



# Analysis of Shiite Arts in the Architecture Shāh Ni'matullāh (Ni'mat Allāh) Wali's Tomb

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**Abstract:** *The current study aims at investigating the artistic characteristics of Shāh Ni'matullāh wali 's Mausoleum and the reflections of Shiite art in this structure. Shāh Ni'matullāh wali 's Mausoleum is a magnificent, yet unknown, historic site, which can be considered the main tourist attraction in Mahan, Kerman. The findings of the study suggest the existence of Shiite art in this mausoleum under the impact of different factors such as regional established Shi'a territories in Iran and India. The findings were gathered through library and field studies and also examining Shiite.*

**Keywords:** *Shi'ite Concepts, Shāh Ni'matullāh wali, Mausoleum, Kerman, Mahan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Shi'ite concepts and ideas refer to the collection of works and thoughts portraying the details of shi'ism. These concepts are extended over the centuries and are Carry the main tenets of Shi'a. With the advent of Islam in Persia and accepting Islam by Iranians, Iranian art was in the service of Islam and during the religious tolerance policy of Sunni rulers Shi'ite artists benefited from this opportunity and delivered their religious beliefs and Shi'ite concepts were crystallized in Islamic art.

With the invasion of Teymur in Iranian territory, Shi'ites political and social conditions entered a new phase. As a result some of the rulers of the Teymurid Supported Shiites and religious leaders. Teymurid policy in fact supported cultural activities and close relationships with political tendencies and the position of its rulers and these rulers with their support of cultural and artistic activities tried to gain cultural identity and legitimize their sovereignty. The impact of the great Shi'a scholars and also the existence of Sophism cults with Shi'ite tendencies contributed in adopting this Teymurid policy. Teymurid religious tolerance policy affected the further development of Islamic Art and Shi'ite artists seized this opportunity and tried to further enhance Shi'ite Art. The tomb of the great dervish, Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali, in Mahan, Kerman is among the structures built in the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD reflecting Shi'ite art. The main building of the mausoleum was built in the year 832 AH, by Sultan Ahmad, the king of Deccan and later other parts were added.

## Statement of the problem

Religious tolerance of Teymurid supported the freedom of minorities, especially Shi'a and Sophism. Iranian cultural activities were seriously followed in this era and Shi'i artists tried to use this opportunity to promote art as much as possible. Construction of mausoleums and religious buildings was affected by Shi'i concepts, and architects and calligraphists made an effort to use Shi'i symbols in their works. The mausoleum of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali, the great dervish, which is situated in Mahan, Kerman, is among the structures reflecting Shi'i concepts. The current study seeks to answer the following question: "How are Shi'i tenets manifested in Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum?"

## **Methodology**

The current study is an analytical fundamental study. The required data was gathered from old and new references and was later qualitatively analyzed. Although library resources are used in the study, but a field study of the building itself, along with taking photos, also sounded vital. In other words, to collect the required information both library resources and field studies have been used.

## **Review of the Literature**

One of the salient studies done on the architecture of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum is a paper called "Adornments of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum" written by Anis Tanhayi, and published in 1387 in the "Quarterly Journal of Islamic Art Studies". Another study named "Comparative Analysis of the Meaning of Sophism in the Architecture of Moshtāqiye and Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum" written by Hedy Mousapour Askari and published in the "International Congress of Civil Engineering, Architecture, and Sustainable Urban Development" in 1392. The third study in this area is titled "the Effect of Sophism secrets in the maintenance of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum" written by Vahide Rahimi Mehr and published in the "International Congress of Civil Engineering, Architecture, and Sustainable Urban Development" in 1392, at Tabriz Azad University. There are also Ph.D. dissertations in this area such as 1. "A Study of Khatayi and Eslimi Details of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum" by Safie Hassani Mousa'abadi, which was defended in 1389 at Esfahan University of Art. 2. "Individual Analysis of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum by Negin Isazade, which was defended in 1388 at Shahid Beheshti University, department of architecture and urbanism. These studies have undoubtedly been of utmost value and have paved the way to discover a tiny part of the concealed arts in this complex. However, no study has been done on the meaning and manifestations of Shia symbols in this historical religious structure, which is going to be examined here.

