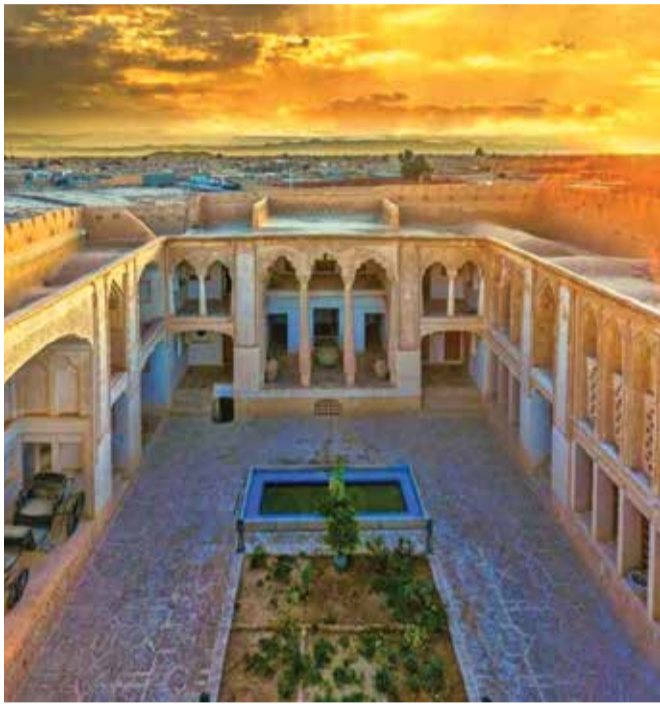


Magnificence of Soulat House in Abarkouh



reiseniran.de

Significant monument

Abarkouh, located in a warm and dry desert climate, experiences hot summers and cold, dry winters. The historical Soulat House, situated on Bahonar Street in the old fabric of the city, is a significant historical and cultural monument, showcasing the traditional architecture of the region.

The house has courtyards covering an area of 150 square meters, with a total area of 1,000 square meters. The entrance door faces east and is adorned with beautiful plasterwork and exquisite *muqarnas* (a form of ornamented vaulting in Islamic architecture). The long entrance hallway is decorated with brick arches, leading to the central courtyard. Four porticos are situated in the four corners of the central courtyard.

On the northern side, there is a *panjdari* (a traditional element of vernacular Persian architecture) room, which, due to its sun-facing orientation, covered walls, and small doors, was used as a winter living space. Opposite is the southern side, which is entirely open and faces the sun. This area was used in the summer and features two beautiful plaster columns. The walls of all four sides facing the courtyard are adorned with special plasterwork.

Next to the entrance, there is a small courtyard designed for relaxation, featuring a floor paved with river stone flagstones. The courtyard encompasses the main building on the southern side, where a portico is prominently displayed. One of the striking features of the building is the exquisitely adorned plaster columns, embellished with prominent Islamic patterns of flowers, bushes, and motifs encircling the courtyard like earrings.

Moving through the vestibule, vis-



destinationiran.com



visitiran.com

Despite the prevailing desert climate in Yazd and Abarkouh, the architecture of Soulat House is designed to ensure the homeowner's comfort in both summer and winter.

itors arrive at the main entrance, where a tall tower stands guard. The intricate woodwork and plasterwork on the house's main door, along with the presence of geometric stained-glass windows, serve as

Iranica Desk

Traditional houses are an integral part of Iranian history and culture, showcasing traditional Iranian architecture. The design and construction of these houses are tailored to the climate and culture of each region. The unique architecture of traditional houses in Yazd, in central Iran, is a prime example of warm and dry climate architecture, not only beautiful but also well-suited to the needs and climatic conditions of the region's inhabitants.

Neighborhoods in Yazd were densely built to provide maximum shade on external surfaces and for passersby to benefit from the shade. Old houses in the city are strategically built in the direction of the qibla, from northeast to southwest, maximizing space efficiency. The central courtyard is surrounded by summer and winter spaces, providing a cool retreat in the summer and warmth in the winter.

The choice of materials, such as mud bricks and wood, along with practical elements like stained glass, small windows, tree-filled courtyards, turquoise ponds, and wind catchers are all indicative of traditional architectural features. These elements reflect the expertise of architects in adapting to the desert climate.

key decorative elements for all the rooms.

History

The late Abbas Qoli Khan Samsam Abarkouhi, also known as Samsam or Soulat, was the founder and builder of Soulat House. It is an intriguing example of an architectural style reminiscent of the Zand period, featuring a central hall and surrounding alcoves. This historical building has been listed on Iran's National Heritage List.

The Abarkouh Anthropology Museum is housed within the Soulat House, where visitors can explore artifacts related to ancient Iran. Established in 2016, the museum operates under the supervision of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism Organization of Yazd Province.

