

The Great Seljuqs, the Sunni Revival, and the Four-Iwan Plan

The Great Seljuqs (1038-1194): A Turkish, Sunni dynasty which ruled the whole Iranian world (including Khurasan and Transoxania), Iraq, Syria, and parts of Byzantine Anatolia.

- **The Sunni Revival:** The term used to designate the movement that culminated with the Seljuqs who actively sought the elimination of Shi'ite principalities in the eastern Islamic world and the Shiite grip on the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad, and who sponsored and fostered the renaissance in Sunni theology and jurisprudence.
- **Nizam al-Mulk (1020-92):** The able vizier of the Seljuq sultans who organized the structure of their state, promoted Sunni learning, and sponsored madrasas in Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq, all called Nizamiyya.

Four Iwan Type: A structure with cross-axes ending in four iwans surrounding a courtyard. In four-iwan mosques and madrasas, the prayer hall is the largest iwan. The type first appeared in Khurasan, probably developed from ancient Iranian models. It was the most popular type in the medieval period, and remained dominant in Iran.

The Madrasa: The specialized institution of learning that was adopted by the Seljuqs to promote Sunni teaching. A madrasa usually contains a mosque, classrooms, and lodgings for students and teachers. Madrasas appeared most probably in Khurasan in the 9-10th c. and spread all over the Islamic world in the 11-12th c.

Muqarnas: Also called the stalactite or honeycomb, one of the most distinctive Islamic architectural elements used in domes, in domes' transitional zones, in cornices and friezes, in conches above entrances, and on friezes supporting balconies of minarets. Its origin, symbolic meaning, and date of first appearance are frequently debated.

Monuments



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The Great Mosque of Diyarbakir

(Founded 1091, and renovated in the 12th century): A Seljuq foundation on the model of the Great Umayyad mosque in Damascus, the mosque is remarkable for its use of diverse Classical and medieval Islamic motifs.

The Masjid-i Jomeh at Isfahan

(9th century, 11th and 12th century): An early hypostyle Abbasid mosque with cylindrical, brick piers to which the Seljuqs added two monumental and extraordinary domes, one on the qibla side (built by Nizam al-Mulk between 1072 and 1075) and one on the northern side (1088-89), and four iwans with pishtaks in the centers of its four porticoes overlooking the courtyard built in the early 12th century. It is the most cited example of the transformation from hypostyle plan to four-iwan plan.

The Imam al-Dur Dome, Samarra

(ca. 1085): a brick tapering cube, similar to the Samanid tomb, and a pointed muqarnas dome whose exterior reciprocates the interior

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