

## Volunteer Monitoring and Documentation Report of Ghiyasiyeh School in Khargard

### Introduction to the Project's Objective:

In early 2022, Anis Darvishi initiated a volunteer project focused on Ghiyasiyeh School. The primary aim of this project was to collect comprehensive architectural information near the Iran-Afghanistan border, specifically within Khargard village, situated in the Khaf County. Ghiyasiyeh School stands as one of Iran's historically significant and visually captivating educational institutions. Anis's personal attachment to the school's cultural value, coupled with cherished childhood memories, ignited her passion for its preservation. The central goal of this endeavor was the meticulous documentation of the school, employing diverse techniques such as photography, while also amassing the research history linked to Ghiyasiyeh School. The initiative aspired to delve deeply into understanding the structure, identifying potential vulnerabilities, and ultimately crafting an exhaustive dossier for the global recognition of its historical significance as a world heritage site.

### Description of Khargard Village:

Khargard Village is the cradle of Ghiyasiyeh School's existence. Situated approximately 7 kilometers south of Khaf in the Khorasan Razavi Province, this village spans along the Khaf-Taybad road. The city of Khaf is known as a popular tourist destination in Iran, with the village of Khargard and the Ghiyasiyeh School being prominent attractions within this county.



Figure 1. The location of Ghiyasiyeh School and Khargard Village - Source: Google Maps

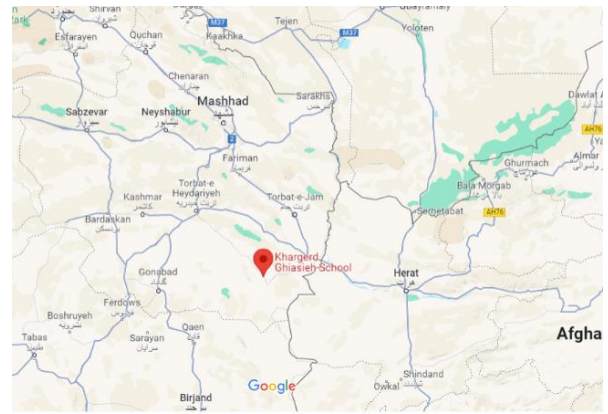


Figure 2. The location of Ghiyasiyeh School and Khargard Village - Source: Google Maps

Spanning around 26 hectares, Khargard Village is composed of 1.5 hectares hosting structures dating back to before the year 1347 in the Persian calendar, 13.5 hectares dedicated to agricultural purposes, and the remaining land housing constructions erected after 1347. The village boasts a population of at least 1,464 residents, residing in 386 households, with a notable portion inhabiting the newer section to the east, along the Khaf-Taybad road. A smaller demographic, largely comprising elderly individuals, resides in the older western part, adjacent to the historical Khargard Village. (Source: Team of Texture and Building Studies, Ghiyasiyeh School )

