

ARTICLE

## Ilkhanid Wood Carvings in the Mountain Villages between Kashan and Natanz

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### Abstract

This paper surveys some wood carvings belonging to four mosques in the villages of Firizhand, Quhrud, Abyana, and Barzuk. Carved between the years 700/1300–1 and 705/1305–6, they consist of architectural elements such as doors, columns, and capitals. The recently found woodwork evidence from the demolished Jami‘ mosque of Barzuk reveals that this building and its decorations were executed by a multiskilled artist, who was most likely a descendant of Abu Zayd. Moreover, the newly discovered columns from the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud show that, in contrast to what was previously thought, the current building is not contemporary with its dated door and was erected in later centuries. Interestingly, these wooden mosques were built during the last years of Ghazan Khan’s rule and witness his order to construct mosques in all the villages of the country. This woodwork offers significant insight into the artistic and cultural situation of the early fourteenth century.

**Keywords:** Ghazan Khan; Ilkhanid wood carving; Jami‘ mosque of Barzuk; Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud; wooden doors

In the middle of the Karkas mountain chain, in the distance between the cities of Kashan and Natanz, there are historical villages with buildings dating from the Seljuq period onward.<sup>1</sup> The earliest examples are religious buildings with wooden structures, flat roofs, and hypostyle halls. A considerable amount of woodwork can be found on parts of these buildings, including the ceiling, pillars, capitals, doors, mihrabs, pulpits, and cenotaphs. This woodwork was produced mostly with indigenous woods of this region, such as walnut and plane. Some types of wood in these villages were famous; for instance, Rashid al-Din Fadl-Allah (d. 1318) in his *Athar va Ihya’*<sup>2</sup> mentioned a type of willow in Quhrud that was very strong and light and suitable for a shovel handle.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the surviving wood carvings in these mountain villages are of particular significance and date back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries. One of the earliest surviving large wooden mihrabs of the Islamic world is from the Jami‘ mosque of Abyana and is dated Jumada I 477/September 1103.<sup>3</sup> Among other outstanding woodwork of the Seljuq period in the region are four minbars belonging to the Jami‘ mosque of Abyana (Muharram 466/

<sup>1</sup> Having a northwest-southeast direction, the Karkas mountain chain stretches from Kashan to Ardestan. The highest peak is Mount Karkas (elevation of 3895 m), which is located close to Natanz.

<sup>2</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Athar va ihya’*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Ettinghausen, “Beveled Style,” 77, pl. 12; Golmohammadi, “Wooden Religious Buildings,” 164–79; Fehérvári, “Mihrāb,” 14.

September 1073); Imamzada Isma‘il in Barz (Rabi‘ II 543/August–September 1148); the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin in Firizhand (Rabi‘ II 583/June–July 1187); and the shrine of Sāhib-i Minbar in Farizhand (undated).<sup>4</sup> Richard Ettinghausen, who visited Abyana in 1951, was the first scholar to discuss the style of these wood carvings and called it “the ‘beveled style’ in the post Samarra period.”<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, we shall deal with wood carvings belonging to four Ilkhanid mosques dated between 700/1300–1 and 705/1305–6. They include wooden doors and architectural elements from the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin in Firizhand (700/1300–1); the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud (Rabi‘ II 700/ March–April 1301); the Masjid-i Purzala in Abyana (701/1301–2); and the Jami‘ mosque of Barzuk (705/1305–6).

The most relevant research on the topic is a paper on the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud by Oliver Watson, to whom we would like to offer our article.<sup>6</sup> With an architectural and epigraphic survey, he has focused on the luster tiles and the wooden door of the mosque, and identifies the building as an example of the Ilkhanid architecture. To identify comparable examples of woodwork, Watson has pointed to the pulpit of the Jami‘ mosque of Nayin dated 711/1311 and the undated door of the Shah Kamaliya madrasa in Yazd. He remained unaware of the existence of three contemporary doors in the vicinity of Quhrud.<sup>7</sup>

The next noteworthy research is an unpublished PhD dissertation on carved woodwork in central Iran by Javad Golmohammadi, who has focused on Seljuq artworks and also discussed the door of the Masjid-i Purzala in Abyana.<sup>8</sup> For the Quhrud door, he cited Watson, but he failed to visit the Ilkhanid wood carvings in Barzuk and Firizhand. The other above-mentioned Ilkhanid woodwork has not yet been studied. The wood carvings in these villages have been relatively neglected; for instance, Willem Floor mentions the balustrade of the pulpit in Nayin as one of the earliest surviving examples of woodwork using the technique of *giriḥ sāzī* (geometric strapwork).<sup>9</sup> However, there are several earlier examples in the villages between Kashan and Natanz, even from the Seljuq period, showing the *giriḥ sāzī* technique.

The Ilkhanid wood carvings in Firizhand, Abyana, and Barzuk will be introduced in chronological order, and then a detailed analysis of the important door of the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud and its long inscriptions will be offered. The recently found woodwork evidence from this mosque will help us date the building and offer a suggestion of its original structure. The concluding part of the paper offers a discussion of the wood-carvers and the social and religious settings.

### The Door of the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin in Firizhand

Firizhand is the last village of the Chima-rud valley in the Karkas mountain chain and is situated 19 km south of the Kashan–Natanz road (Figure 1). Its historical monuments include the fort, the Imamzada Sayyid Ja‘far, the Husayniya, the Imamzada Sāhib-i minbar, the Zir-i Nigin mosque, and two exquisite Seljuq pulpits remaining in the last two buildings.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Golmohammadi, “Minbar,” 77.

<sup>5</sup> Ettinghausen, “Beveled Style.”

<sup>6</sup> Watson, “Masjid-i ‘Ali.”

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed study on the pulpit of the Jami‘ mosque in Nayin, see Smith, “Wood Mimbar.” Donald Wilber has dated the Shah Kamaliya madrasa as 792/1390; Wilber, *Architecture of Islamic Iran*, 187–88, no. 113. Among the wooden doors contemporary with examples introduced in this article are the door of Imamzada Qasim in Gilan dated 706/1306–7 (Sutuda, *Az Astara ta Istarabad*, 74; Floor, “Woodworking Craft,” 181); doors of the mausoleum of Bayzid Bastami dated 707–9/1307–9 (Bronstein, “Decorative Woodwork,” 2618, pl. 1463); a door dated 738/1337 signed by Hasan ibn Jamal Ahmad Shirlar Khanisari (“Lot 318”); and the door of the mausoleum of Baba Qasim in Isfahan dated 741/1340 (Bronstein, “Decorative Woodwork,” 2617).

<sup>8</sup> Golmohammadi, “Wooden Religious Buildings,” 185–86.

<sup>9</sup> Floor, “Woodworking Craft,” 181. For geometric strapwork in Islamic art, see Baer, *Islamic Ornament*, 81–84.

