



ژورنال علمی باستان‌شناسی ایران

PAZHOSH-HA-YE BASTANSHENASI IRAN
P. ISSN: 2345-5225 & E. ISSN: 2345-5500
Homepage: <https://nbsh.basu.ac.ir/>
Vol. 13, No. 37, Summer 2023



Saljuq Architecture in Iran; Masjid-i Jam' of Marand

Anisi, A.¹

<https://dx.doi.org/10.22084/NB.2023.28232.2621>

Received: 2022/11/28; Accepted: 2023/05/19

Type of Article: **Research**

Pp: 313-331

Abstract

The study aims to discuss the Saljuq dome chamber of the Masji-i Jami' at Marand in detail. The building is mainly famous for its Ilkhanid Mihrab. The dome chamber is part of a larger structure that was expanded in various periods. The mosque was examined by previous scholars, who mainly focused on the Mihrab. Sarre, Pope, Siroux and Wilber are well-known scholars of Iranian architecture who have published their survey about the mosque. In his lengthy studies, Robert Hillenbrand categorises the Marand mosque, with other domed mosques of northwest Iran, as the "School of Qazvin". However, no hard evidence confirmed a Saljuq date for the Marand Jami' except for architectural similarities. The present study mainly focuses on the dome chamber of the building. The article first introduces the mosque and then examines its dome chamber. The dome chamber is placed in a rectangular structure in the historic part of the city. The building was developed and changed at various times. The building has neither a courtyard nor a historic entrance. Despite its vanishing dome, the dome chamber still preserved its original architectural features. The building's main features are the square dome chamber, the stunning transition zone that differs from other Saljuq cases, and an inscription band of carved stucco encircles the dome chamber. Providing a comprehensive reading of the Mihrab's inscriptions as much as possible based on previous studies and the fieldwork of the writer is a further purpose of the study. The inscription band of the dome chamber has not received enough attention from earlier scholars. The fresh material that was found in the conservation procedures of the building shed light on the mosque's history. The founded date confirmed the erection of the dome chamber in the Saljuq period. The study also provides some unpublished drawings of the building.

Keywords: Marand, Mosque, Saljuq, Dome Chamber, Inscription.

1. Associate Professor, Research Center for Historic Monuments and Cities, Iranian Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism (RICHT), Tehran, Iran.

Email: anisi61@yahoo.co.uk

Citations: Anisi, A., (2023). "Saljuq Architecture in Iran; Masjid-i Jam' of Marand". *Pazhoheshha-ye Bastan Shenasi Iran*, 13(37), 313-331. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22084/NB.2023.28232.2621>

Homepage of this Article: https://nbsh.basu.ac.ir/article_5316.html?lang=en

PAZHOSH-HA-YE BASTANSHENASI IRAN
Archaeological Researches of Iran
Journal of Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamadan, Iran.

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Introduction

Saljuq monuments in Iran are grouped into three main areas: Jibal, Azerbaijan and Khurasan. The first one embraces the most significant numbers, while the others are still rich in amounts. Several Saljuq buildings appeared in the Qazvin area in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ Despite the general similarity in Saljuq mosques of the northwest, it seems the two mosques, namely Urmiya and Marand, have closer characteristics. In addition, a detailed description of their architectural aspects is absent in the literature of Saljuq's accounts. This article aims to describe the Masjid-i Jam' (Friday mosque) of Marand and defines the below questions:

Questions: 1. What are the main architectural characteristics of the mosque? 2. What is the accurate date of the mosque? 3. What is the contribution of the mosque to the Saljuq architecture in the region?

The Masjid-i Jami 'at Marand, due to its remarkable Ilkhanid Mihrab, is famous. The research literature on the building shows that several scholars have already discussed it. Friedrich Sarre published photos of the Mihrab as the oldest document before later damages in 1901. He also describes the Mihrab and reads some inscription bands (Sarre, 1901: 24-25). Arthur Upham Pope writes that the mosque was originally a church converted into a mosque in the Ghazan Khan era (r. 695-703/1296-1304). He provided the ground plan of the mosque for the first time, describing the dated Mihrab and mentioning some of its inscriptions (Pope, 1981a: 1096 -97). Pope also, by discussing the stucco ornament of the Mihrab, incorrectly dated the building between 716 /1316 and 738/1310 (Pope, 1934: 326). Donald Wilber, like Pope, addresses the Mihrab; however, he believes that because of having portals on three sides, the dome chamber dates back to the Saljuq period (Wilber, 1955: 172). Maxim Siroux published his lengthy account of the mosque in 1956. He explains the location and its surrounding urban area. He describes different parts of the structure but incorrectly defines various stages of its development. He believes the dome chamber was built around 700/ 1300, before the dated Mihrab. He also provides a detailed plan of the Mihrab (Siroux, 1956: 91-94). He only mentions the transition zone and inscription band of the old dome chamber of the mosque without any interpretation. Robert Hillenbrand mentioned some aspects of the dome chamber's feature compared with other Saljuq domed mosques of the region. He grouped the dome chamber at Marand with other ones of the northwest as a "school of Qazvin" (Hillenbrand, 1976 a: 95-97). McClary

and Danesh published a lengthy report on the Mihrab of the building, and in a comparative study, show that the three major Ilkhanid Mihrabs in the Azerbaijan area are stylistically linked (McClary and Danesh, 2023: 184-201). The present study, based on several field works and library studies, with an analytic-historic approach, intends to complete the previous investigations and provide fresh material on the mosque construction date.