## **Significance of the Study**

The most important objective of the current study is to explore Shi'a concepts in Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum. Although other aspects of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's life, his works, and the architecture of his tombstone have been examined by previous researchers, the meaning and manifestations of Shi'a concepts in the elements of this complex have not been reviewed yet. The current study seeks to fill this gap.

## **A brief Overview of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Life and Works**

Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali, son of Abdollah, who was claimed to be from the family of Prophet Mohammad with 20 families in between, was born on the 14<sup>th</sup>, Rabi'olaval, 731 AD. His family used to live in Halab, but his father went to Fars, married a girl from Shabānkāre family, and moved to Kuhbanan, Kerman. He managed to memorize all Quran in his childhood and showed great talent in understanding concepts and meanings (Sarfi and Basiri, 2005). Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali learnt the books *Mersād-al Ebād* by Mohy-aldin Arabi, and *Eshārāt* by Sheykh-al Rais Abu Ali Sina, and especially *Al-hokm* by Sheykh-al Mohāqeqin, and *Emām-ol Movahedin* by Mohy-aldin Arabi. Unlike many dervishes who had chosen to be aloof from the society, he never left people and even travelled a lot to gain spiritual knowledge (Farzam, 1379). During these trips he learnt the rudiments of science, literature, speech, and religion from Sheykh Rokn-al Din Shirazi, Shams-al Din Makki, Seyed Jalāl-al din Kharāzmi, and Qāzi Azad-al din Iji, respectively (Ibid, 2001).

He was impressed with Sheykh Abdollah Yafei's thoughts in Mecca and became his morid. He began the second round of his journeys by visiting several cities such as Egypt and Samarqand. He got to know Amir Teymur during his trip to Samarqand. He also married Mirhoseini Heravi's granddaughter on his trip to Herat. The result of this marriage was a son called Khalil Allah, who later went to India (Nourbakhsh, 2006). Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali stayed in Kerman for a while after he returned from Herat. He then visited Mahan, was fascinated by its beauty, and founded Kheyabad monastery, Khalvat garden, and Mashhad garden in Mahan (Mostofi Bafqi, 1962). One of the most important activities of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali was the effort to clear Sophism from any non-Islamic rumors. He never felt any difference between Islam and Sophism, and tried to purify Sophism from foreign elements taken from India (Nourbakhsh, 2006). (The most important works of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali include: *Divan-e Asha'ar*, *Resale Estelāhāt*, *Mokāshefāt*, *Ta'rifat*, *Marāteb*, *Barzakh*, *Horuf-e Moqata'āte Qurāni*, *Tahqiqāt*, *Soāl-e Komeyl az Hazrat-e Velāyat Ma'āb*, *Tavakkol*, *Nokāt*, *Fiyuzāt*, *Majma-al Asrār*, *Majmo'e al-Latāyef* (Sajjadi, 1994).

Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali returned to Kerman in the last years of his life, after years of activities and long journeys. He finally passed away on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> Rajab, 832 A.D. in Kerman. He was buried by his followers, morids, dervishes, and well known rulers in Mahan, the magnificent land which was long the place to distribute his thoughts and beliefs (Nourbakhsh, 2006).

### **The Construction Process of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum**

Islamic architecture is undoubtedly outstanding which is partly due to its inventors, Muslims, and also the fact that it has been inspired by Islamic rituals. It directs human beings to divine inspirations and has created a place to visualize God (Nasr, 1997). Architecture is a departure point in Iranian art during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century. It especially serves as a connection between Iranian art and religion. Teymurid and the first Safavid rulers were of utmost importance to support Iranian culture, and during their kingdoms art and especially architecture flourished in Iran (Kosari, 2012). Islamic architecture rendered services to Shia religion back then, and this new form of architecture, consequently, was the platform to visualize Muslims' thoughts and beliefs, including implications, indications, determination to enforce human rights, affection toward the prophets, and belief in *Ejtehād*, Leadership, and Justice. Shi'i art and especially architecture has been affected by Shi'a tenets and the prophets' lifestyle (Bemaniyan et. al, 2011).