<sup>10</sup> A‘zam Vaqifi, *Miras-i farhangi-yi Natanz*, vol. 4, 464.



**Figure 1.** A map showing the location of the four villages in the Karkas mountain chain.

In the Husayniya, there is an exquisite wooden door with vegetal and geometrical motifs from the Ilkhanid period that originally belonged to the adjacent mosque of Zir-i Nigin (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>11</sup> The door measures 160 × 70 cm and is made of walnut, whereas its new frame is of plane wood. On the astragal nailed on the separating edge of the two leaves, there is a dated inscription that has been severely eroded by contact with people's hands. The inscription, not previously read, can be made out as: “*fi Ramadān sina sab’a miā*” (in Ramadan of the year 700/May-June 1301).”

In the center of each leaf of the door, there is a vertical rectangle and at the top and bottom are two squares, all containing a single pattern of *gīrih sāzi*. The *gīrih* consists of an eight-pointed star on each side of which a pentagon is depicted. In the squares, one unit of this *gīrih* is drawn, and in the rectangles four units are repeated. Inside these geometrical patterns, some floral motifs are carved at a lower level, using what has been termed a “stratigraphic method.”<sup>12</sup> The rectangle and the squares are surrounded by three flat and recessed frames, and finally they are connected to each other by a frieze of vegetal motifs of palmette scrolls with curling tendrils.

### The Door of the Masjid-i Purzala in Abyana

Abyana is situated in the heart of the Karkas Mountains, in Barz-rud valley near Natanz. Among its historical monuments are the Seljuq Jami‘ mosque, the Purzala mosque, the Harpak fire temple, the Hinza temple, and a Qajar shrine. The village faces south and is built on the mountain slope, the houses being located one above and behind the other. In contrast to the desert architecture of Kashan, almost all the buildings of Abyana have flat wooden roofs. One of the prominent features of Abyana that distinguishes this village from other regions of Iran is the abundance of historical woodwork decorated with various motifs and inscriptions. These works can be seen not only in religious buildings, but also in the houses. The most exquisite wood carvings of Abyana can be found in the Jami‘ mosque, and include beams, capitals, the pulpit, and the mihrab. In addition, more than twenty

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>12</sup> Baer, *Islamic Ornament*, 84–86.



**Figure 2.** The door of the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin in Firizhand, 700/1300–1, 160 × 70 cm.



**Figure 3.** Detail of [Figure 2](#).



**Figure 4.** Door of the Purzala mosque in Abyana, 701/1301–2, 190 × 95 cm, Abyana Museum. Photograph by Mahdi Qorbanizadeh, 2011.

wooden doors from the Ilkhanid to Qajar periods have survived in the village, most of them from the Safavid period.<sup>13</sup>

In Purzala, one of the seven areas of Abyana, there is a mosque with three wooden doors from the Ilkhanid and Safavid periods.<sup>14</sup> Two of the doors in the southern and western parts of the mosque are dated as Ramadan and Rajab 1058 (July–October 1648). The Ilkhanid door that was previously installed in the eastern side of the upper floor is now preserved at the Abyana Museum (Figures 4 and 5).<sup>15</sup> It is made of walnut wood and consists of a one-leaf door with inscriptions over it. The door's frame, which measures 190 × 95 cm, is carved with a narrow frieze of vine scroll design. Inside the frame and above the leaf of the door is a rectangular panel containing a dated inscription, which reads:

And the remembrance of God is the highest and the most honorable. On the date of the year seven hundred and one (1301–2); written by Muhammad ibn 'Ali [ibn] Mujib, the carver of Isfahan (Naqqār-i Isfahani).<sup>16</sup>

On the upper edge of the inscription panel there is a carved band of trefoil leaves encircled in scrolls. The door comprises five rectangular panels: three vertical panels carved with vegetal and cypress-like motifs in the center and two undecorated horizontal panels at the top and bottom. They are surrounded with timbers decorated with several narrow friezes of various plaited designs. The upper horizontal panel contains a partially legible circular inscription bearing a name written in vertical direction: “Muhammad . . . Mahmud ibn Muhammad” Perhaps this is an enlarged version of the seal of the donor of the door; its light incision suggests that, for some reason, it remained unfinished.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Golmohammadi, “Wooden Religious Buildings,” 222–49; Mashhadi, “Inscriptions,” 48–85.

<sup>14</sup> Golmohammadi, “Wooden Religious Buildings,” 113.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>16</sup> It reads: *و لذكر الله اعلى و اجل. في تاريخ سنة احدى و سبعمائه. كتبه محمد بن علي مجيب نقار اصفهاني.*

<sup>17</sup> Golmohammadi, “Wooden Religious Buildings,” 185.



Figure 5. Detail of Figure 4.

### The Jami' Mosque of Barzuk

The historical village of Barzuk is located in a mountainous area 50 km southwest of Kashan. The earliest surviving dated epigraphs in the village are from the Ilkhanid period and include a rock inscription of the digging of a qanat in 695/1295–96 and two wood carvings from the Jami' mosque dated 705/1305–6. The Jami' mosque of Barzuk was demolished around 1981, and a modern building was erected in its place. No photo or description of the Ilkhanid mosque has survived, except for a photo published by Hasan Naraqī, of a leaf of the door in situ. Naraqī wrote, “The roof and columns of this mosque are made in the style of mountain slope buildings, with wooden beams and timbers. One of the ancient works [of the mosque] is a double-leaf carved door dated 705.”<sup>18</sup>

Some of the remnants of the destroyed mosque are preserved in the Barzuk Museum of Anthropology. They include the door, a capital with a wood carving, and more than one hundred and fifty carved and painted beams. Some of the beams have been inscribed with Kufic, thuluth, naskh, and nastaliq scripts during different periods and contain Qur'anic verses, hadith, Persian poems, *waqfnāma* (endowment deeds), and the artists' names (Figure 6). Most of the beams belong to the Zand period (Rabi' I 1184/June–July 1770), when the mosque was renovated.<sup>19</sup>

About twenty-nine pieces of the painted panels from the Ilkhanid period survive. The Ilkhanid wood carvings include three objects: a panel of the construction's memorial, the door, and a capital. The first measures 200 × 20 × 5 cm. It refers to the construction of two mosques in the upper and lower parts of Barzuk and bears the name of the artist (Figures 7 and 8). It reads:

<sup>18</sup> Naraqī, *Athar-i tarikhi*, 356.

<sup>19</sup> Mashhadi and Jayhani, “Remaining Woodworks,” 91–93.



Figure 6. Some of the remnants of the demolished mosque of Barzuk, Barzuk Museum of Anthropology.



Figure 7. A piece of wood carving, 705/1305–6, overall size 200 × 20 × 5 cm, inscription size 193 × 10 cm, Barzuk Museum of Anthropology.



Figure 8. Detail of Figure 7.

