

Abianeh Village – “of the same color as nature”

M. M. G. Soroush

Islamic Azad University - Hamedan Branch, Hamedan, Iran

Abstract

Iranian architecture, pre- and post-Islam, was established based on climate, geography, available materials, culture and native beliefs. In some parts of Iran, architecture has developed in harmony with dominant conditions such as nature and society. In this article we introduce an exemplary area of Iranian architecture in Abianeh Village, located in the Isfahan province of Iran, where attention has been paid to architectural characteristics, context, materials, climate and geography.

Keywords: Abianeh, Iran, architecture, Islamic, materials, climate, geography, native introduction.

1 Introduction

About 40 km northwest of Natanz in Isfahan province at the foot of the Karkas Mountain, an ancient village called Abianeh is located, considered among the most exceptional villages in Iran, due to its historical monuments and relics. The native architectural splendor is full of beauty in this village and it has placed it among the most wonderful areas in the world. Due to its pleasant climate, Abianeh was the dwelling of the Safavid court people coming to Natanz to stay for a full season.

The households of Abianeh, estimated to be 500 units in 1982, live in houses located on a ravine of the Barzroud River, such that the roofs of downdrift houses are the yards of top houses while there is no wall surrounding them. Therefore, Abianeh, at first glance, is a multi-storey village and in some cases up to four storeys. Rooms of Abianeh houses are equipped with networked wooden windows having porches overlooking narrow and dark alleys. Exteriors of Abianeh houses are covered with red soil, the mine of which is near the village. Abianeh has seven wells used to irrigate gardens and fields. Wheat, potatoes and various fruit, especially apples, pears, apricots and nuts are grown. Traditional



clothes are common and the people wear them to show their prejudice and pride towards their culture. Men wear wide and long trousers and women a long dress of colorful cloth while wearing veils.

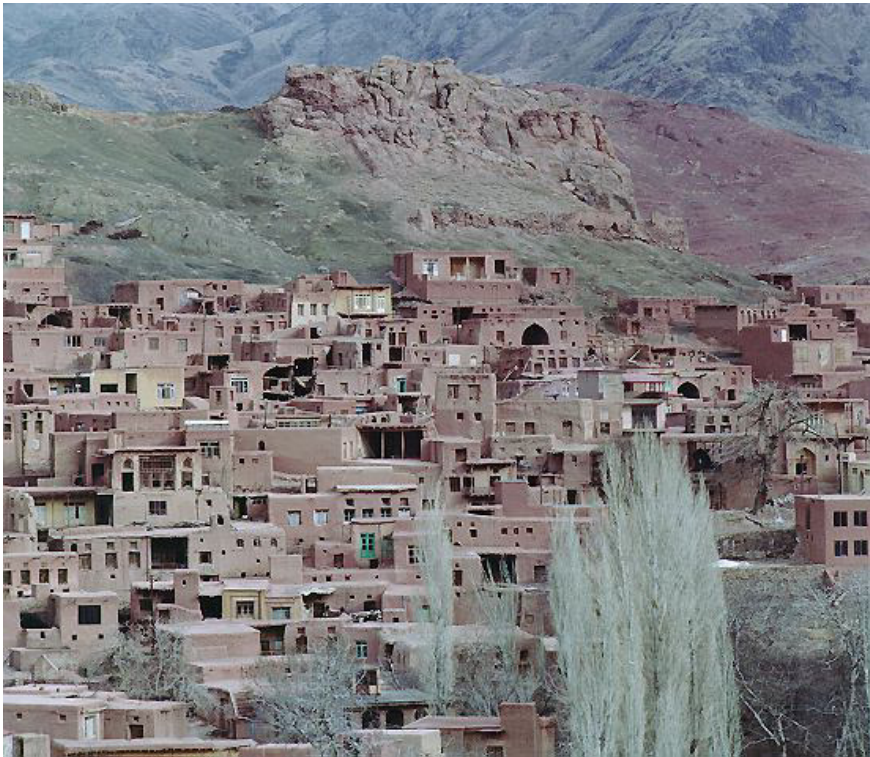


Figure 1: Overall view of Abianeh.

The feeling the village induces is of its fate, an up and down fate of a 1500 years old civilization, while its fascinating architecture is attracting many visitors.

2 Cultural and historical importance of Abianeh Village

Once a civilized village in the Sassanid era, Abianeh has kept its early architecture and customs since the pre-Islamic period. The people speak a mixture of pre-Islamic Farsi and Sanskrit, which is prevalent in the central and western areas. The first evidence of following Islam dates back to the early 5th century. The history of the wooden altar in the village shows the year of 1099 AD, one of the most ancient altars in Iran. Some parts of this altar have been destroyed due to fire in the mosque.