The main structure of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum is a manifestation of Muslim artist's thoughts and passion through architectural details. Along the 9<sup>th</sup> century in addition to the mosques being affected by Shi'a art, monasteries and other places related to dervishes were adorned with Shi'a mottos. Monastery architecture has not been fully defined due to the lack of survived buildings, but the few left monasteries have similar structures and rooms such as an open yard, a congregation hall, *Samā'*, etc. Most monasteries have been built next to a dervish's tombstone or after the death of Morshed or Pir, he was buried in his own monastery (Shayestefar, 2008).

The first structures of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum were constructed in the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and other buildings were then added during the kingdom of the first Shāh Abbas Safavi, Mohammad Shāh, and Naser-al Din Shāh Qājār, who used to be supportive of Shia and dervishes (Tanhayi, 2009). It should be mentioned that Soltan Ahmad Bahmani was a king in Deccan, India, whose tendencies toward Shia moved him to invite Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's family to India. To do that, he sent two of his companions called Qazi Musā Nolkehi and Malek-al Sharq Qalanqarkhān as messengers to Kerman. Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali accepted the king's presents and letters, but refused to go to India due to his old age. He therefore sent one of his Morids to go to India with the messengers. He also wrote a letter to the king addressing him *Shahāb al-Din Ahmad Shāh wali Bahmani*. After a while the king sent two other messengers called *Khāje Emād-al Din Sāmāni* and *Seyf Allāh Ahsan Abādi* to Kerman to invite Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's son. Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali sent his grandsons to Deccan and the king accepted him with open arms (Alami, 2013). After Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali died the King Ahmad Bahmani ordered to build a dome on his tombstone which was finished in 840 S.H (Sajjadi, 1994).

## Manifestations of Shi'a art in the different parts of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum

### 1. The Entrance

There are magnificent adornments in the entrance of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum. The tile works inc"Ali-an wali Allah" "عليا ولي الله" <sup>1</sup> (Ali is God's friend) is written in the entrance. This phrase which refers to Imam part of Shi'a religion is a well-known Shi'a testimony (Shayestefar, 2010). Below God's names, the names of the twelve prophets of Shi'a are written. According to Shi'a beliefs these twelve prophets are the true successors of Prophet Mohammad. These twelve prophets have sufficiently deep knowledge of Islam and have never committed a sin (Shayestefar, 2008).



Figure 1: photos of authors

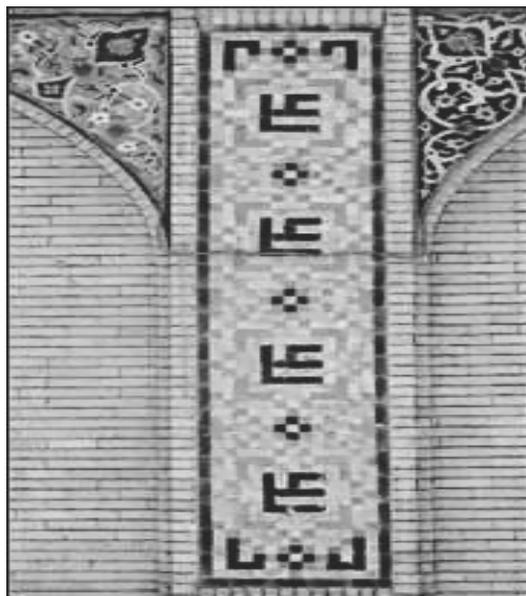


Figure 2: photos of authors

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<sup>1</sup> Ali is God's friend

Shi'a artist believes that these twelve prophets are in charge of taking care of Quran verses and messages, and has shown this by writing their names on the tiles (Shayestefar, 2006).<sup>2</sup> On the two parts of the entrance the name Ali has been written in Kufi Banāei calligraphy.<sup>3</sup> One of the most popular manifestations of the name Ali in inscriptions is " **علی علی علی** " "Ali Ali Ali", which can be seen in some of Teymurid holy buildings. This holy world has been repeatedly used by calligraphists to decorate holy places.

