

# Chesht-e Sharif

## Catalogue

### Chesht-e Sharif, Medrese (Češt-e Šarif)

**Cat. No.** CS 1  
**Position** Lat. 34° 20' 19.82" (N) Long. 63° 44' 19.40" (E) Height 1,587 (m)  
**Location** north of the centre of Chesht-e Sharif town, in the southwestern corner of the large graveyard north of the city. Map p. 70  
**Type** medrese; cemetery  
**Date** Ghurid (inscr.: 562|1167); 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>; 14<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> CE (pottery)  
**Condition** ruin; CS 1a restored and completely altered c. 2007 (Fig. 11)

North of the town of Chesht-e Sharif, two solitary ruins are surrounded by an extensive burial ground (CS 1, Figs. 85–87; 226a). Extending towards the east of this area are park-like grounds with several shrines of various types and dates (CS 35–39, Figs. 85; 92; 226a). They are associated with the shrine of Khaje Qutb ud-Din Moudud Cheshti (d. 527|1132–33 or 534|1139–40), sponsored by the later sultan Ghiyath al-Dunya wa'l-Din. Prior to that Abu Ishaq Shani, (d. 329|941) reportedly built a *khaneqah* there. The shrine is among the few



Fig. 86 Chesht, medrese and shrine (Photo of 1920 by O. von Niedermayer)



Fig. 87 Chesht, medrese, situation as of today

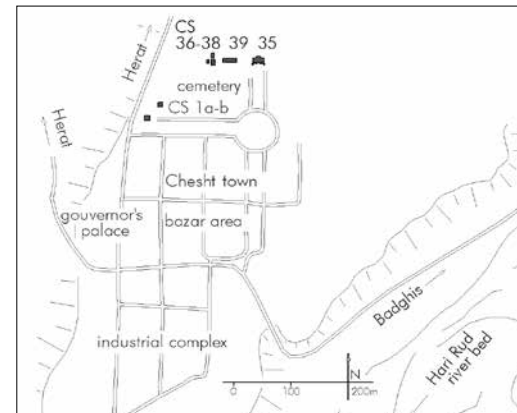


Fig. 85 The town of Chesht-e Sharif, location of the historical area (cp. Fig. 226a–b)

important holy places mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> century (Noelle-Karimi 2014, 31; 42).

The ruins in the western part of this area are mentioned by E. Diez (Niedermayer/Diez 1924, 62; 63), who notes 'several dilapidated buildings, two of them tomb cupolas.' E. Diez continues in the following that 'the palmettes of the inscription frieze show a striking similarity with the calligraphic ornament of the ancient iwan in Khargid<sup>1</sup> and that 'the band ornament is similar to the one on the tower in Kerat<sup>2</sup>, which implies that these cupolas must date from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and, as domed structures, are as rare as historically valuable'. He writes further: 'Particularly appealing is the Naskhi inscription in the richly ornamented niche (on CS 1a) east of the entrance'.<sup>3</sup>

If E. Diez's expression of 'several dilapidated buildings' is correct, there must have been more ruins in the 1920s, not necessarily belonging to the large building of which only the two present structures are left. In fact, a photograph in Niedermayer/Diez (1924, Fig. 182) shows a smaller ruin and a larger two-storey building with *iwan* and *pishtaq* in the background, of which no remains are left<sup>4</sup> (Figs. 86; 87).

1 Niedermayer/Diez 1924, 63. – Diez 1918, Taf. 18.2.  
 2 Diez 1918, 71–76 Taf. 12.  
 3 Niedermayer/Diez 1924, 63.  
 4 The position is to the west of the current location of the shrines CS 35–39.



Fig. 88 Shah-e Mashhad, medrese, view from southwest (Photo: M.J. Casimir/B. Glatzer)



Fig. 89 Shah-e Mashhad, medrese, southern façade (Photo: W. Herberg)

The two preserved buildings carry out-standing terracotta ornamentations on the exterior façades. Their style is well paralleled by the decorative patterns of the Minaret of Jam (Ghurid, dated 1193/94 or 1174/75)<sup>5</sup>, the Ghurid mausoleum in Herat, ascribed to Ghiyath al-Din (r. 1163–1203), now destroyed, and the portal of the Friday Mosque in Herat (built around 1200, later modified and covered with fayence mosaics), even though there the bricks of the Kufic inscription are turquoise-glazed<sup>6</sup>. More buildings with very similar features are known in other regions of ancient Khorasan, e.g. at Zuzan near the Iran-Afghanistan border (Blair 1985).

