

Historical processes of architectural transition in Ardabil's Jome Mosque (The symbol of an Iranian Islamic architecture)

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ABSTRACT

Jame Mosque as a glorious building in a city which has exhibited an unknown and rich treasure of the art of architecture, culture and Islamic civilization, is not totally Seljuk but those parts of the Seljuk era, even today, are also its main augustness. In its completely distinctive spectrum, more than 1100 years of Iran's architecture is transparent and in its lengthy life, there have been several wars and it has been damaged and recovered many times and nothing is remained of that. However, the mosque is there and its remained architecture is like a book that every time it is read, it provides a new meaning spectrum of the past. The remaining of the building is located in north-west of the current city and it is built on an artificial hill with 5 meters' height with the absence of the other buildings and despite approaching disastrous events and happenings, it has maintained its strength. The noteworthy point is its scattered but pleasant architectural and functional decorations of the Ilkhani era being in full harmony and magnificent beatings of facades of the building are based on the mathematical calculations; however, those parts of the Seljuk era, even today, are also its main augustness. Jome Mosque which has been the highest building of the city, in its current condition, is composed of three related parts placing with distance and in an independent manner. 1- The dome is built as the mother cell and the Seljuk mosque's base and during the time, the other elements are attached to it. 2-Porch which is currently placed as a mosque and its south side is ended to dome area though a big and high crater. 3- Steeple which is a large brick cylindrical building located in 16/43 meters of the western wall and along the middle axis of the mosque and its location is even more tragic tradition since it is a building which is totally separated and there is not any sign of its attachment to Seljuk's building. In so doing, its tension with the mosque and its moral function in relation with the other elements of the building as well as its independency from the mosque attract the attention as a unique element.

KEYWORDS

Ardabil, Jome Mosque, building, architecture, Seljuk

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Introduction

Iran Islamic architecture as the other traditional architectures is related and also accustomed to cosmology. Tradition human lives in a purposeful and meaningful world. The world like human is indicator and representative of God's

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power; accordingly, there is a particular relationship among them; human is small world and transient truth mirror.

Whatever is hidden in the nature of Islamic art is called rational intuition and the purpose behind intuition is a universal power of wisdom and reasoning as well as inclusion of eternal and immortal realities' witnesses. This is the same as the intuition's meaning in Islamic tradition in which faith is not perfected except in the light of its illumination and He is the only person who can realize the works and consequences of monotheism i.e. God's unity principle. Iran's Islamic art is the same vein captures its beauty from wisdom.

The relationship among human, architecture and the world is the basis of recognition of Islamic traditional architecture which generalizes the rules of sacred architecture from mosque to the other buildings and eventually the big and small cities. This unity is originated from God's rule and is continued by its means. Form traditional viewpoint, human and the world can be considered as the creators of the sacred art. Accordingly, human, the world and sacred architecture are dependent to God in terms of existence; however, from theoretical viewpoint, cosmology, anthropology and art philosophy are considered as instances of metaphysical rules' release to various moral areas.

Islamic architecture starts with mosque, not due to the point that the first building was created by Muslims and the prophet's guidance, but since mosque possesses all the architectural functions in itself.

Mosque was not only a place for worshiping, but it was a place for managing all the matters which were directly and indirectly related to religion and also it was a place for education and even a place for the passengers' resting and eating.

Time transitions would necessitate verities in the style and functions of the other buildings such as schools, shrines, towers, and cafes, but due to religious demands in all the Islamic geography, mosque was considered as the most important and the most original building. "Arthur Upham Pope" in the third chapter of the book "Iran's architecture" titled "the beginning of Iranian era, new objectives" interprets "mosque" as a city of God in the heart of the earth.

This building in its physical function, is a place for worshiping, but in metaphysical function and Spiritual and mystical manifestations is reflective of all the architectural mysteries.

