Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments in Iran, c. 1256-1335

Function, Meaning and Aesthetic Principles

PhD Dissertation

Faculty of Humanities

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Catalogue of Monuments



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Catalogue of Monuments

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Introduction to the Catalogue of Monuments

The catalogue of monuments provides information, examination and photographic documentation of some fifty monuments arranged into thirty-seven catalogue entries. Where relevant, closely related monuments have been grouped into one catalogue entry. The monuments selected for the catalogue comprise carved stuccos, that his research proposes dating to the Ilkhanid period (1256-1335). However, in some cases these stuccos either pre-date or post-date the Ilkhanid period; they are nevertheless taken into account because they relate closely to Ilkhanid stuccos from technological and aesthetical points of view. The main subject of the research are Ilkhanid carved stuccos, but in monuments where Ilkhanid wall paintings or lustre tiles are combined with carved stuccos to form multimedia decorative repertoires, some essential information concerning the other architectural decorations is provided.

The catalogue's entries are structured to provide thorough data concerning the monuments. They begin with technical information regarding location and monument names. They continue by providing information regarding architectural contexts of stucco repertoires and a discussion of the constructive and decorative chronology of these monuments. The main part of the catalogue entries comprises sections discussing carved stuccos; their production technology, employed artistic techniques, visual properties, their inscriptions and their non-epigraphic elements. Questions of monument patronage and stucco production commissions and the identity of workshops which produced them are addressed. Entries close by providing an examination of the monuments' and stuccos' preservation condition and by providing an account of the research findings, together with the essential bibliography. Selected photographic documentation related to the discussion of the monuments and their stuccos is provided at the end of every entry. Occasionally, the content of diverse sections of these entries may repeat, as they are intended to be reader-friendly and that they may be comprehended independently from other entries and the rest of the catalogue.

The monuments in the catalogue were arranged into seven main groups according to the findings of the performed research. Monuments with stuccos which could be the works of the same or related stucco craftsmen's workshops, or with stuccos which are related in terms of visual and technological characteristics, constitute these groups. Each group is also arranged according to chronological sequence proposed by the research findings. But some monuments and their stucco repertoires are challenging to relate to the other works and have accordingly been placed into the last group in the catalogue. The described catalogue arrangement reflects the research findings and it argues against the comprehension of Ilkhanid monuments and their stuccos as works of regional schools.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 1

Monument Name: Ilkhanid interventions at the Friday mosque of Isfahan (the Uljaytu mihrab, the Small mihrab, stuccos in *iwan*s)

Figs. 1-16.

Associated Names: Western scholars[1] initially called the Ūljāytū[2] mihrab simply *the mihrab* or *the stucco mihrab*. Godard[3] referred to it for the first time as the *Uljaytu mihrab*, (le mihrab du Sultan Uldjaitu Khodabende), based on the name of the Ilkhanid ruler to whom the historic inscription in the mihrab's central lunette refers and because of his interpretation of the mihrab as the material evidence of Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. Western scholars later adopted this name for the mihrab.[4] Iranian scholars[5] however often refer to this mihrab as the *Mihrab of Muhammad Sawi*, after the actual patron of the mihrab (the name is stated in the mihrab's central lunette inscription). The *Small mihrab* was named *Small*, based on the comparison of its dimensions to the Uljaytu mihrab, as it does not contain historic inscriptions referring to its patron.[6] Other supposedly Ilkhanid stuccos in the Isfahan Friday mosque are named after their architectural context location in *iwan*s.

Monument Type: Ilkhanid architectural revetments located in the congregational mosque and produced in separate phases.

Chronology: the congregational mosque was constructed and decorated in numerous phases starting in the early Abbasid period and continuing on until the modern times. Ilkhanid interventions in the mosque comprised modification of its architectural structure – especially the courtyard, and application of stucco revetments (installation of two mihrabs, application of stuccos and other revetments in the *iwan*s of the mosque) in several phases.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): four-*iwan* and courtyard mosque with two domed prayer halls and lateral vaulted and domed prayer spaces. The complex also comprises a madrasa.

Location: Isfahan Friday mosque, old city centre of the Isfahan city, on the northern edge of the Maydan-i Sabz; c. 1.2 km as the crow flies in the north-eastern direction from the historic Safavid square Naqsh-i Jahan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.6702174 N; 51.6864681 E.

Monument Investigation: July 14-15, 2014; May 7-12, 2016; October 22, 2016; November 16, 2017; April 2019.

[1] Van Berchem 1909; Diez 1917; Gabriel 1935.
[2] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[3] Godard 1936, 23, 230; Godard 1937, 237.
[4] e.g. Blair 2003.
[5] Isfahani *et al*, 2010, 1.
[6] Galdieri calls it "the poor mihrab." Galdieri 1981, 37.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Isfahan was the capital of the Seljuq Empire at first and later became the capital of the Safavid Empire. Although Isfahan was considered peripheral during the Ilkhanid period, numerous monuments in the area and the stucco revetments in the Friday mosque reflect the significance of Isfahan for the Ilkhans. This is corroborated by Mustawfi's descriptions of the abundance, agricultural flourishing and population expansion during the Ilkhanid era.[7] Rather than constructing a new structure, Ilkhanid patrons limited themselves to sponsoring improvements to the already existing monumental and highly significant complex, to visually assert their presence in this structure.

Historic descriptions of Isfahan, especially those by Ibn Batutta[8] and Nasir-i Kusraw[9] provide the context for the understanding of Ilkhanid patronage in the Isfahan Friday mosque.[10] The most important information consists of descriptions regarding the uprisings of the mosque's congregation, reflecting their resistance to the change of the state religion from Sunni to Shiʿite Islam, enacted in 1309 by Sultan Uljaytu. These accounts were frequently interpreted as the main reason for the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab and for the Ilkhanid interventions in the Isfahan Friday mosque. But Eugenio Galdieri demonstrates that most of the Ilkhanid interventions at the mosque took place prior to Uljaytu's conversion, which triggered the unrest. Ilkhanid interventions at the Isfahan Friday mosque thus reflected the political ambitions of Ilkhanid patrons instead of being results of simple repairs to the damage, supposedly caused by the popular uprisings. These stucco revetments, especially the Uljaytu mihrab, represent paramount material evidence and historic texts regarding Uljaytu's conversion and Ilkhanid stucco patronage.

b.) Architectural Structure

The Friday Mosque of Isfahan - a Brief History

The Friday mosque of Isfahan is one of the most important monuments in Iranian architectural history. It is located in one of the most significant cities in Iran, the history of which can be traced back to the time of the earliest settlements on the Iranian plateau. The chronology of the mosque's construction phases is complex and it reflects Isfahan's history. The first mosque was constructed soon after the Arab conquest of Iran and it was built on the site of a pre-existing Zoroastrian temple.[11] This hypostyle mosque was subsequently rebuilt and enlarged, and its structure evolved into a courtyard hypostyle mosque. The monument underwent substantial renovations and modifications in the Seljuq period, when the two domed structures were constructed at its southern and northern ends. This was accompanied by the installation of four *iwan*s, which face the mosque's courtyard on its four cardinal sides. These Seljuq interventions were revolutionary and they determined the formation of a new type of mosque ground plan, rectangular in form and consisting of a domed prayer hall adjacent to its *qibla* wall and

[7] Le Strange 1919, 55-8.
[8] Ibn Battuta 2002, 71
[9] Khusraw 1975, 117-18.
[10] Historic descriptions of the mosque were also written by Ibn Hawqal, al-Muqqadasi, al-Mafarrukhi.
[11] For the most comprehensive discussion of the Isfahan Friday mosque see Grabar 1990; Galdieri 1972; Galdieri 1984.

connected to the four-*iwan* courtyard via the main *qibla iwan*. Another smaller domed hall of unascertained function was erected at the opposite end of the complex. This new model of the syntax of architectural spaces subsequently became one of the widespread mosque ground plan types.

Ilkhanid interventions at the Friday mosque of Isfahan took place at the point when the mosque's architectural structure was already developed. These interventions can roughly be divided into two groups: modifications of pre-existing architectural structure and application of architectural revetments onto existing architectural context.[12] Architectural structure modifications comprised changes to the courtyard and further minor structural modifications in adjacent prayer spaces. The installation of the Uljaytu mihrab[13] has so far received the majority of attention, but other stuccos were also produced by Ilkhanid craftsmen: the Small mihrab located in the vestibule close to the main entrance of the mosque,[14] the stucco ceiling of the *shah nishin* (northern *iwan*), and likely some other stucco and terracotta revetments in the northern, eastern and southern *iwan*s. Proposed Ilkhanid dating for the listed stuccoworks has been the subject of debate:[15] most detailed discussions of these interventions is by Galdieri[16] and Ventrone.[17]

The Muzaffarid, Timurid, Safavid and Qajar patrons sponsored further modifications to the mosque. The main contributions of the Muzaffarid period are the construction of the theological school Madrasa Imami on the mosque's eastern side and application of revetments in the northern *iwan*. Muzaffarid interventions also included the enlargement of the mosque's prayer surface. Timurid activities comprised application of the first tile mosaics on the mosque's courtyard and its *iwan*s, and addition of two minarets on the southern *iwan* in order to visually accentuate the *qibla* direction. These revetments were entirely substituted by Safavid patrons, who sponsored an installation of a new mihrab in the main domed prayer hall. Further enlargement of the mosque's prayer spaces took place in this period. Qajar interventions focused on the courtyard, where a model of the *Kaʿba* for the *tawwaf* ritual practice was installed in conjunction with the construction of elevated prayer surfaces in the courtyard.

Ilkhanid Interventions in the Isfahan Friday Mosque

Ilkhanid interventions were coordinated and planned to improve the mosque's architectural structure (Fig. 1). They comprised transformation of the courtyard from a one-storey structure into a two-storeyed one. The remaining interventions served to modify the visual appearance of the architectural structures through application of architectural revetments, mainly in stucco medium. The installation of the Uljaytu mihrab reflects a strong political motivation combined with the will to communicate the change of the official creed, and it so far received the majority

[12] Galdieri 1981, 70-92.
[13] Room 311 on Schroeder's plan of the mosque. See Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, Fig. 328. See also https://archnet.org/sites/1621/media_contents/62965 (Last Accessed: January 7, 2021).
[14] Room 82 on Schroeder's plan of the mosque.
[15] This research is unpublished. Abdullah Quchani, Paper presented at the Art University of Isfahan, December 2017; Abdullah Quchani, "Does the Suffa-yi ʿUmar in the Isfahan Friday Mosque belong to the Muzaffarid period or to the early 12th century?" Abstract of paper presented at the conference *The Architecture of the Iranian World 1000-1250*, University of St Andrews, 21 – 24 April 2016, Conference booklet, 11-12.
[16] See Galdieri 1981.
[17] See Ventrone 1977; Ventrone 1981.

of scholarly attention. Parallel to the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab, a smaller stucco mihrab was installed in the vestibule on the south-eastern side of the mosque, where access to the south-eastern prayer hall was closed off. This modest intervention, perhaps sponsored by a less renowned patron and produced by a different stucco craftsmen's group intended to sanctify this part of the complex. Ilkhanid activities in the northern *iwan* consisted of the application of stucco revetments onto architectural surfaces: the ceiling of the *shah nishin* and possibly application of revetments in terracotta medium. The *shah nishin* stucco ceiling with its geometric and epigraphic elements (the Qurʾanic verse) sanctified and visually accentuated this significant architectural space. The historic stucco inscription which runs along the muqarnas semi-dome served to communicate the political message, although it was located on a relatively concealed part of the *iwan* space; it is likely work of Muzaffarid craftsmen.[18] In sum, Ilkhanid craftsmen, as ordered by the patrons of the stucco revetments, selectively applied the stucco repertoires on essential spaces of the existing architectural complex. In doing so, the stuccos acquired their specific functions and meanings.

Phases of Ilkhanid Interventions in the Isfahan Friday Mosque

The most detailed discussion of the Ilkhanid intervention phases in the Isfahan Friday mosque is provided by Galdieri.[19] He dates them to the period between the second half of the thirteenth century and the first half of the fourteenth century.[20] Galdieri lists the following mosque spaces (based on Schroeder's mosque plan) as Ilkhanid,: Rooms 81 and 83, the Small mihrab located in the Room 82, the flat vault crowned with muqarnas located in the rear of the northern *iwan* (the so called *shah nishin* stucco revetments), terracotta and plaster decorations in the blind niches at the end of the eastern *iwan*, the first works transforming the Nizam al-Mulk's domed hall, some architectural revetments on the interior surfaces of the southern *iwan* (no longer visible – covered by the subsequent layers of ceramic mosaic revetments), the epigraphic terracotta revetments in the barrel vault of the northern *iwan* (Square Kufic medallions and terracotta inscriptions on the supporting structure) and the hall of Uljaytu (Room 311).[21] IsMEO examinations of the mosque's structure propose that the Uljaytu hall was built in several phases.[22]

Galdieri's discussion of the Uljaytu hall, summarized here, revises its construction chronology.[23] Archaeological soundings showed the existence of "Arab network" in the hall, suggesting that the earliest, no longer extant structure in this part of the mosque should be dated to the ʿAbbasid period. This structure was modified in the Seljuq period, during the reign of Malik Shah (r. 1072 to 1092), into a hypostyle hall covered by a circular ceiling on arches. The wall which forms part of the western *iwan* and against which the Uljaytu mihrab was installed is of Seljuq date and was likely constructed during the reign of Malik Shah, in parallel to the

[18] Sometimes it is considered the work of the Ilkhanid dynasty.
[19] Galdieri 1981; Galdieri 1984, 57-9.
[20] Galdieri 1984, 72.
[21] Pope and Ackermann, 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, Fig. 328. See also https://archnet.org/sites/1621/media_contents/62965 (Last Accessed: January 7, 2021).
[22] Galdieri 1984, 57-9; Galdieri 1981.
[23] Galdieri 1981, 74-79.

described Seljuq transformation of the hall.[24] This was followed by the first Ilkhanid phase in which the hall was transformed and some of its surfaces were covered with Ilkhanid *Khatt-i banna'i* inscriptions formed by carved stucco plugs. The IsMEO reconstruction of the remaining epigraphic elements indicates that these revetments bore the name *Muhammad*. IsMEO researchers proposed its original dimension as being 93 x 93 cm. One remaining fragment of this revetment is partially covered by the mihrab. Its original function was that of a corbel, which supported the pointed arches of the hypostyle vault, which is also confirmed by archaeological finds of pillar remains beneath the current floor level of the hall. Galdieri suggests that this modification took place at the beginning of Uljaytu's reign, but in light of the Pir-i Bakran evidence (Cat. No. 2), one cannot exclude the possibility of it being applied during the reign of Ghazan Khan, or even earlier.

The Uljaytu mihrab (Figs. 2-12) was installed in 1310 in this still hypostyle hall, during the second Ilkhanid intervention. The third Ilkhanid intervention consisted of the transformation of the courtyard façade into a two-storey façade. It can be dated to the period between 1310 and 1368.[25] The transformation of the façade required modifications of the arch structures, which served to surmount the halls adjacent to the courtyard; these changes are visible in most of the mosque's structure.[26] In the Uljaytu hall, earlier oblong pillars were incorporated into a new structure with wider arches. With this intervention, the hall was rebuilt into its current architectural structure.

Constructive and decorative phases related to the Uljaytu hall and to the Small mihrab can thus be summarized as the following:

Phase One – the "Arab Network": The IsMEO archaeological excavations revealed remains of the hypostyle hall datable to the ʿAbbasid period. This structure was preserved until the Seljuq modifications.

Phase Two – Seljuq Architectural Accomplishments: Seljuq construction of the four courtyard *iwan*s took place during the reign of Sultan Sanjar, around 1121-2. The wall against which the Uljaytu mihrab is installed was likely constructed in the period of Malik Shah's reign. Seljuq builders modified the pre-existing hypostyle hall into a new structure, hypostyle in plan, and likely covered by a circular vaulted ceiling surmounted by arches. Earlier ʿAbbasid and Buyid architectural elements were integrated into this structure.

Phase Three – The First Ilkhanid Phase: Application of *Khatt-i banna'i* revetments on the architectural surfaces of the no longer extant Seljuq hypostyle hall was performed before the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab, which partially covers the remains of these revetments. An earlier mihrab could have existed in the hall and if so, it was either the work of Seljuq or Ilkhanid craftsmen.

[24] This wall is constructed in typically Seljuq building technique and masonry; fired bricks were arranged in the wall with regular empty intervals to accommodate stucco plugs, which are still visible on the lower portions of the wall.
[25] Galdieri 1981, 73-4, 78-9.
[26] Galdieri 1981, 73-4, 78-9.

Phase Four – The Second Ilkhanid Phase: Installation of the Uljaytu mihrab in 1310.

Phase Five – The Third and Final Ilkhanid Phase (between 1310 and 1368): development of the "madrasa-type" façade for the mosque resulting in the transformation of the courtyard into a two-storey structure. These alterations ended in a thorough rebuilding of the Uljaytu hall where the earlier hypostyle structure had to be eliminated and wider archways (c. 3-3.3 m wide) were constructed. For the construction of these archways, the builders made use of older oblong Seljuq columns, which were brought to light first by Godard and later by the IsMEO. The original fired brick decoration of the Ilkhanid courtyard façade, revealed during the IsMEO soundings, was later concealed with tile mosaics. These operations took place sometime between 1310 and 1365 – posterior to the Uljaytu mihrab installation and prior to the Muzaffarid interventions led by Qutb al-Din al-Muzaffar.

The Small Mihrab and Other Ilkhanid Revetments

The Small mihrab installation (Fig. 14) was an independent intervention, prompted by the closing-off of the passage against which the mihrab was installed.[27] The mihrab was badly damaged during the Iraq-Iran war bombardment of the mosque and it was subsequently completely restored.[28] It does not match the Uljaytu mihrab in quality of production, type of artistic techniques nor in its epigraphic and decorative repertoires.[29]

It is hard to discern the exact chronological frame of the stucco and terracotta revetments in the northern *iwan* (Figs. 13, 15-16). The Ilkhanid dating for the *shah nishin* stuccos was contested and earlier dating for the stuccos was proposed.[30] A closer look at the employed artistic techniques and the form of the arch beneath the revetments however suggest an Ilkhanid date. Presence of other terracotta and stucco revetments (the blind niches in the eastern *iwan*, Square Kufic panels and terracotta revetments of the northern *iwan*), which also contain inscriptions with Shiʿite content are understood as Ilkhanid by some scholars, but they could also date to later periods. The eastern *iwan* revetments in stucco plugs and carved stucco are Ilkhanid in their style and production technology. But the terracotta revetments and Square Kufic panels of the northern *iwan* could have been produced as part of the Safavid modifications. It is difficult to exclude the hypothesis that large-scale redecoration interventions on *iwan* surfaces, which might have included structural repairs to the *iwan*s, took place after Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite creed. Extensive restorations of mosque revetments drastically reduce the possibilities for more detailed observations of joints between the revetments, which would provide a more precise chronological frame for their dating. Perhaps the no longer visible Ilkhanid revetments of the southern *iwan* were also comprised in the same decorative intervention. The Ilkhanid

[27] Only approximate dating of the mihrab can be proposed, in the absence of historic inscriptions.
[28] It was fortunately documented by Viollet around 1912-13. Fonds Viollet. CNRS, Inv. No. HV728.
[29] If the mihrab was executed at the same time at the Uljaytu mihrab it must have been produced by a different group of craftsmen.
[30] In his paper presentation at the Art University of Isfahan in November 2017, Abdullah Quchani, proposed a re-dating of the stuccos to the tenth or eleventh century.

modifications to the Nizam al-Mulk's domed hall were either performed in parallel to these decorative interventions, or, more likely, at the same time as the courtyard modifications.[31]

c.) Architectural Revetments

Ilkhanid stucco revetments at the Isfahan Friday mosque are dispersed across the mosque complex. Moreover, they are results of different interventions and it is unlikely that any of the revetments were produced in parallel or by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. These revetments differ in their material characteristics, employed artistic techniques, style, aesthetics and polychromy. Stuccos for which it has been established that they belong to the Ilkhanid period are therefore discussed in separate sections: the Uljaytu mihrab, the Small mihrab, the stuccos of the *shah nishin* in the northern *iwan* and remaining stuccos on the courtyard *iwan*s.

The Uljaytu Mihrab

Figs. 2-12.

Background

The Uljaytu mihrab is the most significant Ilkhanid stucco revetment in the Isfahan Friday mosque and it is of crucial importance for the understanding of Ilkhanid stuccos. The mihrab's importance stems from its historic inscriptions (Fig. 8), high quality of stucco craftsmanship, extensive polychromy repertoire and good state of conservation. The mihrab has been the subject of scholarly debate for more than a century. Max Van Berchem set out a reading and interpretation of a large portion of the mihrab's epigraphic repertoire.[32] Information about the mihrab was subsequently refined by Ernst Diez,[33] Albert Gabriel,[34] Godard[35] and Schroeder.[36] Wilber's provides a rather general and imprecise discussion to the mihrab.[37] The most detailed reading of the mihrab's inscriptions, which also revealed the artist's signature, is by Hunarfar.[38] The next significant findings relating to the mihrab stem from extensive research of the Italo-Iranian team in the 1970s, summarised by Galdieri.[39] The aesthetics of the mihrab were also briefly examined by Hussein Mohammed Halimi.[40] The mihrab was also a frequent subject of Blair's publications, who proposes that its inscriptions were drawn on paper by Haydar, the manuscript calligrapher and disciple of Yaqut al-Mustaʿsimi.[41] They were then transferred with the aid of large sheets of paper into the stucco medium. The 1970s IsMEO research of the mihrab was continued by Iranian scholars and the 2009-10 publication by Mohsen Isfahani

[31] It is also possible that modification of the Nizam al-Mulk hall, the redecorations of *iwan*s and the modification of the courtyard all took place at the same time and were thus parts of a large scale construction and redecoration project of the late Ilkhanid period.
[32] Van Berchem 1909.
[33] Diez 1915-17, 109.
[34] Gabriel 1935, 32-3, 35.
[35] Godard 1936, 230-6; Godard 1937, 23-5.
[36] Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, Fig. 328. See also https://archnet.org/sites/1621/media_contents/62965 (Last Accessed: January 7, 2021).
[37] Wilber 1955, 141.
[38] Hunarfar 1966, 115-120.
[39] Galdieri 1981; Galdieri 1984, 57-9.
[40] Halimi 1988, 93-8.
[41] Blair 2006, 253-255.

Nakuei *et al* provides information of essential importance for the understanding of the mihrab's polychromy, restoration history and conservation condition.

Mihrab Production

The Uljaytu mihrab was installed against an older supporting wall constructed in the Seljuq period. Because the mihrab had to be installed against an already existing wall, it had to be constructed as leaning against the architectural surface of the wall, rather than stemming from the architectural surface. The dimensions of the mihrab are the following: it is 5.60 m high, 3.30 m wide and 31 cm thick.[42] The relief of the mihrab varies from 2 to 12 cm.[43] The mihrab is composed of numerous stucco panels (Fig. 5), some of concave and some of flat forms in the way that they determine its dynamic surface. Only the small central niche of the mihrab is inserted into the wall, while the surface level of all other stucco panels is not anchored to the supporting structure. There are two possible explanations. The Uljaytu mihrab could either have been installed into a space where there an earlier mihrab used to exist. If so, the stucco craftsmen would have taken advantage of the pre-existing space for the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab.[44] The existence of such an earlier mihrab could also explain the double carved stucco layer panel (Panel O; compare Figs. 3 and 4), where the lower layer could be assigned to an earlier mihrab.

The making of the mihrab started with the application of coarse layers of stucco and it was followed by the division of the mihrab's surface into stucco panels according to a pre-designated plan. Iron nails inserted in the stuccos were used to consolidate its structure.[45] Once the coarse surface of the mihrab was divided into panels, the craftsmen produced finely carved stucco panels in a sequence. No signs of *giornatas* were found on the mihrab.[46] The sequence of production of the mihrab's panels remains unclear. It is likely that craftsmen worked in the counter-clock direction, because of the way the framing inscriptions run. It is plausible that the external parts of the mihrab were made first and the central parts later. It is likely that the same logic was also used for gilding and stucco colouring. Calligraphic peculiarities of the Uljaytu mihrab's inscriptions suggest that their design was outlined by a master stucco craftsman with advanced calligraphic skills. If the design of the entire mihrab was not produced at once, but in segments, as shown, then the master craftsman had to be continuously or at least frequently present at the site of the mihrab installation. Accordingly, it is possible that the stucco master also performed parts of stucco relief carving and it is likely that he supervised the mihrab carving procedure.

The Design of the Mihrab

Blair proposes that the epigraphic repertoire of the Uljaytu mihrab was designed on paper by the manuscript calligrapher Haydar, the disciple of Yaqut al Mustaʿsimi and that this design was subsequently transferred onto the stucco surface with the aid of large sheets of paper and

[42] Halimi 1988, 98; Isfahani *et al* 2010, 438.
[43] Isfahani *et al* 2010, 438.
[44] From proposed reconstructions, it seems that Galdieri considered this hypothesis. Galdieri 1981, 85-7.
[45] Isfahani *et al* 2010, 435.
[46] It is likely that smaller panels of the mihrab consisted of a single *giornata* and that larger panels were performed with several *giornatas*.

carved by stucco craftsmen.[47] Use of large sheets of paper implies that stencils or a dust sprinkling method for design transfer had to be used on the scale one to one. Use of paper stencils for the Uljaytu mihrab design is at first suggested by the abrupt interruptions between parts of the inscriptions, in corners where they take ninety degree turns. Such abrupt interruptions are however also found on mihrabs, where stencils were not used for the transfer of their design, as in the case of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum mihrab (Cat. No. 2).[48] Inscriptions could have been sketched on large sheets of paper and their distribution, based on the inscription size, could have been planned accordingly. The ornamentation and inscription design were outlined freehand directly on the stucco surface , and in segments as the stucco carving proceeded. Fragments of these outlines are found on the Uljaytu mihrab. They are of two types: direct incisions into the stucco surface for Kufic style (panel I; Fig. 5) and red and black painted outlines (panels H and N; Fig. 5). In the latter case, red was used to inscribe the inscription and black was used to enhance its final design. The majority of these traces consist of black outlines and in some parts traces of red are visible underneath the black outlines (panel H; Fig. 5). Black outline was the final design of the inscription before it was carved, although in some parts minimal corrections to this outline, made by the stucco carver, are visible. The form of the black outline and its relationship to the stucco relief show that the outline could not have been produced with tracing of stencils.

Stucco Artistic Techniques

The stucco craftsmen's versatility in the Uljaytu mihrab production is generally appreciated by scholars. Blair specifically praises the mihrab's exterior framing inscription band and highlights its unique quality of calligraphic script set against the rich background of floral scrolls on a concave surface.[49] The framing inscription and the entire mihrab reveal a remarkable level of stucco craftsmanship skill, which includes stucco revetment design and colouring. But the Uljaytu mihrab does not reveal any new approaches to stucco carving, design or use of artistic techniques. Its elaborate design is achieved by means of three relatively common stucco techniques. The mihrab's central parts were produced with stucco panels consisting of one layer of carved stucco. Accentuation of the mihrab was achieved through positioning of the stucco panels on different levels and planes, combining two pairs of stucco columns and capitals with circular surfaces and with colour interplay stemming from the use of colours and metal leaf application. The mihrab's dynamic character was achieved through the creation of more protruding and deeper relief panels on its exterior parts. The exterior framing inscription was produced with carving of two layers of stucco. The top register of the mihrab (panel O; Fig. 5) remains problematic; its lower panel is hardly visible and it could be a remnant of an earlier mihrab. Artistic techniques found on panels O and N are combined on the large lozenges of the mihrab. These panels of floral and geometric ornamentation were produced by carving two layers of stucco in a manner similar to the monumental framing band. Subsequently, the protruding and fully perforated bosses were applied on each lozenge.

[47] Blair 2006, 255.
[48] See Holakooei 2007.
[49] Blair 2006, 254-5.

Mihrab Description

Old photographs indicate that the lower part of the mihrab was badly damaged at the beginning of the twentieth century.[50] This damage was later repaired and most of its panels were reconstructed. The stucco revetments of the mihrab can be divided into two main groups: the panels with epigraphic and floral ornamentation and panels consisting of floral and geometric ornamentation. Floral scrolls were only employed to create the background of stucco panels which contain inscriptions and they do not appear on any other panel. The only exception is the panel with the shahada, which comprises Kufic inscription only. The mihrab's columns,[51] capitals and framing bands feature repeating geometric ornaments, which are combined with abstract floral ornamentation. Lozenges comprise symmetrically ordered floral ornamentation with palmette and half-palmette compositions. The original appearance of the mihrab's top register remains unknown, but the photographic evidence suggests that it consisted of a band of repeating abstract floral ornamentation.[52] Panels with inscriptions are evenly distributed throughout the mihrab's surface and their interchanging form of curved pointed arches and framing bands with ninety degree angles determines a variegated and yet dynamic form of the mihrab. These panels are rendered visually uniform with background floral scrolls, and on the other hand they are distinguished by differing polychromy schemes. Different dimensions and proportions of the inscriptions, together with varying size and form of floral scrolls reflect the craftsmen's design versatility.

Artists' Notion in the Making of the Mihrab

Fig. 5.

Panel A of the mihrab is entirely lost and it is not possible to discern its original form. It is topped by a concave lunette (panel B) with symmetrically arranged composition of overlapping floral ornamentation (palmettes and leaves). The lunette is framed by a thin band of repeating floral decoration which is abstracted into geometric ornamentation.[53] The lunette is flanked by the pair of columns with capitals (panels C and D), which underwent heavy reconstructions at an early stage. The stucco relief of the columns is likely the result of modern restoration interventions. It consists of repeating bands of abstract floral ornamentation framed with interlacing bands. These two columns surmount the small pointed arch (panel E), which carries the third part of the Hadith inscription divided between panels K, H and E. The *Naskh* inscription does not contain diacritic marks and its background consists of floral scrolls. The arch is flanked by two spandrels (panel F) which comprise symmetric designs of overlapping floral elements. The niche's arch is topped by the panel carrying the Shiʿite Shahada (panel G) in Kufic style and it does not comprise any ornamented background. But the elongations of the Kufic letters evolve into a repeating geometric design topped by floral ornamentation. The described panels are framed by the Hadith inscription placed against a floral scroll background

[50] Van Berchem 1909, 368; Godard 1936, 237; Godard 1937, 23; Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 8, 1314; Wilber 1955, Pls. 87-8.
[51] Tops of larger exterior columns do however contain Invocations to God in Kufic style.
[52] Van Berchem 1909, 368; Wilber 1955, Pl. 87.
[53] Reconstructed parts of this band do not correspond to the ornamental forms of its original fragments.

(panel H), which starts on panel K and continues on panel E. The peculiarity of this panel stems from the employed inscription style and the inscription's distribution on two levels.

The framing inscription is flanked by a set of large columns (panel I) and capitals (panel J), which surmount the mihrab's central lunette (panels L and K) with the historic inscription (panel L).[54] Damaged parts of capitals were also reconstructed based on the clues provided by their remaining original parts.[55] The two large column shafts were decorated with abstract leaf compositions framed into floral forms with knots to connect their repeating ornamental patterns. Top parts of the column shafts bear inscriptions in Kufic style with invocations to God (*the Dominion belongs to God*). Column capitals feature stucco designs almost identical to the small pair of columns. The historic inscription is written in nine lines of easily legible *Thuluth* style in the lunette framed by the pointed arch bearing the Hadith inscription (which also comprises the master craftsman's signature). This lunette is located in the central part of the mihrab and its large surface of relatively shallow relief determines the historic inscription as the mihrab's focal point. The panel consists of two large spirals on its lower part, which fold out symmetrically into smaller floral scroll spirals to fill the remaining lunette surface. The given composition of floral ornaments, inscription, relief, panel form and polychromy determined their dazzling effect and immediately attracted the spectator's attention. The monumental lunette is topped by a pair of spandrels with symmetric vegetal design, which echoes the design of the two smaller lozenges. The described composition is framed by the monumental Hadith inscription (panel N). The *Thuluth* inscription features elongated *hastae* and it is set against the background of floral scrolls. Lower parts of this panel were reconstructed in the 1970s and they do not entirely resemble the original parts of the mihrab. The mihrab is topped by the horizontal panel (panel O), which was fully perforated and consisted of a repeating abstract floral design. Its reconstruction does not seem to have taken into account the remaining fragments of the panel.[56] Panel O comprises two layers of carved stucco (compare Figs. 3 and 4); it is possible that this panel was older than the Uljaytu mihrab and that it was incorporated into the new composition by Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen, similar to the cases of Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2) and Urumiya (Cat. No. 23). Panel O and the external framing inscription (panel N) are framed by a repeating geometric band (panel P).

Mihrab Polychromy

The small amount of sunlight, mainly indirect, helped a great quantity of the mihrab's polychromy to remain intact (Figs. 7-12). The extensive amount of original polychromy of the Uljaytu mihrab provides a unique insight into Ilkhanid stucco polychromy and artists' colouring principles, and offers knowledge on the original polychrome appearance of Ilkhanid stuccos. The 1970s restorations,[57] during which the mihrab's surface was cleaned and its polychromy consolidated, determined the extremely good preservation of its polychromy.

[54] Compare images: Van Berchem 1909, 368; with Godard 1936, 237; Godard 1937, 23.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] These remains are well visible on photographs published by Wilber and Godard. See Wilber 1955, Pl. 87; Godard 1936, 237.
[57] Isfahani *et al.*, 2010, 435-6.

First archaeometric investigations of the Uljaytu mihrab's polychromy were performed in the early 2000s.[58] A summary of the Isfahani *et al* team research findings is provided to enable the discussion of the mihrab's polychromy.[59] The prevailing element of stucco body composition is calcium carbonate and it is characterized by its grey (rather than white) colour, which is typical of gypsum produced in the Isfahan area. The mihrab was thus produced with locally available gypsum.[60] Stucco craftsmen employed metal nails (2 cm in diameter, c. 10 cm in length) in order to connect the stucco panels of the mihrab.[61] Chemical analyses propose pigment composition characterization.[62] They suggest that colours were applied on the stucco surface in at least three layers with the aim of obtaining a more opaque colour effect. Blue revealed its crystalline structure and proved to be azurite.[63] Green, which is less commonly found on Ilkhanid stuccos,[64] was identified as malachite.[65] The pigment could have been artificially produced, because it is rare in nature. Two shades of red colour were identified. Opaque red colour was identified as ferrous oxide, which corresponds to red ochre pigment. Quarrying and artificial production of this pigment is attested in the Iranian plateau in at least the 11th century.[66] Light red revealed its crystalline structure and it is derived from ferrous oxides (ochre) which were probably mixed with hematite (also ferrous oxide) to achieve a colour shade close to orange.[67] This pigment also contained a high amount of gypsum, which could have been used to lighten or render more opaque the colour shade.

In sum, some pigments for the mihrab's colouring were artificially produced, while other pigments were of natural origin. Artists paid close attention to opaqueness and transparency of pigments and the final colouristic effect. Stronger opacity of pigments and application of several layers of colour could also have been needed due to the originally rather dark colour of the stucco body. It is not clear whether the mihrab polychromy application was the task of one of the stucco craftsmen from the workshop or if a separate expert was in charge of this activity. Most likely, one of the stucco craftsmen's workshop members specialized in this procedure.

Polychromy Application Principles

Observations of colouring principles employed by the craftsmen to render the Uljaytu mihrab polychromy provide a detailed insight into the colouring notion of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen. Application of polychromy transformed the carved stucco relief. It accentuated its epigraphic and ornamentation elements and it put emphasis on its most important parts. The small concave

[58] See Isfahani *et al.*, 2010.
[59] See Isfahani *et al.*, 2010, 430.
[60] Isfahani *et al.*, 2010, 430.
[61] Isfahani *et al.*, 2010, 535. Use of wooden pegs is attested for the second decorative phase in Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and on the stucco panels of supporting wall niches and the mihrab of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16).
[62] *Ibid.*, 430-432.
[63] This is in line with parallel archaeometric research of blue pigments found on other Ilkhanid stucco and wall painting repertoires, such as the archaeometric research conducted on the stuccos of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) or the Rukn al-Din mausoleum (Yazd; Cat. No. 29).
[64] Parallels in the use of green were registered at the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4), Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3), the mausoleum of Uljaytu at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), the mausoleum of Rukn al-Din in Yazd (Cat. No. 29).
[65] Hydroxide of copper carbonate.
[66] Holakooei *et al.*, 2016, 175-176.
[67] Isfahani *et al.*, 2010, 431, 439.

lunette (panel B) contains extensive traces of its polychromy in blue, green, red and ochre. The background of this stucco panel was coloured dark blue. The upper level of the floral ornamentation relief seems to have been coloured green. Punctured and incised parts of its relief were coloured in red and ochre, which highlighted the outlines of the panel design against the darker, green floral ornamentation. The lunette was topped by the pointed arch inscription (panel E) which was coloured pastel green and set against a dark blue background. It is difficult to determine the original colour of the background floral scrolls: they retain small portions of red and ochre and could have been coloured with green or ochre. This panel consisted of a slightly lighter, but not contrasting colour scheme. The two lozenges with abstract floral compositions had dark blue backgrounds. Leaves of floral ornamentation were coloured green and their outline could have been covered with silver leaves. Their punctured and incised parts were filled with red and ochre, which accentuated the outline of their design and broke the monotony of the large green surfaces. Polychromy of the lunette (panel B), the framing inscription (panel E) and the two lozenges (panel F) therefore determined their visual unity and their colour contrast to the adjacent panels G and H with different polychromy schemes.

The mihrab's interior niche is topped by panel G with the Shiʿite Shahada, for which a different colour scheme is employed. The Kufic inscription of this panel may have been covered with silver leaf and it was set against the plain dark blue background. The contrast between the shiny metallic silver inscription and the dark blue must have been striking and it rendered the inscription well visible. The small arch composition and the Shahada panel are framed by the Hadith inscription (H). The colour scheme of this panel is markedly different from the surrounding panels. The inscription contains extensive traces of silver-like colour, which cover red traces and possible gilding remains. Closer observations of the panel indicate that rather than covered with silver leaf, the inscription originally may have been gilded with gold leaf. But the evidence of original silver leaf application found on the other panels of the mihrab, especially on the monumental *Thuluth* inscription (panel N), confirms that this technique was employed for its polychromy. The original appearance of panel H perhaps consisted of a gilded, golden *Thuluth* inscription, set against a dark blue background with floral scrolls in lighter tonalities. This framing inscription is flanked by two large columns topped by capitals. The original colour scheme of the column shafts was rather dark and consisted of dark blue background and floral ornamentation coloured with green and ochre. The two column shafts contain epigraphic panels on their top parts with invocations to God: these panels are framed with red and inscriptions in the Kufic style were coloured with ochre of orange to yellow hues. The red frame and the light colour of the inscription made them stand out against the dark background. The capitals on the tops of the columns consisted of a warmer colour scheme in which green was absent. Protruding parts of the relief were either coloured with ochre or red, or a combination of both, and the recessed parts, which emphasize the abstract ornamentation of the capitals, were dark blue.

The two columns surmount the central lunette with the historic inscription (panel L), which is framed by the Hadith inscription (panel K). The contrasting colour schemes of these two panels and the use of metal leaf increased the visibility of the central lunette and emphasized the curved form of the framing Hadith. The historic *Thuluth* inscription of the central lunette retains traces of gilding. Its background floral scrolls were clearly overpainted with modern silver. Punctured

and recessed parts of scrolls were coloured ochre. The colour scheme consisted of warm and shining inscriptions, which were made visible when set against the dark blue background. If the floral scrolls were originally silver in colour, then the combination of gold and silver determined a dazzling effect through their interplay. This polychromy scheme, combined with the large and flat surface of the panel, and the *Thuluth* inscription with diacritical marks, not only rendered the essential historic inscription well visible, but also easy to read for the literate audience.

The central lunette framing the Hadith (panel K) determined the contrasting effect with its colder polychromy scheme. The *Naskh* inscription was green and set against large and visible portions of shallow dark blue background. The punctured border between the central lunette and this framing inscription is coloured with a dark red or almost purple shade, which was created by first applying dark blue and painting it over with red. The lunette's framing inscription consists of an outer framing band of repeating floral elements in abstract forms of leaves. It constitutes a darker polychromy scheme of dark blue background and unknown colour of leaf pattern, but some parts also retain traces of modern silver. The two adjacent lozenges with extremely protruding reliefs were made to appear more protruding through the juxtaposition of dark blue for the relief's recessed parts and warmer schemes for its protruding parts. The protruding parts of the relief retain only small amounts of red which could have been employed for the stucco design outline. The described structure of the mihrab is separated with the external monumental framing Hadith inscription (panel N) in *Thuluth* style with a border of repeating geometric patterns in forms of knots. The monumental framing inscription, similar to the smaller framing inscription (panel H), retained a warm colour scheme which was set against a dark blue background. Observations of the *Thuluth* inscription provide indications that its silver colour is original. Larger parts of the scrolls retain extensive traces of red and they reveal large portions of the stucco relief body, but smaller parts of the scrolls were manipulated with the application of modern silver paint. These scrolls and floral elements retain extensive portions of dark colour which could be blue or black. It could have been used to outline the scroll design for carving. The small external border of this panel, consisting of repeating floral pattern features dark blue background and its protruding parts reveal the stucco body. The polychromy scheme of the mihrab's top register (panel O) cannot be established.

The described use of colours allows for the understanding of some core colouring principles (logics) for mihrab's colouring. The collection of these principles should be understood as craftsmen's colouring notion. This knowledge allowed the craftsmen to visually transform mihrab's stucco relief and to impact not only visibility of some of its elements, but also to determine the three-dimensional appearance of mihrab's relief. Dark blue was used to colour backgrounds of all mihrab panels. Its use and juxtaposition against warmer colour tones and schemes on protruding parts of relief increased the perceived depth of reliefs. Green was almost explicitly used to colour the *Naskh* inscriptions, but in some cases it was employed for floral ornamentation. Red appears on small framing bands between the panels and on floral ornamentations of the monumental framing inscription, and it was employed to outline *Thuluth* inscriptions. Black was used to accentuate and finalize inscription designs before their

carving.[68] Orange-like ochre was employed to colour recessed parts of some floral scrolls, which might have been covered with silver leaves.

Prevailingly dark blue schemes (panels N and H) were evenly distributed across mihrab's structure and they were combined with prevailingly green panels (panels K, F, E and B). Even distribution of these panels and their differing forms gave the mihrab a uniform and at the same time dynamic colour scheme rhythm. These panels contrasted with panels of lighter colour schemes (panels G, L and M) which consequently resulted more visible. They mainly combined a small portion of dark blue with gilded inscriptions and red, light ochre or brown floral ornaments. With exception of *Naskh* inscriptions, which were coloured green, and the Kufic invocations coloured in red to orange hues, the *Thuluth* inscriptions were either gilded or covered with silver leaves.

This particular treatment of inscriptions, which were always coloured with lighter colours, in comparison to their darker and often heavily ornamented background, made them stand out from the background and rendered them visible and relatively easy to read by the literate audience. The central lunette with the historic inscription, which precisely outlines all characters involved in the making of the mihrab, was rendered the mihrab's focal point by the means of its dimensions, flat surface, position and polychromy. This inscription panel was additionally highlighted by the monumental framing Hadith inscription, which emphasizes the importance of patronage in religious life. The Shahada panel below the central lunette also served to additionally stress the significance of religion to which the patronage policies were tied. The described colouring notion entirely transformed mihrab's carved and brown coloured relief. Each colour was used with particular intentions at determining final visual appearance of each stucco panel and its place in the mihrab's visual hierarchy. Nothing was left to coincidence, rather, the craftsmen consciously determined use of each colour at achieving the polychromy effect of the mihrab. By doing so, they highlighted its form and rendered its function and meaning more explicit.

Aesthetics and Style

The stucco revetment style and aesthetics of the Uljaytu mihrab are difficult to categorize or to compare to other Ilkhanid stuccos. The unique style and aesthetic appearance of the mihrab, which were conditioned by the mihrab production procedure, were determined by the following factors. Firstly, the structure and panel division of the mihrab were well planned in terms of their dimensions, proportions, forms and types of surfaces. Secondly, the epigraphic and ornamental repertoires were distributed across the mihrab's panels according to a clear logic of interplay of different schemes and stucco surfaces. Thirdly, although the employed stucco artistic techniques were not demanding, they were used consciously and, depending on the type of stucco panel location and surface, in the way that they variegated and rendered the mihrab's form dynamic. Fourthly, the polychromy palette, with a wide spectrum, was employed in a way that emphasis was given to the mihrab's most significant elements - its inscriptions. Use of colour also corroborated the specific hierarchy of the panels.

[68] Possible black outline traces were also found on floral scrolls of the monumental framing inscription.

The outlined stucco craftsmen's skills enabled the making of the Uljaytu mihrab, which can justly be understood as one of the masterpieces of Ilkhanid stucco revetments. The stucco craftsmen were given the task of making the mihrab, rather than producing a larger stucco repertoire, which enabled them to focus and concentrate their skills there. If Uljaytu converted to the Shiʿite faith sometime in 1309 and if the mihrab was completed in October 1310, it becomes clear that regardless of the fact that it is difficult to establish the necessary production time for the mihrab, the craftsmen did not need to work in haste and they could dedicate themselves fully to the project. Furthermore, the mihrab was commissioned by a minister and intended to show his political alliance to the ruler, and this likely resulted in a greater amount of available resources. The best craftsmen could be hired and even brought to Isfahan from remote places. Material difficult to obtain, such as different pigments, was likely made available. The craftsmen were therefore given the time and the necessary resources to produce the imperial style mihrab. Comparison of the Uljaytu mihrab to the mihrab in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), which is found in more deteriorated conditions, reveals important parallels between the two mihrabs. The two mihrabs differ in their design and the Pir-i Bakran mihrab reveals a larger spectrum of employed artistic techniques. Both mihrabs however contain similar *Thuluth* inscriptions in their framing panels. In both cases, the inscriptions are produced on concave surfaces. Moreover, the layout of inscriptions and the solutions to the inscription breaks in the corners at ninety-degree angles are almost identical.

The Small Mihrab

The small stucco mihrab (Fig. 14) is located on the side of the main entrance corridor, which leads from the mosque's main portal to its courtyard. It was documented by Viollet in 1912-13, prior to its damage in the Iran-Iraq war.[69] The Small mihrab has been dated to the Ilkhanid period, but apart from that, it was only given scant attention. Galdieri calls it "the Poor" mihrab, due to its lesser aesthetic quality.[70] According to Galdieri, the architectural space where the mihrab is located, together with its two adjacent spaces, dates to the Ilkhanid period. The mihrab is placed in a space which once served as a communication opening between the mosque entrance corridor and the south-eastern prayer halls. It is applied to the material closing off this walk-way.[71] By doing so, the builders succeeded in enlarging the prayer hall on the south-eastern side of the mosque. The function of the mihrab is to indicate the *qibla* direction to the faithful immediately upon their arrival to the complex.

Although restored, the mihrab was additionally damaged during the bombardment of the mosque in the 1980s. It was subsequently repaired and only a few parts of the mihrab remain original. It does not contain any historic inscription which could indicate its dating or inform about its patron. The employed artistic techniques and the approach to stucco carving for the mihrab's making differ from the Uljaytu mihrab. Given that the mihrab installation was only possible once the passage was closed off, which was likely prompted by the modifications of the courtyard structure, the Small mihrab can be dated to the period posterior to the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab. The inscriptions of the mihrab (invocations to God and the *Ayat al-Kursi*)

[69] Fonds Viollet, CNRS, Inv. No. HV728.
[70] Galdieri 1981, 37.
[71] See Ventrone 1981.

have been read by Hunarfar, but no detailed discussion of the mihrab's stucco relief, artistic techniques or its aesthetics were performed.[72]

The Mihrab Design

The Small mihrab is placed against the wall parallel to the *qibla* wall and it is the main part of the stucco revetment composition. The original stucco mihrab and the adjacent revetments of this architectural space might have been of different appearance. Although the entire wall is coated with stuccos, they must not be understood as only decorating a mihrab.

The mihrab was inserted in the middle of the shouldered arch opening, but it was placed on its left side for unknown reasons. The proportions of the mihrab were partially determined by the opening and the modern floor covers its lower portions, which impacts the mihrab's squat appearance. The next striking peculiarity of the mihrab is the disposition of its panels which determines a mihrab composition unusual for the Isfahan region. The mihrab consists of a small pointed arch, which is flanked by two small columns with vertically elongated capitals, which enclose a concave lunette. This pointed arch is flanked by the two spandrels and framed by a badly damaged inscription band. The described central nucleus of the mihrab reflects a standard mihrab composition, but the composition of the remaining panels is unusual. The exterior framing band of the mihrab with repeating geometric designs, frames both the central niche of the mihrab and the panel which is placed on the top of the mihrab. The framing band in the form of the letter H is therefore unusual. The mihrab is framed on its top by another panel with repeating floral and geometric motifs. The Small stucco mihrab is framed by stucco panels which fill the remaining space of the closed off passage area. These panels are arranged to echo the form of the passage opening and they mediate between the round form of the shouldered arch and the mihrab's rectangular form. The two lozenges flanking the arch compliment the scheme and ensure that the entire wall surface is covered with stuccos. The composition is topped by a band of stucco plugs.

The described structure of the mihrab is peculiar, and parallels of similar panel organization solutions are found in north-eastern Iran. The mihrab of the Bayazid Bistami complex in Bistam (Cat. No. 19) also contains a framing band in the form of the letter H. A more distant, but relevant parallel is the solution of stucco panels disposition at the Farumad Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 16). The Small mihrab could thus have been produced by stucco craftsmen who mainly operated in north-eastern Iran.[73]

Stucco Artistic Techniques

The Small mihrab's central nucleus consists of two small columns, which enclose the concave niche, and are framed by an uninterrupted pointed framing band, which is topped by two flanking lozenges. The two columns are of rather unusual form, which have no parallels; it reminds of acanthus leaves and the two capitals reflect similar compositions. The relatively thin shape of the columns and capitals, contrary to their usually more bulbous forms, is also

[72] Hunarfar 1966, 149-50.
[73] Stucco artistic techniques, and especially the approach to stucco carving of the Small mihrab are very similar to the mihrab of Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19).

unusual.[74] The two columns surmount the concave lunette, which seems to retain the original stucco decoration in badly damaged form. It is possible to discern that the lunette stuccos comprised the usual symmetric design of palmette and floral compositions. Contrary to most stucco revetments, this composition was produced with the application and carving of several layers of stucco material. The concave lunette is framed by a geometric band and another band consisting of circulating spiral forms. The pointed form of the described arch is additionally highlighted with the panel consisting of two framing bands with floral and geometric motifs. These framing bands are topped by two lozenges on each side. The lozenges are framed by a thin band of repeating geometric ornamentation, and they contain symmetric abstract floral compositions, which could have been abstracted roses or peonies, now severely damaged. The lozenges were produced in the same stucco technique as the concave lunette and one of the pointed framing bands. The described structure is enclosed with a framing band of *Naskh* (illegible) placed on floral background. Several layers of stucco were carved to produce a protruding relief with inscription and floral background. The ornamental form of the floral scrolls is similar to that of lozenges and it markedly differs from the floral scrolls in stucco medium in the Isfahan region. Another peculiarity of the framing band are the two corner medallions which were produced with carving of additional, more protruding stucco layers. These tear shaped medallions render the corner transitions of the framing band more elegant. This visual device is relatively uncommon in the Isfahan area, but it is frequently found on stucco mihrabs in north-eastern Iran.

The described structure is framed by the H letter-form framing band (panel H) which connects the nucleus of the mihrab to the panels on its top. It consists of a repeating geometric pattern of interlacing octagonal forms. Central parts of these octagonal formations might have carried some protruding bosses or medallions, or they contained floral motifs, as indicated by remaining parts of the bottom left corner of the framing band. In its top left and top right corners, the framing band contains two separate cartouches with invocations to God (*there is no God but God*) written in Square Kufic with vertical letter shafts extended into complex knotted patterns. The entire band is carved out of a single stucco layer and at a ninety-degree angle, which differs from other mihrab's panels. The mihrab is topped by a horizontal panel which contains protruding abstract forms, heavily perforated and made to appear as if it was undercut in the upper part of the register (pseudo undercut stucco technique). The design of the panel is repeating, but the perforation forms of its upper protruding parts reveal different modes of stucco perforation. The Small mihrab's top panel is framed on its top by a band, which protrudes from the background and consists of repeating floral ornamentation of abstracted flower blossoms which resemble lotuses, and applied carved and perforated flower-like tripartite medallions. The entire mihrab is framed by another small band of repeating knotted ornamentation which renders its design more refined.

The relative unity of the design and stucco artistic techniques employed to produce the mihrab suggest that it was made by one craftsmen's workshop. But its surrounding panels feature a markedly different approach to stucco carving. Lower panels feature floral designs created with carving of a single stucco layer in a bevelled manner. They are topped by two epigraphic

[74] It is not clear if the columns and capitals retain their original forms or if they were modified through restoration.

cartouches with invocations to God in Square Kufic. The lunette area can be divided into three parts: the top of the mihrab is framed by the panel, which contains simple repeating geometric motifs. This composition is framed by the *Naskh* inscription recounting the *Surat al-Fatiha*. Differently from the mihrab, these three panels are aligned with the shouldered arch opening and its vertical symmetry axis to mediate between the opening and the mihrab.[75] The large framing panel with geometric ornamentation features a design, which is frequently encountered on carved doors, and more rarely in carved stucco. It is characterized by star and leaf motif. The central triangular panel contains a composition of abstract leaf motifs which protrude on their tops. Their presence is puzzling because they are not comparable to any other stucco panel of this repertoire and they could be a copy of floral scrolls of the Uljaytu mihrab. The two lozenges which flank the shouldered arch on its external parts retain unassuming symmetrical compositions of abstract floral designs set against a plain background. Their carving and style reveal an affinity with the two lower panels and the artistic technique of these panels matches. The stucco plugs on the architectural surface of the wall are different from the plugs found in the eastern *iwan*.

Aesthetics and Style

The Small mihrab is different in style from any other stuccos in the Isfahan Friday mosque and its composition does not find close parallels in either Ilkhanid or Seljuq stuccos of the Isfahan area. The artistic techniques, mihrab composition, form and design, find closer parallels in the mihrab of the Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19) and a more distant, but still relevant parallel is found in the mihrab of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16). These parallels are of little aid in dating the Small mihrab, but they suggest that whoever produced it was more familiar with the stucco designs and artistic techniques of north-eastern Iran. In the absence of historic inscriptions the patron, craftsmen and time of completion of this mihrab remain unknown. Based on current understanding, it is likely that the mihrab was produced during or slightly after the Ilkhanid modifications to the courtyard of the mosque, sometime between the installation of the Uljaytu mihrab in 1310 and before the Muzaffarid activities in the mid-fourteenth century.

Northern Iwan Revetments

The question of architectural revetment chronology and dating in the northern *iwan* of the Isfahan Friday mosque is challenging. Its revetments are of different types and they were applied in several phases starting with the time of the construction of the *iwan* by the Seljuqs and ranging to Ilkhanid, Muzaffarid, Timurid and Safavid refurbishments. The only inscriptions with dates belong to the Safavid period and one fragmented stucco inscription can be interpreted as Muzaffarid. So far, the scholarly community almost unanimously posited that the stucco revetments of the *shah nishin* (Fig. 13) were produced by Ilkhanid craftsmen and that the upper storey historic inscription, which runs along the muqarnas semi-dome, is Muzaffarid. Earlier dates for these revetments were recently proposed by Quchani,[76] but they remain a speculation,

[75] Their examination suggests that they have been heavily restored, if not reconstructed.
[76] Unpublished research. Abdullah Quchani. Paper presented at the Art University of Isfahan. December 2017; Abdullah Quchani. "Does the Suffa-yi ʿUmar in the Isfahan Friday Mosque belong to the Muzaffarid period or to

until more substantial evidence emerges. Terracotta revetments in the *iwan's* interior have also been interpreted as Ilkhanid or Muzaffarid by Galdieri.[77] These decorations have no parallel in Ilkhanid architectural revetments, because a different artistic technique and design are employed for their production. Moreover, the western passage arch contains inscriptions in Square Kufic, which were produced with inserted glazed material.

The Shah Nishin Ceiling

The stucco revetments of the *shah nishin* ceiling (Fig. 13) in the northern *iwan* have been subject to scholarly debate due to their unique aesthetic appearance and because of the difficulty to establish their dating. Quchani argues for a relatively early date, while Galdieri and Hunarfar considered them Muzaffarid.[78] These stuccos are applied onto the ceiling of the *shah nishin*, presumably a place where the ruler would have been present during the prayer ceremonies.[79] The stucco composition consists of two main elements. The ceiling is covered with geometric patterns arranged in radial forms on flat and concave surfaces. This surface is encircled by a Qurʾanic inscription (*Surat al-Nur,* 24: 36-38) in Kufic with elongations forming a complex composition of knotted motifs further extended into repeating floral forms. The inscription background consists of abstract floral forms. The original colour scheme of the panel has been altered by excessive restoration interventions.[80] The *shah nishin* stuccos could have originally covered a larger surface. These stuccos are different in carving technique and ornamental repertoire, compared to the stucco inscription in the upper opening with the muqarnas half-dome of the northern *iwan*. It is difficult to date the *shah nishin* stuccos because no parallels of similar stuccos exist. Quchani argues for their earlier date based on his epigraphic analysis of the inscription band, which revealed the presence of early forms of Kufic letters.[81]

The style of these stucco revetments seems closer to Ilkhanid than Seljuq counterparts, but this does not allow for an exclusion of the possibility of their later date. On these grounds, an Ilkhanid or Muzaffarid date for the *shah nishin* stuccos seems probable. Further arguments in favour of the Ilkhanid date of the *shah nishin* stuccos are provided by the evidence of Ilkhanid architectural revetments application in the southern and eastern *iwan*s, which suggest that the interior surfaces of the northern *iwan* were also redecorated parallel to the Ilkhanid courtyard refurbishments. If the Seljuq *iwan* surface was only decorated with fired bricks arranged in different forms and if the *shah nishin* was re-decorated in the Safavid period, then the stuccos of the *shah nishin* would logically be results of an intervention subsequent to the Seljuq decoration of the *iwan*: either during the Ilkhanid, Muzaffarid or Timurid period, with the latter being the least plausible.

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the early 12th century?" Abstract of paper presented at the conference *The Architecture of the Iranian World 1000-1250*. University of St Andrews, 21 – 24 April 2016, Conference booklet, 11-12.

[77] Galdieri 1981, 73.

[78] Galdieri 1981, 73; Hunarfar 1966, 164-5.

[79] In the Isfahan Friday mosque each *iwan* has its own *shah nishin*, which suggests that the name of the architectural space was only partially related to its function, which might have been only symbolic.

[80] Hunarfar, 125-6.

[81] Unpublished research. Abdullah Quchani. Paper presented at the Art University of Isfahan. December 2017; Abdullah Quchani. "Does the Suffa-yi ʿUmar in the Isfahan Friday Mosque belong to the Muzaffarid period or to the early 12th century?" Abstract of paper presented at the conference *The Architecture of the Iranian World 1000-1250*. University of St Andrews, 21 – 24 April 2016, Conference booklet, 11-12.

The content of the Qurʾanic inscription of these stuccos consists of selected verses of the *Surat al-Nur*. Although the *Surat al-Nur* is one of the most widespread Qurʾanic texts on Islamic architecture, its selection for the *shah nishin* seems to be a particular choice. The three verses stress the importance of the performance of religious duties, among which is prayer, for men of secular professions such as traders and sellers also. The inscription includes the part of the text which states that God will reward men of this profession if they perform their religious duties. This Qurʾanic excerpt could be a reference to the ruler of the Empire, who performs many secular duties and could stress the importance of the ruler's piety. It could also be an allusion to its patron, who bore a secular profession.

It has been mentioned that the stucco panel contains extensive incisions of ruling lines for the outline of the inscription. The three verses of the inscription were perhaps sketched and then transferred onto the stucco surface with the aid of these baselines. It is very interesting to note that the last word of the third verse of the inscription حساب could not fit into the space for which it was designated. The stucco craftsmen, in order not to break the Qurʾanic verse, placed this word at the end of the inscription, above it, at a ninety degree angle.

The Upper Storey Inscription (Northern Iwan)

This stucco inscription in *Thuluth* is set against a slightly recessed floral scroll composition. Its fragments retain some white traces, but the rest of its polychromy has been lost. Reading of this inscription and its dating to the Muzaffarid period is proposed by Quchani.[82] Recently, the same researcher proposed a reconsideration of the reading and a re-dating of the inscription to the twelfth century.[83] Quchani proposes that the inscription contains the name of a ruler and a vizier, who were Seljuq historic persons, and not Muzaffarid. This reading is difficult to accept, as it is based on a re-examination of the inscription in an altered state and due to the lack of further evidence.[84] The inscription is located between the interior architectural surface of the *iwan* and the more recessed muqarnas semi-dome. The structure of the muqarnas and the surface of the *iwan* indicate that the space for the inscription had to be deliberately planned by the builders of the *iwan*. Although it seems that this architectural surface was a result of Safavid modifications and this might be the reason why the stucco inscription is almost entirely concealed by the white cornice of the pointed arch of the *iwan's* surface. The stucco inscription could have originally been a type of framing band for the muqarnas semi-dome and is thus likely contemporary to the installation of the muqarnas. If so, an early twelfth century date is difficult to accept. Rather, the inscription and the muqarnas structure must have been works of Muzaffarid craftsmen. If so, the function of this stucco inscription was to inform the spectators about the patron of this refurbishment, likely a Muzaffarid official.

[82] Unpublished research. Abdullah Quchani. Paper presented at the Art University of Isfahan. December 2017; Abdullah Quchani. "Does the Suffa-yi ʿUmar in the Isfahan Friday Mosque belong to the Muzaffarid period or to the early 12th century?" Abstract of paper presented at the conference *The Architecture of the Iranian World 1000-1250*. University of St Andrews, 21 – 24 April 2016, Conference booklet, 11-12.
[83] *Ibid.*
[84] The joints between the inscription and the surrounding revetments have been altered by restoration interventions.

Eastern Iwan Revetments

Stucco revetments of the Ilkhanid period located in the eastern *iwan* (Figs. 15-16) have been discussed in detail by Ventrone.[85] A brief summary is given here. The *iwan* was constructed during the Seljuq period, but one part of the decoration located on its rear surface dates to Ilkhanid times.[86] Ventrone outlines the following stucco revetments as belonging to the Ilkhanid period: the four stucco plug panels in the northern and southern passages of the *iwan*, the fired brick inscription in Kufic style, the lower rear arch with muqarnas elements, and the *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions on all three interior surfaces of the *iwan*.[87] Galdieri also mentions the blind niches in the rear part of the *iwan*, which were decorated with stucco and terracotta.[88] Ventrone proposes that these revetments were produced in a single decorative campaign. The Ilkhanid revetments of the architectural surfaces are four panel compositions of stucco plugs in dado areas, which are located in the two passageways of the *iwan* (northern and southern). Ventrone proposes that these panels were perhaps the earliest Ilkhanid revetments in the *iwan*. She states that the Shiʿite content of the most elaborate panel is difficult to be used for its dating, but the stylistic parallels she draws connect the panel to the revetments with Shiʿite content, which were all produced during the Uljaytu's Shiʿite period.[89]

Southern Iwan and the Nizam al-Mulk Domed Hall Revetments

Galdieri mentions the presence of Ilkhanid revetments on the façade of the southern *iwan*, but he also explains that they are no longer visible.[90] He also mentions that the first transformative interventions in the Nizam al-Mulk's domed hall (the domed *qibla* hall) took place in the Ilkhanid period, but he does not specify their characteristics.

d.) Furnishing

The only Ilkhanid piece of furnishing in the Isfahan Friday mosque is the undated wooden minbar, currently located in the Uljaytu hall, on the right hand side of the Uljaytu mihrab.[91] The minbar was extensively debated by Francesco Noci.[92] In its production, the woodwork of the Isfahan minbar can be related to the wooden Ilkhanid minbar at the Friday mosque of Naʾin dated 1311; this allows for the minbar to be dated to the Ilkhanid period.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Uljaytu Mihrab

The content of the Uljaytu mihrab inscriptions can be divided into two main categories: historic inscription (panel L) and the religious texts (panels N, K, E, H, D). The content of the religious inscriptions is different from most of Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. In place of the usual Qurʾanic

[85] See Ventrone 1981; Ventrone 1977.
[86] Ventrone 1981, 56.
[87] *Ibid.*, 58.
[88] Galdieri 1981, 73.
[89] Ventrone 1977, 105-108.
[90] Galdieri 1981, 73.
[91] There is one minbar on the left hand side of the Uljaytu mihrab, which is however of a much later date.
[92] Noci 1982, 1-29.

verses the mihrab contains two Hadiths.[93] The Shiʿite Shahada and invocations to God are featured on the mihrab. These inscriptions are produced in a variety of inscription styles of exceptional calligraphic quality (in terms of script fluency, proportion and form elaboration) ranging from *Thuluth* and *Naskh* to Kufic. The most significant inscriptions of the epigraphic repertoire were made in *Thuluth*. All inscriptions contain diacritical marks, but they are not vocalized. The choice of calligraphic styles and employment of diacritical marks reflects the craftsmen's will to render the epigraphic repertoire as legible as possible, for a literate audience. The visibility of the inscriptions, which also eased their reading, was accentuated with gilding or application of silver leaf, which were set against a darker background of blue and floral scrolls.

The mihrab's epigraphic programme is the essential element for the interpretation of its meaning and function. Similar to the division in the content of these inscriptions was also the scholarly focus at discussing the epigraphic programme. Historians mainly focused on the central lunette historic inscription, which remains one of the most significant historic pieces of evidence regarding Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. Art historians recognised the importance of the mihrab in illustrating Uljaytu's conversion and lauded the quality of the epigraphic programme, especially of the exterior framing inscription. The question of the mihrab's patronage, its actual patron, and evidence regarding the role divisions at construction sites for the production of stucco revetments, was overshadowed by the outlined discourse. Observations of the mihrab's colour scheme and the relationship between the inscription content and their polychromy, in fact points towards the existence of an inscription hierarchy, which was strengthened by its polychromy scheme. This leads to the suggestion that the combination of silver and gold leaf for the historic inscription in the mihrab's lunette served to corroborate the primary message of the mihrab, which was the statement regarding its patronage and political alliance via the mihrab installation. Furthermore, the framing Hadith inscription with content regarding the patronage of monuments, which promises award for generous patrons in their afterlife, is emphasized with silver leaf application. Shiʿite inscriptions of the mihrab, were rendered polychrome, but less visible with less precious pigments of green and ochre; they were therefore assigned a secondary place in the importance hierarchy and visibility of the mihrab's epigraphic programme, which determined its meaning. The function and the meaning of the Uljaytu mihrab should thus be understood as an expression and willingness of assertion of political power through architectural and artistic patronage. The mihrab's secondary meaning relating to the change of the state creed to Shiʿite was certainly part of the communication, which the mihrab was supposed to convey to the faithful, but it has been over-interpreted by the scholars to the point that it rather erroneously resulted as the main meaning of the mihrab.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (top to bottom):

a.) The exterior framing panel of the mihrab (panel N) contains a well-known Hadith with the theme of mosque patronage. It is set against a floral background. The surface of this inscription

[93] Hadiths have also been documented on the Abu l-Hasan al-Kharaqani mihrab at Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21), the Marand Friday mosque (Cat. No. 22) mihrab and the stuccos of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16) mihrabs.

panel is concave. The inscription was originally covered with silver leaf. This *Thuluth* inscription was well visible because it was set against the dark blue background.

The inscription reads:[94]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قال [ا]لصادق المصدق رسول الرحمن صلى الله عليه وآله: "من بنى مسجدا كمفحص قطاة بنى الله له بيتا في الجنة" وقال امير المؤمنين علي بن ابي طالب عليه سلام الله ورسوله وملائكته: "من اختلف الى المسجد اصاب احدى الثمان: اخا مستفادا في الله او علما مستظرفا او آيا محكمة او رحمة منتظرة او كلمة رده عن ردى او يسمع كلمة تدل على هدى او يترك خشية ذنبا او حياء."

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful: The credible one, the one whose credibility has been certified, the messenger of the Beneficent, the Authenticator, may God bless him and his family, said: "For the one who builds a mosque as an act of patronage, Allah will build a house for him in the paradise." And the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAli Ibn Abi Talib, God's peace and the peace of His Prophet and His Angels be upon him, said: "The one who visits the mosque frequently receives one of the following eight (rewards): a useful brother in God, or subtle knowledge, or clear signs, or awaited mercy, or a word of response which shall save him from perishing, or he shall hear a word that will lead him towards guidance, or he shall turn away from a sin out of fear, or out of shame."

The high-level production skill of this inscription has been highlighted by Hillenbrand and especially by Blair. The exceptional quality of the inscription should be assigned to the stucco craftsmen and perhaps the head of the stucco workshop, who possessed advanced calligraphic skills to design the inscription.[95] The beginning and the end of the inscription were damaged more than a century ago and subsequently reconstructed.

The inscription contains a Prophetic Hadith, which reports that mosque construction deed will award its patron with a place in paradise. The Hadith is followed by another Hadith relating to the authority of ʿAli and stating that anybody frequenting the mosque will be awarded with eight awards. The content of the text highlights the significance of mosque patronage as a good deed for the afterlife and the significance of the performance of prayers. It is thus the patron who will be rewarded for the constructive or decorative undertaking and it is the patron who provides the faithful with a prayer space where they can perform religious rites necessary for the divine rewards.

b.) The framing of the mihrab's central lunette (panel K) contains an important Shiʿite Hadith, written in *Naskh*, which continues on two smaller bands of the mihrab (panels H and E). This Hadith concerns the religious authority of the ʿIbadi Traditionalist Jabir ibn Zayd regarding the revelation of *Surat al-Nisaʾ* (4:59). The inscription was coloured in green and set against a blue background with floral scrolls. the floral scrolls might have been covered with silver leaf; their metallic shine was combined with ochre colour, which was applied in the concave parts of the floral scrolls. The inscription is signed by the head of the stucco workshop in the empty space between parts of the inscription; in the left hand corner of the lunette frame (see section c).

[94] Author's reading and translation.
[95] If a professional calligrapher was called for this imperial commission, it remains unlikely that the mihrab was signed by the calligrapher.

The inscription reads:[96]

عن جابر بن زيد الجعفي قال سمعت جابر بن عبد الله الانصاري يقول لما انزل الله على نبيه صلى الله عليه وآله يا ايها الذين آمنوا اطيعوا الله واطيعوا الرسول واولى الامر منكم, قلت يا رسول الله قد عرفنا الله ورسوله فمن اولو الامر الذين قرن الله طاعتهم بطاعته وطاعة رسوله فقال ,عليه السلم...

Jabir ibn Zayd al-Jaʿfi said: "I heard Jabir ibn ʿAbdullah al-Ansari say when God revealed (His word) to His Prophet, may God bless Him and His family: O ye who believe, Obey God and obey the Prophet, and the leaders amongst you! I said, o Prophet of God, we know God and His Prophet, but who are meant as "ulu al-amr" whose obedience God related to His own obedience and to the obedience of His Prophet?" And the Prophet said, Peace be upon him,…

The text of this Hadith inscription continues on panels H and E.

This inscription contains a Hadith, the content of which is closely tied to the Shiʿite faith. This is in line with the content of the large framing inscription and with the Shiʿite Shahada in the central part of the mihrab (panel G). This inscription is the strongest marker of the Shiʿite faith in the epigraphic programme. The use of Hadiths on the Uljaytu mihrab could have been motivated by the freshly proclaimed change of the official creed in the Empire. Although Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith is not directly expressed in any inscription of the Uljaytu mihrab, sponsored by his minister, these revetments indirectly testify to his conversion. The only evidence of a direct statement regarding Uljaytu's conversion remain the modifications of epigraphic content of coins minted from 907 AH onwards together with the Shiʿite calls for prayer mentioned by Muhammad Ibn Battuta,[97] both ordered directly by the ruler. The Shiʿite content of this inscription should thus be interpreted as an indirect marker of Uljaytu's conversion in parallel to redecoration interventions in other Ilkhanid monuments in this period, which frequently contained explicitly Shiʿite inscription content.

c.) The Hadith inscription (panel K) bears the mihrab's artist signature. The signature has been subject to scholarly debate. Different readings and diverse identifications of the signature have been proposed.

عمل حيدر

Work of Haydar.

Hunarfar is the first to read this signature as *work of Haydar*.[98] The mihrab had undergone numerous restoration interventions and some of these manipulated its epigraphic programme with interventions of integration of missing inscription letters. The reading of the signature presents several issues in this respect. The two diacritic marks (dots) indicate that the second letter should be read as a *ya* and the first letter can be interpreted as *ha*. The rest of the inscription is problematic. It has been read as a *dal* and *ra*. This part of the inscription appears as a single letter in the form of an elongated dal with twisted end, and if so, its form is rather unusual. The reading of this part as two letters (*dal* and *ra* respectively) is possible, but it should not be taken

[96] Author's reading and translation.
[97] Ibn Battuta 2002, 71.
[98] Hunarfar 1966, 120.

for granted. *Dal* is a non-connecting letter and a space between the two letters would be necessary. In the given case the two letters touch and their only separation is a shallow incision between the two. This anomaly can be assigned to the fact that the calligrapher ran out of space for the signature. The proposed reading, *Haydar*, nevertheless remains the most convincing interpretation of the signature until further evidence emerges.

Blair accepts Hunarfar's reading of the signature (Haydar) and proposes the identification of the signature artist based on her research of primary Safavid sources.[99] Building on her research, Blair proposes the genealogy of disciples of the renowned Baghdadi calligrapher Yaqut al-Mustaʿsimi.[100] One of these disciples was Sayyid Haydar Gundanivis. Blair suggests that the mihrab's signing artist should be identified as Haydar, the disciple of Yaqut, and that he designed the mihrab's inscriptions on paper, which were transferred onto the stucco surface with the aid of large sheets of paper and carved on the spot by stucco craftsmen.[101] Blair also proposes that the same calligrapher signed the stucco band in the interior of the Natanz Friday mosque *iwan* (Cat. No. 12).

The only direct connection between the manuscript calligrapher Haydar and the Uljaytu mihrab is the signature which is currently read as *work of Haydar* and the high calligraphic quality of mihrab's inscriptions. The signature is short and there would need to be at least one more part of the artist's name for it to be securely identified as the signature of Sayyid Haydar Gundanivis. In contrast, at Natanz, the signature is longer and contains other names, which are difficult to read and they do not correspond to any known name of Sayyid Haydar Gundanivis. Secondly, Blair proposes that the manuscript calligrapher designed the inscription on paper and that the design was subsequently transferred onto the stucco surface with the aid of large sheets of paper. As the discussion in this dissertation shows, the common practice, found in the majority of Ilkhanid (and earlier) stucco revetment repertoires, was to design the revetments on the spot, on the stucco surface (with incisions or painted outlines) and with the aid of small sketches and grid lines for some inscription styles. This research discussed numerous traces of stucco design: red and black outlines, ruling, and the especially common and widespread practice of direct incisions of design on the stucco surface. Close observations of the mihrab reveal some spots where direct incisions of inscription design can be spotted. It is therefore possible to rule out the hypothesis suggesting that paper was directly involved in the design transfer for the Uljaytu mihrab. Inscriptions of the mihrab were therefore outlined directly on the stucco surface by a person with advanced calligraphic skills. Rather than a manuscript calligrapher, this person was most likely the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop, the person in charge of the making of the Uljaytu mihrab. Finally, regardless of who designed the inscription, the signature must belong to the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop. This is suggested by the analysis of Ilkhanid stucco signatures presented in this research work. It shows that signatures found on stucco revetments belonged to the heads of stucco craftsmen's workshops. The signatory artist of the Uljaytu mihrab was thus a master stucco craftsman, whose role likely comprised the

[99] Blair 2003, 39-46; Blair 2006, 254-5.
[100] Blair 2003, 39-46.
[101] Blair 2003, 45; Blair 2006, 254-5.

outlining of the design for the mihrab. This Haydar could have consulted professional calligraphers or could have received training in calligraphy himself.

d.) The central lunette of the mihrab (panel L) contains the historical inscription with precise information about the patronage of the mihrab, the nature of this intervention and the date of its completion. This *Thuluth* inscription was gilded and it was placed against a dark blue background with floral scrolls which were possibly covered with silver leaf.

The inscription reads:[102]

سلطان محمد هذا المحراب المستطاب من مضافات العمارات التي اتفقت اعادتها في ايام معدلة السلطان حامي حوزة الاسلام و الايمان غياث الدنيا والدين ظل الله في الارضين حرس الله ببقائه الاسلام من فواضل صدقات العميمة الصاحبية الاعظمية صاحب ديوان الممالك شرقا وغربا بعدا وقربا سعد الحق والدين المخصوص بعناية رب العالمين محمد الساوي اعز الله انصاره وضاعف اقتداره تولاه العبد الضعيف الراجي الى رحمة الله تعالى وغفرانه عضد بن علي المستري احسن الله عاقبته في صفر سنة عشر وسبعمئة ختم الله تبارك وتعالى بالخير والظفر

Sultan Muhammad. This exalted mihrab is part of architectural additions which took place in the days of (the reign of) the Sultan, the defender of the territory of Islam and of the faith, Ghiyath al-Dunya wa al-Din, the shadow of God on Earth, Protector of Islam, may God make his rule last, from the excellent alms of the mighty minister, from his great property, the guardian of the ruler's treasury, to the East and to the West, far and near, Saʿd al-Haqq wa al-Din, he who enjoys the support of the Master of the Worlds, Muhammad al-Sawi, may God exalt his victories and increase his powers. (The mihrab) was supervised by the weak servant who strives for God's mercy and forgiveness, ʿAdud ibn ʿAli al-Mastari, may God grant him a good end, in the (month of) Safar (of the year) 710, may God render (it) with goodness and victory.

The historic inscription of the Uljaytu mihrab has been debated extensively by numerous scholars. The most important contributions consist of its first readings by Van Berchem and the completion of its reading by Hunarfar.[103] The interpretation of the meaning of the inscription was continued by historians and art historians alike. These scholars unanimously agree that the inscription is one of the most important pieces of evidence regarding Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith and the patronage of the mihrab. The inscription states that the mihrab is part of additions during the renovation interventions, which took place during the rule of Sultan Uljaytu. The mihrab was sponsored by his grand vizier Muhammad al-Sawi and its installation process was overseen by ʿAdud ibn ʿAli al-Mastari.

The following points require special attention. Although Western scholars, starting with Godard, named the mihrab *the Uljaytu mihrab*, its real endower was the grand vizier of Uljaytu, Muhammad al-Sawi. Iranian scholars indeed often refer to the mihrab as *the mihrab of Muhammad al-Sawi*. The inscription is also significant because it states exactly when the mihrab was made: in the month of Safar of the year 710 AH, corresponding to June-July 1310. The term, *the Uljaytu mihrab*, is thus an artificial construction, which falsely implies that the mihrab was an imperial commission undertaken by the Ilkhanid emperor Uljaytu. It was

[102] Author's translation.
[103] Van Berchem 1909; Hunarfar 1966, 115-120.

Muhammad Sawi who sponsored mihrab, very likely to demonstrate his alliance to the emperor. Furthermore, the epigraphic programme of the mihrab does not contain any inscription, that directly refers to Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. This assumption derives from the reading of the historic inscription, which clearly states that the mihrab was produced during the reign of Uljaytu and the logical connection to the sectarian aspects of other inscriptions in the mihrab's epigraphic programme; the Shiʿite Shahada on panel G, the two Hadiths regarding the religious authority of Jabir ibn Zayd, invocations to the Twelve Imams and the religious authority of ʿAli. Van Berchem was correct in stressing the relation between the Shiʿite content of the mihrab and the appearance of the Shiʿite Shahada on Ilkhanid coins in the year 709 AH.[104] The term, *the Uljaytu mihrab*, can therefore be misleading. Moreover, the primary meaning of the mihrab as a *document of Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith* requires reconsideration.

Two further points regarding the historic inscription require attention. Firstly, the inscription provides essential information regarding the mechanism behind the patronage of Ilkhanid revetments (Fig. 2). Muhammad Sawi was the endower of the mihrab installation. In this respect, Sultan Uljaytu was the main addressee of the undertaking as it was dedicated to him. ʿAli al-Mastari was entrusted with the role of overseer of the project and therefore must have been a reliable and close colleague of Muhammad al-Sawi. Muhammad al-Sawi as the commissioner was the person who generated the idea of making the mihrab. In deciding to sponsor it, to demonstrate his alliance to the ruler of the Empire, Muhammad al-Sawi conceived the meaning of the mihrab. He thus dictated the content of the epigraphic programme: that the aspects of patronage must be highlighted and that the new official creed of the ruler and consequently of the Empire should be clearly expressed. These ideas were communicated to the overseer and it was ʿAli al-Mastari who worked on the ground in order to materialize the sponsor's wishes. The overseer took care of the financial aspects of the commission, choice of craftsmen for the making of the mihrab, and took responsibility for the quality of the final output which had to comply with the sponsor's wishes. It was therefore ʿAli al-Mastari who directly communicated with master craftsmen during the mihrab design preparation and during the preparation of its epigraphic programme. The craftsmen received the orders and interpreted them through the process of the mihrab's production. The main message of the mihrab must be understood as the content of its historic inscription, located in the most prominent part of the mihrab - the central lunette panel.

Inscriptions of sectarian nature therefore assumed a secondary position in the hierarchy of the importance of their meaning. This is also reflected in the mihrab's polychromy. The historic inscription seems to be the only inscription which combines application of both gold and silver leaf. The colour scheme consists of a *Thuluth* inscription, which was gilded and set against a dark blue background with floral scrolls, which were likely covered with silver leaf. The combination of silver and gold leaf created a dazzling effect which accentuated its visibility and elevated its significance through the application of a large amount of precious material, for which a considerable amount of labour was needed. This can be related to the exterior framing inscription (panel N) which contains a Hadith, but the Hadith highlights the importance of patronage for religious purposes. This inscription is the only other inscription covered with

[104] Van Berchem 1909, 374.

silver leaf. The historic inscription therefore assumed its further importance in connection to the content of the Hadith inscription. In sum, the primary message, dictated by the will and intentions of the endower in sponsoring the Uljaytu mihrab was that of patronage, which consolidated political alliance with the ruler of the Empire. The religious content of the mihrab was therefore secondary and perhaps more important for the devotees of the prayer space and for the local religious authorities.

d.) The central rectangular panel (panel G) contains the Shiʿite Shahada, designed in Kufic style with elaborate geometric elongations. The inscription was coloured white and set against a green to blue background.

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله

There is no God but God, Muhammad is his Prophet and ʿAli is his friend.

This inscription expresses the Shiʿite aspects of the mihrab's epigraphic programme. The Uljaytu mihrab is one of the very few Ilkhanid mihrabs with the Shiʿite Shahada. Here it is given a prominent position in one panel consisting of a single register. The Shiʿite Shahada was certainly part of the mihrab's original epigraphic programme and the space for it was planned in a way for the panel to accommodate the entire Shiʿite prophecy of faith.[105]

e.) Capitals of mihrab's larger framing arch contain invocations to God, which are produced in Kufic style with geometric elongations of *hastae*. The proportion of these inscriptions accentuates their vertical axis. The two inscriptions on the columns are placed on positions which flank the Shiʿite Shahada on the central panel (panel G). The original colour of the inscriptions could have been something between ochre and orange. These inscriptions were placed on a blue background with green floral scrolls.

لا اله الا الله

There is no God but God.

The inscription repeats on each column, and it is positioned on a level close to the main panel (panel G), which expresses the Shiʿite Shahada. The two invocations on the column capitals can thus be understood as invocations to God. They reaffirm God's uniqueness and oneness, which is one of the central doctrines of the Islamic religion. In the given case, the column inscriptions buttress and boost the content and the message of the Shiʿite Shahada.

f.) The Hadith inscription from panel K continues on panels H and E. The Hadith highlights the religious authority of ʿAli and it contains blessings to the 12 Imams. This inscription contains perhaps the most explicitly expressed Shiʿite doctrine of the epigraphic repertoire, along with the Shiʿite Shahada.

Continuation of the inscription on panel H:[106]

[105] The stucco mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) features a Sunni Shahada in a similar part of the mihrab. The Shiʿite Shahada panel in the stucco mihrab of the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18) is a later modification and it post-dated the Ilkhanid stucco repertoire.
[106] Author's reading and translation.

... هم خلفائي يا جابر وأئمة المسلمين بعدي اولهم علي بن ابي طالب ثم الحسن ثم الحسين ثم علي بن الحسين ثم محمد بن علي المعروف في التورية بالباقر وستدركه يا جابر فاذا لقيته فأقرئه مني السلم ثم الصادق جعفر بن محمد ثم موسى بن جعفر ثم علي بن موسى ثم محمد بن علي ثم علي بن محمد...

"They are my successors, O Jabir, and the leaders of the Muslims after me, the first of whom is ʿAli ibn Abi Talib and then al-Hasan, and then al-Husayn, and then ʿAli ibn al-Husayn, and then Muhammad ibn ʿAli, known in the Torah as al-Baqir, and you will perceive him, O Jabir, when you meet him, send my regards to him. Then there is al-Sadiq Jaʿfar ibn Muhammad, and then Musa ibn Jaʿfar, and then ʿAli ibn Musa, and then Muhammad ibn ʿAli and then ʿAli ibn Muhammad…

Modern restoration of the last part of the panel H inscription:[107]

...ثم الحسن بن علي ثم سميي وكنيي حجة الله في ارضه و بقيته في عباده...

…and then al-Hassan ibn ʿAli, then the most faithful of the faithful, the Authority of Allah, in his land, and his reminder amongst his servants:…

The inscription from panel H concludes on panel E:[108]

...بن الحسن بن علي ذلك الذي يفتح الله تعالى ذكره على يده مشارق الارض ومغار بها."

…ibn al-Hassan ibn ʿAli, this is the one, mentioned by the Almighty, by whose hands God, exalted be his remembrance, will conquer the Easts and the Wests of the world."

g.) Epigraphic Peculiarities in the Uljaytu Mihrab Inscriptions

The epigraphic repertoire of the Uljaytu mihrab distinguishes itself from other Ilkhanid repertoires in stucco medium because it was designed by a person who possessed advanced calligraphic skills and the stucco craftsmen's versatility in mihrab production. Its inscriptions stand apart because of their elegant proportions and their fluidity. The exterior framing inscription presents a *Thuluth* style with elongated vertical letter shafts. The *Naskh* inscription also reveals a similar type of fluidity, which can be observed in elegant letter ligatures. The lower *Thuluth* inscription reveals slightly different proportions in comparison to the framing inscription and it is characterized by the practice of superimposition of parts of the inscription which is not found in other inscriptions of the repertoire. Kufic inscriptions illustrate a high degree of skill in developing their design and in fitting into the designated spaces. The described characteristics of the mihrab's epigraphic repertoire leave no doubt that these inscriptions were outlined onto the stucco surface by a skilled stucco craftsman who possessed advanced calligraphic skills, and that equally skilled stucco craftsmen carved them. Such work could not be performed by just one person, and it is therefore likely that the head craftsman outlined the design, which was subsequently carved by several craftsmen under his supervision.

Closer observations of the inscriptions reveal another peculiarity of the repertoire, which can be interpreted as a marker of personal style. On some particular instances the person who inscribed inscriptions seems to have deliberately disconnected connecting letters. This

[107] Author's reading and translation.
[108] *Ibid.*

occurrence is found in two cases, where the letter *ta* is disconnected from the medial form of the letter *ha*. The medial *ha* occurs on five occasions in the entire mihrab, but two of these were entirely restored and it is not possible to discern their original form. The described phenomenon resembles the *unauthorized connections between letters*, the specific approach towards calligraphy, which is known to have been practiced by Yaqut and Ibn al-Bawwab.[109] In the case of the Uljaytu mihrab the connecting letters are disconnected. While this evidence confirms the high degree of the inscriber's calligraphic skills, it should not be considered as evidence pointing to the work of a manuscript calligrapher.

This disconnection between the letters is found in the historic inscription in the word: اعادتها, where the letter *ta* is clearly disconnected from the medial letter *ha*, for which its initial rather than medial form is used. An identical phenomenon is observed in the word طاعتهم of the *Naskh* inscription. The contrary case of the occurrence of regular medial *ha* is found in the word ايها of the *Naskh* inscription on panel K. Two more cases of the medial *ha* forms are found in لهم and بها of the *Thuluth* inscription. This inscription contains different ligatures and forms of medial *ha*, but these inscriptions are the work of modern stucco restorers.

The described peculiarity of the epigraphic programme is significant because the disconnection of letters occurs in two different inscriptions, designed in two diverse calligraphic styles (*Thuluth* and *Naskh*). This practice of disconnection of letters should be interpreted as evidence of a personal calligraphic style.

The Small Mihrab

a.) The framing inscription, which runs along the shouldered arch topping the mihrab, recounts the *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1-7) in *Naskh* style.

The inscription reads: [110]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –

[109] Blair 2006, 254-5.
[110] Qurʾanic text and English translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

The inscription concludes with invocations to God:

سبحان الله و الحمد الله و لا اله الله الا

Praise be to God, glory be to God, there is no God but God.

Hunarfar's studies of the mihrab and its epigraphic repertoire show that this inscription must have originally been written in Kufic style and it recounted the *Ayat al-Kursi* instead of the *Surat al-Fatiha*. In his publication, Hunarfar refers to it as *the external framing inscription of the mihrab,*[111]. It seems that restorers used Hunarfar's reading of the other inscription in the mihrab to restore this one. By doing so, they entirely altered the content of the inscription and its aesthetic properties. It would not be logical for the mihrab to contain two identical inscriptions and there is no other trace of a Throne verse inscription mentioned by Hunarfar in this architectural space or as part of the stucco repertoire.

b.) Two invocations to God in Kufic style are placed in the cartouches to the left and right hand sides of the mihrab.

الملك لالله

The Dominion belongs to God.

الحكم الله

The Judgement belongs to God.

The two invocations to God are produced in monumental Kufic style. They are well visible to the faithful and easy to read due to their dimensions. The two inscriptions were first read by Hunarfar.[112]

c.) Two smaller cartouches on the top of the mihrab framing panel in the form of the letter H contain invocations to God written in Kufic style.

لا اله الا الله

There is no God but God.

These two inscriptions are designed in Kufic style with elongated letter shafts, which translate into a knot-form ornamental medallion. Both inscriptions are similar in form and calligraphic style. They were not mentioned by Hunarfar or in other publications.

d.) The badly damaged inscription in *Thuluth* style in the mihrab is difficult to read; fragments on its horizontal part are barely legible and it seems that the inscription recounts the *Surat al-Fatiha*. This inscription is very difficult to read due to the bombardment damages caused to the

[111] Hunarfar 1966, 150.
[112] Hunarfar 1966, 149.

mihrab. In 1965 Hunarfar read the entire inscription and stated that the Opening Chapter is followed by invocation to God:

سبحان الله و الحمد الله و لا اله الا الله

Praise be to God, glory be to God, there is no God but God.

Only fragments of the inscription can be read today, but Hunarfar states that the inscription is written in the *Muhaqqaq* script, which confirms that this is the inscription he read. It seems that Hunarfar's reading of the mihrab's inscriptions was used for the post-bombardment restorations of the mihrab, when the restorers used Hunarfar's reading to reproduce the inscription running along the shouldered arch.

The Shah Nishin Ceiling in the Northern Iwan

a.) Qurʾanic inscription of *Surat al-Nur*, (24:36-38), is featured on the stucco revetments of the *shah nishin* ceiling.

The inscription reads:[113]

فِي بُيُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ
رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۙ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ
لِيَجْزِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

[Such niches are] in mosques which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings,
[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of zakat. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about –
That Allah may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account.

This inscription recounts one of the most common Qurʾanic verses in Islamic architecture and its meaning is likely connected to the significance of the architectural space it adorns; the *shah nishin*, which is sanctified via the presence of this Qurʾanic inscription. The inscription stresses the importance of the secular ruler and his practice of religious rites. The last word of the inscription was squeezed into the space next to it, because the craftsmen ran out of space.[114] The inscription features Knotted Kufic style, which is a somewhat archaic choice, if the inscription is considered to date to the Ilkhanid period, as implied by the analysis of modifications of the *iwan's* structure. The letter shafts are elongated, and they present a variety of knotted forms.

The North Iwan Arch Inscription Band

[113] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/An-Nur (Last Accessed: December 7, 2020).
[114] By doing so, the craftsmen avoided breaking the Qurʾanic verse, which was likely considered a blasphemy.

a.) The latest reading of the carved stucco inscription band by Quchani[115] is the following:

امر ببناء هذه الغرفة و ابداعها اعادة ال[sic] لية الامير السعيد المرتضى [sic]سر علاء الملة [sic]السعيد الصدر
الس[sic]لا الدين علي بن الحسن [sic] بني الزهدي

The construction of this room, its additions and its restoration [sic] were ordered by the prince the Sayyid al-Murtada [sic] ʿAlaʾ al-Milla [sic] al-Sayyid al-Sadr [sic] al-Din ʿAli ibn al-Hasan [sic] Bani al-Zuhadi (?)

The inscription is badly damaged, and it went through numerous restorations. Only the following parts are possible to be securely read today:[116]

امر ببناء هذه الغرفة و ابداعها اعادة [sic] الامير [sic]السعيد الصدر [sic] الدين علي بن الحسن [sic]

The construction of this room, its additions and its restoration [sic] were ordered by the prince [sic] al-Saʿid al-Sadr [sic] al-Din ʿAli ibn al-Hassan [sic]

The inscription is written in *Naskh* and placed against a background of floral scrolls. It has additionally been altered by the recent restorations. The style of the inscription is difficult to pinpoint, and it can be found in Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. Quchani suggests identification of the name Murtaza ibn al-Hassan in his reading of the inscription as a Seljuq minister of the Seljuq Sultan Mahmud ibn Muhammad, who ruled in the first half of the twelfth century (1118-1131).[117] Due to the damage of the inscription, Quchani's reading of the inscription is no longer legible and further evidence is needed to confirm this hypothesis. The inscription mentions that the application of the stucco band is part of restoration and addition interventions, which makes a Seljuq date less likely, given that the *iwan* was constructed in the Seljuq period. The titles and the status of the patron are important, and they suggest that the patron of the intervention, which also comprised other modifications of *iwan*, was an official of a higher rank or a ruler. A Muzaffarid date for the inscription is possible because ceramic revetments were applied on the *iwan's* interior surfaces in the Muzaffarid period. In this way, the other Muzaffarid interventions should be understood as repairs and additions to the *iwan*, mentioned in the inscription. It is possible, until further evidence emerges, to consider this stucco inscription band as a late Ilkhanid or Muzaffarid intervention.

The Eastern Iwan Terracotta Inscription in Kufic Style

a.) The inscription in Kufic style, understood as Ilkhanid by Ventrone, is located on the southern passage of the *iwan*. It features the *Basmala* and the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:18):

The text reads:[118]

[115] Abdullah Quchani. Paper presented at the Art University of Isfahan. December 2017.
[116] Author's reading.
[117] Abdullah Quchani. "Does the Suffa-yi ʿUmar in the Isfahan Friday Mosque belong to the Muzaffarid period or to the early 12th century?" Abstract of paper presented at the conference *The Architecture of the Iranian World 1000-1250*. University of St Andrews, April 21 – 24, 2016, Conference booklet, 11-12.
[118] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ali-imran-18-qs-3-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 7, 2020).

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

The quotation concludes with an invocation:

صدق الله

Sincerity is God's.

This elaborate Kufic inscription is made out of terracotta, and it is fitted in the arch of the *iwan's* southern passage. The inscription seems to be an addition to the Seljuq structure of the *iwan* and it is difficult to date. While Ventrone proposes an Ilkhanid date, Hunarfar argues that the inscription is the work of Seljuq renovations of the *iwan*. Extensive restorations make it difficult to establish a precise dating for the inscription. Its style has parallels in both Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. The inscription was first read by Hunarfar.[119]

Mosque's Revetments Patronage

Sponsorship of stucco revetments in the Isfahan Friday mosque during the Ilkhanid period was of essential significance for the patrons, who through these actions asserted their political power. The discussion of the epigraphic repertoire of the Uljaytu mihrab showed that the main function of the mihrab was to highlight the names of the characters involved in the commission and installation of the mihrab; while its religious meaning is not to be neglected, it is nevertheless of secondary importance. Uljaytu's minister commissioned the mihrab in order to illustrate his political alliance to the Ilkhanid ruler. Equally important was his alliance to the overseer of the mihrab's installation, who was his colleague. Similar motivations for architectural patronage at the Isfahan Friday mosque are known from the Seljuq period, when the two rivalling ministers Nizam al-Mulk and Taj al-Mulk competed for the ruler's favours and manifested their political power through the patronage of the two domed chambers. History informs that Muhammad al-Sawi was not successful in dominating the political scene, because he was executed less than one year after the completion of the Uljaytu mihrab.

Apart from the Uljaytu mihrab, no direct information regarding patronage of other Ilkhanid revetments in the mosque exists. It remains unclear who the patrons of the Small mihrab and the revetments in the northern, southern and eastern *iwan*s were. Looking at the larger context of patronage patterns at the Isfahan Friday mosque, it is likely that the revetments were sponsored by Ilkhanid officials of middle of higher ranks. The modification of the mosque's courtyard was a large-scale operation which required a substantial amount of funding and labour and it thus had to be sponsored by a prominent endower or by the state directly. It remains unclear whether the application of Ilkhanid revetments in *iwan*s constituted separate interventions, or if these interventions were part of the courtyard refurbishment activities.

[119] Hunarfar 1966, 134.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Detailed discussion of the Uljaytu mihrab demonstrates that the craftsman's signature on the mihrab belonged to the stucco master Haydar, who was in charge of the making of the Uljaytu mihrab. The similarity of ornamental vocabulary of the mihrab with stucco revetments at the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3), the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No, 4) together with similar techniques of design transfer and related characteristics of calligraphic styles found at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), suggests that the stucco craftsmen's workshop in charge of the making of the Uljaytu mihrab was native to the Isfahan region. The discussion of the Uljaytu mihrab's signature and the signature found on the stucco band at the Friday mosque of Natanz (Cat. No. 12) shows that it is unlikely that the same craftsmen worked on both monuments. Ventrone's research of stucco plugs indicates the possibility of the same craftsmen being employed to produce the stucco plug revetments at Pir-i Bakran, Ushturjan and Isfahan. It thus seems that the area in which the stucco craftsmen's workshop operated could have been limited to the Isfahan area. Other Ilkhanid stucco revetments at the Isfahan Friday mosque do not retain craftsmen's signatures, but their artistic techniques and style of production indicate disparities rather than similarities. It is possible to conclude that separate groups of craftsmen were employed to work on the Uljaytu mihrab, the Small mihrab and the stucco revetments of the *iwan*s.

f.) Stucco Revetments' Condition

The Uljaytu Mihrab

Observation of old photographs of the mihrab are informative of its condition and of the history of its restorations. No written reports on these interventions exist, but a summary account regarding interventions on the mihrab is provided by Isfahani *et al*.[120] Some of the oldest photographs by M. Gervais-Courtellemont (published by Van Berchem in 1909) and by Diez from 1913 (published in 1917), show that the mihrab already underwent urgent repairs aiming at its structural consolidation on its lowest part. Three missing portions of the mihrab were structurally integrated with plain uncarved layers of stucco material prior to 1909. Photographs by Godard, Pope and Wilber show the mihrab's condition in the 1930s, prior to Godard's restorations.[121] The lower part of the mihrab was in a ruined state and some repairs of consolidation and visual integration of the mihrab's lower portion were already completed. Missing parts of inscriptions, especially the historic inscription, were integrated. The spandrels reveal damage to the protruding bosses which were positioned in the centre of the lozenges with floral ornamentation.

The most important evidence concerns the top register of the mihrab (panel O). These photos all reveal the stucco panel with floral ornamentation consisting of abstract lotus-like elements inserted into a geometrical frame. Photographs confirm that this panel was covered with another perforated stucco panel which concealed it.[122] The most significant evidence for the

[120] Isfahani *et al*. 2010, 235.
[121] See Galdieri 1981, 77.
[122] Remains of this panel, which might have been destroyed or broken off, in order to reveal the stucco underneath are visible in the lower left and right side corners of the register.

understanding of this register derives from the two photographs taken and published by Wilber.[123] A similar mihrab panel design (with floral framing elements formed in a similar style) is seen in the top register of the stucco mihrab in the Teheran National Archaeological Museum, originally from the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 32). This damaged panel was subsequently reconstructed, likely as part of Godard's restorations.[124] If the lotus prototype is accepted as the origin of this stucco design (as suggested by numerous scholars), then it is likely that this panel was originally part of an earlier Ilkhanid stucco repertoire, either a mihrab or a different stucco revetment. Results of Godard's interventions are documented by the 1960s photos by Lisa Golombek, Josephine Powell and Marylin Jenkins.[125]

Subsequent restorations mainly focusing on the mihrab's polychromy research and consolidation and cleaning of its surface were performed by the Italo-Iranian team in the 1970s. They comprised polychromy consolidation, cleaning of the mihrab, consolidation of stucco layers, research of the environmental impact on the mihrab.[126] Isfahani *et al* register restoration interventions around 1986, based on their interview with stucco craftsman who performed them, during which some lower parts of the mihrab were repaired.[127] They also state that further refreshments of the mihrab's polychromy in order to visually integrate the polychromy lacunae took place posterior to these interventions. These cleaning and overpainting interventions caused detachment of the polychromy layer from the stucco body and consequently prompted its further degradation. These interventions were continued by Isfahani *et al*. Their team performed interventions on the mihrab's surface consisting of cleaning, consolidation and repairs to the mihrab's surface, reconstruction of some damaged parts of the stucco relief and recognizable visual integration of polychromy lacunae. It is evident that care for conservation and preservation of the Uljaytu mihrab was taken through the last century and that its current aesthetic appearance is the result of these numerous interventions. Although patina and oxidation of polychromy were largely removed, the polychromy was altered with extensive integrations of parts where it was lost.

The Small Mihrab

The mihrab was badly damaged during the bombardment of the mosque in the 1980s. Research of Hunarfar's studies of the mihrab suggests that its post-bombardment restoration resulted in the alteration of its original appearance. One inscription was entirely changed and large portions of the remaining parts of the mihrab and the surrounding stuccos were restored. The mihrab is currently in a good state of conservation.

Stucco Revetments in the Iwans

The remaining stucco revetments debated in this section (the *shah nishin* ceiling in the northern *iwan*, the stucco plugs and other revetments in the eastern *iwan*) have all undergone extensive renovations in the 1970s and during the last decades. While joints between the revetment panels

[123] Wilber 1955, Pls. 87-8.
[124] This is mentioned by Galdieri. Galdieri 1981, 77.
[125] https://archnet.org/sites/1621 (Last Accessed: June 28, 2018).
[126] Isfahani *et al*. 2010, 235.
[127] *Ibid.*, 436.

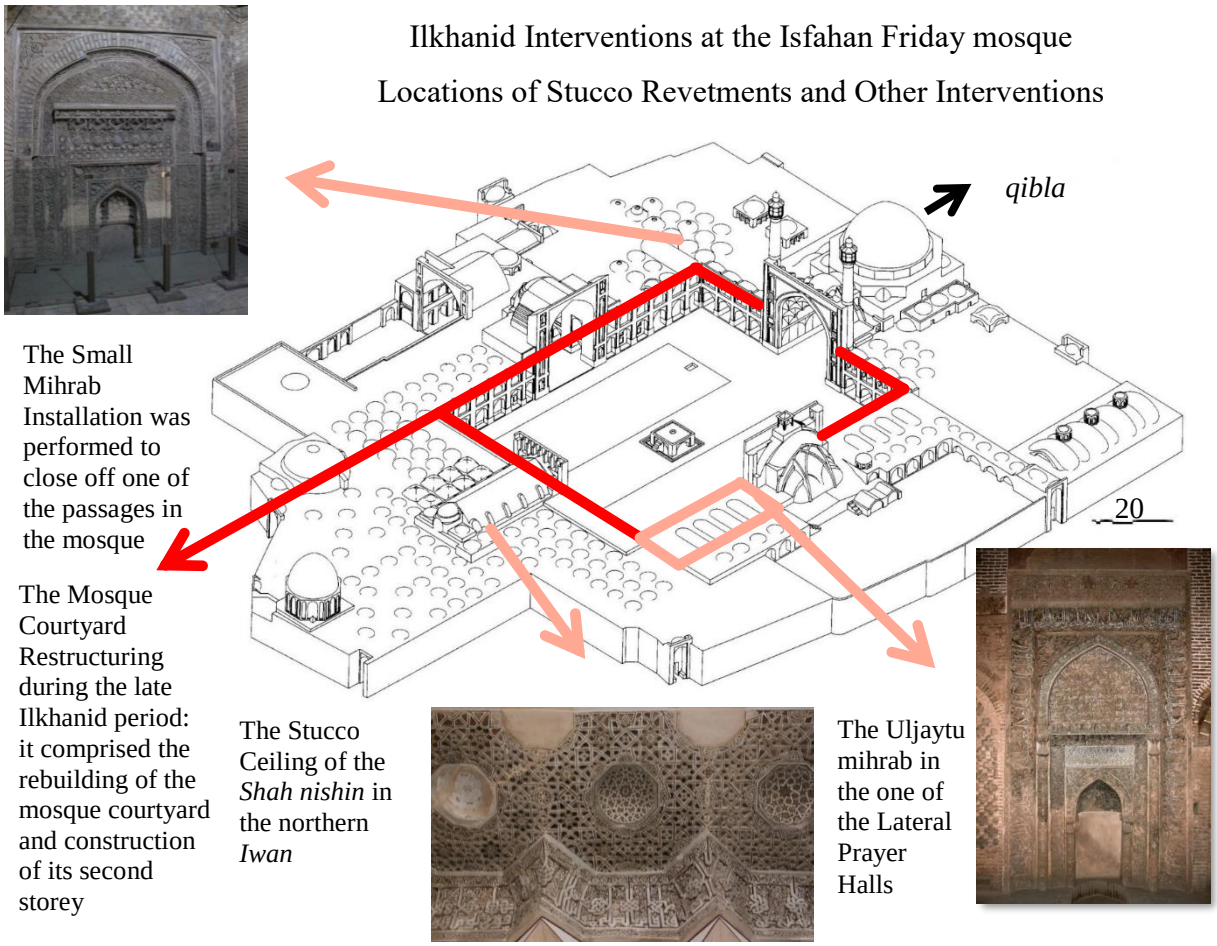
and sometimes their appearance have been altered, all these revetments are in good state of preservation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research proposes a reassessment of the Ilkhanid interventions at the Isfahan Friday mosque. The discussion of the Uljaytu mihrab provides information regarding its stucco artistic techniques and polychromy. The craftsmen's notion in making the mihrab and in transforming its relief, by the means of application of polychromy, highlights the epigraphic repertoire and the message of the mihrab. It stresses the importance of patronage and the message of the political alliances of the mihrab's patron with the Sultan of the Empire. Sectarian inscriptions are an equally important expression of the change of the official creed supported by the sultan's ally. The polychromy repertoire of the mihrab is unique and shows how the craftsmen consciously used colours on stucco relief. The craftsmen's workshop, led by the signature artist – master craftsman Haydar, was likely native to Isfahan and it produced the Uljaytu mihrab based on their earlier experience of stucco craftsmanship. The workshop designed the mihrab, transferred its design onto the stucco surface, carved it and applied onto its surface colours and metal leaf. In sum, the mihrab provides essential evidence concerning Ilkhanid stucco craftsmanship, craftsmen's workshops, an insight into Ilkhanid stucco polychromy and interpretation of the mihrab's meaning.

The Small mihrab is characterized by a distinct design, not native to the Isfahan area and its stuccos have been altered through restoration interventions. The reasons for its installation – modification of architectural spaces. reflect a different motivation for its installation. The remaining revetments are difficult to date securely to the Ilkhanid period, due to the lack of evidence stemming from extensive restoration interventions in the complex. The Ilkhanid date for the stucco plug revetments in the eastern *iwan* is confirmed through the discussion. It is shown that the revetments of the northern *iwan* remain challenging. Muzaffarid dating is suggested for the historical inscription encircling the muqarnas semi-dome and an Ilkhanid or later date is proposed for the stuccos of the *shah nishin*. Examination of Ilkhanid interventions at the Isfahan Friday mosque shows that Ilkhanid interventions in the complex were more substantial than it appears at first glance. The Uljaytu mihrab normally overshadows the rest of the interventions performed by the same dynasty, which also comprised a major modification of the courtyard of the monumental complex. Patronage of these modifications was the key to assert the Ilkhanid officials' political power in the region and it is not an exception in the context of the history of patronage activities at the Isfahan Friday mosque.

h.) Selected Bibliography: the Uljaytu mihrab: Blair 2003, 45; Blair 2006, 254-5; Gabriel 1935, 32-3, 35; Galdieri 1981; Galdieri 1984, 57-9; Godard 1936, 230-6; Godard 1937, 23-5; Halimi 1988, 93-8; Hunarfar 1966, 115-20; Isfahani *et al*., 2010; Van Berchem 1909; Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol 3, 949-966; the Small mihrab: Galdieri 1981; Hunarfar 1966, 149-50; the revetments in the *iwan*s: Gabriel 1935; Galdieri 1984, 29-54; Galdieri 1981; Quchani 1985; Quchani 2016; Hunarfar 1966, 86-98, 124-35; Ventrone 1977; Ventrone 1981.



Mosque axonometry from: Qasimi, 1997, *Ganjnameh*, *VII*, 123.

Figure 1: Axonometry of the Isfahan Friday mosque with information concerning the main Ilkhanid interventions on the monument and location of stucco revetments.

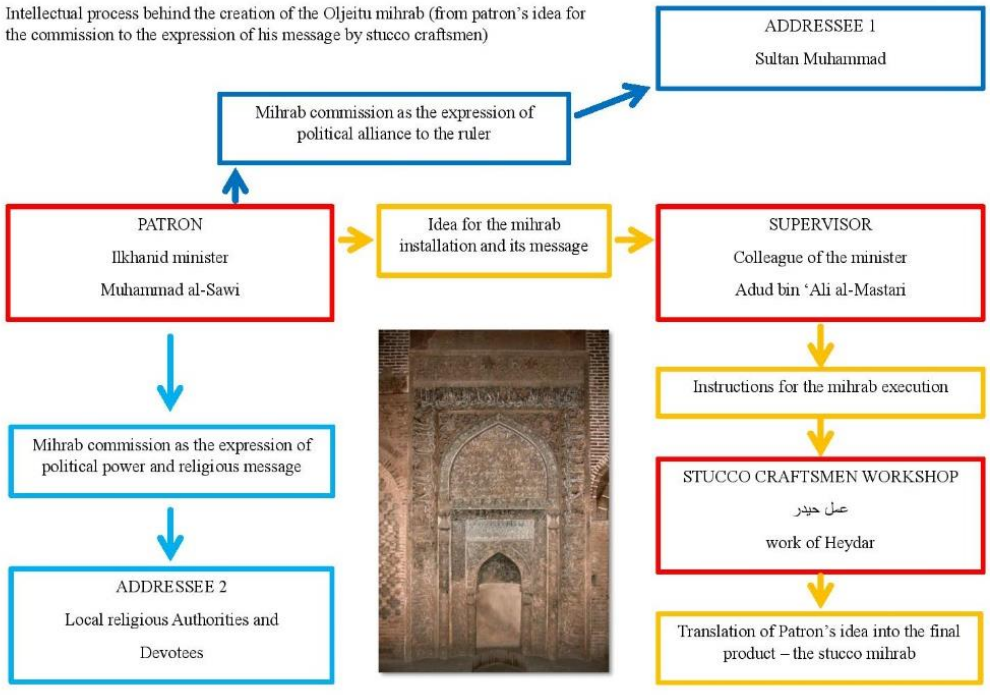


Figure 2: The scheme illustrating the intellectual process behind the design and production of the Uljaytu mihrab.

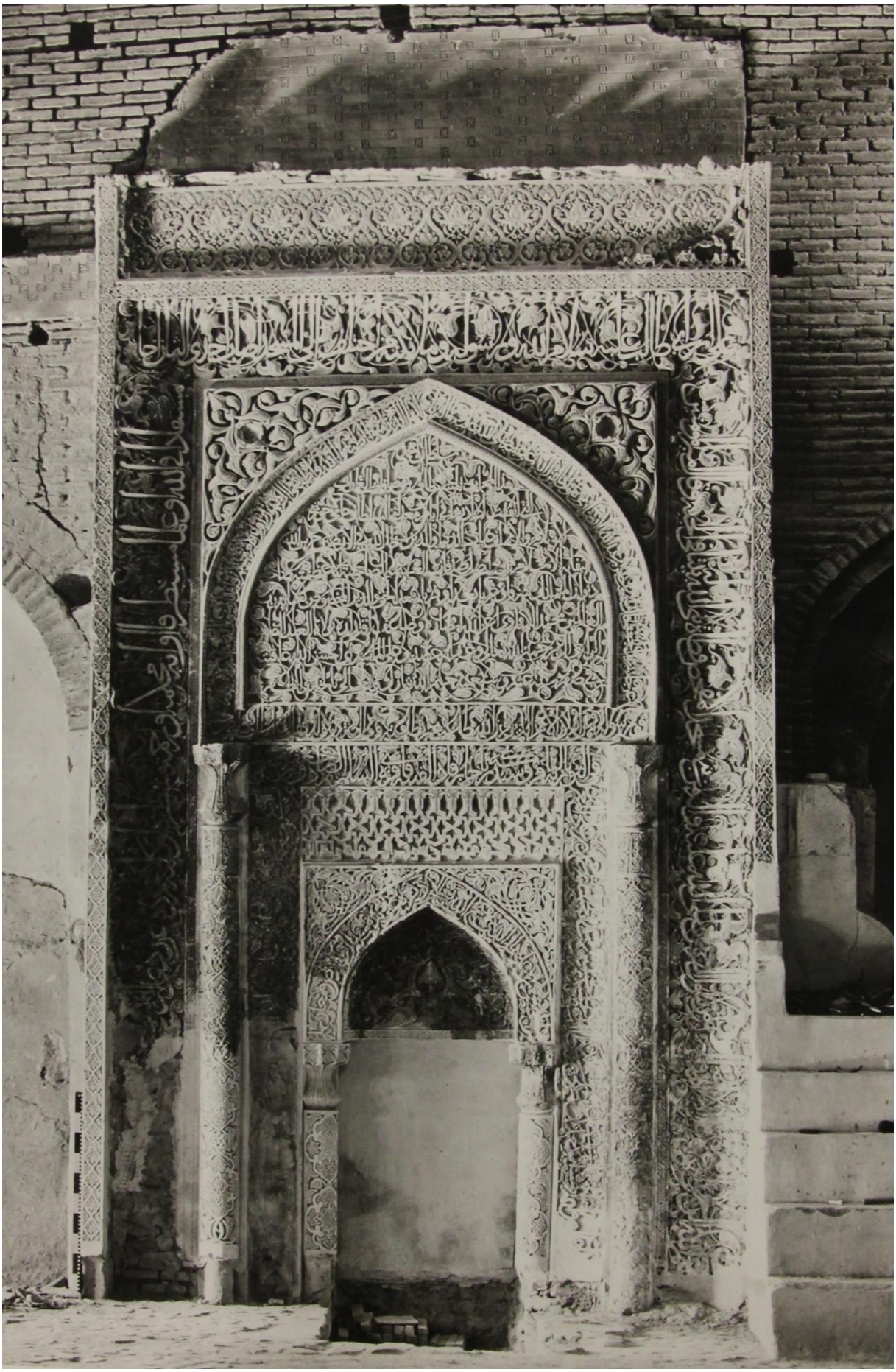


Figure 3: The Uljaytu mihrab by B. M. Smith, c. 1937. (Courtesy of the Freer and Sackler archive).



Figure 4: The Uljaytu mihrab in 2016. The image shows the brown colour of the mihrab's stucco body, typical of stuccos produced in the Isfahan area. Traces of its polychromy are visible.

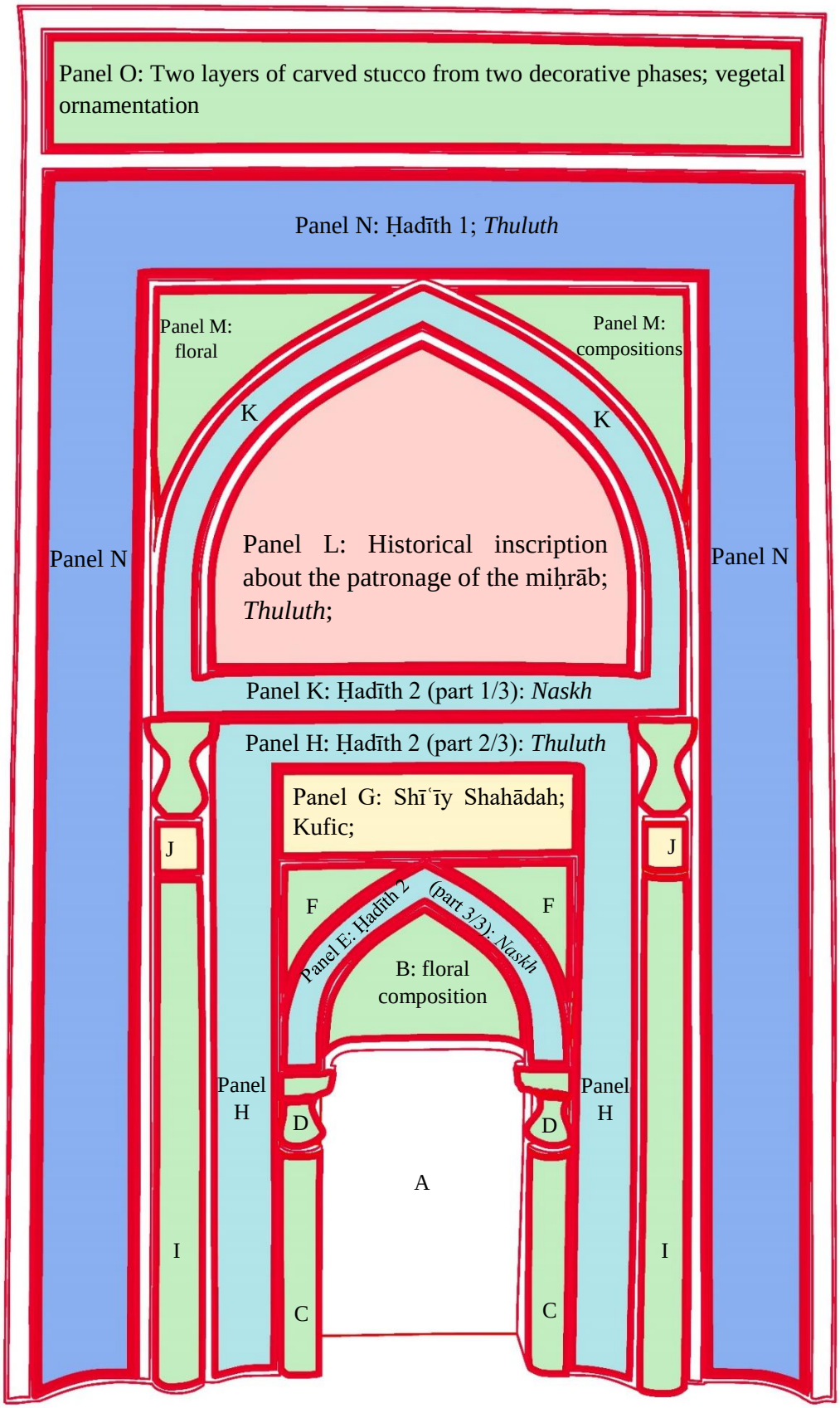


Figure 5: Line drawing of the Uljaytu mihrab with stucco panel division design and information concerning the inscription bands.



Figure 6: Information concerning reconstructed parts of the relief of the Uljaytu mihrab: all marked areas are reconstructed reliefs which are the works of conservation interventions on the mihrab during the last century; green marks reliefs where the pattern was copied from the extant parts of the mihrab and red marks areas where the relief was reconstructed based on the restorer's choices due to the lack or neglect of evidence regarding the original appearance of these parts of the relief.

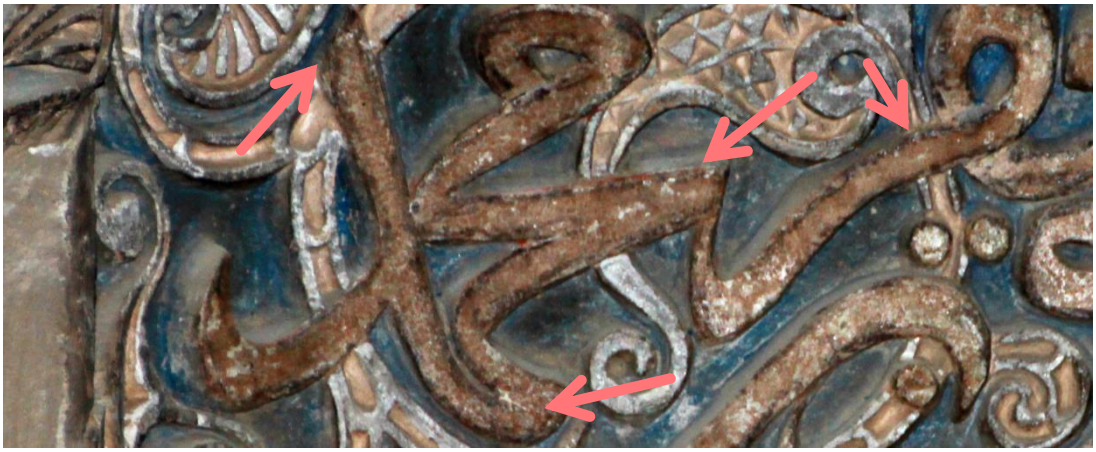


Figure 7: Details of the Uljaytu mihrab inscription (panel H): remains of red and black outline used to create the design of the inscription for its carving.

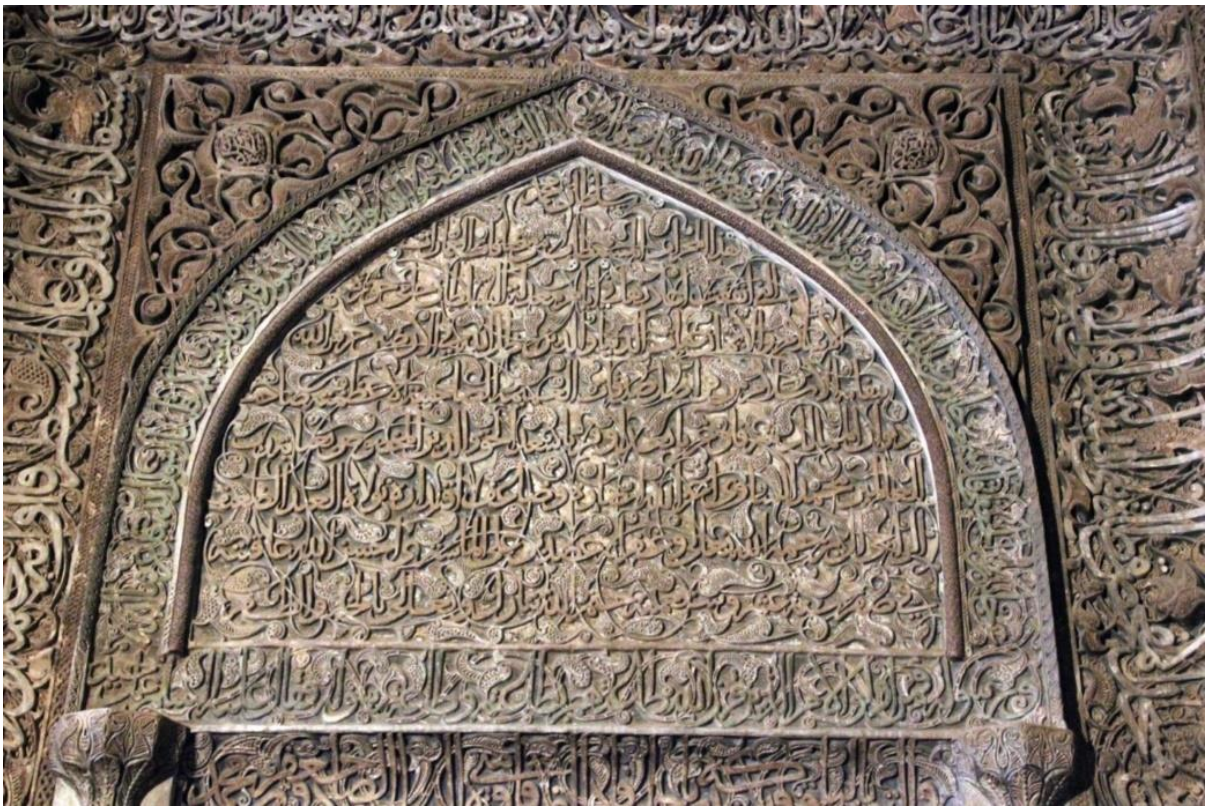


Figure 8: Detail of the Uljaytu mihrab showing its central lunette (panel L) with the historic inscription which was the primary message of the mihrab.



Figure 9: Detail of the monumental Hadith inscription (panel N) of the Uljaytu mihrab. The inscription was likely gilded with silver leaf and set against a background of blue, red and white vegetal scrolls.



Figure 10: Detail of the historic inscription of the Uljaytu mihrab showing its colouring principles: the inscription was likely gilded and set against a background of light blue. Floral scrolls might have been gilded with tin or silver leaves.



Figure 11: Detail of the Hadith inscription on the Uljaytu mihrab, showing its colouring principles: the inscription was coloured green and set against a blue background. Floral scrolls might have been gilded with tin or silver.



Figure 12: Detail of the Uljaytu mihrab column capitals, illustrating use of red: red was employed to colour the architectural lines of the mihrab in order to accentuate them and to create visual framing devices.

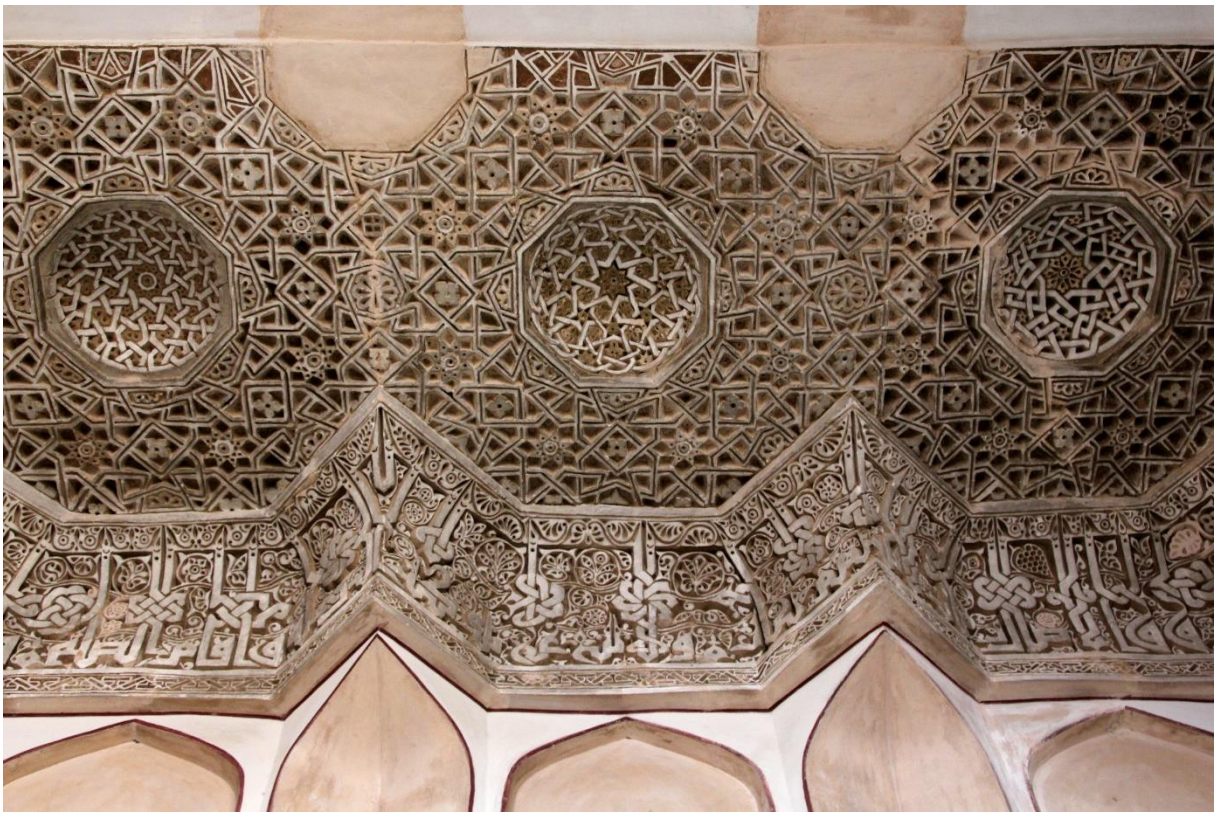


Figure 13: Carved stuccos of the *shah nishin* ceiling in the northern *iwan* of the Isfahan Friday mosque.



Figure 14: The Small carved stucco mihrab.

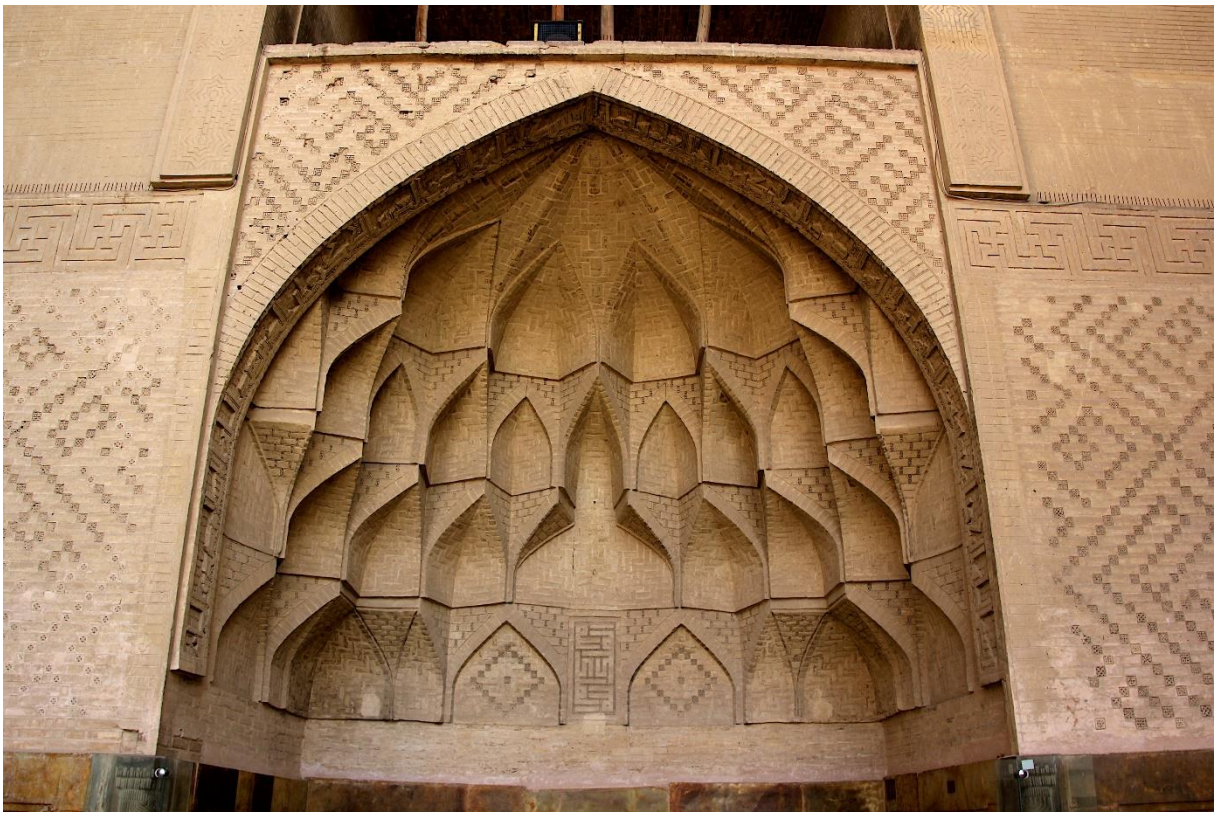


Figure 15: The *shah nishin* of the eastern *iwan* of the Isfahan Friday mosque.

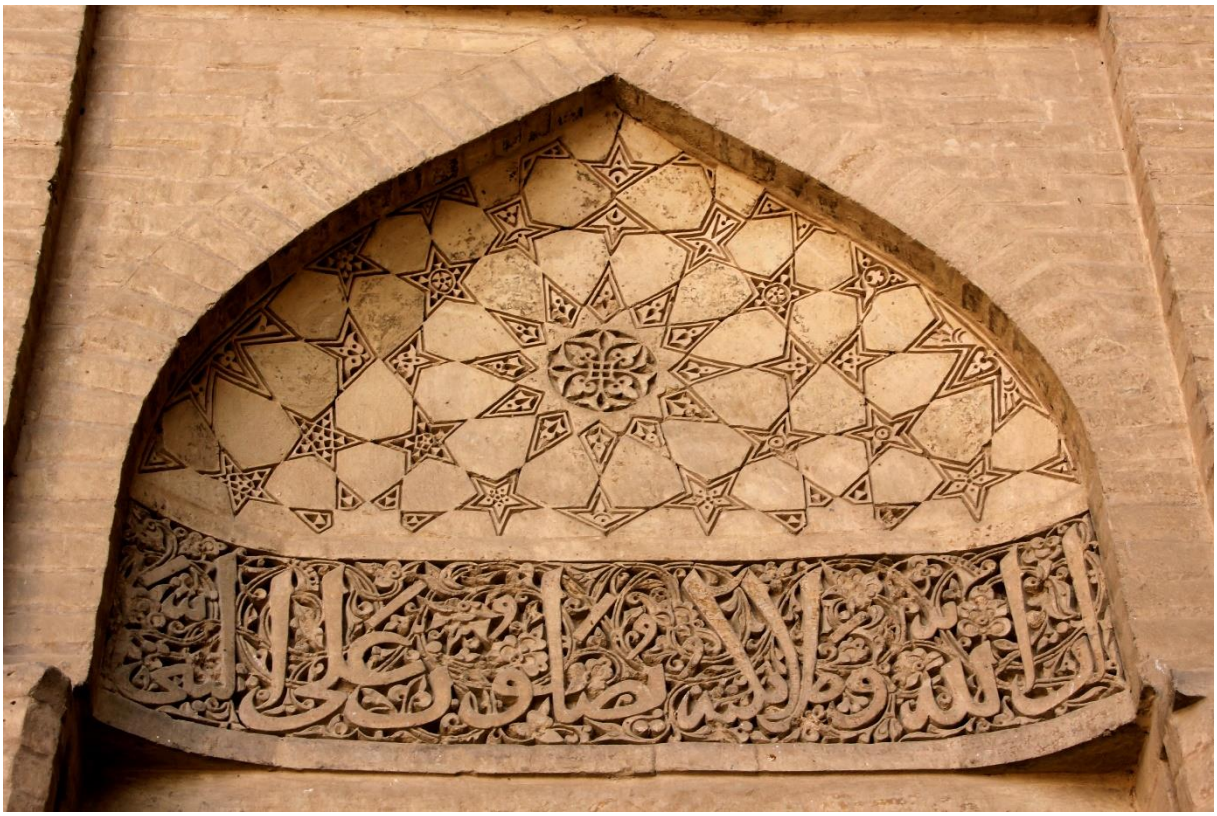


Figure 16: Carved stuccos of the blind niche in the eastern *iwan* of the Isfahan Friday mosque.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 2

Monument Name: Pir-i Bakran mausoleum

Figs. 17-40.

Associated Names: the mausoleum is named after the Shaykh who is allegedly buried in the structure (Shaykh-i Pir-i Bakran; Muhammad ibn-i Bakran); variant spellings for the name of the Shaykh and the settlement exist: Bakran and Baqran, but Bakran is more common. Pīr-i Bakrān[128] is the most suitable mode of transliteration of the name of the settlement and the monument; the historic inscriptions in the monuments refer to the name of the Shaykh as Pir-i Bakran (پیربکران).The monument is referred to as tomb, mausoleum, shrine or a domed structure (although the architectural structure includes only one dome of modest dimensions). The monument's most common names are: Gunbad-i Pir-i Bakran (the dome of Pir-i Bakran), the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, the Shrine of Pir-i Bakran, Gunbad-i Muhammad ibn-i Bakran, and the Tomb of Sheikh Muhammad ibn Bakran.[129]

Monument Type: mausoleum and pilgrimage complex.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in four phases; the earliest part of the monument is the small domed structure, which dates to the pre-Ilkhanid period. The monument was subsequently enlarged in the Ilkhanid period with addition of a monumental *iwan* and production of the first decorative programme. The *iwan* was subsequently closed off by a large stucco mihrab which required construction of a new entry corridor. This phase included the first re-decoration of the monument. The access corridor was additionally expanded and the structure was re-decorated for the second time. The Ilkhanid decorative and constructive phases reflect changes in function and aesthetics of the structure from a mausoleum into a pilgrimage complex with designated prayer surfaces for the faithful. These changes were put in place within the short time span of a decade and a half.

Location: the monument is located in the Pir-i Bakran village, a settlement in the Linjan region. The monument is some 24 km to the south-west of the centre of the city of Isfahan as the crow flies. Originally, the mausoleum was located in an ancient Jewish cemetery.[130]

GPS location of the monument: 32.4656712 N; 51.5603688,19 E.

Monument Investigation: July 14, 2014; November 23, 2017; November 25, 2018.

[128] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[129] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/1636 (Last Accessed: November 19, 2020).
[130] Construction of communication roads in the region in the last decades of the twentiethth century caused an isolation of the mausoleum from the Jewish and modern Muslim cemeteries in its proximities.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Background

The strategic, commercial, and agricultural significance[131] of the Linjan region from the tenth to fourteenth centuries is emphasized by Ibn Hawqal (d. c. 978),[132] Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 1072–77),[133] and Mustawfi (d. 1344).[134] Although Mustawfi describes Isfahan's population as predominantly Sunni and of the Shafiʿi legal school, he does not specify the religious affiliation of the mosques, colleges, and dervish convents that he mentions in the surrounding settlements.[135]

Literary sources are silent on Pir-i Bakran and make no mention of Shaykh Muhammad ibn Bakran, to whom the mausoleum is dedicated in its foundation inscription.[136] In comparison to the abundance of literary information concerning Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad (d. 1299?)[137] and Shaykh Ahmad Jami (d. 1141)[138] and their much larger complexes at Natanz[139] and Turbat-i Jam,[140] this literary silence on Shaykh Muhammad ibn Bakran suggests that he was of minor importance. The only information about the Shaykh is provided by historical inscriptions within the mausoleum (see below), which report that he used to teach in the *iwan*, that he died on 13 Rabiʿ I in the year 703 AH (October 25, 1303),[141] and that the mausoleum houses his tomb. The extension of the bedrock beneath the mausoleum's domed chamber has unknown limits.[142] An excavation of the place of burial (*maqbara*) could reveal whether the Shaykh's cenotaph covers actual remains, but these would be impossible to identify. As Grube notes, it is puzzling that such a large and lavishly decorated mausoleum should be located in a remote area and dedicated to an apparently minor figure.[143]

International archaeological and restoration missions in Iran during the twentieth century identified the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum in the Linjan region of Isfahan province (completed by 1312–13;) as one of the key monuments of the Ilkhanid period (1256–1353). Despite the fact that the mausoleum has received considerable scholarly attention since Herzfeld's survey in 1935,[144] the outstanding richness and complexity of Pir-i Bakran's tile and stucco revetment and related construction phases remain only partially understood. In the 1970s, the IsMEO undertook significant research and restoration work on the mausoleum, but their efforts were

[131] S. M. Stern, E. Beazley, and A. Dobson, 1971, 47–48; Schefer 1970[1881], 298; Le Strange, 1915–19, Vol. 2, 55. See also Le Strange 1966; Durand-Guédy 2010.
[132] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-hawqal (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).
[133] Frye 1975, vol. 4, 531–42.
[134] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/hamd-allah-mostawfi (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).
[135] Le Strange 1966, Vol. 2, 56, 58.
[136] The question of the identity and religious status of the Shaykh is thoroughly discussed by Hamzavi and Aslani, Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 44–70.
[137] Blair 1986a, 5-15.
[138] Golombek 1971, 28, 31.
[139] Blair 1986a. See also Qasimi 2004, Vol. 8, 68–77.
[140] Golombek 1971. See also Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 106–19.
[141] Hunarfar 1966, 263.
[142] Paone 1995, 274, 277. The bedrock underneath the mausoleum was documented by the IsMEO team during the restoration interventions. See *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale,* Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 11876/9 (Rosario Paone, 1975) and 10923/2 (Rosario Paone, 1974).
[143] Grube 1981, 87.
[144] Herzfeld 1935, 106–7.

interrupted by the onset of the Iranian Revolution at the end of 1978.[145] The Pir-i Bakran mausoleum is thus one of the most enigmatic Ilkhanid monuments, with many unresolved questions regarding the identity of the deceased (Shaykh Bakran, d. 1303), as well as the mausoleum's history, function, decorative programme, patronage, and craftsmen.

The multitude of decorative stages at Pir-i Bakran is characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. This feature is perhaps best illustrated by the mausoleum of Uljaytu (Sultaniyya, 1305–13/16-20; Cat. No. 27) and by the Khanqah of Pir Husayn (near Baku, 1243–44, 1266–67, 1285–86; Cat. No. 25). Compared to other Ilkhanid structures, the constructive and decorative work on Pir-i Bakran spans one of the longest periods (which is nonetheless short, perhaps some fifteen years) and represents one of the richest examples of Ilkhanid decorative repertoires. As one of the earliest Ilkhanid monuments with combined stucco and tiles, Pir-i Bakran offers a unique view on the interaction between the two decorative media, as well as their relationship to wall paintings.

In 1935, Herzfeld analysed the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran as a sanctuary of the Sufi Shaykh Bakran, who lived and died there.[146] This hypothesis was elaborated by Godard, based on a consideration of historic inscriptions and the mausoleum's construction stages.[147] The structure is believed to have initially been an *iwan* where Shaykh Bakran taught, which was transformed into a mausoleum upon his death on October 25, 1303. As Paone points out, this hypothesis lacks solid evidence.[148] After discussing the construction stages of the building, Pope proposes its initial function as a mausoleum, but fixes its construction date after 1303.[149] Although Pope does not dedicate sufficient attention to the mausoleum's revetments, he identifies two layers of stuccos in its interior.[150] Wilber's detailed study of Pir-i Bakran is extremely important, because he reports its state of preservation in 1939 and describes the mausoleum's architectural revetments, especially the tiles that are no longer *in situ*.[151] Wilber also notes the traces of original stucco colouration, which have not been discussed in subsequent research.[152] He is the first to suggest a chronological framework for the mausoleum's decoration. Hunarfar produces annotated transcriptions of the mausoleum's epigraphic programme.[153] The body of evidence from the 1970s IsMEO restorations of Pir-i Bakran led to reconsiderations of the mausoleum's constructive and decorative aspects.[154] Discussions of its stucco decoration by Grube and its tile decoration by George Douglas Pickett do not deal with the decorative stages in depth, however. Grube's stylistic and iconographical research excludes considerations of stucco craftsmanship. Pickett outlines three hypothetical decorative stages and provides important data on tile revetments, but fails to consider the decoration holistically, by instead focusing on tiles

[145] IsMEO 1980, 95–108; Paone 1995, 265. See also Jung 2001, xvii–xix.
[146] Herzfeld 1935, 106–7.
[147] Godard 1937, 29–35.
[148] Paone 1995, 277.
[149] Pope and Ackerman 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, 1078–79.
[150] *Ibid.*, 1079.
[151] Wilber 1955, 121–24.
[152] *Ibid.*, 121.
[153] Hunarfar 1966, 253–66.
[154] Paone 1995, 265.

and the tile mihrab in the north-western side of the *iwan*.[155] Even so, works by Grube and Pickett remain the best-known western scholarly discussions of the mausoleum's decoration.

These findings were supplemented by Paone's contributions, the deputy (*vice responsabile*) who oversaw the mausoleum's restorations by the IsMEO between 1973 and 1978.[156] Paone examines the history of the mausoleum's renovations and the findings of the restoration project. He is the first to discuss the mausoleum and its decorative programme within the context of the lesser known Ilkhanid structures of Isfahan province.[157] Not only does Paone provide new information, but he also casts doubt on long-standing assumptions concerning the monument. In addition to these, Claire Hardy-Guilbert's 1992 doctoral dissertation exemplifies important early research on the stuccos of Pir-i Bakran. Hardy-Guilbert's detailed discussion of the inscriptions and decorative iconography of the mausoleum, performed during the IsMEO interventions on the structure, is her most important contribution.[158] Recent studies by O'Kane[159] on the painted plaster decoration of the domed chamber, bring up new points on its iconography. Tehnyat Majeed's[160] research on the mausoleum's inscriptions is of interest despite several shortcomings. One recent study by Rajaei Baghsorkhi sheds new light on the relationship between inscriptions and floral ornaments of Pir-i Bakran's stucco revetments.[161] The most recent discussion of the mausoleum, which includes a very important section on the mausoleum's architectural revetments based on the latest restoration campaigns, was published by Hamzavi and Aslani.[162] Taken together, the literature[163] discussed here provides substantial knowledge on Pir-i Bakran; yet it leaves many open questions. The identity of the Shaykh remains unresolved, and the construction and decoration interventions of the mausoleum are not yet fully understood. We must also consider the relationship of the constructive and decorative interventions to the overall function of the architectural structure, as well as the aesthetics of the mausoleum's decorative programme.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 17-18, 20.

The layout of the mausoleum does not follow a canonical scheme, but it is similar to the *iwan* of Sayyid Muhammad - the Garladan *iwan* (Isfahan, 1317).[164] This monumental *iwan* contains the tomb of a Sufi saint and it was originally situated in a cemetery, but its revetments are more modest.[165] This monument, which may have been inspired by the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran,[166] suggests its original function as a funerary shrine complex (*buqʿa*).[167] Other parallel complexes-

[155] Pickett 1997, 124–30.
[156] Paone 1995, 265; Grube 1981, 91.
[157] Paone 1981, 1–30. See also Hardy-Guilbert 1992, 187–98.
[158] Hardy-Guilbert 1992. For a detailed discussion of the mausoleum's inscriptions, see *Ibid.*, 54–119; and for a discussion of stucco revetments iconography, see *Ibid.*, 120–68.
[159] O'Kane 1999-2000, 9–18.
[160] Majeed 2008, 111–23. See also Majeed 2006.
[161] See, e.g., Rajaei Baghsorkhi and Halimi 2009, 5–17; Rajaei Baghshorki and Mahdirgi 2013, 1–21.
[162] Hamzavi and Aslani 2012.
[163] See also Knobloch 2000, 42–47; Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 200–207.
[164] Paone 1981, 15–16. See also Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 218–21.
[165] Paone 1981, 15–16.
[166] *Ibid.*, 16–17, 20.
[167] Blair 1986a, 24–25.

including those of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad (Natanz, 1304–25; Cat. No. 12), Shaykh Safi al-Din (Ardabil, first constructions around 1335), Bayazid Bistami (Bistam, 1299–1313; Cat. No. 19), and Shaykh Ahmad (Turbat-i Jam, 1236, 1302–62; Cat. No. 30), illustrate how patronage of Sufi shrines became an important tool of political propaganda in this period.[168] Under Ilkhanid patronage, pre-Ilkhanid structures were modified into pilgrimage sites, as exemplified by the Gunbad-i ʿAlawiyan (Hamadan, around 1188).[169] It is plausible that the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum might have been sponsored by state officials as a religious commemoration of the real or legendary Sufi Shaykh's tomb and the sacred rock.

The nucleus of the mausoleum is a three-storey *iwan* that houses the stucco mihrab; the majority of the stucco and tile revetments is concentrated in its interior (Fig. 18). The northern side of the *iwan* is flanked by a muqarnas semi-dome and contains the *maqbara* or tomb chamber, which houses the presumed grave of the Shaykh (Figs. 21, 22). The *maqbara* is flanked on the northern side by a pre-Ilkhanid adobe domed structure,[170] originally of a *chahar-taq* form with Ilkhanid wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos (Fig. 2, panel X).[171] The cluster of the *iwan* and the *maqbara* is oriented on the northeast to southwest axis, towards Mecca. Similar to the other *iwan* mentioned above, the orientation of Pir-i Bakran was determined by topographical features of the terrain.[172] The adjacent entrance corridor (*dalan*) is perpendicular to the *iwan*, and joins it at the south-eastern side. The construction of this corridor (perhaps in two stages) was necessary once the south-western opening of the *iwan*, the original entrance, was closed off by the stucco mihrab. The *dalan* and the first two floors of the *iwan* are constructed out of cut stone joined with mortar, while the third floor and the vaults of the *iwan* and the *dalan* are built out of fired brick and mortar. Stone is a less common building material in the Isfahan area, where fired or adobe brick predominate. It seems that the builders constructed the mausoleum from stone for pragmatic reasons, because it was found in abundance in the vicinity. The fact that stone (rather than brick) was used to construct the mausoleum has resulted in a better preserved structure.

The majority of wall painting, applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, carved stuccos and tiles are contained in the interior of the monument. The exterior architectural surface of the mausoleum is covered with an extensive repertoire of glazed cross and star tiles. The original façade of the mausoleum is the southern side of the monumental *iwan*, which was later closed off by the installation of the mihrab. The surfaces of this side of the *iwan* feature a visual façade which retains remains of carved stuccos and tiles. Spandrels of the pointed arch of the *iwan* and of its blind niches and windows display remains of carved stuccos, which constituted the focal points of the façade.

[168] Golombek 1971, 420, 422–23, 425, 427. See also O'Kane 1992, 85–92.
[169] See Shani 1996.
[170] As far as I am aware, the structure is referred to for the first time as pre-Ilkhanid (rather than pre-Islamic) by Majeed 2008, 114. Rosario Paone confirms this date based on the scientific research and restoration interventions performed on the structure (e-mail messages to author, September 20 and 29, 2016).
[171] Paone 1995, 273. IsMEO interventions on the mausoleum have been extensively documented. These documents are now part of the *Fondo IsIAO* (IsIAO deposit) of the *Archivio Fotografico* (photographical archive) at the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'Giuseppe Tucci' (MNAO) in Rome.
[172] Paone 1981, 19–20; Wilber 1955, 39, 121.

Constructive and Decorative Chronology of the Monument

Figs. 17-19.

Phase One - The pre-Ilkhanid structure

The small adobe domed structure is the oldest part of the mausoleum. Based on archaeological excavations and subsequent restoration interventions, the IsMEO team ascertained that it predates the mausoleum and that it was built as an independent structure. It was initially considered to be pre-Islamic, but it is currently recognized as pre-Ilkhanid.[173] The structure is difficult to date, but it is clear that its wall painting decoration with elements of moulded and stencilled stuccos (Fig. 4, panel X) should be understood as Ilkhanid, and most likely connected to the third Ilkhanid decorative phase at the mausoleum.[174]

Phase Two – The First Ilkhanid mausoleum

The first Ilkhanid construction phase comprises the *iwan* with the *maqbara* area, and it is not clear when it began. The *iwan* forms the main architectural space of the monument and it was constructed with a typically Ilkhanid pointed vault. The IsMEO investigation confirms that some of the arches of the *iwan* were originally closed.[175] Furthermore, the *iwan's* three-storey structure has a function similar to the external galleries of the mausoleums of Sultan Sanjar (Marv, 1157) and the Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). The first floor consists of two corridors interconnected with the roof of the *maqbara*. Since the *maqbara* roof served to connect the two corridors, it must have been part of the mausoleum's original structure,[176] which points to its original function as a mausoleum rather than a teaching *iwan* (fig. 2). This is also confirmed by the fact that the interior of the *maqbara* is decorated with three layers of revetments, which are discussed in greater detail below. This space leads to the second-floor gallery, which conceals the exteriors of the vault and the muqarnas semi-dome, and houses a staircase leading to the rooftop. This structure must have been completed prior to the installation of the mihrab that closed the main entrance of the *iwan* and required the construction of the *dalan* (fig. 4).

Phase Three – The First Redecoration Campaign at the Mausoleum

The second Ilkhanid phase of the mausoleum consists of the following interventions: the installation of the stucco mihrab, which closed off the southern opening of the monumental *iwan*, the construction of an entrance corridor on the south-eastern corner of the *iwan*, and the application of a large amount of carved stuccos in the mausoleum's interior and the corridor.

[173] Rosario Paone, e-mail messages to author, September 20 and 29, 2016.
[174] Based on a stylistic comparison of the wall painting to fragments of wall painting I noticed on panel D (Fig. 4, panel D; Fig. 13) in the interior of the *iwan*, I date this wall painting to the third decorative stage (completed by 1312–13). See Paone 1995. For more information on the wall painting, see O'Kane 1999-2000, and especially Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 142–48.
[175] Paone 1981, 20.
[176] See, for example, *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale,* Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 11075/12-15 (Rosario Paone, 1974), 10969/5 (Camillo Tarozzi, 1974), 11001/13 (Franco Rigamonti) and 11077/24 (Rosario Paone, 1974).

Phase Four– The Second Redecoration Campaign at the Mausoleum

The corridor was further extended in the fourth phase. There are no superimpositions of revetments within this extension of the *dalan*. The characteristics of revetments applied to the interior surfaces of this part of the *dalan* correspond to the revetments of the mausoleum's third stage. Soundings of the floor of the entrance corridor, by the IsMEO team, revealed the corridor's original floor, which differs between the older and later part of the corridor and thus additionally confirms the proposed hypothesis that the corridor was constructed in two stages. This information confirms the assumption that the *dalan* was extended during the last interventions on the structure.[177]

The installation of the mihrab included the construction of separation grills, along with the moulded perforated octagonal turquoise tiles and moulded cobalt cross tiles of the *maqbara* above the mihrab, and on the open arches of the ground floor (Figs. 2, 23).[178] This second constructive phase changed the function of the structure; it provided for a designated prayer space for the faithful and it thus transformed a simple mausoleum structure into a medium dimension pilgrimage complex in its own right, and with a multitude of architectural spaces with different functions to accommodate pilgrimage and devotional rites. The described phenomenon corresponds to Ghazan Khan's fostering of religious devotion in Sufi mausoleums.[179]

Dated inscriptions (panels B, U, and the Shaykh's cenotaph) are not necessarily contemporary to the mausoleum's two construction stages, and the mihrab is undated. These inscriptions, however, imply that the two main constructive stages of the mausoleum were completed by, or prior to, 1303–4, because they are located in one part of the *dalan*, and in the *maqbara*. While the extension of the access corridor constitutes the only construction intervention on the monument, this constructive and decorative phase also comprised the application of an extensive glazed cross and star tile programme on mausoleum's interior and exterior surfaces. Furthermore, the interior of the *iwan* was also decorated with a second layer of carved stuccos. The third decorative campaign of the mausoleum did not constitute a haphazard application of architectural revetments on the monuments structure. Quite to the contrary, the craftsmen were selective in deciding which revetments from previous decorative phases would remain visible and which revetments needed to be redecorated with new decorations. The motivation for these interventions could have been Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite creed, because the inscriptions of revetments from this phase feature texts with Shiʿite oriented content (e.g. the Square Kufic panels, etc.).

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument did not undergo any major structural or decorative interventions in the post-Ilkhanid period, perhaps because it fell into disuse at an early point. One of the very few elements of the monument which is difficult to date and could have been constructed in the

[177] See, for example, *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale,* Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 11868/12-17 (Rosario Paone, 1975) and 11874/31a, 30a, 29a (Rosario Paone, 1975).
[178] Rosario Paone 1980, 66; Grbanovic 2021.
[179] Blair 1986a, 25; Shani 1996, 154.

post-Ilkhanid period is the minaret-like structure, which flanks the mausoleum on its north-western corner. The structure is built out of fired brick rather than local stone, and it is not integrated in the architectural structure of the supporting walls of the mausoleum.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

Figs. 17-18.

The core of the mausoleum is presented by the rectangular *iwan*, which flanks the earlier domed structure on its southern side. The supporting walls of the *iwan* are flanked by additional structures on its eastern and western sides. The entrance corridor of the mausoleum is adjacent to it on the south-eastern side, and it is rectangular in form. The extension of this corridor is not evident from the ground plan; it can only be spotted through the observation of the joints of the structure, in addition to the evidence from the Italian archaeological soundings of its floor structure. The described plan of the mausoleum therefore assumes a letter L form.

This un-canonical ground plan of the mausoleum was determined by three main factors. Firstly, Paone mentions the existence of bedrock underneath the mausoleum and explains that it determined its orientation. Secondly, the presence of an earlier domed structure on the site also influenced the position of the monument. Moreover, the monument was constructed and decorated in several phases. Finally, it is likely that the position and dimensions of the mausoleum's entrance corridor was determined by the presence of other structures around the mausoleum.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

Different parts of the mausoleum complex present varying types and heights of elevation. The monumental *iwan* presents a three-floor partition and it assumes a rectangular form. It is the most elevated part of the structure. The monument does not feature a monumental minaret structure, which would make it visible from further away. The corridor of the mausoleum is a single storey structure and it does not assume monumental dimensions.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

It is generally believed that Pir-i Bakran's monument first functioned as the Shaykh's teaching *iwan*, which was converted into a mausoleum upon his death. The mausoleum is located on the Jewish cemetery of Esther Khatun[180] and it encompasses a pre-Ilkhanid domed structure and a sacred rock. Jews have traditionally associated this rock with the ascension of the Prophet Elijah, while the Shiʿites consider it a place where the Imam ʿAli descended from heaven.[181] Given the political and religious climate during the reigns of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) and Uljaytu (r. 1304–16), it is reasonable to propose a state patronage for the mausoleum on an ancient Jewish site that had been appropriated by the Ilkhans.[182] Such sponsorship activities may have been intended to promote the conversion of Jews to Islam, while the decorative refurbishments perhaps served as state propaganda linked to the religion of the rulers. If so, the

[180] Herzfeld 135, 106–7.
[181] Hunarfar 1966, 257; Paone 1995, 277.
[182] Morgan 1986, 225. See also Melville 1990a, 55–70; Melville 1990b, 159–77; Melville 1998, 473–82.

structure would have communicated the official state creed through its inscriptions, thereby shaping local religious activity. Due to the political significance of the mausoleum, considerable resources were devoted to its structural and decorative modifications, and craftsmen were mobilized from different parts of the Empire to achieve the desired architectural effect. As in the example of the Sultaniyya mausoleum, that of Pir-i Bakran would have required continuous updating; when the official state creed changed from Sunni to Shiʿite allegiance, the inscriptions and decorative programme of the monument had to be adjusted accordingly.[183]

The hypothesis stating that the monument was a mausoleum from its outset, presented by Paone, is the most plausible. It is however important to note that the modifications to the mausoleum's structure, which comprised installation of the monumental stucco mihrab, the access corridor and the architectural decoration, transformed the mausoleum into a complex with a prayer space for the faithful who visited the sacred tomb. A similar phenomenon has been observed through the research and studies of decorative phases and modifications of the ʿAbd al-Samad tomb and complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The Pir-i Bakran mausoleum could have originally been a larger complex, which featured further structures, of which no traces remain.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 18-19; 21-40.

The Pir-i Bakran mausoleum is the essential Ilkhanid monument for the study and understanding of Ilkhanid architectural revetments. The sheer amount and variety of architectural revetments and the fact that they were produced in at least three distinct interventions, provide information regarding Ilkhanid artistic techniques, decorative aesthetics, principles, craftsmen's migration, workshop composition and other data.

Interior Revetments

The stuccos of Pir-i Bakran are an example of superb technical skill and a complex decorative repertoire produced in several stages. Together with the Friday mosque of Ushturjan (1315–16, about 30 km south of Isfahan; Cat. No. 4); the Uljaytu mihrab (1310; Cat. No. 1) in the Isfahan Friday mosque; the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27) and the Turbat-i Jam complex (Old mosque, Cat. No. 30), the monument conserves extensive traces providing significant information concerning the original stucco colouration (Figs. 23-24). The closest stylistic parallels to Pir-i Bakran are the Friday mosques of Ushturjan, Farfan (1300–20; Cat. No. 5) and Haftshuya (eleventh to twelfth centuries, with Ilkhanid stucco decoration from the early fourteenth century; Cat. No. 3).

The Frist Decorative Stage

In order to understand the aesthetics of Pir-i Bakran, one must first comprehend the sequence of its decorative stages. The initial decorative stage of the mausoleum was determined by credible accounts of early surveys of the mausoleum. The evidence consists of the following elements: the half-star lustre tile dated 1298–99,[184] the moulded lustre faience in the arch of the

[183] Brambilla 2012, 5–7, 21–22.
[184] Bahrami 1938, 257, 259; Paone 1995, 277.

iwan's northern recess,[185] and the rectangular phoenix tiles that are no longer *in situ* (Fig. 38).[186] The IsMEO team also discovered tiles underneath the stucco panel U (dated 1303–4). Later research published by Hamzavi and Aslani shows that these gilded tiles were cut to form an inscription and that stucco was used for its background (Fig. 23).[187] These finds, especially the tile and stucco decoration beneath the dated panel U, indicate that the first decorative stage was produced prior to and separate from the second stage. Despite the date of the half-star lustre tile, we cannot conclude with certainty that this intervention was completed in 1298–99, due to the possibility of tile reuse. Nonetheless, the first decorative stage must have been completed prior to the second stage, which is dated 1303–4.

These elements are the only remains of the earliest decorative repertoire, which consisted of lavish tiles depicting phoenix motifs combined with other types of tile revetments confined to the mausoleum's interior. The phoenix imagery is contemporary to the stucco decorative inscriptions produced with stucco plugs (*Khatt-i bannaʾi;* Fig. 21) in the *maqbara* and the *iwan,* bearing the names of Orthodox Caliphs and the Sunni Shahada.[188] This rules out the possibility of a Shiʿite affiliation for the phoenix motifs, as suggested by Watson.[189] Moreover, the presence of similar motifs in lustre revetments of the Mongol summer palace at Takht-i Sulayman (an imperial commission by Abaqa Khan, ca. 1270), suggests that lustre tiles with these motifs could also be used in a secular context, rather than exclusively in Shiʿite structures.[190]

The Second Decorative Stage

The second decorative stage includes the first production of carved stuccos and it was completed by 1303–4, according to three dated inscriptions (panels B, U, and the Shaykh's cenotaph). Inscriptions from this stage praise the Shaykh or quote Qurʾanic verses. Examination of stuccos suggests that panels B, E, O, and U belong to this stage (Figs. 18, 22-27). Moreover, a layer of stuccos belonging to this intervention was also discovered under the tile dado running below the stucco *Surat al-Insan* (76:1–8) inscription (from the third decorative stage) of the *iwan*. In future research, other panels may be revealed by layer probes since these were concealed by the subsequent stucco layer (third stage). Phoenix tiles (first stage) were documented *in situ* by Wilber; the second decorative repertoire was therefore perhaps partially integrated with the first one. The position of the dated panels (*dalan* and *maqbara*) mentioned above implies that the entire mausoleum (with the exception of the second part of the *dalan*) was completed by the end of the second decorative stage. Additional evidence for this conclusion is provided by the stucco panel D above the entrance to the *iwan* (Fig. 18).[191] Its recently damaged parts reveal another stucco layer underneath; it thus contains stucco decoration from the second and third stages. This panel is positioned above the arch connecting the *dalan* and the *iwan*; the mihrab and one part of the *dalan* therefore must have been

[185] Pickett 1997, 124–25.
[186] The presence of tiles with phoenix imagery was first noted by Wilber 1955, 121.
[187] Rosario Paone, e-mail message to author, August 28, 2014; Hamzavi and Aslani 2012 246–47.
[188] Ventrone 1981, 60–61, 63.
[189] Watson 1985, 134, 136, 154–56.
[190] *Ibid.*
[191] For a detailed discussion, see Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 98.

completed by 1303–4. The following discussion shows that the tiled grills are related to the mihrab and the *maqbara* and were perhaps installed at this point. Stuccos produced during this decoration intervention are of a particular style differing stylistically from stuccos produced in the subsequent intervention.

The Mihrab

Figs. 28-30.

The mihrab is a critical element of the stucco revetment; it is neither signed nor dated, and its production is believed to postdate 1303–4.[192] Parts of the mihrab with sculptural decoration and deep undercutting (the top register and the niche) relate to stuccos of the Friday mosques of Ushturjan (transitional zones; Cat. No. 4) and Farfan (upper lunette of the mihrab; Cat. No. 5). In fact, the mihrab's closest stylistic parallel is the *maqbara* lunette stucco panel U dated 1303–4 (Figs. 22-27). Both the mihrab and this stucco panel U exhibit similar monumental *Thuluth* inscriptions, superimposed over smaller Kufic inscriptions in the background. In both cases the Kufic inscriptions comprise Qurʾanic quotations: the Throne Verse (2:255, *Ayat al-Kursi*) on the mihrab and the *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1–7) on the *maqbara* lunette panel U. But the *Thuluth* inscription on the mihrab quotes the *Surat al-Insan* (76:1–8), while that of the *maqbara* lunette panel U is a eulogy to the Shaykh. As discussed below, similar stucco colouration principles also relate the mihrab to the *maqbara* lunette panel U.

The fact that the mihrab dates to 1303–4 confirms the hypothesis that the mausoleum was completed by that date. The grills with tile decoration were installed together with the mihrab; they separate the *maqbara* from the *iwan* and close some of the *iwan*'s openings as well as the part of the opening above the mihrab (Figs. 21, 28). Most of the moulded four-pointed star and octagonal perforated tiles (cobalt and turquoise) were removed from the site (Figs. 39).[193] Visible parts of grills confirm that these structural elements were not part of the original plan. Because of their joint function with the mihrab, they must have been part of the mihrab installation intervention. Further evidence is based on the observation of the revetment application in the mausoleum's *maqbara* (Fig. 22). The interior stucco decoration of the *maqbara* and the joints between the separation grill (with perforated tiles), the stucco panels, and the *Khatt-i banna'i* inscriptions on the ceiling of the *maqbara* indicate that the separation grill and the interior stucco decoration of the *maqbara* were not part of the original decorative programme.

[192] Majeed 2008, 119–22; Pickett 1997, 128; Pope and Ackerman 1977[1938], Vol. 3, 1078.

[193] These tiles were removed from the separation grills on the orders of André Godard to preserve them from illegal looting. The tiles, which are stored in Isfahan, were studied and classified by Rosario Paone, Raimondo Boenni, and Morteza Nasseri between 1975 and 1978. They located 124 fragments of tiles belonging to Pir-i Bakran during their research. See Paone 1980, 72. See also images in the *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale*, Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 13077/34-37 (Rosario Paone, 1977) and 12593/0, 0A, 1-3 (Rosario Paone, 1976).

The Third Decorative Stage

Figs. 31-32, 36, 40.

The third (and final) decorative stage comprises tile and stucco decoration and was perhaps the most extensive. The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Figs. 33-34; Cat. No. 3) relates closely to the panels located within the *iwan* of Pir-i Bakran (Fig. 18, panels D, F, G, H, I, K, L, N, P, Q, R, and S; Figs. 31-32, 36, 40). These panels are similar in production technology and decorative iconography and were perhaps produced by the same workshop. All the Pir-i Bakran panels resembling those of Haftshuya belong to the upper, final decorative layer. These panels are related to the surrounding faience revetments, which must have been produced contemporaneously. Other panels of Pir-i Bakran (Fig. 18; panels A, C, J, M, V, and X) differ stylistically from Haftshuya, but match the faience, and should be regarded as coming from the same phase. The dated stucco panel located in the niche of the south-western supporting wall of the *iwan* (panel G) implies that this undertaking was completed by 1312–13. As opposed to the Qurʾanic inscriptions of the third stage, panel G (Fig. 18) contains a eulogy, with content related to the inscription on the earlier *maqbara* lunette panel U and the Shaykh's cenotaph.

Faience Revetments

The majority of Pir-i Bakran's faience revetments belongs to the third decorative stage (produced sometime between 1303–4 and 1312–13). Although the faience revetments were meticulously described by Wilber[194] and discussed by Pickett,[195] a few additional points require attention. Some of the stucco panels within the *dalan* and the *maqbara* (Fig. 18; panels A, C, M, V) include tile revetments, which confirm that the faience decoration belongs to the third decorative undertaking. As noted above, the phoenix tiles suggest a partial integration of previous decorative stages with the final stage (Fig. 38). These phoenix tiles could have been located in the niches of the *iwan*'s northern recess and were perhaps not removed by redecorators because of their value. In contrast, the tile and stucco inscription of the *maqbara*, which was probably less appealing, was already covered by stucco (Fig. 23; panel U, dated 1303–4) during the second decorative stage. The faience of the third decorative undertaking (an estimated 30,000 tiles)[196] encompasses the structure's interior and exterior (Figs. 21-22, 28) and it is more extensive than the previous tile repertoires. These glazed cobalt and turquoise tiles assume various forms, with crosses and stars prevailing. The fact that the Shaykh's cenotaph was covered with the same type of decorative tiles,[197] confirms that the third decorative stage was undertaken separately from the second one. The application of faience is based on clearly defined principles: it enhances the mausoleum's architectural features and it fills the spaces between the stucco panels, thus achieving a uniform appearance of the entire decorative programme. Moreover, faience enhances the visibility of the stucco panels. The

[194] Wilber 1955, 121–24.
[195] Pickett 1997, 124–30.
[196] *Ibid.*, 129.
[197] Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (IsMEO), *Attività di scavo e restauro in Medio Oriente, 1957–1977: Mostra documentaria* (Rome, 1977), R17.

stucco was originally coloured, and the overall aesthetic effect thus differed considerably from the present one.

Stucco Plugs

The stucco plug revetments in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum are above all located on architectural surfaces of the interior supporting structure of mausoleum's *iwan*. The plugs can be divided into two large groups; the plugs which are used to form inscriptions of *Khatt-i bannaʾi*, belonging to the mausoleum's first decorative stage (the Sunni Shahada and the names of the Orthodox Caliphs) and stucco plugs which constitute an independent decorative programme, such as the carved stucco plugs of the mausoleum's first floor. Some of these plugs are epigraphic, but the majority assumes a simple floral form.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior revetments of the mausoleum were produced during the second and third decorative interventions. The majority are glazed star and cross tiles and on the southern, partially open side of the mausoleum's *iwan* a façade is formed with a combination of carved stuccos and glazed tiles. Only fragments of stuccos, which decorated the spandrels of the pointed arch forming the *iwan*, remain and it is not possible to propose information regarding their original appearance. Some blind niches on the same side of the *iwan* however do conserve carved stucco revetments. These stuccos feature modest, deeply carved abstract and floral elements. Their carving approach and production technique are closely related to the stuccos of the openings of the pointed arches, which form the external gallery on the second floor of the *iwan*. These stuccos were produced with a lesser production skill and might be works of less qualified stucco carvers.

Stucco Polychromy at Pir-i Bakran

Wilber was the first to describe the traces of Pir-i Bakran's original colouration as red, blue, and white.[198] A detailed examination, however, reveals two shades of blue, red, pinkish, white, yellow, sometimes green and black, and traces of gilding, and suggests that the majority of the stuccos of the mausoleum were coloured (Figs. 22-24; 29-30).[199] The colouring technique was mostly likely tempera (on dry support). The following pigments were employed for the colouring of the stuccos in the mausoleum: huntite for white, red ochre for red, yellow ochre for yellow, and azurite for blue.[200] The pigments employed on the Pir-i Bakran stuccos stem from the traditions of artistic use in Iran.

[198] Wilber 1955, 122. Detailed descriptions of pigmentation traces were first provided by Hardy-Guilbert 1992, 51.
[199] The most detailed information on the stucco pigment composition and gilding in Pir-i Bakran is provided by Holakooei 2007.
[200] Holakooei 2007, 2–5.

Mihrab's Colouring Principles

Figs. 29-30.

Progress in photographic technology improved possibilities for recording the stucco polychromy. The discussion focuses on the mihrab because it is juxtaposed to the *maqbara* area; these two spaces are the main focal points of the mausoleum's interior. The mihrab also preserves sufficient pigment traces to allow for a discussion of its polychromy. As mentioned above, it seems likely that the mihrab was completed by 1303–4, when the interior was probably still decorated with lustre and glazed tiles, whereas most of the current stucco and tile revetments were produced later (between 1303–4 and 1312–13). The craftsmen must have been attentive to the integrity of the decorative repertoire, and this makes the polychromy of the mihrab important, although it was followed by another decorative phase.

Analysis of the mihrab's colouring, based on the polychromy traces, reveals the existence of a clear logic of stucco colouration, and of an intrinsic relationship between the colouring and the three-dimensional appearance of the stucco. The principles of stucco colouring are best observed in the two upper registers of the mihrab and in its centre. The larger lace-like surfaces were covered in red to pink, and white served as their contour to enhance the ornamental forms, but sometimes their roles were reversed. Red, pink and white were applied exclusively on the protruding parts of the relief, against a deeply carved background coloured in light blue. Gilding enhanced the visibility of the *Surat al-Insan* inscription against its polychrome background. The colour scheme of the lower parts of the mihrab was similar to that of its upper parts, but the background was coloured in dark blue rather than light blue. Dark blue not only increased the contrast between the carving planes of the central niche, but also functioned in contrast to the parts of the mihrab with a light blue background. This colouristic juxtaposition gave the mihrab an illusion of greater depth. At present, it is not possible to exclude the possibility of the mihrab having been repainted, which could have occurred through centuries of the mausoleum's use by the faithful.

The polychromy and decorative principles of the Pir-i Bakran mihrab are similar to those employed for the colouration and gilding of the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1). This mihrab was produced with a much higher degree of design and carving skill, and retains pigmentation traces of a wider colouristic spectrum which corroborate its exceptional lavishness. The colours of Pir-i Bakran are also similar to those of Nishapur,[201] but the plasticity and dynamics on display at Pir-i Bakran are more advanced.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Pir-i Bakran

The Pir-i Bakran stuccos are perhaps composed of gypsum and some talcum powder.[202] After the killed plaster (*gach-i kushta*) was applied to the walls, craftsmen had approximately forty-eight hours to carve it, but this technique of stucco production was not employed for all the stuccos in the mausoleum.[203] It may have been used for the production of the mihrab and for

[201] Wilkinson 1986, 117, 202.
[202] Wulff 1966, 135.
[203] *Ibid.*, 134.

the stuccos of the third decorative intervention, which are similar to those of the Haftshuya mosque (Cat. No. 3). The relatively small surface of the panels of the mausoleum's wall surfaces enabled their elaborate production in a short period of time. In fact, larger panels in the interior of the *maqbara* and on the supporting walls of the *iwan* reflect a lesser skill. Some damaged panels in the *iwan*'s interior confirm that gypsum was applied in several layers and then carved. Evidence of the use of wooden pegs for consolidation of stucco reliefs in the mausoleum was also documented.

An investigation of the relationship between the lace-like background patterns (produced with metal chisels and other tools) and the vegetal scrolls in the foreground confirms that carving rather than moulding was used in the stucco production. The mihrab may have required production in separate sections. Damaged parts of the mihrab's stucco relief reveal traces of red colour and design for the stucco carving, in a manner similar to those observed at the Sujas Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 35) and numerous other Ilkhanid monuments. This design was likely prepared by the head of the stucco craftsmen and it allowed for fast production of elaborate decoration by the stucco carvers. Holakooei's examination of Pir-i Bakran's stuccos reveales further extensive traces of red outlines used for stucco production.[204]

The Pir-i Bakran Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

This discussion of Pir-i Bakran's architectural revetments and their decorative stages allows for a better understanding of their aesthetics and style. As already noted, the majority of carved stuccos was produced during the second (1303–4) and third (1312–13) decorative interventions. These stuccos can be distinguished based on two criteria: observations of joints between the revetments produced in different decorative interventions and their stylistic comparison. By comparing these stucco revetments to stylistically similar ones from the Haftshuya, Farfan, and Ushturjan Friday mosques, and by differentiating stuccos from these two interventions, we can make some observations regarding their divergent technical and stylistic characteristics.

All that is visible of the first phase of the stucco revetments (which corresponds to the second decorative intervention completed by 1303–4) are three stucco panels (Fig. 18; panels B, E, O, T, U), the mihrab (Fig. 28), and panel U in the *maqbara* (Fig. 22). These stuccos can be divided into two different groups based on their stylistic characteristics. The mihrab and panel U display deep reliefs and similar floral ornamental vocabulary. Moreover, the mihrab and panel U both show traces of original pigmentation and gilding, and they share similar polychromy aesthetics. Moreover, they both use a related *Thuluth* style for the inscriptions, while the Kufic on the two panels is distinct. The three panels B, E, and O are stylistically different from the mihrab and panel U, and are characterized by relatively shallow reliefs, which sometimes resemble an applique work, with rigorously symmetrical and highly abstract floral ornamentation. Panels O and E in particular, display similar aesthetics of symmetrical, shallow, and abstract ornamentation; they mirror each other, and they are juxtaposed on diverging sides of the *iwan* (see their locations on Fig. 4, panels E and O). In this respect, their aesthetic principles are

[204] Holakooei 2007.

different from the subsequent layer of stucco revetments produced during the third decorative intervention.

The remaining stucco decorations belong to the third decorative stage (completed by 1312–13), which corresponds to the second phase of stucco revetments in Pir-i Bakran (Fig. 19; phase 3). As mentioned earlier, a considerable portion of these stuccos closely resembles those of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Fig. 18; panels D, F, G, H, I, K, L, N, P, Q, R, and S). These stucco panels all share common technological and stylistic traits. Their relief is deeper and more contrasting in comparison to the stuccos produced during the preceding intervention. The type of carving is also different. It is characterized by an extensive number of patterns created with the repeated perforation of the stucco material. Moreover, undercutting of stucco appears only in this decorative intervention (Fig. 18; panels F, K, R, Q; Fig. 31). Ornamental motifs of these panels are similar to the earlier stuccos and consist of highly stylized abstract and symmetric floral forms. Because of the different carving techniques however, these panels display a distinctive overall aesthetic when compared to the stuccos of the preceding intervention (completed by 1303–4).

Yet other stucco panels belonging to this intervention also display a different style and production technology. For example, panels G, H, and S display double plane carving with an extensive perforation of stucco, which lacks undercutting. Panels G and S contain inscriptions in calligraphic styles unique to these panels. Another group of stuccos belonging to this intervention is found between the arches of the external gallery on the second floor of the mausoleum. These stuccos were produced by at least two different hands. The quality of their making is markedly divergent, but they all display a similar aesthetic of symmetrical abstracted floral ornamentation. The two large panels with square Kufic inscriptions (Figs. 21, 36; panels I and P) also belong to this decorative stage, but they stylistically stand apart from other stuccos.

This discussion of the stucco revetment styles demonstrates that it is impossible to equate a single decorative intervention with a single style of stucco ornamentation. Rather, the two interventions contain stucco panels comprising several styles. Instead of indicating a sudden change in decorative taste or aesthetics, these differences were likely determined by the stucco craftsmen's workshops in charge of stucco making, as well as diverging stucco production techniques.

The Decorative Hierarchy

Faience and stucco of the mausoleum feature diverging colour schemes: turquoise and cobalt for tiles; and a more elaborate palette of light blue, dark blue, light and dark red, white, and gold for stucco. These schemes were determined by the pigment availability, the technical advancement, and perhaps by the size of endowments, as indicated by the case of the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1). The relationship between tiles and stuccos suggests the primacy of stuccowork over tilework in the ornamental hierarchy. We can see that stuccos assumed a primary position in the decorative repertoire, since the main architectural surfaces of the mausoleum's interior were decorated with stucco, rather than tiles. Tile revetments enhanced the architectural elements of the mausoleum's interior and visually outlined architectural surfaces decorated in the stucco medium. Exceptions are the separation grills produced during

the installation of the mihrab, which are decorated with moulded turquoise and cobalt tiles (Figs. 21, 28). These grills have a structural and a decorative function: they filter light into the mausoleum and are thus of symbolic importance.

The tiles that adorn the grills are unique in shape and ornamental design (Fig. 39). Such tiles have not been discovered in any other Ilkhanid structure. The tiles could have been manufactured in Isfahan and its surroundings or they could have been brought in from Kashan. Less visible parts of the mausoleum were decorated with *Khatt-i banna'i* (Figs. 21-22). The entire decorative programme, produced according to a hierarchy of media, reflects an aesthetic that avoids empty spaces and highlights exuberance. Because of its durability, tiling was used extensively on the exterior of the mausoleum; nonetheless, key portions of the façade were decorated with stuccos (Fig. 20). It is also important to bear in mind that the aforementioned decorative stages were performed in a relatively short period of time. The predominance of stucco may be explained in part by the need to cover large architectural surfaces quickly in the redecoration interventions. Moreover, the polychromy of the stucco decoration played a key role in the final appearance of the stuccos, because it highlighted their plasticity. The juxtaposition of the flat glazed tile surfaces in cold colour tones with the deep stucco reliefs in contrasting and vibrant colours increased the visibility of the stuccoworks. The stucco was deliberately employed for critical elements, such as the inscriptions and the focal points within the *iwan*, which would have attracted the gaze of the faithful. The peak of stucco production in this period and the aesthetic taste of the time are both reflected in the primacy accorded to stuccowork within the mausoleum's decorative programme.

The stuccos of Pir-i Bakran have been described as comprising an excessive and unorganized variety of styles and techniques that collectively form the mausoleum's manneristic façade.[205] This research, however, invites a reconsideration of these assumptions. It is now clear that the perceived excessiveness of the stuccos, in fact, represents an accumulation of stuccos produced and applied onto architectural surfaces in at least three separate undertakings. I argue that the decorative principles and the relationship between the inscriptions and ornamental repertoire should be taken as evidence of an advanced aesthetic consciousness. Moreover, the strategic combination of multi-coloured stucco and bichrome faience, which achieves a flamboyant effect, also reveals the craftsmen's admiration of vibrant colours. Rather than being a chaotic assemblage, the architectural revetment programme of the monument was produced according to a clear logic and to display the prestige of the mausoleum and its endower.

Significance of Pir-i Bakran's Revetment Aesthetics

Scholars regard Pir-i Bakran as a primary example of Ilkhanid decorative aesthetics and as one of the earliest Ilkhanid structures with combined stucco and tile decoration.[206] Based on the current research, it is possible to refine the significance of Pir-i Bakran for a scholarly understanding of Ilkhanid architectural decoration. As mentioned earlier, the Friday mosque of Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4), the Uljaytu mihrab at the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1), the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), and the Old mosque of Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No.

[205] Shani 1996, 85; Pope and Ackerman 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, 1079; Grube 1981, 87. See also Shani 1989, 67–74.
[206] Shani 1996, 85; Pope and Ackerman 1977[1938], Vol. 3, 1079; Grube 1981, 87; Wilber 1955, 100–104.

30) also conserve pigment traces. Pir-i Bakran's colour palette is similar to that of Turbat-i Jam, but the stuccos of Ushturjan, Uljaytu mihrab, Sultaniyya, and Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3) display more elaborate colour palettes. These variations in colour palettes were perhaps determined by the size of the endowments or by workshop's practices. The stuccos of Pir-i Bakran therefore exemplify a specific rather than a universal approach within Ilkhanid stucco polychromy. Moreover, the lavishness of Pir-i Bakran's decoration was perhaps determined by its political significance. The fact that the mausoleum is one of the earliest Ilkhanid structures in the Isfahan province might have also lent it greater importance and sanctity in comparison to later structures. This antiquity of the mausoleum may have attracted more prestigious patrons for its constant refurbishment interventions.

Pir-i Bakran's decorative programme challenges the widespread scholarly perception of Islamic architectural decoration in Iran as the product of a linear technical and stylistic evolution. This study of the mausoleum's decorative undertakings permits aesthetic developments in the period when Ilkhanid architectural patronage reached its zenith to be traced. The mausoleum was initially decorated with lustre and glazed tiles and *Khatt-i banna'i*, followed by the first layer of stucco panels and faience grills, and it finally was redecorated with stucco panels and faience. The differences between these three decorative undertakings suggest a rapid change in decorative aesthetics rather than a sudden technological advancement in revetment production technology. Lavish patronage was the key factor in fostering this unprecedented evolution of decorative aesthetics.

A closer look at Pir-i Bakran's decoration also suggests an affinity between the Seljuq and Ilkhanid decorative principles, which initially appear to be visually distinct. This apparent difference is due to the development of stucco carving techniques, as well as the availability of expensive pigments, especially gilding and bichrome tiles—materials that reflect the prosperity of the Ilkhanid Empire. Pir-i Bakran's decoration thus illustrates a turning point in Ilkhanid and Islamic decorative aesthetics. This decorative repertoire of the early fourteenth century epitomizes the Ilkhanid predilection for exuberant and colourful stucco, combined with tile decoration. The popularity of this decorative effect fostered increased faience production in the period, which eventually led to a shift from stucco to faience as the primary decorative medium under the Timurids. Investigating a greater number of Seljuq, Ilkhanid, Timurid, and Turkmen monuments could help us comprehend more clearly the relationship between stucco and faience decoration and the impact of Ilkhanid aesthetics on later Persianate and Islamic architectural decoration.[207]

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing belonging to the monument was discovered at the site.

[207] O'Kane 1984.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

1. Historic inscriptions from the Pir-i Bakran Mausoleum

a.) Panel B: type of inscription style: *Thuluth*; location: *dalan;* phase Two. The inscription is located above the original entrance of the mausoleum, and it is set against a background of modest floral scrolls. The relief is relatively plain, and it conserves traces of original blue background colouring.

هذه العمارة المباركة الشيخ المشايخ المسلمين محمد بن بكران في ثلث و سبعمائة

This is the blessed building of the Shaykh of the Muslim Shaykhs, Muhammad ibn Bakran. In the year 703 (1303–4).

b.) Cenotaph of the Shaykh historic inscription: type of inscription style: *Naskh*; location: *maqbara;* phase Two. The inscription is located in a carved plaque at the bottom of the cenotaph. It is placed against a plain background.

هذه الروضة المقدسة المباركة لشيخ المشايخ المسلمين قدوة ارباب المحققين محى معالم الشريعة معظم الطريقة كاشف اسرار الحقيقة حجة الحق على الخلق هادي الخلق الى الحق العارف باسرار الربوبية الواقف باثار الالوهية محمد بن بكران جعلهاالله روضة من رياض الجنة له في الليلة الثلثا عاشر شهر ربيع الاول سنة ثلث و سبعمائة عمل سراج

This is the sacred tomb, blessed, of the Shaykh of the Muslim Shaykhs, model of the masters whose soul elevated to the degree of perfection, invigorator of the teachings of the Law, venerated master of the path, revelatory of the secrets of the truth, argument of the truth for the creatures, guide of the creatures towards the truth, learnt of the secrets of divinity, guardian of the traditions of theology, Muhammad ibn Bakran. May God place his tomb among the tombs of Paradise! (He died) in the night of 13 Rabiʿ I of the year 703 [October 25, 1303]. Work of Saraj [or Sirraj].

The smaller cenotaph next to the Shaykh's cenotaph is signed by the calligrapher: *ʿAli Mahmud ibn Muhammad Tabrizi Bafiruzan.*

The cenotaph also features other inscriptions, which are the Throne verse, the *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* and the blessings to Twelve Imams. These inscriptions are works of the second and third decorative stages.

c.) Panel U: type of inscription style: *Thuluth;* location: *maqbara;* phase Two. The inscription is part of a monumental carved stucco panel which comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt in the background of the historic inscription. If features Kufic style and it is the excerpt from the *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1-7).

هذه الروضة المقدسة الشيخ المشايخ المسلمين قدوة ارباب المحققين محى معالم الشريعة كاشف اسرار الحقيقة واقف باثار الالوهية حجة الحق على الخلق محمد بن بكران نورالله قبرة في سنة ثلث و سبعمائة

This is the sacred tomb of the Shaykh of the Muslim Shaykhs, model of masters whose soul elevated to the degree of perfection, invigorator of the teachings of the Law, revelatory of the secrets of the truth, guardian of the traditions of theology, argument of the truth for the creatures, Muhammad ibn Bakran. May God illuminate his tomb. In the year 703 [1303–4].

The text of the Qurʾanic excerpt reads:

The inscription reads: [208]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

The last verse of the excerpt is not contained in the inscription and the verse remains broken.

d.) Panel G: type of inscription style: *Thuluth*; location: *iwan*, south-eastern supporting wall of the *iwan* niche; phase three. The text of this inscription was likely copied from inscriptions on the panel U and the cenotaph of the Shaykh.

هذه الصفة المباركة الشيخ المشايخ المسلمين قدوة ارباب المحققين محمد بن بكران قدس الله روح العزيز سنة اثنى عشر و سبعمائة

This is the suffa of the Shaykh of the Muslim Shaykhs, the model of the true masters, Muhammad ibn Bakran. God bless his noble spirit. In the year 712 [1312–13].

e.) The half-star lustre tile[209] discovered at the site of Pir-i Bakran mausoleum and published by Medi Bahrami comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt and date of its production. It is reportedly stored in one of the museum collections of Isfahan.[210]

The inscription consists of Qurʾan *Surat al-Saff* (61:13), which is a rarely featured Qurʾanic excerpts, in *Naskh* style. The inscription concludes with the year of production of the tile written in numerals:

The content of the Qurʾanic excerpt is:[211]

[208] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[209] Bahrami 1938, 257.
[210] TEI 3784 (Last Accessed: October 26, 2021).
[211] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-as-shaff-13-qs-61-13-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 19, 2020).

وَأُخْرَىٰ تُحِبُّونَهَا ۖ نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And [you will obtain] another [favour] that you love – victory from Allah and an imminent conquest; and give good tidings to the believers.

يا محمّد فى شهور سنة ٦٩٨[212]

Oh Muhammad! In the months of the year 698 (1298-99).

The Qurʾanic excerpt is rarely featured in architectural revetments, but one parallel is mentioned by O'Kane, said to have existed in the wall painting repertoire of the Azadan domed structure, located towards the north-west of Isfahan. One of the Qurʾanic excerpts in the wall painting repertoire dated 1364-6 features the same verse of the same Qurʾanic chapter.[213]

2. Qurʾanic inscriptions at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum

a.) Panel C: Knotted Kufic inscription; phase 3; Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4). The inscription is employed to form a decorative stucco panel in a masterly manner; it runs along the outlines of the mausoleum's lunette and the knotted elements form the panel's central grid-like composition. In order not to break the fourth verse of the excerpt, the craftsmen squeezed its last part in the space next to the inscription.

The inscription reads:[214]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

This Qurʾanic excerpt exalting God and highlighting his uniqueness is frequently featured in Medieval Iranian stucco repertoires on mihrabs and other parts of decorative programmes.

b.) Panel F: Kufic inscription: phase three; invocation to God. This inscription is designed in Kufic style with elongated letter *hastae*. It is placed against a leaf-derived background, which is very similar to the one encountered in the carved stucco frieze of the dado area of the mausoleum. In fact, both bands are works of the third decorative phase.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم . سبحان الحي الباقي

In the name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful, Glory be to the Others.

[212] TEI 3784 (Last Accessed: October 26, 2021).
[213] See O'Kane 1999-2000, 14-16.
[214] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).

c.) Panel J: the carved stucco frieze which tops the dado area of the interior of mausoleum's monumental *iwan* is topped by a double-inscription frieze. It consists of a large inscription in *Naskh* style set against a background of floral scrolls. It features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Insan* (76:1-8). The end of the inscription features the signature of the master stucco craftsman in charge of the redecoration of the mausoleum (of the third decorative phase). The signature is slightly different from the rest of the inscription because it comprises diacritical marks. This inscription is topped by a small dimension border featuring Square Kufic style inscription carved out of one layer of stucco body. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:255-256). These stuccos are part of the third decorative stage.

The *Naskh* inscription text reads:[215]

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَذْكُورًا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا
إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا
إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا
عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا
يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا
وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?
Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.
Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.
Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.
Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of Kafur,
A spring of which the [righteous] servants of Allah will drink; they will make it gush forth in force [and abundance].
They [are those who] fulfil [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread.
And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive,

The Signature of the master stucco craftsman reads:

عمل محمّد شاه نقّاش

Work of Muhammad Shah [al-]naqqash.

The Square Kufic inscription text reads:[216]

اللهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لاَ تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلاَ نَوْمٌ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهم وَلاَ يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاء وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَلاَ يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيم

[215] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Insan (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[216] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.
There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

d.) Panel K: Kufic with knot elements; phase three. This inscription visually frames the exterior of the *maqbara*. The inscription style is specific, and it consists of a Kufic inscription which translates into knotted element composition in the area above the inscription. In terms of design and production technology, this inscription resembles similar Kufic inscription in the monumental lunette of the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 3). Both are works of the same craftsmen. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (36:1-7).

Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (36:1-7):[217]

يس
وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ
إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ
لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَا أُنْذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ
لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Ya, Seen.
By the wise Qurʾan.
Indeed you, [O Muhammad], are from among the messengers,
On a straight path.
[This is] a revelation of the Exalted in Might, the Merciful,
That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware.
Already the word has come into effect upon most of them, so they do not believe.

e.) Panel N: *Naskh*: second or third decorative phase. The area above the *maqbara* roof forms the passage between the *iwan* supporting wall structures. A small carved stucco mihrab and two inscription bands were produced and aligned on the wall facing the monumental mihrab. Hunarfar reports that the inscription framing this mihrab features parts of *Surat al-Ikhlas* and

[217] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ya-Sin (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

that the longer band which spreads across the surface of this wall was already illegible at the time of his survey.[218]

f.) Panel Q: *Naskh*; phase three. This inscription band features fluid *Naskh* style with slightly elongated vertical shafts of letters. The inscription is placed against a background of simple vegetal elements and framed by a geometric border on its top. The inscription features the *Basmala* and first four verses of *Surat al-Ikhlas*, 112:1-4.

g.) Panel S: Square Kufic: phase three. This panel of abstract and vegetal composition comprises and epigraphic cartouche in square Kufic in its top portion.

The inscription reads:

الملك لله

The Dominion belongs to God.

The niche where the panel is located also comprises two columns of Square Kufic compositions with repeating *Muhammad* in positive and negative of the carved reliefs.

h.) Panel X: three inscriptions in wall painting and applied moulded stuccos. The interior of the small domed chamber features an architectural revetment repertoire which consists of wall painting and applied moulded stucco media. The *qibla* wall of the structure features a mihrab produced with applied moulded stuccos. It features a framing inscription of a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112: 1-4)[219] and in the central part of the frame, the apotropaic invocation, which reads *But Allah will spare you their evil* (part of 2:137). The mihrab is framed by remains of a wall painting landscape consisting of two mosque minarets with glazed insert revetments and further elements of plant (tree) landscape. The upper portion of the domed structure features a double inscription in *Naskh* and Kufic style. The *Naskh* inscription was read by O'Kane and Hunarfar as Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-4). O'Kane states that the Kufic inscription is no longer legible, but Hunarfar sustains that it also comprises parts of *Surat al-Ikhlas*.[220]

The text of the *Naskh* inscription reads:[221]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,

[218] Hunarfar 1966, 264-265.
[219] O'Kane 1999-2000, 13-15.
[220] Hunarfar 1966, 264; O'Kane 1999-2000, 13-15.
[221] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

i.) Inscriptions of the monumental mihrab in the mausoleum are few in number, compared to other Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. The mihrab is the work of the second constructive and decorative stage and its panels retain extensive traces of blue, white, and red. They can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises inscription bands of Qurʾanic excerpts. The second group consists of Square Kufic bands of repeating invocations, which function as visual elements of vegetal compositions which do not comprise other epigraphic elements.

The niche of the mihrab is framed by a thin Square Kufic band repeating: *The Dominion belongs to God*. A similar type of Square Kufic band is also integrated into the vegetal elements composition of the mihrab's spandrels.

The monumental framing inscription band consists of two main inscriptions in *Thuluth* and Kufic styles. The *Thuluth* inscription is the main and it features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Insan* (76:1-8; for the text, see above) and the upper register of the inscription is filled with the Kufic inscription featuring a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:255-256; for the text, see above), which comprises the *Ayat al-Kursi*. The two inscriptions are placed against a slightly recessed background consisting of vegetal elements and a Square Kufic band forming repeating form of a pointed trefoil arch. This inscription consists of repeating of: *Allah*.

The top horizontal panel of the mihrab displays a deep and protruding relief of abstracted vegetal compositions which repeat across the panel. They comprise a Square Kufic band with repeating: *The Dominion belongs to God*.

3. Non-Qurʾanic Religious Inscriptions at the Pir-i Bakran Mausoleum

a.) Large surfaces of supporting walls, the ceiling of the *iwan* and the ceiling of the mausoleum's tomb chamber comprise *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions, which were produced during its first constructive and decorative stage. These inscriptions may be of a Sunni-oriented content and they act as the background of the entire decorative programme of the monument. They are formed with stucco plugs carved out of layers of plaster, which cover the surfaces. The plugs may have originally been coloured white.

The ceiling of the *iwan* features a repeating Sunni Shahada.

The ceiling of the tomb chamber features repeating inscriptions reading: *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*.

The wall surfaces of the interior of the *iwan* feature names of the four Orthodox Caliphs: *ʿUmar, ʿUthman, Abu Bakr* and *ʿAli*.

b.) Panel I: Square Kufic panel: *63 names of God*; phase three. The monumental panel is a specific composition of Square Kufic, carved out of one layer of stucco, and part of the third decorative intervention. The inscription was first read by Giovanni Oman and Hunarfar.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم هو الله الذى لا إله إلّا هو الرحمن الرحيم الملك القدّوس السلام المؤمن المهيمن العزيز الجبّار المتكبّر الخالق البارى المصوّر الغفّار القهّار الوهّاب الرزّاق الفتّاح العليم القابض الباسط الخافض الرافع المعزّ المذلّ السميع البصير الحكم العدل اللطيف الصبر الحليم العظيم الغفور الشكور العليّ الكبير الحفيظ المقيت الحسيب الجليل الكريم الرقيب المجيب الواسع الحكيم الودود المجيد الباعث الشهيد الحقّ الوكيل القوىّ المتين الولى الحميد المحصىّ المبدئ المعيد المحىّ المميت الحيّ[222]

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, God there is no other but Him. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Believer, the Vigilant, the Mighty, the Compeller, the Proud, the Creator, the Evolver, the Fashioner, the Pardoner, the Dominator, the Bestower, the Dispenser of all good, the Victorious, the All-knowing, He who restrains, He who expands, He who humbles, He who raises dignity, He who gives honour, He who abases and degrades, the Hearer, the All-seeing, the Judge, the Just, the Benevolent, the Sagacious, the Gentle, the Inaccessible, the indulgent Pardoner, the Very Grateful, the Vigilant Guardian, the Nourisher, the Determiner, the Majestic, the Generous, the Possessive Guardian, the Assenter, the Omnipresent, the Wise, the Very Loving, the Glorious, the Revivifier, the Witness, the Truth, the Truster, the Powerful, the Unshakable, the Friend, He who is worthy of all praise, the Numberer, the Innovator, He who resuscitates, the Creator of Life, the Creator of death, the Living.[223]

This and the second such panel are unique cases of monumental Square Kufic inscriptions of such dimensions among Ilkhanid monuments. Similar types of panels are only found at Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3) and they in fact seem to be works of the same craftsmen's workshop.

c.) Panel P: Square Kufic panel: Muhammad and the Fourteen Infallibles (*Muhammad wa Chahardah Maʿsumin*); phase three.

اللهم صلى على محمد المصطفى وصلى على علي المرتضى وصلى على فاطمة الزهرة وصلى على خديجة الكبرى وصلى على حسن مجتبا وصلى على حسين شهيد كربلا وصلى علىزين العابدين وصلى على محمد باقي وصلى على جعفر صادق وصلى على موسى الكاظم وصلى على محمد تقي وصلى على علي نقي وصلى على حسن العسكري وصلى على محمد مهدي.[224]

Blessings of God on Muhammad al-Mustafa, ʿAli al-Murtada, Fatima al-Zahra, Khadija al-Kubra, Hasan Mujtaba, Husayn Shahid Karbala, ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin, Muhammad Baqir, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, Musa al-Kazim, ʿAli Musa Rida, Muhammad Taqi, ʿAli Naqi, Hasan al-ʿAskari and Muhammad al-Mahdi.[225]

The content of this inscription is the only explicitly Shiʿite inscription of the monument's epigraphic programme, together with the blessings to Twelve Imams on the cenotaph of the Shaykh, which could however be works of the cenotaph's later modification (see above).

d.) The interior of the tomb chamber of the Shaykh contains two more panels of Square Kufic inscriptions, one of which is left incomplete. The two panels recount the same inscription,

[222] TEI 35433 (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021); Oman 1999, 151-157.
[223] Text from: Majeed 2008, 117.
[224] After Hunarfar 1966, 257.
[225] Text from: Majeed 2008, 116.

which is also found on the cells of the mausoleum's muqarnas semi-dome. All of these panels are works of the third decorative phase. Their content was first read by Hunarfar:[226]

سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا اله الا الله و الله اكبر و لاحول ولاقوة الا بالله العلي العظيم

Glory be to God and Praise be to God and there is no God but God and the God is the Greatest, and there is nobody greater or stronger than the God who is the Highest and the Greatest.

The same inscription repeats in the upper medallions inserted into the muqarnas cells of the muqarnas semi-dome.

Stucco Plugs on Supporting Walls

Several stucco plugs in the interior of the mausoleum's *iwan* comprise epigraphic elements. Some of the most commonly occurring are: *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*, but other elements are found in the plugs.[227]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

No architectural revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period have been recorded on the mausoleum.

Mausoleum and Revetments' Patronage

Original lustre tiles with animal motifs and especially *Khatt-i bannaʾi* decoration containing the names of the Orthodox Caliphs and the Sunni Shahada suggest that the mausoleum could hardly have been a Shiʿite structure in the early stages of its existence.[228] The mihrab and the grills were installed during the second decorative stage in 1303–4, by which time the mausoleum's structure had been completed. The subsequent redecoration, which perhaps included an extension of the entrance corridor (third stage), was completed by 1312–13. It is during this phase that markedly Shiʿite inscriptions (the two square Kufic panels) characterized the decorative repertoire of the mausoleum.

Lavishness of the first two decorative stages would seem to render the third stage (between 1303–4 and 1312–13) unnecessary; it must have been put in place for reasons other than the deterioration of earlier decoration. According to Majeed, the final decorative stage was motivated by Uljaytu's Shiʿite propaganda, but this hypothesis requires refinement.[229] There is no mention of Uljaytu in the inscriptions, unlike in the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (1310; Cat. No. 1),[230] which was sponsored by his vizier to celebrate Uljaytu's conversion to Shiʿism.[231] Unless further evidence emerges, it would be difficult to argue for an imperial commission in the case of Pir-i Bakran.

[226] Hunarfar 1966, 264-265.
[227] See Ventrone, 1981, 60–61, 63.
[228] Watson 1985, 153–56; Pickett 1997, 125.
[229] Majeed 2008, 111–13.
[230] Blair 1986a, 8.
[231] Majeed 2008, 122–23; Hunarfar 1966, 115–21.

Inscriptions from the third stage, however, contain Shiʿite elements in Square Kufic, seen on two large panels on the supporting walls of the *iwan* (Fig. 4, panels I and P): the Beautiful Names of God (*al-asmaʾ al-husna*) and the Fourteen Infallibles (*Muhammad wa Chahardah Maʿsumin*; Figs. 2, 8).[232] Furthermore, the Shaykh's cenotaph was refurbished in parallel to these interventions.[233] The dated inscription on the cenotaph is the oldest, but it is also likely that the cenotaph was subsequently enlarged (no dated inscriptions of this intervention exist; this part of the cenotaph contains verses from the *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* and the Throne Verse only). It may have been during this intervention that a Shiʿite inscription blessing the members of the Prophet's family (*Ahl al-bayt*) was added to the cenotaph.[234] It is plausible that this happened during the third decorative stage; the part of the cenotaph with the Shiʿite inscription was not covered by the tile decoration, which was applied to the top part of the cenotaph during the third decorative intervention.

Perhaps it was indeed Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite creed that prompted a more exuberant and explicitly Shiʿite decorative programme at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, sponsored by an unknown endower. We might speculate that this anonymous endower was an Ilkhanid official of a lower rank, who took over the duty of commissioning structural or decorative interventions of the mausoleum, which is similar to the case of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4).[235] Perhaps the resistance to the Shiʿite creed in the Isfahan region triggered the state's response by fostering propagandistic redecorations of religious structures via its officials. On the other hand, the limitations of the Pir-i Bakran's endowment income could have determined the preference for a redecoration project, rather than a construction *ex novo*.

In the past, scholars considered the death of the Shaykh as the turning point in the mausoleum's construction and decoration, a view for which there is no substantial evidence. The inscription on the *maqbara* lunette (panel U) provides information about the Shaykh and his death, but its validity as a source of information may be dubious because the evidence provided by the structure and its revetment suggests a different constructive and decorative sequence for the lunette. Further research might consider the possibility of Ghazan Khan's death (1304) as an indirectly determining factor for the cessation in production of the second decorative stage. We also cannot exclude the possibility that the patron of the second decorative stage might have died around 1303–4. Alternatively, this decoration could have been judged as inadequate during Uljaytu's reign, when it was redecorated by a new Shiʿite patron. Such a sequence of events, however, would be difficult to prove. It is also hard to argue for an imperial commission in the case of Pir-i Bakran, due to the lower quality of the architectural revetments as compared to those of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27) and his 1310 mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1). Therefore, it is more reasonable to consider the possibility that Ilkhanid officials were involved in the constructive and decorative campaigns of Pir-i Bakran, as at Ushturjan. It is crucial to stress, however, that unlike at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4), no written

[232] Hunarfar 1966, 256, 259–60. See also Oman 1999.
[233] See also images in the *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale,* Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 10010/14-15 (Camillo Tarozzi, 1974) 10910/11, 13 (Camillo Tarozzi, 1974) 12343/10 (Franco Rigamonti, 1976).
[234] See also images in the *Archivio fotografico del Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale,* Fondo IsIAO, negatives no. 10910/11, 13 (Camillo Tarozzi, 1974) and 12343/10 (Franco Rigamonti, 1976).
[235] See Miles 1974, 89–98.

evidence of any endowers has yet been discovered. The question of the exact identity of Pir-i Bakran's patrons thus remains unanswered for the time being.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The only signatures of craftsmen in Pir-i Bakran are those of Muhammad Shah (al-)*naqqash* on the stucco inscription of the *Surat al-Insan* running along the interior supporting walls of the *iwan* (Fig. 18; panel J; third decorative stage); the stone carver Saraj (a carved inscription on the marble cenotaph of the Shaykh, second decorative stage; dated 1303–4); and perhaps the calligrapher ʿAli Mahmud ibn Muhammad Tabrizi Bafiruzan (a carved inscription on an unidentified marble cenotaph adjacent to the Shaykh's cenotaph).

The term *naqqash* normally denotes a painter-decorator or a sculptor, and can also mean *designer*, but it is distinguished from *naqqar*, which designates a carver or engraver. It is not clear whether the signature of Muhammad Shah *naqqash* refers to the designer of the third decorative repertoire or the head of the stucco workshop. Blair's identification of the person in question with a famous Isfahani calligrapher is plausible, but the claim requires further research and solid evidence.[236] The quality of the Pir-i Bakran's signed inscription does not correspond to the skill of a master calligrapher, even if we take into consideration that someone else may have carved the signature. It has been noted that the almost contemporary wooden minbar at the Friday mosque of Naʾin (dated 1311) is signed as a work of (ʿ*amal*) Mahmud Shah ibn Muhammad *al-naqqash* al-Kirmani.[237] The signed inscription on the Naʾin minbar, by contrast, reveals the skill of a master calligrapher in its design.[238] Indeed, after stating that the minbar was made by the master, the glory of the workmen (ʿ*amal*), Mahmud Shah ibn Muhammad *al-naqqash* al-Kirmani, it continues in Persian and at the end states that the inscription was *written by* (*bi-yadi*) the slave ʿAbd al-Hakim al-Muhammadi.

The *nisba* of the other Pir-i Bakran craftsman, *Tabrizi*, could indicate that craftsmen or workshops from remote parts of the Empire may have been employed for the task of decorating the mausoleum. The stucco panels of the second decorative stage (produced by 1303–4) resembling those of the Ushturjan and Farfan Friday mosques (Cat. Nos. 4-5) suggest the activity of the same workshop, given the proximity of these three structures and their almost contemporary production. At least two stucco workshops must have been involved in the third decorative stage, however, because only two thirds of the panels are related to Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3). In sum, parallels between the four monuments suggest the activities of at least three itinerant stucco workshops within the Isfahan province in the first half of the fourteenth century.

f.) Monument Condition

Historically, travellers did not include the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum in their itineraries and descriptions. It is therefore unknown when exactly the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum fell into disrepair and disuse. Because Paone has thoroughly discussed the mausoleum's restorations, I address only the essential points here.[239] The central and southern part of the *iwan* must have

[236] Blair 1986a, 39. See also Arberry *et al*. 1959-62, Vol. 1, 103.
[237] Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 100.
[238] See Wittek 1938, 33–34; Smith 1938, Fig. 4. See also Noci 1982, 1-28.
[239] Paone 1995, 1–30.

been repaired just before 1937, and the first documented interventions (1937) imply that the mausoleum was in disuse at that point. The 1937 interventions focused on structural repairs of the second floor of the galleries, the mihrab area, the domed structure, and two portals of the *dalan*. They were followed by the reconstruction of the *dalan*'s vaulting, which was performed by 1959. Due to the limited nature of these interventions, the first scientific restoration campaign of the monument (1970–78) was entrusted to IsMEO. When this campaign was interrupted, the local institutions documented their interventions as thoroughly as IsMEO had.

Photos published by Godard[240] and Pope[241] document the damaged state of the structure in the 1930s: the vault of the *dalan* was in ruins, which led to the deterioration of its internal decoration, especially the stucco panels within the *dalan*. The second floor of the *iwan* was also damaged, and cracks in the north-western and south-eastern parts of the *iwan*'s supporting walls are visible. The mihrab was in poor condition, but the lower part of the mihrab had already been restored prior to these interventions. Compared to their present state, however, the top register of the mihrab and the stucco panels on the supporting walls of the *iwan*'s interior were in excellent condition at that time.

Photos published by Wilber[242] show the 1937 restoration interventions: the structure and the mihrab were in a more integral condition, while the other remaining stucco revetments had already started to degrade. After the 1937 restorations, the mausoleum may have functioned as a place of commemoration for Imam Husayn's martyrdom (*husayniyya*) until the 1960s, when a mosque was built nearby and prayers were held there instead.[243] Photos published by Grube[244] document cracks in the *iwan* vault, damage to the upper part of the muqarnas semi-dome, a damaged top register of the mihrab, and damage on several stucco panels positioned on the interior of the supporting wall of the *iwan* and within the *maqbara*. The 1937 and 1956–57 (1959) interventions focusing on the structural integrity and preservation of the monument failed in preventing further deterioration of the mausoleum's decoration. The mihrab and the stucco panels in the *iwan* suffered particular damage, because the initial wall cracks were neither repaired nor were the panels consolidated on time. The IsMEO interventions focused on the stucco revetment consolidation, the muqarnas semi-dome, domed chamber, and the *maqbara*; conservation efforts were continued by local institutions after the international collaboration ended in 1978.

Interventions on Pir-i Bakran subsequent to the Iranian Revolution are documented by colour photographs by Blair and Bloom.[245] These photographs indicate that the damage to the panels was repaired sometime in 1970s or 1980s. Importantly, the first cleaning and consolidation interventions of the stuccos with original colouring traces were performed by the IsMEO.[246] The originality of these colour traces has been confirmed by some preliminary examinations of pigment samples by the IsMEO members.[247] This IsMEO investigation and restoration of

[240] Godard 1937, 33.
[241] Pope and Ackerman 1977[1938], Vol. 8, 388.
[242] Wilber 1955, Pls. 26, 27 by A. U. Pope.
[243] Paone 1995, 277.
[244] Grube 1981, Figs. 17, 20, 25.
[245] See http://archnet.org/collections/15 (Last Accessed: August 10, 2016).
[246] Rosario Paone, e-mail message to author, August 28, 2014.
[247] *Ibid.*

stucco decorations was continued later, in the 2000s. Preliminary archaeometric research of the stucco pigmentation and gilding was performed by Holakooei.[248] This was followed by Hamzavi and Aslani's research and restoration interventions on the mausoleum a decade ago.[249] Furthermore, in the course of Hamzavi and Aslani's research, cracks in the *maqbara* lunette stucco panel U revealed another decoration layer beneath, which consists of a gilded ceramic inscription with a stucco decorated background.[250]

g.) Research Findings – Summary:

The Pir-i Bakran mausoleum was constructed in two stages, and its decorative programme is a result of at least three separate decorative undertakings. My study yields evidence confirming Pir-i Bakran's original function as a funerary structure (as previously suggested by Paone) and not a teaching *iwan* that was subsequently turned into a mausoleum. Moreover, I have determined that the entire mausoleum was constructed by 1303–4, and its decorative undertakings were completed by 1312–13.

It is not clear when the construction of the mausoleum started. The mihrab, which is believed to postdate the Shaykh's death in 1303, seems to have been installed by 1303–4, together with the perforated tile-decorated grills. The shortage of information about Shaykh Bakran suggests that this personage might have been a legendary figure or a religious authority from the time preceding the Ilkhanid Empire, around whom the myth of a Sufi Shaykh was created during the Ilkhanid period, in all probability for the state's celebration of the official creed. I found no clear indication that the death of the Shaykh triggered any decorative or constructive undertakings. The final redecoration of the mausoleum was the first occasion in which a Shiʿite message was prominently displayed in the structure. The combined Sufi and Shiʿite character of the mausoleum must have attracted its endowers. Pir-i Bakran's lavish decoration suggests a relatively high-ranking endower for at least the final redecoration intervention. Without further evidence, however, it is impossible to relate the monument to a royal patron. Except for three craftsmen's signatures, the identities of the mausoleum's artists and endower(s) remain unknown.

It is necessary to reconsider Pir-i Bakran's significance for the understanding of Ilkhanid decorative aesthetics. Previously perceived as chaotic and excessively exuberant, the decorative programme of Pir-i Bakran may be explained as the accumulation of three decorative stages. From this perspective there are four key points. First, the craftsmen consciously integrated new revetments into older elements of architectural decoration. Second, decoration was applied according to clear principles in order to enhance the mausoleum's architectural features and focal points. Third, the primacy of stucco over tiles (second and third decorative stages) is due to the predominance of stucco production at a time when tile revetment had yet to evolve (under the Timurids). Fourth, this decorative hierarchy may be accounted for by aesthetic predilections rather than pragmatic technical developments. A clear distinction between the three decorative

[248] Holakooei 2007.
[249] Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 71–186, 193–276.
[250] Rosario Paone, e-mail message to author, August 28, 2014; Hamzavi and Aslani 2012, 246–47.

stages has been demonstrated, but it is not evident when the first stage began, and the length of the intervals between the three stages remains unknown.

Polychromy played a critical role in the ultimate aesthetic appearance of Pir-i Bakran's decorative programme. My analysis of the stucco polychromy and stucco colouring principles yields a revised vision of Ilkhanid decorative aesthetics. Pir-i Bakran's endower(s) and artists savoured expensive, vibrant, and exuberant decoration using brightly coloured stucco, against a background of bichrome tiles in cold tones. These stucco colouration principles stemmed from the region's long-standing tradition of polychrome stuccowork, epitomized in the three-dimensional and dynamic trompe l'oeil of Pir-i Bakran's stucco revetments. Colour is only one aspect of this monument's consciously planned programme of fashionable and functional decoration. I have pointed out that the multimedia revetments did not simply adorn the structure, but also emphasized the key architectural features and spaces of the mausoleum.

To conclude, the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum is one of the key structures for new studies on Ilkhanid decorative aesthetics. Its exuberant ornamentation represents a particular case within the rapidly changing taste of the period, characterized by an innovative syntax between decorative media and polychromy. This change in artistic conception during the reigns of Ghazan Khan and Uljaytu contributed to the dynasty's investiture within the territory and culture of Iran. Ilkhanid art and architecture emerged from a quest for the finest expression of political, religious, economic, and cultural dynastic power. The creativity and wit of this artistic experimentation express themselves outstandingly in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Hamzavi and Aslani 2012; Hunarfar 1966, 252-266; Grube 1981; Paone 1995; Paone 1981; Paone 1980; Herzfeld 1935, 106-107; Godard 1937, 29-35; SPA Vol. 3, 1078-1079; Wilber 1955, 121-124; Pickett 1997, 124-130; Hardy-Guilbert 1992, Majeed 2008; Baghsorkhi and Halimi 2009; Baghshorki and Mahdirgi 2013; Knobloch 2000; O'Kane 1999-2000; Bahrami1938, 257-259; Holakooei 2007; Oman 1999.

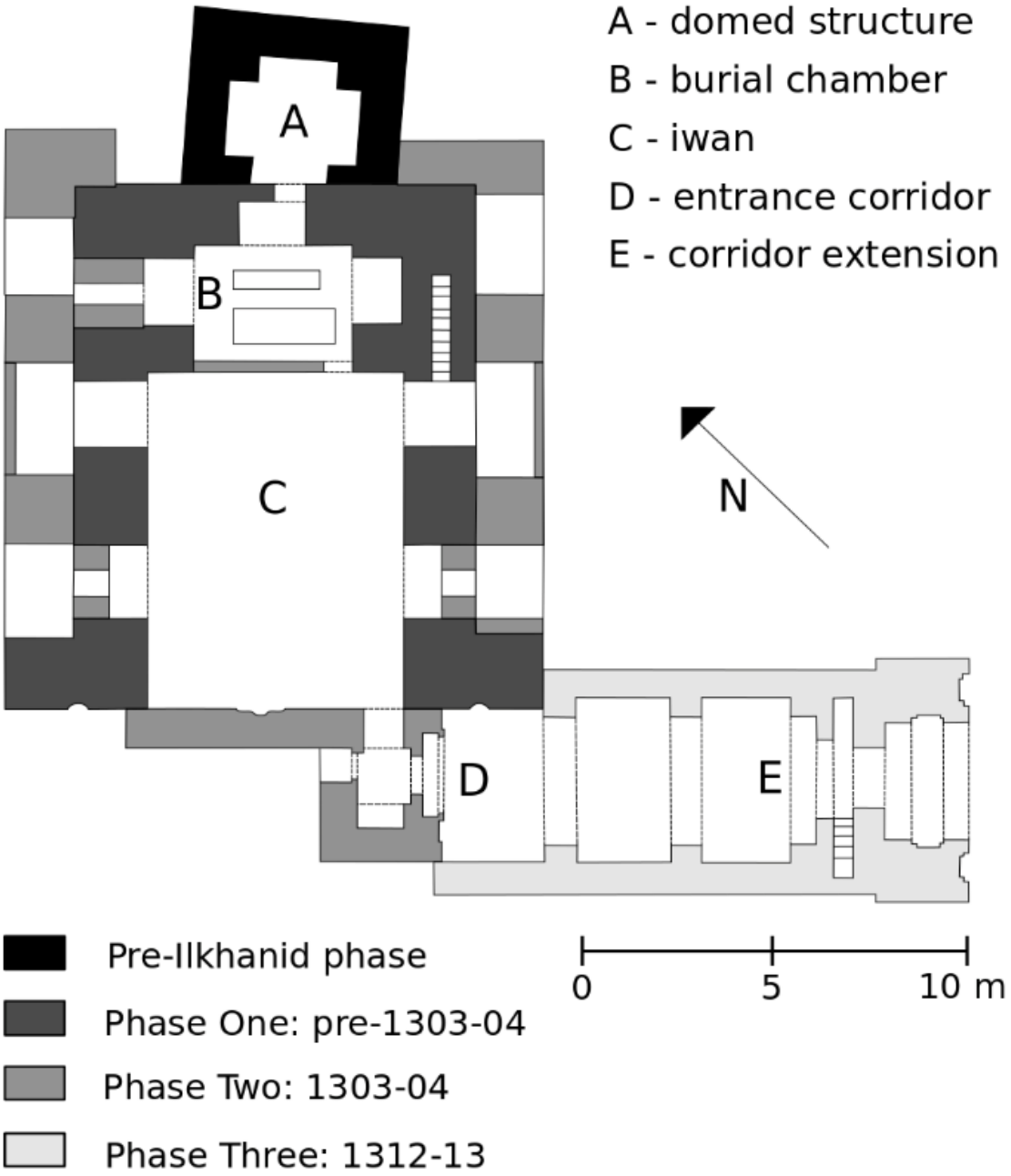


Figure 17: Ground plan of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, with indicated constructive and decorative phases. (After Wilber 1955, Pl. 29).

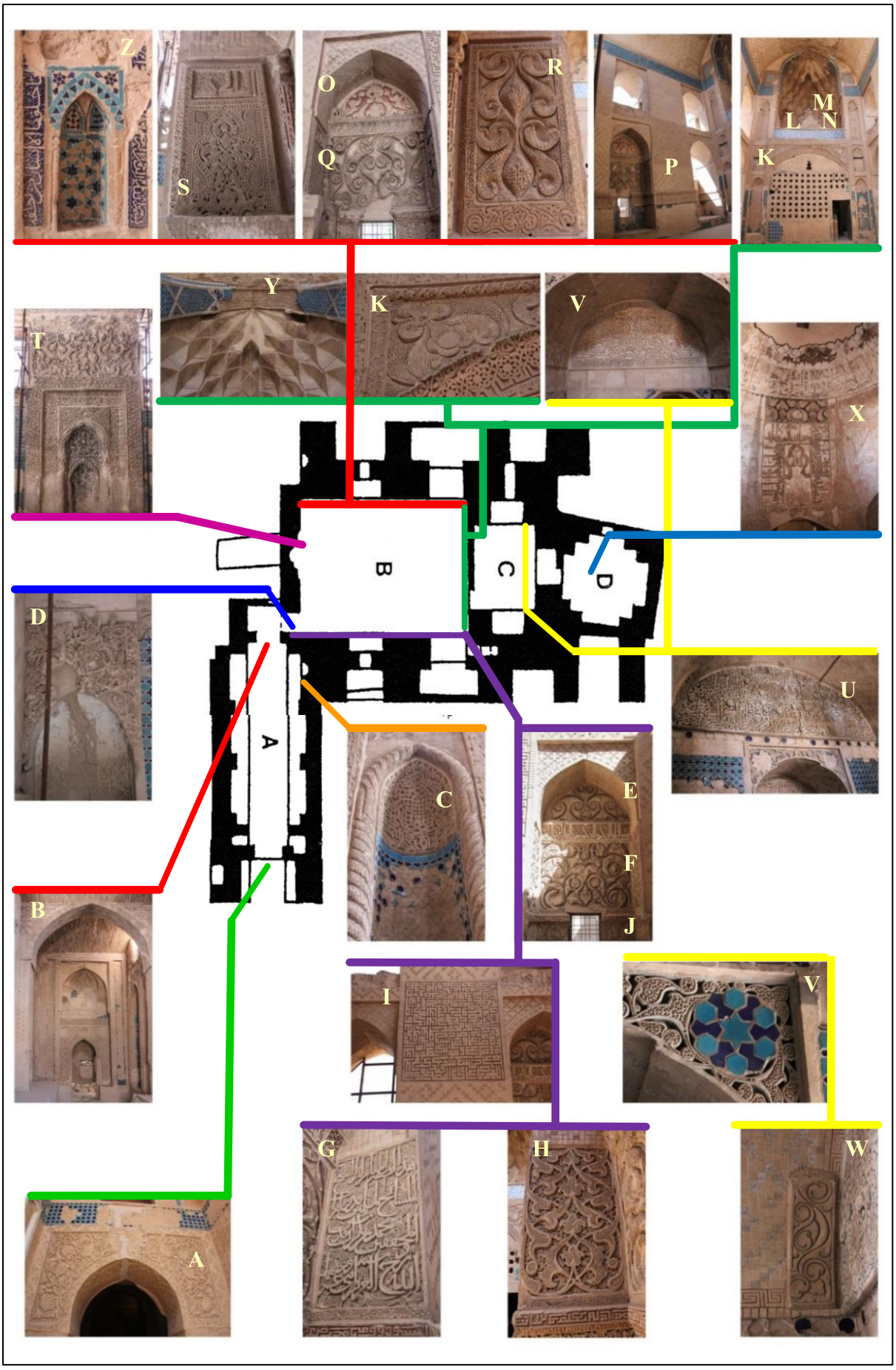


Figure 18: Locations of stucco panels of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.

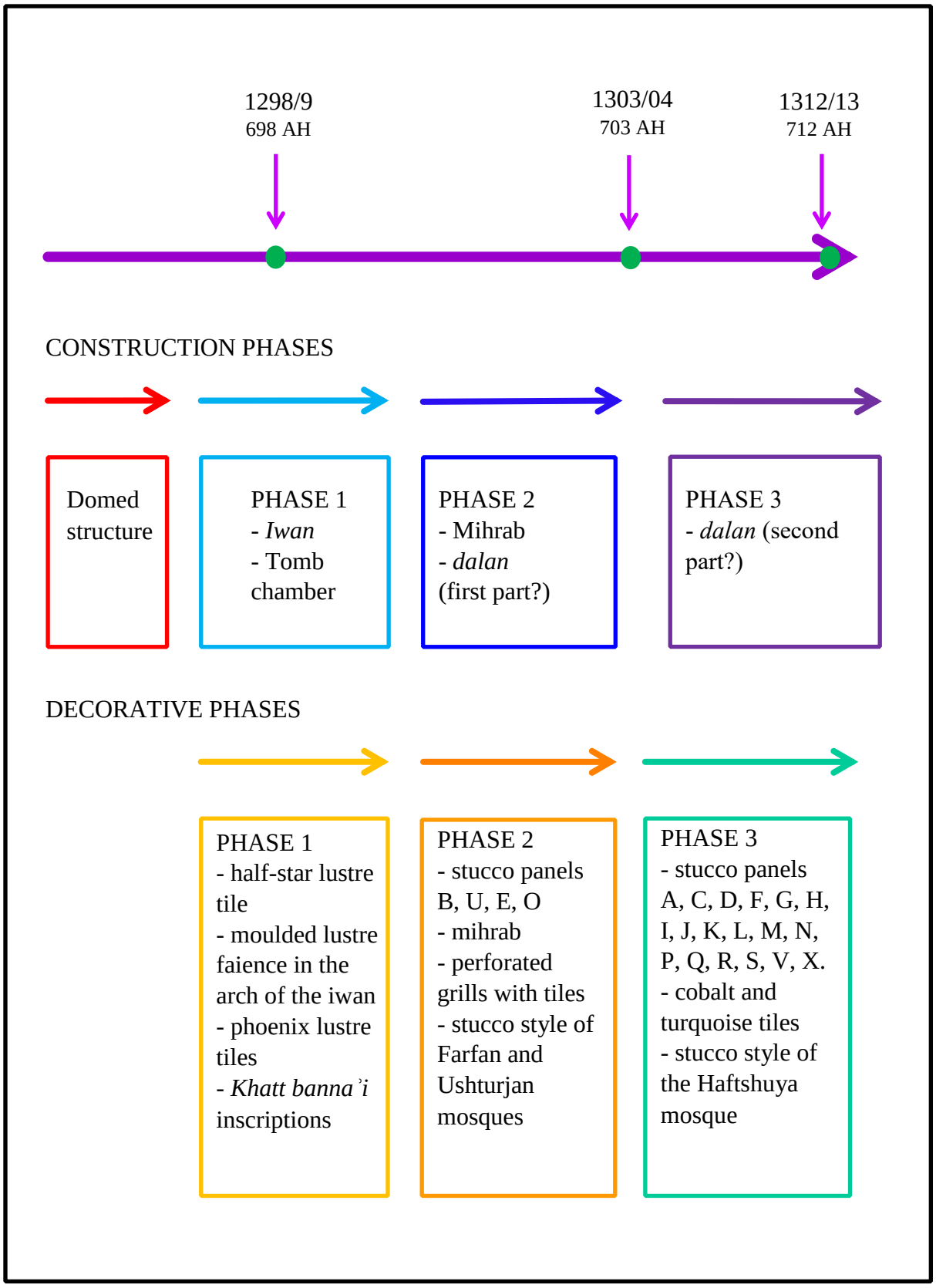


Figure 19: Information concerning constructive and decorative undertakings at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.



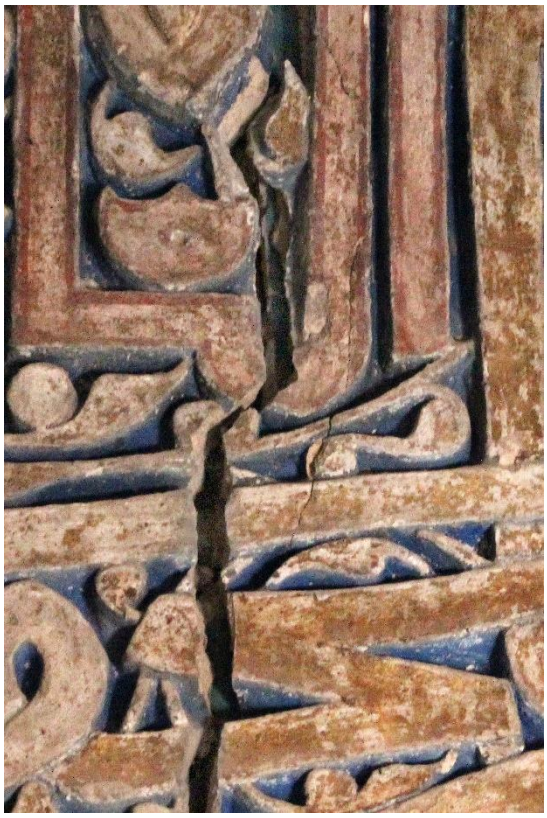
Figure 20: Exterior of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum. View from south.



Figure 21: Interior of the monumental *iwan* of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, view from south-west: remains of the separation grill between the *iwan*'s main space for prayer rites and the burial chamber of the Shaykh.



Figure 22: Interior of the burial chamber of the Shaykh with the carved stucco inscription (panel U; second phase) dated 1303-04, which covers earlier stucco and tile revetments.





Figures 23 and 24: Details of the Carved stucco inscription panel in the burial chamber of the Shaykh. Left: the crack in the panel reveals the covered tile and stucco revetments of mausoleum's first decorative phase. Right: detail of abstracted vegetal ornamentation with gold leaf gilding.

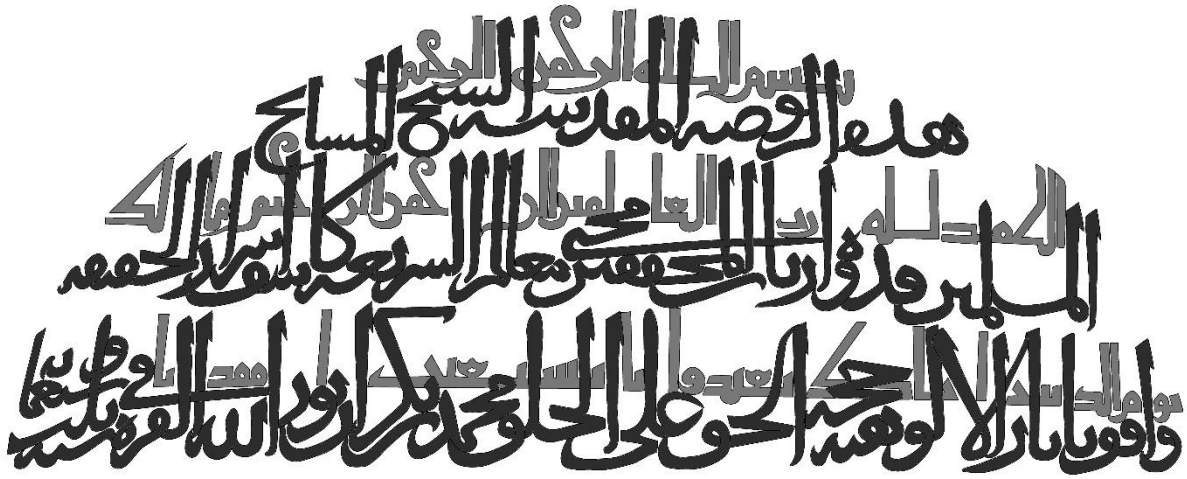


Figure 25: Drawing of the historic inscription of the burial chamber of the Shaykh (panel U).

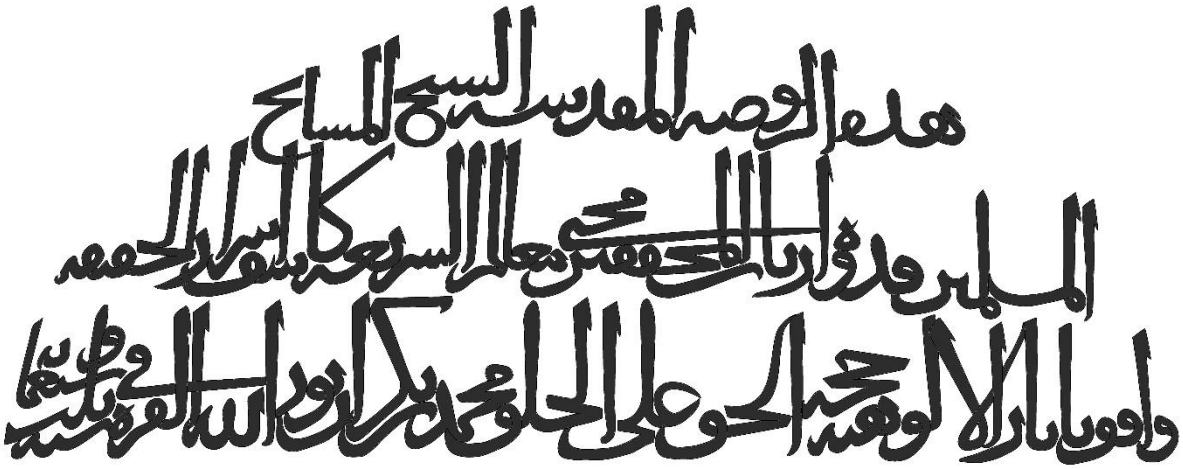


Figure 26: The historic inscription was designed free-hand on the surface of the stucco panel.

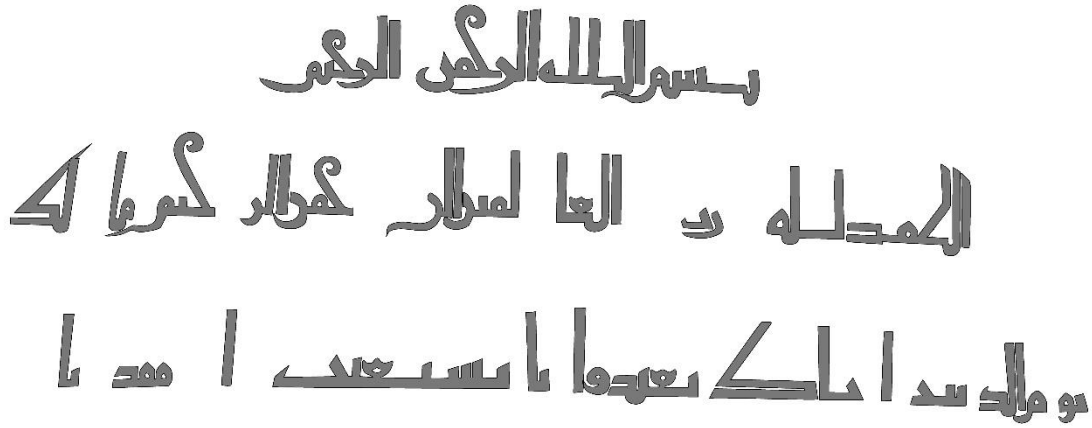
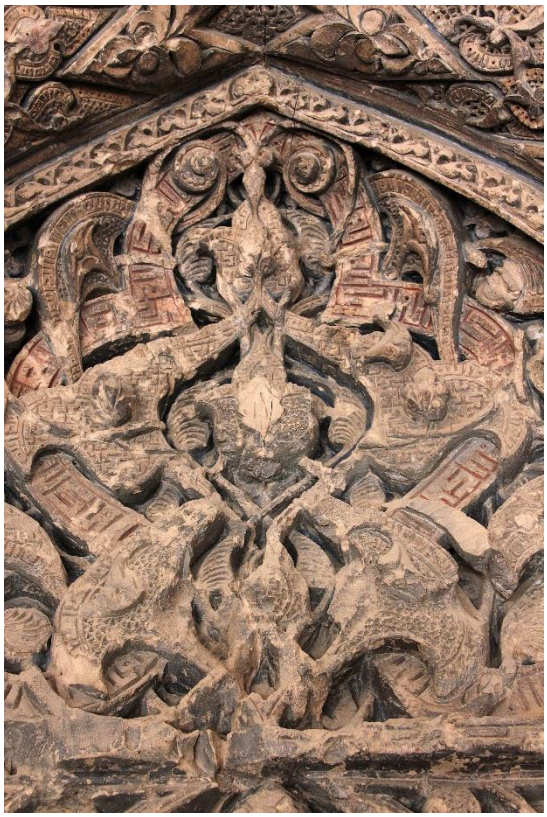
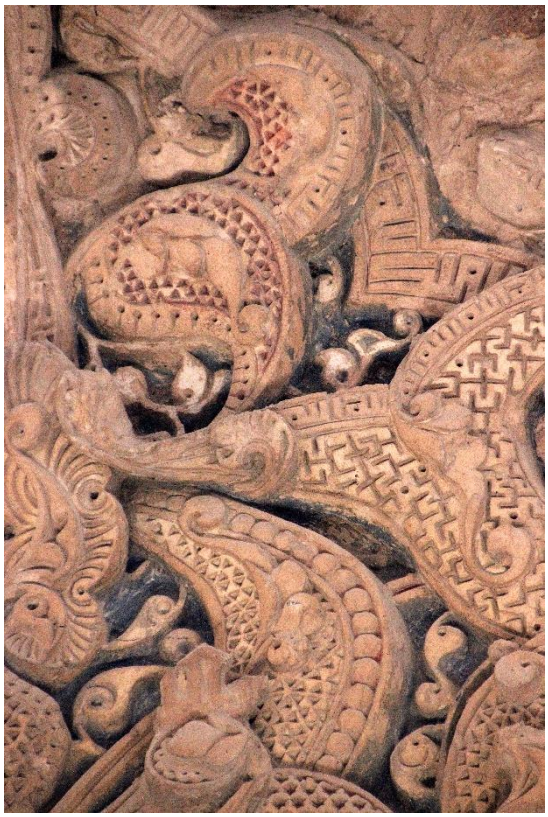


Figure 27: The Qurʾanic Kufic inscription was employed to fill the background of the historic inscription.

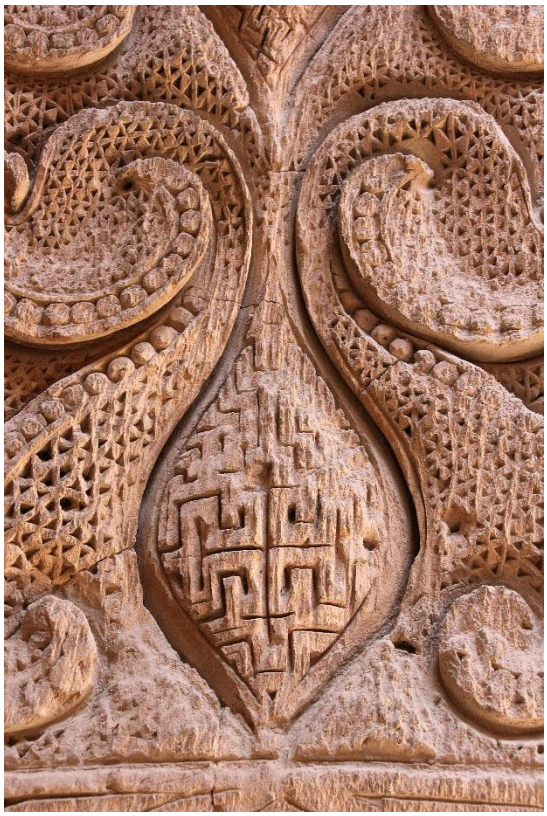
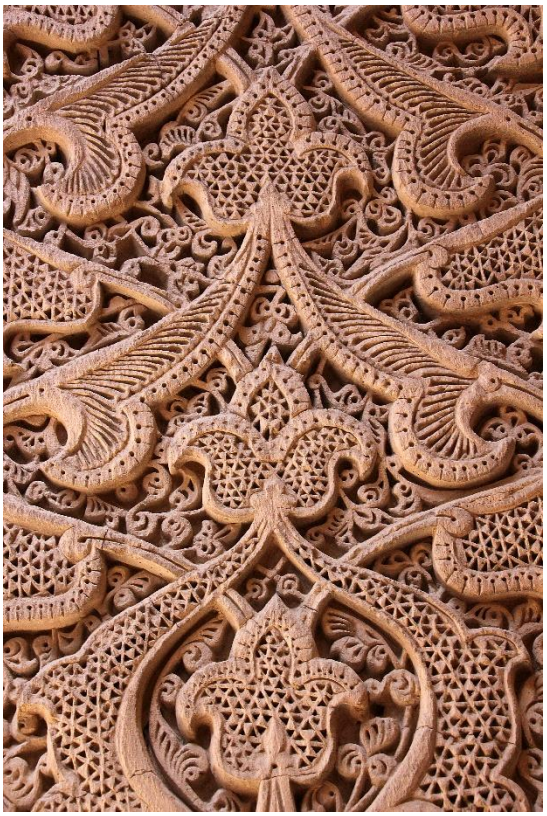


Figure 28: The monumental carved stucco mihrab was installed to close off the *iwan* opening of the mausoleum by 1303-04. This signalled the transformation of the mausoleum into a pilgrimage complex with space for prayer rites.





Figures 29 and 30: Details of the carved stucco mihrab. Left: the monumental lunette was produced by carving away several stucco layers and it retains traces of the mihrab's polychromy. Right: the upper panel of the mihrab consists of abstract ornamental elements, which are heavily perforated; the relief is enriched by the addition of applied moulded elements.

Figures 31 and 32: Stucco panels H (right) and R (left) from the third decorative phase at Pir-i Bakran feature a clear-cut relief. Stucco undercutting is employed for production of panel R. These revetments are likely works of the same workshop, which produced stuccos of the Haftshuya Friday mosque.




Figures 33 and 34: Stuccos of the Haftshuya Friday mosque. Left: the stucco band framing the mihrab of the mosque is produced with the same technology as the stuccos of Pir-i Bakran (see Figure 31). Right: the niche lunette of the Haftshuya mihrab is produced with technology and ornaments related to the stuccos of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.

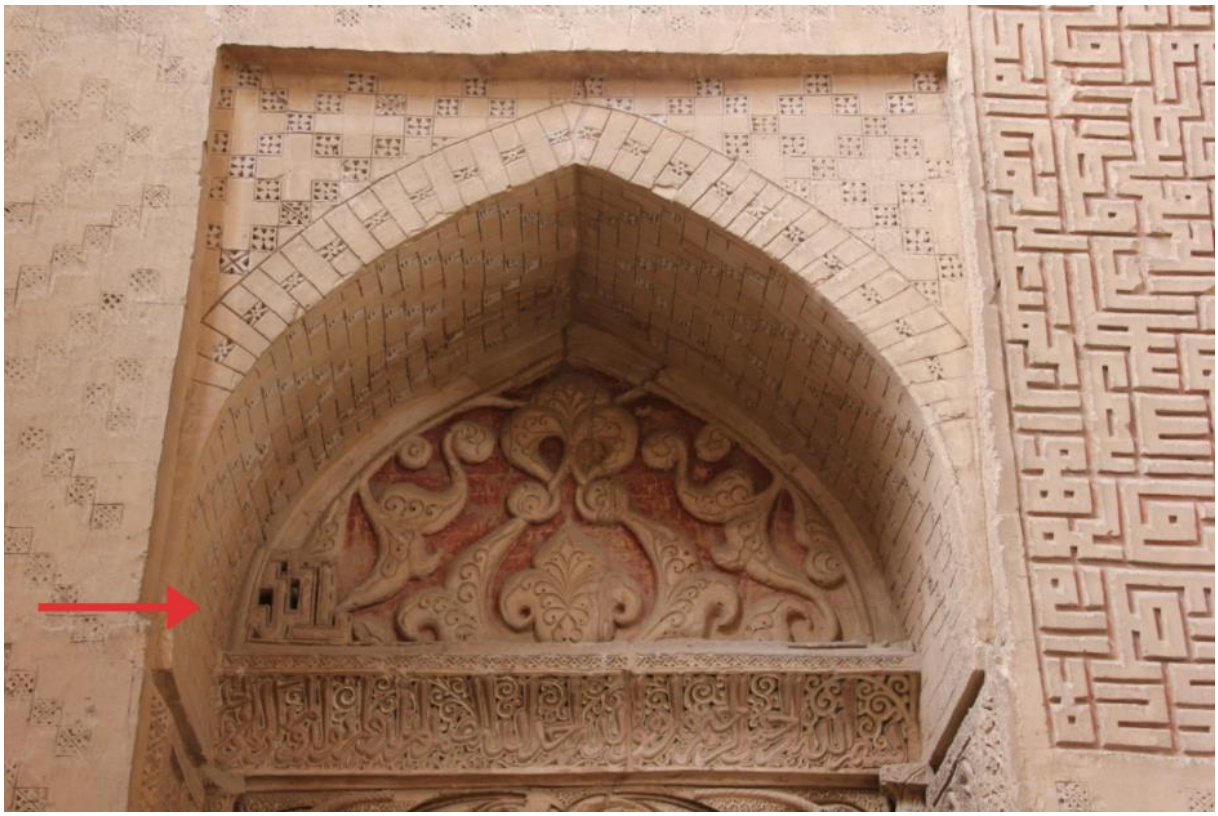


Figure 35: The niche in the north-eastern supporting wall of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum retains two layers of stuccos from the second and third decorative stages. The stuccos of the third decorative stage were produced in the form of a perforated grill, which partially revealed the stuccos underneath. This could be a type of a homage to the earlier craftsmen.

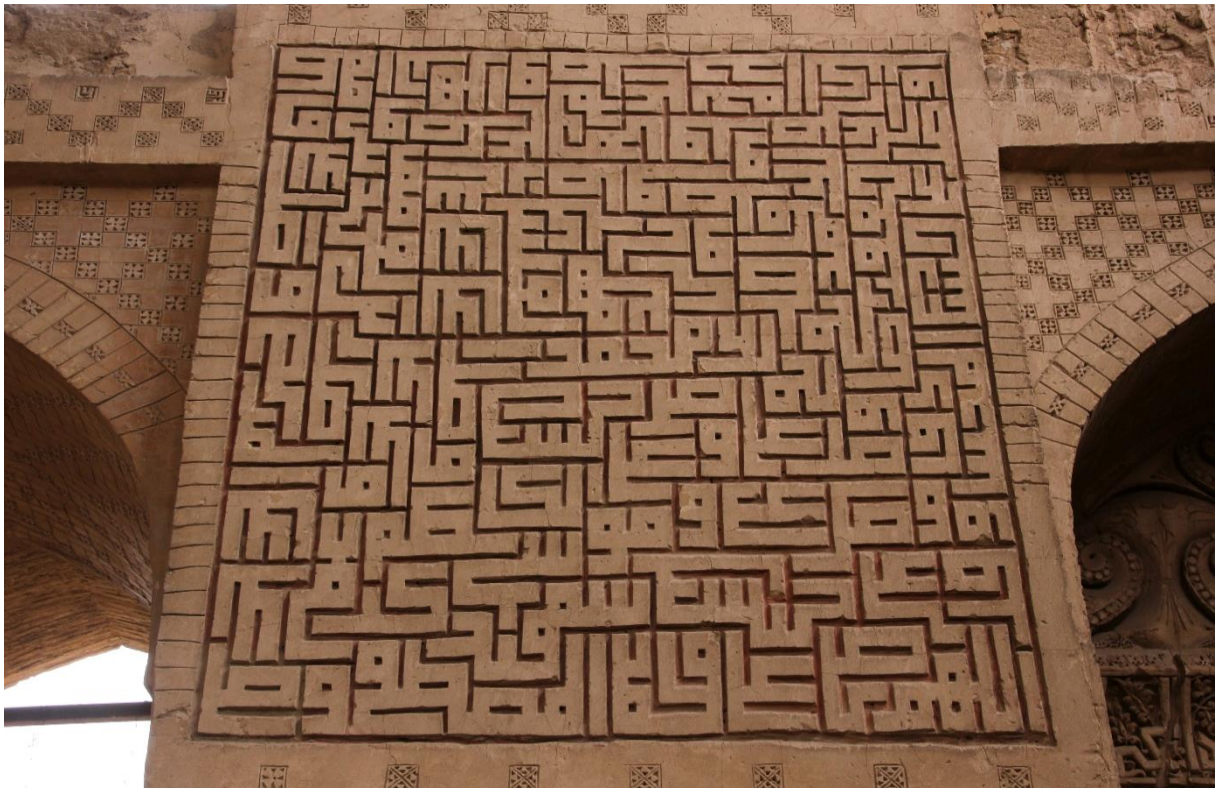


Figure 36: Square Kufic inscription panel in the interior of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum's *iwan* (south-western supporting wall). The inscription recounts blessings to the Infallibles: it is one of the Shiʿite inscriptions of the mausoleum's epigraphic programme, which was produced in the third phase.

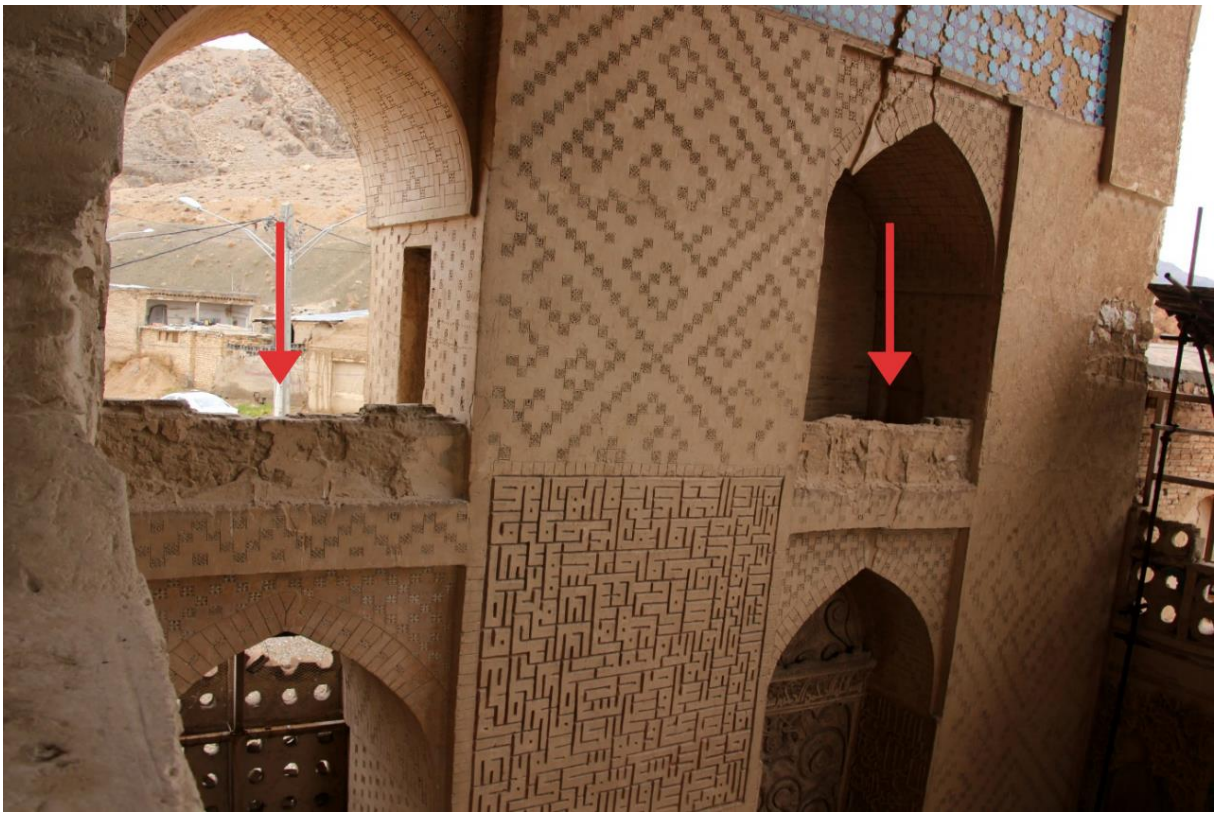


Figure 37: Adhesion mortar, which corresponds in dimensions to the New York and Berlin tiles with phoenix images and Qurʾanic quotations and suggests their original location in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.



Figure 38: Rectangular moulded and glazed tile with phoenix images and Qurʾanic quotations in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, with suggested provenance from the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum. Ident. Nr. 40.181.3. (Curtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art New York)



Figure 39: Selected images of Pir-i Bakran separation grill tiles discovered in the Chihil Sutun deposit in 1978. (Courtesy and Copyright of Rosario Paone)



Figure 40: Stucco panel F (third phase), with evidence of use of wooden pegs for adhesion of stucco.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 3

Monument Name: Haftshuya Friday mosque

Figs. 33-34, 41-52.

Associated Names: variant names are employed for the monument; Haftshuyeh;[251] Haftshouyeh;[252] Haftchouyeh;[253] Hafshuya;[254] Haftshuya;[255] the name of the settlement, Haftshuya, varies due to different possibilities of its transliteration from Persian, but the most correct modality would be: Haftshūya.[256] In modern Persian, the name of the settlement is sometimes written as one and sometimes as two words: Haft Shuya or Haftshuya (هفت شوییه; هفتشویه) and sometimes the letter *ta* (هفشویه) is left out of the name.[257]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in four phases (phase one: pre-Seljuq or Seljuq; phase two: Seljuq; phase three: Ilkhanid; phase four: Ilkhanid) with subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): two-*iwan* and courtyard mosque with square domed prayer hall and lateral vaulted prayer spaces.

Location: Haftshuya village; c. 12.2 km as the crow flies in the north-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.42122 N; 51.47140 E.

Monument Investigation: July 15, 2014; November 30, 2017.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The most detailed historic discussion of the Haftshuya in the Ilkhanid period is provided by Mustawfi.[258] In his description of the eight districts of the city of Isfahan, Mustawfi states that the settlement of Haftshubah (presumably corruption of the name Haftshuya, or the opposite), is one of the three main settlements of Isfahan's fourth district, the Qahab, which in total comprised some forty villages. This district was named after numerous underground water channels running through the area and bringing drinking water from the mountain ranges north of Isfahan, towards Isfahan city. The size and wealth of the settlement were the consequence of agriculture and hoarding activities.

[251] https://archnet.org/sites/5448 (Last Accessed: June 23, 2018).
[252] Isfahani 2018.
[253] Siroux 1971.
[254] Hillenbrand 1971, 161.
[255] Grbanovic 2017b.
[256] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[257] Hunarfar 1966, 361-363
[258] Le Strange 1919, 54-64.

The Haftshuya Friday mosque is located on the northern edge of the modern settlement. It is flanked by the modern herb factory on the eastern side and faces the dessert on other sides. The modern settlement must have gradually shifted southwards as the mosque must have been constructed in the centre of the historic, no longer extant hamlet. The shifting of the modern settlement was partially determined by the construction of new transportation lines on its northern side. No other historic monuments are preserved in Haftshuya. This renders the knowledge gathered from the research of the Haftshuya Friday mosque of great significance for the understanding of the settlement's history. Further archaeological research is needed to establish a more exact time of the mosque's earliest construction phases.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 41-43.

The Haftshuya mosque is in a ruined state. The largest part of the remaining structure dates to the Ilkhanid period and it consists of the main prayer hall, which was topped by a no longer extant dome. The hall is flanked on both sides by lateral vaulted prayer spaces, which are also ruined. This structure is preceded by a ruined *iwan,* which is connected to its courtyard, and another *iwan* on its opposite site. The two *iwan*s used to delineate the courtyard of the mosque, which was entered from the eastern side through the still extant portal. A fired brick base of an older, most likely Seljuq, minaret is located on the south-western side of the mosque. The question of the Haftshuya Friday mosque construction phases is challenging, due to the ruined condition of its architectural structure, the lack of systematic research, the necessity for archaeological excavations and because material from its earlier structures was re-used in subsequent construction campaigns. Drawing on the existing information and observations of the ruined structure, it is possible to roughly outline four construction phases of the mosque.

Construction Phases

Phase One - The Earliest Haftshuya Mosque

The evidence regarding the earliest mosque derives from a brief and limited archaeological sounding of the mosque's minaret base, which was conducted in 1976, by the members of the Italian mission in Iran (IsMEO).[259] These soundings revealed remains of an earlier mihrab in the ground at the southern side of the Seljuq minaret (Fig. 42).[260] No information regarding the seismic resistance of the minaret, considered Seljuq by the Italian researchers and by Siroux,[261] were discovered, but the soundings revealed remains of an earlier mihrab buried at the foundation of the minaret. In the words of Paone, the Seljuq minaret was constructed as leaning

[259] Finds of this campaign were briefly mentioned Paone 1981, 13-14. No detailed report of the campaign was recovered, either from the Eugenio Galdieri archive in Rome, or from the IsMEO archive at the Oriental Art Museum Giuseppe Tucci in Rome. The person in charge of this campaign, Rosario Paone, recounted the finds in person and based on his notes, stored in his private archive in Bari. E-mail to the author: March 7, 2018; March 16, 2018. Photos of the intervention were not found, but the original and published versions of the drawing of these soundings exist in Paone 1981, 33. This campaign, initiated by Alberto Parducci (September 14-26, 1976) with aims to explore the seismic resistance of Seljuq and Ilkhanid minarets in the Isfahan area was continued by Rosario Paone, who directed the workers of the Isfahan Friday mosque to perform the soundings on November 30, 1976. E-mail to the author: March 7, 2018; March 16, 2018.
[260] Paone 1981, 33.
[261] Siroux 1971, 229-235.

against the internal surface of an earlier mihrab, which could be dated to Seljuq or to an earlier period.[262] The base of the minaret was constructed out of broken bricks and fragments of stone blocks, which were fused together with mortar.[263] The wall behind the mihrab was constructed out of large mud-bricks and the mihrab's niche was covered with a layer of *kahgil*, except in some parts, where pieces of stone and brick were inserted to give the structure more solidity.[264] In his speculative reconstruction of the construction phases of the mosque, Siroux drew some remains of a structure on the western side of the mosque and labelled them as *ruines informes*;[265] these shapeless or rough ruins could however not be the remains of this mosque contemporary to the buried mihrab on the southern side of the minaret, due to their ground plan not matching with the position of the buried minaret.

The described soundings did not receive a follow up and their short mention in a publication with limited circulation resulted in the lack of their appreciation by the scholarly community responsible for further discussions of the monument. These finds provide the only evidence of perhaps the earliest Islamic religious structure in the settlement of Haftshuya, which could date to the Seljuq or pre-Seljuq period. Its discovery illustrates that construction interventions at Haftshuya consisted of four, rather than three, phases.

Phase Two – The Seljuq Haftshuya Mosque

This phase of the mosque has been considered as the first and the oldest phase by researchers.[266] The most authoritative discussion of the mosque's construction is Siroux's 1971 publication. The mosque was neither included in Wilber's monograph on Ilkhanid Architecture[267] nor was it discussed in the Arthur Upham Pope's *Survey of Persian Art*.[268] It is briefly mentioned by Hunarfar.[269] In his description of the mosque, Siroux distinguishes between Seljuq and Ilkhanid phases, based on his observations of construction material, the quality of construction campaigns and the monument's architectural elements. Siroux dates the Seljuq phase to the twelfth century. According to Siroux, the Seljuq mosque consisted of a domed prayer hall without lateral prayer spaces, flanked by a rectangular courtyard, which was surrounded by a row of galleries, and the minaret, of which only the base remains. Siroux compares the minaret's dimensions (4.65 m in diameter) to the minaret bases of Bersiyan (5.75 m in diameter) and Ziyar (5.50 m in diameter) and states that the Haftshuya minaret is of modest dimensions.[270] Based on existing evidence, the Ziyar minaret was a freestanding structure with a function of signposting travellers' routes, and not a mosque minaret which were normally smaller in dimension.[271] The Haftshuya minaret therefore has the regular dimensions of a mosque minaret of the Seljuq period.

[262] Paone 1981, 13-14.
[263] *Ibid.*
[264] Paone 1981.
[265] Siroux 1971, 231.
[266] Siroux 1971.
[267] Wilber 1955.
[268] Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938].
[269] Hunarfar 1966, 321-322.
[270] Siroux 1971, 232.
[271] Archaeological excavations of the surroundings of the Ziyar minaret would be needed to confirm this hypothesis.

In his ground plan, Siroux proposes the reconstruction of the mosque and marks the Seljuq construction phase. The reconstruction of the Seljuq ground plan could have been dictated by the position of the minaret base, and by the supposition that a minaret should be located on the south-western side of the structure.[272] Considering that only a small amount of structure belonging to this phase exists, the plan of the Seljuq mosque could have been different from the one proposed by Siroux; there seems to be no evidence pointing to the existence of a domed prayer hall for this constructive phase. Moreover, the courtyard could also be a later Ilkhanid modification. Finally, one cannot exclude the possibility that this mosque was hypostyle in plan.

Phases Three and Four– The First and the Second Ilkhanid Haftshuya Mosques

Siroux suggests that the anomalies in symmetry between the eastern and western galleries of the mosque occurred because the mosque was constructed in two stages.[273] He speculates that the Ilkhanid mosque construction was jeopardized by land acquisition difficulties[274] and he proposes that the construction of the mosque took place in the fourteenth century.[275] He states that the first construction stage was interrupted for a few years and continued. Based on his stylistic comparison of the mosque's stucco mihrab, he proposes a date for the second construction phase as 1340s or later.[276] The domed prayer hall and the other parts of the mosque indeed reveal two constructive phases, with application of stuccos in the second, final phase. It is however difficult to argue that the second phase was a pure continuation of the previous one. Close observations of the remaining structure, its architectural elements and stuccos, indicate that the second construction intervention served to strengthen the mosque's weak architectural structure. The originally intended architectural design was thus modified due to structural issues.

Summary

The Ilkhanid builders made use of the pre-existing Seljuq structure, which they modified. They enlarged the mosque's courtyard and constructed two *iwan*s facing each other and delineating the main axis of the mosque. A new prayer hall was added to the southern *iwan* and it was flanked by adjacent vaulted prayer spaces. The two *iwan*s might have been built with fired brick material from the Seljuq mosque. The employed construction and fired brick decoration techniques of the two *iwan*s are either Seljuq or Ilkhanid. The rest of the structure was constructed with adobe bricks. The thickness of the supporting walls of the domed hall amounts to some 2.10 m, which was necessary due to the lesser resistance of adobe material in carrying the dome structure, which was constructed out of fired bricks, as indicated by the remaining parts of prayer hall's transitional zones.

The transitional zone elements were arranged in a system consisting of eight pointed arches and squinches placed in the space between the arches. It is not clear whether this transition structure

[272] Siroux seems to have believed that the Ilkhanid mosque was constructed based on the pre-existing Seljuq structure.
[273] Siroux 1971, 232-234.
[274] According to Siroux, the patron might have had difficulties in acquiring the terrain for the mosque construction, which might have belonged to several owners.
[275] Siroux 1971, 232-234.
[276] *Ibid.*

evolved into a drum, which carried the dome structure, although such a solution is likely. Soon after the described structure was built, the use of adobe bricks in place of more costly fired bricks caused structural tensions. Specific problems occurred within the dome area and the supporting walls could not withstand the weight of the dome. This was the main reason for the interventions of the second stage, which were aimed at strengthening the mosque's structure.

