

## **A Comparative Study of Two Tourist Attractions from an Architectural Perspective (Case Study: The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar and Hindu Temple in Hormozgan Province, Iran)**

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### **Abstract**

Hormozgan located in the south of Iran with an anchorage background after the Volga River in the north of the country was an important gateway for Asian and European overseas merchants as well as importing goods into Iran. Bandar Abbas is the center of Hormozgan Province and one of metropolises of Iran which is also considered the economic pole of Iran. This city is also considered as a tourist destination in Iran because of its tourist attractions. In this research, a comparative study has been made between the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar and the Hindu Temple in Bandar Abbas with a new perspective. This research seeks to answer the question of what are the similarities and differences between these two monuments and what has highlighted these similarities and differences. Therefore, these two monuments are studied and compared in terms of indicators such as architecture, building materials and building plan.

**Keywords:** Tourism, tourist attraction, architecture, the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, the Hindu Temple, Bandar Abbas

### **Introduction**

Although the Indian urban and architecture having a long history with Iranian culture as well as the influence of European urban and architecture and some Asian countries on Iran have had desirable cultural outcomes, but however the irregular modeling at the present has been so hasty and widespread that the reputation of ancient Iranian architecture has also pushed to the margins. Columns and domes of Iranian architecture have been mentioned in historical texts and the architecture and urban libraries of the world's great universities. It should be noted that Iranian architecture has influenced the architecture of other countries like India and some European countries. For example, one can see it in "Iranian gardens" in India (Khansari, Moghtadar, & Yavari, 2015). The Taj Mahal with an Iranian-Islamic architecture is less Indian in style. This monument was built by Shah Jahan near Agra city, two hundred kilometers from Delhi. New Delhi, the current capital of India, where was selected as the capital in south of Old Delhi has also a culture originated from the love between the two nations of Iran and India. Old Delhi is also called "Shah Jahanabad" because its tall stone fort has been made by Shah Jahan (Dabirsiyaghi, 2008).

Iranian architecture art has not only influenced in the Middle East and some Asian countries, but also on other continents as well. Great and famous artworks of Byzantine architecture such as the Church of St. Sufism (the current Hagia Sophia Mosque) and the Church of the Holy Apostles (St. Sergius) all built by order and under the command of Emperor Justinian in Constantinople have benefited elements of Iranian art and architecture (Shafa, 2006).

The domes of shrines and mosques and the use of various elements including rhythm and color in them are among the most supreme and elegant masterpieces of architectural art in the long-standing Iranian culture. Since the Iranian architectural art and, on the other hand, Indian architecture are ancient and deep-rooted arts, so architecture and urban of these two countries have been accompanied by progressive changes every year. However, ancient domes and religious places have never been compared in terms of Iranian and Indian architecture.

Bandar Abbas in the south of Iran is the largest port of Iran and center of Hormozgan Province and Bandar Abbas city and is also considered as one of the metropolises of Iran. This port was formerly called Gambron which was renamed Bandar Abbas after the expedition of Shah Abbas I and the expulsion

of the Portuguese from Iran. In addition to have many natural attractions, this city has many historical monuments and attractions. Accordingly, it is one of the tourist destinations of Iran. Monuments such as the Kolah Farangi Mansion, Galedari Historical Bath Museum, Hindu Temple, Ahmadi House, Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, Gap Minber Wind-catcher, and Water Museum are all considered as tourist attractions of this city.

Finally, two monuments of Shrine of the Seyyed Mozaffar and Hindu Temple were selected for the present study after a rigorous research on different and various issues and discussion with experts in the field of architecture. This study intends to compare these religious monuments in terms of architecture and use and to investigate their architectural similarities and differences. On the other hand, since changes have arisen in the attitude and lifestyle of the people in the present, and subsequently in the architecture, such religious monuments with a historical background have received a lot of attention. Based on social finding resulted from this southern area of Iran, this article intends to explain what changes have taken place in the structure of these two monuments each of which is a symbol of a special and separate religion.

## **Questions**

### **Main Question**

What is homogeneity and heterogeneity between the various components of architectural structure of the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar and the Hindu Temple in Bandar Abbas and what makes the homogeneity and heterogeneity stand out?