Historic Setting

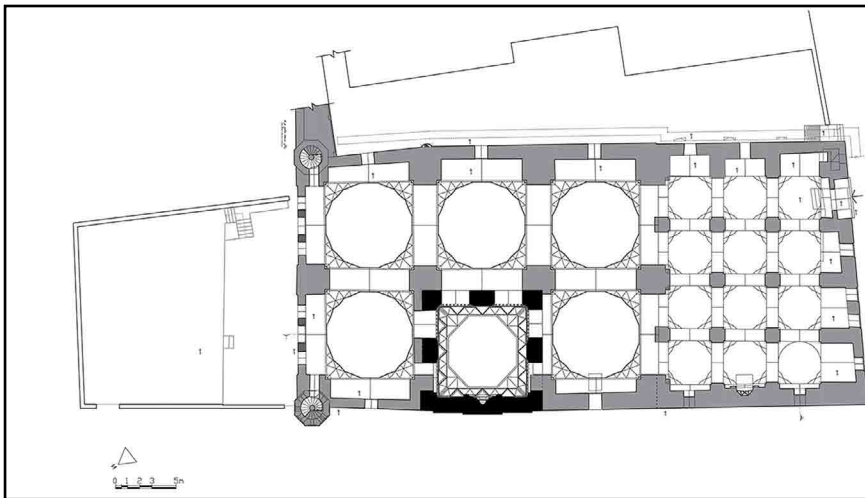
The city of Marand is $38^{\circ} 25' 54.60''$ N and $45^{\circ} 46' 14.86''$ E and located northwest of Tabriz city, in the modern East Azerbaijan province. The city has a lengthy historical background. It is said that the wife of Noah, the prophet, was buried in the town (Chardan, 1349/1970: 398-400). The history of the city goes back to 3000 B.C.E. It seems Marand was prosperous in the Urartu and Mada periods (Azizian, 1378/1999: 85-95). Arab Muslims conquered the city in 21-22/642-43. Buladari mentions Marand as a small village, where Muhammad ibn Ba'ith (201-34/816-48) constructed a fortification and several castles there (Buladari, 1364/1985, 89). In the 3rd /9th century, Tabari says Marand is a large and beautiful town; its periphery is two Farsang, and several gardens exist inside and outside the city (Azizian, 1378/1999: 118). The anonymous author of *Hudud al-'Alam* (372/982) writes that Marand is a prosperous small city which produced woollen clothes (Anonymous, 1362/1983: 160). Ibn Huqal, in his *Surat al-Arz* (367/977), grouped Marand with other small towns of the region as fruitful ones, which have plenty of gardens and springs (Ibn Huqal, 1345/1966, 85). Muqaddasi, in *Ahsan al-Taqasim* (375/985), says that the city is fortified and surrounded by gardens. The Jami' of the town is in the bazaar (Muqaddasi, 1361/1983: 560).

All these medieval texts show that Marand was a prosperous town in the early Islamic centuries. So, constructing a Masjid Jami' inside the town is not surprising. In Marand, like other cities of the region, such as Urmiya, placing a Friday mosque beside the bazaar was standard in the medieval period. It is noteworthy that the Masjid-i Jami' of Marand is still near the bazaar area.

Location and Description

The Masjid-i Jami', $38^{\circ}25'51.80''$ N, $45^{\circ}46'32.38''$ E, is located in the old and historic part of the city, to the northeast of Imam Khomeini Square, beside the present Shahid Rajaie Street. To the east of the mosque is a

street locally known as Masjid-i Jami' Street. The mosque's main entrance, which has no historical significance, entered from the street. Behind the entrance, seven stairs downward led inside the building. The mosque is roughly rectangular, measuring 47.25×21.65 m. Due to Azerbaijan's cold weather, the mosque has no courtyard and is a completely enclosed structure. Architecturally, two different adjoining parts, which are various in proportion, form the masjid. The first part, which comprises 12 domed bays, is adjacent to the entrance. The second part seems older and contains six vaulted square bays of similar size (Fig. 1). In the middle of the south side of the second part stands a square dome chamber (gunbad khana). Its dome has vanished and is now covered with a flat timber roof.² It seems the dome chamber was the oldest core of the mosque and was originally accessible on three sides. At a later time, possibly in the Safavid period, a series of vaulted bays measuring 7.25×7.25 m were built around the dome chamber. In the next phase, possibly in the Qajar period, the structure extended to the east, and a further shabistan equal in width to the previous part was erected. The latter shabistan contains twelve vaulted bays measuring 3.5×3.5 m. On the west side, two separate doorways lead to outside.



◀ Fig. 1: Ground plan of the mosque (After ICHTO).

The dome chamber is approximately square, measuring 7.45×7.65 m. The inner diameter of the dome chamber is 10.58 m, and its ground plan has six arched openings on all sides except the Qibla (south) wall (Fig. 2). A pier measuring 2.07 long, 1.28 m wide and 4.27 high is in the middle of each side. A similar plan can be seen in other Saljuq dome chambers of the region, such as the Friday Mosque of Urmiya (middle of the 6th /12th century) and Sujas (3rd quarter of the 6th /12th century). Over each entrance is a four-centred arch, which rests on a round-engaged column of plaster,



▲ Fig. 2: East side view of the dome chamber (Author, 2022).

40 cm in diameter, at each corner of the pier. Each column is covered with vegetal repetitive patterns of carved stucco in high relief. The openings of all sides originally had equal sizes. However, a brick wall has blocked parts of two openings opposite each other on the west and east sides of the chamber. It is likely that once the building had a structural problem, the wall was erected as a traditional solution to strengthen the structure. An engaged round column of plaster, 40 cm in diameter, was placed at each southeast and southwest corner of the Qibla wall.

