

# An Examination and Analysis of the Architectural Features of Historical Madrasas in Qazvin, Iran (Surviving Examples from the Safavid and Qajar Periods)

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**Abstract:** Throughout most periods of Islamic history, the city of Qazvin has been a significant center for the production and dissemination of religious knowledge, as well as a major cradle for renowned scholars and jurists. The origins and development of educational institutions and Madrasas/schools in this city date back to the fourth century AH. The Madrasa building, as an independent architectural entity dedicated to education, emerged as the result of extensive efforts aimed at creating a specialized space for teaching and housing students—separate from the mosque—and addressing the limitations of pre-Madrasa educational settings. Nevertheless, many mosques did not entirely lose their educational role, and their physical and functional connections with Madrasas persisted. Consequently, Mosque-Madrasas represent a prominent manifestation of this interaction in the architectural history of Iran and, after mosques themselves, are considered among the most valuable architectural monuments of the Islamic period. These structures were designed to meet educational, residential, and devotional needs, and they hold considerable architectural and spatial-organizational significance. With its rich tradition of Madrasa construction—particularly during the Safavid capital era and later in the Qajar period—Qazvin, and its remarkable collection of surviving historical Madrasas, occupies an important position in the study of the architectural typology of historical Iranian Madrasas. Employing a descriptive-analytical approach based on fieldwork and direct observation, this study analyzes the physical components and spatial-organizational patterns of the historical Madrasas of Qazvin and compares them with analogous examples in Iranian architecture. The analysis relies primarily on maps, field observations, and direct spatial perception. The findings reveal that the historical Madrasas of Qazvin exhibit identifiable and recurrent spatial patterns, whose recognition can contribute meaningfully to understanding the fundamental architectural principles of Iran’s traditional Madrasa buildings.

## Keywords:

Historical Madrasas  
Mosque-Madrasa  
Qazvin  
Spatial organization

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## 1. Introduction

The *Madrasa/School* has historically been an institution distinguished by its intellectual foundations, educational aims, and distinct pedagogical methods, through which it became well known and developed over time. It played a significant role in the advancement of higher learning in the Islamic world, a role characterized by its own specific features and functions. The emergence of the Madrasa in this sense is considered a phenomenon of the fourth century AH ([Abd al-Rahim, 1985: 106](#)). Before the establishment of Madrasas, other educational centers in Islam, such as mosques, *maktab-khānahs*, *Bayt al-Hikmahs*, and *Dār al-‘Ilms*, which later served as the foundations for the development of Madrasas, were responsible for providing education and instruction.

South of the Rudbār-e-Shahrestān and Alamut highlands, which form part of the Alborz Mountain range and descend gradually toward fertile alluvial plains suitable for cultivation, lies the Qazvin plain. This plain features exceptionally rich and productive soil and connects to the plains of Rey and Varamin in the east and southeast. At the northern edge of this plain, and at a short distance from the aforementioned highlands, the city of Qazvin is located (Dabir-Siaqi, 2002: 8).

Since antiquity, the Qazvin region has occupied a strategic position at the crossroads of major east–west and north–south routes, a geographic advantage that has been one of the key factors in the city's formation and continued vitality throughout history. The movement of commercial caravans along these routes played an essential role in shaping and expanding urban centers (Varjavand, 1998: 757). Within this context, the construction of Madrasas and other educational institutions can also be viewed as an indicator of urban development (Fig. 1).

In Qazvin, the construction of Islamic seminaries has experienced periods of growth and decline from the fourth century AH onward. Although no physical traces survive from the Madrasas of the Buyid period or subsequent eras up to the Safavid dynasty, numerous historical texts and documents reference their existence. The earliest known Madrasa in Qazvin was established in the fourth century AH by Šāḥib ibn ‘Abbād, the vizier of the Buyids, adjacent to the Jāme Mosque (Varjavand, 1998: 1196). Archaeological excavations beneath the Hallāj Dome of the Jāme Mosque have uncovered remains attributed to this structure (Mojabi, 1999: 464).

The central religious and social role of the Jāme Mosque, and the continued tradition of teaching religious sciences within it, together with its shared functional and cultural purpose with the Madrasa, contributed to the establishment of religious Madrasas adjacent to Friday mosques once they had acquired sufficient institutional identity (Soltānzādeh, 1985: 405). The Jāme Mosque of Qazvin similarly functioned as a focal point around which scholarly and cultural activities developed throughout this period and in subsequent eras (Fig. 2).

During the Seljuk period, Qazvin gained considerable importance due to its proximity to Isma‘ili strongholds, becoming a central base for campaigns against the Isma‘ilis. Alongside the military confrontations initiated by the Seljuk government, Sunni scholars also engaged in widespread ideological efforts to counter Isma‘ili doctrines—an endeavor that contributed to the flourishing of Madrasa construction during this era. One such example is the Madrasa attached to the Khomārtāsh Dome, mentioned in an inscription of the Jāme Mosque of Qazvin: “*Khomārtāsh, son of ‘Abdullah, states: I endowed this dome and the Madrasa attached to it ...*” (Mojabi, 1999: 474).

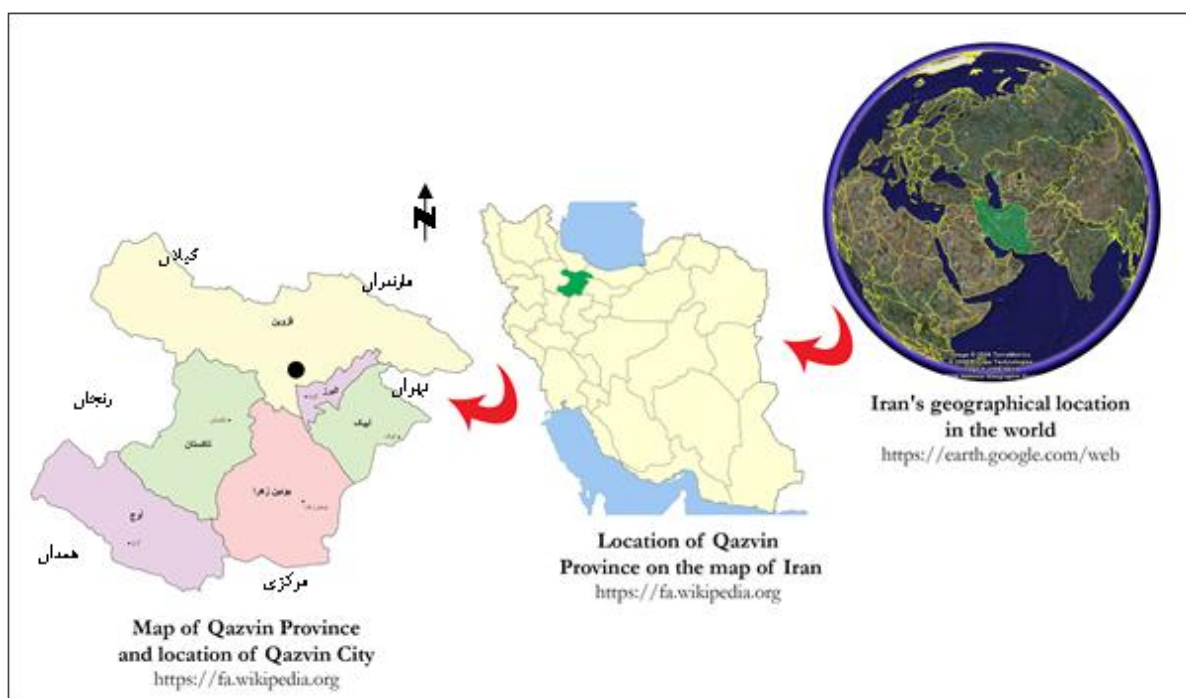


Figure 1. Geographical location of Qazvin province and city in the world (Drawing: Author, 2024)

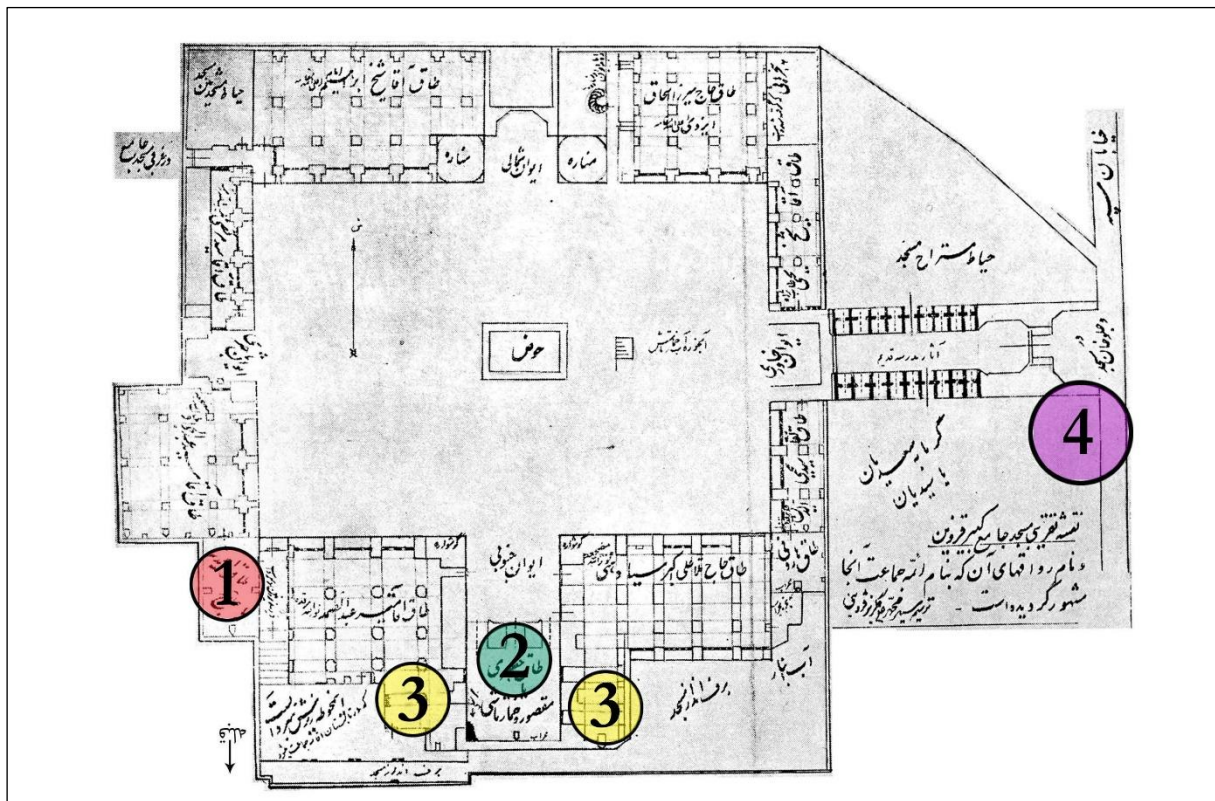


Figure 2. Plan of the Jāme Mosque of Qazvin (Source: Golriz, 2003). Approximate locations of the Madrasas dating to the 4th–6th centuries AH:

1. The Madrasa founded by Šāhib ibn ‘Abbād, vizier of Fakhr al-Dawla Deylamī
2. The Jafarī family’s teaching center (*kursī-ye tadrīs*)
3. The Madrasa attached to the Khomārtāsh Dome, as indicated in the inscription of the Jāme Mosque
4. The Madrasa constructed by the Nishābūrīans at the entrance of the Jāme Mosque of Qazvin

‘Abd al-Karīm Rāfi‘ī Qazvinī (d. 623 AH) also references numerous other Madrasas from this period in the fourth chapter of his work *al-Tadwīn fī Akhbār Qazwīn*, confirming the vibrancy of scholarly and cultural life in Qazvin at that time.