Observations of the mihrab indicate that the size and especially its height exceeds the space which was planned for the mihrab: the upper register of the mihrab stretches above the lowest part of the transitional zone arches. The original opening in the middle of the *qibla* wall, which perhaps housed a smaller mihrab or lead to another smaller prayer hall, was closed off to strengthen the wall and the stucco mihrab was installed on its surface.

The two side niches, the left one decorated with stucco plugs and the right one featuring a Square Kufic inscription, were originally intended as window openings. They were closed off to strengthen the supporting wall. This modification was camouflaged with two stucco lunettes. The niche on the western prayer hall supporting wall, close to the Square Kufic inscription lunette, was for example reduced in size, closed off and covered with stucco plug decoration. The same action can be observed in most niches, which were originally openings for communication between prayer spaces. Similar interventions are also observed on the remaining parts of the lateral arched spaces on the western part of the mosque's courtyard. In sum, the entire architectural structure was strengthened through the reduction in size or closing off of its communication openings. Once the builders resolved these structural issues, they proceeded with the application of stucco revetments on mosque's interior focal spaces. The stucco revetments are discussed in the separate section and as it is demonstrated, they should be dated to the period between 1310 and 1316, together with the second Ilkhanid mosque construction phase (see below).

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The tile decoration inserted into the external architectural surfaces of the mosque has so far been interpreted as evidence of mosque refurbishment in the Muzaffarid or Timurid periods.[277] These tile remains could however also belong to the Ilkhanid period, because such decoration techniques already existed in the Isfahan area, as confirmed by the Ushturjan Friday mosque (1315-16; Cat. No. 4). Some parts of the architectural surfaces covering lateral vaulted structures of the mosque and the northern *iwan* also retain a layer of plain plaster covering, typical of later periods, such as Safavid and especially Qajar plaster revetments. Further research would be necessary to explain which modifications the mosque underwent upon the fall of the Ilkhanid Empire, and at which point in history the mosque fell into disrepair.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

Fig. 41.

The Ilkhanid Haftshuya Friday mosque was a mid-size mosque with a central square prayer hall of considerable dimensions (9.20 x 9.55 m) topped by a dome.[278] This hall was flanked by the

[277] Siroux 1971, 229-235.
[278] *Ibid.*, 230.

lateral prayer halls, covered with vaults and preceded by an *iwan*, which served as the main entrance to the domed prayer hall. This *iwan* faced the rectangular courtyard with a *hauz* in its centre and was mirrored by a smaller *iwan* on the longitudinal axis of the mosque, which delineated the mosque's northern extremes. The described structure was therefore a two-*iwan* courtyard mosque with the main domed prayer hall and adjacent vaulted prayer spaces.

This ground plan is similar to the ground plan of the Ilkhanid Gar Friday mosque (Cat. No. 7), which originally consisted of a courtyard flanked by two *iwan*s and the prayer hall which housed the stucco mihrab (much smaller in size). In both cases, at Gar and Haftshuya, the Ilkhanid mosques are constructed in the area where Seljuq mosques existed, and in both cases, Seljuq minarets were re-used for the Ilkhanid mosques. The last Ilkhanid phase at Haftshuya can be dated based on the discussion of its stucco revetments, to early fourteenth century (1310-1316). It remains unclear when the construction of the first mosque that is buried under the minaret took place. The second intervention can be dated to the Seljuq period, based on the construction material characteristics, methods, and type of the minaret. It is however unclear when the Ilkhanid interventions began. Perhaps the first Ilkhanid activities on the site could be dated to the period slightly earlier than the second Ilkhanid phase (1310-1316); if the first Ilkhanid construction campaign resulted in structural problems of the monument, these had to be quickly mended.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The nature, size and type of the original elevation of the mosque are difficult to estimate, due to its ruined state. The domed prayer hall retains a staircase, the original function of which might have been to conduct the faithful to a small upper gallery on the supporting walls of the prayer hall. This staircase was part of the supporting walls of the first Ilkhanid mosque; the system is similar to that found at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Garladan *iwan*, where an upper gallery is formed by arcades and openings of the supporting walls of the *iwan*. The elevation of the domed prayer hall was higher than the height of the lateral prayer spaces, which flanked it on the eastern and western sides and which seem to have been created with the use of pointed arches and pointed vaults. The elevated height of the prayer hall was additionally accentuated by the elevated height of the two *iwan*s, which were placed in an axis with the prayer hall and visually accentuated the direction of the domed prayer hall, the direction of prayer, and made the stucco mihrab the focal point of the mosque's interior.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The presence of the minaret, the buried mihrab (Fig. 42) and the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab confirm that the monument in question is a mosque. It is called a Friday mosque because it is the only historic mosque found in Haftshuya. No minbar is left to confirm this, perhaps because it was moved once the mosque fell into ruin, or it deteriorated. The size of the monument also confirms the fact that this must have been the main mosque in the settlement at the time of its construction and it therefore served the community. Siroux mentions[279] that there seems to be evidence of

[279] Siroux 1971, 229-235.

adjacent structures next to the mosque, but this aspect of the monument would require archaeological investigation.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 44-52.

Architectural revetments of the Haftshuya Friday mosque can be roughly divided into two categories: internal and external revetments. The interior of the once domed prayer hall is revetted with stucco decorations of four types: the stucco mihrab (Figs. 45, 47-52), the epigraphic and geometric stucco plugs covering the supporting walls, geometric stucco plugs in the lunettes of the supporting walls and the Square Kufic inscription (Fig. 46) in one of the lunettes of the *qibla* wall. Moreover, the arch of the western supporting wall is decorated with geometric and floral stucco revetments and epigraphic and floral stuccos (Fig. 44), which are later in date. The interior stucco revetments, with the exception of the floral and epigraphic stuccos of the arch in the western supporting wall, were produced during the second Ilkhanid construction phase and can be dated, based on the analysis below, to 1310-1316.

The mosque's exterior revetments comprise glazed tile inserts on the entrance portal and some remaining glazed tile fragments found at the site, but no longer possible to relate to their original location on the architectural surface. As mentioned, the tile revetments were believed to date to the Muzaffarid period. But the majority of these ceramic decorations could also be contemporary to the interior stuccos, given that they adorn a structure built during the same intervention and because such revetment production techniques already existed in the Isfahan area at that time, as illustrated by the case of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4). The mosque's carved stuccos have so far been most thoroughly discussed by Shadi Naqib Isfahani[280] and their inscriptions were discussed by Mahdi Razani.[281] Hunarfar also briefly addressed the mosque's revetments.[282]

Interior Revetments

Figs. 44-52.

The stucco revetments in the domed prayer hall are concentrated on the *qibla* wall. These revetments were applied directly on the adobe wall and they were produced contemporarily to the second Ilkhanid construction phase, which comprised modifications to the supporting walls of the dome prayer hall. The central part of the *qibla* wall, the focal point for the faithful, supports the carved stucco mihrab. The mihrab is flanked by two niches on each side. The eastern niche is decorated with plain stucco plugs, while the western niche is decorated with a Square Kufic inscription, of which only a fragment remains. The lack of symmetry between the decorative repertoires of these two niches is unusual and difficult to explain. This was perhaps caused by the need to quickly decorate the architectural surfaces, which required two stucco craftsmen with different stucco revetment production skills, to work in parallel. It is however not possible to exclude the possibility that the stucco plugs of the eastern niche were a later

[280] Isfahani *et al*, 2016-17; Isfahani 2018.
[281] Razani 2005.
[282] Hunarfar 1966; Hunarfar 1968.

modification, performed when other architectural surfaces of the vaulted prayer spaces were covered with a layer of plain plaster. The remaining surfaces of the prayer hall supporting walls are decorated with simple stucco plugs arranged in geometrical patterns. This modest, simple and fast to produce artistic technique was used to decorate large architectural surfaces and served as a background to the main decorative repertoire consisting primarily of the stucco mihrab; it is followed in hierarchy by the two niches and finally, the background of the decorative programme consists of stucco plugs ornamentation.

The Mihrab

Figs. 45, 47-52.

Mihrab Production

The mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque is on first sight similar to the majority of Ilkhanid mihrabs. Its dimensions feature the golden mean proportions.[283] Nevertheless, the structure and the composition of the mihrab reveal some peculiarities resulting from the anomalies of its design and making. These anomalies are informative of the on-site procedures undertaken by the stucco craftsmen for the mihrab's production. The central part of the mihrab, framed by the inscription recounting *Ayat al-Kursi* (Qurʾan, 2:255) was likely conceived as the initially planned mihrab design and further exterior panels were added to it only subsequently. The mihrab's central part consisting of two arches with respective lunettes and lozenges framed by two columns and capitals, was produced first. When this part of the mihrab was completed, the craftsmen decided to enlarge it. They first added the horizontal panel of abstract ornamentation above the Throne verse inscription. Afterwards, they produced the top-most panel of the mihrab. Finally, they framed the mihrab with the exterior frame consisting of protruding undercut elements and small circular applied medallions. This hypothesis is based on two pieces of evidence. Firstly, the top panel does not reveal a horizontal symmetry of disposition of its ornamentation; it is not aligned with the vertical symmetry axis, as proposed and strictly followed for the design and production of the mihrab's central parts. Secondly, the panel design of the mihrab does not resemble any other Ilkhanid mihrab. It is also likely that the mihrab was originally higher, because the panels could have been extended into the transitional zone lunette, which is now open.[284] The hypothesis concerning the mihrab's production sequence is additionally supported by the fact that the top-most panel and external framing bands do not contain inscriptions, but rather, a modest repeating and fast-to-produce abstract ornamental forms. These framing panels are applied on a slightly higher visual plane, compared to the mihrab's central panels. But the similarities in use of artistic techniques in the central part of the mihrab and for the creation of these external framing bands are so close that it is possible to state that the mihrab was produced by the same team of stucco craftsmen; the enlargement of the mihrab occurred during its making and not as a separate subsequent intervention.

[283] Isfahani *et al*, 2016-17; Isfahani 2018.
[284] See also Isfahani 2018.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The lowest parts of the mihrab are lost due to the ravages of time. The lowest portion of the central niche is no longer extant. It is topped by the lower lunette of the mihrab. Stucco ornamentation of this lunette consists of badly damaged, but still discernible polylobe geometric design. Palmettes and half-palmettes form the centre of this design and they are arranged in vertical symmetry. This part of the mihrab contains the largest quantity of polychromy traces. The stuccos were first coloured white and then painted with predominantly green shades. This stucco panel is characterized by deep carving of one stucco plane; the entire composition is not set against a carved, but a plain, background. The lunette is framed by an arch, which was restored at a later point. This arch contains verses of the *ʿImran* chapter (3:17-18) in *Thuluth* style set against an entirely plain background - an anomaly in comparison to the rest of the mihrab, which further confirms the assumption that this inscription is a later modification. This framing arch is flanked by two lozenges, consisting of single-plane carved stucco, with slight undercut and comprising symmetrical arrangements of floral ornamentation with palmettes and half palmettes, which closely resemble the ornamentation of the lower lunette. The lozenges are topped by a horizontal register consisting of carved and deeply undercut abstract composition which is partially covered by an applied Kufic inscription of the Sunni Shahada. The panel distinguishes itself from the rest of the mihrab by its strongly protruding relief and extremely deep stucco undercutting; it is pierced on the entire surface and floral lace-like patterns are applied over it.

The described mihrab composition is framed by two columns with capitals symmetrical in their design featuring abstract ornamentation. The columns display advanced geometric and floral design produced with the aid of a compass and with no design parallel in any other Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. While the right capital is entirely lost, the left capital retains its stucco core. Older photos (Fig. 45) constitute the only body of evidence testifying to the original appearance of the two capitals. The two capitals were produced together with the horizontal panel, with the same carving technique, and they reflected the stucco piercing and carving of this panel. In their ground plan form, they resemble the form of the capitals of the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1). Unlike the majority of Ilkhanid mihrab capitals, these two capitals do not contain any epigraphic elements, but they are adorned with lace-like applied ornamentation. These capitals supported the central lunette of the mihrab, composed of three sections.

The central lunette is framed by two Kufic inscription bands. The outer Kufic inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-7).[285] The Square Kufic inscription runs along the interior edges of the Kufic inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Qalam*, 68:51-52). This Square Kufic inscription resembles closely a Square Kufic inscription in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2); the Qurʾanic inscription running along the *Surat al-Insan*, on the top of the tiled dado.[286] The overlapping part of the central lunette with the Square Kufic inscription indicates that the central lunette was produced following the completion of these two Kufic inscriptions.

[285] Compare to a very similar inscription (in content and design) on the northern supporting wall of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum's *iwan* facing the funerary chamber of the Shaykh (Cat. No. 2).
[286] Preliminary research by Holakooei (Holakooei 2007), provides information about the stucco technique, the craftsmen employed to produce these Square Kufic inscriptions.

The central lunette does not contain epigraphic elements. Its ornamentation features an interplay of abstract forms resembling heart, floral and geometric designs. It is closely linked to the outer framing bands of the mihrab, which supports the assumption that the mihrab was produced in one intervention, and was enlarged in the middle of the work. The lunette is topped by two damaged lozenges. The left hand lozenge retains remains of its original stucco ornamentation on its top central part, suggesting that the ornamentation was perhaps similar to the floral composition lozenges of the lower mihrab arch. The right-hand lozenge is important because it reveals traces of its original design.

The mihrab's framing inscription (Qurʾan, 2:255) consists of the *Thuluth* inscribed *Ayat al-Kursi*, set against the floral background of palmettes and small floral elements.[287] It is topped by a horizontal register of stuccos consisting of undercut, perforated and applied stucco elements arranged in abstract heart-like forms. As mentioned, these forms are not arranged in an axis with the mihrab's main vertical symmetry axis. This was caused by the panel production method and perhaps the haste of having to complete the mihrab. Other abstract undercut and perforated forms of the mihrab, with applied protruding medallions, find very close parallels in stucco artistic techniques and aesthetics of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).

The top horizontal stucco revetment band is recessed from the other panels, and was not produced on the same visual plane.[288] The joint between this panel and the panel below it is problematic: its ornamentation seems to have been adjusted and tops of its rounded heart-like forms were trimmed to make a space for the upper register. It is possible that the panel was covered by another pierced stucco panel. The top panel was thus visible through a now vanished upper layer of carved and pierced stucco. The parallel in support of this hypothesis is the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1), where the mihrab's upper register consisted of two overlapping stucco panels. Similar solutions of two layered pierced stucco revetments have been documented at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 23).

The Square Kufic Lunette

Fig. 46.

The lunette on the *qibla* wall with the stucco inscription in Square Kufic (right hand side of the mihrab), recounts *Blessings to the Fourteen Infallibles*, which remain only in fragments. It was produced by stucco craftsmen using a different artistic technique from those employed to produce the Haftshuya mihrab. This distinctive artistic technique is distinguished by the mode of the design transfer, creation, and its carving.[289] It was also employed at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), during the last decorative intervention for the making of the two monumental Square Kufic panels in the *iwan* and two related panels in the mausoleum's funerary chamber.[290]

[287] Compare to stuccos found at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and Varamin (Cat. No. 36), although, similar approaches can also be observed at Pir-i Bakran.
[288] Compare to stuccos of the transitional zone lunette above the mihrab in the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4).
[289] See Holakooei 2007.
[290] Detailed studies of this technique were performed by Holakooei. See Holakooei 2007.

The dating of the inscriptions at Pir-i Bakran is of essential help to date the Haftshuya Square Kufic inscription. The Square Kufic inscriptions at Pir-i Bakran were produced during the third decorative intervention dated 1312-30.[291] The reason for this decorative intervention could be the patron's will to convey the message regarding the new state religion, the Shiʿite Islam, as determined by Uljaytu in 1310, when he converted to the Shiʿite creed. The presence of the Square Kufic inscription at Haftshuya can be interpreted in several ways. The analogy with Pir-i Bakran indicates that the Square Kufic inscription at Haftshuya was made at some point between 1310 and 1316 (during the time when Sultan Uljaytu was Shiʿite); perhaps it was produced sometime around 1312-1313, as suggested by the dated inscription at Pir-i Bakran.

It is however difficult to exclude the possibility that the Square Kufic inscriptions were results of later interventions in both monuments. At Haftshuya, the Square Kufic inscription is clearly applied directly on the adobe surface of the prayer hall supporting wall and it does not cover any earlier stuccos. This makes it likely that this inscription was produced at the time of the installation of the mosque's stucco mihrab, although it contains only the Sunni Shahada. Alternatively, the Square Kufic inscription could be a later modification at Haftshuya, after the mihrab installation, still produced sometime between 1310 and 1316, because the mihrab could have been made prior to Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. If so, the Square Kufic inscription nevertheless proposes the *ante-quem* date for the stucco mihrab installation, which was so far dated based on stylistic grounds to 1340 or later. Strong evidence in support of the hypothesis that the Square Kufic inscription is contemporary to the mihrab is the earlier listed parallel between the Haftshuya mihrab and the third phase stuccos at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). It is thus plausible that both, the mihrab and the Square Kufic inscription of Haftshuya, date from the period between 1310 and 1316. This date is thus also the *ante quem* date, which should be used for the understanding of the monument's construction chronology.

Stucco Plugs

Stucco plug revetments at Haftshuya were produced with an artistic technique common and typical of the Ilkhanid period; the plugs are applied onto architectural surface rather than inserted into empty spaces between bricks. Moreover, at Haftshuya, the Seljuq stucco plugs technique would not be possible as the supporting walls are made of adobe bricks. The predominant type of stucco plugs at Haftshuya is the four-petal flower ornament. It is found on the communication arches of the prayer hall supporting walls and the *qibla* wall. This stucco plug pattern is combined with the "x" geometric pattern in several versions, located on the *qibla* and the other supporting walls of the prayer hall. The communication arches and lunettes of the prayer hall supporting walls are also adorned with the butterfly-shaped stucco plugs. The only epigraphic stucco plugs with the name *ʿAli*, in Square Kufic, are located on the remaining parts of the prayer hall's transitional zones. The remains of the transitional zones also reveal incised chequered and other geometric patterns. Some exterior surfaces of the mosque may have been revetted with stucco plugs.

[291] See Grbanovic 2017a.

The outlined repertoire of stucco plugs at Haftshuya displays common ornamental, geometric and epigraphic traits found in numerous Ilkhanid structures. Not all stucco plugs date back to the Ilkhanid period; some of them might be more recent additions or repairs of older revetments.

Exterior Revetments

Evidence testifying to the mosque's original exterior decoration is scarce. Some exterior architectural structures of the vaulted prayer spaces retain fragments of stucco plugs. It is likely that a larger amount of these revetments was applied to the mosque's architectural structures. This is hard to assess, due to the recent (2014-2016) restoration interventions.

Two other types of exterior architectural revetments can be identified: fired bricks arranged in patters on the northern *iwan*, and glazed tile inserts. Architectural surfaces of the northern *iwan* were decorated with fired bricks arranged into geometric patterns. Glazed tiles could have been inserted into the empty spaces between these bricks, but no fragment of glazed elements was discovered to confirm this hypothesis. Although this artistic technique was more widespread in the Seljuq period, the Isfahan area offers parallels of such artistic technique being used to create Ilkhanid architectural revetments. The closest parallels are the Iziran Friday mosque (interior fired brick revetments) and the Kaj Friday mosque (exterior and interior fired brick revetment).

Glazed tile decoration documented at the mosque's site can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises turquoise square tile inserts, employed to form chequered patterns, which decorate the entrance portal's arch on its eastern side. According to Siroux,[292] tiles at Haftshuya date to the Muzaffarid period, but these tile inserts could be contemporary to the first Ilkhanid phase, during which the northern and southern *iwan*s were constructed. The modern restoration intervention on the southern *iwan* intends to illustrate that the *iwan* was decorated with glazed tile inserts, by recreating the original pattern on one part of its interior surface.

Further glazed fragments at the site no longer retain their original architectural context. The majority of these glazed tiles are of turquoise and dark blue colour, but some fragments covered with white glaze and some with black glaze are also found on the spot. The majority of fragments are angle cut and only some of them have oblique forms. It is unclear whether these revetments originally belonged to the mosque or if they were brought to the site from some other structure. Without conclusive finds, one may conclude that the mosque's exterior may have been decorated with glazed revetments during the Ilkhanid or later periods.

Stucco Polychromy at Haftshuya

Figs. 48-51.

The largest amount of stucco polychromy is conserved under the lower arch of the mosque's mihrab. The floral stucco decoration of this lunette retains extensive traces of green and white. The entire stucco revetment was first coloured white and actual colours of the stuccos were applied over it. By doing so, the artists assured the glossy and flamboyant colour effect of stuccos. Traces of red in the upper central lunette of the mihrab, in the circular forms, which were originally covered with stucco grid nets are abundant. Traces of white and blue are

[292] Siroux 1971, 232.

conserved in the deeply carved relief of the Throne verse inscription. Red was also used to outline stucco designs and especially the Square Kufic and Kufic inscriptions of the mihrab and the Square Kufic lunette inscription on the right hand side of the mihrab. The wide range of pigmentation traces, presumably original and still awaiting archaeometric research, nevertheless suggests that a wider colour palette was employed at Haftshuya, in comparison to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). Abundant use of green distinguishes the Haftshuya polychromy from the other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires in the Isfahan area. No traces of gilding or use of metal leaf were documented on Haftshuya stuccos.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Haftshuya

Stuccos at Haftshuya were produced with a wide variety of artistic techniques. Some of the most peculiar techniques are those which combine several approaches for the stucco revetments production. The exterior framing elements, for example, consist of carved, pierced and undercut stucco to which circular medallions were applied (Figs. 33, 47-48). Moreover, the Throne verse inscription was created by carving, double outlining of the inscription and with addition of applied floral elements. The central, upper stucco lunette features a combination of approaches; carved stucco is pierced in a variety of ways and it is also undercut. Protruding floral elements and circular bosses with reticular covers are added to these stuccos (Fig. 48). Kufic and Square Kufic inscriptions (Fig. 46), which frame this lunette, also required specific design transfer and production techniques. The central horizontal panel, flanked by the two no longer extant stucco capitals, also reveals a specific syntax of stucco artistic approaches by combining deep undercutting of extremely protruding relief, which is pierced and completed by application of the Kufic Shahada inscription and lace-like floral ornaments (Fig. 52). These elements serve to further elaborate the stucco design, to increase the interplay of light and shadow on the stucco relief and to unify the visual appearance of the capitals and the central horizontal panel, against which the Kufic inscription is set. The Square Kufic inscription in the western lunette also displays a separate artistic and inscription design transfer techniques. As mentioned, the majority of these techniques was employed, very likely by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop, to produce the most extensive group of stuccos during the last decorative intervention at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.

The Haftshuya Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The style of the Haftshuya stucco revetments is determined by the use of stucco artistic techniques which was created by the craftsmen in two interlinked stages. The mihrab is determined by the creative syntax of the different approaches to stucco revetment production. It is characterized by the frequent use of undercutting technique, piercing, application of protruding elements and lace-like floral ornamentation. These artistic techniques assured the uniform and at the same time dynamic appearance of the mihrab. The vertical symmetry axis was employed to produce the majority of the mihrab's panels. This axis is additionally accentuated by the resonating vertical lunettes which flank the mihrab on both sides; one is decorated with stucco plugs and the other one with the Square Kufic inscription. Use of floral and geometric ornamentation is combined with epigraphic elements to achieve a uniform rhythm of the mihrab's visual elements.

Artistic techniques for production of the stuccos in the mosque's prayer hall were used in a manner which determined a uniform appearance of the entire stucco revetment repertoire and to accentuate focal points of the *qibla* wall. Accordingly, the mihrab was given the most attention and care in production. It was followed in decorative hierarchy by the two lunettes and set against a simple background consisting of stucco plugs. The absence of other decorative media in the prayer hall indicates that craftsmen skilled to produce tile or wall painting revetment were either not hired for the project or not available at the time of this decorative intervention.

In sum, the Haftshuya stucco revetment repertoire reveals disparities in production quality, but its mihrab should nonetheless be considered as an exceptional Ilkhanid stucco revetment, given that it was produced for a mosque located in a mid-range size settlement. It was shown that the repertoire should be dated to 1310-1316, due to its close connections to Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite creed and the stuccos of the third decorative stage at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing of the mosque remain *in situ*.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The arch of the lower niche of the mihrab contains an inscription of the Qurʾanic verses from the *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:17-18).[293]

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ
شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

The patient, the true, the obedient, those who spend [in the way of Allah], and those who seek forgiveness before dawn,
Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

This inscription differs from the others in its production: it is mediocre in quality and features *Thuluth* style on an undecorated background. Investigation of the inscription's joints with the mihrab confirms the suspicion that this inscription was repaired or made anew after the mihrab's completion. Perhaps it was a later restoration of the original inscription, which got damaged. The inscription was first read by Razani.[294]

[293] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[294] Razani 2005, 53.

b.) Central panel of the mihrab contains fragments of an inscription, which has not been covered in the scholarly research. The fragments can be read as the Sunni Shahada.[295]

لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا ٱللهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ ٱللهِ

There is no God but God and Muhammad is his Prophet.

The use of the Sunni Shahada on the mihrab is perplexing, given that the Square Kufic inscription in the lunette recounts a Shiʿite text. The disparity in content between the two inscriptions could suggest that the mihrab was produced prior to Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite creed and that the Square Kufic inscription was a modification made during Uljaytu's Shiʿite period 1310-1316, after the mihrab's completion. However, the mihrab and the Square Kufic inscription, are both applied directly onto the surface of the adobe supporting walls, which indicates that they are contemporary to each other. Moreover, in both cases the revetments are strongly linked to the third decorative intervention at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), which suggests that they were produced as parts of the same intervention. It is plausible that the Sunni Shahada was used for the mihrab, due to the limited space (this could be understood as abbreviated Shiʿite Shahada). The size of the inscription letters left no space for a Shiʿite Shahada to be inscribed on the mihrab. Alternatively, it could be considered that the stucco craftsmen first produced the mihrab and as they continued work on the lunettes and architectural surfaces of the supporting walls, they were ordered to convey the Shiʿite message due to Uljaytu's conversion. The possibility of Uljaytu's conversion happening in the middle of the decorative works at Haftshuya remains a strong speculation until further evidence emerges.

c.) The upper central lunette of the mihrab contains in its interior the Qurʾanic Square Kufic inscription of *Surat al-Qalam* (68:51-52).[296]

وَإِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْنُونٌ
وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

And indeed, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes when they hear the message, and they say, "Indeed, he is mad."
But it is not except a reminder to the worlds.

Artistic technique[297] and inscription design transfer for this inscription reveal close analogies to the Square Kufic inscriptions from the third decorative intervention at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum dated 1312-13 (Cat. No. 2).[298] This Square Kufic inscription runs on the top of the *Surat al-Insan* inscription in *Thuluth* style and was produced exactly the same way as the Haftshuya inscription. Together with the other outlined analogies, this evidence suggests the involvement of the same craftsmen's workshop at Haftshuya and for the third decorative

[295] Author's reading.
[296] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Qalam (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[297] Holakooei 2007.
[298] See Grbanovic 2017a.

intervention of stucco revetments application at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum. The inscription was first read by Hunarfar[299] and Razani.[300]

d.) The exterior inscription of mihrab's upper central lunette contains the Qurʾanic Kufic inscription of *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1-7).[301]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

This inscription features Kufic style with vertical elongations and floral patterns of letters. Its style closely resembles the Opening chapter inscription from the third decorative intervention in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). These close similarities indicate that the two inscriptions were almost certainly produced by the same workshop. The difference between the two inscriptions is however revealed in their floral ornamentations, which show variation of the same ornamental pattern; at Pir-i Bakran the floral pattern is eight-petalled and at Haftshuya it is four-petalled. The inscription was first read by Hunarfar[302] and Razani.[303]

e.) The mihrab's framing inscription, designed in monumental *Thuluth* style with diacritical marks, set against a rich floral background, recounts the *Ayat al-Kursi* of the Qurʾanic excerpt from the *Surat al-Baqara* (2:255).[304]

اللهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لاَ تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلاَ نَوْمٌ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهم وَلاَ يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاء وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَلاَ يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيم

[299] Hunarfar 1966, 322.
[300] Razani 2005, 53.
[301] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[302] Hunarfar 1966, 322.
[303] Razani 2005, 53.
[304] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

Unlike the previously listed inscriptions, this inscription does not have direct parallels with the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum revetments of the third decorative phase. It however closely resembles the monumental inscription, which runs along the transitional zone of the funerary chamber at the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad mausoleum in Natanz dated 1307-8 (Cat. No. 12).[305] The first peculiarity consists of applied floral medallions, which protrude from the carved floral background of the stucco inscriptions. The second important similarity is the proportion and the style of the inscriptions. Thirdly, in both cases, the inscriptions contain incised double outline. This peculiarity is also observed in the historic stucco inscription of the Imamzada Yahya at Varamin dated 1307 (Cat. No. 36).[306] The inscription was first read by Hunarfar[307] and Razani.[308]

The Square Kufic Lunette

The Square Kufic lunette located on the right hand side of the mihrab contains the fragmentary remains of an inscription. This inscription has not been recorded in any publication about the mosque. The following fragments could be read (from right bottom to top and from top to left and centre):

– ق و صلی علی فاطمة الزهراء و صلی علی موسی [sic]

Blessings to Fatima al-Zahra and Blessings to Musa [sic]

These inscription remains suffice to identify its content. The inscription recounts the Blessings to the Fourteen Infallibles (*Chahardah Maʿsumin*), the fourteen saints of the Shiʿite creed (Blessings of God on: Muhammad al-Mustafa, ʿAli al-Murtada, Fatima al-Zahra, Khadija al-Kubra, Hasan al-Mujtaba, Husayn Shahid al-Karbala, ʿAli Zayn al-ʿAbidin, Muhammad al-Baqir, Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, Musa al-Kazim, ʿAli Musa al-Rida, Muhammad al-Taqi, ʿAli al-Naqi, Hasan al-ʿAskari, and Muhammad al-Mahdi).

The inscription is characterized by the repeating formula *and the blessings to* (*wa sala ʿala*), which was read twice. Moreover, there is a letter, which should clearly be read as the final *qaf*, belonging to *Jaʿfar al-Sadiq*. The only name, which can be fully read, is that of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima al-Zahra. The first name of Musa al-Kazim can also be read.

[305] Blair 1986a, 61-62.
[306] Bazl 1934, 25.
[307] Hunarfar 1966, 322.
[308] Razani 2005, 53.

Stucco Plugs on Supporting Walls

Some stucco plugs on the interior surfaces of the remaining parts of transitional zone arches of the domed prayer hall contain epigraphic elements written in Square Kufic:

علي

These stucco plugs bear the name of the key Shiʿite figure, Imam ʿAli. These plugs relate in their content to the Square Kufic inscription in the *qibla* wall lunette which contains Blessings to the Fourteen Infallibles. The location of the plugs indicates that they were produced at the time of the mihrab and Square Kufic lunette production.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

Fig. 44.

The panel below the main original Ilkhanid communication arch, which used to connect the domed prayer hall with the western prayer spaces, but which was later closed off, contains stucco revetments. They are unlikely to have been part of the original Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. The inscription, the invocation to God, contains diacritical marks and it is written in vertically accentuated *Naskh* style:

يا الله

It is difficult to date the panel, but its artistic technique, consisting of shallow relief carved stucco on a single plane and its distinct calligraphic style suggest that this is a later addition. The background of the panel retains extensive traces of yellow ochre. In its production, style, epigraphic font, and content, the inscription does not match the monument's decorative programme. It is possible that the inscription was produced during the Safavid or Qajar period, when the architectural surfaces of the mosque (including its *iwan*s) were covered with plain white plaster coating.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The mosque and its revetments do not provide any information about the patronage of the monument. The discussion of the mosque construction and revetment application phases reveals that construction activities at the Haftshuya site span across several dynasties and centuries. The first mosque, of which only the mihrab remains buried beneath the Seljuq minaret base, was characterized by a different ground plan and should be considered the earliest mosque structure. Its construction was likely sponsored to provide the local community with a space for religious practice and congregation.[309] Rather than renovate the first mosque, the second construction of the mosque consisted of a separate project, which was probably sponsored by a local wealthy patron. This Seljuq structure, constructed out of fired bricks, required a considerable amount of funds and mobilization of builders.

[309] This structure either became too small for the local community or it could have been damaged by an earthquake in this earthquake prone area, and a new structure thus had to be built.

The situation radically changed in the Ilkhanid period, when two interlinked interventions determined the mosque's enlargement and production of stucco revetments. These activities can be dated to the Golden period of Ilkhanid architectural patronage (1295-1316). Analogous to the situation at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4) and Natanz (Cat. No. 12), these activities could have been sponsored by local patrons, perhaps Ilkhanid officials, with family ties to the settlement of Haftshuya. Use of adobe material in place of fired bricks, suggests that the structure had to be built quickly and that the funds for its construction were limited. This resulted in structural problems in the domed prayer hall, which required the second intervention for the consolidation of the monument's structure and application of stuccos. The Shiʿite content of some of these revetments suggests strong links to the Uljaytu's Shiʿite phase and indicates that the patron of this intervention also likely adhered to the Shiʿite faith. Similar to the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4), the Uljaytu mihrab installation at the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1), the re-decoration of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), and especially the production of Shiʿite inscriptions on the architectural surfaces of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), at Haftshuya too, Shiʿite message was communicated to the faithful via the stucco revetments. The analogy with the outlined cases suggests that the patronage of this phase was indirectly determined by the official state religion. The patron of this phase could be a local notable, who served the Ilkhanid Empire in an office of a lower or medium significance.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The mosque's stuccos do not contain historic inscriptions, which could provide direct information regarding the time of their completion and neither do they contain any craftsmen's signatures. Evidence consisting of matching stucco design transfer approaches, stucco carving and artistic techniques, analogies in stucco ornament design and matching epigraphic content, suggests that the same stucco workshop produced the stuccos at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (parts of the third decorative phase; Cat. No. 2) and the Haftshuya Friday mosque (compare: Figs. 31-34). The dated inscription at Pir-i Bakran, 1312-13, and the Shiʿite content of the inscriptions in both monuments, which link these repertoires to the Uljaytu's Shiʿite phase, indicate that the Haftshuya repertoire was likely produced around 1312-13. The content of the Shiʿite inscriptions in both stucco repertoires links them to Uljaytu's Shiʿite period, 1310-1316. The analogy between stucco revetments of these two repertoires confirms the assumption that stucco craftsmen's workshop possessed specific knowledge of artistic techniques, which migrated together with the craftsmen.[310]

Analysis of the Haftshuya mihrab provides significant insight into on site procedures of stucco craftsmen. As explained, the stucco craftsmen started by creating the mihrab of restricted dimensions and with determined design, which was subsequently enlarged as the on-site work progressed. The absence of tile revetments contemporary to stucco revetments at Haftshuya, which contrasts the situation at Pir-i Bakran, where the third phase revetment programme consist of carved stuccos, wall paintings and an extensive repertoire of tile revetments, points

[310] Further similarities in stucco revetment style, artistic techniques and carving approach link the Haftshuya stuccos to the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin (Cat. No. 36).

towards the specialization of the stucco craftsmen's workshops and the fact that stucco experts only worked in stucco medium.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is in ruin. Remaining parts of the mosque consist of the Seljuq minaret base, two ruined *iwan*s, supporting walls of the prayer hall and some parts of adjacent prayer spaces. The entire structure lost its domed and vaulted roofing system. Weather continues ruining its architectural structure and specially the stucco revetment repertoire in the interior of the prayer hall, which is directly exposed to the weathering agents. Restoration interventions on the mosque so far consisted of application of *kahgil* layers to its architectural structure to protect it from weathering, and some interventions aiming at its consolidation. The stucco mihrab was restored in several phases, through minimum interventions aimed at consolidation of its structure and to stop its decay.

Observation of photographic material allows the process of the mosque and stucco revetments decay to be discerned, which occurs in spite of the described interventions. Comparison of photographs from 1970s and 1980s demonstrates that several large parts of the mihrab were lost in this period: the two capitals of the columns and a portion of the Throne verse inscription were entirely lost. Moreover, surface damage to the mihrab's revetments, which was not mended, evolved into more dangerous and heavy structural damage. This can be observed on the top left corner of the mihrab, which revealed only small cracks at the beginning of the 1970s; currently, these cracks expand across the mihrab's surface, and they reach the supporting wall of the mihrab. Initial surface damage thus evolved into a more severe structural damage.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The mihrab buried under the minaret base of the mosque suggests that the site is older than what is currently believed. At least four major construction campaigns took place on the site before the fall of the Ilkhanid Empire. The mosque could have been restored sometime between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The stucco revetments, including the mihrab, should be re-dated to 1310-1316, compared to previous dating suggesting 1340s or later. Close observations pinpoint Shiʿite content of the hitherto undiscussed Square Kufic inscription in the lunette, in the stucco medium, additionally linking the mosque stuccos to the Uljaytu's Shiʿite period. Classification and comparison of design production, transfer, and stucco artistic techniques, propose strong links to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and provide sufficient evidence to suggest that the same stucco craftsmen were involved in the production of stuccos at both monuments. This is significant evidence regarding the stucco craftsmen's mobility, which also suggests that stucco craftsmen worked only in stucco medium.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Bazl 1934, 25; Grbanovic 2017b, 53, 61-65, 68; Hillenbrand 1986, 185; Hillenbrand 1971, 161, 163; Holakooei 2007; Hunarfar 1966, 321-322; Hunarfar 1968, 74; Isfahani *et al* 2016-17; Makowicky 1989, 975, 977, 987, 994; Mustawfi 1919, 57; Paone 1981, 13-14, 32; Razani 2005, 50-55; Salmani 2017, 243-259; Siroux 1971, 229-235.

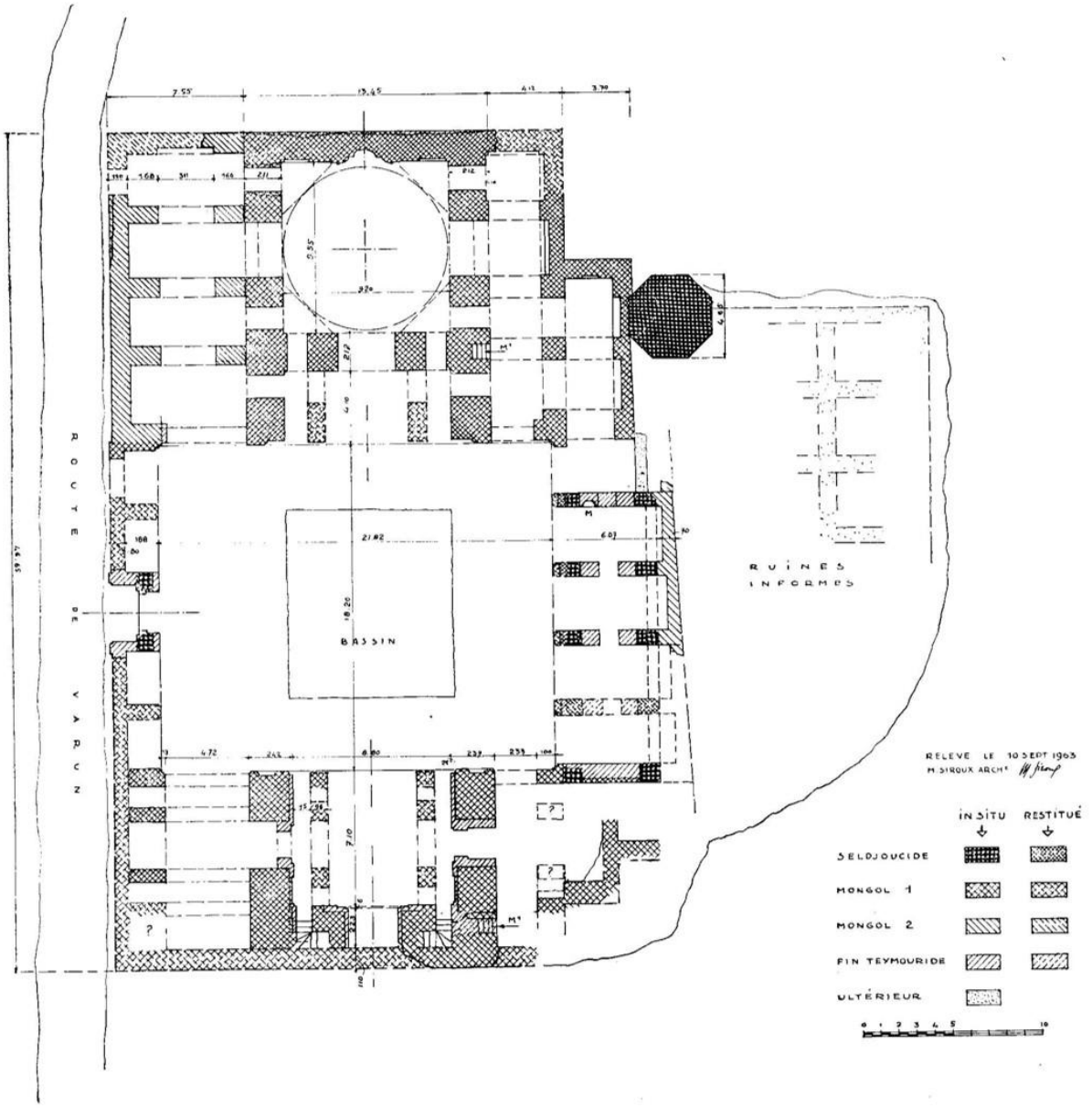


Figure 41: Ground plan of the Haftshuya Friday mosque with marked construction phases (After Siroux 1971, Fig. 79).

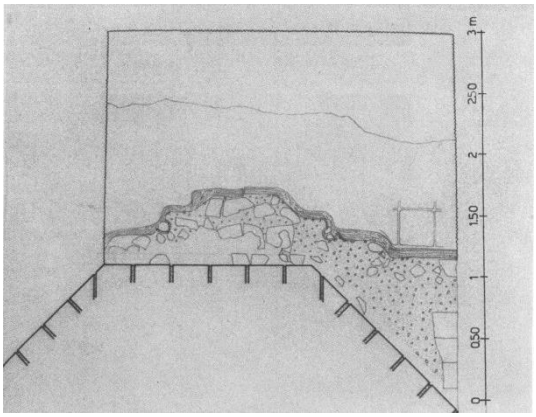


Figure 42: Drawing of the Haftshuya Friday mosque minaret remains and the excavated mihrab predating the construction of the Seljuq minaret (Courtesy and copyright: Rosario Paone).



Figure 43: The ruined architectural structure of the Haftshuya Friday mosque; view from the courtyard towards the main (once domed) prayer hall with the stucco mihrab.



Figure 44: The western passage between the domed hall and the side prayer space of the Haftshuya Friday mosque was closed off and decorated with carved stuccos in two phases.



Figure 45: The carved stucco mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque in the 1970s (Courtesy and copyright: Rosario Paone).

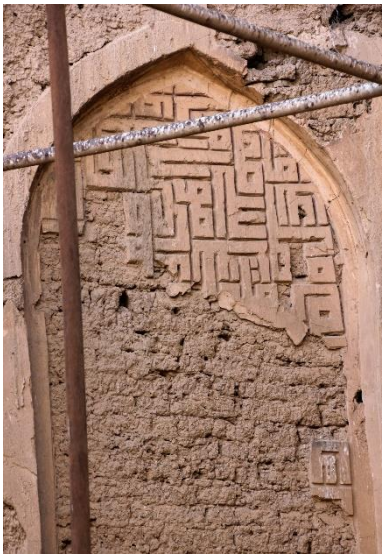


Figure 46: The square Kufic inscription in the blind niche flanking the mihrab on the right-hand side retains fragments of Blessings to the Fourteen Infallibles. It is produced in a manner related to the Square Kufic inscriptions of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.



Figure 47: The carved stucco mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque.



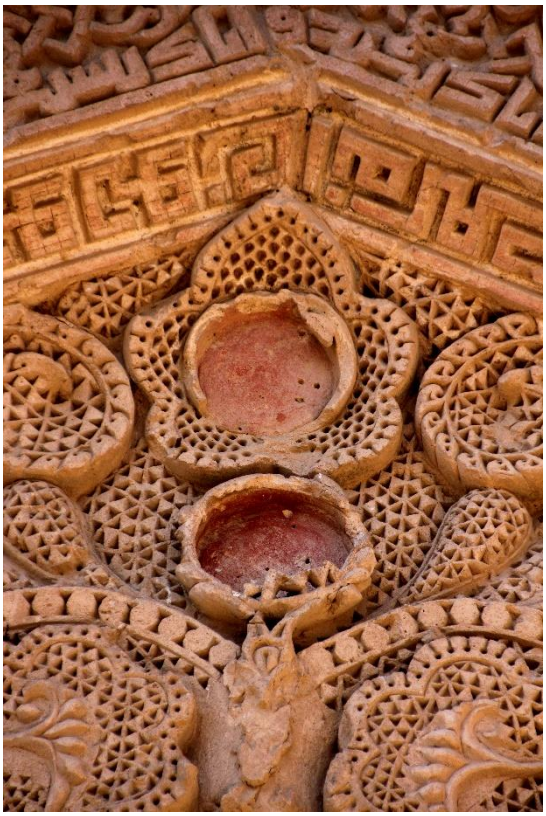
Figure 48: Detail of the central lunette and stucco panels of the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab.

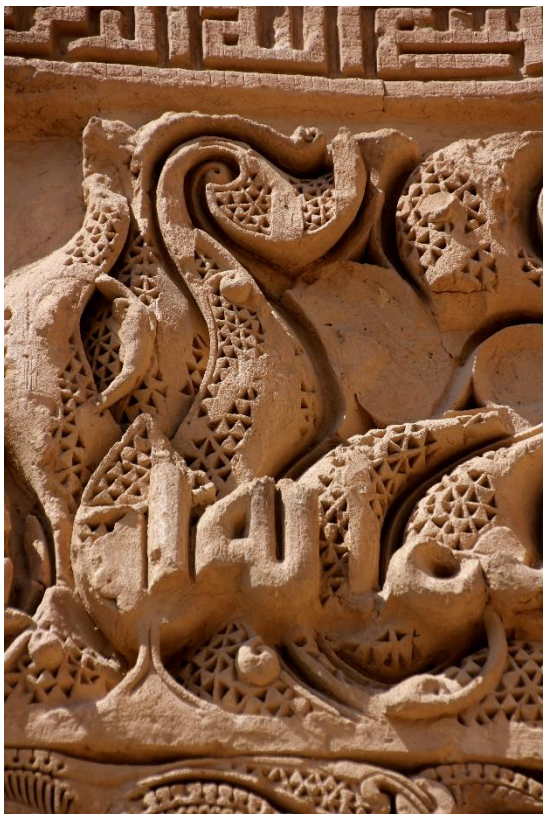


Figure 49: Detail of the interior niche of the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab with the carved stucco lunette featuring palmette-derived design. The framing inscription band is the work of a modern conservation intervention.



Figure 50: Detail of the lunette of the Haftshuya mihrab niche showing the carved stuccos with remains of polychromy: white was employed as a coating primer and green was painted over to render the stucco relief polychromy.





Figures 51 and 52: Details of the Haftshuya stucco mihrab. Left: detail of the monumental mihrab lunette with applied moulded stucco elements and remains of red. Right: fragments of the Shahada inscription with undercut abstracted elements in background.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 4

Monument Name: Ushturjan Friday mosque

Figs. 53-68.

Associated Names: due to different possibilities of vocalization, transliteration and spelling of the settlement's name (اشترگان; اشترجان), the mosque has been called Ashtarjan,[311] Oshtorkan, or Ushturjan Friday mosque. The most correct transliteration and pronunciation of the settlement's name is Ūshturjān.[312] The name has its roots in ancient times, when it was called either Shuturkan, or Shaburkan, Ashburqan or Ushburqan.[313] The mosque is always referred to as the congregational mosque, accordingly, Masjid-i Jamiʿi Ashtarjan, Ushturjan or Oshtorkan. The modern name of the settlement is Imanshahr.[314]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least three phases (phase one: Seljuq mosque; phase two: Ilkhanid rebuilding of the mosque and the first decorative repertoire; phase three: late Ilkhanid to early Muzaffarid modifications of the mosque's structure and partial redecoration of its architectural surfaces).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): two-*iwan* and courtyard mosque with monumental domed prayer hall and lateral vaulted prayer spaces.

Location: Ushturjan settlement; c. 26 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.4761138 N; 51.4796074,272 E.

Monument Investigation: July 14, 2014; November 17, 2017; November 25, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

A summary of the data regarding Ushturjan's history is provided from the publication by George C. Miles.[315] Little is known about Ushturjan; one of the few sources is Ibn Battuta, who visited it on his way to Isfahan in 1327. He mentions that there is a fine mosque in the settlement but leaves out any details about its architectural structure. Ushturjan, similar to Pir-i Bakran, flourished because it was located on one of the communication routes between Isfahan and Shiraz. The water of the Zayanda river was used for cultivation of fruit trees and vegetables.

The Friday mosque was not founded in the Ilkhanid period, but earlier, perhaps during Seljuq times, which suggests that Ushturjan was already inhabited by a sufficient number of people requiring a congregational mosque. Further modifications and enlargements of the Friday

[311] See Miles 1974, 89.
[312] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[313] See Miles 1974, 89.
[314] See also https://archnet.org/sites/1597#item_description (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).
[315] Miles 1974, 89-90.

mosque's structure in the Ilkhanid and subsequent periods likely reflect Ushturjan's growth in population. The mosque's Ilkhanid revetments and the construction of the near-by Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun (Cat. No. 32) indicate that Ushturjan was a significant settlement in the Ilkhanid period, perhaps as important as Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2).

Background

The congregational mosque of Ushturjan was first described in detail by Wilber; its inscriptions were published by Hunarfar[316] and later in more detail by Miles. Some Iranian publications mentioning the mosque were published recently.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 53-57.

The Ilkhanid Friday mosque of Ushturjan features an architectural structure of rectangular form, which consists of a two-*iwan* mosque plan with domed prayer hall and adjacent prayer spaces topped by a domed system.[317] The two *iwan*s face the courtyard on a north to south axis. The *qibla iwan* is larger than the north-eastern *iwan* and it leads to the domed prayer hall. The square domed prayer hall used to comprise passages to adjacent prayer spaces, which were closed off during the late Ilkhanid and early Muzaffarid interventions, perhaps due to static issues. The mosque's courtyard is flanked by further prayer spaces which are all covered with a domed system. The mosque has two entrances, one on its south-eastern side, which currently serves as its main entrance and its original main entrance on its north-eastern side. The south-eastern entrance features an entrance portal decorated with carved stucco and stucco plugs. The north-eastern entrance portal does not align with the axis of the *qibla iwan* and the mihrab, because it is an older structure. This entrance portal perhaps presents remains of the earliest mosque on the site; it was entirely redecorated and likely enlarged.[318]

Construction Phases

The foundation of the Ushturjan Friday mosque dates to at least the Seljuq period. Evidence is provided by the two layers of revetments on its north-eastern portal. The majority of scholars have always referred to the Ushturjan Friday mosque as a mosque founded in 1315-16.[319] This would be illogical, if an *imamzada*, the Imamzada of Rabiʿa Khatun (with mihrab dated 1308-09; Cat. No. 32), would have been constructed prior to the establishment of a congregational mosque.

Research of the mosque's historic inscriptions and observations of its structure allow the monument's construction chronology to be re-examined. There was first a Seljuq perhaps hypostyle mosque, which was followed by the first Ilkhanid constructive and decorative phase (1315-16), when the current structure was built and decorated. This was followed by another constructive and decorative phase when some parts of the mosque were modified and

[316] Hunarfar 1966, 267-278.
[317] As it will be shown, an earlier mosque existed on this location, prior to 1315-16.
[318] This action took place, as suggested in this research, in the Ilkhanid period, during the enlargements of the mosque and its decorative campaign dated 1315-16.
[319] Miles 1974; Blair 1986a, 9.

redecorated (perhaps around 1476). No subsequent interventions on the mosque seem to have taken place.

Phase One - The Earliest Ushturjan Mosque

The Friday mosque's north-eastern entrance portal (Fig. 56) retains evidence concerning the monument's earliest phase: the right hand side section of the portal, which is richly decorated with ceramic revetments in various artistic techniques, contains one part of the portal where these revetments were removed. They reveal an earlier fired brick inscription of a Qurʾanic excerpt. The artistic technique employed to produce this inscription is not characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. Such revetments are commonly found on Seljuq structures, which suggests a Seljuq date for the original north-eastern portal. The mentioned anomaly in the location of the portal, in relation to the mosque's ground plan, indicates that this portal, and perhaps some parts of the mosque's structure were incorporated in the Ilkhanid structure dating 1315-16. This significant evidence therefore suggests a much earlier foundation mosque date, perhaps 11 or 12th century.[320]

Phase Two – The First Ilkhanid Ushturjan Mosque

The first Ilkhanid phase of the mosque dates to 1315-16, as suggested by several historic inscriptions on its architectural surfaces. One inscription is located on the south-eastern portal, where the date is contained in the stucco band running along the portal. The other inscription is located on the north-eastern portal, indicating that both, stucco and tile revetments, were produced during this intervention. The third date is contained in the carved stucco Kufic inscription which runs along the perimeter of the dome of the mosque's domed prayer hall (Fig. 57). The location of this inscription provides a secure date for the domed square hall and the dome itself, but this does not exclude the possibility of its later modifications.

The outlined evidence suggests that construction of the current Ushturjan Friday mosque concluded around 1315-16. But this was an intervention of a renovation and enlargement of an earlier pre-existing structure. The earlier mosque must have been ruined, because the 1315-16 inscriptions do not refer to it as a mosque renovation, but its construction.[321] The earlier structure may have featured a hypostyle in plan, and it was subsequently transformed into a two-*iwan* monument with a courtyard and a domed prayer hall on the *qibla* side, in a manner similar to the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) or the Gar mosque (Cat. No. 7). This undertaking comprised lavish decoration of its architectural surfaces with different types of stucco, and glazed revetments on the exterior north-eastern portal. Stucco and tile decorators worked in parallel, given that the south-eastern portal only contains stuccos and the north-eastern portal is entirely decorated with ceramic revetments. Subsequent modifications of the structure were undertaken due to the static problems of the domed prayer hall and they comprised redecorations.

[320] Accordingly, this is also evidence for the age of the settlement, which likely existed in at least the Seljuq period.
[321] Miles 1974, 90.

Phase Three - The Later Ilkhanid and Early Muzaffarid Mosque at Ushturjan

This phase comprises modifications of the domed hall structure. The date 1476 is contained in the inscription mentioning renovations of the monument, on a stucco plaque in the mosque's south-eastern *riwaq*, in *Naskh* style (see below).[322] The inscription states that the mosque was renovated, but it does not provide reasons for the renovations. Closer observations reveal that at this point the passages between the domed hall and the adjacent prayer spaces covered with domes were closed off. This isolated it from the adjacent prayer spaces, but it also ensured that the dome stayed in place. The dated inscription in the prayer hall's drum area indicates that the dome did not collapse and that it dates to the first Ilkhanid interventions. But the *Khatt-i banna'i* inscriptions on the supporting walls of the dome chamber were most likely results of a redecoration dating to this intervention. In this way the closed off areas of the architectural spaces could be concealed.

The dating of the mihrab is difficult to ascertain due to the absence of stucco craftsmen's signature or a date on the mihrab. It is logically work of the first Ilkhanid intervention, although the mihrab could have been partially modified during the second intervention and during the application of *Khatt-i banna'i* inscriptions. This is highly likely for the mihrab's upper register which consists of ornamentation featuring an incredibly protruding relief produced with specific artistic techniques.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Inscriptions in the mosque testify to patronage of some interventions in the Aq Quyunlu period. Moreover, the mosque retains a water container from the seventeenth century. The mosque was therefore functional throughout this period. In modern times, one part of the mosque was turned into a shelter, during the Iraq-Iran war. This area of the mosque, with its stucco plugs, was entirely whitewashed.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

Fig. 53.

The current ground plan of the Ilkhanid mosque was formed by 1315-16; the mosque retains two *iwan*s facing the internal rectangular courtyard. The *qibla iwan* leads to the square domed prayer hall which houses the monumental stucco mihrab. The domed hall and the courtyard are both flanked by smaller prayer spaces, which are covered with a system of small domes. The two *iwan*s accentuate the mosque's *qibla* axis. This ground plan is of a medium size and it occurs frequently in Central Iran. Two monuments of similar date and ground plan are the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Gar mosque (Cat. No. 7). In all three cases Ilkhanid two-*iwan* mosques were built on sites of earlier monuments.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The mihrab area is accentuated by the domed prayer hall and the adjacent *qibla iwan*, which is larger in dimension, compared to the mosque's north-eastern *iwan*. The mosque's two entrances

[322] See Miles 1974, Inscription no. 46; pages 97-98.

are visually highlighted with entrance portals. The *qibla* direction and the north-south axis are accentuated with the sequence of the following structures: the domed prayer hall, the *qibla iwan*, the courtyard, the north-eastern *iwan* and the monumental north-eastern entrance portal.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument is a congregational mosque. There are no other indications of a mosque serving a secondary function such as a madrasa. No other structures, which could have been adjacent to the mosque are preserved. The Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun (Cat. No. 32), near the mosque indicates that the local cemetery was separated from its congregational mosque.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 55-68.

Interior Revetments

The majority of the mosque's revetments are concentrated in the mosque's domed prayer hall. The two *iwan*s and the two entrance portals also retain different types of architectural revetments in ceramic and carved stucco media. The remaining prayer spaces of the mosque are mainly decorated with stucco plugs. The decorative programme of the mosque's domed hall consists of two decorative interventions (see below). The monument's epigraphic programme was studied by Miles, upon whose readings this research stands.[323]

The Interior of the Domed Hall

The Inscription Band at the Springing of the Dome (Phase One)

Fig. 57.

The dome of the mosque features a star-like design formed with the aid of arranged fired bricks and accentuated with application of stucco bands. These stucco bands contain floral ornamentation and they retain large amounts of pigmentation traces in white, red and blue. Just below the dome runs the Knotted Kufic inscription, which contains the Qurʾanic excerpt (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-6) and the date of the completion of the domed structure as 1315-16.[324] The inscription completion date placement is peculiar: it is superimposed on the inscription's religious text. The stucco inscription is a feat of strength of stucco craftsmanship: its letters are elongated into diverse knotted forms with distinct floral finials. The inscription is placed against a background saturated with floral scrolls, palmettes and half-palmettes. The inscription panel was carved out of two layers of stucco, one of which served for the background and the other for the inscription, which slightly protrudes from the background.

[323] Miles 1974.
[324] The entire historic inscription reads: *And this (is) in the latter part of (the month) Safar, year seven hundred and fifteen*. See Miles 1974, 94.

The Transitional Zone (Phase One)

Figs. 57, 63.

The dome of the prayer hall is supported by an elaborate transition zone consisting of a system of arches. These arches evolve into pendentives on the corners and they are filled with muqarnas. They are connected by four archivolts placed on cardinal sides of the mosque's structure. These elements evolve into a squinch system, which enables a smooth transition between the square and the hemispherical forms. The four archivolts are decorated with stucco bands recounting Qurʾanic verses; they may have originally been open and closed off at a later stage. These inscriptions were part of the mosque's original design. They recount Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18-22) on the archivolt of the north-western supporting wall. These stucco inscriptions are closely related to the inscription which runs below the dome: ornamental details, artistic technique and style of the inscriptions suggests that these were work of the same stucco craftsmen and that they also date from 1315-16. The inscriptions feature *Naskh* style and their background is filled with an extensive decorative programme of floral scrolls, palmettes and half-palmettes.

The *qibla* lunette (in the archivolt) contains a stucco decoration below the archivolt's inscription. It was produced with artistic techniques related to the archivolt inscription and it retains comparable pigmentation traces of blue, red, and white. This stucco panel features ornamentation and epigraphic bands characteristic of stucco revetments of the Isfahan area. The panel displays a composition of symmetric and interlocking elements of palmette-like leaves and their variations. They are arranged into a pyramidal design, the monotony of which is broken by inscription bands in Square Kufic with the repeating exclamation: *The Kingdom belongs to God*. This stucco panel is related to the Kufic inscription which runs below the dome and the archivolt inscriptions. It also contains similar and extensive traces of red, blue, and white (and minimal traces of green). Further elements, such as the teardrop medallions with Square Kufic, were applied to the relief to increase the contrast between the composition's protruding and recessed elements. The lunette panel contains a remaining part of the original scaffolding, which was used to construct the dome and to decorate the structure. This panel should thus be dated 1315-16, together with the archivolt inscriptions and the Kufic inscription running along the dome's base.

The Mihrab (Phases One and Two)

Figs. 58-66.

Mihrab Phases

The mihrab's core is formed by its inner niche with a pointed arch, which is topped by a panel of carved and perforated stucco. This structure is framed by a monumental inscription band and topped by a rectangular frieze of deep-relief stuccos with inscription bands. The chronology of the mihrab's production is unclear; the difference in employed artistic techniques and observations of the mihrab's panel joints indicate that the mihrab's upper register could be an afterthought or a slightly later addition. Diverse artistic techniques were employed. Its lower part was made with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, but it also contains a panel of

perforated stuccos with palmette imagery native to the Isfahan area. The artistic techniques for mihrab's upper register are different; a deep relief, with heavy undercutting is produced by the means of stucco carving of at least three stucco layers.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The interior lunette of the mihrab is carried by a pointed arch, which is formed with fluted bands of stencilled applied stuccos. The lunette's interior comprises decoration of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and Kufic inscriptions (left: *Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-6 and right: *Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:16). These two panels are divided by a panel of applied stencilled stucco ornamentation of floral designs. These registers are topped by the muqarnas hood produced with the same artistic technique and featuring Square Kufic inscriptions (invocations to Muhammad and ʿAli) arranged in muqarnas cells. The niche is topped by the carved stucco register with a symmetrical composition of palmette imagery and it features a deeply carved stucco relief. The background of stucco is filled with abstract floral ornamentation and inscription bands in Square Kufic (repeating of: *The Dominion belongs to God*). This structure is outlined by a framing band which comprises four (two double) inscriptions. The inner framing band inscription is badly damaged. It was originally a dark blue inscription (*Ayat al-Kursi*, 2:255) of cursive style, painted directly on the stucco surface of the mihrab and topped by no longer extant Kufic style inscription in white (illegible).[325] The exterior framing inscription in *Naskh* (*Surat al-Insan*, 76:1-4) is set against a dark blue background and topped by a small white inscription in Kufic (read by Miles as parts of the Shahada).[326] The top register of the mihrab consists of intertwined Square Kufic bands and floral imagery arranged according to principles of vertical symmetry into repeating medallion-like patters. Square Kufic bands repeat *Allah*. The floral imagery of this panel differs from the mihrab's carved stucco panel and it has few similarities with other stucco repertoires of the Isfahan area. This panel also retains extensive polychromy traces.

Revetments on Supporting Walls of the Domed Hall (Phases Two and Three)

Fig. 57.

Architectural revetments on supporting walls were likely applied after the openings of the domed hall were partially or entirely closed-off (see above). These interventions likely took place during the Aq Quyunlu period. Due to the modifications of the domed hall's supporting walls, it was necessary to at least partially redecorate them. The supporting walls and the intradoses of archivolts are decorated with diverse stuccos. The intradoses of two open archivolts (which were not closed off), which likely date to the 1315-16 phase, are decorated with stucco plugs and geometrically arranged stucco decoration with epigraphic elements in cursive, Kufic or Square Kufic (*Allah, Muhammad*). The supporting walls are decorated with three types of revetments. There is a *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscription, which runs along the upper edge of supporting walls, at the springing of the transitional zone, repeating *Allah*. This inscription frames the supporting wall surface. Below the inscription, the stucco plugs are arranged in diverse geometric patterns. The third part comprises the dado areas, which is

[325] Miles 1974, 95.
[326] *Ibid.*

decorated with geometrical motifs with floral stucco inserts. Blind niches also comprise decorations. Their upper parts are decorated with geometrical ornamentation in carved stucco and stucco plugs.

The described stucco plug and geometrical ornamentation of the supporting walls likely covers earlier revetments. The entire layer of decoration protrudes and covers parts of the mihrab's profile, indicating that the mihrab pre-dates these decorations. Moreover, the top register inscription does not align with the revetments of mosque's transitional zone.[327]

Post-Ilkhanid Revetments

There is a stucco panel with a historic inscription on the surfaces of a pier near the *qibla iwan*.[328] This inscription informs about interventions subsequent to the mosque construction and decoration in 1315-16. The inscription communicates that many parts of the mosque (left and right) were restored and repaired during the reign of Uzun Hasan (the Aq Quyunlu ruler; r. 1453-78) by an employee of his, apparently native to Ushturjan, *Pir Kamal al-Din Isma'il, Son of Zahir al-Din Ibrahim al-Ushturjani*. It is plausible that repairs of the *qibla iwan* and modifications of the domed hall, with closings off and application of revetments on to supporting walls, took place during this intervention.

Exterior Revetments

Exterior revetments are found on both *iwan*s and both entrance portals. No other revetments cover exterior surfaces of the monument.

The South-eastern Entrance Portal (Phase One)

This portal is smaller in dimension, compared to the north-eastern portal. The south-eastern entrance portal is carried by a pointed arch, and it is rectangular in form. The portal might have been more richly ornamented in its original form. The muqarnas semi-dome and the historic inscription in stucco form portal's decorative programme. The muqarnas semi-dome is produced with cells featuring strapwork revetments; triangular forms between the muqarnas cells are decorated with carved stucco with floral ornaments arranged into abstract geometric forms. The stucco inscription, which runs below the muqarnas semi-dome contains the Qur'anic inscription (*Surat al-Jinn*, 72:18) and the date of the completion of the portal, 1315-16 - the same as the domed hall and the north-eastern portal. The stucco inscription is badly damaged, but it illustrates that once it had been a masterpiece of stucco craftsmanship. Fluid *Thuluth* is used for the inscription, which is set against a rich background of floral scrolls.

The North-eastern Entrance Portal (Phases One and Two)

Figs. 54-56.

The north-eastern entrance portal features a decorative programme of ceramic architectural revetments, produced and signed by two masters of separate professions; this is a work of redecoration (1315-16) of an earlier portal. One part was revealed by soundings. The original

[327] This might however be an effect of restoration interventions.
[328] Miles 1974, 97-98.

portal likely dates to the Seljuq period and it comprised inscriptions formed by fired brick and terracotta elements. The current portal consists of the main structure which is carried by a pointed arch, and which is divided into three separate tiers. In the interior recessed part of the portal, there is a muqarnas semi-dome and two recessed niches on each side. A pair of minarets extend from the top of the portal. The exterior surface of the portal contains three niches on each side, with *Khatt-i bannaʾi* in their interior. These exterior surfaces are not as lavishly decorated as those of the entrance portal of the *khanqah* at Natanz (Cat. No. 12). Nevertheless, the two portals, at Natanz and Ushturjan, are similar in their structural features, although the Natanz portal is lacking minarets, perhaps because it is the portal of the *khanqah* rather than a mosque. These two muqarnas semi-domes also reveal similar features. The central space of the interior of the portal at Ushturjan is dominated by the large inscription in tile mosaic of dark and light blue glazed elements, which constitute the historic inscription relating to the mosque's patronage. In comparison to the tile mosaic at Natanz portal, the Ushturjan tile mosaic is advanced: it contains rosettes of mosaic with white and brown glazed inserts. The inscription is framed with bands of geometric ornamentation in sgraffito technique, similar to the technique found at Natanz, but more developed and comprising two shades of blue. A similar artistic technique of sgraffito tiles was also employed for the Qurʾanic inscription (*Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:90-91), which runs right above the door of the entrance portal. The door is encircled by a geometrical band of terracotta elements set against light blue glaze inserts. Two of these tiles contain signatures of artists responsible for the making of portal's glazed revetments. They are not dissimilar from the two patrons' signatures located on the light blue glaze inserts of the base of the minaret of the ʿAbd al Samad complex (Cat. No. 12).

A series of Square Kufic inscriptions made out of terracotta elements and set against light blue glazed inserts decorates the area at the springing of the portal's muqarnas semi-dome. These inscriptions are arranged into medallions forming an interplay of geometrical forms. The central inscription contains names of the members of the house of the Prophet (*Ahl al-Bayt*) and the Twelve Imams; an explicitly Shiʿite content, which reflects the state religion in the time in which the mosque was decorated. Other such medallions contain repeating names of *Muhammad, ʿAli* and the *Blessings to Muhammad and the Twelve Imams*. These medallions form a visual horizontal band of Square Kufic inscriptions. Square Kufic and *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions are also used to recount Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:28-29; *Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:16-17) in a set of medallions. The area above the medallions comprises the muqarnas semi-dome, which is decorated with glazed revetments: tile mosaic, sgraffito ornamentation in dark and light blue, terracotta and ceramic inserts. The two spandrels on the external surfaces of the entrance portal carry medallions with repeating names *Muhammad* and *Allah*, arranged in geometrical patterns and produced out of dark blue glazed elements. The remains of the two minarets topping the portal were decorated with epigraphic bands, which were produced with glazed inserts placed between the fired bricks. One portion of the remaining inscription reads: *The God is the Greatest*.

The Qibla Iwan (Phase One)

Figs. 67-68.

The *qibla iwan* was badly ruined and it must have been repaired subsequently to the Ilkhanid interventions. Only lower parts of this *iwan* comprise Ilkhanid architectural revetments, which consist of a glazed tile inscription, Square Kufic bands and stucco plugs. The *iwan* comprises a fragmentary inscription in tile and stucco medium (which reads: *Accomplished with the Help of God*…). The interior part of the *iwan* comprises a set of panels with stucco plugs (floral and epigraphic with word *Allah*) and Square Kufic borders (Qurʾan, *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* 36:1-9; *Surat al-Hashr*, 59:23-24).[329] The second panel with Qurʾan 59:23-24 is of particular interest because portions of it reveal the way in which it was produced. It seems that the stucco dried quicker than the artisans had foreseen and they did not manage to complete the inscription. For this panel, the stucco plugs not only comprise *Allah*, but also *Muhammad, al-Mulk lillah, ʿAli, Rasul Allah*, etc.[330]

The North-eastern Iwan (Phase One)

A stucco inscription runs along the intrados of the *iwan*'s arch and recounts a Qurʾanic verse (*Surat al-Ahzab*, 33:56). The carving quality of this inscription does not match other stuccos on the south-eastern entrance portal and the domed hall. This inscription is inserted into a fired brick cartouche, which suggests that the space for the inscription was left at the time of the construction of the *iwan*. The inscription is badly damaged. The interior of the intrados of the *iwan* contains a chequered pattern produced with fired bricks and terracotta, stucco plugs in different arrangements and a fragmentary wall painting in a degraded state.

Stucco Polychromy at Ushturjan

Ushturjan stuccos retain extensive polychromy traces. The stucco inscription of the north-eastern *iwan* conserves traces of blue and green, suggesting that it was set against a dark background and coloured with lighter colours. The Square Kufic panels of the *qibla iwan* conserve traces of red, employed for design transfer. The stuccos of the domed hall present two slightly different colour schemes. The inscription bands running below the dome and on the archivolts conserve extensive traces of white to ochre, blue and red. These inscriptions were set against a dark blue background and they were coloured red and white. The same applies for the stucco decoration bands in the dome area of the prayer hall. The mihrab presents a slightly extended polychromy scheme with addition of light green, similar to traces found at Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3). Similarly to Haftshuya, the Ushturjan mihrab was also first coloured with a white primer and subsequently it was rendered polychrome with red, white, green and blue. The applied moulded stuccos of mihrab's framing inscriptions were set against blue background, which was shaded. Shading of colours is rarely encountered on Ilkhanid stuccos. The panel above mihrab's niche retains extensive traces of green. The described manners of applying colours at Ushturjan are similar to those mentioned in the studies of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1).

[329] Miles 1974, 93.
[330] Miles 1974, 93.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Ushturjan

Different types of architectural revetments and diverse stucco artistic techniques were employed at Ushturjan. The north-eastern *iwan* features a modest inscription in stucco produced out of one layer of stucco. The *qibla iwan* contains two panels with stucco plugs and Square Kufic inscriptions which should be considered a separate stucco artistic technique. The domed prayer hall retains various architectural revetments in carved stucco. The inscription running below the dome and the inscriptions of the archivolts were produced with carving of two stucco layers.

The mihrab is the most complex piece of the revetments and it was likely produced in two separate interventions or by two different stucco craftsmen's workshops. The contrast between the artistic techniques is striking and confirms this assumption. Some parts of the mihrab are produced by carving two to three stucco layers, and undercutting some parts of them. In addition, some ornaments were applied on the carved stucco relief. This is very different from the lower part of mihrab where wall paintings and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos are located. This artistic technique is not native to the Isfahan region, where it is only found in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). The presence of this artistic technique suggests that the craftsmen who made it arrived from Sultaniyya. Apart from the mentioned artistic techniques, there are also stucco plugs, *Khatt-i bannaʾi* and geometric stucco patterns present in the domed hall and located on the surfaces of its supporting walls. Stucco plugs are also found on the piers of other prayer spaces in the mosque.

The Ushturjan Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Different artistic techniques were employed to produce the architectural revetments of the domed prayer hall of the Ushturjan Friday mosque. On the one hand, there are carved stuccos, which were works of local stucco craftsmen native to the Isfahan area. On the other hand, the monument also comprises other decorative media, such as moulded and stencilled stuccos, which are native to the area of Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), Yazd and Abarquh (Cat. Nos. 11, 29). The combination of the two types of stucco media, which encounter each other in the mihrab of the Ushturjan mosque, is striking and might be the result of two separate decorative interventions. It is therefore difficult to consider the monument as featuring unified aesthetics or a single style of stuccos.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque does not conserve any old pieces of furniture, apart from the Safavid water reservoir.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The South-eastern Entrance Portal

a.) This part of the monument retains only one inscription, in carved stucco medium, which features *Naskh* style. It is set against a richly carved background of floral scrolls. It provides important information concerning the year of completion of the portal and it contains a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jinn* (72:18).

The inscription reads:[331]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وانّ المساجد اله فلا تدعوا مع الله احد[ا] في سنة خمس عشرة وسبعمائة

In the name of God, The Compassionate, the Merciful. It is onto God that the mosques (temples) are set apart: call not then on any other therein with God (Qurʾan 72:18). In the year seven hundred and fifteen (1315-16).

The North-eastern Entrance Portal

a.) The north-eastern portal contains an important historic inscription in tile mosaic (dark blue set against a turquoise background). The inscription provides crucial information concerning the identity of the patron of the 1315-16 rebuilding and redecoration interventions at the mosque. The inscription was read by Miles.[332]

The inscription reads:

أمر ببناء هذا المسجد المبارك الصاحب الأعظم ملك الوزراء فى العالم فخر الدنيا و الدين محمد بن محمود بن علي الاشترجاني

The construction of this blessed mosque was ordered by the greatest of the lords, king of viziers in the universe, Fakhr al-Dawla wa al-Din Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn ʿAli al-Ushturjani.

The inscription refers to the construction of the monument, but it is placed on the portal which was rebuilt and redecorated: in the lower right hand side section, this portal reveals remains of earlier revetments and a fraction of an inscription, which likely dates to the Seljuq period. Despite the inscription referring to the construction of the monument, this intervention needs to be understood as the rebuilding and redecoration of an older structure.

b.) An inscription band runs above the entrance opening of the portal. It is produced with sgraffito turquoise tiles. It features a Qurʾanic excerpt from the *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:90-91). It was read by Miles.[333]

The inscription reads:[334]

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ ازْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَنْ تُقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلْءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوِ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

Indeed, those who reject the message after their belief and then increase in disbelief – never will their [claimed] repentance be accepted, and they are the ones astray.
Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers – never would the [whole] capacity of the earth in gold be accepted from one of them if he would [seek to] ransom himself with it. For those there will be a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers.

[331] Miles 1974, 93.
[332] *Ibid.*, 90-91.
[333] Miles 1974, 91.
[334] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

c.) The two tiles above the entrance portal's opening contain signatures of the head of the tile craftsmen and the head the of builders responsible for the redecoration and rebuilding of the portal. The two signatures are incised onto the turquoise star tiles, and they make sense when read together. They were first noted and read by Miles.[335]

The tile craftsmen's signature read:

عمل حاجي محمد قطاع تبريزي[336]

Work of Hajji Muhammad qittaʾ-i Tabrizi.

عمل بناء احمد بن محمد البناء المعروف حداد[337]

Building work of Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-bannaʾ al-maʿruf-i Haddad.

d.) A rectangular panel of Square Kufic style features names of the Prophet and the Twelve Imams of the Shiʿite branch of Islam:[338]

محمد و علي و حسن و حسين و علي و جعفر و موسى و علي و محمد و علي و حسن و محمد

Muhammad and ʿAli and Hasan and Husayn and ʿAli and Musa and ʿAli and Muhammad and ʿAli and Hasan and Muhammad.

e.) A Square Kufic panel on the right hand side of the portal features compositions of the repetition of *Muhammad;*[339] it is mirrored by a similar panel of compositions of *ʿAli*.[340] Another such panel contains an invocation to God:[341]

It reads:

رضوان الله عليهم جمعياً

The benediction of God upon them all (Muhammad and Imams).

f.) Four panels display a Square Kufic inscription, which comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:28-29):[342]

The inscription reads:[343]

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۚ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

[335] Miles 1974, 91.
[336] TEI 35457 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021)
[337] TEI 35455 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021).
[338] Miles 1974, 92.
[339] Miles 1974, 92.
[340] *Ibid.*
[341] *Ibid.*
[342] *Ibid.*
[343] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ تَرَاهُمْ رُكَّعًا سُجَّدًا يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِضْوَانًا ۖ سِيمَاهُمْ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ مِنْ أَثَرِ السُّجُودِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مَثَلُهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ ۚ وَمَثَلُهُمْ فِي الْإِنْجِيلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأَهُ فَآزَرَهُ فَاسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَىٰ عَلَىٰ سُوقِهِ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ ۗ وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion. And sufficient is Allah as Witness.
Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration. That is their description in the Torah. And their description in the Gospel is as a plant which produces its offshoots and strengthens them so they grow firm and stand upon their stalks, delighting the sowers – so that Allah may enrage by them the disbelievers. Allah has promised those who believe and do righteous deeds among them forgiveness and a great reward.

g.) Two rectangular panels in *Naskh* style inscription produced in tile mosaic medium, in white set against a blue background, feature the last part of the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Anʿam* (6:100):[344]

It reads:[345]

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ ۖ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

But they have attributed to Allah partners – the jinn, while He has created them – and have fabricated for Him sons and daughters. Exalted is He and high above what they describe.

h.) Two cartouches (?) placed in blind niches of the portal feature sgraffito tiles of dark blue and an inscription in *Naskh*, recounting a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:16-17).[346]

It reads:[347]

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ
الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْمُنْفِقِينَ وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ

Those who say, "Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire,"
The patient, the true, the obedient, those who spend [in the way of Allah], and those who seek forgiveness before dawn.

i.) At the top portion of the *iwan*, there is a medallion in the spandrel, produced in dark blue glazed material and placed against a light blue background. The featured inscription style is *Naskh* and the composition consists of five repetitions of *Allah*. Another such roundel is placed

[344] Miles 1974, 92.
[345] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-anam-100-qs-6-100-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[346] Miles 1974, 92.
[347] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

opposite this one and it features the same artistic technique and a design of five repetitions of *Muhammad*.[348]

j.) Carved stucco inscription in the intrados of the arch of the portal with dark blue background is written in *Naskh* style and it features the *Basmala* followed by the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:56):[349]

It reads:[350]

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.

The Interior of the Domed Prayer Hall

a.) The inscription at the springing of the dome outlines the dome collar. It assumes monumental dimensions and it features Knotted Kufic style with elaborate knot elements in the area of the *hastae* which terminate with abstracted vegetal finials. The inscription protrudes from a richly carved background of palmette-derived elements. It was read by Miles,[351] and it features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-6). Moreover, the date of the completion of the inscription, and by consequence, of the dome construction, is indicated with a date in cursive style placed at the end of the inscription, in its upper register. The inscription retains some traces of pigmentation in red, white, and dark blue.

The passages reads:[352]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

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[348] Miles 1974, 92.
[349] *Ibid.*, 93.
[350] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ahzab-56-qs-33-56-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[351] Miles 1974, 94.
[352] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds – and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment –
And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women – those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

The inscription contains the date of the completion of this part of the monument, which reads:

و ذلك فى أواخر صفر سنة خمس عشرة و سبعمائة[353]

And this (was completed) at the end of (the month of) Safar, (in the year) seven hundred and fifteen (1315-16).

b.) The transitional zone area comprises inscription bands, which frame the four archivolts. They retain blue in the recessed parts of carved stucco reliefs, together with traces of red and white. They feature *Naskh* style, they are slightly concave, and they are placed on the same visual plane with the palmette-derived elements' background. Occasionally, knotted elements are inserted into spaces above the inscription letters. The inscriptions were read by Miles.[354] The inscriptions should be read together as one inscription band, which begins with the *Basmala* and continues with the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (9:9-22):

The inscription text reads:[355]

اشْتَرَوْا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
لَا يَرْقُبُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلًّا وَلَا ذِمَّةً ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ
فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ
وَإِنْ نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَهْدِهِمْ وَطَعَنُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ فَقَاتِلُوا أَئِمَّةَ الْكُفْرِ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ لَا أَيْمَانَ لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْتَهُونَ
أَلَا تُقَاتِلُونَ قَوْمًا نَكَثُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۚ أَتَخْشَوْنَهُمْ ۚ فَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ
قَاتِلُوهُمْ يُعَذِّبْهُمُ اللَّهُ بِأَيْدِيكُمْ وَيُخْزِهِمْ وَيَنْصُرْكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَيَشْفِ صُدُورَ قَوْمٍ مُؤْمِنِينَ
وَيُذْهِبْ غَيْظَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۗ وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ
أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِيجَةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ
مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يَعْمُرُوا مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ شَاهِدِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ بِالْكُفْرِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ وَفِي النَّارِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ
إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ
أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ أَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ
يُبَشِّرُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنْهُ وَرِضْوَانٍ وَجَنَّاتٍ لَهُمْ فِيهَا نَعِيمٌ مُقِيمٌ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

[353] Miles 1974, 94.
[354] *Ibid.*, 94-95.
[355] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/At-taubah (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.
They do not observe toward a believer any pact of kinship or covenant of protection. And it is they who are the transgressors.
But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakat, then they are your brothers in religion; and We detail the verses for a people who know.
And if they break their oaths after their treaty and defame your religion, then fight the leaders of disbelief, for indeed, there are no oaths [sacred] to them; [fight them that] they might cease.
Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and determined to expel the Messenger, and they had begun [the attack upon] you the first time? Do you fear them? But Allah has more right that you should fear Him, if you are [truly] believers.
Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people.
And remove the fury in the believers' hearts. And Allah turns in forgiveness to whom He wills; and Allah is Knowing and Wise.
Do you think that you will be left [as you are] while Allah has not yet made evident those among you who strive [for His cause] and do not take other than Allah, His Messenger and the believers as intimates? And Allah is Acquainted with what you do.
It is not for the polytheists to maintain the mosques of Allah [while] witnessing against themselves with disbelief. [For] those, their deeds have become worthless, and in the Fire they will abide eternally.
The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.
Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.
The ones who have believed, emigrated and striven in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives are greater in rank in the sight of Allah. And it is those who are the attainers [of success].
Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him and approval and of gardens for them wherein is enduring pleasure.
[They will be] abiding therein forever. Indeed, Allah has with Him a great reward.

The Mihrab

The mihrab comprises several inscriptions, which are organized from the bottom to the top:

a.) The lower portion of mihrab's internal niche comprises applied moulded and stencilled stuccos with inscriptions in Kufic on two panels flanking the central floral design of the revetments. The two inscriptions comprise Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1-6) and *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:16). Where applied moulded stuccos have fallen off, the basic design of the inscriptions can be seen in red outline, which served as markers.

The first inscription reads: [356]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –

The second inscription reads:[357]

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Those who say, "Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire,"

b.) The hood of the mihrab's internal niche is produced in applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and it comprises three tiers of muqarnas. The lower tier comprises Square Kufic compositions of texts which resemble Blessings to the Twelve Imams.

The extant original non-restored parts (the two central cells out of four) of these compositions were read by Miles, as:[358]

اللهم صلى على محمد المصطفى

Oh God, bless Muhammad the Chosen!

و صلى على علي المرتظى

And bless ʿAli the Approved!

The cells flanking these may recount the Shahada. However, these inscriptions could be the results of restoration interventions.

[356] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[357] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[358] Miles 1974, 96.

c.) The spandrel panel topping the mihrab's niche features a symmetrical design of perforated and undercut palmette compositions with a Square Kufic band acting as one of the composition elements. The band consists of the repeating invocation: *The Dominion belongs to God.*

d.) The mihrab's niche is framed by a wall painting inscription in dark blue set against a light coloured and plain background, which features Kufic style. This band is composed of two juxtaposed inscriptions, one of which is no longer legible and was written in Kufic. Miles states that the two inscriptions are badly damaged and that it is not possible to understand their content.[359]

e.) The monumental framing band of the mihrab consists of a *Naskh* style inscription in relief, produced with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos. It retains traces of blue and white in the background. The upper register of the inscription band is filled with a Kufic inscription in the same artistic medium. The *Naskh* inscription features the *Basmala* and the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Insan* (76:1-4), and the small Kufic inscription repeats *Ayat al-Kursi* (2:255) until *kursiyuhu* (approximately half of the verse). Another small inscription in white features parts of the Shahada:[360]

The large inscription reads:[361]

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَذْكُورًا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا
إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا

Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?
Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.
Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.
Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.

The Kufic inscription reads:[362]

اللهُ لاَ إِلَـهَ إِلاَّ هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لاَ تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلاَ نَوْمٌ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الأَرْضِ مَن ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهم وَلاَ يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلاَّ بِمَا شَاء وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالأَرْضَ وَلاَ يَؤُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيم

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His

[359] *Ibid.*, 96.
[360] *Ibid.*, 95-96.
[361] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Insan (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[362] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The small white inscription reads:

الحمد [sic] اله لا اله الا و ... اكبر سبحان ...[363]

Praise be to God. There is no God but God, and … greater, glory…[364]

f.) The top horizontal panel of the mihrab (likely second phase) comprises a repeating composition of abstracted vegetal design which contains a Square Kufic band. The band reads: *Allah*.

The Qibla Iwan

a.) The intrados of the *qibla iwan* was once reveted with a historic inscription band, which consisted of a combination of glazed elements for the inscription, which were set against a background of carved stucco-produced leaf-like compositions. Only the beginning of the inscription remains intact, and it was read by Miles.[365]

The inscription reads:

اتفق بعون الله [sic]

Accomplished with the help of Allah [sic]

The position and content of the inscription might indicate that the *iwan* was the work of a different builders' and craftsmen's workshop, compared to the rest of the structure. Alternatively, this was a separate segment in the process of the mosque rebuilding or repair. It is most likely that the inscription referred to the time of completion of the *qibla iwan* and perhaps the domed prayer hall.

b.) The interior of the *iwan* comprises several panels of carved stucco plug compositions, which are framed by Square Kufic inscriptions carved into a single layer of stucco. In some portions, these inscriptions may have remained incomplete, because the stucco body dried up and it was no longer possible to carve it. Miles was able to recognize the content of the inscriptions.[366]

One of the inscriptions features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (36:1-9):[367]

يس
وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ
إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ

[363] Miles 1974, 96.
[364] *Ibid.*
[365] *Ibid.*, 93.
[366] Miles 1974, 93.
[367] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ya-Sin (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَا أُنْذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ
لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُقْمَحُونَ
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ

Ya, Seen.
By the wise Qurʾan.
Indeed you, [O Muhammad], are from among the messengers,
On a straight path.
[This is] a revelation of the Exalted in Might, the Merciful,
That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware.
Already the word has come into effect upon most of them, so they do not believe.
Indeed, We have put shackles on their necks, and they are to their chins, so they are with heads [kept] aloft.
And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.

Another such inscription is fragmented, and it features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Hashr* (59:23-24):[368]

The inscription text reads:[369]

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ
هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.
He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

c.) Medallions on architectural surfaces of the *iwan* contain epigraphic elements, such as *Allah, Muhammad,* in *Naskh* style, and they are located in the intrados of the lateral arch of the domed hall (the south-eastern arch).[370]

The Smaller Iwan

a.) A carved stucco inscription in fragmented state is located in the intrados of the *iwan*. Its relief is shallow and it retains some polychromy traces. The inscription was read by Miles:[371] it comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:56) and it features *Naskh* style with some elements of floral background filling the remaining space:

[368] Miles 1974, 93.
[369] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Hashr (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[370] Miles 1974, 94.
[371] *Ibid.*, 93.

The inscription reads:[372]

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.

The South-eastern Riwaq of the Courtyard

d.) The historic inscription commemorating the latest interventions on the monument is located in the *riwaq* south-east of mosque's courtyard. It assumes the form of a carved stucco plaque. The inscription features ten lines of *Naskh* style writing in Persian and a framing inscription featuring a Qurʾanic excerpt in Arabic.

The inscription was read and translated by Miles:[373]

در زمان خلافة
پادشاه إسلام السلطان
الأعظم مالك رقاب الأمم
أبو النصر حسن بهادر خان
خلد الله ملكه و سلطانه تعمير
يمين و يسار مسجد جامع اشترجان نمود از
خاص مال خود الشيخ السالك المتقى
كمال الد[...] إسماعيل بن ظهير الدين إبراهيم اشتر
جانى (اشترجانى) ابتغاء لمرضاة الله تعالى أميد كه قبول حضرة
عروه أهل كردد بدعا بانيش ياد كنيد فى تأريخ ربيع الثانى سنة أحد و ثمنين و ثمنمائة

In the time of the Caliphate of his majesty, Emperor of Islam, the greatest Sultan, lord over the necks of the peoples, Abu al-Nasr Hasan Bahadur Khan,[374] may God make eternal his sovereignty and his reign: the repair (tajdid), right and left (in its entirety), of the Friday mosque of Ushturjan, has been accomplished, at his own personal expense, by the Shaykh, the disciple, the pious Pir Kamal al-D(in) Ismaʿil ibn Zahir al-Din Ibrahim al-Ushturjani, who seeks satisfaction of God, may He be exalted, in the hope that it will be acceptable to the leader of the people, and that he shall remember its builder with prayers; dated Rabi' II, year eight hundred and eighty-one (July-August, 1476).

The framing border of the inscription is written in Arabic and it features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (9:18) completed by an invocation to God. The inscription was read by Miles:[375]

[372] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ahzab-56-qs-33-56-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[373] Miles 1974, 97-98; TEI 35597 (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).
[374] This person is the Aq Quyunlu ruler Uzun Hasan, who ruled between 1453-78. Miles 1974, 98.
[375] Miles 1974, 98.

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ[376]

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.

The invocation:

صدق الله العظيم و صدق رسوله

God Almighty spoke the truth, and His Prophet spoke the truth.

The historic inscription is of essential significance in providing evidence of the 1476 interventions on the monument. It indicates that these interventions were likely extensive and might have comprised the majority of the monument.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The north-eastern portal of the mosque carries information regarding the 1315-16 mosque construction (phase two), informing that it was built by *Fakhr al-Dunya wa al-Din Muhammad ibn Mahmud ibn ʿAli al-Ushturjani*. As Miles explains, this person was a state accountant and secretary of the Ilkhanid court; the rank of the patron is similar to that of the complex of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12).[377] This is also in line with the fact that both structures assume related dimensions of medium-sized monuments. This evidence is crucial for the understanding of Ilkhanid architectural patronage, especially for monuments where patrons are not known. It is possible to propose that as in Ushturjan, local notables and Ilkhanid officials were patrons of other related monuments such as the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3), the Gar Friday mosque (Cat. No. 7) and the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).

Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Tile Craftsmen

We are fortunate to possess a double signature of the ceramic revetments' makers, on two sgraffito tiles of the north-eastern entrance portal of the mosque. The first signature reads *Work of Ahmad ibn Muhammad, the Mason, known as Haddad* (the smith, or iron-worker) and the second signature reads *Work of Hajji Muhammad, the (tile)-cutter, of Tabriz*.[378] This double inscription is significant, because it provides direct evidence of work division for the completion of the entrance portal. *Mason Ahmad* was in charge of the construction or rebuilding of the portal and *Hajji Muhammad* was the main tile cutter, or tile revetment master, the head of the workshop in charge of the decoration of the portal. These signatures should be considered as signatures of the artisans responsible for the reconstruction of the north-eastern portal and they have little to do with the rest of the mosque's architectural revetments in entirely different

[376] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-at-taubah-18-qs-9-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).
[377] Miles 1974, 90-1.
[378] Miles 1974, 91.

media. For the mosque's carved stuccos, applied moulded stuccos and the wall paintings, no signatures of craftsmen exist. Their origin is however possible to propose based on the revetment production technology and their visual characteristics.

Stucco Craftsmen

The stucco revetments of the Ushturjan Friday mosque do not contain any signature of stucco masters. Earlier observations however allow some information regarding the craftsmen's workshops to be proposed. It has been noted that two distinct artistic techniques appear in the domed prayer hall of the mosque: the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and the carved stuccos. The workshop in charge of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos must have arrived at Ushturjan from Sultaniyya. Likely, the same workshop also produced the wall paintings and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). Alongside this workshop, a different workshop, likely native to the Isfahan region, produced carved stuccos. Therefore, at least three workshops worked on the Ushturjan revetments: the tile-cutting workshop, which decorated the north-eastern portal, the stucco carving workshop responsible for the south-eastern portal and interior revetments and the applied moulded and stencilled stucco workshop which produced parts of mihrab.

f.) Monument Condition

Old photographs document the Ushturjan Friday mosque in a partially ruined state. Since then, numerous conservation interventions catered to its preservation. Old photographs indicate that the mosque's north-eastern portal was heavily damaged, including its missing minarets and parts of ceramic revetments which were later reconstructed. Especially the upper portion of this portal was decayed and ruined. Some parts of the mosque's structure were in a state of disrepair and this has been mended. Interior revetments were treated with consolidation and repair interventions. Restoration interventions took place especially in the *qibla iwan* and the domed prayer hall. The mosque is currently in a good state of preservation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The discussion of the mosque proposes data regarding its architectural revetments and its history. This research suggests that the mosque is of Seljuq foundation and that in the Ilkhanid period a large-scale construction of the mosque took place in the same location around 1315-16. The interior of the domed hall of the monument and likely also the mihrab were subjected to further interventions and modifications. The mosque's constructive and decorative chronology is therefore considerably more complex than what has been acknowledged: it consisted of at least three major separate undertakings, compared to the currently perceived single intervention in 1315-16. Furthermore, the detailed analysis of the mosque's architectural revetments proposes that the domed hall was decorated in two interventions, rather than one. The discussion provides observations regarding polychromy, artistic techniques and aesthetics of the rich architectural revetment programme of the monument.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Miles 1974; Hunarfar 1966, 267-278; Nazeri and Isfahani 2016.

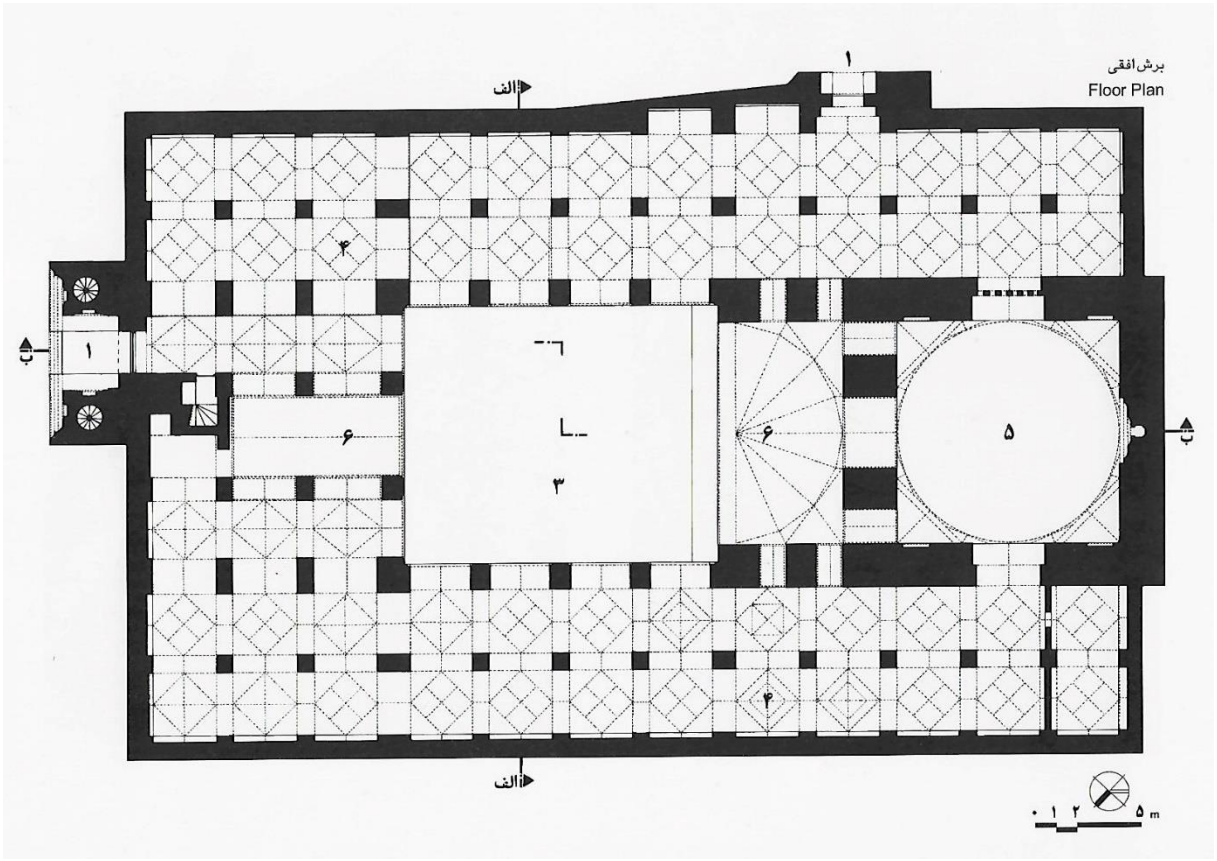


Figure 53: Ground plan of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 152).



Figure 54: Exterior of the Ushturjan Friday mosque. View of the main entrance portal on the northern side of the monument.



Figure 55: Detail of the northern entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque with muqarnas hood decorated in sgraffito, terracotta and glazed revetments.



Figure 56: Detail of the bottom right hand side part of the northern entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque retains evidence of two phases of construction and decoration.



Figure 57: Interior of the domed prayer hall of the Ushturjan Friday mosque. View towards south-west.



Figure 58: The core of the mihrab of the Ushturjan Friday mosque in carved stuccos, wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stucco media.



Figure 59: Detail of the upper horizontal panel of the stucco mihrab. The panel may be a later addition to the mihrab. It features an extremely deep stucco relief with protruding abstracted elements; it displays carved stuccos characteristic of the Isfahan area.



Figure 60: Detail of the monumental framing inscription band of the mihrab in applied moulded and stencilled stucco and wall painting media: the inscription design consists of three inscriptions in diverse epigraphic styles and dimensions.



Figure 61: Detail of the spandrel panel topping the niche of the mihrab in carved stucco medium. The panel was produced by the means of carving of at least three subsequently applied layers of stucco body.



Figure 62: Detail of the internal niche of the mihrab with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos forming the cells of the muqarnas hood and the twisted framing band. Square Kufic inscriptions form the lower tier of the muqarnas. The stuccos retain polychromy traces.




Figures 63 and 64: Carved stuccos of the Ushturjan mosque. Left: detail of the deep relief with undercut stuccos in the lunette topping the mihrab. Right: detail of the mihrab spandrel panel with extensive polychromy traces in white, green, blue and red.




Figures 65 and 66: Left: detail of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos in the lower part of mihrab's niche, showing red outlines of the design for application of stuccos. Right: detail of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos framing arabesque band of the mihrab, with abstracted flower blossom motifs, which resemble ornaments of the wall paintings at the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya.

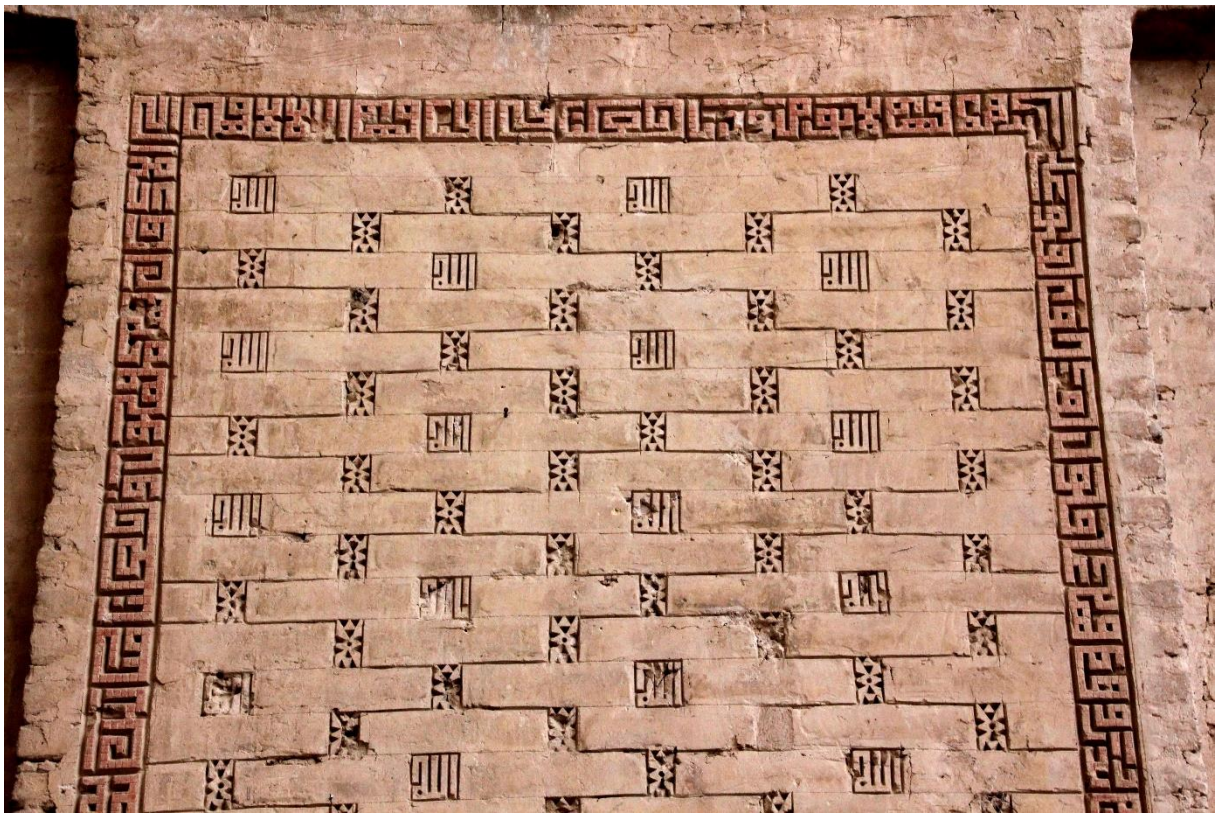


Figure 67: Square Kufic inscription and stucco plug panel in the *qibla iwan* of the mosque. The Square Kufic inscription retains incisions and traces of red employed for the transfer of its design from a sketch onto the stucco surface.



Figure 68: The incomplete panel of Square Kufic inscription and carved stucco plugs mentioned by Miles.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 5

Monument Name: Farfan Friday mosque.

Figs. 69-76.

Associated Names: the mosque received its name from the settlement it is constructed in: the Farfān Friday mosque.[379] The settlement is also referred to as Farifan.

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least two phases (phase one: likely Seljuq mosque with stucco mihrab; phase two: Ilkhanid rebuilding of the mosque and modifications of the mihrab) with subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): hypostyle mosque without a courtyard or a domed prayer hall.

Location: Farfan village; c. 80 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.436235 N; 52.478736 E.

Monument Investigation: December 28, 2014; May 9, 2016; April 11, 2019.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The village of Farfan is located in the Rui-Dasht region, where remains of settlements pre-dating the Bronze age were excavated.[380] The area was also significant in the Sasanid period. Mustawfi describes the region and agricultural significance in the Ilkhanid period, when Farfan was one of the three most significant settlements in the area; Farfan is described as a settlement with many mosques, dervish convents and commercial structures.[381] The Friday mosque is the essential historic monument that testifies to the history of Farfan and its significance in Seljuq and Ilkhanid times.

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 69.

The architectural structure of the Farfan Friday mosque was constructed in several phases. Salihi considers it of Ilkhanid origin, but there are several pieces of evidence which suggest that its structure could date back to at least the Seljuq period.[382] The current structure of the mosque consists of the vaulted prayer hall with the *qibla* wall, which features the carved stucco mihrab. The *qibla* wall is preceded by a Safavid *iwan* which currently functions as one of the mosque's

[379] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[380] Salihi 2007, 233.
[381] Le Strange 1915, 202-07.
[382] Salihi 2007, 234.

entrances. Observations of the ground plan of the mosque indicate that both current entrances to the mosque are posterior modifications. The *qibla* wall of the mosque is its oldest part and the mosque's current prayer hall was constructed after the mihrab's completion. No archaeological excavations were performed to attest to the mosque's original extent, but the mihrab's positioning may indicate that the current mosque was perhaps only one of the prayer halls of a more extensive structure. The stucco mihrab was produced during the construction of the *qibla* wall and redecorated at a later point. The structure underwent further modifications with the addition of buttresses and adjacent walls and the *iwan* in the Safavid period.[383] The mosque is located in the centre of modern Farfan.

Construction Phases

The exact sequence of the mosque's construction and its exact dating are challenging, due to the lack of archaeological excavations and due to the difficulty of examining the original supporting walls and joints between parts of its structure and the decorations.

Phase One - The Seljuq Farfan Mosque

Evidence which allows the existence of the Farfan mosque to be proposed already in the Seljuq period stems from observations of the stucco mihrab. This mihrab was made in two decorative stages, with the second stage being surely Ilkhanid. The original mihrab however reveals closer resemblance to Seljuq stuccoworks. The Farfan mosque, like those of Gar (Cat. No. 7), Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3) and Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4), was likely founded in the Seljuq period.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Farfan Mosque

The Ilkhanid period of the Farfan Friday mosque comprised rebuilding of its prayer hall and modifications to the mihrab, especially its upper stucco lunette. Its irregular prayer hall may have been rebuilt in Ilkhanid or later period, with supporting walls perhaps being reused for the construction of the new prayer hall. In the mosque's interior the two mezzanines are accessed via staircases. The purpose of these structures was to enlarge the mosque's prayer surface.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Further modifications of the Farfan Friday mosque took place in Safavid period, as suggested by Salihi, when the *iwan* was added to the mosque and some structures were built on its western side. The positioning of the *iwan* is irregular, which may reflect presence of other structures in the mosque's proximities.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

Fig. 69.

The ground plan of the mosque is square. This structure is carried by piers and pilasters. The roofing arrangement consists of small domes, which are carried by pointed arches.

[383] Salihi 2007, 234.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The Ilkhanid structure of the mosque was likely a prayer hall which pertained to a larger monument. The *iwan* added in the Safavid period[384] formed a monumental entrance for the mosque, because it did not have an entrance portal, or because its original portal fell into disrepair. The elevation of the mosque thus consists of its supporting walls and domed system for its roofing.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

There are no written sources which confirm that this mosque was actually a congregational mosque. This is supposed, because the mosque is the only extant historic mosque in Farfan, but there could have existed other mosques, as indicated by Mustawfi. The minbar in the mosque is modern and not sufficient evidence to suggest that this was a congregational mosque.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Interior revetments of the Farfan Friday mosque consist of its stucco mihrab, which is located on the mosque's *qibla* wall.

The Mihrab

Figs. 70-76.

The Mihrab and the Mosque

The stucco mihrab is located on the mosque's *qibla* wall. Some parts of the mihrab are concealed by the structure of pointed arches, which carries the domed roofing system of the mosque. This suggests that the earliest part of the mosque is the *qibla* wall with the stucco mihrab and that the prayer hall was rebuilt after the mihrab was already in place. The southern entrance to the mosque is unusual, because it is entirely attached to the mihrab on its left side, but it may be contemporary to the mihrab, because the mihrab's form is adjusted to this opening. The second entrance into the mosque's prayer hall is located in its western supporting wall, and it is not aligned in axis with any of its architectural elements. This entrance was likely an afterthought. The lack of an entrance to the mosque on its northern side, opposite of the *qibla* wall, is indicative of the fact that this mosque was perhaps originally only one of the prayer halls of a more extensive structure. The mihrab's inscriptions were studied by Salihi.[385] In his description of the mihrab, Salihi considers it a work of one intervention, which he dates based on the stylistic analysis of its central lunette (but not the rest of the mihrab) to the Ilkhanid period, and dates the mihrab to the first decades of fourteenth century.[386]

[384] Salihi 2007, 234.
[385] Salihi 2007, 237.
[386] *Ibid.*, 238.

The Mihrab's Core Structure (Phase One)

Figs. 70-75.

The mihrab consists of several panels of carved stucco. It is characterized by numerous inscription bands and some panels of abstract ornamentation compositions. The mihrab's lower portions are almost entirely destroyed, likely due to the humidity infiltration from the ground and from the joints between the *qibla* wall prayer hall's structure. The central niche of the mihrab comprises a stucco panel with a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:238) which is fragmented. The inscription features a cursive style and it is set against a floral scroll background. This area was originally flanked by two columns, of which only the capitals remain. The internal lunette of the mihrab's interior niche is the only part which does not feature epigraphic elements, but instead displays a symmetrical palmette composition. This design is large in size and it lacks detail similar to the niche lunette of the mihrab at the Kuhpaya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 8). The lunette of Farfan mihrab's niche is framed by an inscription band in Square Kufic with the repeating exclamation: *I place my absolute trust in God*.

The two spandrels of the mihrab's niche consist of repeating geometric patterns, which are produced with stucco perforations. These panels are framed by an inscription band in Kufic style and with Qurʾanic content (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-4); it is set against a heavily perforated background of repeating triangular geometrical patterns. The Kufic inscription features letter elongations evolving into intertwining floral ornaments, which form the upper decorative band of the panel. The left hand side of the mihrab features a stucco panel with the Shahada, which is not complete, because it is covered by the prayer hall's structure. This stucco panel comprises an elegant inscription in Kufic, with vertical elongated letter shafts, which accentuate its vertical axis and determine the panel's steady rhythm of forms. The inscription's background consists of floral scrolls with palmette-like designs. The relief of this panel is carved out of several stucco layers. The right-hand side of the mihrab comprises an inscription band of Qurʾanic content (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:21-22), written in *Naskh*, which runs along the perimeter of the mosque's minbar. This inscription is also set against a floral scroll background.

The Central Lunette (Phase Two)

Fig. 76.

The mihrab's top section comprises a monumental stucco lunette. It features a composition of abstract floral ornamentation with palmette-derived elements. A symmetric band of Square Kufic is interlaced in this design and it recounts the repeating invocation: *The Dominion belongs to God*. This large lunette was originally encircled by another inscription band in *Thuluth* style, which used to contain a historic inscription, currently visible only in fragments. The inscription informs on the repertoire's patron and it perhaps contained the date of the conclusion of the works on the mihrab.[387] The quality of the inscription reflects a lesser design skill of craftsmen who produced it, hinting at different phases of the mihrab's production. Salihi writes much

[387] The inscription reads: *The construction of the mihrab was ordered by the exalted lord, the prince of religious scholars, of the learned one.* This inscription was designed free-hand and carved into a single layer of stucco and set against the background floral scrolls.

about the central lunette of the mihrab and dates the mihrab based on stylistic comparison of this lunette to the stucco repertoires of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4), the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3).[388] Closer observations of the lunette reveal that it protrudes by some 4.5 cm; it may have been inserted into the mihrab after its completion. This lunette was thus part of the mihrab's second decorative intervention and it cannot serve as the dating element for the entire mihrab. This lunette is stylistically and technically different from the other parts of the mihrab, which pre-dates the lunette and are more closely related to Seljuq stuccos where Knotted Kufic is frequently employed.[389] In sum, the first phase of the mihrab's production could date from the Seljuq or Ilkhanid period and the upper parts of the mihrab are redecorations from a separate Ilkhanid intervention.

Exterior Revetments

The mosque does not retain any Ilkhanid exterior revetments.

Stucco Polychromy at Farfan

The mihrab of the Farfan Friday mosque was entirely whitewashed several times. On the parts where the whitewash has fallen off, for example above the minbar, the uncovered relief retains original polychromy traces of red for the background of the inscriptions.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Farfan

The stucco artistic techniques employed for the production of the Farfan mihrab are technologically undemanding and frequently occurring. Some panels with more elaborate inscriptions were produced by the means of carving two stucco layers and other more modest panels were produced by carving a single stucco layer. The first phase of the making of the mihrab (Seljuq or Ilkhanid) comprised carving panels out of two stucco layers. Subsequently, in the Ilkhanid period, additions to the existing mihrab were made, but for these panels carving a single stucco layer with a much plainer relief was employed. Although stylistically and visually the large lunette of the mihrab does resemble the ornamentation of the Ushturjan Friday mosque, the Haftshuya Friday mosque and the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, at Farfan, the stucco lunette is produced with more basic artistic techniques and it is lacking protruding characteristics, typical of stuccos found in these monuments.[390]

The Farfan Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The style of stuccos of the Farfan mihrab is characterized by a relatively shallow relief of stucco panels. The fact that only two artistic techniques for the mihrab's production were employed results in its relatively plain relief. The mihrab's floral symmetrical designs are of large dimensions and lack detail. This is compensated for with heavy perforation of the background

[388] Salihi 2007, 234, 237-38.
[389] There is no exact visual parallel for the Knotted Kufic inscriptions of the Farfan mihrab, but perhaps, the stuccos of the Madrasa Haydariyya in Qazvin could be considered a remote parallel.
[390] It could be hypothesized that the stucco lunette in question could be a later copy of an earlier lunette of this mihrab.

and geometric ornamentation of the mihrab's panels. The mihrab can be considered the work of a local stucco craftsmen's workshop.

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing, except for the built minbar, is present in the monument.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

Readings of inscriptions and translations have been published by Salihi.[391] They are reported here for the sake of completeness, with additional comments and observations and the reading of the historic inscription.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The inscription in the lower interior niche framing band is badly damaged and preserved only in fragments. It featured Qurʾan (*Surat al-Muʾminun*, 23:1-3). This is one of the frequently occurring Qurʾanic excerpts in the Iranian Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. The inscription displays cursive style set against a plain background.

The entire passage reads:[392]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Certainly will the believers have succeeded:

الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

they who are during their prayer humbly submissive,

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ

and they who turn away from ill speech.

Only the second half of verse 2 is legible and the rest of the inscription is no longer extant.

b.) The inscription cartouche below the lunette of mihrab's interior niche features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:238), but the inscription is only preserved in fragments. The inscription is written in *Naskh* with slightly elongated *hastae*. It is superimposed into two registers.

The entire passage should read:[393]

حَافِظُوا عَلَى الصَّلَوَاتِ وَالصَّلَاةِ الْوُسْطَىٰ وَقُومُوا لِلَّهِ قَانِتِينَ

[391] Salihi 2007, 237.
[392] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Muminun (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[393] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-238-qs-2-238-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer and stand before Allah, devoutly obedient.

This excerpt is also one of the excerpts, which are frequently featured on stucco mihrabs. The inscription reports the entire verse of Qurʾan, no part is missing.

c.) The inscription surrounding the mihrab's pointed arch lunette is written in Square Kufic style and it features the repeating of an invocation to God, which reads:

توكلة على الله

I place my absolute trust in God.

Square Kufic inscription bands are epigraphic elements, which frequently occur in the Ilkhanid period, especially in the Central Iranian region and the area of Isfahan.

d.) The inscription band which frames the niche of the mihrab features another Qurʾanic excerpt from 48:1-3 (possibly 48:1-4), *Surat al-Fath*. Lower portions of the inscription are damaged or missing. The *hastae* of letters translate into a band of four-pointed star-like elements which render the inscription elegant and form its visual frame.

The entire passages reads:[394]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

This Qurʾanic excerpt is frequently featured in Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. The first word of verse one is concealed by the wall. The inscription stops at the end of the third verse and the rest of it is no longer extant.

e.) The panel which flanks the mihrab on the left-hand side features fragments of the Shahada designed in Kufic style; the last part of the inscription is concealed by the wall structure. The inscription features a complex design of *hastae* translating into a knotted grid topped by ornamental ends of vegetal derivation.

The inscription reads:

[394] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

لا اله الا الله محمد ر [sic]

There is no God but God, and Muhammad (is his Prophet).

The inscription is unlikely to have comprised the Shiʿite Shahada, as there was no space available for it.

f.) The inscription band on the right-hand side of the mihrab's core, which frames the minbar, features a Qurʾanic excerpt from 2:21-22, *Surat al-Baqara*. It features *Naskh* style and it is placed against a modest vegetal scroll background. Its lower part is no longer extant.

The entire passage reads:[395]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ
الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous,

[He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allah equals while you know [that there is nothing similar to Him].

The first half of verse twenty-one is missing. The second half of verse twenty-two is missing due to the damaged character of the inscription.

g.) The horizontal inscription band topping the core of the mihrab features a Qurʾanic excerpt (22:77; *Surat al-Hajj*). This inscription is designed in Knotted Kufic style and it assumes monumental dimensions which render it one of the mihrab's focal points. The beginning and the end of the inscription are concealed behind the later prayer hall structure.

The entire passage reads:[396]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good – that you may succeed.

This passage of the Qurʾan is occasionally featured on stucco mihrabs. The first two words are concealed by the wall structure and the last three words are covered by the wall.

h.) The monumental lunette of the mihrab (decorative phase two) comprises bands of Square Kufic with a repeating invocation to God. Such types of bands have been observed in other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires in the region of Isfahan.

[395] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-baqarah (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[396] Qurʾanic text and translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-hajj-77-qs-22-77-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

The inscription reads:

الملك لله

The Dominion belongs to God.

i.) The monumental lunette topping the mihrab was framed by an inscription band in cursive style resembling *Naskh* and it is placed against a limited amount of vegetal elements. Only the beginning of this historic inscription is visible and the rest is concealed by the structure of the prayer hall.

The inscription reading proposed:

امر بعمارة المحراب المولى المعظم [sic]

The mihrabs of this building was ordered by the Great Mawla [sic]

The inscription hints at the second decorative phase of the mihrab (the monumental lunette and the historic inscription), indicating that the undertaking could have been sponsored by a religious authority.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not retain any post-Ilkhanid stucco revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The historic inscription of the Farfan mihrab remains is fragmented and it cannot provide precise indication regarding mihrab's patron. From the titles in the inscription, it is difficult to tell whether the patron was the local religious authority or an Ilkhanid official native to the settlement, or both. Given the dimension of the mosque and the size of the stucco repertoire – the mihrab – it is logical to suppose that the patron need not be of a high rank in order to commission this work. The patron could thus have been a local religious authority or an Ilkhanid official of a lower rank, similar to other stucco repertoires of this size.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco mihrab of Farfan does not conserve a stucco craftsmen's signature, which could point towards a certain workshop recognizable from the stucco signatures of other stucco repertoires. Characteristics of the Farfan mihrab are indeed difficult to pinpoint. Some parts of the mihrab feature elaborate inscriptions with reflected compositions and calligraphic styles (mainly Kufic inscriptions), while the other cursive inscriptions are either work of a different hand or later additions. They differ in style but they also reflect a lesser quality of stucco design and carving. The mihrab's floral ornaments are large and lack design detail. This is compensated by heavy perforation of many panels. This points to a local stuccowork, similar to that encountered in the Kuhpaya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 8). With undercutting and protruding relief missing from the Farfan mihrab it is difficult to associate it with stuccos located in the proximities of the city of Isfahan. But its ornamental elements are characteristic of the area.

Elaborate Kufic inscriptions present a different problem. Based on epigraphic ground they either could be dated to the Seljuq or to the Ilkhanid period, but the syntax between them and the abundance of these inscriptions is more characteristic of Seljuq stuccos. It is most likely that the stucco panels are older than the large central lunette and the cursive inscriptions on the right-hand side of the mihrab. Without additional evidence it is difficult to propose any detailed information regarding the stucco craftsmen of the Farfan mihrab.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument has recently undergone repairs of its roofing and insulation which prevent water infiltration. The stucco mihrab is whitewashed and would require consolidation and cleaning for its better preservation. Some parts of the external architectural structure of the mosque have also been mended, with the addition of a *kahgil* layer, although the mosque is constructed of fired brick. Some adjacent parts of the mosque, especially on its western side, remain in ruin. The monumental *iwan* flanking the mosque which may be a mud brick construction, is in a partially deteriorated state.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

According to this research, the Farfan Friday mosque mihrab is the work of two separate interventions and the first mihrab might date to either the Seljuq or Ilkhanid period. The analysis highlights essential differences in stucco relief of some parts of the mihrab and therefore postulates that these parts, especially the central lunette and the stucco bands on the right-hand side of the mihrab, are additions and modifications of the Ilkhanid period, to the already existing mihrab. Even if not of different dynasties, surely the mihrab was not made during a single decorative intervention. Furthermore, the history of the construction of the mosque and its different phases is also discussed and shows that the *qibla* wall is the oldest part of the mosque, with the prayer hall being modified and likely rebuilt upon the completion of the mihrab.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Salihi 2007.

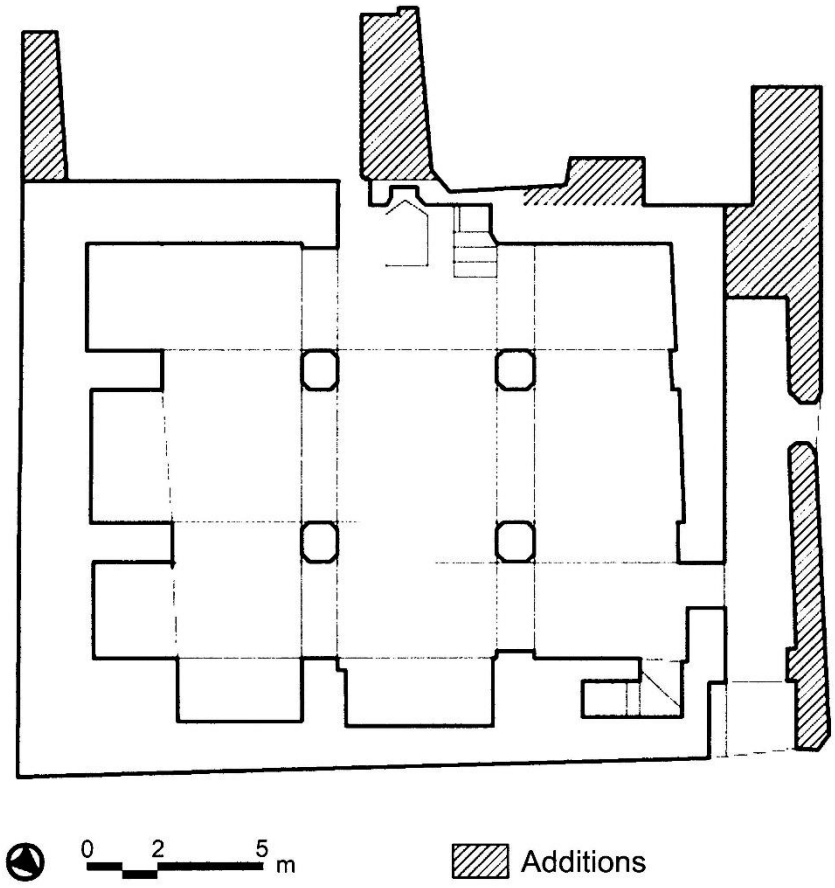


Figure 69: Ground plan of the Farfan Friday mosque (After Salihi 2007, 235).

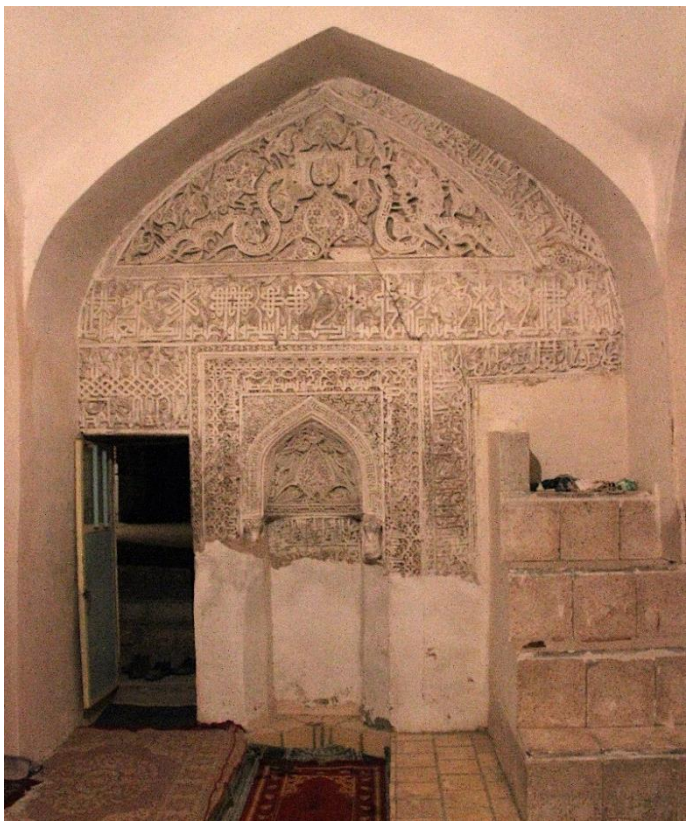


Figure 70: The carved stucco mihrab of the Farfan Friday mosque.



Figure 71: Detail of the upper part of the carved stucco mihrab: the monumental lunette is positioned in the centre, on the right-hand side, it is flanked by the cursive historic inscription.

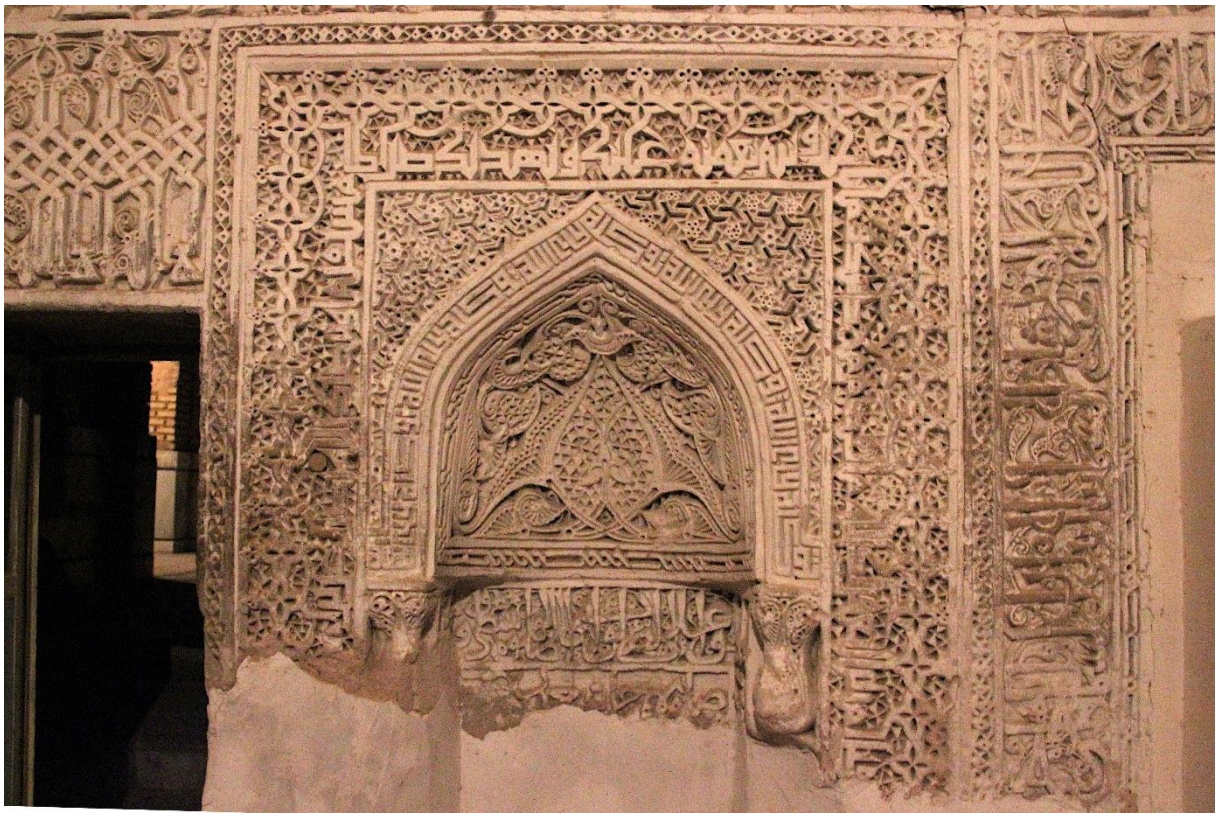


Figure 72: Detail of the lower part of the carved stucco mihrab of the Farfan mosque. The central niche is framed by a Square Kufic inscription and a further framing band featuring Kufic style. The Shahada panel is positioned on the left-hand side, above the entrance passage.



Figure 73: Detail of the monumental mihrab lunette, which is likely an addition to the mihrab.



Figure 74: Detail of the lunette of the mihrab's niche with the framing Square Kufic inscription and spandrels.



Figure 75: The Shahada panel above the entrance passage features a slightly bevelled stucco relief.



Figure 76: Side view of the monumental lunette of the mihrab revealing that it protrudes from the mihrab's relief by 4.5 cm; this indicates that the lunette panel was likely produced subsequently to other parts of the mihrab.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 6

Monument Name: Pa Minar mosque

Figs: 77-86.

Associated Names: the correct name of the monument is the Pā Mināŕ mosque.[397] The other frequently occurring name of the monument is Masjid-i Pa Minar. The most common spelling of the monument's name is Pa Minar mosque, but sometimes it occurs as the Pa Manar or Pa Menar mosque. The monument is renowned as the mosque with one of the oldest minarets after which it was named. The name of the mosque can be translated as *the mosque at the foot of the minaret*.[398] Other names for the mosque are Masjid-i ibn Kuya,[399] Imam Hassan mosque or Suffat-i Imam Husayn (to commemorate the tradition that the Imam once prayed at the site).[400]

Monument Type: hypostyle mosque with a courtyard and adjacent prayer spaces.

Chronology: The chronology of the mosque's constructive and decorative undertakings is challenging to comprehend. The monument was most likely constructed in the Early Islamic period. Currently, the oldest part of the monument constitutes the dated fired brick minaret, which is one of the oldest minarets in Iran. The minaret was subsequently incorporated into the later architectural structure of the mosque. The majority of the monument's architectural structure and revetments date from Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. The mosque was probably constructed and decorated in four phases (phase one: pre-Seljuq or Seljuq; phase two: Seljuq; phase three: Seljuq; phase four: Ilkhanid) with further modern modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the architectural structure of the mosque was determined in the Seljuq period. The main part of the mosque is the six-bay *riwaq* with the mosque's *qibla* wall. The mosque comprises a courtyard flanked by *riwaq*s from three sides, but these are now modern structures. Absence of the main domed prayer hall indicates that there existed a variety of architectural forms in the Seljuq period.[401] The described architectural structure may have remained largely unchanged in the Ilkhanid period, when the decorative repertoire of the mosque underwent a thorough redecoration.

Location: Zawara settlement (located near Ardistan); c. 117 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Isfahan in the direction of north-east.

GPS location of the monument: 33.4487945 N; 52.4960383 E.

[397] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[398] Blair and Bloom 2009, Vol. 3, 450.
[399] Peterson 1977, 60.
[400] Peterson 1977, 86.
[401] Korn 2000 [2010].

Monument Investigation: November 7, 2018 (complete examination of the monument and its revetments was not possible due to the ongoing restoration interventions).[402]

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Zawara is located near Ardistan, a larger settlement on a communication route connecting Naʾin to Natanz and Kashan.[403] Zawara also prospered due to its geographical proximity to the city of Isfahan. Zawara is first mentioned by Yaqut, as settlement dating back to at least the Sassanid period; as a fortified settlement with Zoroastrian temples. Two Islamic monuments (the Friday mosque and the Pa Minar mosque), both dating mainly to the Seljuq period, reflect the significance of this minor settlement in the Seljuq era. The Friday mosque of Zawara has been noted by Islamic Architectural Historians as the first four-*iwan* type mosque with a courtyard and the main domed prayer hall. The modern settlement extends from its old city centre in the south-western direction.

Background

The Pa Minar mosque is retained significant because of its minaret, which contains a historic inscription with the date 1068-69, and makes it one of the earliest extant minarets in the Iranian territory. The mosque was likely constructed on the grounds of a Zoroastrian temple. The monument was discussed by Samuel Peterson in the landmark article published in 1977. A good discussion of the mosque's constructive and decorative stages is provided by Laura Meneghini in the PhD thesis from 2008-09.[404] In addition to this, photographic documentation of the monument by Blair and Bloom (archnet.org), from 1984, is of great significance, because it documents parts of the mosque's stucco repertoire, which was entirely lost during the past decades. But the mosque's stuccos have so far been given only limited attention; the monument and its six stucco mihrabs have mainly been considered works of Seljuq and Ilkhanid builders by Peterson as well as Meneghini. The mihrabs were discussed by ʿAli Sajjadi, who dates them to the eleventh century.[405] Redecorations and minor structural modifications of the Pa Minar mosque, discussed in this catalogue entry, provide evidence of Ilkhanid interventions on the monument and accordingly highlight the significance of Zawara in Ilkhanid times.

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 77.

The monument is a courtyard mosque type, which does not comprise a central monumental domed hall, frequently encountered in Seljuq mosque structures. This indicates that the Pa Minar mosque was intended to be a minor structure, compared to the near-by Friday mosque of Zawara. The mosque features a rectangular ground plan (18.5 x 9.25 m). Its structure was formed by sets of domed prayer spaces arranged into *riwaq*s. The *qibla riwaq* is of considerable significance because it houses several stucco mihrabs and other types of stucco decoration. It

[402] As the monument was documented and examined it was undergoing major reconstruction and restoration interventions.
[403] Blair and Bloom 2009, Vol. 3, 450. See also Peterson, 1977, 86.
[404] Given the extensive discussion of the monument by Meneghini, this catalogue entry largely builds up on her research, by adding further details regarding the stucco revetments of the monument.
[405] Sajjadi 1996, 103-106.

was originally divided into at least six sections, and each domed unit housed a stucco mihrab. The mosque's eastern vaulted prayer space consists of three arcaded spaces and the northern section of the mosque structure consists of four arcaded spaces. The western part of the monument was rebuilt during the past decades, and it has recently been entirely demolished to provide space for rebuilding of the subterranean prayer spaces and for the reconstruction of this part of the monument. The monument comprised two underground spaces; there existed a square space with four columns under the eastern part of the mosque, which exceeds its ground plan extent, and the hall underneath the mosque's western part, which may have reflected the ground plan of the monument's western structure.

Construction Phases

Understanding of the architectural structure of the mosque has been challenging, due to the numerous phases of its construction and decoration. Peterson suggests that the presence of the Zoroastrian temple on the mosque grounds impacted its ground plan. The oldest extant and visible part of the mosque is the fired brick minaret with the historic inscription (in Kufic with floral elements) featuring the date of its completion 1068-69 (it also contains the name of the patron: *Muhammad ibn Ibrahim*). This is the approximate date for the mosque's Seljuq construction phases.

The presence of double layers of stuccos, on several mihrabs and their surroundings, has been noted at an early point. Already Godard, later cited by Wilber, sustains that the Pa Minar mosque dates to the Seljuq period, during which the first stucco repertoire was produced and which was later covered by Ilkhanid stuccos. These Ilkhanid stuccos were parts of a thorough redecoration programme. Further challenge for the discussion of the mosque's stuccos is presented by the fact that three mihrabs contain(ed) historic inscriptions referring to their patron as the same patron of the minaret, which suggests that the last layer of stuccos in the monuments should be dated to the second half of the eleventh century. Different explanations and hypotheses regarding the interpretation of these inscriptions have been put forward since, starting with Peterson, who determined the consensus of the Ilkhanid date for the mosque's second stucco layer.

In sum, the mosque was founded at an early point, the minaret is the oldest part of the mosque, and the mosque's structure was rebuilt in the Seljuq period. Furthermore, the mosque underwent extensive redecoration interventions in Ilkhanid times, when minor modifications of its structure might have also been performed.

Phase One - The Earliest Pa Minar Mosque

Peterson proposes that the oldest parts of the monument comprise the subterranean hall on its western side and the two western arcades of the mosque's *qibla* area; these two storeys of the monument formed a single architectural structure, which dates back to the Sassanid period.[406] Meneghini suggests that at the very least the subterranean structure should be dated to the pre-Islamic period.[407] Recent destruction and reconstruction of the mosque's western parts resulted

[406] Peterson 1977, 88.
[407] Meneghini 2008-09, 190.

in alteration of the subterranean structure, which was rebuilt to feature Islamic architectural elements.[408] Similar to the Friday mosque of Isfahan and the Friday mosque of Naʾin, the Pa Minar mosque may have been constructed on the site of a pre-existing monument, parts of which could have been integrated in its structure.[409]

Phase Two – The First Pa Minar Mosque

Meneghini follows Peterson and proposes that a mosque structure existed on the same location which pre-dated the construction of the Seljuq brick minaret (1068-69). According to Peterson, the modest decorative style of some of the stucco revetments in the western parts of the mosque's *qibla* area indicates their dating to the ninth century, due to their stylistic resemblance to stuccos discovered in Samarra.[410] Moreover, structural cores of the mosque's northern and southern parts are to be dated to this period.[411] This mosque was built out of fired bricks which were arranged to form ornamental patterns.

Phase Three – The Seljuq Pa Minar Mosque

The third phase indicated by Meneghini comprises the construction of the mosque's brick minaret.[412] Its historic inscription contains the date 1068-69 and the name of its patron, *Muhammad ibn Ibrahim*.[413] Meneghini supposes that there already existed a mosque structure and that it was enlarged on its eastern side. In this period, the mosque's architectural structure reached its full form which was subsequently not modified excessively. The mention of the same patron's name on the mosque's stuccos and the minaret made Paterson and Meneghini suggest that some of the stuccos which are visible date to the time of the minaret's construction. Meneghini proposes that three layers of stucco revetments existed, and that they were produced during the second, third and fourth phases (two layers of Seljuq stucco and a layer of Ilkhanid stucco), and she states that the earliest phase of stuccos is not visible.[414] However, given the existence of another layer of stuccos beneath these stuccos, and as the discussion below illustrates, it is most likely that the upper layer of stuccos dates from the Ilkhanid period. The construction material for this phase of the mosque comprised fired bricks arranged in different manners, which do not match the modality of brick arrangements forming the minaret.

Phase Four– The Ilkhanid Pa Minar Mosque

Traditionally, scholars consider the mosque's Ilkhanid phase as the monument's last historic phase. They interpret it as a redecoration intervention, which comprised production of the last layer of stuccos concentrated in the mosque's *qibla* area. But this research has been performed

[408] Possible evidence which could confirm the dating of the mosque structure to the Sassanid period has therefore been destroyed. The ongoing archaeological excavations around the mosque may provide evidence for the dating of the earliest extant parts of the monuments.
[409] Meneghini 2008-09, 191.
[410] Meneghini also mentions that under other stuccos with two layers of stucco revetments, it is likely that there is another earlier stucco layer, now entirely covered. *Ibid.*, 190, 335.
[411] *Ibid.*, 191.
[412] Meneghini 2008-09, 190.
[413] This makes it the earliest dated Seljuq minaret in the Isfahan region.
[414] Meneghini 2008-09, 190, 335.

based on their stylistic comparison. Minor structural modifications of the monument were likely part of this redecoration intervention.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Lack of architectural revetments and elements datable to post-Ilkhanid period, indicates that the monument did not undergo any major modifications until the present time.

Mosque Ground Plan in the Ilkhanid Period

Fig. 77.

The mosque's architectural structure dates mainly from the Seljuq period. In the Ilkhanid period, architectural surfaces of the mosque were redecorated and minor structural modifications were perhaps put in place. The oldest ground plan of the mosque is provided by Peterson and published in 1977 and it does not record the latest modifications of the monument. The mosque was rectangular and its arcaded structures, *riwaq*s, just one bay deep, were placed around the courtyard. The mosque's southern and northern sides are longer and enable for the structure to accentuate the direction of the *qibla*. The symmetry and regularity of these two parts of the monument indicates that these are the oldest parts of its architectural structure. Judging from the extant stuccos, it seems that the smaller entrance next to the minaret is the mosque's original entrance. In sum, in the Ilkhanid period, the mosque featured a rectangular plan, flanked on four sides by arcaded prayer spaces, with an interior richly decorated in stucco and minaret positioned on its north-eastern side.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The elevation of the mosque is proposed by Peterson, but it remains unclear how precisely it reflects its original elevation. The most elevated parts of the mosque are located on the extreme eastern side of the *qibla riwaq* and on the western side. This is somewhat unusual. The most elevated point of the mosque was its minaret, which served as a visual indicator of the mosque in the maze of structures forming Zawara's centre.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The current understanding of the mosque's construction history, its architectural forms and decorative phases, suggest that the monument's primary function was to provide prayer space for the faithful. Congregational function was however assigned to the Friday mosque of Zawara, which is located near the Pa Minar mosque. Given the evidence for early foundation of the Pa Minar mosque, which may pre-date the Friday mosque of Zawara, the Pa Minar mosque could have originally had the function of a Friday mosque until the construction of the current Friday mosque, in response to the settlement's growing population.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 78-86.

Three types of architectural revetments cover(ed) the architectural surfaces of the Pa Minar mosque. The minaret features a fired brick Kufic inscription.[415] The mosque's interior revetments consist of carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks of the supporting walls, which were observed in the *qibla riwaq* of the mosque, and which constitute the earliest decorative layer of the mosque. In addition to stucco plugs, the mosque features an extensive and challenging-to-comprehend repertoire of carved stucco revetments consisting of two layers. The earliest layers have been assigned to the ninth century, based on stylistic comparison, followed by the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods.

The stucco repertoire witnessed major alterations during the past decades, but its more complete state was fortunately documented by Peterson in 1977 and Blair and Bloom around 1978.[416] The decorative programme was first altered towards the end of the twentieth century and it went through significant further alterations in the 2018-19 restoration campaigns. Stuccos of the western *riwaq* were entirely lost, but photos by Blair and Bloom illustrate existence of the *iwan*-like structure, which featured stuccos related to those in the southern entrance corridor. The *qibla riwaq* originally featured six carved stucco mihrabs produced on the support of the carved stucco plugs. Some of these mihrabs retain two layers of carved stucco. Large portions of these mihrabs were lost during the restoration campaigns and their appearance and structures were significantly altered. The detailed analysis of stuccos below presents information and reflections regarding the sequence of their production and their dating.

Interior Revetments

The most complete discussion of the interior revetments of the Pa Minar mosque in Zawara is provided in Peterson's article published in 1977. According to Peterson, based on the style and production technique, around eighty-five percent of visible stuccos (the most recent layer) are to be assigned to a single intervention, but the remaining stuccos covered by this layer are of technically better quality.[417] Important observations by Peterson also concern the disproportionate size of the ornamental elements of the last stucco layer, in comparison to the mosque's dimensions.[418] Peterson focuses his discussion of stuccos to four stucco mihrabs in the mosque; he believes that the last layer of stucco should be dated to the Ilkhanid period, based on its production technology and ornamental vocabulary and that earlier layers need a more precise dating, based on the evidence these mihrabs contain.[419] In order to ease comparison, this discussion utilizes the same numbering of mihrabs as Peterson (Bay 1 is the most western positioned and Bay 6 is the most eastern positioned).

[415] The rest of exterior architectural surfaces of the monument appear not to have been decorated.
[416] Their photographs present invaluable material documenting the stuccos of the mosque, which allows for its better understanding and research.
[417] Peterson 1977, 62.
[418] *Ibid.*
[419] *Ibid.*

The Six Mihrabs' Corpus

Bay 1 Stucco Mihrab

Fig. 78.

Investigation of Bay 1 in 2018 illustrates that the vast majority of the revetments once located in this architectural space of the mosque are no longer extant. The Bay was scantly documented by Paterson, but Meneghini proposes an analysis of its decorative phases.[420] Observation of a photograph by Peterson nevertheless allows some information concerning the revetments of Bay 1 to be drawn.[421] The image documents the upper portion of a fragment of the right-hand side angle of a framing inscription, which formed the mihrab, in a fashion similar to Bays 6, 5, 3 and 2. The fragment of the framing inscription featured cursive style, with elongated shafts and a background of stylized floral ornamentation similar to the large framing band of the mihrab in Bay 2. Differently from mihrabs in Bays 6, 3 and 2, the mihrab in Bay 1 did not comprise a rectangular panel with a historic inscription on its top. The remaining space between the mihrab and the pointed arch niche was filled with a layer of carved stuccos displaying repeating abstract elements, which are also found on the mosque's southern entrance corridor. The disparity in production quality between the mihrab and these stuccos, like elsewhere in the mosque, is visible. The image also documents a stucco band running along the intrados of the pointed arch structure.

In sum, when the monument was surveyed by Peterson, Bay 1 of the Pa Minar mosque also comprised a carved stucco mihrab with background carved stucco panels. These stuccos were produced with the same artistic techniques and carving approach, and they share ornamental characteristics with the upper layer of stuccos which decorated other bays of the mosque. They are therefore works of the last decorative intervention in the mosque, and they should be dated to the Ilkhanid period. It is possible that these revetments were lost in the first large-scale restorations, soon after the Islamic revolution.

Investigation of Bay 1 in the winter of 2018 revealed further evidence for the understanding of the mosque's history (Fig. 78). The *qibla* area of the supporting wall features a fired brick constructed niche in which the described stucco mihrab was installed in the Ilkhanid period. On the right-hand side of the supporting wall, a small portion of carved stuccos was documented; these are fragments of the last decorative repertoire of Bay 1 (see above). The architectural surface of the supporting wall on the left-hand side of the mihrab niche reveals a specific arrangement of fired bricks, with gaps of a size for stucco plugs. Moreover, the mihrab niche was built with the particular techniques of fired brick placing. The spandrels of the mihrab's interior niche are produced with perpendicular positioning of fired bricks, with spaces in between in order to form a chequered pattern. Finally, the lunette of the mihrab's internal niche was originally produced by placing the fired bricks in a herring bone pattern; such fired brick placement was also observed on the left hand side of the remains of carved stuccos of Bay 5.

[420] Peterson 1977, 65, Fig. 4; Meneghini 2008-09, 333.
[421] The Pa Minar mosque was documented with coloured photos, for the first time, by Blair and Bloom.

In sum, the mihrab niche of Bay 1 was originally built and decorated with fired bricks, which were placed to form different decorative patterns and the bay did not comprise any carved stuccos. This artistic technique was also observed in Bays 5, 4 and 3. Moreover, use of fired brick patterns and stucco plug decoration should be understood as characteristic of the mosque's first decorative phase. The presence of two layers of stuccos in Bay 3, in addition to underlying decorative brick patterns and stucco plugs, therefore proves that the mosque was decorated in three separate interventions.

Bay 2 Stucco Mihrab

Fig. 80.

The architectural structure and stucco revetments of Bay 2 have been significantly altered by restoration interventions of the past decades. Analysis of their photographic documentation by Peterson and Blair and Bloom is of essential significance for their comprehension.[422] Photographs by Blair and Bloom, from 1978, document Bay 2: it housed a stucco mihrab in a pointed arch niche and further stuccos. The intrados and external surfaces of the pointed arch structure, together with adjacent surfaces of the *qibla* wall and the architectural space, were all covered with carved stuccos.[423] Currently, the only remaining original part of Bay 2 are parts of the *qibla* wall and the stucco mihrab. The carved stuccos of the pointed arch and the spandrels topping the mihrab featured a carved stucco band with whirling patterns and spandrels with symmetrically composed designs of large scroll-derived elements. The disparity between the mihrab's production quality and the surrounding stuccos, also spotted in Bays 1, 3 and 6, is documented by these photographs.

Parts of the mihrab in Bay 2 are still extant and they were recently restored. The mihrab features the same design principles as those observed in Bays 1, 3, 6 and possibly 5. The lower part of the mihrab is lost and only its upper portion featuring the interior niche and the large framing inscription band remain. The mihrab protrudes from the supporting *qibla* wall in the same manner as the mihrab in Bay 6, which suggests that it is a work of redecoration. The mihrab's central lunette features a flat abstracted floral pattern with almost entirely perforated surface.[424] The lunette is framed from two sides, like the lunettes of the mihrabs in Bays 6, 4 and 3, with an inscription band recounting an excerpt from *Surat al-Aʿraf* (7:29) in Kufic style. The mihrab's spandrels are damaged and it is not possible to propose their original composition. The described mihrab structure is framed by a large inscription band. This inscription has a peculiar appearance: the letters are rather small and disproportionate compared to their large and elongated *hastae*. The inscription is placed against a background of carved leaf elements

[422] Peterson 1977, Fig. 10. Blair and Bloom: https://archnet.org/sites/1695/media_contents/50239 (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020); Images No.: IMG15315; IMG15318; IMG15319.
[423] The majority of these revetments, with the exception of the mihrab were lost soon after the Revolution, when the architectural structure of Bay 2 was altered. Recent interventions in 2018 included destruction of the supporting walls and the roofing system of Bay 2 (together with Bays 1 and 3) and a reconstruction of what the architectural structure could originally have appeared like.
[424] The central part of the design conserves a similar dark grey and scratched surface in a teardrop shape, like the mihrabs in Bays 6, 3 and 2, which relates the production technology of these mihrabs and provides evidence for the hypothesis that they are work of the same stucco craftsmen' group and part of the same decorative intervention.

which feature incisions related to the other stucco mihrabs of the mosque.[425] The mihrab in Bay 2 is contemporary to the mosque's last decorative intervention, and therefore to the last layer of stucco revetments and to mihrabs of other bays.

The mihrab is topped by a rectangular inscription panel. Its text contains the defaced *Basmala* and a benedictory phrase.[426] The text also comprises the name of the panel's patron, reading *Abu ʿAbdullah ibn Ibrahim ʿAli*, and omits the *Muhammad*, which is contained in the other related panels.[427] Close observations of the mihrab's restored inscription panel in 2018 indicate that the stucco body and characteristics of the inscription style employed for the historic inscription are closely related to the similar plaque above the mihrab in Bay 6, which is work of the mosque's last decorative intervention. The upper portion of the mihrab's plaque is problematic; in photos by Peterson, and Blair and Bloom, it seems that this layer of stucco may have been damaged and that there is another layer of stucco underneath it. Drawing from the analysis of different stucco layers documented in Bay 3, it is reasonable to propose that the layer documented by Peterson, and Blair and Bloom, and the current stuccos of Bay 2 are remains of the extensive decorative ensemble from the third decorative intervention in the mosque which should be dated to the Ilkhanid period.

Bay 3 Stucco Mihrab

Fig. 81.

Research of architectural revetments in Bay 3 is of essential significance for the understanding of the chronology of constructive and decorative undertakings at the Pa Minar mosque. The documented and no longer extant mihrab featured two layers of carved stucco which were applied onto the supporting wall with carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks. Except from the *qibla* wall, the original structure of the Bay 3 (along with Bays 1 and 2) was demolished soon after the Islamic revolution.[428] Images by Peterson and Blair and Bloom document the appearance of Bay 3 in the 1970s. The *qibla* wall of Bay 3 featured a carved stucco mihrab produced with the same artistic techniques as the mihrabs of Bays 6, 5 and 4. The lower part of the mihrab's internal niche and its lunette retain extensive traces of an earlier carved stucco layer which was covered by this stucco mihrab. A related stucco fragment, produced with the same type of perforation and with similar carving approach, features the beginning of the *Basmala* and it is documented on the right-hand side of the extrados of the pointed arch framing the lunette. Currently, only a few fragments of stuccos from the first stucco mihrab in Bay 3 and the supporting wall with carved stucco plugs are extant. Observations of joints between revetments and their overlap inform about the chronology of the decorative interventions in Bay 3, which can be divided into three separate phases. Further

[425] Despite the extensive restoration of the mihrab, it is still possible to discern the dark brown colour of its stucco body and surface cracks on the stucco, like those encountered on mihrabs and revetments of the last decorative phases of Bays 6, 5 and 4.
[426] See Peterson 1977, 63.
[427] Peterson 1977, 64.
[428] This intervention included a reconstruction of the demolished structure, but the reasons for this undertaking remain obscure. The described reconstructed structure of bays 1, 2 and 3 was again demolished in 2018, in the framework of the demolition and reconstruction of the western part of the structure of the monument. The described modifications on the mosque caused almost complete loss of the architectural revetments, especially those in Bays 3 and 1.

hypotheses regarding the dating of these phases, proposed below, aid the understanding of the monument's history.

Bay 3 – Phase 1: Stucco Plug Revetments

The right-hand side of the mihrab (the second layer of stucco), is damaged in the area of the large framing inscription and it reveals the supporting *qibla* wall surface with stucco plugs. The fact that the mihrab used to cover the stucco plugs, indicates that the mihrab was not the original revetment of this architectural space. In fact, both layers of stucco (the first and the second layer) featured extensive revetment repertoires covering stucco plugs. Furthermore, the 2018 examination of the *qibla* wall in Bay 3 revealed that almost the entire *qibla* wall originally retained carved stucco plugs. At the time of the mosque's construction, Bay 3 featured only stucco plugs and a fired brick mihrab niche. These revetments may be contemporary to the mosque's minaret construction.[429] It has been noted above that the first layer of carved stuccos in Bay 3 extended over these plugs and it must therefore be understood as result of the subsequent decorative intervention. Related evidence of this constructive and decorative phase was also found in Bays 1, 4 and 5 and in the *iwan* of the mosque's western *riwaq*.

Bay 3 – Phase 2: The First Stucco Layer – Seljuq Interventions

Photographs by Peterson and Blair and Bloom document the two layers of stuccos on the *qibla* wall of Bay 3. The first layer of carved stuccos is only partially visible on their photographs, because it was covered with the subsequent layer. These stuccos were documented in two areas of the *qibla* wall: in the mihrab's internal niche and on the intrados and external surfaces of the pointed arch which frames the large architectural niche of the *qibla* wall. The location of these stuccos illustrates that the first phase of carved stucco production did not only comprise a production of a mihrab, but that the majority of the *qibla* wall was covered in stuccos at this point. Photos of details of the interior small niche of the mihrab document extensive portions of the first layer of stucco, which consist of repeating abstract patterns, which resemble the first stucco layer on the intrados of the pointed arch of the Bay 3 niche. Another fragment of the first layer of stuccos is visible below the mihrab niche and it features abstracted floral ornamentation. Peterson draws parallels between this stucco layer and Samarra stuccos and he proposes an early dating of these stuccos to the ninth century.[430] A closer look at the first layer of stuccos indicates that their decorative elements persisted into later historical stuccos and that such an early date for the stuccos cannot be justified on stylistic basis. Scarcity of epigraphic elements and simplicity of stucco production approaches are elements in favour of pre-Ilkhanid or Pre-Seljuq date, but a Seljuq date for the stuccos cannot be excluded. Strong evidence in support of this hypothesis is the fact that the stuccos are placed over the wall with carved stucco plugs. Considering that no known examples of carved stucco plugs exist from the Pre-Seljuq period, it therefore must be concluded that the first layer of carved stuccos in Bay 3 dates to the Seljuq period or later.

[429] Such hypothesis and understanding of decorative phases is also proposed by Meneghini in her dissertation. Meneghini 2008-09, 192-93, 335.
[430] See Peterson 1977, 81-85.

Bay 3 – Phase 3: The Second Stucco Layer – Ilkhanid Interventions

The second layer of carved stucco decoration of Bay 3 is lost, but its discussion by Peterson and photographic documentation by Peterson and Blair and Bloom, provide sufficient material for its comprehension. These images document an extensive carved stucco repertoire which covered the *qibla* wall of Bay 3 and constituted its third decorative layer.

The design of the mihrab is almost identical to that of the Bay 6, but its ornamental elements are variegated. The mihrab is formed by a small niche. The lunette of the niche is closely related to that of Bay 6; it features carved abstract floral forms and it preserves traces of areas where protruding elements were applied to variegate the lunette's stucco relief. The niche is topped by a framing inscription band in cursive style recounting *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:16), similar to the mihrabs in Bays 4 and 6. The mihrab's spandrels in Bay 3 feature symmetrical compositions of palmette-derived ornamental designs produced like those of the Bay 6 mihrab. But in Bay 3, additional protruding elements decorated surfaces of the mihrab's spandrels. The described structure of the mihrab is framed by a large inscription band (illegible), almost identical to the mihrabs in Bays 2 and 6. The framing inscription is set against a background of floral motifs with perforated surfaces and peculiar knotted compositions in its angles. The mihrab is topped by a rectangular panel, which could be read as: *Abu Muhammad ʿAbdullah ..... ibn? Ibrahim?*,[431] a content related to the mihrab in Bay 6. The space between the mihrab and the intrados of the pointed arch of the large niche on the *qibla* wall is filled with shallow relief stucco panels of carved abstract elements.

Chronology of Revetments in Bay 3

Bay 3 was constructed and redecorated twice. The first phase is marked by a wall with stucco plugs. Its stucco plugs are evidence of Seljuq construction of the *qibla* wall of the mosque, which preceded the application of two layers of carved stuccos in Bay 3. These two stucco layers are either both works of Seljuq craftsmen, or the first layer is produced by Seljuq and the second by Ilkhanid craftsmen. Furthermore, epigraphic evidence does not reveal any evidence for the understanding of the second layer of stuccos. Having seen technological and aesthetic differences between the two stucco layers, it is most reasonable to propose that the two layers of stucco were produced at a considerable distance in time. If so, it is more plausible that the second layer of stuccos in Bay 3, and all the stuccos in the other bays, which share the production technology, ornamental vocabulary and design, are works of the mosque's large-scale redecoration intervention, which most likely took place in the Ilkhanid period. This intervention could have been either prompted by deterioration of the monument or it could have been financed by a newly appointed local official of the Ilkhanid court who wanted to consolidate the political alliance with the ruling order.[432]

[431] Peterson 1977, 63.
[432] See Peterson 1977, 64.

Bay 4 Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 82-83.

Comparisons of photographic documentation of Bay 4 revetments, from photos by Blair and Bloom[433] and the mosque's recent documentation, reveal that revetments on the surfaces of this Bay are lost, except for the mihrab's upper section. This stucco mihrab differs from the other mihrabs in its form and design. It partially resembles searly Seljuq stuccos discovered at Nishapur. The mihrab features a large lunette, formed by a pointed arch structure. The lunette comprises floral and geometrical ornamentation arranged into a repeating pattern. The mihrab's lunette is framed by a cursive Qurʾanic inscription *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:78-81) similar to the now lost inscription of the mihrab in Bay 6. The left-hand side spandrel of the Bay 4 mihrab also features a symmetrical composition of an abstract geometrical pattern; perforations of this composition match those of the background ornamentation of the framing inscription on the Bay 6 mihrab. The carved stucco mihrab of Bay 4 is thus contemporary to those in Bays 5 and 6. Photos by Blair and Bloom, the earliest known colour photos of the mihrab, document light blue traces in the background of the mihrab's inscription band.

Bay 5 Stucco Mihrab

Fig. 83.

Only some fragments of the original decoration of this bay remain on the *qibla* wall: fragments of a mihrab similar to the mihrab in Bay 6 and fragments of carved stuccos of abstract floral and geometrical forms on the *qibla* wall. Artistic techniques for production of these stuccos and carving approach are closely related to stuccos of Bay 6. Furthermore, the colour of the stucco body and cracks on its surface further relate these stuccos to those of Bay 6. In sum, stuccos of Bay 5 are contemporary to those in the Bay 6, and they belong to the last decorative intervention in the mosque.

Bay 6 Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 84-86.

The architectural space of Bay 6 may retains the original architectural supporting structure and stuccos. The space is rectangular in form; its *qibla* wall was constructed to accommodate a concave mihrab. The stucco mihrab in the niche is well preserved and comparison of photos by Peterson[434] and the mosque's investigation indicate that the mihrab was not excessively modified.

The carved stucco mihrab is placed in the niche formed by a pointed arch, and the space between the pointed arch and the mihrab is filled with carved stuccos. It features a central niche filled with abstract floral elements of stucco decoration with abundant incisions. The niche was framed by an inscription in carved stucco, which is no longer extant. Spandrels flanking this niche retain stuccos symmetrical in design and displaying abstracted floral compositions related

[433] Blair and Bloom: https://archnet.org/sites/1695/media_contents/850 (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020), Imgs. No.: IIR0515, IIR0514.
[434] Peterson 1977, Fig. 6.

to the mihrab's interior niche. The mihrab's structure is framed by an inscription band set against a floral background. Only the upper portion of the inscription band is preserved. It is disproportionately large in comparison to the core structure of the mihrab. The inscription band features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Israʾ* (Qurʾan 17:3)[435] in monumental Kufic style and a background consisting of perforated floral elements and derived palmette designs. Peterson assigns the stucco mihrab in Bay 6 to the Ilkhanid period, but he points out that the form and design of the cavetto frame of the mihrab are Seljuq in appearance.

The stucco mihrab is topped by a rectangular inscription panel, which contains information regarding its patronage: *This mihrab from among what Abu Muhammad ʿAbdullah ibn Ibrahim ibn ʿAli has built*.[436] A similar content of inscription is encountered on the panel topping the stucco mihrab in Bay 3. In both cases, the two inscription plaques are raised above the adjacent layers of the background decorations in carved stucco. The inscription panel of Bay 2 is different and it does not protrude from its background; its text is also different.[437] Peterson accepts the proposal by Oleg Grabar that the mihrab in Bay 6 should be considered of the Seljuq period. But these observations of decorative iconography on the Pa Minar stuccos and their connection to early works of Islamic Iran are difficult to accept, due to the persistence and tradition of ornamentation which allowed for the survival and frequent use of archaic ornamental vocabulary in the Ilkhanid period. Based on his stylistic comparison of the mihrab in Bay 6 with other Islamic stuccos and comparison of the mihrab in Bay 6 with those in Bays 2, 3 and 4, Peterson concludes that these stuccos are to be dated to the period contemporary to the construction of the minaret (1068-69) or shortly after its completion to c. 1070.[438]

Stuccos in Bay 6 do not feature any pigmentation remains. The surface of all the stuccos is covered with cracks on the surface of the stucco body.[439] Normally, gypsum is a locally available material for production of stuccos. It is therefore logical to conclude that all the stuccos of the Pa Minar mosque with the described superficial cracks are the work of a single decorative intervention and the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. Furthermore, observations of overlapping stucco layers in other Bays of the mosque (especially Bays 3, 4, 5, and 1) indicate that the stuccos of Bay 6 all belong to the last decorative intervention in the mosque and should therefore be dated to the Ilkhanid period. The proposed dating for these stuccos presents problems of incongruence with the historic inscription plaque above the mihrab of Bay 6, which would suggest evidence for the mihrab to be dated to an earlier period, such as the minaret. This inconsistency can be explained by either erroneous reading of the historic inscription (which is no longer legible due to the damage on its surface), which is not unlikely, given the degraded state of the inscription documented by Peterson. Alternatively, it is possible that the craftsmen responsible for these stuccos copied an earlier inscription. Such cases have for example been

[435] Peterson 1977, 64.
[436] Peterson 1977, 64.
[437] See Peterson 1977, 63.
[438] Peterson 1977, 80.
[439] Similar types of cracks have also been documented on the stucco inscription band of the *iwan* of the Shamsiyya madrasa in Yazd (Cat. No. 29), and it seems that the cracks are a result of additives or impurities in the stucco body.

identified at Farumad and Qurwa Friday mosques and perhaps the carved stucco mihrab of the Nayriz Friday mosque.

Western Riwaq and the Iwan with Carved Stuccos – No Longer Extant

Fig. 79.

Meneghini retrieved a ground plan of the Pa Minar mosque, in the archive of ICHHTO, which documents the monument's structure on the eve of the Islamic revolution.[440] The plan illustrates that the western part of the Pa Minar mosque's architectural structure was knocked down during the first larger restoration interventions soon after the revolution.[441] Parts of the western section of the monument were documented by Peterson and Blair and Bloom prior to their demolition.[442]

The position of the *iwan* in the western part of the monument was somewhat irregular, compared to the adjacent architectural spaces. The *iwan* is closed from three sides and open towards the mosque's courtyard and its supporting walls contain passages to the adjacent spaces. The *iwan* structure is constructed out of fired brick and it features two types of architectural revetments, which present different phases of monument. The lower part of the interior surface of the *iwan* retains remains of a layer of carved stuccos, which is the work of the third decorative intervention of the monument. The upper part of the *iwan*, where these stuccos fell off, reveals the original surfaces of supporting walls from the first constructive and decorative phase of the monument. The architectural structure of the *iwan* presents a peculiar solution; the rear interior space of the *iwan* comprises two squinch-like elements and a pointed arch forming the blind niche in their middle. The transitional elements are constructed with fired bricks, which are arranged into different directions and function as decorative patterns, such as herringbone, swastika-like and other geometrical forms.

The second layer of architectural revetments in the interior of the *iwan* is preserved on its lower part and consists of carved stuccos. Originally, the entire interior of the *iwan* may have been covered with such stuccos. The stuccos are divided into panels according to surfaces and forms of surfaces they cover, and they present a unified revetment programme characterized by repeating abstracted floral elements. The rear wall of the *iwan* is covered with vertical bands of simple swirl-formed repeating patterns. Transitional zone elements are covered with numerous panels, which feature floral and scroll-like elements. Available photographs do not document any other layer of stuccos on the *iwan*'s surfaces. These stuccos are clearly related to stuccos of transitional zones and wall surfaces in Bays 2, 3, 5 and 6. Furthermore, very similar stuccos adorn the southern entrance corridor of the mosque. In sum, the carved stuccos on the *iwan* of the mosque's western *riwaq* represent the last decorative layer of architectural revetments of the monument, which should be dated to the Ilkhanid period.

[440] Meneghini 2008-09, 215; Fig. 4.
[441] The reasons for this intervention remain unknown.
[442] Peterson 1977, Fig. 34. Blair and Bloom: https://archnet.org/sites/1695/media_contents/50237 (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020), Img. No.: IMG15313.

South-eastern Entrance Corridor

The mosque's south-eastern entrance corridor is clustered between the minaret and Bay 6. The positioning of this corridor suggests that it was constructed to function as an architectural space of mediation between structures built in two distinct phases. The minaret pre-dates the mosque. It is however unlikely that this corridor was the original entrance to the mosque from its outset, due to its irregular positioning in regard to the mosque's ground plan. The corridor is covered by two small spherical domes and its interior is extensively decorated with carved stuccos. The decorative principles for the production of these stuccos and their ornamental vocabulary are similar to stuccoworks described in the *iwan* of the mosque's western *riwaq*. Vertical bands of repeating floral patterns cover the supporting walls. This decorative approach and division into different panels with floral ornamentation are encountered in the upper part of the corridor's interior; on pointed arch structures supporting the roofing system and on curved structures of the roofing system. The ornamental vocabulary, properties of the stucco body and the employed artistic technique for these stuccos are related to those of the upper layers of stuccos in the mosque's six bays and the last layer of the western *riwaq*'s *iwan*. In sum, these stuccos should be associated with the mosque's third decorative intervention, which dates from the Ilkhanid period.[443]

Stucco Plugs

Stucco plugs have been recorded only in the *qibla* Bay 3. These plugs are carved stucco plugs, which are inserted into designated spaces between the fired bricks forming the supporting walls. In other Bays, signs of gaps between fired bricks indicate that they once contained such plugs.[444] Stucco plugs were the original decoration of the majority of the mosque's architectural structure.

Exterior Revetments

Apart from the mosque minaret, with its elaborate inscription, there is no other evidence indicating that the Pa Minar mosque could once have been decorated with exterior architectural revetments.

The Minaret

The minaret contains the historic inscription in Kufic style, with the name of its patron: *Muhammad ibn Ibrahim*.[445] The abbreviated name of the patron on the minaret could have been impacted by the lack of space for the full name, as proposed by Peterson.[446] But this could also be the result of a modern restoration intervention. Peterson proposes that the mihrabs in Bays 2 and 3 must have undergone considerable modifications in the post-Seljuq period and for this

[443] No underlying layers of other revetments were discovered during the monument investigation in 2018.
[444] The extant plugs were restored and it is not clear if they still bear original ornamental characteristics, these plugs however feature the simple and very common x-letter pattern, and it is therefore likely that these were indeed types of stucco plugs, which once adorned the monument.
[445] Hunarfar 1965, 172.
[446] Peterson 1977, 64.

reason they should be dated to the Ilkhanid rather than Seljuq period, despite the historic inscription mentioning the same name of the patron as the minaret.[447]

Stucco Polychromy at Pa Minar

This research revealed the existence of at least three decorative phases of architectural revetments at the Pa Minar mosque. In its original iteration, the mosque was a construction built out of fired brick, and this construction material was also employed to decorate its architectural surfaces, by means of placing bricks to produce different abstract geometric patterns. The revetments of this period comprised supporting wall surfaces decorated with inserted carved stucco plugs. Following the first phase the mosque was redecorated two more times. The first re-decorative phase (the second stage of the mosque) comprised the application of carved stuccos, but the only remains of these revetments were discovered in Bay 3. The performed analysis of the monument provides clear evidence for the dating of the first stucco layer of the Pa Minar mosque to the Seljuq period. Remaining portions of these stucco fragments do not retain any pigmentation, and they reveal an entirely white surface, which might be a consequence of their whitewashing. Drawing from other Seljuq stucco repertoires, it is quite likely that these stuccos might have originally been polychrome.

The second intervention of stucco revetment application, the third and the last decorative phase, comprised production of an extensive carved stucco programme, which consisted of at least six stucco mihrabs (one mihrab per bay) on the mosque's *qibla* wall and additional revetments on interior surfaces of these bays, the *iwan* of the western *riwaq* and the south-eastern entrance corridor of the mosque, and some surfaces of the mosque's courtyard. This was a large and thorough redecoration intervention, which changed the visual appearance of the majority of the mosque's surfaces. These revetments visually unified the mosque's interior and highlighted the significance of the mosque's *qibla* area.[448] The choice to produce six stucco mihrabs could have been determined by the abundance of resources (material, craftsmen's workshop) and by the pre-existing architectural structure of the monument, which did not feature a focal space or point in the *qibla* area. Evidence of remains of the original stucco polychromy was documented on stucco mihrab in Bay 4, but it presents issues concerning the authenticity of the pigmentation, due to the restoration interventions on the stucco surface. The left-hand side fragment of the framing inscription band of the lunette retains traces of blue, but this is already work of the restoration. The image by Blair and Bloom also documents some blue traces on the lunette's vegetal stucco elements, together with a layer of white. The described colouring traces, especially light blue and perhaps white, allow to propose that the last stucco repertoire of the mosque, produced in the Ilkhanid period, was originally polychrome.

Ilkhanid Stucco Artistic Techniques at Pa Minar

The second layer of stucco revetments in the Pa Minar mosque dates to the Ilkhanid period according to this research. At Pa Minar, the vast majority of stuccos were produced by carving only one stucco layer, and this determined their rather flat and non-protruding reliefs. This was

[447] *Ibid.*, 64.
[448] There were more than one stucco mihrab also in other monuments, such as the Sava Friday mosque or the Malik mosque in Kirman, which renders this phenomenon less unusual.

compensated for with a specific approach of producing very deep incisions of simple decorative elements, which determined a strong light and shadow effect on the stucco reliefs. Stark disparity in appearance and production quality can be observed between the mihrabs and the rest of the stucco repertoire. This must be the result of work division within the stucco craftsmen's workshop, according to which the most important elements of the repertoire (the mihrabs) were produced by the head and other expert craftsmen, while the less significant parts of the programme were works of less skilled craftsmen. These mihrabs were produced with at least three techniques. Evidence of stucco relief produced by means of carving two different stucco layers was observed in the lunette framing inscription of the mihrab in Bay 4. Remains of another separate artistic technique are found in the form of dark scratched and uncarved surfaces of the mihrabs in Bays 6, 3 and 2. They are evidence of applied protruding carved elements of stucco decoration. Another separate artistic technique is observed in the lunette of the mihrab in Bay 4; here, the floral and geometrical elements are arranged into a composition, but the upper parts of these floral, palmette-like elements protrude from the stucco relief in a manner that the background is empty and they are not attached to the stucco relief.

The Ilkhanid Pa Minar Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The decorative properties of the first phase of the Pa Minar mosque consisted of fired brick patterns and stucco plugs, with sober appearance. The second decorative stage was characterized by heavily perforated stucco surfaces with a shallow relief. Application of these stuccos drastically changed the mosque's appearance, from a fired brick-decorated-mosque into a mosque with colourful stucco decoration. In the third decorative intervention, the second layer of stucco decoration was applied to the surfaces of the monument on an unprecedented scale. It drastically changed the appearance of the mosque. Furthermore, the aesthetic differences between the first and the second stucco layer are striking. Differently to the shallow and perforated relief with simple abstracted ornamentation of the first layer, the second layer presents a strong shadow and light effect on deeply carved stucco reliefs and a more dynamic appearance of the mihrabs with diverse inscription styles, concave and protruding surfaces and heavy perforations. These dynamic and contrasting reliefs, which were also likely polychrome, drastically impacted the appearance of the monument, and as mentioned in the section below, could have played a significant role behind the patronage of this decorative intervention.

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing was found on the site.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Historic Inscriptions

a.) The historic inscription on the minaret is produced in a mixed technique of fired brick and terracotta elements, which are combined with carved stucco inserts. The inscription is written in Kufic style with additions of vegetal elements. The most complete reading of the historic inscription is provided by Blair.[449]

[449] TEI 26767 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021); Blair 1992, 137-139.

The inscription reads:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ممّا أمر ببناء هذه المنارة محمّد بن إبراهيم ابتغا لوجه الله سنة إحدى و ستّين و أربع مائة

Basmala. Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, seeking God's face, ordered the construction of this minaret in the year four hundred sixty-one (31 October 1068-19 October 1069).

b.) Historic inscription on the mihrabs of Bays 2, 3 and 6 was read in the most complete manner by Blair. These inscriptions are written in *Naskh* and their background is plain.

The inscriptions read:

ممّا أمر بعمل هذا المحراب المهتدى أبو عبد الله محمّد بن إبرهيم بن علىّ أطال الله بقاه

The one guided (by God), Abu ʿAbdullah Muhammad ibn Ibrahim, may God extend his life, ordered the making of this mihrab.

The first word of the inscription, which repeats throughout the panels, is unusual from a grammatical point of view. Such a verb is not employed frequently in medieval Iranian inscriptions, and it could be work of early restorations of the monument. The fact that the three stucco plaques repeat the same verb, which is also found on the inscription of the minaret, could indicate that the content of these inscriptions was copied from the minaret.

Qurʾanic Excerpts

The mihrabs in the six bays of the mosque also feature inscription bands framing their lunettes and mihrab structures. Many of these were badly damaged or are no longer extant. Some of the inscriptions were read by Blair at an early stage and are reported here.

Bay 1 Mihrab

None of the inscriptions are legible.

Bay 2 Mihrab

The inscription framing the lunette of the mihrab's niche features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Aʿraf* (7:29). This is a rarely occurring Qurʾanic verse in Medieval Iranian stucco repertoires.

The text reads:[450]

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۚ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ

Say, [O Muhammad], "My Lord has ordered justice and that you maintain yourselves (in worship of Him) at every place [or time] of prostration, and invoke Him, sincere to Him in religion." Just as He originated you, you will return [to life].

The framing band of the mihrab is no longer extant and it was not read.

[450] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-araf-29-qs-7-29-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020).

Bay 3 Mihrab

The inscription framing the lunette of the mihrab was read by Blair as a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:16).

The text reads:[451]

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

Those who say, "Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire."

The monumental framing inscription of the mihrab was badly damaged already during Blair's research of the monument and could not be read.

Bay 4 Mihrab

The inscription framing the lunette of the mihrab in Bay 4 was read by Blair, consisting of the *Basmala* and the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:78-81).

The text reads:[452]

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا
وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا
وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا
وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.
And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.
And say, "My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority."
And say, "Truth has come, and falsehood has departed. Indeed is falsehood, [by nature], ever bound to depart."

This is a commonly occurring Qurʾanic excerpt in Iranian stuccos; the same chapter is also employed for the inscriptions of the Bay 6 mihrab.

Bay 5 Mihrab

The mihrab was damaged at an early stage and its inscriptions were not read.

[451] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ali-imran-16-qs-3-16-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020).
[452] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Isra (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020).

Bay 6 Mihrab

In addition to the historic inscription, the mihrab of Bay 6 also features the monumental framing inscription in Kufic style, which was read by Blair as a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:17).

The text reads:[453]

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

O descendants of those We carried [in the ship] with Noah. Indeed, he was a grateful servant.

The inscription framing the lunette of the mihrab's niche was not read due to its extensive damage.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The patron of the third decorative intervention (Ilkhanid) may have wanted to show his political power by means of patronage of a large revetment repertoire and six stucco mihrabs in the mosque. Drawing from the size of this redecoration intervention and its described nature, it is possible that the patron of the third decorative intervention, in the Ilkhanid period, was a local notable, who was also likely an Ilkhanid official of a lower to medium rank.

Ilkhanid Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The Ilkhanid stucco repertoire of the Pa Minar mosque does not retain any signature of stucco craftsmen's workshop. The discussion of stucco artistic techniques employed for the production of the stuccos, illustrates that the listed approaches to stucco production are some of the most common and widespread artistic techniques and they are therefore of little aid at pinpointing peculiarities of the stucco craftsmen's workshop.[454] One exception may be the artistic technique of semi-applied and somewhat undercut floral elements of the lunette of the mihrab in Bay 4. But stucco undercutting, which was abundantly employed to produce, for example, stuccos at Haftshuya (Cat. No. 3) and Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), and which is considered typical of the Isfahan region, is missing. The craftsmen in charge of the production of the Pa Minar stuccos were thus unlikely to be native to the Isfahan region. The observed strong disparity between the quality of the mihrabs' production and the rest of the repertoire is very striking and has so far been interpreted in a rather negative light, as a sign of provincial and not well versed stucco craftsmen's workshop. But these characteristics likely reflect division of work within the workshop. The type of carving and possibility of producing the stucco ornamentation could have also been impacted by the locally available material employed for the stucco body production.

[453] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-isra-3-qs-17-3-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 4, 2020).
[454] It has been mentioned that the colour of the stucco body is dark brown, which is the common colour of stuccos in the Isfahan region; this piece of information therefore only suggests that the material for the production of the stuccos was locally quarried.

f.) Monument Condition

Restoration interventions on the monument started in the nineteenth century, but the monument underwent major modifications aimed at its preservation during the past years. Currently, archaeological excavations are taking place in some parts of the mosque. Peterson reports that the mosque was modified on its eastern part and Meneghini adds that the lower part of its *qibla* wall was also heavily modified prior to 1980s.[455] Meneghini lists the following modifications: the closing of the western entrance of the monument, coating of the *qibla* wall with white plaster, interruption of communication between the northern and western parts of the monument and covering of the structure with beige coating, modifications of the floor of the courtyard and northern part of the mosque, construction of the new façade on the western part of the monument and restoration of the minaret.[456]

A visit to the mosque was performed in winter 2018, when the monument was in the middle of the latest restoration interventions. Further research of information on the interventions and observations of post-intervention images of the monument allow information about its latest modifications to be proposed. In 2018, the western part of the mosque was entirely demolished in order to allow for the rebuilding of the western *shabistan*. The rebuilding of this *shabistan* is not scientifically correct. More than half (four out of six arched structures of the *qibla riwaq*) of the southern part of the architectural structure of the monument were also knocked down, but the *qibla* wall and its stuccos were kept and left exposed to the weathering agents throughout the winter of 2018. The southern and western structure of the mosque was subsequently built anew, but the scientific correctness of the newly built structures is questionable. Comparison of the monument's historic photographs, with documentation during the ongoing reconstruction and the final result illustrates that in this process, stucco revetments were lost and that the new architectural structure only partially reflects the original. Comparison of these photos also illustrates the loss of a considerable number of stuccos, which includes one entire mihrab and some stuccos covering the *qibla* wall. Furthermore, the covered (Seljuq) stucco layer, which was still visible, has been covered or lost. In sum, the recent conservation interventions on the monument significantly altered its original structure and caused considerable damage to its interior revetments.[457]

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research of the Pa Minar mosque provides information regarding its alterations through time and restoration interventions. It proposes a detailed analysis of architectural structure and its revetments. Accordingly, a revised chronology and dating of different constructive and decorative interventions on the mosque are put forward. The monument was built in the early Seljuq period together with the minaret and it was redecorated with stuccos. Upon that, a large-scale redecoration with an extensive stucco repertoire took place in Ilkhanid times. The earliest stuccos of the mosque date to the Seljuq period, rather than the ninth century, as proposed by Peterson. Moreover, the majority of stuccos were works of an itinerant stucco workshop, which

[455] Peterson 1977, 90; Meneghini 2008-09, 191.
[456] Meneghini 2008-09, 191.
[457] The ongoing archaeological excavations may have provided evidence regarding the Seljuq period of the monument's history, but they have not been published yet and therefore cannot be included into this research work.

might not have been native to the Isfahan area. These stuccos also provide evidence of work division within the workshop.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Peterson 1977; Hunarfar 1966, 171-174; Meneghini 2008-09, 187-193; Sajjadi 1996, 103-106; Blair 1992, 137-139.

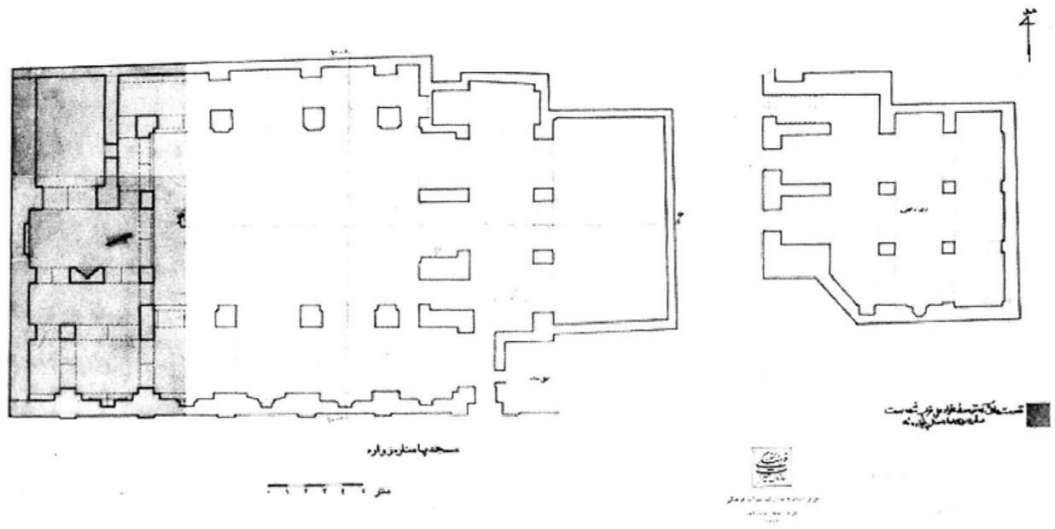
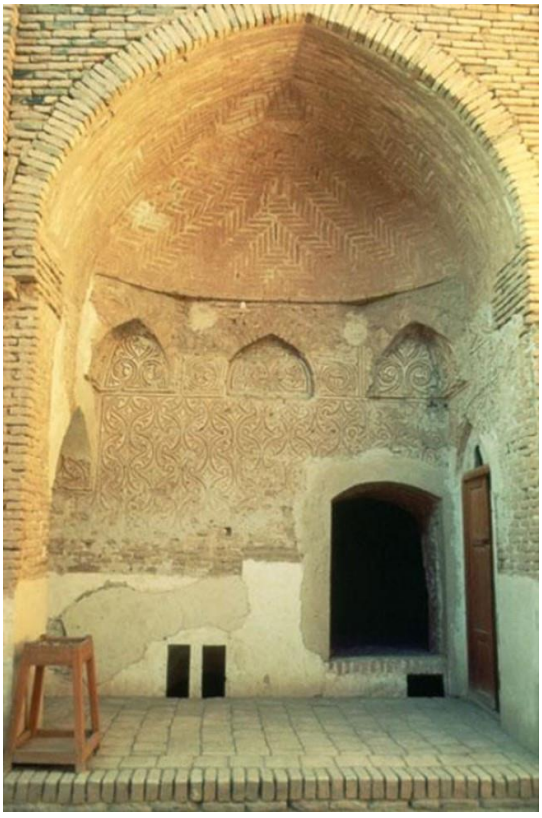
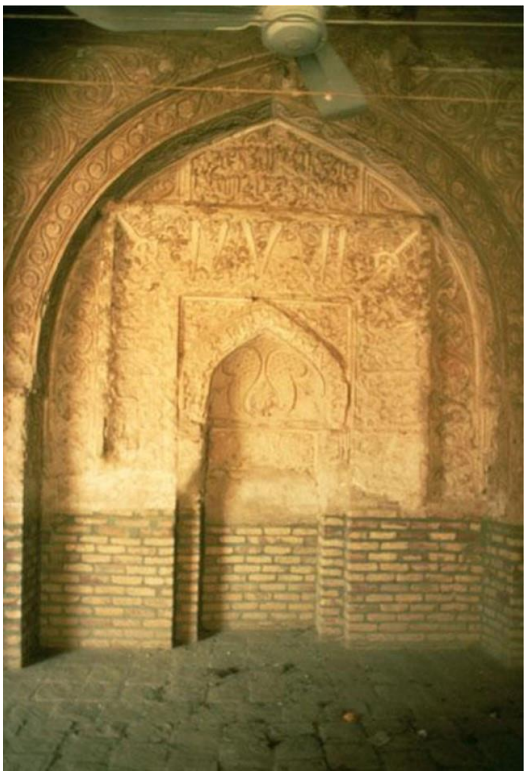


Figure 77: Ground plan of the Pa Minar mosque at Zawara: the shaded area of the mosque was demolished and rebuilt in the period after 1979; recently, this part of the mosque (except for the *qibla* wall) was again demolished and rebuilt. (After Meneghini 2008-09, Fig. 4).





Figures 78 and 79: Left: the niche of the first mihrab in Bay 1: it was produced with the placing of fired bricks in herringbone and chequered patterns, similar to the ceiling of the western *iwan* of the mosque (Right). Right: no longer extant structure of the western *iwan* of the mosque with fired brick revetments and second phase of stucco decoration (After Blair and Bloom IMG15313: https://archnet.org/sites/1695/media_contents/50237 Last Accessed: January 8, 2021)





Figures 80 and 81: Left: the no longer extant carved stucco mihrab in the Bay 2 of the Pa Minar mosque at Zawara (After Blair and Bloom IMG15318: https://archnet.org/sites/1695/media_contents/50242 Last Accessed: January 8, 2021). Right: detail of the now fragmented mihrab in Bay 3 with three different decorative phases; stucco plugs, carved stucco on the right-hand side and carved stucco on the left-hand side (After Peterson 1977, Fig. 28).



Figure 82: Detail of the remains of the mihrab in Bay 4 of the Pa Minar mosque at Zawara.



Figure 83: View of Bays 5 (foreground) and 4 (background) of the Pa Minar mosque at Zawara with fragmentary remains of carved stuccos.



Figure 84: Carved stucco mihrab in the Bay 6 of the Pa Minar mosque at Zawara.

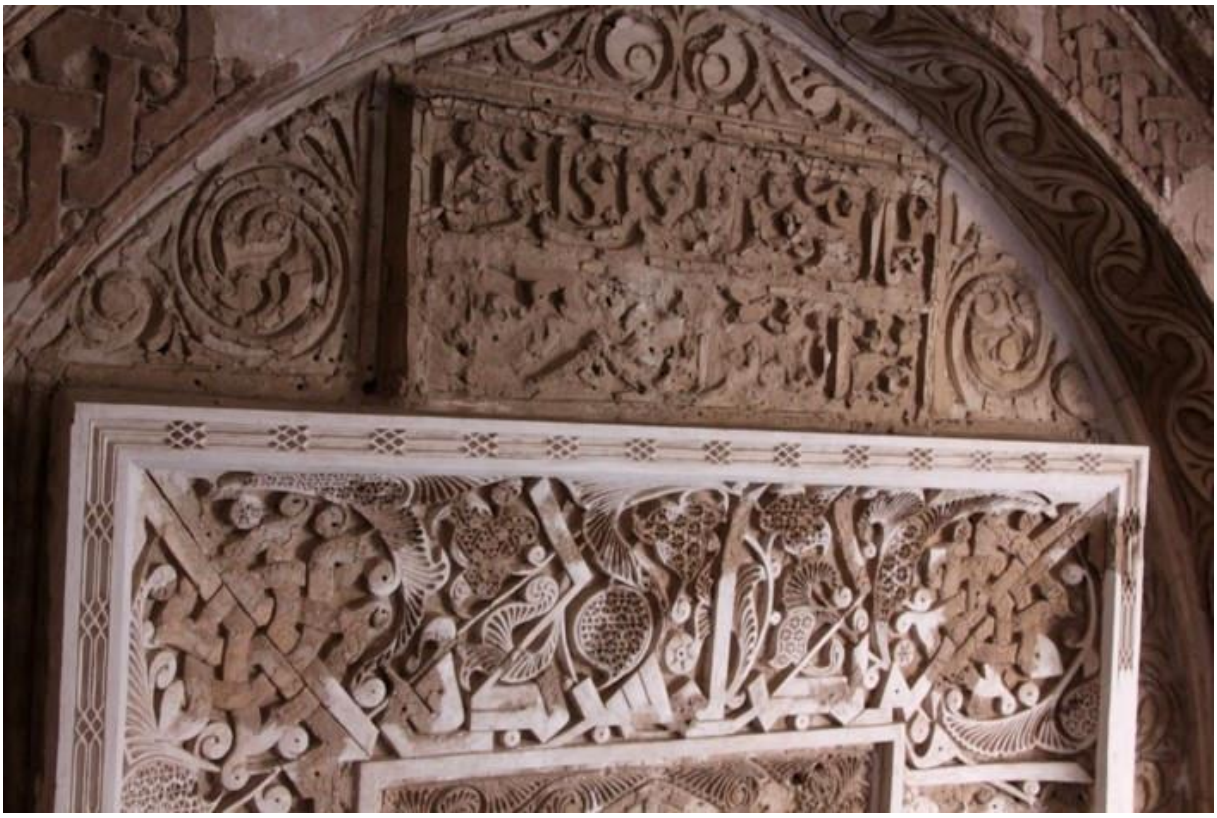


Figure 85: Detail of the upper section of the carved mihrab and the historic inscription in Bay 6 of the Pa Minar mosque.



Figure 86: Carved stuccos (third decorative phase) on the architectural surfaces of the Bay 6 of the *qibla riwaq* of Pa Minar mosque at Zawara.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 7

Monument Name: Gar Friday mosque

Figs. 87-92.

Associated Names: The name of the settlement is written with different spellings: Gar, Jar and Ghar. The most appropriate transliteration of the name of the settlement would be Jār,[458] because it is written with جار. Sometimes it is also written with گار, hence Gar, and sometimes with غار as Ghar.[459] Because the name of the monument is most frequently referred to as Gār,[460] this entry adopts the same name. The monument is most commonly called after its Seljuq minaret, as the minaret of Gar (Manar-i-Ghar; Manar-i Gar; Manar-i Gar), but the monument was actually a mosque, likely the congregational mosque of the settlement.[461]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in two phases (phase one: Seljuq mosque with minaret; phase two: Ilkhanid mosque with two *iwan*s, a courtyard and a stucco mihrab in the domed hall) without subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): two-*iwan* and courtyard mosque with square domed prayer hall and lateral vaulted prayer spaces.

Location: Gar village; c. 22 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.5215012 N; 51.8404571 E.

Monument Investigation: May 11, 2016; April 6, 2019; April 11, 2019.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The village of Gar is one of the settlements located in the area along the two shores of Zayanda river, east of Isfahan. It is a significant centre for grain agriculture and wood production. Gar is located in the area where Seljuq and Ilkhanid monuments of Bersiyan, Dashti, Kaj, Iziran, Ziyar and Kaj are situated. The area was populated in the Seljuq period, as testified by the settlement of Bersiyan and remains of the Seljuq minaret at Gar. It is likely that a boom in population, due to the favourable agricultural conditions during the Ilkhanid period, determined new building campaigns in the settlements where these Ilkhanid monuments are located, including the rebuilding and modifications to the congregational mosque of Gar.

[458] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[459] Hunarfar 1966, 182.
[460] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[461] Hunarfar 1966, 182. See also https://archnet.org/sites/5456/media_contents/41033 (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 87-89.

The monument is a mosque, likely the congregational mosque of Gar. Its foundation dates to the Seljuq period, of which remains the fired brick minaret with inscription dated 1121-22. Further Seljuq remains of wall constructions in the mosque's central part are present at this ruined state. These walls are built out of fired bricks, the interior of which was filled with beaten soil.[462] The mosque was rebuilt and enlarged in Ilkhanid period. The date for the Ilkhanid mosque is provided by the stucco plaque on the structure of the domed prayer hall with the mihrab, which states that the mihrab was installed in 1261-62; this makes its decorations one of the earliest dated Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. The Ilkhanid mosque was constructed out of fired bricks. The Seljuq prayer hall of the mosque likely consisted of the domed hall flanked by two prayer spaces. The form of the Ilkhanid mosque's northern *iwan* is anomalous, due to the existence of earlier Seljuq structure. According to Siroux, the mosque was rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period for an unknown reason.[463]

Construction Phases

A detailed study of the construction phases of the monument is proposed by Siroux.[464] In his study Siroux describes the mosque's remaining parts and he proposes a partial reconstruction of the mosque's appearance in the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. He explains that the foundation of the mosque dates to the Seljuq period, for which there is a date on the minaret (1121-22) and that the mosque was rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period, for which he does not mention any date. Furthermore, at a later stage, in the Safavid period, the mosque was enclosed by a mural structure, with defense towers on its corners. This account of the mosque's constructive and decorative chronology draws on the monument's field documentation and plans by Siroux.

Phase One - The Seljuq Gar Mosque

There are only a few remains of the original Gar mosque from the Seljuq period. The minaret is located on its northern side. It has an octagonal base and it is built out of fired brick. The top of the base of the minaret carries the historic inscription, which states that the patron was a local notable and that the minaret was constructed in 1121-22. The date of the minaret is therefore the orientation date for the Seljuq mosque. Remains of the Seljuq walls on the eastern side of the domed prayer hall with the stucco mihrab were constructed out of fired brick and filled with beaten soil; the mosque's original domed prayer hall was flanked by two lateral prayer spaces. The mosque also featured a courtyard and some lateral prayer spaces, similar to the later Ilkhanid Gar mosque. According to Siroux, the mosque was not constructed well, and he notes disparities between quality of bricks in the remaining wall structures.

[462] Wilber 1955, 119.
[463] Siroux suggests that the Seljuq mosque was demolished to give space to the new Ilkhanid mosque. See Siroux 1971, 269.
[464] *Ibid.*, 267-70.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Gar mosque

Siroux states that the reason for the mosque's rebuilding during the Ilkhanid period is not obvious from observations of its remains. The mosque comprised a domed prayer hall with the stucco mihrab, which was flanked by two lateral prayer spaces and preceded by the *qibla iwan*. According to Siroux the lateral prayer spaces of the domed hall were constructed poorly and they could not withstand the lateral forces of the weight of the domed prayer hall, which caused the collapse of the dome. Remains of transitional zone elements confirm the hypothesis of a dome's existence. On the exterior surfaces of the mosque's northern walls remain traces of the *qibla iwan,* which preceded the domed prayer hall. Siroux discovered some remains of arcades in the eastern part of the mosque, set regularly at a distance of 3.5 m.[465] According to Siroux the mosque comprised a rectangular courtyard flanked on the eastern and western sides by prayer halls consisting of four to five arcades. He also hypothesizes the existence of a northern *iwan*, which would flank the minaret structure. Siroux does not provide a date for the Ilkhanid mosque, but an orientation date is reported by Hunarfar in his reading of one of the stucco plaques in the interior of the domed prayer hall, which states that the stucco mihrab was installed in the mosque in 1261-62 (see below).

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Siroux explains that the entire mosque was enclosed with fortification walls in the Safavid period. These walls were built out of mud brick and comprised a tower on each of the four corners.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The ground plan (Fig. 87) of the Ilkhanid Gar mosque consisted of the domed square prayer hall constructed out of fired brick. The prayer hall might have been flanked by the Seljuq era or rebuilt lateral prayer structures. The hall was preceded by the *qibla iwan*, which comprised two side passages to two flanking rectangular spaces, which were built out of mud bricks and perhaps coated with a layer of fired bricks. The *qibla iwan* opened onto a rectangular courtyard formed by two rows of bays which formed lateral prayer spaces. On the northern side of the courtyard there might have existed a northern *iwan*. The Seljuq minaret was integrated into the mosque's structure. The ground plan of the mosque was therefore similar to that of the Ilkhanid Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4). But these monuments comprise monumental entrance portals on eastern and northern sides. No traces of possible entrance portals remain at Gar.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The high points of the monument consisted of the domed prayer hall preceded by the monumental *iwan* and the highest point of the monument was the Seljuq minaret.

[465] Siroux 1971, 268.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The reconstructed ground plan of the mosque shows that the mosque was a regular, two-*iwan* courtyard and domed prayer hall mosque. It is reasonable to suppose that this was the congregational mosque of the Gar settlement.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Architectural revetments on the mosque's interior surfaces remain on the structure of the domed prayer hall. The other parts of the monument are in ruin.[466] The revetments comprise a ruined stucco mihrab flanked by a niche on its left-hand side, which features *Khatt-i bannaʾi* revetments in fragmented state. The supporting wall opposite the *qibla* wall features two plaques of carved stucco inscriptions with historic content and stucco plug decoration with arabesque bands of carved stucco in the intrados of the main entrance passage to the prayer hall. The architectural surface of the prayer hall's northern supporting wall retains remains of *Khatt-i bannaʾi*. The Seljuq minaret features the historic inscription produced out of fired brick and *Khatt-i bannaʾi* in fired brick which cover most of its shaft.

The Mihrab

Figs. 89-90.

The stucco mihrab is in a ruined state and it is exposed to weathering agents. Only its left section conserves parts of its original stuccos.[467] The mihrab's ruined parts provide evidence regarding its production. The mihrab's basic structure was constructed out of fired bricks arranged to form its internal niche and frames for its carved stucco panels. The mihrab is formed by a pointed arch and some traces of stuccos remain in the interior of its niche. The niche consisted of the lunette, which topped the polygonal form of the niche's lower part. The brick structure of the lower part of the niche was arranged in a manner to provide space for vertical bands of stucco decoration. Some fragments of vertical bands of stucco decoration remain *in situ;* they feature repeating floral patterns. On the left-hand side of the niche of the mihrab remains a part of the structure which used to be one of two columns which flanked the niche.

The left-hand side of the intrados of the lunette retains some stucco ornamentation: it consisted of a band of repeating floral ornamentation elements which protruded from the relief. The pointed arch of the niche was framed with a stucco inscription band featuring Qurʾanic excerpts (*Surat al-Mulk*; 67:1-3) in *Naskh* style, set against a background of floral scrolls. The inscription band is slightly concave. The spandrels topping the niche of the mihrab were lost, but the left-hand side spandrel may bear traces of a restoration intervention. The described structure of the mihrab is framed by an inscription band recounting *Ayat al-Kursi* (Qurʾan, 2:255). The form and artistic techniques used for the making of this inscription band are very peculiar and

[466] For documentation of the monument in a ruined state, before the performance of restoration interventions, see images by Wilber, in: Wilber 1955, Pls. 22-25.
[467] See Pl. 23, in Wilber 1955. It documents the ruined state of the mihrab during Wilber's survey of the monument in 1943.

illustrate distinctive stucco style of the Gar mosque. The inscription band is formed out of several elements; the lower part of the band contains the actual band with the *Thuluth* style inscription. This band is topped by a small band of repeating floral ornamentation which forms a concave in combination with the inscription band. The two bands are topped by another, plain framing band and another band of repeating floral elements. These four bands of stucco ornamentation, which form a slightly concave relief, are interconnected with applied stucco elements set at regular intervals. These elements depart from the floral scroll elements of the inscription's background and they are attached to surfaces of the other thinner bands. They resemble flower bud or blossom ornamentation of tripartite forms and they are heavily perforated in a manner similar to the perforation of the inscription's floral scroll background. This framing band conserves extensive traces of red in its background.[468] Some floral ornaments are coloured white. The mihrab is topped by a horizontal inscription with a fragmented Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surah Hud*, 11:73) on its top. The band features Kufic style set against a background of interlacing geometrical ornamentation with floral inserts. Some background elements of the inscription are heavily perforated.

Two Stucco Cartouches

Figs. 91-92.

The interior surface of the northern supporting wall of the domed prayer hall of the Gar mosque contains two carved stucco cartouches on each side of the entrance passage. The right-hand side cartouche is damaged. The left-hand side cartouche is more integral, but weathered. Hunarfar read these inscriptions when they were in a more integral state.[469] The inscriptions recount that the patron of the mosque and the mihrab is *Rashid al-Din Muhammad Kamal Ahmad ibn Ismaʿil* and that the mihrab was installed during Ramadan of the year 1260-61.[470] These inscriptions are written in *Naskh* style and they are set against a plain background. Given that they are placed into fired brick cartouches of the supporting wall structure, they must be contemporary to the construction of the last domed prayer hall of the monument.

The Intrados of the Main Entrance to the Prayer Hall

The passage between the *qibla iwan* and the domed prayer hall is formed by a pointed arch, the intrados of which is decorated with stucco plugs of two types and with carved stucco arabesque bands. These are stucco plugs with square and perforated ornamentation and there are stucco plugs with epigraphic elements (reading: *Allah*) in Kufic style. The plugs are arranged into a chequered pattern, which is framed with a carved stucco band of repeating floral ornamentation.

The Khatt-i bannaʾi

Further stucco plug revetments are found on the interior surface of the *qibla* wall of the domed prayer hall and on the external surface of the northern wall of the domed prayer hall. Stucco plugs of the *qibla* wall are located on the left-hand side of the mihrab, in the blind pointed arch

[468] The stuccos of the Farfan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 5) also conserve traces of red pigmentation in the stucco relief background.
[469] Hunarfar 1966, 185-86.
[470] Wilber only read the six, of six hundred, Hunarfar proposes reading as six hundred and sixty. Wilber 1955, 119.

niche. The plugs comprise composition of square and perforated plug ornament and they form *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscription, which likely reads *Allah* and perhaps *Muhammad*. The exterior surface of the northern supporting wall of the domed chamber also contains *Khatt-i bannaʾi*. This inscription also displays stucco plugs of forms similar to those on the *qibla* wall and the intrados of the arch: they comprise square incisions and pointed perforations. The plugs form cartouches with repetition of *Allah*.

Exterior Revetments

The Seljuq Minaret

Fig. 88.

The inscription on the Seljuq minaret is formed out of cut brick elements. It features Kufic style and reports the date of minaret's completion and information regarding its patron. The background of the inscription is filled with square elements of brick material, which form a chequered pattern. The inscription is enclosed by two bands on its top and bottom, which feature repeating geometric patterns. The shaft of the minaret is decorated with *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions, which are formed with fired bricks arranged to determine the protruding background of the inscription. The *Khatt-i bannaʾi* consists of the repeating invocation to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*).

Stucco Polychromy at Gar

The remains of the stucco mihrab of the Gar Friday mosque contain pigments in the area of the large framing inscription band (Fig. 90). The background of the inscription was coloured dark red. Traces of white remain on smaller bands with repeating abstract floral patterns. Use of red for the background of stucco relief is rather uncommon. This role is normally assigned to shades of blue. The stucco mihrab at Farfan retains similar traces of red, which may have been used to colour the background of the mihrab's inscription band. The amount of remaining polychromy is not sufficient to propose more detailed information regarding use of colour or the originally polychrome appearance of the stucco mihrab.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Gar

The Gar stucco mihrab features a relatively deep stucco relief, with the exception of panels in its niche, which may have been produced by a different hand. The majority of the mihrab's stucco panels were either carved out of one thick layer of stucco or two stucco layers. The specific characteristic of the Gar mihrab is the frequent use of applied protruding elements (Fig. 90). This specific artistic technique is employed to connect different stucco bands into a single visual units and to render their relief more variegated. Applied protruding elements are of different types. They feature abstract floral forms, which are heavily perforated. The combination and the mode of use of applied protruding elements at Gar should be considered as a specific artistic technique; such use of protruding elements is not encountered on other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. In sum, the remaining parts of the Gar stucco mihrab display an array of different stucco artistic techniques. Observed combinations of artistic techniques

illustrate the creativity of stucco craftsmen. The stucco mihrab of Gar is visually markedly different from most other stuccos in the Isfahan area.

The Gar Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The style of stucco revetments at Gar is characterized by a deep contrasting relief. Moreover, frequent use of protruding applied elements is unique to this stucco repertoire. This device is used to unify different stucco bands and to render the relief of the mihrab more dynamic. The appearance of the stucco mihrab is determined by frequent perforation of the inscription's background floral elements and rhythmical application of perforated protruding elements. The juxtaposition of Kufic to cursive scripts also renders the relief of the mihrab more dynamic.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque is in a ruined state.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Minaret

a.) The historic inscription on the minaret:

بسملة أمر ببناء هذه المنارة الزهيد الرئيس سيد الرؤساء القسم بن أحمد بن أبى القسم
فى سنة خمس عشرة و خمس مائة[471]

Basmala. This blessed minaret was built by the humble principle, chief of the principles, al-Qasim ibn Ahmad ibn Abi al-Qasim in the year five hundred and fifteen (1121-22).

b.) The shaft of the minaret features a repeating invocation to God designed in the *Khatt-i banna'i* style.

It reads:

الملك لله[472]

The Dominion belongs to God.

The Two Cartouches

a.) The two cartouches with historic inscriptions have been read by Hunarfar when they were still better preserved. They feature cartouches produced out of stucco material, with inscriptions in *Naskh* style placed against a plain background. The right-hand side cartouche is preserved in fragments and the left-hand side cartouche is in a better state of preservation. They deteriorated since.

The right-hand side (western) cartouche reads:[473]

[471] Hunarfar 1966, 184-185.
[472] TEI 7669 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021). See also Hunarfar 1966, 184.
[473] Hunarfar 1966, 185.

امر عمارت هذا المحراب

رشيد الدين محمد كا

مل احمد بن اسماعل

The construction of this mihrab was ordered by Rashid al-Din Muhammad Kamil Ahmad ibn Isma'il.

The left-hand side (eastern) cartouche reads:[474]

[sic] ولية

[sic] ابن ابي القاسم

[sic] رمضان المبارك

[sic] ستين و ستمائة

[sic]

[sic] *ibn Abi al-Qasim*

[sic] *the blessed Ramadan*

[sic] *six hundred and sixty*

The two cartouches are of utmost significance for understanding the time of construction or redecoration of the mosque, which comprised the installation of the stucco mihrab. It is accordingly possible to suggest that the monument was repaired and embellished with the carved stucco mihrab in 1260-61. The cartouche provides information concerning the patron: it was somebody, perhaps an Ilkhanid official, called *Rashid al-Din Muhammad Kamal Ahmad ibn Isma'il*.

The Mihrab

The most detailed reading of the three fragmented inscription bands of the mihrab is provided by Hunarfar,[475] some information is also contained in the TEI.[476]

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (top to bottom):

a.) The mihrab features a horizontal inscription on its top. The last part of the inscription survives, and it was read by Hunarfar. The inscription features Kufic style, with *hastae* of letters developing into abstracted vegetal elements, which form its background. Hunarfar provides the reading of the inscription, but he does not mention that this is a Qur'anic excerpt from *Surah Hud* (Qur'an, 11:73). Only the last part of the verse is preserved.

[474] *Ibid.*
[475] Hunarfar 1966, 185-186.
[476] TEI 37434 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021).

The entire inscription reads:[477]

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۖ رَحْمَتُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ ۚ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

They said, "Are you amazed at the decree of Allah? May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honourable."

The extant inscription begins with *ʿaleikum* and finishes at the end of the verse.

b.) The mihrab's framing inscription band was partially reassembled during the interventions on the monument in the last decades. It features *Thuluth* style, and it is set against a richly decorated background consisting of abstracted vegetal elements with heavily perforated surfaces. Some of these elements translate into the applied perforated elements placed between the inscription band's top edge and the thin arabesque framing band. They provide for the visual mediation between the mihrab's panels. The inscription band features a Qurʾanic excerpt, which recounts *Ayat al-Kursi* (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Baqara* 2:255; possibly also parts of the verse 256), of which the middle part and a few fragments are still extant.

The inscription reads:[478]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The extant fragment of the inscription is the middle of the Throne verse, it starts with *ʿaindahu* and it finishes at *al-ard*.

c.) The third inscription of the mihrab frames the pointed arch of its interior niche. The left-hand side portion of the inscription is still extant, although difficult to read. The inscription is written in *Naskh* style and the tops of the *hastae* protrude from the band towards the thin arabesque framing band flanking it, which renders the inscription band more dynamic. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Mulk* (Qurʾan, 67:1-3) and it was read by Hunarfar.

The inscription reads:[479]

[477] Qurʾanic text and English translation is from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-hud-73-qs-11-73-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[478] Qurʾanic text and English translation is from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[479] Qurʾanic text and English translation is from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Mulk (Last Accessed: Novemebr 12, 2020).

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۖ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ ۖ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِنْ فُطُورٍ

Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent,
[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving,
[And] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks?

The extant part of the inscription starts in the middle of the second verse of *Surat al-Mulk* and it runs until *al-rahman*, the middle of the third verse.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature any post-Ilkhanid stuccos.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The name of the patron of the mosque and the stucco mihrab is stated on one of the two stucco plaques, as *Rashid al-Din Muhammad Kamal Ahmad ibn Ismaʿil*. This person may have been a local notable, likely employed by the Ilkhanid state. The *nisba* does not connect the patron to the settlement nor does it provide any titles or professions. The patron was therefore likely of a lower status or rank. The inscription specifically refers to the making of the mihrab, but given its position, it can be supposed that the patronage of the mihrab also included the mosque's rebuilding.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

No signatures of stucco craftsmen's workshop responsible for the making of the stucco repertoire are conserved at Gar. Artistic stucco techniques used for the making of the mihrab and the specific use of protruding applied elements do not find a parallel in any other Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. This is perhaps due to the fact that the Gar mihrab is much earlier in date and there is no extant comparable material for its stuccos. While the aesthetics of the mihrab resemble those of Central Iran, it is difficult to state whether the craftsmen responsible for its making were native to the region or if they were mobilised from afar.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is in an entirely ruined state. Only some parts of the mosque's structure, with the majority in the domed prayer hall, remain. Moreover, the Seljuq minaret conserves its base and parts of its shaft. Some restoration works on the *qibla* wall, the mihrab and the northern wall of the prayer hall were performed to consolidate the structure and to preserve the mihrab.

g.) Research Findingss – Summary

The discussion attempts to assemble information regarding the construction phases, architectural structure characteristics and architectural revetments of the mosque of Gar. The stucco mihrab of the Gar mosque is produced with a specific combination of stucco artistic

techniques, which designate its specific and unique style and aesthetics without parallels. The mosque and its stucco mihrab are an important example of early Ilkhanid stuccos.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Siroux 1971, 267-270; Hunarfar 1966, 182-186; Wilber 1955, 119-120.

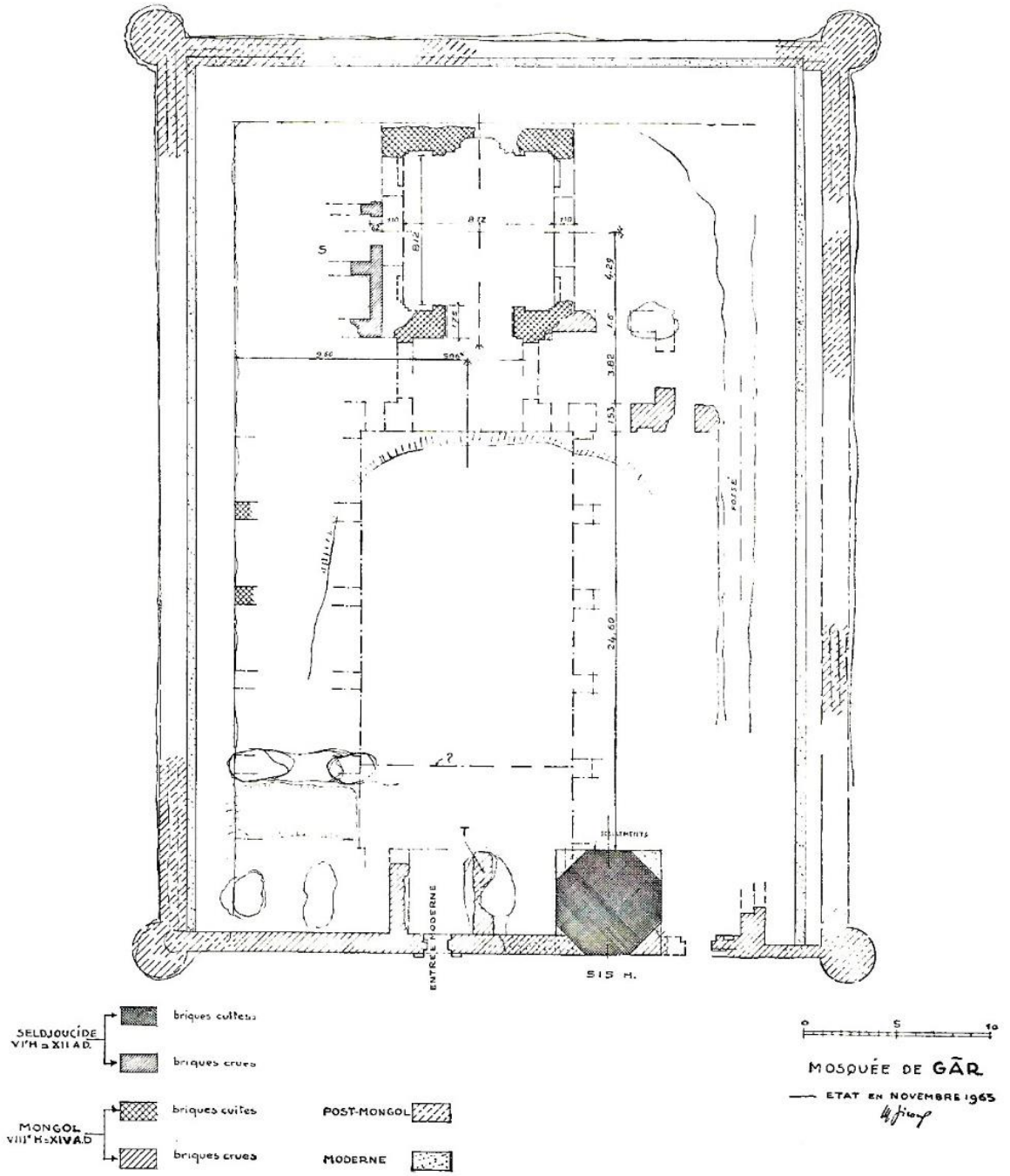


Figure 87: Ground plan of the Gar Friday mosque with constructive stages (After Siroux 1971, 269).



Figure 88: Seljuq minaret (with historic inscription in Kufic style running around its shaft) in the foreground and remains of the Ilkhanid domed hall of the Gar Friday mosque in the background.



Figure 89: Remains of the *qibla* wall of the Gar Friday mosque with the carved stucco mihrab in a ruined state. *Khatt-i bannaʾi* panel is visible on the left-hand side from the mihrab.



Figure 90: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab of the Gar Friday mosque showing a specific stucco artistic technique of applying protruding stucco elements to visually connect the stucco bands of the exterior surfaces of the mihrab.



Figure 91: Western carved stucco cartouche with historic inscription concerning the patronage of Ilkhanid interventions on the monument and the mihrab production by *Rashid al-Din Muhammad Kamil Ahmad ibn Isma'il.*



Figure 92: Eastern cartouche with fragments of carved stucco historic inscription providing information concerning the date of completion of interventions, which likely included production of the carved stucco mihrab, as 1260-61.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 8

Monument Name: Kuhpaya Friday mosque

Figs. 87-92.

Associated Names: the Friday mosque of Kūhpāya[480] is also known under the name of Masjid-i Miyan-i Deh (literal translation: the mosque in the centre of the village). Another name for the mosque is the Mujan-i mosque. Kuhpaya is the modern name of the settlement, which was historically known as Vir. There are different ways of spelling the name of the settlement in Persian, as Kuhpaya (کوهپایه) and abbreviated to Kuhpa (کوهپا). The name of the settlement derives from its geographical location *at the foot of the hill* or *mountainous*. The name of the settlement has been transliterated in different manners, among which are: Kuhpayeh, Kuh-payeh, Kuhpaya, Kuhpa, Qohpaya, Qohpa, Koupa, Kupa and Qopa. The mosque is most frequently referred to as the Friday mosque of Kuhpayeh or Kuhpaya.[481]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument with a complex history of constructive and decorative phases (phase one: likely Sassanid structure; phase two: Abbasid and Seljuq mosque; phase three: Ilkhanid redecoration of the prayer hall; phase four: early 16th century restoration of the dome chamber and installation of the minbar) with subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (in the Ilkhanid period): mosque with a central domed prayer hall, adjacent cruciform plan, courtyard with adjacent prayer spaces and *iwan*s facing it.

Location: Kuhpaya village; c. 72 km as the crow flies in the eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan (towards Naʾin).

GPS location of the monument: 32.7127842 N; 52.4390101 E.

Monument Investigation: November 7, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The chronological and geographical context of the settlement are summarized from Encyclopaedia Iranica.[482] Kuhpaya was historically known as Vir and it is also mentioned under this name by Yaqut. Kuhpaya is located half-way on the historic route between Isfahan and Naʾin.[483] It functioned as a significant stopover on the way between Isfahan and Yazd. It was also an important junction between Ardistan and Rudasht, and an important local commercial centre.[484] Kuhpaya has been rarely mentioned in written sources until modern times. The settlement was historically renowned for the production of raisins, horticulture, poppy

[480] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[481] See https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kuhpaya-i (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).
[482] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kuhpaya-i (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).
[483] Summary from: Siroux 1971, 27-31.
[484] See Siroux 1971, 27-31; Siroux 1966, 137-138.

plantations and mines of iron ore and collyrium. In the present time, Kuhpaya is significant for cereals, beans, cotton production, and horticulture (nuts, pomegranates, apricots, grapes).

Background

The most detailed research of the monument was performed by Siroux and this catalogue entry is based on his research and additional examination of the monument.[485]

Siroux suggests that the mosque has Sassanid foundations. Interventions on its structure in Seljuq, Ilkhanid and Safavid periods testify to the significance of Kuhpaya. There are also other monuments in Kuhpaya: the Safavid caravanserai, the Maʿsum mosque, two other mosques, a hammam, and a water reservoir of likely Safavid date. There remain ruins of the old mud wall and the fortification which served for Kuhpaya's protection and which date back to the Sassanid period.[486] Several monuments dating to the Safavid period reflect the significance of Kuhpaya under Safavids and confirm the hypotheses that the mosque was rebuilt and decorated with the minbar at that point. Kuhpaya was also an important administrative centre in Safavid period when it administered settlements such as Naʾin, Ardistan and Garquya.

b.) Architectural Structure

The mosque is located in Kuhpaya's old city centre and it is surrounded by further structures on its eastern side. It features a complex plan, which is the result of several constructive campaigns; it comprises a courtyard, a cruciform plan and its main part is represented by the domed prayer hall, which houses the small stucco mihrab of the Ilkhanid period and the Safavid tile minbar. The sequence of construction stages of the mosque is difficult to comprehend, but some information has been proposed by Siroux.[487]

Construction Phases

The mosque's structure is the result of numerous constructive and decorative interventions. The most obvious periods are evident from its architectural revetments, which are located in its main domed prayer hall. The small stucco mihrab indicates that some redecoration interventions, if not modifications of the architectural structure, took place in the Ilkhanid period. But the mosque's structure is earlier in date. According to Siroux, the mosque's cruciform and *chahar-taq* plan was determined by the Sassanid Fire Temple at the site. The domed structure of the mosque is challenging to date with certainty, because the majority of its surfaces have been coated with Safavid plaster layers. It is nevertheless likely that the first mosque was constructed in the Seljuq period. The minbar has been thought to be Ilkhanid by Siroux, but later research by Watson demonstrates that it is of an early sixteenth century date (see below).

Phases One to Three - The Earliest and the Seljuq Kuhpaya Friday Mosque

According to Siroux, the earliest mosque dates to the early Islamic period, to sometime between the tenth and eleventh centuries.[488] This phase comprised three constructive interventions. The

[485] Siroux 1966.
[486] *Ibid.*, 157-160.
[487] *Ibid.*
[488] Summary from: Siroux 1966, 139-150.

mosque's construction started with the erection of the main domed prayer hall, with internal dimensions of approximately 6 m per supporting wall. This building comprised an arcade on each of its four sides. The second phase of the early mosque comprised the construction of structures adjacent to the domed prayer hall, which were arranged in hypostyle and cruciform plans. The subterranean cruciform prayer space also dates from this period. The initial structure of the mosque, which comprised the dome prayer hall, resembled the *chahar-taq* form of Sassanid origins. Siroux suggests that the domed prayer hall of the mosque was originally not constructed for the Islamic religious practice and that, analogically to the case of Yazd-i Khast, at Kuhpaya a fire temple of *chahar-taq* structure was converted into a mosque. The original structure was constructed out of beaten soil, sun dried bricks and fired bricks. The domed hall was, according to Siroux, constructed at the end of the Sassanid period.

The reconstruction of the mosque's ground plan by Siroux indicates that the pre-Ilkhanid Kuhpaya mosque consisted of a domed prayer hall flanked by two minor courtyards and that it was preceded by a cruciform space, which formed a hypostyle prayer hall adjacent to the domed hall. This combination of two distinct ground plans is an exception in comparison to other Iranian mosques. Siroux mentions that the original plan for the mosque construction had a strong tendency to achieve a symmetrical plan, but that the quality of the construction reveals shortcomings of forms and construction modality of architectural elements. The mosque also comprised a courtyard with adjacent prayer spaces and minor dimension *iwan* structures. During the third constructive phase, parts of the mosque's prayer hall were modified and a no longer extant minaret may have been constructed at this point.

Phase Four– The Ilkhanid Kuhpaya Friday mosque

According to Siroux, it is possible to discern two phases of Ilkhanid interventions at the Kuhpaya Friday mosque.[489] The first intervention comprised the installation of the stucco mihrab in the domed prayer hall and enlargements of the northern parts of the mosque. The analysis of the mihrab prompted Siroux to suggest its dating to around 1310.[490] But the detailed analysis of the mihrab illustrates that there are several options for its dating. The domed hall structure of the mosque had to be closed off on its *qibla* side in order for the mihrab to be installed in the mosque.

Siroux proposes the reading of the small lustre tile plaque, which is inserted into the stucco mihrab. The fact that the plaque is inserted into a seemingly Ilkhanid stucco revetment work and the difficulty of reading the historical inscription of the lustre tile prompted Siroux to read its date as 1334-35.[491] But this historic inscription actually contains information regarding the date and patronage of the Safavid tile minbar. Siroux accordingly proposes that the minbar is also a fourteenth century work. This was contested by Watson who reads the date of the same inscription as 935 AH, and provides evidence for the dating of the ceramic minbar to the early Safavid period (1528-29).[492] Siroux also proposes that the plaster coating of the domed hall should be dated to the first Ilkhanid phase, but according to the judgement of this research, it

[489] Summary from Siroux 1966, 150-54.
[490] For the discussion of the mihrab see *Ibid.*, 150-151.
[491] *Ibid.*, 139, 150-151.
[492] TEI 36212 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021).

can be dated to the Safavid period, in the same manner as the tile minbar. Siroux proposes that these plaster moulds are similar to those in the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque of Naʾin (Cat. No. 9), and the no longer extant mausoleum of Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw in Abarquh (Cat. No. 11).[493] He also proposes parallels with the plaster coating at the Natanz complex (Cat. No. 12), but the research has shown that those interventions need to be dated to the Safavid or Qajar period. Siroux also mentions that the transitional zone of the dome and the dome itself were likely remodelled at this point. At the same time, some northern portions of the mosque were demolished to provide space for the construction of the monumental *iwan*, which was juxtaposed to the mosque's domed prayer hall and inserted into the older structure of its northern prayer halls.[494] Moreover, some other parts of the prayer spaces closer to the domed structure may have been rebuilt during these interventions.

The second phase of Ilkhanid interventions in the mosque occurred soon after the first and comprised the construction of the façade for the prayer spaces adjoining the courtyard and modifications to the courtyard facing structures. It also comprised modifications of the interior supporting structure of the mosque's entrance.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Post-Ilkhanid interventions included limited enlargements of the mosque's structure, which were likely prompted by the need to accommodate the growing population of the settlement for Friday sermons.[495] These interventions focused on repairing the prayer structures. Further enlargements of the mosque took place in the Qajar period.[496]

The Safavid interventions on the monument are perhaps the most significant later modifications of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque. They comprised only minor enlargements to its structure. Moreover, the interior of the main domed prayer hall was redecorated at this point. The date for these interventions is provided by the lustre tile plaque with the historic inscription which is currently inserted into the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab (Fig. 96). Its historic inscription illustrates that the minbar of the mosque was donated as a waqf to the mosque, and that it was sponsored by *Iskandar ibn-i Shams al-Din ibn-i Iskandar* in 1528-29. This intervention likely included the domed prayer hall's refurbishment.

Some parts of the mosque contain significant inscriptions informing about its modifications and their patronage. An inscription names its patron as *Sultan Muhammad Baba Sharaf* and there is a door close to it with a complete date in numbers as 1086 AH. The name of the patron and the date inform about Safavid interventions. The locks of the door of the mosque are signed as *work of Ustad Muhammad ʿAli with his sons*, and one pair of the door is signed as *work of Ustad Shams*, which are datable to the time of the reign of Shah Sulayman (r. 1666-1694), who

[493] Siroux 1966, 150.
[494] *Ibid.*, 151.
[495] Summary from: *Ibid.*, 154-55.
[496] A *hussayniyya* was added to the mosque complex either in the Safavid or in the Qajar period. Furthermore, access to the kanat was consolidated; apart from this no other significant interventions took place in this period. A water basin dated 1333 AH was donated to the mosque in this period.

was situated in Isfahan in 1668. Another stoneslab inserted into the core of the mosque provides the date 1669.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The Ilkhanid ground plan was reconstructed by Siroux (Fig.93).[497] The Ilkhanid mosque consisted of numerous elements and architectural structures which were works of pre-Ilkhanid and Ilkhanid construction activities. The nucleus of the mosque was formed by the domed prayer hall which was flanked by two adjacent prayer spaces. The prayer hall was preceded by a five-bay prayer hall structure, which was hypostyle in plan, but within which the vaulting system formed a cruciform plan. The use of this cruciform plan, with a small dome on the intersection accentuated the *qibla* direction. The mosque featured a square courtyard, which was flanked by additional prayer spaces. The northern area of the mosque was characterized by a monumental *iwan*, which was juxtaposed to the domed prayer hall and inserted into an earlier, likely Seljuq structure of prayer spaces. The Ilkhanid interventions comprised enlargement and transformation of the monument from a hypostyle mosque into a courtyard mosque with four *iwan*s.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The elevation of the Ilkhanid mosque was conceived to present elevated points with the entrance portal, the domed prayer hall, the northern *iwan*, the cruciform arranged spaces of the prayer hall adjacent to the domed prayer hall, and the minaret. The Ilkhanid construction of the northern *iwan* impacted the elevation of the mosque by additionally accentuating the north-south direction of the *qibla*. The courtyard's façades were also arranged in the Ilkhanid period.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

Information regarding the religious structure of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque is scanty, but observations of its plan and the study by Siroux indicate that the monument was a pre-Islamic structure converted into a congregational mosque.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Architectural revetments of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque are concentrated in the interior of its domed prayer hall. Its only remaining historic revetments are the stucco mihrab on the *qibla* wall of the mosque's domed prayer hall, the tile minbar on the right-hand side of the mihrab and the white plaster mouldings covering supporting walls and transitional elements of the domed prayer hall. The tile minbar was studied by O'Kane.[498] The oldest piece of revetment is presented by the stucco mihrab, which was dated to 1310 by Siroux, and which contains a later-inserted lustre tile slab with a historical inscription regarding the patronage of the Safavid tile

[497] For ground plans of the monument, see Siroux 1966, Pls. III-V.
[498] The minbar in contrast received considerable attention and it is known that it was installed in the mosque during Safavid modification of the monument, perhaps in parallel to the application of plaster mouldings on the interior surfaces of the domed prayer hall. See O'Kane 1986, 147-149.

minbar.[499] The mihrab has not been discussed thoroughly and it requires a more detailed assessment which could provide new information regarding its production, craftsmen, dating and aesthetics.

The Mihrab

Figs. 94-98.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The current small dimension stucco mihrab may have been the small internal niche of a more extensive mihrab. This is indicated by the moulds of white plaster around it.[500] The panel composition of the mihrab is modest. Its central part consists of a rectangular panel with abstract ornamentation, which forms a slightly concave relief of its niche. The rectangular panel is framed by a band of floral ornamentation and by an external band with an inscription set against a background of vegetal ornaments.

The central rectangular part of the mihrab features a niche composition formed by perforated elements of geometrical ornamentation topped by triangular floral elements functioning as spandrels. The aforementioned lustre tile with the historic inscription regarding the patronage and date of the production of the Safavid ceramic minbar was inserted into the stucco mihrab as the mihrab's later modification (the tile is dated 1528-29). The central rectangular panel of the mihrab is framed by a band of floral ornamentation. This band features repeating compositions of half-palmette elements and floral decoration, which were carved out of one stucco layer. The second framing band of the mihrab, its current external border, consists of epigraphic and floral elements. The inscription in *Naskh* style features the *Basmala* and a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4). It features a design with incorrectly proportioned letters and awkward corner solutions. The inscription is placed against a floral ornamentation background. But differently to the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos, at Kuhpaya the background is filled with a selection of floral elements, which are not arranged into any kind of an orderly composition.

Mihrab Production and Dating

The mihrab is frequently considered work of provincial artists. The lesser stucco production skill of the craftsmen who worked at Kuhpaya is visible in the simplicity and lack of proportion for the design of its inscription band, rather than carving quality. The mihrab features two diverse stucco artistic techniques which were commonly used for the production of Ilkhanid stuccos. The mihrab is difficult to associate with other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires which could point towards the provenance of the craftsmen who produced it. It is however clear that it displays stucco artistic techniques and ornamentation which were widespread in the Ilkhanid period. Moreover, its aesthetic appearance is also closer to Ilkhanid works than Seljuq.

[499] The lustre tile was also read and published by Watson some decades ago. See TEI 36212 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021).
[500] It is possible that the layers of plaster actually conceal some other parts of the mihrab.

The dating of the mihrab is challenging to propose, due to its lower production quality. Its ornamentation and epigraphic elements do not aid in its dating. It is consequently reasonable to propose that the 1310 date put forward by Siroux needs to be handled with caution. The mihrab could have been produced earlier, during the reign of Ghazan Khan, when the economy of the Isfahan area and the rest of the Empire already flourished. A later date for the mihrab, for example towards the end of Uljaytu's reign, is equally plausible. It would therefore be more reasonable to propose that the Kuhpaya Friday mosque mihrab should be understood as produced sometime between 1295 and 1316.

Post-Ilkhanid Revetments

There are only two types of architectural revetments dating to the post-Ilkhanid period and they are both located in the domed prayer hall of the mosque. They comprise the tiled minbar and the plaster mouldings of the mosque's prayer hall interior (see below).

The Minbar

Figs. 94, 99-101.

A detailed study of the tile minbar is provided by O'Kane.[501] The minbar has been thought to date to the fourteenth century by Siroux, but Watson corrected the reading of the dated inscription of the lustre tile currently inserted into the mosque's stucco mihrab; the minbar therefore dates to the early Safavid period (1528-29). O'Kane justly points out that the minbar reveals archaic features and that it is relatively modest in comparison to the status of its patron and his other patronage activities. The minbar is decorated with tiles in light and dark blue and white, arranged to create repeating geometrical patterns. The top part of the minbar contains a white and blue underglaze inserted plaque with a religious text. In comparison to other such minbars, the Kuhpaya minbar is unassuming in its design and tile craftsmanship. The near-by mosque of Maʿsum contains a mihrab which is produced out of similar elements and colours of tiles; it is likely that the minbar of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque and the mihrab of the Maʿsum mosque are contemporary in their production and works of the came craftsmen's workshop.

The Plaster Mouldings

Siroux suggests that the plaster mouldings, which cover the surfaces of supporting walls and transitional zones of the domed prayer hall of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque, are Ilkhanid in their date, but he also proposes that the minbar is of Ilkhanid production. It is more likely that the interior of the domed prayer hall was refurbished when the Safavid minbar was installed. If so, the mouldings should be of early Safavid date. This would be in line with their form and visual appearance, which reveal more recent features compared to plaster coatings of the Ilkhanid period.

[501] O'Kane 1986, 147-149.

Exterior Revetments

There are no remaining historic architectural revetments on the exterior surfaces of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque.

Stucco Polychromy at Kuhpaya

The small stucco mihrab of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque was whitewashed at an unknown date. Some parts of the mihrab seem to indicate the existence of remains of polychromy, which are concealed by the whitewash. It is likely that, like the vast majority of Ilkhanid stucco repertoires, the Kuhpaya mihrab was originally polychrome.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Kuhpaya

The analysis and discussion of the mihrab of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque demonstrate that there exists a disparity between the design of the stucco mihrab and its production techniques and stucco carving approaches. The mihrab does not display a complex design, but disproportional inscriptions and lack of design composition skills for the background with floral elements. But the stucco craftsmen were relatively skilled in stucco carving: the mihrab's stucco panels were carved out of one or more stucco layers to feature a plastic relief determined by the addition of protruding elements. These stucco artistic techniques and carving approach are common in the Ilkhanid period.

The Kuhpaya Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetic appearance of the Kuhpaya stucco mihrab is impacted by the fact that the craftsmen were not sufficiently skilled to produce an advanced piece of stucco. The mihrab nevertheless displays a sense of arrangement of stucco perforations and the tendency towards the creation of a relief and a three-dimensional piece of stucco revetment. Visual characteristics of the mihrab are challenging to compare to the other Ilkhanid stuccos in the Isfahan region.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque does not contain any pieces of furniture dated to Ilkhanid period.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The mihrab's framing inscription band features *Naskh* style and it comprises the *Basmala* and the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4). The inscription is of poor proportions and letter forms, which contrasts to the well-produced vegetal background of the framing band.

The inscription reads:[502]

[502] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

b.) The lustre slab from the Safavid period which is inserted into the core of the niche of the stucco mihrab. It comprises two inscriptions: one in its central part and one framing inscription. Both were read by Watson.[503]

The central inscription reads:

هو العلی الأعلی وقف نمود این منبر را إلی قربة الله افتخار الحاجّ و الحرمین حاجی اسکندر بن شمس الدین بن اسکندر فی محرّم المکرّم سنة خمس و ثلاثین و تسعمائة هجریّة آمرزیده باد که فاتحة خواند

The inscription provides the date of completion of the minbar and the lustre tile as 938/1528-29 and it names the patron of the minbar installation intervention as *Hajji Iskandar ibn Shams al-Din ibn Iskandar*.

The framing inscription reads:

اللهمّ صلّ علی المصطفی محمّد و المرتضی علی و البتول فاطمة و السبطین الحسن (و) الحسین و زین العباد و الباقر و الصاد[ق] و الکاظم و الرضا (و) التقی و النقی و الزکی و الحجّة القائم المهدی صلوات الله علیه و علیهم أجمعین

The inscription recounts Blessings to the Imams and the *Ahl al-Bayt*. This is a Shiʿite sectarian text.

The inscription plaque on the top of the minbar also refers to the minbar installation, the same date of the intervention and the same name of the patron. It also comprises signatures of two craftsmen responsible for the production of glazed or lustre revetments of this redecoration.[504]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature any carved stuccos from the post-Ilkhanid times.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The information regarding the patronage of the pre-Safavid interventions and foundation of the mosque and the stucco mihrab is lacking. It remains unclear who founded the mosque and who sponsored its maintenance, enlargements and re-decoration in the Ilkhanid period. Given the extent of Ilkhanid interventions, the patrons could have been local notables or lower Ilkhanid officials.

[503] TEI 36212 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021). See also Aube 2017, 123-124.
[504] See TEI 36214 (Last Accessed: October 27, 2021).

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

It is difficult to establish connections between the Kuhpaya mihrab and to relate it to similar Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. Although the mihrab features some affinities with other Ilkhanid stuccos in the Isfahan region, it nevertheless lacks determining traits which would allow the statement to be made that the mihrab was produced by craftsmen like those who produced the stuccos of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3), the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) or the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). Furthermore, the Kuhpaya stucco mihrab is one of the few mihrabs that reveal the described shortcomings of design production which are not found in the majority of other repertoires. This perhaps enables the statement to be made that the mihrab could have been produced by some craftsman or a small group of craftsmen local and native to the settlement of Kuhpaya.

f.) Monument Condition

The Kuhpaya Friday mosque is in a fairly good condition. The revetments of the mosque's domed prayer hall have been maintained well and the structure of the mosque, despite numerous modern alterations, is in good condition. Some of the interventions on the mosque and its architectural surfaces are not in line with the principles and theory of restoration, but they serve to render the monument functional for the local community.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research provides information regarding the mosque's history and it revises the chronology of its numerous constructive and decorative phases. The stucco mihrab of the mosque is the only Ilkhanid-date revetment in the monument and it was perhaps produced in parallel to Ilkhanid enlargements to the mosque. Rather than being firmly dated to 1310, as suggested by Siroux based on stylistic grounds, the mihrab should be considered as produced sometime between 1295 and 1316 (1290-1320). Observations on the mihrab showed that it was produced with a fair knowledge of stucco artistic techniques, but that it is lacking inscription and ornamentation design skills. This allows the conclusion that the mihrab was likely produced by local craftsmen.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Siroux 1966; Siroux 1971; O'Kane 1986, 147-149; Watson 1985; Watson 1975.

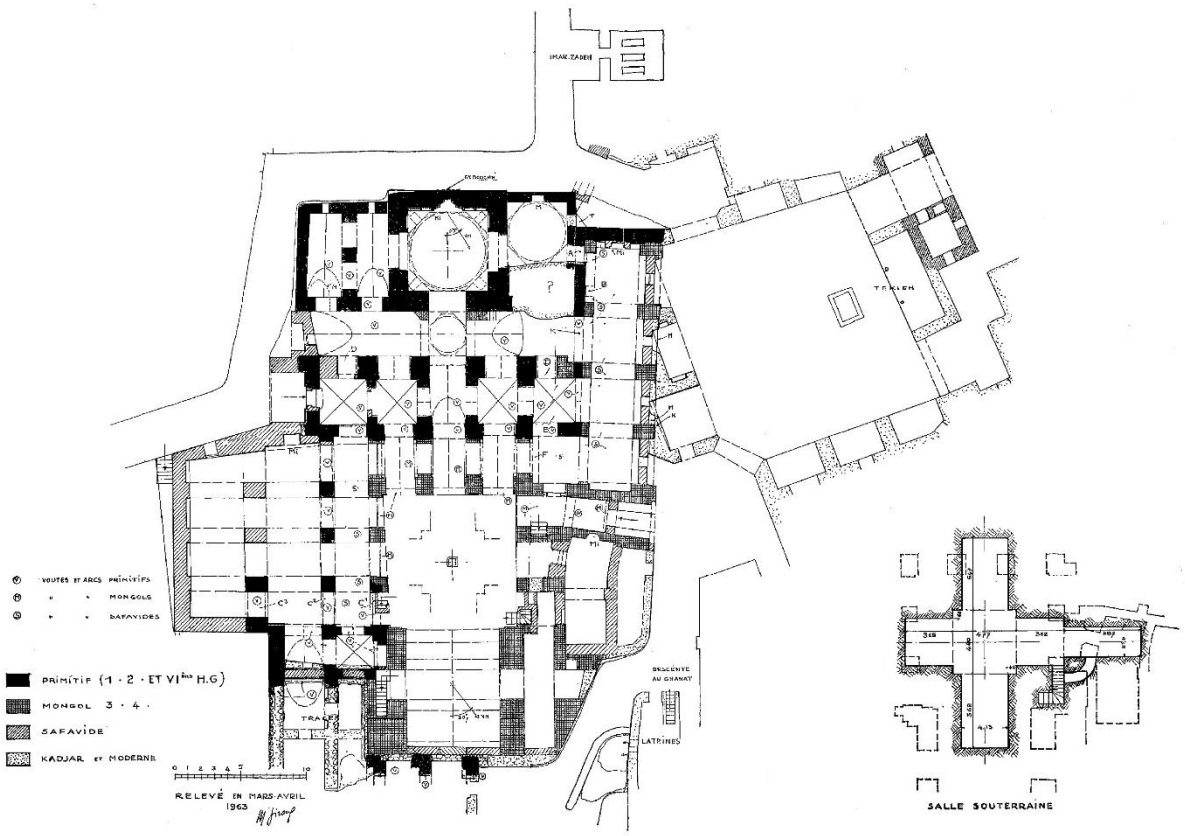


Figure 93: The ground plan of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque with marked construction stages (After Siroux 1966, Plate III).



Figure 94: The carved stucco mihrab and the glazed ceramic minbar in the interior of the domed hall of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque.



Figure 95: The carved stucco mihrab of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque.

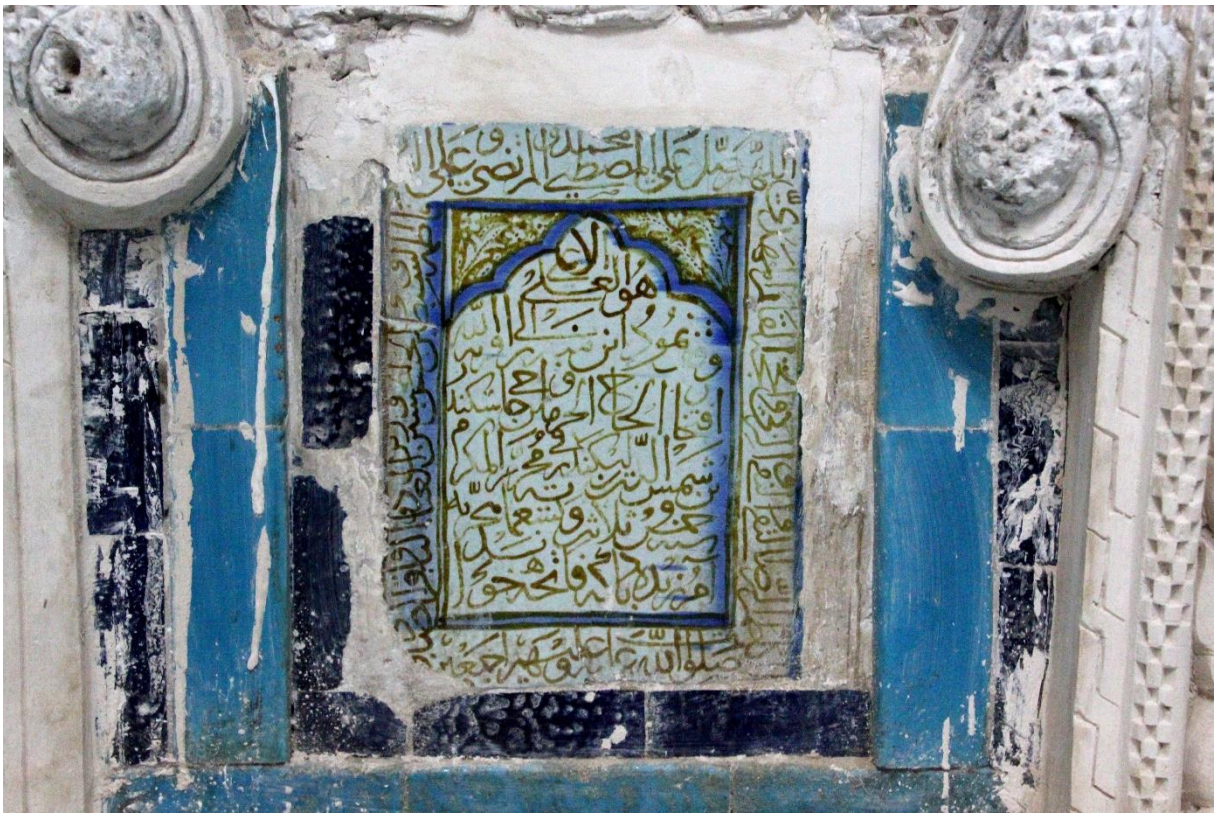


Figure 96: Detail of the lower portion of the Kuhpaya stucco mihrab with the Safavid (1528-29) lustre tile, which contains inscriptions providing information regarding the patronage of the minbar installation, which was sponsored by *Hajji Iskandar ibn Shams al-Din ibn Iskandar*. This plaque was likely inserted into the mihrab at a later point. It might have involved remodelling and repairs to parts of the mihrab.



Figure 97: Detail of the framing inscription band of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque mihrab.

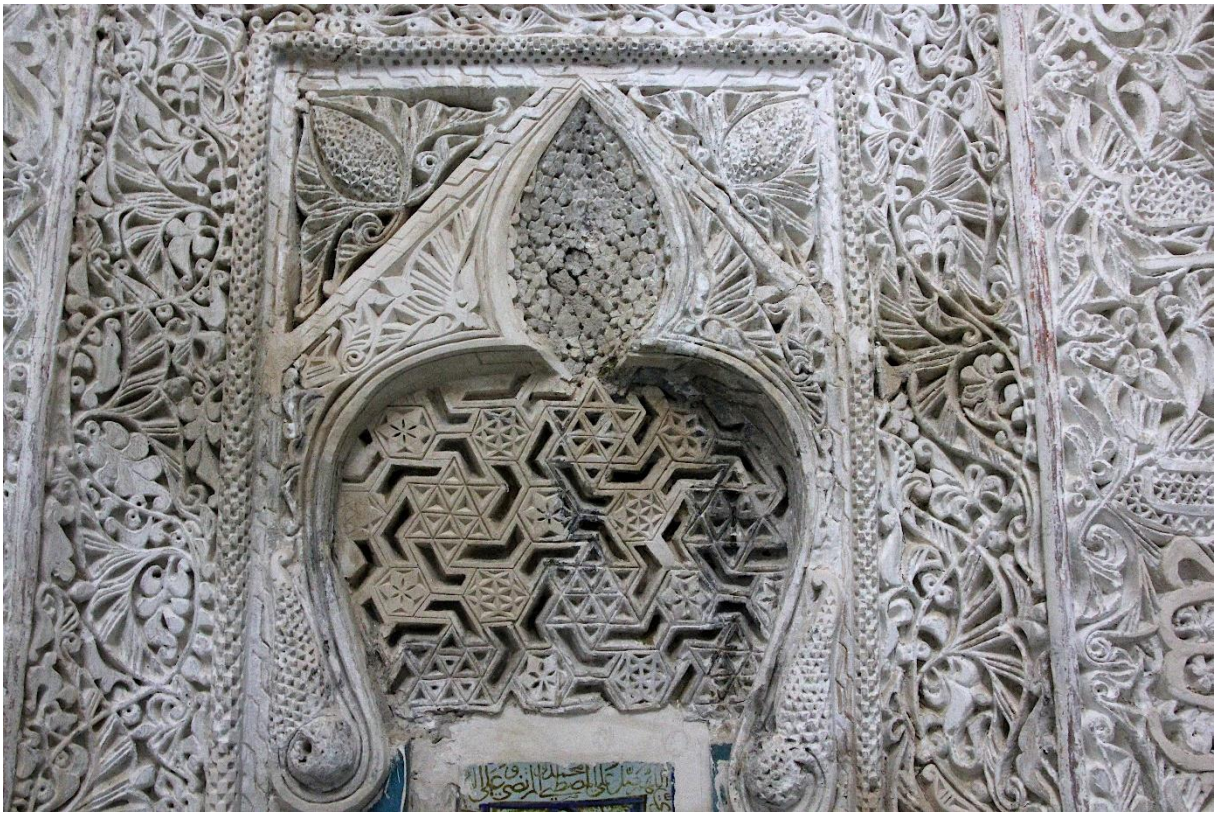


Figure 98: Detail of the central niche lunette and the spandrel area of the Kuhpaya stucco mihrab.




Figures 99-100: The minbar of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque. Left: the minbar and the Safavid mouldings on the architectural surfaces of the domed hall of the mosque. Right: the other side of the minbar and the empty space where the lustre tile with historic inscriptions (now part of the mihrab) could have originally been located.



Figure 101: Blue and white underglaze ceramic tile inserted in the top portion of the minbar with historic information concerning the patronage and installation of the Kuhpaya Friday mosque minbar.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 9

Monument Name: Baba ʿAbdullah complex

Figs. 102-111.

Associated Names: the name of the monument derives from the historic inscription in the carved wooden panel which was located in the interior of the monument and contains the name of one of its patrons (dated 1300).[505] The monument is referred to as the Mosque of Bābā ʿAbdāllah (مسجد بابا عبدالله).[506] Variant spellings of the mosque's name include: Mosque of Baba ʿAbdullah, Masjid-i Baba ʿAbd Allah, Masjed-e Baba ʿAbdallah, Baba-ʿAbdollah Mosque, Masgid-i Baba ʿAbd Allah and Masdjid-i Baba ʿAbd Allah.[507] This research employs the following monument denomination: Baba ʿAbdullah complex, due to the multitude of its functions.

Monument Type: this multifunctional complex consists of a mausoleum and a mosque. The monument is the result of at least two phases of construction and decoration, which took place in the Ilkhanid period; they allowed for the development of the mausoleum's ground plan into a funerary complex with a two-*iwan* and courtyard mosque, adjacent prayer spaces and two subterranean prayer halls.

Chronology: the monument is believed to have been first constructed in the Ilkhanid period, but forms and locations of its subterranean halls indicate that this could have been an earlier structure, which was rebuilt in the Ilkhanid era, around 1300. The mausoleum of the complex was subsequently redecorated to feature an extensive wall painting repertoire dated 1336. The domed mausoleum comprises remains of thirteen Ilkhanid and Timurid cenotaphs decorated with carved stuccos and tile mosaic. The monument was subjected to several restoration interventions which altered its architectural revetment repertoire and structure.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): a domed prayer hall (mausoleum) and two-*iwan* mosque with a courtyard.

Location: Naʾin settlement; c. 135 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Isfahan in the direction of east.

GPS location of the monument: 32.8639483 N; 53.0929096 E.

Monument Investigation: November 29, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Naʾin is a small dimension settlement in Central Iran, on one of the main communication roads between Isfahan and Yazd.[508] The settlement is located in a semi-desert area and its history

[505] The panel was incorporated into the mihrab structure already at the time of its publication by Smith and Wittek in 1938.
[506] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[507] https://archnet.org/sites/1643/media_contents/42395 (Last Accessed: June 26, 2020); Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, 48.
[508] Summary from: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5764 (Last Accessed: June 26, 2021).

reaches back to at least the pre-Islamic times.[509] The name of the settlement could derive from its pre-Islamic past, indicating that this is a place of *descendants of the prophet Noah*, who is referred to as *Naen*. Alternatively, its name could also derive from the marsh plant called *Ney*, (literally: a straw).[510] The settlement is mentioned by al-Istakhri as being administrated by the Fars region, but dependent on Isfahan and Yazd. Naʾin is mentioned by Yaqut and Nassir-i Khusraw. In *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, Mustawfi describes the citadel of Naʾin. The city is also referred to in written sources in connection to the near-by mines of silver and as place of origin of kaolin clay, employed for the production of porcelain in Safavid Kashan. Modern Naʾin developed into an important carpet production centre.

Background

The best known monument of the settlement is the Friday mosque with its complex history, important early Islamic carved stucco repertoire and a monumental Ilkhanid wooden minbar.[511] Currently, Naʾin and Muhammadiya are almost merged into one settlement. Two other monuments in Muhammadiya, its Friday mosque and the Sar-i Kucha mosque, are also significant monuments and they are related to the Baba ʿAbdullah complex. In addition to the Friday mosque, the second most important monument in Naʾin is the Baba ʿAbdullah complex, which received only limited scholarly attention and lacks a comprehensive discussion. The monument is located in the area of two historic quarters of the settlement, the Saray-i Naw and Kuy-i Sang, and it is connected to the historic bazaar by a passage.[512] The first research and some readings of the monument's historic inscription was performed by B. M. Smith and Paul Wittek.[513] The monument was documented by Medina and Blair and Bloom;[514] these photographs help in spotting its modern alterations. The complex is also included in Qasimi's encyclopaedia and it is briefly mentioned by Wilber.[515]

The monument comprises a carved stucco and wall painting repertoire, which dates to the Ilkhanid period. The stucco revetments of the complex are of particular significance because they were employed to decorate a considerable number of cenotaphs in the mausoleum's interior and they present a unique phenomenon. These cenotaphs were covered by a modern floor structure for the mausoleum to function as a prayer hall; the floor was only recently removed for the cenotaphs to be seen and accessible to researchers. The monument presents several challenges. Firstly, the sequence of the construction of its structure is unclear. Secondly, the original function of the monument was suggested to have been a mausoleum turned into a

[509] *Ibid.*
[510] This would present a parallel case to the derivation of the name of the settlement Nayriz. Information from: https://lamtakam.com/dictionaries/azad/343303/%D9%86%D8%A7%D8%A6%DB%8C%D9%86 (Last accessed: June 26, 2020).
[511] The minbar is signed as the work of two craftsmen, one of them with the *nisba* of the near-by village of Muhammadiya (a precinct of Naʾin).
[512] https://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/6870236/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%AA-%DB%B7%DB%B0%DB%B0-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%86%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%86 (Last accessed: June 26, 2020).
[513] Smith and Wittek 1938.
[514] For photographs by Medina and Blair and Bloom, see https://archnet.org/sites/1643/media_contents/42394 (Last Accessed: June 26, 2020).
[515] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, 48-53; Wilber 1955, 128.

mosque. Thirdly, the identity of the persons buried in the structure remains unknown and it is not clear if these cenotaphs were works of one or several interventions. It is also necessary to establish whether the 1336 redecoration of the monument is tied to the change in its function and to identify the patron of this intervention. Furthermore, the cenotaphs require documentation and discussion because they are some of the few examples of carved stucco reveted cenotaphs.

b.) Architectural Structure

The core of the monument functions as a mosque and it consists of two juxtaposed *iwan* structures and the courtyard; this mosque is adjacent to the monumental domed hall with the cenotaphs and wall painting which functioned as a mausoleum. The *qibla iwan* of the mosque precedes a smaller prayer hall with vaulted roofing system; this compound is juxtaposed on the *qibla* axis by a smaller *iwan* placed opposite to the *qibla iwan*. These elements form the mosque's main axis. The sides of the courtyard are additionally flanked by a hypostyle, two-*riwaq* prayer hall, on its western side. Smaller adjacent spaces flank the courtyard from its eastern side. The *qibla iwan* and the prayer hall behind it may have been the focal part of the mosque, and the *qibla* wall of the mosque's prayer hall comprises one large and one small passage (closed off in modern times) which lead to the domed mausoleum with a square ground plan.

Construction Phases

Architectural revetments provide some information concerning the chronology of construction and decoration of the complex. The wooden panel from the mosque features a historic inscription informing that the patron of the mosque is Muhammad, son of Shams al-Din ʿAbdullah,[516] and that the mosque was built in 1300. This panel was incorporated in the mihrab area of the monument's domed hall,[517] and it was subsequently transferred to the Naʾin museum (the Pirniya House).[518] The monumental wall painting inscription band in the mausoleum of the complex comprises the date 1336. The architectural structure of the monument was restored several times, and its surfaces were either coated with thick layers of plaster or rebuilt with modern fired brick material. Evidence of several construction phases and of different compounds of the complex with differing religious functions can be discerned based on observations of the monument's architectural structure and its ground plan.

The difference in thickness of the mausoleum's supporting walls indicate that it was constructed in a separate intervention and by a different builders' group, compared to the mosque with asymmetric alignment to the domed mausoleum. Forms and locations of two passages between the mausoleum, the *qibla iwan* and the mosque's prayer hall area, confirm that the described differences are results of a construction break. The monumental complex was thus constructed in at least two phases. The location of the monument's subterranean spaces, which are not

[516] The full name of the patron from the historic wooden inscription text, is: *Muhammad, Son of the late Shams al-Din, son of Abi ʿAbdullah ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Abi ʿAbdullah ibn-i Abi al-Qassim ibn-i ʿAli*.
[517] It is documented in this position on photographs from 1969 by Mariylin Jenkins Medina. https://archnet.org/sites/1643/media_contents/105798 (Last Accessed: June 26, 2020); Photograph Inv. No. IAA117980.
[518] http://naeeni.com/masjed-baba-abdollah-nain/ (Last accessed: June 26, 2020).

situated in the monument's *qibla* area, but on its opposite side, additionally support this hypothesis. The listed evidence suggests that the mosque structure post-dates the construction of the mausoleum, which determined the mosque's location and its ground plan. The mausoleum thus originally retained a function separate from the mosque; cenotaphs in its interior confirm that this structure was a mausoleum and not the mosque's domed prayer hall. Reference to the mosque construction on the carved wooden inscription plate, which states that the mosque was built in 1300, should be interpreted as the *ante-quem* date for the construction of the mausoleum and the mosque. Consequently, the 1336 date on the wall painting inscription band in the mausoleum, provides the date of completion of its redecoration in wall painting medium. Integration of a domed mausoleum into a more extensive complex, or an expansion of a mausoleum into a funerary complex in its own right, is a frequently occurring phenomenon in the Ilkhanid period.[519] It is however less common for a mausoleum structure to be repurposed into a mosque structure or for a mosque in its own right to be built next to an already existing mausoleum.[520] In sum, the mausoleum was built prior to 1300, to which a mosque was added in 1300; the mausoleum and the mosque were redecorated in 1336.

The first cenotaphs in the mausoleum likely existed before the time of the completion of construction of the adjacent mosque. The number of these cenotaphs could have subsequently gradually increased by means of additional burials due to the sacredness of the given space. Similar to the wall painting repertoire production in the mausoleum, the application of carved stuccos on the cenotaphs was also a redecoration intervention. These two activities could have taken place in parallel, but the cenotaphs may have also been decorated in carved stucco medium before or after 1336, as an independent redecoration intervention.

Observations of the mausoleum's architectural structure and its relationship to the remains of the wall painting repertoire illustrate that the horizontal wall painting register with the central circular and the flanking teardrop medallion compositions functioned as a top portion of a mihrab. Joints between surfaces of this horizontal wall painting register and the surrounding structure and especially the wall behind it indicate that this is not the mausoleum's original mihrab but a later addition. The transitional zone area was rebuilt in modern times and some of the arched openings were additionally strengthened in order to support the domed structure. It is unclear whether the original dome was single or double shelled. The majority of the mausoleum's supporting walls are coated with white plaster and shallow muqarnas blind niche mouldings; the muqarnas system of transitional zone area is also the work of the wall painting redecoration intervention.[521] The function of the mausoleum thus did not change through time; it housed numerous cenotaphs and graves of the deceased. The function of the wall painting mihrab in the hall was intended for prayer rites of an individual nature. In sum, the discussion

[519] Some of the best examples include the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran near Isfahan (Cat. No. 2), the complex of Shaykh Jami at Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30), the complex of Bayazid Bistami at Bistam (Cat. No. 19), the Ilkhanid mausolea at Qum (Cat. No. 15), the Baba Afzal tomb in Maraq (Cat. No. 14) and many others.

[520] The best parallel example for a presumably similar phenomenon is the case of the chronology of construction and development of the Complex of ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12). Similar was also performed in the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).

[521] A parallel in favour of this intervention is the Ilkhanid period muqarnas dome in the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12).

illustrates that the mosque of Baba ʿAbdullah in Naʾin should best be called the mosque and mausoleum of Baba ʿAbdullah, due to the two distinct functions of its architectural structures.

Production of the wall painting repertoire and carved stuccos for the cenotaphs were late Ilkhanid decorative activities in the mausoleum. Subsequently, in the Timurid times, either an already existing cenotaph of a revered personage or a new grave was decorated with tile mosaic. Observations of the lower edges of this cenotaph, which feature a fired-brick-like material and are not covered by the tile mosaic, suggest that this intervention was a redecoration of an already existing cenotaph. The cenotaph's dimensions and its central position close to the mihrab and the *qibla* wall indicate that this could have perhaps been the oldest cenotaph of a revered anonymous personage. If so, the redecoration was performed to pay homage to the deceased (religious authority?).

Phase One - The First Monument – A Mausoleum or a Mosque?

The first monument built on the site was a monumental square mausoleum topped by a dome, which housed the grave of an unknown personage. Subsequently, a decision was taken by the Ilkhanid official Baba ʿAbdullah to build a mosque on the site, likely to cater to the pilgrims and for the local community. The mausoleum structure pre-dates 1300, which is stated as the year of the mosque construction completion.[522] The exact date of the mausoleum construction cannot be established with certainty. The mausoleum was likely built sometime between the 1270s and 1300; its architectural structure, although smaller, is not dissimilar to the mausolea and madrasas of the Abarquh and Yazd regions (Cat. Nos. 11, 29). A similar ground plan and structure in adobe material were, for example, featured by the no longer extant mausoleum of Hasan Ibn Kay Khusraw in Abarquh,[523] and the mausolea of Sayyidun of ʿAli al-Naqi and Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi (Cat. No. 11).[524]

Phase Two – The Second Monument – A Conversion into a Mosque?

The significance of the mausoleum and the growth of the settlement might have prompted the construction of a mosque adjacent to the mausoleum. The carved wooden inscription plaque with information concerning the patronage of the mosque by Baba ʿAbdullah with the date 1300 likely refers to this second phase of the monument enlargement by means of the mosque construction. The two-*iwan* mosque structure was aligned to form the *qibla* axis with the square mausoleum, and additional prayer spaces were constructed adjacent to its courtyard. The described construction of the mosque therefore partially reflected the significance of the mausoleum, which could have been a pilgrimage destination.

Phase Three – Further Modifications and a Redecoration?

The majority of constructive undertakings on the mausoleum and the mosque were completed by 1300. Subsequent modifications were tied to production of architectural revetments in carved stucco and wall painting. The date of the wall painting repertoire production in the interior of the mausoleum is provided at the end of the monumental inscription band topping

[522] This date has so far been interpreted as the *ante-quem* date for the construction of the entire monument.
[523] Wilber 1955, 154-155, Pls. 121, 123; Fig. 34. Godard 1936, 60-61, 63, 68, Figs. 42-47.
[524] Wilber 1955, 176; Godard 1936, 72, Fig. 50.

the edges of its supporting walls (1336). This repertoire included a wall painting mihrab, of which only the top horizontal panel remains. The muqarnas elements in white plaster may be later Timurid or Safavid additions. The patron of the wall painting repertoire remains anonymous until the emergence of further detailed evidence. The production of carved stucco coatings for the cenotaphs could have been indirectly impacted by the wall painting production activities. But it remains unclear when exactly these stucco cenotaphs were produced; based on the existing evidence, a c. 1300 date is plausible.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The evidence of post-Ilkhanid modifications of the monument is presented by the tile mosaic cenotaph in front of the mausoleum's wall painting mihrab, and by white plaster coatings of walls and muqarnas elements. They are post-Ilkhanid additions to the mausoleum's interior, which most likely date to the Timurid or Safavid period. The tile mosaic cenotaph in the mausoleum is likely a redecoration of the most significant cenotaph in the mausoleum, rather than a grave and cenotaph dating to the Timurid period.

