

Typology of Kurdistan Style Mosques in Iran

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Abstract

Kurdistan province has been an important part of pre-Islamic Iran territory; after Islam, it changed to Jabal and Kurdistan. This region was the major part of the Ardalan state in the Safavid and Qajar periods which in newly formed political divisions are divided among several provinces including Kermanshah, Hamadan, and western Azerbaijan. Based on specific characteristics of the region a distinctive type of mosque has been established including wooden colonnaded iwan, lateral corridors, theologian's room, yard, and entrance. These mosques are consisted of flat ceiling and colonnaded iwan / porticos which are deeply influenced by the northwestern and western regions' architectural / building style; one of these stylistic characteristics is the plan with iwans on four corners of Shabestan. Some of these mosques are mono-iwan and some bi-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 Kurdistan mosques in this article.

Keywords

Ardalan State

Theologian's Room

Kurdistani Style

Abdollahi Mosques

Sanandaj

1. Introduction

Since 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 reviewed and accessed, his method to recognize the buildings is of the great importance, because most Islamic buildings were classified based on dynasties or historical period prior to his new ideas. Some of these methods are related to specific regions of the country, such as Azari or Isfahani, but generally, we can trace the general principle of Iranian architecture in them. Factually, one of the little discussed styles in reference books is Kurdistan style. Basically, the author has suggested a new style in this article which would be scrutinized and criticized by colleagues.

Field 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 Kurdistan province; that is a kind of architectural style which mostly included a hall with an iwan or iwans at one of its ends. Therefore, Kurdistan style mosques with a plan composed of wooden colonnaded sanctuary (Shabestan), iwan and annex spaces can be introduced as the indicator of this style.

2. Kurdistan Province

The territory known today as Kurdistan in political division of the country is the main part of Ardalan or Kurdistan state of Safavid period. Previously Kurdistan state has been included of several parts which are mainly consisted of Paveh, Javanrood, Ravansar from Kermanshah province (Sanandaji, 1987, p. 22), Zoor city (Sharzoor) in the eastern part of Iraq Suleymanieh, Bahar in

Hamedan province and Chamchamal city near Bistoun, Dinvar in Kermanshahan.

Ibn Hoghal introduces the Jabal region as summer and winter dwelling of Kurd people (Ibn Houqal, 1938, p. 305). Hamdollah Mostofi enumerates 16 zones for Kurdistan which have been limited to Arab Iraq, Ajam Iraq, Azerbayejan, Khuzestan and Diar Bakr (Diyarbakir) region including the cities, Alani, Alishtar, Kheftian, Darbandkhatoon, Darband Zangi Dezbill, Dinvar, Sultan Abad of Chamchamal, Shahre Zoor, Kermanshah, Karandok-hoshan, Kankoor, Maydasht, Harsin and Vastam (Mostofi, 2002, p. 201); adding Luristan to Kurdistan limitations, Amir Ashraf Khan Badlisi mentions the borderlines of Kurdistan territory (Badlisi, 1994, pp. 23-24).

In Safavid period borderline/frontier, Kurdistan province consisted of four zones: Khorkhoreh, Javanrood, Uraman, and Elkae in Baneh, apart from Kermanshah. Furthermore, Garous, Elkae Zarinkamar, Teghanemin and Kalhor were recorded as the subordination of Iraq state in this period (Samia, 1999, pp. 84-85).

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 Kurdistan was divided into three states of Ardalan with the center of Saneh (Sanandaj), Mokri with the center of Savojbollagh (Mahabad) and Baban with the center of Suleimanieh, finally each one was divided into smaller sections (Badlisi, 1994, pp. 411-413).

Ardalan state was regarded as an important province in Qajar period stretching from Mokri Bukan to Zohab Garmsir in North; its width was estimated 250 km from Shahre Zoor to Almehr Ghelaghi Mountain in Hamedan, including 1300 villages, a city and a township (Babani, 1996, p. 23). Based on the law issued in 1325 A.H./1907 A.D. in the first national council, there were established four states and 23 governorships in new divisions after the Constitutional revolution, one of which was Kurdistan (Hamon, 1996, p. 15).

According to these sources, the main foundation of Ardalan state is the contemporary Kurdistan centered in Sanandaj. Based local Kurd historians Sanandaj was built in 1046 A.H./1636 A.D. on the remains of a village named Saneh by the order of Shah Safi and by Soleiman Khan Ardalan. Since then, Sanandaj has been selected as the center of Kurdistan (Sanandaji, 1987, p. 122; Vaghaya Negar Kurdistan, 2002, p. 32; Ardalan, 2005, p. 71).