Madrasa construction in Qazvin witnessed a decline during the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods. However, with the rise of the Safavid dynasty and the adoption of Twelver Shi‘ism as the official state religion, major transformations occurred in Shi‘i scholarly institutions. In 955 AH, Shah Tahmasp I selected Qazvin as the Safavid capital. Over time, the city evolved, beyond its political and military significance, into one of the major intellectual and cultural centers of Shi‘ism (Sadr Haj Seyyed Javadi, 2012). The prominence of religious seminaries during this era was such that Chardin, in his travelogue, refers to the Madrasas as the most beautiful buildings of the city (Mojabi, 1999: 491).

Despite maintaining a degree of scholarly vitality, Qazvin’s Madrasas gradually declined in importance following the transfer of the capital to Isfahan and the subsequent flourishing of its seminaries. After the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1135 AH and the flight of Shi‘i scholars during the Afghan invasion, Qazvin became one of their refuges. The city’s seminaries later regained much of their intellectual prominence in the 13th century AH (Sadr Haj Seyyed Javadi, 2012), a period in which numerous Madrasas were once again constructed.

Today, only a small number of Qazvin’s historical Madrasas have survived, while many others are known solely through written and archival sources. The present study aims to identify and elucidate the architectural principles and spatial organizational patterns of Qazvin’s historical Madrasas. To this end, selected Madrasas were compared with other prominent examples in the architectural tradition of historical Iran to determine their shared and distinctive features.

The research methodology is based on field study, direct observation, and comparative analysis, employing a descriptive-analytical approach. The fieldwork includes the identification and examination of historical Madrasas in Qazvin, documentation of architectural elements, comparison of architectural plans with existing conditions, and in-situ assessments to gain qualitative spatial insight. The library research incorporates earlier studies and textual sources relevant to the topic. Architectural plans of selected buildings constitute the primary documents upon which the physical and spatial analyses are grounded.

Regarding previous scholarship, it should be noted that a considerable number of Iran's historic structures, including some of its finest architectural achievements, were built as educational institutions, underscoring the prominent status of learning and Madrasa construction in the Iranian-Islamic cultural tradition (Molazadeh & Mohammadi, 2002: 16). Despite the significant architectural role of Madrasas in Islamic Iran and their rich historical legacy in Qazvin, existing research has largely been confined to historical descriptions or brief architectural overviews. Except for a few monographs on individual Madrasas, no comprehensive study has yet examined the architectural features of Qazvin's historical Madrasas in comparison with parallel examples across Iran.

## 2. Historical Madrasas of Qazvin

No physical remains of Qazvin's early Madrasas before the Safavid period have survived. Of the Madrasas recorded in historical documents from the Safavid and Qajar periods, some have been destroyed while others remain standing, most of the extant examples belonging to the Qajar era (Fig. 3).

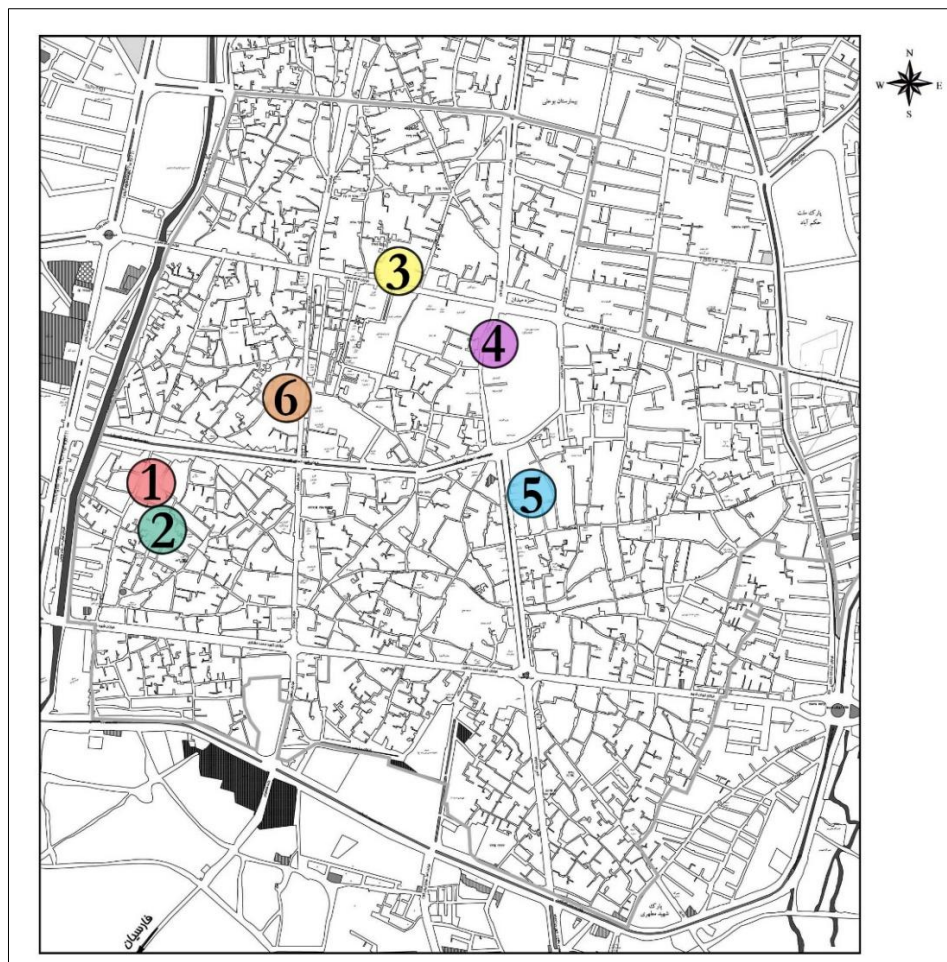


Figure 3. Location of the existing historical Madrasas within the historic fabric of Qazvin (Source: Sharmand Consulting Engineers, 1986).

1. Sardar, 2. Ebrāhīmīyeh (New), 3. Eltifātiyeh, 4. Peyghambarīyeh, 5. Sheikh al-Islām, 6. Šāleḥīyeh

During the Safavid period, notable Madrasas in Qazvin included Ākhūnd Molla Khalilā, Khalifeh Solṭān, Eltifātiyeh, Navāb Solṭān, Panjah ‘Alī, Peyghambariyeh, and the New (Ebrāhimiyyeh) Madrasa. Among these, only Eltifātiyeh and Ebrāhimiyyeh (New) have survived in their entirety. The Navāb Solṭān Madrasa was demolished, and the current Imām Ṣādiq Seminary was built on its site. Of the Ākhūnd Molla Khalilā Madrasa, only a small portion remains today—the tomb of Ākhūnd Molla Khalilā, Khalil ibn Ghāzī Qazvinī, the founder of the Madrasa—while the rest has been destroyed. Khalifeh Solṭān and Panjah ‘Alī Madrasas were entirely demolished; Khalifeh Solṭān had been located on the eastern side of Sepah (Shuhadā) Street, opposite the Jāme Mosque. Due to neglect, it gradually fell into ruin and was completely lost during the early 14th century AH, under the rule of Sa’d al-Saltaneh (Dabir-Siaqi, 2002: 568, 573). In his travelogue, Chardin considers Khalifeh Solṭān Madrasa the finest of Qazvin’s Madrasas (Mojabi, 1999: 491).

Peyghambariyeh Madrasa is situated on the western side of the Chehel Sotoun Garden, at the eastern edge of Peyghambariyeh Street, north of the Peyghambariyeh Mausoleum, and connected to it (Dabir-Siaqi, 2002: 566). The Madrasa still exists today; however, previous restorations have altered parts of its architecture. It no longer functions as an educational institution (Fig. 4).

During the Qajar period, notable Madrasas included Ṣālehiyeh, Hājj Seyyed Ebrāhīm Tankābānī, Sheikh al-Islām (also referred to as Masoudiyeh, Āqāsī, or Hājj Mirzā Āqāsī), Āqā, Molāvārdī Khān, Shabān Kordī, Heydariyeh, and Sardar. Among these, only Sheikh al-Islām, Sardar, and Ṣālehiyeh have survived intact. Molāvārdī Khān Madrasa was demolished, and a new seminary bearing the same name was constructed in its place, while the remaining Madrasas of this period no longer exist (Fig. 5).

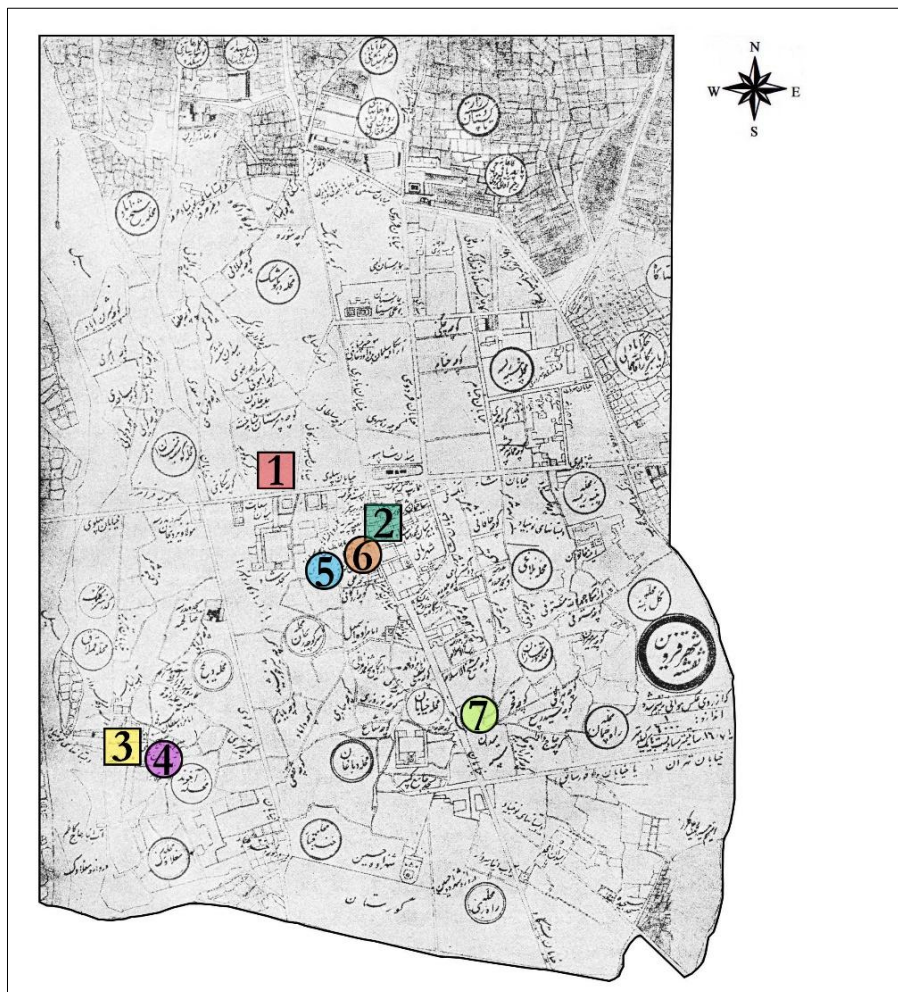


Figure 4. Map of Qazvin city, 1931 CE (Source: Golriz, 2003). Locations of Safavid-period Madrasas: Squares: extant Madrasas: 1. Eltifātiyeh, 2. Peyghambariyeh, 3. Ebrāhimiyyeh (New) Circles: demolished Madrasas: 4. Ākhūnd Molla Khalilā, 5. Panjah ‘Alī, 6. Navāb Solṭān, 7. Khalifeh Solṭān