## 2. Atābaki Yard

This yard is a square space and involves four symbols of Sophism. To Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali the number "four" which is the number the letters in the word " **الله** ", "Allah" ,"God" reflects four stages: heart, brain, soul, spirit. ( **الف و لام و لام و ها هر چهار / اسم اسم است ای حروف یار** ). (Ni'matullāh Wali, 2003) There are also four flowerbeds and one pond decorating this yard reflecting the holiness of number "five" in Sophism (Rahimi Mehr, 2014). The entrance door is adorned with Shi'a testimonies and next to them the holy words of "Allah" " **الله** ", "Mohammad", " **محمد** " and "Ali", " **علی** " can be seen. The combination of these words reflect Shia beliefs in that time. According to Shi'a tenets, anyone believing in God's affection must likewise believe in Mohammad and Ali's affection. The architect of this structure has tried to show Ali as God's companion and respected by God (Shayestefar, 2006). It implies that Ali has had so much knowledge of Islam that can be referred to as the primary point of reference (Ibid and Ez-al Din. 1993).



Figure 3: photos of authors

The repeated words of "Allah" " **الله** ", "Mohammad" " **محمد** " and "Ali" " **علی** " on the entrance door have made a coherent combination of religious recitations (called Zekr in Sophism), in line with Sophism rituals (Rahimi Mehr, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Figure 1, photos of authors.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 2, photos of authors.

<sup>4</sup>Figure 3, photos of authors.



**Figure 4:** photos of authors

### 3. Vakili Yard (Mahdi-ye)

This yard and the buildings on the east, north, and south of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's tombstone were built during the kingdom of Nāser-al Din Shāh Qājār (1264-1313 S.H.), and Mohammad Esma'il Khān (the first Vakil-al Molk) and his son Mortezā Qoli Khān (the second Vakil-al Molk) in Kerman and were finished in 1287 S.H. this yard with its ponds manifests a small piece of heaven, apparently referring to the 119<sup>th</sup> verse of the Sura "Maeda". The Mesl theory can also be deduced from the building's reflection in the water. One of the artistic points of this yard is the cross-shaped pond which has four parts stretching in four directions.<sup>5</sup> There exist a museum, a bookshop, and Amir Nezām Garusi's tombstone<sup>6</sup> on the upper, north, and western-south of the entrance, respectively. Mohammad Esma'il Khan was the founder of this yard and after him his son called Mortezā Qoli Khān added the two minarets and the gateway (Karamouzian,2008).



**Figure 5:** photos of authors

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.5; Figure 4, photos of authors

<sup>6</sup> the famous politician, writer, and artist of Qājār era

A big Kashkoul<sup>7</sup>, which is the symbol of Sophism, is placed next to the entrance door of the shrine. This Kashkoul is made of different metals like copper and brass, and is decorated with poems of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali in admiration of the prophets, and words like "يا هو" "Ya Hou" and "يا علي" "Ya Ali". People put their dedicated money or jewelries into this Kashkoul (Tanhayi, 2009).<sup>8</sup>

Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's tombstone is decorated with a magnificent inscription which is still glowing. It shows Shahāb-al Din Ahmad Shāh Bahmani and his son Soltān Alā'e Din's cordiality toward this great dervish (Farzam, 2001).



Figure 6: photos of authors

On the entrance door of the shrine an inscription can be seen containing a hadith related to the Prophet : I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its door (انا مدينة العلم و علي بابها) , which has been claimed to be describing Ali. This hadith shows the Prophet's knowledge and Ali's high position in Islam. In this hadith Ali has been described as the gateway to the city of knowledge, therefore whoever wishing to obtain the Prophet's knowledge has to acquaint with Ali first (Shayestefar, 2012). There is also a poem beneath the hadith which is written by Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali explaining the same hadith. (اگر در خلقو حق را در نیایی / بیایی خانه اما در نیایی / نبی)

(Ni'matullāh Wali, 2003). بیت الله و بابش علی دان / اگر از در نیایی در نیایی

#### 4. The Dome on Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Tombstone

This dome was built under the order of Soltan Shahāb-al Din Ahmad Bahmani and was finished during the kingdom of his son, Soltan Ala'e Din. This dome is indeed the oldest part of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum and its construction was done in 840 A.D.