In accordance with what was commanded to construct these two mosques and their buildings, the higher and the lower (*‘ulyā va suflā*), by the grace and success of the Almighty God, the weak servant in need of God, may God have mercy on him, Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd ibn Abi Tahir ibn Abi Zayd ibn Muhammad, in the year seven hundred and five succeeded [in accomplishing] with his handwriting and engraving.<sup>20</sup>

This important inscription informs us that two mosques were built, the Jami‘ mosque being the “lower” one. There is no trace of the “higher” mosque. The question that arises here is whether the craftsman, who introduces himself as “Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd ibn Abi Tahir ibn Abi Zayd ibn Muhammad,” was from the family of Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, the famous potter of late twelfth and early thirteenth century. There are three reasons to propose that the Barzuk wood-carver most likely was a descendant of Abu Zayd. First, Muhammad is trying to record four generations of his ancestors, when usually scribes mention only the names of their father and sometimes their grandfather. With this somewhat unusual method he extends his family lineage to the famous Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad. Second, there were often a variety of artistic skills in a family and the succession of generations during this period. An example is the Kirmani family: such skills as carpentry, calligraphy, stucco, and wood painting can be seen in different generations of this family.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, craftsmen of the medieval period were usually multiskilled; a clear example is Hasan ibn ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Babuwayh, of whom both luster tiles and stucco works survive.<sup>22</sup> So it is not strange to imagine that one of the descendants of Abu Zayd was a wood-carver in the early fourteenth century.

Third, in terms of time, Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd could certainly be the great grandson of Abu Zayd ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, the famous potter, whose dated works span from 582/1186 to 616/1219–20. Let us presume that Abu Zayd died around the year of his last remaining work. It is not known how old his son Abu Tahir was. But the birth of his grandchild Abu Zayd (Abu Tahir’s son) must have occurred after his death, because the tradition of naming the child after the death of the grandfather was a common pattern at the time.<sup>23</sup> The wood-carver Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd includes the phrase “may God forgive his father” on the inscription of the Barzuk door, meaning his father died before 705/1305–6. This evidence supports the hypothesis that the artist has proudly recorded his genealogy to mention the name of Abu Zayd, the famous painter-decorator (*naqqāsh*) and potter who also had a taste for poetry.<sup>24</sup>

The last words of the inscription demonstrate that this descendant of Abu Zayd was the calligrapher (*bi khattīhi*) and the carver (*nāqirīhi*) of the piece. The text indicates that he was ordered to build, and perhaps this can be interpreted to mean that he was the architect of this wooden building. It is not surprising to imagine that, like Abu Zayd, who was both potter and painter, his great grandson also was a painter, and painted the above-mentioned panels. Apparently this multiskilled artist was in charge of the overall execution of the building and its decorations.

His name also is recorded on the stunning door of the mosque (Figures 9 and 10). It measures 175 × 100 cm and contains a brief inscription at the top of both leaves that reads:

[Light shines] through houses [of worship] which Allah has ordered to be raised, and where His name is mentioned. He is glorified there morning and evening (Qur’an 24:36). In the year seven hundred and five; Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, may God forgive his father.

<sup>20</sup> وفق مما امر ببناء هذه المسجدين و عمارتهما عليا و سفلى بفضل و توفيق الله تعالى العبد الضعيف المحتاج الي رحمة الله محمد بن ابى زيد بن ابى طاهر بن ابى زيد بن محمد فى سنة خمس و سبعمائه بخطه و ناقره.

<sup>21</sup> Salehi Kakhki and Taghavi Nejad, “Justari dar nasab shinasi,” 86–87, 100.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 94–95.

<sup>23</sup> Blair, “Brief Biography,” 159.

<sup>24</sup> Mashhadi and Jayhani, “Remaining Woodworks,” 96–97. For Abu Zayd, see Watson, *Persian Lustre Ware*, 124–31, 176–85; Blair, “Brief Biography.”





**Figure 9** (left). Door of the Jami' mosque of Barzuk, 705/1305–6, 175 × 100 cm, Barzuk Museum of Anthropology.



**Figure 10** (right). Detail of Figure 9.

The structure of the door resembles that of the Purzala mosque with the assemblage of rectangles, but here the number of the rectangles in each leaf is increased to seven. Three horizontal rectangles are placed at the top, middle, and bottom at equal distances, and there are four vertical rectangles between them. Almost all parts of the door are decorated with abstract vegetal motifs in a light beveled style. In the horizontal panels, there is a rhythm of triangular leaves, in the spaces between which the same motifs are placed in smaller forms. The vegetal decorations of the vertical panels are formed inside and outside of lozenge-shaped curves. In the friezes between the panels, there are curvilinear sinuous scrolls, leaves, and tendrils.

One of the remnants of the mosque is a stunning bracket capital, which is carved on two sides (Figure 11). It also is in light beveled style. It can be assumed that this was executed by Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd. Interestingly, the plain surface of the capital is painted with vegetal motifs and scrolls in black, yellow, and red. The resemblance of the painted motifs to the carvings supports the hypothesis that the ceiling was painted in the Ilkhanid period. Similar undecorated bracket capitals can be found in the Purzala mosque, which were probably constructed in later centuries.

### The Door of the Masjid-i 'Ali in Quhrud

Quhrud was on the historical caravan route between Kashan and Isfahan. The only remarkable surviving monuments of this village are two small mosques with architectural



**Figure 11.** A capital from the Jami' mosque of Barzuk and a painted detail of it, ca. 705/1305–6, 83 × 28 × 20 cm, Barzuk Museum of Anthropology.

decorations from the Ilkhanid period. The first is the Masjid-i 'Ali, which contains a door dated 700/1301 and hundreds of luster star tiles dated 700/1300 and 707/1307. The other mosque, which is called the Masjid-i Kalla, was built in smaller dimensions but with the same structure and elements as the Masjid-i 'Ali. There was a molded blue and black underglaze painted tile in the mihrab that was produced by one of the potters of the Abu Tahir family. Because of the chipping in the phrase including the date, Oliver Watson attributes it to 716, 717, 726, or 727 (1316–1327).<sup>25</sup>

The Masjid-i 'Ali's ground plan is square, with four pillars in the center. It is roofed with nine flattish domes. The interior is heavily plastered and the decoration is limited to the mihrab and entrance. When Watson published his article in 1975, there were two ceramic slabs in the center of the mihrab, but in later years, they were stolen and found their way into Western auctions. One of them was a turquoise-glazed tile dated 708/1308, containing the name of the donor, "Abd al-Wahid ibn Muhammad al-Quhrudi."<sup>26</sup> This name also is mentioned on the wooden door dated 700/1301. Accounting for the difference between the dates of the door and mihrab, Watson considers them the dates of the construction and the completion of the decorations.<sup>27</sup>