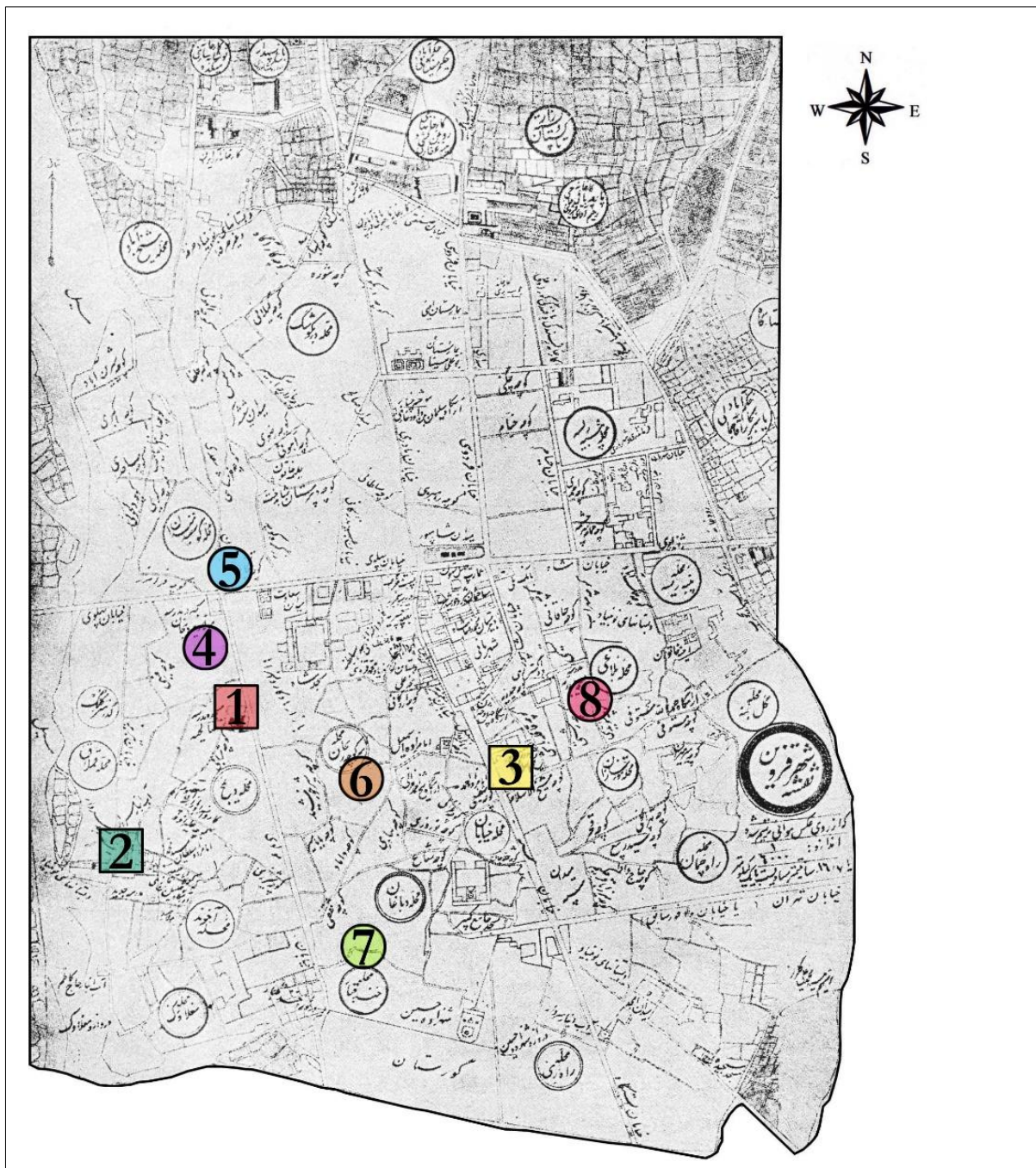


Figure 5. Map of Qazvin in 1931 (Golriz, 2003): Spatial Distribution of Qajar-Period Madrasas

Squares: Existing madrasas: (1) Şälehiyeh, (2) Sardar, (3) Sheikh al-Islam

Circles: Demolished Madrasas: (4) Mowlā Verdī Khān, (5) Hājj Seyyed Ebrāhīm Tankābonī, (6) Shabān Kordī, (7) Āqā, (8) Heydariyeh

### 3. Functional Typology of Historic Madrasas in Qazvin

One of the three fundamental systems of architecture is the functional system. The functional system of a Madrasa building, as its name suggests, must address the needs of those who inhabit the architectural space and pursue knowledge within it. In Iranian architecture, many spaces can serve multiple functions, or a combination of functions may be integrated into certain buildings. Similarly, the functional system of historic Madrasas can be categorized into several components, including the Madrasa itself, the Madrasa-Mosque, the Madrasa prayer hall, the Madrasa Hosseiniyeh, and even the Madrasa tomb. Among these, Madrasas and Madrasa-Mosques represent the most common functional types in Iranian architecture, and the majority of Qazvin's historic Madrasas fall into these two categories.

### 3.1. Madrasa

In the functional typology, the term “Madrasa” refers to a building designed to meet the needs of students who live and study there. Its spaces are not arranged or designed to accommodate non-students. In these Madrasas, the prayer space (the Madrasa-Mosque or prayer hall) is reserved exclusively for the students and is not accessible to the general public. The prayer area in this type of Madrasa is relatively small and limited in scale.

An example in Qazvin is the Altafatiyeh Madrasa, where the prayer space (prayer hall) is located in the southern iwan of the Madrasa. This area is modest in size, contains a small mihrab, and serves primarily the devotional and, occasionally, the educational needs of the students, rather than those of the broader public. From this perspective, the Altafatiyeh Madrasa follows the pattern of Timurid-period Madrasas, such as the Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Bukhara and the Ghiathieh Madrasa in Khargerd, as well as certain Safavid-period Madrasas (Fig. 6).

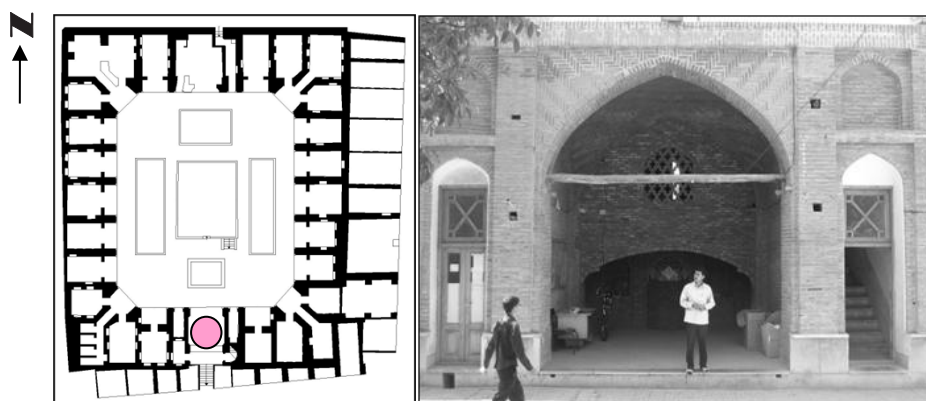


Figure 6. Plan of the Altafatiyeh Madrasa (Source: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document No. 101)

● Location of the Prayer Space (Prayer Hall) in the Altafatiyeh Madrasa Plan

The prayer hall of the Altafatiyeh Madrasa is modest in size and does not serve a public function. Top left: Photograph of the madrasa’s prayer hall (Photo: Author, 2011).

### 3.2. Madrasa-Mosque

From a functional typology perspective, the term Madrasa-Mosque refers to buildings in which the majority of spaces are devoted to education (madras), residential quarters (hujra), and service areas, with the primary functional priority being the educational role. The only shared function with a mosque is the prayer space (prayer hall–mosque), which is designed to accommodate a much larger number of users than just the residents of the madrasa. During specific times, this space is also used by the general public for daily prayers and other religious ceremonies.

Many madrasas exhibit this functional pattern. This may be due not only to the historical precedent of religious education in mosques since early Islam but also to the limited availability of dedicated religious spaces in the urban fabric, which necessitated accommodating public devotional needs. In most of these madrasas, the prayer space (mosque or prayer hall) is located along the main axis of the madrasa, typically on the southern side aligned with the qibla. Given its public function, it is usually the largest covered space within the madrasa (Fig. 7).

The design of Madrasa-Mosques in Iranian architecture has followed an evolutionary trajectory. In some of these buildings, the functional priority is given to the mosque. In other words, the building is primarily a mosque, and the public generally refers to it as such. In these structures, a number of residential cells (hujras) are often located on the first floor or in the corners and secondary axes of the courtyard, where students reside. The shared functional boundary with the Madrasa is usually limited to these few cells. Examples include the Sorkhi Mosque, Hakim Mosque in Isfahan, and the Mirza Ali Akbar Madrasa-Mosque in Ardabil, all of which contain several cells on the ground and first floors.

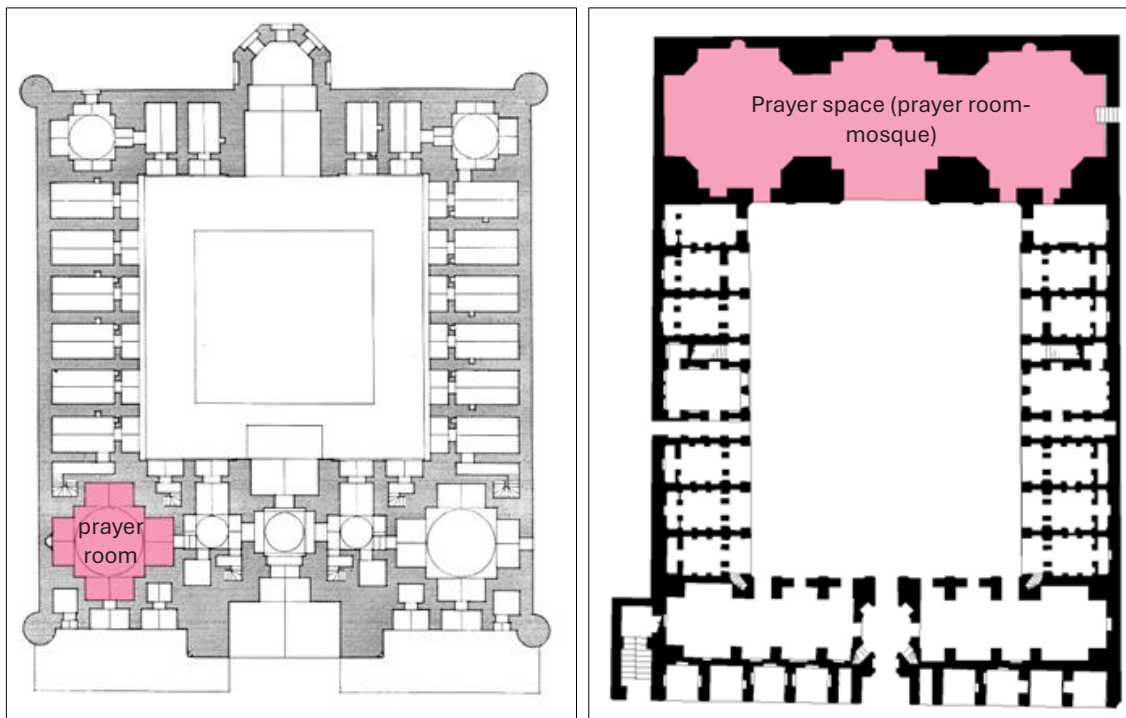


Figure 7. Differences in the Arrangement and Scale of the Prayer Space (Prayer Hall–Mosque) in the Architectural Plans of a Madrasa and a Madrasa-Mosque

Right: Plan of the Sardar Madrasa-Mosque in Qazvin (Source: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document No. 102)

Left: Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Bukhara (Source: [Golombek & Wilber, 1995](#))

In other cases, as previously noted, the building's primary function is educational. The functional integration is organized in such a way that the various components and spaces of the building are designed primarily to meet the needs of the Madrasa's residents. Only the prayer space (prayer hall–mosque) is occasionally used by the general public, for instance, during daily prayers. Such buildings are generally referred to as Madrasas by the public.