Inside the dome chamber, the transition zone of the building, 3 m high, is to be found at a height of 6 m. The zone creates an eight-sided base for erecting the dome. The form of the squinch in the Marand mosque is in some ways different from that of the trilobed Saljuq in central Iran.³ In the latter, eight rib vaults typically provide 8, 16, and 24-sided bases, transforming a rectangle or square apex into the circular base of the dome.⁴ In the Marand, a shouldered arch spans the corners.⁵ The form of the niche seems to be tri-lobed; however, structurally, the upper part is set over the two separate blind niches (each niche topped by a projected arch head) on the lower part (Fig. 3). The shouldered arch recesses appear to anchor the squinch one to the cornice on which it rests. Rather than filling the squinch zone and thus articulating the inner wall surface, the shouldered arch becomes a framing device and a type of moulding that unifies the zone and creates a rhythmic design.⁶

Structurally, the combination of these narrow lobes does not make an integrated and trilobed solid squinch, similar to those of central Iran, and typically has less resistance against thrusting. The distance between each squinch in Marand is divided by two equal jointed niches (Fig. 4). A window with a shoulder arch head is in the lower part of each niche. Similar windows, blocked now, can be seen on the other sides of the transition zone. At the end of the lower row of the transition zone is placed a blind niche with a decorative pattern. The closest parallel of construction can be seen in the Masjid-i Jami 'of Urmiya (middle of the 5th/11th century),⁷ Gunbad-i Surkh in Maragha (542/1142), the 'Ala'adīn Mosque in Qūniya (632-33/1235).⁸

It is notable that the differentiation between the transition zone in Urmiya and Marand Jami' lies in the continuous interwoven net of concaved niches in the latter, circling the circumference of the dome chamber even in the middle of the sides, which would have led to the structural unity and equilibrium.⁹ The original exterior form of the Marand domed chamber has vanished. However, compared with other Saljuq mosques of the region,

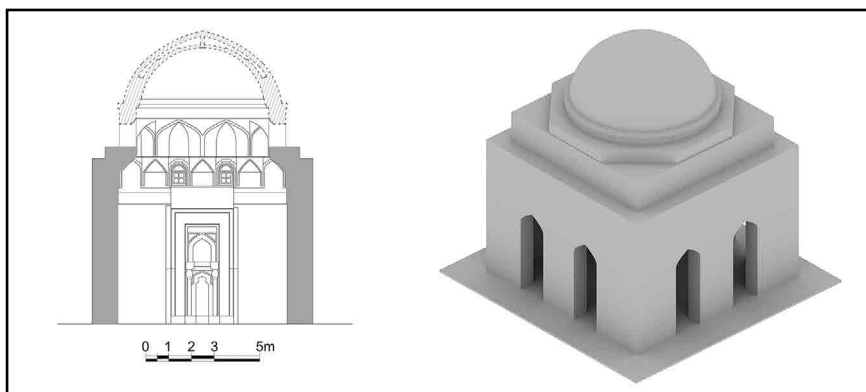


▲ Fig. 3: View of the southeast Squinch (Author, 2022).



◀ Fig. 4: Transitional zone over the Mihrab (Author, 2022).

such as Urmiya, Sujas and Qurva, the exterior façade of the building likely enjoyed no decoration. The inner diameter of the vanished dome is 5.70 m. There is no clue from the original dome of the mosque. However, due to a homogeneous architectural style among the northwest Saljuq mosques, proposing a reconstruction form of the dome is possible. The closest parallels from a dimensions point of view are those of Sujas and Qarva.¹⁰ These two domes have pointed profiles and rest on a hexadecagon zone. The dome of Marand, similar to Urmiya, was likely a double-shell dome, in which its inner shell had a hemispherical form, while its outer shell seemed to be pointed. The dome at Marand, like the mosques mentioned above, had a low profile (Fig. 5 a, b).¹¹ The proposed reconstruction of the dome shows that the inner height of the dome chamber was around 12.70 m. So, the inner ratio of width to height is about 1:1.70, close to that of Urmiya (1:1.72).



◀ Fig. 5: (a) Proposal reconstruction of the dome (left), (b) 3d scheme of the dome chamber (right).

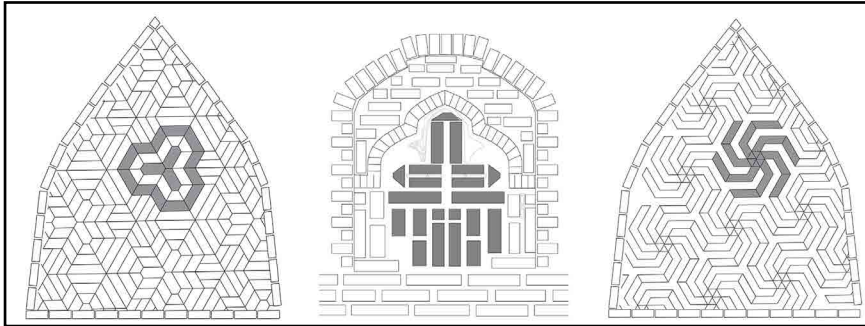
Recognising the construction of a domed mosque originally inside an earlier hypostyle mosque (such as the south dome chamber in Isfahan Jami‘) or independent like a pavilion has always been curious for architectural historians. Godard classifies the latter type as a pavilion or kiosk-domed mosque, similar to Barsiyan, Simnan, etc. (Godard, 1936: 193). The northwest Saljuq domed mosques (such as those of Sujas, Qurva and Urmiya) were built independently, so it is reasonable to suppose the Jami‘ of Marand had a similar situation. During an archaeological investigation carried out by the ICHTO in 2008-2010, the remains of a row of columns of baked brick were found adjacent to the northeast outside of the mosque. The investigation showed that the row was not limited to the peripheries of the mosque, and it was extended inside the northeast of the mosque. The survey showed that the earlier floor of the mosque was about 1.10 m below the present level. The investigation showed an earlier shabiستان of an unclear date and boundary once existed there. However, due to a lack of hard evidence, constructing the dome chamber inside an earlier shabiستان in Marand is still an open question and requires more investigation.¹²

The building is entirely constructed of baked brick with mortar plaster. Like the Saljuq domed mosque of the region, there is no independent minaret of the period standing near the mosque of Marand.

