Introduction and Physical Investigation Mosque-madrassa of karim Ishan, the First Religious school of Iranian Turkmen

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ABSTRACT: Mosques and religious places have had special place in Iranian traditional architecture. The importance of self-purification and training has been manifested by constructing mosques with multiple applications serving as a place for both training and worship. Although, in Iranian past architectural style, there could be hardly found buildings serving as mosque and madrassa at the same time. Allocating a separate building as madrassa, near to mosque is privilege of the building to other mosques and madrassa. It is not unlikely that such a rich architectural work is seen in the central regions of Iran. However, locating the masque-madrassa of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan, in a remote village in the north of Iran is an interesting reality arising so many questions. The purpose of the authors of this article is not to give a perfect investigation of this mysterious complex. Instead, they are about to introduce this complex and to open the way of further studies and researches on various aspects of it. Thus, this paper investigates the features of the mosque and madrassa and the trend of its changes till now.

Keywords: Islamic architecture; Turkmen; Mosque; Religious school; Seyyed Ghelich Ishan

INTRODUCTION

The art of architecture has high potentials in different local regions of Iran. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out researches about Iran local architecture styles in order to identify different cultural and artistic aspects of Iran. The vast majority of attempts which have been done in this line, have hardly considered the buildings located in unknown and remote regions of the country while even the regions have rich architectural potential which should be investigated. The potentials would be completely forgotten or even collapsed if no attention be paid to them. The current paper is an outcome of field studies carried out by referring to ancient and old sources as well as current available ones. Regarding the fact that available written sources have not paid sufficient attention to the first masque_madrassa of Iran's Turkmen in one hand, and on the other hand knowing that the masque_madrassa of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan with its architectural style of central Asia as well as central regions of Iran, is an unidentified place which is going to be destructed only due to the fact that it has been located in a remote region, in the event of paying no attention to this complex, it would be destructed in the near future. By introducing this historical and valuable complex located in the northern region of Iran this paper tries to recall previous information and to register information, features and current specifications of the complex for comparison and applying necessary changes purposes.

Background

The mentioned building is a monument of Qajar era. This religious mosque_madrassa is located in the village of Karim Ishan, with following geographical positions: 37° east longitude and 55° north latitude, 45km far from the north of Kalale county of Gholestan province. The construction of the building was started in 1261 Hijri shamsi (1882) and was ended and inaugurated in 1286 Hijri shamsi (1907). By completing the building of madrassa, the
construction of mosque was started. The construction of this madrassa which took 25 years was done by village people as well as an unknown Ottoman artist and architecture by the order of the religious leader of Gooklan tribe, Seyyed Ghelich Ishan, and order of Soltan Abdol-Hamid. The inhabitants of the region believed that the age of this building is even more but according to Edward Yate (Edward Yate, 2007) a British commander who was crossed that region in 1894, the building was under construction in that year.

**General Description and Investigation of the Building**

![Figure 1. Mosque-Madrasah](image)

**Madrassa**

The total area of madrassa building is 1700 m². This building consists of 4 main sections: main entry, courtyard, chambers and balcony. The entry gateway is placed in the northern border. After the gateway, there is a two ways corridor. Passing this corridor, a square courtyard with an octagonal pool is observed in the center of yard. Chambers have been distributed into the four corners of the yard and Madrasah is located in the southern side of the yard. The balcony was the lodging of Seyyed Ghelish Ishan; the founder of the madrassa. The chambers and yard was for seminarians use.

**Mosque**

With the dimension of 13m×17m the mosques sets rotation to themadrassa position in order to agree with the direction of Qibla. The entrance of the mosque with three gates is located in the eastern side. Two of doors are opened inside the mosque and one is opened to its hostel. The construction of the mosque began after the madrassa. The main area of the mosque which is for carrying out worship consists of four square spaces, which all together form another big square area. Mosque ceiling has been covered by four domes. The domes have been founded on arches which form column by joining together in the center of mosque. The mihrab of the mosque is an arcades which shows the direction of Qibla. During prayer, the leader goes inside the mihrab in order to lead prayers. The minbar of the mosque has two stairs which is used during Friday prayer. The inside layers of the mosque have been made of brick and chalk. Its ceiling has been recently covered by bitumen indicating that the old ceiling had been timeworn and let water penetrate inside the mosque. The plane of the mosque is square-rectangular and its total volume implies a cubic shape. Used as a symbol any shape is reflection of oneness and modality of origin inside itthath encompasses and preserves all modalities and differentiations. Simplicity is seen all over the mosque and there is no special decorative element. The most dominant element of the mosque is a single, simple and white column through its simplicity and oneness reminding people the monotheism principle and the oneness of god. Inaddition to its cubic volume as well as benefiting from a plane with no concavity and convexity (Nakhir & Nahaz), the facade and interior space of the mosque imply the presence of god through their simplicity, white color and elementary shapes which remind people the entity of whom is the only owner of all wealth. The mosque has been scaled very warm, intimate and humanly. Indeed, its architecture is a picture of the universe or a picture of human within its universe aspects. In general, mosque is considered as the home of god inside which human senses his presence. This is the reason why it has been scaled friendly and intimate; a scale by which an individual not only senses no inferiority but also senses the purity of god due to its simplicity and friendly atmosphere.
**Review on Building Construction**

