

# Restoration and reconstruction

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## DECORATIVE HERITAGE IN TRANSITION: A STUDY OF THE IMAMZADEH ABDULLAH AND NAEIN'S JAME' MOSQUE

Ahmad Moghaddasi<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohammad Hossein Moghaddasi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Arts and Design, School of Built Environment, University of Canberra, Canberra, Australia

<sup>2</sup>Faculty of Art, University of Semnan, Semnan, Iran

\*Corresponding author's email: Ahmad.moghaddasi@Canberra.edu.au

### Abstract

**Introduction.** Imamzadeh Abdullah is located in the village of Koudzar, about 30 km from Arak and approximately 270 km from Tehran, Iran. Located on a hill north of the village, the Imamzadeh dates back to the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods. The building is constructed of brick with a stone foundation, and while the exterior lacks decoration, the interior features intricate ornamentation. **Methods.** This article explores the developments in stucco and decorative arts during a specific period, using Imamzadeh Abdullah and the Jame Mosque of Naein as case studies. It highlights key findings from a comparative analysis of the decorative and architectural features of both structures, examining regional changes and artistic innovations. Despite its historical and artistic significance, Imamzadeh Abdullah has suffered extensive structural and decorative damage over the years. The building has undergone three major restoration phases since 1967, yet further efforts are needed to preserve its intricate stucco decorations and architectural integrity. Careful documentation and analysis of its decorative elements, alongside comparisons with similar structures such as the Jame Mosque of Naein, are essential for deepening our understanding of its architectural and cultural importance. **Results.** Through a comparative analysis with the Jame Mosque of Naein, this research traces the evolution of architectural decorations in Imamzadeh Abdullah, highlighting key stylistic developments and regional artistic innovations.

**Keywords:** acrography; Imamzadeh Abdullah; decorative arts; Kufic script; Jame Mosque of Naein.

### Introduction

The Seljuk period in Iran (11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD) is known as a period of artistic and architectural achievements. Architectural spaces show many innovations in form and function. Architectural decorations, although having developed in a monochrome form, incorporated complex structural elements within them, and the combination of structure and decorations is one of the prominent features of this period. Among the famous buildings of this period, the Grand Mosque of Isfahan shows the architectural developments of the Seljuk period well and is even referred to as the museum of Iranian architecture. This building, with its diverse stucco decorations and its large-scale four-iwan (porch) architecture, is known as a landmark in Seljuk architecture (Blair et al., 1994). Therefore, the Grand Mosque of Isfahan is known as an influential and guiding model in the architecture of buildings after it, which simultaneously incorporates engineering knowledge and the beauties of Islamic architecture (O'Kane, 1995). This study focuses on a specific type of stucco decoration made of plaster known as acrography, which was particularly prevalent in West Asian and West Asian architecture

(Nezhad et al., 2021; Shahbazi et al., 2019). This type of decoration is known for its detailed designs that have both aesthetic and symbolic significance. Acrography was commonly used in mosques, tombs, and palaces and included floral motifs, Arabic inscriptions in Kufic or Thuluth script, and complex and combined decorations. These decorations typically conveyed religious and cultural concepts in an artistic and mystical language specific to that particular region.

In Islamic architecture, acrography played a central role during the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods, and the craftsmen of this art combined mystical concepts with earthly beauties (Golombek and Wilber, 1988). The methods of creating these decorations include carving, embossing, moulding, and combining it with natural colours and painting. This decorative style is very common in the mihrabs of mosques and shrines in Iran (Shekofteh, 2025). What is noteworthy about this decorative style is that it not only added aesthetic and visual quality to the space, but also had an acoustic application in the halls of mosques and prayer rooms (Karbaf and Ezaan, 2025). The enduring legacy of this decorative style emphasizes its importance

as a vital element of the architectural heritage of West Asia, embodying the technical skill and creative vision of the masters.

