



AŠTARJĀN

AŠTARJĀN (OŠTORJĀN), name of a subdistrict (*dehestān*) and its chief village, lying southwest of Isfahan on the road connecting this city with Šahr-e Kord. The village (population 2065 in 1345 Š./1966) is noteworthy for its medieval Friday mosque dating from the early 8th/14th century. The mosque, significant for its architecture, decoration, and epigraphy, comprises a dome chamber, an unusually wide *qebla ayvān*, a small courtyard with uneven lateral prayer halls, an underground vaulted winter prayer hall, and an off-axis portal. Arcades articulate the lateral courtyard facades, while *ayvāns* on the north and south sides mark the major axis. The pronounced asymmetry of the entire medieval layout—excluding later buttresses and other additions—points to several building campaigns, which were probably complicated by pre-existing structures. Certainly the dome chamber, with its humble mud-brick core and its multiple openings, is well within the local late Saljuq tradition. It seems, then, that an earlier mosque with a dome chamber was at first slightly modified by the addition of the north portal and soon after largely rebuilt and entirely redecorated in its present form. Naʿanz and Lenjān offer parallel and contemporary cases in this area, while new Il-khanid projects nearby included Daštī, Kāj, and Ezīrān. The mosque was thus part of a massive building program around Isfahan between ca. 1300 and ca. 1325.

The decoration, as at nearby Lenjān, is of virtuoso quality and applied in highly selective fashion. Most of it is found on the north portal or within the dome chamber (compare the Varāmīn Jāmeʿ mosque), thereby highlighting the blank areas elsewhere. Unadorned exteriors were of course characteristic of



Saljuq architecture. Stucco is the principal medium and is found carved, incised, embossed, in high relief, painted, and imitating brickwork. Glaze is virtually confined to the lofty and attenuated portal, perhaps because this area was decorated last. There are numerous direct imitations of Saljuq brickwork, and echoes of it in the alien medium of stucco; indeed, the decoration is transitional, just as that of the Naṭanz *kānqāh* is up-to-date. Chinese elements include peonies, lotuses, and kufic writing wrought in designs recalling seal script. Such features recur at Lenjān.

From the late Saljuq period onwards, epigraphy became increasingly dominant in mosque decoration. The Aštarjān Jāme' has some forty-seven inscriptions and—like Lenjān—well exemplifies this trend. Several of the twenty-seven Koranic inscriptions are especially appropriate to their position in the building or to its physical environment. The historical inscriptions in the portal and the dome chamber give the (completion?) date 715/1315, while the former also identifies the patron, a local minor official called Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. 'Alī Oštorjānī. His inflated titulature parallels roughly contemporary inscriptions at Naṭanz, Qohrūd and Qom. Other inscriptions mention Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Bannā' and the tilecutter Ḥājjī Moḥammad, while a Persian inscription dated 881/1476 records repairs.

The only other noteworthy building in the village is the contemporary shrine, Emāzāda Rābe'a Kātūn, a mud-brick mausoleum of domed square type distinguished only by a small magnificent stucco *meḥrāb* (dated 708/1308), now kept in Tehran.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pope, *Survey of Persian Art*, pp. 1079-80.

D. N. Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran. The Il Khānid Period*, Princeton, 1955, pp. 138, 141-45, pls. 68, 89-102 and figs. 25-27.

L. Honarfar, *Ganjīna-ye ātār-e tārikī-e-Ešfahān*, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 267-79,



with five plates.

G. C. Miles, "The Inscriptions of the Masjid-i Jāmi' at Ashtarjān," *Iran* 12, 1974, pp. 89-98 and pls. I-VIII.

A. Rafī'i Mehrābādī, *Ātār-e mellī-e Eṣfahān*, Tehran, 1352 Š./1973. pp. 822-26.

Razmārā, *Farhang* X, p. 14.

Search terms:

اسhtarjan aashtarjan ashtarjaan