In a third category of Madrasa-Mosques, both functions—educational and devotional—are balanced, so that neither the mosque nor the Madrasa dominates functionally. Unlike the previous types, these buildings are recognized by the public as Madrasa-Mosques, in which the two functions are harmoniously integrated without any functional conflict. In these structures, the art of Iranian architectural design, particularly in functional organization, reaches its peak, representing a superlative functional system. Notable examples in the history of Iranian architecture include the Aqa Bozorg Madrasa-Mosque in Kashan, the Seyyed Mosque in Isfahan, the Sheikh Abdol Hossein Madrasa-Mosque, and the Sepahsalar Madrasa-Mosque in Tehran. In these buildings, the two functions of education (Madrasa) and worship (mosque) coexist independently while maintaining functional interrelations through diverse organizational strategies ([Fig. 8; Table 1](#)).

The functions of the Ebrahimeh, Sardar, Salehieh, Sheikh al-Islam, and Peyghambariyeh Madrasas in Qazvin can be classified as Madrasa-Mosques. Among these, a notable aspect of the spatial organization, except for Peyghambariyeh, which can be considered a unique model of Qazvin's Madrasa-Mosques, is the separation of student and public entrances to the prayer space (prayer hall–mosque) to prevent functional interference and conflict. Students and residents of the Madrasa access the prayer hall internally, through the central courtyard or other Madrasa spaces, whereas the general public enters via a separate access directly from the urban fabric (street, alley, etc.), bypassing the spatial hierarchy. After performing their religious rituals, the public exits through the same entrance, without accessing the educational or residential areas of the students.

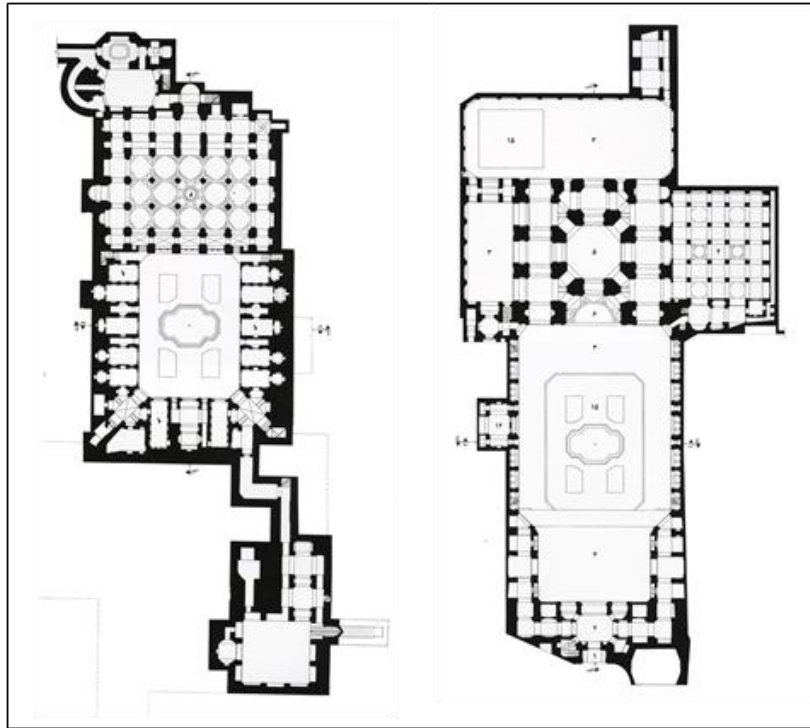


Figure 8. Ground Floor and Basement Architectural Plan of the Aqa Bozorg Madrasa-Mosque in Kashan (Source: [Haji Ghasemi, 2015](#))

An example of functional balance, integrating the two functions of the mosque (public prayer space) and the Madrasa (teaching and student living spaces).

Effectively, the prayer space of the Madrasa functions as an independent entity for the public, spatially distinct from the Madrasa, and is regarded as a neighborhood mosque. Users do not need to pass through other Madrasa spaces, including the courtyard, to reach the prayer hall. This feature is particularly pronounced in the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque in Qazvin, where the difference in elevation between the prayer space and the student living and teaching areas, combined with multiple access points from Salehieh Street to the prayer space (the Salehieh Mosque itself), reinforces this separation (Figs. 9 and 10).

As a result, the prayer spaces of the Sardar and Salehieh Madrasa-Mosques are recognized by the public as the Sardar Mosque and Salehieh Mosque, respectively. This spatial organization effectively prevents any functional conflict between the two user groups of the building. Such an approach to spatial arrangement is not observed in other comparable examples in Iranian architecture. Therefore, it can be concluded that in the historical Madrasa-Mosques of Qazvin, the method of achieving functional balance between the mosque and Madrasa (devotional and educational functions) differs from other prominent examples of Madrasa-Mosques in Iranian architecture (Figs. 11 and 12).

Table 1. Functional Typology of Selected Historic Madrasas in Iranian Architecture

Type	Examples		
Madrasa	Emam Khomeini (Soltani), Kashan	Araban, Isfahan	Aliya Madrasa, Ferdows
	Chaharbagh, Isfahan	Mollā Abdullah, Isfahan	Ghiathieh Madrasa, Khargerd
	Sadr Bazaar, Isfahan	Sadr, Tehran	Mirza Jafar Madrasa, Mashhad
	Emamiyeh (Baba Qasem), Isfahan	Filsof-ol-Dowleh, Tehran	Khan Madrasa, Shiraz
	Nimavard Madrasa, Isfahan	Mohammadiyeh, Tehran	Jahangir Khan, Qom

Type	Examples		
	Jaddeh Koochak, Isfahan	Balaser, Mashhad	Ebrahim Khan, Kerman
	Jaddeh Bozorg, Isfahan	Paeen Pa, Mashhad	Masoumieh, Kerman
	Ulugh Beg Madrasa, Bukhara	Parizad Madrasa, Mashhad	Hojatieh, Borujerd
	Altafatiyeh, Qazvin	Habibeh, Ferdows	Emam Khomeini, Yazd
<b>Madrasa-Mosque (Mosque Priority)</b>	Sorkhi Mosque, Isfahan	Mirza Ali Akbar, Ardabil	Rukn al-Molk, Isfahan
	Hakim Mosque, Isfahan	Seyyed/Grand Mosque, Zanjan	Jame Abbasi Mosque, Isfahan
<b>Madrasa-Mosque* (Madrasa Priority)</b>	Ebrahimeh, Qazvin	Marvi, Tehran	Hakim Bashi, Tehran
	Sardar, Qazvin	Moshir al-Saltaneh, Tehran	Khazen al-Molk, Tehran
	Ulugh Beg Madrasa, Samarkand	Mo'ayer al-Mamalek, Tehran	Mirza Abolhassan Memar Bashi
	Sheikh al-Salam, Qazvin	Haj Ghanbar Ali Khan, Tehran	-
<b>Madrasa-Mosque (Balanced Functional System)</b>	Aqa Bozorg, Kashan	Thagheh-ol-Islam, Isfahan	-
	Seyyed, Isfahan	Sheikh Abdol Hossein, Tehran	-
	Salehieh, Qazvin	Shahid Motahari-Sepahsalar, Tehran	-

\* In buildings where the primary functional priority is the madrasa, the dominant spaces are dedicated to student living and education. The prayer space (prayer hall–mosque) may, at certain times, also serve the general public as a mosque.

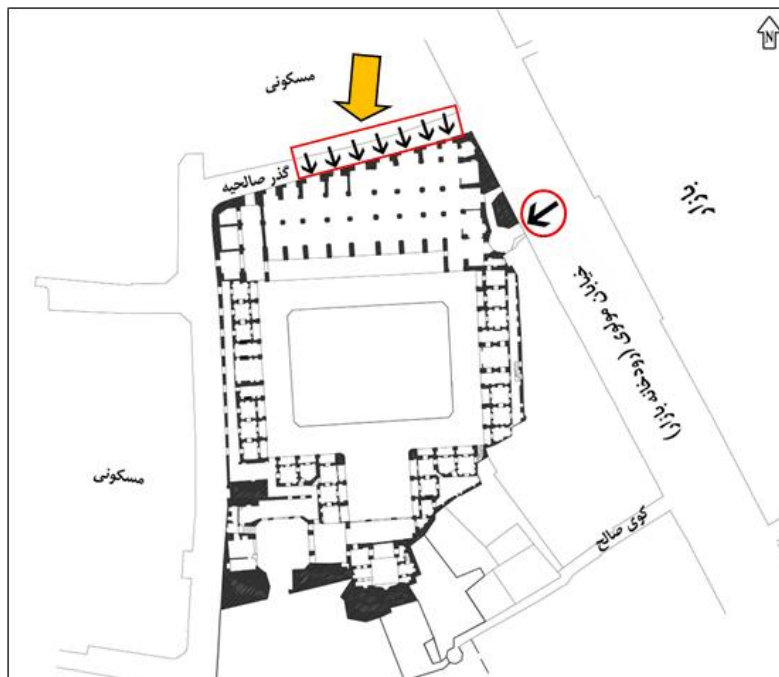


Figure 9. Ground Floor Architectural Plan of the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque in Qazvin (Source: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document No. 103)

➔ More than seven direct access points (without intermediate spaces) lead to the prayer space (i.e., the Salehieh Mosque) from the northern Salehieh street, allowing the general public to enter and exit without interfering with the students' living and educational areas.



Figure 10. Photograph of the Direct Public Access Points to the Prayer Space of the Madrasa (i.e., Salehieh Mosque) from the Northern Salehieh Street (Photo: Author, October 2011).

The function of the Peyghambariyeh Madrasa is also classified as a Madrasa-Mosque; however, unlike other madrasas, access to its prayer space (prayer hall) is not provided through the central courtyard, and no separate entrance has been designed for the public. Currently, the madrasa no longer serves an educational purpose, but the general public uses its prayer space as a mosque.

It is important to note that this madrasa is located within the Safavid-era government complex (Dolatkhaneh), and several interventions occurred in the late Safavid period, the Qajar period, and later within the Dolatkhaneh precinct. Renovations, documented by an extant inscription, have also been carried out. These factors introduce uncertainties regarding the original architectural design and functional typology of the madrasa. It is plausible that its original function was primarily educational rather than a public mosque, and the current use of the prayer space as a mosque may have evolved from a student-exclusive prayer area.



**A** Figure 11. Location of the Prayer Space (Prayer Hall–Mosque) in the Sheikh al-Islam, Sardar, and Salehieh Madrasa-Mosques (Plan Sources: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document Nos. 102–104). Red arrow: Direct access from the urban fabric to the prayer spaces (prayer hall–mosque) allows public use, while the Green dashed arrow: the main entrance (iwan) serves the residents of the madrasa (students, instructors, etc.) in accordance with traditional Iranian architectural patterns, maintaining spatial hierarchy. In the historical Madrasa-Mosques of Qazvin (excluding Peyghambariyeh), a separate direct access

from the urban fabric (street, alley, etc.) is provided for the public to enter the prayer hall, independent of the main madrasa entrance and without following the spatial hierarchy. This arrangement enables the public to use the prayer space without passing through the central courtyard, thereby avoiding any functional interference with the students' educational and residential areas. This design not only prevents such conflicts but also grants the prayer space (prayer hall–mosque) a high degree of spatial and functional independence, so that the general public perceives it as a neighborhood mosque, distinct from the madrasa building. Examples include the Salehieh, Sheikh al-Islam, and Sardar mosques.