Ilkhanid Complex Ground Plan

The extant evidence suggests that the entire architectural structure of the monument is work of Ilkhanid builders. The ground plan and the structure of the complex (Figs. 102-103), consisting of the mausoleum and the mosque were most likely formed by two main construction interventions which concluded by 1300. Construction of the mausoleum, consisting of a square structure topped by the dome, preceded the mosque erection, and the mosque was likely built in order to expand the mausoleum into a pilgrimage or a funerary complex.

The main components of the ground plan are the square mausoleum on the southern side of the monument, which determined the orientation and the main axis of the mosque constructed next to it. The mosque ground plan consists of two juxtaposed *iwan*s flanking the courtyard. A rectangular vaulted prayer hall is located between the *qibla iwan* and the mausoleum and it was the focal prayer space of the monument. Further modest prayer spaces flank eastern and western sides of the monument. The extensive subterranean system beneath the mosque, on its northern side, testifies to the fact that the mosque was constructed after the mausoleum was already in place. This underground hall system likely functioned as an additional prayer space, perhaps for very hot or cold parts of the year. The described characteristics of the monument's ground plan indicate that it should actually be understood as a complex consisting of a standardized form of a mausoleum and a two-*iwan* with a courtyard mosque. This plan type formed in the Seljuq period and witnessed a continuation in Ilkhanid times. The mosque seems not to have featured a minaret, perhaps due to the fact that it did not retain a congregational function, given the presence of the historic Friday mosque in its proximities.

Ilkhanid Complex Elevation

The mosque elevation is variegated and the floor of the complex is not even, reflecting different phases of monument's construction. The lowest floor level is that of the mausoleum.[525] The most elevated point of the monument is presented by the mausoleum's domed structure, which is substituted by a modern dome. The dome's transitional zone was developed into two levels of transitional elements, with the lower section featuring a set of blind arcades alternated with pointed arch elements set into the corners of the square structure in a manner to translate it into an octagonal form. These elements translated further into a drum which in its interior featured a squinch system. The original dome carried by the described structure may have been double-shelled.[526]

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The discussion of available evidence concerning the monument's constructive and decorative chronology illustrates that this monument which is normally referred to as a mosque, is in fact a complex consisting of an earlier mausoleum and a subsequently constructed mosque. Religious function of the mosque was therefore in some sense subordinated to the presence of the mausoleum and its tombs (Fig. 103) in its domed interior which emitted the sacredness and attracted visitors to the complex.[527] The inscription fragment on one of the cenotaphs (Cenotaph no. 1) indicates that at least one person buried in the structure was a Sayyid and also a state official of some rank. It is not clear if this group of cenotaphs forms a set of family graves, or if each cenotaph marks a grave of a different unrelated individual. According to the ICHHTO office in Naʾin, the mausoleum hall hosts burials of different notables and Sufi authorities of the Ilkhanid period. If so, it might be that the burial of these persons was prompted by the presence of one, now anonymous, grave of a religious or a Sufi authority. The monument therefore retained several functions; it was built as a funerary structure, to which a mosque was added to provide space for prayer for its visitors.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The decorative programme of the complex consists of mainly interior revetments which are concentrated in the mausoleum. The only exterior architectural revetments are the repeating herringbone patterns on architectural surfaces of the courtyard and the *iwan* of the mosque. The mausoleum's revetments comprise a number of carved stucco-decorated cenotaphs, which were produced sometime between 1300 and 1336, when the interior was redecorated with wall

[525] It is falsely indicated on Qasimi's elevation, as at the time of his investigation of the monument the original floor level of the mausoleum was still covered in order to provide a prayer surface and to function as the monumental domed prayer hall of the mosque rather than mausoleum. See Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, 50.
[526] Compare to the Rukniyya or Shamsiyya mausolea (Cat. No. 29) and Seljuq Friday mosques, for example those at Sujas (Cat. No. 35) and Qurwa.
[527] According to the ICHHTO office, the monument was first built as a mausoleum, and it was subsequently converted into a mosque.
https://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/6870236/%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%82%D8%AF%D9%85%D8%AA-%DB%B7%DB%B0%DB%B0-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%86%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%86 (Last accessed: June 26, 2020). See also https://web.archive.org/web/20131225073555/http://isfahaneast.com/newsF-703.html (Last Accessed: June 26, 2020).

paintings. The extant remains of the wall paintings comprise the top horizontal register of the mihrab and a monumental inscription band which runs along the top edges of the mausoleum's supporting walls. Another cenotaph in the interior of the mausoleum dates to the Timurid period and it is decorated with tile mosaics.

Interior Revetments

The Stucco Cenotaph Corpus

Figs. 103-110.

The interior of the domed structure of the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex contains some thirteen cenotaphs, which probably accumulated around the essential cenotaph of a political, learned or religious authority. At a certain point, most likely around the time of the redecoration of the mausoleum's interior with wall paintings, these cenotaphs were redecorated with carved stuccos produced by one team of craftsmen.

Cenotaph Number 1

Fig. 105.

This is the most monumental carved stucco cenotaph of the complex. It consists of two parts; the horizontal chest-like cenotaph and a vertical slab on the side where the head of the buried person was placed. This specific form of the cenotaph may indicate that the buried personage was of a higher social status compared to the others, or that the personage may have been the patron of the cenotaphs' re-decorative intervention. Stuccos on the sides of the cenotaph's horizontal part are partially damaged and their upper carved stucco layer may have fallen off. The visible layer of stuccos was restored and it features a repeating composition of geometrical elements forming stars and octagons. The upper horizontal surface of the cenotaph could have carried a no longer extant carved stone slab. The rear side of the cenotaph's vertical part retains flower blossom plugs incised into a layer of stucco. The vertical slab edges are decorated with two modest bands of repeating geometrical and vegetal patterns. The plugs are framed by an unassuming repeating floral band. The front side of the vertical slab is significant, because it comprises a fragmented historic inscription. Its surface is divided into a central rectangular panel with inscription fragments (see below), informing that the person buried (perhaps the patron of the cenotaphs' redecoration intervention) was a Sayyid and possibly also an Ilkhanid official. The inscription is framed by perforated patterns and vegetal elements and a further more extensive framing panel with repeating geometricized floral elements. These stuccos retain traces of white and red, which could be the results of restoration intervention, but they may also reflect the cenotaph's original polychromy.[528]

[528] All the listed stuccos share the production methodology, which comprised carving a single stucco layer, with simple and deep perforations in order to deepen the visual depth of the cenotaph's relief.

Cenotaph Number 2

Fig. 106.

This cenotaph features a chest-like form and the majority of its stuccos are no longer extant. The lower portions of the cenotaph's sides retain some fragments of carved stucco panels. They feature modest triangular patterns which recall star elements and are produced by thin and larger incisions into one layer of stucco material.

Cenotaph Number 3

Figs. 106-107.

This chest-form cenotaph displays stuccos with rosettes produced with modest repeating geometrical patterns and abstracted floral rosettes.

Cenotaph Number 4

Figs. 106, 109.

This stucco cenotaph of chest-like form retains fragments of inscription bands in addition to geometrical compositions. Top edges of the cenotaph were visually framed with the carved Qurʾanic inscription in *Naskh* style, which was set against an incised background. The inscription retains diacritical marks, but it is not vocalized. Some ligatures and placements of lettering resemble *Thuluth* style, but its proportions and letter forms are closer to *Naskh*. The cenotaph's larger sides were decorated with incised geometrical star patterns. The cenotaph's remains illustrate the characteristic designs of this stucco cenotaph corpus: their edges, especially top edges, featured inscriptions with Qurʾanic passages and their larger surfaces were reveted with repeating designs of rosettes, geometrical and vegetal patterns.

Cenotaph Number 5

This cenotaph is of smaller dimensions and it no longer retains any stuccos.

Cenotaph Number 6

Fig. 108.

This chest-form cenotaph retains some fragments of large stucco panels covering its sides. These panels feature compositions of eight-pointed stars set against carved geometrical background (on shorter sides), and combined with cross elements (on longer sides), thus featuring a frequently encountered combination of forms in architectural revetments of the Ilkhanid period. The stucco surface is heavily perforated and incised in order to create a lace-like appearance of its decorative pattern.

Cenotaph Number 7

The majority of stuccos of this chest-form cenotaph are no longer extant. The remaining stucco fragments feature a design similar to the one on the cenotaph number 6; eight pointed star

elements alternated with crosses. These panels are all heavily perforated to reduce their visual weight. They were framed by bands of repeating geometrical elements.

Cenotaph Number 8

This chest-like cenotaph features remains of a design of eight pointed star elements alternated with crosses. These crosses feature modest vegetal elements, which are also found on other stucco cenotaphs. In some areas the upper layer of stucco fell off revealing the ground stucco layer.

Cenotaphs Number 9 and 10

Fig. 110.

The cenotaph number 9 assumes a chest-like form, but it is of considerably smaller dimensions compared to the other cenotaphs. Its closest parallel, in terms of dimensions and type of stucco revetments, is the adjacent cenotaph number 10. The two cenotaphs differ from the others, because they retain stuccos on their sides and on their upper surfaces. Their upper surfaces are produced in a manner for the cenotaphs to feature a protruding upper element of longitudinal form, which resembles a tombstone with a recessed candle-like form. Both cenotaphs feature incised and perforated geometrical patterns on their sides and compositions of symmetrical palmette and leaf-like elements on their top surfaces, with further heavy perforation and incising of recessed planes of carved reliefs. Cenotaph number 9 features cross elements on its sides and palmette compositions on the top, which are set against a background of repeating triangular perforations. Cenotaph number 10 displays stuccos of related design, but with differentiations revealing the craftsmen's sense for creativity and variation of ornamental elements. Cenotaph number 10 features eight pointed star elements on its sides with a background of geometrical perforations most likely derived from designs of carved stucco plugs. The upper surface of the cenotaph features an elaborate composition consisting of palmette elements which are carved out of one stucco layer, but with two visual planes.

Cenotaph Number 11

Fig. 104.

This cenotaph features a chest-like form and it is the largest of all the cenotaphs in the corpus. Its lower portions provide evidence indicating that it was most likely a stucco cenotaph which was redecorated in the Timurid period, perhaps due to the significance of the identity of the personage buried in the grave. This is also reflected in its location in front of the mausoleum's mihrab. This cenotaph was redecorated in tile mosaic medium of a restricted colour palette consisting of turquoise, dark blue and white elements. These mosaics were produced to form large panels of star elements framed by repeating cross-derived geometrical elements. The joints on the cenotaph's sides are embellished with blue and white chevron patterns. The upper surface of the cenotaph is no longer extant and it might have contained evidence and information concerning the identity of the personage buried in the grave.

Cenotaphs Number 12 and 13

These two cenotaphs of chest-like forms are of medium dimensions. They are entirely restored and they do not retain any original ornamentation.

The Wall Painting Repertoire

Figs. 104, 111.

The redecoration intervention of the mausoleum next to the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque was completed by 1336 and it comprised production of an interior wall painting decorative programme. Extant wall paintings comprise a horizontal panel with *shamsas* above the mihrab area and the monumental inscription band which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls. The surfaces of the supporting walls are covered with white plaster coating with shallow niche moulds. This plaster coating and muqarnas elements in the pointed arches and blind niches of the transitional zone are likely post-Ilkhanid additions of the Timurid or Safavid period.

Judging from the nature of the Ilkhanid wall paintings in the geographical area between Abarquh, Yazd and Naʾin, the monument's original wall painting repertoire was likely more extensive. The mihrab below the horizontal panel with *shamsas* may have been produced in wall painting medium. In fact, the *kahgil* remains on the highly altered mihrab area indicate that there was a historic mihrab in the mausoleum.[529] It is also likely that the supporting wall surfaces and elements of transitional zone and the interior surface of the dome were covered with wall paintings.

The Horizontal Panel above the Mihrab

Fig. 111.

The space between the top section of the mausoleum's no longer extant mihrab and the monumental inscription is filled with a horizontal wall painting panel. This tripartite panel features a *shamsa* in its centre which is flanked by two tear drop medallions. The background of these three monumental geometric and vegetal compositions is filled with small knotted rosettes inserted into symmetrical floral compositions with flower blossoms resembling irises, lotuses and peonies. Differently to the wall paintings at Rukniyya mausoleum in Yazd (Cat. No. 29), the panel at the Baba ʿAbdullah complex does not feature epigraphic elements. Instead, it comprises more elaborate compositions of vegetal and geometrical patterns which resemble the wall painting repertoire of the Madrasa Shamsiyya (Cat. No. 29). The polychromy spectrum employed to produce this panel is rather wide and it features diverse shades of blue, green and brown. The lack of epigraphic content on the panel might have been determined in juxtaposition to the inscription bands on the no longer extant mihrab. The function of this panel was to visually connect the mihrab with the monumental inscription band. Furthermore, geometric and vegetal ornamentation of the panel might have had significance in connotation with paradisiacal

[529] The presence of the *kahgil* reminds of wall painting production technology documented in the Ilkhanid period funerary structures and madrasas of the Yazd and Abarquh area, where wall paintings were often produced on the support consisting of a layer of *kahgil* and plaster.

themes. Observations of the joint between the panel and the inscription band confirm that this panel was part of the 1336 wall painting production intervention.

The Monumental Inscription Band

The monumental inscription band (Fig. 111) in *Thuluth* style was hand-drawn on the wall paintings white preparation layer and it was subsequently coloured dark blue. It retains most of its diacritical marks and almost full vocalization in sections where it features Qurʾan. It consists of two Qurʾanic passages (*Surat al-Fath*; 48:1-10 and *Surat al-Saffat*; 37:180-182) and at its end, the date of completion of the wall painting repertoire production. The content of the inscription was selected in a reflected manner in order to fit into the available space. Furthermore, its most significant passages (48:2-3) fit exactly in the area topping the mihrab, where they were better visible compared to the rest of the inscription. The inscription features some peculiar letter forms and ligatures, and occasionally words overlap each other.

Exterior Revetments

Apart from designs of repeating abstract herringbone patterns on the surfaces of the courtyard structure the monument complex does not retain any other exterior architectural revetments.

Stucco Polychromy at Naʾin

Carved stucco cenotaphs in the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex do not retain extensive pigmentation traces. The only trace is light red. The nature of these remains indicates that red may be the result of restorations, which might have been based on real red pigmentation remains. It is thus not possible to propose information regarding specific characteristics of polychromy of these cenotaphs. It is nevertheless reasonable to assume that these cenotaphs were originally polychrome, similar to the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Naʾin

Examination of the stucco cenotaphs of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex illustrates that they were all produced with the same stucco artistic technique, which required carving one stucco layer. The peculiar approach to the stuccos production of these cenotaphs stems from the fact that the surfaces of ornamental designs were extensively perforated and carved in order to produce their lace-like appearance. The mentioned relations between the cenotaph designs and the shared approach to stucco production, suggest that all cenotaphs were decorated in one decorative intervention and that they were work of one stucco craftsmen's group. It would however be unusual for so many graves to appear at the same time in the mausoleum. It is thus more likely that the cenotaphs were already extant and only redecorated sometime around the moment when the interior of the mausoleum was redecorated in the wall painting medium.

The Naʾin Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics of the stucco cenotaphs at the Baba ʿAbdullah complex are characterized by extensive panels of geometrical designs featuring rosettes, eight-pointed stars, crosses and other geometrical compositions. Extensive perforation and incisions on surfaces of these elements allowed the craftsmen to create dynamic stucco panels which were produced with basic stucco

production technology. Specific characteristics of the aesthetics of these cenotaphs comprise abundant geometric designs, which was determined by dimensions and forms of the cenotaphs. The interplay between geometric and vegetal ornaments is also observable. Use of basic stucco artistic technique is compensated for by complex stucco designs achieved through repetition of perforations and incisions of the stucco reliefs.

d.) Furnishing

The interior of the monument does not retain any historic furniture. The only extant fragment of historic furniture, possibly part of a minbar, is the wooden slab with carved historic inscription which was transferred to the museum (see below).

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The extant epigraphic programme of the mausoleum consists of the following inscriptions: the carved wooden panel which used to be inserted into the mausoleum's mihrab area, but most likely originates from the adjacent mosque, the fragmentary historical inscription on the Cenotaph No. 1, and the monumental inscription band produced in the wall painting medium, which tops edges of supporting walls and the mihrab.

a.) The carved wooden panel discovered in the monument is now stored in the Naʾin's Pirniya Museum. It features an important historic inscription concerning the time of the construction of the mosque, its patron and function. It was published by B. M. Smith and Wittek.[530] The inscription is written in six lines, with some of its parts partially damaged. The level of production of the inscription is advanced; it displays a *Naskh* style, it is vocalized and it comprises diacritical marks. The inscription protrudes from recessed and carved ornamental floral scrolls in its background. In some parts words of the inscription are superimposed on each other, which additionally reflects the advanced design and craftsmanship skills of its producers.

The inscription reads:[531]

أمر ببناء هذا المسجد المبارك الصدر الكبير المح [sic]... الصدور و الأكابر مفخر العراق مرضى الأخلاق شمس الدولة و الدين جلال الإسلام و المسليمين أمين الملوك و السلاطين محمد بن المرحوم شمس الدين أبي عبدالله بن محمد بن أبي عبدالله بن أبي القسم بن علي متّع الله بطول بقائه و تقبّل الله منه و أعانه يوم الفرع الأكبر تحريرا في غّرة شهر الله الحرام سنة سبع مائة

This mosque was built by the orders of the Great Chief, the (sic) of the chiefs and Nobles, the Glory of Iraq, he who is laudable of nature, of the State and of Religion, the Majesty of Islam and of the Muslims, the Trustee of Kings and Sovereigns, Muhammad, Son of the late Shams al-Din, son of Abi ʿAbdullah ibn Muhammad, ibn Abi ʿAbdullah, ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn ʿAli, may Allah let him enjoy the length of life, and may Allah accept (the mosque) from him and help him on the day of the Judgement. (Produced) on the first day of the sacred month of Allah (Muharram) of the year seven hundred (September 16, 1300).[532]

[530] Smith and Wittek 1938, 27.
[531] TEI 3840 (Last Accessed: October 28, 2021).
[532] In his translation of the inscription, Smith employs the term "written," for the beginning of the last part of the inscription. But the text of the inscription does not include a verb which would mention the type of working or

The inscription provides information sustaining that the mosque of the complex was built in 1300, and that the construction was ordered by Muhammad ibn Shams al-Din ibn Abi ʿAbdullah. The inscription comprises the date of the completion of the panel.

b.) Cenotaph No. 1 is the only one that features fragments of an inscription which may have been of historic nature.

The legible remains read:[533]

السعيد
المظفذ الد[ين]
علي مال[?] الدين محمد
[سل]طانه[?]

The Saʿid (the blessed?)
Al-Muzaffar al-D[in]
ʿAli Mal (?) al-Din Muhammad
Sultanuhu?

This inscription is the only legible historic inscription on the group of cenotaphs and it provides indicative information regarding the identity of one of the personages buried in the mausoleum.

c.) Cenotaph No. 4 features a Qurʾanic excerpt of *Ayat al-Kursi* (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255) in *Naskh* style, which is fragmented.

The inscription reads:[534]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

d.) In addition to the carved wooden panel, the interior of the mausoleum also features a large monumental inscription in wall painting medium. The inscription consists of Qurʾanic passages and it comprises the date of its production; Rabiʿ I, 737 AH (1336). It is very important for the understanding of constructive and decorative chronology of the monument because it provides

activity tied to the production of the inscription, which would also include the signature of the craftsman. A more neutral term, such as "produced" is therefore is more appropriate as it does not designate involvement of specialized craftsmen such as carvers, calligraphers or designers. See Smith 1938, 27, Footnote No. 16.

[533] Reading by the author.

[534] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).

the date of completion of the wall painting repertoire production. The production of this extensive wall painting repertoire was a redecoration. The monumental inscription band features *Thuluth* style with diacritical marks and vocalization. The inscription is depicted with blue on white background. It is damaged to the point that some of its sections are no longer extant and many of its portions are not well legible due to the loss of their pigmentation.

The content of the inscription consists of three parts: it begins with Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-10), with the most important section placed exactly above the mihrab (48:2-3). The inscription continues with Qurʾanic quotations from *Surat al-Saffat* (37:180-182). The last part of the inscription contains information concerning the time of the completion of the wall painting repertoire.[535]

The inscription starts with the *Basmala*, and it is followed by the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48):[536]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا
وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا
إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا
لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَتُعَزِّرُوهُ وَتُوَقِّرُوهُ وَتُسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۚ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللَّهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.
[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds – and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment –
And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women – those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

[535] The beginning of this section is partially damaged, and it is possible that it originally perhaps also contained the name of the patron or a craftsmen's signature or perhaps some blessing formulas.
[536] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 3, 2020).

And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise.
Indeed, We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner.
That you [people] may believe in Allah and His Messenger and honour him and respect the Prophet and exalt Allah morning and afternoon.
Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you, [O Muhammad] – they are actually pledging allegiance to Allah. The hand of Allah is over their hands. So he who breaks his word only breaks it to the detriment of himself. And he who fulfils that which he has promised Allah – He will give him a great reward.

The inscription is preserved in a fragmentary state. The last word of 48:1 is missing. The first part of 48:2 is illegible, parts of 48:4 are illegible, 48:8 is no longer extant, and the beginning of 48:9 is illegible. This is a frequently featured Qurʾanic excerpt on Ilkhanid architectural revetments. These excerpts from 48 abruptly stop and the inscription continues with a different Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Saffat* (37:180-182).

The text reads:[537]

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ
وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ
وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Exalted is your Lord, the Lord of might, above what they describe.
And peace upon the messengers.
And praise to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

The inscription is well legible apart from one word in verse 180 and another one in verse 182. The featured Qurʾanic excerpt is rarely employed for inscriptions in Ilkhanid architectural revetments.

The last part of the inscription contains information concerning the year of completion of the wall painting repertoire. The beginning of this section is lost and some parts are difficult to read, due to the loss of their pigmentation. It is plausible that this section also contained information concerning the patron of this re-decorative intervention.

ربيع الاول سنة سبع و ثلاثين و سبعمائة

... the month of Rabiʿ al-Awwal, (in the) year seven hundred and thirty-seven (October 8-27, 1336 CE).

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The only historic inscription referring to the patronage of the complex is the mentioned wooden plaque inscription, which informs that the mosque was built in 1300 and sponsored by *Muhammad, Son of the late Shams al-Din, son of Abi ʿAbdullah ibn Muhammad, ibn Abi ʿAbdullah, ibn Abi al-Qasim ibn ʿAli* (see above). This inscription has so far been interpreted

[537] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/As-Saffat (Last Accessed: December 3, 2020).

as referring to the entire complex. But the performed research reveals that this should be understood as an inscription tied to the mosque structure and not the mausoleum, which most likely already existed at the time of the mosque construction and therefore pre-dates it. The actual patron of the mausoleum remains unknown because there are no historic inscriptions concerning its construction and neither its redecoration in the wall painting medium. The patron was likely a prominent figure tied to the government, which is hinted at by the fragments of the inscription on the Cenotaph No. 1.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The discussion of stucco revetments on the Baba ʿAbdullah cenotaph corpus indicates that they were redecorated in carved stucco medium sometime around 1336, at the time of the application of wall paintings in the interior of the mausoleum. These stuccos were therefore produced by one workshop, and they accordingly share technological and visual features. The origin and the identity of the craftsmen's workshop remains unclear. Given the fact that wall painting and applied stucco revetments were more widespread in Yazd area, the stucco carvers may have originated from Abarquh or Isfahan.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument was listed as a national monument already in 1934, which might have been a consequence of being visited by foreign scholars like Pope and Smith. Observations of photographs by Jenkins and by Blair and Bloom allow modern alterations to the monument to be discerned. The 1969 photograph by Jenkins documents the wooden panel with the historic inscription located in the area of the mihrab, which at that point was no longer extant, apart from its top horizontal panel in the wall painting medium. Photos by Blair and Bloom confirm that the transitional zone of the monument and its dome shell were entirely rebuilt before their survey of the monument on the eve of the Islamic Revolution. Photographs of the monument published by Qasimi in 2004[538] show that a wooden floor was built in the interior of the domed hall in recent times.[539]

The monument has undergone extensive renovations in the last two decades which altered its original architectural structure, but they also assured its preservation. The domed prayer hall has been recently returned into the mausoleum. While its cenotaphs were successfully restored, it would nevertheless be necessary to dedicate further attention to its wall paintings which require at least cleaning and consolidation. A new plan for restoration interventions on the mosque which started in 2015 includes rebuilding of the floor of the entire monument, isolation and repairs to its roofing system, and substitution of its watering system and toilet facilities.[540]

[538] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, Img. 229 on page 53.
[539] The function of this floor was to cover the cenotaphs and to thus enable the use of the domed prayer hall for prayer rites, which would have been obstructed by the fact that at least thirteen cenotaphs were extant inside of it. This wooden floor concealed the cenotaphs, which consequently have not received scholarly attention, but paradoxically it also ensured their preservation.
[540] https://sahebnews.ir/203190/%DA%A9%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%82-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%86-%D9%87%D9%81%D8%AA%D9%85-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%B3.htm (Last accessed: June 26, 2020).

The urban context surrounding the monument was also subjected to conservation interventions at the time of the visit to the monument in 2018. In these interventions, parts of adjacent structures were knocked down, apparently for the purpose of the monument's preservation. A 2019 newspaper article informs on the completion of restoration activities connected to the surroundings of the monument; some adjacent deteriorated structures which acted as buttresses to the mosque were knocked down and are being reconstructed in order to provide for the architectural support.[541]

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The examination of the monument known as the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque illustrates that the monument actually consists of an earlier Ilkhanid mausoleum next to which a mosque was built in 1300. The mausoleum was an important burial location for prominent Ilkhanid personages and religious authorities. By 1336, the mausoleum was redecorated in wall painting medium and around that time its cenotaphs were redecorated in carved stucco. This unique phenomenon of a group of cenotaphs in a mausoleum with a mosque, decorated with carved stuccos, is a curious example of redecoration, and it illustrates the versatility of stucco craftsmen and patrons in decorating cenotaphs in diverse media. This exceptional monument therefore represents another peculiar case of use of stucco revetments and an interesting example of constructive and decorative chronology. The identity of the patron and persons buried in the mausoleum remains unknown, but the mausoleum with its sacred graves may have triggered construction of the mosque and patronage of architectural revetments in its interior.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, 48-53; Smith 1938; Wittek 1938.

[541] http://www.chtn.ir/news/ID/144303/%D8%A7%D8%BA%D8%A7%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%88-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%81-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF-%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A8%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D9%86%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C%D9%86 (Last Accessed: June 26, 2020).

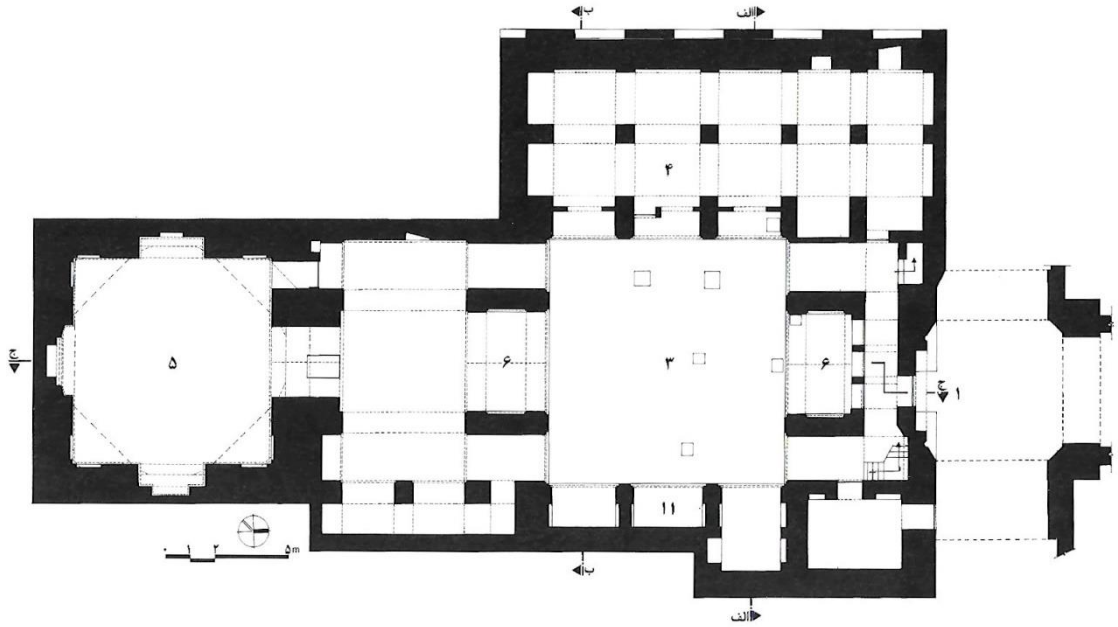


Figure 102: Ground plan of the mausoleum and mosque of Baba ʿAbdullah in Naʾin. (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 6, 51).

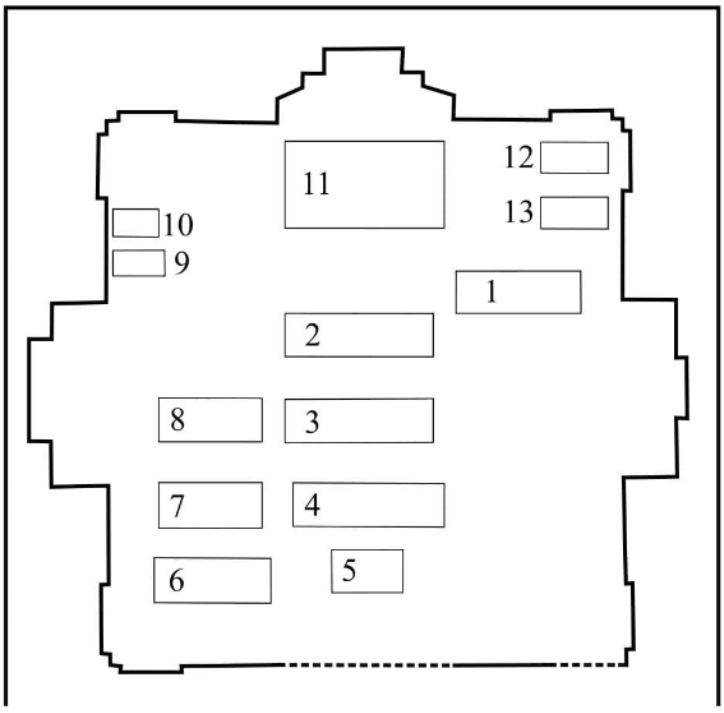


Figure 103: Line drawing of the mausoleum of Baba ʿAbdullah (After Qasimi) with schematic positioning and numbers of cenotaphs in the mausoleum.





Figures 104-105: Left: interior of the Baba ʿAbdullah mausoleum with the monumental wall painting panel and inscription band above the mihrab niche. The Timurid tile mosaic cenotaph (No. 11) is located in front of the mihrab. Right: cenotaph No. 1 with remains of a carved stucco historic inscription.



Figure 106: Cenotaphs Nos. 2, 3 and 4. View from south-west.

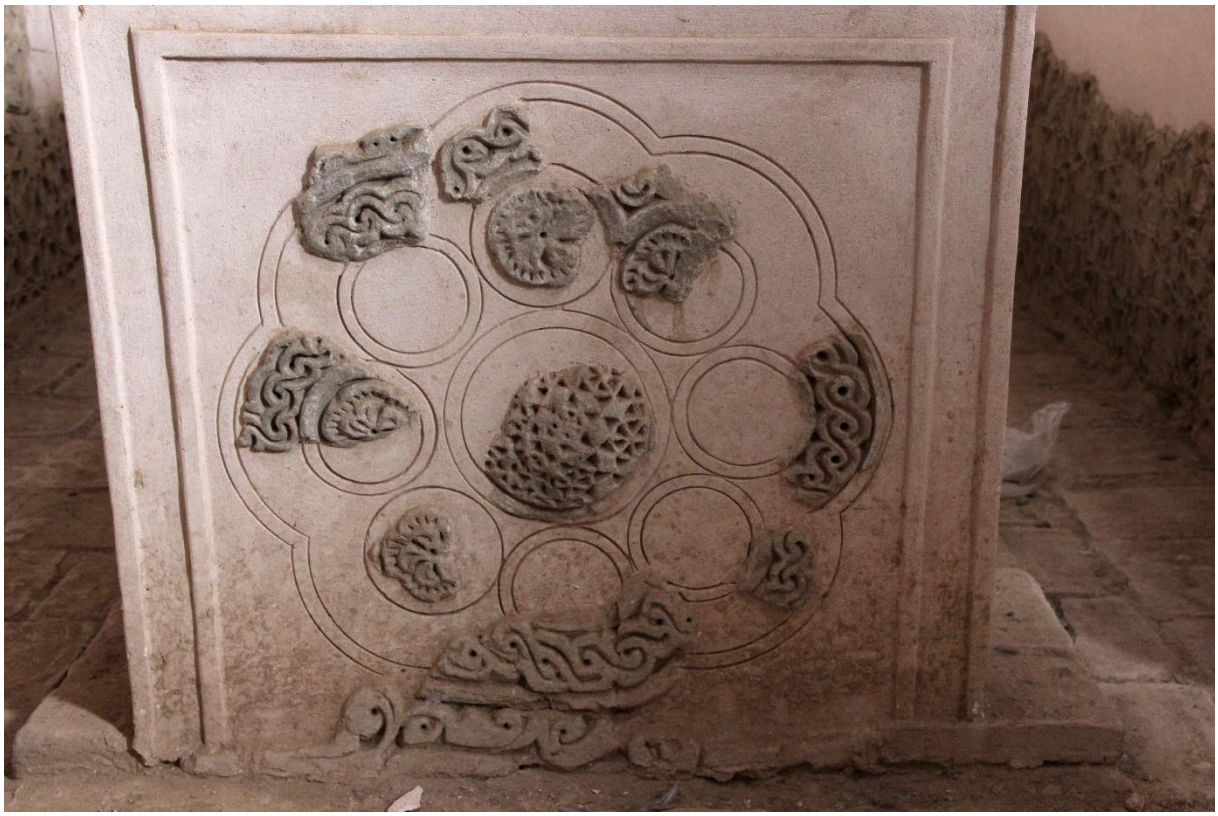


Figure 107: Detail of carved stucco rosette on the cenotaph No. 3.

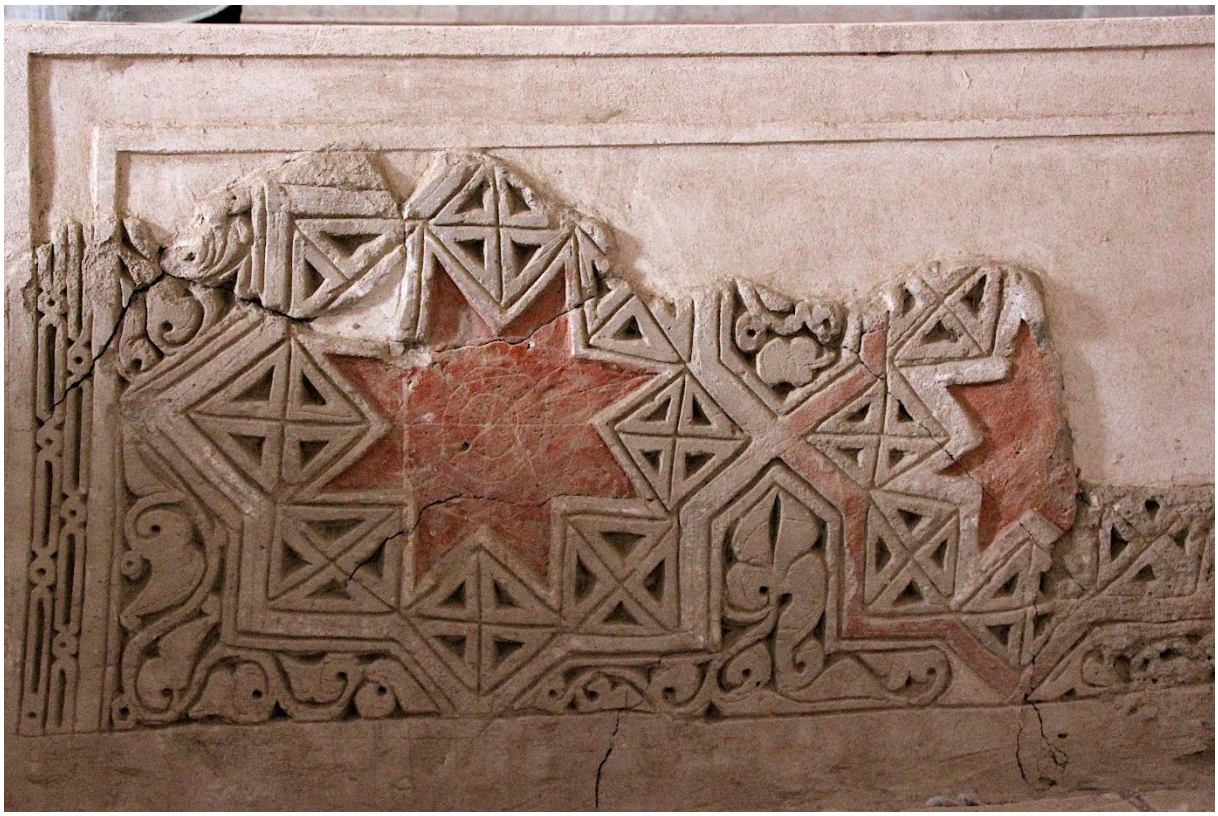


Figure 108: Detail of eight-pointed star panels on the cenotaph No. 6. It is not clear if red was employed for the design of these panels or if this is a result of a conservation intervention.



Figure 109: Detail of the Qurʾanic inscription and geometric panel of the cenotaph No. 4.



Figure 110: Carved stucco cenotaphs number 9 (in foreground) and 10 (in background).



Figure 111: Monumental wall painting panel topping the no longer extant mihrab of the Baba ʿAbdullah mausoleum with monumental *Naskh* inscription running above it.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 10

Monument Name: Abarquh Friday mosque

Figs. 112-118.

Associated Names: the monument's variant names derive from different modes of transliteration of the settlement's name in which it is situated: Abarkuh Friday mosque, Abarku Friday mosque and Abarquh Friday mosque.[542] Abarkuh Friday mosque is the most frequently employed name, but Abarqūh[543] Friday mosque would reflect a more appropriate transliteration. Another variant name for the settlement, which is however rarely used, is Abarquya. Different ways of transliteration of the monument's and settlement's name stem from two manners of writing the name of the settlement: it can either be written as Abarqu (ابرقو) or Abarkuh (ابرکوه). Both ways of spelling are in use.[544]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in three to four phases (phase one: possible Seljuq foundations of the mosque, which are no longer extant; phase two: Ilkhanid mosque and the stucco mihrab; phase three: Timurid additions and redecorations; phase four: Safavid interventions).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): four-*iwan* and courtyard mosque without a central domed hall, with numerous lateral vaulted and domed prayer spaces.

Location: in the old city centre of the Abarquh village; c. 134 km as the crow flies in the south-western direction from the city centre of Yazd.

GPS location of the monument: 31.1304527 N; 53.2855703 E.

Monument Investigation: May 13, 2016; May 4, 2016; November 30, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Abarquh is located on old communication routes connecting Yazd and Isfahan with Shiraz and Istakhr.[545] Abarquh flourished on account of its geographical location and cotton industry. The significance of Abarquh as a regional administrative centre is already mentioned by Ibn Hawqal. Written sources report the existence of a Friday mosque as early as the beginning of the twelfth century.[546] The prosperity and wealth of Abarquh in the pre-Ilkhanid period are reflected in numerous monuments, such as the Gunbad-i ʿAli and the mausoleum of Pir-i Hamza Sabzpush. According to Mustawfi, Abarquh was a small but prosperous settlement, with

[542] See also http://www.archnet.org/sites/2876 (Last Accessed: December 9, 2020).
[543] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[544] According to Mustawfi, the name of the settlement derives from "bar quh" (on the mountain), which described the original location at the time, which subsequently moved.
[545] Summary from: Hillenbrand 1986, 66.
[546] *Ibid*.

craftsmen and products of corn and cotton. Evidence of minting activities in Abarquh was discovered for Ilkhanid, Timurid and Muzaffarid periods. The predominance of Ilkhanid monuments in Abarquh reflects its significance in this era. Abarquh was also important in the Safavid period when it was included in the crown's domains.

Background

Research about the Abarquh Friday mosque was first published by Godard[547] and Hillenbrand. Its constructive chronology is challenging to comprehend, due to numerous restoration interventions.[548] Both Wilber[549] and Hillenbrand suggest that the mosque was likely founded in Seljuq period, although the vast majority of its current structure dates to Ilkhanid times.[550] These publications provide some basic information concerning the monument, together with Qasimi's entry in the encyclopaedia of Islamic architecture.[551] The monument is however lacking a thorough discussion of its constructive and decorative chronology and architectural revetments. Its Ilkhanid stucco mihrab is often referred to, due to the presence of the date of its completion (1337-38), but it is lacking a complete reading of its epigraphic repertoire, and it requires a discussion in its own right.

b.) Architectural Structure

The Ilkhanid Abarquh Friday mosque features a four-*iwan* plan with a rectangular courtyard, with further adjacent prayer spaces of various architectural forms and with vaulting systems ranging from barrel vaults to cross vaults and small domes. The *qibla* orientation of the monument differs by some forty-five degrees. The mosque structure is preceded by an entrance portal and a small domed chamber, with passages to the side prayer spaces which are not arranged symmetrically. The *qibla iwan* may have been enlarged by the addition of a rectangular hall which leads to another prayer hall of four by four bay arrangement. Godard suggests that this part of the structure is a later addition; an argument in favour of his hypothesis is the absence of any Ilkhanid or Timurid revetments in these spaces.[552] Safavid additions of marble and alabaster revetments in this area reflect later modifications of the mosque. The mosque also comprises a small minaret, which flanks its structure on its eastern side.

Construction Phases

The earliest *post-quem* date for the mosque's construction is contained on the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in its eastern *iwan.* This masterpiece of stucco revetment provides important evidence for the understanding of Ilkhanid stucco artistic techniques and it displays a rich selection of diverse calligraphic styles and ornamental elements. The mihrab is dated 1337-38. This date needs to be understood as an indicative date for the construction of the Ilkhanid mosque structure, which was built on the grounds of an earlier Seljuq mosque. Timurid interventions likely comprised application of some wall paintings on the ceilings of the mosque's side prayer

[547] Godard 1936, 56-60.
[548] Hillenbrand 1986, 66-67.
[549] Wilber 1955, 181-82.
[550] Given the long history of the settlement and its significance mentioned by written sources, it would be plausible to suppose that there existed a Seljuq structure, which was rebuilt in Ilkhanid period.
[551] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 174-179.
[552] Godard 1936, 56, 60.

spaces. An undated historic inscription, suggested to date to the mid-fifteenth century by Golombek and Wilber, informs about the interventions of the construction *of a mosque adjacent to the old mosque*, which could be a reference to the rebuilding of the mosque's southern part.[553] This intervention may have comprised modifications of the *qibla iwan* and the construction of prayer spaces behind it. If so, it was the second most extensive intervention in the mosque's history. The next dates for the understanding of the mosque's chronology are presented by Safavid marble and alabaster mihrabs (dated 1591-92). Safavid interventions comprised the application of these revetments in the mosque's *qibla* area, but they were limited to a redecoration, rather than rebuilding of the mosque.

Phase One - The Seljuq Abarquh Friday Mosque

There exists no archaeological evidence concerning the Seljuq Abarquh Friday mosque period mosque in Abarquh, which is mentioned in primary written sources. Godard considers the Abarquh Friday mosque as an Ilkhanid foundation, but Wilber proposes the possible existence of a Seljuq mosque.[554] Hillenbrand provides some observations and also suggests that the mosque was founded in the Seljuq period.[555] He proposes that the second storey ribbed domical vaults could be Seljuq in date, because they are similar to those in the Isfahan Friday mosque.[556] He also suggests that the mosque's domed chamber could have been the main part of a small covered *shabistan* of Seljuq date, mentioned in written sources by Ibn al-Balkhi in 1116.[557] It remains unclear whether the Seljuq mosque was knocked down to provide space for an Ilkhanid mosque or if the Seljuq structure, or its parts, were incorporated into the Ilkhanid mosque's structure.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Abarquh Friday Mosque

According to Godard and Hillenbrand, the majority of the mosque's current structure dates to the Ilkhanid period.[558] Hillenbrand explains that the mosque was constructed in a single campaign and that it comprised a cruciform four-*iwan* plan, with *iwan*s facing the rectangular courtyard of the mosque. Regular alignment of four *iwan*s does not reveal anomalies which could be the result of several constructive campaigns. The mosque's structure was preceded by an entrance portal, which led to its northern *iwan.* Prayer spaces were arranged to flank the entrance portal and to surround mosque's courtyard. The *qibla iwan* extension and the construction of prayer spaces behind it should be considered post-Ilkhanid interventions. The mosque's minaret is small and it resembles minarets of the Garladan *iwan* in Isfahan; it could have been constructed by Ilkhanid builders. The indicative date for the construction of the Ilkhanid mosque is located on the monumental stucco mihrab in its eastern *iwan* and it suggests that the monument was constructed around, or by 1337-38.[559]

[553] Golombek and Wilber 1988, Vol. 1, 357.
[554] Godard 1936, 56; Wilber 1955, 181-82.
[555] Hillenbrand 1986, 66-67.
[556] *Ibid.*
[557] *Ibid*., 66.
[558] Godard 1936, 56, 60; Hillenbrand 1986, 66.
[559] No other historic inscriptions survive from the Ilkhanid period.

Phase Three – Muzaffarid and Timurid Abarquh Friday mosque

The Abarquh Friday mosque underwent further modifications in the post-Ilkhanid period, but they are difficult to discern, due to extensive restoration interventions on the monument. Some revetments can be indicatively dated based on their artistic techniques and style. The double tile mosaic inscription in the *qibla iwan* could be either late Ilkhanid or, more likely, Muzaffarid work. This inscription indicates that the *qibla iwan* was intended as the original architectural unit of the Ilkhanid mosque and that it was subsequently extended. The *tuğra*-form historic inscription in tile mosaic is difficult to date precisely, but arguments by Wilber and Golombek suggest that it dates to the mid-fifteenth century.[560] If the inscription is considered of Ilkhanid date (as proposed by Hillenbrand), it would refer to the construction of the four-*iwan* monument. But if the inscription dates to the mid-fifteenth century (Wilber and Golombek), it would refer to extensions of the *qibla iwan* and construction of the prayer space behind the *qibla iwan*. Reasons for these interventions are difficult to explain; additional prayer space may have been needed due to Abarquh's growth of population. But these interventions could have simply been prompted by the patron's will to enlarge the mosque and emphasise its *qibla* area. Timurid interventions comprise remains of wall paintings in the mosque's side prayer spaces facing the courtyard. These wall paintings feature modest designs of stencilled abstract floral ornamentation.

Phase Four – Safavid Modifications of the Abarquh Friday mosque

Safavid modifications of the Abarquh Friday mosque comprised installation of alabaster and marble mihrabs in its *qibla* area. The main marble mihrab, dated 1591-92, is now on display in the National Archaeological Museum of Teheran and it provides indicative dates for similar revetments still located *in situ*. Two more mihrabs of this period are located in the mosque's *qibla* area: one is produced out of alabaster and the other out of marble. They feature styles and inscription contents related to the large mihrab in the Teheran collection. They also display similar ornamental compositions and carving approach. Safavid interventions seem to have also comprised activities of covering the mosque's architectural surfaces with plaster layers; some of them are located in the *qibla iwan* and the others in the mosque's entrance area.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The Ilkhanid mosque ground plan (Fig. 112) was designed by arranging four *iwan*s and prayer spaces around the mosque's rectangular courtyard. The ground plan has irregularities in placement, architectural form and dimensions of the prayer halls adjacent to the courtyard. Most of the prayer halls are constructed with the use of two storey arcades with pointed arches. Prayer halls adjacent to the entrance portal with the *iwan* are not symmetrical and they might have been enlarged and modified in different periods. Eastern and western prayer halls flanking the courtyard feature a symmetrical arrangement of bays, but they are covered with differing roofing systems. The location of the minaret is rather unusual: it is placed next to the mosque's eastern *iwan*, which indicates that there could have been a pre-Ilkhanid mosque in this location.

[560] Golombek and Wilber 1988, Vol. 1, 357.

The *qibla iwan* is flanked by symmetrically arranged prayer halls, which were parts of the same construction campaign as the mosque.[561]

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The most elevated point of the Abarquh Friday mosque is its entrance area with the entrance *iwan*, and not the *qibla iwan*. The mosque's minaret assumes modest dimensions. The mosque's *qibla* orientation is accentuated by the axially placed *qibla* and entrance *iwan*s. The courtyard of the mosque features façades of two storey prayer halls. This is not dissimilar to the Ilkhanid arrangements of courtyard façades at the Isfahan Friday mosque.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The ground plan of the mosque, the arrangement of its architectural spaces and characteristics of the mosque's architectural revetments indicate that the monument's function was to provide space for prayer to the settlement's congregation. No further functions of the mosque can be discerned from its structure and revetments, although it perhaps also assumed the role of a madrasa.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The mosque comprises revetments from different periods, staring with the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab and concluding with Safavid marble revetments. Its structure was restored during the recent decades and its architectural surfaces have been covered with layers of plaster, which conceals its original architectural surfaces. The monument is of middle to large dimension, but it is scarcely decorated.[562] The case of Abarquh Friday mosque is similar to the slightly smaller congregational mosque of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat No. 12). The oldest dated architectural revetment of the mosque is the carved stucco mihrab which is located in the eastern *iwan* and which will be given detailed attention below. The date of the tile mosaic inscription in the *qibla iwan* is unclear, but it could be either Muzaffarid or Timurid. Lateral spaces flanking the *qibla iwan* and prayer spaces facing the mosque's courtyard retain some wall paintings which are either of Timurid or of a later date. The mosque retains a marble and an alabaster mihrab from Safavid period, and a larger Safavid marble mihrab which was transferred to the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran.

Interior Revetments

The Carved Stucco Mihrab (1337-38)

Figs. 113-118.

The monumental stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque is a masterpiece of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmanship. The mihrab is positioned in the centre of the *qibla* wall of the mosque's eastern *iwan* and it is dated 1337-38.[563] The location of the mihrab, in a lateral rather than *qibla*

[561] Compare to the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28).
[562] Hillenbrand 1986, 66.
[563] The date of the mihrab provides an indicative date for the comprehension of the first constructive and decorative campaign of the Abarquh Friday mosque.

iwan, suggests that, originally, Ilkhanid decorative repertoire could have comprised at least another mihrab in the *qibla iwan*. The mihrab was of masterly design and carving which is evident despite the extensive damage which caused the loss of its upper portion.

The mihrab's design consists of complex ornamented and designed stucco panels. The mihrab is incorporated into the supporting wall of the *iwan* and its central niche is of considerable depth, compared to other Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. The mihrab was thus produced in parallel to the construction of the *iwan*. The date on the mihrab, 1337-38, can therefore be considered as a reliable date for the construction of the Ilkhanid Abarquh Friday mosque. The deep central niche of the mihrab is formed by a pointed arch and topped by a pair of spandrels. The niche and the spandrels are framed from three sides by two monumental stucco bands. The panel division and the form of the mihrab are not complex and they are visually efficient in providing space for the carved stucco ornaments of complex compositions.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The mihrab's central niche is formed by a pointed arch. The lower portion of the niche's interior is divided into five rectangular stucco panels, which are topped by a band containing fragments of a historic inscription and the lunette of the niche. The lower portion of the niche is badly damaged and only some parts of the stucco panels are in good condition. The central panel is well preserved and it features a geometrical composition of Square Kufic bands (reading: *The Dominion belongs to God*) which is set against an entirely perforated background and topped by a cartouche (with a fragment of an excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* in Kufic style). This panel is flanked by four symmetrically arranged decorative panels which feature compositions of palmette-like ornamental elements and star patterns. These panels are topped by a fragmented *Naskh* inscription which comprises historic content concerning the mihrab's production and the time of its completion. It features *Naskh* style and it is occasionally written in two registers. Only fragments of the inscription remain, and the earliest readings of it are crucial for its comprehension. The inscription concluded with the date of the mihrab's production, which can no longer be read as 1337-38, because some of its parts crumbled away.[564] The lunette of the mihrab's niche displays a symmetrical composition of palmettes, semi-palmettes, floral scrolls, thin Square Kufic bands (*The Dominion belongs to God*) and other abstracted ornaments. The lunette panel reflects characteristics of Ilkhanid stuccos of the Isfahan area.[565] The lunette is framed by a fragmented inscription band which runs along its intrados and features *Naskh* style (it is no longer legible) and it is set against a plain background. The exterior outline of the niche is framed by a large spiral framing band (resembling a column shaft), which features heavily perforated and repeating geometric ornamentation. This framing band is considerably damaged.

The niche is topped by a pair of damaged carved stucco spandrels. They are of reduced dimensions, compared to the size of the mihrab. They are interconnected and their ornamentation was symmetrically designed. Each spandrel retains bases of protruding bosses,

[564] Currently only the 700 of the AH is well visible. The reading of the date of the mihrab must therefore rely on earlier publications and photographic documentation by Godard and Hillenbrand.

[565] Some of the closest parallels are found in the lunettes of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan mihrab (now in the Teheran National Archaeological Museum; Cat. No. 32) and the mihrab of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz (Cat. No. 31). The mihrab of the Kirmani mosque of the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30) also features very similar ornaments and ornamental compositions.

where traces of compass lining for the bosses are still visible. These spandrels were ornamented with tripartite compositions featuring deeply carved floral elements. Two monumental stucco bands frame the described mihrab structure from three sides. The interior framing band displays a masterly design and tour de force of calligraphic styles, with three inscriptions. The largest part of the band surface is occupied by the *Naskh* inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-3) with diacritical marks and partial vocalization. It is characterized by elongated shafts of vertical letters, which interact with the Kufic inscription in the upper register of the band, and determine its repetitive rhythm. The Kufic inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Israʾ*, 17:78-80)[566] fills the space of the upper part of the *Naskh* inscription. Both inscriptions are additionally topped by a thin line of Square Kufic band, which begins with the *Basmala* and features a Qurʾanic excerpt.[567] Stucco craftsmen combined three different inscriptions and styles in a single framing band which is a remarkable feat of design.[568] The background of the band is filled with masterly arranged, heavily perforated and detailed floral scrolls.

The mihrab's exterior framing band features repeating symmetrical compositions of palmette designs and a thin inscription band in Square Kufic (*The Dominion belongs to God*). The two framing bands are both flanked by thin bands of repeating geometric or floral ornamentation patterns. These two bands increase the monumentality of the mihrab. Stucco surfaces of these framing bands are relatively flat and unprotruding, and they are directly juxtaposed to the mihrab's deep central niche. In sum, the mihrab was carefully designed and produced in a masterly manner. Stuccos of the mihrab retain some red, white and perhaps ochre pigmentation traces, and the mihrab provides significant evidence regarding the stucco production artistic techniques and on site procedures.

The Making of the Mihrab – The *Giornata*

The mihrab's three inscriptions are also significant for the understanding of Ilkhanid stucco production technology. On the righthand side, the band (together with the exterior framing band) conserves traces of breaks between separate stages of stucco working (Fig. 117). This evidence is of essential significance for the comprehension of stucco art. It demonstrates that stuccos were produced in segments determined by the time necessary for the stucco material to dry. These segments of work can be called *tageswerk* or *giornata*. The stucco mihrab was therefore produced segment by segment, rather than the entire surface being covered with layer after layer of stucco. This means that designs for stuccos had to be produced by stucco craftsmen, rather than by calligraphers, who would produce them in one go.

Post-Ilkhanid Revetments

The Abarquh Friday mosque also comprises some architectural revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period. The *qibla iwan* retains fragments of a tile mosaic double inscription band, which used to run along its three interior sides.[569] The tile mosaic features four colours, which

[566] Author's reading.
[567] The inscription has so far not been read.
[568] Compare to the Ushturjan Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 4) and the Madrasa Shamsiyya in Yazd (Cat. No. 29).
[569] Only fragments of this inscription band remain today, and it is difficult to propose its precise dating.

indicates its likely Muzaffarid date.[570] The inscription band features two superimposed inscriptions, with historic inscription written in *Thuluth* style and a Qurʾanic excerpt in Kufic. The tile mosaic *tuğra* inscription in the *qibla* area, which contains a historic inscription regarding the patronage of additions to the mosque, has been dated to mid-fifteenth century by Golombek and Wilber. Soundings of plaster layers in architectural surfaces behind the *qibla iwan* revealed existence of tile mosaics of similar type. The mentioned inscription band was therefore originally part of a larger repertoire of tile mosaic revetments. These revetments could be result of the *qibla* area redecoration. There are also some traces of wall paintings in the Abarquh Friday mosque. These wall paintings cover ceilings of lateral prayer spaces facing the courtyard. They are produced with two shades of blue and they do not comprise epigraphic content. Rather, they feature arrangements of different types of floral rosettes and medallions.

The mosque's *qibla* area comprised several mihrab elements. Some of these mihrabs were installed to correct the direction of *qibla*, which, as noted, is mistaken by thirty to forty-five degrees. The extension of the *qibla iwan* comprises two mihrabs. A small alabaster mihrab is located in its central part and it is flanked on the left side by another mihrab which was produced with reused tile elements of turquoise glazed tiles and blue and white tiles with floral ornamentation. The manufacture of this tile mihrab may be much later, compared to the rest of revetments. The small alabaster mihrab is of late sixteenth century date and it is related to the large marble mihrab of the mosque now in the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran.

Stucco Polychromy at Abarquh

The stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque comprises two types of polychromy traces: red colour remains which served for the outlining of the stucco design and possible remains of mihrab's original polychromy. The right-hand side of the mihrab with the monumental inscription band reveals remains of red colour outlines for stucco design. These outlines cover the surface of the mihrab's stucco relief, on the last layer of stucco which was carved. Damaged parts of this panel, on the left-hand side, reveal red colour design traces beneath the upper layers of stucco. These pieces of evidence demonstrate that the stucco ornamentation design had to be distributed across different layers of stucco, which were carved in a consecutive manner. Lower layers of stucco comprise less complex designs, delineating areas of stucco not to be carved and upper layers of stucco comprise more detailed stucco design traces. These colour design traces were combined with incisions of basic stucco design, of which some traces remain.[571] The central lunette of the mihrab conserves some traces of polychromy of white and yellow ochre.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Abarquh

Common artistic techniques were employed to produced the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque. Complex designs and advanced stucco carving skills of the craftsmen were factors which determined the mihrab's elevated artistic quality. Stuccos in the mihrab's central niche are all carved out of at least two stucco layers, and minute details and perforation

[570] On the other hand, the inscription band is placed on an elevated location and the fact that it had to be inserted into the structure of the *iwan* would suggest that the inscription band should be dated to the time of the construction of the mosque, to the Ilkhanid period.
[571] Compare to the Sujas Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 35).

of ornamental elements ensured for the variegated surface and dynamic relief of these stuccos. The twisted framing band of the niche is relatively large, but its surface has been broken down into smaller dynamic units by the means of its division into swirling elements and their heavy perforation. The mihrab's spandrels feature a combination of diverse stucco artistic techniques, where the stucco relief was carved out of several layers and topped by the addition of two large protruding bosses. The most complex part of the mihrab is presented by its internal framing band, which displays three inscriptions in diverse styles, arranged into a masterpiece design. Stucco artistic techniques employed for the production of this panel comprise carving of two or more stucco layers and application of protruding elements in forms of palmettes and semi-palmettes. Applied protruding elements were directly juxtaposed to non-protruding and rather flat surfaces of the relief.

The Abarquh Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The stucco panels of the mihrab are carved out of more than a single stucco layer and their ornamentation consists of small and detailed elements. The majority of the mihrab's stucco panels are heavily perforated to reduce their visual weight. The mihrab's inscriptions feature three different styles, which is exceptional, because normaly, mihrabs feature no more than two distinct inscription styles. Differently to many Ilkhanid mihrabs, such as the Marand Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 22) or the Varamin Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 28), the Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab displays a less complex design and a smaller number of stucco panels. But it assumes equally monumental dimensions. The mihrab is rendered a visual masterpiece by the means of production of delicately designed stucco panels and minute details of their reliefs. The closest parallel for the mihrab is the badly ruined mihrab of the Gunbad-i Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum in Abarquh, which was likely produced by the same craftsmen (Cat. No. 11). The ornamental iconography of the Abarquh mihrab is typical of Central Iranian stuccos although it has no undercut stucco typical of the Isfahan area stuccos.

d.) Furnishing

No Ilkhanid period furniture is located in the mosque.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Historic Inscription in the Qibla Iwan

a.) The historic inscription in tile mosaic has been dated to the different periods. Its text provides the name of the patron for the rebuilding or refurbishment in the mosque, which took place in the post- Ilkhanid period. The inscription was read by Godard.

The inscription reads:

أمر ببناء هذا المسجد المتصل بالمسجد القديم العبد الضعيف الفقير الحسن إبن حاجى محمّد بن أحمد المشتهر بفراش الملقب بحاجى أمين الدين ابرقوئى أصلح الله أحواله[572]

[572] TEI 36035 (Last Accessed: October 29, 2021).

The construction of this mosque, adjacent to (literally: at the) the old mosque, was ordered by the weak slave, the poor, al-Hasan ibn Abi Hajji Muhammad ibn Ahmad, known as Hajji Amin al-Din (al-)Barquhi, may God bestow wellbeing of his affairs.

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The central panel of the lower portion of the mihrab's interior niche comprises a geometrical composition which is formed by a repeating band of invocations to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*). The composition is topped by a cartouche with a short Kufic inscription in fragmented state, which translates into a design of knotted elements. A fragment of the inscription allows to determine that it featured a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (Qurʾan, 112:3).[573]

b.) The lower part of the mihrab's niche is separated from its lunette with a *Naskh* inscription band in fragmented state. It is set against a plain background. The earlier readings of the inscription enabled the researchers to read the date of the completion of the mihrab as: 738 AH (1337-38).

c.) The lunette of the mihrab's niche was originally framed by another *Naskh* inscription, which is in fragmented and illegible condition.

d.) The monumental framing band of the mihrab features three inscriptions in diverse styles and with differing content. They are set against a background of minutely carved vegetal scrolls and other palmette-derived elements.

The large *Naskh* to *Thuluth* style inscription features the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-3).

The inscription reads:[574]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path.
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.

The Kufic inscription fills the empty space in the upper register of the *Naskh* inscription. It features Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:78-80).

The inscription reads:[575]

[573] Author's reading.
[574] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).
[575] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Isra (Last Accessed: December 6, 2020).

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا
وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا
وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.
And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.
And say, "My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority."

The inscription band panel is framed with a Square Kufic inscription. It starts with the *Basmala* and it continues by featuring a Qurʾanic excerpt which could not be deciphered.

d.) Panels of mihrab which feature vegetal compositions, such as the exterior monumental framing band and the lunette of mihrab's niche, contain thin bands of Square Kufic inscriptions with the repeating invocation to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*). These bands are employed as elements of ornamentation and they are incorporated into designs. The described phenomenon is frequently encountered in stuccoworks of the Isfahan area, such as the mihrabs of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4), and the Farfan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 5).

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not retain any post-Ilkhanid stuccos.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The founder of the Ilkhanid Abarquh mosque is unknown, but it is reasonable to suppose that the Ilkhanid mosque was sponsored by an Ilkhanid official, which would be appropriate, judging from its dimensions. Similar cases of such rank of patronage for monuments of related dimensions are the Friday mosque of Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4) and the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12). There are no indications of involvement of imperial patrons, such as in the case of the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18) and the Complex of Bayazid Bistami (Cat. No. 19). The only reference regarding the patronage history of the Abarquh Friday mosque is contained in the undated *tuğra* inscription in its *qibla* area. This inscription mentions sponsorship of additions of a mosque to an old mosque, which should be understood as enlargements of the monument. These activities were sponsored according to the inscription, by *al-Hasan ibn Hajj Muhammad ibn Ahmad Amin al-Din Abarquhi*. It is not clear to which period should the inscription be related and which modifications exactly does it mention.[576] The identity of the mentioned patron remains obscure, but the *nisba* contained in his name suggests

[576] Blair suggests that the inscription refers to construction of the *qibla* and the northern *iwan*, but Hillenbrand insists that the four *iwan*s were constructed during a single campaign and that the inscription in question should be understood as information regarding the Ilkhanid patron of the mosque. Hillenbrand 1986; Blair 1986a, 32.

that he was of local origin.[577] If so, the patron could have been an Ilkhanid official with family ties to the settlement of Abarquh.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque does not contain craftsmen's signature. Similarities of the Abarquh mihrab with those located near Isfahan, Natanz and Turbat-i Jam suggests that the workshop which produced the mihrab likely operated in Central Iran. Possibly, the same craftsmen who produced the Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab also produced the now fragmentary mihrab of the Gunbad-i Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum (Cat. No. 11). The absence of stucco undercutting technique on the Abarquh mihrab may indicate that its craftsmen were not native to Isfahan, but perhaps other parts of Central Iran. But north-western Iranian stuccos present a relatively different type and style and it is therefore more likely that the craftsmen were from central or north-eastern Iranian territory.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument has been thoroughly restored during the recent decades, with interventions focusing on its architectural integrity. Additional interventions should focus on its revetments, especially the stucco mihrab and wall paintings. The stucco mihrab has already been restored several times and mihrab's form and original dimensions were suggested by the means of a reconstruction. Stuccos of the mihrab may have also been attacked by termites, but there are currently no insects present on the stucco relief. The mihrab could be cleaned and consolidated and its pigmentation traces would require archaeometric research.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

Examination of the mosque's stucco mihrab highlights the advanced skills of stucco craftsmen who produced it. It has also been pointed out that the mihrab provides important evidence regarding the on-site procedures of stucco craftsmen. It proves that stucco revetments were produced in segments and it illustrates how the stucco design was outlined onto consecutively applied layers of stuccos, with the aid of red colour outlines and surface incisions of design. The original Ilkhanid repertoire of architectural revetments of the mosque was perhaps of a larger extent. Moreover, the mosque was likely already founded in at least the Seljuq period and its current structure dating to the Ilkhanid times likely presents a rebuilding or a construction *ex novo*, which substituted an older congregational mosque.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Hillenbrand 1986; Godard 1936, 56-60; Blair 1986a, 32; Golombek and Wilber 1988, vol. 1, 357; Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 174-179.

[577] This is in line with the cases of patronage in Ushturjan and at Natanz.

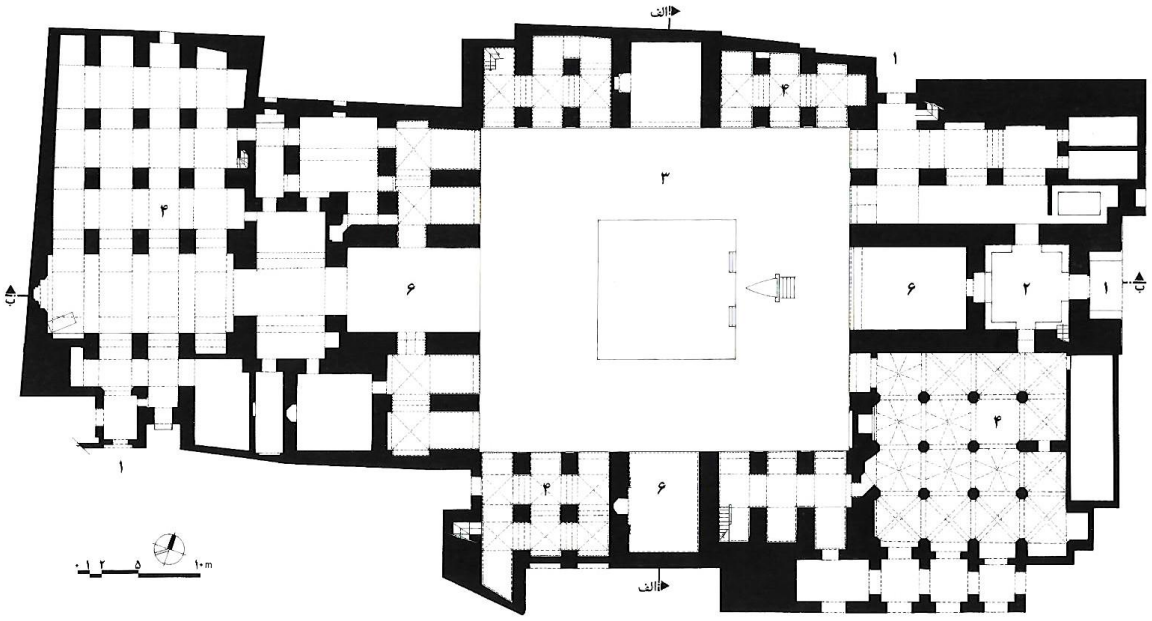


Figure 112: Ground plan of the Abarquh Friday mosque (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 177).





Figures 113 and 114: Left: monumental carved stucco mihrab in the eastern *iwan* of the Abarquh Friday mosque. Right: detail of the central part of the lower section of carved stucco mihrab's niche.



Figure 115: Detail of the upper part of the central niche of the carved stucco mihrab, outlined by the twisted torus moulding forming a pointed arch and flanked by the monumental inscription band.



Figure 116: Detail of the monumental framing inscription band from the left hand side of the mihrab, which consists of three Qurʾanic inscriptions in three different inscription styles (rotated by 90 degrees clock-wise).



Figure 117: Detail of the right hand side of the mihrab monumental inscription band in a damaged state showing joints between two segments of stucco carving of the panel (the *giornata*).



Figure 118: Detail of the mihrab's monumental framing inscription band showing the Kufic inscription with remains of free-hand performed inscription design incisions on the stucco surface before carving.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 11

Monument Name: Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi and the related monuments (Mausoleum of Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw and Mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi)

Figs. 119-128.

Associated Names: the monument is known as the Mausoleum of Sayyidūn Gul-i Surkhi[578] (بقعه سیدون گل سرخ); it is occasionally referred to as the *aramgah* (ارامگاه) and as the Gunbad-i Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi. Related monuments are known as the Mausoleum of Sayyidūn ʿAli al-Nāqī[579] (or simply: Sayyidun Tomb; Gunbad-i Sayyidun; Gunbad Sayyidun)[580] and the Mausoleum of Ḥasan ibn Kay Khusraw[581] (variant names include: Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusrow Tomb; Gunbad-i al-Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw; Tomb of al-Hasan ibn Kay Khusrow; Mausoleum of al-Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw),[582] which is sometimes confused with the once adjacent structure of Tawus al-Haramayn.[583] The less commonly employed name of the settlement is Abarquya.[584] According to Mustawfi, the name of the settlement derives from its topographical features, as *the settlement on the hilltop* (bar kuh).[585]

Monument Type (Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi): originally square structure topped by a dome with the function of a mausoleum; the dome and the transitional zone are no longer extant and the monument is in a ruined state.

Chronology: the extant parts of the monument suggest that it was constructed in one constructive intervention which took place in the late Ilkhanid period.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): a square mausoleum topped by a dome.

Location: Abarquh settlement (located in proximities of the city of Yazd); c. 131 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Yazd in the direction of south-west.

GPS location of the monument (Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi): 31.135418 N; 53.2870997 E.

GPS location of the monument (Mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi): 31.135418 N; 53.2870997 E.

GPS location of the monument (Mausoleum of Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw): no longer extant.

[578] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[579] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[580] http://www.archnet.org/sites/5424/media_contents/40744 (Last Accessed: July 3, 2020).
[581] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[582] http://www.archnet.org/sites/1593 (Last Accessed: July 3, 2020).
[583] Godard 1936, 60.
[584] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abarquh (Last Accessed: July 3, 2020).
[585] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abarquh-i-history (Last Accessed: July 3, 2020)

Monument Investigation: November 30, 2018. The mausoleum of Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw no longer exists and its discussion is provided based on extant publications and photographic documentation.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The information about the historic and geographical features of Abarquh is discussed by Bosworth and a summary is provided here. The tenth century written sources mention Abarquh as one of the important settlements on the main communication road leading from Shiraz/Istakhr to Isfahan and Yazd. Abarquh is described as a prosperous settlement in the ʿAbbasid and Buyid periods. In these times, the settlement possessed a citadel, fortified walls, and a congregational mosque. Artificial irrigation systems allowed the settlers to cultivate vegetables, fruit products and cotton. In the eleventh century the settlement was part of the Daylamite kingdom of Isfahan and of the Kakuyid dynasty based in Hamadan. These were the vassal states of Buyids, and they gradually became part of the Seljuq Empire with capital in Isfahan. Later, the area was integrated first into the Ilkhanid and subsequently into the Muzaffarid Empire.

Background

The rich history of the settlement is reflected in its monuments of the Islamic period. The oldest extant monument, with a historic inscription, is the Gunbad-i ʿAli from the Daylamite period. The settlement flourished in Seljuq times, when the mausoleum of Pir-i Hamza Sabzpush, with its monumental carved stucco mihrab and the wall painting repertoire, dating to the second half of the twelfth century, was built. The Congregational mosque of Abarquh was extensively rebuilt and redecorated, which included the installation of a monumental carved stucco mihrab in its eastern *iwan*, during the late Ilkhanid period (1337-38). The artistic technology of architectural revetments production, which developed under the Ilkhans, the carved stucco, the wall painting and the applied moulded stucco media, were widespread in the Abarquh-Yazd-Naʾin area, and they continued to be produced under the Muzaffarid rule. From this period, there remain several mausolea in Abarquh, some of which are badly damaged or semi-ruined, or no longer extant; the Mausoleum of Kay Khusraw (d. 1318)[586] and his daughter Bibi ʿAʾisha Malik-i Khatun,[587] the monument of Tawus al-Haramayn (mentioned already by Mustawfi as a renowned monument), the Mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi and the Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi. These little-known monuments, some no longer extant, others in ruins, or undergoing restoration interventions, were given only scant scholarly attention.

Godard proposes chronology and dating for the monuments in Abarquh:[588]

- 448/1056-57; the Gunbad-i ʿAli,
- 6th/12th century; the Pir-i Hamza Sabzpush mausoleum,
- Early Ilkhanid period: construction of four *iwan*s of the Abarquh Friday mosque with some dependencies,

[586] Godard 1936, 60.
[587] *Ibid.*, 60.
[588] *Ibid.*, 72.

- Around 718/1318-19; construction of the mausoleum of Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw,
- Around the same time: construction of the Gunbad-i Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi, the Mausoleum of Gul-i Surkhi and the extant portal of the Nizamiyya mosque,
- 738/1337-38: installation of the stucco mihrab in the Abarquh Friday mosque,
- 755/1354-55: further structural additions to the Friday mosque of Abarquh,
- Around 818/1415-16: construction of structures adjacent to the mausoleum of Kay Khusraw.

b.) Architectural Structure

Mausoleum of Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw

Figs. 119-120.

The mausoleum was built and decorated with a monumental wall painting repertoire in the late Ilkhanid period and it is no longer extant. Its most important documentation and discussion is provided by Godard[589] and Wilber.[590] Inscriptions of the mausoleum inform that it is a burial structure dedicated to al-Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw, who passed away in 1318, and to his daughter.[591] This is one of the mud brick-built monuments,[592] of which only a few examples survive. Photographic documentation of the monument published in 1936 by Godard documents the mausoleum with an extensive portion of supporting walls and the dome already entirely ruined. The reason for use of adobe brick material were its lower price and shorter construction time.[593] The monument is significant due to its extensive wall painting repertoire which comprised a monumental mihrab, and covered the supporting walls, the transitional elements and the interior of the dome. Wilber's description of the mausoleum's interior and its transitional zone, as well as the wall painting programme, recalls the extant revetments and architectural features of the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9). Wilber dates the monument to c. 1320.[594]

Photographs by Godard illustrate that the mausoleum's revetments were produced in wall painting medium, without carved stuccos or applied moulded stuccos.[595] Wilber mentions having spotted light blue, dark blue, red, green and yellow pigments on wall paintings, and that stencils might have been employed to produce their designs.[596] The historic inscription in the mausoleum (published by Godard) informs that the mausoleum was built for Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw, who died in 1318 and for his daughter who passed away in 1307.[597] The mausoleum

[589] Godard 1936, 60-63
[590] Wilber 1955, 154-55.
[591] *Ibid.*, 154.
[592] Godard 1936, 63.
[593] Wilber 1955, 155.
[594] *Ibid.*
[595] Their designs resemble those of the madrasa Shamsiyya in Yazd and also of the mausoleum next to the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque (Cat. No. 9). In fact, the date 1336 in the wall painting monumental inscription band of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex suggests that this is a work which only slightly post-dates the production of the Kay Khusraw mausoleum repertoire.
[596] Wilber 1955, 155.
[597] Godard 1936, 60-63. Wilber suggests that the monument might have been built slightly after the date of the death of his daughter.

was built and decorated in one intervention around 1318, but due to the death of the daughter of the patron, it is plausible that the first construction undertakings at the site began in 1307.[598]

Godard's description of the no longer extant monument is summarized here.[599] Godard provides the ground plan of the mausoleum which illustrates that the monument featured a simple square form with three openings. The eastern supporting wall is marked as damaged or no longer extant, which is also confirmed by Godard's photographic documentation, showing that this supporting wall almost entirely collapsed along with a part of the transitional zone and the dome shell. On the southern side of the mausoleum, there are marked parts of supporting walls of an adjacent monument, which Godard identifies as the actual Tawus al-Haramayn mausoleum, and proposes that its construction post-dates the erection of the Kay Khusraw's mausoleum. Importantly, Godard states that the direction of the mausoleum's *qibla* is corrected in comparison to the *qibla* direction of the Friday mosque of Abarquh (Cat. No. 10). The transition between the square structure of the mausoleum and its dome was achieved by placing the pointed arch structures into the corners formed by supporting walls. These elements were alternated with blind niches to form an octagonal architectural structure. It developed into a circular drum which carried the hemispherical dome on a squinch system.[600] The wall paintings of the monument featured Qurʾanic passages and a historic inscription, which were combined with geometrical and vegetal ornamental compositions of medallion and *shamsa* designs. The pigmentation palette of the repertoire consisted of blue, ochre, grey-pink, green-ash, and blue ultramarine.[601]

Mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi

Figs. 121-123.

Information about this monument is scarce. According to the ICHHTO Abarquh, the structure of the monument could date from the Seljuq period and it could have been redecorated in Ilkhanid times.[602] Wilber and Godard suggest c. 1330 dating of the monument, together with the near-by mausoleum of Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi. Photographs by Blair and Bloom document its

[598] Godard 1936, 63.
[599] *Ibid.*, 68.
[600] The system is similar to the Baba ʿAbdullah mausoleum next to the mosque in Naʾin, and the Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum. Earlier monuments with such transitional zone system include the Friday mosque of Sujas (Cat. No. 38) and Qurwa in north-western Iran.
[601] The closely related architectural repertoires are the wall paintings of the ʿAli al Naqi Sayyidun mausoleum, the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9) and perhaps the madrasa Kamaliyya (Cat. No. 29).
[602] See for example: http://mjib.ir/blog/page/26/ (Last Accessed: July 3, 2020); https://www.mehrnews.com/news/3998104/%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%86%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%AA-%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B4%D9%88%D8%AF (Last Accessed July 3, 2020); https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/2480447/%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%86%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%87 (Last Accessed July 3, 2020).

structure with a ruined part of the dome and supporting walls. Recent newspaper articles describe the problem of the monument's deterioration caused by the presence of colonies of termites; they feed with the adobe material and weaken the support of wall paintings which consequently fall off.[603] Like the near-by mausoleum of Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi, the ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum also features remains of scaffolding on its supporting walls.

The monument is built out of adobe bricks; it features a square ground plan with internal blind niches topped by a hemispherical dome. The mausoleum's transitional zone is similar to the one of the Kay Khusraw mausoleum (see above) and the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9). The exterior surface of the dome has been largely refurbished in a manner to feature turquoise glazed inserts placed between fired bricks and glazed bricks arranged into a herring bone pattern. The mausoleum retains remains of a wall painting repertoire on its interior surfaces.[604] Its mihrab is no longer extant, but it may have been produced in the wall painting medium. The surfaces of the supporting walls feature remains of *shamsa* designs formed by Kufic inscriptions, in a manner not dissimilar to the teardrop medallions of the mausoleum of Rukn al-Din in Yazd (Cat. No. 29). Pointed arches in the corners of the structure, which function as the main elements of transition combined with the squinch-like forms above them, feature muqarnas niches. A long Knotted Kufic inscription in wall painting medium and dark blue colour runs along the lower edge of the dome's interior. Another inscription band in *Thuluth* style forms a large *shamsa* in the focal point of the dome's interior. The colour palette of the wall painting repertoire is restricted, compared to Wilber's documentation of wall painting polychromy palette at the Kay Khusraw mausoleum and the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex (Cat. No. 9). The dado area of the mausoleum has been recently restored and it features modern eight pointed and cross tiles glazed with turquoise and dark blue colours.[605]

Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi

Figs. 124-128.

This monument was given even less scholarly attention compared to the mausoleum of Kay Khusraw and the mausoleum of ʿAli al-Naqi. A more detailed discussion of the monument is accordingly provided here, based on secondary written sources and on the examination of the mausoleum in 2018. A photograph of the ruined stucco mihrab in the mausoleum is published by Godard, but he does not discuss the monument.[606] Some information is added by Wilber,

[603] Fortunately, recent measures for the elimination of termites from the building have been undertaken: https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news/2480447/%D8%AE%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%81%D8%B8%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A8%D9%82%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%B3%DB%8C%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%B9%D9%84%DB%8C-%D9%86%D9%82%DB%8C%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%A9%D9%88%D9%87 (Last Accessed July 3, 2020).

[604] Compare to the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9).

[605] Compare to the madrasa Shamsiyya in Yazd (Cat. No. 29).

[606] The photograph of the mihrab of the monument published by Godard is of utmost significance because it documents the no longer extant stucco revetments of the interior of the mausoleum.

who proposes to date the mausoleum to c. 1330, but who did not visit the site. The monument has been partially restored since, but it requires further interventions for its preservation.[607]

The mausoleum's structure features a square plan, and it likely retained a transitional zone similar to those of the ʿAli al-Naqi,the Kay Khusraw and the Baba ʿAbdullah mausolea. What currently remains of the mausoleum, are large portions of its supporting walls and a few fragments of its interior decoration in carved stucco. These stuccos are likely work of the same craftsmen's workshop which produced the mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque.[608] The relationship between the stuccos and the adobe brick supporting walls indicates that the monument was built and decorated in one intervention. This most likely occurred in the late Ilkhanid period, as suggested by Wilber, and as indicated by the close relationship between the dated carved stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque and the remaining fragments of carved stucco revetments of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum (see below).

Construction Phases – the Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum

The discussion of the mausoleum's structure and revetments illustrates that the entire mausoleum and its revetment repertoire were produced in one constructive and decorative intervention.

Phase One - The Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum

The mausoleum's structure (Figs. 124-128) is ruined, but efforts for its consolidation and partial rebuilding have been undertaken.[609] The mausoleum originally consisted of a square structure formed by supporting walls, which carried a hemispherical dome. The structure was built with adobe bricks. Only fragments of transitional zone elements remain on the mausoleum's southern side. They indicate that, in the fashion of the Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum, the mausoleum of Kay Khusraw and the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex (Cat. No. 9), the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum likely employed a comparable system of transitional elements. The remaining supporting walls of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum retain traces of scaffolding on their interior and exterior surfaces (Figs. 124-125). The interior of the monument retains fragments of architectural revetments (Figs. 124-128) which suggest that it was originally covered with an extensive decorative programme covering the walls, the transitional zone and the dome's interior. It was produced in carved stucco, moulded and carved stucco and perhaps wall painting media.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Judging from the extant monument features the mausoleum appears not to have been rebuilt or redecorated in the later times.

[607] The monument has been partially restored but its architectural structure is badly damaged.
[608] Wilber's suggestion that these stuccos are related to those of the Abarquh Friday mosque carved stucco mihrab in the eastern *iwan* is entirely correct, as shown by the below executed analysis of the extant and documented stuccos of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum.
[609] Due to the lack of scientific research, there are no published ground plans or elevations of the monument.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

The ground plan of the monument is similar to the Kay Khusraw mausoleum (Fig. 121). The structure is square and it retains a niche for the mihrab. It currently features one entrance on the northern side, but it is likely that it originally featured three entrances, similar to the Kay Khusraw mausoleum.[610]

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

No elevation plan of the monument is published, but drawing on observations of remaining elements of its transitional zone, it can be suggested that the elevation of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum was similar to the mausoleum of the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9). The most elevated part of the monument was its dome, which was surmounted by a sophisticated system of pointed arches alternated with blind niches and an additional squinch system in the drum area.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

According to the local tradition, the monument houses the (still extant, but modest) grave of Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi. It is related to another monument with the tomb of the same Sufi personage, in Yazd, but which dates to later centuries. The mausoleum retains remains of interior revetments, which include fragments of a once monumental carved stucco mihrab intended for performance of prayer rites by the faithful who visited the sacred site. The discussion of its architectural structure and repertoire confirms that this is a mausoleum-type monument, and that numerous parallels, which have been listed earlier, exist in Abarquh area and in Yazd and Naʾin. The mausoleum may have been intended as a free standing structure and not part of a more extensive complex.

c.) Architectural Revetments – the Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum

The mausoleum exterior wall surfaces seem not to have been decorated. But it is plausible that the exterior dome shell, in a manner similar to the mausolea of Kay Khusraw and ʿAli al-Naqi, was coated with glazed elements.

Interior Revetments

The mausoleum's interior retained a monumental decorative programme consisting of carved stucco, moulded and carved stucco, glazed inserts and, possibly, wall painting media.

Each interior surface of supporting walls is divided into three vertical registers. Surfaces of walls were either decorated with other stucco media or with wall paintings. The eastern wall retains traces of the dado area which conserves a thin layer of plaster, which could have originally functioned as a preparation layer for a wall painting. The areas of supporting walls (where presumably other entrances existed) and the *qibla* wall (with fragments of carved stucco mihrab), retain remains of shallow applied muqarnas on their top sections. These muqarnas consist of two tiers and they feature symmetric abstract moulds combined with palmette-derived

[610] These additional openings were likely closed off during the restorations for the preservation of the mausoleum, as they enabled for a better stability of the supporting wall structure.

compositions. Closer observations of these muqarnas, and especially the muqarnas above the carved mihrab remains, indicate that they were moulded and perhaps carved upon their applications onto walls. The muqarnas were originally likely polychrome although they do not retain any pigmentation traces, because they are heavily weathered. The other mentioned mausolea in this catalogue entry all retain similar muqarnas elements, but it is unclear if they were produced with the related artistic technique.

The Mihrab

Figs. 124-128.

The monumental stucco mihrab of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum is located in the centre of the *qibla* wall, and its form is reflected on the other supporting wall surfaces with more modest architectural revetments produced with related artistic techniques. Photographic documentation of the mihrab by Godard, in 1936, is of outmost importance, due to the further extensive damage to the mihrab in the past decades.[611]

Comparison of Godard's photograph of the mihrab with its current state of preservation, illustrates that the mihrab was in an already deteriorated state at the time of Godard's survey. Godard's photograph documents the mihrab with panels of carved stuccos: remains of spandrels, parts of its internal niche, parts of three framing bands on the right hand side of the mihrab, and remains of a horizontal panel topping the mihrab and connecting it to the moulded and carved stuccos above the mihrab. Currently, the entire right hand side of the mihrab is no longer extant, due to the deterioration of the supporting wall which was rebuilt. Furthermore, there are no traces of the upper horizontal carved stucco panel which used to top the mihrab. In fact, the only remaining fragments of the carved stucco mihrab are parts of the left hand side interior panels of the niche, fragments of the left hand side spandrels and one of its three monumental framing bands.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The core of the mihrab featured a pointed arch niche. This arch was not surmounted by a pair of columns, but by a round column shaft-like band, which outlined niche's exterior.[612] The interior of the niche featured a lunette in the upper portion and its lower section was divided into several vertical rectangular panels. The upper portion of the left hand side interior of the niche conserves remains of two panels. The upper panel featured a symmetrically composed band with palmette and scroll elements and it was outlined with a knotted band. Similar types of knotted bands have been documented on Ilkhanid stuccos in Central Iran. Below this panel are the remains of another panel which reminds of a cartouche form similar to mihrabs of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the two mihrabs at Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30) and the mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. No. 33). The remaining fragments of this cartouche feature parts of cursive inscription, which could have retained craftsmen's

[611] Godard 1936, 71, Fig. 50.

[612] The closest parallel for the described solution is observed on the remains of the mihrab in the eastern *iwan* of the Abarquh Friday mosque (Cat. No. 10), which also does not feature columns surmounting the niche, but a twisted torus moulding. This is in fact one of the many related features of these two mihrabs, which were most likely produced by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop.

signature or the date of the mihrab's completion (Figs. 127).[613] This is not dissimilar to the location of the date of production of the Abarquh stucco mihrab (Cat. No. 10). The background of this inscription cartouche is rendered visually lighter by means of constant perforation of its surface. The lower portions of the mihrab's interior retains remains of a round column-shaft outline. It featured a combination of repeating patterns consisting of palmette-derived elements and geometrical bands. There also remains a large fragment of the interior vertical rectangular panel of the lower portion of the niche. It displays a repeating geometrical pattern of large geometricized star elements surrounded by knotted swirls and stucco perforations of triangular and circular forms.

The mihrab's niche was topped by a pair of triangular spandrels, of which only fragments of the left hand side spandrel remain. These fragments indicate that the spandrels originally featured protruding bosses in their centres, in a manner similar to the Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 10). These bosses were inserted into triangular symmetrical compositions of palmette elements. The spandrels were framed by a thin geometrical band of square and rectangular elements, which is frequently featured on Ilkhanid stuccos.[614] The described mihrab structure was framed by three carved stucco bands. Currently, only fragments of the interior band remain, on the mihrab's left hand side. The well preserved part of the inscription band retains complex palmette elements, which slightly protruded from the panel, and were part of the inscription's background composition. This slightly concave band featured an inscription in *Naskh* style, which protruded from the carved background. The inscription band is damaged to the degree that it is no longer legible, but it most likely featured a Qurʾanic excerpt. The concave form of the band functions as a translation of visual planes from the mihrab's deep niche into exterior flat planes of the mihrab's three framing bands. This inscription band was divided from the second framing band by a band with repeating geometrical patterns produced with perforation and carving of a single stucco layer.

The second and the third framing bands of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum are no longer extant, but they functioned as its further visual frames. The middle band was the largest of all and the right hand side portion of it is visible on Godard's photo; it may have featured an inscription set against a vegetal background. It was divided by a thin repeating geometrical band from the external band. The external, third, band was of lesser dimensions and it may have featured repeating compositions of palmette elements. The described mihrab structure was topped by a monumental horizontal stucco band which increased the mihrab's vertical axis in conjunction with the upper carved and moulded muqarnas stucco panel.[615] This horizontal panel likely featured monumental symmetrical compositions of palmette and vegetal elements. It was topped by a thin geometrical band produced with stucco perforation. The described mihrab structure is topped by earlier described muqarnas (see above).

[613] The fragments of the inscription are divided into two lines and the first line could contain the *nisba Abarquhi* and the second line contains fragments which could be interpreted as "fi" – in the year…).
[614] Compare to the stucco columns of the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and also majority of stucco repertoires in the Qum area (Cat. No. 15).
[615] Compare to the similar function of the top horizontal panels of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1) and the mihrab in the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28).

In sum, the mausoleum featured a mid-size stucco mihrab which was part of a more extensive decorative repertoire. Numerous parallels between the remains of this mihrab and the stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque (Cat. No. 10), indicate that these two mihrabs are works of the same craftsmen's workshop. There are also some differences between the two mihrabs; the Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab was a technologically more complex commission, compared to the mihrab of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum. This perceived difference might be caused by the fact that the Gul-i Surkhi mihrab is largely lost. The difference might also be connected to the sizes of the endowments available for the production of these repertoires. The Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab is dated 1338, which allows a more detailed dating for the Gul-i Surkhi mihrab and mausoleum to be established, which accordingly likely date to sometime around 1330s.

Exterior Revetments

Observations of supporting walls, which still retain scaffolding cavities on internal and external surfaces, suggest that the exterior surfaces of the mausoleum were not decorated. This is in line with the related monuments in Abarquh. Furthermore, there exists a high probability that the exterior surface of the dome shell of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum could have been covered with revetments in glazed medium, which is not dissimilar to the ones at the ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum and those reported to have existed at the Kay Khusraw mausoleum.

Stucco Polychromy at the Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum

Discussion of extant fragments of the carved stucco mihrab at the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum revealed that the carved stucco fragments of the mihrab still retain a small amount of polychromy traces. These traces are preserved on stucco fragments in the interior of the mihrab's niche, on the left hand side, and also the corner area of the monumental framing inscription band. They comprise remains of yellow ochre, which may have been employed in order to colour the *Naskh* inscription and some other protruding parts of the stucco relief. Drawing on parallels with the other Ilkhanid stuccos and the evidence of presence of yellow traces, it is likely that the mihrab and the other revetments of the monument were originally polychrome.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum

The mausoleum's stucco mihrab was installed on the adobe brick-built surface of the supporting wall, by the means of application of a few centimetres thick coarse stucco layer. Further finer stucco material was subsequently applied for the purpose of the carving of the mihrab's relief. The majority of its stucco panels were produced by carving one or more stucco layers. The craftsmen employed a variety of perforations to produce variegated stucco panels. Specific types of perforation and geometric and vegetal ornamentation, combined with the selection of stucco artistic techniques, indicate that Gul-i Surkhi mihrab is very likely work of the stucco craftsmen's workshop which produced the Abarquh Friday mosque mihrab dated 1338. If so, the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum and its architectural revetments were produced sometime around the 1330s. Observed differences in the level of complexity of production and design of the two mihrabs also indicate that a more extensive amount of funding must have been made available

to craftsmen for the purpose of the mihrab production at the Friday mosque, compared to the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum.

The Gul-i Surkhi Mausoleum Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics of the carved stucco mihrab of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum are determined by combination of undemanding stucco artistic techniques, detailed design of inscriptions and ornamental bands and use of extensive perforations and incisions to break down carved stucco reliefs. The mihrab's visual appearance has the closest parallel in the carved stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque (Cat. No. 10). These two mihrabs display manneristic traits, which stem from an extensive number of ornamental elements combined with perforation of stucco surfaces and their combination with inscriptions. Furthermore, thin geometrical bands which connect panels of these mihrabs additionally increase their manneristic appearance. The difference between these two mihrabs is their context. The monumental stucco mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque is installed in one of the *iwan*s and it is not combined with any other architectural revetment. On the contrary, the Gul-i Surkhi mihrab was part of a more extensive decorative repertoire of mausoleum's interior.[616]

d.) Furnishing

None of the monuments features any historic furniture.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Mausoleum of Hasan Ibn Kay Khusraw

a.) The historic inscription in wall painting medium provides information concerning the monument, its patron and identity of persons buried. The first reading of this inscription and its translation to French was published by Godard.[617] At the time of his visit to the monument, Godard reports that the historic inscription is damaged on several parts and that it was illegible for a long period of time due to the accumulation of dirt on its surface.[618]

و لذكر الله الأعلى ... الأولى هذه قبّة مطهرة وتربة مقدّسة الملك الإسلام الشهيد ... السعيد قدوة ملوك العجم صاحب السيف و القلم ناصر آيات المبرّة فاتح ... أبواب الآيات و الكرامات ولّى الله فى عهده خليل الدنيا وحقّ و الدين الحسن إبن الصاحب الأعظم السعيد الأمير الأعدل الشهيد مجد الدولة و الدين كيخسرو إبن الصاحب الأمير الشهيد ... الدولة و الدين السعد إبن منصور إبن الأمير ... صاحب العلم الزاهد سلطان الحاجّ و الحرم منبع الخيرات و الأمير الأعدل سعد الدولة و الدين أبى بكر محمّد ... الله مضجعه و إبنته الملكة المعظّمة العاقلة العادلة السعيدة المبرّات مجد الدنيا و الدين تاج المعالى الشهيدة عصمة الدنيا و الدين صفوة الإسلام و الملّة بيبى عائشة ملكة خواتون نوّر الله قبرها و اتّفق واقع وفاة الملك السعيد ... الله مضجعه ليلة السبت خامس جمادى الثانية ثمان و عشرة و سبعمائة و زمان حيوته ثلثة و تسعين سنة و صرّف جميع الأوقات الشريفة بالطاعة ... رات و أنواع المبرّات وفاة إ بنته المذكورة نوّر الله قبرها فى ليلة الخميس السابع عشر من ذى القعدة سنة سبع و سبعمائة هجريّة

In memory of God, the highest ... the most worthy. This pure dome (qubba)… and this blessed tomb (those are) of the Tapper of Islam, the martyred… fortune, the model of the kings of the non-Arabs, master of the sward and the feather, auxiliary of the signs of beneficence, the one

[616] The final effects of appearance of these two mihrabs were therefore different.
[617] Godard 1936, 60-63.
[618] Godard 1936, 63; TEI 3293 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).

who opens… the doors of signs and bounties, delegate of God during his time, friend of the world, of law and of religion, al-Hasan, son of al-Sahib al-Aʿazam, the wealthy, the most just and martyred ruler,… Majd al-Dawla wa al-Din, Kay Khusraw, son of his majesty, the martyred ruler … al-Dawla wa al-Din, al-Saʿd, son of the most just ruler Saʿd al-Dawla wa al-Din, Mansur, son of the ruler…, the holder of the knowledge, the pious, the Sultan of the pilgrimage and of the Holy Place, source of good works and beneficence, Majd al-Dunya wa al-Din, Taj al-Maʿali, Abu Bakr Muhammad, may God… be his rest; and to his daughter, the glorified, wise, the just, wealthy princess, the deceased, virtue of the world and of religion, purity of Islam and of the nations, Bibi ʿAʾisha Malika Khatun, may God illuminate her tomb! The death of the lord, the fortune ... may God ... be his rest, took place (on) the night of Saturday, the fifth day of the month of Jumada II, seven hundred and eighteen. His life has lasted 93 years. He spent every noble moment of it in the works of devotion and all kinds of benefits. The death of his daughter, the one mentioned, may God light up her tomb, (took place) on the night of Thursday, the seventeenth of the month of Dhu al-Qaʿda in the year seven hundred and seven of the Hijra (1307-08).

Mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi

The mausoleum features an epigraphic repertoire consisting of several Qurʾanic inscriptions in Knotted Kufic style with elaborate *hastae* terminating in floral finials. The longest inscription runs along the lower edge of the dome's interior. It is produced in wall painting medium, in dark blue colour and it is set against a background of thin repeating patterns of elegant floral scrolls. Traces of another similar inscription band are visible in the central part of the dome, where it is integrated into the *shamsa* composition. This inscription is in extremely fragmented state.

The *qibla* wall of the mausoleum used to feature a mihrab, which is no longer extant. It is reasonable to assume that it was produced in the same medium, an almost monochrome wall painting. The mihrab was topped by a *shamsa* composition which may have consisted of a central circular vegetal composition encircled by a Kufic inscription band produced in style related to the inscription band running along the dome's lower edge. But the *shamsa* Kufic inscription was of smaller dimensions and it displays repeating knotted patterns which are interconnected and do not assume figural variations.[619]

Mausoleum of Sayyidun Gul-i Surkhi

The only extant inscriptions of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum are illegible fragments on the remaining badly damaged parts of its carved stucco mihrab. Judging from the context and drawing on parallel examples, the interior of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum originally featured a more extended epigraphic programme. There remain two fragments of inscriptions on its stucco mihrab. In the intrados of the interior of the mihrab's niche, on its left-hand side, there is a fragment of a panel which was likely a cartouche which could have either recounted the year of the mihrab's completion, or a stucco craftsmen's signature, or even both. The second inscription fragment on the mihrab is observed in the area of the first of its three framing bands.

[619] Compare to the madrasa Shamsiyya in Yazd (Cat. No. 29).

This inscription band featured *Naskh* style and it was set against a recessed richly carved composition of vegetal elements.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

None of the mausolea retain post-Ilkhanid stuccos.

Mausoleum and Revetments' Patronage

Drawing on parallels from other monuments, the patron of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum could have either been a prominent relative of the deceased or a local authority who wanted to assert their political and religious authority by the means of the mausoleum's patronage.

Stucco Craftsmen Workshop(s)

The mihrab of the mausoleum is closely related to the carved stucco mihrab which was installed in the eastern *iwan* of the Abarquh Friday mosque and which is dated 1338 (Cat. No. 10). These two mihrabs were produced with related stucco artistic techniques, similar stucco carving approach and shared inscription styles and geometrical and vegetal ornamentation. Despite differences in the level of complexity of the stucco mihrab designs, these two mihrabs are likely works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. Accordingly, they provide evidence regarding artistic activities of a stucco craftsmen's workshop in Abarquh. This workshop remains anonymous, because neither of the two mihrabs retains a signature of its master. It is however likely that it also operated in the surrounding settlements, such as Yazd or Isfahan. Similar designs and combinations of inscription styles on carved stucco inscription bands of the Shamsiyya madrasa (Cat. No. 29) illustrate that these craftsmen shared design and production technology with their colleagues in Yazd, or perhaps they also collaborated.

f.) Monument Condition

The photograph by Godard (Fig. 124) documents the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum in a deteriorated state in the first decades of the 20th century. Its stucco mihrab was already fragmented and its dome had already collapsed; the once richly decorated interior was in a degraded state at the time of Godard's visit to the mausoleum. Comparison of the photograph by Godard with the visit of the monument in 2018 indicates that the mausoleum was subjected to further decay which caused loss of parts of its architectural structure and stuccos. The right-hand side of the *qibla* wall entirely collapsed between the early 20th century and the present. The wall was rebuilt during the recent restoration interventions, which included construction of two external monumental adobe ramparts for the static support of the monument's structure. Observations of the carved stucco mihrab's fragments suggest that it was treated with a consolidator for the purpose of protection of its relief. A small roof structure was built above the mihrab in order to limit the amount of weather impacting the extant relief fragments. Although well performed, these recent restoration interventions did not manage to prevent the continuation of the impact of weathering on its architectural revetments.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This catalogue entry is dedicated to the discussion of the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum, but it also provides some basic information regarding less discussed monuments; the mausoleum of Sayyidun ʿAli al-Naqi and the no longer extant mausoleum of Kay Khusraw. The discussion of these monuments revealed that they present standardized mausolea structures. These buildings share characteristics of construction material, dimensions, elements of transitional zone and modalities of constructing and embellishing exterior surfaces of the domes.

Information regarding the historic inscription of the mausoleum of Kay Khusraw provides the orientation date for the understanding of the chronology of these mausolea. These closely related monuments featured architectural revetment repertoires in their interiors which were produced with diverse selections of artistic techniques. While the Kay Khusraw mausoleum displayed a complex and rich wall painting repertoire, the ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum retains elements of more modest wall paintings with a higher number of inscription bands. In Yazd, related structures, such as Shamsiyya and Rukniyya (Cat. No. 29), combine wall paintings with applied moulded stuccos and also with carved stucco medium. A different combination of architectural revetments is however featured at the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum. The interior of this badly damaged mausoleum was decorated with an extensive architectural repertoire, which featured a monumental carved stucco mihrab, possibly a wall painting dado area and muqarnas elements produced by means of pre-moulding and carving of stucco. The artistic technique of pre-moulding the stucco, its application on the architectural surfaces and subsequent carving, may be rare. Furthermore, the extant fragments of the mausoleum's badly damaged carved stucco mihrab indicate its close relation to the stucco mihrab in the eastern *iwan* of the Abarquh Friday mosque. These two mihrabs could have been works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop; they share similar production technology, visual elements, design principles and aesthetics. In sum, the Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum likely dates to the late Ilkhanid period, to sometime around the 1330s. The provided discussion of the monument is of significance, given the lack of publications on the subject and due to the fact that the majority of its architectural revetments have been lost because of inadequate conservation interventions.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Godard 1936, Wilber 1955.

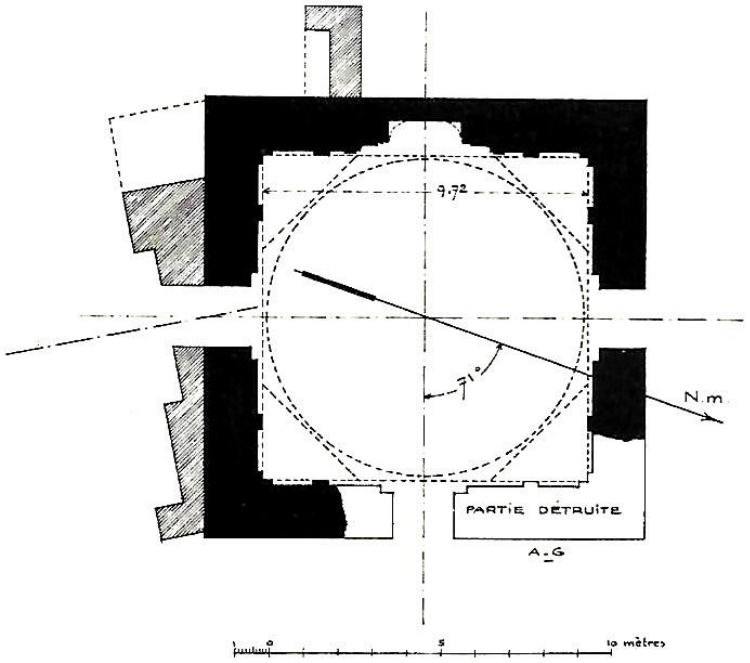


Figure 119: Ground plan of the Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw mausoleum (After Godard 1936, 63, Fig. 43).

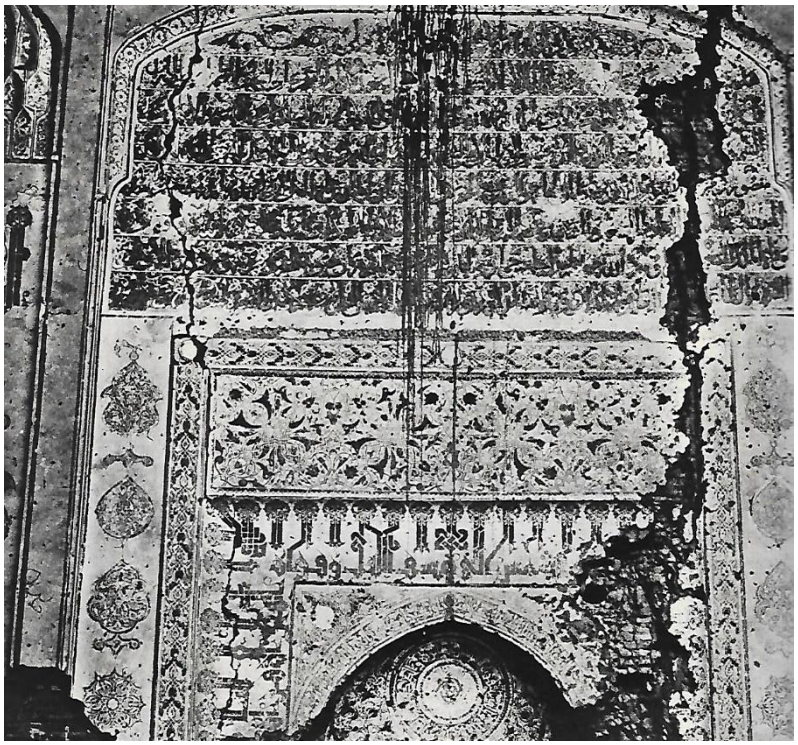


Figure 120: Photograph of the interior monumental wall painting mihrab of the no longer extant Hasan ibn Kay Khusraw mausoleum (After Godard 1936, 64, Fig. 44).



Figure 121: Interior of the ʿAli al-Naqi Sayyidun mausoleum with the fragmented wall painting repertoire. View towards the *qibla* wall.



Figure 122: Detail of the wall painting *shamsa* composition with Kufic inscription above the no longer extant mihrab of the ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum.



Figure 123: Detail of the monumental Knotted Kufic inscription running at the springing of the dome of the ʿAli al-Naqi mausoleum.





Figures 124 and 125: The carved stucco mihrab of the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum. Left: Photograph published by Godard in 1936 (After Godard 1936, 70, Fig. 50). Right: photograph of the mihrab in 2018 showing its deterioration through the years.



Figure 126: Detail of the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum carved stucco mihrab: the left hand side of the monumental framing inscription band.



Figure 127: Detail of the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum carved stucco mihrab: the left hand side area in the intrados of the mihrab's pointed arch niche retains a carved stucco fragment which might have been a date of the completion of the mihrab or a signature of its master craftsman.



Figure 128: Detail of the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum carved stucco mihrab: bottom section of the left hand side monumental inscription band of the mihrab.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 12

Monument Name: ʿAbd al-Samad complex

Figs. 129-142.

Associated Names: variant names are employed for the monument; they are determined by diverse architectural functions of structures forming the complex; the monument is occasionally referred to as a Friday mosque, a *khanqah* or a shrine. The most common denomination for the complex is Khanqah-i Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad, but other names, such as: the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad Shrine, the Friday mosque of Natanz, the Mosque of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad, are also employed. Perhaps the most correct denomination is: Majmūʿa-yi Shaykh-i ʿAbd al-Samad[620] – the Complex of ʿAbd al-Samad. The complex is named after the Shaykh to whom it is dedicated and who is buried in the central part of the complex. No variant names of the settlement, Natanz, have been documented.[621]

Monument Type: Religious complex consisting of the Shaykh's shrine, the minaret, the congregational mosque and the *khanqah* (no longer extant) with the entrance portal.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least four phases (phase one: pre-Seljuq octagonal chamber; phase two: Seljuq shrine and congregational mosque; phase three: Ilkhanid; constructive and decorative: rebuilding and redecoration of the shrine and the mosque; phase four: Ilkhanid: redecoration of the shrine, construction of the *khanqah* and the minaret), with subsequent modifications in Safavid and Qajar periods.[622]

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): religious complex comprising the *khanqah* (replaced by a modern construction) with an entrance portal, the muqarnas-dome shrine of the Shaykh, the four-*iwan*-type congregational mosque with the minaret and the pre-existing domed structure.

Location: Natanz settlement; c. 102 km as the crow flies in the north-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan.

GPS location of the monument: 33.5202490 N; 51.9129227 E.

Monument Investigation: March 23, 2011; November 9, 2017; November 15-16, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The city of Natanz retains a geographically significant location, on the ancient trade and pilgrimage routes linking Isfahan with Kashan and Qum. The historic descriptions of Natanz are found in Mustawfi's work.[623] Monuments of Natanz testify to its past. The Fire temple, not

[620] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[621] See https://archnet.org/sites/1645 (Last Accessed: November 25, 2020).
[622] Chronology of the complex construction and decoration is revised in this catalogue, and it contrasts content of earlier publications, especially Blair 1986a.
[623] Le Strange 1919, 73.

far away from the ʿAbd al-Samad complex, is the oldest known structure and provides evidence concerning the Zoroastrian settlement on the site. Further monuments, the Kucha-yi Mir mosque (Cat. No. 31) and the Complex of ʿAbd al-Samad, testify to the significance and expansion of the settlement in Seljuq and Ilkhanid times. The city retained a specific importance in the Safavid period, especially during the rule of Shah Abbas II, who frequently travelled for retreats to his estates in Kashan, passing Natanz on his way. This resulted in the construction of Safavid monuments near Natanz, but also in a renewed interest in the complex of ʿAbd al-Samad. Further significance of the complex is evident from its Qajar restorations and modifications. The monument reflects the settlement's complex history. With the passing of the time, its function changed from a modest domed structure and a shrine with a mosque into a pilgrimage complex in its own right.

Background

The ʿAbd al-Samad ensemble was discussed in detail by Blair in the monograph dedicated to the monumental complex.[624] The publication provides a detailed overview of the monument, but it nevertheless has some shortcomings. Another publication, in two volumes, by ʿAzam Husain Waqifi,[625] proposes some further and revised information concerning the historic monuments of Natanz. Waqifi's discussion of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex is important, because it proposes discussion of post-Ilkhanid modifications of the complex. Further information concerning the monument is proposed by Hassan Naraqi and more recently, by Qasimi.[626] This research summarizes finds of earlier works and provides a revised understanding of the monument and its *in situ* examination and with a focus on stuccos and lustre tiles which were parts of the monument's Ilkhanid decorative programme.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 129-130.

The monument originally comprised four main structures: the congregational mosque, the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad, the minaret and the (no longer extant) *khanqah* with the entrance portal. Each of these structures was built in diverse phases and was further modified across time, by various patrons. While the complex is understood as an Ilkhanid masterpiece of architecture and decoration, its earlier phases are only mentioned in passing (the domed structure in the mosque) and frequently ignored. Post-Ilkhanid phases have so far been understood as renovations of the complex, but they attest to its significance and to the constant patronage of the site from 10th century all the way to the Qajar period. Construction chronology of the complex has so far been debated above all by Blair, who proposes a hypothetical sequence of the monument construction by drawing on the analysis of its historic inscriptions.[627] This approach, however, ignores some *in situ* evidence which indicates the existence of further phases of its construction.

[624] Blair 1986a.
[625] Waqifi 1995.
[626] Naraqi 1969, 382-87; Qasimi 2004, Vol. 8, 68-77.
[627] Blair 1986a.

The oldest part of the complex is the domed octagonal structure, with an inscription dated 998-99 (389 AH), which was discovered during the 1970s restoration interventions.[628] This structure was incorporated into the Seljuq mosque, of which no traces remain, and which was later rebuilt into a four-*iwan* type Ilkhanid mosque.[629] Inscriptions indicate that the mosque of the Ilkhanid period was constructed around 1304-1307. The most problematic is the dating of the shrine of the Shaykh, which is currently believed to date from 1307, based on the historic inscription in carved stucco which runs along the muqarnas dome.[630] But a closer look at the shrine structure and its revetments reveals that the shrine too was constructed and decorated in several stages and it actually predates the 1307 decorative phase. The *khanqah* was constructed in 1316-17 and the minaret was added to the complex in 1325. The *khanqah* was knocked down in modern times and a mosque was constructed in its place; its portal was however preserved and restored.

Two important landmarks for the understanding of the patronage and chronology of the monument's development need to be considered: the death of the Shaykh and the death of the main Ilkhanid patron (ʿAli al-Mastari). According to the written sources, the Shaykh passed away in 1299-1300, which suggests that the shrine for the Shaykh should have been constructed earlier than 1307. The date of the stucco inscription (1307), should rather be understood as the date of a separate decorative intervention in the shrine, which was performed when the building already existed. The second important date is the year 1312 in which ʿAli al-Mastari was executed. The death of the patron signals a break in the continuous patronage of the complex. In fact, the minaret and the *khanqah* are works of later building activities.

The Congregational Mosque

The congregational mosque is a four-*iwan* mosque which incorporates the octagonal domed structure dated 998-999.[631] The current mosque structure dates from the Ilkhanid period, but there likely existed a Seljuq mosque on the site. The mosque's foundation inscription of its Ilkhanid patron ʿAli al-Mastari refers to the construction of the mosque as a renovation or a rebuilding, implying that an earlier mosque existed on the site (see below). The octagonal domed pavilion was thus transformed from a free standing structure into the main domed prayer hall of a large dimension mosque. The courtyard of the mosque measures 14 m on each side. The mosque is accessed via a narrow corridor on its southern side, which is preceded by a portal with a historic inscription, dating the mosque construction (1304 and 1307-08) and another inscription recalling repairs in 1929-30. The entire structure is constructed of fired brick, with inserted stucco plugs, similar to those found in the shrine complex of ʿAbd al-Samad and also the near-by Kucha-yi Mir mosque entrance portal (Cat. No. 31). The north and south *iwan*s comprise muqarnas vaults and the north *iwan* features a monumental carved stucco band, which is signed by a master craftsman (*Haydar Asil al-Din?*). The north *iwan* comprises a Safavid period wall painting inscription. The mosque also contains inscriptions commemorating

[628] Blair 1992, 58-59.
[629] See Blair 1986a, 47-48.
[630] *Ibid.*
[631] The diameter of the octagonal structure amounts to c. 15 m. The 1960s excavations demonstrate that this octagonal structure was originally free standing and only later incorporated into the mosque. Blair 1986a, 17.

Safavid and Qajar modifications and redecorations, including the whitewashing (possibly an iconoclastic act) of the mosque (and perhaps the complex).

The Shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad

Figs. 134-138.

The shrine of the complex houses the grave and the cenotaph of Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad. The Shaykh's grave was made the raison d'être of the complex although the structure of the shrine pre-dates the death of the Shaykh. Due to its sacredness within the complex, the shrine was redecorated several times and it features stucco plugs, carved stucco and lustre tile decorated interiors, a result of several decorative phases.[632] The ground plan of the funerary structure is square on the exterior and cruciform in its interior (Fig. 129). The shrine's cruciform interior is formed by four deep niches on every supporting wall. The structure used to feature passage openings on every side, which were closed off at the time of the lustre tiles installation. The building is topped by a muqarnas dome, which is decorated with glazed revetments on its exterior tent-form shell.

Blair dedicates a remarkably short description to the shrine's structure.[633] She rejects the hypothesis of the shrine being an earlier structure, stating that it could not have been anything else but a mausoleum.[634] As an argument against a repurposed mausoleum, Blair writes that there are no sources referring to any person being buried at the site of Natanz. She rejects the evidence of stucco plugs, indicating that the structure could have been plastered either shortly after the mausoleum's construction, or at a considerably later point, in which case the stucco plugs would constitute the original decoration of the Shaykh's tomb. But Blair overlooked two crucial pieces of evidence indicating that the shrine cannot simply be dated to 1307-08. The date 1307-08 is contained in the historic stucco inscription which also mentions the patron of the mausoleum as Zayn al-Din Mastari. The inscription is supported by stucco columns, which comprise stucco craftsmen's signatures spread across their capitals. The stucco inscription could have been an afterthought or a modification of the mausoleum's original design. It could also be part of the mausoleum's repairs which included rebuilding or construction of the muqarnas dome.[635] Blair notes that the mausoleum's northern entrance, which is the usual entrance to mausoleums in Ilkhanid Iran, was closed off. But she does not consider that the mausoleum's southern wall also originally featured an entrance which was closed off during the installation of the lustre mihrab (and the lustre tile dado). It is thus clear that the lustre tile mihrab and the dado area covered with star and cross tiles and topped by the famous frieze with bird images (dated 1307-08), were not part of the mausoleum's original decorative repertoire. Moreover, the lustre tile frieze, with only mortar left *in situ* and tiles entirely removed, also covers the wall with stucco plugs. Blair proposes that this is the builders' mistake.[636] The plugs are however also found on higher elevations of the walls, where soundings by the means of

[632] The lustre tiles are now dispersed in numerous museum collections, but the stucco plugs and the carved stuccos remain *in situ*.
[633] Blair 1986a, 20.
[634] *Ibid.*, 23.
[635] Hence, historic stucco inscription refers to *qubba*, which could also be interpreted as the dome and not mausoleum, as suggested by Blair.
[636] Blair 1986a, 40.

plaster removal have recently been performed. The stucco plug evidence indicates that the lustre tile decoration was certainly an afterthought of the decorative programme of the Shaykh's tomb. The shrine was later coated with plaster in its interior, which is whitewashed; this was likely part of Safavid or Qajar renovations to the complex, which are mentioned, with direct referral to the whitewashing of the complex in one of the historic inscriptions in the congregational mosque. Another piece of evidence attesting to several phases comprises the relationship between the mortar of lustre tiles and stucco[637] columns carrying the monumental stucco band. Close observations reveal that the stucco plugs in the dado area are covered by the mortar for the tile dado adhesion. This mortar also abundantly covers the lower portions of the columns, suggesting that lustre tiles were applied as the last intervention in the shrine, after the stucco columns were already in place.

The sequence of decorative interventions in the shrine requires therefore a re-examination. The mausoleum was constructed as an independent funerary structure prior to the 1307-08 decorative interventions in its interior, most likely in the Seljuq period. The walls of this structure were constructed out of fired bricks with stucco plug inserts. This structure housed a tomb of a no longer identifiable personage and it was repurposed for the burial of the Shaykh.[638] This transformation of the shrine comprised the addition of stucco columns, which carry the carved stucco inscription dated 1307-08. The muqarnas dome may be contemporary to the stucco inscription. Upon the completion of the entire building, the openings of the structure were closed off in the subsequent phase and lustre tiles (the mihrab and the dado area, with bird imagery tile in the Metropolitan museum of New York, dated Shawwal 707/March-April 1308) were installed. In sum, the shrine of the Shaykh consists of two to three constructive and decorative phases, rather than one, as suggested by Blair. The shrine had also undergone later modifications, such as production of the *cuerda secca* tile cenotaph for the Shaykh's grave (Safavid period) and the coating of the shrine's interior with white plaster.

Further arguments can be put forward in favour of the hypothesis that the shrine was reused for the Shaykh's burial. The Shaykh passed away in 1299-1300, but the stucco inscription and tiles are dated 1307-08. It would be logical for the construction of the mausoleum for the Shaykh to take place immediately after his death, as in the case of Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), where the exact date of the death of Shaykh Bakran is mentioned, and the same date is found on several parts of the mausoleum. It is therefore plausible that interventions on the Natanz shrine took place prior to 1307-08. Moreover, historic inscriptions of the congregational mosque mention repairs and refurbishments, in place of an *ex-novo* construction, indicating the existence of an earlier mosque on the site. In the Seljuq period, the site thus already featured a congregational mosque and a shrine. The final argument for the pre-Ilkhanid, likely Seljuq dating, for the first phase of the shrine, is the evidence from the Kucha-yi Mir mosque (Cat. No. 31). This mosque features Seljuq and Ilkhanid phases. It was enlarged and expanded during Ilkhanid times, but its earlier structure, as shown by Galdieri and his team, is Seljuq.[639] A similar scenario for the

[637] Blair believed that columns were made out of terracotta; their damage illustrates their stucco body, grey in colour.
[638] Several parallel cases of repurposing of funerary structure can be listed: the Alinja Khanqah in Nakhchivan (Cat. No. 26).
[639] The findings of their research were published by Waqifi. See Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 46-50.

entire ʿAbd al-Samad complex is therefore likely: a domed octagonal structure was made part of a mosque in the Seljuq period, when another mausoleum was built in its proximities. In the Ilkhanid period, the entire complex was rebuilt, enlarged, refurbished, with the addition of the *khanqah* and the minaret following the death of al-Mastari. As Blair herself mentions, other mausolea and pilgrimage complexes, such as the Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), the Beyazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19), the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30) and others, all demonstrate numerous refurbishments and continuous patronage of shrines for pilgrimage.[640]

Importantly, the function of the Natanz shrine evolved with its modifications. The original structure was certainly a funerary structure – a mausoleum, which did not change with production of its stuccos. The closing off of the shrine's passages and the installation of the lustre mihrab with lustre dadoes signalled the transformation of the monument from a mausoleum into a shrine with a prayer space in its own right, regardless of the proximity of a congregational mosque. This is similar to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), where a stucco mihrab was installed to close off the funerary *iwan* and to form a prayer space for its pilgrims.[641]

The *Khanqah*

Figs. 141-142.

The *khanqah* was built under the patronage of Zayn al-Din ʿAli al-Mastari, slightly later than the rebuilding and modifications of the congregational mosque and the Shaykh's shrine. It was demolished in the 1930s and only the heavily restored portal remains on the site. The portal is in axis with the mosque entrance portal, but it is more monumental and it represents a tour de force of Ilkhanid ceramic revetments. B. M. Smith's images from the 1930s document the state of the *khanqah's* portal prior to its restorations, especially of its muqarnas semi-dome and portal's upper section.[642] In place of the *khanqah*, a modern mosque was built on the site; it is thus not possible to discern the original characteristics of this part of the complex.

The Minaret

Figs. 139-140.

The minaret is the last structure which was added to the complex, and it is structurally independent. It is dated 1324-25. The base of the minaret constitutes a part of the façade of the complex and it is richly decorated. The rest of the minaret contains *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions. It is plausible that the dome of the shrine of the Shaykh could have been modified or repaired during the minaret's construction. Blair argues that the inscriptions on the minaret were added later, and that the minaret is contemporary in construction to the shrine and the mosque. Two similar signatures of craftsmen found at the portal of the Friday mosque of Ushturjan (Cat. No.

[640] Blair 1986a, 23.
[641] Both cases, Natanz and Pir-i Bakran, therefore exemplify a change of modest mausoleums into proper pilgrimage sites, or real *mazars*.
[642] B. M. photographs in the Freer and Sackler gallery.

4) indicate that the two patron signatures at the Natanz minaret are genuine; the minaret thus postdates the shrine and the complex by a few years.

Vaulting

The Natanz complex comprises one of the earliest cases of transverse vaulting, in the mosque's access corridor.[643] Moreover, the muqarnas dome is an isolated case of the building tradition native to Iraqi territories and the Khuzistan area. At Natanz, the muqarnas dome, which required specialized building knowledge, provides evidence of builders' migration, probably from south-western Iran, for this specific commission. The geographically closest examples of Ilkhanid muqarnas use, are the muqarnas semi-domes attached to portals or *iwan*s found at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4), Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), Varamin (Cat. No. 28) and Bistam (Cat. No. 192) monuments. According to Blair, the shrine at Natanz, with its muqarnas dome and single minaret emulates Iraqi Suhrawardi tombs.[644]

The Façade

Blair suggests that the façade of the complex was also a way to overcome two differing *qibla* orientations of the mosque and the shrine.[645] If the shrine was to be an Ilkhanid foundation it would have been planned with a southern entrance, which is however blocked by the minaret. This is another argument in favour of an earlier dating for the shrine's structure. The same change of the main entrance occurs in the octagonal pavilion, which was incorporated into the Seljuq mosque. The reorientation of the complex took place in the first Ilkhanid phase. Blair supposes that this shift was necessary due to the shifting of the settlement's location.[646]

Construction Phases of the Complex

Fig. 130.

Phase One - The Earliest Structures – the Octagonal Pavilion

The site of the complex was first occupied by the domed octagonal structure. This structure presents a *post quem* date for the history of the complex, based on the inscription in brick and stucco, which runs below its dome and is dated 998-99, to Buyid period. Not all the parts of the inscription have been uncovered.[647] The domed pavilion was perhaps originally a funerary structure, although no traces of graves remain on its premises. This structure was later integrated into a Seljuq mosque, which was rebuilt into an Ilkhanid four-*iwan* mosque. The interior of the structure was refurbished in the Ilkhanid period with a lustre mihrab[648] and during the Safavid

[643] Blair 1986a, 33.
[644] *Ibid.*, 37.
[645] *Ibid.*, 55.
[646] She does not consider the existence of the river course on the northern side of the complex, which was necessary to feed it with water and which prevented a northern orientation of the complex.
[647] The inscription is covered by a Safavid or Qajar era wall painting featuring a floral scroll element. The covering of the historic inscription with the wall painting can be interpreted as the act of re-interpreting the history of the domed pavilion.
[648] This aspect of the structure is only mentioned by Waqifi. The mortar for the adhesion of parts of lustre labs of the mihrab is still present *in situ*. Its research allows the proposition that a pair of spandrels stored at the Victoria and Albert museum could have belonged to this mihrab.

and Qajar periods, it was decorated with wall paintings in the dome area and whitewash on its surfaces.[649]

Phase Two – The Seljuq Complex

Major building activities took place at the site of the complex already in the Seljuq period. But no historic inscriptions and only a few pieces of evidence remain *in situ*. These activities aimed at the formation of the first religious complex at the site. They likely comprised construction of a mosque with the integration of the Buyid pavilion to function as its domed prayer hall. It is not clear however what the ground plan and dimensions of this mosque could have been. In line with other similar sites, it is possible to suppose that this was a courtyard mosque, perhaps a two-*iwan* and courtyard mosque.[650] In this period, the current shrine of the Shaykh was constructed, likely as a funerary structure for an unknown personage, a local religious authority or a local notable. This structure would have originally been entered from the northern side and it would be a square funerary structure with open sides. It was subsequently transformed into a mausoleum with a prayer space and re-used for the burial of the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad. These construction activities likely took place sometime between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Phase Three – The First Ilkhanid Phase – Patronage of ʿAli al-Mastari

The first Ilkhanid phase of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex comprises activities under the patronage of ʿAli al-Mastari. The reason for the modifications of the complex was likely the death of the Shaykh in 1299-1300, which can be considered as a hypothetical *post-quem* date for these undertakings which lasted until the death of their patron in 1312. Works of this intervention comprised major modifications and construction activities of the Ilkhanid mosque, modifications of the shrine's structure and construction of the *khanqah* with the entrance portal next to the shrine. Motivation for these activities was perhaps the will to enlarge the mosque structure and its prayer surface and to provide for the burial of the Shaykh. The dated inscription suggests that the activities at the mosque concluded around 1304.

In parallel, modifications of the mausoleum into a shrine for the Shaykh took place. The dated stucco inscription (1307-08) indicates that the modifications of the shrine lasted longer, perhaps because priority was given to work on the mosque. This refurbishment and reuse of the funerary structure likely comprised work on supporting walls, construction of the muqarnas dome and stucco decoration production.[651] At this point, the shrine's passages were still open, but the northern passage might have been closed off for the *khanqah* construction. The revetment repertoire of the shrine's interior consisted of supporting walls with inserted stucco plugs from the original iteration of the monument and the added monumental inscription band in carved stucco carried by eight columns flanking the niches of the shrine's interior. The lustre tile dado and the mihrab were added only subsequently, when the passage on the southern side of the shrine had to be closed off for the minaret construction. The last structure built in this period was the *khanqah*, of which little is known, because only its portal remains *in situ*. Work on the

[649] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 58-104.
[650] Compare to the Gar Friday mosque (Cat. No. 7), the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Farfan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 5).
[651] Wilber mentions that the walls of the shrine were likely rebuilt at this point. Wilber 1955, 134.

khanqah concluded sometime around 1315-16, as indicated by the historic inscription framing its portal. These activities were interrupted by the execution of the main patron of the undertakings, ʿAli al-Mastari, in 1312.

Phase Four– The Second Ilkhanid Phase – Further Enlargements

The second Ilkhanid phase of the complex comprised the construction of its minaret, dated 1325, as indicated by the historic inscription on the minaret's base. The relationship between the shrine structure and the minaret is of essential significance for the understanding of the decorative enterprises in the shrine's interior. The minaret is located on the shrine's southern side, which was originally open. To construct the minaret, which was conceived as a part of the façade of the mausoleum, the shrine had to be closed off and an alternative entrance needed to be put in place. The eastern opening of the shrine was chosen and the shrine would be entered from the side of the mosque, sharing its entrance corridor. The closing off of the shrine's southern passage enabled the minaret construction which concluded in 1325-26. It was also the precondition for the application of lustre tile decoration. Following the construction of the minaret, the entire complex was completed in the Ilkhanid period, but it was further redecorated on a minor scale in Safavid and Qajar times.[652]

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The major post-Ilkhanid periods of the shrine's modifications are Safavid and Qajar; they were aimed at additional embellishment of the complex's structure. While Blair largely overlooked and only mentions these modifications, they prove vital for the understanding of the monument's history, its function and meaning. They were given attention in Waqifi's publication and only a summary is provided here.[653]

Significant modifications of the Safavid period comprise application of architectural revetments. In this period, the cenotaph of the Shaykh was renewed and given a Safavid look, which can be interpreted as appropriation of the sacred space. Moreover, the northern *iwan* of the congregational mosque was embellished with wall paintings, which comprise lengthy texts referring to patronage of the complex in the Safavid and Qajar periods and again hint at the assertion of political power through their sponsorship. In this period, the domed structure's interior, which already comprised an Ilkhanid lustre mihrab, was covered with wall paintings.[654] These wall paintings explicitly covered the dated inscription of 998-99, suggesting that an attempt to visually unify the entire structure of the mosque with Qajar and Safavid aesthetics was performed. A historic inscription in the mosque refers to the whitewashing of the structure, which likely included the covering in plaster and whitewashing of the shrine. It is probable that the mutilation of the bird figures on the tiles of the shrine took place at this point.

[652] Subsequent interventions focused on repairs, minor modifications and redecorations of the complex, especially of the mosque.
[653] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 51-102.
[654] Blair insists that only the shrine was decorated with lustre revetments. Blair 1986a, 58.

Ilkhanid Complex Ground Plan

The complex (Fig. 129) comprised a four-*iwan* and a square courtyard mosque, with an earlier domed structure transformed into its main prayer hall, which was flanked and connected to the square shrine of the Shaykh. The minaret was added to the complex at a time when the shrine already existed, on its southern side. The *khanqah* was adjacent to the shrine on its western and perhaps northern sides.

Ilkhanid Complex Elevation

The parts of the complex have varying elevations, but numerous construction and decoration activities aimed at the formation of the complex's monumental façade facing the holy tree. It consisted of the entrance portal of the mosque and the shrine, the base of the minaret and the entrance portal of the *khanqah*.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

It initially appears that the religious function of the monument's structures is clear, but a closer look at the building and its constructive and decorative phases, points towards subtle changes of architectural function of some parts of the complex. The octagonal pavilion was originally a funerary structure and it was turned into the mosque's main prayer hall. Ilkhanid installation of the lustre mihrab in its interior signalled that this space was the designated focal point of the mosque. Further redecorations which covered the original dated inscription of the domed structure suggest that there was a need to corroborate the function of the domed structure as a prayer hall. The shrine of the Shaykh is a repurposed funerary building. While decisive evidence to confirm this hypothesis might never be available, it is clear that the shrine structure was a funerary structure from its outset. The redecoration intervention which comprised installation of lustre tiles and the lustre mihrab in the shrine's interior, changed its function into a pilgrimage destination with its own prayer surfaces for the faithful. This intervention transformed the structure of the mausoleum into a proper mazar. Further constructed structures transformed the shrine into a monumental pilgrimage complex. The *khanqah* retained its function as a Sufi hospice until its demolition and the minaret never changed its function.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The complex of ʿAbd al-Samad is renowned for its richly decorated façade, in diverse ceramic media, the stuccos of the shrine and the Friday mosque, and the famous bird imagery tile dado and the lustre mihrab of the shrine. In addition to this, little has been written about the lost lustre mihrab of the mosque's domed octagonal structure, which presumably dated to the Ilkhanid period, before the tiles were dispersed in Qajar times.[655] Furthermore, new information allows further tiles as originating from the mihrab of the Shaykh's shrine to be proposed. Moreover, the congregational mosque comprises diverse types of wall painting revetments from the Safavid and the Qajar periods.

[655] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 86-87.

The Shrine of the Shaykh

Figs. 134-138.

Interior Revetments

The current interior of the shrine differs from its original appearance due to the whitewashing of its interior and removal of lustre tile revetments to museum collections. This whitewashing intervention may have comprised the removal of the bird imagery from the dadoes.[656] The stucco inscription was also whitewashed, but in line with other Ilkhanid stuccos, it was originally polychrome.

Stucco Plugs (Seljuq)

Fig. 136.

The stucco plugs in the shrine are now mainly covered by the whitewash layers, but in some areas, where the layer is damaged, or where the mortar for adhesion of the dadoes had fallen off, they are visible. These plugs are parts of the original structure and they are inserted between the wall's fired bricks. They are of two types. The most common plugs are of x and o form, and they are followed by stucco plugs with epigraphic content. One of the plugs, for example, carries the word *Allah.* These plugs are different from plugs discovered upon the removal of the plaster coating on the surfaces of the congregational mosque. They do not feature horizontal line incisions. Instead, the plugs are literally inserted in empty spaces between fired bricks. This artistic technique is more frequently employed in Seljuq, rather than Ilkhanid period. These plugs are the main evidence demonstrating that the shrine structure pre-dates the death of the Shaykh not only to the period prior to 1300, but to likely the Seljuq period.

The Monumental Stucco Inscription and Stucco Columns (1307-08)

Figs. 134-135.

The historic stucco inscription runs along the area just below the muqarnas dome and it is supported by eight monumental columns produced out of carved stucco. The inscription is incorporated in the structure of the mausoleum's walls, which on their exterior comprise the base for the muqarnas dome.[657] The inscription was whitewashed; its relief and the contrast between the inscription and the background scrolls drastically decreased and made it appear more plain. Moreover, the whitewash covered the inscription's polychromy. This large dimension inscription is written in *Naskh* style, appropriate to its elevated location and for it to be read by spectators.[658] The inscription consists of Qurʾanic excerpts (*Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:162, 164-168, 180), the historic information regarding its patron (ʿAli al-Mastari), and the time of

[656] It is not clear, but it is possible that the muqarnas dome was also whitewashed at this point and it might have looked different when it was constructed. It could also comprise polychrome decoration.
[657] This suggests that the muqarnas dome is contemporary to the dated stucco inscription unless it was modified at a later point.
[658] The double border of the inscription finds its parallels in the Haftshuya Friday mosque inscriptions and stucco mihrab inscriptions of Qamsar, Nushabad, Kashan Friday mosque, the mausoleum of Baba Afzal in Maraq and also earlier examples such as the Haydariyya madrasa in Qazvin. The double outline for cursive inscriptions was more frequently employed in Ilkhanid stuccos.

its completion (1307-08). Background scrolls display imagery mimicking palmettes and half-palmettes. Stucco perforation of the band features a greater richness of perforation patterns.[659]

The inscription is supported by stucco columns with capitals. The shafts of the columns are produced with repeating patterns, which vertically accentuate the shrine and impact its symmetrical appearance. Columns are topped by capitals which consist of two parts: the lower ornate shafts and the bulbous capitals. These bulbous forms are heavily perforated with geometric patterns and they retain original traces of baseline incisions for the perforated patterns. Below the capitals are the cartouches which carry the name of the stucco master responsible for the decorative repertoire. Its most complete reading has recently been proposed by Quchani as: *work of Hasan ʿAli Ahmad Babuya al-Vidguli*.[660] The distribution of this signature into cartouches of the capitals is a unique case in Ilkhanid stuccos. Kufic style is employed for the signature, which is easily legible, because the background of the signature is plain. The signature pertains to the workshop which also produced the carved stucco mihrab of the Imamzada Yahya and Fazl at Mahallat-i Bala (Cat. No. 13), some 150 km as the crow flies from Natanz into north-western direction.[661] Its mihrab is dated 1335-36.

The Lustre Tile Mihrab (1310)

Figs. 137-138.

The opening in the *qibla* wall of the Shaykh's shrine was closed off and covered with a lustre tile mihrab. Only the adhesion mortar for parts of the mihrab tiles remains *in situ*. This mortar reveals dimensions and forms of tiles which formed the mihrab. The lower interior niche of the mihrab has been recognized by Blair as the set of tiles forming a lustre niche, which is now stored in the Victoria and Albert museum (Inv. No. 71-1885)[662] and it entered the collection of the museum at an early point.[663] Several other revetment pieces in lustre entered the same collection around that time and can be linked to Natanz, based on their matching dimensions with the mortar found in the shrine and the congregational mosque. Two spandrels stored in the Victoria and Albert museum (Inv. No. 466-1888; 88 x 153 cm)[664] were also part of the mihrab in the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad. These two spandrel tiles match the dimensions of the adhesion mortar. Another tile in the V&A museum (Inv. No. 8-1886; length: 46.5 cm, height: 61.0 cm, depth: 4.0 cm)[665] could originally constitute upper parts of the shrine's mihrab.

Another tripartite set of tiles (Fig. 138), presumably part of the interior part of the mihrab (or the cenotaph of the Shaykh), below the lower niche is stored in the Metropolitan museum (Inv. No. 09.87; 123.2x59.7 cm).[666] This set of tiles is of particular interest because it contains the

[659] Compare to the Uljaytu mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1).
[660] Personal communication to the author by Sheila Blair. See also McClary and Grbanovic 2021, 19.
[661] Although both repertoires differ visually, they seem to be works of the same workshop.
[662] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O86037/mihrab-unknown/ (Last Accessed : November 26, 2020)
[663] Blair 1986a, 50, 136.
[664] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O221050/tile-unknown/ (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020)
[665] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O278941/tile-unknown/ (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020).
[666] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445953?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=natanz&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2 (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020).

date (1310) and the double signature[667] of the craftsmen (*work of Hasan ibn ʿAli ibn Ahmad Babuya* and *kataba-hu ʿAli ibn Muhammad ibn Fazl Allah*).[668] Dimensions of these tiles match the mortar of the mihrab in the shrine, which makes it likely that they were part of the mihrab, rather than used to cover the cenotaph of the Shaykh, as suggested by Linda Komaroff.[669] The lustre mihrab thus postdates the tile dadoes with the mutilated birds by a few years, suggesting that the mihrab installation and the closing off of the shrine's passage post-dates the installation of the dado frieze. Moreover, the fact that related signatures are found on the stucco band dated 1307-08 and the lustre mihrab dated 1310 is puzzling. It is however likely that the installation of the mihrab was conceived already in 1307-08, because time was needed to produce it. Another closely related set of tiles, presumably functioning as a mihrab, is stored in the Gulbenkian collection (Inv. No.:1567); it may have been installed on the *qibla* wall of the oratory of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (see Cat. No. 27).[670] The two mihrabs were likely produced in the same workshop in Kashan at a short time distance (with the same mould).

Dado Tiles (1307-08)

The tile dado of the Natanz shrine ran along the lower portions of the supporting walls of its interior (Fig. 136). These tiles comprised cross and star tiles in the lower area and a monumental inscription frieze topping them. The frieze tiles are well-known, because the inscription frieze comprises a background consisting of bird imagery in relief. The heads of these bird creatures were all mutilated at an unknown point.[671] They have been recently discussed in an article by Richard McClary and only a few points are accordingly raised here.[672] These tiles have been attributed to the shrine of the Shaykh and they have been featured in major exhibitions of Islamic Art. They are currently scattered across numerous museum collections. The mutilation of the birds, together with the content of the inscription, make it clear that these tiles are part of the Natanz shrine frieze. The tile in the Metropolitan museum (Inv. No. 12.44)[673] is of essential significance because it contains the date of the frieze (1307-08).

The lustre tile frieze with birds in the Natanz shrine must be viewed together with the upper spandrel of the lustre tile mihrab, now in the V&A, which also contains bird imagery in its

[667] The tile set bears a double signature, similar to those found on other Ilkhanid tiles, suggesting division of work between master craftsmen and craftsmen who were responsible for the making of inscriptions and perhaps the rest of the tiles. The second signature of the craftsmen was evidently overlooked by Blair, who gave the credit for the making of the shrine's decorative repertoire (in both stucco and lustre tiles) to Hasan ibn ʿAli ibn Ahmad Babuya. The tile set however specifies that he was the head of the workshop rather than directly the person who crafted tiles.

[668] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445953?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=natanz&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2 (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020).

[669] *Ibid.*

[670] The revetment is on display and it was investigated in person in July 2017.

[671] There has been some confusion regarding two tiles, the dated tile in the Metropolitan museum (tile published by Blair) and the tile from the same frieze in the Khalili collection in London. These two tiles appeared to have birds still in place, which gave way to postulation that they were removed from the shrine before the mutilation of the frieze occurred. It was discovered later that the heads of the birds on both tiles were restored to make them look complete. Author's research in museum collections: February 2019 and May 2019.

[672] McClary 2018.

[673] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446203?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=natanz&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=1 (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020).

background. In both cases, birds represent animate imagery, which was frequently employed for the decoration of lustre tiles. This may have been a common occurrence in Ilkhanid art, as shown by animate tiles found in other religious structures such as the ʿAli mosque in Quhrud, the recently discovered tiles from the Pir-i Bakran shrine (Cat. No. 2), the Pir Husayn Khanqah at Qubalıbalaoğlan (Cat. No. 25), the tiles of the Imamzada Jaʿfar in Qum (Cat. No. 15) and the Varamin Imamzada Yahya (Cat. No. 36). For the Natanz shrine it can be proposed that the bird imagery perhaps needs to be interpreted in the context of paradisiac themes and afterlife - topics linked to the funerary structures. Blair puts forward an important interpretation of the bird imagery, suggesting that the presence of birds as a part of the frieze design may have been an allusion to the popular tradition that *the souls of the martyrs are like green birds who will eat the fruits of paradise*.[674]

Exterior Revetments of the Shrine

The exterior revetments of the shrine comprise the exterior shell of the muqarnas dome. Its glazed revetments provided for the protection of the structure in the cold climatic region. The exterior shell of the Shaykh's shrine is decorated with glazed tile inserts which comprise a chequered pattern, rather than inscriptions, like those found on the minaret, which is another piece of evidence for the minaret's separate dating.

The Congregational Mosque Revetments

Figs. 131-133.

According to Blair, the decoration of the mosque was left incomplete due to the execution of its patron.[675] Architectural surfaces of the mosque are indeed sober, but there are some architectural revetments which require attention. The domed structure comprises stucco dadoes, from the time of its construction, which feature geometric and floral compositions. Later, a lustre mihrab was added to the mosque, in the domed area, perhaps in parallel to the installation of revetments in the shrine (see above). The mosque also comprises a dated carved stucco band in its northern *iwan*. Later revetments are mainly commemorative slabs and diverse types of wall paintings, ranging from monumental inscriptions to inscription cartouches and stencilled wall paintings of the mosque's domed pavilion. These wall paintings mainly date to the Safavid period.[676]

The Northern Iwan Stucco Band

Fig. 133.

The stucco band stretches across the intrados of the northern *iwan* of the congregational mosque. The inscription consists of a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18) and historic content, and it is damaged in parts. It carries the date 1309-10, and it comprises the partially legible signature of the master stucco craftsman heading the workshop which produced it. The reading of the signature by Blair presents difficulties, but an alternative reading is challenging

[674] Blair 1986a, 21.
[675] *Ibid.*, 59.
[676] For their detailed discussion, see Waqifi 1955, Vol. 1, 51-102.

to propose.[677] The style of the inscription is characterized by a contrasting relief, with inscription protruding from the complex floral scroll background. Letters and especially their elongations are peculiar, because they end up in a swirl or scroll-like ends. The background ornamentation displays a common repertoire of floral scrolls with leaves, palmettes and half-palmettes, which are heavily perforated. The signature of the craftsman indicates that the inscription is the work of a workshop, different, compared to the stuccos in the shrine of the complex.

The Domed Pavilion Lustre Mihrab

Fig. 132.

Tile adhesion mortar on the *qibla* wall of the pavilion, indicates that there used to exist a tile mihrab in its interior. This is confirmed by written sources discovered by Waqifi,[678] but information concerning the presence of a lustre tile mihrab in this structure has so far not been addressed by other scholars. Similar to the smaller lustre mihrab in the shrine, this mihrab currently only retains the tile adhesion mortar traces. Historic descriptions state that the lustre mihrab was still *in situ* in the Qajar period, and that the tiles went missing a few days after the ruler was informed of their existence: some of them were sold off at the Isfahan market.[679] Some tiles in the Victoria and Albert museum might belong to this mihrab. This is likely, given that some pieces in the V&A have been clearly identified as belonging to the Natanz complex. These tiles perhaps arrived into the museum collection in a larger group. The pair of triangular spandrels (Inv. Nos. 465-1888 and 724-1888; height: 68.6 cm, width: 48.3 cm)[680] may have been part of this mihrab, because they fit into the empty mortar moulds.[681]

Later Wall Paintings

Later wall paintings comprise monumental inscriptions and cartouches in the northern *iwan*, which also state dates of their completion and their patrons.[682] Moreover, the interior dome area of the octagonal pavilion was refurbished in the Safavid or Qajar period. The surfaces of its supporting walls were whitewashed with the application of thick layers of plaster. The historic inscription dating 989-99, in fired brick and carved stucco, was covered with a band of floral scrolls. The domed area comprises remains of stencilled medallions which consist of vases with flowers and abstract geometric patterns of square Kufic inscriptions recounting the names of *ʿAli* and *Muhammad*, but likely also other names of the House of the Prophet and perhaps longer invocations.

[677] Blair 1986a, 61.
[678] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 86-87.
[679] *Ibid.*
[680] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O221045/spandrel-unknown/; http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O221197/spandrel-unknown/ (Last Accessed: November 26, 2020).
[681] Measured by the Author and compared to the information from the museum collection.
[682] They are discussed in details by Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 51-102.

The Minaret

Figs. 139-140.

The bands on the minaret comprise inscriptions in terracotta placed on dark blue or chequered background of glazed material. This technique was also employed for revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). It is probable that the craftsmen arrived to Natanz (and Ushturjan) upon performing their work at Sultaniyya. The shaft of the minaret comprises *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions produced with glazed ceramic inserts and terracotta. The base of the minaret retains a dated inscription, which consists of glazed and moulded tiles in dark and light blue. The names of the overseer and the patron of the minaret are scratched into glazed turquoise tiles in a manner similar to that of the Ushturjan Friday mosque portal's signatures of craftsmen (Cat. No. 4). The minaret base also contains later additions, such as the text from the Qajar period, which recounts the history of the complex and should be considered the first art historical appreciation of the complex, its features and its religious significance.[683] The muqarnas tiers at the top of the minaret feature revetments similar to the *khanqah* portal. Although the minaret was heavily restored, it is likely work of the same craftsmen as the *khanqah* portal, but with a later completion date. It is probable that the construction of the minaret began under the patronage of ʿAli al-Mastari. When he passed away the construction continued under the new patron.

The Entrance Portal of the *Khanqah*

Figs. 141-142.

The entrance portal of the *khanqah* is a tour de force of ceramic working and it displays numerous decorative techniques. The old images of the complex, especially the 1930s shots by B. M. Smith,[684] document the portal in a ruined state; the majority of the muqarnas hood and the exterior parts of the portal were no longer extant during Smith's visit to the monument. The portal was restored in the 1970s: its muqarnas semi-dome was reconstructed and its revetments were replaced by modern substitutes.

The portal of the *khanqah* is formed by a monumental pointed arch. In its recessed interior the pointed arch is transformed into the muqarnas semi-dome. The external part of the façade of the *khanqah*'s portal is divided into three registers of niches with muqarnas hoods. Inscriptions run along the *khanqah*'s portal between the niches. Two types of inscriptions decorate the external part of the portal; the monumental Square Kufic inscription (repeating the Shiʿite Shahada), which runs in two lines along the portal and the *Thuluth* inscription (historic in content; providing the date of completion and information on the patron; 1315-16; Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿAli), on the external border of the portal. Two distinct techniques are employed for their production. There are further geometric patterns on the portal's surface which consist of elements of glazed and unglazed terracotta. With this technique the artisans created a mesmerising surface of the portal in three colours, rather than two: brown, light and dark blue.

[683] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 102-03.
[684] These photographs were examined by the Author in February 2019, in the Freer and Sackler gallery archives.

The interior niche of the portal features a six-tier muqarnas semi-dome and the surfaces below it comprise two recessed niches with muqarnas hoods flanked by geometrical panels and inscription bands. The portal's interior contains two types of inscriptions. The *Thuluth* inscription (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:273-275), which runs along the entrance opening to the *khanqah*, made out of dark blue glazed elements set against a lighter background of light blue tile and terracotta inserts, which form a chequered pattern. This inscription visually contrasts the historic monumental inscription on the portal's external surfaces. The other inscription, in Kufic style, which recounts Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Nur*, 24:36-37), is produced by scratching away the background of the light blue Kufic inscription, in a manner related to the historic inscription on the entrance portal of the congregational mosque. The two side niches of the portal with muqarnas hoods also contain Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Ikhlas*, 112:1-4) and are produced with the same artistic technique (sgraffito). The background of the recessed niches and the surface between the inscriptions of the portal's internal part are filled with a variety of geometric patterns in strapwork. Geometric designs of the two niches, which are also found on some other parts of the portal, should be considered masterpieces, because they display complex geometric patterns worked on multiple levels. They are closely related to revetments on exterior surfaces of Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), the portal and the interior of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) and the Shah Muhammad shrine in Varamin. These revetments are most likely works of the same craftsmen.[685] The third type of inscriptions comprises glazed tiles with inscription background scraped out (sgraffito).[686]

The Façade

Blair argues that there existed a programme to create a unified façade for the complex[687] under the patronage of ʿAli al-Mastari. But the final result is rather an assembly of three different façades: the portal of the *khanqah*, the base of the minaret and the entrance portal of the congregational mosque. It is difficult to discern a unified plan, given the differing dimensions of these three units and especially their different elevations. The portal of the *khanqah* presents the most monumental façade which was intended to be free standing. This façade comprises ceramic revetments of related techniques, which provide for the uniformity of its visual appearance. The same techniques are found on the much restored minaret, suggesting that they might be works of the same artists.[688] The entrance portal of the congregational mosque is sober, compared to the minaret base and the *khanqah* portal.[689]

Stucco Polychromy at Natanz

Stuccos of the shrine have been whitewashed and there are no traces of their original polychromy. The stucco band in the northern *iwan* of the congregational mosque has not been

[685] Blair notes the artistic techniques of ceramic decoration and occurrence in the other monuments. See Blair 1986a, 41.
[686] Blair 1986a, 42.
[687] Summary from: Blair 1986a, 43-44.
[688] Both the portal and the minaret were sponsored by the same patron.
[689] Blair argues that decoration of the mosque was never finished, but this is puzzling, given the completeness of structures, which were built after the construction of the mosque, such as the shrine of the Shaykh and the portal of the *khanqah*.

whitewashed, but it may have lost its polychromy, due to the exposure to sunlight. Similar to the other Ilkhanid repertoires, these stuccos may have originally been polychrome.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Natanz

Blair correctly recognizes aesthetic and artistic technique differences between the stucco inscriptions of the shrine and the congregational mosque and emphasizes the fact that the two inscriptions bear different stucco craftsmen's signatures.[690] She however does not distinguish between the artistic techniques of the Uljaytu mihrab and the stucco band in the Friday mosque of Natanz, and sustains that these two signatures both belong to Haydar, the manuscript calligrapher. Stuccos of the shrine and the northern *iwan* of the congregational mosque are produced with an unassuming approach which comprised carving of at least two stucco layers. Both repertoires are characterized by deep relief, protruding inscriptions and heavily perforated vegetal elements in the background. Stucco columns of the shrine display different carving and perforation patterns and they reflect masterly craftsmanship skills.

The Natanz Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Aesthetics of the two Ilkhanid stucco repertoires in the complex are strikingly different, compared to the other Ilkhanid stuccos in Central Iran. At Natanz, similar to the case of Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19), stuccos are used in a very sober manner, just for two stucco inscriptions, rather than on extensive architectural surfaces. Stuccos assume secondary place in the hierarchy of decorative media, which was dominated by ceramic and lustre tile revetments. But the stuccos are nevertheless significant. They are employed for inscriptions which were made well visible and well legible. Moreover, they are employed in spaces, where it would be difficult to apply lustre tiles. The stucco inscription of the shrine is of specific significance. This inscription is difficult to consider without the background, which is created by the muqarnas dome. The stucco columns of the shrine and the stucco relief of the inscription therefore function together with the honeycomb forms of the muqarnas dome, which provides an additional visual depth to the viewer and which determined the shrine's monumental appearance.

d.) Furnishing

No original furnishing from the Ilkhanid period remains in the complex.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Selected inscriptions concerning the Ilkhanid constructive and decorative interventions are presented in this section. For post-Ilkhanid inscriptions, the reader should refer to the detailed account by Waqifi.[691]

The Shrine of the Shaykh

a.) The monumental carved stucco inscription supported by stucco columns features a text which is a combination of the *Basmala*, the Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:168-170) and

[690] Blair 1986a, 38-39.
[691] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 51-102.

historic content concerning the identity of the patron of the decorative intervention and the date of its completion (707/1307-08).

The Qurʾanic excerpt reads:[692]

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا ۗ قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا ۚ بَلْ أَحْيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ
فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Those who said about their brothers while sitting [at home], "If they had obeyed us, they would not have been killed." Say, "Then prevent death from yourselves, if you should be truthful."
And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision,
rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them – that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.

The inscription was read and translated by Blair:[693]

هذه القبّة المشرّفة مزار الشيخ الربّانى نور الملّة والدين عبد الصمد بن علىّ الاصفهانى المقيم بنطنز أمر ببنائها الصاحب الأعظم زين الدنيا و الدين خليفة الماسترى فى سنة سبع و سبعمائة

This ennobled dome is the shrine of the Shaykh, the godly, Nur-al Milla wa al-Din ʿAbd al-Samad ibn ʿAli al-Isfahani, resident of Natanz. The great master Zayn al-Dunya wa al-Din Khalifa al-Mastari ordered its construction in the year seven hundred and seven.

b.) The capitals of columns supporting the monumental inscription carry the signature of the master stucco craftsman in charge of the stucco repertoire production, which is written in Kufic style.

The most complete reading of the inscription has recently been proposed by Quchani:[694]

عمل حسن على احمد بابويه بنا ويدگلي

Work of Hasan ʿAli Ahmad Babuya [al-]bannaʾ [al-]Vidguli.

c.) The set of the three lustre tiles from the Metropolitan museum of New York may have covered the cenotaph of the Shaykh. The tiles comprise several inscriptions in diverse styles with Qurʾanic and historic content.[695]

The three tiles feature a trefoil form of an arch sustained by a pair of columns and an inscription band in Kufic, reading: *But Allah will spare you their evil*.

[692] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).
[693] TEI 2097 (Last Accessed: November 11, 2021); Blair 1986a, 62.
[694] Personal communication to the Author, by Sheila Blair.
[695] Inscription readings from: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445953?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=natanz&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2 (Last Accessed: November 27, 2020).

The interior of the arch comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:136 and 2:225).

The area of the spandrels of the arch is filled with one of the two signatures of the tiles, reading:

عمل حسن علی بن احمد با بویه البناء[696]

Work of Hasan ʿAli ibn Ahmad Babuya al-bannaʾ.

The monumental framing band of the tiles features Qurʾan 2:255-256.[697]

The exterior small inscription in lustre features selected verses from the Qurʾanic chapters 1, 97, 100, 112-114. The inscription concludes with the signature of the person writing or designing the inscriptions on tiles and with a partially legible date of tile completion.

...فی شوال تسع و ... بخط العبد الضعیف علی محمح بن فضل الله ال [sic]

...in Shawwal nine and ... in the writing of the weak servant ʿAli Muhammad ibn Fazlullah al-[sic].[698]

d.) The lustre tile lunette in the Victoria and Albert museum, presumably part of the mihrab in the shrine, comprises Qurʾanic excerpt from 17:78 (*Surat al-Israʾ*).[699] A further six tiles from the V&A have been proposed as belonging to the mihrab by McClary, and featuring Qurʾanic excerpt 55:1-23 (*Surat al-Rahman*).[700]

e.) The renowned lustre tile frieze running on the top of the shrine's dado area consists of tiles scattered in numerous collections.

For the most complete list of tiles from the frieze, see McClary 2018, 267.

The tile in the Metropolitan Museum of New York (Inv. No. 12.44) comprises the date of the completion of the frieze:

[شوّا]ل سنة سبع و سبعمائة[701]

(the month of) Shawwal of the year seven hundred and seven. March – April 1308.

The frieze inscription is from *Surat al-Insan*. So far, the following verses have been discerned: 76:1-2; 76:9, 76:11, 76:16.[702] The entire frieze likely features a connected verse selection, similar to 76:1-16 or even longer.

At the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, the frieze in carved stucco at the top of the tile dado also features a monumental inscription with verses from *Surat al-Insan*.

The Khanqah Portal

[696] TEI 3845 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[697] TEI 3845 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[698] Blair 1986a, 394.
[699] http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O86037/mihrab-unknown/ (Last Accessed: November 27, 2020).
[700] McClary 2018, 269.
[701] TEI 3100 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); RCEA XIV, 5226.
[702] McClary 2018, 267.

a.) The monumental *Naskh* inscription in terracotta, set against a chequered background, frames the portal of the *khanqah*. Its content is historic and it concerns the patronage of this part of the complex and the year of its construction.

The inscription was read by Blair:[703]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم أمر بعمارة هذه البقعة الميمونة المباركة الصاحب المعظّم وزير ممالك العالم مشيّد مبانى الخيرات المتوسل إلى الله بأنواع القربات أضعف عباد الله المفتقر إلى رحمته و رضوانه خواجة زين الدنيا و الدين شرف الإسلام و المسلمين خليفة بن الحسين بن على الماسترى تقبّل الله خيراته و أفاض السعادة و الرحمة عليه و على أسلافه و درّياته ثمّ وقفها خانقاها على الفقراء الصوفية تقرّبا إلى الله القديم و تبرّعا لوجهه الكريم بمساعى شمس الدين محمّد بن على النطنزى فى سنة سـ[sic]

The great master, vizier of the provinces of the world, he who raises the buildings of pious foundations, he who seeks God through all methods of intimacy, the weakest of God's servants the poor one who is in need of His mercy and favour, Khwaja Zayn al-Dunya wa al-Din, nobility of Islam and the Muslims, Khalifa ibn al-Husayn ibn ʿAli al-Mastari (may God accept his pious works and pour prosperity and mercy over him and his ancestors and descendants) ordered the construction of this auspicious, blessed place. Then he gave it pious endowment as a khanqah for poor Sufis in order to approach God the Eternal and to be prepared for His noble face. (This was done) through the efforts of Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿAli al-Mastari in the year s[sic](seven hundred and seven).

b.) The portal's exterior surfaces are framed by several bands of Square Kufic inscription in light blue glazed elements set against dark blue background. The inscription comprises the repeating of the Shiʿi Shahada:

لا إله إلّا الله محمّد رسول الله على ولىّ الله

There is no God but God, Muhammad is his Prophet and ʿAli is his friend.

c.) The area below the springing of the muqarnas semi-dome of the portal is adorned with a Kufic inscription produced in sgraffito technique. The inscription comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Nur* (24:36-37). It was read by Blair.[704]

The text reads:[705]

فِي بُيُوتٍ أَذِنَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ
رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۙ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ۖ

[Such niches are] in mosques which Allah has ordered to be raised and that His name be mentioned therein; exalting Him within them in the morning and the evenings.
[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of zakat. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turn about.

[703] Blair 1986a, 66.
[704] Blair 1986a, 67.
[705] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/An-Nur (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).

d.) The monumental cursive inscription band frames the opening of the entrance which used to lead to the *khanqah*. It is produced out of dark blue glazed elements set against a hexagonal patterned background in turquoise. The style of the inscription is similar to the inscription framing the portal's exterior, but it features a different colour combination. The inscription was read by Blair and it comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:273-275).[706]

The text reads:[707]

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أُحْصِرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَغْنِيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ إِلْحَافًا ۗ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ
الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا ۗ وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا ۚ فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَانْتَهَىٰ فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

[Charity is] for the poor who have been restricted for the cause of Allah, unable to move about in the land. An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint, but you will know them by their [characteristic] sign. They do not ask people persistently [or at all]. And whatever you spend of good – indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.
Those who spend their wealth [in Allah 's way] by night and by day, secretly and publicly – they will have their reward with their Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.
Those who consume interest cannot stand [on the Day of Resurrection] except as one stands who is being beaten by Satan into insanity. That is because they say, "Trade is [just] like interest." But Allah has permitted trade and has forbidden interest. So whoever has received an admonition from his Lord and desists may have what is past, and his affair rests with Allah. But whoever returns to [dealing in interest or usury] – those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.

e.) The two niches flanking the interior of the portal's opening feature sgraffito Kufic inscription, which is divided between two niches. It consists of a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4) and it concludes with an invocation to God. The inscription was read by Blair.[708]

The inscription reads:[709]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,

[706] Blair 1986a, 68. TEI 37350 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[707] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-baqarah (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).
[708] Blair 1986a, 68. TEI 37352 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[709] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).

Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

The Congregational Mosque

a.) The inscription band which runs along the area of the springing of the dome of the octagonal pavilion is integrated into the mosque structure and produced out of fired brick elements with carved stucco inserts in the background. It is legible only in parts, because it is covered with a later wall painting. The inscription consists of a Qurʾanic passage (*Surah Al-ʿImran*, 3:18) and historic content mentioning the date of the completion of the pavilion (389/989-99). The inscription was read by Blair at the time of its uncovering during the 1970s restoration interventions.

The Qurʾanic passages reads:[710]

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

The historic part of the inscription reads:

النبیّ محمّد فی سنة تسع و ثلثمائة[sic][711]

[sic] Prophet Muhammad, in the year three hundred and nine (998-99).

b.) The historic inscription in *Naskh* style runs along the top areas of mosque's entrance portal. It is produced in sgraffito, in negative (carving of the background), on rectangular turquoise tiles. The inscription comprises content concerning the identity of the Ilkhanid mosque's rebuilding patron and the date of completion of these interventions as 704/1304-05.

It was read by Blair:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم أمر بالعمارات المستجدّة فی المسجد المولی المعظّم الصاحب الأعظم دستور ممالك العالم ممهّد قواعد الخیر و الکرم خواجة زین الدنیا و الدین خلیفة بن الحسین الماسترى بمساعی الصدر المعظّم شمس الدین محمّد بن علیّ النطنزی فی سنة أربع و سبعمائة[712]

Basmala. The great master, the august lord, minister of the provinces of the world, arranger of the foundations of goodness and generosity, Khwaja Zayn al-Dunya wa al-Din Khalifa ibn al-Husayn al-Mastari ordered the new structures in the mosque (This was carried out) through the efforts of the Great Sadr Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿAli al-Natanzi in the year seven hundred and four.

c.) The carved monumental stucco inscription band which runs along the extrados of the northern *iwan* of the congregational mosque features *Thuluth* style and it is set against a rich

[710] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ali-imran-18-qs-3-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).
[711] TEI 26748 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); Blair 1992, 58.
[712] TEI 3905 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); Blair 1986a, 60.

vegetal background. The inscription consists of a Qurʾanic passage (*Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18) and historic content, which includes the date of its completion and the partially legible signature of its master stucco craftsman. The inscription is dated 709/1309-10.

It was read by Blair:[713]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم انّما يعمر مساجد الله من آمن بالله و اليوم الآخرة ... مر [؟] من المسجد الصدر المعظّم تاج الدولة و الدين علىّ بن ... إبرهيم النطنزى سنة تسع و سبعمائة حيدر بن اصيل [؟] الدين

Basmala. Only he shall inhabit God's palaces of worship who believes in God and the last day (Qurʾan 9:18). [sic] of the mosque, the Great Sadr Taj al-Dawla wa al-Din ʿAli ibn [sic] Ibrahim al-Natanzi. The year seven hundred and nine (1309-10). Haydar ibn Asil (?) al-Din.

The Minaret

a.) The relief glazed tiles on the base of the minaret form a historic inscription with the date of the minaret completion and the name of the patron of this intervention. The inscription is dated 724/1324-25.

The inscription was read by Blair:[714]

أمر ببناء هذه المنارة العالية و الغرف الرفيعة الملك الأعظم الصاحب المعظّم أعدل ملوك العجم بانى قواعد الخيرات منبع السعادات باسط الأمن و الأمان ناشر العدل و الإحسان شمس الدولة و الدين ناصر الإسلام و عون المسلمين محمّد بن أبى علىّ تقبّل الله حسناته فى شهور سنة خمس و عشرين و سبعمائة

The august prince, the great minister, the most just of the princes of the Persians, builder of foundations of pious works, source of prosperities, extender of peace and security, spreader of justice and charity, Shams al-Dawla wa al-Din, defender of Islam and aid to the Muslims, Muhammad ibn Abi ʿAli (may God accept his good works) ordered the building of this high minaret and lofty chambers of the year seven hundred and twenty-five.

b.) The interior of the base of the minaret is decorated in terracotta and glazed elements forming a geometrical pattern. Two tiles comprise the name of the minaret's patrons and the identity of the overseer of the campaign.[715]

They read:

أمير كبير جلال الدين عبد الله أعزّه الله

The grand Amir Jalal al-Din ʿAbdullah (may God glorify him).

بمساعى الصدر الصاحب المعظم كمال الدين محمّد جزاه الله خيرا

Through the efforts of sadr, the great minister Kamal al-Din Muhammad (may God reward him well).

c.) The shaft of the minaret comprises *Khatt-i bannaʾi* produced out of glazed square inserts placed against a fired brick background, reading:

محمّد; يا رزّاق; يا ستّار; يا وهّاب; يا قهّار; يا صمد; يا اخر; يا رحيم; يا رحمن; يا الله; الله[716]

[713] TEI 3128 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); Blair 1986a, 61.
[714] TEI 3409 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); Blair 1986a, 68-69.
[715] TEI 37356 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021); Blair 1986a, 69.
[716] Blair 1986a, 70-71; TEI 37354 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).

Muhammad, O Provider, O Veiler, O Munificient One, O Subduer, O Ethernal One, O Final One, O Compassionate One, O Merciful One, O God.

d.) The upper part of the minaret's shaft also features similar *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions, which read:[717]

العظمة لله ; الملك لله

The Dominion belongs to God. Power belongs to God.

e.) The terracotta Kufic inscription band running around the shaft of the minaret, in its middle, features a repeating invocation to God, which is legible in parts and has been heavily restored:

[... الـ]معظّم أعدل ا[718]...

... the greatest, the most just…

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not comprise carved stuccos from the post-Ilkhanid period.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

We possess a detailed discussion of the patronage of the complex by Blair[719] and only a summary is recounted here. The case of Natanz is fortunate, because numerous historic inscriptions inform us about the patronage of the complex in the Ilkhanid period. This is unlike many other monuments. The information from Natanz therefore informs about patronage trends in Ilkhanid Iran.

Zayn al-Din ʿAli al-Mastari

Blair identifies as the main patron of the complex Zayn al-Din Khalifa ibn Husayn ibn ʿAli al-Mastari, based on readings of historic inscriptions of the *khanqah*, the shrine and the congregational mosque.[720] According to the historical text, ʿAli al-Mastari was a *naʾib* (lieutenant) of the chief Ilkhanid minister Saʿd al-Din Sawi.[721] The *nisba* al-Mastari, comes from the hometown of Zayn al-Din ʿAli, which is located close to the modern city of Arak. Blair explains that ʿAli al-Mastari was likely part of Uljaytu's mobile court, given his prominent bureaucratic position of a minister, linked to the chief minister Saʿd al-Din, which is confirmed by the tile *sahib*,[722] used in the inscriptions at Natanz complex.[723] The title and status of the patron are in line with similar cases of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) and the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1). There is however also an important difference. At Natanz, the patron ʿAli al-Mastari may have been personally initiated in the Sufi order of Suhrawardiyya and he also is said to have sponsored another Sufi Ribat in Baghdad of c. 1310.[724] The personal link between the patron and the complex is therefore more obvious at Natanz, and presents another type of

[717] Blair 1986a, 70; TEI 37358 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[718] Blair 1986a, 71; TEI 37362 (Last Accessed: November 2, 2021).
[719] Blair 1986a, 5-30.
[720] *Ibid.*, 6.
[721] They were both executed in 1312. Blair 1986a, 6-7.
[722] In addition to *kwaja* and *mawla*, two more generic titles for a prominent person. Blair 1986a, 9.
[723] *Ibid.*
[724] *Ibid.*, 11.

motivation for its patronage, apart from political motivations and their links to the image of the pious sponsor of a Sufi complex. It has been noted that Suhrawardiyya are a Sunni Sufi group, but that they also revered the Prophet's family, including ʿAli. Sponsorship and existence of such Sufi orders in Ilkhanid Iran may not have been uncommon, given the parallel case of ʿAlaʾ al-Dawla al-Simnani and his Kubrawiyya group and the *khanqah* near Simnan, which was also a Sunni group of Sufis who acknowledged and worshipped Prophet's family. But the Natanz complex gradually became a Shiʿite pilgrimage complex and lost its original meaning.

Shams al-Dawla wa al-Din Muhammad ibn Abi ʿAli

The inscription at the base of the minaret and on the *khanqah* portal records the name of this patron, who is referred to as *sahib* and *malik*, but who was however lower in rank, compared to Zayn al-Din ʿAli al-Mastari.[725]

The Overseers

We are fortunate to possess references to site overseers for the construction of the Natanz complex in four inscriptions. The mosque inscription dated 1304-05 and the *khanqah* portal inscription dated 1307-08, name the site overseer as Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿAli al-Natanzi. The inscription in the congregational mosque, dated 1309-10, names the overseer Taj al-Din ʿAli ibn Ibrahim al-Natanzi. The tile on the minaret base names the overseer Kamal al-Din Muhammad. These overseers are referred to as *sadr* in inscriptions, which according to Blair, should be understood as Ilkhanid officials, likely accountants, endowment supervisors.[726] According to Blair, they oversaw the financial side of the constructions, but it is difficult to exactly define their role.[727] Two important pieces of information emerge from the outlined data. Firstly the mosque and the *khanqah* were overseen by the same person, although the inscriptions mentioning the overseer are of different date. This suggests that the two building activities were interconnected, despite the apparent break in dates. Secondly, the overseers all bear local *nisba*s and were likely natives of Natanz, suggesting that for such roles locals would be chosen.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Craftsmen's Signatures

In her research, Blair proposes the identification of two signatures of craftsmen responsible for stucco decorations of the Natanz complex. One of the readings was recently further elaborated on by Quchani.

Congregational Mosque – The Northern *Iwan* Signature

This signature at the end of the stucco inscription band is read by Blair as *Haydar ibn Asil (?) al-Din*. It is identified by Blair as work of the renowned manuscript calligrapher Haydar, the disciple of Yaqut al-Mustaʿsimi. Blair also suggests that the same person was responsible for inscriptions of the Uljaytu mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1).[728] But Blair

[725] Blair 1986a, 12.
[726] *Ibid.*, 12-13.
[727] *Ibid.*, 13.
[728] See the discussion in the section on the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1).

does not read the signature completely. Moreover, these two signatures (Natanz and the Uljaytu mihrab) differ to the degree that they can hardly be considered signatures of the same craftsman. Finally, the Uljaytu mihrab and the stucco band at Natanz also differ in calligraphic styles and stucco artistic techniques, which is another argument in favour of the suggestion that these two stucco repertoires are in fact works of two distinct workshops.

ʿAbd al-Samad Shrine Signature

The stucco repertoire in the shrine of the Shaykh is signed in a peculiar, unique, manner: the craftsman's signature is divided into parts, which are all inscribed on the capitals, which sustain the stucco inscription. Quchani reads it as: *work of Hasan ibn ʿAli ibn Ahmad Babuya al-Bannaʾ al-Vidguli*. Blair identifies the artisan as the person who also signed a set of lustre tiles in the Metropolitan museum.[729] But this research work proposes that it is highly unlikely that the same craftsmen worked both in lustre tile and stucco media. Quchani's corrected reading of the signature demonstrates that the same stucco master also signed the mihrab at the *imamzada* in Mahallat-i Bala, which is later in date: 1335-36 (Cat. No. 13). In fact, as this research illustrates, these two repertoires may be works of the same craftsmen's workshop.

The two described signatures of stucco craftsmen are significant for the following reasons. They inform that stuccoworks of the shrine and the congregational mosque are not work of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. This also justifies the difference in their artistic techniques and overall calligraphic style employed for their inscriptions. Moreover, the stucco inscription in the congregational mosque should be understood as an independent intervention, perhaps posterior to the decoration of the shrine with stucco and lustre tiles.

Blair also proposes that the tile decoration of the façade of the complex is related to the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27) and that the two repertoires could be work of the same craftsmen.[730] She also proposes that similar decoration is found at the mosques of Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4) and Varamin (Cat. No. 28). Further evidence in support of this hypothesis is provided by this research and it also suggests that the Shah Muhammad shrine in Varamin is also the work of this workshop. The repertoires at Varamin are however closer to those of Sultaniyya, compared to Natanz. Natanz revetments display elements which are not found in Sultaniyya and might be technical developments of the workshop, which occurred through the passing of time. Blair suggests that after completing Natanz, craftsmen moved in two directions: stucco craftsmen towards the Friday mosque in Isfahan to produce the Uljaytu mihrab and the tile cutters towards Sultaniyya where they were responsible for the first decorative repertoire of the mausoleum.[731] It has been shown that Uljaytu mihrab is not related to the stuccos of the Natanz complex. The tile cutters however arrived from the direction of Sultaniyya and proceeded towards Ushturjan and Varamin.

[729] See Blair 1986a, 35, 39-40.
[730] *Ibid.*, 44.
[731] *Ibid.*, 45.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshops and Their Mobility

It is challenging to propose information regarding the stucco craftsmen's mobility for the case of the Natanz complex. Three stucco repertoires dating to the Ilkhanid period are found in Natanz, together with the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 31). Each of these repertoires is signed by a different craftsmen's master, which is surprising, given the proximity of the three repertoires and a relatively short time span of their production. This is however evidence in favour of the argument against regional stucco schools, because the Natanz case presents the example of the presence of three different stucco craftsmen's workshops with relatively distinct stucco styles, in a single settlement. It is challenging to suggest the provenance of these craftsmen's workshops, because the artistic techniques they used are not distinctive of a certain geographical region. Perhaps the style of the shrine's stucco inscription could indicate that the workshop was active in Central Iran.

f.) Monument Condition

Old photographs, especially those published by Pope and the ones conserved in the B. M. Smith archive at the Free and Sackler gallery, testify to the ruined state of the complex in the 1930s. The images document the *khanqah* indicating that much of its portal's upper section was in a ruined state. Moreover, the upper part of the minaret and the outer shell of the shrine's dome were also damaged and required repairs. The state of the congregational mosque was not well documented. Through the 1970s, the complex was heavily restored, which was also criticized by the IsMEO team, who recommended for the heavy restorations to halt.[732] The complex is currently in a good state of preservation. The missing parts are the lustre tile revetments of the shrine and the congregational mosque. The complex was subjected to further interventions in recent years.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research revises the constructive and decorative chronology of the Natanz complex and it re-examines our understanding. Amendments for the understanding of the history of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad prove important. The shrine pre-dates the Ilkhanid period and it was re-decorated several times in the Ilkhanid period. Furthermore, new information regarding the lustre tile revetments in the shrine and the congregational mosque is added with new identification of some lustre tile pieces stored in the V&A museum.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Godard 1936, 75-106; Pope and Arckermann 1977[1938], Vol. 3, 1052-1102; Wilber 1955: 133-134; Naraqi 1969, 382-387; Blair 1983; Blair 1986a; Blair 1986b; Blair 1992, 58-59; Waqifi 1995, 2 Vols.

[732] These documents are stored in the Galdieri archive at the EUR in Rome. Researched by the author in 2018.

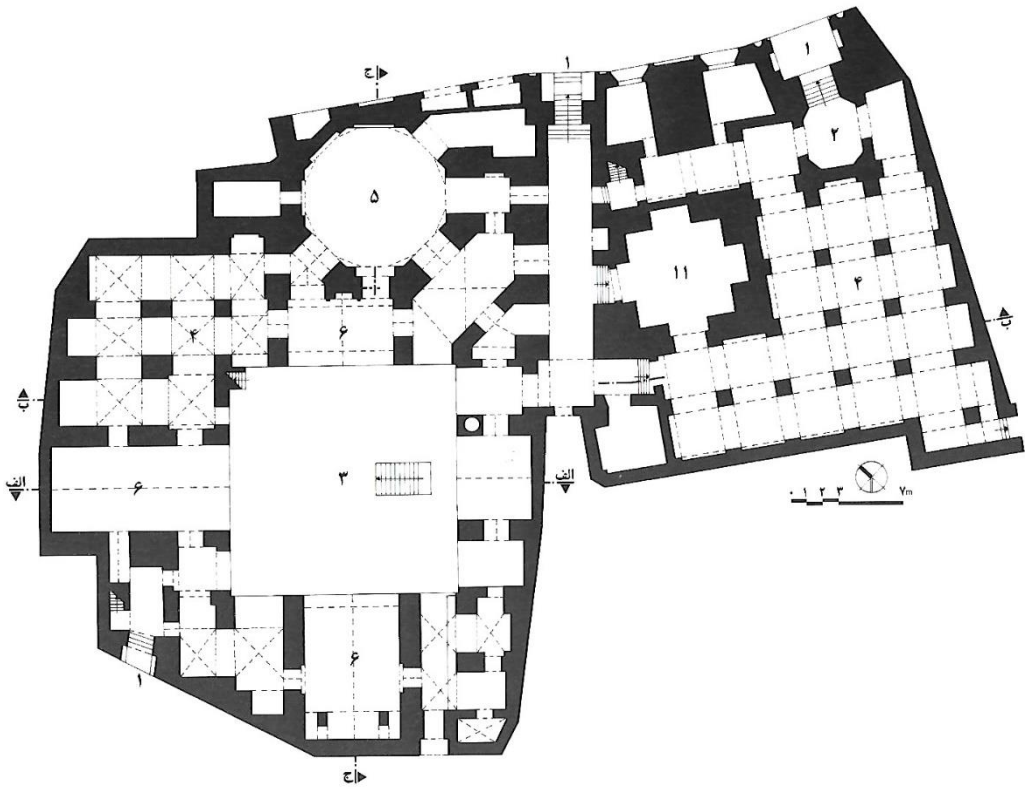


Figure 129: The ground plan of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 8, 73).

Chronology	Events	Mosque	Shrine
Pre- Seljuq period Octagonal Pavilion		Octagonal Pavilion construction - Dated inscription (terracotta and carved stucco) 998/999 CE	
Seljuq Period Seljuq mosque and shrine		Incorporation of the Octagonal Pavilion into a Seljuq mosque	First Seljuq shrine: four openings + carved stucco plug walls
Ilkhanid Period Ilkhanid complex: mosque, shrine, khanqah, minaret	Death of Shaykh ʻAbd al-Samad in 1299/ 1300		Repurposing of the shrine for the burial of the Shaykh
	Construction of the Khanqah in 1306-07	Installation of the lustre mihrab in the octagonal pavilion	
	1307-08	Rebuilding of the mosque	1307-08: refurbishing of the shrine of the Shaykh with stucco Signed and dated monumental carved stucco inscription and stucco columns 1307-08; possible rebuilding of the upper part of supporting walls and muqarnas dome construction
	1308		1308: application of the lustre dado and mihrab
	1310		Installation of the Ilkhanid lustre mihrab? Met 09.87 (dated 1310)
	Death of the main patron, ʻAli al-Mastari in 1312		
	Addition or completion of the minaret in 1324-25		
Safavid and Qajar renovations	Safavid iconoclastic interventions and renovations	Safavid fermans, whitewash of the mosque and the shrine	Safavid cenotaph, zarih and whitewash + birds defacing
	Further Qajar modifications	Wall paintings in the octagonal pavilion further repairs to the complex	

Figure 130: Table summarizing constructive and decorative undertakings at the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz.



Figure 131: The courtyard and the northern *iwan* of the Friday mosque of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex. The intrados of the *iwan*'s pointed arch comprises the monumental carved stucco inscription dated 1309-10 and signed by the master stucco craftsman. Lower surfaces of the interior of the *iwan* are coated with Safavid wall paintings.



Figure 132: Interior of the mosque's octagonal pavilion, view towards the *qibla* wall. The adhesion mortar of the Ilkhanid lustre mihrab mentioned in written sources is well preserved.



Figure 133: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription band in the intrados of the northern *iwan* of the Friday mosque of Natanz with the date of completion and craftsman's signature (rotated by 90 degrees).

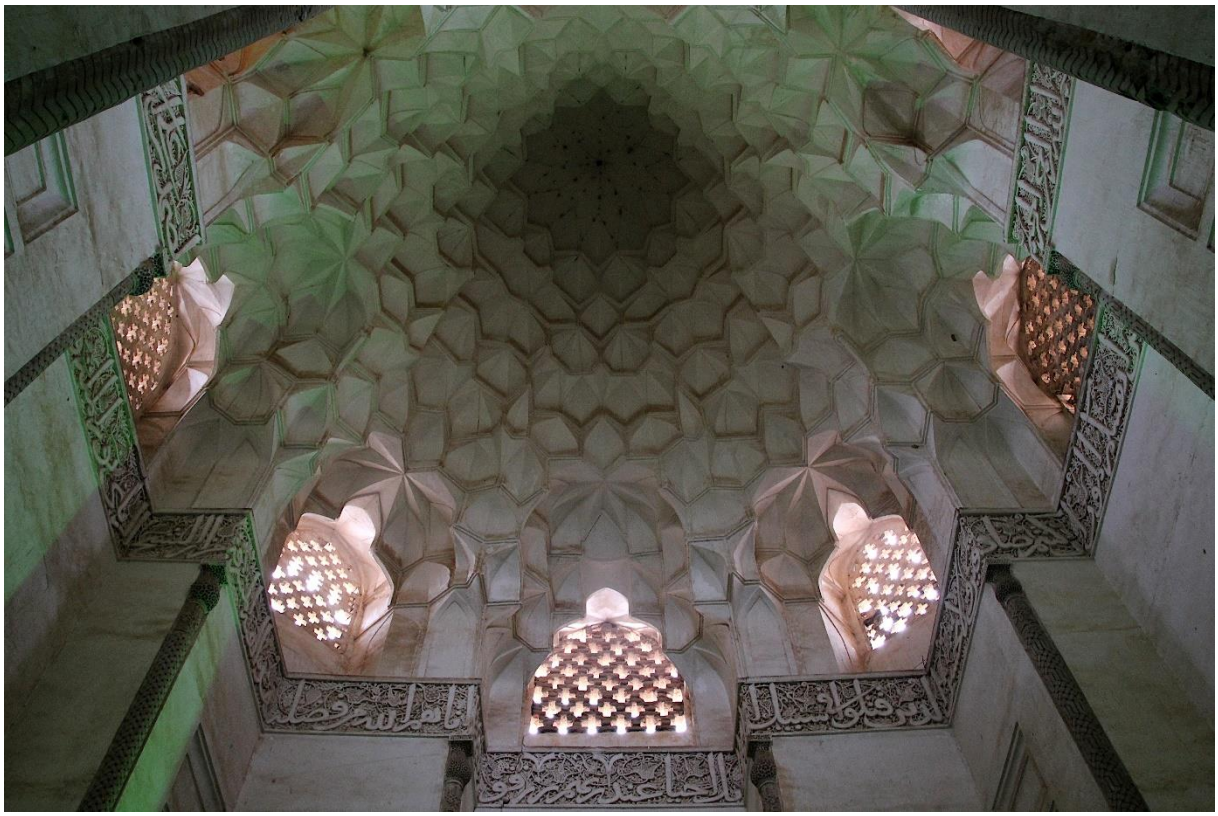


Figure 134: Interior of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad showing the monumental stucco columns supporting the carved stucco inscription with patronage information and the date of completion 1307-08, topped by the muqarnas dome.

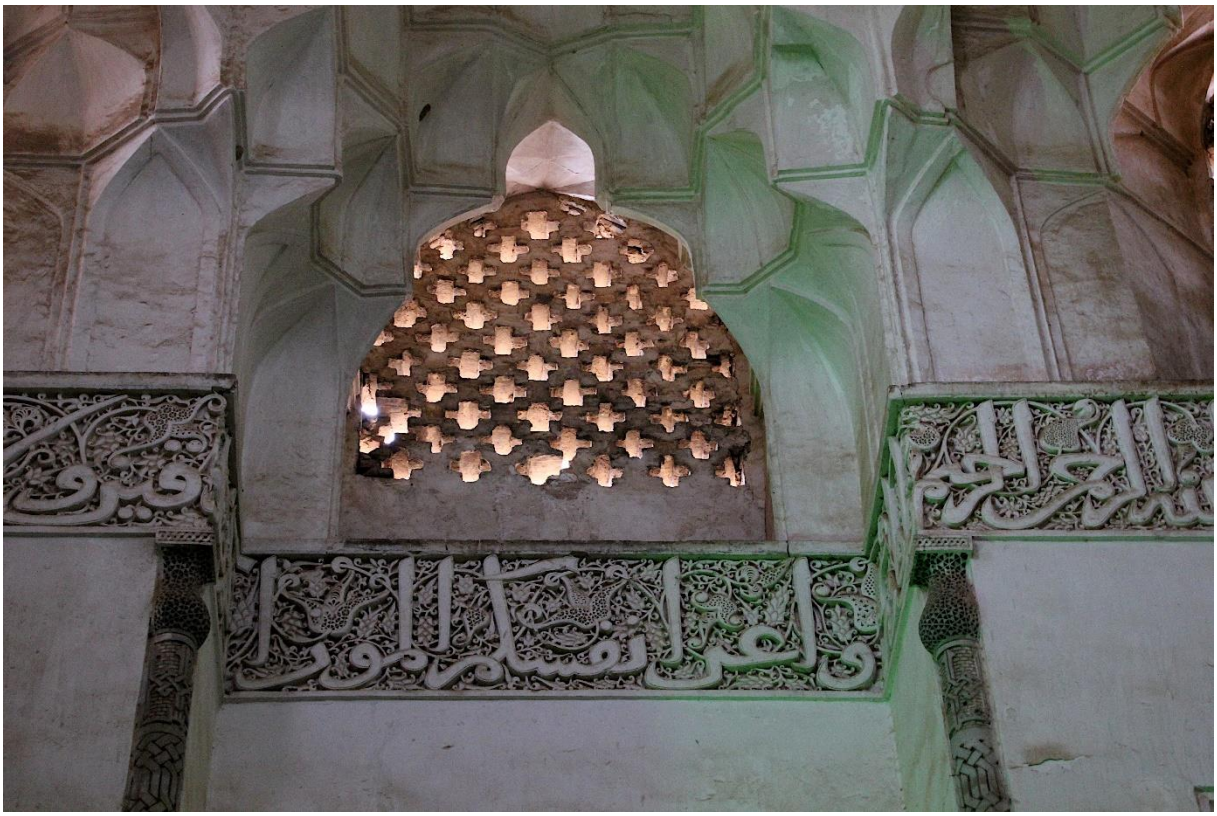
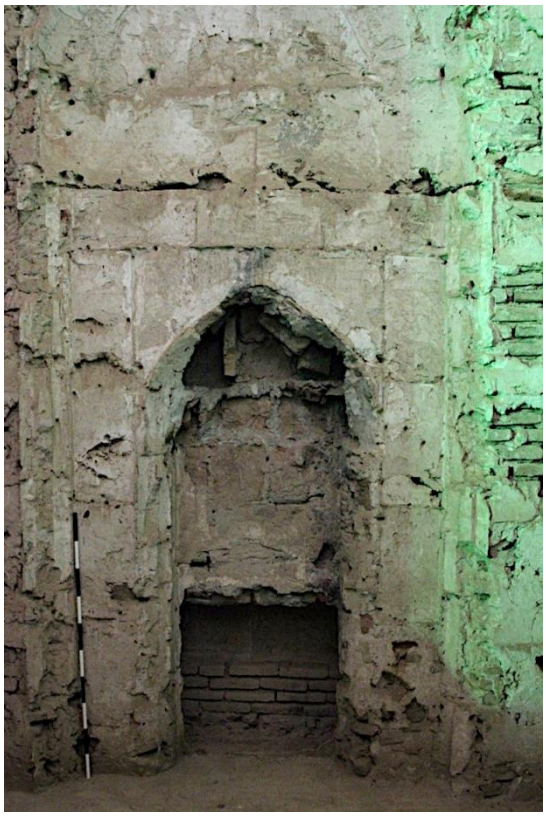


Figure 135: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription topping the supporting walls of the shrine of the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad.



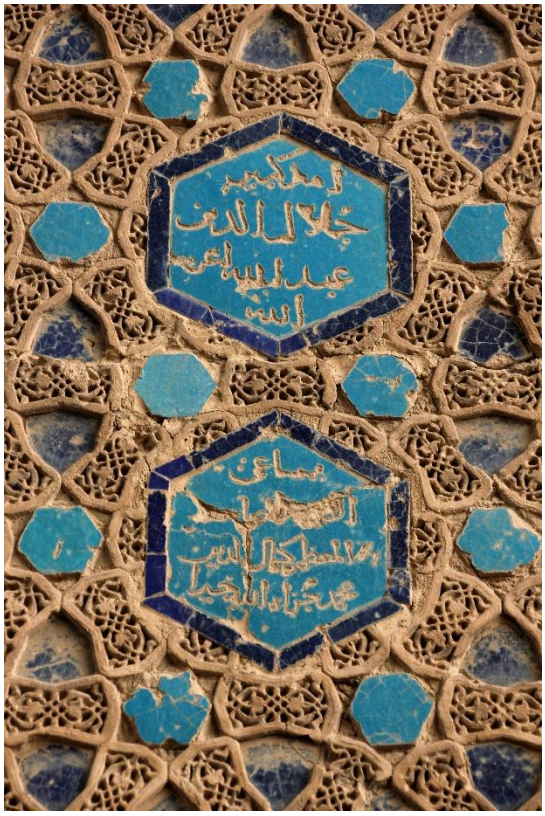
Figure 136: Detail of the dado area of the shrine of the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad revealing several constructive and decorative phases: carved stucco plugs (phase one), carved stucco columns (phase two), adhesion mortar for the star and cross tiles topped by the bird imagery monumental lustre tile frieze dated 1307-08 (phase three).



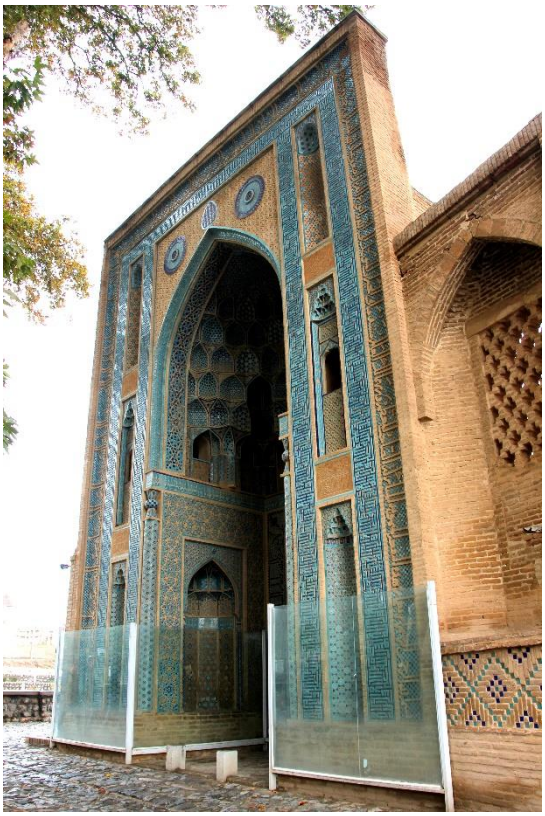


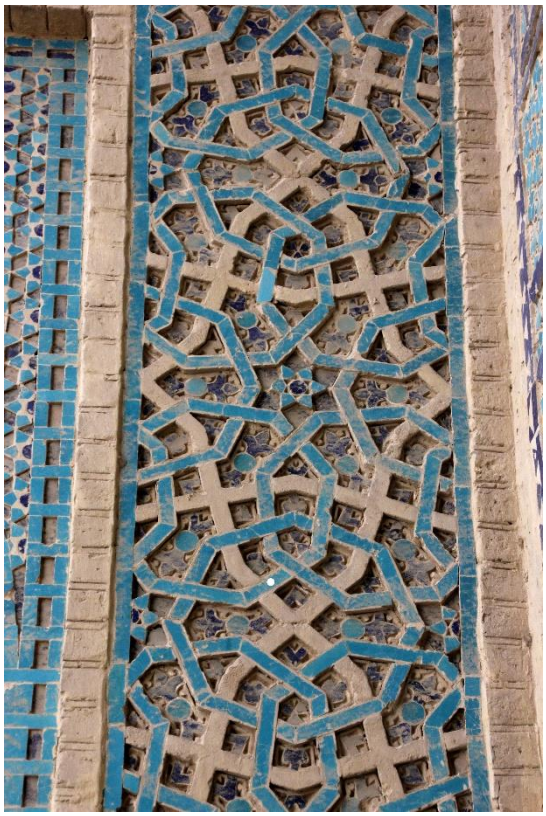
Figures 137 and 138: Left: tile adhesion mortar in the shrine of the Shaykh, which was employed for the installation of the lustre mihrab to close off one of the four original passages into the shrine. Right: a set of three lustre tiles in the Metropolitan museum of Art, New York, which could have covered Shaykh's cenotaph or might have constituted parts of the mihrab in the shrine (Inv. No. 09.87; 123.2 x 59.7 cm).





Figures 139 and 140: Left: the base of the minaret of the Natanz complex, with terracotta and glazed tiles from the Ilkhanid period is topped by a Qajar inscription. Right: detail of the strapwork design of minaret's base with inscription concerning sponsorship of the minaret construction.





Figures 141 and 142: Left: the portal of the no longer extant *khanqah* structure of the Natanz complex with ceramic revetments in glazed and sgraffito media. Right: detail of strapwork design revetments in the intrados of the portal's pointed arch (left hand side) showing revetments which are closely related to those of the first decorative phase in the interior of Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya and the entrance portal of the Varamin Friday mosque.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 13

Monument Name: Imamzada Yahya wa Fazl

Figs: 143-151.

Associated Names: the monument is commonly referred to as the *Imāmzāda* of Yaḥya and Fażl,[733] who are descendants of the Imam Musa Kazim and are buried in the structure. It is located in the upper part of modern Mahallat, which is referred to as the Upper Mahallat (Mahallat-i Bala).[734] Occasionally, the monument is called the Imamzada of the Upper Mahallat (Imamzada Mahallat-i Bala).

Monument Type: *imamzada*.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in several phases (phase one: Ilkhanid funerary structure with a stucco mihrab; phase two: Safavid enlargements of the mausoleum into a pilgrimage complex; further modern modifications of the monument).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the original structure of the monument is not possible to discern due to its subsequent modifications. The Ilkhanid monument was most likely a modest funerary structure which resembled a tomb tower or a mausoleum.

Location: Mahallat-i Bala settlement; c. 85 km as the crow flies in the western direction from the city centre of Kashan.

GPS location of the monument: 33.9182488 N; 50.4535582 E.

Monument Investigation: November 9, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The Mahallat-i Bala constitutes the upper part of the Mahallat settlement and it is located in the eastern part of the Zagros mountains.[735] It is strategically located near the river source and the northern mountain slopes with water supplies. The city is situated on the crossroads of communication routes leading from Isfahan, via Mayma and Dilijan to Qum and Sava, and on the east-west axis connecting Kashan with Gulpayigan and Arak. The settlement was a historically significant centre of Zoroastrian religion and some ruins of Zoroastrian Fire temples are preserved in the settlement. There are also remains of Hellenistic architecture from the time of Alexander the Great. During the Ilkhanid period, the settlement was part of the territory of Greater Iraq. Mahallat assumed a specifically important trade role with Isfahan in Safavid times. Traditions of flower growing started around 1300 and Mahallat is presently one of the most important centres for flower cultivation. The settlement has been mainly left out of historic

[733] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[734] The northern part of the settlement was the living quarter of the descendants of Muhammad.
[735] Information regarding the historical and geographical context of the monument is summarized from: Wilber 1955, 137; http://www.emamzadegan.ir/emamzadehbank/show-10805.aspx and http://www.emamzadehfazloyahya.blogfa.com/ (Last Accessed: November 25, 2020).

written sources. The area around Mahallat is of significance for stone mining (travertine) and it is an important agricultural centre for grain production.

b.) Architectural Structure

The original architectural structure of the *imamzada* is difficult to discern, because it has been heavily modified, especially during the Safavid period and in modern times. The monument has not been subject to a systematic scrutiny and the most detailed description is provided by Wilber.[736] Some information and some observations can be proposed based on the comparison of photographs documenting the *imamzada* through its history. The *imamzada* was originally a modest structure which most likely resembled a tomb tower or a small mausoleum with square or rectangular ground plan and a dome topping its structure. Safavid and modern modifications of the monument reflect its significance in the popular Shiʿite culture and the cult of the Shiʿite Saints. These modifications comprised enlargements and additional embellishment of the monument's interior and exterior, to cater to pilgrims and the faithful of the sacred graves. Moreover, the entire structure was enclosed, not unlike the Imamzada ʿAbdullah in the nearby Gudzar, or the Baba Afzal mausoleum at Maraq (Cat. No. 14), by an extensive mosque structure with spaces for prayer and ablution, which provide infrastructural support for the pilgrimage and religious activities on the site.[737]

Construction Phases

Current architectural structure of the *imamzada*, its architectural revetments and photographic documentation provide evidence indicating that the *imamzada* was most likely constructed in the Ilkhanid period, when a stucco mihrab was installed in its interior. The stucco mihrab was briefly discussed by Wilber[738] and Blair.[739] Both authors propose different dates for the stucco mihrab (from c. 1300 to 1335-36), which provides an approximate date to indicate the time of its construction. Wilber also recounts that the local inhabitants stated that the mihrab was moved within the monument at around 1920.[740] The monument was subjected to enlargement and redecoration interventions in Safavid and modern times.[741]

Phase One - The Ilkhanid Mahallat Imamzada

Wilber visited the monument in 1943, stating that except for the stucco mihrab in the interior of the *imamzada*, the rest of the structure dates to Safavid or later times.[742] He also suggests that only the chamber in which the mihrab is located could date to the Ilkhanid period. The chamber's supporting walls were however covered with layers of plaster, and its exterior surfaces have been repaired, which did not enable Wilber to propose any further information regarding the structure. Wilber follows Godard's suggestion and proposes that the date of the stucco mihrab should be understood as the year seven of the Ilkhanid era, which is respectively

[736] Wilber 1955, 137.
[737] This is also in line with the transformations of the Imamzada Kararr in Buzan.
[738] Wilber 1955, 137.
[739] Blair 1986a, 93-98; Blair 1986b, 391.
[740] Wilber 1955, 137.
[741] The latest modifications of its external decoration were put in place in recent decades and they can be discerned based on comparison of photographic documentation of the monument by Wilber.
[742] For the discussion of the monument see Wilber 1955, 137.

1308.[743] The mihrab date has been read again by Blair with alternative reading 1335-36 which is more plausible.[744] In both cases the readings of the date of the mihrab propose the first decades of the fourteenth century and they indicate that the mihrab is the work of Ilkhanid craftsmen.[745]

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The *imamzada* was modified following its foundation in the Ilkhanid period. Its structure was enlarged and redecorated with plaster layers in the interior and tiles on its exterior.

Safavid Period

Wilber classifies the monument as a tomb shrine, but he does not provide detailed information regarding modifications of the monument which occurred in Safavid and later periods. At that point, the *imamzada* may have been transformed by addition of side spaces which determined its new rectangular ground plan. The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab therefore came to constitute the prayer niche which is located on the *qibla* wall of the new structure. Similar to the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Baba Afzal mausoleum in Maraq (early 14th century; Cat. No. 14), the old mihrab came to present a religious reliquia, together with the tombs of saints, which was preserved when the monument was enlarged and made the focal point of religious rites in the refurbished structure.

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Ground Plan

Detailed characteristics of the Ilkhanid ground plan of the *imamzada* remain unknown, due to the lack of evidence regarding the original Ilkhanid funerary structure.

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Elevation

Similar to the ground plan, the characteristics of the Ilkhanid elevation of the *imamzada* are unknown.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The existence of the tombs in the interior of the monument indicates that the structure was intended as a funerary monument from its outset. Later enlargement of the monument resulted in change of its function from a modest funerary commemorative building into a pilgrimage structure with apposite prayer space for the devotees of the cult of Saints. This was further enhanced by construction of the adjacent mosque which signalled another transformation of the

[743] The suggestion that the mihrab is dated with Ilkhanid, rather than Hijri years, would present an exception to the standard way in which dates were written by Ilkhanid-era stucco craftsmen.
[744] Blair explains that the 736 year could be read by reading the inscription's lower part counter clockwise and notes the presence of two words in the lower sections of mihrab's niche. The date can thus be read separately from the first part of the inscription in the rectangular register, which states that the mihrab was made in the time of Amir al-Muʾminin. Blair's explanation and reading of the date of the mihrab production are convincing and there still remain fragments of these words in the bottom area of the mihrab. Blair, communication to the author.
[745] The mihrab was restored after Wilber's and Blair's visits, but the lower part of the mihrab, which contains its date, remains in a rather ruined state. The content of the inscriptions read by Wilber is nowadays only partially legible. Given the peculiarities of the production of the mihrab and the difficulty to connect it to the other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires, it is necessary to rely on the mihrab's date reading by Wilber and Blair.

monument into a more extensive pilgrimage complex. Subsequently, a cemetery formed around the monument.

c.) Architectural Revetments

With the exception of the stucco mihrab in the interior of the *imamzada*, there are no other historical architectural revetments preserved on the site. Photographs of the monument by Wilber, from 1943, provide evidence informing that the current exterior architectural revetments have been applied on the monument's surfaces in recent decades. Monument's interior is covered with layers of whitewashed plaster.

Interior Revetments

The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab is located on the eastern wall of the southern part of the monument's structure. The modern structure of the monument is not aligned with the mihrab in order to accentuate the prayer direction due to topographical features of the inclined terrain where the *imamzada* is situated.

The Mihrab

Figs. 143-151.

Neither Blair nor Wilber published photographs of the entire mihrab, by instead focusing onto its inner niche which conserves the date of its production. Examination of the mihrab reveals that it has recently been restored and that its numerous parts were reconstructed based on suppositions regarding their original appearance. The stucco mihrab is of medium dimensions and its design is relatively modest. Repairs to the mihrab partially manage to integrate its visual appearance, but they also present issues related to its studies and understanding of its original appearance. The core of the mihrab is presented by a pointed arch niche, which contains a smaller niche of the same form in its interior. The niche is topped by two spandrels and framed by a large framing band with a Qurʾanic excerpt (the *Basmala* and Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48: 1-2). The deep and curved form of the double niche is juxtaposed to the flat surface of the framing inscription band and two spandrels. This juxtaposition determines the mihrab's dynamic appearance.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The interior of the mihrab is relatively shallow and it is formed by a pointed arch. Central and lower parts of the niche are divided into three visual units and topped by the lunette. The area below the lunette is filled by a stucco panel with the information regarding the completion date of the mihrab, which needs to be read as two inscriptions (Figs. 146-147). These inscriptions were interpreted as 1335-36 by Quchani and Blair, at the time when the fragments of the second inscription, located at the very bottom of the niche, were better preserved. The main inscription on the panel of the niche reads: *in the days of the Commander of the Faithful, may God bestow His blessings upon him:* فی ایام امیر المومنین رضی الله عنه. The last line of the inscription on this panel needs to be read together with its two fragments in the lower bottom left and right corners of the niche: it reads; *on the date of the year seven hundred and thirty-six:* بتاریخ سنة سنة ثلثین

سبعمائة.[746] The inscription is written in *Naskh* style and it is placed against a plain background. The composition of the inscription is unusual and it may reflect the craftsmen's creativity in proposing inscription designs.

The lower portion of the niche features a stucco panel with Square Kufic inscription composition repeating *Muhammad* and *ʿAli* four times. The panel may not have been completed, perhaps because the stucco body dried up before the craftsmen managed to carve it. Importantly, the design of the panel is identical to the panels of the Maraq stucco mihrab (Cat. No. 14). Below the panel there is a hole carved into the mihrab with an unknown function. The top section of the mihrab's niche features a lunette of restricted dimensions and ornamental design of repeating geometrical pattern with star and hexagonal elements. The framing band of the niche's pointed arch features a simple repeating element of a knotted border. The niche is flanked by a pair of small stucco columns, which feature knotted capitals and perforations on their shafts. The niche arch is topped by a pair of spandrels which feature symmetrically arranged floral elements. The niche is flanked by two vertical bands of inscription in Kufic (they feature repeating invocation: *The Dominion belongs to God*), on each side. The two inscription bands are designed in Kufic style with slightly elongated shafts, which displays a relatively modest design. The background of the inscriptions is slightly recessed and it features a repeated filling element of abstracted flower blossom and floral composition. The niche with the flanking inscription bands constitutes the lower portion of mihrab's large niche. The sides of the large mihrab niche are adorned with bands of repeating palmette design.

The lower part of the large mihrab niche is flanked by a pair of columns. These columns feature capitals composed out of triangular and square forms and they are embellished with floral elements. The column shafts are decorated with repeating incised geometrical patterns. The lunette of the large mihrab niche features a symmetrical half-palmette composition which was carved on two visual planes. The lunette displays a modest design with a lack of detailed ornamental elements. The niche is framed by the pointed arch, which is outlined by an inscription band with a Qurʾanic quotation (*Surat al-Ikhlas*; 112:1-4; in a fragmented state) in *Naskh* style, with unassuming letter forms lacking diacritical marks and vocalization. The inscription is placed against a slightly recessed background of vegetal scrolls. The inscription band is inclined and concave and it functions as a visual mediator between the niche and the mihrab's external panels.

The niche of the mihrab is topped by a pair of spandrels, which are symmetrical in their design. The spandrels feature triangular floral ornamentation compositions which have been heavily perforated to comprise diverse geometrical patterns. Central parts of these floral elements retain ellipsoidal openings with red pigmentation and damaged edges. The remaining parts of the edges of these openings indicate that circular elements of the spandrels originally featured either perforated circular protruding bosses or they could have been covered with stucco grid elements. The two spandrels of the mihrab are separated by a specific element, which takes the form of a leaf and it contains the signature of the master stucco craftsman responsible for the mihrab's production. This signature (Fig. 151) is partially damaged and difficult to read. Its most complete reading has recently been read by Quchani as: *work of Hasan ʿAli Ahmad*

[746] Blair Sheila, personal communication to the author.

Babuya al-Vidguli.[747] This allows the Mahallat mihrab to be connected to the carved stuccos in the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12) signed by the same stucco master (see below). The described structure of the mihrab is framed by the monumental framing band with Qurʾanic inscription (the *Basmala* and *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-2) written in *Thuluth* style with traits of *Naskh*. The inscription framing band was badly damaged and only some of its original parts still constitute the mihrab. Blair notes issues of orthography, which are no longer discernible, likely due to the restoration of the band. The inscription is set against a floral scroll background, although an extensive portion of the background remains undecorated. Corner parts of the inscription are filled with knotted elements which assure for its smooth transition.

Mihrab Production and Appearance

The mihrab features a rather unusual style of stucco aesthetics. It was produced with standard artistic techniques, which comprise carving a single stucco layer, carving two layers of stucco and application of protruding elements on carved stucco panels. The unusual appearance and aesthetic characteristics of the mihrab are therefore not impacted by the selection of the stucco artistic techniques, or as suggested by Blair, by the old age of the stucco master leading the workshop.[748] The unusual visual appearance of the stucco mihrab is conditioned by other factors. The material composition of the stucco body impacted the mode of carving the stuccos. This resulted in a rather flat appearance of its stucco panels. Moreover, it may have also impacted the level of ornamentation detail which could be produced and designed with such stucco material. The visual appearance of the mihrab is therefore characterized by relatively large stucco panels which present rather flat and non-protruding stucco ornamentation and epigraphic compositions, which lack detail in their design and production. Rather than being considered a regional characteristic of stucco revetments, the appearance of the mihrab needs to be understood as impacted by the stucco preparation and material composition. The damage to the mihrab and its subsequent reconstruction assured for its relative visual integrity, but they do not solve the problem of reading and interpretation of its completion date and the signature of its stucco master craftsman.

Exterior Revetments

The photograph by Wilber documents the *imamzada* with bare exterior surfaces of the monument's supporting walls and with its dome on the tower structure drum without decoration.

Stucco Polychromy at Mahallat-i Bala

The stucco mihrab of the Imamzada at Mahallat-i Bala was in a relatively damaged state during its research by Wilber and Blair, but it has undergone subsequent restoration interventions which aimed to resolve the issue of its visual integrity. The mihrab's original parts, especially

[747] Personal communication to the author by Sheila Blair. See also McClary and Grbanovic 2021, 19.
[748] Blair suggests that the poor quality of the mihrab was due to the craftsman's advanced age (Blair 1986a, 393). Bloom has argued that it was designed on paper by Hasan ibn ʿAli, and then realized by an incompetent hack in the remote location (Bloom 2006, 300). It is more likely that the material properties of locally available material, including an increased clay component (Moslem Mishmastnehi, personal communication, June 24, 2020), determined the reduced plasticity which impacted the performance of carving.

the recessed background of its inscription bands, or the panels featuring floral ornamentation, may conserve traces of original polychromy, which are light and dark shades of red. Use of red instead of blue, for background colouring of stucco reliefs is not frequently encountered in Ilkhanid and Seljuq stuccos.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Mahallat-i Bala

Discussion and observations of the stucco mihrab at the Imamzada of Mahallat-i Bala illustrate that stucco craftsmen who produced the mihrab combined several stucco artistic techniques for its making. The majority of stucco panels constituting the mihrab has been produced by carving a single or double stucco layer. Furthermore, the craftsmen produced either protruding circular bosses or reticular hollow circular structures for the central parts of the large pair of spandrels. The presence of these elements reflects the craftsmen's advanced skills. The described knowledge of stucco artistic techniques and the mentioned variety of stucco perforation patterns on the mihrab's panels strongly contrast the relatively modest and undetailed composition of the mihrab's inscription bands and ornamentation. Rather than being caused by a stucco revetment designer or lack of designing skill, these shortcomings seem to derive from characteristics of the employed stucco material for the mihrab's production (see above).

The Mahallat-i Bala Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

These traits of the mihrab render it difficult to associate with any other stucco revetment from the Seljuq or Ilkhanid period. But the comparison of craftsmen's signatures indicates that the mihrab is the work of the same workshop as the earlier dated (1307) stuccos of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12). As mentioned, the aesthetic differences between the Mahallat mihrab and other repertoires may have roots in stucco composition properties, rather than them being a specific craftsmen's choice. Perhaps the closest examples should be considered those located in the city of Qum (Cat. No. 15); the Bagh-i Sabz funerary monuments and the Imamzada ibn-i Jaʿfar, which all display stuccos of low relief.

The Mahallat-i Bala mihrab stuccos are characterized by a relatively plain appearance without specific relief depth. The majority of panels and ornamental elements of the mihrab are heavily perforated. Perforations of stucco, carving of stucco body and design however do not reveal any attention to, and any aim of creating a detailed stucco relief. This is in stark contrast with the majority of stucco repertoires of the period. The visual appearance and aesthetic characteristics of the Mahallat-i Bala mihrab are therefore rather unusual and they present an exception within the panorama of Ilkhanid stucco repertoires.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not contain any furnishing from the Ilkhanid period.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The interior of the small niche of the mihrab consists of two inscriptions; one is written in *Naskh*, and it comprises two parts, which provide the date of the completion of the mihrab. The second inscription is the Square Kufic panel with four times repeating composition of *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*. This panel interrupts the inscription with the date of completion of the mihrab, which starts on the bottom right from the Square Kufic panel, continues as the lowest line of the invocation in the *Naskh* panel and concludes on the bottom left below the Square Kufic panel. The date of the mihrab's completion makes it one of the late examples of the Ilkhanid period.

The historic inscription reads:

فی ایام امیر المومنین رضی الله عنه

In the days of the Commander of the Faithful, may God bestow blessings upon him.

This inscription comprises the first two lines of the text in the central panel of the mihrab's interior niche. It should be understood as an invocation. It is unlikely for it to be work of a restoration.

The second part of the inscription reads:

بتاریخ سنة ستة ثلثین سبعمائة

On the date of the year seven hundred and thirty-six (736/1335-36).

The location of this inscription and its division into three parts may reflect the craftsmen's creativity in finding the space for the inscription, which could have however also been a deliberate choice. The inscription is very important because it provides the date for the mihrab. In connection to the signature of craftsmen, and the earlier work of the same stucco workshop at the Natanz complex around 1307-08, the date at Mahallat illustrates that the same craftsmen's workshop may have been active in the northern part of Central Iran over almost three decades.

b.) The interior niche of the mihrab is flanked by two epigraphic bands on its sides which feature Kufic style and are set against a background of abstracted vegetal patterns. These inscriptions consist of repetitions of the invocation: *The Dominion belongs to God*.

c.) The mihrab's large lunette is framed by a cursive inscription band featuring *Naskh* style and consisting of a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Ikhlas*, Qurʾan, 112:1-4). The inscription protrudes from the vegetal composition in its background, but it does not comprise any diacritical marks or vocalization.

The surviving text reads:

بسم اللة ... الله ... الـ...د لم یلد و لم یو لـ... کفو احد

The entire text reads:[749]

[749] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

This Qurʾanic excerpt is very frequently featured in Ilkhanid and earlier stuccoworks. One of the closest examples are the stuccos of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).

d.) The mihrab's monumental lunette is topped by a pair of spandrels which are visually divided by a leaf-like medallion in their middle. This medallion is specific to the mihrab of Mahallat and it was incorporated into its design in order to feature the signature of the master stucco craftsman responsible for the mihrab's production.

The most complete reading of the inscription was recently proposed by Quchani:[750]

عمل حسن علی احمد بابویه بنا ویدگلی

Work of Hasan ʿAli ibn Ahmad Babuya al-bannaʾ [al]-Vidguli.

As mentioned above, the signature is the same as the one in the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz, which suggests that the two stucco repertoires are works of the same craftsmen's workshop. Furthermore, the newly read *nisba* of the signature indicates that the craftsmen might have had connections and family ties to the geographical area in which they operated.

e.) The monumental framing band inscription has been heavily restored, but still some of its fragments are missing. Blair notes issues of orthography, which are no longer discernible. The inscription displays a style between *Thuluth* and *Naskh* and it comprises limited elements of vegetal ornamentation in its background. The inscription features the *Basmala* and Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-2).

The inscription reads:

(right) بسم اللة الرحمن الرحيم انا فتحنا لك فتحا مبينا

(top) ايغفر لك الله ما تقدم من

(left) ذ نبك و ما تاحر و يتم نعمته عليك و يهد صرطا

The entire text reads:[751]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا

[750] Personal communication to the author by Sheila Blair.
[751] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 25, 2020).

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

Although the mihrab of the Imamzada at Mahallat-i Bala contains inscription identifying the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop who produced it and the date of the production of the mihrab, the monument does not contain any historic inscription which would provide information regarding its patronage. In line with many other funerary structures in Qum, Isfahan or Hamedan, the monument may have originally also been decorated with a dado area in stucco, which could contain historic inscriptions stating the information regarding the patron of the architectural structure and its decorative repertoire. Some approximate information regarding the patronage of the *imamzada* can nevertheless be put forward, based on the observations of analogous Ilkhanid monuments with stuccos. The closest parallels are funerary monuments of Sayyids or other revered personages, such as the mausolea at the Bagh-i Sabz or the Imamzada Jaʿfar in Qum (Cat. No. 15); they indicate that the construction and decoration of the Ilkhanid *imamzada* at the Mahallat-i Bala was either sponsored by the family of the deceased, if not the deceased themselves. Alternatively, the patron could be a local notable who intended to illustrate his religious piety and devotion by means of patronage of the graves of Sayyids.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The Mahallat-i Bala stucco mihrab is an important stucco revetment because it contains the date of its production and signature of its craftsmen, although they raise issues of interpretation.

Following Wilber and Blair, the latest reading of the mihrab's craftsmen's signature is by Quchani; *Work of Hasan ʿAli Ahmad Babuya al-bannaʾ al-Vidguli*. Although Blair identifies the person as the famous and renowned lustre tile artist from Kashan, who was also in charge of the production of stucco and lustre tile revetments of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), this is unlikely. As this research demonstrates, carved stucco and lustre tile production present two separate sectors of craftsmanship.[752] Furthermore, the discussion of the Mahallat Imamzada mihrab illustrates that the reduced visual characteristics of the mihrab were most likely caused by the stucco material, rather than supposed old age of the master stucco craftsman. The signature of the Mahallat mihrab matches the signature of stucco craftsmen on the capitals of columns in the interior of the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine at Natanz, which is of an earlier date. Natanz and Mahallat are 142 km (as the crow flies) apart, which makes it possible for the craftsmen to have travelled between the two monuments and produced the revetments. If so, the covered craftsmen's mobility distance would be similar to the case of the Nushabad, Qamsar and Kashan mihrabs and to the mobility of the Damghani craftsmen in the area between Damghan, Bistam and perhaps Qala-yi Naw (Cat. Nos. 18, 19, 21). Another important evidence

[752] The discussion of the mihrab and the study in question illustrates that lustre tile production and stucco revetment production were two entirely separate arts and that it is most unlikely that these two signatures could be interpreted and identified as signatures of the renowned lustre tile artist. In fact, Blair admits that the date of the Mahallat mihrab, 1335-36 would indicate that the lustre artist would have been seventy-two years old at the time of its production, she speculates that the poor quality of the mihrab was exactly the result of the advanced age of the craftsman.

is the newly read *nisba* of the head of the stucco craftsmen at Natanz and Mahallat, *al-Vidguli*, which is a settlement located near Kashan, between Natanz and Mahallat. This *nisba* needs not be geographical, but it renders the proposed hypothesis more plausible, because it demonstrates another type of connection between the craftsmen and the geographical unit in which they worked. Furthermore, the aesthetic appearance of the Mahallat mihrab was determined by the stucco material, and its visual traits are characteristic of Ilkhanid stuccos of monuments located in the city of Qum (Cat. No. 15).[753] These parallels confirm that the Mahallat stucco mihrab date (1335-36) is reliable and that the mihrab is the work of craftsmen who operated in the geographical area between Natanz, Kashan and Mahallat-i Bala.

f.) Monument Condition

Wilber mentions that, according to the information of local inhabitants, the stucco mihrab of the *imamzada* was moved from one of the eastern supporting walls to its current location.[754] He also reports that the monument's exterior and interior were repaired shortly before his survey of the *imamzada*. Comparison of Wilber's photographs of the *imamzada* with more recent images illustrates that the monument had undergone further modifications during recent decades. The exterior of the monument's tower-like domed structure has been decorated with ceramic tiles in different colours, which feature the Shiʿite Shahada and invocations to God with geometrical ornamentation. The mosque structure which encloses the monument from the northern and north-eastern sides is also a modern construction; it serves to monumentalize the *imamzada*. The interior of the *imamzada* comprises architectural surfaces covered with layers of white plaster. The mihrab has recently been restored and enclosed into a protective glass case. The visual integration of the mihrab by means of the reconstruction of its damaged or missing parts may have been performed due to the mihrab's function as the focal point for prayers in this functioning religious structure. These reconstruction interventions focused on the external monumental inscription band, but the majority of other fragmented panels were not reconstructed. The performed interventions are adequate for the mihrab's use by the local congregation and pilgrims.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

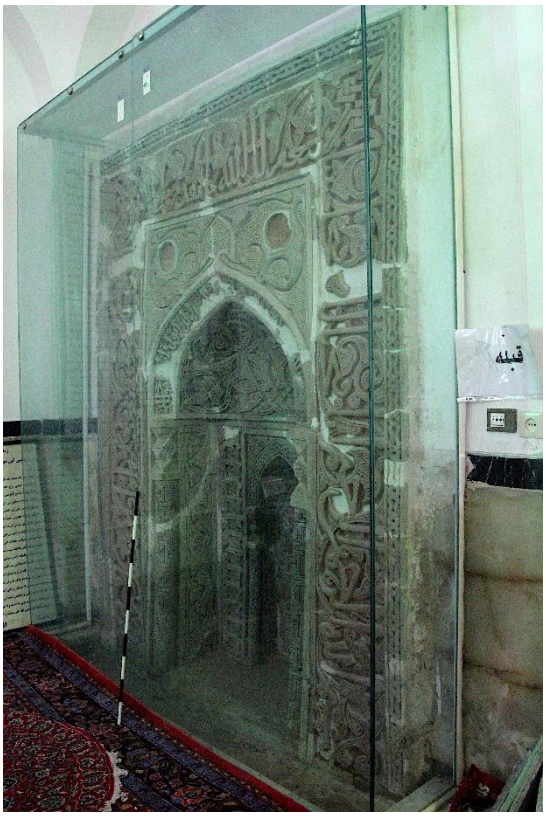
The discussion of the Mahallat-i Bala Imamzada illustrates that the modern structure of the monument conserves an Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in its interior, which dates from 1335-36 and which is the work of the same craftsmen's workshop as the stuccos of the shrine of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz. The Mahallat mihrab is the only historic revetment of the monument and the focal point of its interior. It was preserved due to its sacredness and integrated into the growing pilgrimage and funerary complex.

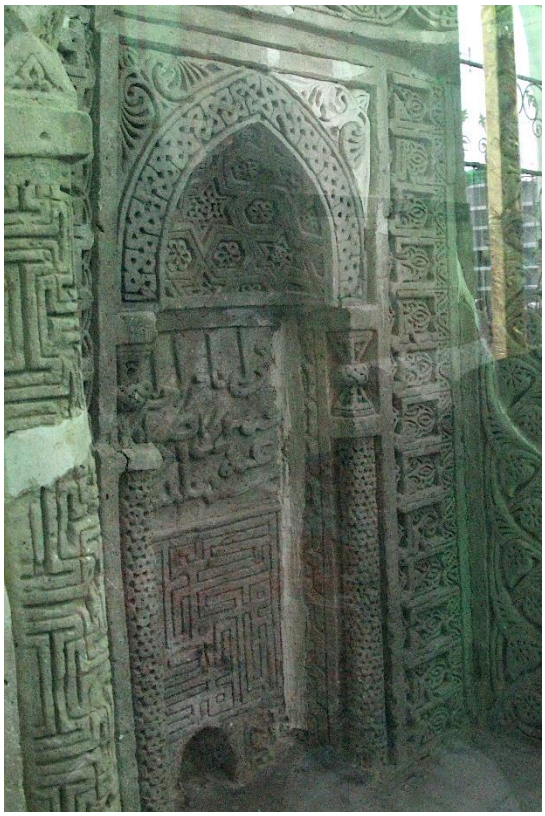
This mihrab retains peculiar aesthetic traits which were determined by the preparation of the stucco body, rather than craftsmen's selection of artistic techniques and their approach to stucco carving. Parallels between the mihrab of the Imamzada at Mahallat-i Bala, Natanz and the Ilkhanid monuments in Qum indicate that the mihrab is the work of a workshop mobile in the given geographical region. The reading by Quchani and interpretation of master craftsman's

[753] For example, the three mausolea of the Bagh-i Sabz and the Imamzada Jaʿfar in Qum (Cat. No. 18).
[754] Wilber 1955, 137.

signature at Mahallat and Natanz, indicates that this was a master stucco craftsman and that the signature is difficult to identify with the famous lustre potter. It is rather the signature of the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop, responsible for the production of the mihrab. The mihrab was part of an originally more extensive repertoire of stucco revetments in the *imamzada*, which may have comprised a stucco dado.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Blair 1986a; Blair 1986b; Wilber 1955, 137.





Figures 143 and 144: The carved stucco mihrab of the Imamzada Yahya wa Fazl at Mahallat-i Bala. Left: view of the carved stucco mihrab in the protective glass case. Right: detail of mihrab's interior niche.



Figure 145: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala: the monumental lunette framed by a fragmented Qurʾanic framing inscription band in *Naskh* style.



Figure 146: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala: the central panel in the mihrab's niche with the main part of its historic inscription, which might be the work of the mihrab's later modification.





Figures 147 and 148: Details of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala. Left: the Square Kufic panel in the niche of the mihrab; fragments of the date of completion of the mihrab are visible below this panel on the left and right sides. Right: detail of the niche framing Kufic inscription.



Figure 149: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala: monumental spandrels featuring distinct types of stucco perforation might have originally also retained applied protruding elements.



Figure 150: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala: the right hand side corner of the mihrab's monumental framing inscription, which was heavily restored.



Figure 151: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala: the master stucco craftsman's signature which is placed in the space between the mihrab's monumental spandrels. The signature's form is unique.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 14

Monument Name: Baba Afzal mausoleum

Figs. 152-160.

Associated Names: the monument is frequently referred to as the Buqʿa of Baba Afzal Kashani, which is sometimes abbreviated to *Buqʿa* Baba Afzal.[755] The monument received only a scant mention in English, in the Ganjnama, where it is referred to as the Mausoleum of Bābā Āfżal,[756] or the *Maqbara* of Baba Afzal.[757] The mausoleum is situated in the settlement of Maraq, which is known under different transliteration versions as Marak and Maraq (in Persian it is spelled: مرق), the latter being more commonly used. The building can also be referred to as the Tomb of Baba Afzal. The monument received its name after the main personage buried in the central part of its structure, the renowned poet and philosopher Baba Afzal al-Din Muhammad ibn Hasan Maraqi Kashani, known under the abbreviated name: Baba Afzal.[758]

Monument Type: the original mausoleum structure evolved into a pilgrimage complex.

Chronology: this research proposes that the first mausoleum was built in the Ilkhanid period; through its subsequent enlargements and additions under later dynasties, especially Safavids and Qajars, the modest mausoleum structure was transformed into a pilgrimage complex in its own right.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): chronology, dating and construction phases of the monument are difficult to understand, due to excessive modern modifications and uninformed restoration interventions on the monument's structure. Observations of its ground plan suggest that in its original iteration, the Ilkhanid monument was a simple tomb structure with a square ground plan and an entrance porch, which was most likely topped by a double-shelled dome of conical form. An external dome shell could have featured a high drum and conical shell, similar to the one almost contemporary dome structure of the shrine of the Sufi Shaykh of ʿAbd al-Samad at the near-by Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The monument's subsequent modifications transformed it into a more extensive pilgrimage complex with additional prayer and lodging spaces for the faithful, a monumental courtyard and further entrance portals, which increased its monumentality.[759]

Location: the monument is located on an elevated slope of the Karkas mountain range, in an unpopulated mountain area, which is juxtaposed to, and well visible from, the Maraq settlement, located towards the south-east, compared to the mausoleum.[760] The monument and the

[755] Humayun employs the term *buqʿa*. See Humayun 1994, 106.
[756] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[757] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[758] See Humayun 1994, 105, 106.
[759] The dome of the core structure of the complex was also rebuilt.
[760] According to Humayun, the mausoleum is located on the mountain slopes, remote from the settlement, in the area where Baba Afzal himself used to wander in nature and lived his mystic experiences. Humayun 1994, 106.

settlement are situated c. 30 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Kashan in the direction of south-west.

GPS location of the monument: 33.9089894 N; 51.145294,125 E.

Monument Investigation: March 1, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Maraq was a historical hinterland of Kashan and it was impacted by its significance.[761] Kashan is considered one of the oldest inhabited settlements in the Iranian territory. It played a significant role as one of the main settlements on the Silk Routes; it prospered economically from trade revenues, and it evolved into an important cultural centre. Maraq thus functioned in relationship with Kashan and it was a source of fruit and especially rose water for Kashan's markets. Maraq is nevertheless a small settlement, and the location of the Mausoleum of Baba Afzal was not impacted by its political or economic or even geographically strategic location, but by the fact that Baba Afzal was native to Maraq. Upon his death, only a relatively modest mausoleum was constructed to house his tomb. Only at a later stage, especially in the Safavid and Qajar periods, did the mausoleum achieve an increased political significance and attract further patrons who sponsored its enlargement and transformation into a pilgrimage centre in its own right.

Background

The monument was built on the site with its primary function to house the tomb of the revered philosopher and poet Baba Afzal al-Din Muhammad ibn Hasan Maraqi Kashani. Some essential pieces of information about the learned person are needed to facilitate the monument's study and understanding; they are provided here, based on information from Encyclopaedia Iranica, by Chittick,[762] and an article by Naser Takmil Humayun.[763]

While written works of Baba Afzal, poet and writer of philosophical oeuvres, a native of Maraq,[764] are well known; there are very few pieces of information regarding his life, including the year of his birth and that of his death.[765] According to historic writings about Baba Afzal by Sayyid Nafisi and Mujtaba Minuyi, he was born towards the end of the 12th century and he passed away in 667/1269.[766] Humayun reports that 606/1210, 610/1213, 667/1269 and 707/1308 have been proposed as dates of Baba Afzal's death, and he accepts 667/1269. Sharif and Qasimi propose the most plausible date to be 667/1269.[767] Chittick contrasts these statements, by sustaining that 610/1213-14 is the most likely date of the death of Baba Afzal.[768] There are further reports that he did not pass away in Maraq and that his remains were brought to the current site only later and that the mausoleum was built at a later point.

[761] Summary from: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baba-afzal-al-din (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).
[762] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baba-afzal-al-din (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).
[763] Humayun 1994.
[764] *Ibid.*, 105-106.
[765] *Ibid.*, 106.
[766] *Ibid.*, 106.
[767] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[768] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/baba-afzal-al-din (Last Accessed: November 18, 2021).

The Life of Baba Afzal

Although little is known about Baba Afzal's life, his written works speak of his teachings, philosophy and belief. He was reportedly imprisoned for sorcery and he did not have a positive relationship with the ruling class during his lifetime. The tomb of Baba Afzal in Maraq is a popular pilgrimage destination; it houses two main graves, the second one belonging to the ruler of Zang, who is reported to have been Baba Afzal's devoted disciple. According to Chittick, it is very improbable that Baba Afzal corresponded with Nasr al-Din Tusi. Based on his works, he proposed that Sunnism is the best religious path. The comprehensive list of Baba Afzal's works and further works attributed to him is published by Chittick.

Some information concerning the life of Baba Afzal, provides significant points related to the monument housing his tomb. Information regarding the year of Baba Afzal's death could be crucial for the comprehension of the monument's constructive chronology, as the *post-quem* date for the beginning of its construction. The m construction is unlikely to have begun prior to 1213-14, but it could have also taken place at a significantly later point. Judging from Baba Afzal's life, it is less likely that the mausoleum was subject to state patronage, because he was not popular with the authorities. The monument's more likely patron could have been the Zangid ruler, who was Baba Afzal's ardent disciple and who could have also acted as a powerful patron. Although it is difficult to associate the mausoleum with a religious group, its Sufi connections may have not been strong and from its outset, the mausoleum may have been a Sunni monument; it was later taken over by the Shiʿite faithful.

The mausoleum of Baba Afzal so far received only limited attention and it requires a thorough discussion for its comprehension.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 152-153.

The oldest part of the monument is its core structure with a square ground plan. This structure is connected with the southern and northern entrance portals and it is flanked by further architectural spaces on its western side. The monument's eastern part faces the modern courtyard and it features a two-*iwan* structure forming its fictitious façade towards the courtyard. The monument's southern entrance portal was extended into a terrace-like structure facing the cemetery and opening the view towards the surrounding natural landscape and Maraq.

Construction Phases

The once modest Mausoleum of Baba Afzal was transformed during historic periods into a pilgrimage complex in its own right. The monument can thus be classified as a sacred pilgrimage destination.[769] But this was a gradual process which occurred through numerous modifications of the mausoleum's structure sponsored by diverse patrons. The monument's history is challenging to comprehend, due to extensive restoration interventions. The original monument from around the mid-thirteenth century was a free standing mausoleum with a square

[769] Naraqi 1969, 355.

ground plan and perhaps an entrance portal. Subsequently, the second cenotaph was refurbished in the mid-fifteenth century,[770] but it is not clear if this phase included modifications of the mausoleum's architectural structure. The mausoleum's Safavid modifications are dated and described in the epigraphic programme of its wooden door. The majority of the mausoleum's enlargements and its transformation into a mid-size pilgrimage destination took place in the Qajar period. At that point, further architectural structures were added to the mausoleum on its southern, northern and western sides, and the courtyard was formed on its eastern side. These architectural spaces retain wall paintings with a historic inscription dating these interventions to 1853.[771] This phenomenon of transformation of a minor mausoleum into a proper pilgrimage complex in its own right is not unique.[772]

Phase One - The Earliest Baba Afzal Mausoleum – the Ilkhanid Foundation

The date of the mausoleum's first constructive undertakings varies depending on the scholarly understanding of the time of Baba Afzal's passing, from 1213-14 to 1307. There however exists no evidence proving that the exact year of Baba Afzal's death marked the beginning of the mausoleum's construction.

The mausoleum's *in situ* examination provides evidence proposing that the first constructive intervention consisted of an erection of a modest square mausoleum structure with the entrance on its south-eastern side. The installation of the stucco mihrab was part of this intervention; this is suggested by its regular and symmetric position in the exact middle of the mausoleum's *qibla* wall. Two large cenotaphs in the mausoleum's interior are symmetrically aligned and perpendicular to the *qibla* direction to not obstruct the view of the mihrab for the faithful. The position of the two cenotaphs, in relation to the stucco mihrab, indicates that they were not intended to form an *imamzada*, where the tomb would constitute the focus of the rite, but that this was a structure which functioned as a mausoleum for the tomb of Baba Afzal and his disciple (and his sons). The stucco mihrab and the two cenotaphs (which were refurbished during the later interventions) were all part of the mausoleum's first constructive undertaking. It is plausible that the mausoleum originally comprised a more extensive stucco repertoire.

Qasimi adopts the suggestion of Sharif ʿAli to date the stucco mihrab to the thirteenth century, but he does not report any specific reasoning for this date.[773] Naraqi is more cautious and he does not explicitly propose any dating for it.[774] He suggests that there exist certain parallels between the stucco repertoires of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz[775] (Cat. No. 31) and the stuccos of the Miyandih Imamzada of Hasan and Husayn in Qamsar. Due to the absence of other historic revetments, the Maraq stucco mihrab is important in providing the dating for the time of the mausoleum's construction.

[770] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[771] *Ibid.*, 84.
[772] Compare to the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Imamzada Jaʿfar in Qum (Cat. No. 15) or the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum in Linjan south of Isfahan (Cat. No. 2).
[773] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[774] Naraqi 1969, 351-55.
[775] For which this research suggests an Ilkhanid date in the first decades of the fourteenth century.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Phase Two – The First Modifications – the Timurid Phase

The wooden case of the cenotaph of Baba Afzal carries the date (1441) and it retains the signature of its craftsman, but any historic inscription in connection to the cenotaph's patron is absent.[776] The cenotaph refurbishment may have been sponsored by a patron to aesthetically update and sanctify the tomb of Baba Afzal (and thus the pilgrimage space.[777] This Timurid cenotaph could signal the change in perception of the religious affiliation of the pilgrimage centre. The cenotaph contains the earliest explicitly Shiʿite inscriptions, with blessings to Twelve Imams illustrating the (new) Shiʿite orientation of the mausoleum.

Phase Three – Major Safavid Modifications

According to Qasimi and Naraqi, the mausoleum had undergone major modifications in the Safavid period, they are difficult to discern due to extensive restoration interventions.[778] Qasimi and Humayun mention that the dome of the mausoleum was rebuilt in the Safavid period (it was further redecorated in the Qajar period). This intervention perhaps included redecoration of the mausoleum's interior.

Phase Four– Qajar Restorations of the Pilgrimage Complex

Photographic documentation and the mausoleum's *in situ* examination illustrate that the majority of the monument's current structure was in place in the Qajar period, but it is challenging to distinguish Qajar from Safavid interventions. The mausoleum's dome was rebuilt and redecorated in the Qajar period, when the majority of the complex was also visually unified with wall paintings. Naraqi, Humayun and Qasimi list a single historic inscription date for Qajar interventions as 1853,[779] but the inspection of the interior of the mausoleum reveals another craftsman's signature with the date 1924. It is unclear if the second date and signature designated only restoration interventions, or production of a new wall painting repertoire. This wall painting repertoire features depictions of muqarnas forms and living creatures; gazelles and peacocks with flower vases and geometrical ornaments. These elements could allude to the mystic nature of the building.

The mausoleum's dome exterior was coated with a geometrical composition and Square Kufic inscriptions formed with fired bricks with glazed surfaces (repetition of: *Muhammad*). In the Qajar period, the mausoleum was further structurally enlarged into a pilgrimage complex in its own right. These interventions comprised construction of another entrance to the mausoleum on its northern side, the building of the adjacent courtyard on its eastern side and further spaces

[776] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[777] The saying goes that the cenotaph was sponsored by the ardent disciple of Baba Afzal, the ruler of Zang, but the date on the cenotaph is considerably later, compared to the time in which Baba lived. The cenotaph is produced with the widespread artistic technique, which comprised carving of separate pieces of inscriptions and ornamentation and their assembling into the cenotaph structure. The signature of the cenotaph reads: *harra-hu al-Abd Mahmoud ibn Habiballah* and it is important because it designates the work of the craftsman as the activity of carving (harra-hu – he carved it, rather than "work of" or "written by / he wrote it").
[778] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84; Naraqi 1969, 351-55.
[779] See, for example: Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.

on its western side. The main, southern entrance was monumentalized with a porch structure which extends along the entire southern side of the monument.

An old photograph of the mausoleum was issued as a stamp on August 22, 1950, in a series of stamps of mausolea, on the occasion of the commemoration of the restoration of the Ibn Sina mausoleum in Hamadan. The stamp number IR B17 depicts the Baba Afzal mausoleum.[780] It documents the view of the monument from its south-eastern side, showing the courtyard structure, the southern porch and the core of the mausoleum with the polygonal dome and its decorative elements. The photograph is of significance also because the entire complex was heavily restored in 1990, as reported and documented by Qasimi.[781] At that point, the ceramic revetments of the dome's exterior were entirely substituted and further modifications and rebuilding of structures adjacent to the core of the complex was performed.[782]

To summarize, although the complex and its decorative repertoire have undergone major structural and decorative modifications in the Safavid and Qajar periods, its oldest parts or architectural revetments, which are the most sacred elements of the building (the stucco mihrab and the wooden cenotaphs of Baba Afzal and the presumed disciple), were kept original. The craftsmen in charge of later re-decorative interventions on the monument selectively redecorated its structures and took decisions regarding which revetments needed to be substituted and which should be kept and integrated into new decorative repertoires with different aesthetics, religious message and production technology. In the case of the Baba Afzal complex, the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab and the wooden cenotaph of Baba functioned as a kind of monumental religious *reliquia* and raison d'être of the monument, which radiated the sacredness into the entire complex and therefore sanctified it and the visitors. The architectural structure of the complex thus assumed a function of an architectural reliquary and not just a pilgrimage complex which catered for the faithful who visited the sacred site.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

The monument's ground plan (Fig.152) in the Ilkhanid period consisted of two main compounds: the mausoleum of square form and its monumental entrance portal. The *qibla* supporting wall features a niche, which houses the stucco mihrab. Its relationship to the mihrab niche and its dimensions indicate that the niche was part of the structure at the time of its construction and that the stucco mihrab is contemporary to the first mausoleum. The described structure has currently two openings on the northern and southern supporting walls, which are preceded by entrance portals. The southern entrance is the main one and it is plausible that there already was an entrance portal on this side of the mausoleum in the Ilkhanid period.

[780] https://colnect.com/en/stamps/stamp/397284-Tomb_of_Baba_Afzal_Kashan-Restoration_of_the_tomb_of_the_philosopher_Avicenna-Iran (Last Accessed: July 6, 2020).
[781] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 86.
[782] The photograph of the monument from 1950, illustrates that the modern ceramic revetments of dome's exterior do reflect those from the Qajar period and that the architectural structures adjacent to mausoleum's core are not modern constructions.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

The Ilkhanid mausoleum's elevation comprised the mausoleum structure, which presented the highest point with its dome and the lower elevation of its entrance portal. The current form and elevation of the mausoleum are from Qajar times. Presently, the mausoleum's core comprises the square shaped structure formed by supporting walls. Pendentives filled with muqarnas serve as elements of transition to the domed structure. They are topped by the high polygonal drum carrying the dome. This drum originally featured window openings, which were closed off at a later point, either because of static, or to prevent the mausoleum's interior from being affected by humidity infiltration.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument functioned as the mausoleum of Baba Afzal (a funerary structure) in the Ilkhanid period. The particular square form and dimensions of the structure were chosen for the monument with the goal of providing the faithful with sufficient surface for prayer rites. The position of the two cenotaphs in the mausoleum's interior, illustrates that the monument was not intended as an *imamzada*.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Figs. 154-160.

The oldest revetment of the mausoleum complex is its stucco mihrab which dates to the Ilkhanid period. The mausoleum comprises the Timurid wooden cenotaph of Baba Afzal and a Safavid door. The interior of the mausoleum and its southern entrance portal also feature Qajar wall painting repertoire. The colourful decoration of the mausoleum's dome external shell was recently restored, but it reflects its original Qajar ornamentation and design.

The Mihrab

Figs. 154-160.

Background

The mausoleum's stucco mihrab has so far not been discussed in detail and its only publication are a few mentions by Taghavinejad, where she does not discuss its production, dating or ornamental and epigraphic elements, but just the corner ornaments.[783] The mihrab's most complete description is by Naraqi,[784] who dates it to the thirteenth century, to the period after the death of Baba, which he accepts as 1269. The mihrab is unfortunately neither discussed nor described by Sajjadi, in his monograph about pre-Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs, which indicates that Sajjadi also considered it as dating to the Ilkhanid period. The description of the Baba Afzal complex by Humayun heavily relies on information published by Naraqi and does not bring up any original points. The monument's stucco mihrab therefore requires a detailed analysis of

[783] Salihi and Taghavinejad 2018, 64, 68.
[784] Naraqi 1969, 352-53.

artistic techniques, epigraphic and decorative programme, which will allow its more precise dating to be proposed. Its comparison to other stucco oeuvres in the northern part of Central Iran provides further information concerning Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen's mobility, stucco production and aesthetics.

The Mihrab and its Niche

The maximum height and width of the mihrab are reported by Naraqi, as 2.5 m. The stucco mihrab is fitted in a pointed arch niche in the exact middle of mausoleum's *qibla* wall. Observations of joints between mihrab panels and the niche suggest that what is seen today as the mihrab is its original design. The mihrab consist of common epigraphic and ornamental elements. The main peculiarities of the mihrab are the two Square Kufic panels in its lower portion. The rectangular structure of the mihrab was designed in order to fit into the niche and upon the mihrab's completion the space between the mihrab and the edges of the pointed arch niche was filled with additional stucco panels. The mihrab's design concept consists of a non-epigraphic internal niche surmounted by a pair of columns which form an angular arch topped by a pair of triangular spandrels. The described structure is framed by the monumental inscription band in *Naskh* style and a set of thin bands with repeating vegetal or geometric ornamentation. The remaining space of the niche is filled with a lunette-like composition of palmette-derived elements on its top, and two panels with geometric elements flanking it, in addition to two Square Kufic panels on each side of the mihrab.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The mihrab's internal niche (Fig. 156) is relatively flat, with the exception of its lunette. The two columns forming the niche are of modest forms and they feature capitals the ornamentation produced with constant carving and perforation of the stucco surface. The rectangular vertical panel between the two columns features a symmetrically laid out composition of palmette elements and it is framed by a thin band of repeating geometric patterns. The lunette of the niche displays a symmetrical floral composition produced with heavy perforation and carving. The two triangular spandrels display geometrical compositions with perforated geometric and floral elements.

The monumental framing inscription band features *Naskh* style Qurʾanic excerpt (the *Basmala* followed by *Surat al-Israʾ*, 17:78).[785] The inscription protrudes from its floral background characterized by elaborately produced abstracted peony elements. The inscription letters are produced with a peculiar approach, in which they are delineated by a double outline (Fig. 157). This peculiar characteristic is frequent in the geographical area stretching between Isfahan, Natanz and Qom.[786] The top space between the mihrab's core and its edges is filled with a stucco panel which assumes the form of a lunette. This panel features a complex and symmetrically aligned ornamental composition of palmette-derived elements. Similar to the mihrab's other parts, the lunette comprises ornamental elements with heavily perforated

[785] See Naraqi 1969, 352-53.

[786] Compare to the Haftshuya Friday mosque stucco mihrab (Cat. No. 3) dated to the first decades of the fourteenth century and the monumental inscription above the supporting walls of the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), dated 1307. See also Cat. No. 15.

surfaces, which lighten their visual weight. The side spaces between the mihrab and the edges of its architectural niche are filled with stucco panels. These panels display repeating perforation patterns, which form grids of six-pointed star elements, and which function as a geometrical background for the mihrab's core. These panels might be partially concealed by the supporting wall structure.

Mihrab's Square Kufic Panels and their Parallels

Figs. 159-160.

Two peculiar panels featuring Square Kufic compositions flank the mihrab's lower section. These two Kufic inscriptions display two differing compositions of repeating and intertwining names of *ʿAli* and *Muhammad*. The composition on the mihrab's right hand side is of particular significance for the determination of the mihrab's more precise dating. This panel features a composition of the names of *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*; its design is identical to the Square Kufic inscription panel in the lower part of the central niche of the stucco mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala (Cat. No. 13).[787] This research demonstrates that the Square Kufic panel compositions of the Ilkhanid period were, as a rule, designed as unique works of art and would not repeat. These panels therefore provide strong evidence suggesting that these two mihrabs could be works of the same stucco craftsmen's group.

Mihrab Dating and Craftsmen

This research work also proposes that the stuccos of Mahallat-i Bala are likely produced by the same workshop as those in the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The similarities in types of inscription styles and production of monumental inscriptions between Natanz and Maraq have been pointed out above. Accordingly, it is possibly to hypothesize that the Baba Afzal mihrab, the Mahallat-i Bala mihrab (Cat. No. 13) and the monumental inscription and columns of the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) may be the works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop, which operated in the given geographical area in the first decades of the fourteenth century. It is thus plausible that the stucco mihrab of the Baba Afzal funerary complex was produced around 1300-1330s. Accordingly, the Ilkhanid mausoleum with the stucco mihrab was a structure that could have been built over the tomb of Baba Afzal after he was already buried in the cemetery of Maraq.

Some further implications for the understanding of Ilkhanid stucco revetments emerge from this discussion. Firstly, the case of Baba Afzal complex stucco repertoire is an example where the monument's patronage is less likely to have been sanctioned by the state. Secondly, the location of the monument and the stuccos, in a relatively remote settlement, illustrates that stucco repertoires and their monuments were not necessarily strategically located along the main communication routes. It was the death of the revered personage and his burial in his hometown that determined the monument's location and prompted the mobilization of craftsmen for stucco production. Thirdly, observations of employed artistic techniques and the mihrab's aesthetic characteristics indicate the activity of another Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen's

[787] Carving of the Mahallat-i Bala panel may not to have been entirely completed.

group, on a regional level, in the geographical area stretching between Mahallat-i Bala, Maraq and Natanz, at distance of some 150 km as the crow flies between these monuments.

Other Revetments

The stucco mihrab is the oldest part of the architectural revetments in the mausoleum's interior. Further architectural revetments include the Qajar wall painting repertoire (see above).

Exterior Revetments

The only exterior architectural revetment is the glazed brick decoration of the exterior shell of the mausoleum's dome which is the result of rebuilding and redecoration undertaken in the Qajar period.[788]

Stucco Polychromy at Maraq

Close observations of the stucco mihrab reveal that the entire repertoire was whitewashed several times. Layers of white colouring are beginning to peel off from the stucco relief and the right-hand side corner of the monumental framing inscription displays the stucco body. It is of dark brown colour with occasional presence of a dark red hue, which may be part of the mihrab's original polychromy.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Maraq

A relatively wide spectrum of techniques, ranging from carving of one or two stucco layers, to heavy perforation of relief surfaces and production of Square Kufic inscriptions, has been observed in the Maraq stucco mihrab. The majority of the stucco panels of the mihrab are produced with the approach of carving one or two stucco layers, and in some cases the surfaces of these carved reliefs are heavily perforated, to render more elegant the visual appearance of stucco reliefs. This described approach and the selection of stucco artistic techniques are relatively common in Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. Furthermore, craftsmen reflected which panels should be produced with carving one and which with two carved stucco layers, in order to achieve the mihrab's balanced and dynamic appearance. Craftsmen also employed more particular approaches to stucco revetment production, such as two Square Kufic panels. The peculiar knowledge necessary for the production of Square Kufic panels, in addition to the making of their design, reflects a more advanced level of expertise and skills of stucco craftsmen.[789] On the other hand, the stucco craftsmen did not employ some stucco production techniques, which occur in the other Ilkhanid stuccos, such as application of protruding bosses. This is of particular significance, because it illustrates the technological differences between stucco repertoires of Maraq, Natanz and Mahallat-i Bala.

[788] It was entirely restored and reconstructed in the 1990s, according to the documentation of its original design and inscription repertoire.

[789] The use of this technique also indicates that the Maraq stuccos are work of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop as those in Mahallat-i Bala.

The Maraq Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The style of the Maraq stucco mihrab is characterized by predominantly shallow stucco relief, especially in its central part and the external panels. The shallow relief was alternated with deeper ones (the monumental framing inscription; Fig. 157), in order to achieve an illusion of the mihrab's more dynamic and three-dimensional appearance. In this respect, the repetitive pattern of the panels flanking the mihrab functions as a background repertoire and it does not obstruct the mihrab's central part. Almost all mihrab panels are arranged according to the logic of symmetry, which is also employed for their compositions. This attitude in the designing of the mihrab determined its balanced and rather static appearance.

Although the mihrab might appear somewhat provincial, the analysis of its artistic techniques and epigraphic and ornamental vocabulary illustrates that it was produced with a solid stucco craftsmanship skills. The mihrab is visually striking and its aesthetics results distinct from better known stucco repertoires, such as the Uljaytu mihrab in Isfahan (Cat. No. 1) or the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum stuccos (Cat. No. 2) or those in Bistam (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). The Maraq stuccos are shallower in comparison to these repertoires, but they are also in worse conservation condition with layers of whitewash having altered the original stucco relief, its polychromy aspects and the interplay of light and shadow. Further differences are found in diverging dimensions. Finally, the aesthetic appearance of the mihrab finds the closest parallel in the mihrab of Mahallat-i Bala (Cat. No. 13), with which it shares the production technology and which could be the work of the same craftsmen's group.

d.) Furnishing

No Ilkhanid furnishing has been registered in the monument.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The mihrab features three inscriptions: the monumental framing inscription with Qurʾanic text and two Square Kufic panels which flank the mihrab on its bottom and carry compositions of repeating names of *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscription:

a.) The monumental framing inscription of the mihrab in *Naskh* style contains Qurʾanic verses of *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:78). The inscription features double outline incisions and it is set against a vegetal background with advanced forms of peonies, lotus blossoms and leaf elements.

The text of the inscription reads:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not comprise any stucco revetments from periods later than Ilkhanid. Its interior is however reveted with a late Qajar wall painting repertoire.[790]

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The discussion of the monument did not reveal any precise information regarding its patronage. Some authors report that the ruler of Zang, the ardent disciple of Baba Afzal, sponsored interventions on the monument and especially Baba's wooden cenotaph, but there is no tangible evidence in favour of this argument.[791] The recounted information regarding the possibility of patronage and written accounts stating that Baba Afzal had issues with the authorities during his lifetime (see above), point towards the possibility that in the Ilkhanid period his mausoleum was not sponsored by a public official of the court, but more likely by some well-off patron related to Maraq and perhaps to Baba himself. There is no information concerning the patrons of the Safavid and Qajar interventions, but judging from the dimensions of these undertakings, state patronage may have become of political interest as the sacred aspects of the monument were integrated into the official religious narrative and became part of the religious pilgrimage infrastructure.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Parallels in design, inscription style and selections of stucco production techniques revealed that the Maraq stuccos are closely related to the mihrab at Mahallat-i Bala (Cat. No. 13), and to a minor extent, to the monumental inscription of the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine in Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The connection between the three stucco repertoires allow a more precise dating of the Maraq mihrab as 1300-1330 to be proposed, and it provides information regarding the mobility of a stucco craftsmen's group in Kashan and its environs. Furthermore, the research of Natanz and Mahallat-i Bala stuccos provides information concerning signatures of the stucco craftsmen's workshop. The workshop was led by the head craftsman Hasan ʿAli Ahmad Babuya al-bannaʾ al-Vidguli.[792] This workshop identification implies further information regarding the mobility of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen at a distance of some 150 km. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the remote location of Maraq, off the main communication routes, implies that craftsmen had to be summoned for the project, rather than them arriving to Maraq in search of work.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is currently in a fairly good condition, because it is an important pilgrimage destination. The majority of the historic architectural revetments are located in the core square structure of the mausoleum and its southern entrance portal. The other adjacent structures were heavily rebuilt and restored. Western adjacent spaces are incomplete or in a partially ruined state. The stucco mihrab in the interior of the mausoleum has been appropriately protected behind glass, and the same was done for the cenotaph of Baba Afzal. Other revetments would

[790] The external shell of the dome is a modern reconstruction of the original Qajar rebuilding and redecoration.
[791] See for example Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84.
[792] See McClary and Grbanovic 2021, 19.

require restoration. Wall paintings of the Qajar period are in good condition. Repairs to the southern porch and its wooden elements, probably dating to the Safavid period, could be extended.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The research of the Baba Afzal monument suggests that the core of the complex was built in the Ilkhanid period, and that this occurred around 1300-1330. Its stucco mihrab was produced as part of the original decorative repertoire which was originally likely more extensive. The stuccos are works of a workshop which operated in Natanz and Mahallat-i Bala and was summoned to Maraq to perform the decorative work on the mausoleum which was likely sponsored by a private patron. After the Ilkhanid period, the mausoleum was redecorated and enlarged through the addition of further architectural spaces. It was turned into a pilgrimage complex and destination in its own right; it was integrated into the official religious narrative already in the Safavid and later in the Qajar period.

The stuccos of Maraq are significant for their use of Square Kufic panels which relates them to the mihrab of Mahallat-i Bala. These two stucco repertoires were the work of the same craftsmen. The stuccos of the mausoleum were produced as an adornment of the monument and a focal point for the prayers of its faithful. But with the passing of time, the stucco mihrab turned into a *reliquia* appreciated by craftsmen rebuilding and redecorating the monument, who left it in place, rather than substituting it with modern revetments. In this sense, the mausoleum structure came to function not only as a pilgrimage complex, but also as a reliquary, for the *reliquias* in its interior; the grave and the cenotaph of Baba Afzal and his devotee and the stucco mihrab.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Salihi and Taghavinejad 2018, 64, 68; Naraqi 1969, 351-55; Humayun 1994; Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 84-87.

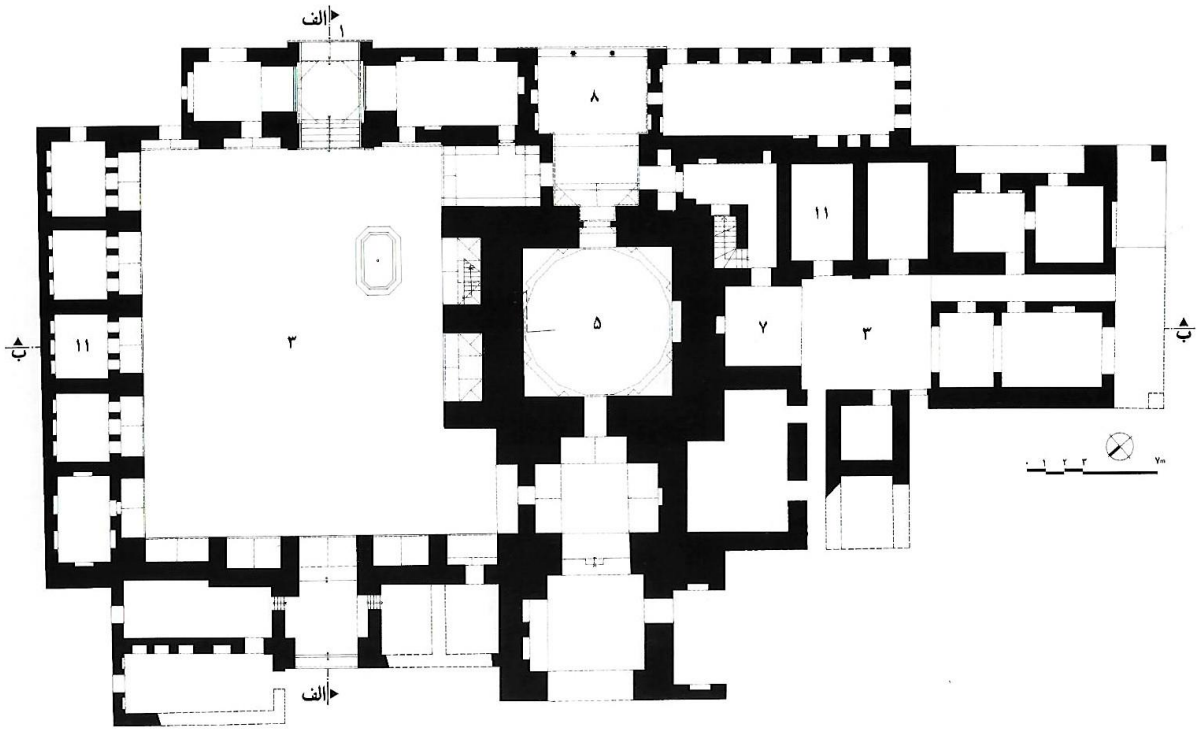


Figure 152: Ground plan of the Baba Afzal funerary complex near Maraq (After Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 85).



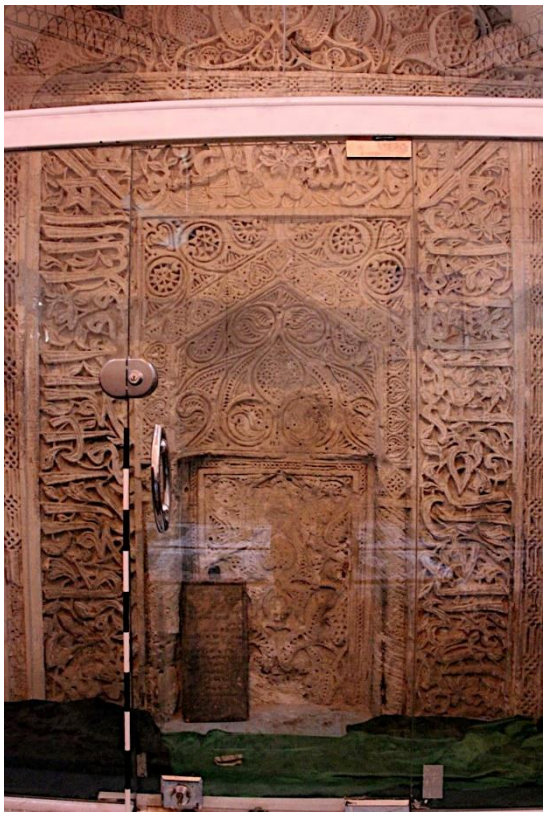
Figure 153: The Baba Afzal funerary complex, view from the east. The square core of the mausoleum developed into a pilgrimage complex in its own right through the centuries of patronage of constructive and decorative interventions on the mausoleum of the revered personage.



Figure 154: Interior of the domed square mausoleum core of the Baba Afzal funerary complex: the carved stucco mihrab and the two cenotaphs on its sides which are positioned so as not to obstruct the view of the mihrab.



Figure 155: The carved stucco mihrab is situated in the pointed arch niche. The space between the rectangular mihrab and the niche boundaries is filled with additional panels of carved stuccos.




Figures 156 and 157: The carved stucco mihrab at Maraq. Left: detail of the mihrab niche and the monumental framing inscription band. Right: detail of the double outline of the mihrab's monumental framing inscription band.

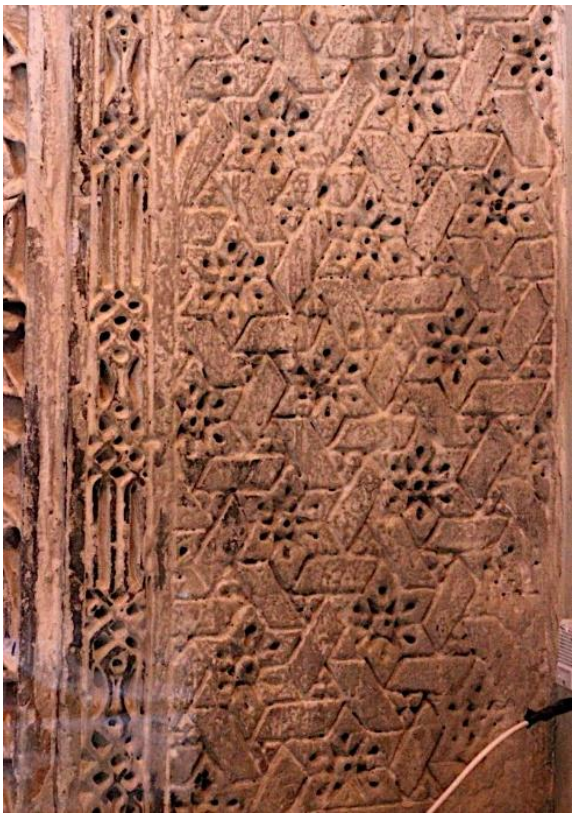
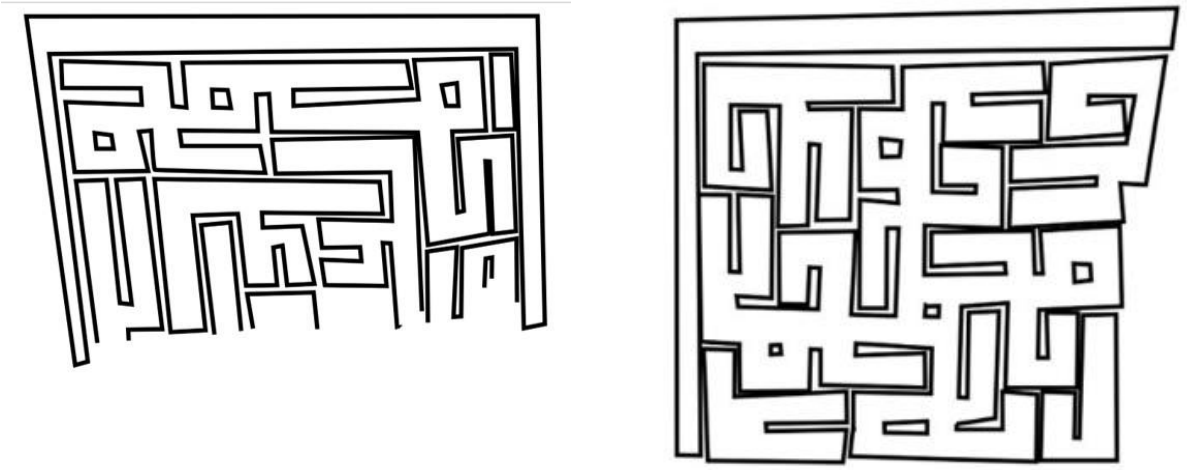


Figure 158: The carved stucco panel with six-pointed star motif was employed to fill the space between the mihrab and the niche. It functions as the background of the decorative repertoire. The design of the panel resembles stuccoworks of the Qum mausolea and the Imamzada Khizr in Hamadan.



