MOSQUES FORMED UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF SELJUK ARCHITECTURE IN IRAN

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Summary

*The development of Turkic Mosque architecture began with the Great Seljuk's in Iran, who absorbed the features of religious buildings that had previously developed in Turkic architecture. During this time, types of mosques with four balconies, courtyards, and a qubba (*dome*) in front of the mihrab appeared throughout Iran.*

The Masjed-e Jāmé of Isfahan, built on the foundations of a brick mosque during the Abbasid period, is the earliest mosque with two minarets. According to the inscriptions, the dome of the large mihrab of the mosque and the small domed space in front of it were built during the time of Melikshah, and the courtyard with four balconies and porches was also built during the Seljuk period. Although the first construction of the Masjid-i Juma in Ardistan and the Masjid-i Juma in Zevwar began earlier, the construction of the mosque around a rectangular courtyard, the four balconies overlooking this courtyard, and the dome located in front of the mihrab bear features of Seljuk architecture.

In the Golpayegan Juma Mosque and Damghan Juma Mosque, only minor parts with a dome and mihrab and the remains of minarets of the Seljuk period have survived from the Seljuk period. The cylindrical body of the minarets of this structure, one of the first interesting Seljuk porcelain minarets, is decorated with geometric patterns. The Barsiyan Juma Mosque consists of a domed room and a minaret. The outer walls of this structure, built entirely of brick, were constructed quite simply. The Qazvin Juma Mosque, built on the remains of a fire temple from the Sasanian period, was supplemented during the Seljuk period with two balconies on the north side, resulting in four balconies in the building plan. The large dome with a diameter of 14 meters in front of the mihrab also dates back to the Seljuk period.

The characteristics of the Great Seljuk mosques of Iran are the presence of four balconies, an inner courtyard, a dome in front of the mihrab, and minarets with narrow long cylindrical bodies. The construction material of the walls and domes of these mosques consisted of tightly built bricks. Their slightly pointed, trumpet-shaped domes were unadorned, simple cubic massifs. The combination of dome and balconies in mosque architecture is observed in Iran during the Seljuk period.

***Keywords**: dome, Jāmeh Mosque, Seljuk architecture, mihrab, Juma Mosque, minaret*

Entrance

The objective of this research is to examine the architectural characteristics of mosques influenced by Seljuk architecture in Iran. The evolution of Turkich mosque architecture commenced with the Great Seljuks in Iran, who assimilated features from religious structures previously developed in Turkich architecture. The Seljuks pioneered a predominantly monumental mosque architecture by assimilating and refining earlier Turkish architectural innovations in Iran. During this era, various types of mosques featuring four balconies, courtyards, and a dome (Qubbe) preceding the mihrab emerged across Iran. Seljuk mosques in Iran were typically constructed on a modest scale using brick, with slightly pointed, squinched domes. The fusion of the dome and iwan reached its zenith during the Seljuk period. This study scrutinizes five mosque layouts, decorations, and structures dating back to the Great Seljuks era in Iran, analyzing them in terms of their architectural techniques.

1.In the research, the architectural features of the following Iranian Mosques, which were built under the influence of Great Seljuk architecture, were examined:

(Figure 1)

1. Jameh Mosque of Isfahan
2. Jameh Mosque of Ardestan
3. Jameh Mosque of Golpayegan
4. Barsian Mosque and Minaret



Figure 1

1.1.Jameh Mosque of Isfahan

The Jāmeh Mosque of Isfahān also known as the Atiq Mosque ((مسجد عتیقis a historic congregational mosque (Jāmeh) of Isfahan, Iran. The mosque is the result of continual construction, reconstruction, additions and renovations on the site from around 771 to the end of the 20th century. (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Jameh Mosque of Isfahan

Researchers believe that the mosque was built and completed in four different periods. These periods are as follows:

First period, Seljuk from VII century

Until the beginning of the period (/1037-1194),

Second period was the Great Seljuk Period (XI. from the beginning of the XIII century),

Third period from the thirteenth century to the beginning of the sixteenth century until the fourth period,

Fourth is the period of the Qajar period (1210-1343/1796-1925) from the beginning of the sixteenth century until the end.

