

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

Re-Imagining the Royal City:

Architectural Patronage and Urban Memory of Isfahan, 1694–1834

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History of Art and Architecture

by

Samira Fathi

Committee in charge:

Professor Nuha N.N. Khoury, Chair

Professor Swati Chattopadhyay

Professor Talinn Grigor, University of California, Davis

Professor Richard Wittman

March 2023

The dissertation of Samira Fathi is approved.

Swati Chattopadhyay

Talinn Grigor

Richard Wittman

Nuha N.N. Khoury, Committee Chair

March 2023

Re-Imagining the Royal City:
Architectural Patronage and Urban Memory of Isfahan, 1694–1834

Copyright © 2023

by

Samira Fathi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The seeds of this research were planted when I was a graduate student in the Iranian Architecture Studies program at Shahid Beheshti University. Sadr-e Isfahani and his patronage was one of the research topics among others that Professor Kambiz Haji Qasemi had listed for us to choose as our research project. To conduct that research, I traveled to Isfahan and became enchanted by its captivating urban image. At the time, I was not aware that I am not alone in this affection for Isfahan. Due to the lack of secondary scholarship on this patron, my term paper remained a preliminary introduction to Sadr-e Isfahani's works. However, the idea of post-Safavid Isfahan stuck with me for years, a research question that I wished to answer sometime in the future. I began working on this project during my Ph.D. program at UCSB. Unfortunately, during my research, the difficulty of exploring an understudied period in the history of Iranian architecture was multiplied by the restricted access to archival materials and primary sources due to Travel Bans and the Covid-19 pandemic. This became even harder with an unprecedented family emergency. In a nutshell, the path to completing this dissertation was bitter and sweet, filled with hopes, fears, joy, and hardships. Despite all these challenges, I am happy to see the fruits of my labor and passion in this dissertation.

This project would not have taken form without the unconditional love and support I received from my mentors and advisors at the History of Art and Architecture at UCSB. I am so grateful to my dissertation advisors who patiently guided me to navigate the American academic system as a new international student. Needless to say, there were numerous obstacles on the path. My deepest gratitude goes to my primary advisor Professor Nuha Khoury for her inexhaustible support and dedication to my intellectual and professional life at UCSB. The completion of this project is in debt to her invaluable and timely advice, professional manner, intellectual vigor, and exemplary generosity and care. I could not undertake this research without her close reading of several drafts of this project and her informative and constructive feedback and suggestions since the conception of this research. I have learned a lot from her impeccable knowledge of the field. She has been beyond a mentor and I cherish the relationship that we have built over the years. To Professor Swati Chattopadhyay for her influential role in broadening and deepening my understanding of architectural history and her limitless and constant support during my studies at UCSB. Her encouragement kept me motivated in the completion of this dissertation. To Professor Richard Wittman for his professional and intellectual generosity in advising me throughout these years. His informative comments and suggestions greatly improved this dissertation. And to Professor Talinn Grigor for inspiring me to continue research on the history of Iranian architecture and for providing me with invaluable insights and feedback. I really appreciate everybody's time and effort in helping me to elucidate my arguments. Thank you all for your dedication to my project. It was a great honor to be your advisee.

The Department of History of Art and Architecture at UCSB provided me with wonderful resources to conduct my research, develop my academic life, and expand my

knowledge. For this opportunity, I am also grateful to my mentors and professors Laurie Monahan, Claudia Moser, Heather Badamo, Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, Ann Jensen Adams, Jeremy White, Carole Paul, and others for enriching my educational and professional life at UCSB. And to my mentors at Shahid Beheshti University especially Professors Zahra Ahari, Mehrdad Qayyumi, and Kambiz Haji Qasemi whose continuous support is always inspiring and encouraging.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge the generous fellowships and financial support I received from my institutional home at the Department of History of Art and Architecture, the Center for the Middle East Studies, the Graduate Division, and the Iranian Studies Initiative for funding my field and archival research and granting me conference travel funds during my doctoral studies at UCSB. I would like to also express my gratitude to the Iranian Studies Association for their generous Student Travel Grant to present my research at Salamanca, Spain.

I am also thankful to my colleagues and friends Alexandra Camille Schultz, Margaret Mansfield, Yun-Chen Lu, Hannah Kagan-Moore, Henning von Mirbach, Betty Schlothman, Mohammadreza Mirzaei, Ali Derafshi, Maryam Heidarkhani, Behjat Loghmani, Leila Haghi, and all my other friends for their friendship and support in this long and bumpy road. Finally, to my family who gave my life meaning and love and always advocated for me in the ups and downs of this process. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my close companion Mahdi, for his endless kindness and encouragement, and to the joys of my life Mehrad and Liana.

VITA OF SAMIRA FATHI
March 2023

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Architectural Design, Dr. Shariati College, Tehran, 2009
Master of Iranian Architecture Studies, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran, January 2013
Doctor of Philosophy in History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara, March 2023 (expected)

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

2008- 2010: Architect at Azhand and Sabat Architecture Firms
2015-2016: Teaching Assistant, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara
Summer 2017: Teaching Assistant, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara
2017-2018: Teaching Assistant, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara
Summer 2020 and Spring 2021: Teaching Assistant, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara
Summer 2021: Teaching Associate, Department of History of Art and Architecture, University of California, Santa Barbara
Winter 2023: Teaching Associate, Department of Art, Art History, and Visual Culture, Michigan State University, East Lansing

PUBLICATIONS

Sokounat dar mahalleh: ravayati az sheklgiri-ye mahalleh-ye Dowlat-e Tehran dar doreh-ye Naseri [Residing in the Neighborhood: A Narrative of the Formation of Tehran's Dowlatabad Neighborhood in the Naseri Era]. Tehran: Matn Press, 2021.

“From Vision to Reality: Tehran’s Urban Expansion Under Naser al-Din Shah (1848–96),” in *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, Vol. 12, Issue 1 (Jan 2023): 71–99.

“Promenading in Isfahan’s Chaharbaghs,” in *PLATFORM*, (October 2021), in Persian and English

AWARDS

UCSB Academic Senate conference presentation grant, 2022
Conference travel grant from Association for Iranian Studies, 2022
Graduate Division Dissertation Fellowship, UCSB, 2022

ABD Travel Funding, Department of History of Art and Architecture, UCSB, 2021
Center for Middle East Studies Summer Fellowship, UCSB, 2021
Annual Conference Fellowship, Society of Architectural Historians, 2020
Iranian Studies Initiative, Graduate Student Travel Grant, UCSB, 2019
Humanities/Social Sciences Research Grant, UCSB, 2019
Summer Research Grant from the Center for Middle East Studies, UCSB, 2019
Margaret Mallory Fellowship, UCSB, 2015-2019
Selected Master Thesis for publication by the Iranian Architectural History program at
Shahid Beheshti University, 2013
Awarded Presentation, “A Window to Birjand:” An Architectural History Workshop on the
City of Birjand, Khorasan, 2012

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: History of Iranian Architecture and Urbanism (17th –19th Century); History of
Islamic Art and Architecture studied with Professor Nuha Khoury

Minor Field: French Colonial Urbanism and Modernism in the Nineteenth Century
Studied with Professors Swati Chattopadhyay and Peter Bloom

ABSTRACT

Re-Imagining the Royal City:

Architectural Patronage and Urban Memory of Isfahan, 1694–1834

by

Samira Fathi

Isfahan, a central city in Iran, became the seat of the Safavid empire (1501-1722) under the rule of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) in 1590, and a great architectural activity turned it into an early modern city out of its medieval past. The grand public and royal architecture of New Isfahan garnered a lot of attention and left a lasting impact on the representation of the city after Shah Abbas I's reign. This excessive attention to the pinnacle of Isfahan's urban history led to the prevalence of a static and timeless image that overglazed the role of later urban interventions key to the vitality of this urban center. This dissertation problematizes this civilizational and dynastic approach to the understanding of urban history and focuses on the neglected and overlooked urban and architectural transformations of Isfahan from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Through an examination of the built environment and its literary representations in tandem with networks of power and patronage, this study complicates the inherited and dominant history of this period by foregrounding emerging urban patrons and lost architectural and urban interventions.

To reconstruct the understudied urban changes in the timeframe of this project, I consulted an array of untapped visual and textual primary and archival sources including

historical maps, engravings, architectural drawings, photographs, historical accounts, travelogues, and literary works. The emphasis in this reconstruction was placed on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century developments of Isfahan under the supervision and patronage of Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani (1758-1823). I read these reconstructions against the production and commission of panegyric-*tazkira* (biographic anthology) as *lieu de mémoire* to cast light on the underlying social, cultural, and political nexus in which these projects were conceived and perceived.

The findings of this research demonstrate that not only did the city remain an active location for royal and non-royal architectural and urban patronage, but also its modifications were preconceived and meaningful in each historical phase. The reconstruction of new developments under Shah Soltan Hosein and local urban patrons, especially Sadr-e Isfahani, in the city brings to light a collective act of referencing Isfahan's glorious past to recover its urban prosperity. The continuous adoption of the "chaharbagh avenue type" and the addition of the Farahabad Palace-garden and the Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan signified this desire. Sadr-e Isfahani's urban vision was the culmination of this desire manifested in the architectural patronage of an emerging and local urban elite. The symbolic and conceptual entanglement of his physical interventions in Isfahan and the commission of *Madayeh* portrayed the ways in which this patron reminded Isfahan of its celebrated past while he simultaneously reinscribed a new memory and history of the city at the beginning of the Qajar period.

NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION, TRANSLATION, AND ANNOTATIONS

In this dissertation, I have transliterated Persian words and names according to the guidelines recommended by the transliteration scheme of [Iranian Studies](#) journal. I am using a simplified version, omitting diacritic marks and the mark showing *hamza*, which would be more accessible to a broader community of readers. The transliterations of Persian words in quotes and captions from other sources have been kept the same. For familiar Arabic and Persian names in the English language such as Isfahan, Ali, and mulla I have chosen to follow their common and known transliterations. All translations in the text are mine, unless otherwise noted. All annotations and lines on maps and illustrations are my additions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Isfahan After Shah Abbas I.....	1
The Dilemma in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Iran.....	8
Previous Scholarship: Safavid Isfahan as a Reference	18
Post-Safavid Isfahan in Primary Sources	24
Organization of this dissertation.....	29
Chapter 1 : Reading Isfahan through <i>Tazkiras</i>	33
Analytical Frameworks and Research Approach	33
The Isfahani Circle of Poets and the Prevalence of Tazkira-Writing.....	37
Tazkira as lieu de mémoire.....	40
Isfahan in Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh (Tazkira-ye Baqi).....	43
Inscribing and Circulating the Urban Memory.....	48
Isfahan Represented in Madayeh: Urban Imagination and Architectural Patronage	51
Power Resides in Isfahan.....	54
Artists' Return to Isfahan.....	55
Piety and Urban Patronage	59
Returning Justice to the City.....	61
Conclusion	63
Chapter 2 : Legacy of the Empire in Late Safavid City	65
Introduction.....	65

A Feeble King, a Decaying City.....	67
Retreat to Haram.....	71
Excessive Religiosity and Urban Regulations.....	76
Additions to the Sa‘adatabad Garden	84
New Maidan and Talar	85
Emarat-e Mabeyn.....	86
Behesht Ayeen Haram	95
The Royal Madrasah and the Surrounding Complex at Chaharbagh Avenue	101
Farahabad: A Palace-City	107
Soltan Hosein’s Passion for Building	107
Expanding Isfahan: A New Royal City	109
Axial Order Over Central Configuration.....	114
Tekiyeh or Maidan?	114
The Great Avenue: Chaharbagh	116
A New Design for Divankhaneh.....	118
Farahabad Represented.....	120
Conclusion	126
Chapter 3 : New Urban Patrons, Agency, and Self-fashioning in post-Safavid Isfahan	128
Introduction.....	128
Isfahan Between Safavids and Qajars, 1722–1789.....	129
Isfahan in the Early Qajar Period.....	144
Rise of Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani	144

Justice and Philanthropy	156
Social and Political Networks.....	158
Familial Links to the Court.....	159
Communities of Knowledge: Networks of Learned Men.....	163
Sadr-e Isfahani's Construction and Restoration Campaign.....	165
Conclusion	176
Chapter 4 : Chaharbagh Promenades and Urban Memory in Isfahan	178
Introduction.....	178
Reclaiming Isfahan Through Chaharbaghs	183
Sadr-e Isfahani's Chaharbaghs	187
Chaharbagh-e Fathabad	187
Design and Form.....	193
Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad-e Tuqchi.....	206
Chaharbagh-e Aminabad	211
Reviving a Historical Urban Axis.....	217
Chaharbaghs: Poetic Imaginations and Urban Memory in Madayeh	220
Sadr-e Isfahani's Chaharbaghs in Travelogues	226
Conclusion	231
Chapter 5 : A Lost Qajar Palace: Reinventing the Image of Kingship in Isfahan	233
Introduction.....	233
Eamarat-e Sadri: A New Palace in Isfahan.....	236
Location and Architectural Configuration	239
Talar or Eyvan?.....	255

Urban and Extra-urban Palaces	262
Emarat-e Soleimaniyeh.....	265
Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin.....	268
Octagonal Palatial Towers	269
The Awaiting Palace: Expansive and Vacant.....	287
Towards a Shift in Artistic Taste	294
The Pictorial Program in the Emarat-e Sadri.....	297
Conclusion	314
Conclusion: Urban Image of Isfahan	317
References.....	325
Appendix.....	341

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1. The reconstruction plan of the Sa'adatabad Garden and Soltan Hosein's additions, by Nazanin Shahidi. Red: the maidan, Purple: the talar, Yellow: two wooden gazebos. (Source: Nazanin Shahidi Marnani, "Bagh-e Sa'adatabad Isfahan dar ayineh-ye Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat," *Motale'at Me'mari Iran*, no.9 (2016): 67-85)

Figure 2-2. View of the Sa'adatabad Gardens and the Haft Dast Palace. Chardin, c.1670s Talar-e Aynekhaneh (1), Emarat-e Mosamman or Namakdan (2), Mahtabi (3), Dowlatkhaneh or the Haft Dast Palace (4). (Source: *Voyages de Mr. Le Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Wikimedia Commons: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/0b/59_Chardin_Palace_near_Esfahan.jpg)

Figure 2-3. "Plan of the town of Esfahan with a description. Review by topographers captain Proskuriakov and ensign" by Ogranovich. Draught by ensign Bolshov and Bakunov. Russian map of Isfahan showing the Sa'adatabad Gardens and the Haft Dast Palace, 1851. 1- Hammam-e vali [governor's bathhouse], 2-Qasr-e Haft Dast-e Vali [Governor's Haft dast palace], 3-Aynehkhaneh Palace, 4- Joui Bridge, 5- Khaju Bridge. Yellow: the possible location of the Emarat-e Mabeyn. (Source: Brill Primary Sources: <https://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/russian-military-intelligence-on-asia-archive>)

Figure 2-4. The open area on the General map of Isfahan by Coste. Behesht Ayeen is not identified here but its location, according to the textual accounts, accords with this open space. (Source: Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_map_of_Isfahan_by_Pascal_Coste.jpg)

Figure 2-5. Behesht Ayeeneh Palace (the original haram of Shah Abbas the great), the Russian map of Isfahan in 1851.

Figure 2-6. Plan of Isfahan, by Coste, 1840. Madrasedh-ye Chaharbagh (34), Carvansara-ye Madar-e Shah (35), Bazar-e Boland (33). Note the location of the Madrasedh at the edge of Chaharbagh Avenue. (Source: Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_map_of_Isfahan_by_Pascal_Coste.jpg)

Figure 2-7. The dome of the Madrasedh-ye Chaharbagh seen from the courtyard, drawing by Pascale Coste. "Collège (Medrekeh) la Mère (Mader) de Shah Sultan Hussein, Vue extérieure" published in *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits*, éd. Morel, 1867. (Source: Wikimedia Commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:College_of_mother_of_Shah_Sultan_Hussein_exterior_2_by_Pascal_Coste.jpg)

Figure 2-8. The façade of Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh facing Chaharbagh Avenue, drawing by Eugene Flandin. (Source: Wikimedia Commons: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaharbagh_School#/media/File:Chahar_bagh_school_drawing.jpg)

Figure 2-9. Plan of Farahabad Garden based on Eugen Beaudouin's survey of this garden in early 20th century (Source: Jean-Do Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," *Middle Eastern Garden Traditions*, 140).

Figure 2-10. Farahabad's reconstructed plan by Brignoli, (Source: Jean-Do Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," *Middle Eastern Garden Traditions*, 143).

Figure 2-11. The Anonymous Persian Plan of Farahabad: Jardin du roy de perse nomme Bar far abat, BNF. (Source: Dumbarton Oaks: <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C178>)

Figure 2-12. Eugen Beaudouin's drawing of the Farahabad Garden. The Farahabad Garden (Red) and the Great Avenue linking it to the Hezar Jarib Garden (Yellow). (Source: published in Jean-Do Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," *Middle Eastern Garden Traditions*, 141).

Figure 2-13. A part of panorama of Isfahan showing the area between the Hezar Jarib Garden on the right and the Farahabad Garden (not visible in this picture) on the left, by Bruyn, 1704. Note the row of young trees along the Great Avenue (the future Chaharbagh Avenue of Farahabad) in the foreground linking these two gardens to one another. At this stage still the construction process of the Farahabad Garden was in progress when Bruyn visited Isfahan. (Source: National Library of Iran, also in Cornelis de Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, p. 196. Source: Internet Archive: <https://archive.org/details/travelsintomusco01bruy/page/n333/mode/2up?view=theater>)

Figure 3-1. Towhid Khaneh, located in the Safavid royal precinct, Isfahan. (Source: Archnet: https://www.archnet.org/sites/4649?media_content_id=140873)

Figure 3-2. A view of the Aynehkhaneh Talar in the foreground and the Khawju Bridge in the background, Eugene Flandin, 1840. (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections)

Figure 3-3. A late-nineteenth-century photograph of the Aynehkhaneh Talar at the bank of Zayandeh River, by Papazian. (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collection)

Figure 3-4. The Sun Palace or Kalat-e Naderi. (Source: Wikimedia Commons: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalat,_Razavi_Khorasan#/media/File:Khorshid_Palace_Kalat.JPG)

Figure 3-5. Karim Khan's Arg at Shiraz, note the central eyvan with two pillars facing the elongated pool. (Source: The Golestan Palace Photo Collection)

Figure 3-6. Another view of the Karim Khan's Arg at Shiraz (Source: Wikimedia Commons: Arg-e Karim Khan in Shiraz:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arg_of_Karim_Khan#/media/File:Arg_of_Karim_Khan)

Figure 3-7. Russian Map of Isfahan, Sarcheshmeh and Baqir Khan Creek (red), Golshan Shekan-e Naw Caravanserai (yellow), and Ali Mardan Khan Tower and Tavileh (green).

Figure 3-8. Madraseh-ye Seyyid al-Iraqayn (Madraseh-ye Sadr Paqal'eh), foundation inscription at the entrance showing the date 1217/1804. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-9. The courtyard of the Madraseh-ye Seyyid al-Iraqayn, front showing the northern *eyvan* and the two side entrances to the courtyard. The metal scaffolding structure running around the rim of the courtyard is used for covering the courtyard and turning it into a *tekiyeh* to house Shi'i rituals in Moharram. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-10. The western façade of the courtyard. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-11. The inscription on the Mehrab located at the southern *eyvan* and the main madras (seminary hall) of the school. The date shows 1217/1804. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-12. Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh-e Sadri (Khawju), showing the courtyard and the entrance *eyvan* along the Khawju chaharbagh. The lush trees of the Khawju chaharbagh are visible at the background of the entrance. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-13. One of the main halls of the Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh-e Sadri. This school is currently in use by the students of religious studies. The school has been extensively renovated in recent years. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-14. Showing one of the 4-eyvans of the Madraseh-ye Sadr-e Bazaar and its courtyard. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-15. The arrangement of student's chambers (*hojreh*) on one of the corners of the courtyard. Sadr-e Isfahani was not able to finish this school due to his untimely death. The second floor has been added later. This school is one of the important and highly demanded religious and Shi'i learning center in Isfahan. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-16. Madraseh-ye Sadr-e bazaar, one of the *eyvans*. (Photo: Samira Fathi)

Figure 3-17. A nineteenth-century photograph of the Takht-e Tavous (Peacock Throne) at one of the halls of the Golestan palace. This photo shows the original design of the throne before its alteration by Naser al-Din Shah. (Source: National Library of Iran)

Figure 4-1. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Safavi (A), Chaharbagh-e Fathabad (B), Hassanabad Gateway (1), Chaharsou Naqqashi (2), Maryam Beygum Madraseh (3), Khawju Gateway (4), Khawju Bathhouse (5), Khawju Madraseh (Madraseh-ye Sadr)

(6), Howz-e Khawju (7), Bagh-e Ramezan-Ali (8), Howz-e Ramezan-Ali (9), Emarat-e Haji Hosein (10), Howz-e Bagh-e Borj (11)

Figure 4-2. Russian map of Isfahan, 1851. Purple: Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Red: Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad, Yellow: Chaharbagh-e Fathabad, Blue: Chaharbagh-e Aminabad, Orange: Possibly part of Chaharbagh-e Fathabad. (Source: *asnad-e tasviri-ye shahrha-ye Iran dar doureh-ye Qajar*, 2000)

Figure 4-3. Russian map of Isfahan, 1851. A closer view of the Safavid and Qajar chaharbaghs and the adjoining gardens: Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Yellow: Chaharbagh-e Fathabad. (Source: Russian Military Intelligence on Asia Online Archive Series 1651-1917, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/russian-military-intelligence-on-asia-archive>)

Figure 4-4. Plan général d'Ispahan, by Pascal Coste, 1839. Purple: Maidan-e Shah, Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Yellow: Chaharbagh-e Fathabad, Orange: Chaharbagh-e Aminabad. Note that the Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad has not been depicted in this map.

Figure 4-5. A late-nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Chaharbagh, Isfahan, by Papazian. (Source: Golestan Palace Photograph Collection)

Figure 4-6. A late-nineteenth century photograph of the Abbasi Chaharbagh, Isfahan, by Papazian. (Source: Golestan Palace Photograph Collection)

Figure 4-7. A late-nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Chaharbagh, Isfahan, possibly by Ernst Hoeltzer (Source: Scrap Book PK-F-73.152, Leiden University Collection
:https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/1933931?solr_nav%5Bid%5D=63a606a797c8db6a4162&solr_nav%5Bpage%5D=4031&solr_nav%5Boffset%5D=10
)

Figure 4-8. The entrance portal of the Madraseh-ye Sadr-e Khawju, Commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani along the Khawju (Fathabad) Chaharbagh. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-9. Chaharsouq Naqqashi, repaired and covered with the paintings of Fath Ali Shah under Sadr-e Isfahani's commission. This *chaharsouq* (a domed structure at the intersection of two perpendicular path or bazaars) was located at the intersection of the Khawju Chaharbagh and the Hasanabad Bazaar. Currently, there is no traces of the paintings left in situ and this structure has lost its function as it is standing isolated among the residential buildings. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-10. Chaharsouq Naqqashi, a view from the road leading to the Hasanabad Bazaar. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-11. The entrance of the Hasanabad Bazaar facing the Chaharsouq Naqqashi. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-12. Portal of the Qaysariyeh Bazaar and the Naqqarekhaneh on the third floor, (Source: originally published in Jean Chardin, *Voyages*, 1705: <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/texts/olearius/pictures/bazaar.jpg>)

Figure 4-13. Portal of the Qaysariyeh Bazaar and Naqqarekhaneh, late nineteenth century photograph (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collections, Album n.199/39)

Figure 4-14. De Brugh Hassan-abaet, Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "De Brugh Hassan-abaet." (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections)

Figure 4-15. Eugene Flandin, "Pont Kadjiou [Khawju], Chiraz [i.e. Isfahân]." (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed June 11, 2019)

Figure 4-16. Architectural renderings of the Khawju Bridge, in the 1830s, by Coste. The yellow highlighted area indicates Sadr-e Isfahani's addition to the bridge or the Bayglarbaygi.

Figure 4-17. A nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Bridge and the Beyglarbeygi structure on top of the central pavilion (Eastern view). By Ernst Hoeltzer. (Source: Ernest Hoeltzer, *Iran dar yeksad o sizdah saal-e pish*, tans. Mohammad 'Asemi. Munich, 1976)

Figure 4-18. A nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Bridge and the Beyglarbeygi structure on top of the central pavilion (Western view). By Ernst Hoeltzer. (Source: Ernest Hoeltzer, *Iran dar yeksad o sizdah saal-e pish*, tans. Mohammad 'Asemi. Munich, 1976)

Figure 4-19. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad (yellow), 128: Tuqchi bridge, 129: Qurkhaneh (blue), 130: Emarat-e Kucheh khane, 131: Bagh-e Kuche Khaneh, 132: Bagh-e Charsoo, 133: Bagh-e Masjid-iBaba Soukhteh and Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh (green), 134: Howz-e Chaharbagh, XXIII: Tuqchi gate, SS: Tuqchi Bazaar. Note the extant symmetrical structures at the edges of the chaharbagh. They might be the remaining garden portals that lined the Tuqchi chaharbagh and part of Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbagh-building project.

Figure 4-20. Qushkhaneh garden and Baba Soukhteh Mosque, ca. 1830s, by Eugene Flandin. Note the Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh. (Source: the Digital Collection of New York Public Library)

Figure 4-21. Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh attached to the Baba Soukhteh Mosque. A new mosque has replaced the old one but the minar has been preserved and attached to the new one. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-22. The remaining building that is currently used as a library, possibly the Eamarat-e Kucheh Khaneh marked on the Russian map of Isfahan, in the Gushkhaneh Garden. This building is on an axis with the Minar-e Qushkhaneh and an underpassage links these two structures. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-23. Russian map of Isfahan. The southern bank of the Zayandeh River. Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (red) parallel to the chaharbagh-e Abbasi (yellow) leading to the Hezar Jarib Garden. Note the garden portals and their arrangement along both chaharbaghs.

Figure 4-24. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Aminabad, leading to the Takht-e Foulad Cemetery (red), and garden portals.

Figure 4-25. The current Fayz Boulevard laid out over the Chaharbagh-e Aminabad. The tripartite composition of the chaharbagh avenue has been preserved, with side lines for pedestrians and the middle as a street. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-26. The entrance vestibule of the Bagh-e Valehiyeh (Garden and tomb of Valeh Isfahani) along the Fayz Street.

Figure 4-27. The dome covering Valeh's tomb in the center of the garden commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani and the poetic foundation chronogram composed by Mohammad Tal'at inscribed in *nasta'liq* script on the lower rim of the dome. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-28. The inscription under the dome referring to Sadr-e Isfahani (*Khan-e sepehr-payeh* Hosein) as the patron.

Figure 4-29. The main hall of the Valehiyeh tomb-garden complex located at the western end of the garden. It is currently used as a cultural and religious institution serving the Takht-e Foulad Cemetery. This section would have been part of the residential areas housing Valeh and his poet companions. (Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 4-30. Map showing the concentration of Sadr-e Isfahani's renovation and construction projects along the new urban axis, consisted of the alignment of his three chaharbaghs, connecting the Tuqchi Gate on the north to the Shiraz gateway on the south.

Figure 5-1. Plan général d'Ispahan, by Pascal Coste, 1839. 28: Bains Publics, 29: Petit Palais Tcharbagh (Green), 30: Palais Tchehel Soutoun, 31: Palais Narendjistan (Yellow), 32: Pavillion Hecht Behecht.

Figure 5-2. The possible location of the Bagh-e Khalvat under Shah Abbas I according to the reconstruction proposed by Galdieri (green). As shown in this map, the Khalvat garden was surrounded by the Chehel Sotun to the north, the Talar-e Tavileh to the west, and the Hasht Behest (Angurestan) to the east. The approximate location of Emarat-e Sadri proposed in this chapter is marked in red. The map also depicts two cylindrical structures (two towers) to the west of the Bagh-e Khalvat in yellow and one extant octagonal tower on the wall between the Bagh-e Khalvat and the Chehel Sotun gardens in blue. The areas shown in black constitute the standing parts of the complex when Galdieri visited the site in the 20th century. Accordingly, the only part left standing from the Haram area was the octagonal tower shown in blue here.

Figure 5-3. Russain map of Isfahan, 1851. Purple: Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, Red: Kakh-e Sadr, Yellow: Narenjistan, Green: Possibly Emarat-e Sarpoushide (Divankhaneh), Blue: Behesht Ayeen (Shah Soltan Hosein's palace), Dark blue: Chehel Sutun, Brown: Hasht Behesht, Orange and dark green circles pointing to the location of the Borj-e 'Alimardan Khan and Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat respectively.

Figure 5-4. Plan of the Chehel Sotun Palace (the Forty-pillared porch), 1839, Pascal Coste. According to the map's legend, "h" refers to the *Entrée du Palais Asham Mahamel Hussen-Khan-Sadreh* [entrance to Mohammad Hosein Khan-e Sadr's palace] and "i" points to the *Passage conduisant au Pavillon des huit Paradis* [the passage leading to the Hasht Behesht Palace]. (Source: *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits*, éd. Morel, 1867: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Garden_and_pavilion_Chehel_Sotoun_map_by_Pascal_Coste.jpg)

Figure 5-5. Palais du Tchar-Bâgh, Ispahan, by Flandin, 1839. Showing the Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat at the corner of the courtyard. (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection).

Figure 5-6. Salle du [Tchar-Bâgh] Palais Kalvèt-Serpouchidèh à Ispahan, by Flandin (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection)

Figure 5-7. Intérieur du palais Tchar-Bach published in *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, by Coste. (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection)

Figure 5-8. "Grand Palais du chah abas," Pascal Coste, 1840. As proposed in this dissertation, this plan depicts the location and design of both Emarat-e Sadri (the right courtyard) and the Narenjistan (the left courtyard). (Source: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds Patrimoniaux: Ms1132_Fol32).

Figure 5-9. Plan of the Chehel Sotun Garden, Pascal Coste, 1840. Source: Tchhel Sotun garden. Note the two octagonal towers located to the south of the garden. (Source: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds patrimoniaux: Ms1132-fol34bisa)

Figure 5-10. Bagh-i Khalvat. The inscription on top of the page reads: "*Palais, Serai (i), d'Asham Mahamed -Hussen-Sadreh. Visir de feth-ali-chah. Ispahan 22 avril 1840*" along with Coste's signature. (Source: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds patrimoniaux: Ms1132-fol33)

Figure 5-11. Marble Throne, Golestan Palace. (Source: Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits*, éd. Morel, 1867. Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5-12. A closer view of the *eyvan* in the Emarat-e Sadri.

Figure 5-13. "Vue extérieure de la salle du trône, Téhérân." (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-906c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

Figure 5-14. "Intérieur de la salle du trône, Téhérân." Note the king's portraits along with other figures on the walls of this hall. (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-906d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

Figure 5-15. "Kiosque Haineh-Khânèh, Ispahan." (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-9078-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

Figure 5-16. A schematic diagram to show the spatial arrangement of the palace and buildings in the Farahabad Garden: the *divankhaneh* courtyard (A), the *shahneshin* area, possibly a talar facing the garden (D), the women's quarter or andarun (B), and the Khaneh-ye *birun* or buildings with public use (C), gardens in the Farahabad Palace (E). By Samira Fathi.

Figure 5-17. Schematic analysis of the Chehel Sotun Garden (left) and the Farahabad Garden (right). By Samira Fathi.

Figure 5-18. Plan analysis illustrating the transformation of spatial arrangements in palace architecture from the 17th to the 19th century: the Safavid Chehel Sotun, Isfahan (left); Karim Khan's Arg, Shiraz (middle); and the Emarat-e Sadri, Isfahan (right). By Samira Fathi.

Figure 5-19. Plan analysis showing affinities between the Farahabad Palace-garden, early 18th century, Isfahan (left); Karim Khan's Arg, mid-18th century, Shiraz (middle); and the Emarat-e Sadri, early 19th century, Isfahan (right). By Samira Fathi.

Figure 5-20. Haft Dast Palace, "Bords du Zendeh-Roud, Ispahan; Palais de Hapht-Dest, Ispahan." (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-908a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

Figure 5-21. A late 19th-century photograph of the Kakh-e Soleimaniyeh, showing the octagonal tower at the corner of the palace. (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collections)

Figure 5-22. Remaining parts of Soleimaniyeh Palace. (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collections: <http://kelkaqaz.blogspot.com/2019/03/blog-post.html>)

Figure 5-23. A view of the Soleimaniyeh hall, note the placement of the elongated hall over the pilot and the access to the courtyard on the other side. (Courtesy of Ehsan Tahmasbi)

Figure 5-24. A view of the great portrait of Fath Ali Shah and the princes flanking his throne adorning one of the walls in the Soleimaniyeh Palace. (Courtesy of Ehsan Tahmasbi)

Figure 5-25. A view of the Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin or Soltaniyeh. Vicinity of Zanjan, (Source: Moritz von Kotzebue, *Narrative of a journey into Persia, in the suite of the*

imperial Russian embassy, in the year 1817. Translated from the German.
<https://archive.org/details/in.gov.ignca.11938>)

Figure 5-26. Kaempfer's "Planographia" of Isfahan, illustrating the Safavid royal precinct in the late 17th century. Talar-e Tavileh (yellow), Bagh-e Khalvat (green), and red circles pointing to the cylindrical towers at the western side of the complex. Note the location of these towers at the corners and intersections of the buildings.

Figure 5-27. A late 19th century photograph of the Emarat-e Isfahan (possibly the Talar-e Tavileh) and a cylindrical multi-story tower at the background. (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collections, no.207/66)

Figure 5-28. "Palais de Tchehel-Sutoun, à Ispahan." Note the octagonal tower in the background visible from the palace's pillared porch (talar). (Source: New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-907f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

Figure 5-29. A closer view of the octagonal tower visible through the pillars.

Figure 5-30. Aerial view of the Safavid palace complex. Note the location of the Masjid Shah and the octagonal tower that might have been visible through pillars in the Chehel Sotun's talar, as illustrated in Coste's perspective from this palace. As the field of view arrows imposed on this aerial view show, Coste would not be able to see these elements exactly the way depicted in this perspective given his vantage point located inside the deep niche (eyvan) of the palace (indicated by red arrows, yellow arrows show normal FOV from a vantage point of a viewer standing right in the talar). It is plausible that he has added these structures to the background later to complete his sketch. (Source: Google Earth 2022)

Figure 5-31. Aerial view showing the spatial relationship between the Chehel Sotun Palace and the standing octagonal tower (Rashk-e Jannat). (Google Earth 2022)

Figure 5-32. A view from the southern side of the entrance area leading to the Chehel Sotun Garden. Note the Rashk-e Jannat Tower in the background. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-33. A model of the Rakibkhaneh mansion (Isfahan's Decorative Arts Museum) inside the museum. Note the location of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower at the corner of the courtyard. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-34. The view of the tower from the courtyard. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-35. An interior view of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower looking downward from the second floor. The central void was covered on the third floor adding to the functional space of the tower. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-36. Richly decorated and painted walls of the fourth floor, featuring small rooms at the corners and elaborate niches carved out of the piers. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-37. An interior view of the fifth floor. This is the most elaborately gilded and painted space of the tower. The walls and ceiling are covered with floral and figural paintings. Landscape murals have been interspaced with portraits of the beauties.

Figure 5-38. Mural paintings of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower. Note the depiction of the duck's body and posture. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-39. Floral and figural carvings on the marble dado of the Marble Throne Hall. Note the posture of the two ducks on the lower part of the dado. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-40. Courtyard of the seraglio, Qazvin by Eugène Flandin. A view of the Emarat-e Divani-ye Qazvin in 1840. (Source: The New York Public Library Digital Collections)

Figure 5-41. Emarat-e Divani-ye Qazvin in the late 19th century. Another early Qajar *divankhaneh* featuring the combination of courtyard layout and a multi-story attached octagonal tower. Note the design of the tower and its resemblance to the Rashk-e Jannat Tower and other contemporary examples discussed in this section. (Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collection, no. 248/71)

Figure 5-42. The Court of Fath Ali Shah at the Nowrooz Salaam Ceremony. c. 1830, Linen; pencil underdrawing with bodycolour and gold paint | RCIN 1005133. (Source: Royal Collection Thrust: <https://www.rct.uk/collection/1005133/the-court-of-fath-ali-shah-at-the-nowrooz-salaam-ceremony>)

Figure 5-43. A closer view of the painting to the left of Fath Ali Shah.

Figure 5-44. A closer view of the central section of the painting, depicting Fath Ali Shah enthroned on the Takht-e Tavous and 12 of his sons.

Figure 5-45. Attendees on the right side of the king in the salaam ceremony.

Figure 5-46. A closer view of the painting that shows Sadr-e Isfahani standing to the left of Fath Ali Shah in the Negaristan mural.

Figure 5-47. One of the flanking halls of the Marble Throne Hall, the Golestan Palace, Tehran. The walls are covered with the portraits of the kings, princes, architectural scenes, etc. A band of poetry in Nasta'liq script separates the upper life-size paintings from the smaller figural and floral decorations of the lower level. Fath Ali Shah's portrait is located at the middle of the wall. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-48. A closer view of the king's portrait surrounded by other royal portraits. The room is heavily renovated. (Samira Fathi, 2021)

Figure 5-49. Portrait of Kay Khusraw, by Mihr 'Ali, Qajar Iran, Isfahan AH 1218/1803-4 ad. (Source: Christies' <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-portrait-of-kay-khusraw-by-mihr-ali-4892532/?>)

Figure 5-50. A monumental portrait of King Jamshid, signed by Mihr ‘Ali, Persia, Qajar, dated 1218 AH/1803 AD. Oil on canvas, mounted on a stretcher, annotated 'Jamshid' in Persian at middle left in nasta'liq script, signed at lower edge 'raqm-i kamtarin Mihr 'Ali, 1218', framed. (Source: Sotheby's. <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/arts-islamic-world-115223/lot.300.html>)

Figure 5-51. Portrait of the Mughal king, Shah Jahan, by Mihr Ali. Detached from the Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan. (Source: Christie's <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-the-mughal-emperor-shah-jahan-signed-mihr-6308184/>)

Figure 5-52. Portrait of the Mughal king, Farukh Seyar, by Mihr Ali. Detached from the Emarat-e Sadri. (Source: Christie's <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6308185>)

Figure 5-53. “Fath Ali Shah sur son trône, avec deux princes à ses côtés, reçoit un groupe de savants secrétaires capables d'écrire des poèmes à la louange du roi (page d'un "Shahinshahnameh)” A page from the *Shahanshahnameh* depicting Fath Ali Shah seated on the Takht-e Tavous and his attendees. Source: The Louvre Museum <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010321603>)

Figure 5-54. Bas-relief représentant Feth-Ali-Châh et les Châh Zadèhs ses fils, à Tchechmèh-i-Ali, près Téhéran. Flandin, 1840, in *Voyage en Perse*, avec Flandin, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5-55. Feth-Ali-Châh, bas-relief, Téhéran. Flandin, 1840, in *Voyage en Perse*, avec Flandin, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Introduction

Isfahan After Shah Abbas I

“*Sefahan nimi az ‘alam bod, aknoun
Jahan nimi ze shahr-e Esfahan ast*” [Isfahan used to be half of the world/ Now, the world is half the city of Isfahan]

and

“*Ey del emrooz biya o be Sefahan bengar/
Esfahan ra be safaa hamcho golestan bengar
Chaharbagh o dar o divar-e vey o bazarash/
sabz o ziba o monaqqash cho noh eyvan bengar.*”¹

[Today, come and take a look at Isfahan/
For its delights, it looks like a flower garden.
Look at its green, beautiful, and embellished chaharbaghs, doors, walls, and bazaars that resemble the nine skies]

These are only a couple of verses from *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh* (Praises of Hosein) or *Tazkira-ye Baqi*, an early nineteenth-century *tazkira* (biographic anthology of poets), admiring post-Safavid Isfahan. Contrary to our expectations, these verses indeed portray a different image of the post-Safavid city, which is commonly associated with decline and degeneracy. The focus of this study is this new and neglected image and the overlooked urban and architectural transformations of Isfahan from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Through an examination of the built environment and its literary representations in tandem with networks of power, this study aims to complicate the inherited and dominant history of this period by foregrounding neglected patrons and lost architectural and urban interventions.

¹ Abd al-Baqi Baqi-ye Isfahani, *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh* (Tehran: Majlis Library, MS 7987) 53.

Isfahan, a central city in Iran, became the seat of the Safavid empire (1501-1722) under the rule of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) in 1590, and a great architectural activity turned it into an early modern city out of its medieval past. Royal palaces, gardens, a vast maidan, a designed public promenade, and other urban elements characterized the Safavid city in the seventeenth century. Shah Abbas I's successors also contributed to the development of his urban project by adding new waterfront palaces, royal gardens, and residential quarters. As a result of economic, political, and cultural flourishing in this period, Isfahan turned into an epitome of a presumed "Golden Age" in the history of Iran.

After the siege of the capital by the Afghans and the fall of the Safavids in 1722, Isfahan lost its political status but reserved its title as "*Dar al-Saltaneh*," [abode of kingship]. Even though this designation was not an exception in the case of Isfahan, and earlier capitals such as Tabriz and Qazvin appeared with the same titles in official sources, Isfahan's royal status went beyond this nominal designation and its cultural legacy continued to shape the image of kingship in the following capital cities. Succeeding ruling groups, Afshars, Zands, and Qajars, avoided Isfahan as their seat of rule and preferred other provincial centers for the consolidation of their dynasty. For a short time, Isfahan was under Afghan rule until the rise of Nader Shah Afshar to power in 1736. Nader Shah assigned a governor for Isfahan and chose Mashhad as his temporary capital. Following his death, Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-1779) shifted the seat of the empire again to the south and made Shiraz into a new artistic center comparable with Safavid Isfahan.² This ambitious stimulation of artistic production in Shiraz was accompanied by an urban renewal project to "restore a neo-Safavid centralized

² Talinn Grigor, "Kings and Traditions in *Différence*: Antiquity Revisited in Post-Safavid Iran," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017), 1082-1101.

state.”³ The last ruling group of the eighteenth century, the Qajars, moved the capital city one more time from Shiraz to Tehran in 1785 which remained the capital city of the country afterward.

According to this common narrative of Iran’s history in the eighteenth century, Isfahan was disfavored by the post-Safavid rulers and faded from the dynastic historiography. In general, the city has been presented as a static and iconic image standing for the golden reign of Shah Abbas I. The uneven historiography of Isfahan is symptomatic of a larger issue in historiography and the dynastic periodization in general. Unlike the first half of the Safavid period, the second half has been largely overlooked and understudied. Periods after the reign of Shah Abbas I have often been considered as the downward and weakening phases of Safavid rule that led to the emergence of a lingering “decline” in the history of Iran—beginning with the death of Shah Abbas I and ending with the rise of Reza Shah Pahlavi to the throne in 1925.⁴ Given this line of historiography, scholarship on Isfahan is mostly limited to the monumental and royal architectural activities of Shah Abbas I. Even the literature on late Safavid urbanism and architecture has been mostly confined to a brief survey of construction activities, albeit under the shadow of the Safavid decline narrative, and mainly focused on the fading imperial power of the Safavid kings and the empowerment of the ulama.⁵ As a result, the grand narrative of Shah Abbas I’s Isfahan in the

³ Grigor, “Kings and Traditions in *Différence*,” 1086.

⁴ Grigor, “Kings and Traditions in *Différence*,” 1099. “In light of this nationalist historiography, post-Safavid art was lamented as a period of hopeless decline and deformation. Qajar art in tot was thought as unworthy of preservation and undeserving of much art historical attention. One of the three influential Orientalists working in Iran, Arthur Upham Pope, encouraged Riza Shah to erase traces of Qajar culture.”

⁵ Masashi Haneda, “The Character of the Urbanisation of Isfahan in the Later Safavid Period,” *Safavid Persia: the History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, (London: I.B. Tauris, Pembroke Papers 4, 1996) 369-388. In this topographical approach,

historiography has glossed over the changes and developments of the city in the later periods.

A recent trend in scholarship, pioneered by Farshid Emami and Kathryn Babayan, has expanded Isfahan's urban studies beyond Shah Abbas I's building campaign. Yet the late Safavid Isfahan remains outside of the scope of this scholarship. Among the few studies concerned with the later Safavid period is Jean-Do Brignoli's scholarship focusing on Shah Soltan Hosein's Farahabad palace-garden in the early eighteenth century. Brignoli's efforts to reclaim this late Safavid complex's status challenges the moralistic judgments that categorize Shah Soltan Hosein's royal architecture in the framework of a narrative of decline. Thanks to his reconstruction based on visual documents, we have a better understanding of the Farahabad suburban area. The limited scope of the study concentrated on just one palace, however, does not represent a full picture of Shah Soltan Hosein's architectural and urban patronage in Isfahan. Highlighting literary sources for the study of this period, Nazanin Shahidi's article on Golzar-e Sa'adat offers new insights into the architectural configuration of Isfahan in the second half of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Her findings suggest that besides Farahabad, Soltan Hosein had commissioned other structures along with a maïdan in the Sa'adatabad Garden. Acknowledging these significant studies, a fuller picture of this period's urban and architectural developments requires further investigation to analyze these individual projects in relation to one another and the city's changes as a whole.

Haneda questions the presumed decline associated with the post-Shah Abbas I's period by emphasizing the later architectural activities in Isfahan. Yet, the urban developments in the last years of the empire have not been included and the architectural efforts of Shah Soltan Hosein have been left overlooked.

Although constructing these grand political histories has served agendas ranging from the nationalist (specifically under the Pahlavis) to the theocratic (Shi'i idioms under the current Islamic Republic of Iran), they are of little help in understanding the city's history as an urban center in the *longue durée*. By challenging the static and frozen historiography of Safavid Isfahan, I hope to draw attention to the ways in which Isfahan coped with the shift of power to other capital cities and continued to function as an active and influential urban center in the following centuries.

To this end, the timeframe chosen for this dissertation covers the period between the accession of Shah Soltan Hosein, the last effective king before the fall of Isfahan, in 1695 and the death of the second Qajar king, Fath Ali Shah, in 1834. Cutting through the dynastic periodization, this time frame is based on a set of common social and cultural factors that link the end of the Safavid period to the early Qajar era. Rather than a clear-cut dynastic periodization that marks the beginning and end of a ruling group, I have opted for a spatio-temporal periodization grounded in the social and cultural context that gives cohesion to a certain time in a designated space. Here Isfahan and its built environment take the first place in defining this periodization. Despite the problematic nature of the “decline” paradigm, I take presumably negative terms such as “rupture” and “break” as analytical terms that signal a certain change separating our period in this project from the preceding and succeeding eras. Instead of justifying a form of continuity, I consider this section of historical time as a distinct era with its own leading logic and characteristics built upon the legacies of the previous era.

The first theme that bridges the gap between the late Safavid and early Qajar periods is the ruler's excessive religiosity. As scholars have interpreted, in the case of the former, this

obsession with religion has been manifested in the empowerment of the ulama and the construction of the royal school (Chaharbagh Madrasa), commissioned by Shah Soltan Hosein along the Chaharbagh Avenue to the south of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* (palace complex). For Fath Ali Shah, his piety and religiously oriented rulership have been associated with his patronage of grand-scale congregational mosques in the capital and provinces to gain the favor of the ulama as powerful urban leaders in the center and peripheries.⁶ While the demonstration of piety and belief in the Shi'i ideology was instrumental for the legitimacy of the Iranian kingship in both cases, as I argue in this dissertation, it should not be overestimated in a way to preclude our understanding of their broader attempts to revitalize and renovate their empire by transforming its built environment. With regard to this caveat, the religious architecture of these periods can be assumed to be just one parcel of the larger urban renewal projects that must be analyzed in their social, economic, and political contexts.

The second characteristic that connects these two ends of the presumed “rupture” is the contribution of the non-royal urban patrons to the preservation and restoration of Isfahan's built environment. During the reign of Soltan Hosein, the limits of the inner city became the domain of urban elites and their social and economic activities. Even after the fall of the empire, this process continued more or less in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was only at the end of Fath Ali Shah's reign that the ulama rose to power as the major urban elites who by the end of the nineteenth century monopolized the economic and social

⁶ Relying heavily on Hamid Algar's book, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: the Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), most of the scholars working on this period view Fath Ali Shah's artistic patronage in the light of his good relationship with the ulama and his piety. And his architectural activities have been interpreted as a way to gain the ulama's favor in consolidating and legitimizing his rule as a Shi'i king.

spheres of Isfahan.⁷ In fact, the ulama was just one of the groups that participated in this process. They came to the front line in urban patronage when Fath Ali Shah appointed prince Seyf al-Dowleh as the governor of Isfahan. The city was mostly under the control of local urban elites before this time. This moment marked the strong presence of princely interest in Isfahan and the ensuing political and social tensions between the state and the ulama manifested in the long career of prince Zill al-Soltan, Naser al-Din Shah's son, both as a prince governor and claimant of kingship.

Thus, according to this rationale, I would argue that the process of Isfahan's provincialization began at the turn of the seventeenth century when Soltan Hosein delegated the inner city to the leading urban elites and moved his *dowlatkhaneh* gradually to the suburb of Farahabad. In the interim period between this shift and the appointment of prince Seyf al-Dowleh, the city was mainly managed by local officers and notables coming from different social groups, involved in the restoration of Isfahan's urban and cultural status. The case of Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani (1758-1823) and his family examined in this dissertation illustrates the ways in which such local notables consolidated and validated their role as urban elites and reworked and refashioned the city's cultural legacy.

While this period demonstrates a sort of cohesion in terms of the city's administrative structure and the upper hand of local elites in managing the city's affairs, it is by no means a homogeneous and monotone period. The focus of this dissertation on Soltan Hosein's reign and the period under Sadr-e Isfahani's career is inevitably conditioned by the availability of primary sources, the number of known or existing buildings, and the prevalence of

⁷ Heidi Walcher, *In the Shadow of the King: Zill Al-Sultān and Isfahān Under the Qājārs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008). Also see her article: "Face of the Seven Spheres: The Urban Morphology and Architecture of Nineteenth-Century Isfahan," *Iranian Studies* 33, no. 3-4 (2000): 327-347.

architectural activities in these periods. The aim of this periodization is to offer a working time frame where cultural processes such as decentralization of power, the rise of urban elites, and the urban transformations of Isfahan can be analyzed in a broader context free of dynastic, political, or centennial categorizations. This said, the revision offered on the late Safavid period in Chapter 1 will be treated as an important prologue for the chronological and thematic organization of this dissertation.

The Dilemma in the Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Iran

Globally the eighteenth century is often thought of as a transitional period between early modern and modern periods. These presumptions have been recently changed due to the shift in the scholarly direction advocating cultural history and taking issue with periodization and dynastic historiography. This new interest in scholarship has also encouraged historians to initiate a new discourse on eighteenth-century Iran.⁸ The recent volume edited by the late Michael Axworthy, *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th century Iran*, is a remarkable attempt to chart the difficulties of dealing with eighteenth-century Iran and how to tackle them. Other than Sussan Babaie's significant contribution to the volume on the architecture of the Kalat-e Naderi, this seminal collection lacks any discussion of cities, at least as the main arenas of political, social, economic, and cultural transformations.⁹ While military ambitions, religion, philosophy, and economy have been addressed, cities and urban life seem to be marginal to these discussions. Andrew Newman acknowledges that culture has been ignored in the

⁸ Michael Axworthy, *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁹ Sussan Babaie, "Nader Shah, the Delhi Loot, and the 18th-Century Exotics of Empire," in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 215-235.

analysis of post-Safavid Iran and that political and economic decline did not necessarily result in cultural decay. He takes the production of religious texts and the life of individual religious figures and clerics as evidence of the continued vitality of Shi'i culture in the eighteenth century despite political and economic instabilities.¹⁰ Yet, one wonders how these human and material movements and circulations occurred in a non-spatial environment independent from the urban centers and their historical connotations.

Another issue with the historiography of eighteenth-century Iran is the decentralization of power that has been termed a "tribal resurgence" in secondary scholarship. Not as easy as a centralized power structure to grasp, tribal rules and local elites took power in the aftermath of the Safavid decline. Due to these complexities, even the interim imperial undertakings and efforts to restore the kingship have been treated with suspicion and neglect. While some scholars attempted to frame Nader Shah's ambitious military achievements and centralization of Iran within the tribal resurgence concept, and even in continuity with the Mongol legacy, scholars such as Axworthy see Nader as a forward-looking king with an imperial project in hand beyond the tribal framework.

It should also be noted that this decentralization was not unique to Iran in the eighteenth century. Other Eurasian cities, especially those under Muslim rule, experienced somewhat similar shifts in power structure following changes in the social order.¹¹ However, the

¹⁰ Andrew Newman, "Of Mullas, Manuscripts, and Migration: Aspects of Twelver Shi'i Community Life in the 18th Century," in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 105-125.

¹¹ For further studies on the emergence of the *a'yan* in the Islamic lands see Bruce McGowan, "The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Gagan D.S. Sood, *Indian and the Islamic Heartland: An Eighteenth-Century World of Circulation and Exchange* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016). For urban and architectural histories addressing these new elites and their contributions see Shirine Hamadeh, *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in*

speedy “collapse” of the Safavid empire left a dramatic effect. While the gradual decentralization of power and the rise of *a’yans* (nobles or urban elites) have been explained by scholars of Ottoman and Mughal empires as harbingers of social rearrangement, the abrupt fall of the Safavid empire was only ascribed to the shortcomings of a feeble king. As Rudi Matthee has argued in *Persia in Crisis*, however, what brought the Safavid empire to an end had much to do with the political flaws and lack of resources embedded in the structure of the empire than any other subsidiary reasons.¹² Maybe we need to revisit the idea of a centralized state under Shah Abbas I altogether to be able to see gradual but fundamental social changes that led to the events of 1722. Building on these discussions, I suggest that the decentralization of power in Iran and the empowerment of tribal and local patrons in later Safavid periods and in the following century must be viewed in this broader eighteenth-century context.

The rise of the new elites can be further contextualized with respect to the heightened mobility of objects and human migration in the eighteenth century. As Nebahat Avcioglu and Finbarr Barry Flood propose, the rise of the sub-imperial middle class in the form of the mercantile bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century engendered a “new pattern of mobility,” dubbed “mercantile imperialism,” which led to the creation of a global and cross-cultural milieu.¹³ This period was a time of great flexibility, mobility, and fluidity prior to the crystallization of the “rigid academic taxonomies of nineteenth-century” and the Orientalist

the Eighteenth Century (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Chanchal Dadlani, “The City Built, the City Rendered,” in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, ed. Kishwar Rizvi (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

¹² Rudolph P. Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

¹³ Nebahat Avcioglu and Finbarr Barry Flood “Introduction: Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century,” *Ars orientalis* 39 (2010): 7–38, 11.

representation of non-European cultures. In such a fluid and interactive environment, the authors maintain, art and architecture became a “public phenomenon” and a “cross-cultural concern.”¹⁴ Even though this volume has successfully brought to light the reciprocal and mutual cultural interactions between the East and the West, it still operates as an East vs. West dichotomy and overlooks the transnational and transregional mobilities outside the limits of the ‘mercantile imperialism,’ which was essentially considered a Western phenomenon. While the internal conditions of the “Orient” are kept marginal to this volume’s discussions,¹⁵ Gagan Sood’s study of the regional-scale trade and circulation in India and the Islamic heartlands in the eighteenth century reveals intriguing traces of the people’s movements under the “successor regimes.” These regimes took power after the decentralization of early modern Islamic empires of the Mughal, Ottoman, and Safavid in the Islamic world.¹⁶ Sood characterizes the eighteenth century as “a moment that brimmed with unscripted possibilities” in which circulation and exchange mostly occurred in arenas outside the “sovereign purview.”¹⁷ These arenas were mainly based on provincial centers distanced from the capitals of the empire.

Methodologically, as proposed by Matthee in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, three approaches have dominated the study of eighteenth-century Iran: transnational, national, and regional approaches. Matthee reminds us that “the fall of the Safavids led to a great scattering of people beyond the borders of Iran, and part of this centrifugal movement

¹⁴ Avcioglu and Flood, “Introduction,” 7.

¹⁵ For instance, the significant collapse of the Safavid empire, the Naderi invasion of India, and the great human mobility prevailing much of the eighteenth century in Iran and its neighboring countries remain irrelevant to this volume.

¹⁶ Sood, *India and the Islamic Heartland*, 11.

¹⁷ Sood, *India and the Islamic Heartland*, 12.

involved the dispersal and outward migration of clerics and mystics.”¹⁸ These movements created large human and cultural networks from Najaf to Lucknow. The cultural contact between Iran and India was not merely confined to military confrontations led by Nader Shah. Relying on the scholarship undertaken in the field of “Persianate Studies” he argues that cultural exchange continued even in the course of the eighteenth century between these two political entities.¹⁹

In this vein, Babaie’s chapter on the Kalat-e Naderi, “Nader Shah, the Delhi Loot, and the eighteenth-Century Exotics of Empire,” in the same volume, can be seen as evidence of this continued cultural exchange.²⁰ Babaie contends that the decoration techniques and architectural forms utilized in the erection of the Sun Palace in Kalat-e Naderi were inspired by Nader’s invasion of Delhi in 1736 and his imperial vision to repeat Timur’s conquests. As loot from the campaign, Nader brought back Indian artists who contributed to the construction of his palace (military camp) in Kalat.²¹ Drawing on these new threads of scholarship, I suggest considering the human migration resulting from the decentralization of power in Iran and the civil wars in the globalizing and cross-cultural context of eighteenth-century Iran.

Along with decentralization came the shift and distribution of power from the capital of the empire to the provinces. In the case of Iran, local governors and officials appointed by “successor regimes,” mostly comprising tribal confederacies, took power in urban centers of the provinces and operated as autonomous entities. But whether these successor regimes

¹⁸ Rudi Matthee, “Historiographical Reflections on the Eighteenth Century,” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 28.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Kalat is a town in the northeast of Khorasan province in Iran.

²¹ Babaie, “Nader Shah, the Delhi Loot, and the 18th-Century Exotics of Empire,” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 215-235.

were able to act beyond their tribal position and manage the urban centers has produced two diverging perspectives: one that still maintains the tribal resurgence view and the fact that a form of simultaneous rule was in effect in the absence of a centralized government;²² and a contrary perspective that refers to the imperial ambitions of Nader Shah beyond his tribal role, as proposed by Axworthy, and the continuity of the political and administrative system that relied on local officials, such as *kalantars*, *kadkhodas*, and local governors, regardless of who ruled in the capital, suggested by Willem Floor.²³ Despite previous scholarship that characterized eighteenth-century Iran by the “decline of the bureaucracy,”²⁴ Floor has recently argued for the existence of a capable administrative system during this period based on local offices and adjusted structures to work with the central government.²⁵

Taking the urban and architectural transformation of Isfahan, when the city experienced the shift of power and turned into a provincial center, this dissertation affirms the partial continuity of urban practices and administrative affairs proposed by social and political historians in the second view. Examining the built environment reveals that despite the strong presence of the tribes in the ongoing civil wars during the eighteenth century, urban centers and cities maintained their importance as the source of legitimacy and power. Rather than looking for a centralized political entity based in a capital city formulating urban and administrative policies, the clue for tracking down the urban and architectural activities in

²² Gene R. Garthwait, “‘What’s in a Name?’: Periodization and ‘18th-Century Iran’,” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 9-21.

²³ Willem Floor, “Tribal Resurgence in the Eighteenth Century: A Useful Label?” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 155.

²⁴ For this discussion see A.K.S. Lambton, “the Tribal Resurgence and the decline of the bureaucracy in the eighteenth century,” in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).

²⁵ Floor, “Tribal Resurgence in the Eighteenth Century,” 154.

the eighteenth century would be the undertakings of local administrators and elites who held power in the provincial urban centers.

Another point is the relationship between the successor regimes, their tribal leaders, and urban notables. During the period under consideration, local governors and officials were mostly selected from these groups. While Nader Shah and Karim Khan sent governors to provinces from their own tribal confederacies, local agents and urban notables were also appointed to these administrative and political positions. These local officials could simultaneously assume multiple roles; they operated not merely as the governor of a specific province but also as heads of social communities and notable families in their dominion. The recent scholarly interest in local communities of notables and families, as agents of socio-political change, has been deemed an appropriate approach for the understanding of power structure in this period. Recent scholarship on the social, political, and economic history of late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Iran asserts the significance and influence of these local families on various provincial and state affairs.²⁶ Taking a “socially oriented” approach, Assef Ashraf highlights the social and political role that familial ties played in the formation of early Qajar *divan* (administration or chancery) as a “familial state” in Tehran and brings to light the “familial and informal nature of political power” during this period.²⁷ The contribution of these local elites and their families in the management of the affairs transcended political duties and their social and economic prominence was also manifested

²⁶ For an economic and social history of this period see: Christoph Werner, *A Town in Transition: A Social and Economic History of the Elite of Tabriz, 1747-1848* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000); Thomas M. Ricks, *Notables, Merchants, and Shaykhs of Southern Iran and Its ports: Politics and Trade in the Persian Gulf, AD 1729-1789* (Gorgias Press, 2012); James M. Gustafson, *Kirman and the Qajar Empire: Local dimensions of modernity in Iran, 1794- 1914* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

²⁷ Assef Ashraf, “A Familial State: Elite Families, Ministerial Offices, and the Formation of Qajar Iran,” *Journal of Middle Eastern studies*, Issue. 51, 2019.

in the proliferation of infrastructural renovations and public works undertaken in provinces. Social historian Heidi Walcher has contributed to this body of scholarship through her significant book on Qajar Isfahan. *In the shadow of the King: Zill al-Soltan and Isfahan under the Qajars* deals with the political and economic context of the city globally and locally and aims to contextualize Isfahan's position in response to nineteenth-century imperial and colonial forces. Walcher's social history of the city is based on Isfahan's nineteenth-century economic developments, especially the boom of opium cultivation. Concentrating on the role of Zill al-Soltan, Naser al-Din Shah's son and governor of Isfahan, and the hierocratic urban authorities (*Aqayan-e Masjid-e Shah*) and well-known families in the later decades of the century, Walcher addressed the urban transformations of Isfahan as logical results of Isfahan's social and economic transformations.²⁸

Only recently architectural historians have joined social historians to consider these local agents' role in shaping the built environment. Nader Sayadi's dissertation, "The Fabric of the Early Modern City: Mass Production of Silk and Local Architectural Patronage in Kashan, Iran, Mid-Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries," is a great example of this sort. Sayadi investigates the role of silk weaving (*sha'rbafi*) workshops in the economic and urban revival of the city of Kashan following the devastating earthquake of 1778/1192. He argues for the consideration of these economic and industrial vernacular elements in the transformations of the city while these factors are usually overlooked in the study of Islamic cities. Through architectural analysis of these workshops, ethnographic study of the patrons involved in the erection of these workshops, and by challenging center-periphery dichotomies, this study relates a new narrative of the city's developments via the lens of

²⁸ Walcher, *In the shadow of the King*. Also, see her article "Face of the Seven Spheres."

indigenous and local industrial progress. His emphasis on local elites and families in shaping the economic sphere of this era is particularly important. As these workshops were erected by local urban patrons in hope of improving the economy of the city after its devastation.²⁹

The significance of these local agents can be fully understood in the context of the early Qajar period. In this dissertation, I will center my analysis around the case of Sadr-e Isfahani, Isfahan's local governor. Haji Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani was one of the prominent local figures in the early years of the Qajar period who launched an extensive construction project in Isfahan and led some of Fath Ali Shah's building campaign in Tehran and provinces. This figure has been highlighted in this study for two main reasons: first, he is a native Isfahani from a low-origin family that rose in ranks from *kadkhoda* (head of a city quarter) to the high-profile urban administrative position of Isfahan's governorship and later became the grand vizier in the Qajar court. The conspicuous point to mention is his lack of "divan background" and tribal ties. He also consolidated his family's position as one of the most influential notable families of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The second reason has to do with the immense urban and architectural campaign that he launched in Isfahan and other urban centers throughout his career. This was the largest physical intervention in the city after the fall of the Safavids. His case will further cast light on how local families and urban notables contributed to the social and political spheres of this period through art and architectural patronage.

²⁹ Nader Sayadi, "The Fabric of the Early Modern City: Mass Production of Silk and Local Architectural Patronage in Kashan, Iran, Mid-Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries," Ph.D. Dissertation, (The University of Texas at Austin, 2021). The architecture and urbanism of provinces have been mostly studied from the standpoint of the center. For example, Markus Ritter's book (*Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785-1848: Architektur Zwischen Ruckgriff und Neuerung*, 2006) analyzes the architecture of royal mosques and madrasas commissioned by the Qajar king and his proxies in the provinces.