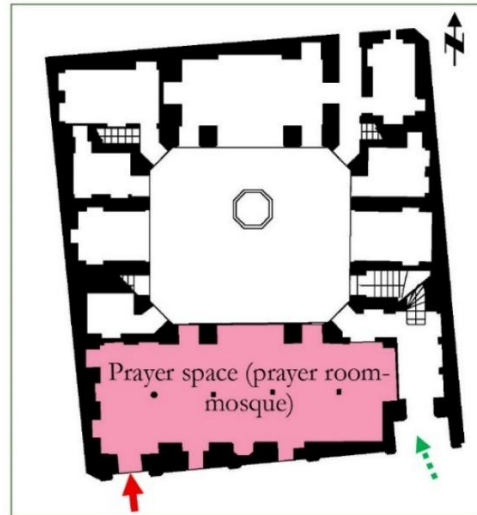


Figure 12. Plan of the Ebrahimeh Madrasa (Source: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document No. 105)

Green dashed arrow: Main entrance (iwān) of the madrasa

Red arrow: Direct access from the urban fabric to the prayer spaces

### 3.3. Tombs and Madrasas in the Functional Organization of Madrasas

Assigning a separate category called “Tomb Madrasa” within the functional organization of madrasas is not straightforward for various reasons. Although some madrasas, according to their primary function (Madrasa or Madrasa-Mosque), were not entirely disconnected from tombs, the term can be applied in cases where madrasas are associated with tombs in two ways.

The first case includes madrasas that, several years after their construction, became the burial place of their founder, custodian, or principal instructor. In such instances, one of the residential cells (ḥujras) of the madrasa was dedicated as a tomb. An example of this in Qazvin is the Ebrahimeh Madrasa-Mosque.

The second case involves madrasas built within or adjacent to the precincts of tombs of religious leaders, and occasionally rulers. In Qazvin, the Peyghambariyeh Madrasa-Mosque, located north of the Chahar Anbiya Tomb, exemplifies this type. It should be noted that during the Timurid period, a significant spatial and morphological relationship between madrasas and tombs developed, the analysis of which constitutes a separate subject of study.

Some madrasas also dedicated certain days of the week to preaching and guiding the Muslim community. From the Safavid period onwards, most madrasas hosted mourning ceremonies during the month of Muharram. From the Qajar period, in addition to mourning rituals, Ta'zieh performances (religious passion plays) became customary in certain madrasas ([Soltanzadeh, 1985: 442](#)).

In Qazvin, Muharram Ta'zieh performances flourished in madrasas as well. In the central courtyard of the Sardar Madrasa, there is a large covered pool elevated one meter above the courtyard level. Students used this elevated platform for sleeping during the summer months, and it also served as a stage for Ta'zieh performances ([Dabir-Siaqi, 2002: 569](#)). Given the construction of a platform in the courtyard that functioned as a theatrical stage, it can be inferred that some madrasas, in addition to their educational and religious functions, were also designed to accommodate performing arts, specifically Ta'zieh.

## 4. Components and Spaces of Qazvin Madrasas

Qazvin madrasas, like other specialized buildings in Iranian architecture, contain spaces designed according to specific functions and systems, defining the building as a distinct madrasa. Among these, educational functions and organizational systems had the greatest influence on the design and arrangement of these spaces. Most madrasas include three primary spatial types: educational spaces (madras), prayer spaces (prayer hall or mosque), and residential spaces (hujras), along with various service spaces.

In terms of architectural components, Qazvin madrasas share elements such as the iwan (main entrance) and courtyard with other Iranian buildings. However, in some cases, these spaces also exhibit unique functional and morphological characteristics. Among the architectural spaces of a madrasa, the educational space (madras), prayer space (prayer hall or mosque), residential space (hujra), and features such as the iwan (main entrance) and courtyard are considered the core components. Without these elements, the madrasa would be functionally and morphologically incomplete. Other spaces, such as service areas, are regarded as secondary. Some madrasas have extensive service spaces, while others have limited ones.

### 4.1. Iwan (Main Entrance)

Generally, the iwan in a madrasa, as in other Iranian buildings, serves as a transitional element connecting the interior and exterior. Typically, it includes spaces such as the jolokhaneh (forecourt), pishkhaneh (anteroom), threshold, doorway, hashti (entrance vestibule), and corridor. Some madrasas, depending on their function or location within the urban fabric, have multiple entrances. Among these, one entrance is designated as the main entrance, incorporating all iwan components (jolokhaneh, pishkhaneh, threshold, doorway, hashti, and corridor) while maintaining the principle of spatial hierarchy. Other entrances serve as secondary access points and are generally simpler, often lacking significant architectural features. For this discussion, iwan refers specifically to the main entrance of the madrasa.

The iwans of Qazvin madrasas generally follow common Iranian architectural patterns, including pishkhaneh, threshold, doorway, hashti, and corridor. Among them, the Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa features a notable jolokhaneh, comparable to the Habibieh Madrasa in Ferdows. The Altafatieh Madrasa exhibits a distinct layout, where access from the hashti to the central courtyard is mediated through two corridors located on either side of the southern iwan, preventing direct entry to the courtyard. An evolved form of this pattern can be seen in prominent Isfahani-style madrasas, such as the Chaharbagh Madrasa in Isfahan (Fig. 13).

### 4.2. Central Courtyard (Miansara)

Following the iwan (pishkhaneh, doorway, hashti, etc.), the central courtyard (miansara) is typically situated. This architectural component has an ancient precedent in Iranian architecture and is considered one of the principal spaces in most historical Iranian buildings. Other spaces are organized around the miansara, and from it, one can access all primary and secondary spaces of the madrasa either directly or via an intermediary space.

In Qazvin madrasas, the miansara generally follows common Iranian architectural patterns in terms of form and spatial arrangement. Its plan, similar to courtyards in mosques, caravanserais, houses, and other buildings, is typically rectangular (often with a 4:1 proportion) or square, sometimes with chamfered corners (ashkoli, 8½ or rounded corners). However, the miansara of the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque exhibits a distinct plan: a projection into the central third of the rectangle (toward the south) transforms the overall plan into a half-cross (semi-chilipa) shape.

Water supply considerations also influence the physical layout of the space. Drawing water from a well generally imposes little restriction on determining the lowest level of the space, whereas obtaining water from a qanat or canal affects the elevation of the courtyard floor (Soltanzadeh, 1985: 430). The Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque features a sunken garden (goudal-baghcheh) within its miansara, which is relatively rare in Qazvin and other cities with similar climates. This feature is

explained by access to water from the Khamartashi qanat, which passed through the madrasa (Figs. 14 and 15).

It should also be noted that some Qazvin madrasas, including Salehieh and Sheikh al-Islam, have one or more secondary inner courtyards in addition to the main miansara.

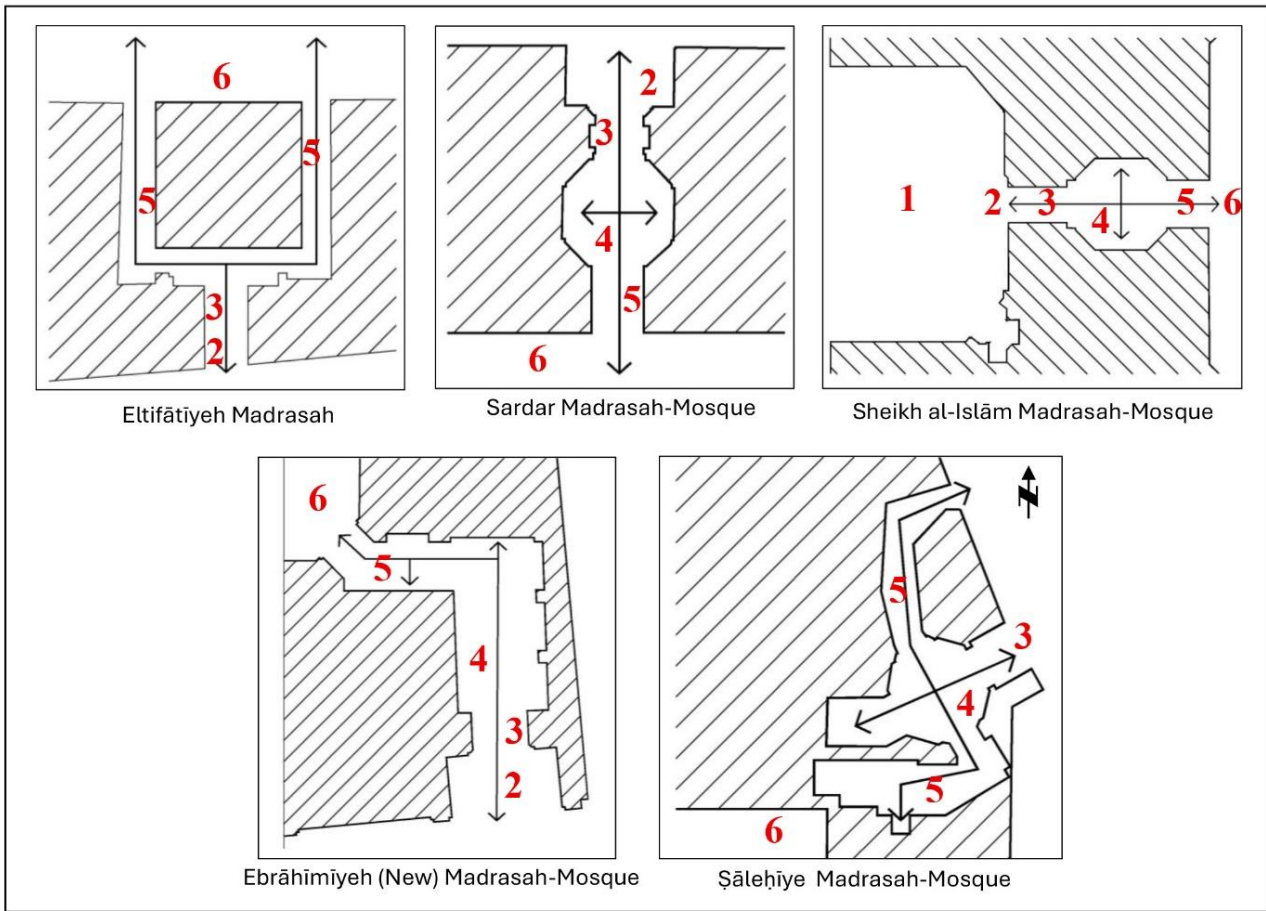


Figure 13. Iwan (Main Entrance) Layout in Qazvin Madrasas

1- Jolokhaneh (Forecourt), 2- Pishkhaneh (Anteroom), 3- Threshold, 4- Hashti (Entrance Vestibule), 5- Corridor, 6- Central Courtyard