The other is a luster ceramic plaque, dated Safar 736/September–October 1335, recording a Sufi dream in the form of *mathnavi* (a poem based on independent, internally rhyming lines). About half of this tile has been lost, but it can be assumed that it originally contained twenty-six bayts (a single line of poetry consisting of two hemistiches).<sup>28</sup> According to the remaining text, apparently a person of unknown name and identity has described a dream. He refers to the place of revelation, which may be the same mosque. In his dream, he meets Nur al-Din of Natanz (d. 699/1299–1300), the famous Sufi leader of that time. The text also mentions a stick (*ʿaṣā*), which may have been the symbolic axis of this revelation. However, since a major part of the poem is missing, its meaning is incomprehensible.<sup>29</sup>

The exquisite door is recessed in the west wall of the building; on the exterior at each side are set luster star tiles above stone couches. Although the leaves of the door are not very large (each leaf measures 170 × 48 × 7.5 cm), the overall dimensions of the door reach 275 cm in height and 210 cm in width with the addition of several wooden panels on three sides. The door, which is made of walnut wood, contains thirteen Persian and Arabic inscriptions, more than 560 words. This is unparalleled in contemporary woodwork (Figures 12 and 13). The inscriptions reveal important information about the building itself

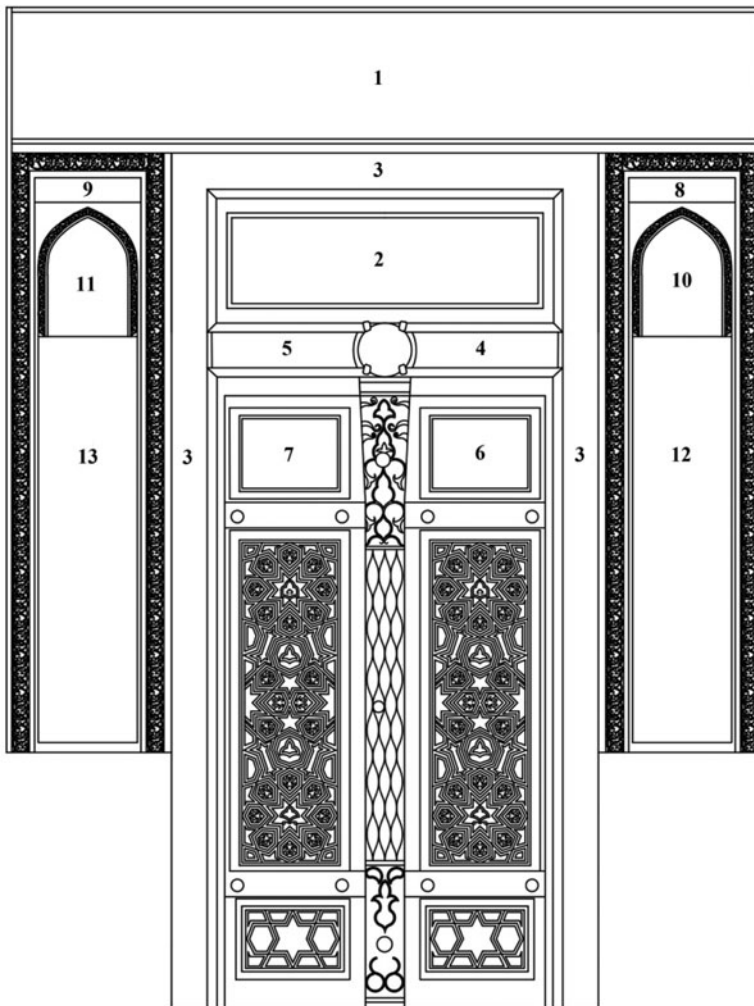
<sup>25</sup> Watson, "Masjid-i 'Ali," 63.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 68; Fehérvári, *Pottery of the Islamic World*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> Watson, "Masjid-i 'Ali," 68.

<sup>28</sup> Mashhadi and Ghiasian, "Writing of Dreams," 126, no. 1.

<sup>29</sup> For images of the tile, see Watson, "Masjid-i 'Ali," pl. 8a; Fehérvári, *Pottery of the Islamic World*, 63; "Lot 306"; "Lot 323."



**Figure 12.** Location of the inscriptions on the door of the Masjid-i 'Ali.

and the social and religious situation of the village during the Ilkhanid period. In inscriptions 12 and 13, the date is mentioned: one in the *abjad* numerical system (“the year of hijra had reached to *dhāl* [700/1301]”) and the other in letters (“Rabi‘ II of the year 700/March-April 1301”).<sup>30</sup> Each of the inscriptions is carved on a single plank of wood, the largest of which is the top inscription, with dimensions of 210 × 34 cm.

At the end of inscription 3, the name of the artist is recorded: “It was written by the weak slave, Muhammad ibn ‘Ali ibn Mujib al-Naqqar al-Isfahani.” There is another name in the bottom right-hand corner of inscription 1: “Work of Ustad Hajji.”

The leaves of the door and the margins of inscriptions 10, 11, 12, and 13 are carved in a style that has been termed “miniature-beveled style.”<sup>31</sup> Some elements of the decoration, such as the intertwining palmettes and scrolls raised from the background imitating a lattice work, became regular features in later wood carving.<sup>32</sup> Inscriptions 1 and 2 are written in

<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that this is one of the first examples of dating with *abjad* letters, which became popular later, in the Safavid period.

<sup>31</sup> Watson, “Masjid-i ‘Ali,” 68.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 13.** Door of the Masjid-i 'Ali, 700/1301, overall size 275 × 210 cm.

Kufic script and other inscriptions are in a naskh script, tending toward thuluth. The background of the inscriptions is filled with comma-like volutes. One of the outstanding features of this door is the execution of the decorations on two levels. This means that the writings and the geometrical pattern of the *gīrih sāzī* are carved on a raised level and the vegetal motifs of the backgrounds are on a recessed surface (Figure 14).

Since the inscriptions of the door are published, there is no need to copy them here, but a description of their content would be worthwhile.<sup>33</sup> Inscriptions 2, 4, 5, and 8 to 11 are Qur'anic, and inscriptions 6 and 7 are hadith. The Qur'anic inscriptions, either directly or indirectly, refer to verses about building a mosque, offering prayers, the names of God, the oneness of God and the truth of His messenger, seeking refuge in God from the evil of Satan, etc. In inscription 10, the verse "Here is a cool washing-place and a drink (Qur'an 38:42)," which was a spring of healing water gushing forth under the feet of Job, is meaningful. It refers to a *siqāya*, which was endowed with the mosque. This word is mentioned in inscriptions 1 and 3 and refers to "what is built for water" and "a water reservoir in mosques."<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that even now the water of the spring flows through pipes in a pond in front of the mosque, perhaps a remnant of the past tradition.

One of the hadiths inscribed on the door deals with the reward of building a mosque and the other mentions the difference between a believer and a hypocrite in the mosque. Interestingly these two hadiths also were written on the Safavid wooden door of the Kalla mosque, indicating that its scribe had seen the inscriptions on the door of the Masjid-i 'Ali.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 69–71. To see the entirety of the inscriptions, see the authors' forthcoming paper, "The Ilkhanid Wooden Door of the Masjid-i 'Ali in Quhrud."

