Religious Architecture of the Timurids

**Timur**: (1370-1405) A Mongol chieftain, Timur started from Transoxania to build a world empire. He conquered Khurasan, Iran, Iraq, and parts of Syria and Anatolia. He massacred whole populations, but saved the craftsmen whom he sent to his capital Samarqand to embellish it. His was the last empire initiated by the steppe people.

**Tile Decoration**
- **Banna'i Technique**: meaning the builder’s technique, it consists of revetment of glazed bricks set within unglazed ones to form geometric patterns.
- **Haftrangi (Cuerda Seca)**: a technique that permits the creation of multi-colored patterns on the same tile before firing without letting the colors run together.
- **Mosaic-faience**: reached its apex in the 14th century, it is a patterned arrangement of closely fitted small pieces of tiles which have surface glaze of different colors.

**Monuments**

**The Bibi-Khanum Mosque in Samarqand**
(1399-1404). Popularly named after Timur’s wife, this is the mosque he intended to be the royal monument. Its tall projecting portal, with its flanking **minarets** was repeated inside in the **qibla** iwan. The mosque displays Timur’s concern for monumental effect and theatrical arrangement.

**The Gur-i-Amir Mausoleum in Samarqand**
(1404). Initially a religious complex appropriated to build a tomb for Timur’s grandson Muhammad Sultan, it became the burial place for Timur and his male descendants. It formed a part of a larger religious complex, and a later **madrasa** abutted on its side. The double-shell dome achieves both an interior harmony and an exterior verticality.

**The Shah-i Zinda Complex in Samarqand**
(1360-1434). Named Shah-i Zinda (the Living King) after a cousin of the Prophet who reportedly disappeared in Samarqand, this funerary alley, dotted with exquisite domes built over 70 years for members of Timur’s family, present the pinnacle of all the tile techniques known to the Timurids.
The Madrasa of Ulugh Beg in Samarqand
(1417-20). Standing in front of the Registan square, this four-iwan madrasa has four domed chambers on the corners, possibly functioning as mausolea, and a vaulted prayer hall on the iwan axis. The Registan square was defined later by the addition of two other madrasas to form a locus of urban life.

The Ghiyathiyya Madrasa at Khargid
(1436-43). Built by Shah Rukh, this is another ideal four-iwan plan, executed in absolute symmetry, with two storeys of rooms inserted between the iwans. The façade has two flanking minarets and a projecting portal, but with less craving for verticality.