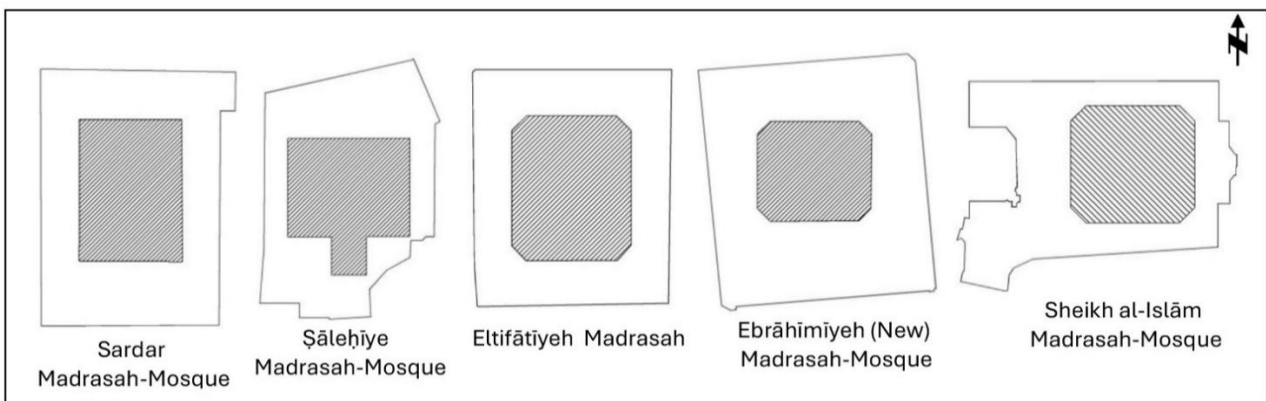


Figure 14. Central Courtyard (Miansara) Layout in Qazvin Madrasas

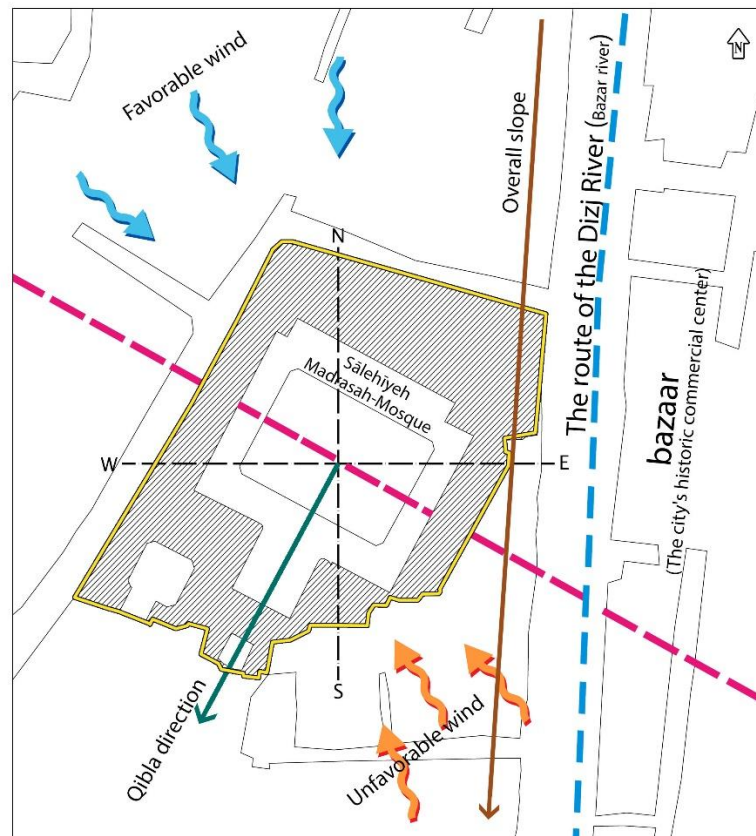


Figure 15. Location of the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque within the Surrounding Urban Fabric  
Position of the Khamartashi qanat passing through the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque in Qazvin (Drawing: Author, October 2011).

#### 4.3. Educational Spaces (Madras, Iwan–Shabestan–Hall)

As previously noted, many specialized buildings in Iranian architecture contain spaces that are not organized for a single function but respond effectively to multiple functions. This characteristic is particularly pronounced in madrasas. For instance, many spaces within a madrasa serve educational purposes and are therefore considered madras (educational spaces). In some madrasas, the prayer space (prayer hall) coincides with the educational space, fulfilling both functions simultaneously. In other cases, a hall or shabestan, independent of the prayer space, is designed specifically for education, offering greater spatial and functional autonomy.

Although most madrasas include designated madras spaces for instruction, other areas may also serve educational functions for various reasons. For example, southern iwans and shabestans, being shaded (*nesar*) in summer, and northern-facing educational spaces (*pato*) that receive sunlight in winter, were both used for teaching and instructional circles.

Educational spaces in Qazvin madrasas are organized in different patterns. In the Sardar Madrasa, educational spaces are located on the eastern and western sides of the central courtyard, flanked by *hujras*. Two additional spaces are situated beside the *hashti* at the northern entrance and were frequently used for educational purposes.

In the Salehieh Madrasa, madras spaces are located on the eastern and western sides of the courtyard, flanked by *hujras*. These spaces are emphasized by arches distinct from the *hujras* and larger openings. Another madras is situated in the southern recess of the courtyard, providing a quiet area, separated from student rooms, likely functioning as the madras of Sheikh Mohammad Saleh Barghani, the founder of the madrasa.

In the Altafatieh Madrasa, a space in the northern wing, larger than other *hujras*, was likely used as a madras. Additionally, the southern iwan, which served as the prayer space with a *mihrab*, was also used as an educational space during the summer.

In the Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa, the educational space is located on the eastern side, distinguished by a columned iwan, which draws more attention than any other space in the madrasa. This columned iwan underwent interventions during recent restoration works (Fig. 16).

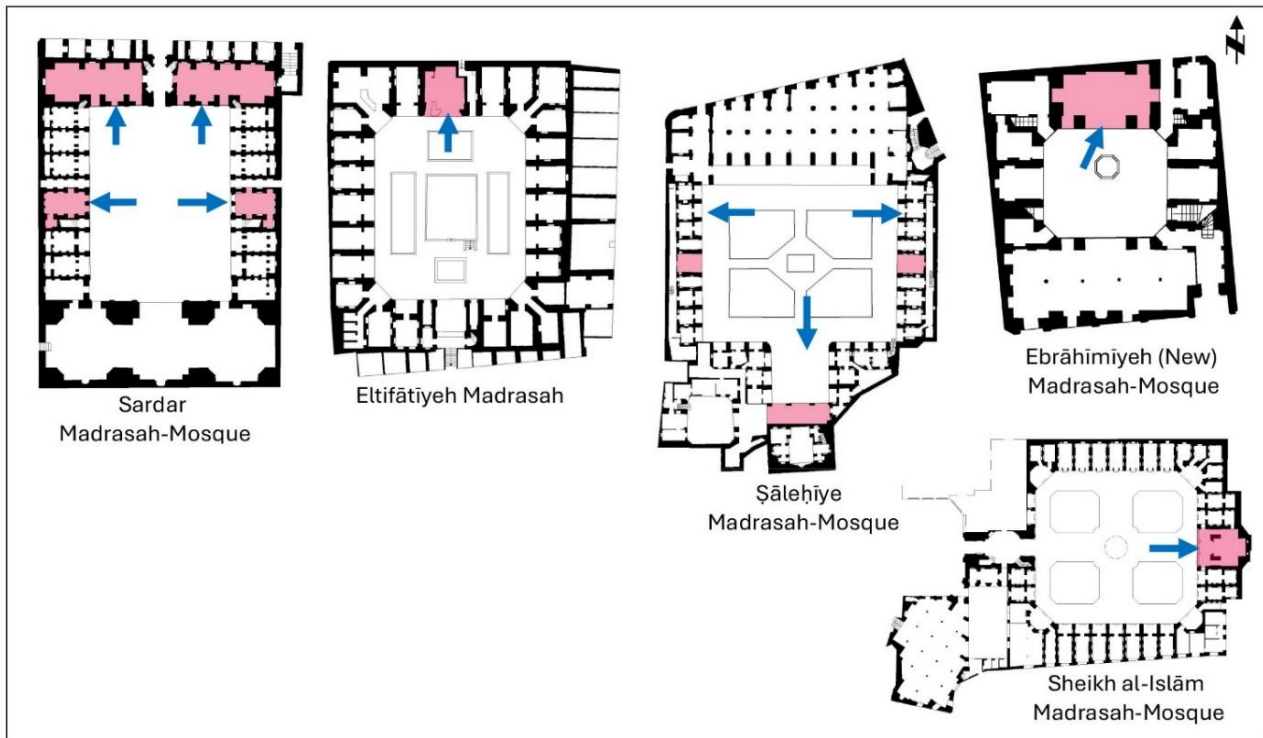


Figure 16. Blue arrow: Location and Layout of Educational Spaces (Madras) in Qazvin Madrasas (Source of Plans: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document Nos. 101–105).

#### 4.4. Prayer Space (Namazkhaneh)

Another principal space in a Madrasa is the prayer space (namazkhaneh), which, given its significance, often received a dedicated location within most Madrasas. In some Madrasas, the prayer space or mosque was the largest covered area of the building, aligned along the main axis. In others, it was less prominent, yet in most cases, the prayer space was located on the southern side to face the qibla.

In Qazvin, the prayer spaces of the Ebrahimeh, Sheikh al-Islam, Sardar, Peyghambariyeh, and Altafatieh Madrasas, similar to other historic Iranian Madrasas, are located on the southern side. However, the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque deviates from this pattern, as its prayer space is situated on the northern side. This arrangement is relatively unique among Iranian Madrasa-Mosques, whose prayer spaces serve a public function.

Prayer halls in Madrasas with a public function (also considered local mosques), such as Ebrahimeh, Sheikh al-Islam, and Salehieh, are typically columned shabestans, representing the common pattern of prayer spaces in Qazvin Madrasas. Among these, the Sardar Madrasa has a rare domed prayer hall, making it an uncommon example in Qazvin. This deviation from the standard layout reflects the Qajar architects' tendency to create spatial expansiveness, as during this period architectural creativity increased, spaces diversified, new forms were introduced, and traditional Iranian architectural patterns evolved toward spatial openness and lightness (Mirmiran, 2000: 54). Exemplary cases include the Seyyed Isfahan and Sepahsalar Tehran Madrasas, highlighting the peak of this Qajar-era tendency.

In the Altafatieh Madrasa, the prayer space coincides with the southern iwan, which contains a small mihrab and, like other Madrasas, occupies a relatively modest area due to its primarily educational function (Fig. 17).

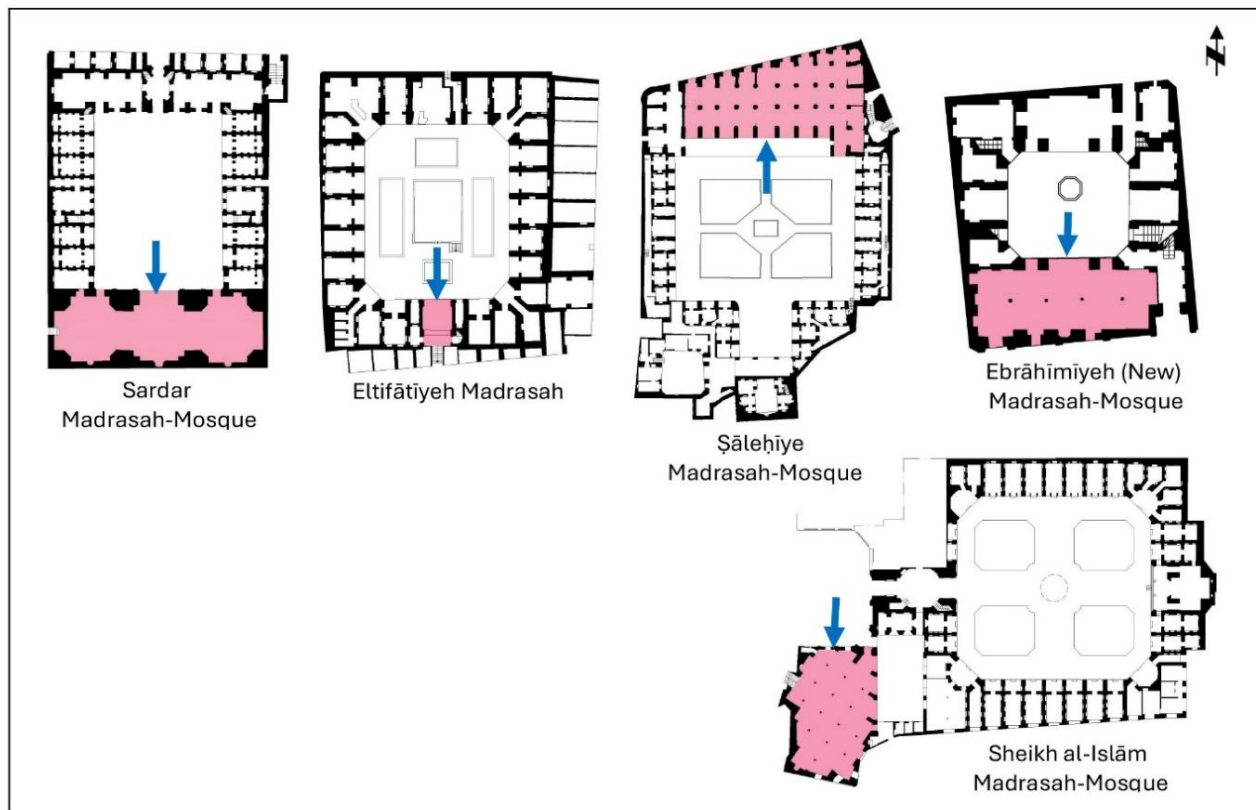


Figure 17. Blue arrow: Location and Layout of Prayer Spaces (Namazkhaneh) in Qazvin Madrasas

- The prayer halls in Qazvin Madrasas generally follow the shabestan (columned hall) pattern, while the Sardar Madrasa-Mosque, with its domed prayer hall, represents a unique example.
- Similar to many other Madrasas, the prayer spaces in Qazvin Madrasas are typically located on the southern side to align with the qibla. However, in the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque, the prayer hall is situated on the northern side, deviating from this convention.