So far the closest preserved example is represented by the medrese of Shah-e Mashhad (dated 1166<sup>7</sup> or 1175/76<sup>8</sup>, Figs. 88–90). It is situated in Gharjistan at the left bank of the Murghab River, at a distance of 80 km from Chesht and Jam, respectively, in the province of Badghis. Published in 1971 by M.J. Casimir and B. Glatzer, the presumably four-*iwan* complex, of which only the eastern part of the southern wing and a small part in the north are preserved, originally measured 44.20 m (N–S) x 44.00 m (E–W).

A to-scale projection of the two structures at Chesht onto the ground plan of the Shah-e

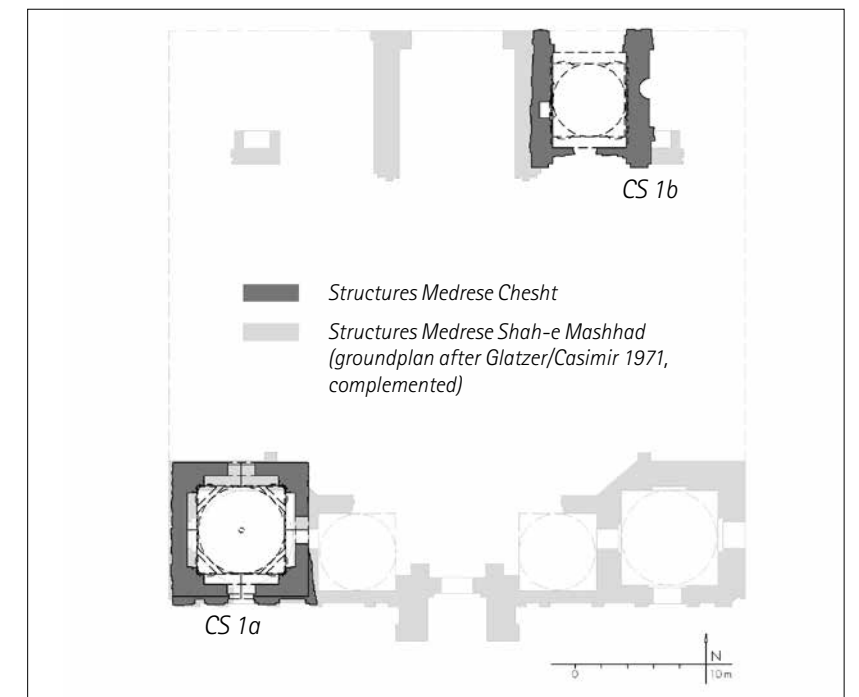


Fig. 90 Projection of the Chesht buildings onto the Shah-e Mashhad groundplan

Mashhad medrese (Fig. 90) illustrates the similarities between the two buildings. It may serve as a visual aid for a general perception of a possible layout of the Chesht medrese in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. The analogies between Shah-e Mashhad and the buildings at Chesht (see CS 1a) are not only the general layout and terracotta ornaments, but also architectural details, e.g. the construction of the squinches with concave cylindrical recesses in between, the stucco decoration in the interior and the Kufic und Naskhi inscriptions.<sup>9</sup> The two structures are described in detail in the following.

5 Maricq/Wiet 1959. – Dupaigne 2007, 106.  
 6 Melikian-Chirvani 1970, 325. – Glatzer/Stuckert 1980. – Franke/Urban 2017, 19 Figs. 18a–c. – Hansen et al. 2015.  
 7 Dupaigne 2007, 108.  
 8 Casimir/Glatzer 1971, 56

9 Casimir/Glatzer 1971. – Fischer 1978a, 348. – Blair 1985, 81–86.



### چشت شریف

در شمال روستای چبست شریف باقیمانده دو بنای به هم پیوسته که از آجر پخته ساخته شده قرار دارد (CS 1a-b) که بوسیله یک آرامگاه در مساحتی گسترده احاطه شده اند. در شرق این ناحیه فضای پارک ماندی وجود دارد که دارای چندین بنای موقت و ساختاری زیارتی است (CS 35-39).