The name “Koudzar” is derived from the term “Koud”, meaning a mass or heap, typically referring to organic matter used for fertility (manure), and “Zar”, which signifies land or a place and, on its own, denotes gold (Amid, 2000). This etymology suggests a historical connection to agriculture, highlighting the village’s reliance on its rich local resources for fertile land and its deep-rooted agricultural heritage.

In the following sections of this article, a detailed and accurate analysis of the acrography found in Imamzadeh Abdullah will be addressed. These stucco decorations have a strong relationship with the decorative styles of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods and have significant similarities and developments with the building of the Jame Mosque of Naein. Through a comparative analysis of Imamzadeh Abdullah and the Jame Mosque of Naein, this study aims to identify stylistic and regional differences while examining the distinct ways in which plant motifs are represented in each building.

The aim of this study is to introduce and highlight one of the lesser-known structures of the same period, the Imamzadeh of Abdullah in Koudzar. Despite its outstanding architectural features and special decorations, this building has been less studied and ignored in academic societies and scientific communities, probably due to its specific geographical location and distance from political events. Since architectural studies have been in urban centres such as Isfahan and Rey, rural buildings have not been considered, despite their unique contributions to regional developments in design and construction.

### Methods

To conduct a detailed analysis of architectural decoration in West Asia, a dual research approach combining case study and comparative analysis was employed. The case study method enables an in-depth examination of specific buildings, such as the Imamzadeh Abdullah in Koudzar, with a focus on unique decorative elements and their restoration processes. This approach is widely utilized in architectural research to uncover subtle connections between form, function, and artistic expression (Hillenbrand, 1994; O’Kane, 1995).

Comparative study is a reliable method (Tang et al., 2010) because it provides a systematic assessment of the similarities and differences between architectural structures, styles or construction methods. By contextualizing case studies among different trends, it provides deeper insight into regional, historical and cultural influences. The method establishes patterns and innovations and highlights the connection between localities and global trends. Its application comprehensively

confirms the development of architecture across space and time.

Further elaborating on this research method, a comparative study allows researchers to juxtapose the characteristics of the case study with similar structures, such as the Jame Mosque of Naein, to draw conclusions about regional variations and broader architectural trends (Blair et al., 1994; Necipoğlu, 1996).

Recent research in this area increasingly relies on qualitative and analytical approaches to examine decorative motifs, emphasizing their aesthetic, cultural, and religious roots (Al-Mosawi, 2016; Esfahani, 2015). For instance, Azami et al. (2014) employed a comparative framework to investigate stucco motifs in Iranian mosques, successfully linking these decorative elements to their historical and symbolic significance (Azami et al., 2014). By integrating archival studies, on-site surveys, and stylistic comparisons, this methodology effectively fills gaps in the existing literature — particularly the limited representation of regional monuments. In doing so, it not only broadens our understanding of West Asian architectural decoration but also establishes a solid foundation for situating individual structures within the wider context of Islamic art and architecture.

### Literature Review

Decoration has always been a defining feature of Iranian and Islamic architecture, conveying both aesthetic expression and philosophical, cultural, and religious ideas. The background of the present research combines key studies on the evolution, practices, and significance of architectural decoration in the Islamic world with an emphasis on Iranian contributions.

The roots of architectural decoration trace back to pre-Islamic cultures, notably during the Sassanian era when stone murals and elaborate stucco work were widespread. In *The Formation of Islamic Art*, Grabar (1987) illustrates how Islamic architecture has appropriated these ancient traditions by blending new Arabic forms, geometric designs, and calligraphic elements with the principles of abstract and spiritual art (Grabar, 1987).

In his 1994 work, *Islamic Architecture: Form, Function, and Meaning*, Hillenbrand emphasizes the evolution from the simplicity of the early Umayyad period to the intricate decorative styles of the Abbasid, Seljuk, and Ilkhanid eras. Iranian architecture, renowned for its exquisite stucco, tile, and brickwork, reached its zenith during the Seljuk and Safavid periods (Hillenbrand, 1994).