(Source of Plans: [Qazvin Province Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010](#), Document Nos. 101–105).

#### 4.5. Living Spaces (Small Iwans, Student Chambers, and Storerooms)

A Madrasa can be briefly defined as an institution of higher education where traditional Islamic sciences, such as Hadith, Tafsir, and Fiqh, are taught. These educational institutions were conventionally residential ([Brand, 2001: 173](#)). Accommodation within Madrasas was provided through rooms that served as student living spaces, a feature with precedents in caravanserais and ribats.

The rooms, known as chambers (hujra), played a substantial, and sometimes primary, role in shaping the overall spatial organization of the Madrasa, making them the most significant architectural units of the building ([Soltanzadeh, 1985: 438](#)). These chambers were considered private spaces and sometimes included a small attached storeroom (pasto). Typically, chambers were organized around the central courtyard (mian-sara), and access to them on the ground floor was provided via small iwan-like spaces (iwancheh), which acted as semi-private transitional areas conducive to student discussions.

Each chamber received natural light through windows and door openings facing the courtyard. The walls were equipped with niches for books and personal belongings. Some chambers, in addition to the storeroom, contained a mezzanine level accessed via stairs, serving as sleeping quarters and private study areas. In most Madrasas, chambers were built over two floors, each accommodating multiple students. Access to the first-floor chambers was generally provided from the courtyard and the vestibule (hashti).

The chambers in Qazvin Madrasas followed common Iranian architectural patterns, with the exception that some lacked an iwancheh or storeroom.

## 5. Spatial Organization Analysis in Qazvin Madrasas

### 5.1. Relationship of the Entrance (Dar-oygah) with Courtyard, Living, Educational, and Prayer Spaces

The entrance space (dar-oygah) connects to other principal Madrasa spaces in various ways, often respecting spatial hierarchy. In Salehieh Madrasa, the entrance links to the courtyard, living spaces, and prayer hall. In Sardar Madrasa, access from the southern hashti leads to the courtyard, while connections to the east and west link to the educational halls, resembling Madrasas of the second phase of the Azari (Timurid) style, such as Ulugh Beg Madrasa in Bukhara and Ghiyasieh in Khar-gird.

In Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa, the entrance connects from the eastern hashti to the courtyard and from the south to the prayer hall, though alterations have occurred in the northern and southern hashti areas. Altafatieh Madrasa demonstrates a different arrangement: access from the vestibule (hashti) to the courtyard occurs via two lateral corridors flanking the southern iwan, preventing direct entry into the courtyard and resulting in no direct link between the entrance and the living, prayer, or educational spaces. An evolved version of this pattern is observed in high-style Isfahani Madrasas, such as Chaharbagh Madrasa in Isfahan (Fig. 18).

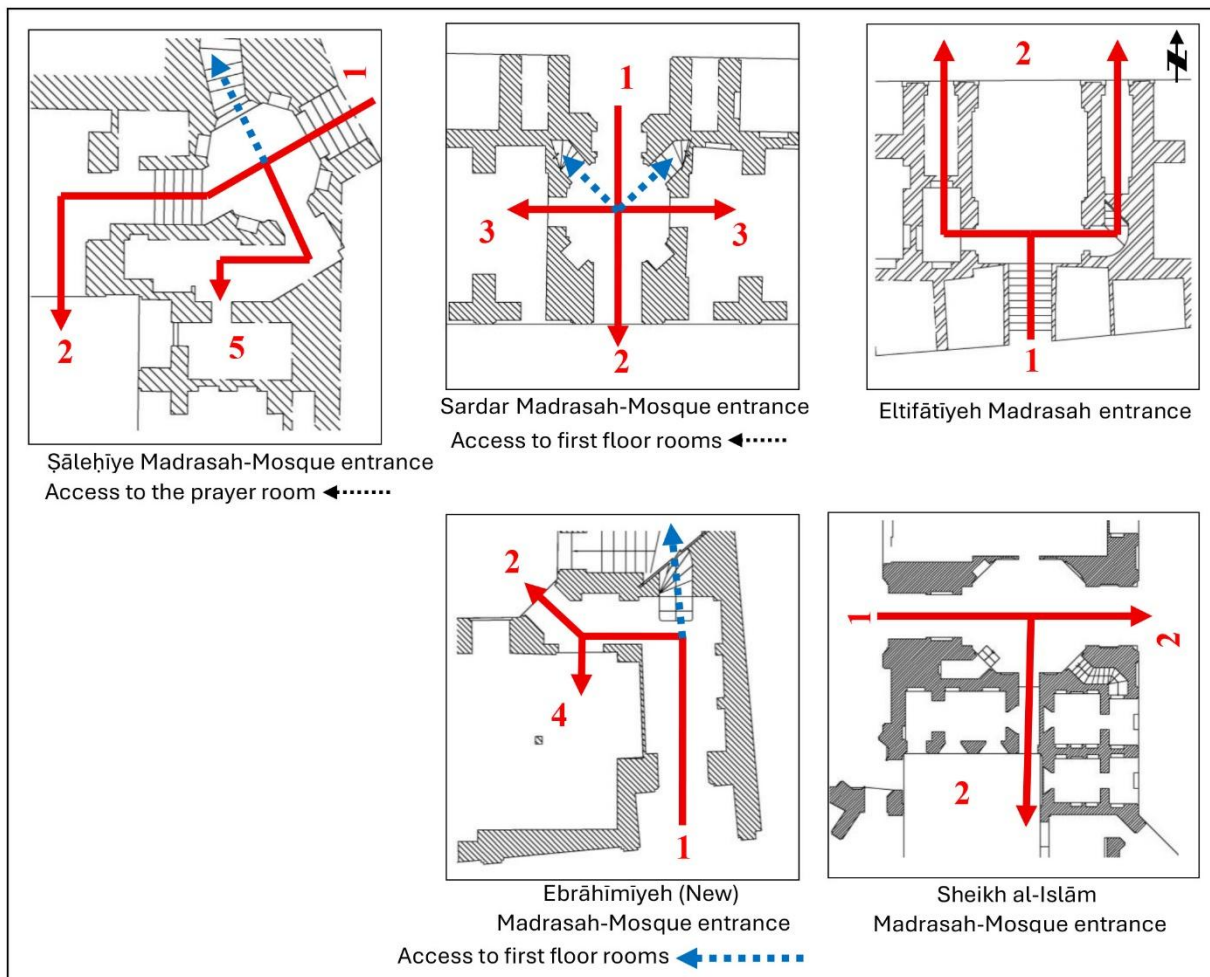


Figure 18. Relationship of the Entrance (Dar-oygah) with the Courtyard, Living Spaces, Educational Halls, and Prayer Halls in Qazvin Madrasas

1. Entrance (Dar-oygah), 2. Courtyard (Mian-sara), 3. Educational Hall (Madras), 4. Prayer Hall (Namazkhaneh), 5. Student Chambers (Hujra).

(Source of plans: Qazvin Cultural Heritage Documentation Center, 2010, Document Nos. 101–105).

## 5.2. Relationship of the Courtyard (Mian-sara) with Educational, Living, and Prayer Spaces

Except for the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque, the courtyard in Qazvin's historical Madrasas connects all three principal spaces—education, prayer, and living quarters. The surrounding spaces are organized around the courtyard, providing direct or hierarchically mediated access to all areas. In the Salehieh Madrasa-Mosque, differences in floor levels disrupt this direct connection, resulting in a spatial and functional separation of the prayer hall from other Madrasa spaces.

Key points regarding the layout around the courtyard include:

- Prayer spaces are located on the southern side of the courtyard (except in Salehieh).
- Educational halls (madras) in Salehieh and Sardar are situated along the eastern and western axes of the courtyard.
- In Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa, the main axis runs east-west, along which the entrance and educational halls are aligned, while student chambers surround the courtyard.

One of the prominent characteristics of spatial organization in Qazvin Madrasas is the absence of a four-iwan (chahār-iwān) layout based on the common models in Iranian architecture, such as the Jāmeḥ Mosque of Qazvin and Isfahan, and the Chahārbāgh Madrasas. In Qazvin Madrasas, emphasis is placed differently on the main and secondary axes: the entrance (dar-oygah) and the prayer hall (namazkhaneh), and occasionally the educational hall (madras) in the Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa, are aligned along the primary axis, while the secondary axis generally only contains the rows of student chambers (hujra) and occasionally minor madras spaces, without significant architectural elements like iwans seen in four-iwan layouts. In other words, Qazvin Madrasas either lack a secondary axis entirely or exhibit minimal emphasis along it (Figs. 19, 20 and 21).

Access to the first-floor chambers in the two-story Madrasas, such as Sardar and Salehiyeh, is provided via staircases located in the courtyard (mian-sara) and the vestibule (hashti). On the first floor, circulation is further facilitated through corridors located behind the chambers.

It should be noted that, unlike many similar buildings in Iranian architecture, the courtyards of Qazvin Madrasa-Mosques possess a special degree of spatial and functional independence due to the direct access provided from the surrounding urban fabric to the prayer spaces (mosques) for the general public. Consequently, access to the courtyard is restricted for the general public except during special occasions (e.g., the first ten days of Muharram), thereby maintaining a private and independent space for students and instructors for living, studying, and discussion.

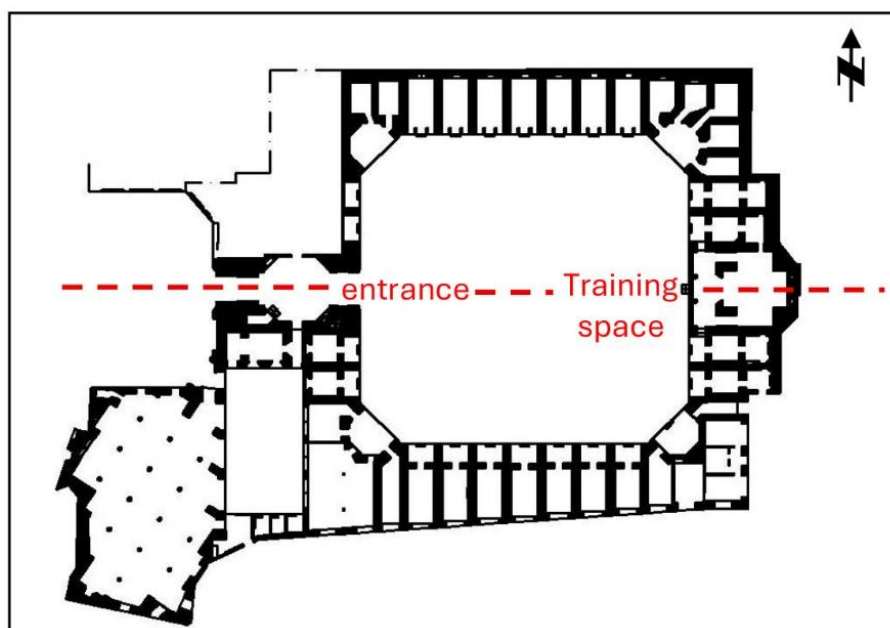


Figure 19. Plan of Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa—Organization of the entrance (dar-oygah) and educational hall (madras) along a single east–west axis.