Sadr-e Isfahani's assistance with the accession of early Qajar kings, including Aqa Mohammad Khan (1742-1797) and Fath Ali Shah (1769-1834), is a curious and informative example to examine. Based on this case, I propose that not only did such local figures have the opportunity to rise as urban elites, but they were also able to contribute to the legitimization process of the emerging rulers and shared power with them. The concept of "simultaneous rule," coined by Pamela Karle Crossley can be adopted to explain these elites' inclusion in the legitimation process of the kingship and explicate the structure of power between the center and peripheries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.³⁰ This emphasis on local governors as urban elites appends a new layer to the understanding of architectural patronage beyond the binaries of religion/ state and royal (princely)/ hierocratic (ulama) that prevails in the scholarship on this period.

The transnational and regional approaches converge in the examination of the early Qajar period when the imperial image re-articulated by Nader Shah (r. 1736-1747) in the mid-eighteenth century was fashioned and tailored for the rise of the new Qajar king, Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834), with the human and monetary resources provided by Isfahan's local administrator. Sadr-e Isfahani's role as governor of Isfahan was central to crafting the royal image of Fath Ali Shah as a rightful heir to the Persian empire following the leads of his immediate predecessors. In addition to the crucial role of this figure and his family in shaping regional politics in relation to the Qajar court in Tehran, his family's connection to the cultural and human networks of the eighteenth century adds a transnational dimension to their locally based power networks. Sadr-e Isfahani, for instance, developed political and

³⁰ P.K. Crossley and Gene R. Garthwaite, "Post-Mongol States and Early Modern Chronology in Iran and China," *JRAS*, Series 3, 26, (2016): 293-307. Crossley defines "simultaneous rulership" as a "Rulership in which the codes of legitimacy of civilisations recognized by the conquest authority are given distinct representation in the rulership," 293.

social connections with Shi'i centers (the 'Atabat) in Iraq through art and architectural projects in Najaf and Karbala. This architectural patronage shared between Iran and Iraq under Sadr-e Isfahani's career set Isfahan and its cultural productions on a broader transregional stage independent of the ruling king in Tehran.

Previous Scholarship: Safavid Isfahan as a Reference

Considering the rise of Tehran as the capital city of Qajar Iran, most of the scholars interested in the Qajar period have investigated Safavid Isfahan in comparison to Tehran to explain the formation of this new capital city.³¹ What characterizes this body of scholarship is the unanimous consensus that Qajar Tehran drew inspiration from the architectural legacy of Safavid Isfahan, although it did not remain a faithful follower and changed the architectural language to accommodate the new needs of Qajar rule. Skipping over the transitional eighteenth century, they are mostly concerned with the "Golden Age" of Isfahan under Shah Abbas I (mostly the first half of the seventeenth century) and compare it to the developments in Tehran under the Qajar kings (mostly the mid-nineteenth century and onward). What has been missing in these studies is how the interim period between these two high points played a role in the configuration of commonalities and differences between these dynastic styles. The transition of ideas as a linear phenomenon moving from the former capital city to the next has meant ignoring contemporaneous Isfahan, which

³¹ See: Zahra Ahari, "Building 'New Isfahan,' Narratives and Forms of life," In *Studies of Iranian-Islamic cities*, No.26 (2017): 27-38; Zahra Ahari, "City, Ceremony, Collective Memory: A Study of the Relation of Ceremonies and Urban Spaces in the Safavid and Qajar Eras," in *Honarhay-e Ziba*, No.47 (2012); Talinn Grigor, "Kings and Traditions in Difference," Babaie, "In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship," *Artibus Asiae*, 66(2), (2006): 35-54. Babaie, S., & Grigor, T. *Persian kingship and architecture: Strategies of power in Iran from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

continued to live on and change in the eighteenth century. For unlike the voluminous scholarship on Safavid Isfahan, the city's eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century architectural and urban history marks a conspicuous lacuna in the field.³²

In “In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship,” the prominent architectural historian of Safavid Isfahan, Sussan Babaie attempts to link Safavid Isfahan to Qajar Tehran, arguing that morphological and typological analogies between Safavid monuments and Qajar royal architecture do not constitute meaningful links and connections. “The fact that the Qajars did not follow exactly the same architectural language of Safavid kingship to express their power constitutes ‘failures’ and ‘ills’ of the Qajars” in Babaie's judgment.³³ Offering a new explanation for the presumed “anomaly” of Qajar architecture, Babaie concentrates on the formal and ceremonial characteristics of Qajar architecture and claims that “the relevance of Safavid imperial architecture to that of the Qajars lies in the sphere of private and leisure Safavid palaces and not in the realm of the ceremonial spaces. It is in that realm of the inner sanctum that the Qajar axis of kingship is made visible.”³⁴ While the *ghulam* (slaves) system was the main administrative and royal base for Safavid

³² For recent studies on Safavid Isfahan's architecture and urbanism see Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Farshid Emami, “Coffeehouses, Urban Spaces, and the Formation of a Public Sphere in Safavid Isfahan.” *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 33 (2016): 177–220; “The New Isfahan: Architecture, Urbanism, and City Experience in Safavid Iran, 1590–1722” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2017); Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (Stanford University Press, 2021).

³³ Babaie, “In the Eye of the Storm,” 35. The common consensus is that the Qajars did not construct grand pillared porches like Safavid *talars* for their audience halls. Instead, they relied on another older type (*hasht behesht*) used in Safavid Isfahan's private and leisure palaces. This change of direction has been usually assumed as a failed practice in comparison to Safavid architecture.

³⁴ Ibid, 36.

kingship,³⁵ the Qajars relied exclusively on a network of ruling elites from the royal
bloodline.³⁶ Babaie maintains that “regardless of Qajar imperial ambitions, the architectural
expression of this corporate family operation is realized not through the imperial symbols of
Safavid architecture but the architecture of the *andarun* [the private space dedicated to the
royal household] and of leisure.”³⁷

Post-Safavid royal architecture is the subject of Talinn Grigor’s scholarship in “Kings
and Traditions in *Différance*: Antiquity Revisited in Post-Safavid Iran.” As a salient
architectural historian of modern Iran, she characterizes this period’s architecture “as a
tabula rasa in which various agents came to offer a working balance between rapid change
and existing tradition.” Concerned with royal architecture and its changes after the fall of
Isfahan, Grigor divides the post-Safavid period into two sections with different approaches
in terms of dealing with past architectural legacy. Accordingly, the period from 1722 to the
1820s is the time for looking at the recent past and appropriating Safavid architectural
elements, such as *talar* (pillared porch) and *hasht behesht* (lit. 8 paradises: a nine-fold plan
type) architectural types. This approach was adopted by the immediate successors of the
Safavids, the Zands, and the early Qajar kings. The second phase includes the period from
the 1820s to 1979 when a revivalist architecture was invented, derived from ancient Persian

³⁵ Shah Abbas I has been credited for the centralization of power in his capital city of Isfahan. He renounced the reliance on the Qizilbash tribal system and established a master-slave system, of rule where military slaves (*ghulams*) served the king after conversion to Islam and in practice, were bestowed with the power to partake in the administration of the empire and construction of the New Isfahan. These slaves were appointed as key court officials in Isfahan and sent to the provinces as governors. They were involved in a corporate system of architectural patronage by undertaking architectural and infrastructure projects under the name of Shah Abbas I. For further information on the social, political, and cultural significance of these military slaves see Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, et al. *Slaves of the Shah: The New elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

³⁶ Babaie, “In the Eye of the Storm,” 37.

³⁷ Babaie, “In the Eye of the Storm,” 54.

architecture and antiquities in Iran. The 1820s break between these two periods marks the political and artistic upheavals in the aftermath of the Perso-Russian wars. The dates demarcating the fall of the Safavids and the Qajars' defeat in the Perso-Russian wars presume a political timeframe in which the transmission of artistic ideas and styles is contingent upon the political watersheds. Grigor balances this temporal frame in her recent book, *The Persian Revival*, where she extends the notion of artistic revival one step back to the Zand and early Qajar periods when ancient Persian techniques and imagery were appropriated as a "copy." As Grigor puts it, "The Persian Revival in Iran was an artistic phenomenon that seems to have begun in Shiraz and migrated later to Tehran—and remained dominant in those two urban centers."³⁸ With regard to the aims of this revivalist style, she maintains: "To represent the empire as magnificently antique was to cling to its modern sovereignty. Invested in the merit Europe ascribed to antiquarian and racial taxonomies, Iranians began to cast their empire in revivalistic terms to defer Europe's portrayal of its decadence and backwardness."³⁹

The study of Isfahan's urban and architectural transformations in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century adds another layer to the complex notion of Persian revival in Iran. Centering my argument on non-royal and local agents, Isfahan's case casts light on other architectural practices that both shared characteristics with and differed from the artistic phenomenon headed by the state and concentrated in Shiraz and Tehran. The concept of "revival" used in this dissertation connotes the restoration and revivification of lost or faded urban and architectural practices in the urban context of Isfahan beyond stylistic concerns.

³⁸ Talinn Grigor, *The Persian Revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture* (Penn State University Press, 2021), 150.

³⁹ Ibid, 145.

The early Qajar period has been treated as a distinct era in Markus Ritter's book, *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785-1848*. Markus has examined mosques and madrasehs as prominent architectural types in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. His architectural and formal analysis of the religious monuments indicates two stylistic tendencies associated with their patronage systems: "a simplification which standardizes and systematizes forms," and "an eclecticism which draws from both the seventeenth century and in some cases earlier traditions."⁴⁰ The process of creating a standardized form was led by the Qajar court to achieve a coherent formal representation of monarchy such as grand scale 4-iwan congregational mosques commissioned in the major urban centers of the provinces across the Qajar dominion. These monumental undertakings ensured the public representation of Fath Ali Shah as a pious king seeking to come to terms with religious authorities. The eclecticism approach was followed by the new ruling elites such as local governors and officials, merchants, and religious figures attempting to differentiate their own local positions in provincial centers. Local mosques and madrasehs, combining vernacular and regional architectural traditions and distinct Qajar motifs, commissioned by these elites were the product of this eclecticism. Markus's study is a valuable source for tracing the links between various patron circles in Iran and their relationship to a specific architectural style of this period. However, his monographic analysis of the main religious buildings can be further contextualized with attention to the broader role and agency that these non-royal ruling elites had in the transformation of the cities. This study also considers religious architecture to be the main form of architectural

⁴⁰ Ritter, *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785-1848*, 536.

patronage in this period either by the court or the elites, which presumes the religiosity of the patron as the major impetus for the increase of architectural activities.

Despite the prevalence of religious architecture at this time, mosques and madrasehs were only a part of architectural projects commissioned by the royals or urban elites. In this dissertation, first, I pay attention to other architectural types such as palace buildings and urban renovation attempts in Isfahan. I bring to light an array of architectural activities beyond religious monuments to expand our understanding of this period's unexplored urban and architectural transformations. Second, I look at the intersection of royal and local urban and architectural patronage in Isfahan through Sadr-e Isfahani's construction and restoration projects either commissioned by him or by Fath Ali Shah. The case of Sadr-e Isfahani's patronage in Isfahan calls to question presumed lines between royal/non-royal, and center/periphery defining the forms of architectural patronage and stylistic categorizations in this period.

With particular importance for my dissertation, nineteenth-century Isfahan has been addressed in social historian Heidi Walcher's scholarship. In "Face of the Seven Spheres: The Urban Morphology and Architecture of Nineteenth-Century Isfahan," Walcher looks at the changes in the city in terms of urban image and its architecture. As an anti-decline study, this article argues that despite the presumed disintegration of Isfahan after the Safavids, Isfahan was preserved, changed, and even developed in the nineteenth century. She contextualizes the destruction of Safavid monuments in Isfahan by the late Qajar rulers as their response to the political, economic, and social changes of the nineteenth century that placed Isfahan in a position between the preservation of old Safavid buildings and the modernization of the city. This article is a remarkable source for my dissertation as it

provides invaluable information on the social and economic contexts of urban patrons and their contribution to the built environment of Isfahan in the nineteenth century.

The treatment of the nineteenth century or Qajar era as a homogenous period in the above-mentioned scholarship, without any explicit reference to the preceding events in the eighteenth century, raises the often-criticized issue of dynastic periodization. While the majority of Walcher's arguments for nineteenth-century Isfahan hold true for the second half of the century, as will be discussed in this dissertation, the beginning decades align more comfortably with the late eighteenth-century contexts rather than the later periods. The shift from the appointment of Qajar princes to the governorship of Isfahan instead of local figures, such as Sadr-e Isfahani, in the last years of Fath Ali Shah's reign can mark the divide between these two phases. Placing emphasis on architectural interventions as indicators of social change, I will hark back to the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to investigate the processes in which late Safavid practices turned into nineteenth-century conditions presented by Walcher. Needless to say, my study relies heavily on the architectural transformation of the period as evidence and to this end utilizes visual and literary sources unexamined in the social and economic history of Isfahan.

Post-Safavid Isfahan in Primary Sources

Unlike the status of the seventeenth-century city that placed the descriptions of Isfahan at the center of European travelogues and Persian historical accounts, the post-Safavid accounts of Isfahan were moved to the margins to make room for other emerging capital cities such as Zand Shiraz and Qajar Tehran. While sources were mostly silent on Isfahan's status between the fall of the Safavids and the rise of the Qajars, the situation improved by the end of the eighteenth century. As Walcher has correctly stated, despite this

improvement, the nature of the sources on nineteenth-century Isfahan presents fundamental problems. Whenever the descriptions of nineteenth-century Isfahan appear in the textual sources they are “notoriously brief” and present specific pathos for the lost glory of the royal city and the Safavid empire. The most baffling issue is “the strong dialectic or interdependence between Persian and European accounts of Qajar Isfahan.” In this regard, Walcher maintains:

In the case of Isfahan in particular, it is almost impossible to avoid European accounts and with them the dilemma of Orientalist stereotypes and personal biases. Accessible Persian sources generally provide only limited information about the history of the buildings or the urban landscape and, in the case of Isfahan, almost all Persian authors have incorporated the leading European accounts into their own narratives and interpretations. Chardin, for example, is quoted by all the available published Persian accounts, Malcolm’s narrative was well known in Isfahan, and Curzon has been read by almost all European and Persian authors writing after publication of his voluminous *Persia and the Persian Question*.⁴¹

While this assessment of the sources seems quite right for the late nineteenth-century Isfahan, as mentioned earlier, assuming a homogenous nineteenth-century can be the core of the issue here. Walcher’s focus on the middle to later decades of the century should not be generalized to the whole Qajar period in Isfahan. One needs to consider Iran’s major social and cultural transformations under Naser al-Din Shah from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Most of the Persian accounts that Walcher consulted were produced in the late nineteenth century and in the context of Naseri reforms and his modernization efforts.⁴² Her

⁴¹ Walcher, “Face of the Seven Spheres,” 328.

⁴² The typical monographs on Isfahan that Walcher mentions, (“Isfahan, Qajar Period,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 2006), are from the late nineteenth century onwards including *Nesf-e Jahan fi Ta’rif-e Isfahan* (1870) by Mohammad Mehdi ibn Mohammad Reza al-Isfahani and *Joghrafiya-ye Isfahan* (1877) by Mirza Hosein Tahvildar were compiled as the

reliance on European travelogues and late Qajar historical accounts of Isfahan leaves the reader with a vicious circle of references in which the line between the primary (contemporary) and secondary (monographs written afterward) accounts disappears. This circle confuses more than it clarifies. The way out of this generalization is to see what the state of the sources is prior to the Naseri era and whether those sources reflect the same issue. In addition to the reassessment of primary sources, we need to turn our attention to other forms of data where the voice of the locals can be heard, and the traces of their existence can be tracked. The above issue with European travelogues can be balanced with the incorporation of untapped primary sources such as visual and local literary representations which have been consulted in this dissertation.

The visual and literary sources can carry the same dangers if examined uncritically. Colonial ambitions and imperial expansionism also characterize the intention behind the available visual evidence produced in much of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, the broad spectrum of information that these underutilized sources provide can assist us in reconstructing a partially close image of Isfahan's physical and architectural transformations. Maps, engravings, architectural drawings, and later photographs of Isfahan have not received enough scholarly attention and if examined, they were considered subsidiary sources to investigate the Safavid city. Maps are informative to gauge the extent

first attempts to record Isfahan's history and geography. *Nesf-e Jahan* was produced for the assemblage of another historiography project, *Merat al-Boldan-e Naseri* (the mirror of cities) and it brought together various information on Isfahan's geography and human history. Later, *Joghrafiya-ye Isfahan* was written, "upon the order of some state dignitaries (*ba-mawjeb-e hokm-e omanāye divān-e dawlat*), with a heavy focus on market forces and geographical questions." As Walcher observes in his analysis of Qajar sources, even later important historiographies of Isfahan, Shaikh Jaberi Ansari's *Tarikh-e Isfahān* and Mir Sayyed 'Ali Janab's *Al-Isfahan*, are drawn on Chardin's account and actually include some translations from his influential travelogue.

of the city's transformations in our period. Two modern maps of Isfahan drawn in 1839 and 1851 are available and comprise the major primary sources of this study.

With respect to the visual representations of the city, the earliest depictions in the seventeenth century belong to European travelogues. Drawings and engravings found in these travelogues along with the textual descriptions helped scholars to imagine the spatial relationship and the location of urban elements in the city. Most of these depictions were concentrated around the key urban spaces of Isfahan and royal monuments. The visual representation of Isfahan entered a new phase in the early nineteenth century. Debates over the accuracy of the drawings and information provided by seventeenth-century travelers among Orientalist scholars led to the need for new documentation of Iran's antiquities. The impact of this debate can be observed in the launch of a new mission by Eugene Flandin, a French artist and Orientalist, and Pascal Coste, a French architect, to document Iran's ancient and modern monuments.⁴³ A general plan of the city by Coste in 1839 complemented the collection that was supposed to be presented to the École des Beaux-Arts. Almost ten years later, in 1851, Russian military cartographers, under the supervision of General Cherikov, produced a detailed map of Isfahan following Russia's increasing political interest in Iran. In comparison to the schematic representation of Coste's map, the Russian map offered a great degree of scientific accuracy and comprehensiveness.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, photography of the city's monuments and people added to the repository of visual representations of Isfahan. In addition to the collection of Qajar kings and dignitaries, photographs produced by European travelers and

⁴³ Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse, mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste ... Publiés par ordre de son excellence le ministre de la maison de l'empereur et des beaux-arts* (Paris: A. 1867).

residents of Isfahan represent Isfahan's everyday life and urban practices. Ernst Holtzer, a German telegraph technician, resided and worked in Isfahan for 20 years and documented Isfahan's urban life visually and textually in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Aligned with other political and cultural transformations of nineteenth-century Iran, Nasir al-Din Shah's interest in documenting his domain of sovereignty led to the emergence of new methods of cartography and historiography of cities in Iran. Following modern surveying approaches under the Pahlavi dynasty, Isfahan's first map (*Naqsha-i Dar al-Saltana Isfahan*) by native cartographers was produced in 1924.

In addition to these maps, the extensive survey of Iran's architecture by French Architect Pascal Coste and his artist colleague Eugene Flandin provides us with invaluable architectural documents and drawings. Almost like the late nineteenth-century textual sources where Chardin's description of seventeenth-century Isfahan overshadows the contemporary presence of the city and his voice can be heard along the lines of every European and Persian account, the visual representations of the city suffer the same issue. In these sources, great emphasis has been placed on the confines of the Safavid city, and in some cases, even by then the deceased Shah Abbas I has been credited for the construction of later buildings. Pascal Coste, for instance, labeled the plan of an early nineteenth-century palace (Emarat-e Sadri) with the name of Shah Abbas.⁴⁵ With this caveat, one should approach visual documents with caution regarding these nostalgic and anachronistic representations. Nonetheless, these sources are crucial for any architectural analysis of the

⁴⁴ Ernst Holtzer, *Iran dar yeksad o sizdah sal-e pish* [Iran in 113 years ago], trans. Mohammad 'Asemi (1975).

⁴⁵ This palace will be discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation.

city and they still yield irreplaceable information regarding Isfahan's post-Safavid built environment.

Given the state of primary sources and the marginality of post-Safavid Isfahan in the textual and visual representations, I propose triangulation of these sources with the Persian literary works produced in the timeframe of this dissertation. Maps and architectural drawings are essential to reconstruct the physical and corporeal aspects of Isfahan's transformation in this period. They provide important information about the scale and form of the building activities, the possible function of spaces, the change in the taste and aesthetic preference of the inhabitants and patrons, etc. However, the lines and labels on the plans and maps are silent and blind when we inquire about how various social and political contexts gave shape to the built environment. Indeed, how the Isfahanis perceived the ongoing transformations of Isfahan will always remain inaccessible to us. However, reading the built environment in tandem with their literary descriptions might cast some light on how the patrons conceived these spaces in Isfahan's cultural milieu. In this dissertation, I introduce a corpus of literary works that populate these dry and technical drawings with poets' poetic imaginations and patrons' desires to evoke Isfahan's urban memory in the lines and verses of Persian biographic anthologies called *panegyric-tazkira*.

Organization of this dissertation

This dissertation analyzes the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century urban transformations of Isfahan through three interrelated concepts of agency, urban memory, and representation of kingship. As a first attempt to reconstruct Isfahan's urban history in this neglected period, the aim of this dissertation is to cast light on the complexities of the city's revival in such a critical moment and in the context of Isfahan's historically and culturally

loaded built setting. By assuming agency to the local administrators of the cities over the tribal resurgence, highlighting the collective urban practices that defined the city's identity, and introducing the lost royal patronage in post-Safavid Isfahan, this study represents Isfahan's transformations as a unique product of social, political, and cultural networks that functioned at the regional, national and transnational levels. The objective of the chronological and thematical organization of this dissertation is to illustrate Isfahan's historical and physical transformations not as detached occurrences but as entangled processes with the city's preceding and following architectural practices in our select spatio-temporal framework.

Following the discussion on sources and approach, Chapter 1, "Reading Isfahan through *Tazkiras*," is dedicated to the introduction of the genre of *tazkira* and its relevance to reading the built environment. In this chapter, I explain how *tazkira* as a site of memory was modified and tailored to represent the concerns of the emerging urban elites in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Panegyric-*tazkiras* became an apt locus for awakening Isfahan's urban memory while reconstructing and rewriting a new history that attested to the agency of emerging urban elites. The last section of the chapter probes into the representation of Isfahan and the patron Sadr-e Isfahani in *Madayeh* to elaborate on what themes and subjects have been selected to tie the city to Sadr-e Isfahani's patronage and evoke Isfahan's urban memory.

Chapter 2, "Legacy of the Empire in Late Safavid City," explores the latest architectural legacy of the Safavid empire in Isfahan under the reign of Shah Soltan Hosein. It examines this period's royal architectural activities from the lens of contemporary accounts free of retrospective decline narratives. Introducing new sources on the built environment of

Isfahan during this period, this chapter challenges the overestimated role attributed to religion in shaping the social and political character of Shah Soltan Hosein's reign and highlights the prominent urban practices and royal ambitions that continued to shape the late Safavid city. Taking a holistic approach to Soltan Hosein's architectural and urban interventions in Isfahan, this chapter suggests a strong royal intention by then to reappropriate and revive the glorious legacy of Shah Abbas I, and even to surpass it.

Chapter 3, "New Urban Patrons: Agency and Self-fashioning in post-Safavid Isfahan," deals with the architectural patronage of local patrons in the aftermath of the Safavid collapse and introduces Sadr-e Isfahani as an influential figure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The self-fashioning practices of these patrons will be explained in relation to the social and political networks of power in Isfahan and Tehran. Tracing the link between these social and cultural networks, this chapter demonstrates the ways in which these local urban patrons engaged with regional, national, and transnational structures of power. Extracted from Madayeh and other primary sources, the last section of the chapter provides the big picture of Sadr-e Isfahani's construction and preservation projects in Isfahan to set the scene for the next chapters on the chaharbaghs and the palace.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation, "Chaharbagh Promenades and Urban Memory in Isfahan," is concerned with the legacy of urban practices and place memory that shaped Isfahan's urban transformations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It argues that although Isfahan was not the seat of power, the urban memory and royal legacy of Isfahan led to the appropriation of specific forms of urban spaces such as the "chaharbagh avenue type" (tree-lined avenues). By identifying and reconstructing the urban ensembles along the new chaharbagh avenues commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani and their relation to the

urban legacy of Isfahan, this chapter sheds light on how Isfahan and its multi-layered past functioned as a palimpsest to select some memories over the rest in this restoration process.

Chapter 5 is concerned with royal legitimacy and how Isfahan's urban memory and royal legacy served for representing the emerging king (Fath Ali Shah) and a new urban elite like Sadr-e Isfahani. "A Lost Qajar Palace: Reinventing the Image of Kingship in Isfahan," complicates the notion of royal agency by bringing in the overlooked role of non-royal patrons in crafting the royal image in Isfahan. The reconstruction of the now-lost palace of Emarat-e Sadri in the Safavid palace precinct serves as a case study to analyze the power dynamics in these center-periphery relations and its artistic and architectural implications for both the king and Sadr-e Isfahani. It also examines the acts of remembering and forgetting practiced in this Qajar palace through decorative programs and architectural design in the heart of Safavid *dowlatkhaneh*.

Through an examination of Isfahan's built environment and the literary representation of its transformations, this dissertation illuminates the longevity of urban memory and the continuity of urban practices that shaped Isfahan's urban experiences. Undeniably, Shah Abbas I's New Isfahan offered a malleable and practical blueprint for later urban interventions in Iran in which reviving and surpassing this successful urban legacy became a paramount task of the succeeding rulers and administrators. However, this competition with the past and respect for the urban legacy of the empire was handled with sufficient care and with the consideration of contemporary needs and aspirations of the new times and new patrons; a strategy that ensured the preservation of Isfahan's urban legacies as well as its smooth transition to the modern era.

Chapter 1 : Reading Isfahan through *Tazkiras*

Analytical Frameworks and Research Approach

This chapter explores the potentiality of *tazkiras* as informative sources for the examination of Isfahan's urban and cultural milieu in post-Safavid era. I will concentrate on the production of *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh* as a complex process of inscribing a new urban memory drawn on the historical urban legacy of Isfahan. Even though the use of literary sources and Persian poetry is not new in the study of architecture and urban history, reading the city through the lens of poetic *tazkiras* is a unique approach that I will be developing in this project. Literary scholars and art and architectural historians have approached Persian poetry from different angles to explore the relationship between literary descriptions and physical space. Paul Losensky, for instance, has traced a mutual and strong link between poetry and architecture in the Persianate world.¹ He takes a phenomenological approach to study the “experiential meaning” of the Hasanabad (Khawju) Bridge in Isfahan.² Poetry has been especially proven to be fruitful for the reconstruction of the lost built environment.

Art and architectural historians have analyzed poetic descriptions (*vasf*) to glean information about the corporeal, physical, and spatial aspects in order to reconstruct past architecture. Art historian Layla Diba has explored the early Qajar palace architecture

¹ Paul E. Losensky, “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in ‘Abdi Bayk Sirazi’s Garden of Eden,” *Eurasian Studies II*, no.1 (2003): 1–29. In this article on the Jannat-i ‘Adan, he demonstrates how ‘Abdi Beyk’s poetry has described the now-lost Sa’adatabad garden in Qazvin to present the ideological, spatial, and temporal meanings of this architectural project.

² Paul E. Losensky, “The Equal of Heaven’s Vault’: The Design, Ceremony, and Poetry of the Ḥasanābād Bridge,” In *Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, ed. Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow (Wiesbaden, 2004), 203.

through the versified historical account of the period. She has solicited information regarding the architectural configuration and elements of Fath Ali Shah's now-lost palaces in the Golestan Palace. This study provides us with an overview of what the early Qajar palatine city might have looked like in its heyday and before its later substantial alterations.³ Architectural historian Nazanin Shahidi, for instance, analyzes a rhyming couplet by Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir Tabrizi about the Safavid Sa'adatabad Garden to sketch out the spatial configuration of the garden and its palaces in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Through a meticulous reading of the poetry and the interpretation of the references that the poet makes, Shahidi has conducted a successful content analysis of this *masnavi*.⁴ Her study illuminates important points regarding this now-lost garden's physical state that otherwise would have remained unknown. These studies highlight the possibilities that Persian poetry can offer to the field of art and architecture history in reimagining and reconstructing a lost built environment.

While the above-mentioned studies try to piece together the now-vanished architecture of the late Safavid and early Qajar periods, we can observe a more advanced approach in the study of the seventeenth-century Isfahan grounded in a variety of literary sources. The recent architectural histories of Safavid Isfahan reveal that the literary works dealing with the city's urban spaces are key to understanding the experiential and spatial aspects of Isfahan's urban life. Scholars had long relied on historical accounts and European travelogues to illustrate the physical developments of New Isfahan, especially under Shah Abbas I, as an imperial project. However, the increasing interest in the consultation of

³ Layla S. Diba, "The Lost Palatine City of Fath Ali Shah," in *International Qajar Studies Association: X-XI, Life at the Court of Fath Ali Shah* (2011).

⁴ Nazanin Shahidi Marnani, "Bagh-e Sa'adatabad Isfahan dar ayineh-ye Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat," *Motale'at Me'mari Iran*, no.9 (2016): 67-85.

literary works has proved beneficial in yielding more nuanced interpretations of early modern Isfahan and its urban and cultural manifestations.

Focusing on various modes of literary expressions and genres, social historian Kathryn Babayan and architectural historian Farshid Emami have shed light on some aspects of Isfahan's urban experiences. Emami, for instance, examines Isfahan's description (*vasf*) literature as topographical works and suggests that during the Safavid period, Isfahan saw "a surge in the production of literary works that engaged with urban spaces and architectural monuments in a heightened manner." These literary works can be divided into four categories including "travel narratives in the form of rhyming couplets (*masnavi*), prose works in the format of epistolary composition (*insha*), versified descriptions of gardens, and *masnavi* poems in the traditional *shahrashub* mode."⁵ Through these works, he demonstrates how the city became entwined with the appearance of a new public sphere, urban subjectivity, and self-fashioning in Isfahan.⁶

The recent seminal work by Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology*, brings in another facet of urban life in Safavid Isfahan through reading the experience of the city in the anthologies (*majmu'a*), a collection of literary works by Isfahani residents. Her innovative approach to read the textual in tandem with the visual representations of urban life makes it

⁵ Farshid Emami, "Discursive Images and Urban Itineraries: Literary Forms and City Experience in early Modern Iran," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No.3 (Summer 2018),162. "Dubbed by twentieth-century literary critics as the 'Indian style' (*sabk-i hindi*), the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is primarily characterized by the use of complex imagery and metaphors, a heightened engagement with aspects of ordinary life, and incorporation of colloquial expressions."

⁶ Emami, "Discursive Images and Urban Itineraries," 157.

possible to glance at Isfahani households' contribution to the production of urban knowledge and *adab* (ethics) of urbanity in the sophisticated and cosmopolitan city of Isfahan.⁷

Given the state of literary works that deal with urban life in Isfahan during the seventeenth century, the question is whether this trend continued in post-Safavid Isfahan. In other words, how did the literature of this period reflect the transformations of the city and its urban spaces? This dissertation asserts that despite the political upheavals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Isfahani literati and poets represented their perception of Isfahan's social and physical changes in another literary format. Building on the innovative approaches taken by Emami and Babayan in reading the city through texts and images, I utilize *tazkira* as a corpus of literary works in which post-Safavid Isfahan was represented. Although this genre has been discussed and studied by literary scholars, its potential value for urban and architectural history is yet to be examined.⁸

I propose reading Isfahan through the lens of *tazkiras* along with tracing the physical transformations of the city to explore the mechanisms in which urban memory of Isfahan was reworked and refashioned by the emerging urban elites. As Babayan argues "seeing, desiring, and writing are entangled modalities of encounter that allowed residents to experience the city and to anthologize the city in complementary ways."⁹ Centering my argument on Panegyric-*tazkiras* and drawing on Babayan's work, I argue that these specific forms of anthologies reflect how communities of knowledge and architectural patronage tied the city to its imagined past through shared urban tropes, embodied practices, and urban

⁷ Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (Stanford University Press, 2021).

⁸ For the latest overview of the biographical writings see Paul E. Losensky, "Biographical Writing: Tadhzkere and Manaqeb," in *A History of Persian Literature: Persian Prose* (2021).

⁹ Babayan, *The City as Anthology*, 3.

memory. “Through words and images residents in Isfahan wrote the city and performed their social relations,”¹⁰ in anthologies examined by Babayan. However, panegyric-*tazkiras* and physical changes in the city under Sadr-e Isfahani’s patronage aimed to select some of those city writing traditions and social relations in relation to his newly erected urban spaces. Thus, this study shows the ways in which new urban elites in post-Safavid Isfahan received this urban knowledge and reworked it through the patronage of biographic anthologies and architectural interventions.

The Isfahani Circle of Poets and the Prevalence of Tazkira-Writing

Amid the calamities and chaos governing the eighteenth-century city, Isfahan saw the rise of a new literary style and the formation of a new literary community titled the Isfahani Circle of Poets. This group promoted the literary-return style (*bazgasht-e adabi*) in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which later became the main style of early-Qajar court poetry. The members of this group expressed their disdain for the Indian Style (*sabk-i hindi*), a style that flourished in the heyday of the Safavid period, and advocated for a return to the style of the classical masters of Persian poetry such as Rudaki, Khaqani, Hafiz, and Sa’di.¹¹ Out of this literary revivalism emerged a new interest in the genre of *tazkira* writing in Isfahan.

The literary scholar, Kevin Schwartz, Isfahan was essential for the formation of the literary return movement, the emergence of the Isfahani Circle of poets, and the extension of the movement to Tehran. He shows how networks and connections among the poets in the

¹⁰ Babayan, *The City as Anthology*, 3.

¹¹ Kevin Schwartz, “Reformation and Reconstruction of Poetic Networks: Isfahan c. 1722-1801,” in *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020).

eighteenth century created a communal identity for these poets, aware of the social and political upheavals of the time, striving to secure patronage for their works. The existence of Isfahani patrons supporting this group is highlighted in Schwartz's work. He asserts:

The patronage Mirza 'Abd al-Wahhab provided to the Isfahani Circle of poets is one of several social and political elements affecting the emergence of the 'literary return' movement, not found in Zand and early Qajar sources. But this type of information has been elided by later Qajar-era authors and, more recently, by modern ones.¹²

Mirza 'Abd al-Wahhab was the mayor of Isfahan in the late eighteenth century and a well-known poet with the pen name *Nishat*. What stands out from this study is the strong connection between the mayors of Isfahan as patrons of arts and the Isfahani Circle of poets.

Among the literary works produced under this literary return movement was the coinage of *tazkira*-writing. *Tazkira* is a commemorative literary work with a long tradition in the Islamic world consisting of a collection of biographic notices. Persian *tazkiras* are classified as "general tazkera, or tazkera-ye 'āmm, which focuses on all Persian poets. The other is the particular tazkera, tazkera-ye khāss, which deals with, for example, contemporary poets or poets of a specific region."¹³ Commonly *tazkiras* were compiled by a poet or literati and then presented to a king or a ruler as was the case in Safavid *tazkiras* like *Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi* (1672-80). There were also other forms of *tazkiras* that functioned as administrative manuals while recording the biographic notices of the state's notable figures.

¹² Kevin Schwartz, "Reformation and Reconstruction of Poetic Networks: Isfahan c. 1722-1801," 83.

¹³ Naofumi Abe, "The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 10 (2017) 129–157, 131.

Mirza Rafi'a's *Tazkirat al-Molouk* is one of these eighteenth-century examples.¹⁴ However, in the early nineteenth century, a new sub-genre of *tazkiras* was directly commissioned by patrons, the so-called "panegyrics-*tazkiras*" to celebrate the artistic or architectural commissions of a particular patron.¹⁵

The literary analyses of the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century *tazkiras* reveal that the compilers of these anthologies and their companion poets were ardent promoters of the literary-return style.¹⁶ *Tazkira-ye Atashkada* (lit. fire temple), completed in 1779/1193 by Lotf-Ali Beg Azar was one of the earliest examples of this genre. Azar was one of the primary members of the Isfahani Circle of poets whose *Atashkada* has been considered influential in consolidating nationalist sentiments in modern literature in Iran.¹⁷

The Isfahani Circle of poets was instrumental for the dissemination of the literary-return style composed and compiled in the *tazkiras*. Students of Azar, Hatef, Sabahi, and other Isfahani Circle poets later gathered in the court of Fath Ali Shah in Tehran and pursued the court's revivalist aspirations. One-third of the *tazkiras* from the Fath Ali Shah's period are royal-commissioned ones. The continuity of this style and heightened interest in *tazkiras* during the early Qajar era marks the magnitude of *tazkiras* as the major literary works of the

¹⁴ Floor, "Tribal Resurgence in the Eighteenth Century," 156. These state manuals include Mirza Rafi'a's *Dastur al-Moluk*, Mirza Sami'a's *Tazkirat al-Moluk*, and a third missing manual written by Mirza Naqi Nasiri.

¹⁵ Abe, "The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran," 133. *Tazkiras* such as "Zinat al-Madayeh (the Ornament of Panegyric Poems, 1803-4/1218) by Mohammad Sadeq Marvazi 'Homa,' Anjoman-e Khaqan (The Gathering of Khaqan, 1818-9/1234) by Fazel Khan Garrusi 'Ravi,' and Negarestan-e Dara (the Picture-Gallery of Darius, 1825-6/1241) by Abd al-Razzaq Donboli 'Maftun,'" were commissioned by Fath Ali Shah.

¹⁶ The founder of this style was Mir Ali Mushtaq (1689-1757). Abe, "The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran," 131. The term *atashkada* would also be a nominal reference to the Sassanian fire temples.

¹⁷ Abe, "The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran," 131.

period. It also stresses the mutual links between the Qajar court in Tehran and the cultural communities in Isfahan as the backbone of the early Qajar revivalist movement.

Tazkira as lieu de mémoire

The word *tazkira* (from the Arabic root *z.k.r*), literally “to remember,” alludes to the act of remembering and reminding and is associated with memory. It is used for the title of biographic compendiums memorializing saints, poets, and urban nobilities. Titles such as *manaqib* and *tarajem* also denote the same genre of biography notices in different parts of the Islamic world.¹⁸ In its modern usage, it also refers to passports as a written note that demonstrates a type of permission to move between countries. *Tazkira* in its conventional meaning, as Hermanson and Lawrence suggest, is not just a “mnemonic repetition:”

Tazkiras, as their name suggests, both memorialize individuals and communicate their legacy to a new generation. They are, to repeat our title, “memorative communications,” projecting the worth of individual heroes as icons of urban Indo-Muslim collective identity. If there is a keyword for understanding poetic and Sufi tazkiras, it is memory.¹⁹

Tazkiras were prevalent literary works in the Safavid period, and many examples were compiled and presented to the Safavid kings. One of them is the *Tazkiraye Nasrabadi* completed from 1672 to 1680 in Isfahan. Iraj Afshar considers *tazkiras* as significant sources on the history of Isfahan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offering a wealth of information on a variety of subjects.²⁰ Known *Tazkiras* such as *Tazkiraye Nasrabadi*, *Tazkirat al-Moluk*, and *Tazkira-ye Hazin* have been utilized to examine the social and

¹⁸ Paul E. Losensky, “Biographical Writing: Tadhkere and Manaqeb,” 339-40.

¹⁹ Hermansen and Lawrence, “Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications,” 152.

²⁰ Iraj Afshar, “TADKERA-YE NAŞRĀBĀDI,” *Iranica*, 2000.

political environment of the late Safavid periods. But other than offering encyclopedic information on the social and cultural demographic of the city, how these significant sources can inform us about the city and its spatial imagination? We know that *tazkiras* were compiled to memorialize saints, poets, nobles, and intellectuals of a designated city, region, or country in the Islamicate societies. Seeing beyond the encyclopedic nature of *tazkiras* as collections of unrelated information, I will here focus on the act of inscribing memory and the urban imagination. As Marcia Hermanson puts it, “the tazkirah tradition, even in classical times, was not so much a historical knowledge project, but an activity of inscribing collective memory.”²¹

Drawing on Maurice Halbwachs’s collective memory and French historian Pierre Nora’s *lieu de memoire*,²² I consider *tazkiras* as sites of collective memory “in three senses of the word—material, symbolic, and functional.”²³ *Tazkiras* are bound to the places and the collective identity of their inhabitants. In explaining the difference between memory and history Nora points that “Memory attaches itself to sites, whereas history attaches itself to events.” This indispensable link between place and memory in *tazkiras* makes it a suitable source for architectural history analysis. Most literary scholars and historians have examined them as sources for social history and for the biographical value of these works. *Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi* (completed in 1091/1680),²⁴ for example, has been recently investigated to offer some insights into the social and cultural milieu of Safavid Isfahan through the biography of

²¹ Marcia Hermanson, “Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Biographical Literature (Tazkirahs),” *Studies in Contemporary Islam*, 2002, 64.

²² French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs coined the concept of collective memory in his book titled *On Collective Memory* originally published in 1925.

²³ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations, Memory and Counter-Memory*, no. 26 (Spring, 1989), 19.

²⁴ Mahmoud Fotoohi, “Tadkera-ye Nasrabadi,” *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, [TADKERA-YE NASRĀBĀDI – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](http://TADKERA-YE NASRĀBĀDI – Encyclopaedia Iranica (iranicaonline.org))

the contemporary artisans and artists living in the city.²⁵ However, despite the place-based character of *tazkiras*, their significance for architectural history has not been fully considered yet.²⁶

My focus on architecture and the built environment complicates the understanding of *tazkiras* as a site of collective memory by highlighting the panegyric aspect of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century *tazkiras* in Iran. The feature of panegyric has been added to place-based Persian biography writing in this period. The panegyric-*tazkira* is a commissioned project to craft a new site of memory intertwined with the identity of a particular patron and a group of select contemporary literati. This inclination towards commissioned *tazkiras* in Iran indicates a historical awareness of the role of *tazkiras* in shaping the memory and the agency of the emerging urban elites to manipulate this process. A possible explanation for this interest can be the push and pull between history and memory following the events of eighteenth-century Iran. The post-Safavid crisis produced a sense of distance from the Safavid past while still, the place entailed the memories of that remote and inaccessible era. According to Nora, “it is this very push and pull that produces *lieux de mémoire*—moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.”²⁷

²⁵ In addition to the literary scholars’ work on introducing this *tazkira*, a few studies focus on the social and cultural history of the Safavid period in this *tazkira* see Badr al-Sadat ‘Alizadeh Moqaddam, “Hayat-e ejtema’i dore-ye Safavi-ye az manzar Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi,” [the social life of the Safavid period from the lens of Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi] *History and Culture*, vol.51, No. 2, Issue 103 (2019):135-151.

²⁶ For an example of scholarship on early nineteenth-century *tazkiras* see Hosein Masjedi and Mahdi Nourian, “Vafa Zavareh-ie va Tazkira-ye Ma’aser al-Baqeriyeh,” [Vafa Zavareh-ie and Tazkira-ye Ma’aser al-Baqeriyeh] *Jame’he Shenasi karbordi*, 1381/2002.

²⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 12.

This struggle between living memories and past histories paved the ground for the emergence of new “sites of memory,” consciously constructed and formulated in textual and material forms. The choice of *tazkiras* rather than other forms of history writing attests to the agency of the patron and his willingness to provide a site of memory where he would be able to make choices in remembering and forgetting some parts of the past over the rest. In this new wave of memory writing, notices of contemporary poets and great men substitute the veneration of deceased icons of the past. These contemporary poets partake in the construction of the site of memory revolving around the centrality of the patron. Indeed, these panegyric-*tazkiras* present a collective effort in which the value of contemporaneity overcomes the veneration of the past.

Isfahan in Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh (Tazkira-ye Baqi)

One of the panegyric-*tazkiras* which is a key source in my analysis of Isfahan’s urban life in the early nineteenth century is *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh* (Praises of Hosein) or *Tazkira-ye Baqi (Madayeh)*. Mohammad Hosein khan Sadr-e Isfahani commissioned this *tazkira* and Seyyed Abd al-Baqi Baqi Isfahani was appointed to compile it in 1222-29/1807-14. The manuscript consulted in this dissertation is an unpublished version currently kept in the Majlis Library in Tehran. The codex is about 452 pages and written in Nasta’liq script. There are anecdotes and dates inserted in the text that place the date of this copy somewhere between 1814 and 1871, according to the chronogram composed for the death of Sadr-e Isfahani’s son, Shokr-ollah Khan, on the last page of this manuscript. In total, this *tazkira* includes the biography and poems of about 73 poets from different origins and regions. However, the majority of these poets, around 46, belong to Isfahan and its villages. The rest

are poets from other provinces who at some point have visited Isfahan and been received and awarded by Sadr-e Isfahani.

This panegyric-*tazkira* diverges from the conventional Indo-Persian *tazkiras* written to memorialize the saints and deceased elites of a city or region. Rather, it includes the contemporary poets' biographies and panegyrics of an alive patron and offers a contemporary account that celebrates the restoration of Isfahan's urban and human life. This characteristic places *Tazkira-ye Baqi* in the category of *madayeh* (panegyrics). *Madayeh's* focus on the contemporary moment of Isfahan's life and the living poets praising the city and the patron makes this *tazkira* a great tool to claim Isfahan's contemporaneity and longevity overshadowed by the past Safavid history. Sadr-e Isfahani aimed to inscribe over Safavid Isfahan a new memory to celebrate his renewed city.

In terms of the content of the poems, *Madayeh* consists of the panegyrics of the Shi'i Imams and the patron, Sadr-e Isfahani. It is organized into two main chapters. The first chapter (*baab*) is on Sadr-e Isfahani's restoration and construction commissions in Iraq's religious and Shi'i centers in two sub-chapters. The first one includes the biography and select poems by court poets who have written about these sacred places (Sadr-e Isfahani's projects in the '*Atabat*') ordered according to the status of the poet (hierarchical ordering of the poets, for instance, court poet laureate "Saba" is the first one in this chapter). The second sub-chapter consists of the biography of other panegyrists who have praised Sadr-e Isfahani's construction projects (*emarat-e mobarakat*). This chapter includes the panegyrics by both "Arab" and "Ajam" poets, as put in *Madayeh*.²⁸

²⁸ These two terms are exactly as used in the text of *Madayeh*. In the early nineteenth-century context, by 'Ajam and 'Arab poets, the author refers to Persian and Arabic-speaking poets respectively.

With regard to the structure of the poems, each panegyric begins with brief praises of Fath Ali Shah followed by Sadr-e Isfahani, and eventually describes how Isfahan and Iran have changed under the latter's just and generous governorship. Usually, the last section concludes with a description and chronogram of the project commissioned by this patron. The clear emphasis on the form and structure of the poems highlights the demand for maintaining the formality of the status hierarchy in this source, an aspect that reflects the structure of power relations in the Qajar court and society.

Although the intent of the compiler was to collect all the panegyrics composed for Sadr-e Isfahani, the city of Isfahan and its built environment are the central theme of this *tazkira*. Isfahan as Sadr-e Isfahani's domain of governorship takes an equal place as the patron in the praises of the eulogists and poets. For most of the poets are originally from Isfahan or if not, they praise those projects supervised by Sadr-e Isfahani concentrated in Isfahan, *Madayeh* becomes a poetic account of Isfahan in the format of biographic compendia. In fact, the eulogy of the patron is inseparable from the praise of Isfahan and its reclamation at the time. *Madayeh* is a site of memory where the commemoration of individual poets, the city's patron, and the "place-memory" of the city converge.

Despite the abundance of architectural descriptions and chronograms in *Madayeh*, this *tazkira* has remained unknown and understudied so far. It seems that Jalal al-Din Homaie is the first contemporary historian who has utilized this manuscript to compile the section on Sadr-e Isfahani's buildings in his well-known multivolume history of Isfahan, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*. He refers to *Madayeh* to list Sadr-e Isfahani's construction and restoration projects in Isfahan and provides a brief description of these buildings' endowment deeds after his demise. Except for Homaie's work, the title of *Madayeh* has only been mentioned in a few

biographical studies on Sadr-e Isfahani.²⁹ In this dissertation, I consider *Madayeh* not merely as an isolated and commissioned panegyric work, but as a written history of Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural vision where his eulogists have parsed out the intentions and objectives of this patron's ambitious renewal project.

Madayeh provide us with clues to access the unwritten and informal social networks of power and their implications in the urban and architectural transformations of Isfahan. The emergence of this type of *tazkiras* remarks a historical and literary discourse that created a new form of social and political hierarchy based on the grouping of the literati and their tendencies toward a specific patron. *Madayeh* also represent the structure of power and social order manifested in the group of poets praising the patron and his patronage, the patron's status in relation to the court and central state, and his ability and power in linking and supporting various cultural and social communities.

It seems that Sadr-e Isfahani followed the king's way of legitimizing his authority and rule by commissioning *Madayeh*. His *tazkira* was produced after *Zinat al-Madayeh* (completed in 1806) which is another *tazkira* written for Fath Ali Shah. Although *Madayeh*'s panegyrics mostly portray Sadr-e Isfahani as an appreciative servant of the court, in some cases his efforts in restoring peace and just rule in Isfahan and Iran even surpass the king's. The constant confusion of the patronage of some projects where the king's historians

²⁹ For instance, Ahmad Golchin Ma'ani in his article ("Haji Mohammad Hoseinkhan Nezam al-Dowleh Isfahani Sadr-e 'Azam-e Iran," *Vahid*, no.51 (1967)) on Sadr-e Isfahani's life mentions the title of the manuscript but does not discuss the content or its relevance to Sadr-e Isfahani's career and projects. Golchin Ma'ani was definitely aware of the content of this *tazkira*, as he has included *Madayeh* in his book, *Tarikh-e Tazkira-haye Farsi*. For further studies on Sadr-e Isfahani see: E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*; Gholamali Pashazadeh, "Sadr-e Isfahani, Haj Mohammad Hosein Khan," *Adyan, mazaheb va erfān, Daneshname-ye Jahan-e Islam*, vol 29; Mohammad Sadr Hashemi, "Haji Mohammad Hoseinkhan Sadr-I Isfahani Molaqqab be Nezam al-Dowleh," *Yadegar*, no. 8, 41-57.

associate them with the king and *Madayeh* explicitly ascribes them to Sadr-e Isfahani speaks of this blurred line and existing tensions between the court and Sadr-e Isfahani's status.

Despite official histories written usually by a court chronicler, where all the descriptions were tailored by a single author, in this genre the author is in fact the compiler of poems composed by poets from different socio-economic strata in relation to the patron and his patronage. As an example, in *Madayeh*, the social status of the poets praising Sadr-e Isfahani's projects ranges from court poets to poet farmers living in remote villages. Although one cannot underestimate the power of awards (*seleh*) granted for these panegyrics, poets in *Madayeh* mostly place emphasis on what was favored by Sadr-e Isfahani to be publicly presented. It also could reflect what was the most striking and significant among Sadr-e Isfahani's projects for the poets. What should be noted is that the composition of poems collected in *tazkiras* precedes the compilation of the collection. In addition to this point, as Homaie notes,³⁰ *Madayeh* was completed when Sadr-e Isfahani had been appointed as the Amin al-Dowleh and Nezam al-Dowleh and lacks the last ten years of his architectural activities as the prime minister.³¹ This means *Madayeh* only reflects his undertakings during the time he was still serving as a local governor striving to build the steps for his promotion and empowerment.

By focusing on *Madayeh* I demonstrate how *tazkiras* reflect the participation of non-royal urban agents in shaping the urban image of Isfahan in post-Safavid era. The significance of this set of sources is that rather than looking in vain for scant information in official court chronicles—where Isfahan usually appears in a few footnotes here and there—

³⁰ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 408.

³¹ In the Majlis manuscript, Sadr-e Isfahani has been referred to as Amin al-Dowleh Haji Mohammad Hosein Khan, and as appears in the text, the title Nezam al-Dowleh was added on the top of his name as an annotation.

these poems depict “textured images,” borrowing Shirine Hamadeh’s terms, reflecting the urban life of the city and social order of the society.³² As Hamadeh’s scholarship on eighteenth-century Istanbul suggests, a new genre of historiography called *tawarikh-e manzum* (rhymed histories) was coined in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Ottoman historiography concurrent with the rise of new urban elites and their contribution to the formation of public urban spaces of Istanbul. It seems that parallel to Istanbul, Isfahan also witnessed the coinage of rhymed histories in form of *tazkiras* and the rise of urban elites (*a’yans*) in the eighteenth century. The panegyric *tazkiras*, which merged the general panegyric and the conventional biographic anthology, became increasingly popular in the early Qajar era.³³ Abe asserts “It is true that the panegyrics for monarchs and princes are an important component of classical Persian Poetry; the close association between panegyrics and *tazkira*-writing can be seen as a specific phenomenon of early Qajar literary culture.”³⁴ I suggest that this phenomenon had a mutual relationship with the ongoing transformations of architecture and art patronage parallel to the rise of local urban patrons like Sadr-e Isfahani.

Inscribing and Circulating the Urban Memory

As stated by David Roxburgh in his study of Album prefaces, a sort of poetic biography introducing an album and artists, “knowledge about the history of art and artistic practices was expressed through biography, an episteme of linked, sequential practitioners, a method

³² Hamadeh, *The City’s Pleasures*, 15.

³³ Abe, 132, 146. During Fath Ali Shah’s period, a new interest in *tazkira-ye khass* was sprung and the king and his princes commissioned seven out of twenty-two *tazkiras* compiled during this period.

³⁴ Abe, “The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran,” 147.

also widely applied to the histories of other pursuits.”³⁵ Grounded in this tradition, *tazkiras* under the Qajars also contributed to the dissemination and transmission of artistic practices. In this dissertation, I suggest that these biographic anthologies also partook in the formation and transmission of urban knowledge and memory. *Tazkiras* were widely read in social and poetic gatherings called *majlis*.³⁶ They were also cited and built upon by other poets. They acted as public texts that brought the patron and the architecture under his commission into the realm of the public sphere and in dialogue with the royal patronage. The Isfahani Circle of Poets and associated social gatherings or *majlis* to recite poetry, for instance, would act as conduits of knowledge production in Isfahan.

The panegyrics and the building chronograms composed for a patron would circulate in different texts and eventually be read and reproduced for another version of *tazkira* or official chronicle. As I have observed, there are copies of poems from *Madayeh* in *Tazkira-ye Samar Isfahani* (also called Naeini). Almost half of this *tazkira* has been dedicated to the panegyrists of Sadr-e Isfahani, including *Madayeh*’s author, Baqi Isfahani, with poems related to Isfahan and the patron.³⁷ Golchin Ma’ani believes that this *tazkira* was also penned for the Nezam al-Dowleh (Sadr-e Isfahani).³⁸ Along with conveying information on the patron and his services, *tazkiras* ensured the dispersion of designated meanings and messages for the building that ought to be publicized and circulated.

³⁵ David Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 210.

³⁶ Abe, “The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran,” 141.

³⁷ This *tazkira* is a manuscript compiled by Seyyed Hasan Naeini and kept in the Majlis Library (IR10-19294). It is a copy of a collection of poems commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani when he was the prime minister (Sadr-e Azam). According to the internal evidence from the content of this *tazkira*, it is dated from the early nineteenth century.

³⁸ Ahmad Golchin Ma’ani, “Haji Mohammad Hoseinkhan Nezam al-Dowleh Isfahani Sadr-e ‘Azam-e Iran,” 231.

Furthermore, *tazkiras* connect to the materiality of the city and the built environment by preserving and making accessible the poetic chronograms inscribed on the buildings. For example, Baqi records his composition of the foundation inscription in his *tazkira* that he had composed for the inauguration of the Khawju Gateway and was inscribed on that structure. So not only were his poems read and seen by the residents of Isfahan as they promenade in the Khawju chaharbagh, the written version of that poetry in *Madayeh* helped to disseminate the fame and name of the patron as well as the city's architectural transformations. Such direct transferring of ideas between the inscriptions on the buildings and the texts in *tazkiras* appear in other structures covered in *Madayeh* including the Emarat-e Sadri and the Valehiyeh tomb-garden discussed in this dissertation.

Tazkiras became a tool for showing off the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century patrons' artistic and architectural patronage, connecting their achievements to the court and highlighting their powers in provincial centers and peripheries. Not only did the king and princes tied their Shi'i ideology to their genealogy in these *tazkiras*, but also rulers of the provinces and even religious figures attempted to perpetuate their benevolent deeds and their status in the power structure of the Qajar era through these literary commissions. Chronologically, *Madayeh* (1807) was the earliest example of *tazkiras* in praise of a local patron following Fath Ali Shah's *Zinat al-Madayeh* (1803). According to Golchin Ma'ani, there were other following instances of *tazkiras* commissioned by local governors and notables that brings to light their architectural patronage.³⁹

³⁹ Ahmad Golchin Ma'ani, *Tarikh Tazkira-haye Farsi*, pp 266, 459, 105, 110, 185. The later examples include *Tazkira-ye Delgosha* compiled by Haj Ali Akbar Navvab Shirazi "Besmel" in 1237 -40/1822 -25 commissioned by Hosein-Ali Mirza Farmanfarma; *Hadiqat al-Madayeh* by Mirza Ekhtiar Shahabi Torshizi in praise of Yousef khan-e Gorji, the patron of Soltanabad; *Lataef al-Madayeh va Zaraef al-Manaqeb* composed by Mirza Mohammad

What differentiates the panegyric-*tazkiras* from the earlier *tazkiras* was their production process and the patronage provided by the new urban elites. This form, in fact, turned into a genre of history-memory writing that systematically merged the human and material networks in relation to and under influence of local patrons. It also highlighted the status of new urban elites who inserted their names in the broader network of the political, religious, and art-patronage world. While most of the provinces were under the governorship of the Qajar princes, these *tazkiras* became essential for the self-fashioning and self-assertion of non-royal agents of change in the early Qajar period. *Tazkiras* as sites of memory validated and legitimized these newcomers' right to intervene in historically and culturally sophisticated urban environments like Isfahan.

Isfahan Represented in Madayeh: Urban Imagination and Architectural Patronage

As a panegyric-*tazkira*, the celebration of the patron and his benevolent deeds is the main and recurring theme of *Madayeh*. Aware of the city's glorious past, *Madayeh*'s poets utilized the known metaphors and tropes associated with Isfahan to claim their presence in the contemporary city and the break with the past. They used opposing adjectives and metaphors to highlight the contrast between the post-Safavid hardships and the current prosperity of Isfahan. Almost all poets follow the same thematic order in setting the scene

Borujerdi "Eshraq" in 1823 including the panegyrics of Mohammad Taqi Mirza Hesam al-Saltaneh (the seventh son of Fath Ali Shah and the governor of Borujerd, Lorestan, Bakhtiari, and Khuzestan; *Ma'aser al-Baqeriyeh* compiled by Mirza Seyyed Mohammad Ali Vafa Zavareh-i in 1830, in praise of the well-known religious leader in Isfahan, Haj Seyyed Mohammad Baqer Shafti Bidabadi and his grandiose mosque, masjid-e Seyyed in Isfahan; *Madayeh al-Mo'tamediyeh* written by Mirza Mohammad Ali ibn Abutaleb Mozahab Isfahani "Bahar" in 1843 consisted of panegyrics of Manuchehr Khan Gorji Mo'tamed al-Dowleh governor of Isfahan.

for the heroic renewal project of Sadr-e Isfahani. They mostly begin with the calamities that Isfahan witnessed after the fall of the Safavids. They present a dark image of the city's ruins where owls and snakes take the place of living people and the weeds grow on the walls. Suddenly, this gloomy and gray image gives way to a bright and brilliant picture. The word *viraneh* (ruin) gets replaced by *abadani* (reclamation) under Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship. This change of tone and mood again is reflected in the description of the urban setting and the presence of the inhabitants.⁴⁰

One of the major urban renewal projects that changed the image of the ruins and gave a new life to Isfahan was the purification and restoration of the water canals (*madi*). Early in his career as governor of Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani sponsored the cleaning of the water canals.⁴¹ Homaie suggests that Sadr-e Isfahani restored the Madi-ye Nizamabad (Madi-ye Joub Siah) and regulated the right to water for the urban and extra urban gardens of the city in 1803.⁴² According to *Madayeh* and a poem by Mayel, the purification and repair of a certain *madi* which was dedicated to the royal buildings (likely Madi-ye Shahi) followed the construction of the Fathabad Chaharbagh in 1803-4.⁴³ It seems that Sadr-e Isfahani also commissioned the construction of a new water basin in front of the Qaysariyeh in the Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan at the same time. Mayel praises this new addition to the Maidan and the delightful space created by this water basin in this public space in these verses:

What a joy in this flower garden and orchard/ that the rejoicing is for both the
senior and the minor

⁴⁰ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 12.

⁴¹ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 420. He refers to *Madayeh* and Isfahan's water document (Tomar-e Aab).

⁴² Ibid, 409.

⁴³ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 47.

Not Abbas I's, nor Abbas II's era/ It is not the era of Tahmasb and Sanjar either

Are the deceased kings alive? /If it was the past, I do not believe so.

Then he maintains the praise of Isfahan's water and its import for the life of the city. In the meanwhile, he also refers to another poet, Azar, who had lamented the ruins of Isfahan in the eighteenth century in his *tazkira*. Mayel regrets that Azar was not alive to see Isfahan's prosperity and development at this time.⁴⁴ In another verse, he mentions how people were used to stopping by this new basin in the Maidan and spending time at this place (anchoring at the coast of this sea).⁴⁵

Water was crucial for the revival of the city, in particular for Isfahan where the majority of the city's land was covered with gardens. Construction of the *madis* ought to be the first undertaking to bring life back to Isfahan.⁴⁶ As was the case during the reign of Shah Abbas I, drawing water from the Zayandeh River through several branches of *madis* was the necessary first step in making the land inhabitable in the arid local climate. This step would provide the infrastructure for later construction projects. In the eighteenth century, Isfahan's built environment suffered due to the lack of effective governorship and necessary funds to maintain the *madis* as the veins of Isfahan. Most of them were destroyed during the civil wars. Without running water in the *madis*, the green image of the city praised by seventeenth-century travelers would have completely changed. Thus, water was essential to revive the economy, agriculture, and prosperity of the decayed city as well as challenging

⁴⁴ Azar Bigdeli, *Atashkadeh*, 435.

⁴⁵ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 49.

⁴⁶ Safa Mahmoudian and Mehrdad Qayyoomi Bidhendi, "The Norm of Mādī: Managing Water in Safavid Isfahan," in *Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie*, ed. Markus Ritter und Ilse Sturkenboommit Fernando Valdéz Fernández (WIESBADEN, 2017): 57-70.

the dark image of Isfahan in its post-Safavid era. According to *Madayeh's* poems, Isfahan reclaimed its long-lasting metaphor as a paradise on earth. Along with water, trees and flower beds improved the general mood of the city. New trees were planted along the new chaharbaghs of Sadr-e Isfahani. Water basins adorned the chaharbaghs and the songs of the nightingales replaced the owls' whine. Undoubtedly, the chaharbaghs, palaces, gardens, and water canals were central elements in the reconstruction of this paradisiacal image as well as in *Madayeh's* poems. Thus, the return of Isfahan to its paradisiacal status was not merely a metaphor to praise the patron, it was indeed a reference to the actual physical interventions undertaken by Sadr-e Isfahani which will be explored in this dissertation.

Power Resides in Isfahan

Another important subject for the poems in *Madayeh* is the presence of Sadr-e Isfahani in the city or his return to Isfahan after his visits to other provinces. This treatment of the subject is not novel, and it dates back to Shah Abbas I's period when Isfahan lamented the absence of the king. According to Emami, in the description of Isfahan composed by Nasira Hamadani (d.1620-1621), "The figures of speech are formed around a central allegory: Isfahan as a new bride (*naw 'arus*). Adorned with flowers, the bride is awaiting the arrival of the groom."⁴⁷ However, this association of the city with a local governor instead of a king is worthy of attention. This metaphoric play in fact implies a great status that Sadr-e Isfahani enjoyed almost equal to the Safavid kings at this time. In addition to Safavid kings, he has even overshadowed the Qajar king, Fath Ali Shah, residing in Tehran. The poet, Harif, claims that when Sadr-e Isfahani is in Isfahan, there is no prosperity at the king's door

⁴⁷ Farshid Emami, "Discursive Images and Urban Itineraries: Literary Form and City Experience in Early Modern Iran," *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No.3 (Summer 2018). 169.