<sup>34</sup> Dihkhuda, *Lughat nama*.



Figure 14. Details of Figure 13.

Inscription 12 is a Persian mystical and moral verse. Referring to inner purity and providing salutations to the Prophet, it is wished that God will accept the donor, and the pilgrims (*zā'irān*) to the building are requested to offer their prayers. Using the word *zā'ir* for the visitors of the mosque is interesting. As will be discussed, this also was a pilgrimage site known as a *qadamgāh* (a place where an infallible had been present, observed, passed by, or seen in a dream); the word *zā'ir* underlines this function. The verse in inscription 13 contains a moral admonition that calls for making people happy, being kind to everyone, avoiding fault-finding, generosity, and, at the end, praying.

### The Donor of the Mosque

The long epigraph containing the name of the founder, similar to most of the inscriptions of the medieval period in Iran, is in Arabic and includes his full name and genealogy: “Abd al-Wahid ibn . . . Muhammad ibn . . . ‘Ali ibn . . . Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ali al-Quhrudi.”<sup>35</sup> His name also is mentioned on the turquoise tile of the mihrab (“The weak slave, ‘Abd al-Wahid ibn Muhammad al-Quhrudi”). Moreover, in the poems of inscriptions 1

<sup>35</sup> The full inscription (also published by Watson, “Masjid-i ‘Ali,” 69) reads:

امر ببناء هذا المسجد و السقاياه الصدر الامام العالم ملك الفاضل و الخطبا مفخر القضاة مفتى العصر نعمان الزمان قدوة المشايخ و المحققين تاج الملة و الدين عبدالواحد بن الصدر السعيد الامام ملك العلماء و الافاضل افتخار العراق خاتم الزمان نجم الملة و الدين محمد بن المرحوم السعيد ملك العلماء و الافاضل زين الحاج الحرمين نجم الملة و الدين علي بن الصدر السعيد ملك الاكابر و الفضلا مفخر القضاة مفتى الفرق زين الحاج الحرمين رشيد الدين احمد بن محمد بن عبد الله بن علي القهرودي. غفر الله لهم. حرره العبد الضعيف محمد بن علي بن مجيب النقار الاصفهاني.

and 12, the word *wāhid* could be a *takhallus* (pen name) of the poet, who was the same ‘Abd al-Wahid.

In inscription 3, ‘Abd al-Wahid’s father, grandfather, and great-grandfather are introduced with long titles that indicate he and his ancestors were religious scholars.<sup>36</sup> The titles given to ‘Abd al-Wahid imply his leading position as a scholar, jurist, orator, and judge. His father Muhammad and his grandfather ‘Ali have titles such as “Sadr al-Sa‘id” and “king of the ‘ulama.”<sup>37</sup> In addition, his great grandfather Ahmad is given the titles of Qadi and “mufti of the sects.” The latter title indicates that he probably has been allowed to issue a fatwa (a formal ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a qualified jurist) in both Shi‘a and Sunni sects. Four generations of this family have been religious scholars, and ‘Abd al-Wahid and his great-grandfather also held the position of judge and issued fatwas. ‘Abd al-Wahid also has the title of “exemplars of the shaykhs and scholars,” used for Sufi leaders and shaykhs. Moreover, in the beginning of one of the poems, the phrase “*Lā ilāha illā hū*” (there is no God but He) resembles Sufi literature. Imam Muhammad Ghazali (d. 1111) considers *lā ilāha illā hū* the monotheism of the elite and *lā ilāha illā Allah* the monotheism of the masses.<sup>38</sup> Even the content of the poems in inscriptions 12 and 13 is related to Sufi ethics.

As mentioned, the luster ceramic plaque dated Safar 736/October 1335 contains the name of Nur al-din of Natanz, the Suhrawardi shaykh who died in 699/1299–1300 in Natanz. He was one of the elders of Sufism in the Kashan region during the Ilkhanid period and was a student of Najib al-Din ‘Ali ibn Buzghush Shirazi (d. 1279), who was a student of Shaykh Shahab al-Din ‘Umar Suhrawardi (d. 1234).<sup>39</sup> Two of Shaykh Nur al-din’s students, Kamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzaq ibn Abi’l-Ghana‘im al-Kashani (d. 1335) and ‘Izz al-Din Mahmud ibn ‘Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir al-Kashani (d. 1334-5), also were famous Sufis of this period, and they passed away around the year of the production of the luster plaque.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it is possible that the people of this mosque were related to the Sufi congregations that were welcomed in the Kashan region.

With regard to ‘Abd al-Wahid’s religion, it should be mentioned that although in inscription 1 there are references to Imam ‘Ali and the family of the Prophet, these tendencies were common among the Sunni mystics of this period and alone do not imply a Shi‘ite belief. Sufism with a Shi‘ite tinge was the most important religious feature of central Iran during the Ilkhanid period, and both Kamal al-Din ‘Abd al-Razzaq and ‘Izz al-Din Mahmud were Sunnis who adhered to the Shaf‘i school of law but held great reverence for ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Prophet’s family.<sup>41</sup>

## The Qadamgāhi Nature of the Mosque

The first inscription contains a poem in sixteen *bayts* describing the dream of the donor ‘Abd al-Wahid.<sup>42</sup> In summary, Imam ‘Ali came to ‘Abd al-Wahid in a dream and ordered the construction of a mosque, marking the location of the mosque, mihrab, minbar, and *siqāya*.

<sup>36</sup> The epithets and benedictions mentioned in the inscriptions are comparable to the epigraphy of the shrine complex at Natanz. See Blair, *Ilkhanid Shrine*, 9–11.

<sup>37</sup> For the title Sadr, which was given to various members of the ‘ulama, see *ibid.*, 12–13.

<sup>38</sup> Ghazali, *Fada‘il al-anam*, 20–25.

<sup>39</sup> Jami, *Nafahat al-uns*, 474.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 481–84. For a discussion of Shaykh Nur al-din ‘Abd al-Samad’s disciples, see Blair, *Ilkhanid Shrine*, 5–6.

<sup>41</sup> Blair, *Ilkhanid Shrine*, 5–11.