Numerous scholars have extensively studied the evolution of Islamic architectural decorations, highlighting the influence of artistic traditions, cultural contexts, and technological advances (Al-Obaid, 2005; Azzaari, 2021; Graves, 2018;

Shafiq, 2014). Scholars such as Necipoğlu (1996) and Pope (1964) have undertaken a more in-depth exploration of the symbolic dimensions inherent in Islamic architectural decoration. Notably, Necipoğlu offers a focused investigation into the ways in which geometric patterns embody the Islamic worldview, serving as representations of unity, infinity, and divine order. This research highlights the interplay between mathematical precision and mystical abstraction, a hallmark of Islamic architectural ornamentation (Necipoğlu, 1996; Pope et al., 1964). In his work *Islamic Architecture of Iran in the Ilkhanid Period* (1955), Donald Wilber offers a comprehensive examination of the materials and construction techniques employed in Iranian architecture. He highlights stucco as a prevalent medium for intricate decorative work, with notable examples found in the Alavian Dome in Hamedan and the Jame' Mosque of Isfahan — both of which exemplify the exceptional craftsmanship of Iranian artisans (Wilber, 1955). Blair and her colleagues (1994) also address the evolution of architectural decoration during the Islamic period, emphasizing the advancements in tilework. They particularly note the widespread use of multi-coloured tiles during the Timurid and Safavid eras, identifying this development as a significant artistic achievement in the architectural traditions of the time (Blair et al., 1994). Golombek and Wilber (1988) demonstrate how local cultural and environmental factors critically informed the development of architectural ornamentation over time (Golombek and Wilber, 1988). They identify the Timurid period's hallmark in its expressive deployment of colour and monumental scale within mosaic tilework. In contrast, the Safavid era is characterized by its cohesive aesthetic unity, sophisticated compositional integration, and the artful intertwining of calligraphic motifs with stylized plant forms.

Scholars of Islamic architecture continue to investigate the study, restoration, and reinterpretation of period-specific ornamental programs (Abdullahi and Embi, 2015; Ahani et al., 2018; Bier, 2015). O'Kane (1995) emphasizes the importance of safeguarding traditional construction techniques within contemporary restoration initiatives, while recent research into digital modelling and reproduction methods offers practical frameworks for implementing and analysing decorative designs (O'Kane, 1995).

Comparative studies — most notably Azami et al. (2014) — have scrutinized decorative stucco motifs in Iranian mosques, interrogating the interplay between indigenous traditions and broader Islamic artistic currents. The Jame Mosque of Naein, for instance, illustrates this synthesis: its austere ornamental vocabulary, characteristic of the early Islamic centuries, is interwoven with vegetal motifs

derived from Sasanian precedents, thereby charting the diachronic evolution of decorative paradigms across distinct periods and regions (Azami et al., 2014).

Despite extensive scholarship, certain facets of Islamic architectural ornamentation remain underexplored, particularly in less prominent edifices. Rural Iranian sites, for instance, often manifest decorative traditions that diverge markedly from those prevalent in urban centres such as Isfahan and Shiraz (Faraji and Masoumi, 2023). Although geographically peripheral, these structures offer invaluable local perspectives on wider artistic discourses and architectural trajectories. Analysing their distinctive motifs, construction methodologies, and adaptations to indigenous materials and environmental contexts can illuminate previously overlooked dimensions of Islamic-period decoration and contribute to more inclusive historiographies.

Despite a substantial body of scholarship on Islamic architecture, specific lacunae remain. In particular, they are:

- 1) a dearth of rigorous studies on rural and regionally peripheral monuments;
- 2) a shortage of comparative analyses that trace stylistic and chronological continuities between the early Islamic and Ilkhanid decorative patterns;
- 3) limited technical documentation of stucco manufacture and application;
- 4) insufficient interdisciplinary work that integrates archival evidence, material analysis, and digital recording.