The Jameh Mosque of Isfahan, built on the foundations of a brick mosque during the Abbasid period, is the earliest mosque featuring two minarets. The courtyard, iwan, and domed layout of the building were constructed by the Seljuk Sultan Melikşah between 1072 and 1092. The mosque's floor plan served as the model for subsequent Iranian Friday mosques.

1.1.1.Architectural of the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan Features

The present structure of the Friday Mosque comprises reconstructions and additions initiated during the Abbasid era, which continued progressively until the 12th century. Subsequent to the Abbasid era, additional facades were incorpo (Figure3).

rated around the courtyard, and a minaret was erected on each side of the main iwan. During the Seljuk period, two domed sections were annexed to the edifice. According to inscriptions, the large mihrab dome and the small domed area preceding it were constructed during the reign of Melikşah, while the courtyard featuring four balconies and porticoes was erected during the Seljuk era. (Figure 4).

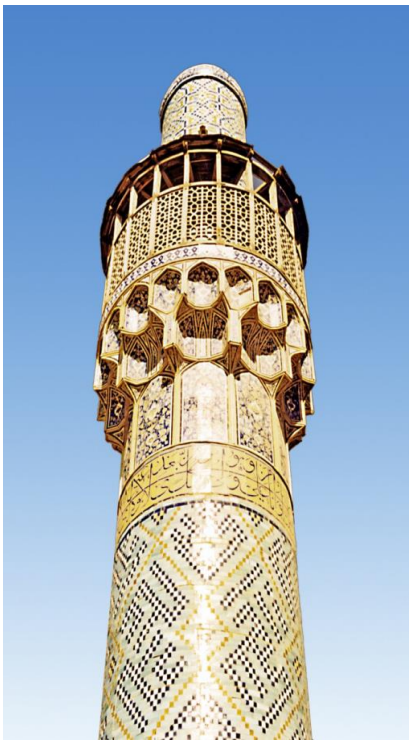


Figure 3. One of the minarets of the Great Mosque of Isfahan



Figure 4

It is a rectangular structure, with its main courtyard measuring 70x60 meters. This mosque features two pools: one is a quadrangular central pool positioned exactly in the middle of the courtyard, and the other pool is located on the north side and has a polygonal shape.There are ten entrances to the mosque: two on the north side, two on the east side, four on the southern edge, and two on the western

edge. The mosque building contains 14 mihrabs: six made of tiles, five made of stone, and three made of plaster. Additionally, four courtyards were constructed on the four sides of the building, serving as spaces for royal visits, public worship, prayer, and teaching by educators. These courtyards were established during the Seljuk period and follow the Razi style. The dimensions of the southern courtyard are 13/5 × 13/80 meters. (Figure 5).