بقایای به جای مانده در بخش غربی این ناحیه برای نخستین بار توسط ارنست دیز در سال 1924 گزارش شدند (دیز 1924، 62)، کسی که به چندین ساختمان مخروطی و دو آرامگاه گنبدی شکل اشاره کرده است. او همچنین در ادامه شرح می دهد که تزئینات نخلی شکل کتیبه موجود در این بنا دارای شباهت در خوشنویسی با مورد مشابه آن در ایوان باستانی خرگید و نیز باندهای تزئینی مشابه در برج هرات است که نشان می دهد این گنبد می بایست به قرون 5 و 6 هجری قمری تاریخگذاری شود، به خصوص کتیبه ای زیبا به خط نسخ در قسمت طاقچه تورفته تزئینی در قسمت شرقی ورودی بنا.

اگر گفته او درست باشد، می بایست بقایای بیشتری در سال 1920 در این مکان وجود می داشت. در حقیقت یک عکس در نیدرماپر (1924 تصویر 182) یک زیارتگاه کامل را در پس زمینه تصویر نشان می دهد، بنایی که هیچ اثری از آن در بررسی دیده نشده است. هر دو بنا دارای نقش کنده و برجسته بر روی آجر در نمای بیرونی هستند که موازی نمونه های مشابه خود در بر روی مناره جم (غور 589 هجری قمری و یا به احتمال بیشتر 569 هجری قمری)، فرمانروای مسلمان سلسله غوری ها، غیاث الدین در هرات و دروازه مسجد جمعه هرات (ساخته شده در حدود سال 596 هجری قمری که بعدها با موزیک پوشش داده شد) منسوب به غیاث الدین و حتی آجرهای کتیبه دار به خط کوفی با تزئین لعاب فیروزه ای میباشند.

ساختمانهای بیشتری از این دست در دیگر مناطق خراسان بزرگ شناسایی شده اند. برای مثال می توان به زوزن در نزدیکی مرز ایران و افغانستان اشاره کرد (بلر 1985). بهرحال بهترین مورد مشابه برای مثال مسجد و مدرسه در مجموعه شاه مشهد (به تاریخ 570-571 هجری قمری) در کنار رود مرغاب و در 80 کیلومتری چبست و جم و در استان بادغیس است. کاوش های سال 1970 احتمالاً مجموعه چهارایوان که فقط بخش شرقی شاخه جنوبی و یک قسمت کوچک در بخش شمالی از آن باقی مانده است را به دست داد. اندازه گیری ساده این بنا ابعاد 44.2 (شمالی-جنوبی) در 44 (شرقی-غربی) متر را نشان می دهد. قیاس و شباهت ها در بناهای چشت فقط در تزئینات آجرهای پخته نیست بلکه در جزئیات معماری این بناها همچون ساختار سه کتخ یا سه گوش با تورفتگی استوانه ای مقعر بین سه کتخ ها، گچ کاری های تزئینی در کتیبه های داخلی و فراوان به خط کوفی و نسخ هم دیده می شود.



Fig. 92 Chesht, medrese, northeastern structure (CS 1b, foreground) and shrines (CS 35-39, background), general view, from southwest