3. Sanandaj and its Mosque Architecture

There appeared a great transformation in the regional architecture and urban planning in Sannadaj after its establishment in Safavid period. Previously, Sanandaj 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 (Zarei, 2007, pp. 120-152). 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, p. 156). Due to high economic status domestic spaces were built on the basis of introverting architectural style of Isfahan, a style which affected Sanandaj 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, p. 36) and of Darullaman (Zarei, 2002, p. 93) in Sanandaj.

4. The History of Kurdistan Mosques

Due to mountainous character of the region, Kurdistan 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. The old mosques of Kurdistan are publicly known as Abdolahi mosques and some of them are named as "Abdollah Omar Mosque". According to Mardukh, Abdolah, the son of the second caliph, ordered to construct a religious complex named as Abdolahi mosques after the capturing of Uraman, Paveh, Javanroud and Shehre Zoor by Muslim invaders and the destruction of Paveh fire temple, which had been built by order of Iranian army commander, Pav (Bav) (Mardokh, 2000, pp. 134-135). He wrote that there were five mosques in Paveh, some of which were old and named Abdolah Omar. This evidence was confirmed by the owner of Hadighe Naseri naming them Abdolah Omran mosques (Vaghaya Negar Kurdistan, 2002, p. 52). Abdolaghadar Babani wrote that a great mosque was built in Paveh and Abdolah did put its pillars by himself; the historian visited these pillars in 1288 A.H.: "The mosque was one of the strong buildings of the region with four wooden pillars not having suffered from damage and the mosques were in the villages." (Babani, 1996, p. 38). In addition, seemingly Abdolahi ibn Omar ordered the mosques to be built in Zhavroud which is called Abdolah Omar or Omar mosque by Tohaf-e-Naserieh (Sanandaji, 1987, p. 31). In no historical sources, except local history records, there are no references to Abdolahi mosques; even in Amir Shraf Khan Badlisi's book entitled "Unabridged history of Kurdistan" which was written in 1005 A.H./1596 A.D. He just alludes to area of Jazire whose people become voluntarily Muslim and also refers to the mosques and schools which were built (Badlisi, 1994, p. 156). It seems that in the early Islamic era, the Muslim commanders ordered to construct the mosques in the conquered regions, including Kurdistan. Apparently, the writings of local historians were probably based on oral tradition common among the local people.

Although the style of the mentioned mosques is not known clearly, it can be hypothesized that there was no formal plan to build the mosques but they prefer to obey the prophet's pattern priority without any force to copy every details of it. According to these hypothesizes, in fact, architectural structure for the Kurdistan mosques followed this general pattern. One of the surviving mosques, Abdolahi in Rijab valley in Kermanshah region, differs from the previously mentioned mosques. This mosque is dated to 18 A.H./639 A.D.; the founder of which is supposed to be Abdolab Ibn Omar (Rashidi, 1999, p. 458). It has been built on the ruins of a pre-Islamic architectural structure with a rectangular plan of 10×18 m extension. Eight columns in two parallel rows in different shapes can be observed in the sanctuary (Shabestan). The stone minbar of the mosque consist of five stairs and it has a minaret constructed on its wall presumably several years after the mosque built (Rashidi, 1999, p. 459), (Figure 1).

The researches performed so far suggested that mosques construction in territories occupied by Muslim forces were subordinated by the pre-Islamic architecture. For example, Damascus great mosque with a rectangular plan and T-shaped construction inspired from Greco-Roman architecture (Ettinghousen & Graber, 1999, pp. 29-30). Fahraj Jāmi' (Friday Mosque) in Yazd region is also inspired from the pre-Islamic Iranian architecture specially

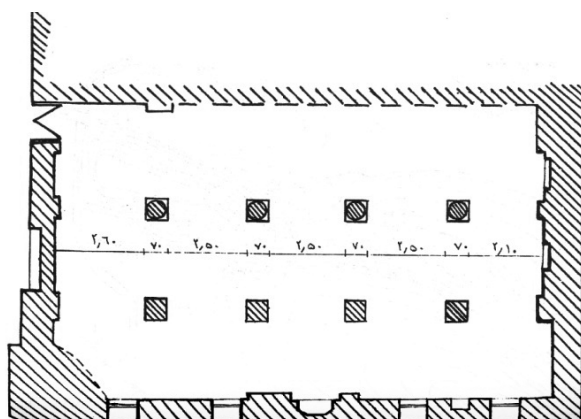


Figure 1. Kermanshah Province, Paveh city, Rijab mosque. Ground plan (Rashidi, 1999).