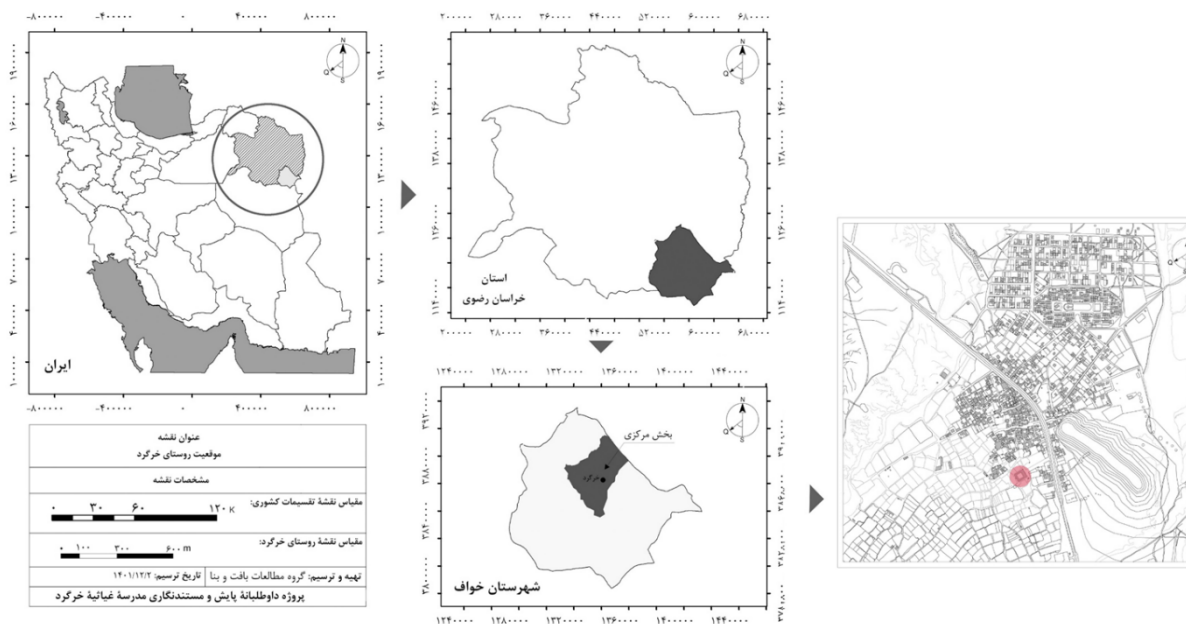


Figure 3. The location of Ghiyasiyeh School and Khargard Village - Source: bahesab.ir

### Brief History of Ghiyasiyeh School:

Ghiyasiyeh School, an architectural marvel with Timurid origins, boasts a history spanning seven centuries. Constructed around 848 AH (1444 CE) in Khargard Village, it was the brainchild of accomplished architects from the Timurid court. While records from its early days remain scarce, local narratives suggest a revival during the Safavid era, a Shiite dynasty, though historical documentation doesn't explicitly validate this claim.

Over the years, travelers marveled at the school's impressive state. However, in the early 14th century AH, Russian forces visited, reportedly relocating numerous tiles and stones to museums across the border. Subsequently, the school gradually declined, even serving as a winter shelter for sheep during grazing shortages.

In 1310 AH (1932 CE), the Cultural Heritage Organization officially registered the school. Decades later, government funding supported its restoration, commencing in 1347 AH (1968 CE). The local community played a pivotal role, contributing materials from village structures and graveyards. By the

summer of 1382 AH (2003 CE), both Khargard Village and Ghiyasiyeh School received official recognition as a historical site. (Source: Team of Texture and Building Studies, Ghiyasiyeh School )

Extensive research has been conducted on Ghiyasiyeh School, ranging from its historical background to intricate architectural details, including geometrical patterns and decorative motifs.

### Efforts Towards Achieving Objectives:

To fulfill the objectives of the project for the preservation, conservation, and study of Ghiyasiyeh School, a call for volunteers was announced through social media in Shahrivar ۱۴۰۱ (۲۰۲۲-۰۹-۰۱). ۴۶ volunteers were selected based on their submitted resumes to participate in the project. The voluntary monitoring and documentation of Ghiyasiyeh School commenced from the 1st to the 5th of Mehr month in 1401 (September 2022) in Khargard village, Khaf County.



Figure 4. Exploring the Mosque of Ghiyasiyeh School ©Zakieh Makarem – October 2022



Figure 5. Exploring the Ghiyasiyeh School ©Matin Mojahed – October 2022



Figure 6. Documentation and Survey Team-©Zakieh Makarem – October 2022



Figure 7. Documentation and Survey Team-©Zakieh Makarem – October 2022

Considering the previous research conducted on the school's structure in past years, the required information was categorized into 12 groups, and all volunteers were assigned to relevant groups based on their work and educational backgrounds. These categories included:

-Studies on Khargard Village and Ghiyasiyeh School: This group focused on researching the historical trajectory of the village and the school, examining their historical development and current status.

-Structural Evaluation: This group delved into the detailed execution of the school's structure, including traditional architectural details, as well as analyzing the forces within the arches.