##### 4.1. The Tombstone

On the lower part of the shrine hexagonal tile works in blue, and also a big marble stone, consisting of several parts, catch the visitors' eyes. This stone is of 3.50 meters length, 2 meters width, and 1.10 meters height. There is a small stone on the final section, put perpendicular to the tombstone. It has been adorned with raised thulth calligraphies of the holy verse of Tathir "انما يريد الله ليذهب عنكم الرجس اهل البيت و يطهركم تطهيرا" (God wants to take away all the dirt from you and keep you clean), and also Salavat (peace be upon Mohammad and his family) (Karamouzian, 2008). Many claim that this hadith has been directly sent to describe Prophet Mohammad's family i.e. Ali, Fatima, Hassan, and Hossein. Prophet Mohammad himself tried to prevent the misinterpretation of this hadith. For instance, for six months (or allegedly 9 months) whenever he left the

<sup>7</sup> dervish's bowl

<sup>8</sup> Figure 5, photos of authors

house to go and say his prayers, came to Fatima's house and would cry "Oh, the family of this house! It's time to say prayers" and then he would recite Tathir verse (Rahgoshay, 2012) at the back of the shrine there is a port built in addition to the shrine. In the middle of this port there is a tombstone belonging to Shāh Khalil Allah, Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's grandson (Tanhayi, 2009).



Figure 7: photos of authors

#### 4.2. Shah Abbasi Port and Dar-ol Hofaz

Shāh Abbasi port has been constructed in the Great Shāh Abbas and Beytash Khān's kingdom. On the entrance of this port holy names of the twelve prophets have been unscripted on steel, which is an invaluable part of the mausoleum (Karamouzian, 2008). While doing these decorations during the Safavid Empire, Iranians practicing Shi'a believed in the dynasty of Imams, including the twelve prophets in Mohammad's family, and therefore the phrase "Shi'a believing in twelve Imams" became popular (Shimal, 2010). The fact that the names of these twelve Imams are mentioned in Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum manifests Ni'matullāhi dervishes' cordiality toward the twelve prophets. These Imams have been set as examples for dervishes and dervishes would try to copy their behaviours. Sophism was in fact base on these rituals from the beginning and dervishes related all sophism mottos prevalent in Ali's children top Ali himself (Sheibi, 1976).



Figure 8: photos of authors



**Figure 9:** photos of authors

In this port there are two other box-shaped marble stone tombstones belonging to Agha Khātun, Khalil Bey afshar’s wife, and Beytāsh, Wali Khān’s son. At the back of the tombstones there exists phrases such as Salavat (peace be upon Mohammad and his family) and also Shia testimonies.<sup>9</sup> Salavat is one of the most popular prayers among the Muslims, which can be said anywhere, anytime. This prayer is referred to Mohammad, and his family including Fatima, Ali (the first Shi'a Imam), Hassan (the owner of time), Imam Hossein (the martyr in Karbala), and other Shi'a Imams (Shayestefar, 2003).



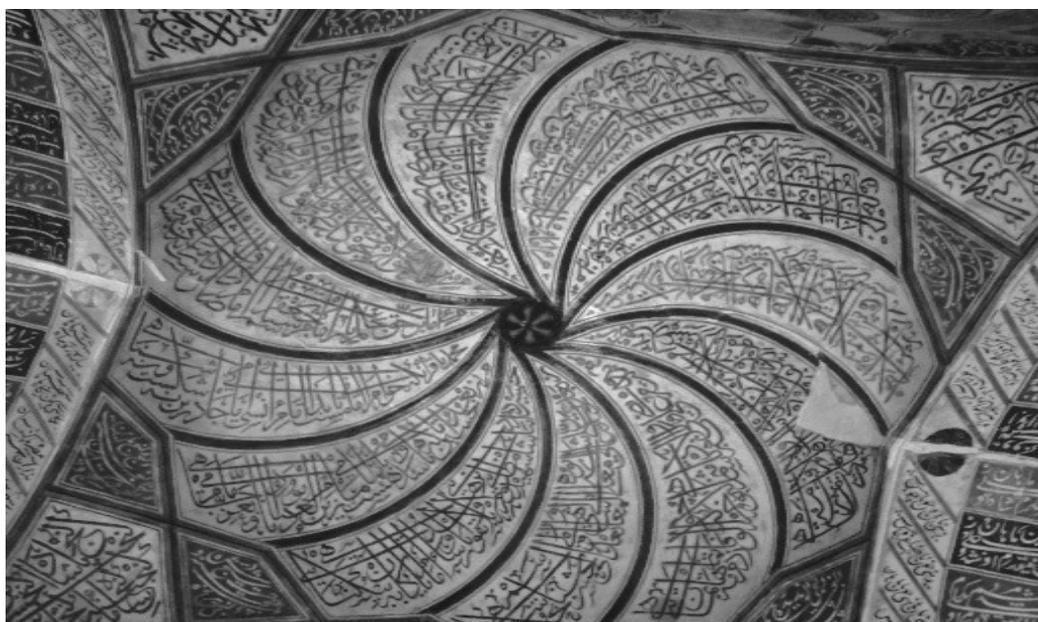
**Figure 10:** photos of authors

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<sup>9</sup> Figure 8 and 9, photos of authors.