the central Iranian architectural style. This is the case of Damghan Tari Khanah mosque, too (Kiani, 1995, p. 42). Therefore, they have specific regional characteristics as other mosques which were built on the basis of indigenous architectural style in other conquered territories. It seems that the design and instruction were not in the same manner as the formal orders to build the mosques. Although, there are several references to word mosque in Quran, in Baghareh (144), Al-Esra (11), Toubeh (17-18), Jin (14), Hajj (4) (Quran Karim, 1995) verses, actually there is no exact planned mosques in these early phrases. Depending on geographical parameters, native experiments and knowledge, the mosque plan in the vast territory of Islam is diverse but in every part the styles have been changed and evaluated during the time process. This is evident in typology of Islamic architecture (Hoag, 1996, pp. 191-192). However, despite of their diversity, the mosques of Kurdistan follow these general patterns, too.

To understand the exact structure of Kurdistan mosques, the archaeological surveys and researches are important. Obviously there are unrecognized old remained mosques in village contexts. The study of village mosques represents that they are consisted of courtyards, entrance sanctuary (Shabestan) spaces, wooden columns and wooden roofs while there is a lateral corridor mostly with an iwan directed to the south. There is a space for religious teaching students above the sanctuary (Shabestan), which is inspired from the ancient domestic architecture.

One of the most important centers of this style is Sanandaj with less than 400 years history of urbanism. The construction of district and great mosques in this city is subjected to this pattern, which represent the continuity of this architectural style. Although the general architectural style of the city was different from Safavid to Qajar era; however, district mosque styles followed Kurdistani architecture style. This can be observed in Uramanat,

Zhavroud, Bijar region, Kamyaran, Sag haz, Baneh, the suburbs of Sanandaj. This plan has been expanded and turned into a plan from which all mosques have been influenced. The original architectural style of the region was to use a space as a sanctuary and wooden colonnaded iwan. A colonnaded iwan was established in front of the sanctuary space (Figure 2-4).

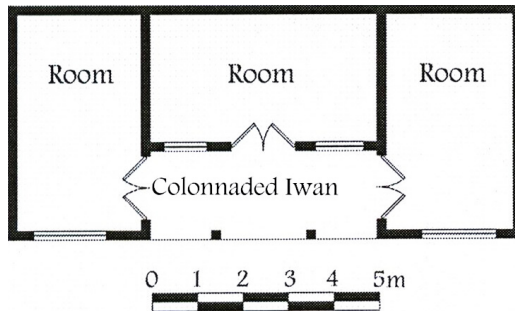


Figure 2. Kurdistan region, a house, freehand drawing plan (Zarei, 2009).

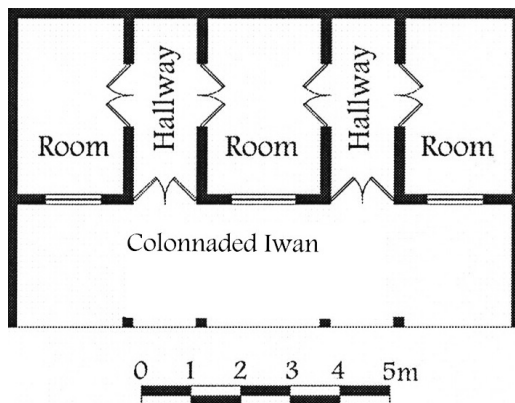


Figure 3. Iran, West region, a house freehand drawing plan (Zarei, 2009).

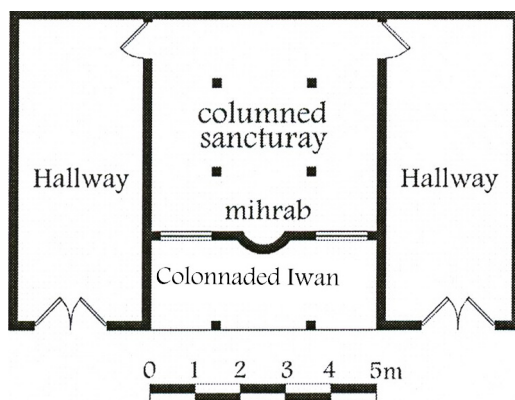


Figure 4. Kurdistan region, a mosque, freehand drawing plan (Zarei, 2009).