<sup>42</sup> It reads:

بتوفیق خدای پاک داور | کریم و خالق و حی و توانگر | شبی در خواب دیدم مرتضی را | امیر و مفرح آل عبا را | بگفتا عبد واحد باش استاد | بفرمایم  
تو را هر گونه بنیاد | توقف کرد آنجا یک زمانی | پس آنگه بر کشید آنجا نشانی | اساس مسجد و محراب و منبر | بیقایه با توابع بود بر سر | امیرالمومنین  
چون داد فرمان | مهتبا شد مرا در حال درمان | ز ناگه سنگ چندی گشت ظاهر | جوانی چند معاون بود حاضر | بامر او اساس از سنگ مرمر | نهادم تا  
ببالا شد برابر | چو واجب گشت بر من آن اشارت | بقدر وسع کردم آن عمارت | امید است آنک باشد یادگاری | نمانم من بماند روزگاری | مگر صاحب  
دلی اهل صفایی | کند در حق این مسکین دعایی | خداوندا تویی دانای اسرار | که دارم زلت عصیان بسیار | ندارم مایه نیکو ز طاعت | بجز ایمان و تسلیم  
و قناعت | بفضلت بنده را دلشاد گردان | ز عدل خود مرا ازاد گردان | امید من بدرگاہت روا کن | شفاعت خواه ما را مصطفی کن | بحق اولیاء و آل پس |  
بحامیم و بطه و بطس.

Then, with the help of some young men, he built the building with marble stones that appeared. After waking, the dreamer, who is “*‘abd-i wāhid*” (slave of the One), starts to build the mosque and *siqāya*, and at the end he prays to God and asks for the intercession of the Prophet and his family.

This revelatory dream can be compared with the inscriptions of a pair of circular luster ceramic tiles dated 1 Shawwal 711/10 February 1312 belonging to the Qadamgāh-i ‘Ali in Kashan. According to the text of those tiles, Imam ‘Ali together with the twelfth imam of the Shi‘ites, who was a youth, appeared in someone’s dream and ordered him to construct a shrine, the exact location of which was specified.<sup>43</sup> Repeating this request in the dreams of several men and women leads to construction of the building. There are obvious similarities between the contents of the inscriptions on the door and the luster tiles: first, the time affinity, as the first one was written in 1301 and the other in 1312; second, the dream of the presence of Imam ‘Ali that has given both places a *qadamgāhi* position; third, the order to build a mosque and a shrine; fourth, the location of the building determined in a dream; and finally, fifth, the construction of a building based on a dream.

Of course, there are differences in the two recorded dreams. In Kashan’s luster tiles, the details of the dream are given in intimate prose and in more detail, even illustrating the scene with depictions of the exact sizes of Imam ‘Ali’s horseshoe and the footprint of the twelfth imam’s camel. Instead, in other parts of the Quhrud door, which had more space for inscriptions, the donor and his family are more fully introduced. In the Kashan tiles, the dreamer and the builder are two different persons; Sayyid Fakhr al-Din Hasan Tabari is the dreamer and Maulana Baha’ al-Din Haydar Faris is the builder,<sup>44</sup> but the dreamer and the builder in the Quhrud story is ‘Abd al-Wahid. Another difference is the Shi‘ite approach in these two inscriptions. As described, ‘Abd al-Wahid is more similar to a Sunni Sufi with an affection for Shi‘ism, whereas in the inscription of the luster tiles Imam ‘Ali refers to the youth and says “this youth is our son, Mahdi Sahib Zaman,” referring to the Shi‘ite’s twelfth imam, and its Shi‘ite faith is obvious.<sup>45</sup>

### Dating of the Masjid-i ‘Ali based on Newly Found Wood Carvings

Oliver Watson has made the argument that almost all the inscriptions of the two mosques of ‘Ali and Kalla in Quhrud were from a limited period (1300–1335), and the two buildings were built of the same elements and were essentially the same type. Considering the fact that the “keel-arches” are characteristic of the Ilkhanid architecture, he concludes, “this would all support the argument that the buildings are contemporary with their inscriptions, although it is by no means conclusive. Until contrary evidence is produced it remains, however, the logical conclusion.”<sup>46</sup>

Now there is new evidence showing the building was built in later centuries. In 2020, the upper rooms of the mosque were renovated to reduce the weight of the flat roofs, with replacement of worn wooden beams and termite extermination (Figure 15). Two historical wooden columns were discovered among the ceiling beams. One of the columns had a relatively intact inscription on which the name of the donor and a Qur’anic verse were recorded:

The construction of this mosque and its *siqāya* was ordered by ‘Abd al-Wahid ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Ali. ‘Keep up the prayer at the sinking of the sun to the dusk of the night and [the reading] of the Qur’an at dawn; surely the reading of the Qur’an at dawn has been witnessed’ (Qur’an 17:78).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> For these tiles and analysis of their texts, see Adle, “Un disque de foundation” and “Un diptique de foundation”; Mashhadi and Ghiasian, “Writing of Dreams.”

<sup>44</sup> Mashhadi and Ghiasian, “Writing of Dreams,” 111–12.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>46</sup> Watson, “Masjid-i ‘Ali,” 72.

<sup>47</sup> أمر ببناء هذا المسجد و سقايته عبدالواحد بن محمد بن علي. أقم الصلاة لدلوك الشمس إلى غسق الليل و قرآن الفجر إن قرآن الفجر كان مشهودا.



**Figure 15** (left). The renovation of the Masjid-i 'Ali in 2020.



**Figure 16** (right). A column belonging to the Masjid-i 'Ali, size of outer frame 70 × 30 cm.

These inscriptions are at the bottom of the column, which has a square section. The middle part of the column has an octagonal section (Figure 16). 'Abd al-Wahid is the same founder of the mosque whose name is carved on the door and the mihrab tile. Moreover, the word *siqāya* and the superb wood-carving quality lead us to conclude that the column belongs to the same mosque and is contemporary with the door.

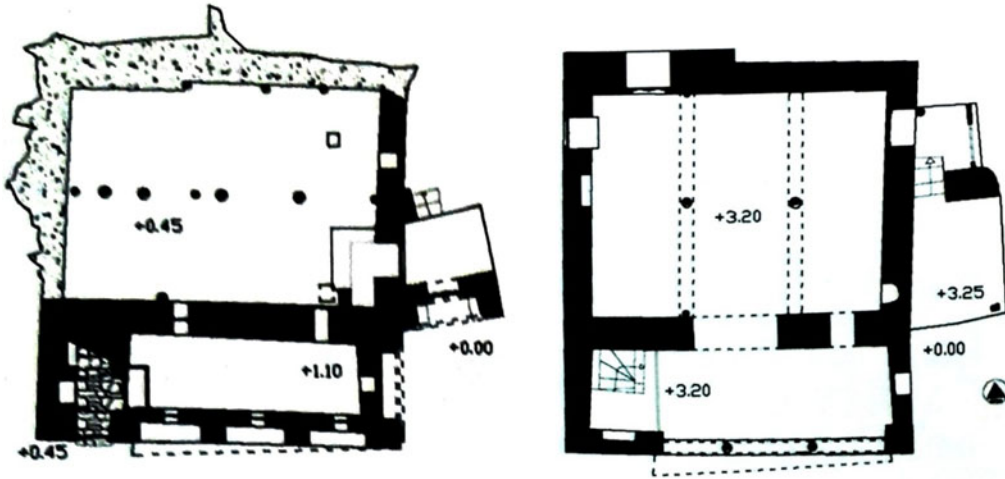
The name of the founder appears in a simple rectangular frame, and the Qur'anic verse is carved inside a mihrabi frame. Like the door, the writings are executed in a raised form and the recessed background is filled with comma-like volutes. Scrolls are carved in the spandrels as well as the borders. One of the characteristics of this work is that the motifs are carved on three levels: the decorative arch and its columns are executed on a completely raised surface, the spandrels are on a slightly recessed surface, and the margin is further recessed.

