

Ziaieieh School's rich historical legacy in Yazd



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The Ziaieieh School, also known as Alexander Prison, is one of the notable historical sites and attractions in Yazd. This school is registered on Iran's National Heritage List, and its location in the historic Fahadan neighborhood makes it easy to visit other historical attractions in Yazd.

Historical significance

The building is renowned for its enigmatic history. The entrance is quite low; however, upon entering the school courtyard, visitors are often left in awe by the grandeur and magnificence of this historical structure, which showcases Islamic architecture from the Ilkhanid period. The Ziaieieh School stands as a steadfast reminder of nearly eight centuries of history. Legend has it that Alexander the Great constructed a prison in what is now Yazd on his way to Rey. Later, during the Sassanid era, under the command of Yazdgerd I, a city was established in this area, named "Yazdan Gerd." Despite the lack of historical documents confirming Alexander's presence or passage through this location, local historians often reference it, IRNA wrote.

Yazd's strategic importance made it an advantageous site for Greek military forces, facilitating Alexander's conquest of the Persian and Median provinces. Additionally, the road systems and postal stations from Persia to Khorasan and Rey traversed Yazd. Therefore, the idea of a site related to Alexander's opponents in Yazd is not far-fetched. Local historians speak of Alexander's invasion of Iran, the influx

of his exiles to Yazd, and the fear and animosity the people of that time felt toward him, contributing to the moniker "Alexander Prison."

This building fell into ruin over time, and a pit formed in one section, leading many to believe it was a dungeon, further entrenching the notion that it served as a prison. However, expert examination revealed that this pit was created as part of an underground water supply network, demonstrating the ingenuity of Iranians in their quest for water in a desert region. Most experts dismiss the idea of it being a prison, asserting that if a prison by that name ever did exist, it was separate from the Ziaieieh School.

In reality, the structure was founded as a school in 631 AH (1233 CE) by Ziaeddin Hossein Razi, a prominent mystic, and was completed by his sons, Majdeddin Hassan and Sharafeddin Ali, in 705 AH (1305 CE). The Ziaieieh School served as a center of learning for over 700 years and was a gathering place for discussions among scholars. His-

torical evidence suggests that the Razi family built large houses with tall wind catchers surrounding this structure. At that time, the building had a tall entrance, soaring minarets, and a garden filled with trees, alongside a library and a bath across from it.

Architectural features

The architecture of the Ziaieieh School is remarkable for its simplicity and elegance, embodying the beauty of the art from that era without excessive ornamentation. The grand structure was built primarily from raw bricks, which perhaps accounts for its resilience and durability throughout the centuries.

The Ziaieieh School showcases Azeri architecture, which became prominent in Iranian architecture following the advent of Islam and during the Ilkhanate period. The construction occurred in two phases: the first involved building an ancient dome that served as a tomb during the Mongol invasion, and the second, approximately 200 years later, saw the

construction of the school itself, including an entrance to the dome.

The dome, standing at 18 meters tall, is made of raw bricks, and its plasterwork, adorned with golden and lapis lazuli watercolor painting, creates an extraordinary visual appeal. Unfortunately, after eight centuries, only remnants of these watercolor decorations remain visible. The dome chamber beneath has suffered significant damage, with no traces of its original inscriptions left. A small museum in this area displays historical inscriptions and gravestones.