Such plan is affected by the natural environment. The colonnaded iwan prevents the snow and rain from entering to the internal spaces while they can be used as a shaded area in the summers and obeyed the entrance of direct sunlight into the spaces. Therefore, columned iwans and roofed spaces are the most important elements of this architectural style which their appearances are continuously observable in Kurdistan mosques.

5. Structural and Architectural 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, p. 458) 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

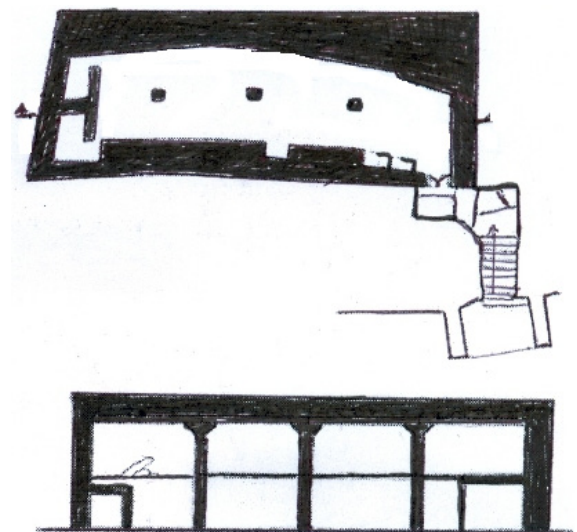


Figure 5. SarwAbad provincial, Oraman Takhet City, ground plan, Pir-e- Shaliar house (Author, 2005).

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 dated to 284 A.H./897 A.D., 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 (Kurdistani, 2000, p. 5) (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Inscription of mosque Kamyaran provincial, Muchesh Village (Kurdistani, 1990).

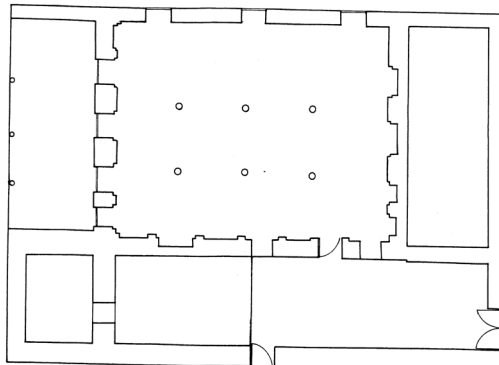
The plan and form of the mosques have changed but even though a general structure can be traced out as follows: A) The mosque entrance has normally inscriptions on the top part mainly on the lintels of the entrance or in the corridors; on both sides of entrance of some mosques two small platform are observed which is a characteristic similar to domestic architectures. B) A central yard with a pool surrounded by trees. C) The original sanctuary has four wood columns which are increased to six or eight in some cases. 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, p. 579). 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, p. 95; Zarei, 2004, p. 128).

It should be noticed that four pillared sanctuary has its own characteristics. Four pillars make a balanced distribution in the sanctuary. Seen from other way round, there have arisen some specific features with the combination of four pillars in chamber. They made balance, along with vast space and geometrical harmony by pillars with a geometrical plan which makes a suitable organization towards qibla, simpler implementation and sustainability of structure (Khan Mohamadi, 2000, p. 274). Therefore, two above factors are important in the appearance of this architectural method generally in Kurdistan mosque style. What is significant in this style is the combination of Shabestan plan with more than four pillars in school of Darullehsan mosque Sanandaj, mosque of Khosrowabad Bijar, mosque of Torjan, and Mirza Farajollah mosque with Do Menar in Saghaz.

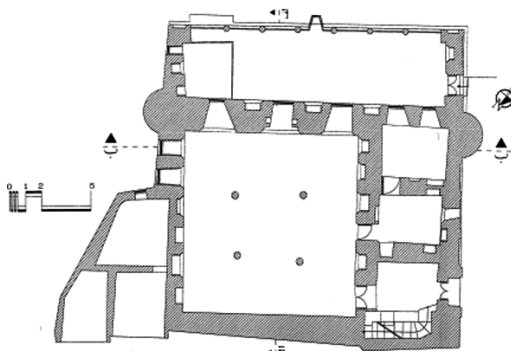
One important element of mosque is its mihrab located in qibla wall of mosque in a chamber covered with deep vault in which there is inserted a light opening or a window. In the past, some specific marble stone was used instead of glass which showed the rotation of sunlight as a measure of prayers time (Kurdistani, 2000, p. 5). In these mosques, a wooden columned iwan is located in one of four directions attached to chamber. In the mosque of Torjan village which built in 1258 A.H./1842 A.D. in Saghaz, the columned iwan is in the south of mosque (Zarei, 2002, p. 90). In one side, the expanded chamber is located

similar to that of the Do Menareh mosque of Saghez lack the yard, while Torjan mosque has a big yard and water fountain in front of iwan (Figure 7-10).