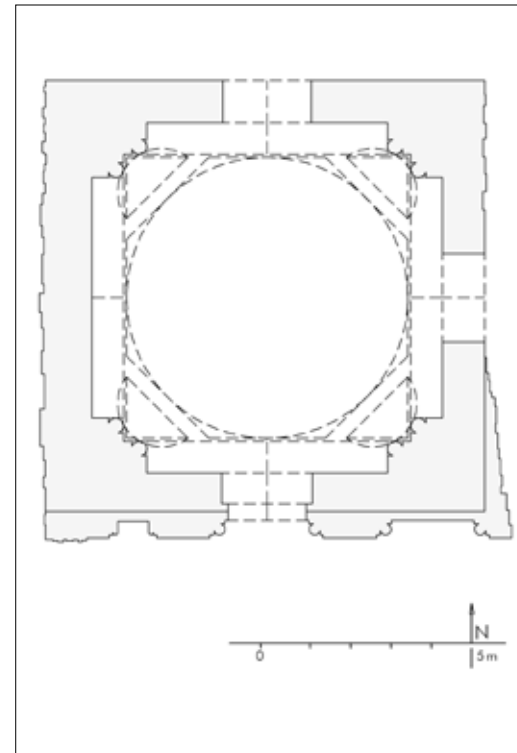


Fig. 91 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), ground plan

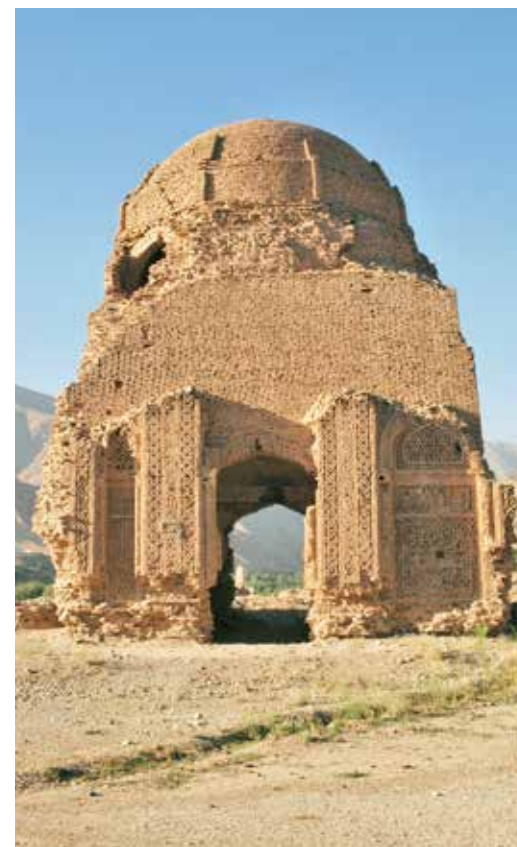


Fig. 93 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), general view, from south

### Chesht-e Sharif, Medrese, southwestern structure (CS 1a)

The ruin (Figs. 93; 94) is located in the southwestern corner of an extensive cemetery north of the village Chesht-e Sharif. The structure was once part of a larger building (Fig. 90), allegedly a *medrese*<sup>10</sup>, to which also another structure 20 m to the northeast is assigned (CS 1b).

Among others, Diez (1924, 62; 63 Fig. 182), Herberg (1979, 39) and Leisten (1998, 182; 183) assumed that the ruin was not to be addressed as part of a larger building, but as an individual funerary monument. However, that this is improbable is particularly indicated by the irregularity of the eastern walls (Fig. 91) which indicates a connection to other parts of a larger building complex. The same applies to the asymmetrical arrangement of entrances as well as to the decoration on the southern façade (Figs. 91; 93), which originally continued to the east. Only this single room, constructed of square burnt bricks (24-25 x 24-25 x 5 cm) and lime mortar, can still be identified at the western part of the proposed complex. No remains of a tomb were found or were previously recorded either here or in the neighbouring building CS 1b!

The ground plan of the room is an exact square (internal measurement: 8.75 x 8.75 m) with a representational entrance in the south (likely one of the lateral entrances to the whole building complex). Further 1.65 m wide openings in the northern and eastern wall led to other rooms which are no longer preserved. The ground plan is marked by an elaborate construction of the internal corners, each with two joined half-columns. They served as supports for the large pointed arches of the niches, which are aligned along the entire length of each side of the room (Figs. 91; 95). The half-columns rise from about 1 m above the present-day surface, a construction level that is accentuated by a row of vertically placed bricks. All three doorways are spanned by a flat pointed 'Iranian' keel-arch.