Figures 159 and 160: Line drawings of Square Kufic panels of the Baba Afzal carved stucco mihrab (positioned on the left and right hand bottom sides of the mihrab). Left: the left hand side Square Kufic panel with repetition of ʿ*Ali* and *Muhammad*. Right: the right hand side Square Kufic panel with repetition of ʿ*Ali* and *Muhammad*.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 15

Monument Name: Mausolea of Qum (mausolea constructed in Qum during the fourteenth century; multiple monuments' catalogue entry)

Figs: 161-170.

Location: Qum settlement; northern part of Central Iran; on the main road leading from Teheran towards south Iran; c. 124 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Teheran to the south-west and some 89 km north-west from the city centre of Kashan. Monuments are scattered across the modern city and its surroundings.

List of Monuments and their GPS locations:

1. Imamzada Shah Jaʿfar

GPS location of the monument: 34.6564726 N; 50.8609435 E.

2. Imamzada Sayyid Musa Mubarak

GPS location of the monument: 34.6382798 N; 50.8996787 E.

3. Imamzada ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar al-Sadiq

GPS location of the monument: 34.6317604 N; 50.8997478 E.

4. Imamzada Ahmad ibn Qasim

GPS location unknown; monument not visited.

5. Imamzada Ibrahim

GPS location of the monument: 34.656217 N; 50.8555976.

6. Tomb of Harath ibn Ahmad Zayn al-ʿAbidin

GPS location of the monument: 34.6475503 N; 50.9043975 E.

7. Gunbad-i Sabz (northern mausoleum of Bagh-i Sabz)

GPS location of the monument: 34.6324705 N; 50.8985764 E.

8. Gunbad-i ʿImad al-Din (central mausoleum of Bagh-i Sabz)

GPS location of the monument: 34.6324705 N; 50.8985764 E.

9. Gunbad-i ʿAli ibn Abi al-Maʿali ibn Abi Safi (southern mausoleum of Bagh-i Sabz)

GPS location of the monument: 34.6324705 N; 50.8985764 E.

10. Imamzada Ibrahim (2)

GPS location unknown; monument not visited.

11. Imamzada Shahzada Ismaʿil

GPS location unknown; monument not visited.

12. Imamzada Zayd

GPS location of the monument: 34.6386057 N; 50.8994323 E.

13. Imamzada Fatima Khatun and Ahmad

GPS location of the monument: 34.6320684 N; 50.8850004 E.

14. Mosque portal (Madrasa Ghiyasiyya)

GPS location of the monument: 34.6404945 N; 50.8940364 E.

Monuments' Investigation: December 19, 2017; December 16, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Qum is situated in the northern part of Central Iran. It is one of the settlements on the main travel routes connecting the north of Iran with central and southern regions, such as the cities of Kashan, Natanz, Isfahan and the region of Fars. A summary of the history of Qum until the post-Ilkhanid period is provided here, which serves as the context for the discussion of Qum's Ilkhanid monuments. It is based on the Encyclopaedia Iranica.[793]

Archaeological investigations indicate that the area of the city of Qum has been occupied since ancient times; south of Qum, settlements dating from the fourth to first millennium BCE have been unearthed. Remains of Seleucid and Parthian occupation were also discovered in the area. The settlement was also important in the Sassanid period to which the fortress Qala-yi Dukhtar in Qum dates. Written sources indicate that Qum was a minor administrative unit of the Sassanid Empire. The first attempt of Arab conquest of the Qum area took place in 644 and the first permanent Arab settlement in the area may have formed around 685-96. Around 780-800, these six settlements were merged into one city; this process included the construction of new infrastructure, such as irrigation channels, congregational mosques, trade quarters and fortification structures. Qum initially comprised Sunnite, Shiʿite and Ismaʿili religious communities. The historic landmark was the passing of Fatima Maʿsuma in 816-17; the first sanctuary hosting her remains was constructed around 869-70. In the ninth century, the Hadith transmitter was moved from Kufa to Qum, which reflects the increased significance of Qum as the centre of the Shiʿite religion. Around the end of the tenth century, Qum may have already been one of the Shiʿite religious centres and it was isolated from the other settlements for this reason; in the meantime the sanctuary of Fatima was enlarged and the population of Sayyids increased. The total population of Qum amounted to some 50,000 inhabitants. According to

[793] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/qom-i-history-safavid-period (Last Accessed: November 5, 2020). For a detailed discussion of history of Qum, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 1, 17-33.

written sources, Qum retained three to nine city gates, five bigger and eight smaller roads, eight squares, three mosques, bazaars, the Fatima shrine with two domes, and probably bathhouses, administrative buildings and the water supplying system. Prior to the Seljuq conquest, Qum was ruled by Kakuyid and Ghaznavid rulers. Eventually, the city became part of the Seljuq Empire around 1050-51. The time of Sultan Sanjar's rule (r. 1119-1133) was the most stable period for Qum during the Seljuq reign, when the second congregational mosque was constructed in the settlement. Qum prospered in the Seljuq period, although it was perhaps the most important centre of Shiʿite religion in the Iranian lands. It is reported that some ten theological schools were constructed in Qum in this era. Moreover, two congregational mosques existed. Subsequently, Qum was ruled by Atabaks of Azerbaijan and the Khwarazmshahs.

According to written sources, Qum suffered major destruction by the Mongol invasion in 1224. After approximately two decades, the rebuilding activities took place. They comprised rebuilding of mausolea of the Shiʿite saints, the sanctuary of Fatima and Qum's infrastructure. The discussion below will illustrate the basic characteristics of some of these monuments. As the examination indicates, the construction style and types of architectural revetments, considered characteristic of the Ilkhanid period, continued to be built and produced also in the decades subsequent to the disintegration of the Ilkhanid Empire. Following the death of Sultan Abu Saʿid in 1335, Qum was ruled by the little-known and semi-autonomous family called *the Safis,* from 1336 until 1412. The conquest of the Iranian territory by Timur did not cause any major damage to Qum. Subsequently, the city was conquered and ruled by the Qara Quyunlu and the Aq Quyunlu dynasties.

With its increasing significance, more construction works were being done in the city and on the shrine of Fatima. Ilkhanid monuments reflect the significance of the families of Qum's inhabitants, their political power and their social role. These monuments are parts of a group and tradition in the given geographical area, because they feature similar architectural forms and types of stucco, and occasionally, lustre tile revetments.

b.) Research Background

The first attempt to provide systematic information concerning Ilkhanid monuments in Qum is by Wilber.[794] In his research, Wilber groups monuments according to types of architectural structures and their location. He informs that monuments are concentrated in four areas of Qum's outskirts, at its four main gates (Rayy gate in the north, Kashan gate in the east, Qalʿa gate in the south and Hamadan gate in the west). Wilber also states that the shrine of Fatima Masʿuma attracted pilgrims and that it was a popular burial place for Safavid and Qajar rulers. He states that it is not clear for which reason there were numerous burial structures built in the areas of gates in the fourteenth century, and that these tombs most likely pertain to some four influential families from the city of Qum. He also informs that some historic inscriptions on these monuments indicate that some of them were works of the same craftsmen's workshop. Wilber correctly states that these funerary structures possess characteristics which set them apart from the majority of the monuments built in the given chronological context. Their general

[794] Wilber 1955, 113-116.

type and plan derive from earlier structures in north-western Iran, and their stuccos reflect the influence of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). While the first part of the statement by Wilber is correct, the second one would require further research. Rather than the influence of the Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya, these structures feature carved stuccos characteristic of the area between Qum and Kashan.

Wilber lists three types of fourteenth century monuments, which he investigates in his work and of which a summary is provided here:

Type One: octagonal structure with a polyhedral dome, with octagonal form in the exterior and a hemispherical interior dome.

Type Two: octagonal exterior structure with a sixteen-sided drum and a sixteen-sided tent dome; the interior of the structure is also octagonal, sixteen-sided transitional zone and a hemispherical interior dome.

Type Three: octagonal exterior structure, with a sixteen-sided drum, with a sixteen-sided tent dome. The interior is octagonal with an inscription frieze running along the upper portions of supporting walls and a decorated hemispherical dome.

Wilber provides a list of fourteenth century monuments according to the building type and presence of architectural revetments which were made in the Ilkhanid period. The list is reported here,[795] because it is the most recent published list of fourteenth century monuments in Qum and it serves as an orientation for the discussion of these monuments:

- Imamzada Shah Jaʿfar: 677/1268-69
- Imamzada Musa Mubarak: c. 1300
- Imamzada ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar: 700/1300; 740/1339
- Imamzada Ahmad Qasim: 708/1308
- Imamzada Ibrahim: 721/1321
- Imamzada Harath ibn Ahmad Zayn al-ʿAbidin: c. 1325
- Gunbad-i Sabz: c. 1330-65
- Imamzada Ibrahim: c. 1330-65
- Imamzada ʿAli ibn Abi al-Maʿali ibn ʿAli Safi: 761/1359-60
- Imamzada Ismaʿil: 776/1374
- Imamzada Kwaya ʿImad al-Din Shahzada Ahmad: c. 1400
- Imamzada Kwaya Beha al-Din Habibullah Qummi: 847/1443
- Chihil Dukhtaran: 905/1443
- Shah Sayyid ʿAli
- Chahar Imamzada (modern structure)
- Shahzada Hamza
- Shahzada ʿAbd Allah
- Imamzada Ibrahim

Wilber concludes by stating that further research is necessary to provide a more complete list of monuments and their detailed discussion. A separate major monograph in two volumes

[795] Wilber 1955, 115.

dedicated to the monuments of Qum, in the Persian language, is the work of Husayn Mudarrisi Tabatabaʿi, entitled: *Turbat-i pakan: asar wa bina-ha-yi qadim-i mahduda-yi kununi-i Dar-al-Muʾminin-i Qum*[796] (*Sacred Tombs: Monuments and Old Buildings of Legal Boundaries of the Sacred City of Qum*). This work provides detailed analyses of Qum's monuments including fourteenth century tomb towers. The same author also published a series of articles relating to Qum's fourteenth century monuments.[797] From recent publications, Hillenbrand's article[798] on the monuments of Bagh-i Sabz provides important information concerning characteristics of these monuments, but they need to be comprehended as examples of the culmination of architectural structure and revetment style which developed in the Qum region across decades preceding the construction of these monuments.

A PhD dissertation dedicated to Ilkhanid monuments in Qum is being completed by Zohre Monzavi at the University of Bamberg in parallel to this research. Given the existence of a work specifically dedicated to the subject, only a brief account of the main Ilkhanid monuments and stuccos in Qum is provided here. This is necessary to provide a thorough picture of the Ilkhanid stucco corpus.. Once published and available, the work of Monzavi will provide a more detailed discussion of these monuments and their significance within the context of Ilkhanid art and architecture. Until that publication, the discussions by Wilber[799] and Hillenbrand's article[800] remain the main Western language sources of information concerning these monuments.

The Most Significant Monuments with Stuccos in the Area of Qum

1. Imamzada Shah Jaʿfar

Associated Names

The monument is commonly referred to as the Imamzada of Shāh Jaʿfar,[801] Wilber refers to it as Imamzada Jaʿfar.[802]

Architectural Structure

The monument was originally an octagonal tomb tower which housed the grave of Shah Jaʿfar. Its interior form is square. The monument was rebuilt in the modern period. Its Ilkhanid lustre tile revetments were moved to Qum's Astana-yi Quds museum. The modern structure and architectural revetments do not reflect the monument's historic features. Historic photographs indicate that the monument was built out of fired bricks. It featured an octagonal form with blind niches on every exterior side and a polyhedral exterior dome. The dome structure was likely double-shelled. The exterior of the monument was not decorated and the interior displayed lustre tile, glazed ceramic and carved stucco revetments.

[796] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[797] See, for example: Tabatabaʿi 1973.
[798] Hillenbrand 2014.
[799] Wilber 1955.
[800] Hillenbrand 2014.
[801] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[802] Wilber 1955, 113-114. For a discussion by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 35-41.

Monument Function

The octagonal tomb tower was a burial structure to commemorate a revered personage.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The mausoleum's interior featured lustre tile and carved stucco revetments. Wilber postulates that a lustre ceramic slab (presumably part of a mihrab) dated 1264 and stored in the Islamic Art Museum Berlin could have originally belonged to this structure. Wilber reports that there is a niche in the mausoleum which is coated with white plaster where the lustre mihrab could have originally been installed. Historic photographs document carved stucco plug inserts on interior surfaces of the supporting walls and thin geometrical bands outlining the transitional corner elements. One photograph documents the interior of the hemispherical dome, indicating that it was built with fired bricks and decorated with carved stucco bands forming a geometrical composition with an eight-pointed star in its centre. A carved stucco inscription ran along the transitional pointed arches' top edges. One of the *in situ* documented star lustre tiles is dated 1266. Wilber proposes that another glazed terracotta tile (dated 1268-69) pertains to the mausoleum.[803] The monument may have been restored already in the Safavid period. Its structure was almost entirely altered in the 1990s. This is, according to Wilber, one of Qum's earliest Ilkhanid monuments.[804]

Bibliography: Wilber 1955, 113-114.

2. Imamzada Sayyid Musa Mubarak c. 1290

Associated Names

The monument is referred to as the tomb of Sayyid Musā Mubārak.[805]

Architectural Structure

The monument was originally an octagonal tomb tower, but a modern structure substitutes it. Extensive restorations render it a challenge to comprehend the mausoleum's original decorative programme.

Monument Function

This is a funerary structure which houses the remains of Musa Mubarak, also known as *Musa the veiled*.[806]

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

Wilber did not visit the monument, and he provides some basic information from written sources.[807] According to his research, the monument likely dates from around 1290. The 2018

[803] Wilber 1955, 114.
[804] *Ibid.*, 114.
[805] Transliteration according to the IJMES system. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 78-81.
[806] Wilber 1955, 120.
[807] *Ibid.*, 120.

examination of the monument revealed that the it was substituted by a modern structure and architectural revetments which do not reflect features of Ilkhanid architecture.

3. Imamzada ʿAli ibn-i Jaʿfar al-Sadiq

Figs. 161-162.

Associated Names

The monument is known as the tomb of ʿAli, the son of Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. The short version of the monument's name is Imamzada ʿAli ibn-i Jaʿfar; it is referred to as a tomb, an *imamzada* and a mausoleum.[808] The long name for the monument, reported by Godard, is the Tomb of Abu al- Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn-i Jaʿfar al-Sadīq[809] and Abu Jaʿfar Muhammad ibn-i Musa al-Kazim.[810]

Architectural Structure

The monument was originally an isolated octagonal tomb tower with a sixteen sided drum and a polyhedral exterior dome shell, with a hemispherical dome in its octagonal interior.[811] In the Qajar period the structure was enlarged by the addition of a monumental entrance vestibule. The original tomb tower is classified by Wilber as Type Two; an octagonal tomb tower with sixteen-sided drum and polyhedral sixteen-sided exterior dome.

Monument Function

The monument is a funerary structure housing remains of a Sayyid.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

Wilber's discussion of the monument[812] with its further *in situ* examination is provided here. This funerary structure is significant because it is known to have been decorated with both carved stuccos and lustre tiles.[813] Inscriptions on its lustre tiles recount that the tomb houses the remains of the sons of ʿAli: the son of Jaʿfar, Muhammad ibn Musa al-Kazim and ʿAli al-Murtada. But the written sources sustain that the tomb of Muhammad ibn Musa al-Kazim is actually situated in Shiraz. Wilber's photographs of the mausoleum's interior indicate that its stuccos were already heavily overpainted at that point. According to written sources, the tomb was completed in 1310, but Godard dates it to 1300 with further renovations in 1399.

Lustre Tiles

The mausoleum featured a decorative programme consisting of lustre tiles and carved stuccos. Wilber reports that some forty-five tiles from the monument are stored in the Qum and Teheran collections and that the smaller tiles date from between 1310 and 1339. Some of these tiles formed the dado area of the monument and they bear the dates 1305, 1321 and 1337-38. The

[808] http://www.archnet.org/sites/2884/media_contents/42585 (Last Accessed: November 6, 2020).
[809] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[810] Wilber 1955, 132. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 42-51.
[811] For a discussion of the monument, see also Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 142-149.
[812] Wilber 1955, 132.
[813] For 1990s photographs of the monument, see Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 143-148.

disparity and time lapse between tile dates is somewhat unusual and it may indicate tile re-use. The mausoleum's monumental lustre mihrab is displayed in the Teheran National Archaeological museum and it is dated 1333-34. Wilber reports that the mausoleum also has a double mihrab-like funerary stela produced in lustre technique which provides the names of the revered personages buried in the monument. The lustre tile revetments listed by Wilber have been removed from the mausoleum and are currently scattered across numerous Iranian and Western museums. In sum, the tomb cover, the dado area and the mihrab of the mausoleum were produced in lustre tile medium. The remaining surfaces of the supporting walls, the transitional zone and the interior of the dome were decorated with carved stucco. Lustre tiles were therefore employed for the monument's focal points. The tomb's significance was highlighted by the addition of lustre tiles and the mihrab, which functioned as the focal point of the entire decorative programme, rendered more visible with this specific decorative medium. The dado area in star lustre and glazed cross tiles may have been employed for the dado area, to be seen by the faithful and due to their greater durability, compared to carved stuccos. Lustre tiles and stuccos were therefore employed for the monument decoration according to a clear logic. Carved stuccos were given a secondary role within the decorative programme, which was nevertheless significant, because lustre tiles and carved stuccos functioned together in forming the mausoleum's architectural revetment repertoire.

Stuccos

The mausoleum's stucco are located on its interior architectural surfaces of the supporting walls, the transitional zone and the dome shell. Since their production, these stuccos were heavily restored and heavily overpainted. The modern repainting is unlikely to reflect the original stucco polychromy. The monumental inscription set against a floral scroll background functions as the frieze of the no longer extant (lustre) dado area. Transitional elements formed by pointed arches are decorated alternately with modest muqarnas hoods and panels of stuccos carved out of one stucco layer. These panels display symmetrical compositions of palmette elements with heavily perforated surfaces. Transitional elements feature various repeating geometrical borders and spandrels with modest symmetrical palmette compositions; a further monumental inscription band set against floral scrolls tops these pointed arch structures.

The area of the mausoleum's sixteen sided drum features niches with plain and painted muqarnas which alternate with panels of symmetrical palmette compositions framed by geometrical bands. The area of the springing of the dome is decorated with three-tiered muqarnas. The dome features a geometrical grid composition formed by stucco arabesque bands, which is filled with geometrical and vegetal carved stucco plugs and epigraphic medallions. It is unclear whether these stuccos are original or if they were modified at a later point. The calligraphic style of medallions and the central circular band in *shamsa* composition may be of more recent vintage.

Wilber compares the Imamzada ʿAli ibn-i Jaʿfar al-Sadiq' dome interior to the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). These two monuments were however decorated with differing artistic techniques and they differ in visual elements as their aesthetics. Importantly, Wilber provides information concerning the colour remains on the mausoleum's stuccos, as: ochre, yellow, orange, brown and red. These stuccos feature characteristics comparable to the

other mausolea in Qum and they display styles and aesthetics typical of this geographical unit. The stuccos are produced with undemanding artistic techniques which required carving of one to two stucco layers. The produced stucco reliefs are not protruding and they feature low reliefs. Although the focal points of the monument were decorated with lustre tiles, the stuccos cover the majority of surfaces of the monument's interior and they functioned in conjunction with lustre tiles. In this respect, the stuccos retained the significant role of covering the architectural surfaces and transforming them into a dazzling funerary monument.

4. Imamzada Ahmad ibn-i Qasim 1308

Associated Names

The monument is referred to as the Tomb of Āḥmad ibn-i Qāsim,[814] by Wilber,[815] but among the faithful, the monument is referred to as the Imamzada of Abu Ahmad ibn Muhammad Hanayfiyya.[816]

Architectural Structure

The monument is located in the southern area of Qum, near the Qalʿa gate.[817] Wilber reports that the monument was in a ruined state, although he did not visit it in person. The mausoleum is octagonal in its exterior and interior, and it is topped by a sixteen-sided drum and a sixteen-sided polyhedral external dome shell. The elevation of the monument could have been altered by the rebuilding activities in the dome area. Currently, the mausoleum's octagonal structure translates via the interior pointed arch elements into a double shelled dome supported by a sixteen-sided drum of dimensions smaller than the perimeter of supporting walls. The drum supported the exterior polyhedral dome shell with modern tile revetments and the interior almost hemispherical dome shell. The exterior transition from the supporting structure into the dome is somewhat awkward, due to the disproportional dimensions of the drum and the dome, compared to the much larger supporting structure. The exterior dome shell rendered the monument well visible from the distance. The architectural type is similar to the majority of the Ilkhanid tomb towers in Qum. The monument's recent rebuilding comprised the majority of the monument's exterior structure, the rebuilding of the interior dome shell and the interior supporting wall structure. Parts of its original interior decorative repertoire were integrated into the restored monument.

Monument Function

The monument is a tomb tower which functions as a funerary structure housing the remains of the revered personage.

[814] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[815] Wilber 1955, 138.
[816] For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 65-70.
[817] Wilber 1955, 138.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

Wilber provides a short description of the mausoleum's interior architectural revetments, which were well preserved despite the monument's ruined state.[818] According to Wilber, the monument's interior featured inscription bands in carved stucco, with diverse epigraphic styles: Kufic, *Naskh* and *Thuluth*. Importantly, these inscriptions included a historic inscription concerning the mausoleum's patronage; its patron was ʿAli ibn Ishaq, the signature of its craftsmen's workshop read *work of Muhammad ʿAli Abu Shujʿa* and the repertoire was completed on Muharram 20th, 708 (June 30, 1308). Following Wilber's examination, the tomb tower was subjected to major rebuilding and repairs, which altered its interior architectural revetment programme.

The monument's modern renovations entirely altered its exterior revetments which no longer reflect the original decorative repertoire. The mausoleum's interior decorative programme was damaged, and its renovations were intended to produce new revetments with partial integration of the original decorations. The interior dome shell may have been rebuilt. It is currently decorated with a central *shamsa* with surrounding teardrop and circular medallions. Judging from the inscription style and the design of these carved stuccos, and their comparison to the original dome shell stucco repertoires in Qum, the revetments are likely modern works. The drum's interior currently retains carved stucco geometrical bands which are interrupted by vertical bands of geometrical and floral elements. These revetments are original remains of a more extensive composition of stuccos which covered this area. Their polychromy has been altered by overpainting.

The area between the drum and the pointed arch transitional elements is reveted with a monumental inscription in *Thuluth* style. The inscription is set against palmette and leaf composed background. Its production technology is not demanding, but the position and dimensions make it one of the focal parts of the monument's interior. The inscription band features a lower border of arabesque elements incised into a layer of plaster. The surfaces of the monument below this inscription band have been entirely whitewashed and coated with modern layers of plaster. The original iteration of the monument's interior was likely similar to interiors of the Imamzada Sayyid ʿAli ibn-i Jaʿfar al-Sadiq or the aesthetics of the monuments at Bagh-i Sabz. Originally, the interior of the monument must have been entirely covered with polychrome carved stuccos. The mausoleum may have also retained lustre tiles.

5. Imamzada Ibrahim 1321

Associated Names

The monument is commonly referred to as the *Imāmzāda* Ibrāhīm.[819] Several monuments bear the same name and there often is confusion which is which. This monument is the *imamzada* located on the outskirts of Ilkhanid Qum, in the eastern part near the Kashan gate.[820]

[818] Wilber 1955, 138.
[819] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[820] For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 73-75.

Architectural Structure (Ground Plan; Elevation)

The tomb tower is octagonal on its interior and exterior.[821] It is topped by a high sixteen-sided drum which supports the polyhedral exterior dome shell. The monument's architectural structure is closely related to the Imamzada Ahmad ibn Qasim and a few other monuments; it is typical of Ilkhanid monuments in Qum area. The proportions and form of its architectural elements are slightly different. The interior of the monument was heavily restored in modern times.

Monument Function

The monument is an *imamzada*, a funerary structure featuring a tomb tower form for burial remains of a descendant of the Twelve Imams and which accommodates the faithful.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

Wilber informs that the monument features two historic inscriptions which provide the dates of construction and repairs of the monument as 1321 and 1402. In his discussion, Wilber does not provide any information regarding the interior revetments of the monument, despite having visited it in 1943.

The monument was thoroughly rebuilt and redecorated in its interior since Wilber's survey. The mausoleum's redecoration integrated original parts of revetments with modern ones, to indicate their original appearance. The interior dome shell displays a modern stellar composition which may reflect the original design of the stuccos covering the dome's interior. The drum area retains original framing bands for window openings and blind niches of the drum's structure, which feature repeating geometrical perforated and incised bands. These are perhaps remains of a more extensive stucco repertoire, which were integrated with modern wall painting surfaces indicating the possible layout of original stucco designs.

A monumental carved stucco inscription runs along the area between the springing of the drum and the lower pointed arch transitional elements. It is not clear if this *Thuluth* inscription band is the work of 1321 or 1402. Diacritical marks and partial vocalization and the inscription's complex design might indicate its later date. The colouring of the inscription band is the result of modern overpainting. Lower portions of the architectural surfaces retain modern stuccos and a modern tile dado area. The remaining carved stuccos of the mausoleum's interior are related to Ilkhanid stuccos of the Imamzada Sayyid ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar al-Sadiq and Imamzada Ahmad ibn Qasim (see above). The decorative stucco programme of the mausoleum was thus likely work of the workshop of ʿAli Abu Shujʿa al-bannaʾ.

[821] For a detailed discussion and images of the monument, see Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 150-153.

6. Tomb of Harath ibn Ahmad Zayn al-ʿAbidin c. 1325

Associated Names

The monument is known as the *Imāmzāda* of Ḥarath ibn Āḥmad Zayn al-ʿĀbidin.[822] It is located in Qum's eastern historic core.[823]

Architectural Structure

The tomb tower is octagonal on its exterior and interior. Its structure is topped by a high sixteen-sided drum, which supports the polyhedral exterior dome. The monument was rebuilt in the nineteenth century and further modified in modern times.[824]

Monument Function

The monument is an *imamzada*, which houses the remains of the revered personage and provides prayer space for its faithful.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The exterior and interior of the monument have been almost entirely altered in the modern period. The most detailed account regarding its original architectural revetments is provided by Wilber, based on the monument's survey in 1944.[825] Wilber highlights that the monument had reportedly undergone alterations already in the nineteenth century. These interventions likely comprised alterations to mausoleum's interior. Wilber does not mention the presence of any carved stuccos in the mausoleum. He however informs that the tomb of the monument was decorated with tiles, which were apparently reused, and that these tiles are similar to those of the Imamzada ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. Wilber does not state on which basis he dates the mausoleum to c. 1325.

7. Gunbad-i Sabz (the northern mausoleum of Bagh-i Sabz) c. 1330; second half of 14th century

Figs. 163-165.

Associated Names

The mausoleum was built to house the remains of an unknown personage. It is called the Green dome - Gunbad-i Sabz,[826] after the colour of the glazed tiles covering its exterior dome shell. Hillenbrand reports that the other local name for the monument is Gunbad-i Saʿd wa Saʿid wa Masʿud.[827] The area where the mausoleum is located comprises three related mausolea and it received its name after this monument: the Bagh-i Sabz (the Green garden).[828]

[822] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[823] Wilber 1955, 167.
[824] *Ibid.*, 167.
[825] *Ibid.*, 167.
[826] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[827] Hillenbrand 2014, 76.
[828] For ground plan, elevation, 1990s photographs and a short description of the monument, see Qasimi 2010, vol. 12, 132-141. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 52-60.

Architectural Structure

The monumental tomb tower with octagonal[829] structure is divided into a two-storey system of large blind pointed arch niches flanked by two tiers of narrow blind niches. The octagonal structure translates into a polyhedral drum which used to feature blind niches and window openings; its structure has been altered since. The drum carries a polyhedral exterior dome covered with modern turquoise glazed tiles. These alterations were put in place in the period preceding the Islamic revolution.[830] The monument is located in the area of the former Kashan gate,[831] in the Bagh-i Sabz.

The ground plan of the monument is octagonal on its exterior and interior. The monument's elevation has been altered and it has to be comprehended from the mausoleum's historic photographs.[832] The supporting octagonal structure of the monument has been visually broken down into compositions of blind niches. The core of the walls is occupied by large, pointed arch niches, which are flanked by two tiers of smaller round arch niches. The high drum of the monument is slightly inclined towards the interior and it originally featured round arch blind niches with some window openings; currently it is a smooth sixteen-sided drum structure without openings.[833]

The monument's interior structure consists of supporting walls formed by deep pointed arch niches. The drum area serves as an element of transition between the supporting structure and the dome: it consists of alternating pointed arch niches and rectangular panels with grills, where the original window openings likely stood. The dome is low-pitched, below the level of a hemispherical dome. Historic photographs document remains of glazed tiles covering the polyhedral structure of mausoleum's exterior dome shell. According to Hillenbrand, the architectural structure and its articulation present one of the most spatially sophisticated Iranian tomb towers.[834]

Monument Function

The monument is a funerary structure which housed the remains of a no longer identifiable personage. The personage buried in the mausoleum could have been a prominent inhabitant of Qum who might have retained a significant religious and political function, similar to the adjacent Safi mausoleum.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The monument is recorded by Wilber and it was recently discussed by Hillenbrand. A detailed analysis of the interior stucco repertoire of the monument is provided by Hillenbrand and

[829] Wilber states that it is a twelve-sided structure. Wilber 1955, 178.
[830] See image by Blair and Bloom: http://www.archnet.org/sites/5483/media_contents/42568 (Last Accessed: November 9, 2020).
[831] Wilber 1955, 178.
[832] See, for example, photograph published by Hillenbrand: Hillenbrand 2014, 77; Fig. 4 or by Wilber: in Wilber 1955, Pl. 182.
[833] Hillenbrand 2014, 76.
[834] Hillenbrand 2014, 77.

therefore only a brief discussion is provided here.[835] Wilber informs that it is difficult to date the mausoleum and its interior architectural revetments, due to the fact that a similar quality of stuccos were being produced in Qum between 1315 and 1365; he nevertheless concludes by suggesting that the monument dates from around 1330.[836] Differently, and more in line with this research, Hillenbrand proposes a second half of the fourteenth century date for the monument, due to its close similarities to the other two mausolea of Bagh-i Sabz.[837] Since Wilber's and Hillenbrand's visits to the monument, the mausoleum has been heavily restored. This included major interventions on its interior decorative repertoire, which comprised modern integrations, consolidation and heavy overpainting of the stuccos. The supporting walls retain deep niches which have been heavily restored to feature modern muqarnas-like structures, but lower portions of niches preserve the original *Khatt-i bannaʾi*. These niche structures are framed by a long stucco inscription band in *Thuluth* style and carved out of a single stucco layer (Qurʾan 55, *Surat al-Rahman*).[838] The supporting wall structure is topped by another cursive epigraphic band in the form of a horizontal monumental inscription with Qurʾanic excerpts and set against a background of palmette-containing vegetal scrolls (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Hashr*, 59:22-24). The drum area with alternating pointed arch niches and niches with grills covering the no longer extant window openings are entirely covered in carved stuccos in low relief. The blind niche panels feature symmetrical compositions of vegetal motifs, mainly palmettes, blossoms and leaves. They are topped by small dimension spandrels and framed with thin geometrical bands. Arches with the grills feature similar framing bands and spandrels. The drum area is topped by a monumental Kufic inscription (Qurʾan 97, *Surat al-Qadr*)[839] band with background floral scrolls. The band is interrupted by a Square Kufic panel. The dome's interior revetments are not preserved, although the remaining edges display a geometrical grid with star-derived elements. This grid is further divided into geometric units with diverse types of carved stucco compositions ranging from tree, kite, medallion and five-pointed star elements. A historic photograph of the drum and dome stuccos, published by Hillenbrand, documents the stuccos prior to the latest interventions which comprised their repainting:[840] the stuccos may have retained original traces of light blue, light green, white and dark red. Hillenbrand informs that the Qurʾanic excerpts on the stuccos extol Allah and that there is no funerary connotation.[841]

The mausoleum's interior revetment repertoire covers all architectural surfaces with different types of stuccos forming the totality of the repertoire and determining the mesmerizing appearance of mausoleum's interior. These stuccos feature low or medium relief which is not contrasting and only rarely forms a strong light-and shadow effect. The dynamic appearance of the repertoire is achieved with differing geometric designs, and the interplay of different forms and content (epigraphic, vegetal, geometric) of stucco panels and their polychromy. Artistic techniques, decorative logic, revetment hierarchy and polychromy of the mausoleum's decorative programme relate closely to stuccos of the other two mausolea at Bagh-i Sabz. Although the Gunbad-i Sabz revetments are not signed by a specific stucco craftsmen's

[835] Hillenbrand 2014, 76-79.
[836] Wilber 1955, 178.
[837] Hillenbrand 2014, 79.
[838] *Ibid.*, 79.
[839] Hillenbrand 2014, 79.
[840] *Ibid.*, 78.
[841] *Ibid.*, 79.

workshop and they are undated, they should be understood as works of the workshop responsible for the ʿAli Safi mausoleum's stuccos. If so, the dating of the monument and its stuccos should be considered as approximately contemporary to the Safi mausoleum (see below).

8. Imamzada ʿImad al-Din / Khwaja ʿAli Safi (Bagh-i Sabz: the central mausoleum) 1390

Figs. 166-168.

Associated Names

The monument is commonly known as either *Imāmzāda* Khwāja ʿImād al-Dīn[842] or Imamzada Khwaja ʿAli Safi, although it actually houses the graves of three brothers.[843]

Architectural Structure

Wilber informs that the structure is of Type Three, and that it is more elaborate compared to the other monuments. The monument features a twelve-sided exterior and octagonal interior ground plan.[844] It is not clear if the current monument reflects its original elevation consisting of the supporting structure, and a high external drum and the tent dome. Exterior surfaces of the monument feature blind pointed arch niches. Hillenbrand mentions that the mausoleum's exterior was restored at least twice and that the appearance of its exterior drum and the dome (like the Gunbad-i Sabz) do not necessarily reflect the monument's original iteration.[845] Hillenbrand mentions that the internal transitional zone is twelve-sided, but that the external drum is sixteen-sided and that this may be the original characteristic of the monument.[846] Its supporting wall structure features recessed pointed arch niches which translate into a sixteen-sided transitional zone with rectangular blind niche panels and window openings leading to the low-pitched hemispherical dome. The articulation of the mausoleum's interior is very similar to Gunbad-i Sabz.[847]

Monument Function

The historic inscription in the interior of the mausoleum states precisely the identity of the three personages buried in the monument.[848] These are three brothers: Khwaja ʿAli Safi (the second ruler of the ʿAli Safi dynasty), Khwaja ʿImad al-Din Mahmud and Khwaja Safi al-Din.[849] The mausoleum can be considered a dynastic tomb.[850]

[842] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[843] See also http://archnet.org/sites/5542 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2020). For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 52-60.
[844] For plan, elevation, 1990s photographs and a short description of the monument, see Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 132-141.
[845] Hillenbrand 2014, 79.
[846] *Ibid.*, 79.
[847] *Ibid.*
[848] *Ibid.*, 82.
[849] Wilber 1955, 188.
[850] Hillenbrand 2014, 82.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The monument is given considerable attention by Wilber[851] and above all by Hillenbrand.[852] For this reason only the main points concerning the mausoleum are summarized, with addition of its *in situ* observations.

During Wilber's mausoleum survey its exterior surfaces comprised fragments of original architectural revetments; stucco plugs on the wall surfaces and turquoise glazed tiles on the tent dome.[853] The interior comprised a well preserved stucco revetment repertoire, which has been damaged only on the supporting wall's lower sections. Following Wilber's and Hillenbrand's visits, the mausoleum was heavily restored, which included cleaning, consolidation and heavy overpainting of the stuccos. In describing the extant polychromy traces on the stuccos Wilber notes traces of dark blue, light blue, red and buff. But currently, the stucco repertoire features extensive colouring of a much wider palette which may be a modern interpretation of their original iteration. Photographs published by Hillenbrand[854] document an already retouched polychromy layer of the stuccos.[855] The monument's entire interior is covered with diverse carved stucco panels in low relief, which relate to stuccos of the other two mausolea at Bagh-i Sabz. But each of these three repertoires also showcase characteristics of individuality of the repertoire and features specific to every stucco decorative programme.

The mausoleum's decorative programme can be described in the following way. The supporting wall surfaces are visually broken down by large and deep pointed arch niches. The lower area of the revetment programme on the walls is no longer extant. The niche interiors feature *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscriptions produced with stucco plugs incised into a layer of plaster and their spandrel areas display medallions with vegetal and epigraphic elements. These niches are topped by pairs of spandrels with elaborate palmette-derived symmetrical compositions. The structures of the niches are framed by a long cursive inscription (*Surah Yaʾ-Sin*, 36:1-45).[856] The mausoleum's *qibla* wall featured a carved stucco mihrab which is no longer extant, but the elaborate palmette-designed lunette composition topping the mihrab remains intact. The mausoleum's supporting walls are topped by a monumental inscription band with historic content concerning the function, patron, and date of the mausoleum's completion; it begins with a Qurʾanic excerpt (23:1-8, *Surat al-Muʾminun*) which is followed by the historic inscription.[857] The end of the inscription in crammed into the available space in three registers. The date of

[851] Wilber 1955, 188.
[852] Hillenbrand 2014, 79-82.
[853] Wilber 1955, 188.
[854] Hillenbrand 2014, Figs. 8-9.
[855] Hillenbrand states that the monument features one of the best preserved polychromy stucco repertoires of the fourteenth century, but material characterization of stucco polychromy is needed to prove its authenticity.
[856] Hillenbrand 2014, 82.
[857] Hillenbrand provides a detailed translation of the historic inscription: The inscription then invokes the mercy of God on the occupants of this *pleasant tomb* (*al-marqad al-latif*). These are *al-sahib al-aʿzam al-dastur al-aʿlim al-mushraf qatiba al-alqab Khwaja Jamal al-Haqq wa al-Din ʿAli and his son (wa ibnahu) al-amir Jalal al-Din and his brother (wa akhahu) Khwaja ʿImad al-Din Mahmud, the two sons of (ibna) al-Khwaja Safi al-Din.* The inscription continues with the words *wa-udkhulhum fi rahmatika wa-anta arhamu al-rahimin (and You are the most merciful of those who dispense mercy)* and it then ends *in the year 792 (1390)* – the year is given in figures. *Ibid.*, 82.

the completion of the repertoire is written numerically, comparable to the ʿAli Safi mausoleum. The inscription is set against a background of vegetal scrolls with varied types of leaf elements.

The transitional zone is sixteen-sided, and it comprises blind pointed arch niches with some window openings. These blind niches and those with window openings feature unassuming decoration of geometrical grids formed by stucco plugs of different colours with epigraphic (*ʿAli*) and abstracted blossom elements. The areas between the pointed arch niches do not feature spandrels but triangular compositions with circular epigraphic medallions with names of revered personages of the Islamic religion. The transitional area is topped by a monumental Kufic inscription (Qurʾan 76:1-6, *Surat al-Insan*)[858] with elements of Knotted Kufic giving it a balanced appearance. This band is framed by two thin bands, one of which features a Square Kufic inscription (repetitions of ʿAli, Muhammad and Allah).[859]

The dome area stuccos are some of the best preserved dome revetments of the fourteenth century.[860] They display a central *shamsa* with an epigraphic band (*Surah Al-ʿImran*; 3:17-18),[861] from which a geometrical grid of interlocking elements develops. This geometrical grid serves as the space organizer for the placement of medallions[862] and other elements of decoration for the dome's surface. The epigraphic band and medallions connect visually to the inscription bands in the mausoleum's transitional zone and supporting structure. In this manner, the craftsmen managed to produce a stucco decorative programme with a uniform and balanced appearance. Inscription bands of the programme emphasize the mausoleum's main architectural lines and the medallion, spandrels and niche stuccos fill the remaining architectural surfaces with background elements of the repertoire. The described stucco aesthetics should be understood as the culmination of this medium, which developed in the Ilkhanid period and continued, as demonstrated by the monument in question, also in the decades after the disintegration of the Ilkhanid Empire.

[858] Hillenbrand 2014, 82.
[859] *Ibid.*, 81.
[860] Hillenbrand notes that this is one of the most complex dome designs of fourteenth century Qum. *Ibid.*, 81.
[861] *Ibid.*, 81.
[862] Specific epigraphic content of these medallions inscriptions is reported by Hillenbrand: "Their general message – and it has to be remembered that this is conveyed by means of words written in widely separated medallions, so that, visually speaking, there is little sense of a single continuous text – is a proclamation of the truth of Islam through the Prophet Muhammad and Imam ʿAli. In true Shiʿi fashion, they confirm ʿAli as the heir of Muhammad. The text as given by Tabatabaʿi reads: *There is no god but God, the King, the Clear Truth. Muhammad is the Messenger of God, he who keeps his promises. ʿAli is the Friend of God, the Commander of the Faithful, the Heir of the Messenger, Lord of the Worlds, [the Confirmer of] the truth of Almighty God, and [the Confirmer of] His noble Messenger, and we are amongst the witnesses to that.*" Hillenbrand 2014, 81.

9. Imamzada ʿAli ibn-i Abi al-Maʿali ibn-i ʿAli Safi / Khwaja Asil al-Din mausoleum (the southern tomb at the Bagh-i Sabz) 1360

Figs. 169-170

Associated Names

The monument is referred to as the Imāmzāda ʿAli ibn-i Abī al-Maʿali ibn-i ʿAlī Ṣafi[863] by Wilber and Hillenbrand.[864] An alternative name for the monument which is frequently employed, is Imamzada Khwaja Asil al-Din.[865] Another popular name, Saʿd (or Sayyid) Maʿsum, is reported by Hillenbrand.[866] The monument is the southern-most of the three mausolea at the Bagh-i Sabz near the Kashan gate.[867]

Architectural Structure

The monument is a twelve-sided structure on its exterior and octagonal in its interior. It was topped by a polygonal drum and a double shelled dome. Photographs by Herzfeld document the mausoleum's ruined state.[868] Wilber reports that the drum and the two dome shells were no longer extant during his visit in 1943.[869] The ground plan and elevations of the monument are published by Hillenbrand.[870] The mausoleum's exterior walls are articulated into a set of pointed arch blind niches which render its appearance elegant and break down the visual weight of its structure. The interior structure of the mausoleum is articulated in a set of deeply recessed blind pointed arch niches in a manner similar to the Gunbad-i Sabz (see above). The transitional zone was articulated into a set of sixteen blind niches, four of which featured window openings. The interior dome shell was rebuilt slightly before the Islamic revolution in order to protect interior stuccos and mausoleum's structure from the weathering agents.[871]

Monument Function

Wilber reports that the monument was built by ʿAli Safi in order to house the remains of his uncle and his son (after whom the monument was named).[872]

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The monument preserves large portions of its original carved stucco repertoire in its interior. These stuccos are of particular significance due to the historic inscription containing the mausoleum's date of completion and because they comprise several signatures of personages

[863] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[864] Wilber 1955, 185; Hillenbrand 2014, 73.
[865] See http://archnet.org/sites/3890/media_contents/1037 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2020).
[866] Hillenbrand 2014, 73.
[867] Wilber 1955, 185. For ground plan, elevation, 1990s photographs and a short description of the monument, see Qasimi 2010, Vol. 12, 132-141. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 52-60.
[868] http://archnet.org/sites/3890/media_contents/1037 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2020). See especially negatives no. (5)l.317(2525) and (5)l.317(2523).
[869] Wilber 1955, 185.
[870] Hillenbrand 2014, 74.
[871] See images by Blair and Bloom: http://archnet.org/sites/3890/media_contents/1064 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2020).
[872] See also Hillenbrand 2014, 76.

involved in the monument's construction and decoration. The repertoire is discussed in detail by Hillenbrand and a summary is reported here.[873]

Carved stuccos cover the majority of the mausoleum's interior surfaces. Lower portions of the walls are missing the original revetments. Stuccos covering deep pointed arch niches on the supporting wall structure, their spandrels and the area of transition, have been considerably restored, which comprised their cleaning and overpainting. Hillenbrand reports on extant pigmentation traces during the survey of the monument by Sarre (between 1895 and 1900) and his survey, informing that the stuccos comprised white, brownish red, blue and green pigmentation on inscription bands and medallions. The eight pointed arch niche structures of supporting walls are framed by a monumental Kufic inscription band (consisting of *Surat al-Insan*: Qurʾan 76 and parts of *Surat al-Qadr*: Qurʾan 97).[874] Their spandrels comprise medallions with epigraphic elements; occasionally, epigraphic medallions are also placed into interior surfaces of these niches - some are historical in content.[875] Thin repeating geometrical bands are employed to further outline pointed arch and spandrel forms. The mausoleum also featured a carved stucco mihrab, of which only a few fragments remain; its monumental framing inscription features *Surat al-Israʾ*; 17:80.[876] The background of the decorative repertoire is formed by stucco plugs produced by the application of a plaster layer on the fired brick surface. Some plugs contain epigraphic elements such as *ʿAli*,[877] but the majority features the x and o design. Supporting walls are topped by a monumental inscription band in *Naskh* style with historic content providing information concerning the mausoleum's patron, and the identity of the two personages buried in its interior.[878] It was carved out of a single stucco layer, similar to the majority of the monument's repertoire. The background is filled with vegetal elements and two thin bands provide visual frames to the inscription. The inscription is topped by the transitional zone system of sixteen rectangular panels with pointed arch blind niches and four window openings. The spandrels of the blind niches feature diverse stucco perforation patterns and an arabesque band runs along the rectangular panels. The transitional area is topped by another monumental inscription band in *Naskh* style with Qurʾanic excerpts (*Surat al-Fath*,

[873] Hillenbrand 2014, 73-79.
[874] *Ibid.*, 75.
[875] These inscriptions include names of Twelve Imams, invocations to God and historic content. For the full reading of these inscriptions, see *Ibid.*, 75-76.
[876] Hillenbrand 2014, 75.
[877] Hillenbrand notes the profusion of the stucco plug ʿAli and suggests that the monument is visually dedicated to Imam ʿAli. *Ibid.*, 74.
[878] The detailed reading of the inscription is provided by Hillenbrand, who reads it in the following manner: *The first metre or so of the much-mutilated lower cursive inscription is missing; it probably contained the basmala. It then reads, initially in rhyming prose: The mention of the Eternal One is most lofty and is most worthy of memorial (dhikru'l-qadim aʿla wa bi-taqdimi ʿula). There ordered the establishment of this lofty tomb (al-buqʿa al-rafiʿa) and this mighty seat (al-sudda al-maniʿa) the client, the most exalted, just Lord of the Arabs and non-Arabs…al-Dunya wa'l-Din Ṣafi al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin ʿAli, may God honour his companions and redouble his capacities. He designed (rasama) the resting place (marqad) of his uncle the lord…Aṣil al-Dawla wa'l-Din, Jamal al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin and his son, and the apple of his eye [lit. 'part of his liver', fidha kabdihi], the martyred, pardoned lord (al-ṣahib al-shahid al-maghfur) Jamal al-Dawla wa'l-Din, Aṣil [al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin] ʿAli b. Abi'l-Maʿali b. ʿAli Ṣafi. May God make the resting place for the two of them cool and make Paradise the place to which the two of them return. In the months of the year 761. (i.e. 1360). Ibid.*, 75-76.

Qurʾan 48).[879] The interior dome shell was originally decorated in a manner related to the other two mausolea of Bagh-i Sabz.

Similar to the other two mausolea, the tomb of ʿAli Safi also displays specific aesthetics of carved stucco interior, which aimed at covering all the architectural surfaces. The mausoleum's interior surfaces were determined by its architectural structure. The stuccos were produced accordingly, and in a manner to highlight the mausoleum's structure. They were employed according to a clear logic. Stucco plugs functioned as the background of this decorative programme. Stucco inscription bands emphasized the main architectural lines of the mausoleum. Pointed arch niches and rectangular panels were filled with stucco arabesques and stucco panels displaying repeating patterns of perforations and incisions. The mausoleum's specific characteristics are the stucco epigraphic medallions placed in the spandrels of recessed niches and in niche interiors. Such elements could have also been comprised in the decorative programme of the no longer extant original interior dome shell.

Craftsmen Signatures

Figs. 169-170.

The specific significance of this mausoleum is the presence of signatures of personages involved in its construction and decoration. Discussion of these signatures is reported here for the sake of completeness.

A historic inscription medallion in the pointed arch niche features, according to Hillenbrand's interpretation, the date of the mausoleum's completion and it identifies its architect.

Hillenbrand reads it as: "…hadhihi'l-ʿimarat bi ʿamal Ḥasan b. ʿAli Kh.l.w. Abi'l-Bannaʾwa kutiba fi Rajab 761"[880]

This building is work of Hasan ibn ʿAli … Abi al-Bannaʾ and (this) is written in Rajab (of the year) 761 (1360).[881]

Hillenbrand proposes that the inscription identifies the architect of the building. This is plausible, given that the inscription specifically refers to *this building is work of*. He also notes that the signature of the same architect is found on the mausoleum of Khadija Khatun[882] at Khalijistan near Qum.[883]

In the spandrel area above this medallion, two additional inscription cartouches must be read together as the signature of the stucco craftsmen's workshop responsible for the mausoleum's stucco repertoire.

The signature was read by Tabatabaʿi:[884]

[879] Hillenbrand 2014, 75.
[880] *Ibid.*
[881] *Ibid.*
[882] For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 202-206.
[883] Hillenbrand 2014, 82; endnote no. 49. See also Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 205.
[884] Tabatabaʿi 1973, 37.

عمل علي بن محمد بن ابي شجاي بنا

Work of ʿAli ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Shujʿa [al-]bannaʾ.[885]

The placing of the two signatures (near each other, pyramidal arrangement) indicates that they might have been intended to be comprehended together. Both signatures refer to the activity of personages as *work of*, but the medallion signature refers specifically to construction activity. Both names of the personages contain the appellative *al-bannaʾ - the builder*, which should not be comprehended as a strict denomination of the builders' profession, but rather as an appellative. It is plausible that the medallion carries the signature of the building's architect and the two cartouches carry the name of the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop.[886] The type of placement of the signatures (large medallion vs undecorated cartouches) reflects the hierarchy between the architect and the stucco craftsmen's workshop, giving the primary position to the architect.

10. Imamzada Ibrahim (2) c. 1330

Associated Names

The monument is known as the *Imāmzāda* Ibrāhīm,[887] or the Shahzada Ibrahim.[888]

Architectural Structure

Wilber classifies the monument as of Type Three; the mausoleum is octagonal in its interior and on its exterior. Wilber's photograph[889] documents its structure; supporting walls feature articulation similar to the monuments of Gunbad-i Sabz. The octagonal drum retained an opening on each side, but it was already in a ruined state. The outer shell of the dome, which was likely of polyhedral form, was no longer extant. The monument is located in the area to the west of historic Qum.

Monument Function

This is a funerary tomb tower which houses a tomb of a Sayyid.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

A brief account of the monument is provided by Wilber and summarized here.[890] He states that the monument is in good condition except for the fact that its external dome shell is missing. He also reports that the blue glazed tiles at the entrance of the mausoleum (similar to those of its cenotaph) are a modern addition. Wilber does not provide further details concerning the

[885] See Grbanovic, Ana Marija "Carved Letters, Designs and Ornaments. Ilkhanid Stuccos and the "Signatures" of their Craftsmen," *Article in Press* for the *Proceedings of Conference Inscriptions from the Islamic World* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh Studies in Islamic Art), Andrew Peacock and Bernard O'Kane (eds).
[886] See also Hillenbrand 2014, 75.
[887] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[888] Wilber 1955, 179. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 71-72.
[889] Wilber 1955, Pl. 183. (not 189, as stated)
[890] *Ibid.*, 178-79.

possible existence of lustre tile or stucco revetments in the mausoleum. The monument was also documented by Blair and Bloom.[891]

11. Imamzada Shahzada Ismaʿil

Wilber reports that the structure is dated 1374 and that its exact location is unknown.[892] He did not visit the monument and he does not provide information concerning the mausoleum's decoration. The only known name of the monument is Shahzāda Ismāʿil.[893]

12. Imamzada Zayd

Associated Names

The monument is known as the Imāmzāda Zayd.[894]

Architectural Structure

The monument may have originally been a tomb tower, which was later enlarged and integrated into the large complex together with the shrine of Chihil Dukhtaran and the Imamzada Musa. The mausoleum's interior and exterior structures have been altered in modern times, but it retains stucco revetments in the intrados of the entrance opening and in its interior. The monument was either octagonal or square on the exterior, its interior is square. The transitional zone consists of pointed arch recesses alternated by blind pointed arch niches. The monument's dome is a modern substitution; it was originally likely a double-shelled dome.

Monument Function

A funerary structure, which houses burial remains of a Sayyid.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The intrados of the entrance portal features a cursive inscription which dates the stuccos to 1447. The panels include Square Kufic compositions of *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*, not dissimilar to those in the intrados of Madrasa Ghiyasiyya in Qum (see below). The interior of the monument may have featured an extensive stucco repertoire comparable to the other tomb towers of Ilkhanid Qum.

13. Imamzada Fatima Khatun and Ahmad

Associated Names

The monument is known as the *Imāmzāda* of Fatima Khātun and Āḥmad.[895]

[891] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/5497/media_contents/42590 (Last Accessed: November 9, 2020).
[892] Wilber 1955, 178.
[893] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[894] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[895] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.

Architectural Structure

The mausoleum may have originally been an octagonal tomb tower similar to other funerary structures in Qum; its exterior was almost entirely altered in the Qajar period and modern times. A modern access corridor was also built to ease the entry for pilgrims. In its interior, the mausoleum retains parts of original stucco repertoire which has been heavily restored with modern additions, whitewash and overpainting. The monument likely originally featured an octagonal exterior and interior and it was probably topped by a double-shelled dome.

Monument Function

The funerary structure houses the remains of Sayyids.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

The mausoleum's stuccos reveal decorative logic and stucco panel division similar to other octagonal tomb towers in Qum. The decorative repertoire features epigraphic bands and stucco panels produced in low relief. These stucco panels display visual elements which are encountered on other Ilkhanid monuments in Qum. The Square Kufic panels in the intradoses of pointed arch niches in the lower sections of the mausoleum are related to similar such panels at the Madrasa Ghiyasiyya (see below) and the Imamzada Zayd (see above). The palmette compositions and epigraphic roundels are similar to those encountered in the Imamzada Jaʿfar al-Sadiq and Imamzada Ahmad (see above). The monumental inscription bands are very similar to those of the three mausolea at Bagh-i Sabz (see above). Stuccos of the transitional zone with blind niches and window openings covered by grills may be works of restoration. Judging from these features, the monument may be one of the later tomb towers constructed in Qum, probably sometime in the second half of fourteenth century.

14. Mosque portal (Madrasa Ghiyasiyya) c. 1325

Associated Names

The monument is referred to by Wilber as the *portal with flanking minarets*. The name currently in use is: the Madrasa Ghīyāṯīyya (Pā Mināŕ).[896]

Architectural Structure

The monument is preserved only in parts and it has been interpreted as a portal of a no longer extant theological school; it consists of the entrance opening formed by a pointed arch and a semi-dome which is flanked by a pair of monumental minarets.[897] The monument comprises fragmented remains of its exterior architectural revetments. A modern structure (a store) has been built into the lower part of its entrance opening. The monument is located in Qum's eastern part.[898]

[896] Transliteration according to the IJMES system. For the discussion of the monument by Tabatabaʿi, see Tabatabaʿi 1976, Vol. 2, 127-129.
[897] Images of monument are available at: http://www.archnet.org/sites/5487 (Last Accessed: November 11, 2020).
[898] Wilber 1955, 167.

Monument Function

The remains of the monument have been interpreted as remains of a theological school,[899] based on the remains of a terracotta glazed historic inscription on the shaft of the left hand side minaret. Identification of the monument as the madrasa Ghiyasiyya requires further evidence.

Architectural Revetments Description and Discussion

Wilber dates the monument to c. 1325, based on his analysis of the monument's fragmented architectural revetments. The historic inscription on the left-hand side minaret originally also comprised the date of its completion which is legible only in fragments. Architectural revetments (stucco plugs, carved stucco and Square Kufic inscription) are found on Ilkhanid monuments of Qum and other near-by settlements, but their production continued also after the fall of the Ilkhanid Empire; this could indicate the monument's later date, compared to Wilber's hypothesis. Wilber proposes that the remaining architectural structure is reminiscent of the Nizamiyya mosque in Abarquh and that this could also be a parallel for the dating of the Qum monument. But the Abarquh monument features more complex architectural revetments, compared to the one in Qum.

The portal's fired brick structure comprised carved stucco plugs inserted between the bricks. Some plugs are of epigraphic and geometrical types; some recount names of revered figures of the Islamic religion (*Allah, ʿAli*) and other plugs feature the frequent x and o type or other geometrical and abstracted vegetal forms. In some cases, these plugs are produced from a coating layer of plaster which covers the architectural surfaces of fired brick structure. Small arched openings on the portal's surface retain remains of carved stucco spandrels and epigraphic cartouches in Kufic style; in their fragmented state, they are difficult to read. The most extensive carved stuccos are placed in the intrados of the pointed arch opening. This is a band of carved stucco Square Kufic inscription. It conserves remains of the incisions of grid lines, which served the craftsmen to transfer the Square Kufic design onto the large dimension surface. The inscription is a repeating epigraphic composition of *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*, very similar to the stuccos in the Imamzada Zayd. This stucco inscription was coated with a layer of plaster at an unknown point which concealed the inscription.

The two minaret shafts, as mentioned by Wilber, featured strapwork ornamentation, which has since been substituted by modern elements. Wilber informs that the minarets were in a poor condition during his visit in 1943; that their shafts were damaged, the glazed terracotta inscriptions were in very bad condition, the heads of the minarets were missing, and the stalactite cornices (which have been rebuilt since) were partially destroyed. In sum, the monumental portal features architectural form and revetments, which are characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. The Square Kufic inscription band in the intrados of portal's opening may be characteristic of stuccos produced in the area of Qum; it could be an argument for the portal's slightly later dating, compared to the suggestion by Wilber.

[899] Wilber 1955, 167.

Characteristics of the Qum Mausolea Architectural Revetments

Stucco Polychromy at Qum

Almost all revetment repertoires in the Qum area have been altered by restoration interventions. The repertoires were whitewashed or overpainted with modern colours. It is thus difficult to propose any detailed information concerning the original colour palette of these repertoires.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Qum

Qum stuccos are produced with undemanding stucco artistic techniques. The vast majority of stucco panels are produced by carving a single stucco layer. Some monumental inscription bands which feature slightly recessed vegetal ornamentation might have been carved out of two stucco layers. These stuccos feature frequent perforations with a wide variety of perforation patterns. Some stucco panels display repeating geometrical designs, such as six-pointed stars, which were produced with incisions. Qum stuccos do not feature artistic techniques which were frequently employed for stucco production in north-western, Central and north-eastern Iran. These are, for example, techniques of applied protruding elements which could be pre-formed or formed upon the application, or both. The stuccos of Qum do not comprise stucco undercut. Carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks and carved stucco plugs produced out of a layer of plaster are employed frequently to form backgrounds of stucco repertoires. Another specific technique was frequently employed to make the Qum stuccos feature Square Kufic inscription bands or panels; it required a specific modality of inscription design transfer with grids and a specific carving angle (around ninety degrees).

In sum, the selection of artistic techniques for production of stuccos at Qum is relatively narrow. It was determined by craftsmen's workshops in charge of production of these repertoires as well as by stucco production knowledge transmission from generation to generation, which in the given case should be called a local tradition. These repertoires were works of a small number of craftsmen's workshop which operated in the area of Qum and some surrounding settlements. Similar can also be observed for the limited number of types of architectural forms of these mausolea and their technical solutions.

The Qum Stucco Revetments' Decorative Principles, Aesthetics and Style

The carved stuccos of the Qum mausolea are all located in their interiors. These interiors consist of supporting structures articulated into sets of niches; they translate into transitional zones of differing types and drums and they are topped by interior low-pitched, hemispherical or high-pitched domes. Several principles, according to which the craftsmen designed these stucco repertoires have been observed. Lower areas of supporting structures mainly functioned as backgrounds to decorative repertoires with stucco plugs, except where the dado areas were produced in lustre tile medium. Recessed niches of supporting walls often featured modest decoration and their focal points were adorned with specifically produced medallions with epigraphic content. Spandrels of recessed niches and pointed arch transitional elements featured vegetal compositions or epigraphic medallions. Their background was often produced with stucco perforation. Inscription bands were frequently employed to accentuate edges of supporting walls, transitional zones and drum areas. Transitional zones consisted of pointed

arch elements forming blind niches alternated with rectangular panels or featuring window openings. These panels displayed symmetrical vegetal compositions or epigraphic elements. The interior dome shells were decorated with carved stucco to feature grids of interlocking geometrical elements. These grids enclosed diverse types of medallions, with epigraphic elements or symmetrical compositions of vegetal ornamentation. Colouring of stucco panels was an essential part which went hand in hand with their decorative principles, but further archaeometric research is necessary to provide sound information regarding their original appearance.

Mausolea and Revetments' Patronage

Qum's Ilkhanid monuments were mainly funerary structures which housed above all graves of Sayyids, which in some cases (the mausoleum of ʿAli Safi at Bagh-i Sabz) were members of the local ruling dynasty. Some monuments comprise historic inscriptions regarding their patrons who were often family members of the deceased personages. Patronage of these monuments was therefore based on family ties between patrons and the persons buried in the mausolea. This is different, compared to the majority of Ilkhanid monuments, where the patronage was enacted by either Ilkhanid officials of various ranks, or the local notables, who could have been of either political, religious or economical status. In those cases, there are no family ties between the patron and the monument, but rather, a connection between the patron and the monument's geographical location, where the patron could have originated from.

But in some cases, Ilkhanid monuments outside Qum, exist where the patrons were tied to the deceased buried in the structure or where they built monuments for their own burial. Some examples include the Muzaffarid mausolea in Yazd (Cat. No. 29), the mausolea of Abarquh (Cat. No. 11) and also the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), the patronage of which is however of an imperial rank. In sum, the mausolea at Qum present a local phenomenon not only in the case of their revetments and structures but also in aspects of their patronage mechanism, which is characteristic of a number of Ilkhanid burial structures. This is different, compared to the funerary complexes which presented political interest for patronage by Ilkhanid officials and local notables due to their religious significance. Some of these examples are the pilgrimage complexes of ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum south of Isfahan (Cat. No. 2), of the Turbat-i Jam complex of Ahmad Jami (Cat. No. 30).

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s) in Qum

Qum mausolea architectural structures can be grouped into three main groups, based on their architectural form and solutions. Similarly, their stucco repertoires can be divided into two groups, depending on their extent and types of panels and visual elements. The discussion of artistic techniques, aesthetics and decorative principles showed that these repertoires all reveal common traits. Some of the monuments also bear the signature of the *ʿAli Shujʿa al-bannaʾ* workshop, while others display close affinities to these repertoires. The double signature at the ʿAli Safi mausoleum also includes the signature of the mausoleum's architect, in addition to the craftsmen's workshop. It is thus possible to conclude that these monuments were works of a restricted number of workshops of builders and stucco craftsmen who operated over several generations in the fourteenth century in the area of Qum.

g.) Research Findings and Conclusion

This research illustrates that Qum's funerary structures, housing graves of Sayyids, mainly sponsored by their relatives, display common features of architectural forms and interior stucco revetment repertoires. They were likely built and decorated by a small number of building and stucco workshops which operated in Qum and the surrounding settlements. Their stucco repertoires share common technological and aesthetic features, which need to be considered as characteristic of this geographical area and which were transmitted through generations also into the period after the fall of the Ilkhanid Empire, until approximately the end of the fourteenth century, when activities of similar types continued in Qum. The three mausolea at Bagh-i Sabz, built in the second half of the fourteenth century, present the culmination of the building and stucco style of Qum, which in some instances continued on a smaller scale also into the fifteenth century.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Wilber 1955; Tabatabaʿi 1971; Tabatabaʿi 1973; Hillenbrand 2014; Qasimi 2010, vol. 12, 132-153.

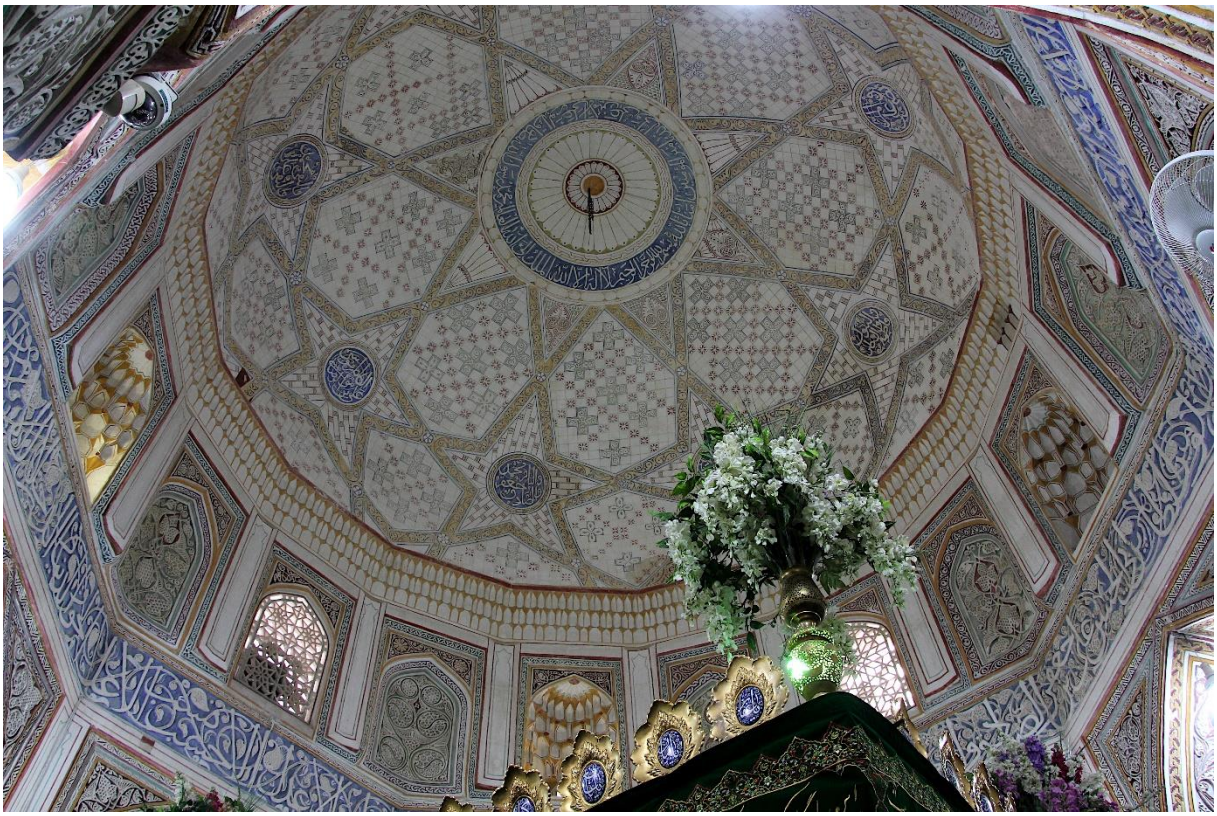


Figure 161: Interior of the mausoleum of ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar al-Sadiq in Qum: interior drum and interior dome shell carved stucco revetments in 2017.

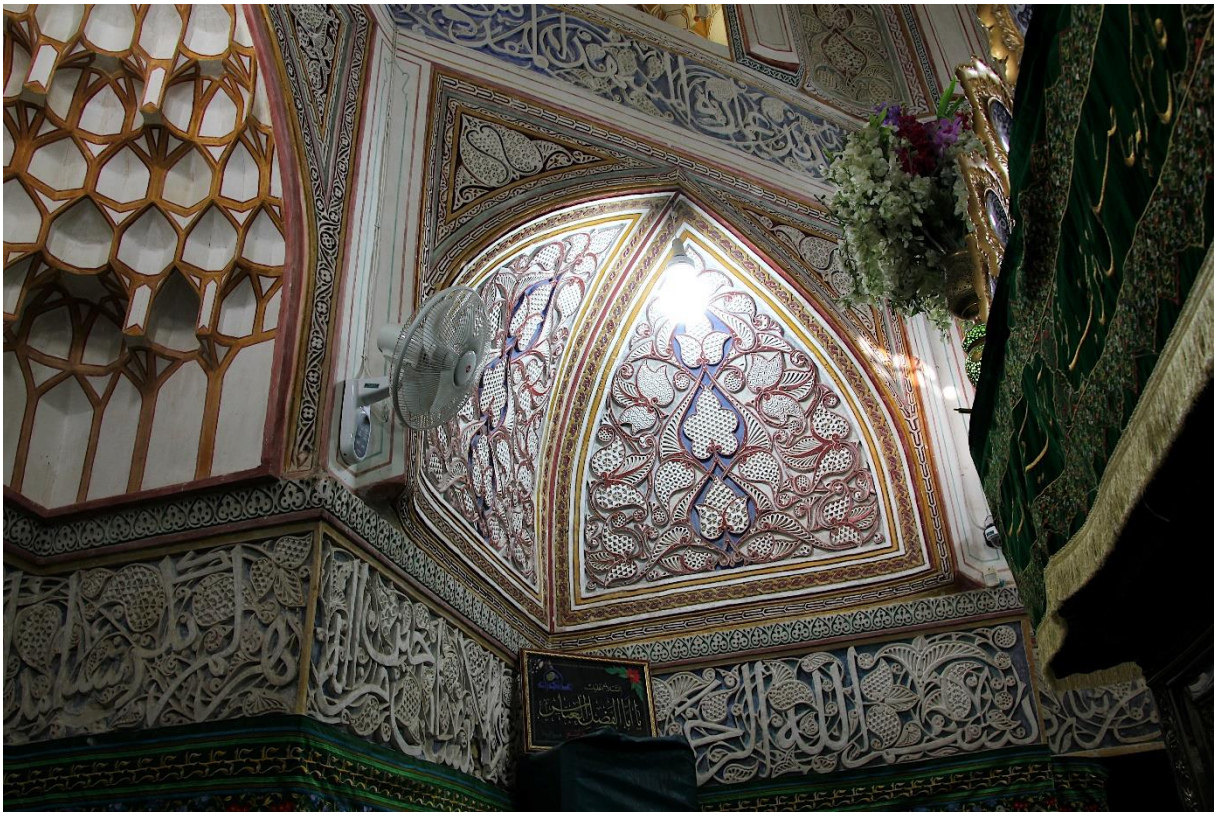
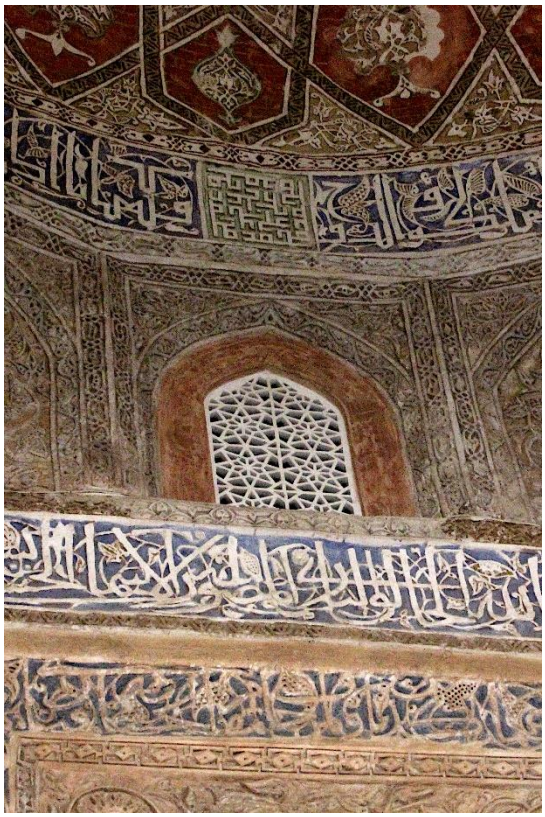
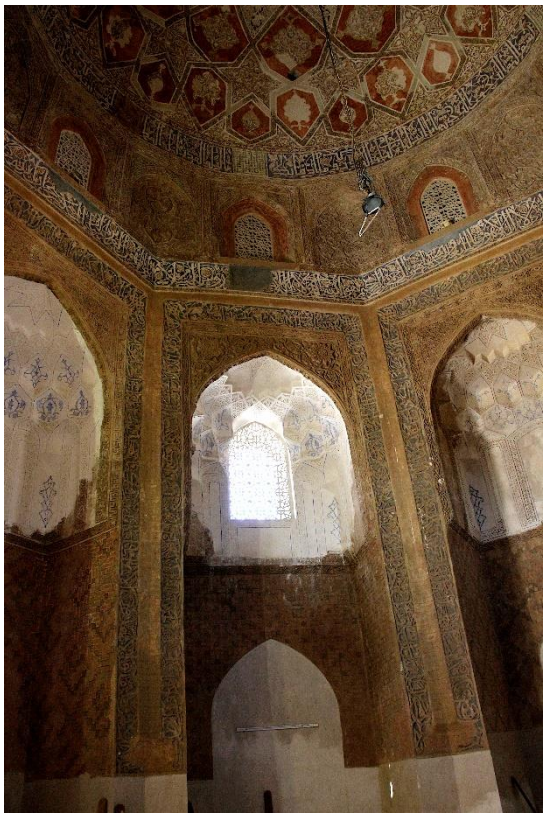


Figure 162: Detail of the interior stucco decoration of the ʿAli ibn Jaʿfar al-Sadiq mausoleum in Qum: the transitional zone pointed arch element is covered with panels of carved stucco featuring symmetrical vegetal compositions.



Figure 163: Interior of the Gunbad-i Sabz mausoleum: carved stuccos of the transitional zone and the interior dome shell in 2017.





Figures 164-165: Left; detail of the carved stuccos in the transitional zone of the mausoleum. Right: supporting wall structure of the interior of the Gunbad-i Sabz mausoleum with carved stuccos: the monumental epigraphic band enhances architectural lines; the muqarnas is heavily restored.

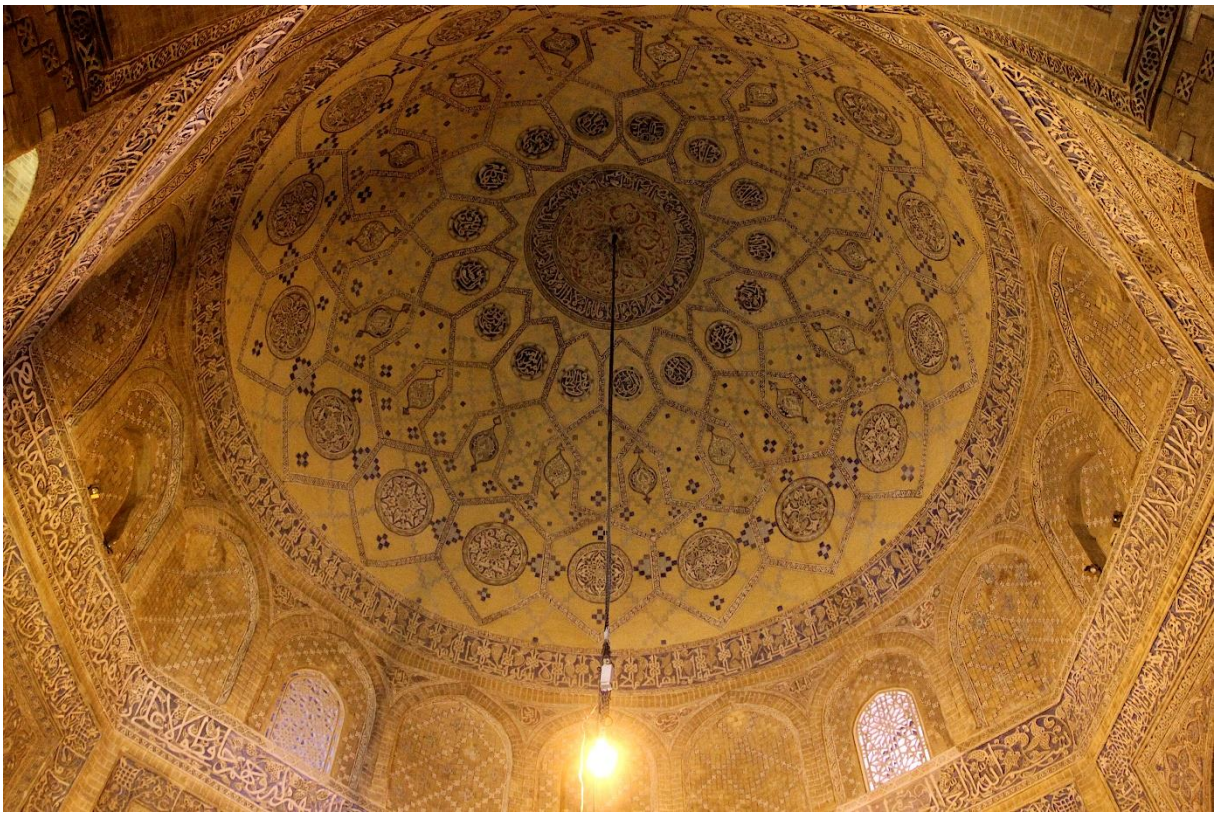


Figure 166: Interior of the ʿImad al-Din mausoleum at Bagh-i Sabz: stuccos of the interior drum and the interior dome shell in 2017.



Figure 167: Supporting wall structure with recessed blind niches at the ʿImad al-Din mausoleum: carved stuccos cover all the architectural surfaces; monumental epigraphic bands outline the interior's architectural lines; medallions function as focal points of niches.

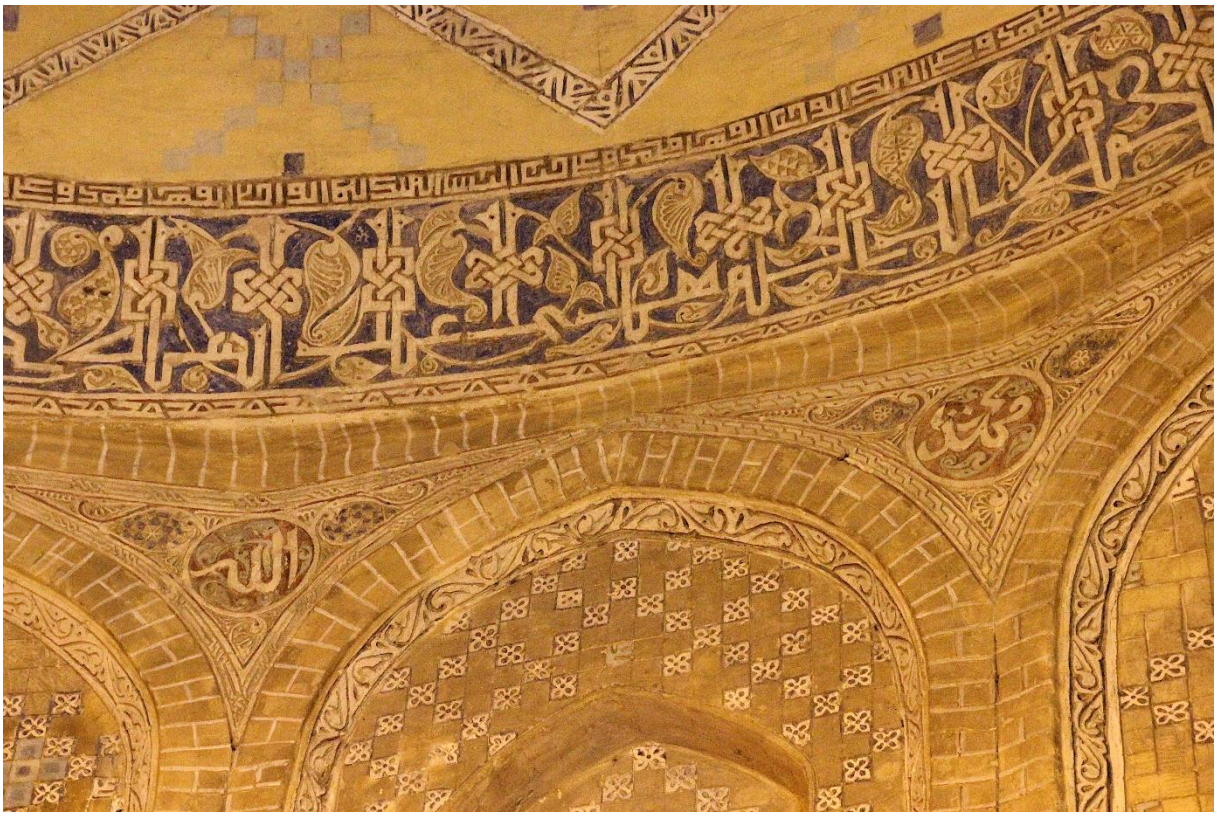


Figure 168: Detail of the area below the springing of the interior dome at the ʿImad al-Din mausoleum (Bagh-i Sabz): Kufic inscription with knotted elements and specific types of epigraphic medallions.

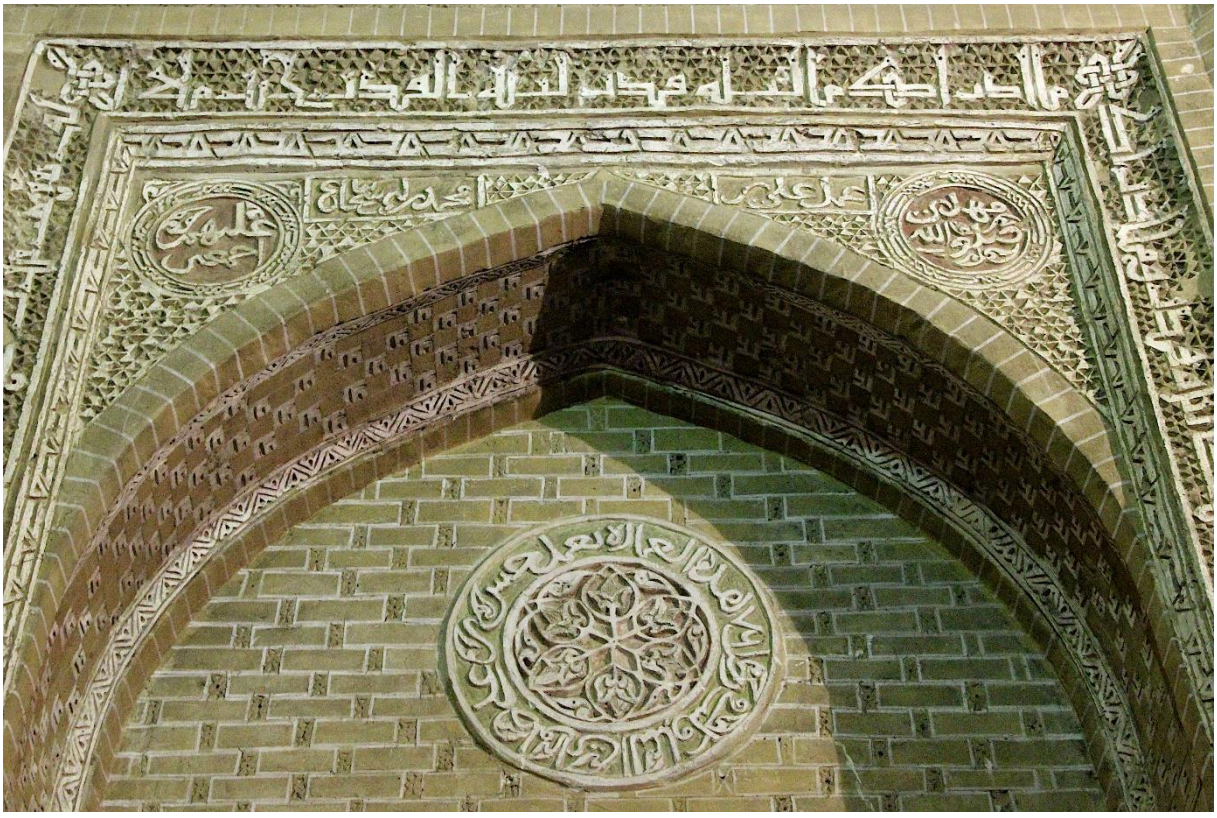


Figure 169: Recessed niche of the ʿAli Safi mausoleum at Bagh-i Sabz: the spandrel area comprises the signature of the head of the stucco craftsmen's workshop, the medallion in the interior of the niche features the date of completion of the monument (761/1360) and architect's signature.



Figure 170: Detail of the signature of the architect of the ʿAli Safi mausoleum: this is one of the two known signatures of architects in monuments of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, which feature stucco repertoires.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 16

Monument Name: Farumad Friday mosque

Figs. 171-188.

Associated Names: the monument is commonly referred to as the Congregational mosque of Farumad. The mosque's variant names derive from different modalities of spelling and transliterating the name of the settlement (فرومد).[900] Perhaps the most correct spelling of the name is the Farūmad Friday mosque.[901] Other variant names comprise: the Friday Mosque of Forumad, the Masjid-i Jami Jamiʿi Forumad, the Friday mosque of Foryumad and the Friday mosque of Faryumad.[902]

Monument Type: two-*iwan* mosque with a courtyard and remains of side spaces flanking the courtyard; it is preceded by an entrance portal.

Chronology: The monument presents challenges for the understanding of its constructive and decorative stages; some of its surfaces retain two to three superimposed layers of different architectural revetments. The monument's dating has been problematic; some scholars suggest a Seljuq and the others an Ilkhanid date. This research proposes that the monument should be understood as an early Ilkhanid monument, which was redecorated and perhaps rebuilt in a short time span.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): two-*iwan* with courtyard mosque

Location: in the southern part of the modern Farumad settlement (located near the city of Sabzivar); c. 90 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Sabzivar in the north-west direction.

GPS location of the monument: 36.5129747 N; 56.7502486 E.

Monument Investigation: December 7, 2017; February 14, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Modern Farumad is a small size settlement in Simnan province. It is situated north from the main modern communication route connecting Sabzivar with Shahrud. In the Ilkhanid period, Farumad was located on the main roads connecting the cities of the historic Khurasan region. The northern road led from Bistam to Jajarm over Farumad and passing by Azadiwar to Nishapur, and it connected the settlements of the Juwayn district.[903] The southern route started in Badhash, near Bistam, and crossed the mountain slopes and deserts to Asadabad, passing through Farumad, to reach Muzinan, Sabzivar and Nishapur.[904] Safavid sources do not mention Farumad, with one less relevant exception. This likely points towards Farumad's lesser

[900] Variant spelling of settlement's name is: فریومد.
[901] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[902] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/5445 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[903] Hoseini 2006, 47.
[904] *Ibid.*, 47.

significance in the period following the disintegration of the Timurid Empire. Farumad was reportedly significantly reduced into a small village in the Qajar period, due to its remote location.[905]

There are no pre-Islamic sources referring to Farumad.[906] Farumad's name is likely derived from *faryu* (فریو), meaning *the correct*, *the right* and of *mad*, (مد or مذ) with the meaning *owner* or *possessor*, therefore *the right owner*.[907] The oldest written mention of Farumad is by ʿAli ibn Zayd Bayhaqi (known as Ibn Funduq), in the work entitled *Tarikh-i Bayhaq* (*The Beyhaq's History*) from the second half of the twelfth century.[908] This work divides the area of Bayhaq into twelve units, with Farumad mentioned as part of the eleventh unit. The same work provides information regarding Farumad, with a description of its surroundings and its history, which stems from the ninth century, when it was founded by ʿAbdullah Tahir Amir Tahiri[909] of Khurasan. Following the death of Malik Shah in 1093, the local rulers of Farid took more power, and Abu al-Qasim al-Farumadi, the Hakim of Farumad, took power over the area of Beyhaq.[910] Beyhaqi also recounts the event of the slaughter of the Zoroastrian population in the area of Farumad, when the Kwarazmshah Yanal Takin burned the settlement in 1143.[911] Farumad was a significant settlement, but it became known as the main centre of the Juwayn district only following the Mongol conquest.[912]

Farumad is mentioned in Yaqut's geographical treatise *Muʿjam al-Buldan*, where he writes about Juwayn; that this is a district located on the caravan routes connecting Bistam with Nishapur, that the original name of this geographical unit was Jakuwiyan and that Arabs arabized it into Juwayn.[913] Mustawfi, in *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, writes that Juwayn is a district close to Bayhaq; that Farumad is part of the district, that its capital is fed with water through a kanat system, and the area is an important fruit production centre.[914] Saʿid Muhandis Hoseini states that notables of Farumad and Ilkhanid officials from Farumad determined the significance of Farumad within the Ilkhanid Empire.[915] Some of these personages are Kwaya ʿIzz al-Din Tahir al-Faryumadi, the deputy of Arghun Khan in the regions of Khurasan and Mazandaran, and his grandson, Kwaya Nizam al-Din Yahya al-Faryumadi, who was very influential in Ghazan Khan's *diwan*.[916]

According to Hoseini, in the period of Abu Saʿid's rule, (r. 1316-1335), the significance of Farumad increased.[917] Farumad is said to have remained an influential city and capital of

[905] Hoseini 2006, 47.
[906] *Ibid.*, 42.
[907] *Ibid.*
[908] *Ibid.*
[909] The Amir of Khurasan between years 829 and 845.
[910] Hoseini 2006, 44.
[911] *Ibid.*, 44.
[912] *Ibid.*
[913] *Ibid.*
[914] *Ibid.*
[915] *Ibid.*
[916] *Ibid.*, 44.
[917] Kwaya ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhammad, the minister of Khurasan in the period of Abu Saʿid's rule, sponsored the monument, referred to in the works of Dawlatshah Samarkandi as: the minister of Khurasan used to live in Farumad, and the state building, known as *imarat-i shahristan*, was constructed with his funds. Hoseini 2006, 44-45.

Juwayn district following the demise of the Ilkhanid Empire (the period of Sarbadars) and it kept this status until the middle of the fifteenth century.[918] Farumad was not spared when Timur took over from Sarbadars.[919] Hafiz-i Abru, writes in the first half of the fifteenth century, that Farumad was one of the most significant settlements of Juwayn district.[920]

Background

Farumad is located in the historic districts of Juwayn and Qumis, of western Khurasan, which assumed specific significance in the Ilkhanid period. Several Ilkhanid monuments are located in this geographical unit: they were published by Bahktiari Shahri;[921] the most significant monuments are: the Friday mosque of Farumad, the mosque of Khusraw Shir (some 40 km north-east of Farumad; Cat. No. 17), the mosque of Aq Qalʿa and the Friday mosque of Sabzivar. Ibn-i Yamin, a renowned poet from Farumad, a contemporary of ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhamad al-Faryumadi, refers to Farumad's monuments (the state fortress, the bazar, the hospital, the *khanqah*, the madrasa, the *Dar al-hadith* and the library) in his poems.[922] The Farumad Friday mosque was constructed in Farumad's historic centre, adjacent to the bazar area. Remains of water channels on the mosque's the north-western side indicate that this area may have originally been called the quarter of *kanat-i bazar*. Hoseini informs that there is a poem which praises Hakim al-Din as the builder (patron) of the Farumad Friday mosque.[923]

Photographic documentation of the Farumad Friday mosque enables the understanding of its historic and modern alterations, and its constructive and decorative chronology. The mention of the settlement and its congregational mosque is provided by H. Schindler, the person responsible for the Telegraph company, who visited the region between 1877 and 1880; he reports that there is an old fortification and also an old mosque which was built some 700 years ago (late twelfth century?).[924] According to Schindler, there was a large minaret in Farumad which collapsed a few years ago and its material was used for the construction of dwellings.[925] Hoseini provides citation of one of the earliest discussions and descriptions of Farumad's monuments from 1879 by a government employee of Shahrud and Bistam, named Ismail ibn Karbalaʿi Hoseyn Dehmalai; he reports that the majority of Farumad's monuments is in a dilapidated state, that its congregational mosque is one of its oldest monuments; he provides description of its structure and revetments, with the first reading of the craftsmen's signature topping the mihrab.[926]

[918] Hoseini 2006, 44-45.
[919] *Ibid.*, 46.
[920] *Ibid.*
[921] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004.
[922] Hoseini also reports that some of these structures are believed to have been sponsored by Hakim al-Din, who was reportedly the director and physician in the hospital of the settlement. See Hoseini 2006, 45.
[923] Hoseini 2006, 46.
[924] Most importantly, the same source informs, as cited by Hoseini, that the settlers were not using the congregational mosque for prayers, because it is a Sunni structure (which is not necessarily correct), and that the monument features very beautiful inscriptions and revetments in stucco medium. See Hoseini 2006, 47.
[925] Hoseini 2006, 47.
[926] The reading is provided as *Work of ʿAli Muhammad ibn Mahmoud Jami Simnani* and it is stated that the historic inscription with the date of construction of the monument was already not legible at that point. The suggested reading of the craftsmen's signature is of great significance, assuming that at that point it has not yet been vandalized. See Hoseini 2006, 48-49.

The ruined Farumad Friday mosque was first recorded with aerial photographs by E. F. Schmidt in 1937.[927] But the site lacks a thorough archaeological excavation. The Farumad Friday mosque was first published by Godard, who suggests that its architectural features are typically Seljuq, but that based on its historic context, and the significance of the given geographical area in the Ilkhanid period, the monument should be understood as dating to the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, especially due to the ground plan similarities between the Farumad, Zuzan and Gunabad Friday mosques.[928]

Scholars were divided into two groups regarding the dating of the Farumad Friday mosque; Akbari, Labbaf Khanikhi, Saber Moqaddam Sharifi and Rahnamaiʿ follow Godard's hypothesis sustaining that the monument dated to the Kwarazmshahid period, but Pickett proposes 1150 for the monument, without stating any evidence.[929] According to Wilber, the monument should be considered as Seljuq in origin and with substantial rebuilding and decorative interventions from the Ilkhanid period from around 1320.[930] The mosque's stuccos and their relation to other Ilkhanid monuments in the region are addressed by Adle, Hoseini and Shekofte. Shekofte points out that the inscriptions of the mosque's stucco mihrab are typically Ilkhanid.[931] Perhaps the most meticulous discussion of the mosque and its architectural revetments is provided by Hoseini (2006), who suggests dating the mosque to Uljaytu's reign, based on her interpretation of its epigraphic repertoire, as 1309-1311.[932] Hoseini argues that the mosque's current structure are Ilkhanid additions to an older Seljuq building which was located in the southern corner. According to Sayyadshahri, the epigraphic styles of the mosque's inscriptions are also related to the Shahi Mashhad Madrasa (1166) and the Ghurid mausoleum of Ghiyas al-Din in Herat and they present arguments against Hoseini's dating of the Farumad Friday mosque. The mosque and some of its revetments are also discussed by Ibrahim Mohammad Zariʿi.[933] The mosque's research was also performed by the private company in charge of its latest restorations; Kaveh Mansouri presented his research at the 2016 conference on Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos at the Kashan University, but this research remains unpublished. Research of the mosque, its dating and constructive and decorative stages, is also being performed by Iman Aghajani at the University of Bamberg. Aghajani provided a catalogue of the monument's inscriptions which has been employed for this research.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 171-175.

Historic Farumad is delineated by a strong fortification (330 m x 250 m), with its north-west corner strengthened by a citadel (c. 90 x 80 m).[934] The Farumad Congregational mosque

[927] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: July 27, 2020).
[928] Godard 1949, 83-114.
[929] Sayyadshahri 2014.
[930] *Ibid.*
[931] *Ibid.*, 30.
[932] Hoseini 2006.
[933] Zariʿi 2012.
[934] According to Adle's research, the citadel should be understood as dating to the Ilkhanid period, and that the fortification is very likely work of patronage of *ʿAlaʾ al-Din Mohammad Faryumadi*, who served as a minister of Abu Saʿid from 1327-28 until his execution in 1342. Another fortified part of the settlement, in its western part, was built in the Qajar period.

features a square ground plan, measuring 35 x 35 m, which is a two-*iwan* type.[935] The mosque's first ground plan is by Godard and it accompanies the mosque's first extensive discussion.[936] The *qibla iwan* measures approximately 11.25 x 6.62 m and the opposite *iwan* is slightly smaller.[937] The two *iwan*s are juxtaposed on the *qibla* axis over a courtyard. The mosque's entrance is marked by an elaborate portal. The majority of the mosque's side spaces are either ruined or preserved in parts. The most complete section of the mosque's side-prayer halls is located on the south-eastern side of the *qibla iwan*. The mosque is constructed out of fired brick and its architectural surfaces are covered with moulded and glazed, and glazed and cut, terracotta media, and also with carved stuccos, which pertain to two to three separate decorative interventions.

Construction Phases

Figs. 176-178.

Wilber and Hoseini propose that the *qibla iwan* area features parts of an older structure which have been integrated into the Ilkhanid mosque, but Hoseini contrasts this statement.[938] The small carved stucco mihrab on the supporting pillar of the *qibla iwan* structure was discovered in the 1986 restoration interventions.[939] Furthermore, the first of the two layers of inscription bands framing the passages could, according to Hoseini, been remains of a smaller dimension *iwan*. The construction break between the side passages of the *qibla iwan* and the rest of its structure is well visible, but it is difficult to estimate to which extent the earlier structure was integrated into the later one. The mosque's observations indicate that its entire structure stems from its original iteration and that this building was at a certain point redecorated with a monumental stucco and terracotta programme.

Hoseini mentions that parts of the monumental column flanking the opening of the *qibla iwan* (on the western side) reveal remains of the mosque's first and second phase and that they resemble columns at the Ribat-i Sharaf caravanserai; the eastern of the two columns retains remains of the mosque's first phase.[940] According to Hoseini, the architectural revetments of the mosque's upper elevations can be divided into two phases of production, and the eastern wall of the *qibla iwan* pre-dates the rest of the mosque's structure.[941] The fact that the *qibla* walls of the prayer halls adjacent to the *qibla iwan* are not aligned with the *qibla* wall of the *iwan*, indicates that these parts of the structure are works of separate construction phases. It is however more plausible that the *iwan* structure pre-dates the adjacent spaces, due to its position compared to their *qibla* walls. Furthermore, the alignment of the side prayer spaces, of their *qibla* walls and of supporting elements, slightly differs from the alignment and orientation of the two *iwan*s and the courtyard. The mosque's *in situ* examinations and archaeometric research of its construction material and terracotta revetments by Sayyadshahri, illustrate that the

[935] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: July 27, 2020).
[936] Godard 1949, 85.
[937] *Ibid.*
[938] Hoseini 2006, 57.
[939] Hoseini 2006, 58.
[940] Hoseini 2006, 59.
[941] *Ibid.*, 60.

mosque's entire structure could be the work of a single constructive campaign dating to the end of the Seljuq or early Ilkhanid period.[942]

The mosque's original iteration comprised a decorative programme consisting of a combination of decorative media. The interior wall surfaces of the *qibla iwan* and the mosque's external surfaces featured large carved stucco plugs set between fired bricks. Furthermore, the mosque's architectural lines, such as pointed arch openings and parts of the exterior structures were decorated with carved stuccos (the first layer), which might have been combined with terracotta elements.

The monument was subsequently redecorated once or twice: these redecorations are likely Ilkhanid, but the reasons for these undertakings are unknown. According to Mansouri, the monument suffered extensive damage during an earthquake and it had to be repaired and redecorated.[943] But architectural revetment layers with overlaps are only present in the *qibla iwan* (in its interior and on the façade); these stucco redecorations in the *iwan*'s interior do not retain any relation to the structural modifications. These stuccos may have been produced to accentuate the *qibla iwan* and to sanctify it. The only other area with more than one layer of architectural revetments is the exterior façade of the *qibla iwan*. On its façade, the terracotta elements cover earlier stuccos, stucco plugs and fired brick geometric patterns. These terracotta elements are combined with carved stuccos on the *iwan*'s façade and they relate to the majority of the stuccos in the interior of the two *iwan*s. It is plausible that the terracotta revetments are contemporary to the stuccos, or that they were applied subsequently and integrated into an already existing architectural revetment repertoire. A possible reason for multiple layers of architectural revetments on the façade of the *qibla iwan* could be the impact of weathering on its original decorative programme.

Sayyadshahri's observations of similarities between the production technology and visual form of Farumad's terracotta revetments with related monuments in Bistam and Natanz, indicate that the first Farumad mosque was constructed and decorated in the late Seljuq or early Ilkhanid period and that its redecoration interventions took place in the first decades of the fourteenth century. These redecorations may have been put in place for political reasons and might reflect the growing importance of the Juwayn district and Farumad.

Phase One - The Earliest Farumad Mosque – a Seljuq or an Early Ilkhanid Foundation?

The mosque's architectural features are related to structures from the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. Its oldest revetments, which were applied to enhance the architectural lines of the interior of the *qibla iwan* and which were combined with large x-form carved stucco plugs between fired bricks of the mosque's fabric, likely date from the Seljuq or late Seljuq period. This original monument was redecorated in one or more campaigns.

[942] Sayyadshahri 2014, 72.
[943] Kaveh Mansouri, paper presented at the University of Kashan Conference Seljuq and Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments, 2016.

Phase Two – The Second Farumad Mosque – an Ilkhanid Redecoration?

The Seljuq mosque was redecorated with an extensive carved stucco repertoire, which expanded over the interior surfaces of the two *iwan*s, the entrance portal and the courtyard's exterior surfaces. Aghajani's reading of the fragmented historic stucco inscription on the *qibla iwan*'s façade, which according to this research is a result of a redecoration, indicates that this redecoration was performed in the early Ilkhanid period.[944] The redecoration corresponds to the period in which the given geographical area assumed growing importance. It might have been performed for the new patron to assert their political authority by means of this pious act. This redecoration likely comprised carved stucco and terracotta production. The mosque was likely rebuilt, enlarged and redecorated. The architectural revetment repertoire which was formed at this point, may have subsequently been subjected to further modifications.

Phase Three – Further Redecorations of the Farumad mosque?

The three layers of architectural revetments, documented on the left-hand side lower portion of the *qibla iwan*'s façade, indicate that the monument might have undergone further redecoration interventions. It is plausible that these three layers of revetments could be results of modern restoration interventions, or that these were minor repairs, rather than a large-scale redecoration intervention.[945]

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument does not comprise any revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period. This is most likely due to it falling into the state of disrepair.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

Fig. 171.

The mosque's structure was likely built in the Seljuq, or towards the end of Seljuq period. The Ilkhanid mosque's ground plan was impacted by the earlier structure. The plan belongs in the group of two-*iwan* mosques; its geographically closest parallel is the Ilkhanid mosque of Khusraw Shir, some 40 km north-east of Farumad (Cat No. 20). Farumad mosque's structure and its north-east to south-west axis, accentuating the *qibla* direction, is formed by positioning of the two *iwan*s. Each *iwan* was originally flanked by side prayer spaces formed by pointed arch arcades. Only the south-eastern hall, next to the *qibla iwan*, remains in good structural condition. The mosque originally featured a minaret, in a manner similar to the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque (Cat. No. 17). The described ground plan was a well-established architectural form at the time of the mosque's construction.

The first ground plan of the mosque was produced by Godard, but a more detailed plan, with hypothetical integrations of its structure is by Hoseini.[946] Godard's plan features at its core the

[944] Iman Aghajani, personal communication to the author, PhD research in preparation at the University of Bamberg.
[945] In his research, Sayyadshahri does not specify in how many stages he thinks the mosque was redecorated, apart from mentioning that the mosque was decorated multiple times.
[946] Hoseini 2006, 60.

two *iwan*s and the arcades delineating the mosque's courtyard.[947] Godard adds some wall structures of the adjacent prayer spaces on the eastern and north-western parts of the mosque. According to Godard, these structures were works of a separate constructive phase, compared to the two aligned *iwan*s and the courtyard arcades.[948] The revised plan by Hoseini features at its core the two aligned *iwan*s, the arcades forming the courtyard and supporting elements of the mosque's side prayer spaces.[949] Hoseini proposes that the eastern supporting wall of the *qibla iwan* pre-dates the rest of its structure. Research of the mosque's construction material by Sayyadshahri, suggests that the two *iwan*s were constructed at the same time.[950] If so, the discussion of constructive phases by Godard is more accurate, because he suggests that the core of the monument (the two *iwan*s and the courtyard arcades) are works of one constructive intervention. The plan by Hoseini displays differences in orientation of the *qibla* wall of the monumental *iwan*, compared to the side prayer spaces flanking it, which indicates that the side spaces post-date the construction of the first two-*iwan* mosque.

In sum, the earliest parts of the mosque's structure from the Seljuq period are the two *iwan*s and the courtyard. The monument was rebuilt, enlarged and redecorated in the second phase, from which the remains of the adjacent prayer spaces and the majority of the mosque's visible decorative programme date. This research suggests, based on discussion of the architectural revetments and their comparison to the relevant repertoires, and by taking into consideration the evidence of historic inscription reading by Aghajani, that the second phase of the monument likely dates to the Early Ilkhanid period, although a late Ilkhanid date is difficult to exclude.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The Ilkhanid mosque elevation was likely the work of Seljuq builders and it consisted of several elements. The mosque featured a minaret which was its most elevated point. The *qibla iwan* with the stucco mihrab was highlighted by its juxtaposition to the smaller *iwan*. The *qibla iwan* was flanked by two single storey side prayer spaces with exterior two storey façades which monumentalized the *qibla iwan*. A similar system of constructing the façade of the internal courtyard of the mosque was employed for the façade of the smaller *iwan*. The entrance portal of the mosque is aligned with its visual axis on its north-eastern side. The entrance portal is of limited dimensions, compared to the two *iwan*s.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

Although there remains no historic inscription which directly refers to the Farumad mosque as a congregational mosque, its ground plan and its extensive architectural revetment repertoire indicate that this mosque was the congregational mosque of Farumad. A Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jumʿa* in the central part of mosque's entrance portal may reflect mosque's function, similar to the use of a related excerpt in the case of the monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Kashan Friday mosque. The Farumad Friday mosque complex might have originally included further structures.

[947] Godard 1949, 85.
[948] Godard 1949, 85.
[949] Hoseini 2006, 60.
[950] Sayyadshahri 2014, 65.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The Farumad Friday mosque retains remains of an extensive architectural revetment repertoire. These architectural revetments are results of at least two, but possibly three or more decorative interventions. The production of the mosque's decorative programme(s) may have been motivated politically, but on its exterior surfaces, the decorations might have needed repairs to their weathering. Terracotta revetments were applied almost exclusively on the mosque's exterior surfaces, where they were occasionally combined with carved stuccos. But in the mosque's interior, carved stucco prevailed. Originally, the mosque featured a more restrained architectural revetment repertoire, which consisted of large carved stucco plugs placed between fired bricks and deeply carved bands of stuccos highlighting the mosque's architectural lines. Subsequently, an extensive programme of carved stucco repertoires, which may have been combined with terracotta, and which included the installation of the mosque's monumental mihrab, was produced in the Early Ilkhanid period. Further renovations of the mosque's decorative programme were performed subsequently and they consisted of further terracotta revetments, perhaps for surfaces where original revetments were damaged.

The mosque's architectural revetments can roughly be divided into two groups: the carved stuccos produced with diverse artistic techniques[951] and terracotta revetments.[952] Craftsmen applied the revetments based on their resistance to weathering. Accordingly, the interiors of the two *iwan*s and the side spaces feature carved stuccos, which are present only in smaller amounts on external surfaces of the *iwan*s and the courtyard. The exception is the entrance portal which is entirely adorned with carved stuccos.

Revetments' Production Chronology

The majority of the mosque's architectural surfaces are covered with one layer of architectural revetments, but in some areas, the overlapping of two, if not three layers, is well visible. This multitude of layers is documented in the area of the *qibla iwan* – on its interior and exterior (Figs. 176-178). Two layers of carved stucco inscriptions have been revealed during the restorations of the passages between the *qibla iwan* and the adjacent spaces. The most important evidence is provided by the south-eastern passage, where a small carved mihrab is located. There the original layer of revetments is visible, which indicates that in its original iteration, the mosque featured deep relief carved stuccos, which were combined with background revetments consisting of fired bricks and plug-like stucco elements forming chevrons or chequered patterns. A related type of the revetments is also revealed on the lower left-hand side portion of the *qibla iwan*'s exterior surface.

Exterior surfaces of the *qibla iwan* indicate that the monument could have been decorated in three interventions: first with fired bricks and plugs, then with carved stuccos and subsequently with terracotta and carved stuccos. But this evidence is limited; only the lower portions of the interior of the *qibla iwan* and the external surface of the same *iwan*, retain more than one layer of architectural revetments. The mosque's exterior surfaces are decorated with a combination of diverse terracotta and carved stucco revetments. These revetments are covered by a

[951] Among which: carving of one or more stucco layers and application of protruding elements.
[952] For information concerning mosque's terracotta revetments, See Sayyadshahri 2014, 32.

subsequently applied layer of carved stuccos and terracotta elements. The vast majority of the carved stuccos and terracotta revetments visible on the monument were thus works of a redecoration intervention, which might have comprised the rebuilding of its structure.[953]

Wilber mentions that the current mihrab covers an older one, and that its remains are well visible in areas where the latest layer of stuccos forming the mihrab has fallen off.[954] Close examinations of the mihrab, which was subjected to conservation interventions since Wilber's visit to the site, did not yield any evidence of an earlier mihrab's existence. Stucco panels above the passages between the courtyard and the mosque's southern prayer spaces are produced with the same stucco artistic techniques as the mihrab. These technological and visual similarities, and the positioning of stuccos, indicate that the mihrab, as well as the stuccos in the interior of the *iwan* and on the exterior surfaces of the monument, are works of the latest redecoration (perhaps second or possibly third decorative phase) of the monument.

The mosque's final decorative programme extended over the surfaces of its entire architectural structure. Relation between stuccos on the mosque's surfaces are evident from their production technology, epigraphic features, shared ornamental features and most importantly, by the four craftsmen's signatures (see below). These four signatures and the fragmented historic inscription on the façade of the *qibla iwan*, enabled Aghajani to propose that this stucco repertoire dates from the Early Ilkhanid period.[955]

Terracotta Revetments

Fig. 188.

Terracotta revetments of the Farumad Friday mosque were researched by Sayyadshahri who informs that their production technology differs from terracotta at the Gunabad Friday mosque and the Zuzan mosque.[956] A related element of terracotta was however discovered in Ilkhanid finds from Takht-i Sulayman and another similar element was found at the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque (Cat. No. 17).[957] The ornamental vocabulary of terracotta elements from the Farumad Friday mosque displays a close relationship with the revetments of the Bayazid Bistami complex (the Uljaytu entrance portal, dated 1313; Cat. No. 19) and the Natanz complex of ʿAbd al-Samad (the heavily restored entrance portal which used to lead to the no longer extant *khanqah,*[958] dated to 1315; Cat. No. 12); rather than dating from the Kwarazmshahid period, the Farumad terracotta revetments (which are closely tied to the extensive carved stucco repertoire of the monument) should be considered Ilkhanid works.[959]

[953] While this has been suggested by both Wilber and Hoseini, no evidence regarding the possibility of rebuilding of monuments structure has been found during two visits to the site in the past years. Moreover, the research by Sayyadshahri indicates that the two *iwan*s and accordingly most of the structure were built at the same time. Compare Wilber 1955, 156-157; Hoseini 2006, 59-60; Sayyadshahri 2014, 65.
[954] Wilber 1955, 156.
[955] Iman Aghajani, personal communication, PhD research in preparation at the University of Bamberg.
[956] Sayyadshahri 2014, 33.
[957] *Ibid.*
[958] *Ibid.*
[959] *Ibid.*

Sayyadshahri's material characterization of constructive material and terracotta revetments from Farumad provide important information for the mosque's comprehension.[960] The majority of terracotta elements of the Farumad Friday mosque were produced out of local clay sources, recovered from the proximities of Farumad.[961] Differing chemical composition of the clay bodies of these revetments reflects the mosque's separate decorative phases; while all the terracotta revetments are pre-fabricated, the moulded elements differ in composition from carved revetments, which might reflect their different production technology.[962] Furthermore, some revetments from earlier phases might have been integrated into the mosque's redecorated architectural revetment programme.[963] Analyses of three fired bricks, pertaining to the mosque's structure, revealed that their chemical composition is related to the moulded terracotta revetments; this indicates that the construction material for the monument's architectural structure was produced out of the same raw material as the considerably finer terracotta revetments, and that they are likely to have been produced in the same period.[964]

Visual similarities between terracotta revetments of the Farumad and the Sangan-i Pain Friday mosques made art historians date these monuments to the Kwarazmshahid period, but the archaeometric research of their revetments suggests a different scenario.[965] Archaeometric research of the Farumad terracotta elements indicates an existence of a new technique for the production of terracotta as: pre-fabricated moulded elements, stamped elements with vegetal patterns, glazed revetments combined with terracotta, and occasionally, blue, underglaze and lustre tiles.[966] Terracotta bodies of the Farumad Friday mosque revealed a particular association with magnesium (Mg) and chromium (Cr); their raw material is of local origin, and the chemical composition of moulded elements differs significantly from the other terracotta revetments, perhaps because the older revetments were integrated into the new repertoire.[967] Terracotta revetments of the Farumad Friday mosque should thus not be considered works of a single decorative intervention; this is confirmed by observations of the relationship between terracotta and carved stuccos. Analyses by Sayyadshahri thus illustrate that some of the terracotta revetments were parts of the mosque's earlier decorative repertoires.[968]

Farumad Friday Mosque Revetments' Dating

The fragmentary historic inscription which carried the date and patron for the mosque's rebuilding and redecoration (phase two or three) is only partially legible (see below).[969] According to Hoseini, fragments of lustre tiles discovered at the site, should be interpreted as evidence in favour of the mosque's Ilkhanid date.[970] The historic inscription outlines the opening of the *qibla iwan.* The information regarding the patron is read by Hoseini as *Malik*

[960] Sayyadshahri 2014, 65-67, 69-72.
[961] *Ibid.*, 65.
[962] *Ibid.*
[963] *Ibid.*
[964] *Ibid.*
[965] *Ibid*, 69.
[966] *Ibid.*, 70.
[967] *Ibid.*, 71.
[968] *Ibid*., 72.
[969] Hoseini 2006, 61.
[970] *Ibid.*

dastur al-hafaqin sultan (?).[971] Hoseini interprets it as the *deputy of the ruler, a minister*, and informs that this appellative was employed for deputies of *the Sultan of the east and the west*, a title which was frequently employed by Sultan Uljaytu.[972] Hoseini also highlights that this title was invented for Uljaytu, as explained by Kashani in his work *Tarikh-i Uljaytu*, in order to distinguish him from the earlier Ilkhanid rulers. Importantly, the same appellative for Uljaytu is also employed on the Burj-i Kashana in Bistam (Cat. No. 18), which was completed in 1308 and sponsored by Uljaytu.[973] Hoseini concludes that the Friday mosque of Farumad was built in the period of Uljaytu's reign and that its second phase dates to the time of his rule, more precisely between 1304-1316, but she does not specify who the actual patron of the monument was.[974] Hoseini also states that further evidence in favour of this hypothesis include the Hadith excerpts referring to Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq, which are located around the courtyard (surfaces), and the exterior parts of the mosque, and the inscription saying *Sadaqa Allahu al-ʿAli al-azim*, on the surface of its *qibla iwan*.[975] A different hypothesis regarding the reading of the historic inscription is put forward by Aghajani, who identifies the titles of the patron as *Kwaya ʿIzz al-Din Tahir al-Farumadi* and allocates the mosque's second or third constructive and re-decorative phase to the Early Ilkhanid period.[976] According to Mansouri, the second phase of stuccos dates to the period of Uljaytu's reign, and according to the reading of the historic inscription by Mansouri, by the minister of Uljaytu, *ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhammad al-Farumadi*.[977] Adle mentions in passing that the Farumad Friday mosque revetments are related to the remains of the Khusraw Shir mosque, some 40 km north-east of Farumad (Cat. No. 17). But Adle concludes by stating that the name of the patron of the Farumad Friday mosque is not known and that the mosque construction could be considered the work of the minister of Abu Saʿid, ʿAlaʾ-al-Din Muhammad. Shekofte proposes that the Farumad Friday mosque and revetments are works of at least three different phases: Seljuq, Kwarazmshahid and Ilkhanid.[978] Shekofte builds her argument on the comparison between the stucco repertoires of the Ribat-i Sharaf caravanserai from the Seljuq period (an imperial redecoration dated 1154-55)[979] and those of the Farumad Friday mosque, which she indirectly states she considers to be of the Ilkhanid period. According to Shekofte, the stucco repertoire of the Farumad Friday mosque needs to be understood as consisting of the Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos, which are works of separate interventions.[980]

Interior and Exterior Revetments

The mosque's interior revetments are preserved in two *iwan*s, but it is plausible that the side prayer halls also featured some architectural decoration. The two *iwan*s retain a large amount of stucco revetments; while the majority of the stuccos can be assigned to the second decorative

[971] Hoseini 2006, 63.
[972] *Ibid.*, 63.
[973] *Ibid.*
[974] Hoseini 2006, 64.
[975] According to Hoseini, these inscriptions illustrate that the mosque was built or decorated in the period when the Shiʿite religion was the state religion, therefore after Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith in 1310.
[976] Iman Aghajani, personal communication, PhD dissertation in preparation at the University of Bamberg.
[977] Kaveh Mansouri, personal communication to the author.
[978] Shekofte 2020, 101.
[979] Godard 1949, 13.
[980] Shekofte 2020, 119.

intervention, the *qibla iwan* retains older architectural revetments pertaining to the mosque's first phase. The comprehension of the monumental stucco mihrab and the question of its dating have also been disputed, but as this research illustrates, it should be understood as a work of the second decorative intervention, when the vast interior surfaces of the two *iwan*s, the entrance portal, and exterior surfaces were decorated with the most extensive carved stucco repertoire.

Interior Revetments of Decorative Phase One – the Qibla Iwan area

Figs. 176, 178.

The interior of the *qibla iwan* retains two layers of architectural revetments. The overlap between different layers of architectural revetments is best visible in the areas of the side passages between the *qibla iwan* and the adjacent prayer halls. There, the monument's architectural structure reveals two layers of Qurʾanic (phase one: Qurʾan, 10:58-59; phase two: Qurʾan, 93:1-6) inscription bands, which outline the extradoses of the pointed arches. The upper layer (second phase) closely mimics the inscriptions of the original revetments beneath them. There are also visible differences in inscription styles of overlapping bands and in the stucco carving approach. The first layer of stuccos differs from the second (more extensive) stucco decorative programme, which covers the interiors of the two *iwan*s, parts of exterior surfaces of the courtyard and the entrance portal. Stuccos of the second phase are more sophisticated in appearance; they feature a shallower relief and their characteristics comprise richly ornamented inscription background, complex vegetal compositions and a wider spectrum of stucco artistic techniques. The first phase consisted of a limited amount of carved stucco which was combined with large carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks of the monument's core structure. Their remains are visible in two parts of the monument; on the lower surfaces of the south-eastern supporting wall, on passage openings of the *qibla iwan* and on the left-hand side of the exterior façade of the *qibla iwan*. In the mosque's original iteration, its architectural surfaces were not covered with extensive amounts of carved stucco or layers of plaster material, but they featured a fired brick and carved stucco plug arrangements.

Another carved stucco revetment, which was most likely produced in the first decorative phase is the small carved stucco mihrab on the pier of the south-western part of the *qibla iwan*. The mihrab is fitted into a small niche which had to be produced at the time of the mosque's construction, as indicated by the placement of fired bricks on the mihrab's right-hand side. The mihrab features two inscriptions in an archaic form of Kufic style (Qurʾan, 112:1-4, invocations to God) which are combined with symmetrical vegetal compositions in the niche, the lunette and on the mihrab's spandrels. It is framed by a thin repeating geometrical band. The mihrab's stuccos match the stuccos located above the passages between the *qibla iwan* and the side prayer spaces. This mihrab pre-dates the monumental stucco mihrab on the *qibla* wall of the *iwan*. Its function was likely similar to the related mihrabs in the Sava Friday mosque (Cat. No. 34); to indicate the direction of prayer and to monumentalize the mosque's structure. The mihrab's limited dimensions are somewhat puzzling because further stucco revetments top it.

In sum, the evidence of the original architectural revetments of the monument is located only in the mosque's *qibla iwan* and the adjacent structures. For this reason some scholars propose that the monument's architectural structure was built in several phases. But an extensive amount

of the mosque's original architectural revetments is still covered by subsequent layers of the second phase. Taking into consideration the new research findings by Aghajani, the phase two revetments may date to the Early Ilkhanid period. Accordingly, the mosque's first layer of architectural revetments likely dates from Seljuq times.

Interior Revetments of Decorative Phase Two – the Two Iwans, the Monumental Mihrab and the Entrance Portal

Figs. 176-185, 187.

Qibla Iwan Interior

Figs. 176, 178-179, 184-185.

The interior of the *qibla iwan* retains architectural revetments from two distinct phases. The first layer of carved stucco inscriptions are the remains of the mosque's original decorative programme, but the layer covering them is the work of the mosque's redecoration (second phase); it comprised production of an extensive architectural revetment repertoire in carved stucco and terracotta. This decorative repertoire extended over the interiors of the *iwan*s, exterior *iwan* façades, arcades of the courtyard and the entrance portal. This redecoration programme might reflect the increased significance of the mosque and the settlement which may have attracted a patron with a higher status and more extensive endowment. The production of the second phase stuccos was performed by one stucco workshop, headed by the master craftsman who signed the repertoire on four parts: on the monumental mihrab, above the monumental mihrab, at the end of the monumental inscription in the interior of the mosque's smaller *iwan* and above the opening of the entrance portal. These signatures indicate that the stucco craftsmen performed their work in segments and they moved from one part of the monument to the other.

The second phase stuccos in the interior of the *qibla iwan* comprise: inscription bands above the pointed arch openings of the *iwan*, the monumental inscription running along the sides of the *iwan* at the level of the springing of the vault, the muqarnas hood adjacent to the *qibla* wall of the *iwan*, the two bands running along the intrados of the *iwan*'s ceiling and the stucco panels between them. Architectural surfaces of the *iwan*'s supporting walls are undecorated. Fired bricks to construct these walls were placed to accommodate the carved stucco plugs of the first decorative phase. Some parts of the *iwan*'s interior surfaces retain fragments of pink to ochre coloured plaster coating which was produced in the second decorative phase.

The monumental stucco inscription band runs along the three walls of the *qibla iwan*'s structure at the vault's springing. The inscription functions as a transition element and it covers the joints between parts of the *iwan*. This inscription features *Naskh* style and Qurʾanic content from *Surat al-Mulk* (67:1-16). Its letters are elongated and rendered thicker at their tops, with *hastae* marked with a specific mark of perforation and incision determining their peculiar style. The same phenomenon marks the stucco inscription of the small *iwan* and on the monumental stucco mihrab in the *qibla iwan*. The inscription is relatively flat, and it is placed against a slightly recessed background composition of vegetal elements. The inscription's top border is framed

by a geometric band which united the stuccos of the *iwan*'s ceiling and the monumental inscription.

The *qibla iwan* ceiling's interior is topped by a monumental muqarnas hood in carved stucco with four preserved tiers. The small *iwan* and the mosque's entrance portal feature related stucco muqarnas structures. Some of these muqarnas retain traces of their original polychromy, of dark blue to purple, black, bright to dark red and white shades (Fig. 184). The location of the muqarnas hood in the *qibla iwan* naturally reflects the craftsmen's logic of emphasizing the mihrab area. The muqarnas hood provides for an elegant visual transition between surfaces of *iwan*'s ceiling. The muqarnas hood is framed by a band of deep relief stuccos which runs in the intrados of *iwan*'s ceiling. It features a particular stucco relief with plain background with protruding abstracted vegetal elements composed into a band of repeating symmetrical vegetal compositions. This stucco band conserves extensive traces of light blue. Another related band of stucco runs over the interior ceiling of the *qibla iwan* close to its opening. This band is strongly related to the bands with similar function and placement in mosque's smaller *iwan*. These bands share ornamental compositions consisting of repeating geometrical patterns and applied circular protruding bosses. Other surfaces of *qibla iwan*'s ceiling are filled with background stucco panels. These panels feature shallow stucco reliefs with incisions forming repeating compositions of octagon-enclosed rosettes and four pointed stars.[981]

The Mihrab

Figs. 179-183.

The central part of the *qibla* wall of the *qibla iwan* features a monumental carved stucco mihrab. This is one of the largest preserved stucco mihrabs from the Medieval Iranian territory. Mihrab's lower portions are entirely lost, most likely due to the humidity and water infiltration from the ground.

Mihrab Dating

Wilber observed presence of an earlier mihrab beneath the current one and suggests that the current mihrab dates to mosque's Ilkhanid modifications.[982] Evidence observed by Wilber is no longer extant and it was likely altered through conservation interventions. The majority of mihrab's stucco panels are in fact applied on the flat architectural surface of the *qibla* wall, and the only part of the mihrab where it features a deeper relief is its central niche. The relationship between the mihrab and the wall is therefore evidence in favour of the hypothesis that the current stucco mihrab is a work of a redecoration and that it is thus work of the second phase. This is confirmed by the fact that the mihrab used to retain the stucco craftsmen's workshop signature related to the other three signatures on stuccos of the second decorative phase of the monument. The mihrab thus dates, drawing on Aghajani's evidence of the reading of the historic inscription, to the Early Ilkhanid period.

[981] Similar patterns are found in wall painting and tile media at the mausoleum of Sangbast and the Pri-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).
[982] Wilber 1955, 156.

The Mihrab Design

Several aspects of mihrab's design and ornamental vocabulary are unique and the mihrab is difficult to associate with other stuccos. The framing H-letter shaped design (Fig. 180) with geometric and epigraphic elements finds the only remote parallel in the Small Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1). The next specific characteristic of the mihrab, which is not encountered in Iranian Medieval stuccos, are its peculiar epigraphic elements (Figs. 182-183) which feature geometrical compositions of apotropaic invocations to God (e. g. *But [Allah] will spare you their evil.*). The use of these invocations is more frequent in lustre tiles, and only in one other case in carved stuccos, at the mihrab of the Bayazid Bistami complex in Bistam (Cat. No. 19).[983] Further mihrab's peculiarity is the abundance of geometric elements, which prevail over vegetal compositions. Variations of circular elements with epigraphic and geometrical content determine the unity of mihrab's ornamental vocabulary. The mihrab is rendered monumental by addition of the top horizontal register with applied protruding elements. The entire mihrab is produced with a wide selection of stucco artistic techniques.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

Mihrab's core is formed by a pointed arch which encloses a deep niche comprising a monumental lunette panel. The lower portion of the niche features a central and two flanking stucco panels. They comprise single stucco layer carved panels with star patterns which might have originally also featured applied protruding elements. Geometrical designs of these panels are related to the stucco bands in the ceilings of the two *iwan*s which were produced in the second phase. The panel area is topped by a band of a *Naskh* style inscription (Qurʾan, *Surah Maryam*, 19:11-13) which is concealed by the monumental lunette. The inscription band is filled with overlapping inscription and its background is filled with modest ornamental elements. The monumental lunette panel is outlined by a repeating geometric band.

Mihrab's lunette (Fig. 181) features a shallow stucco relief with an elaborate symmetrical composition of palmettes and split palmettes. They are heavily perforated and juxtaposed to the entirely plain background. Some elements of the composition feature two visual planes, with some leaf elements on their surfaces. The lunette panel is significant for the understanding of mihrab's original polychromy. Mihrab's niche is flanked by a pair of monumental columns which are topped by a large inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Hajj*, 22:77) in Knotted Kufic. Mihrab's columns and their capitals are badly damaged; they featured perforations and carving of repeating geometric designs and their capitals were formed by compositions of vegetal elements related to the ones on the lunette. The joint area between the lunette and the Knotted Kufic inscription band is of particular interest, because it also features fragmented remains of a thin band which covers the joint area and features teeth-like protruding elements; they are not dissimilar to comparable elements of the carved stucco mihrab in the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. No. 33), which according to this research likely date from early 14th century.[984]

[983] The next closest parallel is presented by the earlier carved stucco mihrab of the Nouri mosque in Mosul, from the late twelfth century, but there the same invocation is employed more frequently and with entirely different inscription designs and compositions.

[984] One further parallel is found in the tenth to eleventh century mihrab of the Mashhad Ata mausoleum in Dikhistan, Turkmenistan. See Muradov 2011.

Farumad mihrab's Knotted Kufic inscription band is elaborate and designed with complex details. Inscription's *hastae* elongations feature various forms of knotted elements which sometimes incorporate the background leaf elements.[985] The mentioned craftsmen's signature used to be located in the apex of this inscription band.

Mihrab's pointed arch niche is topped by a pair of interconnected spandrels which feature symmetrical designs of epigraphic, geometrical and vegetal elements. They comprise a relatively shallow relief, with extensive remains of yellow ochre and blue in their background. The core of the design is presented by two eight-pointed star roundels (Figs. 182-183) which feature repeating inscription compositions in complex Kufic elements, which reads (*We glorify Thee*). Two more such roundels with an invocation (*But Allah will spare you the evil*) are located on mihrab's top corners and they provide for its balanced composition and appearance. The spandrels' background is filled with palmette-derived elements. They directly relate to the lunette composition of the mihrab. Mihrab's described structure is framed by a badly damaged inscription band (featuring *Ayat al-Kursi*, *Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255) in *Naskh* style. Its letters protrude from the vegetal background and it was originally slightly concave.

Mihrab's core is framed by a monumental band of repeating geometric patterns featuring twelve-pointed star elements. These twelve-pointed stars reflect designs in terracotta which are located on the façades *iwan*s.[986] The monumental geometrical band is topped on its right and left hand sides by the star roundels with the apotropaic invocations and adjacent cursive inscription cartouches (*There is no God by God*). These roundels and the inscription band are enclosed by a repeating geometrical frame, which protrudes from relief's visual plane and provides for mihrab's peculiar H-letter form. The space between these roundels is filled by the top horizontal panel, which features a repeating composition of applied protruding elements forming an abstract composition, similar to the stucco band framing the muqarnas hood above the mihrab. The panel featured other elements of an unknown type, which have fallen off completely and their characteristics are difficult to comprehend. Panel's top edge is slightly concave to provide for a visually smooth transition towards the upper areas of the mosque's interior space and further architectural revetments.

The Qibla Iwan Façade

Figs. 174, 177.

The *qibla iwan* façade is formed out of three elements, and it features a design which is mirrored by the façade of the juxtaposed *iwan*. The core of the façade is presented by *iwan*'s exterior surfaces, which are divided into a series of panels and architectural elements, mirrored by exterior surfaces of the smaller *iwan*. These related features of the two courtyard façades, provide important evidence indicating that the mosque structure is work of one constructive intervention, and that the small *iwan* does not post-date the *qibla iwan* construction. The *qibla iwan* façade conserves a sufficient amount of fragmented revetments for the understanding of

[985] In this respect the inscription is directly connected to those on the façade of the *qibla iwan* which were most likely produced in the redecoration campaign.
[986] Similar, but not the same are some stucco reliefs of the Damghani family, which were produced for the monuments in Bistam (Cat. Nos. 18, 19).

its design. Moreover, a very important fragment of the historic inscription on this façade, provides evidence of outmost significance for the understanding of mosque's history.

Description and Discussion of the Façade

Iwan's pointed arch opening is supported by a pair of monumental columns. They feature square and rectangular elements of moulded terracotta, but their original iteration remains unclear due to their damage. Column capitals feature carved stucco and their form relates similar column capitals at the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque (Cat. No. 17). The extrados of the pointed arch features perhaps the most significant historic inscription of mosque's epigraphic repertoire. This fragmented inscription was partially read by Hoseini, discussed by Mansouri and recently its detailed reading is provided by Aghajani (see below). This carved stucco inscription belongs to mosque's second decorative phase. The historic inscription features peculiar type of *Naskh* style. The *hastae* of the inscription are elongated and thickened in comparison to lower parts of letters and they determine the rhythmic appearance of the inscription band. The inscription is placed against a richly ornamented background of vegetal elements. The most unique aspect of the inscription band is the specific treatment of tops of its letters' *hastae*, which all feature a curved (smile-like) line topped by a perforation and a protruding corner on their right hand side. These specific *hastae* forms are encountered on inscriptions of the interior of the *qibla iwan*, on the monumental mihrab and in the smaller *iwan*.

The *iwan* opening is topped by a pair of monumental spandrels which are joined in the middle. Its architectural revetment fragments might be works of restoration, but they feature geometrical patterns comparable to spandrels of smaller *iwan*; twelve-pointed star patterns consisting of recessed moulded elements joined by a grid, produced out of terracotta. Similar to the smaller *iwan* façade, the two spandrels are framed by stucco inscription bands which begin at the springing of *iwan*'s vault. On the *qibla iwan*, the *Naskh* framing inscription set against a vegetal background is damaged to the degree that it is no longer legible. *Iwan*'s structure is framed by two partially preserved framing terracotta bands; the inner band is of specific interest, because it may feature a pseudo inscription design. This terracotta revetment band might be related to similar horizontal inscription bands topping the side openings of the smaller *iwan*'s façade. Only a few sections of this band are preserved they may have been re-attached to façade's surfaces. This band is flanked by a larger exterior band featuring the characteristic twelve-pointed star design consisting of recessed moulded elements and terracotta frames.[987] The band is flanked by two thinner separation bands displaying repeating geometric and vegetal compositions produced out of moulded terracotta elements.

The side parts of the *qibla iwan* façade were in a considerably ruined state. Their upper parts were subsequently rebuilt, but their revetments are preserved only in the areas of pointed arch openings leading to the side prayer spaces adjacent to *iwan*'s structure. The better preserved façade of the smaller *iwan* indicates that the upper storeys of façade's blind niches of the *qibla iwan* were likely reveted with terracotta, and that they featured diverse types of blind niches. The left hand side of the façade conserves the inscription at the extrados of the pointed arch

[987] The elements on the façade might be works of conservation intervention and might have been partially reconstructed.

(Hadith) which displays elaborate Kufic style with elongated *hastae* and various knotted elements. It is set against a background of a rich vegetal repertoire on the same visual plane as the inscription, similar to the band on the core structure of the *iwan*'s façade. The pointed arch opening is further outlined with a band of repeating geometric patterns. It is topped by a pair of joined spandrels with symmetrical vegetal decoration.

These spandrels are significant, because they are produced with the same production technology, which comprises application of protruding elements and indicates that the monumental stucco mihrab and the revetments of the *qibla iwan*'s façade are both works of the second decorative phase. The pointed arch opening is framed by an inscription band in Knotted Kufic (Hadith) which is set against a vegetal background on the same visual plane. The opening was topped by a related horizontal spandrel panel as the left hand side of the façade, and it was framed with a repeating geometric pattern band, which is still well preserved. Revetments of the upper portions of the façade are no longer extant.

The Small Iwan Interior

Figs. 175, 187.

The small *iwan* of the Farumad Friday mosque is juxtaposed to the *qibla iwan* in order to form the main north-east to south-west axis of the monument. The *iwan* is shallower compared to the *qibla iwan* and its height is reduced. The interior of the *iwan* conserves remains of carved stuccos, which featured a more modest architectural revetment programme, compared to the concentration of such revetments in the interior of the *qibla iwan*. But its decorative principles are related to the rest of the repertoire. The signature on its stuccos allows to connect the interior revetments of the small *iwan* to the revetments of the second decorative phase. The small *iwan* does not feature remains of its original architectural revetment programme (phase one). The exterior surfaces of the small *iwan* are flanked by remains of side prayer hall structures with which they form the small *iwan* façade. A row of blind niches was added on the top of the side arcades for them to form a monumental façade, which did not overshadow the main façade of the *qibla iwan* and the adjacent structures.

Small *iwan*'s interior retains a carved stucco decorative programme. The monumental inscription band in *Naskh* (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Mulk*, 67:17-28) style, running along the top edges of the supporting walls of the *iwan*, is a continuation of the related inscription band in the *qibla iwan*. This inscription band is an elaborate stuccowork which required carving of complex inscription styles and richly decorated vegetal background. Lower portions of *iwan*'s walls, which do not feature communication openings with the side spaces, were coated with a thick layer of plain plaster. *Iwan*'s ceiling is better preserved, compared to the *qibla iwan*. It featured an elaborate muqarnas ceiling, which retains layers of plaster coating, but which may have originally been decorated with carved stuccos. The vault of the *iwan* was decorated with two more monumental bands of carved stucco featuring repeating geometric patterns and applied protruding bosses. This is similar to stucco bands which are located in the ceiling of the *qibla iwan*, but in the small *iwan* their number and dimensions are reduced. The extrados of the *iwan*'s pointed arch is outlined with a monumental carved stucco inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:16-25), which reflects the forms of vault's interior on its exterior façade. Spaces between

these geometric stucco bands in the ceiling of the *iwan*'s vault were filled with blind niches and further stucco panels.

The north-eastern surface of small *iwan*'s ceiling retains remains of stuccos which reveal direct parallels in production technology and their visual features to the stuccos of mosque's entrance portal. These remains consist of a blind niche which features the form comparable to blind niches of entrance portal's side wings. This niche is outlined by a framing inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Qadr*, 97:1-5) which features a similar calligraphic style, production methods and visual elements as the Hadith inscriptions topping the blind niches of the entrance portal. Differently from the entrance portal, the niche in *iwan*'s ceiling features a repeating vegetal pattern. The framing band of the niches is additionally framed by a repeating geometric inscription, comparable to such band on the main part of entrance portal's exterior surfaces. The top portion of this space is filled with carved stucco plugs which are closely related to the remains of plugs on the entrance portal.

The revetments in the south-western part of small *iwan*'s ceiling are not well preserved, but their remains illustrate that they were produced based on the symmetry principle. The space between the geometric bands with protruding elements of *iwan*'s ceiling is filled with a blind niche featuring a repetitive and shallow vegetal composition, which is topped by a pair of damaged stucco spandrels and the framing inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Nasr*, 110:1-3) in comparable style. Remains of palmette elements in spandrel areas are produced with the same approach as *qibla iwan* façade horizontal panels and the stuccos in the interior of the *qibla iwan*.

The area on niche's left hand bottom side features an essential piece of evidence for the understanding of the stucco repertoire. A small fragmented inscription is placed in the area of the repeating geometrical ornamentation framing band of the panel. The comparison of this inscription to fragmented craftsmen's signatures above the entrance to the mosque and above the mihrab, indicates that this inscription, albeit in different format, is also the signature of the same master craftsman of the second phase stucco craftsmen's workshop. This fourth signature provides solid evidence to connect mosque's carved stuccos of the entrance portal, the interior of the small *iwan* and the interior of the *qibla iwan*, and the monumental mihrab into a single stucco decorative repertoire. Although these stuccos are closely related to the architectural structure of the monument, they nevertheless seem to be works of mosque's second decorative phase which may have occurred in Early Ilkhanid period.

The Small Iwan Façade

Figs. 175, 188.

The façade of the small *iwan* consists of three parts. Its core is presented by external surfaces of *iwan*'s structure and it is flanked by side architectural surfaces of spaces adjacent to the *iwan*. These side surfaces are crucial in forming the façade; they consist of exterior surfaces of arcades forming the side space of the mosque, which are topped by an additional row of pairs of blind niches, in order to monumentalize the façade. The majority of architectural revetments on the façade is produced out of diverse terracotta revetments, but some stuccos form parts of this decorative programme. The core of the façade is formed by *iwan*'s pointed arch opening which was surmounted by a pair of monumental columns. These columns have been reconstructed

during conservation interventions; they feature small fragments of carved stuccos. They are topped by a monumental inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:16-25) in Knotted Kufic style. The *hastae* of its letters are elongated and they display diverse types of knotted compositions. The inscription is deeply carved and set against a rich vegetal background, but it does not feature protruding elements. Another inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Aʿla*, 87:1-15) in *Naskh*, springs at the level of these columns and frames the monumental terracotta spandrels of *iwan*'s façade. It is set against a vegetal background.

The two monumental terracotta spandrels of the façade are joined to form a single panel. They feature the *signature* ornamental element of the Farumad Friday mosque – the twelve pointed star pattern. These revetments are produced out of moulded terracotta elements framed by a terracotta grid. The described surfaces of the *iwan* are flanked by two more vertical bands of terracotta on each side, which originally formed framing bands of the *iwan*; the *iwan* was originally thus higher. The inner decorative band displays an arabesque composition formed by elements of moulded and carved terracotta. It is separated from the large framing band by smaller moulded elements of vegetal designs forming thin bands. The large band features the same architectural revetments as the monumental spandrels of the façade: the twelve-pointed star compositions of recessed moulded elements framed by a cut terracotta frame.

The two side portions flank the core of the small *iwan*'s façade; they are symmetrically arranged to consist of pointed arch openings on their lower floor. They are topped by spandrels and another register of pairs of blind niches, which form façade's fictitious upper floor. This façade mirrors the composition of *qibla iwan*'s façade to which it is directly juxtaposed. The background of the architectural programme is formed by the twelve-pointed star terracotta revetments, directly connected to the framing band of the core of the *iwan*'s façade, which visually unite the façade and its decorative programme. The two pointed arch openings flanking the *iwan* on each side (the western one leading to the prayer hall and the eastern one into mosque's entrance corridor) feature repeating geometric stucco revetments in their intrados areas and they are outlined by carved stucco inscription bands on their exterior surfaces. Their visual characteristics relate to the framing bands of *iwan* façade's core. The bands are topped by interconnected pairs of spandrels covered with star-derived geometrical patterns consisting of moulded and carved elements.[988] Façade spandrels are topped by short inscription bands which assume forms of cartouches. Regular vertical cracks, at equal distance, which are well visible on the inscription of the western section of the façade, might indicate that the medium of production of these inscriptions was terracotta and not stucco.

Upper registers of façade's side structures originally featured a pair of blind niches on each side. Forms of these niches are closely related to the mentioned blind niches in the ceiling of the small *iwan* and on the side portions of entrance portal's façade.[989] This indicates that these structures are parts of mosque's same construction intervention. Blind niches may have been filed with moulded elements of terracotta to feature repeating geometric or vegetal designs.[990]

[988] See Sayyadshahri 2014, 30-33.
[989] Sayyadshahri clearly states that the reconstruction of their revetments and their re-attachment to the surfaces are erroneous. See Sayyadshahri 2015, 32.
[990] Compare to the exterior terracotta revetments of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (especially the entrance portal of the no longer extant *khanqah*; Cat. No. 12).

It is not clear if glazed elements are original or works of restoration, but their positioning may reflect their original iteration. Niche spandrels are unusual and might be results of façade's excessive reconstruction. They feature large geometrical elements of twelve pointed stars, but their dimensions are disproportional compared to the sides of spandrels. These niches and spandrels were topped by cartouches with stucco inscriptions, similar to solutions applied for the design of side surfaces of mosque's entrance portal façade.

Decorative Principles – Stucco versus Terracotta

At the Farumad Friday mosque, carved stuccos were employed for surfaces, which were difficult to decorate with terracotta, due to their concave forms. Furthermore, stuccos are located in areas which are partially or at least slightly protected from weathering. Another important difference between carved stuccos and terracotta of the façade is their content. The stuccos feature almost exclusively inscriptions which are unique works of art. Quite the contrary, the terracotta normally display repeating geometric and vegetal patterns. Craftsmen therefore exploited the inherent characteristics of distinct architectural revetment media. In other words, it would have been complicated to produce unique inscriptions by moulding and cutting the terracotta; this would also not represent an economic solution, given the fact that the moulds would need to be discarded. It was therefore an entirely pragmatic decision for the inscriptions of the monument to be produced in carved stucco medium, despite its lesser durability. It is likely that the façade of the small *iwan* was decorated with stucco and terracotta during the same intervention. Drawing on evidence from the *qibla iwan*'s revetment observations, it seems that this decorative programme is work of a redecoration (second phase).

Conclusion

The monumental stucco inscriptions on the *qibla iwan*'s core façade and other stucco revetments on the façade of the small *iwan* should be associated with the second decorative phase of stucco application, and thus to the stuccos in the interior of the small *iwan*, the *qibla iwan* and mosque's entrance portal. These stuccos were either produced in conjunction with application of terracotta on façades of *iwan*s, or the terracotta elements were applied later in order to replace selectively the weathered stuccos. Observations of locations of stuccos and their role in the totality of the small *iwan* façade repertoire, nevertheless suggest that stuccos were applied on architectural surfaces according to a clear logic and only on designated surfaces. If so, it is more likely that the second decorative intervention comprised joint application of stuccos and terracotta on mosque's architectural surfaces.

Side Arcades (Riwaqs) of the Courtyard

Façades of the two *iwan*s are connected to form the courtyard with three pointed arch arcades on each side. These arcades originally functioned as passages into mosque's side prayer spaces forming the courtyard. They also provided for the visual continuation of courtyard's exterior surfaces' appearance. These side prayer spaces are mainly no longer extant, but they were likely covered by a system of vaulting. The remaining parts of mosque's structure retain extensive amounts of carved stuccos. The piers of the arcades were coated with plaster out of which simple plug grids were carved. These plug panels were framed by bands of arabesques or smaller inscription bands. The intrados areas of the arcades were also covered with stucco

panels inserted into fired brick cartouches. The panels featured repeating star-derived geometric designs or vegetal patterns, with epigraphic cartouches in their lower areas (these cartouches most frequently feature invocations to God). Large inscription bands (Qurʾanic) are related to the inscriptions of the two *iwan*s. They were produced to frame the pointed arch openings of these arcades. The external surfaces topping the pointed arch openings in the arcades were decorated with modest stucco plug designs, which were incised into layers of plaster. This is not dissimilar from the logic which was employed to decorate the entrance portal of the mosque.

In sum, the arcades' revetments are clearly related to the extensive stucco revetment programme of mosque's second decorative phase, but the arcades nevertheless present a more modest decorative programme. The quality of their revetments matches the rest of the stucco programme, but their amount is reduced and larger surfaces are covered with stucco plug panels, which were less time-consuming, compared to more complex revetments. This was likely determined by the fact that craftsmen wanted to emphasize the two *iwan* façades as the focal points of the mosque's exterior. In this respect, the arcades were decorated to function as the background of the repertoire.

The Entrance Portal

Fig. 173.

The entrance portal consists of three sections. Its core is formed by the pointed arch, which forms the *iwan*-like structure, through which the monument is entered on its north-eastern side. The entrance is not aligned in axis with the two *iwan*s, and it is positioned to flank the small *iwan* on its eastern side. This may indicate that the entrance was not part of mosque's original iteration. On the other hand, the location of the entrance portal could have been impacted by the topography of the terrain on which the mosque is situated, which is slightly sloped, with northern parts of mosque's structure being elevated, compared to its southern parts. The pointed arch portal is flanked on each side by two registers of blind niches, which increase the dimensions of the entrance portal and determine its façade-like structure.

Entrance portal's exterior surfaces were originally decorated with carved stuccos. A pair of columns coated with geometric patterns flanks the opening in the portal and surmounts the pointed arch. The intrados of the pointed arch is coated with a wide band of geometric stucco pattern and its extrados is outlined by the inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al Fatiha*, 1:1-5), which is deeply carved and set against a rich composition of vegetal elements. The pointed arch is topped by fragmentary carved stucco panels forming a pair of monumental spandrels. The spandrels originally featured either vegetal or geometric ornamentation, which was additionally outlined by a band of geometric patterns. The entrance portal structure was originally higher and the opening was outlined by a monumental band of repeating geometrical design, derived from a twelve-pointed star composition. The entrance portal features two more vertical bands in terracotta, with moulded elements framed by geometric twelve-pointed grids. These terracotta revetments could be results of a later modification of entrance portal's façade, but it is not possible to exclude that they were re-attached on these locations by the restorers.

The interior of the entrance portal is decorated with carved stucco. The lower portions of walls are covered by stucco plugs which are produced by covering the entire surface with stucco

material and carving of plugs. These plugs are topped by the *Naskh* inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:9-10) with vegetal background consisting of leaf elements. The upper portion of portal's opening originally featured a carved stucco muqarnas structure, of which the two lower tiers remain. The muqarnas panels are produced by carving of a single stucco layer and they feature symmetrical vegetal compositions or geometric elements. The monumental geometric band in arch's intrados retains two cartouches with cursive inscriptions (Shahada).

One of the stucco muqarnas elements in carved stucco, above the entrance opening, retains fragments of a craftsmen's signature. One fragment can be connected with the signature located in the small *iwan* of the mosque and also to the best preserved signature just above the monumental mihrab in the interior of the *qibla iwan*. The monument therefore retains a total of at least four signatures of its stucco craftsmen with corresponding content of these signatures. This manner of integrating of stucco craftsmen's signatures into a corpus of carved stucco programme, is similar to the attitude adopted by the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop, which operated in the area stretching from Jawin to Damghan, Bistam and Qala-yi Naw (Cat. Nos. 19-21).

The side blind niches of entrance portal's façade are arranged in two registers and they comprise a considerable amount of carved stuccos. The left hand side section was ruined and only its lower register of blind niches remains, with fragmented carved stuccos. The right hand side of the niches is better preserved, where its carved stucco inscriptions, divided into cartouches placed about the spandrel areas of the blind niches, are still partially legible and form a Hadith text. These inscriptions feature *Naskh* style, with *hastae* perforated on their tops related to inscription bands in the interior of the two *iwan*s. They are set against a richly carved background of vegetal elements.

In sum, stuccos on the entrance portal of the Farumad Friday mosque were produced with simple and coherent stucco production technology, which mainly comprised carving of one stucco layer, to produce less complex ornamental elements and stucco plugs. The central part of the entrance portal features more complex stuccos in its interior which comprised more detailed carving to form several visual planes of the inscription bands. The muqarnas hood of the portal required more demanding skills for its production. The signature above portal's opening is of essential significance in further associating these stuccos with the extensive stucco decorative programme in mosque's interior, which are works of the second decorative phase.

Stucco Polychromy at Farumad

The *in situ* observations of the Farumad Friday mosque stuccos provides significant information concerning their original polychromy. No traces of colouring, except for white, have been found on the small amount of stuccos pertaining to the first decorative stage. For the second phase, the majority of stuccos of this extensive revetment repertoire either no longer retain traces, or they only retain a limited colour spectrum. Some revetments of the repertoire however retain pigmentation traces of wide spectrum, which provide evidence in support of the hypothesis that originally, the monumental stucco and terracotta repertoire of the mosque was polychrome in a manner similar to the rest of Seljuq and especially Ilkhanid stuccos.

The best preserved traces of stucco colouring are located in the lunette niche of the monumental mihrab in mosque's *qibla iwan* and on the muqarnas ceiling topping the mihrab. These stucco panels were protected from weathering agents and from the sunlight, due to their locations. Observed colouring traces illustrate that the original polychromy spectrum of stuccos was relatively wide, compared to the extant evidence from the other stucco repertoires; purple-like, light and dark blue, orange and dark red, pistachio green, white and ochre yellow have been observed in abundant amounts. Furthermore, the evidence from the lunette of the mihrab's niche illustrates that prior to their colouring, the stuccos were first coated with a layer of white colour, which functioned as a primer for the polychromy layer.[991] These traces of pigmentation are not sufficient to reconstruct the colouring principles for stuccos, except for the following remarks. Blue is always found in recessed parts of stucco reliefs. Use of green was selective, for highlighting specific elements of compositions on the reliefs and juxtaposing them to their background. Observations of perforated muqarnas cells of the ceiling in the *qibla iwan* reveal a minute attention to perforations and the attitude of colouring the perforated areas in different colours, to form chequered patterns, rather than covering them with one colour.[992] The polychromy of the Farumad re-decoration programme builds on centuries long stucco colouring tradition.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Farumad

Phase One

Architectural revetments of mosque's first decorative phase (the stuccos in the passage areas of the *qibla iwan* and the revetments on the lower portion of the left hand side of the *qibla iwan*'s façade) were produced with two distinct artistic techniques. Supporting walls were reveted with carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks of structure's core and further incisions were performed to form chequered patterns for wall revetments. The carved stuccos were produced out of one layer of stucco, which was thicker than the layers of carved stucco from the second decorative phase. These carved stuccos either featured arabesque or stucco plug patterns, or inscriptions. Inscriptions of the *iwan's* passages reveal a different type of stucco carving, compared to the second decorative stage. It produced revetments with a lesser level of visual element detail, with inscriptions placed against plain background and with letters of larger dimensions and a more reduced amount of additional vegetal or geometric patterns. Compared to the stuccos of the second phase, these stuccos featured less complex designs and more robust carving with a deeper relief and more contrasting appearance.

Phase Two

Farumad's second decorative programme of monumental dimensions is produced with a wider selection of diverse stucco artistic techniques, which enabled the craftsmen to highlight the visibility of the most significant parts of the mosque. Large panels in interiors of the two *iwan*s and the majority of inscription bands on mosque's surface are produced out of one layer of

[991] This is a centuries old practice which has also been documented on tenth to twelfth centuries stuccos of Nishapur. Holakooei *et al* 2018, 176.

[992] This practice has for example been observed, on the presumably earlier stucco mihrab of the Zuzan monument in southern Khurasan region.

stucco. The type of carving of these stucco layers is different, compared to stuccos of the first decorative stage; it is more precise in a manner for it to feature small dimension and finer inscription details, with ornamental knotted elements, which are juxtaposed to richly designed background consisting of numerous variations of vegetal elements. The observed practice must have been conditioned by the stucco material composition. Craftsmen carved more important stucco panels of the programme, such as the panels of the mihrab or some larger inscription bands, out of two or more subsequently applied layers of stucco, which allowed them to produce stucco reliefs with different visual planes.

Farumad's stucco programme was selectively produced with the techniques of applied protruding bosses. These bosses were applied at regular intervals on the carved reliefs featuring repeating geometric compositions in intradoses of the two *iwan*s. The bosses enhanced the regular rhythm of the bands and increased their visibility. Another technique comprising application of protruding elements and featuring heavily perforated abstract forms, was employed for the stucco band in *qibla iwan*'s ceiling to outline its muqarnas hood. This stucco panel features a relief almost entirely composed out of heavily perforated protruding elements forming symmetrical compositions set against selectively carved background. In doing so, the craftsmen produced an extremely deep and contrasting stucco relief. Another artistic technique comprised application of small and repeating protruding elements with the aid of wooden nails or pegs. These elements were applied onto carved stucco surfaces which featured repeating geometric designs or symmetrical compositions comprising vegetal elements; they are located on the mihrab and the two horizontal panels topping the passages to the side prayer halls of the *qibla* façade. These applied protruding elements feature clear-cut edges and they accordingly determine dynamic and contrasting stucco reliefs.

Use of artistic techniques which enabled production of diverse protruding elements impacted the visual appearance and aesthetics of the Farumad stucco repertoire, by highlighting certain stucco panels and increasing their visibility through the deepening of the stucco relief. Differently from stuccos in Central Iran, stuccos of Farumad second decorative phase, do not feature deeply recessed panels produced by carving or undercut. This was seemingly compensated for by the use of protruding elements. Furthermore, a relatively wide selection of artistic techniques was employed to produce this repertoire.

The Farumad Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Aesthetics of the monumental stucco programme of the Farumad Friday mosque feature peculiar characteristics which were determined by the selection of stucco artistic techniques and the stucco production approach. In comparison to the first phase revetments, the second phase stucco repertoire reflects more complex stucco designs, larger dimensions and more advanced stucco artistic techniques.

The overall appearance of the Farumad stucco repertoire is characterized by shallow stucco reliefs, which do not feature deeply recessed areas or stucco undercut. The majority of stucco panels display a single visual plane and clear-cut incisions of their design. Repertoire's appearance is rendered more dynamic through application of protruding elements on stucco panels which highlight the most significant parts of the repertoire by transforming its relief into

a more contrasting and dynamic surface. Another characteristic of the decorative programme is the minute design of the majority of its panels, with complex inscription ornamental elements and carefully formed compositions of inscription background and other stucco panels. These distinct aesthetic characteristics of the Farumad stucco repertoire of the second phase, are partially reflected by the programme of stuccos of the Khusraw Shir mosque (Cat. No. 17). Further parallels, at a lower scale however, and of more distant type, include works of the Damghani family at Bistam and Damghan (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). All these repertoires are relatively close to each other, and the described aesthetics should be comprehended as the aesthetics of the given geographical unit, which were produced by different craftsmen's workshops, but perhaps in the relatively close chronological frame.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not retain any Ilkhanid furniture.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The extensive epigraphic programme of the Farumad Friday mosque was being studied during the preparation of this research work by Iman Aghajani.[993] These readings of monument's inscriptions are presented here with further comments concerning their visual features.

The Entrance Portal

a.) A fragmented inscription runs along the top edges of walls forming the niche of the entrance portal. It features *Naskh* style and its background is filled with vegetal ornamentation. The inscription comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Jumʿa* (62:9-10).[994]

The inscription reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ[995]

O believers, when proclamation is made for prayer on the Day of Congregation, hasten to God's remembrance and leave trafficking aside; that is better for you, did you but know.
Then, when the prayer is finished, scatter in the land and seek God's bounty, and remember God frequently; haply you will prosper.

b.) Two cartouches are located in the intrados of entrance portal's niche (the right hand side cartouche is extant and the left hand side cartouche is destroyed) comprise inscription in *Naskh* style which recounted the Sunni Shahada.[996]

[993] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[994] *Ibid.*
[995] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jumuah (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).
[996] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.

c.) A fragmented inscription band frames the pointed arch of entrance portal's niche and it features Knotted Kufic style with vegetal elements in its background. The inscription recounts Qurʾanic excerpts from the Opening Chapter (1:1-5).

The inscription reads:[997]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.

d.) The right hand side section of the entrance portal retains cartouches with fragmented inscriptions, which recount diverse Hadith texts.

The following Hadith texts were read:[998]

مَنْ بَنَى ۤ لِلَّ مَسْجِدًا بَنَى ه اللَّ ُ لَه بَيْتًا فِّي الْجَنهةّ[999]

Whoever builds a mosque for God, God will build a house for him in the paradise.

إن الله تعالى إّني لأَهَمُّ بّأَهْلّ الأَرْضّ[1000]
عَذَابًا، فَإّذَا نَظَرْتُ إّلَى عُمارّ بُيُوْتّي صَرَفْتُ العذابى[1001]

Oh God almighty, I care about the people of the earth,
They melted, so when I looked towards Ammar, my home, I dismissed my torment.

عَجلُوا بّالصلاةّ قَبْلَ الْفَوْتّ ، وَعَجلُوا بّالتهوْبَةّ قَبْلَ الْمَوْتّ[1002]

Hasten to pray before it is too late, hasten to pray before the death.

قال النبى عليه ...[1003]

The Prophet said, …

[997] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[998] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[999] *Ibid.*
[1000] *Ibid.*
[1001] *Ibid.*
[1002] *Ibid.*
[1003] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.

Eastern Riwaq of the Mosque

a.) A Qurʾanic inscription is divided into bands, which are placed on archivolts of *riwaq*'s arches. Inscriptions feature Kufic style and their background is filled with vegetal elements. The content of the inscription is Qurʾan, *Surat al-Qiyama;* the following parts were documented by Aghajani: 75:1-12, 75:15-34, 75:36.

The inscription reads:[1004]

75:1-12

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ
أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعَ عِظَامَهُ
بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ
بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ
يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ
فَإِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ
وَخَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ
وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفَرُّ
كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ
إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ

No! I swear by the Day of Resurrection.
No! I swear by the reproachful soul.
What, does man reckon We shall not gather his bones?
Surely We are able to reform even his finger-tips.
Nay, but man desires to continue on as a libertine,
asking, 'When shall be the Day of Resurrection?'
But when the sight is dazed
and the moon is eclipsed,
and the sun and moon are brought together,
upon that day man shall say, 'Whither to flee?'
No indeed; not a refuge!
Upon that day the recourse shall be to thy Lord.

75:15-34

وَلَوْ أَلْقَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ
لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ
إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ
فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ
ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ
كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ

[1004] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Qiyamah (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ
وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَاضِرَةٌ

إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ
وَوُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَاسِرَةٌ
تَظُنُّ أَنْ يُفْعَلَ بِهَا فَاقِرَةٌ
كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ
وَقِيلَ مَنْ ۜ رَاقٍ
وَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ
وَالْتَفَّتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ
إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ
فَلَا صَدَّقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ
وَلَٰكِنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ
ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّىٰ
أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ

even though he offer his excuses.
Move not thy tongue with it to hasten it;
Ours it is to gather it, and to recite it.
So, when We recite it, follow thou its recitation.
Then Ours it is to explain it.
No indeed; but you love the hasty world,
and leave be the Hereafter.
Upon that day faces shall be radiant,
gazing upon their Lord;
and upon that day faces shall be scowling,
thou mightest think the Calamity has been wreaked on them.
No indeed; when it reaches the clavicles
and it is said, 'Who is an enchanter?'
and he thinks that it is the parting
and leg is intertwined with leg,
upon that day unto thy Lord shall be the driving.
For he confirmed it not, and did not pray,
but he cried it lies, and he turned away,
then he went to his household arrogantly.
Nearer to thee and nearer

75:36

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى

What, does man reckon he shall be left to roam at will?

This is the only instance in which the given excerpt is employed for Ilkhanid carved stucco inscriptions.

b.) The surfaces of the Eastern *riwaq* comprise further cartouches with invocations to God. The following invocations have been deciphered:[1005]

من الجنة

From paradise.

لا اله الا الله

There is no God but God.

افضل ذكر

The best remembrance.

Further Hadith texts were read on these surfaces:[1006]

من كان الله
كان الله له

Whoever does his deeds to God, the God will mercy him.

The Western Riwaq of the Mosque

Some cartouches with inscriptions on this part of the monument have been damaged to the extent that they are no longer legible.

a.) Inscriptions on surfaces of the *riwaq* recount mainly Hadith texts. The majority features Kufic style with vegetal elements in their backgrounds.

The following Hadiths are reported by Aghajani:[1007]

خير الناس من نفع الناس

The best person is the one who benefits all human beings.

الدنيا مزرعة الاخرة

The world is a plantation for the hereafter.

الجنة دار الأسخياء

The heaven is the abode for generous people.

One further inscription with the repeating of one of the names of God (*al-Malik*) features Kufic style.

The Qibla Iwan

[1005] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1006] *Ibid.*
[1007] *Ibid.*

a.) The pointed arch opening of the *qibla iwan* is framed by a carved stucco inscription in *Naskh* style. This historic inscription is fragmented and it comprises essential information concerning patron's identity for the extensive carved stucco repertoire of the monument (second phase). The most complete reading of the inscription, which provides dates for the dating of this constructive and decorative phase is proposed by Aghajani.[1008]

The inscription reading by Aghajani is the following:

نظام الملک دستور الخافقین سلطان وزراء البر و البحر عزالدنیا و الدین طاهر الفریومدی اعزه الله

… vizier of the east and west, the Sultan among the Viziers of land and sea, glory of the world and religion, Tahir al-Faryumadi, may God glorify him …

Based on the identification of the personage mentioned in the historic inscription, Aghajani proposes an Early Ilkhanid date for this constructive and decorative phase of the monument (second phase).

b.) The southern pointed arch opening of the side passage between the interior of the *qibla iwan* and the south-eastern prayer space retains two layers of carved stucco inscriptions. Inscriptions were read by Aghajani.[1009]

The phase one inscription band features Kufic style and it recounts Qurʾan, 10:58-59 (*Surah Yunus*).

The text of the inscription reads:[1010]

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَٰلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ
قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَجَعَلْتُمْ مِنْهُ حَرَامًا وَحَلَالًا قُلْ آللَّهُ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ ۖ أَمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ تَفْتَرُونَ

Say: 'In the bounty of God, and His mercy — in that let them rejoice; it is better than that they amass.
Say: 'Have you considered the provision God has sent down for you, and you have made some of it unlawful, and some lawful?' Say: 'Has God given you leave, or do you forge against God?'

The phase two inscription band features Kufic style and it recounts Qurʾan, 93:1-6 (*Surat al-Dhuha*).

The text of the inscription reads:[1011]

وَالضُّحَىٰ
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ
مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَىٰ
وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَكَ مِنَ الْأُولَىٰ

[1008] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1009] *Ibid.*
[1010] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Yunus (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).
[1011] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ad-Dhuha (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَىٰ
أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَىٰ

By the white forenoon
and the brooding night!
Thy Lord has neither forsaken thee nor hates thee
and the Last shall be better for thee than the First.
thy Lord shall give thee, and thou shalt be satisfied.
Did He not find thee an orphan, and shelter thee?

This excerpt is rarely employed for Ilkhanid stuccos and it is only found on stuccos of the Farumad Friday mosque.

c.) The northern pointed arch opening between in the eastern supporting wall of the *qibla iwan*, which connects the *iwan*'s interior with the south-eastern prayer hall, features a carved stucco inscription with a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:16) in Kufic style.[1012]

The inscription text reads:[1013]

قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ ۖ فَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۖ وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

Say to the Bedouins who were left behind: 'You shall be called against a people possessed of great might' to fight them, or they surrender. If you obey, God will give you a goodly wage; but if you turn your backs, as you turned your backs before, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement.'

c.) The southern pointed arch passage opening between the western wall of the *qibla iwan* and the north-western prayer spaces, features a carved stucco inscription (likely phase two), which features Kufic style and comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Dhuha* (Qurʾan, 93:7-11). This is continuation of the earlier mentioned inscription. It concludes with an invocation to God. Inscriptions were read by Aghajani.[1014]

The Qurʾanic text of the inscription reads:[1015]

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ
وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ
فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ
وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ
وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

[1012] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1013] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).
[1014] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1015] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ad-Dhuha (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

Did He not find thee erring, and guide thee?
Did He not find thee needy, and suffice thee?
As for the orphan, do not oppress him,
and as for the beggar, scold him not;
and as for thy Lord's blessing, declare it.

The invocation at the end of the inscription band reads:

يغفر الله لنا و لک

May God forgive us and you.

d.) A small carved stucco mihrab is located in the northern passage of *qibla iwan*'s eastern wall. The mihrab features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (Qurʾan, 112:1-4) in Floriated Kufic. The mihrab comprises further invocations to God stating that *The God is the greatest*. Inscriptions were read by Aghajani.[1016]

The inscription text reads:[1017]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

e.) The monumental inscription band which runs in the interior of the *iwan*, along the top edges of its supporting walls, features *Naskh* style and it recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Mulk* (Qurʾan, 67:1-16). It was read by Aghajani.[1018]

The inscription reads:[1019]

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۖ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ ۖ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِنْ فُطُورٍ
ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ
وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ
وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ
إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ
تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ۖ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ

[1016] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1017] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).
[1018] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1019] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Mulk (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ
وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ
فَاعْتَرَفُوا بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسُحْقًا لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ
وَأَسِرُّوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ
أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ
هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ ۖ وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ
أَأَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ

Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent –
[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving –
[And] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks?
Then return [your] vision twice again. [Your] vision will return to you humbled while it is fatigued.
And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made [from] them what is thrown at the devils and have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze.
And for those who disbelieved in their Lord is the punishment of Hell, and wretched is the destination.
They also say, 'If we had only heard, or had understood, we would not have been of the inhabitants of the Blaze.'
So they confess their sins. Curse the inhabitants of the Blaze!
Surely those who fear their Lord in the Unseen — there awaits them forgiveness and a great wage.
Be secret in your speech, or proclaim it, He knows the thoughts within the breasts.
Shall He not know, who created? And He is the All-subtle, the All-aware.
It is He who made the earth submissive to you; therefore walk in its tracts, and eat of His provision; to Him is the Uprising.
Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not cause the earth to swallow you, the while it rocks?

f.) An inscription band in Kufic style is located in the interior of *iwan*'s vaulting and it might have been been written in Persian. Aghajani proposes readings of its fragments:[1020]

... گنبد پیروزه فام ... ملکستان ...

...turquoise coloured dome ... kingdom conquer...

g.) Further Hadith texts are spread over inscription bands of mosque's south wing.

The following Hadiths have been deciphered by Aghajani:[1021]

المنافق فی المسجد

[1020] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1021] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.

كالطير فى القفص

The hypocrite in the mosque is like a bird in a cage.

Further inscriptions in this part of the mosque comprise invocations to God:

لا اله الا الله
وحده لا شريک له

There is no God but God, he is alone and he has no partner.

Further inscriptions of mosque's southern wing comprise diverse Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Aʿraf* (Qurʾan, 7:32, 7:36-37).[1022]

The text of the inscriptions reads:[1023]

7:32

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ ۚ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

Say: 'Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing?' Say: 'These, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be exclusively for those who believed in this present life. So We distinguish the signs for a people who know.'

7:36-37

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ
فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ قَالُوا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۖ قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ

And those that cry lies to Our signs, and wax proud against them — those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever.
And who does greater evil than he who forges against God a lie, or cries lies to His signs? Those – their portion of the Book shall reach them; till, when Our messengers come to them, to take them away, they say, 'Where is that you were calling on, beside God?' They will say, 'They have gone astray from us, and they will bear witness against themselves that they were unbelievers.

The Monumental Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of invocations to God, Qurʾanic excerpts and a no longer extant craftsmen's workshop signature. Aghajani provides detailed reading of these inscriptions.[1024]

[1022] *Ibid.*
[1023] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Araf (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).
[1024] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.

a.) An inscription is located in the interior of mihrab's niche, below its spandrel. It features cursive style with floral elements in its background and it recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Maryam* (Qurʾan, 19:11-13). Inscriptions were read by Aghajani.[1025]

The inscription reads:[1026]

فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا
يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا
وَحَنَانًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً ۖ وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا

So he came forth unto his people from the Sanctuary, then he made signal to them, 'Give you glory at dawn and evening.'
O John, take the Book forcefully'; and We gave him judgment, yet a little child,
and a tenderness from Us, and purity; and he was godfearing,

This excerpt has not been found on any other Ilkhanid stuccos.

b.) The inscription band forming the pointed arch of the mihrab's niche features Knotted Kufic style with vegetal elements in its background. It recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Hajj* (Qurʾan, 22:77).

The inscription reads:[1027]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O men, bow you down and prostrate yourselves, and serve your Lord, and do good; haply so you shall prosper;

c.) The mihrab features four circular medallions with repeating of inscriptions forming eight pointed stars. These inscriptions display Kufic style.

The two medallions in the area of mihrab's monumental spandrels were read by Aghajani, as parts of the *Surah Taha* (Qurʾan, 20:33). They read:

نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا

We glorify Thee,

The other two related medallions in mihrab's upper section comprise repeating of the invocation to God: *(God) will suffice you for them*.

Below these two medallions, there are two cartouches. The left hand side cartouche is damaged and illegible. The right hand side cartouche contains the invocation; *There is no God by God*.

[1025] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1026] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Maryam (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).
[1027] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Hajj (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

The damaged right hand side cartouches might have contained the continuation of this statement. The two cartouches could therefore contain the Sunni Shahada.

d.) The niche and the spandrels topping it are framed by a cursive inscription band in a fragmented state. It contains a Qurʾanic excerpt, the *Ayat al-Kursi* (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255).

The inscription read:[1028]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The Small Iwan

Inscriptions of the Small *iwan* were read by Aghajani.[1029]

a.) The pointed arch openings flanking the Small *iwan* of the monument feature invocations to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*). They are produced in terracotta and they display Knotted Kufic style.

b.) A carved stucco inscription begins at the springing of the pointed arch opening of the Small *iwan* and it runs along the exterior edges of spandrels topping the opening. The inscription features *Naskh* style with background filled with vegetal elements. It recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (Qurʾan, 48:16-25).

The text of the inscription reads:[1030]

قُلْ لِلْمُخَلَّفِينَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ سَتُدْعَوْنَ إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ أُولِي بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ تُقَاتِلُونَهُمْ أَوْ يُسْلِمُونَ ۖ فَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا يُؤْتِكُمُ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ۖ وَإِنْ تَتَوَلَّوْا كَمَا تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا
لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَىٰ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ يُعَذِّبْهُ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا
لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا
وَمَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً يَأْخُذُونَهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا
وَعَدَكُمُ اللَّهُ مَغَانِمَ كَثِيرَةً تَأْخُذُونَهَا فَعَجَّلَ لَكُمْ هَٰذِهِ وَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَ النَّاسِ عَنْكُمْ وَلِتَكُونَ آيَةً لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَأُخْرَىٰ لَمْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهَا قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللَّهُ بِهَا ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرًا
وَلَوْ قَاتَلَكُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوَلَّوُا الْأَدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُونَ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

[1028] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).
[1029] Aghajani, Iman. The Friday Mosque of Faryumad and Its Inscriptions. Article in Preparation for Publication.
[1030] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا
وَهُوَ الَّذِي كَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ بِبَطْنِ مَكَّةَ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ أَظْفَرَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرًا
هُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْهَدْيَ مَعْكُوفًا أَنْ يَبْلُغَ مَحِلَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا رِجَالٌ مُؤْمِنُونَ وَنِسَاءٌ مُؤْمِنَاتٌ لَمْ تَعْلَمُوهُمْ
أَنْ تَطَئُوهُمْ فَتُصِيبَكُمْ مِنْهُمْ مَعَرَّةٌ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ لِيُدْخِلَ اللَّهُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ لَوْ تَزَيَّلُوا لَعَذَّبْنَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

Say to the Bedouins who were left behind: 'You shall be called against a people possessed of great might' to fight them, or they surrender. If you obey, God will give you a goodly wage; but if you turn your backs, as you turned your backs before, He will chastise you with a painful chastisement.'
There is no fault in the blind, and there is no fault in the lame, and there is no fault in the sick. And whosoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him into gardens underneath which rivers flow; but whosoever turns his back, him He will chastise with a painful chastisement.
God was well pleased with the believers when they were swearing fealty to thee under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down the Shechina upon them, and rewarded them with a nigh victory
and many spoils to take; and God is ever All-mighty, All-wise.
God has promised you many spoils to take; these He has hastened to you, and has restrained the hands of men from you, and that it may be a sign to the believers, and to guide you on a straight path,
and other spoils you were not able to take; God had encompassed them already. God is powerful over everything.
If the unbelievers had fought you, they would have turned their backs, and then found neither protector nor helper;
the wont of God, as in the past before, and thou shalt never find any changing the wont of God.
It is He who restrained their hands from you, and your hands from them, in the hollow of Mecca, after that He made you victors over them. God sees the things you do.
They are the ones who disbelieved, and barred you from the Holy Mosque and the offering, detained so as not to reach its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for certain men believers and certain women believers whom you knew not, lest you should trample them, and there befall you guilt unwittingly on their account (that God may admit into His mercy whom He will), had they been separated clearly, then We would have chastised the unbelievers among them with a painful chastisement.

c.) The inscription band which frames the pointed arch opening of the Small *iwan* features Knotted Kufic style with vegetal elements in its background. It recounts the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Aʿla* (Qurʾan, 87:1-15).

The inscription reads:[1031]

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى
الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ
وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَىٰ

[1031] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ala (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَىٰ
فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَىٰ
سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَىٰ
إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ
وَنُيَسِّرُكَ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ
فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ نَفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَىٰ
سَيَذَّكَّرُ مَنْ يَخْشَىٰ
وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشْقَى
الَّذِي يَصْلَى النَّارَ الْكُبْرَىٰ
ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ
وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّىٰ

Magnify the Name of thy Lord the Most High
who created and shaped,
who determined and guided,
who brought forth the pasturage
then made it a blackening wrack.
We shall make thee recite, to forget not
save what God wills; surely He knows what is spoken aloud and what is hidden.
We shall ease thee unto the Easing.
Therefore remind, if the Reminder profits,
and he who fears shall remember,
but the most wretched shall flout it,
even he who shall roast in the Great Fire,
then he shall neither die therein, nor live.
Prosperous is he who has cleansed himself,
and mentions the Name of his Lord, and prays.

This is the only documented use of this Qurʾanic excerpt in Ilkhanid stuccos.

d.) The monumental inscription band which runs along top edges of supporting walls of the Small *iwan*'s interior features *Naskh* style and it is set against a background of vegetal ornamentation. It comprises a continuation of the Qurʾanic excerpt of the inscription with the related location and aesthetics in the *qibla iwan*. It features Qurʾanic excerpt from the *Surat al-Mulk* (Qurʾan, 67:17-28).

The inscription reads:[1032]

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ
وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ
أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَافَّاتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ۚ مَا يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَٰنُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ
أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ ۚ إِنِ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ
أَمَّنْ هَٰذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ ۚ بَلْ لَجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ

[1032] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Mulk (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۖ قَلِيلًا مَا تَشْكُرُونَ
قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ
وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ
فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ هَٰذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ
قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكَنِيَ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ مَعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا فَمَنْ يُجِيرُ الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

Do you feel secure that He who is in heaven will not loose against you a squall of pebbles, then you shall know how My warning is?
Those that were before them also cried lies; then how was My horror!
Have they not regarded the birds above them spreading their wings, and closing them? Naught holds them but the All-merciful. Surely He sees everything.
Or who is this that shall be a host for you to help you, apart from the All-merciful? The unbelievers are only in delusion.
Or who is this that shall provide for you if He withholds His provision? No, but they persist in disdain and aversion.
What, is he who walks prone upon his face better guided than he who walks upright on a straight path?
Say: 'It is He who produced you, and appointed for you hearing and sight and hearts; little thanks you show!'
Say: 'It is He who scattered you in the earth, and unto Him you shall be mustered.'
They say, 'When shall this promise come to pass, if you speak truly?'
Say: 'The knowledge is with God; I am only a clear warner.'
Then, when they see it nigh at hand, the faces of the unbelievers will be vexed, and it will be said, 'This is what you were promised.'
Say: 'What think you? If God destroys me and those with me, or has mercy on us, then who will protect the unbelievers from a painful chastisement?'

In fact, this inscription is the continuation of the Qurʾanic inscription in the *qibla iwan;* it further confirms the hypothesis indicating that the stucco repertoire of the two *iwan*s is contemporary and part of the largest decorative intervention in the mosque.

e.) Another inscription band is located in the interior of *iwan*'s vault (western side). It assumes a form of a horizontal band and it features Knotted Kufic style with vegetal elements in its background. The inscription recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Qadr* (Qurʾan, 97:1-5).

The inscription reads:[1033]

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ
لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ
تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ

[1033] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Qadr (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

Behold, We sent it down on the Night of Power;
And what shall teach thee what is the Night of Power?
The Night of Power is better than a thousand months;
in it the angels and the Spirit descend, by the leave of their Lord, upon every command.
Peace it is, till the rising of dawn.

This is the only known case of use of this excerpt in Ilkhanid stuccos.

f.) An inscription similar to the one above is located on the eastern side of the *iwan*, in a form of a horizontal band. It features Knotted Kufic style with vegetal elements in its background. It recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Nasr* (Qurʾan, 110:1-3).

The inscription reads:[1034]

إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ
وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا
فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَاسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا

When comes the help of God, and victory,
and thou seest men entering God's religion in throngs,
then proclaim the praise of thy Lord, and seek His forgiveness; for He turns again unto men.

This is the only known case of use of this excerpt for Ilkhanid stuccos.

g.) The northern wing of the monument comprises Hadith inscriptions.

The following Hadiths were deciphered by Aghajani:

المؤمن في المسجد
كال ه سمك في الماء

A believer in the mosque is like a fish in the water.

The Craftsmen's Signatures

The stucco repertoire of the Farumad Friday mosque comprises four signatures of stucco craftsmen's workshop, which was in charge of production of its extensive carved stucco decorative programme. One signature (on the mihrab) is no longer extant. The signatures on the entrance portal, the Small *iwan* and in the interior of the *qibla iwan* are in a fragmentary state.

a.) The signature above the entrance of mosque's entrance portal opening is fragmented and the only part, which could be securely read is:

[sic] محمود[sic]

[1034] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/An-Nasr (Last Accessed: November 4, 2021).

[sic] Mahmuʿd [sic]

b.) The signature of the monumental mihrab is no longer extant. Historic photographs document the signature in a fragmented state. It may have contained the signature of the same master stucco craftsman as the other three related signatures. This is significant in confirming that the monumental mihrab of the monument was produced during the most extensive decorative campaign for decoration of the monument with carved stucco revetments.

c.) The monumental mihrab of the mosque is topped by a cartouche with a badly damaged signature of its stucco craftsmen's workshop.

The most plausible reading of the signature is the following:

عمل علي بن ابو حسن بن محمود الشهرستاني

Work of ʿAli ibn Abu Hasan ibn Mahmud al-Shahristani[1035]

d.) The fourth signature of stucco craftsmen's workshop is located in a horizontal cartouche at the end of the monumental inscription in the Small *iwan.*

The most plausible reading of the signature is:

[sic] محمود [sic]

[sic] Mahmud [sic]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not retain any architectural revetments from post-Ilkhanid period. It is probable that the monument fell quickly into disrepair and that patronage of structural and decorative modifications was not attractive to prospective patrons.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The mosque was constructed sometime in Seljuq period, and at that point it featured a restrained architectural revetment programme in carved stucco and plugs. Subsequently, in Early Ilkhanid period, the existing structure of the monument was repaired and redecorated with a monumental stucco and terracotta repertoire. This decorative programme extended over most of the internal and external surfaces of the mosque, with predilection for carved stuccos on the interior and prevalence of terracotta decorations on the exterior surfaces.

Phase One

Only a small amount of original architectural repertoire of the mosque is currently visible and it does not comprise a historic inscription, which would provide evidence regarding patronage of mosque's first constructive and decorative stage. The brief discussion of mosque's geographical and chronological context and history of Farumad, indicates that the settlement's history pre-dated the Ilkhanid period by far. It is thus likely that there existed a congregational

[1035] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: August 29, 2020)

mosque in the town of Farumad, before it gained a greater significance in Ilkhanid period. It is likely that the first monument, of presumably Seljuq vintage, could have been sponsored by some Seljuq official or a prominent local personage.

Phase Two

Information concerning the patronage of mosque's second decorative phase, which may have included repairs of its structure, is provided by the fragmented historic inscription in carved stucco which frames the external perimeter of the opening of mosque's *qibla iwan.* Less than half of the inscription remains on *iwan*'s surface, but some of its parts are weathered to the degree that it results difficult to provide its reliable reading. According to Hoseini and Mansouri, the inscription contains the name of the patron of the monument, which they read and identify as ʿAlaʾal-Din Muhammad Farumadi, the minister of Abu Saʿid who took the post in 1327-28 and remained vizier until he was executed in 1342.[1036] A different identification of the patron has been proposed in the on-going research by Iman Aghajani, who suggests the patron to be Kwaya ʿIzz al-Din Tahir al-Faryumadi, the deputy of Arghun Khan in the regions of Khurasan and Mazandaran.[1037]

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Phase One

The first decorative repertoire of the monument is visible only in fractions and it does not reveal a craftsmen's signature.

Phase Two

The stuccos of mosque's second decorative intervention feature information regarding their craftsmen in form of four craftsmen's signatures. So far, the scholars published information and reading of only one signature which is located in an isolated panel topping *qibla iwan*'s monumental stucco mihrab. Mosque's closer examination yielded information concerning fragmentary remains of three more signatures. One fragmented signatures located in a similar isolated carved stucco panel (like the one topping the mihrab) exactly above the opening in mosque's entrance portal. Furthermore, evidence of the third signature has been spotted by Aghajani in the area at the end of the monumental inscription band in the small *iwan*. This signature is not contained in an isolated stucco panel with an elaborate composition. Craftsmen may have intended to include the information about the authorship of the stucco repertoire at the end of the monumental inscription, but they ran out of necessary space. Aghajani successfully discovered historic photographic documentation of the fourth signature on the mihrab which relates in content to the other three. The fact that the stucco revetment repertoire features four signatures, is exceptional and it may be the largest known number of repeating craftsmen's signatures on one monument. Locations of signatures likely reflect the craftsmen's will to indicate that they produced the extensive repertoire. Moreover, their repetition might also signify that craftsmen did not work on all the surfaces of the monument at the same time but that they started in one section of the mosque and moved to the other architectural surfaces

[1036] Hoseini 2006, 65-66. Kaveh Mansouri, personal communication to the author.
[1037] Iman Aghajani, personal communication, PhD dissertation in preparation at the University of Bamberg.

of the monument only after having completed production of revetments in one part. If so, the signature of the workshop (of the head of it), in fact reveals the aim of the workshop to claim the authorship of the artwork they produced.

The modality of signature location and form finds the closest parallels of similar signatures by the signature of the Damghani family, which operated in Bistam and Damghan, and possibly in Jawin and Qala-yi Naw (Cat. Nos. 18-21). The two isolated panels of signatures from Farumad, find their closest parallel in the signature of one of the Damghani family craftsmen's workshop members' signature, at the no longer extant surfaces of the *iwan* of the mosque structure next to the Pri-i Alamdar tower. Another similar signature is located above the entrance portal of the Kashana tower adjacent to the Friday mosque of Bistam (Cat. No. 18). It is thus possible to propose that the craftsmen of the Farumad stuccos could have been familiar with works of the Damghani family, or that they employed an established practice of stucco signatures. These monuments are located in relative proximities, and the modality of signing the stuccos should be understood as the characteristic of the given geographical unit, which was impacted by the circulation of craftsmen.

The only proposed readings of the craftsmen's signature concern the signature topping the monumental mihrab of the mosque. This signature was vandalized at an early stage and it is currently preserved in fragments. While there exists a reading of it based on the evidence before the destruction, the later readings rely on interpretations of its fragments. One of the first attempts of reading the signature is provided by Wilber in the 1955 monograph, in which he proposes signature's reading as work of *ʿAli Jami al-Sanaiʿ of Simnan*; according to Adle this reading is erroneous.[1038] The most relevant reading may be the 1975 by Mawlawi, reported by Adle, who suggests the reading of the signature topping the mihrab as: *Work of ʿAli ibn Abu al-Hasan ibn Mahmud [Esḥāq?] al-Shahristani*.[1039] Other attempts and interpretations of the signature are provided in the unpublished work by Mansouri, who suggests that the signature should be read as work of *Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Jami al-Shahristani*. The reading by Mawlawi is the most plausible. It is possible to read *ʿAli ibn* in the signature at the end of the monumental inscription of the small *iwan*, which also contains fragment of *Mahmud*.

f.) Monument Condition

Images of the monument by Godard are the most significant historic photographs of the Farumad Friday mosque and they were published in 1949.[1040] They provide evidence indicating that mosque's entrance portal was in a ruined state; the muqarnas hood of the central part of entrance portal's façade had collapsed and the upper portions of entrance façade's side sections were damaged. The majority of architectural revetments of entrance portal's central portion were badly damaged and partially rebuilt; the current iteration of mosque's entrance portal is thus a result of heavy restoration. Another photograph by Godard documents the *qibla iwan* in a ruined state.[1041] The ceiling of the *iwan* had collapsed, probably long time prior to Godard's survey. The only extant parts were portions of the muqarnas hood in carved stucco in the *qibla*

[1038] Wilber 1955, 156.
[1039] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: July 27, 2020).
[1040] Godard 1949, 86-114.
[1041] Godard 1949, 87-89, 91-92.

iwan and extensive portions of the *qibla iwan*'s exterior façade, which was already lacking its upper section. These images document presence of terracotta of *qibla iwan*'s façade and parts of historic carved stucco inscription band at *iwan*'s opening. Further photographs by Finster, taken on the eve of the Islamic revolution, provide important evidence documenting mosque's state of preservation, the relationship between its layers of architectural revetments and the architectural structure, prior to the large-scale restoration interventions.[1042] Further photographic documentation of the mosque by Pope and Wilber, as well as later photographs by Blair and Bloom,[1043] illustrate that the monument was badly ruined during the twentieth century. Adle informs that first conservation interventions on the mosque, aiming at its structural consolidation and preservation, were performed in 1973-1975 and long-term restorations began in 1984.[1044] Remains of the Seljuq period mosque were discovered during these interventions, under the current level of the mosque. The first repairs included rebuilding of mosque's collapsed parts which ensured for its structural integrity and for protection of its decorative programme. The ICHHTO offices began a programme of restoration of ten monuments, among which, the Farumad Friday mosque, in 2002.[1045] These interventions on the mosque comprised extensive treatments of its architectural structure and revetments and also its documentation and production of building's plans and a study of its epigraphic programme.[1046] The monument is in a good conservation state, although further measures could be undertaken to protect its exterior revetments, especially those in stucco medium, which continue to be damaged by weathering. It would be desirable to further clean and consolidate the stuccos in mosque's interior.

g.) Research Finds – Summary:

The Farumad Friday mosque was first built in Seljuq period when it featured a modest architectural revetment repertoire. Subsequently, with the growing prominence of the region in the Ilkhanid period, the mosque was extensively redecorated in Early Ilkhanid period. This redecoration was politically motivated and it included production of stucco and terracotta repertoire which covered most of mosque's surfaces. Structural repairs may have been performed as part of this intervention. Change in mosque's visual appearance impacted its aesthetics of the second phase lavish architectural revetment programme which reflected the political prestige of its patron, likely an Ilkhanid minister. Further important finds concern four repeating signatures of craftsmen on mosque's second phase decorative programme. The placement of signatures illustrates the way the craftsmen proceeded with the production of stuccos: rather than working on the entire monument at the same time, they moved from one part to the other. This large number of craftsmen's signatures reflects craftsmen's willingness to claim the authorship of one of the largest known repertoires of carved stuccos in Medieval Iranian territory. The closest related stuccos are those produced by the Damghani craftsmen's family at Bistam and Damghan (Cat. Nos. 18, 19), rather than stuccos of the Khurasan region or Central Iran.

[1042] Barbara Finster, Image Gallery, Islamic Art and Archaeology, University of Bamberg.
[1043] http://www.archnet.org/sites/5445 (Last Accessed: January 6, 2021).
[1044] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: July 27, 2020).
[1045] Hoseini 2006, 41.
[1046] *Ibid.*

h.) Monument Bibliography: Godard 1949, 84-114; Wilber 1955, 156-157; Mawlawi 1975 after Adle 2012 [1999]; Adle 2012 [1999]; Hoseini 2006; Zariʿi 2012; Shekofte 2020; Aghajani 202-
.

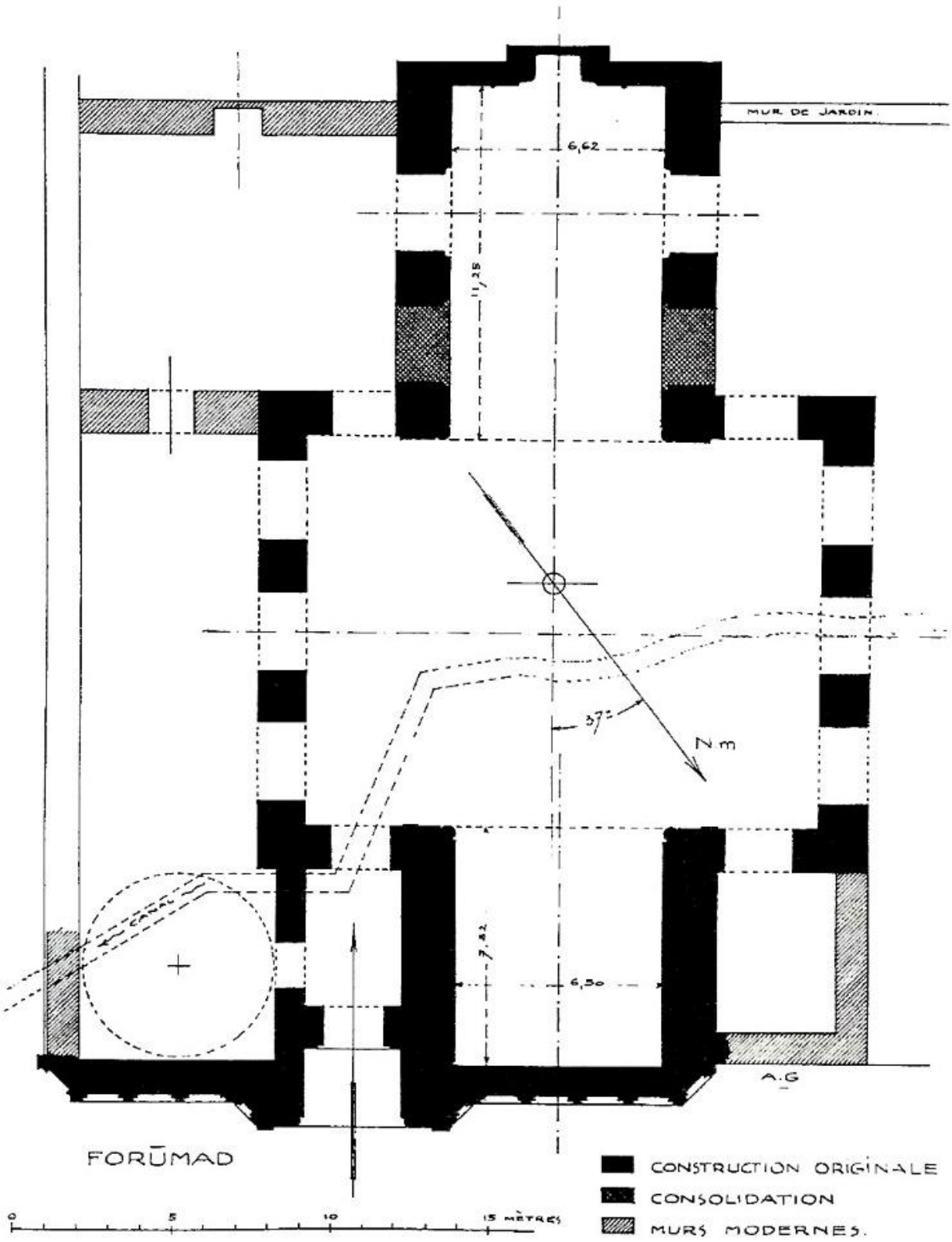


Figure 171: The ground plan of the Farumad Friday mosque with two constructive stages marked (After Godard 1949, 85).



Figure 172: View of the Farumad Friday mosque structure from north-east.



Figure 173: The Entrance portal of the Farumad Friday mosque (decorated in the second phase).



Figure 174: View of the Farumad Friday mosque's *qibla iwan.*



Figure 175: View of the smaller *iwan* of the Farumad Friday mosque, located opposite the *qibla iwan*.



Figure 176: View of the interior eastern supporting wall of the *qibla iwan* of the Farumad Friday mosque, showing two decorative stages.





Figures 176 and 177: Detail views of the Farumad Friday mosque. Left: three decorative layers of the eastern exterior surface of the *qibla iwan*. Right: the small stucco mihrab (presumably Seljuq period) in the passage between the *qibla iwan* and the eastern prayer hall: the arch opening may have been reinforced in the second stage.



Figure 178: The monumental carved stucco mihrab and the muqarnas ceiling in the *qibla iwan* of the Farumad Friday mosque.



Figure 179: Detail of the upper section of the monumental carved stucco mihrab at the Farumad Friday mosque with applied protruding elements forming panels of abstract decorative panels and bands.



Figure 180: Detail of the monumental lunette topping the deeply recessed niche of the monumental stucco mihrab at the Farumad Friday mosque. White, blue and green pigmentation traces are visible.

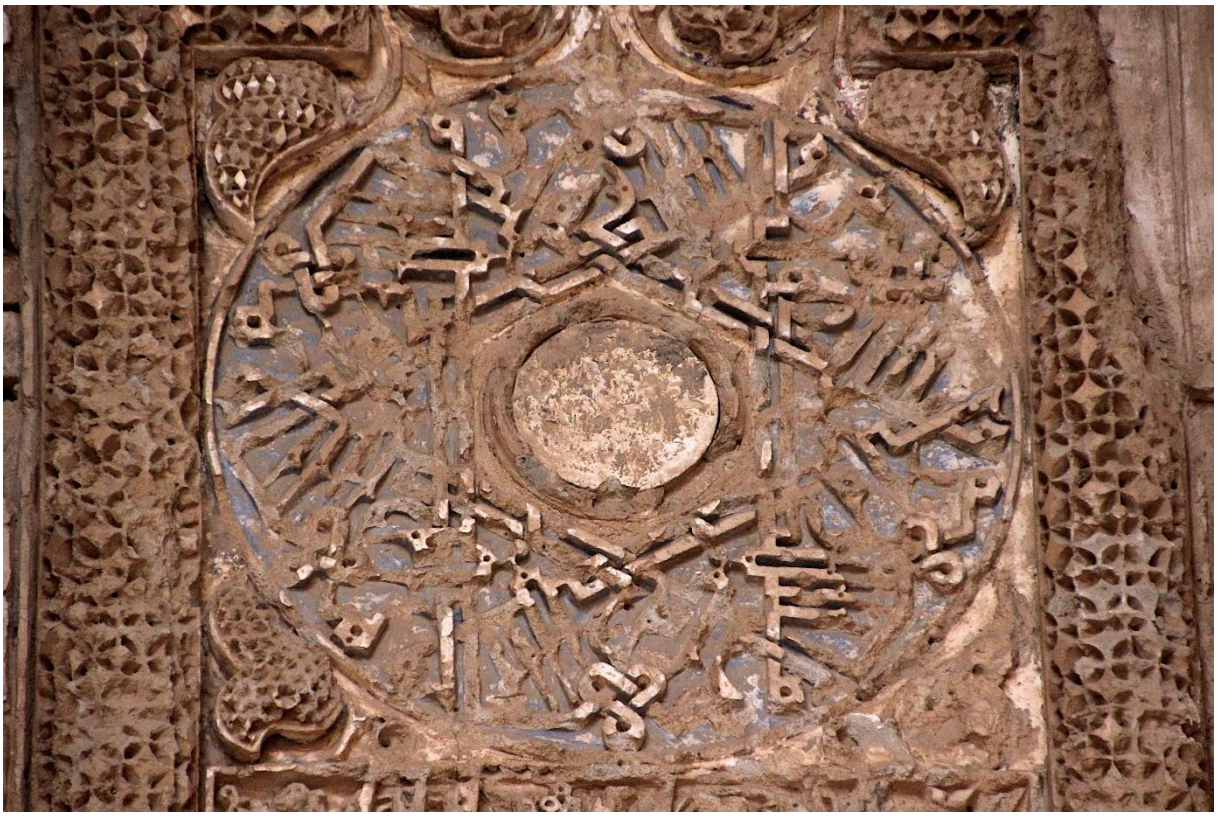
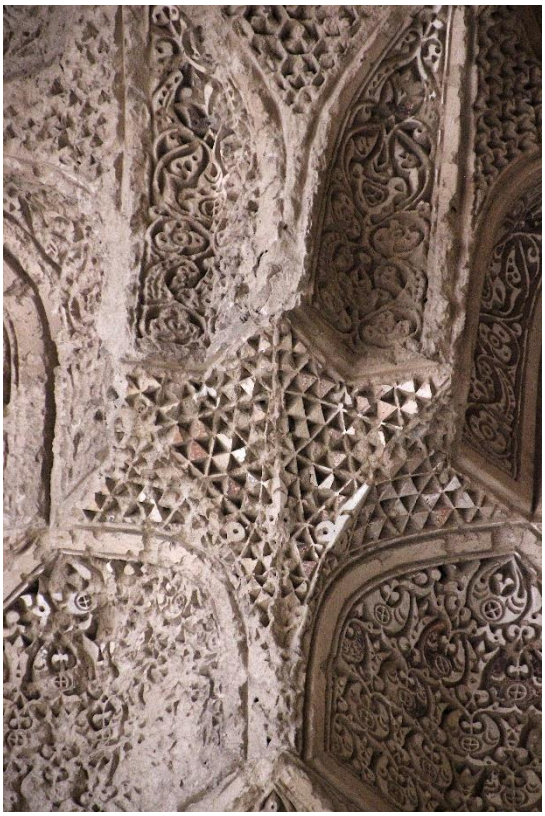


Figure 181: Detail of the monumental mihrab at the Farumad Friday mosque with a geometric composition of repeating apotropaic invocation to God in Kufic style. Blue was employed to colour the recessed parts of the stucco relief.



Figure 182: Detail of the geometrical medallion of the monumental mihrab showing incisions of ruling and compass for placement of the protruding applied stucco element.





Figures 183 and 184: Details of stuccos of the *qibla iwan* at the Farumad Friday mosque. Left: carved muqarnas with pigmentation traces of white and red. Right: monumental inscription band running along top edges of supporting walls of the *iwan* and the ceiling panel of applied protruding elements.



Figure 185: Carved stucco panel of abstract vegetal composition on the eastern side of the *qibla iwan* is produced with the same stucco artistic technique as some panels of the monumental mihrab: both revetments seem to be works of the last decorative stage at the mosque dating to the Ilkhanid period.

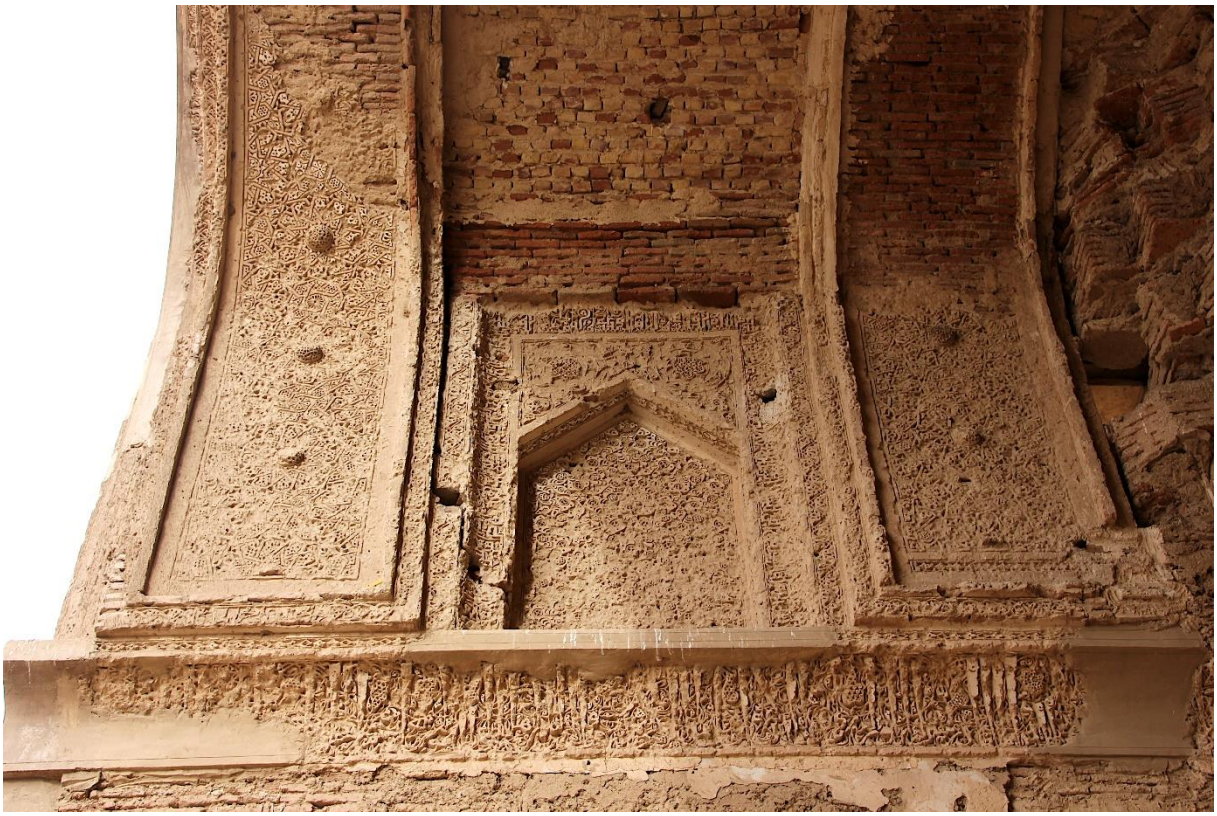


Figure 186: Interior of the ceiling of the small *iwan* at the Farumad Friday mosque with the monumental inscription band and stucco panels on the ceiling. These stuccos feature shallow reliefs carved out of one stucco layer and occasional additions of circular protruding bosses.



Figure 187: Revetments on the western side of the small *iwan*'s façade in terracotta, glazed and carved stucco media. The majority of these revetments were restored and perhaps re-applied on the architectural surfaces.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 17

Monument Name: Khusraw Shir Friday mosque

Figs. 189-196.

Associated Names: the monument is referred to as the Friday mosque of Khusraw Shīr[1047] and occasionally as the Mosque of Khosrow Shir or Khusraw Shir. Other variant spellings (stemming from the transliteration differences) include: Kosrow-shir. In Persian, Khusraw Shir is sometimes spelled as two separate words and occasionally as one word.

Monument Type: ruins of a congregational mosque which featured a two-*iwan* plan with a courtyard.

Chronology: only the *qibla iwan* ruins of the mosque are preserved, but they indicate that the monument was a larger mosque, which featured a two-*iwan* ground plan. The mosque's remains indicate that it was built in one constructive campaign. It featured terracotta revetments with the subsequent addition of a carved stucco repertoire (separate decorative phase).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): most likely a two-*iwan* mosque, with congregational function, closely related to the Farumad Friday mosque.

Location: Khusraw Shir settlement (towards north-east from the settlement of Farumad and north-west from Sabzivar); c. 79.5 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Sabzivar in the north-western direction.

GPS location of the monument: 36.7874907 N; 57.1679542 E.

Monument Investigation: December 7, 2017; February 14, 2020 (the first visit to the monument was performed at a dawn and details of the mosque's architectural revetments were challenging to examine).

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Khusraw Shir is located in the historic regions of Qumis and Juwayn. It is one of the settlements in the mountainous plain on the communication routes leading from western Khurasan towards its northern parts and further towards the territory of modern Turkmenistan.[1048] The remaining monuments in the region, dating to the Ilkhanid period, were published by Mohammed Bakhtiari-Shahri in 2004;[1049] the Friday mosque of Sabzivar and the mosque of Aq Qalʿa testify to the significance of the given region in the Ilkhanid period. This region did not receive any systematic scholarly attention, which is necessary for the better understanding of the monuments, including the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque.

[1047] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1048] As Bakhtiari-Shahri explains, the Khusraw Shir mosque is located in the geographical are of Juwayn which is located on the old communication road between Bistam, Azadiwar and Nishapur. He also informs that the monument is known under the name of Mosque of Khusraw Shir. See Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 35.
[1049] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004.

Background

Adle informs, in the 2012 EI entry, that the Khusraw Shir mosque is still an unpublished monument and he proposes that there is a strong relationship between the Ilkhanid phase of the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18), the Bayazid Bistami complex (especially the entrance portal of the complex commissioned by Uljaytu; Cat. No. 19), the Friday mosque of Farumad (Cat. No. 16) and the Khusraw Shir mosque.[1050] The Khusraw Shir settlement and its mosque have so far been addressed in two publications. The first general discussion of the mosque is by Bakhtiari-Shahri.[1051] Further aspects of the mosque's revetments, their material characterization and production technology are by Sayyadshahri.[1052]

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 189-191.

The mosque was built out of fired brick which ensured its durability. The monument is in a ruined state due to two main factors; the weathering agents and the reuse of its fired brick material by local inhabitants, for the construction of modern dwellings.[1053] The only extant parts of the mosque are the two sides of its monumental *iwan*, which features dimensions of 7 x 11 m; the *iwan* featured a mihrab on its *qibla* wall, and the mihrab's remains were found *in situ*.[1054] An integrated ground plan and elevation of the mosque's *iwan* are provided by Bakhtiari-Shahri.[1055] Older photographs document the mosque's structure and they indicate that the two arcades adjacent to the *iwan* are contemporary additions. They are works of conservation interventions, intended to function as buttresses for the monument and to illustrate the original appearance of prayer spaces adjacent to the *iwan*. Remains of the *qibla iwan* consist of side supporting walls, but its *qibla* wall is no longer extant. These walls, similar to the Farumad Friday mosque, featured two pointed arch openings on each side. The area of the pointed arch vault springing and parts of its surfaces are also preserved, but the *iwan*'s ceiling is almost entirely lost. Architectural surfaces of the *iwan* also retain parts of their revetments which provide some information concerning the mosque's original decorative programme. Sayyadshahri refers to an earlier publication by Molawi informing that the mosque originally retained a minaret.[1056] Remains of the minaret were still visible on the site until the 1940s, when the locals caused its disappearance, due to the removal of material for the construction of modern dwellings.[1057] According to Bakhtiari-Shahri, the closest monument parallels for dating and comprehension of the Khusraw Shir mosque, are revetments and structures of the domed hall of the Aq Qalʿa mosque, and the Kirmani and Old mosque of the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30).

[1050] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faryumad (Last Accessed: July 21, 2020).
[1051] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004.
[1052] Sayyadshahri 2014.
[1053] *Ibid.*
[1054] *Ibid.* Bakhtiari-Shahri does not specify out of which medium was the mihrab produced.
[1055] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 42.
[1056] Sayyadshahri 2014, 36.
[1057] Sayyadshahri 2014, 36.

Construction Phases

Remains of the mosque's architectural revetments were produced in two distinct media: the carved stuccos and the moulded and glazed terracotta relief tiles. Carved stuccos may have been the original revetments of the monument, as indicated by their relationship to the mosque's structure. Extant revetment fragments indicate that stuccos were applied selectively, similar to the case of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16). The architectural revetment repertoire of Khusraw Shir mosque was more modest compared to the one at Farumad.

The only area where the moulded glazed terracotta revetments of the Khusraw Shir mosque are still extant, is the intrados of the *iwan*'s interior, above the north-western opening in its supporting wall, in proximities to the no longer extant *qibla* wall. These revetments were applied on the mosque's surfaces with mortar and they are located in fired brick cartouches. The cartouche with terracotta elements is however covered with a layer of carved stucco, which features a twelve-pointed star design with incised spaces between the pattern's geometrical grids. Although observations propose that the stuccos were applied at the time of the mosque's construction, terracotta was in some instances applied earlier than the carved stuccos. In his detailed discussion of the terracotta elements, referred to as brickwork, Sayyadshahri proposes that the damage to the carved stucco panel covering the terracotta was caused by an earthquake.[1058] According to Sayyadshahri, these terracotta elements are remains of the mosque's original architectural revetment programme, which was contemporary to the time of its construction, and the carved stuccos are understood as a later addition.[1059] But the mosque was likely first decorated with terracotta and stuccos and subsequently, further stuccos were applied on its surfaces shortly after or towards the end of the production of the architectural revetment repertoire. If so, the monument was not decorated in two interventions, but the process of its decoration underwent changes and was performed in several phases across a short time span.

The Khusraw Shir mosque has traditionally been considered as an Ilkhanid monument with an Ilkhanid stucco repertoire, but no exact dating has been proposed for it, due to the lack of historic inscriptions or primary sources. It has so far been understood as an entirely Ilkhanid creation, by Bakhtiari-Shahri and by Sayyadshahri. Parallels between revetments of Khusraw Shir mosque and the Friday mosque of Farumad present evidence for the better understanding of the constructive and decorative chronology of both monuments. The Farumad Friday mosque has been proposed to be a Seljuq monument, and only recently scholars suggest that its stuccos date to (early) the Ilkhanid period. Stuccos of the Farumad Friday mosque, which relate to those of the Khusraw Shir mosque, and the related moulded terracotta elements, are works of its last decorative intervention. If so, the Khusraw Shir mosque should be considered to have been constructed and decorated in the Early Ilkhanid period. Both monuments do not retain any later architectural revetments or evidence of their later modifications.

[1058] Sayyadshahri 2014, 37.

[1059] Quote: "These square *pish-shikli* bricks, with geometric pattern, seem to be the original decorations of the vaults, covered by later stuccowork." Sayyadshahri refers to the terracotta elements as *pish-shikli*, meaning, prefabricated, due to the fact that moulding was performed to determine their form. See Sayyadshahri 2014, 37.

In sum, the Khusraw Shir mosque was likely built during the Early Ilkhanid period, when the settlement of the monument's location flourished economically. The monument was built out of fired bricks and in a manner for it to comprise architectural revetments. The original plan might have been to decorate the monument with moulded and glazed terracotta, but it was soon abandoned in favour of carved stucco medium. Stuccos were applied on the exterior surfaces of the *qibla iwan*, of this two-*iwan* mosque with courtyard. They were employed to emphasize the architectural lines of the *qibla iwan*'s interior. The revetment repertoire is modest, compared to the Farumad Friday mosque, because it was built in a smaller settlement and with a more limited endowment.

Phase One - The Earliest Khusraw Shir Mosque

The Khusraw Shir mosque was likely built and decorated in the Early Ilkhanid period. The original architectural structure of the monument may have resembled the ground plan of the Farumad Friday mosque, but it featured more limited dimensions. The Khusraw Shir mosque was a two-*iwan* mosque, with a courtyard formed by adjacent prayer spaces. The mosque's construction comprised the production of its revetment repertoire, parts of which remain attached to the surfaces of its ruined *qibla iwan* structure. It is not clear if the original architectural revetment repertoire featured moulded and glazed terracotta revetments, or carved stuccos, or both. The carved stuccos of the Khusraw Shir and Farumad mosques are related and could be works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop.

Phase Two – Possible Redecoration of the Khusraw Shir Mosque

The mosque's architectural structure was built as a single constructive undertaking, but the intrados of the *qibla iwan* reveals evidence of carved stucco covering the moulded and glazed terracotta elements. This overlap suggests that the mosque's original architectural repertoire was modified, although the exact nature of this change is challenging to pinpoint. Surfaces of the *qibla iwan*, with fragments of carved stuccos, indicate that the stuccos were intrinsically related to the mosque's structure. These stuccos must thus be contemporary to the mosque's construction. If so, the underlying moulded and glazed terracotta elements in the *iwan*'s interior might provide evidence indicating that some parts of the mosque were decorated in terracotta, or that the craftsmen changed their mind during the process of the mosque's decoration.[1060] More evidence is needed to establish more precisely the extent of the application of terracotta revetments and their exact relation to the carved stuccos. The fact that the terracotta elements are located on the interior surface of the *iwan* is somewhat unusual; these revetments would normally be employed on external architectural surfaces due to their durability. In fact, the carved stuccos which partially cover the terracotta elements feature design and production technology related to the stuccos on the *iwan*'s pointed arch opening; these stuccos do not cover any terracotta elements and they are the results of an intervention contemporary to the mosque's construction. Other stuccos, such as the stucco columns and the monumental inscriptions and spandrels in the *iwan*'s interior, relate closely to the mosque's fired brick structure, indicating that they were the mosque's original architectural revetments.

[1060] It is however not impossible for the position of the terracotta elements to be a modern modification which took place during the latest restoration intervention.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument does not feature any evidence indicating that it had undergone further modifications in the post-Ilkhanid period.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The mosque's ground plan (Fig. 189), with partial reconstruction, is by Bakhtiari-Shahri.[1061] Remaining parts of the monument comprise the *qibla iwan* structure, which is however lacking the *qibla* supporting wall and also parts of the supporting structure on its south-western part. The *qibla iwan* featured two pointed arch openings on each side, which functioned as passages to the prayer halls flanking the *iwan*. These halls were hypostyle and they formed a courtyard preceding the *qibla iwan* and connecting it with the opposite smaller *iwan*.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The only structure of the mosque for which a hypothetical reconstruction of its original elevation can be proposed is the ruined *qibla iwan*. Its reconstruction is by Bakhtiari-Shahri.[1062] The *qibla iwan* was one of the mosque's most elevated parts, to highlight the mosque's orientation, the prayer direction and the no longer extant mihrab. According to Bakhtiari-Shahri's reconstruction, the *iwan* was formed by a gradually narrowing arched structure, which was additionally supported by a set of external ribs functioning as buttresses. The two modern reconstructions of arcades adjacent to the *iwan* do not reflect their original elevations. The mosque used to comprise a minaret.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument is occasionally referred to as a mosque and in other instances as a congregational mosque. The orientation of the mosque's remains and its *qibla iwan*, its further parallels to the Farumad Friday mosque, and its fragmented epigraphic repertoire in carved stucco, provide evidence indicating that this monument is a mosque. Its congregational function is probable, although there is no direct evidence for it.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 192-196.

The architectural revetment repertoire of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque is preserved in fragments. The decorative programme covers the mosque's interior and exterior surfaces. The *iwan*'s façade featured diverse bands of geometric stucco bands and must have originally been more extensive. The interior of the *iwan* features a monumental carved stucco inscription band which runs at the springing of the *iwan*'s vault. The interior of the *iwan*'s vault featured bands of geometric stucco decoration. The side openings in the *iwan* are topped by pairs of carved stucco spandrels with *Naskh* inscriptions on their interior edges. The decorative logic of application of these stuccos is similar to the Farumad Friday mosque *qibla iwan*. In sum, the two *qibla iwan*s and perhaps both mosques were decorated according to related decorative

[1061] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 42.
[1062] *Ibid*., 42.

principles. The decorative repertoire at Khusraw Shir originally comprised a monumental mihrab, which may have been produced out of carved stucco.

Interior Revetments

The mosque's interior revetments are produced with carved stucco medium, and there is evidence of the use of moulded and glazed terracotta elements, which could precede the stucco production. Stuccos were applied in bands or as panels on selected locations to highlight the architectural features and essential forms of the *iwan*'s interior. The entire programme consists of spandrel panels with thin inscription bands topping the passages to the *iwan*'s side spaces, the monumental framing inscription band ruining along the three sides of the *iwan* at the springing of the vault, and bands outlining the *iwan* vault's interior surface. Surfaces which were not decorated with carved stuccos were covered with a layer of gypsum to form a unified architectural revetment programme.

The Interior of the *Qibla Iwan*

Side Passages' Spandrels

Fig. 195.

Observations of the *iwan*'s surfaces indicate that its pointed arch passages were adorned with spandrels in carved stucco medium on both sides of its supporting walls. However, only the spandrels in the *iwan*'s interior are preserved. They consist of three elements: the central spandrel panel, in which the two spandrels are joined in the centre, the *Naskh* inscription band outlining the pointed arch opening, which likely featured Qurʾanic content, and the two external thin framing bands, which comprise arabesques and geometric perforations. The central panels of the spandrels featured symmetrical compositions of palmette and leaf elements. Spandrel stuccos were part of the original architectural revetment repertoire. *Naskh* inscription bands are of small dimensions, and they are set against a plain background. In fact, the preserved remains of these spandrels are similar to stuccos of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16). The elements of these two repertoires, the stucco carving approach and employed stucco artistic techniques are related to the extent that they were likely the works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop.

The Monumental Inscription Band

Fig. 196.

The monumental inscription band in the *iwan*'s interior is preserved in fragments. It originally ran along the three walls of the *iwan*, at the level of the springing of its vault. The inscription band is slightly concave to function as the visual transition from straight walls into the curved surfaces of the *iwan*'s vault. The inscription band features *Thuluth* style and it may contain Qurʾanic content. Although it does not seem to retain diacritical marks, it is occasionally vocalized. The *hastae* of its letters evolve into modest floral or geometric elements which form a balanced inscription band composition by filling the empty spaces of its upper register. Some tops of the *hastae* display round perforations which are produced according to the logic comparable to the stuccos of the Farumad Friday mosque. This specific feature of inscription's

hastae perforation has so far been observed in a small number of stucco repertoires and it should be understood as a specific mark of its craftsmen's workshop style. The background ornamentation of floral scrolls, which are additionally filled with perforated leaf elements, functioned in juxtaposition with the inscription's larger plain surfaces. The entire inscription band was framed by a thin band of repeating vegetal decoration, which ran along its upper edge, and which is preserved in fragments.

In sum, the location, dimensions, production approach and epigraphic style of the discussed inscription band, finds very close parallels in the two related bands running along surfaces of the Farumad Friday mosque *iwan*s; they could have been decorated by the same workshop. Compared to the other remains of stuccos at Khusraw Shir, the monumental inscription band may have been one of its most elaborate components.

The Qibla Iwan Ceiling Stuccos

Figs. 193-194.

The interior surfaces of the *iwan*'s ceiling were originally decorated with bands (in forms of cartouches) of stuccos which outlined the pointed arch forms. Remains of two such bands are still extant; a large band ran along the intrados of the *iwan's* arch opening and the second band ran across the ceiling of the *iwan* above its openings near the *qibla* wall. It is plausible that originally there was a third band which ran along the perimeter of the *iwan's* ceiling next to its *qibla* wall. Differently to the spandrel stuccos and from the monumental inscription band in the interior of the *iwan*, these ceiling bands display carved stuccos which feature non-epigraphic designs of repeating geometric patterns and are filled with further vegetal elements. Their remote location and lesser visibility likely determined their role as the background of the mosque's decorative repertoire.

These stuccos are located in designated frames of fired brick formations, and they are flanked on each side by thin bands of stuccos featuring repeating geometric patterns. The relationship between stuccos and fired brick frames indicates that these stuccos are works of decoration which had to be planned at the time of the mosque's construction. The moulded and glazed terracotta elements are covered by one of these stucco bands and are located on the southern part of the *iwan*'s north-western wall. The moulded and glazed terracotta elements were either re-inserted on the current location by the restorers, or, they could have been intended as original decoration, of which the medium of decoration was changed from terracotta to stucco during the production of the mosque's decorative programme. Sayyadshahri reproduces a photograph by Molawi (published originally in 1968), which documents elements of moulded terracotta revetments retrieved from the minaret's structure.[1063] The terracotta decorations which are covered by stuccos, were originally more extensive and might have comprised further architectural surfaces. Sayyadshahri highlights that the terracotta and glazed revetments of the Gunabad Friday mosque differ from those at the Khusraw Shir mosque, but that there is a relationship in the use of moulds for their forming.[1064] Sayyadshahri reports on his own survey of the site of Khusraw Shir, during which he discovered cut bricks with modest designs and

[1063] Sayyadshahri 2014, 37.
[1064] *Ibid.*, 65-66.

two turquoise glazed ornaments and he emphasizes that these fragments indicate that the Khusraw Shir mosque also featured glazed architectural revetments.[1065]

Sayyadshahri concludes that, if the stuccos date from the Ilkhanid period, the terracotta elements pre-date this period.[1066] These terracotta elements are closely related to those on the monuments of the Gunabad Friday mosque, the Ferdows Friday mosque and the 1219 phase of the Zuzan monument; they all reveal use of stonepaste body, covered by a white layer and a transparent glaze.[1067] Sayyadshahri's proposed parallels between the revetments of these monuments indicate that the construction and production of terracotta revetments of the Khusraw Shir mosque likely occurred towards the end of the Kwarazmshahid dynasty - on the eve of the Mongol conquest of the Iranian territory. In fact, Sayyadshahri proposes to attribute the Khusraw Shir mosque to the Kwarazmshahid period.[1068] Importantly, Sayyadshahri concludes his research by stating that there is a very close relationship between the Farumad and Khusraw Shir mosque moulded terracotta revetments.[1069] He concludes that the performed analyses of the terracotta elements of the revetments from the Khusraw Shir mosque indicate that the monument and these revetments were possibly made before the Ilkhanid period.[1070]

The Mihrab

Bakhtiari-Shahri mentions that originally the monument featured a mihrab in the *qibla iwan*, and that fragments were found *in situ* during the survey.[1071] He however does not specify what kind of fragments were found and which medium the mihrab was made of. Judging from the extant architectural revetment programme of the ruined mosque, it is likely that the mihrab was produced out of carved stucco.

Exterior Revetments

The mosque's exterior revetments are located on the façade of the *qibla iwan*. It is highly likely that the monument also retained an entrance portal façade which could have been richly decorated.

The Façade of the Qibla Iwan

Figs. 191-192.

The external façade of the *qibla iwan* was originally richly decorated in order to highlight and the mosque's most significant architectural spaces. Its structure is preserved only in parts and most of its architectural revetment programme is no longer extant. The remaining evidence suggests that the builders prepared fired brick frames for the craftsmen to fill them with architectural revetments. Two monumental columns built out of fired bricks and coated with carved stuccos carried the *iwan*'s pointed arch, which was outlined on its extrados by a carved

[1065] Sayyadshahri 2014, 37.
[1066] *Ibid.*, 37.
[1067] *Ibid.*
[1068] *Ibid.*, 69.
[1069] *Ibid.*, 70.
[1070] *Ibid.*, 72.
[1071] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 35-36.

stucco band. Further frames of fire brick material indicate that the surfaces of the *qibla iwan*'s façade were covered with further revetments arranged in vertical or framing bands. The extant fragments of badly weathered carved stuccos indicate that the façade of the *iwan* was likely reveted with carved stuccos, but these stuccos may have been combined with terracotta. The general design of the *iwan*'s façade is very similar to the Farumad Friday mosque's *qibla iwan*.

Stucco Polychromy at Khusraw Shir

Examination of the Khusraw Shir mosque's stuccos did not yield any evidence concerning their original pigmentation. Bakhtiari-Shahri informs that there were traces of blue pigmentation in the recessed parts of the mosque's inscription band in the *iwan*'s interior.[1072] The stuccos were thus likely rendered polychrome according to the principles and logic observed in the other Ilkhanid repertoires.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Khusraw Shir

The extant stucco fragments of the mosque provide evidence concerning the use of different stucco artistic techniques and stucco carving approaches for their production. The essential parts of the programme were produced by carving two stucco layers and in a manner for them to feature a concave form. Less complex reliefs were produced by carving one stucco layer. The conscious choice of how to carve and cut the stucco designs is best visible in the monumental inscription band, where the inscription is made to protrude from the background by clear cutting of the stucco surface and by use of the interplay of plain inscription surface and minutely carved vegetal background. It is reasonable to hypothesize that originally, the selection of the stucco artistic techniques was even wider and that it might have included more complex technology for mihrab production.

The described stucco production approach and the mentioned visual properties of stucco panels reveal that the closest parallel stucco repertoire is the second phase decorative repertoire of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16), which also shares a similar form of ground plan and aesthetics solutions, albeit on a more complex level.

The Khusraw Shir Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The craftsmen's selection of less complex stucco artistic techniques, clear-cutting of stucco and heavy perforation and incision of stucco surfaces, determined the final aesthetic appearance of the Khusraw Shir mosque's decorative repertoire. Its stuccos provided for an effective visual change from the plain background of the supporting walls of the monument. Lack of their protrusion or depth was compensated for by the production of minute details of vegetal and geometric ornaments. The monumental inscription band is the tour de force of craftsmen's work and illustrates the elevated degree of skills the craftsmen employed for the production of this decorative repertoire. The relatively flat appearance of the mosque's stuccos is frequent in this geographical area and it should thus be comprehended as a regional mark on stuccos, determined by the geographical circulation of stucco production knowledge. The relationship of the repertoire to the monuments and Ilkhanid stuccos of Bistam produced by the Damghani

[1072] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 36.

family presents a relevant parallel, but overall, the entire Khusraw Shir programme is more closely related to the Farumad Friday mosque stuccos of its second decorative phase.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not retain any historic pieces of furnishing.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Stuccos

The epigraphic programme of the monument is preserved in parts on its carved stuccos. Inscriptions are featured on the monumental inscription band, which ran along the three interior walls of the *iwan*. Further inscriptions are located in the forms of thin bands, which frame the pointed arch openings of the passages between the *iwan* and the mosque's side prayer spaces, which are combined with stucco spandrels; one of them is extant in a fragmented state. Due to their weathered state, it was not possible to read them.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument is in a ruined state, and it does not retain any architectural revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The absence of historic inscriptions on architectural revetments of the ruined Khusraw Shir mosque determines the lack of precise information concerning the mosque's patronage. The mosque's structure does not assume monumental dimensions, but it featured a clear ground plan and its structure was constructed out of fired bricks, rather than less costly adobe material. The mosque, in spite of its modest dimensions, required a considerable endowment for its construction and decoration. The discussion of the mosque's architectural revetments, and their comparison to the closely related repertoire of the Farumad Friday mosque, demonstrates that the Khusraw Shir mosque featured a more modest architectural revetment repertoire. Similar to the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) or the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Khusraw Shir mosque, which likely retained congregational function, was sponsored by some state official of middle rank, who could have had personal ties to the settlement.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The remains of carved stuccos of the Khusraw Shir mosque do not retain a master stucco craftsman's signature. Its stuccos reveal some technologic affinities with the repertoire of the redecoration of Ribat-i Sharaf (works of redecoration dated 549/1154-55).[1073] Nevertheless, the majority of the designs of stuccos at Ribat-i Sharaf, feature more complex designs and compositions, compared to Khusraw Shir. Perhaps the closest parallel repertoire of stuccos is presented by those on the surfaces of the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16). The Farumad and Khusraw Shir repertoires both feature similar selections of stucco artistic techniques, approach to stucco carving, epigraphic styles, vegetal and geometric ornamentation elements,

[1073] TEI 34491 (Last Accessed: November 5, 2021). Godard 1949, 13.

the logic behind the application of stuccos and their relationship to the mosque's architectural structure. Although these parallel repertoires do not provide any specifically conclusive information, they illustrate that the stuccos of the Khusraw Shir mosque were very likely produced by a stucco craftsmen's workshop, which operated in the historic region of Khurasan, rather than craftsmen from central, north-western or northern Iran.

f.) Monument Condition

The Khusraw Shir mosque is a lesser known monument in the Khurasan region. Its existing research of a general and preliminary nature has so far been published only in Persian by Bakhtiari-Shahri.[1074] There is only limited photographic documentation of the mosque which would enable the condition of the monument during the past centuries to be discerned. Photographs of the monument published by Bakhtiari-Shari, from a few decades ago, document the mosque in the state prior to the latest restoration interventions. The mosque was in a ruined state, with only the ruins of the *qibla iwan* remaining *in situ*.

The *qibla iwan* ceiling was ruined a long time ago, which is also confirmed by heavy weathering of its interior stucco decoration, especially the stuccos located on the *iwan*'s eastern supporting wall. At the time of Bakhtiari-Shahri's survey, the *qibla* wall of the *iwan* was no longer extant. The ruined structure of the mosque was subsequently restored. These interventions comprised rebuilding of parts of the *iwan's* vault and buttresses on its exterior. Further interventions were performed to rebuild the façade of the *iwan*. Some stucco fragments were re-attached to the mosque's surfaces and the rest of the fragments on the architectural structure were consolidated. It is not clear if the moulded and glazed terracotta elements were re-attached to the *iwan*'s interior surface close to the overlapping layer of carved stucco.

The described interventions, which did not require an extensive budget, enabled a better preservation of the monument. But the architectural revetments continue to be exposed to weathering. It would be desirable for the interior and exterior revetments of the *qibla iwan* and its structure to be protected from weathering by a roofing system. Furthermore, an archaeological excavation for better understanding of the mosque should be performed. The potential of the site for the tourism industry is not being exploited and the site is lacking any necessary infrastructure, such as a paved access road, which would facilitate its maintenance and visits. A protection fence for the site (the installed fence was stolen), and guards for the monument, which is still at risk of illegal excavations, are necessary.

g.) Research Findings – Summary:

Khusraw Shir Friday mosque was most likely constructed in the Early Ilkhanid period and its original revetments comprised carved stuccos, which might have been a substitution for moulded and glazed terracotta. The stuccos of the monument are the work of craftsmen who most likely operated in Khurasan and the closest parallel repertoires are the stuccos of the redecoration of the Ribat-i Sharaf caravanserai and especially the Farumad Friday mosque. In fact, the similarities of ground plan, construction material, architectural structure and stucco revetments between Farumad and Khusraw Shir monuments indicate that these two monuments

[1074] Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004.

were at a certain point decorated by the same group of stucco craftsmen, native to the Khurasan region. Smaller dimensions of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque and its less complex decorative programme, might reflect a more restrained endowment which was put in place by a state official, who might have had ties to the settlement of Khusraw Shir. This unique and little-known monument in a ruined state requires further archaeological excavations for its fuller comprehension and conservation interventions for its preservation.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, Sayyadshahri 2014.

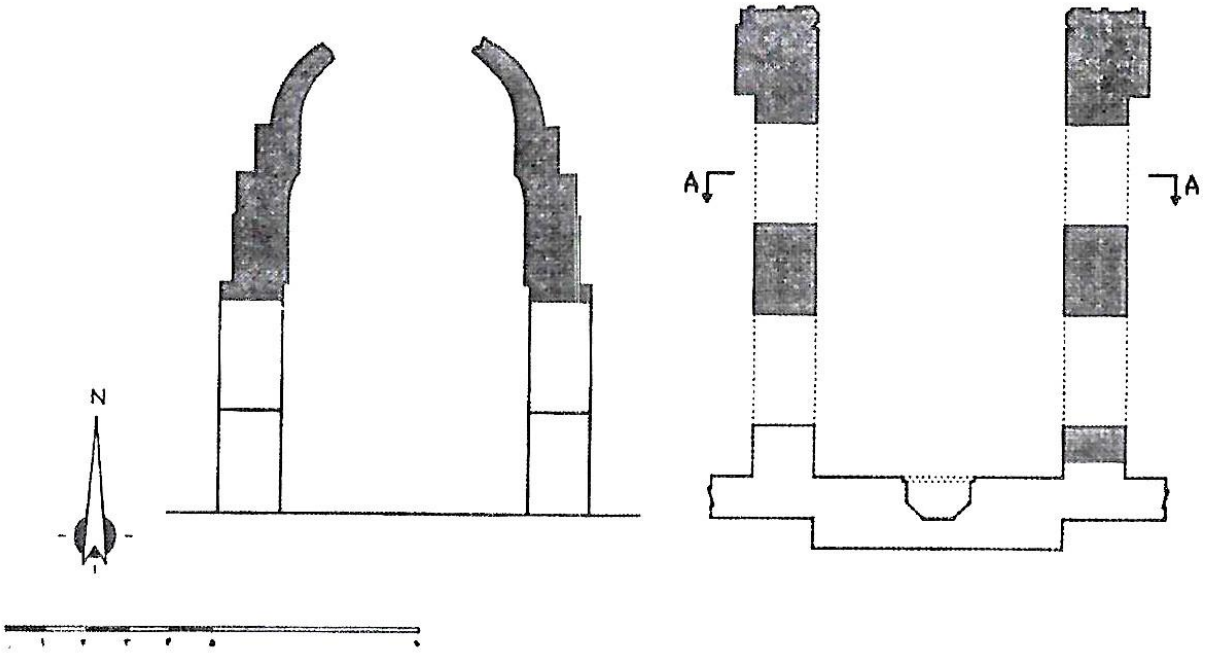
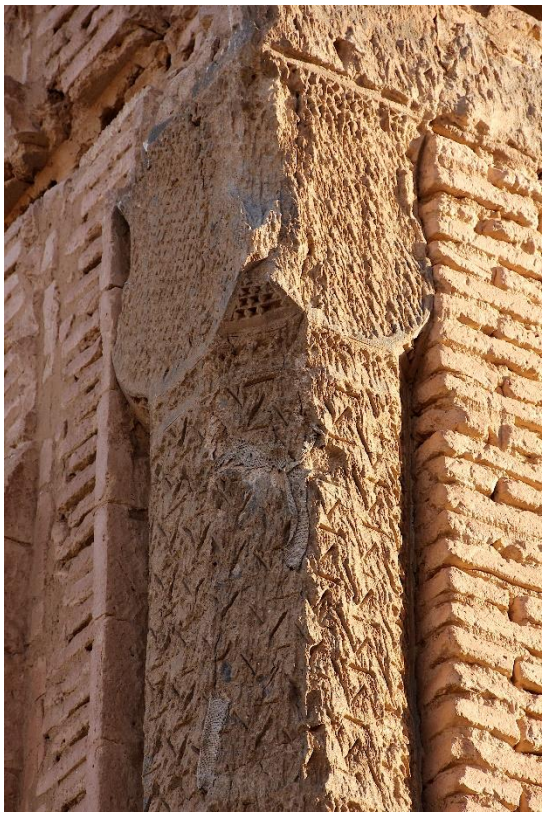


Figure 189: Ground plan of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque remains (After Bakhtiari-Shahri 2004, 42).



Figure 190: The remaining structure of the *qibla iwan* of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque. View from south-west.

Figures 191 and 192: Left: Remains of the *qibla iwan* façade of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque; view from the south. Right: Detail of remaining carved stucco columns flanking the pointed arch opening of the *qibla iwan* of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque.




Figures 193 and 194: Left: Detail of carved stuccos in the intrados of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque *qibla iwan*, on the eastern side. Right: Detail of two layers of moulded and glazed and carved stucco revetments on the western side of the intrados of the *qibla iwan* of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque.



Figure 195: Weathered carved stucco revetments topping the passage opening between the eastern side of the *qibla iwan* and the no longer extant side prayer halls of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque.



Figure 196: Detail of the monumental inscription band running on the top edges of the *qibla iwan*'s supporting wall (western side) of the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque. The inscription style and modality of its production are closely related to monumental inscriptions in the two *iwan*s of the Farumad Friday mosque.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 18

Monument Name: Bistam Friday mosque and the Kashana tower

Figs. 197-207.

Associated Names: the Congregational mosque of Bistam is most frequently referred to as the Friday mosque of Bisṭām,[1075] the Masjid-i Jamiʿi of Bistam, or Bistam Congregational mosque.[1076] The adjacent tomb tower is called: the Tomb Tower of Bistam, the Gunbad of Bistam, the Kashana[1077] or Kashaneh tower (Burj-i Kāshāna)[1078] or the Tomb tower adjacent to the Bistam Friday mosque.[1079]

Monument Type: congregational mosque with adjacent funerary tower.

Chronology: Ilkhanid mosque and tomb tower built on the grounds of an earlier mosque, in at least two separate phases (the tomb tower and the mosque), with minor later additions.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): courtyard mosque with a rectangular courtyard and asymmetrical prayer halls on four sides; the mihrab is located in an arched structure. The adjacent tomb tower is connected to the mosque through the *qibla* wall, through which it is entered from the mosque's eastern prayer hall.

Location: city of Bistam; some 6 km as the crow flies in the northern direction from the city of Shahrud.

GPS location of the monument: 36.4834811 N; 55.0003473 E.

Monument Investigation: July 7, 2014; November 22, 2018; February 13, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Geographical and chronological contexts of the settlement are described in more details in the section concerning the Complex of Bayazid Bistami (Cat. No. 19), only a summary is reported here. Bistam was, according to Mustawfi, an important agricultural centre during the Ilkhanid period. The city was not located on the main travel routes to Khurasan, but it was nevertheless significant, due to its location on the crossroad connecting the main Khurasan route to Gurgan.

The Friday mosque of Bistam and adjacent tomb tower are significant Ilkhanid monuments, together with the Bayazid Bistami complex. The Friday mosque and the tomb tower were built in the Ilkhanid period, on the grounds of a pre-Ilkhanid, likely early Islamic, hypostyle

[1075] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1076] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/4740/media_contents/605 (Last Accessed: December 9, 2020).
[1077] The name of the tower, Kashana, according to Godard, derives from a corruption of Ghazana or Ghazaniyya, as it was thought that Ghazan Khan was the patron of the tomb tower. Blair 1982, 264.
[1078] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1079] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/4741 (Last Accessed: December 9, 2020).

mosque.[1080] The monuments are currently located in the heart of the modern city of Bistam, some 150 m (as the crow flies) to the south from the Bayazid Bistami complex.

The most complete discussion of the two interconnected monuments is provided by Blair and Hillenbrand.[1081] They state that it is challenging to comprehend whether the tomb tower pre-dates, post-dates, or is contemporary to the mosque construction. The tomb tower is subject to independent research by Blair in which she discusses its epigraphic programme rich in historic inscriptions, and which comprises signatures of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's family. Further research is necessary in order to fully comprehend the mosque and tomb tower's constructive chronology and stuccoworks.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 197-199.

The monument comprises two structures: the Friday mosque and the adjacent tomb tower. The Friday mosque features ground plan with a rectangular courtyard in the middle which is flanked by prayer spaces on four sides. The ground plan is irregular and the prayer halls are not symmetric, which might imply that the current Ilkhanid-era Friday mosque was constructed on the site of a pre-existing, Seljuq or early Islamic mosque. Differences in prayer hall spaces might have been caused by diverse construction interventions which are difficult to discern. The tomb tower is integrated into the mosque on its south-eastern side, and it comprises an entrance porch, which is accessed via the mosque's eastern prayer hall. The tomb tower features a polygonal ground plan on its exterior and a dodecagonal form in its interior. It was originally likely topped by a double-shelled dome.

Construction Phases

The Ilkhanid mosque was built on the grounds of an earlier, likely early Islamic hypostyle structure, which was partially integrated into the Ilkhanid mosque structure (Fig. 197). The construction sequence of the tomb tower and the mosque is debated by Hillenbrand and Blair.[1082] According to Hillenbrand, the two monuments were planned to be part of one architectural ensemble from the outset. It would certainly be difficult to construct the tomb tower after the mosque was already in its place and integrate it into its *qibla* wall. On the other hand, it would also be illogical to integrate an existing tomb tower into a newly constructed mosque, which could have been built at a greater distance from the tomb tower. But the tomb tower features an independent entrance portal, which makes it more likely to pre-date the mosque's construction. If the tomb tower would have been part of the mosque complex from the outset, it would have been integrated into it in a more regular fashion.[1083] More recent research by Zariʿi reveals that the mosque dates to the pre-Ilkhanid period, when it likely featured a hypostyle ground plan.[1084] This structure was substantially rebuilt in Ilkhanid times,

[1080] Existence of an earlier monument would explain the irregularities in the ground plan of the Bistam Friday mosque. See Zariʿi 2007.
[1081] Blair 1982; Hillenbrand 1982.
[1082] *Ibid.*.
[1083] One parallel case is presented by the thirteenth to fourteenth century tomb tower of the Alinja Khanqah in Nakhchivan (Cat. No. 26) which was built as an independent structure and later integrated into a mosque complex.
[1084] Zariʿi 2007, 154-157, 167, 169. Zariʿi dates the first mosque structure to the tenth to eleventh centuries.

with partial integration of the earlier mosque structure. It remains unclear if the Ilkhanid mosque was intended to substitute an earlier ruined structure, or if the monument was rebuilt due to the need for a larger prayer space complex.

Carved stuccos of the mosque and the tomb tower were works of the same craftsmen's workshop which is well known to have operated in the area of Bistam. This might imply that the mosque and the tomb tower were built in a relatively short time frame. This is further supported by the dates of the completion of the stuccos in the *qibla iwan* of the mosque (1306), the stuccos of the entrance portal of the tomb tower (1300-01) and the monumental historic inscriptions in the top area of the exterior of the tower (1308-09). The two structures were therefore built at nearly the same time with the tomb tower pre-dating the mosque.[1085]

The Kashana Tower

Figs. 198-202.

The tomb tower is discussed in detail by Hillenbrand[1086] and its inscriptions were examined by Blair.[1087] A summary of their findings is reported here to contextualize the architectural revetments in terracotta and stucco which decorate the tower. The tower is of flanged form, with 25 flanges forming its exterior. Its interior form is dodecagonal. The tower is adjacent to the mosque on its south-eastern side and it is entered through the mosque's eastern prayer hall. The monument is built out of fired brick and the flanges are connected to each other on their top, in the cornice area by brick arches. A double terracotta inscription runs along the top area of the tomb tower in two rows. The tower is currently covered by its internal dome, with the external dome no longer extant. According to Hillenbrand it is likely to have been conical.

The porch of the tomb tower is presently partially covered by the structure of the prayer hall. Its portal inscriptions are dated 1300-01 and the monumental terracotta inscriptions on the exterior surfaces date from 1308-09. Hillenbrand notes that incorporation of such a porch into the mosque structure is rather unusual. The pre-dating of the tomb tower to the mosque is plausible, judging from the dates of the completion of its revetments. Moreover, it would be easier to integrate the tomb tower into the mosque structure than the opposite. The interior of the tower is divided into three registers. Each register contains a blind niche with highly ornamental arch. The tower also contains a tunnel-vaulted crypt. There is a staircase inside the supporting walls of the tomb tower, which leads to its top. The tomb tower also has three windows.

The Ilkhanid Friday Mosque

Figs. 197, 203-207.

The Friday mosque is built out of fired bricks. It consists of four prayer spaces arranged around its rectangular courtyard. The form of the mosque's *qibla* wall is unusual, because it comprises

[1085] Another case in parallel is the Baba ʿAbdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9), where the mausoleum pre-dates the construction of the mosque structure, which is built in a manner for the mausoleum's interior to be accessed from the prayer halls of the mosque.
[1086] Hillenbrand 1982.
[1087] Blair 1982.

the smallest prayer hall, which might reflect the fact that there was an earlier mosque structure on the site.[1088] This could indicate that at least the eastern prayer hall was enlarged and modified at a stage posterior to the mosque's construction. The *qibla* area of the mosque consists of the *qibla* wall and an *iwan*-like structure, which houses the stucco mihrab and further stuccoworks. The upper part of this structure was modified in the Qajar period, when it was redecorated by application of a thin layer of plaster, addition of a stucco inscription and floral ornamentation.

The *qibla* wall prayer space consists of three rather short bays which likely represent the original type of the mosque's prayer hall structures. The mosque's western side of the courtyard is flanked by a four-bay prayer hall, supported by arches and covered with four small domes. The northern prayer hall is similar in structure, and it consists of five prayer spaces connected by arches which carry the dome structures. The eastern prayer hall is the widest and it may have been enlarged. This hall does not mirror the dimensions of the mosque's bays and its supporting structures are not placed in symmetry with the rest of the complex. The roofing of this space consists of a set of barrel vaults. Presently, the mosque is entered though an entrance on its north-eastern side, which may be a later modification. The mosque does no longer feature a minaret which must have existed, given its congregational function.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The upper portion of the mosque's *qibla iwan* was redecorated in the Qajar period. Moreover, the north-eastern area of the mosque's structure with its current entrance may have undergone modifications.

Ilkhanid Mosque and Tomb Tower Ground Plan

The monument is a courtyard mosque with its rectangular courtyard flanked by four prayer spaces (Fig. 197). The mosque's *qibla* and northern side bays feature a symmetrical arrangement. The western prayer hall dates to the Ilkhanid period (with integration of earlier structures), but the eastern prayer hall has undergone further modifications. The entrance area of the mosque was also modified. Perhaps a minaret once existed in the north-eastern side of the mosque. The tomb tower adjoins the mosque at the eastern part of its *qibla* wall. Its entrance porch is integrated into the mosque's eastern prayer hall.

Ilkhanid Mosque and Tomb Tower Elevation

The current elevation of the Bistam Friday mosque is irregular and its eastern and western prayer halls are not level with each other. The elevation and design of the mosque's *qibla* area façade feature a regular arrangement. The mosque's *qibla iwan* with stucco decoration is slightly elevated from the two flanking bays of its prayer hall. These two bays feature pointed arch structures and are symmetrical. The current highest point of elevation of the entire complex is the tomb tower.

[1088] Zariʿi 2007, 154-157, 167, 169.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The function of the Friday mosque is clear: it retains a congregational function. But diverse hypotheses regarding the identity of the deceased buried in the tomb tower have been debated. The most plausible hypothesis suggests that the tomb tower was intended for the burial of a son of Uljaytu, therefore, for a secular rather than a religious character.[1089] The combination of a secular character burial structure with a congregational mosque is rather unusual and it may be the first of its kind in the Ilkhanid period. Connections between tombs of revered religious characters and congregational mosques are however well documented. The best example is in Natanz, at the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12), where the tomb of the Shaykh is connected to the congregational mosque. Further examples of tomb towers combined with mosque structures include the Alinja Khanqah in Nakhchivan (Cat. No. 26) and the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque and mausoleum complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9).

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Interior revetments comprise carved stuccos, which consist of two repertoires. The first stucco corpus is located on the entrance porch of the tomb tower, in the eastern prayer hall. The second corpus comprises the stuccos of the mosque's *qibla iwan*; the stucco mihrab and stucco panels on the surrounding surfaces. Both stucco repertoires were produced by the same stucco workshop, which also produced the stuccos in the seclusion rooms, and the main and the female prayer halls of the Bistami mosque of the Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19). Listed stucco revetments resemble each other in numerous aspects: stucco artistic techniques, carving approach, inscriptions' style, ornamental repertoire in floral and geometric forms and the overall aesthetics of stuccos.

The Kashana Tower

The stuccos of the Kashana tower are located on its entrance porch which is in the interior of the eastern prayer hall of the Friday mosque.

The Porch

Figs. 199, 201-202.

The porch is carried by a pointed arch, which is topped by two small spandrels with plain fired brick decoration. The interior of the pointed arch comprises a six-tier muqarnas vault. The entire stucco repertoire consists of the intrados vegetal element band, the exterior framing inscription, two interior framing inscriptions and two flanking stucco panels. The external framing inscription band, which frames the porch, is left only in fragments, and it comprises a historic inscription with the date 1300-01 and a Qurʾanic excerpt. The inscription is in *Naskh* style and it is set against a background of floral scrolls with leaf-like ornamentation. The intrados of the pointed arch contains a framing floral band, which runs along the muqarnas vault and consist of diverse abstracted vegetal elements, which strongly protrude from the relief. This

[1089] Blair 1982, 278-281.

ornamentation band is reminiscent of the bands in the barrel vault intrados of the female Ilkhanid prayer hall of the Bistami mosque (Cat. No. 19). The lower tier of the muqarnas vault contains a stucco cartouche, with one of the signatures of the stucco craftsmen, reading *work of Muhammad ibn Ahmad* (see below). The panel indicates that the muqarnas niche might have originally contained a more extensive amount of stucco decoration.

The lower part of the porch's interior contains the door opening and two flanking surfaces. These three surfaces are framed by two inscription bands. The two side surfaces contain stucco panels with floral and geometric ornamentation. The left-hand side panel is heavily damaged, but the right-hand side panel preserves its original composition and ornamentation. It closely resembles the mihrabs of seclusion rooms of the Bayazid Bistami complex. Lower parts of these two panels flanking the entrance are no longer extant. The right-hand side panel features a rectangular panel in its centre which contains geometrical ornamentation and floral decoration arranged into a form enclosed by a trefoil arch. The panel is framed by an H-letter form framing band. Not all the inscriptions of these stuccos could be read. On the top part of this composition a horizontal cartouche with a Kufic (invocations to God) inscription which is slightly concave, is featured similar to the mihrabs of the seclusion rooms. The described composition is framed by a repeating pattern of framed floral ornamentation and exterior inscription band. The inscription band (with Qurʾanic excerpts) in *Naskh* style is set against a floral scroll background with leaf ornaments and it is carved out of one layer of stucco. Another inscription band (with craftsman's signature) in similar style, but with more modest floral scrolls, runs on the top of the panel and continues on the side of the door and the opposite panel. The surface with the door opening is framed on three sides by an inscription band (Qurʾanic excerpt) in *Naskh* style with leaf element background.

The left-hand side surface of the porch comprises damaged stucco panels. The remaining fragments of stucco reveal that the internal part of the surface was decorated in the same manner as the right-hand side surface: there was an interior rectangular panel of geometrical ornamentation and floral composition enclosed by a trefoil arch. It was framed by an H-letter form framing device with swastika and floral elements and topped by a cartouche with a Kufic inscription. The composition is framed by the same type of framing band as the other one which comprises repeating floral ornamentation enclosed into geometrical bands. The entire composition is framed by a historic inscription (with craftsman's signature) in *Naskh* style, set against a background of floral scrolls with leaf-like decoration. The composition is met at its top by the inscription band which runs along all three sides of the porch's interior.

Stuccos of the Kashana tower's porch are carved out of one stucco layer. Some parts are slightly concave, similar to parts of the Bistami mosque stucco mihrab. The intrados floral band features applied stucco ornaments in circular and floral forms. The carving style of inscription bands and iconography of floral scrolls is reminiscent of the Bistami mosque mihrab and the mihrab of the adjacent Friday mosque. The Kufic style cartouches are similar to Kufic inscriptions of the Friday mosque's mihrab, the Bistami mosque's main mihrab and the mihrabs of the seclusion chambers of the Bistami complex.

The Friday Mosque

The stucco repertoires of the Friday mosque of Bistam are concentrated in the *qibla iwan* which is the focal point of the monument. This *iwan* structure features elaborate arch forms resembling shouldered arches. The interior of this *qibla iwan* is decorated with stuccos. The central space is taken by the large stucco mihrab which is topped by a stucco inscription band, which runs along three sides of the *iwan*. Surfaces of arcades are also decorated with stucco ornamentation. The upper part of the *iwan*, its niche, was redecorated in Qajar period, from which there is a dated historic inscription and a reticulated set of architectural ornamentation (see below).

The Mihrab

Figs. 203-207.

The mihrab is formed by a pointed arch carried by two columns forming its central niche. The pointed arch is topped by two spandrels. The described structure is framed by two inscription bands which complete the mihrab form. The top of the mihrab is joined by the inscription band which runs along the three sides of the *iwan*. The interior of the mihrab niche's lower section consists of the main surface and two lateral surfaces. The main surface resembles the mihrab of the Bistami mosque. On its upper part, it contains a cartouche with the Shahada. The Shahada was originally a Sunni Shahada, and there is a cartouche beneath it with a later addition of the Shiʿite part. The remaining surface of this part of the niche is filled with repeating circular geometric designs with floral inserts. A rectangular stucco panel was positioned inside it, but it is now lost. This is similar to the mihrab of the Bistami mosque. The two sides of the niche display cartouches of Kufic (*The Dominion belongs to God*) inscriptions with knotted additions in their upper sections. Lower parts of these surfaces are decorated with repeating geometric designs with small floral elements. The two columns of the mihrab closely resemble those of the Bistami Friday mosque: they are produced with the same artistic techniques and they comprise bulbous capitals with floral ornamentation almost identical to those of the Bistami mosque. Moreover, the cartouches beneath the capitals (*The Dominion belongs to God*) are decorated with a comparable calligraphic style. The lunette of the mihrab displays a symmetrical composition of palmette and floral motifs, which are heavily perforated, but differently from the Bistami mosque mihrab, carved out of one stucco layer.[1090] The lunette is framed by an inscription band (Qurʾan, *Surah Hud*, 11:114; preceded by the *Basmala*)[1091] in fluid *Naskh* style which fills the majority of the background with floral scrolls. The two spandrels of the mihrab are symmetrical in their design and they feature compositions of floral scrolls, with inserted circular protruding bosses, now lost.

The niche of the mihrab and the spandrels are framed by two inscription bands, the internal of smaller and the external band of larger dimensions. The internal framing inscription band with Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18-19)[1092] is written in the *Naskh* style and it is slightly concave. The background of the inscription is filled with floral scrolls and oval perforated

[1090] These elements are also featured on the mihrab of Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani complex and thestucco mihrab at Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21).
[1091] Shekofte 2015, 111.
[1092] Shekofte 2015, 111.

inserts at its angles. The larger, external, inscription framing band, with Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-4; preceded by the *Basmala*)[1093] displays a masterly designed Kufic inscription with background vegetal elements. The Kufic has elongated shafts of letters, which form knotted ornaments at regular intervals and end in pointed leaf-like forms. The background of the inscription is filled with repeating flower patterns, circular ornaments with geometric perforations and leaf-like ornaments.[1094] The mihrab is flanked by two thin bands of repeating floral ornamentation on each side.

The mihrab features stucco artistic techniques, ornamentation design, inscription style, and aesthetics closely reminiscent of the Bistami mosque stucco mihrab. Moreover, the stucco artistic techniques and style of inscription bands are very similar to stuccos found on the porch of the Kashana tower. It is therefore not just the signature of stucco craftsmen which connects the three repertoires, but also the artistic techniques employed, the carving style, the type and style of inscription bands and ornamentation, which confirm that the three repertoires are works of the same craftsmen.

The Qibla Iwan

Fig. 207.

The stuccos of the *qibla iwan* comprise, apart from the described mihrab, also a monumental stucco inscription band which runs along the top edge of the stucco repertoire, the stucco panels which cover the side architectural surfaces of the arcades, and on each side of the arcades two inscriptions located in two-tier plaque compositions. The monumental inscription band which runs along the three interior sides of the *qibla iwan* is a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:9-10).[1095] The inscription band is designed in fluid *Thuluth* style and it is set against a background of floral scrolls. Floral scrolls comprise elements of floral and leaf-like ornamentation, and they entirely fill the background.[1096] Architectural surfaces of the *iwan*'s internal sides are covered with panels of stucco featuring floral patterns which are inserted into repeating geometrical compositions. The area of the pointed arches of the arcades contains two panels on each side. These panels transform pointed arches into shoulder arch-like forms. These two stucco panels contain a historic inscription regarding the making of the stucco repertoire (see below). The panel on the left-hand side contains the date (1306-07) of the repertoire and the signature of the stucco master, but it is slightly damaged. The right-hand side panel comprises the historic inscription regarding the identity of the patron of the mosque (see below). The two inscription bands feature *Naskh* style and they are set against a background, which does not comprise floral scrolls, but fills the empty spaces with leaf-like ornamentation.[1097] The appearance and aesthetics of the *qibla iwan*'s side surfaces are arranged so as not to distract the attention from the mihrab.

[1093] Shekofte 2015, 111.
[1094] The inscription band is entirely flat and it was carved out of a single stucco layer.
[1095] Shekofte 2015, 111.
[1096] The inscription appears to have been carved out of one stucco layer.
[1097] These inscriptions were also carved out of single stucco layers.

Exterior Revetments

Exterior of the Kashana Tower

The exterior surfaces of the tomb tower are decorated with stucco plugs in letter x form which are inserted between the fired brick structure. The lower area of the cornice of the tower displays lozenge elements with decoration of interchanging inserts of fired glazed and unglazed elements, which create a chequered pattern. Below these revetments runs the terracotta inscription in two rows.

The Terracotta Inscription Bands

Figs. 198, 200.

The inscription was discussed in detail by Blair and only essential information is reported here.[1098] According to Blair, the medium for the inscription band is cut stucco.[1099] The inscription runs along the top edge of the flanges of the Kashana tomb tower's exterior. It is written in Knotted Kufic style. It is significant, because it provides information regarding the patron, the date and the stucco craftsmen involved in its making and the construction of the tower. Some of the first readings of the inscription were performed by Godard and Pope,[1100] but Blair is the first to fully read the inscription; the upper row of the inscription contains the *Basmala*, the Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-7) and the signature of the stucco craftsman as *work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Damghani*.

The lower row of the inscription contains the name and titles of the patron of the tomb tower, the name of the person for whom the tower was built, the date and another artist's signature. The patron was Sultan Uljaytu, the tomb was built for his son (probably Tayfur, the youngest of his four sons), the inscription completion date is 1308-09 and the artist's signature reads: *work of Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Damghani*.[1101] The inscription is divided into a set of carved stucco panels, with four panels per flange. The stucco decoration displays Knotted Kufic style with elongated letter shafts, which occasionally form knotted forms and comprise diverse floral and leaf-like endings. The background of the inscription is almost non-existent because it is occupied by knotted forms and floral decoration of upper portions of inscriptions. On some empty spaces, a leaf or flower blossom-like decorative element is added.

The Exterior of the Friday Mosque

The exterior of the Friday mosque comprises only a few surfaces which were decorated. This is the refurbished entrance portal of the mosque which does not retain specifically monumental dimensions. It contains some glazed inserts, which are arranged in geometrical chequered patterns, but these ornaments are later additions.

[1098] Blair 1982.
[1099] *Ibid.*, 263.
[1100] *Ibid.*, 264.
[1101] *Ibid.*

Stucco Polychromy at the Bistam Friday Mosque and Tomb Tower

The stuccos of the Bistam Friday mosque and the adjacent tomb tower have all been thoroughly whitewashed. The whitewash conceals any extant traces of polychromy. The whitewash is also applied in such thick layers that it reduces the original features of the relief and its original contrasts between inscriptions, floral ornamentation and the background of these panels.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Bistam Friday Mosque and the Tomb Tower

Stuccos of the Bistam Friday mosque and the Kashana tower are mainly produced by carving one stucco layer. Some of the carved surfaces, especially those of the mihrab's inscription bands are slightly concave. Occasionally, the technique of applied stucco elements – protruding bosses and protruding floral elements - is employed. It is found on spandrels of the mosque's mihrab, where there used to be two circular protruding bosses. Moreover, the stucco band in the intrados of the porch's pointed arch of the tomb tower displays repeating ornamentation, which consists of applied circular bosses and floral elements. There appears to be no stucco panel in these repertoires which would be carved out of more than one stucco layer. The type of perforation geometrical ornamentation arrangements, inscription band styles and floral ornamentation iconography of the two repertoires are closely tied to the stuccos of the Bistami mosque, confirming that the stucco workshop which produced them retained a specific repertoire of stucco artistic techniques they were used to and trained to employ.

The Bistam Friday Mosque and the Tomb Tower Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Stuccos of the tomb tower's exterior and porch and the stuccos of the *qibla iwan* of the Friday mosque of Bistam all display similar aesthetics. Their appearance is characterized by the use of the artistic technique where one layer of stucco is carved for epigraphic elements and their floral background. Moreover, the same technique with added perforations is used for the repeating pattern panels featuring geometric ornamentation with floral elements. This artistic technique determines a relatively shallow stucco relief with no protruding or recessed elements; the aesthetic of stucco carved on a single visual plane is occasionally interrupted by the use of applied circular bosses or floral elements. Overall, the relief created is plain, which contrasts to the aesthetics of two layer carved stuccos found in Central Iran or north-western Iran. Such aesthetics are more common in the Seljuq period and a related approach to stucco making and its appearance is found at the stucco inscriptions of Ribat-i Mahi and the Ribat-i Sharaf in Khurasan. Another significant element of the aesthetics of stuccos at Bistam is the interplay between Kufic style inscriptions of angular forms and cursive *Naskh* or *Thuluth* styles which are fluid. The interplay of these inscription styles assures for a more dynamic appearance of the stuccos. Geometric repeating patterns and perforations serve as a background to the repertoire and can be especially well observed on the architectural surfaces of the mosque's *qibla iwan*. The described aesthetic characteristics of the stuccos are specific to the stucco craftsmen's workshop which produced them, rather than to a certain geographical area. The closest parallels are the perhaps later stuccos of the Kharaqani mausoleum (Cat. No. 21) near Bistam and the mihrab of the Jawin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 20). Further parallels include the last layer of stuccos at the Farumad Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16) and the Khusraw Shir Friday mosque (Cat. No. 17). The listed group of monuments displays regional carved stucco characteristics of the

Ilkhanid period, which were determined by works and activities of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop.

d.) Furnishing

No furniture pertaining to the Ilkhanid era is found in the mosque and the tomb tower.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Friday mosque of Bistam

The Mihrab and the Qibla Iwan Stuccos

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The lower part of the mihrab's niche comprises a plaque with the Sunni Shahada; its Shiʿite part is a later addition. It could have been added during the Qajar renovations of the mosque. The inscription is written in *Naskh* style with elongated letter *hastae.* It is set against a background of floral scrolls and flower buds.

b.) The cartouches below the capitals of the mihrab's columns feature monumental Kufic style. They comprise invocations to God:

The Dominion belongs to God.

c.) The inscription outlining the lunette of the mihrab's niche features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Hud* (11:114).[1102] It displays *Naskh* style and its background is filled with leaf and flower bud elements.