Source: Archive, Cultural Heritage of Kurdistan Province Office.

Figure 7. Saghez, Torjan village, ground plan of mosque.



Courtesy by: Department of Architecture of Bu-Ali Sina Hamadan, Iran

Figure 8. Saghez, Do Menareh mosque, ground plan.



Figure 9. Saghez provhncial, Torjan mosque, view from the south (Zarei, 2004).



Figure 10. Saghez, Do Menareh mosque, view from the south (Zarei, 2004).

In Kurdistan mosques, the courtyard is located in terms of land and topography, generally in one of its four directions. In most cases, there were built some rooms known as theologian's (faghih) room on the lateral corridors to adjust the chamber height and colonnaded iwan which are higher than other parts of mosques. These rooms, accessible through staircase at the end of lateral corridors of chamber, have been the place for education and to accommodate Sunni students. These spaces existed in most neighborhood mosques of Sanandaj and villages. They can be compared with those in old domestic spaces, named goushvar in Iranian architecture and the Asef Deewan related to Safavid era and Moshir Deewan established in Qajar era (Zarei, 2002, pp. 148, 157) (Figure 11-12).

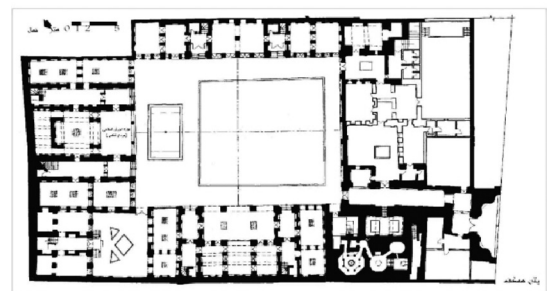


Figure 11. Sanandaj, Asefe-Deewan mansion, ground plan (Zarei, 2002).

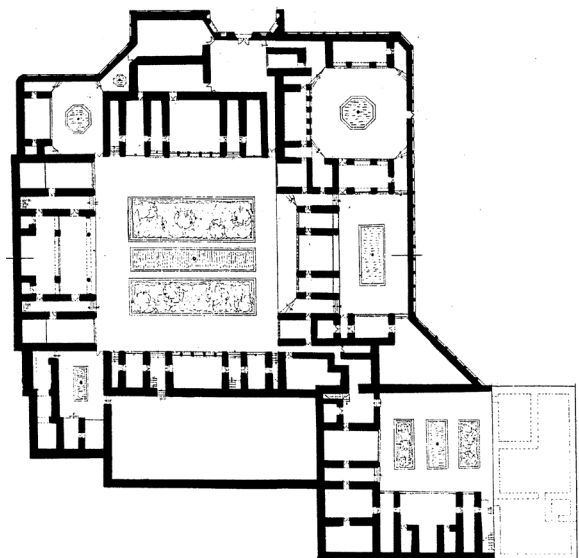


Figure 12. Sanandaj, Moshir Deewan mansion, ground plan (Zarei, 2002).

Abdollah Beig mosque is a good example for this architectural pattern which has a southern directed iwan (Zarei, 2002, p. 97) (Figure 13).

According to Kurdistani style, it can be explained that generally these mosques are included of learning parts (*faghih* room), domestic spaces, toilets, *ghassalkhaneh* (A place where the dead are washed), ablution room (*vozokhaneh*), sanctuary, libraries and yards (Ja'fari, 2000, p. 290). Structurally, these architectural units are very similar to their surrounding buildings; furthermore, their entrance corridors are same as their surrounding building entrances.

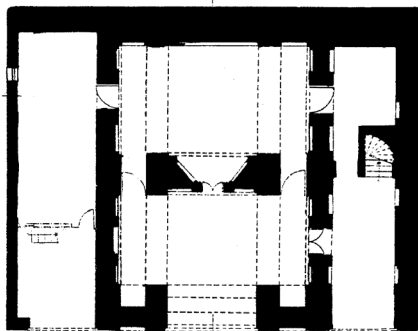


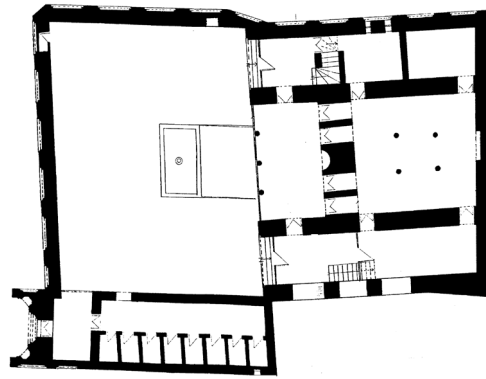
Figure 13. Sanandaj, Abdollah Baig mosque, ground plan (Zarei, 2002).