10 The function of the building that included the two structures is not conclusively certain but the frequent addressing as a *medrese* is more than likely, as argued hereafter.

An epigraphic Naskhi stucco band with triple punched stems runs horizontally along all four sides of the room, just above the pointed arches of the doorways (Fig. 95). The frieze is in a very poor state of preservation and hardly recognisable<sup>11</sup>, but two narrower ornamental borders can be discerned. The inscription, recorded by P. Maitland in 1888, E. Diez in 1924, R. Frye in 1952, and discussed more recently by S. Blair (1985, 81; 82), provides the name of the patron: '... during the days of the reign of the great malik, assisted [by God], victorious, triumphant, wise, just, Shams al-Dunya wa'l-Din', referring to Muhammad ibn Sam before he assumed the title and regnal *laqab* Ghiyath al Dunya wa'l-Din (r. 1163-1203).<sup>12</sup> Melikian-Chirvani (1970, 325) has compared it with the stucco inscriptions preserved in the Friday Mosque of Herat and the epigraphic friezes in the attached mausoleum, which are both ascribed to the same ruler.

Further calligraphic friezes, slightly narrower, in Kufic with single punched stems and only an outer ornamental border zone<sup>13</sup>, frame the four pointed arches of the high niches in the side walls (Figs. 95; 96). It starts in the northeastern corner with the *bismillah*, followed by the suras Quran 3:18-19 and 2:255, and ends in the east with the date in Persian '... dated to the tenth of Jumid [sic] I of the year ... 562 [March 4, 1167] ...'<sup>14</sup>

The large squinches above the corner niches change the rooms' ground plan from a square to an octagon (Fig. 95). Behind each of the pointed arches in the corners is a half-dome, the construction is now also visible from the outside. Above this octagonal transition zone sits the round cupola that covers the entire room. With a base diameter of 6.50 m, it is constructed of



Fig. 94 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), general view, from northeast

square bricks and comprises about 90 brick layers. From the outside all of the six ribs of the cupola, which reinforce the lower two-thirds of the dome, can currently be localised. All internal walls and the inside of the cupola are plastered and have been whitewashed in a light colour.

11 Restored 1978/79 (Dupaigne 2007, 111).

12 Blair 1985, 82.

13 Blair 1985, 82.

14 Blair 1985, 82.





Fig. 95 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), inside view, from south



Fig. 96 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), inside view, detail, from west

The lower part of the building's exterior is irregular on three sides: the bricks are set as if the walls originally adjoined other rooms or outer walls of the building. Only in the upper region do the outer walls display a flat and smooth surface. By contrast, the southern exterior side of the building is elaborately built, the structure is decoratively faced with vertically set flat bricks (terracotta ornamentation). It is composed of a pointed-arch entrance, laterally flanked by two vertical ornamental bands, which are about 1.30 m wide and have a floral pattern, enlaced by interwoven bands (Fig. 93). This decorative band is followed in the east by a 1.95 m wide rectangular blind niche with a pointed arch (Fig. 97). Its base is smaller than its maximum diameter - the characteristic feature of horseshoe-shaped arches. The niche is bordered by half-columns with three-dimensional brickwork and adjoined in the east by a few remains of the same tripartite band of ornamental brickwork, which is better preserved on the left side of the niche. The back wall of the niche is decorated in the same technique, with a large surface ornament under a wide calligraphic band in the lower rectangular part (Fig. 98) and a geometric pattern in the arch zone.<sup>15</sup> West of the entrance and the framing decorative band another, significantly narrower (0.73 m) niche is located. It displays an ornamentation, which is analogous to the eastern niche, including the flanking half-columns.

The combination of a pointed-arch entrance flanked by two niches of distinctly different width, is exactly paralleled on the façade of the Shah-e Mashhad *medrese* (Fig. 89).

The construction technique of the squinch dome as well as the type and delicacy of both the interior and exterior wall decoration links the building stylistically with the ruin further northeast (CS 1b). The preserved onsets of walls on both extant buildings indicate that both were once part of the same large complex. Therefore, the inscription mentioned above can be considered relevant for dating the neighbouring structure (CS 1b) as well.