(i.e., court) in Tehran.⁴⁸ Here Harif touches upon a sensitive and complicated topic that compares Isfahan to Tehran and conditions the prosperity of the Qajar court upon the presence of Sadr-e Isfahani, not the king. This way, Sadr-e Isfahani's Isfahan defies both its past and current power relations and claims a new status built on the history of the city as a royal residence and the seat of the power, superior even to Safavid Isfahan and contemporary Qajar Tehran. In bolstering Sadr-e Isfahani's revival efforts, his Isfahan competes with its own past and the following capital cities of Iran.

In most of the poems compiled in this compendium, Isfahan consciously has been regarded as the representative of the whole nation and the country, "Iran." In this context, Isfahan's fate has been interwoven with Iran's destiny and Isfahan's prosperity under Sadr-e Isfahani's era meant the prosperity of the nation in general.⁴⁹ It must be noted that Sadr-e Isfahani was in charge of the central provinces of Iran including Isfahan, Kashan, and Qom and he had not been still appointed as the prime minister at the time of *Madayeh*'s compilation. However, Sadr-e Isfahani's epithets from the Qajar court, Amin al-Dowleh and Nezam al-Dowleh, could have been the impulse behind his association with the state apparatus and as the representative of the nation. Yet, it also indicates to what extent Isfahan's development was central to the improvement of the country in the view of the contemporary poets.

Artists' Return to Isfahan

As mentioned earlier in this study, eighteenth century Isfahan featured great human migration across the country following the collapse of the Safavid Empire. In addition to the

⁴⁸ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 95.

⁴⁹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 67.

depopulation of Isfahan's neighborhoods, many poets, religious figures, and artists moved from Isfahan to other cities in Iraq, Ottoman Turkey, and Mughal India in hope of finding better living conditions. Unlike Shaykh Hazin Lahiji, who escaped to India from Isfahan on the eve of the Afghan invasion and never was able to come back to his city, some Isfahani poets and learned men returned to the city when they found the situation in Isfahan stable. *Tazkira-ye Hazin* and *Tarikh-e Hazin* relate the history of late Safavid Isfahan and the challenges that these scattered populations faced during the eighteenth century. Despite Hazin's desire to return to Isfahan due to his unhappy life in India where he resided for about thirty years, he was never able to live in Isfahan again.⁵⁰

Unlike *Tazkira-ye Hazin*, which portrays Isfahan's depopulation and the dark days of the city's downfall, *Madayeh* casts some light on the mobility of the poets and their return to Isfahan as a presumably common phenomenon by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The biography of some of Sadr-e Isfahani's panegyrics indicates their return to Isfahan after residing in other cities. These biographies and the poems composed to illustrate this return to Isfahan imply how Isfahan's transformations were perceived by the contemporary poets under Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship. Often, these returnees refer to the prosperity of Isfahan and the just governorship of Sadr-e Isfahani as their reasons to come back to their beloved city.

As Baqi's introduction to the chapter on the Arab panegyrist reveal these Arab poets would travel to Isfahan to recite their panegyrics to Sadr-e Isfahani and some of them would decide to reside in Isfahan and not go back to their homelands following the considerable

⁵⁰ Mohammad Ali Hazin, *Tazkira-ye Hazin* (Isfahan: Entesharat-e ketabforushi Ta'eed Isfahan, 1955)

rewards they received from the governor.⁵¹ Confirming these poets' decisions, Baqi adds his own advertisement of Isfahan's desirable condition as a place of residence in the following verse:

Indeed, why everyone has not resided in Isfahan? / since the city has become an envy of paradise.

Why has it not become the refuge of the world? / since Amin al-Dowleh lives in this city.⁵²

He highlights two factors in attracting these Arab poets. First, the paradise-like quality of Isfahan; and second, the presence of Amin al-Dowleh who has made Isfahan a safe and secure place to live in.

Besides Arab poets from Iraq, poets from other cities and villages also visited Isfahan in hope of acquiring Sadr-e Isfahani's attention and rewards. Harif from Zavareh, Mirza Mohammad Ali from Broujerd, Golshan from Shiraz, Payman from the village of Marbin, Parishan from a certain village,⁵³ and others from Kashan traveled to Isfahan. Some of them came to Isfahan annually to recite their latest panegyrics in the reception ceremony of the Amin al-Dowleh. Sadr-e Isfahani's advocacy of the arts, particularly poetry, encouraged poets to get themselves acquainted with the latest undertakings of the governor in Isfahan and compose an ode, usually a poetic chronogram for a project, which would gain Sadr-e Isfahani's favor.

A curious example of these poets is Mirza Mohammad Ali Piri with the pen name Golshan from Shiraz who has narrated the process in which he was favored by Sadr-e

⁵¹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 68.

⁵² Baqi, *Madayeh*, 68.

⁵³ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 89, 87.

Isfahani in Isfahan. In his about 120 couplets, Golshan relates that while his talent and arts were not appreciated in Shiraz, Sadr-e Isfahani's Isfahan became a destination for this disappointed Shirazi poet. In this poem, Sadr-e Isfahani has been described as the purchaser of the arts (*kharidar-e jens-e honar*) and Isfahan as a market for Golshan's goods (poetry).⁵⁴ As he accounts, his ode in the praise of Imam Ali's battles gained Sadr-e Isfahani's attention. To recognize his talent, Sadr-e Isfahani filled his mouth with jewels. Baqi records that Sadr-e Isfahani rewarded Golshan because the governor was a big supporter of the panegyrist of the innocent Imams and an advocate of the poets and foreigners (*ghoraba*). Golshan explicitly compares Isfahan with Shiraz in their receptivity of arts and artists and utilizes the metaphors of autumn and spring to describe how Isfahan's spring is in its full bloom in Sadr-e Isfahani's era.

There is a name-seeker in Isfahan/ who wants to be known in the heavens.⁵⁵

The autumns of the events dragged me out of the flower garden of Isfahan.

When the life-giving spring breeze blew again/ it called me back from foreign lands to my homeland.⁵⁶

It also must be noted that poets were not the only learned group interested in residing in Isfahan by the late eighteenth century. Religious figures living in the Shi'i centers of Iraq or other cities of Iran were also among the new residents of Isfahan. One of the prominent ulama of the early Qajar period, Mohammad Baqer Shaf'i Bidabadi also decided to leave his life and career in Kashan and chose Isfahan as his place of residence in 1801.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 176.

⁵⁵ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 174.

⁵⁶ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 175.

⁵⁷ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, 60.

Piety and Urban Patronage

Isfahan was turned into a Perso-Shi'i capital city under the extensive and ambitious patronage of Shah Abbas I in the turn of the seventeenth century. By the end of the Safavid period and particularly under Shah Soltan Hosein, this religious and Shi'i identity of the city was bolstered through the empowerment of the religious leaders in Isfahan. The influence and power of the well-known religious scholars such as Mohammad Baqer Majlisi and Mohammad Khatounabadi overshadowed the royal authority in the urban milieu of Isfahan. The latest architectural project of Shah Soltan Hosein, Madraseh-ye Shah Soltan Hosein, along the Chaharbagh Avenue was the public manifestation of this structure of power in the early eighteenth century. While this religious group enjoyed unlimited power in the last years of Safavid period, the fall of the city and the ascension of Nader Shah to the throne brought new challenges to the maintenance of their status. Nader Shah followed a different path, more inclined towards Sunnism, in order to alleviate the seclusion that Shi'ism imposed on Iran under the Safavids. Other than this brief deviation, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witnessed a new interest in Shi'ism following the return of the Shi'i ulama from Iraq and resettlement of the leading clerics in Isfahan and Qom. In this period, Isfahan again became the major Shi'i center of the Iraq-e 'Ajam leading the Shi'i communities in Iraq and Iran.

It was in this climate that Sadr-e Isfahani's religious commissions in Isfahan and Iraq-e 'Arab deemed necessary and meaningful. As part of reviving Isfahan's Shi'i identity and status, Sadr-e Isfahani ordered the construction of three new religious schools in Isfahan and the restoration of Isfahan's old mosques and schools. The most pronounced patronage of this kind was the erection of the Sadr School in Isfahan's bazaar and a similar Sadr School in

Najaf. Both of these madrasehs were built after his promotion to the post of prime minister, Sadr-e A'zam. These religious schools not only did consolidate his social and political status, but they also symbolically linked the Shi'i communities of the early nineteenth-century Iraq-e 'Ajam and Iraq-e 'Arab under a common patron.

As was the case in Isfahan, the addition of the Madraseh-ye Sadr to the city of Najaf was accompanied by other urban renewal projects undertaken by this patron. Sadr-e Isfahani launched a restoration project to rebuild the city walls of Najaf that according to *Madayeh* was completed in 1812. The reasons given by Akhtar for these construction projects were Sadr-e Isfahani's piety and love of Imam Ali as well as the dilapidation of the old city walls that had caused safety and security issues for the residents of Najaf.⁵⁸ Given that the shrine of Imam Ali is located in Najaf, Sadr-e Isfahani's interest in this urban patronage reveals his attention to the Shi'i legacy of Iran and the religious and political links between Iran and Iraq at this time.

Other than these projects, he also ordered the production of seven silver doors in Isfahan for the Shi'i shrines in Iran and Iraq, including the doors for the tombs in Kazemayn, Imam Ali in Najaf, Imam Reza in Mashhad, Hazrat-e Ma'sumeh in Qom, Imam Hosein in Karbala, and Hazrat-e Abbas in Karbala. The shrine of Hazrat-e Abbas was repaired and the dome was gilded under his patronage.⁵⁹ These offerings were supposed to showcase the piety of the Amin al-Dowleh and his passion to the innocent Imams.

Building religious schools (usually including a small mosque attached to the school), commissioning doors for the sacred Shi'i shrines, and erecting public fountains comprise the major public and religious patronage of Sadr-e Isfahani to legitimize his governorship over

⁵⁸ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 22.

⁵⁹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 17.

religiously oriented urban community of Isfahan. It was also essential to secure his political status by gaining the favor of the religious authorities in Iran and Iraq who had strong impact on the public opinion of urban communities. Sadr-e Isfahani augmented the effects of his religious commissions through rewarding the panegyrists of the innocent Imams and the eulogists of his artistic and architectural patronage dedicated to the Shi'i shrines. The first chapter of *Madayeh* consists of the panegyrics of the Imams and the poetic chronograms of Sadr-e Isfahani's interventions in their shrines. These poets have successfully crafted a pious and dedicated persona for Sadr-e Isfahani using familiar metaphors and tropes in the description of his projects.⁶⁰ Thus, *Madayeh* projected a celebrated image of this influential elite manifested in his transnational acts of piety and inscribed his memory in the collective memory of the broader Shi'i community of the Iraq-e 'Ajam and 'Arab.

Returning Justice to the City

Two other interconnected themes to portray Isfahan's prosperity during Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship are the governor's just rule and his benevolent deeds. As the poets in *Madayeh* project, the welfare of the city is subject to the justice and fair management of its population and resources.⁶¹ The generosity of the ruler in assisting the needy and poor as well as his attention to justice, care of the uncultivated lands, and restoration of the ruined buildings are the requirements of a prosperous urban center. In *Madayeh*, there is a direct relationship between the governor and the city's destiny. There can be seen a sort of affinity between the

⁶⁰ For instance, the poets draw on the similarity between his name, Hosein, and the third Imam to make a connection between his persona and the sacred entity of the Imam. Refer to *Madayeh*, 18.

⁶¹ The word “*'adl*” (justice) has frequently appeared in *Madayeh* for example on pages 22, 37, 124, etc.,.

concept of architecture (*me'mari*) and fairness (*'adl*) that must be provided by the city administrator to achieve the well-being of the inhabitants. This juxtaposition can be observed in different poetic combinations in verses such as “when your justice became the architect in this reclaimed land” (*gasht ta 'adl-e to me'mar dar in ma'moureh*) from Danesh and “the ruins turned into spacious gardens and gilded palaces by his justice’s architecture” (*shod ze me'mari-ye 'adlash har koja viraneh-yi/ baghha-ye delgosha o qasrh-ye zarnegar*) from Akhtar in which justice is the agent of reclamation and construction alike an architect.

While fair architecture and construction activities are deemed to revive Isfahan’s corporeal aspect, the magnanimity of the governor is essential to please the hearts of the miserable inhabitants, as versified in Akbar’s ode.⁶² Indeed, justice in this context is an allusion to both tangible and intangible support of the residents and urban life. It includes infrastructure and architectural development as well as social and economic support. Evaluating Sadr-e Isfahani’s projects in Isfahan based on *Madayeh*’s poems, it seems that he was able to adequately manage either side of this equation.

As a logical result deduced by *Madayeh*’s poets, when the requirements of fairness and caring for the destitute are met, the population of the city will grow. A common criterion in assessing a city’s development is its population growth. In the eighteenth century, Isfahan’s population dropped from about 200 thousand to 60 thousand people. Although these figures are not very reliable in the absence of accurate statistical data, historical accounts report an increase in Isfahan’s population to around 80 thousand by the early Qajar period. One of the recurring topics in these panegyrics is the population growth resulting from the justice and generosity of such an admirable governor of Isfahan. A sign of reclamation and prosperity in

⁶² Baqi, *Madayeh*, 23.

these poems is the growth of the population that occurred after Sadr-e Isfahani's renewal of the city. Often in these poems, this growth was in close and direct relationship to the generosity and just governorship of Sadr-e Isfahani, as Baqi states in his poem (*dar Esfahan ze 'adlash shod chenan jam'iyyati haasel*) and Harif confirms this view (*Gasht az 'adl o daad o hemmat-e u, khetteh-ye Esfahan behesht-neshaan*).⁶³

Conclusion

Reclamation and population growth come in contrary to the ruined city inhabited by the owls. The before and after image of Isfahan is presented in this contradiction. The symbolic owl stands for the decadent city that is empty of people and the hustle and bustle of the crowd. The ominous owl in Persian literature signifies desolation, darkness, and ruins. The owl does not build a nest and is notorious for living in isolated ruins.⁶⁴ In *Madayeh*, this is the owl who governs the desolated city before the emergence of the just and avid architectural patron of Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani. As suggested in *Madayeh*, emptiness, isolation, and decadence were replaced by new crowded spaces not suitable for the inauspicious owl anymore. As an example, Parvaneh, in a hyperbolical way suggests: "The world has become so much revived because of his justice (architecture) that the owl is confounded to find a place to live."⁶⁵

The overall satisfaction with the improvements of the city and its management at this time can be concluded from the contemporary travelogues. In comparison to his earlier visit of Isfahan in 1801, Morier acknowledges Isfahan's progress and its inhabitants' positive attitude towards the governor in his second journey in 1818:

⁶³ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 95.

⁶⁴ Sima Soltani, "Joqd dar Gozar-e Rouzegaran," *Bokhara* (2010), 379.

⁶⁵ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 27.

But in his particular department, that of raising money to feed the King's coffers, perhaps no man in Persia has ever surpassed him; and with all this, we found the people of Isfahan, from whom the greater part of the riches are derived, in general very well-disposed towards him. He takes pride in the improvement of the city and its environs, and his success is evident to my eye since I was here last. The public buildings have been repaired and beautified, new avenues have been planted, the cultivation has considerably increased, and there is a more general appearance of affluence and prosperity.⁶⁶

Yet, in the absence of Persian sources narrating the experience of the common people at this time and the caveat regarding the formality and biases of the official sources produced in the Qajar court, how can we assess Morier's judgments? *Madayeh* can offer illuminating glimpses of contemporary Isfahan even in its panegyric format. Based on my reading of this document, of 72 poets listed in *Madayeh*, about 46 were originally from Isfahan while the rest had a chance to experience Isfahan's urban life during their short trips to visit the governor and dedicate their panegyrics to him. Only about 21 out of 72 poets have been categorized as well-known poets related to the Qajar court. Other poets are mostly commoners occupied in different professions. These figures suggest that a collective of poets from various social status were involved in composing panegyrics for the patron which in fact described Isfahan's urban milieu and built environment under his patronage. *Madayeh*'s poets in general presented the renewed city as a relatively prosperous and cheerful urban center, an image of the city that Sadr-e Isfahani was eager to create through reminding Isfahan of its celebrated past.

⁶⁶ James Morier, *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, Between the Years 1810 and 1816. With a Journal of the Voyage by the Brazils and Bombay to the Persian Gulf. Together with an Account of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Embassy under His Excellency Sir Gore Ouseley*, 132.

Chapter 2 : Legacy of the Empire in Late Safavid City

Introduction

‘How wonderful! How wonderful, may it be blessed!
Every one of its [Sevkabad] shaded avenues is a sinecure for gay life and pleasure.
From envy of its abundant pure breeze,
Isfahan’s Ferahabad crumbled in ruins.’¹ (by Ottoman court poet, Nedim)

The destruction of the last Safavid masterpiece, the Farahabad palace-garden in 1722, left a lasting impact on the collective memory of the eighteenth century. The collapse of this expansive complex commissioned by Shah Soltan Hosein (r.1694-1722), epitomized the decline of the Safavid Empire. During the Afghan invasion, this vast suburban garden turned into a military station for Mahmud and his forces, which led to a six-month siege of the city and ultimately the fall of the Safavid dynasty. The contradictory status of Farahabad, both as a remarkable royal masterpiece and a metaphor for the fall of the empire, gave it an unresolved position regarding its architectural legacy. Nonetheless, as the evidence in this chapter suggests, this palace contributed to the design and architectural discourse of the eighteenth century in Iran and beyond, despite its short-lived function as a royal edifice. As Shirine Hamadeh in her article on the Ottoman expression of modernity and novelty states Farahabad’s fame had reached beyond Iran’s borders and entered the architectural discourse of the Ottoman Empire. As an example, by 1728, Ottoman court poet Nedim was alluding to

¹ Quoted in Shirine Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the ‘Inevitable’ Question of Westernization,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 1 (2004), 41. The Sevkabad palace garden was constructed in 1728 “by Saliha Soltan, the mother of Mahmud I, in Beylerbeyi as a smashing triumph over a contemporary Safavid masterpiece, the palace garden of Ferehabad.”

Farahabad in composing his ode for the construction of the new palace garden of Sevkabad. Whether a grand symbol of a great empire's fall or an exemplary and ambitious royal complex, the contemporary significance of this complex, as well as other late Safavid architectural commissions at this time, has been obscured by retrospective accounts and the collapse of the empire.

This chapter explores the last Safavid interventions in the built environment of Isfahan. It unfolds the overlooked and underexamined aspects of Isfahan's urban and architectural transformations under Shah Soltan Hosein, right prior to the collapse of the Safavid Empire. It argues that Soltan Hosein's architectural patronage in Isfahan played a crucial role in redefining the character of the city in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, despite the scholarly neglect of this period. While the Safavid Empire's gradual decline after Shah Abbas I has been associated with the incompetence of his descendants, Shah Soltan Hosein was specifically accused of handing the empire and Isfahan over to the Afghan invaders. The direct link that contemporary local historians and foreign observers have made between the personality of this king and the decadence of the city is substantial to understanding the dominant "decline paradigm" associated with Isfahan's architecture and urbanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Jean-Do Brignoli alerts us of two prevailing issues in the study of Soltan Hosein's expansive palace-garden of Farahabad. The first issue is the problematic conflation of the architectural patronage of the king and his personality with the fall of the empire. The second issue relates to the paucity of primary sources mentioning this period's architecture and the generalization of a few European testimonies following the aftermath of the empire's collapse. He also accurately reminds us that "It was easy for these

chroniclers and moralist historians to make a biased reading of the construction of the palace in the sinister light of the events to come.”²

A Feeble King, a Decaying City

The entanglement between the fate of the decaying empire and the personality of the incompetent ruler is present in almost all secondary scholarship concerned with this period. Soltan Hosein’s interests in *haram* life, religion, and building have been blamed as the reasons behind his absence from political and military arenas. Stephen Blake summarizes Soltan Hosein's characteristics thus: “Quiet, studious, and absorbed in religious issues, he fell under the influence of several influential clerics, most notably the religious scholar Mir Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi, the Mullah Bashi.” And while he was engaged in religious debates in the company of clerics, the management of state affairs was left to the *amirs*.³ Particularly, most historians have associated his weakness in rulership with his obsessions with religion and women. These two interests, as scholars interpret, have been translated in architecture to the construction of two building types: *madraseh* (religious school) and *haram* (private palace). Blake’s summary of Soltan Hosein’s building activity very well fits in this categorization:

Shah Soltan Husain’s building activities in Isfahan reflected his twin obsessions—religion and harem. He erected the last great monument of the city, the Soltani Madrasa, to house Mir Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi and to produce clerics capable of spreading Shi'ism. In the Imperial palace

² Jean-Do Brignoli, “The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited,” 139.

³ Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590-1722* (Mazda Publishers, 1999) 11.

he rebuilt the Chihil Sutun, after it had been completely destroyed by fire in the early eighteenth century, and constructed a new palace complex for his harem (the Paradisal Garden). He also built the last great imperial garden retreat, the Farahabad Chahar Bagh, in the suburbs to the south of the walled city.⁴

This caricature encapsulates the distortions by which Soltan Hosein's architectural patronage have been treated. Not confined to Iran's court, eighteenth-century debates on the decline of morality and imperial degeneracy were prevalent at a global level. In Europe, for instance, the decline of moral values was associated with the decline of the cities and the empire in general.⁵ In this context, most of the information and narratives, given by the Europeans and native chroniclers on this period, are concerned with the moral degeneracy of the king rationally reflected in the demise of the empire and the failure of the city as the seat of the kingship. One can argue that Isfahan, in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was also seen in the same light, obscuring the degree of real transformations that the city experienced.

Assuming this period as a time of "decay and demise," scholars of Safavid history have easily skipped over Soltan Hosein's reign and included this transitory phase as a brief conclusion to their emphasis on the golden age of Shah Abbas I. Blake's note highlights this striking difference:

Besides the timeline that places the major political buildings in the early seventeenth century, the principal economic structures in the mid-seventeenth century, and the important religious buildings in the late

⁴ Blake, *Half the World*, 12.

⁵ Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673-1968*, Cambridge, 2005, 14. Also see Anthony Vidler, *The scenes of the street: transformations in ideal and reality, 1750-1871*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1986.

seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, a more comprehensive, overarching story connects the social architecture of early-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century Isfahan. In this narrative the theme is the rise and fall of both city and dynasty, and the architectural bookends are the Maidan-i Naqsh-i Jahan and the Soltani Madrasa.⁶

Relying on the political history of this period, even architectural historians have assumed the same narrative without further delving into contemporary sources. Minimizing Shah Soltan Hosein's architectural activities to individualistic and pleasure-oriented campaigns leaves out the possibility of searching for a fact-oriented narrative. Babaie's comparison between Soltan Hosein's construction projects and his ancestors is telling in this case.

In contrast to the urban consciousness of the palace construction projects of his forebears in Isfahan, Shah Soltan Hosayn appears to have focused his palatine campaign on a cluster of 'playhouse,' pavilions of dainty scale and delicate disposition planted in the midst of pleasure gardens in Farahabad.⁷

Rudi Matthee in *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* objects to the idea of decline associated with the second half of the Safavid rule and emphasizes the divergence between reality and perception in understanding this concept. He shows that despite the commonly assumed decline of the Safavids after Shah Abbas I, in cultural and economic aspects one observes a form of vitality and continuity with the first half of Safavid rule. Taking some burden away from Shah Soltan Hosein's period, he argues that some of

⁶ Blake, *Half the World*, xviii.

⁷ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) 208. It seems that the author has proposed a revision of her previous account regarding this period in her latest publication focusing on the Safavid town planning practices. In this new interpretation, she considers Soltan Hosein's Farahabad palace-garden as an urban planning attempt. Sussan Babaie, "Safavid Town Planning," in *Safavid Persia in the Age of Empires: The Idea of Iran*, Ed. Charles Melville, 2021.

the economic and political weaknesses of the Safavid empire were in fact the result of structural deficiencies laid out under the rule of Shah Abbas I and his predecessors. Accordingly, he suggests that “one way of evading the problematic decline scenario in the case of late Safavid Iran is to highlight political stability and cultural efflorescence.”⁸

Building on Matthee’s discussion and moving beyond the moralistic classification of Soltan Hosein’s Isfahan, in this dissertation, I will analyze Soltan Hosein’s architectural projects and the transformation of the urban landscape of Isfahan under his rule. I argue that his contribution to the physical and conceptual transformations of the city exceeds the construction of the presumed Soltani madraseh and the lost Farahabad Garden that epitomized his obsession with religion and *Haram*. And even more significant than his individual architectural projects, his urban vision for establishing a new city in the suburban area must be considered an ambitious move for the expansion of the city to the south. Besides, contemporary accounts of his buildings demonstrate a tendency for surpassing the legacy of his ancestors as signs of his interest in royal architectural activities to exert his kingly power over his subjects and revive the Safavid empire’s royal vigor. Rather than undermining this period’s achievements and legacies as an unhappy “bookend” of the glorious Safavid period, as an unhelpful and counter-productive narrative, this chapter will focus on the contemporary strategies for the expression of power and superiority through building and construction activities that very much followed the celebrated model of Shah Abbas I’s New Isfahan and opened a new chapter in the history of the city.

⁸ Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012) xxii.

Although the political narrative of his reign ends up with the conflation of the dynasty's decay and the city's fall, the architectural history of the period reveals a form of revivalism that sought to imitate or even surpass the remarkable period of Shah Abbas I. If we consider the interventions in the built environment as evidence to gauge the vitality of the empire and the emperor's attitude to his own imperial past, the story of the city's transformations takes a different path; one that delves into the reality of urban and architectural transformations perceived and lived in the accounts of contemporary observers. An accurate evaluation and representation of the early eighteenth-century Isfahan, undoubtedly, will yield a better analysis of the following phases of restoration and construction in post-Safavid Iran.

Retreat to Haram

The first criticism targeting Soltan Hosein's incompetence was his sedentary, and palace-bounded way of rule in which the king was entertained with women and wine instead of occupying himself with state matters. Unlike legendary Shah Abbas I, who appeared as a formidable warrior in motion ready for battlegrounds and assertive in exerting power, Soltan Hosein was considered a soft, kind, and pious king who resided in his extravagant palace and distanced himself from the public eye. The erection of the suburban palace garden of Farahabad has been presented as symptomatic of the king's presumed aloofness from the urban center of Isfahan and the court affairs. Consequently, his zeal to complete this suburban palace garden amidst economic and political crises became the subject of public criticism.⁹ But looking from the other side of the story, here I am concerned with how Soltan

⁹ Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 209.

Hosein's love of buildings and construction altered the built environment of the late Safavid Isfahan.

Degraded to a hobby, Soltan Hosein's building undertakings have been discussed in the limited scope of the king's personal habit of squandering the court's capital in constructing lavish and luxurious gardens and private *harams*. Despite the harsh criticism that the construction of the Farahabad Garden and the huge sums gathered to materialize such a massive project sparked in Isfahan, the scale of this architectural patronage was an exemplary project at the turn of the century. A contemporary poet-critic admonished Soltan Hosein's obsession with this project and the ways in which the grand vizier, Fath Ali Khan Daghestani, kept him occupied with the construction of the Farahabad Garden rather than involved in managing the state affairs. The poet recounts on behalf of the vizier to the king: "Give me a free hand so that the entire world becomes beholden to me in money and life, keep yourself busy with the auspicious restoration of the Bagh-e Farah day and night and indefatigably [translation by Matthee]."¹⁰ While this criticism points to the worsening and weakening state of the king's engagement with the management of state matters, his fondness to accomplish for such a grandiose construction project amid the lack of resources and degradation of his royal status is an important subject to pursue.

Although nothing was unusual in terms of investing in royal architecture in the case of Soltan Hosein, the temporal proximity of his building activities to the collapse of the empire evoked the idea of the king's incompetence in managing his domain. Contrary to Shah Abbas I's period when the grand-scale building project of New Isfahan was taken as signs of

¹⁰ Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 209.

the empire's prosperity and the king's potent supervision, in the already weakening reigns of the later Safavid kings the extravagant royal architecture was to be blamed for the impoverishment of the court and lack of sufficient resources. This study liberates the architecture of this period from these dominant narratives to explore the "enunciative power of architecture,"¹¹ expressed in the king's choice of architectural projects and their contemporary effects.

As Rudi Matthee points out "decline is a normative term as well as a relative one, and is thus always used comparatively."¹² Despite the shortcomings of Soltan Hosein's state management in comparison to the Safavid past, his architectural projects were perceived differently by his contemporaneous states such as the rival Ottoman empire. Shirine Hamadeh's intriguing study gives some clues on the importance of Isfahan's urban spaces and specifically Soltan Hosein's Farahabad project in the eye of the Ottomans. Hamadeh argues that the debate on novelty and innovation in eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture was in fact directed toward the Safavid city and its contemporary architecture.¹³ The reference by the Ottoman court poet Nedim to the Chaharbagh of Isfahan in the description of the Sa'dabad garden, in 1722, is one of these clues: "with blots and scores, it scarred Isfahan's Chaharbagh/Sa'dabad has now become a garden upon a hill, my love."¹⁴ Another comparison that Nedim makes directly mentions the Farahabad Garden of Isfahan and the

¹¹ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 2008.

¹² Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, xxix.

¹³ Shirine Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization," 41.

¹⁴ Shirine Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization," 40. In this article, Hamadeh takes the reference to the "Chaharbagh" as an allusion to Chaharbagh Avenue; however, considering the poet's emphasis on the location of the garden on a hilltop, I believe this should refer to the Hezar Jarib or the Chaharbagh garden located at the northern end of the Chaharbagh Avenue.

superiority of the Ottoman palatial garden of Sevkabad, erected in 1728. He describes it as “a smashing triumph over a contemporary Safavid masterpiece, the palace garden of Ferahabad.”¹⁵ Regardless of the economic burden that this royal project left on the already depleted royal treasury, Farahabad would have been considered a royal statement aiming to recuperate the image of kingship in late Safavid Iran by presenting the king as an active and energetic architectural patron.

The allusion to Isfahan and its urban spaces was not limited to court poetry in the Ottoman empire. It was an ongoing expression of power between the two courts (Ottoman and Safavid) in their convivial and official gatherings. Hamadeh, based on other evidence, shows how the Chaharbagh promenade was introduced as a ‘place of fame’ in Mehmet Pasha’s report in 1699 and how six years later a conversation between Ahmed Pasha and Murtaza Kulu Han (Persian ambassador in Istanbul) developed around the concept of pleasure gardens and urban elements. Ahmed Pasha declared that ‘[You] might have a garden called Chaharbagh in your city of Isfahan, [but] we too [in Istanbul] have a heavenly pleasure [gardens]’.¹⁶ Hamadeh interprets these quotes and concludes:

The fact that the century-old promenade was so alive in eighteenth-century Ottoman minds may suggest that poet’s repeated allusions to it in relation to Sa’dabad were not fortuitous, and that in the eyes of contemporary

¹⁵ Shirine Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the ‘Inevitable’ Question of Westernization,” 40. ‘How wonderful! How wonderful, may it be blessed! /Every one of its shaded avenues is a sinecure for gay life and pleasure/From envy of its abundant pure breeze /Isfahan’s Ferahabad crumbled in ruins.’

¹⁶ Shirine Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the ‘Inevitable’ Question of Westernization,” 41. Quoted from Tarih-I Isma’il 'Asim Effendi “Carbag ismiyle sohret-siar olan mahalle.”

viewers the Ottoman palace did evoke connections with its assigned Persian counterpart.¹⁷

As significant as the conversations on the “fame” of the Chaharbagh in 1699 and 1705 would have been for the Ottomans, they imply the self-consciousness of the Safavid court regarding its extended repercussions that could have not been skipped Soltan Hosein’s attention. In fact, his projects were perfectly aligned with this awareness and were supposed to compete with those models. While the early eighteenth-century Ottoman architecture was in part inspired formally and symbolically by the Safavid Chaharbagh, interestingly, Soltan Hosein’s Farahabad was to surpass Samarqand and Cairo and humiliate the sublimity of Shah Abbas I’s Chaharbagh as recorded in the literary sources.¹⁸ I will come back to these local contemporary sources in the rest of this chapter.

Building on Hamadeh’s assertion, what interests me regarding these connections is the contemporary perception of Isfahan’s urban architecture in a broader context in which a new trend for the creation of pleasure gardens was in demand.¹⁹ As I will show in Chapter 3, the chaharbagh avenue type was continued in the post-Safavid transformations of the city as the main ordering and organizing tool of urban spaces. Moreover, these links demonstrate the viability of the transmission of architectural knowledge and ideas even when the political stability and vitality of the Safavid empire were under question.

¹⁷ Hamadeh, “Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the ‘Inevitable’ Question of Westernization,” 42.

¹⁸ Mirza Mohsen Ta’sir Tabrizi, “Masnavi Jahan-nama.”

¹⁹ For the emergence of pleasure gardens see Shirine Hamadeh, “Public Sphere in the Eastern Mediterranean,” *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, 2016; Also from her, *The City’s Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*, 2008; Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London’s Geographies, 1680-1780* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998)

Excessive Religiosity and Urban Regulations

Another criticism expressed of Soltan Hosein's character was the excessive religiosity of the king and the devastating impact that it left on the public life of the city and its urban spaces. According to Matthee, "particularly detrimental to the country's cohesion and defensive capabilities was Soltan Hosein's religious policy."²⁰ The public manifestation of the king's intent to execute Islamic law and order was reflected in the ban on un-Islamic activities in Isfahan, as Blake describes:

The reign of Shah Soltan Husain marked the high point of Shi'ite ulama influence in Safavid Iran. In 1106/1695 the emperor promulgated an edict signed by the Sheikh al-Islam of Isfahan (Majlisi II) and six other prominent ulama banning all non-Islamic activities. It was read in all mosques of the city. In the Maidan-i Naqsh-i Jahan 6,000 bottles of fine Georgian and Shirazi wine from court cellars were publicly smashed. In later years Mir Muhammad Baqir Khatunabadi was an even greater influence on the shah's thoughts and activities.²¹

The consolidation of Shi'i ulama's power in Isfahan during the seventeenth century led to the institutionalization of Shi'i religious policies, targeting the everyday life of Isfahan's residents. Soltan Hosein's interest in religious matters and ulama's authority in shaping the Shi'i lifestyle was materialized in the appearance of ulama's occupation with the production of jurisprudence treaties in Persian for the everyday needs of Muslim women. One of these treaties is *'Aqayed al-Kasa Fi Fiqh al-Nesa*, commissioned by Soltan Hosein and compiled by Shaykh Hosein Karbalaie, as an accessible life guide for mostly noble women of the

²⁰ Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 219.

²¹ Blake, *Half the World*, 11.

court. This treatise was supposed to convey the Islamic way of life for women based on Islamic rules (*Ahkaam*). In this treatise, there are instances of contemporary interpretations for everyday matters that indicate the ideal regulations proposed by the ulama for the presence of women in public spaces of the city. According to these rules, women are required not to leave their houses unless an emergency occurs. If she must leave the house, she is not allowed to pause and talk with other men. While walking in the street, she must avoid walking along with other men and must walk on the lateral paths instead of the central path. It is not advised (*makrouh*) for women to reside in the upper-level rooms facing the street and participate in wedding or mourning gatherings. Moreover, it is unlawful (*haraam*) for Muslim women to attend public baths located on public streets, and in case of urgency, the naked woman must not accompany a stranger but her servant.²²

Another treatise written in 1113/1702 by Mohammad Ali Qazvini targets a more general audience and provides useful and conventional recommendations for the everyday life of the common people. It is titled *Lobab: a treatise on the manners of household management* that also deals with the conditions governing the public presence of women and children. For instance, analogous to Sheykh Hosein Karbalaie's rules, in this treatise men are advised to ban women from interacting with their neighbors through rooftops. Women are not also allowed to promenade in the gardens and watch the celebrations in 'Eid or attend the mourning rituals in Moharram. Young beautiful boys should not go promenading alone (*seyr o sahra*) and children must not be sent to public places such as mosques, bathhouses, and

²² Rasul Ja'farian, "Shah Soltan Hosein va dastour-e negaresh-e ketabi dar fiqh-e zanan," *Maqalat va Resalat-e Tarikhi*, vol 3. 24-26.

bazaars without their parents. *Lobab* also sketches the accepted manners in which people should interact with each other in public places according to social and religious ethics.²³

Not only did these religious policies aim to regulate the everyday public and private life of the Shi'i Muslims, but they also targeted and alienated the religious minorities living in Isfahan including the Christian Armenians, Zoroastrians, Assyrians, and even Sunni Muslims. One of these regulations was designed to limit the presence of the Armenians in economic affairs including selling agricultural products and purchasing lands along the Zayandeh River:

Mirza Rabi'ah also persuaded the shah to issue four raqams curtailing the rights of the New Julfa community. According to the first, no corn or wheat could be brought to New Julfa directly but all had to be taken to Isfahan proper first, there to be bought by the Julfans. The second stipulated that the Armenians could no longer sell fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs to Muslims; the third raised rents paid by the New Julfans, and the fourth confiscated all gardens alongside the Zayandah Rud for the shah, forbidding Armenians from building on the land any longer.²⁴

Beyond the state's rhetoric of religiosity, these restrictions on religious minorities led to the scattering of Isfahan's economic and human forces to other regions and as Matthee suggests, "New Julfa's Catholic Armenians thus emigrated to Venice, Russia, and India in growing numbers in this period."²⁵ While the persecution of religious minorities could have changed

²³ Rasul Ja'farian, "Lobab: Resaleh-ye Nafis dar Sabk-e Zendegi ya Tadbir-e Manzel," [لباب، رساله‌ای نفیس در سبک زندگی یا تدبیر منزل \(manuscripts.ir\)](http://manuscripts.ir). This treatise has also been published in Rafiq-e Toufiq, edited by Rasul Ja'farian.

²⁴ Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 220.

²⁵ Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 220.

the social and cultural presence of these groups in the public sphere of Isfahan, one cannot define with certainty to what extent these rules were executed. The scattered evidence in primary sources indicates a degree of flexibility regarding the implementation of the above-mentioned rules due to the corruption and venality of the Safavid officials. Rasul Ja'farian suggests that the corruption of the courtiers who were occupied with excessive drinking and the benefit they gained from the taxation imposed on the coffeehouses and brothels made the implementation of such regulations a very difficult task.²⁶

Although the above-mentioned treatises are examples of general rules for restricting women's visibility and presence in the city, they connote the anxiety around women's public presence and the ways in which women could undermine these restrictions. The fact that *Lobab*'s author asks his male audiences to prevent the mixing of women with other women through rooftops indicates the prevalence of such practices at that time. In a society where women's presence in the streets and bazaars is prohibited, the upper-level rooms and rooftops turn into a communicative space and social arena. Given the fact that these rules were to portray the ideal Islamic society for the Shi'i ruling class, their feasibility in the execution phase should be thoroughly examined.

I suggest the triangulation of available evidence for investigating to what extent the rules of these treatises were followed and implemented in the everyday life of the late Safavid Isfahan. Turning to other sources, available eyewitness accounts recount a different narrative that women's urban practices were not exactly compatible with these limitations.

Contradictions in the travelers' accounts and even official sources make us suspicious of the

²⁶ Rasul Ja'farian, *Safavi-yeh dar 'arseh-ye Din, Farhang, Siyasat*, vol.1, 409.

direct impact of such religiosity on the reality of urban life during this period. Bruyn who was in Isfahan in 1704, gives two contradictory observations that relate to the rhetorical language of court historians and the image that early eighteenth-century ulama had constructed of the previous Safavid kings. He mentions that during former kings' reigns, they had festivals of Nowruz held at the maidan but Soltan Hosein does not approve of it anymore. He points to other unaccepted activities and states: "Upon these occasions they had also jugglers, which the king at this day will no longer admit of, the directors of his conscience having informed him the toleration of them is sinful and immoral; nor do they any longer allow of dancing women and courtesans, who formerly abounded on all sides."²⁷

While this statement conforms with the common perception of Soltan Hosein's religiosity, Bruyn observes the presence of both sexes promenading, strolling, and walking along the Zayandeh river while enjoying the exuberant social life around the river and the bridge in the evening:

There is nothing more pleasing to the sight than the view to the eastward from upon this bridge; and in the evening you see an infinite number of persons of both sexes, taking the air by the riverside, near the water-fall, and in the fine way that runs along the arches of the bridge, some on horseback, some on foot, smoking and drinking coffee, which they there find ready prepared for them.²⁸

²⁷ Cornelis de Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies* (London: printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, S. Birt, C. Davis, J. Clarke, S. Harding D. Browne, A. Millar, J. Shuckburgh, and T. Osborne, 1737) 196.

²⁸ Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, 200.

John Bell also in his description of the Chaharbagh promenade, observed in 1717, affirms the active presence of common people in this public promenade for socializing and spending their pass time:

This noble street [Chaharbagh] is very broad and straight, and near an English mile in length. On each side are the King's palaces, courts of justice, and the academics for the education of youth, with two towers of tall chinar trees, which afford a fine shade. These trees have a smooth within bark and a broad leaf like the plane-tree. At certain distances there are fountains of water that play continually, round which is spread carpets; and thither the Persians resort to drinking coffee, smoke tobacco, and hear the news: which, I must confess, is very agreeable in hot weather.²⁹

According to this evidence, urban life in the public spaces of Isfahan such as the Chaharbagh promenade and the bridges were, in fact, vibrant and dynamic indicating the limited effect of the religious regulation on these urban spaces at the time. Despite this public presence, the court made some rudimentary efforts to regulate urban life in the city. In the same travelogue, Bell refers to the presence of watchmen at probably the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge, “stationed at each end to prevent disorders.”³⁰

The official account of Mohammad Asef is an additional source to corroborate the continuity of some urban rituals conforming to religious rules. Asef recounts that during Soltan Hosein’s reign, three days a year, men were banned from the urban spaces and had to stay home. Instead, their women and daughters replaced their place at the shops and bazaars. They were specifically supposed to reside in the Qaysariyeh, Carvansaras, and trading chambers, with excessive accessories and make-up. The king and his entourage, including

²⁹ John Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*, 120.

³⁰ Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*, 119.

500 women and girls, 4500 servants, 100 white eunuchs, and 100 black eunuchs, were supposed to attend this spectacle, purchase goods, and enjoy this visual pleasure.³¹

Despite the sensual language of Asef's account that describes Soltan Hosein's *haram* and the women involved in this urban spectacle, a religiously charged spectacle that bans men from the bazaars and instead brings women to the urban scene, although for a short time, is a very interesting ritual. This ritual was in fact practiced during Abbas I's reign resulting in the closure of the Chaharbagh promenade and the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge on Wednesdays to exclusively serve the royal women and high-profile elite women of Isfahan. They could drink coffee in the coffeehouses served by the women and in this female domain, women could experience being in the urban spaces of Isfahan although segregated and regimented. But the difference between these two periods lay in the spaces chosen for this practice that shifted from the Chaharbagh and the bridge to the Qaysariyeh and the bazaar. Even though Asef does not clarify which shops were supposed to be managed by the women, the reduction of days to just three days per year and the change of location for this purpose is notable.

However, another piece of evidence confirms a different form of encounter with the city for the palace women through riding alongside the king during his excursions in Isfahan. According to Matthee, "Shah Sulayman especially was fond of going out riding with his female entourage. He is said to have engaged in sixty-two such excursions in the first five months of his reign, taking advantage of the freedom denied to him during long years of

³¹ Mohammad Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 108.

secluded *haram* life.”³² Although this estimation cannot be generalized to Soltan Hosein’s reign, the fact that the king and his entourage were engaged in these frequent excursions is quite important in terms of urban experience and perception of Isfahan’s urban spaces. This suggests a form of interest in experiencing the city through riding and in motion that accords with the heightened interest in the urban itineraries produced in seventeenth-century Isfahan.³³ These excursions usually happened under strict *quruq* that banned the presence of any male around the royal entourage during their outing.

Another contributing factor in the shift of the women’s bazaars to the Qaysariyeh would have been the erection of the Soltani madrasah in the Chaharbagh, reserved for the religious scholars of Isfahan, at the turn of the century. The addition of this new religious institution along the royal gardens and coffeehouses might have affected the possibility of holding *quruq* and evacuating the avenue from the male gaze for the entertainment of the royal women. Putting these pieces of evidence together, we can surmise that the Chaharbagh at the time had become more accessible for both sexes and the urban status of this street had made it difficult to shut it down every week for holding royal *quruq*. Thus, unlike the harshness of Soltan Hosein’s religious policies and the ulama’s efforts to curtail the presence of women in the city, the evidence affirms the continuity of people’s presence in the public spaces of Isfahan even under the control of the state officers.

Based on the materials considered in this section, I suggest that Soltan Hosein’s excessive interest in *haram* life and religion, or his political failures, must not mislead us

³² Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, 58.

³³ For further information on the urban itineraries see Farshid Emami, “Discursive Images and Urban Itineraries: Literary Form and City Experience in Early Modern Iran.”

into considering his period as an eventless era in terms of architectural and urban developments. Drawing evidence from the transnational impact of his expansive and extensive architectural projects, and the vitality of urban practices despite religious restrictions, I have argued for an alternative perspective that places the built environment and urban practices at the heart of the investigation. In the following sections, I will examine some of the major projects that Soltan Hosein commissioned in Isfahan and their implications in the closing years of the Safavid empire.

Additions to the Sa'adatabad Garden

Soltan Hosein assumed the throne in 1105/1694 in the Talar-e Tavileh, after the demise of Shah Suleyman. And despite the king's intention to reside in the private palaces of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh*, he had to move to the Sa'adatabad gardens and the palace of Aynehkhaneh. According to *Dastour-e Shahriyaran* (order of the kings), the account of the first five years of Soltan Hosein's reign, the palaces of the *dowlatkhaneh* were in need of repair and restoration to be suitable for the king's residence. Soltan Hosein chose not to disturb his mourning household right after the demise of Shah Suleyman and postponed the renovation program to a later date. He then returned to the city palaces after the end of mourning rituals and completion of the restoration works in Isfahan's palaces.³⁴ Following the pattern of the king's movement between urban and suburban palaces, the Sa'adatabad Garden was the favorite suburban royal retreat for Soltan Hosein and in particular for performing public ceremonies and celebrations, such as Norouz fireworks and lighting ceremonies, along the river in the early years of his reign. The Shi'i mourning rituals during

³⁴ Mohammad Ibrahim ibn Zayn al-'Abedin Nasiri, *Dastour-e Shahriyaran*, ed. Mohammad Nader Nasiri Moqaddam, vol.1, 27.

the Muharram and Ramazan were supposed to be held in the urban palaces and *dowlatkhaneh* rather than the suburban ones.³⁵ The Sa'adatabad Garden was located on the southern bank of the Zayandeh River and stretched East to West from the Khawju Bridge to the Allahverdi Khan Bridge and South to North from Takht-e Foulad to the gardens on the northern bank of the Zayandeh River. This was the first Safavid garden in which the river passed through it and divided the garden into two separate areas for women on the north bank and for men on the south bank.³⁶ These two sections were connected through the Joubi (stream) Bridge and literally, a stream of water flow on the bridge as well. The oldest palace, Talar-e Aynekhaneh, was commissioned by Shah Safi, and later additions under his descendants turned this garden into one of the most celebrated royal gardens equivalent to Shah Abbas I's well-known Hezar Jarib garden.

New Maidan and Talar

Shah Soltan Hosein also used this garden as his *dowlatkhaneh* and made some architectural interventions on its westside in the early years of his rule. Shahidi consults the Masnavi-e Golzar-e Sa'adat composed by Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir-e Tabrizi, born in 1060/1650 in Isfahan originally from Tabriz, to discuss the understudied architectural activities of Soltan Hosein in this complex. Interpreting Ta'sir's poetry which is directly intended to describe this garden and its palaces, Shahidi shows that a maidan for polo game and a *talar* to the west, facing the maidan, was added to the Sa'adatabad Garden under his order.³⁷ In addition to

³⁵ Nasiri, *Dastour-e Shahriyaran*, 175-177.

³⁶ Nazanin Shahidi Marnani, "Bagh-e Sa'adatabad Isfahan dar Ayineh-ye Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat," *Motale'at Me'mari Iran*, no.9 (2016) 68.

³⁷ Ibid, 74. "*degar dar samt-e qarb-e aan golestan/ yeki maidan baraye gooy o chugan/ be 'alam dar bozorgi ettefaghash/ lavaye aaseman chub-e ghabayash/ .../dar aan maidan*

these measures, two wooden structures, equal in form and size, across each other, were built (or rebuilt) on the southern bank of the river providing views of the river and the surrounding gardens [Figure 1].

As Ta'sir asserts in his poem, the completion date of the maidan is 1697. Homaie also cites this source to claim that Soltan Hosein established the Sa'adatabad maidan on this date.³⁸ Although Ta'sir's *masnavi* is the only source noting this *maidan*, it is a piece of valuable evidence that Shah Soltan Hosein's impact on Isfahan's built environment is more than what current historiographies claim. Moreover, these measures confirm that Soltan Hosein was in fact interested in expanding this garden as an expression of his royal power, following a similar pattern in building a *maidan* and a *talar* as he witnessed in the Naqsh-e Jahan square and the Ali Qapu Palace. Of course, current sources are not enough to decide how this *maidan* and the *talar* were used, but the formal scheme and architectural characteristics reflect the repetition of a familiar practice in the Safavid *maidan* and *talar* design.

Emarat-e Mabeyn

Another evidence in *Dastour Shahriyaran* is the name of a new *emarat* and its *talar* known as "Emarat-e Mabeyn." This emarat's function and location interestingly match with the new additions to the palaces of the Sa'adatabad Garden. As appears in this early account of Soltan Hosein's reign, in the first year (1105/1693) the king used to practice riding and military skills in a *khiyaban* inside the open space of the Emarat-e Mabeyn. Apparently, this

yeki talar-e 'ali/ do 'alam az jalalash yek jalali/ .../yeki ra gar ze etmamash soragh ast/hamaan Tarikh-e u 'maidan-e bagh' ast (1108 H)." (Afshar, 715)

³⁸ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 278.

emarat was also in the vicinity of the *dowlatkhaneh* where all the gardens around the *dowlatkhaneh* would be banned to function as an exercise field for archery and horse riding.³⁹ In another location in this source, the author recounts the reception of the Ilchi-ye Rum (the Ottoman envoy) by the king in 1109/1697 in the newly completed Emarat-e Mabeyn (*be tazegi be mohandesi-ye ray-e 'alam-ara ... bonyad ...*).⁴⁰ According to the accounts of the next year, the *talar* of this *emarat* was chosen for the celebration of Norouz in 1110/1698, in which the king held an official audience for the nobilities and elites.⁴¹ Moreover, as connoted by the word “*mabeyn*” (which in Arabic means "in between"), this *emarat* might have been located between two other buildings, most likely the Aynekhaneh and the Haft Dast *dowlatkhaneh*. Drawing on Ta'sir's *masnavi*, a *maidan* and a *talar* were designed in the spaces between these two earlier edifices. The *khiyaban* mentioned in the *Dastour Shahriyaran* might have been situated in the *maidan* area and functioned as a vast polo and archery field. While the *maidan* would have been in use since the king's coronation in 1105/1693, the *talar* was completed later (before 1109) as the chronogram provided by Ta'sir (1108) also corroborates.

An additional source that confirms the existence of a palace and *talar* with these characteristics is John Bell's travelogue written in 1717. Bell, who accompanied the Russian ambassador to the court of Soltan Hosein, provides a list of the king's palaces in Isfahan at the end of his description of the city. He names seven palaces including: “1. Tzel Sootun; or that of forty pillars; 2. Tevela Telear, near the stables; 3. Hasht-Behashi, chambers of paradise; 4. Othiat Tallard, near the *Haram*; 5. Guldesta, house of eunuchs; 6. Taughtzy, at

³⁹ Nasiri, *Dastour-e Shahriyaran*, 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 216.

⁴¹ Ibid, 269.

the north entry, [Tuqchi]; 7. Farrabbatt, south east from the city.”⁴² The Othiat Talard might have been the alternative name of the Emarat-e Mabeyn as the word *osat* in Arabic means the middle, referring to the position of the *talar* between other buildings. Bell also notes that the *talar* was next to the *Haram* (private quarters), yet he does not specify the location of the *Haram* in his travelogue whether it is the urban or suburban *haram*. However, it is possible to posit that it might be the Haft Dast palace in the confines of the Sa‘adatabad Garden which frequently functioned as the suburban *dowlatkhaneh* of the king at this time.

Moreover, there is another document, *Masnavi-e Ta’rif-e dowlatkhaneh-ye Shahanshahi*, that describes the completion of Soltan Hosein’s *dowlatkhaneh* and its water canals, *eyvan*, and architectural ornaments.⁴³ The manuscript held at the Majlis Library in Iran was composed in 1106/1695 and scribed in 1700 by Mirza Mohammad ‘Ulya Nasrabadi. Nasrabadi admires this palace by praising the architects, carpenters, plaster workers, and painters and their dexterity in materializing such a grand building. Unfortunately, his descriptions do not identify the location of this *dowlatkhaneh* either. However, my content analysis of this poetic description suggests that this *masnavi* more likely points to the architectural additions of Soltan Hosein in the garden of Sa‘adatabad.

The temporal proximity of this document’s composition date (1695) to the construction date of the maidan and *talar* at Sa‘adatabad Garden (1697) can be a significant clue. In addition to the dating, in this *masnavi* (rhyming couplets), there are some direct allusions to the Sa‘adatabad Garden both nominally and architecturally. The first clue relates to the couplet that gives the chronogram of the building where Nasrabadi uses the word *sa‘adat*

⁴² Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*, 127.

⁴³ Rasul Ja’fariyan, *Maqhalat-e Tarikhi*, Vol. 5, 339-348.

(felicity) to describe this *dowlatkhaneh* (*pey-e tarikh gofta sedgh-e niyyat/makaan-e doulat o jay-e sa'adat*). Using this noun in the chronogram can be a clue to the name of the palace. According to the tradition of composing rhyme chronograms, poets would do their best to compose a couplet that accorded with the name of the building, the name of the patron, and the date of completion. Another informative description comes at the end of a section on the admiration of the plaster worker and the plaster. Nasrabadi here again uses the word *sa'adat* (*tafaakhor-kon be darbani-ye dowlat/ yeki az khane-zadanash sa'adat*).⁴⁴

Besides this nominal hint, in the same section, Nasrabadi eulogizes Shah Soltan Hosein's piety for commissioning such a building and endowing it possibly to the shrine of Imam Ali (*vaqf-e astaanash*). The endowment of Sa'adatabad Palace can be confirmed by another report in *Vaqay-e al-Senin va al-A'vam*, where the author relates that in 1711 Soltan Hosein endowed the rest of (*baqiye-ye*) the Sa'adatabad Garden's land and water along with the Farahabad Garden.⁴⁵ And as we know, the Farahabad Garden was endowed to the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf, the *astan* (threshold) could refer to this important Shi'i shrine in Iraq.

Along with these references, this *masnavi* highlights some of the architectural elements of this *dowlatkhaneh* and the workforces involved in the process of construction. In terms of architectural elements, the poet describes a high and grand *eyvan* in this *dowlatkhaneh* comparable with Taq-e Kasra (the Arch of Khosrow) in Iraq.⁴⁶ This building was decorated

⁴⁴ Ja'fariyan, *Maqhalat-e Tarikhi*, Vol. 5, 341.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 563.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 340. The eminent Sasanian vaulted hall was located in the ancient city of Ctesiphon, Iraq. (*Ze eyvanash be hokm-e uje raf'at/ nemoudeh ko tohi me'raj-e hemmat ...ze pa ta sar tamam asaar-e mardist/ tavan goftan ke joft-e tagh-e kasrast.*)

with muqarnas ceilings, mirrors, paintings of lovers, calligraphy, plasterwork, woodwork, and other embellishing techniques. It also contained an Aynehkhaneh (the hall of mirrors) where the inlaid mirrors reflected the sunlight and created a brilliant and dazzling space. This should be the same Talar-e Aynehkhaneh that stood along the Zayande river in the Sa'adatabad Garden. Pools (*howz*) and water canals (*jadval*), additionally, were designed to complete the *dowlatkhaneh* while providing water for this complex. Nasrabadi describes them as rectangular water basins made of marble even better than the four gardens of paradise (*jannat-e arba'eh*).⁴⁷ He also makes a reference to the architect (*me'mar*) and head supervisor (*sarkar*) of this building, introduced here as *Mokhles*, an epithet bestowed on him by the king. Nasrabadi admires the *sarkar*'s persistence in producing a high-quality building by managing his human forces and acquiring the best construction material if he desires.

The discrepancy between the dates provided in Nasrabadi's *Masnavi* (1695) and the *Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat* by Ta'sir (1697) can be explained with regard to the content and scope of each document. While the latter is rendering a larger picture of the Sa'adatabad Garden and its different components, Nasrabadi's *masnavi* is a chronogram of a particular building, most likely the *dowlatkhaneh*, located in the confine of the Sa'adatabad Garden. Shahidi contends that the *dowlatkhaneh* described in Ta'sir's *masnavi* must be the new *dowlatkhaneh* or Emarat-e Haft Dast, commissioned by Shah Abbas II in 1070/1660 and was situated on the western side of the Sa'adatabad Garden. This *dowlatkhaneh* was composed of seven attached buildings inside the walls on the northern bank of the river. Six of these seven buildings were destroyed in the Afghan invasion. The only standing part, however, did not endure Zill al-Soltan's destructive efforts. As these two *masnavis* suggest,

⁴⁷ Ibid, 341.

Nasrabadi is recounting the addition of a new building or restoration of the Haft Dast *dowlatkhaneh* in the early years of Soltan Hosein's reign. Using the word, *ta'mir* (repair) perhaps Nasrabadi is alluding to the restoration of the Haft Dast in 1695.⁴⁸ Yet the extent of this possible renovation remains unknown to us.

Despite the scarcity of information on the original Haft Dast completed in 1660, Jean Chardin's sketch of this area presents a conglomeration of several buildings enclosed by walls adjacent to the Aynekhaneh. The nineteenth-century maps of Isfahan also demonstrate a different composition of this *dowlatkhaneh*'s precinct which raises the question of the extent of possible alterations under Soltan Hosein's period. However, relying on the literary documents discussed above, it is safe to propose that Soltan Hosein made some changes in this area while erecting the new maidan and *talar* in the Sa'adatabad Garden. The point to compose a *masnavi* for an already existent Sa'adatabad Garden by Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir was probably to praise the restoration and renovation of this garden in order to celebrate Shah Soltan Hosein's claim over this complex. Another example of this type of architectural panegyric from this period is the restoration and reconstruction of the Chehel Sotun Palace after it was burnt during a lighting ceremony in 1706. The poet, Najib Kashani was commissioned to compose a chronogram for the completion of this renovation project.⁴⁹ It appeared to be a convention during the Safavid period to claim a place or building through renovation and in the early years of Soltan Hosein's reign this was probably the case as well.

⁴⁸ Ibid. "*kond gar 'azm-e ta'mir-e deli ra ...*"

⁴⁹ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar tarikhi Isfahan*, 574.

Furthermore, Bruyn who visited Isfahan in 1704 informs us about a fire incident in the *Haram* (Haft Dast Palace) in the Sa'adatabad Garden that occurred in that year and states "There was a loftier building above this seraglio, which was burnt this summer while the king was there."⁵⁰ Even though it is not evident what exactly was destroyed in that fire, one can surmise that it inflicted the new Emarat-e Mabeyn and its *talar* which was later renovated according to another *masnavi* composed in the same year. This document, Masnavi-ye Maddeh Tarikh-e Bana-ye Emarat-e Shahi, is composed of 32 verses in praise of Soltan Hosein and the completion date of an unknown palace in 1116/1705.⁵¹ This rhyming couplet was composed by Mirza Badi' al-Zaman Nasrabadi and included in the Monsha'at-e Nasrabadi (Epistolary of Nasrabadi), currently held at the Majlis Library in Iran. In this *masnavi*, there are references to an *eyvan*, a royal tower (*borj-e Shahi*), Chehel Sotun,⁵² columns, and paintings. As the content of these verses suggests a certain Mahmoud was in charge of the construction and the palace was most likely a renovation project. Since the Haft Dast Palace was made of stone and still visible in Bruyn's representations of the same year, one can assume that the fire would have damaged the recently constructed new wooden *talar* and *emarat*. One verse in Nasrabadi's *masnavi* directly points to the restoration of a "*chehel sotun*" that can be taken as an allusion to the structure of a *talar* (pillared hall). Additionally, the reference to the borj-e shahi could also point to the two

⁵⁰ Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, 201.

⁵¹ Ms. 4157.

⁵² The reference to the Chehel Sotun can be misleading as almost at the same time the Chehel Sotun Palace was destroyed by a big fire and Shah Soltan Hosein ordered its restoration and renovation which was completed in 1118/1707. Since there are some missing words due to the bad condition of the manuscript used here, some parts of the verses cannot be read and identified. For further information on the restoration of the Chehel Sotun Palace see Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar tarikhi Isfahan*, 574.

semi-open structures within the limits of the Sa'adatabad Garden that Ta'sir recounts in *Masnavi-ye Golzar-e Sa'adat*. Based on this evidence, I propose that this *Masnavi* marks the completion of the restoration project in the Sa'adatabad Garden and the renovation of Soltan Hosein's new *emarat* and *talar* after the 1704 fire.

Given the clues provided in this chapter, Soltan Hosein's interventions in the Sa'adatabad Garden mostly concentrated in the area between the Haft Dast Palace and the Aynehkhaneh. The Emarat-e Mabeyn was bracketed between these two older palaces and mediated between the ceremonial and private sections of this *dowlatkhaneh*. Although Chardin's schematic view does not allow for a better reconstruction of these gardens, the Russian map of Isfahan indicates that Qasr-e Haft Dast-e Vali [Governor's Haft Dast Palace] would be the new palace that Sadr-e Isfahani added to this area, and it might have been erected on the ruins of the Emarat-e Mabeyn originally constructed under Shah Soltan Hosein's period. According to this map, the plan of this new Haft Dast Palace resembles the castle form and courtyard plan layout, typical of the late eighteenth-century palaces. By the early nineteenth century, the Safavid Haft Dast Palace was all vanished and only a bathhouse had remained from this extensive complex, labeled as the governor's bathhouse adjacent to the Joui bridge and the Zayandeh River [Figure 2 and 3].⁵³

⁵³ John Johnson, *A Journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the Year 1817*, 113.