When the roofs were renovated, this column was again used as a beam; except for its inscription, it was plastered. The second column, which was severely eroded, has been left outside of the building, but the mihrabi frame of its inscription is still clearly recognizable and shows that it was a parallel to the other column (Figure 17). The tongue at the top of the column that was the location of the capital has remained completely intact. The measurements of the inscription frames of both columns are almost identical (70 × 30 cm). This evidence shows that the mosque was originally a wooden building with at least two pillars and a ceiling height of 320 cm. After the destruction of the wooden Ilkhanid mosque, two of its columns were used as beams for the later building, which was probably erected in the Qajar period. It should be mentioned that almost all the historical buildings in the

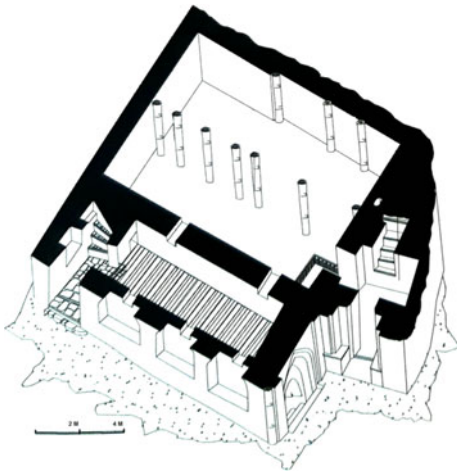


**Figure 17**. A wooden column belonging to the Masjid-i 'Ali, ca. 700/1301, 320 × 28 × 28 cm.

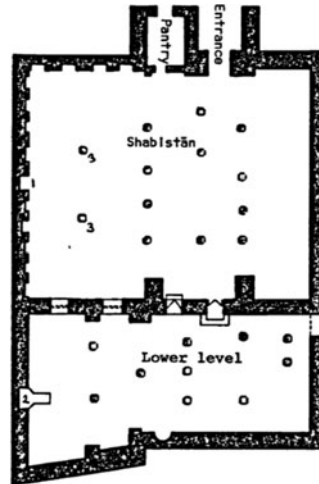




**Figure 18.** Plan of the ground floor (left) and first floor (right) of the Purzala mosque in Abyana (from Ra'ī, *Abyana*, Figures 77–78).



**Figure 19** (left). Structure of the ground floor of the Purzala mosque in Abyana (from Ra'ī, *Abyana*, Figure 81).



**Figure 20** (right). Plan of the Jami' mosque of Abyana (from Golmohammadi, "Wooden Religious Buildings," Figure 1).

neighboring mountain villages, from the Seljuq period onward, have flat roofs with wooden beams, among which are the Jami' mosque of Abyana, the Masjid-i Purzala in Abyana, the Jami' mosque of Barzuk, and the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin in Firizhand. The plans of the mosques in Abyana, and especially the Purzala mosque, can help us imagine the initial plan of the Masjid-i 'Ali (Figures 18–20).

### The Wood-Carvers

In the wood carvings we have considered, the names of three artisans are recorded: Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn Mujib al-Naqqar al-Isfahani, Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, and Ustad Hajji. Muhammad al-Naqqar signed the doors of the Masjid-i 'Ali in Quhrud and the Purzala mosque in Abyana. Al-Naqqar used the verb *harrarahū* on the Quhrud door and *katabahū* on the Abyana door, both indicating he was the calligrapher.

It is interesting that Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd also refers to himself as *nāqir*. Two other uses of the word *naqqār* for woodworkers can be found at the Thesaurus d'Epigraphie Islamique website. The first, the Maqām of Qaydar Nabi in Zanjan province, dated 692/1291–92, is signed by Naqqar ‘Ali Isfahani; and the second, dated 831/1427–28, was Ustad Husayn ibn ‘Ali Najjar Naqqar in Natanz.<sup>48</sup> Apparently use of the word *naqqār* changed during the fifteenth century, when in Tabriz or the Mazandaran region a woodworker signed as a *najjār* (carpenter).<sup>49</sup>

In the Quhrud door, the name of Ustad Hajji also is written in a very small size. Oliver Watson, who had not seen the Purzala door, hypothesized that possibly Ustad Hajji carved the work to the other's design, as Muhammad only recorded himself as the calligrapher.<sup>50</sup> There are two reasons to reject this hypothesis. First, in addition to the verbs *harrarahū* and *katabahū*, on both doors Muhammad uses the title “Naqqar” for himself, indicating he was carver and calligrapher. Second, the diminutive form of the phrase “work of Ustad Hajji” that is carved in the background of the inscription may show that he was the carpenter rather than the artist. This assumption is reinforced by one of the *bayts* of the poem in inscription 13: “While Ustad was erecting this [plank of] wood; in the morning he asked to recite *Fātiha*.” Apparently, Ustad Hajji did the heavy work of cutting the timbers, and Muhammad decorated them.

The similarity of vegetal motifs and the carving quality of the door and the wooden column of the Masjid-i ‘Ali leads us to imagine that the columns of the mosque also are the work of the same artist. The door is dated Rabi‘ II 700/March–April 1301, and the Abyana door is dated 701/1301–2. It can be assumed that Muhammad was active in the villages of this region for at least one year. Accepting this hypothesis makes Watson's opinion about moving the door from Isfahan to this area problematic.<sup>51</sup>

The Quhrud door is decorated with geometrical patterns of *giriḥ sāzī*, but the Abyana door is designed with a different structure of raised and recessed rectangular frames. In the Quhrud door, the writings dominate the decorations, but in the Abyana door writing plays a secondary role, and the main parts of the door consist of rectangular frames decorated with scrolls and curling tendrils.

Interestingly the Quhrud door resembles that of Firizhand in its carvings on two levels (raised and recessed), its execution quality, and use of the same *giriḥ sāzī* motifs. Moreover, in both doors, there are similar vegetal motifs on the astragals nailed on the separating edge of the two leaves (Figures 3 and 14). It can be hypothesized that perhaps the Firizhand door also was carved by Muhammad al-Naqqar.

Thus, of the four doors introduced here, two have been signed by Muhammad al-Naqqar, another one can be attributed to him, and one has the signature of Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd. Both wood-carvers introduce themselves as calligrapher and carver. Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, who has proudly recorded his full genealogy to mention the name of his ancestor Abu Zayd, also perhaps was an architect and painter. This confirms the multiskilled nature of these artists, who were probably in charge of the execution of the buildings and their decorations. The newly discovered wood carvings demonstrate that these artists, in contrast to previous research, not only carved the doors of the mosques but also worked on their columns and capitals.