The inscription reads:[1103]

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ

And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember.

d.) The interior of the mihrab's two framing bands features *Naskh* style and it comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (9:18-19). It is placed against a background of floral scrolls.

The inscription reads:[1104]

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

[1102] Shekofte 2015, 111.
[1103] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-hud-114-qs-11-114-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 11, 2020).
[1104] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/At-taubah (Last Accessed: December 11, 2020).

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.
Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

e.) The monumental inscription framing the mihrab features monumental Knotted Kufic style and it comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-4). The top register of the inscription band is filled with flower rosettes. The rest of the background is filled with leaf-derived elements.

The inscription reads:[1105]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

f.) The inscription running along the three sides of the *qibla iwan*, topping the mihrab, comprises the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jumʿa* (62:9-10). It features *Thuluth* style. The inscription is set against the background comprising floral scrolls and additional leaf and flower bud elements.

The inscription reads:[1106]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumuʿa [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.

[1105] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).
[1106] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jumuah (Last Accessed: December 11, 2020).

And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.

g.) The historic inscription on the stuccos of the mosque's *qibla iwan*, concerning patronage of the monument, is divided into two double-lined inscription plaques, which are located above the side openings of the *iwan*.

The right-hand plaque reads:[1107]

أمر بهذه العمارة الشريفة الذى هو متولّيا لهذه البقعة المنيفة بإذن الواقفين مدّ الله ظلّهما و تقبّل منهما الفقير

The blessed building was built by the person who is (also) its mutawwali of the buqʿa (the Kashana tower?), with the permission of the standing, may God extend the shade and accept the poor …

The left-hand plaque reads:[1108]

إلى الله الغنىّ أبو يزيد بن محمّد بن محمّد [بن] مسعود البايزيدى غفر الله له و لوالديه و لجميع المؤمنين و المؤمنات فى شهور سنة ستّ و سبعمائة

…to the rich God, Abu Yazid ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Masʿud al-Bayazidi, may God forgive him, and his family and all the believing men and women. In the months of the year seven hundred and six (1306-07).

h.) The area above the mihrab comprises a Qajar historic inscription commemorating the mosque's renovations.

The inscription reads:[1109]

في سنة ١٢٤٢ قد اتفق تعمير هدا المسجد في دولة السلطان الاعظيم و الخاقان الافخم السلطان ابن السلطان والخقان ابن خقان فتحعلي شاه قاجار خلدالله الملك حين كانت في الدولة الله و ردوى ميرزا والى ولايت البسطام

In the year 1242 begun the repairs of this mosque, in the land of the Great Sultan, al-Khaqan al-Afkham, the Sultan, son of the Sultan, and the Khaqan, son of Khaqan, Fathʿ Ali Shah Qajar, may God immortalize the King, this was in the Land of God and the garden of the Princes, in the province of Bistam.

The inscription indicates that the mosque was renovated during the reign of Fathʿ Ali Shah Qajar, around 1826. These renovations might include repairs to the mihrab, the building of the mosque's entrance portal and other interventions.

The Kashana Tower

Entrance Porch

[1107] TEI 2083 (Last Accessed: November 5, 2021).
[1108] *Ibid.*
[1109] Zariʿi 2007, 163.

a.) The *Naskh* inscription which runs along the three sides of the entrance portal, below the springing of the muqarnas hood, comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-4) and the signature of the master stucco craftsman.

The inscription reads:[1110]

عمل محمّد بن الحسين الدامغانى غفر الله له و لوالديه و لجميع المؤمنين ... فى منتصف شوال سنة سبعمائة

Basmala. Qurʾan 48:1-4. Work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Damghani, may God pardon him and his family and all the believers... In the middle of (the month of) Shawwal (of the) year 700 (1300-01).

The entrance portal comprises other inscriptions, which could not be deciphered due to their whitewashing and partial damage.

Exterior Monumental Inscriptions

Two monumental inscriptions are produced out of terracotta or carved stucco. They are divided into sets of inscription plaques which are inserted into designated surfaces of the tower flanges. These inscriptions are written in Kufic style and some letters occasionally translate into vegetal ornamentation.

a.) The upper inscription features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-7) and it contains the signature of the master craftsman.

The inscription reads:[1111]

بسم الله / الرحمن الر / حيم إنّا فتحنا / لك فتحا مبينا / ليغفر لك / الله ما تقدّم / من ذنبك / و ما تأخّر / و يتمّ نعمته / عليك - و يهد / يك صراطا / مستقيما و / ينصرك الله / نصرا عزيزا / هو الذى / أنزل السكينة / فى قلوب / المؤمنين / ليزدادوا / إيمانا مع / إيمانهم و / لله جنود / السموات / و الأرض / و كان الله / عليما حكيما / ليدخل / [المؤمنين] / و المؤمنات / [و المشركين / و المشركاة] / أنهار خا / لدين فيها / و يكفر عنهم / سياتهم و / كان ذلك / عند الله / فوزا عظيما / و يعذّب / بسم الله / و المنافقات / و المشركين / و المشركات / الظانّين بالله / ظنّ السوء / عليهم دا / ئرة السوء / و غضب الله / عليهم و / لعنهم و / أعدّ لهم / جهنّم و / ساءت مصيرا / و لله جنود / السموات و الأرض / و كان الله / عزيزا حكيما (قرآن، ٤٨، ١-٧) / عمل محمّد بن الحسين / الدامغانى غفر الله له / و لوالديه و لجميع المؤمنين

Basmala. Qurʾan, Surat al-Fath, 48:1-7. The work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-Damghani, may God pardon him and his parents and all the believers.[1112]

b.) The lower inscription comprises a historic text concerning the patronage of the tower, the years of completion of the undertaking and the signature of the second master.

The inscription reads:[1113]

/ أمر ببناء هذه / القبّة المباركة / العالية الشريفة / السلطان / المعظّم / شاهنشاه / الأعظم / مالك رقاب / فى الأمم / حافظ بلاد / الله ناصر / عباد الله / المؤيّد / بنصر الله / غياث الدنيا و / الدين ركن / الإسلام و / المسلمين / قامع العداة / و المتمر

[1110] TEI: 35503 (Last Accessed: November 5, 2021). Blair 1982, 264.
[1111] Blair 1982, 266-67. TEI 36266 (Last Accessed: November 5, 2021).
[1112] Blair 1982, 265.
[1113] Blair 1982, 266-67. TEI 36266 (Last Accessed: November 5, 2021).

/ دين ظلّ / الله فى / العالمين / سلطان ا / رض الشرق / و الصين / ملك عباد / الخافقين / المخصوص / بعناية ربّ / العالمين / خدابنده / محمّد خا / ن بن خان / اعزّ الله / الله فى / انصاره و / خلّد الله / ملكه و / كيد حساده / و عدوه لاجل و / لده قترة / عتبة سالا / لة الخانية / الطفل السعيد / الشهيد / بوفا سال [؟]/ سلطان محمّد / تغمّده الله / بغفرانه و يدخله / بحبوحة / جناته فى / شهر الله / الأصمّ رجب / عم ثمنة / و سبعمائة / عمل حسين بن أبى طالب / المهندس الدامغانى

Ordered the building of this blessed high, noble tomb, the great sultan, the august shahanshah, overlord of the necks of nations, protector of God's lands, defender of God's servants, he who is assisted by God's help, Giyas al-dunya wa al-din, Rukn al-Islam wa al-Muslimin, subjugator of the enemies and rebels, shadow of God in the world, sultan of the land of the east and China, king of the servants of the horizons, he who enjoys the special solicitude of the Lord of the worlds, Khudabanda Muhammad Khan ibn Khan, may God exalt his victories and may God perpetuate his dominion and deceive his enviers and his enemies, for his son, dust of the threshold of the Ilkhanid scion, the auspicious and martyred child, Buqa? Shal?, Sultan Muhammad, may God immerse him in pardon and admit him to the fullness of Paradise, in God's month Rajab al-Asamm of the year 708 (December 1308-January 1309). The work of Husayn ibn Abi Talib, al-Muhandis, al-Damghani.[1114]

The content of the two inscriptions provides crucial information concerning the patronage of the tomb tower. The lower inscription states that the tomb tower was sponsored by Sultan Uljaytu, for his son, and that the work on the tower was completed in 1308-09. The two inscriptions comprise signatures of the father and son of the Damghani stucco craftsmen family (see below).

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

Post-Ilkhanid stuccos are found in the ceiling above the mihrab area of the Friday mosque of Bistam. They comprise a historic inscription commemorating the Qajar era renovations. The mihrab's Shahada panel might have been modified at the time of these decorative interventions.

Mosque and Tomb Tower's Revetments' Patronage

The titles of the patron of the Friday mosque are mentioned in the historic inscription plaque on the right-hand side surface of the *qibla iwan*, but apart from these titles, there is no name of the patron. There is more precise information concerning the patronage of the Kashana tower. The long historic inscription on the tower's exterior top surfaces mentions the name of Uljaytu, together with his titles. The significance and function of the tomb tower are also stated in this inscription: it was intended as a burial structure for perhaps the youngest of Uljaytu's sons. The stucco craftsmen involved in the making of the stuccos for the tomb tower and the mosque belonged to the same workshop. It is accordingly plausible that Uljaytu was not only the patron of the tomb tower, but also of the congregational mosque. One of Uljaytu's officials sponsored the construction of the entrance portal with the corridor into the Bayazid Bistami complex, which demonstrates links between Uljaytu and the monuments in Bistam.[1115]

[1114] Blair 1982, 265.
[1115] At the Bayazid Bistami complex, the Ilkhanid officials of Uljaytu and Ghazan Khan sponsored constructions of parts of the complex.

Differently to imperial commissions such as the Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), the Kashana tomb tower does not stand out architecturally. This demonstrates that rulers could also commission minor monuments, not just those of large dimensions and with extensive decorative repertoires. Furthermore, the stucco craftsmen employed for the decoration of the Kashana tower are the same stucco craftsmen who produced the stuccos of the Friday mosque and the Bistami mosque and its seclusion cells. Therefore, there is no difference in the making or product quality between the commission of Uljaytu and his officials. This is an important part of the evidence, which demonstrates that the technological and aesthetic quality of stucco revetments was not always conditioned by the status of the patron, but by the stucco workshop employed.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

There are several stucco craftsmen's signatures on the tomb tower and the Friday mosque which are related to the near-by Bayazid Bistami complex and the ruined mosque in Damghan. These signatures have been discussed by Blair.[1116]

The two monumental inscriptions on the exterior surfaces of the tomb tower contain two signatures; the lower register is signed as *Work of Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Damghani* and the upper inscription belongs to his son, and reads *Work of Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Damghani*. This double signature is significant, because one decorative repertoire is signed by two craftsmen who are related (father and son). It means that the two stucco craftsmen were both master craftsmen and they both signed their works as they worked in parallel. This unique evidence provides important information regarding the composition of stucco craftsmen's workshops and it indicates that every workshop was not headed by a single master stucco craftsman, and that masters could work together. Blair notes stylistic differences in production and design of the two inscriptions.[1117] These differences are likely the results of the work of two persons with divergent design skills (the father and the son).

Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Damghani signed four other repertoires:

- the stucco band on the mihrab of seclusion rooms of the Bistami complex, dated 1302-03, as: *work of Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-muhandis al-bannaʾ al-Damghani.*

- the arch of the mihrab in the main prayer hall of the Bistami mosque, which is dated 1313-14, as: *work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-muhandis al-bannaʾ al-Damghani.*

- the *Ayat al-Kursi* inscription band of the tomb tower's entrance porch, as: *work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Abi Talib, al-Muhandis al-Damghani, may God forgive him and his parents and all believers.*

- the corridor of the entrance portal of Uljaytu at the Bistami complex is signed as: *work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-jassas (stucco-worker) al-Damghani.*

[1116] Blair 1982, 283.
[1117] *Ibid.*, 283.

The brother of Muhammad also signed a 1302-03 inscription in the seclusion cells of the Bistami complex and a stucco inscription in the ruins of the structure (small mosque) adjacent to Pir-i Alamdar tomb tower in Damghan.[1118]

The outlined signatures are significant from several points of view. They show that family members worked together as a stucco craftsmen's workshop. The signature of Muhammad furthermore shows that he is sometimes signed as *muhandis*, as *banna'* and once as *jassas*. These three titles can be interpreted in different ways. *Muhandis* might mean engineer or mathematician, or geometer. *Banna'* can be interpreted as a builder and *jassas* as stucco worker. This interchangeable use of titles for the craftsman in question illustrates that the profession as a part of a signature could be modified according to the liking of the signatory artist and that the artist could have possessed several professions and their respective titles. This is more evidence which links the construction sector with the stucco revetment sector. The *jassas* signature title is unique among Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen's signatures, and it could be interpreted as the honorary title of the artist. It nevertheless demonstrates professionalization of the sector. The striking aspect of the Bistam signatures is their length, in comparison to normally much shorter signatures, which would contain the verb, one name and eventually a *nisba* of the craftsman. Moreover, Bistami signatures are always placed on rather visible parts of revetments and in the case of the main prayer hall mosque mihrab at the Bistami complex, also on a prominent part of the mihrab. This characteristic can be counted as a peculiarity of the stucco workshop.

f.) Monument Condition

Both structures have been restored and they are in fairly good condition. The courtyard of the mosque has been covered with a modern roofing system. Stuccos of the *qibla iwan* have been consolidated and they are in a good structural condition, although they are whitewashed. The exterior of the tomb tower has been repaired, partially reconstructed and consolidated. The carved stucco inscription is in good condition. The stuccos of the porch would however require some cleaning and consolidation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The Kashana tower pre-dates the construction of the mosque into which it was integrated. This likely occurred before the completion of the construction of the tower. Stuccos of the tower, the congregational mosque and the Bistami complex, share artistic techniques, carving approach and aesthetics. The relationship between the stucco repertoires of the monuments has also been discussed. The significance of reoccurring signatures of the stucco craftsmen has also been addressed illustrating new information concerning composition and use of craftsmen signatures.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Hillenbrand 1982; Blair 1982; Zari'i 2007.

[1118] See TEI 3878. The signature reads: عمل حاجی بن الحسین البنّاء الدامغانی غفر الله له.

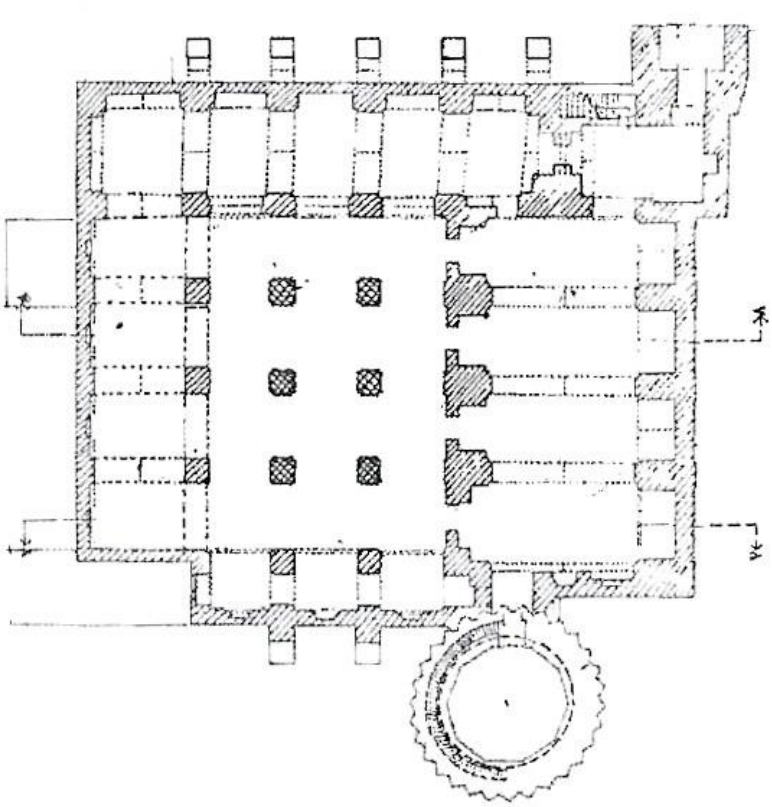
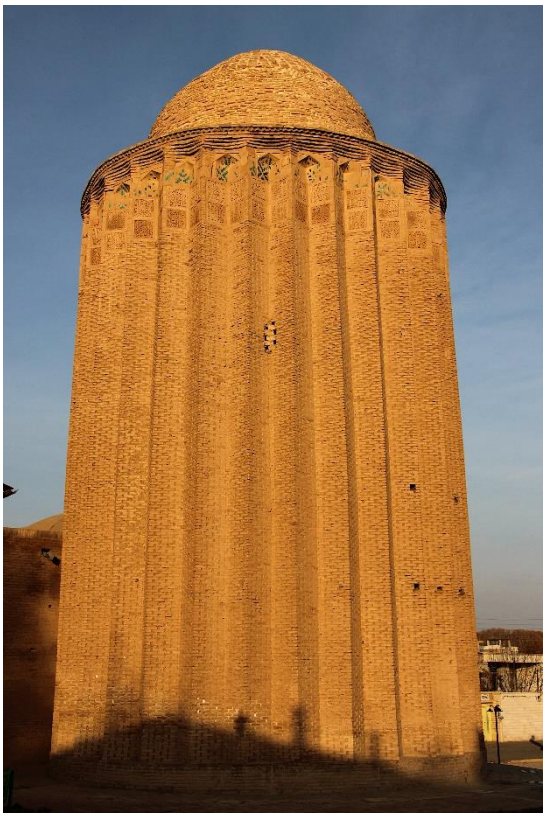


Figure 197: Ground plan of the Bistam Friday mosque and the Kashana tower. Darker areas present reconstruction of the pre-Ilkhanid mosque, which have been partially destroyed and partially integrated into the Ilkhanid structure (After Zariʿi 2007, 169).





Figures 198-199: The Kashana tower. Left: exterior structure of the Kashana tower with two monumental Kufic inscriptions and ceramic inserts in the top area. Right: carved stuccos of the entrance portal of the Kashana tower, which is accessed through the eastern prayer hall of the Bistam Friday mosque.

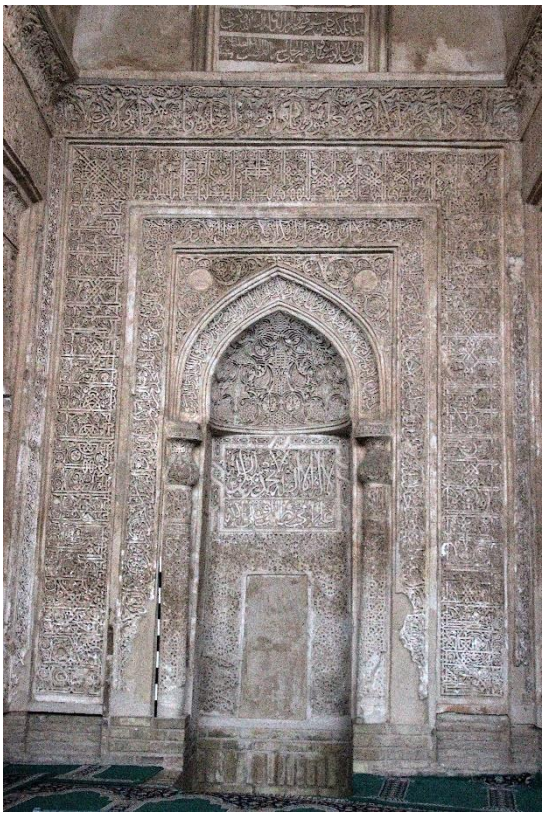


Figure 200: Detail of the monumental inscriptions running along the perimeter of the top section of the Kashana tower. View from the north.





Figures 201 and 202: Details of stuccos at the Kashana tower entrance portal. Left: applied moulded element compositions in the intrados of the pointed arch opening of the tower's entrance portal. Right: epigraphic, geometric and vegetal panels on the right-hand side of the entrance opening display visual elements characteristic of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop.




Figures 203 and 204: Stuccos of the Bistam Friday mosque. Left: the monumental carved stucco mihrab in the *qibla iwan* of the Bistam Friday mosque. Right: detail of the carved stucco mihrab; the left-hand side column with abstracted vegetal elements characteristic of Damghani craftsmen.

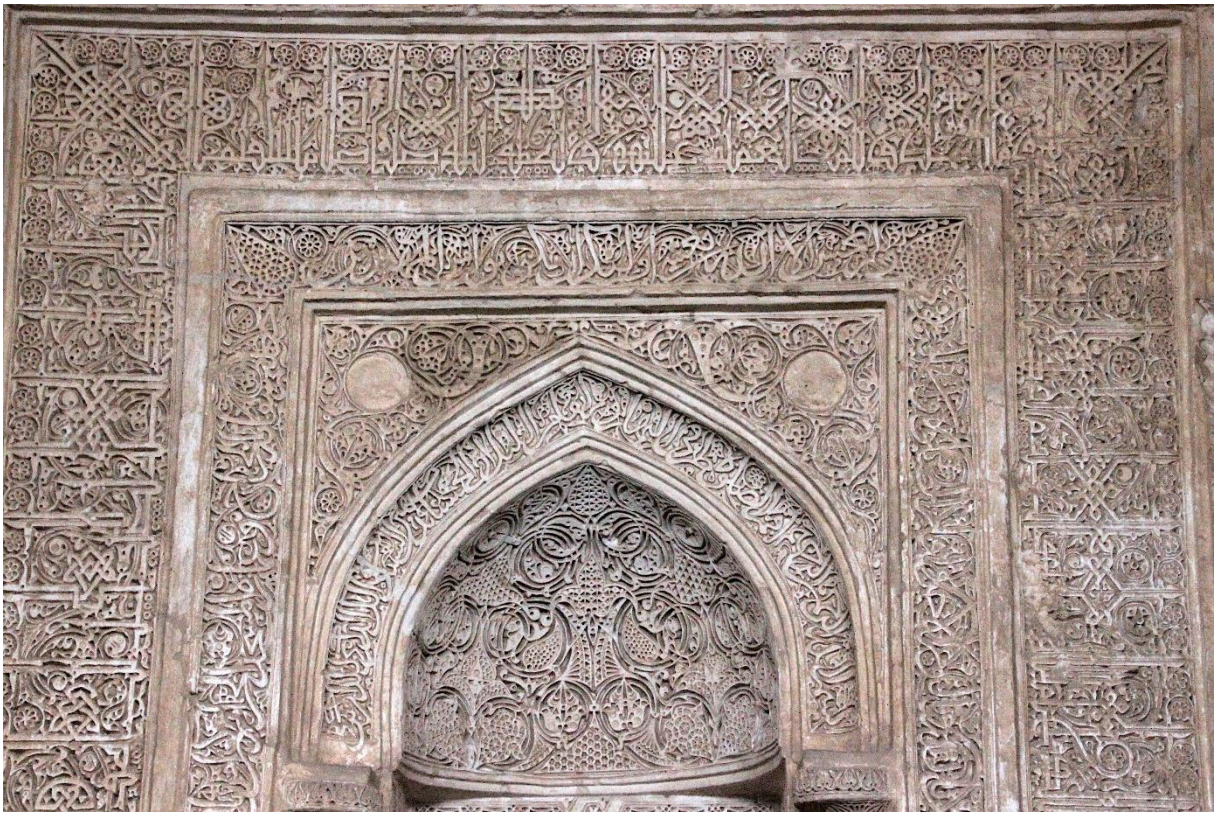


Figure 205: Detail of the upper section of the monumental stucco mihrab, which was whitewashed. The inscription bands display diverse calligraphic styles. Use of Kufic for the monumental framing band is a less frequent choice of the Ilkhanid craftsmen.

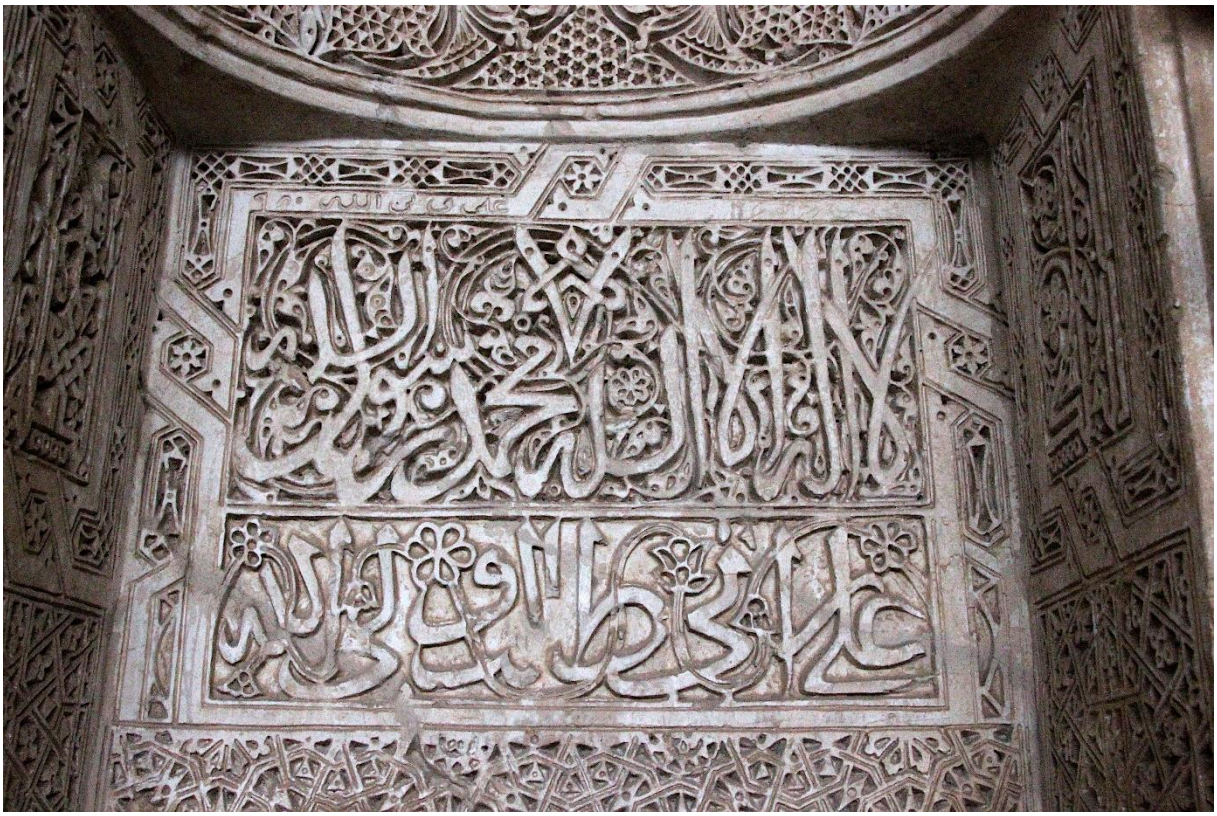


Figure 206: Detail of the lower portion of the niche of the monumental mihrab with the panel featuring the Shahada; the Shiʿite part of the Shahada in the lower register is a later addition, which can be distinguished by a different relief, type of carving and differing calligraphic style and ornamental elements.



Figure 207: Fragmented historic inscription and stuccos on the eastern side of the interior of the *qibla iwan* of the Friday mosque of Bistam.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 19

Monument Name: Bayazid Bistami complex

Figs. 208-217.

Associated Names: variant names are used for the monument, depending on comprehension of its function; the Shrine of Bāyazid Bisṭāmi,[1119] the Mashhad-i Bayazid Bistami, the Aramgah-i Bayazid Bastami, the Bayazid Bistami Shrine Complex, the Shrine of Bayazid Bastami, the Manar Mashhad-i Bayazid Bastami, the Tomb of Bayazid Bastami, the Khanqah and Shrine of Tayfur Abu Yazid al-Bistami. The name of the settlement is transliterated in different manners: Bastam, Bestam or Bistam, and occasionally, Bustam or Bostam. Transliterations of Shaykh's name (buried in the complex) comprise Bayazid and Beyazid.[1120]

Monument Type: shrine complex.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least four phases (phase one: pre-Seljuq; phase two: Seljuq minaret and mosque; phase three: Ilkhanid mosque, seclusion cells and the Imamzada Muhammad; phase four: Ilkhanid entrance portal and corridor), with subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): shrine complex with the tomb of the Shaykh, the Bistami mosque, the Imamzada Muhammad, seclusion cells, the entrance portal with corridor and later structures.

Location: settlement of Bistam; c. 6 km as the crow flies in the northern direction from Shahrud.

GPS location of the monument: 36.4842764 N; 55.0007753 E.

Monument Investigation: July 7, 2014; November 22, 2018; February 12, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Bistam is located near Shahrud; its strategical location close to the main communication routes leading from Rayy to Khurasan and especially towards the north, to Gurgan, determined the long history of the settlement, which likely dates back to Sassanid times.[1121] The settlement is mentioned by Ibn Hawqal, Abu Dulaf and al-Muqqadasi, who list no longer extant monuments of the city. Bistam was historically an important agricultural centre. Bistam is also mentioned by Mustawfi, as a small town. The monuments of the settlement, especially the Bayazid Bistami complex, testify to the significance of pilgrimage in Bistam during the Ilkhanid period.

[1119] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1120] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/1599 (Last Accessed: December 10, 2020).
[1121] Summary from: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/bestam-3 (Last Accessed: December 10, 2020).

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 208-209, 217.

The complex of Bayazid Bistami is located in the centre of Bistam, near the Friday mosque and the Kashana tomb tower (Cat. No. 18). The Bistami complex consists of diverse architectural structures built first in the pre-Seljuq era, with the most significant structures constructed in Ilkhanid times, and with later additions in Timurid and Qajar times. The main structures of the complex are: the mausoleum of Bayazid, the mosque, the minaret, the Imamzada Muhammad Bistam Mirza, the entrance portal and its corridor, the madrasa, two other tombs and further oratories. Following the death of the Shaykh (in 847 or 877), the first constructions were built on the site in pre-Seljuq times. The Seljuq minaret with dated inscription (1120) and the façade of an earlier mosque were incorporated into the Ilkhanid mosque of Bayazid. Significant repairs and enlargements of the complex were performed during the reign of Ghazan Khan, especially the construction of the mosque, with the stucco mihrab dated 1299. The second Ilkhanid constructive and decorative phase of the complex is marked by the reign of Uljaytu. It comprised the construction of the eastern entrance portal with the corridor and an *iwan* opposite it, which might have led to the other no longer extant parts of the complex. At this point, the *iwan* of Ghazan khan, which separates the two tomb towers of the Imamzada Muhammad, might have been redecorated. Further repairs, modifications and additions to the complex were put in place in Qajar period.

Construction Phases

Phase One - The Earliest Bistam Complex – Pre-Seljuq

Archaeological remains testify to the existence of pre-Seljuq structures on the site of the present-day complex. The exact function and characteristics of these monuments have been discussed by Adle.[1122] It is likely that the first construction works on the site took place shortly after the death of the Shaykh in 847 or 877.

Phase Two – The Seljuq Bistam Complex

The earliest structures of the complex date to the Seljuq period. The minaret carries a historical inscription with the date 1120-21; it was later incorporated into the Ilkhanid complex. The structure which originally functioned as the façade of the Seljuq mosque was incorporated into the Ilkhanid mosque of Bayazid.[1123] This undertaking was likely sponsored by Ghazan Khan. This structure is adjacent to the minaret, and it now functions as the *qibla* wall of the Ilkhanid mosque's first prayer space. Further evidence of the Seljuq mosque was discovered during archaeological soundings, in the area in front of the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Bayazid mosque, indicating that the Ilkhanid mosque was built on the ground of an earlier Seljuq or pre-Seljuq monument.[1124]

[1122] Adle 2015, 90-94.
[1123] See Adle 2015, 90-94. Adle also proposes a hypothetical reconstruction of the appearance of this mosque's façade. See Adle 2015, 247.
[1124] See Adle 2015, 90-94.

Phase Three – The First Ilkhanid Bistam Complex

The first Ilkhanid phase of the Bistami complex comprises construction interventions which took place during the reign of Ghazan Khan.

The Bistami Mosque (c. 1299)

The main part of the complex consists of the Bayazid mosque which comprises a stucco mihrab signed by *Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Bannaʾ al-Damghani*. The mosque consists of three main architectural spaces: the entry hall or *shabistan* for prayer, which precedes two further prayer halls, which are currently functioning as prayer halls for the male and female faithful. The entry *shabistan* comprises the earlier Seljuq mosque façade, which functions as its interior *qibla* wall; the Seljuq wall was incorporated into the Ilkhanid mosque. The entry *shabistan* is a structure with a rectangular and slightly irregular plan. Its superstructure is carried by pointed arches which surmount four small domes of its roofing. The space leads to the main (male) prayer hall and the adjacent (female) prayer hall. The female prayer hall is covered by a barrel vault. The main prayer hall, according to the archaeological excavations and Adle's research, could have been originally topped by a domed structure.[1125] Presently, this prayer hall is covered by a modern flat roof. In its interior it is decorated with a stucco inscription band which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls and the monumental stucco mihrab, which carries the signature of the stucco workshop master and the date of its completion 1299. The adjacent female prayer room is decorated with some stuccos, and it is connected to the domed structure known as the *sardab*. This structure was refurbished in the Qajar period.

Seclusion Cells (c. 1302)

The Ilkhanid complex of Bayazid comprises Sufi cells for seclusion. Their interior is richly decorated with carved stuccos; they comprise several stucco mihrabs and further stucco panels covering walls and ceilings. The repertoire is signed by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop as the stuccos in the interior of the Bistami mosque. The signature reads: *work of Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Bannaʾ al-Damghani and his brother Hajji ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Bannaʾ al-Damghani*. The repertoire is dated 1302. These seclusion cells are located between the *iwan* of Ghazan Khan and the *sardab*.

The Imamzada Muhammad

The Imamzada Muhammad is a mausoleum consisting of two conical domed tomb towers (square in plan) and it houses the grave of Muhammad, believed to have been the son of Imam Jaʿfar al-Sadiq. Construction of the north tomb tower is credited to Ghazan Khan. The second tomb tower structure was intended to serve as the tomb of Bayazid Bistami. The two tomb structures are connected by the Iwan of Ghazan Khan, which features stucco, terracotta and ceramic decoration on its exterior surfaces. Pickett dates the structure to no later than 1304.[1126] The Iwan of Ghazan Khan comprises architectural revetments of a type related to the revetments of the Iwan of Uljaytu. It is thus probable that the Iwan of Ghazan Khan was either part of the

[1125] See Adle 2015, 90-94.
[1126] Pickett 1997, 62.

same construction interventions as the construction of the Iwan of Uljaytu, or it could have been refurbished and redecorated during Uljaytu's interventions. The domed tomb tower which houses Muhammad's tomb had its interior entirely refurbished and redecorated in the eighteenth century; further refurbishments took place under Fath ʿAli Shah Qajar and during the reign of Nasr al-Din Shah Qajar.[1127]

Phase Four – The Second Ilkhanid Bistam Complex

The *Iwan* of Uljaytu (c. 1313-14)

The second Ilkhanid phase of the complex comprises structures which were built under the patronage of, or during the reign of Sultan Uljaytu. These building activities include construction of the Iwan or Portal of Uljaytu, with the corridor which lead into the courtyard of the complex. The portal is richly decorated in terracotta and glazed revetments, and it features muqarnas decoration in stucco. It is connected to the corridor which is covered by a barrel vault. The stucco inscription in the corridor states that the patron of the structure was Muhammad ibn Fazlullah al-Bayazidi, perhaps an Ilkhanid official native to the settlement, and that the structure was built during the reign of Uljaytu. The inscription also contains the date 1313-14.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

There is another mosque structure next to the Imamzada Muhammad, the foundation date of which is unknown; it was renovated in the Qajar period, perhaps during the reign of Fath ʿAli Shah, in 1826. The entire religious ensemble was enclosed with walls in the Qajar period, which have been substituted by a modern enclosure.

Ilkhanid Complex Ground Plan

The ground plan of the Ilkhanid Bistami complex (Fig. 208) is not uniform and it reflects its numerous construction stages and modern modifications. The core of the complex is represented by the tomb of the Shaykh, which is located in the open air, similar to the complex of Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30). The tomb is located in front of the Imamzada Muhammad, which is another font of sanctity in the complex. The placing of the other tomb tower of the Imamzada Muhammad at a distance and its connection via the Iwan of Ghazan Khan and the seclusion rooms forms the enclosure of the complex. The mosque is entered through a modest portal adjacent to the tomb of Bayazid; its irregular plan indicates that it was built in at least two phases. The minaret of the complex, pertaining to the Bayazid mosque, is visible from the courtyard. The Seljuq mosque might have been larger and it probably occupied the space of the Imamzada Muhammad.

Ilkhanid Complex Elevation

The complex does not feature a uniform elevation and it comprises multiple focal points, determined by the location of its structures. Focal points with vertical axes are presented by the two tomb towers of the Imamzada Muhammad and the minaret. Due to the collapsed dome,

[1127] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 132-149.

which is no longer extant, the mosque remains less visible. In its original structure the dome of the mosque must have been the highest point of the entire complex.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The complex consists of diverse structures, each of which possesses a specific religious function. Together, these structures contribute to the main purpose of the complex: to serve the pilgrims, who visit it and to allow for the complex to run independently. The purpose of the mosque is clear: it is a commemorative mosque, which marks the grave of the Shaykh and which serves as a prayer space for pilgrims. Perhaps the structure also assumed didactic purpose until a *khanqah* was built near it. The Imamzada Muhammad consist of two burial towers, which are interconnected by the monumental Iwan of Ghazan Khan. The purpose of the *iwan* was to connect the ensemble visually and to provide for its monumentality. The adjacent seclusion rooms served for the cult of the Shaykh and are also known as the *khanqah*. The function of the *sardab* structure is not clear, but it might have originally been built as a funerary monument. The Uljaytu portal might have not been built as an independent structure; originally, it could have served as an entrance portal into another no longer extant structure.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The Bistami mosque contains Seljuq decoration in stucco and bricks in the first prayer hall, which originally retained the function of the mosque's exterior façade. The female prayer hall comprises stucco revetments on the *qibla* wall and the ceiling of its barrel vault. The main prayer hall retains the monumental stucco mihrab and a fragmented stucco inscription band which runs along the top parts of the supporting walls. Other stucco revetments include the muqarnas semi-dome of the Uljaytu portal and a monumental inscription band in its corridor, and the remains of two stucco columns which decorate the Iwan of Ghazan Khan. Apart from the interior stucco revetments, the complex comprises exterior revetments on the Uljaytu portal, the Iwan of Ghazan Khan and the conical external domes of the Imamzada Muhammad; they are produced with diverse artistic techniques of glazed and terracotta media.

The Bayazid mosque

Figs. 210-213.

The Bayazid mosque was constructed in at least two phases. The first interior prayer hall comprises the Seljuq exterior mosque façade, which was integrated into the Ilkhanid structure to function as the *qibla* wall of this secondary prayer hall or entrance vestibule. Its revetments comprise a combination of fired bricks and carved stuccos. The Seljuq façade can be dated to the time of the construction of the mosque's minaret (dated 1120-21). The female prayer hall features minor portions of stucco decoration in the form of inscription bands and geometric decorative bands, which might be the remains of a more extensive stucco repertoire. The main prayer hall features the monumental carved stucco mihrab, which is set against the *qibla* wall and the monumental stucco inscription band, which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls. The stuccos mihrab comprises the date 1299.

Seljuq Revetments – The Exterior Mosque Façade Turned into the Qibla Wall

The remaining Seljuq mosque façade now constitutes the *qibla* wall of the first prayer space of the Ilkhanid mosque.[1128] The rebuilding of the façade into the hall comprised the construction of an entrance vestibule, which functions as a prayer hall and consists of four bays, carried by pointed arches and roofed with small domes. These four parts of the wall vary in size; the second bay from the left now constitutes the main entrance passage into mosque's main prayer hall. Revetments on the Seljuq façade are divided into four portions, which constitute decorated niches with pointed arches. They were originally framed by a monumental inscription band from three sides, which functioned as the exterior margin of the façade.

Decoration of these niches was conceived as a unified programme. The extreme left bay is decorated with a specific stucco plug decoration on its lower part. Stucco plugs are created out of five square elements, which are heavily perforated and form a cross. The space between the cross square plugs was covered with plaster and incised into a geometric pattern. The lunette of the bay's niche is decorated with eight-pointed star and cross pattern, which was likely made of terracotta. It is set against a background of perforated stucco. Spandrels of the niche retain star-like decorated surfaces, which are produced with the same decorative medium. The remains of the framing inscription on the left side of the bay feature Kufic style (the inscription starts with the *Basmala* and it comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fath*). The second bay from the left (the current entrance to the main prayer hall), is decorated by two bands of repeating floral ornamentation in carved stucco which run along its perimeter. The lunette of the bay features a composition of floral ornamentation which may have been carved out of two stucco layers. The lower layer constitutes the background of the panel and it is heavily perforated. The upper layer features a net composition of interlacing leaf-like ornaments. The third bay from the left displays a niche which features stucco ornamentation arranged into a lunette formed by means of two inscription bands (the horizontal panel features the Shahada and the pointed arch panel contains an inscription regarding the mosque patronage; see below) in Kufic style with vertical elongations of letter shafts. The centre of this lunette displays a modest vegetal composition. The fourth bay from the left features the same ornamentation as the second: a lunette with heavily perforated stucco background, against which a net composition of interlacing leaf-like ornaments is set. The right-hand side of the bay contains the beginning of the framing Kufic inscription (see above). The dating for the described stucco ornamentation should be related to the minaret's construction (1120-21).

Ilkhanid Revetments

The Ilkhanid revetments of the Bayazid mosque are located in the main prayer hall and the female prayer hall. They comprise inscription bands, mihrab, and diverse bands of abstracted floral motifs in carved stucco of distinctive artistic technique and appearance. The mihrab is dated 1299, which suggests that these stuccos were produced during Ghazan Khan's reign. The stuccos of the female prayer hall are more modest and more fragmented. Both stucco repertoires

[1128] For the reconstruction of the façade, see Adle 2015, 247.

were the work of the same craftsmen, as indicated by their shared stucco production technology and visual features of stuccos.

The Main Prayer Hall

Stuccos in the main prayer hall comprise the mihrab and the monumental inscription band, which runs along the top edges of supporting walls. Remains of other stucco revetments are attached to this inscription band, suggesting that the original repertoire of stucco revetments was more extensive and that it comprised stuccos in the transitional zone and the dome of the mosque.

The Mihrab

Figs. 210-211.

The mihrab of the main prayer hall of the Bayazid mosque is formed by a pointed arch surmounted by a pair of columns and topped by two spandrels. The mihrab's structure is enclosed with a band of geometric ornamentation in the form of the letter H and the upper part of the mihrab comprises another horizontal stucco panel. The composition of the mihrab differs from the majority of Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs.[1129]

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The central niche of the mihrab is formed by a pointed arch. The interior of the niche is decorated with a repeating pattern of perforated quadruple leaf elements, which are enclosed into geometrical frames. They used to encircle a rectangular stucco panel, which is no longer extant. The upper part of the niche contains the lunette which is separated from the lower portion with a large Kufic inscription band. The inscription features an invocation to God. The Kufic inscription is a masterpiece: its letters comprise very long elongations which form knotted geometric patterns and terminate in floral designs. The inscription is set against a background of floral scrolls. The stucco lunette is formed by a wavy stucco inscription band recounting a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Ayat al-Kursi*, 2:255)[1130] in *Naskh* style. The remaining space of the lunette is filled with floral ornamentation produced out of two stucco layers and featuring two visual planes. Circular forms with floral perforated designs serve as its background, which is covered by a subtle net of interlocking leaf-like motifs. The niche structure is flanked by two stucco columns with geometric ornamentation on their shafts. Their capitals contain cartouches with invocations to God (*There is no God but God*) in *Naskh* style. The upper parts of the capitals of the columns are bulbous in form and they feature floral ornamentations arranged into a repeating pattern.

The mihrab's monumental lunette is framed by a concave inscription in Kufic style with historic content: the signature of the master stucco craftsman, the date of the mihrab completion and the dedication of the stuccowork to the complex and the Shaykh. This type of signature is rather exceptional, because it is long and located on a very significant location – the focal point of the

[1129] A similar design is employed for the Small stucco mihrab of the Ilkhanid period in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1).
[1130] Shekofte 2015, 112.

mihrab.[1131] The concavity of the inscription enables a smooth transition between the lunette plane and the framing inscription of the mihrab. The mihrab niche is topped by two spandrels featuring compositions of abstracted vegetal ornaments in protruding forms. The two spandrels are divided by an applied floral ornament. The described niche and spandrel structure is framed by a *Thuluth* inscription set against a background of floral scrolls. It features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Tawba* (Qurʾan, 9:18-19).[1132] This inscription band is concave and it echoes the small inscription band of the mihrab's lunette. The floral scrolls are similar to those of the lunette's framing inscription.

The mihrab structure is further framed with the stucco band in the form of the letter H. This stucco band displays swastika and flower blossom motifs. It fills the empty space and enlarges the mihrab, but it does not deter the viewer's attention from the mihrab's most significant parts. The H-form band encloses a horizontal stucco panel on the top of the mihrab. This stucco panel reflects the ornamentation of the mihrab's spandrels. The panel features a repeating composition of symmetrically arranged palmette motifs which are interrupted by the addition of protruding elements in their middle and around them. The protruding elements and the palmette motifs assure for the dynamic appearance of this repeating pattern. On its top, the mihrab is met by the beginning and the end of the monumental stucco inscription band.

The Monumental Inscription Band

Fig. 212.

The monumental inscription band runs along the mosque's supporting walls and it is interrupted by the mihrab. Some parts of the inscription are lost and have been replaced with a modern wall painting reflecting the inscription's content. The inscription contains a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (Qurʾan, 48:1-6) and it concludes with historic information concerning the mosque and stucco patronage and the time of their completion. The inscription is damaged (verses 2-3 of chapter 48 are no longer extant). It is produced in a distinctive *Thuluth* style. The background floral scrolls are on the same visual plane as the inscription.

The Female Prayer Hall

Fig. 213.

The female prayer hall consists of one bay covered with a barrel vault. The part of the *qibla* wall on the level of the barrel vault contains stucco decoration, together with two other stucco bands in the barrel vault's intrados. The two stucco bands in the intrados of the vault are of repeating vegetal ornamentation with palmette-like elements. Some parts of this relief are protruding. The beginnings and ends of the better preserved stucco band comprise cartouches with invocations (*The Dominion belongs to God*). The stucco decoration in the *qibla* wall area of the vault is arranged in a tripartite composition. The central part consists of a frame with Kufic inscription featuring Qurʾanic excerpts (illegible), which might have originally framed a

[1131] Compare to the historic inscription of the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1) and the other the stucco mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque with two historic inscriptions framing its lunette (Cat. No. 22).
[1132] Shekofte 2015, 112.

window opening. The frame is flanked by two niches which comprise carved and perforated stucco ornamentation arranged to form niches. The space between the two niches and the central inscription frame is filled with stucco ornamentation featuring geometric patterns, which transform into floral patterns.

Seclusion Rooms

Figs. 214-216.

The three seclusion rooms are richly ornamented with stucco revetments. The repertoire is signed, and the stuccos are the work of the same workshop as those in the main prayer hall of the Bistami mosque. The date of the completion of these stuccos is included in their rich epigraphic repertoire: 1302-03. The three seclusion rooms feature three mihrabs and they are a unique example of seclusion rooms with stuccos. Moreover, the walls and ceilings of the seclusion rooms are ornamented with inscription bands and geometric ornamentation. The mihrabs are small versions of the mihrab in the main prayer hall of the mosque: they display related stucco artistic techniques, and comparable type of stucco relief and inscriptions. They contain both Kufic and cursive inscriptions (see below). The ceilings of the seclusion rooms are decorated with circular geometric patterns, carved on a single plane. Passages between the rooms are decorated with inscription bands.

The Corridor of the Uljaytu Portal

The interior of the corridor of the Uljaytu portal is decorated with a large stucco inscription band. It is historic and it records the titles of Uljaytu. It comprises two further cartouches, also in stucco, which contain the date of the completion of the corridor (1313-14), the name of the patron (Uljaytu's official) and the signature of the master craftsman responsible for the production of the stuccos (*work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn [al-]jassas al-Damghani*). The inscription band was made in the same way as the mihrab of the Bistami mosque and it is work of the same stucco workshop. The background of the monumental inscription contains floral scrolls. Upper portions of corridor's ceiling retain remains of wall paintings featuring geometrical ornaments and compositions of inscriptions in Square Kufic, which are likely Safavid or Qajar additions. The corridor's supporting walls are decorated with stucco plugs in x form. The plugs are connected with double incisions between the bricks.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior revetments of the complex are discussed by Pickett and they are located on the following structures: Uljaytu's portal, the Iwan of Ghazan Khan and the domes of the tomb towers of the Imamzada Muhammad. Pickett supposes that these revetments are the work of the stucco workshop, which signed the stuccos of the complex, but not the exterior revetments in ceramics and terracotta. It is more likely that a separate group of craftsmen was in charge of the decoration of the complex's exterior architectural features.

The Portal of Uljaytu

The portal is rectangular in form, and has a pointed arch. The interior of the arch comprises the muqarnas hood decorated with carved stuccos. The rest of the portal is decorated with terracotta

and turquoise ceramic inserts forming strapwork designs. These inserts were produced out of stamped clay which was burned and glazed. Pickett notes that the employed ceramic and terracotta artistic technique is archaic and not in line with early fourteenth century developments of ceramic decoration, as seen at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) or Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). He proposes that the ceramic revetments are of local production.

The portal's surface is divided into six bands of terracotta and ceramic insert compositions. These bands run along the external surfaces of the portal and enclose its spandrels and the pointed arch. Larger bands feature repeating geometric patterns created with glazed inserts set against fired terracotta. Two smaller bands display repeating swastika-derived patterns. Two other bands are formed with glazed relief tiles forming abstract patterns. The portal's spandrels are decorated in the same technique, which features a triangular repeating pattern also employed to frame the upper part of the pointed arch. The lower part of the pointed arch is decorated with column-like elements, which feature repeating interlaced designs made out of glazed tiles and terracotta inserts. The interior of the portal's niche is decorated with glazed tiles carrying swastika-arranged inscriptions with the repeating name of *ʿAli*. Other revetments of the portal's interior comprise knotted, interlacing geometrical decoration, produced with glazed inserts set against moulded terracotta elements.

The Iwan of Ghazan Khan

Fig. 219.

The Iwan of Ghazan Khan is a structure similar to the Portal of Uljaytu. It is rectangular and formed by a pointed arch. The artistic techniques employed for the decoration of the portal are the same as those of the Uljaytu portal: diverse combinations of repeating geometric patterns, created with a combination of stamped terracotta inserts and moulded glazed elements. The portal's surface is divided into three bands: a central large band and two bands which flank it. These bands run along the portal's three sides. The large band features a repeating pattern of glazed ornamentation in circular geometric form which is set against terracotta inserts. The two smaller bands display geometrical ornamentation of interlaced repeating knotted patterns.

The lower parts of the portal's pointed arch structure are flanked by two columns which feature carved stucco ornamentation. They consist of repeating geometric and floral patterns, which are created with heavy perforation of the stuccos. The spandrels of the arch lost their original ornamentation and the restoration works feature repeating geometric patterns composed of terracotta elements, which might have originally been covered by another layer of geometric elements of glazed inserts. The pointed arch is framed by another band of repeating geometric ornamentation composed out of terracotta and glazed moulded inserts. There is a muqarnas semi-dome in the rear of the portal which is decorated with terracotta and glazed tile inserts. Some parts of the arch's intrados retain ornamentation produced with terracotta and featuring star patterns. Lower parts of the arch's interior comprise a band of geometric knotted ornamentation produced with glazed tiles featuring repeating knotted compositions with terracotta background. The portal's supporting walls are decorated with stucco plugs resembling those of the Uljaytu portal corridor. The use of the same artistic techniques and

ornamentation patterns as at the Uljaytu portal suggests that these two structures were decorated within a short time span and by the same craftsmen's workshop.

The Domes of Tomb Towers

The two domes of the tomb towers constituting the Imamzada Muhammad are clad with square turquoise glazed tiles.

Ilkhanid Stucco Polychromy at Bistam

The stuccos of the female prayer hall of the Bistami mosque were entirely whitewashed. The stuccos of the main prayer hall of the Bistami mosque retain some polychromy traces. The monumental stucco inscription band reveals traces of ochre yellow and white. In some parts of the mihrab, traces of red, orange to brown and white were documented. It is not clear if white traces of the mihrab are the result of overpainting, or whitewash, or if they are original. In some parts, the polychromy of the mihrab might have been deliberately removed. This stucco repertoire, like the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos, was originally likely polychrome.

Ilkhanid Stucco Artistic Techniques at Bistam

The combination of stucco artistic techniques for the Ilkhanid stucco repertoires of the Bistami mosque is peculiar. Instead of the usual combination of stuccos carved out one or two stucco layers, the prevailing stucco technique at the Bayazid mosque is that of a single layer carved stucco. Only the lunette of the mihrab features a distinct stucco relief produced by carving two stucco layers. There is a frequently employed method of protruding boss application and other floral elements on stucco panels. The combination of protruding elements with stucco carved out of a single stucco layer is specific and it is also found in the near-by Friday mosque and the portal of the Kashana tower, which were decorated by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. Further monuments decorated by the same workshop include the no longer extant mosque structure next to the Pir-i Alamdar tower in Damghan.[1133] These observations are significant, because they suggest that every stucco workshop possessed its own knowledge of stucco artistic techniques; these techniques determined the style of stucco repertoires, based on which individual stucco workshop can be recognized.

The Bistam Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics of the stuccos at the Bistami mosque and its seclusion halls are determined by the combination of single layer carved stucco and application of protruding elements. Moreover, in the mihrab, some of the inscription bands are concave. The use of carved stucco on a single layer determined aesthetics of plain stucco relief, which are interrupted by occasional applications of protruding elements. The style employed by the craftsmen is best observed in the mihrab of the mosque's main prayer hall. There, the panels of the mihrab are composed for flat surfaces of stucco carved out of one stucco layer rhythmically interrupted by panels featuring protruding elements. Repetitive use of these protruding elements determined the mihrab's balanced and symmetrical appearance. The addition of concave inscription bands,

[1133] More distant parallels comprise the Farumad and Khusraw Shir Friday mosques (Cat. Nos. 16-17) and the Friday mosque of Jawin (Cat. No. 20) and the complex of Hasan al-Kharaqani at Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21).

which are juxtaposed to the flat-appearing H-formed framing device, interrupted the monotone rhythm of the mihrab and determined its dynamic appearance. The stuccos in the main prayer hall are placed to highlight its essential architectural spaces: the mihrab attracts the attention of the faithful to the *qibla* wall and the monumental inscription band frames the entire repertoire and the prayer hall. Further stuccos decorated transitional zones of the prayer hall and perhaps the domed area. Stuccos of the female prayer hall also highlight the *qibla* wall and architectural lines. The function of the stuccos in the seclusion rooms is slightly different. There, the stuccos cover almost all architectural surfaces, and they serve to bring the faithful to a state of meditation.

d.) Furnishing

Apart from the old wooden door of the main prayer hall no other historic furnishing remains in the monument.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Minaret

a.) The historic inscription on the Seljuq minaret of the complex is produced out of fired brick and it features Floriated Kufic style.

The inscription reads:[1134]

الإمام رضى الدين محمّد بن عيسى [sic]...
قدّس الله روحه في
...سنة أربع عشرة و خمس [مائة]

The Imam Riza al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿIsa [sic], may God sanctify his soul, in the year five (hundred) and fourteen (1120-21).

Another inscription on the minaret reads:[1135]

[sic]عبد الرحيم خالد بن قاسم [sic]

[sic] ʿAbd al-Rahim Khalid ibn Qasim [sic]

The Bayazid mosque

Seljuq Terracotta and Stucco Revetments (the Entrance Vestibule)

a.) The historic inscription in the outline of the pointed arch of bay three from left to right, mentions the name of the patron of the mosque construction, which is also mentioned on the minaret inscription: *Imam Riza al-Din Muhammad ibn ʿIsa*:[1136]

b.) The horizontal panel below the inscription features the Sunni Shahada.

[1134] TEI: 7658 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021); RCEA, VIII, n° 2982.
[1135] TEI: 7924 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021); RCEA, IX, n° 3210.
[1136] TEI: 37142 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021).

c.) The monumental framing inscription band retains its beginning and the end. It starts with the *Basmala* and it likely features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath*.

The Female Prayer Hall

a.) The cartouches below the bands display abstract protruding vegetal elements, in the intrados of the vault covering the hall feature invocations to God: *The Dominion belongs to God.*

b.) The inscription on the upper portion of the *qibla* wall of the hall, which might have framed a window opening, is whitewashed and damaged to the point that it is not legible. The inscription is produced to feature *Naskh* style and it covers the majority of the panel.

The Main Prayer Hall

The Monumental Inscription Band

a.) The monumental inscription band in *Thuluth* style is set against a vegetal composition. It runs along the top edges of the supporting walls which used to surmount a hemispherical dome covering the mosque's main prayer hall. The inscription consists of a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-6; verse 1-3 are no longer extant) and the historic content is fragmented to the point that it is not legible (it likely comprised titles of the patron and the year of completion of production of stuccos).

The inscription reads:[1137]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ
وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.
[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds – and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment –
And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women – those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is

[1137] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The no longer extant inscription plaque, reported as *in situ*, and read by Pickett, at the bottom of the niche of the mihrab, read:[1138]

Work of Muhammad ibn Ahmad, 660/1262.

The inscription is no longer extant. It might have been connected to an earlier mihrab which could have been located in the same position.

b.) The horizontal Kufic inscription band separating the lower portion of the niche from its lunette seems to comprise an invocation to God.

c.) The cartouches of the mihrab's columns feature invocations to God:

There is no God but God (left hand side cartouche).

The Dominion belongs to God (right hand side cartouche).

d.) The lunette comprises an undulated inscription band in *Naskh* style featuring a Qurʾanic excerpt, the *Ayat al-Kursi* (2:255).[1139]

The inscription reads:[1140]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

e.) The inscription outlining the pointed arch of the mihrab is historic (with craftsman's signature) in its content and it features *Naskh* style.

It reads:[1141]

[1138] TEI: 2118 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021); Pickett 1997, 62.
[1139] Shekofte 2015, 112.
[1140] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 11, 2021).
[1141] TEI 3208 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5329.

سئل عن سلطان العارفين قدّس الله نفسه بم نلت ما نلت قال بإدخال السرور فی قلب المؤمن عمل محمّد بن الحسين بن أبی طالب المهندس بنّاء الدمغانی غفر الله له و لوالديه و للمؤمنين و المؤمنات

The Sultan of the Knowers (Arifin), may God sanctify him, was asked: "By what did you achieve what you achieved?" He said: "By entering happiness into the heart of the believer." Work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Bannaʾ al-Damghani, may God forgive him and his family and the believing men and women.

f.) The mihrab's monumental framing inscription band features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (Qurʾan, 9:18-19).[1142]

The inscription reads:[1143]

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.
Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

The same Qurʾanic excerpt is employed for the framing inscription band of the mihrab in the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18), which is the work of the same craftsmen's workshop.

Seclusion Rooms

a.) The signature of the craftsmen responsible for production of the stuccos in the seclusion rooms of the complex reads:[1144]

أمر بعمارة هذه الصومعة الشريفة المباركة الكريمة افخم الكفات [sic] فی سنة إثنی و سبعمائة عمل محمّد بن الحسين بن أبی طالب المهندس البنّاء الدامغانی و أخوه حاجی غفر الله لهم و لوالديهم و لجميع المؤمنين و المؤمنات

The construction of this noble, blessed, generous, most precious seclusion rooms was ordered by [sic] in the year seven hundred and two (1302-03), work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Bannaʾ al-Damghani and his brother Hajji, may God pardon them and their family and the believing men and women.

The three mihrabs and the stucco panels of these rooms feature a rich epigraphic repertoire consisting of diverse Qurʾanic excerpts, a Hadith and independent epigraphic elements in medallions. These inscriptions have been read by Shabnam Haqiqnejad *et al*, as: *Surah Hud*

[1142] Shekofte 2015, 112.
[1143] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/At-taubah (Last Accessed: December 11, 2020).
[1144] TEI: 3877 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021)); Hillenbrand 1982, 247.

(11:114-115), *Ayat al- Kursi* (2:255), the *Basmala*, *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:78-79), *Surat al-Jinn* (72:18), *Allah, Muhammad, Muhammad is the messenger of God*, titles of Bayazid Bistami and the Hadith regarding the significance of prayer.[1145] Some of the Qurʾanic excerpts repeat (*Ayat al-Kursi*). They mention that some inscriptions are damaged to the degree that they can only partially be read, or they are in a fragmented state, and it is not possible to determine the Qurʾanic excerpt exactly.

Portal of Uljaytu and its Corridor

a.) The historic inscription in the interior of the corridor of the Uljaytu portal is produced in carved stucco, in monumental dimensions, and it reads:[1146]

بسمه أعلى اتفقت عمارة هذا الايوان فى الدولة السلطان الأعظم شاهنشاه المعظّم سلطان السلاطين
العرب و العجم سلطان أرض الله ناصر دين الله حافظ بلاد الله علاء الدنيا و الدين غياث الإسلام والمسلمين أعدل الملوك و
السلاطين اسكندر الثانى خسرو ايران سلطان اولجايتو محمّد خدابنده خان خلّد الله ملكه ما دامت السموات و الأرضين و
هذه العمارة بسعى شيخ الأعظم هادى أصناف الأمم المخصوص من أنام الله بالفضل و الكرم مقبول الجمهور سلالة آل
الطيفور شرف الملّة و الدين ناصح الملوك و السلاطين محمّد بن فضل الله بايزيد أدام الله بركته

The construction of this iwan was agreed in the name of the highest (God), in the land of the Great Sultan, the Shahanshah, the Magnificent, the Sultan of the Sultans, of Arabs and non-Arabs, the Sultan of the Land of God, the Supporter of the Religion of God, the Protector of the lands of God, ʿAlaʾ al-Dunya wa al-Din, the Advocate of Islam and the Muslims, the Most Righteous of the Kings and the Sultans, the Second Alexander, Khusraw of Iran, Sultan Uljaytu Muhammad Khudabanda Khan, may God preserve his kingdom as long as the heavens and the two earths [remain]. And this building (is endowed) by the efforts of the Shaykh al-Aʿzam, from among the hierarchy of special nations, from God's sleep, with grace and acceptable generosity, from the state descendancy of the family of the Tayfur, the pride of the community and the religion, the advisor of kings and sultans, Muhammad ibn Fazlallah Bayazid, may God prolong his blessing.

b.) The cartouches below the monumental inscription contain the craftsmen's signatures and the year of completion of stuccos:

عمل محمّد بن الحسين جصّاص الدامغانى
غفر الله له و لجميع المؤمين و المؤمنات
فى سنة ثلث عشرة و سبعمائة

Work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn [al-]jassas (the stucco-worker) al-Damghani, may God pardon him and all the believers, in the year seven hundred and thirteen (1313-14).

[1145] Haqiqnejad *et al* 2018, 115-118, especially: 126.
[1146] TEI 3207 (Last Accessed: November 8, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5328. In TEI, the inscription reading is classified as belonging to the Kashana tower, but this is erroneous. The inscription is located in the interior of the Uljaytu portal.

Complex and Revetments' Patronage

The patron of the stucco revetments of the Bistami mosque and seclusion rooms remains unknown.[1147] The date on the mihrab and references of the monumental inscription in the mosque's main prayer hall indicate that the repertoire dates to the time of the reign of Ghazan Khan. It remains unclear whether the repertoire and the construction activities in the Bayazid mosque were sponsored by Ghazan Khan himself or by one of his officials. In contrast, it is clear that the Portal of Uljaytu was commissioned by one of Uljaytu's officials. The patronage of the complex during the reigns of Ghazan Khan and Uljaytu illustrates the significance of this complex and the tomb of the Shaykh for the pilgrimage activities in the Ilkhanid period, which were sanctioned by the State. References to both rulers in stucco inscriptions testify to the link between rulers and commissions of the complex. The patronage information is in line with other comparable Ilkhanid monuments at Natanz and near the city of Isfahan. But only in the case of the Bistami complex, do inscriptions contain explicit references to the rulers of the Empire.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The craftsmen's signatures on the stuccos of the Bayazid complex are the following:

Seclusion rooms: *work of Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Banna' al-Damghani and his brother Hajji ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Banna' al-Damghani.*

Stucco mihrab in the main prayer hall: *work of Muhammad ibn Husayn ibn Abi Talib al-Muhandis al-Banna' al-Damghani*.

Uljaytu Portal stucco inscription: *work of Muhammad ibn al-Husayn al-jassas (stucco-worker) al-Damghani.*

The two signatures of the stucco craftsmen found on one of the mihrabs of the seclusion rooms and the stucco mihrab of the main prayer hall of the Bayazid mosque demonstrate that the same stucco workshop was in charge of their production. Similarities in choice of stucco artistic techniques, distinctive stucco carving approach and calligraphic styles of inscription, which match between the three repertoires, demonstrate that the stucco workshop retained its own repertoire of stucco artistic techniques, carving and inscription styles. The Bistami monuments are the only ones which display repeating signatures and family relations between the three craftsmen (see also Cat. No. 18).

f.) Monument Condition

The complex is in a good preservation state, due to its significance. Recent interventions comprised cleaning of the stuccos in the seclusion rooms. Stuccos in the female prayer hall are in a degraded condition. They require cleaning and consolidation. The mihrab of the main prayer hall is in a relatively good state, despite some restoration interventions for its

[1147] The historic inscription regarding the patronage of the stuccos is damaged in the area where the information on titles of the patron is contained.

consolidation, which are lacking visual integration. The reconstruction of the missing part of the monumental inscription band in the main prayer hall of the mosque is inadequate.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research provides information regarding the appearance, function, content and aesthetics of the stuccos at the Bayazid Bistami complex. The discussion highlights the relationship between the signatures of the same craftsmen's workshop and the use of similar artistic techniques, carving approach and ornamental style of repertoires in the Bayazid mosque, the seclusion rooms and the Uljaytu portal. This information is essential to comprehend how stucco workshops functioned and how each possessed a distinctive style and characteristics for stucco revetment production. The relationship between stuccos of the complex and the near-by Friday mosque is also elucidated.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Shekofte 2015, Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 132-147, Adle 2015, 90-94; Pickett 1997, 62-64; Haqiqnejad *et al* 2018.

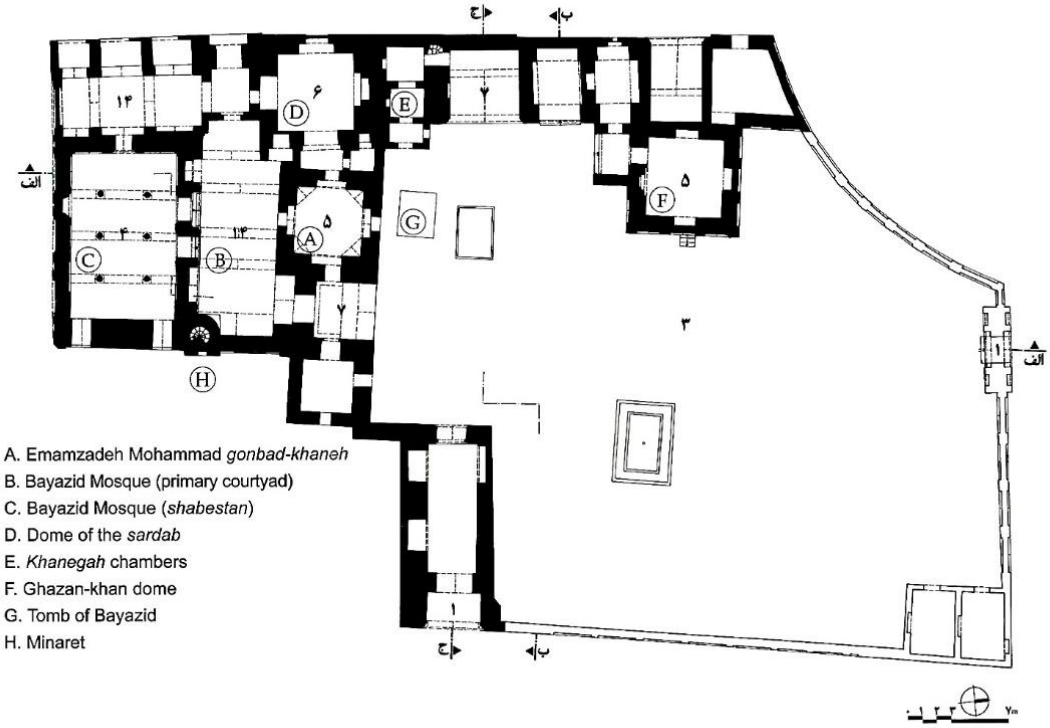


Figure 208: Ground plan of the Bayazid Bistami complex (After Qasimi 2010, Vol. 11, 147).



Figure 209: Exterior of the Bayazid Bistami complex, view from north-east. Left hand side: the grave of the Shaykh Bayazid and the entrance portal of the mosque. Right hand side: the Iwan of Ghazan Khan's and the mausoleum.



Figure 210: The carved stucco mihrab in the Ilkhanid mosque's main prayer hall (male prayer hall).



Figure 211: Detail of the monumental carved mihrab: the central lunette with *Ayat al-Kursi* is framed by the *Naskh* inscription band with historic content which concludes with the craftsmen's signature.



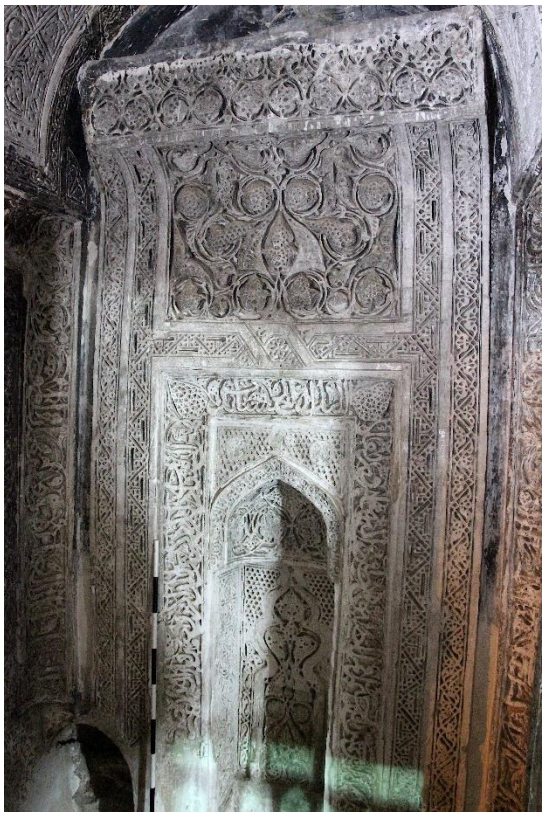
Figure 212: Detail of the monumental carved inscription band, which runs along the top edges of supporting walls of the main prayer hall of the Bayazid Bistami mosque.



Figure 213: Remains of carved stucco repertoire in the female prayer hall of the Bayazid Bistami complex mosque (the hall to the west of the main prayer hall).



Figure 214: Ceiling of the larger seclusion room of the Bayazid Bistami complex, with the craftsmen's signature in a unique form of a lobed medallion.

Figures 215 and 216: The mihrabs in the seclusion rooms of the Bayazid Bistami complex. Left: the largest carved stucco mihrab in the seclusion rooms with Qurʾanic excerpts and stucco panels similar to the stuccos in the main part of the complex. Right: the middle size stucco mihrab in one of the seclusion rooms, which was restored.

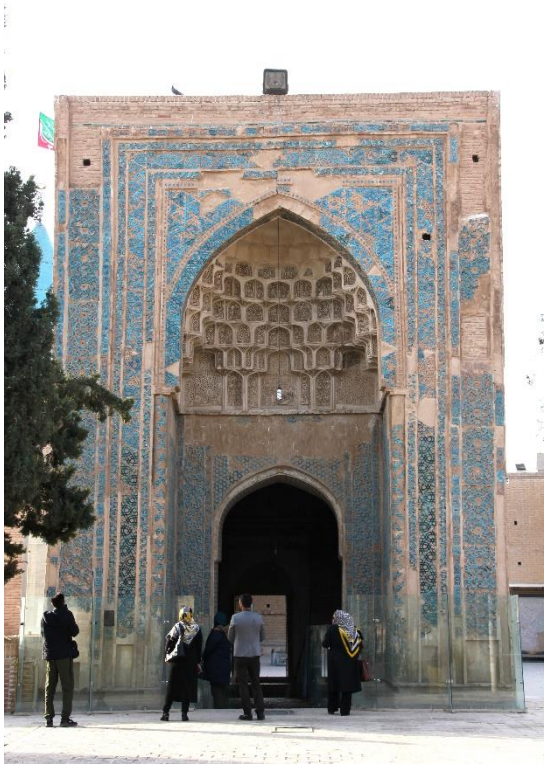


Figure 217: The Uljaytu entrance portal of the Bayazid Bistami complex with terracotta and glazed revetments.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 20

Monument Name: Jawin Friday mosque

Figs. 218-226.

Associated Names: the most frequently employed denominations are the Friday mosque of Jawīn[1148] and the Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn mosque (of Jawin). Jawin can also be transliterated as: Jovin, Javin and Joveyn. Local inhabitants refer to the monument as the Imam Hasan mosque, although, this being the main mosque of the small settlement, it would be appropriate to classify it as its congregational mosque.

Monument Type: the monument currently functions as a congregational mosque; its original architectural structure was knocked down and a new mosque was constructed in recent years, which comprises the only remaining historic revetment, the mihrab. The original architectural form of the monument is therefore not known. The mihrab is registered as a historic monument pertaining to the Seljuq period,[1149] but this research puts forward the hypothesis dating the stucco mihrab to the Ilkhanid period and to consider the no longer extant mosque's structure as Ilkhanid. The small wooden minbar was transferred to the mosque from the near-by *imamzada*; it was recently registered as a historic monument, and it carries a date informing that it was produced in 1327. The monument originally featured the main carved stucco mihrab and another smaller mihrab, which was transferred to the Muzi-yi Hammam-i Kuhna-yi Simnan (the Museum of the Old Simnan Bath house).[1150]

Chronology: due to the lack of scientific research, little is known about the constructive and decorative chronology of the monument; this research proposes that the monument was built or rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period; this building intervention also included the production of the mosque's large stucco mihrab and perhaps the small stucco mihrab.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): most likely a congregational mosque with a modest architectural structure of rectangular ground plan and a carved stucco repertoire.

Location: the village of Jawin (located in the remote valley of the Lasghird rural district, which is part of the central Surkha district); c. 46 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Simnan in the direction of south-west.

GPS location of the monument: 35.489223 N; 52.8931528 E.

Monument Investigation: February 11, 2020 (investigation of the small mihrab now stored in the museum in Simnan was not possible because the museum was closed due to the National holiday).

[1148] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1149] Rizwani 1998, 182.
[1150] This small mihrab was at a certain point inserted into the central part of the large mihrab. But this could be a result of restoration interventions. See image by Rizwani: Rizwani 1998, 185. The current small mihrab in the museum may be a cast and the location of the original is not known.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Very little is known regarding the village of Jawin, due to its small size and the off the beaten track location, in a remote valley. Some information can nevertheless be gathered from Internet sources and a short article by Hasan Rizwani.[1151] The name of the settlement derives from the name of the water course (Jawin river) running through the valley in which the village is located, on its eastern slope, on the southern part of the Elburz mountain range. The only historic communication routes lead from Jawin southwards towards Simnan and Varamin. The living quarters of the settlement indicate that it was more extensive in its past. The dwellings of the inhabitants were constructed with adobe material, and they are being substituted with modern constructions. Remains of a large fortified complex (Qalʿa-yi Kafar), which was partially carved out of the cliffs and partially built, are located on the western slope of the valley, opposite Jawin. The fortification likely served as a refuge in case of danger, although it is reported to have been an Ismaili fortification.

b.) Background

The historic carved stucco mihrab in the mosque was likely the focal point of a more extensive decorative programme. If so, one can speculate that the local inhabitants living in prosperity, due to their agricultural activities, could have decided to mobilize and sponsor a stucco craftsmen's workshop to embellish their mosque. The large stucco mihrab was registered as a historic monument at a relatively late date, in 1998. Despite the fact that the mihrab was a protected piece of the monument, the structure of the mosque was demolished to make way for a modern construction. During the building of the new mosque structure, the part of the *qibla* wall, where the large stucco mihrab is located, was reinforced, but these interventions also caused damage to the external panels of the mihrab's stucco relief.[1152] The wooden minbar with the late Ilkhanid date was registered as a protected monument in 2019, but it originates from a different monument. Apart from the short account by Rizwani no scientific articles have been dedicated to the monument. A thorough discussion of the monument is therefore necessary in order to provide information regarding its constructive and decorative undertakings and especially for a contextualized re-examination of its stuccos.

c.) Architectural Structure

The old architectural structure of the monument was razed to the ground to construct the modern mosque. No photographic documentation of the mosque's structure preceding its demolition and no archaeological excavations of the area have been performed. The modern mosque is positioned on the site of the old monument and it integrates the historic carved stucco mihrab in its new *qibla* wall. The modern structure features two floors and the mihrab is located in the upper storey, but only its upper portion is visible; the original floor of the mosque was much

[1151] The short article by Rizwani is the only scientific publication of the monument. See Rizwani 1998. The information presented here is summary from an Internet blog of one of the natives of the settlement. www.javinsemnan.arvandblog.ir (Last Accessed: Mar 29, 2020). A very limited information concerning the village is also available on the Persian version of Wikipedia, under voice "جوین (سرخه) / Jawin Surkha" https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%AC%D9%88%DB%8C%D9%86_(%D8%B3%D8%B1%D8%AE%D9%87) (Last Accessed: May 29, 2020).

[1152] See images by Rizwani, in: Rizwani 1998, 183.

lower, compared to the floor level of the second storey. The exterior surface of the *qibla* wall shows signs of numerous rebuilding activities which were performed to buttress it. The original form of the mosque's ground plan remains unknown and it is unclear what the characteristics of its supporting elements and roofing system were. It is likely that it assumed a rectangular form, with a hypostyle supporting system and roofing consisting of either small domes or vaults. The absence of a courtyard was most likely determined by the lack of space and probably also by the harsh winter climate.

Construction Phases

The only pieces of evidence for the discussion and hypothetical reconstruction of the mosque's constructive and decorative chronology are provided by its stuccos.[1153] Detailed examination of the large stucco mihrab and the collection of evidence in favour of an argument for its Ilkhanid date, and its strong ties to the stucco repertoires of the Damghani stucco craftsmen (stuccos at Damghan, Bistam and Qala-yi Naw), allow the proposition that the large mihrab was produced in the Ilkhanid period (see below). The mihrab is well integrated into the mosque's *qibla* wall, indicating that it was produced at the time of the mosque's construction. The small stucco mihrab is difficult to assess and it is unclear if it was produced when the monumental mihrab was made. The possibility of the existence of two stucco mihrabs in the monument is significant, because it illustrates the prestige of the commission and it indicates that the monument was originally reveted with a more extensive repertoire of architectural revetments. The time of the foundation of the mosque, or at least its rebuilding and production of carved stucco revetments should be assigned to the Ilkhanid period, possibly the period of Abu Saʿid's reign, as suggested by the close analysis of the monumental stucco mihrab (see below).

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

There is no evidence or information concerning later modifications of the monument apart from the modern modifications.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The mosque has been referred to as the Jawin mosque,[1154] the mosque of Imam Hasan and the mosque of Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn. References to the mosque as a congregational or Friday mosque are less frequent, although it is the main mosque in the settlement; it would be appropriate to consider it a congregational mosque.

[1153] The wooden minbar, transferred from the *imamzada*, bears the signature of its producer and also the date of its completion as 727/1327 – the period of Abu Saʿid's reign. It would be erroneous to simply assume that the large and small stucco mihrabs should automatically be associated with the production of the minbar and thus dated 1327, but the minbar points towards artistic activities on the monuments in the Jawin valley in the late Ilkhanid period.

[1154] See for example the title of the article by Rizwani, in Rizwani 1998, 181.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The main revetment of the mosque is the medium size carved stucco mihrab installed on the *qibla* wall of its current upper storey. The monument also retained another mihrab, reportedly in the mosque's western section, which was transferred to the Simnan museum.[1155] Its visual characteristics differ from the mosque's large carved mihrab, but it is likely that the two mihrabs were produced in parallel, at the time of the mosque's construction or rebuilding. These two mihrabs were likely focal points of a more extensive stucco repertoire of the monument's interior. They received only marginal mentions in some Iranian publications.[1156] In addition to the extant large and small stucco mihrabs, a wooden panel located in the large mihrab glass case is another fragment of the mosque's historic revetments. The large stucco mihrab is topped by a horizontal panel of carved wooden ornamentation which features repeating swirl patterns. The panel was only recently integrated into the mihrab structure, in the process of the mosque's modern rebuilding and the mihrab's restoration. It could have been part of a wooden piece of furniture, although its length would indicate that it could have pertained to a wooden cenotaph or a wooden ceiling.

The Large Carved Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 218-225.

Positioning

The large carved mihrab is set against the *qibla* wall of the main prayer hall of the modern structure of the Jawin Congregational mosque. It is missing parts of the spandrels and a large portion of its framing inscription band. Judging from the size of the columns surmounting the mihrab's niche, and the dimensions of its spandrels, the original carved stucco mihrab of the mosque must have been larger and it likely included another monumental framing inscription. The mihrab's unusually large stucco columns and the size of their capitals indicate that there is a portion of mihrab buried under the current floor level. Evidence in favour of this hypothesis is also provided by its inscriptions. The mihrab's large framing inscription is missing its beginning, which is likely below the floor level. The same is evident for the religious and historic inscriptions in the internal lower part of the mihrab's niche; the beginning and the end of the inscription, which frames this rectangular panel, is lacking its parts. The mihrab is positioned in front of the *qibla* wall, and it leans on it, but it is not integrated into the *qibla* wall. Judging from the depth of its niche, which is considerable, it is however plausible that, originally, the mihrab was integrated into the *qibla* wall and that the wall must have been prepared to accommodate the mihrab at the time of its construction. The mihrab was therefore part of the construction intervention and not a redecoration of an earlier monument. There could have nevertheless existed a pre-Ilkhanid mosque on the site where the mosque with the carved stucco mihrab was built.

[1155] At a certain point this mihrab appears to have been integrated into the central part of the larger mihrab of the monument. See image by Rizwani: Rizwani 1998, 183, Fig. 3.
[1156] The small mihrab is referred to in Taghavinejad's publications. See Taghavinejad and Salihi 2017, 61-62.

Mihrab Description

The mihrab features one internal niche, which is formed by a pointed arch surmounted by a pair of columns and capitals (Figs. 219-224). This niche is topped by a pair of spandrels which are joined into one stucco panel. The mihrab's structure is framed by two small border bands and a monumental inscription band in Kufic style. The mihrab likely featured another larger framing inscription which is entirely lost and partially substituted by the inserted horizontal carved wooden panel. The interior of the niche consists of several panels, parts of some have been lost. The lower part of the niche's interior comprises a vertical rectangular panel and two smaller panels flanking it. The side panels feature geometric patterns filled with diverse types of abstracted leaf elements and specific floral compositions reflecting forms of a grid pattern background.

The central rectangular panel of the lower part of the niche is badly damaged (Fig. 220); it featured at least two epigraphic bands in Kufic style and of historic content. They might have framed an internal panel with floral and geometric ornamental elements, or perhaps another panel with an inscription. The background of the external inscription band retains extensive amounts of red and the short horizontal inscription, which was written in at least two registers, features dark blue to greenish pigmentation remains. The upper section of the mihrab's niche consists of central lunette with a symmetric vegetal composition, the lower inscription band in *Naskh* style and another inscription band which frames the lunette on its sides. The lunette displays a symmetric composition of palmette and leaf-like elements; traces of incisions for the production of the design are visible on the surface of its relief. The lunette's relief is produced with a peculiar approach which enabled the craftsmen to produce a relatively shallow and dynamic relief; the recessed parts of vegetal element surfaces are heavily perforated with diverse perforation patterns and slightly protruding outlines, small leaf elements of the composition feature entirely plain surfaces. The *Naskh* inscription below the lunette is set against a plain background with extensive amounts of blue, which might be the result of overpainting. The mihrab's stucco lunette is flanked on its sides by another inscription band which featured Kufic style, but of which only the beginning of the *Basmala* is discernible. It is set against a plain background coloured dark red. The *Naskh* and Kufic inscriptions contain the *Basmala,* but their content was different.

Out of two large columns (Fig. 224) flanking mihrab's niche, only the right-hand column remains preserved. These columns featured circular shafts with repeating floral and geometric patterns and large curvilinear capitals with diverse ornamental elements. The carved stucco pattern on the surface of the right-hand side shaft is of particular interest for the understanding of the Jawin mihrab. This column shaft features a peculiar composition of abstracted vegetal and geometric design. The composition consists of intertwining elements of a four-petal flower blossom (resembling a four-leaf clover) and a kind of mirrored triangular geometric element. These two elements form a repeating textile-like pattern which covers the column's shaft surfaces. The upper edge of the shaft retains an inscription band in Kufic style, similar to Kufic inscriptions in the mihrab's niche. The last part of the inscription was superimposed in two registers, due to the lack of space to complete it. The capital features a mushroom-like form and it is disproportionately large, compared to the mihrab's other parts. The surface of the capital's

relief is divided into three registers of interconnected ornamental elements featuring a decorative composition. The lower part of the capital displays repeating flower blossom-like rosettes; the middle part features vertical leaf elements produced with the same carving approach as those in the lunette of the mihrab's niche, and the upper part features leaf-like and abstract elements produced with incisions. Further deep incisions connect the three registers and form the vegetal and geometric composition of the column's capital.

The fragmented inscription band in *Naskh* style frames the exterior outline of the mihrab niche's upper portion (Fig. 219). This is the only inscription set against a background with modest floral scrolls. The Jawin mihrab thus features a peculiar design, because the internal and external edges of its niche feature inscription bands.[1157] The external edge of the *Naskh* inscription band is framed by another band which consists of repeating vegetal elements (Fig. 225). These elements assume rosette or flower blossom forms. The mihrab's niche is topped by a pair of spandrels, which form one stucco panel. The described mihrab structure is framed by a thin framing band, which serves as an outline of the mihrab's form. Fragments of this outline are preserved in its upper part and it consists of repeating rosette and rhombus forms. The rosette elements echo the large rosettes on the lower section of the right-hand side capital of the mihrab's column. A pair of spandrels (Fig. 221) with protruding elements' composition tops the mihrab's niche.

The monumental framing band with the Kufic inscription frames the entire mihrab. It features an inscription in an elaborate Kufic style, which is set against a plain background. Some selected letters of the inscription are rendered in peculiar forms, and their vertical shafts are elongated. These elements provide a constant rhythm to the inscription. The inscription's plain background retains extensive amounts of blue, which could be a result of overpainting. The monumental Kufic inscription is produced with the same technology as the other mihrab's inscriptions; it is carved out of approximately two layers of stucco. Another thin framing band functions as an outline for the mihrab's design; it enhances its architectural lines, and it frames the mihrab structure on the exterior of the monumental Kufic band. It displays a repeating geometric pattern consisting of elongated plug-like elements, x-form elements and net-like patterns. This is a geometric band design which is featured in several Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. Judging from the proportions of the mihrab's parts and its design features, the original mihrab likely comprised another monumental framing inscription band.

Epigraphic Programme of the Monumental Mihrab

The mihrab of Jawin mosque was originally likely larger. Its epigraphic programme is unpublished. For this reason the author's readings of the inscriptions have been included in the lower section of this catalogue entry. Despite its medium dimensions, the mihrab features a relatively large number of inscription bands, which amount to six inscriptions in total. Five of them contain Qurʾanic verses and one inscription is of historic content. Inscriptions were produced by the use of *Naskh* and variations of Kufic epigraphic styles. The most elaborate epigraphic style is featured in the large monumental inscription framing band where some

[1157] This is also the case with the carved stucco mihrab of the Imamzada ʿAbdullah at Gudzar near Arak, for which this research also proposes an Ilkhanid date.

letters of Kufic inscription are elongated or given more elaborate forms (especially the non-connecting letters, or those at the end of words).[1158] The mihrab's inscriptions do not reflect specifically advanced calligraphic skills of the stucco craftsmen, but they rather display modest designs.

The content of the mihrab's inscriptions reflects the mihrab's function and meaning within the architectural context. The large external Kufic inscription features Qurʾan 17:78 (*Surat al-Israʾ*).[1159] The verse selection is tied to the general function of the mihrab and the prayer space surrounding it, rather than a specific building. The 16:128 verse (the last verse of the *Surat al-Nakhl*) is a less commonly featured verse of Qurʾan, and it is designed in *Naskh* style on the exterior edges of the mihrab's lunette. The verse concerns the topic of the significance of God and believers performing good deeds which is a frequent theme of inscriptions in religious monuments. One of the inscriptions flanking the lunette of the mihrab in Kufic style in the intrados is lost, except for the *Basmala* at its beginning, The lower inscription band in *Naskh* style also features the *Basmala* and a fraction of Qurʾan 2:163 (*Surat al-Baqara*). This excerpt is frequently featured on mihrabs and other revetments of religious structures and it concerns the topic of the reaffirmation of the oneness of God. The lower part of the interior of the mihrab's niche contains the Kufic inscription featuring the (less) frequently occurring Qurʾanic chapter of *Yunus*, verses 10:105-106, and it was likely preceded by the *Basmala*. This inscription frames an inscription in *Naskh*, of which only the beginning remains, and which informs who the *Shaykh* of the mosque was (it is possible that this person was also the patron of the mihrab). The fragment of the inscription confirms that monument's original function, at the time of the installation of the mihrab, was a mosque.

The mihrab's Qurʾanic inscriptions feature another peculiarity: all of them begin with the *Basmala*. The observed peculiarity could reflect the fact that the craftsmen in charge of the mihrab production were not entirely familiar with modalities of composing epigraphic programmes of stucco revetments. This is partially confirmed by the observed disparity in production skills of the mihrab's inscriptions and panels with vegetal and geometric elements. In sum, the content of the mihrab's Qurʾanic inscriptions does not point towards a specific message of its patron and the selected Qurʾanic verses reflect general tendencies of Qurʾanic excerpts, which find parallels in the other stucco mihrabs of Ilkhanid and earlier periods.

The Mihrab Production Technology

The Core of the Mihrab

Observations of the mihrab's stucco panels reveal the grey colour of the stucco body, which has a tonality similar to the Bistam stucco repertoires (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). This stucco body colour must be understood as characteristic of locally quarried gypsum material, which was employed for stucco revetment production at the Jawin mosque. Observations of the damage of the mihrab's lunette provide evidence proposing that the layers of stucco body for the mihrab's

[1158] The vertical shafts of the letters are elongated and additional vertical elements without letter function are added to some letters without vertical shafts, in order to create an equilibrated and rhythmical form of the inscription.
[1159] A similar use of the same Qurʾanic verse for the mihrab's framing inscription of a monument, which originally retained the function of a funerary structure is found on the stucco mihrab of Mahallat-i Bala (Cat. No. 13), for which this research proposes a date between 1335-36.

carving were applied onto a structure, which was either produced out of, or covered with, a layer of *kahgil*. The best example confirming that *kahgil* was not only employed for minor commissions, but also for the monumental ones, is the now badly damaged carved stucco mihrab in the north-western hypostyle hall of the Kashan Friday mosque.[1160]

Artistic Techniques and Comparison

The craftsmen employed diverse artistic techniques to produce the mihrab. The mihrab's column shaft four-petal flower blossom pattern is also found on the majority of stucco revetments produced by the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop.[1161] The flower-blossom rosettes on the right-hand side capital of the mihrab's column are produced in a manner similar to the lunette panel of the Kharaqani mihrab in Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21) and the stucco panels of the Ilkhanid monuments in Bistam. These rosettes are located on the column's capital, which features another Damghani workshop-related ornamental pattern on its shafts. The described evidence therefore strongly suggests that the Jawin mihrab must have been produced by a stucco carver who participated in the production of stucco repertoires signed by the members of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's family. The mihrab's spandrels feature symmetrical compositions of applied protruding elements of diverse forms which were produced out of several layers of stucco body. The employed artistic technique is not excessively demanding, but it is frequently spotted on Ilkhanid stuccos of the Bistam area (although several Seljuq parallels exist). The described issues of the Jawin mihrab's disproportion, and its modest visual forms of inscriptions, can partially be assigned to the behaviour of the stucco material. However, the difference in quality of production of inscription bands and non-epigraphic panels should not be ignored; it likely indicates that craftsmen's workshop could have lacked the member responsible for inscription design, which was most likely the master craftsman.

Mihrab's Dating and Craftsmen

The Jawin mosque's monumental stucco mihrab features affinities with stuccos of the Damghani craftsmen's workshop.[1162] Technological parallels between the repertoires of Ilkhanid stuccos in Bistam and Damghan illustrate that the Jawin mihrab was likely produced by a craftsman who had direct contact with the Damghani workshop and could have been its member. If so, the Jawin mihrab slightly post-dates the repertoires at Bistam and Damghan.

Although the Jawin and Kharaqani (Cat. No. 21) mihrabs are closely related to works of Bistam and Damghan, they do not seem to have been produced by the same craftsmen. These two mihrabs should therefore be understood as a kind of spin-off product of the Damghani workshop; they were likely made by younger members of the workshop, who produced independent works in the continuation of their careers as stucco craftsmen. Kharaqani mihrab

[1160] See also the discussion of the supporting wall stucco revetments of the Imamzada ʿAbdullah at Gudzar. Not only stucco mihrabs, but also wall painting repertoires were applied on *kahgil* support, the best example being the wall painting repertoire of the lower portions of supporting walls of the Qurwa Friday mosque.

[1161] Compare to stuccos of the Bistami complex, the Kashana tower and the Friday mosque of Bistam (Cat. No. 18).

[1162] This research showed the connection between the Kharaqani mihrab in Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21) and the works of Bistam and Damghan (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). Looking at the relationship between the mihrabs of Jawin and Qala-yi Naw, is becomes clear that their parallels with the Bistam and Damghan repertoires are manifested in the use of different stucco artistic techniques and of different ornamental elements.

was likely produced during the reign of Abu Saʿid and the Jawin mihrab seems to post-date the production of the repertoires at Damghan and Bistam. The Jawin stucco mihrab should thus be dated to the Ilkhanid period, rather than Seljuq. More specifically, it should be dated to the period either towards the end of Uljaytu's reign or during the reign of Abu Saʿid. It thus represents one of the later Ilkhanid stucco repertoires.

The Small Carved Stucco Mihrab[1163]

The small stucco mihrab of Jawin Friday mosque was transferred to the Old Hammam of Simnan Museum. The mihrab is reported to have been located in the mosque's western section, but an image by Rizwani also shows it inserted into the lower portion of the interior niche of the monumental mihrab (see above). The original location of the small mihrab and its exact function are thus unknown.[1164] As mentioned, this mihrab in the museum collection may be a cast of the original.

The design of the mihrab consists of several panels and its relief is carved to produce detailed ornamental compositions and inscription bands. It features a central niche filled with a symmetrical composition of leaf-derived elements which intertwine on several planes. The panel is flanked by two bands with repeating vegetal patterns, which function as column shafts. The columns surmount a four-tier muqarnas hood of the mihrab's niche. The muqarnas hood is flanked by a pair of spandrels which feature symmetrical vegetal compositions. The two protruding bosses with vegetal elements highlight the spandrels and their circular form; they are juxtaposed to the sharp edges of the muqarnas hood to determine the mihrab's dynamic appearance. The mihrab's structure is framed by two further bands; the internal band features a *Naskh* inscription (Qurʾanic excerpt of the first half of verse 21 of *Surat al-Hashr*) set against floral scrolls and the external band features a repeating vegetal ornamental band.

If the mihrab was carved, it was mainly carved out of one stucco layer. Its two protruding bosses on the spandrels could have either been moulded or applied on the mihrab's surface and carved subsequently. The relief of the small mihrab is more detailed, compared to the large mihrab. The small mihrab does not feature shared characteristics of production technology, design or ornamental vocabulary with the large stucco mihrab (see above). The two mihrabs are thus

[1163] At the time of the visit to Simnan, the museum was closed due to a national festivity. For this reason the mihrab is discussed based on photographs published on the Internet. See high resolution images: https://www.google.com/maps/place/%DA%AF%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%87+%D9%BE%D9%87%D9%86%D9%87%E2%80%AD/@35.566356,53.4000676,3a,75y,90t/data=!3m8!1e2!3m6!1sAF1QipPZ7A87ttzreBemxajDx2H6RZQQLBjjyRr4850n!2e10!3e12!6shttps:%2F%2Flh5.googleusercontent.com%2Fp%2FAF1QipPZ7A87ttzreBemxajDx2H6RZQQLBjjyRr4850n%3Dw203-h270-k-no!7i4008!8i5344!4m8!1m2!2m1!1ssemnan+museum!3m4!1s0x0:0x61e0f24e955cc6bf!8m2!3d35.5662547!4d53.3998706 (Last Accessed: May 29, 2020). One of the few published photographs of the mihrab is by Taghavinejad, who however excluded the large carved stucco mihrab of Jawin Friday mosque from her discussion and she does not consider the architectural context of the mihrab. Taghavinejad and Salihi 2017, 61-62.

[1164] Rizwani 1998, 183, Pl. 3.

unlikely to have been produced by the same craftsmen. The small mihrab's characteristics are difficult to associate with any Ilkhanid or post-Ilkhanid stuccos.[1165]

The Minbar

The wooden minbar in the Jawin Friday mosque is produced out of walnut wood and it is small (171 x 67 cm). The minbar is dated 727, but it is reported to have been transferred to the mosque from a near-by *imamzada*. Instead of assuming the common staircase-like shape it consists of only one unit, which resembles a *kursi* more than a minbar. The only ornamental elements of the mihrab are the columns inserted between the beams of its structure and the incised inscriptions on its surface. The incised inscriptions on the minbar (see below) provide information concerning its makers and the time of its production. The minbar was produced by *al-ʿAbd Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr Khalil the Biyabuni and his son*, in 1327.

Exterior Revetments

The architectural structure of the mosque is modern and the monument does not feature any historic architectural revetments on its exterior surfaces.

Stucco Polychromy at Jawin

The mihrab's survey documents extensive traces of dark blue and dark red on the mihrab's reliefs; these traces are located in the plain backgrounds of the inscription bands. Their uneven distribution, with concentration on the mihrab's lower parts and mainly on inscription bands, and suspiciously dark tonalities of pigmentation traces, indicate that these colouring remains are likely results of the mihrab's modern overpainting. The small mihrab does not retain any pigmentation traces.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Jawin

The craftsmen selected a wide spectrum of stucco artistic techniques for the making of Jawin mosque's monumental stucco mihrab. These techniques required carving of one, two or three consecutively applied layers of stucco, application of two layers of protruding perforated elements and also a technique which has not been spotted on other stuccos. This technique enabled the craftsmen to conceal the joints between the panels of the mihrab and to produce a band of protruding and undercut flower blossom and leaf elements. It reflects the craftsmen's creativity during the mihrab's production. The observed disparity between inscription panels and those with non-epigraphic elements could have been caused by the craftsmen's lack of skills in the production of inscriptions. This could be the result of an absence of the workshop's member responsible for inscription designs. In sum, the wide selection of stucco artistic techniques employed for the production of the Jawin mihrab illustrates the advanced skills of the craftsmen in charge of its production, despite the slightly awkward proportions of the mihrab's panels and lesser calligraphic skills for inscription designs.

[1165] The proposed hypotheses would however need further research in favour of their confirmation. Archaeometric analyses of the two mihrabs could for example provide information regarding the preparation of stucco material for the mihrab's production which could clarify any possible relation between them.

The Jawin Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetic appearance of the large stucco mihrab at the Jawin Friday mosque is determined by the wide selection of artistic techniques for its production and by some craftsmen's specific choices. Frequent use of plain background for the inscription bands determined their visibility and enhanced their legibility and highlighted the mihrab's epigraphic repertoire. Diverse stucco techniques allowed the craftsmen to variegate the relief of the mihrab which varies from very shallow panels to panels with two sets of protruding elements. The juxtaposition of listed elements and diverse visual appearances of panels allowed the craftsmen to produce the mihrab's dynamic relief. These aesthetic characteristics and the principles behind its production resemble attitudes of the craftsmen who produced the Ilkhanid stucco repertoires at Bistam and Damghan (Cat. Nos. 18, 19).

d.) Furnishing

The mosque houses a small wooden minbar, which is discussed above.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Large Stucco Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (top to bottom):

a.) The mihrab's monumental framing inscription in Kufic style features elaborated forms of letter *hastae* and additions of vertical elements which provide for its rhythmic and equilibrated appearance. It is set against the plain background with blue pigmentation remains.

An extensive portion of the inscription is damaged and only its first part remains on the mihrab's relief. The beginning of the inscription is somewhat illogical, which might be caused by a conservation intervention which resulted in the incorrect reconstruction of the inscription.

The beginning of the inscription, presumably a reconstructed part, is read as:

قرءان الفجر

The inscription continues with part of the verse of *Surat al-Israʾ*, but its beginning is missing. The remaining fragment of the inscription is from 17:78, and it reads:

لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ …

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.[1166]

The missing part of the inscription most likely contained the continuation of Qurʾan 17:78 and perhaps its next two verses (17:78-80).

[1166] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-isra-78-qs-17-78-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 9, 2021).

The same Qurʾanic verse is also found on the monumental framing inscription of the Baba Afzal mausoleum in Maraq (Cat. No. 14). The similarity of employment of the given Qurʾanic verse on these two stucco revetments illustrates that Qurʾanic verses were used for the epigraphic programmes of the stucco mihrabs (and repertoires) with a limited degree of selection and that their content was only partially linked to the function of monuments.

b.) The inscription on the exterior margin of the mihrab's lunette is designed in *Naskh* style and set against a background of recessed floral scroll elements, which fill the empty space behind the inscription. The beginning and the middle portion of the inscription are intact, but the rest is lost.

The inscription starts with the *Basmala*, of which the beginning remains:

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱ

The next remaining portion of the inscription featured Qurʾan, *Surat al-Nakhl*, 16:128, but it only remains in fragments.

The beginning is missing:

إِنَّ

The preserved part of the inscription reads:

اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْ

The end of the verse is missing:

ا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good.[1167]

But it is unlikely that the entire verse of the Qurʾanic excerpt fitted on the short inscription band.

c.) The inscription in the intrados of the mihrab niche's lunette which flanks the lunette on the right- and left-hand sides, was produced in Kufic style, but the majority of the inscription is no longer extant. The plain background of the inscription retains dark red colouring, but it is not clear if this is a result of overpainting or if these are original pigmentation remains. Only the beginning of the inscription, the *Basmala*, remains on the mihrab's relief:

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّ

d.) The inscription band which outlines the lower edge of the mihrab niche's lunette is designed in *Naskh* style; it is set against a plain background which retains extensive remains of dark blue, likely results of overpainting. The inscription begins with the *Basmala* and it continues with Qurʾan (*Surat al-Baqara*; 2:163). The end of the inscription is missing.

[1167] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-an-nahl-128-qs-16-128-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: February 2, 2021).

بِسْمِ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنِ ٱلرَّحِيمِ

The extant fraction of the Qurʾanic inscription reads:

وَإِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَّا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ا ...

The remaining part of the inscription is missing, but it should continue as:

لرَّحْمَٰنُ الرَّحِيمُ

And your god is one God. There is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.[1168]

e.) The lower part of the mihrab's niche consists of three rectangular panels. The middle panel contains fragments of two inscriptions. The large Kufic inscription functions as a framing inscription of the panel and the interior of the panel may have contained another, smaller, *Naskh* style inscription (see the next section; section f.), which seems to (have) contained historic content. The beginning of the large framing inscription is damaged, but partially legible. The inscription features at least two Qurʾanic verses from *Surah Yunus* (10:105-106), the content of which is particularly suitable for epigraphic programmes of mihrabs and architectural revetments on *qibla* walls. The inscription retains traces of dark red in its plain background, but this colouring could be result of overpainting.

The damaged beginning of the inscription reads:

وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ

The well-preserved part of the inscription continues as:

لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ
وَلَا تَدْعُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

The continuation is damaged and only one fragment of it can be read as:

يَنفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُ

It is accordingly possible to conclude that the inscription featured at least verses 105 and 106 of *Surah Yunus*:[1169]

وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ
وَلَا تَدْعُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ فَإِن فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذًا مِّنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

And [commanded], 'Direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth, and never be of those who associate others with Allah;

[1168] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-163-qs-2-163-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: February 2, 2021).
[1169] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-yunus-105-qs-10-105-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 30, 3021)

And do not invoke besides Allah that which neither benefits you nor harms you, for if you did, then indeed you would be of the wrongdoers."

The inscription was likely preceded by the *Basmala*.

Importantly, this illustrates that the panel on which the framing inscription is placed, reached considerably below the current level of the mosque's floor.

f.) The aforementioned *Naskh* inscription was distributed in at least two registers, but it likely featured further registers and it was placed in the middle of the central rectangular panel of the mihrab niche's lower section. The location of the inscription reflects its significance within the epigraphic programme of the mihrab and the need for it to be well visible. The inscription's plain background retains extensive traces of dark blue pigmentation. Only the beginning of the inscription is preserved and it likely contained important information concerning the mihrab and the mosque.

The beginning provides information regarding who the religious leader of the mosque's congregation was, but the name of the person seems to have been deliberately damaged to the point that it is no longer legible. The person in question could also have acted as a patron of mosque's construction.

The inscription reads:

امام هذا المسجد الشيخ الا...

The Imam of this mosque is the Shaykh al-A…[1170]

The location of the historic inscription is appropriate, but it is not clear how frequently such historic inscriptions occurred in the lower sections of the internal niches of mihrabs, due to their frequent damage. A parallel case is found at the Mahallat-i Bala mihrab (Cat. No. 13), where the mihrab contains a historic inscription in the lower section of the niche.

g.) The area below the right-hand side capital of the mihrab comprises a cartouche with an inscription in Kufic, which is partially damaged and its last part is missing. The inscription could have continued on the (no longer extant) left hand side capital.

The remaining parts of the inscription were read by Iman Aghajani as:

لا إله إلا الله الجليل الجبار، لا إله إلا الله الواحد القهار[1171]

There is no God but God, the Majestic, the Mighty, there is no God but God, the Unique, the Subduer.

This is a fraction of a Hadith text concerning the attributes of God. It is possible that two more verses of it were inscribed on the mihrab's left-hand side column:

[1170] Iman Aghajani proposes to read the missing part of the last word visible as *Shaykh al-Islam*.
[1171] https://dorar.net/fake-hadith/151 (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).

لا إله إلا الله الكريم الستار، لا إله إلا الله الكبير المتعال[1172]

There is no God but God, the Noble, the Concealer, there is no God but God, the Great, the Transcendent.

The Small Stucco Mihrab

a.) The small mihrab is framed by one *Naskh* inscription band. Its content was read by Aghajani as 59:21 (*Surat al-Hashr*). But the inscription does not comprise the entire verse; only its first half, because there is no more space for the remaining part of the Qurʾanic verse. This practice of breaking Qurʾanic verses in inscriptions occurs occasionally on Ilkhanid stuccoworks.

Only the first half of the entire verse is contained in the inscription:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ[1173]

The entire verse would read:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَىٰ جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ[1174]

If We had sent down this Qurʾan upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.[1175]

The Wooden Minbar

The minbar's epigraphic programme is modest, and it consists of two inscriptions. There is a short invocation to God on the top portion of the minbar's left-hand side column. The longer historic inscription which provides information about the craftsmen responsible for the minbar's production and the year of its completion is written on the three horizontal beams of the minbar, on its left-hand side. Both inscriptions are incised into the structure of the minbar with fluid *Naskh* style. They possess diacritical marks, but vocalization is absent. Although these inscriptions are written in Arabic, they comprise occasional elements in Persian. This reflects the fact that the craftsmen themselves may have written and composed the texts for these inscriptions.

a.) The invocation to God is incised on the surface of the top portion of the minbar's left-hand side column, but it does not have a corresponding inscription which would be placed in a symmetrical relation to it. The absence of the other inscription could indicate that these incised inscriptions could post-date the minbar's production.

The inscription reads:

[1172] *Ibid.*
[1173] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-hashr-21-qs-59-21-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[1174] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-hashr-21-qs-59-21-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 12, 2020).
[1175] *Ibid.*

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Although this inscription can be featured independently, it would be more logical for it to be understood as the continuation of the Prophecy of Faith (the Shahada). If so, its beginning is missing, perhaps due to the minbar's restoration.

b.) The longer historic inscription is divided into three parts in order to fit on the horizontal beams of the minbar's structure; it is written in the same style as the short invocation. It provides historic information tied to the minbar's production. But it is not clear if this inscription post-dates the production of the minbar or if it is original. As mentioned, some Persian elements are inserted into this Arabic inscription.

The inscription reads:

العبر يد بر والله يقل في ماه
ربيع الخر سنة سبع و عثناين و سبعماية
كتبه العبد محمد بن ابو بكر خليل بيابانكي و ابنه في الدين

The style of the *Naskh* inscription is characterized by its simplicity, round letter forms and extreme fluidity. These aspects determine its elegant and aesthetically pleasing appearance. The inscription is important because it provides the date of the minbar's completion as 727/1327 and it informs that the inscription was *written by al-ʿAbd Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr Khalil the Biyabuni and his son*.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not retain any architectural revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

This research proposes that the construction of the Jawin mosque and the production of its architectural revetments occurred in the late Ilkhanid period. These activities may reflect the accumulation of wealth and perhaps growth of the settlement. There likely existed an older mosque in the settlement which was rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period. The sponsoring of this commission reflected the patron's will to provide a new prayer structure and to assert their economic and political authority in Jawin. This commission was likely enacted by a prominent local patron, who, according to the fragmented inscription in the lower portion of mihrab's niche, could have also been the local religious authority.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The large and the small stucco mihrabs might be works of the same intervention of stucco revetment production, despite the disparities in their technological and aesthetic features. It is plausible that craftsmen divided the work of the revetment production and performed the production of these two mihrabs in parallel. None retain signatures of their workshop, which could be due to their deterioration, or because they originally did not retain any signature.

The examination of these mihrabs yielded evidence to link the large mihrab to works of the Damghani craftsmen's workshop which operated in the area stretching from Qala-yi Naw,

Bistam and Damghan, during the time of Ghazan's and especially Uljaytu's reign. The Damghani workshop and its disciples operated in the given geographical area for several generations, and they were mobile on a radius of at least 260 km.[1176] Locations in which the works of the Damghani craftsmen's workshop are located indicate that the craftsmen were mobile in the geographical area which stretches along one of the main communication routes connecting north-western Iran and the Khurasan. These communication routes were the necessary infrastructure for the craftsmen to travel to diverse settlements and for patrons to mobilize artists. Especially in the case of Jawin, which is located in a remote, dead-end valley, the craftsmen had to be summoned to perform their work and they did not pass by the settlement in search of work.

f.) Monument Condition

The rebuilding of the mosque's structure significantly altered the architectural context of its historic revetments, but the monument seems to have been modified several times during the twentieth century.[1177] Information concerning any scientific examination of the monument's structure, or the surrounding territory is lacking. The mosque's rebuilding with modern material was performed in several stages and its current structure is a conglomerate of diverse architectural spaces. Observations of the mosque's exterior surfaces show that the lower part of its structure was rebuilt with material which was presumably part of its old structure. This is well visible on external surfaces of the mosque's *qibla* side. The procedure of the mosque rebuilding caused damage to the large carved stucco mihrab. The mihrab currently leans against the supporting wall and a carved wooden panel has been integrated on its top. The small mihrab was transferred to Simnan during these rebuilding interventions. The minbar is placed in the main prayer space of the monument, and it lacks any protection against damage. The climate and humidity of the mosque might also cause further damage. The large stucco mihrab was protected in a better way. Observations of its relief indicate that it was likely treated with Paraloid or some other consolidant, which determined the preservation of its relief, but it might have a negative effect in the long run. The mihrab is also screened off with a frame carrying a protective glass sheet. This solution may have been well implemented, because the lower part of the glass case is open, allowing access to the interior of the mihrab for the necessary interventions and enabling the exchange of air, which assures the appropriate climatic conditions for the mihrab's preservation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The discussions of the Jawin Friday mosque, the wooden minbar, the large carved stucco mihrab and the small mihrab, allow the proposition that the mosque was built or rebuilt in the late Ilkhanid period and that disciples of the Damghani stucco craftsmen family were employed in order to produce its stuccos, especially the large carved mihrab. The monument and its architectural revetments should be considered the work of a specific craftsmen's workshop which operated in the given geographical area and they should be understood as Ilkhanid repertoires, rather than Seljuq, as it is currently believed. The mihrab discussion revealed a

[1176] So far, the research by Blair showed the evidence for their mobility on a distance of some eighty to ninety km. See Blair 1982.
[1177] See images by Rizwani, which show first results of mihrab restoration prior to 1998: Rizwani 1998, 182-187.

specific artistic technique which was employed to produce its flower border band between the niche lunette's external surface inscriptions and the spandrels. Despite its not excessively elegant appearance, the mihrab was produced with a wide variety of stucco artistic techniques and it features a large number of inscriptions. This research thus provides the first detailed discussion of the monument, readings of the so far unpublished epigraphic programme, detailed reading of the inscriptions on the minbar, more precise dates for the mosque's stuccos and information concerning their production.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Rizwani 1998; Taghavinejad and Salihi 2017, 61-62.



Figure 218: The carved stucco mihrab of the Jawin Friday mosque.



Figure 219: Detail of the monumental lunette and the framing inscription band of the Jawin Friday mosque mihrab.



Figure 220: Detail of the lower section of the mihrab's niche at the Jawin Friday mosque, with fragmented historic and Qurʾanic inscriptions in Kufic style. The background retains colouring traces which could be the results of overpainting.




Figures 221-222: Details of the Jawin Friday mosque monumental mihrab. Left: detail of applied protruding elements forming the mihrab's spandrels: the artistic technique is related to the works of Damghani craftsmen. Right: Detail of mihrab's niche.




Figures 223-224: Details of the Jawin Friday mosque monumental mihrab. Left: detail of the monumental lunette topping the mihrab niche: it is produced with a specific carving approach, which combines carving of several visual planes. Right: detail of the right-hand side stucco column with rosette and geometrical quatrefoil elements resembling works of Damghani craftsmen.



Figure 225: Detail of the floral band framing the exterior of the framing inscription of the mihrab's lunette. The floral elements are undercut and they protrude from the carved stucco relief.



Figure 226: Detail of the carved wooden panel, currently topping the monumental mihrab. The panel could have originally been part of a ceiling or some other furniture. It is unlikely that it was a part of the mihrab.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 21

Monument Name: Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani mausoleum

Figs. 227-233.

Associated Names: the most common English names for the monument are the Mausoleum of Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Kharaqānī[1178] and the Shaykh Kharaqani mausoleum. Variant names are in use, due to different modalities of transliteration of the Shaykh's name and because the monument's function has been interpreted in different manners. The name of the Shaykh is differently spelled as Shaykh Abu 'l-Hasan Kharakani, Sheikh ʿAbd'ul Hasan Khargani, Shaikh ʿAbdul Hassan Kharkani, Sheykh Abu l-Hasan al-Kharqani and Abol Hassan Kharqani.[1179] In Persian descriptions, the monument is referred to as the *aramgah*, *buqʿa*, *masjid* and *khanqah*.

Monument Type: mausoleum with further structures and functions connected to the Sufi order and pilgrimage activities to the grave of the Sufi Shaykh.

Chronology: the monument is convincingly classified as work of Ilkhanid builders and stucco craftsmen, but the structure of the mausoleum has been significantly altered in past decades; only its stucco mihrab is original and the rest of the structure is modern.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): modest mausoleum structure with a square ground plan, topped by a dome.

Location: in the settlement of Qala-yi Naw Kharaqan, (located in proximities of the city of Bistam); c. 18 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Bistam in the north-east direction.

GPS location of the monument: 36.6337266 N; 55.0694034 E.

Monument Investigation: February 13, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

A summary of the settlement's history and the life of the Shaykh are provided in this section, based on the Encyclopaedia Iranica entry.[1180] According to Mustawfi and a-Muqqadasi, Bistam is located on the main communication road between Astarabad and Kharaqan and the settlement of Kharaqan was significant in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which approximately correspond to the period of Ilkhanid reign. This geographical area is characterized by moderate climate which renders agriculture of numerous orchards lucrative. The name of the settlement, *Kharaqan*, most likely derives from *Khara* (*Khor* or *Farah*) and *qan* (land), therefore, possibly, *the land of Farahmand*. Kharaqani's tomb is mentioned as one of the most significant landmarks of the area; it used to be located in the old settlement, but the modern settlement

[1178] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1179] Source of variant names of the monument: http://archnet.org/sites/5493/media_contents/41432 (Last Accessed: May 22, 2020).
[1180] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-hasan-Kharaqani-ali-b (Last Accessed: May 22, 2020).

shifted southwards. The monument is located on a natural platform overlooking the new settlement named Qala-yi Naw Kharaqan.[1181]

Shaykh Kharaqani

The Shaykh Abu'l-Hasan Kharaqani ʿAli ibn-i Ahmad ibn-i Jaʿfar ibn-i Salman (963-1033), was the Sufi Shaykh, native to the Kharaqan settlement near Bistam. The Shaykh was of humble origin and was reportedly born in Kharaqan in 963. The Shaykh was famous already during his lifetime, and according to written accounts, he was visited by historic figures, among whom were Mahmud of Ghazna and Ibn-i Sina. He is considered a mystic of great significance and he was lauded by other Sufi authorities, such as Abu Saʿid ibn-i Abi'l-Khayr (d. 1049), Abu'l-Qasim Qushayri (d. 1072) and in particular ʿAbdullah Ansari (d. 1089), who retained that Shaykh Kharaqani is one of the most important Sufi masters of his time.

He is reported as the Shaykh whose works were written in Persian rather than Arabic. According to Landolt, the question of Kharaqani's affiliation to Sufi groups remains obscure. Sources also report rivalry between Kharaqani and Abu ʿAbdullah Dastani from Bistam (d. 1026) with regard to spiritual theories as well as the competition for the title of *the Shaykh of Mashayikh* (*the Master of Masters*). Sources report that Kharaqani regarded himself as the disciple and closely connected (in a spiritual way) to Bayazid Bistami, and as Landolt reports, there are many similarities between the sayings of the two Sufi leaders. Kharaqani was accordingly included into the spiritual genealogy of the Naqshbandi order, but he has also been associated to the Suhrawardi order and the Shafiʿi theological school. But according to Landolt, Kharaqani may have gravitated towards the Malamatiya tradition of historic Khurasan. Furthermore, he did not regard highly the institutionalized Sufism and he followed classical Islamic ascetism. One of the oldest quotations of Kharaqani is included in Qushayri's *Risala*, which was written only twelve years after the death of the Shaykh. The most important work of the Shaykh, the *Kitab Nur al-ʿUlum* is known through an extract produced in 1299.

Background

The Kharaqani mausoleum's limited research of past decades is poorly published. The only English mention of the monument is by Hillenbrand, in his report on new discoveries of the travels in Khurasan from 1971.[1182] The only sources of information, apart from discussions of the Shaykh and his life, are personal blogs of art history by Sufism enthusiasts. Another significant source is Josephine Powell's photographic documentation of the monument, during her visit in the 1960s, which provides important documentation of the mausoleum's stucco mihrab.[1183] These sources, combined with the mausoleum's Qajar photographic documentation and its recent field survey, provide material for the discussion of the monument's stucco mihrab.

[1181] Qala-yi Naw Haraqan is the most common way of spelling of the settlement, although Kharaqan would be more correct.
[1182] Hillenbrand 1971, 161.
[1183] These photos are important, because they document the state of the mihrab prior to its modern restoration interventions. They allow the support of the mihrab, parts where it was ruined and its decoration to be observed. http://archnet.org/sites/5493/media_contents/41426 (Last Accessed: November 29, 2020).

Importantly, another mausoleum, believed to be the place of martyrdom and burial of Shaykh Kharaqani is located in Kars (Turkey).[1184] This monument dates to the Ottoman period and it was endowed by Sultan Murad III, when the grave of the Shaykh was miraculously rediscovered through a dream-like intervention. This *discovery* and patronage of the monument in Kars were strongly tied to the interpretation of the Shaykh's significance in defending the Sunni Islam as opposed to the Shiʿite Islamic threat from the Iranian territory, in the context of Ottoman – Safavid conflicts. These two mausolea of the Shaykh reflect differing religious and socio-political interpretations of the Shaykh's significance.

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 227.

Most of the monument's structure has been modified in recent times. The Qajar photographic documentation of the mausoleum's exterior provides the most significant evidence regarding its original iteration.[1185] The caption below this photograph informs that it was produced by the *Dar al-Funun,* that its photographer was Hanizad ʿAbdullah-i Qajar and that the photograph documents the exterior view of the Hasan Kharaqani mausoleum (literally the building and the mosque) of the settlement Qasba-yi Naw, which was constructed during the reign of Abu Saʿid, which is located close to Bistam and which is in a ruined state.[1186] The caption includes the blessings related to the Shaykh and a serial number in its bottom left corner.

The mausoleum of the Shaykh is located on slightly elevated terrain, overlooking the settlement of Qala-yi Naw Kharaqan. It developed into an important pilgrimage destination. The complex was refurbished in order to cater to pilgrims. The orientation of the monument is peculiar; it is oriented towards the west, and it differs by some 45 degrees from the *qibla* direction. This could be evidence of the existence of a pre-Ilkhanid building on the spot of the Shaykh's grave, which could date to Seljuq or earlier periods. Hillenbrand states that from the external view, the mausoleum is an irregular octagon with a deep niche on each side.[1187] Compared to the late Qajar period photograph of the monument, Hillenbrand seems to describe a structure which was already experiencing major rebuilding activities. Hillenbrand states that internally the structure assumes square form, and that its interior has been whitewashed except for the stucco mihrab.

Construction Phases

Gathered descriptions and documentation of the monument allow the proposition of a few points regarding its history and function. The Qajar photograph documents the exterior of the

[1184] For a detailed discussion of the history of the monument, its patronage, waqf and other information, see the article by Mevlüt Çam: Çam 2016, 121-142.
[1185] The photograph with the best resolution was found on Wikipedia, but the question of its copyright for publication remains ambiguous. The resolution is good enough to read the caption which identifies the photographed building as the mausoleum of Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani. The smaller parts of the caption of the photograph are difficult to decipher. https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87_%D8%B4%DB%8C%D8%AE_%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86_%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C#/media/%D9%BE%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87:%D8%A2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87_%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C.jpg (Last Accessed: May 22, 2020).
[1186] I would like to thank Maryam Moeini for her help with the reading of the entire caption of the photograph.
[1187] Hillenbrand 1971, 161.

monument's south-western section. It illustrates that the original structure of the monument consisted of two separate buildings which were likely works of two separate campaigns. The core of the mausoleum consisted of the square structure which featured two storeys in its exterior and was topped by a dome. The monument's south-western façade was divided into three parts; the main arch niche with the entrance opening and two rows of blind niches on each side of the structure's opening. This structure was constructed out of fired brick. The photograph also documents the roofing system of the mausoleum; at the time of its documentation the exterior of the two shells of the dome had already collapsed, but the internal dome was in place.

In sum, the core of the monument was of unassuming dimensions, and it featured standard architectural elements and forms. This structure was preceded on the south-western side by a small vestibule. The building and decorative interventions of the Ilkhanid period comprised the construction of the mausoleum's main square structure and production of its interior decoration. The monument's irregular orientation, differing from the direction of the *qibla*, could therefore have been determined by the smaller, perhaps pre-existing structure. The Ilkhanid patron's motivations for the mausoleum's construction and its decorative campaigns must have been politically motivated. The Qajar photograph indicates that the monument's structure remained largely unchanged until modern times. The partially degraded state of the monument's main part (large cracks in the supporting walls, lack of external dome shell, partially ruined façade niches, etc.), indicate that the monument was in a relatively deteriorated state. But it could have been repaired, rather than entirely replaced by a modern structure. Starting in the pre-Revolutionary period, the main structure of the mausoleum was destroyed and subsequently rebuilt in order to feature an octagonal ground plan, to which Hillenbrand refers.

Further modifications of the mausoleum were undertaken to transform it into a pilgrimage complex. The current monument includes the mausoleum of the Shaykh, with its octagonal part of the structure functioning as a prayer space or mosque for pilgrims. The garden setting of the entire complex, its service structures and also accommodation facilities for the pilgrims were also built recently. Together with the grave of the Sufi Shaykh in the smaller adjacent space, the stucco mihrab functions as a sacred relic, which emits blessings to pilgrims.

Phase One - The Earliest Kharaqani Mausoleum

The discussion of the existing evidence about the mausoleum's history, indicates that there was an earlier funerary structure on the site of the Shaykh's tomb, which pre-dated the Ilkhanid period. This structure assumed modest dimensions and it functioned as a building comprising the tomb of the Shaykh which could have been constructed soon after his death or later in the Seljuq period.

Phase One– The Ilkhanid Kharaqani Mausoleum

Ilkhanid interventions on the site of the Shaykh's tomb present the most significant phase in the history of this religious complex. Ilkhanid authorities sponsored the construction of the square mausoleum with the double shelled dome and internal stucco revetment repertoire, in order to encourage the devotion to the Shaykh and to have control of religious and pilgrimage activities within the Empire. The historic inscription (see below), which reportedly existed in the interior

of the mausoleum's dome, provides evidence indicating that the patronage of the mausoleum was undertaken during the time of Sultan Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan's rule (r. 1316-1335) and that the patrons of the enterprise were the local Ilkhanid officials.[1188] Another peculiarity of the mihrab (discussed below) are its inscriptions in Persian, rather than Arabic, which was the norm in the Ilkhanid period. It is likely that this epigraphic programme was determined by the fact that this was a mausoleum for the specific Shaykh and the inscriptions were thus written in Persian. Use of Persian for inscriptions in stucco medium can also be interpreted as evidence of the repertoire's late Ilkhanid date, when Persian language inscriptions are featured more frequently on architectural revetments. Importantly, the historic inscription starts by quoting one of the Chapter 9 verses of the Qurʾan (*Surat al-Tawba*), which refers to the theme of mosque construction and it continues by describing the building as the blessed dome. It is thus likely that the square part of the funerary complex was intended as a small mosque or a prayer surface for the faithful. But the specific reference to the *blessed dome* could also be a sign of repairs of an already existing structure.[1189] In sum, construction of the extensive part of the monument and production of its stucco repertoire took place in the Ilkhanid period.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The mausoleum of Kharaqani did not undergo major modifications in the medieval period. The Qajar photograph indicates that at least the exterior of the monument and its dimensions remained largely unchanged until modern times. Modifications of the structure began prior to the Islamic Revolution; as reported by Hillenbrand, the monument already featured a modern structure in the 1970s. The monument's further modifications continued until recent times and the only original part of the structure is its monumental Ilkhanid stucco mihrab. The initially modest mausoleum structure was gradually transformed into a modern pilgrimage complex; it is surrounded by a quadripartite garden, and further service structures have been constructed, including library and accommodation facilities for pilgrims.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

The monument's available documentation indicates that its original structure featured the square plan mausoleum preceded by a rectangular vestibule on its south-western side.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

As documented on the late Qajar photograph, the elevation of the monument's main façade consisted of two storeys on its south-western side, which was preceded by an entrance vestibule. The most elevated point of the monument was the double-shelled dome, which covered its square core.

[1188] Compare to stuccoworks of the monuments of near-by Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19), the Burj-i Kashana with the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18) and also the no longer extant structure adjacent to the Pir-i Alamdar tower in Damghan. In this respect, the works on the Kharaqani mausoleum may be one of the later stucco revetment repertoires produced by this workshop.

[1189] This would be similar to the historic stucco inscription running along the top sections of supporting walls of the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine in Natanz (Cat. No. 12).

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The understanding of the monument's original religious function is blurred due to its numerous modern alterations. According to Landolt, the monument should be understood as a mausoleum or a burial chamber with an adjacent mosque.[1190] Hillenbrand considers the monument to be a mausoleum.[1191] The late Qajar period photograph, which documents the monument's original structural form, suggests that it was built as a mausoleum with a prayer space for pilgrims, similar to the Maraq mausoleum (Cat. No. 14) and the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12).

In sum, the main function of the monument was to house that tomb of the Shaykh. The mentioned mosque function of the monument's main part, should therefore be understood as a place for prayer for the pilgrims rather than a mosque in its own right. The existence of a *khanqah* on the site is not attested, but the complex may have originally comprised a separate structure with *khanqah* function. The octagonal form of the main part of the mausoleum is therefore not evidence of it being a *khanqah*, but the result of the monument's modern modifications.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Architectural revetments of the Kharaqani's mausoleum can be roughly divided into two groups. The first group comprises the remaining historic revetments - the carved stucco mihrab in the interior of mausoleum's main architectural structure. It functioned as the focal point of a more extensive stucco revetment programme. Sources mention that there was a monumental historic inscription which ran around the interior perimeter of the dome of the mausoleum; it could have been produced in carved stucco. The second group comprises the mausoleum's modern architectural revetments: the alabaster slab of the Shaykh's cenotaph from the 1930s, the small internal ceramic mosaic reflecting the form of the dome above the Shaykh's cenotaph, and exterior ceramic revetments on the mausoleum's entrance portal. Furthermore, chequered patterns are produced with ceramic inserts to decorate the spandrels and to form the visual frame to the mausoleum's façade. Further ceramic inserts have been employed to accentuate visual forms of the external surfaces of the mausoleum's transitional elements.

Interior Revetments

The Mihrab

Figs. 228-233.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The carved stucco mihrab of the Kharaqani mausoleum was installed into the mausoleum's supporting wall which is constructed out of fired brick. The depth of the mihrab's internal niche indicates that the mihrab was installed in the mausoleum in parallel to its construction. The examination of the mihrab by the ICHHTO provides evidence suggesting that there was an

[1190] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/abul-hasan-Kharaqani-ali-b (Last Accessed: May 22, 2020).
[1191] Hillenbrand 1971, 161.

earlier mihrab and a structure on the site.[1192] The mihrab assumes small to middle dimensions (3.35 m high and 1.90 m wide),[1193] but in its original form, it could have extended throughout the surface of the supporting wall. Hillenbrand explains that the stucco mihrab features numerous characteristics of Mongol stucco style; false bricks and joint plugs incised in plaster, a series of small motifs in place of large compositions and vertical emphasis on niches and arches.[1194] He concludes by stating that the absence of Kufic style inscriptions points towards the mihrab's Ilkhanid date.

The design and panel division of the mihrab display some peculiar solutions. The mihrab is formed by a relatively large interior niche which is deeper, compared to the related stucco mihrabs of the Bistam Friday mosque (Cat. No. 18) and the Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19). Most of its inscription bands have been given a concave form in order to variegate the appearance of its panels and to determine its dynamic form. The niche is framed by an inscription band which runs throughout its perimeter thus substituting the usual pair of columns surmounting the arch. This unusual solution may be unique. The niche is topped by a pair of spandrels with symmetrical floral compositions and a horizontal inscription panel. The structure of the mihrab is framed by the exterior monumental inscription band in *Thuluth* style.

Mihrab Panels and Inscriptions

The mihrab's niche was damaged and some of its stucco surfaces are no longer extant (Figs. 229-230). The interior of the niche was decorated with stucco panels which did not feature any inscriptions. The side surfaces of the niche's lower part are preserved and they display repeating designs of elaborate stucco plug compositions. The main interior surface of the mihrab's niche is no longer extant. The lunette of the niche (Fig. 231) is of restricted dimensions and features a triangular pointed form with a symmetrical design of floral ornaments, which assume simple abstracted split-palmettes, tripartite leaf-like elements and blossoms. The tripartite leaf-like elements and the abstracted split-palmettes are identical to such elements on stucco repertoires of Bistami monuments which were produced by the Damghani stucco workshop. The lunette panel is framed by a large geometric band with further floral elements. This design of ornamentation finds close parallels in stuccos of the Burj-i Kashana in Bistam (the entrance portal of the Bistam Friday mosque; Cat. No. 18) and the stucco mihrab of the Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19). Furthermore, both, the lunette and the described frame, feature particular stucco perforations, with small punctures, which are occasionally framed by circular incisions, and which are found on Bistami stucco repertoires. Another peculiar element of the lunette's vegetal composition are the two rosettes or flower blossoms in its top section. These rosettes are closely related to the ones on the top sections of the column capitals flanking the interior niche of the carved stucco mihrab at the Jawin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 20).

The described mihrab niche structure is flanked by an inscription band (Figs. 230, 232). It is written in *Naskh*, with occasional superimpositions of inscription. Its background is filled with abstract decorative elements. The inscription has so far not been read. This inscription band assumes a concave form and it mediates between the panels of the mihrab's deep niche and its external panels. The niche of the mihrab is topped by a pair of spandrels which form one stucco

[1192] Hillenbrand 1971, 161.
[1193] *Ibid.*
[1194] *Ibid.*, 161.

panel (Fig. 229). These spandrels display symmetrical compositions of split palmettes with extensive incisions on their surfaces and their background filled with leaf-like elements. The dimensions of these vegetal compositions are relatively large, and they are related to those in the niche and to the stucco repertoires located on Bistami monuments. The spandrel panel is topped by a horizontal panel which features a Prophetic Hadith in *Naskh* style and Arabic language (Fig. 229). The inscription background is filled with vegetal and geometric ornaments which are related to designs of spandrels and the mihrab's lunette.

The mihrab's structure is framed by the monumental inscription band (Figs. 228-230) in *Naskh* style and Persian language; its content is specific and it comprises one of the Shaykh's sayings (see below). The inscription is placed in one register with occasional superimpositions. Its background is filled with ornamental elements featuring leaf-like forms, geometric elements and perforated swirls. Its background elements are not recessed. This attitude is also observed on other panels of the mihrab's relief and it is a feature which the Kharaqani mihrab shares with the Bistami stucco repertoires (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). It is probable that the mihrab originally featured at least one more framing band and that its dimensions were more extensive.

Remarks Regarding Mihrab's Epigraphic Programme

This mihrab comprises a monumental inscription in Persian language with specific content tied to the monument's function. Its content is believed to be one of the Shaykh's sayings, which concerns the *qibla* direction and the question of the holiness of religious spaces. The Hadith in Arabic, in the horizontal panel of the mihrab, refers to the theme of prayer. The small niche framing inscription perhaps features a Qurʾanic excerpt. The earlier section concerning the life of the Shaykh Kharaqani, shows that the Shaykh's Arabic language knowledge was limited, and that his sayings are transmitted in Persian. The epigraphic programme of the mihrab hints at the function of the architectural space through its Hadith placed in its focal point. The religious message of the Shaykh in the monumental framing inscription accordingly ties the mihrab to the specifically funerary nature of the monument and the Shaykh's Sufi teachings. The choice of these inscriptions must have been determined by the patron of the stucco repertoire, perhaps in collaboration with the stucco craftsmen. It was intended to reflect the sacred nature of the burial place and teachings of the Shaykh. The stucco mihrab of the Kharaqani mausoleum is one of very few such cases in Ilkhanid stucco medium. The only other known inscriptions in the Persian language and carved stucco medium are the inscription bands in the interior of the Khizr mausoleum in Hamadan (Cat. No. 37).

Mihrab Production

Damaged parts of the mihrab's lower portions reveal the supporting wall into which the mihrab is installed. The wall is built out of fired brick material and the builders prepared the wall surface for the mihrab's production. Damage to the mihrab's lower sections reveals the modality of overlap between them. The production of the carved panels of the mihrab began in its interior niche; first, the rectangular panels were produced and subsequently, the mihrab's lunette was made. The joint between the lunette and the panels is visible, because the lunette layer protrudes by a few centimetres from the plane featured by the rectangular panels. Upon the completion of the niche panels, the craftsmen proceeded in their work with the production of the interior framing inscription; its internal edge covers the edges of the niche's panels. The craftsmen subsequently produced the panel comprising the spandrels and mihrab's horizontal Hadith inscription. Finally, they produced the monumental external inscription band. In sum, the craftsmen began their work of stucco carving in the central part of the mihrab and they

proceeded to carve its external parts. The mihrab's inscriptions were carved in the direction in which they were written.

Observations of Kharaqani's mihrab provide information regarding the stucco artistic techniques and carving approaches for its production. It was made by using the least complex stucco artistic technique, which comprised application of a coarse layer of stucco for the basis and only one layer of fine stucco material, which was carved. The carving angle between the tools and the stucco surface is variegated and it usually amounts to around sixty degrees. The fact that the mihrab was likely produced in Ilkhanid period, possibly towards the end of it, when numerous more complex production techniques existed, renders the choice of this modest production technology somewhat unusual. The choice of stucco panel production out of one carved stucco layer featuring one visual plane, is also the main stucco production approach which was employed by the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop. The stucco repertoires of Bistam however occasional employ some small dimension protruding elements. The difference in observed selection of artistic techniques for the production of the stucco repertoires at Bistam and Qala-yi Naw may reflect the fact that the artistic techniques were applied selectively for stucco production.

Comparanda

The stucco panels of the Kharaqani mihrab contain ornamental elements which they share with the Bistami stucco repertoires (Cat. Nos. 18, 19). The most important elements in common include: the blossoms and the tripartite leaf elements of the lunette of Kharaqani's mihrab, the geometrical x-formed border framing the lunette, and other leaf elements on its spandrels, in the background of the horizontal inscription panel and the monumental external inscription band. In addition to these similarities, the repertoires also share similar cursive style of inscriptions and stucco production technology. The Kharaqani mihrab is more modest, despite the quality of its carving and design matching the Bistami repertoires. This is impacted by two main factors; only the mihrab from the original repertoire is still extant and the surface of the mihrab's relief is damaged, most likely due to the damage of its architectural structure.

Reportedly, a historic inscription of the Kharaqani mausoleum (see below) informed that the stucco repertoire was produced during the reign of Abu Saʿid. It is thus plausible that the Kharaqani stucco repertoire was produced by the same craftsmen's workshop as the Bistami repertoires, but possibly in the period subsequent to their production. Younger generation craftsmen from the Bistami workshop could have been in charge of the production of the Kharaqani mihrab. Kharaqani stuccos may have been a lesser dimension commission, compared to those in Bistam. Craftsmen therefore adjusted their product according to the amount of resources they were given. The distances between these monuments propose that the craftsmen were mobile at a distance of 90 km (as the crow flies).

Mihrab's Dating

The mentioned no longer extant historic inscription on the interior perimeter of the dome of the Kharaqani mausoleum (see below) provides indicative evidence that the stucco repertoire of the Kharaqani mausoleum was produced during the reign of the last Ilkhanid ruler Abu Saʿid. This is plausible and may reflect the relationship with the Bistami stucco repertoires which were produced during the reigns of Ghazan Khan and Uljaytu. An earlier date for the mihrab is nevertheless equally possible, judging from its formal and technological features. Persian language inscriptions on the mihrab could have been the result of direct links between their

content and the specific function and dedication of the mausoleum to the particular Shaykh. But they may also be interpreted as evidence in favour of its late Ilkhanid date.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior revetment repertoire of the mausoleum is the work of modern rebuilding and redecoration activities and their appearance and media do not reflect historic characteristics of the mausoleum, as documented on the late Qajar photograph.

Stucco Polychromy at the Kharaqani Mausoleum

Hillenbrand mentions that at the time of his visit to the Kharaqani's mausoleum, its interior was entirely whitewashed with the exception of the mihrab. Closer observations of the mihrab's relief reveal the presence of some traces of white, but the majority of its surfaces feature the light brown colour of its stucco body. No pigmentation traces remain on its surface. This is similar to stucco repertoires in Bistam, the majority of which is whitewashed. It is difficult to understand this lack of pigmentation traces on the Kharaqani's mausoleum and the only possible explanation is that the pigmentation was entirely lost, or that it, less likely, was not coloured.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Kharaqani Mausoleum

The craftsmen who produced the mihrab, selected a modest approach to stucco carving and artistic technique, which required the stucco relief to be produced out of one layer of stucco body. Carving was performed at around a sixty degree angle and it resulted in the production of a relatively shallow mihrab stucco relief, with inscriptions and ornamental elements on a single visual plane, juxtaposed to the recessed parts of the relief produced by stucco carving. Use of a single stucco artistic technique and constant stucco carving approach determined the mihrab's uniform appearance. The mihrab was rendered dynamic by production of the curved interior inscription band, which frames its niche and adoption of cursive inscription styles for its inscription bands. The described simplicity of the stucco production methodology could reflect the limited or modest size of the endowment for the production of the mausoleum's interior revetments.

The Kharaqani Mausoleum Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The visual appearance and aesthetics of the Kharaqani mihrab were determined by the stucco carving approach and artistic technique employed for its production. They are characterized by a relatively shallow relief, a feature shared with stucco repertoires of the given geographical region, located in Bistam, Damghan (no longer extant) and also further off, at Farumad and Khusraw Shir. The peculiarity of the Kharaqani's mihrab stems from the decision to employ cursive inscription styles and to exclude Kufic style from its epigraphic repertoire. The mihrab does not feature any complex geometric elements and precedence is given to symmetrical vegetal compositions consisting of palmette and leaf elements. These formal elements determined the fluid appearance of the mihrab's visual programme, which mainly excluded any angular elements. In sum, the aesthetic choices of the craftsmen for the mihrab's visual content, determined an innovative syntax between its epigraphic and ornamental elements and determined the mihrab's distinct aesthetic appearance.

d.) Furnishing

No historic pieces of furniture have been documented in the mausoleum at the time of its visit.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions:

a.) Horizontal panel with the Prophetic Hadith written in *Naskh* style, concerning prayer:[1195]

قال النبی علیه السلام المصلی یناجی ربه

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The one who prays entrusts himself to his Lord."

The content of the Hadith and its central placement in the mihrab's focal point are not coincidental and they reflect the main function (prayer space for the faithful) of the architectural space where it is located.

b.) Exterior monumental framing band of the mihrab written in *Naskh* style, presumably one of the sayings of Shaykh Kharaqani, regarding the *qibla*:[1196]

گفت علی شیخ قدس الله روحه قبله پنج است : کعبه قبله مومنان است , بیت المعمور قبله فرشتگان است [sic] [و عرش] قبله دعاگویان است و حق قبله جوانمردان و دوستان است ...

ʿAli Shaykh, may god purify his soul, said (that) there are five qiblas: the Kaʿba is the qibla of Believers, the Bait al-Maʿmur (the Frequented House) is the qibla of Angels… (missing part of the inscription) … and the throne of the qibla is praying, and the right to the qibla is of Gentlemen (intended as Sufi ascetics) and Friends (the end of the inscription is missing).

The last part of the inscription was at certain point restored, (and later removed), as:

دل قبله عارفان است

The heart is the qibla of mystics.

The content of the inscription may be one of Shaykh Kharaqani's sayings. This is one of the few known inscriptions on Ilkhanid stucco revetments, written in Persian, in addition to the quotations of the *Shahnama* in stuccos of the Khizr mausoleum in Hamadan (Cat. No. 37). The reasons for the writing of the inscription in Persian are arguments in favour of the hypothesis that the content of the inscription is indeed one of the Shaykh's sayings, who, as reported, did not master the Arabic language well and normally operated in Persian. The Persian language inscription on the mihrab is additional evidence in favour of the hypothesis that the mausoleum's stuccos were produced towards the end of the Ilkhanid Empire.

[1195] See also https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%A2%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%85%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87_%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86_%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C (Last Accessed: January 27, 2021).

[1196] https://www.ettelaat.com/mobile/?p=32452&device=phone (Last Accessed: January 27, 2021).

c.) Interior inscription band which frames the exterior margin of the mihrab's niche is written in *Naskh* style and it has so far not been read. It perhaps features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Hashr*.[1197]

d.) According to reports, there existed a monumental historic inscription in the interior of the mausoleum, which ran along the perimeter of the dome (the medium of the inscription is not specified, but it could have been carved stucco), with information concerning the patronage of the monument, but it is no longer extant, and it needs to be comprehended as an indicative piece of information:[1198]

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم انما يعمر مساجد الله من آمن بالله و اليوم الاخر و قد امر بنا القبة المباركة فى ايام الدولة السلطان اعظم مالک رقاب الامم غياث الدنيا و الدين ابوسعيد بهادر خان خلد الله ملكه .... الامير العادل مخلص الملک خسرو آفاق كرويج نويان يزيد عدله رجا شفاعة سلطان الاوليا سند العارفين و قطب السالكين ابى الحسن قدس الله روحه تقبل الله منه فى توليه شيخ الاسلام المعظم صدر الملة و الدين ابو يزيد بن ابى القاسم بسعى مشايخ الاعظام نظام الملة و الدين [sic] بن ابى القاسم و ركن الملة و الدين ابوالحسن و تاج الملة و الدين محمد ابنا الشيخ الصدر الدين آدام الله بركاته

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Mosques are built (only) by (those) who believe in God and the Day of the Judgement (following the beginning of verse 18 of chapter 9 – Surat al-Tawba of the Qurʾan). And the building of the blessed dome was ordered in the days (of the rule) of his majesty the great Sultan, Malik Raqib al-Umam, Ghiyath al-Dunya wa al-Din, Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan, may God perpetuate his reign… al-Amir al-ʿAdil (the just ruler), the saviour of the kingdom, Khusraw of the Lands, Karwij Nuayan, may his justice increase, he asked for the intercession of the sultan of the friends of God, the supporter of those who have knowledge (of God), and the chief of those on the path (of God), Abu al-Hasan, may God sanctify his soul, and may God accept (his good deeds) from him, in the vicinity of the great Shaykh al-Islam, the chief of the (Muslim) community and of the religion, Abu Yazid ibn Abi al-Qasim, and the pillar of the congregation and the religion, Abu al-Hasan, and the crown of the congregation and the religion, Muhammad son of the Shaykh, the chest of the religion, may God's blessings last upon him.[1199]

The inscription may have been composed on purpose for the building, and it contains information regarding the patronage of the Ilkhanid construction of the mausoleum and its revetments, most likely an extended stucco repertoire. It reports that the monument was constructed during the reign of Abu Saʿid and it lists the personages involved in its patronage. These persons may have been linked to the Ilkhanid administration and at the same time also to the Sufi circle tied to the Shaykh. The caption of the late Qajar photograph of the mausoleum's exterior also states that the mausoleum was constructed during Abu Saʿid's reign, and it is plausible that the information for it could have been taken from this inscription which could have still existed at the time of the mausoleum's photographic documentation.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature post-Ilkhanid stucco works, except for modern revetments.

[1197] Personal communication by Iman Aghajani.
[1198] The author of the article refers to the source of the inscription as one of the publications of ICHTTO. See https://sinapress.ir/news/10914/ (Last Accessed: May 22, 2020).
[1199] I thank my dear friend and colleague, Aila Santi for help with the translation of this inscription.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The mausoleum's observed characteristics and the Ilkhanid building and decorative activities, reflect the attitude of pious patronage of structures connected to Sufi personages. The mausoleum's construction not only enabled the patrons to illustrate their piousness and assert their political authority in the given region, but it also made it possible for the tomb of the Shaykh to be transformed into a pilgrimage destination. The described political background of the mausoleum's patronage may reflect attitudes and state policies which were put in place already during the time of Ghazan Khan's reign and which continued under Uljaytu and Abu Saʿid.[1200] In terms of material resources and labour, the construction and decoration of the Kharaqani mausoleum in the late Ilkhanid period was not a large dimension endowment, but it was significant from a socio-political and religious point of view. In fact, its presumed patrons were personages tied to both, the Sufi movement and the Ilkhanid Empire administration. They also may have been personally tied to the settlement in which the mausoleum is located.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco mihrab was one of the later works of some members or disciples of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop. The more modest appearance of the Kharaqani mihrab was most likely determined by the limited resources of its endower, but the formal quality of the mihrab's inscriptions and ornamentation are of the same level as those on the stuccos of Bistami and Damghani repertoires. As explained, the association of the Kharaqani mihrab with works of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's workshop provides evidence indicating that this workshop operated in at least three related settlements which span the distance of 90 km (as the crow flies).

f.) Monument Condition

The monument was in ruined conditions when it was documented in the Qajar period and it was subsequently rebuilt. The historic inscription on the replaced tombstone of the cenotaph of the Shaykh provides information regarding the mausoleum's historic renovations and rebuilding in the 1930s. There also is information indicating that the mausoleum's first extensive modifications took place in the years preceding the Iranian Islamic Revolution.[1201] These interventions comprised the rebuilding of the architectural space around the mihrab, and they were initiated by the General Directorate of Archaeology. Another large-scale rebuild of the complex for pilgrimage was performed after 1971. Authors also mention that the local ICHHTO office undertook some archaeological excavations of the area in 1999, but no reports on these research activities have been located. A quote from the report states that in the *qibla* area of the

[1200] Compare to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12), the Shaykh Jami complex (Cat. No. 30), modifications of Gunbad-i ʿAlawiyan mausoleum, modifications to the Imamzada Yahya mausoleum in Varamin (Cat. No. 36), extensions and redecorations of the Pir Husayn Khanqah in Qubalıbalaoğlan (Cat. No. 25), the Alinja Khanqah in Nakhchivan (Cat. No. 26), and several other monuments.

[1201] https://www.irna.ir/news/81480174/%D8%AA%D8%B9%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%B5%D9%87-%D9%88-%D8%AD%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B9%D9%87-%D8%B4%D9%8A%D8%AE-%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%B3%D9%86-%D8%AE%D8%B1%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%88-%D8%AF%D9%88-%D8%A7%D8%AB%D8%B1-%D8%B4%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86 (Last Accessed: January 27, 2021).

mausoleum, excavations were performed, and that at a depth of some 10 cm, remains of another mihrab were found, which was produced with fired bricks and layers of gypsum. Further modifications of the monument and its surroundings (the garden and the structures of the complex) were still being put in place during recent years. The monument structure is a modern one and the monument operates fully as a pilgrimage and learning centre.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This is the first systematic text with information concerning the history of the monument, its architectural structure and revetments, function and dating. It has been shown that the original monument assumed the form of a square mausoleum with a conical dome and interior carved stucco revetment decoration. The monument was sponsored by the local religious and state authorities, for commemoration of the Shaykh's tomb, to bolster pilgrimage activities and to assert political authority. The commission took place, most likely, during the rule of Abu Saʿid. A Damghani craftsman was called to perform the interior revetments production based on the available budget. The mihrab's epigraphic programme reflects its function, and also the function and meaning of the mausoleum, and it clearly demonstrates the connection to the Shaykh buried in the mausoleum and his teachings. The Persian inscription on the mihrab is an exception to the rule in the context of Ilkhanid stucco revetments. The monument's modern rebuilding and modifications enabled for the continuity of its function, and to sustain pilgrims visiting the sacred place. But they also altered the original architectural context of the stucco mihrab and the Shaykh's tomb, and concealed any evidence for comprehending the mausoleum's history.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Hillenbrand 1971, 161. Photographs by Josephine Powell (Archnet).

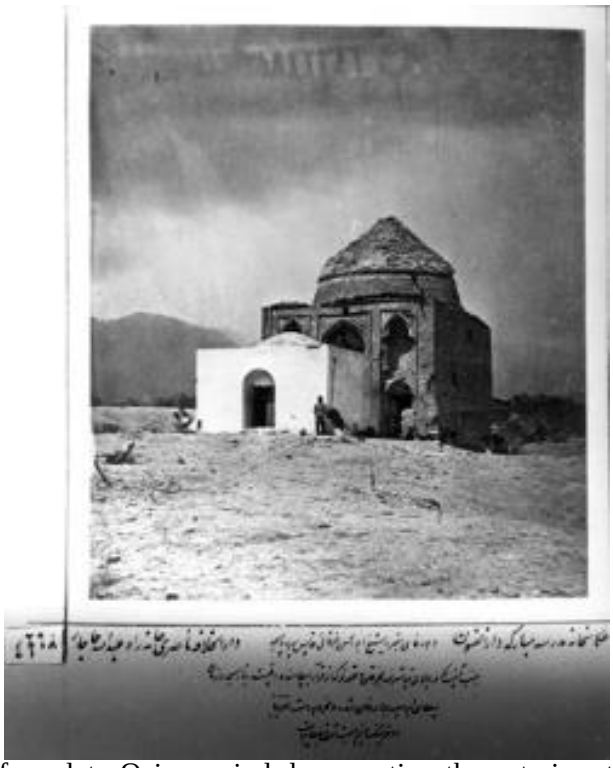


Figure 227: Photograph from late Qajar period documenting the exterior structure of the Kharaqani mausoleum. View from the south-west (Wikipedia Commons).



Figure 228: Carved stucco mihrab of the Kharaqani complex.



Figure 229: Detail of the upper portion of the mihrab, with the Hadith inscription placed in the horizontal stucco panel, which acts as one of mihrab's focal points.



Figure 230: Detail of the lower portion of the mihrab showing the remains of stucco inscription bands and panels of geometric elements on the left- and right-hand sides of the mihrab niche's lower section.



Figure 231: Detail of the monumental lunette topping the niche of the mihrab. Its ornamental elements, the abstracted vegetal composition, are closely related to the stucco repertoires of the Damghani craftsmen's family in Bistam and Damghan.





Figures 232 and 233: Left: detail of the smaller inscription band of the mihrab. Right: detail of the geometrical panel on the right-hand side of the interior of mihrab's niche.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 22

Monument Name: Marand Friday mosque

Figs. 234-243.

Associated Names: the monument is commonly referred to as the Congregational mosque of Marand, the Friday mosque of Marand and the Masjid-i Jamiʿi Marand.[1202] The monument received its name from the settlement in which it is situated.

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least three phases (phase one: Seljuq; phase two: Ilkhanid; phase three: Ilkhanid repairs) with latter enlargements of its structure.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): mosque consisting of six architectural spaces, arranged in two rows of three, to form a rectangular ground plan; the main prayer hall of the *qibla* wall comprised a separate domed structure which collapsed and was likely rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period. A hypostyle prayer hall was added to this structure in the post-Ilkhanid period, on its eastern side, which also comprises the current entrance to the monument.

Location: city of Marand; c. 60 km as the crow flies in the north-western direction from the city centre of Tabriz.

GPS location of the monument: 38.4316245 N; 45.7753698 E.

Monument Investigation: October 21, 2017.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The settlement of Marand is located on one of the main communication routes connecting Tabriz with Julfa and the north-western Iranian territory with the Caucasus. This strategical location rendered Marand an important stopover for caravans and a significant trade centre. Its congregational mosque reflects the significance and history of the settlement.

Background

The monument was first examined by Wilber, with a short discussion, a photograph and the first ground plan of the monument, which also indicated its distinct construction phases.[1203] The most complete examination of the mosque is presented by Siroux.[1204] This discussion of the monument is based on Siroux's examination of the mosque, which took place prior to its

[1202] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1203] Wilber 1955, 172, Pl. 167 and Fig. 47.
[1204] Siroux 1956.

modern alterations. The first article comprising the reading of most of the mosque's inscriptions is from 1975, by Salmasizade.[1205]

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 234.

The mosque's current architectural structure is the result of several building campaigns. The oldest part of the mosque is its western structure. Observations of the ground plan, Wilber's[1206] examination and the one by Siroux,[1207] propose that the domed chamber of the mosque was built in the Seljuq period. This was recently proved by the reading of the dated inscription running around the top edges of domed prayer hall's supporting walls by Korn.[1208] Ilkhanid activities in the mosque comprised at least two interventions. In the first intervention, its domed structure was repaired and decorated with stucco revetments (the mihrab dated 1330-31).[1209] In the second phase, the structure was enlarged with additions of domed areas on the eastern, western and northern sides of the monumental domed hall. These modifications may be repairs mentioned by the historic inscription on the stone portal, which according to Wilber, might have been moved from the original position to the current one.[1210] The mosque was further enlarged in recent times, with the addition of the hypostyle prayer hall on its eastern side, which functions as its current entrance. It is not clear whether the mosque originally retained an entrance portal. The absence of a courtyard is striking; this might have been due to the restricted availability of terrain to construct a larger mosque, or due to cold weather in the region. Wilber mentions remains of a minaret on the mosque's north-western side.[1211]

Construction Phase

Observations of joints between the mosque's structure and the historic stucco inscription indicate that the core of the mosque was constructed in three phases. The construction started in the Seljuq period, when the main domed prayer hall was built. It is not clear whether this prayer hall was flanked by any adjacent structures, or if it was free standing. In the late Ilkhanid period, this structure was rebuilt and decorated with the monumental carved stucco mihrab. Further repairs of the structure took place a few years later, towards the end of the Ilkhanid period, as suggested by the stone portal inscription. In the modern period, the surface of the prayer spaces of the mosque was extended by the addition of the eastern hypostyle prayer hall and two minarets.

[1205] Salmasizade proposes readings of the majority of mihrab's inscriptions, but not the monumental inscription band in the domed prayer hall of the mosque. Salmasizade 1975, 151-152.
[1206] Wilber 1955, 172.
[1207] Siroux 1956.
[1208] Lorenz Korn, "What were the earliest dome chambers in Iranian mosques? An Archaeological Perspective," paper presented at the 12th ICAANE, University of Bologna, April 6-9, 2021.
[1209] Dates for these interventions are given by the historical inscription on the mihrab, which is dated 1330-31.
[1210] The portal carries the date 1339.
[1211] The current monument has two minarets, on the edges of the western supporting wall. No traces of the original entrance portal remain and as for the remains of the minaret mentioned by Wilber, it is not clear if it was a Seljuq or an Ilkhanid construction.

Phase One - The Seljuq Marand mosque

Wilber marks on his plan, the areas where he discovered remains of the original mosque structure.[1212] The Seljuq mosque structure may have consisted of the domed prayer hall and on its three sides (with the exception of the *qibla* wall) passages to side prayer spaces. This is similar to the Qurwa and Sujas Friday mosques (Cat. No. 35), which were believed to be the so-called *kiosk type* mosques, but they actually comprised structures adjacent to the main domed prayer halls. If the remains of the minaret mentioned by Wilber were Seljuq in date, it would be logical to suppose that the space between the minaret and the domed prayer hall was part of the mosque structure.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Rebuilding and Decoration of the Mosque

It is difficult to discern the reasons for the Ilkhanid modifications of the Seljuq Marand mosque. The mosque's original domed structure may have encountered static issues and the dome could have collapsed already in the Seljuq period. The other reason could be that the Ilkhanid patron simply wanted to enlarge and redecorate the mosque for Marand's growing population and to assert their political authority. Observations of Wilber's ground plan, with marked constructive phases, indicate that the structure of the Seljuq domed hall was strengthened and that the mosque was also enlarged with the addition of five adjacent domed prayer spaces, which were further rebuilt in the Safavid period. During this intervention, the interior of the mosque's main prayer hall was decorated with the monumental stucco mihrab. Moreover, the upper sections of the domed hall also comprise brick and stucco revetments. The date for the intervention is provided by the mihrab's historic inscription, which states that it was installed as a renovation in 1330-31.

Phase Three– Further Ilkhanid Modifications of the Mosque

The mosque's stone portal is located in the interior of the prayer hall, on the eastern side of the domed prayer hall. It states that the mosque was renewed in 1339. This is rather close to the interventions of 1330-31 and it suggests that the mosque structure was not stable or that further enlargements were performed at this point. But the extent and the nature of these interventions remain obscure.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The mosque underwent refurbishments in the Safavid period, when spaces adjacent to the domed prayer hall were entirely rebuilt. These parts post-date the eastern hypostyle prayer hall of unclear construction date. The eastern prayer hall does not contain any specific revetments; it is of lower height and it is constructed out of more modest architectural elements. Its roofing system is carried by pointed arch arcades covered by a small dome structures.

[1212] Wilber 1955, Fig. 47.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The ground plan (Fig. 234) of the Ilkhanid Marand mosque was rectangular. It was likely formed by six domed spaces arranged into two rows.[1213] These domed areas were subsequently rebuilt in the Safavid period. A minaret might have existed on the mosque's north-western side. The mosque's structure was carried by pointed arch arcades and the roofing system consisted of domes. Transitional elements carrying the dome structures differed between the main prayer hall and the adjacent halls. The absence of a monumental entrance is peculiar and that the mosque's original entrance portal may have either been ruined or removed at a later point. The mosque's ground plan is of a less common type of Ilkhanid monuments, because it does not contain any open spaces, such as a courtyard or an *iwan.*

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The most elevated point of the mosque was the minaret, which is currently a modern reconstruction. The elevation of the Ilkhanid mosque was determined by the domed prayer spaces and the main prayer hall possessed a slightly higher elevation, compared to the rest of mosque's structure. The elevation of the adjacent eastern hypostyle prayer hall is of smaller dimensions.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument's architectural form, the status of its Ilkhanid patron and the absence of other Ilkhanid monuments in Marand, confirm that this was the congregational mosque of Marand.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The mosque's interior revetments are concentrated in the main domed prayer hall. It is decorated with the monumental Seljuq stucco band (dated 1092-93),[1214] which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls and the monumental carved stucco mihrab dated 1330-31. Transitional elements of the domed hall comprise decorative patterns created with arrangements of fired bricks. Moreover, the stone portal with the historic inscription is another significant architectural revetment of the mosque; both Siroux and Wilber note that it is not placed in its original location.

The Mihrab

Figs. 237-243.

The mihrab's core consists of two superimposed niches flanked by a pair of columns. This composition is framed by inscription bands and topped by a horizontal register. The mihrab contains the signature of the master stucco craftsman, information about the patron and the supervisor of the mosque's redecoration; it states that the mihrab is part of renovation

[1213] See Siroux 1956, 90.

[1214] Lorenz Korn, "What were the earliest dome chambers in Iranian mosques? An Archaeological Perspective," paper presented at the 12th ICAANE, University of Bologna, April 6-9, 2021.

interventions. The mihrab installation and rebuilding of the Seljuq domed prayer hall were likely the first Ilkhanid interventions in the mosque which were completed around 1330-31. The mihrab was therefore produced during the reign of Abu Saʿid, in the Late Ilkhanid period. The upper half of the mihrab was restored, cleaned and perhaps overpainted and it is in good condition. The lower portion of the mihrab was severely distorted until its recent conservation in 2021.[1215]

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The mihrab's interior lower niche features an unusual form without parallel in other Ilkhanid stuccos (Figs. 237, 239). This niche is formed by the trefoil angular or cusped arch. The intrados of the arch retains remains of a Kufic inscription band which is illegible. The interior surface of the niche is decorated with a stucco panel which could be the work of a Safavid or later renovation. This stucco panel features interlacing elements which echo the form of the trefoil arch and constitute the niche's main decorative patterns. The panel's background is filled with small vegetal elements, not characteristic of Ilkhanid stuccos. On their lower end, the knotted design patterns transform into a short inscription in *Naskh* and Kufic styles with invocations to God.

The trefoil arch niche is framed by a fragmented *Naskh* inscription (with benedictory content) which runs along its perimeter (Fig. 241). It is fully vocalized and placed against a plain background. This inscription could be work of a later, post-Ilkhanid, modification. The inscription is topped by a band of repeating vegetal elements forming diverse patterns. Spandrels of the mihrab's interior niche originally featured symmetrical compositions of abstract floral ornaments. These spandrels are topped by a short inscription band which contains the signature of the stucco workshop's master. The signature contains diacritical marks, it is written in *Naskh,* and placed against a plain background. It states that the mihrab is *work of the Poor servant, Nizam the mason (bandigir) of Tabriz* (Fig. 241). The type and manner of the mihrab's signature relate closely to the stucco signature on the Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 23). The described structure is flanked by a pair of stucco columns.

These columns are large and robust, with disproportionally large capitals (Fig. 242). They display repeating surfaces of vegetal elements which they are heavily perforated and carved out of two layers of stucco. Top sections of column shafts contain cartouches with invocations to God in Kufic style (*The Dominion Belongs to God*). The column capitals display bulbous forms and they are decorated with compositions of circular and vegetal elements. Ornamentation of the column capitals repeats in the horizontal stucco band which tops the artist's signature. The columns carry the pointed arch, which forms the mihrab's upper niche and the monumental lunette. The lunette is deeply recessed. Its interior surface features a symmetrical composition of palmette-derived elements. The lunette's intrados contains a historic inscription in *Naskh* style, placed against a plain background with ochre-orange to brown pigmentation. It provides information regarding the name of the mosque's keeper. The external perimeter of the pointed arch is framed by a larger inscription band with historic information about the patronage of the

[1215] Amin Moradi, personal communication to the author.

stucco mihrab, which occurred during the rule of Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan.[1216] The inscription is designed in *Thuluth* style and it is set against a background of floral scrolls. Monumental spandrels of the mihrab's niche are framed with a small floral band and they feature triangular symmetric compositions of floral ornamentation. These spandrels are topped by a horizontal band of repeating abstracted floral ornamentation.

This structure of the mihrab is framed by three bands (Figs. 237-238, 240): a thin band in Kufic style (which contains Prophetic Hadiths) set against an ochre background, a monumental framing inscription in *Thuluth* (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18) and a band of floral ornamentation. The joining angle between the Kufic and *Thuluth* inscriptions is produced to increase the mihrab's dynamic appearance. The large framing band in *Thuluth* contains diacritical marks and partial vocalization. Its proportions and dimensions are elegant, and it may have been coloured white. It is slightly concave and it does not display a deep relief. This is compensated for by the application of protruding floral elements which form the vegetal background of the band. This inscription band is framed by a small band of repeating floral ornaments which might have been coloured with white.

The mihrab structure is topped by a monumental horizontal stucco panel. This register is similar to the top panels of the mihrabs of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) and the Kirmani mosque at the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30). It displays a repeating pattern of symmetrical palmette and vegetal compositions. The majority of stucco panels, which constitute the mihrab, are carved out of two stucco layers, and many of them contain applied protruding elements in floral forms or net-like elements. Heavy perforation of floral ornamentation is another characteristic of the mihrab. The mihrab's dynamic appearance is achieved through the use of two different types of arches, and with its deeply recessed niches. Stucco inscription bands are positioned interchangeably between the panels of floral ornamentation, to achieve a steady rhythm of the diverse types of the mihrab's stucco panels.

The Monumental Inscription Band of the Domed Hall

Figs. 235-236.

The monumental inscription band runs along the top edges of the domed prayer hall's supporting walls. The inscription is produced in a manner which was widespread in the Seljuq period. Apposite space was left for the inscription during the construction of the supporting wall structure and upon that, the inscription was inserted into the prepared fired brick cartouches. The inscription is fragmented and badly damaged; it was possible to read some parts of it, as Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:62-63, but it is not clear it the entire inscription featured this chapter or if it comprised other content. Recently, Korn read the fragmented date of the completion of the inscription as 1092-93, confirming that it is of Seljuq vintage.[1217] It features Knotted Kufic style with slightly elongated letter shafts forming knotted ornaments. Some letters are written in the opposite directions; final letters of words are formed

[1216] The inscription is designed in a manner for the name of the ruler to be placed exactly in the central part of the top point of the band. This is similar to the case of inscription design of the Kashan Friday mosque stucco mihrab, where the expression "Friday mosque" (from the Qurʾanic excerpt) is also placed in the same position.
[1217] Lorenz Korn, "What were the earliest dome chambers in Iranian mosques? An Archaeological Perspective," paper presented at the 12th ICAANE, University of Bologna, April 6-9, 2021.

into vertical *hastae*; additions of ornamental, non-functional *hastae* and knotted forms render its reading more challenging. The inscription is set against a background of floral scrolls, which are characterized by disproportionally large and heavily perforated elements of abstract leaf-like and palmette-like compositions. The inscription also conserves extensive amounts of pigmentation traces, especially blue, which was used for its background. This inscription band dates to the Seljuq period; it is well integrated into the wall structure and it would be difficult to substitute it during a renovation intervention.[1218] Accordingly, the walls of the domed prayer hall also date to the Seljuq period. The described case may be similar to the Urumiya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 23), where a Seljuq mosque was redecorated during Ilkhanid and subsequent periods.

The Transitional Zone

Fig. 235.

Decorative designs of transitional elements are arranged according to the principles of symmetry, and they are produced with terracotta and glazed inserts. This ornamentation served as a background to the stucco repertoire. This decoration displays the richest arrangements on the *qibla* side of the supporting walls. The elements above the mihrab feature repeating star patterns in which bricks and terracotta elements were placed. The space between them retains remains of carved plaster. The lower tier of transitional elements was decorated with a greater degree of variety of ornamental patterns. Some transitional elements display chequered patterns, others feature grid-like patterns. Small corner lunettes in which the bricks were arranged to feature cross-like patterns inserted into trefoil arch frames are flanked by stucco plugs. It is unclear if this part of the monument is of Seljuq or Ilkhanid vintage; an Ilkhanid date is perhaps more likely.

Supporting Walls of the Domed Hall

The supporting walls of the domed prayer hall were renewed during the recent restoration interventions. It is likely that they contained stucco plug ornamentation. Some elements pertaining to the supporting walls comprise: corner columns, which flank supporting walls in the areas of the pointed arch passages to the side prayer hall spaces; their height spans from the ground until the level of the springing of pointed arches. They have been constructed with fired brick and mortar core covered with layers of carved plaster. The core of the fired bricks was arranged for the bricks to protrude from the plaster. The plaster carving was performed to form repeating geometric patterns together with the ends of these bricks. These decorative patterns resemble fish scales and related elements of the ornamentation are found in the transitional elements of the prayer hall. This suggests that the described columns are contemporary to the transitional zone of the domed hall (see above).[1219]

[1218] This has already been proposed by Wilber: Wilber 1955, 172.
[1219] Wilber already suggested that the only Ilkhanid elements of the monument is the carved stucco mihrab. Wilber 1955, 172.

The Stone Portal

The stone portal is, as mentioned by Siroux and Wilber, no longer in its original position; it must have been moved to another part of the mosque.[1220] The portal is formed by a pointed arch. The lower part of the arch is flanked by a pair of thin and round columns, with small dimension square capitals. The portal is lacking ornamentation, but it contains a historic inscription in its top register, above the passage of the pointed arch, which informs about restoration interventions on the monument, provides information on their patron, and the date of their completion. This inscription features *Naskh* style, and it is distributed into two superimposed rows. Some parts of the inscription are squeezed between these two rows to form a third line of inscription. The inscription fills the majority of the space and there are no other ornaments in its background.

Exterior Revetments

The mosque does not retain exterior revetments. There are however some elements of carved stone, which have been inserted into the structure of the new entrance portal and may have been reused. A stone slab with a relief resembling a sword, which could have originally been a tombstone is located on the left-hand side of the entrance portal. Another stone slab on the left-hand side of the portal resembles a shallow mihrab niche. On the right-hand side of the entrance portal, there are two more stone slabs with fragmented and heavily weathered portions of inscriptions in *Naskh*, which do not contain other ornamentation. It is possible that some of these slabs could have been parts of the mosque's original entrance portal.

Stucco Polychromy at Marand

The stuccos of the Marand Friday mosque conserve some polychromy traces. Inscription bands and ornaments of the mihrab's relief retain traces of red to orange, ochre to brown and white colours, some of which are the results of the mihrab's overpainting. The two capitals of the mihrab's columns retain colouring traces of likely authentic traces of red. The ornamentation of the mihrab's central lunette retains traces of white. Inscription bands retain yellow ochre to light brown background which are results of overpainting. The Seljuq monumental inscription band which runs along the top areas of domed prayer hall's supporting walls retains some polychromy traces, especially blue. Traces of blue for the background of the monumental inscription band point towards the very common and widespread approach to stucco colouring, where light blue to dark blue is employed for the background of the relief. Perhaps the inscriptions and floral scrolls were coloured white or red. Traces of stucco polychromy on the mihrab are different. The red hue on its capitals is a somewhat unusual colour choice; normally, such elements would be coloured blue. Other parts of the mihrab's stucco panels display extensive amounts of ochre, which ranges in hues from yellowish to light brown, but this is likely the result of overpainting.

[1220] See, for example, Wilber 1955, 172.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Marand

The stuccos of the Marand mihrab can be distinguished by their less common combinations of stucco artistic techniques. The mihrab's panels were produced with diverse stucco carving approaches: they are carved out of at least two stucco layers; the ornamentation of the stucco reliefs is heavily perforated and protruding elements of varying forms are applied to many of these stucco panels. The final result of the combination of these stucco artistic techniques and the use of a specific ornamentation repertoire which comprised different types of abstract floral elements and floral scrolls, is a relief which resembles undercut and protruding stucco reliefs of Isfahan area stuccos. But at Marand, the reliefs are not specifically protruding, nor are they undercut. Further specific characteristics of the mihrab are diverse inscription bands featuring three different calligraphic styles. The mihrab displays a wide selection of artistic techniques, ornamental elements and calligraphic repertoires.

The Marand Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Specific characteristics of the Marand stucco mihrab derive from the selection of stucco carving approaches and its ornamental repertoire. The combination of repetitive abstract applied elements on the stucco relief assured for the mihrab's visual depth. The mihrab's proportions display accentuation of its vertical axis and the mihrab is slenderer than the majority of Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. Moreover, some of the mihrab's elements are slightly disproportionate. The column capitals and shafts are relatively large for this size of mihrab. The central lunette formed by the pointed arch is very deep and it strongly contrasts the surrounding mihrab's panels. Another specific characteristic is its interior cusped arch, which is not found in other repertoires, except for the Urumiya mihrab (Cat. No. 23). In sum, specific characteristics of the mihrab comprise its slightly accentuated vertical axis, combination of different carving approaches, juxtaposition of inscription bands to symmetrical floral ornamentation compositions and concave surfaces.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not contain any furniture from the Ilkhanid period.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The interior of the mihrab's small niche was likely refurbished in the post-Ilkhanid period. It features a central panel with a knotted composition with epigraphic elements, of which *Allah* can be read. This panel is framed by a badly damaged and no longer legible Kufic inscription, similar to the one framing the mihrab's large niche. The exterior of the small niche is framed by a vocalized *Naskh* inscription with diacritical marks, which is set against a plain background. It is fragmented and it may either recount a Hadith, Blessings or Benedictions.

b.) The shafts of the monumental columns forming the mihrab's large niche comprise four epigraphic cartouches on their lower and upper ends. They all comprise the same text (*the*

Dominion belongs to God, he is not born). These cartouches feature Kufic style inscriptions with elongated letter shafts and occasional vegetal element endings which are set against a plain background with extensive traces of dark red.

c.) The mihrab's internal niche is topped by a horizontal register with the craftsmen's workshop signature in *Naskh* style which is vocalized and contains diacritical marks. It is set against a plain background.

The signature reads:

عمل العبد الفقير نظام بندگير التبريزى

Work of the Poor Slave Nizam [al-]bandigir al-Tabrizi.

d.) The mihrab's monumental lunette springs from the capitals of the columns and it is formed by two inscription bands and an interior monumental panel of symmetrical palmette-derived element composition. These two inscriptions are of utmost significance because they provide detailed information concerning the patronage of the mihrab's installation.

The inscription band which runs along the intrados of the niche features *Naskh* style and it is set against a plain background. It is vocalized and it comprises diacritical marks.

The inscription reads:

وقف من حال خيرته مدينة مرند على مصالح هذا المسجد الجامع وشرط التوليته العبد الضعيف حسين ابن محموح ابن تاج خواجة[1221]

The weak servant Husayn ibn Mahmud ibn Taj Khwaja made the revenues of the city of Marand waqf for the maintenance of this congregational mosque, and established conditions of the administration.[1222]

The second inscription runs along the exterior surfaces of the lunette and it assumes a more monumental style. It features *Naskh* style, and it is set against a slightly recessed background consisting of floral scroll compositions.

The inscription reads:

جدّد من فواضل أنعام السلطان الأعظم مالك رقاب الأمم أبو سعيد بهادر خان خلّد الله ملكه فى سنة إحدى و ثلاثين و سبعمائة هجريّة[1223]

Renewed by the abundant gift of the Great sultan, the possessor of the necks of the nations, Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan, may God make his rule everlasting; the year seven hundred and thirty-one after the Hijra (1330-31).[1224]

[1221] Salmasizade 1975, 152.
[1222] TEI 7480 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1223] TEI 7270 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1224] Wilber 1955, 172.

e.) The monumental niche of the mihrab is framed by a thin, inclined and difficult to spot Kufic inscription, which is preserved in fragments. It features a selection of Prophetic and other Hadiths.

One of the Hadiths could be read as:[1225]

سبحان الله، والحمد لله، ولا إله إلا الله، والله أكبر، ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله

Glory be to God, and praise be to God, and there is no god but God, and God is (absolutely) Great, and there is neither strength nor power except with God.

f.) The monumental inscription band which frames the mihrab, features a monumental *Thuluth* style inscription. It is vocalized and it contains diacritical marks, which might be the results of a restoration intervention, because this is less common in Ilkhanid stuccoworks. The inscription contains a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (Qurʾan, 9:18). It is set against a background decorated with carved and applied protruding leaf-derived elements.

The text of the inscription reads:[1226]

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.

The Monumental Inscription Band in the Prayer Hall (Seljuq)

a.) The monumental inscription band in Knotted Kufic style runs along the top edges of supporting walls. It is missing in parts and several of its fragments are difficult to read, due to its weathered state. It was however possible to recognize two verses of *Surat al-Tawba*, the Qurʾanic excerpt (9:62-63). The inscription displays an elaborated design with knotted elements, and it is set against a deep relief of vegetal elements composition, some of which protrude from the background. The band also retains traces of blue, white and red colouring. Korn succeeded in reading the date of the completion of the inscription, at its end.[1227]

One part of the inscription text reads:[1228]

يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ لَكُمْ لِيُرْضُوكُمْ وَاللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُرْضُوهُ إِنْ كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ
أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ مَنْ يُحَادِدِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأَنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الْخِزْيُ الْعَظِيمُ

They swear by Allah to you [Muslims] to satisfy you. But Allah and His Messenger are more worthy for them to satisfy, if they should be believers.

[1225] Author's reading.
[1226] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-at-taubah-18-qs-9-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 22, 2020).
[1227] Lorenz Korn, "What were the earliest dome chambers in Iranian mosques? An Archaeological Perspective," paper presented at the 12th ICAANE, University of Bologna, April 6-9, 2021.
[1228] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/At-taubah (Last Accessed: November 22, 2020).

Do they not know that whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger – that for him is the fire of Hell, wherein he will abide eternally? That is the great disgrace.

The end of the inscription band comprises the date of its completion, which provides the most solid evidence to date it to Seljuq period.

The date of completion of the inscription was read by Korn as: 485/1092-93.

The Stone Portal

a.) The stone portal, which is no longer located in the original position, comprises an important historic inscription in three lines of *Naskh* style, set against a plain background. The inscription provides information concerning the patronage of a renovation intervention at the mosque, in the early post-Ilkhanid period.

The inscription reads:

امر بتجديد هذه العمارة العبد الفقير خواجة حسين بن سيف الدين محمود ابن تاج خواجة في اواخر شوال سنة اربعين وسبعمائة[1229]

The renovation of this building was ordered by the weak servant Khwaja Husain ibn Saif al-Din, Mahmud ibn Taj Khawaja at the end of (the month of) Shawwal in the year seven hundred and forty (April 1340).[1230]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

There are no stucco revetments in the monument which date to later periods.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The patrons of the Seljuq and earlier periods of the monument are unknown, but the mihrab and the stone portal historic inscriptions are informative of the two Ilkhanid renovation interventions at the mosque. The stucco mihrab contains a historic inscription, which informs that the mosque's first Ilkhanid renovation, which included installation of the stucco mihrab, was sponsored under the auspices of Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan. The patron was likely one of the Ilkhanid officials or even the ruler himself. The second inscription specifies that the supervisor of the mosque and its waqf was Husayn ibn-i Mahmoud ibn-i Taj Khwaja; this is rarely encountered information in historic inscriptions of Ilkhanid monuments.[1231] Further Ilkhanid renovations were, as stated on the stone portal, ordered and sponsored by the keeper of the mosque's waqf.

The Marand Friday mosque stuccos are therefore one of the few repertoires which were produced during the reign and sponsored by the last Ilkhanid ruler. The commission was therefore of an imperial status, but this is not reflected in the dimensions of the stucco repertoire,

[1229] Salmasizade 1975, 152.
[1230] TEI 7479 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1231] One good example is the historic inscription above the entrance portal of Khanqah of Pir Husayn in Azerbaijan, dated 1243-44 (See Cat. No. 25).

which comprised only the monumental stucco mihrab. The stucco mihrab indeed resembles many other repertoires, which were commissioned by Ilkhanid officials, rather than rulers.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The signature on the stucco mihrab reads: *work of the poor slave Nizam bandigir al-Tabrizi*. The inscription states that the stucco master, the head of the workshop, was Nizam, the *bandigir* (mason)[1232] of Tabriz. The inscription is placed into a horizontal inscription band, which spans between capitals of stucco columns flanking the mihrab's main niche. This positioning of the signature is very similar to the one on the mihrab of the Urumiya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 23), which is also signed by a Tabrizi stucco master. Although the manner of the mihrab's signature are shared between these two repertoires, they do not have many other features in common. The title of the profession of the signatory artist at Marand, *bandigir,* is also peculiar. While some signatures contain professions such as *muhandis, bannaʾ, naqqash*, rather frequently, *bandigir* is featured only in the signature at Marand. The *nisba* al-Tabrizi may indicate that the master stucco craftsmen could be a person native to the area of Tabriz. The Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab also contains a signature with a *nisba* Tabrizi, which makes it likely that these *nisba*s indicate in a general manner the provenance of stucco craftsmen. The two master craftsmen of Urumiya and Marand mihrabs could be relatives or could have trained the art of stucco carving together.

f.) Monument Condition

The structure of the monument is in a good condition because it has undergone several conservation interventions during the recent decades. The mihrab was recently restored (2021) in an inadequate manner, which altered its original aesthetic appearance. The upper portion of the mihrab was renovated earlier and the mihrab was likely overpainted. Apart from the mihrab, the remaining parts of architectural decoration are in a rather good state of conservation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This discussion provides detailed information regarding the characteristics of the Marand Friday mosque's architectural revetments. It outlines the employed artistic techniques, characteristics of polychromy and aesthetics of the stucco mihrab and the monumental inscription band. It proposes that the mihrab and the stone portal are works of Ilkhanid craftsmen, but that the structure of the domed hall, with its monumental inscription, pre-dates the Ilkhanid period and it is likely work of Seljuq builders and craftsmen. The research proposes important information regarding patronage and artistic characteristics of mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab, which dates from the time of the reign of Abu Saʿid. Furthermore, some readings of parts of the inscriptions, so far unpublished, are presented in the inscription section of this catalogue entry.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Siroux 1956; Wilber 1955, 172; Salmasizade 1975.

[1232] It is translated by Wilber as mason, but it could also mean calligrapher. Mason is a more reasonable translation, given the proximity of the two sectors. Given however that the Marand signature is the only one containing this profession, it could also be considered a nickname or a family name.

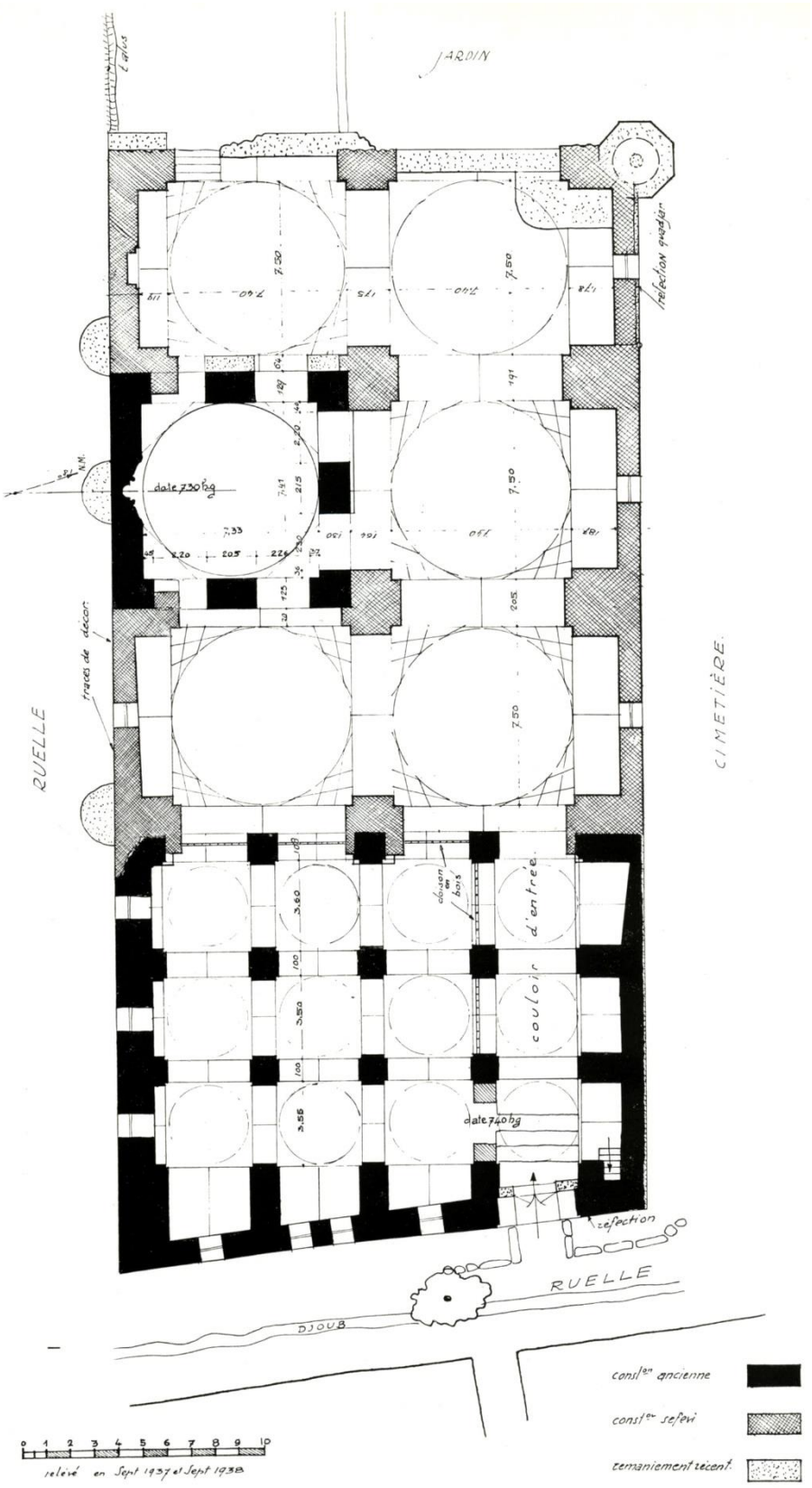


Figure 234: Ground plan of the Marand Friday mosque with marked construction stages; dark colour: older parts of the mosque; lighter colours: Safavid additions and modern modifications (After Siroux 1956, 90).



Figure 235: Interior of the monumental prayer hall, showing the fragmented monumental stucco inscription topping edges of supporting walls and remains of the transitional zone elements in terracotta and carved stucco. View towards the *qibla* wall.



Figure 236: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription band topping edges of supporting walls which dates to the Seljuq period.



Figure 237: The monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque (prior to the latest conservation interventions).

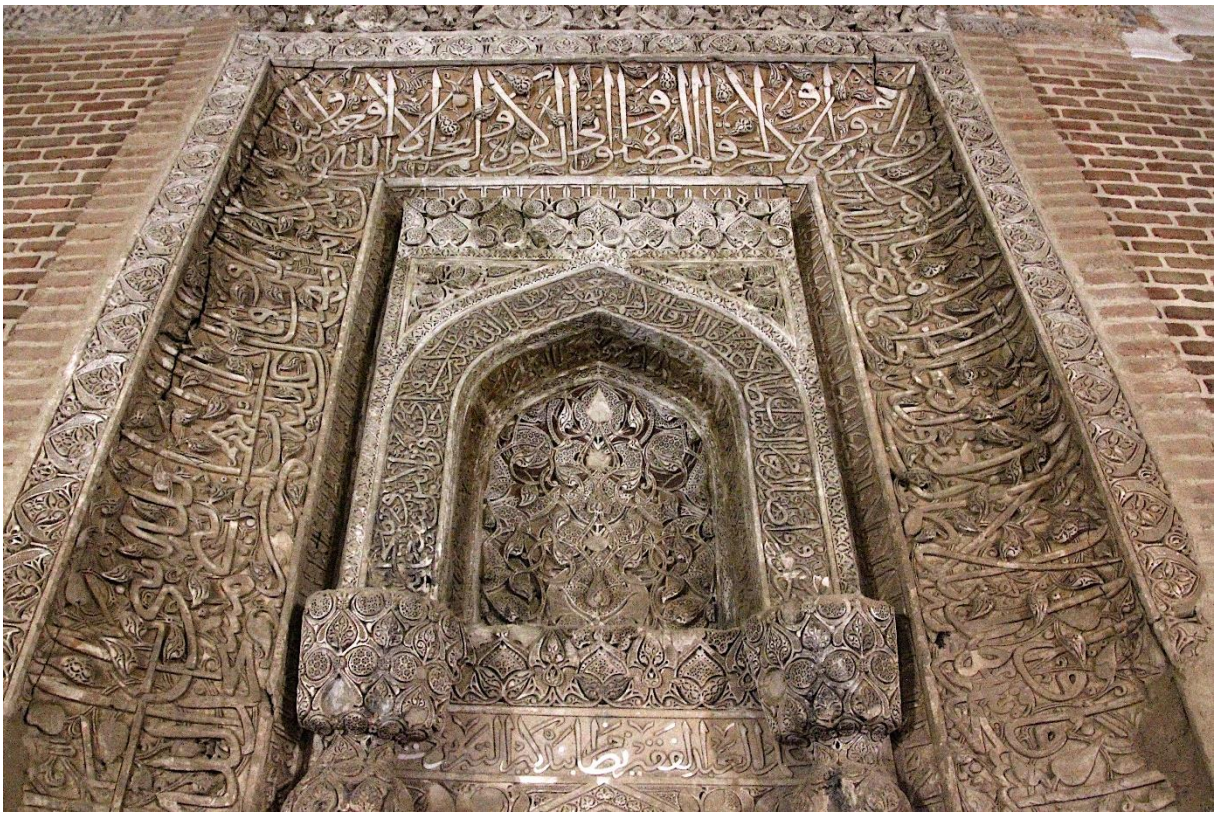


Figure 238: Detail of the upper portion of the Marand stucco mihrab. The two historic inscriptions framing the monumental lunette and the craftsman's signature below the lunette are well visible.



Figure 239: Detail of the lower section of the Marand Friday mosque stucco mihrab with stucco panels, which suffered structural distortion. State prior to the latest conservation interventions.

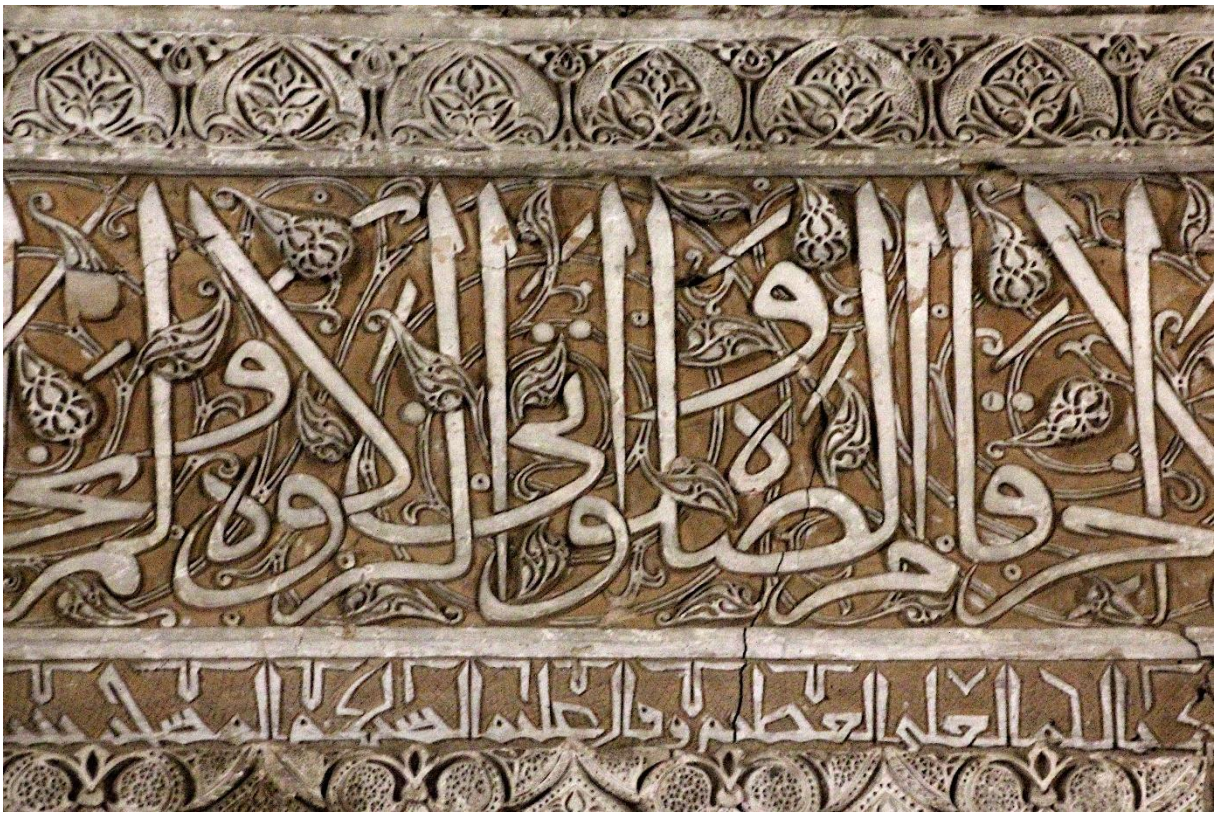
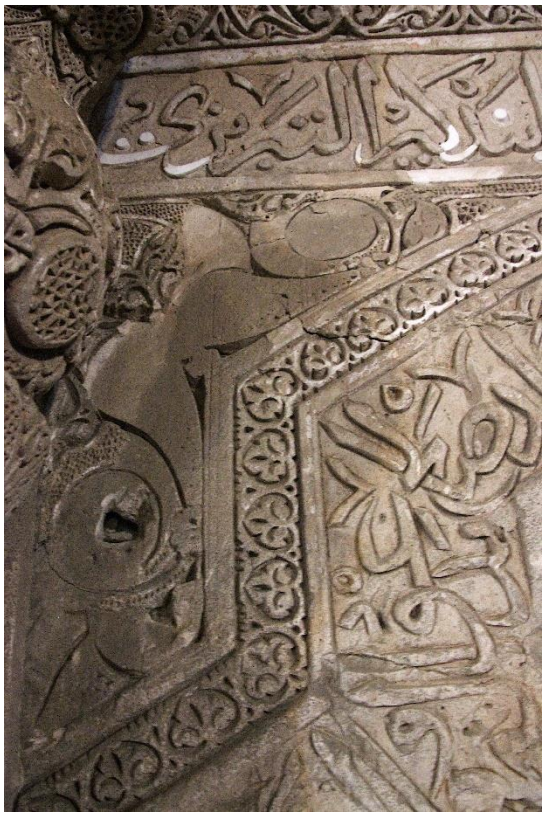


Figure 240: Detail of the monumental framing inscription band of the Marand Friday mosque stucco mihrab with an arabesque band above it and a thin Kufic band below it. These stuccos were restored and likely overpainted.



Figure 241: Detail of the central part of the mihrab showing the stucco craftsman's signature, placed in a position related to the Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab.





Figures 242 and 243: Details of the monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque. Left: detail of the left-hand side stucco capital produced with masterly skills. Right: Detail of the spandrel of mihrab's interior niche, which is damaged: the ground incisions of stucco design of the niche and the spandrel are well visible.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 23

Monument Name: Urumiya Friday mosque

Figs. 244-253.

Associated Names: the settlement of Urumiya used to be called Rizaʿiya during the Pahlavi time.[1233] Accordingly, the name of the mosque used to be the Friday mosque of Rizaʿiya. The name of the monument was modified at the time of settlement's name change, to: the Friday mosque of Urmia, Urmiya, Orumiya or Orumiyeh. The spelling of the mosque's name depends on the employed transliteration system. Ūrūmiya[1234] is the most correct spelling of the settlement and the monument's names.[1235]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least three phases (phase one: Seljuq foundation; phase two: Ilkhanid modifications; phase three: Qajar refurbishments).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): mosque with a domed prayer hall and adjacent rectangular prayer spaces comprising two rows of bays carried by pointed arch arcades.

Location: city of Urumiya; north-western Iran; on the south-western shores of the lake Urumiya; some 120 km as the crow flies in the south-western direction from the city centre of Tabriz.

GPS location of the monument: 37.5510344 N; 45.0758527 E.

Monument Investigation: July 22, 2014.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Urumiya is located on one of the most fertile plains in Iran, to the south-west of the Urumiya lake.[1236] The derivation of settlement's name is uncertain, but it is of non-Iranian origin. Urumiya's location is significant: it is located in the area of the crossroads between modern Iraq and Turkey and the Kurdish populated area of Zagros. The abundance of water sources in this geographical unit rendered the Urumiya plain a very fertile and significant agricultural centre. This area was inhabited by Urartu and Assyrian civilizations in the late second millennium BCE. Urumiya was conquered in mid-seventh century by Arabs, who established fortified infrastructure in the area. According to al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, the 10th century

[1233] Summary from: Minorsky, V., Bosworth, C.E. and Coakley, J.F., "Urmiya", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1300 First print edition: 1960-2007 (Last Accessed: December 10, 2021).
[1234] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1235] The monument is always referred to as a Congregational or Friday mosque.
[1236] For more detailed information, see Minorsky, V., Bosworth, C.E. and Coakley, J.F., "Urmiya", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1300 First print edition: 1960-2007 (Last Accessed: December 10, 2021).

Urumiya was the third most significant settlement in the historic Azerbaijan region, after Ardabil and Maragha. In this period, al-Muqqadasi recounts, that Urumiya was located on the crossroads of communication routes between regions of Azerbaijan and Anatolia (Ardabil-Maragha-Urumiya-Barkiri-Amid). The district of Urumiya was inhabited by Kurdish and Christian populations and it never played a crucial part in Islamic history. It was a remote fief, which was overseen by diverse dynasties. For the Ilkhanid period, Urumiya is important, due to its proximity to the lake; on the Shahi island of the lake, there existed a fortress where Hulagu and Abaqa khan were buried, according to Rashid al-Din's *Jami al-Tawarikh*.

Background

The Friday mosque of Urumiya and the Se Gunbad mausoleum are two monuments, which testify to the significance of the settlement in Seljuq, Ilkhanid and later periods. The congregational mosque is located in the old city centre, which currently functions as the centre of the modern settlement. The mosque is of Seljuq foundation and it was redecorated in the Ilkhanid and Qajar periods. The monument received only limited scholarly attention, and the article by Christy Wilson, from 1937, remains its most authoritative discussion.[1237] The monument is included in Wilber's monograph[1238] and in the *Survey of Persian Art*.[1239] More recently, Iranian scholars published three articles dedicated to the monument. Husayn Farahmand and Ismail Marufi-Akdam provide a discussion of the mosque's construction chronology; their research finds are similar to those by Wilson.[1240] Mozafar Abaszade and Sarur Tariqi and Aram Alizadegan propose a detailed analysis of the mosque's architectural structure.[1241] Maryam Motafakerzade and Sahar Zekavat discuss the mosque's stucco mihrab and its ornamental elements.[1242]

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 244.

The mosque's current structure consists of the domed prayer hall which contains the stucco mihrab and monumental inscription bands. The hall is flanked on its western side by a nine-bay long prayer hall, carried by pointed arch arcades. Each bay consists of three arcades covered by three small domes. There used to be some prayer spaces of a related ground plan on the eastern side of the prayer hall, but these structures were recently demolished. The latest building interventions comprised addition of modern prayer spaces, which form the mosque's rectangular courtyard.

The mosque's domed prayer hall is the work of Seljuq builders. It is one of the few remaining parts of the Seljuq congregational mosque. Originally, the hall was flanked by adjacent arcaded prayer spaces, and it likely comprised a courtyard structure. The domed prayer hall features a square plan. Its supporting walls retained two window openings on each side, some of which

[1237] Wilson 1937.
[1238] Wilber 1955, 112-113.
[1239] Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, 1048-49, Fig. 377.
[1240] Farahmand and Marufi-Akdam 2014.
[1241] Abaszade, Tariqi and Alizadegan 2019.
[1242] Motafakerzade and Zekavat 2019.

have been closed off. The supporting walls translate into a polygonal drum, which carries the hemispherical dome, via a system of pendentives with large muqarnas elements on their surfaces. The transitional zone might indicate that the upper part of the domed hall was rebuilt in post-Ilkhanid period. One parallel for the given type of the transitional zone is the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), which features monumental muqarnas elements in the area below the drum. The domed hall and the adjacent spaces were constructed out of fired brick. Mosque's nine bay prayer hall was constructed in the second constructive phase which took place either in Seljuq or more likely, Ilkhanid times. It is built out of cut stone and fired bricks. The mosque's monumental stucco mihrab in the domed hall of the mosque was believed by Wilber to feature a Seljuq and an Ilkhanid phase. Recent research by Karimy proposes that the mihrab had undergone substantial modifications in Qajar period.[1243]

Construction Phases

The question of the Urumiya Friday mosque's constructive chronology presents a complex problem. Its earliest phase does not contain historic inscriptions. A further problem is presented by the stucco mihrab, which was produced and redecorated during at least two separate interventions. The structure was additionally modified during the last centuries, and some parts of the original monument were demolished and replaced by modern structures. Modern modifications of the mosque and numerous restoration interventions make it difficult to observe its original architectural structure and to comprehend its construction history. The mosque's present day structure is the result of construction and decoration interventions which took place in Seljuq, Ilkhanid, Qajar and modern periods.

Phase One – The Seljuq Urumiya mosque

The Seljuq mosque structure may have consisted of the domed prayer hall (square in plan, with 10.5 m for each side) with openings on three sides. The domed hall was the core of an originally more extensive monument and it was not a kiosk-mosque. Each side of the domed hall also comprised three window openings. The hall's transitional elements are no longer visible, and the dome was likely rebuilt at a later point. The transition between the walls and the dome was achieved via a system of arranged squinches with muqarnas, which translated the square supporting structure into a sixteen-sided drum of the dome. Wilber's survey of the monument provides evidence that the mosque's monumental carved stucco mihrab consists of two decorative stages, with the second stage carrying the date 1277-78.[1244] The concealed first phase mihrab could date from the Seljuq or Ilkhanid period, but the mihrab's visible surfaces may have been also modified and repaired in the Qajar period.[1245]

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Urumiya mosque

The date for the Ilkhanid interventions on the structure is indicatively provided by the stucco mihrab, as 1277-78. But the extent of the Ilkhanid interventions on the mosque is difficult to ascertain. The mosque's domed prayer hall was likely repaired and redecorated with stucco

[1243] Amir Hossein Karimy, paper presented at the *I love Persian stucco conference*, University of Bamberg, April 2017.
[1244] Wilber 1955, 112-13.
[1245] Amir Hossein Karimy, personal communication to the author.

revetments. Furthermore, the ground plan of the mosque was transformed by the construction of additional prayer hall structures flanking and preceding its domed hall. The plan of the mosque might have been irregular due to the space restraints.

Phase Three – Post-Ilkhanid Modifications

The date for the post-Ilkhanid modifications of the mosque is contained on its current entrance portal (1771). It indicates that the mosque's rebuilding took place in the second half of the eighteenth century. Further evidence is provided by three inscriptions in the domed hall which mention restorations: one dates from the time of Fath ʿAli Shah Qajar (r. 1797-1834), one is dated 1885 and another is dated 1930.[1246] The mosque's lateral prayer halls do not contain historic architectural revetments and could have been rebuilt in modern times. Post-Ilkhanid interventions may have included redecoration of the domed prayer hall's interior; carved stucco inscription bands and plaques commemorating these interventions are located on its supporting walls. As mentioned, Karimy suggests that at this point, the mihrab of the domed hall was redecorated and repaired. Wilson's photograph of the mihrab from the first half of the twentieth century, in fact, documents the mihrab with a glazed tile dado in its lower section. Later modern restorations reversed this intervention and the lower portion of the mihrab is currently work of a modern reconstruction.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

Dimensions and exact characteristics of the Ilkhanid Urumiya mosque are not known (Fig. 244). The Ilkhanid interventions surely comprised repairs to the domed prayer hall and its decorative repertoire. Perhaps, these interventions also comprised the mosque's enlargement through the construction of additional prayer spaces, which could have transformed the mosque in a manner similar to the Marand Friday mosque (Cat. No. 22), or into a courtyard mosque.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The highest elevation of the mosque is represented by its domed prayer hall. The original dome of the mosque was likely hemispherical, and it determined the mosque's visibility. The mosque may have featured a monumental minaret.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument has always been referred to as the congregational mosque of the settlement. It therefore served as a prayer space for the community and especially for the Friday prayer sermon. Its current ground plan, although it had undergone modifications, does not reflect any additional functions.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Architectural revetments of Urumiya Friday mosque are concentrated in the interior of the domed prayer hall. They comprise the stucco mihrab, two monumental inscription bands, which run along the surfaces of the supporting walls, and other inscriptions in medallion forms. The

[1246] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 154.

mihrab presents challenges connected to the comprehension of its several production phases and its dating. It is the result of at least two decorative interventions and it was likely further modified. The monumental inscription band which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls is likely of Seljuq vintage. The mosque's exterior surfaces, with the exception of the entrance portal, do not comprise architectural revetments.

Interior Revetments

Architectural Structure Surfaces

The architectural surfaces of the domed prayer hall's interior were coated with a thick layer of plaster during one of the latest interventions. This plaster coating prevents observations of joints between the architectural revetments and supporting walls. Furthermore, it is not clear whether the plaster conceals some architectural decoration such as stucco plug arrangements or *Khatt-i banna'i*. The transitional zone with the system of pendentives, muqarnas and blind niches in the drum area was also coated with white plaster during recent interventions. Originally, the transitional zone elements were likely decorated, perhaps in a manner similar to the Marand Friday mosque, with strapwork-design revetments arranged to form diverse patterns filled with carved and perforated stucco inserts. The mosque's historic inscriptions also state that the dome was rebuilt recently; the dome in fact does not display any architectural revetments typical of the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods.

The Mihrab

Figs. 245-252.

The mihrab's basic design and form partially resemble the mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque (Cat. No. 22). While the Marand mihrab reveals a slender design with accentuated vertical axis, the Urumiya mihrab is wider and with its proportions close to the golden mean. The Urumiya mihrab (7,82 m x 5,48 m) is one of the largest known carved stucco mihrabs, together with the mihrab of the Tabriz Friday mosque (Cat. No. 24), the no longer extant carved stucco mihrab in the north-western hall of the Kashan Friday mosque and the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1). The size of the mihrab reflects the prestige of the endowment for its (re)decoration. This is significant, given that Urumiya was never a capital of an Empire or a significant settlement within it.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

A photo published by Wilson in 1937 documents the Urumiya mihrab with its lower portion clad with rectangular turquoise tiles of the monument's dado area dating to the Qajar period (Fig. 245). These tiles were removed during subsequent restoration campaigns, and they were substituted with the mihrab's hypothetical reconstructions. The mihrab's central part consists of two superimposed niches. The lower, central, niche (Fig. 248) is formed by a cusped arch, of dimensions and form similar to the interior niche arch of the Marand Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 22). These two are the only known mihrabs which employ the cusped arch forms for the interior niches. The similarity of the niches and the other shared aspects of the two mihrabs aid at confirming the Ilkhanid date of the majority of the upper carved stucco surfaces of the

Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab. The interior of the cusped arch's niche was badly damaged, and it retains original stuccos only in its upper portions; the rest are hypothetical reconstructions. These stuccos display repeating patterns of radially arranged interlacing elements which contain some floral ornamentation and they do not comprise epigraphic elements. Exterior surfaces of the mihrab's interior niche are outlined with an inscription band in Kufic style, featuring a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (Qurʾan, 3:18-19), set against a background of repeating perforated abstracted floral elements. This framing band is arranged in a modality similar to the Marand mihrab. Only the upper parts of the framing inscription are original and the lower parts are reconstructions. The inscription band is additionally framed by an arabesque band consisting of heavily perforated abstracted leaf elements. The niche is topped by a pair of spandrels.[1247] Spandrels of the trefoil arch feature symmetrically arranged floral elements which resemble leaf ornamentation and strongly protrude from the relief. Each spandrel contains a hollow and perforated protruding circular applied boss. These protruding bosses might be later additions; they were produced during the last intervention on the mihrab together with the mihrab's perforated lunette.

The mihrab's niche is flanked by a pair of monumental columns, and it is topped by a horizontal inscription cartouche set between column capitals (Fig. 248). The horizontal inscription band contains the signature of the master stucco craftsman and the date of the completion of the mihrab. The inscription reads: *work of the poor slave ibn-i Sharafshah al-bandigir al-Tabrizi, in the month Rabiʿa al-Ahar in the year six hundred seventy six (1277-78).* The inscription proposes information regarding the name of the stucco craftsman in charge of the mihrab's production and its date of completion. The placement of the signature and the mihrab's completion date are similar to those at the Marand Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 22). Both signatures are signed by masters with the *nisba* al-Tabrizi. This relates the two mihrabs, which are however works of distinct workshops. Similarities between these two mihrabs and their signatures indicate that the two master craftsmen could have either been relatives or that they trained together. The signature and the date of the Urumiya mihrab completion are written in the horizontal register which may be the work of the mihrab's later modification. As suggested by Karimy, this could be the result of Qajar repairs to the mihrab. The Qajar restorers could have copied the signature and the date of the mihrab's completion from the layers of stucco which are currently concealed under the mihrab's renewed parts.

Two stucco columns flank the mihrab's internal niche (Fig. 248). These columns are, like at Marand, disproportionally large in comparison to the mihrab's other parts. The columns feature shafts with reticular abstract floral ornamentation arranged into a repeating pattern with applied flower blossom elements. This stucco ornamentation is not encountered in other Ilkhanid repertoires: the carving method and the ornamentation iconography indicate that column shafts (and consequently their capitals) were produced in the post-Ilkhanid period. The tops of the column shafts feature repeating vegetal elements. The column capitals are rather large, and they are heavily perforated to create radiating geometrical ornamentations and to render the capitals more elegant. These capitals flank another horizontal stucco band, which tops the craftsman's signature and mihrab's date. This stucco band consists of two tiers of circular and abstract floral

[1247] Compare to the Marand Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 22).

elements which are applied onto the carved stucco surface. The panel is slightly inclined towards the spectator. Observations of the joints between the described stucco panels indicate that the mihrab's columns and the two horizontal bands (with the signature, and with protruding abstract elements) were produced in the same moment, perhaps contemporary to the perforated stucco lunette topping them.

A pair of monumental columns surmounts the pointed arch forming the mihrab's monumental lunette (Fig. 247). The pointed arch is framed by an inscription band featuring Hadith and Qurʾanic texts (Prophetic Hadiths and part of Qurʾan, *Surat al-Aʿraf*, 7:204) in *Naskh* style. The inscription band is flanked by two thin bands of repeating floral ornaments on each external border. The top of the pointed arch, at the point where the inscription takes a turn, is decorated with an applied protruding element, which assumes a flower blossom design. The function of this element is not purely ornamental; it divides the inscription into two parts and it fills the space between the two Hadith inscriptions.

The pointed arch's interior is occupied by the mihrab's monumental lunette (Figs. 248, 251) which displays a peculiar type of stucco revetment. The lunette stucco panel features a perforated grill which assumes a geometrical form based on a principle of a twelve-sided pattern. This perforated grill contains radially arranged perforated and hollow circular protruding elements. The space between the circular elements is filled by the reticular geometric grill which features leaf-derived elements. This leaf-like ornamentation does not constitute part of the Ilkhanid stucco revetment ornamentation iconography; this indicates that this panel also post-dates the Ilkhanid mihrab. The grill in fact conceals an older mihrab, which can be seen through its perforations and in the areas where protruding circular elements have fallen off. Ornamentation of the older mihrab beneath the grill consisted of geometrical ornaments in floral forms, which are also located on the external framing inscription of the mihrab, and they are also encountered in the monumental inscription band in the prayer hall. If the perforated lunette grill is post-Ilkhanid in date, similar to the mihrab's lower section, it is then necessary to understand to which period the concealed mihrab can be dated. Given that the mihrab covers the window openings of the *qibla* wall, which could be Seljuq, the concealed mihrab may be of an Ilkhanid date (1277-78) and the mihrab's upper central panels may be works of Qajar repairs, as proposed by Karimy. If so, the date and the signature of the master craftsman are a restoration copy of the inscription, which was concealed by the restored parts of the mihrab.

The mihrab's pointed arch is topped by a pair of symmetrically arranged spandrels which feature strongly protruding abstract floral ornamentation. The mihrab's spandrels are topped by a horizontal stucco panel which consists of symmetrically arranged repeating floral ornamentation and a medallion in its middle. It seems that the up to now described mihrab's structure is of post-Ilkhanid date. There is a specific joint between this structure and the small inscription band, which runs along its perimeter (Fig. 250). The nature of this joint indicates that the mihrab's interior structure strongly protrudes from its exterior panels; only the internal part of the mihrab was therefore refurbished in the post-Ilkhanid period. Moreover, the mihrab's damaged external framing inscriptions reveal the supporting walls and not an underlying mihrab. Furthermore, the external monumental inscription features the same flower blossom ornaments as the stuccos, which are concealed by the mihrab's perforated stucco lunette (Fig.

252). Accordingly, the exterior structure of the mihrab is parallel in date to its concealed panels and it may thus be dated 1277-78.

A small inscription band frames the mihrab's core and connects it to the monumental external framing band. The inscription is inclined and it connects the mihrab's two visual planes to render its relief more variegated. It contains Qurʾanic verses from *Surat al-Muʾminun* (Qurʾan, 23:1-13) and it is designed in *Naskh* style. The inscription is dense and some of its words are superimposed on each other. It is placed against a background which features modest floral scrolls. This inscription band is framed by the monumental inscription band (Figs. 246-247), which also features the Throne verse (*Ayat al-Kursi*, Qurʾan, 2:255-256). The lower third of the band contains the inscription, which is designed in Kufic style and which features letter forms similar to the monumental stucco inscription band, which runs along the top edges of supporting walls. Elongations of its letters translate into a triangular geometric pattern with flower blossom-like rosettes and circular ornamentations. These rosettes are identical to those beneath the perforated grill of the mihrab's central lunette. These two external inscription bands are thus contemporary to the concealed mihrab layer behind the lunette's perforation grill. They may thus be dated 1277-78. The monumental inscription band is framed by another stucco band of smaller dimensions which features repeating vegetal ornamentation. This ornamentation consists of large heavily perforated repeating leaf-like elements and compositions of small flower buds.

The mihrab's top section comprises a horizontal stucco panel (Fig. 249). This stucco panel is unusual, and it presents a specific problem linked to its production. It features symmetrically arranged repeating compositions of diverse protruding vegetal elements. These elements strongly protrude from the relief and render the mihrab's appearance dynamic. It is however not clear if these protruding elements were part of the original horizontal stucco panel, or if they were added during restoration interventions. These protruding elements may cover an older stucco relief.

Mihrab Production and Dating

Examination of mihrab's panels sheds light on issues connected to its production and dating. The current mihrab is a result of two decorative interventions. The original mihrab was produced during the Ilkhanid period and can be dated to 1277-78. This mihrab underwent subsequent modifications, which focused on its central part, where it was covered with new stucco panels. Furthermore, some external framing panels might have also been restored at that point. There are numerous arguments in favour of this hypothesis. Firstly, the mihrab's central lunette grill covers earlier stucco decorations. These earlier stucco decorations resemble the decorative elements of the mihrab's monumental framing inscription band. Secondly, many stucco panels of the mihrab's central part, especially the lunette's perforated grill, feature ornamental elements which are not characteristic of Ilkhanid stuccos. The mihrab's external framing bands may not have been refurbished, because they do not reveal double stucco layers. Only the core of the mihrab, which comprises the two niches, flanking stucco columns and spandrels, is the result of the redecoration. If so, the dated inscription band with the stucco craftsmen's signature could be a copy of an earlier signature, which is covered with this newer stucco panel. The date of the mihrab repairs or second decorative phase remains a matter of

speculation. The mihrab may have been refurbished during one of the post-Ilkhanid interventions. This could either be: 1771, 1797-1834, 1885, or 1930. Wilson documented and published the mihrab in 1937, and if the refurbishments of the mihrab were results of the 1930s decorations, this would be perhaps have been known to her, and she would have mentioned it. The 1930s interventions are therefore an unlikely date for the mihrab's refurbishments, because these interventions seemingly focused on the mosque's rebuilding. The first, 1797-1834, and the second, 1885, dates are more likely.

Upper Monumental Stucco Inscription Band

Fig. 253.

The upper monumental inscription band runs along the edges of the supporting walls, just below the transitional zone of the mosque's domed prayer hall. The inscription was produced in a space which was left for it on purpose during the time of the mosque construction. Moreover, the inscription's ornamental elements related to the mihrab's first phase. This might indicate that the inscription is the work of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen.[1248] The inscription band at Urumiya features a complex design and it is produced with a wide spectrum of stucco artistic techniques. This Knotted Kufic inscription features the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-6). The lower two thirds of the band are filled with inscription in Knotted Kufic style and the upper third comprises repeating floral elements. The Knotted Kufic inscription features elongated *hastae*; some letters also translate into knotted elements and occasionally forms of letters are made to translate into the inscription's background elements. The inscription's *hastae* end up in abstracted vegetal composition finials which occur frequently in Ilkhanid stuccos and wall paintings. The two parts of the band are united through the background of Knotted Kufic inscription which is filled with rich ornamentation of intertwined and interlaced vegetal elements. The repetitive nature of the band's upper section is directly juxtaposed to the rich and variegated ornaments of Knotted Kufic inscription and its curved letter forms.

In sum, the inscription band comprises a masterly design of Knotted Kufic style with different and variegated letter forms with richly ornamented background and a repetitive upper register. The style of the inscription band is closer to the Seljuq prototypes, save for the protruding elements in its background. The position of the inscription band and the fact that it is inserted into the supporting wall structure, point towards the possibility that it is Seljuq in date. The upper part of the inscription might have undergone historic restorations to integrate its missing parts. The lower portion of the inscription band conserves some traces of red, but it is not clear if they are original or a later addition.

Post-Ilkhanid Revetments

It has been hypothesized that the stucco mihrab of the domed prayer hall is Ilkhanid in date and that it was refurbished in the Qajar period. In addition to the mihrab's refurbishment, there are other architectural revetments from the post-Ilkhanid period, which mainly date to the Qajar

[1248] At the Marand Friday mosque the monumental stucco inscription band may pre-date the Ilkhanid mihrab dated 1330-31 (Cat. No. 22). This could also be the case at the Urumiya Friday mosque.

period. These revetments comprise the mosque's entrance portal and stucco bands in the domed hall.

The mosque's entrance portal leads to the side wing of the arcades with small domes forming a prayer hall. It is decorated with muqarnas decoration from the Qajar period. Other post-Ilkhanid revetments are located in the main domed prayer hall. These revetments consist of a set of plaster inscription bands. These inscription bands were applied on the surfaces of the supporting walls at the time when they were covered with a thick layer of plaster. Their main function is to accentuate the domed hall's architectural lines. These plaster inscription bands are exclusively epigraphic, and they do not feature ornamentation. The main monumental inscription runs along the supporting walls at approximately half their height. Other inscription bands frame the window and passage openings of the domed hall. They are similar to the monumental inscription band. Two cartouches of stucco inscriptions which flank the mihrab inform about the Qajar interventions' patronage.

Exterior Revetments

The mosque's exterior architectural surfaces do not contain architectural revetments. As a result of one of the restoration and repair campaigns, the dome of the mosque used to be covered with turquoise tiles, but these have been removed recently. The only decorated exterior structure of the mosque is its entrance portal from the second half of the eighteenth century.

Entrance Portal

The mosque's entrance portal is rectangular and it is formed by a pointed arch. The intrados of the pointed arch is divided into three units which comprise muqarnas decoration. The honeycombs of the muqarnas are white and they contain stars and epigraphic elements. The portal contains the historic inscription which informs about the date of its construction (1171/1758).

Stucco Polychromy at Urumiya

There are no polychromy traces on the stucco mihrab which seems to have been whitewashed or over-cleaned. The monumental inscription band retains some polychromy traces of red on its lower repeating floral band, but these traces could be later modifications.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Urumiya

The Monumental Inscription Band

The monumental inscription band combines three different artistic techniques. Its relief was produced by carving at least two stucco layers. Further protruding elements in the forms of leaves and flowers were applied on the background floral repertoire of the inscription. The inscription's upper register is made by carving one stucco layer. This combination of artistic techniques is not uncommon, but it demonstrates the masterly use of diverse artistic techniques, which was employed with the aim to produce a dynamic stucco inscription band.

The Mihrab – Phase One

The artistic techniques employed for the production of the stucco mihrab can be divided into two groups. The first group comprises techniques which were used for the making of the first, Ilkhanid mihrab, which is now largely concealed by later modifications. The second group constitutes artistic techniques which were employed for the mihrab's refurbishment, likely in the Qajar period. The stucco panel concealed by the perforated lunette grill and the stuccos of the monumental framing inscription band best illustrate stucco techniques, which were used for the making of the Ilkhanid mihrab. These panels were characterized by stucco relief which was not protruding and it displayed a single visual plane. Deep incisions were used to make ornamentation and inscriptions in order to produce a contrasting stucco relief. These stucco panels were produced by carving at least two stucco layers.

The Mihrab – Phase Two

The second phase in the making of the stucco mihrab is presented by its Qajar modifications. Above all, the main core of the mihrab (two niches, two pairs of spandrels and two stucco columns, and perhaps additions to the top horizontal register of the mihrab) was produced during this intervention.

The mihrab's spandrels were made by carving a single or double layer of stucco, which was topped by applied ornaments in the forms of leaves and flower blossoms. Such protruding elements are found on the horizontal band between column capitals and in the mihrab's upper register, where they might have been added to an existing mihrab panel. Another specific artistic technique is employed for the production of the perforated stucco grill, which decorates the mihrab's central lunette. This grill might have been moulded and subsequently attached to the mihrab surface and additionally carved. Its other specific features comprise its applied hollow and perforated circular bosses with floral forms. Application of these bosses additionally variegates the mihrab's visual depth, its shadow and light interplay and its overall dynamic appearance. The perforated grill and its production modality are approaches to stucco production which were not common in the Ilkhanid period.[1249] The manner in which hollow and perforated protruding bosses are applied on the perforated grill is unique to the Urumiya mihrab. These peculiarities are further arguments against an Ilkhanid date for the perforated stucco grill. Some stucco panels of the mihrab, supposedly of Qajar date, display very modest artistic techniques, where only carving a single or double stucco layer was employed.

In sum, the selection of stucco artistic techniques for the production of the Urumiya mihrab differed between its two decorative phases. The earlier mihrab was produced with modest and common artistic techniques. The mihrab's Qajar refurbishments comprised the application of protruding elements and the creation of a perforated grill with hollow protruding bosses. These stucco craftsmen possessed a masterly skill of stucco techniques and approaches to stucco carving.

[1249] Compare to two perforated grills, with different arrangements in the niches of the supporting walls of the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2) and the top register of the mihrab of Uljaytu (Cat. No. 1).

The Urumiya Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics and style of the stuccos differ between the two phases of the mihrab's production. The first, Ilkhanid mihrab, was characterized by a shallow relief and deep perforations and cutting of a single or double stucco layer. One of the characteristic ornaments of this mihrab was the flower blossom ornament which was sometimes combined with inscriptions. Similar ornamentation and inscription style are found on the monumental inscription band which could be an argument for its Ilkhanid date. The aesthetics and style of the refurbished mihrab are radically different. They are characterized by a relief with deep and thin carvings and by the abundance of applied protruding elements of diverse forms. Such a relief had a greater profile and a more contrasting appearance of protruding and flat stucco surfaces which rendered it dynamic. It remains unclear whether this radical difference could be a response of the Qajar stucco craftsmen to the mihrab's rather plain relief, or if the Qajar craftsmen simply worked with different stucco artistic techniques.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque does not contain any furnishing, from Ilkhanid or earlier eras.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The interior niche formed by the cusped arch is framed by an inscription band in Kufic style set against a floral background. The inscription features Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:18-19).[1250] Only the beginning of the verse 19 is contained in the inscription and the verse is abruptly interrupted.

The inscription reads:[1251]

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them – out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account.

[1250] Author's reading.
[1251] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

b.) The interior of the niche is topped by a horizontal inscription cartouche with the signature of the master stucco craftsman and the date of the mihrab's completion. This is likely a copy of the mihrab's original plaque. The signature is written in *Naskh* style and it is set against a modest perforated background.

The signature reads:

عمل عبد المؤمن بن شرفشاه النقّاش التبريزي

Work of ʿAbd al-Muʾmin ibn Sharafshah al-naqqash al-Tabrizi.

c.) The mihrab's monumental pointed arch niche is outlined on the exterior edge by an inscription band with Prophetic Hadiths. These inscriptions feature *Naskh* style and they are placed against a vegetal element background. The inscriptions were read by Kalus.[1252]

The inscriptions read:

... النبى عليه الصلوة و السلام أقبل على صلوتك و لا تكن من الغافلين

The Prophet, prayer and peace may be upon him, (said): "Undertake your prayers and do not be among the heedless."[1253]

و قال النبى عليه السلام كونوا في الدنيا أضيافا و اتّخذوا المساجد بيوتا

And the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Be (like) guests in this world and take the mosques as (your) homes."

d.) The central part of the mihrab is framed by a thin band featuring *Naskh* inscription which comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Muʾminun* (Qurʾan, 23:1-13).[1254] The background of the low relief inscription band is filled with simple vegetal elements.

The inscription reads:[1255]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ
إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ
فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ
أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ
الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

[1252] TEI 37448 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1253] The last part is from Qurʾan 7:205, *Surat al-Aʿraf*. TEI 37448 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1254] Author's reading.
[1255] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Muminun (Last Accessed: December 6, 2020.)

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ
ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ

Certainly will the believers have succeeded:
They who are during their prayer humbly submissive
And they who turn away from ill speech
And they who are observant of zakat
And they who guard their private parts
Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed.
But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors –
And they who are to their trusts and their promises attentive
And they who carefully maintain their prayers –
Those are the inheritors
Who will inherit al-Firdaus. They will abide therein eternally.
And certainly did We create man from an extract of clay.
Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging.

e.) The exterior monumental Knotted Kufic inscription band of the mihrab features the *Basmala* and the *Ayat al-Kursi* (Qurʾan, 2:255-256). The inscription was read by Kalus.[1256]

The inscription reads: [1257]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ
لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.
There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

The Monumental Carved Stucco Band

a.) The monumental carved stucco band runs along the top edges of the domed prayer hall's supporting walls. It features Knotted Kufic style and it is set against a richly decorated floral background. The inscription comprises the *Basmala* and it recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from

[1256] TEI 37448 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1257] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/?s=2%3A256 (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

Surat al-Fath (Qurʾan, 48:1-6).[1258] The last verse of the excerpt ends in its first third, without continuation, perhaps due to the lack of space.

The inscription reads:[1259]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ
وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path.
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.
[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds – and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment –
And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women – those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

See above.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The patron of the first Seljuq mosque and of the Ilkhanid mihrab, which is now largely concealed, remains unknown. Based on information from the monuments of similar dimensions, such as the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) or the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12), it is possible to suggest, that the Ilkhanid refurbishment of the mosque and the production of its first stucco mihrab, were sponsored by a local notable, native to the settlement, who could have been an Ilkhanid official, or a religious authority.

There is more detailed information regarding the Qajar refurbishments of the mosque and their patronage. The 1771 interventions (on the portal) were sponsored by Reza Khuli Khan

[1258] Author's reading.
[1259] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

Baylarbay and the 1834 restorations were ordered by Najaf Khuli Khan Baylarbay Afshar.[1260] The 1780 repairs of the dome were ordered by the ruler of Urumiya, Yusuf Khan Shujʿa Uduleh.[1261] The outlined information regarding the sponsorship of the Urumiya Friday mosque's restorations reflects the mosque's significance in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the local men of political power took care of it.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco mihrab of the Urumiya Friday mosque is signed as: *work of poor slave ibn Sharafshah al-bandigir al-Tabrizi in the month Rabiʿa al-Ahar in the year six hundred seventy six (1277-78)*. The procedure and sequence of the mihrab's production are complex and they comprise at least two phases. This signature is placed in the horizontal inscription band between the capitals of mihrab's columns, similar to the signature of the Marand Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 22). The two mihrabs are of differing proportions, but they share basic design principles. But the Urumiya mihrab was likely refurbished in the Qajar period. It seems that the Qajar stucco craftsmen copied the mihrab's original design and covered it with new stucco panels. The main evidence for this is contained in the mihrab's central lunette, which reveals the existence of an older mihrab beneath the perforation grill. The first mihrab should thus be considered as Ilkhanid and the refurbished mihrab as Qajar, until new evidence emerges. The *nisba* of the craftsman, *al-Tabrizi*, indicates that the craftsman leading the workshop could have been a native of the geographical area, in a manner similar to the Marand mihrab. The two signatures share craftsmen's *nisba*s and basic design principles of the mihrabs. Moreover, the selection of stucco artistic techniques with frequent use of protruding applied elements is also shared between the two mihrabs. The two mihrabs should therefore be considered as the work of two separate workshops of craftsmen who operated in the north-western area of Iran and perhaps trained together or occasionally collaborated.

f.) Monument Condition

The structure of the mosque had undergone extensive restoration interventions and modifications and it is in a good condition. The domed hall of the mosque is in a good condition. Its stucco revetments were whitewashed and the Qajar stucco bands were repainted. The mihrab is in good structural condition and it has been restored.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The discussion of the history and structure of the Urumiya Friday mosque indicates that the mosque's original ground plan is unclear, but that there likely existed a mosque with a domed prayer hall and a courtyard in the Seljuq period. Ilkhanid interventions in the mosque comprised the installation of the mihrab which was partially refurbished in the Qajar period. A Seljuq date for the mihrab can be discounted due to the mihrab's position, which closes off one of the original passages of the domed prayer hall. Some parts of the Ilkhanid mihrab, especially its external framing bands, have been kept and its central core was refurbished into a mihrab with a protruding relief. The mihrab's upper horizontal panel could have been repaired with the

[1260] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 154.
[1261] *Ibid.*

addition of protruding vegetal ornaments. The mihrab's Qajar refurbishments reflect the will of the patrons to demonstrate their political power through the patronage of the prayer hall's focal point. The mihrab may have been damaged and it therefore could have required repairs. The change of aesthetics between the first and the refurbished mihrab is the result of differing works and knowledge of the stucco craftsmen, rather than a direct will to change its aesthetic appearance. It remains unclear to which period the monumental stucco inscription band, which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls, should be dated. It is likely of a Seljuq date, but an Ilkhanid date is also possible, based on its technologic and aesthetic similarities to the external and concealed parts of the mihrab.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Wilson 1937; Wilber 1955, 112-113; Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938], Vol. 3, 1048-49, Fig. 377; Farahmand and Marufi-Akdam 2014; Abaszade and Tariqi and Alizadegan 2019; Motafakerzade and Zekavat 2019; Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 154-159; Quchani 2016.

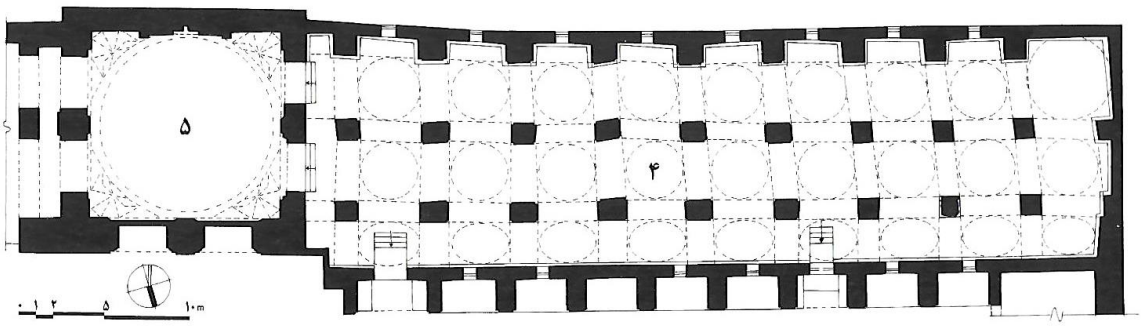


Figure 244: Ground plan of the historic structure of the Urumiya Friday mosque: the domed hall predates the hypostyle hall (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 157).

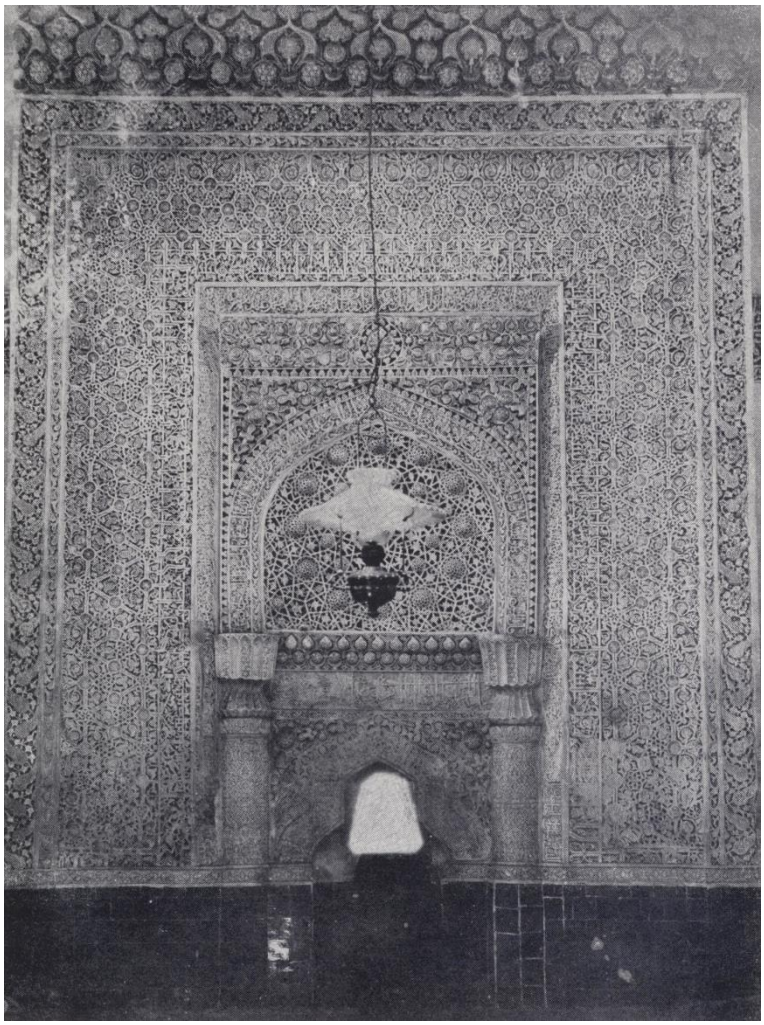


Figure 245: Photograph of the monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Urumiya Friday mosque, published in 1937, documenting Qajar addition in tiles on the mihrab's bottom section. The photograph documents the results of an early restoration of the mihrab (After Wilson 1937, 41).

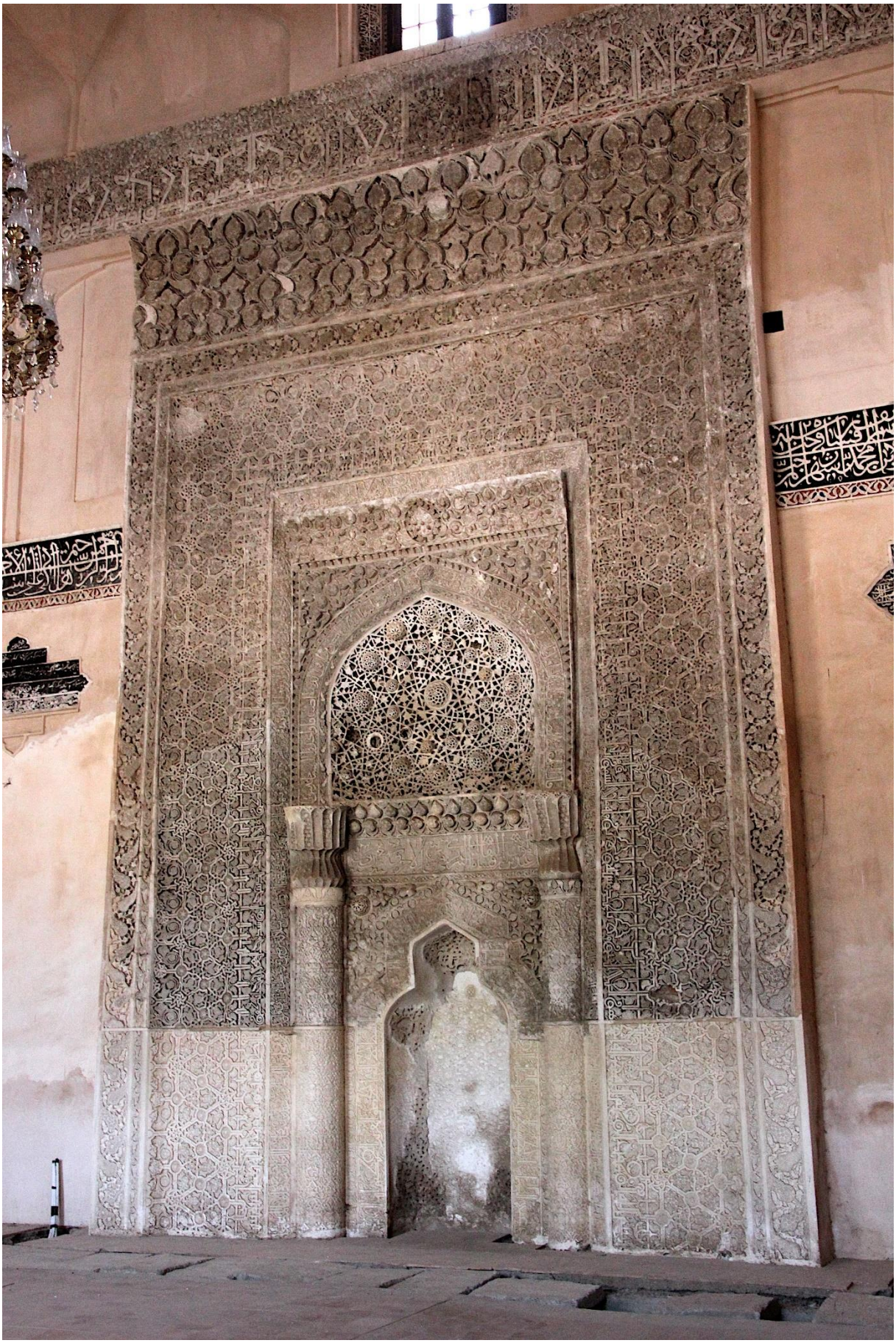


Figure 246: The mihrab of the Urumiya Friday mosque after recent conservation interventions, with reconstruction of its lower section.

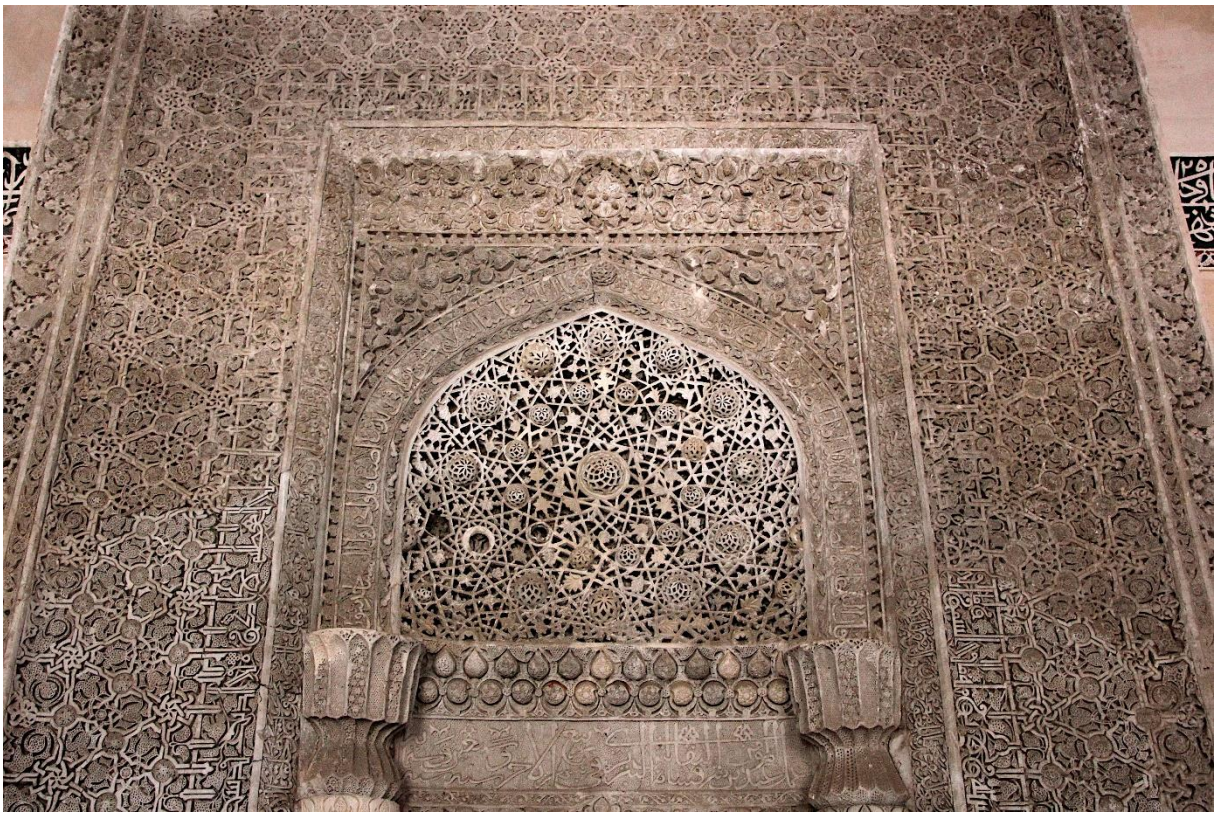


Figure 247: Detail of the upper section of the Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab with monumental perforated lunette in its centre.

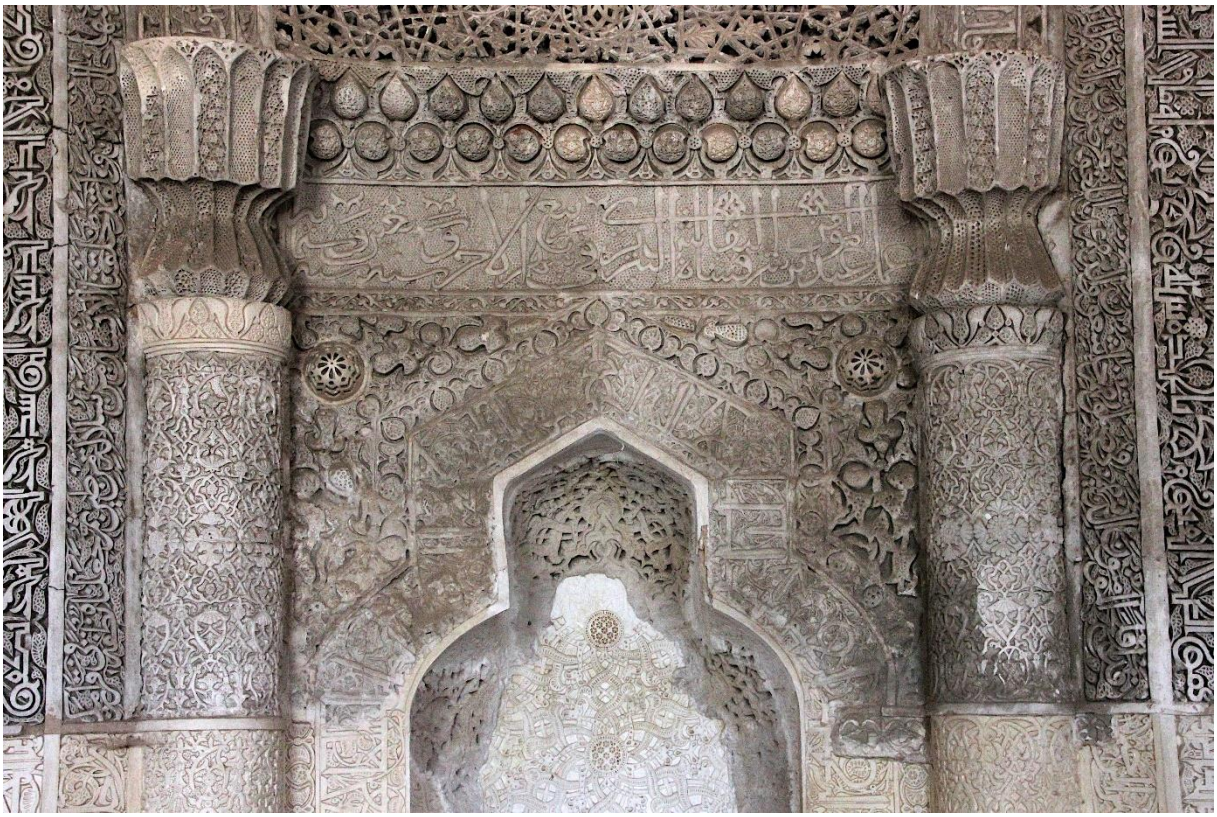


Figure 248: Detail of the lower portion of the Urumiya Friday mosque mihrab showing the internal niche and signature of master stucco craftsman, closely related, in form and position, to the monumental mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque.

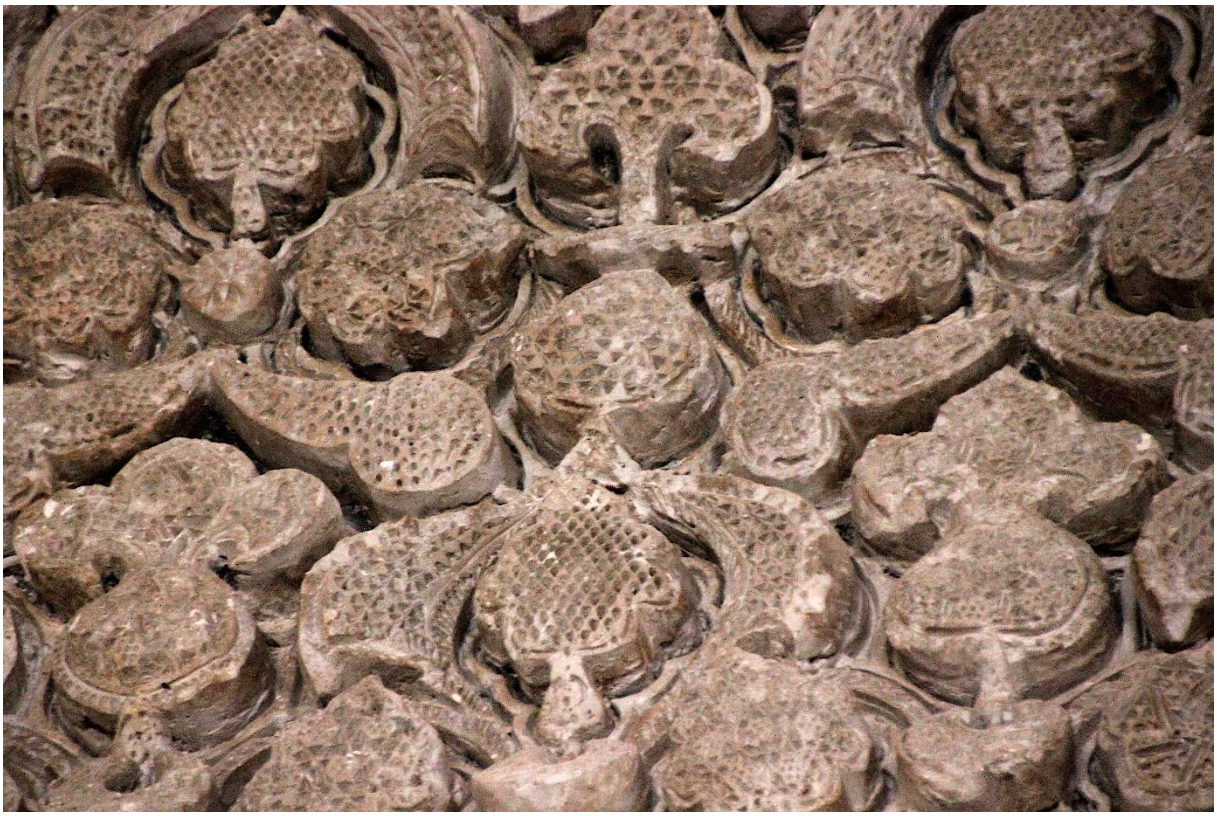


Figure 249: Detail of the top horizontal panel of the Urumiya mihrab, showing applied protruding elements in carved and perforated stucco, which form the abstracted vegetal elements stucco panel.

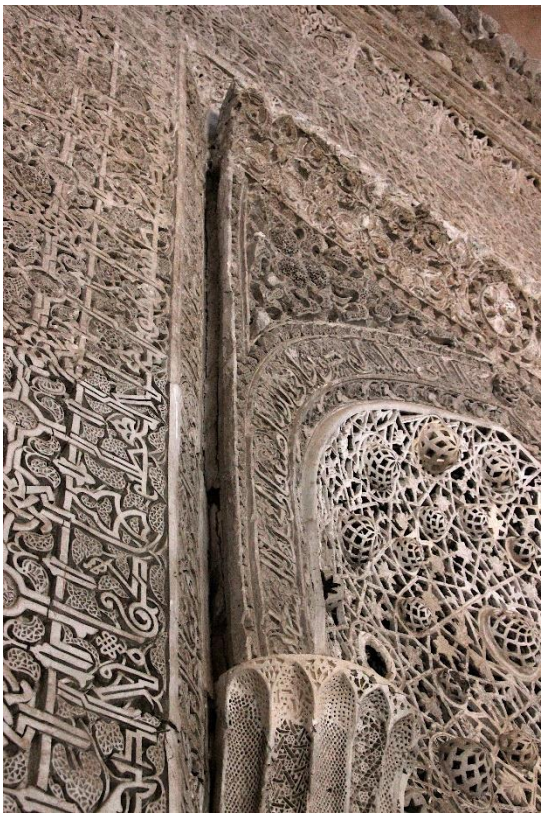


Figure 250: Detail of the Urumiya mihrab showing the joints between the core of the mihrab and the external framing panels. This might indicate that the core belongs to the second (Qajar) and the surrounding panels to the first (Ilkhanid) decorative stage.

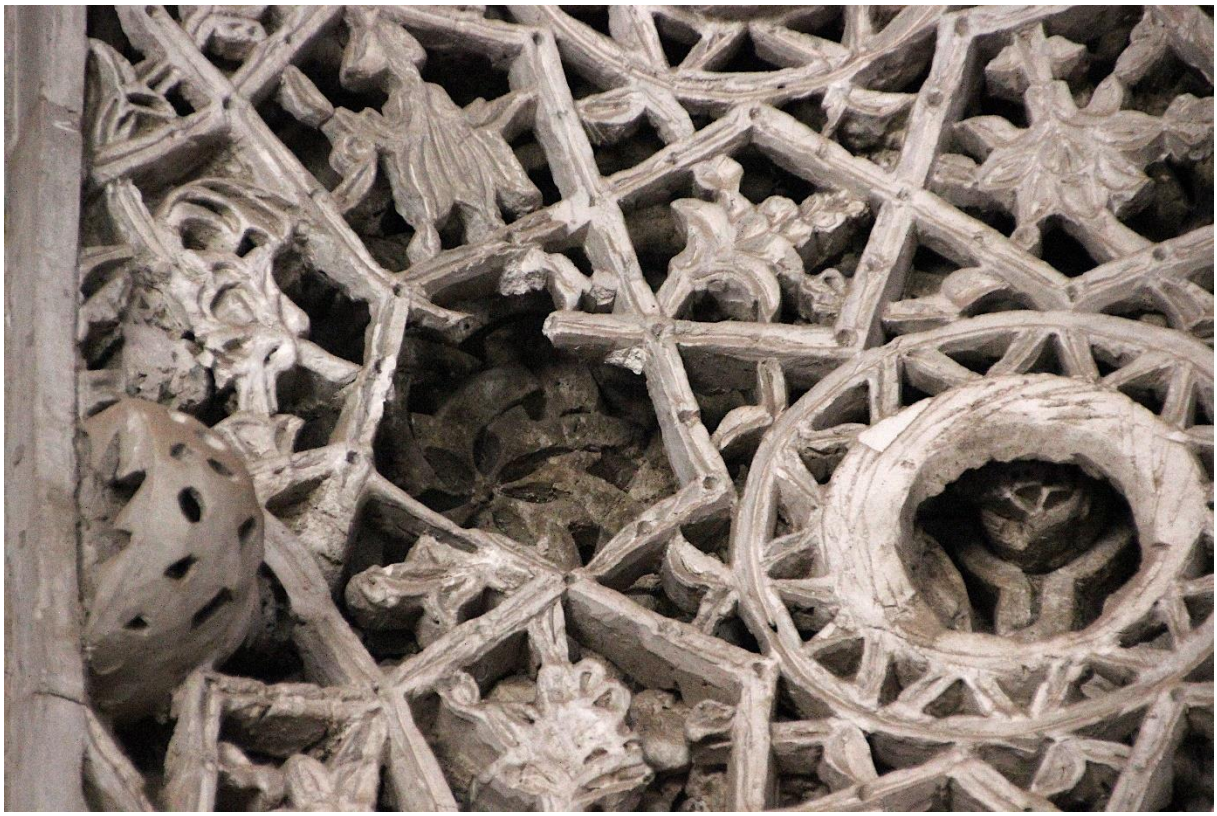


Figure 251: Detail of the perforated lunette of the mihrab. Its damaged parts reveal an older mihrab panel underneath it. The grill might be the work of Qajar restorations and the older panel Ilkhanid.

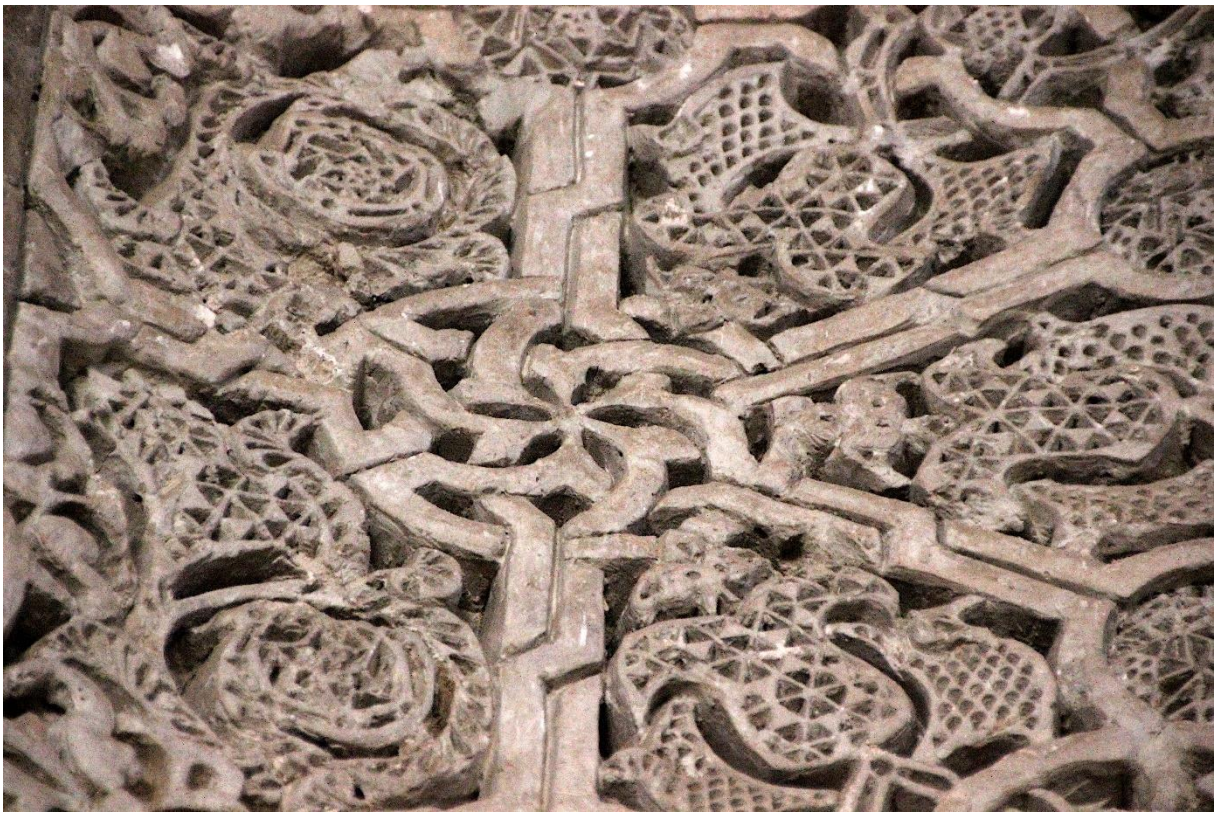


Figure 252: Detail of the knotted flower blossom integrated into the framing inscription band of the Urumiya mihrab. It retains a form and design related to stuccos covered by the perforated lunette grill. This might indicate that the external parts of the mihrab are contemporary to the ones covered by the monumental perforated lunette panel.



Figure 253: Detail of the monumental inscription band with Qurʾanic excerpts topping the edges of the supporting walls in the domed hall of the Urumiya Friday mosque. The inscription band may date to the Seljuq period, although its production technology and visual characteristics are related to the older parts of the mihrab (Ilkhanid?).

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 24

Monument Name: Tabriz Friday mosque

Figs. 254-263.

Associated Names: the monument is most commonly referred to as the Tabrīz Friday mosque,[1262] but some written sources refer to it as the Big mosque (Jamiʿi al-Kabir).[1263]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in several phases (the mosque was most likely founded in the Seljuq or pre-Seljuq period;[1264] remains of a pre-Ilkhanid stucco mihrab and wall painting fragments were discovered in the mosque; the mosque houses a monumental carved stucco mihrab from the Ilkhanid period), with subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the Ilkhanid ground plan of the mosque is of unknown characteristics, as it is no longer extant. The mosque most likely comprised a domed prayer hall and adjacent hypostyle spaces.

Location: city centre of Tabriz; north-western Iran; the monument is located in the Old city centre's bazar area.

GPS location of the monument: 38.0806722 N; 46.2903165 E.

Monument Investigation: October 22, 2017.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Ilkhanid Tabriz is described in detail by Mustawfi, who states that it is the finest and the largest city of Iran.[1265] Tabriz was surrounded by defensive walls and its population increased in the Ilkhanid period, because it was the Empire's capital. This required the construction of more extensive defensive walls. Mustawfi provides information concerning the foundation of Ghazaniyya, the Rabi-i Rashidi, and the construction of the Argh-i ʿAli Shah. There is however no mention of the Friday mosque of Tabriz in his accounts. The majority of Tabriz's population was Sunni, adhering to the Shafiʿi theological school. Mustawfi's accounts regarding the revenues of Tabriz and its dependent villages illustrate the significance of Tabriz in the Ilkhanid period, as the major centre in the north-west of Iran. Tabriz was a significant agricultural and trade centre positioned on the crossroads of communication routes connecting Iran to Anatolia, Iraq and Caucasus.

[1262] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1263] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94.
[1264] Melville 1981, 160.
[1265] Summary from: Le Strange 1966, 162-63.

Background

The Friday mosque of Tabriz is located in the old city centre, in the bazar area. The monument is now largely a modern structure, which comprises in its interior a monumental stucco mihrab from the Ilkhanid period, suggested to date from the fourteenth century. A smaller, presumably Seljuq-era mihrab was discovered in the ground below the current level of the mosque's prayer hall. Remains of wall paintings with gilding were discovered on the wall surfaces of the space currently covered by the floor of the main prayer hall with the Ilkhanid mihrab.[1266] The monumental stucco mihrab of the Friday mosque was in a ruined state and it was partially restored prior to 1997. It underwent further major alterations around 2010. Qasimi discusses the mosque's structure and its construction phases.[1267] The earliest article dedicated to the monument and its monumental mihrab is by Mehdi Makinejad *et al* (2010). Another recent publication by Amin Moradi, Rasul Musawi-Hajji and Behruz Omrani compares the Ilkhanid mihrab to the stucco mihrabs of Urumiya and Marand Friday mosques (Cat. Nos. 22-23).[1268] A comprehensive article regarding the monumental mihrab, the earlier Seljuq mihrab and the wall painting remains is being prepared by Korn.[1269] Accordingly, the discussion in this research focuses on the monumental Ilkhanid stucco mihrab.[1270]

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 254.

The current Friday mosque of Tabriz consists of diverse structures which were constructed in the post-Ilkhanid period. Modifications mentioned by Qasimi,[1271] illustrate that the supporting walls separating these new structures were gradually demolished in order to form a unified complex representing the Friday mosque of Tabriz. Research of written sources and accounts of earthquakes by Charles Melville, which is summarized here, presents the most reliable source concerning the construction, earthquake damage, and constructive chronology of the Tabriz Friday mosque.

Construction Phases

The necessary evidence to comprehend the mosque's constructive and decorative chronology has been altered by several restoration interventions, especially those which concluded in 2013, in the framework of the project of restoration and rehabilitation of the Tabriz bazar.[1272] It is thus necessary to rely on written sources, observations of the monument and its historic photographic documentation predating modern alterations.

[1266] Lorenz Korn, personal communication to the author.
[1267] Qasimi 1997, Vol. 7, 94-101.
[1268] Moradi, Musawi-Hajji and Omrani 2015.
[1269] Personal communication by Lorenz Korn. Article in preparation for the 2021 ICAANE.
[1270] Examination of the wall painting remains and the small carved stucco mihrab was not possible during the monument survey, because special permission would have been necessary.
[1271] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94-95.
[1272] See Mustafawi 2013, 162-179.