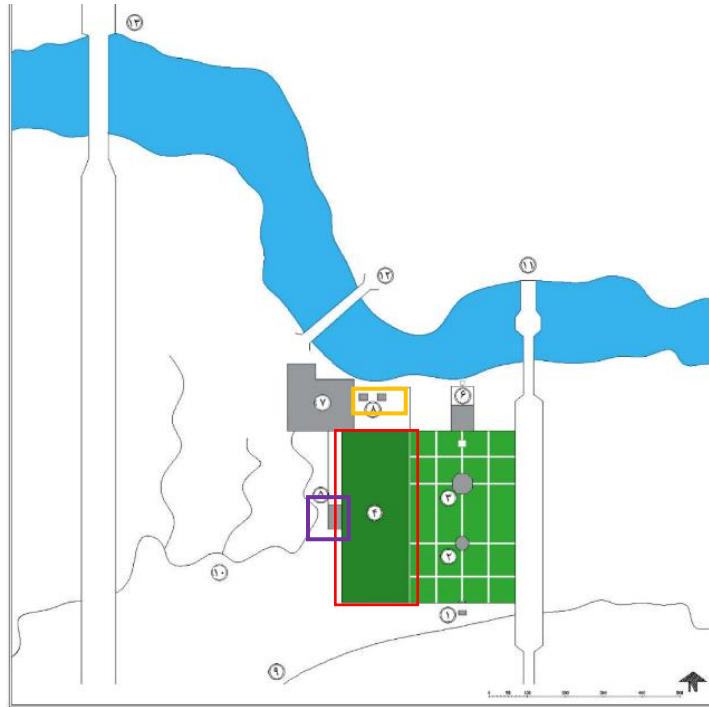


Figure 2-1. The reconstruction plan of the Sa'adabad Garden and Soltan Hosein's additions, by Nazanin Shahidi. Red: the maidsan, Purple: the talar, Yellow: two wooden gazebos

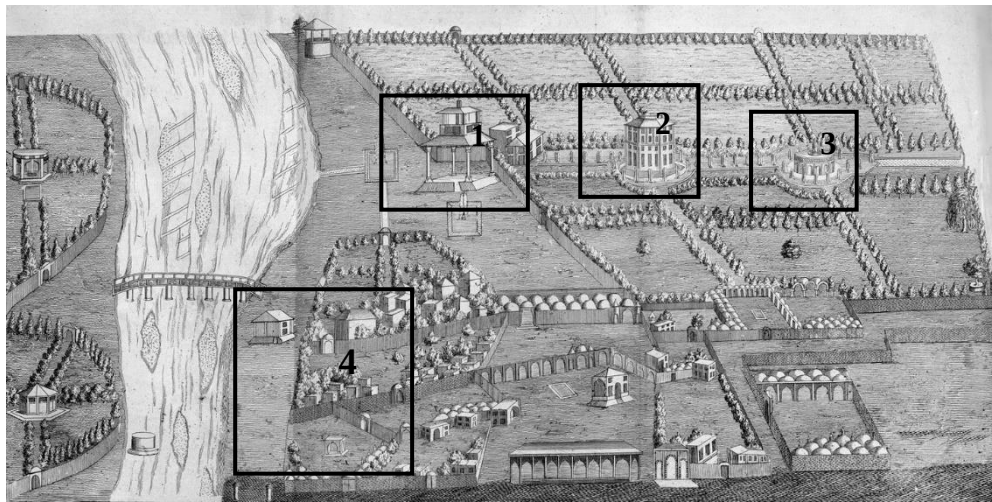


Figure 2-2. View of the Sa'adabad Gardens and the Haft Dast Palace. Chardin, c.1670s. Source: *Voyages de Mr. Le Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient*. Wikimedia Commons. Talar-e Aynehkhaneh (1), Emarat-e Mosamman or Namakdan (2), Mahtabi (3), Dowlatkhaneh or the Haft Dast Palace (4)

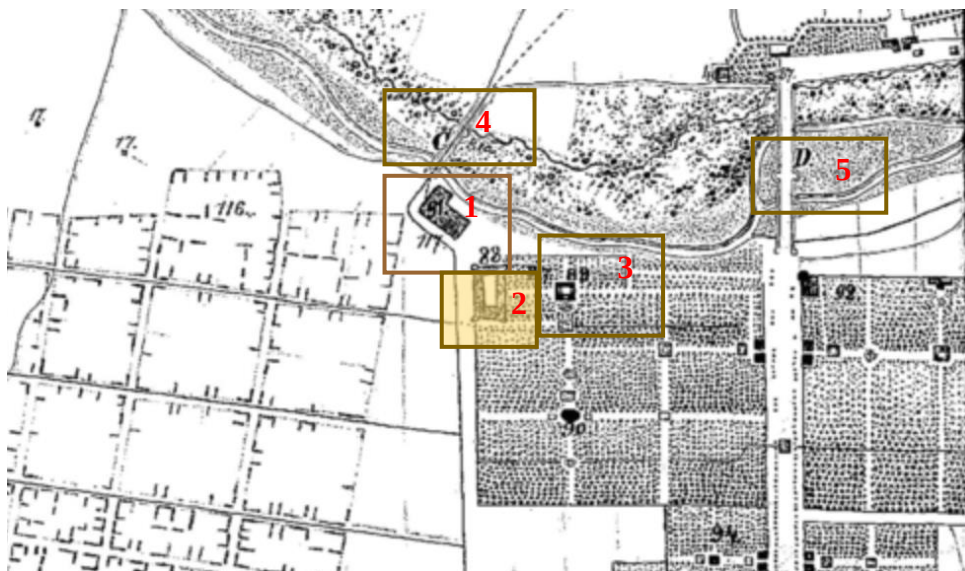


Figure 2-3. Russian map of Isfahan showing the Sa'adatabad Gardens and the Haft Dast Palace, 1851. 1- Hammam-e vali [governor's bathhouse], 2-Qasr-e Haft Dast-e Vali [Governor's Haft dast palace], 3-Aynehkhaneh Palace, 4- Joui Bridge, 5- Khaju Bridge. Yellow: the possible location of the Emarat-e Mabeyn.

Behesht Ayeen Haram

Despite the long-accepted narrative of Soltan Hosein's period that summarizes his building activities in the construction of the Soltani Madraseh and Farahabad Palace-garden, in this section, I will argue that Soltan Hosein did not abandon the traditional palace precinct in Isfahan and gradually alternated his residence between the urban and suburban *harams* due to practical reasons. Interestingly, he began by establishing his palatial complex at the heart of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* and in a very strategic location. A new *Haram* "*andarun khaneh*" was commissioned by Soltan Hosein in the *dowlatkhaneh* probably somewhere confined to the Hasht Behesht palace, the Chehel Sotun Palace, and the Talar-e Tavileh. As Asef describes, this pleasure house was called Behesht Ayeen (*aan kaamsara-ye Jannat asara mosamma be behest ayeen kardand*) and served as the main urban *Haram* of the king. This andarun probably was appended to the Safavid palace complex in the early years of

Soltan Hosein's reign, most likely in 1105/1694 when according to *Dastour Shahriyaran*, Soltan Hosein avoided the city's *dowlatkhaneh* due to the need for restoration of the *haram* in Isfahan. The king returned from the Sa'adatabad *dowlatkhaneh* to the city palaces when the renovation was completed.⁵⁴ While the scope of this restoration remains unknown, Bruyn's observation suggests that the construction process was still ongoing in 1704:

The first time I was at court, in the absence of the King and his women, I went through a gallery between these walls, and thought the entrance of it quite royal. From thence I went to the new Seraglio of the women, which is full of small magnificent apartments, with walls white without and painted with flowers. At the end of this building on the righthand, there is a great apartment of the neatest sort, surrounded with rooms, which were then not finished, and upon which they were then at work. From thence you go into the hall of Tiel-Setton, [...].⁵⁵

According to him, there was an unfinished project in the palace district of Isfahan that might be the above-introduced Behesht Ayeen Palace. The proximity of this unfinished apartment to the Chehel Sotun Palace is another clue to assert this proposition. He also mentions the construction of a new seraglio and the expenses that the king is responsible for to maintain the royal palaces.⁵⁶ There is no further information in primary sources regarding this palace. The only available textual source mentioning this palace is *Rostam al-Tavarikh* which dates from the later periods in the early nineteenth century. There are also traces of this palace's name and location on the mid-nineteenth-century maps of Isfahan. This meager retrospective evidence confirms the existence of this newly built palace under Shah Soltan Hosein although the details of its design and function remain elusive and vague to

⁵⁴ Nasiri, *Dastour-e Shahriyaran*, 27.

⁵⁵ Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, 196.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 197.

reconstruct its architectural and spatial configuration. The later construction and renovation efforts on this area of the palace complex by Sadr-e Isfahani (the subject of Chapter 5), during Fath Ali Shah's period, also complicate the identification of the late Safavid interventions. In the absence of further evidence, here I rely on the available sources to sketch out the extent of Soltan Hosein's architectural measures in the confine of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* inside the city.

As Asef recounts, this Saray or *Haram* was constituted of a 1500 by 1500 *zar*⁵⁷ (1,560 by 1,560 m) area, comprising 500 *eyvans*, palaces, and chambers. In the middle of this area, there was a palace for the king approximately 200 by 200 *zar*' (208 by 208 m) in four levels (*chahar martabeh*). According to his description of the Chehel Sotun Palace, by four levels he probably meant the hierarchical division of the palace that developed along a central axis and began from the lowest level in the front courtyard and ended on the higher level dedicated to the king, *shahneshin*. A forty-pillared *talar* (*chehel sotun*) was located on the east side of this *Haram*, facing a rectangular pool (*daryache*). And a resting platform (*neshiman*), resembling an island, was designed in the middle containing a smaller pool made of jade at the center. This vast pool was used by the king and his women for riding boats (*keshti*) while colorful precious stones were poured into the pool to create a mesmerizing effect in the water. Along with this area, there seem to have existed several other places such as *rahat khaneh* (comfort room), *hazz khaneh* (joy room) and *lezzat khaneh* (pleasure room) for entertaining the king and his *haram* women.

⁵⁷ Each *zar*' is 104 centimeters.

Unlike the common assumption that Farahabad was Soltan Hosein's pleasure garden, the characteristics of the Behest Ayeen make it a more likely candidate for such a function. It is clear from Asef's account of both Farahabad and Behesht Ayeen, and also based on Ta'sir-e Tabrizi's description of Farahabad, that the urban palace of Behesht Ayeen served the royal *haram* and Farahabad was intended for a more complex cluster of functions (including residential chambers) than just a 'playhouse' for the king.

Even though Asef's account does not provide any date for the construction of this *Haram*, it seems that it served as the main *andarun* of Soltan Hosein before 1711 when the construction of a new palace in the Farahabad Garden was completed. In Pascal Coste's general plan of Isfahan, 1841, there is no trace of this palace in the area, but a vast open land south of the Narenjestan can be assumed as the location of the Behesht Ayeen Palace [Figure 4]. Another plan drawn by Coste points to the possible location of this palace, "Bestahin" building, on the south side of the Narenjestan. The Russian map of Isfahan also confirms Asef's account indicating traces of an extant building titled Behesht Ayeeneh in the same location. The area designated as "Behesht Ayeeneh (the original *haram* of Shah Abbas the great)" in the map's legend possesses a very large rectangular pool at the center which seems to be the largest one in comparison with other water basins of adjacent palaces and gardens in the *haram* precinct. This pool more likely is the same *daryacheh* that Asef introduces, however the location of the palace and its forty-pillared talar is difficult to identify on the map. An equally possible hypothesis is the restoration and renovation of Shah Abbas I's *haram* called Bagh-e Ferdus, as both its name and its architectural characteristics with a large pool correspond with the Behest Ayeen *haram* of Soltan Hosein. Blake claims there was a garden in *Haram* with a large pool for women to ride their boats

during Abbas I's reign that might be the same pool mentioned in Asef's account and rendered in the Russian map of Isfahan.

There is a discrepancy between Asef's account and the Russian map in presenting the size and boundaries of the palace. While in the former, the palace had almost covered the whole area between Chehel Sotun, Hasht Behesht, and Talar-e Tavileh, the latter renders the palace a relatively smaller rectangular area limited to Kakh-e Sadri, Narenjestan, and other older palaces. According to the later accounts, the *haram* precinct had undergone several phases of transformation after the fall of the city [Figure 5]. Of them, the most significant one was the construction of a new *haram* for Fath Ali Shah by the governor of Isfahan, Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani in the early nineteenth century. This palace was supposed to be built in an open area limited to the Behesht Ayeen, Chehel Sotun, and Hasht Behesht. This account and the Russian map affirm that the Behest Ayeen palace was still standing when the map was produced in 1851. From the available sources, it is not clear if the original Behesht Ayeen was left intact during later construction activities or if it was appropriated for the Qajar palace in the complex.

Given the contemporary accounts of the period, the royal household and the king mostly resided in the two major urban and suburban residences of Isfahan: the urban *dowlatkhaneh* (the Safavid palatial complex next to the Naqsh-e Jahan Square) and the suburban *dowlatkhaneh* (the Haft Dast Palace in the Sa'adatabad Garden) at least for the first two decades of Soltan Hosein's reign. Both *dowlatkhanehs* were in use at the time for a variety of functions and depending on the occasion. For instance, Talar-e Tavileh, Talar-e Chehel Sotun, and Ali Qapu housed official receptions and public audiences in the early years of his

period. While the Sa'adatabad Garden and the Aynehkhaneh gradually replaced the older Safavid *talars* for ceremonies and celebrations, the urban palaces were adjusted to house public mourning rituals and Shi'i ceremonies during the Moharram and Ramezan months. In one instance, the king returned from the Sa'adatabad *Dowlatkhaneh* to the urban *dowlatkhaneh* just to hold the *ta'zieh* of Moharram and returned to his suburban palace when the rituals were held. As the author of *Dastour Shahriyaran* asserts, it was not deemed appropriate for the king to stay in his suburban palace when the mourning month was approaching in 1109/1697.⁵⁸ Instead, the Sa'adatabad Garden and its entrance building were adorned with lights and prepared for the public celebration of Norouz in 1108/1696.⁵⁹

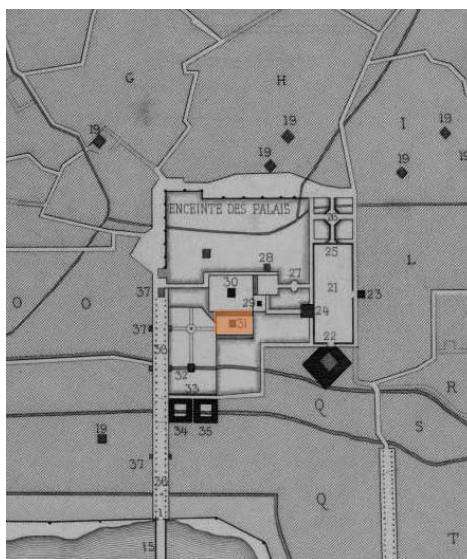


Figure 2-4. The open area on the General map of Isfahan by Coste. Behesht Ayeen is not identified here but its location, according to the textual accounts, accords with this open space.

⁵⁸ Nasiri, *Dastour-e Shahriyaran*, 177.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 175.

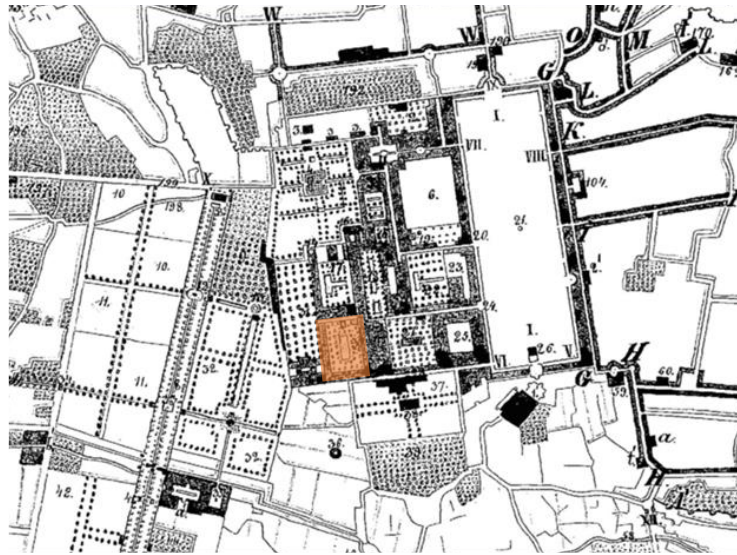


Figure 2-5. Behesht Ayeeneh Palace (the original haram of Shah Abbas the great), the Russian map of Isfahan in 1851

The Royal Madraseh and the Surrounding Complex at Chaharbagh Avenue

The most praised and significant royal commission in the last years of the empire was the erection of a new religious school along Shah Abbas I's Chaharbagh Avenue. Madraseh-ye Madar Shah/ Soltan Hosein also called the Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh was part of a larger complex including a caravanserai and bazaar. The construction process of this economic and religious complex began in 1116/1704 and the school was ready to house the students in 1122/1710.⁶⁰ While the Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh was just one component of this urban complex, the monumentality of its architecture and especially its lofty dome turned it into a comparable example to the great mosque of Shah Abbas I in the Naqsh-e Jahan Square. The positioning of this new addition along the secular axis of the city was an attempt to revitalize Shi'ism and stress the prominence of the religious leaders in the urban environment of Isfahan. As Babaie puts it:

⁶⁰ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar tarikhi Isfahan*, 686.

Those establishments, together with the important *vaqf* (endowment) provisions dedicated to the ensemble, provided for the madrasa's maintenance, for the salaries of its teachers and tuition of the students as well as its hugely significant library of religious and legal knowledge. More importantly, however, the complex focused an unprecedented emphasis on the religious education and propagation of Imami Shi'ism along one of the principal urban nodes of Esfahan, the Chahar Bagh.⁶¹

Although the function of this monument presents the ruler's inclination toward religion, one should not underestimate the royal ambitions in asserting kingly power through this monumental project. The appearance of this madraseh adjacent to the royal gardens and in the celebrated public space of Chaharbagh Avenue was in fact an effective way to showcase the royal power and kingly presence in the city. Unlike other architectural commissions of Soltan Hosein in Isfahan, this madraseh endured the chaos following the Afghan invasion and became the epitome of Safavid piety and fate. In the eighteenth century, while most of the gardens along the Chaharbagh were in ruins, this madraseh was commemorated as the last souvenir of a glorious era. It later became the most influential model for the early Qajar period madrasehs when there emerged an increasing interest in madraseh-building among the urban elites.

The tendency toward elite self-fashioning through madrasa building had its roots in the second half of the seventeenth century. At this time, madrasa as a type took a prominent place in the royal and non-royal architectural patronage in Isfahan. According to Haneda's survey of building activities in the Safavid period, out of 27 madrasas built in Isfahan since the rise of the Safavids 12 belonged to the periods of Suleyman and Soltan Hosein,

⁶¹ Sussan Babaie, "Safavid Town Planning," 114.

particularly amplified during the latter period. In this chart, there is no mention of any mosque or shrine in the list. Accordingly, the chart reveals that from Abbas II's period to Soltan Hosein's time, almost all other religious building projects were gradually replaced by madrasehs inside the city borders. This is a very important transition that can be interpreted with respect to the changing social status of urban patrons and the rise of madraseh as the center of religious activity rather than mosques. As Haneda points out the patrons of religious buildings by the end of the Safavid period mostly belonged to the group of slaves, khajawas, the city's artisans, and other social groups; not necessarily from the royal family or dignitaries.⁶²

A rising interest in Shi'i passion plays (*ta'ziyeh*) and mourning rituals for the innocent Imams in Moharram could have contributed to the preference for madraseh over other religious institutions during the late Safavid period. Madrasehs became the center of these social and religious events and the patrons ensured and supported the performance of these Shi'i events through endowment deeds (*vaqfs*). It was under Soltan Hosein's period that both the tradition of *vaqf* and madraseh building picked up. The Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh was a perfect example of this urban patronage trend. According to the *vaqf* of this madraseh, about forty Shi'i men and women were to be hosted and fed every night during Ramazan, and Shi'i mourning rituals ought to be held in this madraseh.⁶³ As Babak Rahimi in his analysis of Safavid Muharram rituals and state-building proposes, Muharram mourning rituals sponsored by the state were carnivalesque performances that shaped the public sphere

⁶² Haneda, M. (1996). "The character of urbanization of Isfahan in the later Safavid Period," In C. Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*. London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 369-388.

⁶³ Rezaie, "Naqsh madraseh-haye 'asr Safaviyreh dar gostareh tashayyo' davazdah emami," (Role of Safavid madrasas in the spread of the Twelver-Imami Shi'ism), 221.

in Isfahan, a spectacle that created a space of multilayered interactions where the state power could be presented and defied at the same time in a collective and shared urban setting.⁶⁴

During the Safavid period, Muharram as a Shi'i ritual transcended the simple act of memorializing the martyrdom of the innocent imam, Hosein, and developed into a performative public event. Rahimi maintains:

By the latter half of the seventeenth century, the Muharram public progressively grew more autonomous from the state in light of the escalation of participation among socio-professional groups, guilds, futuvvat members, females, and the poor. Combined with other public spaces, such as the market (bazaar), coffeehouses (qahvekhaneh), travel lodges (caravanserai), public baths (hammam), schools (madrasah), squares (Maidan), and sport clubs (zurkhaneh), this ritual spatialization identified a type of public characterized as an informal sphere of civic cultures and cognitive networks of relations.⁶⁵

Thus, the madraseh's function went beyond a mere religious college to educate the students; in fact, the institution of the madraseh was an urban and public space where the religiosity and piety of the society as a whole could be practiced and performed. Lesser urban patrons might have found the possibility of such sociability in madrasehs a fascinating means for self-fashioning in Isfahan [Figures 6,7,8].⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Babak Rahimi, *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran: Studies on Safavid Muharram Rituals, 1590- 1641 CE*, 2012.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 12-13.

⁶⁶ Figures 2-9 and 2-10 have been omitted due to copyright restrictions. See the table of figures for more information.

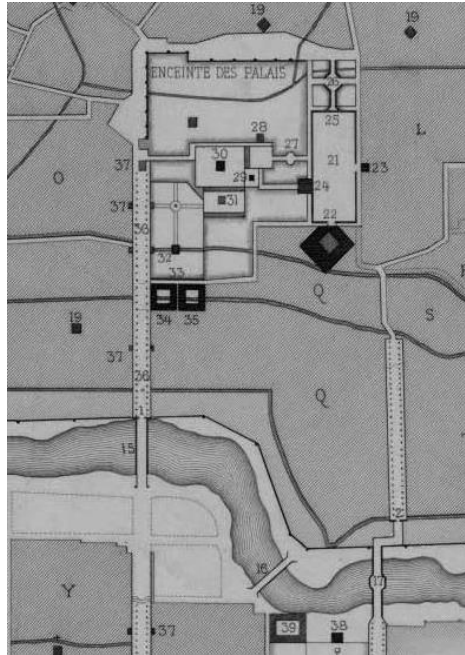


Figure 2-6. Plan of Isfahan, by Coste, 1840. Madrasedh-ye Chaharbagh (34), Carvansara-ye Madar-e Shah (35), Bazar-e Boland (33). Note the location of the Madrasedh at the edge of Chaharbagh Avenue.

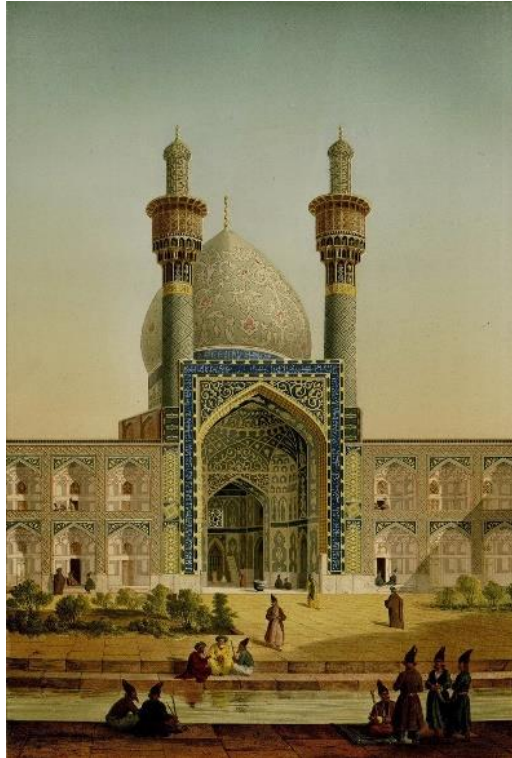


Figure 2-7. The dome of the Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh seen from the courtyard, drawing by Pascale Coste.



Figure 2-8. The façade of Madraseh-ye Chaharbagh facing Chaharbagh Avenue, drawing by Eugene Flandin.

Farahabad: A Palace-City

Soltan Hosein's Passion for Building

Despite the administrative and political disruptions in the Safavid court under Soltan Hosein's rule, his architectural projects resembled, his ancestor Shah Abbas I's construction activity in Isfahan. Except for the still-standing Madraseh-ye Shah, his Farahabad palace-garden did not last long enough to be recorded and examined by visitors and historians. Yet both architectural projects changed the spatial relationship between urban and suburban parts of the city and represented Isfahan's transformations during the social and political upheavals of the late Safavid period.

Contemporary reporters attest to Soltan Hosein's enthusiasm for architectural projects, as demonstrated by his investment in the construction of the Farahabad palace-garden. As asserted by the last director of the Dutch East India Company, Jan Oets, "the king was a 'great squandermania and lover of building and demolishing mansions and pleasure gardens' and 'about the only thing he occupies himself with.'"⁶⁷ Not only as a personal passion, but construction was indeed a profitable capital investment for the king as well, as Bruyn notes in 1704, "This Prince takes so great a pleasure in building, that they reckon he has that way expanded four or five million in the ten years he has been upon the throne, tho' the gardens and the houses of pleasure cost him nothing."⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces*, 206.

⁶⁸ Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, 211.

But as Bruyn describes, his love of building was materialized through attracting volunteer construction forces bound to the unique relationship between the king and his subjects:

When he has a mind to build anywhere, the proclamation of such his intention is made by the sound of a trumpet, that those who love him may come and work for him. Upon this the artificers repair to him from all parts, without claiming the least reward; nor do the grandees of the Kingdom fail to send others at their own expense. The Armenians are bound to contribute in the same manner, and I know it for certain that a large garden which was made in my time cost them three hundred Tomans, which amount to one hundred and twenty thousand livres.⁶⁹

Although confirming the use of free labor needs more evidence, the existence of a corporate construction system including various social groups in the process of architectural activities in Isfahan is considerable. The Armenians, the courtiers, and even artisans working under the support of a specific elite in the city could have been involved in this collaborative event that in the end resulted in the erection of new buildings sponsored by the king. Besides the love of the king, one must point out the significance of undertaking such a huge construction project even when the treasury was depleting and the court struggling with long-term economic crises. Amidst economic challenges, Soltan Hosein commissioned the Farahabad Garden, which began immediately after his coronation in 1694 and was completed in 1711. It was exactly at this place where the destiny of the Safavid dynasty turned and Soltan Hosein desperately surrendered the empire to the Afghans in 1722.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Expanding Isfahan: A New Royal City

Farahabad was located at the skirt of the Soffeh Hill and on the arid lands southside of Isfahan's city walls, almost a *farsang* (3.5 miles) away from the center of Isfahan. The construction of the palace and adjacent elite mansions and gardens followed immediately after the completion of the garden. Soltan Hosein's considerably vast and complex palace-city stood to the west side of and parallel to the Hezar Jarib (or Chaharbagh) garden of Abbas I. The sheer size of this project and the king's attention to its completion and embellishment spread the rumors in the public imagination that Soltan Hosein will abandon the Naqsh-e Jahan gardens and move the *dowlatkhaneh* to this new palace-garden.⁷⁰ However, as Asef recounts, the placement of this new city "*shahr-e naw*" (new city) was considered a practical response to the scarcity and high price of undeveloped lands inside the crowded urban areas inside the city walls. According to him, due to the excessive development and prosperity of the city, Soltan Hosein decided to construct his new city further away from the old city.⁷¹ Moreover, the scale of the project required an extensive open area which disqualified any remaining lands close to the walled city.⁷²

Considering the positioning of this new city in the suburb of Isfahan, the first question that should be addressed is the function of this palace-garden and its role in the social and political context of the late Safavid Isfahan. Was Farahabad a summer retreat or a *dowlatkhaneh*? Babaie believes that it was not "simply a retreat for the last Safavid king but served as his principal place of residence during a reign that was mired by the delegation of

⁷⁰ Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 144.

⁷¹ Mohammad Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 69.

⁷² Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 145.

power to the eunuch *ḡolāms* of the *haram* and the powerful clergy.”⁷³ Regarding the dates of its construction, one needs to question to what extent it was supposed to function as a residential quarter at the time. The Farahabad project was executed in two phases: First, the completion of the garden layout and its residential structure, between 1694 and 1711; second, the addition of palatial and urban elements to the south end of the garden, between 1711-1715.⁷⁴ This sequence of phases implies that at least the palace could not have been completed for two-thirds of Soltan Hosein’s reign. Prior to 1715, all the important court receptions were held in Talar-e Aynehkhaneh and Kakh-e Haft Dast-e Sa‘adatabad.⁷⁵ After the completion, the Farahabad Palace-garden became the principal palace of the king for official meetings and audiences. It was at this place where the king received the Ottoman and Russian ambassadors reported in John Bell’s travel account. Accompanying the Russian ambassador, Artemy Petrovich Volynsky, Bell served as the medical attendant and traveled to Iran in 1717. Bell reports the audience held by the Shah at Farahabad and states:

On the 12th, the ambassador, had a third audience of the Shah at Farrabbatt, a country-house near the city. It is an extremely pleasant place, adorned with gardens, fountains, and cascades, surrounded with parks for all kinds of game. While we were at supper on the terrace, we had a squall of wind which almost carried away everything.⁷⁶

Bell recounts that the two other receptions had been held in the Talar-e Tavileh and the Sa‘adatabad palaces before the king received the *Ilchi* in Farahabad. Concluded from this report and citing Asef’s description of Farahabad, this palace-garden functioned as the

⁷³ Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 208.

⁷⁴ Reza Moqtader, “Bagh-e Farahabad: Isfahan,” 60.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*, 114.

dowlatkhaneh and the residence of the king in the last decade of his reign. Asef also in *Rostam al-Tavarikh* refers to Farahabad as the *dowlatkhaneh-ye mobarak-e shahi*. When Farahabad was perfected with its variety of spaces and decorations, the king became so fascinated by its charms that he decided to leave Isfahan and reside in his new palace-garden.⁷⁷ This gradual distancing from the old city was accomplished when Farahabad was ready to function in its full-fledged capacity as the *dowlatkhaneh* and a new city. Brignoli also confirms the shift of the *dowlatkhaneh* from the city to the suburb of Farahabad by acknowledging the fact that Soltan Hosein's Farahabad was more than an isolated suburban retreat:

Thus, an attempt at understanding Beaudouin's maps confronted with the written sources leads to the idea, contrary to what is generally admitted, that Farahabad was not a sumptuously isolated palatial utopia. Like other Safavid royal residences, this palace would have been accompanied by a real urban development, traditionally built around a great avenue and a maidan thus forming a complete ensemble, opening a new district in the capital city's suburbs: the Farahabad Chahar bagh, which Mohammad Asaf described as a new city, Shahr-i Now.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Reza Moqtader, "Bagh-e Farahabad-e Isfahan," *Mouze-ha*, 60.

⁷⁸ Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 144.

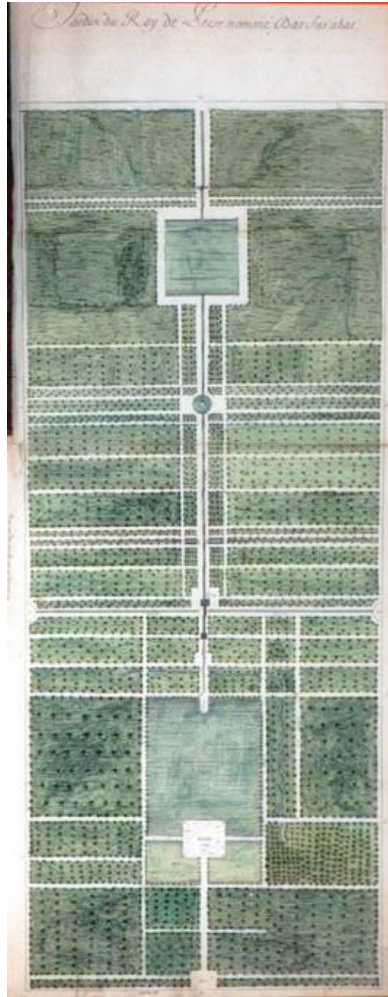


Figure 2-11. The Anonymous Persian Plan of Farahabad: Jardin du roy de perse nomme Bar far abat, BNF. Source: Dumbarton oaks website <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C178>

Farahabad, as a new city, was akin to other urban development projects undertaken under the Safavids. Taking distance from the hustle and bustle of the old city, like Shah Abbas I's decree in the construction of the chaharbagh gardens along Chaharbagh Avenue by the elites, Soltan Hosein required close companions (*mogharaban*) to build their mansions and houses adjacent to the Farahabad Garden. As recorded in *Waqaye' as-Sanin-i va al-A'vam*, this decree was announced concurrent with his order for the construction of a new palace in the Farahabad Garden in 1711, under the supervision of Ibrahim Aqa

Youzbashi.⁷⁹ Amongst these companions, was the head religious scholar of Madraseh-ye Shah, Amir Mohammad Baqir-e Khatunabadi. Despite his reluctance, he complied with the king's order and purchased the land, and constructed a mansion. A water canal from the Sa'adatabad Stream was granted to his land to get the reclamation process started.⁸⁰ This corporate system of reclaiming undeveloped lands via royal decrees was, in fact, conventional practice in managing the landscape that had its precedents in the urban developments of New Isfahan under Shah Abbas I and the establishment of the Sa'adatabad Suburb under the following Safavid kings during the seventeenth century. Even the name of this palace-city invoked nominal and typological connections with Shah Abbas I's Farahabad residence in Mazandaran.⁸¹

According to Brignoli's analyses, two imposing axes define the order and arrangement of the Farahabad complex. The garden is an elongated rectangle stretching from the south to the north including two rectangular pools aligned with the north-south axis. Another more conspicuous and visible east-west axis divides the palatial district and the built area into two asymmetrical parts. Ultimately, these two axes meet perpendicularly at the center of a square-form courtyard which probably served as the main courtyard (or as Brignoli tends to call a Maidan) of the *divankhaneh* in the south. As Brignoli suggests, this courtyard is the divider between the densely built area of the palatial complex of *andarun* on the West and the *birun* on the East. He also identifies two *maidans* leading to the *birun* from a great east-west avenue [Figure 10].

⁷⁹ Abdul Hosein Khatunabadi, *Vaqaye' as-Sanin-i va al-A'vam*, 549.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 563.

⁸¹ Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 145.

The palace complex stood at the northern end of the Farahabad Garden. Based on an unknown Persian Garden plan [Figure 11] and the photographs of Beaudouin's archeological drawings [Figure 9], Brignoli asserts that the Farahabad Garden was divided into two parts along its length comprising a semi-public garden in the southern section and a more private garden in the northern part [Figure 10]. He proposes the existence of a hydraulic system for the creation of a cascade at the dividing line where the elevation of two sections differs. A century-old water canal (the Black Canal of Abbasabad), already built for supplying water to Shah Abbas I's Hezar Jarib garden, was widened to provide water for the two massive water basins in this expansive garden. Two identical architectural structures, possibly towers (*burj*), were located at each corner of the larger pool to provide the vista of the river and the surrounding landscape at the foot of the Farahabad Garden.

Axial Order Over Central Configuration

Tekiyeh or Maidan?

Acknowledging Brignoli's significant contribution to our knowledge of this new city, now we have a better understanding of the complex and its components. Despite the invaluable significance of the plans and visual documents that Brignoli consults for his reconstruction, the mere typological analogy cannot determine the function or the use of space in these plans. There are still questions regarding the function of Farahabad spaces that remain unanswered and can be further explored by investigating Persian primary sources. For instance, Brignoli compares Shah Abbas I's Farahabad residence to Shah Soltan Hosein's new city and states that "the Mazandaran palace was as much a town as a palace, with a vast urban extension, a *maidan*, a royal mosque, baths, and a carvansarai." While the similarities

between these palaces are undeniable, some of the architectural elements take a different role in Isfahan's Farahabad which seems unattended in his analysis. As maintained by Asef, this new city consists of several elements: a palace as the *shahneshin*, a street, two large pools, a caravansara, a bathhouse, a *tekiyeh*, and a collection of mansions and houses erected by the courtiers and elites around the *dowlatkhaneh*.⁸² Unlike the formal analysis of Brignoli that poses the existence of *maidans* in Farahabad, based on his comparisons with Mazandara's residence and Naqsh-e Jahan Maidan, Asef's account does not mention any *maidan* at all. Instead in Isfahan's Farahabad, a *tekiyeh* substitutes the *maidan* in the list of spaces in the palace compound. Rather than a central organization where the buildings were arranged around an empty core or *maidan*, a pronounced east-west axis, the great avenue (chaharbagh avenue), becomes the structural ordering element in Soltan Hosein's Farahabad.

Relying on local sources and endowment deeds, an alternative function can be proposed for the two open spaces between Great Avenue and the *divankhaneh*. In none of the Persian sources like Asef's and Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir's accounts, one can see any evidence referring to the *maidan* in this garden complex. Yet the only element resembling a *maidan* layout is the *tekiyeh* or *carvansara* which also appears in Asef's description. He characterizes the *tekiyeh* as a delightful place full of flowers and trees and the *carvansara* as a very spacious place. In addition to Asef's account which seems to refer to the *tekiyeh* in passing, there is an endowment deed from Soltan Hosein indicating the use of this garden for the performance of Moharram rituals and Shi'i passion play (*ta'zieh khani*). According to this document, Soltan Hosein endowed the income of the Farahabad Garden for holding *ta'zieh*

⁸² Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 70.

in this garden and offering food to the people attending this mourning ritual. The date of the endowment deed is 1128/1716 which accords with the completion date of the palace in Farahabad. This endowment deed indicates that Farahabad was indeed a *dowlatkhaneh*, not a pleasure house, and the *tekiyeh* was probably supposed to accommodate this religious event at least three times a year. Given this document, the presumed *maidans* connecting the great avenue to the *birun* could have been used as *tekiyeh*. Therefore, this open space in Farahabad was considered a public space that would have been used for *ta'zieh* in this period. In addition, this open space lacked any political, economic, religious, and royal architectural signifiers that adorned Shah Abbas I's great *maidan*. Instead, the function of *tekiyeh* would perfectly fit the religiosity of the Safavid court magnified by Soltan Hosein's excessive attention to Shi'i doctrine and public rituals.

The Great Avenue: Chaharbagh

A close reading of Asef's narration of this new city reveals the crucial role of the great avenue in the formation of Farahabad's *dowlatkhaneh*. He specifically renders the avenue as an integrated part of the *dowlatkhaneh* when he states that inside its (Farahabad's) *dowlatkhaneh*, an avenue, 1000 by 100 *zar*⁸³ (1,040 by 104 meters) and with nice arches and decorations, was constructed for the residence of the servants and the men of pen and sword. And around the *dowlatkhaneh*, the proportionate (*mozun*) and agreeable (*pasandideh*) mansions of the ministers, close companions, amirs, ghulams, and great masters (*bashians*) were to be built according to their status in harmonious (*mozun*) streets. The doors of these great buildings were supposed to be placed right across one another along

⁸³ Each *zar* is approximately 104 centimeters.

the street.⁸⁴ As this account indicates, the arched chambers of the great avenue served as the hub of royal services, and administrative and security affairs. Whereas Abbas I's Chaharbagh accommodated grandee's and elites' gardens along the avenue, here the great avenue was integrated into the administrative district of the new royal city.

Represented in Beaudouin's plan, the great avenue linking the Farahabad complex to the Hezar Jarib Garden is flanked by portals to the symmetrically arranged spaces like what Asef describes. It is not easy to determine if Asef's use of the word arches (*taghnama*) refers to the portals of the gardens (as what can be inferred from the plan) or just arched chambers facing the street. However, what is obvious is the pre-conceived layout of this new city which was in fact in dialogue with the old Chaharbagh and *dowlatkhaneh* [Figure 12].

⁸⁴ Asef, *Rostam al-tavarikh*, 71. (*dar dowlatkhaneh-ash khiyabani be tool-e hezar zar' va sad zar'* 'arz ba taghnama-haye khub, be jahat-e neshastan-e khadam va hasham va arbab-e seyf va ghalam ba naghsh va negar sakhtand)

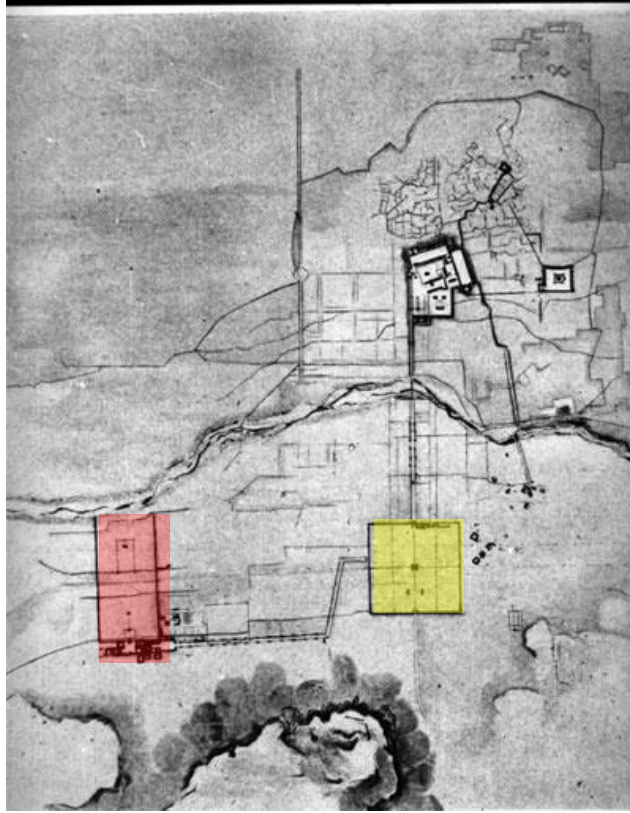


Figure 2-12. Eugen Beaudouin's drawing of the Farahabad Garden (Red) and the Great Avenue linking it to the Hezar Jarib Garden (Yellow).

A New Design for Divankhaneh

Another point from Asef's description of the *shahneshin* can be useful in delineating the spatial arrangement and organization in this new *divankhaneh*. According to Brignoli, in Farahabad "The density of the buildings and the complexity of spaces that can be seen as a juxtaposition of a *birun*, an *andarun* and a *divan-khana*, is a unique occurrence in the history of suburban palaces."⁸⁵ Moreover, the two-faced audience hall was also placed at the far end of the courtyard rather than sitting in the middle of the garden, deviating from the Safavid

⁸⁵ Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 152.

prototypes and resembling a Qajar conception of the reception hall and *divankhaneh*.⁸⁶ Here, Asef's account adds to our understanding of this new configuration of spaces where he claims that a pleasant *shahneshin* was built for the king in which when he seated there, he was able to observe his *ghulams*, dignitaries, and courtiers on one hand and the *haram* women and servants on the other hand. While these two groups were able to see the king, they could not see each other. This interesting arrangement of attendees should be considered in this case. This arrangement suggests a new form of spatial structure that dedicates specific spatial presence to the women unlike the exclusively male-dominated court audiences of former kings. It is also consistent with the organization of the plan in the palatial area divided by a courtyard where the *shahneshin* structure was flanked by two symmetrical corridor shape extensions. The plan of such a structure where the king oversees those segregated groups and at the same time visually connects with them is not easy to imagine. However, Asef's account and Beaudouin's plan allow for assuming a central *shahneshin* open on four sides, the north view to the semi-public garden, the south view to the main courtyard, the west view to the women's corridor, and the east view to the courtiers' and the *ghulams*' corridors. As the plan implies and Brignoli correctly suggests, there might be a form of pillared-*talar* (or an *eyvan*) attached to the audience hall on the north side opening to the gardens and the inner courtyard of the *divankhaneh*.⁸⁷ This open hall might have been the same terrace mentioned by Bell when he was dining with the king in Farahabad.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid, 148.

⁸⁷ Brignoli, "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," 148.

⁸⁸ Bell, *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia*, 114.

Asef's account casts some light on the complexity and multiplicity of architectural spaces and their arrangement in Farahabad. Despite its detailed descriptions, this account dates to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries which questions its credibility in some cases. Asef acknowledges that he has received the account of Soltan Hosein's period from Amir Hosein-e Khosh Hekayat, Ganjali Khan Isfahani.⁸⁹ The accordance of the information in his account and the reconstruction plans of Farahabad examined in this section, however, grants this account acceptable credibility. Nonetheless, the investigation of the perception of this new city at the time of its creation should be followed through contemporary sources.

Farahabad Represented

While some of the above-discussed visual and textual sources and reconstructions present the caveat of anachronistic and ahistorical interpretations, a contemporary literary description can illuminate our understanding of this short-lived but massive architectural project. The unpublished literary document Masnavi-e Jahan-nama (world-viewing couplet) was composed by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century court poet Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir Tabrizi whose Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat was analyzed earlier in this chapter.⁹⁰ It consists of the poetic description (*vasf*) of the Farahabad Garden and palaces established by Shah Soltan Hosein (*dar ta'rif-e bagh va emerat-e Farahabad-e behesht bonyad keh ehdasiye navab-e ashraf ast*). This manuscript is kept at the Majlis Library in Tehran.

In this document, Mirza Mohsen divides his couplet on Farahabad and its buildings into three consecutive sections including the descriptions of the garden, the buildings, and the

⁸⁹ Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 67.

⁹⁰ Ta'sir Tabrizi, "Masnavi Jahan-nama," 71.

bathhouse.⁹¹ Like his *Golzar-e Sa'adat*, his poem is loaded with spatial and architectural information. Considering his meticulous rendition of Sa'adatabad, his choice of dividing the poem into three separate sections might follow a spatial and locational rationale. As my examination of previous sources suggested, the garden and the palatial district were assumed separate entities and their erection dates affirm this hypothesis. This chronological sequence might have been reflected in Ta'sir's dedication of separate sections to each entity's poetic description.

His composition for the garden begins with the praise of the garden's elevated location and its considerable vastness. In the next couplet, he probably notes the huge excavation to prepare the land for this new project that can be corroborated with the huge pile of dirt depicted in Bruyn's panorama of Isfahan illustrated in 1704.⁹² And then he exalts the garden for enhancing Isfahan's status and uses the trope of head and crown for showing the relationship between them; Isfahan is the head and Farahabad is the crown. Not only does this metaphor reflect the perception of the poet on the importance of this garden, but it also suggests that—despite the actual distance between the city and this complex—Farahabad was deemed part of the city in the contemporary imagination, not a removed and isolated retreat. Amidst the description, he constantly expresses his admiration for the lofty buildings of the garden and their paradisaal vistas. He notes the existence of the lakes filled with bubbles, suggesting the presence of fountains and their effect on the pool's water, and commends its pleasant air and water.

⁹¹ Ta'sir Tabrizi, "Masnavi Jahan-nama," 71.

⁹² Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*, 195.

The following section focuses on the palaces (*emarat*) or the built area of this new city (*shahr-e now*). This part reveals some illustrative information on the architectural forms and elements, construction materials, and architectural and decorative techniques, and highlights the assumed intention behind this grand project. Ta'sir accentuates the height and sublimity of its buildings as he did for the garden where he asserts that the ninth heavens support its foundation and the galaxy forms its *eyvan*'s edges (*charkh-e nohom poshti-ye bonyan-e u/kahkeshan torre-ye ayvan-e u*).⁹³ Then he notes the use of mudbrick, plasterwork, mirrorwork, and woodwork on its walls and windows and points to the application of *muqarnas* in the arches of its buildings and the extensive utilization of stone.

After praising the techniques, materials, and loftiness of its buildings, Ta'sir eulogizes the new city as a whole. He commences with a moon metaphor: this new city has renewed the world as the moon illuminates the universe (*now shode 'alam hameh zin shahr-e now*). Then he notes the expansive size or the developed state of its garden (*tose'eh*) when he compares it with Cairo and Samarqand. He continues to admire the new street of the city, which in its great length resembles unlimited aspirations (*tul-e amal tul-e khiyaban-e u*). And due to the abundance of new gardens along its street, it overshines the sublimity of the old Chaharbagh (*raf'at-e u sar shekan-e chaharbagh*). The symmetrical distribution of the gardens along the street (*tarh shode Golshan o bagh az do su/ chon khat-e no rasteh ze rouye neku*) and the construction of lofty structures in each one resembling the king's signature on a written letter (*bar sar-e har bagh banaie boland/ chon be ragham mohr-e sha-e arjomand*) follows. In the end, he attributes this city to Shah Soltan Hosein with his epithets such as the king of kings of religion (*shahanshah-e din*) and the lord of necks or

⁹³ Ta'sir Tabrizi, "Masnavi Jahan-nama," 71.

heads (*shah-e malek reghab*) and acclaims the king's act of endowing these buildings to Najaf.⁹⁴

The third section of his account illustrates the bathhouse of this complex as an exquisite royal *hammam* made of marble floors, with walls covered with tiles and paintings and stones carved out to depict the faces of the beauties. According to his description, the bathhouse's pleasant running water was heated by the sun from dawn to dusk. And as the last couplet indicates, it functioned as Soltan Hosein's private bathhouse (*khosro-e aafagh dar u kamyab*).

Given these details about this new city, some general conclusions can be made. In terms of general characteristics of this complex, if we consider Ta'sir's perception of this project as the court poet in accordance with Soltan Hosein's building program, this project was assumed as a new city to compete with Shah Abbas I's Isfahan and in fact, perceived as an addition to renew the old Isfahan. Confirming this view, Tahvildar also describes Farahabad as a new city not very far from Isfahan, resembling the spatial relationship between the new and old Baghdad located on both sides of the river.⁹⁵ Its topographically elevated location and lofty buildings, parallel to Shah Abbas I's Hezar Jarib, were meant to surpass the well-known gardens of the great builder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Abbas I, symbolically and visually. As Brignoli points out:

Indeed, Farahabad was probably the greatest palace built by the shahs in Isfahan, three times as big as the palace of Naqsh-e Jahan and probably

⁹⁴ Ta'sir Tabrizi, "Masnavi Jahan-nama," 72.

⁹⁵ Tahvildar, 27. Brignoli's analysis of the plans also yield the same conclusion suggesting that Farahabad was indeed very close to the river, probably only a dozen meters away from the riverbank.

slightly larger than the Gardens of ‘Abbasabad. Besides, it was built very far from the city, thus certainly giving the impression that the shah had no particular interest in the matters of the state.⁹⁶

With respect to the particularities of this complex, the extensive use of marble and other stones and the application of highly praised decoration techniques in its buildings contradict the commonly accepted narrative that associates the decline of construction skills, due to the use of mud brick in this project, with Soltan Hosein’s defective rulership. For instance, as Honarfar states, Farahabad was an infirm edifice made of mudbrick. Citing the travelers, he maintains that the complex did not have much artistic value, but its construction led to the development of this area and the emergence of new villages.⁹⁷ As can be inferred from Ta’sir’s poem, a variety of construction materials and decoration techniques were employed to complete this immense project and mud brick was just one of them.

Another critical point, confirming Brignoli’s speculation, is the allusions to the *eyvan* in this complex that allows us to hypothesize the existence of a semi-open viewing stage, probably a *talar*-like space facing the north depicted in Beaudouin’s plan and described by Asef as the *shahneshin* area. This hypothesis along with other references to the continuation of building *talars* during Soltan Hosein’s reign can lead us to question the complete disappearance of *talar* structures during the late Safavid period interpreted as the indicator of the king’s aloofness and isolation from ruling matters.⁹⁸ Regarding the evidence presented in this section, it is safe to suggest that Farahabad’s gathering *shahneshin* would have been

⁹⁶ Brignoli, “The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited,” 139.

⁹⁷ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar tarikhi Isfahan*, 724.

⁹⁸ According to Babaie, the pillared-talar was the main spatial and architectural element for the royal gatherings and the Safavid form of conviviality which was absent in Farahabad.

an altered form of the Safavid *talar* to accommodate the new spatial hierarchy of the court, a combination of pillared *talar* and *eyvan*. If women and men were supposed to attend court gatherings, a new and more inclusive design was required to fulfill this purpose. This also alludes to the increasing status of the *haram* in the ruling matters, spatially represented in this new arrangement of attendees in royal audiences. Moving beyond the accusation of Soltan Hosein for being subjected to his *haram* and the religious figures, one needs to examine how these transformations materialized in the architectural language of its period. As our evidence testifies, women were given a place in court audiences, but it does not refute the continuation of *talar* design for royal receptions. In fact, the juxtaposition and spatial proximity of the *divankhaneh* to *haram* and the in-betweenness of the reception hall between the *andarun* and the *birun* is an architectural response to the changing politics of the court in the late Safavid period that later was appropriated and favored in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century royal architecture.

Additionally, the allusion to the chaharbagh and deliberately to its design in Ta'sir's *masnavi* reveals the cultural weight of the great avenue in Farahabad for Soltan Hosein's administrative system in this new *dowlatkhaneh*. Linking Hezar Jarib to Farahabad, this street was to out-shine the century-old chaharbagh and through this link, indeed, make a statement regarding the Safavid past. Through this avenue, Farahabad became connected to Shah Abbas I's Chaharbagh formally and conceptually [Figure 13]. So rather than establishing a new maidan, as Shah Abbas I did, he took the idea of chaharbagh avenue as the organizing structure of his own urban project. As discussed earlier, it might be the case that the *tekiyeh* mentioned by Asef functioned as the maidan of this new city when *ta'zieh* would not be held there. But it seems reasonable to conjecture that this maidan or *tekiyeh* did

not hold the same economic and political role as the Naqsh-e Jahan Square erected by Shah Abbas I. Besides, perhaps the assumed carvansarai would have been designed for providing economic services to this new city. Taking the chaharbagh avenue design for ordering and shaping all these institutions attests to the growing interest in chaharbagh and avenue design (linear organization) rather than the central layout (maidan) in this period.

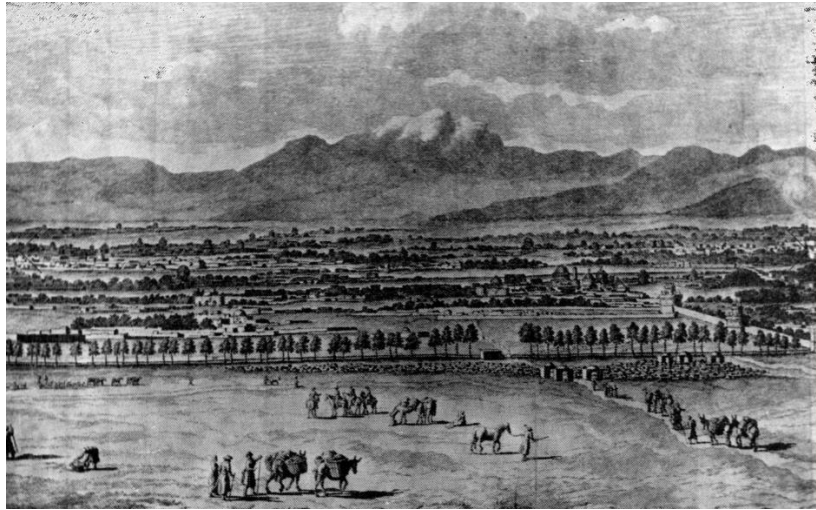


Figure 2-13. A part of panorama of Isfahan showing the area between the Hezar Jarib Garden on the right and the Farahabad Garden (not visible in this picture) on the left, by Bruyn, 1704. Note the row of young trees along the Great Avenue (the future Chaharbagh Avenue of Farahabad) in the foreground linking these two gardens to one another. At this stage still the construction process of the Farahabad Garden was in progress when Bruyn visited Isfahan. Source: National Library of Iran, also published on page 196 of his travelogue [Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies : Bruyn, Cornelis de : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)

Conclusion

Isfahan in the last thirty years of the Safavid period witnessed a set of royal urban and architectural undertakings comparable with the admired efforts of Shah Abbas I in the early seventeenth century. Clearly, Shah Soltan Hosein was following the lead of his ancestors in refashioning and reshaping the city to accommodate his administrative and political needs.

The shift to the south and distancing from New Isfahan, by then a century-old city, was a logical move to expand the urban area and establish a new royal complex. Following the court's move between the city and the suburban *dowlatkhanahs*, the Safavid court was in the process of gradually shifting the center of power from the walled city to Farahabad as a new royal city. The adoption of Safavid architectural language and urban design forms such as *talar* and Chaharbagh avenue and their modifications to fulfill the new needs of the court attest to the continuity and vitality of architectural activities in this overlooked period of Isfahan's history.

Chapter 3 : New Urban Patrons, Agency, and Self-fashioning in post-Safavid Isfahan

Introduction

[...] But due to the revolutions in Iran/ Isfahan has turned into ruins for forty years. Isfahan is a ruin yet in this desolate city/ you can find treasures among the ruins. In every ruin thousands of treasures are hidden / there owl and homa¹ live in the same nest. Because of Isfahan's destruction, Iran is a ruin/ lest it be destroyed more than this.² (Azar Bigdeli, c. 1760)

The Safavid empire officially came to end in 1722. As a result, several civil revolutions followed throughout the eighteenth century. This chapter aims to explore the state of architectural interventions in this tumultuous period of Iran's history. It examines the shift in the urban patronage of Isfahan and the empowerment of non-royal elites in shaping the architectural milieu of eighteenth-century Iran in the aftermath of the Safavid empire's decline. It also explores the ways in which these new patrons contributed to the preservation of Isfahan's urban memory by reviving particular urban elements. These attempts to utilize urban memory to revive Isfahan's urban life were made possible through recording Isfahan's rehabilitation and circulating its descriptions in the biographic compendiums or *tazkiras*.

In this chapter, I will expand Heidi Walcher's significant contribution to the study of post-Safavid Isfahan with a focus on architectural interventions in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century-Isfahan and discuss the unsettled anxiety regarding its status right after the fall of the Safavids. Rather than excluding the eighteenth-century history of the city, I

¹ *Homa* is a mythical bird in Iranian mythology that symbolizes happiness and prosperity. As opposed to *Homa*, the owl represents misery and misfortune.

² Azar-e Bigdeli, *Atashkadeh-ye Azar*, 435.

aim to explore how commonly ignored short-term governors and administrators of Isfahan in this period claimed their right to the city through architectural interventions. The second section will introduce one of the major figures of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Isfahan, Muhammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani who emerged from the above-discussed social and cultural context and asserted his new role as a rightful heir to the Safavid urban legacy of Isfahan.

Isfahan Between Safavids and Qajars, 1722–1789

In 1722, after seven to nine months of siege by the Afghans, instability, anarchy, and famine led to the decline of Isfahan's urban life. All the contemporary accounts of this period reflect the inevitable amount of uncertainty and misery that governed the city. Lamentations for the city and its lost Safavid glory filled the lines of the few accounts available from the first half of the eighteenth century. Most international merchants left the city due to this condition and the remaining local population sought refuge in other cities. The economy and agriculture declined and natural disasters like famine exacerbated the already unbearable living condition in Isfahan. And because of these calamities, the city and its population experienced a long period of economic and safety challenges. That said, even in such a dramatic moment in the history of Isfahan, the city continued to function and restore itself under various ruling groups in the eighteenth century.

The Safavid empire's decline was not completely analogous to what occurred in other early modern Muslim empires such as the Ottoman and Mughal empires. While they did not witness a collapse of the empire by foreign invasions, their presumed decline in the eighteenth century characterized similar changes in the eighteenth century in general and

post-Safavid Iran in particular. Of these transformations, the widespread process of decentralization of power and empowerment of urban elites observed in other Eurasian cities, as well as in Isfahan, was interpreted as the signs of Iran's decline, not worthy of scholarly probing. However, looking at the emergence of a local patron such as Sadr-e Isfahani opens new vistas to understanding the power structure in post-Safavid Iran and the role of urban restoration in this process.

The process of Isfahan's status change from the throne seat to a provincial center was turbulent. The royal status of Isfahan, containing significant riches of the Safavid empire, made the city a strong pole for the ambitious rulers of the century. Although the three major dynasties of the Afsharid, Zand, and Qajar in the eighteenth century avoided establishing their seat of rule at Isfahan, their constant challenges in pacifying the city indicate the severity of tensions that they had to face. Nonetheless, the city was not as eventless as the later historiography of eighteenth-century Iran relates. Evident in the contemporary accounts, there were sporadic instances of physical changes including the construction and restoration of the ruined city under the following kings and governors of Isfahan.

Following the siege of the city and the downfall of the Safavid empire, the Afghans ruled over Iran for seven years. During their brief rule, according to *Rostam al-Tawarikh*, Ashraf Afghan commissioned a wall around the city, measured 4 *zar'* width (4.16 m) and 20 *zar'* (20.8 m) height out of brick and plaster. As was the case under the Safavids, the repair and maintenance of the city walls were not the main concern of the state. However, the Afghans felt the necessity of fortifying and securing the city with new walls to prevent possible invasions. Not just in Isfahan, Ashraf did also commission the construction of a fortification around the Safavid core of Tehran.

Ashraf's other projects include the erection of a house (*khaneh*)³ behind the Talar-e Tavileh (100z by 80z), the restoration of the northern *eyvan* of the Masjid-e Jami' with an epigraphic inscription of the names of four caliphs, and the repair of the ceiling of Soltan Mahmud Inju mosque, and others.⁴ Another interesting case of architectural activity ascribed to Ashraf was the destruction of Abbas II's Chehel Sotun Palace at Sa'adatabad and the transportation of its construction materials to the area close to the Shahrestan Bridge to build a new Chehel Sotun Talar. This palace was apparently embellished with mirrorwork and gilded decorations, as Asef relates.⁵

Soltan Hosein's only heir to the throne, Tahmasb II (r. 1729-32) who had fled to the northern provinces in the aftermath of the Afghan invasion, was able to claim power with the assistance of Nader Khan Qarakhlu (later Nader Shah), from the Afshar tribe. During his short reign, he was very content with Nader Khan's services and entitled him Tahmasb Quli Khan. According to Asef, after pacifying the rebels and establishing order in the provinces, Nader came back to Isfahan and undertook a new project commissioned by the king to construct a dome for the Sufis of Isfahan, facing the door of the Talar-e Tavileh and behind the Ali Qapu, called Towhid Khaneh.⁶ Although there is evidence that a place called Towhid Khaneh had existed in the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* during the Safavid period, its formal features are unknown. At present, a domed structure is still standing behind the Ali Qapu

³ This is presumably the known Talar-e Ashraf currently standing in Isfahan. The date of its foundation is not clear, and some scholars believe this talar was a Safavid building later chosen by Ashraf as his residence. For further information about this talar see Lotfullah Honarfar, *Ganjine-ye Asaar-e Tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 581.

⁴ Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 168.

⁵ Ibid, 197.

⁶ Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 198.

Palace at the same location mentioned in Asef's account, dedicated to the Art University of Isfahan [Figure 1].

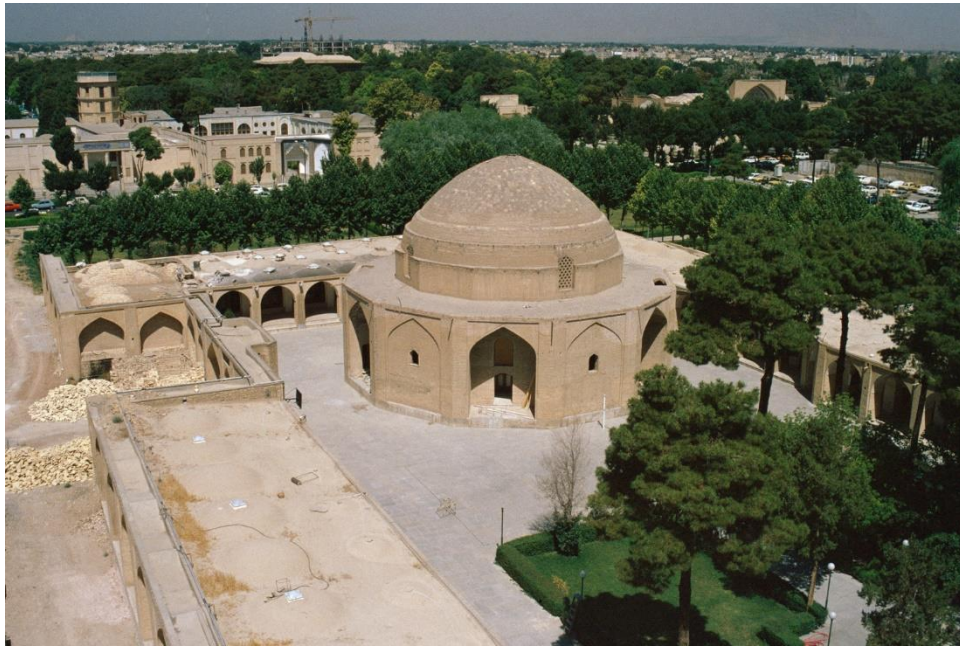


Figure 3-1. Towhid Khaneh, located in the Safavid royal precinct, Isfahan. Source: Archnet

As a revenge for Ashraf's destruction of Shah Abbas II's Palace, Shah Tahmasb II repeated the same action with Ashraf's talar. The talar was destroyed according to the decree of the Safavid ruler, and the materials were used in the construction of a new talar substituting the previous Safavid talar, somewhere between the Khawju and Allah Verdi khan bridges and close to the seven-story tower (*borj*)⁷ of Ganj Ali Khan.⁸

We know that Shah Abbas II had erected a new talar at the southern bank of the river called Aynehkhaneh and it seems that Asef's description points to this palace [Figure 2].

The talar of this palace was covered with large mirror panels that created a unique and

⁷ This is apparently the Haft Dast Palace (Seven-units palace) which was a Safavid *haram* erected on the southern bank of the Zayandeh River. Asef has probably mistaken the name of this palace, taking the seven stories instead of the seven units in this palace. The name of Ganj Ali Khan is also irrelevant to this palace.

⁸ Asef, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 167.

pleasant effect through the reflection of the river-front landscape in the talar.⁹ And we can certainly assert that, based on nineteenth-century engravings and late Qajar photographs, the Ayenehkhaneh Talar was in place and standing till 1901 [Figure 3]. Since Asef does not provide any names, if the Ayenehkhaneh was not the talar that he mentions, then another possibility would be to assume this as one of Soltan Hosein's buildings next to the Sa'adatabad Garden which were destroyed at the turn of the century by Zill al-Soltan.¹⁰



Figure 3-2. A view of the Aynehkhaneh Talar in foreground and the Khawju Bridge in the background, Eugene Flandin, 1840. Source: NY Public Library

⁹ Lotfullah Honarfar, *Ganjine-ye Asaar-e Tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 578.