## The Social and Religious Settings

In the four surveyed villages, which are located in a mountainous area and are quite close to each other, we see significant developments in mosque construction. In Quhrud, the Masjid-i

<sup>48</sup> Fondation Max van Berchem, Genève, Thesaurus d'Epigraphie Islamique, nos. 3673, 9713.

<sup>49</sup> Gierlichs, “Tabrizi Woodcarvings,” 363; Aube, “Skills and Style,” 285–96.

<sup>50</sup> Aube, “Skills and Style,” 69, no. 45.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

‘Ali was built around the year 1301 and the Masjid-i Kalla was erected ten years to some decades later. In Firizhand there also are two historical religious buildings, the Masjid-i Zir-i Nigin, the door of which is dated 700/1300–1, and a shrine that may have functioned as a mosque in past centuries. In Abyana, the Purzala mosque was built in 701/1301–2. In the wooden panel of the Jami‘ mosque of Barzuk, the construction of two mosques in 705/1305–6 is mentioned.

These mosques, which were built between the years 700/1300–1 and 705/1305–6, are connected with an important development in the history of the Ilkhans and the history of Islamic Iran. This happened during the reigns of Ghazan Khan (r. 1295–1304) and his successor Uljaytu (r. 1304–1316), who continued the actions and reforms of his predecessor. Unlike the earlier Ilkhans, Ghazan Khan converted to Islam and carried out many cultural, economic, and social reforms. Rashid al-Din in the last chapter of his *Tarikh-i Mubarak-i Ghazani* (“the blessed history of Ghazan”) mentions that forty reforms occurred during the reign of Ghazan Khan. One of the reforms was construction of mosques in the villages:

It is clear that people need bathhouse and mosque, and in the villages of some provinces, they have not built either of them. Before this, the kings of Islam did not plan it. And in any case, in the situation where the people there do not pray in congregation and do not perform the ablution (*ghusl*), there was a problem in their Muslimness. The king ordered and dispatched imperial decrees (*yarligh*) to build mosques and baths in all the villages of the kingdom. Those who do not build are criminals and sinners; and they built for almost two years in the entire kingdom wherever there was none.<sup>52</sup>

The construction of these mosques in the villages between Kashan and Natanz during the last years of Ghazan Khan’s rule is compatible with his order. These buildings are a sign of that prosperous era of mosque building in Iran that led to the gathering of artists from other cities. Moreover, Ghazan Khan’s devotion to Shi‘ite imams and their descendants (*sādāt*) led to the construction of Dar al-Siyada buildings, as a surviving *waqfnāma* dated Safar 703/September–October 1303 from Dar al-Siyada of Kashan confirms.<sup>53</sup>

The weakening of Sunnism that started with the victory of the Ilkhans over the ‘Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad reached its apogee with Uljaytu’s conversion to Shi‘ism in late 709/1310.<sup>54</sup> Before his conversion to Shi‘ism five years before his death, he had wavered between the various religions of Christianity, Buddhism, and Sunnism of the Hanafite and Shafi‘ite schools.<sup>55</sup> The stunning stucco mihrab added to the mosque in Isfahan in 1310, with its Shi‘ite inscriptions, can be considered a direct reflection of that conversion.<sup>56</sup> This also is reflected in other contemporary structures of the Isfahan province. For instance, inscriptions of the “third decorative stage” of the Pir-i Bakran mausoleum, which were completed in 1312–13, contained Shi‘ite elements such as the names of the Fourteen Infallibles.<sup>57</sup>

A clear example of Shi‘ite tendencies and thoughts in the Kashan region is the construction of a *qadamgāh* in the Shi‘ite city of Kashan and the construction of the Masjid-i ‘Ali in Quhrud, both of which were pilgrimage sites. The content of the Shi‘ite inscription of the Quhrud door is not far removed from Sunni beliefs and is more moderate than that of the Qadamgāh-i ‘Ali in the Shi‘ite city of Kashan. No trace of Shi‘ism can be found in the remaining inscriptions at three contemporary mosques in other villages. Although at first glance it seemed that the brevity of the inscriptions did not allow an opportunity to address religious beliefs, the inscriptions of the painted beams from the ceiling of Barzuk’s Jami‘

<sup>52</sup> Rashid al-Din, *Jami‘ al-tawarikh*, vol. 2, 1337.

<sup>53</sup> Kashani, *Tarikh-i Uljaytu*, 93–95; Afshar, “Waqfnama,” 123–26.

<sup>54</sup> Kashani, *Tarikh-i Uljaytu*, 100.

<sup>55</sup> Blair, *Ilkhanid Shrine*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> Blair, “Writing about Faith,” 107.

<sup>57</sup> Paone, “Mongol Colonization,” 1–30; Grbanovic, “Ilkhanid Revetment,” 66.

mosque had no indication of Shi'ism but had content in accordance with the Sunni perception of Islam.<sup>58</sup> These inscriptions are in line with the words of the Ilkhanid historian Hamd-Allah Mustaufi (d. ca. 1344), who identified the city of Kashan as Shi'ite and its villages as Sunni.<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

The surviving Ilkhanid wood carvings from the mosques of four mountain villages between Kashan and Natanz were built in a period of about five years. They offer an interesting picture of the art and culture of the early fourteenth century. In this article, the names of two wood-carvers have been identified. The first was Muhammad Naqqar, an artist from Isfahan who probably lived for a while in these villages and carved the door and the wooden columns of the Masjid-i 'Ali in Quhrud as well as the door of the Purzala mosque in Abyana, and perhaps the Firizhand door. The second artist, Muhammad ibn Abi Zayd, carved the door and other woodwork of the Jami' mosque of Barzuk, and apparently was in charge of the construction of the mosque and its decorations, including the carving and wood painting.

This was a time of mosque-building, according to the order of the newly converted Ghazan Khan. The surveyed examples show the construction of more than one mosque in some villages, as two mosques were built in Barzuk, both mosques of Quhrud were erected in the Ilkhanid period, and in Abyana the Purzala mosque was erected next to the magnificent Seljuq Jami' mosque. Among all this woodwork, the long inscriptions of the Quhrud door are of particular importance in that they present Persian culture at the beginning of the fourteenth century. They demonstrate that Sufi beliefs were mixed with Shi'ite ideas. Gradually Shi'ite beliefs penetrated among the official scholars who were probably Sunnis; in the following centuries, devotion to Imam 'Ali and the Prophet's family became Shi'ite faith.

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<sup>58</sup> Mashhadi and Jayhani, "Remaining Woodworks," 92–93.

<sup>59</sup> Mustaufi, *Nuzhat al-Qulub*, 68.

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