This study addresses those gaps by undertaking a case study of Imamzadeh Abdullah in Koudzar, paired with a comparative analysis of the Jame Mosque of Naein. Using archival research, in-situ survey, stylistic comparison, and digital documentation, the research aims to:

- 1) provide technical and chronological documentation of stucco ornamentation;
- 2) clarify regional stylistic variation and transmission between the early Islamic and Ilkhanid contexts;
- 3) situate these findings within broader social, religious, and material networks. In doing so, the project seeks not only to enrich our understanding of Islamic architectural ornamentation but also to contribute a more inclusive and evidence-based historiography that incorporates understudied regional monuments.

## Results

### *The Imamzadeh Building and Its Specifications*

Koudzar is situated 38 km southeast of Arak, along the Arak-Khomein highway, at an elevation of approximately 1,718 m above sea level in a mountainous, cold-climate zone (Fig. 1). The region's aridity and low annual rainfall severely limit its agricultural potential. Although a small stream



Fig. 1. Red dot shows the location of Koudzar in Iran (Author)

courses through the village, its flow is insufficient to meet all irrigation requirements and local water demands (Tali et al., 2016).

The village’s strategic location near the crossroads has made it a transit point throughout history, which has fostered socio-economic interaction between neighbouring regions, although it remains somewhat distant from major cultural centres such as Tehran or



Fig. 2. A landscape view of the Imamzadeh Abdullah building (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

Isfahan. The frigid, mountainous climate of Koudzar has shaped not only local agricultural practices but also the vernacular architecture. As in many rural settlements across Iran’s highlands, buildings here have responded to severe winters and chronic water shortages by employing indigenous materials — primarily stone and mudbrick (Hillenbrand, 1994). Although this geographic isolation poses significant challenges, it has simultaneously fostered the preservation of traditional architectural typologies and cultural customs, offering a singular window into rural life on Iran’s central plateau.

*The Imamzadeh Structure*

The Imamzadeh stands at the northern edge of the village, atop a hill now consecrated as a cemetery (Fig. 2). Its plan is octagonal, and it originally supported a double-shelled dome; currently, only the inner shell remains (Fig. 3). Historical accounts suggest that the outer shell took the form of a conical dome (Rok), a typology characteristic of Islamic-Iranian dome construction. Chronologically, the structure dates to the Seljuk period (12<sup>th</sup> century CE), with subsequent modifications in the early Ilkhanid era. Architecturally, it closely parallels the Imamzadeh Jafar in Isfahan (Fig. 4).

Archaeological evidence suggests that the main edifice was erected during the Seljuk period, while its stucco ornamentation was applied some two centuries later in the Ilkhanid era. This chronological interval between structural construction and decorative overlay underscores the building’s palimpsestic history. Moreover, the enduring evolution of Iranian architectural traditions demonstrates that edifices have been continually adapted and refined in response to functional requirements, shifting aesthetic paradigms, and evolving religious practices (O’Kane, 1995; Pope et al., 1964).

The use of octagonal structures and double-shell domes is a distinctive feature of Seljuk architecture, which consistently uses geometric forms to convey structural complexity and visual harmony (Blair et al., 1994). The similarity of this building to the Imamzadeh of Jafar in Isfahan is an expression of common architectural motifs and possibly the influences of regional styles that were prevalent in central Iran during the transition from Seljuk to Ilkhanid (Wilber, 1955).

The Imamzadeh’s primary structural fabric comprises brick masonry laid atop a rubble-stone foundation — an assemblage characteristic of Seljuk and Ilkhanid architectural typologies. The edifice rises to a height of 10 m and presents a total circumference of 24 meters; each facet of its octagonal plan measures 2.6 m, with wall thicknesses reaching 1.7 m. These proportions not only attest to the building’s inherent solidity but also demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of load distribution and structural stability (Fig. 5).