The Mosque's building history

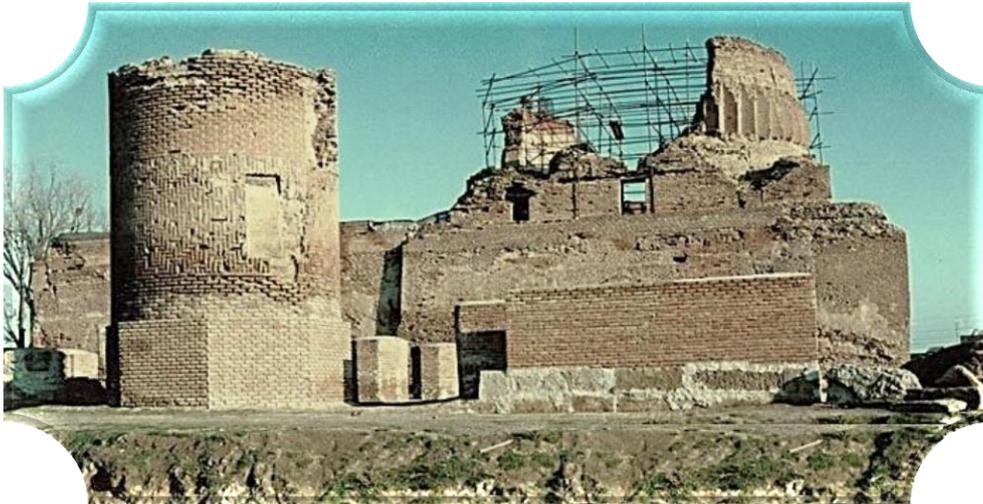


Figure 1: The overall view of Ardabil's Jame (Jome) Mosque.

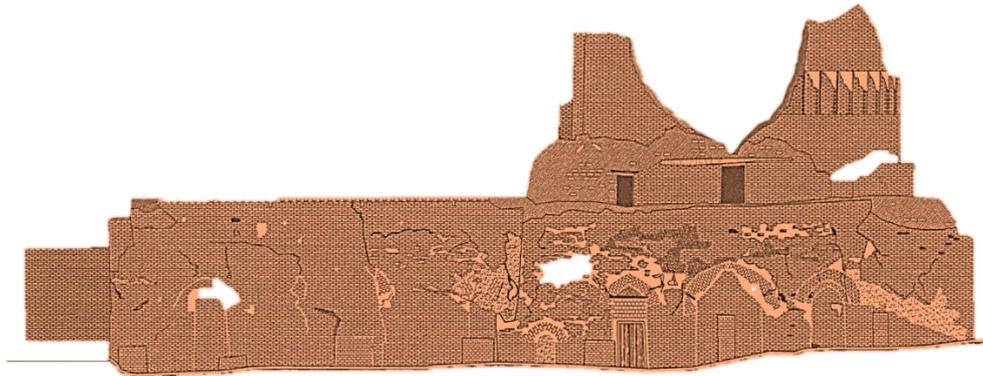


Figure 2: The design of Ardabil's Jame Mosque, South Front of the Dome (Shahbazi Shiran, 2004, Documents of the National Heritage Organization with changes).

Considering Archaeological excavations which are carried out in the surrounding area of the mosque, the remains of the pillar dormitories in the east and northern areas as well as works of inscriptions belonging to the third and fourth AH century are discovered. The original building of the current mosque was built in Seljuk era on more ancient remnants and about the year 620 AH, it was ruined because of Mongols' invasion and generally its decorative and restoration tasks was completed in 650 AH. During the process, the dome is restored completely and the outer area of the dome along with interior façade of the dormitory and altar are adorned with various functional shapes made up of flowers and plants, geometric designs, and colorful plasters and tiling decorations.

For complete awareness concerning the creation process and the main features of the mosque and getting familiar with building eras and meticulous investigation of the functions of the building, it should be noted that the information is so inefficient that cannot be valid guidance for the things that have been lost forever. Therefore, in this stage, two levels are noteworthy which should be considered in evaluation of the literary evidence; first, although the

information is comprehensive in surface, in a meticulous investigation, abundant faults are observed and the worth point is that the information is not valid in most cases and since there are not accompanied with necessary studies, they cannot be considered as the basic principle.

Despite the problems available regarding using the documented sources for obtaining archeological and architectural information, it should be indicated that in general, the scientific researches and the obtained documents and evidences are archaeological activities introducing new and original cases about this valuable Islamic building.

The importance of the obtained results in the field and historical art and archeological information and queries are refereed in the following:

Local narratives, sayings and writings of domestic and foreign researchers:

According to the narratives that exist in the local area, Jome Mosque is exactly located in the place of a building which was existed before Islam and it is assumed that its location was a fireplace has been transferred to mosque in early Islam simultaneous with turning people into the religion of Islam (Shahbazi Shiran, 2004:27).