### **Sub-questions**

- What are the similarities and differences between Iranian and Indian architecture?
- How have been the Iranian dome of the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar and the Indian dome of Hindu Temple in Bandar Abbas built?
- How can these two buildings show the use of colors and the coordination fastening in Islamic and Indian architecture?

### **Methodology**

In the study, it is used field and library research with an analytical-descriptive approach in accordance with its subject and purpose. First, it was sought data of the two mentioned buildings in various and different documents, books,

papers and references. In order to the field study, professor of architecture, local people and staff and employees of the aforementioned monuments was interviewed.

### **Findings**

There are many monuments in the south of Iran. These are sometimes only a few kilometers apart are different in terms of architecture and use. For instance, the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar astonishes every visitor with its Islamic-Iranian artistic architecture is different from the Portuguese castle on Hormuz Island that is reminiscent of the invasion of Portuguese admiral, Afonso de Albuquerque, from India to the Persian Gulf and is inspiring the architecture in Portugal of the late medieval European and the Iberian Peninsula and to some extent also the architecture of Iran's historic castles (Zande Del et al., 1998). If the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar is a place of prayer and worship for Muslims, the Portuguese castle in Hormuz was command headquarters consists of the different parts including a hall for orations and festivals, a very large reservoir, a grocery storeroom, a church for prayer and even a restaurant for enjoyment and binge of naval soldiers and commanders, ammunition depots, prison and barracks. Portuguese architectures hired native and possibly Indian workers to build the castle just at the end of the northern opening of the island and overlooking the sea and controlled the sea through the holes made in the wall. On the other hand, monuments left by Sassanid's in Qeshm show history of our ancient culture originated from the Zoroastrian religion.

Tourists are faced with the four cultures of Sassanid Iran, Islamic Iran, Indian religious culture and architecture and European Christian shrine in the Portuguese Castle visiting the Hindu Temple in Bandar Abbas, the Portuguese Castle in Hormuz Island, the Sassanid monuments in Qeshm and the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar that it is very fascinating for any tourist with any taste and culture. Due to the relative importance of modern tourist standards in a city as Bandar Abbas, the Hindu Temple, Delgosha Mosque, Galehdari Historical Bath Museum, Water Museum, Rainwater collection Pond can be selected as the top monuments. The Hindu Temple is prominent in several aspects. First, it is an Indian cultural symbol in Iran which can't be found in other areas of the country. Second, unique and elegant architecture of this temple's dome is significantly different from the other historical monuments of the province. Third, it is a combination of Iranian-Indian architecture made

by materials compatible with the climate of Bandar Abbas. Fourth, it illustrates the valuable and wealthy culture of this city that has included a non-Iranian temple in its heart respecting the other religious opinions. In addition to its special elegant architecture, these features make the Hindu Temple prominent for tourists. Similarly, it indicates that the city not only includes the followers of two main Islamic sects, Shi'ite and Sunni, but also has a peaceful religious and cultural history with other non-Islamic religions.

### **The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar**

According to local researches and conversation with people who was engaging to work in the courtyard of the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, it was found that this monument in the central district of Bandar Abbas has a unique architecture apart from religious place and people visiting it for intercession and prayer. Some Sunni residents of Bandar Abbas believe that Seyyed Mozaffar was a Sunni Sadat from village of Godeh<sup>1</sup> and some decided to build a durable building for it and turn it into a shrine to be a center for visiting Bandar Abbas and its surrounds people because of the large number of Sunnis visiting his tomb.

This monument is considered as an architectural masterpiece in Banda Abbas because of its four minarets and unique turquoise and golden dome. The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar has long been a spiritual sanctuary for the people of Hormozgan and tourists of other cities, and it has an adventurous and dramatic history. Seyyed Mozaffar, as said, is one of descendants of Imam Musa Ibn Jafar who has been loved and respected by many people throughout Hormozgan province and its surroundings. This shrine has received countless tourist pilgrims every year.

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1. One of the villages of Bastak city in Hormozgan Province.