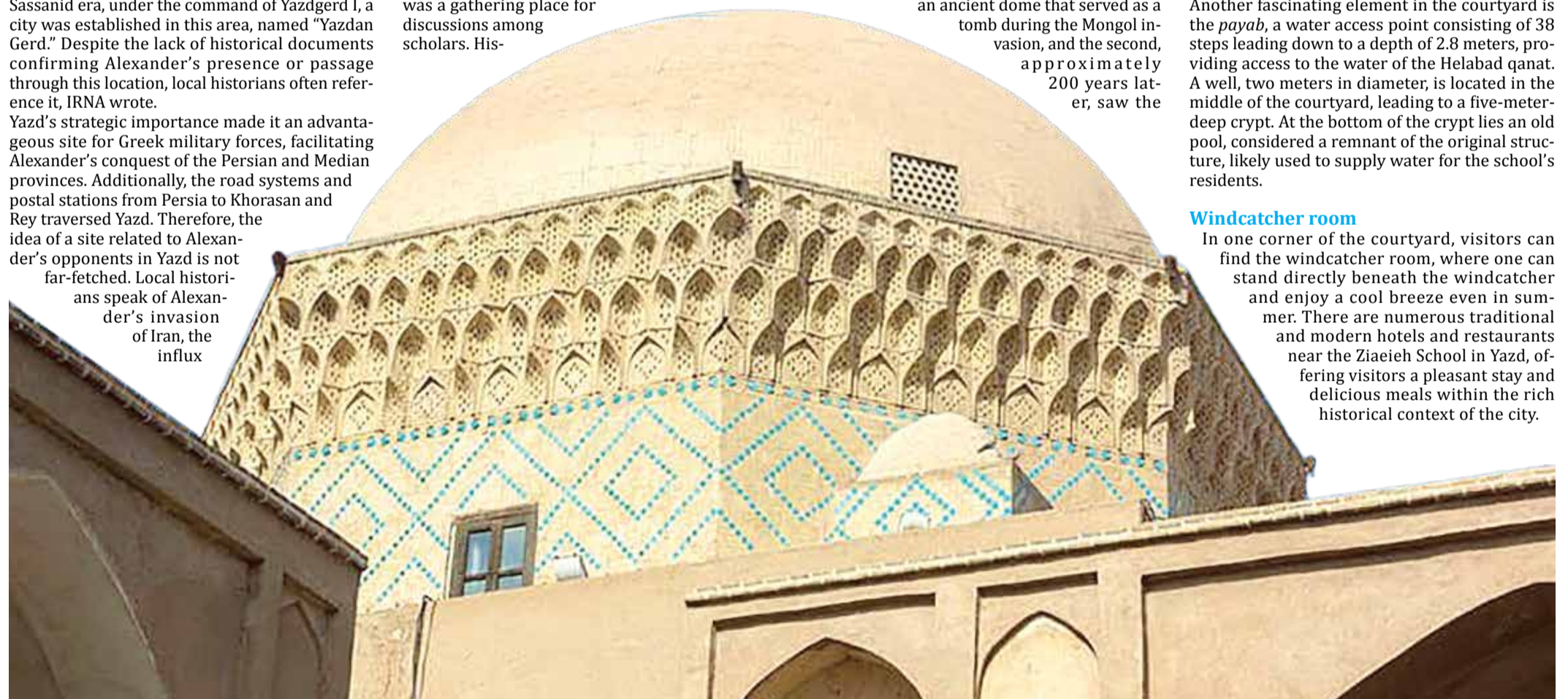
Surrounding the courtyard are various corridors, with the larger ones located on the western side, featuring a plaster mihrab. In addition to smaller porches in front of the rooms, there are four taller porches, giving the structure a distinctive four-porch layout.

Payab (water access point)

Another fascinating element in the courtyard is the *payab*, a water access point consisting of 38 steps leading down to a depth of 2.8 meters, providing access to the water of the Helabad qanat. A well, two meters in diameter, is located in the middle of the courtyard, leading to a five-meter-deep crypt. At the bottom of the crypt lies an old pool, considered a remnant of the original structure, likely used to supply water for the school's residents.

Windcatcher room

In one corner of the courtyard, visitors can find the windcatcher room, where one can stand directly beneath the windcatcher and enjoy a cool breeze even in summer. There are numerous traditional and modern hotels and restaurants near the Ziaieieh School in Yazd, offering visitors a pleasant stay and delicious meals within the rich historical context of the city.



Craftsmanship of Ehrami fabric from Khuzestan Province

Ehrami is a traditional fabric of Iran that is locally produced in Khuzestan Province. This fabric is made using cotton or wool yarn, and textile machinery is employed to create Ehrami fabrics, which typically feature simple geometric patterns.

In the past, a type of ehrami fabric was produced without any pattern and was used as clothing for Ihram during the Islamic pilgrimage of Hajj. Today, however, Ehrami fabrics are woven in various sizes and forms, including prayer rugs, doormats, bed covers, bags, and similar products. In Yazd Province, a fabric called 'harami' is produced, and in Ilam, another type known as 'Ihram' is woven. These fabrics differ

from the Ehrami of Khuzestan Province in terms of material, design, pattern, size, and color. The motifs, colors, and designs of Ehrami fabrics are

inspired by the memory of the weaver. There are no pre-made designs; instead, they are typically created based on a general form. Due to the tech-

nique used in making Ehrami, cursive patterns cannot be applied; the designs are geometric and symmetrical. The most common motifs found in

Khuzestan's Ehrami include diamonds, pines, double diamonds, and simple stripes. The motifs of Ehrami are reminiscent of those found in the

pottery of the ancient Susa civilization, dating back hundreds of years.

Bright and vibrant colors such as red, yellow, blue, green, and white are commonly used in Ehrami fabrics. Today, most of these products measure either 70 by 110 centimeters or 100 by 150 centimeters. The traditional textile machine used for weaving is installed and fixed in the workshop, with the warp yarns arranged horizontally. Like many other textile machines, most of its parts are made from wood. The cities of Shushtar, Dezful, Behbahan, Susangerd, and Masjed Soleyman are some of the most important centers for Ehrami production.



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