At the northwest and southeast corners of the building are two octagonal minarets of baked brick. The first minaret has an inner circular staircase and is accessible from the inside of the mosque. So, it suggests that the minaret was not independent and was built contemporary with the development of the mosque in the second phase. The main entrance of the mosque was likely once to the west side, and the minaret was added to the building for more stress on the entrance. The latter was built similarly to the first about 20 years ago.

Decoration

The inner decoration of the mosque comprises brick and plaster, which the letter dominates without question. The lower part of the transition zone is covered by high-quality brick revetment, which shows various geometric patterns. These patterns can also be seen in other Saljuq monuments in the northwest area, such as the tomb towers at Kharaqan (Fig. 6). Applying brick decoration in Marand, similar to that of Isfahan, may suggest that the mosque of Marand was erected at a close time to Isfahan. No trace of any decorative joint plagues of plaster was found inside the Marand mosque.



◀ Fig. 6: Various baked brick patterns of the transition zone (Author, 2022).

The main decorative element of the mosque is a stunning carved stucco Mihrab, which occupies about one-third of the Qibla wall of the dome chamber. Sarrae published the earliest photo of the Mihrab in 1901 (Fig. 7). The Mihrab is rectangular, measuring 6.05 m long and 3.15 m wide. A large carved stucco panel measuring 2.75 long and 0.95 m wide is on the top of the Mihrab. The panel contains a series of tulips with pairs of tendrils in high relief. The console covers part of an inscription band (see: below), which encircles the dome chamber. The panel was added later to the dome chamber. A rectangular frame measuring 5.01 m long and 0.20 m wide runs around the Mihrab. The frame is ornamented with carved stucco and contains floral patterns in low relief. Several inscriptions can be seen on the Mihrab. The largest is a Thuluth inscription, which runs around the Mihrab's inner cavetto frame, 45 cm wide. The inscription band is ornamented with low-relief vegetal patterns integrated into the letters. The inscription contains three various texts. The initial portion of the Inscription in the bottom, right to the viewer, has vanished, but the remains of it show that it was a hadith from Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. The text is (1):

إذا رأيتم الرجل يعتاد [المسجد فاشهدوا له بالايمان]

Translation: If you see someone attending the mosque, bear witness to him with faith.

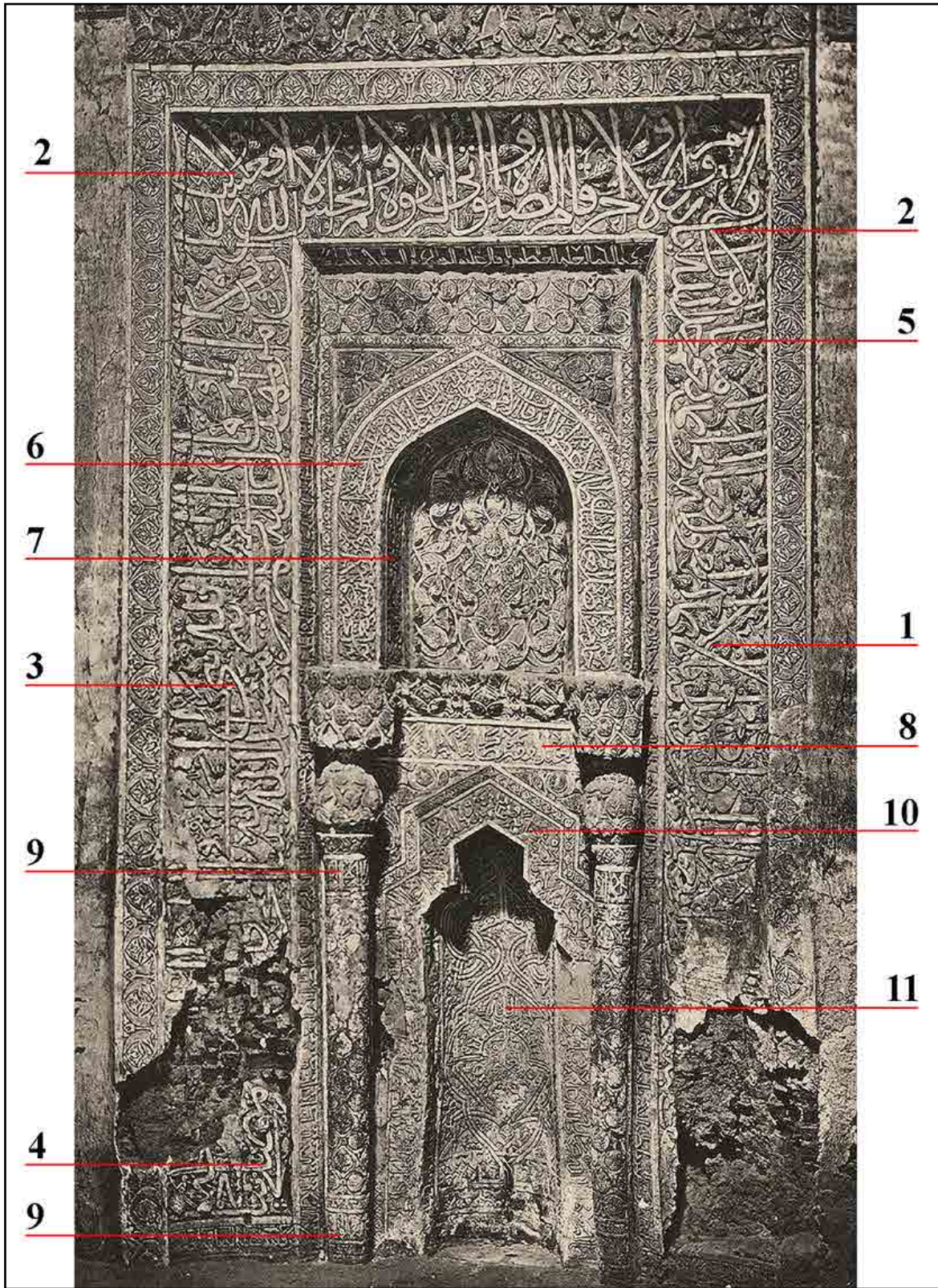
After the hadith rests a Quranic verse (9:18) that reads (2):