**Figure 11:** photos of authors



**Figure 12:** photos of authors

There also exists a stone in this port where the phrase Salavat has been unscripted and a person called Qot-al Din has dedicated it to Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum.<sup>10</sup>

#### **4.3. Chele Khane**

On the east of the main hall (on the western-south at the back of the shrine) a small room with a low arch in a Teymurid style catches the visitors' eyes. It is believed that this room used to be Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Chele Khane. There exists the poem <sup>11</sup>(درگاه الهیست درگاه علی / درگاه الهیست درکه لم یزلی / حق باز کند در رفیع...)

<sup>10</sup> Figure 10, photos of authors.

<sup>11</sup>Figure 11, photos of authors.

room and the dome are the oldest parts of the complex, which have probably been built before the Safavid Empire, since they have not been demolished while building the port. It is widely thought that Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali has spent at least 40 days and nights (one chele) in this room, saying prayers. The roof of Chele Khane has been shaped like the dervish's hat with 12 lines (Tanhayi, 2009). Number twelve which is prevalent in many patterns can also be related to Shia thoughts and the twelve Imams. Although number twelve is also important in astronomy, but seems to be of more importance in Shi'a, since it refers to the twelve Imams (Kianmehr and Khozayi, 2007). There are Quran verses, hadiths, and poems, written in blue and red on the walls of this room. These inscriptions include poems describing Ali and the twelve Imams, Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali, and also Mahan. Although the inscriptions are not destroyed, but the poems are not readable. The written phrases include combinations of Persian and Arabic words and refer to Shi'a Velāyat (Shayestefar, 2010). Chele Khane was totally damaged during the 1311 flood, but was later restored.



Figure 13: photos of authors

Realizations of “Zo-al faqār Sword” can be seen on the four walls of Chele Khane.<sup>12</sup> According to the legends, this sword belonged to the prophet Mohammad but during the Ohod War when Ali's sword hit one of the enemy's helmet and broke into pieces, Ali came to the Prophet Mohammad and asked for a sword (Ibid Asir, 1993). Having seen the courageous battles of Ali against the enemies, the prophet cried: **الا على لا سيف الى ذوالفقار** “there is no brave man like Ali and no sword like Zo-al faqār”. This hadith proves the bond between magnanimity and Sophism. The two main groups of dervishes claim to be belonging to Ali's family (Borkhart, and Titus, 1992). Zo-al faqār sword is the symbol of Ali's power and bravery to Muslims, especially Shi'i Muslims. This hadith can be seen written on many sword blades all over the world. Muslim artists usually picture Ali holding Zo-al faqār (which is believed to have been of two blades (Akashe, 2002). There is an exterior part on the dome which is seen as an eight-angled shape from outside. An inscription of **”سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا اله الا الله والله اكبر”** (God is above all dirt, we worship God, there is no God like Allah, God is greater than all), and **(يا مقلب القلوب و الابصار)** (God is the pacifier of our hearts and eyes) has been written on the dome. The exact inscription has been surprisingly written in reverse on the upper part of the dome.

<sup>12</sup> Figure 13, photos of authors.



Figure 14: photos of authors

### 5. Mirdāmād (Shāh Abbasi) Yard

Mirdāmād yard, which has been built during the Great Shāh Abbas's kingdom, has been later restored during nāser-al din Shāh Qājār and Nāser-al Dole Farmānfarmā (Farzam, 2001). This port consists of a pond and two flowerbeds, reflecting the holiness of number three in Sophism (Rahimi Mehr, 2014) Dervishes believe in three stages in fairness. It has been founder by Ibrahim, then developed by Ali, and finally completed by Imam Zamān (Karbon, 2007). The twelve months of the year and the twelve Imams, showing the impact of Shi'a, are manifested in this port.