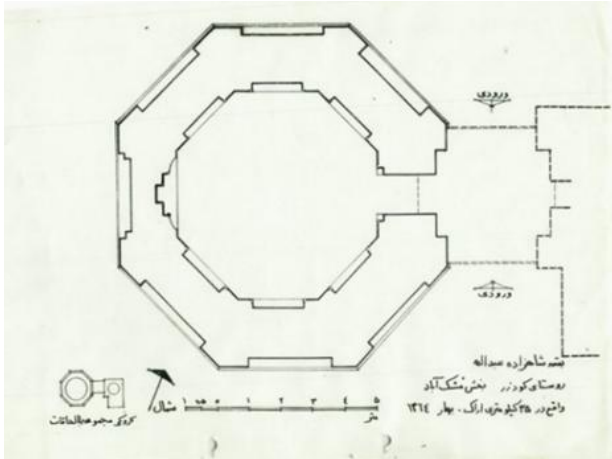


Fig. 3. Floor plan of the Imamzadeh Abdullah building (Source: Arak Cultural Heritage Documentation Center)

The selection of materials and construction techniques in the Imamzadeh structure reflects a strategic adaptation to local environmental conditions. Locally abundant brick was employed, its high thermal mass mitigating diurnal temperature extremes. Moreover, the foundation was reinforced

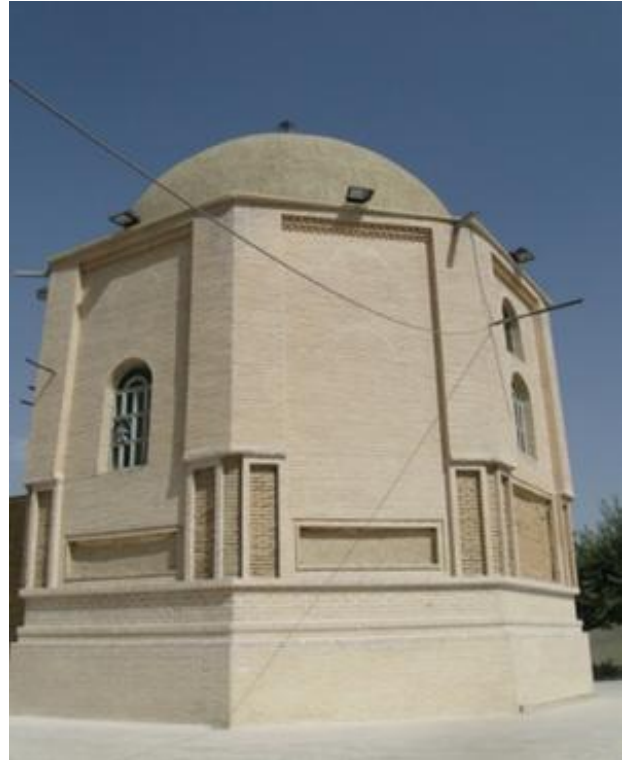


Fig. 5. Exterior view of the Imamzadeh (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 4. Imamzadeh Jafar in Isfahan (Photo by Ernst Emil Herzfeld)

with stone, a measure particularly suited to the region's cold, mountainous climate.

#### *Decorative Elements*

In contrast to the elaborate interior, the building's exterior brickwork is unadorned and austere. In 1967, local interventions applied a cement render to the facade, which further obscured original architectural details and compromised its historical authenticity. In contrast, the interior's stucco ornamentation remains exceptionally well preserved (Figs. 6 and 7). Regrettably, the exterior ornamentation has mostly succumbed to deterioration over time; however, the interior embellishments — emblematic of the Imamzadeh's artistic identity — remain intact.

A defining characteristic of Ilkhanid-period architecture is the extraordinary virtuosity exhibited in stucco craftsmanship. The prolific employment of diverse decorative techniques not only attests to the artisans' refined skill but also constitutes a central element of Islamic architectural aesthetics (Wilber, 1955).

The Imamzadeh's interior is adorned with elaborate stucco ornamentation — encompassing geometric configurations, floral motifs, and canonical Islamic iconography. These embellishments transcend mere decoration, functioning to elevate the spiritual ambiance, evoke a sense of transcendence, and foster a connection with the divine (Hillenbrand, 1994). The use of stucco here aligns with broader trends in Iranian architecture,



Fig. 6. Mihrab of the Imamzadeh Abdullah with Kufic script and Islimi designs (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 7. Islimi designs and geometric patterns on the wall of the building, with visible structural cracks. (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

where ornamental programs serve as essential vehicles for communicating cultural narratives and religious affect.