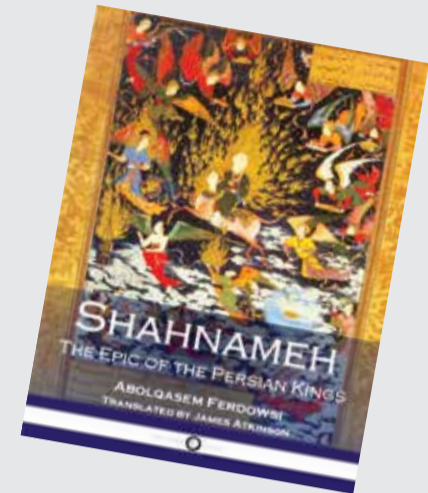
Best time to visit

Visiting Soulat House, which showcases the pinnacle of plasterwork and decorative art, is one of the highlights of a trip to the historic city of Abarkouh.

The distance from Soulat House to several other beautiful houses, some of which are nationally renowned, is just a few steps.

In the summer, Abarkouh experiences its highest temperatures, while in the winter, it is at its coolest. Therefore, the most suitable time to visit Soulat House, considering the climate, is early spring and early autumn.

Legacy of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in Persian literary tradition



The impact of Ferdowsi's Book of Kings upon textual production in the Persian speaking world has resulted in an outpouring of renditions, continuations and imitations throughout history. The Book of Kings has served as a model for authors seeking to retell the tales and triumphs of various personalities contained within it and as an inspiration to create stand-alone 'cyclical' or 'secondary' epics. It has also served as a repository of style, language and metaphor to be borrowed, incorporated and sprinkled across works of multiple genres, and has had its concepts of justice and kingship utilized for didactic purposes.

By the fifteenth century, as Julia Rubanovich notes, Ferdowsi's work 'had taken its particular place in every stratum of the Persian literary system, and was to keep its singular position throughout the forthcoming centuries'. Ferdowsi's Book of Kings, it bears mention, was also part and parcel of a larger, multilingual literary universe that extended beyond Persian and commingled with like-minded epics represented in different languages.

The focus here is on the Book of Kings as a model for authors to narrate events close to their own lifetimes, either contemporaneous with their own life or in the recent past. Texts that rely on an epic tradition of the Book of Kings to narrate historical events are what the literary historian Zabihullah Safa refers to as 'historical epics'. In his work on the Persian epic tradition, Safa cites the variety of historical epics composed in different geographical and political settings from the early thirteenth century to the early nineteenth century, many of which rely on the Book of Kings as a model.

It is within this tradition of epic poetry and imitation of the Book of Kings that the war-ballads of the first Anglo-Afghan War are best understood.

The first historical epic imitating the Book of Kings model and contemporaneous with the events it described is Shahan-shahnameh-ye Payizi, produced during the reign of Sultan 'Ala al-Din Muhammad Khwarazm Shah (ruled from 1200-20). It recounts the Sultan's various victories, and, like many such historical epics, was produced at the court of the patron it was praising.

The early-modern and modern periods also witnessed a prolif-

eration of similar historical epics modelled on the Book of Kings. In some cases, these imitative texts were more heavily influenced by the particular style of Nezami's (died in 1209) Book of Alexander (Eskandarnameh), itself a text focusing on one character from Ferdowsi's epic. Imitations of the Book of Kings predominated in Safavid and Ottomans domains, mainly but not exclusively at the court.

At the court of the Safavid monarch Tahmasp (ruled 1524-76), who is often portrayed as shunning non-religious poetry, the poet Qassemi composed several historical epics in praise of various rulers. Qassemi's Book of Kings (Shahnameh-Qasemi) included one part celebrating the deeds and victories of the Safavid founder Shah Isma'il (ruled from 1501-24) (entitled Shahnamah-ye Mazi) and a second part dedicated to the deeds of his son Shah Tahmasp (entitled Shahnameh-ye Navab-e 'Aali).

Later, during the reign of Shah Abbas (ruled from 1588-1629), an unknown author produced two war-ballads, entitled War-Ballad of Qeshm (Jangnameh-ye Qeshm) and Book of Jarun (Jarunnameh), in imitation of Ferdowsi's epic. These works describe battles between local forces and the Portuguese over various islands in the Persian Gulf in the early seventeenth century. The works highlight the heroic deeds of local actors, such as Imam Quli Khan of Shiraz, as well as the role played by the British East India Company (EIC).

In the eighteenth century, the poet Muhammad Ali Tusi, the self-proclaimed 'Second Ferdowsi', composed a Book of Kings-inspired epic entitled Shahnameh-ye Naderi on the triumphs and heroics of the Iranian ruler Nader Shah (ruled from 1736-47). According to Abbas Amanat, Iranian-born American historian, it is one of the first post-classical epics articulating proto-nationalist sentiments around Iranian territory and the first epic depicting a post-Safavid ruler according to 'symbolism that harks back to a mythical Iranian past'.

Such depictions would continue into the following century with the Shahan-shahnameh by the poet Saba, one of the last great court-sponsored imitations of the Book of Kings in Iran, produced at the court of the Qajar monarch Fat'hali Shah (1797-1834).

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter titled, 'A Market for the Masters: Afghanistan c. 1839-1842', from a book entitled, 'Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900', written by Kevin L. Schwartz, published by Edinburgh University Press.