Nassir-i Khusraw and Mustawfi provide accounts of the 1042 earthquake which hit Tabriz.[1273] The accounts of the earthquake and of the subsequent rebuilding of Tabriz, by Karbalaʿi, inform that the Friday mosque of Tabriz was rebuilt following the 1042 earthquake.[1274] The Friday mosque foundation thus pre-dates Seljuq times. The earthquake of 1273 is also mentioned as damaging to the monuments, but there is no information regarding the damage or rebuilding of the Friday mosque.[1275] There were two further earthquakes in 1304 and 1345, but written sources do not report information related to the Friday mosque. Another significant earthquake which impacted the Friday mosque occurred in 1780; it was the reason for numerous monuments in Tabriz being ruined, the Friday mosque included - damaged monuments were listed by Tabatabaʿi, Zunuzi and Dunbuli.[1276]

The following information concerning the Tabriz Friday mosque can therefore be deduced.[1277] The mosque was rebuilt after the 1042 earthquake, which means that the mosque was a pre-Seljuq foundation. There are no mentions of the mosque in Ilkhanid sources, but the monumental carved stucco mihrab testifies to the modifications and decorative interventions in this era. The next information about the mosque mentions that it was in almost complete ruined state in the fifteenth century and that its rebuilding was sponsored by Uzun Hasan's consort, Shah Begum. The mosque is also mentioned by Evliya Çelebi, who states that it had two hundred columns; this should be interpreted as an indication of its hypostyle ground plan and extensive dimensions. The mosque contains Safavid inscriptions referring to Shah Tahmasp (dated 1565) and Sultan Husayn (1695), which testify to Safavid modifications of the monument. After the 1780 earthquake, the monument was subjected to further substantial rebuilding.[1278]

Phase One - The pre-Seljuq and Seljuq Tabriz Friday Mosques

As Melville has shown, based on the scrutiny of primary written sources, there was a Friday mosque in Tabriz which was ruined in the 1042 earthquake. It is plausible that the pre-Seljuq mosque was constructed in the form of a hypostyle ground plan, which was maintained and extended in the Ilkhanid period. The mosque was almost ruined at the time of rebuilding interventions, during the reign of Uzun Hasan, which indicates that the vast majority of the monument was altered at that point and in subsequent periods. Qasimi mentions that the 1980s restorations in the mosque resulted in in the discovery of the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab, which was concealed by the rebuilding of the monument following the 1780 earthquake.[1279] He also informs that another mihrab was discovered during these interventions, which was Seljuq in date.[1280] This small stucco mihrab is currently located below the floor level of the prayer hall with the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab and it cannot be seen.[1281] Further fragments of wall paintings

[1273] Melville 1981, 161.
[1274] *Ibid.*, 162.
[1275] *Ibid.*
[1276] Melville 1981, 160, 169.
[1277] See Melville 1981, 171-172.
[1278] Najafqulli Khan's nephew, Ahmad Khan Dunbuli took over the task of renovating the mosque, which was not completed during his lifetime, and it was completed by his son Husayn Quli Khan.
[1279] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94.
[1280] *Ibid.* See also Makinejad *et al* 2010, 83.
[1281] Lorenz Korn, personal communication to the author.

in blue, red, and gold leaf gilding were found in the architectural space where the small mihrab is located.[1282] These revetments may be fragments of the mosque's extensive pre-Ilkhanid decorative programme dating to the Seljuq or earlier period.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Tabriz Friday Mosque

There are no written sources which could provide information and evidence to more precisely date the Ilkhanid modifications of the Tabriz Friday mosque. The re-discovered and restored Ilkhanid stucco mihrab testifies to the fact that the mosque must have been rebuilt, or at least redecorated, in the Ilkhanid period. The location of the monumental mihrab is elevated, compared to the earlier small carved stucco mihrab and wall painting fragments. The monumental mihrab is not dated and it does not contain a stucco craftsmen's signature; it has been attributed to the fourteenth century.[1283] The artistic techniques for the production of this mihrab and its selected ornamental and epigraphic programme correspond to characteristics of Ilkhanid stuccos.

A likely reason for the Ilkhanid interventions at the Seljuq mosque could be the damage caused by the 1273 earthquake.[1284] If so, the repairs would have been performed sometime after 1273. The production of the stucco mihrab and Ilkhanid structural modifications may have taken place sometime during the reign of Ghazan Khan, due to Tabriz's population growth and the increase in its significance. The 1273 earthquake can be considered a general *post-quem* date for the production of the monumental stucco mihrab in the Friday mosque.

The ground plan of the Ilkhanid mosque is challenging to discern. Judging from the location of the monumental stucco mihrab, the small earlier mihrab and the wall painting remains, it seems that the Ilkhanid mihrab was installed in a prayer hall of an earlier period, which might have been rebuilt to comprise two storeys already in Ilkhanid times. The Ilkhanid mosque structure likely mimicked the Seljuq mosque with the monumental domed hall and adjacent spaces. The choice of the monument structure type may have been impacted by lack of space due to the bazar and by the cold climate of the region.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The Tabriz Friday mosque underwent numerous structural modifications in the post-Ilkhanid period which are best discussed by Qasimi and summarized here.[1285] The mosque was in a ruined state in the mid fifteenth century and its rebuilding was sponsored by Uzun Hasan's consort. Furthermore, Evliya Çelebi reports that the Tabriz Friday mosque in the seventeenth century retained two hundred columns, which may indicate that it featured a hypostyle ground plan or a hypostyle prayer hall prior to the devastating 1780 earthquake. Historic inscriptions on the stone slabs in the mosque testify to mosque modifications in the Safavid period. The mosque was damaged by the strong and devastating 1780 earthquake and its current structure largely post-dates 1780. Subsequently, several structures, which were built and known as separate monuments have been merged into a single complex which is nowadays known as the

[1282] *Ibid.*
[1283] Makinejad *et al* 2010, 83.
[1284] See Melville 1981, 162.
[1285] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94-101.

Friday mosque of Tabriz. Only the central bay of the current Friday mosque, which consists of a series of pointed arch arcades covered by a vaulting system and which leads to the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in the *qibla* wall area, is considered part of the historic Friday mosque.[1286] The current complex also incorporates the adjacent madrasa to which it is connected by a modern theological school structure and the monumental entrance portal with two minarets. These structures form the courtyard in front of the mosque.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The characteristics of the Ilkhanid Tabriz Friday mosque (Fig. 254) are difficult to comprehend, due to its numerous post-Ilkhanid structural alterations. The only certainly Ilkhanid part of the mosque is the portion of the *qibla* wall which comprises the monumental stucco mihrab on the modern upper storey and the older smaller stucco mihrab and wall painting fragments in its lower storey. The prayer hall area is of a pre-Ilkhanid date, but heavily rebuilt, with changes of the floor level. Parts of the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab are concealed by the new floor level of the prayer hall. It is plausible that the Ilkhanid mosque ground plan resembled that of the Seljuq mosque, which was the result of the rebuilding campaign of the mosque following the 1042 earthquake: a mosque with a central domed prayer hall flanked by further prayer spaces.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

It is not possible to propose information regarding the Ilkhanid elevation of the mosque, because the characteristics of the Ilkhanid mosque and its ground plan are unknown.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The mosque's is referred to in written sources as a congregational mosque and the primary mosque of the settlement. This is sufficient to confirm that the monument was the congregational mosque of Tabriz. Unless further evidence emerges, it will remain unclear whether the mosque assumed further functions. Two madrasas were built next to it in the Safavid period, which signalled an important transformation of the congregational mosque into a complex with a theological centre.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The Friday mosque of Tabriz was altered several times and it currently comprises a limited amount of historic architectural revetments. The mosque's main prayer hall originally featured a considerably lower floor level and a different structure (domed hall). The level of the upper floor was modified; the current floor conceals lower parts of the monumental stucco mihrab and it forms a lower storey beneath it, where the small stucco mihrab and the wall painting

[1286] These are: the Alchaq mosque *shabistan* to the south-east of the complex, the Qalʿa-i Uglu mosque to the east of the complex, the Khwaja al-Islam mosque to the west, and the Shaykh Sadiq mosque to the north-east. Furthermore, two madrasas used to constitute part of the Friday mosque complex: the Jafariyya madrasa is no longer extant and the Talabiyya madrasa has been rebuilt in the modern period. According to Melville, the two madrasas are of Safavid foundation. Qasimi confirms this by stating that the northern part of Talabiyya was constructed in the second half of the seventeenth century. He also mentions that the madrasa was rebuilt during the recent decades. The latest addition is the portal of the madrasa, which connects it to the Friday mosque and which is surmounted by two large minarets.

remains of the pre-Ilkhanid period are located.[1287] The mosque's exterior façade does not comprise any architectural revetments.

Interior Revetments

The monument was visited in order to survey the monumental Ilkhanid stucco mihrab. Access to the lower storey of the prayer hall with the small pre-Ilkhanid stucco mihrab and wall painting fragments was not possible during the visit. For this reason, this discussion of the monument's revetments focuses on the monumental Ilkhanid mihrab.

The Ilkhanid Carved Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 255-263.

Background

The mihrab was concealed during the rebuilding interventions which followed the mosque's destruction by the 1780 earthquake. The mihrab was rediscovered during the 1980s excavations at the mosque, which comprised its initial restoration interventions. The photograph published by Qasimi (in 1997), documents the state of the stucco mihrab prior to its major 2010s conservation and the reconstruction of its stucco panels.[1288] The stucco mihrab was ruined, but it nevertheless represents an important work of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmanship. It provides numerous pieces of evidence regarding Ilkhanid stucco artistic techniques, colouring of stucco revetments and aesthetics. Furthermore, the mihrab testifies to the Ilkhanid phase of the congregational mosque. The stucco mihrab poses numerous research questions. The mihrab has not received a systematic scrutiny so far, with the exception of the publication by Makinejad *et al* and more recently a comparative research of north-western Iranian Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs by Moradi, Musawi-Hajji and Omrani.[1289] Although it has been unanimously accepted that the mihrab is of Ilkhanid date,[1290] it remains unclear to which period of the Ilkhanid rule it should be assigned. Furthermore, due to the absence of the craftsmen's signature, the information regarding the mihrab's craftsmanship is lacking, but some of it can be proposed based on observations of its production techniques, carving approach and ornamental elements. The mihrab retains extensive amounts of polychromy traces which are invaluable pieces of evidence regarding Ilkhanid stucco polychromy. It features stucco revetments which were produced with peculiar artistic techniques which are not frequently encountered in Medieval Iranian stuccoworks.

Mihrab Location and Restorations

The mihrab is located on the *qibla* wall of mosque's main prayer hall. Its architectural context is discerned based on its historic documentation. A photograph published by Qasimi, in 1997 documents the state of the stucco mihrab before it underwent the extensive 2010-2013 restoration interventions. The photograph documents the *qibla* wall of the mosque, in the area

[1287] This was kindly explained and illustrated by Lorenz Korn. Personal communication to the author.
[1288] For the image of the partially restored mihrab, see Qasimi 1997, Vol. 7, 98, Fig. 102.
[1289] Makinejad *et al* 2010; Moradi, Musawi-Hajji and Omrani 2015.
[1290] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94-95. Makinejad *et al* 2010, 83.

where the mihrab panels were damaged; it is constructed out of fired bricks. These bricks were placed in a manner to determine the mihrab's basic form and to provide an architectural structure onto which the carved stucco panels would be attached. Original parts of the mihrab comprised approximately half of its central lunette and fragments of framing inscription band of the lunette. Some fragments of the interior framing band remain, and portions of the monumental framing band are visible on the mihrab's left-hand side. The photograph indicates that only a few portions of the stucco mihrab are original. Furthermore, it also shows that the lower part of the mihrab, with the central niche, was in a modified state, with applied alabaster slabs, which most likely dated to the Safavid period.

The stucco mihrab was heavily restored in the framework of interventions for the revitalization of the Tabriz bazar.[1291] Photographs by Anoushfar document the mihrab in the process of restoration which was completed in 2013.[1292] In this intervention, modern stucco craftsmen aimed at reconstructing the destroyed parts of the mihrab. Makinejad *et al*, point out that not all the interventions reproduce the original design correctly.[1293] They reflect the significance of the mihrab for the mosque's community.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The stucco mihrab (Fig. 255) is of monumental dimensions and its proportions are comparable to the stucco mihrab of the Urumiya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 23). The mihrab's lower portion is concealed by the modern floor level arrangement. The basic design of the mihrab is simple, compared to the mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque (Cat. No. 22) or the Uljaytu mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1). The mihrab is formed by a large central niche which assumes the form of a pointed arch. The niche is the mihrab's most recessed part and it is integrated into the supporting wall. The lower part of the niche is entirely lost and it is not clear what kind of stucco revetments it comprised. The entire lower portion of the mihrab is lost, most likely due to water infiltration. The upper part of the niche of the mihrab features a large central lunette, which conserves around two thirds of the original stucco panel. The lunette (Figs. 256-259) features a stucco panel with a relief of extreme plasticity, which finds little parallels in other stucco repertoires.[1294] The stucco relief of the lunette displays an abstract pattern of ornamentation which resembles abstracted flower blossom elements.[1295] These floral elements were flanked by large and extremely protruding heavily perforated half-palmettes with Square Kufic inscription bands.[1296] These stuccos are uncharacteristic of north-western Iran, but they are also generally exceptional, compared to the stuccos in the other geographical regions.[1297] The stuccos of the mihrab's lunette also contains considerable amounts of original pigmentation. Abundant traces of dark blue were spotted in the recessed parts of the stucco

[1291] Mustafawi 2013, 162-179.
[1292] See https://archnet.org/media_contents/84373 (Last Accessed: November 27, 2020).
[1293] This seems to apply to the external framing bands of the mihrab and the framing band of the pointed arch niche, which originally comprised epigraphic elements. Makinejad *et al* 2010, 83.
[1294] It seems that the lunette was built as recessed on purpose, in order to accommodate these stuccos.
[1295] Compare to the central lunette of the Haftshuya Friday mosque stucco mihrab (Cat. No. 3).
[1296] These Square Kufic inscriptions remain only in fragments and they are difficult to decipher due to their damaged state.
[1297] Compare to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum mihrab (Cat. No. 2) and the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 3).

relief (Figs. 259, 262). In addition to blue, red and white are found in smaller amounts. There remain some traces of green and red.

The central niche and lunette of the mihrab are framed by three bands of stucco, which form the pointed arch (Figs. 257, 262). Only fragments of these bands remain, and they have not been reconstructed correctly. Original stucco fragments indicate that the three bands comprised diverse elements of ornament repetition, and that the middle band contained a cursive inscription, which was set against a background of rich floral ornamentation. It was flanked by two other bands which feature arabesque designs. The interior framing band displays a repeating ornamentation displaying reticular composition and abstracted vegetal elements. The band serves as a transition between the concave plane of the mihrab's lunette and the mihrab's flatter exterior framing bands. The second framing band is the largest of the three; it contains fragments of an inscription in *Naskh* style. This inscription was placed against a background of floral scrolls with numerous leaf elements. The band conserves traces of its original pigmentation in white, red and blue. The third, exterior framing inscription consists of repeating abstracted floral ornamentation with polygonal medallions. Some of these medallions comprise parts of inscriptions in cursive style which are difficult to decipher. The combination of these three framing bands, with differing curvatures, enabled the craftsmen to create an undulating shape for the mihrab's niche and to determine its dynamic appearance. The niche of the mihrab and its three framing bands were topped by a pair of monumental spandrels which are no longer extant.

The mihrab's niche and the spandrels are framed by three stucco bands which determined the mihrab's final form and size (Figs. 256, 260-261). Very few fragments of the internal framing stucco band remain. The left-hand side fragment of stucco indicates that this framing band likely consisted of a set of symmetrical and repeating abstracted floral compositions.[1298] The second framing band comprises the inscription and it is the largest of the three. The inscription is produced in monumental dimensions and Knotted Kufic style. It features a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Muʾminun*, 23: 1-7) placed against a recessed floral scroll background. Only some parts of the original inscription survived which are located in the top left corner and the horizontal part of the inscription band. Makinejad *et al* point out that the reconstruction of the inscription does not entirely reflect the original inscription band, in terms of its content and length.[1299] The inscription band is concave, similar to some of the bands of the mihrab central niche's pointed arch. It is set against the background of floral scrolls which were composed out of scroll elements and diverse types of perforated abstract leaf elements. Traces of the band's original pigmentation are conserved in its recessed parts. Blue was employed to colour the inscription's background and there remain some traces of red and white which were used for the colouring of the background ornamentation. The inscription's colour remains unknown, as no traces of pigmentation are found on its original parts. In sum, the few fragments of the inscription band illustrate that it was produced by master craftsmen; it displays reflected

[1298] These compositions resemble those on the Ilkhanid period mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque and they also echo the framing band of the Haydariyya madrasa in Qazvin.
[1299] Makinejad *et al* 2010, 83.

composition and proportions, and creativity in variegating its knotted elements and forming a complex background repertoire.

The monumental Kufic inscription band is framed by the external, third, framing band (Fig. 260). This framing band is flanked on both edges by thin separation bands. All parts of the external band are works of reconstruction. The evidence confirming that the mihrab originally contained these external framing bands, is provided by the photograph published by Qasimi, which documents the mihrab's fired brick structure. These bands feature repeating symmetrical compositions of abstracted floral patterns with heavy perforation.

Mihrab Production and Dating

Observation of the production methods and artistic techniques employed for the production of the mihrab's stucco panels, reveals that the stucco craftsmen mastered numerous stucco artistic techniques. Among these, some techniques required advanced knowledge of stucco working. This is the case for the central lunette of the mihrab's niche, which is produced with a combination of carving of several consecutively applied layers of stucco, application of protruding elements, undercutting of stucco, and production of hollow elements for the relief. This particular approach and selection of artistic techniques allowed the craftsmen to produce a complex stucco relief, which was rather thick and which united different stucco artistic techniques. The final result was a recessed protruding relief with very rich ornamentation and strong light and shadow effect, determined by the interplay of stucco undercut, applied elements and hollow units.

The monumental Knotted Kufic framing band is produced with a more restricted selection of stucco artistic techniques, but it nevertheless reflects a masterly produced stucco relief. The mihrab therefore comprises diverse artistic techniques, characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. The technology of stucco production displayed in the mihrab's central lunette is one of the arguments for the mihrab's Ilkhanid dating, because such stucco reliefs and artistic techniques are only rarely featured in Seljuq stuccos. The remaining fragments of the framing Knotted Kufic inscription illustrate that the stucco craftsmen in charge of the mihrab production were not only skilful stucco carvers, but that they were also able to produce complex inscription designs. The inscription is not dissimilar to the framing band of the no longer extant monumental carved stucco mihrab of Kashan Friday mosque.

In sum, the selection of stucco artistic techniques, the featured inscription band and the mihrab's other ornamental elements are evidence indicating that the mihrab is the work of Ilkhanid craftsmen. More precise dating can be hypothesized based on written sources, comprehension of local history and comparison of the mihrab to the other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. It would be most logical for the Ilkhanid modifications of the Friday mosque of Tabriz to have taken place in the time when Tabriz was the capital city of the Empire. If so, the mosque was most likely modified and the mihrab must have been installed sometime between 1265 and 1306. One of the *post-quem* dates for the mihrab dating is presented by the 1273 earthquake. Melville also explains that no other earthquakes of the Ilkhanid period were strong enough to damage Tabriz's monuments. The mihrab therefore most likely post-dates 1273 and pre-dates the moving of the capital from Tabriz to Sultaniyya in 1306. It is not possible to entirely exclude

the possibility of the mihrab's later date, reflected by its advanced artistic features, but it is more logical for the mihrab to have been produced around 1300. Other Ilkhanid repertoires in the area of north-west of Iran, such as the mihrabs of Sujas (Cat. No. 35), Urumiya (Cat. No. 23) and Marand (Cat. No. 22) Friday mosques are of little help for the dating of the Tabriz mihrab, because they do not present direct parallels to it.

Comparanda

The Tabriz Friday mosque mihrab is difficult to associate with other Ilkhanid stuccos. From a technological point of view, the mihrab most closely resembles the repertoires located in central Iran, especially, those in the Isfahan area. Stucco repertoires such as those in the Ushturjan Friday mosque, the Pri-i Bakran mausoleum and the Haftshuya Friday mosque, display similar selections of stucco artistic techniques and approaches to stucco carving (Cat. Nos. 2-3). These monuments feature more frequently inscriptions in *Thuluth*, *Naskh* and Square Kufic and none of them displays a monumental Knotted Kufic inscription band. Knotted Kufic is present on the Farfan Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 5), but that mihrab presents a very shallow relief and it is difficult to date securely. Monumental Knotted Kufic inscriptions are more frequent in occurrence in the geographical area stretching between Kashan, Varamin, Damghan and Bistam. It is therefore difficult to provide any statement regarding the provenance of stucco craftsmen responsible for the production of the Tabriz monumental mihrab, which has little in common with mihrabs of Urumiya and Marand Friday mosques. Given that the craftsmen had to master both, stucco techniques and designs, and provided that it was easier to produce a new design, than learn a different stucco technique, it may be logical that the craftsmen's workshop operated in central Iran and perhaps reached Tabriz from that direction.

Exterior Revetments

There are no historical revetments on mosque's external architectural surfaces.[1300]

Stucco Polychromy at the Tabriz Friday Mosque

Original fragments of the Tabriz Friday mosque Ilkhanid stucco mihrab conserve considerable amounts of original traces of stucco polychromy. The widest spectrum of conserved polychromy traces is retained on the stucco panel of the mihrab's central lunette. Its stuccos conserve traces of blue employed to colour the recessed parts of its relief. Traces of white are discernible on protruding parts of its carved relief. Remains of red are found in hollow units of the mihrab's relief; red colour was used both to outline the design for carving of the stucco relief and for its colouring. This stucco panel also conserves some traces of green on the perforations of abstracted floral ornamentation. The framing bands of the mihrab's pointed arch conserve some traces of red and blue. Blue was used to colour the background of the monumental framing Knotted Kufic inscription band. Protruding parts of this inscription band conserve some traces of red and white.

The colouring palette of the Tabriz Friday mosque stucco mihrab comprised at least blue, red, white and green, which is more, in comparison to the restricted palette of the Pir-i Bakran

[1300] The monument is flanked by other monuments from three sides and the entrance façade was modified during the recent decades.

mihrab (Cat. No. 2) and comparable to traces found on the mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3). The Tabriz Friday mosque mihrab polychromy traces are some of the few which also conserve green. Blue was mostly used for colouring the recessed background parts of the stucco relief, which is in line with the majority of Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. Red, white, and green, were employed to render polychrome the protruding parts of the relief, which is in line with the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Tabriz Friday Mosque

The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab comprises stucco panels which display a wide selection of diverse stucco revetment production techniques. The craftsmen's decision to employ a variety of stucco artistic techniques determined the mihrab's dynamic appearance and increased its monumentality. The mihrab displays a wider selection of stucco craftsmen's techniques in comparison to the Uljaytu mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1). The mihrab's central lunette is a specifically interesting example of stucco revetment, which was produced with a combination of diverse approaches to stucco production, which included the carving of several stucco layers, application of protruding elements, creation of protruding hollow elements and stucco undercut. The closest parallels of similar stucco revetments are found in the Isfahan area. The central stucco lunette is related to the fragments of some of the framing bands of the mihrab's pointed arch, which display use of similar artistic techniques. It is in stark contrast with the monumental Knotted Kufic inscription band, which displays a different relief with a rather flat visual plane. In sum, the selection of different artistic techniques, high quality of stucco ornamentation and inscription design, and arrangement of the mihrab's panels determined the mihrab's monumental appearance. The combinations and use of outlined artistic techniques single out the Tabriz mihrab from the other mihrabs in north-western Iran and point towards a central Iranian provenance of its craftsmen.

The Tabriz Friday Mosque Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The mihrab's stucco is characterized by a relatively deep relief on the majority of its panels, which are juxtaposed to flat surfaces of the monumental framing inscription band in Knotted Kufic. The discussion of the mihrab's fragments demonstrates that, originally, the mihrab was also characterized by a wider selection of stucco inscriptions, which ranged from Knotted Kufic to *Naskh* and Square Kufic. The mihrab therefore displayed the maximum possible variety of stucco artistic techniques, inscription styles and ornamental vocabulary. The appearance of the mihrab was carefully planned in a manner for its concave and flat panels to create a variegated and undulated surfaces, which were rendered additionally dynamic through the application of various protruding stucco elements. The overall result of the mihrab's visual appearance finds only a few parallels in north-western Iran and it is closer to those of the Isfahan area which rarely feature Knotted Kufic inscription style.

D.) Furnishing

No Ilkhanid era furnishing is located in the mosque.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab is partially discernible from its original fragments. Its original epigraphic repertoire was likely more extensive. The inscriptions are listed in a bottom to top order.

a.) The monumental lunette of the mihrab comprises abstracted vegetal applied moulded elements. Borders of some of these elements comprise Square Kufic inscription bands, which are preserved in a fragmented state. They are no longer legible, but they are similar to bands of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum mihrab and the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab in the Isfahan region. These borders of Square Kufic likely consisted of repeating invocations to God.

b.) The middle of the three bands, which frame the mihrab's pointed niche of its monumental lunette, was originally an epigraphic band, but it was reconstructed in an incorrect manner to feature an arabesque pattern. The inscription's original fragments retain a few letters in *Naskh* style with elongated *hastae*, but these are not sufficient to discern their content. Originally, the band consisted of the inscription which was combined with leaf-derived elements filling the empty space of its background.

c.) The monumental framing inscription band was heavily reconstructed, but its original appearance can be discerned based on the few intact fragments of the mihrab. The inscription features Knotted Kufic style: its *hastae* translate into diverse knotted elements topped by elaborate finials of abstracted vegetal compositions. Additional knots and *hastae* are inserted in the inscription's background to create a rhythmic pattern across the band. Corners of the inscription band feature remains of more complex knotted elements. The background of the inscription consisted of a dense composition of vegetal scrolls and palmette elements with heavy perforation of the uncarved surfaces. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Muʾminun* (Qurʾan, 23:1-7).

The text of the inscription reads:[1301]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ
إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ
فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

Certainly will the believers have succeeded:

[1301] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Muminun (Last Accessed: November 27, 2020).

They who are during their prayer humbly submissive,
And they who turn away from ill speech,
And they who are observant of zakat,
And they who guard their private parts,
Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed.
But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors.

The employed Qurʾanic excerpt if frequently featured in Iranian medieval stuccoworks.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

There are no written sources with information regarding the patronage of the Ilkhanid Tabriz Friday mosque. The status of the patron can be proposed based on the information concerning the extent of the Ilkhanid interventions on the mosque, but these are also scant. It has been mentioned that the mosque was rebuilt in the Seljuq period, but this was followed by the 1273 earthquake in Tabriz, which likely damaged the Friday mosque. It is reasonable to suppose that some medium or major dimension structural repairs were needed. The only extant and tangible element of the Ilkhanid Tabriz Friday mosque is its stucco mihrab. The discussion of the mihrab illustrates that it used to be perhaps one of the finest, or at least the most complex examples of Ilkhanid stucco art, together with the Uljaytu mihrab and the no longer extant mihrab in the Kashan Friday mosque. Accordingly, the mosque patron had to be of a higher rank in order for him to assure sufficient funds for the repairs, if not enlargements, and for the production of the monumental mihrab. The mihrab alone is a craftsmen's product which required a skilful team and sufficient resources for its production. It is also of extensive dimensions, which indicates that there was a sufficient amount of material, and that sufficient funds were made available for a longer period of work by skilled stucco craftsmen. The patron of the mosque or at least the stucco mihrab must have been at least an Ilkhanid official if not of royal rank. Given the fact that numerous construction activities took place in Tabriz during the reign of Ghazan Khan (for example the construction of Ghazaniyya and the Rabi-i Rashidi), it is not unlikely, that the Tabriz Friday mosque could have been sponsored by the Emperor himself or by one of his ministers.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The Tabriz Friday mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab does not contain any signature of its craftsmen. Information regarding the workshop which produced it can only be speculated on, based on the characteristics of the stuccos and their relation to other Ilkhanid stuccoworks. The earlier discussion of the Tabriz Friday mosque mihrab attempted to propose links between the mihrab and parallel stucco repertoires. It has been mentioned that, in terms of artistic techniques and approach to stucco production, the Tabriz mihrab encounters the closest parallels in the stucco repertoires of the Isfahan area. It has also been pointed out the monumental Knotted Kufic inscription of the Tabriz mihrab finds closer parallels in the area around Kashan, Varamin and Bistam, rather than Isfahan.

f.) Monument Condition

The discussion of the mihrab and comparison of photographs before and after its latest conservation interventions, which concluded in 2013, demonstrate that several panels of the mihrab have been reconstructed based on unfounded hypotheses regarding the original ornamentation repertoires of its stucco panels. Only some fragments of the stucco mihrab remain intact, as shown by Qasimi's image,[1302] and the rest is the result of the 2013 restoration intervention, documented by Anoushfar.[1303] Qasimi's image shows the mihrab prior to its latest restorations which comprised the reconstruction of many of its stucco panels; illustrates that the Ilkhanid mihrab was placed against a fired brick supporting wall, the structure of which was purposely built to carry the stucco layers of the mihrab and to determine its form. The portion of the *qibla* wall which carries the stucco mihrab is perhaps the only part of the monument which dates to the Ilkhanid period. The prayer hall which houses the mihrab was constructed in a set of later interventions, and additional structures were built adjacent to it. In sum, the mihrab's reconstruction resulted in drastic alterations of the visual appearance and its original artistic features. Reconstruction and conservation interventions on the mihrab should therefore be judged as inadequate from a scientific point of view. These interventions however serve the congregation of the mosque well, because they visually integrate the mihrab, which is the focal point of prayers and they partially determine the preservation and appreciation of the mihrab's original fragments. Cleaning and better consolidation of the mihrab are nevertheless necessary. Archaeometric research of the original pigmentation of the mihrab would aid at providing information regarding Ilkhanid stucco polychromy and artistic techniques.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The discussion of the Tabriz Friday mosque and its Ilkhanid stucco mihrab sheds light on the significance of the monument and its stucco revetments. It has been shown that the mosque is likely of a pre-Seljuq foundation and that the stucco mihrab was part of its repairs and embellishment, which most likely took place during the reign of Ghazan Khan. Subsequent damage to and destruction and modifications of the architectural structure resulted in its alteration. The stucco mihrab was drastically altered during the two conservation interventions between the 1980s and 2010s. These interventions aimed at its visual integration and they resulted in the alteration of its original appearance, unfaithful reconstruction and irreversible modifications to the mihrab's original fragments. The analysis of its original fragments nevertheless indicates that the mihrab was produced with an advanced degree of stucco craftsmanship skills and based on a reflected and well-planned design. This enabled the production of this monumental mihrab with variegated relief, undulated surface and strong interplay of shadow and light on its relief, which were originally polychrome. The comparison of the rich combination of calligraphic styles, ornamental vocabulary and stucco artistic techniques, allows the mihrab to be dated to the period of the reign of Ghazan Khan and to propose that the craftsmen who produced the mihrab were most likely native to the area of central Iran.

[1302] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 98.
[1303] See www.archnet.org/sites/6862/media_contents (Accessed: June 24, 2019).

h.) Monument Bibliography: Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 94-101; Makinejad *et al* 2010; Moradi, Musawi-Hajji and Omrani 2015.

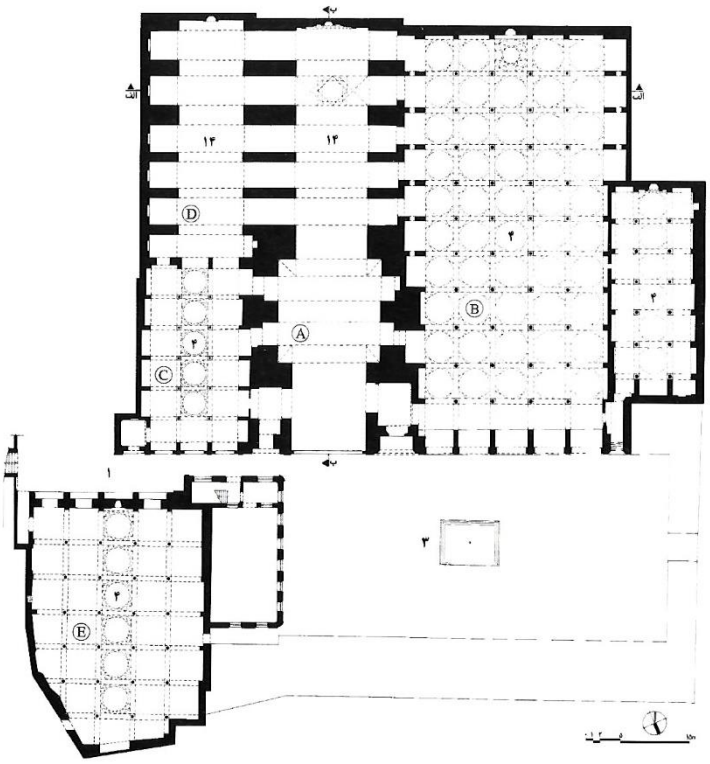


Figure 254: Ground plan of the Tabriz Friday mosque. The monumental carved stucco mihrab is located in the hall marked with the number 14 (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 100).



Figure 255: View of the restored monumental stucco mihrab of the Tabriz Friday mosque. The modern structure of the prayer hall partially covers the earlier mihrab.



Figure 256: Detail of the upper part of the Tabriz Friday mosque stucco mihrab. The few original fragments of the mihrab (in grey colour) were integrated into a heavily reconstructed composition of stuccos.



Figure 257: Detail of the monumental lunette of the Tabriz Friday mosque mihrab, which consists of a panel composed with applied hollow and undercut elements of stucco. The lunette is framed by a cursive inscription band set against vegetal composition background.

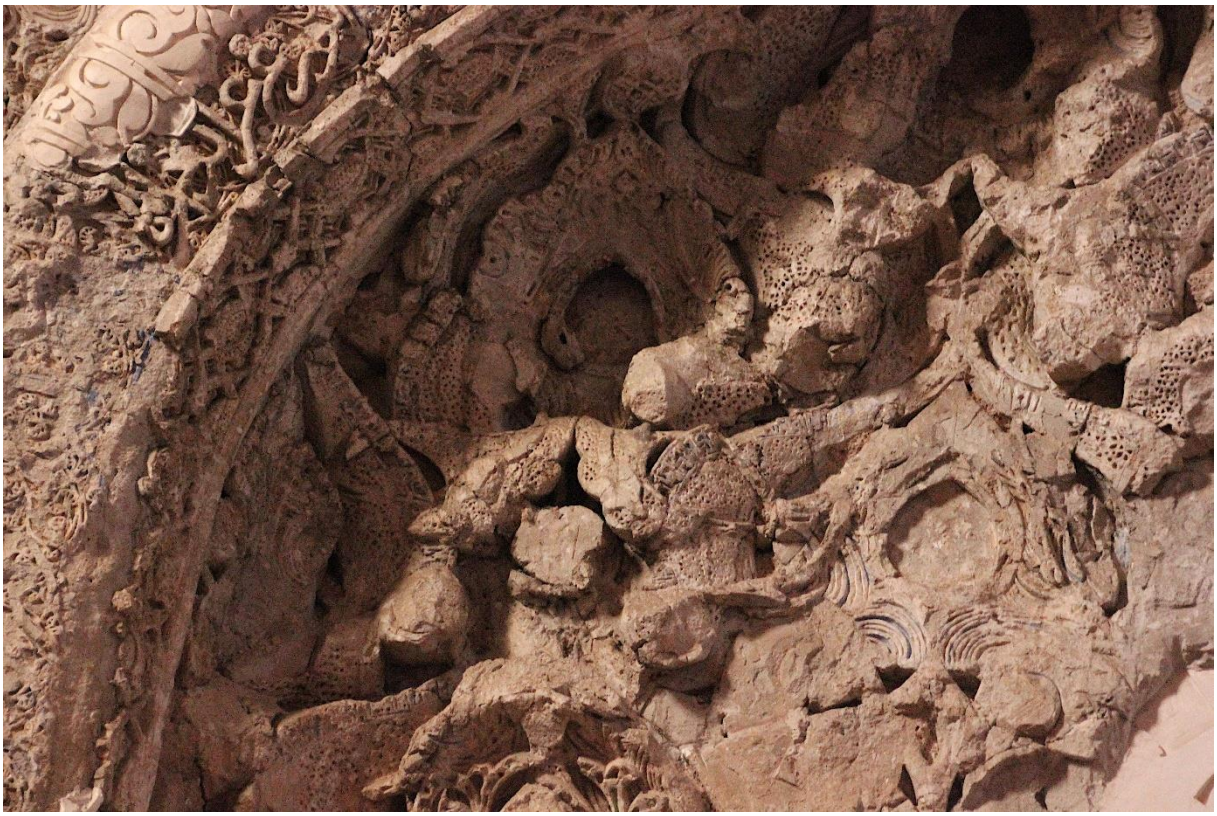


Figure 258: Detail of the mihrab's monumental lunette showing partially damaged applied protruding hollow and undercut elements of the stucco panel. These elements were produced by carving several consecutively applied layers of stucco.



Figure 259: Detail of applied protruding hollow and undercut elements of the mihrab's monumental lunette. Lower layers of carved stuccos retain extensive traces of blue, red to orange and white. Some elements featured small inscription bands, which functioned as their outlines.

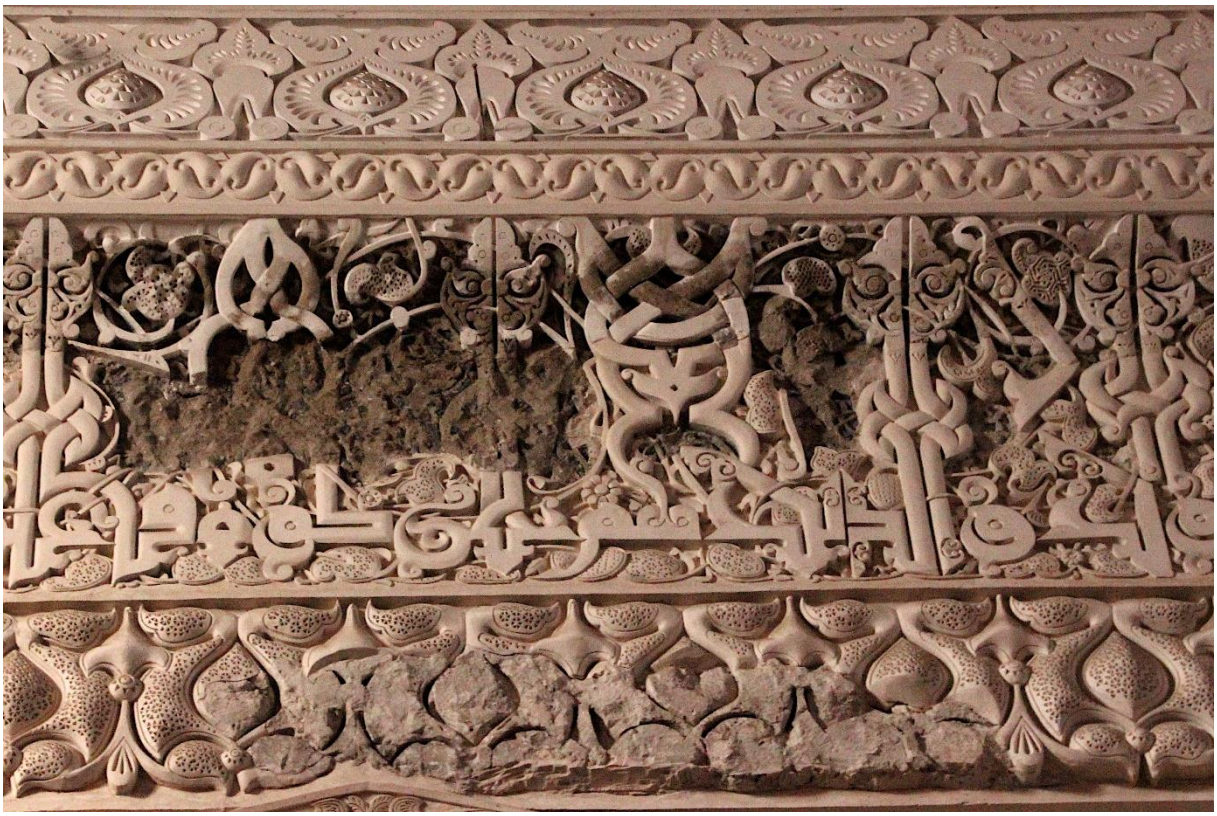


Figure 260: Detail of the horizontal part of mihrab's monumental framing inscription band, showing original fragments of the mihrab in grey and reconstructed parts in modern white plaster. These reconstructions do not always reflect the original stuccos of the mihrab.



Figure 261: Detail of the left-hand side framing bands of the monumental mihrab, showing original fragments of the mihrab in grey and reconstructed parts in modern white plaster. The interior abstracted vegetal ornament band was not reconstructed correctly.





Figures 262 and 263: Details of pigmentation traces of the monumental stucco mihrab in the Friday mosque of Tabriz. Left: traces of red, blue and white in the recessed parts of the inscription's relief framing the mihrab's monumental lunette. Right: traces of blue and white in the recessed parts of the interior framing band of the mihrab (the left-hand side section).

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 25

Monument Name: Pir Husayn Khanqah

Figs. 264-275.

Associated Names: some of the most common names of the complex are: the Pir Ḥusayn Khānqāh,[1304] the Pir Husayn Khanqah and Mausoleum, the Pirsaatcay Xanegahi, the Seyx Pir Hüseyn Sirvani Xanagahi, the Khanqah and Tomb of Pir Husayn ibn-i ʿAli, the Khanakah and Tomb of Pir Husayn ibn Ali, and the Chanakah and Tomb of Pir Husayn.[1305] Names of the monument depend on the interpretation of its function and manners of reference to the Sufi Shaykh buried in the complex.

Monument Type: fortified *khanqah* complex with a minaret, a mosque, a burial chamber, mausolea and seclusion rooms.

Chronology: the oldest parts of the complex are the burial structures in its interior. They were transformed into a monumental complex by the construction of the minaret, the mosque and other necessary structures for the *khanqah* to accommodate pilgrims. The entire complex is fortified, due to its isolated location at the Pirsaat River. An old cemetery is located towards the north of the complex, where there are remains of other historic structures.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the irregular set of structures enclosed by the fortification is arranged in a north-south axis. The complex comprises an external caravanserai and a cemetery.

Location: Pirsaatçay (Pirsaat river) area, some 16 km from Haciqabul rayon, in the Qubalıbalaoğlan municipality. The complex is in an isolated location, on the banks of the Pirsaat river. The monument is situated c. 75 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Baku in a south-western direction.

GPS location of the monument: 40.153808 N; 49.007882 E.

Monument Investigation: December 23, 2018; visits to the museums where the revetments from the monument are stored took place between December 21 and December 27, 2018. Documentation and examination of the exterior of the complex was limited, as it is near the protected river dam, which was forbidden to be photographed or accessed.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The geographical location of the Pir Husayn Khanqah complex changed through times. The monument was originally built on the main communication route between Baku and Salyan. Presently, it is isolated and off the main communication routes of the Azerbaijan Republic. The Pir Husayn Khanqah complex was in a ruined state at the beginning of the twentieth century

[1304] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1305] https://archnet.org/sites/3695 (Last Accessed: August 19, 2020).

and it was affected by the USSR project of dam construction on the Pirsaat river, in its immediate proximities.

The Shirvanshah Dynasty

The Shirvanshah dynasty ruled the eastern Caucasian region (the historic region of Shirvan; Azerbaijan, Arran, Armenia and eastern Caucasus) from the middle of the ʿAbbasid period until the Safavid times.[1306] The Shirvanshahs became tributaries of the Seljuqs under Fariburz I, but during the reign of the Seljuq Sultan Mahmud ibn Muhammad (r. 1118-1131), their reign turned into a protectorate of the Georgian kingdom. The region of Shirvan was controlled by Khwarazmshahs in the thirteenth century and subsequently conquered by the Mongols: the region was divided between the Ilkhanid Empire and the territory of the Golden Horde. The Shirvanshahs thus became tributaries of the Ilkhans. They were later tributaries of the Timurids and their dynasty continued as local rulers in the Safavid period.

Background

The first systematic scientific research of the complex was performed in 1861 by Bartolomeyev and B. Dorn.[1307] The site was excavated between 1939 and 1940. The main studies of the monument were published by Aslanapa Oktay[1308] and later, detailed studies of the complex's epigraphic repertoire in stone and especially its tile corpus were performed by Vera Kratchkovskaya.[1309] Gulchohra Mammadova and Zahida Mammadova date the complex to between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.[1310] They estimate the date of the death of the Shaykh Husayn to 1074-75. Despite the extensive studies from the USSR period, little is known about the monumental *khanqah* complex of Pir Husayn and especially its carved stucco mihrab. The *khanqah* complex formed around the grave of the Shaykh of the Qalandariyya sect, known as Pir Husayn ibn-i ʿAli, an Azeri Shaykh, who lived in the tenth or eleventh century. The tomb of the Shaykh was located on the site of the *khanqah* and the *khanqah* complex was built at the site starting in the thirteenth century. Frequently, the mausoleum of the *khanqah* is miss-identified as the grave of the Turkmen Qara Quyunlu ruler Pir-i Husayn Abu Saʿid.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 264-266.

The monument is built out of cut stone, which abounds in the area, and it assumes the form of a *ribat*. Its rectangular, north to south ground plan is irregular and it consists of several separate structures flanking its central courtyard. They are enclosed by the monumental crenelated ramparts, which are buttressed with round bastions at the corners and semi-circular bastions in the middle parts of the three ramparts. The monument is entered from the south-eastern side, through a large opening and a monumental entrance portal. The entrance portal was photographed in its ruined state in 1907 by S. Avetissian; his photographs document the historic

[1306] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/servansahs (Last Accessed: January 28, 2021).
[1307] For a detailed discussion of history of the research of the monument, see Kratchkovskaya 1946, 19-28.
[1308] Aslanapa 1979, 84-92.
[1309] Kratchkovskaya 1946.
[1310] Mammadova and Mammadova 2013, 112.

inscription on the portal.[1311] The main components of the complex are: the fortified enclosure, which comprises a mosque structure, the mausoleum of the Shaykh, a seclusion room, another mausoleum, other service spaces and the monumental minaret. The date on the minaret, which also contains the signature of its architect, indicates the time of its completion as 1256. The historic inscription on the *khanqah*'s entrance portal provides information concerning the patronage of the complex. It was constructed by Sharaf al-Dawla wa al-Din Hasan, during the reign of Shirvan Shah Warajam Afridun Abu al-Muzaffar Fariburz (Fariburz III; r. 1225-1255); the waqf of the complex was established in 1243-44 (Fig. 267). This makes it one of the monuments contemporary to the early Ilkhanid period. The most important period of the complex's construction activities lasted between 1243 and 1267. The mosque of the complex featured a monumental stucco mihrab, produced in the 1260s, as a work of redecoration. The studies of the tiles from the cenotaph of the Shaykh, now mainly in the Hermitage Museum, provide information concerning the redecoration of the complex's interior in lustre tile medium, which started in 1280.

Construction Phases

The constructive chronology of the monumental complex is challenging to discern. The monument was in a ruined state in the first half of twentieth century and subsequently it had undergone thorough conservation interventions, which comprised its rebuilding, based on a hypothetical reconstruction of its architectural structure. The epigraphic programme of the complex is rich, and it comprises several historic inscriptions in carved stone. Due to the reconstructions and conservation interventions, some of these historic inscriptions were either removed from the original architectural context and are now housed in museum collections, or the carved stone cartouches with inscriptions were re-inserted in the structure of the monuments, not necessarily in their original locations.[1312]

The monument's historic inscriptions are located on the following parts of the complex: The entrance portal comprises the longest historic inscription concerning the patronage and the time of construction of the complex in 1243. The minaret of the complex comprises several historic inscriptions naming the architect and the patron of the complex and providing three distinct dates of construction activities. These inscriptions propose 1256-57, 1300-01 and 1302-03, as dates of the minaret' construction, but none of them refers to a renovation, rebuilding or activity of construction of the minaret. The external structure of the mosque's vestibule, was entirely rebuilt and it does not comprise any historic inscription.

Construction Chronology and Monument's Epigraphic Programme

A hypothetical chronology of the complex's construction can thus be proposed as the following. The first parts of the complex were built around 1203-04; the architect of the intervention was Shahzada Habibullah ibn-i Shaykh Hajji Muhammad.[1313] This earliest date is the *ante-quem* date for the beginning of complex's construction. The existence of the signature of the architect

[1311] See Kratchkovskaya 1946, Pls. 3, 7, 31.
[1312] For example, the minaret, which would logically be the result of a single constructive intervention, comprises three historic inscriptions proposing dates of its completions as 1256-66, 1300-01 and 1302-03.
[1313] The carved stone slab with this information is currently located on the minaret.

or the master builder should be understood as an indication that the activities in question were likely extensive and of a greater prestige. The next historic inscription is the longest inscription concerning the patronage of the monument, which tops the opening of the *khanqah*'s entrance portal. It informs that the construction of the complex's enclosure was completed around 1243-44; then the waqf of the monument was established, which indicates the conclusion of the initial construction activities. The patron of these interventions was Hasan ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Hasan al-Bawadi, during the reign of Fariburz III. Later dates on historic inscriptions of the complex either indicate additions of structures to the existing complex or redecoration activities.

The minaret of the complex retains several historic inscriptions, in forms of carved stone slab cartouches, which are inserted into the minaret's external coating (1256-57, 1300-01 and 1302-03). These dates indicate construction activities in the complex, but not necessarily the minaret. The minaret was not planned as part of the complex from the outset; it is not integrated into the fortified enclosure, nor does it lean on it. Instead, it was conceived as an independent structure in the courtyard. This building activity took place around mid-thirteenth century, as suggested by the dated inscription 1256-57. The inscriptions dated 1300-01 and 1302-03 could indicate rebuilding or repairs of the minaret, or they could have pertained to the other structures within the complex.

Further historic inscriptions are all located on architectural revetments, which used to cover the interior surfaces of the complex. The carved stucco mihrab, which was originally located on the *qibla* wall of the mosque's main prayer hall, is dated 1266-67. The lustre tile revetments of the monumental dado and the cenotaph of the Shaykh bear dates varying between 1282-83 and 1285. The carved stucco mihrab is one of the earliest dated carved stucco revetments of the Ilkhanid period. The mihrab was installed in the mosque in order to monumentalize the original mihrab, which was a modest stone-carved niche. The mihrab was likely the work of stucco craftsmen who were summoned to the site for the commission, and who might have reached it from the Iranian territory. The mihrab's installation predates the production of the lustre tile repertoire for the *khanqah* by almost two decades, indicating that the two decorative media and the revetments were separate redecoration interventions. Eight-pointed star tiles forming the lower portion of the dado retain dates of production as 1282-83, and the monumental lustre frieze with the historic inscription topping them is dated 1285. These revetments were the works of the redecoration, which was intended to highlight the most significant parts of the complex, such as the cenotaph of the Shaykh Husayn and the interior of the mosque. The last date concerning the chronology of the building and decorative activities at the *khanqah* was located near the entrance portal, on the external surfaces of its fortified enclosure. This date is considerably later, and it indicates that some kind of building activities took place in 1397-98.

In sum, the discussion of the chronology of the formation of the Pir Husayn Khanqah complex indicates that the complex developed over a time span of some eight decades or almost a century. The main architectural structure formed in roughly the first half of the thirteenth century. Subsequently, further decorative interventions of the interior, of the essential parts of the complex, took place towards the end of the thirteenth century. This makes the monument one of the early monuments with carved stucco and lustre tile revetments of the Ilkhanid period,

although the complex is considered belonging to the Shirvanshah dynasty. Within the context of Ilkhanid architectural history, the Khanqah of Pir Husayn presents one of the early examples, and also of the carved stucco and lustre tile revetments. The case of the *khanqah* and its stucco and tiles assumes further significance, given the fact that it is located at one of the longest distances from the main lustre tile production centre, Kashan, which provides solid evidence of the of these tiles for the monument.[1314] Similar applies to its stucco mihrab; the monument is the most northerly-located structure with a carved stucco mihrab. The *khanqah* complex presents an example of architectural syncretism. It is a monument, which features a local construction tradition and use of available construction material found near the site. On the other hand, the architectural revetments employed for the decoration of the interior were brought to the site or the craftsmen were invited to produce them on the site. These revetments were therefore not part of the regional tradition and they were likely considered an exotic work.

Phase One - The Earliest Khanqah Complex

The first *khanqah* complex formed around the grave of the Shaykh Husayn. The sacredness-emitting grave of the Shaykh was the raison d'être for the formation of the monumental complex. Historic inscriptions indicate that state officials were involved in the patronage of the constructive and decorative interventions at the complex. The *khanqah* complex came to play a significant role as a pilgrimage destination and religious learning centre; it functioned as an institution in its own right, and at the same time was connected to the state.

The formation of the *khanqah* occurred between the beginning of the thirteenth century (around 1203-04) and until the sixth decade of the thirteenth century. The formation process of the complex is partially reflected in the slightly irregular form of its ground plan. The form and orientation of the fortified structure protecting the complex indicate that some structures pre-date its construction. The most plausible construction sequence of the complex is the following. After the burial of the Shaykh on the site and construction of the burial structure, another mausoleum of an unidentified personage was built near it. Then a plan was laid out to construct a larger complex, which comprised the mosque with the vestibule, which incorporated the grave of the Shaykh, the service areas and the stables. The layout and dimensions of these structures were planned as an enclosed complex, but the minaret may have been an afterthought or a later addition. The listed construction activities concluded around the 1240s when the monument's architectural structure was largely formed. Subsequently, the minaret construction took place around 1256-57, or later, as an independent building project. Later interventions on the monumental complex were for redecoration, addition and modification of the monument, aimed at increasing its prestige and asserting political power through its patronage.

Phase Two – The Evolution of the Khanqah Complex

The constructed monumental complex of the *khanqah* developed further during the second half of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth century. The minaret could have been rebuilt or repaired sometime in the early fourteenth century. The main change to the

[1314] Further fragments of lustre tile revetments have however been found in abundance in the territory of modern Azerbaijan, which indicates that the *khanqah* is only one of the monuments in which such revetments were employed and which there exists direct evidence of.

complex comprised the installation of stucco and tile revetments in the most significant interior spaces, in two separate decorative activities. A monumental carved stucco mihrab (1266-67) was installed on the *qibla* wall of the mosque's main prayer hall, which served to render the pre-existing mihrab, which consisted of a modest stone-carved niche, more monumental. A decade later, between approximately 1282 and 1285, a decision was taken to install in the interior of the monument an extensive lustre tile programme. These tiles were employed for the areas that were considered the most significant in terms of their religious function, and were also the focus for the pilgrimage activities and religious rites.

Later Phases – Later Modifications of the Khanqah Complex

Further modifications of the *khanqah* are difficult to discern, because the monument was badly ruined. The only evidence is the historic inscription on the entrance portal of the monument. It is dated 1397-98 and it indicates that the complex might have been repaired around that time. Judging by the architectural properties of the monument's original parts and its architectural revetments, there is no evidence of later artistic styles at the site.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Observations of the monument and its structure indicate that it did not undergo any major modifications after the end of the fourteenth century.

Ilkhanid Complex Ground Plan

The fortified enclosure of the complex unites the individual structures into a *khanqah* complex (Fig. 264). The form of these fortified ramparts is irregular and it resembles a rectangle oriented to the north-south. The ramparts feature a monumental entrance portal on the south-eastern side of the complex. Southern structures of the complex are not well preserved, but there remains a burial building, which assumes the form of a tomb tower. Judging by context, it is plausible that it was either a burial for one of the patrons tied to the complex, or perhaps, the tomb tower was built to host the tomb of another revered personage. The structures in the south-western part of the complex are not well preserved. The north-eastern part of the complex is occupied by the monumental minaret and stables. The most significant parts of the complex, the mosque, the tomb of the Shaykh and the seclusion rooms, are located in the north-west. The mosque is located adjacent to the tomb of the Shaykh, on its southern part. Next to the tomb of the Shaykh, there is another space which may have served as a seclusion room. The disposition of these architectural structures reflects the fact that these buildings are works of several construction phases, rather than one large building campaign. The position of the Shaykh's tomb determined the subsequent construction of the mosque on its southern side. The minaret's position is somewhat irregular. The courtyard of the complex functioned as the connection space between these structures.

Ilkhanid Complex Elevation

The complex presents several elevated points. The most elevated and visible is the monumental minaret. The next highest point was presented by the small tomb tower which was built for the unknown burial and juxtaposed in axis to the minaret. The remaining parts of the complex were

covered by flat roofs, and they did not present any specific elevations. The exterior surfaces of the fortified enclosure were built to present balanced and simple façades. The eastern side, with the monumental entrance portal is the main façade of the complex.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument is a complex which consists of several structures with diverse religious functions. The oldest part of the monument is the tomb chamber of the Shaykh. In addition to this grave, there is a tomb tower on the southern side of the complex, which hosts the grave of an unknown person. This tomb tower was constructed at the site, either because it became an attractive place for burial of revered persons tied to patronage or spiritual practices of the *khanqah*, or both. The construction of the mosque at the site was a necessity in order to host pilgrims. The vestibule at the entrance of the mosque could also serve as a prayer space or space for other religious rites. Both, the installation of the mihrab and lustre tiles, should be understood as parts of enlargements and redecoration interventions of the complex. These activities resulted in the increasing of symbolic significance of these spaces. The presence of the Shaykh's grave therefore prompted the necessary additions and enlargements and attracted pilgrims and followers to the site. In addition to these religious structures, the site also comprised maintenance buildings.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The interior architectural revetments of the Pir Husayn Khanqah can be divided into two groups, based on their medium; carved stuccos and lustre tiles. Most of the lustre tiles pertaining to the site have since been removed and are currently stored in a number of museum collections. The monumental carved stucco mihrab was removed from the site and transported to Baku for its preservation. The monument has thus been stripped of its original revetments. These revetments were concentrated in the most significant parts of the complex. The monumental stucco mihrab might have originally consisted of three parts (the large central part and two flanking smaller niches) and it was installed against an already existing *qibla* wall of the mosque. The exact location of the entire lustre tile programme, their function and meaning, have been discussed in detail by Kratchkovskaya.[1315] Lustre tiles adorned the burial chamber of the Shaykh, and perhaps the vestibule and the prayer hall of the mosque. They formed a monumental dado area which consisted of star and cross tiles topped by an extensive inscription band frieze. Further lustre tiles, which were specifically produced, were employed to cover the Shaykh's cenotaph. Both, the stucco mihrab and the lustre tiles, are works of the complex's redecoration and they were installed in its interior in order to increase the prestige of the sacred spaces and to sanctify them. Their sponsorship reflected the political power of their patrons.

[1315] Kratchkovskaya 1946, see especially 28-61, 80-99.

The Mihrab

Figs. 268-271.

The monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Pir Husayn Khanqah was transferred to the National literature museum in Baku, where it is on permanent display. The transfer of the mihrab was undertaken due to the complex's ruined state and in an attempt to salvage the mihrab. The transfer included its dismembering into individual panels for transport, and their reassembling in Baku. The mihrab structure consists of the main monumental mihrab niche, which is flanked by another smaller niche on its left-hand side. Perhaps, originally, the mihrab featured a tripartite composition.

Mihrab Installation

The Pir Husayn mihrab features a relatively squat form, and its vertical axis is reduced, compared to the more frequently employed mihrab forms and proportions. This peculiar form of the mihrab was determined by the architectural structure of the mosque's prayer hall where it was installed on its *qibla* wall. The central niche of the mihrab is missing and it is not clear what its original form was. Examination of the central part of the mosque's *qibla* wall reveals a carved stone niche with a muqarnas hood topping it. This niche was custom made at the time of the mosque's construction, in a manner and technique related to the prayer hall's entrance, which features carved ornamentation. This niche is considerably deep and built out of cut stone. Its muqarnas hood consists of three tiers. Judging from the form of the mihrab's niche, its spandrels, and the framing band formed out of cut stone, it seems that the first mihrab niche of was produced as a carved stone niche and it did not have stucco revetments. Furthermore, the interior of the stone niche was carved to feature cut stone ornaments; remains of a round trefoil arch are visible in the niche's lower portion. The stucco mihrab production for the mosque of the *khanqah* was a work which was performed later, in respect to the construction of the mosque's structure, and this intervention should be understood as a redecoration. The redecoration of the mihrab with carved stuccos resulted in its enlargement, monumentalization, and in the change of the *qibla* wall's decorative aesthetics. This intervention was likely performed for political reasons of patronage of interventions at the *khanqah*, as indicated by the size and position of the historic inscription, which highlights the name of its patron and the time of the mihrab's completion. The stucco mihrab, its panels and their designs of epigraphic, vegetal and geometric ornamentation, present unusual characteristics of dimensions and proportions.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The internal core of the monumental mihrab is missing. What remains is the historic inscription panel (Fig. 269) topping the mihrab's niche area and the framing bands of the mihrab's exterior surfaces. In the niche's central part, the historic inscription informs about the ruler under whose auspices the mihrab was commissioned (Fariburz III) and the date of the mihrab's completion (1266-67). This inscription is produced in a medium other than carved stucco: it is a mosaic of glazed elements, which were inserted into stucco or mortar material. The niche is framed by a thin concave band which assures for the transition between the exterior and interior planes of

the mihrab's stucco panels. The band features an arabesque pattern consisting of leaf elements with star perforation patterns and half-palmettes.

The mihrab consists of two larger bands or sets of stucco panels (Figs. 269-270). The interior band consists of diverse elements: it features two vertical bands of geometric patterns produced with perforations and incisions and its horizontal part features a central panel of vegetal composition flanked by two panels of epigraphic elements. The two vertical panels of the framing band feature a basic scale-like grid form, which encloses diverse decorative patterns produced with perforations and incisions. Their most common patterns are derived from the six pointed star. These panels feature ornamentation, which is disproportionally large compared to the rest of the mihrab panels with more complex and subtle designs. This unusually large size of scale-like elements on these panels could derive from the craftsmen's lack of skill, but it at the same time contrasts to the rest of the mihrab. The internal band's horizontal central panel features symmetrical compositions of split palmette elements and epigraphic bands with invocations to God in Kufic style. The central parts of the designs retain traces of surfaces where circular protruding bosses were applied. Split palmettes therefore function as the background of the composition and some of them were made to protrude from the background's visual plane in order to enhance the appearance of the stucco relief.

Another monumental band outlines the mihrab on its exterior margins. This framing band features distinct visual properties, compared to the ones described. The band retains a fragmented Qurʾanic excerpt (the *Basmala* and *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18) in Kufic style. The background of the inscription is filled with floral scrolls and other vegetal elements. The Kufic inscription features elegant proportions, slightly elongated *hastae*, and occasional elaborated ends of *hastae*. At its corners, the inscription comprises knot-star elements, characteristic of Ilkhanid architectural decorations. This external framing band presents one of the mihrab's most elaborate compositions.

In sum, the overall appearance of the mihrab's core was determined by the bands and panels which featured predominantly vegetal designs produced with perforations and incisions. The mihrab's visual features were of a manneristic and somewhat dispersed nature. Nevertheless, the mihrab was produced with several stucco artistic techniques and its visual appearance was produced by the use of epigraphic, geometric and vegetal elements. In this respect, the mihrab demonstrates characteristics of more complex stuccoworks. But the overall result is somewhat provincial, which was most likely impacted either by a reduced number of craftsmen from the workshop, or due to the impact of the mechanical properties of the mihrab's stucco body, made of the locally available gypsum material.

The Small Mihrab Niche

On the left-hand side of the mihrab's core, there is another smaller mihrab structure, which could have functioned as a side mihrab. It may have been produced to fill the empty space on the architectural surfaces of the mosque's *qibla* wall, which was determined by the mihrab installation in its centre. Two small side mihrabs might have been produced to cover the entire *qibla* wall of the mosque with carved stuccos. The stuccos of the left-hand side small mihrab are preserved in parts, with its central section, which presumably featured a niche, missing. The

niche was framed by an inscription band featuring Kufic style and Qurʾanic content (illegible), the inscription is set against a plain background, but the empty spaces between the letters are filled with vegetal elements, which were carved into the same stucco body layer as the inscription. The mentioned framing band is topped by a horizontal panel, which features a Qurʾanic inscription in *Naskh* (see below) with superimpositions in several places. It is placed against a plain background, but some vegetal elements have been carved out to fill the empty spaces between the lettering, out of the same stucco layer as the inscription.

The Mihrab's Patronage

The carved stucco mihrab is perhaps the northern-most located extant Ilkhanid stuccowork in the Caucasus region. This points towards the fact that the stuccos of the *khanqah* must have been produced by a group of craftsmen who arrived to the area and must have been summoned on purpose for the task. Having seen that the same monument also comprised a large amount of lustre tiles produced in Kashan, and keeping in mind that one of the patrons of the monument had family ties with north-western Iran, it is likely, that one of the patrons must have also attracted the craftsmen's workshop and mobilized them for the task in question. The presence of lustre tiles and carved stuccos at the *khanqah* reflects the appreciation of the given decorative media, and the will of the patrons to sponsor their production to indicate the prestige and religious significance of the religious structure and to indirectly demonstrate their political and economic power.

The Mihrab's Craftsmen

The stucco mihrab was produced by versed craftsmen, but its visual properties were either impacted by the locally available material or there could have been a smaller number of craftsmen on the site at the time of the mihrab's production. Although the mihrab provides evidence of advanced stucco production technology and artistic techniques, its visual appearance does not match the Ilkhanid stucco masterpieces, such as the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1), the stuccos of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) or other repertoires. The Pir Husayn stucco mihrab is more modest, produced in a less complex manner, with a lesser amount of material and presumably lesser quantity of resources. In terms of the relation of the Pir Husayn mihrab to the nearest stucco repertoires, the mihrab possesses only partially shared characteristics with the small mihrab of the Alinja Khanqah in Nakhchivan area (Cat. No. 26). In fact, the craftsmen in charge of the production of the Alinja Khanqah mihrab possessed more advanced stucco production skills, than the ones responsible for the mihrab of the Pir Husayn Khanqah. The ties between the two mihrabs nevertheless indicate that the Alinja Khanqah stucco mihrab could have been produced in a similar chronological context as the one at Qubalıbalaoğlan.

Lustre Tiles

Figs. 272-275.

The Khanqah of Pir Husayn used to retain an extensive lustre tile repertoire. There is no exact information regarding the location of these tiles, which also determined their function and meaning. These tiles can be roughly divided into three groups: lustre tiles of specific forms for

the coating of the Shaykh's cenotaph, dados of star and cross tiles topped by the monumental lustre tile frieze and glazed and moulded octagonal tiles. The vast majority of these tiles is now stored in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. They were studied in detail and their inscriptions were read by Kratchkovskaya, thus only a summary is reported here.[1316] The star tiles of the dado area are specifically important, because they do not feature only religious texts; many of them retain love quatrains.

The dado area tiles (Figs. 272-273) consisted of two parts. The lower, large part of the dado was formed by a combination of turquoise glazed crosses and star tiles. The eight pointed stars of the dado were produced with underglaze colouring and lustre techniques. They mainly featured various geometric, arabesque or vegetal compositions in their central parts, with inscriptions of Qurʾanic content or love quatrains running along their edges coloured white. The presence of these tiles in the religious context can be understood through a Sufi interpretation.[1317] Love quatrains may have been metaphors of the religious quest for the divine through the spiritual experience. This is not dissimilar to related tiles and inscriptions found in monuments in the Iranian territory, such as the ʿAli mosque at Quhrud.[1318]

The described dado area was topped by a monumental frieze consisting of large lustre tiles. Twenty-four of these tiles are preserved in the Hermitage collection. They are of outmost importance, because they form a historic inscription and they provide the exact date of the lustre tile dado's production, as 1285. The date on the tiles is therefore an important *ante-quem* date for the understanding of the constructive chronology of the monument. Nevertheless, these tiles were works of a redecoration intervention which comprised the application of architectural revetments on the surfaces of the already extant monument. The dado tile frieze was of standard dimensions (tiles measuring approximately 36 x 34 cm) and the tiles feature the usual moulded forms with arabesques on their top and hand-made inscriptions in their central registers. In sum, all the frieze tiles feature standard forms and dimensions and artistic techniques and visual vocabulary which were typical for lustre tiles produced in Kashan; it is unlikely, at the present state of knowledge and understanding of Iranian lustre tiles, that the tiles could have been produced in a production centre other than Kashan. They must have been ordered specifically for the monument, to be custom made, and perhaps as a result of the patron's personal ties to the geographical area in which the production centre of tiles is located. Very few Ilkhanid monuments retain lustre tiles *in situ* and there is little direct evidence regarding the use and original locations of such revetments in monuments.[1319] For the tiles of Pir Husayn, the works of Kratchkovskaya are the most relevant. Her reconstructions and research indicate that they covered the cenotaph of the Shaykh (Figs. 274-275), the interior of the burial chamber and perhaps the mosque and the vestibule.[1320] They served the purpose of visually enhancing the shrine's interior; to demonstrate its importance and religious significance through sponsorship of precious tiles and also to showcase the political power of the patrons, through their

[1316] Kratchkovskaya 1946, see especially 28-61, 80-99.
[1317] See, for example, O'Kane 2006.
[1318] See Watson 1975.
[1319] Perhaps the most relevant example is the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad (Cat. No. 12), which is part of a larger complex, in Natanz. The shrine featured a dado area on the lower portions of supporting walls and it also featured a lustre tile mihrab, in the same space where the tomb of the Shaykh was located.
[1320] Kratchkovskaya 1946, 28-61, 80-99, Pls. 44-46.

installation. It is plausible that the elevated cost of tiles was understood by the faithful and that they could perceive the sacredness of a specific architectural space also as reflected by the abundance of tiles.

The cenotaph of the Shaykh's grave (Fig. 275) was covered with a set of lustre tiles. These tiles were produced in specific forms, in order to determine the form of the cenotaph with a two-sloped formation on its top. These tiles are of large dimensions (Fig. 274), compared to more frequently occurring lustre tiles; they measure around 44 x 47 cm.[1321] They are products of the same decorative intervention of the mosque's interior as the dado tiles. They should therefore be understood as dating to around 1285. Similar tile sets are known to have adorned cenotaphs of revered personages in the shrines of Qum and Mashhad, but there may be no such tiles left *in situ*. The production of the tiles for the cenotaph of Shaykh Husayn indicates that the commission of the revetments for the *khanqah* was important in profile and must have required a considerable endowment. In sum, the lustre tile repertoire of the Khanqah of Pir Husayn required an extensive amount of labour for its production and transport. It was not only one of the prestigious commissions but also a commission of a relatively early date, compared to proliferation of lustre tile production in the first decades of the fourteenth century, rather than late thirteenth century. This lustre tile programme provides a rare insight into the patronage, production and mobility of lustre tile revetment repertoires.

Lustre tiles were employed to embellish an architectural interior which also contained carved stuccoworks. The difference in architectural media choice for the revetments is evident. It depended on the difficulty of the architectural decorations' production. The largest piece, the monumental, perhaps tripartite, mihrab was produced out of carved stucco, because this was a less demanding and less costly activity, compared to producing it from lustre tile medium. To the contrary, lustre tiles were employed for the parts of the monument's surfaces which could be produced in smaller dimensions and for which transport would not be excessively demanding. The observed difference between the decorative media could however have been determined by the fact that the mihrab installation was an intervention of decorating the mosque's interior, which was separate from the tile production. In terms of the question of hierarchy between the two decorative media, there may not have been a clear distinction. The mihrab was clearly the focal point of the complex's interior and it thus should not have been produced with a medium considered inferior to the others. Furthermore, it was likely polychrome in its original iteration, which made it match the lustre tiles. The reason for the choice of revetment media should be understood as determined by the technical (dimensions, plasticity) characteristics of revetments. These tiles are a significant example of architectural revetments, which were produced, most likely, in Kashan, perhaps on the personal order of their patron with the *nisba Qazvini*, who likely possessed personal or political ties and contacts to their production centre (see below).

These tiles were probably produced in Kashan and shipped to the site where they were installed. Perhaps a tile expert accompanied the shipment and ensured for the successful application of the tiles on the architectural surfaces. The specific form and nature of the cenotaph tiles

[1321] Two of these tiles are stored in the Georgian National museum in Tbilisi, and the rest it likely to have been transferred to Russia, although officially, the other tiles of the cenotaph are considered to be dispersed.

indicates that there was a clear plan and goal for production of the tiles for the *khanqah* and that they were commissioned, rather than bought as prefabricated material. The listed information is significant for the understanding of the production and distribution mechanisms of Ilkhanid lustre tiles. The evidence provided by the tiles from the Pir Husayn Khanqah is of utmost significance in this respect. The tile production in Kashan and their installation at Qubalıbalaoğlan, which is more than 700 km (as the crow flies) distance from their production centre, provides evidence of the almost exceptional transport of these tile revetments. In fact, Qubalıbalaoğlan presents the northernmost known point of arrival of the Kashan lustre tile material (in an extant architectural contaxt). This was likely determined by the patron who was a native or descendant of natives from the area relatively close to Kashan. A similar case is presented by Ilkhanid lustre tiles discovered at the island of Kharg, some 500 km (as the crow flies) south of Kashan, at the Imamzada Mir Muhammad (1300-01, 1337-38).[1322]

Exterior Revetments

Exterior architectural revetments of the Pir Husayn Khanqah are produced out of cut stone. They can be roughly divided into two groups: inserted carved stone slabs featuring historic inscriptions with vegetal ornamentation in their background and works of stone carving, such as muqarnas elements. These revetments were preserved in two parts of the complex: the exterior surfaces of the minaret and the exterior surfaces of the *khanqah*. Further works of stone carving comprise interior revetments of the passages between the mosque's spaces, which are limited to simple twisted column elements.[1323]

The Minaret

The minaret of the complex features a square base and it is entered from the courtyard. Its base gradually translates first into an octagon and subsequently into the minaret's cylindrical shaft. The corners of the minaret's square base have been partially cut off to feature a more elegant architectural form and their top areas display three tiers of muqarnas. One historic inscription tops the entrance into the minaret. Apart from elegant lettering, it also features vegetal elements in its background. Another historic inscription with the signature of its architect is located on the octagonal part of the minaret and it is placed symmetrically towards the courtyard, for the purpose of visibility and legibility of the inscription. Two more cartouches of cut stone historic inscriptions, with information concerning the patronage and endowment of the complex are located in the upper portions of the minaret's shaft. Presumably, their location was intended for the inscriptions to be well visible. The transitional area between the minaret's shaft and şerefe is filled with two tiers of stone-cut muqarnas. The top of the minaret concludes in a polygonal form consisting of thick ribs.

[1322] One of the tiles found on the site bears a signature (ʿamal Sayyid ibn-i Amir Husayn al-Bukhari), which has been interpreted as the signature of the architect of the building by Mayer. Given that it is located on a tile and produced in the tile medium, it is likely that this was a signature of the head of the tile production centre.

[1323] Further works of stone carving at the site are remains of historic tombstones, which have been decontextualized, but either derive from the interior territory of the monument or from the near-by cemetery on the hilltop to the north of the *khanqah*.

Other Stonework

Fragments of carved stone elements located in the courtyard feature fine carving, and some of them formed architectural elements and structures, rather than retained function of tombstones. There is a fragment of arabesque. Another fragment features an elaborate and relatively complex concave carving of an eight-pointed star, and it could have originally functioned as part of water installation in the complex's courtyard. Another fragment could be the remains of a mill wheel, which might indicate that the complex originally comprised further dependencies in its proximities.

The entrance portal (Fig. 267) of the complex is formed by a pointed arch and an *iwan* structure. The longest historic inscription of the complex is located in the interior of the *iwan* opening, just above the opening into the courtyard of the complex. This inscription was removed from the ruined structure and transferred to Baku, and it has been recently re-installed on the monument's reconstructed architectural structure. It features a *Naskh* inscription divided into four lines (see below).[1324]

Stucco Polychromy at the Pir Husayn Khanqah

Observations of the stucco mihrab's photographs since its arrival into the museum collection, such as photographs by Blair and Bloom from 1984,[1325] and their comparison to the mihrab's state of preservation at the time of the visit to the museum collection (2018), illustrate that it was restored several times. The mihrab's relief was affected by its dismemberment and subsequent reassembling; there are gaps between the mihrab's parts and some parts of it seem to have been damaged. Photographs of Blair and Bloom document the mihrab with extensive amounts of yellow on its surface, but this is likely modern colouring covering archaeologically reconstructed parts of its relief. This colour was subsequently removed, sometime between 1984 and 2018. The mihrab's surface was most likely thoroughly cleaned at least once or twice since its arrival into the museum collection. In fact, the mihrab's close observations in 2018, revealed that its relief does not preserve its original polychromy. It is therefore not possible to provide information regarding the mihrab's possible polychrome appearance at the time of its completion. It is nevertheless reasonable to assume that the mihrab was coloured brightly with white, red, blue, green and ochre hues, similar to the majority of carved stucco revetments of the Iranian territory in the given chronological context.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Pir Husayn Khanqah

The analysis of the stucco mihrab from the *khanqah* illustrates that the mihrab was produced with a selection of diverse stucco artistic techniques. Its less significant parts, such as the small niche on the left-hand side, were carved out of a single stucco layer and with deep incisions. The mihrab's central part was produced in various manners. The interior framing band with scale-like compositions and geometric ornamentation was produced by stucco perforations of numerous modalities. These panels showcase the craftsmen's versatility for working stucco surfaces, although the ornamental elements result excessively large. The mihrab's exterior

[1324] The inscription is of simple character and it does not comprise any vegetal elements in its background.
[1325] https://archnet.org/sites/3695/media_contents/41240 (Last accessed: August 28, 2020).

framing band is produced in an entirely different manner, comprising a stucco relief produced by carving one layer of stucco. This carving modality is peculiar, because the cutting angle for the stucco amounts to around ninety degrees. Although the inscription surface was not worked further, it was made to feature elaborate vegetal extensions of letters and a minutely worked background vegetal composition. These elements were produced with a specific manner of continuously perforating and incising the stucco relief's surface. The most specific artistic techniques of the mihrab are located on the mihrab's horizontal panel of its interior framing band. This panel was produced by carving several subsequently applied layers of stucco material and it featured applied circular protruding bosses and applied protruding elements which may have been carved prior to their attachment to the mihrab panel. This could however be the result of a restoration intervention.

In sum, the Pir Husayn Khanqah's mihrab was produced with a considerably wide variety of stucco artistic techniques. It reflects the craftsmen's skills of stucco working and their advanced production technology knowledge. On the other hand, the mihrab presents issues of disproportion between the size of ornamental elements and panels, which could be attributed to restoration interventions, but also to the lack of the craftsmen's design skills, or perhaps different levels of skills between the craftsmen of the workshop. Furthermore, the relative shallowness of the mihrab's stucco relief and its panels may be attributed to the locally available gypsum.

The Pir Husayn Khanqah Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics of Pir Husayn Khanqah's stucco mihrab were impacted by several factors. Its proportions were determined by the available space and form of the mosque's *qibla* wall. Furthermore, somewhat shallow carving of the stucco material was impacted by the gypsum properties, or it may have been difficult to apply thicker layers of stucco on the given supporting wall. The mihrab's stucco relief is rather plain, with the exception of the central horizontal panel above its niche. The carving of these stucco panels does not present contrasting reliefs, the panels instead frequently feature a single visual plane. The described characteristics of the mihrab should be understood as a specific mark of its workshop and as impacted by the architectural and geographical contexts.

d.) Furnishing

The monument no longer possesses any historic furnishing.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The epigraphic programme of the complex can be roughly divided into three groups. The first group consists of carved stone inscriptions which are located on the exterior entrance portal surfaces and the minaret. They provide important information concerning the construction of the complex; its patronage, constructive chronology and signatures of the architect and builders. The second group consists of inscriptions in the complex's interior, in stucco medium - the epigraphic programme of the monumental carved stucco mihrab in the mosque. Its epigraphic programme consists of Qurʾanic excerpts and the historic inscription with the date of mihrab's completion. The last group of inscriptions is retained on lustre and glazed tiles, which were

installed during a redecoration intervention of the *khanqah*'s and mosque's interiors. These tiles formed a monumental dado area topped by a frieze with historic inscription. Some of the dado star tiles feature love quatrains, which should be given a metaphoric interpretation and be associated with the Sufi nature of the complex, and other tiles comprise Qurʾanic excerpts. A specific set of lustre tiles, with a tailor-made form and epigraphic programme, was produced to cover the Shaykh's cenotaph. These tiles are dispersed between the Baku, Tbilisi and St Petersburg collections.

Historic Inscriptions

a.) A stone slab (66 x 40 x 13 cm) found on the site of the *khanqah* complex was seen in 1861 located at the entrance of the mosque. It features a historic inscription concerning the identity of the architect of the complex and it is written in *Thuluth,* in two registers. The stone slab is currently part of the permanent collection of the Museum of History of Azerbaijan in Baku, where it is on display. The inscription is dated 1203-04.

المعمار بهذ(ه) العمار[ة] شيخ زاده حبيب الله بن شيخ حاجى محّمد[1326]

The architect of this building is Shahzada Habibullah ibn Shaykh Hajji Muhammad.

The inscription is significant because it provides information concerning the identity of the person who was in charge of the construction of the complex's mosque.

b.) Another stone slab (72 x 216 cm) is located above the entrance portal of the complex and it features a historic inscription concerning the construction of the complex. It is divided into four lines and it displays *Naskh* style. The inscription is dated 1243-44.[1327]

أمر هذه العمارة بعهد الملك العالم العادل المؤيّد المظفّر علاء الدنيا و الدين ملك الإسلام و المسلمين تاج
الملوك و السلاطين وارزجم افريذون أبو المظفّر فريبرز بن كرشاثب بن فرّخزاد بن منوجهر ناصر أمير المؤمنين أعزّ
شرف (؟) الدولة و الدين حسن بن محمّد بن حسن الباوندي الله أنصاره بمال الصدر الكبير المفضّل المحسب افتخار خراسان
المعروف بهزار وثاق كانت بتوفيقه (؟) على الخيراة فى تأريخ ماه رجب سنة أحد أربعين و ستّمائة

(The construction of) this building was ordered in the time of the knowing and just king al-Muʾayyad al-Muzaffar, ʿAlaʾ al-Dunya wa al-Din, the king of Islam and the Muslims, the crown of the kings and sultans, wa Arz Jam Afridun Abu al-Muzaffar Fariburz ibn Karshathb ibn Farrakhzad ibn Manujihir Nasir Amir al-Muʾminin, may God bestow blessings on his supporters, with fonds of the great excellency al-Mufaddal al-Muhasab Iftikhar Khurasan Sharaf al-Dawla wa al-Din, Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Bawadi known as Bihuzar wa Thaq and this was his success. The charity (was performed) on the date of the month of Rajab of the year six hundred and forty-one.

c.) Another historic inscription is produced out of cut stone in a form of a stone slab inserted into the structure of the minaret. It is dated 1256-57. It features *Thuluth* style and it is divided into two rows.

[1326] Njejmat 1991, 44, no. 47; TEI 23146 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1327] Kratchkovskaya 1946, 98; TEI 2690 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).

در عهد شروان شاه معظّم اخستان بن فرابرز تأريخ سنة محرّم أربع خمسين و ستّما[ئة][1328]

In the time (of the reign) of the Shirwanshah, the great Akhsitan, ibn Fariburz, (at) the date of (the month of) Muharram in the year six hundred and fifty-four (1256-57).

The inscription is significant because it provides information regarding the patronage of minaret's construction and of related parts of the complex.

d.) Another stone slab is inserted into the minaret's structure and it consists out of two lines of text in *Thuluth* style. It is dated 1293-94.

The inscription reads:[1329]

أمر [ببناء] هذه العمارة گرشاسب بن اخستان بتأريخ ماه رجب سنة ثلث تسعين و ستّمائة

(The construction of) this building (not referring to the minaret) was ordered by Gorshasb ibn Akhsitan at the date of the month of Rajab in the year six hundred and ninety-three.

The inscription is important because it mentions the patron and the time of the construction of an unknown structure of the complex, rather than referring to the minaret. It is therefore plausible that the inscription's current location, on the minaret's shaft, is not original; the inscription may have pertained to the monument's other parts.

e.) There is another inscription on the minaret, which retains the minaret architect's signature. It features *Thuluth* style, and it is divided into two superimposed lines.

معمار منارة شمس الدين محمّد بن أبى العبّاس (؟) عمل محمود بن إبراهيم[1330]

The architect of the minaret is Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn-i Abi al-Abbas (?), work (of) Mahmoud ibn-i Ibrahim.

The inscription is significant because it provides information and direct reference to the role of an architect in the project of the minaret's construction. Moreover, it refers to another person, who may have been either the head of the builders' group in charge of the minaret's construction or perhaps the master craftsman responsible for the stone masonry of the complex.

f.) Another historic inscription is located on the minaret. It features *Thuluth* style with characters in relief and a two-line division. The date 1300-01 has been assigned to this inscription.

در عهد پاد شاه عادل من كابوكا قاان زيد عدله اين عمارت مناره كه در خانقاه شيخ بزر گوارپير حسين قدّس الله
اعز اعانت بنا فرمودند در طعديد اعاشه مواظب ارغون آغا ملك دشت و البر كر اين مناره محرابه باشد [از] اين روحه
طعديد آثرا عمارت بكند[1331]

In the time of (the reign of) the Padshah of the best among the Kabuka, Qan Zeyd ʿAdalah, this building (and) its minaret which is in the khanqah of the Great Shaykh Gawar Pir Husayn, may God bestow blessings on his spirit, with the aid of the great care and caution of Arghun Agha

[1328] Njejmat 1991, 45, no. 50; TEI 23149 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1329] Njejmat 1991, 47, no. 54; TEI 23153 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1330] Njejmat 1991, 47, no. 55; TEI 23154 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1331] Njejmat 1991, 46, no. 53; TEI 23152 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).

Malik Dasht and the work of this minaret be the mihrab of the building and make it a (great) monument.

The inscription is important because it is written partially in Arabic and partially in Persian, which makes it one of the few such early examples in Ilkhanid art and architecture. Furthermore, the inscription points towards the elevated rank of the patron who sponsored the minaret's construction.

g.) Another historic inscription is incorporated into the minaret's structure and it provides information concerning the building of the complex. It is dated 1302-03. The slab measures 90 x 40 cm and the inscription is divided into three lines of *Thuluth* style wording.

صاحب هذه العمارة أمير دولت بن گيوگور بتأريخ شوّال سنة إثنى و سبع مائة عمل استاد محمود بن إبراهيم[1332]

The founder of this structure is the Amir-i Dawlat ibn Gayugur at the date of (the month of) Shawwal of the year seven hundred and two, work of Ustad Mahmoud ibn-i Ibrahim.

The inscription is important, because it provides another date related to interventions on the complex, although it does not specifically refer to any part of the monument; it nevertheless provides evidence indicating the importance of the monument's patron to the ruling class. This is significant, given that the complex was a Sufi *khanqah*; it thus illustrates the close connection between the state and the Sufi brotherhoods. The inscription repeats the signature of the architect, who is however not referred to as the architect but as *ustad*. The variation in the signature, on the minaret's two locations, therefore illustrates that signatures were not written according to rigidly fixed formulas.

The Portal of the Khanqah

The portal of the *khanqah* features another inscription with a later date, 1397-98, which is now stored in the Museum of History of Azerbaijan in Baku. The inscription plaque was originally incorporated into the external façade of the complex's entrance portal and it is in a fragmented state. The inscription is divided into two lines, and it features *Thuluth* style.

أمر ببناء هذه العمارة لعهد ملك المعظّم المنصور المظفّر الواثق بالله سلطان خليل الله بن شيخ إبراهيم خلّد الله ملكه عبد الفقير عبد الصمد [إبن] المرحوم ... مظفّر [اللهمّ] صلّى على السدت الوقف و بسعى عبد الفقير أبى القاسم بن مبارك[1333]

The construction of this building was ordered by the great sovereign, al-Mansur, al-Muzaffaral al-Wathiq bi-llah, Sultan Khalilullah ibn Shaykh Ibrahim, may God make his rule everlasting, the poor servant ʿAbd al-Samad [son of the] deceased… Muzaffar, may [God's] blessings be to the al-sadat (?) and al-waqaf, by the efforts of the poor servant Abu al-Qassim ibn Mubarak.

The inscription is of a considerably later date, compared to the other historic inscriptions of the complex. It thus provides significant evidence pointing at renovations and expansion of the complex towards the end of the fourteenth century.

[1332] Njejmat 1991, 48, no. 63; TEI 23161 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1333] Njejmat 1991, 64, no. 145; TEI 23242 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The mihrab's central part features a historic inscription in glazed elements and stucco. Together with the mihrab, it was moved to the National Literature Museum in Baku, during the major restorations on the complex. The inscription features *Naskh* style and it is divided into two lines. It is dated 1266-67.

The inscription reads:[1334]

السلطان الأعظم أبو الفتح فرخزاد إبن اخستان إبن فريبرز إبن گرشاسف ناصر أمير المؤمنين خمس [و] ستّين [و ستّمئة]

The greatest of the sultans, Abu al-Fath Farakhzad ibn-i Akhsitan ibn-i Fariburz ibn-i Gurshasaf Nasir-i Amir al-Muʾminin, (in the year) [six hundred] [and] sixty-five.

This inscription is of utmost significance for the understanding of the mihrab's patronage and installation in the interior of the *khanqah* complex's mosque. It provides the date of the completion of production of the monumental stucco mihrab as 1266-67. In this respect, the stucco mihrab of the Pir Husayn *khanqah* is solid evidence of stucco revetment production in the Early Ilkhanid period. The extant part of the inscription and observation of its semantics and syntax indicate that this is a fragment of an originally longer inscription. The mention of the ruler in the inscription most likely indicates that the mihrab was produced during his reign, but the mihrab installation intervention was likely sponsored by some official of his.

b.) The monumental framing band of the mihrab in Kufic style, features a fragmented Qurʾanic excerpt (the *Basmala* and *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18):[1335]

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.

Tiles of the Khanqah

a.) The Monumental Frieze of the Dado Area

The dates of production of the tile frieze running along the interior vestibule of the *khanqah*'s mosque have been read by Kratchkovskaya and Watson.

The tiles now stored in the Hermitage Museum bear the date 1282-83. The inscription frieze features a monumental *Naskh* inscription in one line.

[1334] Njejmat 1991, 44, no. 48; TEI 23147 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1335] Reading by the author. Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-at-taubah-18-qs-9-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: February 1, 2021).

Another group of 23 tiles from the interior of the *khanqah*, now stored in the Hermitage Museum, and dated 684/1285-86, features a very important historic inscription concerning the construction of the complex. The inscription displays *Naskh* style.

The inscription reads:

المعروف // بپير هذا // مشهد الشيخ ا // لإمام السالك // الناسك قطب ا // لأولياء قدوة ا // لأتقياء الحسين إ // بن // علي حسين روا // نان قدّس ا // لله نفسه أمر بتجديد// عمارته الفقير إ // لى الله الأحد // عمر بن محمّد الشيرزا // دي القزويني أ // على الله شأنه و صانه عمّا // شانه و ذلك // في شهور سنة أر // بع و ثمانين و // ستّمائة هجريّة // نبويّة مصطفويّة // و لذكره أعلى // و أجلّ قال ا // لله تعالى ألا // إنّ أولياء [ا]لله // لا خوف عليهم // و لا هم يحزنون // و قال رسول [ا]لله // صلّى // الله عليه هم ا // لقوم لا يشقى بهم // جليسهم[1336]

This is the grave of the Shaykh, the imam, the wanderer (on the path of God), the devout, the leader of the friends (of God), the example of the pious ones al-Husayn ibn ʿAli, known as Pir Husayn Rawanan, may God bless his soul. The renovation of the building (was ordered by) the one in need of the Single God, ʿUmar ibn-i Muhammad al-Shirzadi al-Qazvini, may God enhance his affairs and (…?). And this (took place) in the months of the year six hundred eight-four after Hijra of the chosen prophet (1285-86). And for his remembrance and the Highest God almighty said: "Certainly, for the friends of God there will be no fear, and they will not grief." (Qurʾan 23:10). And the Prophet of God, God's prayers be upon him, said: "They are the people who will not be miserable."

The importance of this inscription is the fact that it provides the year in which the monument was renovated by a particular patron tied to the ruling class. It is thus direct evidence for the dating of the monument's tiles and also for the understanding of its history. The reference to the *renovation* is likely a redecoration intervention, rather than rebuilding of the monument's architectural structure. Another important information concerning the patronage of this intervention, which comprised the installation of lustre tiles produced in Kashan, in central Iran, is the patron's *nisba*, which refers to Qazvin. Although it is not possible to prove whether in the given case the *nisba* is geographical or not, it is plausible that the redecoration of the *khanqah*, with lustre tile medium, which was being produced in central Iran, could have been enabled or even determined by the patron and his ties to the native lands of north-western to central Iran.

b.) The Star Tiles from the Dado Area

Some of the star tiles from the dado area bear the date of production 1283-84 and 1284-85 which might indicate the duration of the production of the entire lustre tile frieze. The Qurʾanic inscription on one of the tiles is Qurʾan 112.[1337]

One lustre tile fragment from the frieze is stored in the State Museum of Baku and its inscription features one of the poems assigned to ʿUmar Khayyam. Another tile in the same collection features love quatrains:[1338]

باذم (؟) چو من عزم نو می آمد

[1336] Kratchkovskaya 1946, 88-89; TEI 3565 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021)
[1337] RCEA, XIII, n° 4831; TEI 3527(Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1338] Kratchkovskaya 1946, 84, no. 27; TEI 39549 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021)

بر من همه خوش دلی بر می آمد

.. گلگون سر شکم (؟) که خواند

A tile panel from the complex was acquired in 1925 by the Hermitage Museum collection, and its inventory numbers are IR-0233-0287. These cross and star tiles feature Qurʾanic excerpts and love quatrains; they also comprise information concerning the date of their production, stated as 1284-85.[1339]

عشق تو همان مونس جانست کی بود
مهر تو ... و نشانست کی بود
... گفتی (؟) من نه ... تو نه آنی
این عاشق ... همانست کی بود

عشق آمد و شد چو خونم اندر رگ و پوست
تا کرد مرا مهر و بر کرد ز دوست
اجزای وجودم همگی دوست گرفت
نامیست زمن و باقی همه اوست
فی سنة ثلث و ثمانین ستماية

The Georgian National useum in Tbilisi stores two large angular lustre tiles, which pertained to the cenotaph of Pir Husayn. They were acquired around 1880 and they bear the following inventory numbers: 02033 and 02119. They are dated 1285-86.[1340]

One of the two tiles features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (9:18).[1341]

Further star tiles connected to the monument have been dispersed and are currently in unknown locations.

One star tile is reported to feature Qurʾanic quotations (*Surat al-Ikhlas*, *Surah Al-ʿImran*) and it is dated 684/1285-86.[1342]

Another dispersed star tile from the complex bears a fragmented inscription of the *Basmala* and a Qurʾanic excerpt (from *Surat al-Anbiyaʾ*) with the date of its production 684/1285-86:[1343]

كتب فی سنة أربع و ثمانين و ستّمائة

Written in the year six hundred and eighty four.

Another fragmented star tile features the *Basmala*, the Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fatiha*) and the date 1285-86.[1344]

[1339] Kratchkovskaya 1946, 82-83, 136, no. 64; TEI 39762 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021)
[1340] TEI 30623 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1341] TEI 30629(Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1342] RCEA, XIII, n° 4866; TEI 3566 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1343] RCEA, XIII, n° 4867; TEI 3567 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).
[1344] RCEA, XIII, n° 4868; TEI 3568 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).

There is also a lustre tile in the Hermitage Museum, which is dated 1285-86.[1345]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature any architectural revetments from post-Ilkhanid period.

Complex and Revetments' Patronage

The monument's extensive epigraphic programme comprises several significant historic inscriptions with important evidence concerning the patronage of the constructive and decorative interventions of the complex. Based on the retrieved information it is also possible to propose some information concerning the socio-political climate in the given region and in connection to patronage activities tied to the *khanqah*.

The longest historic inscription of the complex, now returned from Baku and re-inserted into the structure of the rebuilt monument, above the opening of the monumental entrance into the complex, provides information concerning the patronage of the complex. It is dated 1243-44 and it comprises information concerning some of the most extensive constructive undertakings tied to the formation of the complex. The inscription contains two names of historic personages. It first refers to the name of the Shirvanshah ruler Fariburz III, during whose reign the monument was sponsored, and it continues by informing that the endowment for the monument was provided by one of his officials, Hasan ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Barwandi. These large-scale undertakings were thus directly sanctioned by the ruler of the local dynasty, and the act of patronage and endowment provision was performed by one of his close officials. The *khanqah* complex is therefore one of the few Ilkhanid monuments, which provides primary source information concerning the mechanism behind its patronage, and it is one of the few cases of monuments with a Sufi component, from which it is evident that it was tied to the patronage of state officials. Another reference to the same ruler, Fariburz III Shirvanshah, is also contained on a carved stone slab of the minaret (1256-57), but this inscription does not provide further information concerning the patron.

The monumental mihrab originally installed in the interior of the mosque and lustre tiles retain some inscriptions providing information regarding their patronage. These two re-decoration interventions were two distinct undertakings, starting with the production of the mihrab and continuing with the installation of lustre tiles a decade later. The mihrab had undergone alterations especially due to its removal from the architectural context and transfer to the museum collection in Baku. It is thus not clear if its historic inscription above the no longer extant central niche was originally longer and could have contained further information regarding its patronage. The mention of the ruler in the mihrab's historic inscription, with a lengthy name, illustrates the significance and the patron's willingness to highlight the ties to the ruler. The patron of the mihrab installation was thus likely one of the ruler's officials. The patron might have possessed personal ties to the geographical origin of the stucco craftsmen's workshop, similar to the patron of the monument's lustre tiles, who may have possessed

[1345] RCEA, XIII, n° 4869; TEI 3569 (Last Accessed: November 10, 2021).

personal ties to central Iran, which likely aided him in securing the revetment production for the monument's decoration.

The lengthy historic inscription in lustre tile medium provides important information concerning their patronage. The inscription specifically refers to the act of tile sponsorship as a renovation, or better said, a redecoration. Furthermore, it provides the full name of the sponsor of tiles as ʿUmar ibn-i Muhammad al-Shirzadi al-Qazvini. This personage was likely a state official of some kind. Most importantly, the name of the patron of the tiles retains the *nisba* al-Qazvini. Although this research highlights the fact that the *nisba*s should not be interpreted in a strictly geographical sense, the case of the patron of the *khanqah*'s tile, may be one of geographical *nisba*s. It proposes that the origins of the patron or his ancestors are tied to the city of Qazvin, which retained an important socio-political and economical role in the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. Qazvin is located some 290 km (as the crow flies) towards the north-west from the main production centre of lustre tile revetments, the city of Kashan. The familiarity with the Iranian territory, and perhaps family or political ties, may have aided the patron at securing the commission of the extensive lustre tile revetments programme for the *khanqah*. Although it has been mentioned that remains of lustre tiles have also been discovered elsewhere in the territory of modern Azerbaijan, the dimensions and specific aspects of the programme for the Pir Husayn Khanqah present the only known case of lustre tiles in the Azerbaijani territory with partially known architectural context, which exceed dimensions of lustre tile programmes in the monuments of the central Iranian territory. Another specific aspect of tiles from the *khanqah* is their relatively early date, 1285-86, which makes them one of the earliest known repertoires of lustre tile revetments for which the architectural context is known. This indicates that lustre tiles were fashionable already in the early Ilkhanid period, and their prestige must have been known to the population. For these reasons the tiles may have been specifically desired for the *khanqah*.

The last known information concerning the patronage of the complex is retained on the inscription near its entrance portal, which mentions construction activities taking place around 1397-98, and names their patron as ʿAli al-Qasim ibn-i Mulaskh. Although the inscription does not mention the monument's rebuilding and it refers to construction, it should be understood as an intervention of either repairs or structural modifications to the existing complex. The patron of the intervention has not been identified but he may have been tied to the state.

In sum, construction, maintenance and additions to the complex were sanctioned by the state, which was of utmost significance in order to attract wealthy patrons. The state sanctioned patronage of the monument also indicates that the state had an overview on the religious practices and economy of pilgrimage to the site. In this respect, the patronage of the complex impacted its institutionalization. This monument is one of the exceptional examples which retains sufficient evidence to sustain these hypotheses. It is considerably different, compared to the situation at the Alinja Khanqah in the geographically related area of Nakhchivan (Cat. No. 26). There, the Shaykh was executed by the state, which was likely the reason to deter wealthy patrons from sponsoring the site and its complex.

Architectural Structure, Stucco Craftsmen and Tiles Workshop(s)

The complex of the *khanqah* comprises historic inscriptions which provide invaluable information concerning the identity of its architect and other craftsmen involved in the monument's constructive and decorative undertakings. Furthermore, observations of its architectural revetments in stone, lustre and stucco, allow some hypotheses concerning the workshops involved in their production to be proposed.

The earliest significant historic inscription on the monument is the stone slab (1203-04) inserted into the minaret's structure. It informs that the architect of the building is Shahzada Habibullah ibn-i Shaykh Hajji Muhammad. Bearing in mind that another later inscription refers precisely to the architect of the minaret, this stone slab currently located on the minaret, may actually refer to the other parts of the complex.[1346] This architect could either have been in charge of construction of the mosque and of the monumental fortified enclosure of the complex.

Further information regarding the identity of the monument's architect and other experts involved in the construction of the *khanqah* is provided in a significant inscription with a double signature and date on the minaret. This stone slab contains a short and detailed text specifying the name of the minaret's architect and possibly the identity of the master builder in charge of the minaret's construction. It is significant that the name of the architect is referred to not as the architect of the *building* but as the architect of the *minaret*. The architect of the minaret is identified by the inscription as Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn-i Abi al-Abbas; his name is followed by a signature, starting with *work of* and continuing with Muhammad ibn-i Ibrahim. The role of the architect was likely that of an actual designer of the minaret, the person who planned its structure and likely supervised its construction. The second person was likely the master stone mason who headed the minaret construction workshop in the process of preparation of construction material and building of the minaret. This person is also mentioned on another stone slab historic inscription on the minaret, which suggests that he was an important person, not only for construction of the minaret, but also other parts of the complex.

In sum, the discussion of the evidence concerning the identity and involvements of diverse artisans in the formation of the architectural structure and decorative programme of the *khanqah* complex, provides invaluable insight into the world of construction and decoration. It has been shown that at least two different architects were employed for the construction of the minaret and the rest of the complex. Furthermore, these architects may have worked on design and supervision of construction projects, which were further assisted and lead by master stone masons, for which the name in the minaret inscription is also conserved. The stucco mihrab of the complex does not feature a signature of stucco craftsmen's workshop, but its examination provides evidence indicating that the workshop had to be summoned specifically for the commission in question. Observations of the employed stucco production technology and the mihrab's visual elements suggest that its craftsmen arrived from north-western Iran. Lustre tile revetments are unlikely to have been produced anywhere but Kashan. Upon that, they were shipped to the destination of the monument. It however remains unclear if some craftsmen from

[1346] It is therefore plausible that the inscription was re-located or inserted into the minaret structure during the extensive renovations of the complex which took place in the past decades.

Kashan were also involved with the site.[1347] Finally, the complex of the *khanqah* is the case of a monument which gradually evolved into a monumental pilgrimage and religious complex, through prestigious endowments. This also impacted selection of its architectural revetments and the craftsmen who produced it.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is documented as in a ruined state at the beginning of the twentieth century. An extensive amount of damage was inflicted onto the monument by the construction of the dam on the Pirsaat river. For this reason, many architectural revetments, in lustre tiles, carved stucco and cut stone media, were removed from the site at an early stage. Only later, around 2010, were large-scale restoration interventions for the preservation of the monument undertaken. Its ruined parts were rebuilt and consolidated, and the monument was in good condition at the time of the visit in 2018. These interventions also included the return and re-integration of some of the architectural revetments which were taken to Baku collections. The most altered parts of the monument are therefore the interior of the mosque, the mausoleum and the adjacent spaces. They have been almost entirely stripped of their architectural revetments, with lustre tiles removed from the architectural surfaces and the cenotaph of the Shaykh, and the carved stucco mihrab removed to the Baku collection. Although this determined the preservation of these revetments, it also caused their detachment from their original architectural complex, in which they performed their original function and retained their meaning.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This discussion provides a comprehensive account of the constructive and decorative chronology of the Pir Husayn complex. Following the formative period of the complex, which concluded around 1243-44 with the institution of the waqf, the site attracted not only pilgrims, but also patrons willing to sponsor the construction of additional parts of the complex, such as the minaret and above all lavish revetments increasing the sacredness of the monument's focal spaces. A monumental carved stucco mihrab was installed in the mosque, and subsequently, the Shaykh's cenotaph, the burial chamber, and some parts of the mosque, were redecorated with an extensive lustre tile repertoire. As shown by Kratchkovskaya, some of these tiles might have been re-employed for the lower portion of the dado area in the burial chamber. Other tiles, sponsored by a patron with ties to the Iranian territory, were likely commissioned in Kashan and installed in the complex. Use of carved stuccos and lustre tiles for the monument's redecorations, illustrates the popularity and appreciation of the two decorative media, which went beyond the core of the Ilkhanid territory. The case of the complex and its revetments is important, as it hints at the migration of stucco craftsmen towards the Caucasus for specific commissions, and at the transport of lustre tiles for important commissions. It has also been shown that the complex evolved and formed around the tomb of the Shaykh, that this was sanctioned by the state. The architectural structure and the revetments in carved stucco, stone

[1347] There could have been craftsmen who observed and measured the monument in order to produce the revetment programme, and there could have been craftsmen from Kashan who travelled to the site together with the tile shipment in order to ease their installation on the architectural surfaces of the complex.

and lustre tiles functioned as containers for the Shaykh's grave, similar to related cases of Sufi complexes and mausolea across the Ilkhanid territory.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Kratchkovskaya 1946, Mammadova and Mammadova 2013, 112-119, Shirvanshahs' Heritage in the World's Museums 2018 (exhibition catalogue), 25, 164-168, 170, Bretanickij 1966, 92-101.

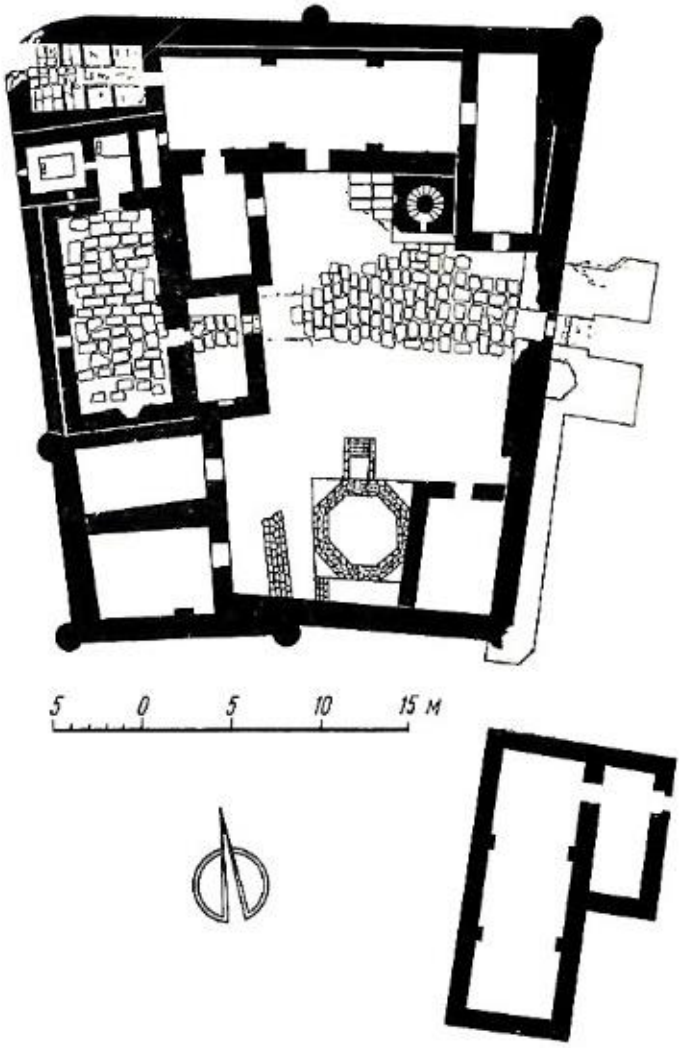


Figure 264: Ground plan of the Pir Husayn Khanqah (After Bretanickij 1966, 93).

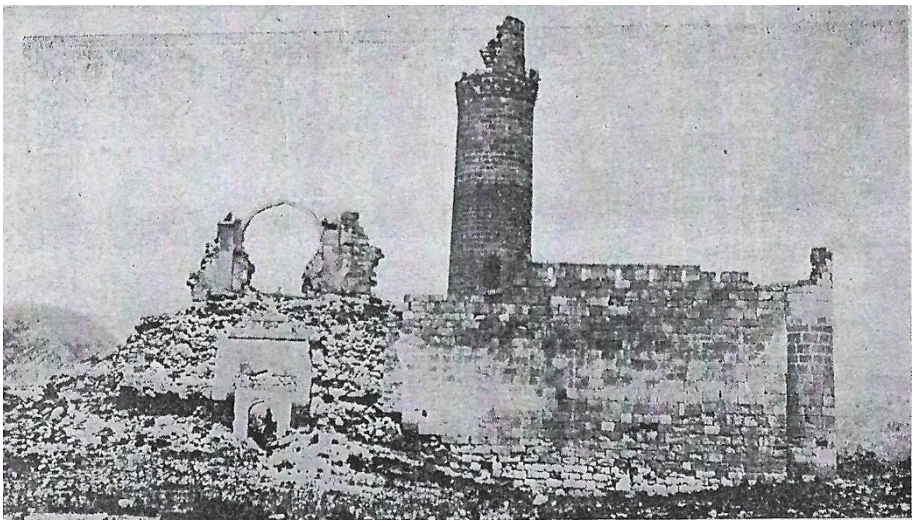


Figure 265: Photograph from 1907 by Avetissian, documenting the ruined state of the Pir Husayn Khanqah (After Kratchkovskaya 1946).



Figure 266: Exterior of the Pir Husayn Khanqah in 2018, after the large-scale conservation interventions on the monument.



Figure 267: Detail of the historic inscription topping the main entrance opening of the fortified *khanqah* structure. The inscription mentions the main patron of the monument and the foundation of its waqf in 1343-44.

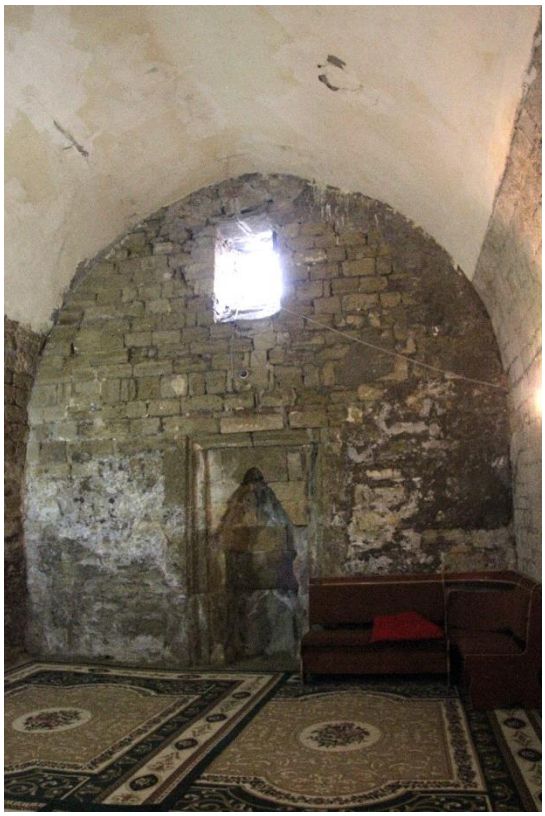


Figure 268: The monumental carved stucco mihrab from the Pir Husayn Khanqah was transferred to and is on permanent display in the National Literature Museum in Baku.



Figure 269: Detail of historic inscription in glazed elements and the panels of the upper portion of the monumental mihrab. The panels topping the inscription display as selection of diverse artistic techniques for the production of their slightly protruding relief.





Figures 270 and 271: Left: Detail of the carved stucco mihrab framing bands on its right-hand side. Right: The *qibla* wall of the Pir Husayn Khanqah mosque, with the carved stone niche, where the mihrab was originally located.

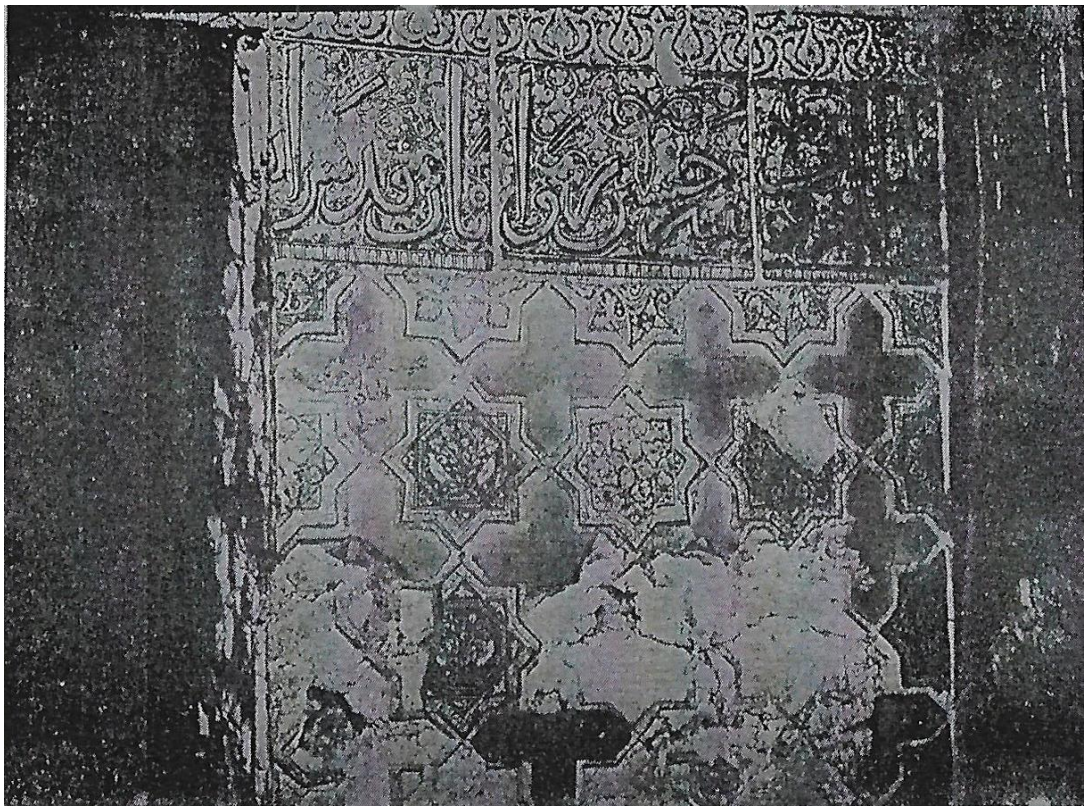


Figure 272: Photograph from 1907 by Avetissian, documenting the lustre tile frieze and the cross and star tile dado in the Pir Husayn Khanqah. These revetments subsequently dispersed into several museum collections (After Kratchkovskaya 1946, Plate 5).

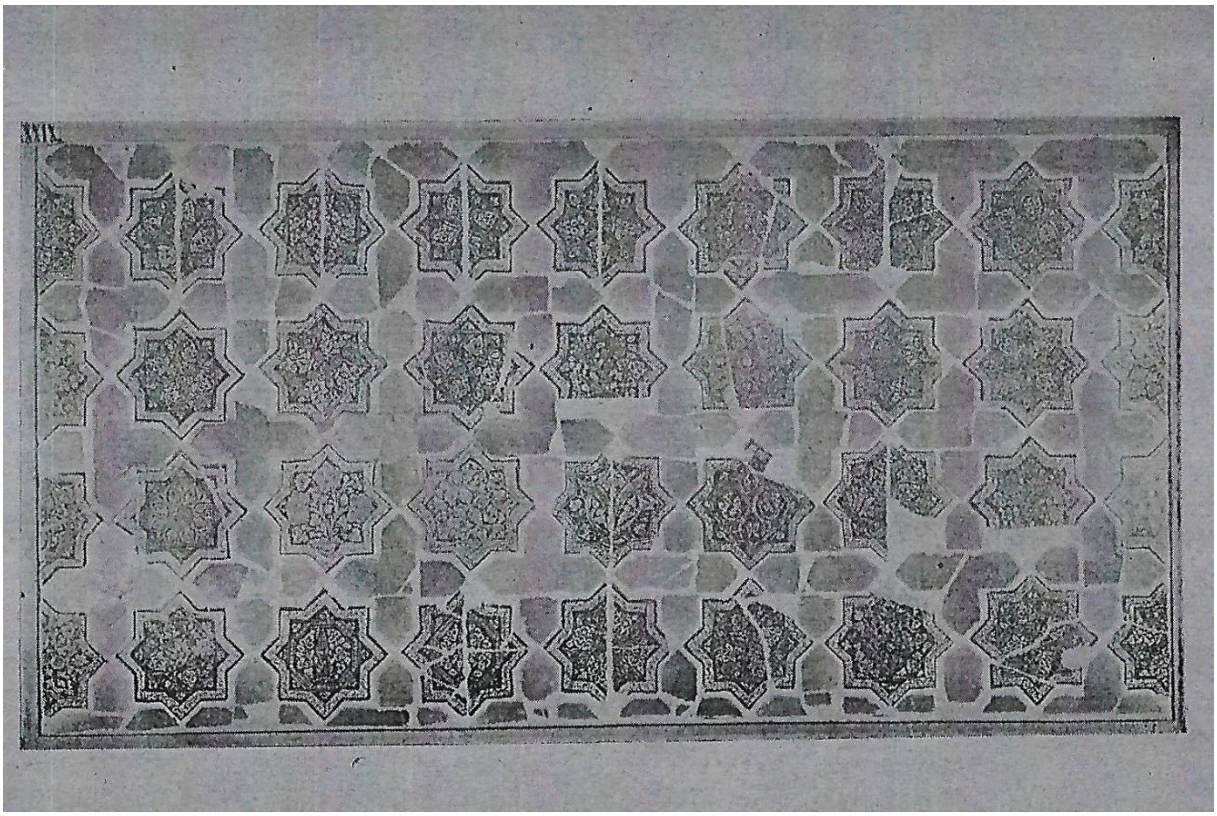


Figure 273: Cross and star tiles of the Pir Husayn Khanqah stored in the Hermitage Museum collection (After Kratchkovskaya 1946, Plate 4).

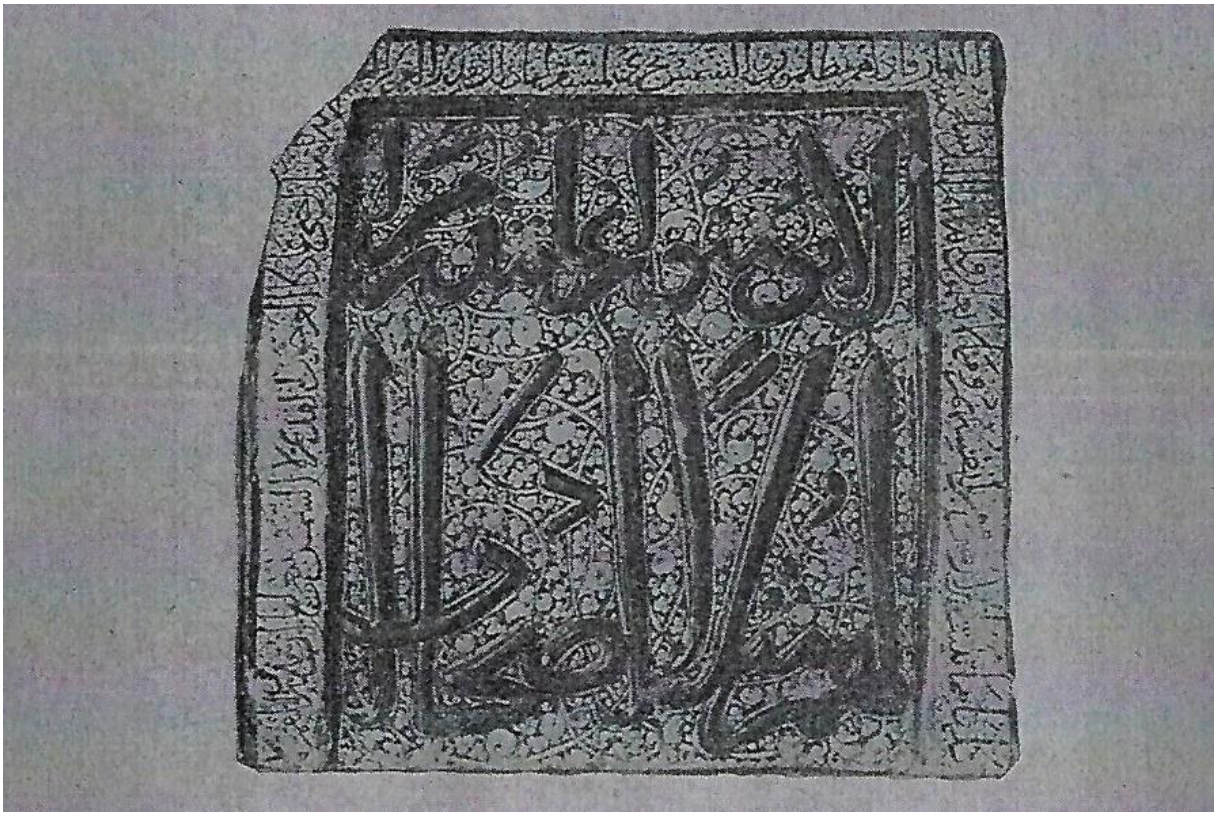


Figure 274: An example of a lustre tile, which was made specifically to cover the cenotaph of the Shaykh Pir Husayn (After Kratchkovskaya 1946, Plate 33).

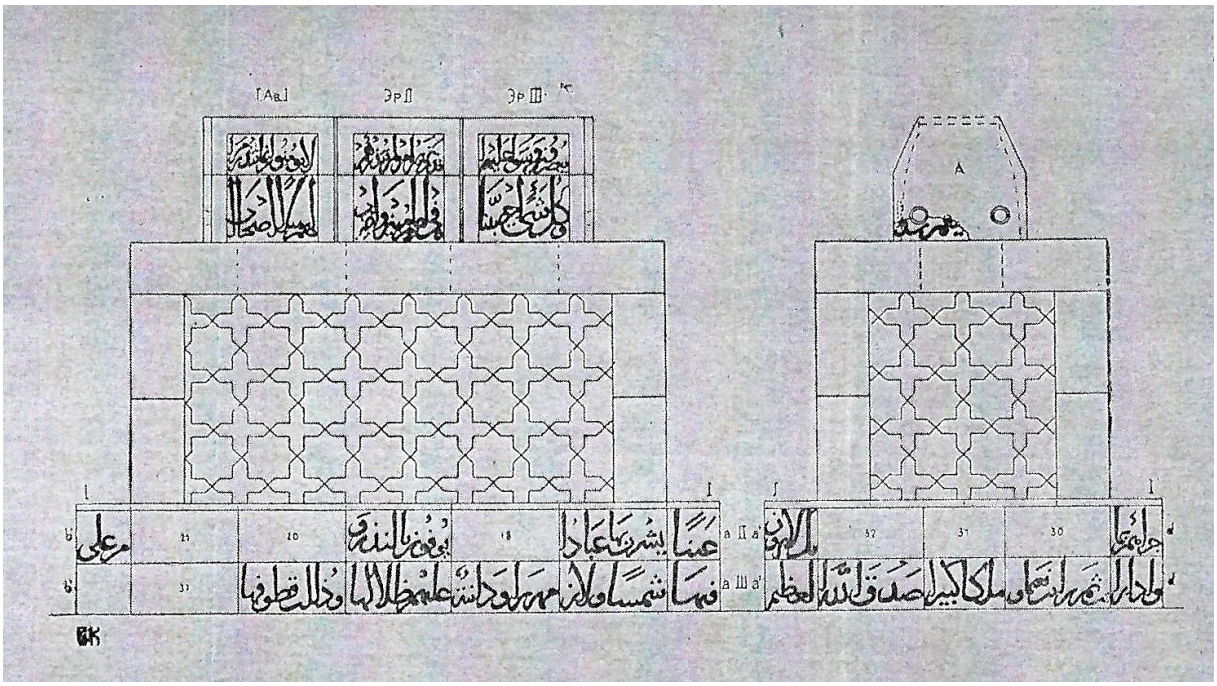


Figure 275: Reconstruction drawing of the cenotaph of Pir Husayn with locations of its tile revetments (After Kratchkovskaya 1946, Plate 46).

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 26

Monument Name: Alinja Khanqah

Figs. 276-279.

Associated Names: the most common English name for the monument is the Ālīnja Khānqāh[1348] (Əlincəçay Xanəgahı or Xanəgahı Əlincəçay), it derives from the name of the river Alichay or Alinjachay, which forms the valley in which the monument is situated. Locals refer to the monument according to the name of the Sufi Shaykh buried in the mausoleum, as the Khanqah of Shaykh Naʿimi, the Khanqah of Shaykh Khurasan Fazlullah Naʿimi and the Khanqah of the Shaykh Fazlullah Naʿimi. Names and appellatives of the Shaykh comprise: Fazlulalh Astarabadi, Fazlullah Tabrizi Astarabadi, al-Hurufi (the founder of the Hurufiyya movement), and Naʿimi - the pseudonym under which he wrote. The monument is almost exclusively referred to as the *khanqah*, although it includes the Shaykh's mausoleum.

Monument Type: the monument consists of a tomb tower with the burial of the Shaykh Naʿimi, remains of a *khanqah* and the adjacent mosque.[1349]

Chronology: the monument was heavily restored in the past years and there exists no complete documentation of its earlier structure. Judging from its extant architectural revetments, especially two stucco mihrabs, the tomb tower can be dated the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The adjacent mosque is a fifteenth century construction.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the monument was heavily rebuilt and it is difficult to discern the chronology and the time of its original construction. Observations of its structure indicate that the tomb tower pre-dates the mosque's construction. The tomb tower features architectural revetments characteristic of the Ilkhanid period and its two stucco mihrabs, according to this research, may be works of the early fourteenth century. The no longer extant *khanqah* might have been constructed at the site, due to the presence of the tomb tower.

Location: in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Enclave of the Azerbaijan Republic; near the Alinja and Khanqah settlements, in the valley of the Alichay river (located on the slopes overlooking the valley); c. 26 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Nakhchivan in the north-eastern direction.

GPS location of the monument: 39.1888727 N; 45.7153932 E.

Monument Investigation: October 13, 2021.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The monument is located on the slopes of the Zangezur mountain range, in the valley of the Alinjachay river. The nearest settlement is Khanqah (Xanəgah), and the monument is situated

[1348] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1349] Originally, the monument is reported to have comprised further structures, such as the hospice for pilgrims.

in the administrative district of the Julfa Rayon forming part of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Exclave of Azerbaijan Republic. The settlement is renowned as a significant agricultural centre which includes the production of grapes. Population of the modern settlement is reported to amount to 1,200 inhabitants.

The Life of the Shaykh Naʿimi

Shaykh Naʿimi,[1350] who is believed to be buried in the tomb tower of the Alinja Khanqah, is the founding father of the Hurufism[1351] movement. [1352] The movement was important in Timurid Iran and it later impacted the Bektashi movement in the Ottoman Empire. Hurufi sources report that the Shaykh was born in 1339-40 in Astarabad and that his family claimed descendence from ʿAli. He followed the profession of his father and first became a *qadi*, but eventually he started to practice the Sufi ritual of *dhikr*, upon which he travelled to perform the hajj. During his lifetime, the Shaykh travelled extensively in the Iranian territory, and around 1386, he began to preach his teaching of Hurufism in Tabriz area. He travelled to Kwarazm, southern Iran and the Fars region. He subsequently returned to Kwarazm, where he had several dreams, which determined his spiritual mission to disseminate the teachings. The interest in interpretation of dream visions was one of important aspects of his life and teachings, and it was one of the reasons he gained followers. He gained the majority of his followers in the regions of Khurasan and Isfahan, where he founded the community of halal-eating and truth-speaking dervishes. There he gained direct access to the Jalayirid court, even the Sultan Uways ibn-i Hasan himself. The Shaykh is reported to have received further important spiritual revelations of esoteric knowledge when staying in Tabriz which comprised knowledge regarding the numerologically determined symbolic sense of letters of the Perso-Arabic alphabet.

He was imprisoned in Shimakha (modern Baku) in 1394, on the accusations of heresy of his teachings, which did not comply with the official Shiʿite creed; the fatwa against him was issued by Qadi Beyazid, the employee of Ibrahim Shirvanshah. He was subsequently imprisoned in the castle of Alinja, on the command of Timur's son Miran Shah, on August 28, 1394 (1 Du al-Qaʿda 796), and he was executed six days later. At the moment of the Shaykh's capture at Alinja, he was martyred for his hereticism, by being tied in ropes and dragged around the Alinja castle. He was buried near the castle. Some sources report that Shaykh Naʿimi was beheaded by Miran Shah personally and that his corpse was dragged around the bazaar before it was

[1350] The full name of the Shaykh is Fazlallah Shihab al-Din ibn-i Baha al-Din (or ibn Abu Muhammad) al-Astarabadi. Further appellatives of the Shaykh include Fazlullah Hurufi and Fazlullah Tabrizi and he was known as *sahib-i taʾwil* (the master of interpretation of dreams and of the inner meaning of Islamic ritual). He was also appealed to as *rabb al-ʿalamin* (the Lord of the Worlds), but for writing poetry, he employed the *takallos*[1350] Naʿimi.

[1351] *Hurufism, a body of antinomian and incarnationist doctrines evolved by Fażl-Allāh Astarābādi (d. 796/1394; q.v.), known to his followers also as Fazlie Yazdan (the generosity of God). Its principal features were elaborate numerological interpretations of the letters of the Perso-Arabic alphabet and an attempt to correlate them with the human form. The movement that espoused these teachings was relatively short-lived in Persia, but it had a significant prolongation in Anatolia and the Balkans, primarily under the auspices of the Bektāši order.* From Encyclopaedia Iranica: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/horufism (Last Accessed: August 11, 2020).

[1352] Information on the life of the Shaykh is summarized from: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/astarabadi-fazlallah-sehab-al-din-b (Last Accessed: Augusts 11, 2020).

handed over to his followers for burial.[1353] Algar informs that the structure of the Shaykh's grave was built six years after his death by somebody called Sayyid Musa, and that the structure came to comprise the grave of one of the Shaykh's followers, ʿAli al-Aʿla.[1354] The site of the Shaykh's execution and burial became the pseudo-Kaʿba for Hurufi followers; Algar reports that they performed pilgrimage to the place on the anniversaries of the Shaykh's execution and that they circumambulated it twenty-eight times. Algar emphasizes the complex operation behind the transfer of sanctity from Mecca, in connection to Hajj, to Alinja, the place of martyrdom, execution and burial of the Shaykh and the related rites tied to the pilgrimage to Alinja, which assumed the function of the Kaʿba through Hurufi interpretations and the Shaykh's teachings, which Algar denominates *the pseudo-Hajj*.[1355] The most important follower and successor of the Shaykh is Amir Sayyid ʿAli, frequently called ʿAli al-Aʿla, who brought Hurufism to the Anatolian territory and who is considered the chief successor of the Shaykh.

The most significant work of Shaykh Naʿimi is the *Jawidan-nama*, which is written in prose and discusses doctrines of Hurufism; it is considered the foundational text of Hurufism. Another important work is the *Nawm-nama*, a work recounting the dreams of the Shaykh. Other works include the *Muhibbat-nama* and the *ʿArsh-nama*, and further works of prose.

Background

The most detailed discussion of the monument is provided by Leonid Bretanickij, from 1966.[1356] The reading of the inscriptions of the eastern stucco mihrab of the monument is provided by Kalus.[1357] The most recent publication by Mammadova and Mammadova does not present any new finds concerning the monument.[1358] These researchers address question of monument's constructive chronology, its dating and they provide basic information concerning the eastern stucco mihrab in the interior of the tomb tower.[1359] There is no publication of the monument in English. This research re-examines the monument's structure and it provides detailed discussion of both of its mihrabs in order to propose information for thorough comprehension of the monument and its stuccos.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 276-277.

The monument is situated on the steep terrain which was transformed into a set of terraces to facilitate its construction. It overlooks the settlement of Khanqah and the village of Alinja. This monumental complex consists of a mosque, a *khanqah* (no longer extant) and the tomb

[1353] This is an important piece of information, which informs that the body existed and was allowed a burial, which gives the possibility of the followers burying the body of the Shaykh in its current monument at Alinja.
[1354] The information reported by Algar is in contradiction with observations of the tomb tower structure and remains of its architectural revetments in the area of the passage between its mosque and the tomb tower.
[1355] https://iranicaonline.org/articles/horufism (Last Accessed: August 11, 2020).
[1356] Bretanickij 1966, 120-24.
[1357] TEI 39978 (Last Accessed: November 11, 2021).
[1358] Mammadova and Mammadova 2013, 119-122.
[1359] The western mihrab has not been discussed so far. The scholarly focus on the eastern mihrab might have been determined by its better state of preservation, compared to the more fragmented western mihrab.

tower.[1360] Originally, it likely comprised structures for the accommodation of pilgrims.[1361] There are remains of a medieval cemetery near the monument. Similar to the monumental complex of the Pir-i Husayn Khanqah at Qubalıbalaoğlan (south-west of Baku; Cat. No. 25), the Alinja Khanqah also features a fortified architectural structure. The construction material for the complex varies from fired brick to cut stone. The tomb tower was built out of fired brick and the mosque is constructed out of roughly worked locally available cut stone and fired bricks in its interior. The mosque structure post-dates the construction of the tomb tower with the Shaykh's grave and the two carved stucco mihrabs in its interior. Bretanickij provides the most detailed information concerning the patronage and construction of the tomb tower; the partially legible carved stucco slab above the entrance of the tomb tower (which is now accessed from the interior of the later mosque's structure), provides the status of the patron as an Amir and it provides the name of the architect of the tower, stating that this was architect Khwaja Jamal al-Din.[1362] Major restoration interventions of the monument were performed in 2005.

The Tomb Tower

Fig. 277.

The tomb tower features a square ground plan, and it was intended as a free standing structure. Its square form translates by the means of interior pendentives into an octagonal drum topped by a double-shelled dome, which might have been rebuilt.[1363] The interior shell of the dome is hemispherical, and the exterior shell features a polyhedral tent form.[1364] In the tomb tower's interior, the transitional zone elements are adorned with muqarnas. The interior of the tomb tower houses the grave of the Shaykh and two stucco mihrabs (see below). The adjacent mosque structure built out of cut stone and fired bricks was constructed subsequently to the tomb tower (in the fifteenth century), so that it covers the tomb tower's entrance portal, which has to be entered from mosque's upper storey prayer hall.[1365] The mosque structure is heavily restored and it does not feature historic architectural revetments.

Remains of exterior surfaces of the tomb tower's entrance opening retain some original architectural revetments in terracotta, carved stucco and glazed elements and a carved stucco historic inscription panel (Fig. 277).[1366] Such revetments most frequently occur on Ilkhanid monuments of north-western Iranian territory.[1367] Perhaps geographically the closest parallel of

[1360] Mammadova and Mammadova date the complex to the twelfth century. Mammadova and Mammadova 2013, 119.

[1361] In addition to the two extant architectural structure of the complex, there is evidence of archaeological excavation, documented on the ground plan published by Mammadova and Mammadova, which indicates the existence of a structure supported by round columns on the western side of the tomb tower, and another rectangular structure (perhaps the hospice for the pilgrims) towards the south of the mosque structure.

[1362] Bretanickij 1966, 122. The name of the architect is difficult to read from the slab in its current state of preservation.

[1363] The ruined structure of the monument is documented by Bretanickij, who also provides the first ground plan of the complex. See Bretanickij 1966, 120-21.

[1364] According to Mammadova and Mammadova, the exterior of the structure of the tomb tower was originally covered with terracotta and glazed elements of architectural revetments.

[1365] Further evidence of the construction break between the tomb tower and the mosque structure is provided by the observations of the ground plan of the complex. They illustrate that, although attached to each other, the structure of the tomb tower and the mosque are not aligned to feature a coherent and regular ground plan.

[1366] They comprise fired brick, turquoise glazed elements and carved stucco inserts.

[1367] I thank Amin Moradi for helping me comprehend the dating of these revetments.

similar architectural revetments is the mausoleum of Muʿmina Khatun[1368] (1186)[1369] in Nakhchivan.[1370] But the strapwork design of the Alinja tomb tower resembles Ilkhanid revetments, such as those at the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and it should thus be dated to late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. A less relevant parallel is the mausoleum of Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr in Nakhchivan,[1371] which was built in 1161.[1372] The Muʿmina Khatun and the Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr mausoleum are works of architect or master builder *Ajami ibn-i Abu-Bakr al-Nakhchivani*.[1373] These parallels provide indications concerning the architectural context of the Alinja monument and related buildings in the given geographical unit.[1374]

The form of the Alinja tomb tower and its dimensions are related to the Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr monument, but the Alinja tomb tower comprises stucco revetments and exterior revetments characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. Bretanickij proposes to date the Alinja tomb tower to the last decades of the twelfth or early thirteenth century.[1375] Bretanickij also proposes parallels with eastern Anatolia and the region of Daghistan.[1376] The Alinja tomb tower should be dated to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, as indicated by the evidence of the portal's revetments and its two carved stucco mihrabs in its interior (see below). The construction of the later mosque at the site of the Alinja tomb tower is not dissimilar to the Khanqah of Pir Husayn in Qubalıbalaoğlan (Cat. No. 25).

Listed observations concerning architectural revetments of the Alinja tomb tower's entrance portal contradict the information concerning the time of the Shaykh's death (execution) and the popular narration of the monument's history. The Sufi complex is traditionally believed to be the tomb and *khanqah* complex of Shaykh Naʿimi, who was executed in Alinja in 1394. It is highly likely that the tomb tower could have been built prior to the Shaykh's execution, to house

[1368] The Muʿmina Khatun mausoleum features monumental dimensions, with accentuation of its vertical axis and it is a decagonal brick tomb tower, which displays elaborately designed exterior façades, consisting of blind niches and shallow muqarnas hoods. Importantly, the mausoleum has been shown to have been part of a larger complex with a mosque and a *khanqah*, a case not dissimilar to the situation at Alinja.
[1369] See also Bretanickij 1966, 121.
[1370] The revetments of the Muʿmina Khatun mausoleum, are more complex, but the architectural revetments artistic techniques are closely related to the ones employed for the exterior revetments visible at the Alinja mausoleum.
[1371] The Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr mausoleum features different architectural revetments, compared to the Muʿmina Khatun monument. Its exterior revetments do not display any turquoise glazed elements and they only consist of geometric and epigraphic compositions, produced out of terracotta, with recessed background filled with stucco material, which was perforated and carved to feature various vegetal and geometric decorative patterns.
[1372] The tomb of Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr features a more modest architectural structure of a tomb tower with an octahedral ground plan, which translates into a roofing structure, with (likely) a double shelled dome, of which the external shell is tent-shaped, via an octagonal drum area. The architectural structure of this mausoleum relates to the tomb tower form of the Alinja complex. Both buildings share related dimensions and construction principles of a tomb tower structure topped by a double shelled dome. The Alinja tower is however square in ground plan and it translates into an octagonal form, while the Yusuf ibn-i Khusayr tomb tower is entirely octagonal.
[1373] This architect is considered the founder of the local Nakhchivani architecture and is reported to have operated in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the area of Nakhchivan. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ajami-b (Last Accessed: August 12, 2020).
[1374] Further monuments are considered works of the same architect: the no longer extant portal with two minarets near the mausoleum of Muʿmina Khatun and the Friday mosque of Nakhchivan. http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ajami-b (Last Accessed: August 14, 2020).
[1375] See Bretanickij 1966, 121.
[1376] *Ibid.*, 121.

a different tomb, and that it was later repurposed to host the burial of Shaykh Naʿimi.[1377] One Parallel case is presented by the shrine of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the Kharaqani complex at Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21).

The Mosque of the Alinja Complex

Although the monument is referred to as a *khanqah*, this complex comprises a tomb tower and an adjacent mosque. The mosque consists of two storeys and its upper storey functions as the main prayer hall. The entrance to the mosque is located on the western side of its structure. The mosque's upper storey consists of two parallel *riwaq*s supported by arcades and topped by six hemispherical domes. The hypostyle form of the structure and the presence of a modern mihrab in its *qibla* wall indicate the function of this part of the complex as a mosque, most likely intended for the performance of rites by pilgrims who visited the site. But this could be a modern development. Another architectural element which confirms the function of the structure, are remains of the minaret on its eastern side.

Construction Phases

The earliest structure of the complex is the Ilkhanid tomb tower which was built in order to host a tomb of a no longer identifiable personage. This monument pre-dates the martyrdom and burial of Shaykh Naʿimi in 1394. *In situ* examinations of the relationship of the two carved stucco mihrabs with the tomb tower's structure, provide evidence indicating that they were produced at the time of the tomb tower's construction. Their production technology and aesthetic appearance are characteristic of Ilkhanid carved stuccoworks in the Iranian territory. The connection between the tomb tower and the death and burial of Shaykh Naʿimi remains obscure, and there is little evidence to propose what exactly occurred in 1394 at Alinja. According to the Sufi, Hurufi and historic sources, the Shaykh was buried in the tomb tower at Alinja. But this claim could be of an entirely legendary nature. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, the monument was expanded by the construction of the adjacent mosque and further no longer extant structures.

The two stucco mihrabs are well preserved, but their exterior margins now join modern plaster coating. Damage to their reliefs reveals bare fired bricks of the tomb tower's core structure, indicating that they must have been produced at the time of construction of the tomb tower. Analysis of their production technology, artistic techniques and visual features (see below), proposes to date them to the first decades of the fourteenth century. This matches the proposed dating of the tomb tower's entrance portal to the Ilkhanid period. The available data indicates that the Alinja complex was constructed in at least two phases: first an Ilkhanid tomb tower with stuccos was built in the early fourteenth century and subsequently, in the late fifteenth century, a mosque structure was built at the site. Dating of the other parts of the complex (column remains of the hospice at the site) remains unclear.

[1377] Compare to related cases of re-use of burial monuments or conversion of their function, such as those at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), and others. A parallel case in favour of the plausibility of this hypothesis is presented by the information concerning the burial of Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Kharaqani (Cat. No. 21), who is claimed to have been buried at Qala-yi Naw near Bistam and also in Kars in the modern Turkish territory.

Phase One - The Earliest Alinja Monument – early fourteenth century

The earliest monument at the site of the Alinja Khanqah was the square tomb tower, constructed out of fired bricks and topped by a double shell dome. The exterior of this tower was decorated in terracotta, stucco and turquoise glazed elements, characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. In its interior, the tomb tower was decorated with two carved stucco mihrabs (placed symmetrically to flank the *qibla* wall's entrance opening) which are characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. This tomb tower was originally constructed for an unknown personage and later reused for the burial of the Shaykh.

Phase Two – The Second Alinja Monument – Tomb Tower Reuse Around 1394

Observations of the structure, the entrance portal and the two stucco mihrabs of the Alinja tomb tower, provide solid evidence to sustain that the tomb tower was built in the early fourteenth century. Information concerning the life and the time of the passing away of the Shaykh, suggests that the tomb tower was reused, or that the body of the Shaykh was added to an already extant grave in 1394. It is also possible that the information concerning the Shaykh's burial at the site could be entirely legendary. There is no clear connection between the moment of the death of the Shaykh and constructive or decorative activities at the complex. The presence of the Shaykh's burial, if real or fictional, became the focal point on the site of Alinja, which attracted pilgrims and which prompted patronage of the complex's enlargements.

Phase Three - Later Developments of the Complex

Following the death and the presumed burial of Shaykh Naʿimi in the earlier tomb tower at Alinja, the additions of other structures transformed the modest tomb tower into a pilgrimage complex in its own right. The most important addition is the mosque structure adjacent to the tomb tower. It is believed to have been constructed in the fifteenth century. The construction of the mosque comprised the merging of the tomb tower's structure with the mosque, for the tomb tower to be accessed from the interior of the mosque's prayer hall. The raison d'être of the mosque was not to form an independent religious structure, but for it to serve the visitors of the tomb tower. In addition to these two structures, the complex comprised further buildings, of which only traces remain. The best parallel example of similar developments is presented by the case of the Burj-i Kashana and the Friday mosque of Bistam (Cat. No. 18). In sum, additions and construction of further buildings likely took place in the centuries following the death of the Shaykh. Within the architectural context of the complex, the tomb tower with the grave of Shaykh Naʿimi functioned as the sacredness emitting source, which determined the construction of additional structures at the site, the meaning and function of the entire complex, and which attracted not only pilgrims, but also sponsors to the complex.[1378]

[1378] Compare to the mausoleum of Baba Afzal in Maraq (Cat. No. 14) near Kashan, the ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Shaykh Jami complex at Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30) and the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2) south of Isfahan.

Complex Ground Plan

Fig. 276.

The ground plan of the complex consists of the following units: the tomb tower with square ground plan, the mosque adjacent to it (which features two storeys, a rectangular form and roofing system of six semi-domes, covering the two pointed arch formed *riwaq*s, with remains of a minaret on the northern side) and remains of a rectangular hospice for pilgrims or dervishes (towards the south-east of the complex). The tomb tower is the oldest part of the complex; its *qibla* wall is connected to the mosque and it is entered from the mosque's upper prayer hall. The described irregular arrangement of the complex was likely determined by the topography of its location and diverse constructive phases (inclined terrain).

Complex Elevation

The two most elevated points of the complex were presented by the minaret of the mosque and the exterior shell of the dome topping the tomb tower.[1379] The semi-dome roofing system of the mosque was also intended to monumentalize its exterior and it was one of the most effective systems to cover the mosque's structure, given the sloped terrain on which the complex developed.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument is most frequently referred to as a *khanqah* complex. But the extant parts of the complex feature structures with separate functions. There is little doubt about the tomb tower: it was a burial structure, which was repurposed for the burial of the Shaykh and his disciple. The tomb tower initially featured an independent entrance and it was later connected to the mosque in order to be accessed from its interior. This interconnectedness of the two structures illustrates their interdependence in terms of their religious function and it provides important evidence regarding religious rites of medieval Caucasus. Further remains of no longer extant structures indicate that the complex likely comprised a *khanqah*.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 277-279.

The extant historic architectural revetments consist of three elements, all concentrated in the tomb tower of the complex, for which this research proposes an early fourteenth century date. The exterior of the tomb tower, in the area of the passage to the prayer hall of the mosque, conserves remains of strapwork design revetments and a carved stucco historic inscription plaque. Judging from the colour and constitution of the stucco plaque, it must be contemporary to the two mihrabs and work of the same workshop, which produced the two mihrabs in the tomb tower. The two mihrabs are an important example of carved stucco revetments from the Caucasus region and should be associated with Ilkhanid stuccos from central Iran (see below).

[1379] Compare to the Pir Husayn Khanqah in Qubalıbalaoğlan (Cat. No. 25).

Interior Revetments

Figs. 278-279.

The Alinja tomb tower features two carved stucco mihrabs in its interior. Due to the excessive restoration interventions on the monument, and especially of the interior surfaces of the tomb tower, it is no longer possible to understand the relationship between the external margins of the mihrabs and the architectural surfaces surrounding them. But the *in situ* investigation of the mihrabs revealed that their damaged stucco reliefs cover the fired brick structure of the tomb tower. The mihrabs were therefore produced at the time of the tomb tower's construction. They are thus contemporary to the strapwork on the entrance façade of the tomb tower, which is characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. The closest parallels for the two mihrabs are Ilkhaind stuccos of central Iran. Bretanickij proposes parallels in north-western Iran.[1380] These two mihrabs are particularly significant pieces of carved stucco revetments; they are the only ones in the area of Nakhchivan and two out of three carved stucco mihrabs in the entire Caucasus. The Alinja mihrabs raise questions concerning their dating, provenance of the craftsmen, their production technology and aesthetics.

The Two Stucco Mihrabs

Figs. 278-279.

The two mihrabs of the Alinja Khanqah are located on the *qibla* wall of the tomb tower. They flank the opening entrance of the tomb tower and they are positioned symmetrically, opposite the cenotaph of the Shaykh's. The two mihrabs feature elaborate and balanced designs of alternating stucco panels with inscriptions and vegetal compositions. They are produced with diverse stucco artistic techniques, which point towards the advanced skills of the craftsmen in charge of their production. They are unique carved stucco pieces located in the Nakhchivan territory and their geographically closest counterpart is the monumental mihrab of the Pri Husayn Khanqah of Qubalıbalaoğlan (Cat. No. 25), dated 1266-67. The two mihrabs were produced in designated niches at the time of the tomb tower's construction. They are contemporary to the strapwork at the entrance of the tomb tower, which is characteristic of the Ilkhanid period. The eastern mihrab is in a better state of preservation, compared to the Western mihrab. The western mihrab was restored several times which caused alterations to its stucco relief. The two mihrabs retain extensive traces of stucco polychromy.

Mihrabs' Description and Discussion

Eastern Mihrab

Fig. 278.

The mihrab is well integrated into the structure of tomb tower's supporting wall and it displays diverse visual planes and relief depths. In order for the mihrab to feature a concave form, its panels were occasionally made concave or inclined to serve as elements of visual transition for the niche's formation. These panels were directly juxtaposed to repeating vegetal bands, which

[1380] Bretanickij 1966, 121.

protrude from the mihrab's relief. In doing so, the craftsmen achieved its dynamic appearance. The mihrab features a relatively high number of inscriptions: six bands and cartouches.[1381] They are alternated with panels of carved stuccos which feature purely vegetal compositions and arabesques, while geometrical elements are almost entirely absent. Basic principles of the mihrab's design comprise its core with the pointed arch niche, topped by a horizontal panel and framed by several bands. The entire structure is topped by another larger horizontal panel of monumental dimensions which increases the mihrab's size and accentuates its vertical axis.

The mihrab's niche is formed by the pointed arch supported by a pair of columns; its interior is divided into three sections. The lower portion of the niche is flat, and it features the remains of a carved stucco panel, which was damaged in the middle. The panel originally featured a symmetrical composition of abstracted vegetal elements. It was deeply carved to appear contrasting, and its leaf and palmette-like elements were heavily perforated to assume elegant forms. The panel is flanked by two columns which protrude from the wall plane. The column shafts are simple and they feature arabesque designs. They are topped by cartouches in Kufic style (reading: *the Dominion*). Column capitals are protruding and they display elegant round forms of palmette and leaf elements, with deep, almost undercut carving, which makes them appear very contrasting, three-dimensional and dynamic. These protruding and curvy forms of the capitals are juxtaposed to more solid and angular panels of the column shafts and the inscription band forming the niche's pointed arch. Between the two capitals, just above the lower panel of the niche, runs one of the mihrab's inscriptions. It resembles a cartouche and it separates the lunette of the niche from its lower panel. The inscription cartouche originally featured an invocation to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*) in *Naskh* style which was set against a background of carved floral scrolls. The two columns carry the inscription band in *Naskh,* which forms the pointed arch of the mihrab's niche. Its slightly squat form is one of the visual peculiarities of this mihrab. The inscription band comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4) which protrudes from its floral background. The interior of the pointed arch is occupied by the stucco lunette panel, which features an elegant and symmetrical composition of palmettes, abstracted flower blossom elements and vegetal ornaments. The niche is topped by a pair of small spandrels, which feature mirrored symmetrical compositions of split palmettes and abstracted blossoms. These spandrels are topped by another horizontal panel with an inscription (*the Dominion belongs to God, the One, the al-Mulk lillah, the One, the Subduer*) in *Naskh* style. The inscription slightly protrudes from the background which consists of a carved vegetal composition.

The described structure of the mihrab is framed by an arabesque band of split palmette compositions. The mihrab is framed by another framing band which features epigraphic content and a specific form. The band is positioned at around seventy degree angle, compared to the mihrab's central parts, so that it functions as the connecting band between the mihrab's internal parts and its exterior surfaces. The inscription band is in *Naskh* style (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath,* 3:16-19) and the *hastae* of its letters are slightly elongated and rendered thicker at their ends, in order to determine the inscription band's rhythmic appearance. The inscription is placed on a recessed background consisting of various vegetal elements. The framing inscription band is

[1381] Inscriptions were read by Kalus: TEI 39978.

outlined on its exterior by another thinner band which features repeating arabesque composition of split palmettes and swirl elements. This band is directly related to the larger and more protruding band which frames the framing inscription band in the interior of the mihrab. On the exterior band, elements of decoration also protrude and they are deeply cut in order to appear more contrasting. The visual alteration between the bands and panels with epigraphic elements and those with purely vegetal compositions is therefore an effective tool to render the mihrab's appearance dynamic and at the same time also balanced.

The mihrab is topped by a large panel of carved stucco composition which showcases the masterly skills of stucco craftsmen in charge of the mihrab's production. The panel's composition consists of large split palmettes and abstracted vegetal forms. This symmetrical composition was accentuated by production of central vegetal elements in its middle, with a protruding aspect, which additionally highlighted the dynamic and monumental appearance of the mihrab's relief. The mihrab was produced with a wide selection of stucco artistic techniques, which enabled the craftsmen to produce the mihrab's complex stucco reliefs of more modest dimensions.

Western Mihrab

Fig. 279.

The Western mihrab is closely related to the Eastern mihrab. In fact, the only major difference between the two mihrabs is the content of their inscriptions. The two mihrabs share the panel division designs, inscription styles, and vegetal compositions and they are thus almost copies of each other. This is a unique phenomenon of copying or repetition of mihrab designs; it seems to be a unique case in the context of Iranian medieval stuccos. The monumental framing band of the mihrab, in *Naskh* style, comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-6), which continues on the band forming the pointed arch of the mihrab's niche (1:7). This continuation of the inscription has been heavily restored. The area between the niche and the mihrab's monumental framing band retains a horizontal inscription panel with the Sunni Shahada in *Naskh* style, with elongated *hastae*. The lower section of the mihrab's niche contains three cartouches which together read as an invocation to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*).

Exterior Revetments

The Strapwork Entrance Opening Façade

The area around the entrance opening of the tomb tower and between the structure of the interior of the mosque still conserves remains of the tomb tower's exterior architectural revetments. These revetments are a composed design which consists of three elements. Terracotta elements form the basic geometric pattern; the recessed parts of the pattern are filled with turquoise glazed elements alternated with stucco infills. The stucco fillings produce large stucco plugs, the surface of which is perforated and incised in order to render their appearance more manneristic and to break down the surfaces. The described type of architectural revetments is,

as noted above, characteristic of the Ilkhanid period.[1382] This specific type and visual form of revetments was likely produced by craftsmen from the Iranian territory.

Stucco Polychromy at Alinja

Close observations of the two stucco mihrabs in the tomb tower provide some indications concerning their polychromy. The recessed parts of the mihrabs' relief conserve extensive traces of blue and red. Traces of dark blue and red reflect the common approach to stucco colouring typical of Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. It is reasonable to assume that the two mihrabs of the Alinja Khanqah originally likely featured stucco panels, which were coloured brightly, with blue, red, white, and perhaps yellow and green.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Alinja

The two mihrabs were produced with a combination of stucco artistic techniques, some of which required advanced production skills. None of their panels was carved out of a single layer of stucco which illustrates the craftsmen's preference for the use of more advanced stucco techniques. The epigraphic bands of the mihrabs were carved out of at least two layers of stucco, with the background of the inscriptions resulting recessed compared to the slightly protruding inscription elements. The most complex parts of the mihrabs are the panels with vegetal compositions and arabesques. The capitals of the mihrabs' columns were produced to feature protruding and round forms. Their ornamental composition was made to appear contrasting by extremely deep incisions and carving of the stucco reliefs. These thick and deep incisions were directly juxtaposed to the heavily perforated surfaces of the abstracted vegetal elements. Similar logic and particularly deep incisions of the stucco relief, with apparent undercutting, are characteristic of arabesque bands framing the niches of the mihrabs, their spandrels and lunettes, and external framing bands with vegetal compositions. The lunettes also featured applied protruding elements. These masterly skills of craftsmen are showcased in the top horizontal panels of the mihrabs, which monumentalize their appearance and render their compositions more balanced, and accentuate their vertical axes. The panels consist of large abstracted vegetal elements which were deeply carved to feature contrasting stucco reliefs. These elements were partly heavily perforated and, partly covered by further layers of stucco, to feature protruding forms. The central parts of these panels were adorned with additional protruding elements. They were produced with a combination of three distinct approaches to stucco production which demanded advanced craftsmen's skills. In sum, compared to the other stucco mihrabs in the Iranian territory, from the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods, the Alinja mihrabs were produced with an above average number of diverse stucco artistic techniques, which reveal that the craftsmen who produced these mihrabs were in possession of advanced training and skills of stucco art.

In fact, the Alinja mihrabs are the only (extant) stucco mihrabs of medieval Nakhchivan, indicating that the craftsmen in charge of their production must have been mobilized for the commission. Considering the geographical features of the Nakhchivan area and the communication routes to the near-by lands, the craftsmen must have arrived from north-western

[1382] These techniques of producing the architectural revetments are also encountered on some Ilkhanid period monuments, such as the complex at Natanz, the Bistam complex and pre-Ilkhanid monuments in Khurasan.

or central Iran. The closest stucco revetment in the Iranian territory is the monumental mihrab of the Marand Friday mosque, from the late Ilkhanid period, some 85 km (as the crow flies) to the south of Alinja. These two stucco repertoires do not reveal any particularly converging features. In fact, the Alinja mihrabs have more in common with the stuccoworks of central Iran. Bretanickij compares the Alinja mihrab to the one of Marand and to monuments in Daghistan territory.[1383] Nevertheless, the hypothesis that the craftsmen who produced the stucco mihrabs of Alinja arrived from north-western Iran, or its other parts, such as central Iran, is more plausible.

The Alinja Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The interior of the tomb tower of the Alinja Khanqah has been almost entirely altered through modern renovation interventions; white plaster coats the supporting walls, and muqarnas on transitional elements no longer reflect the original appearance of the monument's interior. The two carved stucco mihrabs present aesthetics of balanced design based on the interplay of stucco panels with epigraphic content, which are directly juxtaposed with those consisting of purely vegetal compositions. The dynamic appearance of the mihrabs is achieved by careful planning and positioning of the panels at various angles in order to form their niches. Further variegation of the mihrabs' reliefs is achieved through the use of deep undercut, carving thick layers of stuccos and the application of protruding elements on panels with vegetal compositions. The final aesthetic appearance of these mihrabs is further refined through the extensive perforation of the stucco reliefs which renders their compositions more elegant. Variegations of inscription styles in inscription bands and of curved and angular stucco panels add to the dynamic appearance of the mihrabs. Their overall visual appearance, when compared to Iranian stuccoworks, reminds of early fourteenth century Ilkhanid revetments which were produced in central Iran. Compared to the Seljuq stuccoworks from Iran, the Alinja mihrabs feature more characteristics of the Ilkhanid revetments, such as an abundance of cursive inscriptions, frequent deep cutting of thick layers of stucco reliefs and the partial undercut of decorative elements.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not retain any historic furnishing.[1384]

e.) Epigraphic Programme

a.) The historic inscription in carved stucco above the entrance to the tomb tower is produced out of carved stucco, indicating that the mihrabs belonged to the monument's original iteration sponsored by an Amir. This inscription also names the architect of the tomb tower (*Miʿmar Khwaja Jamal al-Din*), but not the stucco craftsmen involved in the production of the mihrabs.

Both stucco mihrabs of the Alinja Khanqah are of relatively small dimensions, but they feature elaborate and complex designs on their stucco panels and an extensive number of inscriptions,

[1383] Bretanickij 1966, 121.
[1384] Even the tombstone of the cenotaph of the Shaykh is a modern substitution rather than the original from the time of his burial.

which alternate with carved stucco panels of predominantly vegetal element compositions and arabesques.

The Eastern Mihrab

These inscriptions were read by Kalus.[1385] The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The central niche of the mihrab is formed by a pointed arch supported by a pair of columns. These columns feature two cartouches in the area below their capitals which both feature invocations to god in Kufic style and they read:

الملك

The Dominion.

These are the only Kufic style inscriptions of the mihrab's epigraphic programme.[1386]

b.) The interior of the mihrab's niche, at the level of the column capitals, is filled by a horizontal panel with an inscription featuring *Naskh* style of a different form, compared to the pointed arch inscription band. This horizontal register is of similar dimensions to the pointed arch inscription band, but it features and independent content. The inscription reads:

توكّلت على الله

I trust God.

This is a common invocation which occurs on some stucco revetments and architectural revetments in the other media.

c.) The pointed arch of the mihrab's niche is formed by the inscription band panel, with deeply carved stucco relief. The inscription displays *Naskh* style, with additions of ornamental vegetal elements on the tops or in the background of the inscription's letters. The panel of the inscription features a specific framing device of vegetal elements which are heavily perforated. This Qurʾanic excerpt is in fact the entire *Surat al-Ikhlas*, Qurʾan 112:1-4. It is preceded by the *Basmala*.

The Qurʾanic excerpt reads:[1387]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

[1385] TEI 39978 (Last Accessed: November 12, 2021).
[1386] Invocations in the cartouches are often written in Kufic style. The monumental Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1) features similar cartouches in the same parts of the mihrab composition, which display the same inscription content in Kufic style, but of more elaborate proportions and form, and larger dimensions. This parallel illustrates that the Alinja mihrab was designed according to the principles for mihrab production which were frequent in the Iranian territory.
[1387] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

This Qurʾanic passage occurs very frequently on medieval stuccos of the Iranian territory; it is not only featured on mihrabs, but also on other types of stuccos in religious monuments.

d.) The mihrab's pointed arch niche is topped by a pair of spandrels and the horizontal inscription register. The inscription panel features *Naskh* style, and the inscription is placed against a recessed and carved floral scroll background. The length of the inscription, which features a common and frequently employed invocation to God, corresponds to the dimensions of the cartouche, suggesting that the text was employed and chosen on purpose, as determined by the space available for the inscription.

The inscription reads:

الملك لله الواحد القهّار

The Dominion (belongs to) God, the One, the Subduer.

The invocation is indirectly related to the *Surat al-Ghafir*, Qurʾanic verse 40:16, which contains a similar, but longer invocation. But the text in question should be considered, an independent invocation to God rather than a Qurʾanic excerpt. The content and meaning of the invocation match the content of Qurʾanic passages employed for the mihrab's inscriptions, which mainly highlight the oneness, uniqueness and significance of God.

e.) The mihrab's monumental framing inscription is positioned on an inclined and concave surface of the stucco panel, which forms its core and frames the mihrab's central parts. The form of the inscription band functioned to add volume, plasticity and a three-dimensional appearance to the mihrab. The inscription band therefore functioned as a visual connection between the interior core of the mihrab and its external stucco panels. The inscription features one of the frequently employed Qurʾanic passages for the stucco revetment epigraphic programmes, Qurʾan 3:18, from *Surah Al-ʿImran*.

The inscription reads:[1388]

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

[1388] The Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ali-imran-18-qs-3-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 2, 2020).

Similar to the meaning of the inscription band forming the arch and the invocations to God on the mihrab, this passage also focuses on highlighting the importance and oneness of God.

The Western Mihrab

These inscriptions have so far not been read. This is the first reading of the inscriptions by the Author.

a.) Three cartouches in the lower section of the mihrab's niche comprise an invocation to God in Kufic style. They need to be read together.

The invocation reads:

الملك لالله

The Dominion belongs to God.

b.) The monumental framing inscription band of the mihrab, in *Naskh* style and the partially restored band framing the pointed arch of the mihrab's niche comprise one inscription, which begins on the framing band and concludes on the band forming the pointed niche. This is a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1:1-7).

The inscription reads:[1389]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

c.) The pointed arch niche of the mihrab is topped by a horizontal panel with the Sunni Shahada in *Naskh* style, with elongated *hastae*.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

[1389] Qurʾanic text and English translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

Although the mosque of the *khanqah* complex was first constructed in the post-Ilkhanid period, it does not retain any original architectural revetments.

Alinja Complex Revetments' Patronage

Very little is known regarding the patronage of the Alinja complex. A partial reading of the carved stucco plaque by Bretanickij, illustrates that the sponsor of the building of the tomb tower could have been a local *Amir*.[1390] This construction took place, as suggested by this research, in the early fourteenth century. The fact that the inscription indicates the likeliness of the tomb's patron being a state official, further confirms the hypothesis that the tomb tower pre-dates the death of Shaykh Naʿimi, and that it was repurposed for the burial of the Shaykh. State patronage of the complex at the time of the Shaykh's burial are unlikely, taking to consideration that the Shaykh was executed by the ruler and that his Sufi order was persecuted. If so, parts of the complex, which post-date the construction of the tomb tower, could have been built considerably later, when the patronage of the complex was less controversial. Alternatively, it is also plausible that the patrons of the structures could be notable individuals who were not tied to the state apparatus.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The discussion of the Alinja stucco mihrabs and their production technology, visual elements, design and aesthetics illustrates several important points. Firstly, the mihrabs were produced by a craftsmen's workshop which had extensive experience and advanced knowledge of stucco production. Secondly, the workshop responsible for the production of the mihrabs arrived at Alinja from either Shirvan or more likely from the central Iranian territory. The remote location of the *khanqah* illustrates that the craftsmen had to be summoned for the production of the mihrabs and the other stucco revetments, and that they were thus not randomly itinerant.

f.) Monument Condition

The ruined state of the monument in the 1960s is documented by Bretanickij.[1391] Observations of modern photographs and videos of the structure indicate that most of the complex has been extensively rebuilt since. The last extensive interventions were performed in 2005. But it is not clear whether the rebuilding and restoration have been performed to reflect the monument's original characteristics. The construction material of the tomb tower's exterior architectural surfaces has been changed and its interior no longer reflects the original. The only extant original parts of the tomb tower are the two stucco mihrabs, the fragments of a later slab of the cenotaph, and the remains of the exterior revetments in the area of the tomb tower's entrance, protected by the mosque structure. Furthermore, the western mihrab was recently restored, which comprised the substitution and integration of some of its damaged panels with new stuccos, which do not match the original revetments in terms of production and aesthetic quality. The mosque of the complex has also been rebuilt and resorted to the degree that it no longer features any architectural revetments. But its structure may reflect the original one. For the other buildings of the complex, there remain only excavated fragments on the site, and there

[1390] Bretanickij 1966, 122.
[1391] *Ibid.*, 120.

is no precise information regarding scientific archaeological excavations or any further relevant finds.

g.) Research Findings – Summary:

This discussion proposes information for the revised understanding of the constructive and decorative chronology of the Alinja Khanqah, and some explanations concerning the significance of the monument and its little-known stucco mihrabs. Significant finds indicate that the tomb tower's structure and the two stucco mihrabs pre-date the death of the Shaykh which occurred in 1394. The tomb tower and the mihrabs were the works of builders and craftsmen, produced sometime in the early fourteenth century. The exterior architectural revetments of the tomb tower confirm the proposed Ilkhanid dating, because the mihrabs were installed in the tomb tower at the time of its construction. The mihrabs are of advanced production technology and elegant aesthetic appearance. They were produced with a wide variety of stucco artistic techniques and their combinations. Similar to numerous other stuccoworks, the mihrabs of Alinja were originally polychrome. Their craftsmen may have been summoned for the commission, most likely from the Iranian territory. There remain many open questions concerning the monument. A through archaeological excavation of the site could provide further information regarding the no longer extant parts of the complex.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Bretanickij 1966, 120-124; Mammadova and Mammadova 213, 119-122.

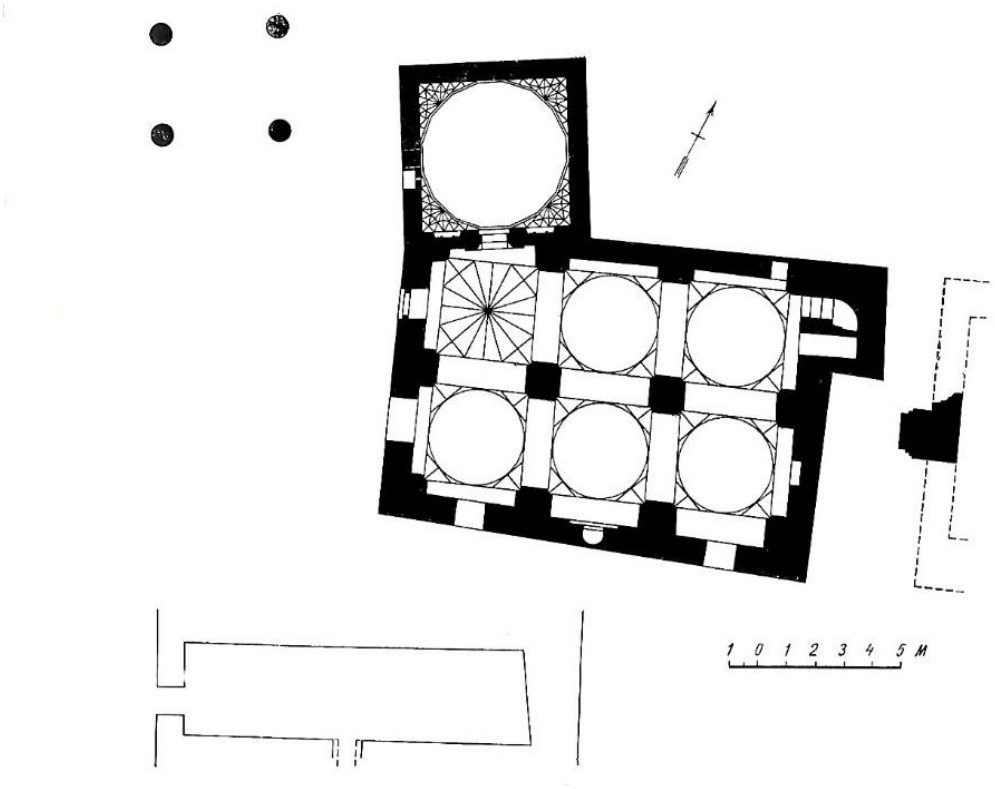


Figure 276: Ground plan of the Alinja Khanqah complex (After Bretanickij 1966, 12).



Figure 277: Revetments and carved stucco historic inscription plaque forming the entrance façade of the tomb tower of the Alinja Khanqah, which is accessed through the adjacent mosque with a later construction date.



Figure 278: The eastern stucco mihrab of the Alinja Khanqah.



Figure 279: The western stucco mihrab of the Alinja Khanqah.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 27

Monument Name: Uljaytu mausoleum

Figs. 280-302.

Associated Names: the name of the monument derives from the designation of its function and the name of its patron buried in its interior. The most common denomination of the monument is: the Mausoleum of Sulṭān Ūljāytū (at Sultaniyya).[1392] Variant names of the monument derive from modalities of description of its functions as a funerary structure (tomb, mausoleum, dome), variations in spelling of the name of the Sultan (Uljaytu, Oljeitu, Oljaytu, Sultan Khudabanda) and the name of the location of the monument in the city of Sultaniyya (Soltaniyeh, Sultaniyya, Sultaniyya).[1393] The most frequent denominations of the monument comprise: the Tomb of Uljaytu, the Mausoleum of Oljaytu, the Uljaytu Tomb, the Gunbad-i Uljaytu Khudabandah, the Uljaytu Khudabanda Gonbad, the Oljeytu Gunbad, the Gunbad-i Sultaniyya, the Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh, the Gunbad-i Sultaniyyah, the Gonbad-e Soltanieh and the Gunbad-i Soltaniyeh.[1394] Perhaps the most correct denomination of the monument is: Mausoleum of Sultan Muhammad Uljaytu Khudabanda, because it provides the full name of its patron and the person buried in its interior. It also carries the correct description of its main architectural function.

Monument Type: a monumental octagonal mausoleum structure topped by a double-shelled dome and flanked by a rectangular funerary space, with further no longer extant adjacent architectural spaces. The monument was constructed in a palatial context.

Chronology: monument built and decorated in at least two constructive and two decorative phases, during the reigns of Sultan Uljaytu and Sultan Abu Saʿid; one of the main research questions concerning the monument addresses the issue of the reason behind the architectural modifications to the originally planned structure and the rationale for the second decorative intervention in the mausoleum's interior, which was performed shortly after the first phase.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): octagonal mausoleum topped by a double-shelled dome, with a rectangular crypt adjacent to it; the monument originally comprised further adjacent structures.

Location: Sultaniyya settlement (located in proximities of the city of Zanjan in north-western Iran); c. 37.2 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Zanjan in a south-easterly direction.

GPS location of the monument: 36.4340511 N; 48.7963968 E.

Monument Investigation: April 10, 2011; April 26, 2017; December 18, 2018; March 3, 2020.

[1392] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1393] In the Persian language, the most common reference to the monument reflects the significance of its architectural form, especially the monumental dome. Gunbad-i Uljaytu is the most common name of the monumental mausoleum employed in Iran.
[1394] http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 3, 2021).

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya was constructed in the period following the decisive reforms of Ghazan Khan (ruled: 1295-1304) which brought about the prosperity of the Ilkhanid Empire.[1395] It is located in Sultaniyya, which was funded by Arghun khan, but Uljaytu took the political decision to transform it into the new capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty; a monumental and imperial project of construction of the new capital thus took place under Uljaytu's auspices. The monumental citadel was built in the centre of the settlement. Further Ilkhanid monuments are located near it. Among these, the Tappa Nur (which presumably features the remains of a mausoleum) may be contemporary to the construction of the citadel, the Ilkhanid monument near the settlement of Viyar (likely dates from the period preceding the rule of Ghazan Khan), and the later funerary and *khanqah* complex of Çelebi Öglu (a later Ilkhanid monument, which post-dates the construction of Sultaniyya citadel). Matrakçi's 1537-38 work contains the earliest extant representation of the city of Sultaniyya.[1396] The miniature of Matrakçi shows the royal capital and the Uljaytu mausoleum with a dome flanked by two half-domes and eight turrets as high as the dome, which is not an exact depiction of the mausoleum.[1397]

Although the Ilkhanid dynasty was short-lived, the mausoleum of Uljaytu reflects the economic prosperity under his rule and showcases the apex of artistic and construction technology of its time. The Seljuq mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar (1157,[1398] Marv) is perhaps the structure which offered the inspiration for the architectural solutions for Sultaniyya. According to scholarly tradition, the Sassanid Taq-i Kisra's (540 CE, Ctesiphon)[1399] monumental *iwan* structure is believed to have been the monumental dimension which the Ilkhanids wanted to surpass, but this assumption lacks solid evidence proving that Taq-i Kisra presented an architectural challenge to Ilkhanid builders and patrons.[1400] The no longer extant mausoleum of Ghazan Khan, which was built in Tabriz (Ghazaniyya), is problematic to compare to the Uljaytu mausoleum. Its hypothetical reconstruction is still not confirmed and as far as it can be ascertained, its structural solutions seem closer to Seljuq tomb towers,[1401] than to the mausoleum at Sultaniyya, which features monumental dimensions and distinct architectural solutions.

The mausoleum of Uljaytu is one of the very few Ilkhanid monuments for which the imperial status of the patron is confirmed and supported by an extensive amount of evidence. Further Ilkhanid imperial commissions comprise: Ghazan's and Uljaytu's patronage of the Bayazid Bistami complex at Bistam (Cat. No. 19), the Burj-i Kashana next to the Friday mosque of Bistam (Cat. No. 18) sponsored by Uljaytu, the tomb of Ghazan Khan in Tabriz (no longer extant) and the summer palace of Takht-i Sulayman built on the orders of Abaqa Khan.[1402]

[1395] Brambilla 2012, 1, 5.
[1396] Yurdaydın 1976, Pls. 31b, 31a. See also Atıl 1987, 84-87; Rogers and Ward 1988, 106.
[1397] See discussion in Atasoy 1976, 2-16; Atasoy 1978, 93-101.
[1398] Brambilla 2012, 1.
[1399] *Ibid.*, 7.
[1400] *Ibid*. 8-10.
[1401] Pinder-Wilson 2001, 155-186.
[1402] For Bistam, some of the monuments may have been sponsored by Uljaytu in the period when he had not yet been the ruler of the Empire. Accordingly, the only truly imperial sponsored monuments of the Ilkhanid period are the Takht-i Sulayman palace, and the mausolea of Ghazan and Uljaytu.

Among these, Takht-i Sulayman and the mausoleum of Uljaytu required advanced construction technology.

Background

The first assessment of the Sultaniyya mausoleum by Godard[1403] in the 1940s was continued by Wilber[1404] in 1955. It received further attention in the 1970s restoration project,[1405] but research of Sultaniyya was halted in the period after the Iranian Revolution and the protracted Iraq-Iran conflict. A lively art historic debate developed outside Iran, but the focus shifted from the architectural structure of Sultaniyya towards the meaning of the two layers of its interior decoration.[1406] During this period, scholars were still relying on data by Godard; in 1994, however, Robert Hillenbrand[1407] published a cutaway view, and in 1998, the first elevations and sections were published.[1408] Nonetheless, Hillenbrand's entry on Sultaniyya fails to explain its architectural structure. Only recently have attempts at restoration of and research on Sultaniyya been resumed. Research by Brambilla,[1409] addresses hitherto un-discussed architectonic solutions of Sultaniyya which are essential for the understanding of its structure. Significant articles on the subject of the mausoleum's revetments were published by Blair and Sims.[1410] Information about the mausoleum and its revetments is provided in the monograph by Manucheher Hamzelu.[1411]

Architectural Context - The Royal City of Sultaniyya

The royal city of Sultaniyya comprised other important monuments in the proximities of the citadel, on the outskirts of the settlement and at more remote locations. Information on these monuments is drawn from primary and secondary sources by Hatef Atri Naiemi.[1412] The settlement, at the time of its founding by Arghun, was built to feature an exterior defensive wall of some 7320 m in circumference; it was later expanded by Uljaytu to 18.300 m circumference wall, but its construction was interrupted by Uljaytu's death. The traveller's report by James Morier (d. 1849), informs that outside of the citadel, there were ruins of several mosques built with materials comparable to the tomb of Uljaytu.[1413] Naiemi also performs research of primary written sources describing Sultaniyya and provides some information concerning the city in Ilkhanid times.[1414] The area of the settlement was prosperous, with abundant rivers and trees. There were stores with exquisite goods, several mosques, a large number of *zawiyas* and other structures. Court officials and other noblemen were ordered to sponsor and direct the construction of palaces and gardens in the settlement. There was also a monument built by the minister ʿAli Shah and there was the tomb of Shaykh Buraq, which is still extant. Another

[1403] Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, 1103-1118.
[1404] Wilber 1955.
[1405] Bausani 1982, 90-123. See also Boyle 1968, 629-641.
[1406] Blair 1986a, 139-151; Sims 1988, 139-175.
[1407] Hillenbrand 2000 [1994], 14-15, 44-46, 334, 456-464, 465.
[1408] Qasimi 1998 [1996], 306-307, 309.
[1409] Brambilla 2012; Brambilla 2019.
[1410] Blair 19887; Sims 1988.
[1411] Hamzelu 2002.
[1412] Naiemi 2020, 8-16.
[1413] Naiemi 2020, 12.
[1414] *Ibid*., 14-16.

monument attributed to the minister ʿAli Shah is the *Firdaws workshop*, of which the location is still unknown. There are also mentions of the presence of an observatory and reports of the invention of a new type of portable school in a tent close to the royal encampment. There is also a reference to a madrasa built by Uljaytu. Moreover, the settlement also comprised a congregational mosque, which was located on its outskirts.

Architectural Context - The Citadel

The formation of Sultaniyya and the characteristics of the citadel and other structures in the new capital has been recently re-examined by Naiemi.[1415] The existing studies of Sultaniyya above all focused on the extant mausoleum of Uljaytu and the citadel, but remains of other monuments have almost entirely been overshadowed by this scholarly focus.[1416] The citadel was partially excavated during sixteen excavation seasons (1988-2004).[1417] The construction of the city of Sultaniyya was completed by Uljaytu in 1305 and named Sultaniyya – the Imperial.[1418] Written sources inform about the summoning of artisans and craftsmen for the construction of the citadel from areas such as Tabriz, Baghdad and Mosul, and likely other places.[1419] There is no precise information regarding the provenance of craftsmen and builders. As this research illustrates, there occurred a migration of craftsmen responsible for the second decorative layer of revetments towards the area of Isfahan (Cat. Nos. 2, 4), Yazd (Cat. No. 29) and Abarquh, and some tile experts produced the glazed and terracotta revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28), the complex of ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4).[1420] The project of the Sultaniyya citadel and the mausoleum, and other monumental structures, was a large-scale construction site(s) in which craftsmen interacted with each other; with the aid of imperial funds they could experiment and advance their artistic production technology and approaches. Upon that, this knowledge dispersed across the Greater Iranian territory by means of craftsmen's, builders' and artisans' mobilization for new commissions.

Other written sources examined by Naiemi inform about the moment of foundation of the imperial city; it comprised numerous structures, among which were the central charitable foundation of nineteen buildings, including: a school, a mosque, a *khanqah*, a hospital, a guest house, a *dar al-huffaz* (Qurʾan recitation and memorization place), and a *dar al-siyada* (house of *sayyids*). According to Naiemi, the most significant monument of the citadel of Sultaniyya was the mausoleum of Uljaytu; the structure was intended as a royal funerary monument from its outset, which is supported by the evidence of the burial of Uljaytu and his relatives in the mausoleum's oratory structure and adjacent crypts on its exterior sides.[1421] Uljaytu endowed

[1415] Naiemi 2020.
[1416] *Ibid.* Naiemi also informs that there has been little information and research on the residential quarters of Sultaniyya.
[1417] *Ibid.*, 2.
[1418] *Ibid.*, 3.
[1419] *Ibid.*, 4.
[1420] In some of these monuments the likeliness and shared technological and aesthetic features are so close that this provides the primary evidence in favour of this hypothesis.
[1421] Naiemi 2020, 4.

extensive lands in support of the citadel and designated the custodianship of the complex to his minister Rashid al-Din.[1422]

The citadel's dimensions amount to 295 x 315 m and the citadel is oriented cardinally; it was enclosed by a sixteen-tower fortified wall structure built out of large dimension slabs of cut stone.[1423] The citadel was additionally protected by a ditch. Examinations of the fortified enclosure of the citadel make it understood that it was constructed in two phases, of which one could have taken place during the reign of Arghun and the other under Uljaytu.[1424] Naiemi suggests that the citadel was likely built and outlined with the aid of a grid pattern which enabled the exact alignment of the two gate structures. Historic sources inform that the northern gate served as the main entrance to the citadel and the southern gate could have been a private access to the citadel employed by the members of the court.[1425] The 2000-2002 excavations of the citadel revealed evidence of a passageway in front of the northern gate, which lead through the citadel. Furthermore, the citadel was supplied with water from the outside territory by a terracotta pipe system.[1426] Naiemi however stresses that the original ground plan of the citadel still remains obscure, due to the lack of further excavations. The excavations provide some information concerning the structures adjacent to the interior sides of the citadel's fortification.[1427] These structures could have been some type of ramparts or connecting elements between the ramparts of the citadel and the monumental buildings in its interior.[1428] Only the area of the mausoleum of Uljaytu has been thoroughly excavated and the vast majority of the citadel terrain still requires a systematic excavation and research in order for us to understand the characteristics and function of other monuments in the citadel. The discovered internal network of passages between the citadel's parts indicates that the citadel was divided into four areas with distinct functions and differing types of architectural structures. If so, the area where the mausoleum of Uljaytu is located, was the core of the citadel's religious centre.

The Sultaniyya Congregational Mosque

Naiemi provides one of the most recent and detailed studies regarding the Congregational mosque of Sultaniyya.[1429] It was located in the area north-west of Sultaniyya and surrounded by pastures, agricultural lands and the city. The site of the mosque was documented with aerial photographs in 1955, and in 2009 the first archaeological excavations were performed on the site.[1430] Archaeological finds inform that religious buildings of Sultaniyya were located on its south-eastern part, and public spaces such as the bazar and the cemetery were situated on its south and south-western parts. An aerial photograph from 1964 documents the location of the mosque, recognizable by its almost correct *qibla* orientation and deviation from the north-south

[1422] Naiemi 2020, 4.
[1423] *Ibid.*
[1424] *Ibid.* The 1990s excavations brought to light evidence that the citadel featured two aligned gates structure on the northern and southern end.
[1425] *Ibid.*
[1426] *Ibid.*, 5.
[1427] *Ibid.*, 5.
[1428] Importantly, an area adjacent to the western fortification wall of the citadel revealed remains of what could have been a workshop area. *Ibid.*, 5.
[1429] Naiemi 2020, 16-19.
[1430] *Ibid.*, 17.

axis on which the other monuments are oriented.[1431] Written sources report that Uljaytu founded an excellent congregational mosque, with a madrasa adjacent to it, which comprised a hospital.[1432] The same reference indicates that the congregational mosque likely featured an extensive architectural revetment programme in marble and glazed media, perhaps in architectural revetments related to those of the Uljaytu mausoleum.[1433] Naiemi provides information concerning Sultaniyya from the seventeenth century; the description of the settlement implies that the monuments were still preserved and functional at that point and that Sultaniyya featured; the tomb of Uljaytu (referred to as the mosque in the citadel), a bazaar, a stone caravanserai and a large mosque (presumably the congregational mosque). The congregational mosque's excavations revealed three distinct periods of its use and the most significant period was Ilkhanid.[1434]

The Tappa-Nur

Naiemi provides information concerning another archaeological site and remains of a monument slightly outside of Sultaniyya settlement, which dates to the Ilkhanid period and has been named Tappa Nur.[1435] Excavations of this site revealed remains of a twelve-sided structure on the elevated hilltop, which resembles a tomb tower, but its function remains difficult to comprehend.[1436] Different hypotheses have been put forward in this regard which are summarized by Naiemi.[1437] She proposes that the monument was in fact a complex and not an isolated structure. She also reports that, according to Brambilla, the monument was the mausoleum sponsored by Abu Saʿid for his burial, and that according to written sources, the monument was destroyed and its remains were desecrated by the son of Timur, Miran Shah. If so, the mausoleum could have been part of an extensive complex described by Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, who mentions, that there was a very big mosque and a palace complex just outside Sultaniyya, according to Clavijo's accounts, dating to the Timurid period. Naiemi also reports that excavations of the small areas on the site of the Tappa, revealed the remains of architectural spaces which could be of residential nature, perhaps remains of a palace, and also remains of the cemetery adjacent to the mausoleum's structure. Information concerning the characteristics of Sultaniyya's suburbs, based on the excavation information and written sources, are provided by Naiemi.[1438] Naiemi also provides new information concerning the characteristics of the kanat system of Sultaniyya.[1439]

[1431] Naiemi 2020, 17.
[1432] *Ibid.*, 17.
[1433] This is very likely, because the patron of the monuments was the same person and the craftsmen were likely to have been managed to work on a group of monuments sponsored by the same patron.
[1434] Naiemi 2020, 19.
[1435] *Ibid.*, 19-20.
[1436] *Ibid.*, 19.
[1437] *Ibid.*
[1438] *Ibid.*, 20-25.
[1439] *Ibid.*, 25-26.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 280-281.

The Mausoleum of Uljaytu – The Architectural Structure

The core of the mausoleum is formed by the monumental octagonal structure flanked by a modest entrance portal and the rectangular structure, called oratory, on its *qibla* side, which houses the main subterranean burial crypt. Originally, the monument was a larger complex and it included further adjacent structures (see below). The oratory and the entrance portal are of almost equal height and they reach the top of the second storey of the mausoleum's core.

The core of the mausoleum consists of the supporting octagonal structure which is formed with superimposed arched structures divided into three stories. The second storey features an internal passage gallery facing the centre of the mausoleum's interior. The third storey of the structure, where the transitional zone between the supporting structure and the dome begins, features an external gallery. This external gallery conceals the mausoleum's interior transitional zone and it acts as a visual mediator between the octagonal core of the mausoleum and its dome. The corners of the octagonal three-storey-structure retain remains of turrets, which have been interpreted as minarets. These eight turrets did not function as minarets but as elements of visual elevation and accentuation of the monument's vertical axis. The dome of the mausoleum is double shelled, but it is not placed on an explicitly visible drum structure, which would elevate it visually. For this reason, the dome is ovoid and not hemispherical.

Construction Technology

Research by Brambilla[1440] unveils the Uljaytu mausoleum's architectonic structure and it proposes new information concerning the architectural solutions, which were necessary to construct the monumental structure. As Brambilla explains, Sultaniyya's structure relies on a system of interlocking arches of the octagonal structure which transmits the weight of the dome into its foundations. During the construction, the levels of the building were self-supporting, thus allowing for a safe and efficient construction.[1441] Furthermore, the use of the ovoid and double-shelled dome minimized its weight and lateral forces allowing for the dome to be almost self-supporting.[1442] Brambilla[1443] stresses that the bearing structure is octagonal, but functions by the principles of a domed square structure. This structure does not make use of traditional transition elements, such as squinches or buttresses. This is not necessary because the octagonal structure translates into the dome via the external gallery system on its third floor. In its interior, only small dimension flat muqarnas cell forms were necessary to render the transition from the octagonal structure into the dome aesthetically pleasing. At Sultaniyya, the external transitional zone hidden by an external gallery on its third storey may have been inspired by the Sultan Sanjar mausoleum. The seismic analysis[1444] of the mausoleum reveals that the described structure allows for an extraordinary resistance to earthquakes, an essential feature in an

[1440] Brambilla 2012.
[1441] *Ibid*., 12, 16.
[1442] *Ibid*., 11.
[1443] *Ibid*.
[1444] Vasseghi 2004.

earthquake-prone area.[1445] The double shelled dome of the mausoleum is constructed in a manner for the two dome shells to be connected by internal ribs which form hollow voids; this principle is related to the manner of construction of the mausoleum's octagonal core. The turrets of Sultaniyya are not extensions of the piers of the octagonal baldachin, but architectonic structures which start at the bottom of the gallery and emerge on the surface at the drum level. These turrets emphasize the vertical axis of Sultaniyya and enhance its visibility in combination with colourful tiled decoration of the dome.

The Uljaytu Mausoleum – an Architectural Complex

Naiemi proposes some important hypotheses concerning the northern façade of the mausoleum.[1446] She suggests that the difference in architectural revetment media between this entrance portal, which is coated with an extensive amount of revetments in carved stucco, and the mausoleum's other openings, which are reveted with terracotta and glazed revetments, is not a coincidence.[1447] The northern entrance could have been coated in carved stucco because it was actually a passage which lead to a no longer extant architectural structure adjacent to and part of the mausoleum.[1448] The area above the carved stucco portal is also coated with layers of plaster which feature muqarnas. Furthermore, the carved stuccos around this opening feature fine carving and rougher and less detailed stuccos would be expected on exterior surfaces. It is plausible that the northern opening of the mausoleum originally functioned as a connection passage to another adjacent structure of the mausoleum; this could have been another structure to host the graves of the deceased or some other architectural space intended to cater to the pilgrims.

Naiemi also informs that the progress of archaeological excavations of the site allowed other structures which were adjacent to the mausoleum to be discovered and that further structures could have been attached to it, but it currently is an isolated octagon with the oratory for the crypt.[1449] According to archaeological finds, the mausoleum's eastern entrance portal may have been its main entrance, because it was preceded by a courtyard and four *iwan*s.[1450] Naiemi also recounts that excavations in the mausoleum's southern side uncovered remains of a two-storey underground crypt, which pre-dates the mausoleum's construction and which could be one of the reasons for the choice of the mausoleum's location and the determining factor for its orientation.[1451]

The citadel also comprised an Ilkhanid mosque, on the ground of which a later Safavid mosque was built.[1452] Naiemi informs that the original Ilkhanid mosque was larger, compared to the Safavid one, and that it likely covered the northern façade of the Uljaytu mausoleum. If so, one may consider the possibility that the mausoleum was also structurally connected to the mosque.

[1445] Ambraseys and Melville 1982, 1-21, 37-106.
[1446] *Ibid.*, 5.
[1447] *Ibid.*
[1448] Monuments such as the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum near Isfahan (Cat. No. 2) or the Gunbad-i ʿAlawiyan mausoleum in Hamedan, featured extensive surfaces of carved stuccos on their exterior architectural surfaces.
[1449] Naiemi 2020, 7.
[1450] Naiemi correctly points out that parts of these structures are visible on Flandin and Coste's drawing of the mausoleum, which dated from 1851 and 1867. *Ibid.*, 7.
[1451] *Ibid.*, 8.
[1452] *Ibid.*

Naiemi correctly concludes that the Uljaytu mausoleum, in its original iteration, featured a religious complex, which in written sources would be referred to as *abwab al-birr*, and that the mausoleum was thus a more extensive complex, compared to what is normally suggested (a mausoleum with an octagonal core and adjacent oratory housing the crypt). Archaeological finds of potteries directly referred to as having been endowed to the complex, might indicate that an architectural space in the north-eastern corner of the monument could have been a storage for objects donated to the complex.[1453]

The Crypt Structure – The Oratory

The mausoleum's crypt, labelled by Brambilla and Blair as the oratory, is adjacent to its octagonal core, on its southern side. Joints between the two structures indicate that the oratory was likely an afterthought.[1454] This structure is positioned in a symmetrical manner in relation to the mausoleum's core and it is oriented for the bodies of the deceased in the crypt to properly face Mecca. This architectural space was necessary for the monument's function as a pilgrimage centre. The structure containing the crypt in which the patron and some of his relatives were presumably buried, therefore served to monumentalize the subterranean crypt. It has been postulated that the monumental size of the oratory reflected Uljaytu's will to render the mausoleum a centre of pilgrimage with remains of the Twelve Imams or Imams ʿAli and Husayn. The dimensions of the structure could have however been intended for the purpose of the monumentalization of Uljaytu's tomb and they should therefore not be taken as evidence of any supposed change of the monument's function. The exterior of the structure is unassuming, and it distracts the viewer from the mausoleum's core, but its interior was covered in revetments of diverse media, in order to accentuate its significance. The interior of the oratory was thoroughly restored in the 1970s interventions.

Construction Phases

The discussion of the architectural structure of Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya illustrates that this complex was constructed and decorated in at least two stages. The visually slightly awkward form of the oratory, compared to the mausoleum's octagonal core, may be a result of distinct construction phases. As mentioned above, the complex originally comprised further adjacent structures, which were connected to the mausoleum's octagonal core through its side openings. The two phases can roughly be outlined based on the content of historic inscriptions of the mausoleum's revetments as: phase one; between 705/1305-06 and 710/1310; phase two: between c. 713/1313-14 and 716/1316 or 720/1320.[1455] As noted, the construction of the mausoleum was sponsored by Uljaytu, but after his death, the undertakings were completed by Abu Saʿid.

The discussion of the Uljaytu mausoleum's decorative programme illustrates that its architectural revetments were applied in two decorative phases. The second decorative phase resulted in the application of a second layer of architectural revetments in distinct artistic

[1453] Naiemi 2020, 8.
[1454] Brambilla managed to observe the joints between the structure and the octagonal core of the mausoleum, during the 1970s restoration interventions. Blair 2014, 119.
[1455] Blair 2014, 117, 121.

techniques and decorative media, compared to the original programme which mainly consisted of ceramic revetments. The overlap between the layers of revetments produced in two stages has been noted only in the interior of the mausoleum's octagonal structure. The overlap is partial, and the proposed evidence indicates that, differently from what the scholars so far proposed, the break between these two decorative phases was not stark. Rather, the second decorative stage, produced in wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, proposed a different decorative and epigraphic programme and it covered surfaces which were also left incomplete at the time of the interruption of production of the first decorative repertoire featuring mainly strapworks. There was therefore continuity between the production of the two decorative repertoires, for which the original scaffolding of the monument was employed (see below). As mentioned, Blair's research regarding the reason for the production of the second decorative stage of the revetments is plausible: Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith may have prompted the making of a distinct decorative repertoire for the mausoleum's interior, where the Sultan was envisioned to be buried.[1456] These two decorative phases therefore feature differences in the production technology and artistic techniques which changed from terracotta and glazed media to applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall paintings. Further differences include change in the content of the epigraphic programme and visual elements of decorative compositions.

Phase One - The Earliest Sultaniyya Mausoleum; Between 1305-06 and 1310

The original mausoleum of Uljaytu was intended to be built as an octagonal structure with adjacent structures, some contemporary to the construction of the mausoleum's core and some, such as the oratory, added in the second constructive phase. The mausoleum was decorated on its exterior with glazed media and it comprised passages to adjacent structures, such as the northern opening with carved stuccos. The interior of the mausoleum's octagonal structure was decorated in the first stage with diverse types of ceramic revetments which comprised terracotta inserts with carved ornamentation, sgraffito and other media. These revetments featured diverse compositions with predominantly geometrical patterns and epigraphic elements. They were applied on lower surfaces of the mausoleum's octagonal supporting structure. At a certain point, the production of these revetments was interrupted when the upper portions of the octagonal structure's interior were still barren. Subsequently the second decorative stage was produced which resulted in covering most of the first decorative stage revetments.

Phase Two – The Redecoration of the Sultaniyya Mausoleum; Between 1313-14 and 1320

The second constructive and decorative stage of the Uljaytu mausoleum comprised the construction of the oratory, the production of revetments in the interior of the oratory and for the interior of the octagonal core of the mausoleum. The main part of the second decorative stage revetments is located on the surfaces of the mausoleum's octagonal interior. This decorative programme was produced in order to cover and substitute the originally intended programme of the first stage. It comprised production of monumental dimension wall paintings, which were combined with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos. This repertoire, as explained by Blair, features more extensive epigraphic programme, which comprises historic

[1456] Blair 2014, 122-127.

inscriptions, Hadiths, Qurʾanic excerpts and invocations to the sacred personages related to the Shiʿite creed.[1457] As Blair explains, the Shiʿite content of the repertoire can be perceived well and it reflects the reason behind this redecoration intervention.[1458] The repertoire also includes unique types of architectural revetments, which have not been documented in any other Ilkhanid architectural revetment programme. This is perhaps best illustrated by monumental teardrop medallions in the transitional zone, just below the springing of the dome. These applied moulded stuccos were also gilded, and they required an exceptional amount of labour for the gilding to be produced on such large surfaces. These and other applied moulded stucco revetments of the sanctuary may have been inventions which were produced specifically for this imperial monument with innovative, unique and prestigious revetments, in order to reflect the power and wealth of their imperial patron – Sultan Uljaytu.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

It is not clear when exactly the citadel and the mausoleum of Uljaytu fell into disuse and disrepair. According to historians, the life of the new Ilkhanid capital of Sultaniyya, and consequently, of its monuments, was short. The royal citadel was abandoned soon after the demise and disintegration of the Ilkhanid Empire. If so, the Uljaytu mausoleum did not retain its function any longer and it is likely that it was either not maintained or only to a minimal extent. It could have been repaired or renovated in the Safavid period, when the settlement again gained importance. Some evidence in favour of this hypothesis is the Safavid-looking rails in wood and stone media, which were installed to delineate the internal passages of the gallery on mausoleum's second storey and external borders of the third storey gallery.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

The monument's ground plan (Fig. 280), as discussed above, consists of the octagonal core, the adjacent rectangular oratory on its southern side and the main entrance which leads into the octagonal mausoleum. Originally, the funerary complex was more extensive and it comprised further adjacent structures, which were connected to the octagonal core of the mausoleum via its side openings. The described structure is unique in terms of its dimensions, elaborate ground plan, structure design and construction elements and technology in the context of medieval Iranian architecture.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

The mausoleum's elevation consists of the monumental octagonal structure and lower elevations of adjacent spaces, which buttresses(ed) the mausoleum's core. The octagonal supporting structure consists of two storeys and the third storey with the external gallery functions as a concealed transitional zone, which allows for the elegant transition into the dome structure. The dome is therefore the most elevated point of the monument which is also best visible from afar. Eight turrets on the corners of the octagonal structure reached in elevation slightly beyond two thirds of the dome's height and served to visually elevate and accentuate

[1457] Blair 2014, 122-127.
[1458] *Ibid.*

and render more elegant its monumental dimensions. The adjacent oratory does not excessively impact the elevation and the appearance of the complex.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

Accounts of travellers Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo,[1459] Adam Olearius,[1460] Pietro della Valle,[1461] Giosafat Barbaro[1462] and Ambrogio Contarini[1463] caused confusion regarding the Uljaytu mausoleum's function, they often described it as a mosque with minarets. But primary written sources provide evidence of a separate congregational mosque in Sultaniyya. Moreover, the main evidence regarding the mausoleum's function as a funerary complex is reflected by the fact that it was sponsored by Sultan Uljaytu and that he was buried in its interior along with some of his relatives. It has been hypothesized that, originally, Uljaytu intended to transfer some or all Twelve Imams of the Shiʿite creed into the mausoleum remains of, but as Blair proposes, there is no solid evidence to confirm this assumption and the structure was intended as a mausoleum from its outset.[1464] This is plausible, given that a similar decision was undertaken by Ghazan Khan, who also sponsored the construction of a mausoleum for his burial. But earlier Ilkhanid rulers, who were neither Sunni nor Shiʿite, but Buddhist, followed entirely different burial practices which required for the burials to remain anonymous, for their locations to be unknown and without specific architectural features.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Figs. 282-302.

The decorative programme of Sultaniyya poses diverse research questions. Its interior was decorated in two main stages with the combinations of distinct artistic media. These two decorative phases present challenge to the scholars, who began to search for the explanation of the phenomenon at an early stage. It was believed that these revetments were produced in two stages which were separate from each other by just a few years (phase one: between 705/1305-06 and 710/1310; phase two: between 713/1313-14 and 716/1316 or 720/1320).[1465] But observations of the mausoleum's architectural structure and especially of scaffolding remains (employed for its construction and application of revetments) and their relation to the two layers of revetments, indicate that there never was a break between these two decorative interventions. Rather, the second phase started to be developed at the time when the first phase was still being applied on the lower elevations of mausoleum's interior.

Another important research question regards the reasons for the production of the second decorative programme which resulted in covering the revetments made in the first decorative intervention.[1466] It has been hypothesized that the patron, Sultan Uljaytu, changed his mind concerning the mausoleum's primary function. It has been proposed that Uljaytu intended to

[1459] Le Strange 1958 [1928], 161-163.
[1460] Olearius 1971, 476-479.
[1461] Lockhart and Gaeta 1972, 331-333.
[1462] Lockhart 1973, 135-136.
[1463] *Ibid.*, 151, 194-195.
[1464] Blair 2014, 122-123.
[1465] Blair 2014, 117-127, see especially 117.
[1466] For the most updated explanation, see Blair 2014, 122-127.

create a pilgrimage centre by recovering the remains of two of the Twelve Imams, in order to bury their remains in the new superstructure and to divert the pilgrimage routes into the newly established Ilkhanid capital (see above). More recently, Blair convincingly proves that there is not enough evidence in support of this hypothesis and that the monument was more likely intended as a burial place for the Sultan from the outset.[1467] It is clear that the deterioration of the revetments, change of the monument's function, or an aesthetic change, or pragmatic decisions are not satisfactory reasons for the mausoleum's redecoration. Blair illustrates that the second epigraphic repertoire of revetments is more pointedly Shiʿite, compared to the known inscriptions of the original decorative repertoire.[1468] It was therefore Uljaytu's conversion (in 1309) and especially his will to communicate the new official creed of the Empire to the public, that prompted the mausoleum's redecoration in order to reflect the narrative of the new official.

The difference in visual features of mausoleum's first and second decorative programme is stark. The first layer of revetments comprises mainly glazed and terracotta elements forming strapwork. Its decorative compositions were pre-meditated to form geometric compositions by calligraphic, geometric and abstracted vegetal elements in terracotta and glazed elements and in one of the earliest examples of tile mosaic.[1469] The production of the first decorative repertoire did not only require an extensive amount of funds, but also an immense amount of labour and time. In contrast, the second decorative layer of the mausoleum consists of large surfaces covered in wall paintings, which were combined with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos on selected architectural surfaces, above all elements of the transitional zone, the drum and the muqarnas of the internal galleries of the mausoleum's octagonal core. These revetments also required a considerable amount of funding, but their artistic techniques and production technology allowed for a faster production of the repertoire and its partial pre-fabrication. The aesthetic change between the two repertoires of decoration, perceived by scholars, is therefore the result of the pragmatism of the builders, architects and craftsmen taking part in the project. The media of the second decorative programme allowed for a faster intervention and they were more suitable for covering the dome's interior, compared to ceramic revetments.

Another hitherto unaddressed aspect tied to the question of the mausoleum's two decorative phases, is the modality of the application of the revetments on its interior surfaces, which required scaffolding (Figs. 288, 291, 295, 299). Observations of the remaining scaffolding beams in the mausoleum's interior indicate that the original scaffolding was employed for the application of the revetments of both phases. The scaffolding was not cut off upon the application of the first decorative layer; this signifies that the first decorative phase was never concluded. Moreover, the original scaffolding of the monument was employed for the application of the second decorative layer; this indicates that the production of the second decorative layer either began as soon as the application of the first was interrupted, or that it was being produced in parallel, but in a different priority order. The stuccos could have been intended partly as original revetments to be combined with tiles but applied only in the areas where ceramic revetments – on the upper elevations – were not suitable. It is nevertheless more

[1467] Blair 2014, 122-127.
[1468] *Ibid.*, 122-127.
[1469] Blair 2014, 119-120.

likely that the production of the first decorative phase was interrupted and that immediately, a decision was taken to begin applying different revetments to cover the mausoleum's entire interior. In both cases, the significant difference from the current understanding of the mausoleum's chronology of decoration consists of the fact that, traditionally, scholars propose that there existed a break of a few years between the two decorative stages, based on the studies of the epigraphic content of their programmes, and by disregarding the material evidence and aspects of revetment production technology.

Interior Revetments

Interior Revetments of the Oratory

Fig. 286.

The rectangular architectural structure features numerous blind niches and it is covered with a tripartite roofing system consisting of the main, dome-like structure and two vaults flanking it. The revetments of the interior are preserved on its supporting walls and in the roofing area. No interior surface displays two layers of revetments. These revetments seem to be works of the first or second decorative stage, as indicated by the comparison of the technology and visual characteristics of the revetments in the interior of the oratory and the mausoleum's octagonal core. The choice of diverse decorative media in the oratory's interior stems from pragmatic reasons, where glazed media were employed for the lower elevations and stuccos and wall paintings for the upper parts of the walls and the ceiling. Architectural revetments in diverse media, among which tile mosaic dado area borders, mortar for adhesion of glazed ceramics for the dado, the monumental carved stucco double-inscription band above the dado, carved stuccos on the supporting walls, wall paintings, and perhaps applied moulded stuccos in the muqarnas hoods and the vault, cover the interior of the oratory.[1470] Blair correctly points out that the minor dimension borders of the dado area are produced with one of the earliest known cases of tile mosaic in Iranian territory, which contains not only dark and light blue shades but also white, and it therefore features an already developed colour palette.[1471] But this tile mosaic is, as informed by Blair, the work of the second decorative intervention.[1472] Another aspect of the interior revetments mentioned by Blair, is the complexity of the design joining two inscriptions styles into a monumental inscription band in carved stucco topping the dado area.

The dado area of the oratory's interior features a peculiar design and it consists of diverse media. The lower border of the dado area and joint areas between wall surfaces, were outlined in tile mosaic featuring an abstracted arabesque design in light blue, dark blue and white. Specific polygonal forms of columns in tile mosaic were produced to cover these joints. The described tile mosaic relates directly to similar tile mosaic in the interior of the mausoleum's octagonal core from the second decorative phase. The core of the dado area consisted of glazed tile elements, of which only traces of adhesion mortar remain on the supporting walls. These tiles featured octagonal forms and they were most likely turquoise or blue. Similar mortar is found in the dado area of the mausoleum's octagonal core and its joints with plaster decoration of the

[1470] Only a few mentions of the revetments in the interior of the crypt structure have been provided by Blair.
[1471] Blair 2014, 119.
[1472] *Ibid.*

second decorative repertoire are flush. The dado area is topped by the monumental inscription band in carved stucco, which features a large inscription in *Thuluth* style (*Surat al-Mulk*, Qurʾan 67) with elongated *hastae,* and a smaller inscription in its upper register in Kufic style (*Surat al-Qiyama*, Qurʾan 75). These inscriptions are set against a richly decorated floral background and another register of repeating abstract elements was designed on the inscription band's top.

The architectural surfaces topping the dado area were covered with ceramic revetments of which only traces of adhesion mortar remain. Deep muqarnas niches topping the dado area may have also been reveted in a similar modality, but with distinct forms and perhaps with several colours of ceramic elements. Fragmented remains of revetments on the walls and pieces of revetments discovered in the oratory indicate that these revetments did not consist of glazed elements only, but that they were combined with carved stucco or terracotta inserts. Glazed elements formed geometric star patterns which framed carved stucco elements produced out of a single stucco layer and featuring abstracted vegetal compositions. On the south-western supporting wall of the oratory, these revetments also cover a closed-off entrance. The closing-off of this passage may have been put in place at an early point, because it is covered with glazed and carved stucco revetments associated with the mausoleum's second decorative intervention. The closed off structure has been masterly incorporated into the decorative composition of the interior surfaces of the oratory's supporting walls. The outlines of tiles impressed into the mortar indicate that tiles were employed to form facade-like compositions; their forms comprised octagonal tiles, specific elements for muqarnas and star tiles. These ceramic revetments are contemporary to the dado area and they are thus works of the second decorative stage. The top edges of the supporting walls, above the ceramic tile composition, were outlined with another inscription band which could have been produced out of carved stucco or wall painting. A lustre mihrab, now in the Gulbenkian collection (Inv. No. 1567) was reportedly installed in this area of the oratory.

The oratory's interior upper surfaces were decorated with diverse, now badly damaged, revetments. Arcades, vaults and muqarnas hoods were covered with wall paintings and possibly by applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, of which a few fragments remain. Wall paintings feature fragmented and illegible inscriptions in Kufic and cursive styles. The muqarnas display compositions of abstracted floral ornamentation distributed across the cells. Further fragments comprise evidence of large surfaces covered with repeating geometric designs of six-pointed star-derived elements which are related to the wall paintings of the second phase in the mausoleum's core interior.

Interior Revetments – The Octagonal Core of the Mausoleum

For both decorative phases at Sultaniyya, the craftsmen needed a scaffolding to be able to apply the revetments on the mausoleum's architectural surfaces. This scaffolding was built with the traditional technology, which required the wooden beams to be inserted into the supporting walls, the transitional zone and the dome, at the time of their construction. These wooden beams were employed for the scaffolding's construction by addition of further wooden beams. Upon the completion of the interventions in the mausoleum's interior (and exterior of the structure), such scaffoldings would be removed by sawing off the wooden beams flush with the architectural surfaces, with portions of the beams inserted into the walls remaining there. In

some parts of the mausoleum's interior, these remains of wooden beams of the original scaffolding are still visible. The upper areas of the mausoleum's drum zone and at the springing of the dome, reveal wooden beam remains in the wall structures, which are distanced at regular intervals.

The locations of these wooden beam remains are not related to the compositions of applied moulded stuccos; the stucco revetment programme was therefore applied in asymmetry or in juxtaposition with the scaffolding. This indicates that the applied moulded stuccos were produced with the mausoleum's original scaffolding which was put in place at the time of its construction and which was intended for the production of the first decorative phase. This crucial evidence therefore confirms that the two repertoires of the two decorative phases at Sultaniyya were produced with the same scaffolding. Several further implications are brought forward by this evidence. Traditionally, the two phases were considered as separated from each other, due to the difference in their media, the dates of the historic inscriptions and differences in their epigraphic content. The new evidence of the scaffolding proposes that there was a very short break between the two decorative phases, if at all, because the original scaffolding was not yet removed in the moment when the production of the second layer of revetments was decided upon. This also confirms the assumption that the mausoleum's original decorative repertoire was never completed, also because no glazed revetments were found by soundings of the upper parts of the mausoleum's interior. It is accordingly plausible that there never was an actual break between the two phases.

The First Decorative Stage

Figs. 284-285, 287, 289, 291.

The first decorative phase was produced in an extremely costly medium of glazed tile and terracotta media. These revetments were made to cover extensive amounts of architectural surfaces of the mausoleum's interior octagonal core. The revetments on the surfaces of the first storey galleries in the mausoleum's interior consisted of carved terracotta inserts, unglazed and uncarved terracotta framing elements and glazed elements in light and dark blue. They were combined with glazed inserts placed between fired bricks to form repeating *bannaʾi*-like inscriptions or abstract decorative patterns. Extensive amounts of tile mosaic have been discovered upon the removal of the second decorative layer, in the area of the gallery openings of the mausoleum's second storey. They cover the intradoses of the gallery arches and surfaces in the passage areas of the galleries. They feature diverse variations of star-form designs in light, dark blue and white, for which glaze was occasionally scratched away, for them to display a combination of biscuit and glaze and to thus form more complex patterns. Such revetments are found in fragments on the lower elevations of the oratory's interior and in the first phase revetments of the mausoleum's core. They relate closely to similar arabesque bands on the main entrance *iwan* portal of the Varamin Friday mosque dated 1322 (Cat. No. 28).

Closely related contemporary Ilkhanid repertoires which involve similar revetment media, such as the exterior entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) and the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), demonstrate that related commissions and revetment programmes sponsored by patrons of lower rank, such as Ilkhanid officials with ties to their

hometowns or settlements of origin, featured more limited dimensions. Another important difference between these revetment repertoires is the fact that the ceramic revetments of the Sultaniyya mausoleum were produced with a wider spectrum of differing artistic techniques, compared to more modest revetments of the Ushturjan Friday mosque's portal. The external architectural surfaces of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex however nearly match Sultaniyya in terms of the diversity of employed revetment media, which were however produced in two decorative stages and some of which considerably post-date the construction of the Sultaniyya mausoleum. In sum, the first decorative repertoire of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya comprised a specifically and perhaps uniquely wide selection of artistic techniques, which were employed for the production of its glazed revetments. It is also plausible that some of the revetment techniques could have been invented or developed for the production of the mausoleums original decorative repertoire. Imperial patronage enabled the craftsmen to experiment producing architectural revetments, to improve extant artistic techniques, and to enhance and refine their design skills, by the means of continuous repetition and practice caused by the need to produce the exceptionally extensive decorative programme for the mausoleum.

The Second Decorative Stage

Figs. 287, 289-290, 292-302.

The discussion in this research adopts Blair's view suggesting that the reason for the mausoleum's second decorative layer, concentrated in the interior of its octagonal core (but also present on the oratory's elevated surfaces) was the communication of Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith (which occurred in 1309). In other words, the epigraphic programme of the second decorative stage was aimed at highlighting the fact that the new state religion of the Ilkhanid Empire was Shiʿite and not Sunni Islam. The decision to cover sheer amounts of the mausoleum's interior with the second layer of revetments and to almost entirely redecorate the monument, reflects how significant the change of the patron's creed was. This case of the mausoleum's redecoration therefore proposes one of the best examples and pieces of evidence for the strong link between monuments, revetment patronage and politico-religious messages communicated by the patrons. The significance of the decorative programme's epigraphic repertoire was therefore greater, compared to the aesthetics of its revetments. The change in the visual appearance of the architectural revetments from the mausoleum's first to second decorative stage was impacted by the change of the revetment media for the two decorative stages. This was likely a pragmatic solution.

These revetments featured monumental dimension wall paintings which were likely produced with the aid of stencils. These wall paintings were combined with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, which were employed for small dimension and above all curved surfaces, such as the transitional zone area, the springing of the dome and the muqarnas hoods of the mausoleum's interior galleries. It has been postulated that these specific artistic techniques derived from the area of Yazd-Abarquh and Naʾin, where such revetments occur frequently, but none of those extant monuments pre-date the redecoration of the Sultaniyya mausoleum (see Cat. Nos. 11, 29). Furthermore, the technology of the production of revetments for Sultaniyya required the use of textiles for their adhesion on the architectural structures with small iron nails and paper moulds. Such procedures have not been documented on related

revetments of the Yazd-Abarquh area. It may be more likely that the craftsmen, upon producing revetments at Sultaniyya, migrated in the direction of Isfahan, Yazd and Abarquh, to produce revetments there. The imperial commission for Sultaniyya's extensive decorative repertoire may have stipulated the invention of new technological solutions for the production of its second decorative layer.

Scholars have commonly argued that the second decorative stage at Sultaniyya was produced in plaster medium because it was cheaper and faster. Compared to the production of ceramic revetments, the second decorative phase in wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos was indeed faster to produce also due to the possibilities of the revetments' partial pre-fabrication. Given however that it nevertheless required a large amount of manual labour and resources, especially to cover large surfaces with gold leaf gilding, it is difficult to prove that one of the two decorative stages was more costly than the other. The production of the mausoleum's two decorative programmes of such an extensive dimensions could only be possible due to the available funds from the imperial commission, and it must have been motivated and desired by the commissioner himself. Similar phenomena of redecoration have been addressed in this research work, but they always occur on a considerably lesser scale or by focusing on focal points of the monuments. The thorough and monumental redecoration of Sultaniyya therefore presents a case of an imperial change of mind and consequent redecoration of the mausoleum.

The Dome Area

Figs. 297, 300-302.

The dome area wall painting is preserved in parts, but considerable evidence indicates that the entire wall painting was outlined and coloured. In some areas of the wall painting, there remain nails or perforations in the plaster, which are related to similar nail perforations employed by the craftsmen to attach the moulded and stencilled stuccos on the mausoleum's surfaces. It is thus highly likely that the dome wall painting composition originally comprised a combination of wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, similar to the revetments of the Shamsiyya madrasa and Rukniyya mausoleum in Yazd (Cat. No. 29). The decoration of the dome's interior might have been interrupted by the death of Sultan Uljaytu, or the revetments could have deteriorated due to the water infiltration through the cracks in the dome.

The Epigraphic Programme(s) of Architectural Revetments of the Sultaniyya Mausoleum and Re-decoration of Mausoleum's Octagonal Core Interior

Blair's article dedicated to the epigraphic programme(s) of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya was published in 1978, but it remains the ground breaking publication on the subject, which did not receive a follow up.[1473] In her publication, Blair publishes the most comprehensive study of the inscriptions which are visible on two layers of the architectural revetments in the interior of the mausoleum and on its other surfaces. The clear listing and grouping of inscriptions by Blair provides a comprehension of the differences between the inscriptions of the first and the second decorative interventions. In her publication, Blair debates

[1473] Blair 1978.

the possibilities and reasons which could have caused the decision to redecorate the mausoleum in a short time span. Blair considers the possibility of a change of the mausoleum's function from a burial place for Twelve Imams into a burial structure for Uljaytu himself, as a reason behind the choice to redecorate the mausoleum. On the other hand, Blair informs about the differences in the characteristics and content of the two epigraphic repertoires and she proposes that the second layer of revetments features more texts, which reflect the Shiʿite creed to which Uljaytu converted in 1309.

The theme of the Uljaytu mausoleum and the question of its redecoration has been recently revisited by Blair in her book, *Text and Image in Medieval Persian Art*, in which she dedicates one of the chapters to the monument.[1474] Blair provides a revised and expanded discussion of the monument in a wider context, which includes a revised discussion of the possible reasons for its redecoration.[1475] Blair informs that the Ilkhanid written sources do not provide any information concerning the redecoration activities in the mausoleum.[1476] She continues by stating that the reasons could either be religious, or political, or a combination of both. Blair informs that several scholars connected the activity of redecoration with Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith, although the exact relationship between the conversion and the redecoration have never been addressed and require further evidence. According to Godard, Sultan Uljaytu, when visiting Iraqi Shiʿite shrines in April 1310, took the decision to transfer the remains of the Imams ʿAli and Husayn into the monument; this was his original intention behind the construction of the monumental mausoleum, but towards the end of his life he either changed his mind or he could not transfer the remains due to the opposition of the two shrines. He thus decided to redecorate the monument for the purpose of his own burial. According to Wilber, Godard's hypothesis was correct, but he dates the mausoleum's oratory and the second decorative layer of the revetments to the second phase, which he dates prior to 1313, when the tomb was dedicated. Blair corrects these assumptions by informing that the dated inscriptions on the two decorative layers of revetments indicate that the second decorative intervention started after 1313 and that it continued beyond Uljaytu's death in 1316, all the way to 1320.[1477]

Blair informs that the earliest known evidence for Uljaytu's idea of moving the bodies of ʿAli and Husayn to the mausoleum dates to the nineteenth century European travellers' accounts, who travelled in the area in the period of Fathʿ Ali Shah's reign (r. 1797-1934). Blair states that this could nevertheless be possible, because the idea of the transfer of the two bodies could reflect the need to form a new pilgrimage centre for the ruler's political and economic ambitions.[1478] Blair informs that Ilkhanid chronicles mention Sultan Uljaytu in connection with the transfer of relics of revered personages of Islam to Sultaniyya, but that it is challenging to establish to which extent these sources are correct and if any relics were transferred by Uljaytu at all.[1479] Blair states that the epigraphic programmes of the mausoleum's two decorative layers do not contradict the idea of Uljaytu deciding to convert his tomb into a shrine for the remains of the Imams. Blair proposes that there is a parallel between the mausoleum's two decorative

[1474] Blair 2014, 112-171.
[1475] Blair 2014, 122-127.
[1476] *Ibid.*, 122.
[1477] *Ibid.*
[1478] *Ibid.*, 122-123.
[1479] *Ibid.*, 123.

layers and the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1), which celebrates Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith through its epigraphic programme. But differently from the epigraphic programme of the Uljaytu mihrab, which features pointedly Shiʿite texts, the epigraphic programmes at Sultaniyya are less explicit.[1480] She also informs that Uljaytu's *Shiʿite phase* may have lasted for only a few years and that he returned to Sunni Islam prior to his death. On the other hand, the evidence from coins struck in the name of Uljaytu, proposes that the Sunnite state official creed is only seen with the advent of Abu Saʿid's reign.[1481] Blair concludes that the benedictions to ʿAli from the mausoleum's second decorative stage present Shiʿite forms and that the persons who composed the epigraphic programme of the second decorative stage were therefore not Sunnites but Shiʿites.[1482] The wall painting medallions with epigraphic elements containing the names of Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthman, ʿAli, Hasan and Husayn, according to Blair, may reflect the Ilkhanid religious eclecticism rather than the Sunnite faith.

Blair revises her old interpretation of the mausoleum's epigraphic programme, by stating that the mausoleum's redecoration could be understood in the light of contemporary historic events.[1483] She refers to the 1315 event when the son of the chieftain of Mecca, Humayza, murdered his brother and took refuge at the Ilkhanid court; the next year Uljaytu sent one part of his army to help him re-capture Mecca; this attempt by Uljaytu to re-capture Mecca could be reflected in the activity of the redecorations at the Sultaniyya mausoleum.[1484] Blair proposes that the eight turrets on the mausoleum's exterior thus proposed a visual allusion to Mecca.

Blair informs that the large knotted inscription running in the higher elevations of the mausoleum's interior contains the Qurʾanic excerpt 2:127 (*Surat al-Baqara*), about Abraham and Ismaʿil laying the foundations for the Ka'ba; according to Blair, this is a text which could support the idea of Mecca's recapture by Uljaytu.[1485] The 3 m high inscription of Qurʾan, *Surat al-Anbiyaʾ* (the Chapter of the Prophets), should be given more weight according to Blair, because its text focuses on the function of the structure as a tomb, but it may also refer to sectarian disputes by means of the mentions of *righteous* and *disbelievers*.[1486] Other inscriptions, like the one in the dado inscription frieze, which recounts Qurʾan 48, the *Surat al-Fath*, comprise the main topic of the victory of Islam, but these are frequently featured Qurʾanic excerpts in numerous monuments. Blair concludes the discussion by discarding the idea of the conquest of Mecca as the reason for the mausoleum's redecoration, due to the lack of sufficiently explicit evidence.[1487] Blair mentions that the second decorative phase required the installation and construction of the oratory. These structural modifications should therefore be understood as changes motivated concurrently to the redecoration activities. She states that the addition of the oratory transformed the core of the mausoleum into a gathering hall, which was necessary for pilgrimage. This is, as Blair informs, not dissimilar to the case of Ghazan khan's

[1480] Blair 2014, 123.
[1481] *Ibid.*, 124.
[1482] Blair 2014, 124.
[1483] *Ibid.*, 125.
[1484] *Ibid.*
[1485] Blair 2014, 125.
[1486] *Ibid.*
[1487] *Ibid.*, 126.

tomb and pilgrimage activities tied to it. The mausoleum complex was also intended as the burial place for the family of Uljaytu.

Blair concludes by stating that virtually all sources concur that the monument was originally intended as the tomb for Sultan Uljaytu, an octagonal structure with architectural revetments in glazed and terracotta media. Half-way into construction activities, in the spring of 1310, the Sultan converted to the Shiʿite faith and visited the shrines of Iraq, where he perhaps got the inspiration and idea of transferring the remains of the two Imams to Sultaniyya, in order to create a new pilgrimage centre worthy of the Ilkhanid capital. Upon his return from Iraq, the construction of the mausoleum continued, and it was inaugurated in 1313. Shortly thereafter, Sultan Uljaytu decided to enlarge the monument through the addition of the oratory and redecoration of the mausoleum's interior, which transformed the monument into a pilgrimage-complex.[1488] The second decorative layer, according to Blair, was characterized by bright colours and it apparently emphasized directionality towards the oratory, and its revetments were in the fashion of the monuments of its time. Importantly, the mausoleum's interior with its new decorative repertoire, and additional lamps, textiles and other objects, must have provided an important sensual experience for the pilgrims. Furthermore, Blair proposes that the epigraphic programme of the second decorative stage, with many Hadiths and Qurʾanic passages referring to the topic of pilgrimage, would have appealed to the literate audience among the pilgrims, together with the theme of Uljaytu's aspirations to re-capture Mecca and aspirations to his broader political legitimacy.

Blair nevertheless concludes that the ultimate reasons for the redecoration of the tomb remain obscure.[1489] She rightly informs that Sultaniyya was not located on a sufficiently strategic location, which would enable the continuity of its significance as a capital, and that similarly to the site of Takht-i Sulayman, Sultaniyya was employed as a temporary residence and a hunting ground.[1490] Blair concludes that the size of the funerary complex at Sultaniyya reflects Uljaytu's aspirations and that modifications of the mausoleum's original plan reflect the will to make the image of the ruler even grander and to encourage the pilgrimage to the site. While this might be generally speaking correct, it is nevertheless important to note that the mausoleum of Uljaytu is the only extant structure from the royal city of Sultaniyya. Blair discusses the changes between the first and the second decorative repertoire also from the point of view of changes of the architectural structure.[1491] Blair suggests that the architectural structure's modifications (the addition of the oratory and the redecoration), indicate Uljaytu's decision to transform the mausoleum from a single-room tomb into a multi-chambered pilgrimage structure with parts of it built specifically to accommodate the needs of pilgrims.[1492] Blair correctly emphasizes that this transformation should be viewed as part of the development of the shrine complex.[1493] The suggestion by Blair that the monument was redecorated and its oratory added for fostering pilgrimage activities is valid, but the conversion of Uljaytu to the Shiʿite faith must also be understood as one of the reasons for the mausoleum's redecoration. The second decorative

[1488] Blair 2014, 127.
[1489] *Ibid.*, 127.
[1490] *Ibid*.
[1491] Blair 2014, 127.
[1492] *Ibid*.
[1493] *Ibid.*

layer, as shown, does feature a distinct and more Shiʿite inclined epigraphic programme. Moreover, it would be illogical to cover such large surfaces of the monument's interior to simply foster pilgrimage.

Looking at a wider context, this research illustrates that Shiʿite inscriptions begin to occur in several other monuments from the moment of Uljaytu's conversion. These redecoration interventions were often produced in carved stucco medium, but also in other media, such as tiles, and they may be the indirect result of Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. Numerous parallels of cases of the developments of pilgrimage complexes and shrines in Ilkhanid and other periods can be listed. Some of the best examples of modifications, additions, enlargements and redecorations of shrine complexes are addressed in this work: the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Shaykh Ahmad Jami complex at Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30) and the Bayazid Bistami complex at Bistam (Cat. No. 19). But perhaps the most obvious examples are the Fatima Masʿuma and Imam Riza shrines in Qum and Mashhad. These monuments illustrate how shrines and pilgrimage complexes developed around tombs of a revered personages, which in some cases were miraculously re-discovered from periods preceding any construction activities. These examples illustrate that redecoration of monuments of earlier or Ilkhanid periods were common activities in Ilkhanid Iran. These redecorations could have had diverse motivations, scopes and functions; the revetments were added to additionally accentuate focal points of the structures or to sanctify specific religious spaces; but there may be only a few if no cases in which redecorations were performed for aesthetic changes. The redecoration of the Sultaniyya mausoleum therefore needs to be comprehended in this context. It is accordingly unlikely that the redecoration of the Uljaytu mausoleum could have taken place for aesthetic purposes. Rather, the reasons behind the redecoration must be tied to the change of the epigraphic programme of mausoleum's architectural revetments and therefore must have been politically motivated. The change of Uljaytu's creed must have played a considerable role as a motivation for the change of epigraphic programme, similar to the other discussed monuments.

Exterior Revetments

Exterior Surfaces

The Exterior of the Mausoleum

The majority of the external architectural surfaces of the monumental complex were coated with a layer of glazed revetments which were resistant to atmospheric agents. The light and dark blue combination of these glazed elements enabled the craftsmen to produce diverse decorative patterns for the dome, which comprised Kufic style inscription medallions and simple *bannaʾi*-like inscriptions in dark blue set against light blue background on the turrets. Further glazed revetments were employed for muqarnas tiers topping the external surfaces of the third storey gallery (and also the muqarnas hoods in the interior of the mausoleum's core). The tripartite pointed arch openings of this external gallery were visually emphasized by the application of geometric compositions of glazed light and dark blue elements which form the window outline bands and spandrels. It is not clear whether the rest of the gallery's external surfaces were also covered in revetments, or if dark brown surfaces of the structure's fired

bricks were left to be seen. It is unclear whether the exterior architectural surfaces of the mausoleum's first and the second storey were left blank, in fired brick colour, or if they were also originally covered with glazed revetments.

The described logic behind the application of glazed revetments on the mausoleum's exterior surfaces was a phenomenon which began to develop in the Ilkhanid period and which is not typical of earlier architectural structures in the Iranian territory. The development at Sultaniyya is not a solemn invention and similar decorative logic for exterior surfaces was also documented on other Ilkhanid monuments. The described phenomenon should therefore be understood as an invention by the Ilkhanid craftsmen, builders and architects. This practice lived on under the dynasties which succeeded the Ilkhans, such as the Muzaffarids and Timurids.

The Northern Opening of the Mausoleum – Carved Stuccos

Fig. 282.

The northern entrance or passage opening in the supporting wall of the mausoleum retains remains of a carved stucco decorative programme which comprises inscription bands and panels of abstracted vegetal compositions. As mentioned, this opening could have functioned as a connecting passage between the mausoleum's octagonal core and a no longer extant adjacent structure of this funerary complex. The inscription bands and panels of stuccos are distributed around the opening to form a monumental arch-like formation.

These stuccos are different from the point of view of their artistic techniques and production technology, compared to the other Ilkhanid stuccoworks. Some vegetal ornaments of external carved stucco panels feature artistic techniques or types of vegetal ornamentation which have not been documented on almost any other Ilkhanid monument. The original programme consisted of diverse panels which surrounded the opening. An inscription band of shallow relief was produced to outline the pointed arch. The inscription is set against a plain background of uncarved stucco and it is plausible that this inscription band was repaired at a later stage. The framing inscription band (Qurʾan: 17:78-80, *Surat al-Israʾ*) is flanked by a pair of stucco spandrels on its top, but only the left-hand side spandrel is preserved. It features a symmetrical vegetal composition with a central rosette or a flower blossom in its middle and remains of leaf-derived ornamental elements. These stucco panels are not typical of the Ilkhanid period. They display a differing stucco relief and ornamental elements which are rarely encountered on Ilkhanid stuccos.

In addition to the framing inscription band and the spandrels, the programme includes further panels. These panels were formed to monumentalize the mausoleum's passage. These spandrels were topped by a horizontal inscription band in *Thuluth* style and with vegetal elements in its background. In addition to the monumental horizontal panel, the ornamented surfaces of the opening were increased by additions of further stucco panels. Some of these panels are preserved only in parts and the lower part of the opening was originally also reveted in carved stucco. These stuccos consisted of several stucco panels featuring blind niches (left-hand side) and symmetrical abstracted vegetal compositions, of which the one of the left-hand side panel is well preserved. They formed vertical bands of revetments and they were topped by a cartouche-like inscription section. These cartouches (Hadith, see below) flank the large

horizontal panel with the *Thuluth* inscription, but differently to the panel, they feature Kufic style. The inscription form is slightly particular due to the strongly elongated *hastae* which display knotted elements. Vegetal elements of the background of the Kufic inscription cartouches are closely related to those of the *Thuluth* inscription; they feature similar forms of abstracted vegetal elements, which were produced with the same artistic techniques. A fragmented inscription read by Blair indicates that these stuccos were produced by 1310-11 (see below).

The vertical stucco panel on the left-hand side of the entrance opening provides information regarding the visual characteristics of the no longer extant stuccos. The panel displays a barely visible broken shoulder arch form, which encloses the core of the symmetrical vegetal composition, and which retains spandrels with vegetal elements. The core of the panel composition consists of palmette and scroll elements. The visual appearance of this stucco panel is unusual; it is bevelled, which was not typical for Ilkhanid stuccos. In sum, the form and visual appearance of these stucco panels are distinct, compared to most stuccos from the early decades of the fourteenth century.

Another characteristic of the mausoleum northern opening's stuccos is the repeating ornamental band filling the spaces between the discussed panels and uniting them visually into an equilibrated composition. This band is in some cases slightly concave, and it features diverse motifs derived from leaves and other vegetal revetments. On some occasions, these ornamental repeating elements are abstracted to the point where it is no longer possible to recognize the origin of the ornament. The repeating framing band on the top of the stucco panels is slightly larger and it features a more complex composition. One of its peculiar aspects, which concludes the stucco composition of the opening and functions as its framing device, is the absence of perforation.

The discussed stuccos differ from the monumental stucco inscription band, which tops the dado area in the oratory's interior. These two stucco repertoires were not produced with the same artistic techniques and their reliefs display diverse forms and characteristics of depth and relief inclinations. Furthermore, ornamental elements and inscription styles of these two repertoires display considerable differences in design, proportion, and form. It is unlikely that the two repertoires could have been produced by the same craftsmen.

The northern opening's stucco revetments do not relate to those in north-western Iran and neither to the stuccos of other geographical regions. The perhaps closest comparison is presented by a stucco panel featuring a peony-like composition, which is located on the left-hand side of the mihrab in the monumental domed structure of the Varamin Friday mosque. At Varamin, it is known that the stuccos of its domed hall were produced in at least two Ilkhanid phases and that the monument underwent further modifications in later times. The accepted date for these stuccos is 1322-25, which allows the hypothesis that the stucco craftsmen who produced the stuccos of the Sultaniyya mausoleum's entrance portal could have subsequently migrated to Varamin in order to produce further works there.

Eastern and Western Façades of the Mausoleum's Exterior - Revetments

The two side entrance portals of the mausoleum feature glazed and terracotta revetments. These revetments form façades of the mausoleum's entrance or passage openings on its eastern and western sides. The revetment artistic techniques and forms of design are directly related to the ceramic revetments in the mausoleum interior's core which were produced during the first decorative intervention. These revetments feature repeating geometric designs of variations of star or abstracted flower blossom elements. Another part of the panels features octagonal geometric compositions. The spandrels on the south-western entrance feature repeating compositions with epigraphic elements in Square Kufic with the names *Muhammad* and *ʿAli*. For both openings, the revetments form façade-like compositions, which are almost entirely independent from the underlying architectural structure. The core principle of design employed for these façades is a combination of openings with adjacent side panels and bands of revetments, which are flanked with blind further niches decorated with related revetments.

The production technology and designs of these revetments are related to the ones on the entrance portal and adjacent surfaces of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque near Isfahan (Cat. No. 4). The closest parallel of all are however the remains of terracotta and glazed elements, tile mosaic and sgraffito revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat No. 31). The revetments of the Sultaniyya mausoleum's two openings and glazed revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque reveal a number of closely related features indicating that, upon the conclusion of the first decorative phase at Sultaniyya, some craftsmen went to Varamin and produced the glazed and terracotta revetments at the Friday mosque and at the Shah Husayn Imamzada.[1494] Shared aspects of these repertoires comprise panels of repeating geometric designs which are based on octagonal or star forms. The repertoire at Varamin is dated 1322, on the tile mosaic's fragmented historic inscription on the mosque's entrance portal. The Varamin glazed revetment repertoire, located on the main entrance portal, the *qibla iwan* and in the interior of the domed prayer hall, shares the selection of artistic techniques with those of the first decorative stage of the Sultaniyya mausoleum's interior. The Kufic inscription band, which runs across the interior of the entrance *iwan* of the Varamin Friday mosque, features the practice of partially scratching away the glaze of the revetments, in order to reveal their biscuit and for them to form elegant elements of the floral scroll background. Such a technique has also been documented on the surfaces of the Sultaniyya mausoleum (in the lower elevations of the interior of the octagon) and it might be the result of inventions and developments of the revetment production technology which took place at Sultaniyya. Revetments on supporting walls in the interior of the Varamin Friday mosque's domed hall consist of geometrical tile mosaic background and terracotta inscriptions in the foreground; exact parallels of such artistic techniques and designs are located in the interior of the Sultaniyya mausoleum's octagonal core.

In sum, the described parallels in production technology, artistic techniques, visual elements of geometry and modality of application of glazed and terracotta elements on exterior surfaces of the Uljaytu mausoleum and on the surfaces of the Varamin Friday mosque, are closely related and it is most likely that they are works of the same craftsmen. This could also be the case for

[1494] See Wilber 1955, 177.

the glazed revetments of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz and the entrance portal of Ushturjan Friday mosque, but the parallels between these repertoires and Sultaniyya are related to a lesser degree. Glazed revetment experts, upon the interruption of the first decorative stage at the Uljaytu mausoleum, gradually dispersed into diverse regions of the Ilkhanid Empire. The Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) revetments were surely produced by a group of craftsmen who worked on the repertoires of the entrance openings of the Sultaniyya mausoleum. The revetments at Ushturjan and Natanz, which are slightly different, were perhaps produced by a mix of craftsmen and with only partial involvement of craftsmen from the Sultaniyya project.

External Gallery Revetments

The external gallery of mausoleum's third storey retains extensive amounts of architectural revetments. These revetments are located on architectural surfaces of the gallery's ceiling, on its supporting piers and its interior wall surfaces. They are produced with a specific artistic technique which combines panels of inserted carved stucco plugs placed between fired bricks of the structure, with thin bands of carved stucco and panels of carved stucco elements displaying diverse geometrical forms, combined with terracotta framing devices in the form of geometrical frames. The craftsmen who produced these revetments demonstrated their skills and versatility and they produced a different design for each pointed arch opening-delimitation portion of the gallery's ceiling. The architectural lines of the gallery's structure and the division of its ceiling areas into smaller decorative panels were achieved by production of carved stucco bands which feature arabesque ornamentation of diverse leaf and vegetal elements. Corners and intersections between these bands are adorned with further rosettes and more complex compositions of vegetal elements. Occasionally, their borders feature compositions of epigraphic elements in Square Kufic, such as the repetition of the name *ʿAli*. Pendentive elements of the gallery display designs consisting of two visual planes. One plane consists of terracotta or stucco formed geometrical grids and the second, visually recessed plane, comprises carved stucco elements placed in geometrical grid openings.

The cores of the revetment programme are the hexagonal compositions placed in the ceilings of the gallery arcades. These hexagonal panels feature diverse designs which consist of terracotta geometrical grids which are filled with inserts of carved stucco. Isolated epigraphic elements, mainly names of religious figures or invocations to God, play a significant role in these compositions. On some occasions, longer invocations to God and Qurʾanic excerpts are employed to form the borders of these hexagonal and octagonal medallions. These revetments do not find an exact parallel in other Ilkhanid monuments. Perhaps the closest are stucco plug and carved stucco compositions in the eastern *iwan* of the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1).

Stucco Polychromy at Sultaniyya

The examination of architectural revetments at the Uljaytu mausoleum illustrates that carved stuccos played a minor role in this monumental repertoire of architectural revetments produced with a wide variety of artistic techniques and revetment media. These stuccos are nevertheless important to thoroughly comprehend the Ilkhanid stucco revetments and for their comparison to other repertoires discussed in this work. The carved stuccos of the Sultaniyya mausoleum are located in two areas of the monument: the external stucco panels adorning the southern opening

in the mausoleum's core and the monumental carved stucco band topping the dado area of the oratory's interior.

Very few traces of pigmentation have been spotted on the monumental double inscription band of the oratory; there remain traces of light green, which may have been employed to colour the recessed background of stuccos, in place of the more frequent use of blue. Other colours such as blue, red and white were likely employed to render the stucco relief distinguishable from the surrounding glazed revetments with darker colour compositions.

The stuccos on the exterior mausoleum surface, which formed the opening passage between the mausoleum's core and a no longer extant structure, retain more pigmentation remains. Extensive traces of pistachio green, which might be the result of later overrepainting, are visible on the framing cursive inscription band of the pointed arch's opening. Similar shades of green are located in the cavities of the majority of the other stucco panels forming the entrance opening's repertoire. Traces of blue may have substituted green for the colouring of the recessed parts of the stucco reliefs. Apart from these remains, no other pigmentation traces were spotted on these stucco surface.

Compared to the other Ilkhanid carved stucco repertoires addressed in this research work, the stuccos of the Sultaniyya mausoleum retain unusually extensive traces of light green in place of blue. This might have been a deliberate aesthetic choice of the stucco craftsmen. The entire colour spectrum of stuccos was however wider and it must have included shades of blue, red and white, and perhaps ochre, in a manner similar to the mausoleum's wall paintings.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Sultaniyya

The discussion of carved stuccos in the mausoleum's oratory and on its southern opening illustrate that these stuccos were likely produced by distinct groups of craftsmen. Their production methods and employed artistic techniques differ considerably. The stuccos of the oratory were produced with artistic techniques which were frequently employed by Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen. They required carving two layers of subsequently applied stucco material, but no protruding element was added, nor did the craftsmen perform undercutting of stucco relief. Deep carving of the relief into thick layers of stucco material was performed instead.

The described procedures for the stucco revetment production in the oratory differ considerably from the techniques the craftsmen employed for the production of the southern opening's stuccos. For these stuccos, which might have originally been more extensive, a wider variety of techniques was adopted. They were carved out of a relatively thin layer of stucco and the carving angle was sometimes employed to create bevelled ornamental elements and occasionally it featured stucco undercut. The contrast between the bevelled and the undercut vegetal elements of these symmetric and balanced compositions added to their dynamic appearance. Furthermore, the stucco reliefs were made to feature protruding parts by the addition of stucco material and application of partially pre-formed protruding elements. The overall visual appearance of these stuccos is peculiar to the point that they find only a few parallels, such as some of the stucco panels in the interior of the Varamin Friday mosque's domed chamber (Cat. No. 28). In sum, these stucco panels are somewhat exceptional in appearance and production methods, compared to the other Ilkhanid stuccos. This might be due

to the fact that the craftsmen were willing to produce unique revetments for this imperial decorative repertoire.

The Sultaniyya Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

It has been mentioned that the two repertoires of carved stuccos at the Uljaytu mausoleum display considerably differing features of production technology, visual appearance and aesthetics. The interior oratory's monumental double inscription band features frequently occurring aesthetics of Ilkhanid stuccos. Its relief is relatively flat and un-protruding, but at the same time deeply carved, thus featuring a strong light and shadow contrast. Quite to the contrary, the stuccos of the mausoleum's southern opening feature shallow relief with applied protruding elements, stucco undercut and bevelled stuccos. This combination is rare in the Ilkhanid period and it is more characteristic of the Timurid stuccos. It is plausible that the discussed stuccos were precursors of a later stucco style, as motivated by the prestigious imperial commission to the craftsmen requiring a monumental, unique and innovative architectural revetment programme.

d.) Furnishing

The monument does not retain any original furnishing in its interior. Some objects pertaining to the mausoleum and fragments of its elements have however been discussed by Blair.[1495] Furthermore, the traveller's descriptions of the monument, especially those by Olearius, provide important primary evidence allowing these objects and revetments to be connected to the monumental complex.[1496] Blair attempted to identify the remains of grills of which one is part of the Kier collection.[1497] The other known objects, which were commissioned for the Sultaniyya mausoleum, are monumental dimension Qurʾans sponsored by Uljaytu himself. These Qurʾans have been discussed and examined by Blair, and one of the best examples of Qurʾanic leaves pertaining to these works is stored in the Copenhagen National Library.[1498] Qurʾanic book rest and other necessary objects of art were commissioned specifically for the mausoleum.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The epigraphic programme of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya has been studied and published in detail by Blair in her 1987 article.[1499] The inscription readings in this section of the monument discussion are retrieved from the publication and from the TEI. Comments on their form, function, meaning and characteristics of architectural revetments with inscriptions are provided by the author of this research work, to better understand the monument, its revetments, and the epigraphic repertoire(s).

[1495] Blair 2014, 128-135.
[1496] It is known that the oratory and the core of the sanctuary featured metal separation grills, which were described as still *in situ* by Olearius.
[1497] Blair 2014, 131.
[1498] *Ibid.*, 131-134.
[1499] Blair 1987 43-96.

a.) The Lustre Mihrab in the Gulbenkian Collection[1500]

This lustre mihrab in the Gulbenkian collection (Inv. No. 1567)[1501] is considered as originally pertaining to the Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya. It has been proposed that it was installed on the *qibla* wall of the oratory's interior. The mihrab consists of three lustre tile slabs, but the current mihrab could be the interior of a larger mihrab.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions.

1. The exterior framing band features a dark blue relief *Naskh* style inscription set against a background of vegetal decoration.

The inscription consists of the *Basmala* and a passage from Qurʾan; 76:1-4 (*Surat al-Insan*). It reads:

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَذْكُورًا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا
إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا

Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?
Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.
Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.
Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.

The inscription is interrupted in the middle of the fourth verse, and it continues in the mihrab's central niche, where it is produced in the same inscription style, but in slightly larger dimensions. There, it reads:[1502]

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا
إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا
عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا

Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.
Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of Kafur,
A spring of which the [righteous] servants of Allah will drink; they will make it gush forth in force [and abundance].

The inscription concludes at the bottom of the niche, and it features combined with the framing inscription, passages of *Surat al-Insan* 76:1-6.

[1500] Inscription reading from: RCEA, XIV, n° 5283.
[1501] The revetment is on display and it was investigated in person in July 2017.
[1502] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Insan (Last Accessed: January 4, 2021).

2. This niche is enclosed by an arch, which comprises a pair of thin columns in turquoise and a pointed trefoil arch formed by an inscription. This part of a Qurʾanic passage functions as an invocation to God and it reads:

فسيكفيكهم

But [Allah] will spare you their evil.

The passage continues around the spandrels and the interior of the arch formed by the inscription, and it reads:

الله و هو السميع العليم

Allah will be sufficient for you against them. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.[1503]

The Qurʾanic passage in question is the last part of the verse 137 of *Surat al-Baqara*. This passage assumed a specific function in Islamic art and architecture. The passage is frequently featured in lustre tile medium, but examples in wall painting (Rukniyya mausoleum Yazd; Cat. No. 29) and stucco (the stucco mihrab of the Farumad Friday mosque; Cat. No. 16) have been documented. The specific aspect of use of this passage in architectural revetments is the visual emphasis dedicated to the invocation فسيكفيكهم , which is featured in monumental inscription forms and in diverse styles, with the rest of the Qurʾanic passage filling its background. Blair recently suggested that this part of the Qurʾanic passage should be understood as an invocation to God, which likely possessed an apotropaic meaning.[1504] On the other hand, visual features and forms of letters, and their sequence, in this long word, provided the artists, craftsmen and persons in charge of the inscription design with numerous possibilities of forming visual forms, due to the symmetry of the word and due to the balanced distribution of letters with "teeth," "eyes" and *hastae*.

The example of the Gulbenkian lustre tile mihrab composition, from, presumably, the Sultaniyya mausoleum's oratory, finds a close parallel in the lustre tile revetment set (Inv. No. 09.87),[1505] in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of New York. This lustre tile set is signed *Work of Hassan ʿAli ibn-i Ahmad Babuya al-Bannaʾ*, and with the second signature of the calligrapher in charge of the calligraphy design of the panel, which reads: *in Shawwal nine and (sic) bi-khatti (in the writing of) the poor slave ʿAli Muhammad ibn Fazlallah al-(sic).* This lustre tile set has been assigned to the complex of ʿAbd al-Samad at Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The design and composition of the tile set display an almost identical visual form of *fasayakfikuhum*, combined with a pair of slender columns, not dissimilar to the ones observed on the lustre tile mihrab above. Similarities in form and design of the two lustre repertoires, and their artistic techniques, are so close that it is likely that the two lustre revetment sets were produced in the same workshop of lustre craftsmen, in Kashan, perhaps in a short time span and with the same

[1503] Qurʾanic text in English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-137-qs-2-137-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 4, 2021)
[1504] Sheila Blair, paper delivered at conference, *Inscriptions of the Medieval Islamic World*, American University in Cairo, 2019.
[1505] https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/445953?searchField=All&sortBy=Relevance&ft=natanz&offset=0&rpp=20&pos=2 (Last Accessed: October 14, 2020).

mould. As the historic inscription below indicates the designer and the writer of the mihrab were two different persons.

3. The mihrab also comprises an important historic inscription, which is divided into two bands flanking the arch of its niche. The two inscription bands are spread across two out of three tiles and the upper tile features a repeating vegetal design (with a floral scroll in the foreground) instead of epigraphic elements.

The inscription is designed in *Naskh* style; its colour is white, which might reflect the craftsmen's will to render the inscription (and its content) visible within the mihrab and easy to note to the literate audience.

The inscription reads:[1506]

أمر بترتيب هذا المحاريب و الكتابة العبد شمس الدين حسين نجيب تعريفا أحسن الله
عاقبته و كتب ذلك فى شهور سنة عشر و سبعمائة هجريّة نبويّة مصطفويّة

This mihrab and its inscriptions were made (lit. "built") by al-ʿAbd Shams al-Din Husayn Najib, known as the best of God and his punishment, this was written in the months of the year seven hundred and ten of the Hijri calendar.

The mihrab's historic inscription states that the revetment was produced in 1310-11, which allows it to be assigned to the beginning of the second decorative intervention in the mausoleum. The inscription is somewhat unusual because it employs the verb *built* at its beginning, implying that the name of the person who sponsored the mihrab was the same person who also produced it. If so, the mihrab is a unique case, or better said, example, of a craftsmen's donation of a revetment to the sanctuary. Furthermore, the inscription does not refer to the singular object noun, but plural, indicating that there could have originally been more than one lustre mihrab in the mausoleum, which could have been part of the same commission.

b.) Exterior Revetments

1. Square Kufic inscriptions in the area of the springing of the mausoleum's dome feature a repeating pattern in light blue glazed elements set against unglazed terracotta elements; they are juxtaposed to the light blue colour of the dome. These inscriptions consist of a band, which features a repeating trefoil arch pattern. The inscriptions read:[1507]

البقاء

Everlastingness.

(Repeated five times)

الله محمد علي

Allah, Muhammad, ʿAli.

[1506] RCEA, XIV, n° 5283; own reading with one correction to the RCEA reading.
[1507] Blair 1987, 44.

(Continuously repeating)

2. The mausoleum's northern passage or entrance opening with carved stucco panels features several inscriptions. It consists of three panels placed at the same level. The central rectangular panel is in *Naskh* with elongated *hastae* and the two panels flanking it assume the forms of cartouches with inscription segments in Kufic style.

The first inscription is partially damaged, and Blair managed to read the following parts of the text:[1508]

[sic] داخل المؤر [sic] هو يطلب العلم لحماية [sic] الاسلم [sic]

... He who seeks knowledge in the defence (?) of Islam ...

Blair proposes that the inscription could be part of an unknown Hadith text.

Another inscription in the central cartouche of the entrance opening, in carved stucco medium, was read by Blair as Qurʾan, *Surat al Israʾ* (17:78-80):[1509]

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا
وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا
وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.
And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.
And say, "My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority."

This Qurʾanic excerpt is commonly featured in Ilkhanid architectural revetment inscriptions, especially mihrabs.

The two cartouches flanking the inscription featured a short Hadith text, which was read by Blair:[1510]

قال النبي عليه السلام المصلي ينجي ربه

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: the one who prays converses intimately with his Lord.

The same Hadith is displayed in the central horizontal panel of the late Ilkhanid carved stucco mihrab of the Kharaqani complex at Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21). Blair informs that this is a canonical Hadith listed by al-Bukhari.[1511]

[1508] Blair 1987, 44.
[1509] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Isra (Last Accessed: January 4, 2021).
[1510] Blair 1987, 45.
[1511] *Ibid.*

Another inscription in blue on plaster (wall painting) is read by Blair on the north portal of the mausoleum, as the excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* with *Ayat al-Kursi* (Qurʾan 2:255-256):[1512]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.
There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

Further inscriptions are located on the eastern entrance opening of the mausoleum. They have been read by Blair,[1513] who informs that one of the inscriptions contains parts of completion date. The inscriptions are of Shiʿite content and one of them features an extended Shiʿite Shahada in Square Kufic style in three geometrical medallions. It reads:

لا له الا الله الواحد محمد رسول الله الصادق علي ولي الله وصي رسول الله

There is no God but the One, Muhammad is the true Messenger of the God, ʿAli is the friend of God and the testator of the Messenger.

This is an extended version of the Shiʿite prophecy of faith. As the other inscriptions indicate, this repertoire was produced between 1313-14 and 1320, in the period coinciding with Uljaytu's Shiʿite phase. These revetments should be considered of the second decorative programme. Blair correctly informs that similar forms of Shiʿite prophecies of faith are also found on the following monuments: the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque dated 1310; (Cat. No. 1), the entrance portal of the *khanqah* of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz dated 1307-08 (Cat. No. 12) and the stucco mihrab of the Varamin Friday mosque dated 1322-25 (Cat. No. 28). She considers the Friday mosque of Bistam Shiʿite Shahada to pre-date the one at Sultaniyya, and dates it to 1306-07,[1514] but this is erroneous; as this research illustrates, the plaque with the Shiʿite Shahada at Bistam is a later addition. Accordingly, the Shiʿite Shahadas of the Natanz complex, the Sultaniyya mausoleum and the Uljaytu mihrab are the earliest such cases.

[1512] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-baqarah (Last Accessed: January 4, 2021).
[1513] Blair 1987, 45.
[1514] *Ibid.*

Other inscriptions in the same medium comprise repeating compositions with the names of revered personages of Islam:

محمد

Muhammad.

علي

ʿAli.

The two names are employed to form compositions, which are frequently produced by Ilkhanid craftsmen in diverse media. These compositions form the spandrels of the entrance portal.

The lower section of the entrance portal features fragments of a historic inscription, which dates this architectural revetment repertoire. Blair read the following fragment of the inscription band:

[sic] في سنة عشر[sic]

In the year ten [sic].

This short fragment of an originally longer content is of essential significance for the understanding of the time of production of the external architectural revetments of the mausoleum's eastern entrance opening. As Blair informs, it is logical to consider that the date of these revetments can be completed as 1310-11. This only extant date on the mausoleum's exterior therefore indicates that the revetments were being applied on its lower sections not before, but after the conversion of Uljaytu to the Shiʿite creed and perhaps following the interruption of the production of the mausoleum's interior revetments (first phase). The chronology of the mausoleum's decoration can therefore be reconstructed in the following manner. The craftsmen started to produce the first decorative layer of the interior of the mausoleum prior to Uljaytu's conversion in 1310. Subsequently, in the moment of conversion, these activities halted. The craftsmen therefore proceeded to cover the mausoleum's external surfaces. In parallel, other craftsmen were summoned to immediately start producing the second decorative layer in the interior of the mausoleum in an entirely distinct medium, with separate visual elements and a modified, more explicitly Shiʿite content, of its epigraphic repertoire.

Third Storey Gallery Stucco Revetments

Blair lists and meticulously describes all the epigraphic elements of the stucco revetments in the interior surfaces of the transitional zone gallery on the mausoleum's third storey.[1515]

She records the following epigraphic elements:

الله, علي, الملك, محمد, البقاء, العز دائم و الاقبال

Allah, ʿAli, Al-Mulk, Everlastingness, Lasting Glory, Plenty.

[1515] Blair 1978, 46-50.

Blair mentions issues in reading some epigraphic elements. The comparison of the restored revetments of the gallery with Blair's readings indicates that some inscriptions might be modern additions to the original revetment repertoire.

c.) Interior Revetments

The First Decorative Phase Revetments

The inscriptions of the first decorative stage in the core of the mausoleum's octagonal structure have been read and published by Blair.[1516] These finds, with additional comments concerning architectural revetments of the inscriptions are listed here for comprehension of the content and characteristics of the mausoleum's epigraphic programme.

1. The inscription in the south-eastern corner below the dome shell and the transitional zone of the muqarnas tiers is written in *Naskh* style on glazed ceramic tiles in dark blue and white combination and it is preserved in fragments.

The inscription reads:

[sic] ي الله [sic]

[sic] –y Allah [sic].

Blair informs that this fragment of an inscription is covered by the second decorative layer and that its entire content cannot be read, unless the second layer would be removed.

2. The inscription in the north-western bay of the mausoleum (Bay One), in the first storey of the bay, features a repeating composition in Square Kufic. It is produced out of terracotta elements combined with glazed blue elements.

The inscription reads:

علي

ʿAli.

3. The intrados of the interior arch of north-western bay (Bay One) features another repeating inscription composition in Square Kufic style and in the artistic technique of composing terracotta and blue glazed elements, similar to the inscription above. The composition is inserted and set against a turquoise background of glazed elements and the geometric band is produced with brick elements. The panel features inserts of terracotta, which have been finely carved to display symmetrical abstracted floral compositions.

The inscription reads:

محمد

Muhammad.

[1516] Blair 1978, 50-53.

4. Remains of a fragmented inscription are found in the south-western bay (Bay Three) which features an inscription consisting of terracotta and turquoise glazed elements. Blair reports that only the beginning of the inscription is visible, the *Basmala*, and that the remaining content would need to be verified, but it is likely, that the inscription featured a Qurʾanic excerpt.

5. The southern bay (Bay Four) also features a composition in Kufic style which displays a repeating composition (five times), and reads:

محمد

Muhammad.

Blair postulates that there was a mirror composition on the opposite architectural surface of the bay, which could have read:

علي

ʿAli.

6. The southern bay (Bay Four) features, according to Blair, traces of an inscription similar to the one mentioned above. It consisted of a related composition with *Muhammad* repeating five times, in Kufic style and in a similar artistic medium.

7. The inscription in the second storey of the eastern bay (Bay six) is produced out of terracotta elements, which are set against a tile mosaic background, featuring repeating geometrical patterns. This artistic technique has also been documented on surfaces of the Varamin Friday mosque. It features Knotted Kufic style.

The content of the inscription consists of the *Basmala* and the *Ayat al-Kursi* (see above).

Importantly, Blair reports that after the c. fifteen letters gap of the inscription, it concludes stating the date of the inscription's completion in Arabic, in words: *713/1313-14*.[1517]

This piece of information is of utmost significance, because it provides information regarding the completion of the inscription and the date, which indicates the approximate end of the first and the beginning or time of production of the second decorative stage.

8. The eastern Bay (Bay Six), features an inscription on its second floor, which is produced with terracotta elements and set against a background in geometrical tile mosaic elements. The inscription recounts verses from Qurʾan 112 – the *Surat al-Ikhlas*.

9. Another inscription in the eastern Bay (Bay Six), in the area of the second-floor gallery, close to the muqarnas hood of the *iwan*'s structure, features Square Kufic style and it is made out of brick mosaic. Blair mentions that the inscription is partially ruined, but that it may feature a composition consisting of repeating epigraphic elements of *Muhammad.*

10. Another inscription in the eastern Bay (Bay Six) is located on the surfaces of its ground floor. It features a composition of *Muhammad,* in Kufic style, which repeats five times. On the

[1517] Blair 1978, 51.

opposite architectural surface, there is a similar design of revetments, but it is produced to display five repetitions of *ʿAli*.

11. Another inscription in the eastern Bay (Bay Six) is located in the top area of the intrados of the interior arch form. It features a strapwork composition in Square Kufic, which reads:

سبحان الله

Praise be to God.

12. The north-eastern Bay (Bay Seven) displays an inscription in Knotted Kufic style which is produced out of terracotta elements and set against a tile mosaic background. The inscription reads:

الملك الله

The Dominion belongs to God.

The opposite architectural surface features a similar inscription, produced with the same artistic techniques, which reads:

الع[زة] الله

Praise be to God.

13. The inscription in the northern Bay (Bay Eight) displays Knotted Kufic inscription in terracotta medium which is placed against a tile mosaic background. The inscription is located on the lower elevations of the bay. It consists of the *Basmala* and the beginning of the *Ayat al-Kursi* and further excerpts from the same chapter (2:255-256), but the inscription is damaged. Blair notes that the same content of the inscription is employed also on external surfaces of the same bay and in the upper intrados of the eastern Bay.[1518]

Having listed inscriptions of the first decorative repertoire of the mausoleum's interior, it is possible to draw some conclusions regarding the epigraphic content of the first decorative stage.[1519] Blair already noted that some inscriptions were illegible at the time of her examination of the monument, and that some could be read only in part, because they are covered with the second decorative layer. The analysis of the extant inscriptions indicates that they can be divided into two groups. One group, which is the larger one, comprises inscriptions which are either Benedictions, invocations to God or names of revered persons of the Islamic religion. These inscriptions were employed by craftsmen as epigraphic elements which were multiplied and placed in different directions; they featured diverse inscription styles to form various visual compositions. This was only possible due to the employed artistic media; tile mosaic, terracotta and glazed elements, because these artistic techniques required pre-meditated designs to be composed out of small parts on the ground, made to adhere to each other and then be applied on architectural surfaces. A possible exception are the Square Kufic and *bannaʾi* inscriptions

[1518] Blair 1978, 53.
[1519] It is however important to note that the repertoire in question has been uncovered only in parts and a large portion of it remains covered by the second decorative layer.

which could be produced on the spot using the grid system for the transfer of the inscription design onto the large dimension architectural surfaces.

The second group consists of longer inscriptions; the ones which have been uncovered comprise combinations of the *Basmala* with Qurʾanic excerpts, which were frequently employed to produce architectural revetments of the Ilkhanid and earlier periods. These inscriptions were longer in their form and they could not be employed to compose decorative panels in terracotta and glazed elements. Rather, they were produced out of small terracotta elements and mainly juxtaposed to the tile mosaic background, which featured geometric patterns. This technique and such decorative logic are also found on the Varamin Friday mosque's (Cat. No. 28) surfaces. From this discussion it becomes apparent, that the type of the text and its visual characteristics could be exploited in diverse manners. This was observed by the craftsmen who employed distinct artistic techniques for diverse types of texts. The original epigraphic programme of the mausoleum thus seems not to have comprised any form of a Shahada, or Hadiths or pointedly Shiʿite texts, which occur in the second decorative repertoire. As Blair concludes, the difference in the content of the mausoleum's first and second decorative programmes is the absence of Shiʿite texts in its original decorative programme.

The Second Decorative Phase Revetments

1. The monumental Knotted Kufic inscription below the transitional zone of the interior of the dome is produced in wall painting medium. It features Qurʾan 2:121-127; *Surat al-Baqara*:[1520]

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ
يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ
وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَاعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُونَ
وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ
وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ
وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَٰذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۖ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ
وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Those to whom We have given the Book recite it with its true recital. They [are the ones who] believe in it. And whoever disbelieves in it – it is they who are the losers.
O Children of Israel, remember My favour which I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds.
And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, and no compensation will be accepted from it, nor will any intercession benefit it, nor will they be aided.
And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them. [Allah] said, "Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people." [Abraham] said, "And of my descendants?" [Allah] said, "My covenant does not include the wrongdoers."
And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And

[1520] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-baqarah (Last Accessed: January 4, 2021).

We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform Tawwaf and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]."
And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits – whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day." [Allah] said. "And whoever disbelieves – I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire, and wretched is the destination."
And [mention] when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and [with him] Ishmael, [saying], "Our Lord, accept [this] from us. Indeed You are the Hearing, the Knowing.

Blair notes that blue on white inscriptions in this wall painting were specifically popular in Ilkhanid Yazd, but earlier examples of a Kufic inscription in white set against a blue background (which dates to the Seljuq or earlier period), is found on the first phase layer of the mihrab in the north-western hypostyle prayer hall of the Kashan Friday mosque. Blair notes that the design of the inscription at Sultaniyya is unusual, but it would perhaps be better to label it as unique; it features knotted elements in the middle of the letters' *hastae*.

2. The transitional zone below the mausoleum's dome contains a monumental inscription band with a composition of two inscriptions.

a.) The first inscription is located beneath the muqarnas elements, and it is of monumental dimensions; it features *Naskh* style, it is white and placed against a blue background with small dimension vegetal elements. This is the main inscription, and the second inscription (section b.) fills its upper register.

The inscription consists of an invocation (in remembrance of the Dear) and a Qurʾanic passage (21:105-112; *Surat al-Anbiyaʾ*):[1521]

ذكر العزيز
وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ
إِنَّ فِي هَٰذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِقَوْمٍ عَابِدِينَ
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ
قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ آذَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ ۖ وَإِنْ أَدْرِي أَقَرِيبٌ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ مَا تُوعَدُونَ
إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ
وَإِنْ أَدْرِي لَعَلَّهُ فِتْنَةٌ لَكُمْ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ
قَالَ رَبِّ احْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَٰنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَىٰ مَا تَصِفُونَ

And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants.
Indeed, in this [Qurʾan] is notification for a worshipping people.
And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.
Say, "It is only revealed to me that your god is but one God; so will you be Muslims [in submission to Him]?"