Figure 8. Interview with the Construction Team of Ghiyasiyeh School-©Zakieh Makarem – October 2022



Figure 9. Survey Team-©Zakieh Makarem – October 2022

-Analysis of Decorations: This group engaged in interpreting and categorizing various decorative elements present in the building, such as patterns and motifs. They also analyzed the knots and symbols used in the decorations.

-Building Pathology: This group assessed the structural damages that the building had incurred over the years. They reviewed reports from individuals who had worked on the building and examined the current state of damages. They employed thermal imaging cameras for a more precise assessment.

-Damage Analysis of Decorations: This group studied the damages that had occurred to the patterns and decorations on the building over the years, creating maps of the damages.

-Analysis of Muqarnas: This group examined the importance of this architectural element, particularly Shirazi Muqarnas. They analyzed the Muqarnas in different parts of the school, including the courtyard, the school building, the mosque, and the eastern and western ivans. Their analysis covered the external structure, geometric plan, and interior structure.

-Analysis of Wall Inscriptions: This group's goal was to document all handwritten inscriptions on the school's walls, protect and study them, and understand the tradition of writing in the school's context.

- drawing : Given the shortcomings and inaccuracies in previous building maps, a thorough and accurate mapping was conducted. The team, in collaboration with the -photogrammetry group, undertook the task of surveying and mapping the building's current status.

Photogrammetry: This group utilized modern techniques, including software like GIS, drones, and mapping, to capture detailed photographs of the entire school structure, including decorations and Muqarnas.

-Landscape Analysis: This group aimed to capture various aspects of the building and village landscapes, including biodiversity, flora, fauna, architectural patterns, and gardens.

-Documentation Group: This group was responsible for documenting the entire monitoring process through photographs and videos. They captured the progress of the project and the volunteers' contributions, resulting in two presentation films.

-Design Group: This team was in charge of designing the tomb of the architect of Ghiyasiyeh School, Master Qavam al-Din.

These dedicated efforts reflect the multi-faceted nature of the project, with each group focusing on specific aspects of the school's documentation, conservation, and analysis. Through these collective endeavors, Ghiyasiyeh School's historical and architectural significance was meticulously studied and preserved for future generations.