Picture 1. The shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, Bandar Abbas (2021)

Photo by Sima Saber Solghi

#### **Architectural Features of the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar**

We don't have much information about the previous condition of the shrine and the quality of its building in the past. Of course, residents of the city have attributed his both to Sunni and Shi'ite. It seems that he died in this city in 1053 and was buried in the same current building. The shrine hasn't been apparently rebuilt for years, and it has been somewhat worn. It isn't clear what the original building looked like or who has built it on the tomb. There is no valid document and evidence in this regard, but it appears that some reconstructions have been made in it because if not, nothing remains. Older people of the village relate that the first shrine made of only wood was different from the current shrine. In 1926, it has been renovated and completely changed. Four minarets and magnificent and beautiful tiles have added to elegant and worthiness and glory of its architecture. Since 1978, the whole building was renovated and reconstructed, and some parts was expanded.

The magnificent and beautiful architecture of this monument has a special fascination. The shrine's façade with the colorful tiles, domes with four enameled minarets in a calm and pleasant sky blue color and Iranian architecture is unique not only for pilgrims, but also for every visitor and tourists.

The four enameled minarets and turquoise tiles of the windows and exterior façade are reminiscent of Safavid architecture. The arch of the

entrance has been decorated with Muqarnas and its dome with Moaraq tiles. Based on the popular belief that some consider Seyyed Mozaffar to be Sunni and some to be Shi'ite, architectures and restores have planned and decorated its façade in such a way that it has a combination of two traditions. Using an artistic approach in the history of the shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, they presented a combination of a Shi'ite Safavid and Sunni Timurid planning and designing so that visitors and tourists not only remember the other Safavid splendid architecture and turquoise domes in Iran, but it is also revived in their memory the Timurid monuments in Iran and Afghanistan and Muslim Post-Soviet countries. On the other hand, its foundation has been artistically and aesthetically placed on a high platform. Architecture has been architecturally in connection with religious visitors in several ways: it invites them from the noisy and chaotic world to calm one with its turquoise color and makes their tired and weary mind excited with its beautiful Muqarnas arcs.



Picture 2. The Hindu Temple (Bat Goran Temple), Bandar Abbas (2021)

Photo by Sima Sabar Solghi

### **The Hindu Temple (Bat Goran Temple)**

The Hindu Temple or Pagan Temple is one of the most beautiful and unique monuments in Bandar Abbas. This temple has been constructed during Qajar period and region of Mohammad Hassan Khan Saad al-molk, Bandar Abbas ruler, in 1795, with the money and gifts of Hindu workers in Qeshm and Hormuz Island and Bandar Abbas and Indian merchants. It has a long history the political and cultural relations between Iran and India led many Indians to come to Iran and settle there. Therefore, since Indians, whether as worker or merchant, when came to Hormozgan province and other regions likely

gathered in local houses of Bandar Abbas and surrounding island for their rituals, it appears that they intended to build a building as shrine for worship many years ago, although it was effective to enter the East India Company to Iran especially to the Persian Gulf by European (Ghaemmaghami, 1975). It should be noted that political and cultural relations between Iran and India was established during the Safavid dynasty. Mir Seyyed Ali and Abd al-Samad played an important role in emergence of the Indian-Iranian Painting.

The Hindu Temple has a middle square room on its dome. Architecture of its Muqarnas dome is not only different from other Iranian and local domes of Persian Gulf coasts, but also from domes all over Iran. Planning of this temple is more like Indian shrines. Following the development of urban and restoration of streets of the city, the building of the Temple was located next to one of the busiest streets in the center of city. Although the Temple built for worship of Hindus residing in Bandar Abbas, but also it has been one of important buildings connecting artistic and cultural relations between Iran and India. As we know, the believers of Brahman school who believe in the gods of Brahma, Vishnu and Tsiva are a large part of the Indian nation. It is clear that architecture of the Temple is based on the belief in Vishnu and Tsiva in northern India. For instance, we can see symbols and signs of three important sects of Hindu – worshipers of Vishnu, Shiva and Buddhist stupas in the sanctuary and decorations of the Temple (Nourinejad, 2014).

