




Iranian–Shiite Tomb Building Tradition in South Khorasan: Review of the Architecture of Imamzadeh Zeid al–Nar in Qaen County

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Abstract

Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum is one of the prominent tomb buildings in South Khorasan Province, located in Afriz village, Qaen County. This magnificent building recalls the authentic Iranian architectural style, erected over the grave due to the importance and prestige of the buried individual, attracting pilgrims. Contrary to this, little research has been conducted on the architectural aspects of this building, and the present study aims to examine its architectural features relying on field evidence and library studies. In this regard, the authors have tried to first extract all technical and decorative features of the work and finally address its chronology and explanation. The article seeks answers to these questions: 1- Does the buried person's identity match the examination of sources? 2- What period does the building's construction date back to, and what architectural features does it possess? The results of the forthcoming research show that local sources and regional people identify the buried person as Zeid al-Nar; however, some believe Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar's burial is in Samarra. Regarding the construction date, although local sources state the first structure on the tomb was built during the Abbasid era, the current building underwent major reconstruction during the Safavid period, and Safavid architectural features can be observed in the tomb's decorations and inscriptions.

Keywords: Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar (AS) Mausoleum, Afriz, Qaen County, Islamic Era Architecture, Safavid Period.

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Introduction

The mausoleums of Imams and Imamzades are among the most important sacred places for Shiites. Examining tomb buildings throughout the history of Islamic Iran shows that the construction of such buildings has a close connection with Shiism. The support and importance of tombs, especially religious ones among Shiites, has been the main factor in forming numerous tomb buildings in Iran and even other Islamic lands. Therefore, what primarily causes the creation of a mausoleum is honoring and glorifying divine symbols and respect for the Prophet (PBUH), Imams (AS), and God's saints. It can be said that from the Shiite perspective, tomb building is one of the clear examples of everything related to God; for this reason, these pilgrimage sites are often referred to as "Bab Allah" (Gate of God). South Khorasan Province in eastern Iran is one of the regions where numerous tomb buildings from the Islamic era remain in various points. This province was part of Greater Khorasan in the past and known as "Qohistan," with historical sources and texts addressing its importance. However, the region's distance from power centers and its special environmental conditions have led to less attention to its cultural and historical values.

The continuous presence of Shiites and Sunnis in South Khorasan from the early Islamic centuries to today has caused followers of both sects to build mausoleums to honor their influential and respected figures. From the Seljuk period onward, constructing these buildings became common in Qohistan. Among Sunni-related tomb buildings in this region are the mausoleum of Sultan Ibrahim Reza (AS), Mazar-e Darvish Khasro, Bi Bi Morad Mausoleum, Imamzadeh Seyed Mohammad Taghan, Mazar-e Mulla Mahmud Qalandar in Darmian County, Sultan Zeid Mausoleum in Bajad village of Birjand County, and Mazar-e Gol in Khusf County. With the official establishment of Shiism in the Safavid period, the tradition of tomb building, especially for Imamzades, received more attention from both rulers and people. The Zeid al-Nar Mazar is one such site where major reconstruction occurred in its architecture during the Safavid period. According to most Shiite scholars, Zeid al-Nar is the son of Imam Musa al-Kazim (AS) and brother of Imam Reza (AS) (Khwandamir, 2001, vol. 2: 81) and was also known as Talabi; Zeid al-Nar is the same person who revolted in Basra (Tabari, 1996, vol. 13: 5647).

The studied mausoleum is located in Afriz village, Qaen County. Based on local sources and field reports, this work is attributed to Zeid al-Nar, brother of Imam Reza (AS), who, after rebelling against the Abbasids in Iraq and numerous battles, was martyred near Qaen, the center of Qohistan province, and buried there. After this event, this great person's tomb became a symbol of resistance against oppression, attracting people's attention, and over consecutive centuries has always been respected by the public and rulers. Based on remaining inscriptions, the last repairs to the building were carried out during the Safavid period, which was a staunch supporter of Shiites and Imams. The presence of valuable decorations and grand architecture in this mausoleum prompted the authors to examine and reidentify this building and ultimately explain and analyze its technical and decorative aspects.