![Figure 2: the level ground plane of mosque and madrassa.](image)

Unlike other local buildings which were underconstruction at the same time, in the construction of this building were used no wood or fabric materials. Instead, strong and sustainable materials like brick and liquid mortars like lime and stucco which show good resistance against rainfall and moisture were used (Ghobadian, 2010). This indicates the special importance of this building among people who constructed a permanent building for acquiring religious sciences despite of their migration life style. To gain more information one could refer to the book of Khorasan and sistan; written by Edward Yate where he indicates that during his visits of the mentioned region in 1894 he saw no permanent and strong building but the building of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan. During construction operations, the bricks were made of the soils of that region and were burned in two brick kilns located near to the complex. Moreover, the required fuel for brick kilns, were supplied from around forests. The use of cypress trees’ wood as well as stucco for making the doors of the chambers imply a kind of self-sufficiently in the construction of the building which have been resulted in more conformity of the building with nature and no necessity to the materials of other regions which in turn led to the accelerating of construction operations and availability of materials during repairing operations (Pirnia, 2008).

**Different Areas Designed Around the Mosque**

The entrance of the mosque: the mosque has two entrance gates. One for women and the other which ends to the explain room of men. Therefore, three doors could be seen from the outside of the mosque. One door for entering to the explain room and the two others for entering into the mosque.

The distance between the mosque and ablution room has designed in the way that an individual as moving from the ablution room to the inside of the mosque moves along Qibla. In this way, the body and soul of hefeels the presence of God till reaching worship place. By entering the mosque, he attends in the worship place directly and findshimself in the presence of God.
Mihrab

Has been separated as a sign by boarders from other spaces and shows the direction of Qibla. Through its simplicity this internal element of the mosques represents the oneness and unity of god.

![Figure 4. Interior space of the mosque](image)

Rooms

The internal space of the mosque had different applications compared with their today’s applications. The small rooms serving as hostels today were places in which seminarian’s discussed together. The room located at the furthest point, was a room called explanation room in which Seyyed Ghelich Ishan did discussion with his students. The room located before it was a place in which seminarians discussed together.

![Figure 5. Interior space of hostel](image)

The Most Apparent Characteristic of the Mosque

Extroversion, having no yard & minaret, both of which are characteristics of Islamic architecture style, are from special aspects of the mosque. Although the courtyard of mosques is the most attractive element from visitors point of view, due to climate condition and domestic features of the region. Deletion of minarets was likely decided due to the existence of the six minarets of the adjacent madrassa.

Different Spaces Designed in the Madrassa

Entrance: is divided into two parts. The first one is the pre entrance section with almost 4m length and the second one which starts after crossing the entrance gate, has 6.5m length. The entrance arch has an almost 4.5m height with a 60cm height stage located at the both sides of the arch. This stage extends up to entrance gate. Also, in both sides of the entrance arch, there are two arcades covered with inscription symbol icon tiling. The entrance gate joins to the yard through a corridor. The walls and ceiling of the corridor have been decorated by simple brickwork.
As one arrives at the entrance gate, the decoration style and elements get another beauty and Gol-Botte (floral vector) plasterworks show off themselves. In the both sides of the ceiling the holy "Allah" word has been formed with bricks. In addition, in the internal section of the archhas been placed a piece of cypress tree's wood horizontally under the arch that is in a lowerheight than the arch. In addition to its structural role, this horizontal hasp makes the entering people to bend down their head which could imply the courtesy and respect toward the place. It should be mentioned however that the following sentence has been carved on the horizontal wood:

"-history of the Ishan madrassa of Seyyed Ghelich our dear, its finishing date is Vatane Ghariban (the home of strangers).