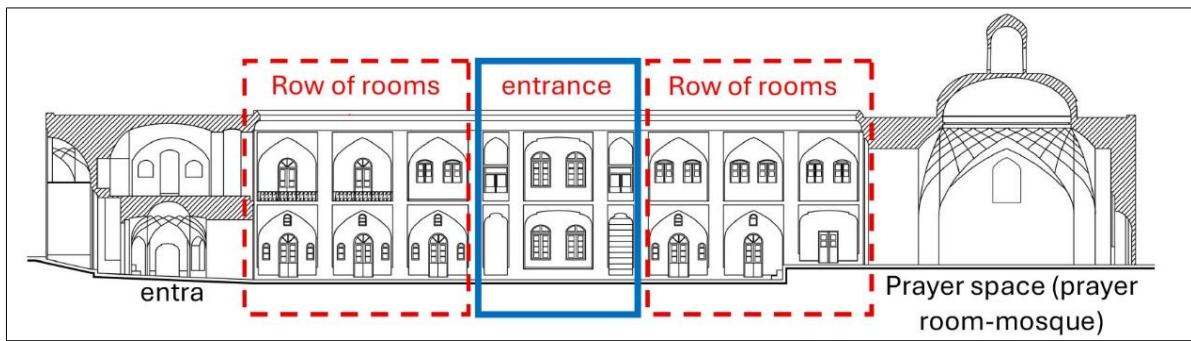


Figure 20. Section of Sardar Madrasa—The madras is organized along the east–west axis, situated among the student chambers (hujra), with arches differing from those of the chambers (Kalleel arch) highlighted in the façade.



Figure 21. Elevation of Salehiyeh Madrasa—The madras is organized along the east–west axis, located among the student chambers, with arches distinct from the chamber arches (Mazeh-i Kofteh arch) emphasized in the façade.

## 6. Typology of Spatial Organization and Architectural Arrangement in Historical Madrasas of Qazvin

In general, three types of architectural organization can be identified in the historical madrasas. Among these, the first type corresponds to the Isfahani and Azari style, while the second and third types emerged after the Safavid era, during the second Isfahani period (Qajar).

**Type I:** In this type, the three main functional spaces, educational (madras), prayer (namazkhaneh), and residential (hujra), are organized around a central courtyard (miyansara) on the ground floor, with student chambers sometimes repeated on the second floor. Access to the second-floor chambers is provided either via staircases located at the corners of the courtyard, on either side of the main iwan, or from the entrance hall (hashti). Access to the second-floor chambers can occur in two ways: first, through interconnected upper-floor iwans forming a continuous arcade, from which the chambers are accessed. An example of this layout is the Chaharbagh Madrasa in Isfahan.

**Type II:** In this type, the upper-floor iwans (ivancheh) are not interconnected, and access to the second-floor chambers occurs via covered or open corridors located behind the first-floor chambers. In some madrasas, the second-floor chambers have no ivancheh at all, and access is exclusively via rear corridors. Examples of this type include the Khan Madrasa in Shiraz, Soltani

Madrasa in Kashan, Nimaavard Madrasa in Isfahan, Ulugh-Beyg Madrasa in Samarkand and Bukhara, and Ghiyasieh Madrasa in Kharqerd.

**Type III:** In this type, the prayer space is located on the ground floor, the madras is situated on the lower floor, and some chambers are positioned below ground level around a sunken courtyard (bagh-chal), creating a cool and pleasant microclimate. Climatic conditions played a significant role in the spatial organization of this type, which is mostly found in desert cities. A prime example of this type is the Aqa Bozorg Madrasa in Kashan (Table 2).

Table 2. Typology of Spatial Organization and Architectural Arrangement in Selected Historical Madrasas in Iranian Architecture

Type	Examples of Madrasas
Type I	Imam Khomeini (Soltani) Kashan, Araban Isfahan, Sardar Qazvin, Chaharbagh Isfahan, Molla Abdullah Isfahan, Ghiyasieh Khorgerd, Sadr Bazaar Isfahan, Sadr Tehran, Mirza Jafar Mashhad, Emamiyeh (Baba Qasem) Isfahan, Falsaf od-Doleh Tehran, Khan Madrasa Shiraz, Nimavard Isfahan, Sheikh al-Islam Qazvin, Jahangir Khan Qom, Ebrahimieh Qazvin, Balaser Mashhad, Ebrahim Khan Kerman, Jaddeh Bozorg Isfahan, Paeen Pa Mashhad, Masoumieh Kerman, Ulugh Beg Bukhara, Parizad Mashhad, Hojatieh Borujerd, Eltafatieh Qazvin, Habibeh Ferdows
Type II	Seyyed Isfahan, Shahid Motahari, Tehran / Sepahsalar
Type III	Agha Bozorg Kashan, Moravi Tehran, Hakim Bashi Tehran, Imam Khomeini Yazd, Moshir al-Saltaneh Tehran, Khazen al-Molk Tehran, Salehieh Qazvin, Mo'yer al-Mamalek Tehran, Mirza Abolhasan Memar Bashi, Mosalla Madrasa Yazd, Haj Ghanbar Ali Khan Tehran

\* Shahid Motahari Madrasa / Sepahsalar also has cells on the ground floor.

Among the historical Mosque-Madrasas of Qazvin, the Sardar and Ebrahimieh Madrasas are classified within Type One in terms of spatial layout and architectural organization. Their prayer and educational spaces are located on the ground floor, while the residential quarters occupy both the ground and first floors, with access to the first-floor rooms provided via staircases located in the courtyard (miānsarā) and vestibule (hashti). In contrast, the Salehieh Mosque-Madrassa of Qazvin exhibits a Type Three spatial arrangement, with three levels, a sunken garden (godāl bāghche), and residential units organized around it, representing an exceptional case in this climate zone (Figs. 22 and 23). Finally, it should be noted that among the Mosque-Madrasas of Qazvin, the Telfatieh, Peygambariyeh, and Sheikh al-Islam Madrasas are single-storey buildings—a configuration that is relatively rare in the context of historical Iranian Madrasas, where two-storey structures are more commonly observed.

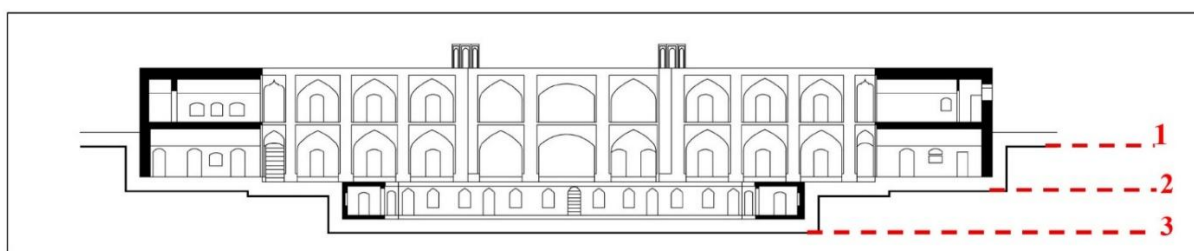


Figure 22. Section of the Salehieh Mosque-Madrassa – spatial organization of the Madrasa across the lower floors.

## 7. Research Findings

Based on the preceding discussion, the principles and characteristics of the architecture of historical Madrasas in Qazvin, which constitute a distinct architectural pattern for these Madrasas, can be summarized as follows:

In the historical Mosque-Madrasas of Qazvin (except for the Peygambariyeh Madrasa), public access to the prayer space or mosque is provided via one or more direct entrances from the

surrounding urban fabric (streets or alleys), independent of the main Madrasa entrance. These entrances are designed without following the conventional spatial hierarchy, allowing the general public to use the mosque without passing through the main entrance or the courtyard (*mīānsarā*) of the Madrasa. Consequently, functional conflicts with the educational and residential spaces of students are avoided. This design ensures the spatial and functional autonomy of the prayer hall or mosque, to the extent that in some cases the public regards it as a separate mosque, distinct from the Madrasa building, such as in the Salehieh and Sardar Mosque-Madrasas. Within this spatial arrangement, the *mīānsarā* also provides the Madrasa residents with a distinct, private space, enabling uninterrupted educational and residential activities. This functional separation of educational and residential spaces from the public prayer space is not observed even in exemplary designs such as the Aqa Bozorg Mosque-Madrasa in Kashan or the Seyed Mosque-Madrasa in Isfahan, where entrances and courtyards are shared between students and outsiders. In Qazvin, however, the public prayer space is completely segregated, so that the mosque and Madrasa maintain both independence and concurrent functionality. This feature highlights the architects' sophisticated understanding of functional systems in architecture and the significance of functional separation in the design of Mosque-Madrasas in historical Iranian architecture.



Figure 23. View of the sunken garden (*godāl bāghche*) at the Salehieh Mosque-Madrasa.

- The **iwan**—a vaulted, roofed architectural element, open on one to three sides ([Rafiei Sereshki, 1985: 39](#))—although significant in Iranian architecture, is absent in the classical sense in the historical Madrasas of Qazvin. While the iwan reached its pinnacle in Seljuk-era Razi-style architecture, exemplified by four-iwan mosques such as the Jameh Mosque of Isfahan, and has traditionally played a central role in spatial organization in prominent Iranian Mosque-Madrasas (e.g., Aqa Bozorg Mosque-Madrasa, Aliya Madrasas of Ferdows, Chaharbagh Madrasa of Isfahan, Seyed Madrasa of Isfahan, and Soltani Madrasa of Kashan), the Madrasas of Qazvin adopted a different approach. Here, the main and secondary axes emphasize the entrance (*darāyghāh*), the prayer hall, and occasionally the Madrasa (as in Sheikh al-Islam Madrasa), while the secondary axis typically accommodates only the row of student rooms and occasionally Madrasas at the same height, without any prominent element such as an iwan to emphasize the axis. This distinct arrangement differentiates Qazvin Madrasas from the conventional two- and four-iwan Madrasas of Iran, establishing a unique architectural model within Iranian Madrasa design.

The findings indicate that the architects of Qazvin's historical Madrasas did not simply follow common Iranian Madrasa layouts or replicate conventional patterns; rather, they adopted an independent approach, achieving a coherent and sustainable model in designing Mosque-Madrasa complexes.

## 8. Conclusion

A review and analysis of architectural patterns in Mosque-Madrasas, particularly historical examples in Iran, demonstrates that past architects consistently sought to organize two distinct functions—mosque (public prayer space) and Madrasa (educational and semi-private residential space for students)—side by side, while preventing functional overlap. These deliberate design strategies facilitated one of the most creative examples of spatial organization in Iranian historical architecture.

The findings of this study, based on a comparative analysis of the architectural layouts of historical Mosque-Madrasas in Qazvin and other prominent examples in Iran, reveal that a unique method was employed in Qazvin to separate and regulate the ritual and educational functions. In this method, students access the prayer space through the *mīānsarā* and internal Madrasa areas, while the general public is provided with one or more fully independent entrances from the urban fabric (streets and alleys) directly to the mosque. These entrances, designed without conventional spatial hierarchies, facilitate short-term public presence and rapid exit through the same route. As a result, the *mīānsarā* and other Madrasa spaces effectively become private environments for the students and residents, while the prayer space attains an independent identity, so much so that it functions as a neighborhood mosque without any interference between the two user groups (students and the public).

This spatial organization pattern is prominently observed in four historical Mosque-Madrasas of Qazvin—Sardar, Salehieh, Ebrahimieh, and Sheikh al-Islam—and is rarely replicated in other Iranian architectural examples. Therefore, it can be concluded that the historical Mosque-Madrasas of Qazvin adopted a distinctive, efficient, and innovative approach to balancing the ritual and educational functions, rendering them exemplary and unique in the history of Iranian architecture.

## Conflict of Interest

This article has one author and does not have any conflicts of interest.

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## Data Availability

The raw data of this research are available from the author and can be accessed upon request.

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