قال الله تعالى انما يعمر مساجد الله من آمن بالله و اليوم الاخر و اقام الصلاة و اتى الزكاه و لم يخش الا الله فعسى اوليك ان يكونوا من المهتدين.

Translation: God, the excellence says only he shall inhabit God's places of worship who believes in God and the Last Day, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and fears none but God alone; it may be that those will be among the guided.

After the Quranic verse placed a further hadith from Muhammad, the prophet of Islam (peace be upon him), on the left side of the frame reads (3):

و قال عليه السلم من بنى لله مسجدا بنى الله له بيتا فى الجنة



▲ Fig. 7: Location of inscriptions on the Mihrab, photo from Sarre 1901 with numbering by the present Author.

Translation: And peace be upon him said whoever builds a mosque for God, God builds a house for him in heaven.

According to Sarre's photo, the remains of the inscription likely suggest a further hadith at the bottom of the band that can be read as (4):

وقال عليه السلام ان ال [مصلی] اذا صلى [یناجی ربه]

Translation: And peace be upon him, said when the worshiper prays, he calls his Lord.

Beside the cavetto frame, a narrow Kufic inscription band, about 10 cm wide, runs around the inner rectangular part of the Mihrab. The text is (McClary and Danesh, 2023: 197) (5):

... رسول الله قال المساجد ... سبحان الله الحمد لله ولا حول ولا اله الا الله والله اكبر ولا حول ولا قوة الا بالله العلي العظيم وقال عليه السلام المسجد... الله العظيم وقال عليه السلام ... قال عليه السلام ...

Translation: ... The prophet of Allah said the mosques... exalted is Allah, and praise is for Allah and there is no god except Allah is the greatest, and there is no power nor strength except in Allah the lofty, the great ... The prophet said the mosque ... Almighty Allah he said peace be upon him ... he said, peace be upon him ...

A large niche topped by a keel arch dominates the middle of the Mihrab. On the extrados of the arch is an inscription band of Thuluth that is a foundation text. It read as follows (6):

جدد من فواضل انعام السلطان الاعظم مالك رقاب الامم ابوسعيد بهادر خان
خلد الله ملكه في سنة احدى و ثلاثين و سبعمائه هجريه

Translation: New (renew) from the abundant reward of the most excellent Sultan, owner of the necks of nations, Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan, may God make immortal his reign in the year 731 AH (1330-31).

The inscription refers to the patron's name of the renewing Mihrab, Abu Sa'id Bahadur Khan (r.716- 36/ 1316-35), the last Ilkhanid. Like Marand, a stunning Mihrab is in the Urmiya Jami'(d. 676/1277). In the latter, the patron's name is absent, while in the first one, it is on the top is visible. This difference goes back to the religious policy of the ruler. The Mihrab at Urmiya was built in the reign of Aqaba (r. 663-81/1265-82), who followed his ancestral shamanism, so Islam has no position in society. However, the Mihrab at Marand was erected in the reign of Bahadur Khan, who was determined to dominate Islam in Iran. So, to be built, a Mihrab is considered a pious act and provides credit for the patron.¹³

The general structure of the Mihrab is similar to that of Uljaytu in Isfahan. Unlike the latter, the inscription band on Marand is a secular (historical) text

and not a Quranic one. The remains of an earlier Mihrab (Saljuq) may be found beneath the present Mihrab.

A further inscription band in Naskhi is on the intrados of the keel arch of the Mihrab. The text is (7):

وقف من المال خیرته مدینه مرند علی مصالح هذا المسجد الجامع و شرط
التولیته العبد الضعیف حسین بن محمود بن تاج خواجه

Translation: The endowment of the assets of the city of Marand on the interests of the masjid-i Jami' and the condition of its patronage, weak servant Hussein Ibn Mahmud Ibn Taj Khwaja.

The remains of red paint can be seen on the background of the inscription band. The intrados inscription band is notably a rare case in the Ilkhanid Mihrabs. The spandrels of the arch are decorated with floral motifs of low relief. A vegetal pattern of large leaves overlaid by twisted scrolling tendrils decorates the tympanum of the arch.

