

## The Position of the Holy Shrines in the City (Case Study: Emamzade Yahya Shrine in Sari)

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### ABSTRACT

From the advent of Islam, the religious buildings are one of the main elements of the Islamic cities and the religious buildings in the form and structure of the city was with the creation of the first Islamic cities. One of the religious buildings with effective role in organizing the Islamic cities is holy shrine. The sons of Imam (12 Imam in Shia) and the related shrines are considered. There are some holy shrines in Iraq and most of them are in the cities and villages of Iran. Sadat (the son and grand sons of Imam) distribution was not similar in all areas and there are many holy shrines where they felt safe as Rey Mountain, Tabarestan and some central areas in Iran. As Mazandaran province (Old Tabarestan) was the place of formation of Alavian government and the children of the Prophete peace be upon him and most of the Sadat and the children of Imaman (pbuh) were killed in the battles in this region and the war with the enemies of the Prophete children, there are many holy shrines in this area. According to the statistics 1996, there are more than 979 shrines in Mazandaran province. The present study was done to evaluate the position of the holy shrines in a city with the case study of Imamzade Yahya shrine in Sari (one of the ancient cities in Mazandaran) was done with field study. The aim was the evaluation of the position of this shrine in old tissue of Sari city as the identity center and social interaction center of this city and its structural-spatial organization is as it is linked with the historical identity of the past of the city. The present study investigated the active nature of this area with the presence of market and Imamzade Yahya shrine as the economical center and referred to the important role of this shrine in the old tissue of Sari as one of the organizing elements in this city.

**KEYWORDS:** Islamic urbanization; Architecture; Religious building position; Imamzade Yahya shrine; Sari

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### INTRODUCTION

A part of the historical identity of any nation is considered in the valuable monuments. On the other hand, the historical buildings had different use. One of the most important uses of old valuable monuments in Iran is religious places. Iran is one of the countries with enriched culture based on Islam. The cultural heritage of this old country is considerable and it is also increased considerably after some centuries. The historical monuments with various religious, cultural, service and educational use and the valuable effects showed the great civilization in this country.

Iran is with more than 17000 historical monuments and great part of its is consisting of valuable buildings as mosques, Hosseinie and holy shrines (Based on the existing statistics in Iran, more than 8000 holy shrines of the Prophete family are registered being distributed in various provinces). This building (called the religious men shrine or holy shrines) was the origin of the formation of the villages, township and cities and they are famous in cultural heritage and they require the special protection. The historical-religious monuments are consisting of various types including Hosseinie, mosques and holy shrines. The main difference of this building with other historical buildings is that they can not be eliminated or changed their use and they keep the residential-humanistic complexes. With the advent of Islam in Iran, the architecture and urbanization in Iran were changed and created significant overlapping. Accepting Islam and the relationship between the Iranians and infallible Imam (pbuh) and their residency in this country were full of grace. Formation of most of the townships and cities was done due to the religious places and holy shrines. Iranian people respect them and they know them as the favor of Allah and asked them to fulfill their needs. To do this and respecting them, some monuments were built in their tomb and sometimes their footsteps were respected as Ghadamgah and they were protected as holy place and they decorated them gracefully. The holy shrines have important role in Allah close relation with God. As people know there is a place to link them to Allah (symbolic) and they ask them to fulfill their needs and it will have positive effect on their morale. Some of the holy shrines were considered more due to the special architectural structures and as they belong to the infallible Imam (pbuh) as in some cities or towns, they are considered as the city center or township. Salih Shrine in Tajrish (Tehran), Abolazim shrine (pbuh) in Rey, Masume Shrine (pbuh) in Qom, Shahcheraq shrine (pbuh) in Shiraz, etc as

religious center attracted 1000 people daily and developed these townships and affected urbanization and urban planning and gave identity to them.

Normally, holy shrines and their construction among human communities date back to the past. In Iran, many years ago, the shrines were considered more as in the second millennium BC, Shah Ilam shrine was built in Haft Tape and it is of great importance in terms of architecture progress and historical aspects. After some Islamic centuries, architecture namely the holy shrines are developed in various regions. Some of the reasons of the development of this architecture is the migration of the Son of Imaman (pbuh) and sadat to Iran and their martyrdom and death and formation of local governments.