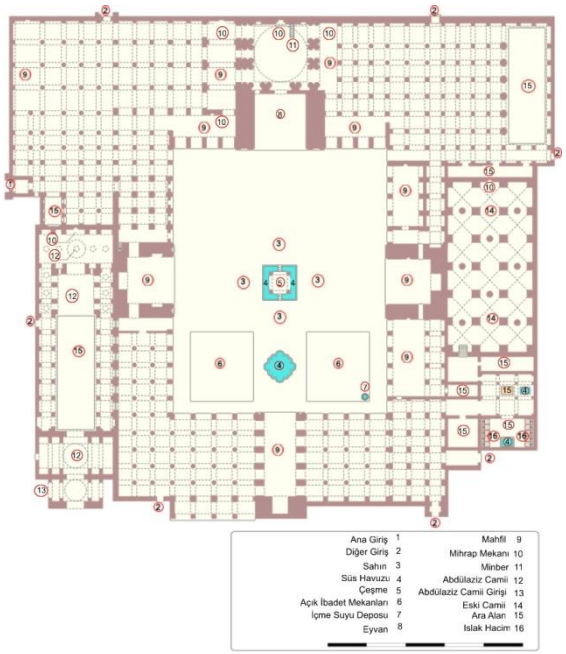


Figure 5

1.1.2.Nizamülmulk Dome bequeathed by the Seljuks

To the south of the building stand two minarets, each towering at a height of 35 meters, alongside a dome known as the Nizam-ül Mulk Dome. (Figure 6).This dome stands as the largest of its time. Constructed in the rib style, the dome is supported by three-slice pendentives at its corners, which in turn transfer the load to the load-bearing walls and eight stout pillars. It is believed that these pillars have endured since the inception of the mosque, suggesting their continuity from the early multi-columned structure. Consequently, this architectural feature, known as the dome preceding the mihrab, serves. (Figure 7).

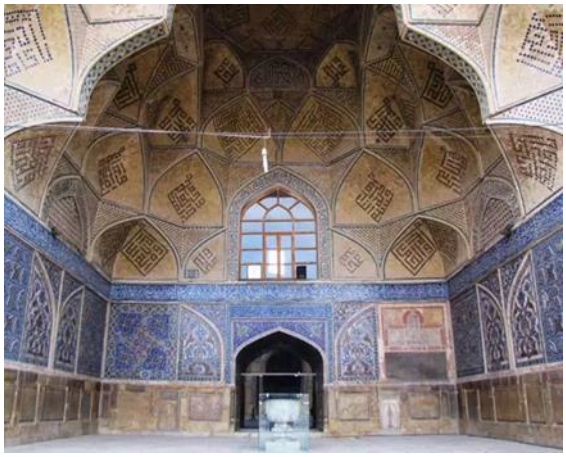


Figure 6



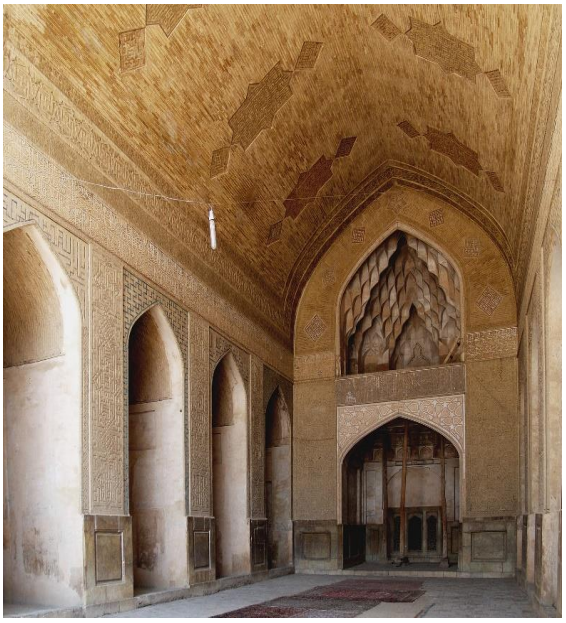
Figure 7

1.1.3.Architectural details of the Great Mosque of Isfahan

The grand mihrab installed in the western iwan by the Mongolian Khan Olcaytu in 1310, the madrasah added by the Muzafferis in 1366-67 attempting to integrate seamlessly with the existing structure, (Figure 8). and the Beytü'ş-şitâ (winter prayer hall) constructed during the Timurid period in 1447-48, all showcase

features reminiscent of Seljuk architecture. (Figure 9).

Rectangular mihrabs like the one commissioned by Olcaytu Khan are prevalent throughout Iran during the Great Seljuk Period. (Figure 10).