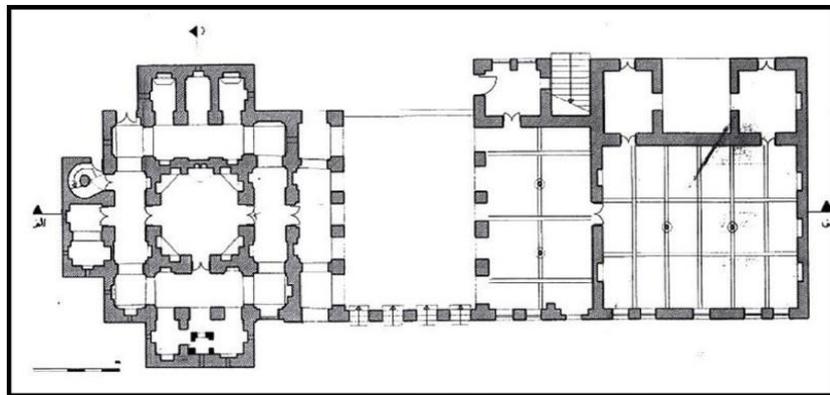
### **Materials**

The Temple was built in the middle of a previously-purchased garden in the northeast of the Bandar Abbas: “skilled and master architects were brought from India to build this temple, and it completed in a short time. The garden area is about 300 m long and 200 m wide” (Ibid, 23).

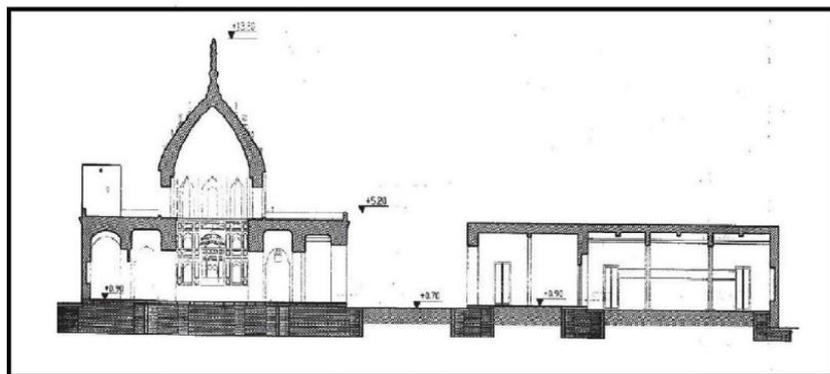
Due to the climatic conditions, Iranian local architects probably cooperated Indian ones to choose materials because of familiarity with the weather of this climate since it has been used local materials suitable for the weather of port such as stone ballast, mud and water-resistant mortar, soil coral rocks and thick gypsum and Louis plaster in constructing the Temple. The coral rocks are suitable for constructing the ports despite the high humidity. For example, we can name the historical context of Bushehr which coral rocks have been used in every part of its buildings. Wood has been used in the roof of this Temple which was brought to Bandar Abbas from India or Zangbar by local boats. The woods were soaked in oil to increase their

durability and stability in building. In this way, termite couldn't easily penetrate and erode them.

It was also used lime in the foundation of buildings because of humidity of soil. The entire roof of dome was flat and covered by thatch. The interior of walls was plastered and dome has been also constructed lime, a mixture of plaster and sand formed based on an attractive architectural style. It had been covered on the wood of roof by mats before pouring thatch. It was used wood boards instead of mat. Wood and metal and sometimes stone gutters have been used for rainwater (Deghani, 2017).



The courtyard of the community hall and the square dome in the Hindu shrine Archive of Hormozgan Cultural Heritage Library



The courtyard of the coNorth and south view and lower section of Hindu shrine. Hormozgan Cultural Heritage Library Archivemcommunity hall and the square dome in the Hindu shrine Archive of Hormozgan Cultural Heritage Library

**Picture 3. Plan and view of the shrin**

### **Plan of The Hindu Temple's Building**

The main room and altar of the temple are located in the north of building and there are shelves and blind frames around the room. Here, there are four corridors which have been probably used for a kind of Tawaf<sup>1</sup> and prayer ceremony. There are small rooms in the corridors for Brahman (clergy) and Brahman educators, and it is seen the religious paintings inside some chambers one of the most important of which is the Krishna (flutist god) (Ibid, 2015).

### **Architecture of The Hindu Temple**

Inside the Temple, in the western part of the corridor, there are spiral-like stairs going up to the roof. On top of the roof, there is a rectangle ridge on the stairs on both sides. The ridge likely had a door which was opened to allow fresh air to enter the temple in summer and closed or locked to prevent cold in winter. Current view of building of the Temple apparently show that this temple has been planned according to hot and sultry climate of Bandar Abbas. The crew and Brahman (clergy) and Brahman guests and travelers could go to the roof through stairs and Ridge, and sleep in cool air at night. In addition, ridge was used as a wind-catcher sending a cool breeze of sea into the Temple.