Mohammad Ibn Ahmad Moghaddasi (1982, 560-561 AH) along with referring to the castle and Ardabil markets which are composed of a quadruple and is visible in the intersection crossroads of the mosque, has written that: "Outside of the city, there is a wide squat, which in the year of 617 is ruined due to the Mongol's invasion, nothing remained of Ardabil except the ruins"; that in case, probably, according to the sacred information and old tradition of creating religious buildings in center of the city, the features are related to Sasanian urbanism.

There is another narrative that the foundation of the city is attributed to Firooz Shah [Sassanid] (Islamic Encyclopedia, 1913; 432 AH); accordingly, considering the deserted neighborhoods in south of the mosque and accepting people's narratives concerning the creation of the mosque on the ancient ruins, made it probable to investigate and identify the elements and building activities and Jome Mosque's features clearly.

With regard to the reasons behind the mosque's ruin, there is belief that the interior area of the mosque has been a safe place for refugees and Ardabil people's gathering in case of catastrophes, war, and enemies and rogue clans invasion from the ancient time; it is stated that in one of the invasions, many people including women and men had taken refuge in the mosque due to the enemies' evil and rape and the enemy attacked and killed most of them, after this happening based on people's belief since Jome Mosque was not able to secure oppressed victims from the dark sight and dread enemy's attack, due to the curse of the women of the city as well as due to their severity, the dormitory was cracked and the dome was collapsed.

Among the most popular travelers visited Ardabil in the Safavid era and referred to Jome Mosque in their travelogue, it can be referred to Adam Olearius who describes Jome Mosque as follows:

"The biggest mosque among the others is Adineh Mosque (Jome Mosque) which is located on a small hill possessing circular and high tower which is visited on Fridays (Jome) which is homonym with the mosque (Jome). There is a well in front of the mosque which is created by the chancellor of the Sarchordis dynasty who was named Mohammad Reza previously. The water of this well is provided from a mountain in several miles of south eastern of the city. People who wanted to

enter the mosque and worship, were supposed to wash themselves in that water” (Sarre, 1910:50).

Le brun, a passenger passing Ardabil on October 15th, 1703, reports about the mosque as follows:

“This mosque is located in the east part of the city and is located on a small hill and for the use of prayers, it is divided into many small parts, the small part which is located in the dome is big enough and is surrounded with a wall which is gradually transferred to bell-shape. There is a well in front of the mosque” (Le brun, 1718; Nirnakbe & Siroux, 1998, 185 AH).

J. de Morgan, at the early 20th century, with visiting this work along with provision of its photo, reports Jome mosque in Iran geographical studies’ reports as a castle which was belonged to Sultan Osman Khan and was created in 942 AH. Moreover, he has considered the mosque as a tower tomb attributing to “Sultan Ahmad Siyahpoush’ through providing a design of Seljuk minaret Jome Mosque (de Morgan, 1959: 406/1-404 AH). It seems that J. de Morgan has presented this hypothesis through observing two scripts attributed on Seljuk minaret whose text is not related to the mosque.

Concerning these two inscriptions which have historical content and text, two probability and hypotheses can be stated: first, these inscriptions which have the date of ninth century AH, are related to another year that have been moved to different location and are located on Seljuk Minaret and second, Seljuk minaret of Jome mosque has been utilized as a governmental base or a watchtower for protecting and surrounding the building in the ninth century AH.

The first scientific research about the building was carried out by Maxime Siroux, French architecture after J. de Morgan’s visit in 1937.

Maxime Siroux who has printed his scientific report about the building along with its design and plan in bulletin of “the French Institute in Cairo” in the same years, concerning the original of the building believes that for the first time in the fifth century AH, it is probably built on the ruins of a Sassanid era’s building and at that time, it was composed of a high dormitory and arcade hall (Siroux, 1988: 185AH) (Siroux, 1945:1/41).

Siroux states about Jome Mosque’s collapse as the following:

“When Mongols attached Ardabil in 1217, Jome Mosque was damaged a lot and its dome was rebutting in 650 AH and at that time, some of its places were covered by plaster and false hanging and hub was stamped on it. In the middle of the eighth century AH, the dome of the dormitory was whitewashed and gypsum altar was built and was decorated with paintings (ibid.).

Andre Godard also through visiting Jome mosque, identified many similarities between this historical building and porch buildings of Sassanid era and along with providing the design presented by Maxime Siroux, in his book “Iran’s art”, considers this historical work as porch building of Islam era that durability of architecture before Islam is demonstrated within that and he makes comparison with Fars’ “Firuzabad Girl Castle” (Godard, 1965: 1/62).