¹⁰ Refer to chapter 1 on the late Safavid Isfahan for the description of Shah Soltan Hosein's architectural projects in Isfahan. As argued in that chapter, there was possibly a *talar* built by Soltan Hosein in this area in the late seventeenth century.

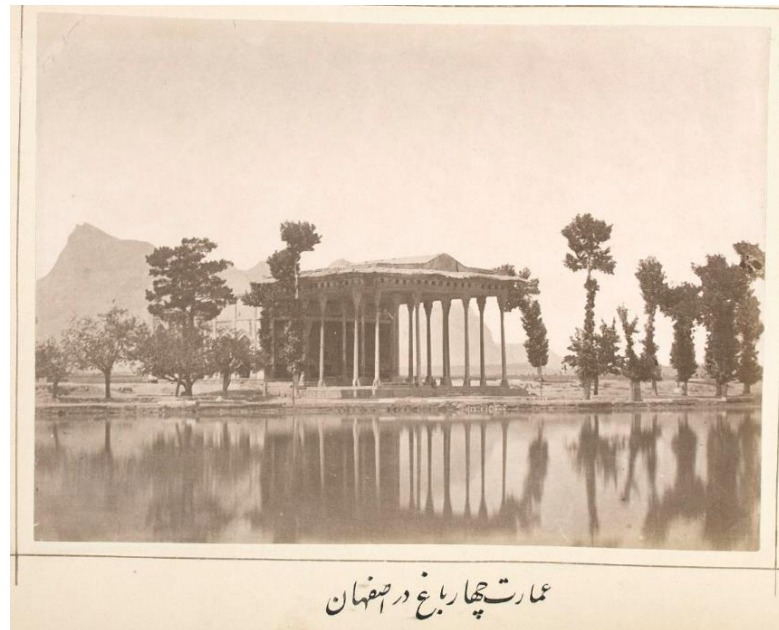


Figure 3-3. A late-nineteenth-century photograph of the Aynehkhaneh Talar at the bank of Zayandeh River, by Papazian. Source: Golestan Palace Photo Collection

These assertions are based on *Rostam al-Tawarikh* (the Rostam of Histories), as Perry puts it, “an unusual history of Iran from 1694 to 1835 by Mohammad Asaf, nicknamed “The Rostam of Philosophers.”¹¹ Although the credibility of Asef’s assertion about the talars can be challenged, the case in itself is a great example of utilizing architectural type and style as a claim for power and the role that destruction played in the process. Particularly the emphasis on the *talar*, as the emblem of Safavid legitimacy and kingship was a remarkable

¹¹ Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 68. “It is based on the reminiscences of the author’s grandfather, who served the last Safavid ruler, Shah Soltan-Hosayn (1694–1722), and father, who served Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar during his captivity at the Zand court of Shiraz (1765–79). Further family and personal memories take the story through the bloody and disastrous reigns of Karim Khan’s successors into that of the second Qajar king, Fath-Ali Shah (1797–1834). The Rostam of Histories (alluding to Rostam, or Rustam, the superhero of the Iranian national legend) generally affects a bombastic, mock-heroic tone, but frequently slips into a lively vernacular Persian to pass on scurrilous and dubious anecdotes.”

point. Whether an actual event or a myth, this anecdote signals the meaning of architectural elements and spatial types in such a critical moment in Iran's history.

Shah Tahmasb II was the only king, from the Safavid line, who considered building his own dynasty on the remnants of his Safavid heritage in Isfahan. The following ruler, Nader Shah (r. 1736-1747), turned his attention to Khorasan and established his military town at Kalat, north of the city of Mashhad. As Talinn Grigor puts it, "Forced by loyalty to their own ancestral territory and a desire for dynastic new beginnings, they [Karim Khan and Agha Muhammad Khan] each based their court in Shiraz (1762) and Tehran (1785), respectively."¹² Nader was mostly occupied with military campaigns and centralization of power and his few architectural patronages were concentrated at Kalat in the Khorasan region [Figure 4]. However, in his eleven-year reign, he commissioned the restoration of Safavid palaces and urban monuments in Isfahan. Under Nader and his successors, Isfahan's governorship was delegated to more than twenty governors (*hakem*). Among them, only two were from local Isfahanis, Abdullah Khan and Mirza Abdul Vahhab.¹³

¹² Talinn Grigor, "Kings and Traditions in Différance: Antiquity Revisited in Post-Safavid Iran," 1085.

¹³ Mehr al-Zaman Shirzadfar, *Isfahan dar doreh-ye Afshar va Zand*, 50-55.



Figure 3-4. The Sun Palace or Kalat-e Naderi. Wikimedia Commons.

One of the tribal groups that rebelled in post-Safavid Iran was the Bakhtiari tribe. Maybe as a pacification strategy, Nader displaced some families from the Bakhtiari tribe to the Bidabad neighborhood in Isfahan in 1160/1747.¹⁴ But as evidence indicates, the head of this tribe was also interested in the royal legacy of Isfahan. Ali-Mardan Khan Bakhtiari, the supreme chieftain of the Bakhtiari tribe, invaded Isfahan and entered the city in 1163/1750 in alliance with Karim Kahan-e Zand and became the autonomous ruler of Iran for a year in the aftermath of Nader Shah's demise. Regarding Ali-Mardan Khan's architectural activities in Isfahan, one can discern from the sources that he was notoriously disdained for the plunder of Isfahan's neighborhoods. Asef reminds us that only three neighborhoods of

¹⁴ Haji Rajab Ali Khan and his family resided in this area and later Haj Hashem Khan who organized revolts and led an insurgency in the city came from this family line.

Lonban, Bidabad, and Bagh-e Morad, which were home to the Lurs of the city (related to the Bakhtiari tribe), survived and remained secure from the pillage of this ruthless ruler.¹⁵

Although Karim Khan did not choose Isfahan as his capital city, he hoped to establish a “neo-Safavid centralized state” and his urban renewal project in Shiraz was in fact modeled on the Safavid prototypes and urban design principles in Isfahan. Karim Khan’s new construction activities were concentrated around a central square, Maidan-e Shah, and later became a model for Agha Muhammad’s Tehran.¹⁶ The link between Zand and Qajar architecture is more evident in the construction and design of the Golestan Palace in Tehran. Karim Khan undertook a renewal and construction project in Tehran around the Safavid core which was a military station established under the Safavid Shah Tahmasb. The Zand structures of Khalvat-e Karim Khani and Divankhanah served as models for Fath Ali Shah’s ambitious construction campaign at this citadel [Figure 5, 6].¹⁷

¹⁵ Rostam al-Hokama, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 263.

¹⁶ Grigor, “Kings and Traditions in *Différance*: Antiquity Revisited in Post-Safavid Iran,” 1087. “The citadel of Karim Khan (Arg-i Karim Khan), built in 1766-1767, served “as royal residence and seat of empire, this medieval fortress enclosed an area of one acre.”

¹⁷ Layla Diba, “The Lost Palatine City of Fath Ali Shah,” 15.



Figure 3-5. Karim Khan's Arg at Shiraz, note the central eyvan with two pillars facing the elongated pool. Source: The Golestan Palace Photo Collection, Tehran



Figure 3-6. Another view of the Karim Khan's Arg at Shiraz, Source: Wikimedia Commons: [Arg-e Karim Khan in Shiraz](#)

In addition to the revivalist approaches of Karim Khan's court at Shiraz, the local governors of Isfahan assigned under Zand rule also undertook local restoration and

construction projects in Isfahan. During this time, a relatively peaceful period led to a more stable situation in which local governors enjoyed longer tenures. In twenty years, only three governors were assigned to Isfahan including Haj Aqa Mohammad Marbini, Mirza Abdul Vahhab, and Mohammad Baqir Khan Khorasgani. Regarding the responsibility of these governors, Perry states:

Public works and disaster relief outside the metropolis were normally the responsibility of the local authorities, but there are reports of assistance being sent from Shiraz. In 1778 an earthquake shook Isfahan and its environs, and in Kashan thousands of people are said to have been buried alive. Karim Khan sent masons, carpenters, and laborers under the supervision of two Zand khans to help repair the damage.¹⁸

Haj Aqa Mohammad Marbini as the governor of Isfahan, sometime between 1180/1766 and 1194/1780, was responsible for the patronage of some constructions in Isfahan including the erection of the Golshan Carvansarai, Sabbaghan Bazaar, Rahnan Bathhouse, and Bagh-e Haji (or Bagh-e Hodayun). Mohammad Baqir Khan Khorasgani was another governor who left his legacy in the city through construction activities. Cheshme-ye Baqir Khan is attributed to this patron.¹⁹ Some of these interventions can be identified on the Russian map of Isfahan.

Again, after the death of Karim Khan-e Zand (1751-1779) and till the beginning of the Qajar dynasty in 1789, almost ten governors ruled over Isfahan in a span of seventeen years. In this tumultuous condition, and even after the consolidation of Shiraz as the seat of rule, there were unsuccessful attempts to turn towards Isfahan and restore its royal status. One of

¹⁸ Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, 127.

¹⁹ Mehr al-Zaman Shirzadfar, *Isfahan dar doreh-ye Afshar va Zand*, 202. The Bagh-e Haji was located at the current location of the Takhti Stadium.

the claimants of power in Isfahan was Ali-Morad Khan of the Zand tribe. After Karim Khan, he revolted and attacked this city several times in order to gain the governorship of Isfahan and to overtake the throne. Finally, Ali-Morad Khan ascended the throne in 1196/1782 and became the king of Iran till 1199/1785. He resided in Isfahan for about two years.²⁰ Among his commissions were the compilation of the history of Zandiyeh in the style of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* by Mirza Abdullah Shahab Torshizi, and the history of Afshar and Zandiyeh (*Golshan-e Morad*) by Abolhassan Mostowfi Ghaffari Kashani. Unfortunately, it is not clear what Ali-Morad Khan accomplished in terms of architectural patronage during his rule.²¹

The significance of Isfahan's governorship can be better understood in the context of Iran's eighteenth-century system of administration and bureaucracy. Despite widely accepted ideas introduced by Ann Lampton that characterize eighteenth-century Iran by two main tendencies, "tribal resurgence" and "decline of the bureaucracy," Willem Floor argues for the existence of a capable administrative system based on local offices and adjusted structures to work with the central government. As Floor explains:

²⁰ Mehr al-Zaman Shirzadfar, *Isfahan dar doreh-ye Afshar va Zand*, 70. J. R. Perry, "ALĪ-MORĀD KHAN ZAND," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/8, p. 869, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ali-morad-khan-zand-r> (accessed on 30 December 2012).

²¹ "Ali-Morad Khan, who was unpopular in Shiraz, inevitably decided to move the capital to Isfahan. He fined all officials, including Ebrahim, 40,000 Tomans and forced them to move to the new capital.[1] at the time of staying in Isfahan, Ebrahim made a pilgrimage to Mecca and maintained his influence over trade centers of Shiraz.[6] in 1785, Jafar Khan collected an army and marched towards Isfahan, meanwhile Ali-Morad Khan, heavily ill, died in Murcheh Khvort.[12] when news reached Isfahan, Ebrahim led a revolt against Baqer Khan, kalantar of Isfahan and arrested him.[8] When Jafar Khan arrived in Isfahan, Ebrahim greeted him in ahead of the rest of the officials and declared him king and the rightful successor to Karim Khan.[13]"

[wiki Hajji Ebrahim Shirazi - Wikipedia](#)

Local government constituted the backbone of Iran's administrative system or bureaucracy. Its main function was to levy taxes and maintain law and order. Local 'dynasties' of *kalantars*, *sheikhs*, *kadkhodas*, *zabets*, and so forth guaranteed stability, the steady flow of funds, and taxes. But this decentralization of power did not mean that the center relinquished its sovereignty; rather it served to underscore that sovereignty, because the center could intervene whenever it wished to do so.²²

Besides the system of provincial governorships, Floor notes how post-Safavid rulers obtained previously practiced administrative knowledge about their domain through the compilation of administrative manuals. He mentions the production of three state manuals written in the eighteenth century, by the authors from the bureaucratic families who worked under the Safavid, Afshar and Zand courts, including *Tazkerat al-Moluk*, *Dastur al-Moluk*, and the third one is an anonymous manual written in 1731.²³ Despite the short-lived governorships in Isfahan, the governorship of Isfahan turned into an important position and challenging post to maintain. Among these governors, one with a longer period of rule was able to represent his power through construction and restoration projects. In the absence of royal patronage, these governors were in charge of restoring Isfahan's political, economic, and social life.

As mentioned earlier, the claimants of power in Iran were trying to reclaim Isfahan as the base of the monarchy. The return of Shah Tahmasb II to Isfahan, the conquest of Isfahan by Ali Mardan Khan Bakhtiari and Karim Khan Zand, the accession to the Safavid throne by Ali Murad Khan Zand, and the short-lived rule of the Isfahani ruler Mohammad Baqir Khan

²² Willem Floor, "Tribal Resurgence in the Eighteenth Century: A Useful Label?" in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th century Iran*, 154.

²³ Ibid, 156.

Khorasgani in Isfahan are examples of these efforts. Most of these khans and rulers did not claim a monarchy at first and entered the battlefield as deputies of the Safavid heirs. Later, as they consolidated their position, they strived strove to conquer Isfahan and subsequently imprinting imprinted their name on the physical legacy of the city.

The scant scholarship on this period, which often focuses on the founders of dynasties, shows that Isfahan completely disappeared from the scene of political conflicts and gave way to new capitals such as Shiraz, Mashhad, and Tehran. Since the history of Iran has always been the history of great men and epic rulers, the role of these less ambitious and influential rulers and kings such as Ali Murad Khan and Mohammad Baqir Khorasgani seems insignificant. Especially in a period of Iranian history when social order was changing and practically no dominant central power was in charge, the role that these rulers played in shaping the social and political atmosphere of eighteenth-century Isfahan deserves close reading.

The building activities of these rulers left a longer effect on the city's social and economic life. For instance, the Golshan Carvansarai and its warehouse, located somewhere between the Sadr Madrasedh and Bagh-e Qalandaran in Bazaar, was one of the major trade centers in Isfahan's bazaar hosting international merchants by the end of the nineteenth century. This carvansarai, a garden (Bagh-e Haji), and a bathhouse (Hammam-e Rahnan, located at the village of Ranan or Rahnan) were attributed to Haji Aqa Mohammad Marbini (Rahnani) who was the governor of Isfahan (1173-79/ 1760-66) and the minister of Karim Khan Zand in the eighteenth century.²⁴ Mohammad Baqir Khan Khorasgani, who also served as Isfahan's governor several times and was finally declared the king of Iran, though

²⁴ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 340.

just for a few days, left his marks on the city. He filled the moat around the Tabarak Castle and led the water to flow into another creek, possibly the Sarcheshmeh and Baqir Khan Creek on the Russian map of Isfahan. There is also a set of several mansions in Khorasgan, one of the counties of Isfahan, known as the Khani mansion which is attributed to Mohammad Baqir Khan and his family.

Rather than wiping out scant traces of these lesser agents to glorify the legacy of great rulers, this study places emphasis on the role that these agents as conduits of knowledge and memory played in the restoration of Isfahan's urban prosperity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The history of these governors' and rulers' constant attention to Isfahan in their frequent returns to take the throne in this city shows the fact that Isfahan, despite successive riots and clashes between different groups, witnessed temporary periods of political stability and calm. Apart from deaths, famines, and civil wars, there is evidence of the implementation of previous customs and rituals, such as welcoming new rulers, celebrations, and lighting ceremonies in the city's public spaces, which have certainly been effective in the lived experience of the city's inhabitants outside of the devastating city narrative.

It is in this social and political context that one can trace the clues of physical and urban change and examine how these new claimants of power dealt with the Safavid architectural and artistic heritage during their rule in Isfahan. Obviously, one cannot expect to find many new projects left by these rulers in this turbulent period. By putting these scattered works together, however, we can study and analyze how local structures of urban administration facilitated the city's transition from the Safavid to the Qajar period. And if we inspect the nineteenth-century maps of Isfahan, with this new perspective, we will find names that can

only be understood and retrieved by knowing these agents and their physical and material imprints on the built environment of the city. In this light, Ali Mardan Khan Tower and Tavileh (stable), Sarcheshmeh and Baqir Khan Creek, and Golshan Shekan-e Naw Caravanserai labeled and marked on Isfahan's maps become meaningful commissions that participated in the urban and architectural landscape of the city [Figure 7].



Figure 3-7. Russian Map of Isfahan, Sarcheshmeh and Baqir Khan Creek (red), Golshan Shekan-e Naw Caravanserai (yellow), and Ali Mardan Khan Tower and Tavileh (green)

Isfahan in the Early Qajar Period

Rise of Mohammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani

By the turn of the century and the Qajars' accession, specifically under the second Qajar king Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834), Isfahan experienced a period of revival and restoration. In continuity with the eighteenth-century efforts of the local governors to restore Isfahan's glorious past, late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Isfahan became the center of an extensive public work and revival project by the local and native governor of the city, Muhammad Hosein Khan Sadr-e Isfahani. This section aims to contextualize Sadr-e

Isfahani's rise to power as an Isfahani urban elite and a Qajar statesman by casting light on his social and professional life in relation to his urban and architectural patronage.

Sadr-e Isfahani was the son of Haj Mohammad Ali 'Allaf, a vegetable seller, and rose to prominence under Fath Ali Shah's rule. His services to the founder of the Qajar dynasty, Aqa Mohammad Khan, and later to Fath Ali Shah, secured and promoted his positions in managing Isfahan. He was a native of Isfahan and the *kadkhoda* of the city quarter during Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar's reign and became the *beyglarbeyg* (governor) of the cities of Isfahan, Qom, Kashan, and Saveh in 1795-96.²⁵ In 1806, he assumed the position of Amin al-Dowleh and Mostowfi al-Mamalek, and Isfahan's governorship was granted to his son Mirza Abdullah Khan.²⁶ He was given the title of Nezam al-Dowleh in 1813 and finally, in 1818, he was appointed as the Sadr-e A'zam of Fath Ali Shah until his death in 1824.²⁷

His two prominent characteristics constantly reiterated in Persian sources are his illiteracy and low social status. Coming from an anonymous family in Isfahan, the story of his assistance with the Qajar kings' empowerment and acquiring wealth through this connection to the court precedes any description of his benevolent undertakings in Isfahan.

²⁵ For administrative positions under the Qajars see: S. Bakhsh, "ADMINISTRATION in Iran vi. Safavid, Zand, and Qajar periods," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Online Edition, 1982. "As in the Safavid period, there were four large governments: Kurdistan, Lorestan, 'Arabestan and Georgia. Beglarbegis were appointed to the major provinces: Isfahan, Azerbaijan, Qaradag and Qarabag, and also to some of the major towns. Hakems were appointed to some two dozen lesser provinces and districts."

²⁶ Ibid. "The *şadr-e a'zam*, or prime minister, headed the bureaucracy and the *mostawfi al-mamalek* was in charge of revenue and financial administration. Mostawfis worked under the latter in Tehran and were assigned to all the provinces; they were responsible for drawing up the annual tax assessments and registers of authorized expenditures for the provinces, approving assignments on revenue, and verifying the accounts of the provincial governments, army, and other government offices."

²⁷ Jalal al-Din Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan: mojallad-e abniyeh va emarat va asar-e bastani*, 407.

The striking discrepancy between Mohammad Hosein's humble origin and high-profile status in the Qajar court in the eye of the contemporary statemen was represented in a verse from Fath Ali Khan-e Saba, the laureate poet, that says: He [Mohammad Hosein] reached to the skies from straw selling/ He sat on the throne from his shop bench (*az kahkeshi be kahkeshan shod/bar takht ze takhteh-ye dokan shod*). As a way of scorning Mohammad Hosein's illiteracy, Fath Ali Shah asked this court poet to compose a satire for Sadr-e Isfahani to see if he realizes the irony and the meaning. Astutely, Sadr-e Isfahani rewarded the poet after listening to the recitation of the poem. Some of his rivals at the Divan reproached him for not understanding the poetry at all. When he was asked for rewarding such a degrading satire, he said: I appreciated his work and would have given more if it was a panegyric.²⁸ This allegedly thoughtful response provides a perspective on his life and career as an outsider at the Qajar court who despite his illiteracy appreciated poetry and artistic production.

Not just in the eye of his Iranian peers, even European envoys and ambassadors visiting the Qajar court criticized his lack of required education and background as a noble to serve at the *divan*. The harshest criticism came from the British envoy, Sir Harford Jones,²⁹ as a member of the British mission to the court of Fath Ali Shah, who was accommodated in Sadr-e Isfahani's house during his mission in Isfahan and Tehran in 1809-10. He describes Sadr-e Isfahani in the following terms:

²⁸ Lotfullah Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 743.

²⁹ "He was attached to the first Persian mission led by Sir John Malcolm (1801). He remained in Tehran from 1809 to 1810, in the service of the Dundases. During this time his main achievement was the Preliminary Treaty of 1809 that effectively barred France from the route to India. In 1810, his authority in Tehran was crucially undermined by the East India Company, through Lord Minto's appointment of Sir John Malcolm as envoy while Jones represented the crown."

There was not a gentleman on my mission, who does not know that the Ameen-ed-Dowlah's knowledge of reading and writing was about equal to that of one of our washerwomen, and his ignorance, except in the *Ourf* of Persian finance, was so gross, and his manners so bad, that he was the constant joke of his brother Ministers. 'The Shah's opinion of him was one day expressed to me in very few words: --"he is an ass, and of no very high breed, but he is useful, and will bear a devilish great burthen.' For myself, as an English gentleman, I must unlearn all I have learnt, before I praise a traitor, or think a blockhead, though he be a nobleman, a respectful person.³⁰

In one of the meetings with the king, he even called Amin al-Dowleh as "*Batcha Goorbeh*" (kitten) to express his anxiety over Sadr-e Isfahani's lack of knowledge of foreign politics. However, Jones was very irritated with the great influence that the Amin al-Dowleh possessed on Fath Ali Shah's decisions and scornfully justifies this naming and states:

Now this nobleman had a very round face, and round eyes, which I suppose was a considerable inducement to me, to make use of the word I did; but I was exceedingly irritated by seeing him so stupidly encouraging the King of Persia in what was neither for his interest nor his honor.³¹

It is evident from different instances in Harford's account that he did not have a positive attitude towards Sadr-e Isfahani and his actions. On the other hand, he enjoyed interacting with Mirza Shafi' who was the grand vizier at the time. And it is likely that Harford's opinion on Amin al-Dowleh was affected by the continuous jealousy present among the rival

³⁰ Sir Harford Jones, *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia: In the Years 1807-11*, 414.

³¹ Jones, *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia: In the Years 1807-11*, 211.

groups at the Qajar court. A quote from Mirza Shafi' about Sadr-e Isfahani, in a conversation between Mirza Shafi' and Harford Jones, can clarify this point:

The Ameen-ed-dowlah will probably do all in his power to make the Shah think the Prince [Abbas Mirza] needs no assistance from him; but he will be cautious, I think, how he gets into an argument with your friends, especially if he finds me shy in backing him. This person certainly does contrive to draw from Isfahau, and the districts committed to his charge, as well as from the general superintendence of the finance department, large sums to King's coffers, and this gives him weight and credit at Court; but I very much doubt whether the system he is pursuing, is not that of ***killing the goose to get at her eggs all at once***. It is curious to me that the Shah, who in other things is so very sharp-sighted, should not be so in this [emphasis is mine].³²

Despite numerous references to his illiteracy, it seems that he enjoyed a high status in the Qajar court presumably due to his immense wealth and numerous connections. Unlike these downgrading accounts, all Persian and European sources unanimously agree on his role in the improvement of the city as a just and generous patron. Haji Mohammad Hosein had amassed an immense wealth under the Zands and was already among the city's elites due to his position as the tax steward. He assisted Fath Ali Shah with his ascension to the throne by opening the gates of Isfahan to his entourage after the death of Aqa Mohammad Shah and welcomed the new king with appropriate celebrations and required provender.³³

Sadr-e Isfahani utilized his immense wealth for the development of Isfahan's economy and public welfare and the change was already evident to the foreign visitors of the city.

³² Ibid, 284.

³³ E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 84.

John Macdonald Kinneir who was attached to Sir John Malcolm's mission to Persia in 1808-09, describes Isfahan as an important city and states: "Ispahan is the first commercial city in the empire, being the emporium of the foreign trade between India and Persia, Turkey and Cabul. Its manufactures are various; but in that of gold brocade it has attained unrivaled excellence."³⁴ The improvement of the economy paralleled the repair of the ruined city and the construction of urban infrastructures. Kinneir also gives an overview of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban improvement program in Isfahan:

Indeed, it [Isfahan] seems to be already emerging out of its ruins, under the auspices of the person above mentioned [Amin al-Dowleh], who, from the lowest origin, has raised himself to the first situations in the empire, and the enjoyment of immense wealth, which he employs in the improvement of his native city and province. Besides the new palace, he has beautified and rebuilt many of the bazars, repaired and added to the fountains and aqueducts which supply the public gardens with water, and enclosed and cultivated all the waste land in the vicinity of the city.³⁵

Morier, like other commentators on Sadr-e Isfahani's accumulation of wealth, provides an explanation for his success:

Here, from his intimate knowledge of the market, and of all the resources of the city, and of its inhabitants, he managed to create a larger revenue than had ever before been collected. He became the partner of every shopkeeper, of every farmer, and of every merchant; setting up those with

³⁴ Macdonald Kinneir, *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire: Accompanied by a Map*, 113.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 112.

capitals who were in want, and increasing the means of others who were already in trade.³⁶

Morier in this quote hints at some of the key factors in Sadr-e Isfahani's success. In his early career, as a local Isfahani, Sadr-e Isfahani began with the lowest positions of urban administration: *kadkhoda* and *kalantar*. In these positions, he got engaged in the management of city quarters and obtained needed experience in financial and administrative matters. As a native resident of Isfahan, he was able to grasp the formal and informal mechanisms of social and cultural interactions among different social groups. And as a local Isfahani governor, he had enough motivation to restore Isfahan's then-lost prosperity. Morier also notes another factor that created his social and professional network and strengthened his position as an accepted public figure in Isfahan. His investment in providing financial support to the lower strata of the Isfahani society such as farmers and shopkeepers enabled him to both penetrate the circle of the masses and to micro-manage the city's revenues.

Besides funding the peasants and supporting the merchants, Sadr-e Isfahani was a great investor in agriculture and land development. As a great "speculator,"³⁷ this gave him the means to amass wealth and bolster his status as a new urban elite in Isfahan and an influential statesman. Despite his illiteracy, he was keen to take advantage of the post-Safavid condition of the royal and communal lands left in the hands of the local governors. As Harford Jones had noticed, Sadr-e Isfahani's knowledge of "Ourf [conventions] of

³⁶ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809: in which is included, some account of the proceedings of His Majesty's mission, under Sir Harford Jones, Bart. K. C. to the court of the King of Persia*, 131.

³⁷ Heidi Walcher, "Face of the Seven Spheres: The Urban Morphology and Architecture of Nineteenth-Century Isfahan," *Iranian Studies*, 118.

Persian finance” equipped him with an understanding of Isfahan’s economy and the way to dissolve the financial issues of the city. Sir Ker Porter points out some of Sadr-e Isfahani’s urban revival strategies based on what he observed in Isfahan in the 1820s:

He has required and re-colonised many of the deserted villages, encouraged agriculture, and used similar means to populate the habitable streets of the city, by promoting the old manufactories, and striving to attract commerce back to its ancient channels. His zeal has already done much, and is likely to do more.³⁸

This process of land purchase and development was carried out even when Sadr-e Isfahani spent most of his time in Tehran as the Mostowfi al-Mamalik and later as the minister. His elder son, Abdullah Khan, governor of Isfahan and later the Amin al-Dowleh, continued his father’s lead in reclaiming agricultural lands and expanding a familial empire in Isfahan. As Heidi Walcher explains:

‘Abd al-Husayn continued his father’s policy of heavy investment in agricultural property, buying land as well as leasing divani-villages and estates of communal land (*amlak-i mushtarak*) on extremely favorable terms. This chiefly served to increase his own wealth but indirectly added to the general economic revival of the city.³⁹

Sadr-e Isfahani’s attention to the revitalization of Isfahan was materialized through a set of construction and restoration projects in the city. While Markus Ritter points to the appointment of Sadr-e Isfahani as minister of finance as a possible reason for the initiation

³⁸ Sir Ker Robert Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia, &c. : during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, 409.

³⁹ Heidi A. Walcher, “Face of the Seven Spheres: Urban Morphology and Architecture in Nineteenth-Century Isfahan,” 118. The name of the oldest son of Sadr-e Isfahani was Abdullah Khan.

of a building program in the early nineteenth century, my research suggests that Sadr-e Isfahani's transnational projects definitely comprised a lion share of these construction activities. His architectural and urban renewal vision extended from his own neighborhood in Isfahan to the whole country and beyond when he was appointed as the *Mostowfi al-Mamalik* and *Nizam al-Dowleh*. His urban constructions in Kashan and Najaf can be considered part of this extensive project.

The precise reasons for the origin of a building programme at this time, apart from general considerations mentioned below, remain unclear. Tentatively one can relate it to a measure of stabilization when war with Russia had been declared, and to a change in the administrative organization when Muhammad Husain Khàn, governor of Isfahàn and himself one of the earliest patrons, became minister of finances and later prime minister.⁴⁰

In addition to cultivation growth and land improvements, this ambitious urban patron encouraged trade and commerce through the establishment of new bazars mostly attached to the older monuments of the city. The construction of new bazars next to the Chaharsu Naqqashi, the Tuqchi gate, and the old Masjid-e Jami' were examples of this kind of urban intervention in Isfahan. Ouseley who found Sadr-e Isfahani a "patriotic minister" recounts his observations of the city's improvements after the realization of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban renewal project that stretched from the Fathabad Chaharbagh to the Tuqchi gate on the north:

⁴⁰ Markus Ritter, *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran 1785-1848: Architektur Zwischen Ruckgriff und Neuerung*, 527.

[...] For this handsome bazar [Hasan Abad] and the neighboring Charbagh, which now present busy and cheerful scenes, where lately ruins alone were visible, the inhabitants are indebted to the Amin Addouleh, whose indefatigable perseverance in embellishing and enriching Ispahan is evinced by the population and bustle of those streets situated between the bazar above-mentioned and the gate called Tukhchi, a space of about two miles.⁴¹

Besides erecting new bazars along this renewed urban axis, it seems that Sadr-e Isfahani had other visions to stimulate the production of the goods in Isfahan. The establishment of European manufactories would have been one of these desires. As suggested in Sadr-e Isfahani's conversation with Johnson, he was eager to bring to Isfahan new factories where glass and porcelain of better quality could be produced:

On taking leave of the Nizam, I had asked if there was anything which I could do for him in England; when he observed, that I must be aware that in Persia glass bottles and china-ware were already made, but of inferior quality; and he was anxious that I should engage for him a glass-manufacturer and a porcelain-manufacturer, to settle at Ispahan; adding, that he would treat them as they could expect. I promised him that I would attend to his request, on my arrival in London.⁴²

This quote also connotes a value judgment that Sadr-e Isfahani had supposed European productions superior to what was already produced in Iran. Although we are not informed about the results of this request, what is clear in this quote is a sense of inferiority of the Persian industry compared with the European ones reflected in Sadr-e Isfahani's request.

⁴¹ William Ouseley, *Travels in Various Countries of the East, More Particularly Persia*, 26.

⁴² John Johnson, *A Journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the Year 1817*, 122.

Regardless of this judgment, Sadr-e Isfahani seemed enthusiastic to expand the industry in Isfahan.

Apparently, Nizam al-Dowla's interest in importing European factories made an impression on European envoys like Robert Kir Porter. In his view, Sadr-e Isfahani was a "patriotic" minister "whose indefatigable perseverance in embellishing and enriching Isfahan is evinced by the population and bustle of those [Isfahan's] streets."⁴³ Porter like other Europeans who met Sadr-e Isfahani in Isfahan admire his building projects and his liberal views:

And during my intercourse with the Nezam-a-Daula, who seemed to regard the restoration of the old capital with the most liberal views, I had much pleasure in paying him more than a Persian compliment, while remarking on the fine wood with which he was filling the desolated tracts of the town.⁴⁴

Of course, it is not clear what these liberal views are in according to Porter, referring to another part of his travelogue on Fath Ali Shah's period, he observes "something of the improvement" taken place that is related to the more open relationship with Europe and the King's support of sending Iranian students to Europe to study arts and sciences.⁴⁵ And not irrelevant to these "progressive" actions, Sadr-e Isfahani introduced Haji Mirza Abulhasan Ilchi (niece of Haji Ebrahim Khan Kalantar) as a candidate to travel with Harford Jones to

⁴³ William Ouesely, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 26.

⁴⁴ Sir Ker Robert Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia: during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, 432.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 351.

England and negotiate the provisions of the Mojmāl treaty on behalf of Iran. Sadr-e Isfahani and Mirza Shafi' were the two negotiators designated by the king to sign this treaty.⁴⁶

He was also a generous and welcoming host who provided remarkable accommodations for the increasing presence of European missions. As is evident through sources, Sadr-e Isfahani hosted these foreign ambassadors in his private houses in Isfahan and Tehran. While the court had established itself in Tehran, Fath Ali Shah delegated this responsibility to Sadr-e Isfahani as his trusted agent and sent some of these ambassadors to Isfahan to be hosted there. Sadr-e Isfahani hosted Sir John Malcolm in 1800, General Gardane in 1807, Sir Harford Jones in 1808, Suleyman Efendi (envoy of Soltan Mahmud Khan of Rum), and Ahmad Chalabi (envoy of Davoud Pasha, Baghdad's minister) in 1808, and Sir Gore Ouseley in 1811 in his houses in Isfahan and Tehran.⁴⁷

According to the conventional practice in Iran, ambassadors and foreign missions would be hosted in the prime minister's house, and even for Qajar historians, the selection of Mohammad Hosein Khan for this task as the governor of Isfahan and later the second minister was an unusual case. E'temad al-Saltaneh points out this unconventional choice and provides a reason for this selection. He stresses the point that accommodating ambassadors in Sadr-e Isfahani's house demonstrates his magnanimity, sobriety, and great personality as Mohammad Hosein Khan was famous for his extensive generosity, benevolence, blessing, and luxurious hosting which had left a good impression on the guests. He continues,

⁴⁶ Gholamali Pashazadeh, "Sadr-e Isfahani, Haj Mohammad Hosein Khan," Adyan, Mazaheb va Erfan, *Daneshname-ye Jahan-e Islam*, vol 29. 470.

⁴⁷ E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 105.

although the expenses were provided by the state, there is definitely a difference between a generous hostess and a brutal one, a point that was taken into account for choosing him.⁴⁸

Secondary scholarship on Qajar statesmen, however, has a different take on this close and welcoming relationship between Sadr-e Isfahani and the foreign ambassadors. This scholarship accuses him of being a puppet agent working for the British empire and its colonial ambitions. According to the East India Company records, in 1800, Sir John Malcolm sent a letter to his supervisor at the East India Company and reported that Sadr-e Isfahani had requested an annual pension from the company. In response, Malcolm set a 500-rupee annual salary as a reward for his services to the company, consisting of sending the required news and information to the company through Shiraz and Bushehr to Bombay as well as facilitating British trade in Iran.⁴⁹ Although the nature of his interactions with the British remains unknown, economic reasons for reviving Isfahan's commerce seems to be the main motivation. Regardless of these interpretations, what is obvious is the extent of his interactions with different social and political groups even when he was serving in a provincial government.

Justice and Philanthropy

In Persian sources, Sadr-e Isfahani has been praised for his generosity, innate cleverness, and admirable ethical characteristics. His attention to people's well-being and his excessive generosity was reflected in his two often used epithets as Hatam-e sani and Khawjeh Nezam

⁴⁸ E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 98.

⁴⁹ Gholamali Pashazadeh, "Sadr-e Isfahani, Haj Mohammad Hosein Khan," *Adyan, Mazaheb va Erfan, Daneshname-ye Jahan-e Islam*, vol 29. 469

al-Molk-e dovvom.⁵⁰ It is easy to see the challenge in Persian accounts on the biography of this patron. The contradiction posed by his humble origin and illiteracy with respect to the traditional divan system in Persian courts was partially resolved with an emphasis on his virtue and generosity. Almost appearing in the accounts as a legendary donor and philanthropist, his immeasurable wealth was spent to fund the businesses and feed the poor. His generosity and attention to the welfare of Isfahan's inhabitants were manifested in the construction of a new palace next to the Safavid Haft-Dast, titled Otagh-e Daad (the Outcry chamber). It was dedicated to the destitute of Isfahan to get financial support from the governor who was supposed to receive them personally at this place.

As E'temad al-Saltaneh narrates Haji Mohammad Hosein had good relations with the *luties*⁵¹ of Isfahan, the leader of the *luties*, Pahlavan Agha, saved him when he was caught by Ja'far Khan Zand in Isfahan. According to this anecdote, Mohammad Hosein Khan was arrested by Ja'far Khan, tied on the back of the horse and dragged on the ground from Isfahan to Shiraz. While Fath Ali Shah, the Qajar crown prince at the time, was on his way to Isfahan to suppress Ja'far Khan's revolt, Mohammad Hosein Khan was able to cut the shawl tied around his waist on the Khawju Bridge and hide under the bridge. Amid this incident, he miserably promised to repair the bridge should he survive this incident. Luckily, Pahlavan Agha and a group of *luties* came to rescue him and return him to the city. Since

⁵⁰ The epithet (*Hatam*) is commonly attributed to somebody who is well-known for excessive generosity. His second epithet refers to the influential figure of the Seljuq period, khawjeh Nezam ol-Molk-e Tusi, in the 11th century.

⁵¹ "The second group of *lutis* was formed by urban Robin Hood-type bandits. They were members of the neighborhood *fotovvat* association and they were not supposed to submit to anyone who did not abide by their code of *javanmardi* ('manliness'), in other words, they constituted a *penti*. This meant that they were supposed to work for their living, help others, and defend their neighborhood and town." For a study of the term *luti* see [LUTI – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](http://LUTI-Encyclopaedia Iranica (iranicaonline.org))

this incident, Mohammad Hosein Khan was favored by the king and given permission to interfere in important affairs. He also repaired the bridge as he had intended.⁵²

This story clearly reveals the position of Mohammad Hosein Khan in Isfahan even before the reign of Fath Ali Shah. Reality or myth, Mohammad Hosein Khan owed his survival and life to two important forces of that time: one, the support of the Qajar government and his crown prince, and the other, the good friendship and relationship he had made with the urban rebels and villains because of his charitable deeds. E'temad al-Saltaneh explains how Mohammad Hosein Khan got linked to these two poles of power in Isfahan. He states that at those times, *bayglarbaygs* and *kalantars*, despite the existence of a separate position like the governor of the province, had ultimate autonomy in the cities and they were responsible for holding the keys of the gates and handling the affairs of the rebels and villains of each city. At the time, Mohammad Hosein Khan was the *bayglarbayg* of Isfahan and in charge of those responsibilities.⁵³ As Isfahan's *kalantar*, he had the privilege to mediate between the Qajar court and the masses in Isfahan.

Social and Political Networks

What mattered the most was Sadr-e Isfahani's ability to discern the underlying network of power in Isfahan and in the Qajar administrative system. He was able to make the right connections with the leaders of social groups in Isfahan and link himself to the Qajar court through various pathways. Walcher points to Sadr-e Isfahani's ability to balance the power between various groups in Isfahan and states:

⁵² E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 87-88.

⁵³ E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 89.

Establishment of governmental control over Isfahan required balancing the conflict between the claims of suzerainty by the central government, the autonomous self-assertion of the local elite, and a *modus vivendi* with the city's chief religious leader. The success that Ḥājī Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Khan Ṣadr Eṣfahāni and his son 'Abd-Allāh Khan Amin-al-Dawla enjoyed in running the city government was partly due to their ability to marshal these elements of internal urban politics as well as the indispensable court diplomacy in Tehran.⁵⁴

One needs to add to the circles of urban elites, religious leaders, and central government at Tehran the existence and significance of urban rebels or *luties* as well. In fact, not only Sadr-e Isfahani was keen to underscore the critical role of formal poles of power in Isfahan, he was well-seasoned in the urban and social politics of the city to understand the ways to tame the informal but influential rebellious social groups like *luties*.

Familial Links to the Court

To understand how a commoner like Sadr-e Isfahani from a low social standing was able to access the highest ranks of power at the Qajar court, one needs to probe into the structure of Qajar politics and administrative offices. As Asef Ashraf suggests taking a socially-oriented approach to examining the *divan* would be a more suitable pathway to understanding the early Qajar politics and institutions. His approach focuses on the familial links that formed the *divan* at the Qajar court.

Doing a socially-oriented study of the *divān* would entail identifying the main office holders, tracing their family, social, and geographic backgrounds, highlighting the marital ties between office holders, and

⁵⁴ Heidi Walcher, "ISFAHAN viii. QAJAR PERIOD" in *Iranica*, [ISFAHAN viii. QAJAR PERIOD – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](https://iranicaonline.org/articles/isfahan-viii-qajar-period)

uncovering their sources of economic and social prestige. It would mean taking seriously the familial nature of the Qajar state—not just as a description of the Qajar polity, but as a clue to how power was produced and reproduced in the formative years of the Qajar period.⁵⁵

Asef argues that much of the political power at the divan was dependent on familial ties and Qajar princes and khans from the Qajar tribe were the figures as powerholders of the early Qajar court. Asef introduces Sadr-e Isfahani as an exception to the rule who “lacked a true dīvān background” (not from the Qajar tribe) and entered the divan through creating familial links by marriage and expressing his loyalty to the king by gift-giving practices.

But “outsiders” in the dīvān during the early years of Fath-‘Ali Shah’s reign were not exclusive to Qajar tribal khans. Muhammad Husayn Khan, the governor (bayglarbayg) of Isfahan, provides an example of someone who rose from humble origins to become the Prime minister and to the pinnacle of power. Although his father and grandfather had been local stewards (mubāshir), they lacked a true dīvān background. Originally a green grocer from Isfahan, Muhammad Husayn Khan’s first promotion was to become the alderman (kadkhudā) of his neighborhood in the city. From there, he worked to build alliances with local shopkeepers, merchants, and farmers, gradually making his way up to becoming the mayor (kalāntar) of the city. Muhammad Husayn Khan came to the attention of Fath-‘Ali Shah when the new shah passed through Isfahan on his way to Tehran to take the throne, following Agha Muhammad Khan’s death. In 1806, Fath-‘Ali Shah brought him to Tehran, appointed him to serve as imperial treasurer, and gave him the title Amin al-Dawlih.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ashraf Asef, “A Familial State: Elite Families, Ministerial Offices, and the Formation of Qajar Iran,” 44.

⁵⁶ Ashraf Asef, “A Familial State,” 69.

Sadr-e Isfahani bolstered his prestige and secured his family's social status through marriage. From his several marriages, he fathered many children among whom Abdullah Khan was from his Isfahani wife and Ibrahim Khan Nazer from the daughter of Haj Ibrahim Khan E'temad al-Dowleh Shirazi.⁵⁷ Although his marriage to E'temad al-Dowleh's daughter granted him a better social status, it was his son's, Ibrahim Khan's, marriage to Fath Ali Shah's daughter, Khadijeh Khanum Esmat al-Dowleh, that linked his family to the Qajar household.

His oldest son, Abdullah Khan, followed a similar path to power as well. When he became Amin al-Dawleh, he arranged for his son to marry another daughter of Fath Ali Shah and Taj al-Dawleh. And according to the sources, despite Taj al-Dawleh's reluctance, Khorshid Kolah Khanum got married to Mirza Ali-Mohammad Khan due to the influence and prestige that Amin al-Dawleh and his father had in the Qajar court.⁵⁸ Upon their wedding, Mirza Ali-Mohammad Khan was given the title of Nizam al-Dowleh, the same title that Sadr-e Isfahani had enjoyed. Later on, he was appointed as the governor of Isfahan while Abdullah Khan was the prime minister. The circulation of important titles and positions among Sadr-e Isfahani's family in the first half of the nineteenth century suggests how successful Sadr-e Isfahani was in expanding and interlacing his family line with that of the Qajar royal family. To secure these positions and express loyalty to the royal household, Sadr-e Isfahani provided the king and his court with precious gifts as *pishkish*.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Hosein Sa'adat Nouri, "Rejal-e Dore-ye Qajar," *Vahid Magazine*, 121. Ibrahim Khan E'temad al-Dowleh Shirazi was the *kalantar* of Shiraz and governor of Fars under the Zands and later served as the grand vizier of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar.

⁵⁸ Hosein Sa'adat Nouri, "Rejal-e Dore-ye Qajar," *Vahid Magazine*, 127.

⁵⁹ Ashraf Asef, "Familial State," 70.

Considering the remarkable role of these gifts in raising Sadr-e Isfahani's social and political significance, the question is how his art and architectural patronage reflect these relationships. Of Sadr-e Isfahani's projects in Isfahan, his sponsorship of Emarat-e Sadri and the Takht-e Tavus, are apt examples to explore this matter. As Ashraf Asef explains:

A timely and luxurious gift that Muhammad Husayn Khan gave to Fath-
'Ali Shah in 1801–2, while he was still the governor of Isfahan and on the
occasion of the shah's marriage to Tavus Khanum, surely helped his
career prospects: gem studded "Sun Throne," later renamed the "Peacock
Throne" (takht-i tā vū s) in honor of the shah's wife. Part of the
explanation for the gift may lie in the fact that Muhammad Husayn Khan
was close to the family of Tavus Khanum, both of whom were from
Isfahan, but the gift, coming as it did early in Fath-'Ali Shah's reign, may
also have been made with an eye toward solidifying Muhammad Husayn
Khan's political prospects.⁶⁰

One wonders how the design and production of gifts tell us about the political motivation of their commissioners. The throne was crafted in Isfahan under the supervision of Sadr-e Isfahani and adorned with dazzling gems and precious stones. It was first called the Sun Throne and later renamed the Takht-e Tavus on the occasion of Fath Ali Shah's marriage to Tavus Khanum (Taj al-Dowleh). She was a Georgian Isfahani girl brought to the court at the age of eight and was educated and prepared for her new role as the king's new wife. Although she never became the queen, she was the king's favorite wife. As the design of the throne suggests it was a bed throne suitable even for the king and Tavus's wedding night.

⁶⁰ Ashraf Asef, 72.

Apparently, this marriage had a political significance for Isfahan as well. There are clues that Sadr-e Isfahani might have been involved in introducing Tavus to Fath Ali Shah as well. It seems that Tavus enjoyed being engaged with a circle of Isfahani artists and statesmen. In *haram* at Qajar court, Tavus was educated by the famous Isfahani poet, Neshat-e Isfahani. Considering the influence that Tavus, a native of Isfahan, had on the king, this marriage would be an informal conduit to secure Isfahan's and Sadr-e Isfahani's privileges in the Qajar court in addition to the formal affairs. After the demise of Sadr-e Isfahani and the disfavor of his son, prince Sayf al-Dawleh, son of Tavus and Fath Ali Shah, inherited the governorship of Isfahan.

Communities of Knowledge: Networks of Learned Men

In addition to constructing familial and political ties with the Qajar court, Sadr-e Isfahani expanded his social and political networks through Isfahan's literati community. The patronage of religious structures and poetry was at the core of his cultural commissions. His attention to the religious leaders and acquiring their favor strengthened his position as Isfahan's governor. The representation of his piety and respect to the religious figures of Isfahan were manifested in the construction of three new school-mosques in Isfahan and the restoration of some of Isfahan's old schools and mosques. One of the earliest examples was the erection of a new *madrseh* in the Pa-qal'a neighborhood. The school was known as *Madrseh-ye Shaykh al-Iraqayn*, referring to the name of the school's superintendent. He also commissioned two other religious schools in a larger scale during his career: *Madrseh-ye Sadr-e Khawju* and *Madrseh-ye Sadr-e Bazaar*. Although there is not much known about Sadr-e Isfahani's relationship with the *ulama*, relying on his architectural patronage in

Isfahan and other Shi'i centers at 'Atabat, one can surmise his religious orientation and intentions as necessary to his self-fashioning practices.

Besides ulama and the religious circle of the city, he also gained the favor of the literati of Isfahan through financial support and rewards. During his governorship of Isfahan, many learned men who had fled the city and resided in other provinces returned to Isfahan in hopes of gaining the governor's attention and favor. Poets who composed panegyrics in praise of his persona and benevolent deeds were rewarded and given the required means to reside in Isfahan. One of the contemporary poets who had made a close friendship with Sadr-e Isfahani was Mohammad Kazem Valeh Isfahani. Sadr-e Isfahani rewarded the poet with a garden and a tomb structure along his newly built Aminabad chaharbagh on the road to the Takht-e Foulad.⁶¹ The garden was situated at the western edge of the Aminabad chaharbagh and intended as a pleasure garden and a gathering place for Valeh and his poet companions.⁶² Valeh has been identified as a well-known calligrapher, but a mediocre poet praised for his sublime taste in arts. He was linked to the Isfahani circle of poets and interacted with most of his contemporary poets. In addition to the circle of poets, he was respected by the community of the ulama, philosophers, and mystics of the city.⁶³ Valeh owned a chamber at the Madraseh-ye Jaddeh-ye Bozorg and he used to hold most of his teachings and discussions there. His new garden was reserved as his suburban retreat to host prominent poets such as Mirza Fazlollah Khavari Shirazi and Mehdi Beyg Shafaqi and hold poetry *mahfels* (gatherings). His burial chamber is located in this garden. A monumental

⁶¹ Lotfullah Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye Asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 759. For the architectural configuration of this garden and tomb refer to the next chapter on Sadr-e Isfahani's urban vision.

⁶² Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan: Fasl-e Takaya va Maqaber, daftar-e Dovvom*, 201.

⁶³ Ibid, 200.

dome mounted on eight columns features Valeh's tomb in the middle of this garden. Aqa Mohammad Tal'at Isfahani's poetic chronogram (1214/1800) under the dome indicates the patron's name, Sadr-e Isfahani. The garden is known today as the Tekiyeh-ye Valehiyeh and its design features and patronage emblemize the strong connection between the governor and this prominent Isfahani literati and artist at the time.⁶⁴

Sadr-e Isfahani's Construction and Restoration Campaign

Jalal al-Din Homaie has dedicated about twenty-three pages of his *Tarikh-e Isfahan* to Sadr-e Isfahani's building activities in Isfahan. To compile the list of his projects, he has referred mostly to *Madayeh* that comprises the first twenty years of Sadr-e Isfahani's career. For the last ten years of his career, Homaie has relied on the epigraphs of the standing buildings and other historical accounts. His list is the most comprehensive account of Sadr-e Isfahani's construction and restoration projects. This list along with Sadr-e Isfahani's other projects in Iran and Iraq illuminates the scope of his architectural patronage and the agenda behind this building campaign. In addition to placing Sadr-e Isfahani's project in a transnational and transregional context, this chapter investigates his artistic commissions in a broader scope to include his patronage of "minor arts" along with his urban and architectural projects. In this holistic approach, his commission of seven doors for the shrines of the innocent Imams in Najaf and Karbala will be understood in relation to his supervision over the production of Fath Ali Shah's famous *Takht-e Tavus*.

Another consideration in examining and identifying Sadr-e Isfahani's projects is the misleading line that divides preservation and construction in our modern scholarship.

⁶⁴ This garden and tomb of Valeh have been discussed further in Chapter 4 under the section on the Aminabad Chaharbagh.

Despite our modern understanding of conservation and restoration as merely an act of minor intervention in order to keep the original building standing, Sadr-e Isfahani's restoration and construction projects reveal that early Qajar architects and patrons had a more liberal and flexible definition in mind regarding restoration and preservation. The line between constructing a completely new structure and restoring an old building seems to be more fluid in this period. Sometimes even the stylistic and formal analysis cannot help in defining the line between the old and the new. In such instances, archeological investigations would be the only way to reveal the date of each intervention. As the following description of Sadr-e Isfahani's building activities demonstrate, much of his renovation and restoration efforts are a combination of repairing and appending to the old through new constructions in a way that sometimes the line between past and present seems blurry and unrecognizable.

Sadr-e Isfahani's restoration and construction activities are mostly concentrated in Isfahan, in his hometown and the domain of his governorship. Early in his career, as a *kadkhoda* and *kalantar* of the neighborhood, his architectural patronage was confined to the limits of the Paqal'eh neighborhood. This city quarter was located at south of Tabarak Castle and considered one of the oldest residential neighborhoods of Isfahan. Sadr-e Isfahani commissioned the Tekiyeh-ye Khan in 1792 and Madraseh-ye Khan also known as Masjid and Madraseh-ye Seyyid al-Iraqayn in 1794 [Figure 8-11]. At the time, Sadr-e Isfahani was the governor of Isfahan and the name of these two projects reflect his official title, khan. Along with his interventions in the Paqal'eh neighborhood, he also repaired the Khawju Bridge in 1794 and, most likely at this time, mounted the central pavilion of the Safavid

bridge with his own new structure called the Beyglarbaygi.⁶⁵ In addition to Isfahan, the governorship of Kashan, Qom, and Saveh was also delegated to him in 1797.



Figure 3-8. Madraseh-ye Seyyid al-Iraqayn (Madraseh-ye Sadr Paqal'eh), foundation inscription at the entrance showing the date 1217/1804. Photo: Samira Fathi.



Figure 3-9. The courtyard of the Madraseh-ye Seyyid al-Iraqayn, front showing the northern eyvan and the two side entrances to the courtyard. The metal scaffolding structure running

⁶⁵ This structure and its architectural renderings have been discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation.

around the rim of the courtyard is used for covering the courtyard and turning it into a *tekiyeh* to house Shi'i rituals in Moharram. Photo: Samira Fathi



Figure 3-10. The western façade of the courtyard. Photo: Samira Fathi



Figure 3-11. The inscription on the Mehrab located at the southern *eyvan* and the main madras (seminary hall) of the school. The date shows 1217/1804. Photo: Samira Fathi

Between the years 1797 and 1807, Sadr-e Isfahani undertook several restoration and construction projects including the Saqakhaneh (water fountain) next to the Masjid Jami' (1799), Saqakhaneh Paqal'eh (1799), Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh Sadri (1801-05) [Figure 12, 13], Emarat-e Divankhaneh and Sarpoushideh-ye Sadri (1800-03), Chaharbagh-e Fathabad

(1801-05), Bazaarcheh, Chaharsoo, and Saqakhaneh Hoseinabad next to the Tuqchi gateway (1801-03), Saqakahneh and Bazaarcheh next to the Madraseh-ye Molla Abdullah (1802), Bazaarcheh next to the Masjid Jami' (1803), and the new pool and shops of the Qaysariyeh (1803). All these new buildings and structures were constructed in the process of restoring and preserving standing historical monuments and public buildings. For instance, the Emarat-e Sadri was erected simultaneously with the restoration of the Safavid mansions and gardens between 1799 and 1802 and new markets and water fountains were appended to the old mosques and madrasehs during their conservation process. Of these preservation activities are the repair of the Madrasehh-ye Molla Abdullah (1802), Bazaarcheh and Darwazeh-ye Hasanabad (1802), restoration of the wall paintings of the Chaharsoo Naqashi (1802) and Masjid Jami' specifically the tiled portal opposite the Sabziyan alley (1803), Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan (1803), and the cleaning and rebuilding the water canals (*madis*), particularly the Madi-ye Nezamabad (1804). Besides these projects in Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani and his deputy, Mirza Abul Qasem Isfahani in Kashan undertook an extensive restoration plan to revive the city of Kashan.⁶⁶ The Safavid garden of Bagh-e Fin was also renovated and a new pavilion for Fath Ali Shah was constructed inside this garden. As part of this restorative project, Sadr-e Isfahani ordered the rehabilitation of the Safavid avenue that had connected the city to the Bagh-e Fin. A new chaharbagh avenue was laid out on the Safavid *khiyaban*, resembling other chaharbagh avenues Sadr-e Isfahani established in

⁶⁶ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 24. The author in *Madayeh* does not provide any name for the avenue, but according to other construction activities in the Bagh-e Fin, I assume this avenue must be the one that linked the Bagh-e Fin to the city, corresponding to the current Amirkabir street.

Isfahan.⁶⁷ This chaharbagh was celebrated in *Madayeh* as Sadr-e Isfahani's renovation efforts in Kashan.



Figure 3-12. Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh-e Sadri (Khawju), showing the courtyard and the entrance *eyvan* along the Khawju chaharbagh. The lush trees of the Khawju chaharbagh are visible at the background of the entrance. Photo: Samira Fathi

⁶⁷ In addition to the Fath Ali Shah's pavilion at the end of the garden, there has been another residential structure on the eastern side of the garden associated with the Nezam al-dowleh that I surmise to be Sadr-e Isfahani's addition as well. Currently, this structure has been converted into a museum inside the Bagh-e Fin.



Figure 3-13. One of the main halls of the Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh-e Sadri. This school is currently in use by the students of religious studies. The school has been extensively renovated in recent years.

In 1807, Mohammad Hosein Khan was appointed Mostowfi al-Mamalek (financial minister) and credited the epithet of Amin al-Dowleh (trustee of the state). It is at this time that he commissioned the establishment of another new chaharbagh avenue at the north bank of the Zayandeh River, Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (1805-09) and the compilation of the *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh* or *Aminiyeh* (*Tazkira-ye Baqi*). Almost concurrently, he ordered the erection of a new appendage to the Safavid palace of Haft Dast on the eastern side of the Sa'adatabad Garden. The Emarat-e Haft Dast-e Sadri or Taq-e Daad (the arch of justice) was erected in 1805-13.

In 1809 Sadr-e Isfahani was assigned to establish order in Iraq. It seems that it was during his travel to Iraq that he commissioned the restoration of the walls of the city of Najaf (according to *Madayeh* in 1812), the erection of a new building in the courtyard of Hazrat-e

Abbas's shrine in Karbala, and the construction of a Madraseh and Saqakhaneh in Najaf.⁶⁸ Additionally, he decreed the production of seven doors for the sacred Shi'i tombs at Najaf, Karbala, Kazemeyn, and Qom. During these years, he commissioned another chaharbagh on the northern quarters of Isfahan, Chaharbagh Hoseinabad Tuqchi (1809), supervised the erection of a new palace for the prince Suleyman Mirza in Karaj (1809-12), and repaired the Shanzdah Deh Dam (1810) on the Zayandeh River.

Four years later, he assumed the governorship of the Fars province and was granted the title of Nezam al-Dowleh.⁶⁹ His sons, Abdullah khan and Ibrahim khan, replaced Sadr-e Isfahani's posts and were chosen as the Amin al-Dowleh and the governor of Isfahan respectively. Between his appointments as Nezam al-Dowleh and his promotion to the post of prime minister in 1819, Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural patronage comprised the commission of the tomb of Aqa Mohammad Kazem Valeh Isfahani (1814), the restoration of the Imamzadeh Isma'il (1814), and the repair of the Bazaar and Chaharsoo Rangrazan (1817). The latest project of Sadr-e Isfahani in Isfahan as the Sadr-e A'zam (prime minister) was the construction of the Madraseh-ye Sadr-e bazaar (1819-24) that was left unfinished due to the untimely death of the patron in 1824 [Figure 14-16].

⁶⁸ According to E'temad al-Saltaneh, Sadr-e Isfahani signed a contract with the Ottomans for establishing a new wall around the city and reclaiming the uncultivated land between this wall and the built area of the city. Based on this contract, this in-between land officially became the property of Sadr-e Isfahani and his descendants since then. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 90.

⁶⁹ Homaie, 407.



Figure 3-14. Showing one of the 4-eyvans of the Madraseh-ye Sadr-e Bazaar and its courtyard. Photo: Samira Fathi



Figure 3-15. The arrangement of student's chambers (*hojreh*) on one of the corners of the courtyard. Sadr-e Isfahani was not able to finish this school due to his untimely death. The second floor has been added later. This school is one of the important and highly demanded religious and Shi'i learning center in Isfahan. Photo: Samira Fathi



Figure 3-16. Madraseh-ye Sadr-e bazaar, one of the *eyvans*.

In addition to urban and architectural interventions, Sadr-e Isfahani's name also appears in the patronage of the most luxurious artwork of the period, the Sun Throne (Takht-e Tavous or Peacock Throne) [Figure 17]. As Yahya Zoka states, in the early years of Fath Ali Shah's reign, the king appointed Sadr-e Isfahani, in one of his travels to Isfahan, to build a new throne made of precious stones and jewels that he had in his possession. According to this account, the Isfahani craftsmen and goldsmiths began the production process in 1800 and completed and transported the Sun Throne a year later to Tehran to be used for the Nowruz celebration in 1801. Zoka believes that there was no better place than Isfahan and that nor was a better and more trusted person than Sadr-e Isfahani for this project in the early years of Fath Ali Shah's reign.⁷⁰ However, this throne was not the only luxurious commission of this Isfahani patron. It is said that Fath Ali Shah used to call Sadr-e Isfahani with this phrase: "Nezam al-Dowleh is the jewel tree" (*Nezam al-dowleh derakht-e Javaher ast*). This probably refers to a tree made of jewels that Sadr-e Isfahani had gifted to the

⁷⁰ Yahya Zoka, "Taajha va Takht-e Saltanati-ye Iran," in *Honar va Mardom*, No. 60, 1967. P 52.

king.⁷¹ Furthermore, according to *Madayeh*, Sadr-e Isfahani was put in charge to provide a jewel box as a repository to organize and store the royal jewels and treasures. The treasure box was made of gold and decorated with *minai* (enamel). Baqi's chronogram was also inscribed on the box. He introduces the craftsman's name, Mohsen, in his chronogram.⁷² As demonstrated here, for the most part, Sadr-e Isfahani's involvement in the early Qajar artistic commissions was due to his access to the resources available in Isfahan as the main center of arts and crafts in early nineteenth-century Iran.



Figure 3-17. A nineteenth-century photograph of the Takht-e Tavous (Peacock Throne) at one of the halls of the Golestan palace. This photo shows the original design of the throne before its alteration by Naser al-Din Shah.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Baqi, *Madayeh*, 62.

Conclusion

Despite political tensions and civil wars among claimants of power over the remnants of Safavid empire in Isfahan, scattered and intermittent architectural activities continued in the city. The period marked by the fall of the city to the Afghans in 1722 and the consolidation of the Qajar dynasty in Tehran by the end of the century witnessed the efforts of Isfahan's short-term governors for reclaiming its social, political, and urban status. Non-royal and local patrons including merchants, clerics, tribal leaders, low-ranking city administrators, and governors inserted their names in the architectural legacy of the city, even if through a minor construction and preservation project. As the first section of this chapter demonstrated, what appeared in the late nineteenth century as the emergence of non-royal urban elites was in fact a continuation of an earlier practice in post-Safavid Isfahan that took a full-fledged form by the end of the century. Alongside architectural patronage, these patrons formed a community of knowledge in Isfahan and were often commissioners of other artistic and cultural productions such as literary works, including *tazkiras* that perpetuated their memory and legacy.

Sadr-e Isfahani was one of these non-royal urban elites who constructed new social and political networks in Isfahan and other regions under his rule. His gradual ascendance to power was directly linked to his administrative background in Isfahan and the knowledge that he had acquired living in the city. He keenly entangled his urban patronage with other artistic forms such as supporting the poets and panegyrists to remind Isfahan of its past glories. My systematic analysis of his projects represents his works as a more sophisticated and multilayered patronage system rooted in the known urban practices in the city. In addition to self-fashioning that marked his urban and artistic patronage, his projects aimed to

craft a new image of kingship for Fath Ali Shah grounded in the legacies of empire in Isfahan.