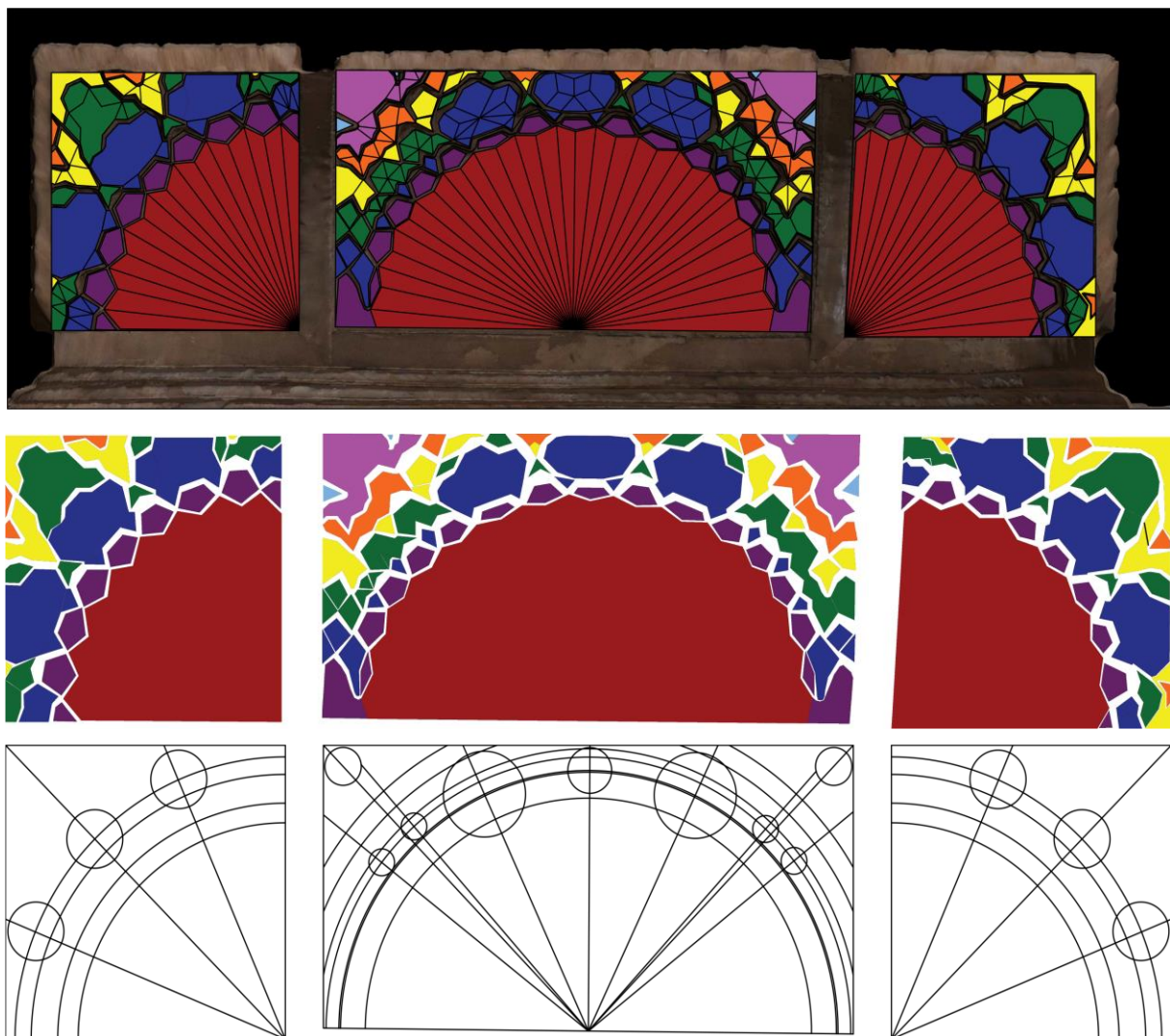


Figure 10. Display of Muqarnas Elements and its geometric system ©Muqarnas Team

## Community Engagement and Organizational Support:

In pursuit of this project, local villagers and authorities took charge of hosting and providing sustenance for the volunteers. The executive teams that contributed to its establishment included the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization of Khaf County, overseen by Mr. Basaliqeh; Mr. Rezayat and his family, proprietors of the traditional guesthouse; and the historical district residents of Khargard village. Their collaborative efforts played a pivotal role in bringing this endeavor to fruition.

## Challenges, Difficulties, and Positive Aspects Throughout the Project:

Undertaking a project of this magnitude came with its fair share of challenges, but it also presented opportunities for growth, collaboration, and positive outcomes. One of the initial difficulties was assembling and coordinating a large team with diverse perspectives and viewpoints regarding the project. Lack of prior experience in such endeavors added to the challenges. Limited access to the internet and the inability to access required files hindered the project's progress and made certain tasks more challenging. Technical challenges, such as the inability to rotate drones in tight corners, delayed the work of the documentary team and other related groups, leading to project extensions. Additionally, the voluntary and self-driven nature of the project, coupled with the absence of substantial financial support, posed challenges related to volunteer fatigue and sustainability. Despite these hurdles, the project team persevered and emerged with valuable experiences and achievements.