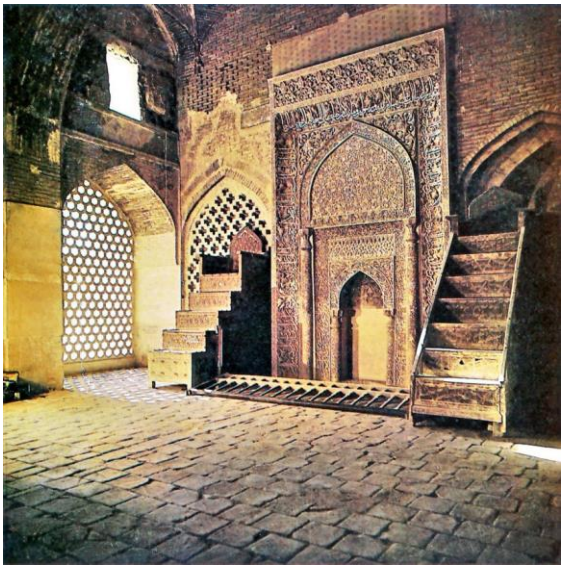
A prayer section from the Seljuk Period

Figure 8



Southern part of the iwan

Figure 9



Architectural details of the Great Mosque of Isfahan in 1310

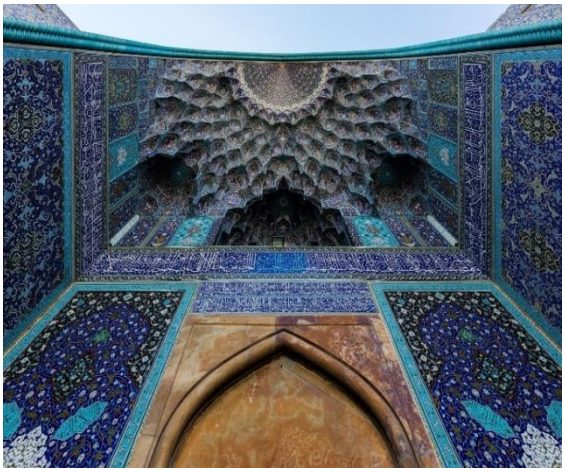
The mihrab built by Olcaytu Khan

Figure 10

1.1.4.Architectural ornamental details of the Great Mosque of Isfahan

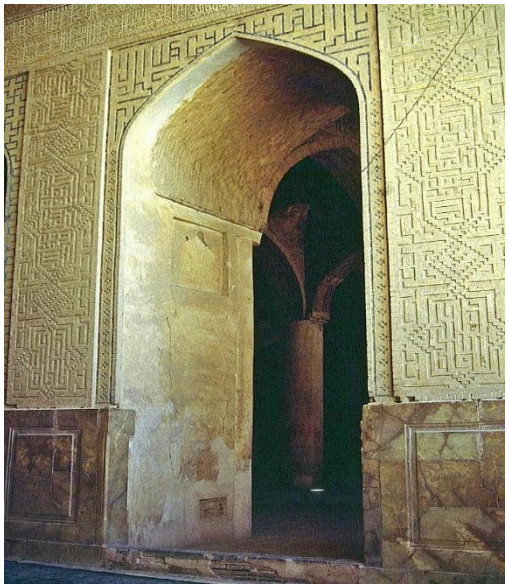
Plaster joint decorations in the Friday Mosque of Isfahan are prominently displayed on various architectural elements: the northeast crown gate, the side spaces of the southern iwan, the surfaces of the columns east of the northern iwan, the columns between the northern iwan and the Terken Hatun dome, and the inner wall surfaces of the eastern iwan. (Figure 12) .

These embellishments feature handdesi, floral, and written motifs (sülüs, tezyînî kûfî, and ma'kilî). They represent the most prevalent type of decoration, showcasing one or two simple motifs, such as a line and a triangle, a line and a circle, or a square and a triangle, each with distinct characteristics. (Figure 13). Following hendesî elements, herbal plaster joint decorations rank second, incorporating curved branches, flowers, and rumi motifs.