Research Methodology

This is a descriptive-analytical study aimed at examining the architectural features, historical chronology, and decorative elements of the Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar mausoleum in Afriz village, Qaen County, South Khorasan Province. The methodology is based on four main axes:

Library Research: Review of reliable historical sources including "Baharestan dar Tarikh-e Rejal-e Qaenat va Qohistan" (Ayati, 1371/1992), "Tarikh-e Habib al-Siyar" (Khwandamir, 1380/2001), local Qohistan chronicles, "Majales al-Mu'minin," and other texts to determine the identity of the buried figure, construction history, renovations, and to resolve discrepancies regarding the burial location (Afriz vs. Samarra).

Field Surveys: Multiple site visits by the authors in 1394 (2015), 1397 (2018), and 1398 (2019) for detailed documentation of the twelve-sided plan, cross-shaped interior, entrance iwans, muqarnas work, colored plaster decorations, inscriptions, and materials (stone, gypsum, brick) before and after restorations; recording changes resulting from Awqaf Organization interventions and subsequent Cultural Heritage restorations.

Archaeological Sounding and Archival Evidence: Utilization of the 2018 sounding report (Mohammad Reza Soroush) that revealed Ilkhanid-period remains, old photographs from the Cultural Heritage archives, and the registration report (Hassanabadi, 1376/1997).

Oral Interviews: Conversations with the cultural heritage expert (Soroush, 1397/2018) and local residents to supplement information on Timurid–Safavid phases and beliefs associated with the ancient pistachio tree.

Finally, the data were interpreted through chronological synthesis, comparison with similar mausoleums

(e.g., Turanshah in Sarayan), and thematic analysis of Shiite influences in decorations and symbolism (minarets, inscriptions). This multi-method approach enabled a comprehensive reconstruction of the building's evolution from possible Abbasid origins to major Safavid reconstruction and directly addressed the study's core questions.

Discussion

1. Location of Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum (AS)

The Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum is located in Qaen County, Sedeh Section, Afriz District, southwest of Afriz village, 50 km southwest of Qaen. It was registered as a national monument on August 2, 1997, with number 1894. Its geographic coordinates (UTM) are longitude 0685921 and latitude 3703260. This site has been used as the village cemetery from the past to now. Agricultural lands are in the west and south of the mausoleum. It seems the old texture of Afriz village formed in this area, and during contemporary times, its development shifted northwest toward the Birjand-Ferdows road.

2. Construction History of Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum (AS)

The initial construction is attributed to al-Mu'tasim al-Abbasi, who regretted martyring the Imamzadeh. According to a Kufic inscription, al-Mu'tasim's name was inscribed, and this inscription remained until around 800 AH. Later, during the Ghaznavid sultans, Abu Muhammad Hasan ibn Mansur Qayeni, the famous minister of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, who had special devotion to Zeid ibn Musa (AS)'s shrine, made significant efforts in repairing and reconstructing this building (Ayati, 1992: 129).

With the emergence of the central and powerful Shiite Safavid government and attention to sacred shrines and Imams (AS), this building also received attention from Safavid kings. Based on the inscription inside the entrance iwan to the dome chamber, this building was reconstructed and built simultaneously with the Safavid period. Later, during the Qajar period and concurrent with the local ruler Amir Alam Khan Heshmat al-Molk, the building was repaired and reconstructed again (Shateri, 2007: 49).