### Statement of the problem

The holy shrines due to the architectural quality and quantity have the second position in Iran art and architecture after the mosques. The martyrdom and death of the children and son of infallible Imam of Shia (pbuh), martyrdom of the great soldiers in Islam, respecting the religious, literature and scientific men and acknowledging the position of the just rulers, caused to construct such great buildings. Mazandaran as the first political basis of Shia in Islam provided suitable safety for the Sadat and immigrants who left their country to be escaped of the tyranny of the Abasid rulers. The behavior of the residents in Mazandaran is the grace granted by Allah, as the green nature or great people, this feature caused that the guests in this city were respected at their life and when they were martyred and the holy shrines were built for them. As Mazandaran province (Old Tabarestan) is the location of the formation of Alavian and the children of the Prophet (pbuh) and great number of Sadat and children of the Prophet were killed in the battles in this region in the war against the enemies of the Prophet family and there are many holy shrines in this region. In the Marashian era with the ruling of Teimour in Iran, the second period of construction of tomb began in Mazandaran. The first period was dedicated to Ghabus, Lajim and Resket domes and they were some examples. These works started Razy style in Iran architecture. After a long silence with the formation of the local strong government of Marashian, Emamian ruled in Mazandaran and propagated the thoughts and respected the religious men. There are various architecture works in holy shrines. The holy shrine tower of Emamzade Yahya in Sari is one of the great examples in this period and besides the structure, the valuable architecture had a wooden box and an old door.

The present study evaluated the role of holy shrines in formation of urban spaces with the case study of the role of Emamzade Yahya in Sari in urban tissue organizing of Sari. At first, a complete history of this building was introduced in terms of its architecture importance. The brick tower building of Emamzade Yahya in Sari is consisting of wooden box and door with artistic and historical significance. In accordance with the existing content of the inscription, the wooden box was built in 849 hijri ghamari and the sponsor was Khaje Hassan and the writer of the inscription was Fakhroldin Motahar Ibn Abdollah Al-Dai. Referring to the family tree, Imamzade Yahya was one of the children of Imam Musa Kazim. This holy shrine is famous in the city and villages of Sari town and other tourists visiting this town.

According to the historical documents, 4 people are buried in this tower. Yahya Ibn Mir Qavamoldin Marashi is famous and the current shrine is built due to its burying in this place. There are some books about this building in the trip stories and they are sometimes in contradiction with the histories and documents.

### Emamzade Yahya shrine in historical books

In various books, Emamzade Yahya shrine is referred. The book of Melgonef and Rabio to the notes of Corpus board of Sotude in the fourth volume of the book from Astara to Astarabad in the introduction of Emamzade Yahya presented a full introduction of the existing texts and investigated them as analytical (Sotude, 1996: 531-534/4).

This study mostly included the writings published on this work before his book and it had an analytical-comparative view. Bahrololum in a book titled shia history and Sari shrine (Bahrololum, 2006: 569-589) investigated the family tree of the people buried in this building.

In the old books of Safavid era, it is stated that Yahya holy shrine is called "Emamzade Selsele" and Sheikgh Ebrahim is mentioned his Motevali (supporter). Also, Mola Sheikgh Ali Gilani in the book "Mazandaran History" mentioned a holy shrine in Sari called Emamzade Selsele but he said nothing about the original name (Gilani, 1998:58). Mirzahir Al-Din Marashi considered the shrine of Seyed Yahya as the ninth son of Qavamoldin in Sari and mentioned that this shrine belonged to the son of Imam Musa Kazem (pbuh) and later he was called Emamzade Yahya. He said his brother, Hossein and sister Sakine were buried beside him (Marashi, 1984:483).

Rabino as the first formal report of a foreigner of Yahya shrine tower in the book of Estarabad and Mazandaran wrote about the building inscription as:" The form of the inscription of the window of Emamzade Yahya in Sari: هذه الروضة المباركة امير الاعظم صاحب الكرامه و الولاية الامامه يحيى بن موسى الكاظم عليه السلام و الثالث اختهم سكينه بنت الامام موسى الكاظم

... في حادى عشر شهر ربيع الاول سنة ست و اربعين و ... as the action of Master Hossein and Mohammad Najar Gil (Rabino, 2004:95).

Mahjuri reported about Emamzade Yahya shrine and brass candle on the tower and two pairs of door. He said that these doors were made of forest trees and inlaying and a pair of it was sent by the order of Ali Asghar Hekmat, the culture ministry to run archeology of culture center. During the visit of Mahjuri, a pair of the doors was installed on the body of the tower. He mentioned the inlaying writing on the door: " في حادى عشر شهر ربيع الاول سنة ست و اربعين " مائه عمل استاد حسين و استاد محمد گيل

Based on this test, this building was built on 11 Rabiolaval, 846 Hijri Ghamari. The door on the body of the tower is different from the report of Mahjuri and he described the box in the tower and the inscriptions and it is similar to what we see now. He wrote: " Besides the mentioned people on the box, Mirghavamoldin Marashi was also buried in this place (Mahjuri, 1966:339).

Corpus board visited the holy shrine in 1967. Based on the report, it is stated that the famous doors of Iran museum in Tehran belongs to this shrine as this letter and history is based on this fact (Sotude, 1996, 533/4).