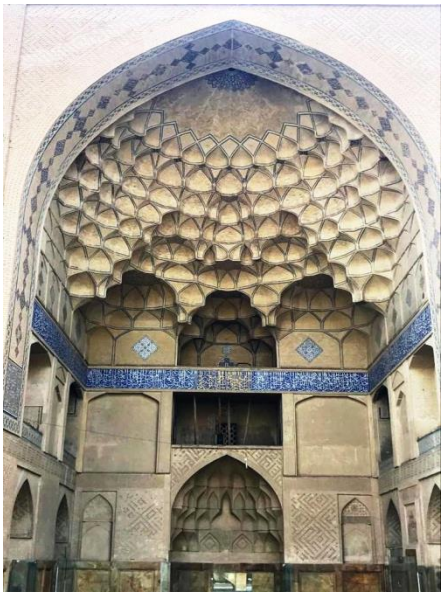
Detailed tile and brickwork of the iwan

Figure 11



The north side of the mosque is located in Chelestun

Figure 12



The north side of the mosque is located in Chelestun

Figure 13



Wall with blue, turquoise and yellow tiles

Figure 14



Figure 15. Masjid-i Jami' (Ardistan)

1.2.*Masjid-i Jami' (Ardistan)*

The initial construction of Ardistan's Masjid al-Juma, situated in the northern region of Isfahan province, dates back to the pre-Seljuk era, akin to other Seljuk structures in the area. However, the most significant repairs and additions to the building occurred during the Seljuk period. An inscription on the wall of the dome preceding the mihrab bears the date 1158 and the name of Abu Tahir al-Husayn bin Ghali, his bani. (Figure 14).

This mosque holds the distinction of being the first two-storey mosque in Islamic history and the second four-courtyard mosque in the Islamic world, both innovations introduced during the Seljuk period. Constructed around a rectangular courtyard, the mosque features four balconies overlooking the courtyard, and the dome preceding the mihrab reflects characteristic Seljuk architecture. (Figure 15). Unlike other Seljuk mosques, the inner faces of the arches between the pillars supporting the dome are adorned with inscriptions and plaster decorations, enriching the spatial experience. (Figure 16).



Bottom view of the main dome

Figure 16

1.2.1. Ardistan Masjid al-Juma features

Since its initial construction, many sections of the Ardistan Masjid al-Juma have been demolished, leading to the gradual formation of a complex with new additions over time. Within this complex, there exists a madrasah, caravanserai, water cellar, and bathhouse. Shared architectural elements with the Zevvare Mosque include the dimensions of the dome

diameter, eight-sided pillars, the layout of iwans, and the presence of corner pendentives.



Figure 17



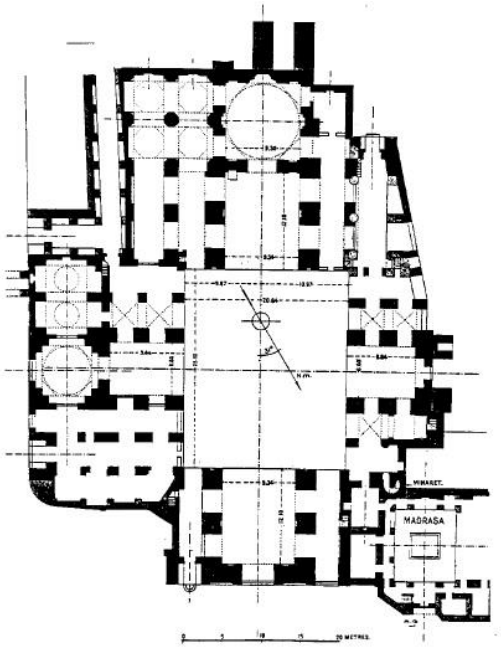
Figure 18

The Ardistan Masjid Juma is oriented from north to south and features an irregular rectangular plan. The structure comprises a domed harim preceding the mihrab and a courtyard surrounded by four iwans, making it an exemplar of Seljuk mosque typology, which combines indoor and outdoor spaces

(Figure 17).

The building boasts a total of six entrances. The courtyard, extending in a north-south direction, is laid out in a rectangular fashion and enlivened by iwans in all four directions. The facades between the iwans achieve a monumental appearance with two- and three-storey porticoes. Within the western iwan, a pointed arched opening grants access to additional chambers. The section of the iwan extending from the wall to the vault is organized across two floors, each featuring two pointed arched recesses side by side. The southern iwan is covered by a barrel vault and features a pointed arch, while access to the side spaces is facilitated by pointed arched openings.

(Figure 18).