It is noteworthy that a stone doorframe is inside the mosque, adjacent to the entrance on the north side.¹⁴ It contains a four-centred arch that rests on two round engaged columns. On the top of the arch is a rectangular inscription band in Thuluth (Fig. 8). Wilber mentions the doorframe as the portal of winter shabistan and briefly translates it.¹⁵ However, its complete text reads as follows:



Fig. 8: Inscription over the stone doorframe (Author, 2022). ►

امر بتجدید هذا العماره العبد فقیر خواجه بن سیف الدین محمود بن تاج خواجه
فی اواخر شوال سنه اربعین و سبعمائہ

Translation: The renewing of this building was ordered by the poor servant, the Khwaja Ibn Sayf al-Din Mahmud Ibn Taj Khwaja, the end of Shawwal, the year 740 (March, 1339).

The two texts refer to the same person, who was introduced with detail in the latter inscription. The title Khwaja (great chief or dignitary) shows its high governing rank. It is unclear that the doorframe initially belonged to which part of the mosque. However, the doorframe has probably been moved from a nearby structure and installed in the mosque later. It seems that Taj Khawja was a benefactor in repairing religious structures.

The inner arch of the Mihrab rests on two decorated impostes. A floral panel in high relief places occupies the span of them. Immediately below the panel is a rectangular surface containing the name of the craftsman or artist who created the Mihrab. The script style is Rika, which is often used for signs.¹⁶ The text is (8):

عمل‌العبد الفقير نظام بندگیرالتبریزی

Translation: The work of the poor servant Nizam Bandgir of Tabriz.¹⁷

Bandgir literally means a repairer who blocks tiny gaps in a structure with plaster. Similarly, in the Ilkhanid Mihrab of Urmiya (d. 676/1277), the craftsman's signature is in the middle of the Mihrab. Both craftsmen are from Tabriz. The city seemed to be the centre of craftsmen, and Tabrizi artisans produced a series of stunning carved stucco Mihrabs, similar decorative surface patterns, in the region.¹⁸

The decorative engaged columns flanked the central niche. On the collar and bottom of each column is written in Kufic (9):

الملک‌الله

Translation: The sovereignty belongs to God.

Beneath the inscription band is a further niche with a trefoil arch head. Two separate texts run around the frame. The others are missing except for a fragment part of the texts on the extrados of the niche head. However, Sarre's photo provides the lost text right to the viewer, and it can be read as (10):

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم [إذا مات ابن آدم] انقطع عمله عنه الا ثلاث صدقه جاریه او علم ينتفع به من او ولد صالح يدعوه

Translation: The prophet of Allah, may God's prayers and peace be upon him, said if the son of Adam dies, his deeds come to an end, except for him three, ongoing alms, or knowledge that is benefitted from, or a righteous child who prays for him.

The second script, possibly a further hadith, is illegible. However, the word "Masjid" is readable in the middle of the text. The rear cursive surface of the inner niche on the bottom of the Mihrab suffers from many losses, but Sarre's photo shows that it was embellished with strap work patterns in

low relief. A large cursive Allah (God) is at the top, and two words in semi-circular form are below it. The text can be read as (11):

خلد الله ملكه

Translation: God immortalised his kingdom.

The above phrase is a du'a (prayer), traditionally applied for sultans in the Ilkhanid period. The exact phrase with Abu Sa'ied Bahadur Khan's name is inscribed on a silver Ilkhanid coin dated 726 AH.¹⁹

Beneath Allah, two words, al- Sami' and al- 'Alim, both in cursive script, are mirrored, so the text reads:

الله السميع العليم

Translation: God is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

At the bottom of the niche, the phrase الملك الله can be read. According to Sarre's photo, the remains of two inscription bands in Kufic, which have almost vanished now, at the bottom end of the Mihrab, are hardly readable and remain unrecognised.

An inscription band of carved stucco encircles the dome chamber at a height of 5.27 m from the floor level (Fig. 9). Previous scholars only mentioned it inside the dome chamber without any description (Wilber, 1955: 172; Siroux, 1956: 12). The band is 75 cm high; however, the text is 55 cm tall. The inscription band articulates the vertical section of the dome chamber. The initial inscription on the dome chamber's west side is badly damaged and illegible now. However, it can be assumed that the inscription started with a standard phrase, bismala (in the name of God). It is followed by a Quranic text (Quran, 72: 18-28)²⁰ that ends on the beginning of the northwest side of the dome chamber. The inscription frieze is in Kufic on an azure background, making the text more legible. Running an inscription band of carved stucco around a dome chamber can be seen in other Saljuq mosques of the region, such as the Friday mosque of Qazvin, Hiydaria and Sujas.



Fig. 9: View of the inscription band, southeast side of the dome chamber (Author, 2022). ►

Despite the decorative role of the inscription, its theme has been deliberately chosen to be suited to the building's function. The first verse emphasises to the believers that the mosques are for only God and call

not anyone along with God. The verse is popular and has been written in several places, such as Varamin Jam's Mihrab (Dodd and Khairallah, 1981: 139-140). The other verses are mainly about Islamic monotheism (Tawhid) and following the prophet of Islam. It is noteworthy that there is no record of using the Sura al-Jinn to this degree in other medieval buildings in Iran. Stylistically, the inscription is interlaced in the body of letters. The background of the frieze is adorned with decorative patterns (Fig. 10)

The upper part of the Kufic band is filled with floral patterns containing netted stars and lozenges of carved stucco in high relief. Simple floral forms with scrolls can be seen on the upper part of the inscription band. The end of some letters, like alif is bent toward right and left. The words like kh and ki are identically carved. The inscribing letters such as alf, kaf, and sin are similar to those of Isfahan South Dome. The incision design of some letters, such as alif can be seen in the inscription. The closest parallel of epigraphy can be seen in Masjid-i Hiyadariya and Ribat-i Sharaf, both dating back to the Saljuq period. The remains of an illegible minor inscription band in Kufic can be seen under the dome chamber's band on the top right side of the Mihrab.