Inside the shrine, there was a lantern donated by the Khazimeh family in Nader Shah Afshar's era, with an inscription in poetry (Rajabi, 2005: 145), though no trace remains today. Mirza Khanlar Khan in his Qajar-era travel to the region wrote: "... Here (Afriz) a group of Sayyids from Musa al-Kazim live whose ancestor is Zeid ibn Musa ibn Ja'far (AS), and Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar is buried here, said to be the son of Musa ibn Ja'far (AS), who rebelled against Ma'mun al-Rashid after Imam Reza (AS)'s martyrdom, defeated some Abbasids, and set their houses on fire, hence nicknamed Zeid al-Nar. Finally, Mu'tasim, Ma'mun's governor of Qaenat, martyred him. The shrine and courtyard were built by Amir Heshmat al-Molk and still unfinished" (Mirza Khanlar Khan, 1972: 293).

Based on Islamic written sources before Khanlar Khan, Zeid al-Nar's rebellion occurred during Imam Reza (AS)'s lifetime, not after; after the rebellion in Iraq, he was sent by the Abbasids to Merv to Ma'mun and Imam Reza (AS). The current building has been reconstructed by Qaen's Awqaf and Charity Affairs Office in recent years, with changes to the main courtyard, surrounding porticos, and dome decorations. Later, additions by the South Khorasan Cultural Heritage Organization were removed, and the building underwent major restoration. However, based on existing evidence, the building's construction history can be described as follows: The sounding conducted by Mohammad Reza Soroush, archaeologist of South Khorasan Cultural Heritage Organization, in 2018 refers to Ilkhanid remains. The building was also constructed in the Timurid period (oral interview with Mohammad Reza Soroush). The presence of inscribed and dated gravestones around the mausoleum indicates its importance; including a Timurid gravestone dated 814 AH currently inside the entrance iwan to the dome chamber.

In the Safavid era, major changes and restorations were made, including additions like the northeast iwan based on the building's inscription. In the Qajar period, the building was updated decoratively, and in the final stage, the dome was built, and a symmetrical iwan with the northeast one was added in the southwest by the Awqaf Office. In 2018, after sounding and restoration, this iwan was removed.

3. Description of Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar Building and Its Decorations

The mausoleum building is constructed along northeast-southwest with a twelve-sided plan, and its internal plan is cross-shaped. Entry to the Imamzadeh is through an iwan in the northern front. This entrance has a pointed arch and is adorned with beautiful muqarnas and cross-shaped plasterwork. The plasterworks are colored in light and dark blue, brown, yellow, green, and orange, executed with carving and diagonal line motifs as narrow bands around the iwan arch. The two side walls of the iwan are also decorated with brickwork in flat and upright patterns and lozenge shapes (Kiani, 1997: 59; Figs. 3 and 4).



On the iwan's forehead, geometric decorations are worked in basket-weave, and inside the iwan with shallow nested niches with pointed arches, circular sharp curves (abru), and squinches. On both sides of the iwan, two small iwans are seen; in the right small iwan, a staircase leads to the iwan's roof and architectural spaces previously around the courtyard. This entrance has been restored in contemporary times with a pointed arch and struck covering. Beside this small iwan, from old photos, remnants of a cylindrical tower on the right of the entrance iwan are seen, now destroyed.

The left small iwan, with more originality, is designed as a niche with approximately one meter depth, and a gravestone is in its wall. Behind this space is a room accessible from inside the courtyard. Probably in the past, entry to this space was possible from outside (left of iwan). This space relates to a family grave, now blocked from outside. After the northeast entrance iwan, the courtyard is located, where in the past spaces for pilgrim lodgings and other architectural spaces existed in four sides enclosing the complex's courtyard. These spaces have been destroyed over time due to natural and human disasters. Based on old photos, some architectural sides around the courtyard had iwans facing the courtyard, with rooms behind. Today, except for the northeast courtyard part (spaces attached to entrance iwan), no trace remains of others. Behind the entrance iwan, three small iwans are placed, two designed as niches with one meter depth; one has a back space connected to the roof staircase, and the third relates to a space with a grave. These spaces are covered with pointed arches, and simple plasterworks are seen inside the alcoves and under the ceiling. Gravestones are visible inside these alcoves, and graves surround the mausoleum in the courtyard. Spaces for religious gatherings, pilgrim lodgings, sanitary and recreational facilities have been built in the mausoleum courtyard by the Awqaf Office and people in the southeast and southwest sides in recent years. Opposite the entrance iwan is the mausoleum building. The distance from the mausoleum to the northeast iwan (entrance) is 16 meters. The exterior of the mausoleum is plain except for the entrance iwan, with only pointed arch niches for lightening the dome's weight load and shallow small iwans in exterior spaces, some filled over time due to restorations. From old photos, this part had clay-straw plaster, and shallow small iwans and niches in upper walls were around the building.