Beyond their aesthetic function, the stucco ornamentation of this Imamzadeh offers critical insight into the intercultural artistic exchanges of the Ilkhanid era, a period marked by the intensification of Iranian, Mongol, and wider Islamic traditions (Grabar, 1987). The artistry and technical sophistication evident in these decorative elements reflect the presence of a vibrant artistic community, one that actively integrated diverse cultural influences into a unified and coherent architectural expression.

The Imamzadeh edifice functions not only as a landmark of architectural achievement but also as a tangible record of its era's cultural heritage. Its robust masonry, coupled with the finely articulated interior stuccowork, attests to the site's significance within the evolution of Iranian architectural practice. Continued scholarly inquiry, alongside targeted restoration and conservation initiatives, is essential both for safeguarding this invaluable resource and for deepening our appreciation of the artistic accomplishments of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods.

From a technical standpoint, the stucco ornamentation of this edifice is unrivalled in the region. Each interior surface is adorned with elaborate and

singular stucco reliefs, featuring complex geometric configurations and refined Islamic motifs that attest to the artisans' exceptional skill and high degree of artistry. Moreover, the extensive deployment of stucco not only enhances the visual richness of the interior but also modulates its acoustic properties, fostering a serene environment conducive to contemplation and worship.

The most elaborately ornamented element of the structure is its mihrab, which serves as the building's liturgical and visual focal point. This mihrab is adorned with delicate, flowing lines of ornamental Kufic script interwoven with stylized floral motifs, the precision of which attests to the artist's mastery. Its intricate detailing invites comparison with celebrated examples such as the Oljeitu mihrab in the Jame' Mosque of Isfahan. Beyond its decorative function, the mihrab embodies the symbolic nexus between the earthly and the divine, thereby enhancing both the sensory and spiritual experience of the worshippers.

*Analysis of Stucco Decorations: A Comparative Study of Geometric and Botanical Patterns in the Imamzadeh Abdullah and Jame' Mosque of Naein*

In this section, we aim to conduct a detailed comparison of the stucco decorations in the Imamzadeh Abdullah building with the decorative patterns found in the Jame' Mosque of Naein.

#### *Analysis of the Jame' Mosque of Naein*

In Fig. 8, captured by the author, the stucco decorations of the mihrab in the Jame' Mosque of Naein are characterized by distinctly Iranian motifs, infused with Sasanian influences. The stucco hemispheres at the center of the mihrab are notably substantial yet relatively simple. This decorative style later evolved during the Seljuk period and is often referred to as "high relief stucco work". An exemplary later manifestation of this can be seen in the dome of the Alavians in Hamedan, which traces its roots back to this period (Basiri, 2024). A noteworthy aspect of this mihrab is the absence of any inscriptions, and the arabesque designs have yet to achieve full maturity, with simple geometric forms, such as eight-pointed stars, prominently featured. The floral motifs visible in the upper section of the Figure represent a unique pattern within this architectural context (Fig. 8).

#### *Analysis of the Imamzadeh Abdullah*

Fig. 9 illustrates the mihrab of the Imamzadeh Abdullah in Koudzar. Here, the arabesques have reached a level of maturity, interwoven seamlessly with the mihrab, creating an inseparable visual and structural relationship. Notably, inscriptions have begun to find their place within the mihrab, with Kufic script merging harmoniously with the arabesque designs. Regarding the stucco hemispheres at the center of the mihrab, their volume and prominence

have diminished, yet their complexity and finishing have been enhanced, resulting in a more refined visual experience. The botanical forms also exhibit a more symmetrical arrangement, offering a balanced aesthetic.