3 Climate and geography of Abianeh Village

In the heart of the Karkas Mountain, there is a green valley extending over the central Sahra. The existence of pleasant valleys around a dry Sahra has been concomitant with a great importance. One of these valleys is Barzroud, 90 km from Kashan on the road from Kashan to Natanz, starting from Hanjen Bridge in Abianeh. At this point, the valley becomes wider, surrounded by mountains of “Colah barfi” and “Dena”. There are some springs culminating at the foot of the valley forming a small river, the existence of which is the origin of the name of the village. Some buildings in the east and south of the village are influenced by pre-Islamic architecture. The height of the village is 2300 m above sea level with a valley ravine of 45 degrees resulting from erosion by the Barzruad water. There is a remarkable difference of height between the highest and the lowest point of the village. The village is developing in an eastern–western direction, since there is a steep slope in the north and a variety of gardens in the south.

4 Materials used in Abianeh Village

This collection of historical buildings has remained excellent since the Sassanid era, with muddy house walls formed from red soil, which are of great interest. This red soil, found in the north and north west of Abianeh, becomes stronger when it is subjected to more rain. This character has percolated to people keeping their traditions.



Figure 2: House face built from red soil.

Walking in the village valley, you can see similar houses and networked windows, and in general they are isomorphic in context and architecture. The doors are equipped with two different handles, one for men and the other for women so that the house settlers know who is coming in. There are geometric figures carved on the doors on which the owner or builder's name is written.

There are some poems on the doors such as “oh lord! Open the door for me I don’t want help from any one else”.

The application of native materials and building principles are subordinate to the socio-economic pattern of the village. Although most ancient buildings have used mud and wooden beams, there is some use of brick, plaster or steel beams as ceilings and columns, and metal windows, especially outside the old part of the village built by the more prosperous members of the village community. The facades in most cases are made with red mud mixed with straw, the mine of which is near the village.

5 Context

The main passage (east–west) of the village along with the water well is 3–5 meters wide and some side passages, in parallel, have been made step-like to lower the slope of the passage. The passages, in which the people pass with their animals, are narrow.

The main passage connects the important points of the village such as the Harpac fire temple, the inn, the Porzaleh mosque, the great mosque, and the Yahya and Eisa shrine. Social classes have settled in the village based on its special nature. Yosmoon, the living area of the rich, has occupied the well-cultivated fields, having access to a fruit garden in the eastern part. The houses enjoy special space while in the Herde part, the poor families live who cannot access water and gardens. The middle part of the village is for the intermediate class living on a slight slope. The pall area connects the poor and the rich. Due to the lack of space, it has been common for the people to build cave-like storage in the hills one kilometer from the village to keep their livestock, winter food and unnecessary things.

6 Architecture

Located on the slope, a fire temple is the most historical relic of Abianeh, known as a Zoroastrian temple built in the mountain. Most of the portals have remained since the Safavid era while most houses have two stone platforms for the people to sit on.

While sitting on these platforms, you can remember the past history originating in the soil and space. The houses, big and small, are founded on the architectural foundation of the Sassanid era architecture as a four-storey room. The main architectural method of building houses dates back to the Sassanid era, an example of which can be seen in the Firouzabad palace of Fars, which belonged to the Sassanid kings and also in Haroun prison near Bibishahrbanou Mountain.

There are other things in Abianeh that are attracting people, one of which is people’s life, intact and full-blooded. The people of Abianeh, while speaking Pahlavi, are aware of all modern aspects of life. The learned people of Abianeh coming from the cities or other parts no longer wear civil clothes and wear native clothes instead. They try to keep their custom related to their tradition. For



example, you can't buy the wedding cloth of the Abianeh people whatever you offer, but on the other hand they try to be compatible with the needs of the age and they won't have an extended family. In general, Abianeh is a precious antiquity with a life in harmony with nature and space. You can't easily touch it but you can feel the traces of long history in some places.

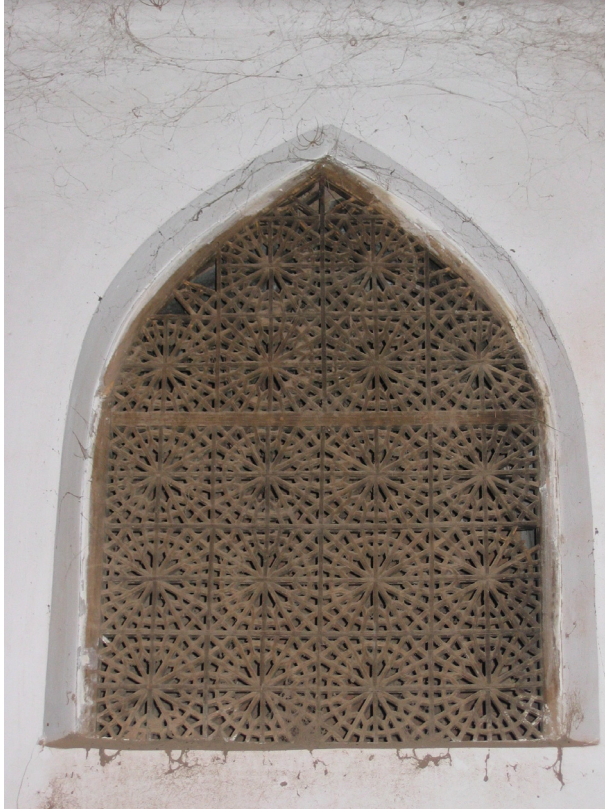


Figure 3: Cover of window.