The main materials in wall construction were stone, but in recent two decades by South Khorasan Awqaf and Charity Affairs Office, reconstructed with brick and gypsum plaster. However, recent restoration actions under Cultural Heritage supervision removed the Awqaf's brick facade, and the building was restored in original style. Before Awqaf restoration, a staircase led to the roof on the right of the entrance iwan to the mausoleum. The main entrance to the dome chamber is in its northeast side. Before restoration, two minarets were above the iwan, built in recent decades with cement and metal materials, now demolished for restoration (Figs. 7 and 8). The interior space of the iwan, like the entrance iwan, has beautiful muqarnas and cross-shaped plasterwork. Shallow pointed niches are adorned with sharp arches and paintings in light and dark blue, brown, yellow, green, and orange. Among these decorations, a bird motif is observable (Figs. 9 and 10). After the iwan's forecourt, the dome chamber space with cross plan is placed. In four directions of the interior space, four iwans with muqarnas decorations and adorned niches are present, with the northern iwan having more intricate details.

Each of the four iwans is marked externally with frames whose corners are worked with shamsah. Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum (AS) has a magnificent and tall dome with about two meters stem. This dome is worked in arabesque manner and double-shelled. The central square space, with corner constructions, turns to octagonal and hexadecagonal, finally to circular for the dome covering and stem placement. The central square dome chamber has beautiful shamsah bandings, and its interior is adorned with gypsum plaster, shallow nested pointed niches, and cornice work. Above the iwans and before the dome base starts, a light opening is placed in each four sides. These light openings are covered with semicircular arches, and above arches and corner constructions, muqarnas plasterwork is done. The main dome was destroyed in the past, replaced by a metal skeleton dome (simultaneous with minaret addition), covered with turquoise square tiles. The building's skirting is also made with marble up to one meter height. In the middle of the mausoleum, a metal shrine is placed; the previous shrine was sandalwood, 2 meters long and 1.7 meters wide. It should be noted that in the southwest part of the building, symmetrical to the northeast entrance, another entrance is placed. On both sides of this entrance's interior space, two rooms are built; the right space is now used as a pantry, and the left relates to a staircase leading to the roof. For covering this space, a pointed arch is used, and on both sides, two semicircular arch niches are worked. This iwan and surrounding space were added, built newly during pre-revolution repairs along with the dome. In the sounding around the building by South Khorasan Cultural Heritage Organization in 2018, older architectural remains were discovered, attributed to the Ilkhanid period (conversation with Mr. Mohammad Reza Soroush, 2018).