Ardistan Ulu Camisi planı
(A. U. Pope)

1.2.2.*Ornamental Features*

The decorations, created through various treatments of the bricks, are primarily concentrated in the dome and the tromp. Additionally, plaster decorations adorn the surfaces of piers, arches, and inscriptions throughout the building. Geometric and floral compositions persist as prevalent motifs within the architectural design. The mihrab features a rectangular form.

On the contrary, the eastern iwan mirrors the western iwan in terms of arrangement. The qibla iwan is situated opposite the northern iwan, which is wider than the side iwans. The minaret of the structure stands in the northwest corner, although its upper portion has been demolished. Constructed of brick material, the minaret is characterized by its simplicity in decoration. Across all three buildings, a uniform plan, building material, and ornamental principles are evident. (Figure19).



Figure 19

1.3.Jameh Mosque of Gülpayegan

The Gulpayegan Masjid Juma Mosque is situated in the city center of Gulpayegan, approximately 200 km north of Isfahan. It was commissioned by the son of the Seljuk Sultan Melik Shah. Notably, the Gulpayegan Friday Mosque exemplifies the Pavilion Mosque architectural style found in Iran. This type of mosque is believed to have evolved from Sassanid temples during the Islamic period. In the 19th century, during the Qajar period, significant modifications were made to the mosque, including the addition of two large iwans in the north and south, two smaller iwans in the east and west, and a small domed room located behind them. (Figure 20).

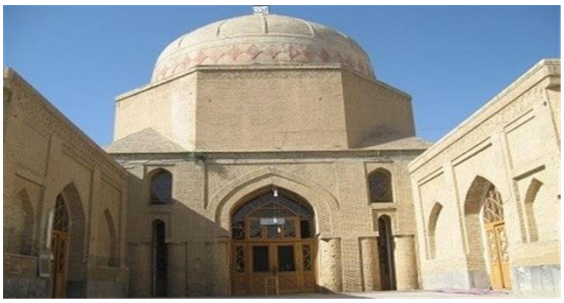


Figure 20

Gülpayegan Mosque, South Iwan and Domed Space Plan and Structure

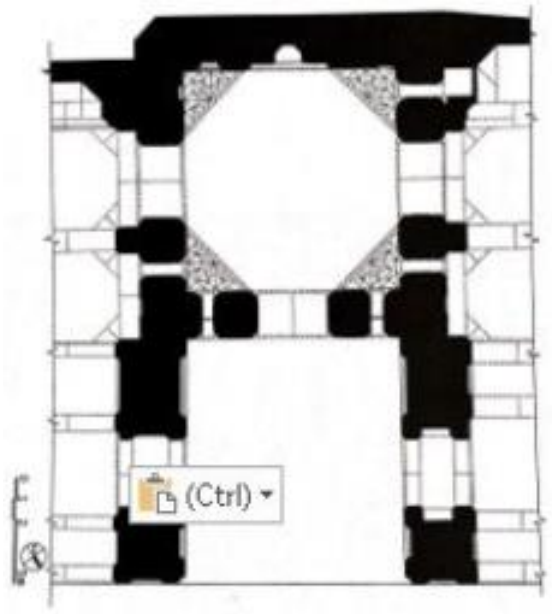


Figure 21

1.3.1.Features of Gulpayegan Masjid al-Juma

It is connected to the side spaces of the mosque through three arched openings. Likewise, it is linked to the northern iwan via a gateway. Positioned on the qibla side, there exists a mihrab adorned with muqarnas. Crafted using stucco technique, the mihrab features three Kufi inscription belts, delineated by geometric motifs. Openings are situated on the sides. Access to the dome is facilitated by the muqarnas pendentives located at the corners. (Figure 21).

1.4.Barsian Mosque And Minaret

The Barsian Mosque and Minaret, built between 1097 and 1134, comprises a domed room and a minaret. The outer walls of this entirely brick-built structure are characterized by simplicity (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Barsian Mosque

The minaret, erected during Malik Shah's reign, features a cylindrical body tapering from the base to the top, with thick walls. The dome covering the mosque's harim section rests on an octagonal drum adorned with tromps at the corners and arch connections between them. The interiors of the tromps are embellished with three-slice muqarnas. (Figure 23).