6.1 Hajatgah mosque

Located near the mountain, Hajatgah mosque has a sign stating 1574 AD, the early part of the Safavid era. You can enter the door to arrive in the main part of mosque to see the splendid simplicity. There are orange and green suspensors hung for people to express their needs. There are quadric verses written on ceiling wood, which take you from the earth to the dream of flying.

6.2 Porzalleh mosque

The Porzalleh mosque is situated in the old section of the village with a wider area and less mystery. Its eastern door, which opens into the heated part, remains



from the Ilkani era of 1322 AD. It is the most ancient door in Abianeh with decorations like those of Bayzid bastami's shrine door, covered with a special liquid to give protection from insects.

6.3 The great mosque

A wooden altar, 2 m x 1.08 m, in the nocturnal yard of the mosque, which was built by the order of Abou jafar mohammad in 1098 AD with beautiful fringes and carved with Kufi writing, reminds you of the dreamful space which includes the motivation of coming to Abianeh. Mosque precinct writings show that it was repaired by molana Mohammad baha aldin in 1393 AD. A raised structure has remained since the Saljuqi era in 1087 AD, which is more or less corrupted, but has been protected by the traditional people of Abianeh. Its arm is built as a column capital with an eight-leaf flower of lotus, seen in perspolis stones.

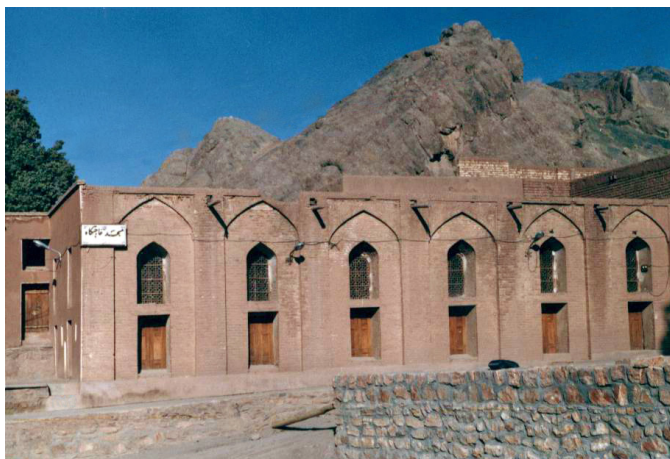


Figure 4: Hajatgah mosque.

6.4 Harpac fire temple

The Harpac fire temple was built in the Sassanid era but remained only until the Safavid era. Now there is only a frame remaining of the ancient architecture.

Passing the village to Palhamoneh, you can look at old Abianeh, beautiful and fascinating, to understand that there is exceptional and dignified architecture erected on the smooth slope while red soils remind you of flames dancing over ashes.

7 Conclusion

Iranian architecture has been established based on the following principles:

1. Human proportion: Making a good fit between human dimensions and structure dimensions.

2. Avoidance from extravagancy: Simplicity is the most important factor for well-being.
3. Structure.
4. Nativity: Relying on the building materials available to people.
5. Introspectivity: This kind of architecture tries to make itself recognized as an integral part of nature.
6. Notion: Such as reflection, affinity of architecture with nature and geometry.



Figure 5: Humans, nature and architecture.

Most traditional buildings in Iran rely on climate, culture and geography while using traditional and available materials that are the best selections to erect permanent and ever lasting buildings.

- A. economics and cheapness,
- B. harmony with climate and geography,
- C. application of experience in use among executives,
- D. being of the some colors as nature making a beautiful conformity,
- E. establishing a peaceful feeling in humans.

Abianeh, Masouleh (Gilan), Kandevar (Eastern-Azabaiejan), Varkaneh, Geshani, and Habashi in Hamedan are among the parts of Iran having these characteristics.

References

- [1] Diba, Darab, "culture and architecture quarterly", volume 1, summer 1999
- [2] Khosravi, Abas, "a research in Iran natural scope", 1999
- [3] Khansari, Zinolalabedin, "Abianeh and its people s culture", 1995
- [4] Kiani, Yosef, "Iran architecture", Jahad University, 1987
- [5] Pirnia, Mohammad Karim, "Iran Islamic architecture", UN. Science & technology, 1992



- [6] Pirnia, Mohammad Karim, "Iran architecture methods", UN. Science & technology, 1992
- [7] Zargar, Aakbar, "an introduction to village architecture of Iran", Publisher Art & Islam, 1999