After this sounding, the iwan and entrance were removed, and two minarets attached to the building and beside the entrance were added. Evidence shows these minarets did not have large diameters and probably, besides aesthetic, had application for strengthening and stability of the main wall. The main materials used in the building were originally stone, clay, and gypsum; but with subsequent reconstructions by Awqaf, other materials like brick, metal, and cement were used. Overall, the building's restoration includes items such as: restoring the mausoleum entrance portal (entrance iwan), reconstructing plaster decorations, flooring, and full revival of northeast and south facades previously executed unprofessionally, full roofing of entrance portal, removing brick facade of parts of south side and re-executing with stone, and finally executing brick parapet based on existing evidence. The building's colored plasterwork was also unprofessionally covered with a gypsum layer during Awqaf restoration, and previous evidence was not preserved, with reconstruction not in original style. Also, tiles used in the dome and iwan were removed, and in restoration operations, new tiles were used, somewhat affecting the building's originality. However, during subsequent restoration operations by South Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization, many Awqaf additions and decorative extras were removed, and the building was somewhat reconstructed and restored in past style. It is noteworthy that about 10 meters east of the mausoleum, an ancient pistachio tree is located, to which local people have special belief; they tie cloths to it for fulfilling wishes and believe cutting or destroying it will have irreparable consequences.

The Imamzadeh Zeid ibn Musa (AS) building has three stone inscriptions installed in the northern entrance, inside the entrance iwan to the mausoleum, more than anything revealing the religious, historical, and cultural value of the building.

Inscription No. 1: This inscription measures 35 × 120 cm, made of white marble... (Truncated 1728 characters). Inscription No.1 (Authors, 2015) Figure 17. Inscription No. 2 (Authors, 2015) Inscription No. 3: This inscription is of black stone with five lines. Its dimensions are smaller than the previous two, 34 × 33 cm. The inscription text is as follows: "The construction of this lofty iwan, the blessed shrine of Imamzadeh of the worlds, Zeid ibn Musa (AS), was completed in the time of the king of angelic army, Shah Abbas, by Haydar Hussein. Sweeper of this threshold year 1043 AH." The date inscribed shows the iwan's construction time, concurrent with Shah Safi's reign (1029–1642 CE), but the text refers to Shah Abbas (1588–1629 CE). Probably, restoration began in Shah Abbas's time, and the inscription was installed then. Beside this blessed threshold, great scholars and regional figures are buried, with their gravestones confirming this.

4. Data Analysis

Regarding Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar's burial place, there are discrepancies in historical and local sources, each presenting different views. Briefly: In 190 AH, Zeid ibn Musa appeared in Basra and, because he set fire to places he reached, became known as "Zeid al-Nar." After a while, Ali ibn Abu Sa'id, Ma'mun's deputy, arrested and imprisoned him (Ibn Athir, 1992, vol. 16: 255 and 261; Tatavi and Qazvini, 2003, vol. 2: 1456). In "Tarikh Habib al-Siyar," it is stated that Zeid al-Nar took control of Basra during Abu al-Baraya's rebellion on Ahvaz, set fire to Abbasid houses and gardens, Hasan ibn Sahl fought him and captured him. Then sent to Merv to Ma'mun, and Ma'mun sent Zeid to his great brother Imam Reza (AS). Imam Reza ruled but did not speak to him for a long time, and finally Ma'mun poisoned Zeid al-Nar (Khwandamir, 2001, vol. 2: 81).

In "Ansab" handwritten manuscript No. 3591 in Astan Quds Razavi Library, Zeid al-Nar had four sons, and his children resided in various regions (Qomi, 2005, vol. 2: 332). In "Muntaha al-Amal," it is also stated that Zeid al-Nar had children. In "Jami' al-Ansab," Sheikh Saduq determined his death at the end of al-Mutawakkil's caliphate (847–861 CE) in "Sar min Ra'a" (Samarra), so probably buried there (Rawzati, 1956, vol. 1: 67). In "Muntaha al-Amal," it is mentioned that Zeid al-Nar went to Basra, burned Abbasid houses, was delivered to Ma'mun by Imam Reza (AS), and finally died in "Sar min Ra'a" poisoned by Ma'mun (Qomi, 2005, vol. 2: 355). Qadi Nurullah Shushtari in "Majales al-Mu'minin" and the author of "Umdah al-Talib" stated that Ma'mun poisoned Zeid in Khorasan, and his burial place is in Merv. But Qohistan historians, including Abu al-Hamid Rubakhi and Muhammad ibn Ali Yaseri, report his burial in Afriz, Qaenat (Ayati, 1992: 128).