Figure 15: photos of authors

### 6. Biglar Beygi Yard (Hosseiniye)

The last part built in Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's Mausoleum is Biglar Beygi Yard. Unfortunately only some parts of this yard have been remained. On the entrance door some parts of the Quran verse **و لقد كتبنا في الزبور** (من بعد الذكر ان الارض يرثها عبادى الصالحون) (We have written that the world will be inherited by people of good

deeds). (Anbia Sura, 10<sup>th</sup> verse). The artist has shown his cordiality toward Imam Hossein by mentioning his name twice at the beginning and the end of the verse.<sup>13</sup> A hexagon pond (showing the holiness of number six) can be seen in this yard. In Islam, Summerid and Hebrew beliefs, the world is believed to have been constructed in six stages. (ان ربكم الله الذي خلق السموات و الارض في ستة الايام) (Your God is Allah, who created the skies and the earth in six days) (A'raf Sua, 54<sup>th</sup> verse)(Rahimi Mehr, 2014). An entrance called Mohammad Shāhi exists in this yard, which has been built under the order of Mohammad Shāh Qājār (1250-1260 S.H) on the west of the tombstone. The minarets were also built during the kingdom of Mohammad Esmā'il Khan-e Nouri, or better known as Vakil-al Molk (1277-1284 S.H)(Farzam, 2001). These minarets are 42 meters high each and were partially damaged in 1360 earthquake. This yard has been connected to Biglar Beygi's house with a bridge. The bridge was also totally damaged during the 1311 flood (Karamouzian, 2006).



Figure 16: photos of authors



Figure 17: photos of authors

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<sup>13</sup> Figure 15, photos of authors.

## 7. The Tombstone Minarets

Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's tombstone has four minarets with tile works and several Shi'a inscriptions. The word Ali has been written to decorate the octagonal minarets. On the upper part of the minarets the word Allah and the first half of Shi'a testimonies (which is the most known part of the testimony) have been written. From an artistic point of view, the phrase (لا اله الا الله) (there is no God except Allah) means being free from the truth of everything except God. It also means that everything returns to God (Bemaniyan, 2008). On the lower parts of the minarets the word Allah (الله) has been written and the word علي (Ali) has been repeatedly written four times. This combination of words shows the spiritual closeness between God and Ali (Tanhayi, 2009). In the upper part of the minarets in Vakili Yard, the word Ali (علي) has been beautifully written twice facing each other. The phrase (لا اله الا الله) is also written all around the octagonal minarets (Tanhayi, 2009) Shi'a testimonies formulated as (لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله علي ولي الله) (There is no God except Allah, Mohammad is God's messenger, Ali is God's friend) involves three main tenets. These three tenets can be observed in many holy places. In this testimony God has been introduced as unique and needless of others, Mohammad as God's messenger, and Ali as the successor of Mohammad (Shayestefar, 2008).

## Conclusion

In the current study a brief introduction to Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali and the construction process of his mausoleum was presented. This was done through an analysis of Shi'a tenets' manifestation in different parts of the complex. The following conclusions can be drawn based on this study:

During the Teymurid the rulers did not play hard on different religious groups. As a result, Shi'i artists tried to express their affection toward the Prophet's family and create works reflecting their religious thoughts. Mosques and mausoleums built during this era reflected Shi'a values. This became twice more important during the Safavid Empire.

Religious policies of Teymurid allowed different religions to flourish. Ne'matullāhi minority was among the newly-born cult in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, S.H. which was founded by Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali and was practiced by numerous followers. After Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali's death a dome was built on his tombstone under the order of the king of Deccan.

During the Safavid Empire Shi'a became the official religion and Safavid rulers made an effort to support dervishes. Shāh Abbas, for instance, ordered for Shah Abbasi Yard and Port and Dar-al Hofaz to be built and added to the complex. These additions are of utmost importance in reflecting Shia tenets in this complex. Chele Khane is situated in this port, which is believed to be the primary room of Shāh Ni'matullāh Wali. The roof and the walls of Chele Khane are decorated with Shia symbols and the names of the Prophet's family. Atabāki, Vakili, and Biglar Beygi Yards were also constructed during the Qājār kingdom, which are also manifestations of Sophism. The minarets also contain elements of Shi'a such as the testimonies, and the names of Ali, the first Imam of Shi'a.

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