Figure 23

Plaster stucco and terracotta adorn all interior surfaces of the mosque, with decorations predominantly featuring vegetative motifs and relief.

Regarded by many experts as a prime example of Seljuk brick craftsmanship in the 5th century AH, this minaret ranks among the oldest in Iran and is the third oldest in Isfahan's historical minaret collection. Its construction dates back to H. 491 / M. 1097. (Figure 24).



Figure 24



Barsian Mosque and Minaret Features



Barsian Mosque and Minaret

1.4.1.Barsian Mosque And Minaret Features:

The minaret stands at a height of 35 meters and features a cylindrical body that tapers upwards, with the top portion protruding outward. This upper section contains a small window adorned with a pointed arch. (Figure 26).

The pointed arch, widely employed in Kalahandi facade architecture and later adopted during the Great Seljuk and Anatolian Seljuk periods, was subsequently introduced to the West through the Crusades. It represents a significant stylistic characteristic of Turkish art, enhancing the interplay of light and shadow on the facade while mitigating the facade's overall massiveness. (Figure 25).

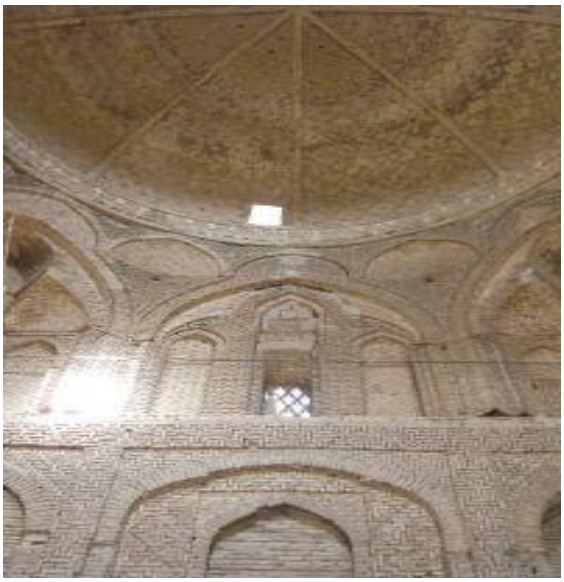


Figure 25



Figure 26

1.5.Jameh Mosque Of Qazvin

The Qazvin Friday Mosque stands as one of the oldest dated Friday mosques in Iran. Erected upon the remnants of a Sassanid fire temple, the mosque was augmented during the Seljuk period with the addition of two balconies on the northern facade, resulting in a total of four balconies within the building plan. Additionally, the large dome preceding the mihrab, boasting a diameter of 14 meters, also originates from the Seljuk period. (Figure 27).