It is noteworthy that none of the Islamic written sources, except Mohammad Hossein Ayati and Qohistan historians, mention Zeid al-Nar's martyrdom and burial in Afriz, but local people believe the existing mausoleum belongs to Zeid ibn Musa (AS). Also, another mausoleum attributed to Zeid ibn Musa in Qaen city exists, related to descendants of Imam Musa al-Kazim (AS). Regarding the building's construction date, the book "Baharestan in History of Qaenat and Qohistan Men" attributes it to early Islamic centuries;



however, no evidence from this era is observed in the current building, and archaeological excavation is needed for certainty. However, limited debris removal in 2018 pointed to Ilkhanid evidence, and it is probable that in the Timurid period, when Shiites gained more freedom, a structure was built here. In this period, relatively many tomb buildings were constructed in South Khorasan, with some plans comparable to Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum; including Turanshah Mausoleum in Sarayan (70 km northwest of Afriz) and Abu al-Mafakhir Mausoleum in old Qaen city, both Timurid-Safavid, with single iwan entrances. In Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum, two entrance iwans are placed in northeast and southwest directions. In contemporary times, two rooms were built in the southwest entrance iwan, causing more protrusion. After 2018 sounding and identifying older remains, these two spaces were removed, and the architectural space retreated slightly toward the dome chamber.

Evidence of two columns around this iwan was also identified, and based on this, built up to the iwan edge. Probably, a building existed here in the Timurid period, and in the Safavid era, with Shiism officialized, the building was reconstructed or restored anew. This is mentioned in Inscription No. 3: "The construction of this lofty iwan, the blessed shrine of Imamzadeh of the worlds, Zeid ibn Musa (AS), was completed in the time of the king of angelic army, Shah Abbas, by Haydar Husseini." From this era onward, fundamental changes in architecture and decorations are observed, and courtyard surrounding architectural spaces were also built simultaneous with building repairs.

In Shiite mausoleums, decorations from early Islamic centuries to contemporary have always been one of the most important and widely used tools for expressing religious and cultural identity. These decorations are designed to clearly reflect Shiite religious symbols in structure and architectural content, including various arts of plasterwork, brick and tile combination, tilework, mirrorwork, inlay, marquetry, khatam, metalwork on doors and fabric work for shrine and tomb covering, along with religious symbols and motifs like cypress, mountain cypress, and peacock. These elements simultaneously have aesthetic and promotional aspects, with their peak use in Safavid and Qajar periods; as the verbal and religious legitimacy of Safavids in people's acceptance of Twelver Shiism and their role as custodians of this religion strengthened this attention (Abolhasani Taraqi and Tavasoli Kupaei, 2013: 27).

Shiites have special attention to decorating mausoleums, and the most important architectural arts are used in these buildings. In Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum building, among decorative arts, paintings in the northeast entrance iwan were present, unfortunately, in recent decades due to unprofessional restorations, a major part destroyed, with only little evidence remaining. The most important decoration used in this iwan is muqarnas work. Another art used in mausoleum architecture is inscription writing. Before Islam, script was the only decorative tool for inscriptions, and after Islam's emergence, artists used Quranic concepts, supplications, and hadiths for building decoration. Calligraphy in Islamic architecture, besides decorative, carries meanings and concepts reflecting social, religious, and cultural conditions of the writing time and showing Muslim artists' creativity and spiritual purity (Shayestehfar and Sarafzadeh, 2010: 91).

Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum building has inscriptions that, besides artistic value, provide important information about construction date, restoration, patron, and master architect. Some inscriptions have pictorial motifs like cypress tree; this symbol, sacred before Islam, continued in Islamic periods. In Inscription No. 2, the mausoleum is likened to a garden from paradise gardens, showing its importance among Shiites. Also, inscriptions indicate people's respect for Ahl al-Bayt (AS), such that many greats and scholars are buried around these mausoleums. Besides artistic aspect, inscriptions also have the role of transmitting religious and social beliefs and can be classified and examined by script type, content, color, and material. Based on field examinations and old photos, this mausoleum before restoration had two minarets in the northeast entrance iwan part, demolished during restoration operations.

In the 2018 sounding in the southwest entrance iwan part, remnants of two circular columns similar to minarets were identified. Minarets have an important symbol in Islamic architecture; although the word "minaret" is not mentioned in the Quran, it is referred to multiple times in Nahj al-Balagha and Islamic hadiths (14 times in Nahj al-Balagha, Najafi, 2002-a: 64). The presence of two minarets, one right and one left of the mosque, symbolizes belief in Quran and Ahl al-Bayt (AS); these two are lamps guiding seekers to monotheism's abode. Shiites believe in following Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for reaching truth and Islam's continuity, faith in God's book and Ahl al-Bayt (AS) is necessary: "I leave among you two weighty things, the Book of Allah and my progeny; they will not separate until they meet me at the Pond, and Ali is with the Quran and the Quran with Ali." According to some, minarets are God's two perfect friends, Muhammad and Ali (AS), placed together, embodying God, Prophet, and Ali (AS).

Conclusion

In constructing architectural spaces in different periods, besides factors like geography, climate, and culture, religion and religious issues also directly influence styles and features. This influence is more evident especially in religious buildings, particularly tomb architecture. With Islam's spread in Iran and Shiism's expansion in early Islamic centuries, Iranian cities and villages became centers for Imamzades' life and after death, and their mausoleums became pilgrimage sites for enthusiasts, one of the important cultural aspects in people's lives. In terms of religious branches and rulings, Shiites believe building on graves is disliked, but this dislike does not include Ahl al-Bayt Prophet (PBUH)'s mausoleums, believing building mausoleums for prophets and saints is permissible and even strongly recommended. Shiites believe these buildings' existence has no religious prohibition, but is a form of Islam propagation and sign of respect for religious greats, implicitly a confrontation with infidels' destructive propaganda. In many Shiite religious mausoleums, the building is observed within a green and garden-like area with water streams. Although such tomb building style was common in Iran from the past, from Shiite view, this architectural sample symbolizes paradise, and using decorative elements expresses Shiite beliefs and respect for Imams and religious greats. Given that Imam Reza (AS) was crown prince in Ma'mun Abbasid caliph's time, a large number of his acquaintances and relatives migrated to Khorasan, often martyred in clashes with Ma'mun's government. Based on local sources and popular narratives, Imamzadeh Zeid al-Nar (AS) was Imam Reza (AS)'s brother, martyred in Afriz clash with the government by Mu'tasim, Qaen's governor, then Mu'tasim, regretting his act, built a mausoleum over his grave. However, some sources do not mention the buried figure and believe Zeid al-Nar is buried in Samarra. The oldest existing document regarding building construction is an inscription in the entrance iwan indicating this iwan's construction and restoration. Gravestones around the mausoleum, including Inscription No. 2 inside the entrance iwan, show this site's importance in the Timurid period (9th century AH). This evidence indicates a building existed here, and in the Safavid period fundamental changes and restorations were made.

Zeid al-Nar Mausoleum with cross plan and notable decorations in entrance iwans to courtyard and also entrance iwan to the Imamzadeh itself is built. The building is in the village cemetery center, perhaps the reason for village formation is this Imamzadeh's existence. Among notable points of this site are several historical inscriptions and gravestones adding to the building's importance. Based on existing evidence, this building had various parts including pilgrim lodgings and architectural spaces around the Imamzadeh. Performed restorations not only affected the main building but also other architectural spaces, in some cases not matching previous evidence. The presence of architectural and decorative elements in the Imamzadeh is the result of Shiite view toward Imamzades..