The main door is transferred to ancient Iran museum and the current door is installed instead (Shayan, 1985:301). The properties of the door are simialr with the current door installed on the body of the tower based on the report of Shayan. The reports in the history showed the significance of shrine tower and the people buried. Using durable wooden decorations showed the importance of this building among the supporters and people.

The identity of the people buried in the tower

Determining the identity of people buried in the shrine tower is complex with historical ambiguities.

Based on the inscriptions of the eastern angle of the box, the people buried in the tower were as:

- 1- Yahya Ibn Musa Kazim (pbuh)
- 2- Hossein Ibn Musa Kazim (pbuh)
- 3- Sakine Bent Musa Kazim (pbuh)

The big box showed that more than one person is buried in this place.

Beside the mentioned inscription, there are valid documents about burying place of Yahya, the son of Mir Ghavam Al-Din Marashi, the founder of Alavid Marashi dynasty (Encyclopedia of Shia, 1989:483/2). He was called "Emamzade Selsele" and passed away in 781hijri ghamai (Shoja Shafi, 1998:47). Marashi considered his shrine in Sari (Mirzahirodin, 1984:483). Thus, as this great building was built by Marashian and historians emphasized on the bury of the son of Mirghavamoldin Marashi, the founder of Alavi dynasty Marashian in this city and the shrine of Yahya Ibn Mir Ghavam Al-Din in this place is surely in this place. It can be said that Yahya Ibn Mir Ghavamoldin is buried beside the tomb of three children of Imam Musa Kazim (pbuh). Their names are mentioned in the box inscription. The main reason of the fame of this place is that Imamzade Yaha is buried in this tower and it attracted many visitors. More studies, negate the people mentioned on the box in this place.

According to the historical books, it can be said that the identity of people buried in this place is different from the people introduced in the inscriptions of the wall. For example, in an obvious case, no name as "Sakine" is observed in historical texts among the list of the children of Imam Musa Kazim (pbuh).

The current condition of the shrine tower

The shrine of Emamzade Yahya is located beside Amir Zeinolabedin in Jomhuri Street being less far from the central square of Sari, Median Saat. The current building of old brick tower of shrine and new mosque included the addition part from the east. The brick building of the tower is made as circular and cylinder and there is Rhenish helm, octagonal and two-crust. Now the rectangular section is used for religious rituals. The surrounding area of the tower is the local market of the peddlers and vehicles traffic. The external dome is Rhenish helm, brick and interior space is oval and plastered with vaulted decorations. The external façade of the mosque is covered with 5 centimeter brick and there are verses of holy Quran and traditions of the Prophet and infallible Imam (pbuh) in Persian style writing and Thuluth written on the tile.

The interior space of the mosque is tile and stone decorations in recent years. The bottom section of the walls is made of stone to the height 170cm and then it is plastered.

Pulpit

There is a wooden pulpit in the mosque with the date 1988 on its support and there are some decorations as simple netted Girih Chini . The counter space is square and provided circular section by the earrings (Gushvare) in the angles for the sphere space under the surface.

### Wooden door

In the north side of counter, a simple door provided the access to the warehouse. A pretty door full of the masterpiece of the 9<sup>th</sup> century was between this section and the tower. Based on the construction date of this door and the similarity, it is the primary model of one of the doors of Emamzade Abas shrine. The door of Emamzade

Yahya is two-pair and each pair is consisting of three tablets. A small tablet on the top, a big tablet in the middle and a small tablet in the bottom. Each tablet is surrounded by the frames with slimy as bottom and up slimy decorations and around all the decorations, there is the main frame of the door being decorate by two slimy rows with simile spirals with the interior sections. The decorations of the upper small tablets were similarly three half medallion with descending movement being decorated with Khatayi ivy with pretty flowers.

The decorations of the big middle tablets are consisting of a vertical medallion with two head medallion being surrounded in a ground with big scale tissue and its middle was full of Khatayi flowers and ivy. The interior space of the frame was full of the body slimy half for decoration. As it was said, the decorations in both great tablets of the door were similar. This door was installed on the body of tower and it was a cover between the mosque and shrine tower. There was a central pasar in each pair and two small tablets in the top and bottom. The Lachak and medallion was decorated as scaled form. The use of tender plants forms in an abstract ground of geometry forms is the abilities of Shia architecture art. The name of the builder as “done by Fakhroddin Ibn Ostad Ali Najar” was written on the small tablet at the bottom of the right side pair and in the left tablet, the name of the supporter as “Sahebe Rostam Ibn Nezam” was inlaid.

#### Skylight

There is a pretty netted skylight at the top of the door being replaced with the old skylight. On a thin inscription that is located between two big tablets that is vertically located in the middle section and the lower part of this part.