## Achievements Throughout the Project:

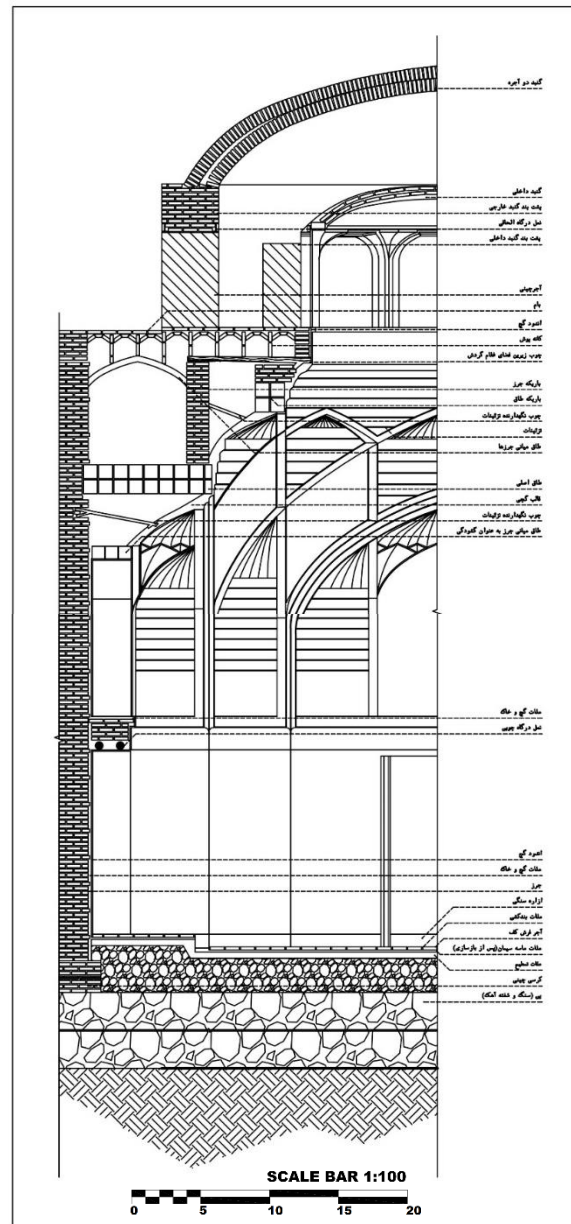


Figure 11. Wall section of Modaras ©Structure team

Throughout the project, numerous significant achievements were realized, transcending the mere preservation of Ghiyasiyeh School's physical structure. Notably, the initiative garnered remarkable community engagement, kindling a newfound appreciation for the precious heritage held by local villagers. This forged a deeper trust in the experts and specialists striving to safeguard this legacy. Simultaneously, extensive documentation efforts resulted in the compilation of valuable scholarly resources, including books on wall inscriptions, geometrical designs, decorations, and a comprehensive architectural study of the school. These materials promise an in-depth understanding of the school's historical and cultural importance, awaiting unveiling to enthusiasts of history and art. Moreover, the project served as an empowering platform for experts, showcasing their dedication and proficiency in heritage preservation. Despite financial constraints, their commitment mirrored that of valiant soldiers, guarding a fragment of Iran's historical and cultural wealth. Lastly, the project significantly contributed to heightened awareness of Ghiyasiyeh School's historical and cultural significance. By showcasing its splendor and historical relevance, the initiative played an instrumental role in educating the populace about their shared heritage.

### **Conclusion:**

finally, the project's achievements extended beyond tangible results. While preserving a historic building is vital, the project's impact reached deep into the hearts and minds of the local community and heritage enthusiasts. It showcased the power of collaboration, dedication, and a shared sense of responsibility for safeguarding the past for the benefit of future generations. The hope is that the hard work and dedication of the experts and volunteers will serve as a beacon of inspiration, reminding everyone of the importance of preserving the cultural treasures that shape our identity and heritage. Moreover, it is anticipated that this endeavor, driven solely by passion for safeguarding Iran's rich heritage, will bear abundant fruit, contributing not only to the nation but also to global culture enthusiasts. The experts, like courageous and devoted sentinels, have stood watch over a segment of Iran's historical and cultural treasures, undeterred by year-long trials and tribulations. There is also a resolute determination to establish an association and grassroots organization dedicated to preserving the country's historical edifices and heritage, fostering connections among individuals working across diverse domains, both nationally and internationally.



*Figure 12 Volunteer Documentation and Monitoring teas of School of Ghiyasiyeh . -©Mohamd Rezaei – October 2022*