<sup>15</sup> Stylistically close to the niches of the Ghurid portal in Herat (Franke/Urban 2017, 19 Fig. 17a-b).



Fig. 97 Southwestern structure (CS 1a), detailed view, from south

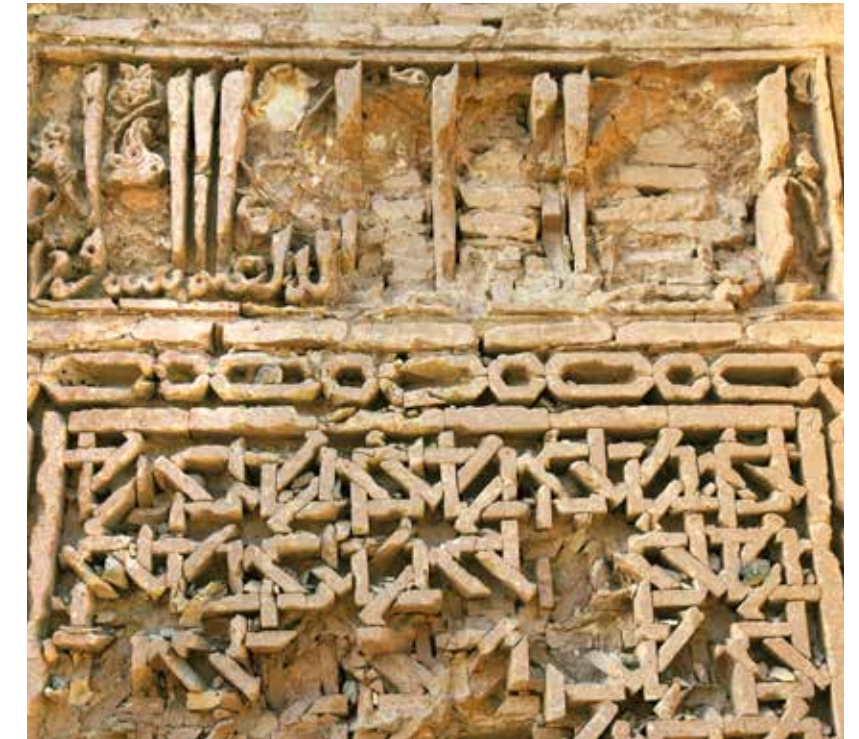


Fig. 98 Detail of the brick decoration (cp. Fig. 97): a calligraphic band on top of a chain-lattice and interlaced bands around eight-pointed stars

### چشت شریف (مدرسه، غرب)

باقی مانده گوشه جنوب غربی یک قبرستان گسترش یافته در شمال روستای چپست شریف وجود دارد. بنا به روایتی، اتاق بخشی از یک مجموعه بزرگ مرتبط به مدرسه بود که گروهی دیگر از خرابه ها در فاصله 20 متری شمال شرق (CS 1b) نشانگر آن است.

دیز (Diez 1924) و نیز دیگران (Herberg 1979, 39) اشاره کرده اند که ویرانه های برجای مانده نمی توانند به بخشی از ساختمان مرتبط باشند اما به عنوان بناهای یادمانی آرامگاهی مطرح بوده اند. به هر حال این مسئله غیرمحمول است که این بنا منحصرأ به تزئینات نامتقارن ورودی و نیز تزئینات نمای جنوبی که در حقیقت به جهت شرق ادامه داشته و نیز به وسیله دیوارهای بیرونی نامنظم شرقی و غربی متکی باشد و این امر نشانگر یک ارتباط با دیگر بخش های یک بنای معماری بزرگ میباشد. در بخش غربی آن فقط یک اتاق کوچک که با آجرهای مربع شکل (25/5-24/24-25 سانتی متر) پخته شده اند ساخته شده، هنوز قابل تشخیص است. پوشش و نمای بیرونی بنا به شکل بی قاعده بر روی سطح زمین قرار دارد. اتاق های دیگر در ابتدا به بنا پیوسته بودند.