Chapter 4 : Chaharbagh Promenades and Urban Memory in

Isfahan

Introduction

*“pas az aank Isfahan har gushe-ash shod ‘eshrat-araie
Bar u az char janeb kard ziba charbaghi zam” (Baqi, Madayeh)*

[When every corner of Isfahan became a place of pleasure.
He added beautiful chaharbaghs to the four sides of the city]

The contemporary Isfahani historian and the author of *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, Jalal al-Din Homaie, has credited two Hoseins for the reclamation of Isfahan after the fall of the Safavids; Mohammad Hosein Khan-e Sadr-e Isfahani and Mohammad Hosein-e Kazerouni.¹ Considering the number of restoration and construction activities undertaken by Sadr-e Isfahani, I suggest that his extensive building campaign was indeed a coherent urban program by which a new urban axis was highlighted in the city. By identifying Sadr-e Isfahani's projects on Isfahan's maps and examining the spatial relationship between them, this chapter offers a systematic analysis of his urban vision in the context of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Iran.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, eighteenth-century Isfahan witnessed the frequent and ambitious attempts of local governors and tribal chiefs in taking over Isfahan's royal legacy. Although Isfahan lost much of its royal weight due to the shift of the center of power to the following capital cities, there were signs of construction activities by the local mayors and non-royal elites in the city were few and far between. Their sporadic attempts

¹ Jalal al-Din Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 407.

can be understood as Isfahan's struggle for survival in the tumultuous circumstances of the eighteenth century. However, Sadr-e Isfahani's extensive and multifaceted construction program indicated a turning point in the social and economic life of the city. While social and cultural historians of nineteenth-century Iran have successfully argued for the rise of non-royal architectural patronage in Iran, they have overlooked examining these projects in conjunction with each other as a coherent urban program and urbanization.²

As discussed in the previous chapter, Sadr-e Isfahani instigated an extensive reclamation project during his career. In terms of geographical scope, he began with small architectural commissions in his neighborhoods in Isfahan, Paqal'a and Khawju,³ and later extended his patronage to other parts of Isfahan as well as other cities of Iran and Iraq. As a local figure who rose to prominence step by step, the scope of his projects expanded from the patronage of a neighborhood *tekiyeh* or a water fountain in the Khawju quarter to the establishment of a new wall around the city of Najaf in Iraq. Depending on his advancement in his career, his architectural patronage grew in terms of geography and scale. In addition to the scope and scale, what sets Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural patronage apart from both the royal and non-royal architectural activities of the time is his unique urban vision that will be introduced in this chapter.

To understand the significance and scope of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban interventions in Isfahan, one needs to look at the post-Safavid rulers' urban legacy in Mashhad, Shiraz, and

² See Heidi Walcher's and Markus Ritter's scholarships dealing with early nineteenth century Iran.

³ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi Isfahan*, 37. Paqal'a refers to the neighborhood surrounding the Deylamite Tabarak Castle constructed in the 9th century. In the Seljuk period, the neighborhoods located in the southeast of Safavid Isfahan such as Paqal'a, Ahmadabad, Khawju, Bagh-e Morad, and Tervaskan were among the best quarters of Isfahan.

Tehran. Keeping in mind that these cities became the seat of political power in the eighteenth century and Isfahan turned into a provincial center, one can gauge Sadr-e Isfahani's attempts in a better light. Following the fall of Isfahan, Kalat-e Naderi⁴ became the emblem of Nader Shah's (r. 1736-1747) power and sovereignty. Although Kalat with its known "sun palace" (Qasr-e Khorshid) was considered a fortress for Nader and his companions, Babaie argues that the remaining traces of buildings and water channels around the palace indicate the existence of an urban plan. The octagonal *hasht-behesht* layout of the palace along with the traces of water channels make references to the *hasht-behesht* type building developed in the Mughal and Safavid architecture. The Kalat complex was commissioned after Nader Shah's successful campaign to India in 1739. Referring to this campaign and its cultural and artistic implications, Babaie explains the appearance of new forms and decoration techniques affected by the Mughal and Indian architecture and design.⁵

In Shiraz, Karim Khan Zand (r. 1751-1779) also known as *vakil al-ra'aya* (deputy of the people) followed the lead of Shah Abbas I in reconfiguring Shiraz's urban setting to prepare it for the new seat of Persian Kingship. He based his court in Shiraz in 1762 and launched a restoration and construction campaign in this new capital city. He restructured Shiraz through the erection of a new 25-foot wall with a moat and six gates surrounding the urban quarters. A mosque (Masjid-e Vakil), bazaar (Bazaar-e Vakil), the citadel (Arg-e Karim Khan), public garden (Bagh-e Nazar), and bathhouse (Hammam-e Vakil) were organized around the central square of Shiraz (Maidan-e Shah). Karim Khan's citadel (Arg-e Karim Khan), constructed in 1766-67, had residential and governmental functions. It was the main

⁴ A small town some 150 kilometers north of Mashhad.

⁵ Sussan Babaie, "Nader Shah, the Delhi Loot, and the 18th-Century Exotics of Empire," 218.

residence of the royal household and the center for administrative offices. Like the Safavid palaces, Karim Khan's citadel featured three *talars* for ceremonial receptions of the Zand dynasty, albeit on a smaller scale. In locating his center of rule, Karim Khan chose not to intervene in the old quarters and moved away from the historical center of Shiraz, as was the case in Shah Abbas I's New Isfahan.⁶

By the end of the eighteenth century, Aqa Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, moved the seat of the empire to the north and declared Tehran the capital city of Iran in 1785. This time, all the imperial projects loaded with the expression of imperial power were concentrated at the Golestan Palace. This palace complex, consisting of residential and administrative quarters, was expanded out of its Safavid and Zand foundations at this time and turned into a full-fledged palatial district under the following Qajar kings. This first Qajar king has been identified as a military man concerned with bringing peace to the disintegrated country with no time for architectural showcasing. However, his expansion of the Golestan Palace signified the importance of architecture for the expression of power even for this military-minded Qajar king.

Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834), the second Qajar king, also concentrated his building activities in Tehran and focused on the embellishment of the Golestan Palace and the adjoining areas. As a result of this construction campaign, the Golestan Palace was expanded, a new royal mosque and maidan linked the palace complex to the Bazar, new palaces were built in Tehran's vicinity, and residential quarters were erected to house the growing population of the city. In Abbas Amanat's words:

⁶ Talinn Grigor, "Kings and Traditions in *Différence*," *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, 1085-87.

That Tehran was designated in the Fath 'Ali Shah era both the "abode of monarchy" (dar al-saltana) and the "abode of the caliphate" (dar al-khilafah) reflects the Qajars' view of their capital as the seat of a dual authority—the temporal sovereignty of the shah and the religious custodianship (caliphate) that the Qajar ruler hoped to uphold on the Safavid model. The Qajars tried to follow the Safavid example not only by naming their capital grandly but also by physically brandishing its image.⁷

Despite these developments and royal investments in beautifying the new capital city, Tehran's political status was overshadowed by Isfahan and Tabriz due to the "lack of substantial commercial and other economic enterprises."⁸ As will be explored in the ensuing chapters of this dissertation, Fath Ali Shah's architectural and artistic patronage was in great deal dependent on Isfahan and its cultural and political weight. Sadr-e Isfahani's support of the new king and his dynasty through Isfahan's monetary and cultural cachet is an underestimated fact that my dissertation aims to explicate.

The above-mentioned royal urban and architectural projects in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Iran provide a rational background for the appearance of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban renewal project in Isfahan. In terms of scope and variety of construction and restoration activities, Sadr-e Isfahani's project in Isfahan was comparable with post-Safavid royal commissions. Yet, what differentiates his attempts in Isfahan can be summarized in two points: The first point is pertinent to his patronage system and socio-political status. Sadr-e Isfahani was not in any sense from a royal background or connected to the ruling tribes or family. He was a low-profile Isfahani who served in different urban administrative roles and constructed social and political networks to insert himself into the

⁷ Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 12.

⁸ Ibid.

Qajar elite circle.⁹ The second point derives from what he achieved and left behind in urban and architectural terms in Isfahan. Unlike the element of *maidan* that was appropriated and reproduced mainly in Shiraz and Tehran—of course, an interpretation of Safavid *maidan*—the key organizing element in Sadr-e Isfahani's renewed Isfahan was the chaharbagh avenue type also introduced to Isfahan under Shah Abbas I, not a public square. The rest of this chapter is dedicated to provide an explanation for this choice at this moment of Isfahan's history.

Reclaiming Isfahan Through Chaharbaghs

One of the substantial architectural undertakings of Sadr-e Isfahani in revitalizing Isfahan was the construction of new chaharbagh avenues in the city. He commissioned three of them in Isfahan and apparently, they were not the only one and isolated examples sponsored by Sadr-e Isfahani. As his architectural patronage in Kashan attests, he also sponsored a new chaharbagh avenue in this city under his governorship which is off-limit for our discussion here.¹⁰ This section will delve into the history of these chaharbaghs and their designs in relation to Sadr-e Isfahani's other architectural activities in Isfahan. Locating these avenues on maps and situating them in the textual sources and the context of Sadr-e Isfahani's larger urban project, I argue that the revival of the city was in fact very much dependent on the revival of the chaharbagh avenue as a type and essential organizing and ordering urban element in post-Safavid Isfahan. In this section, I glean information about these overlooked urban spaces of Isfahan from the visual and textual sources such as travelogues, maps, and literary representations to highlight the role of these new

⁹ See Chapter 3 for further information on his career and personal life.

¹⁰ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 24.

chaharbaghs¹¹ in the urban renewal of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Isfahan and their perception by Isfahan's inhabitants.

Shah Abbas I moved the seat of the Safavid empire from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1591. The New Isfahan was planned to the south of the medieval center of Isfahan concentrated around the Old Maidan and the Masjid-I Jami.' The new city was composed of two structural components: Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan (public square) and Chaharbagh Avenue or *khiyaban* (tree-lined avenue). As appeared in earlier Safavid urban and palatial complexes in Khoy and Qazvin, *khiyaban* became an essential element of New Isfahan.¹²

The Safavid Chaharbagh was a 4-kilometer-long avenue that connected the Dowlat Gate on the North of the river to the Hezar Jarib gardens on the south through the Allah Verdi Khan bridge.¹³ Two rows of trees were planted on two sides of the avenue flanked by gateways of statesmen's gardens and mansions. A series of pools linked via a water channel composed the central part of the avenue shaded with trees. This avenue functioned as "an

¹¹ Chaharbagh hereafter refers specifically to chaharbagh avenue unless identified otherwise.

¹² For further information on these early Safavid examples of *khiyaban*: Mahvash Alemi,

[Khiyaban — Dumbarton Oaks \(doaks.org\)](http://doaks.org)

¹³ Mahvash Alemi, "A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran," www.middleeastgarden.com. 2007. P 4. For further discussion see Roger M. Savory, "ĀHĀRBĀĠ-E EṢFAHĀN," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, [ĀHĀRBĀĠ-E EṢFAHĀN – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](http://iranicaonline.org) accessed online 2022. "Isfahan followed the model of Qazvin's urban layout. A garden city (*bāghistān*) was created to the south of the old city center. A large *khiyābān* was built in 1596 to connect the entrance at the Dawlat Gate near Shah 'Abbas's urban residence, the dawlatkhānah, to his great suburban garden known as the Chaharbagh-i Hizar Jarib that stood south of the Zayande River. A canal dug from the river irrigated the garden and ran through the *khiyābān* that constituted the main axis of the new garden city. The Georgian Allahvirdi Khan was commissioned to build a monumental bridge, finished in 1602, that connected the two portions of the promenade. The part on the side of the city was called Chaharbagh-i Pain ("low chahārbāgh") and the one across the river was called Chaharbagh-i Bala ("high chahārbāgh")."

urban artery with a public space of leisure” which was used by the Isfahani residents for promenading and strolling in the evenings.¹⁴ Mostly intended for men, it was also accessible for women on certain days of the year. According to Babaie, “In Isfahan, the Chahar Bagh Promenade intersects with the Zayandeh River to create a chahar bagh on the macro level of the city, dividing it into quadrants and in effect transposing the garden’s paradisiacal associations onto Isfahan, the city of paradise.”¹⁵

Chaharbagh (lit., four gardens) is a Persian term used to designate a quadripartite subdivision of a lot in garden design with a historical significance in much of the Islamic world. This Persianate layout ubiquitously appeared in the Timurid gardens of Samarqand and Herat as well as the funerary gardens of Mughal India. However, it was in Shah Abbas I’s Isfahan that this garden design concept was conceptualized as a planned urban design element and a tree-lined public avenue. Maryam Ahmadi argues that Chaharbagh Avenue was an essential element in the urban design of New Isfahan which developed out of pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions of garden design in Iran. She demonstrates the development of quadripartite garden layouts from the early pre-Islamic and Achaemenid examples of royal gardens, the early Islamic, Timurid, and Mughal gardens to their culmination under the Safavids. She shows how the image of the Islamic garden as a paradise and the Persian garden layout came together to create a prototype for the design of gardens in the Islamicate world. Comparing the gardens of Herat in central Asia with the Chaharbagh Avenue, she suggests that Shah Abbas I’s Chaharbagh was highly influenced by the design of the Gozar

¹⁴ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 72. Also look at: Roger M. Savory, “ĀHĀRBĀĠ-E EṢFAHĀN,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, accessed online 2022.

¹⁵ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 67.

Gah axis in Herat and the Timurid garden architecture where the quadripartite garden plan turns into a public promenade with flanking gardens in Isfahan.¹⁶

However, as the accounts of later Safavid urban interventions suggest, the Chaharbagh was not the only *khiyaban*—a wide, straight, and paved axis marked with trees—in the Safavid city. In the process of constructing a waterfront palatial retreat at Sa‘adatabad Garden, under Shah Abbas II and Shah Safi, a wide avenue was laid out that stretched from the Hasanabad Gateway to the Sa‘adatabad Garden passing over the Hasanabad Bridge. As Jaberi Ansari asserts this was just a wide path to the Hasanabad Bridge but not a tree-lined chaharbagh like Chaharbagh Avenue.¹⁷ As Alemi describes, “The garden was linked to the city through a new khiyābān that ran from the bridge to the Chaharsu-yi Naqashan and from here, through the bazaar, to Maidan-i Shah.”¹⁸

The last *khiyaban* developed under the Safavids was the “great avenue” that connected the Hezar Jarib garden of Shah Abbas I to the Farahabad Garden of Shah Soltan Hosein.¹⁹ This vast and designed avenue consisted of administrative sections of the new *doulatkhaneh* at Farahabad. The symmetrical gardens and gateways along this tree-lined avenue indicate a preconceived layout similar to Shah Abbas I’s Chaharbagh. With respect to the entanglement of Isfahan’s urban transformations during the Safavid period with the development of promenades in general and Chaharbagh Avenue in particular, the revival of Isfahan through chaharbaghs deemed an organic and rational response to the decayed urban

¹⁶ Maryam Ahmadi, “Chahar Bagh Avenue, Isfahan: Genesis and Demise” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Nottingham Trent University, 2016) 158.

¹⁷ Jaberi Ansari, *Tarikh Isfahan va Rey*, 372.

¹⁸ Alemi, “Bagh-i Hizar Jarib-i Naw,” <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C174>

¹⁹ For a discussion on this avenue refer to Chapter 2.

spaces of the post-Safavid city—possibly what Sadr-e Isfahani perceived as a solution to restore Isfahan’s urban status.

The concept of *khiyaban* in Persian gardens was transferred to the urban design of Safavid Isfahan as an organizing element and materialized in its ideal form in the Chaharbagh Avenue. Yet it developed beyond a formal association as a garden design element. With its recreational function of promenading, it entwined the notion of urban experience through promenading with the concept of tree-lined public avenues.

Sadr-e Isfahani’s Chaharbaghs

As visual and textual sources attest Sadr-e Isfahani established three chaharbaghs on the east side of Chaharbagh Avenue. These chaharbaghs were designed and executed sequentially, including Chaharbagh-e Fathabad (1218/1803), Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad Tuqchi (1224/1809), and Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (after 1224/1809).²⁰ As the dates and order of their construction suggest they were not isolated projects but deemed as a chaharbagh-building program initiated by the construction of the most lauded of Sadr-e Isfahani’s chaharbaghs, Fathabad.

Chaharbagh-e Fathabad

The earliest chaharbagh has been introduced in primary sources by different names such as Khawju, Sadri, *Naw* (new), and Fathabad.²¹ As stated in *Madayeh*, after the completion of the newly erected royal mansion (*emarat-e jadid ol-bana-ye Soltani*), Navab Amin al-

²⁰ Seyyed Abd al-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh*, 40

²¹ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 129.

Dowleh (Sadr-e Isfahani) ordered (*val amr-e aan amir*) the reconfiguration of an already existing *khiyaban* into a chaharbagh (*tarh-e chaharbagh-e tazeh va darvaze-ye Boland avazeh rikhtand*). The name Fathabad, referring to the name of Fath Ali Shah, was given to this chaharbagh after the completion of the construction and inauguration of the gateway.²² Despite the explicate reference in *Madayeh* to the patron and the process of this chaharbagh's erection, later accounts such as *Safarnameh-ye Seyf al-Dowleh*, penned by Soltan Mirza Mohammad Seyf al-Dowleh (possibly the 38th son of Fath Ali Shah and the governor of Isfahan before Zill al-Soltan), attributes it to the deceased khaqan, Fath Ali Shah. Having perceived it as a royal edifice (*banay-e moloukaneh*), he explained that the design and layout of this *khiyaban* were the same as the Shah Abbas I's Chaharbagh, except for the arched walls, carved stone dadoes, and longer length of the Fathabad chaharbagh.²³

The Fathabad Chaharbagh was located on the northern bank of the Zayandeh River, running parallel to the east of the Safavid Chaharbagh. Although the location can be confirmed approximately through the texts, there is an inconsistency in terms of its limits in the textual sources. Some describe it as confined to the Hasanabad Gateway and the Zayandeh River, while others introduce it as the longest chaharbagh in Isfahan stretching between the Zayandeh River and the Tuqchi Gate. The author of *Madayeh* also vaguely marks its limits by the Khawju Quarter and the Zayandeh River and does not specify the northern end of the chaharbagh. Al-Isfahani, by the late nineteenth century, defines this chaharbagh as delimited from the south to the Niasarm water channel (*madi*)²⁴ and the

²² Baqi, *Madayeh*, 65.

²³ Seyf al-Dowleh, *Safarnameh-ye Seyf al-Dowleh or Makkeh*, 367.

²⁴ *Madi* is a local term for water channels branched from the Zayande River for irrigation purposes. There was a complex system of water distribution and management in Isfahan that consisted of these *madies* that served the whole city.

Zayandeh River which was built on the old road to Shiraz.²⁵ However, Tahvildar claims that it was longer than the Safavid chaharbagh stretching from the Khawju Bridge to the Tuqchi gateway all the way to the north.²⁶

Mohammad Hasan Khan Jaber Ansari also confirms Tahvildar's observation about the length of this chaharbagh which had linked the Zayandeh River to the Tuqchi Gate. According to his account, it was established on an old Safavid road and was transformed into this chaharbagh because Sadr-e Isfahani's houses were located in the Khawju quarter. To sponsor this project, Sadr-e Isfahani enjoyed the abundance of cheap labor and free construction materials from the ruins of the Afghan invasion for building this chaharbagh and allocated most of the state funds for its maintenance.²⁷

To investigate the inconsistency in textual sources, I cross-examine these accounts with the maps of Isfahan produced in the nineteenth century. As the Russian map of Isfahan illustrates, the only section of this long linking path that appears as a straight street (*khiyaban*) with rows of trees, is the part between the Khawju Gateway and Khawju Bridge. Although the section linking Darvazeh-ye Hasanabad and Chaharsouq-e Maqsoud would have been in line with the southern section, it seems this line has been interrupted between the Hasanabad and Khawju gateways. In addition to the southern part, the area between the Chaharsouq-e Maqsoud and the Tuqchi Gateway does not present a straight avenue resembling a chaharbagh. Instead, it follows the old pattern of winding paths forming the bazaars that stretched from the Maidan-e Shah to the Tuqchi Gateway.

²⁵ Mohammad Mehdi ibn-e Mohammad Reza Al-Isfahani, *Nesf-e Jahan fi Ta'rif al-Isfahan*, 42.

²⁶ Mirza Hosein Khan Tahvildar, *Jografiya-ye Isfahan*, 29-30.

²⁷ Haj Mirza Hasan Khan Jaber Ansari, *Tarikh-e Isfahan va Ray*, 372.

According to the Russian map, Maryam Beygum's Madrasehh and the Khawju Bathhouse on the east and Bagh-e Tekiyeh on the west are located between the Hasanabad and Khawju Gates. This section is narrower, and the edges are not lined with trees. Beginning from the Khawju Gate the street widens up and four tree lines define the passages through the chaharbagh. On the east are located Madrasehh-ye Khawju, Emarat-e Haji Hosein,²⁸ and Bagh-e Borj; on the opposite side are Hammam-e Bistun, Koushk-e Bagh, and Bagh-e Ramezan-Ali.²⁹ There are three pools of Howz-e Khawju, Howz-e Ramezan-Ali, and Howz-e Bagh-e Borj at this chaharbagh, labeled on the map.



Figure 4-1. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Safavi (A), Chaharbagh-e Fathabad (B), Hassanabad Gateway (1), Chaharsou Naqqashi (2), Maryam Beygum Madraseh (3), Khawju

²⁸ Possibly this refers to Sadr-e Isfahani's houses located in the Khawju quarter. See the previous chapter for a discussion on Madrasa-ye Khawju.

²⁹ This garden more likely belonged to Ramezan-Ali, Sadr-e Isfahani's brother, who also served as the beyglarbeygi of Isfahan for a short time when Sadr-e Isfahani was attending the court at Tehran.

Gateway (4), Khawju Bathhouse (5), Khawju Madraseh (Madraseh-ye Sadr) (6), Howz-e Khawju (7), Bagh-e Ramezan-Ali (8), Howz-e Ramezan-Ali (9), Emarat-e Haji Hosein (10), Howz-e Bagh-e Borj (11).

Even Pascal Coste's map confirms the delimitation of the Fathabad Chaharbagh to two important water channels, Madi-ye Niasar and Madi-ye Farshadi, marking the northern and southern borders of the Khawju Quarter. What can be confirmed is that the Fathabad Chaharbagh could have not exceeded beyond the northern side of the Maidan-e Shah and the rest of the path to the Tuqchi Gateway was the existing bazaars. It seems that the confusion on the length of this chaharbagh comes from the fact that Sadr-e Isfahani's second chaharbagh was laid out at the extension of these existing bazaars to the Tuqchi Gate, completing the north-south axis created by the Fathabad and Aminabad chaharbagh on the south. This continuity of the road passing through the bazaars from the Fathabad Chaharbagh to connect to the Tuqchi Chaharbagh could have made (or better to say as spatially perceived) this road the longest thoroughfare in the city, bracketed between the new chaharbaghs.

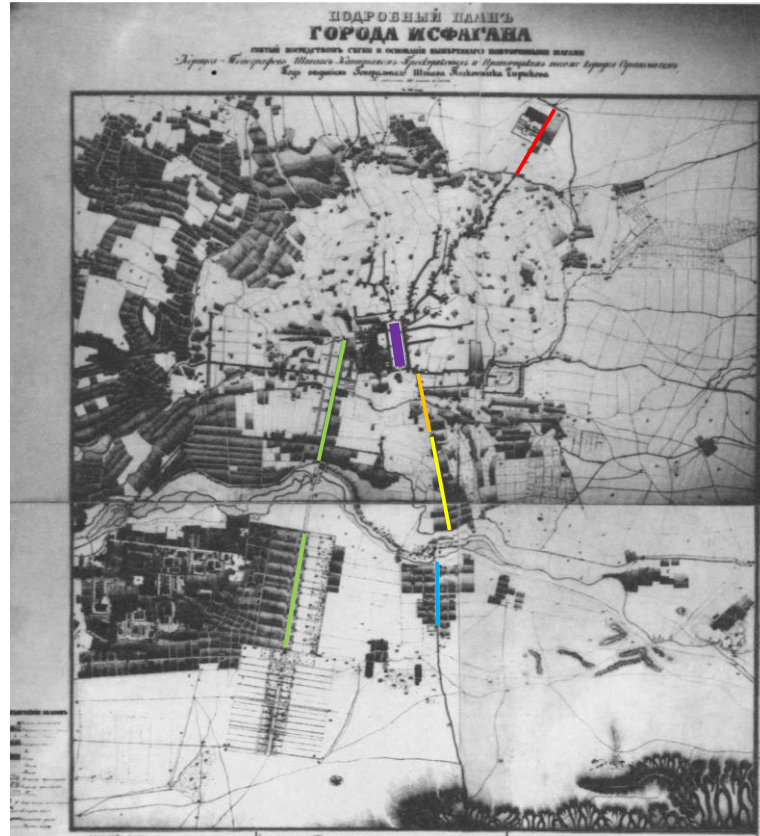


Figure 4-2. Russian map of Isfahan, 1851. Purple: Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Red: Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad, Yellow: Chaharbagh-e Fathabad, Blue: Chaharbagh-e Aminabad, Orange: Possibly part of Chaharbagh-e Fathabad. Published in *asnad-e tasviri-ye shahrha-ye Iran dar doureh-ye Qajar*, 2000.



Figure 4-3. Russian map of Isfahan, 1851. A closer view of the Safavid and Qajar chaharbaghs and the adjoining gardens: Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Yellow: Chaharbagh-e Fathabad. Courtesy of Russian Military Intelligence on Asia Online Archive Series 1651-1917, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006. <http://primarysources.brillonline.com/browse/russian-military-intelligence-on-asia-archive>.

Design and Form

As deduced from the textual sources, the Fathabad Chahrbagh in its general layout and design was very much analogous to the Safavid Chaharbagh. Al-Isfahani asserts that it was built in the style of the old chaharbagh but failed to reach its degree and state (*darajeh va halat*). By the time Al-Isfahani visited this chaharbagh (late nineteenth century), it was already in ruins, and other than plane trees, pools, and dilapidated portals of gardens, nothing had remained. Despite its decayed state, al-Isfahani acknowledges that it still retained its formal characteristics of a “chaharbagh” (*vaz’ va sourat-e chaharbaghi*), though

he does not give any explanation of what those characteristics are.³⁰ Tahvildar specifically notes that the Khawju Chaharbagh's plane trees are all straight, high, and strong and its gardens and pavements are like the Abbasi Chaharbagh, but its walls are better and all arched. But on the downside, this chaharbagh did not possess such lofty garden portals and vast pools compared to the old chaharbagh except for one. He also mentions that a small mosque was added to this chaharbagh by Abdullah Khan, Sadr-e Isfahani's son, and a bathhouse commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani for the residents of the Khawju Quarter.³¹

³⁰ Mohammad Mehdi ibn-e Mohammad Reza Al-Isfahani, *Nesf-e Jahan fi Ta'rif al-Isfahan*, 42.

³¹ Mirza Hosein Khan Tahvildar, *Jografiya-ye Isfahan*, 29-30.



Figure 4-4. Plan général d'Ispahan, by Pascal Coste, 1839. Purple: Maidan-e Shah, Green: Safavid Chaharbaghs, Yellow: Chahrbagh-e Fathabad, Orange: Chaharbagh-e Aminabad. Note that the Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad has not been depicted in this map.

In addition to these later descriptions, maps and visual sources indicate with more clarity the similarities and differences between the Fathabad and the Safavid chaharbaghs. Like the Safavid model, the Fathabad chaharbagh is a wide avenue, with four rows of trees on both sides, interspersed by a few pools right in front of the symmetrically arranged garden portals. This tree-lined avenue is delimited spatially by two gateways on the south and north

and flanked by gardens, a bathhouse, and a mosque.³² Rather than a central water channel that divided the middle part into two sections, as the late nineteenth-century photographs illustrate, the middle part of the Fathabad chaharbagh was a paved pathway with flanking water channels. Additionally, instead of porous garden gateways designed at the edges of the Safavid Chaharbagh, the new example appeared with relatively high arched walls, harmonically designed with deep niches, and at some points disrupted by the portals of the gardens or other adjacent buildings. And as observed by John Johnson in 1811, the deep recesses in the side walls were suitable for seating and enjoying the shade in this chaharbagh.



Figure 4-5. A late-nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Chaharbagh, Isfahan, by Papazian. Source: Golestan Palace Photograph Collection

³² Most likely he is referring to the existing mosque-madrassa commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani, which is now known as Madrasa-ye Sadr-e Khawju.



عکس چارباغ کهنه صفور صفور

Figure 4-6. A late-nineteenth century photograph of the Abbasi Chaharbagh, Isfahan, by Papazian. Source: Golestan Palace Photograph Collection³³



Figure 4-8. The entrance portal of the Madraseh-ye Sadr-e Khawju, Commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani along the Khawju (Fathabad) Chaharbagh. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

³³ Figure 4-7 has been omitted due to copyright restrictions. See the table of figures for more information.



Figure 4-9. Chaharsouq Naqqashi, repaired and covered with the paintings of Fath Ali Shah under Sadr-e Isfahani's commission. This *chaharsouq* (a domed structure at the intersection of two perpendicular path or bazaars) was located at the intersection of the Khawju Chaharbagh and the Hasanabad Bazaar. Currently, there is no traces of the paintings left in situ and this structure has lost its function as it is standing isolated among the residential buildings. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.



Figure 4-10. Chaharsouq Naqqashi, a view from the road leading to the Hasanabad Bazaar. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.



Figure 4-11. The entrance of the Hasanabad Bazaar facing the Chaharsouq Naqqashi. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

The improvement of the old *khiyaban* to the Fathabad Chaharbagh was a part of Sadr-e Isfahani's larger project of recovering the Khawju Quarter. As the chronology of his projects demonstrates, Sadr-e Isfahani's urban renewal project commenced with his small-scale local architectural measures limited to the Khawju and Paqal'a quarters during the beginning years of his career. As Jaberi Ansari suggests, Sadr-e Isfahani's houses were located in this quarter.³⁴ And given the restoration measures around the Khawju Bridge, he was, in fact, investing in the improvement of the Khawju Quarter and its neighboring areas.

As part of these restoration efforts, Mehrabadi notes the construction of a new structure called Beyglarbeygi on top of the Khawju Bridge which was destroyed by Zill al-Soltan in 1310/1893 along with other Qajar and Safavid monuments.³⁵ Although nothing remains in textual sources on this addition, nineteenth-century photographs and drawings confirm its

³⁴ Haj Mirza Hasan Khan Jaberi Ansari, *Tarikh-e Isfahan va Ray*, 372.

³⁵ Abolqasem Rafi'ie Mehrabadi, *Asar-e Meli-ye Isfahan*, 95. Mas'ud mirza Zill al-Soltan was the son of Naser al-din Shah and the governor of Isfahan.

existence. Flandin and Coste's drawings of the bridge depict a rectangular structure right above the *kushk* (the central pavilion) of the Khawju Bridge. A comparison between De Bruyn's drawing of the bridge in 1704 and Coste's and Flandin's drawings in the 1830s reveals that this structure had been added sometime between these two dates. Accordingly, it seems probable to assume that it was part of Sadr-e Isfahani's restoration projects of the bridge in 1209/1794.

In terms of architectural form, there are discrepancies between Flandin's and Coste's drawings of this structure. In Flandin's this structure is presented as a narrow and relatively high rectangular room with just one opening on its width and five on its lateral walls. However, Coste's architectural profiles render a relatively modest room with three openings on its width and four openings on the side walls. A late nineteenth-century photograph by Papazian represents this structure very similar to the above-discussed engravings. It features a rectangular room pierced on four sides and placed on only one side of the central *kushk*.

The addition of this structure to the Safavid bridge seems very enigmatic in terms of its use and function. Since this bridge already featured a central pavilion to view the surrounding landscape, appending a new spot for this purpose seems unnecessary. However, its perforated design and high position are compatible with such a function. The only reference to the function of this structure comes from Coste's observations in his *Monuments modernes de la Perse* which explains "Above the central pavilion, on the

upstream side only, rises a covered gallery reserved for the music corps which performs fanfares on Fridays [My translation].”³⁶

The word “Fanfare” might refer to the performance of music as was common at naqqarakhaneh (kettledrum house) in Isfahan. In Safavid Isfahan, the naqqarekhaneh was located at the upper galleries flanking the portal to the Qaysariyeh bazaar that was positioned at the northern side of the Naqsh-e Jahan square. Babaie explicates the role of this space in Isfahan and its royal associations: “In cities of rule, it was the naqqarekhaneh that regulated, with its martial music, the quotidian rhythms of life, such as the morning and evening calls to open and close gates (such as the bazaar gates), as well as the announcement of public festivals, parades, and appearances of the king.”³⁷ As the late nineteenth century photographs attest, the Safavid naqqarekhaneh was in place by the end of the century.³⁸ The galleries have been removed sometimes in the early twentieth century and today a modern coffeehouse has replaced the Safavid naqqarekhaneh.

³⁶ Pascal-Xavier Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste, ..., publiés par ordre de son excellence le ministre de la maison de l'Empereur et des beaux-arts*, 34.

³⁷ Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 90.

³⁸ Ernst Hoeltzer, published in *Ernest Hoeltzer: Iran dar yeksad o sizdah saal-e pish, tans. Mohammad ‘Asemi*. (Munich, 1976). Hoeltzer’s photograph of the naqqarekhana on page 248.

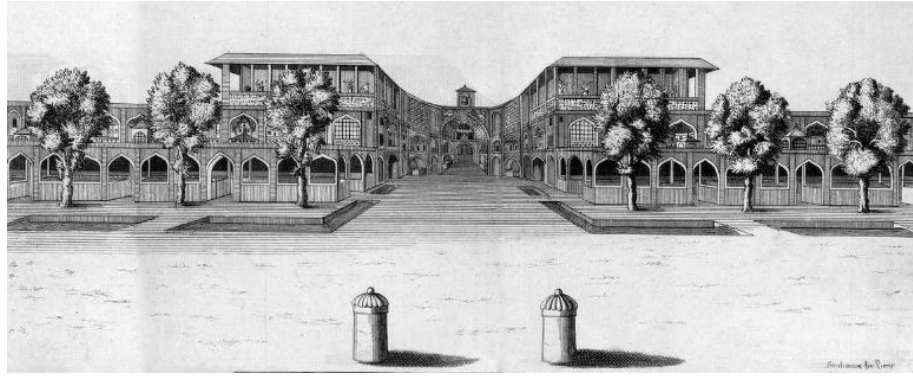


Figure 4-12. Portal of the Qaysariyeh Bazaar and the Naqqarekhaneh on the third floor, Jean Chardin, Voyages, 1705.



Figure 4-13. Portal of the Qaysariyeh Bazaar and Naqqarekhaneh, late nineteenth century photograph, Photo Album at Golestan Palace, n.199/39

The architectural similarities between the galleries of the Safavid naqqarekhana and Sadr-e Isfahani's addition to the Khawju bridge as well as Coste's observation suggest that the bayglarbaygi structure might have been used as an additional naqqarekhana. At the time Sadr-e Isfahani was the governor of Isfahan, as Morier explains, foreign missions and ambassadors were supposed to enter the city through the Shiraz Gate and pass the Aminabad and Fathabad chaharbaghs to be received by the governor.³⁹ Relying on this scant

³⁹ Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 160.

information, the purpose of the bayglarbaygi chamber can be interpreted in two ways: 1) as an indicator of the presence of official order and governance reflected in the auditory announcements; There was a long tradition of informing the residents of official decisions, the rhythm of daily life, and trade via *naqqareh* which might have been performed in this structure. 2) as a viewing spot reserved for Sadr-e Isfahani, mounted on top of the Safavid bridge, to emulate Safavid practices of public ceremonies and celebrations. Safavid kings, following Shah Abbas II, attended the crowd in public ceremonies and rituals such as *Abpashan* (water splash festival) along the Zayandeh River and enjoyed the spectacle while seated in the central pavilion of the Khawju Bridge along with court dignitaries and foreign ambassadors.⁴⁰ In both interpretations, this additional structure invokes a claim for royal status through amending and combining Safavid architectural elements.

Although it is a relatively insignificant addition to the old bridge, its strategic location and design indicate a very ambitious intention. Sadr-e Isfahani's modest and simple room superimposes itself on top of Shah Abbas II's bridge, known as the best bridge in Isfahan, while the design in its general scheme follows the lines of Safavid design. However, the substitution of arches with straight lines in the openings, the less-decorated facade, and the cubical form of the room are very much in contrast with the standing Safavid examples.

⁴⁰ For the Safavid ceremonies held around the Khawju Bridge see: Paul E. Losensky, "The Equal of Heaven's Vault': The Design, Ceremony, and Poetry of the Ḥasanābād Bridge," Zahra Ahari, "City, Ceremony, Collective Memory: A Study of the Relation of Ceremonies and Urban Spaces in the Safavid and Qajar Eras," 2012.



Figure 4-14. De Brugh Hassan-abaet, Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "De Brugh Hassan-abaet." New York Public Library Digital Collections.



Figure 4-15. Eugene Flandin, General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Pont Kadjiou [Khawju], Chiraz [i.e. Isfahân]." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed June 11, 2019. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-907b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

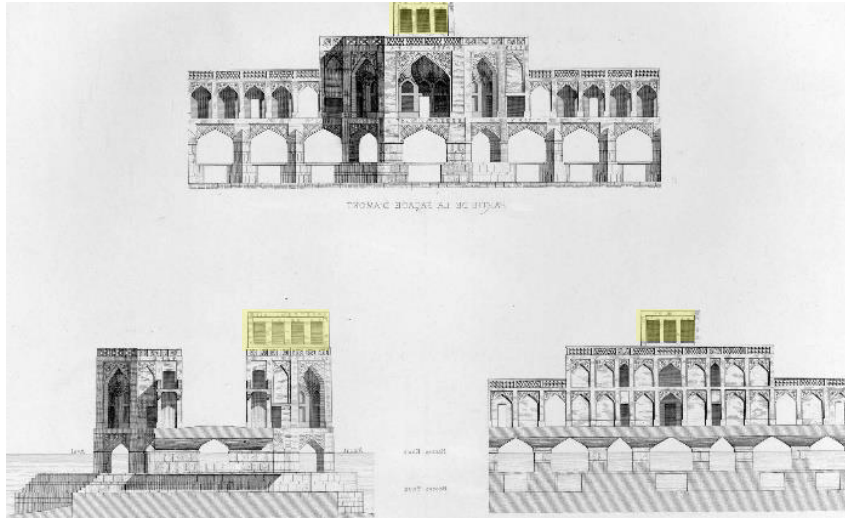


Figure 4-16. Architectural renderings of the Khawju Bridge, in the 1830s, by Coste. The yellow highlighted area indicates Sadr-e Isfahani's addition to the bridge or the Bayglarbaygi.



Figure 4-17. A nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Bridge and the Beyglarbeygi structure on top of the central pavilion (Eastern view). By Ernst Hoeltzer, published in Ernest Hoeltzer: Iran dar yeksad o sizdah saal-e pish, tans. Mohammad 'Asemi. Munich, 1976.

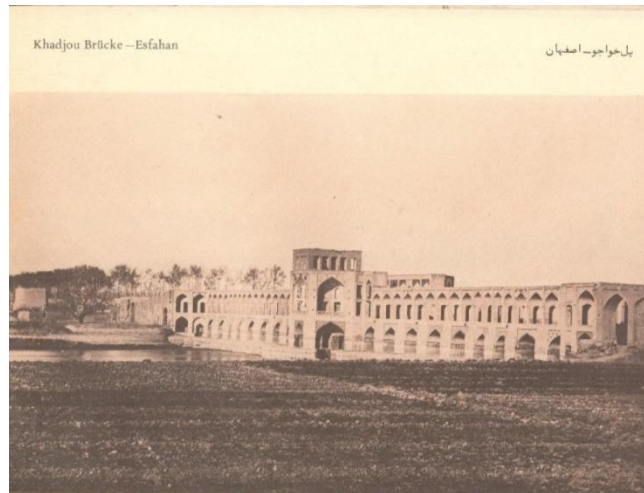


Figure 4-18. A nineteenth century photograph of the Khawju Bridge and the Beyglarbeygi structure on top of the central pavilion (Western view). By Ernst Hoeltzer, published in *Ernest Hoeltzer: Iran dar yeksad o sizdah saal-e pish*, tans. Mohammad ‘Asemi. Munich, 1976.

Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad-e Tuqchi

Sadr-e Isfahani’s second chaharbagh project, Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad-e Tuqchi was constructed around 1224/1809.⁴¹ This chaharbagh covered the street between the Tuqchi gateway and Tuqchi bridge at the northern border of the city and its name was an allusion to Sadr-e Isfahani’s first name, Hosein. Allegedly, two lion statues were installed on two sides of the Tuqchi gate, right at the beginning of the chaharbagh.⁴² All the available information about the construction of this chaharbgah in secondary sources comes from *Madayeh*. Baqi relates that after the construction of the Fathababd chaharbagh and the restoration of the Hasanabad Bazaar, Sadr-e Isfahani ordered the restoration of the Tuqchi gate and the establishment of a new bazaar attached to the gate (*tarhi az now dar an makan andakhteh va*

⁴¹ Jalal al-Din Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan: Mojallad-e Abniyeh va Emarat va Asar-e Bastani*, 407.

⁴² Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 293. Honarfar asserts that these two statues were later moved to the area next to the Khawju Bridge by Sadr-e Isfahani.

bazaari vasi' sakhteh).⁴³ Along this bazaar, Sadr-e Isfahani also commissioned a water fountain (saqqakhaneh) on the opposite side of the Tuqchi mosque.

Part of this project was the construction of a new chaharbagh outside of the Tuqchi gate. According to the sources, Sadr-e Isfahani restored an already ruined Tuqchi chaharbagh in this place and turned it into a new one, the Hoseinabad chaharbagh.⁴⁴ Honarfar claims that this chaharbagh was in fact the result of the Safavid expansion of the city to the north when the new quarters were appended to the old parts.⁴⁵ What can be inferred from the above-mentioned sources is that there was an existing *khiyaban* in this place during the Safavid era and then it was turned into a chaharbagh avenue under Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship.

On two opposite sides of this chaharbagh, there were an old mosque called Qaba Soukhteh⁴⁶ and a garden portal to the Qushkhaneh Garden. In the latter garden, there was a high and vast, two-story palace considered a royal property (*khalesejaat*). In 1308/1893, Tahvildar describes this garden's very organized state with orderly street layouts, pools, and water channels.⁴⁷ This garden was particularly significant for the governors of Isfahan as the ceremonies for donning the newly assigned governors with the kingly offer of the royal robe (*khal'at*) were held there.⁴⁸ For the same reason, it can be suggested that Sadr-e Isfahani paid considerable attention to the restoration of this garden and the adjoining areas. During his governorship, this garden was also used for the governor's meetings with ambassadors

⁴³ Ibid, 34.

⁴⁴ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 416.

⁴⁵ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 726.

⁴⁶ Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 230. Qabasukhteh or Pasoukhteh was a Seljuq Mosque outside of the Tuqchi gate. The only standing part of the mosque is a minar called Minar-e Tuqchi.

⁴⁷ Mirza Hosein Khan Tahvildar, *Jografiya-ye Isfahan*, 30.

⁴⁸ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 292. Quoted from *Mer'at al-Boldan-e Naseri*, 32.

and envoys, as was the case when Sadr-e Isfahani met Sir Harford Jones privately in this garden to urge him for an immediate departure toward Tehran.⁴⁹

Comparing textual descriptions with the Russian map of Isfahan, this chaharbagh had approximately the same length as the Aminabad chaharbagh. According to Honarfar, this chaharbagh was about 2000 *qadam* (steps, approximately 1,440 m) long.⁵⁰ It is a straight tree-lined street punctuated by pools and traces of symmetrical buildings on both sides. The mosque is within a garden called Masjid-e Baba Soukhteh and the lines of an unlabeled structure in this garden accord with the Qurkhaneh garden on the opposite side of the chaharbagh. It seems that Qurkhaneh is the above-mentioned Qushkhaneh garden.

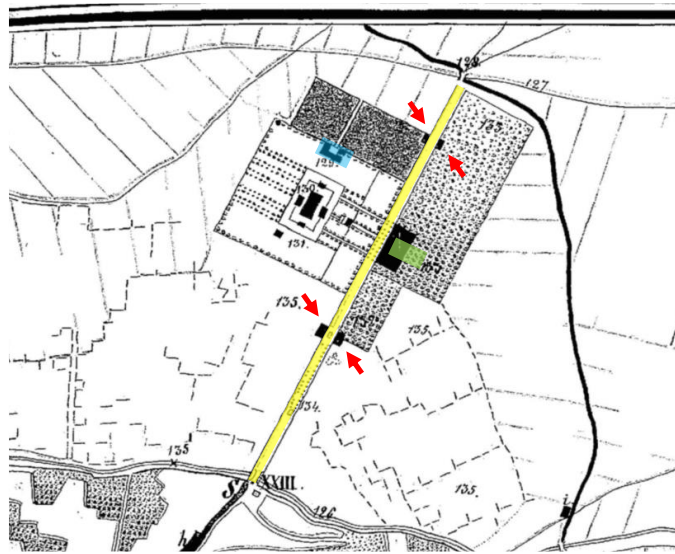


Figure 4-19. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Hoseinabad (yellow), 128: Tuqchi bridge, 129: Qurkhaneh (blue), 130: Emarat-e Kucheh khane, 131: Bagh-e Kuche Khaneh, 132: Bagh-e Charsoo, 133: Bagh-e Masjid-iBaba Soukhteh and Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh (green), 134: Howz-e Chaharbagh, XXIII: Tuqchi gate, SS: Tuqchi Bazaar. Note the extant symmetrical structures at the edges of the chaharbagh. They might be the remaining garden portals that lined the Tuqchi chaharbagh and part of Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbagh-building project.

⁴⁹ James Morier, *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the years 1810 and 1816*, 172.

⁵⁰ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 726.

Unlike the Russian map, Coste's map does not identify this chaharbagh. However, Flandin's drawing of this garden and adjacent buildings gives an idea of this area in the 1830s. According to Honarfar, quoted from *Mer'at al-Boldan*, there was a pool in the Tuqchi Chaharbagh between the portal of the Qushkahneh Garden and the Baba Soukhteh Mosque.⁵¹ Based on the Russian map, this pool would have been located somewhere between the two symmetrical structures at the northern part of the chaharbagh. Flandin's illustration also demonstrates a circular pool apparently filled in with dirt and weeds which might have been, based on the remaining evidence on the site, the above-discussed pool in the Hoseinabad chaharbagh. Currently, a recessed open area in front of the Minar-e Qushkhaneh—which has been incorporated into a later mosque—demarcates the possible location of Flandin's circular pool. The Qushkhaneh Garden today is known as a park in the Shahshahan Quarter that still bears some footage of the past.

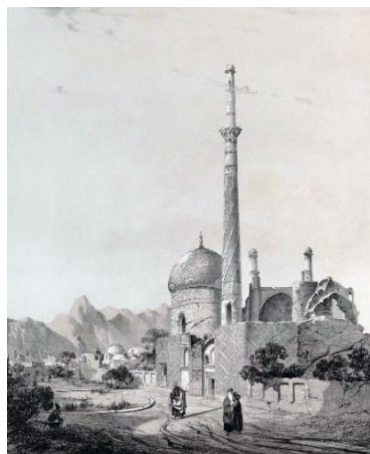


Figure 4-20. Qushkhaneh garden and Baba Soukhteh Mosque, ca. 1830s, by Eugene Flandin. Courtesy of the Digital Collection of New York Public Library. Note the Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh.

⁵¹ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 292.



Figure 4-21. Minar-e Bagh-e Qushkhaneh attached to the Baba Soukhteh Mosque. A new mosque has replaced the old one but the minar has been preserved and attached to the new one. Fathi 2021

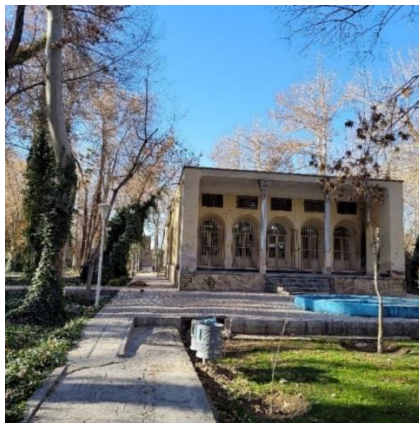


Figure 4-22. The remaining building that is currently used as a library, possibly the Eamarat-e Kucheh Khaneh marked on the Russian map of Isfahan, in the Gushkhaneh Garden. This building is on an axis with the Minar-e Qushkhaneh and an underpassage links these two structures. Fathi 2021.

This chaharbagh has attracted less attention in the secondary sources compared to the Fathabad Chaharbagh. Nonetheless, as the placement of the elements around this avenue demonstrates, this chaharbagh, its bazaar, and the Saqqakhaneh were a unified project laid out on the old road to the Tuqchi Gate that integrated the existing mosque and garden into a coherent urban axis in the Hoseinabad Quarter.

Chaharbagh-e Aminabad

The third and the most celebrated of these chaharbaghs was Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (after 1224/1809). It was designed right after the completion of the Hoseinabad chaharbagh and in line with the Khawju Chaharbagh at the south of the river.⁵² The name of this chaharbagh probably alludes to Sadr-e Isfahani's title, Amin al-Dowleh (trusty of the state).⁵³ He was granted this title in 1806 and the construction of the chaharbagh followed this designation. This chaharbagh linked the Khawju Bridge to the Takht-e Foulad, on an old road to Shiraz. It was shorter than the Khawju Chaharbagh and defined by gardens and tombs on its both edges.⁵⁴ Unlike Khawju, this chaharbagh has escaped historians' attention. Nonetheless, it is by far the most celebrated street in *Madayeh*. Like two other chaharbaghs, Baqi describes this one and exaggerates in defining its limits, confined from one side to the Zayandeh River and the other end infinite. Baqi notes that it is similar (*qarin*) to the Fathabad Chaharbagh and constructed within a month.⁵⁵ However, located on the main road to the city through the Shiraz gate, a few observations of this chaharbagh have been recorded by European travelers. A deviation from the Khawju (Hasanabad) Bridge breaks the continuity of Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbaghs on both sides of the river, unlike the Safavid model where the two chaharbaghs are in line with the Allah Verdi Khan bridge. However, as Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbaghs were built upon the existing paths, this deviation should be considered an architectural response to the topographic and historical requirements of the site rather than a personal decision.

⁵² Seyyed Abd al-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh*, 40.

⁵³ James Morier, *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the years 1810 and 1816*, 129.

⁵⁴ Mohammad Mehdi ibn-e Mohammad Reza Al-Isfahani, *Nesf-e Jahan fi Ta'rif al-Isfahan*, 44.

⁵⁵ Seyyed Abd al-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh*, 40.

The earliest account of the Aminabad chaharbagh is Morier's description of the British envoy's entrance to the city. Despite his criticism of Isfahan as a decayed city, his brief observation while approaching Isfahan in 1810 is useful in understanding the design and function of this avenue:

The avenues in question [Aminabad and Fathabad] are, indeed, works of pure vanity, and seem to have been made for no other purpose, than to give a specious appearance to the numerous ruins that are everywhere to be seen on the approaches to this once immense city. They are planted in straight lines, roads passing on the sides and in the center, whilst rose trees, basins and canals occupy the remaining part of the ground. As we passed, fountains played; and we were made to remark that the basins of water were decked with flowers in honour of the Ambassador's [Sir Harford Jones] entry. Such sort of *petits soins*, as far as I can judge, are decisive marks of the Persian character.⁵⁶

This chaharbagh also caught Sir James Buckingham's attention, a British journalist and traveler, almost ten years later than Morier. He notes:

As we quitted Ispahan, we went out through the Shiraz-gate, passing through the long avenues of the Chahr Bagh [Aminabad and Fathabad] in our way, and having gardens on each side of us, well watered by fountains, canals, subterranean aqueducts, and artificial cascades, the trees in most luxuriant foliage, full-blown roses adding their perfume to this general breath of Spring, prolonged to so late a season.⁵⁷

In addition to travelers' descriptions, the Russian map provides a clear sense of its organization and design. While Seyyed Reza Khan's map of Isfahan in 1924 has excluded the southern part of the city, the Russian map identifies each garden at the edges of this

⁵⁶ James Morier, *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, between the years 1810 and 1816*, 130

⁵⁷ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 239.

chaharbagh as well as a number of tombs located around it. According to this map, chaharbagh gardens were laid out on both sides of the street, with facing symmetrically organized portals. The scale of the gardens diminishes moving to the south. The design of the garden portals resembles the Safavid chaharbagh gardens leading to the Hezar Jarib Garden. Each portal is comprised of three cubical structures leading to the main intersection of the garden. The Shiraz gate on the north end, two rows of trees on both sides, and a relatively large basin at the mid-length of the avenue can be identified on this map as well. The gardens on the east include Amin al-Dowleh, Aminabad, Molla Mohammad, and Molla Seyyed. On the opposite side, there are the Sa'adatabad, Negarestan, Nokteh Mohammad Hasan, Takht-e Foulad gardens, and Takht-e Foulad Carvansara. Most likely, the gardens of Amin al-Dowleh and Aminabad belonged to Sadr-e Isfahani as their name suggests.

The Aminabad chaharbagh, as was the practice with the formerly discussed chaharbaghs, was constructed on an already existing *khiyaban*. This *khiyaban* was laid out on the east of the Sa'adatabad Garden (also known as New Hezar Jarib), commissioned in the mid-seventeenth century under Shah Abbas II, including the Aynehkhaneh and Namakdan palaces. Tavernier, the late seventeenth-century traveler, compared this *khiyaban* to the one created by Shah 'Abbas I and noted: "although wider, it lacked such important garden and architectural features as the water channel in the middle and the beautiful gate buildings of the flanking gardens."⁵⁸ As depicted on the Russian map and described in textual sources, Sadr-e Isfahani's new chaharbagh added these missing elements to this Safavid *khiyaban*, turning it into a chaharbagh featuring garden portals and water channels.

⁵⁸ Mahvash Alemi, "A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran," www.middleeastgarden.com. 2007. P 4.

Besides the Safavid royal gardens of Sa'adatabad, this chaharbagh also linked the city to the historic cemetery in Isfahan, the Takht-e Foulad. This garden was a resting place for great religious and learned figures since the thirteenth century, under the Ilkhanids. It was expanded and venerated during the Safavid period. Shah Abbas I renovated the tomb structure of Baba Rokn al-Din (d. 1367), a high-ranking mystic, in this cemetery.⁵⁹ Most of the tombs also functioned as shrines and were visited by the Isfahani residents weekly. Functioned as a public hub outside of the city walls, this cemetery and shrine complex also housed the burial of the nobilities and grandees of Isfahan under the Qajars.⁶⁰

As introduced in Chapter 3, Sadr-e Isfahani commissioned the Tekiyeh-ye Valehiyeh, a tomb-garden for Valeh Isfahani.⁶¹ The garden was situated at the western edge of the Aminabad chaharbagh and intended as a pleasure garden and a gathering place for Valeh and his poet companions. According to Homaie, the dome existed earlier in Valeh's personal garden and was later prepared for his tomb with the financial support of Sadr-e Isfahani, who was his friend at the time. The verses written on the tombstone by Valeh himself are also great examples of Valeh's skills and talent in poetry and calligraphy indicating his fastidious taste as an artist.⁶² Today, this garden and the tomb are located on the west side of Feize Street and its western rooms designed on a nine-fold plan are used as a library for the Takht-e Foulad Complex. The gateway to the garden has been recently renovated after the Islamic Revolution.

⁵⁹ Lotfollah Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 493.

⁶⁰ Seyyed Ahmad 'Aqili, *Takht Foulad-e Isfahan*, (Isfahan: Sazman farhangi tafrihi shahrdari-ye Isfahan, 2019), 17.

⁶¹ Honarfar, *Ganjineh-ye asar-e tarikhi-ye Isfahan*, 759.

⁶² Homaie, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 191-205.



Figure 4-23. Russian map of Isfahan. The southern bank of the Zayandeh River. Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (red) parallel to the chaharbagh-e Abbasi (yellow) leading to the Hezar Jarib Garden. Note the garden portals and their arrangement along both chaharbaghs.



Figure 4-24. Russian map of Isfahan. Chaharbagh-e Aminabad, leading to the Takht-e Foulad Cemetery (red), and garden portals.



Figure 4-25. The current Fayz boulevard laid out over the Chaharbagh-e Aminabad. The tripartite composition of the chaharbagh avenue has been preserved, with side lines for pedestrians and the middle as a street. Fathi, 2021.



Figure 4-26. The entrance vestibule of the Bagh-e Valehiyeh (Garden and tomb of Valeh Isfahani) along the Fayz Street.



Figure 4-27. The dome covering Valeh's tomb in the center of the garden commissioned by Sadr-e Isfahani and the poetic foundation chronogram composed by Mohammad Tal'at inscribed in *nasta'liq* script on the lower rim of the dome. Fathi, 2021.

Figure 4-28. The inscription under the dome referring to Sadr-e Isfahani (*Khan-e sepehr-payeh* Hosein) as the patron.



Figure 4-29. The main hall of the Valehiyeh tomb-garden complex located at the western end of the garden. It is currently used as a cultural and religious institution serving the Takht-e Foulad Cemetery. This section would have been part of the residential areas housing Valeh and his poet companions. Fathi, 2021.

Reviving a Historical Urban Axis

Considering these three chaharbaghs as a coherent and systematic way of organizing and managing land in the eastern side of Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbaghs were designed

to create the longest north-south axis connecting the Shiraz Gate to the Tuqchi Bridge by touching important urban elements such as Maidan-e Shah, Sa'adatabad gardens, Masjid-e Jami,' and Takht-e Foulad, linking these historically significant nodes of religious and political centers. This urban restoration project was realized on a parallel axis to the old Safavid chaharbagh with a shift toward the east, marking a new emphasis in the urban vision of Sadr-e Isfahani on Isfahan's pre-Safavid history. As Lisa Golombek asserts, a pre-Safavid bazaar had connected the Hasanabad Gate to the Tuqchi Gate in the Safavid period.⁶³ However, it was Sadr-e Isfahani's urban vision to revive this bazaar by extending it on both ends via chaharbagh avenues. The new urban axis not only did highlight the pre-Safavid south-north pathway of the city but also did create a rival axis to the Safavid Chaharbagh Avenue.

Contrary to the Safavid Chaharbagh, in which the street was stretched between two royal gardens and the chaharbagh itself was assumed as a royal domain, Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbaghs connected the two gates of the city and functioned as a non-royal urban space. Rather than being terminated by the royal gardens, this new axis linked two historical sites of Isfahan in the south and north—Takht-e Foulad and Baba Soukhteh Mosque. The choice of concentrating his urban renewal efforts around these chaharbaghs indicates Sadr-e Isfahani's attention to the urban vitality of the old quarters of Isfahan. The establishment of new bazaars, water fountains, and mosque-schools along the chaharbaghs would have stimulated the economy and enlivened the urban life along these avenues. Although the gardens located along these chaharbaghs were not considered public parks accessible to everyone, the avenues leading to public places such as bazaars and city gates became public

⁶³ Lisa Golombek, "Urban Patterns in Pre-Safavid Isfahan," 28.

spaces open to the inhabitants of Isfahan and the chaharbaghs were open and accessible to everyone.

This axis seems to mark the new symbolic interest in the Shi'i centers located in Iraq. As Baqi explicitly notes in his description of the Fathabad Chaharbagh's foundation, this axis was supposed to emphasize the city's paths to Iraq and Fars. Sadr-e Isfahani's new chaharbaghs highlighted the link between Isfahan and Fars, the recent political center of the Zand dynasty, and its connection to Iraq, the religious center of Shi'i beliefs. Given his architectural projects in Najaf and Karbala, this axis symbolically connected Iraq-e 'Ajam and Iraq-e Arab.⁶⁴ Extending his patronage practices to other religious centers, he commissioned a new wall around the city of Najaf (in 1812), a building in the courtyard of the tomb of Hazrat-e Abbas, and a Madraseh (Madraseh-ye Sadr) and saqqakhaneh at Najaf. Showcasing his piety, he also sponsored the production of seven doors for the sacred tombs of Shi'ite Imams at Najaf, Karbala, Hazrat-e Abbas, Kazemein, and Ma'sumeh Qom.⁶⁵ Iraq became a favorable destination for the learned figures and clerics of Isfahan seeking better living conditions in the post-Safavid era. His attention to the city of Najaf parallel to Isfahan, and the similarities between his madrasehs in Isfahan and Najaf reflect the significance of Iraq-e Arab for reimagining Isfahan's religious, political, and commercial role in the early nineteenth century.

⁶⁴ Iraq or Iraq-e 'Ajam (the north-west province) and Fars (the southern province) were the two important provinces (eyalat) of Iran at the time.

⁶⁵ Seyyed Abd al-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh*, 22.

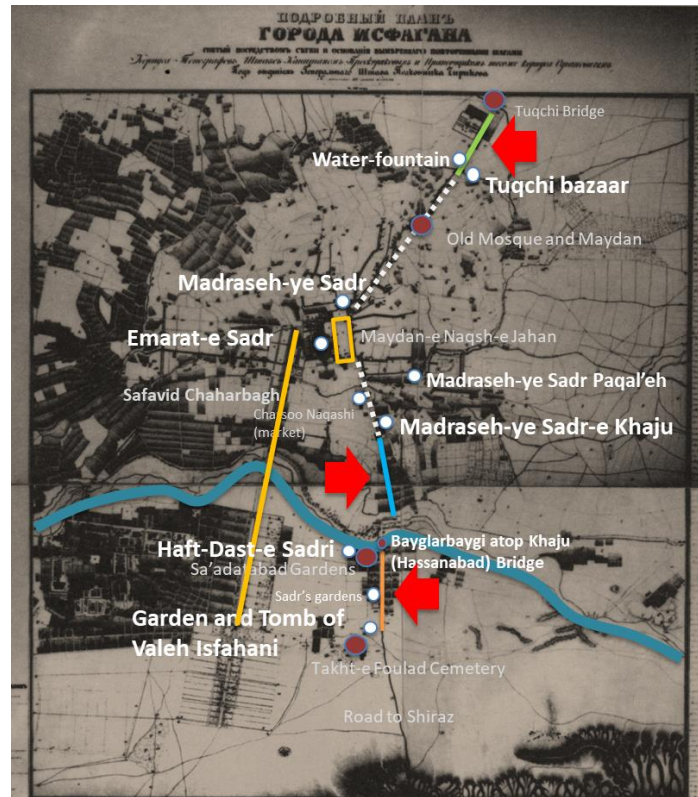


Figure 4-30. Map showing the concentration of Sadr-e Isfahani's renovation and construction projects along the new urban axis, consisted of the alignment of his three chaharbaghs, connecting the Tuqchi Gate on the north to the Shiraz gateway on the south.

Chaharbaghs: Poetic Imaginations and Urban Memory in Madayeh

Besides recording the life of the poets and the praise of the patron, *Madayeh* was a collection of poetic descriptions of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban projects including his chaharbaghs. Even though the panegyrists were paid for composing chronograms and praising his patronage, the poetic imagination of these poets were, to some degree, in line with the traditional *vasf* literature on Isfahan in the format of panegyric-*tazkira*. In the absence of other evidence pointing to the conception and reception of Sadr-e Isfahani's

chaharbaghs, these poems are valuable sources to provide insights into how the patron and his panegyrists wished to represent and publicize these urban projects.

Each chaharbagh and its construction process have been praised and described in *Madayeh* by several poems. In fact, Baqi, the compiler of this *tazkira*, has collected these poems under a separate introduction to each poet's biography. He has also attached his own compositions giving the poetic chronogram of each project along with others. As an example, Baqi presents us with a long description of the Fathabad Chaharbagh beginning with a prose explaining the approximate geographical limits and the patronage of this chaharbagh and ending with the poetic chronogram of the project. He was put in charge of composing this piece as the foundation inscription of this project to be inscribed on a stone at the site "in order to clarify the date of the project to the observers."⁶⁶ One wonders what might have been the purpose of this clarification stated by Baqi. A possible hypothesis would be the distinction that Sadr-e Isfahani wished to make between his architectural interventions and the standing Safavid monuments in the city, which could denote his anxieties and challenges to represent himself in front of the overwhelming presence of Safavid legacy in Isfahan.

With respect to the Fathabad Chaharbagh's design, as Baqi maintains, a team of gardeners and architects (*be tarrahi-ye baghbanan-e sa'adat peyvand va me'maran-e honarmand*) worked together to lay out the chaharbagh and the gateway [possibly the Khawju Gate].⁶⁷ He praises this chaharbagh as a paradise-like garden that embarrassed

⁶⁶ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 65. Baqi does not state where exactly this stone was supposed to be installed or whether this stone was part of the buildings at the edges of the Chaharbagh.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 65. Jaber Ansari refers to a story about the design of this chaharbagh in *Tarikh-e Isfahan va Ray*, p 372: "It is said that when the deceased Sadr decided to build the

(*khejeldar-e khejel ast*) the Chaharbagh Avenue while the gateway's building humiliated (*monfa'el amad*) the Sa'adatabad palaces.⁶⁸ The chronogram that Baqi composed gives the date 1218/1803 for the completion of the chaharbagh and its gateway (*Goft Fathabad daem hamcho ferdows-e barin/ Goft in golshan be molk-e shah-e golzar-e janaan*). Even Isfahan became the envy of the Zand capital, Shiraz, after the completion of this new chaharbagh. Through this construction project, Sadr-e Isfahani's Isfahan rivaled the Safavid Isfahan and Zand Shiraz, a comparison that beyond mere exaggeration, reflects how contemporary architectural attempts were measured with these preceding examples in mind.

