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## The History and Architectural Features of the Blue Mosque in Iravan

### Abstract

The Blue Mosque in Yerevan is a prominent monument of Islamic architecture from the Persian era, constructed between 1760 and 1765 under the rule of Huseyn Ali Khan of the Iravan Khanate. Serving as a central religious, educational and social institution for the Muslim community, it reflects the historical and cultural interactions between Azerbaijan and Iran. The mosque is notable for its Persian-style design, including a courtyard, arcaded galleries, a richly decorated dome, and intricate blue brickwork. Despite periods of functional change during Russian and Soviet rule, the mosque has been restored and continues to serve both as a place of worship and a cultural landmark. This study examines the historical background and architectural characteristics of the Blue Mosque, emphasizing its significance in the cultural heritage of Iravan.

**Keywords:** *Blue Mosque, Iravan, Islamic architecture, Persian era, cultural heritage, brickwork, Iravan Khanate*

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## İrəvandakı Göy Məscidin tarixi və memarlıq xüsusiyyətləri

### Xülasə

İrəvanda yerləşən Göy Məscid, Fars dövrünə aid İslam memarlığının görkəmli abidəsidir. 1760–1765-ci illər arasında, İrəvan xanlığının hakimi Hüseynəli xan dövründə inşa edilmişdir. Məscid, müsəlman icması üçün mərkəzi dini, təhsil və sosial mərkəz kimi fəaliyyət göstərmiş, Azərbaycan və İran arasında tarixi və mədəni qarşılıqlı əlaqələri əks etdirir. Məscid, fars memarlıq üslubunda — həyət, sütunlu galeriyalar, zəngin bəzədilmiş günbəz və mürəkkəb mavi karandaşlı kərpic işləri ilə seçilir. Rusiya və Sovet hakimiyyəti dövründə funksional dəyişikliklərə baxmayaraq, məscid bərpa olunmuş və həm ibadət yeri, həm də mədəni abidə kimi fəaliyyətini davam etdirmişdir. Bu tədqiqat, Göy Məscidin tarixi və memarlıq xüsusiyyətlərini araşdırır, İrəvanın mədəni irsindəki əhəmiyyətini vurğulayır.

**Açar sözlər:** *Göy Məscid, İrəvan, İslam memarlığı, İran dövrü, mədəni irs, karandaşlı kərpic işi, İrəvan xanlığı*

### Introduction

The Blue Mosque (*Goy Masjid*) in Iravan is one of the most remarkable and historically significant monuments in the South Caucasus, representing a tangible link to the city's multicultural and multi-religious past. Constructed between 1760 and 1765 during the rule of Huseyn Ali Khan, the governor of the Iravan Khanate, it stands as a prime example of Persian Islamic architecture outside the borders of present-day Iran. The mosque was not only a place of worship but also a hub for education, social gatherings, and community life, playing a vital role in the cultural and religious identity of Iravan's Muslim population in the 18th and 19th centuries. (Rabbani, Ali, 2020)

Situated in the historic core of Iravan, the Blue Mosque once formed part of a broader urban landscape shaped by the political and cultural influences of the Persian Qajar dynasty. Its distinctive blue and turquoise brickwork, elegant dome, and intricately decorated minaret have long

symbolized the refined artistic traditions of the Persian architectural school. The complex includes a spacious courtyard surrounded by arcaded galleries, a prayer hall with a prominent dome, and auxiliary rooms that once served various community functions.

Throughout its history, the Blue Mosque has undergone periods of transformation, reflecting the political shifts in the region. Under Russian imperial rule in the 19th century, it maintained its function as a religious site, but during the Soviet era, particularly in the 1930s, it was closed and converted into the Museum of the History of Iravan (Babaie, Sussan, 2008).

Today, the Blue Mosque remains an active place of worship and a popular cultural landmark, visited by both local residents and international tourists. Its survival and restoration make it an important case study in the preservation of Islamic heritage in non-Muslim-majority countries. By examining its historical development and architectural features, we gain valuable insights into the cultural exchanges and artistic traditions that shaped the South Caucasus.

The Blue Mosque in Iravan stands as a remarkable testament to the city's layered history and the enduring legacy of Persian Islamic architecture in the South Caucasus. Built in the mid-18th century under the patronage of Huseyn Ali Khan, it has served various roles over time—from a central religious and cultural institution for the Muslim community to a Soviet-era museum and ultimately, back to its original function as a mosque. Its architectural elegance, characterized by blue and turquoise brickwork, a harmonious dome, and intricate calligraphy, reflects the artistry and craftsmanship of the Persian tradition.