نقشه اتاق نشانگر یک مربع دقیق اندازه گیری شده (اندازه گیری داخلی اتاق: 8/75 در 8/75 متر)، با یک ورودی تجسمی (که همچنین به عنوان یکی از ورودی های اصلی این مجموعه معماری به شمار میرود) در بخش جنوبی است، درحالیکه 1,65 متر گسترده گی دیوارهای شمالی و شرقی که در مجاورت دیگر اتاق ها قرار داشته اند دیگر باقی نمانده اند. نقشه اتاق نشان از طرح و ساخت استادانه آن با گوشه های داخلی و هرکدام با دو نیم ستون به هم پیوسته دارد. این نیم ستونها در حقیقت نقش پشتیبان و نگاه دارنده قوس های بزرگ نوک دار تاقچه ها، که هر یک در مجموع دارای تراز در هر ضلع هستند را برعهده دارند. نیم ستون ها در حدود یک متر بالاتر از سطح امروزی، سطحی ساخت و ساز که توسط ردیفی از آجرهای عمودی پوشیده شده اند، قرار دارند. هر سه درگاه موجود با کمانه صاف و وارونه قوسی شکل ایرانی که بیشتر از حد باز شدن درها باز می شدند، مهار شده اند. بدون فاصله از درگاه و در فضای بالای آن بر روی دیوار، باندی از کتیبه گچبری شده تزئینی به خط نسخ ایجاد شده است و دورتادور اتاق در هر چهار ضلع آن ادامه دارد. این کتیبه تنها توسط پاتاق تاقچه قوسی شکل محدود شده است. باند مشابه ای از کتیبه یاد شده با عرضی باریکتر تاقچه های بلند با قوس در دیوارهای کناری را دربر گرفته است. در کنار آیات قرآنی همچنین نام حامی و پشتیبان نیز آمده است: 'در طول روزهای سلطنت مالک بزرگ، حمایت شده [بوسیله خداوند]، فاتح، منصور، دانا، عادل، شمس الدنیا والدین، اشاره به غیاث الدین والدین (بلر 1985، 81). سطر دیگر اشاره دارد به تاریخ به فارسی '... به تاریخ دهم ... یک سال ... 562 از زمان هجرت پیامبر... (بلر 1985، 81).

بخش پایین تر از نظر سطح قسمت بیرونی بنا دارای ساختاری نامنظم است و آجرها هم به طور نامنظم درحالی که دیوارها در دیگر اتاق ها بنا به هم متصل هستند. فقط در بالای دیوارهای بیرونی سطحی صاف و هموار به نمایش درآمده است. تاقچه به وسیله نیم ستونهایی با آجرکاری سه بعدی مرزبندی شده و در بخش شرقی به باقیمانده کمی از همان تزئینات آجرکاری یاد شده که در قسمت چو حفاظت شده است، متصل می باشد. ترکیب ورودی قوس نوک دار که به وسیله دوفرورفتگی با عرض متفاوت احاطه شده کاملاً در نمای مدرسه شاه مشهد تکرار شده است.

تکنیک ساختاری گنبدهای سه کنجی و همچنین ظرافت به کار رفته در تزئینات دیوار از مشخصه های معماری غوری ها میباشد. آنها بنا را به صورت نگارشی به خرابه های شمال شرق مرتبط می کنند (CS 1b). بقایای دیوار باقیمانده نشان می دهند که آنها احتمالاً بخشی از یک ساختمان بزرگتر هستند. بنابراین کتیبه متعلق به CS 1b که به سال 590 هجری قمری بازمی گردد، می تواند همچنین مربوط به CS 1a باشد.



### Chesht-e Sharif, *Medrese*, northeastern structure (CS 1b)

The second preserved part (CS 1b) of the assumed complex is situated some 20 m to the northeast of the building described above (CS 1a). It is even more deteriorated and consists of only one room as well (Fig. 100). It is constructed of square burnt bricks (24–25 x 24–25 x 5 cm) and lime mortar. Rectangular in plan (internal measurements: 7.30 m [N–S] x 5.60 m [E–W]), it is crowned by a cupola above an octagonal transitional zone with corner squinches (Fig. 99).