My analysis of *Madayeh* reveals that the narrative of Isfahan's reclamation was in fact entangled with the creation of these chaharbaghs as the signs of development and improvement. In addition to the organization and structure of the poems, the content of the poems implies strong anxiety over the decline of the city and the degradation of its status. Each poet strives to present Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural patronage in reclaiming Isfahan's status with reference to previously desolated and decayed Isfahan. Of these panegyrists, to name a few, Rafiqi uses two opposite terms "reclamation" (*abadani*) and "ruins" (*viraneh*) to foreground the refinements under Sadr-e Isfahani's supervision.⁶⁹ Another poet conveys this anxiety when he alludes to the lost significance of Isfahan despite its reputation as the land of great men (*Az Sefahan asari hich be joz naam nabud/ Garche besyar dar an sarvar*

chaharbagh, an architect asked for five hundred *tuman* and another one claimed one hundred *tuman*. They chose the latter, but when the construction work finished, the first architect came and complained that I asked for five hundred because I could design the street in a way similar to the old chaharbagh, it would meet the bridge in a straight line, not deviated at both sides by fifty Zar'." Ansari speculates that this may be just a story and probably considerations for adjacent buildings such as Imam's tomb or madraseh is the reason for this deviation.

⁶⁸ The Sa'adatabad Palace is discussed in Chapter 2.

⁶⁹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 38.

or *salar amadeh*).⁷⁰ He portrays Isfahan's changes by employing metaphors like "a pile of dirt," "a nest of owls and snakes" in contrast to flower gardens and paradise. Harif proudly acclaims Sadr-e Isfahani's endeavors for renewing the city and claims that as a result of Isfahan's prosperity during his time, the city has forgotten its Safavid era (*dey kardeh be 'ahd-e to faramoush/'ahd-e Safavi-ye ra Sefahan*).⁷¹

Interestingly these urban improvements in Isfahan are tied to the construction of chaharbaghs. Among Sadr-e Isfahani's projects, these chaharbaghs are the most frequently cited urban elements in praising the development of Isfahan to a paradise-like city. For example, Baqi binds the pleasures of Isfahan to the addition of chaharbaghs to the four corners of the city. Another example of this kind is Montakhab's admiration of Isfahan which refers to its chaharbaghs and bazaars to testify the conversion of Isfahan into a flower garden.

*"Ey del emrooz biya o be Sefahan bengar/
Isfahan ra be safaa hamcho golestan bengar.
charbagh o dar o divar-e vey o bazarash/
sabz o ziba o monaqqash cho noh eyvan bengar."*⁷²

[Today, come and take a look at Isfahan/
For its delights, it looks like a flower garden.
Look at its green, beautiful, and embellished chaharbaghs, doors, walls, and bazaars that resemble the nine skies]

The success and prosperity of Sadr-e Isfahani's renewal project has been expressed in *Madayeh* in experiential terms, the joy and glee that the inhabitants of Isfahan would experience in these new chaharbaghs. Instead of focusing on physical descriptions and praise of construction work, the focus of the poets is centered on how these chaharbaghs

⁷⁰ Ibid, 124.

⁷¹ Ibid, 97.

⁷² Baqi, *Madayeh*, 53.

have improved the general mood of the Isfahanis. For instance, several poems praise the joyful space of the Hoseinabad Chaharbagh. Among these, Rafiqi claims that the inhabitants of Isfahan experienced delight and joy (*behjat o enbesaat*) caused by the paradisaal gardens and water channels of this chaharbagh.⁷³ Montakhab, also finds the Hoseinabad Bazar attached to this chaharbagh a perfect place for outings and leisure walks as he invites the paradise to watch its fineness (*cho amad dar miyan pa-ye tafarroj gasht tarikhash/be Jannat gu biya hosn-e Hoseinabad ra bengar*).⁷⁴

Amid their imaginative descriptions, these poets enliven their poetic representations through the presence of the people as the inhabitants of these spaces. In the context of *Madayeh*, the reclamation of hearts precedes the reclamation of the city.⁷⁵ Although enveloped in poetic imaginations, Baqi declares that the Aminabad Chaharbagh became thronged with the crowd—young and old, day and night—delighted by viewing its trees and running waters.⁷⁶ Passersby and residents forgot about paradise and lovers failed to remember their beloveds' beauties after observing the enjoyable stature of this chaharbagh. Observers of this paradise-like place, out of joy and rejoicing, whispered Baqi's verses: "What a garden that paradise is an example of it/... no sign of anguish there/no sorrows of the days/ no sound other than the harp's/ no whining, but the reed's."⁷⁷ Described as an accessible public space, *Madayeh* presents these chaharbaghs as if they were intended to bring joy and delight to the crowd by pleasing the senses, stimulated through gardens, trees, flower beds, water elements, and melodious sounds.

⁷³ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 38.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 53.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 67.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 95.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 67.

Acknowledging the panegyric nature of these descriptions, one needs to be cautious of taking them at face value. We will never know how Isfahanis exactly experienced, moved in space, and perceived these public promenades. However, as I discussed in Chapter 1, the significance of these poetic descriptions lies in their role as *lieu de memoire* to remind and awaken the memory of a specific type of spatial experience associated with the chaharbagh avenues in general. The reiteration of well-known literary tropes and metaphors attached to the urban memory of Isfahan in *Madayeh* matched with the erection of new chaharbagh avenues in Isfahan evoke the idea of urban pleasure alive in the collective memory of the Isfahanis.

As I have argued somewhere else, “*seir-e chaharbagh*” (promenading in chaharbagh) was a known and desired public urban practice in Isfahan since the Safavid period.⁷⁸ This performative aspect of promenading is pertinent to the known combination of terms *seir* and *tamasha* often used to describe excursions and leisure walks in Persian prose and rhyme. The term *seir* denotes moving slowly in a space while enjoying agreeable sights and *tamasha* is defined by looking at something pleasant with awe and contemplation. The word *tamasha* (from the Arabic root *m.sh.y*) also indicates movement and path. The act of promenading is an embodied practice and as Edward Casey argues, place-memory contains memories associated with our movement in that place.⁷⁹ The role of poetic descriptions in *Madayeh*, I propose, is reminding the inhabitants of the city of this celebrated and desired spatial and embodied practice and memory. Thus, not only did *Madayeh* as a *tazkira* and *lieu de memoire* contained the memory of the poets and the patron, through these literary

⁷⁸ “Promenading in Isfahan’s Chaharbaghs,” *PLATFORM*.

⁷⁹ For further discussion see “Chapter IX: Place Memory” in Edward S. Casey, *Remembering, Second Edition: A Phenomenological Study* (Indiana University Press, 2000).

forms and tropes attached to the concept of chaharbagh avenue, it awakened and evoked Isfahan's past lived experiences, the ones that Sadr-e Isfahani and his eulogists hoped to make the decayed city recover.

Sadr-e Isfahani's Chaharbaghs in Travelogues

Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbagh avenues also caught the attention of the foreign travelers who visited Isfahan during this period. Along with the poetic renderings of *Madayeh's* poets, the travelers' experiences of the city provide us with some information regarding these newly built urban spaces. Despite their complementary merit, they bear some undeniable issues as Walcher summarizes in her assessment of European travelogues and their representation of Isfahan in the nineteenth century:

Although almost every traveler to Qajar Iran makes some mention of Isfahan, 19th-century accounts are highly stereotypical, and information on the city's form as well as its contemporary internal urban and social structure remains elusive despite its prominence. Travel publications as well as unofficial diplomatic and political reports frequently summarized Isfahan in a few paragraphs with reference to the comprehensive descriptions of preceding writers, especially that of Chardin. Narratives as well as pictorial representations were often anachronistically nostalgic or inordinately negative, and most writers contentedly relied on the already published stereotypes. Approaching Isfahan with this kind of historicism, 19th-century travel books, magazines, etc. portrayed a sentimental picture of Safavid magnificence and empire, which reinforced the sense of cultural decay and political decline of Qajar Isfahan. This is significant, as the high popularity and wide distribution of travel books had a lasting influence on later European as well as Iranian perceptions and historiography on Isfahan.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Heidi Walcher, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/isfahan-viii-qajar-period>

While these travelogues carry such misrepresentations or ignorance of the contemporary city, overshadowed by Safavid grandeur and nostalgic sentiments, European travelers have left some unintentional and incidental references to the state of urban life in Isfahan. Besides the above-mentioned caveats in referring to these sources, one might retrieve some information out of their achronological and sometimes incorrect descriptions.

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the Fathabad and Aminabad chaharbaghs in the north functioned as the main entrance paths to the city for the formal procession of the foreign envoys and ambassadors at the time. James Morier, who accompanied Sir Harford Jones in his two diplomatic visits to Isfahan in the early nineteenth century, states that “these avenues occupy, as I conjecture, the place of what was the longest and the largest street of Ispahan in the time of Chardin.”⁸¹ Despite the significant function of these avenues for Sadr-e Isfahani, almost replacing the Safavid Chaharbagh in official processions, Morier finds these avenues as “works of pure vanity.”⁸²

Morier’s perception of Isfahan is evident in another part of his account in which he attempts to provide an overview of the city for his supposedly European audience. Relevant to our discussion of the chaharbaghs, he discredits recent improvements of Isfahan and states:

In forming his idea of this city, let not the reader bring it into comparison with any of the capitals of Europe. Here are no long and broad streets, no architectural beauties, and few monuments of private wealth, or public munificence.⁸³

⁸¹ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 129.

⁸² Ibid, 130.

⁸³ Ibid, 135.

Contradicting himself, in another part of the travelogue, he speaks of Isfahan's new chaharbagh avenues and the restoration of the public monuments around them.⁸⁴ Almost concurrent with Morier's account, William Ouseley in 1811 describes the Fathabad Chaharbagh in very favorable terms and finds the adjacent Hasanabad Bazaar full of cheerful, and busy scenes:

We usually entered Ispahan by way of the bridge and gate called khaju, and through the adjoining charbagh or quadruple garden, of which the spacious avenues, bordered with trees and shrubs, and watered by rills, flowing from ample fountains, led us to the Bazar of Hassan Abad.⁸⁵

James Silk Buckingham also finds this chaharbagh worthy of mention and admires its imposing tree-lined avenue:

The Char-Bagh, or Four Gardens, a work of the present Governor, Hadjee Mohammad Hussain Khan, the entrance to which is imposing from the long avenues of trees which presents to the view, also shared our admiration. We had seen, however, so much to charm and delight us, and quitted one spot with so much regret, though to visit another perhaps still more beautiful, that we were literally fatigued with pleasure, and tired of constantly beholding so much splendour and magnificence in art, mixed with everything that is agreeable in nature.⁸⁶

Another English envoy John Johnson, visiting Isfahan in 1817, describes his arrival in Isfahan through an unnamed chaharbagh avenue. When Johnson resided in Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani was the *Mostowfi al-Mamalek* and in charge of the king's treasury as the Nizam al-Dowleh, being granted this title in 1813. By this time, all three chaharbaghs of Sadr-e

⁸⁴ Ibid, 132.

⁸⁵ William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 26.

⁸⁶ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 219.

Isfahani were completed and were in use in their best condition. Johnson relates his entrance to the city in the following way:

The approach to Ispahan by all the principal roads is through gardens. That along which we passed, led through the Chaur Baug (or four gardens); on passing the gate of which it divides into two roads, which extends along the principal or central avenue. They are each twenty feet broad, having between them a plot of garden ground fifty feet wide, bordered with two rows of high poplars and plane trees, rising from among bushes of rose trees and jassmine, which were now in full bloom. In the middle flows a stream of clear water in an open channel of white masonry, nearly level, and having falls of masonry whenever there is an inclination of the ground. This avenue is enclosed by walls of masonry 18 or 20 feet high; which, together with the trees, afford an agreeable shade during the greater part of the day. These walls are so thick that arched recesses have been formed in them three feet deep, with the breadth of pillar only between them. The basement of the arches is of such convenient height, as to serve for seats in these recesses throughout the whole extent. At regular distances of about 200 yards, the roads unite round a basin of water, opposite which on either hand are gateways leading to dwelling houses for servants and travelers and to shops near the gates for sherbets, hookahs, bread, acid milk, and other refreshments. After passing through the Four Gardens, which are altogether about a mile in extent, we came to a bridge over the river Zainderood, having walls on each side with arches, and a narrow foot-path under them, and in the center, rooms projecting over the river, for persons to sit and smoke in. The road over the bridge is about 30 feet wide, and level throughout extent in length may be about 200 feet. After passing over, we entered the Bazar of Shah Abbas, which was really grand, and replete with every superior accommodation.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ John Johnson, *A journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the year 1817*, 105.

Despite valuable details in his descriptions, Johnson has failed to provide the names of the famous bridges and chaharbaghs mentioned in this quote, which makes his descriptions difficult to spatially locate. Tracking his trajectory, he probably entered the city through the southern gate of Isfahan which at the time was the Shiraz gate. Through this unnamed chaharbagh, he passed over a bridge that ought to be the Khawju Bridge with its central “rooms projecting over the river.” Accordingly, the chaharbagh avenue before passing the Khawju Bridge from the southern gate must be the Aminabad chaharbagh (or less likely the Fathabad Chaharbagh, if one leaves some room for possible errors). Later, he entered the “bazaars of Shah Abbas” which makes no sense considering his trajectory. Assuming that he continued on the same path to reach the Maidan-e Shah, this bazaar must be the Hasanabad Bazaar along the Fathabad chaharbagh and Johnson has probably mistaken it with the bazaars of Shah Abbas.

In the chapter on Isfahan in his travelogue, the term “Chaur Baug” was used interchangeably for both old and new chaharbaghs and without specifications. However, comparing his observations with the visual sources, we can hypothesize that the term chaharbagh here might refer to Sadr-e Isfahani’s chaharbaghs rather than the Safavid counterpart. Pointing to the high walls with deep niches in them suitable for seating and the lack of any mention to the royal gardens and lofty gatehouses that adorned the edges of Safavid Chaharbagh Avenue can substantiate this hypothesis. Another clue is the arrangement of the gateways leading to public amenities branched from the avenue. The Safavid chaharbagh, as sources attest, had a different arrangement of garden gateways along the avenue, appearing more like porous walls rather than high arched walls characteristic of Sadr-e Isfahani’s Fathabad Chaharbagh discussed above. As evident from Johnson’s case, to

bring to light the post-Safavid transformations of Isfahan, one needs to be aware of these misrepresentations and confusions either in local or European sources.

Through a triangulation of travelers' observations and *Madayeh*'s poems, one can infer that these new chaharbaghs endowed the city with agreeable public spaces intended to replace the ceremonial role and spatial effect of the Chaharbagh Avenue in this period. Competing with the royal axis of Shah Abbas I's chaharbagh, Sadr-e Isfahani's three chaharbaghs laid to its east and created a new urban axis that revived the pre-Safavid road to Shiraz. This axis marked the new social and political order of the city where the royal image and urban history of Isfahan was reworked and reconstructed by Isfahan's governor.

Conclusion

Isfahan's new chaharbaghs, as presented in locals' and travelers' accounts, were instrumental in revitalizing Isfahan's function as an urban center. Sadr-e Isfahani appropriated the practice of promenading as a reclamation device to revive and restore Isfahan's urban and economic prosperity. Not only did the form of the Safavid Chaharbagh Avenue shape Sadr-e Isfahani's new chaharbaghs, but the memory of its spatial experiences was emphasized and evoked in *Madayeh* as a sign of the city's development and reclamation under his patronage. As a patron aware of and acquainted with the urban practices associated with promenading and *seir o tamasha* in a chaharbagh, Sadr-e Isfahani organized his urban and architectural projects (religious schools, water fountains, markets, gardens, etc.) along the new chaharbaghs. The placement of these urban elements and their specific arrangement represent the "chaharbagh avenue type" as a pivotal and spatial type for evoking Isfahan's urban memory. Here, the spatial type of the chaharbagh avenue was merged with Sadr-e

Isfahani's configuration of the non-royal urban ensemble to update this early modern concept for accommodating upcoming changes.

In this light, Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbagh-building projects can be understood as his response to the Safavid legacy as well as recovering the urban, social, and economic potentials of a desolating city. Sadr-e Isfahani was aware of his ineptitude to compete with the Safavids both due to the lack of necessary means and the imposing image of the Safavid empire in Isfahan. Nonetheless he chose to invest in reviving the urban memory of Isfahan through his chaharbaghs and *Madayeh*. Juxtaposing his mansions and gardens along the chaharbaghs with public urban structures, Sadr-e Isfahani interwove his self-fashioning practices with the public works and urban revival of Isfahan. In this context of competing with the past, as Baqi asserts, Sadr-e Isfahani's chaharbaghs were to humiliate and surpass the old chaharbagh and his age ought to outshine the Safavid era.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 65.

Chapter 5 : A Lost Qajar Palace: Reinventing the Image of Kingship in Isfahan

Introduction

In March 1798, Baba Khan (later Fath Ali Shah), then the ruler of Shiraz, ascended to the Qajar throne. He was the second Qajar king who tried to restore the centralization of the state challenged by the post-Safavid civil unrest in Iran. His court played a major role in reviving and reinventing the image of Persian kingship in the early nineteenth century and placed the king himself at the center of this revivalist vision. After the fall of Isfahan, the king's throne moved to Mashhad and Shiraz, and by the late eighteenth century, Tehran was selected as Iran's capital city. With all its royal glory, Isfahan was no longer a suitable place for the post-Safavid rulers. During the eighteenth century, Shiraz, the capital of the Zand dynasty, became a thriving center for artistic and cultural productions, comparable to Safavid Isfahan. And under Fath Ali Shah's reign, almost all artistic and cultural forces were concentrated in the new capital city of Tehran. Though economically and culturally influential, Isfahan and Shiraz could no longer compete with Tehran's political weight in the nineteenth century.

The first two decades of Fath Ali Shah's reign are marked as a prolific period of constructing the image of power in the Qajar court. Artists and craftsmen, from Isfahan and Shiraz, gathered in the Tehran court to articulate the image of an ambitious king. Textile weavers and tailors adorned the king's robes, and goldsmiths and jewelers carved precious stones for his regalia. Court poets praised and promoted his glorious kingly charisma in

verse and adept painters perpetuated his jewel-like and eternal presence in wall paintings and monumental life-size portraits. The king of the kings and *khaqan* of *khaqans* (to name a few of his numerous titles) reflected his ambitious presence.

Fath Ali Shah consciously and deliberately promoted his image of kingship as an icon and was very well aware of the enunciative power of images. His portraits were sent as diplomatic gifts to his counterparts across the world and his ubiquitous images appeared on different objects, in various media, forms, and scales. Fath Ali Shah's court artists strove to revive pre-Islamic, Sassanian, representation of kingship to emphasize the continuity of Persian kingship. This stylistic choice was essential for legitimizing and consolidating Fath Ali Shah's power when his capability to run the empire was challenged by the defeats in the Perso-Russian wars. The king's monumental representations were carved along the Sassanian rock reliefs to bridge the undeniable historical gap between these two empires.¹

But how was this image-making vision realized in the architecture of this period? While the king's representations in paintings, rock reliefs, book arts and etc., have been the subject of scholarly works, his urban and architectural patronage have been mostly associated with religious public monuments and leisure palaces. In Tehran and the provinces, the king launched a public work campaign including the construction of new congregational mosques on a grand scale. Yet, Fath Ali Shah's urban and sub-urban palaces have occupied a minor place in the scholarship concerned with royal representation. It is known that new urban and extra-urban palaces were erected in Tehran and other cities for the king. In this chapter I aim

¹ For studies on the production of the life-size royal portraits during Fath Ali Shah's period see Layla S. Diba, "Image of Power and the Power of Images," in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925*. Willem Floor, "Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqashan) in Qajar Persia," *Brill* 16 (1999).

to introduce a significant palace built for Fath Ali Shah by Sadr-e Isfahani in Isfahan that can both illuminate our understanding of early Qajar palatial architecture and the role that Sadr-e Isfahani played in crafting the king's royal image.

According to current scholarship, the most significant urban palace to stage the king's image was located in the heart of the Golestan Palace in Tehran. Where a rectangular porch supported by two twisted marble columns, looted from Shiraz, would frame the image of the seated king in the Marble Throne Hall. For envisioning such a royal display porch in the construction of his image of Perso-Shi'i kingship, Fath Ali Shah was very much in debt to the architectural legacy of the Safavid Isfahan and Zand Shiraz. *Talar*, a pillared porch in Iranian architecture, with its long history in displaying the image of Persian kingship was a key reference to both Safavid and pre-Islamic Persian palace architecture.² Currently, this grand hall and a private apartment are the only surviving buildings from this period in the Golestan Palace. Nonetheless, art historian Layla Diba suggests that the Marble Throne Hall with all its staging strategies was only a part of an extensive lost palatine city commissioned by Fath Ali Shah in the Golestan Palace constructed in the early nineteenth century.³

As I argue here, not only was the king enthusiastic about erecting new palaces in Tehran, but he was also fond of integrating his dynastic image with the Safavid royal legacy in the city of Isfahan. However, his interest in Isfahan went beyond iconographic references to Safavid architectural types and motifs. He in fact physically altered the Safavid palace precinct and inserted his palace in this complex. And as we shall see in this chapter, the task

² Jennifer Scarce, "The Architecture and Decoration of the Gulistan Palace: The Aims and Achievements of Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834) and Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896)," *Iranian Studies* 34, no. 1/4, Qajar Art and Society (2001): 103–16.

³ Layla S. Diba, "The Lost Palatine City of Fath Ali Shah," in *International Qajar Studies Association: X-XI, Life at the Court of Fath Ali Shah*, 2011.

of erecting such a palace for this ambitious king was delegated to none other than Sadr-e Isfahani.

This chapter aims to cast light on how Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural and artistic commissions in Isfahan relate to the Qajar representation of kingship. The majority of Sadr-e Isfahani's urban and architectural patronage occurred in the beginning years of Fath Ali Shah's reign, concurrent with the consolidation of Sadr-e Isfahani's status in the Qajar court. It seems relevant to probe into the possible connections between the creation of a public image for this new king and the building campaign of a new and ambitious local patron in the Safavid capital city. In this chapter, I will emphasize those commissions of Sadr-e Isfahani that have a direct connection with the king and the court in Tehran to demonstrate how this local patron facilitated the process of royal representation in Isfahan and Tehran parallel to his self-fashioning efforts.

Emarat-e Sadri: A New Palace in Isfahan

Among Sadr-e Isfahani's urban and architectural projects, there are examples of palatial structures in different cities in Iran. He was credited with the establishment of new buildings such as the Emarat-e Sadri and Haft-Dast in Isfahan, Emarat-e Soleimaniyeh in Karaj, Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin in Soltaniyeh, and unknown *emrats* in Tehran and Kashan.⁴ Some of these palaces or mansions were intended for the residence of Fath Ali Shah and the royal household. The Emarat-e Sadri was the most significant one erected in the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* (palace precinct) in Isfahan. While the *chaharbaghs* seem to present Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship and his personal attention to the prosperity of Isfahan, this *emarat*

⁴ E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*, 92

was erected under Sadr-e Isfahani's supervision after a direct decree from Fath Ali Shah functioned as a material signifier of the king and the new era.

Maaser al-Soltaniyeh, an official history of Fath Ali Shah's reign written in 1800, asserts that the king assigned Sadr-e Isfahani to construct a paradise-like mansion (*khorrām sara-yie be ayeen-e behesht*) between the Chehel Sotun and Behesht Ayeen Palaces.⁵ According to *Maaser al-Soltaniyeh* and *Madayeh*, the construction of this palace was completed sometime between 1800 and 1803. As Danesh notes in his ode included in *Madayeh*, the king ordered a building befitting his royal status to perpetuate his name in Isfahan, and his humble servant, Haji Hosein Khan, completed the erection of this *emarat* in 1803.⁶

Sadeq Vaqaye'negar (Sadeq the chronicler), another court historian, describes this palace in *Tarikh-e Jahan Ara* as Emarat-e Khold-e Barin (Sublime Paradise) erected by the order of the king. After admiring Isfahan's agreeable climate and the Zayandeh River's salubrious water, he acknowledges the popularity of this *emarat* by noting that it has been already described by so many others leaving nothing for him to admire. In terms of the king's intention behind this commission he states that since the Safavid kings had built numerous buildings in this city, Fath Ali Shah also decided to erect a paradise-like palace here. While the decree for the construction was given by the king, as Vaqaye'negar puts it, anonymous local agents (*karkonan-e aan diyar*) oversaw realizing that order. With regard to

⁵ Mahdi Sadr Hashemi, "Haji Mohammad Hosein Khan-e Sadr-e Isfahani molaqqab be Nezam ol-Dowleh," 52.

⁶ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 32. (*seza-ye ghadr-e khod 'ali bana-yi khast ta manad/ az u javid dar molk Sefahan daad farman ra/ kamineh chaker-e dargah-e u Haji Hosein Khan aan/kaz aab 'adl darad sabz golzaar-e Sefahan ra/ ...be payan bord in delkash emarat ra ke az Jannat/ sezaad aarand agar az bahr-e darbanish rezvan ra*)

its design, he maintains, this palace was unprecedented in the imagination of preceding kings.⁷

Unlike Vaqaye‘negar’s omission of Sadr-e Isfahani’s name, Baqi’s account of this *emarat* as a “*haramsara*” in *Madayeh* also corroborates with Donboli’s (the author of *Maaser al-Soltani-yeh*) account that Sadr-e Isfahani was responsible for this royal commission both in terms of its financial support and execution.⁸ Baqi brings Mir Mohammad Ali’s ode (with the pen name Danesh), which was granted permission to be inscribed in the *eyvan* of this *emarat* (*esharat be sabt-e aan dar eyvan-e Emarat-e falak bonyan*) to demonstrate this relationship. As opposed to *Tarikh-e Jahan Ara*, *Madayeh* directly explicates the role that Sadr-e Isfahani had in the erection of this palace. William Ouseley, who visited this palace in 1811, identified it as “Imarat-e Fatteh Abad.” In his travelogue, he attributes it to Sadr-e Isfahani and recounts: “[he] has erected and completely furnished at his own expense, a very beautiful new edifice for the accommodation of his sovereign, in honor of whose name (Fatteh Ali Shah) it is entitled Fatteh Abad or the ‘Residence of Victory.’”⁹

What is intriguing in these differing accounts are the claims over this palace and what benefits each party hoped to achieve by claiming its ownership. In sum, as contemporary Persian sources and European travelogues unanimously suggest, this *emarat* was built upon the king’s decree and its construction and furnishing expenses were intended as *pishkesh* or gift to Fath Ali Shah from Sadr-e Isfahani. Consequently, the building and its architectural

⁷ Sadeq Vaqaye‘negar, *Tarikh-e Jahan Ara*, 644.

⁸ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 31.

⁹ William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 27.

components were supposed to resonate with the king's royal status and reflect Sadr-e Isfahani's loyalty to the Qajar court in Tehran. Whatever the politics of naming was at the time, it is intriguing to note that this palace was mostly identified by Sadr-e Isfahani's name rather than Fath Ali Shah's in the visual and textual sources of the period.

As was the convention during the Safavid period, local governors were in charge of executing the king's order in undertaking architectural projects in provinces. Building the empire was a corporate enterprise for the Safavid kings where *ghulams* and nobilities were engaged in the architectural projects of the empire.¹⁰ The Ganjali Khan complex in Kerman is an example of these local projects outside of the capital city. However, what differentiates Sadr-e Isfahani's architectural undertakings in Isfahan on behalf of Fath Ali Shah is the cultural and political weight of Isfahan where these projects are located. While most of the Safavid palaces in the palace precinct were available and operational for the use of the Qajar king, commissioning a new palace for Fath Ali Shah's residence among Safavid palaces connotes other intentions behind this project. By reconstructing this now-lost palace, this chapter will address the significance of this project for crafting a new image of kingship for Fath Ali Shah and for balancing power between the center and peripheries necessary for the survival of the Qajar dynasty.

Location and Architectural Configuration

Most contemporary accounts identify this new palace as a *haramsara* (women's quarters). Other names such as *divankhaneh*, Emarat-e Khold-e Barin, Emarat-e Naw, Emarat-e Sadri, and Kakh-e Sadri have been attributed to this complex. The earliest

¹⁰ Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, et al. *Slaves of the Shah: The New elites of Safavid Iran*, I.B. Tauris, 2004.

eyewitness account of this *emarat* was given by James Morier who visited Isfahan in 1808. At that time, Sadr-e Isfahani was promoted to serve as the second minister, and his son Abdullah Khan replaced him as the governor of Isfahan. Morier gives the most detailed and comprehensive description of the Emarat-e Sadri among all travelers and even local visitors. He calls this *emarat* “Haram” and claims that “this building was lately erected by Mahomed Hossein Khan, the second Minister, and presented by him to his Majesty, and therefore is a very good specimen of the style and workmanship of the present day.”¹¹ As a royal residence, it was considered a perfect establishment in providing comfort and convenience by the availability of every necessity for residence, without prior announcement, for receiving the king and his large entourage.

The Emarat-e Haram which Morier describes is adjoined to the Chehel Sotun garden and connected to this palace through an “intricate passage” under an octagonal tower. This passage, as Morier relates:

Opens into an oblong square laid out into flower beds, straight walks and basins of water, and surrounded on all sides by chambers for women of inferior rank. Proceeding on the left side of this court, a door opens into a spacious green-house called the Narengistoon, in which there are only young orange trees. From this, there is but one step into the principal court of the building, one whole side of which is occupied by the King’s apartments or drawing-rooms.¹²

Following Morier’s observation, this *emarat* consisted of two sections: the first section with an oblong square courtyard surrounded by service rooms, and the Narenjistan section where the main court and the rest of the richly decorated rooms were located. Additionally, a

¹¹ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 167.

¹² Ibid.

subterranean summer residence right under the main rooms of the Narenjistan and a bathhouse complete the *emarat*.

For locating this *emarat* on the Safavid royal precinct, I have relied on two maps of Isfahan produced in 1839 and 1851. On Pascal Coste's map, the earliest map of the city after the fall of the Safavids, two palaces of the Petit Palais Tcharbagh and Palais Narendjistan have been identified [Figure 1]. Although the schematic representation of Coste's map does not allow for deducing further information about this area of the royal precinct, it seems possible to assume the whole area, between the Chehel Sotun and Hasht Behesht palaces, labeled Narenjistan, to be Sadr-e Isfahani's Haram complex. Yet, Vaqaye'negar gives a more accurate location for this palace. He notes that the *emarat* was located in the area among the three Safavid palaces of Chehel Sotun, Talar-e Tavileh, and Angurestan. As textual sources reveal, the Emarat-e Sadri substituted the whole private palaces of the Safavid era situated in the location of Bagh-e Khalvat, and the only remaining part from this garden was the Angurestan or the Behesht Ayeen Palace, constructed by the last Safavid king, Shah Soltan Hosein in the early eighteenth century. In fact, this area has been reserved for private quarters and residential purposes since Isfahan's development by the Safavid kings in the early seventeenth century and continued to be used for this purpose since then [Figure 2].¹³

¹³ Figure 5-2 has been omitted due to copyright restrictions. See the table of figures for more information.

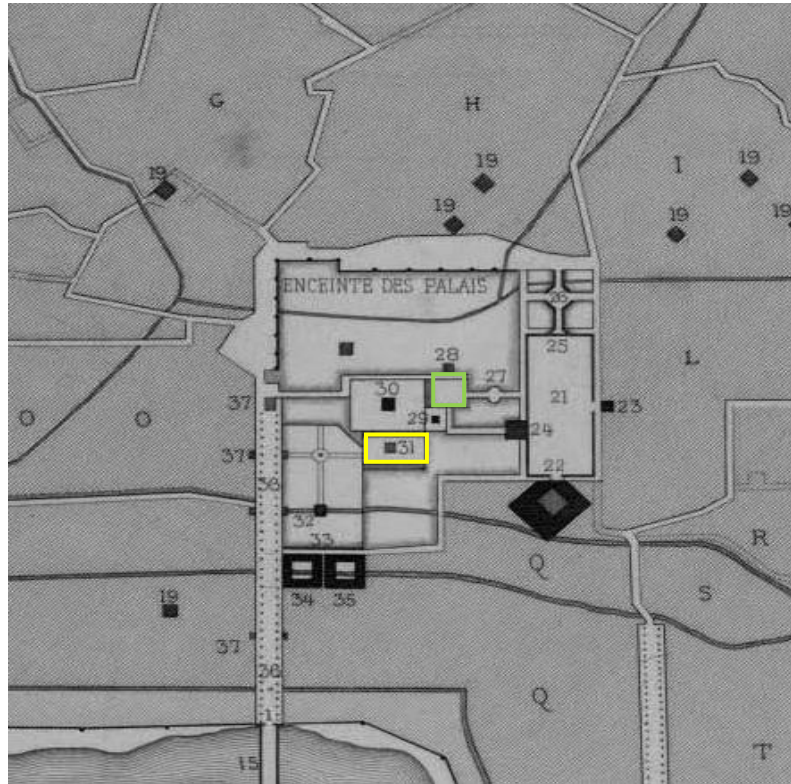


Figure 5-1. Plan général d'Ispahan, by Pascal Coste, 1839. 28: Bains Publics, 29: Petit Palais Tcharbagh (Green), 30: Palais Tchehel Soutoun, 31: Palais Narendjistan (Yellow), 32: Pavillon Hecht Behecht.

The Russian map of Isfahan, drawn almost ten years later, provides us with more details about this *emarat* and other gardens and mansions in this area [Figure 3]. First, the Behesht Ayeen Palace which was supposed to define the southern border of the Emarat-e Sadri is clearly demonstrated on the map. According to this map, Sadr-e Isfahani's complex is identified with the number 17 and labeled as the "Kakh-e Sadri" and is adjacent to the Narenjistan (31) on the West.

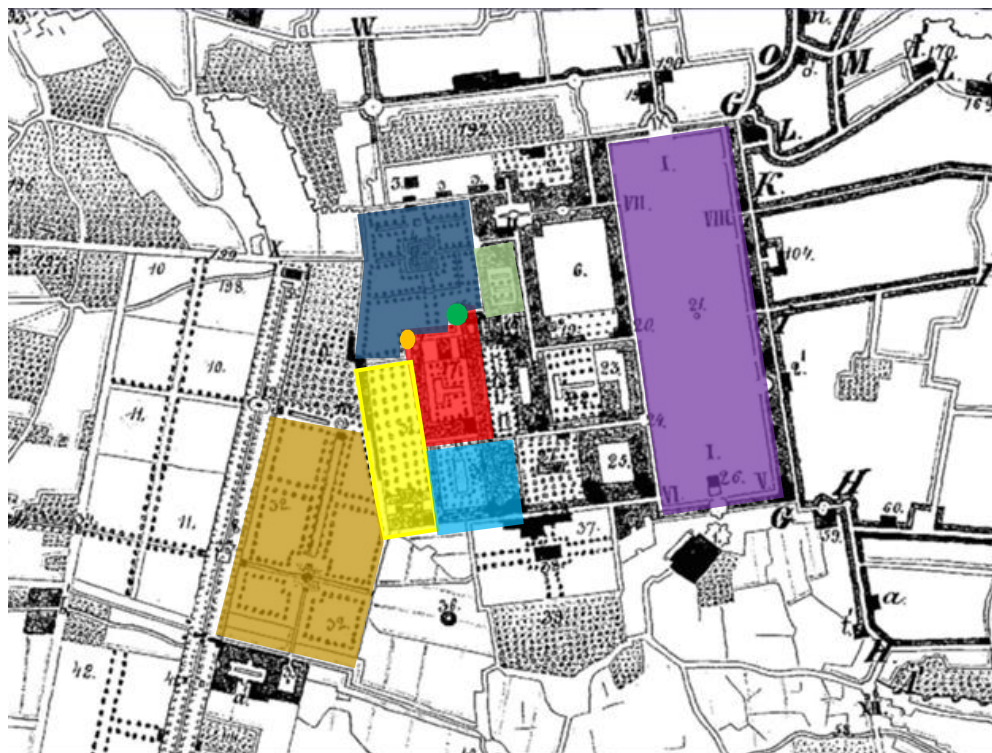


Figure 5-3. Russian map of Isfahan, 1851. Purple: Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, Red: Kakh-e Sadr, Yellow: Narenjistan, Green: Possibly Emarat-e Sarpoushide (Divankhaneh), Blue: Behesht Ayeen (Shah Soltan Hosein's palace), Dark blue: Chehel Sutun, Brown: Hasht Behesht, Orange and dark green circles pointing to the location of the Borj-e 'Alimardan Khan and Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat respectively.

As marked on the map there are two towers, Borj-e Alimardan Khan (14) and Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat (15), between the wall of the Chehel Sotun Garden and Sadr-e Isfahani's complex. According to the textual descriptions of European visitors, an octagonal tower structure was located between the Chehel Sotun and Emarat-e Sadri. Coste, in a description of the Chehel Sotun garden, also points to the existence of this tower and the underground passage underneath it.¹⁴ The plan of the Chehel Sotun drawn by Coste marks an octagonal structure in the middle of the southern wall of the garden. However, the same plan labels the entrance to Sadr-e Isfahani's palace (labeled 'h') at the southeastern corner of the Chehel

¹⁴ Xavier Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits par Pascal Coste*, 32.

Sotun garden without showing another tower [Figure 4]. Since the octagonal tower gave access to both the Haram and the Narenjistan, it seems plausible to assume Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat, identified on the Russian map, as the octagonal linking tower. In Flandin's drawing of the courtyard of *Palais du Tchar-Bâgh*, an octagonal tower is seen that possibly could have been one of the towers attached to the Emarat-e Sadri. In other drawings by Coste and Flandin, they depict Petit Palais Tcharbagh, which must be the same palace that they had rendered several views of it in their drawings captioned Salle du [Tchar-Bâgh] Palais Kalvèt-Serpouchidèh à Ispahan, Intérieur du Palais Tchar-Bach, and Palais du Tchar-Bâgh, Ispahan [Figure 5,6,7].

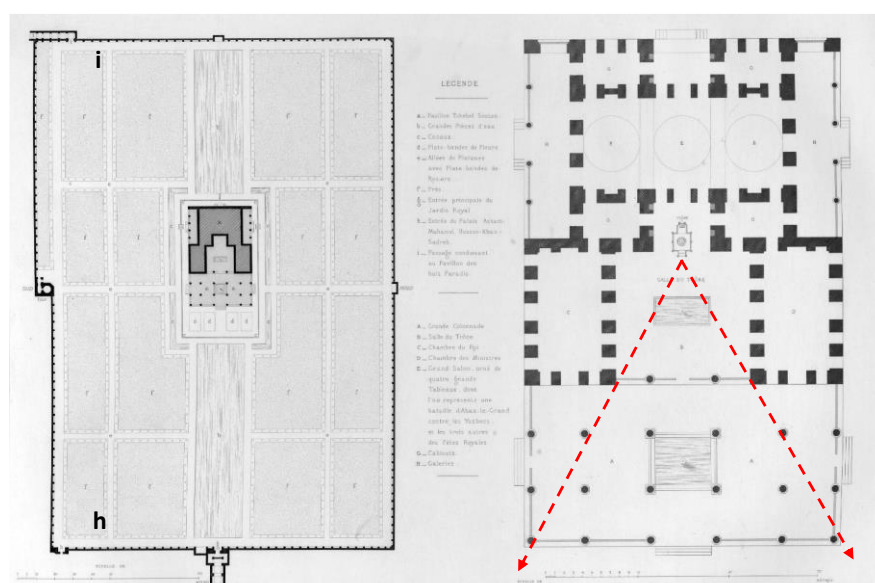


Figure 5-4. Plan of the Chehel Sotun Palace (the Forty-pillared porch), 1839, Pascal Coste. According to the map's legend, "h" refers to the *Entrée du Palais Asham Mahamel Hussen-Khan-Sadreh* [entrance to Mohammad Hosein Khan-e Sadr's palace] and "i" points to the *Passage conduisant au Pavillon des huit Paradis* [the passage leading to the Hasht Behesht Palace].



Figure 5-5. Palais du Tchar-Bâgh, Ispahan, by Flandin, 1839. Source: New York Public Library Digital Collection. Showing the Borj-e Rashk-e Jannat at the corner of the courtyard.

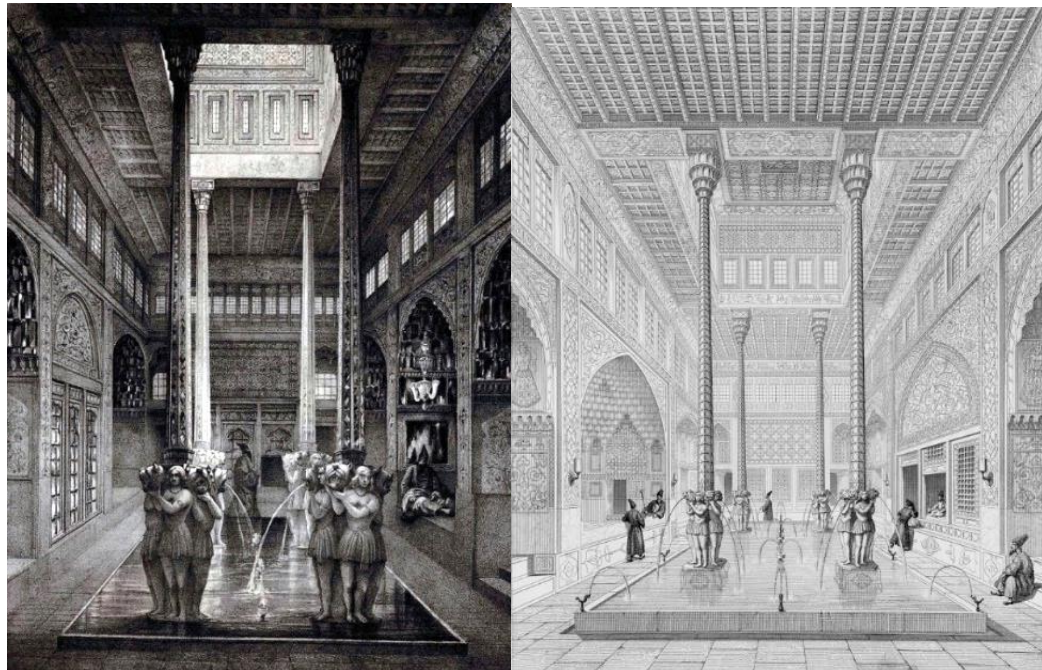


Figure 5-6. Salle du [Tchar-Bâgh] Palais Kalvèt-Serpouchidèh à Ispahan, by Flandin

Figure 5-7. Intérieur du palais Tchar-Bach published in *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, by Coste

There is a discrepancy between the two maps regarding the spatial arrangement of this complex. While the Russian map identifies two separate spaces as the Narenjistan and Kakh-e Sadri, Cost's map only indicates the Narenjistan on the same ground. So based on these two maps, it is not clear how the spaces were arranged in this complex. Fortunately, late nineteenth-century textual evidence provides us with some clues regarding its spatial composition. In Mirza Hosein Tahvildar's description of this palace (1877), which is the only textual source referring to the location of each section, the complex consists of two main sections: First, the built area (*a 'yani*) which is a two-story structure arranged around an extensive courtyard with a grand "*talar*;" Second, the private courtyard (*hayat khalvat*) of Narenjistan, which seems to be a courtyard with the private mansions reserved for the Haram including orange groves, a bathhouse, and other service areas.¹⁵ Tahvildar points out that the *talar* is located at the border separating the two sections of the complex and opening toward both courtyards. He compares this *talar* to the grand Safavid *talars* of the Chehel Sotun, Ali Qapu, and Ayenehkhaneh.¹⁶

Tahvildar's textual account of the Emarat-e Sadri corresponds to another plan drawn by Xavier Pascal Coste in 1840 on the ground of this *emarat* [Figure 8]. This plan is labeled by Coste as the "*grand palais de chah-abas*" and identified by the Dumbarton Oaks' *Middle Eastern Garden Tradition* collection as the palace of Narenjistan, held in the Bibliotic Municipal de Marseille.¹⁷ As the location and configuration of this palace indicate, it must be the plan of the Narenjistan identified in Coste's plan of Isfahan. This plan is a rectangular form with a two-partite composition consisting of two courtyards. Despite the detailed

¹⁵ Mirza Hosein Khan Tahvildar Isfahani, *Jografiya-ye Isfahan*, 24.

¹⁶ Tahvildar Isfahani, *Jografiya-ye Isfahan*, 24.

¹⁷ [Middle East Garden Traditions — Dumbarton Oaks \(doaks.org\)](http://doaks.org)

measurements and labels of the plan, the southern side has been left unfinished. Yet, the continuation of drawing baselines of the north side alludes to the similar composition of spaces on the opposing side, which completes the mirroring of the north side against a horizontal axis. The two courtyards have been divided through a set of rooms and spaces including a *talar* with two columns that opens toward the eastern courtyard and the domed hall facing the western courtyard. An octagonal tower (B tower) at the upper left corner is identical to the one that Coste has depicted on the plan of the garden of Chehel Sotun [Figure 9]. This tower marks the length of this palace that would have covered the area between the eastern gateway of the Chehel Sotun Garden and the location of the Chehel Sotun Palace in the middle of the garden. Comparing the placement of Coste's Narenjistan Palace with the Russian map, it seems that this plan only depicts the Emarat-e Sadri and the Narenjistan would have been located to the west of this palace.

Matching Tahvildar's description, the western courtyard features orangeries flanking the central room on the north (*salon* indicated on Coste's plan) completed with another pillared *eyvan* on the west side. In the eastern courtyard, a large T-shape basin dotted with fountains is leading to the main pillared *talar/eyvan* that signifies the importance of the central space, as Coste has erroneously marked, a hall intended for Shah Abbas.

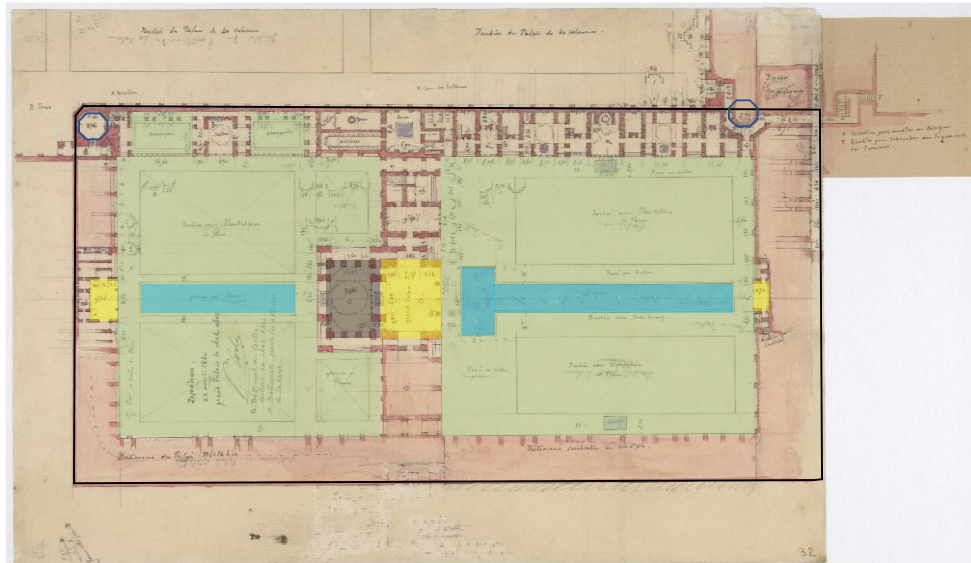


Figure 5-8. “Grand Palais du chah abas,” Pascal Coste, 1840. Source: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds Patrimoniaux: Ms1132_Fol32. As proposed in this dissertation, this plan depicts the location and design of both Emarat-e Sadri (the right courtyard) and the Narenjistan (the left courtyard).

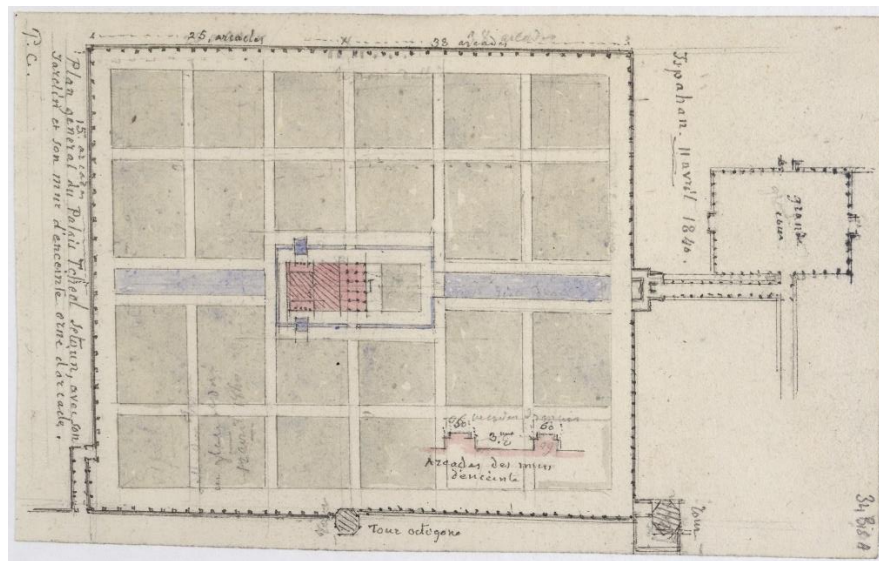


Figure 5-9. Plan of the Chehel Sotun Garden, Pascal Coste, 1840. Source: Tchhel Sotun garden: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds patrimoniaux: Ms1132-fol34bisa. Note the two octagonal towers located to the south of the garden.

Another perspective by Coste, dated 22 Avril 1840, and labeled “*palais, serai, d’Ashan Mahamed Hussein-Khan-Sadreh, visir de feth-ali-chah,*” depicts the grand pillared *eyvan* and the surrounding spaces in the eastern courtyard [Figure 10]. Not only does this drawing very much correspond to Coste’s above-discussed plan in terms of the number of spaces and their possible spatial configurations and elevations, but it also follows the same drawing attitude for leaving the left side of the building (the southern side of the plan) incomplete. As the date recorded on the plan and the view are the same, it can be assumed that the elaboration efforts have been intentionally avoided due to the symmetrical design of the building. Although this presumption would seem practically sound, the incomplete status of these two documents in comparison with Coste’s other drawings in Isfahan can imply other reasons pertinent to the authorial intentions behind these representations and their possible publications.

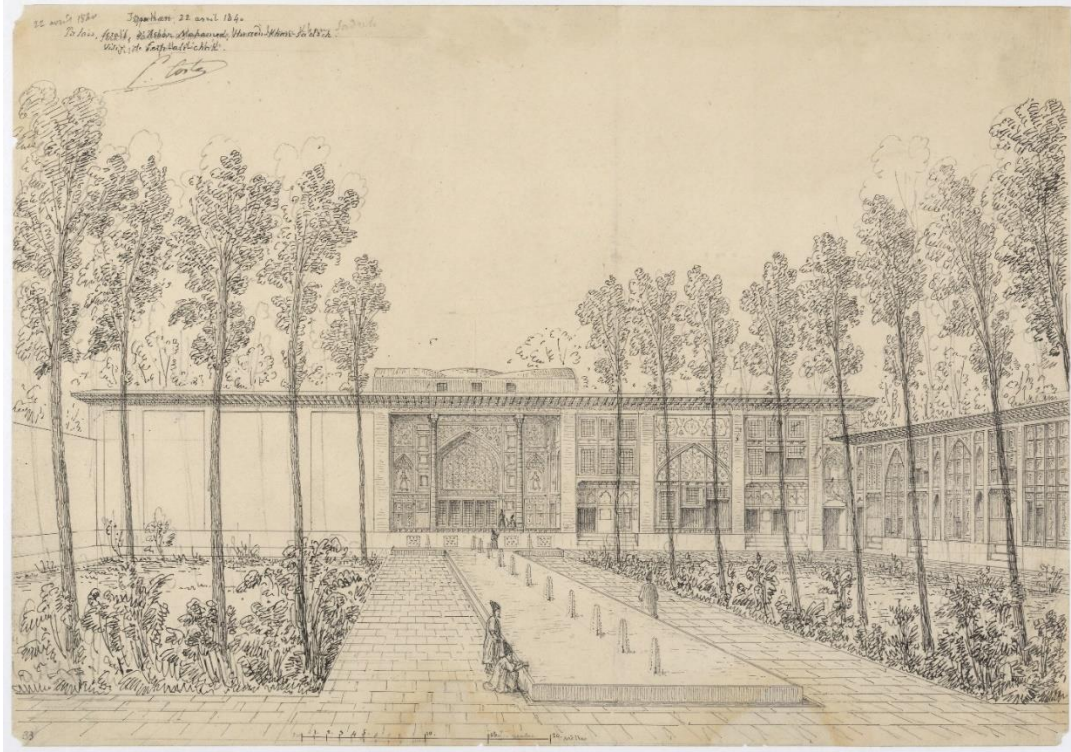


Figure 5-10. Bagh-i Khalvat: Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds patrimoniaux: Ms1132-fol33. The inscription on top of the page reads: “*Palais, Serai (i), d’Asham Mahamed - Hussen-Sadreh. Visir de feth-ali-chah. Ispahan 22 avril 1840*” along with Coste’s signature.

The design of the Emarat-e Sadri, as rendered in Coste’s plan and view, accords with the Marble Throne Hall built approximately at the same time in Tehran [Figure 11]. The view of the Marble throne hall portrayed in another drawing by Coste demonstrates striking similarities between these two palaces. Like the Emarat-e Sadri, the Marble Throne Hall was a central *eyvan* supported by two twisted marble columns and flanked by other rooms on two levels in a tripartite composition. As the drawing indicates, the hall was located on one side of an enclosed area, probably a courtyard. Even the composition of wall decorations and the location of voids and solids in the pillared *eyvans* are comparable in these two palaces. In both cases, the main *eyvan* is filled with a five-part sash window and flanked by two doors on each side. Additionally, the pictorial programs in the *eyvans* confirm affinities

between these two palaces for individual portraits of presumably Fath Ali Shah (or other life-size portraits) have covered the niches of the hall. Moreover, two elongated pools of water right in front of the *talar* create a visual and spatial axis leading to the main *eyvan* where the king was supposed to be seated on the throne.

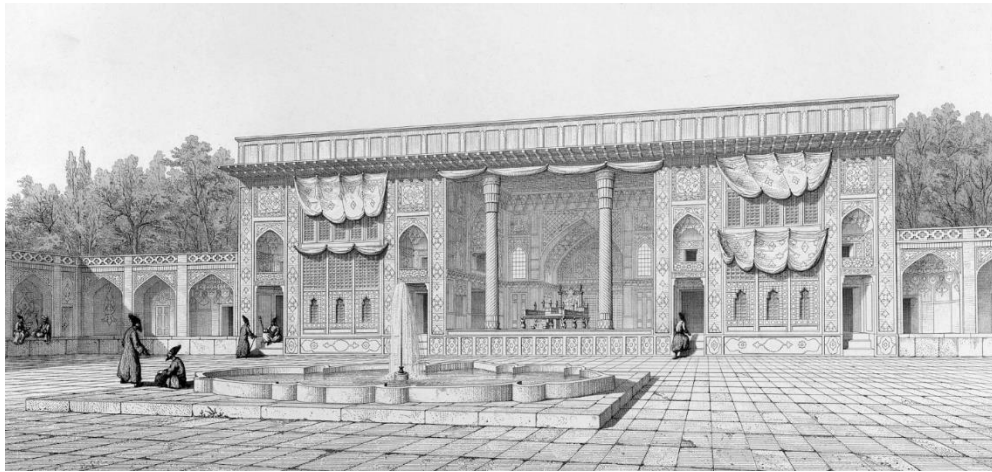


Figure 5-11. Marble Throne, Golestan Palace. Pascal Coste, *Monuments modernes de la Perse mesurés, dessinés et décrits*, éd. Morel, 1867. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Aside from these affinities, there can be observed some differences in forms and decorations. In the Emarat-e Sadri, according to Coste's perspective, the columns in the *talar* seem to be made of wood resembling the slender wooden pillars of the Safavid palaces and *talars* in Isfahan. Contrary to the Emarat-e Sadri, two twisted stone columns, looted from Karim Khan's citadel in Shiraz, support the Marble Throne Hall. These twisted columns feature a spiral carving and a more cylindrical form. In addition to the material and form of the columns, instead of two windows on both sides of the main *eyvan* in the Marble Throne Hall, two large standing portraits of the king or the princes adorn the niches mounting the flanking doors in the Emarat-e Sadri. Additionally, the grand *talar* of the Marble Throne Hall is more pronounced and stands out due to the higher elevation of the

central portion in comparison to the one-story walls of the courtyard. The Emarat-e Sadri also presents a distinct domed hall behind the grand *eyvan* which is missing in the Marble Throne Hall, at least based on the standing building today. Unlike the Tehran example, this feature accords well with the adjacent Chehel Sotun Palace where the pillared hall was attached to a gallery behind it covered with three domes [Figure 12,13].

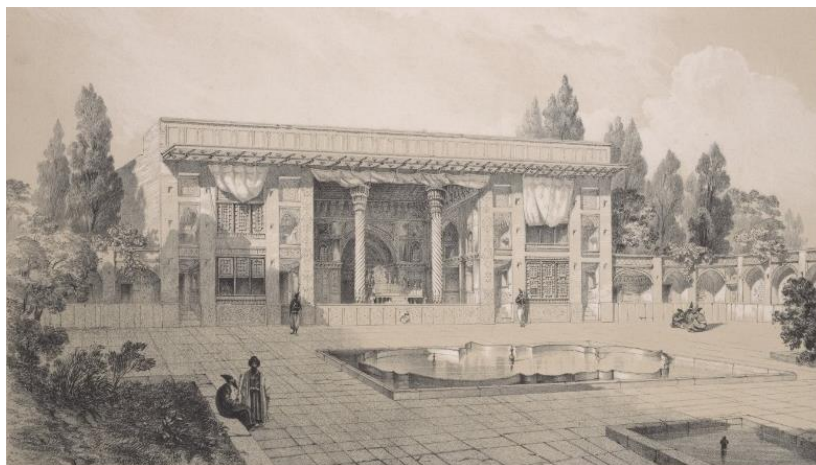
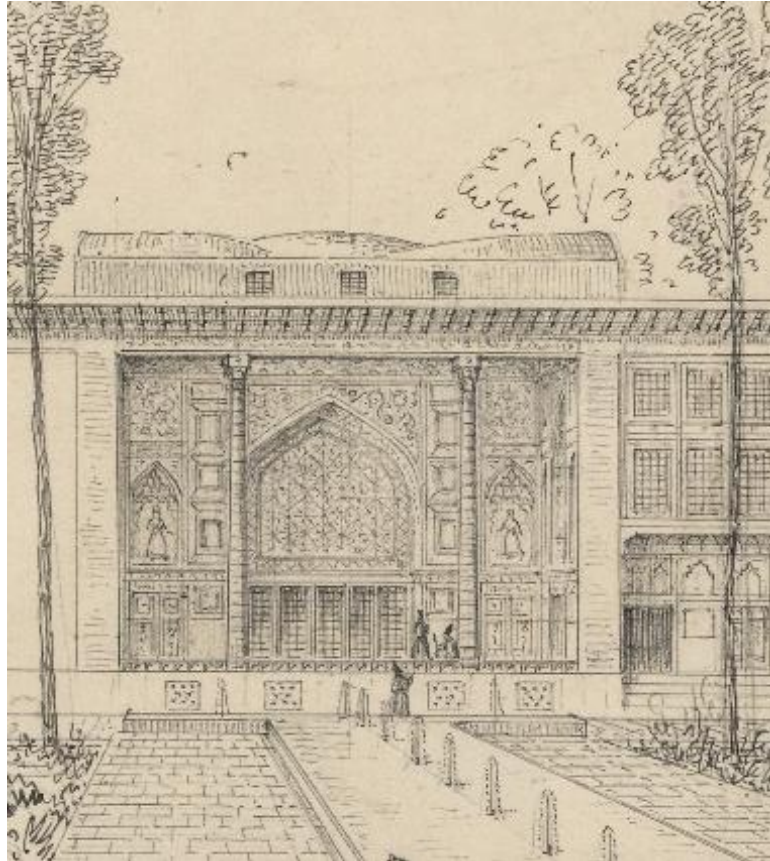


Figure 5-12. A closer view of the *eyvan* in the Emarat-e Sadri, Coste.

Figure 5-13. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Vue extérieure de la salle du trône, Téhérân." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-906c-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

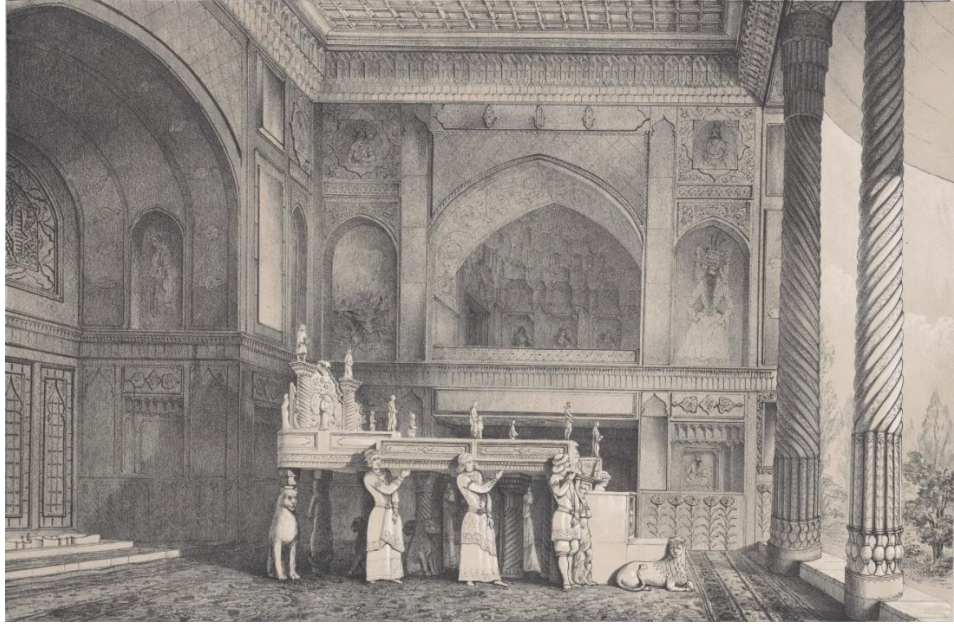


Figure 5-14. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Intérieur de la salle du trône, Téhérân." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 3, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-906d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Note the king's portraits along with other figures on the walls of this hall.

Besides architectural analogies between these two early Qajar palaces, the Emarat-e Sadri also presents connections with Karim Khan's citadel (Arg) in Shiraz where rooms and pillared *eyvans* have been arranged around a rectangular courtyard.¹⁸ Yet, the fortress type with cylindrical towers at the corners has been modified and balanced in the Emarat-e Sadri and a central domed chamber has been added to the composition of the main *eyvan*. The design of this palace is significant due to the way the architect has merged the typical four-*eyvan* plan of residential function with the garden-pavilion type represented by the *eyvan* and domed hall in Safavid examples. In this case, a smaller version of the Chehel Sotun Palace has been inserted and attached to the rectangular courtyard composition to generate a multi-purpose palace suitable for the residence of the king and his royal entourage. This spatial composition suggests how the public reception palace has transformed to

¹⁸ This complex was discussed in Chapter 3.

accommodate both the public and private functions of a court palace. The citadel form of Karim Khan's Arg has been modified in a way to integrate the centrality of the public reception hall and *talar* with the private function of the haram type. In this new form, the *shahneshin* is located at the center of private and public realms not as an outward-looking viewing stand but as an inward-looking spectacle for showcasing the king and his royal presence.

Talar or Eyvan?