Donald Wilber also along with approving the beliefs of (Siroux) with regard to appearance and transition period of the decorations of Jome Mosque’s architecture writes:

“The elements which exist since the eighth century AH, involves hard plaster coating that has covered the interior wall’s surface of the dome and Altar of Mogharnas and the other decorations have been painted. The facade of corner vaults and circular nogul and lower walls were decorated having indigo color



designs which are done by patterns. The above decorations are similar to interior decorations of Al Jayto tomb and Abru Tower but in Ardabil's Jome Mosque, the designs are more meticulous and subtle and limited to particular areas" (Wilber, 1955: 134-135).

Therefore, about the historical origin of the dome building, he states that:

"It is not clear to exist two building and decoration areas in this place as stated by Siroux, the exterior surface of the dome is decorated by blue pottery parts which are located inside the brickwork without any certain design. This method in architecture is observed in Seljuk era, accordingly, the restoration of the dome of building might be carried out after 1591 AH; in addition, making use of hanging and false hole filling has been existed for a fairly long period" (ibid.).

Friedrich Sarre along with considering misunderstanding of J. de Morgan and after quoting the reports of Adam Olearius, adds these hypotheses:

"It seems that Olearius plan demonstrates the building before the ruin and earthquake's devastating effects; therefore, according to this plan and its comparison with the current state, the real shape of the building in its first condition can be restored. Moreover, it seems that the dome is dazzling and with regard to clear features of surrounding cracks many hypotheses are remained which can be attributed to the later periods and second half of the fourteenth century" (Sarre, 1910:186-223).

The results of the mosque's investigation show that prior to 617 AH, possessed a room with dome cover and there was an open balcony in its exterior façade. In points of the fact, the first era of decorations of the building are observed in the balcony's fronts; these types of decorations (stamp pattern) are abundant among these bricks' claws and they constitute crenate in some parts. This is a method of Seljuk era which is observed in many buildings and its date can be estimated to the second half of the fifth century AH or later (Siroux, 1988; 182 AH).

L. Rumble (1936:207-209) also in his investigations in late ninth and early tenth century remarks that the architectural features of before Islam which is totally evident in the building. Ismail Dibaj (1967; 60) writes about architectural features and destruction causes of Jome Mosque:

"The original building is composed of two parts; the porch which is swollen and the main building which has a big brick dome with inscriptions and mosaic tiles and fermented decorations which are completely deconstructed due to earthquake and currently, nothing is remained except several basis and surrounding walls".

Mohammad Javad Mashkour (1970: 384) also along with introducing Seljuk minaret of Jome Mosque related to entrance of surrounding area of the mosque which has been ruined and deconstructed similar to the other parts of the mosque, about the current condition of the building writes that:

"Currently, this building is composed of a square dormitory that its dome is fallen and rectangular prayer room is remained that its flat roof is protected by two pillars of wooden logs".

Some also believe that this mosque is created in Sasanid time on one of the buildings of Sasanid era (Wilber, 1967).

The author of "Ardabil on the history track", quoted the date of Jome Mosque's creation to 678 AH according to some inscriptions, and indicates that through observing embroidery on the left side of the scattering doublet door which is located in the entrance of the current mosque, have been restored in 710 AH; but, since there is not counterpart, it is skeptical whether they have built the mosque in that year or they have restored it (Safari, 1991:176/2, 180 & 181).

The presented content and evidence, though limited, have so far made clear the originality of some of the essential elements of the mosque's architecture which is remarked below:

1- Jome Mosque is built on one of the buildings of before Islam and it has been the biggest mosque among the others.

2- In the second half of the fifth century or later, early sixth century AH, the mosque had a dome house which some parts are still observable. Its dome house also had a heavy and slow down dome.

3- Prior to 617 AH, this building had a room with dome cover and there was a porch (without roof) proximate to the exterior view (Shahbazi Shiran, 2004: 32)..

4- The first period of decorations was done of the porch's front body.

5- Briefly, the order of building construction was as follows:

First, the archeological bed has a building of Sassanid era, after that, on the ruins of the same building, a mosque was restored in the fifth century AH. Creation of minaret was done at the same period. In the seventh century, without any changes in the building's foundation, distinctive revolutions in the dome's building and restoration of the decorations have appeared.