6. Different Plans of Kurdistani Mosques

Considering the geographical contexts and the taste of their founders, Kurdistani mosques have iwans, some just one but some two iwans. In quarters and villages mosques, iwans usually has a flat roof instead of arched. They have been located in one side of chambers. Accessibility to chambers is less through iwans in contrast to the mosques of other parts. The following classification has been offered to recognize the plans of Kurdistani mosques.

6.1 Northern facade single-iwan mosques:

A columned iwan is located in the north side of chamber, i.e. in the south of mosque courtyard. Among these mosques are Rashid Ghale Beigi mosque, in Sanandaj, which was built in Qajar era (Zarei, 2002, p. 96) (Figure 14-15).



Courtesy by: Department of Architecture of Bu-Ali Sina, Hamadan, Iran

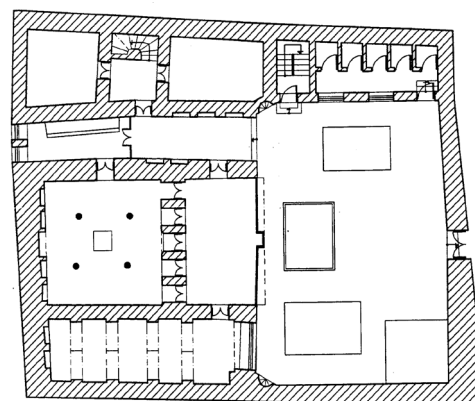
Figure 14. Sanandaj, Rashid Ghaleh Baigi mosque, ground plan.



Figure 15. Sanandaj, Rashid Ghaleh Baigi mosque, view from the north (iwan of north) (Zarei, 2003).

6.2 Southern facade single-iwan mosques:

There is a columned iwan in the south of chamber an almost directed toward the qibla as seen in two minaret mosque of Saghaz, Tarjan mosque in Saghaz, Khosrowabad mosque in Bijar, Abdollah Beig mosque Khorshid laqa khanom mosque, Vazir mosque, and Mulla Ahmad Ghiamati mosque in Sanandaj (Figure 16-24).



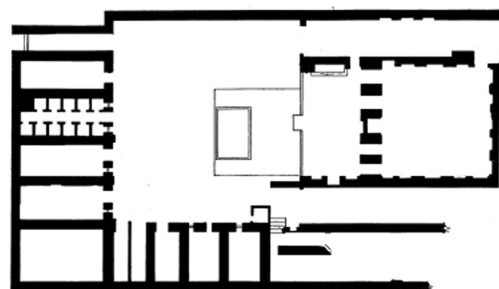
Courtesy by: Department of Architecture of Bu-Ali Sina University, Hamadan, Iran

Figure 16. Sanandaj, Vazir mosque, ground plan.



Courtesy by: Archive of Cultural Heritage of Kurdistan province

Figure 17. Bijar provincial, Khosroabad Village, mosque, ground plan.



Courtesy by: Archive of Heritage of Kurdistan Province

Figure 18. Sanandaj, Mollah Ahmad Ghiamati mosque, ground plan.



Figure 19. Saghez, Do menareh mosque, view from the South (Zarei, 2005).



Figure 20. Saghez provincial, Torjan mosque, view from the interior (Zarei, 2004).



Figure 21. Sanandaj, Abdollah Baig mosque, view from the south (Zarei, 2005).



Figure 22. Sanandaj, Vazir mosque, view from the south side sanctuary (Zareir, 2005).



Figure 23. Bijar provincial, Khasroobad village, mosque, view from the south (Zarei, 2006).