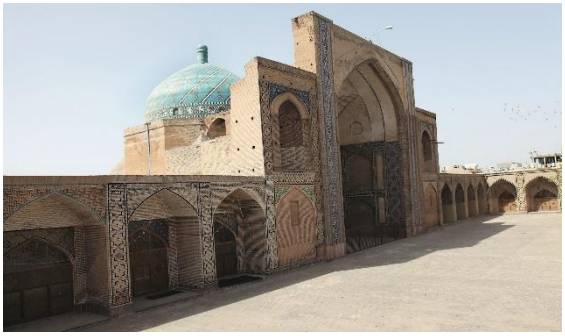


Figure 27

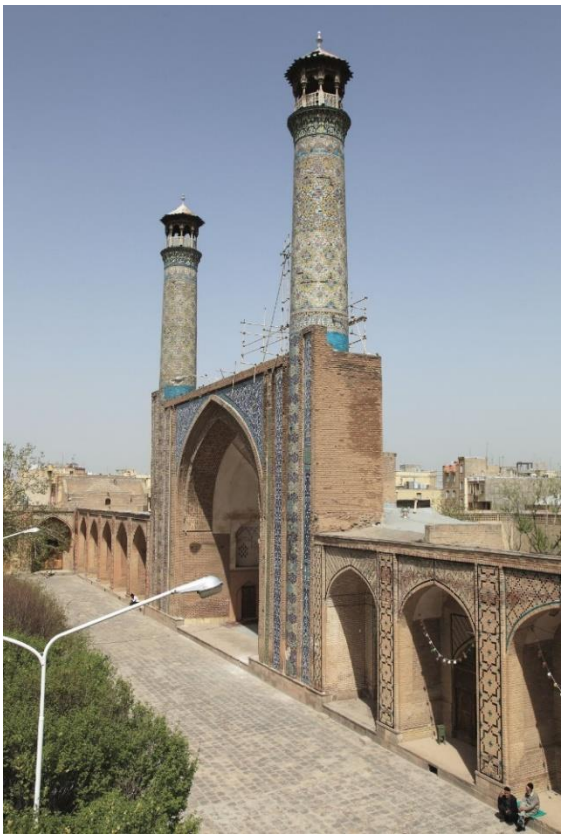
1.5.1.Jameh Mosque of Qazvin Features

The mosque was constructed entirely using brick material, with tile decorations added at a later stage. It was designed in a plan featuring four iwans.

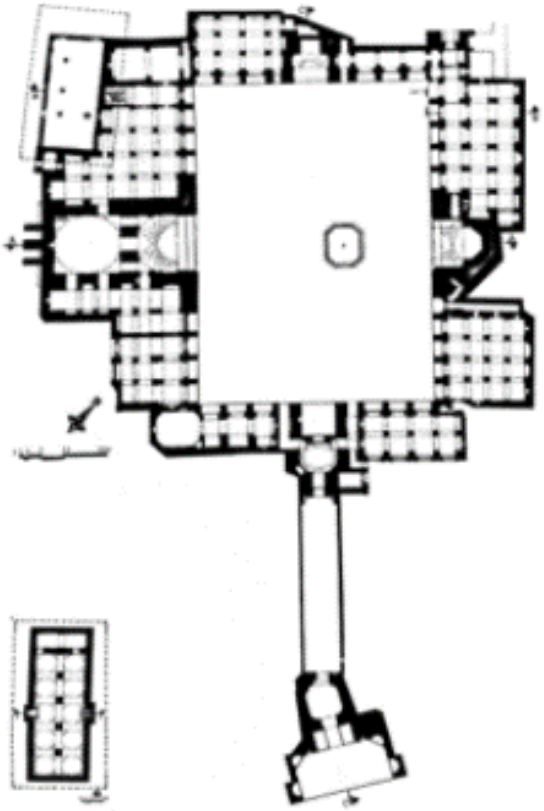
An iwan is situated at the center of each facade of the courtyard, with a harim located both to the north and south of the courtyard. On the east and west sides, porticoed sections extend between the iwans. The southern iwan, commissioned by the Safavid Sultan Shah and built by Abbas, spans two floors and contains five rooms accessible via stairs. (Figure 28).



Figure 28



Jameh Mosque of Qazvin



Plan of Jameh Mosque of Qazvin

CONCLUSION

The Great Seljuk period stands out as one of the most illustrious eras in Iranian architecture. One of the significant characteristics of mosque architecture during this period is the revival of pre-Islamic styles adapted into mosque architecture.

These mosques not only represent a crucial aspect of Iranian Islamic architecture but also serve as a significant model for other Islamic nations in the region. While the iwan element in these mosques has its roots in Sassanid architecture, the emergence of the four-iwan courtyard plan is more likely influenced by Turkish-Islamic architectural precedents predating the Seljuks, rather than ancient Iranian architecture. In fact, the four-iwan layout finds its origins in Turkish and Central Asian architectural traditions before Islam.

Mosques from the Great Seljuk period exhibit a variety of decoration styles including brick, plaster, plaster joint, wood, tile, and tile mosaic decorations. The mihrabs in these structures typically feature rectangular shapes and are constructed using brick and plaster materials. These mihrabs are often large in size, extending to the section providing access to the dome.

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