6- The mosque was ruined and reconstructed due to various causes. The mutual agreement is that the great part of the mosque's damages was done by the earthquake.

7- Jome Mosque is a building with a porch related to the era before Islam that durability of the architecture before Islam is transparent in it which is comparable with Fars' "Firoozabad Girl Castle".

Archaeological excavations in the place:

The most comprehensive and meticulous information regarding the date of the mosque's creation as well as its changes and transitions during various periods are provided by archeological discoveries for researchers.

For the first time in 1974, Aliakbar Kargar Sarfaraz missioned on behalf of Iran's national organization of archeological works' protection to carry out excavations in top of the mosque which can be grounds for restoration of the building later. Although, the results and findings concerning the discoveries and speculations have not been published yet, the presentation of the primary report which is available in archival documents and stagnant cultural heritage, crafts and tourism organization led to recognition towards the new effects of this great historical work's architecture. Later, in summer 1981, the excavation staff of cultural heritage organization with guardianship of Mahmoud Mousavi and Mohammad Mehryar initiated the task with regard to find the relationship between minaret parts and dome house of the mosque, removing the soil of surrounding area and discovery in this part and for finding out the unanswered questions and facts and final realities' understanding of the historical work, they made an attempt to speculate in north and eastern fronts. Moreover, in summer 1981, excavation and speculation by means of completing the obtained information and protecting and organizing which were discovered along with previous investigations, was prosecuted by previously mentioned excavation staff.

The primary results of the discovery were only published in archeological journal as an article.

The 1981 discoveries in the location were resulted in finding several foundations and pillars that in terms of combination and shape are comparable with Esfahan's Jame Mosque's foundation and Shoushtar's Jame Mosque.

Aliakbar Kargar Sarafraz who was responsible for guardianship of 1981 discoveries, attributed the origin of the building and its primary appearance to this era according to Deylami arches foundation and believes that in Seljuk era, the mosque has undergone essential changes.

He proposes two hypothesis concerning the building's creation is Seljuk era:

1- Seljuk have expanded the building.

2- Or they have restored and reconstructed it (Shahbazi Shiran, 2004: 33).

He accepts the first hypothesis through proposing that point that Seljuk have made an attempt to build a thick brick minaret and a dormitory proximate to Deylami era's Jome Mosque.

Mahmoud Mousavi and Mohammad Mehryar also after carrying out two sections of excavation in surrounding area of Jome Mosque comment that:

"Jome Mosque is a square building and its privacy arena was wider in Seljuk era and earlier that the current cut and remained hill.

The mosque was a great building which was constituted of various courts and dormitories and was considered as Ardabil's the most vital force and the main axis".

It can be inferred from the archeological excavations' reports and their results about Jome Mosque that:

1- The building of the mosque is located on top of a hill that under the hill, there are architectural works of the first centuries of Islam or even more ancient.

2- In Seljuk era, the mosque is not built, but expanded and the other elements are added.

3- The origin of the mosque's building is related to Diyalame city.

4- The mosque' minaret was not originally attached to the body which is separated from the building's body now due to destruction of the components and network.

5- In the distance of the interior and exterior surface and among the thick pillars, there is a big network of corridors with archipelagoes.

6-The original building of the mosque has been very big and the expansion of the hill on which the mosque is located is evident in the proximate fields.

7-The discoveries have proved that the narrative which has assumed the mosque as joint point of the roads and markets, has not been too exaggerated (Shahbazi Shiran, 2004: 34).

Conclusion

The current building of Jome Mosque undoubtedly has the stamp of Seljuk architecture but interior design of the building is in contrast with its decade. The noteworthy point is the scattered but delightful and functional decorations of the building which are replete with total harmony and magnificent beat based on math calculations are done in Ilkhani era.

The shape of the mosque includes a porch in the front and a four arch building in the back and in terms of plan, this mosque has been comparable with the buildings before Islam and probably these buildings have been inspiring Islamic architects. The ideas originated from Damghan Sassanid tower's design as well as Firoozabad castle have spread through all parts of the building. This inspirational is a source which has been repeated even in high brick two folded dome with long stalks of prism (Al-Qaeda triangle) and Mogharnas warheads that have articulated the exterior facade of the dome. In points of the fact, all the

details of Jome Mosque's plan are reflective of the method of previous and contemporaneous mosques.

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