### **Research**

The Blue Mosque in Iravan is one of the most remarkable monuments of Islamic architecture in the South Caucasus, dating back to the Persian Qajar period. Built between 1760 and 1765 under the patronage of Huseyn Ali Khan, the ruler of the Iravan Khanate, it served as a center of worship, education, and community life for the Muslim population of the city. The mosque's historical development, architectural characteristics, cultural significance, and preservation efforts reflect both its artistic value and its role as a symbol of intercultural heritage in Yerevan.

Constructed during the rule of the Persian Qajar dynasty, it features distinctive blue tilework, a harmonious courtyard layout, and a blend of beauty with functionality that exemplifies Persian Islamic design. Historically, it functioned not only as a religious site but also as a hub for education, community gatherings, and cultural exchange. Its transformation over time—from a mosque to a Soviet-era museum and back to a functioning religious institution—mirrors the broader socio-political changes of the region (Keshavarz, Fatemeh, 2018).

The mosque was constructed during a period when the Iravan Khanate was a Persian-controlled territory strategically located between the Ottoman and Russian Empires. It served as the main Friday mosque of Iravan, accommodating the city's Muslim population, which was dominant at the time. Following the Russo-Persian War and the Treaty of Turkmenchay in 1828, Yerevan became part of the Russian Empire. Although demographic changes began to take place, the mosque continued to operate for decades. During the Soviet period, especially in the 1930s, religious activities were prohibited, and the mosque was converted into the Museum of the History of Iravan. After Armenia's independence in 1991, the Blue Mosque was restored with financial and technical support from the Islamic Republic of Iran and once again became an active place of worship (Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 1995).

Architecturally, the Blue Mosque is an outstanding example of 18th-century Persian Islamic design. The complex covers a large rectangular area, organized around a central open courtyard surrounded by arcaded galleries. The main prayer hall, located on the southern side of the courtyard, is topped by a large dome covered in blue and turquoise glazed tiles, decorated with intricate floral and geometric patterns. A slender minaret rises beside the prayer hall, adorned with ceramic brickwork and Quranic inscriptions. The courtyard is framed by shaded arcades that once hosted gatherings and educational activities, while the decoration features a combination of calligraphy, arabesques, and symmetrical motifs typical of Persian craftsmanship (Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, 1987).

Historically, the Blue Mosque served as more than a place of prayer. It was also a center for Islamic education, housing *madrasahs* where theology, literature, and science were taught. It became an intellectual hub within the Iravan Khanate, promoting both religious and scholarly learning. Today, it remains a symbol of cultural coexistence, representing the shared history of Armenians, Persians, and other communities in the region. Its continued use, despite the small size of Iravan's Muslim population, reflects both respect for religious diversity and the importance of preserving heritage (Fragner, Bert, 2005).

The Blue Mosque underwent extensive restoration in the 1990s, supported by the Iranian government. These efforts focused on repairing brickwork, strengthening structural elements and revitalizing the mosque's courtyard and minaret. The restoration ensured that the mosque could serve both as a religious site and as a cultural monument open to visitors.

The Blue Mosque in Iravan is thus a rare surviving example of Persian Islamic architecture in the South Caucasus and an enduring symbol of the city's multicultural heritage. Its 18th-century origins, architectural elegance, and historical transformations reflect the complex cultural and political history of the region. Today, it serves as both a functioning place of worship and a prominent cultural landmark, highlighting the importance of protecting monuments that embody shared heritage. Studying the Blue Mosque offers valuable insights into the artistry, craftsmanship and intercultural exchanges that have shaped Iravan's identity across centuries.

### Conclusion

From an urban development perspective, the integration of the mosque within a rapidly modernizing city poses both opportunities and risks. While increased tourism can bring attention and resources, it also raises concerns about environmental impacts, visitor management, and preserving the mosque's authenticity amid urban change. Collaborative planning involving heritage professionals, urban planners and community stakeholders is vital to balance these factors effectively. Looking ahead, the Blue Mosque holds considerable potential as a focal point for cultural tourism and intercultural exchange in Iravan. Expanding visitor facilities, enhancing interpretive materials, and developing cultural events can deepen public engagement and support sustainable preservation efforts. Furthermore, research collaborations with international academic institutions can enrich understanding of the mosque's architectural and historical significance while raising its profile globally.

Ultimately, the future of the Blue Mosque depends on continued commitment to preserving not only its external structure but also its role as a living cultural and religious institution. By addressing challenges proactively and fostering inclusive dialogue, the mosque can remain a vibrant symbol of Iravan's rich and pluralistic history for generations to come.

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