Which means that: "I'd like to tell you the history of the Ishan madrassa of Seyyed Ghelich our dear, its finishing date is Vatane Ghariban (the home of strangers).

In the Abjad system, the sentence of Vatane Ghariban (the home of strangers) is equal to 1328 Hijri Ghamari (1897) which is the inauguration date of the madrassa. According to inhabitants as well as according to past visitors, there were very beautiful netted plasterworks on the entrance arch which have been destroyed due to flood or earthquake and despite of frequent repairs they were not last again and nowadays no sign of them is seen at all. After crossing the entrance ceiling, there is a door in the left side which is opened to the library.

Central Yard
The square yard of this madrassa with an area of almost 200m² has been covered with a 26.26 brick carpet. In the center of the yard there is an octagonal pool with 60cm depth. The edge of the pool has been made of brick and its internal surface has been covered by white chalk. In the four side of the pool there are twin orifices located opposite to each other in order to direct water towards foot washing place adjacent to the pool with a 24cm width.

The distance between the pool and the foot washing place has been donebrickworkfor 13cm.
Chambers: There are 23 chambers all around the yard as a symbol of the number of the years of the prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad. One of the southern chambers serves as a madrassa. This part of madrassa with thick walls and doors opening to the yard has no window and it benefits only from a Hoornoo (light orifice) which supplies the necessary light and ventilates the chamber air. This place which has been insulated

![Figure 8. Interior wall of chamber, the Hoornoo is covered](image1)

![Figure 9. Exterior plan of chamber](image2)

![Figure 10. Yard of school and chambers](image3)

From the clamor of the external section of the madrassa was serving as learning and resting room of seminarians. The number of chambers located in the eastern, western and southern sides is more than those of located in northern side in which the entrance gateway has been located. In the entrance of the chambers, a stage with a ceiling over it has formed asmall terrace. The area of chambers is almost 12 m$^2$ which have been covered with a brickwork dome-shaped ceiling. The walls of the chambers have been decorated by fireplace, shelf, arch and arcades. After its reconstruction and relief in 1986, some windows were considered for the chambers and the Hoornoo (light orifices) were covered by cement. It should be mentioned that in the northern corner of the building, a window has been located in a higher position than the mentioned new windows the surface of which has been covered by brick and cement.

Minaret: although in designing of madrassas there is no need to minarets having minaret is of the special characteristics of this building. This building currently has four solid minarets. According to older illustrations, the minarets were taller and there were two additional minarets in the entrance gateway which are not seen today at all. The existence of this number of minarets could have different reasons of which it could be referred to the religious beliefs of inhabitants as well as the symbolic situation of the building as the only building of the region which guided seminarians from far distances. They were also used as lookout towers in order to guard the inhabitants from the insecurity condition of those times.

![Figure 11. Minaret of mosque](image4)

![Figure 12. Minaret of mosque](image5)
Stairway

Outside of the madrassa and in the western side of the entrance way, there is a gate. After crossing the gate a 14 helix stairs with 30cm height is appeared. After mounting the stairs there is a mound which is connected to the roof of the madrassa by a woody short door. At the both sides of the roof there are 5 stairs with almost 20 cm height which are the access way to the balcony creating a higher location at the roof from which the viewer is overlooking on whole madrassa. Due to these stairs, a store space has been created beneath the balcony.

Balcony

The room above the store i.e. the area between the ceiling of the entrance corridor and the floor of the balcony which has almost 120cm height and 15m² area is divided into two areas by a door. The first one with an area of almost 11m² has a dome-shaped ceiling and two windows, one in eastern side and the other in the western side. After crossing the door, the main room is appeared. This room has a 9m² area with 5 windows placed on the northern side creating a proper view to outside of the madrassa. In addition, there are two windows placed on the western and eastern sides. This room was the main residence place of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan.

General Plan

Regarding to the fact that the madrassa of seyyed Ghelich Ishan is an introversion building, its architect felt no necessity of additional and special finishing on the exterior surfaces and he has tried to create the minimum visual features for viewers by simple and symbolic icons as well as by varying the layout of bricks in different sections. In this way, the rhythm, symmetry, balance and scale of the building has been created by minimum surface decoration.