#### *Geometric Patterns*

In Fig. 10, which depicts the geometric patterns on a column, a soft, circular movement can be observed, yet the floral motifs do not demonstrate the deep, complementary connection seen in later periods. This suggests the architect's intent during this era to merge geometric shapes, typical of Islamic design, with botanical motifs. Given that this building belongs to the early centuries of mosque construction, the lack of extensive practical experience in executing such designs likely means that the originality of the floral motifs largely retains its pre-Islamic characteristics.

#### *Advancements in Geometric Designs*

As shown in Fig. 11, the geometric patterns have reached a pinnacle, with a distinct differentiation observable among the geometric shapes. The circles maintain their original characteristics, and the polygons (star shapes) also reflect this. In contrast to the Jame' Mosque of Naein, soft movements within the geometric patterns are absent, suggesting that both the circular forms and the geometric designs have become firmly established in their



Fig. 8. Mihrab of the Jameh Mosque of Naein (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 9. Mihrab of the Imamzadeh Abdullah of Koudzar (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 10. A landscape view of the mihrab and decorations of the Jameh Mosque of Naein (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 11. Decorative patterns on the wall of the Imamzadeh Abdullah building (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

respective placements. The floral motifs are so intricately intertwined with the geometric forms that each botanical element seems specifically tailored to a portion of this comprehensive pattern.

#### *Use of Inscriptions*

In Figs. 12 and 13, inscriptions appear in areas beyond the mihrab within this religious structure, predominantly situated above the arches and distinct from the geometric decorations. An additional point to note about these inscriptions is that the Kufic script used is embellished, making it quite challenging to read.

#### *Incorporation of New Scripts*

Finally, in Figs. 14 and 15, we observe that, in addition to the traditional Kufic script — long prevalent in Islamic architectural designs — the Thuluth script has also been introduced into the decorative elements of this period. This incorporation reflects an evolution in decorative practices and a broader exploration of calligraphy within architectural ornamentation.

#### **Discussion**

Although foundational scholarship has elucidated the historical, formal, and symbolic dimensions of Islamic ornamentation (Grabar, 1987; Hillenbrand, 1994; Necipoğlu, 1996) and comparative work has addressed prominent stucco motifs (Azami et al., 2014; Wilber, 1955), key gaps persist. Empirical reviews indicate that rural and regionally peripheral



Fig. 12. Decorative details of the Jameh Mosque of Naein (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

monuments remain inadequately documented (Faraji and Masoumi, 2023); comparative, diachronic studies tracing stylistic continuities from the early Islamic through the Ilkhanid periods are limited; technical documentation of stucco manufacture and application is sparse; and interdisciplinary approaches that combine archival evidence, material analysis, and digital recording have been insufficiently applied (Al-Obaid, 2005; O'Kane, 1995). The present study addresses these deficits by pairing a focused case study of Imamzadeh Abdullah (Koudzar) with a comparative analysis of the Jame



Fig. 13. Folded Kufic inscriptions above the arches of the Jameh Mosque of Naein (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

Mosque of Naein, employing archival research, systematic in-situ survey, stylistic comparison, and digital documentation. This combined methodology aims to produce technical and chronological records of stucco ornamentation, clarify regional patterns of stylistic transmission between early Islamic and Ilkhanid contexts, and situate decorative programs within broader social, religious, and material networks — thereby supplying empirical data and methodological precedent needed to broaden and substantiate the historiography of Iranian Islamic architectural decoration.

In addition, this study extended existing scholarship by demonstrating how focused regional analyses could reshape broader understandings of Islamic architectural ornamentation. By concentrating on an understudied rural monument and situating it within a comparative framework, the research highlighted patterns and relationships that had remained largely absent from mainstream architectural narratives. The findings showed that the decorative programme of Imamzadeh Abdullah not only reflected local craftsmanship and material constraints but also preserved stylistic transitions that were less visible in major urban monuments. This reinforced the argument that rural structures — despite their modest scale — offered critical evidence for tracing the diffusion, adaptation, and persistence of artistic forms across time.