[1521] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Anbiyaʾ (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).

But if they turn away, then say, "I have announced to [all of] you equally. And I know not whether near or far is that which you are promised.
Indeed, He knows what is declared of speech, and He knows what you conceal.
And I know not; perhaps it is a trial for you and enjoyment for a time."
[The Prophet] has said, "My Lord, judge [between us] in truth. And our Lord is the Most Merciful, the one whose help is sought against that which you describe."

Blair reports that both Pope and herself consider this inscription a stylistic masterpiece. Given the large dimensions of the inscription (around 3 m), it seems likely, that it must have been produced with the aid of stencils, although it features a cursive inscription style.

b.) The second inscription fills the empty upper sections of the monumental *Naskh* inscription. It features Kufic style and a series of Qurʾanic excerpts. Blair reports that many parts of the inscription were illegible during its examination, and that only the following Qurʾanic passages could be recognized:

18:110 (*Surat al-Kahf*):[1522]

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَٰهُكُمْ إِلَٰهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۖ فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا

Say, "I am only a man like you, to whom has been revealed that your god is one God. So whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord – let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone."

and 39:73 (*Surat al-Zumar*):[1523]

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ

But those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened and its keepers say, "Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein," [they will enter].

Blair informs that the inscription was not intended to be read and that it functioned as a space filler. This is plausible, given the size of the inscription band and its elevated location, compared to the mausoleum's ground level. The inscription band could however be well seen from the galleries of the mausoleum's first and second storeys. Blair suggests that this is one of the earliest inscriptions which combined two inscriptions in separate inscription styles into one band (a two-tiered inscription). She mentions that one of the parallel inscriptions of approximately similar date is the double inscription of the carved stucco mihrab at Pir-i Bakran, and that this design practice became popular in Ilkhanid architectural revetment production, soon after the completion of the mausoleum at Sultaniyya.[1524]

[1522] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-kahf-110-qs-18-110-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1523] Qurʾanic text in English and Arabic from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-az-zʿUmar-73-qs-39-73-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1524] Blair 1978, 54.

3. The glazed revetment dado area of the mausoleum's interior is topped by an inscription frieze, which is produced in a specific artistic technique of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos combined with wall paintings. It features an inscription in *Thuluth* style applied on the wall painting surface which functions as its background. The inscription protrudes from the background wall painting layer and forms a relief. It comprises diacritic marks and vocalization.[1525] The area below the inscription frieze features mortar for the adhesion of tiles, which were octagonal in form and which were part of the second decorative stage.[1526] These tiles are the works of the second decorative phase, because they cover a layer of *Khatt-i bannaʾi* revetments produced out of fired bricks (background) and small square glazed inserts in turquoise colour (for the letters). The inscription frieze is doubtlessly the work of the second decorative phase, because it protrudes from the original plane of the revetments below it, and due to the artistic technique in which it is produced. Closer investigations of the frieze reveal that the inscription retains portions of a dark colour layer; the inscription could have originally been gilded with gold or metal leaf. The background inscription's floral scroll compositions comprises palmette elements which are painted in a delicate manner with combination of white and blue.

The inscription was read by Blair and it features *Surat al-Fath*[1527] (Qurʾan 48).

Blair proposes that the closest parallel to the inscription at Sultaniyya, is the stucco inscription frieze running along the supporting walls of the monumental *iwan* structure at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).[1528] The inscription at Sultaniyya however features a more complex composition, a more advanced design, and more refined proportions. Its closer parallels, also in terms of production technology, are inscriptions found in the late Ilkhanid and Muzaffarid mausolea of Yazd (Cat. No. 29).

4. The monumental framing inscriptions of the eight bays of the octagonal structure of the mausoleum are produced in wall painting medium. Many of these inscriptions feature *Naskh* style. They form an interconnected epigraphic repertoire of Hadith texts, which constitutes a sub-group to the epigraphic programme.

a.) The framing inscription on Bay 1 (north-western bay) reads:

[قال النبي عليه السلام] اذا دخل احدكم المسجد فليركع ركعين [قبل ان تجلس]

(The Prophet, Peace be upon Him, said:) when one of you enters a mosque, make two rukʿas, (before sitting down.)

[1525] Blair informs that it is 70 cm high. *Ibid.*, 54.
[1526] These revetments are similar to the dado area tiles and mortar of the oratory structure, and they date the oratory's revetments to the second decorative stage.
[1527] Blair 1978, 54.
[1528] *Ibid.*

Blair informs that this Hadith is one of the canonical Hadiths, which is listed in early Hadith editions.[1529]

Another further fragment of this inscription reads:

يدخله الجنة قال النبي عليه [السلام]

... will admit him to the Paradise, said the Prophet, peace be upon (Him.)

Blair informs that it is possible that this Hadith is the same as the one on the Bay 4 framing inscription.[1530]

b.) The framing inscription of Bay 2 (western Bay) reads:

قال النبي صلوات الله عليه و سلم بشر المشائين في ظلم [الليل] الى المسجد

The Prophet, may God bestow prayer and peace upon him, said: Guide the wanderers in the darkness (of the night) to the mosque.

Blair informs that this text is also one of the canonical Hadiths.

c.) Bay 4 (southern Bay) also contains a Hadith inscription, which reads:

[قال النبى عليه السلام] من آمن بالله و رسوله و أقام الصلوة و صام رمضان فان حقا على الله أن يدخله الجنّة

(The Prophet, peace be upon hi, said:) the one who believes in God and his Prophet and raises the prayer performs fasting during Ramadan, then it is incumbent, upon God to cause him to enter the Paradise.

Blair informs that this Hadith is contained in editions by al-Bukhari and Ibn Hanbal.[1531]

d.) Bay 5 (south-western Bay) also contains a Hadith excerpt, which reads:

صدق رسول الله الدنيا ساعة واجعلها طاعة

The Prophet spoke truly: the World lasts only an hour, therefore, use it obediently!

Blair informs that this text is not featured in canonical traditions of the Prophet, but that it is paraphrased in Rumi's Mathnawi.[1532]

Bay 5 features another inscription, which contains numerical content, reading:

٧٢٠

720/1320-21

[1529] Blair 1978, 55.
[1530] *Ibid.*
[1531] *Ibid.*
[1532] *Ibid.*, 55.

This date is noted by Blair, who also comments on the oddness of its positioning and relation to the rest of the epigraphic repertoire.[1533] Blair informs that the numerals are squeezed in the bottom area of the panel and that the digit seven is disproportionally small, compared to the two other digits, and that the numerals are placed in a different direction, compared to the inscription.[1534] The content (the date) expressed by the inscription contrasts the inscription with the date of the completion of the second decorative phase, which is located on the lower elevations of Bay 6 (eastern Bay), with the date 713/1313-14 (see above). Blair postulates that the cases of different dates on the same architectural revetment repertoires were not unusual in Ilkhanid Iran. Furthermore, the expression of completion of a certain part of the monument in numerals did occur, with parallel example at the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) monumental stucco inscription in the domed prayer hall.[1535]

Blair notes that the longer inscription with the completion date of the second phase should be given more weight compared to the one in numerals, which also post-dates the death of Sultan Uljaytu (716/1316) by four years. Blair therefore proposes that the numerical inscription, due to its odd form and placement, should be understood as a marker of completion of minor repairs or restorations of the repertoire.[1536] It is plausible that the inscription is of an odd shape, due to the modern restoration interventions, which however only began to be performed at the time of Blair's examination of the monument. Perhaps the inscription could also be understood as a graffiti by a craftsman or somebody who could reach this part of the revetments, soon after the repertoire's completion. Although Blair interprets this date (1320) in her 1978 article as a date indicating later repairs of the monument, she considers 1320 as the date of conclusion of the second decorative repertoire in her revised discussion of the monument published in 2014.[1537] Blair accordingly proposes that the construction of the monument began at the time of Uljaytu's ascension to the throne and that the first constructive and decorative stage concluded in 1313-14, when the building was dedicated. In the 2014 publication, Blair mentions that shortly after 1313-14, the second stage began, when the oratory was added to the monument and the interior of the octagon was redecorated. Blair states that these activities concluded in 1320.[1538]

e.) Bay 6 (eastern Bay) also contains a Hadith excerpt, which reads:

... المؤمنين يوم القيامة فى ظل صدقته ان ...

... the believers on the Day of Judgement in the shadow of His alms ...

Blair informs that the exact Hadith containing this passage could not be found, but that it could possibly be a derivation of Ibn Hanbal's edition of Hadiths.[1539]

f.) Bay 7 (the north-eastern Bay) also contains an inscription of a Hadith, which reads:

[1533] Blair 1978, 56.
[1534] *Ibid.*
[1535] The other examples Blair lists are examples of the dates of completion of the repertoires written in words but slightly squeezed in the available space, which is not an unusual phenomenon.
[1536] Blair 1978, 56.
[1537] Blair 2014, 122.
[1538] *Ibid*., 122, 126-127.
[1539] Blair 1978, 56.

ارحموا من فی الأرض یرحمکم من فی السماء

(The Prophet, said:) be merciful to those on earth, so that He who is in Heaven is merciful to you.

Blair informs that this is a canonical Hadith listed by Al-Tirmidhi.[1540]

g.) Bay 8 (the northern Bay) also features a Hadith excerpt, which reads:

قال رسول الله صلّی الله علیه و سلّم ایها الناس اقبلوا علی ما القیم من اصلاح (؟) ... و اعرضوا عما المؤمنین

The Prophet, may God bestow blessings and salvation upon him, said: Oh people, draw near to the guardians of improvement (?) … and show yourselves to the true believers!

Blair informs that the source and the meaning of this Hadith are unclear.

5. The Bays forming the core of the funerary complex of Sultan Uljaytu contain a set of Hadith inscriptions on the outer frames of their pointed arch structures. These inscriptions are of limited dimensions and they are gilded (most likely with gold containing leaf); they feature Kufic style.

a.) The inscription on the Bay 2 (western Bay), Bay 3 (south-western Bay) and Bay 8 (northern Bay) contains fragments of one Hadith, which read:

قال علی بن أبی طالب کرم الله وجهه أربع ...

ʿAli ibn-i Abi Talib, may God enable his countenance, said: Four ….

Blair informs that the rest of the inscription is not legible, but that the inscription likely contains a Shiʿite Hadith.[1541]

b.) Another such inscription is located on Bay 1 (north-western Bay) and it reads:

قال النبی الدنیا ساعة فاجعلها طاعة ...

The Prophet said, The World is only an hour, so use it obediently.

As mentioned above, and already noted by Blair, this inscription seems to repeat the text of the Hadith excerpt on the south-eastern Bay (Bay 5).[1542]

6. The exterior frames of the bays forming the main structure of the mausoleum's octagonal core contain a set of Hadith excerpts, which frame the spandrels of their upper arches. They feature Floriated Kufic style and wall painting medium, with inscriptions in blue set against a white background.

a.) This wall painting inscription in Floriated Kufic repeats to form a long framing band. It is located on Bay 5 (south-eastern Bay) and Bay 6 (eastern Bay). The inscription reads:

[1540] Blair 1978, 56.
[1541] *Ibid.*, 57.
[1542] *Ibid.*, 57.

قال رسول الله صلّى الله عليه و سلّم طلب العلم فريضة على كلّ مسلم و مسلمة

The messenger of God, may God bestow blessings upon him and grant him salvation, said: to seek knowledge is the duty of every male and female Muslim.

Blair informs that the excerpt is a common Hadith related by Ibn Maja and that this Hadith was popular in the Ilkhanid period, when it was used in the borders of several star lustre tiles dated 738/1337.[1543]

b.) Another repeating inscription in the same style is located on the southern Bay (Bay 4) and it reads:

قال النبى عليه السلام الدنيا مزرعة الآخرة

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: the World is the sowing ground of the hereafter.

Blair informs that this is not a canonical Hadith, but that this Hadith became very popular in the fourteenth century, when it was also quoted by moderate mystics.[1544] It is cited by al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and by Rumi. Very importantly, Blair informs that the same Hadith is featured in the carved stucco mihrab of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4).[1545] This parallel informs about the use of the Hadith also in carved stucco medium, which in the given case was addressed to the faithful of an *imamzada* (a funerary structure for the descendants of the Twelve Imams). The use of the same Hadith in the mausoleum of Sultan Uljaytu could therefore have had related motivations and it could reflect the Shiʿite aspect of the mausoleum's second decorative phase.

7. The spandrels of the outer frames of the bays forming the mausoleum's core feature circular designs composed by the repetition of inscriptions with the names of revered persons of the Islamic religion. They are not dissimilar to more complex compositions, especially those in forms of *shamsas,* on the interior surfaces of the bay arches. These revetments are produced in wall painting medium which is occasionally combined with applied moulded stuccos in low relief.

Blair informs that these spandrel roundels were legible only on the right hand side of the Bay 5 (south-eastern Bay), and that the majority of these revetments entirely deteriorated by the time of her examination of the repertoire in late 1970s.[1546] The preserved roundel consists of six intertwined inscriptions reading *Muhammad*, and the left hand side roundel probably featured a similar composition, but with repetitions of *ʿAli*.[1547] This is plausible, given that the lower surfaces of these openings feature similar compositions, but with the use of *Naskh* style and addition of *Allah* in the centre of these larger roundels.

[1543] Blair 1978, 58.
[1544] *Ibid*., 58.
[1545] The mihrab is signed by the master craftsman with the *nisba* Kirmani and it is dated 708/1308.
[1546] Blair 1978, 58.
[1547] *Ibid*., 58.

8. The interior arch structures of eight bays forming the mausoleum's core are framed by large dimension inscription bands, which feature *Naskh* style. They were produced in wall painting medium, in white set against dark blue background.

a.) The inscriptions in Bay 2 (western Bay) and Bay 7 (north-eastern Bay), read:

... القيام إلى الأمور و مصالح الجمهور أدام الله نصره و شد نطاقه ...

... the supporter of the affairs and needs of the community, May God perpetuate his victory and strengthen his dominion ...

Blair informs that these benedictions could refer to Sultan Uljaytu, the patron of the monument, because their form refers to a living person.[1548]

b.) The inscription in Bay 8 (northern Bay) reads:

... شرف الإسلام و المسلمين محمّد مدّ الله ظلّه و نصر محله ...

... glory of Islam and the Muslims, Muhammad, may God extend his shadow and glorify his quarter ...

Blair informs that the inscription most likely refers to benedictions intended for the patron of the monument, Sultan Uljaytu, whose proper name was Sultan Muhammad Khudabanda.[1549] She highlights that the types of benedictions contained in the inscriptions are intended for a living person. The inscription content was therefore tailor-made for the monument and intended to strengthen the political authority and status of its patron.

9. The extradoses of the internal arches of all eight bays are outlined with a Square Kufic inscription band, which runs across all the bays. It contains a repeating benediction. The inscription is produced in wall painting medium; it is white and set against a dark blue background. The repeating inscription band outlines and highlights architectural forms of the interior arches in bays and it visually unites them.

The inscription reads:

الملك لله

The Dominion belongs to God.

Blair notes that the inscription is occasionally misspelled[1550] which indicates that it might not have been produced with the aid of stencils. Blair also points out, that remote parallels in other media include similar bands on the carved stucco mihrab at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Ushturjan Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 4). But use of Square Kufic seems to have become more frequent for epigraphic repertoires in the time of Uljaytu's reign which might have had a connection to his conversion to the Shiʿite faith. On the other hand, the visual properties of Square Kufic and the need to compose such inscriptions and transfer them onto

[1548] Blair 1978, 58.
[1549] *Ibid.*, 60.
[1550] Blair 1978, 59.

large architectural surfaces with the aid of gridlines, rendered this inscription style more appropriate for repeating benedictions than long texts. Only rarely, such as in the case of the Square Kufic band of the carved stucco frieze running along the interior of the monumental *iwan* at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, or at the Ilkhanid mihrab of the Sava Friday mosque (Cat. No. 34) and at the mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque (Cat. No. 10), is Square Kufic employed to recount longer Qurʾanic excerpts.

10. The interior of the upper gallery of Bay 1 (north-western Bay) features a specific inscription, which runs along its walls topping wall surfaces with wall painting *shamsas*, until the springing of the gallery's muqarnas hood decorated with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos displaying abstracted symmetrical vegetal compositions. The inscription is produced in wall painting medium. It is of light blue colour, set against a plain white background and it features a specifically designed inscription style reminiscent of abstracted Knotted Kufic.

The inscription reads:

سلطان محمّد اولجاتو

Su[l]tan Muhammad Ulja[y]tu.

Blair provides important comments concerning the inscription.[1551] She reports that the inscription repeats a highly stylized name of the mausoleum's patron, Sultan Uljaytu. Blair notes the missing *lam* of *Sultan* and the medial *ya* of *Uljaytu*, which have been substituted by smaller and more abstract suspended elements. Blair continues by interpreting these letter omissions as mistakes or miss-spellings of the ruler's name, and states that this could be due to the stylization of the inscription and importance of the symbolism of the word, rather than its actual appearance.[1552] This is unlikely, given that the inscription was almost certainly produced with the aid of stencils, which required for the inscription to be carefully pre-designed. The mistake could have occurred during the process of producing the large stencil, but this is unlikely, because such issues do not occur in the other contemporary or slightly later wall painting repertoires produced with stencils. These omissions of letters could have been artistic choices, which could have been undertaken in order to render the inscription more symmetrical and visually appealing.

11. Another inscription runs across the extradoses of interior pointed arches of Bays. It also features Square Kufic style and the same content as the inscription number 9. It is white and set against dark blue background. The repeating invocation of the inscription band visually unites architectural elements and forms of eight bays and ads to the uniform appearance of mausoleum's second decorative programme.

The inscription reads:

الملك لله

The sovereignty belongs to God.

[1551] Blair 1978, 59.
[1552] *Ibid.*

12. The areas of the intradoses of the interior arched niches of all bays feature wall painting revetments. These wall paintings consist of panels with *shamsas* with repeating epigraphic elements arranged into compositions. These panels are framed with highly stylized Floriated Kufic inscription bands which repeat the three words of the name of the mausoleum's patron. The inscription band apparently ran across all the bays; at the time of Blair's investigation of the monument in late 1970s, it was still preserved in Bay 1 (north-western Bay), Bay 2 (western Bay), Bay 3 (south-western Bay) and Bay 5 (south-eastern Bay).[1553]

The inscription reads:

سلطان محمّد اولجاتو

Su[l]tan Muhammad Ulja[y]tu.

Blair informs that the inscription is highly stylized and that it presents cases of missing letters (the *lam* of *Sultan* and the media *ya* of *Uljaytu*) similar to the larger such inscription (inscription No. 10), naming them problematic spellings. The fact that the same phenomenon repeats on another inscription, in a different inscription style and of different dimensions, should be interpreted as evidence in favour of the outlined hypothesis, stating that the spelling of the inscription and omissions of some letters were choices of the artists responsible for the inscription's design, rather than a careless mistakes or a miss-spellings.

13. The intradoses of the interior arches of the bays forming the mausoleum's octagonal structure are, as mentioned, reveted in wall painting medium. The surfaces of the intradoses and the walls forming them are covered with diverse compositions of *shamsas* with abstracted vegetal and epigraphic elements. These epigraphic elements are names of revered personages in the Islamic religion and they are repeated to form circular compositions. These compositions are enclosed into rectangular panels which are further framed by mentioned repeating inscription bands in Floriated Kufic with the name of the mausoleum's patron (inscription No. 12).

a.) Inscription compositions on Bay 1 (north-western Bay) and Bay 3 (south-western Bay) consist of the following epigraphic elements:

محمّد ,علی

Muhammad, ʿAli

These inscriptions are repeated sixteen times to form circular *shamsa* compositions in the central position of the vertical rectangular panels of the pointed arch niches' intradoses of the mausoleum's bays.

b.) Inscription compositions on Bay 5 (south-western Bay) are written in a specific form consisting of a mix between Kufic and *Naskh* styles. These epigraphic elements are repeated four times each. The inscriptions read:

[1553] Blair 1978, 59-60.

أبو بكر, عمر, عثمان, على, حسن, حسين

Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthman, ʿAli, Hasan, Husayn.

These are the names of the Four Orthodox Caliphs which are joined by the names of ʿAli's sons, Hasan and Husayn. According to Blair, the mixture of these names reflects the religious eclecticism of Ilkhans.[1554] Korn documents earlier use of combinations of these names in the Qurwa Friday mosque (Seljuq period carved stuccos); the mosque seems to have been a Sunnite monument.[1555] In the Ottoman period, the combination of these names becomes standard for medallions or transitional zones of mosque interiors.[1556]

d.) Inscriptions of the Uljaytu mausoleum's oratory

a.) The carved stucco dado, which tops the once glazed tile dado, consists of two inscriptions; the large inscription is written in *Naskh* to *Thuluth* style and the smaller inscription (b.) is the space filler in its upper register. Both inscriptions are placed against a richly carved and decorated vegetal element and scroll background.

The inscription is a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Mulk* (Qurʾan 67).[1557]

b.) The small Kufic inscription which is placed in the top section of the double inscription band is also a Qurʾanic excerpt, from Qurʾan *Surat al-Qiyama* (Qurʾan 75).[1558]

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature post-Ilkhanid stucco revetments.

Mausoleum and Revetments' Patronage

The fact that there is explicit and clear evidence indicating that the patronage of the mausoleum is of imperial status, is important for the understanding of the relationship between the architectural revetment repertoires and the types of endowments and statuses of their patrons. The imperial commission of the monument, by Sultan Uljaytu, was continued by Abu Saʿid, after his death. The wealth, which accumulated as a result of reforms enacted by Ghazan Khan, was employed to construct a monumental funerary complex. The availability of these funds was the pre-condition for the construction of a large monument and the two extensive decorative repertoires concentrated in the mausoleum's interior. The endowment enabled the architect to design a monumental building which required extensive amounts of construction material and specific construction technology. The core of the structure was constructed out of fired bricks, which was costly, compared to adobe brick or locally collected stone material. The available resources greatly impacted several aspects of the monument's architectural revetments.

[1554] Blair 1978, 60.
[1555] Korn 2020, 21.
[1556] *Ibid.*, 19.
[1557] Blair 1978, 60.
[1558] *Ibid.*

Architectural Revetments' Craftsmen Workshop(s)

The construction and decorative undertakings for the Uljaytu mausoleum required an extensive number of building experts, building labour force and craftsmen for production of its revetments. The Sultaniyya mausoleum presents the case where builders and craftsmen needed to be summoned to the site for the monumental project. It is however important to note that the mausoleum of Uljaytu was not the only a monument, but that the entire citadel structure needed to be built and other large monuments, such as the Congregational mosque of Sultaniyya were being constructed in parallel. It is therefore erroneous to perceive the mausoleum as the only exceptional constructive and decorative project of the Ilkhanid period and of Uljaytu's reign. It is likely that builders and craftsmen summoned to the settlement of Sultaniyya did not work on a single monument, but that they worked on a range of structures. It is therefore plausible that craftsmen from the entire Ilkhanid Empire and from abroad were summoned to decorate these buildings.

Exterior ceramic revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum and the first decorative phase in its interior, which features diverse types of ceramic and terracotta artistic techniques, were most likely translated to Sultaniyya from north-western Iran, where such revetments were frequently employed and produced, as indicated by earlier monuments, such as the Rabi-i Rashidi settlement and the mausoleum of Ghazan Khan. These craftsmen were likely mobile between Sultaniyya and Varamin, Natanz and Ushturjan, where they could have been involved in the production of revetments for the Varamin Friday mosque, (Cat. No. 28), the Imamzada Shah Husayn, the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12), the portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4; the *nisba* of the tile cutter's signature on the portal of this mosque refers to Tabriz) and other monuments. Perhaps the most closely related extant architectural revetment repertoire are the revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque and the Imamzada Shah Husayn.

The second stage revetments of the mausoleum's interior were produced in wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stucco media. Perhaps the best parallels for the aesthetics of the mausoleum's interior are the programmes of Rukniyya (1325) and Shamsiyya (1365) in Yazd (Cat. No. 29) and the wall painting repertoire of the domed mausoleum structure of the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30) from the end of the Ilkhanid period. The exceptional aspect of the second decorative stage at Sultaniyya is the sheer dimension of the decorative programme, and dimensions of its wall paintings, which required the use of stencils for their design transfer. Furthermore, the applied stucco elements of Sultaniyya, for example the teardrop medallions, assumed extensive dimensions. In addition to this, stuccos were attached to surfaces with nails, and their structure was reinforced through the insertion of textiles into their core, at the time of the moulding process. This revetment programme developed in suitable conditions; the imperial commission enabled an extensive number of craftsmen and extensive material resources for its production. The exact origin of these craftsmen is difficult to pinpoint. Upon the completion of the project, these well-trained craftsmen scattered across the Empire and worked on commissions of more limited dimensions, for which they employed related production technology, similar visual elements and shared aesthetics. This is especially true for the late Ilkhanid and Muzaffarid monuments of Yazd and Abarquh (Cat. Nos. 11, 29). The commission of the second decorative stage at Sultaniyya mausoleum therefore generated not only a

monumental revetment repertoire, but it also fostered the formation of an extensive number of craftsmen who produced later repertoires related to Sultaniyya.

f.) Monument Condition

The Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya was one of the major and well-known monuments already during the time when the first western travellers reached the Iranian lands. The monument was mentioned in numerous travelogues and its first photographic documentation was performed in the first decades of the twentieth century. Some of the earliest black and white photographs of the mausoleum's interior and exterior are provided by Robert Byron, who travelled in the Iranian territory in 1933-34.[1559] These photographs are of utmost significance for the understanding of the mausoleum's deteriorated state, its structure and revetments, prior to the restoration interventions.

Photographs by Byron document the exterior of the monument in its ruined state.[1560] The top areas of the double-shelled dome's exterior were deteriorated to the point that one could see the interior rib structures which acted as the structural mediator between the two dome shells. Only the lower portions of the dome shell were preserved and retained glazed architectural revetments featuring *banna'i* inscriptions and abstract geometric patterns. Of eight turrets encircling the mausoleum's dome, the majority of them were already ruined, or at least strongly dilapidated. The edges of the octagonal structure's supporting walls were also partially ruined, and its ornamental muqarnas tiers with glazed revetments were damaged. The external gallery was in a good state of preservation along with the supporting wall structures. The oratory was damaged. One of Byron's photographs documents the stucco revetments in the area of the main entrance opening of the mausoleum.[1561] This photograph illustrates the deteriorated state of the stuccos and it testifies that they were not subsequently modified or altered by restoration interventions. Byron documented the interior of the core of the mausoleum and his photographs document the state of the interior revetments prior to the large-scale conservation interventions in the 1970s, by the Italian team, which resulted in the removal of the second decorative layer of revetments on the lower elevations of the monument's interior.[1562] These images indicate that the second decorative layer of the mausoleum's revetments was in a well preserved state and that it also comprised the production of a dado area consisting of glazed tiles and the monumental inscription frieze topping it, produced out of partially moulded stuccos on plaster support. One of the images is especially significant; it documents the interior of the dome structure and its transitional zone.[1563] The photograph is one of the few photographic documentations of this part of the monument, which precedes the installation of the scaffolding in its interior. Furthermore, this image illustrates that the mausoleum's architectural structure was in a damaged state; a large crack is visible in the dome's structure, which continues into the supporting walls. In sum, although the majority of the mausoleum's architectural revetments

[1559] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1560] See IMG08674; IMG08675 at http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1561] See IMG08680 at http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1562] See IMG08681; IMG08682; IMG08683; IMG08684; IMG08685 at http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).
[1563] See IMG08684 at http://www.archnet.org/sites/1671 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).

were in a good state of preservation at the time of Byron's visit to Sultaniyya, the monument's architectural structure was showing signs of decay and structural issues.

The 1970s conservation interventions on the Uljaytu mausoleum were carried out in the framework of the Italo-Iranian International cooperation in the field of Islamic architecture and archaeology.[1564] The project of Uljaytu mausoleum's restoration was led by Marco Brambilla. It comprised the first scientific research of the monument and its architectural context, and restoration interventions on its architectural structure and decorative programmes. This international team consisted of researchers focusing on the mausoleum's studies, and architects and restorers who took decisions concerning the conservation interventions on the monument. The scaffolding system was installed in the mausoleum's interior for conservation interventions and studies of its architectural revetments, but it has not been removed since. These conservation interventions began with urgent repairs of the mausoleum's structure. On the exterior, the structural damage to the building was repaired, and its original architectural revetments were re-attached to the surfaces. Furthermore, the area of the dome's exterior was repaired and new revetments were produced to cover the dome and the surrounding surfaces in order to protect them from atmospheric agents.

Extensive conservation interventions were performed on the mausoleum's architectural revetment programme, especially on the two layers of revetments in its interior. At the time of the beginning of these interventions, it was known that the second layer covers earlier glazed revetments. For this purpose, small soundings comprising the removal of the second decorative layer were performed across the interior surfaces of the mausoleum's core in order to determine the extent of the first decorative layer. Subsequently, two activities took place in parallel; a large scale cleaning campaign of the second layer revetments, and some five hundred pieces of these revetments in wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos were detached from the mausoleum's surfaces, in order to uncover the first decorative layer in glazed medium.

The removal of the second decorative layer resulted in the discovery of the first decorative layer which had to be cleaned, consolidated and studied. The removal was performed in a selective manner, but it altered the second decorative layer and rendered its visual reading challenging. Cleaning, consolidation and visual integration with partial over-painting of wall painting revetments began to be performed. Further interventions on applied moulded stuccos, such as the monumental teardrop medallions at the springing of the dome and the stuccos of the interior transitional zone, were performed in a selective manner to indicate the differences between the cleaned and restored revetments and those in degraded condition.

These interventions were interrupted by the onset of the Iranian Revolution, when the Italian team had to leave the site. Continuation of conservation interventions after the Iranian Islamic revolution proceeded at a slower pace and at a more reduced scale. Characteristics of these interventions were strongly impacted by the lack of funds for conservation interventions. Experts of conservation, among them the staff of the monument and the local ICHHTO organization, worked on the already installed scaffolding and mainly focused on repairs to the

[1564] Information concerning these restoration intervention has been personally communicated to the author of the research by Marco Brambilla. Photographic documentation of the interventions is found on: https://sultaniyya.org/?page_id=33 (Last Accessed: January 5, 2021).

architectural revetments of the mausoleum's interior and exterior.[1565] Moreover, the proximities of the mausoleum began to be excavated. Sometime later, a decision was taken, to remove the dwelling structures from the citadel's site and to excavate the citadel area. These excavations were performed in a sporadic manner and without systematic documentation. They nevertheless brought to light the remains of the citadel's walls and of some other structures within the citadel, such as the hammam, the caravanserai and the entrance gates. The ICHHTO interventions on the mausoleum's revetments comprise the consolidation of the second decorative layer, its cleaning and overpainting of the wall painting designs. The integrations of missing parts of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos have also been performed, but the question of their original appearance and polychromy have not been resolved. These interventions are of limited scale. Consequently, only a few portions of the second decorative repertoire in the mausoleum's interior are adequately conserved and the majority of the second phase revetments still requires appropriate treatment. The situation is at its direst in the dome area, above the monumental teardrop medallions. More consistent and large-scale conservation interventions would be an appropriate step to undertake. This step would however need to follow more fundamental interventions for the consolidation and integration of the mausoleum's structure and scientific excavations of the citadel and other sites in the mausoleum's proximities. The main barrier at achieving this goal, which is most necessary for the preservation of the given UNESCO World Heritage Site, may be the lack of funding for such large-scale interventions and it would be reasonable to consider the possibility of an international project aiming at the preservation of the Uljaytu mausoleum and the citadel.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

Several visits to the site of the Uljaytu mausoleum and the citadel of Sultaniyya allowed for a discussion and re-examination of one of the most significant Ilkhanid monuments. The research and examination of the mausoleum were based on existing works by Blair, Brambilla and Naiemi; new hypotheses concerning its structure and decorative repertoire(s) are offered built on the summaries of the most important findings. The first group of evidence consists of observations of the remains of the cut off scaffolding which was embedded in the mausoleum's structure. The evidence from the lower elevations showed that the scaffolding remains were encompassed by two layers of decoration, suggesting that the same scaffolding was employed for both decorative repertoires, phase one and phase two, and that thus there never was a considerable break between the production of the two decorative programmes. The discussion of the architectural revetments, their media and the decorative logic, in the mausoleum's oratory, confirmed that the oratory was an addition and that it was decorated during the second decorative intervention.

Further observations of the composition and design logic behind the production of the wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos of the transitional zone and at the springing of the dome area, allowed a new hypothesis concerning the decorative repertoire of dome's interior surfaces to be proposed. Observations of the state and design of the wall painting composition remains revealed the evidence of nails and perforations of the plaster surface,

[1565] Information on these restoration interventions has been communicated personally by Ms Askari, the member of the ICHHTO Sultaniyya, to the author of the research work.

indicating that the interior of the dome was originally decorated in both, wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stucco media, rather than only wall painting. The research also postulates the modality of production of the architectural revetments in the interior of the double-dome shell. The dome form was an innovation of its time and it has been considered that the revetments could have been applied on the interior dome surface with the aid of moulds for the stuccos rather than the dome. The examination of the revetments' remains in the dome area revealed that such mechanisms (dome moulds) were not needed for the production of the revetment repertoire in question. Existing studies of the design of revetments in the dome areas indicate that the circular design can be broken down into small units, which were repeated across the surface of the dome's interior. These decorative units were transferred onto the architectural surfaces of the dome's interior, similar to the mausoleum's wall paintings, with the aid of stencils, on a 1:1 scale. Importantly, observations of the wall painting remains in the dome area, revealed evidence of there having been a plan to complete wall paintings by application of applied moulded stuccos into designated spaces of the wall painting composition. It has therefore been discovered that the wall painting in the mausoleum's dome area is most likely incomplete and that its decoration was interrupted by the death of the mausoleum's patron.

Further important discoveries comprise the relation between glazed revetments produced in the first phase of decoration, especially on the exterior surfaces of the southern passage or entrance opening into the mausoleum. These revetments in light and dark blue and occasionally terracotta elements, feature star, octagon and other geometric patterns. Their artistic technique, dimensions, design and ornamental motifs are directly related to the glazed revetments of the entrance portal, the *qibla iwan* and the interior of the dome hall of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) and the Imamzada Shah Husayn in Varamin. Upon the interruption of the first decorative phase at Sultaniyya, some of the craftsmen migrated to Varamin for work there. Other craftsmen, participated in production of decorative programmes at Bistam, Natanz and Ushturjan, but these monuments are less closely related to the Sultaniyya mausoleum, compared to monuments in Varamin. The craftsmen responsible for the second decorative stage in wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, most likely migrated to the area of Yazd and Abarquh to produce the decorative repertoires on the late Ilkhanid and Muzaffarid monuments (Cat. Nos. 11, 29). Finally, the research addresses the question of the reasons for the redecoration of the mausoleum's interior. The analysis of the revetments, and their ornamental and epigraphic content, enabled the hypothesis recently revisited by Blair proposes as the most likely scenario. The redecoration of the mausoleum did not occur due to the supposed change of the mausoleum's function, which lacks solid evidence; the reason for the redecoration of the monument was Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith. Similar cases of redecoration motivations have also been documented in several other Ilkhanid monuments and they therefore reflect a common practices triggered by Uljaytu's change of faith. It has been established that the imperial status of the patron reflected itself not in the quality of the revetments, but in the size of the mausoleum's architectural structure and the extent of its architectural revetment programme(s).

h.) Monument Bibliography: Blair 1986c; Blair 1987; Sims 1988; Blair 2014, 112-171; Brambilla 2012; Naiemi 2020; Hamzelu 2002; Lockart and Gaeta 1972; Lockart 1973; Yurdaydın 1965, 283-286; Yurdaydın 1976.

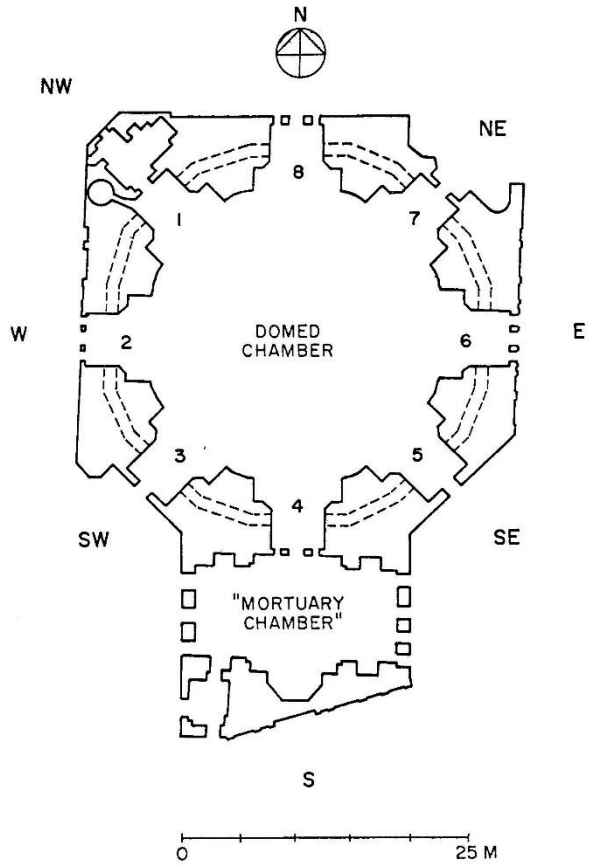


Figure 280: Ground plan of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (After Blair 1987, 80).



Figure 281: Exterior of Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya, view from south-west.



Figure 282: Carved stuccos of the northern passage opening which might have connected the core of the mausoleum with other adjacent, no longer extant, structures.



Figure 283: Detail of carved stucco and terracotta revetments on the ceiling of the mausoleum's external gallery.



Figure 284: First decorative phase revetments in terracotta and glazed elements in the lower portions of Bay 6.



Figure 285: Remains of carved stucco and glazed revetments featuring five-pointed star geometric designs. These revetments are closely related to those of the entrance portal of the Varamin Friday mosque.



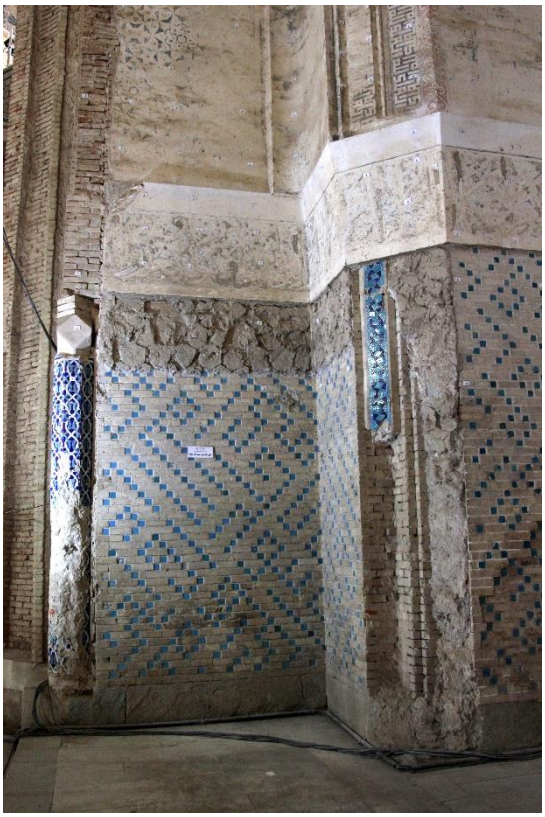
Figure 286: Detail of the monumental double carved stucco inscription (phase two), which ran along the top edges of the dado area in mausoleum's oratory.



Figure 287: Detailed view of the muqarnas hood in the first storey gallery area of mausoleum's core, showing the first phase of the revetments in glazed and terracotta media and the second phase revetments in applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, which were attached to the surfaces with the aid of linen textiles and iron nails (Bay 1).



Figure 289: Detail of remains of the scaffolding wood, which penetrates through two layers of revetments, indicating that the same scaffolding was employed for the production of the first and the second decorative phases of the mausoleum octagonal structure's interior (western side).





Figures 290 and 291: Details of revetments in the octagonal core of the Uljaytu mausoleum. Left: remains of adhesion mortar for octagonal tiles of the second phase covering the *banna'i* inscriptions of the first phase and tile mosaic columns of the second phase. Right: detail of the design outline for wall paintings of the second decorative stage.



Figure 292: The second decorative layer was removed from the surfaces of the mausoleum, to show the ceramic revetments underneath it. The photograph also shows the holes from the scaffolding: they are placed in regular intervals and do not obstruct the revetment design.



Figure 293: Detail of the two layers of revetments in the area above the dado, showing the second phase applied moulded stuccos and wall paintings.



Figure 294: Detail of wall painting revetments (second phase): the wall paintings feature diverse inscription styles and compositions of epigraphic and vegetal elements, which were multiplied on architectural surfaces of the mausoleum by stencils.



Figure 295: Detail showing diverse inscription styles of wall paintings and colour combinations of the second decorative stage.



Figure 296: Detail of applied moulded stucco spandrel design (western side). These stuccos display decorative patterns closely related to the revetments in the interior of the mausoleum of the Madrasa Shamsiyya, which were likely produced by the same craftsmen upon completion of works at Sultaniyya.



Figure 297: Detail of the wall painting inscription with the repetition of the name of the mausoleum's patron (Sultan Muhammad Uljaytu), provides evidence confirming that the mausoleum's wall paintings were produced with the aid of stencils for transfer design (After Blair).



Figure 298: The interior of the transitional zone and the dome of the Uljaytu mausoleum, around 1936. Robert Byron (photographer), Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, Image ID: IMG08684.



Figure 299: View of the wall painting and applied moulded stuccos between the bay niches and the springing of the dome. The monumental *Thuluth* and Kufic inscription band was restored recently (second decorative phase).



Figure 300: Detail of the transitional zone muqarnas cells reveted with wall paintings and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos (second decorative phase). The remains of the scaffolding are visible and the revetment design is irregular, compared to the placement of the scaffolding, indicating that the scaffolding was already in place at the time of the second decorative intervention.



Figure 301: The area at the springing of the interior dome of the Uljaytu mausoleum's octagonal core, with monumental teardrop medallions produced in applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, with additions of wall paintings.



Figure 302: Detail of a gilded teardrop medallion in the dome springing area of the mausoleum: the medallion design was outlined with red and subsequently, it was gilded with gold leaf.



Figure 303: Detail of remains of wall painting and nails and textiles of the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos for the revetments in the core of the Uljaytu mausoleum's dome shell interior.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 28

Monument Name: Varamin Friday mosque

Figs. 304-318.

Associated Names: the most frequently employed name for the monument is the Congregational mosque of Varamin. Different spellings are employed for it: the Masjid-i Jamiʿi Varāmīn,[1566] the Masjid-e Jame Waramin; the Masjed-e Jameh; the Friday mosque of Waramin and the Friday mosque of Veramin.[1567]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in two phases (phase one: Ilkhanid construction of the monument and the decoration of *iwan*s; phase two: Ilkhanid decoration of the domed prayer hall) with subsequent Timurid modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): four-*iwan* mosque, with domed prayer hall, the courtyard and the entrance portal.

Location: city of Varamin; 45 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Teheran.

GPS location of the monument: 35.3220811 N; 51.641411 E.

Monument Investigation: July 22, 2014; December 19, 2018; February 10, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Varamin was strategically located on one of the main communication routes of the Ilkhanid era which stretched between eastern and western Iran.[1568] These routes connected Tabriz and Sultaniyya with the regions of Qumis and Khurasan. Varamin is located on the fertile Varamin plain and it was an important agricultural centre in medieval period; it was renowned for the production of cotton, fruits and corn.[1569] The settlement flourished after the Mongol invasion and the sack of Rayy in 1220.[1570] In the Ilkhanid period, Varamin was transformed from a village into the provincial capital of Rayy. Mustawfi reports that its population was predominantly Shiʿite.[1571] The Ilkhanid period was the most significant moment in Varamin's history and signs of its decline are reported by Clavijo in Timurid times.

[1566] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1567] http://www.archnet.org/sites/1686 (Last Accessed: December 14, 2020).
[1568] Summary from: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/waramin-COM_1338?s.num=112&s.start=100 (Last Accessed: December 14, 2020).
[1569] Blair 2016, 1.
[1570] *Ibid.*
[1571] *Ibid.*, 2.

Background

The Varamin Friday mosque is perhaps the most important Ilkhanid monument of Varamin. Other monuments, such as the Imamzada Yahya, the ʿAlaʾ al-Din tomb tower, the Shrine of Kawkab al-Din and the Imamzada Shah Husayn, testify to the significance of the settlement in the Ilkhanid period. The monumental dimensions of the congregational mosque reflect the size of the settlement in the Ilkhanid period which was an important trade and agricultural centre. The Friday mosque of Varamin was first studied by Friedrich Sarre, who published its first ground plan and some studies of the mosque's architectural revetments.[1572] Further significant contributions comprise Kratchkovskaya's research of the mosque's epigraphic programme.[1573] The monument is also discussed by Wilber and more recently by Blair.[1574]

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 303-304, 308.

The mosque's architectural structure is considered one of the best examples of a courtyard mosque with a domed prayer hall and four *iwan*s arranged around its courtyard. This ground plan is not an Ilkhanid invention; it was well developed in the Seljuq period. The mosque is however the only well preserved Ilkhanid period building with this type of plan. Although the mosque was constructed in a single construction campaign, it was subsequently redecorated. The *qibla iwan* retains two layers of architectural revetments. Moreover, the stuccos of the *qibla* wall in the mosque's domed prayer hall were refurbished in the post-Ilkhanid period. Historic inscriptions of the mosque provide dates for the understanding of its decorative and constructive chronology. The earliest inscription on the entrance portal is dated 1322 and the inscription with the date 1325 is located in the domed hall, at the end of the monumental carved stucco inscription band. Further inscriptions on the *qibla iwan* mention Timurid interventions on the mosque.[1575]

Construction Phases

The mosque is regular in ground plan and was constructed in a large-scale construction campaign. Some parts of the mosque, especially the *qibla* area, were redecorated soon after the building's construction concluded. The mosque is an entirely Ilkhanid monument which was repaired in the Timurid era. The mosque was in ruins at the beginning of the twentieth century, as photographic documentation by Robert Byron from the 1930s illustrates.[1576] Numerous conservation interventions on the monument were performed in order to reconstruct its missing parts and to consolidate its revetments.

Phase One - The Ilkhanid Varamin Mosque (1322-1325-26)

The *Naskh* inscription on the mosque's entrance portal states that the mosque was constructed during the reign of Abu Saʿid and that its patron was Muhammad ibn-i Muhammad Mansur al-

[1572] Sarre 1910, 59-64.
[1573] Kratchkovskaya 1931.
[1574] Wilber 1955, 158-159; Blair 2016.
[1575] The exact characteristics of these interventions are difficult to comprehend.
[1576] See photographs by Byron: http://www.archnet.org/sites/1686 (Last Accessed: December 14, 2020).

Quhadi. Pickett suggests the identity of the patron as the Ilkhanid official ʿIzz al-Din Quhadi. The inscription also contains the date of the mosque's construction: 1322. This inscription was badly ruined and only fragments of it remain.[1577] The first construction stage of the mosque likely began during the reign of Abu Saʿid, if not earlier. The entire monument was constructed out of fired bricks to form its ground plan. The first phase of the mosque's construction comprised application of ceramic revetments on its entrance portal and the *qibla iwan*. The *qibla iwan* was further decorated with terracotta revetments, fragments of which remain on its damaged surfaces. Further glazed revetments applied in this intervention cover the majority of the supporting walls of the mosque's domed prayer hall.

The second phase of interventions comprises the decorative campaign aiming at the application of stucco revetments in its domed prayer hall. This intervention is dated 1325-26, as stated in the monumental stucco inscription band, which runs along the top edges of the prayer hall's supporting walls. The decorative intervention of 1325-26 should be considered a continuation of the earliest phase of the mosque (dated 1322). The comparison of the dates of these two historic inscriptions also provides indicative information concerning the time necessary for the construction of the mosque, which amounts to few years. The mosque currently does not retain a minaret.

Post-Ilkhanid Modifications of the Mosque

Two historic inscriptions inform about post-Ilkhanid interventions on the mosque. These inscriptions are located on the mosque's *qibla iwan* and in its domed prayer hall. One inscription is dated 1418-19 and the other one 1446-47. The 1418-19 date is contained in the historic inscription on one of the two stucco slabs which were applied on the surfaces of the mosque's *qibla iwan*. This inscription states that the undertakings took place during the reign of Shah Rukh and that the patron of the interventions was an Amir Ghiyas al-Din Yusuf Khwaja. Closer observations of the *qibla iwan*'s revetments reveal damages and in some parts, another layer of terracotta decoration under them. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the *qibla iwan* was redecorated, at least partially, in 1418-19. In the interior of the domed prayer hall, the stucco panels on the left-hand side of the mihrab may be additions post-dating the mihrab's completion; they can be dated 1418-19 or 1446-47. In sum, post-Ilkhanid interventions at the Varamin Friday mosque seem not to have impacted its architectural structure, but its decorative repertoire.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The mosque features the only Ilkhanid example of a regular four-*iwan* plan (Fig. 303). The plan of the current mosque resembles the original, but it is not entirely symmetric, which might be due to the reconstruction of the missing parts of its structure.

The core of the monument is presented by the central domed prayer hall in the *qibla* area. This hall is preceded by the *qibla iwan*, which is larger than the other three *iwan*s. The domed prayer hall is flanked by lateral prayer spaces, which form the mosque's *qibla* section. The eastern side of the mosque (the original part of the structure) comprises three bays with three rows of spaces.

[1577] For a more complete drawing of the inscription and for its discussion see Kratchkovskaya 1931, 48-51.

The mosque's structure is carried by pointed arch arcades. The bay flanking the prayer hall is covered by cross vaults and the remote bays are covered by barrel vaults. The western side, which was rebuilt recently, features only two bays, instead of three. The lateral *iwan*s are smaller in size, compared to the *qibla iwan*. The northern part comprises the entrance portal, which is formed by a pointed arch; the façade of the mosque is divided into two tiers.[1578] The entrance portal is connected with the mosque's northern *iwan* and the courtyard by a corridor, which functions as the main access to the interior. The side prayer spaces, which flank the *iwan,* are covered with cross vaults and are carried by pointed arches. In sum, the mosque's western side was reconstructed and it could have been reduced in dimension through this rebuilding process.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The mosque's most elevated part is presented by the dome of the main prayer hall which is the focal space of the mosque. The next elevated points are its entrance portal and the northern and the *qibla iwan*. These architectural elements feature more extensive dimensions and they visually accentuate the mosque's north-south axis and its direction to Mecca.

The mosque was constructed in a manner for its external surfaces of supporting walls to be organized in balanced façades. The most elaborate façade is on its northern side, where the entrance portal is situated. The portal is formed by a pointed arch and it is divided into two registers of blind niches. The portal protrudes from the supporting wall's plain surface and it is elevated, compared to the height of the supporting walls. The supporting walls of the northern side are divided into two registers which are filled with blind niches. A similar logic is observed on the façades of eastern and western supporting walls. There, the *iwan*s functioned as side entrances into the mosque and their rear sides were open. Pointed arch niches of supporting walls of the mosque's lateral sides, combined with the side entrance portals, created a steady and regular rhythm of curved and straight lines and rendered these façades visually appealing. The same logic was also employed for the interior of the courtyard, where its *qibla* side is accentuated by the *qibla iwan* divided into two tiers and flanked by two floors of pointed arch arcades. The façade of the *qibla iwan* therefore echoes the façade of the mosque's entrance portal and provides for the uniformity of the mosque's visual appearance.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

Studies and observations of the mosque's ground plan and its spaces indicate that the function of the monument was to serve the local congregation.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The chronology of production of the Varamin Friday mosque's architectural revetments is challenging to comprehend, because they were produced in several phases. The revetments of the entrance portal comprise a historic inscription with the date 1322 which allows for their secure dating. The similarity of the artistic techniques and medium indicates that the revetments of the upper portions of the *qibla iwan* should also be dated 1322. The *qibla iwan* was

[1578] The northern supporting wall and the façade of the mosque were damaged and subsequently reconstructed.

subsequently redecorated, likely in the Timurid period. This is attested by two stucco plaques with the historic inscription dated 1418-19. The date for the domed prayer hall's stucco decorative programme is contained on the monumental inscription band, which runs along the top edges of its supporting walls: 1325-26. The monumental stucco mihrab and the stucco and ceramic decoration on the prayer hall's supporting walls and side passage areas are contemporary to the monumental inscription. Some Timurid additions could have been made to the *qibla* wall on the left-hand side of the mihrab. The dome of the prayer hall may be Ilkhanid, but it could also be a Timurid restoration. Stucco bands and plugs in lateral prayer spaces should be dated to 1322-1326; they also contain a signature of the stucco master, responsible for the production of these stuccos.

Interior Revetments

The Domed Prayer Hall

Figs. 311-313.

The domed prayer hall's interior is decorated with architectural revetments which can be divided into two large groups: ceramic revetments of the transitional zones and pointed arch passages, and carved stucco revetments. The interior of the dome is decorated with medallions of Square Kufic inscriptions which are arranged into a radial pattern. The centre of the dome features a strapwork roundel with a geometrical composition. The revetments of the dome were heavily restored before the 1970s and towards the end of the twentieth century. The transitional zone consists of a sixteen-sided drum with window openings and blind niches with their spandrels decorated in carved stucco. The transitional zone below the drum consists of arched elements with three tiers of muqarnas decoration and blind niches between them. The muqarnas is plain and the spandrels of pointed arches are decorated with the restored revetments featuring diverse geometric patterns. The surfaces of blind niches have been decorated by arranging fired bricks into diverse abstract patterns.

The square area of the prayer hall is decorated with stuccos and terracotta, and glazed revetments. The *qibla* wall features the monumental stucco mihrab, which was badly damaged, and of which only the upper portion remains. Detailed epigraphic and palaeographic analysis of the mihrab and other revetments, by Kratchkovskaya, confirm that these stuccos and the mihrab are the work of Ilkhanid craftsmen.[1579] The mihrab is flanked by a set of blind niches which contain smaller interior niches. The surface of the supporting walls is embellished with a chequered pattern carved out of a stucco layer, which features cross-shaped arrangements resembling abstract stucco plugs. The monumental stucco inscription band with the date of completion (1325-26) runs along the top edges of the supporting walls. The side supporting walls contain pairs of passages to the lateral prayer spaces. The pointed arch passages are embellished by framing inscriptions in Kufic style produced with terracotta and glazed elements. These framing inscriptions are formed with terracotta cut to resemble inscriptions which are set against a background of six-pointed star and hexagonal patterns of tile mosaic consisting of light and dark blue glazed elements. Spandrels of these pointed arches are

[1579] Kratchkovskaya 1931, 54-58.

decorated with carved stuccos which can be related to the stucco band in the lateral payer hall. They were recently restored.

The stucco craftsmen worked side by side with ceramic experts in order to decorate the domed prayer hall of Varamin Friday mosque. Larger surfaces of the domed hall were covered with stucco, but ceramic revetments were employed more selectively to accentuate architectural forms and elements of the hall. The use of ceramic revetments is restricted to embellishment and accentuation of pointed arch forms, where ceramics form framing inscription bands and spandrels. Logically, stucco, which was lighter and easier to work with, was used for the area of the dome and on the most elevated portions of the transitional zones. Priority is given to stucco on the *qibla* wall, perhaps because it was easier to produce a mihrab out of this medium and, as customary, also the monumental inscription which runs above the mihrab. The use of carved stucco medium was conditioned by pragmatic reasons, but it also resulted in the primacy of the stucco medium over tiles, in the given repertoire. The juxtaposition of the brightly coloured mihrab and the stuccos to the cold tones of the ceramic revetments rendered the hall vibrant.[1580] The Varamin prayer hall however best illustrates the craftsmen's selectiveness in the use of these two decorative media.

The Dome

Fig. 312.

The centre of the dome's interior is decorated with a circular medallion produced out of ceramic revetments. The radial star-derived geometrical design departs from the centre of the medallion, and it translates into a geometrical radial grid into which star elements are inserted. The medallion is framed with a carved stucco band of repeating incised abstract patterns. Fired bricks of the dome structure are arranged by an interior rib system into a pattern of kite-like forms, which grow in size as the diameter of the dome increases. These fired brick patterns constitute the background of the dome's revetment repertoire, which is created with Square Kufic medallions. These medallions seem to have been produced through the carving of stuccos; they are polychrome, and they display combinations of white inscriptions set against light blue or red background. A thin band of repeating abstract floral ornaments in carved stucco runs along the dome's perimeter.

The Transitional Zone

Fig. 311.

The transitional zone at the Friday mosque of the Varamin prayer hall consists of two areas: the lower area with transitional elements topping the square prayer hall and the upper drum area. The corners of the square prayer hall are topped by pointed arches, which comprise three-tiered muqarnas decoration, composed out of large cells. These arched muqarnas structures are interrupted by blind niches carried by pointed arches. Fired bricks, which constitute the blind niches, were placed in different directions in order to make a chequered decoration. This arrangement of muqarnas arches and blind niches translates in its upper part into the sixteen-

[1580] Compare to the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) or the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum in Linjan (Cat. No. 2).

sided drum with window openings and squinch-like blind niches. The spandrels of the blind niches and pointed arch muqarnas elements contain revetments featuring strapwork. These revetments comprise a background pattern of recessed eight-pointed star designs produced with light and dark blue glazed elements and framed by protruding geometrical composition in terracotta elements, which features cross-like and octagonal patterns. The use of strapwork for the spandrels accentuated the architectural form of the domed hall's transitional elements. The use of the same artistic medium for the pointed arch passages of supporting walls, spandrels of transitional elements, and for the circular medallion of the drum, determined a balanced appearance of prayer hall's interior.

The Monumental Inscription Band

Fig. 317.

The monumental inscription band runs along the top edges of the domed prayer hall's supporting walls. The inscription is written in *Naskh* style; it begins with the *Basmala* and it continues with a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jumʿa* (Qurʾan, 62:1-7). The end of the inscription contains the date of its completion, in numbers: 1325-26. This is an exception, because Ilkhanid stucco inscriptions would usually contain dates expressed in words.

The inscription band consists of two bands: the lower monumental band contains the inscription and it is topped by a narrow band of repeating floral ornamentation set against a background of abstract patterns. This band is slightly inclined and it creates the impression of a concave inscription band. The inscription band is partially covered by the top portions of the stucco mihrab, which indicates that the inscription was in place at the time of the mihrab installation. This large inscription features *Naskh* style with some diacritical marks and partial vocalization. Kratchkovskaya remarks that this inscription is similar to the dated inscription on the mosque's main entrance portal.[1581] The inscription also displays characteristics similar to the monumental inscription band which frames the interior of the *qibla iwan* from three sides. The inscription background consists of floral scrolls which feature accentuated circular forms and minutely carved background filled with diverse vegetal ornaments. Some leaf elements and abstracted palmettes of the background have been produced as applied protruding elements; they accentuate the plasticity of the inscription band's relief. Their even distribution aids at creating a steady rhythm of the inscription band's relief variations. The inscription band is produced with a combination of diverse artistic techniques which comprise carving of a stucco relief out of at least two layers and the application of protruding elements.[1582]

The Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 312, 314-316, 318.

The stucco mihrab of the Varamin Friday mosque is installed in the centre of the domed hall's *qibla* wall and it covers most of its architectural surfaces. Photographs by Robert Byron from the 1930s document the mihrab's damaged state. The mihrab's central part comprises a rather

[1581] Kratchkovskaya 1931, 52-53.
[1582] Compare to the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Marand Friday mosque (Cat. No. 22).

high internal niche formed by a pointed arch. Only the upper portions of the niche's hood retain their stucco decoration. The niche was flanked by a pair of stucco columns which are no longer extant. The exterior outline of the pointed arch is framed by the inscription band in Kufic style. The spandrels of the pointed arch are rather large and they are connected to each other. The described structure is framed by a narrow band of repeating floral ornamentation and by a monumental stucco band, which contains a composition of two inscriptions. This framing band is further framed by a large stucco panel from three sides which displays a unique design. The top horizontal panel contains lateral bands which consist of identical sets of abstract floral ornamentation. The stuccos of the panel thus add to its size and monumentality, but they are also monotonous. The mihrab is flanked on its left by two stucco panels, which are framed by a thin Kufic inscription and are likely a later addition to the mihrab.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The remaining stuccos of the mihrab's interior niche lunette display a masterly carved relief. It features a symmetrical composition of palmette, leaf and floral scroll elements. These ornamental elements are heavily perforated with diverse types of stucco perforation and juxtaposed to circular forms of scrolls, which retain flat relief without perforation. The lunette of the niche is framed by the damaged inscription band with Qurʾanic excerpts (*Surat al-Jinn*, 72:18-19) in Kufic style. Kratchkovskaya observes that forms of some letters resemble the other inscriptions of the mihrab, but some other letters assume slightly distinct forms.[1583] The inscription is placed against the background which consists of a lower band with floral scrolls and an upper band of repeating floral elements. These spandrels feature symmetric vegetal element compositions distributed on several visual planes of the deep stucco relief. The lower parts of the mihrab's spandrels are damaged, but they retain most of the stucco relief in their cores. Narrow bands of abstract repeating geometric and floral elements ornamentation frame these spandrels. The described structure is framed by the monumental double inscription band.

The monumental framing inscription band displays masterly developed epigraphic elements and complex stucco carving art. The inscription consists of a large Knotted Kufic inscription with Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:80) set against a floral scroll background. Its top area is filled by the smaller Kufic inscription which features Qurʾanic quotations (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:2-4). The inscription band is composed out of three visual planes: its background is recessed, and it comprises floral ornament compositions, but the most visible element is the Knotted Kufic inscription, which is placed in the foreground; the small Kufic inscription is also produced on the same plane as the Knotted Kufic inscription.[1584] These three variations of visual planes render the inscription band dynamic. The small Kufic inscription of the band presents a less complex design, plainer relief and a background of unassuming floral scrolls. The background repertoire of the Knotted Kufic inscription consists of rich compositions of floral scrolls and palmette ornamentation. The described structure is framed by the large tripartite

[1583] Kratchkovskaya 1931, 34.

[1584] The use of edge incision is also documented on monumental framing inscriptions of the mihrabs or domed chambers at the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the mihrab of the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3).

framing panel, which features repeating vertical bands of symmetrical palmette and vegetal compositions. The panel and its stuccos retain extensive traces of green and red.

In sum, shared characteristics of ornamentation vocabulary, related features of epigraphic elements, similar selection of artistic techniques and approach to stucco carving suggest that the stucco mihrab was produced in a single decorative phase. Two stucco panels flank the mihrab on the left-hand side and they require more detailed attention for the understanding of their relationship to the mihrab.

The Two Stucco Panels on the Left-Hand Side of the Mihrab

These two panels are positioned in an asymmetrical manner and there are no corresponding panels on the mihrab's right-hand side. These two panels may be the results of the *qibla* wall revetments and structure repairs. The upper stucco panel resembles the framing stucco panel of the mihrab: it retains related ornamental composition and identical artistic techniques were employed for its production. The lower stucco panel is entirely different from the mosque's other stuccos. This panel comprises a composition consisting of flower blossom elements which does not find parallels in any Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. Both panels are framed by narrow bands with Kufic inscriptions (*Surat al-Rum*, 30:3;[1585] *Surat al-Israʾ*, 17:111), which, according to Kratchkovskaya, resemble mihrab's inscriptions.[1586] Differently from the mihrab inscription bands, these inscriptions do not display any background scrolls or other ornamentation; they are set against a plain background. They could be works post-dating the mihrab's production. Until further evidence emerges, most arguments are in favour of the hypothesis that the two panels were an afterthought to the decorative programme of the domed prayer hall.

Ceramic Revetments Framing the Lateral Passages

Fig. 313.

The two supporting walls of the domed prayer hall, which flank the *qibla* wall, comprise two passages each. These passages are formed by pointed arches. Architectural revetments of supporting walls are arranged in the following manner: the pointed arches are topped by pairs of stucco spandrels, and they are framed by glazed revetment inscriptions. The background of the repertoire and surfaces of the supporting walls are decorated with stucco plugs. The ceramic revetment inscriptions are inserted into designated spaces, which were created for them at the time of the prayer hall's construction, which suggests that they date to 1325-26. All four framing inscription bands feature Kufic style, with Qurʾanic excerpts (*Surat al-Insan*, 76:1-4; 76:7-9; 76:12-15; 76:19-21). Their inscription style is characterized by elongated letter shafts which end in floriated endings. One of the inscriptions might contain an emblem or signature of its craftsmen, which was however not deciphered. The inscription bands are produced with a combination of terracotta and glazed elements and tile mosaic. Kufic inscriptions protrude from the revetment relief, and they are produced out of terracotta. They are set against a

[1585] This is a rarely employed Qurʾanic excerpt in Ilkhanid stucco revetments.
[1586] Kratchkovskaya 1931, 34.

background of tile mosaic with six-pointed stars and hexagons produced out of light and dark blue glazed elements.[1587]

Stucco Plugs

Fig. 313.

Stucco plugs are located on all four supporting walls of the domed prayer hall, and they function as the background of its decorative repertoire. The damaged parts of the wall structures demonstrate how these revetments were produced. At the time of the supporting walls' construction, the fired bricks of the architectural structures were already placed to form the ornamental patterns and to create space for the layers of plaster to produce stucco plugs. Subsequently, the fired bricks were entirely covered with a layer of plaster, which was incised to form diverse grids and forms for the carving of the stucco plugs. The most common ornamental pattern consists of stucco plug elements attached to each other to form angular bands, which are arranged to form zig-zag patterns. In some other cases, the revetments feature cross-form compositions produced out of isolated stucco plugs combined with attached arrangements of plugs. The repetitive nature of these patterns and their shallow relief rendered them less visible and determined their role as the background of the decorative repertoire.

Other Stucco Revetments

The passages on the supporting walls of the domed prayer hall contain carved stucco spandrels. These stuccos feature shallow reliefs. All spandrels display symmetrical and mirrored compositions of palmette and leaf ornamentation. Some spandrels, for examples, those topping the main entrance into the domed prayer hall, also contain medallions with epigraphic elements (*Allah, Muhammad, ʿAli*). These spandrels are decorated with the related stucco technique and in a manner similar to the blind niches and window openings of the domed hall's drum zone. The related use of stucco has also been documented in the near-by Imamzada Yahya (Catn. No. 29), which was redecorated slightly earlier, compared to the time of construction of the Varamin Friday mosque.

Lateral Prayer Spaces

The eastern prayer hall spaces contain some stucco bands and spandrels. These bands run along the surfaces of the supporting walls and they occasionally delineate areas between the supporting and vaulting elements. These stuccos form modest bands of repeating floral ornamentation which present a considerably shallow relief. Some of the bands and spandrels contain epigraphic elements, mainly in the forms of medallions, such as: *Allah, Muhammad* and *ʿAli*.[1588] One of the bands comprises the signature of the master stucco craftsman, and it has been partially deciphered as: *work of ʿAli al-Qazvini, may God bless him* (see below). The fact that the signature is placed in this unassuming stucco band in the lateral prayer spaces, may

[1587] Similar revetments are part of the first decorative programme of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27).
[1588] The majority of these stucco bands were recently restored.

indicate that this is the signature of the workshop, which was only responsible for the stucco bands of the lateral prayer spaces and not the revetments in the domed prayer hall.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior architectural revetments of the mosque are located on the main entrance portal, the external surfaces of the lateral prayer spaces which face the internal courtyard, and the *qibla iwan*. It is not known whether the dome of the mosque comprised exterior architectural revetments. The mosque's external surfaces were decorated with terracotta and glazed tiles around 1322 and the lower portion of the *qibla iwan* was redecorated with stucco revetments around 1418-19. The exterior architectural revetments feature diverse decorative media, which relate the Varamin Friday mosque to monuments such as the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and the Ushturjan Friday mosque entrance portal (Cat. No. 4). The ceramic revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27) are closely tied to the glazed revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque. Another important parallel are the revetments of the Imamzada Shah Husain in Varamin.[1589] The revetments of these three monuments are likely works of the craftsmen's workshop, which arrived to Varamin after the conclusion of works at Sultaniyya.

The Entrance Portal

Figs. 304-306.

The front façade and the main entrance portal, especially their upper parts, were damaged.[1590] The façade is divided into two tiers of blind pointed arcades and the larger entrance portal features a tripartite division with three tiers of blind façades. The portal was originally decorated with ceramic revetments, described by Pickett.[1591] Further decay is observed based on the comparison of Morosov's drawings published by Kratchkovskaya and the current photographic documentation of the monument.[1592]

The entrance portal is supported by a pointed arch with muqarnas decoration. The exterior façade of the portal is divided into three tiers of blind niches. The upper third of the portal was entirely ruined and its current structure has been reconstructed; it accordingly does not comprise any remains of revetments. The side blind niches of the portal feature remains of ceramic revetments. These revetments were produced with a combination of rectangular elements of glazed light and dark blue and unglazed terracotta. These elements were employed to constitute geometricized floral ornamentation in the forms of six-petalled flower blossoms, with circular stucco plugs set in their centres. The pattern is of arabesque character. Variations of this pattern and the identical technique were employed to decorate the framing rectangular band which runs along the portal's pointed arch. The colour and form variations of these designs are used for the

[1589] Pickett 1997, 111.
[1590] Their recent rebuilding, in a form of a reconstruction proposes their original structure.
[1591] Pickett 1997, 110-112. Pickett observes that the architectural revetments of the portal are related, from the technical aspects, to the portal of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and that these artistic techniques are also found in the first phase of architectural revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). He remarks that the revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque portal, given their dating 1322, result rather conservative in terms of employed artistic techniques as in terms of ornamentation style.
[1592] See Kratchkovskaya 1931.

decoration of the muqarnas tiers, of which fragments of the lower three tiers remain. The area below the muqarnas semi-dome was decorated with an inscription band, now in fragments: this band was produced with terracotta elements for the Kufic inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18) and design of floral scrolls in its background, created with light and dark blue glazed elements, with light blue glazed elements featuring further ornamental details produced with sgraffito technique. The Kufic inscription displays elongations of letters and additional ornamental inserts, which provide for its steady rhythm of horizontal and vertical elements.

The central part of the entrance portal's interior comprises a horizontal panel, with fragments of a historic inscription in *Naskh* (light blue against dark blue background). The inscription was recorded by Morosov, before its last fragments were ruined. It refers to Abu Saʿid; it provides the name and titles of the patron of the mosque and the date of completion of decoration (see below).[1593] The spandrels of the main entrance opening feature strapwork in the form of star patterns. The decoration of the two niches flanking the entrance presents separate artistic media: these niches were decorated with a strapwork decoration of two-tiered muqarnas niches, but their lower portions present strapwork ornamentation of six-pointed star patterns, which feature only terracotta and light blue glazed elements, and lack dark blue. The intrados of entrance portal's pointed arch is decorated with a repeating pattern of strapwork which displays a twelve-pointed variation of the star pattern. The side surfaces of the entrance portal's interior were decorated with muqarnas hoods featuring diverse panels of star and geometric designs. In sum, the surfaces of the entrance portal were covered with diverse strapwork star-patterns and with two inscription bands. The date of these revetments is provided by the historic inscription on the portal, as 1322.

The Qibla Iwan

Figs. 307-310.

The *qibla iwan* and the lateral architectural elements were built to form the mosque's internal façade. Their close investigation allows to postulate that the *iwan* was decorated in 1322, in parallel to the decoration interventions on the mosque's entrance portal and architectural surfaces facing the internal courtyard. The *iwan*, especially its lower half, may have been redecorated in the Timurid period, as indicated by the two stucco plaques with the historic inscription referring to Shah Rukh and bearing the date tentatively read as 1418-19. Further arguments in favour of this hypothesis are the revetments of the interior part of the *iwan*, which reveal two layers of decoration. Moreover, the decorative medium of the *qibla iwan* differs between its upper portion and external surfaces, and the lower part of its interior. It is plausible that, originally, the *qibla iwan* was decorated with strapwork which echoed the revetments of the mosque's main entrance portal. The *iwan* was subsequently redecorated with stuccos and terracotta in the Timurid period.

Exterior of the *Qibla Iwan*

The *qibla iwan* is formed by a pointed arch and it was originally rectangular. The upper parts of the *qibla iwan* were ruined and not reconstructed. The pointed arch structure is flanked by

[1593] See Kratchkovskaya 1931, 48-54.

two columns which feature ceramic revetments composed of rectangular light blue glazed inserts forming repeating inscription swirls reading: *ʿAli*. A decorative band which encircles the pointed arch springs from the top of the column capitals. This band was heavily restored. On the extrados, the decorative band comprises a repeating band of a chequered pattern formed by light blue glazed elements inserted between fired bricks of the structure. In the intrados, there is another repeating decorative band of ceramic revetments, which features strapwork in light and dark blue ceramic glazed elements and terracotta. These strapwork elements are arranged into a series of cartouches which feature diverse variations of geometricized floral ornaments.

The remaining parts of the *qibla iwan*'s exterior indicate that there used to be a rectangular framing band of decoration, which outlined the form of the *qibla iwan*, but it was entirely destroyed and only parts of its structure remain. The *iwan* is flanked on each side by two superimposed blind niches which retain some remains of their architectural decoration. Originally, there were three superimposed blind niches, which matched with the top edge of the *qibla iwan*. These niches were additionally connected with arcades set on the top of the lateral prayer hall spaces to form the *qibla* façade. The decoration of the remaining blind niches comprises two different types of architectural revetments which were used according to the logic of symmetry. The niches in the second tier of the structure were decorated with strapwork in light and dark blue glazed elements, and terracotta. The lower pair of blind niches feature revetments in terracotta and stucco. They consist of a star pattern design of twelve pointed stars, and they contain medallions with inscriptions reading: *Allah*. Terracotta material is used to form the star patterns and inscriptions, while stucco is employed to fill the background of the revetments in the form of small geometric perforated elements. The blind niches flanking the *qibla iwan* are framed by bands which display decorative patterns of eight-pointed stars. These patterns are formed by fired bricks, and stucco is used to fill the spaces between them and to create their framing borders. These external surfaces of the *qibla iwan* were part of the same decorative campaign (dated 1322), during which the main entrance portal and architectural surfaces of the mosque's courtyard were decorated.

Interior of the *Qibla Iwan*

The interior of the *qibla iwan* is divided into two parts. The upper part comprises the muqarnas hood with the monumental *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscription placed in its centre. These revetments are contemporary to the construction of the *qibla iwan* and can be dated 1322. The lower part of the *qibla iwan* contains historic inscriptions with a date posterior to 1322 and it also reveals the double architectural revetment layers. The lower part of the *iwan* was redecorated in 1418-19, as suggested by these historic inscriptions.

The upper part of the *qibla iwan* retains the muqarnas hood, which consists of six tiers of muqarnas; the centre of the hood does not contain the muqarnas and it leaves space for the monumental *Khatt-i bannaʾi* panel. The inscription is Shiʿite in content (see below) and it contains smaller inscriptions flanking it. The Shiʿite content of the monumental inscription is unusual, given that the revetments were produced during the reign of Abu Saʿid, when the official religion of the Empire was Sunnite. As explained by Kratchkovskaya, the Shiʿite inscriptions might have been desired by the patron of the mosque, or because Varamin was a

largely Shiʿite settlement in Ilkhanid Iran.[1594] The employed artistic technique of the revetments, the relationship of the inscription to the *qibla iwan* and the links between the *qibla iwan*, the entrance portal and the surfaces of the mosque's courtyard are sufficient evidence to sustain that these inscriptions should be dated to 1322.

The lower portion of the *qibla iwan* features the main passage to the domed prayer hall and two lateral passages to the adjacent prayer spaces. The *iwan* is decorated with arranged blind niches and revetment panels. The top edges of the supporting walls, at the springing of the pointed arch, are decorated with a monumental inscription band which consists of two inscriptions (see below). Two pieces of evidence pointing at the existence of two decorative phases on the lower part of the *qibla iwan* surfaces have been documented. The first piece of evidence comprises two panels which feature historical stucco inscriptions (Fig. 308). These two panels are positioned below the monumental stucco band and they flank the main entrance of the domed hall. They contain information for the dating of the second decorative intervention and its patronage: the redecoration took place in 1418-19, during the reign of Shah Rukh and the patron of the redecoration was the Amir Ghiyas al-Din Yusuf Khwaja.[1595] These two inscriptions are produced in *Naskh* style and their background is filled with foliage. The damaged right hand side inscription reveals traces of the earlier decoration beneath it.

The extent of this redecoration is difficult to determine. Some evidence is contained in the blind niche to the right-hand side of two stucco panels (Fig. 309). This niche reveals two layers of architectural revetments. The lower layer of decoration in terracotta strapwork displaying geometricized floral ornaments, similar to those found on the upper portions of the *qibla iwan* and the main entrance portal of the mosque. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that, originally, the entire *qibla iwan* was likely decorated with strapwork designs. The second layer of the decoration in the niche comprises stucco plugs with floral and epigraphic (*Allah, ʿAli*) elements. The fact that the craftsmen responsible for the redecoration of the *qibla iwan* employed stucco material indicates that the stuccos in the *qibla iwan* could be the results of this redecoration. This would include the monumental inscription band, stucco plugs and decorations of the spandrels of the passages and some blind niches. The blind niche on the left-hand side may have been redecorated and it retains the original terracotta strapwork. The two niches below the stucco historic inscriptions feature repeating bands of the Shiʿite Shahada. The spandrels of the main entrance of the domed hall retain traces of their original strapwork which does not seem to have been redecorated. The framing Square Kufic inscription in carved stucco medium (*Allah, Muhammad, ʿAli, The Dominion belongs to God*) is uniform to the stucco plugs and it seems that it was produced as a part of the redecoration campaign. The side surfaces of the *qibla iwan* have been restored, but they seem to have retained their original revetments, which are similar to those framing the blind niches of the external surfaces of the *qibla iwan*: fired brick formed eight-pointed star tiles. Recessed parts of these ornamental patterns were likely filled with perforated stucco elements.

The dating for the monumental stucco band (Fig. 310), which runs along the three internal surfaces of the *qibla iwan*, is difficult to pinpoint. The band features a monumental *Thuluth*

[1594] Kratchkovskaya 1931, 41-44.
[1595] *Ibid*., 50-52.

inscription (*Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:9-10), the top of which is filled with a small Kufic inscription (*Surat al-Maʿun*, 107:1-7; *Surat al-Ikhlas*, 112:1-4). The design of these two inscriptions is masterly composed and a complex floral scroll background is also carved into it. The inscription band is difficult to compare to the modest stucco plaques with the Timurid historic inscriptions on the *qibla iwan*'s surfaces. It seems that the band was part of the original ornamental repertoire of the *qibla iwan*.

In sum, the discussion of the *qibla iwan*'s revetments indicates that some parts, especially the revetments on its lower internal area have been redecorated in the Timurid period. The reasons for these redecorations were likely political and connected to the will of the patrons to display their political power. Historic inscriptions might also be a reference to some other parts of the mosque which might have been repaired at this point. It is unlikely that the strapwork revetments of the *iwan* were deteriorated and that they needed replacement. The redecoration interventions impacted the aesthetic appearance of the *qibla iwan.* The redecoration medium was stucco, which was different to the earlier strapwork revetments. These stuccos were rendered polychrome and visually juxtaposed to the colder tones of the *iwan*'s earlier revetments. The change in aesthetics was likely conditioned by craftsmen's availability, rather than the will to change the aesthetics of the *qibla iwan*.

Exterior Surfaces of Lateral Prayer Spaces Facing the Internal Courtyard

The focal point of the internal courtyard of the Varamin Friday mosque is presented by the *qibla iwan* which is higher and larger in dimension, compared to the other courtyard's architectural structures. Its revetments are conserved on external surfaces of piers which support the western *iwan* and western bays of prayer halls. These revetments are rectangular, and they fill the surfaces of the piers. Moreover, some remaining fragments of revetments illustrate that, originally, the spandrels of the pointed arches of these spaces were also decorated with architectural decoration. These revetments were produced by inserting terracotta elements of rectangular forms into thick layer of mortar or stucco material, which came to constitute the background of the decorative bands. The ornamentation of these surfaces features blind niches and surfaces of decorative bands, which display diverse geometric patters of star motifs. Glazed elements were not used for these revetments. In terms of the artistic techniques and modality of production, these revetments can be related to the original *qibla iwan* and entrance portal's decoration. These revetments should be considered as part of the mosque's original decorative programme from 1322.

Stucco Polychromy at the Varamin Friday Mosque

Only the mihrab of the mosque retains polychromy traces. The majority of its panels retain extensive traces of red and green. They are mainly contained in the perforations of the background floral ornamentation. It remains unclear which colours were used for the colouring of the background of the mihrab's three-dimensional relief, and it is not clear how the protruding parts of its relief were coloured. The abundant presence of green is somewhat unusual, because this pigment is conserved on a limited number of Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. The absence of blue, which is most frequently preserved on Ilkhanid stuccos, is puzzling.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Varamin Friday Mosque

The most complex stucco revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque are its stucco mihrab and the monumental inscription band, which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls of the domed hall. It is not clear whether the *qibla iwan* monumental inscription band was produced out of stucco or clay material, but it was made with artistic techniques similar to the mentioned stuccos. Stucco panels located in the lateral prayer spaces, on the spandrels of the passages between the domed prayer hall and the adjacent spaces, and on the spandrels of the transitional zone, are produced with a markedly less complex approach, which comprised carving of a single stucco layer. In contrast, a sophisticated combination of artistic techniques was chosen for the production of the mihrab and the monumental inscription band topping it. Stucco craftsmen combined carving of several consecutively applied layers of stucco with the technique of application of protruding elements. Only some of the mihrab's inscription bands display a more restricted selection of stucco techniques and carving of two stucco layers. The majority of stuccos is characterized by a deep stucco relief formed out of several visual planes of abstract ornamentation resembling leaves, palmettes and floral scrolls. These reliefs are additionally enriched by the application of floral and other protruding elements, with smother surfaces, which increased the depth of the stucco relief and rendered its appearance more dynamic. These characteristics of revetments, especially those of the mihrab, are more advanced, or at least different from the Ilkhanid stuccos on the monuments of north-western or central Iran.

The Varamin Friday Mosque Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The specific visual appearance and aesthetics of Varamin stuccos are determined by the use of artistic techniques, which allowed the craftsmen to create very deep, dynamic and variegated reliefs of the mihrab's stucco panels and the monumental inscription band. Another specific characteristic of these stuccos are the sharp edges of their reliefs, many of which were created with tools held at a ninety-degree angle. These sharp edges add to their contrasting appearance. These stuccos are characterized with the craftsmen's preoccupation for minute details, reflected in the rich backgrounds of the inscription bands of the mihrab and the monumental stucco band. The undercutting of stucco is absent in Varamin, but the craftsmen managed to create a dynamic and often protruding stucco relief through the juxtaposition of applied stucco elements to the richly carved stucco relief.

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing of Ilkhanid period is located in the mosque.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Domed Prayer Hall

The Monumental Inscription Band

a.) The monumental inscription band runs along the top edges of the mosque prayer hall's supporting walls and it features *Naskh* style. It begins with the *Basmala* and it continues with a

Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jumʿa* (Qurʾan 62:1-7). At the end of the inscription, its completion date is written in numerals 726/1325-26.[1596]

The inscription reads: [1597]

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ
هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ
مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَاةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا ۚ بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ
قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ هَادُوا إِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ لِلَّهِ مِنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is exalting Allah, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom – although they were before in clear error –
And [to] others of them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
That is the bounty of Allah, which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.
The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.
Say, "O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are allies of Allah, excluding the [other] people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful."
But they will not wish for it, ever, because of what their hands have put forth. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers.

The inscription concludes with:

سنة ٦٢٧

Year 627 (1325-26).

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):[1598]

[1596] TEI 3427 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5536.
[1597] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jumuah (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1598] TEI 37010; TEI 37012 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).

a.) The inscription which frames the mihrab's lunette niche features Kufic style and recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jinn* (Qurʾan, 72:18-19). It is set against floral scroll background.

The text of the inscription is:[1599]

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا
وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا

And [He revealed] that the masjids are for Allah, so do not invoke with Allah anyone.
And that when the Servant of Allah stood up supplicating Him, they almost became about him a compacted mass."

b.) The monumental framing inscription band of the mihrab is a composition of a large Knotted Kufic inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Israʾ*, 17:80) and a smaller Kufic inscription in its top register (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:2-4).

The monumental inscription reads:[1600]

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

And say, "My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit and grant me from Yourself a supporting authority."

The small inscription reads:[1601]

لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

c.) The two stucco revetment panels on the mihrab's left-hand side may be the works of later redecorations of the hall's interior. They feature Kufic style inscription borders, set against a plain background. Some parts of the inscription have been read, and they comprise the following Qurʾanic excerpts: *Surat al-Rum*, 30:3; *Surat al-Israʾ*, 17:111.

The inscriptions read:

[1599] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jinn (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1600] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-isra-80-qs-17-80-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1601] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

Surat al-Rum, 30:3[1602]

فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ

In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome.

and

Surat al-Israʾ, 17:111[1603]

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِنَ الذُّلِّ ۖ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيرًا

And say, "Praise to Allah, who has not taken a son and has had no partner in [His] dominion and has no [need of a] protector out of weakness; and glorify Him with [great] glorification."

Glazed Revetments of the Domed Prayer Hall

a.) These terracotta Kufic inscriptions are set against the geometric background composed out of glazed elements. They frame the lateral openings of the domed hall. All the inscriptions feature excerpts from *Surat al-Insan*; the breaks between the employed verses might indicate that the inscriptions were not being produced in an orderly manner, but several at a time (Qurʾan, 76:1-4, 76:7-9, 76:12-15, 76:19-21).[1604]

The employed verses of the inscriptions read:[1605]

76:1-4

هَلْ أَتَىٰ عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَذْكُورًا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا
إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا
إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا

Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned?
Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.
Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful.
Indeed, We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a blaze.

76: 7-9

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا
وَيُطْعِمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا
إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

[1602] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-ar-rum-3-qs-30-3-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1603] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-isra-111-qs-17-111-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1604] TEI 37016 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).
[1605] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Insan (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

They [are those who] fulfil [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread.
And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive,
[Saying], "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude.

76: 12-15

وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا
مُتَّكِئِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۖ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا
وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا
وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرَا

And will reward them for what they patiently endured [with] a garden [in Paradise] and silk [garments].
[They will be] reclining therein on adorned couches. They will not see therein any [burning] sun or [freezing] cold.
And near above them are its shades, and its [fruit] to be picked will be lowered in compliance.
And there will be circulated among them vessels of silver and cups having been [created] clear [as glass].

76: 19-21

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنْثُورًا
وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلْكًا كَبِيرًا
عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُنْدُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ ۖ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا

There will circulate among them young boys made eternal. When you see them, you would think them [as beautiful as] scattered pearls.
And when you look there [in Paradise], you will see pleasure and great dominion.
Upon the inhabitants will be green garments of fine silk and brocade. And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver, and their Lord will give them a purifying drink.

Lateral Prayer Halls

a.) A Craftsmen's signature is located on the supporting wall of the south-eastern part of the mosque. The location of the signature indicates that it is unlikely to be the signature of the craftsmen responsible for the decoration of the *qibla iwan* or the domed prayer hall, but rather, the side prayer halls. It is written in *Naskh*, in a cartouche and placed against a plain background.

The inscription was recently re-examined by Kalus:

عمل علي قزوينى خدايش بيامرزاد[1606]

Work of ʿAli (al-)Qazvini, may God bless him.

The Mosque Entrance Portal

[1606] TEI 3428 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5537.

a.) The entrance portal featured a horizontal panel with a historic inscription regarding the patronage of the mosque, which was read by Morosov at an early point. Currently, only fragments of the inscription remain. It was produced in tile mosaic, and it featured light blue *Naskh* style inscription set against a dark blue background. The end of the inscription comprised the date, which signals the time of the mosque's construction completion: 722/1322.

The inscription read:

ذكر القديم أعلى و بالتقديم أولى أمر ببناء هذه العمارة الجامع المبارك فى أيّام دولة السلطان المعظّم خاقان الأعظم مالك بن منصور رقاب الأمم مولى سلاطين العرب و العجم أبو سعيد بهادر خان خلّد الله سلطانه العبد الضعيف محمّد بن محمّد القوهذى تقبّل الله منه و وفّقه لمرضاته بسعى ولده الخليفة الصالح الحسن بن محمّد [كلمة] الله سعيه فى شهور سنة ٧٢٢[1607]

Translation:

Remembrance of the construction of the old, the first construction of this blessed collective building, in the days of the Great Sultan, Haqan al-Azam, Malik ibn Mansur, the Owner of the necks of the nation, the Mawla of the Sultans of the Arabs and the non-Arabs, Abu Saʿid Bahadur Khan, may God preserve his reign, the Poor Slave Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Quhandi, may God forgive him and protect him from illnesses (?), with the efforts of the son of the Khalifa al-Salih al-Hasan ibn Muhammad … may God help him. In the months of the year 722 (1322-23).

b.) There are also fragmented remains of a monumental inscription which ran through the interior of the entrance portal, in the area topping its supporting walls. The inscription was produced in Knotted Kufic style, in terracotta, and placed against a glazed element composed geometric background. The inscription started with the *Basmala* and continued with fragments of a Qurʾanic excerpt relevant to the theme of the mosque construction from *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18:[1608]

The text reads:[1609]

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.

The *Qibla Iwan*

a.) The monumental stucco band runs along the three internal surfaces of the *qibla iwan* and it consists of a large *Thuluth* inscription and a smaller Kufic inscription, which fills the space in the top register of the band. The background of the panel is elaborate, and it features vegetal

[1607] TEI 3365 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5478.
[1608] TEI 37018 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).
[1609] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-at-taubah-18-qs-9-18-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

scrolls and palmette elements. The *Thuluth* inscription (*Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:9-10) and the small Kufic inscription (*Surat al-Maʿun*, 107:1-7; *Surat al-Ikhlas*, 112:1-4; illegible) feature a selection of Qurʾanic excerpts.[1610] The dating of the inscription is difficult to pinpoint; it could be an original work or work of the redecoration mentioned in the two stucco panels below it.

The excerpts read:

Surat al-Jumʿa, 62:9-10:[1611]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ
فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

O you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumuʿa [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.
And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.

Surat al-Maʿun, 107:1-7:[1612]

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ
فَذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيمَ
وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ
فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ
وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense?
For that is the one who drives away the orphan,
And does not encourage the feeding of the poor.
So woe to those who pray
[But] who are heedless of their prayer –
Those who make show [of their deeds],
And withhold [simple] assistance.

Surat al-Ikhlas, 112:1-4:[1613]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

[1610] TEI 37344 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).
[1611] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jumuah (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1612] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Maun (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1613] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

The right-hand side inscription panel reads:

قد تمّ مسجد الجامع فی أیّام الدولة السلطان الأعظم مالك رقاب الأمم مولی ملوك العرب و العجم السلطان شاه رخ بهادر خلّد الله ملكه و سلطانه

Translation:

The Congregational mosque was completed in the days of the state of the Great Sultan, the Owner of the necks of the nation, the Kind of the Arabs and the non-Arabs. The Greatest Sultan Shah Rukh Bahadur, may God protect his kingdom and his rule.

The left-hand side inscription panel reads:

و بسعی الأمیر الأعظم الأ عدل افتخار الأمراء فی الزمان الأمیرغیاث الدولة و الدین یوسف خواجه عمّت میامن معدلته فی شهر محرّم [ا]۸۲

Translation:

By (the means of) efforts of the Great Prince, the Righteous, the Pride of Princes, in the time of the Prince, the Protector of the state and the religion, Yusuf Khwaja, may country spread from its average, in the month (of) Muharram, 82[1] (1418).

c.) The *Khatt-i bannaʾi* inscription panel in the area of the muqarnas hood of the *qibla iwan* comprises a Shiʿite inscription and it is flanked by shorter invocations to God.

The inscription reads:[1614]

اللهمّ صلّ علی محمّد علی حسن حسین صلوات الله علیهم
الملك لله سبحان الله الله ...
سبحان الله محمّد الملك ...

Translation:

Allahum, blessings to Muhammad, blessings to Hasan, Husayn, may God bless them.
The Dominion belongs to God, Glory be to God, God.
Glory be to God, Muhammad, Dominion.

d.) The columns of the *qibla iwan*'s portal are decorated with glazed inserts and they comprise a repetition of *ʿAli*:[1615]

[1614] TEI 37020 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).
[1615] TEI 37022 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).

علی

ʿAli.

e.) Two blind niches below the carved stucco panels with historic inscriptions feature repeating bands of the Shiʿite Shahada produced out of brick or terracotta elements.

f.) The spandrels of the main entrance opening in the *qibla iwan*, leading into the domed prayer hall, retain remains of the original strapwork. The framing Square Kufic inscription in carved stucco is uniform to the stucco plugs and it was produced as part of the redecoration programme.[1616]

It reads:

Allah, Muhammad and ʿAli, The Dominion belongs to God.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

Apart from the discussed redecoration around 1418-19, the mosque does not retain later revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The discussion of the monument illustrates that the entire mosque structure was completed between 1322 and 1325-26. This intervention included the application of ceramic revetments on the main entrance portal of the mosque, the *qibla iwan* and the surfaces of the prayer halls facing the internal courtyard. Further activities of the domed prayer hall's decoration, consisting of carved stuccos, ceramic strapwork and mosaic and stucco plugs, were performed by 1325-26. The 1325-26 activities should be considered as a continuation of the first construction and building phase. The lower portion of the *qibla iwan*, and perhaps some surfaces of the domed prayer hall were redecorated in the Timurid period, around 1418-19.

Historic inscriptions contain information about the patronage of the mosque. The 1322 activities, the largest of all phases, were sponsored by one of the most important Ilkhanid officials of Abu Saʿid: the Ilkhanid official ʿIzz al-Din al-Quhadi. The status of this patron is appropriate in relation to the mosque's dimensions and its significance. Accordingly, the mosque can be understood as almost equal to imperial undertakings. The sponsorship of the decoration of the mosque's domed prayer hall could be the work of the same patron, although he is not mentioned in any of its inscriptions. Alternatively, the decorations could have been sponsored by some other Ilkhanid official or a local notable. The Timurid 1418-19 redecorations took place during the reign of Shah Rukh and they were sponsored by his official Amir Ghiyas al-Din Yusuf Khwaja. The patron is of elevated status, but these redecoration activities were of limited extent focusing on the application of a few panels on the lower part of the *qibla iwan*. This intervention can be understood as a Timurid appropriation of the Ilkhanid monument.

[1616] TEI 37024 (Last Accessed: November 15, 2021).

The fact that the Congregational mosque of Varamin, located in a significant Ilkhanid settlement, which also contained earlier Ilkhanid monuments, was constructed during the reign of Abu Saʿid, is somewhat puzzling. One would expect for the essential monument of the settlement to have been constructed already during the reign of Ghazan Khan or Uljaytu. The only explanation which comes to mind is that there used to be an earlier Friday mosque which was either ruined, and therefore no longer extant during the reign of Abu Saʿid, or this structure could have been demolished for the purpose of the construction of the mosque in question. Furthermore, the apparent absence of Seljuq monuments in Varamin is unusual, especially in comparison to the numerous monuments of Seljuq period, located in settlements such as Simnan or Damghan. It is plausible that the significance of Varamin increased significantly during the Ilkhanid period and that this attracted patrons of numerous monuments in Varamin.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Only limited indications regarding the stucco craftsmanship of the revetments at the Varamin Friday mosque exist. The craftsmen's signature on one of the stucco bands in the eastern lateral prayer space of the mosque reads: *work of Ali al-Qazvini, may God bless him*. The position of the signature is on a modest stucco band in a lateral prayer hall. Its location implies that the stucco craftsmen who signed these stuccos could be only responsible for the stuccos in the lateral prayer halls, rather than the domed prayer hall. The *nisba al-Qazvini*, hints at the origin of the craftsmen from the city of *Qazvin*, which is not excessively distant from Varamin, although there are no Ilkhanid stucco revetments in *Qazvin* or its proximities, except for the redecorated mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque (Cat. No. 35), which presents an entirely different style. The *nisba al-Qazvini* should therefore be considered as indicative information regarding the origin of the stucco craftsmen.

The discussed stucco revetments, especially the mihrab and the monumental inscription of the domed prayer hall, do not resemble any other stucco repertoires in the given geographical region. The revetments do not match those of earlier Imamzada Yahya in Varamin (Cat. No. 36). They are also different from the repertoires on the monuments in Bistam, which were produced by a regional school. Nor do the Varamin stuccos resemble revetments found at Farumad and Khusraw Shir. The selection of artistic techniques, approach to stucco carving and the final result displayed at Varamin are characteristic of master stucco craftsmen and it is therefore unlikely that the stuccos were produced by local artists. The closest examples of repertoires, which could be considered as related to Varamin, are stuccos on the opening passages of the Uljaytu mausoleum in Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27).

The glazed and terracotta revetments of the Varamin Friday mosque do not retain any craftsmen's signature. But, as mentioned, they are produced with the same technology and artistic techniques, and they feature closely related designs to the revetments at the Imamzada Shah Husayn in Varamin and the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). Their likeness is so strong that it is almost certain that the craftsmen responsible for the first decorative stage of revetments at Sultaniyya also produced the revetments of these two monuments in Varamin.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument was badly ruined during the time Robert Byron visited it in the 1930s, but subsequently, the mosque underwent numerous conservation interventions which comprised the reconstruction of its ruined parts, consolidation and partial integration of its architectural revetments and their repairs. Perhaps the most problematic parts of the mosque comprise the stuccos on the lower portions of the *qibla iwan* and inside the domed prayer hall. These revetments should be consolidated and cleaned.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The examination of the Varamin Friday mosque and its revetments allows information regarding the nature and dimensions of three dated interventions on the monument to be proposed. The entire mosque structure was built between 1322 and 1325-26 and its external architectural surfaces were completed at that point. The decoration of the mosque was continued and completed by 1325-26, with the decoration of the domed prayer hall. The monument was redecorated during Timurid times, but contrary to some suggestions, these interventions were very restricted and mainly aimed at the display of political power. The discussion of the use of diverse revetment media in the mosque's domed prayer hall, showed how consciously the craftsmen selected the decorative media for distinct architectural elements, in order to accentuate the forms of the monumental prayer hall's interior. The mihrab and the inscription band of the hall were produced with a masterly selection and employment of complex combinations of artistic techniques, which are found in only a few Ilkhanid repertoires. The artistic quality of the architectural revetments of the mosque clearly reflects the status of their patrons.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Sarre 1910, 59-64; Pope and Ackermann 1977[1938-39], Vol. 3, 1052-1102; Kratchkovskaya 1931; Pickett 1997, 109-112; Wilber 1955, 158-159, Qasimi 2004, Vol. 8, 40-49.

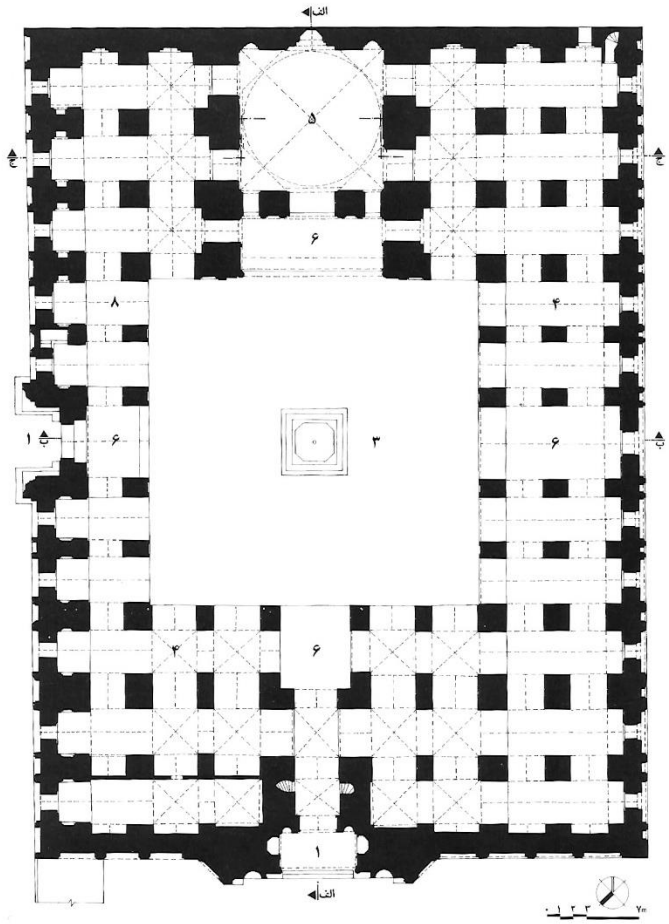


Figure 303: Ground plan of the Varamin Friday mosque (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 8, 47).



Figure 304: The main entrance portal of the Varamin Friday mosque.





Figures 305 and 306: Details of the terracotta and glazed revetments of Varamin Friday mosque's entrance portal. Left: geometric panels in strapwork, which closely resemble the first phase revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya.



Figure 307: View of the *qibla iwan* and the courtyard of the Varamin Friday mosque.



Figure 308: Detail of the lower (redecorated) surfaces of the interior of the *qibla iwan* of the Varamin Friday mosque, with the monumental double stucco inscription, the two stucco panels with historic inscriptions (dated 1418-19) and Square Kufic panels with Shiʿite inscriptions.



Figure 309: Detail of the blind niche flanking the right hand side historic inscription stucco panel: two layers of revetments are visible and indicate that the lower area of the *iwan* was redecorated in 1418-19.



Figure 310: Detail of the monumental double inscription band running on top edges of supporting walls of the *qibla iwan*. This carved stucco inscription is likely work of Timurid redecoration interventions dated 1418-19.



Figure 311: View of the interior of the domed prayer hall, showing the transitional zone and the dome, which were likely renovated. View towards the *qibla* wall.



Figure 312: View of the monumental carved stucco mihrab and the monumental inscription band running along top edges of prayer hall's supporting walls at the Varamin Friday mosque.



Figure 313: The eastern supporting wall of the domed prayer hall of the Varamin Friday mosque. The fired brick and carved stuccoworks cover the walls. The passage openings are topped by carved stucco spandrels and outlined in terracotta and glazed element Kufic inscriptions, produced in technique closely related to the first decorative phase of revetments at the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya.

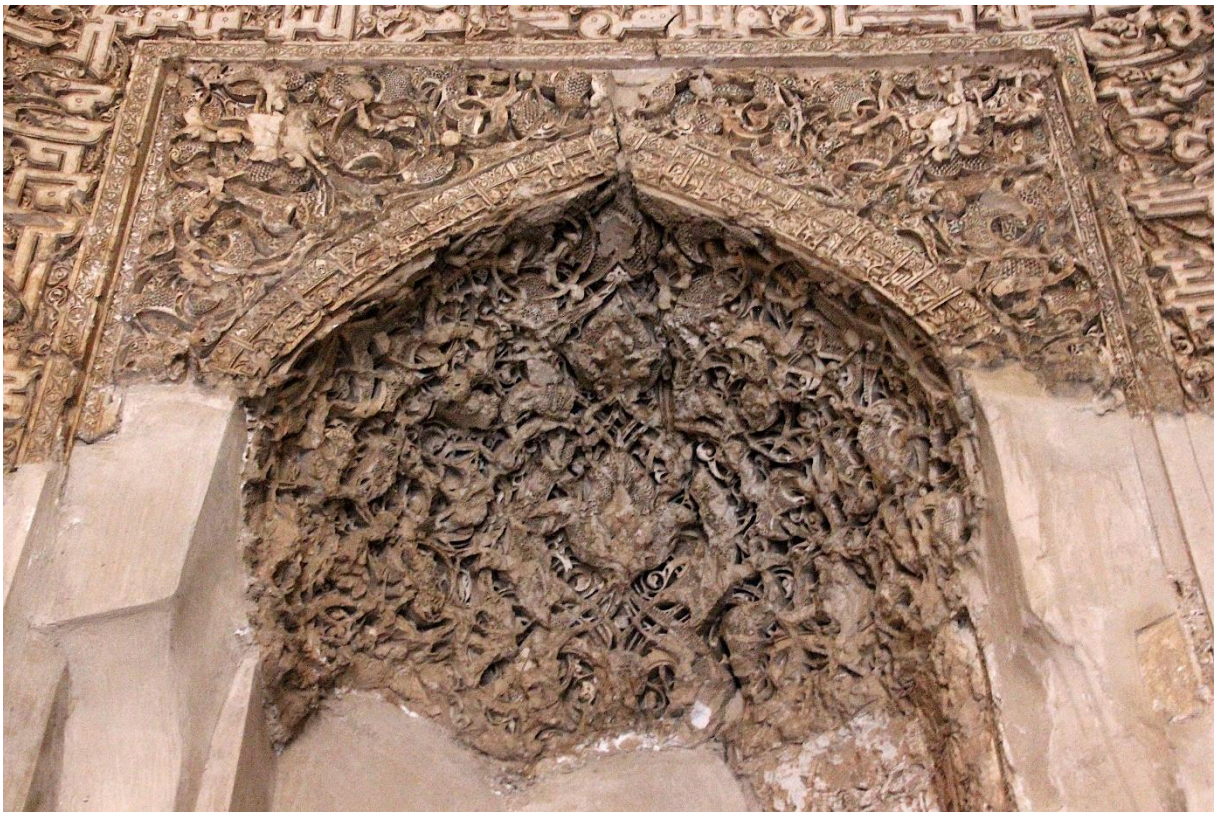


Figure 314: Detail view of the monumental carved stucco mihrab: the central lunette and the spandrels. The stucco reliefs of the mihrab are deep and they retain protruding elements. Pigmentation traces are visible on reliefs.



Figure 315: Detail of the right-hand side spandrel of the stucco mihrab, showing that the panel was produced out of several consecutively carved layers of stuccos. Cavities of the relief retain remains of green and red colouring.



Figure 316: Detail of the double monumental framing inscription band of the carved mihrab in Knotted Kufic and Kufic styles and deeply carved vegetal scroll background.

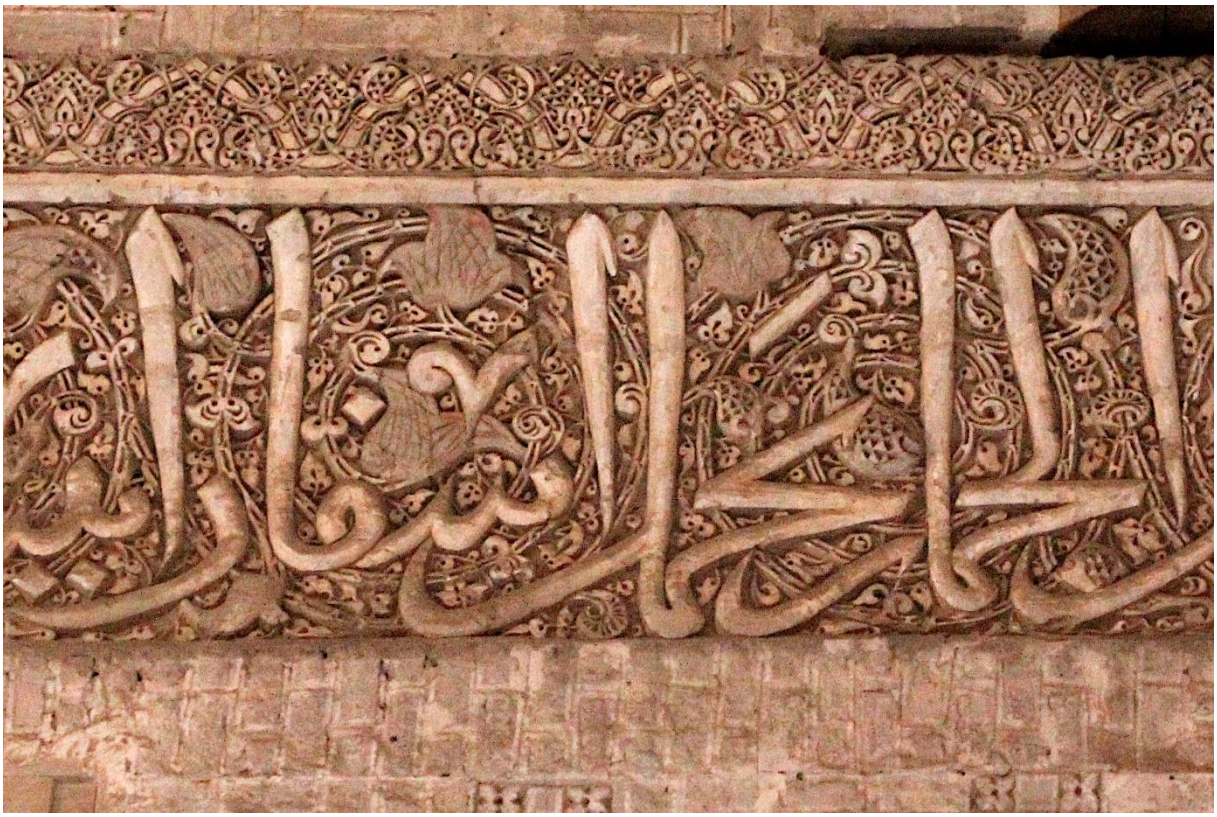


Figure 317: Detail of the monumental inscription band running along the top edges of the supporting walls of the domed prayer hall at the Varamin Friday mosque. The inscription band is placed against a minutely carved vegetal background, and it used to retain applied protruding elements in forms of palmettes, which have fallen off.



Figure 318: Detail of the lower panel (of the two) on the left-hand side of the carved stucco mihrab. The panel is produced with a specific approach and it features a deep relief. The closest parallel for the panel could be the stuccos of the western opening passage at the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 29

Monument Name: Rukniyya, Shamsiyya and Kamaliyya

Figs. 319-337.

Associated Names: the three monuments are known under several variant names, stemming from diverse modalities of spelling of their patrons' names and diverse interpretations of their function.

The Mausoleum of Rukn al-Dīn[1617] is referred to as a monumental domed structure, an *imamzada*, a tomb or a mausoleum. The most frequently employed names for the monument are: the Sayyid Rukn al-Din Tomb, the Imamzada Sayyid Rukn-i al-Din, the Buqʿa Sayyid Rukn al-Din, the Gunbad-i Sayyid Rukn al-Din, the Jamiʿi Waqt-i Saʿat, the Vaqt-i Saʿat Jamiʿ, the Tomb of Sayyid Rukn-al-Din, the Mausoleum of Sayyid Rukn al-Din, the Sayyid Rukn ad-Din Tomb, the Rukn-i ʿAlam Tomb and the Mausoleum of Rukn-i ʿAlam.[1618]

The Madrasa of Shams al-Dīn[1619] is occasionally referred to as a mausoleum, but it is more frequently designated as a theological school – a madrasa. Variant names of the monument comprise: the Shamsiyya Madrasa, the Madrasah-i Shamsiyah, the Madrasah-i Shamsiya, the Madrasah-i Shams al-Din, the Madrasa Shamsiyeh, the Madrasa of Mir Shams al-Din, the Mausoleum of Shams ad-Din, the Seyyed Shams-o-Din Monument and the Imamzada Shams al-Din.[1620]

Variant names for the Madrasa Kamāliyya[1621] derive from diverse denominations of its function and its architectural structure. The monument is sometimes referred to as the burial place or a mausoleum, and on other occasions, it is denominated as a theological school. Variant names of the monument comprise: the Buqʿa-yi Shah Kamali, the Boqe-yi Shah Kemali, the Madrasa Kamaliye, the Madrasa Shah Kamali and the Shah Kamal al-Din Madrasa.[1622]

Monument Type(s): these three monuments are partially related due to the family ties between their patrons, which might have affected the choice of builders and decorators for these monuments. These three monumental structures share features of ground plan, employed architectural elements, and types of architectural revetments in their interiors and areas of entrance portals. Such monuments were especially frequent in Yazd and their architectural revetment media are characteristic of the geographical region spreading between Abarquh, Yazd and Naʾin.

Chronology: these monuments are mainly works of single constructive and decorative interventions with the goal of providing burial structures for their patrons, accompanied by

[1617] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1618] http://www.archnet.org/sites/1693 (Last Accessed: September 1, 2020).
[1619] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1620] http://www.archnet.org/sites/3891/media_contents/50195 (Last accessed: September 1, 2020).
[1621] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1622] http://www.archnet.org/sites/5510 (Last Accessed: September 1, 2020).

charitable activities; the exception is the Madrasa Shamsiyya, which was built across a longer time span. The concept behind the patronage of these monuments is not dissimilar to the foundations in north-western Iran, such as the Ghazaniyya and the Rashidiyya.[1623]

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): these three monuments are complexes which formed around the mausolea of their patrons and comprised structures, such as theological schools, *khanqah*s and further dependencies.

Location: the city of Yazd in central Iran: the mausoleum of Rukn al-Din is centrally located near the Congregational mosque of Yazd; the Madrasa of Shams al-Din is more remote and it is located some 1.1 km south-west from the Friday mosque of Yazd. The Madrasa Kamaliyya is located some 170 m as the crow flies towards the north-west, from the Friday mosque of Yazd.

GPS location of the Mausoleum of Rukn al-Din: 31.90114 N; 54.3684151 E.

GPS location of the Madrasa of Shams al-Din: 31.8971952 N; 54.3569007 E.

GPS location of the Madrasa Kamaliyya: 31.9025232 N; 54.3676542 E.

Monument Investigation: May 5, 2016; February 24, 2018; February 29, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The three monuments subject to the discussion in this catalogue entry were all built in the Ilkhanid period, but at that time, the area of Yazd was ruled by a family of governors, Muzaffarids (713-95/1314-93), who were subjects to the Ilkhans.[1624] Upon the collapse of the Ilkhanid Empire, the Muzaffarids evolved into a de facto independent ruling unit, which controlled a more extensive territory stretching from Yazd to the southern regions of Fars and Kirman and the Greater Iraq; this political unit endured until the conquest of the territory and execution of the majority of the Muzaffarid family members by Timur in 1393.

Background

Yazd, Abarquh and Naʾin's economic prosperity in the Muzaffarid period led to the development and flourishing of the architectural patronage. It is reported that in the fourteenth century, in Yazd alone, some twelve mosques, one hundred theological schools and two hundred tombs were constructed.[1625] Although this might be an exaggeration, the written source reflects the fact that numerous construction activities related to the construction of some of Yazd's major monuments have taken place in this chronological frame. Wilber highlights the fact that the political ties between the Muzaffarid governors and the Ilkhanid rulers had a major impact on the formation of the architecture and especially architectural revetments of Yazd.[1626] The first Muzaffarid governor Mubariz al-din Muhammad ibn-i al-Muzzafar had a good

[1623] Blair reports that Ghazaniyya is the only known complex of such type, which pre-dates the monuments in Yazd. See Blair 1986a, 92, Note No. 10. See also Kadoi 2005, 229, 236.
[1624] Summary from: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mozaffarids (Last Accessed: September 4, 2020).
[1625] Summary from: http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mozaffarids (Last Accessed: September 4, 2020).
[1626] Wilber 1955, 92-94.

relationship with Sultan Uljaytu. When Mubariz al-din in 1319 succeeded in taking over Yazd from the Atabak rulers, Abu Saʿid confirmed his suzerainty and his rule lasted until his death in 1365. Until the death of Abu Saʿid, the Muzaffarid dynasty was especially powerful due to its support by Ilkhanid rulers.

Architectural Legacy of al-Muzaffars

The three monuments have been given detailed attention by Holod in her PhD work, to which access is limited.[1627] Consequently, one of the earliest available discussions of the Muzaffarid monuments in Yazd and its surroundings is provided by Wilber,[1628] who postulates the existence of the *School of Yazd*.[1629] He associates the related monuments of Abarquh and Yazd as the following: the mausoleum of Rukn al-Din, the Madrasa Shamsiyya, the mosque of Shah Kamali, the tomb of al-Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw, the Gunbad-i Sayyidun (ʿAli al-Naqi and Gul-i Surkhi; Cat. No. 11), stating that all these structures have a related type of decorative treatment.[1630] But Wilber classifies these monuments as works of one building school, based on his observations of their architectural structures and by disregarding the differences in their decorative programmes and the technology employed for their production. These monuments should be associated on the grounds of their structural characteristics, but there also are substantial differences between their decorative programmes.

Wilber proposes that the mausoleum of Uljaytu at Sultaniyya must have been the first monument where applique plaster and painted linear designs were thoroughly exploited.[1631] Although there is a strong connection between the second decorative phase revetments of Sultaniyya and those on the monuments of Abarquh and Yazd, there are also substantial differences between these revetments. According to Blair, the craftsmen summoned for the production of the second decorative repertoire at the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya, could have migrated to Yazd in order to produce repertoires at Rukniyya, Shamsiyya and other Muzaffarid monuments.[1632] The architectural revetment programme of the second decorative stage at Sultaniyya is of monumental dimensions; it has no precedents, but there are also no later monuments with a comparable decorative repertoire featuring such a wide spectrum of artistic techniques and proportionate dimensions. It is plausible that the craftsmen who produced the second phase revetments at Sultaniyya, arrived from the area of central Iran, from the region between Abarquh, Yazd and Naʾin, because these areas were the traditional centre of wall painting production. Ilaghi Alvandiyan had shown that the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos were produced with two main production techniques, which involved the moulding of stuccos and their subsequent application on the architectural surfaces, where these revetments were combined with wall paintings. The combination of gold and applied moulded stuccos at Sultaniyya is currently the earliest dated case and the later monuments of Yazd, such

[1627] The author of the PhD work did not share the research material, which was requested, and pointed towards the hard copy version of the work in the Harvard libraries.
[1628] Wilber 1955, 92-94.
[1629] *Ibid.*, 93.
[1630] *Ibid.*
[1631] Wilber 1955, 93.
[1632] Blair informs that the body of the deceased patron, the coffin and the tombstone were transferred from Tabriz to Yazd. Moreover, written sources inform that the plans for the Shamsiyya complex were drawn in Tabriz. Blair 1986a, 33.

as Rukniyya and Shamsiyya, might have been produced by craftsmen arriving from Sultaniyya.[1633]

The commission at Sultaniyya impacted the architectural revetment repertoires of the Muzaffarid Yazd in several ways. It required the craftsmen to be mobilized specifically for the imperial commission and for them to work on an exceptionally large-scale project. This enabled the craftsmen to further train their skills and to improve the technology of the artistic techniques employed for the production of Sultaniyya's monumental decorative repertoire. The production of the second phase decorative revetments at Sultaniyya may have been, as convincingly argued by Blair, produced in response to Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith, in order to communicate the new official creed.[1634] The reasons for the change of the decorative medium between the mausoleum's two decorative phases may have however been technical. The wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos could be produced faster, compared to tile or glazed revetments. Furthermore, the lesser weight of these revetments offered the possibility to apply them on inclined surfaces.

Wilber proposes two possible hypotheses concerning the spread of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall paintings.[1635] The applied stucco technique combined with wall painting could have reached the area of Yazd with the craftsmen from Yazd and other areas who were summoned to Sultaniyya for the production of the second decorative stage and migrated (back) to Yazd after having concluded works at Sultaniyya. Alternatively, craftsmen from settlements other than Yazd could have been summoned to Sultaniyya for the production of the monumental re-decoration programme, and upon its completion, they were attracted to Yazd because it enjoyed prosperity and calm, and because of the numerous construction projects taking place in the city.[1636] The first scenario proposed by Wilber seems more likely, due to the fact that an advanced level of expertise was necessary for the production of the second decorative stage at Sultaniyya, and the craftsmen therefore had to be already trained and mastered the employed artistic techniques. The presence of wall painting and carved stucco repertoires in Yazd and surroundings, may provide evidence indicating that the craftsmen who produced the stuccos of Sultaniyya, may have been summoned from this geographical area.

The imperial nature of Sultaniyya's second decorative phase likely fostered further development of artistic techniques and production of architectural revetments, but these developments must have been based on well-established artistic practices. The hypotheses proposed by Wilber are important, but they were developed at a point when the monuments of Yazd and Abarquh were not well researched. Wilber sustains that the mausoleum of the (no longer extant) al-Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw in Abarquh, the mausoleum of Sayyid Rukn al-Din in Yazd and the Madrasa Shamsiyya, belong to works of the same school of architectural structure construction and revetment production.[1637] The structures of these mausolea present closely related architectural solutions, which are especially well visible in the use of

[1633] Wilber 1955, 93-94.
[1634] Blair 2014, 122-127.
[1635] Wilber 1955, 93.
[1636] *Ibid*.
[1637] *Ibid*., 94.

architectural elements for the transitional zone systems.[1638] But this regularity and continuous use of similar architectural solutions for the mausolea is however not unique to the geographical area of Abarquh, Yazd and Naʾin triangle.[1639]

Wilber does not provide precise information based on the taxonomy of the decorative artistic techniques and he associates the monuments regardless of their several differences between their architectural repertoires. The Mausoleum of al-Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw featured an interior architectural revetment repertoire which consisted of wall paintings only (Cat. No. 11). This is different from the Madrasa Shamsiyya, which retains a decorative repertoire combining wall paintings with applied stuccos and carved stuccos. At Rukniyya, the interior revetment repertoire also features wall paintings and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, but they are more strictly separated from each other. The Kamaliyya madrasa displays an almost exclusively monochrome wall painting repertoire. These four monuments with closely related architectural structures therefore feature considerable differences in the selection of the artistic techniques and media for the production of their interior revetment repertoires. In sum, the builders' groups somewhat standardized the optimal type of architectural structures for the monuments in the Yazd area, but the decorative programmes of these monuments were not standardized to the same degree.

the differences in revetment repertoires may stem from the fact that there operated several different craftsmen's workshops in the area, and that each of them specialized in a distinct decorative medium. These media were on some occasions combined, but this was not the rule. Wilber's hypothesis concerning the existence of a Muzaffarid monuments' school of Yazd therefore requires a reconsideration. Apart from basic characteristics which are shared between the revetments of these monuments, these repertoires showcase evident differences. But the frequency and partially shared characteristics of these decorative programmes were determined by workshops frequently operating in the area, due to the suitable economic climate and political aspirations of the monuments' patrons, which gave way to numerous constructive activities. This contrasts the idea of a coordinated and defined concept of a school of architectural revetments.

Wilber notes that the timespan across which these revetments were produced is relatively short (the short life of the school of Yazd), and that it gave way to tile mosaic, which became more popular towards the end of the fourteenth century.[1640] This change in predominance of architectural revetment media should be given an explanation from a technological point of view. At a certain point, a workshop of tile mosaic developed in the given area. The workshop gradually gained prominence, received more commissions and grew in size to overshadow the workshops for production of other architectural revetments. Several reasons for this change can be proposed. One important advantage of tile mosaic is its greater resistance to weathering and the possibility of its pre-fabrication. Furthermore, tile mosaic technology enabled of the production of new types of designs and combinations of diverse colour shades into a wider

[1638] Closely related solutions have also been observed in the other monuments, such as the Babaʿ Abdullah complex in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9) and other mausolea in Yazd and Abarquh.
[1639] Compare to monuments of Seljuq period, in other geographical areas, such as the north-western Iran-located Friday mosques of Sujas (Cat. No. 35) and Qurwa.
[1640] Wilber 1955, 94.

colour palette for the revetments. These technological and aesthetic properties, gave way to the spread of the new architectural revetment medium. Wilber states that the Muzaffarid architectural revetments were not entirely substituted by tile mosaic, and that they lived in continuity, as illustrated by the monuments such as the Gawhar Shad mosque in Mashhad and the Shrine of Zayn al-Din in Taybad, where they were employed in the architectural interiors.[1641] These media also lived on in late Ilkhanid and Timurid structures, of which one of the extant examples is the Haruniya complex at Tus, north of Mashhad. The described change of artistic techniques and media for the production of architectural revetments and the consequent shift in aesthetics should not be viewed as a simple change of patrons' taste, but rather, as determined by technological advancements.

To conclude, the question of the disappearance or lesser frequency of use of architectural revetment media, which were popular in Muzaffarid Yazd, was perhaps caused by the migration of craftsmen to other geographical areas, following the fall of the Muzaffarid dynasty. The significant technological differences between the new tile mosaic medium and the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall paintings, is the modality of their production. Tile mosaic could often be prefabricated to a large degree, which enabled its faster installation on architectural surfaces.[1642] The applied stucco revetments and wall paintings however required the presence of the craftsmen *in situ* during the entire production process.

b.) Architectural Structures

Rukniyya

Architectural Structure

Fig. 319.

The monument and architectural revetments of the mausoleum and further structures of the Rukn al-Din complex are works of one constructive and decorative intervention, which dates to 1325, as informed by the content of the epigraphic repertoire's historic inscription. This monument is one of the earliest examples of a revetment repertoire combining wall painting, applied moulded and stencilled stucco, carved stucco and glazed revetments. Its repertoire extends over the exterior and interior architectural surfaces of the complex's mausoleum. Originally, the complex consisted of several structures, and it has also been known as the Masjid-i Waqt wa Saʿat. This monument was originally a more extensive complex, but currently only the mausoleum of its patron is extant. The patron of the monument is Morteza ʿAzam Sayyid Rukn al-Din Muhammad ibn-i Nazam al-Din al-Husayni al-Riyazi, who is stated in the inscription to have ordered the construction of the *Institution of the Time and the Hour*, the institution in charge of the production of devices for time measuring.[1643] Wilber provides a hypothetical reconstruction of the original complex, based on his observations of the monument at the time when it was still in a ruined state and it did not undergo considerable restoration

[1641] Wilber 1955, 94.
[1642] This accordingly meant that a large amount of material and partial preparation of tile mosaics could take place prior to the beginning of the commission and that the revetments could be produced quickly if necessary.
[1643] Wilber 1955, 160.

interventions.[1644] In his description of Rukniyya's extant parts, Wilber proposes two reconstructions of the structure in front of the mausoleum.[1645] He states that it either consisted of a vaulted entrance hall or, more likely, a rectangular hall covered with vaults (similar to the structure of Shamsiyya). The interior of this structure was covered with carved stuccos featuring complex designs related to those of the Shamsiyya madrasa. Wilber suggests that the courtyard in front of the Rukniyya mausoleum was the connecting point between different components of the complex, which likely comprised: the madrasa and the mausoleum to the south, the monumental *iwan* with a pair of minarets topping it with the time measuring device in the *iwan* (towards north), the mosque on one of the two lateral sides of the complex, and the library which reportedly contained around three thousand volumes.

Currently, the mausoleum's core consists of a square structure topped by a double-shell dome. The transition between the square structure and the dome is achieved by the transitional zone system, which has also been observed in the mausoleum of Baba ʿAbdullah in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9), and monuments from the area of Abarquh (Cat. No. 11).[1646] The transitional zone at Rukniyya consists of a set of four corner pointed arches topping the mausoleum's supporting walls, which are interrupted by blind niches. These elements further translate into a set of squinches which are alternated with smaller blind niches. The dome of the monument is of bulbous form on its exterior and it assumes the form of a squat pointed arch in its interior, rather than a hemisphere. The core of the mausoleum is preceded by an entrance portal which assumes the form of an *iwan*. This *iwan* structure is flanked on its sides by two floors of arcades which enable passage to the upper parts of the structure and might have functioned as education spaces. Currently, the mausoleum is preceded by a slightly irregular rectangular courtyard, formed by a modest wall enclosure. Its entrance *iwan*-portal, the courtyard and the enclosure, may have been constructed to monumentalize the complex and to render it better visible in the maze of Yazd's historic.

Shamsiyya

Architectural Structure

Fig. 327.

The first brief discussion of the monument and its revetments is provided by Wilber in his monograph.[1647] Wilber dates the structure of the madrasa Shamsiyya complex to c. 1365, but it has been shown that the monument is the work of two phases; its first constructive and decorative activities were interrupted by the death of its patron. As Kadoi informs, the structure of the monument should be dated to around 1335.[1648] According to primary written sources, the construction of the complex concluded in 1333.[1649] The monument has been referred to as both, as the mausoleum of Shams al-Din and as the Madrasa Shamsiyya. The extant structure is the

[1644] Wilber 1955, 160.
[1645] *Ibid.*
[1646] This transitional zone system has however been established already in Seljuq period, with some of its examples being the Friday mosques of Sujas (Cat. No. 35) and Qurwa.
[1647] Wilber 1955, 186.
[1648] Kadoi 2005, 229.
[1649] Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 97.

mausoleum which was tied to the madrasa structure, of which only ruins and a few fragments of wall paintings remain exposed to the weathering agents. Wilber narrates that, upon the death of Shams al-Din in Tabriz, his wife requested for his remains to be sent to Yazd for burial in the complex; the coffin transfer was reportedly accompanied by two marble slabs, which might have been employed for the production of the deceased's marble tombstone, and the coffin was reportedly placed in a tomb of ebony and sandalwood. The marble tombstone retains an inscription stating the time of its production to 1365.

The ground plan of the Shamsiyya madrasa is more complex, compared to the Rukn al-Din mausoleum, but this might be the result of the fact that the architectural complex structure of Shamsiyya is better preserved. Its ground plan demonstrates that at the time of completion of its construction, the monument was a complex in its own right, which consisted of two main components: the funerary structure for the patron of the complex and other architectural spaces, which functioned as a theological school. The ground plan was impacted by the pre-existing urban fabric. Two main construction phases of the monument have been recognized. Originally, the monument featured a modest structure similar to the Rukniyya mausoleum and it was subsequently enlarged into a monumental complex. This intervention comprised the addition of architectural structures on the sides adjacent to the core of the funerary structure. Some of the passages in the mausoleum accordingly needed to be closed off or opened up. The rebuilding of the monument therefore comprised a transformation of a square mausoleum with an *iwan*-portal and a courtyard into a larger cross-form ground plan. Further smaller spaces were adjacent to these large dimension courtyards and structures.

Kamaliyya

Fig. 335.

Architectural Structure

The suggested date for the completion of the constructive and decorative interventions of the Kamaliyya complex, near the Friday mosque of Yazd, has been proposed as c. 1320. The complex comprised a madrasa, a *khanqah*, a mausoleum and a water reservoir, according to written sources.[1650] This may be one of the earliest extant monuments, which was the work of builders and craftsmen who operated in the region under the Muzaffarid government. The patron of the complex was Kamal al-Din Abu al-Maʿali, an important political figure and the minister of the Muzaffarid ruler Mubariz al-Din.[1651] The complex is preserved only in parts; its domed square mausoleum presents the core of the remaining structure comprising also the rectangular courtyard and the entrance *iwan*.

The monument was the work of one construction intervention. The access courtyard leading to its mausoleum is rectangular and it enabled the communication between the *qibla*-oriented mausoleum and the street; in this manner the monument's ground plan was inserted into a pre-existing urban context.[1652] The ground plan features a regular square, with added parts on its

[1650] http://www.archnet.org/sites/5510/media_contents/50199 (Last Accessed: September 11, 2020).
[1651] *Ibid.*
[1652] It also features a passage connecting the complex with the kanat and the water reservoir.

sides, which transform it into a cross-form and with the passage into the madrasa structure on the rear side. The transitional zone system employed to transform the square structure into the hemispherical dome is of the same type as the ones at the Rukniyya and Shamsiyya, with slight differences. The square structure formed by supporting walls is topped by corner arches interrupted by blind niches. Above these elements, there runs a row of squinches alternated with blind niches which form the mausoleum's drum area and carry its hemispherical dome. The mausoleum's exterior has been heavily rebuilt and its dome was coated with modern glazed revetments.

Religious Function of the Three Monuments

The three monuments have been interchangeably referred to as mosques, madrasas, mausolea, shrines and tombs. A closer look at these monuments reveals that their structures were originally more extensive complexes, which consisted of diverse architectural structures with various religious functions. These complexes developed, almost as a rule, around the tombs of patrons who sponsored their construction. Prominent patrons of Yazd sponsored the construction of multi-functional complexes in order to celebrate and demonstrate their political power; accordingly, these complexes comprised the tombs of the patrons which assumed forms of mausolea. In addition to the mausolea, the complexes comprised theological schools, mosques or water reservoirs, in order to demonstrate the piety of the patrons by patronage of these charitable foundations.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Rukniyya

Figs. 321-326.

Revetment Media and Decorative Principles

Rukniyya's revetments can roughly be divided into four groups, according to the artistic media employed for their production. The exterior surfaces of the entrance portal and the exterior of the mausoleum's dome are covered with diverse glazed revetments and especially tile mosaic. The interior surfaces of the mausoleum's entrance *iwan* are reveted with plastered muqarnas and carved stuccos. These stuccos are fragmented, but the remains of their panels are sufficient to understand the original iteration of this part of the monument. The interior of the mausoleum is decorated with three revetment media: wall paintings in the area of the dome and transitional elements, applied moulded and stencilled stuccos on the surfaces of supporting walls, the transitional zone and the mihrab, and some panels of carved stuccos on the mihrab.

The distribution of the revetments on the surfaces of the monument reflects careful consideration of their technological features, in relation to the characteristics of the mausoleum's architectural structure. The craftsmen decided to decorate the interior of the dome with predominantly wall painting medium, due to its concave structure, which would render the application of moulded stuccos on such extensive architectural surfaces challenging. Only some parts (interiors of teardrop formed calligraphic compositions) were decorated with applied moulded stuccos. The transitional zone of the monument also featured numerous concave

elements, and for this reason, a decision was taken by craftsmen to decorate them with wall paintings. The supporting walls of the mausoleum's interior were almost exclusively covered with applied stencilled and moulded stuccos. The mihrab of the mausoleum is preserved in parts and it is one of the best examples of a mihrab decorated with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos combinedwith carved stuccos. The use of these three architectural revetment media for the production of a unified repertoire of the mausoleum's interior provides evidence regarding the interconnectedness of these media. This phenomenon is important for the understanding of the artistic and craftsmanship' practices, because it indicates that the craftsmen specialised in distinct media and collaborated on projects for the production of monumental decorative programmes.

In sum, the interior architectural programme of the Rukn al-Din mausoleum was produced with two main media: the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall paintings. In some parts of the structure, where it was technically easier, the surfaces were covered in wall painting only. On the other easy to decorate surfaces, wall painting has been highlighted by the addition of applied moulded stuccos. Some of the focal points of the mausoleum's interior, such as central parts of the mihrab (the spandrels, etc.), were produced with carved stuccos, perhaps to highlight their visibility. The case of the Rukn al-Din mausoleum therefore illustrates that each revetment medium was employed consciously and applied on optimal architectural surfaces with the goal of highlighting the most significant parts of the building's interior. The carved stuccos of the monument were employed above all to decorate the interior of the mausoleum's entrance *iwan.* This choice also seems to have been caused by practical considerations of the carved stucco's technical properties. These revetments were likely polychrome, although no remains of polychromy have been spotted on them, due to their weathering. These carved stuccos featured relatively thick and deeply incised reliefs which produced a strong shadow and light effect and determined their contrasting appearance.

Carved Stuccos

Figs. 321-322.

The peculiar aspects ofthe carved stuccos at Rukniyya are not the employed artistic techniques or the manners of carving the stucco, which are all fairly common, but the characteristics of their design and visual elements. The inscription band fragment in the mausoleum's entrance *iwan* consists of three distinct inscription styles combined into a unified and balanced inscription band and set against a background of complex floral scrolls. Another specific aspect of the carved stuccos at Rukniyya is the profusion of Square Kufic inscriptions in their designs. Square Kufic is combined with two further inscription styles. The bands of repeating invocations to God in Square Kufic (*The Dominion belongs to God*) are also employed as visual elements of carved stucco panels below the inscription band, which display compositions of abstracted vegetal elements.

Interior Revetments – Applied Moulded Stuccos and Wall Paintings

Figs. 322-326.

Other specific types of inscription compositions featuring diverse inscription styles are also a particular characteristic of the interior revetments in applied moulded and stencilled stucco and wall painting media at Rukniyya. Inscription compositions produced with applied moulded stuccos and wall paintings allowed the craftsmen to manufacture rectangular panels which feature cursive inscription compositions with inscriptions oriented in contrasting directions, combined with a Kufic inscription in wall painting medium placed upside down on the surface of the supporting wall. In this case, the primary concern of the craftsmen was not the legibility of the inscriptions, but the aim to produce sublime designs and complex compositions with diverse inscription styles. The capsizing of these inscriptions is another piece of evidence confirming that these designs were produced with the aid of stencils. Perhaps the most complex composition combining three inscription styles (arranged in different directions) is located in the framing band of the mausoleum's mihrab. This inscription band consists of four inscriptions. The core is formed by the large dimension *Naskh* inscription which runs along the mihrab's perimeter. Another inscription in *Naskh* style is placed on its top, running in the opposite direction and filling the area above it. A Kufic inscription of smaller dimensions, with specific angles to form its letters, was subsequently applied between these two inscriptions, to fill the space, but it can be visually differentiated from the two and read due to its clear-cut angular form. The borders of the inscription(s) band are additionally framed by Square Kufic inscriptions of reduced dimensions. These inscriptions were produced with applied moulded and stencilled stucco techniques, which enabled their superimposition and placement in different directions. This artistic technique therefore opened new possibilities and opportunities for innovative designs of architectural revetments, which were successfully exploited by craftsmen. In this respect, the inscription designs and compositions observed in Rukniyya are more complex, compared to those observed at the mausoleum of Uljaytu in Sultaniyya.

The use of stencils is visible in the inscription compositions of the mausoleum's transitional zone where apotropaic invocations to God (*But Allah will spare you their evil*) were composed to display complex designs. These inscriptions were not only meant to be read; they functioned as complex and striking visual elements which could be perceived as apotropaic ornaments, which added to the fascination of the mausoleum's interior. The inscription style and compositions played a specific role and these inscriptions were no longer intended to simply convey a meaning, but to also function as independent visual elements of the revetment repertoire.[1653] The case of Rukniyya illustrates the use of this invocation in the wall painting medium, which had to be pre-meditated and arranged into a design, which fitted in elements of transitional zones. Smaller knotted Kufic compositions were also specifically designed to fit into the mausoleum's squinches.

[1653] This has been elucidated in the recent research by Blair, who proposes that the use of this invocation in the lustre tile mihrabs was a specific artistic choice, due to the length of the invocation and the visual properties of the *eyes* and *hastae* of the letters, which are almost symmetrically distributed in the invocation.

Shamsiyya

Decorative Principles

The main decorative programme of the complex comprises the interior of the mausoleum's monumental entrance *iwan* portal. This decorative repertoire is produced with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, which are combined with wall paintings. The monument retains the *in-situ* evidence and further photographic documentation indicating that it also featured lustre and Lajvardina tile revetments with animate imagery. Differently to the mausoleum of Rukn al-Din, at Shamsiyya, the relation between the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall painting is not separate, beause they are constantly interconnected and intertwined, and they therefore go hand in hand. Closer observations of the design and visual features of the wall paintings, applied moulded and stencilled stuccos, and carved stuccos, indicate that Shamsiyya's decorative programme may be the work of the craftsmen who also decorated Rukniyya. This is not surprising, because the patrons of these two monuments were a father and son; they therefore employed related resources and acquaintances to secure artisans and builders for their construction and decoration.[1654]

Interior Revetments

Figs. 331-334.

The Shamsiyya mausoleum's interior features two main types of architectural revetments. The dado area was decorated with lustre star tiles and glazed moulded cross tiles. The mausoleum's supporting walls and likely also the transitional zone and the collapsed dome, featured exclusively applied moulded and stencilled stuccos combined with wall paintings. The configuration of the supporting walls is however different; the *qibla* area features a large niche which originally was a passage to the other parts of the complex. Similar applies to the mausoleum's sidewalls. These niches are formed by specific forms of round arches, instead of frequently employed pointed arches. The forms of the supporting walls and their niches therefore determined the tripartite division of the revetment deigns on their surfaces and specific forms of panel designs. Compared to earlier dated revetments of Rukniyya, at Shamsiyya, the craftsmen gave a lesser emphasis to the use of inscription styles for the designs of their visual features. Rather, a stronger emphasis is given to geometric compositions, in particular to circular sun-like formations (*shamsas*) and teardrop medallions. The predominance of these geometric designs with an abundance of vegetal elements might have been intended to evoke Paradise and to thus reflect the mausoleum's funerary function. The principles behind the design production and division of the architectural surfaces are not dissimilar to those at Sultaniyya. At Sultaniyya too, paper was employed to render the structure of applied moulded elements in stucco stronger, but the forms of the applied moulded stuccos at Sultaniyya almost exclusively featured bevelled reliefs.

[1654] Blair 1986a, 19; Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 97.

Tiles

The remains of a lustre star and glazed cross tile dado were discovered during Shamsiyya's restoration interventions in the 1970s.[1655] These tiles have been removed from the site since, and only a few fragments of cross tiles remain *in situ*. The mortar for the adhesion of the tiles is still present on the mausoleum's supporting walls. Its observations indicate that originally, the tile dado ran along the mausoleum's interior perimeter. It is interesting to note that the tile dado also covered the lower portion of the mihrab which was produced with wall painting medium. It is therefore likely that the application of the tile dado was not part of the mausoleum's original decorative programme and that this was either an afterthought or a later redecoration intervention. These tiles were therefore applied to additionally embellish the mausoleum and to add to its material and visual prestige.

The second important source of information concerning the tile dado is the photographic documentation of a small portion of the dado with its tiles by Blair and Bloom.[1656] These photographs provide information about the technological and visual features of tiles. The cross tiles were glazed with turquoise glaze, but they did not feature an ornamental relief produced with moulding. These and the eight-pointed star tiles featured limited dimensions, compared to the usual dado tiles. Eight pointed star tiles were produced with lustre medium. Importantly, lustre alone was employed to decorate these tiles. The decision of the craftsmen to employ the lustre medium without underglaze painting could have been impacted by the small dimension of tiles. The significant aspect of these tiles is also their visual vocabulary, which consists of abstracted floral and geometric compositions and animal imagery. Among these, a central image of a bear and a bird resembling a phoenix or a crane were documented *in situ*.

The presence of these tiles in the mausoleum is of significance for the understanding of the use of animate figures in religious monuments of the Ilkhanid period. Shamsiyya mausoleum is therefore another monument where the use of animate tiles was documented *in situ*. It presents a monument which is relatively distanced from the tiles presumed production centre, Kashan, although the latest archaeological excavations of the Yazd ICHHTO revealed evidence of the existence of tile kilns in Muzaffarid Yazd. On the other hand, other related lustre tiles of comparable dimensions (the majority of which is stored in the Boston Museum of Art) also do not feature any underglaze painting. The presence of these animate images in the mausoleum should be interpreted in a manner similar to related contexts discussed in this work: the mausoleum of Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2), the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), and the other smaller mausolea where such tiles were found. In sum, animate creatures on the tiles likely functioned as apotropaic elements and perhaps allusions to the divine, although it is not possible to exclude that these tiles were re-used from some other context.

[1655] Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 97.
[1656] http://www.archnet.org/sites/5510/media_contents/50199 (Last Accessed: September 11, 2020).

Applied Moulded and Stencilled Stuccos

Figs. 331-332, 334.

The applied elements of stucco at Shamsiyya can roughly be divided into two groups. The largest of these stuccos is produced by moulding of a subtle layer of plaster for them to feature a flat relief. These elements were produced with small dimension moulds and combined on wall surfaces to form large compositions of repeating visual elements. Their visual appearance and the contrast with the flat wall surfaces were enhanced by colouring their background with blue, green and other colour shades and by juxtaposing them to the flat and white surfaces of plaster coating. The same artistic technique was employed for some of the applied moulded stuccos of Sultaniyya, but the combination of stuccos with wall painting colouring at Shamsiyya is different and reflects a separate decorative logic. The second group of applied moulded stucco revetments is best visible on the large circular, sun-like, compositions on the mausoleum's supporting walls. These compositions were formed with a specific artistic technique which consisted of several stages. The unique aspect of these elements is that they strongly protruded from the wall surfaces and that they were produced in a manner for them to mimic the visual effect of stucco undercutting, which was widespread in Isfahan and the surroundings. The obtained effect of undercut at Shamsiyya determined the dynamic appearance of its revetments and it enabled the craftsmen to variegate the relief of supporting walls, and to break their plain appearance. These applied moulded stucco elements were also coloured, for them to feature a mesmerizing visual appearance, and they reflect the complex and detailed compositions of visual elements of Shamsiyya's decorative programme. These protruding undercut elements were not only employed for the *shamsa* designs but also for rectangular panels with abstract elements and vegetal compositions.

Carved Stuccos – the Entrance *Iwan*

Figs. 329-330.

Wilber does not note the presence of carved stucco revetments in the entrance *iwan* of Shamsiyya's mausoleum. These carved stuccos were employed exclusively on some parts of the mausoleum entrance *iwan*'s interior. The majority of the mausoleum's repertoire consists of applied moulded stuccos combined with wall painting and only a few bands and panels are produced out of carved stucco. Observations of the remains of these stuccos however reveal that, in some instances, they cover a layer of completed applied moulded stuccos. The interior surfaces of the *iwan* are divided into a set of niches and blind niches, which aid at breaking down and variegating the surfaces of the *iwan*. These elements are decorated with applied and stencilled moulded stuccos. Two large panel compositions of applied moulded stuccos combined with wall paintings are arranged to revet the pointed arch ceiling of the *iwan*. The carved stuccos are employed in order to highlight the interior of the *iwan* and to provide for a visual frame and break between the *iwan*'s flat surfaces of supporting structure and its ceiling. The stuccos form a complex inscription band which runs along the top portions of the *iwan*'s supporting elements. The considerable overlap between these stuccos and the applied moulded and wall painting layer beneath them, especially in the area of the *iwan's* rear structure, indicates that, the carved stuccos are either the result of a redecoration intervention or an

afterthought; they do not fit with the rest of the revetment programme. It is likely that the carved stuccos were works of the second decorative phase, which coincided with the break in patronage of the monument caused by the death of its patron.

These stuccos feature a complex design, which consists of several registers and employs diverse visual elements: four distinct inscription styles and vegetal elements. The tripartite division of these registers comprises the central register in the middle and two smaller registers flanking it on its top and bottom. The bottom register features flat relief produced by carving of a single stucco layer in order to form the stylized Kufic inscription band. The main register of the inscription band features a large stylized Kufic inscription which functions as the main subject of the composition. Specific characteristics of this inscription comprise double incised outlines and occasional knotted elements inserted in *hastae* of its letters. The inscription *hastae* are additionally topped by the abstract symmetrical vegetal compositions, which are frequently encountered in Ilkhanid revetments, especially inscription compositions on architectural revetment repertoires of the fourteenth century Yazd. This monumental inscription is set against a background of floral scrolls and split palmettes. The smaller Kufic inscription runs on the top of the *hastae* area of the large Kufic inscription. The small Kufic inscription displays particular forms of letters with specific inclinations of letter *teeth,* elongated *hastae* and ends of letters like *waw, qaf, ra* and *fa*. The incorporation of this inscription into the composition of the stucco framing band enriches the complexity of the panel's design and it adds to the dynamic appearance and volume of its stucco relief. The core register of the inscription band is slightly concave on its top, in order to act as a visual mediator between the architectural elements and visual planes of the monument's structure. The top register of the inscription band features a repeating composition of heavily perforated abstracted vegetal elements which intertwine on two visual planes. These compositions consist of split-palmettes. The designers decided to also insert bands of repeating invocations to God in Square Kufic into the composition. These Square Kufic bands are directly related to those mentioned to have been incorporated into the vertical rectangular panels of carved stuccos in the entrance hall of Rukniyya. In fact, the two stucco repertoires share characteristics of the inscription compositions with diverse style types of carving and vegetal and geometrical elements. These similarities are so close that it is possible for these stuccos to be the works of the same workshop, but according to the research of the history and chronology of the monuments, the stuccos of Rukniyya pre-date those of Shamsiyya. The repertoire at Rukniyya was presumably produced in 1325 and the one in Shamsiyya dates to approximately 1335.

The half-blind niche openings in the supporting structure of the entrance *iwan* (Fig. 330), below the monumental carved stucco inscription band, were originally decorated with a combination of wall paintings and applied moulded stuccos of very low relief and subtle designs. At a later stage, the decision was taken to cover lower portions of these openings with a layer of carved stuccos. This was not a structural solution which would include a closing off of an architectural opening to strengthen the structure. Rather, these stucco panels were inserted into the openings, to communicate a message and to also display distinct visual characteristics. These carved stucco panels fill the lower portions of blind niches with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and wall paintings. They consist of two parts. The lower portion features an epigraphic relief, and it is topped by a horizontal composition of vegetal elements. Although these panels share

some characteristics with the inscription band of the *iwan*, they display distinct characteristics. They consist of rectangular cores and epigraphic frames. The core of panels are the cartouches which comprise inscriptions in the style between *Naskh* and *Thuluth*. The background of the inscriptions consists of vegetal elements which include split palmettes and subtle floral scrolls. Similar to the monumental inscription band, the inscription in the core of the cartouche also features an incised double outline. The framing band of the cartouche features stylized Kufic style with repeating invocations to God (*The Dominion belongs to God*).[1657]

These panels are produced with a masterly skill; they feature diverse types of carving from deep outlines of elements to subtle forms of palmette leaves and heavy, but at the same time balanced and elegant, perforation of stucco surfaces. The quality of these stucco reliefs is of advanced level and together with epigraphic cartouches, these works of stucco reveal the masterly skills of their craftsmen. The artistic techniques employed for the production of stuccos in these blind niches are slightly different from those of the *iwan*'s monumental epigraphic band, but both stuccos feature similar aesthetics and style. All these stuccos are works of a single craftsmen's workshop and they post-date the completion of the original architectural revetment repertoire in the *iwan*'s interior and they are most likely works of a redecoration intervention. These stuccos present a high level of craftsmanship comparable to other known masterpieces of the Ilkhanid period in central and other areas of Iran.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior architectural revetments of the Madrasa Shamsiyya remain on two parts of the partially preserved complex – its entrance portal and architectural surfaces of the courtyard preceding the mausoleum. Originally, the exterior revetment repertoire could have been more extensive. Architectural surfaces of the courtyard are partially damaged, and a large portion of the courtyard structure has been rebuilt to reconstruct its original form. Extant revetments on these surfaces have been heavily restored and substituted by modern copies. They are produced with the tile mosaic medium, which features a colour palette consisting of white, light blue, dark blue and beige. The beige colour is the biscuit of the tile material. These tile mosaics were designed to highlight the architectural forms of the monument and they consist of columns for blind niches, lunettes of blind niches, spandrels topping the openings, muqarnas hoods of passages between parts of complex and rectangular panels covering supporting wall surfaces. The tile mosaics must have been planned as the architectural revetments for the monument from the outset. They required the construction of fired brick frames at the time of the monument's construction. The colour palette of the tile mosaics reflects the developments of the artistic medium and it is wider, compared to earlier dated tile mosaics, such as those produced for the original architectural revetment programme of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). Specific aspects of these tile mosaics include floral elements on vertical panels, where parts of the turquoise glaze have been scratched off in order to form floral forms. These elements were also perforated for pieces of dark blue glazed elements to form flower blossom elements, for the tile mosaic panel composition. Muqarnas hoods in the courtyard openings have been

[1657] The inscription band therefore functions as a visual background to the core of the cartouche and as its framing device.

entirely restored to feature white plaster coating and wall painting outlines, but no original muqarnas elements remain *in situ*.

The other group of exterior revetments is concentrated on the modest entrance portal, which leads into the courtyard of the complex and functioned as its main entrance. This structure is preserved only in parts, and it has been heavily rebuilt. Extant architectural revetments are works of modern reconstruction and it is not clear to which extent they reflect the original iteration of the portal.

Kamaliyya

Interior Revetments

Figs. 335-337.

The architectural revetment programme of Kamaliyya can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of external architectural revetments on the exterior structure of the mausoleum's dome. The second group of the revetments are the mausoleum's internal revetments. An extensive portion of the repertoire, in a degraded state, is preserved in the mausoleum's interior. These revetments were produced with wall painting medium. Photographs of the mausoleum's dado area document its eight-pointed lustre tiles of small dimensions and glazed cross tiles between them. Extant fragments of wall paintings in the ruined monument, considered to have been the madrasa of the complex, indicate that not only the mausoleum was decorated with revetments.

The Wall Painting Repertoire

Figs. 335-337.

At Kamaliyya, the repertoire does not combine wall paintings and applied moulded stuccos but features only wall paintings. The focal point of the repertoire is presented by the monumental mihrab. Differently to Rukniyya, at Kamaliyya, the mihrab is given its designated space in a specifically built niche on the mausoleum's *qibla* wall.[1658] The niche is formed by a pointed arch, but its upper portion was not specifically decorated. The entire lower portion of the niche is filled with the mihrab which is composed of different panels of wall painting revetments. The design principles of the mihrab consist of the large central niche, topped by a pair of spandrels and outlined by two framing bands topped by a no longer extant horizontal panel. The lower portion of the mihrab's interior niche is badly damaged, but it retains remains of a blind arch mould, which served for the arrangement of a symmetrical wall painting composition. The lunette of the niche's interior is well preserved. It consists of three tiers of muqarnas. The muqarnas cells feature a wall painting design of a symmetrical floral composition. The niche of the mihrab is topped by a pair of spandrels, which feature a somewhat irregular form, determined by the mould of a shouldered arch and additional triangles on its sides. The spandrels retain the remains of symmetrical compositions of vegetal elements.

[1658] The mihrab design is not dissimilar to the mihrabs of Rukniyya and also remains of the mihrab at the Baba ʿAbdullah mosque in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9).

The mihrab's structure is framed by a monumental epigraphic framing band which features Knotted Kufic style. The inscription is set against a plain background. The knotted elements of the inscription assume monumental dimensions and they display elaborate and variegated forms. The complexity of the inscription's design and its plain background are likely specific choices of the craftsmen; these solutions were adopted to render the design and ornamentation of the wall painting monumental, despite the fact that it was produced with a restrained colour palette. The design of the monumental framing inscription band was therefore envisioned from the outset in a manner for it to be well visible and legible.

The structure of the mihrab was topped by a large horizontal panel which rendered its appearance monumental and increased and accentuated the mihrab's vertical axis. The mihrab was framed by another framing band which featured less complex visual elements of lines and flower blossoms. On the top of this mihrab and below the lunette of the niche in which the mihrab is located, ran a monumental cursive historic inscription. Only the beginning of the inscription remains intact, on the right-hand side of the niche, which features *Naskh* with elongated *hastae*, and begins with "he built the building," indicating that the inscription provided the information regarding the mausoleum's patron. The mausoleum's supporting walls are almost entirely plain at the height of the mihrab, for the purpose of highlighting the hierarchy of the mihrab within the given architectural space. Flat surfaces of the supporting walls were divided into blind niche arrangements in order for their visual weight to be broken down and to determine a more equilibrated appearance of the mausoleum's interior. The surfaces of the supporting walls are coated with white plaster and the blind niches and openings are outlined with blue.[1659]

Another monumental inscription runs along the top edges of the mausoleum's supporting walls. It is of large dimensions, compared to the mihrab inscription its design is more complex. It features Kufic style with elongations of *hastae* in a manner for the lower parts (eyes) of the letters to constitute the first register, the middle area of the inscription with *hastae* carrying different knotted elements, and the second register and the tops of *hastae* with repeating symmetrical floral elements on their tops. In this manner, the added knotted and vegetal elements enabled the craftsmen to produce a monumental inscription band with accentuated vertical axis. A minutely designed stencil-produced floral scroll, similar to the one on the mihrab's inscription band, served to indicate the presence of the inscription's background.

The transitional elements of the mausoleum's interior were also embellished with wall paintings. This was performed in a selective manner, for the most significant elements to be visually highlighted by application of wall painting inscriptions. These inscriptions, which featured invocations to God, were pre-meditated designs, which were outlined on concave surfaces of transitional elements with the aid of stencils. The large pointed arches topping the corners of the supporting walls are adorned with Kufic style invocations to God, which were composed and designed to feature symmetrical forms and to mirror each other. The blind niches and squinches are only outlined with blue, and they serve as a background to the repertoire. The

[1659] It appears that this plaster coating pertains to the original wall painting repertoire and it was likely employed in order to cover the supporting walls in the interior and in order to visually unite the interior surfaces of the mausoleum.

area of the interior shell of the hemispherical dome is entirely covered with white plaster and its focal point at the highest point of the dome features a polychrome rosette consisting of feather-like elements coloured with green, different shades of blue and perhaps red. The rosette is similar to the almost identical rosette in the central part of Rukniyya's dome.

The decorative repertoire of Kamaliyya's interior is more modest, compared to Rukniyya or Shamsiyya, which might reflect a reduced endowment for its production or lack of availability of craftsmen. The wall painting repertoire is nevertheless distributed across its surfaces according to clear principles, which reveal the strong will to highlight the essential parts of the mausoleum's interior, accentuate its architectural lines and break down the large surfaces into an elegant and complex network of smaller architectural forms. The use of a single decorative medium, in addition to the tile dado, is likely the effect of either a lack of working force and expertise in the production of revetments, or of a reduced budget for the monument's decorative programme.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior shell of the mausoleum's hemispherical dome is ornamented with a large dimension grid featuring star designs which are produced by placing the turquoise glazed revetments on the surfaces of the dome's coating. The entrance portal of Kamaliyya was heavily rebuilt and restored and it thus does not retain any original architectural revetments. Drawing on parallels from Rukniyya and Shamsiyya, it is evident that the structure of this *iwan*-entrance is related to them. Accordingly, the entrance *iwan* was likely covered in revetments similar to Rukniyya and Shamsiyya.

Carved Stucco Polychromy at Yazd

Rukniyya and Shamsiyya retain parts of revetment repertoires in carved stuccos, mainly in forms of inscription bands in entrance *iwan*s. The *in-situ* examination of these stucco reliefs and their photographic documentation yielded limited information concerning polychromy traces on their surfaces. The polychromy of the Rukniyya stuccos appears to be entirely lost, due to them being constantly exposed to sunlight. At Shamsiyya, the monumental inscription band in the interior of the entrance *iwan* conserves considerable traces of polychromy. They indicate that frequently employed principles were used to render the stuccos colourful. The recessed areas of the reliefs were coloured blue and the ornamentation of the floral background was coloured with a combination of red and white and perhaps other colours. Remains of green have been found on the vegetal symmetrical ornamentation of the letter *hastae* of Shamsiyya's monumental Kufic inscription. The carved stucco spandrels of the mihrab in the interior of Rukniyya, retain extensive traces of blue and white in the recessed parts of the relief.

In sum, the colour palette employed for the colouring of stuccos at Shamsiyya included at least two shades of blue, red, white and pistachio green, and perhaps shades of ochre. This evidence indicates that the stuccos of Muzaffarid Yazd were likely coloured in a manner and with principles similar to those which developed through decades of stucco production in the Ilkhanid period.

Carved Stucco Artistic Techniques at Yazd

Rukniyya and Shamsiyya retain parts of the decorative repertoires in carved stucco. The logic behind the use of carved stuccos and modalities of their design in these two monuments are closely related. Both monuments feature carved stuccos in areas of the entrance *iwan*s' interiors. Rukniyya also displays two carved spandrels inserted into the applied moulded stucco mihrab. The carved stuccos of these mausolea feature complex inscription bands which frequently employ more than one inscription style and which are deeply carved to feature a contrasting relief. These stuccos were produced by carving of several subsequently applied layers of stucco. The use of this artistic technique enabled the craftsmen to create deep and contrasting stucco reliefs. These stucco techniques are not demanding, but the level of their production and their design are advanced. Other techniques, such as application of the protruding elements in stucco, or stucco undercut, were not used to produce these stuccos, which is different from the stuccos of the Isfahan region.

The Yazd Carved Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The visual appearance of stuccos at Rukniyya and Shamsiyya is characterized by deep and contrasting reliefs. These stuccos feature inscription bands with complex designs which combine several inscriptions in diverse sizes and produced with distinct inscription styles. These stuccos were employed in a selective manner in order to visually highlight the architectural lines of the entrance *iwan*s, or focal points of the mihrab, in the interior of Rukniyya. This decorative logic is similar to the other Ilkhanid monuments, the difference being that the mausolea of Yazd combine carved stuccos with other media, such as applied moulded or stencilled stuccos and wall paintings. The visual appearance of the stuccos is close to the stuccoworks of the Abarquh Friday mosque (mihrab dated 1338; Cat. No. 10) and the Sayyid Gul-i Surkhi mausoleum in Abarquh (Cat. No. 11). These stuccos are visually related, but from technological point of view, they have less in common with stuccos of the Isfahan area.

d.) Furnishing

The monuments do not retain any Ilkhanid furnishing.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The epigraphic programmes of the three monuments are published by Alvandiyan, Majid Ulumi and Mohammad Hassan Khademzade 2009.

Rukniyya

See Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 89-96.

Shamsiyya

See Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 97-105.

Kamaliyya

See Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009, 113-117.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monuments do not retain any post-Ilkhanid stuccoworks.

Monuments' and Revetments' Patronage

In comparison to the majority of the monuments treated in this research work, the information on the patronage of Kamaliyya (1320), Rukniyya (1325) and Shamsiyya (1335?) is clearer. Information concerning the patronage of the three monuments indicates that all three complexes with primarily funerary and charity functions were sponsored by prominent figures tied to the Muzaffarid court. The motivation behind the act of patronage was two-fold; to assure one's remembrance and burial space and to sponsor charitable institutions through which the name of the patron would also be remembered. These political acts allowed the officials to assert their power by pious sponsorship of madrasas and other institutions. This is different, compared to the sponsorship of pious endowments by Ilkhanid officials. At the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) or the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), sponsorship of the monuments is by Ilkhanid officials, but it excluded any construction of a mausoleum for the patron. The monuments of Yazd therefore illustrate a development in patronage conception and also in the articulation of complexes and their functions.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

At Kamaliyya the wall painting is employed independently from any other media. Considering this repertoire dates from 1320, it may be one of the earlier Muzaffarid monuments, compared to the repertoires documented at Rukniyya (1325) and Shamsiyya (1335?). In fact, a gradual shift in predominance of other decorative media for the production of architectural repertoires can be seen when observing these monuments and taking note of the chronological sequence of production of their revetments. Kamaliyya features the interior which is covered with wall paintings and to which a tile dado was added upon the mausoleum's completion or at a later point. The slightly later repertoire of Rukniyya features a tile dado, but its surfaces were covered with a combination of independently applied wall paintings and a combination of applied moulded and stencilled stucco with wall painting colouring and frames and inserts of carved stucco panels in the mihrab area. While the wall painting was an almost independent medium in the dome area of the monument and in its transitional zones, the majority of the surfaces feature a combination of wall painting and applied moulded and stencilled stuccos. In fact, Rukniyya may be one of the earliest monuments in the given geographical area, which features the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos.

All earlier related monuments treated in this research, such as the al-Hasan ibn-i Kay Khusraw mausoleum in Abarquh, the Sayyidun mausolea in Abarquh (Cat. No. 11) and the mausoleum of Baba ʿAbdullah mosque in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9), do not feature applied moulded and stencilled stuccos. Furthermore, early Ilkhanid monuments in the settlement of Yazd, such as the Madrasa Ziaʿiya (the Alexander's prison), feature programmes produced with the wall painting medium and occasionally also carved stucco (the Twelve Imam mausoleum – the Mashhad Davazdah Imam), but never applied moulded stuccos. All repertoires which comprise applied moulded stuccos post-date the completion of the second decorative repertoire at the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27). The existing evidence from the monuments therefore points towards

the possibility that the applied moulded and stencilled stucco techniques developed for the production of Sultaniyya's second decorative programme.[1660] The development and progressively increased frequency of use of applied moulded and stencilled stuccos in place of wall painting medium is well evident, although the number of extant and examined monuments is not big enough to confirm the correctness of this assumption. The carved stuccos of Rukniyya and Shamsiyya are probably works of a craftsmen workshop which could be related to the stucco repertoires in the Abarquh area, because these stuccos are produced with different artistic techniques, compared to those of the Isfahan area. The craftsmen could have also operated locally; in Yazd and its surroundings.

f.) Monuments' Condition

The mausoleum of Rukn al-Din is one of the perhaps best known and best-preserved monuments of the period under discussion. The good state of preservation and constant care by authorities to maintain the mausoleum, might have been determined by the central position of the monument, close to the Friday mosque and also in the area of essential significance for the tourism industry. Conservation activities and maintenance of the architectural structure of Rukniyya also enabled the preservation of its rich architectural revetment repertoire. The monument's interior has been recently subjected to a thorough restoration intervention, due to a termite infestation. In contrast, the Shamsiyya madrasa has been neglected, perhaps also due to its more remote location. At Shamsiyya, the majority of its interior revetments are in a degraded state and in dire need of restoration. These revetments are also being attacked by termites. The state of preservation of Kamaliyya is considerably degraded and especially its interior revetment repertoire is in dire need of conservation interventions for its preservation. The repertoire has been affected by water infiltration through openings in the drum, which have since been closed off. Further sources of water infiltration and damage on the revetments were the openings in blind niches of the transitional zone, which have been screened off with grills. Similar to the other two discussed monuments, Kamaliyya's revetments were attacked and significantly damaged by colonies of termites which feed on the revetment material.

g.) Research Findings – Summary:

The research of the three monuments provides basic information regarding their history, architectural structures and decorative repertoires. The discussion illustrates that the architectural repertoires of these monuments, especially those of Rukniyya and Shamsiyya, developed as a continuation of the second decorative stage undertakings for the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya. Likely, the craftsmen migrated from Sultaniyya towards Yazd where they continued producing revetments in mixed medium, consisting of wall paintings, applied moulded and stencilled stuccos and carved stuccos. Differently to other geographical regions, in Yazd, the moulded and stencilled stuccos were predominant parts of the repertoires and carved stuccos were employed selectively and in restricted quantities.

[1660] On the other hand, it must be considered that only a group of monuments from the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries survives in Yazd and that it is possible that the evidence of earlier monuments with applied moulded stuccos is simply lost.

Around 1320, the repertoire in the interior of Kamaliyya was still produced in the wall painting medium only. Subsequently, at Rukniyya, around 1325, the wall paintings were combined with applied moulded and stencilled stuccos. By 1335, at Shamsiyya the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos were fully integrated with wall painting medium and got to constitute a unified repertoire. Carved stuccos were applied selectively on architectural revetments in order to highlight architectural lines of the entrance *iwan*s of Rukniyya and Shamsiyya and the mihrab of Rukniyya. These stuccos are related to the stuccos of the Abarquh area, rather than those of Isfahan.

These three multifunctional complexes are related, in terms of architectural structures, to the mausolea of Abarquh (Cat. No. 11) and the Baba ʿAbdullah complex at Naʾin (Cat. No. 9), but their revetment repertoires, especially those of the interior, present a separate development. The patronage of the three monuments at Yazd presents a slightly different case, compared to the patronage of Ilkhanid monuments and stuccos by Ilkhanid officials. The main difference is comprised in the fact that the monuments of Yazd, with pious and charitable functions, developed around the mausolea of the patrons, who were secular figures of political influence and with a function in Muzaffarid administration, rather than revered sacred personages.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Alvandiyan 2010; Alvandiyan 2012; Alvandiyan, Ulumi and Khademzade 2009; Wilber 1955, 92-94, 160-161, 186; Blair 1986a, 19; Kadoi 2005; Holod 1973 (not accessed).



Figure 319: The entrance *iwan* of the Rukniyya mausoleum.



Figure 320: Detail of the carved stucco panel in the interior of the entrance *iwan* at the Rukniyya mausoleum shows the masterly designed inscription band combining three inscriptions in diverse inscription styles.

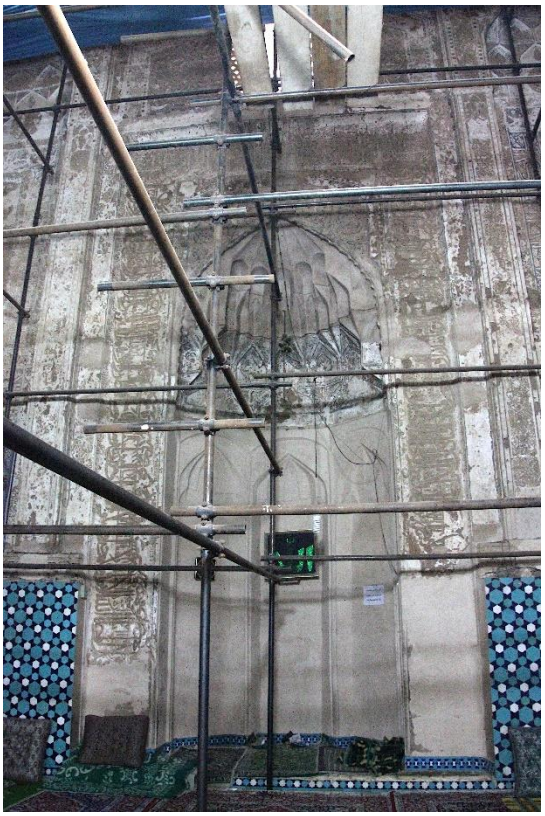


Figure 321: The applied moulded and carved stucco mihrab of the Rukniyya mausoleum.



Figure 322: Detail of the top left-hand side of the Rukniyya mausoleum mihrab, showing the carved stucco spandrels with blue pigmentation, and the monumental framing inscription band in applied moulded stuccos, with three inscriptions.



Figure 323: Detail of the apotropaic invocation in wall painting medium of the transitional zone's blind niche in the Rukniyya mausoleum. It was produced with stencils.



Figure 324: Detail of the corner transitional zone element of the Rukniyya mausoleum with mirrored apotropaic invocation to God produced with stencils and completed free hand.



Figure 325: View of the interior dome shell of the Rukniyya mausoleum with revetments combining wall painting and applied moulded stucco media. The use of stencils for the basic ornamental designs is evident.



Figure 326: Detail of the applied moulded and stencilled stuccos on the supporting walls of the Rukniyya mausoleum.



Figure 327: The entrance *iwan* of the mausoleum at the Shamsiyya madrasa complex.



Figure 328: View of the ceiling of the mausoleum's entrance *iwan* at the Shamsiyya madrasa complex, showing the remains of revetment panels in combination with wall painting and applied moulded stuccos.



Figure 329: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription band running along the walls of the interior of the entrance *iwan* at the mausoleum of the Shamsiyya madrasa.





Figures 330 and 331: Revetments at the mausoleum of the Shamsiyya madrasa. Left: two phases of decoration in applied stuccos (phase one) and carved stuccos (phase two). Right: detail of the applied moulded stuccos and wall painting panel in the intrados of the *qibla* blind niche of the Shamsiyya madrasa complex.



Figure 332: Applied moulded stuccos and wall paintings combined to produce the *shamsa* design revetments on supporting walls of the mausoleum at the Shamsiyya madrasa complex.



Figure 333: Detail of the wall painting teardrop medallion on supporting walls in the mausoleum of the Shamsiyya madrasa. The design and dimensions of the medallion resemble similar medallions on the horizontal panel topping the mihrab of the Baba ʿAbdullah mausoleum in Naʾin (Cat. No. 9).



Figure 334: Detail of the applied moulded stuccos in the mausoleum of the Shamsiyya madrasa. The revetments mimic the undercut stuccos of the Isfahan area. Their decorative pattern is very similar to the second phase revetments of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya, which was likely produced by the same craftsmen.



Figure 335: View of the interior of the transitional zone and the dome of the Kamaliyya mausoleum, with remains of its wall painting repertoire. The dome medallion resembles the medallion of the Rukniyya mausoleum; remains of the monumental inscription band are visible.



Figure 336: Detail of the upper portion of the wall painting mihrab at the Kamaliyya complex's mausoleum.



Figure 337: Detail of the transitional zone and upper portions of the supporting walls at the Kamaliyya mausoleum, showing remaining parts of its wall painting repertoire.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 30

Monument Name: Shaykh Turbat-i Jam complex

Figs. 338-355.

Associated Names: the monument's variant names comprise: the Shaykh Āḥmad-i Jāmī shrine complex at Turbat-i Jām,[1661] the Shrine of Shaykh Ahmad ibn-i Abu al-Hasan, the Shrine of Shaykh Ahmad-i Jam, the Turbat-i Ahmad-i Jam, the Turbat-i Shaykh al-Islam Ahmad-i Jam, the Turbat-i-Jam and the Torbat-i-Sheykh-Jam.[1662] Diverse spellings are used for Turbat or Torbat, and Shaikh and Shaykh, depending on transliteration. Variant names for the complex derive from the Shaykh's different titles.

Monument Type: funerary and pilgrimage complex.

Chronology: the monument was built in numerous phases; some of the oldest parts of the complex date to the Ilkhanid period (the Old mosque, the Kirmani mosque, the White hall and the Gunbad hall's wall painting programme); the most significant post-Ilkhanid construction activities took place in Kartid, Timurid, Safavid and Qajar times.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the domed hall (Gunbad), flanked by the Old mosque (rectangular in plan), with later Ilkhanid additions of the entrance portal *iwan* and two structures flanking it: the Kirmani mosque and the White hall. The complex was significantly enlarged during the Kartid and Timurid periods, with later Safavid renovations and Qajar additions.

Location: in the north-eastern part of the city of Turbat-i Jam; the city is located some 140 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city of Mashhad.

GPS location of the monument: 35.2471496 N; 60.6291787,264 E.

Monument Investigation: July 8, 2014; February 19, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Turbat-i Jam is located on one of the main historic routes connecting Mashhad with Herat.[1663] The Jam river brought water to the settlement which was crucial for its development. According to Mustawfi, Turbat-i Jam was a medium size settlement, with around 200 dependencies. Both Mustawfi and Ibn Battuta mention the thriving agriculture and pastoralism in the region.

[1661] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1662] See https://archnet.org/sites/3887/media_contents/41564 (Last Accessed: December 18, 2020).
[1663] Summary from: Potter 1994, 82-83.

Background

Shaykh Ahmad Jam passed away in 1141.[1664] A century later, construction of the complex was initiated by Ilkhanid and Kartid patrons. Further additions to the complex were made in the Timurid period and further refurbishments took place during the Safavid hegemony. The descendants of Shaykh-i Jam were an influential family, which held spiritual and political bonds to the rulers of Kartid and Timurid dynasties; in this manner, they assured for the patronage, protection and veneration of the shrine. Their influence extended onto the near-by settlements.

The most detailed study of the Turbat-i Jam complex is by Golombek and it discerns approximately eight constructive phases of the complex, based on the examination of its structure, use of literary texts and careful study of its epigraphic repertoire.[1665] It received a follow up by Shivan Mahendrarajah, who revisits issues concerning the construction chronology and patronage of the complex.[1666] The publication by Yaqub Danishdust regarding the research and conservation interventions on the monument is crucial in comprehending the alterations to the complex.[1667] More recent works include the discussion of the monument's stuccos by Taghavinejad.[1668]

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 338-340, 344, 347.

The complex consists of ten main architectural structures, which are grouped around the tomb of the Shaykh, located in complex's courtyard, in front of the monumental entrance *iwan*. The construction of the complex began in thirteenth century and it spans to the present time. The most precise study of the complex, summarized here, is by Golombek and by Mahendrarajah.[1669]

The beginnings of construction activities at the site correspond to the Ilkhanid period, following the conquest of the Turbat-i Jam area; these activities reflect parallel intensive construction activities in the near-by area of Herat. The earliest part of the complex is the Gunbad which is dated to 1236. Written sources suggest that the next constructed building was the Old mosque, around 1320, by Malik Ghiyas al-Din Muhammad; it was probably sponsored with his own wealth. The evolution of the complex continued with the addition of *khanqah*s. Subsequently, works were interrupted by the uprisings signalling the collapse of the Ilkhanid Empire. The next constructed structure was the monumental entrance *iwan*. Further enlargement of the complex was sponsored by Muʿizz al-Din Kart, the ruler of Herat, by 1360: the Gunbad was redecorated, the entrance portal *iwan* completed and the Kirmani mosque and the White dome were added to the complex. The overseer of these undertakings was the descendant of the Shaykh's family, Ibn Mutahhir. Later construction undertakings took place under the Timurid dynasty:

[1664] Summary from: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/ahmad-i-djam-SIM_0405?s.num=1&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=turbat+jam (Last Accessed: December 18, 2020).
[1665] Golombek 1971.
[1666] Mahendrarajah 2016.
[1667] Danishdust 1986.
[1668] Taghavinejad 2017.
[1669] Golombek 1971; Mahendrarajah 2016.

construction of the two madrasas is attributed to Timur, by Golombek, based on written sources. Further constructions are by Amirs and high officials of the Timurid court from around 1440s. Amir Jalal al-Din Firuzshah, the chief Amir of Shah Rukh, ordered the construction of the madrasa (the Green Dome) and perhaps the New mosque. Written sources suggest that further constructions took place in the fifteenth century: a madrasa was built by a little-known Amir Shah Malik. The most significant repairs of the complex took place during the Safavid period, under Shah Abbas I, when the entrance portal was redecorated. Some additional pavilions were added to the complex in Qajar period.

Construction Phases

Phase One – Thirteenth to early Fourteenth Centuries – the Gunbad and the Old Mosque

The Gunbad

Figs. 344-346.

The Dome Chamber or the Gunbad, is located in the central part of the complex (behind the monumental *iwan* and next to the Old mosque). This structure was originally built as an isolated, self-standing building. The Gunbad is square in plan and its transitional zone is formed by four squinch arches and four blind arches. The structure of the dome consists of intersecting ribs, which form a star pattern in its interior. The building comprises three sets of doors from the fourteenth century; one of them is dated 1333. One of the passage openings was opened subsequently and cut through the mihrab. The fourth door dates to the fifteenth century. Supporting walls and the dome area are decorated with wall paintings, stylistically datable to the second half of the fourteenth century. The inscription, which runs along the supporting walls contains significant information regarding the patronage of the domed hall and its subsequent modifications (see below).

Golombek proposes that according to the inscription, the domed structure was built in 1236 by a descendant of the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar, which could be a reference to the founder of the Kart dynasty, Rukn al-Din Abu Bakr.[1670] But Mahendrarajah proposes that the possible founders of the Gunbad could be either descendants of the Jami family or an Ilkhanid official, because the Kartid dynasty was yet to form.[1671] Moreover, the reference in the wall painting inscription regarding the construction of the Gunbad by a descendent of Sultan Sanjar has to be interpreted as legendary and politically motivated.[1672] The structure was repaired under the Kart ruler Malik Abu al-Husayn Muhammad (r. 1332-1370), on the orders of Ibn Mutahhir son of Ahmad (fifth generation descendant of the dynasty of the Shaykhs of Jam).[1673] The dome chamber was therefore constructed in the thirteenth century (around 1236) and subsequently, its structure was modified and redecorated sometime between 1332 and 1370, with the wall painting repertoire.

[1670] Golombek 1971, 31.
[1671] Mahendrarajah 2016, 121.
[1672] *Ibid.*
[1673] *Ibid.*

The Old Mosque

Figs. 340-343.

The Old mosque (Masjid-i Atiq)[1674] is located to the south-east of the Gunbad. This structure was originally rectangular in plan; it comprised two storey arcades, which carried the roofing system consisting of transverse and tunnel vaults. The entire structure comprised five bays. The central part of the mosque was covered by a dome, of which traces were seen by Golombek.[1675] The plan of the mosque was therefore of five bays, but the central bay along the *qibla* axis and the central horizontal bay were emphasized by groin vaults. The structure still conserves some stucco revetments, among which, an inscription which runs along the supporting walls (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-6) and stucco plug revetments.[1676] Originally, there existed a stucco mihrab, in the space, which is now empty, in the middle of mosque's *qibla* wall. The stucco decoration of the mosque was concentrated in the area close to the mihrab, with side bays decorated with coloured stucco plugs and stucco inscriptions. According to Mahendrarajah, this structure was built in 1320-21 and completed around 1333.[1677]

Phase Two – Fourteenth Century Structures

The Kirmani mosque

Figs. 347-351.

The Kirmani mosque was, according to written sources, one of two mosques which used to flank the entrance portal of the complex. The mosque received its name after the signature of the stucco master on the stucco mihrab in the mosque's interior. The stucco mihrab is accompanied by a stucco inscription frieze with Qurʾanic verses from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (Qurʾan, 36:6-9) and further stucco panels. Another carved stucco mihrab on the exterior wall of the mosque's structure is signed by the same Kirmani master craftsman and its visual features are related to the monumental stucco mihrab; the date of this mihrab (1328) provides the indicative date for the stucco repertoire of the Kirmani mosque.[1678] One of the stucco plates on architectural surfaces of Kirmani mosque's interior carries the signature of Ustad Muhammad Faqir, indicating that the mosque's stuccos could be work of two workshops or two separate decorative stages.

The mosque is rectangular and it consists of five bays. A lantern structure used to top its central bay and its lateral bays were covered with transverse vaults and half-domes, which are now covered by muqarnas decoration. O'Kane suggests that the mosque's structure underwent major rebuilding after the mihrab of the mosque was already in its place. Both, Danishdust and O'Kane date the mosque's construction to around 1328 and suggest that its patron was Ghiyas

[1674] It is referred to by Wilber as the Sunni oratory. Wilber 1955, 174.
[1675] Golombek 1971, 29.
[1676] Some stuccos from the Old mosque were transferred and put on display in the National Archaeological museum in Teheran.
[1677] Mahendrarajah 2016, 122.
[1678] Danishdust read the date of the mihrab as either 1318-19 or 1328. O'Kane suggests 1312-13. Danishdust 1986, 58; O'Kane 1992, 89.

al-Din Kart, the patron of the White Dome. According to Mahendrarajah, 1328 is a likely date, given the patron's political situation and patronage activities.[1679]

The White Dome

The structure on the north-eastern side of the entrance portal is the Gunbad-i Safid, the White Dome, which is also referred to as the Masjid-i Riwaq. According to Golombek, the room could have originally contained a mihrab.[1680] The interior is filled with several tombs and one of them is dated 1655-56.[1681] The structure of the White dome is smaller than the Kirmani mosque and it contains two deep recesses on northern and southern sides, and further shallower recesses on the eastern and western sides. Arches of the structure support the vaulted star form ceiling. O'Kane and Danishdust suggest that the structure was built in 1328, by Ghiyas al-Din Kart.[1682]

The Entrance Portal

The entrance portal (Fig. 339) is around thirty metres high. It comprises niches in its lateral walls, which serve as passages to the other parts of the funerary complex; to the Kirmani mosque (east), to the White dome (west) and to the Gunbad (south). These lateral openings feature muqarnas plaster hoods which cover earlier carved stucco decoration. The portal was constructed in two phases. The works on the portal started under patronage of Mutahhir ibn-i Ismaʿil, the brother of the patron of the Old mosque. The portal was however not completed during the lifetime of Mutahhir ibn-i Ismaʿil, and the construction of the portal was continued by his son, Ghiyas al-Din, who also redecorated the Gunbad structure.[1683] The portal was covered with tile mosaic in Safavid period, under Shah Abbas I, around 1316-17, by the architect Amir ibn-i Hajji Mahmud al-Natanzi.[1684]

Saracha *Khanqah* and the Fariwandi Madrasa

These two structures are no longer extant; they used to flank the Gunbad on the south-western side. The patron of the *khanqah* was Shihab al-Din Ismaʿil and the patron of the madrasa was Khwaja ʿAlaʾ al-Din Muhammad Fariwandi. The exact location, dimensions and features of these two structures are challenging to determine without archaeological excavations. But written sources testify to their existence. It is possible that they were already partially demolished towards the end of the fourteenth century, to make space for the construction of the White dome and some other parts of the complex. According to Mahendrarajah, these structures were completed prior to 1335.[1685]

[1679] Mahendrarajah 2016, 122.
[1680] *Ibid.*
[1681] *Ibid.*
[1682] O'Kane 1992, 89. Danishdust 1986, 58, 61.
[1683] Mahendrarajah 2016, 112.
[1684] *Ibid.*, 112.
[1685] *Ibid.*, 115.

Phase Three – Fifteenth Century Structures

Timur's *Khanqahs*

Written sources mention the construction of two *khanqah*s by Timur, around 1385, on the eastern side of the complex, but no traces of them remain.[1686] The main gate of the complex is currently located on the ground where these *khanqah*s could have been located. According to Mahendrarajah, these structures were constructed around 1381.[1687]

The Madrasa of Firuzshah or the Green Dome

The other name of this structure is Gunbad-i Sabz; it is located to the north-western side of the complex. This structure was originally intended to be part of a more extensive architectural structure, which was never completed, but of which traces remain on the sides of the Green dome.[1688] The southern side of the structure and its dome are decorated with faience revetments. The structure contains the completion date (1440) and the signature of the head of the tile decoration workshop (*the work of the weak slave, Ustad Hajji Mahmud, the Ornament of the Jami of Shiraz, may Allah pardon him*).[1689] The Green dome is constructed with supporting walls in square form on exterior and a cruciform plan in its interior. The mihrab is located on the southern side of the domed chamber. The adjacent structure to the Green Dome also contains a mihrab and these two structures would evolve into an *iwan*.

The New Mosque (the Masjid-i Naw)

The New mosque is located on the western side of the complex. It comprises a large rectangular courtyard which leads to its prayer halls. The main prayer hall is cruciform and it is flanked by two additional prayer spaces covered with cross vaults. Parts of the Old mosque had to be demolished for the construction of the New mosque.[1690] Revetments of the New mosque and some parts of its structure are of modern vintage and the only original structure is the cruciform prayer hall. According to written sources, the mosque was built by Amir Jalal al-Din Firuzshah in 1442-43.[1691]

The Madrasa of Amir Shah Malik

Written sources indicate that the complex comprised another madrasa, on its southern side, where modern structures pertaining to the complex are currently located.[1692] The patron of this madrasa was either the renowned Shah Malik, or a lesser figure called Amir Malik Shah, who sponsored works at the Masjid-i Mashhad. This structure was built before 1419–20.[1693]

[1686] Mahendrarajah 2016, 112.
[1687] *Ibid*.
[1688] *Ibid*, 119.
[1689] *Ibid*., 112.
[1690] Perhaps also some other Ilkhanid period buildings were knocked down to make space for the New mosque.
[1691] Mahendrarajah 2016, 112.
[1692] *Ibid*.
[1693] *Ibid*.

Ilkhanid Complex Ground Plan

The Ilkhanid funerary complex (Fig. 338) consisted of the following structures: the Gunbad, the Old mosque, the Kirmani mosque, the entrance portal and the White hall. The Gunbad is likely the oldest structure together with the Old mosque. The Gunbad is square in plan and it was originally a free-standing structure. The Old mosque is partially reconstructed, based on suppositions regarding its original structure. This structure was rectangular in plan, and it comprised five bays, with the central bay enlarged and intersecting with the horizontal central bay into a cruciform form. Some parts of the mosque were demolished in order to provide space for later structures, such as the New mosque. The entrance portal was added on the northern side of the Gunbad and it was connected to it and to the two lateral structures constructed in parallel to the first construction phase of the entrance portal *iwan*: the Kirmani mosque and the White hall. The Kirmani mosque is rectangular in plan with numerous recesses. The original structure of the Kirmani mosque, built around 1328, was later modified, in parallel with the 1360s redecorations of the Gunbad. The White hall is rectangular in plan with a stellar superstructure in its middle. Numerous recesses of the hall variegate its ground plan.

Ilkhanid Complex Elevation

The elevation of the Ilkhanid complex was dominated by the entrance portal, which accentuated the vertical axis of the complex, and the Gunbad behind it, with its domed superstructure. The Old mosque was likely covered by a central dome, at the intersection of the two bays, which formed its cruciform plan. Another elevated point of the complex was the White hall's roofing structure which assumed a stellar form.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The function of all parts of the Ilkhanid complex is not entirely clear. The grave of the Shaykh was never integrated into a mausoleum-like structure and alternatives were employed to commemorate it. The Gunbad could have been built as a commemorative funerary structure or as a pilgrimage space for prayer. Its original function remains unclear. The Old mosque served as a funerary mosque, which commemorated the grave of the Shaykh and served for prayer. The construction of the Kirmani mosque could have been intended as enlargement of prayer space for the pilgrims visiting the complex. The White hall served to house other graves of notables who wanted to be buried near the Shaykh.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

For the understanding of the Ilkhanid architectural revetments at Turbat-i Jam, attention needs to be given to three structures: the Old mosque with its carved stuccos, the Kirmani mosque with carved stuccos and the Gunbad (with its wall paintings dating to the redecoration intervention in 1360s). The stuccos of the Old mosque could be dated to around the 1320s or 1330s; it is possible that they are the work of the Kirmani mosque stucco masters. The Kirmani mosque stuccos can be dated to 1328, according to the date contained in the related mihrab on

the mosque's exterior surfaces.[1694] These stuccos also comprise two signatures of stucco craftsmen. The wall paintings of Gunbad are later in date, but they are described here for comparative purpose with earlier Ilkhanid wall painting repertoires, mainly located in central Iran.[1695]

The Old Mosque

The Old mosque was partially ruined, but it retains the majority of its original stucco revetments, except for the mihrab. Its stuccos contain an extensive amount of stucco polychromy and they display a distinctive stucco style and artistic techniques.

Stuccos

Figs. 340-343.

The stuccos in the Old mosque are concentrated around the mihrab area and it is plausible that there once existed a monumental stucco mihrab in the mosque. Stuccos decorate the central bay of the Old mosque, on the *qibla* side. They cover the architectural surfaces of two storey arcades which carry the mosque's roofing system. The lower storey of the arcades is decorated with stucco columns, which display Floral and Square Kufic bands on their shafts (they either feature the Sunni Shahada or repetition of *Muhammad*). Capitals of these stucco columns are formed with Square Kufic inscriptions which is a unique case of use of Square Kufic in stucco medium for columns surfaces.[1696] These columns comprise an extensive amount of original polychromy consisting of white, red and blue. The spandrels of the lower storey arcades are enclosed by stucco bands, which present heavily perforated geometric patterns coloured white, red and blue. The intrados of arches is decorated with Ilkhanid stucco plugs arranged in symmetrical geometric patterns and carved into a stucco layer. Supporting wall structures of arcades are decorated with stucco plugs which are arranged in geometric patterns and emphasized with addition of blue, red and white in chequered patterns.

There is a monumental inscription band (Fig. 342) which runs at the top of the first storey of arcades. This inscription band contains a double inscription with large dimension *Thuluth* style and smaller Kufic inscription placed on its top. These two inscriptions contain Qurʾanic quotations (*Thuluth* inscription: *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-6; Kufic inscription:[1697] *Surat al-Nabaʿ* 78:1-17) and they are set against a background of floral scrolls, which retain an extensive amount of plain relief surfaces.

The upper storeys of the arcades are decorated with carved stuccos (Figs. 340, 343). These stuccos are arranged to form framing devices for the openings of the pointed arches. Qurʾanic inscriptions run along these openings which are topped by pairs of spandrels (two out of four inscriptions could be read: *Ayat al-Kursi*, *Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255; *Surat al-Tawba*, 9:18-19).[1698]

[1694] The mihrab is signed by the same master stucco craftsman as the monumental mihrab of the Kirmani mosque.
[1695] Such as the wall paintings of Yazd area (Cat. No. 29), and those at Pir-i Bakran (Cat. No. 2) and Ushturjan (Cat. No. 4).
[1696] The closest parallel are the two slender columns in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, in the north-western niche of the iwan. They feature specific compositions in positive and negative, repeating: *Muhammad*.
[1697] Author's reading. This is a rarely occurring Qurʾanic excerpt in Ilkhanid stucco medium.
[1698] Author's reading.

These spandrels are decorated with applied protruding bosses and their floral decoration is not dissimilar from the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque. The arcades are framed with geometric patterns of stucco produced with heavy perforation. The intradoses of these arches are decorated in a manner similar to the lower storeys: stucco plugs are arranged to form geometrical patterns. The intradoses of the arches, which connect the bays on the upper storey, are decorated with heavily perforated stucco with geometric ornamentation.

These stuccos retain extensive amounts of original polychromy in white, red and blue. The colours are used to emphasize Qurʾanic inscriptions and invocations. Moreover, conscious use of colour for stucco plugs and carved revetments serves to highlight the architectural forms of the structure. The artistic techniques employed for the production of these stuccos are undemanding. Most of the stucco inscription bands are carved out of a single or double stucco layer. Protruding bosses are applied to the spandrels on the upper storeys of arcades. Stucco plugs mainly comprise modest floral ornaments. Square Kufic inscriptions are set against a plain background, which is carved out, based on the applied sketches of Square Kufic inscriptions.[1699]

The Gunbad Structure

The three sets of Ilkhanid wooden doors, one dated 1333, together with the wall painting inscription in the interior of the Gunbad, testify to the Ilkhanid period foundation of this structure, around 1333-1336. The Gunbad's interior, as stated by its wall painting inscriptions, was redecorated in the 1360s.[1700] A short description of the wall painting repertoire is provided here for the sake of completeness.[1701]

Wall Paintings

The interior of Gunbad is decorated with a monumental wall painting repertoire (Figs. 344-346) which covers its supporting walls, the transitional zone and the dome. The wall painting repertoire was produced with the use of stencils for repeating patterns, decorative rosettes and floral bands, but its inscriptions in cursive style were hand-written and incised on the surface of the wall painting support. The repertoire is masterly arranged for the inscription bands, floral bands, rosettes and other pictorial devices to highlight the monument's architectural structure. The prevailing colours of the repertoire are red, white and blue, but it also contains shades of green.

The centre of the ribbed star dome (Fig. 344) comprises a muqarnas decoration with its cells coloured with floral ornamentation. The ribs which carry the dome are visually enhanced with repeating floral bands. Empty spaces between these ribs are filled with floral rosettes, which create a circular pattern. Other devices and types of ornamentation are also found in spaces formed by the ribs: some are decorated with a chequered pattern, which is also featured on the supporting walls, and larger spaces are filled with Square Kufic inscriptions. The transitional zone consisting of four squinch arches and four blind arches is richly decorated with reflected

[1699] This artistic technique is different from those seen at the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2).
[1700] The information is contained in *shamsas* on the supporting walls of the structure.
[1701] This structure requires a separate and more detailed study.

use of inscriptions and floral bands. Each transitional element comprises two inscription bands: the exterior form of the transitional element is highlighted with inscription bands in white with a blue background of larger dimensions. These bands are reflected in the interior space of transitional elements where white inscriptions with red background echo forms of transitional elements. The spaces between the inscription bands are filled with chequered patterns, repeating floral ornamentation, short inscription cartouches and rosettes. Spandrels of transitional zone elements are decorated with rosettes, and with radial geometrical patterns, which are inserted into compositions of floral ornamentation. The top edge of Gunbad's supporting walls is decorated with double inscription band containing information about patronage of the structure.[1702] Vertical shafts of the large *Thuluth* inscription are elongated and the remaining upper portion of the band is filled with Kufic inscription, similar to the stucco band of the Old mosque.

The southern supporting wall, which now features one of the openings, retains remains of a stucco mihrab. Each supporting wall is divided into three equal portions, which contain further subdivisions. The visual frames for each door opening are formed with chequered patterns in black, red, blue and white, and with the addition of short inscription bands. The southern side with the remains of the mihrab comprises a distinct pattern of vertical floral compositions. The remaining portions of the supporting walls display tripartite divisions of space, where the walls are decorated with large rosettes and compositions of flowers in vases. For rosettes and the ornamentation of the supporting walls, red, blue, white, pistachio green and black were used for colouring. Some rosettes comprise epigraphic elements.

The Kirmani mosque

Figs. 347-351.

Stucco revetments of the Kirmani mosque represent the first phase of the architectural structure and its decoration. The mosque was completed around 1328, but it underwent modifications, likely, around 1360, when its vaulting structure and the roofing system were probably rebuilt. The stucco programme comprises the monumental stucco mihrab with the signature of its master craftsman, the inscription band, which runs along the top edges of mosque's supporting walls and stucco plates inserted into the walls on the mosque's south-eastern side. These stuccos were entirely whitewashed.

The Inscription Band

The monumental inscription band (Figs. 347-348) runs along the top edges of the Kirmani mosque supporting walls.[1703] This fragmented inscription band, with some restoration integrations of its inscription text, retains Qurʾanic verses from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (Qurʾan, 36:6-49).[1704] The inscription is written in *Thuluth* style; letters' *hastae* are elongated and the inscription contains numerous ligatures and compressed and superimposed manner of writing; it is a masterpiece of calligraphy. The empty spaces between the elongations of the inscription

[1702] This inscription band represents aesthetics of polychromy also encountered in the stucco medium: the background is coloured blue and the inscription is white.
[1703] The artistic technique employed for the making of the band is the common carving of two layers of stuccos.
[1704] Author's reading.

are occasionally filled with knot elements, resembling those of Knotted Kufic style, similar to the inserted knots of the Mir Zabir mausoleum mihrab at Sirjan (Cat. No. 33). The inscription is placed against a background of complex floral scrolls with palmette imagery, which are recessed in comparison to the inscription and carved out of the lower layer of stucco material. The inscription band was whitewashed and its damaged parts were replaced with modern restorations.

The Mihrab

Figs. 349-352.

The monumental stucco mihrab of the Kirmani mosque is inserted into the main southern recess of its architectural structure. Its lower part was damaged by water infiltration, and some parts of its decoration were reconstructed by modern restoration interventions. The mihrab consists of the main interior niche, which is flanked by two columns, and topped by a pair of spandrels. This structure is framed by a monumental inscription band. The described structure is further framed by a tripartite monumental panel of repeating compositions of palmette ornamental elements and by thin vegetal and geometric bands on its sides. Such bands visually unite the mihrab on its top margin with the monumental inscription running along top edges of the Kirmani mosque's supporting walls (see above).

The internal niche of the mihrab was heavily damaged. In the recessed space, on the right-hand side of the mihrab's niche, is the signature of the master stucco craftsman who headed the workshop responsible for the production of the mihrab and the monumental inscription band. The signature reads: *the work of the weak and meagre slave who hopes for the mercy of his great Master, Khwaju Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud al-Kirmani*.[1705] The signature of the stucco craftsman is contained in a cartouche, which might have been mirrored by a cartouche containing the date of the mihrab's completion.[1706] The date of completion of the mosque's stucco repertoire can be extrapolated from the external stucco mihrab, which is signed by the same stucco master and which contains a partially legible date, which could either read 1312-13 or 1327-28.[1707]

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The central part of the niche (Figs. 349-350, 352) of the Kirmani mosque mihrab was covered by a modern restoration work, which reveals remains of the original mihrab on its lower part (Fig. 352).[1708] The interior of the lower portion of the niche consists of one main panel and two side surfaces flanking it. The right-hand side surface retains the cartouche with the signature of the master stucco craftsman and fragments of two panels of vegetal compositions. The left-hand side of the niche is fragmented. The lower portion of the niche is topped by an inscription band

[1705] O'Kane 1992, 89.
[1706] The mihrab and its signature has been compared by Rashidniya, Salihi and Taghavinejad to stucco mihrabs of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque at Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab from Ushturjan (Cat. No. 32) and the Mir Zabir mausoleum at Sirjan (Cat. No. 33), suggesting that the mihrabs are the work of the same Kirmani stucco school. See Salihi, Taghavinejad, Rashidniya 2017.
[1707] O'Kane 1992, 89.
[1708] The examination of the lower portions of the mihrab niche during the 2020 survey, indicate that the central stucco panel of the niche does not reflect the original.

and the monumental lunette panel, which are well preserved. The inscription band features *Naskh* style Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yunus* (Qurʾan, 10:62-64). It is placed against a background of floral scrolls with leaf and split-palmette elements. The large lunette panel (Fig. 351) features a common symmetrical composition of palmette ornamentation.[1709] The lunette panel is outlined by a thin band of repeating floral patterns on three sides, and by another large band of repeating abstracted vegetal elements on its right- and left-hand sides.[1710]

The pointed arch which carries the niche is flanked by two columns. The column shafts are visible in fragments in the mihrab's lower portion; they consisted of repeating palmette and leaf bands, similar to the ones on the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1). The right-hand side capital is preserved and it features a composition of rosettes, leaves and palmette leaves. The two columns surmount the framing inscription of the mihrab's niche, which assumes a form similar to the bands of the Mir Zabir mausoleum's mihrab (Cat. No. 33). The framing inscription features *Naskh* style and it recounts a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (Qurʾan, 3:26-28). The inscription retains diacritical marks, and it is vocalized. It is set against a plain uncarved background. The mihrab niche is topped by a pair of spandrels.[1711] These spandrels are composed out of tripartite floral ornamentations, consisting of diverse leaf elements and flower blossoms. In their centres, they retain circular surfaces, which used to retain protruding bosses.[1712] A thin geometrical band frames these spandrels.

The described mihrab composition is framed by a monumental framing band (Fig. 350), which starts with the *Basmala* and features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Fath* (Qurʾan, 48:1-4). The inscription band displays *Thuluth* style similar to the monumental band of the Kirmani mosque (see above).[1713] Both of these inscription bands are characterized by extremely elongated letter *hastae*, and frequent superimposition of their texts and their diagonal writing. In both cases, the band relief is relatively shallow. The angles of the mihrab's framing band are filled with knotted arrangements. The inscription is set against a richly decorated background of floral scrolls with leaves and palmette ornamentation. The exterior margins of the framing band are outlined with a thin band of alternating flower blossom and leaf elements.

The described mihrab's structure is framed on three sides by symmetrical bands of palmette compositions (Figs. 349-350). Two such bands run along the mihrab's sides and they merge with the top register of the mihrab, which consists of repeating vertical rows of symmetrical palmette decorations. These elements form the monumental composition in the mihrab's top section. They accentuate its monumentality and vertical axis. This top register is slightly concave and the terminations of the bands protrude from the mihrab's relief; parts of them had

[1709] These ornamentation elements are in fact similar to the mihrabs of which is indeed also found at the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab at Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab (Cat. No. 32), and the mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum (Cat. No. 33). The closest parallel for the lunette is presented by the lunette of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab.

[1710] These bands are not dissimilar to the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab at Natanz (Cat. No. 31).

[1711] Their design is similar to the spandrels of the Kucha-yi Mir at Natanz mihrab and the mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan.

[1712] The protruding bosses appear to have fallen away from the mihrab. The scratchings of the surface of the empty spaces for the bosses suggest that they surely existed. The use of protruding bosses for spandrel composition is very similar to the spandrels of the Kirmani signed mihrabs of Kucha-yi Mir mosque, the Mir Zabir mausoleum and the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab.

[1713] The closest parallel for the inscription band is encountered in the stucco mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum.

to be applied on the mihrab's relief, rather than be carved out of it. The entire mihrab structure is flanked by two bands of repeating floral ornamentation.

The Stucco Plaques in the Kirmani Mosque

Some carved stucco plaques are located on the upper portions of the mosque's south-eastern supporting walls. They present a distinct type of stucco carving, with deep perforations of the stucco relief, which create a contrasting background of empty carved-out space for floral compositions of plaques. In their upper register, these plaques carry inscriptions in Kufic style. One of the plaques is signed *Work of Ustad Muhammad Faqir*. This indicates that a different workshop was in charge of the production of these plaques. The plaques may be later additions to the mosque's surfaces which could have been produced at the time of the mosque's rebuilding. Their distinct carving style suggests that they were not produced in a manner similar to the monumental inscription band and the stucco mihrab of the Kirmani mosque. Some fragments of stucco bands are also found on the arches which surmount the mosque's hall. They indicate that the decorative programme of the architectural space was originally more extensive. Judging from their position, these bands are likely the work of the mosque's rebuilding and could be contemporary to the mentioned stucco plaques.

Exterior Revetments

The external carved stucco mihrab is located on the external wall of the Kirmani mosque and points towards the *qibla*. No further exterior revetments are found on the mentioned structures, apart from the Safavid date tile mosaics of the entrance portal.

The External Mihrab

Figs. 353-356.

The external mihrab was discovered during the restoration interventions which are described by Danishdust.[1714] It is closely related to the Ilkhanid stuccos of the Kirmani mosque, because it is signed by the same master stucco craftsman. Its signature reads: *Work of the poor person, Khwaju Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud al-Kirmani*.[1715] The mihrab comprised a fragmentary date of its completion, which could be read as either 1312-1313 or 1327-28.[1716] The date on the mihrab is significant evidence for the approximate dating of the Ilkhanid stucco repertoire in the Kirmani mosque. Furthermore, the external mihrab and the mihrab in the interior of the Kirmani mosque present a unique case in Ilkhanid stuccos, where two mihrabs retain the signature of the same master stucco craftsman.[1717] The mihrab is fragmented.

The external mihrab is smaller, compared to the internal mihrab. It might have been produced for the purpose of the prayer space extension. The mihrab's basic design is similar to the one in the Kirmani mosque. The mihrab features a central niche formed by a pointed arch. The lower portion of the niche is divided into three panels. The central panel comprises diverse

[1714] Danishdust 1986, 58.
[1715] O'Kane 1992, 89.
[1716] *Ibid.*
[1717] Comparison of these two signatures indicates that nevertheless variations in formulation and expression of the name of the master craftsman were part of the craftsmen's practice.

compositions of geometric patterns in the lower part and a floral composition in the central section. The two panels are separated by a *Naskh* inscription band with invocations to God. A separate arch forms the inscription band in *Naskh* style comprising Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (Qurʾan, 112: 1). The area below the niche's lunette is filled with a fragmentary Knotted Kufic inscription band which may have featured the *Basmala*. The band is separated from the lunette with a repeating band of perforation and abstracted vegetal patterns.

The two side panels of the niche's lower portion are badly damaged. But the craftsman's signature on the right-hand side of the niche, in the designated cartouche, is well legible (see above), and there remain fragments of the date of the mihrab's completion on the left-hand side. Further panels of vegetal decoration fill spaces on the sides of the niche. The top of the niche is filled by the monumental lunette (Fig. 355) consisting of a large and symmetrical composition of palmette elements similar to the internal mihrab. The niche is flanked by a pair of columns which surmount its pointed arch. The column shafts display patterns of repeating vegetal compositions similar to those on the shafts of the interior mihrab. The column capitals are no longer extant. The two columns surmounted an inscription band which framed the mihrab's niche. The niche was topped by a pair of spandrels of which fragments are visible. The mihrab structure was framed by a large inscription band (Fig. 354) which is preserved in fragments. It features the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Jinn* (Qurʾan, 72:18-23) and *Thuluth* style, with elongated *hastae*, slightly inclined lettering with occasional superimpositions of text, similar to the monumental framing band of the Kirmani mosque mihrab and the monumental inscription band on the top portions of its walls. The inscription is placed against the richly decorated background of floral scrolls and palmette elements. The mihrab structure is outlined by a thin band of arabesques.

The external mihrab shares several similarities with the large mihrab in the Kirmani mosque's interior. The two mihrabs are produced with the same production technology and stucco artistic techniques. Moreover, they feature similar designs and panel divisions. Ornamental vocabulary of these mihrabs is closely related and also the inscription types and styles reveal close similarities. The two mihrabs are signed by the same master stucco craftsman and they are works of the same workshop at a close time distance; this allows the level of variation in ornamentation and stucco revetment design, which the craftsmen produced in two different mihrabs to be observed.

Stucco Polychromy at Turbat-i Jam

The stuccos of the Kirmani mosque were entirely whitewashed and they do not retain their original polychromy. The external mihrab of the Kirmani mosque does not retain any polychromy traces. The stuccos of the Old mosque however retain extensive amounts of stucco polychromy consisting of traces of white, blue and red. This repertoire is important for the understanding of the use of colour on Ilkhanid stuccos. But this colour palette was restricted to three principal hues: blue, red and white, without traces of diverse shades of red, or addition of green. Blue is used for the background of the double inscription which runs along the supporting walls. The inscriptions might have been coloured white or red. The stucco plug ornamentation is also coloured with these three colours. Red is used abundantly and serves to create the background of the colour patterns in combination with white. Blue is only employed to

highlight stucco plugs and to form geometric patterns. Heavily perforated geometric patterns on the arches of the arcades are coloured with all three colours which highlights the repetitive nature of the employed patterns. This addition of pigments variegated the ornamental pattern and rendered the relief more contrasting. Square Kufic inscriptions retain extensive traces of blue, which was used for their background, while the Square Kufic inscriptions might have been coloured white in order to render them more visible. Cursive inscription bands of the upper storey of the arcades retain blue background and might have been coloured white. The ornamental compositions of the spandrels of the upper storey were coloured with an inverted colour scheme with red for their backgrounds. The described use of colours reflects colouring principles which were common in the Ilkhanid period. The majority of the other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires were also coloured according to similar logic, but with a wider colouring palette.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Turbat-i Jam

The stucco artistic techniques for the production of stuccos at the Old and Kirmani mosques are fairly similar. In both cases, stucco reliefs of inscription bands were carved out of two layers of stucco material. The stucco plugs at the Old mosque are absent in the Kirmani mosque. Moreover, the Square Kufic inscriptions are only present in the Old mosque. Stuccos of both repertoires comprise the use of protruding bosses for spandrels of the mihrabs and arcades. These artistic techniques demonstrate a slight variegation in their selection, between the two structures, but all the techniques were frequently employed in the Ilkhanid period.

The Turbat-i Jam Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The stucco revetments of the Kirmani mosque were produced with artistic techniques which are similar to those employed in the Old mosque. Moreover, the two repertoires do not seem to be very far apart in their dating, with the Old mosque stuccos produced around 1320 and the Kirmani mosque stuccos dated to 1328. The appearance of the stuccos, their inscription styles and types of relief are however differing. Moreover, the stuccos of the Old mosque retain their polychromy while the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque were whitewashed. These two repertoires are works of different craftsmen's workshops. The artistic style of the Old mosque is closer to the stuccos of central Iran and visually matches stucco repertoires of earlier dates. The stuccos of the Kirmani mosque illustrate a distinct style: it is characterized by inscriptions with extensive elongations of letter shafts and insertion of knotted ornamentation; these inscriptions are fluid and their proportions are different from the repertoires in central Iran, north-western Iran or the Khurasan region. The closest parallels for the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque are the stucco mihrabs of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. No. 33) and the Kucha-yi Mir mosque at Natanz (Cat. No. 31), which are however signed by different stucco masters.[1718] Importantly, the close dates of the Old mosque stuccos and those of the Kirmani mosque, demonstrate that dating of stucco repertoires based on their stylistic characteristics is difficult, because different styles and artistic techniques existed in parallel.

[1718] Without further evidence, despite suggestions by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad, it is difficult to find solid evidence that the Kirmani mosque stuccos are the works of the same workshop as the Mir Zabir mausoleum, or the Kucha-yi Mir mosque of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab.

d.) Furnishing

Three pairs of wooden doors, one dated 1333, are present in the Gunbad structure. These doors reflect the Ilkhanid foundation of the Gunbad, and the fact that the interior of the structure was redecorated around the 1360s, is indicated by historic inscriptions on the wall painting repertoire. No other pieces of furniture from Ilkhanid period are found in the complex.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

This section is limited to the epigraphic programme in the carved stucco medium which is located in the Old mosque and the Kirmani mosque.

The Old Mosque

Not all the stuccos of the Old mosque are preserved and its epigraphic programme is incomplete. Some of the inscriptions are damaged to the point that they are no longer legible.

a.) The capitals of the columns forming the ground storey pointed arches of the *qibla riwaq* feature compositions of Square Kufic inscriptions. The inscriptions to the west are the Sunni Shahada and the inscriptions to the east are repeatings of *Muhammad*.[1719]

b.) The second storey framing inscription bands recount Qurʾanic passages in *Naskh* style and they are set against a floral scroll background. The inscriptions closer to the *qibla* wall are no longer legible. The inscription framing the north-western opening features *Ayat al-Kursi* (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255) and the inscription to the north-east features excerpt from *Surat al-Tawba* (Qurʾan 9:18-19).[1720]

Text of the *Ayat al-Kursi* reads:[1721]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The excerpt from the *Surat al-Tawba* reads:[1722]

[1719] Author's reading.
[1720] Author's reading.
[1721] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-baqarah-255-qs-2-255-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1722] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/At-taubah (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ
أَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَاجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَجَاهَدَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ لَا يَسْتَوُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakat and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided.
Have you made the providing of water for the pilgrim and the maintenance of al-Masjid al-Haram equal to [the deeds of] one who believes in Allah and the Last Day and strives in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

c.) The monumental inscription runs along the top edges of Old mosque supporting walls of the *qibla riwaq*; it consists of a monumental *Thuluth* inscription (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:1-6) and the Kufic inscription topping it (*Surat al-Nabaʿ*, Qurʾan, 78:1-17). The inscription band is preserved in fragments.

The *Thuluth* inscription text reads:[1723]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا
وَيُعَذِّبَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ الظَّانِّينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ ۚ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ ۖ وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.
[And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds – and ever is that, in the sight of Allah, a great attainment –
And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women – those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

[1723] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

The Kufic inscription text reads:[1724]

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ
عَنِ النَّبَإِ الْعَظِيمِ
الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ
كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ
ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ
أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا
وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا
وَخَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا
وَجَعَلْنَا نَوْمَكُمْ سُبَاتًا
وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا
وَجَعَلْنَا النَّهَارَ مَعَاشًا
وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا
وَجَعَلْنَا سِرَاجًا وَهَّاجًا
وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا
لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا
وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا
إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا

About what are they asking one another?
About the great news –
That over which they are in disagreement.
No! They are going to know.
Then, no! They are going to know.
Have We not made the earth a resting place?
And the mountains as stakes?
And We created you in pairs
And made your sleep [a means for] rest
And made the night as clothing
And made the day for livelihood
And constructed above you seven strong [heavens]
And made [therein] a burning lamp
And sent down, from the rain clouds, pouring water
That We may bring forth thereby grain and vegetation
And gardens of entwined growth.
Indeed, the Day of Judgement is an appointed time –

The Kirmani mosque

The Monumental Inscription Band

a.) The monumental inscription band of the Kirmani mosque features *Naskh* style, with elongated letter shafts and addition of knotted elements. It is set against a richly carved vegetal

[1724] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/An-Naba (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

background. The inscription begins with the *Basmala* and it continues to recount a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin*, of which the extant parts comprise the middle of verse 6 until the end of the verse 49.[1725]

The text of the excerpt reads:[1726]

يس
وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ
إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ
عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ
لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَا أُنْذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ
لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُقْمَحُونَ
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ
وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ۖ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ
إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ
وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ
إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُرْسَلُونَ
قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ
قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ
وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ
قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ ۚ أَئِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُسْرِفُونَ
وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَىٰ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ
اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ
وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ
أَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَٰنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ
إِنِّي إِذًا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ
قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ
وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِينَ
إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ
يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ ۚ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ
أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ
وَإِنْ كُلٌّ لَمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ
وَآيَةٌ لَهُمُ الْأَرْضُ الْمَيْتَةُ أَحْيَيْنَاهَا وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهَا حَبًّا فَمِنْهُ يَأْكُلُونَ
وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا جَنَّاتٍ مِنْ نَخِيلٍ وَأَعْنَابٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا فِيهَا مِنَ الْعُيُونِ
لِيَأْكُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ وَمَا عَمِلَتْهُ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۖ أَفَلَا يَشْكُرُونَ
سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

[1725] Author's reading.
[1726] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ya-Sin (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

وَآيَةٌ لَهُمُ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ مُظْلِمُونَ
وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ
وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَّرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ
لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ۚ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ
وَآيَةٌ لَهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ
وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ مِثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ
وَإِنْ نَشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيخَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْقَذُونَ
إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ
وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّقُوا مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَمَا خَلْفَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ
وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ
وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنُطْعِمُ مَنْ لَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ أَطْعَمَهُ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَٰذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
مَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً تَأْخُذُهُمْ وَهُمْ يَخِصِّمُونَ

Ya, Seen.
By the wise Qurʾan.
Indeed you, [O Muhammad], are from among the messengers,
On a straight path.
[This is] a revelation of the Exalted in Might, the Merciful,
That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware.
Already the word has come into effect upon most of them, so they do not believe.
Indeed, We have put shackles on their necks, and they are to their chins, so they are with heads [kept] aloft.
And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.
And it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them – they will not believe.
You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him good tidings of forgiveness and noble reward.
Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register.
And present to them an example: the people of the city, when the messengers came to it –
When We sent to them two but they denied them, so We strengthened them with a third, and they said, "Indeed, we are messengers to you."
They said, "You are not but human beings like us, and the Most Merciful has not revealed a thing. You are only telling lies."
They said, "Our Lord knows that we are messengers to you,
And we are not responsible except for clear notification."
They said, "Indeed, we consider you a bad omen. If you do not desist, we will surely stone you, and there will surely touch you, from us, a painful punishment."
They said, "Your omen is with yourselves. Is it because you were reminded? Rather, you are a transgressing people."
And there came from the farthest end of the city a man, running. He said, "O my people, follow the messengers.
Follow those who do not ask of you [any] payment, and they are [rightly] guided.

And why should I not worship He who created me and to whom you will be returned?
Should I take other than Him [false] deities [while], if the Most Merciful intends for me some adversity, their intercession will not avail me at all, nor can they save me?
Indeed, I would then be in manifest error.
Indeed, I have believed in your Lord, so listen to me."
It was said, "Enter Paradise." He said, "I wish my people could know
Of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured."
And We did not send down upon his people after him any soldiers from the heaven, nor would We have done so.
It was not but one shout, and immediately they were extinguished.
How regretful for the servants. There did not come to them any messenger except that they used to ridicule him.
Have they not considered how many generations We destroyed before them – that they to them will not return?
And indeed, all of them will yet be brought present before Us.
And a sign for them is the dead earth. We have brought it to life and brought forth from it grain, and from it they eat.
And We placed therein gardens of palm trees and grapevines and caused to burst forth therefrom some springs –
That they may eat of His fruit. And their hands have not produced it, so will they not be grateful?
Exalted is He who created all pairs – from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.
And a sign for them is the night. We remove from it [the light of] day, so they are [left] in darkness.
And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.
And the moon – We have determined for it phases, until it returns [appearing] like the old date stalk.
It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.
And a sign for them is that We carried their forefathers in a laden ship.
And We created for them from the likes of it that which they ride.
And if We should will, We could drown them; then no one responding to a cry would there be for them, nor would they be saved
Except as a mercy from Us and provision for a time.
But when it is said to them, "Beware of what is before you and what is behind you; perhaps you will receive mercy… "
And no sign comes to them from the signs of their Lord except that they are from it turning away.
And when it is said to them, "Spend from that which Allah has provided for you," those who disbelieve say to those who believe, "Should we feed one whom, if Allah had willed, He would have fed? You are not but in clear error."
And they say, "When is this promise, if you should be truthful?"
They do not await except one blast which will seize them while they are disputing.

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The *Naskh* inscription band which separates the lower portion of the mihrab's niche from the monumental lunette features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Yunus* (Qurʾan, 10:62-64). There were further inscriptions in the lower portion of the niche which are fragmented and concealed by the modern plaster panels of the mihrab.

The inscription text reads:[1727]

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ
لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

Unquestionably, [for] the allies of Allah there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve
Those who believed and were fearing Allah
For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter. No change is there in the words of Allah. That is what is the great attainment.

b.) The right-hand side cartouche inserted in the lower portion of the mihrab's niche comprises the signature of the master stucco craftsman responsible for the production of the Kirmani mosque's stucco repertoire. This is the same craftsman who also signed the external mihrab of the same architectural complex, but in a slightly different manner (see below).

The signature reads:[1728]

عمل عبد الضعيف النحيف الراجي الى رحمه رب العزيز خواجو بن زكي بن محمد بن مسعود كرماني

Work of the weak, poor slave, who hopes in the mercy of the God, Khwaju ibn-i Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud [al-]Kirmani.

c.) The monumental lunette of the mihrab is framed by the *Naskh* inscription set against a vegetal background, which comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surah Al-ʿImran* (3:26-28).

The inscription text reads:[1729]

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ ۖ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ ۖ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۖ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ
لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَٰلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

[1727] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Yunus (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).
[1728] RCEA, XVI, n° 6144 bis; TEI 1587 (Last Accessed: November 19, 2021).
[1729] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ali-Imran (Last Accessed: January 20, 2021).

Say, "O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honour whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.
You cause the night to enter the day, and You cause the day to enter the night; and You bring the living out of the dead, and You bring the dead out of the living. And You give provision to whom You will without account."
Let not believers take disbelievers as allies rather than believers. And whoever [of you] does that has nothing with Allah, except when taking precaution against them in prudence. And Allah warns you of Himself, and to Allah is the [final] destination.

d.) The monumental framing inscription band of the mihrab begins with the *Basmala* and it continues to recount the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-4). The inscription band features a fluid *Naskh* to *Thuluth* style with additions of knotted elements and a richly carved vegetal background. These inscription style and proportions are related to the monumental inscription band of the Kirmani mosque.

The inscription text reads:[1730]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزًا
هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.
It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

The External Mihrab

The mihrab is preserved in fragments and its inscriptions are damaged.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The horizontal panel in the lower part of mihrab's niche comprises *Naskh* inscribed invocations to God.

They read:[1731]

سبحان الله و الحمد لله و الملك (؟) لله

Glory be to God, Praise be to God, the Dominion belongs to God.

[1730] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).
[1731] O'Kane 1992, 89.

b.) The framing band of the mihrab's lunette is outlined with a Qurʾanic inscription band in *Naskh* style which is fragmented. Parts of *Surat al-Ikhlas* could be read (Qurʾan, 112:1).[1732]

The inscription reads:[1733]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,

c.) The mihrab is signed by the stucco master who was in charge of production of the interior stuccos of the Kirmani mosque, but the formulation of the signature is slightly different.

The signature reads:[1734]

عمل المسكين المستكين الحافي خواجو زكي بن محمد بن مسعود الكرماني

Work of the poor person, Kwaju Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud al-Kirmani.

d.) The beginning and the end fragment enable for a reconstruction of the monumental framing inscription's content at the External mihrab. It features *Naskh* style with elongated letter shafts and it is set against a minutely carved background. The inscription originally featured an excerpt from *Surat al-Jinn* (Qurʾan, 72:18-23). Only the beginning and the end of the inscription are preserved.

The text of the inscription is:[1735]

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا
وَأَنَّهُ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللَّهِ يَدْعُوهُ كَادُوا يَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا
قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدْعُو رَبِّي وَلَا أُشْرِكُ بِهِ أَحَدًا
قُلْ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا رَشَدًا
قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا
إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا

And [He revealed] that the masjids are for Allah, so do not invoke with Allah anyone.
And that when the Servant of Allah stood up supplicating Him, they almost became about him a compacted mass."
Say, [O Muhammad], "I only invoke my Lord and do not associate with Him anyone."
Say, "Indeed, I do not possess for you [the power of] harm or right direction."
Say, "Indeed, there will never protect me from Allah anyone [if I should disobey], nor will I find in other than Him a refuge.

[1732] O'Kane 1992, 89.
[1733] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ikhlas-1-qs-112-1-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).
[1734] O'Kane 1992, 89.
[1735] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: https://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jinn (Last Accessed: December 8, 2020).

But [I have for you] only notification from Allah, and His messages." And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger – then indeed, for him is the fire of Hell; they will abide therein forever.

Ilkhanid Revetments' Patronage

The complex mechanism of patronage at the Turbat-i Jam complex and its historical context is discussed in detail by Mahendrarajah.[1736] There are clear indications regarding the patronage of the Ilkhanid structures of the complex. The Old mosque was founded by Khwaja Razi al-Din Ahmad ibn-i Ismaʿil, an Ilkhanid official. The Kirmani mosque was founded by Ghiyas al-Din Kart, and later rebuilt. The Gunbad was likely founded by one of the descendants of the Jami family. Its later wall painting repertoire was sponsored by another descendant of the Jami family, Ibn-i Mutahhir son of Ahmad. The outlined information about the patrons of the structures at Turbat-i Jam indicate that two types of patrons worked on the complex: the Jami family and the local rulers. In both cases, the commissions were prestigious and the patrons should be regarded as of high profile. The evidence regarding the patronage by the Jami family is significant, because it illustrates a distinct type of patronage, compared to the majority of Ilkhanid monuments, and it demonstrates the prestige of the Jami family, as the keepers of the shrine complex.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Information concerning the stucco workshop of the Old mosque stucco repertoire is lacking. Moreover, it is difficult to assign this repertoire to any known stucco school, due to its distinct style not encountered in other repertoires. The stuccos in the interior of the Kirmani mosque contain signatures of two stucco craftsmen, on the mihrab and on the stucco plaque inserted into the supporting walls. These two signatures point towards the probability that the stucco repertoire of the Kirmani mosque might have been produced by two stucco workshops. The plaques are likely works which took place during the mosque's rebuilding are not contemporary to the Ilkhanid repertoire.

The two mihrabs, in the interior and exterior of the Kirmani mosque, retain signatures of the same stucco master.

The internal mihrab is signed: *Work of the weak, poor slave, who hopes in the mercy of the God, Khwaju ibn-i Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud [al-]Kirmani.*

The external mihrab is signed: *Work of the poor person, Kwaju Zaki ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Masʿud al-Kirmani.*

These two mihrabs share the artistic techniques, the production technology, designs, the ornamental vocabulary and inscription style characteristics. Moreover, both signatures of the craftsmen are placed in cartouches on the right-hand side of their niches' interiors. This reflects the characteristics and stucco production knowledge and know-how of their workshop. There are nevertheless variations between the two mihrabs, which reflect the craftsmen's will to produce unique works of stucco repertoires, to never repeat themselves and to propose original

[1736] Mahendrarajah 2016.

compositions for every mihrab. The two signatures differ in their formulation. The inscription of the internal mihrab is longer and it comprises more invocations to God and appellatives of the master stucco craftsman, compared to the one on the External mihrab. This could have been determined by the available space for signatures.[1737]

The signature with the *nisba* Kirmani has been discussed in length by O'Kane, Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad. The modality, in which the signature is presented, is similar to the cases of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab from Ushturjan and the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz and the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. Nos. 31-33). But these repertoires and their signatures are works of different master craftsmen. These craftsmen could have been relatives, which could be indicated by their common *nisba*. The *nisba* should not be comprehended in a strictly geographical sense. Technological similarities, those of artistic techniques and visual vocabulary of these repertoires, indicate that the craftsmen who produced them could have trained together. The listed evidence and observations confirm that it is not possible to argue that these stuccoworks are works of the same school or a workshop, as suggested by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad.[1738]

f.) Monument Condition

The latest renovations of the complex were performed in 2010, 2011 and 2016.[1739] Detailed information concerning the conservation interventions on the complex is provided by Danishdust.[1740] The structure of the entire complex is in good condition. The stuccos of both the Old mosque and the Kirmani mosque would require consolidation and cleaning. The wall painting repertoire of the Gunbad is in a good state, but some cleaning would be beneficial for its preservation.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This examination provides information regarding the constructive and decorative chronology of the Turbat-i Jam complex. It comprises detailed information concerning the Ilkhanid and Kartid carved stucco and wall painting repertoires of the complex. It proposes new information about the epigraphic programmes of the stucco repertoires in the Old mosque of the complex, the Kirmani mosque and the External mihrab. Furthermore, information regarding the remains of pigmentation and colouring principles of the Old mosque stuccos is provided. Comparison of the stuccos from the Old and the Kirmani mosque indicates that they are works which were performed at a short time distance, but by different craftsmen's workshops. The plaques of carved stuccos on the walls of the Kirmani mosque indicate that only the monumental inscription band and the mihrab date to the Ilkhanid period, to around 1328, and that the stuccos on its upper elevations are likely works of later rebuilding and a separate workshop. Comparison of the internal and external mihrabs of the Kirmani mosque provides information concerning the works of the same craftsmen's workshop, as indicated by their signatures. Their comparison allows the relation between the two repertoires and a chronological frame for the

[1737] Similar variations in signatures are also found on the signatures of the Damghani stucco craftsmen's family, indicating that this could have been a common practice.
[1738] Salihi, Taghavinejad and Rashidniya 2017.
[1739] Mahendrarajah 2016, 109.
[1740] Danishdust 1986.

production of the Kirmani mosque stuccos to be established. Further comparison of these repertoires to the other stuccoworks signed by the Kirmani *nisba* master craftsmen (Rabiʿa Khatun, Ushturjan; Mir Zabir, Sirjan; Kucha-yi Mir, Natanz) indicates that these stuccos could be works of craftsmen who collaborated or trained together and who could have been relatives, but also that these stuccos are not works of a stucco school, as proposed by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Danishdust 1986; O'Kane 1992; Golombek 1971; Wilber and Golombek 1988, Vol.1, 346-349; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2017; Taghavinejad 2017; Mahendrarajah 2016; Porter 1994.

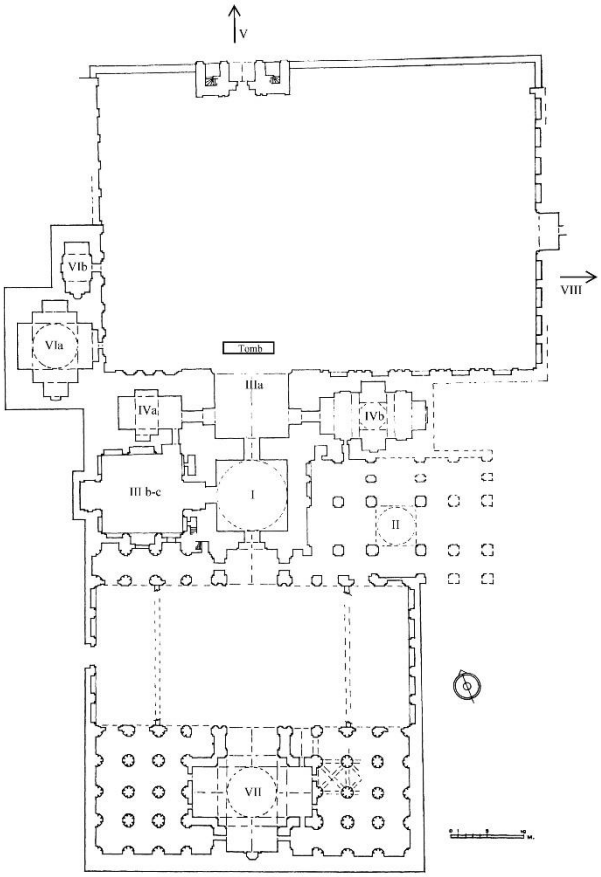


Figure 338: Ground plan of the Turbat-i Shaykh-i Jam complex (After Mahendrarajah 2016, 111).



Figure 339: Exterior of the Turbat-i Jam complex, view from north-east.

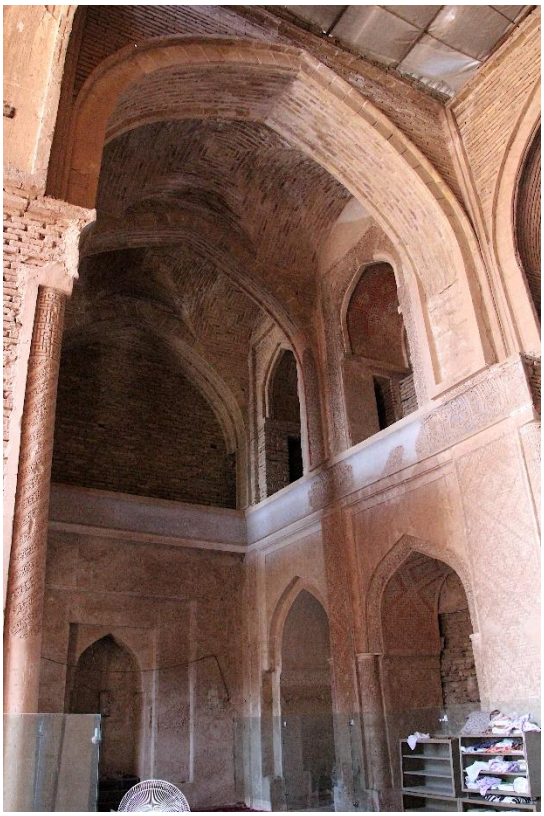


Figure 340: View of the *qibla riwaq* of the Old mosque at the Turbat-i Jam complex.



Figure 341: Detail of stucco revetments at the *qibla riwaq* of the Old mosque: carved stuccos of the pointed arch opening in the *riwaq*'s north-western part. The stuccos retain extensive polychromy traces.



Figure 342: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription band running along supporting walls of the *qibla riwaq* at the Old mosque.



Figure 343: Detail of the upper storey carved stuccos in the north-western part of the Old mosque's *qibla riwaq*. The stucco production technology is related to the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque, but with a lesser level of design detail.



Figure 344: Transitional zone and the dome of the Gunbad structure, with the redecorated wall painting repertoire.



Figure 345: Detail of the transitional zone element in the Gunbad, showing diverse types of inscription bands of the wall painting repertoire.



Figure 346: Detail of the Gunbad wall painting repertoire: the *shamsa* design on the supporting wall, with master wall painter craftsman's signature in the centre.

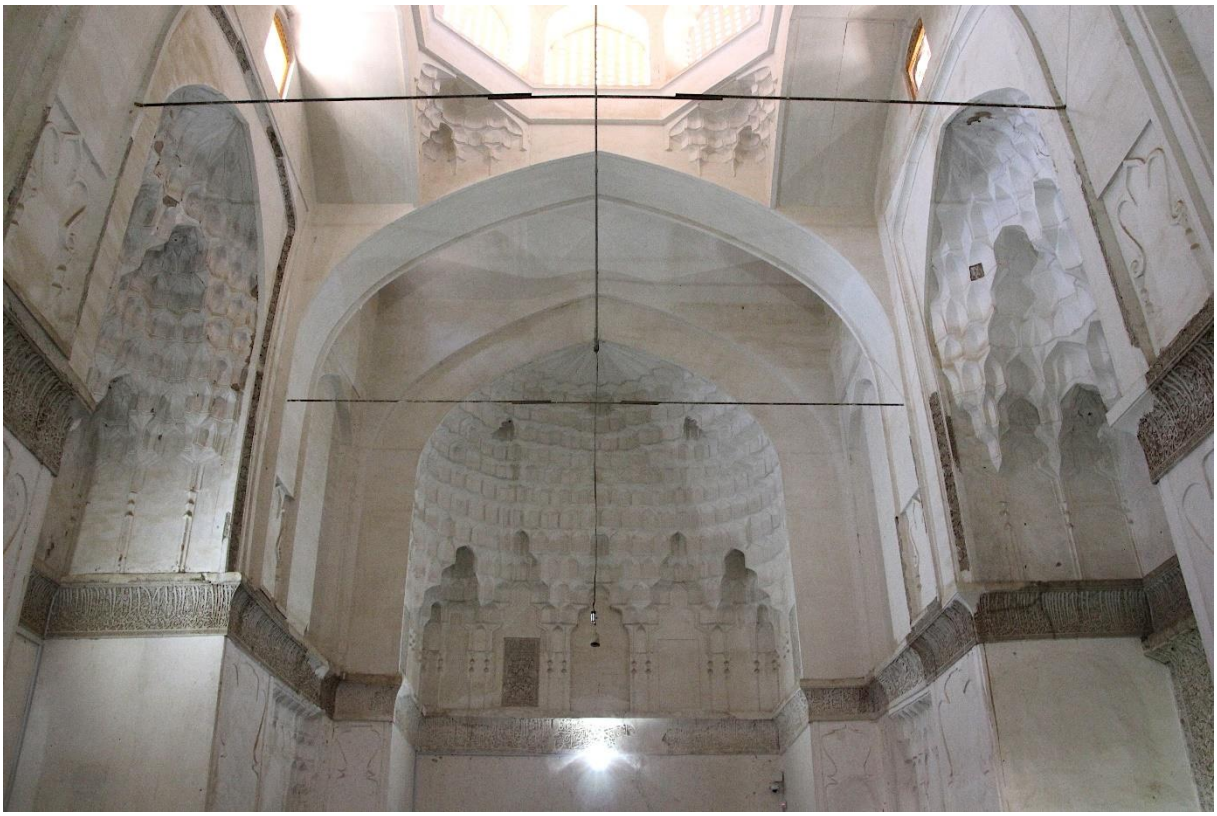


Figure 347: View of the interior of the Kirmani mosque, towards south-east. Monumental stucco inscription band tops edges of mosque's supporting walls. The ceiling and the muqarnas post-date the Ilkhanid stucco repertoire in the mosque.



Figure 348: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription in the Kirmani mosque.



Figure 349: The monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Kirmani mosque at the Turbat-i Jam complex.

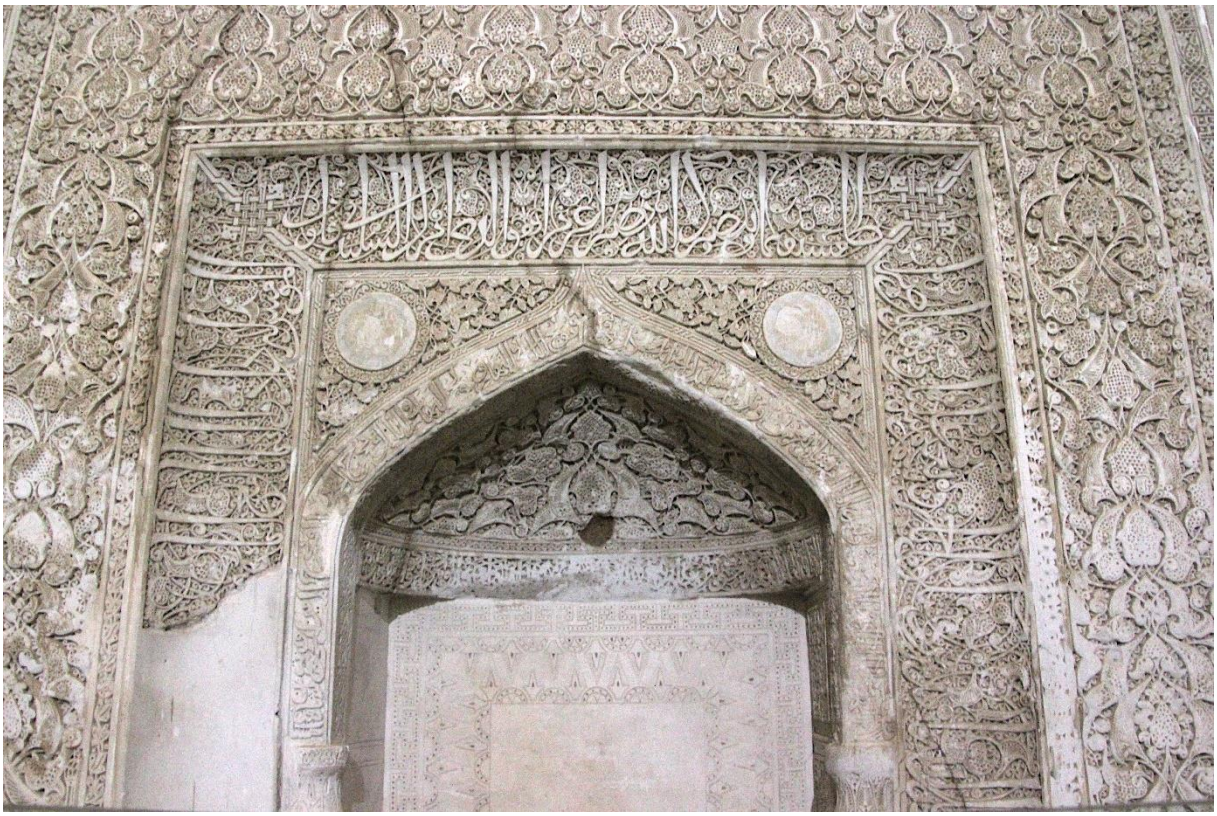


Figure 350: Detail of the Kirmani mosque mihrab: the central niche topped by the spandrels and framed by epigraphic and abstracted vegetal element bands.

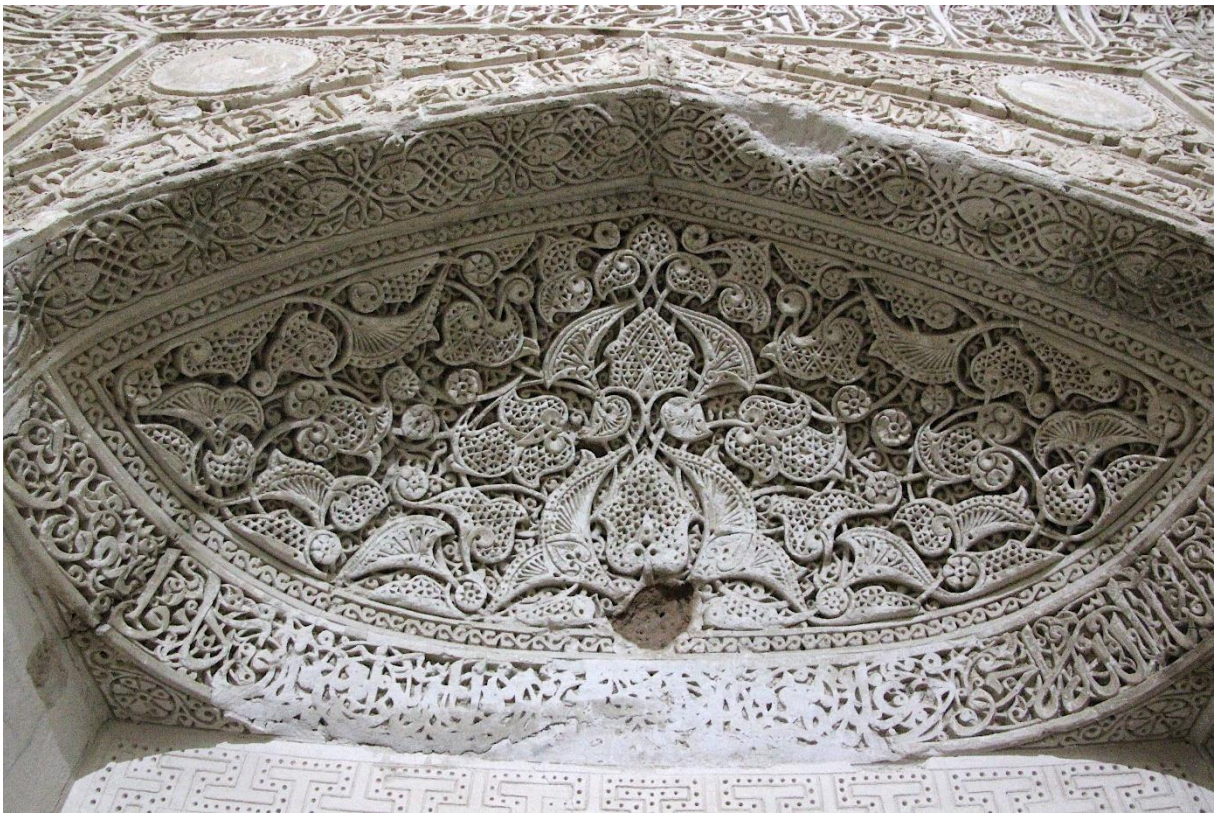


Figure 351: Detail of the Kirmani mosque mihrab: the monumental lunette toping the niche. It is closely related to the lunette of the external stucco mihrab of the complex, in terms of production technology and design.



Figure 352: Detail of the lower edge of the Kirmani mosque mihrab: the modern stuccos conceal the fragmented remains of the original mihrab.





Figures 353-354: Images of the external stucco mihrab at the Turbat-i Jam complex. Left: the remaining fragments of the mihrab behind the protective glass. Right: detail of the right-hand side of the mihrab's framing inscription band displays calligraphic style and panel related to the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque of the complex.



Figure 355: Detail of the external stucco mihrab at the Turbat-i Jam complex: the monumental lunette topping the niche is similar to the stuccos of the monumental mihrab in the Kirmani mosque of the complex.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 31

Monument Name: Kucha-yi Mir mosque

Figs. 356-365.

Associated Names: variant names are employed for the monument; the Mosque of Kuche Mir, the Masjid-i Kucha-yi Mir and the Kūcha-yi Mīr mosque.[1741] The mosque's name derives from its location in the Mir alley, but this is a Safavid period name, which was given to the street based on the Safavid notables connected to it.[1742]

Monument Type: mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least two phases (phase one: Seljuq mosque, Phase two: Ilkhanid enlargements of the mosque and addition of the stucco mihrab in the new main prayer hall) without subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): mosque preceded by an entrance portal and two prayer halls flanking the entrance corridor; the upper storey of the mosque comprises a small mihrab.

Location: Natanz; c. 102 km as the crow flies in the north-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan. The mosque is located some 300 m as the crow flies in the north-western direction from the ʿAbd al-Samad complex.

GPS location of the monument: 33.5199526 N; 51.9123669,17 E.

Monument Investigation: December 2017; November 16, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The mosque is located in Natanz, a significant hinterland settlement of Isfahan. Natanz flourished under the Seljuq, Ilkhanid and especially Safavid dynasties. The mosque was built in one of the quarters of Natanz and it testifies to the existence of this part of the settlement from at least the Seljuq period. For more information concerning the history of Natanz, see the catalogue entry on the Complex of ʿAbd al-Samad (Cat. No. 12).

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 356.

This two-storey mosque comprises two prayer halls on its ground floor which are connected with an entrance corridor. The entrance corridor is preceded by an entrance portal. The entrance portal is formed by a pointed arch with a recessed semi-dome. A carved stucco inscription runs along the intrados of this arch, but it is ruined and no longer legible. The remaining architectural

[1741] Transliteration according to the IJMES system. Variant names information: http://www.archnet.org/sites/5481 (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[1742] See Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 46.

surfaces of the mosque are decorated with stucco plugs. The western hall dates to the Seljuq and the eastern hall to the Ilkhanid period. The external perimeter of the mosque amounts to 7.5 x 6.75 m and it is topped by nine small domes. The Ilkhanid hall contains a medium size stucco mihrab. A small mihrab is installed against the wall directed towards the *qibla* on the mosque's second floor which is ruined. The mosque was perhaps slightly larger and it might have comprised other mihrabs. The mosque presents a problem for dating and understanding of its construction sequence, and issues regarding the dating of its stuccos, which have been assigned to the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods.

Construction Phases

There are only a few discussions of this mosque and the most extensive is presented by Waqifi, who reports unpublished finds by the IsMEO team, from 1966,[1743] which prove crucial for the understanding of the mosque's constructive and decorative chronology. O'Kane's and Salihi and Rashidniya's discussion of the mosque's stuccos are informative of their characteristics, their supposed dating, and the question of the relationship between the stuccos of Kucha-yi Mir and other monuments.

Phase One – The Seljuq Kucha-yi Mir Mosque

Based on archaeological soundings by IsMEO,[1744] it was possible for the team to establish which parts of the mosque belong to the Seljuq and which to the Ilkhanid period. These finds were published by Waqifi.[1745] The original Seljuq Kucha-yi Mir mosque comprised a modest ground plan featuring a rectangle. Its ground floor was topped by another floor which is now largely in ruin. The reconstruction of the mosque's plan by the IsMEO supposes that each of the two floors contained a mihrab. The mihrab of the upper floor is still conserved. According to the IsMEO, the mosque contained the entrance corridor which was preceded by a tall or a two storey portal, slightly higher than the mosque itself.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Kucha-yi Mir Mosque

The Seljuq Kucha-yi Mir mosque was modified in the Ilkhanid period; a prayer hall was added to the existing structure on the opposite side of its entrance corridor. This prayer hall might have originally been larger than the existing structure and it was modified at a subsequent point. The hall comprises four pillars and two pilasters, which carry the roofing system of the prayer hall on shouldered arches. This prayer hall houses the large stucco mihrab which should be considered the masterwork of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen. The described structure and the mihrab have been believed to be Seljuq until the IsMEO discoveries, which however remained unpublished and are still stored in the Galdieri archive at the EUR in Rome.[1746] The first scholar to argue for the Ilkhanid date of the mihrab is O'Kane, who highlights the similarities between the stuccos of the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab and the Kirmani mosque at Turbat-i Jam (based on signatures of craftsmen and stucco style; Cat. No. 30). Research by Rashidniya and Salihi highlights the similarities between the stucco repertoires of these two monuments and the

[1743] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 48-49.
[1744] Eugenio Galdieri was the chief of this expedition.
[1745] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 50.
[1746] The author visited the archive in March 2018 and investigated the majority of the documents it comprises.

Ushturjan Rabiʿa Khatun Imamzada mihrab (Cat. No.32), now stored in the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran.[1747] The below discussion of the architectural revetments demonstrates that the mihrab dates from the Ilkhanid period.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

No major modifications of the mosque took place in the period post the Ilkhanid dynasty.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The mosque features a rectangular ground plan (Fig. 356). The external perimeter of the mosque's main prayer hall currently amounts to 7.5 x 6.75 m.[1748] Its ground floor comprises an almost square Ilkhanid hall which is connected to the rectangular Seljuq hall by the entrance corridor. Stairs from the entrance corridor lead to the upper floor where the small Seljuq stucco mihrab is located.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The irregular elevation of the mosque is caused by its two construction phases, but an attempt to create a unified façade is discernible. The mosque faces the street through an entrance portal formed by a pointed arch which seems to retain a Seljuq elevation. The uneven levels of the two prayer halls cannot be noticed from the mosque's entrance side, but from its rear, which is inaccessible due to the presence of dwellings.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument functioned as the mosque for the domestic quarter where it is located. It did not retain the function of a congregational mosque, due to the presence of the congregational mosque at the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12).

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The Monumental Carved Stucco Mihrab

Figs. 359-365.

The mihrab's dating was debated by several scholars who considered it of either Seljuq or Ilkhanid date. According to Godard,[1749] the mihrab was to be dated to the Seljuq period. After Kleiss in 1977,[1750] O'Kane was the first to suggest its Ilkhanid dating in 1992, but Waqifi presents both possibilities; Seljuq and Ilkhanid.[1751] According to Sajjadi, the mosque and the mihrab date to Seljuq period.[1752] The Ilkhanid date for the mihrab is also given in the latest

[1747] Salihi and Rashidniya 2016.
[1748] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 46.
[1749] Godard 1936, 82. Seljuq dating proposed by Godard was followed by Hillenbrand 1985, 200; Mishkuti 1970, 68; Naraqi 1995, 285 and Sajjadi 1996, 128.
[1750] Kleiss 1977, 297-99.
[1751] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 48-49.
[1752] Sajjadi 1996, 127-128.

research by Rashidniya and Salihi, who suggest an Ilkhanid date and associate the main mihrab with other mihrabs signed by Kirmani craftsmen.[1753]

The dimensions of the mihrab are 2.84 x 1.64 m.[1754] The mihrab is considerably smaller, compared to the monumental mihrabs of the Ushturjan Friday mosque, Pir-i Bakran mausoleum or the Uljaytu mihrab. The dimensions of the mihrab were adjusted to the space available in the Ilkhanid prayer hall. An unpublished image by Galdieri shows the relationship between the mihrab and the wall it is inserted in, illustrating that the mihrab and the supporting wall are contemporary to each other.[1755] Differently to the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1), which leans against an earlier wall dating to the Seljuq period, the mihrab of Kucha-yi Mir is fully integrated into the wall of the prayer hall. The architectural elements, especially its shouldered arches and the mode of construction of the prayer hall, indicate that the mihrab is of Ilkhanid date. Further evidence emerges from the comparison of the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab to that of the Kirmani mosque at the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30), the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab (Cat. No. 32) and the stuccos of the Mir Zabir mausoleum at Sirjan near Kirman (Cat. No. 33). The Turbat-i Jam and the Rabiʿa Khatun mihrabs retain dates of their completion, which enable an approximate dating for the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab to the first two decades of fourteenth century to be proposed.

Description and Discussion of the Mihrab

The design of the mihrab is balanced (Fig. 359): two pointed arches form the two niches which are flanked by lozenges and a pair of columns with capitals. The entire structure is framed by a framing inscription band (Fig. 364) which provides the mihrab with a uniform and monumental appearance. This inscription band of the mihrab features the Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surah Hud*, 11:114-115) in *Thuluth* style, set against a background of floral scrolls. The inscription band framing the mihrab's monumental central lunette features a specific somewhat archaic Kufic style with knots (Fig. 361), which evolves into knotted patterns; it was read as continuous repetition of the word *Allah*, by O'Kane.[1756] The mihrab contains two cartouches on the side surfaces of its interior niche; they display inscriptions in *Naskh* set against a plain background. The right hand side niche conserves the legible signature of the stucco craftsmen's workshop master, *work of Haydar Kirmani*. The left hand side cartouche is badly damaged and not legible. It comprised the date of the mihrab's completion, in a manner similar to the Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab and those at Turbat-i Jam. The Opening chapter (*Surat al-Fatiha*, Qurʾan, 1:1-7) is featured on the *Naskh* style inscription which runs along the interior of the lower portion of the mihrab's niche (Fig. 365). This inscription is badly damaged.

The lower interior niche of the mihrab consists of two main parts; a rectangular panel which is topped by a pointed hood. The rectangular panel (Fig. 365) is fragmented, but it is possible to discern that it was decorated with floral imagery and that it contained a Qurʾanic inscription (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-7). It is topped by a lunette hood (Fig. 362) which comprises a well

[1753] Salihi and Rashidniya 2016, 9.
[1754] Salihi and Rashidniya report the thickness of the relief of the mihrab, including is support as 40 cm. *Ibid.*, 11.
[1755] The ground plan, elevations and notes on the Kucha-yi Mir mosque by Galdieri are stored in the Galdieri archive at EUR in Rome.
[1756] O'Kane 1992, 87.

preserved symmetric composition of palmettes and half-palmettes. In terms of artistic technique (double stucco layer carving) and imagery, this lunette relates to the stuccos of the Kirmani mosque at Turbat-i Jam. The rectangular panel and the lunette are framed with bands of blossoms which resemble lotus-like flowers. The spandrels (Fig. 363) topping the interior lunette comprise two applied protruding bosses with geometric decoration and flanking floral imagery. The entire structure is framed by two columns.

A pair of monumental columns carries the monumental lunette of the mihrab (Fig. 360), which is framed by several bands of stucco carving. One of the bands is epigraphic and carries the aforementioned Kufic inscription (repetitions of *Allah*; Fig. 361). The centre of the lunette is composed of symmetrical imagery of palmettes and half palmettes related to the interior niche lunette. The correspondence of the imagery of two lunettes and their more protruding relief serve to create unified and balanced appearance of the mihrab with accentuated vertical axis. This lunette is topped by two spandrels with applied and extremely protruding bosses. These bosses are decorated with symmetrical floral imagery and they are part of vegetal element compositions. The mihrab's two lunettes, two pairs of protruding bosses and two pairs of columns, serve to determine its unified design. The entire structure is framed by the monumental *Thuluth* inscription (Qurʾan, *Surah Hud*, 11:114-115; Fig. 364). The design of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque is not dissimilar to the design of the Turbat-i Jam or the Rabiʿa Khatun mihrabs, although they also comprise substantial differences.

Mihrab's Production

The framing floral and geometrical bands of the mihrab were carved out of only one layer of plaster. The technique of carving of two layers of plaster is used for monumental inscriptions and the two lunettes. In this manner, a greater plasticity of the mihrab's relief is achieved. For the central lunette of larger dimension, there are also signs of slight undercutting of the floral ornamentation, which was enabled by the application of a coarser second stucco layer for carving. The striking aspect of these parts of the mihrab is that, often, the background of inscriptions consists of modest floral scrolls and the rest of the background remains plain. The last employed technique, which is not found in the ʿAbd al-Samad shrine nor in the Natanz congregational mosque is the application of protruding bosses. These bosses were applied on the mihrab's spandrels.

The Upper Mihrab

Fig. 358.

The upper mihrab measures 67x 48 cm[1757] and it is damaged. The mihrab should be dated to the Seljuq period. The mihrab reveals modest stucco carving technique where a single layer of stucco is carved. Moreover, its decoration is restricted and a large portion of its surface is blank. The decoration of the mihrab consists of a central cartouche with the beginning of the Shahada which is flanked by floral ornamentation. Weathering of the mihrab might have rendered its body coarser.

[1757] Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 47.

Exterior Revetments

The Entrance Portal

Fig. 357.

The mosque's entrance portal is decorated with stucco plugs and the intrados stucco inscription. The entrance portal is carried by a tall and elevated pointed arch with accentuated vertical axis. It is further divided into two tiers which correspond to the two floors of the mosque. the external surfaces of the portal comprise recessed niches on both sides, according to the two-tier division. The interior part of the entrance portal contains two recessed niches on each side of the entrance opening. The pointed arch is carried by squinches, likely of Seljuq date. Stucco plugs of the entrance portal are very similar to those at the Congregational mosque and the Shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad, which is another argument confirming the existence of a Seljuq mosque and shrine on the site of the current Complex of ʿAbd al-Samad.

The stucco plugs of the portal's pointed arch's hood are however Ilkhanid in their artistic technique and might be the results of Ilkhanid repairs to the mosque structure and the portal. The stucco inscription running along the intrados of the portal's pointed arch might be work of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen. It is heavily weathered and it is no longer legible. This inscription might be historical, or carrying benedictions, or Qurʾanic excerpts. The style and artistic technique of this inscription correspond to those employed for the making of the large stucco mihrab in the mosque's Ilkhanid prayer hall, which suggests the dating of the intrados inscription band to Ilkhanid period.

Stucco Polychromy at Kucha-yi Mir

The mihrab was partially whitewashed and perhaps over-cleaned. Traces of a yellowish colour on the exterior framing band are visible, but these might be results of whitewash. It is nevertheless reasonable to suppose that this mihrab was originally polychrome in red, yellow, white, blue and perhaps green, similar to many other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Kucha-yi Mir

It has been mentioned that three diverse artistic techniques were employed for the production of the large stucco mihrab at the Kucha-yi Mir mosque: carving of a single stucco layer, carving of a double stucco layer and application of protruding bosses. All three artistic techniques present basic knowledge of stucco carving and are found on the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos. A similar combination of artistic techniques is also found on the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1) and the mihrabs signed with the Kirmani *nisba* (Cat. Nos. 30, 32-33). On the other hand, despite being located in central Iran, the mihrab lacks undercutting and deep relief, the frequently occurring characteristics of stuccos located in Isfahan area and the surroundings. Moreover, the protruding bosses are applied, but only a few other elements of the mihrab's relief protrude from its relief, which is unlike the situation in the Isfahan region. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that craftsmen responsible for this work were not native to the Isfahan region.

The Kucha-yi Mir Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Several elements make the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab distinguish itself from the majority of central Iranian stucco repertoires. The heavy perforation, typical of the Isfahan area, is almost entirely absent from this mihrab. Heavy perforations give way to unusual and perhaps unique floral and geometric bands. On the other hand, half-palmettes and palmettes are relatively common in this geographical area. They nevertheless find the closest parallels in the stucco mihrabs of the Kirmani mosque, the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab of Ushturjan and the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan. The overall collection of artistic techniques, rather shallow relief, and predominantly floral ornaments, render the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab not only distinct from the Isfahani stucco repertoires, but they also make it different from stucco repertoires of Kashan and Qum areas.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque retains no original furnishing.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (top to bottom):

a.) The monumental framing inscription of the mihrab features *Thuluth* style and it comprises a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surah Hud*, 11:114-115). The beginning and the end of the inscription are missing, because the lower section of the mihrab is damaged. The inscription was read by O'Kane and Sajjadi.[1758]

The inscription reads:[1759]

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ وَزُلَفًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ذِكْرَىٰ لِلذَّاكِرِينَ
وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

And establish prayer at the two ends of the day and at the approach of the night. Indeed, good deeds do away with misdeeds. That is a reminder for those who remember.
And be patient, for indeed, Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.

The first two words of the verse 114 are lost or fragmented, the rest is occasionally damaged, but legible. The Qurʾanic excerpt in question occurs frequently on Ilkhanid stuccoworks.

The inscription concludes with a Hadith, reading:[1760]

قال رسول الله صلّى الله عليه و سلّم لو علم المصلى sic

[1758] O'Kane 1992, 86-87; Sajjadi 1996, 128.
[1759] Qurʾanic text and English translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Hud (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[1760] O'Kane 1992, 86-87.

The Prophet of God, peace and the Blessings of God be upon him, said: if one praying learned [sic]

The last part of the Hadith is missing, due to the damage of the lower portion of the mihrab. This Hadith has not been observed on other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires.

b.) The inscription framing the mihrab's monumental lunette features a specific type of Kufic style, which is characterized by knotted lettering, and *hastae* of the letters with further knot elements placed at regular intervals. The inscription features an elaborate design, despite its small dimensions. The heart-like forms of letters and *hastae* could be interpreted as archaicizing elements; they are also found on the carved stucco mihrab of the Zuzan monument in Khurasan, for which this research proposes a date between the eleventh and twelfth century.

The inscription consists of repeating word: *Allah.*[1761]

The inscription design and form display less common forms, compared to other Ilkhanid stucco inscription bands. The repeating of Allah in the described manner presents a unique case.

c.) The interior of the mihrab's niche features two inscription cartouches on the left- and right-hand sides. The left-hand side cartouche, which comprised the date of the mihrab's completion is no longer legible. The extant inscription features *Naskh* style set against a plain and uncarved mihrab. The right-hand side cartouche of the mihrab comprises a partially legible signature of craftsmen's workshop which was read by O'Kane:[1762]

عمل حيدر كرماني

Work of Haydar Kirmani.

The signature allows to associate this stucco repertoire with works of the Kirmani craftsmen (at Turbat-i Jam, Ushturjan Imamzada and Sirjan), which were not one workshop, but perhaps relatives who trained together.

d.) The interior lower portion of the mihrab's niche features a fragmentary cursive inscription. It recounts the Opening chapter of Qurʾan (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-7). The inscription was read by O'Kane.[1763]

The inscription reads: [1764]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ

[1761] Reading by O'Kane 1992, 87.
[1762] O'Kane 1992, 87.
[1763] *Ibid.*, 87.
[1764] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

The extant fragmented inscription starts with the second verse and it runs until the end of the sixth verse. The missing parts are those of the lower portion of the mihrab, which is lost.

The Entrance Portal

a.) The mosque's entrance portal features a cursive inscription in *Naskh* style, in carved stucco, which occupies the intrados of the portal's pointed arch. The inscription is preserved only in fragments, many of which are weathered to the degree that they are no longer legible. The inscription could have been of Qurʾanic or historic content.

The Second Storey Mihrab

a.) The mihrab on the second storey comprises a cartouche in its centre, which retains remains of an inscription recounting the Shahada.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature any post-Ilkhanid revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The mosque does not retain any information about its patron, but, similar to the same dimension repertoires found at Ushturjan, the patron of the mosque could have been a local notable, who worked for the Ilkhanid court, or a local religious authority.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco craftsman's signature, which is damaged, was first read by O'Kane as *work of Haydar al-Kirmani*.[1765] O'Kane correctly supposes that the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab has little to do with the stuccoworks with similar signatures of the Natanz Congregational mosque and the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. Nos. 1, 12).[1766] Instead, O'Kane proposes that there are several similarities between the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab and the mihrab of Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun in the National Archaeological Museum Teheran and the Kirmani mosque of the Turbat-i Jam

[1765] O'Kane 1992, 87.
[1766] He also points out that Blair's identification of those signatures as the works of a manuscript calligrapher, disciple of Yaqut al-Mustaʿsimi, must remain a speculation. *Ibid.*, 78-88.

complex (Cat. Nos. 30, 32).[1767] Stylistic proximities of these three mihrabs and the same manner of signing the mihrabs in cartouches, below the interior niches of the mihrabs, and the *nisba* Kirmani, are shared. This argument was picked up later and scrutinized by Rashidniya and Salihi.[1768] Based on the proposed parallels, O'Kane proposes the dating of the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab to sometime between the possible dates for the dating of the Kirmani mosque mihrab: 1312-1328.[1769] Judging from the constructive and decorative activities tied to the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12), which took place at the beginning of the fourteenth century, and building on the relationship between the *Kirmani* signed mihrabs, it is possible to propose that the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab dates from the first two decades of the fourteenth century.

f.) Monument Condition

The old photographs of the mosque document its damaged upper storey and the entrance portal. At a certain point, the Ilkhanid prayer hall was reduced in size, perhaps due to the diminishing congregation of the mosque or due to the ruing of its supporting walls. The 1960s restorations assured for the mosque's preservation. The monument is in a good state of preservation, except for the entrance portal where its revetments are exposed to weathering. Moreover, the small mihrab on the mosque's upper storey would require protection from weathering.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The examination of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque and its stuccos provides information on the stucco repertoire characteristics and its relation to other stuccoworks in diverse regions. This allows the dating of the mosque's large stucco mihrab to be revised to the first two decades of fourteenth century. Furthermore, the relationship between the Kirmani signed mihrabs is elucidated and it is suggested that the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab is produced by craftsmen who were related to the other workshops with the same *nisba*. These works are not the works of the same craftsmen's workshop or a stucco school, but perhaps of relatives who trained together or occasionally collaborated. The research provides information regarding the production of the mihrab and a detailed analysis of its epigraphic programme. Moreover, the discussion revises the overall chronology of the mosque, its constructive and decorative undertakings. It illustrates that the monument was built in the Seljuq period, but that the Ilkhanid interventions comprised the building of the prayer hall carried by shouldered arches, which houses the carved stucco mihrab well integrated into the hall's supporting wall. The mosque was enlarged in Ilkhanid period, which might have included further modifications and redecoration of its entrance portal with a few fragmented revetments.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Naraqi 1995, 405-07; Sajjadi 1996, 128; Mishkuti 1970; Hillenbrand 1985, 200; O'Kane 1995; Waqifi 1995, 2 Vols; Salihi and Rashidniya 2016.