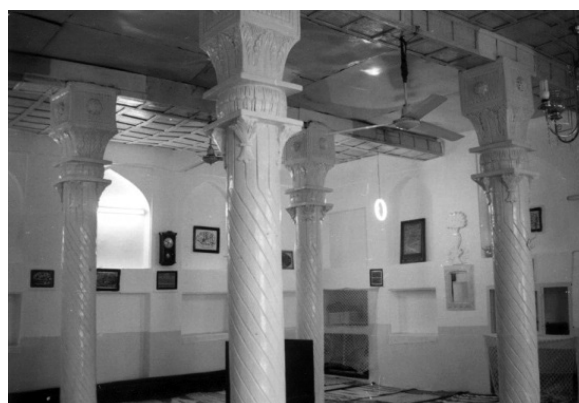


Figure 24. Sanandaj, Mollah Ahmad Ghiamati mosque, interior (Zarei, 2004).

6.3 South and east double-ivan mosques:

They are the prototypes of Kurdistan mosques as in Darullehsan mosque in Sanandaj. There have been located two iwan in east and south of mosque chamber. In school-mosque of Daraullehsan Sanandaj, one iwan is in the east faced to the yard and the other faced south outside the courtyard. These iwans are built according to the architecture of central regions using arch and vault method. (Zarei, 2006, p. 25) (Figure 25-26).

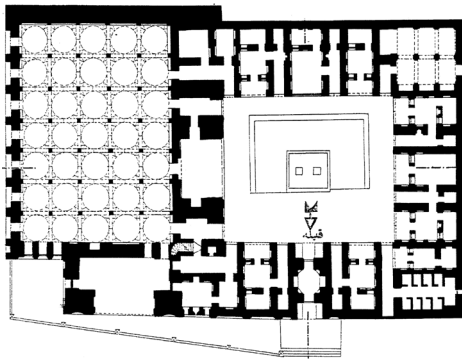


Figure 25. Sanandaj, Darullehsan mosque, ground plan (Zarei, 2005).

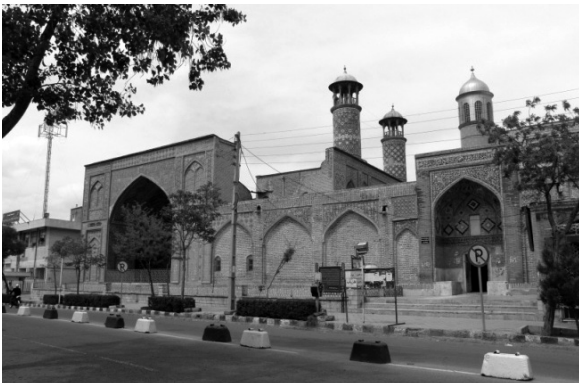


Figure 26. Sanandaj, Darullehsan mosque, view of the south (Great mosque) (Zarei, 2006).

The other examples of these styles are Mirza Farajollah Vazir mosque in Sanandaj and Avihang mosque with two iwan, one toward the east inside the courtyard and the other faced toward the south and street. It seems to be influenced by the plan of school/mosque of Darullehsan (Zarei, 2000, p. 99); (Figure 27-30). Original building isn't known but there were some restorations in Qajar period.

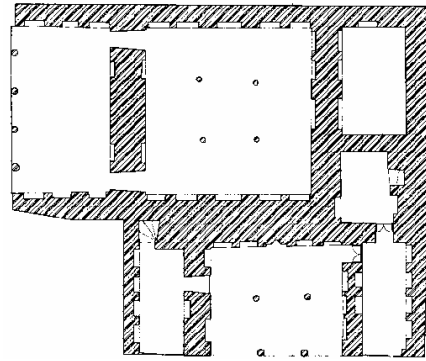
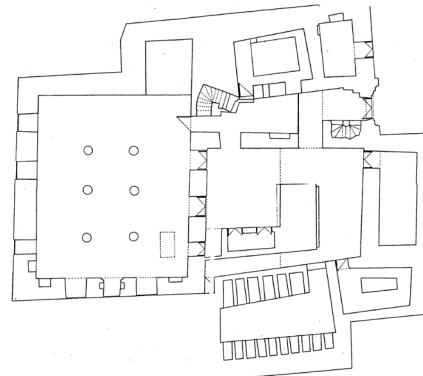


Figure 27. Sanandaj, Mirza Farajollah Vazir mosque, ground plan (Zarei, 2002).



Courtesy by: Department of Architecture Bu-Ali Sina University,
Hamadan, Iran

Figure 28. Sanandaj provincial, Avihang Village mosque, ground plan.