The decoration of this skylight in the top section was including the geometry netted forms and in the bottom section, netted tablets of plant as Tumar. The margin of all the tablets is a strip with the form of two complex bottom and up rows.

#### Shrine

Emamzade Yahya shrine is consisting of two sections “external shrine” and external box”. The external shrine was added in 1974 to the building. The Perforation with chini decoration presenting the four different forms. The box inside the shrine is one of the masterpieces of wooden arts in Mazandaran being built based on its inscriptions with the order of “ Khaje Sen Ibn Al-Mahrum Pir Ali RUMi” in 10 Jamadiolaval in 849hijri Ghamari. The inscription of this work was written by “Fakhroddin Motahar Ibn Ali Aldai Al-Hossni Al-Amali”.

#### Summary

The shrine tower called Emamzade Yahya shrine in Sari town is one of the great architecture works in Mazandaran with special features in architecture and wooden arts. Based on the historical and analytical studies, the people buried in this great tower are introduced as:

- 1- Yahya Ibn Mir Ghavamoldin Marashi of the Hosseini Sadat and the grandson of Ali Ibn Hossein Zeinalabedin
- 2- Moayed Billah Abolhossein Ahmad Ibn Al-Hossein Ibn Harun Ibn Al-Hossein Ibn Mohammad Ibn Harun Ibn Mohammad Ibn Ghasem Ibn Al-Hassan Ibn Al-Hassan Ibn Ali Ibn Abitaleb (pbuh).
- 3- Abutaleb Yahya Ibn Abi Al-Hossein Ahmad Ibn Abi Al-Qasem Al-Hassan Almoyad Bellah.
- 4- Ses, the sister of one of two men called Sakine.

Based on the construction date of the tower, this building was built by Sadat Marashi with two aims:

First, the respect of the shrine of three Sadat Hasani who were the pioneer of developing Shia religion in Tabarestan in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century in Zeidie government.

Second, respecting the name of Yahya, the son of Mirghavam ol din Marashi, the founder of Marshian dynasty.

For many years, this tower was located in the center of Mazandaran and it was safe against the natural and humanistic damages and it is protected against the damages. Emamzade Yahya shrine structure with circular and cone dome plan is built with local mortar and brick and is in the residential space of Sari beside the main square of the city. This position links the social and cultural relations of the residents of this city with the religious identity of the tower as it is common among the main residents of the city and they put the dead body before bury in the Hosseinie in front of the tower to have the grace of the Emamzadegan. There are wooden art masterpieces in this shrine. The wooden decoration of this shrine is consisting of an inlaid door, a perforated wooden skylight and a valuable box. The decorations are such that this shrine is considered as the small museum of architecture and wood art of Mazandaran.

- The study of the role of Yahya shrine in organizing Sari city

The old tissue of Sari in the city center is located in Jomhuri Street to Median Saat as the identity center of the social interaction of this city.

The main elements of the spatial organization of the required area are as:

The communication and activity centers are Jomhuri Street, Bahram Eter allay, Mirmashhad, the entrance areas to the holy shrine.

The communication and activity centers as Median Saat and the open space around the holy Shrine.

The public buildings including Emamzade Yahya shrine and Emamzade Zeinalabedin shrine and the Hosseinie around it, the mosque of Hazrat Zeinab, Hosseine Beit Al-Zahra, Haj Rezakhan mosque and religious school of Sari, public bath and Hosseinie Bahram Eter, the active center with the presence of market and Yahya shrine as the economical and social center, the movement of mourning people in Moharam to Yahya holy shrine and holding religious rituals are some examples. The holy shrine of Emamzade Yahya in this area established the urban activities as:

The presence of Yahya shrine, Zeinolabedin shrine as the elements of mental and functional indices in the city and the establishment of the residential units in some parts of the area

The concentration of the commercial units along Jomhuri, Bahram Eter and Emamzade Yahya shrine

The abandoned spaced in various parts

### **Conclusion**

As the shrines are the historical identity of each nation and the organizing elements of each city, the ground of the urban space and the componets by continuous protection should show the local and historical values of the city and its spatial and structural organization should be as it is linked with the historical identity of the past of the city and memorable spaces are created. The hierarchy of the accesses and transportation networks are well linked with each other by observing the stable environmental criteria and its urban space is comfortable with the presence of economical activities and its development in terms of various criteria of space aesthetics, meaning and pilgrimage and tourism in the central tissue of the city and in relation to the holy shrine is possible. It is possible that by repairing the holy shrine as the lasting legacy and based on the key role of the buildings in urban tissue, these places are turned into the cultural centers and people can meet their mental, materialistic and spiritual needs by them.

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