The lighting of its building is also provided by retractable piers inspired by Iranian architecture along with four skylights on all four sides. The large dome is decorated by trapezoidal layers and symbols of Hinduism. Furthermore, there are approximately 72 well-carved turrets and a larger turret on the head of dome around the dome on all four sides like Hindu shrine that it has given a special elegant to this building. It has been used inverted lotus reliefs on these turrets that it has created a variety of decorations on top of the dome.

Since lotus is a prominent symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism, it has been repeated by beautiful bedspreads on the wall and arch of the central room. In Buddhism, this is one of the most important and prominent symbols of religious architecture. This flower is not only seen in Hindu architecture, but also in Achaemenid architecture. According to the remaining documents and archeological researches as well as paintings of shrines similar to this shrine in India, it appears that there are various paintings in the central hall each of

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1. The ritual of performing a type of circumambulation, for example, seven circumambulations of the Kaaba as part of the Haj to Mecca.

which has a special philosophy of Indian beliefs. Since all Hindu shrines in India have statues and idols, these artworks have been undoubtedly used in the shrines of Bandar Abbas and especially in the shelf of the altar.

### Conclusion

According to findings, there are similarities and differences between these two questioned monuments in terms of architecture and use. On one hand, there are similarities between these two shrine. The two monuments are both places for worship. Similarly, it has used in both architectures parts such as dome, porch and square building and decorations such as Muqarnas<sup>1</sup> and Moaraq<sup>2</sup>. In addition, there is an area in front of the two buildings for other cultural and artistic activities. Finally, these monuments have been built close in time. Table 1 presents a summary of these similarities.

On the other hand, there are differences between these two monuments. The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar with an Iranian-Islamic architecture is a specific and prominent symbol in shrines all over Iran. However, the Hindu Temple has been built in terms of the Indian architecture as a dome with an Indian special icons and symbols. The other difference refers to use buildings in recent years. In this regard, the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar, contrary to the Hindu Temple, has been used for religious activities while the Hindu Temple is mostly used for cultural and artistic activities. Table 2 represented a summary of these differences.

**Table 1. Similarities Between Two Monuments**

Building	Similarities
The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar and The Hindu Temple	A place for worship
	Having architectural parts such as dome, porch, square building and decorations such as Muqarnas and Moaraq
	An area in front of buildings
	Stairs
	Having cultural and artistic activities
	built close in time

1. Muqarnas is a form of ornamented vaulting in Islamic architecture.

2. Moaraq is an ancient technique that has been perfected in the Middle East and Far East. It involves placing wood, glass, and other materials into pictures and other designs. The designs are then glued to a surface such as wood, then sanded and lacquered. The end result is a magnificent piece of art that will last forever (<http://www.persianmemories.com/art/moaraq.html>).

**Table 2. Differences Between Two Monuments**

<b>Building</b>	<b>Differences</b>
The Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar	A personal tomb of the descendants of Imam Musa Kazem
	Iranian-Islamic architecture
	usual dome in Iranian Islamic architecture which is a specific symbol in shrines all over Iran
	Minarets
	It is yet used in recent years
	A place for religious activities
	Unique tiles of Islamic architecture
The Hindu Temple	A shrine of the Indians residing in Bandar Abbas.
	Indian architecture
	A dome with a special icon and an Indian specific symbol
	No minaret
	No use
	A Place more for cultural and artistic activities
Use of plaster and mortar in the building	

Bandar Abbas is one of the most popular tourist destination in Iran due to a long history as well as to be one of the main ports of Iran on the Silk Road. This largest Iranian port is an attracting destination for both foreign and domestic tourists because of shopping centers, free sea and Persian Gulf, and historical attractions. Today, historical monuments with unique and distinctive architecture originated from the past culture and history, regions and tribes are considered as destinations with cultural attractions. The different monuments belong to different cultures and beliefs can provide an opportunity for attracting a different range of tourists. The monuments such as Hindu Temple in Bandar Abbas, the Portuguese Castle on the island of Hormuz, the Sassanid monuments in Qeshm and the Shrine of Seyyed Mozaffar introduced Sassanid and Islamic-Iranian cultures as well as the Indian architecture and worship culture and the European Christian shrine in the Portuguese Castle to tourists. This can be very attractive for any tourist with any taste and culture.

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