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ARCHITECTURAL AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF STYLE MOSQUES IN IRAN

Abstract: Mazandaran province has been a significant section of pre-Islamic Iran territory. This region (Mazandaran) was the major section of the Iran state in the Zandian periods which in newly formed political divisions are divided among several provinces including Sari, Babol, Amol, Babolsar and etc. Based on specific characteristics of the region a distinctive type of mosque has been established including entrance, yard, theologian's room, lateral corridors, and wooden colonnaded iwan. According to this study, these mosques are comprised of colonnaded iwan / porticos and flat ceiling which are deeply impacted by the western and northwestern regions' architectural / building style; one of these stylistic characteristics is the plan with iwans on four corners of Mazandaran. Some of these mosques are bi-iwan and some mono-iwan but all in a rather different style from the other mosques of Iran. Iwans in these mosques are built in two floors or built with wooden columns, which endorse a distinctive type which are called Mazandaran mosques in this paper.

Keywords: Mazandaran, Mosques, Iran, wooden colonnaded iwan

1. INTRODUCTION

Zarei, E, M. (2008) and M. K. Pirinia (2001) suggested methods for the typology studies of Iranian architecture, there has been a great change in Iranian Islamic period buildings analytical studies. Although some of the offered methods need to be accessed and reviewed, his method to recognize the buildings is of the great importance, because most Islamic buildings were categorized based on historical or dynasties period prior to his new opinions. Some of these methods are connected to specific areas of the country, such as Azari or Isfahani and Kurdistan but generally, we can trace the general principle of Iranian architecture in them. Actually, one of the little discussed styles in reference books is Mazandaran style.

Basically, the author has suggested a new style in this study which would be criticized and scrutinized by colleagues.

The field of this survey research is Surveying the architectural style of these mosques and comparing them with other architectural works of the region determines that this kind of architectural structure has been existed at least from the first millennium B.C. in north western Mazandaran province; that is a kind of architectural style which mostly included a hall with an iwan or iwans at one of its ends. Therefore, Mazandaran mosques style with a plan composed of wooden colonnaded sanctuary, iwan and annex spaces can be introduced as the indicator of this style. (As demonstrated by Zarei, E, M. 2008)

2. MAZANDARAN PROVINCE

Badlisi, 1994, pointed out that the territory known today as Mazandaran in political division of the country is the main part of Iran. Previously Mazandaran state has been included of several parts which are mainly consisted of Kaspian. There was bad political and strategy situation. A new political division became common from the early of Safavid period based on naming states and tribes on the regions and areas according to which Mazandaran was divided into Kaspian, ultimately Kaspoian was divided into smaller sections.

3. MAZANDARAN AND ITS MOSQUE ARCHITECTURE

There appeared a great transformation in the regional architecture and urban planning in Mazandaran after its establishment in Safavid period. Previously, Mazandaran architecture was extroversive but due to the contribution of non-native architects, artists and carpenters especially from Isfahan, the general context of the city was affected by Isfahani style which is apparent in old sections of the city. It seems that new architectural structures were built to be used by the high socioeconomic trade men and merchants who immigrated to Sannandaj (Zarei, 2007).

Due to high economic status domestic spaces were built on the basis of introverting architectural style of Isfahan, a style which affected Mazandaran architecture deeply. The only thing spared from this change was the mosques architectural structures. They were built based on the ancient style of colonnaded iwan in one of four geographical directions such as mosque-schools of Darullehsan (Zarei, 2006) and of Darullaman (Zarei, 2002).

Due to mountainous character of the region, Mazandaran mosques have a

distinctive style adapted to the geographical landscape of the region. According to the author's field surveys, no mosque was recognized from the early Islamic era; actually this is an important fact which should be explored by the archaeological surveys and excavations. Since there is no inscription, it can be hypothesized that the old mosques in the villages were built based on the plan of an older style.

4. ARCHITECTURAL AND STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MOSQUES

Although there is no clear understanding of early mosques and their plans in Kurdistan, referring to plan of Abdolahi mosque of Rijab in Kermanshah region, Rashidi (1999) suggested that the plan has been rooted from the domestic houses of the Uramanat area with a columned room and flat roof; one of the good examples of such plan is that of Pir-e Shaliar house.

Descriptively, it seems that the mosques plans followed the domestic spaces plans in the first stages but they have gradually changed and elaborated. Though, the early Islamic period mosque plans are not known exactly and the few known ones are reconstructed for several times, the original structure seems to have changed although the general principles are stable as the climate condition is stable. The old mosques of Zhavroud, Paveh, Uraman and Mochesh have their original structure; the Mochesh mosque has an inscription date in the name of a person called "Soltan Abdolaziz". This inscription has been inscribed on a stone column base with a wooden column on it. It seems that the inscription represents the date of restoration and not the date of original founding (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Inscription of mosque Kamyaran provincial, Muchesh Village (Kurdistani, 1990).*

The plan and form of the mosques have changed but even though a general structure can be traced out as follows: A) the original sanctuary has four wood columns which are increased to six or eight in some cases. B) A central yard with a pool surrounded by trees. C) The mosque entrance has normally inscriptions on the top part mainly on the lintels of the entrance or in the corridors; on both sides of entrance of some mosques two small platforms are observed which a characteristic similar to domestic architectures is. In some of the mosques, sanctuary is included of two general parts, an entrance for resting which is not as high as the second part and normally shorter; the second part is a special part for prayers

which is a step lower. These two parts are separated with a wooden barrier; at most 30-40 c.m. high. There is a platform in the center of chamber to locate a heater (Farivar, 2000). According to the regional religion (Sunni), most Kurdistan mosques have a four pillar chamber reminding the four caliphs. It seems that using four pillars in the construction of mosques emerged in Buyid period and highlighted in Saljuq period (Hillenbrand, 1976; Zarei, 2004).

5. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to carry out a theoretical study on Descriptions of Mazandaran Style Mosques in Iran. The main contribution of this paper was to persuade researchers to take a serious attention on Descriptions of Mazandaran Style Mosques in Iran. The existence of various styles of mosque architecture in Iran requires a more thorough study for a better analysis to determine their typology. One of the less known architectural styles is Mazandaran mosques formed under the influence of climatic, cultural and religious factors lasting for several thousand years. This style is the continuity of a long term tradition of building trend in western and northern west regions without basic changes in principles which has been adapted with the needs and new spatial functions of time. Therefore, Mazandaran style mosques with a great variety in plans have a unity in general local architectural patterns and principles.

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