Fig. 100 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), general view, from south

On the eastern and western sides, the room is bound by more than 1.70 m thick walls, whereas the southern wall is constructed as a large pointed 'Iranian' keel-arch (Fig. 100). The outside of the arch is smoothly flattened by bricks placed on edge, and the c. 1 m deep underside of the arch is decorated with a calligraphic stucco frieze along the internal face and a band of intricately laid, three-dimensional brick patterns (Figs. 102, right; 104, left). The latter consists of a square field with Kufic inscriptions above the impost, followed by a band of repeated geometric patterns around a central star. A similar arch originally existed on the northern side, of which only the lowest part just above the springing lines (and now entirely without decoration) is still visible (Fig. 102, left). There, only a few fragments of the three-dimensional brick decoration have remained *in situ*, and the construction technique of the large arches is thus easily recognisable: It was entirely built of vertically placed square bricks of which the first two rows on each side protrude (Figs. 102; 104) and provide the frame for the ornamental zone.

Only very little of the façade remains in the south, in fact only on both the western and the eastern wall, about 1.20 m to the south of the southern internal wall of the room (Fig. 99). They display a three-dimensional ornament of terracotta pieces forming a monumental Kufic inscription zone between braided bands (Figs. 101; 103). Both the inscription friezes are fragmentary and preserved only up to a height of c. 1 m (Figs. 101; 103). The western fragment however, provides the dedication: '*the great sultan ... dated in Rabi'II of the year*'...<sup>16</sup> According to S. Blair, stylistic characteristics

<sup>16</sup> Blair 1985, 82.

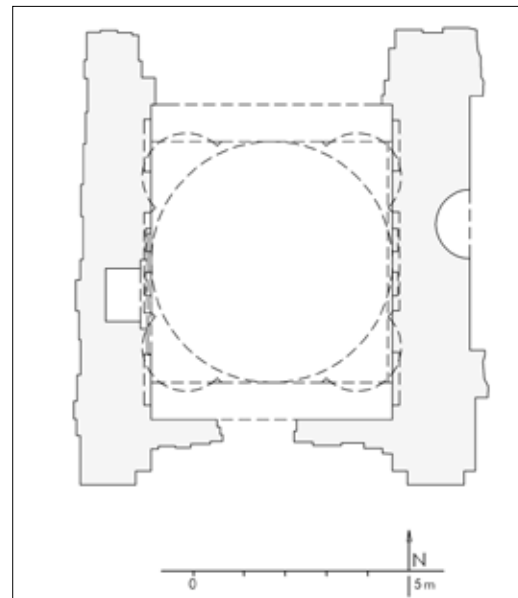


Fig. 99 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), ground plan

link the inscription to the Shah-e Mashhad *medrese* in Garjistan (dated 1166 or 1175/1176), but the title 'magnificent sultan' refers again to Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad, connecting it to an inscription in a shrine in Mashhad (dated 1181).<sup>17</sup>

However, as argued above, architectural details indicate that originally both ruins were part of a single structure in which case the date of the western building most probably applies to both structures.

The internal side walls of the room are divided into two storeys. The eastern wall on the ground floor is smooth and not decorated, while the western wall is taken up by a *mihrab* within a rectangular blind niche (Fig. 107); its presence indicates that this room was a place for prayers. Above, the remains of stucco decoration can still be recognised (Fig. 105). Built as a high, rectangular niche with a horseshoe-shaped pointed arch, the shape of the *mihrab* in the eastern wall (Fig. 107) is repeated in each of the three blind niches in the upper storey (Figs. 102; 104). Above each of the two flanking lateral niches are two smaller, horseshoe-shaped blind niches; the central niche is higher and larger. The horseshoe-pointed-arch niche is also present in the southern façade of building CS 1a.

<sup>17</sup> Blair 1985, 82.



Fig. 101 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), detail of western brick decoration, from south



Fig. 103 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), detail of eastern brick decoration, from south



Fig. 102 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), inside view, from west



Fig. 104 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), inside view, upper part, from east



Fig. 105 Northeastern structure (CS 1b), inside view, lower part, remains of stucco decoration, from east