◀ Fig. 10: Detail of inscription band of the dome chamber (Author, 2022).

In the process of conservation activities by the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organisation in 1385/2006, at the end of the inscription, on the northwest corner side of the dome chamber, the below date appeared (Fig. 11)²¹.

... هذه الكتابه سنه خم [سه ت] مئین و اربع مائه ... امیرالامرا قطب الدوله ...



Fig. 11: Faded date of inscription (Author, 2022). ►

Translation: ... this writing in the year four hundred and eighty five... the commander of commanders ... leader of the state

The Amir al-Umara is a military title found from the early 4th/10th century onwards, first in Iraq and then in the Iranian lands. In the Saljuq period, the title was normally one of several titles applied to high military commanders (Bosworth and Savory, 2011). The title in Marand possibly refers to Amir Isma'ile Yaquti, who ruled Azerbaijan during the Malikshah's reign (465-85/1072-92), sultan of Great Saljuq. According to Saljuq Nama, after his death, the struggle between his wife Turkan Khatun (who aimed to protect her son Mahmoud's kingship) and another Malik Shah's son, Barkiyaruq, occurred over the Saljuq sovereignty (Nishapuri, 1332, 35-36). He defeated Turkan Khatun (his stepmother) in a battle near Brujard and then surrounded her army in Isfahan. However, they finally reached a compromise with the meddling of Saljuq nobles. Barkiyaruq accepted, in exchange for money, ended the seizure of Isfahan in 486/1093. After his departure, Turkan Khatun sent a messenger to Malik Isma'ile (or Isma'ile Yaquti), the brother of Barkiyaruq's mother.²² She encouraged him to support her conflict with Barakiyaruq with a marriage vow. The request shows that Isma'ile was an influential man with a powerful army. Finally, in a battle near Karaj, Barkiyaruq defeated Isma'ile. He escaped to Isfahan and was killed soon after by Barkiyaruq's commanders in 486/1093 (Furouzani, 1393/2015: 162-63). So, it suggests that Isma'ile Yaquti was a provincial ruler and army commander, so entitling him as Amir al-Umara is acceptable. So, it can likely confirm the erection of the dome chamber in 485/1092 when Isma'ile was in power.

Conclusion

The Masjid- i Jami' at Marand is a significant building on some counts. From the architectural history perspective, it illustrates the idea of constructing a dome chamber, which first occurred at Isfahan Jami 'as a new fashion in the Saljuq period. The faded date (485/ 1092) at the end of the inscription band suggests that the mosque of Marand was the earliest Saljuq domed mosque,

which hitherto has been identified in the Azerbaijan area. The small size and simple square plan of the dome chamber show the conservative experience of erecting a mosque in a small town in northwest Iran. The scheme of Marand was a prototype for other Saljuq domed mosques in the region, such as Urmiya, Sujas and Qurva. From the architectural point of view, the sophisticated zone of transition of the dome chamber shows an innovative technique that is little known in Saljuq architecture. These features can be considered the main contribution of the Marand Jami' in developing Saljuq domed mosque in northwest Iran. The dome chamber is not preceded by an iwan. The feature shows that the mosque can be categorised as a freestanding domed mosque - or, as Godard says, "kiosk-mosque" (mosquée kiosque). As mentioned earlier, Pope claims that the building was originally a church and then converted into a mosque. However, the present study suggests that the dome chamber was initially likely built as a domed mosque beside (or inside) an earlier structure.

The interior Saljuq decoration contains brickwork of geometric patterns with a Kufic inscription band of carved plaster. These features also show a common characteristic of the Saljuq mosques; however, the latter distinguishes Jami' of Marand from the central Iranian mosque in the 5th/11th century. The similarities of the stunning carved stucco Mihrab of the mosque with those of Urmiya and Tabriz define an identical type of Mihrab that can be named the "style of Tabriz", which was standard in the Ilkhanid period in Azerbaijan and influenced central Iran.

The formation and development of the mosque in various periods suggest the continuity and integrity of the Iranian mosques according to the population growth and response to new needs throughout history.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Mr. Vahabzada, Mr. Chatrouz and Mr. Muhammadi for providing information about the mosque. I am thankful to Dr. Richard McClary for his kind favor in sending me his article on the mihrab of the building. I also thank Mr. Mustafa Sandoqdar for preparing the drawings of the study.

Endnotes

1. A pair of tomb towers became known in the Kharagan, and a further one in Takiṣtan and two domed small mosques at Qirva, Sujas became evident. For the first one see Stronach, and Young, 1966: 1-20, and for the two mosques see Hillenbrand, 1972: 64-77 and Hillenbrand, 1976: 47-79.