### Conclusion

The study demonstrated that the stucco program of Imamzadeh Abdullah represents a distinct and technically sophisticated phase within the regional decorative repertoire: a coherent integration of geometric systems, vegetal motifs (notably grapevine foliage), and Kufic epigraphy that is concentrated and most fully realized in the mihrab. Close reading of stylistic, compositional, and technical features indicates that these decorative



Fig. 14. Thuluth script used in the mihrab of the Imamzadeh Abdullah of Koudzar (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)



Fig. 15. Flourished Kufic script in the mihrab of the Imamzadeh Abdullah of Koudzar (Photo by A. Moghaddasi)

interventions postdate the primary Seljuk structure and reflect a later, more mature decorative agenda consistent with Ilkhanid-period practice.

Comparative analysis with the Jame Mosque of Nain clarified the local trajectories of motif adoption and adaptation: while Nain preserves explicit continuities with Sasanian-derived vegetal forms (palm and grapevine), Imamzadeh Abdullah manifests a more advanced synthesis in which vegetal and geometric vocabularies are deliberately reconciled into unified compositions. This pattern supports a model of regional transmission in which peripheral monuments both conserve older iconographic stocks and serve as loci for stylistic elaboration. Crucially, these observations permit more secure relative dating of decorative phases

and underscore the importance of examining non-urban sites for reconstructing chronological and stylistic sequences.

Practically, the findings identify the mihrab and associated stucco panels as primary targets for conservation and further technical study. Material and microstructural analyses, together with expanded comparative sampling of rural monuments, would refine understanding of manufacture, chronology, and workshop practice. More broadly, the case of Imamzadeh Abdullah argues for the inclusion of regionally peripheral monuments in historiographic accounts of Iranian Islamic ornamentation, thereby enriching — and where necessary revising — established narratives derived predominantly from major urban ensembles.

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## ДЕКОРАТИВНОЕ НАСЛЕДИЕ В ПЕРЕХОДНЫЙ ПЕРИОД: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ИМАМЗАДЕ АБДУЛЛЫ И МЕЧЕТИ ДЖАМЕ В НАЙНЕ

Ахмад Могаддаси<sup>1\*</sup>, Мохаммад Хоссейн Могаддаси<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Факультет искусств и дизайна, Школа архитектуры и строительства, Университет Канберры, Канберра, Австралия

<sup>2</sup>Факультет искусств, Университет Семнана, Семнан, Иран

\*E-mail: Ahmad.moghaddasi@Canberra.edu.au

### Аннотация

**Введение.** Имамзаде Абдулла находится в деревне Кудзар, примерно в 30 км от Арака и приблизительно в 270 км от Тегерана, Иран. Расположенная на холме к северу от деревни, Имамзаде относится к периодам Сельджуков и Ильханидов. Здание построено из кирпича с каменным фундаментом, и хотя снаружи отсутствует декор, внутри оно отличается замысловатым орнаментом. **Методы.** В этой статье рассматриваются изменения в лепнине и декоративно-прикладном искусстве в определенный период на примере мечети Имамзаде Абдуллы и мечети Джаме в Найне. В ней освещаются ключевые результаты сравнительного анализа декоративных и архитектурных особенностей обоих сооружений, рассматриваются региональные изменения и художественные новшества. Несмотря на свою историческую и художественную значимость, мечеть Имамзаде Абдуллы за эти годы сильно пострадала от структурных и декоративных повреждений. С 1967 года здание пережило три крупных этапа реставрации, однако необходимы дальнейшие усилия для сохранения его замысловатых лепных украшений и архитектурной целостности. Тщательная документация и анализ его декоративных элементов, а также сравнение с аналогичными сооружениями, такими как мечеть Джаме в Найне, необходимы для углубления нашего понимания его архитектурной и культурной значимости. **Результаты.** В данном исследовании, на основе сравнительного анализа с мечетью Джаме в Найне, прослеживается эволюция архитектурного убранства мечети Имамзаде Абдуллы, освещаются ключевые стилистические тенденции и региональные художественные новшества.

**Ключевые слова:** акрография; Имамзаде Абдулла; декоративно-прикладное искусство; куфическое письмо; мечеть Джаме в Найне.