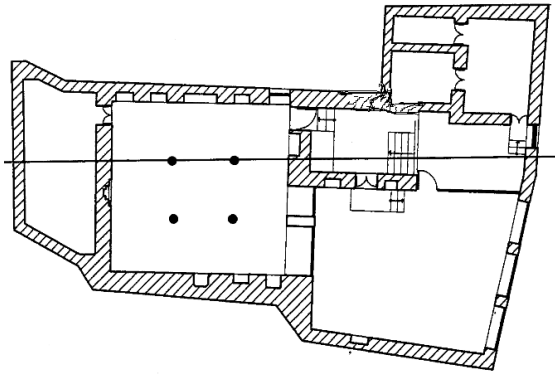


Figure 29. Sanandaj, Mirza Farjollah mosque, view from the east (Zarei, 2004).



Figure 30. Sanandaj, Village of Avihang mosque, view from the east (Zarei, 2004).

6.4 Eastern single-iwan mosques: Abundance in numbers, these mosques have colonnaded iwan eastward in chamber. The most evident examples can be found in Ghoolah mosque, probably built in Zandieh era (Zarei, 2002, p. 97); (Figure 31-32).



Courtesy by: Department of Architecture of Bu-Ali Sina University,
Hamadan, Iran

Figure 31. Sanandaj, Ghoulah mosque, ground plan.



Figure 32. Sanandaj, Ghoulah mosque, Interior (Zarei, 2007).

Another example is mosque-school of Darullaman in Sanandaj with an iwan in the east of chamber entered in school yard. This mosque was built in 1268 A.H./1851 A.D. by Amanullahkhan Sani, the grandson of Fatih-alishah Shah King of Qajar, the governor of Kurdistan (Sanandaji, 1987, p. 16). Babai Naqshband, Mulla lotfollah Sheikh-oleslam, Ibrahim Beig mosques in Sanandaj are other examples (Figure 33-34).

6.5 Non-iwaned mosques: The plan of these mosques consists of colonnaded chamber, lateral

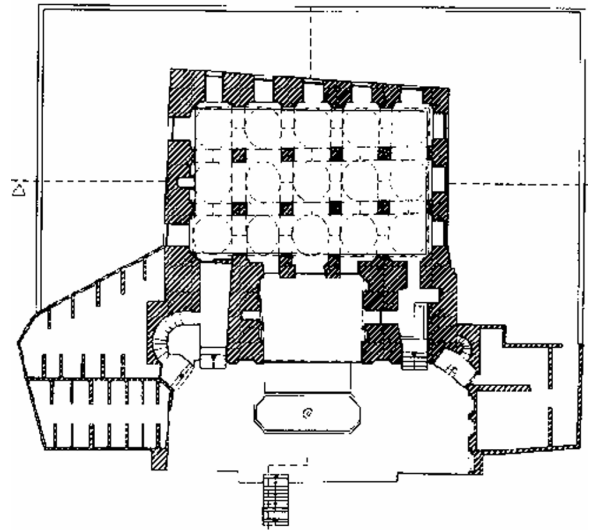


Figure 33. Sanandaj, Darullaman mosque or Vali mosque ground plan (Zarei, 2002).



Figure 34. Sanandaj, Darullaman mosque or Vali mosque, view from the east (Zarei, 2004).

corridors, theologian's room above the corridor and courtyard. The iwan doesn't exist in the mosque while it has an arcaded façade through which an entrance door and windows open into the yard, amongst which are the mosques of Emamzadeh sultan Abdollah complex and Hajereh khatoon complex in Sanandaj (Figure 35-36).

All the above mosque architectural plans are affected by climate, native architecture, religious beliefs and the founder's interest which are less observed in other mosques of Iran, demanding us to call them Kurdistani style of mosques.

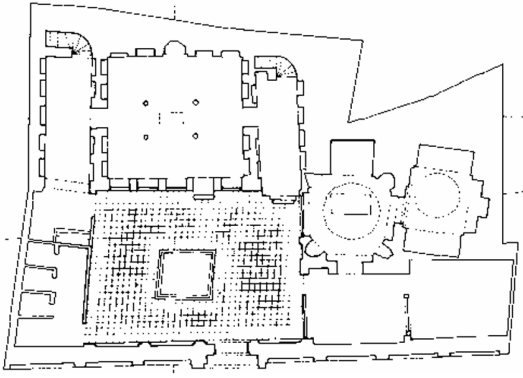


Figure 35. Sanandaj, Complex of Imam Zadeh Abdollah or Tagheh Gawrah, ground plan (Zarei, 2002).



Figure 36. Sanandaj, Complex of Imam Zadeh Abdollah or Tagheh Gawrah, view from the north (Zarei, 2007).

7. Conclusion

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 Kurdistan 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, Kurdistan style mosques with a great variety in plans have a unity in general local architectural patterns and principles.

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