2. It is likely the dome destroyed by an earthquake in 1786 (See Ambraseys and Melville, 1982: 55-56).
3. For a new study on tri-lobed squinch see: Hagra, 2023: 872-74.
4. Godard says this type of construction were applied in all great Saljuq domes. See: Godard 1949: 273.
5. Such as the Friday Mosques of Isfahan, Barsiyan, Ardiştan and Zavara.
6. Edward and Edward, 1999: 78-9.
7. For a photo of the squinch of Masjid-i Marand see Hillenbrand 1976 (a): Pl. II and Pl. III.
8. For a detailed study see Redford 1991: 54-74.
9. Pashaei Kamali et al., 2020: 11.
10. The ground plan of Masjid- Jami' at Qurva and Sujas are 5.5×5.5 m and 9.20×9.20 respectively.
11. For example see Hillenbrand, 1976 b: 54 & Hillenbrand, 1972: 11.
12. I am grateful to Mr. Aminian the supervisor of investigation for providing the information.
13. A similar situation can be seen in the Friday mosque of Urmiya and Ardabil, both in the Azerbaijan area (For these two mihrabs see: McClary & Danesh, 2023: 173-74 & Anisi, 1396 / 2017: 45, respectively.
14. The doorframe was previously installed on the opposite side of the present location.
15. Wilber, 1955: 172.
16. Rīqa is derived from Thulth intended for the rapid writing and often used for signs.
17. Pope translates the Bandgir as plařter worker (Pope, 1982 b: 398).
18. For a recent comparative studies on the subject see: McCalary & Danesh, 2023: 164-212).
19. The full text is: فی ایام دوله السلطان الاعظم ابوسعید خلد الله ملکه.
The coin is preserved in the Malik Museum in Tehran. Property No: 0000, 06, 00597. For a further example see: Blair, 1983: 299.
20. Sura al-Jinn. See: Arberry, 1964: 347-48.
21. The title at the end of the inscription it is not clear now. But according to the conservators of the inscription, Mr. Shahpalangi it has been read according the fade remaining trace (personal communication). I am grateful to Mr. Vahabzada, the supervisor of the conservation of the inscription band for providing me information about the date.
22. Khal-i Barkiyaruq

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معماری سلجوقی در ایران؛ مسجد جامع مرند

علیرضا انیسی^۱

شناسه دیجیتال (DOI): <https://dx.doi.org/10.22084/NB.2023.28232.2621>

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۱/۰۹/۰۷، تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۲/۰۲/۲۹

نوع مقاله: پژوهشی

صص: ۳۳۱-۳۱۳

چکیده

هدف از این مطالعه بررسی دقیق گنبدخانه سلجوقی مسجد جامع مرند می‌باشد. این مسجد عمدتاً به دلیل دارا بودن محراب ایلخانی آن شناخته شده است. گنبدخانه بخشی از یک بنای بزرگ‌تر می‌باشد که در دوره‌های مختلف گسترش یافته است. این مسجد به وسیله محققین قبلی که عمدتاً بر این محراب تمرکز نمودند، بررسی شده است. «ساره»، «پوپ»، «سیرو» و «ویلبر» از پژوهشگران شناخته شده معماری ایران هستند که مطالعات خود را در مورد این مسجد منتشر کرده‌اند. «رابرت هیلن براند» در مطالعات مفصل خود مسجد مرند را به همراه سایر بناهای گنبددار شمال غرب ایران را جزو «شیوه قزوین» دسته‌بندی می‌کند. تاکنون به جز شباهت‌های معماری هیچ مدرک محکمی تاریخ سلجوقی مسجد جامع مرند را تأیید نکرده است. این پژوهش نخست به معرفی مسجد می‌پردازد و سپس ویژگی‌های معماری گنبدخانه آن را بررسی می‌کند. این گنبدخانه بخشی از یک ساختمان مستطیل‌شکل است که در بخش تاریخی شهر قرار دارد. این ساختمان در دوره‌های مختلف تاریخی توسعه و تغییر یافته است. این ساختمان فاقد حیاط و یا یک ورودی تاریخی است. باوجود تخریب گنبد، گنبدخانه هنوز ویژگی‌های اولیه معماری خود را حفظ کرده است. این خصوصیات اصلی عبارتند از: گنبدخانه مربع‌شکل، منطقه انتقال نیروی شاخصی که با سایر نمونه‌های سلجوقی تفاوت دارد و نیز کتیبه‌ای گچ‌بری شده که به دور گنبدخانه است از خصوصیات بارز این بنا می‌باشد. تکمیل خوانش کتیبه‌های محراب در حد امکان و بر پایه اطلاعات موجود از دیگر اهداف این مطالعه است. بررسی کتیبه گنبدخانه مورد غفلت پژوهشگران قبلی واقع شده است. اطلاعات جدیدی که در جریان حفاظت و مرمت این کتیبه به دست آمد تاریخ مسجد را روشن و ساخت آن را در دوره سلجوقی تأیید نمود. به علاوه، در این پژوهش برخی از طرح‌های منتشر نشده از این بنا ارائه می‌گردد.

کلیدواژگان: مرند، مسجد، سلجوقی، گنبدخانه، کتیبه.

۱. دانشیار پژوهشکده ابنیه و بافت‌های تاریخی، پژوهشگاه میراث فرهنگی و گردشگری، تهران، ایران (نویسنده مسئول).

Email: anisi61@yahoo.co.uk

ارجاع به مقاله: انیسی، علیرضا، (۱۴۰۲). «معماری سلجوقی در ایران؛ مسجد جامع مرند». پژوهش‌های باستان‌شناسی ایران، ۱۳(۳۷): ۳۳۱-۳۱۳. <https://dx.doi.org/10.22084/NB.2023.28232.2621>

صفحه اصلی مقاله در سامانه نشریه:

https://nbsh.basui.ac.ir/article_5316.htm?lang=fa

فصلنامه علمی گروه باستان‌شناسی دانشکده هنر و معماری، دانشگاه بوعلی سینا، همدان، ایران.

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