

Cultural richness of Emad-o-Doleh Mosque in Kermanshah

The Emad-o-Doleh Mosque is a remarkable structure with a distinctive spatial location. Situated in the heart of Kermanshah, within the traditional bazaar, it serves as a central gathering place for the community. Kermanshah lies in a border region, making it a crossroads of diverse beliefs and cultures from neighboring countries, which has fostered the coexistence of various religions. These attributes have transformed the mosque into a hub for different social classes.

The architecture of the mosque reflects its public utility. Unlike other royal mosques of its time, Emad-o-Doleh Mosque was constructed with simplicity, resembling later mosques and even contemporary buildings in Iran. This is particularly evident in the courtyard's decorations, which feature unglazed narrow bricks alongside vibrant seven-color tiles. In contrast, the prayer hall adheres to traditional brickwork, influenced by the architectural styles of two neighboring countries. The construction method ingeniously accommodates various tastes and aesthetics, setting it apart from conventional architectural traditions.

Emad-o-Doleh is one of the most distinguished mosques of the Qajar era, constructed in 1868 within the jewelers' bazaar with the pa-

tronage of Imam Qoli Mirza Emad-o-Doleh, the ruler of western Iran. Its architectural style incorporates several key elements: 1) façade, 2) entrance, 3) *hashti* (corridor), 4) courtyard, 5) *ivan* (porch), 6) columned prayer hall, 7) watchtower, and 8) adjacent chambers and internal courtyards, all designed in a traditional school or mosque style. The *hashti* acts as a transitional space between two halls, adorned with beautiful patterns created through various ceiling and covering decorations. The surrounding chambers are intended for accommodating students of religious sciences. According to the deed of endowment, these students can utilize these spaces under specific conditions and operate shops within the Emad-o-Doleh caravanserai for a fee. On the northern side of the courtyard, a short *ivan* topped with a watchtower is flanked by two mirrored *ivans* on the western and eastern sides.

Notably, Emad-o-Doleh brought one of the doors from the Imam Ali (PBUH) shrine to Kermanshah,

installing it at his mosque, and in return, endowed a silver door to the holy shrine of Imam Ali (PBUH). This wooden door, dating back to the Safavid period, is currently placed at the mosque's entrance from the jewelers' bazaar and is known as the Qapi of Shah-e Najaf. Additionally, a door on the southwest side of the mosque opens into the junction of the jewelers' and Hoori Abad bazaars beneath the bazaar's largest dome, known as meydan. This door features simple metal decorations inspired by Arabian culture, contrasting with the intricate traditional decorations found in Persian regions.

Upon passing through the corridor, visitors enter a spacious courtyard measuring 30 by 35 meters, which includes four *ivans*,

chambers, paths to the internal yard, restrooms, and stairs leading to the roof. The southern *ivan*, considered the entrance to the main prayer hall, is taller and more ornately decorated than the other three *ivans*. An inscription above the mosque's exquisite tiling showcases a ghazal along with the names of the then king (Nasereddin Shah) and the mosque's founder (Imam Qoli Mirza Emad-o-Doleh), as well as the construction date.

At the back of the mosque, an entrance leads into a rectangular prayer hall. The hall's vaulted ceiling and dome rest on fourteen brick columns. The walls and ceiling are adorned with simple brickwork, lacking special decorations, except for the dome's area near the altar, which features colorful tile decorations. In the middle of the southern wall lies the altar, decorated with tiles. The column bases are square at the bottom and transition into octagonal forms as they ascend.

Light enters the prayer hall through openings in the ceiling.

The courtyard's chambers and *ivans* are enhanced by decorative tile work. In the center lies a newly constructed pool with a basement, now cherished by the students. A small wooden room is situated atop the eastern *ivan* of the courtyard. The main entrance is through the eastern *Ivan*, which connects to the jewelers' bazaar via a large wooden door.

Another notable feature of cultural and artistic interchange is a large clock, reportedly brought from Switzerland, which is displayed on the west side of the courtyard, atop the mosque's only minaret. This impressive timepiece is immediately visible upon viewing the mosque. The unique tiling, characterized by innovative designs, quality craftsmanship, and exquisite wooden doors, showcases some of the mosque's finest elements. Additionally, two brick pulpits — one in the women's section and another in the men's area — are symmetrically placed on either side of the altar, harmonizing with the bricks of the prayer hall.

The mosque's dual entrances from both sides of the bazaar highlight the significance of spirituality in the culture of Kermanshah. The presence of this sacred structure within the bustling bazaar underscores the historical connection between these two spaces.



Artistry of reverse glass painting in Iran

Reverse glass painting has a history in Iran that dates back over three hundred years. While there is no definitive documentation regarding its introduction, one theory suggests that this art form arrived via southern ports where trade flourished, exposing Iranians to new artistic influences.

Conversely, some experts believe it was introduced from Germany, while others trace its origins to imported goods from India and China, arguing that it was not a locally developed art form, visitiran.ir wrote.

Despite these varied origins, reverse glass painting has successfully adapted to the Ira-

nian Islamic style, becoming distinctive enough to be easily recognized as a unique form of Iranian art. Artists typically use oil or watercolor paints, which may contain various ingredients such as gum Arabic, animal glue, tragacanth, and grape syrup, resulting in a transparent finish. Historically, egg yolk was added to enhance the paint's density, though this made it less durable. Today, linseed oil serves as the primary ingredient for oil paints, with most contemporary artists opting for oil over watercolor due to its viscosity and protective qualities.

The process of reverse glass

painting begins with tracing the desired design in black ink, typically Chinese ink. A layer of varnish is then applied to reinforce the sketch and facilitate better adhesion of the pigments to the glass. Once this is complete, the colors are applied.

In Iran, it is common practice to use tin plates and paper to protect the back of the glass artwork. Popular themes in Iranian reverse glass painting include *gol-o morgh* (flowers and birds), religious narratives, depictions of holy monuments and shrines, tales from the Shahnameh (Book of Kings), ancient Iranian folklore, and intricate calligraphy.