The northern face of course, which is the main symbol of the building, covered by bricks and glazed tile and the architect has tried to dissolve the rigidity of the building by making arcades in the both sides of the entrance gateway. Although proportionality is a vital and definitive factor of conformity, it always has been controversial issue among architectures (Ghruter, 2009).

Unfortunately, due to the destruction of the minarets of the entrance gateway and collapse of the upper sections of the minarets located in the four corners of the madrassa, the proportionality of the exterior surface has...
loosed its originality and it has been mixed to somewhat. Therefore, regarding to the presented descriptions, it
could not be offered right interpretation and understanding of the mentioned proportionality.

Decorations of madrassa

In the both sides of the entrance gateway there are two arcades with tile works in the upper side. The
region inhabitants believe that, the tile work of the right hand arcades (Fig. 15) associates the icon of Seyyed
Ghelich Ishan while the tile work of the left hand owning (Fig. 16) associates her wife. While such a decoration style
i.e. making icons, is hardly seen in the Iranian architecture style of religious places it has been likely imported by
the ottoman architect of the building indicating his respect to Seyyed Ghelich Ishan. Of course, the professional
artist was receiving detailed orders from his sponsor with respect to format, shape, material selection and other
making icon and inscription considerations (konel 2001). Also, the use of Bukhara tiling and iconography style
would be because of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan attendance in Khiva and Bukhara for some years (Edward Yate, 2007).
The Amood (additional decorations) of the portalis tiling and its interior surface is brickwork in the Girih forms. Also, in the upper side of the entrance gateway there is afloralbulgePlasterwork (Barhashte plasterwork) and other parts of the entrance way are decorated asRagh chin (simple horizontal brick work). Since this tiling has been done in the S side of the store where there is no direct light, in addition to its artistry and aesthetic aspects and emphasizing that this section plays an entrance role, it could be considered as a functional role to it as an appropriate insulator for the store. In some sections of the store, the tiling has been done in the Negini form(tiles are rarely used among bricks). Most parts of the tiling have been destructed by the lapse of time. Of course the use of yellow, turquoise, azure and violet colors is apparent. The interesting thing which could be seen in the remnants of the tiled section is a kind of repetitive rhythm in the northern face of the madrassa. Around and between arches had likely been decorated in this way.

**Brickwork**

It should be said that almost the dominant decoration style applied in the building is brickwork which is apparent in the facade of chambers arches and also on the interior walls of the yard. However, on the minaret and surface of the external walls it has been applied a straw mat brickwork through which the architect could create different visual textures and repeat it with a simple rhythm in all facades only by brick.

**Plasterwork Decoration**

Currently, there are only two plasterworks in the madrassa of Seyyed Ghelich Ishan. Unfortunately, other decorative shapes like netted plasterworks over the portal and balcony have been destructed due to natural disasters and today they are kept in an inappropriate condition in the store located beneath the balcony.
Two decorative designs on the entrance and exit arches with raised plasterworks on them are seen. The exit arch has been designed as a pot which associates the image of flower to viewers. The plasterworks which have been worked on a brick context had been considered as simple decorative elements of the madrassa. Avoidance of useless work and squandering is apparent in the total decoration of the madrassa; a principle which has been observed both before and after Islam (Pirnia. 2008).

End Words
In the early of its 130 year-old jubilee after sustaining different events and disasters, the mosque-madrasah of Seyyed Ghlich Ishan, a common memorial building of Iran and Turkey, as a oldest permanent religious school of Turkmen is still of the active religious centers of the considered region. Although there is no trace of the tall minarets of the main portal and the netted and plasterworks of it have been destructed, but even the little amount of monuments are evidences of its magnificent that more attentions should be paid to its perverse and revival in order to keep this memorial of architecture history of the Iranian Turkmen for future generations.

Footnote
1. Of Turkmen race
2. Sovereign of Ottoman 1876-1909
3. A madrasa or college, especially a madrassa attached to a mosque where young men study theology.
4. A tree known as a lord of all trees with pleasant aroma. The Thor grows in Ghazan Ghaya forest
5. An opening in the dome , light orifice
6. Decorating building by tiling, brickwork, plasterwork and stone
7. An Islamic decorative art form used in architecture and handicrafts consisting of geometric lines that form an interlaced strapwork. Girih has been defined as "geometric (often star-and-polygon) designs composed upon or generated from arrays of points from which construction lines radiate and at which they intersect"
8. Raised Plasterwork
9. Iranian anthropologist
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