[1767] O'Kane 1992, 78-88.
[1768] See Salihi and Rashidniya 2016.
[1769] O'Kane 1992, 90. Rashidniya and Salihi date the Kucha-yi Mir lower mihrab to mid-fourteenth century. Salihi and Rashidniya 2016, 9.

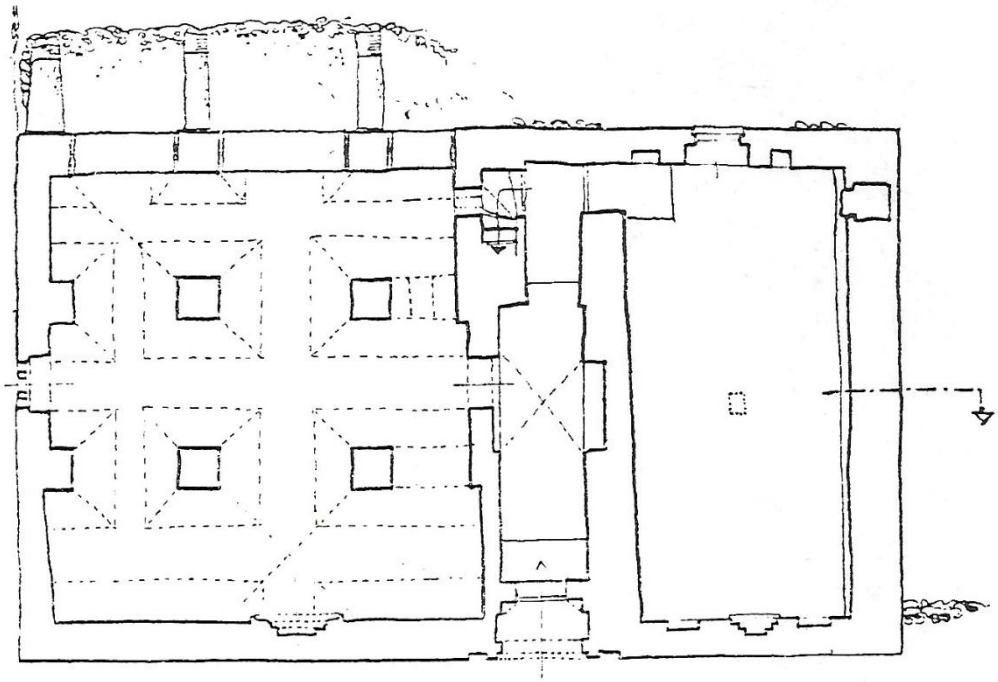


Figure 356: Ground plan of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz (After Waqifi 1995, Vol. 1, 50).





Figures 357 and 358: Left: detail of the fragmented *Naskh* inscription running along the intrados of mosque entrance portal's pointed arch opening. The inscription features visual characteristics closely related to the monumental framing band of the large mihrab of the mosque (see below). Right: remains of the small mihrab on the second storey of the mosque.



Figure 359: The large carved stucco mihrab in the hypostyle prayer hall of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque, with the protective glass case (Ilkhanid period).



Figure 360: Detail of the monumental lunette of the large mihrab, showing a symmetrical composition of palmette-derived elements, carved out of at least two layers of stucco. The visual elements employed for the panel design relate to mihrabs of the Turbat-i Jam complex.



Figure 361: Detail of the monumental spandrel of the mihrab and the framing Kufic inscription. The spandrel features designs related to mihrabs at Turbat-i Jam and the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan. All these spandrels also comprise(d) applied protruding bosses.



Figure 362: Detail of the smaller lunette of the large carved stucco mihrab at the Kucha-yi Mir mosque. The panel features a palmette design related to the monumental lunette of the mihrab. The flower blossom borders of the panel are comparable to mihrabs at Turbat-i Jam and Sirjan.



Figure 363: Detail of the spandrel of mihrab's interior niche and the right-hand side capital of the column forming the monumental arch of the mihrab.





Figures 364 and 365: Left: detail of the monumental framing band of the large mihrab at the Kucha-yi Mir mosque; it is closely related to the similar fragmented inscription band in the intrados of the pointed arch opening forming the entrance portal of the mosque. Right: detail of the stuccos at the lower portion of the internal niche of the large mihrab of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 32

Monument Name: Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun

Figs. 366-373.

Associated Names: the monument is referred to as the Imāmzāda Rābiʿa Khātūn,[1770] for which variant spellings exist.[1771]

Monument Type: *imamzada* (replaced by a modern structure; its stucco mihrab was transferred to the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran).

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in one phase (Ilkhanid). The mihrab was transferred to the museum in the 1930s, because the monument's architectural structure was in ruin. The monument was subsequently replaced by a modern structure which comprises the tomb of the saint. Architectural revetments of the modern structure comprise modern mirror works (*ayna-yi kari*).

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period; no longer extant): square domed structure with blind niches on the interior surfaces of supporting walls, similar to the shrine structure of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), but with one entrance opening.

Location: Ushturjan; c. 26 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Isfahan. The *imamzada* is located 250 m as the crow flies to the south-east from the Friday mosque of Ushturjan.

GPS location of the monument: 32.4737202 N; 51.4804678,136 E.

Monument Investigation: May 13, 2016; November 17, 2017.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The history of Ushturjan dates back to at least the Seljuq times. Descriptions of Ibn Battuta confirm that Ushturjan was thriving in the Ilkhanid period, due to the abundance of water from the Zayanda river, which allowed for the flourishing of agriculture in the region. Ibn Battuta mentions the Friday mosque, but not the shrine of Rabiʿa Khatun. Little is known regarding the saint Rabiʿa Khatun, because none of her writings have survived. For further information regarding Ushturjan, see the catalogue entry concerning the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4).

Background

The monument is located on the south-eastern edge of the old settlement, in the proximities of the local cemetery. The *imamzada* was first discussed by Wilber, based on his visit to the

[1770] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1771] See http://www.archnet.org/sites/1596 (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

monument in 1943.[1772] The monument is mentioned in passing by O'Kane.[1773] The first detailed account of the *imamzada*'s mihrab is provided by Mansur Abyar, which comprises readings of its inscriptions and a discussion of the mihrab.[1774] More recent contributions by Salihi, Taghavinejad and Rashidniya shed light on the mihrab's stucco design and especially the signature of its craftsmen, which they relate to the concept of the *Kirmani stucco school*, based on the mihrab's comparison to mihrabs of Turbat-i Jam, Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz and the Mir Zabir shrine in Sirjan.[1775] The mihrab is also featured in Shekofte's study of Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs.[1776]

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 366.

In the 1930s, the *imamzada* was in a ruined condition and lacking most of the roofing structure and upper parts of its supporting walls. Accordingly, the decision was taken for its carved stucco mihrab to be transferred to the Teheran National Museum of Archaeology, where it could be provided with the appropriate conditions for its preservation.[1777] The ruined structure of the *imamzada* was knocked down, in recent years, and entirely rebuilt as a modern structure. The most precise discussion of the original architectural structure of the *imamzada* is provided by Wilber, who visited the ruined monument at the time when its stucco mihrab was already transferred to Teheran. Hunarfar does not describe the monument. More recent articles by Iranian scholars focus only on the carved stucco mihrab and they disregard aspects of its original architectural context.[1778]

The following description of the mausoleum's original structure is provided based on information by Wilber.[1779] The *imamzada* was constructed out of mud brick material, which reflects a more modest budget for its construction. The interior of the *imamzada* was decorated with the large stucco mihrab (now in the museum) and perhaps some other undocumented stuccos. Wilber also mentions that the original supporting walls of the shrine were made of mud bricks, which contain pebbles and straw and that these walls were coated with *kahgil* and a thin coating of plaster. The shallow recesses of the interior structure contained red-painted plaster on their lower parts and they assumed the forms of pointed arches. The area of the recesses was divided into five lobes and details of the decoration were painted with dark blue, white and green; there were also decorations of floral patterns made out of applied plaster.[1780] In Wilber's plan, the structure is shown as square in form, with some 10 m in length for each supporting wall. Wilber reports that its walls were preserved up to the height of 5.25 m. The monument retained one entrance on its northern side, opposite the *qibla* wall. The interior form of the

[1772] Wilber 1955, 138.
[1773] O'Kane 1992, 88.
[1774] Abyar 2002, 78-80.
[1775] See Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.
[1776] Shekofte 2015.
[1777] Wilber also mentions that an attempt was made in order to preserve the structure of the *imamzada*: a modern roof was constructed for the shrine and fired bricks were used to clad its most vulnerable parts. Wilber 1955, 138.
[1778] See Abyar 2002, 78-80; Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.
[1779] Wilber 1955, 138.
[1780] It is not clear which artistic technique Wilber means with the term "applied plaster." It could be the technique of applied moulded and stenciled stuccos, which is comprised in the mihrab of the Ushturjan Friday mosque.

structure was that of a cross-plan, similar to the shrine of the ʿAbd al-Samad complex at Natanz (Cat. No. 12). The supporting walls retained further recessed niches which may have originally been decorated with stucco or similar revetments. Differently to the Natanz shrine, the structure was intended as a mausoleum with one entrance and not four openings.

Wilber reports that the interior of the *imamzada* was decorated with polychrome stuccos in sidewall recesses and the mihrab. Wilber informs that stems and leaves were full half-rounds of plaster, suggesting the presence of carved stucco decoration. Wilber continues by stating that dark blue and white border lines were used to delineate details of the decorative patterns. Moreover, fragments of mosaic faience were found in the rubble and on walls. Wilber reports the presence of terracotta ornamentation for the making of the mosaic decoration out of glazed inserts of dark blue, light blue and white and he informs that there were fragments of an inscription at the site. These ceramic revetments could however be related to those on the northern entrance portal of the Ushturjan Friday mosque.

Wilber suggests that the construction of the *imamzada* and the Friday mosque took place in parallel and that the *imamzada* was completed prior to the mosque's. It is evident that Wilber considered the Ushturjan Friday mosque of Ilkhanid foundation (Cat. No. 4). The fact that there was an earlier mosque on the site (shown by this research), explains that the works for the construction of the *imamzada* could have taken place and could have been completed prior to the Ilkhanid rebuilding of the Friday mosque. In fact, the date on the carved mihrab of the *imamzada*, 1308-09, pre-dates the date of the redecoration and rebuilding activities of the Friday mosque, dated 1315-16 (Cat. No. 4).

Construction Phases

Wilber's description of the monument's original architecture does not mention any separate construction or decorative phases. The monument was constructed around 1308-09, as indicated by the date on its stucco mihrab.[1781] This *imamzada* may have been an Ilkhanid foundation for the female saint and it may have reflected Ushturjan's urban growth. It is not clear when the monument fell into disrepair; it was functional at the time of Wilber's visit in 1943.

Phase One - The Earliest Imamzada

The *imamzada* was an Ilkhanid construction *ex novo* and it might reflect the Ilkhanid fostering of the cult of saints and pilgrimage. Little is known of the saint buried in the mausoleum and it is not clear whether she was a descendent of the Twelve Imams, or if this is a result of the re-interpretation of the site of reverence.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

No historic post-Ilkhanid phases are recorded on the monument by Wilber.

[1781] Wilber 1955, 138.

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Ground Plan

The *imamzada* was square in plan (Fig. 366) with interior cross-form ground plan and recessed niches. The mausoleum featured one entrance opposite the *qibla* wall. The ground plan of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun resembles the form and dimensions of the later Khwaya Saʿd (c. 1365) mausoleum in Isfahan.[1782]

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Elevation

Due to the ruined state of the monument it is difficult to speculate about the elevation of the *imamzada*. Wilber mentions that its mud brick walls were preserved to the height of 5.25 m and he describes the recessed niches with pointed arches. Given that these niches were integral at the time of Wilber's writing, it is unlikely that original walls could have been considerably higher. Wilber does not mention any transitional elements, but he reports that its dome was damaged.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The religious function of the structure was that of a mausoleum which housed the tomb of the female saint. The presence of the monumental stucco mihrab in its interior, which may have been part of the monument's original design (based on its location on Wilber's plan), indicates that the mausoleum was also intended as the prayer space for the faithful.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

The only preserved interior revetment of the monument is the carved stucco mihrab now on display in the collection of the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran. Wilber informs that the original repertoire also comprised further stuccos. The mihrab was therefore only the central and focal point of a more extensive decorative repertoire.

The Mihrab

Figs. 367-373.

The mihrab is currently part of the permanent display at the Teheran National Museum of Archaeology. The mihrab had to be cut into pieces for transport from Ushturjan to Teheran. Upon the entry into the collection, the mihrab had undergone extensive restoration interventions for its display and preservation.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The dimensions of the mihrab (4.16 x 2.43 m)[1783] indicate that the mihrab is of medium size.[1784] The mihrab comprises one internal niche, on its lower part, which is formed by the pointed

[1782] See Wilber 1955, 185-86.
[1783] Abyar 2002, 78.
[1784] Abyar reports that the entire width of the mihrab (with the supporting structure of the mihrab) amounts to 52 cm. *Ibid.*, 78.

arch.[1785] The lower parts of the niche are flat and its surface is covered by the main panel which is flanked by two side panels (Fig. 373). The main panel comprises a background of abstract and interlaced geometric patterns, which frame the vertical rectangular panel (heavily restored), consisting of a symmetrical design of floral rosettes and palmette motifs. This main panel is flanked by two panels, one on each side, which are divided into two parts. Their upper parts carry cartouches with the signature of the head stucco craftsman (*work of Masʿud al-Kirmani*; right-hand side cartouche) and with the date of mihrab's completion on the left-hand side (*in the year 708*/1308-09; Fig. 372). The system of cartouches which carry the signature of craftsmen and date of the completion of the work is similar to cartouches on the Kucha-yi Mir mosque's mihrab in Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the Turbat-i Jam mihrabs (Cat. No. 30) and the Mir Zabir Shrine's mihrab in Sirjan (Cat. No. 33).[1786] These cartouches top vertical rectangular panels which comprise arabesque ornamentation composed of symmetrical arrangements of palmette imagery.[1787]

The niche is topped by the interior lunette (Figs. 370-371). The background of the lunette is sober and it is juxtaposed to the rich medium depth stucco relief of symmetrically arranged compositions of half-palmettes, floral scrolls and further vegetal imagery.[1788] These stuccos conserve extensive polychromy traces of specific tonality of light blue background and perhaps white ornamentation. The lunette is separated from the lower parts of the niche with a Kufic inscription band, which according to Abyar was badly damaged, and only partially legible, to allow him to establish that the inscription recounts a Prophetic Hadith. The lunette is framed by a band of floral ornamentation similar to floral ornamentation bands of Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 31). The lunette's exterior parts are additionally framed by a *Naskh* inscription of Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-7) set against a floral scroll background. The style of this framing inscription is fluid, and it is crammed into the available space. Accordingly, little space is left for the carving of the background, which comprises portions of floral ornamentation, to indicate the existence of background floral scrolls. The two spandrels which flank the niche on its top are almost identical to those at Kucha-yi Mir: they contained applied protruding circular bosses, which were inserted into tripartite compositions of floral ornamentation, similar to the Kucha-yi Mir mosque's mihrab.

The described composition is framed by the inner framing band with inscription in Kufic style (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Muʾminun*, 23:1-5) in a fragmented state and by the exterior monumental framing band, which comprises only abstract floral and geometric revetments (Fig. 369). The Kufic inscription band fragments display the masterly skill of the stucco craftsmen. This inscription comprises visual elongations of the letters' *hastae* which give a steady rhythm to its visual appearance. The exterior framing band (Fig. 368) comprises revetments of floral derivation which are arranged on two visual planes and do not comprise epigraphic elements. The decoration of the band consists of repeating patters of symmetrically arranged compositions

[1785] This niche is one of the very few niches of Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs which retains all of its stucco revetments.
[1786] For a detailed study see Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.
[1787] Compare to the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab (Cat. No. 31) of the Kirmani mosque stuccos at Turbat-i Jam (Cat. No. 30).
[1788] Compare to the lunette of the mihrab at Kirmani mosque in Turbat-i Jam complex and the lunette of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab. The vocabulary of ornaments of the lunette is not dissimilar to that found on the Haftshuya mihrab (Cat. No. 3), but there, different artistic techniques are used for its production.

of palmettes. This arabesque band is covered by repeating geometric patterns of floral derivation, which render the composition more complex and fluid.

The mihrab is topped by two horizontal inscription bands (Figs. 367-368). The lower inscription band of Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Ikhlas*, 112:1-4) in *Thuluth* style, is set against a variegated background of floral scrolls. The upper band is damaged to the degree that it is no longer legible; its inscription displayed Kufic style. The mihrab of the *imamzada* masterly balances between inscriptions and abstract ornaments on the mihrab's carefully arranged panels. The choice of Kufic and *Thuluth* styles serves the purpose of variegating the visual appearance of the stucco repertoire and assures for its dynamic effect.

Other Revetments

Wilber's description of the monument, from his survey of the monument in 1943, provides an indicative account of other revetments found in the *imamzada*. He recounts that the recessed niches of the supporting walls were also decorated with carved and likely applied (moulded and stencileld) stuccos.[1789] Moreover, he also reports that tile mosaic in dark blue, light blue, terracotta and white glazed elements was employed for the decoration of the *imamzada*'s surfaces.[1790] These revetments were lost when the building was demolished.

Exterior Revetments

Wilber does not provide any information regarding exterior revetments of the *imamzada*.

Stucco Polychromy at Imamzada in Ushturjan

Wilber reports the presence of extensive polychromy traces on the mihrab and the other revetments of the *imamzada*.[1791] The stucco polychromy of the mihrab has been well preserved, thanks to its relocation into the museum environment, but it is also likely that it was retouched when the mihrab entered the collection.

The mihrab conserves extensive traces of light blue, mainly in the recessed parts of its relief. Some parts of the mihrab's protruding relief retain traces of white and red. It is not clear whether white was the original colour of the mihrab, or if it served as a primer. The mihrab could also have been whitewashed. It remains unclear which other pigments, likely, white, red and perhaps green, were used for the colouring of protruding parts of its relief. The light blue of the mihrab's recessed parts is considerably lighter in comparison to the shades of blue found at the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1).

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Imamzada at Ushturjan

The mihrab of the *imamzada* presents a restricted selection of stucco carving techniques, similar to those encountered in the mihrab of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque at Natanz (Cat. No. 31).[1792]

[1789] Wilber 1955, 138.
[1790] *Ibid.*
[1791] *Ibid.*
[1792] The two mihrabs nevertheless feature differences in epigraphic styles and ornamentation vocabulary. But their artistic techniques selection is related.

The majority of the mihrab was produced with the undemanding technique of carving of two stucco layers. Stucco undercut is not present. The two protruding bosses were produced in an almost identical manner to the Kucha-yi Mir mihrab. Modest geometric and floral bands of the mihrab are carved out of one stucco layer. The striking aspect of the Ushturjan *Imamzada* mihrab is the level of detail encountered in its relief. This might have been conditioned by the type of stucco composition employed for the mihrab's production.

The Ushturjan Imamzada Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The imamzada's mihrab is strongly related to the Kucha-yi Mir and the Turbat-i Jam mihrabs (Cat. Nos. 30-31).[1793] The same applies to its style and aesthetics. Variations of symmetrical palmette designs are encountered in all three mihrabs. The striking difference is however the greater amount of floral decoration on the *imamzada*'s mihrab. Furthermore, the mihrab's exterior framing band, with its repeating palmette design and framing floral geometric pattern, does not retain an exact parallel, thus reflecting the creativity of the stucco carvers for the mihrab's production. In comparison to Isfahani stuccos, such as the Haftshuya or the Pir-i Bakran mihrab, we do not find stucco undercut in the mihrab of the *imamzada*. Furthermore, the relief of the *imamzada* mihrab is detailed, but at the same time it is relatively shallow and not as protruding as stuccos of the stucco *qibla* lunette at the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4). These outlined stylistic comparisons point towards the theory of Rashidniya, Salihi and Taghavinejad, which suggests that the craftsmen of the Ushturjan *imamzada*'s mihrab were not native to the Isfahan area. Rather, they worked on works such as Turbat-i Jam, Kucha-yi Mir and Mir Zabir (Cat. Nos. 30, 31, 33). Nevertheless, these mihrabs were not produced by one workshop, but by craftsmen who were related or who trained together and occasionally collaborated.

d.) Furnishing

No furnishing of the *imamzada* has survived to the present time.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The only part of the monument comprising epigraphic content is the stucco mihrab. Originally, the epigraphic programme of the monument was likely more extensive.

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab was meticulously studied and read by Abyar. These readings are reported here with additional comments.

The epigraphic content of the mihrab comprises the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The interior of the mihrab's niche comprises two cartouches on its sides, which feature the signature of the master craftsman responsible for the mihrab production and the date of the mihrab's completion. The two cartouches are placed in positions of the mihrab's lower elevation which made them visible to the faithful. They are produced in *Naskh* style and they

[1793] The Sirjan mihrab of Mir Zabir mausoleum is partially related, but it presents different solutions.

protrude from the background consisting of a perforated fish scale pattern. The cartouches were first read by Wilber.[1794]

The right-hand side cartouche:

عمل مسعود كرماني

Work of Masʿud [al-]Kirmani.

The left-hand side cartouche:

في سنة ثمان و سبعمائة

In the year seven hundred and eight (1308-09).

The content of the cartouches is of utmost importance for the mihrab's dating and for the identification of the craftsmen's workshop which produced it.

b.) The lower edge of the mihrab lunette's interior features a Kufic inscription band placed against a background of leaf elements, which was mentioned to contain a Prophetic Hadith by Abyar, but which is only partially legible.

The beginning of the inscription reads:

]sicقال رسول عليه السلام [

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said … [sic]

The presence of a Hadith text in the mihrab's epigraphic programme is relatively rare, but parallel cases exist. The mihrab of Abu al-Hasan al Kharaqani (Cat. No. 21) comprises a Prophetic Hadith; another extensive Hadith programme is featured on the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque and the mihrabs of Marand and Urumiya Friday mosques (Cat. Nos. 1, 22-23). Earlier cases of hadith texts in the mihrab in other architectural revetment media are presented by the lustre mihrab in the Quds museum of Mashhad, dated 1215.

c.) The exterior of the mihrab's monumental lunette is framed by an inscription band which features a style between *Naskh* and *Thuluth* and is set against a densely filled background of vegetal elements. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fatiha* (1:1-7).

The inscription reads: [1795]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ

[1794] Wilber 1955, 138.
[1795] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

The mihrab of Kucha-yi Mir mosque features the same Qurʾanic excerpt, but it is located on the mihrab's framing inscription band. This Qurʾanic excerpt is frequently employed for Ilkhanid and Seljuq stucco revetment repertoires, especially mihrabs.

d.) The framing inscription band of the mihrab is lost in many parts, but it is nevertheless possible to read parts of its content and to suggest, after Abyar, that the inscription features the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Muʾminun* (23:1-5). The inscription displays Kufic style, characterized by the occasional overlaps of letter and elongated hastae ending in abstracted vegetal finials. It is placed against a richly decorated background filled with palmette and leaf-derived elements. The recessed parts of its relief comprise remains of dark blue colouring.

The inscription reads:[1796]

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ

Certainly will the believers have succeeded:
They who are during their prayer humbly submissive,
And they who turn away from ill speech,
And they who are observant of zakat,
And they who guard their private parts.

This Qurʾanic excerpt is frequently featured in stuccoworks, especially on mihrabs.

e.) The lower of the two horizontal epigraphic panels topping the mihrab features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4). The inscription is produced to display *Thuluth* style and it is placed against a shallow relief and rich design of floral scrolls. The *hastae* of the lettering are slightly elongated.

The inscription reads:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

[1796] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Muminun (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

This Qurʾanic excerpt exalting God and highlighting his uniqueness is frequently featured in medieval Iranian stucco repertoires, on mihrabs and also other parts of the decorative programmes.

f.) The second horizontal inscription panel tops the mihrab's structure. At the time of Abyar's research, the inscription was already in a state of fragmentation and difficult to read. The panel could be the result of the mihrab's redecoration. The inscription features a monumental form of Kufic style, with a specific characteristic of double outline, and it is somewhat archaicizing. The inscription is placed against a vegetal element composition and it features a relatively shallow relief. It may feature a Qurʾanic excerpt exalting Allah.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

No written information regarding the patronage of the *imamzada* exists and the inscriptions of the mihrab are silent about it. The patron may have been a local notable, possibly employed in the Ilkhanid court and perhaps native to Ushturjan, similar to the case of the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4); this was however a more monumental commission, which required a more extensive endowment. There are no links between the employed stucco artistic techniques on the *imamzada*'s mihrab and the revetments of the Ushturjan Friday mosque which could suggest a possible employment of the same stucco workshop and likeliness of patronage by the same patron.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco mihrab of the *imamzada* is signed in one of the cartouches as *work of Masʿud al-Kirmani*. The similarity of the signatures between Turbat-i Jam, Natanz and Sirjan has been debated in length by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad.[1797] These stuccoworks indeed reveal striking similarities in the use of artistic techniques for stucco production and also in the mihrabs' ornamental repertoires. But the signatures of craftsmen, always placed in cartouches on the sides of the interior niche panels, are signed by different persons, who all carry the *nisba* (al-)Kirmani. It is thus not clear whether these signatory artists were colleagues, or relatives, which appears also likely. These four cases of shared *nisba*, artistic techniques and stucco aesthetics, are nevertheless striking and provide important evidence of the stucco craftsmen's workshops migration and transfer of artistic know-how. Moreover, the city of Kirman does not seem to have been a significant stucco production centre in the Ilkhanid period. The most likely scenario is therefore that the four stuccoworks are the work of craftsmen who at a certain point

[1797] Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.

trained together or collaborated. These signatures of different stucco masters could also be the results of the change of the master craftsman of one workshop, which occurred through the passing of time. It is not clear if the *nisba* Kirmani is geographical and if it thus indeed indicates the very origin of craftsmen. Rather, the group was itinerant according to stucco commissions.

f.) Monument Condition

Although Wilber describes the monument to be in a relatively good state with a collapsed dome and new roofing, the monument did not survive to the present time. At a certain point, a decision seems to have been taken to modernize the monument by replacing it with a modern construction.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The stucco mihrab's examination and research of its architectural context provide information about the mihrab of the lost *imamzada* of Rabiʿa Khatun in Ushturjan. The discussion highlights the disparities in stucco aesthetics and artistic techniques between the *imamzada*'s mihrab and the stuccos of the other monuments in the Isfahan region, suggesting it to be the work of craftsmen not native to Isfahan. Moreover, the similarities between the other repertoires bearing similar stucco craftsmen's signatures, such as the mihrab of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque at Natanz, the Mir Zabir mausoleum in Sirjan and the Turbat-i Jam's Kirmani mosque, have been demonstrated, and additionally confirm the hypothesis that these stuccos are likely works of related craftsmen who worked in separate workshops. The analysis of the *imamzada*'s mihrab also provides an overview of the inscriptions, artistic techniques, polychromy and aesthetics of this Ilkhanid carved stucco masterpiece.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Wilber 1955; Abyar 2002; Shekofte 2015; Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.

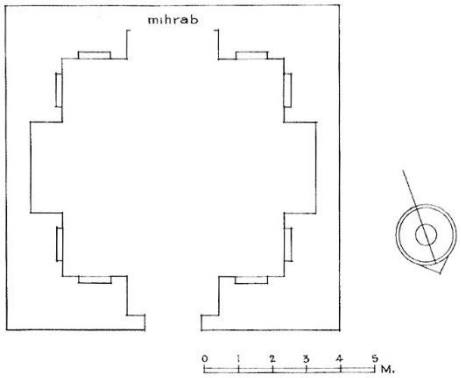


Figure 366: Ground plan of the no longer extant Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan (After Wilber 1955, Plate 25).



Figure 367: The monumental carved stucco mihrab from the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan, on permanent display at the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran.



Figure 368: Detail of mihrab's upper section showing its framing bands. The vegetal composition band in its centre features a framing device resembling lotus blossoms. This panel is carved out of several layers of stucco material.

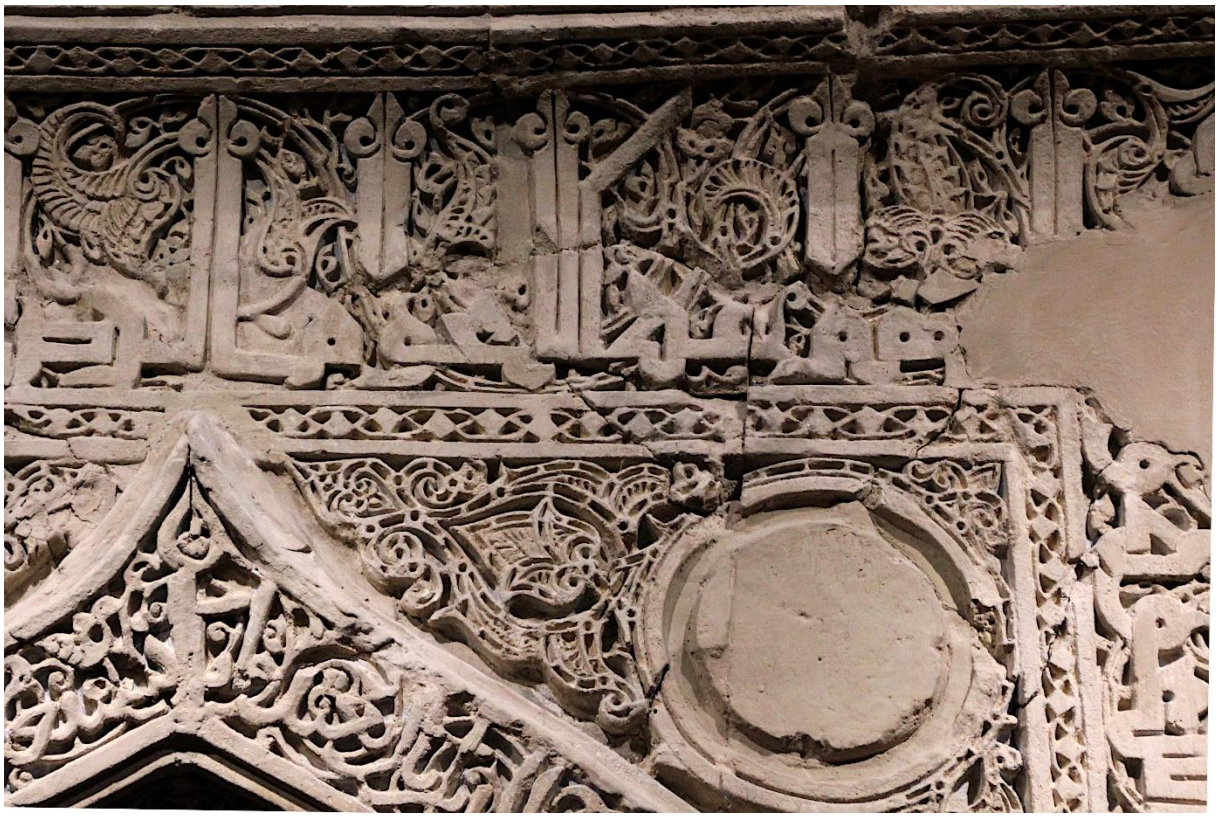


Figure 369: Detail of the right-hand side spandrel of the mihrab's niche and the Kufic inscription framing band of the mihrab. These stuccos are different from the other repertoires signed by craftsmen with the *nisba Kirmani*.



Figure 370: Detail of mihrab's monumental lunette panel featuring palmette-derived elements' composition. The recessed parts of the relief retain pigmentation traces which were likely retouched in the mihrab conservation process.



Figure 371: Detail of the Kufic inscription at the bottom edge of mihrab's monumental lunette. The surface of the inscription retains traces of lining employed for the outlining of the inscription on the stucco surface.



Figure 372: Detail of the left-hand side cartouche in the interior of mihrab's niche, with inscription providing the date of the mihrab's completion as 1308-09.

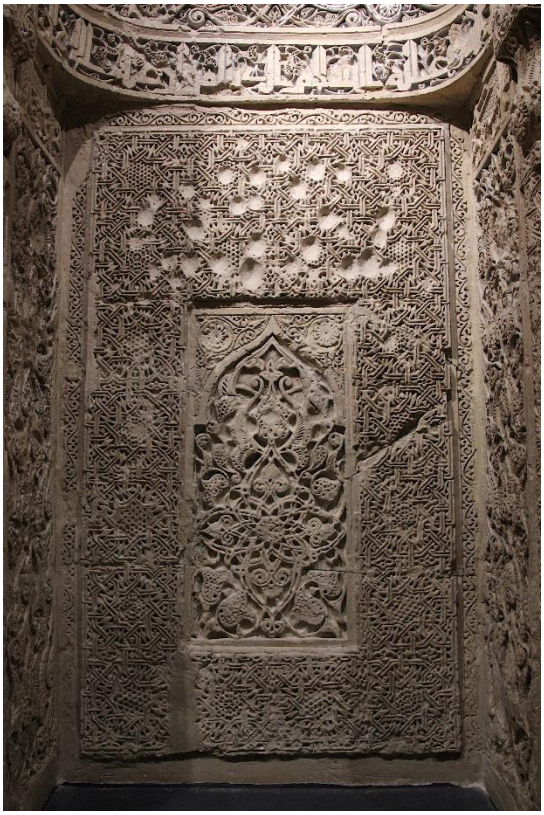


Figure 373: Detail of the central panel of the lower portion of mihrab's niche. The perforation damage of the upper part of the panel might have been caused by the faithful.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 33

Monument Name: Mir Zabir mausoleum

Figs. 374-383.

Associated Names: the Mīr Zabīr mausoleum[1798] is referred to as an *aramgah* (mausoleum) and a *buqʿa* (mausoleum). *Mir* could be a corruption of *Pir*, possibly a title of a Sufi Shaykh. The site is not associated with the term *imamzada*.[1799]

Monument Type: mausoleum.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in one phase, likely in the first decades of the fourteenth century.[1800]

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): square mausoleum topped by a hemispherical dome. The dome is surmounted by pendentives and the octagonal drum. The current dome seems to be an internal shell of the original double-shelled dome.

Location: the mausoleum is located on the grounds of the historic cemetery of the village Sharifabad, on its eastern side, close to the settlement of Saʿadat-abad (modern Homashahr), c. 34 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Sirjan into the north-eastern direction (or southwards from Pariz and Pesoujan settlements).

GPS location of the monument: 29.7146582 N; 55.8342869,262 E.

Monument Investigation: February 23-24, 2020.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The monument is located near Sirjan, on the old caravan connecting Kirman and Sirjan. No written sources describing the settlement and the mausoleum have been discovered.

Background

The monument is relatively well known to Iranian scholars, but it remains unnoticed by Western scholars. The studies of the mausoleum began with publications by Varjavand (1972) Khatami (1995) and Keshawarz (2000), which represent its most thorough contributions.[1801] They were followed by Okhabi (1997), Zendedel (1997) Rajabi (2012), who mostly repeat the same

[1798] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1799] A burial place for descendants of the Prophet.
[1800] This research dates the monument to the Ilkhanid period, drawing on the stylistic analysis of the stucco revetments and investigation of artistic techniques used for their production, which are related to the other Ilkhanid period stucco repertoires in Natanz (Kucha-yi Mir mosque; Cat. No. 31), Ushturjan (Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun; Cat. No. 32) and Turbat-i Jam (The Shaykh Turbat-i Jam complex; Cat. No. 30).
[1801] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad, 2018, 96.

information.[1802] The most recent contributions are by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad,[1803] with mentions by Salihi and Rashidniya[1804] and by Shekofte.[1805]

Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad put out a series of articles about Ilkhanid stuccoworks with signatures of master craftsmen comprising the *nisba* al-Kirmani. One article is dedicated to the Mir Zabir mausoleum and it provides some preliminary information concerning the monument.[1806] Other articles discuss the hypothetical existence of the Kirmani stucco craftsmen's school and they refer to the Mir Zabir mausoleum's stucco repertoire in the context of its comparison to the related monuments.[1807] A more detailed discussion is necessary to establish on firmer grounds the characteristics of mausoleum's stuccoworks and their dating. Furthermore, the proposed association of the mausoleum's stuccos to the Kirmani school, should be revised, due to several differences between stucco repertoires signed by different craftsmen who only share the *nisba* al-Kirmani. Rather than a work of a stucco school, the monument and its stuccos need to be considered works of an independent craftsmen's workshop, which might have had remote family ties with craftsmen responsible for the production of other al-Kirmani signed stuccoworks, and who might trained the art of stucco together or occasionally collaborated. The *nisba* al-Kirmani should also not be interpreted in a strictly geographical sense, because the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan is the only extant Ilkhanid stucco repertoire in the area of Kirman. Kirman does not seem to have been an important stucco art centre in the Ilkhanid period, in contrast to the Seljuq era, to which stucco repertoires, such as the three carved stucco mihrabs of the Malik mosque in Kirman and the extensive stucco repertoire of Khwaja Atabak mausoleum in Kirman indicate.

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 374.

The monument is constructed out of locally available construction material: roughly worked stone, which is assembled with gypsum-composed mortar. The mausoleum's structure is square in plan, with external sides of walls 9 m long; on the internal side of the mausoleum, the supporting walls amount to 7 m in length.[1808] Four large pendentives translate the mausoleum's square structure into its octagonal drum. The hemispherical dome might have originally comprised an external shell. The monument is situated on a constructed platform and its entrance, which is located on its northern side, used to be accessed via a staircase. The external façade of the mausoleum is arranged into a tripartite system of recessed niches formed by pointed arches, which are framed into a rectangular composition. One opening on the *qibla* wall, above the mihrab, provides the natural light for the mausoleum's interior. The interior surfaces of the mausoleum's supporting walls are articulated into blind niches. These niches were built with the aid of inserting horizontal wood elements into the wall structures, which

[1802] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad, 2018, 96.
[1803] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.
[1804] Salihi and Rashidniya 2016.
[1805] Shekofte 2015.
[1806] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.
[1807] Salihi, Taghavinejad and Rashidniya 2016.
[1808] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018, 97.

enabled the ormation of niches. The arcades of these niches were formed with fired bricks inserted into the mausoleum's stone core.[1809]

The mausoleum's interior is decorated with an extensive stucco repertoire. It comprises a relatively large stucco mihrab and a monumental inscription running along the top edges of the mausoleum's supporting walls. Furthermore, wall surfaces and transitional zone elements retain remains of stucco panels, indicating that they were originally almost entirely covered in carved stucco. The dome structure of the mausoleum is a work of rebuilding, due to the collapse of the dome; originally, the interior of the dome might have also been reveted in stuccos. The mihrab and the stuccos on the supporting walls are in a deteriorated state and they require conservation interventions for their preservation.

Construction Phases

The relation between the building and its stuccos indicates that the monument was constructed and decorated in one intervention. The revetment programme consisted of predominantly carved stuccos, but some fragments indicate that it could have comprised applied moulded stuccos (native to the Yazd-Abarquh area) and tile decoration.[1810] Technological and visual characteristics of monument's stucco repertoire, illustrate that the mausoleum was likely built in the first decades of fourteenth century (see below).

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument did not undergo modifications subsequent to its construction in the Ilkhanid period.

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Ground Plan

The mausoleum is square in plan. Its supporting walls are made visually more appealing and lighter by the use of blind niches on their exterior and interior surfaces. The interior of the mausoleum comprises four supporting walls, each of them having a large recessed niche in its centre; the space between these niches is filled with pairs of smaller and shallower recessed niches. The mausoleum's building is modest and it did not comprise any adjacent structures. The skill of its builders is demonstrated in its transitional zone which comprises a pendentive system and octagonal drum topped by the hemispherical dome. The monument is placed on a platform in order for it to seem more monumental and well visible. The mausoleum's ground plan is similar to the no longer extant Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun at Ushturjan (Cat. No. 32). Further earlier examples include the core of the Mashhad Ata mausoleum (11-12th centuries) complex in Dikhistan in modern Turkmenistan.[1811]

Ilkhanid Mausoleum Elevation

Each external side of the monument is divided into three sections, which are decorated with recessed niches and organized into rectangular frames. This device breaks down the visual

[1809] Stuccos of the mausoleum were applied directly on the stone, wood and fired brick core of the monument, without *kahgil* or other type of a preparation layer.
[1810] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018, 97.
[1811] See Muradov 2011.

weight of supporting walls and it accentuates the mausoleum's vertical axis. Such workmanship is traditional of southern Iran, where earlier monuments of similar structure are located, for example in Abarquh (Gunbad-i ʿAli) or Turan Pusht (the mausoleum of Junayd).

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The monument is a mausoleum, which could have retained a Sufi function or it perhaps houses a tomb of a local authority. Its extensive stucco repertoire indicates the likeliness that the monument was an important pilgrimage destination. The mihrab in the mausoleum's interior determined the prayer space for the faithful. This indicates that the unidentified personage, Mir Zabir, buried in its interior, might have been a religious authority.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The mausoleum's interior is decorated with an extensive carved stucco decorative programme. Its best preserved parts include the monumental inscription topping the edges of the supporting walls, the mihrab, and fragments of panels covering supporting walls and transitional zone elements. Originally, the stuccos covered the entire interior of the mausoleum which might have also included the interior of its dome.

Interior Revetments

Figs. 375-383.

The Monumental Inscription Band

Figs. 375-376, 383.

The monumental inscription band runs along the top edges of the mausoleum's four supporting walls. It visually frames the supporting walls and the stucco decorative repertoire comprising the blind niches on the walls, the wall surfaces and the mihrab. The inscription band is in a deteriorated state. It features selected Qurʾanic excerpts, of which it was possible to decipher the *Basmala*, the two verses from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-2) and a verse from *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:45).[1812] The inscription relief, in a manner similar to the mihrab, is plain and not protruding. The inscription is written in *Thuluth* style and it comprises knotted elements, which resemble Knotted Kufic. The inscription retains diacritical marks and occasional vocalization.[1813] It is placed against a richly decorated background of floral scrolls, large leaves and flower blossoms. Similar elements are employed for the background of mihrab's inscription bands.

The Mihrab

Figs. 376-381.

The mihrab is slightly squat in appearance. This seems to have been determined by the wall dimensions which limited its height. It is positioned in the centre of the *qibla* wall and it is installed in the wall structure to feature a deep internal niche. The mihrab's lower half is entirely

[1812] Author's reading.
[1813] The presence of diacritical marks and especially vocalization could indicate early fourteenth rather than thirteenth century date for mausoleum's stuccos.

lost, due to the damage inflicted by water infiltration from the ground and likely by weathering. The parts where the mihrab has fallen off indicate that the stucco was applied directly on the stone surface of the supporting wall. Some horizontal wooden poles of small dimensions were inserted into the wall to reinforce mihrab's structure and to form its niche.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The mihrab's design and form are unusual and there is no exact parallel for them in medieval Iranian stuccos. This might be a result of the craftsmen's will to produce a unique stuccowork. The mihrab consists of a deep central niche which is formed by a pointed arch (Figs. 376-378). The niche could have originally been flanked by a pair of columns which would have surmounted the pointed arch. The only remaining stucco of the niche is the lunette panel in its top section. Earlier researchers inform about the existence of fragments of cartouches with the signature of the workshop and the date of the mihrab's completion.[1814] The niche is outlined with two stuccos bands: an indentation form band and an inscription band. The indentations (Figs. 377-378, 381) partially conceal the niche's interior. The combination of the niche and stucco indentations is an unusual artistic choice, which is not frequent in Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. A good parallel is the earlier (perhaps 11-12th century) mihrab of the Mashhad Ata complex in Dikhistan, in modern Turkmenistan.[1815] This indentation band is attached to the inscription band (Fig. 378) which forms the pointed arch of the mihrab's niche. The inscription band features *Naskh* style and it retains diacritical marks and vocalization. It comprises the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4) and a fragment of a Prophetic Hadith.[1816] The exterior edge of this inscription comprises a thin repeating knotted element outline. The niche of the mihrab is flanked by two large triangular panels of stucco which assume the function of spandrels (Fig. 378). They consist of symmetrically arranged compositions of palmette designs and the background filled with vegetal elements. The form of these panels, which function as spandrels, is not customary and might have been determined by the mihrab's large niche and the need to fill the space between the mihrab's monumental inscription and the inscription outlining the niche's pointed arch.

The mihrab structure is enclosed into a larger niche formed by a pointed arch (Figs. 377-379). The interior of the niche is outlined by a monumental inscription band, which assumed the role of the mihrab's framing band. The inscription band is of extensive dimensions and it assumes a concave form to mediate between the mihrab's planes. The remaining portion of the inscription band features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Israʾ* (17:77-79). The inscription features *Thuluth* style; it retains diacritical marks and occasional vocalization. The design and the background of the inscription are very similar to the monumental inscription band, which runs along the top edges of its supporting walls. The mihrab's inscription band features knotted elements in its background filled with floral scrolls, flower blossoms and leaf elements. The

[1814] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad report that in earlier times the mihrab retained remains of two cartouches on each side of the niche of the mihrab, and that they used to contain the signature of the stucco craftsmen and the date of the completion of the mihrab. They are however no longer *in situ*, because the passing of the time destroyed them. This is characteristic of the Kirmani mihrab group.

[1815] The Dikhistan mihrab comprises three niches and its largest niche is also framed by a very similarly carved stucco band with larger indentations, which partially cover the interior of the lunette of the niche. See Muradov 2011, 322-324, 335.

[1816] The Hadith remains in fragments only. It is not noted by earlier researchers.

band is outlined on the lower and the upper edges by thin bands with repeating knotted ornamentation. Another such band additionally fills the intrados of the mihrab's large pointed arch niche. The exterior edges of the mihrab's large niche are outlined by a small band featuring *Naskh* style and with similar characteristics to the band which outlines the mihrab's internal niche (Fig. 377). The inscription band is vocalized and it retains diacritical marks. It features *Ayat al-Kursi* (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255). The mihrab's large niche is topped by a pair of monumental spandrels (Fig. 377). Their visual form was partially determined by the lack of space and the need to top the mihrab with the monumental inscription band outlining the edges of the supporting walls. The spandrels feature symmetrical compositions of palmette and split-palmette elements set against a minutely carved background. They retained applied circular protruding bosses which are no longer extant. The two spandrels are topped by triangular spaces, with shallow stucco reliefs, which might be the works of restoration.

Comparanda

The mihrab's design does not retain exact parallels in Ilkhanid stucco revetments. Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad compare the design of the Mir Zabir mihrab to the other mihrabs they consider to be works of the Kirmani school: to the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab at Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the mihrab of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun from Ushturjan (now in National Archaeological Museum in Teheran; Cat. No. 32) and the two mihrabs at the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30).[1817] They propose that there are similarities between the designs of these mihrabs, but there are also obvious differences: the proportions of the Mir Zabir mihrab are different, and the types of arches employed to form the mihrab are entirely distinct. Moreover, the form of the spandrels differs from the other mihrabs, although they used to contain protruding bosses. Furthermore, the mihrab's inner niche does not contain spandrels. Perhaps a closer parallel could be the Mashhad Ata mihrab in Dikhistan.

Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad state that the inner lunette of the Mir Zabir mihrab's niche comprises a symmetrical design of palmette imagery with heavy perforation. The lunette is similar to those at Kucha-yi Mir, Turbat-i Jam and the Ushturjan Imamzada mihrabs. The similarities between these lunettes do not only comprise their imagery, but also the carving style with heavy perforation, and the artistic technique, which comprises carving of two layers of stucco. According to Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad, these mihrabs are works of the same stucco craftsmen's workshop. In search for similarities, they however disregard differences between these repertoires. The Mir Zabir mihrab features ornamentation similar to that of mihrabs at Turbat-i Jam, and the Kucha-yi Mir mosque, but the style of its inscriptions is entirely distinct and its forms, and the design indicate that the mihrab likely dates from the first decades of the fourteenth century or later. The listed mihrabs retain divergent signatures of craftsmen which only share the *nisba* al-Kirmani. This clearly indicates that it was not one workshop which produced these mihrabs but that there were several stucco masters who were leading separate workshops. Shared similarities between these mihrabs and the *nisba* of their signatures might either indicate family ties between these master craftsmen, or that these

[1817] Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018, 103.

craftsmen trained together, but later each of them operated their own stucco craftsmen's workshop.

Supporting Walls and Transitional Zone Elements

Figs. 382-383.

The remaining fragments of the carved stuccos on the surfaces of blind niches and other parts of the mausoleum's supporting walls and the transitional zones, indicate that most of its interior was originally decorated with an extensive carved stucco programme. Compared to the monumental mihrab and the inscription band running along tops of supporting walls, the stuccos of the wall surfaces feature less complex designs and they were produced with less demanding technology. These revetments functioned as a visual background of the mausoleum's decorative programme.

Blind niches on the walls are outlined with repeating designs of compositions consisting of vegetal and geometric ornaments. Their interiors are coated with plain plaster. The niches are topped by pairs of small triangular spandrels with shallow incisions of blossoms and abstracted vegetal elements. The surfaces between the niches are coated with two types of carved stuccos. One type comprises stucco plugs which are carved out of a layer of stucco. These plugs are arranged into geometrical patterns, but they do not form inscriptions in *Khatt-i bannaʾi*. The plugs comprise knotted elements, and incised geometrical compositions. The other type of revetments covering these surfaces are panels of carved stuccos with floral medallions and compositions of leaf-derived elements. These compositions feature shallow reliefs, and they repeat across the surfaces between niches and in corner areas. They function as framing devices which allowed the craftsmen to transform mausoleum's wall surfaces into elegant façade compositions.

Exterior Revetments

It is not clear whether the mausoleum was originally decorated on its external surfaces.

Stucco Polychromy at Sirjan

The mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum was partially whitewashed and it lost most of its polychromy. Only the largest inscription band retains some traces of white and occasionally orange, which may be results of mihrab's retouching during its restoration. The stucco plugs of the monument do not retain their original polychromy. It is however likely that, in a manner similar to the majority of the stucco repertoires of the Ilkhanid period, these stuccos were originally polychrome.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Sirjan

The mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum is produced with the use of standard and less complex stucco artistic techniques: the mihrab and the monumental inscription were carved out of two or more stucco layers. The background repertoire on the supporting walls and pendentives of the mausoleum was produced by carving of one stucco layer and with the stucco plug technique. The mihrab was also decorated with two protruding bosses. The selection of artistic techniques

for the Mir Zabir mihrab is very similar to those employed for the making of the Kucha-yi Mir, Imamzada Ushturjan and Turbat-i Jam mihrabs. This links these mihrabs, despite some of the earlier outlined differences, and it suggests that based on the shared artistic techniques, ornament details and stucco signature type, the four mihrabs could have been work of related craftsmen's workshops.

The Sirjan Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Distinct design and arch forms, style of inscriptions and stucco relief of the Mir Zabir mihrab suggest that this work of art features distinct aesthetics, compared to other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires. The arrangement and forms of mihrab's panels make it appear very dynamic, despite its small number of panels. The large and wide niche which encloses the mihrab and was likely determined by the wall structure, renders its appearance slightly squat. With rather shallow stucco relief, diverse forms and squatness, the mihrab is a unique stuccowork of the Ilkhanid period. The mentioned indentations of the mihrab's interior niche are similar to those at Dikhistan and they present a specific interplay of the mihrab panel forms, which additionally increase its dynamic appearance. Only details of the ornamentation and artistic techniques link this mihrab to repertoires of Natanz, Ushturjan and Turbat-i Jam.

d.) Furnishing

No original furnishing is found in the interior of the mausoleum.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The Monumental Inscription Band

a.) The monumental inscription band is preserved in fragments. It used to run along all the top edges of the mausoleum's supporting walls. The inscription features *Thuluth* style; it is set against the background of floral scrolls, leaf elements and knotted compositions similar to those employed for Knotted Kufic inscriptions. Three parts of fragmented inscription could be recognized: the beginning with the *Basmala*, two verses from *Surat al-Fath* (48:1-2) and a verse from *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:45). The inscription retains diacritical marks and vocalization.

The *Surat al-Fath* text reads:[1818]

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا
لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا

Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest,
That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path.

The *Surat al-Ahzab* text reads:[1819]

[1818] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 17, 2020).
[1819] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/?s=33%3A45 (Last Accessed: December 17, 2020).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness and a bringer of good tidings and a warner.

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The mihrab's interior niche is framed by the *Naskh* inscription with diacritical marks and vocalization, set against the background of vegetal elements. The inscription features the *Basmala*, the Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Ikhlas* (Qurʾan, 112:1-4) and it continues with a Prophetic Hadith, of which only the beginning remains.

The Qurʾanic excerpt reads:[1820]

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ
لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One,
Allah, the Eternal Refuge.
He neither begets nor is born,
Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

The Hadith fragment could be read as:

قال النبي عليه السلام ...

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said…

b.) The monumental inscription band in the interior of the large niche forming the mihrab features *Thuluth* style. It is vocalized and it retains diacritical marks. The inscription is concave and it is set against a vegetal scroll, monumental leaf elements and flower blossom ornaments. Occasional knotted elements fill the space between the inscription's *hastae*. In style and visual appearance, the inscription is similar to the monumental inscription band which runs along the top edges of the supporting walls. The inscription is fragmented and its remaining part comprises Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Israʾ* (Qurʾan, 17:77-79).

The inscription text reads:[1821]

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا ۖ وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا
أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَىٰ غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا
وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا

[1820] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Ikhlas (Last Accessed: November 20, 2020).
[1821] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Isra (Last Accessed: December 17, 2020).

[That is Our] established way for those We had sent before you of Our messengers; and you will not find in Our way any alteration.
Establish prayer at the decline of the sun [from its meridian] until the darkness of the night and [also] the Qurʾan of dawn. Indeed, the recitation of dawn is ever witnessed.
And from [part of] the night, pray with it as additional [worship] for you; it is expected that your Lord will resurrect you to a praised station.

c.) The monumental niche of the mihrab is outlined on its exterior edge by a *Naskh* inscription band which features *Ayat al-Kursi* (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:255). The inscription is vocalized and it retains diacritical marks. In its style, it is very similar to the inscription which outlines the mihrab's interior niche.

The text of the inscription reads:[1822]

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۖ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۖ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

This is one of the most frequently employed Qurʾanic excerpts in Ilkhanid stuccoworks, especially mihrabs.

Mausoleum and Revetments' Patronage

The monument is lacking historic inscriptions and it is not mentioned in written sources. It is thus unclear who the patron of the Mir Zabir mausoleum was. Different hypotheses can be put forward. If Mir Zabir was a local notable, he could have ordered the construction and decoration of the mausoleum for himself. If Mir Zabir was perhaps a Sufi, or a different type of a revered person, which seems more likely, the mausoleum could have been sponsored by some local notable or an Ilkhanid official. The mausoleum's dimensions and its stucco repertoire point towards a minor commission.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Much has been written about the Kirmani stucco workshop and the pertinence and links between the Mir Zabir mausoleum and the Kirmani school of stucco craftsmen by Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad.[1823] The proposed discussion of the mihrab and the research of the craftsmen's signatures however, indicates that these mihrabs were in fact produced by different stucco masters and their workshops. These masters could have however been related

[1822] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/?s=2%3A255 (Last Accessed: December 17, 2020).
[1823] Salihi, Taghavinejad and Rashidniya 2017.

or could have trained together. This would explain the listed similarities in the production technology, and artistic techniques and ornamental elements of these repertoires. The stuccos of the Mir Zabir mausoleum feature several characteristics of production technology, design and ornamental vocabulary which are not shared with the outlined monuments.

f.) Monument Condition

The structure of the monument has been repaired, but the stuccos in its interior require further extensive and urgent conservation interventions for their preservation. The mihrab is in a ruined state and it requires consolidation, cleaning and integration. The remaining architectural surfaces of the mausoleum's interior should also be restored. The stuccos of the supporting walls and pendentives are partially detached from the wall surface. They would require consolidation and cleaning.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

The examination of the Mir Zabir mausoleum provides systematic information concerning its architectural structure and decorative repertoire. Moreover, the performed analysis proposes new readings of some inscriptions of the stucco decorative repertoire, which have hitherto not been read. Furthermore, the analysis of the production technology and visual features of stuccoworks indicates that they are results of one decorative intervention performed by one stucco craftsmen's workshop. Further discussion of the monument contrasts the scholarly assumptions suggesting that mausoleum's stuccos, especially the mihrab, were produced by the Kirmani stucco school. Although the mausoleum's stuccos display several affinities to other Ilkhanid stuccoworks with the cartouche signatures of master stucco craftsmen comprising the Kirmani *nisba*, these stuccos are works of distinct stucco craftsmen's workshop, the masters of which might have collaborated or trained together at a certain point. Furthermore, the analysis of the Mir Zabir stucco repertoire allows some remarks concerning the dating of the decorative programme and the time of mausoleum's construction to be proposed. Judging from its production technology, design, epigraphic features and ornamental vocabulary, the repertoire is most likely to date from the first two or three decades of fourteenth century.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Salihi and Rashidniya 2016; Salihi, Taghavinejad and Rashidniya 2017; Salihi, Rashidniya and Taghavinejad 2018.



Figure 374: Exterior of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan. View from the north.



Figure 375: Detail of the fragmented monumental inscription band, which runs along the top edges of the mausoleum's supporting walls. Stucco plugs covering the wall surfaces are visible in the lower part of the photograph.



Figure 376: The monumental carved stucco mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan.



Figure 377: Side view of the profile of the upper part of the Mir Zabir mausoleum's mihrab, showing its deep profile and the recessed niche. The monumental spandrels, which used to comprise applied circular protruding bosses, topping the large niche are well visible.



Figure 378: Frontal view of the preserved upper part of the mihrab showing its numerous panels of diverse forms and the specific indentation panel outlining the mihrab's interior niche.

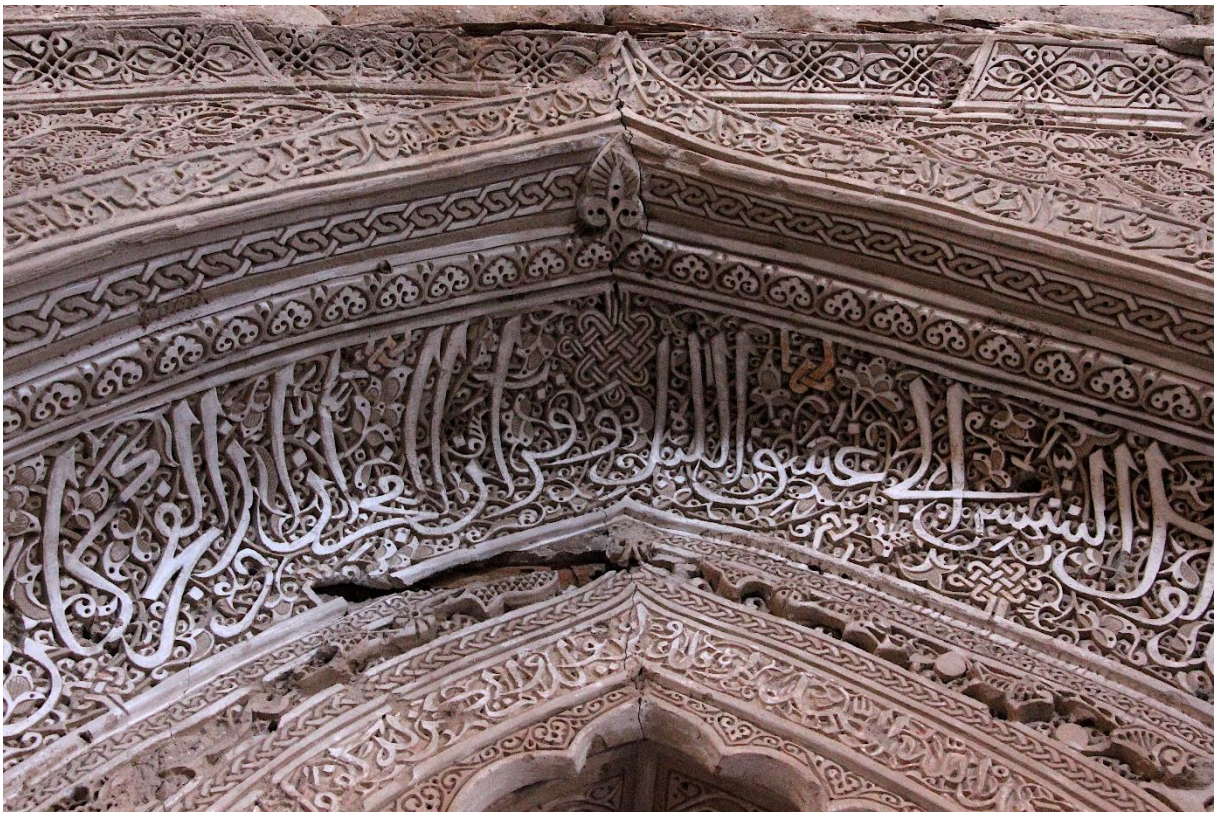


Figure 379: Detail of the monumental inscription band of the mihrab at the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan. The inscription retains diacritical marks, vocalization and knotted elements. Its panel is concave.



Figure 380: Detail of a crack in the monumental inscription band of the mihrab, showing that craftsmen employed wooden reinforcements for the preparation and structure of mihrab's niche.



Figure 381: Detail of mihrab's internal niche panel, displaying a palmette composition related to the mihrabs of Turbat-i Jam complex and the Kucha-yi Mir mosque mihrab at Natanz.



Figure 382: Detail of the remaining fragments of carved stucco medallion panels covering surfaces of the supporting walls in the interior of the Mir Zabir mausoleum.



Figure 383: View of the top edge of the supporting walls and the transitional zone elements of the mausoleum which retain fragments of carved stucco monumental inscription band and further carved stucco panels' fragments.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 34

Monument Name: Sava Friday mosque

Figs. 384-403.

Associated Names: the monument is a congregational mosque, named after the settlement in which it is located. Different ways of transliteration of the settlement's name (ساوه) determine the monument's variant names. The old name for the settlement which is no longer in use is: Savadj. The mosque has been referred to as the Friday mosque of Sava, the Friday mosque of Saveh, the Friday mosque of Sava, and the Friday mosque of Savah. Occasionally, the monument is referred to as the Historic Congregational mosque of Sava. The most frequently occurring spelling of mosque's name is the Friday mosque of Saveh.[1824] A more correct transliteration of the monument name is the Friday mosque of Sāwa.[1825]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in five main phases (phases one and two: pre-Seljuq mud brick structures; phase three: Seljuq mosque; phase four; Ilkhanid modifications and redecorations of the mosque; phase five; Safavid modifications of the mosque) with further modifications in the Qajar period.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): the Ilkhanid monument comprised the Seljuq structure with Ilkhanid modifications and redecorations; courtyard mosque with square domed prayer hall, lateral vaulted prayer spaces and at least two *iwan*s.[1826]

Location: city of Sava; c. 64.4 km as the crow flies in the north-west direction from the city centre of Qum.

GPS location of the monument: 35.0102867 N; 50.36246 E.

Monument Investigation: November 9, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Sava is located on the medieval communication routes which connect Qum with Hamedan, and Qazvin; it was also a stop-over on routes leading from the Zagros area and Lower Iraq towards Rayy and Khurasan.[1827] This strategic location of the settlement determined its significance as a trade and agricultural centre. The name of the settlement, Sava, could be a Muslim name, but it might also have origins in Avesta texts. Sava was significant during the early Islamic period, under Seljuqs, Ilkhans and Safavids. In describing the city, in the tenth century, al-Muqqadasi

[1824] See https://archnet.org/sites/1658 (Last Accessed: November 30, 2020).
[1825] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1826] The mosque structure might have displayed a four-*iwan* layout.
[1827] Summary from: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/sawa-COM_1007?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopaedia-of-islam-2&s.q=saveh (Last Accessed: November 30, 2020).

states that the Friday mosque of Sava was located close to the communication routes, near the bazaar area, that the town was fortified and that it had several baths. The Friday mosque of Sava reflects the history of the settlement in its many constructive and decorative undertakings. The mosque has also been praised by Qazvini as possessing one of the most extensive libraries which comprised scientific and astronomic instruments. The library is also praised by Yaqut, who states that it is of unparalleled richness. The library, which was located in the mosque, was destroyed by the Mongol invasions. For the Ilkhanid period, Mustawfi writes that Sava is the settlement of Islamic foundation, that recently (in the Ilkhanid period) the walls of the settlement were rebuilt in fired brick by Kwaya Zahir al-Din ʿAli ibn-i Malik Sharaf al-Din al-Sawi, that corn and cotton crops were abundant in the area, and that the best fruits of the region were figs, apples, grapes and pomegranates. He highlights that the population of the settlement is Sunnite of the Shafiʿi branch. Mustawfi's description of Sava therefore illustrates that it has revived itself from the Mongol destruction.

A number of other monuments testifies to the significance and rich history of Sava. The Red mosque (the current Inqilab mosque) is thought to have been founded in the Seljuq period. Moreover, the Imamzada Sayyid Ishaq, near the congregational mosque, conserves remains of Ilkhanid tiles in its main interior space. Significant monuments dating to the Ilkhanid period have also been found in the near-by settlement of Ava (Aveh),[1828] which presented a stopover between Qum and Sava. Historically, the cities of Sava and Ava were connected to each other, but also contrasted each other, because Sava was a Sunni and Ava a Shiʿite settlement.

Background

The Friday mosque of Sava has been the subject to several sporadically published archaeological excavations. The most complete information concerning its constructive phases is provided by Mohammad Mehriyar.[1829] Discussion of the mosque's architectural structure is proposed by Alireza Anisi.[1830] Some information is also provided by Qasimi.[1831] Among recent more detailed discussions, the article by Mehdi Paknejad, provides some comprehensive information concerning the mosque's architectural revetments, especially its numerous stucco mihrabs.[1832] It builds on earlier work by Abulfazl Farahani and Quchani.[1833] This research accordingly relies on a summary of existing publications and specific focus on monument's architectural revetments surveyed during its visit in 2018. It focuses on the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in the monument.

[1828] See Lashkari 2017; Lashkari, Shahidi and Vatan 2013.
[1829] See Mehriyar 1996.
[1830] Anisi 2007, 175-182.
[1831] Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 40-47.
[1832] Paknejad 2018.
[1833] Farahani and Quchani 2002.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 384-388.

The most detailed discussion of the mosque's architectural structure by Anisi is employed here, to provide a summary concerning its features.[1834] The architectural spaces comprising the structure of the mosque are arranged around a square courtyard (42 x 42 m).[1835] The domed prayer hall and the *qibla iwan* are located on the mosque's south-western side. The *qibla iwan* precedes the mosque's main domed prayer hall constructed in Seljuq period and redecorated in Safavid times, around 1516-17 and 1546. The mosque's central domed prayer hall was inserted into an older monument, which is attested by the discoveries of ruined piers in this area and by the observations of the domed prayer hall's supporting structure for which piers from the earlier period were partially reused. Another *iwan*, presumably constructed in the fourteenth century (as illustrated by its architectural revetments), faces the mosque's courtyard on its north-western side.[1836] The minaret is its earliest extant element (its historic inscription contains the date 1110-11) and it is located outside of its enclosure. The mosque comprises an architectural structure on its north-eastern side, of asymmetrical form; this structure is a later addition, which likely substituted an earlier three bays deep and eight bays wide architectural structure.[1837] This part of the mosque's structure could originally have served as its library, known from the written sources. Original characteristics of the mosque's, likely monumental, entrance portal are unknown, but descriptions by Qazvini indicate that it comprised a large entrance portal which was topped by a pair of minarets. The mosque also comprised two side entrances, of which, parts of the north-western side entrance were discovered during archaeological excavations.

Construction Phases

Research and conservation interventions on the monument, especially those performed between 1984 and 1990, allow for the better comprehension of the complex history of its numerous constructive and decorative phases. The first mentions of the Sava Friday mosque are in written sources from the tenth century, which present the earliest evidence concerning the mosque's foundation. But Anisi's discussion of the still extant early architectural elements of the mosque proposes that the first congregational mosque of Sava might have been funded around the ninth century. Subsequent information regarding the construction undertakings at the mosque is comprised of the free-standing and isolated fired brick minaret, which contains a historic Kufic inscription, with the date of its construction and the name of its patron; the minaret was built in 1110-11 and it may have been endowed by the Seljuq ruler Sultan Muhammad ibn-i Malik Shah. The date on the minaret therefore constitutes the approximate date for the Seljuq phase of the minaret and mosque's construction. Seljuq interventions on the mosque comprised enlargements and reinforcements of the earlier hypostyle structure dating to the tenth century. Moreover, the domed prayer hall was constructed in the centre of the *qibla* side of the mosque's prayer hall spaces. Some stucco mihrabs were also installed in the mosque in this period.

[1834] Anisi 2007, 175-182.
[1835] *Ibid.*, 175.
[1836] *Ibid.*, 175.
[1837] *Ibid.*, 176-77.

The city and presumably the mosque were destroyed by Genghis Khan's invasions, which signifies that the mosque had to be repaired or rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period. The last significant phase of the mosque's construction and decoration dates to Safavid times, to the reign of Shah Tahmasp, when the mosque structure was repaired, partially rebuilt and modified. Moreover, the central domed prayer hall was entirely redecorated and the *qibla iwan* was redecorated with Safavid revetments. Some additional Safavid mihrabs were also installed in the mosque. These interventions were followed by Qajar modifications of the mosque's architectural structure and its revetments.

In sum, five main periods of construction and decoration can be discerned; two pre-Seljuq phases during which a modest mud structure was transformed into a mud brick hypostyle mosque; the Seljuq phase in which the mosque structure was rebuilt into a fired brick structure with a central domed prayer hall; the Ilkhanid period in which the mosque was repaired and partially rebuilt with the addition of two or more *iwan*s and the Safavid period in which the monument was again rebuilt and in which the central domed prayer hall was thoroughly redecorated in conjunction with the mosque's *qibla iwan*. One of the results of these numerous construction campaigns is the accumulation of architectural revetments in the mosque's interior. At Sava in particular, these revetments present an extensive stucco mihrab corpus. These mihrabs are challenging to date and they require discussion of their artistic features. They remain some of the least addressed aspects of the monument.

Phases One and Two – the Pre-Seljuq Sava Mosque

The earliest date of the mosque in written sources derives from al-Muqqadasi's description of Sava in the tenth century.[1838] The research suggests that the earliest Sava mosque was constructed out of rammed earth and that it was subsequently transformed into a hypostyle structure, measuring approximately three bays deep on the south-western, north-western and south-eastern sides of the courtyard, with unknown original limits of the structure on its other sides.[1839] This structure was replaced by a mud brick hypostyle mosque in the second phase of construction.[1840] The mosque's roofing system originally comprised an arrangement of barrel vaulting. These barrel vaults were produced out of fired bricks and some of their remains were discovered in the mosque's structure, because they were reused for its construction. From the second phase, massive pillars, barrel roofing and mud bricks of extensive dimensions, remain as parts of the mosque's current structure. Anisi proposes to date the mosque's second phase to the ninth century, based on observations of its structure and its architectural elements.

Phase Three- The Seljuq Sava Mosque

The Seljuq interventions comprised the rebuilding and repurposing of the mud brick structure into the hypostyle mosque with a central domed prayer hall. Damaged architectural surfaces of

[1838] Excavations in the area of the domed prayer hall of the mosque revealed evidence regarding its early phases (remains of three mud piers placed on rammed earth floor, which probably dates back to the time of the foundation of the mosque).
[1839] Numerous mud brick piers discovered in the monument could likely be part of this older mosque structure, but they still require a more in depth study for their thorough comprehension.
[1840] The research of the mosque also illustrates that its numerous mud brick piers have been rebuilt and strengthened with fired bricks in the subsequent construction interventions in the mosque.

fired brick wall surfaces of the mosque's corridor retain large mud brick elements. These Seljuq interventions comprised the construction of the mosque's domed prayer hall. This hall was inserted in the pre-existing mosque's structure, which is evident from its ground plan; the domed prayer hall and its *qibla* wall protrude from the *qibla* wall structure. The Seljuq date for the domed prayer hall may be indicated by the transitional zone and its elements, which are placed on top of the supporting walls of the square prayer hall. A set of pendentives with muqarnas decoration produced in fired brick and interrupted by blind niches, formed by pointed arches and topped by a set of squinches, assure for the smooth transition between the square form of the prayer hall and the circular drum which carries the dome. Written sources, especially al-Qazvini, inform, that the mosque also comprised a monumental entrance portal, which was topped by a pair of minarets. Such portals began to be constructed in the Seljuq period. Written sources report that the library of Sava was located in the Friday mosque.[1841] Anisi proposes that the mosque's north-eastern part, which was ruined and of which only some lower portions of walls remain, could have been the space which originally housed the library. If so, the Sava Friday mosque is one of the few monuments, for which there is information that one of its parts operated as a learning centre. The isolated fired brick minaret with the date and information on its patronage provides an indicative date, 1110-11, for the dating of the mosque's Seljuq phases. From the minaret, it is evident that the patronage of the Seljuq Sava Friday mosque involved Seljuq officials with higher posts.

Phase Four – The Ilkhanid Sava Mosque

Written sources record that the library, which was presumably part of the Seljuq Sava Friday mosque, was burned down in the fire during Sava's conquest by Genghis Khan, in 1220, for which it is known that the city suffered considerable destruction. Detailed information regarding the damage caused to the Seljuq Sava mosque does not exist and the assessment of the monument does not reveal specific traces of damage which could be assigned to the Mongol destruction. Some indications regarding Ilkhanid interventions at the mosque nevertheless exist.[1842] Anisi suggests that the architectural revetment evidence of mosque's north-western *iwan* indicate that the *iwan* is an Ilkhanid construction, but that the *qibla iwan* is the work of Safavid builders, as indicated by the dated inscription on its internal surface. Actually both, the north-western and the *qibla iwan* comprise two layers of architectural revetments. The upper layers are above all remains of typically Safavid wall paintings, and some surfaces are covered with thick layers of plaster, which function as whitewash. Where this plaster has fallen off, on surfaces of both *iwan*s, considerable amounts of carved stuccos are visible.[1843] It is thus plausible to propose that the two *iwan*s were inserted in the mosque structure already during

[1841] The sources do not mention the exact location of the library and whether it comprised an isolated structure adjacent to the mosque or if it was housed in one of the mosque spaces.

[1842] Characteristics of Ilkhanid interventions on the mosque structure are in some cases hard to comprehend, because the monument had undergone major redecoration and partial rebuilding in the Safavid period.

[1843] These carved stucco revetments mostly cover blind niches of the *iwan*s and they comprise spandrels topping the passages of pointed arches between the *iwan*s and adjacent prayer spaces. The stuccos feature combinations of stucco plug and carved stucco revetments panels. The stuccos have been carved out of a single or double stucco layer. Based on stucco artistic techniques characteristics, the approach to stucco carving and ornamental iconography, these stuccos are more likely to date from the Ilkhanid period.

Seljuq period. Ilkhanid interventions in the Sava Friday mosque also comprised the production of a carved stucco mihrab, which is discussed separately in the section below.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

Based on the assessment of architectural revetments of the Sava Friday mosque, it is possible to discern two significant phases of monument alteration in post-Ilkhanid period. The central domed prayer hall and the *iwan* surfaces were partially rebuilt and redecorated in Safavid period. The mosque had also undergone redecorations of the exterior surface of its central dome in Qajar period.

Safavid Modifications of the Friday mosque of Sava

Safavid modifications of the mosque focused on the domed prayer hall and adjacent spaces, the *qibla iwan* and the north-eastern prayer hall structures. The structure of the domed prayer hall was redecorated.[1844] The dome of the mosque was rebuilt to feature a Safavid style, bulbous, double-shell dome. Both Qasimi and Anisi state that the *qibla iwan* was inserted into the mosque structure in the Safavid period and that it is the work of Safavid constructors. It would be more reasonable to propose that the *qibla iwan* is also work of Ilkhanid and Seljuq builders and that it was only redecorated in the Safavid period. Western prayer halls of the mosque, located between the current mosque entrance and the domed prayer hall, were also rebuilt and redecorated in the Safavid period. The bay structures were rebuilt to feature a centralized cruciform prayer hall, topped by a small squat dome and embellished with a Safavid mihrab.

Further Qajar Alterations

The major undertaking at the Sava Friday mosque during the Qajar period comprises decoration of the dome's exterior surfaces.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The Ilkhanid Sava Friday mosque plan (Fig. 384) comprised the following architectural spaces: the central domed prayer hall and the adjacent prayer spaces. Further prayer spaces of the mosque were arranged around its square courtyard. It is difficult to judge, based on the remaining evidence, whether the mosque in the Ilkhanid period featured a four-*iwan* arrangement. The roofing system of the mosque comprised barrel vaults for the prayer spaces and the hemispherical dome for the main square domed prayer hall. It remains unclear whether the Seljuq monumental entrance portal, with a pair of minarets, was destroyed or damaged during the Mongol invasion and whether it was rebuilt during Ilkhanid interventions.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

Ilkhanid Sava Friday mosque comprised several elevated points. If it existed, the monumental entrance portal with the minarets accentuated the mosque's *qibla* axis, together with the *qibla iwan* and the dome of the prayer hall, which presented the mosque's elevated points. The existing structure suggests that only the mosque's main entrance side could have been arranged

[1844] The interior also contains historic inscription which provides information regarding the time of completion and patronage of these interventions.

into an entrance façade. The courtyard of the mosque and structures flanking it were rebuilt in the Ilkhanid period and it seems that the builders and architect consciously planned the façade arrangements of the courtyard's four sides.[1845]

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The mosque's ground plan illustrates that the architectural structure was intended to function as the Congregational mosque of Sava. Written sources inform that at least until the Seljuq period, one part of the mosque structure served as a library and perhaps as a scientific centre. This is an important piece of evidence which implies the possibility that also other congregational mosques in the Iranian territory could have possessed such functions.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Architectural revetments of the Friday mosque of Sava can roughly be divided into two groups of exterior and interior revetments. The exterior revetments comprise: fired brick and stucco revetments of the Seljuq minaret, the revetments of the western and *qibla iwan*s (Ilkhanid and Safavid phases), and the ceramic revetments of the dome's exterior surfaces from the Qajar period. The second group comprises the mosque's interior architectural revetments, which present a specific case of a nine mihrab corpus, mainly produced out of stucco. They are located in diverse areas of the mosque's prayer halls and they are dated to various historic periods from the Seljuq until Qajar times. One of these mihrabs dates to the Ilkhanid period and it is given a greater amount of attention in this research. The mosque's interior also retains stucco plug revetments on architectural surfaces of the mosque's supporting elements and Safavid revetments in the mosque's monumental domed prayer hall.

Interior Revetments

The interior architectural revetments in the Sava Friday mosque do not constitute a unified decorative repertoire. They are rather a corpus of architectural revetments produced from different media ranging from stucco and wall painting to ceramics, and they date from different historic periods.

The Stucco Mihrab Corpus

The Sava Friday mosque presents an exceptional case, because it comprises an extensive number of mihrabs, which were produced across a long time span, mainly out of carved stucco, but with employment of diverse artistic techniques and with differing artistic and aesthetic principles. The study of these mihrabs is therefore of essential significance for the understanding of the development of stucco artistic techniques, changes in mihrab aesthetics through time and for the comprehension of the mosque's decorative chronology. A preliminary study of these mihrabs is presented by Sajjadi, who focuses on pre-Ilkhanid mihrabs of the monument and provides some basic information combined with readings of inscriptions on mihrabs.[1846] A more detailed study of the entire mihrab corpus has been recently published by

[1845] The western *iwan* is however of lager dimensions in comparison to the *qibla iwan* which is somewhat puzzling and illogical.
[1846] Sajjadi 1996, 95-101.

Paknejad.[1847] It serves as a base for the more detailed discussion of the Ilkhanid mihrab in the present research.

The Ilkhanid Mihrab (Mihrab No. 4)

Figs. 389-392.

The Ilkhanid mihrab is the only mihrab from the corpus which dates to this period (Fig. 396). The mihrab is dated to the Ilkhanid period by Mehriyar and Paknejad,[1848] who suggest its date as 1305, based on written sources and adding that the dating corresponds to mihrab's characteristics of polychromy remains, stucco relief, epigraphic elements and its design. The first reading of the mihrab's inscriptions and its brief description is provided by Farahani and Quchani.[1849] The mihrab is however undated nor features a craftsmen's signature.[1850] This mihrab is located in the first bay of the southern prayer hall flanking the mosque's monumental domed prayer hall.[1851] It is installed into an appositely constructed niche on the *qibla* wall of the bay.[1852] It is badly damaged, with the majority of its lower parts missing and only the top portion well preserved. The mihrab is of medium dimensions and its design is not complex. The core is presented by the internal, rather high, pointed arch niche. Its stuccos remain in fragments and the exterior niche areas are lost. The niche is topped by a pair of spandrels and framed by three framing inscription bands and a further thin external band featuring a repeating pattern of knotted, rope-like, ornamentation. Most of the lower portions of these inscription bands is lost, but its remaining parts illustrate that these inscription bands are a tour de force of stucco craftsmen, who succeeded in designing three inscription bands featuring three different styles. The mihrab is located in a relatively dark part of the mosque's structure, without windows, which enabled the preservation of its extensive polychromy traces.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The mihrab's central part consists of its pointed arch niche (Fig. 389). The internal part of the niche is divided into five panels. Only a limited fraction of these stuccos remains intact and suggests that this part of the niche comprised an inscription band written in cursive script, perhaps *Naskh,* which was set against a light green background (Fig. 390). The remaining stucco revetment fragments feature thin bands of repeating knotted ornamentation similar to the mihrab's external knotted border.[1853] The lower portion of the niche's remaining stucco fragment retains a damaged design which seems to have comprised an inscription in either Kufic or Square Kufic, set against a background of repeating knotted patterns. This background is a unique feature. Another fragment of the niche's stuccos features remains of a panel on the mihrab's left-hand side, which was heavily perforated and which may have contained a cursive,

[1847] Paknejad 2018.
[1848] *Ibid.*, 121- 123.
[1849] Farahani and Quchani 2002, 44-47.
[1850] Paknejad provides a relatively detailed description of the mihrab, but he does not challenge its dating and neither does he contextualize the mihrab, or provide its comparison to the other stucco mihrabs in the Sava Friday mosque. *Ibid.*
[1851] Information about the mihrab is summarized from: Paknejad 2018, 121-123.
[1852] At the present time the visibility of the mihrab is partially obscured by Safavid arcades which were constructed in front of it.
[1853] The fragments of this knotted band retain abundant polychromy traces of dark red and white colours.

perhaps *Naskh* inscription.[1854] The stucco revetments of the niche's lunette remain in fragments (Fig. 390). These fragments display parts of a symmetrically arranged composition of palmette and palmette-like ornamentation. Some fragments of thin framing band in the niche's intrados, which outline the lunette stucco panel, indicate that this framing band comprised a repeating abstract geometric motif. The framing band of the mihrab's niche and its extrados have not been preserved.

The niche of the mihrab is topped by a pair of spandrels (Figs. 398-399), which assume triangular forms. Each spandrel reveals remains of a circular boss in its central part. The bosses were likely hollow and ornamented with geometrical and floral patterns. The external margins of these bosses were encircled with a thin band of perforated stucco material. The three framing inscription bands which form the outer parts of the mihrab surfaces are arranged in a manner to form a concave surface; it determines its visual depth and renders its design more dynamic. These three inscription bands feature three different inscription styles.[1855] The internally placed inscription band assumes the largest dimensions and features an inscription in Kufic style, which recounts Qurʾanic quotations (*Surat al-Fath*, 48:2-3). The Kufic inscription is characterized by slightly elongated vertical shafts of its letters, which occasionally end in various floral elements and mediate between the inscription and its background. The two corners of the inscription band are filled with knotted compositions, which allow for a smooth transformation between the three parts of the inscription band. The floral scroll background of the inscription is designed in an elaborate manner. The internal inscription band of the three is of smallest dimensions and it is designed to mediate between the large flat plane presented by the internal Kufic inscription band and the curved, or almost diagonally placed, surface of the external Square Kufic band (Fig. 398). This inscription features *Naskh* style and it recounts Qurʾanic verses (*Surat al-Baqara*, 2:125-126). The *i*nscription is placed against a simple background, which comprises indications of the presence of floral scrolls. The external of the three stucco inscription bands of the mihrab features Qurʾanic text (*Surah Yaʾ-Sin*, 36:9-15) written in Square Kufic style. This Square Kufic inscription is peculiar, because it also contains frequent diacritical marks, which rarely occur on Square Kufic inscriptions in stucco medium of the Ilkhanid period. The Square Kufic inscription is white and set against a dark blue background, which increases its visibility and legibility.[1856] In fact, the entire design and craftsmen's idea to create a framing mihrab inscription band in a Square Kufic style is very original.

Comparanda and Mihrab Dating

The described features of the mihrab's stucco lunette, especially the symmetrical palmette composition, find several parallels in other Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. Perhaps the closest parallel is found in the stucco mihrab of the not so distant Kucha-yi Mir mosque at Natanz (Cat. No. 31). Its mihrab also features a similar composition. These two lunettes share the same stucco production techniques and stucco carving approaches. Further parallels include, as mentioned by Paknejad, the lunate of the mihrab of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun from Ushturjan, now

[1854] See Paknejad 2018, 123.
[1855] Compare to the stucco mihrab of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2) and the Uljaytu mihrab in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1).
[1856] Compare to the Ushturjan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 4) and Pir-i Bakran Square Kufic inscriptions (Cat. No. 2).

stored in the National Archaeologic Museum of Teheran (Cat. No. 32). The two mihrabs of the Kirmani mosque of the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30) also present parallels. The employed protruding boss stucco artistic techniques used to produce the spandrels of the Sava mihrab find close parallels in several other mihrabs of the Ilkhanid period. One further parallel is the mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. No. 33) which this research proposes to be dated to the early fourteenth century.

The outlined parallels present very close renditions of stucco mihrab spandrels in terms of employed stucco artistic techniques and ornamentation elements. These parallels can be used as the evidence which confirms the dating of the Sava mihrab to the Ilkhanid period. The outlined parallels and especially the selection of stucco artistic techniques and approach to stucco carving, might indicate that the Sava mihrab could be the work of stucco craftsmen who were also involved in the production of the mentioned mihrabs. The closest parallel for the framing Square Kufic inscription band of the Sava mihrab are the large stucco columns of the Old mosque of the Turbat-i Jam complex (Cat. No. 30) which also feature similar designs. The occurrence of the Square Kufic framing inscription on the Sava mihrab should be understood as a work of creativity of its stucco craftsmen. The other mentioned cases of use of Square Kufic style in stucco medium are mainly dating from the first two decades of the fourteenth century (e. g. Abarquh, Pir-i Bakran). A more precise date for the Sava mihrab can accordingly be proposed to the first two decades of the fourteenth century.

Discussion of the Mihrab Corpus of the Sava Friday Mosque

The discussion of the stucco mihrabs from the Sava Friday mosque allows two conclusions to be drawn. The understanding of the mihrabs, their dating and production, provides a more informed comprehension of the mosque's constructive and decorative chronology and aids at dating different parts of its structure, where these mihrabs are located. Comparison of these mihrabs illustrates the changes in their production technology and development of their aesthetics.

The earliest extant stucco mihrabs of the Sava Friday mosque were produced in Seljuq period, some as series and others as results of separate interventions. The unfinished and incomplete character of some of these mihrabs might not necessarily reflect a frenzy in the mosque's construction, but rather difficulties in their production faced by the craftsmen. The locations of Seljuq mihrabs on piers supporting the mosque superstructure indicate that the hypostyle prayer halls adjacent to the mosque's domed prayer hall, were constructed in the Seljuq period. But they might contain earlier mud structures of the mosque in their interior. The relatively undamaged state of these mihrabs provides evidence suggesting that, when the Mongol conquest of Sava took place, the mosque was not entirely destroyed, as indicated by written sources. The presence of the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in the niche of the *qibla* wall flanking the domed prayer hall from the eastern side, confirms the hypothesis that the mosque was modified and that the area of the domed hall and the *qibla iwan* were redecorated in the Ilkhanid period. The Safavid mihrab in the structure flanking the domed prayer hall on its western side reflects major structural modifications of this part of the monument in Safavid times. In addition to this, Safavid stucco mihrab and architectural revetments present in the domed prayer hall also indicate major redecorations of the domed hall and the *qibla iwan* in Safavid period.

These mihrabs date to Seljuq, Ilkhanid and Safavid periods and their existence in the monument, which was continuously modified and redecorated by patrons, illustrates that redecorators and builders in charge of modifications of the monument aimed to preserve earlier stucco mihrabs and to incorporate them into new repertoires of architectural revetments. The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab is also of particular significance for the understanding of the mosque's construction history and phases. Analysis of the mihrab reveals that artistic techniques employed for the mihrab production and ornamental vocabulary match closely the stucco revetments located in the western *iwan* of the mosque and the *qibla iwan* (Figs. 386-388). Although their upper layers can be firmly dated to the Safavid period, the lower layers, mainly featuring small stucco spandrels of pointed arches, openings, and stucco plug and fired brick ornamentation, present the research issue of assigning the structure of *iwan*s and their revetments to either the Seljuq or Ilkhanid period.[1857]

The stucco mihrabs of the Sava Friday mosque, which date to diverse periods also allow some observations regarding differences in their production technology to be drawn. It is possible to observe relatively contrasting characteristics of the stucco reliefs of the mihrabs from the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. The majority of Seljuq mihrabs in the Sava mosque display stucco relief which was produced by carving a single stucco layer and which was characterized above all by a ninety-degree angle between carving tools and the stucco surface. The final result are mihrabs with very shallow stucco relief and little contrast between the inscriptions, floral elements and the background of the repertoire. The Ilkhanid mihrab however displays a dynamic and contrasting deep stucco relief, which was produced with distinct and more advanced stucco production techniques. The difference in production methods between these mihrabs however does not necessarily signal a technological advancement, which would have occurred through the passing of the time. Rather, this difference needs to be assigned to the fact that these mihrabs were produced by different craftsmen's workshops.

Domed Prayer Hall Revetments

The domed prayer hall of the Sava Friday mosque is the focal part of the monument. The first domed structure of the mosque was inserted into a pre-existing structure in the late Seljuq or Ilkhanid period. The domed hall was partially rebuilt and entirely re-decorated in the Safavid period. The interior of the domed hall displays a uniform decorative programme, which comprises surfaces of the dome, the transitional zones and the supporting walls. Exterior surfaces of the structure display an elaborate ceramic revetment programme, which covers the surfaces of the dome and the drum. Some ceramic revetments on interior and exterior of the structure date from the Qajar period.

Exterior Revetments

The mosque's exterior revetments are located on the following surfaces: the Seljuq minaret, the western and *qibla iwan*s, which conserved two phases of decoration from, presumably, the

[1857] Close technical and stylistic parallels between the Ilkhanid mihrab, and the stuccos on surfaces of the two *iwan*s, which are partially visible, suggests that the *iwan* structures date to the Ilkhanid, rather than Seljuq periods. Clear differences in production technology and aesthetics appearance of Seljuq mihrabs in the mosque and the Ilkhanid mihrab, provide additional evidence for this hypothesis.

Ilkhanid and Safavid periods, and the mosque dome's exterior surfaces from the Safavid or Qajar periods.

The Minaret

The minaret is the oldest dated structure of the entire monument, because it bears the historic inscription containing information regarding the patronage of (at least) the minaret and the time of its construction. It has been suggested that there originally existed two minarets which constituted the mosque's monumental entrance portal. If so, this would be the earliest dated example of a monumental twin minaret *pistaq*. The remains of the fired brick minaret comprise its lower part, but its decoration is lost on one side. It consists of a hollow fired brick core and external coating produced with appositely shaped fired brick elements. The decoration of the minaret consists of circular bands with epigraphic, floral and geometrical ornamentation. Epigraphic bands with Kufic historic inscription are separated by thin bands of repeating undulated ornamentation elements and larger circular panels featuring geometric compositions. It is plausible that more extensive amounts of minaret's decorative surfaces were originally covered with carved stucco.

The Western Iwan

Figs. 385-387.

The western *iwan* of the Sava Friday mosque was likely one of the mosque's four *iwan*s and must have been constructed to contrast a juxtaposed *iwan* on the mosque's eastern side. The *iwan* is interconnected with the adjacent prayer spaces by a pair of openings on each side. The exterior surfaces of the *iwan* are plain, due to its damage and later restoration interventions, but its interior surfaces comprise two layers of architectural revetments. The upper layer of the revetments can be firmly dated to the Safavid period, based on existing inscriptions, analysis of their production technology, calligraphic style and type of revetments. Damage to the Safavid revetments reveals a layer of concealed revetments beneath them. These revetments comprise compositions of carved stucco plugs inserted between fired bricks forming the supporting structure of the *iwan* and carved stucco revetments employed to decorate spandrels of blind pointed arch niches and passages. The carved stucco revetments display deep and contrasting reliefs and some of the stucco spandrels seem to have been carved out of more than one stucco layer. These spandrels display different ornamental compositions; most frequently, simple repetitive geometrical ornamentations of stucco perforation. One of the spandrels features an elaborate frame with a Square Kufic inscription. Another spandrel features a floral composition, which resembles closely the Ilkhanid mihrab of the mosque. These stucco spandrels are closely related to those located on the surfaces of the *qibla iwan*, which are discussed below. As mentioned, the described links between the stucco ornaments of the first phase of the western *iwan* and those located on the *qibla iwan*, suggest that these two *iwan*s were constructed during the same intervention.

The Qibla Iwan

Fig. 388.

The *qibla iwan* of the Sava Friday mosque is believed to have been constructed in the Safavid period. A closer examination of its architectural surfaces reveals that its southern structure contains two layers of revetments: some parts of the structure retain carved stucco spandrels, which are most likely work of craftsmen who also decorated the mosque's first western *iwan.* These surfaces display peculiar types of architectural revetments, which combine fired bricks and plug elements with epigraphic content. Observations of the heavily restored parts of the mosque, on its southern side, nevertheless reveal that the *qibla iwan* is connected to the two adjacent prayer space structures in a regular manner, and that it must be contemporary to these structures. The presence of Seljuq stucco mihrabs on some piers, which act as supporting elements of these prayer spaces, proposes that, the *iwan* was part of the mosque structure prior to the advent of Safavid interventions. In sum, the double revetment layer on the southern side of the *iwan* and the interconnectedness of the *iwan* with the adjacent prayer spaces confirm its pre-Safavid date.

Stucco Polychromy at Sava – the Ilkhanid Mihrab

The Sava stucco mihrab conserves extensive traces of polychromy. Stucco polychromy of the mihrab reveals various colour shades: white, light red, dark red, ochre yellow to brown and dark blue. The shades of light and dark red are well preserved; red was used in a manner similar to the Uljaytu mihrab (Cat. No. 1): to enhance the mihrab's architectural lines and to serve to outline the ornamental elements. White was employed for parts of the stucco relief which were more protruding, compared to the other stucco relief's features. Green reveals shades similar to those on the Haftshuya Friday mosque mihrab (Cat. No. 3). The abundancy of traces of green at the Sava mihrab is rather surprising. Green was in some cases used to colour the background of the damaged inscription band in the mihrab's internal niche. Green was also employed for the colouring of the recessed and perforated parts of the floral ornamental compositions of the mihrab's spandrels and the background scrolls of stucco inscription bands. Blue is only spotted in the external inscription framing band, where it was employed to visually deepen the recess of the inscription background and to make the inscription stand out from the background. Yellow ochre to brown is preserved in only a few instances on the Sava mihrab; it could be result of degradation of a different pigment which was originally of darker shade. This colour was employed selectively to highlight some details of the mihrab's stucco relief. It was, for example, used for colouring of the lotus flowers on the mihrab's spandrels to enhance their visibility.

The stucco mihrab at Sava not only conserves extensive traces of colouring, but it also provides evidence indicating slightly different colouring principles, compared to those which this research observed on the majority of Ilkhanid stuccos. The abundance of light green on the Sava mihrab is an exception; it is not clear whether such an amount of green reflects its prevalent position in the polychromy scheme, or if this pigment is simply more resistant in comparison to other pigments the craftsmen employed. The recorded polychromy traces nevertheless illustrate that green had a specific and significant role in the polychromy repertoire of the Sava

Friday mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab. The remaining traces also suggest that the use of blue pigment was rather limited, which contrasts the evidence proposed by other Ilkhanid stuccos, which reveal abundant use of blue, especially for colouring of the stucco reliefs' backgrounds. In turn, traces of light and dark red, or brown, reveal the fairly common use of these colours for the purpose of highlighting the mihrab's outlines.

In sum, the discussion of polychromy traces on the Ilkhanid mihrab of the Sava Friday mosque demonstrates that, for the stucco revetment colouring, in the Ilkhanid period, there existed diverse colour palettes and that colouring principles for stucco revetments, to a certain extent, depended, on the colour palette selection. But it remains unclear what exactly was the determining factor behind the stucco colouring palette. This could be the availability of colours for stucco revetments. Alternatively, the stucco colour palettes could have been perhaps more strongly conditioned by stucco workshops themselves, if it was stucco craftsmen who were in charge of the preparation and production of pigments for stucco colouring.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Sava – the Ilkhanid Mihrab

The Ilkhanid stucco mihrab of the Sava Friday mosque combines three approaches to the production of stucco relief which comprise four separate stucco artistic techniques. The middle framing inscription band of the mihrab was produced with the most widespread stucco artistic technique characterized by carving of one stucco layer. The large framing inscription band in Kufic style with elaborate floral ornamentation in its background and most of the other parts of the mihrab were produced by carving of two layers of stucco material. The mihrab's spandrels provide evidence of remains of circular protruding bosses, which were applied on the stucco relief. The exact nature of these elements remains unclear; they were circular in form and perhaps hollow. But it is not known if they were also perforated and with what kind of ornamentation were they embellished. The fourth stucco artistic technique is presented by the Square Kufic inscription band; it required carving of two stucco layers, but the mode of transfer of the inscription design differs from the other mihrab's inscription bands, because it was performed with the aid of a square grid. These artistic techniques are very frequently employed for stucco production in the Ilkhanid period. In fact, the selection of these artistic techniques for the production of the Sava mihrab, is also encountered in several other Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs, such as the mihrab of the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz (Cat. No. 31), the mihrab of the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun from Ushturjan (now in the National Archaeological Museum in Teheran; Cat. No. 32), the stucco mihrab of the Mir Zabir mausoleum near Sirjan (Cat. No. 33), stuccos of the Friday mosque of Bistam (Cat. No. 18) and the mosque of the Bayazid Bistami complex (Cat. No. 19) and several other examples. The use of the fourth artistic technique, for Square Kufic inscription band, is however an exception and perhaps a unique characteristic of the Sava Friday mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab.

The examination of the employed stucco artistic techniques for the production of the Sava Friday mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab provides additional evidence confirming that the mihrab is the work of Ilkhanid stucco craftsmen. Moreover, the presence of the Square Kufic inscription band on the mihrab suggests that the mihrab should be dated to the first two decades of fourteenth century. The mihrab's stucco relief and described stucco artistic techniques for its production are also in stark contrast with the stucco reliefs of the majority of other, older

mihrabs in the Sava Friday mosque, which have also been manly produced out one rather thin stucco layer.[1858]

The Sava Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style – the Ilkhanid Mihrab

The Ilkhanid mihrab at the Sava Friday mosque displays visual characteristics which frequently occur on Ilkhanid stuccos. The mihrab was produced with a variety of stucco artistic techniques. This use of diverse stucco artistic techniques allowed for the production of diverse types of stucco panels which constitute the stucco mihrab; these panels are visually uniform, because of the present shared visual characteristics. All the mihrab's stucco panels feature a non-protruding stucco relief characterized by the upper visual plane. The relative shallowness of stucco mihrab's relief was only interrupted by two circular protruding bosses on its spandrels. The low dynamicity of the stucco relief, its shallowness and sober design, are compensated for by the variegated selection of three distinct calligraphic styles for its framing inscription bands. Use of diverse calligraphic styles determined the visual contrast and the interplay between angular forms of Square Kufic and circular forms of *Naskh*, which were mediated by the Kufic inscription. Floral ornamentation of inscription bands and use of related floral ornaments for the mihrab's spandrels and its central lunette, assured for its visual integrity. The mihrab's polychromy traces additionally transformed its visual appearance by rendering its relief more contrasting.

d.) Furnishing

No Ilkhanid furniture is located in the monument.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The monument features an extensive epigraphic programme, but the focus of this research is its Ilkhanid stucco mihrab (the mihrab number 4).

The Ilkhanid Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the Ilkhanid mihrab is preserved in fragments. Three bands retain inscriptions which are partially legible. Further partially legible fragments comprise two inscriptions in the mihrab's niche. The mihrab originally featured five or more inscriptions.

a.) The monumental Kufic inscription band which frames the niche and the spandrels of the mihrab is set against a rich floral scroll background. The inscription is characterized by elongated *hastae* which occasionally terminate in floral elements. The corners of the inscription are filled with knotted elements. The inscription features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (legible parts are; 48:2-3) which is preserved in the mihrab's upper portion section. The inscription was originally longer.

[1858] The Ilkhanid Sava mihrab therefore indirectly also illustrates the differences in use of stucco artistic techniques for stucco revetment production in different historic periods.

The text of the legible inscription starts in the middle of the verse 2 and terminates in the middle of the verse 3 of *Surat al-Fath*.[1859]

The text of the inscription reads:[1860]

لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا
وَيَنْصُرَكَ اللَّهُ نَصْرًا عَزِيزً

That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favour upon you and guide you to a straight path,
And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.

b.) The *Naskh* inscription which tops the monumental framing Kufic inscription is featured in a thin band and set against a modest floral scroll background. The inscription is legible in its upper parts and it was read by Paknejad.[1861] It features a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:125-126). The legible part begins in the middle of the verse 125 and terminates in the middle of the verse 126. The inscription was originally longer.

The text of the inscription reads:[1862]

وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنًا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَنْ طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ
وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَٰذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۖ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

And [mention] when We made the House a place of return for the people and [a place of] security. And take, [O believers], from the standing place of Abraham a place of prayer. And We charged Abraham and Ishmael, [saying], "Purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who are staying [there] for worship and those who bow and prostrate [in prayer]." And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits – whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day." [Allah] said. "And whoever disbelieves – I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire, and wretched is the destination."

c.) The exterior inscription band of the mihrab is written in Square Kufic and it is composed in a specific way. The inscription is divided into two registers and the reading proceeds from right to left and up and down, all the way through the inscription. This Square Kufic band may be unique and it features Qurʾanic excerpts of *Surat al-Ya-sin* (36:9-15).[1863] The inscription is preserved in the upper portion of the mihrab and some fragments remain on the right-hand side of the mihrab, which are difficult to read. Originally, the inscription was longer, and it logically

[1859] This is author's reading of the inscription, which was not published so far.
[1860] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-fath (Last Accessed: December 1, 2020).
[1861] Paknejad 2018, 122.
[1862] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-baqarah (Last Accessed: December 1, 2020).
[1863] Paknejad does not provide information concerning the verses of the inscription.

comprised further verses from the same Qurʾanic chapter. The legible parts of the inscription begin in the middle of the verse 9 and are interrupted in the middle of the verse 15.

The text of the inscription reads:[1864]

وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ
وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ۖ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ
إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ
وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ
إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُرْسَلُونَ
قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ

And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.
And it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them – they will not believe.
You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him good tidings of forgiveness and noble reward.
Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register.
And present to them an example: the people of the city, when the messengers came to it –
When We sent to them two but they denied them, so We strengthened them with a third, and they said, "Indeed, we are messengers to you."
They said, "You are not but human beings like us, and the Most Merciful has not revealed a thing. You are only telling lies."

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

Post-Ilkhanid stuccos mainly date to the Safavid period (see above).

Mosque and Stucco Revetments' Patronage

Stucco revetments of the Sava Friday mosque do not contain information regarding the identity or the status of their patron. Historic information on the inscription of the minaret suggests connections between royal patronage of the monument and possibly royal patronage of the Seljuq stucco mihrabs. The technological level of production and the aesthetic appearance of these mihrabs however indicates that the stucco craftsmen in charge of the production of Seljuq stucco mihrabs did not possess excessively advanced stucco production skills, which would reflect an imperial or elevated status of their commission. It is therefore possible that the Seljuq stucco mihrabs could have been the results of minor and separate decorative interventions. In contrast, the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab does reveal advanced stucco craftsmanship' skills, which are combined with skilled designs of mihrab's inscriptions.

[1864] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ya-Sin (Last Accessed: December 1, 2020).

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

Stucco mihrabs of Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods in the Sava Friday mosque do not contain any stucco craftsmen's signatures which could indicate direct connection between these mihrabs and contemporary stucco revetments. The majority of Seljuq stucco mihrabs was most likely the work of a single stucco craftsmen's workshop, but no parallels for these mihrabs have been found in other monuments. The discussion of the Ilkhanid mihrab revealed that the mihrab was produced with stucco production technology, which is frequently encountered in other Ilkhanid stuccoworks and that the craftsmen were most likely native and mobile within the geographical area of central Iran, in the area between Natanz, Kashan, Qum, and Sava.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is in a good state of preservation. Although the monument is documented as partially ruined on images by Marie-Thérèse Ullens de Schooten (images are dated 1950-70), already at that point measures were taken to protect the monument with an enclosure.[1865] The monument was subjected to archaeological research and repairs, and conservation interventions, which began in the 1970s and continued with large-scale interventions and research between 1984 and 1990, and during the recent decades.[1866] Architectural revetments in the main domed prayer hall and the mosque's stucco mihrabs in the lateral prayer spaces are in fairly good condition. The monument is currently being restored, but these interventions comprise minor treatments of architectural surfaces.

g.) Research Findings – Summary

This research focuses on the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab in the *qibla* area of the *riwaq* flanking the mosque's domed prayer hall on its eastern side. The mihrab's discussion illustrates that it is of the early fourteenth century and that it is closely related to the stuccoworks of central Iran, such as the Kucha-yi Mir mosque in Natanz and the Imamzada Rabiʿa Khatun mihrab from Ushturjan. The mihrab displays a specific Square Kufic inscription band with an extensive amount of polychromy traces indicating its colouring principles. Its production technology and aesthetics differ from the mosque's other mihrabs of Seljuq and later periods, which however provide context for its understanding. This examination sheds light on the little noted mihrab and its relationship to the mosque. Some new readings of the mihrab's inscriptions are also provided.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Qasimi 2004, vol. 7, 40-47; Farahani and Quchani 2002; Paknejad 2018; Anisi 2007, 175-182.

[1865] https://archnet.org/sites/1658#item_associations (Last Accessed: December 1, 2020).
[1866] Anisi 2007, 175.

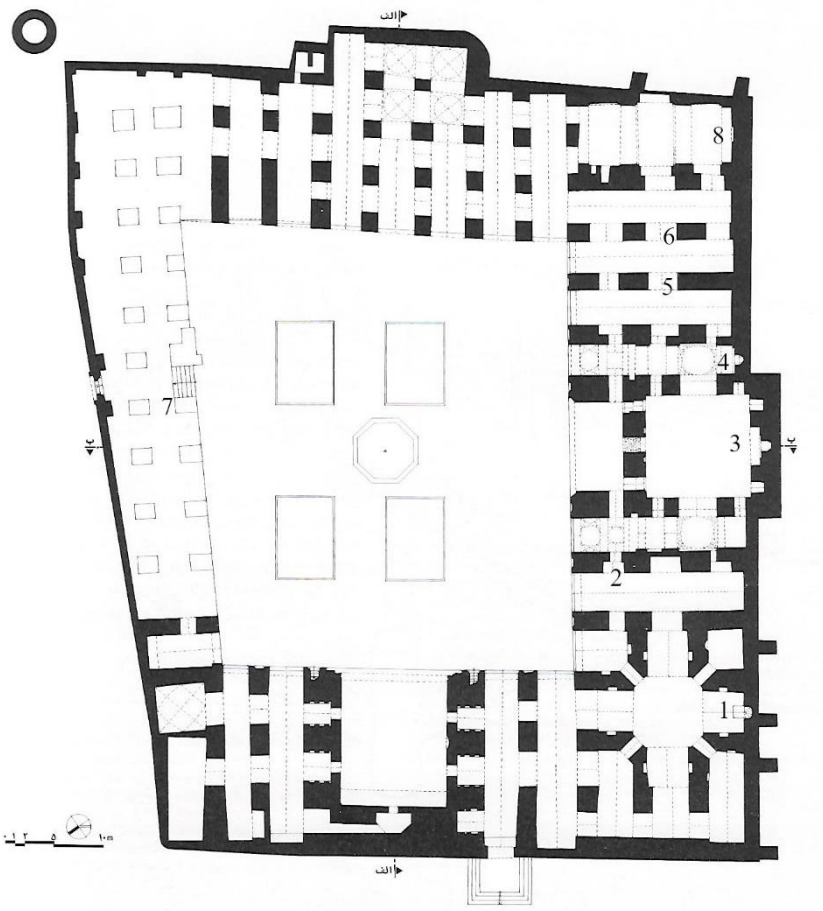


Figure 384: Ground plan of the Sava Friday mosque with marked locations of its mihrabs (After Qasimi 2004, Vol. 7, 44).



Figure 385: The western *iwan* of the Sava Friday mosque.



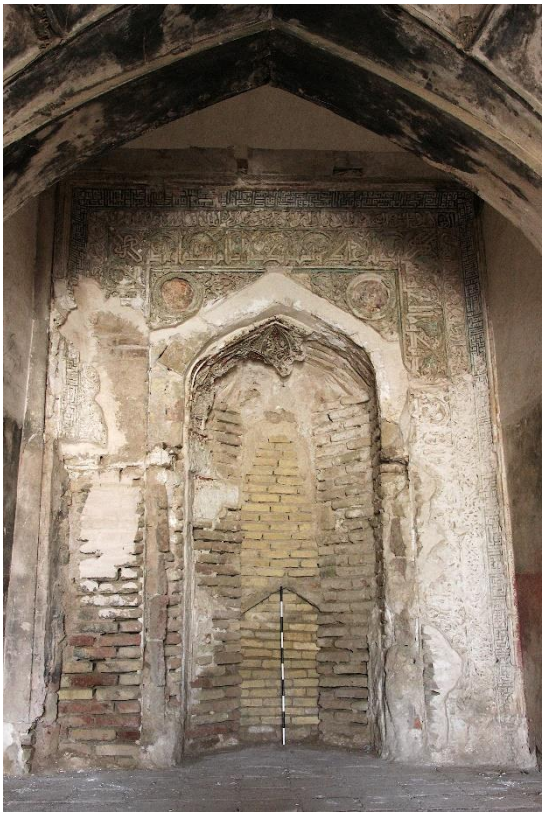
Figure 386: The southern supporting wall in the interior of the western *iwan* of the Sava Friday mosque passage was reduced in size and covered in plaster coating in Safavid period. The plaster coating conceals earlier carved stuccos with a Square Kufic inscription.



Figure 387: Detail of the blind niche on the right hand side of the southern supporting wall of the western *iwan* at the Sava Friday mosque, showing the covered carved stuccos. The flower blossom of the stuccos relates to the elements in the spandrels of mosque's Ilkhanid mihrab (see below).



Figure 388: Detail of the main supporting wall of the *qibla iwan*, showing several layers of revetments and building phases.





Figures 389 and 390: The Ilkhanid mihrab (mihrab No. 4) of the Sava Friday mosque. Left: View of the mihrab. Right: Detail of the fragmented lunette panel topping mihrab's niche; the polychromy traces could be original or overpainted during conservation interventions.



Figure 391: Detail of the Ilkhanid mihrab at the Sava Friday mosque, showing its right hand side top corner. The mihrab comprises three framing inscription bands, with Square Kufic displaying a Qurʾanic excerpt. This is similar to the mihrab of the Abarquh Friday mosque and the monumental inscription band running along the dado area of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum.



Figure 392: Detail of the flower blossom element of the Ilkhanid mihrab's left hand side spandrel, which resembles the mihrabs of Turbat-i Jam and Kucha-yi Mir stuccos.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 35

Monument Name: Sujas Friday mosque

Figs. 393-402.

Associated Names: the mosque is referred to as the Congregational mosque of Sujas; the name of the settlement can be spelled and transliterated in diverse modalities. The mosque's variant names comprise: the Friday mosque of Sujas, the Friday mosque of Sojas, the Friday mosque of Sajis, the Friday mosque of Suğas and the Friday mosque of Sudzhas. Perhaps the most correct and common spelling of the monument's name is: the Friday mosque of Sujās.[1867] Currently, the monument is known as the Historic mosque of Sujas.[1868]

Monument Type: congregational mosque.

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in two phases (phase one: Seljuq mosque; phase two; Ilkhanid redecoration of the mihrab) without subsequent modifications.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): mosque with a central domed prayer hall, which was likely flanked by adjacent prayer spaces forming the mosque's hypostyle side prayer halls which might have comprised a courtyard.

Location: Sujas settlement; c. 31.2 km as the crow flies in the south-western direction from the city centre of Sultaniyya; north-western Iran.

GPS location of the monument: 36.2364265 N; 48.5441035 E.

Monument Investigation: April 26, 2017; October 20, 2017.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

Sujas is located near the northern slopes of Zagros, in north-western Iran, some thirty kilometres south-west from the Ilkhanid capital Sultaniyya, and approximately fifty kilometres south of Zanjan.[1869] Ilkhanid sources,[1870] in particular, reports by Mustawfi, illustrate the importance of the Sujas region.[1871] Mustawfi states that Sujas was ruined during the Mongol invasion and that its inhabitants were Mongol. The region was important because of its proximity to Arghun Khan's burial site[1872] and other crucial Ilkhanid religious and secular structures. Mustawfi describes the inhabitants of Sujas as Sunni Muslims of the Abu Hanifa branch.[1873] The majority of Ilkhanid construction activities in Sujas seems to have occurred prior to Uljaytu's

[1867] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1868] For variant names of the monument, see https://archnet.org/sites/3877/media_contents/50007 (Last Accessed: November 14, 2020).
[1869] For primary written sources mentioning Sujas see Zipoli 1975.
[1870] Historic background of Sujas was discussed in depth by Hillenbrand and Zipoli. See Hillenbrand 1975, 50-51; Zipoli 1975.
[1871] Le Strange 1915–19, 68-69.
[1872] Zipoli 1975, 104-108, 122.
[1873] Le Strange 1915-19, 69.

conversion[1874] to the Shiʿite faith in 1309. The Friday mosque of Sujas is located at the south-western end of the settlement. It used to be one of the three historical monuments in Sujas, together with the Imamzada Ibrahim[1875] and the mosque of Sayyid Muhammad and Sayyid Jaʿfar.[1876] The latter two monuments were entirely altered over recent decades. The Sujas Friday mosque has been declared a protected national monument and it no longer serves its original function.

Background

The Sujas Friday mosque (Figs. 393-402) was first discussed by Donald Wilber in his 1955 monograph on Ilkhanid architecture in Iran.[1877] The mosque did not attract subsequent scholarly attention until Hillenbrand's 1975 publication which remains the mosque's most authoritative discussion.[1878] Hillenbrand put the Sujas Friday mosque on the map as the essential Iranian Seljuq monument. His thorough discussion of the mosque's architectural structure and its stucco revetments, including their epigraphic programme, leaves only a few gaps and unresolved questions.[1879] The proposed idea of the Qazvin *regional school*[1880] of architecture and architectural decoration was discussed further by Raya Shani in her 1989 article on the Kashan stucco school.[1881] These publications partially determined the understanding of Seljuq monuments, as classified into regional schools of Khurasan, Isfahan, Kashan, and Qazvin.[1882] These monuments were categorised based on their comparable architectural structures and related stylistic features of architectural revetments in association to their geographical distribution. Such assumptions determined the loss of specific monuments' details from the scholarly discourse. Stuccos of the Sujas Friday mosque are less well understood than their architectural context. As Hillenbrand points out, numerous questions concerning Sujas stuccos require further examination.[1883] Iranian scholars performed further research and restoration campaigns on the Sujas Friday mosque and its stuccos.[1884] New research of other Iranian Seljuq and Ilkhanid structures and their stuccos provides more substantial grounds for their further discussion and contextualisation.[1885]

[1874] Pfeiffer 1999, 35–67.
[1875] The *imamzada* was constructed and refurbished in several campaigns; Zipoli determined the oldest parts of the *imamzada* as Seljuq. Zipoli 1975, 114-118, 133-138. Since then, the structure was entirely altered.
[1876] *Ibid.*, 117, 144-148.
[1877] Wilber 1955, 118.
[1878] Hillenbrand 1975, 49-79.
[1879] Kleiss 1973, 51-54.
[1880] For studies of Islamic Architecture, the term *school* and the definition criteria for *regional school* require a more comprehensive understanding based on a larger scale research.
[1881] Shani 1989, 67-74.
[1882] Hillenbrand 1975, 62-63; Shani 1989.
[1883] *Ibid.*, 62.
[1884] Talebi and Mirfattah 2010-11, 30-32.
[1885] Zipoli 1975, 103-186; Talebi and Mirfattah, 2010-11; Najafi and Mirfattulah 2006, 103-124; Ahmadi and Shekofte 2011, 125-150; Hamidi 2011, 88-93; Hamidi and Hazayi 2011, 102-111.

b.) Architectural Structure

Fig. 393.

The architectural structure[1886] of the Sujas Friday mosque has been discussed extensively by Hillenbrand.[1887] It consists of a monumental domed square prayer hall[1888] which could have originally been part of a more extensive structure. It is considered one of the most monumental Seljuq domed mosques in north-western Iran.[1889] The transition between the supporting walls and the dome is achieved through a system of squinches, sixteen pointed blank arches, and a dome collar. Its closest parallel is the Friday mosque of Qurwa[1890] which features a related stucco repertoire.

At Qurwa, the date 1179[1891] in the historic carved stucco inscription below the hemispheric dome should be considered as a reliable date for its stuccos. At Sujas and Qurwa, the stuccos were an indispensable part of the architectural surface design. The lower register of Qurwa revetments, consisting of a monumental mihrab produced in painted plaster on *kahgil* support, and the related revetments on its supporting walls, however, present issues. Relying on Samimi's reading of an entirely degraded inscription, Hillenbrand accepts the dating of wall painting revetments at Qurwa to the Buyid period (1022),[1892] but he mentions that their stylistic affinities relate them to Ilkhanid wall paintings.[1893] Author's observations of the wall painting's design, proportions, and their relation to the architectural structure, propose that this wall painting (painted plaster) mihrab and the related wall paintings could only have been produced after the construction of the upper part of the dome hall and its stucco carving repertoire. Kufic wall painting inscriptions and this wall painting technique find the closest parallels in the more complex wall paintings of the Uljaytu mausoleum at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27).

Construction Phases

Observations of the Sujas Friday mosque indicate that the monument was constructed in the Seljuq period and that it was redecorated in Ilkhanid times. None of the mosque's architectural revetments retain a historic inscription which could provide information for the dating of its constructive and decorative phases. The close parallels in building technology and Seljuq stucco artistic techniques, between the Sujas and Qurwa Friday mosques, allow an approximate date for the first phase of mosque construction and decoration at Sujas, to around 1179 to be proposed, based on the date in the historic inscription at the Qurwa Friday mosque. Additional similarities in stucco artistic techniques and ornamentation elements between the Sujas Friday mosque, the Qurwa Friday mosque and the Pir mausoleum at Takistan, connect these three monuments. They were likely built by the same group of builders and even more likely, they

[1886] Mosque plans: Hillenbrand 1975, 52, 54, 64, 73; Kleiss 1973, 53-54.
[1887] Hillenbrand 1975, 51-54, 72-79; Najafi and Mirfattulah 2006, 106-107.
[1888] Godard suggests that this was a kiosk mosque. Godard 1964, 232-235.
[1889] Hillenbrand 1975, 49.
[1890] *Ibid.*, 53, 78. For Qurwa Friday mosque: Hillenbrand 2006, 63-86. See also Najafi and Mirfattolah 2006, 104-106; Ahmadi and Shekofte 2011, 131, 134; Korn 2018a.
[1891] Hillenbrand 2006, 141-142.
[1892] *Ibid.*, 138-157. Hillenbrand mentions the poor condition of this inscription. Latest restorations altered its appearance to the degree that its content, in my view, can no longer be considered original. See Korn 2018a.
[1893] Hillenbrand 2006, 138-140.

were decorated with stucco revetments produced by a single itinerant stucco workshop. Detailed observations of stucco revetments at the Sujas Friday mosque's interior indicate that the stucco mihrab contains two layers of stucco revetments; it has been redecorated. Examination of the mosque's stuccos, performed below, allows for the differentiation between Seljuq stuccos and those produced by Ilkhanid craftsmen. It is therefore possible to propose that the mosque was redecorated in the Early Ilkhanid period.

Phase One - The Seljuq Sujas Friday mosque

Original dimensions and architectural characteristics of the Sujas Friday mosque are challenging to comprehend, due to the lack of archaeological excavations. The only indication regarding its architectural features is its extant central domed prayer hall. This structure was interpreted as a *kiosk mosque* by Godard; but it would be more reasonable to propose that the mosque was originally a more extensive structure and that the current monument represents only its central part, which was the central domed prayer hall. The approximate dating for the mosque construction is based on the mosque's close affinities in architectural structure, construction methods and architectural revetments with the near-by Qurwa Friday mosque dated 1179, based on its historic stucco inscription. At this point, the Sujas mosque was decorated with an extensive and complex repertoire of stucco revetments.

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Redecorations of the Mosque Interior

The second phase of the Sujas Friday mosque comprised a redecoration intervention on the mosque's stucco mihrab. This intervention was limited to the areas accessible without the scaffolding and it seems that the craftsmen chose to redecorate only the mihrab, which functions as the focal point of the domed hall's interior. The approximate date for the intervention is proposed as late thirteenth century, since the Sujas region was particularly significant in this period, as indicated by written sources.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument does not reveal any post-Ilkhanid modifications.

Ilkhanid Mosque Ground Plan

The ground plan of the Sujas Friday mosque in the Ilkhanid period was that of a mosque's structure constructed in the Seljuq era. The mosque comprised a central domed prayer hall. It is almost certain that this square prayer hall was part of a larger structure which either featured a hypostyle or a courtyard and *iwan* mosque type. The remaining structure of the mosque does not feature an entrance portal or a specifically arranged façade, which is another argument in favour of the suggestion that the monument was originally more extensive.

Ilkhanid Mosque Elevation

The information regarding the elevation of the Ilkhanid mosque structure is limited, because the entire structure of the monument no longer exists. The mosque's domed hall was likely one of the most elevated points of the mosque which was surpassed only by the minaret.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The remaining structure of the mosque comprises its central domed prayer hall, which indicates that the mosque was likely the most significant monument in the settlement and that it had a function of a Friday mosque. Because the other parts of the mosque are no longer extant, it is not possible to state whether the mosque had any additional functions. The current role of the congregational mosque of the settlement has been assigned to a modern construction which is located in the proximities of the historic mosque. The historic Sujas Friday mosque is no longer used for congregational purposes.

c.) Architectural Revetments

Interior Revetments

Figs. 394-402.

The exterior of the mosque is undecorated, perhaps because the craftsmen did not employ stucco on architectural exteriors in a mountainous area. Architectural revetments in the mosque's interior are of three types: geometric forms produced with fired bricks (net and wickerwork patterns), stucco joint plugs (arranged in stepped crosses) and carved stuccos (two phases).[1894]

Seljuq Stucco Revetments (Phase One)

Figs. 394-398, 402.

The Sujas stuccos resemble closely the almost identical decoration scheme of the Qurwa Friday mosque's stuccos. The Sujas Friday mosque dome's interior was embellished with carved stucco medallions and ribs arranged in a geometric pattern, applied directly onto the dome's surface and consisting of predominantly floral decoration with small epigraphic medallions for ribs, and larger Kufic style medallions.[1895] All stucco inscriptions have been meticulously documented, read, and translated by Hillenbrand.[1896]

The dome's collar (Figs. 394-396) is decorated with a large Kufic inscription (the *Basmala* and Qurʾan, *Surat al-Fath*, 48:4-5, fragmented) set against a floral background.[1897] The hexadecagonal area between the blind arches and the dome is filled with carved vegetal stucco ornamentation. The Kufic inscription of the dome's collar and the hexadecagonal floral stuccos differ from the medallion and ribbed stucco revetments in an important way: rather than applied, they are inserted into supporting walls; they were fitted within designated spaces between rows of construction bricks, appositely planned for stuccos. The transitional zone arches (Figs. 395, 397) are decorated with another Qurʾanic inscription on a floral background (*Surah Taha*, 20:1-43); the excerpt illustrates God's characteristics and powers. Below these arches, three inscriptions (Fig. 398) run along the walls: two small Kufic inscriptions (top: *Surah Yaʾ-Sin*,

[1894] Hillenbrand 1975, 57-59.
[1895] Stucco applique medallions, which link Pir mausoleum at Takistan to Qurwa are absent at Sujas. Hillenbrand 1972, 53-54.
[1896] Hillenbrand 1975, 63-72.
[1897] I thank Lorenz Korn for the correction of the reading of this fragmented inscription.

36:8-32, a common Qurʾanic inscription; middle: fragmentary, *al-asmaʾ al-husna*) and a monumental *Naskh* inscription (*Surat al-Mulk*, 67:1-9); the excerpt outlining the punishments for disbelievers, one of the most common Qurʾanic inscriptions. This inscription repertoire consists of Qurʾanic quotations and religious texts frequently employed for mosques; it does not reveal specific identity or agenda of its endower.

These inscriptions were an essential part of the mosque's architectural structure and they must have been included in the original mosque design. They must have been produced at the time of the mosque construction, because brick laying for supporting walls had to be arranged to leave space for these inscriptions. A similar practice can be identified at the Haydariyya madrasa, the Ardistan Friday mosque, the Isfahan Friday mosque's Seljuq stuccos in the two domed halls, and the Zawara Friday mosque; it was a common approach to application of stucco inscriptions on architectural surfaces in the Seljuq period.[1898] The carved Ilkhanid stucco inscriptions found in the Ushturjan Friday mosque's transition zones (Cat. No. 4) and the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28) present the same technique, which is less frequently employed in the Ilkhanid period. Application of stuccos onto any type of architectural surface, as seen in the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the Ilkhanid stuccos in the Isfahan Friday mosque (Cat. No. 1), or in the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3), was a more common Ilkhanid approach to stucco application.[1899]

The Mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque (Phases One and Two)

Figs. 399-402.

The mosque's mihrab was produced in two separate stucco craftsmanship' interventions. Its first phase must have been performed contemporarily to the mosque's Seljuq stucco repertoire (see above), because the first mihrab matched the designated space determined by the mosque's structure. The second mihrab isa result of a later and entirely separate intervention, which requires a more precise chronological frame and discussion.

The Seljuq Layer (Phase One)

Figs. 400, 402.

Two sections of the Sujas Friday mosque's mihrab display remains of an earlier mihrab underneath, indicating that it was produced in two phases. The framing floral and epigraphic band of the mihrab's concave tympanum reveals another layer of floral stucco ornamentation on its right-hand side. The mihrab's middle framing epigraphic band, with hexagonal geometric forms, displays remains of a monumental epigraphic band placed against a floral background beneath it. The earlier rectangular inscription frieze could hardly be part of the original mihrab,[1900] as indicated by its joints to the tympanum. These two remaining portions of the original mihrab match in colour, carving technique, and stucco relief properties, as determined

[1898] For information about Seljuq mosque and revetment design: Korn 2012, 212-236.
[1899] Seljuq stucco workshops thus, rather than working in isolation, collaborated closely with mosque builders in order to create a unified architectural structure and its revetments.
[1900] Also suggested in Hillenbrand 1975, 59.

by the stucco composition and the peculiarities of the relief's artistic production.[1901] The mihrab's lower part is entirely missing, due to humidity infiltration. The original stucco mihrab underneath the visible one (instead of the supporting wall) could have accelerated the desiccation and decreased the adhesion of the second mihrab, resulting in its lesser resistance to the ravages of time.

The Ilkhanid Mihrab (Phase Two)

Figs. 399-402.

Mihrab Description

The stucco mihrab is flanked by niches, with stepped arches containing shallow five-tier muqarnas forms, produced with fired bricks and joint plugs. It consists of a small niche framed by two columns of unknown original form. This structure supports the concave tympanum framed with a floral background inscription: *Surat al-Najm*, 53:12-16, which asserts God's authority. The tympanum contains the following inscription bands; the common verse 33:56 of *Surat al-Ahzab*, blessing the God, his Angels, and the Prophet, the Sunni Shahada, and a fragmentary invocation to God. Parts of rectangular frieze with a fragmentary three-line frieze inscription can be seen between the two columns. Hillenbrand identifies it as *Surat al-Hashr* (59), verse 22 and fragments of verse 24, featuring some names of God (*al-musawwir, al-qahhar, al-ghaffar, al-ʿazim,* and *al-ʿali*).[1902] Since Hillenbrand's study, the right hand fragment of the frieze has been lost, but a new fragment emerged on the left hand side: in the first line, parts of verse 24 of *Surat al-Hashr*; *al-khaliq* and *al-bariʿ*, in the second line names of God *al-khabir* and *al-halim*, and in the third line *al-baʿith, al-shahid*, *al-haqq*, and *al-wakil*.[1903] A fragment of the next register of the frieze also emerges below this one; it retains geometric and floral ornamentation and fragments of a one line *Naskh* inscription, which could be historic.[1904] Some other portions of this frieze remain covered beneath the modern consolidation material of the mihrab. The mihrab's tympanum is topped by two rectangular spandrels and framed by three floral and epigraphic bands (inner band: *Surat al-Baqara*, 2:286 and perhaps 2:285, also a very common inscription; middle band; *Surah Yaʾ-Sin*, 36:7-12, already encountered in the small Kufic inscription on supporting walls, the *Basmala* and parts of *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112), a very common Qurʾanic inscription; outer band: parts of *Surat al-Baqara*, 2:256, perhaps originally preceded by *Ayat al-kursi*). The mihrab is squat in form, which might be characteristic of the Seljuq period and contrasts to the slenderer Ilkhanid mihrabs, such as the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum mihrab (installed by 1312-13; Cat. No. 2), the Marand Friday mosque Ilkhanid mihrab (Cat. No. 22) and the Uljaytu mihrab (1310; Cat. No. 1) in the Friday mosque of Isfahan.[1905]

[1901] They also match stucco properties of the cursive inscription on the arches of the squinch zone, which is clearly Seljuq in dating.
[1902] Hillenbrand 1975, 72.
[1903] Author's reading.
[1904] This inscription is too excessively damaged to permit its reading.
[1905] Their proportions are close to the golden mean.

Mihrab Production

The damaged parts of the mihrab's monumental lunette provide evidence regarding its production: craftsmen applied the first layer of stucco, drew its ornamental design with a red outline, incised it, and carved the stucco. Subsequently, they selectively applied a second thicker layer of stucco onto the uncarved parts and proceeded to produce protruding parts of the stucco relief. Unsuccessful adhesion between the two stucco layers, structural tensions, and excessive dryness caused the detachment of these protruding ornaments; only small remaining fractions testify to the mihrab's original completeness. Recent damage[1906] to the right-hand side corner of the mihrab's inner framing inscription band demonstrates that this part of the mihrab was produced in the same manner as its lunette; it features two carved stucco layers and traces of red outlines. The damaged edge of the outer inscription indicates that it is comprised of two stucco layers and that it contains red outlines.[1907] Unlike the mihrab's central parts, this outer framing epigraphic band does not reveal any older layer of stucco underneath. Historic photographs indicate that this band of stucco was applied directly onto the supporting wall with stucco plugs.[1908] This enlargement framing band is severely damaged, but when the second mihrab was complete, its height exceeded the upper edges of the niches flanking it; this would be inconsistent with mihrab's original design. The original mihrab was therefore enlarged during its redecoration. The consequence of the redecoration intervention or its aim, was to monumentalize the mihrab because it was the focal point of prayer rites.[1909]

Comparanda

Hillenbrand highlights similarities between the Sujas mihrab's central stucco framing band and the inscription band on the Seljuq Haydariyya madrasa's mihrab (in Qazvin).[1910] Despite some stylistic proximities, these two bands also retain divergent characteristics. The Haydariyya mihrab was produced with a higher degree of stucco craftsmanship' skills, manifested in calligraphy quality, minute details of rich ornamental design, and the approach to stucco applique carving.[1911] The central framing band of the Haydariyya mihrab possesses a clearly defined design of vertical symmetry: two types of hexagonal ornamentation panels run along the framing band interchangeably, with special corner panel forms. In contrast, at Sujas, only the left corner retains a specifically designed solution and each hexagonal panel is slightly different in design and dimension. Vertical and horizontal parts of the band differ in design and thus present a distinct symmetry concept. At Haydariyya, slight undercutting is present on most protruding stucco elements, with strong undercutting in the mihrab's upper register, but the stucco perforation is shallow.[1912] Undercutting is absent at Sujas and the perforation of the stucco elements is deeper. These parallels between Haydariyya and Sujas are therefore more indefinite, compared to what is initially apparent. The similarity in style between these two repertoires is nonetheless difficult to explain. It is possible that a stucco carver was inspired by

[1906] Sometime between 2010 and 2017.
[1907] These traces are still visible on the horizontal part of the inscription.
[1908] Wilber 1955, 118; Hillenbrand 1975, 60.
[1909] Hillenbrand 1975, 77-79; Talebi and Mirfattah 2010-11, 30; Zipoli 1975, 6.
[1910] Hillenbrand 1975, 62-64, 78-79.
[1911] *Ibid.* For detailed study of hexagonal design see Hamidi and Hazayi 2011.
[1912] The same stucco carving approach is spotted in the Seljuq Haydariyya madrasa (Qazvin) stuccos.

the stuccos which he observed in Haydariyya,[1913] but the original Sujas mihrab or no longer existing mihrab could have been a closer source of inspiration.

Stucco craftsmen of the second Sujas mihrab could have imitated older stuccos, similar to the cases of stucco design and carving copying of two almost identical layers of the inscription bands at the Farumad[1914] Friday mosque (Cat. No. 16) or in line with the copying of older historic inscription content at the Pir-i Bakran[1915] mausoleum (Cat. No. 2). Stucco craftsmen must have paid close attention to existing architectural revetments, their design and inscription content, when redecorating monuments. The parallel with Haydariyya is thus not an obstacle for the Ilkhanid dating of the second phase Sujas mihrab. Hillenbrand justly maintains that Wilber's dating of the Sujas mihrab to the Ilkhanid period cannot be based on the presence of polychromy traces or historic circumstances. Scientific examination of the polychromy traces could aid its dating, given that in the Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods different pigments were employed for stucco colouring. The architectural structure and brick and joint decoration of Haydariyya and Sujas are closely related, but the Sujas stuccos are closely related to stuccos of the Qurwa Friday mosque.[1916]

Dating and Context

The Sujas Friday mosque and its first phase of stucco revetments should be dated to the third quarter of the twelfth century (around 1179 as indicated by the date at Qurwa), based on the interconnectedness of the monument and the stuccos, and building on the Qurwa parallel.[1917] The concave lunette of the redecorated Sujas mihrab contains an inscription band with the Sunni Shahada, implying that its redecoration was sponsored by a Sunni benefactor, at the time when Sunni Islam was the official Ilkhanid religion - before Uljaytu's conversion to the Shiʿite faith in 1309-10, which triggered the redecoration of the Ilkhanid monuments with Shiʿite inscriptions.[1918] At the Uljaytu mausoleum of Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), the Friday mosque of Isfahan Ilkhanid revetments (Cat. No. 1), the Pri-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), and the ʿAbd al-Samad complex (Cat. No. 12), Shiʿite inscriptions were produced as Ilkhanid redecoration campaigns of earlier (pre)Ilkhanid monuments, because of a politically motivated patronage. Galdieri's studies of Ilkhanid interventions in the Isfahan Friday mosque outline four Ilkhanid intervention phases.[1919] Galdieri explains that the Ilkhanid reign and power were visually manifested in stucco application interventions expressing the state religion change. The Seljuq Haftshuya Friday mosque was modified and decorated with stucco revetments by Ilkhans, to perhaps mark the Ilkhanid presence in the region.[1920]

[1913] Hillenbrand 1975, 61.
[1914] From paper presented by Kaveh Mansuri at the University of Kashan Seljuq and Ilkhanid Stucco conference in April 2017.
[1915] Stucco carvers of the third decorative intervention (1312-13) copied content of an earlier inscription (1303-04). Grbanovic 2017a, 73-74.
[1916] Hillenbrand 1975, 62-64, 73-74, 78-79.
[1917] *Ibid.*, 77-79.
[1918] Blair 2014, 112-171; Blair 2006, 254-255; Van Berchem 1909, 367-78; Grbanovic 2017a, 66; Miles 1974, 91-92; Blair 1986a, 60-71.
[1919] Galdieri 1984, 57-60; Galdieri 1981, 70-93.
[1920] Siroux 1971, 229-235. Haftshuya stuccos should be dated to earlier than 1310, rather than c. 1340, as proposed by Siroux.

Building on the proposed arguments, the Sujas mihrab was perhaps redecorated sometime between the 1270s and 1310.[1921] Although its stylistic features are closer to Seljuq, rather than later Ilkhanid stuccos, this cannot be used as the dating argument. Later typically Ilkhanid stucco features such as Square Kufic inscriptions, stucco gilding, or extremely protruding stucco relief, which all required advanced knowledge of stucco artistic techniques, are in fact absent in the Sujas mihrab.[1922]

The Mihrab Redecoration Intervention

This intervention was likely sponsored by a state official or a local notable. The sponsorship of the mihrab's refurbishment could either have been politically motivated in connection to the significance of the Sujas Friday mosque in Ilkhanid times, or it could have simply been performed to show the endower's religious devotion. If the Sujas Friday mosque was damaged during the Mongol conquest, this refurbishment could have occurred soon after the Ilkhanid Empire was established. If so, the mihrab was refurbished before the end of the thirteenth century, which makes it one of the earliest Ilkhanid stuccoworks. The Sujas mihrab provides an important insight into characteristics of stucco artistic techniques and architectural patronage in Early Ilkhanid period. It also illustrates change in reasons for Ilkhanid redecoration campaigns. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Ilkhanid redecorations aimed to demonstrate piety of individual patrons, but in the time of Uljaytu's conversion, there seems to have existed an Empire-wide trend of assertion of the new state religion, as dictated by the ruler.

Exterior Revetments

The exterior architectural surfaces of the extant parts of the monument are not covered with architectural revetments.

Stucco Polychromy at Sujas

The remaining polychromy traces on the second phase stuccos (Ilkhanid phase) of the Sujas Friday mosque mihrab are conserved in abundant quantities, but it is not clear if they were manipulated and perhaps visually integrated during the last restoration campaign. The remaining polychromy traces are best observed on the mihrab's central lunette. The background of the lunette's stucco relief conserves colouring in light blue. The shade of this colour is however in stark contrast with frequent remains of pigmentation in blue of the other Ilkhanid stucco repertoires; blue is normally of darker shades. The background of inscription in the lunette is coloured green. Green was also employed to colour some perforations and recessed parts of floral ornamentation of palmette-like compositions in the lunette. The extensive amount of green is striking; it resembles traces of green on the Haftshuya Friday mosque, which are of a slightly darker shade. The lunette also conserves traces of red and orange. These colours are preserved on the lower layers of stuccos, where they were covered by subsequently applied

[1921] Similar to Wilber's unexplained dating of the mihrab to 1290. Wilber 1955, 100.
[1922] In my view, the presence or absence of evidence for the use of stucco artistic techniques (specific ways of design transmission, colouring principles, gilding and stucco carving techniques) is a more reliable dating tool, compared to dating based on stylistic affinities of stuccos.

stucco layer. Red and orange were employed for the transfer of stucco design. Further traces of green are found on the three external bands which frame mihrab's structure.

The entire palette of the mihrab's stucco polychromy comprised at least the following colours: light blue, green, dark red and light red to orange hues. Some remains of polychromy indicate that above all green, but also blue, were employed to colour recessed parts of mihrab's stucco reliefs. Protruding parts were coloured red, which might have been combined with yellow ochre and white. In sum, the primacy of green, is unusual and not in line with polychromy traces discovered on the other Ilkhanid stuccos.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Sujas

The selection of stucco artistic techniques for the Ilkhanid redecoration of the Sujas Friday mosque's stucco mihrab is wide. Modest stucco artistic techniques are represented in the mihrab's lower niche panels which are carved out of a single stucco layer. Most of the mihrab's stucco reliefs are however produced with carving of two or more layers of stucco, as reflected by the mihrab's central lunette. Particularly complex stucco revetment is the external framing band of the Sujas mihrab which presents stucco ornamentation designs similar to the external framing band of the mihrab of the Haydariyya madrasa. This framing band demonstrates that the stucco craftsmen in charge of the mihrab redecoration mastered the technique of protruding stucco elements application. The monumental external framing band with the Kufic inscription is complex and it combines carving of several stucco layers, which determined a deep and contrasting stucco relief. The only significant stucco artistic techniques, which are absent from the Sujas mihrab are stucco undercut and application of protruding circular bosses. In sum, the Sujas Friday mosque mihrab presents a wide selection of stucco artistic techniques, which indicates that the stucco craftsmen in charge of the mihrab's redecoration possessed advanced knowledge of stucco artistic techniques.

The Sujas Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

The aesthetics and visual characteristics of the Ilkhanid stucco mihrab at the Sujas Friday mosque are determined by several factors. The most significant factor is the underlying Seljuq mihrab, which partially determined the panel division, dimensions, form and proportions of the Ilkhanid redecorated mihrab. The central niche and lunette of the mihrab are larger than the mihrab's framing bands. Moreover, the level of detail for the stucco relief production is higher in these framing bands, compared to the mihrab's central lunette with a modest design and extensive dimensions. The second factor may have been the preparation of the stucco body for the mihrab's redecoration, which impacted the appearance of stuccos, more than the selection of stucco artistic techniques. The mihrab's appearance is not entirely balanced, and the panels of its framing bands are in disproportion to the panels of the central niche. The contrast between them is revealed in the differences of stucco relief type and depth: the mihrab's framing bands are produced to feature a considerably deeper relief with contrasting appearance, but the central lunette of the mihrab is rather flat, although it originally comprised another layer of stucco revetments.

The mihrab is characterized by a disproportional relationship between its central niche and framing bands. The division of the mihrab into diverse panels is not complex and the mihrab

contains a restricted number of panels. The central part of the mihrab with rather flat stucco relief panels is in stark contrast with panels of more protruding and deeper relief which frame it. The outlined characteristics of the mihrab and its stuccos render evident some shortcomings related to its design and production of stucco panel reliefs.

d.) Furnishing

The mosque does not comprise any pieces of Ilkhanid furniture.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The inscriptions of the monument's architectural repertoire have been meticulously studied and read by Hillenbrand. The readings with a few comments are reported here for the sake of completeness.

The Supporting Walls, the Transitional Zone and the Dome (Phase One: Seljuq)

a.) The dome structure and revetments were badly damaged and have since been restored. They might have featured inscription bands which are no longer extant.

b.) The inscription at the springing of the dome features Kufic style and it is set against a richly decorated background consisting of abstract vegetal compositions, which do not assume form of floral scrolls, but rather bouquet-like repeating compositions.

The fragmentary inscription was recently read by Korn as a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Fath* (4-5):[1923]

The excerpt reads:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا
لِيُدْخِلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَيُكَفِّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ ۚ وَكَانَ ذَٰلِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

It is He who sent down the Shechina (tranquillity) into the hearts of the believers, that they might add faith to their faith — to God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth; God is All-knowing, All-wise —
and that He may admit the believers, men and women alike, into gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever, and acquit them of their evil deeds; that is in God's sight a mighty triumph;

This inscription is frequently featured in stucco repertoires of Seljuq and Ilkhanid periods. The inscription was overpainted with green and light blue; green does not reflect the original polychromy of the band.

c.) The long inscription outlining the transitional zone's architectural forms of pointed arches and blind niches was read by Hillenbrand as a Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surah Taha* (20:1-43). The inscription is set against a background of a floral scroll composition.

[1923] Hillenbrand 1975, 64.

The inscription reads:[1924]

طه
مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ
إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَىٰ
تَنْزِيلًا مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَاوَاتِ الْعُلَى
الرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ
لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَىٰ
وَإِنْ تَجْهَرْ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى
اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ
وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ
إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى
فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَىٰ
إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى
وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ
إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي
إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ
فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَىٰ
وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ
قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَىٰ
قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَىٰ
فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَىٰ
قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۖ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ
وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَىٰ
لِنُرِيَكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى
اذْهَبْ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ
قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي
وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي
وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي
يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي
وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي
هَارُونَ أَخِي
اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي
وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي
كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا
وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا
إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا
قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ
وَلَقَدْ مَنَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰ
إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ
إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ
وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَىٰ

[1924] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/taha (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي
اذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي
اذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ

Ta, Ha.
We have not sent down to you the Qurʾan that you be distressed,
But only as a reminder for those who fear [Allah] –
A revelation from He who created the earth and highest heavens,
The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established.
To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth and what is between them and what is under the soil.
And if you speak aloud – then indeed, He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden.
Allah – there is no deity except Him. To Him belong the best names.
And has the story of Moses reached you? –
When he saw a fire and said to his family, "Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire; perhaps I can bring you a torch or find at the fire some guidance."
And when he came to it, he was called, "O Moses,
Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.
And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed [to you].
Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.
Indeed, the Hour is coming – I almost conceal it – so that every soul may be recompensed according to that for which it strives.
So do not let one avert you from it who does not believe in it and follows his desire, for you [then] would perish.
And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?"
He said, "It is my staff; I lean upon it, and I bring down leaves for my sheep and I have therein other uses."
[Allah] said, "Throw it down, O Moses."
So he threw it down, and thereupon it was a snake, moving swiftly.
[Allah] said, "Seize it and fear not; We will return it to its former condition.
And draw in your hand to your side; it will come out white without disease – another sign,
That We may show you [some] of Our greater signs.
Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed."
[Moses] said, "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance]
And ease for me my task
And untie the knot from my tongue
That they may understand my speech.
And appoint for me a minister from my family –
Aaron, my brother.
Increase through him my strength
And let him share my task
That we may exalt You much
And remember You much.

Indeed, You are of us ever Seeing."
[Allah] said, "You have been granted your request, O Moses.
And We had already conferred favour upon you another time,
When We inspired to your mother what We inspired,
[And We favoured you] when your sister went and said, 'Shall I direct you to someone who will be responsible for him?' So We restored you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve. And you killed someone, but We saved you from retaliation and tried you with a [severe] trial. And you remained [some] years among the people of Madyan. Then you came [here] at the decreed time, O Moses.
And I produced you for Myself.
Go, you and your brother, with My signs and do not slacken in My remembrance.
Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed.

The featured Qurʾanic excerpt is frequently contained in Seljuq and Ilkhanid stucco repertoires, but in shorter excerpts, compared to the case of Sujas, where the length of the excerpt is exceptional, due to the space necessary to fill with the inscription. The inscription band was retouched with modern colours, to feature peach-orange background and green floral scrolls. These colours do not reflect the original colour traits of the band.

d.) The top areas of the walls are visually framed by three inscription bands: the lowest is the largest and it features *Naskh* style; it comprises Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Mulk* (67:1-9) and it is set against a background of a monumental floral scroll. The inscription is topped by two thin epigraphic bands. The middle of these three bands features the text of the ninety-nine names of God (*al-asmaʾ al-husna*) in Kufic style. The inscription band on the top contains Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (36:8-32); it features Kufic style with slightly inclined letters and elongated *hastae*. These inscription bands were also overpainted with modern colours which are unlikely to reflect their original polychromy characteristics.

The *Naskh* inscription content (Qurʾan, 67:1-9) reads:[1925]

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ
الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۖ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ ۖ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِنْ فُطُورٍ
ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ
وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ
وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ
إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ تَفُورُ
تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ۖ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ
قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ

Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent –
[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving –

[1925] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Mulk (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

[And] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks?
Then return [your] vision twice again. [Your] vision will return to you humbled while it is fatigued.
And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made [from] them what is thrown at the devils and have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze.
And for those who disbelieved in their Lord is the punishment of Hell, and wretched is the destination.
When they are thrown into it, they hear from it a [dreadful] inhaling while it boils up.
It almost bursts with rage. Every time a company is thrown into it, its keepers ask them, "Did there not come to you a warner?"
They will say,"Yes, a warner had come to us, but we denied and said, 'Allah has not sent down anything. You are not but in great error.'"

The top inscription band (Qurʾan, 36:8-32) reads:[1926]

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُقْمَحُونَ
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَغْشَيْنَاهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ
وَسَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنْذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ
إِنَّمَا تُنْذِرُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الذِّكْرَ وَخَشِيَ الرَّحْمَٰنَ بِالْغَيْبِ ۖ فَبَشِّرْهُ بِمَغْفِرَةٍ وَأَجْرٍ كَرِيمٍ
إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَدَّمُوا وَآثَارَهُمْ ۚ وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ
وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ
إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ مُرْسَلُونَ
قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ
قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُمْ لَمُرْسَلُونَ
وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ
قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ
قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ ۚ أَئِنْ ذُكِّرْتُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُسْرِفُونَ
وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَىٰ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ
اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْأَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ
وَمَا لِيَ لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ
أَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَٰنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ
إِنِّي إِذًا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ
قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ ۖ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ
بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ
وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ جُنْدٍ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا كُنَّا مُنْزِلِينَ
إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ
يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ ۚ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ
أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ
وَإِنْ كُلٌّ لَمَّا جَمِيعٌ لَدَيْنَا مُحْضَرُونَ

[1926] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Ya-Sin (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

Indeed, We have put shackles on their necks, and they are to their chins, so they are with heads [kept] aloft.
And We have put before them a barrier and behind them a barrier and covered them, so they do not see.
And it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them – they will not believe.
You can only warn one who follows the message and fears the Most Merciful unseen. So give him good tidings of forgiveness and noble reward.
Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register.
And present to them an example: the people of the city, when the messengers came to it –
When We sent to them two but they denied them, so We strengthened them with a third, and they said, "Indeed, we are messengers to you."
They said, "You are not but human beings like us, and the Most Merciful has not revealed a thing. You are only telling lies."
They said, "Our Lord knows that we are messengers to you,
And we are not responsible except for clear notification."
They said, "Indeed, we consider you a bad omen. If you do not desist, we will surely stone you, and there will surely touch you, from us, a painful punishment."
They said, "Your omen is with yourselves. Is it because you were reminded? Rather, you are a transgressing people."
And there came from the farthest end of the city a man, running. He said, "O my people, follow the messengers.
Follow those who do not ask of you [any] payment, and they are [rightly] guided.
And why should I not worship He who created me and to whom you will be returned?
Should I take other than Him [false] deities [while], if the Most Merciful intends for me some adversity, their intercession will not avail me at all, nor can they save me?
Indeed, I would then be in manifest error.
Indeed, I have believed in your Lord, so listen to me."
It was said, "Enter Paradise." He said, "I wish my people could know
Of how my Lord has forgiven me and placed me among the honoured."
And We did not send down upon his people after him any soldiers from the heaven, nor would We have done so.
It was not but one shout, and immediately they were extinguished.
How regretful for the servants. There did not come to them any messenger except that they used to ridicule him.
Have they not considered how many generations We destroyed before them – that they to them will not return?
And indeed, all of them will yet be brought present before Us.

The featured Qurʾanic excerpt is one of the most frequently appearing excerpts in Seljuq and Ilkhanid stuccos. At Sujas, it is an exceptionally long portion of the text, due to the space available.

The Mihrab (Phase Two: Ilkhanid)

The mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque retains an epigraphic programme on its stucco panels which are works of the Ilkhanid redecoration interventions. The earlier Seljuq mihrab also retained inscriptions, which are however not visible, except for a few fragments. The repeating of inscriptions on the mihrab, compared to the interior of the monument, is another piece of evidence confirming that the mihrab is the work of a separate redecoration intervention. All the inscriptions have been read by Hillenbrand, amendments are only made to the inscription below the mihrab's monumental lunette.

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The lower section of the area below the mihrab's lunette comprises the remains of a *Naskh* style inscription with excerpts from Qurʾan (*Surat al-Hashr*, 59:22, 24), which most likely comprised at least verses 22 to 24.

The text (59:22-24) reads:[1927]

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۖ هُوَ الرَّحْمَٰنُ الرَّحِيمُ
هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ
هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۚ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.
He is Allah, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

This part of *Surat al-Hashr* is frequently featured on Seljuq and Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. These panels do not retain pigmentation traces.

b.) The interior of the niche, the monumental lunette panel of the mihrab, also comprises inscription bands which are integrated into the lunette's symmetrical vegetal composition. The inscriptions were read by Hillenbrand; they are written in *Naskh*, and set against a plain background, and they comprise Qurʾanic text from *Surat al-Ahzab* (33:56) and the Shahada (without the Shiʿite part).

The inscription (33:56), reads:[1928]

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ۚ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا صَلُّوا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.

[1927] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).
[1928] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/quran-surah-al-ahzab-56-qs-33-56-in-arabic-and-english-translation (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

c.) The lunette of the mihrab is framed by an inscription band in *Naskh* style set against a floral scroll background. The panel was recently heavily restored which altered its original appearance. The panel featured a Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Najm* (53:12-16)

The inscription reads:[1929]

أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ
وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ
عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ
عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ
إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ

So will you dispute with him over what he saw?
And he certainly saw him in another descent
At the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary –
Near it is the Garden of Refuge –
When there covered the Lote Tree that which covered [it].

d.) Three bands frame the mihrab and they all comprise epigraphic content. The first of the three, in the interior, is fragmented and produced in *Naskh* style; the inscription is vocalized and set against a plain background of modern green colour and it comprises Qurʾanic excerpt from *Surat al-Baqara* (2:285-286). The middle inscription band is located in the background of the abstract protruding element framing composition. It is designed in *Naskh* style and it functions as the background of the panel's visual repertoire. It contains Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surah Yaʾ-Sin* (36:7-12) and parts of *Surat al-Ikhlas* (112:1-4). The third is the monumental Kufic framing band which constitutes the exterior parts of the mihrab. It is badly damaged in many parts. It features Qurʾanic excerpts from *Surat al-Baqara* 2:256 and it perhaps featured also the *Ayat al-Kursi* (the Throne verse).

The interior inscription reads: (2:285-286):

آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ كُلٌّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ ۚ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ
لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ ۗ رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إِصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ۚ رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ ۖ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا ۚ أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانْصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination."
Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not

[1929] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/An-Najm (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020)

with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."

The exterior inscription's text is (2:256):[1930]

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۖ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

These two selections of Qurʾanic excerpts are some of the most common Qurʾanic excerpts employed for medieval Iranian stuccos, which occur in the majority of stucco repertoires. They occur particularly frequently on mihrabs or other focal points of stucco repertoires.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The mosque does not comprise any post-Ilkhanid stucco revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

The stuccos of the Sujas Friday mosque do not contain any historic inscriptions which could provide information regarding the patronage of the monument and its architectural revetments. The discussion of the monument illustrates that the mosque, which was originally perhaps a larger structure, was built and decorated with an extensive stucco revetment repertoire around 1179. The detailed analysis of its architectural revetments revealed that the mosque was redecorated in the Early Ilkhanid period, prior to the boom in Ilkhanid patronage marked by the reigns of Ghazan Khan and Uljaytu.

Observations of the mosque's stucco demonstrate that the Ilkhanid redecoration of the mosque was a minor intervention, which focused on redecoration of the domed hall's focal point: its stucco mihrab. The mihrab was enlarged and rendered more monumental through this intervention, but it is not clear if the intervention was needed due to the decay of the Seljuq period mihrab. This seems rather unlikely. The mihrab was therefore perhaps redecorated in order to assert the political authority of redecoration's patron by the means of the mihrab's visual appropriation. Ilkhanid tombstones and written accounts concerning the significance of other monuments in Sujas, reflect the mosque's significance in the Ilkhanid period prior to the early fourteenth century.

The identity of the Seljuq and Ilkhanid patrons of the Sujas Friday mosque remains unknown, due to the absence of direct evidence, but some information can be proposed based on the assessment of the monument's characteristics and by drawing parallels with other monuments. It has been mentioned that the domed prayer hall, which constitutes the core of the monument, is perhaps the largest domed structure of the Seljuq period in north-western Iran. In addition to its extensive dimensions, the Seljuq Sujas mosque comprised an extensive repertoire of interior

[1930] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/?s=2%3A256 (Last Accessed: November 16, 2020).

architectural revetments consisting of an extensive amount of stucco panels, stucco plugs and fired brick revetments. These characteristics of the Seljuq Sujas Friday mosque suggest that the mosque must have been sponsored by a prominent patron, who was likely at least a significant Seljuq official. The possibility of royal Seljuq patronage is not to be excluded.

Ilkhanid interventions in the Sujas Friday mosque contrast with characteristics of the Seljuq monument. The discussion of the stucco revetments of the mosque demonstrates that only the mihrab comprises two layers of stucco revetments. These Ilkhanid interventions assumed limited dimensions. The status of the Ilkhanid patron of the Sujas Friday mosque's redecoration therefore did not need to be elevated and the finances required for the redecoration of the mihrab required only a restricted endowment. The Ilkhanid patron therefore need not be a significant Ilkhanid official. It is more likely that the patron of the mihrab's redecoration was a local notable with political influence in Sujas. This could have been either a minor and local Ilkhanid official, or a local religious authority. The stucco mihrab redecoration could also have been a donation of stucco craftsmen.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The Seljuq stucco repertoire and the Ilkhanid redecoration of the mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque do not contain any dates indicating the time of their production and neither do they contain signatures of stucco craftsmen. Some information regarding the stucco craftsmen who produced these revetments can be proposed, based on their minute observations and the comparison of stuccos to the other buildings in this geographical area.

Research of the Seljuq stuccos highlights numerous affinities between the repertoires of the Seljuq Sujas Friday mosque stuccos, the stuccos of the Qurwa Friday mosque (dated 1179) and the stuccos of the mausoleum of Pir at Takistan. These three monuments display stucco revetments produced with the same stucco artistic techniques, stucco carving approach and similar aesthetics. The date of the Qurwa repertoire provides indicative information for the approximate dating of the three repertoires. These repertoires are similar to the degree that it is possible to state that they were produced by the same stucco craftsmen's workshop.

The Ilkhanid redecoration of the stucco mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque is more difficult to contextualize from the point of view of stucco production and workshop. The mihrab was produced with a wide selection of stucco artistic techniques, which range from the approach of carving of a single stucco layer, to more complex carving of two or more layers of stucco and production of large protruding elements, which assume forms of abstract floral and geometric ornamental elements and which were heavily perforated. The other Ilkhanid stucco revetments in the proximities of Sujas, such as those at Sultaniyya (Cat. No. 27), Urumiya (Cat. No. 23) and Marand (Cat. No. 22), are produced with a more restricted selection of stucco artistic techniques and they feature distinct visual characteristics. The Ilkhanid mihrab of the Sujas Friday mosque resembles more closely stucco repertoires of Isfahan region, although it is missing stucco undercutting, characteristic of Isfahan region. Stucco craftsmen's workshop responsible for the production of the Ilkhanid mihrab at the Sujas Friday mosque was either entirely local, and therefore unique to the region, or the stucco craftsmen arrived from more distant geographical units.

f.) Monument Condition

The ruined state of the Sujas mosque and dire conditions of its stuccos were highlighted by Hillenbrand in 1975.[1931] The mosque subsequently underwent two major restoration campaigns: the first between the 1970s and 2010, and the second campaign around 2012.[1932] The first campaign consisted of urgent interventions aimed at safeguarding the mosque. Hillenbrand proposes that the apex of the mosque may have collapsed and been rebuilt at a certain point.[1933] If so, the damage to the dome apex must have been minimal and repaired quickly, since the stuccos reveal only limited impact of humidity infiltration. The dwellings attached to the mosque were knocked down to protect the monument and its structural damage[1934] was repaired. The crumbling stucco mihrab was also mended. The second restoration campaign continued work on structural repairs and stuccos and it included a preliminary archaeometric research of the stuccos.[1935] The mihrab was cleaned, consolidated, and its missing sections were reconstructed. The choice of modern material for these integrations may cause structural tensions within the mihrab and their excessive whiteness may distract viewers. Photographic documentation of the Sujas stuccos demonstrates that they were retouched with colours from the 1980s onwards. These colour shades reach beyond the spectrum of original pigmentation traces, as noted by Wilber in the 1930s.[1936]

g.) Research Findings – Summary

Research of the Sujas Friday mosque allows new information regarding the monument and its stuccos to be proposed. Discussion and observations of stuccos in the mosque's interior allowed differences in characteristics between the original Seljuq stucco repertoire and the Ilkhanid additions to it to be delineated. It has been demonstrated that the Ilkhanid interventions comprised only redecoration of the mosque's stucco mihrab, while the rest of the already existing stucco repertoire, which was produced in the Seljuq period, was left intact by the Ilkhanid redecorators. The aim of the mihrab redecoration was to render it monumental, but the redecoration of the mihrab resulted in changes of its visual properties and aesthetics. This change of the aesthetics was the consequence of the mihrab's redecoration by a different stucco craftsmen's workshop with distinct knowledge of stucco production. The change of aesthetics however does not present the motivation behind the redecoration of the mihrab. The performed examination also demonstrates that the Ilkhanid redecoration of the mihrab was perhaps sponsored by a patron of a middle or lower social status. The sponsorship of the mihrab's redecoration was likely motivated by the will of the patron to assert the political dominance among the congregation of the settlement. Further conservation interventions are necessary for the mihrab's preservation.

[1931] Hillenbrand 1975, 55, 59, 61.
[1932] I observed mosque alterations based on comparison of photos by Hillenbrand (1975), Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom (1984; Archnet), Lorenz Korn (2000; Image Archive of Otto Friedrich Universität Bamberg) and my photos from 2017.
[1933] Hillenbrand 1975, 52.
[1934] *Ibid.* 51.
[1935] Talebi and Mirfattah 2010-11, 27-32. Finds of this archaeometric research provide general information on the Sujas stucco composition, focusing on architectural inscriptions rather than the mihrab. They suggest that the stucco composition of Sujas, Qurwa and the Pir mausoleum in Takistan are related.
[1936] Wilber 1955, 118.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Wilber 1955, 118; Hillenbrand 1975; Zipoli 1975; Talebi and Mirfattah 2010-11.



Figure 393: Exterior of the architectural structure of the domed hall at the Sujas Friday mosque which was likely the core of a more extensive mosque structure. View from north-west.



Figure 394: View of the interior of the restored dome and the carved stuccos of the Seljuq Sujas Friday mosque. The design and arrangement of stucco bands and medallions, and the monument construction technology are closely related to the Qurwa Friday mosque; these two monuments may be works of the same Seljuq builders and stucco craftsmen's workshops.



Figure 395: View of the Sujas Friday mosque transitional zone with carved stucco inscription bands (Seljuq phase) outlining the main architectural lines of transitional elements.

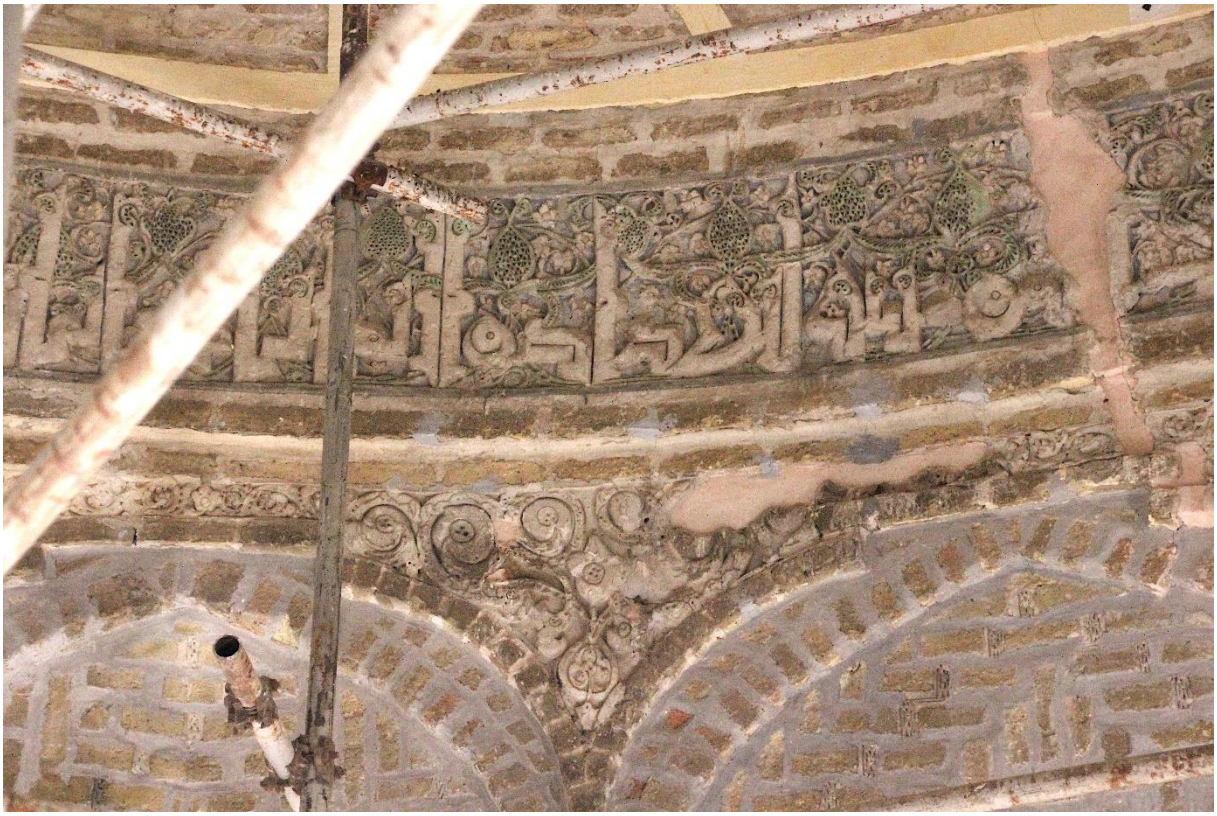


Figure 396: Detail of the monumental Kufic inscription band running at the springing of the dome. Further carved stucco compositions fill spaces between squinches of mosque's transitional zone.



Figure 397: Detail of carved stucco inscription bands (Seljuq phase) running along blind niches and corner elements of the lower portion of domed hall's transitional zone.



Figure 398: The three inscription bands (Seljuq period), which run along the top edges of the supporting walls at the domed hall of the Sujas Friday mosque.



Figure 399: The monumental mihrab (Seljuq and Ilkhanid phases) and the blind niches flanking the mihrab, at the *qibla* wall of the domed hall of the Sujas Friday mosque.



Figure 400: Detail of the monumental lunette of the mihrab at the Sujas Friday mosque. The stuccos of the lunette are work of the mihrab's Ilkhanid decorative phase; they were restored and their pigmentation traces were repainted. The lunette panel originally featured applied perforated protruding elements. The inscription fragments below the lunette could be Seljuq or Ilkhanid.

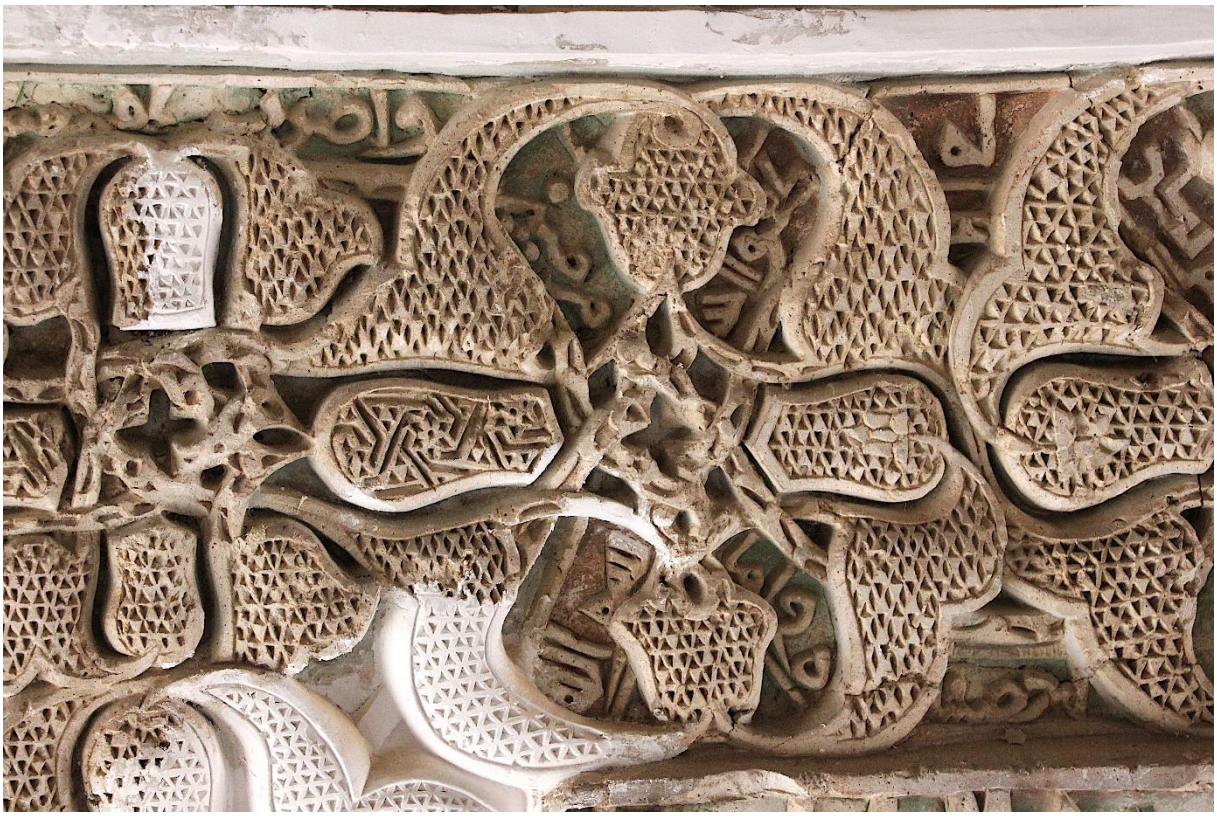


Figure 401: Detail of the monumental framing band (Ilkhanid) of the Sujas mihrab, which mimics revetments of the framing band of the Haydariyya madrasa mihrab, but these revetments are produced with a separate stucco production technology.



Figure 402: Detail of the right hand side section of the mihrab showing two layers of stuccos: their stucco composition, type of carving and visual element design differences are discernible.

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 36

Monument Name: Imamzada Yahya

Figs. 403-412.

Associated Names: the monument is known as the Imāmzāda Yaḥya of Varāmīn.[1937] Variant spellings of monument's name are results of diverse systems of transliteration and spelling: the Imamzade Yahya, the Imam Zadah Yahya, the Imamzadeh Yahya and the Imam-zadeh Yahia.[1938] The name of the *imamzada* derives from the name of the personage buried in its interior, Yahya ibn-i ʿAli ibn-i ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn-i Qasim ibn-i Hasan ibn-i Zayd ibn-i Imam Hasan.[1939]

Monument Type: *imamzada*; funerary structure, originally part of a more extensive complex; square mausoleum preceded by an entrance *iwan* and flanked on three sides by dome-covered rooms (second phase).

Chronology: monument constructed and decorated in at least two phases (phase one: Ilkhanid complex with lustre tile revetment; phase two: Ilkhanid redecoration with stucco revetment; probably enlargement of the structure) with minor subsequent modifications. An archaeological excavation of the complex could ascertain possible earlier Seljuq phases of the monument.

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): funerary structure with a central domed hall flanked on four sides by lateral interconnected spaces; the *imamzada* is preceded by an entrance portal of an *iwan* form. The structure is work of at least two Ilkhanid constructive and decorative phases. The building was originally part of a more extensive complex consisting of several monuments, but these were demolished.[1940]

Location: the city of Varamin; c. 45 km as the crow flies in the south-eastern direction from the city centre of Teheran.

GPS location of the monument: 35.3161853 N; 51.6481317 E.

Monument Investigation: July 04, 2014; December 19, 2018.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

For Historic and Geographical context of Varamin, see the catalogue entry concerning the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28).[1941]

[1937] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[1938] See also https://archnet.org/sites/1684 (Last Accessed: November 17, 2020).
[1939] Blair 2016, 2.
[1940] See Blair 2016, 12.
[1941] See also *Ibid.*, 1-2.

Background

Imamzada Yahya is located in Varamin. The settlement was an important agricultural and trade centre in Ilkhanid period, which is reflected in the number of monuments endowed by Ilkhanid patrons. The Friday mosque of Varamin is one of the essential Ilkhanid monuments and it was located in the centre of Varamin. In contrary, the Imamzada Yahya, which was originally part of a more extensive complex, was situated in its southern outskirts.[1942] Further Ilkhanid monuments in Varamin are the tomb tower of ʿAlaʾ al-Dawla, located close to the Friday mosque, the shrine of Kawkab al-Din, and the Imamzada Shah Husayn. The ʿAlaʾ al-Dawla tomb tower and its architectural revetments are related to the Bistam Friday mosque's Kashana tomb tower (Cat. No. 18), but the shrine of Kawkab al-Din was built anew and it no longer retains parts datable to Ilkhanid period. The Imamzada Shah Husayn was rebuilt into a modern structure with its old parts incorporated in it; its Ilkhanid strapwork mihrab and revetments of the tomb tower are closely related to the glazed revetments of the Friday mosque of Varamin (Cat. No. 28) and they are likely works of the same workshop.[1943] The Imamzada Yahya was a funerary monument within a more extensive complex, around which developed the historic cemetery.[1944]

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 403-404.

The current architectural structure of the *imamzada* is the only remaining part of the complex, which once comprised another funerary tower and a mosque.[1945] The *imamzada* structure dates back to the Ilkhanid period and it was rebuilt into a larger monument by the addition of interconnected lateral spaces and the entrance *iwan*, during the second construction intervention in Ilkhanid period.[1946] Written descriptions of the complex by Jane Dieulafoy, from 1881, help at the understanding of the characteristics of the original complex.[1947] The *imamzada* was originally decorated with an extensive repertoire of lustre revetments and carved stuccos.[1948]

Construction Phases

The dates for the understanding of construction sequence of the monument are provided by its architectural revetments. The following milestones in construction and decoration can be outlined: lustre star tiles dated 1261-63, the dated lustre mihrab from 1265, lustre tombstone slab dated 1305 and the date on the stucco inscription band which runs along the dado area: 1307.[1949] The *imamzada* is one of the Early Ilkhanid monuments which was redecorated during the Golden Period of Ilkhanid architecture. Lateral architectural spaces flanking the mausoleum

[1942] Blair 2016, 12.
[1943] For information on the monument, see Wilber 1955, 177-178.
[1944] See Dieulafoy 1887, 147. See also Blair 2016, 3, 12; Wilber 1955, Pls. 6, 9.
[1945] Wilber 1955, Pl. 6.
[1946] Blair 2016, 2; Wilber 1955, 109-111.
[1947] Dieulafoy 1887, 147.
[1948] Dates of the stucco inscription band and dates on tile revetments, which are now scattered in numerous museum collections, provide milestones for the understanding of the constructive and decorative phases of the monument.
[1949] Wilber 1955, 109.

on its three sides and the *iwan* preceding it, were built in Ilkhanid period, but they do not retain architectural revetments.[1950]

Phase One – The Ilkhanid Imamzada Yahya and the Complex

According to Dieulafoy's description, the original complex comprised an octagonal tomb tower of a pre-Seljuq date with stucco plug decoration, a courtyard mosque of Seljuq date and the Ilkhanid *imamzada*.[1951] According to Sarre, who documented the monument at the end of nineteenth century, the octagonal tomb tower contained a stucco mihrab with traces of blue and the *imamzada* contained lustre tiles with dates around 1262.[1952]

In Wilber's reconstruction of the original complex, which is based on drawings by Dieulafoy, he proposes that the tomb tower and the *imamzada* were parts of a mosque structure.[1953] Examination of the structure and its joints enabled Wilber to propose that the *imamzada* originally consisted of a square domed structure, which was subsequently enlarged. The original *imamzada* was a monument with a square exterior ground plan and an octagonal plan in its interior. The transition from the square structure to the dome is achieved through deep corner angle niches framed by pointed arches. The area of the octagonal drum comprises a sequence of blind niches and window openings formed by pointed arches. The dome was likely rebuilt and it does not contain any historic architectural revetments. The described structure featured one entrance on its northern side, opposite the *qibla* wall. This structure comprised the lustre and stucco revetments and their dates help the understanding of its constructive and decorative sequence. Dieulafoy's description of lustre tile revetments at the *imamzada,* informs that parts of them were already removed and sold off, at the time of the monument survey in 1881. Dieulafoy's description of tile revetments is significant, because it testifies to their existence in the *imamzada*: Dieulafoy mentions the lustre mihrab, a lustre tomb slab, star tiles in dado areas and stucco revetments.[1954]

Dating for the original structure of the *imamzada* is provided by the revetments which were kept in its interior: lustre star tiles dated 1261-63, dated lustre mihrab 1265, lustre tombstone slab dated 1305 and the date on the stucco inscription band, which runs along the dado area: 1307. The monument was therefore constructed around 1260 and decorated with a star lustre tile dado and a lustre mihrab, unless these tiles were reused.[1955] It was subsequently redecorated some four decades later, in c. 1300, when the stucco revetments and the tombstone lustre slab were added to the monument.

[1950] The *imamzada* is the only monument of Varamin which comprised lustre revetments combined with stuccos.
[1951] See Dieulafoy 1887, 147-149; Wilber 1955, 109-110.
[1952] Sarre 1910, 59.
[1953] The level of accuracy of this reconstruction remains unclear, but it is important to consider that the current *imamzada* was part of a larger complex, which had a funerary-commemorative and prayer function. If so, the site was an important pilgrimage place.
[1954] See also Blair 2016, 3-7.
[1955] Reuse of lustre tile revetments at the *imamzada* has recently been proposed in the latest research by Yves Porter and Anais Leone. Article in preparation for the Proceedings of the Bamberg Stucco Conference.

Phase Two – The Redecorated Ilkhanid Imamzada Yahya

The *imamzada* was enlarged in the second Ilkhanid constructive phase by addition of lateral structures on its four sides. On each side of the *imamzada*, the lateral structures display a tripartite division and interconnectedness of structures. The southern and northern sides of the *imamzada* comprise each an *iwan* structure, which is flanked by lateral spaces connected to the *iwan* structures. These spaces are larger in size, compared to the spaces on eastern and western sides. The two *iwan*s accentuate the north-west axis of the *qibla* direction. The *iwan*s form monument's tripartite façade and they function as its focal points. While the main *iwan* is formed by a semi-dome and depressed arches, the other lateral spaces are covered by small slightly depressed domes. These spaces were likely used for storage and perhaps for accommodation of shrine's guards or for its pilgrims.

Redecorations of the *imamzada* can be indicatively dated, based on the dates contained by its architectural revetments. The stucco inscription which runs along the dado area of the interior of the *imamzada* is dated 1307 and the tombstone slab is dated 1305. The *imamzada* was therefore redecorated during Uljaytu's reign, perhaps as a result of wealth, which allowed for the patronage of its redecoration. This phase did not comprise building activities, but it is possible that minor repairs of the structure were undertaken. The addition of stuccos to the presumably already existing lustre revetments drastically changed the aesthetics of *imamzada*'s interior. This redecoration seems to have been put in place to monumentalized monument's interior and to increase its sanctity. Interestingly, its stuccos were not applied as separate revetments of the interior. Quite the contrary, they were combined with existing lustre tiles, in order to increase their monumentality and to boost their visibility. This further emphasized the architectural structure and surfaces of the monument.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases

The monument seems not to have undergone any major modifications in post-Ilkhanid times, apart from modern alterations.

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Ground Plan[1956]

The original *imamzada*, constructed around 1260, featured a ground plan (Fig. 403), which externally assumed a square form and internally developed into an octagonal space. The northern supporting wall possessed an opening which was the entrance into the structure. It is likely that the original structure was preceded by an entrance portal.

Ilkhanid *Imamzada* Elevation

The highest elevated point of the *imamzada* was its dome which stretched across the entire structure. It is not clear if the exterior surfaces of supporting walls were organised into façades. The type of the entrance portal of the *imamzada* is unknown.

[1956] Wilber 1955, Pls. 6, 9.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

The *imamzada* is a commemorative funerary structure, which shelters the grave of Imam Yahya ibn-i ʿAli ibn-i ʿAbd al-Rahman ibn-i Qasim ibn-i Hasan ibn-i Zayd ibn-i Imam Hasan Mujtaba, a descendant of one of the Twelve Imams.[1957] Originally, the complex comprised another funerary structure, the tomb tower and a mosque. This mosque might have been a funerary (commemorative) mosque. The patronage of the *imamzada* and its rich lustre tile and stucco revetments testify to its significance as an important pilgrimage destination. It is perhaps one of the Early Ilkhanid monuments with a pronouncedly Shiʿite function. As Blair reports, Varamin was a Shiʿite centre from at least the Early Ilkhanid period.[1958]

c.) Architectural Revetments

Architectural revetments of the *imamzada* were located in its interior space. It is not known whether its exterior architectural surfaces were also decorated. The interior of the monument comprised revetments in lustre tile and carved stucco media. The lustre tile revetments have been entirely removed from the monument and only the stuccos are left *in situ*. Written accounts, dates and signatures on lustre tile revetments allowed the researchers to connect them to the monument, although it is not possible to exclude the possibility of reuse of lustre revetments for the monument. These lustre medium revetments are now scattered in diverse museums, but they have been subject to a recent publication by Blair.[1959] The monument provides an example of Ilkhanid decorative repertoires where stuccos were integrated into an existing repertoire of lustre tiles. This later intervention changed the visual appearance of monument's interior and the balance in hierarchy between the two media.

Interior Revetments

Figs. 405-412.

Phase One

Figs. 407, 411-412.

The first decorative intervention (c. 1260) comprises application of a star tile dado area along monument's supporting walls and the installation of the lustre tile mihrab on its *qibla* wall. The dado tiles, which are now scattered in numerous museum collections are dated between 1261 and 1263. They provide significant information indicating that the production of an extensive corpus of tiles for a single monument lasted almost three years. The lustre tile mihrab was removed after Dieulafoy's visit to the monument in 1881, and it was sold by Haghop Kevorkian to the Doris Duke Foundation in Honolulu, in 1940 (it was formerly kept in the Philadelphia Museum). It is dated 1265 and signed by one of the lustre tile masters of the Tahir family from Kashan; this mihrab was work of the first decorative intervention in the mausoleum.

[1957] Blair 2016, 2.
[1958] Blair 2016.
[1959] *Ibid.*

Phase Two

The monument was subjected to a redecoration intervention in early fourteenth century, c. 1300. The redecoration comprised the production of the tombstone for the grave of Imam Yahya, which is dated 1305 and stored in the Hermitage museum (Inv. No. ИР-1594).[1960] The most extensive part of this intervention consisted of production of stuccos for monument's interior. These revetments were juxtaposed to the existing lustre tiles. This activity resulted in the increase of monumentality of the lustre tile-stucco decorative programme. Other architectural surfaces, which were lacking decoration, were also decorated with stucco. Stuccos therefore became to consist the background of the lustre tile decoration repertoire.

Lustre Revetments

Figs. 411-412.

This subject has been addressed by Watson[1961] and Wilber.[1962] The recent publication by Blair provides a comprehensive study of monument's lustre revetments.[1963] Here, an overview of lustre revetments is provided, based on these publications and studies of revetments in museum collections. It serves to understand better their relationship to the stuccos, because these two media were interconnected within the decorative hierarchy of *imamzada*'s decorative programme.

The lustre revetments of the *imamzada* are of three types: the monumental lustre mihrab, the tombstone of Imam's grave and the lustre star tiles of the dado area.[1964] As mentioned, the lustre mihrab and the dado tiles represent the original decorative repertoire of the *imamzada*. The tombstone slab was added during the redecoration phase in early fourteenth century.[1965]

The Mihrab (Phase One)

The mihrab was applied on the architectural surface of the *qibla* wall (Fig. 418); it was framed by a stucco inscription band and another top horizontal layer of stucco during the redecoration intervention.[1966] The lustre mihrab is currently part of the Doris Duke Foundation collection in Shangrila (Inv. Nr. 48.327). It was still described in situ by Dieulafoy and shortly afterwards it was removed from the site and sold off. The mihrab is dated Shaʿban 663 (May 1265) and signed as *work of ʿAli ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i Abi Tahir*,[1967] the third generation lustre craftsman from the renowned Tahir family from Kashan.

[1960] https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/08.+applied+arts/125004 (Last Accessed: November 17, 2021).
[1961] Watson 1985, 191.
[1962] Wilber 1955, 109-111.
[1963] Blair 2016.
[1964] These revetments are now scattered in numerous museum collections. Their locations in the *imamzada* are known through the account by Dieulafoy, and there exist only some traces of tile adhesion mortar *in situ*.
[1965] It could be a substitution to the original tombstone slab.
[1966] See Blair 2016, 3.
[1967] *Ibid.*

The mihrab (384.5 x 228.6 x 21.6 cm) is of monumental dimensions and it consists of sixty individual pieces of lustre tiles.[1968] In its design and form, it resembles other lustre mihrabs, such as the one in the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art (Inv. No. I. 5366, dated Safar 623 -February –March 1226),[1969] which is also close in date. But it is also similar to several stucco mihrabs, especially the Uljaytu mihrab in the Friday mosque of Isfahan (Cat. No. 1). The Varamin mihrab was subsequently framed by added stucco revetments. Wilber notes that the empty space of the mihrab on the *qibla* wall of the *imamzada* is larger than the mihrab,[1970] but in the upper edge of it, the space between the mihrab and the stucco inscription band was filled with star and cross tiles.[1971]

The Dado Area (Phase One)

Figs. 411-412.

The dado area of the *imamzada* has been completely refurbished through the passing of the time. According to Dieulafoy, the dadoes comprised the lustre star and cross tiles, which are now scattered across numerous museum collections.[1972] The dado area was enlarged during the redecoration intervention by addition of the inscription band in carved stucco on its top. Eventually, the tiles were removed and the dado was refurbished in Qajar period with rectangular tiles featuring floral compositions in yellow and blue.

Specific characteristics of Ilkhanid dado lustre tiles are that the tiles retain white background which is decorated only with lustre. Tiles feature diverse floral compositions and on some tiles there are animate figures, such as birds. Tile frames consist of inscriptions which normally quote Qurʾanic verses, but some tiles with *Shahnama* quotations have also been identified as belonging to the *imamzada*. It is not clear if this is a mistake of tile attribution or if the lustre decorators simply reproduced any text they had at disposition. Some of these tiles were custom made to fit the edges of the dado area, rather than being cut on spot, which suggests that the tiles were produced on purpose for the dado area, rather than without a predestined goal. These tiles are masterpieces of Ilkhanid lustre pottery.

The following museum collections comprise lustre tiles, which have been attributed to the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin, based on the corresponding dates or based on their stylistic comparison.

Hermitage Museum: IR-1046-IR-1056.[1973]

[1968] *Ibid.*, 4.
[1969] http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t2.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleLink$0.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_3x4&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=2 (Last Accessed: November 17, 2020).
[1970] Wilber 1955, 110.
[1971] Author's observation.
[1972] With the largest group of some sixty tiles in the Hermitage museum collection.
[1973] Lukonin and Ivanov 2012, Cat. Entry No. 103. https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ub-bamberg/reader.action?docID=1337405&ppg=140 (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020)

University of Harvard Museum: 1932.127; 1931.128.[1974]

Los Angeles County Museum of Art: M.2002.1.76; M.2002.1.147.[1975]

Boston Museum of Fine Arts: 07.668; 08.295; 09.318; 08.296; 09.318; 07.902; 07.668; 2001.683.[1976]

The Metropolitan Museum of New York: 22.193.2; 91.1.100; 41.165.22.[1977]

The Art Institute of Chicago: 1915.243; 1915.242.[1978]

The British Museum: OA+.1121; G.475; G.474; G.473; G.472; G.471; G.470; G.469; G.466; G.464; G.460; G.459; G.457; G.456; 1896,0201.103; G.450; G.482; G.480; G.463; G.453; G.483; G.477; G.451; G.452; G.454; G.476; G.455; 1896,0201.101; G.481; G.478; G.206; G.479; G.465; G.462; G.205.[1979]

The Victoria and Albert Museum: 1837L-1876; 1837L-1876; 1072-1875; 1837K-1876; 1837J-1876; 1837&A, C, E, F-1876, 1487-1876, 1489-1876, 1838&C, E-1876, 1077-1892, 1099&A-1892, 1100&A-1892.[1980]

The National Museum of Scotland: A.1889.68; A.1921.1314.[1981]

Berlin Museum of Islamic Art: I. 3864+I. 5689 a-c.[1982]

Bargello Museum: 1970c.[1983]

Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg: 1883.155[1984]

The Tombstone Slab (Phase Two)

The tombstone slab, which used to cover the grave of the Imam Yahya, is dated 1305; this indicates that it was added to the tomb during the redecoration process. It (Inv. Nr. ИР-1594) entered the collection of the Hermitage museum in 1925, but it was kept in the Stiegltz museum beforehand.[1985] It consists of four large lustre tile slabs (total dimension: 221 x 87 cm) and it is stated on the tombstone that it was produced for the Imamzada Yahya. The slab assumes a mihrab niche form and it resembles cores of lustre tile mihrabs, such as the one of the Imamzada Yahya or the one kept in the Berlin museum. The tombstone features superb lustre tile craftsmanship.

[1974] From museum storage research by the author, February-March 2019.
[1975] *Ibid.*
[1976] *Ibid.*
[1977] *Ibid.*
[1978] From museum storage research by the author, February-March 2019.
[1979] From museum storage research by the author in April 2019.
[1980] *Ibid.*
[1981] *Ibid.*
[1982] From museum storage research by the author in September 2018.
[1983] Author's visit to the collection in summer 2018.
[1984] https://sammlungonline.mkg-hamburg.de/de/object/Sternfliese/1883.155/dc00119339?s=sternfliese&h=0 (Last Accessed: January 30, 3021).
[1985] Blair 2016, 5-6.

Stucco Revetments (Phase Two)

Figs. 405-410.

The dating of Imamzada Yahya's stuccos is provided by the inscription which runs along the dado area. It states that the stuccos were completed in 1307. The stucco revetments therefore present the second decorative phase of the *imamzada*, which probably began in 1305, with the installation of the lustre tombstone on Imam's grave. Subsequently, the interior of the *imamzada* was refurbished by application of stuccos. These revetments comprised the production of the inscription which ran along top edges of the lustre tile dado and above the lustre mihrab. Another monumental horizontal stucco panel was added on the top of the lustre mihrab. Transitional zone elements were decorated with muqarnas in stucco. Upper blind niches and window openings of the drum, which carried the dome of the *imamzada,* were also embellished with stuccos. Stucco plugs on supporting walls of the *imamzada* were part of the original construction of supporting walls and not the redecoration.

The Dado Area

Figs. 405-408.

The application of the monumental inscription band on top edges of the dado area, above the entrance and above the mihrab, provided for the continuity of the stucco revetment repertoire. This addition rendered more monumental the dado area of lustre star and cross tiles (see above).

The monumental inscription begins with the *Basmala* and the Qurʾanic quotation (*Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:1-4), and it continues with information regarding the patronage of the redecoration intervention (see below). The inscription abruptly concludes with the year of its production. The inscription band is topped by a small band of repeating floral ornamentation carved out of one stucco layer. The inscription band features *Naskh* style with occasional vocalization and diacritical marks. The inscription contains a double incised outline similar to stuccos at the Shaykh ʿAbd al-Samad complex in Natanz (Cat. No. 12), the stuccos in the domed prayer hall of the Varamin Friday mosque (Cat. No. 28), the monumental inscription framing band of the mihrab at the Haftshuya Friday mosque (Cat. No. 3) and Seljuq stuccos, such as those at the Madrasa Haydariyya in Qazvin. The background of the inscription contains distinct floral scrolls. These scrolls are recessed in comparison to the inscription which protrudes from the stucco relief plain. They feature fine and thin swirls embellished with large elements resembling flower blossoms. These elements are not encountered in other stucco inscription bands of Ilkhanid stuccos and they should be understood as a peculiarity of the workshop which produced them.

The Mihrab Additions

Fig. 418.

The redecoration intervention in stucco impacted the appearance of the already extant lustre mihrab on the *qibla* wall of the *imamzada*. The mihrab was framed by a monumental inscription band of the dado area. In addition to this, the remaining space on mihrab's top, between the inscription and the top edge of the supporting wall, was filled by addition of a monumental

horizontal stucco panel. In this manner, the mihrab was rendered more monumental and it covered the entire *qibla* wall of the *imamzada*. This horizontal stucco panel features large repeating abstract ornamental elements which comprise circular elements united by half-palmettes.

The panel was carved out of at least two layers of stucco and its elements are almost entirely perforated with diverse perforation types. In a manner similar to the monumental inscription band and the stuccos of the transitional zone, the horizontal panel of the mihrab also comprises traces of yellow ochre, but this colour seems to be a recent addition.

The Transitional Zone Stuccos

Figs. 409-410.

Transitional elements of the *imamzada* were likely refurbished during the redecoration campaign, but it is possible that the original elements were simply covered with stuccos. The niches feature muqarnas decoration, which is covered with stuccos carved out of one stucco layer, and they display a rather plain relief. The muqarnas are divided into three tiers and the intradoses of pointed arches which shelter the muqarnas are decorated with stucco. The honeycombs of muqarnas are decorated with diverse stucco panels arranged in symmetrical compositions. Some panels display repeating perforations of stucco surface, which form geometrical patterns, and other panels feature symmetrical compositions of palmette elements. The intrados stucco bands display repeating abstract elements of floral derivation. The appearance of stuccos in transitional zones is characterized by shallow reliefs of abstract forms with frequent perforations, which render their appearance uniform. Application of stuccos onto the transition elements highlighted their architectural forms, which were juxtaposed to the inscription band running along supporting walls above the dado area.[1986]

Upper portions of *imamzada*'s structure are also decorated with carved stucco. Stuccos were used to decorate the spandrels of blind niches' pointed arches and window openings in the drum area. These stuccos are carved out of one stucco layer and they feature abstract floral motifs with frequent perforations, which echo patterns encountered on muqarnas niches. Some spandrels comprise medallions with names *Muhammad* and *Allah*. Addition of stuccos on these elements increased the visibility of the architectural forms in the drum area and it accentuated the vertical visual axis of monument's interior.

Stucco Plugs (Phase One)

Surfaces of supporting walls and the drum structure are decorated with stucco plugs (see, for example: Fig. 406). These plugs are inserted between fired bricks of supporting walls. It is likely that these stucco plugs were produced during the time of monument's construction, rather than them being a later addition. These stucco plugs are mainly non-epigraphic and they feature geometric elements. The most common type of plugs is the stucco plug in x-form.

[1986] The stuccos of transitional zones appear to have been overpainted with white, black and yellow colours.

Exterior Revetments

Exterior architectural surfaces of the original *imamzada* are concealed by subsequently constructed structure. It is therefore not clear whether the exterior surfaces of the *imamzada* were originally decorated with architectural revetments.

Stucco Polychromy at the Varamin Imamzada

The monumental inscription band, the stuccos of transitional elements and the horizontal panel of the mihrab contain extensive traces of polychromy which are not original. The background of the monumental inscription contains yellow to orange ochre traces and remains of white. The horizontal mihrab stucco panel retains extensive amounts of yellow ochre. The stuccos of transitional elements and those on the spandrels of the drum openings, comprise extensive amounts of yellow ochre, white and grey to black. The nature of these polychromy traces indicates that these are modern colours. The stuccos of the *imamzada* were thus overpainted during recent restoration interventions.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at the Varamin Imamzada

Artistic techniques employed for production of stuccos at the *imamzada* are relatively modest. The monumental inscription band is carved out of two stucco layers. Mihrab's horizontal panel is perhaps the most complex stucco panel of the entire repertoire. It was produced by carving of at least two stucco layers; its ornamentation is heavily perforated and slightly undercut. Stuccos of transitional elements and the drum area were produced with the less complex technique of carving of one stucco layer. The employed artistic techniques and the approach to stucco carving displayed on these stucco panels, indicate that the entire repertoire is rather uniform and they it was produced by one stucco craftsmen's workshop.

The Varamin Imamzada Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Stuccos of the *imamzada* are characterized by a relatively shallow and non-protruding relief. The majority of stuccos are heavily perforated with diverse perforations. Prevailing decorative motifs of stuccos are either perforated surfaces or compositions of palmette motifs. The monumental inscription band comprises the double incised outline, which is also encountered at the Natanz shrine, the Haftshuya Friday mosque and several other Ilkhanid and Seljuq stucco repertoires. These similarities could indicate that the stucco craftsmen who produced the revetment repertoire could have been native to central Iran.

The addition of stucco to an already existing repertoire of lustre tiles is an interesting case. The production of stuccos transformed the appearance of *imamzada*'s interior. The stuccos boosted the visual appearance and visibility of lustre revetments and they increased their monumentality. In the hierarchy of the new revetment repertoire, which became to comprise lustre tiles and carved stuccos, the stuccos nevertheless assumed a secondary role. Focal points of the repertoire remained the lustre mihrab, the star and cross lustre tile dado area and the cenotaph. Lustre tiles present a chromatic selection of shades of blue, green and shiny lustre. Their rather dark appearance was juxtaposed to brightly coloured stuccos. Stuccos therefore assumed a secondary place in the hierarchy of the revetment repertoire and acted as a

background to the lustre tile repertoire. The decorative programme was further visually united by the repetitive balanced surfaces of supporting walls decorated with stucco plugs.

d.) Furnishing

There is no Ilkhanid furnishing in the *imamzada*. Qasimi mentions existence of precious wooden door which was stolen.[1987]

e.) Epigraphic Programme

The epigraphic programme of monument's stuccos consists of the following inscriptions:

The Stucco Dado Inscription

a.) This is the only *in situ* inscription of monument's epigraphic repertoire which originally consisted of lustre tile and stucco revetments. The inscription consists of a Qurʾanic excerpt (Qurʾan, *Surat al-Jumʿa*, 62:1-4) and a historic inscription naming the patron of the redecoration intervention and the time of completion of stuccoworks.

Information on the inscription is proposed by the TEI[1988] and it is included here for the sake of understanding the monument's history, with additional comments from the site's observations.[1989]

The Qurʾanic part of the inscription reads:[1990]

يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوسِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ
هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
وَآخَرِينَ مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ
ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is exalting Allah, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.
It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom – although they were before in clear error –
And [to] others of them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. That is the bounty of Allah, which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty.

The historic part of the inscription reads:

سعى بإنشاء هذه العمارة قربة لله تعالى و تشبّثا لمرضاته فضل الله تعالى على
عبده المذنب الخاطىء أبو محمّد الحسن بن المرتضى بن الحسن بن محمّد بن الحسن بن أبى زيد ...

[1987] Qasimi 2010, Vol. 13, 82.
[1988] TEI 2096 (Last Accessed: November 17, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5222.
[1989] Blair 2016, 5-6.
[1990] Qurʾanic text in Arabic and English translation from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/Al-Jumuah (Last Accessed: November 18, 2020).

تجاوز الله عن سیئاته بمحمّد و ذریّاته فی محرّم سنة سبع و سبع مائة[1991]

Efforts were made for the construction of the building to approach God the Most Exalted and endeavouring to please Him, who was gracious to His sinful and sinning servant, Abu Muhammad al-Hasan ibn-i Murtada ibn-i al-Hasan ibn-i Muhammad ibn-i al-Hasan ibn-i Abi Zayd,… may God forgive his evil deeds through Muhammad and his progeny, in Muharram of the year seven hundred and seven (July 1307).[1992]

The information provided by the inscription is of essential significance in determining the time of work by stucco craftsmen and patronage of the stucco revetment repertoire. Blair convincingly identifies the patron of the monument as Fakhr al-Din, the local ruler (*malik* or *wali*) of the province of Rayy and Varamin at the turn of the fourteenth century, who was also a protégé of Arghun Khan and who is mentioned in Rashid al-Din's Chronicle.[1993] Importantly, Blair also stresses that ʿIzz al-Din Quhandi, the main patron of the Varamin Friday mosque, was a protégé of Fakhr al-Din, which provides for another connection between patrons of monuments of Varamin.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The monument does not feature any post-Ilkhanid stucco revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage[1994]

An extensive endowment was necessary to commission the lustre mihrab and the dado area star and cross tiles of the monument. It can be accordingly postulated that the patron must have been well off in order to commission these undertakings. This could be an Ilkhanid official with ties to Varamin or a local notable of exceptional wealth. Blair proposes an interesting speculation, suggesting that patronage of Imamzada Yahya could have been always connected to the Hasani family, proposing that the monument could have been founded by the father of Fakhr al-Din and its redecoration and modifications sponsored by the son.[1995]

Monument's historic inscriptions provide indications regarding the patron of the redecoration intervention at monument, who is identified by Blair.[1996] As Blair successfully illustrates, the patron of the redecoration intervention was a *Malik*, a middle rank Ilkhanid official, Fakhr al-Din, who is mentioned in primary written sources. The patron passed away a few months after the completion of *imamzada*'s stuccos. His endowment for the monument was extensive, and it comprised the production of the lustre tile cover for the cenotaph and the extensive carved stucco repertoire. Blair informs that the same patron also commissioned construction of the ʿAlaʾ al-Din tomb tower at Varamin (dated 1289) for burial of his father.[1997] This structure is

[1991] TEI 2096 (Last Accessed: November 17, 2021); RCEA, XIV, n° 5222.
[1992] Blair 2016, 6-7.
[1993] *Ibid.*, 7-9.
[1994] See *Ibid.*, 13.
[1995] This is certainly logical, but it would require evidence which would confirm the proposed speculation. See *Ibid.*, 12.
[1996] *Ibid.*, 7-10.
[1997] *Ibid.*, 10-12.

however not related to Imamzada Yahya from architectural and revetments point of view; it has more in common with the badly altered structure of the Shah Husayn Imamzada.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The stucco revetments of the *imamzada* do not contain any signature of the stucco craftsmen's master. The analysis of the repertoire points towards similarities between *imamzada*'s stuccos and some repertoires in central Iran. Interestingly, the later stuccos of the Varamin Friday mosque retain only a few similarities to stuccos of the *imamzada*. This is another argument to suggest that stucco craftsmen had to arrive to Varamin in order to produce stuccos, rather than them being local craftsmen.

f.) Monument Condition

The monument is in a structurally good condition and it has been restored several times. The interior of the *imamzada* was slightly refurbished. The area of the missing mihrab remains bare. Stuccos of the *imamzada* were overpainted. Removal of recent polychromy, their cleaning and consolidation, would be necessary for their preservation. In sum, the monument is in a relatively good condition and it would necessitate only minor conservation interventions on its revetments.

g.) Research Finds – Summary

The research of the monument fills the gaps in its understanding. It provides detailed information regarding characteristics of stucco revetments and their relationship to removed lustre tiles. The list of lustre tile revetments in museum collections, which may belong to the monument, is proposed. The research shows that stuccos were applied and consciously integrated into an already existing decorative repertoire of lustre tiles and that the objectives of the redecoration were not to only enrich the decorative repertoire of the *imamzada*, but to also put further emphasis on the lustre tile repertoire and to monumentalize it. The discussion summarizes recent research finds concerning monument's patronage and information regarding its epigraphic programme in the stucco medium.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Sarre 1910, 59; Qasimi 2010, Vol. 13, 82-87; Wilber 1955; Blair 2016; Kratchkovskaya 1935; Overton and Maleki 2020.

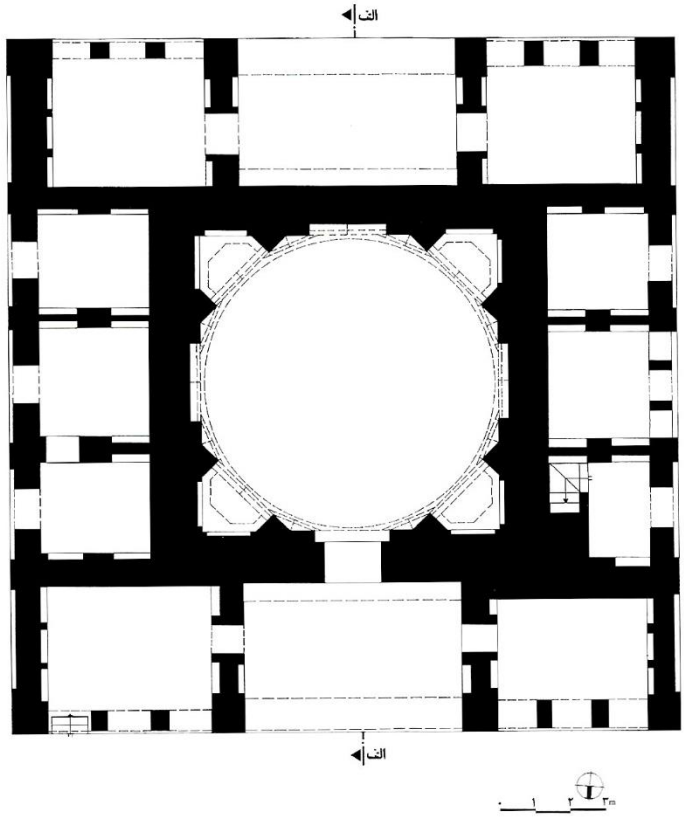


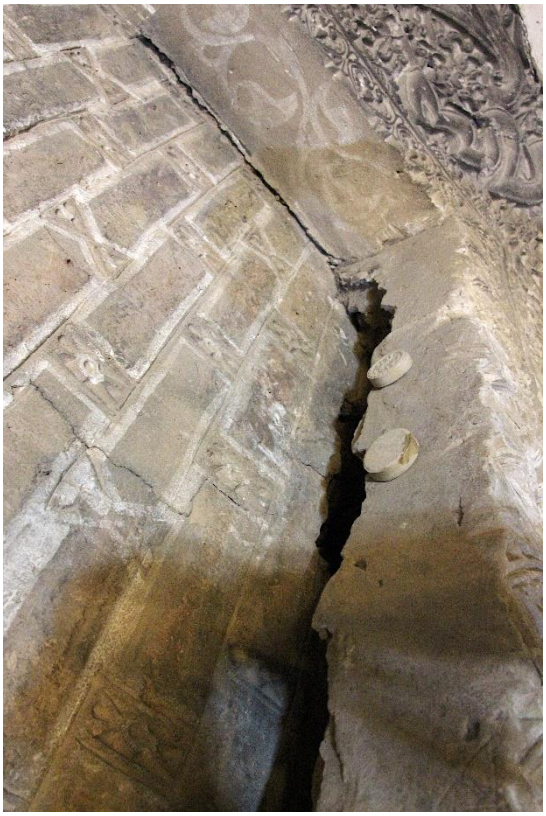
Figure 403: Ground plan of the Imamzada Yahya at Varamin, without marked constructive stages (After Qasimi 2010, Vol. 13, 85).

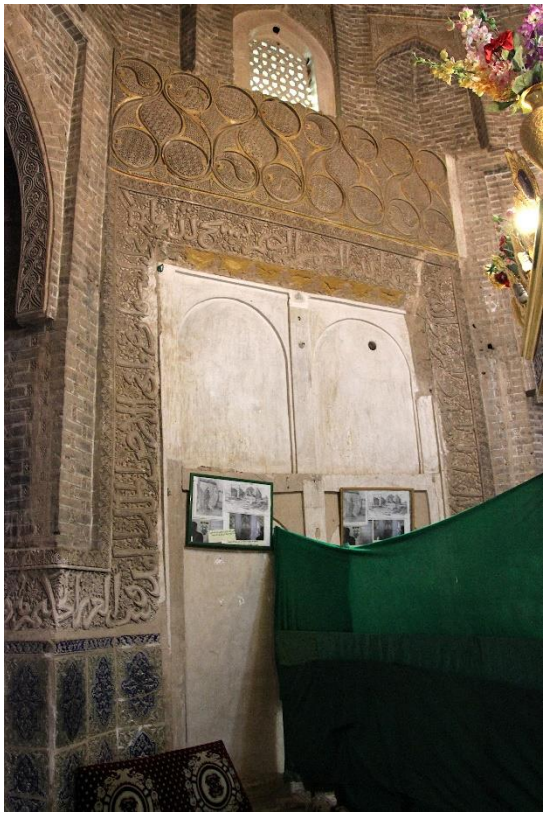


Figure 404: Exterior structure of the Imamzada Yahya at Varamin, view towards south-west.



Figure 405: Interior of the Imamzada Yahya at Varamin, the south-western corner. View of the monumental carved stucco inscription band which covers an earlier closed off passage.





Figures 406 and 407: Left: Detail showing the joint between the supporting walls and the monumental carved inscription band running over walls of *imamzada*'s interior, which is a work of a redecoration. Right: carved stuccos which were added to monumentalize the lustre tile mihrab of the *imamzada* (now in the Doris Duke Foundation Collection).



Figure 408: Detail of the monumental carved stucco inscription band, showing the double incised outline of the inscription.

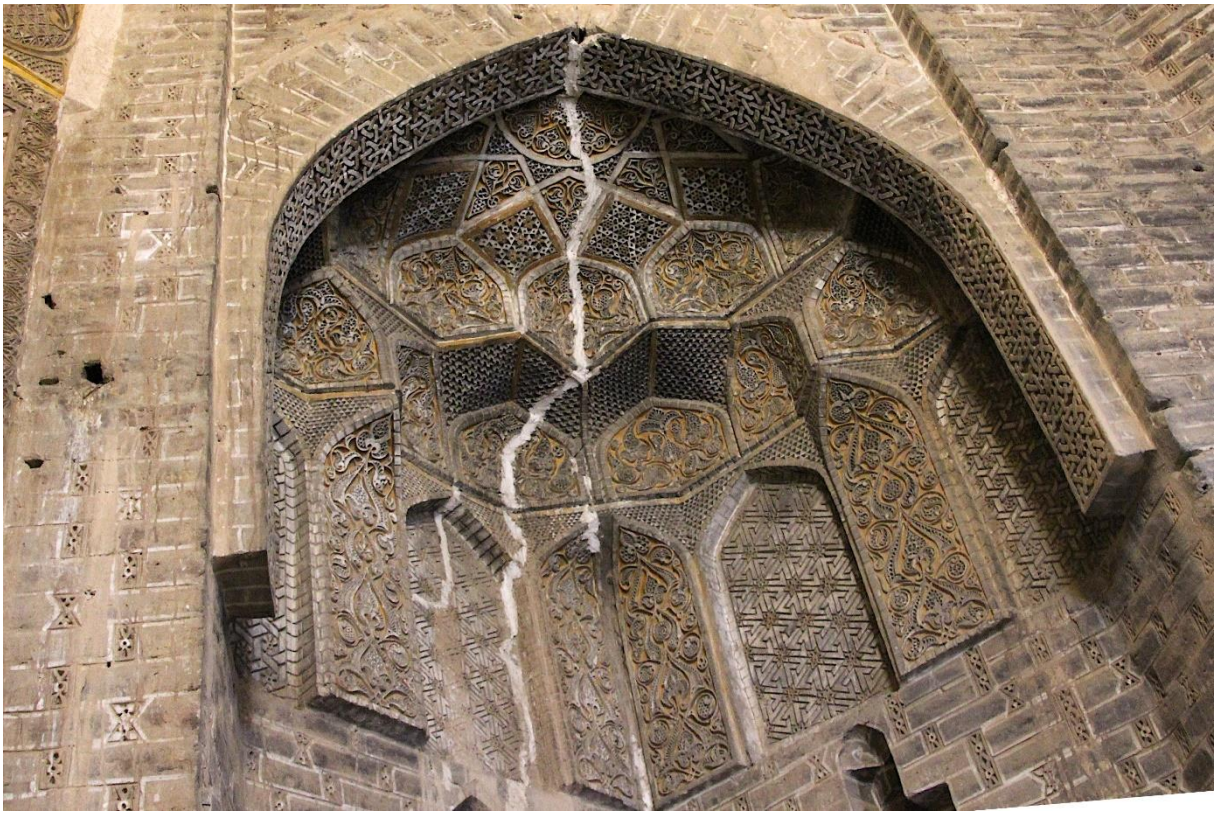


Figure 409: The south-western corner transitional zone element with the carved stucco muqarnas contemporary to the production of the monumental carved inscription (a redecoration). The stuccos were overpainted in recent times.



Figure 410: Carved stucco spandrels topping blind niches in the upper part of the transitional zone in the interior of the core of the *imamzada*.



Figure 411: Eight pointed star tile from the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin, dated 661/1262-63 (Height: 31.9 cm; Thickness: 1.7 cm), The Metropolitan museum of Art, New York, Inv. No. 91.1.100. (Courtesy of the Metropolitan museum).



Figure 412: Eight pointed star tile from the Imamzada Yahya in Varamin, dated 663/1265 (Height: 31.9 cm; Thickness: 1.7 cm), The Metropolitan museum of Art, New York, Inv. No. 91.1.105. (Courtesy of the Metropolitan museum).

CATALOGUE OF MONUMENTS

Monument Catalogue Number: 37

Monument Name: Imamzada Khizr

Figs. 413-432.

Associated Names: the monument is most frequently referred to as an *imamzada*, and occasionally as a *buqʿa*, although some researchers suggest that, originally, it was built as a Sufi *zawiya* or a *khanqah* comprising Shaykh's funerary structure.[1998] Diverse spellings for the name of the village in the proximities of Hamadan, where the monument is located and after which it received the name, exist. The most frequently employed names for the monument are: the Imāmzāda Khiżr (امامزاده خضر),[1999] the Buqʿa-yi Khizr and the Buqʿa-yi Pir-i Khizr.[2000] Variant spellings also include the Imamzada Khezr. Further variations of the name of the settlement and the monument exist in Persian. Frequently, the settlement is spelled as: خضر, but خدرis also occasionally employed.[2001] The long name of the settlement used to be: مزرعه خضر, *the land or field of Khizr*.[2002] Less commonly employed names of the monument comprise the Imamzada Sayyid Muayad al-Din Alawi (descendant of Imam Hasan Mujtaba).

Monument Type: the preserved monument features a square ground plan. Remains of an entrance portal, or of an adjacent structure, are visible on its exterior wall surface on the western side, indicating that, originally, the monument was more extensive.[2003] The monument reportedly contains an underground chamber which was covered and closed off during its latest restorations.

Chronology: the monument is believed to have been built in Seljuq period. It was redecorated in Ilkhanid times with addition of stucco revetments in its interior. This redecoration might have been performed as a part of the process of converting the *khanqah* into a mausoleum for the Shaykh who passed away.[2004]

Architectural Structure Type (Ilkhanid period): square structure topped by a dome and preceded by an entrance portal with further structures on its western side.

Location: Khizr settlement (located in proximities of Hamadan); c. 3.8 km as the crow flies from the city centre of Hamadan in the direction of north-east.

GPS location of the monument: 34.7936725 N; 48.5269117 E.

Monument Investigation: March 2, 2020 (the underground funerary chamber of the monument cannot be accessed due to the performed restorations).

[1998] Zariʿi 2002, 192-222; at 192.
[1999] Transliteration according to the IJMES system.
[2000] Zariʿi 2002, 192.
[2001] *Ibid.*, 192.
[2002] *Ibid.*, 192.
[2003] Lack of archaeological investigations of the area prevents to draw any conclusive evidence concerning its original iteration, the ground plan and to confirm its function.
[2004] Zariʿi 2002, 192.

a.) Geographical and Chronological Context

The village of Khizr is located in the proximities of Hamadan, some three kilometres to the north-west of Hamadan's city centre, currently almost forming a satellite city, due to Hamadan's expansion. The settlement is known for the monument named the Imamzada Khizr, which is located on an elevated hilltop on the eastern side of the village. Detailed information concerning the settlement and the monument is provided by Zariʿi and it is summarized here.[2005]

The main traditional occupations of Khizr's inhabitants comprised agricultural activities, free work and handicrafts, among which especially wool-related crafts. The *imamzada* is mentioned in historic written sources: one of the earliest works referring to the monument is the *Tuhfat al-ʿIraqayn* (originally titled: *Khatm al-Ghara'ib*)[2006] of Haqani al-Shirwani (d. 1186-87 or 1199).[2007] The village of Khizr was located on the network of Hamadan's caravanserais. In fact, Haqani reached Hamadan from the direction of Khizr, and on his way, he probably visited the *imamzada*. In his discussion of Hamedan, he includes the Imamzada Khizr, describing it as a square domed structure. Al-Rawandi, writing in 1238, reports that he heard that the *Imamzada* Khizr was visited by Sultan Tughril Beg (990-1063) on his way to Hamadan. Zariʿi informs that the three elderly authorities of Hamadan waited at the Imamzada Khizr to receive the Sultan at his arrival. Their choice of location was that of an elevated hilltop in the proximity of Hamadan, which allowed them to see when the Sultan was arriving, rather than the *imamzada* itself.[2008] The identity of the personage buried in the monument is unknown; it could have been a revered person with a Sufi role.

Background

The most comprehensive study of the monument, its constructive and decorative chronology and visual features, function and meaning of the mausoleum have so far been only addressed in the Persian publication by Zariʿi (2002).[2009] The Imamzada Khizr is little-known among English speaking scholars. Its first mention and images were published by O'Kane for his discussion of use of Persian language in the Iranian territory and especially on monuments.[2010] The recent publication by Viola Allegranzi concerning inscriptions of *Shahnama* on architectural revetments refers to the monument and includes some images of its stuccos.[2011] The monument therefore requires a thorough re-examination.

[2005] Zariʿi 2002, 196.
[2006] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/katm-al-garaeb (Last Accessed: November 30, 2020).
[2007] https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaqani-servani-works (Last Accessed: November 30, 2020).
[2008] Zariʿi therefore concludes that, based on information provided by al-Rawandi and Haqani, the structure of the Imamzada Khizr pre-dates Seljuq period. Zariʿi 2002, 192-193.
[2009] *Ibid.*, 192-222. In 1953, Mohsen Mustafawi performed first research of the monument, but without providing information concerning the dating of the architectural structure of the monument. He however considered its epigraphic programme to be dating to thirteenth century.
[2010] O'Kane 2006.
[2011] Allegranzi 2020.

b.) Architectural Structure

Figs. 413-415.

The monument is located on the elevated plain in the eastern part of Khizr and its original architectural context was in the centre of this village. It was located on the cemetery and some historic tombstones were still present *in situ* at the time of Zariʿi's writing in 2002. According to Zariʿi, the monument does not feature an exceptional architectural form, and its dome has been rebuilt in a manner not reflecting the original structure.[2012] He highlights that monument's significance stems from its stucco revetments in the centre of its interior, which present examples of specific inscription styles. The content of inscriptions of building's epigraphic programme is also unique (in the stucco medium), because they feature excerpts from the *Shahnama*. Furthermore, these verses are combined with Qurʾanic verses on monument's stucco mihrab, which marks the *qibla* direction. During the past two decades (1980-2000), archaeological activities relating to the building and its surroundings took place, and they were published by Zariʿi in his 2002 article. They propose that monument's architectural structure dates from tenth to eleventh centuries and further remains of no longer extant structures were discovered during these campaigns.

The monument features a square structure topped by a low-pitched dome. Internal dimensions of the square structure amount to 4 x 4 m and its external dimensions amount to 6 x 6 m.[2013] The original dome of the monument might had featured a double shelled dome. The monument originally retained two entrances: the northern entrance, which is 2.55 m high and which functioned as monument's original entrance, and the western entrance (which has been closed off), which amounts to the height of 2.35 m and 1.10 m of width. The monument retained three window openings, out of which two on the *qibla* wall, on the sides of the mihrab, which directed the light towards the cenotaph in its interior. Thickness of monument's walls is approximately 1 m. Zariʿi dates the architectural structure of the monument to eleventh century, due to the simplicity of its ground plan and by explaining that these forms of monuments were especially frequently built in Early Islamic period from ninth to eleventh centuries.[2014] He considers the stuccos of monument's interior works of one decorative phase, which occurred in the Early Ilkhanid period when, he believes, the *zawiya* or the *khanqah* structure was turned into a mausoleum, due to the death of the revered personage.

The fired-brick dome of the monument is surmounted by four triangular corner elements.[2015] Its ground plan, by Zariʿi, indicates that the transitional elements connecting its supporting walls and the dome, are combinations of small internal pendentives, which are externalized into structures covering corners formed by supporting walls. Sections and elevations of the monument published by Zariʿi illustrate the characteristics of the structure which coincide with a mausoleum function.

[2012] Zariʿi 2002, 192.
[2013] *Ibid.,* 196.
[2014] *Ibid.*
[2015] According to Zariʿi, the dome was built as a single shelled dome.

At the western section of the monument, there remain parts of a no longer extant adjacent structure, which comprise stucco plugs, fragments of a stucco inscription band and remains of an arch.[2016] It is not clear if this adjacent structure assumed a form of an *iwan* or a room. Close observations of these remains indicate that it was built in two constructive and decorative phases, or that it was modified at certain point. Zariʿi's detailed analysis of internal stucco revetments proposes that they are work of one decorative intervention, but this research provides indication that the stuccos are works of two interventions. Zariʿi dates these stuccos to the Early Ilkhanid period. In sum, the available evidence proposes that the monument dates to Seljuq period and that it was redecorated in Ilkhanid times.

Construction Phases

There exists exact evidence regarding the time of monument's construction and decoration and it needs to be proposed based on interpretation of the monument and its stuccos. Written sources testify that there existed a monument with the same name and in the same location in Seljuq period. According to the existing published research by the ICHHTO of Hamadan, the monument is understood as constructed between tenth and eleventh centuries.[2017] Zariʿi proposes, based on the form of monument's dome, transitional elements, and formal properties of its stuccos on the external surfaces, that it would be more appropriate to consider the construction of the monument to have taken place at the end of tenth or the beginning of eleventh century. Zariʿi also proposes that mihrab's epigraphic features and ornamental characteristics provide evidence indicating that it is work of Early Ilkhanid period, therefore of the end of thirteenth century, and that the mihrab is similar to other Ilkhanid mihrabs with a shallow stucco relief. But Mostafawi suggests that these inscriptions date from either thirteenth or fourteenth centuries.[2018]

Phase One - The Seljuq Khizr Monument

Writings by Haqani and al-Rawandi report the existence of the monument in Seljuq period. These sources are sufficiently reliable, but details concerning monument's characteristics are unclear. It thus remains unknown whether the monument was rebuilt at a later point, or if its current structure dates from tenth to eleventh centuries. The architectural structure of the monument was modified extensively in modern times; it is not clear if the current structure is result of Ilkhanid rebuilding or if its core reflects monument's original iteration. According to Zariʿi, there existed at least one more structure adjacent to the current monument.[2019] Zariʿi proposes that the original monument's structure functioned as a *khanqah* which was converted in the Early Ilkhanid period into a mausoleum for the deceased religious authority of an unknown identity. Its modest architectural structure and ground plan should however be treated cautiously as evidence in favour of the proposed dating for the structure. According to Zariʿi, architectural revetments from Seljuq period, connected to the history of monument's construction, is the relocated stone slab, which features abstracted compositions of vegetal

[2016] Zariʿi 2002, 198.
[2017] *Ibid.*
[2018] *Ibid.*
[2019] The ruined structure on Zariʿi's photograph was subsequently demolished and it is no longer extant.

elements.[2020] This carved stone slab, Zariʿi suggests, was monument's original mihrab, which had to be removed for the production of the current carved stucco mihrab.[2021]

Further indirect evidence in favour of the hypothesis that the original monument dates to Seljuq period is provided by the existence of other Seljuq buildings in its geographical proximity. The two closest monuments from Seljuq period are the Gunbad-i ʿAlawiyan mausoleum in Hamadan, which has undergone slight structural modifications in Ilkhanid period. Another minor Seljuq monument in Hamadan is the Ghurban tower (Burj-i Ghurban).

Phase Two – The Ilkhanid Khizr Monument – from Khanqah to Mausoleum?

The monument is suggested to have been redecorated in Early Ilkhanid period, but there exists no direct evidence in favour of this hypothesis.[2022] The *Shahnama* content of mausoleum's inscriptions is a rarely occurring phenomenon. *Shahnama* excerpts begin to appear on architectonical revetments in the Iranian territory, in Ilkhanid period, but more frequently in tile and especially lustre tile medium.[2023] The Khizr monument is in fact so far the only monument which features *Shahnama* excerpts in carved stucco medium. A related monument with Ilkhanid stucco mihrab featuring inscriptions in Persian language is the Kharaqani mausoleum in Qala-yi Naw (Cat. No. 21) near Bistam; its inscriptions are closely tied to the function and identity of the Sufi authority buried in the mausoleum. The presence of the *Shahnama* verses at the Khizr mausoleum partially confirms the suggested dating of Khizr mausoleum's stuccos to Ilkhanid period. But characteristics of the stucco relief at the Khizr repertoire cannot be considered as reliable evidence in favour of its more precise chronological classification.[2024] Due to extensive modifications of mausoleum's internal surfaces, there is no possibility to observe what the nature of the relationship between the stuccos and the walls of the structure is, and whether the structure pre-dates the stucco repertoire. Closer observations of the stucco mihrab and its visual elements of non-epigraphic content, especially its geometric framing pattern, reveal that the modality of production and design principles of this repeating six-pointed star pattern is closely related to two similar panels flanking the core of the carved stucco mihrab of the Baba Afzal mausoleum in Maraq (Cat. No. 14), for which this research proposes dating to circa 1300-1330. Further parallels comprise stucco repertoires of the Ilkhanid Qum mausolea, especially the Imamzada Shah Ahmad Qasim and Fatima Khatun (1308; Cat. No. 15) and the Imamzada Zayd (1444; Cat. No. 15). Zariʿi mentions the specific style of Kufic inscriptions on the mihrab and on the surfaces of mausoleum's supporting walls, stating that they are the *Iranian Kufic style* and that they could be considered characteristic of Ilkhanid period. In sum, the evidence for the Ilkhanid date of mausoleum's stucco repertoire is the following: the presence of Persian language quotations from the *Shahnama,* the related stucco artistic techniques employed for production of geometrical panels of mihrabs between the Khizr mihrab and the Maraq Baba Afzal mausoleum mihrab and the Qum mausolea, and the stucco plugs on mausoleum's exterior western wall surface.

[2020] Zariʿi 2002, 200, 202.
[2021] *Ibid.*, 200, 202.
[2022] *Ibid.*, 218.
[2023] See O'Kane 2006.
[2024] Zariʿi 2002, 218.

Zariʿi proposes that the original function of the monument was that of a *khanqah* and that the monument's function was repurposed at the moment of revered Sufi master's death, into the burial structure, and that stuccos were likely applied at this point. This hypothesis is reasonable, but it lacks evidence. The identity of the person buried in the mausoleum remains unknown and the time of the death of the personage is not possible to be determined. The monument could have functioned as a mausoleum from its outset and the Sufi master could have been buried in the structure adjacent to a more extensive no longer extant complex. Dimensions and mausoleum's architectural form do not match a structure which would function as a *khanqah* or a *zawiya*. There is also no evidence, as pointed out already by Zariʿi, pointing towards a close relation between the stuccos and the repurposing of the monument as a mausoleum. Many questions concerning the original function and the revered person buried in it therefore remain open.

Post-Ilkhanid Phases and Modern Modifications

The original stucco repertoire was damaged and a decision was taken, at an unknown point, but most likely in the last two centuries, to repair it. These stucco bands were produced in an entirely distinct inscription style, which is a mixture of *Naskh* and *Thuluth* set against a plain background; it strongly differs from Kufic inscriptions on the mihrab and the monumental Kufic inscription running above the dado area. Judging from the style of inscription repairs, they are not entirely modern, but likely work of craftsmen of limited skills and they could have been produced during the past two or more decades.

Ilkhanid Monument Ground Plan

Ground plans and elevations of the monument are proposed by Zariʿi.[2025] The ground plan (Fig. 413) of the monument comprises a square structure. According to Zariʿi, the original entrance of the mausoleum was on its northern side. Placement of the main entrance on the northern side is logical, because it would be juxtaposed to the stucco mihrab and the *qibla* wall of the monument. The remains of the adjacent structure of rectangular form indicate that the mausoleum could have been part of a more extensive complex.

Ilkhanid Monument Elevation

Elevations of the monument are contained in Zariʿi's publication.[2026] These elevations illustrate the original dimensions of monument's three window openings, position of its entrance on the northern side and remains of the entrance structure on its western side. The elevation of the monument consists of superimposition of square structure topped by a dome, which assumes hemispherical form. Examination of the monument in 2020 however indicates that there exists no visible evidence that this dome is the original as it may have been heavily restored.

Religious Function of the Architectural Structure

Based on the features of its ground plan, the remains of evidence of no longer extant structures, the content of epigraphic programme of its revetments, and the presence of the mihrab, Zariʿi

[2025] Zariʿi 2002, 195, 197, 199.
[2026] *Ibid.*

concludes that the monument most likely originally functioned as a *khanqah* or a *zawiya* dedicated to an unknown Shaykh.[2027] Original funerary function of the Khizr mausoleum is supported by its extant epigraphic programme which comprises Qurʾanic inscriptions and quotations from the *Shahnama*.[2028] According to Zariʿi, the Khizr monument was transformed into a mausoleum in the moment when the spiritual leader of the Sufi community at the *khanqah* passed away.[2029] Due to the significance of the monument and the Shaykh, the mausoleum accordingly turned into a pilgrimage destination. The Khizr mausoleum was perhaps a local pilgrimage destination, rather than a large-scale one.[2030]

The identity of the personage buried in the Khizr mausoleum is unclear. Zariʿi reports on the existence of the old tombstone with illegible Kufic inscription, but the survey of the monument revealed that this cenotaph must have been removed from the building during the last decades, when major renovations were performed in the interior of the shrine. Zariʿi recounts that the only information relating the identity of the person buried in the monument is proposed in *Tuhfat al-ʿIraqayn* by Haqani al-Shirwani,[2031] and in the work *Rah al-Sudur* by Ibn Rawandi,[2032] which mention the name of the living quarter named Khizr. Although these written sources refer to the mausoleum, they do not specify the identity of the person buried in it, by only referring to the place as the burial of Baba Khizr.[2033] Further sources refer to the person as Baba Taher or Pir-i Khizr.[2034] Another personage who could possibly relate to the monument, is the mention in written sources of arrival to Hamadan of a learned man named Shah Khushin; some researchers have proposed that this person was buried in the mausoleum or that it was the burial of the Sayyid Fakhr al-Din, the descendant of Imam Hasan Mojtaba. Another possibility is that the mausoleum was connected to an individual who carried the name Khizr.[2035] The below performed analysis of the monument and its architectural revetments points towards the ties between the Sufi movement and the person buried in the mausoleum.

In sum, first centuries of monument's existence, from the time of its construction in Seljuq or earlier period, are not well comprehended, but at least from the moment of Ilkhanid decorative interventions for the stucco repertoire production, the structure functioned as a mausoleum.[2036] The monument subsequently retained the function of a funerary structure and pilgrimage destination. Presently, the monument has been reinterpreted into an *imamzada*, stating that it is a burial of a descendant of one of the Twelve Imams.[2037]

[2027] Zariʿi 2002, 219.
[2028] *Ibid.*
[2029] *Ibid.* Similar has for example been suggested for the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum near Isfahan, although this research shows that the monument most likely functioned as a funerary structure from its outset.
[2030] *Ibid.*
[2031] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/kaqani-servani-works (Last Accessed: June 25, 2020).
[2032] http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ebn-ravandi (Last Accessed: June 25, 2020).
[2033] Zariʿi 2002, 220.
[2034] *Ibid.*
[2035] *Ibid.*
[2036] Compare to the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum (Cat. No. 2), the shrine of ʿAbd al-Samad in Natanz (Cat. No. 12) and also at the Kharaqani mausoleum in Qala-yi Naw close to Bistam (Cat. No. 21).
[2037] This reinterpretation of the religious significance of the monument allowed for it to remain a popular pilgrimage destination.

c.) Architectural Revetments

The monument featured architectural revetments on its interior and exterior surfaces. They may post-date the construction of monument's original structure. Exterior surfaces retain fragments of carved stucco plugs and carved stucco inscriptions which are heavily weathered. These revetment remains are contemporary to the original interior carved stucco repertoire.

Interior Revetments

Phase 1 –Seljuq Revetments

The Stone Relief

Zariʿi publishes a photograph of a carved stone relief (65 x 21 cm) which features abstracted vegetal composition; he informs that this carved stone relief was located in the interior of the monument, in one of its niches.[2038] Zariʿi proposes that this stone relief could have functioned in place of the current carved stucco mihrab and that it was removed to a different location in the monument, at the time of the installation of the stucco mihrab in Early Ilkhanid period.[2039] According to Zariʿi, the stone slab dates from the time of monument's construction.[2040]

The Stone Cenotaph

Zariʿi provides detailed information concerning the cenotaph of the deceased personage buried in the monument.[2041] He informs that the cenotaph is produced out of carved marble (60 x 38 cm) and that it features Kufic inscriptions set against a floral scroll background. He also reports that these inscriptions, due to the damage and change of cenotaph's location, are illegible. The described cenotaph may thus not to be the original tombstone of the monument, which could have been moved into its interior.

Phase 2 – Ilkhanid Revetments

The Stucco Repertoire

Figs. 416-421.

The interior architectural revetment programme of the monument consists of carved stucco revetments. They comprise: the small stucco mihrab and two bands of inscriptions which run along monument's supporting walls at two different heights. The upper and the lower inscriptions feature excerpts from the *Shahnama*. This is a unique case of such content produced in carved stucco medium and located in a religious structure.[2042] Their function and meaning have for the first time been addressed by O'Kane.[2043] This research recently received a follow up by Viola Allegranzi.[2044] Listed stuccos are however works of two distinct phases. The first

[2038] Zariʿi 2002, 200.
[2039] *Ibid.*, 201-202.
[2040] *Ibid.*, 202.
[2041] *Ibid.*, 202.
[2042] *Ibid.*, 203.
[2043] O'Kane 2006, 352-353.
[2044] Allegranzi 2020.

group comprises the majority of the mihrab and the *Shahnama* inscription in Kufic style; these are the original stuccos, produced in Ilkhanid period, most likely on architectural surfaces of an earlier structure. The second group of the revetments comprises the second inscription band on the higher location of supporting wall surfaces (*Naskh* style) and parts of the small stucco mihrab. They are works of repairs and redecorations, which were integrated into the Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. They are of a more recent vintage, likely from nineteenth or twentieth century.

The Mihrab

Figs. 419-421.

The mihrab dimensions amount to: 220 cm high, and 140 cm wide.[2045] This makes it one of the smaller known Ilkhanid stucco mihrabs. Based on inscription styles and stucco forms of the mihrab, Zariʿi suggests, that the mihrab should be understood as dating to Ilkhanid period, more precisely to the end of thirteenth or early fourteenth century.[2046] The presence of *Shahnama* excerpts and similarities between geometric patterns and stucco artistic techniques of the Khizr stucco repertoire, confirm the assumption that these stuccos are works of Ilkhanid craftsmen. Building on similarities between parts of this mihrab and the one at Maraq (Cat. No. 14), the mihrab should be considered work of early fourteenth century, rather than the Early Ilkhanid period, as proposed by Zariʿi.

Mihrab Description and Discussion

The design of the mihrab (Fig. 430) is determined by its small dimensions. Occasionally, the dimension proportions between its panels result somewhat irregular, which might had been caused by its redecoration or repairs. Mihrab's basic design consists of an arch niche topped by a pair of spandrels, framed by an inscription and geometric bands and additionally topped by a horizontal inscription panel. The mihrab and the other stuccos in monument's interior have been constantly whitewashed and their presumed polychrome appearance was entirely altered.

Mihrab's internal niche (Figs. 431-432) is formed by a pointed arch (which assumes form of segmental arch) and its interior is divided into three sections. The lower part of the rectangular niche originally featured three stucco panels, but only the central panel is preserved. The central panel features a large symmetrical composition of vegetal elements resembling abstracted split-palmettes. The lower part of the niche is separated from the lunette with a large inscription band in Kufic (featuring an invocation to God) set against a plain background. The lunette of the niche features a symmetrical panel composed out of diverse vegetal elements resembling palmettes and floral scrolls. Its niche was not designed to have been carried by a pair of columns; this is unusual and irregular, compared to the other known Ilkhanid mihrabs. The niche is separated from the other mihrab panels with thin uncarved bands, which cover the joints between panels. The niche lunette is topped by a panel which features forms of a pair of spandrels. The geometric design of the panel comprises a repeating geometric pattern of star elements produced with incisions and perforations of one stucco layer resulting in a

[2045] Zariʿi 2002, 198.
[2046] *Ibid.*, 198.

considerably shallow stucco relief. The planes of the panel and its geometrical design are related to the external framing band with geometrical pattern of six-pointed stars.

Mihrab's structure is framed by a Kufic inscription band related in style to the monumental Kufic inscription band running above the dado area of monument's interior. The Kufic inscription of the mihrab features a Qurʾanic excerpt (*Surat al-Fatiha*, 1:1-7) and it is produced on mihrab's slightly concave surface, which adds to its plasticity.[2047] *Hastae* of inscription's letters occasionally develop into half-palmette and leaf-like elements. The corners of the inscription band are additionally embellished with Knotted Kufic-derived corner elements which spring from the inscription. The inscription band is framed by two thin bands. The first band is entirely plain and the second band features a repeating geometric pattern produced by incision of one stucco layer. The entire mihrab structure is additionally framed by the panel with a repeating six-pointed star geometric pattern.[2048]

The mihrab is topped by a horizontal epigraphic panel. This geometric panel is of smaller dimensions, compared to the mihrab, indicating that the mihrab must have originally been topped by a top horizontal panel, which probably featured an inscription band. This horizontal inscription band likely deteriorated and could have been substituted in more recent times by the current plain inscription in *Naskh* style comprising a Hadith text (see below) with diacritical marks and vocalization untypical of Ilkhanid stuccos.[2049] Its style, appearance and the quality of production are different, compared to the rest of the mihrab. The fluid appearance of lettering of this inscription is rarely encountered in Ilkhanid stuccos. Rather than a modest later addition to the mihrab, this inscription should be understood as a renovation of mihrab's top horizontal panel. Rather than a historic modification or redecoration, the inscription band could be a more recent work, from nineteenth or twentieth century.[2050] The monument and its stuccos were subjected to an intervention of repairs or redecoration in modern times.

Monumental Inscription Bands

The Monumental Kufic Inscription Band

Figs. 416-417.

Lower portions of monument's supporting walls are coated with stone slabs, which form a dado area, but this is result of a modern modifications. The Kufic inscription band (c. 25 cm high) runs above the dado area (some 2 m from the ground level) and it frames the openings in monument's walls.[2051] The total length of the inscription amounts to around 14.28 m.[2052] The location of the Kufic inscription and its form indicate that in its historic iteration, the monument likely retained some kind of architectural revetments in the dado area. The stucco inscription functioned as a visual framing device, which topped the dadoes and which enhanced the

[2047] The inscription in Kufic style is produced to feature sharp edges, but the light and shadow interplay of its relief, like the rest of the mihrab was lost through the whitewash procedure.
[2048] Compare to the Maraq mihrab of the Baba Afzal mausoleum (Cat. No. 14) and the Ilkhanid mausolea in Qum (Cat. No. 18).
[2049] Zariʿi 2002, 200.
[2050] *Ibid.*, 200.
[2051] *Ibid.*, 207.
[2052] *Ibid.*

appearance of monument's interior, its walls and window openings. Out of all the window and entrance openings, the inscription band forms the pointed arch form above the opening only on the western wall; it is interrupted in the area of the current entrance and it runs above the window openings. This indicates that, at the time of production of this inscription band, there surely existed an opening in monument's western wall; it was either a passage to another building or more likely, the original monumental entrance of the monument. The inscription features selections from the *Shahnama* (see below). Its text begins on the left hand side of the stucco mihrab and it continues over the walls all the way to mihrab's right hand side. The mihrab and this Kufic inscription were works of one decorative intervention.

The majority of space is taken by the inscription, written in a specific Kufic style, which is named *Iranian Kufic*, by Zariʿi. The inscription background is filled with restrained amounts of floral scrolls with stylized and round palmette elements. The *hastae* of letters are proportionally elongated. The top register of the space between the *hastae* is filled with a repeating leaf-like ornamental band. The inscription was originally polychrome, similar to the rest of the repertoire. O'Kane and Allegranzi propose that the inscription's content needs to be interpreted in the Sufi context and perhaps in relation to the unknown identity of the person buried in the mausoleum.[2053]

The Monumental *Naskh* Inscription Band

Fig. 418.

The *Naskh* inscription band runs along top edges of supporting walls in the interior of the monument, just below the transitional zone elements. It is set against an entirely plain and uncarved background. The inscription retains diacritical marks and vocalization. Its proportions, letter forms, diacritical marks and vocalizations relate it to the horizontal panel topping the small stucco mihrab. Having concluded that this panel is work of repairs or a redecoration and having seen that the *Naskh* inscription content is related to the Kufic band (it repeats some of its couplets; see below), it is plausible, that the inscription band is a later work of repairs. It thus does not date from Ilkhanid period, and it is likely that it was produced in nineteenth or twentieth century. The repetition of Kufic inscription band's content in the *Naskh* inscription band indicates that the craftsmen studied the content of the Kufic inscription at the time of repairs to the upper inscription band, for which they chose to produce it in *Naskh* rather than Kufic, perhaps because this style was less demanding for production.

Exterior Revetments

Figs. 414-415.

Monument's exterior features architectural revetments only on the western wall which according to Zariʿi also featured ceramic inserts (they were not spotted at the time of the visit of the monument in 2020).[2054] Zariʿi also proposes that, originally, the exterior of the dome must have been reveted with some kind of ceramic revetments. Furthermore, the western supporting wall surface retains revetments in stucco plugs and carved stucco inscriptions, but

[2053] O'Kane 2006, 352-353; Allegranzi 2020, 137.
[2054] Zariʿi 2002, 202.

only fragments of these remain. These remains relate to the ones in its interior and could date to Ilkhanid interventions. These revetments in carved stucco form a broken arch and they comprise fragments of an inscription in *Thuluth* style. Zariʿi provides readings of a fragmented inscription written in Persian, and notes that the remaining parts of the inscription were either damaged on purpose or through the passing of time.[2055]

Stucco Plugs and Other Stucco Fragments

The exterior revetments (Fig. 426) feature two layers of occasionally superimposed stucco plugs. External stucco plug revetments are interconnected between each other by incised lines. There are also extant remains of repeating geometric framing bands which are of the same pattern as the thin framing geometrical band of the stucco mihrab in the monument. These stuccos are thus contemporary to the interior Ilkhanid stucco repertoire. Some fragments of exterior stuccos are unusual, because they are incisions of incomplete stucco plug patterns. Moreover, the fragment of the historic inscription retains traces of two stucco plugs in its lower part, which partially overlap with inscription's letters. The right hand side fragments contain thin bands of repeating abstracted vegetal ornamentation which assumes appearance of an arabesque. The right hand side stucco plug fragments are of particular interest, because they cover parts of the surface in pointed arch's interior. Given that this pointed arch likely originally functioned as an opening for an entrance portal, or a connection corridor to a no longer extant structure, it is plausible that it was closed off at a certain point and that a layer of stucco plugs was produced to cover it. Judging from characteristics of these stucco plugs, remains of the arched opening and the placement of the carved stucco inscription, it is likely, that this side of the monument was rebuilt and redecorated at the time of internal stucco revetment repertoire's production to feature a monumental entrance.

Stucco Polychromy at Hamadan

The examination of the stuccos pertaining to the monument shows that the external stuccos have been badly weathered and that they lost their polychromy. The internal stuccos have been whitewashed several times and if there exist traces of their polychromy, they are to be found beneath these numerous layers of white paint. Judging from the extensive evidence concerning the practices of stucco colouring in medieval Iran, it is reasonable to propose that the original stucco repertoire of monuments interior and exterior was coloured.

Stucco Artistic Techniques at Hamadan

The outlined examination of mausoleum's stuccos illustrates that the majority of stuccos was produced with undemanding stucco artistic techniques. Stucco reliefs are always carved out of one stucco layer, but at different angles. For inscriptions, a nearly ninety degree angle is employed to produce their sharp and contrasting edges. For symmetrical floral compositions, a larger angle amounting to around hundred and twenty degrees was employed to produce bevelled appearance of these reliefs. Incisions and perforations have been employed for the production of repeating geometric designs. In sum, the stucco craftsmen's workshop responsible for the production of monument's original stucco repertoire employed a limited

[2055] Zariʿi 2002, 198.

selection of stucco artistic techniques. This could either have been caused by apprentice craftsmen or due to the limited budget available for the production of stuccos.

The Hamadan Stucco Revetments' Aesthetics and Style

Aesthetic characteristics of stuccos at the Khizr mausoleum are differentiated by the monumental and somewhat rough appearance of its inscription bands set against entirely or almost plain backgrounds. Their reliefs feature sharp and contrasting edges which were directly juxtaposed to more manneristic and refined repeating geometric pattern panels and bevelled panels of symmetrical vegetal compositions. The specific stucco carving approach and a limited selection of stucco artistic techniques, combined with somewhat disproportional dimensions of mihrab's panels and with the monumental inscription bands, therefore determined the final visual appearance of the stucco repertoire. The programme is lacking elegance and detail, yet is demonstrates craftsmen's willingness to produce a refined repertoire of architectural revetments.

d.) Furnishing

At the time of the visit to the monument, its interior did not contain any historic furniture.

e.) Epigraphic Programme

Interior Revetments

The Mihrab

The epigraphic programme of the mihrab consists of the following inscriptions (bottom to top):

a.) The mihrab contains an inscription band of large size which divides the lower part of its niche from the lunette area.[2056] Observations of joints between the inscription panel and adjacent mihrab's panels reveal differences in their positioning, which provides information in favour of the argument that this inscription could be work of mihrab's later repairs.

The inscription reads:

قال الحمد الله الدائم الدوام

And (he) said: May there be eternal and everlasting praise to God.

The content of this inscription is connected to the tradition of inscribing the *al-asmaʾ al-husna,* the hundred names of God. It can also be understood as an invocation to God.

b.) Mihrab's main inscription band features a frequently occurring Qurʾanic excerpt, the *Surat al-Fatiha* (Qurʾan, 1:1-7), which is written in a peculiar and rarely occurring type of Kufic style.

[2056] See Zariʿi 2002, 200-201. Zariʿi points out that the style of this inscription differs from the other inscriptions of the monument's epigraphic programme, but he does not propose nay reasons for behind this phenomenon.

The inscription reads: [2057]

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمـَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الْحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِين
الرَّحْمـنِ الرَّحِيمِ
مَـالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
إِيَّاك نَعْبُدُ وإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
اهدِنَـــا الصِّرَاطَ المُستَقِيمَ
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنعَمتَ عَلَيهِمْ غَيرِ المَغضُوبِ عَلَيهِمْ وَلاَ الضَّالِّينَ

In the name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.
[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds,
The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,
Sovereign of the Day of Recompense.
It is You we worship and You we ask for help.
Guide us to the straight path –
The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favour, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.

As Zariʿi mentions, parts of the inscription are either damaged or missing, with the *Basmala* missing at the beginning; the inscription ends abruptly in the middle of chapter's last verse.[2058] This most likely indicates that the mihrab was larger, compared to what it currently is and that it reached lower.

c.) The top horizontal panel of the mihrab is a result of a later addition or a restoration.

It features a Hadith inscription with a few grammatical shortcomings and it reads:

] (ال)غافلينsicاقبل على صلاتك ولا تكن مثل [

Accept (the duty) of your prayers and do not be like the oblivious.

The lack of the definite article in the word is a frequently occurring grammatical mistake encountered in Arabic inscriptions in Iranian territory. It was first spotted by Zariʿi.[2059] An incomplete reading of the inscription is provided by Zariʿi.[2060] The same Hadith text is part of the inscription panel with Qurʾanic quotations, in the centre of mihrab's lunette dating to approximately ninth century, which was discovered at the site of Samarra and is currently stored in the National museum of Iraq.[2061]

[2057] Qurʾanic text and English translation are from: http://www.alquranenglish.com/surah/al-fatiha (Last Accessed: November 13, 2020).
[2058] Zariʿi 2002, 200-201.
[2059] *Ibid.*, 200.
[2060] *Ibid.*, 200.
[2061] See, for example: https://books.google.de/books?id=1oBiDwAAQBAJ&pg=PA51&lpg=PA51&dq=%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84+%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89+%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%83+%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7+%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%86+%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84+%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86&source=bl&ots=XKfn1pIbGZ&sig=ACfU3U0k2NJAGc-g_cHqzvXMMJ43veVnow&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiok_bhkJXqAhVoSBUIHe96CLkQ6AEwAHoECAo

The Kufic Inscription Band in the Interior of the Mausoleum

Zariʿi provides full annotated reading of the *Shahnama* verses in the inscription band.[2062] He explains that selected verses were perhaps chosen to provide an image of all the rulers and their characters, and that this is their connecting theme. Zariʿi points out several mistakes in these inscriptions which include repetitions of the same words or misspellings. He attributes these shortcomings to the communication between the writer and the stucco craftsman. He also postulates that these mistakes might have occurred because they already existed in the version of the text the craftsmen employed. He also highlights that the specific inscription style, the *Iranian Kufic*, is employed for the inscription band. He proposes that the content of the inscriptions must be interpreted from the Sufi point of view, or in relation to the unidentified person buried in the monument. He suggests that the person could be the ruler of Luristan who died in Hamadan in tenth century, and could have been renamed in Baba Khizr or Pir-i Khizr. The translations of the *Shahnama* verses to English have been provided by Majid Zohouri.[2063]

به نام خداوند جان و خرد کزین بر[تر] اندیشه بر نگذرد

In the name of the Lord of life and wisdom, whose wisdom man's thought cannot surpass.

This is the opening verse of the *Shahnama*.

ستم دیده را اوست فریادرس منازید با ناز و نیرو بکر

(He is the) saviour of the oppressed, avoid the arrogance of the power and appearance.

This verse comes from the Story of the King Ardashir. According to Zariʿi, it is not clear if this verse was chosen on purpose, or if it was combined with other verses from the same section of work.

خداوند نام و خداوند جان خداوند روزیو ده رهنمای

The lord of honour and life, he is the Provider and the Guide.

In *Shahnama*, this verse is preceded by the last verse of the stucco inscription, but it may be that the person selecting the verses for the inscription gave precedence to this one, due to the significance of its meaning.

که او افرید این روان و خرد ستایش مرادی را به اندر خورد

He creates soul, spirit, and wisdom, worship just and merit him.

This verse is also part of the beginning of the *Shahnama*.

QAQ#v=onepage&q=%D8%A7%D9%82%D8%A8%D9%84%20%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%89%20%D8%B5%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%83%20%D9%88%D9%84%D8%A7%20%D8%AA%D9%83%D9%86%20%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%84%20%D8%BA%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%86&f=false page 50-51 of the book (Last Accessed: November 17, 2021).

[2062] Zariʿi 2002, 207-210.

[2063] I would like to thank Majid Zohouri for this help, very much, as it exceeds my competences. Inscription translations were further corrected by Amin Moradi, to whom I would like to thank very much for his help.

ازویست بالا ازویست پست مسمه بندگانیم ایزد یکست

He owns the heaven and the Earth, we are all servants of God and he is alone.

This verse comes from the beginning of the Story of the King Manuchihir.

کجا شهریران با تاج و تخت کجا پهلوانان پیروز بخت

Where is Iran with all its kings and their thrones? Where are the heroes with names and badges?

This verse is selected from the story of Ardashir.

کجا انخردمند گنداوران کجا ان سواران جنگی سران

Where are those wise warriors? Where are those warlike riders?

This verse is also selected form the Story of Ardashir.

همه خاک دارند بالین خشت مگر انکه جز تخم نیکی نکشت

Humans will die one day, except for those who did good deeds in their life.

This verse is repeated in several stories of the *Shahnama* and it is therefore not entirely clear from which part of it was it selected.

به نیکی بباید تن اراستن که نیکی نشاید ز کس خواستن

Human traits should be adorned with good deeds, in this case good qualities flow to human beings.

This verse comes from the Story of Lashkar and Afrosiyab.

همی تا توانی به نیکی گذار

Do as much as you can to do good deeds.

The second part of this couplet is missing, because there was no space for it in the inscription. The verse is selected from the Story of Qamus Kushani. This is a rarely employed excerpt from the *Shahnama* on architectural revetments.[2064] The fact that the last verse of the last couplet of the *Shahnama* excerpt is missing from the inscription, due to the lack of space for it, indicates that the order of stucco inscription's production began by carving of the mihrab and once the mihrab was completed the Kufic inscription was produced.

The Interior Naskh Inscription Band

Zariʿi provides the reading of the inscription with annotation, comments and interpretation.[2065] The inscription begins in the right hand corner on the southern supporting wall and runs around its perimeter. Its length amounts to 16 m and it contains eight couplets from Ferdowsi's

[2064] Zariʿi 2002, 210.
[2065] *Ibid.*, 216-219.

Shahnama.[2066] First five couplets are repetitions of Kufic inscription's content.[2067] Zariʿi suggests that a possible reason for this may be the damage and replacement of the inscription, which could have been located in the same place, before the current band was produced at a later point in monument's history.[2068]

کجا شهریران با تاج و تخت کجا پهلوانان پیروز بخت

Where are those wise warriors? Where are those warlike riders?

This first couplet of the *Naskh* inscription is a copy of the sixth couplet of the Kufic inscription. It is a couplet from the story of Ardashir.

کجا ان خردمند گنداوران کجا ان سواران جنگی سران

Where are those wise warriors? Where are those warlike riders?

This is the couplet number seven of the Kufic inscription. This verse is also selected form the Story of Ardashir.

همه خاک دارند بالین و خشت مگر ان که جز تخم نیکی نکشت

Humans will die one day, except for those who did good deeds in their life.

This couplet is the content of the Kufic inscription, its eighth couplet. It is however written with two differences (addition of *waw* in the first verse and separation of athe *ke* in two words in the second verse), compared to the Kufic inscription of the couplet. The craftsmen thus critically performed the writing and production of the inscription. This verse is repeated in several stories of the *Shahnama* and it is therefore not clear from which one was it selected.

به نیکی بباید تن اراستن که نیکی نشاید ز کس خواستن

Human traits should be adorned with good deeds, in this case good qualities flow to human beings.

This couplet is copied from the Kufic inscription, where it is the ninth in sequence. The copy is identical without any changes, compared to the mode of spelling and writing the couplet in the Kufic inscription. This verse comes from the Story of Lashkar and Afrosiyab.

همی تا توانی به نیکی گرای که اینست بگویی راهنمای

Do good deeds as much as possible, which is a guide for you.

This couplet is also related to the Kufic inscription, where it is tenth in sequence, but with the second part missing, due to the lack of space. The verse is selected from the Story of Qamus Kushani. In the *Naskh* inscription the couplet is complete.

[2066] Zariʿi 2002, 216.
[2067] *Ibid.*
[2068] *Ibid.*, 217.

سرت گر بساید به چرخ بلند سرانجامت خاکست جای گزند

Even if you are at the top of the skies, you will die and you will be buried in the soil.

This verse is not found in the Kufic inscription and it is unique to the *Naskh* inscription. The quatrain is selected from the section of the Nuzar kingdom. One of its words is repeated twice and there is a variant spelling of one of the expressions in the second verse.

که تخت و کله چون تو بسیار دید نخواهد همی یا کسی ارمید

There were many kings and thrones like you, but in the end nobody survived from the death.

This quatrain is not contained in the Kufic inscription, and like the previous one, it is selected from the Story of the Nuzar Kingdom.

جهانا ندانم چید کردیی که خود پرورانی و خود بدروی

Oh Universe! I don't know what are you doing, that you cultivate and reap yourself.

This quatrain is unique to the *Naskh* inscription. It is selected from the Story of the King Zakhak. Zariʿi notes some spelling issues with this section of the inscription.

Zariʿi also comments on the entire inscription band.[2069] He states that the style of inscription possesses some properties of *Naskh* and *Thuluth* styles, although it is closer to *Naskh*. The inscription presents some shortcomings in terms of repetition of words, not elegant lettering and ligatures. He also proposes that a specific version of the *Shahnama* text was employed for the production of these two inscriptions and that for this reason, some of their spellings and expressions differ from canonical versions of the *Shahnama*.

Post-Ilkhanid Stucco Revetments

The Ilkhanid stucco repertoire deteriorated through time and that it was most likely repaired by production of new parts of stuccos and their integration into the existing repertoire. The differences in visual characteristics and production technology between the stucco panels suggest that these post-Ilkhanid additions are the reconstruction of the upper monumental inscription band in mausoleum's interior and at least the upper horizontal panel of the stucco mihrab. Apart from these, the monument does not feature other post-Ilkhanid architectural revetments.

Mosque and Revetments' Patronage

Lack of historic inscriptions and other evidence poses the problem of understanding the identity of the person buried in the mausoleum, the time of its construction, and the identity of its patron and stucco craftsmen. Judging from the size of the monument and based on the extant stucco revetment repertoire, the construction and decoration of the monument did not require an extensive endowment and the patron of the monument could either have been a state official or a prominent local figure.

[2069] Zariʿi 2002, 219.

Stucco Craftsmen's Workshop(s)

The fact that the stucco repertoire is lacking a date or a stucco craftsmen's signature renders its exact classification and contextualization more challenging. The discussion of the repertoire nevertheless elucidates its relations to the Maraq stucco mihrab and the Qum mausolea. This provides some evidence in favour of the early fourteenth century date of the repertoire. It also indicates that the stucco craftsmen who produced the Khizr mausoleum's stuccoworks were regionally mobile.

f.) Monument Condition

The Imamzada Khizr was inscribed on the list of protected national monuments in 1975.[2070] The elevated hilltop and the cemetery of monument's location were altered during the years preceding 2002. Importantly, until a few decades ago, the *imamzada* was flanked by another structure, which fell into ruin and which is no longer extant. The visitors of the monument used to light fire in mihrab's proximities, which affected its relief and the state of its conservation, and it caused loss of its original polychromy. They were covered through application of numerous layers of whitewash on its surface.[2071] The monument presents issues tied to water infiltration which affect its structure and stuccos, and require further conservation interventions.

g.) Research Finds – Summary

This research provides some information concerning the chronology of construction and decoration of the Khizr mausoleum. It has been shown that the stuccos of the mausoleum most likely date to early fourteenth century, that they are work of monument's redecoration and that they were repaired later, by the means of historic reconstructions of the original repertoire. The craftsmen responsible for the production of the repertoire seem to have been native to northern part of central Iran. The ones responsible for the production of the original stucco repertoire possessed limited knowledge and skills which may have been in the stage of development. The unique aspect of the mausoleum is presented by its monumental inscription bands which feature excerpts from the *Shahnama*. These inscriptions were produced in relation to the mystic nature of the monument and tied to the unknown identity of the personage buried in the mausoleum, who was likely a revered figure in Sufi circles of its time. Alternatively, the personage could have been a local ruler. The repetition of some quatrains in the upper monumental inscription band suggests that its content was copied from the lower inscription band in Kufic style, at the time of repairs of the stucco repertoire, which also comprised mihrab's repairs. This redecoration of the monument might have been sponsored for purely political reasons of asserting the authority through the pious act. Or perhaps, an influential local figure sponsored a renovation of an older structure. There is no direct evidence regarding the relationship between the time of the burial of the personage in the mausoleum and the production of its stucco revetments, which might post-date the burial. The revetments might have also been sponsored in light of the will to increase the sacredness of the burial space and to foster pilgrimage. The outlined parallels propose an early fourteenth century date for the original stuccos in the Seljuq era building. Numerous questions tied to the understanding of the

[2070] Zari'i 2002, 194.
[2071] *Ibid.*, 200-201.

monument, its form and function, remain open. It would be necessary to prove whether the monument originally functioned as a *khanqah,* how extensive the entire complex was and what exactly was its original function.

h.) Monument Bibliography: Zariʿi 2002; Allegranzi 2020; O'Kane 2006.

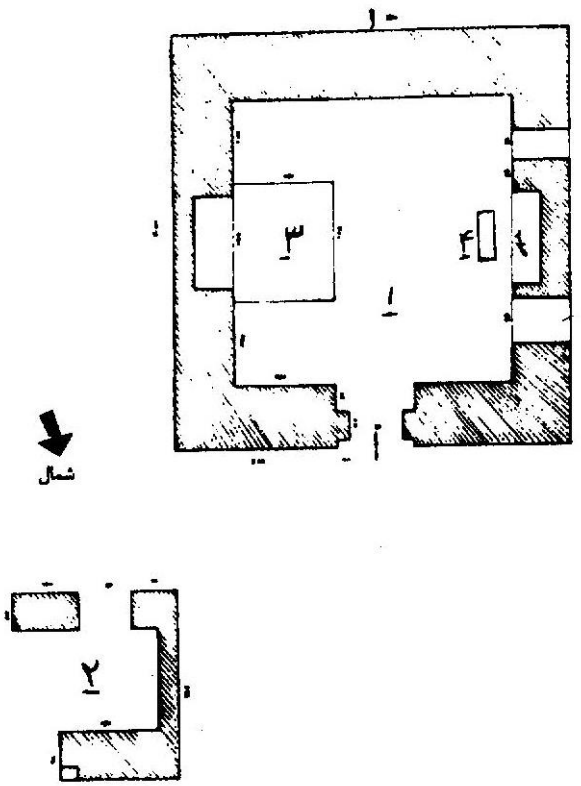


Figure 413: Ground plan of the Imamzada Khizr indicates remains of a structure, which could have functioned as a *khanqah* (After Zariʿi 2002, 195).



Figure 414: The exterior architectural structure of the Imamzada Khizr. The view from north-east shows the remains of the original entrance portal or an adjacent structure.



Figure 415: Detail of the remains of the entrance portal or an adjacent structure to the *imamzada*, with remains of two layers of carved stucco plugs, and an inscription fragment on the left-hand bottom side.



Figure 416: Detail of the monumental *Shahnama* inscription on the lower portions of the interior supporting wall surfaces of the *imamzada*, heavily whitewashed.



Figure 417: Detail of the monumental inscription band of the *Shahnama* at the Imamzada Khizr, which outlines a closed off opening, which could have been its original entrance or a passage to the no longer extant adjacent structure.



Figure 418: Detail of the *Naskh* inscription band with the *Shahnama* content, which runs above the top edges of supporting walls in the interior of the *imamzada*. The inscription is likely work of a post-Ilkhanid redecoration.



Figure 419: The mihrab of the Imamzada Khizr. The top horizontal panel may be the work of post-Ilkhanid repairs. The six-pointed star pattern framing panel relates to similar panels at Maraq and Qum.



Figure 420: Detail of the interior niche, spandrels and framing inscription of the *imamzada*'s mihrab, which is heavily whitewashed. The ornamental vegetal and geometric patterns are disproportionally large, compared to the inscriptions. The panels present a specific type of a relief.



Figure 421: Detail of the lower portion of the niche of the Imamzada Khizr's mihrab, showing disparate joints between panels, indicating that the mihrab was being repaired.