According to Coste's plans and drawings, this *emarat* likely featured several *eyvans*, a porch enclosed on three sides with two pillars. In *Madayeh*, contemporary poets such as Baqi and Danesh, for instance, praise a lofty arched *eyvan* humiliating the Eyvan-e Kasra. However, Tahvildar informs us of a "*talar*" comparable to the Safavid *talars* in this complex. The terms *talar* and *eyvan* have been used interchangeably to describe this *emarat*'s grand porch. But as Sussan Babaie argues *talar* had a very specific meaning in Safavid architecture referring to a pillared porch open on three sides, manifested in its perfect form in the Chehel Sotun and Aynekhaneh. According to her definition "A 'talar' palace is a building generally divisible into two parts: one consists of a cluster of rooms and halls of varying sizes; the other is anchored on the first and consists of a space open on three sides (the fourth is a wall of the room/hall cluster) with its roof held aloft by a number of pillars."¹⁹ Tahvildar clearly alludes to such *talars* in admiring the *talar* of the Emarat-e Sadri when comparing it to the well-known Safavid *talar* palaces such as the Chehel Sotun, Aynekhaneh, and Ali Qapu [Figure 15]. What can be proposed is that Tahvildar's *talar* might have been the same *eyvan* described by the Qajar poets and depicted by Coste. The

¹⁹ Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces*, 157.

confusion between the use of these two terms, *talar* and *eyvan*, can be explained by the change of the meaning attributed to each term throughout time. While contemporary accounts identify this porch as an *eyvan*, the late nineteenth-century historian calls it a *talar*. Maybe Tahvildar's use of this term would have been an indication "to evoke a Safavid patrimony" to the Qajar dynasty even though it referred to two distinct forms.²⁰ However, as the primary visual and textual sources confirm the *eyvan* in the Emarat-e Sadri was completely distinguishable from the Safavid *talar* in its space and form. This *eyvan* is indeed a portion of the Safavid palace, the *shahneshin* area, which in composition was an *eyvan* with two columns without the pillared-*talar* projection.



Figure 5-15. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Kiosque Haineh-Khânèh, Ispahan." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-9078-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

²⁰ Ibid, 160.

Whether called a *talar* or *eyvan*, this space in this complex was an evident symbol of kingship. Jennifer Scarce summarizes the role of this architectural element and space in the royal architecture of early Qajar Iran:

The plan and decoration of the divankhanah and the marble throne is a direct visual reference to Fath Ali Shah's royal status. The plan of a spacious open reception hall supported on columns stresses both the antiquity and continuity of Iranian monarchy as it is found in pre-Islamic Achaemenid and Sassanid architecture as well as in the palaces of Safavid Isfahan and Zand Shiraz. The space inside the raised platform which frames and protects the ruler was also decorated with lavish mirror mosaic which both reflects him and catches and intensifies the multicolored light of his jeweled regalia. The mirror work also surrounds portraits of Fath Ali Shah painted by Mihr Ali in 1803.²¹

The Marble Throne Hall in Tehran was the most splendid example of these royal palaces. The walls of these halls were covered with portraits of the king, princes, and Persian and European beauties. The life-size paintings of the king, in particular, turned this hall into a picture gallery where the king's bodily presence and his image converge.

Post-Safavid royal architecture drew inspiration from Safavid private and leisure spaces rather than public ceremonial models such as Safavid *talars*. Sussan Babaie especially asserts that "the relevance of Safavid imperial architecture to that of the Qajars lies in the sphere of private and leisure Safavid palaces and not in the realm of the ceremonial spaces. It is in that realm of the inner sanctum that the Qajar axis of kingship made visible."²² While

²¹ Jennifer M. Scarce, "The Architecture and Decoration of the Gulistan Palace: The Aims and Achievements of

Fath 'Ali Shah (1797-1834) and Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896)," *Iranian Studies*, 2001, Vol. 34, No. 1/4, Qajar Art and Society (2001), pp. 103-116. P 111.

²² Babaie, "In the Eyes of the Storm," 36.

the *ghulam* system was the main administrative and royal base for Safavid kingship, the Qajars relied exclusively on a network of ruling elites from the royal bloodline.²³ Babaie maintains, “regardless of Qajar imperial ambitions, the architectural expression of this corporate family operation is realized not through the imperial symbols of Safavid architecture but the architecture of the *andarun* [the private space dedicated to the royal household] and of leisure.”²⁴ As the royal household takes the primary position in exerting royal power in different parts of Iran under the Qajars, palatial architecture and *andarun* become the center of attention. During the early Qajar period “retreating into the Haram” shifted the axis of kingship from the Safavid *talars* to the palaces inspired by the architecture of *andarun*.²⁵ While the *hasht-behesht* type flourishes during the Qajar period as a primary royal architectural configuration and fits well with the interpretation provided here, the linear and elongated composition of the Marble Throne Hall begs a different analysis and explanation.

Looking back to the late Safavid royal architecture would be helpful in understanding this interest in the architecture of *andarun*. As discussed in the Chapter 2, not only *talars* were still built during Soltan Hosein’s reign, but also did Farahabad’s new spatial arrangement reflect the change of the attitude towards *haram* and its inclusion in the public and political representation of kingship. The analysis of Farahabad’s spatial arrangement suggests a new composition that combines architectural vocabularies from both the public and private realms of Safavid royal architecture [Figure 16]. Accordingly, the *divankhaneh* (public reception hall) is located between the public and private sections of the complex and

²³ Ibid, 37.

²⁴ Ibid, 54.

²⁵ Sussan Babaie, “In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship,” 37.

it features a central courtyard as the primary organizing space. The *shahneshin* and its possible *talar* mediate between the gardens and the courtyard. Rather than a centralized organization that places the palace at the center of the garden, here the palace has been shifted to the end of the site providing a view of the river and the gardens to the north. In this case, a *talar* (the space of public reception) has been inserted in the courtyard plan (a type used for the *andarun* and private sections) and created a novel composition.

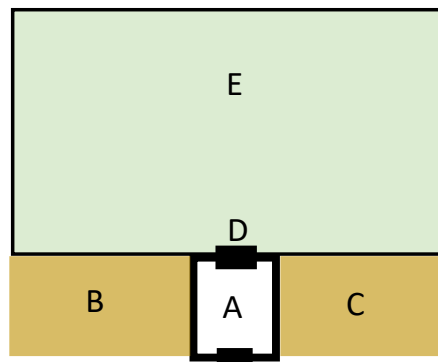


Figure 5-16. A schematic diagram to show the spatial arrangement of the palace and buildings in the Farahabad Garden: the *divankhaneh* courtyard (A), the *shahneshin* area, possibly a *talar* facing the garden (D), the women's quarter or *andarun* (B), and the *Khaneh-ye birun* or buildings with public use (C), gardens in the Farahabad Palace (E).

Comparing Farahabad to later palaces such as Karim Khan's Arg in Shiraz and the Marble Throne Hall in Tehran, I suggest that Soltan Hosein's Farahabad had a lasting effect on the palace architecture of post-Safavid Iran [Figure 17]. The linear arrangement of spaces on the two sides of a central courtyard featuring two *eyvan* or *talar* form projections towards the courtyard might have been the latest evidence of Safavid royal architecture that could accommodate the Qajar dynasty's needs. The existence of a possible *talar*, simultaneously facing the gardens and the courtyard strengthens this hypothesis. All later palaces discussed

here follow such a courtyard-plan layout. Although the use of *eyvans* punctuating the walls of the courtyard was not new to Iranian architecture, the revival of this type substituting the stand-alone tripartite Safavid *talar* prototype is notable. In line with these transformations, the Emarat-e Sadri's design as Isfahan's new *divankahneh* presents similitude to these earlier models that juxtapose public and private quarters around a central courtyard in order to house the Qajar household when the king resides in Isfahan. Thus, the pedigree of the early Qajar palace architecture can be found in the overlooked palace of Farahabad in Isfahan rather than the well-known examples of Safavid *talars* such as the Chehel Sotun. As the formal analysis of the plans indicates, Farahabad would be an apt choice for appropriation with all its innovative spatial arrangement and suitability for the needs of the extensive Qajar royal family.

Bringing the Emarat-e Sadri into the equation and presenting how its design is relevant to the preceding and contemporary royal architecture in Isfahan and Tehran provides us with an alternative to explaining the relevance of the Qajar royal architecture to that of Safavid prototypes [Figure 18,19]. As I argued in the first chapter, the Farahabad Palace-garden was beyond a leisurely retreat and its design and function contributed to the contemporary discourse of power in the late Safavid period. It should be also noted that the courtyard plan with a two-pillared *eyvan* was a known type in the residential vernacular architecture of late Safavid Isfahan. Babaie points to the mansion of Isfahan's Shaykh al-Islam, possibly with a Safavid origin and Naderi alterations, as an example of urban elite architecture presenting this composition.²⁶ Ultimately, as evidence presented in this chapter suggests, besides the *hasht-behesht* prototype, one can assume a spectrum of architectural models including the

²⁶ Babaie, "In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship," 53.

Farahabad Palace-garden, the Haft Dast Palace²⁷, and the elite residential architecture in Isfahan that would have inspired the design of the Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan and the contemporary Qajar ceremonial halls in Tehran and provinces.

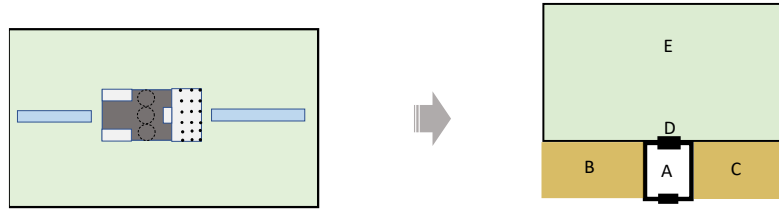


Figure 5-17. Schematic analysis of the Chehel Sotun Garden (left) and the Farahabad Garden (right). By Samira Fathi.

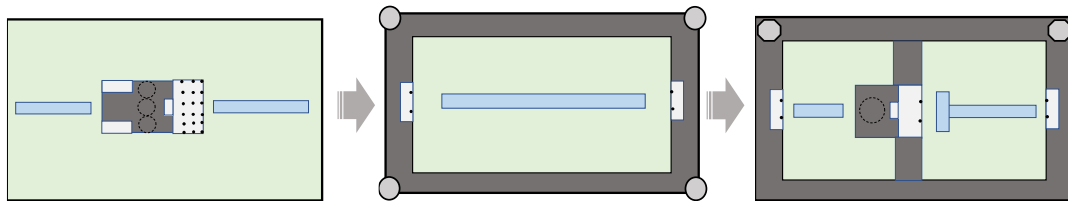


Figure 5-18. Plan analysis illustrating the transformation of spatial arrangements in palace architecture from the 17th to the 19th century: the Safavid Chehel Sotun, Isfahan (left); Karim Khan's Arg, Shiraz (middle); and the Emarat-e Sadri, Isfahan (right). By Samira Fathi.

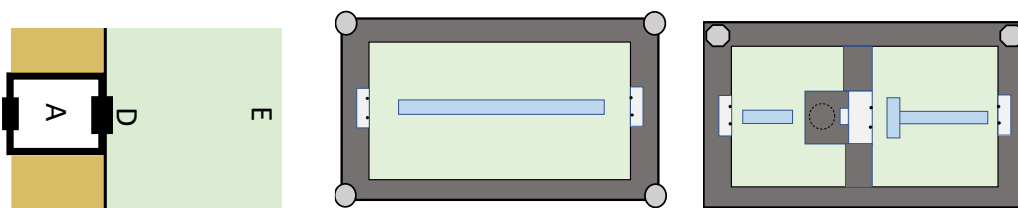


Figure 5-19. Plan analysis showing affinities between the Farahabad Palace-garden, early 18th century, Isfahan (left); Karim Khan's Arg, mid-18th century, Shiraz (middle); and the Emarat-e Sadri, early 19th century, Isfahan (right). By Samira Fathi.

²⁷ More information regarding this palace is provided in the next section.

Urban and Extra-urban Palaces

Palaces erected during Fath Ali Shah's period can be divided into two subcategories: urban and suburban or extra-urban. Other than the Golestan Palace complex, which was located inside the city walls, the rest of his palaces were mostly suburban or extra-urban palaces in the vicinity of Tehran. The Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan now can be added to the repertoire of the early Qajar urban palaces contemporary to the Marble Throne Hall. As suggested by Layla Diba, this hall was only a small remnant of a lost palatine city commissioned by Fath Ali Shah in Tehran. Her attempts to reconstruct this now-lost palace complex in the Golestan Palace propose remarkable affinities between the Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan and the palaces of this palatine city in Tehran. To reconstruct this now-lost palatine city, Diba consults the poetic descriptions of two contemporary court poets that date the construction of these palaces to sometime between 1805 and 1808. Based on these sources, she identifies three building types in this complex:

Small octagonal pavilions, known in the Qajar period as *kola farangi*; one or two-story structures with large open central porches, sometimes domed, *talar/eyvan* but which did not feature the enormous porches with wooden columns of Safavid prototypes; and buildings open at the sides in the style of the Hasht Behesht palace of Isfahan.²⁸

In addition to these types, the decorative motifs, techniques, materials, and themes of the paintings in these palaces evoke the descriptions of the Emarat-e Sadri provided by local and foreign sources. For example, the Khorshid Palace contained "a *shamseh* (roundel) on the ceiling, a fountain, a lofty *eyvan* with columns" as did the Emarat-e Sadri. This palace was

²⁸ Layla S. Diba, "The Lost Palatine City of Fath Ali Shah," 17.

decorated with “inlaid stone and wood carving, mirror-work,” and “paintings of beautiful youths (*qelman*) and maidens (*huris*) of paradise; and consisted of private rooms (*khalvat* and *hojreh*) alcoves (*qorfeh*), and its gardens were filled with the song of nightingales.”²⁹ Even the more interesting part of this complex is the Emarat-e Golestan that “featured a spacious porch open to the north and south and overlooking gardens; and a lofty arch” that matches with Tahvildar’s descriptions of the Emarat-e Sadri’s *talar*.

Besides the Eamart-e Sadri which falls into the category of urban palaces built for the king, Sadr-e Isfahani was involved in the construction of suburban palaces to accommodate Fath Ali Shah’s large royal household in his seasonal migrations. One of these suburban structures was possibly an addition to the Safavid Haft-Dast Palace in Isfahan [Figure 20]. In *Madayeh*, Baqi refers to the construction of a new *eyvan* called Otaq-e Daad (the Chamber of Justice) at the bank of the Zayandeh River adjacent to the Aminabad Chaharbagh.³⁰ This chamber was intended as a public place for serving justice, especially to help the destitute and needy inhabitants of Isfahan. Abdollah Khan, Sadr-e Isfahani’s son and governor of Isfahan at the time, was supposed to reside in this chamber one day per week and endow goods and money to the poor.³¹ This was indeed a material gesture of Sadr-e Isfahani’s generosity and his public service.

As indicated in other sources, this *eyvan* might have been a part of the palaces that Sadr-e Isfahani built next to the Safavid Haft-Dast palaces. Haft Dast Palace was located on the west side of the garden of Sa‘adatabad and was one of the buildings constructed under Shah Abbas II, in 1070/1659. This palace, as its name suggests, had seven units or constituents.

²⁹ Ibid, 20.

³⁰ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 61.

³¹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 62.

Originally, it was intended as a *dowlatkhaneh*. Only one part of these seven palaces endured the Afghan invasion but was later demolished by Zill al-Soltan in 1318/1900 altogether.

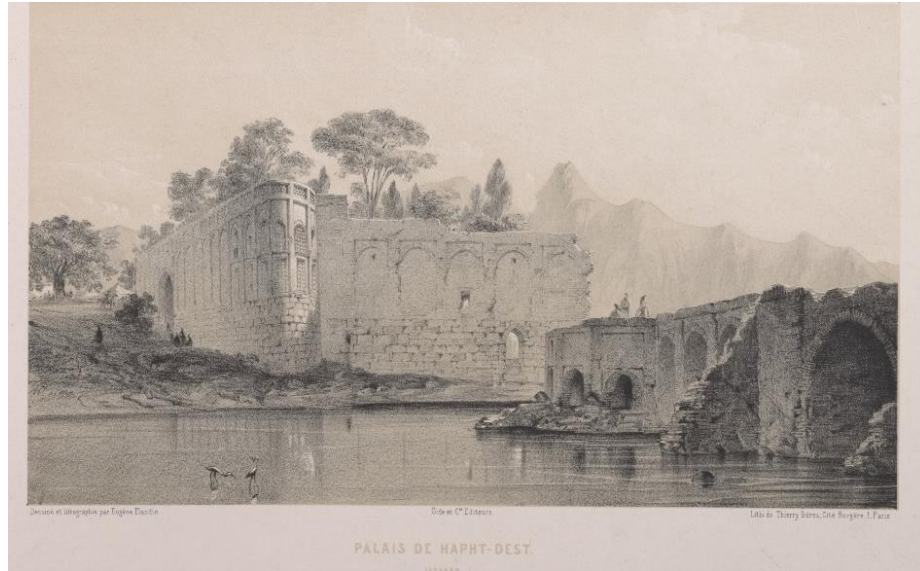


Figure 5-20. Haft Dast Palace, General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Bords du Zendeh-Roud, Ispahan; Palais de Hapht-Dest, Ispahan." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-908a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

Sadr-e Isfahani also supervised other palaces outside Isfahan mentioned earlier in this chapter.³² These palaces or mansions were intended for the residence of Fath Ali Shah and his extensive royal family in his frequent movements across the country. As Diba explains:

One of the principal vehicles for the expression of power was the propagation of numerous progeny. Fath Ali Shah fathered more than sixty sons and forty-eight daughters by almost a thousand wives and concubines. In so doing, he emulated

³² It is likely that the Nezamiyeh *emarat* in the confine of the Fin Garden was one of these palaces in Kashan erected by Sadr-e Isfahani when he was in the role of the Nezam al-Dowleh.

legendary Persian kings such as Kayumars and drew upon deep-seated traditions associating political power with potency and fruitfulness.³³

Thus, a new architectural requirement for palace design was the accommodation of such an extensive royal household and their entourage in their seasonal migrations between palaces. As Jennifer Scarce notes “The idea of migration was deep-rooted in Persian tradition, and, as practiced by the Qajar rulers and their retinue, involved moving out of Tehran for the hot summer months to cooler retreats.”³⁴ Although these seasonal movements were not particular to Qajar kings, the growing royal household necessitated increased attention to the design of suburban residential palaces. Moreover, while most of this period’s palaces were extra-urban summer retreats, Fath Ali Shah’s choice of imprinting his image on Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* reveals his desire for inclusion in the grand narrative of the Persian kingship articulated by Safavid kings in Isfahan. Emarat-e Sadri was the earliest palaces of this kind to be built under Sadr-e Isfahani’s supervision. However, examining later projects under his patronage and supervision can be informative in understanding his role as the supervisor in these palace-building undertakings.

Emarat-e Soleimaniyeh

One of these later examples is Emarat-e Soleimaniyeh at Karaj completed in 1224-27/1809-12, for the residence of prince Soleiman Mirza, Fath Ali Shah’s son.³⁵ Sadr-e Isfahani appointed Mirza Aboul Qasim Isfahani, deputy of Kashan, to undertake the construction. This palace complex was constituted of various gardens, audience halls, private quarters, and as Khavari indicates a “Chaharbagh.” The palace also features a five-

³³ Diba, “Image of Power and the Power of Images,” 35.

³⁴ Scarce, “The Arts of the 18th-20th Centuries: Architecture,” 913.

³⁵ Khavari, *Tarikh-e Zolqarnayn*, 342.

story tower attached to the main hall. There are traces of the tower's first floor remaining at the site today [Figure 21,22]. The hall is remarkable in terms of construction technique as it is the first example of a *pilot* architecture in Iran under the Qajars [Figure 23].

The only existing part of the complex is the summer pavilion with a hall that has been recently renovated as a palace-museum. This hall houses two monumental murals on two opposing walls depicting the portraits of the Qajar kings and princes [Figure 24]. The first one is the only surviving portrait of Aqa Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar dynasty seated on the throne along with the chiefs of Qajar tribes. The second one portrays Fath Ali Shah enthroned on the Peacock throne (Takht-e Tavus) and 14 of his sons surrounding him. The paintings have been signed by Abdullah Khan the well-known painter and designer of the Qajar court.





Figure 5-21. A late 19th-century photograph of the Kakh-e Soleimaniyeh, showing the octagonal tower at the corner of the palace. Photo: Golestan Palace photo archives

Figure 5-22. Remaining parts of Soleimaniyeh Palace. Source: Golestan Palace photo archives, <http://kelkaqaz.blogspot.com/2019/03/blog-post.html>



Figure 5-23. A view of the Soleimaniyeh hall, note the placement of the elongated hall over the pilot and the access to the courtyard on the other side. Photo: courtesy of Ehsan Tahmasbi



Figure 5-24. A view of the great portrait of Fath Ali Shah and the princes flanking his throne adorning one of the walls in the Soleimaniyeh Palace. Photo: courtesy of Ehsan Tahmasbi

Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin

The second example, built in 1227/1812, is a palatial complex at Soltaniyeh, known as Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin, constructed for the frequent and long residence of the king in the prairie of Soltaniyeh to oversee the preparation of his military forces in the middle of the Perso-Russian wars [Figure 25]. As the textual and archaeological pieces of evidence suggest, this now-lost military camping ground with its residential quarters and reception halls resemble the Soleimaniyeh and Emarat-e Sadri palaces. This palace was composed of a variety of spaces including *divankhaneh* (hall of the audience), *kolah farangi* (pavilion), *haramsara* (residential quarters), *khalvatkhaneh* (private quarter), *borj* (tower), bathhouses, and courtyards.³⁶ The paintings of Fath Ali Shah and his sons, similar to Negaristan and Soleimaniyeh palaces, embellished the *khalvatkhaneh* at this complex. The three-story

³⁶ Mahsa Fayzi, “Barressi-ye emarat-e mosum be ‘Sepehr-e Barin’ dar dasht-e Soltaniyeh bar assas manabe’-e tarikhi va asnaad-e tasviri,” [the examination of the Sepehr-e Barin Palace in the Soltaniyeh prairie according to the historical sources and visual documents], 2019, 137.

palace featured a reception hall and an *eyvan*, with two pillars on the third floor. The tower was probably a five-story octagonal structure analogous to the Soleimaniyeh tower, reserved as the private bedroom of the king or a viewing place for the women in the haram.³⁷

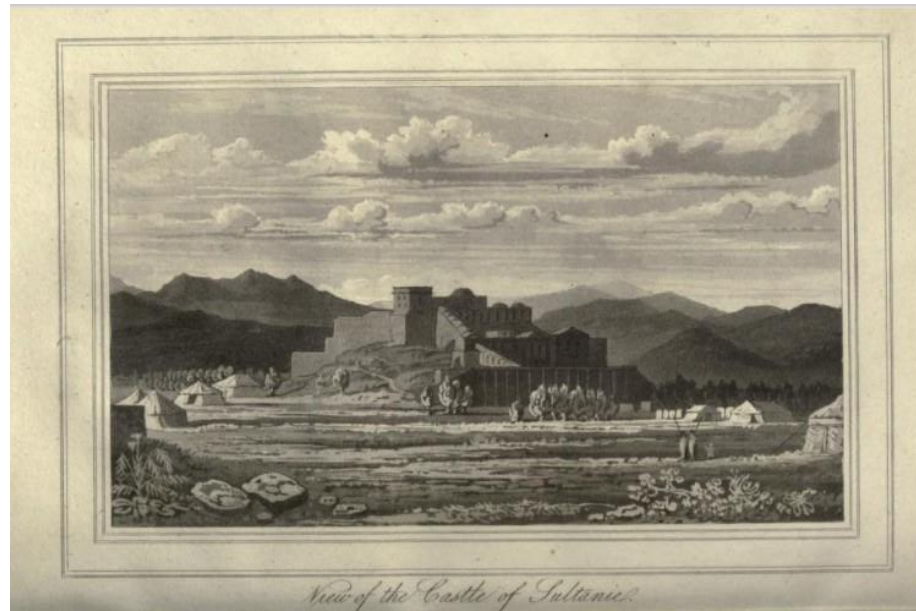


Figure 5-25. A view of the Emarat-e Sepehr-e Barin or Soltaniyeh. Vicinity of Zanjan, reproduced in Moritz von Kotzebue's *Narrative of a journey into Persia, in the suite of the imperial Russian embassy, in the year 1817*. Translated from the German.

Octagonal Palatial Towers

Aside from common patronage, there are shared design and architectural characteristics that thread Sadr-e Isfahani's palatial projects in different parts of the country. The first

³⁷ Moritz von Kotzebue, *Narrative of a Journey into Persia, in the Suite of the Imperial Russian Embassy, in the Year 1817*. Translated from the German (London Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), 230.

common element is attached octagonal towers situated at the corners of the palace configured as an elongated rectangle with a central courtyard. As discussed earlier, similar multistoried octagonal towers can be observed in the Emarat-e Soleimaniyeh and Emarat-e Soltaniyeh constructed under Sadr-e Isfahani's supervision. Visitors' accounts of the Emarat-e Sadri offer some scant clues on the existence of possible octagonal towers in this palace. Morier, in his second journey to Isfahan in 1808, noted the existence of an octagonal tower in the description of the *Emarat- Sadri*. He states: "From the garden of the Chehel Sitoon an intricate passage leads under an octagonal tower into this new palace, and opens into an oblong square laid out into flower beds, straight walks and basins of water, and surrounded on all sides by chambers for women of an inferior rank."³⁸ In 1817, Johnson also described "Amarut Noo" [Emarat-e Sadri] in his travelogue and pointed to two towers at the two ends of this building:

At the two extreme angles of the building are towers; one of them is fitted up for sitting in, and has a passage beneath it to the Cheyl Sittoon; the other is intended, no doubt, for a place of security, as its iron-based windows show. These towers spoil the pleasing effect of the whole structure, but they may possibly have their use in future times. These and similar features of security are observable in the plan of all new buildings erected by the great in Persia; I remarked them first even in mansions of private families at Shirauz, and afterwards at Aminabad, and in all new caravanseras.³⁹

Johnson refers to two towers attached to this palace, one with a residential function that provides a passage underneath leading to the Chehel Sotun Palace and the other with a

³⁸ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 167.

³⁹ John Johnson, *A journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the year 1817*, 110.

security function. He does not specify what the formal characteristics of each tower were, yet he informs us about the possible function of these linking elements. These observations can be confirmed by Coste's plan of the Narenjistan Palace examined earlier. On this plan, there are two octagonal shafts at the upper corners of the palace, one has been specifically identified as a tower. The same octagonal forms are also visible in another plan drawn by Coste depicting the Chehel Sotun Garden. According to these evidence, two octagonal tower structures marked the two corners of the Emarat-e Sadri aligned with the dividing line between this palace and the Chehel Sotun Garden.

The standing buildings in Isfahan today include an octagonal tower where Coste has labeled as the entrance to the Emarat-e Sadri. This tower, Rashk-e Jannat, is located at the northwest corner of the Rakibkhaneh mansion (currently Isfahan's Museum of Decorative Arts). The building is dated to Shah Abbas I's period and functioned as a storage for saddlery equipment. It is allegedly built over another Safavid building called Jobbehkhaneh. Sussan Babaie has referred to this tower as a possible extant Safavid tower-pavilion in the residential quarters of the mid-seventeenth-century Bagh-e Khalvat (the garden of solitude). She suggests that there was a "polygonal multi-storied tower in one corner of the Bagh-i Kahalvat" reserved exclusively for the king and provided access and views to the *andarun* and the private quarters. Accordingly, she assumes that the standing octagonal tower might have a Safavid origin despite its eighteenth century-looking mural paintings and decorations.⁴⁰

On the other hand, Mahvash Alemi notes that the Bagh-e Khalvat "was modified when the Sara-yi Sadri was built on its grounds during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1797–

⁴⁰ Sussan Babaie, "In the Eye of Storm," 51.

1834), as documented in a drawing by Coste in 1840.”⁴¹ As Kaempfer’s *planographia* of Isfahan in the late seventeenth century shows, there were two cylindrical multi-story towers between the Bagh-e Khalvat and Bagh-e Chehel Sotun on the west side of the residential quarters. A late nineteenth-century photograph of an unknown Safavid *emarat* in Isfahan presents a cylindrical tower adjacent to this *talar*, which accords with the other two Safavid towers depicted by Kaempfer.⁴² While the existence of multi-storied palatial towers can be traced back to seventeenth-century Isfahan and even earlier to the Timurid period,⁴³ the prevalence of these small octagonal towers following the same form and design in the early Qajar period is remarkable.⁴⁴ Comparing the location of those Safavid towers with the existing tower in the corner of the Rakibkhaneh reveals that the standing octagonal tower is a later addition to the Safavid foundation of the building. It might have been added during the alteration of the whole area of the Bagh-e Khalvat and its preparation for the construction of the Emarat-e Sadri [Figure 26, 27].⁴⁵

⁴¹ [Bagh-i Khalvat — Dumbarton Oaks \(doaks.org\)](http://www.doaks.org)

⁴² This palace has been identified as the Talar-e Tavileh which seems questionable. As the tower in the photograph cannot be identified on Kaempfer's *Planographia* and its existence cannot be corroborated with the textual descriptions of the Talar-e Tavileh.

⁴³ Kaveh Bakhtiar, “Palatial Towers of Nasir Al-Din Shah,” *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 33–43, 33.

⁴⁴ John Johnson, *A journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the year 1817*, 110.

⁴⁵ Conversion of Kaempfer's *Planographia* into a modern city plan by E. Galdieri. Preserved buildings black. "Marstdlle", Heinz Luschey, “Der königliche Marstall in Isfahān und Engelbert Kaempfers *Planographia* des Palastbezirkes 1712,” *Iran*, 1979, Vol. 17 (1979), pp. 71-79.

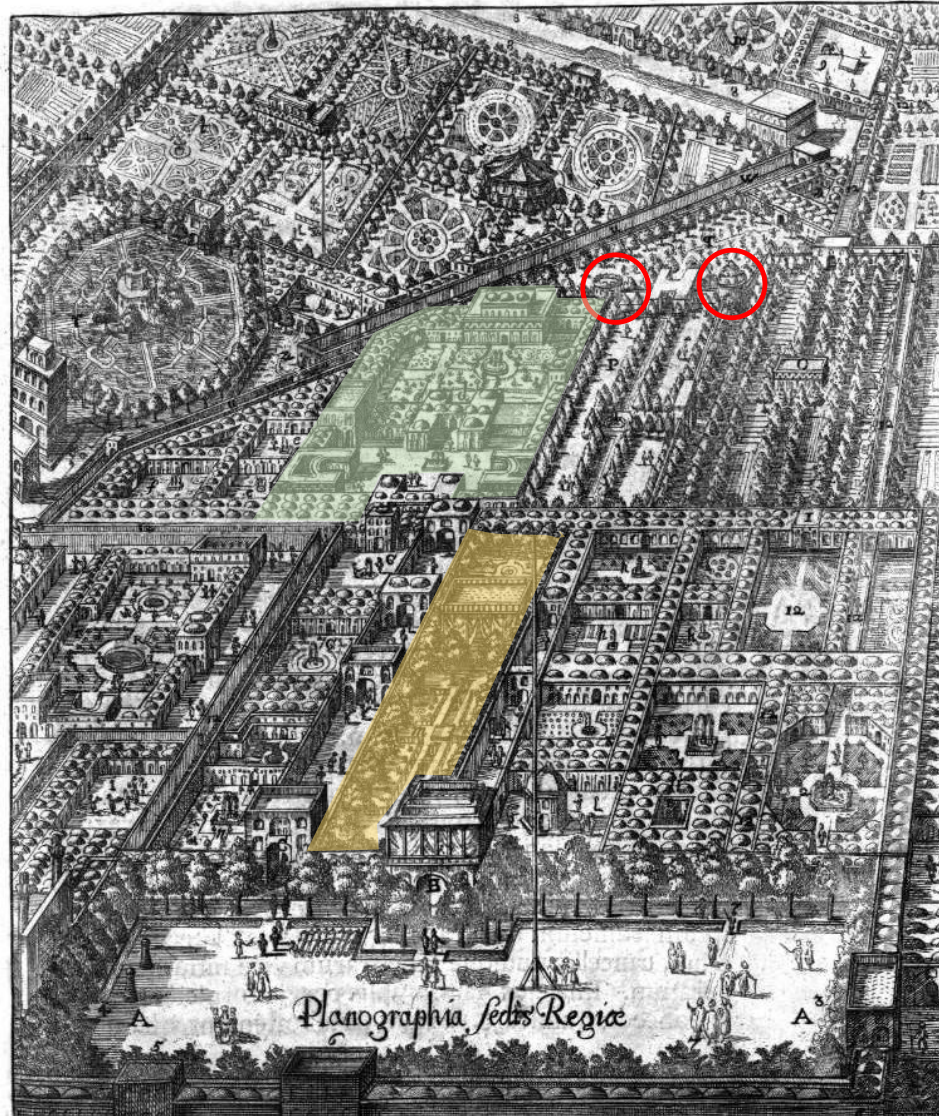


Figure 5-26. Kaempfer's "Planographia" of Isfahan, illustrating the Safavid royal precinct in the late 17th century. Talar-e Tavileh (yellow), Bagh-e Khalvat (green), and red circles pointing to the cylindrical towers at the western side of the complex. Note the location of these towers at the corners and intersections of the buildings.

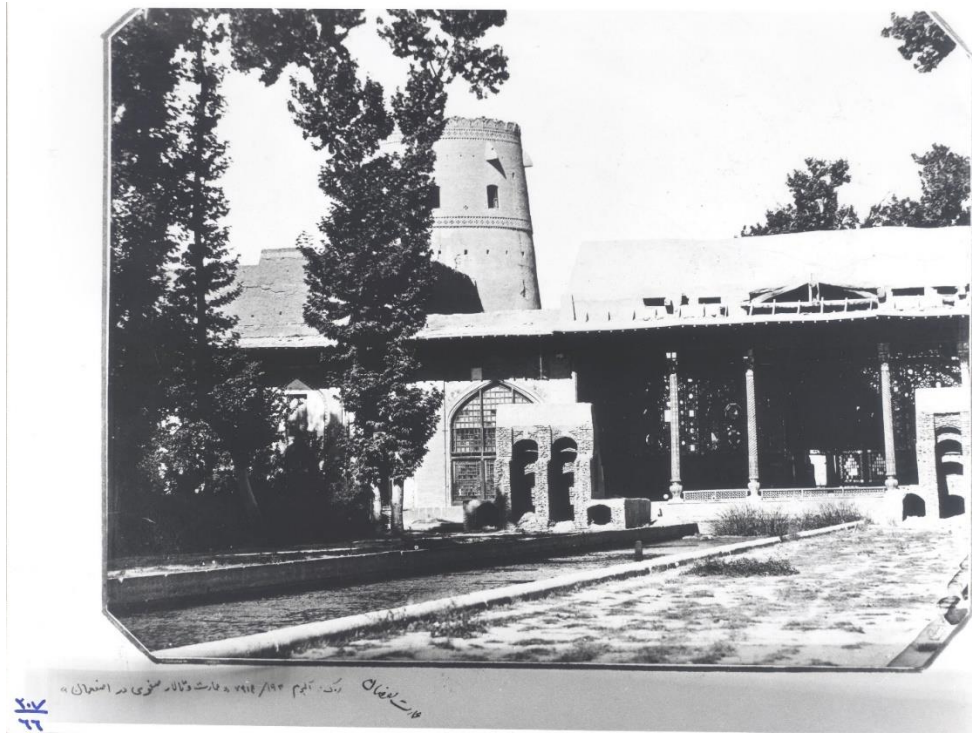


Figure 5-27. A late 19th century photograph of the Emarat-e Isfahan (possibly the Talar-e Tavileh) and a cylindrical multi-story tower at the background. Photo: Golestan Palace Photo Archives, no.207/66.

As the renovation history of the Rakibkhaneh suggests, the building was reconstructed and renewed during Sadr-e Isfahani's governorship and later utilized as the residence of Isfahan's governors under the Qajars, especially by the prince Zill al-Soltan. The basement was also used as a prison.⁴⁶ Since Sadr-e Isfahani's interventions in this building have not been recorded in detail, it is not clear if the foundation of the tower was in place prior to this phase of restoration. However, the formal and decorative affinities of the Rashk-e Jannat to other contemporary palatial towers supervised by Sadr-e Isfahani corroborates its early Qajar architecture and craftsmanship. Like the octagonal towers described in the Soltaniyeh and Soleimaniyeh palaces, the Rashk-e Jannat was a five-story octagonal tower mounted

⁴⁶ Claimed in the history of the building presented by Isfahan's Museum of Decorative Arts in the Rakibkhaneg mansion.

with a smaller two-story wooden structure on top. Flandin's engraving depicts this tower in its full seven-story version behind the Chaharbagh palace while today only the masonry part remains in situ.⁴⁷

Another perspective produced by Coste from the interior of the Chehel Sotun Talar provides some clues on the spatial and visual relationship between this palace and the Rashk-e Jannat Tower [Figure 28]. In this perspective, Coste is drawing the view from the inner part of the *eyvan* in the Chehel Sotun Palace and facing towards the East. Visible in his field of vision from this vantage point, he observes the Rashk-e Jannat Tower and the Masjid-e Shah at the background through the *talar*'s pillars. Although given his vantage point he would have seen these elements more to the right of the picture plane, his depiction of the tower is quite accurate. The juxtaposition of this tower with the *minars* and the dome of the Masjid-e Shah suggests how these new multi-storied structures would have been visible from different parts of the *dowlatkhaneh* [Figure 29-35].

⁴⁷ This section has focused on the early Qajar palaces which were built under Sadr-e Isfahani's supervision and does not include all the palaces constructed in this period. Similar octagonal towers can be observed in other palaces built for Fath Ali Shah such as the Qasr-e Qajar in the vicinity of Tehran which confirms the attribution of the Rashk-e Jannat to the architectural repository of this period in general.

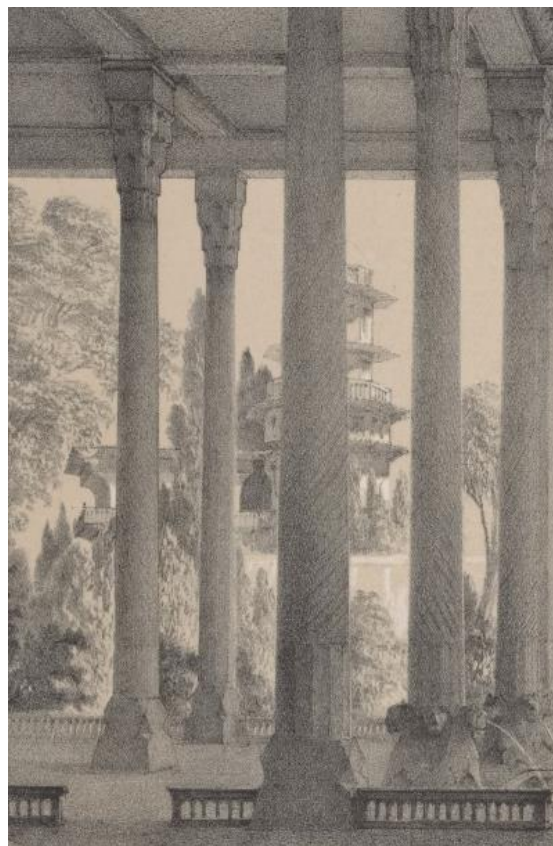


Figure 5-28. General Research Division, The New York Public Library. "Palais de Tchehel-Sutoun, à Ispahan." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed November 9, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-907f-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>. Note the octagonal tower in the background visible from the palace's pillared porch (talar).

Figure 5-29. A closer view of the octagonal tower visible through the pillars.

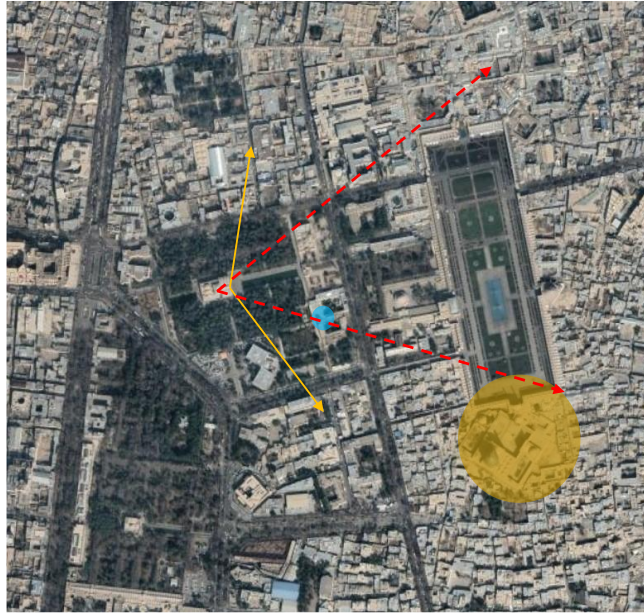


Figure 5-30. Aerial view of the Safavid palace complex, Google Earth 2022. Note the location of the Masjed Shah and the octagonal tower that might have been visible through pillars in the Chehel Sotun's talar, as illustrated in Coste's perspective from this palace. As the field of view arrows imposed on this aerial view show, Coste would not be able to see these elements exactly the way depicted in this perspective given his vantage point located inside the deep niche (eyvan) of the palace (indicated by red arrows, yellow arrows show normal FOV from a vantage point of a viewer standing right in the talar). It is plausible that he has added these structures to the background later to complete his sketch.



Figure 5-31. Aerial view showing the spatial relationship between the Chehel Sotun Palace and the standing octagonal tower (Rashk-e Jannat), Google Earth 2022.



Figure 5-32. A view from the southern side of the entrance area leading to the Chehel Sotun Garden. Note the Rashk-e Jannat Tower in the background. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

Figure 5-33. A model of the Rakibkhaneh mansion (Isfahan's Decorative Arts Museum) inside the museum. Note the location of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower at the corner of the courtyard. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

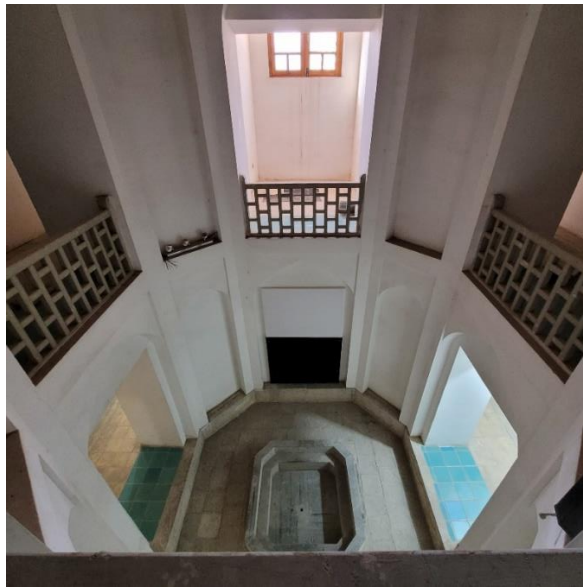


Figure 5-34. The view of the tower from the courtyard. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

Figure 5-35. An interior view of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower looking downward from the second floor. The central void was covered on the third floor adding to the functional space of the tower. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.

Along with this common architectural type, the decoration and wall paintings of the tower attest to the Qajar taste and technique recognizable in other contemporary palaces.

The fifth floor of the tower is decorated with rich mural paintings featuring figural and floral

decorations. The walls are covered with portraits of female figures interspersed with landscape and architectural illustrations [Figure 36, 37]. The figures also present a resemblance to Mughal portraits distinguishable from the Safavid portraits. The floral wall decorations include the flower vase motif with ducks and birds completing the composition. The likeness of the motifs in this tower to the dado carvings at the Marble Throne Hall in Tehran indicates the possibility of shared workmanship or design layout in both buildings [Figure 38, 39]. This evidence attests that the Rashk-e Jannat Tower would have been built sometime between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, definitely prior to Morier's visit to Isfahan in 1808.⁴⁸ This octagonal palatial tower casts light on how early Qajar palaces' design both drew inspiration from the Safavid design practices in Isfahan and developed a new configuration for the changing needs of the royal household.

⁴⁸ As noted by Ali 'Alaie in "koushkha-ye motabbaq dar baghha-ye Irani" [Multistoried pavilions in Iranian gardens], *Golestan-e Honar* 11, Spring 2009. pp 55-67. Nilufar Malek also attributes this tower to the Qajar era in "gozaresh kargah-e maremati-ye Emarat-e Rakibkhaneh," 18.

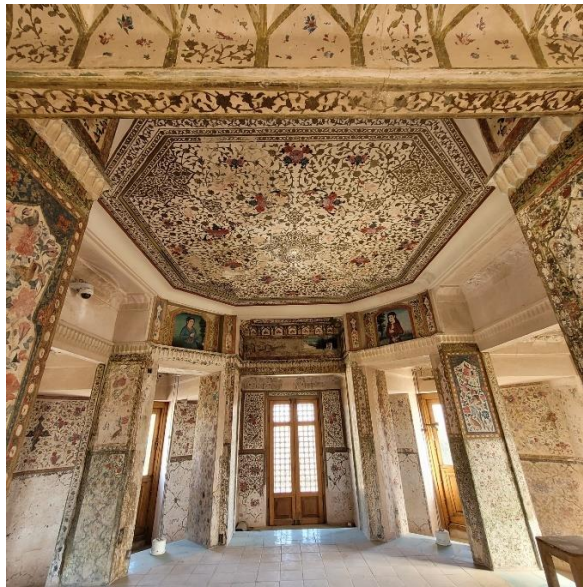
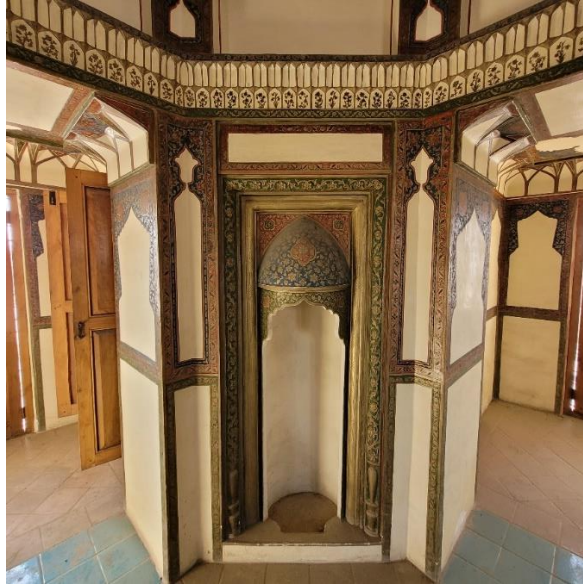


Figure 5-36. Richly decorated and painted walls of the fourth floor, featuring small rooms at the corners and elaborate niches carved out of the piers. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021

Figure 5-37. An interior view of the fifth floor. This is the most elaborately gilded and painted space of the tower. The walls and ceiling are covered with floral and figural paintings. Landscape murals have been interspaced with portraits of the beauties.

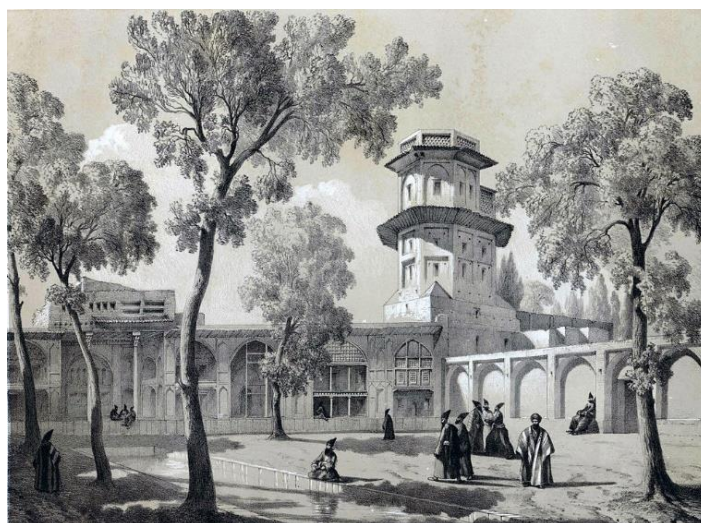


Figure 5-38. Mural paintings of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower. Source: Samira Fathi, 2021. Note the depiction of the duck's body and posture.

Figure 5-39. Floral and figural carvings on the marble dado of the Marble Throne Hall. Source: Samira Fathi, 2021. Note the posture of the two ducks on the lower part of the dado.

Besides particular palace projects overseen by Sadr-e Isfahani, other contemporary palaces across the country feature this kind of multistoried palatial towers in the *divankhaneh* precinct. One example of this group is the Borj-e Rokn al-Dowleh at the

Emarat-e Divani-e Qazvin. Rokn al-Dowleh, Fath Ali Shah's eighth son, became the governor of Qazvin in 1823 [Figure 40, 41]. As Alaie speculates, this tower might have been located in the wall separating the Naderi and Rokniyeh courtyards and built sometime in the eighteenth century or the early nineteenth century.⁴⁹ In terms of the location between two courtyard palaces and the architectural form, this tower is akin to the octagonal towers of the Emarat-e Sadri, providing a high and multi-directional view of the surrounding area.



⁴⁹ Ali Alaie, “koushkha-ye motabbaq dar baghha-ye Irani,” 62.



Figure 5-40. Courtyard of the seraglio, Qazvin by Eugène Flandin. A view of the Emarat-e Divani-ye Qazvin in 1840. The New York Public Library's Digital Collection

Figure 5-41. Emarat-e Divani-ye Qazvin in the late 19th century. Another early Qajar *divankhaneh* featuring the combination of courtyard layout and a multi-story attached octagonal tower. Note the design of the tower and its resemblance to the Rashk-e Jannat Tower and other contemporary examples discussed in this section. Photo: Golestan Palace Photo archives, no. 248/71.

A prominent example of this structure was constructed in the Golestan Palace, called Borj-e Jahan-nama, functioned as the *khawbgah* (sleeping quarter) of Fath Ali Shah. This tower was built in four masonry stories and the fifth floor featured a light-weight wooden structure as a pillared porch surrounding the central core of the tower. Textual evidence indicates there was another slender and high tower in this location attributed to Aqa Mohammad Shah, the founder of the Qajar Dynasty, prior to the construction of the Borj-e Jaahan-nama.⁵⁰ As the views of this now-lost tower suggest it was also an octagonal tower resembling the octagonal towers examined in this section.

During the early Qajar era, these palatial towers were mostly called with the general term, tower (*borj*), and positioned in the haram area. They were in use from the early Qajar

⁵⁰ Ibid, 56.

period and exclusively reserved for the king's or haram's private use. Later during the Qajar period, these palatial towers were favored by Naser al-Din Shah and appeared in his urban and suburban palaces. The upper floor in these multistoried palaces was set aside for king's sleeping chamber. The tower was guarded at night and the height and insulation of the structure ensured the safety and security of the king.⁵¹ The Naseri palatial towers were specifically identified as *kolah farangi* (in the style of European chapeau) and presented a more spacious and elaborated version of the early Qajar examples.⁵²

As the location and the extensive decorations of the Rashk-e Jannat Tower indicate, it might have been one of these *khwabgah* towers dedicated to the private repose of the king or the governor. Its height, visibility, and strategic location between the public and private realms denote dominance and power that sets the king's private chamber as a landmark in the palace complex. Unlike the stand-alone multistoried towers placed in the middle of a garden (e.g. Hasht Behesht, Jahan-nama, Uch Martabeh and Goldasteh) with public and ceremonial functions, this private palatial structures were embedded at the intersection of public and private sections of the palace complex.⁵³ While these earlier examples do not

⁵¹ Kaveh Bakhtiar, "Palatial Towers of Nasir Al-Din Shah." *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 33–43. For other studies regarding multistoried towers in Safavid and Qajar palaces see: Ali 'Alaie, "koushkha-ye motabbaq dar baghha-ye Irani."

⁵² For the recent study on *kolah farangi* and its metaphorical implications in Iranian architecture see: Zeynab Tamassoki, "Edrak-e hoviyyat va tarikhnegari-ye me'mari: kolah farangi va gofteman khod-digari dar Iran-e modern (1659-1925)," [Perception of identity and architectural historiography: kolah farangi and the discourse of self-other in modern Iran 1659-1925], Ph.D. Dissertation, Shahid Beheshti University, 2022. P 130.

⁵³ For a study of the Goldasteh palace see: Farshid Emami, "Royal Assemblies and Imperial Libraries: Polygonal Pavilions and Their Functions in Mughal and Safavid Architecture." *South Asian Studies* (Society for South Asian Studies) 35, no. 1 (2019): 63–81. In this article, Emami proposes that the Guldasta pavilion was used as a *kitabkhaneh*, a place for the royal assembly with the learned men and similar functions, during the Safavid period. For another study by the same author on the Jahan-Nama pavilion see: "All the

exceed three stories in height, these early Qajar towers can reach as high as seven floors. Unlike the Safavid octagonal multistoried prototypes, known as the *hasht-behehst* type, these later slender towers rise from an inward-looking square or octagonal base in the lower floors and convert into an outward-looking octagonal chamber providing a lavishly designed and decorated pavilion.

Architectural analysis of early Qajar towers in this chapter illustrates two significant points about the architectural practice of the early Qajar period. First, the octagonal multistoried towers located in the *dowlatkhaneh* area is a unique structure formulated and designed in the first quarter of the nineteenth century and perceived as a place for royal repose. The liminality of this structure between the realm of public and private, as well as its capacity to provide a panoramic view of the surrounding area right from the heart of the palace complex makes this structure a specific type distinct from the preceding and following examples. Here, rather than a showbox for exhibiting royal power and possibly engaging in a mutual gaze between the ruler and the subject, the tower becomes an omnipresent eye observing the subjects, seeing without being seen. This tower, in both form and function, imply solitude and individualism placed at the intersection of two poles of power in the Qajar Dynasty, the Qajar haram and the Qajar state. As Fath Ali Shah was represented as an omnipresent king in other media, these imposing royal structures stood out from the crowd of royal buildings as the signifier of Fath Ali Shah's ever-watching presence.

Second, these towers must be distinguished from other multistoried and octagonal buildings erected under the Safavids and the later Qajar period. It seems there is a confusion in the current scholarship on these types and their function. As I have demonstrated here, these towers present a distinct category not to be confused with the *kolah farangi* type. The genealogy of the *kolah farangi* goes back to the Timurid *hasht-behesht* layout and these two storied stand-alone structures were usually built in the middle of Safavid gardens. During the early Qajar period, *kolah farangi* type was also erected among Fath Ali Shah's palace complexes and clearly identifiable from the tower (*borj*) type. I suggest that rather than moving from the Naseri period back in time to identify these towers as *kolah farangi*, we need to contextualize and historicize these unique structures in their own period.

The Awaiting Palace: Expansive and Vacant

The Emarat-e Sadri would have been the most extensive, spacious, and grand palace built outside the capital city, as gauged by the contemporary and later visitors. In 1877, Tahvildar praises this *emarat* as the most comprehensive and expansive among royal buildings and believes that such a great *talar* had not been built after the Chehel Sutun, Ali Qapu, and Aynehkhaneh. In terms of judging the building's execution, Tahvildar describes it by adjectives like *binazir* (unique), *marghub* (high quality), *'Ali* (sublime), and *Darkhor-e Sha 'n-e Haramkhaneh-ye Mobarakeh* (worthy of the royal household's status).⁵⁴ Even Jaber Ansari, who seems to be a critic of Qajar art and craftsmanship, acknowledged the

⁵⁴ Tahvildar Isfahani, *Joghrafiya-ye Isfahan*, 24.

sublimity of the Emarat-e Sadri's decorations compared to Safavid palaces and found the gilding and embellishments of this *emarat*'s 25 rooms no less than the Ali Qapu Palace.⁵⁵

Not only did local learned men like Tahvildar find this palace notable, but also it was a superb building representative of contemporary artistic taste and workmanship in the eye of Orientalist envoys. This complex was intended to accommodate the whole royal family including the king and around 240 princes accompanied by their attendees. It was designed to respond to this demand in the limited confines of the Safavid palace precinct through its architectural and spatial arrangement. Other than its practical purposes, which must be a fundamental consideration in an architectural project, it is interesting to note the state of readiness to serve the royal family through the extensive efforts put forth for providing all the necessary amenities and facilities for the comfortable sojourn of a large entourage in this complex. Morier explains this preparedness in the following passage:

It is indeed considered so perfect in its establishment, that if the King were to arrive at Ispahan without a moment's notice, not one, the smallest domestic article, would be wanting for the convenience of his suite, and the whole palace would present all the comforts which would be found after a residence of many years.⁵⁶

Johnson also points to the expansiveness of this *emarat* and the amenities provided by Sadr-e Isfahani, to host the royal household should they reside in Isfahan, after his observations in 1818:

⁵⁵ Jaber Ansari, *Tarikh-e Isfahan*, 350. It is not clear how many rooms were in the Emarat-e Sadri and whether Ansari's estimation of 25 rooms is accurate.

⁵⁶ Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 167.

The apartments are indeed very elegantly fitted up and are destined to be occupied by His present Majesty and his suite. They said to be furnished with all that he can immediately want; though it is not to be supposed that his whole family, including all those who are alive out of his two hundred and forty children, could be accommodated in them. The pictures are numerous, and they are all portraits of His present Majesty, Futteh Ali Shah, and his noble family of sons; a well-imagined compliment from the person who prepared this royal residence. The rooms extend along three sides of a square or garden and are sufficient for the accommodation of a *hundred persons* with every possible convenience. There are orange groves between the sitting rooms; and tanks of water are found in the principal apartments, which are all arched.⁵⁷

Even comparing the size of standing palaces like the Chehel Sotun and Hasht Behesht to the Emarat-e Sadri on the maps is a testimony to the grand scale of this palace project. Just the built area of the Narenjistan is approximately twice as large as the Chehel Sotun Palace on the Russian map. Although this overall estimate represents the sum of various rooms and apartments in this complex, this simple comparison illuminates the amount of labor and sums invested in the completion of this project in Isfahan.

Apart from its grand scale, the high quality of craftsmanship and artistic undertakings in this complex have been recognized in eyewitness accounts. In terms of architectural distinctions between this *emarat* and standing Safavid palaces in Isfahan, Ouseley claims “If the other [Safavid] palaces derive from their more ample proportions and richer though faded decorations, an air of superior majesty, this modern and smaller building pleases,

⁵⁷ John Johnson, *A Journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the Year 1817*. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 110.

perhaps in a higher degree, by the smiling gloss of novelty.”⁵⁸ In addition to the novelty, these apartments are better suited for habitation as opposed to the dreary and obsolete Safavid palaces, as Ouseley maintains:

The others, not yet claiming veneration as monuments of antiquity, are, however, sufficiently old to appear, when considered as dwelling places, dreary, gloomy and incommodious, whilst the newly-constructed apartments of Fattah Abad seem to constitute a cheerful, clean and comfortable habitation.⁵⁹

In 1818, the Scottish artist, diplomat, and traveler, Sir Ker Porter, finds this *emarat* a “superb structure,” designed in the same style as other [Safavid] buildings but “executed in a more simple and light, and therefore more elegant taste.”⁶⁰ Buckingham notes the alleged superiority of this *emarat* to other contemporary palaces claimed by the Emarat-e Sadri’s builder Aqa Bozorg. This architect was assigned to give a tour of the recently completed Emarat-e Sadri to Buckingham in 1808. Quoting Aqa Bozorg, Buckingham mentions that “It is said to be by far the best palace of his own in all the country, and far superior to any of the royal residences at Teheran, Tabreez, Kermanshah, or Shiraz,”⁶¹ and continues to describe the layout of this building:

This palace, which is in the general style of the plainest of the old ones here, is furnished with spacious courts, fountains, canals, gardens, and trees. With such fine models immediately before their eyes, the builders have succeeded in completing a

⁵⁸ William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Sir Ker Robert Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia: during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, 417.

⁶¹ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 232.

tolerable imitation of the more ancient works, it is only less costly, less gorgeous, and less overpowering in splendour.⁶²

Although Buckingham enjoys the novelty of this new *emarat*, in his romantic and Orientalist view seeking a more authentic image of the Safavid past in Isfahan, everything even in this agreeable building reveals the decline in the arts:

All these rooms being newly carpeted, the work fresh, and everything in perfect order, there is greater pleasure in witnessing this effort of recent labour than in traversing the decayed halls of more splendid days; though almost every part of the modern works, both in the architecture and the details, bespeaks a decline of art in the country.⁶³

And to justify the construction of such an inferior building in comparison to the Safavid models, he relies on an Orientalist paradigm to explain this unnecessary undertaking: “For, though all the remains of departed grandeur here are the property of the king, it is the fashion of this country for the reigning sovereign not to inhabit any palace of his ancestors; so that excellent edifices are thus neglected and destroyed, to erect inferior ones on their site.”⁶⁴ Through these comparisons, these travelers explain their unresolved and mixed feelings towards the contemporary architectural scene of early Qajar Isfahan. In so doing, these spectators fail to acknowledge the enunciative role of architecture in the politically and culturally charged domain of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* for the new Qajar king, Fath Ali Shah. They also overlook the fact that this new complex was mostly built over the ruins of the Safavid private quarters that in the span of 80 years after the fall of the Safavids might have been in need of reconstruction. This complex also was attached to the most celebrated

⁶² Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 234.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 232.

Safavid audience hall, the Chehel Sotun, and was meant to function in relation to the remaining functional edifices of the Safavid period. Therefore, not only did this new *emarat* was placed in dialogue with Safavid past and its royal prestige, but also it was planned to respond to the contemporary necessities of living in this palace as a royal residential complex.

The fact that Aqa Bozorg, the “builder” of this *emarat*, accompanied Buckingham for visiting this new edifice is a curious phenomenon reflecting the significance of this project for Sadr-e Isfahani to be presented to the foreign artists and visitors. As a convention in this period, foreign envoys and travelers were supposed to be accompanied and guided by a host (*mehmandar*), usually appointed by the governor, to guide the guest during his visit to the city. Although Buckingham’s use of the word builder does not clarify what this person’s exact role was, the fact that he was allowed to accompany Buckingham signifies his high status and official appointment for this purpose. According to *Jami’ Ja’fari*, this person must have been the same architect whom Sadr-e Isfahani set out to Yazd to erect a new Shah madraseh in the Tabrizian quarter.⁶⁵

Sadr-e Isfahani’s pride in showcasing Isfahan’s architectural legacy and his part in reviving the city is also manifest on another occasion where he encourages Sir Harford Jones to stay longer in Isfahan before his departure to Tehran and visit the city’s buildings, as Morier reports: “The Beglerbeg said, ‘that the Ambassador was to stay at Ispahan to see the country at his leisure, and visit all the fine buildings of the city.’”⁶⁶ All these instances

⁶⁵ Mohammad Ja’far ibn Mohammad Hosein Naeeni, *Jami’ Ja’fari*, 556. Aqa Bozorg was the son of the Ostad-e Saani, Aqa Jaani Me’marbashhi (the head architect).

⁶⁶ Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 172.

imply to what extent Sadr-e Isfahani perceived his architectural achievements as signs of dignity and self-promotion that has to be exhibited and introduced to the visitors of Isfahan.

The showcase of this palace and Sadr-e Isfahani's projects was not an isolated effort directed towards the foreign envoys and visitors. The eulogy of this magnificent palace and its construction process were also recorded in Sadr-e Isfahani's textual legacy, *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh*. In this *tazkira*, Baqi dedicates a section to the erection of the *haramsara*, the foundation date, the intents behind its construction and its architectural components. As Baqi claims, by the completion of this *emarat* in a very short time, a paradise appeared in Isfahan and Isfahan's claim of being a paradise-like city (which had been lost for years) was proven. Then he praises the joyful space (*fazaa*) of this *emarat*, its solid and stable structure, and its lofty *eyvan* and then acclaims its pleasant bathhouse and the orderly layout its Narenjistan. He claims that the palaces of paradise are imperfect compared to this *emarat* and Eyvan-e Kasra⁶⁷ is humiliated in front of its *eyvan*.⁶⁸

Besides Baqi's eulogy of Sadr-e Isfahani's *emarat*, Mirza Mohammad Ali, with the pen name of Danesh, notes that ceilings in this *emarat* were covered with roundels and each palace (*qasr*) was decorated with floral paintings resembling flower gardens (*golestan*). The walls were covered with figural paintings of both men and women (*sourat o temsaal-e divarash*) better than *Houri* and *Ghelman* in paradise. Its *eyvan* is introduced here as a jewel-inlaid *pishtagh* (arched portal). Then he admires the *emarat*'s pure pool (*daryacheh*) and its mirrorwork when the king's image gets reflected on each piece of the mirrors. Danesh calls this *emarat* a ready and available paradise (*behesht-e naghd*) for the Iranian

⁶⁷ The palace of Khosrow, Sassanian king, and a landmark in the history of palatial architecture.

⁶⁸ Seyyed Abd ol-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh*, 31.

people (*ahl-e Iran ra*) and encourages an unknown subject (it seems to be the king) to reside in this eternal paradise instead of making things difficult on himself. The last verse, providing the date of the *emarat*, congratulates Fath Ali Shah on the completion of this *emarat* (*bovad yarab mobarak in bana soltan-e dowran ra*).⁶⁹

As the expansive scale of this project and its state of readiness indicate, Sadr-e Isfahani completed the construction and embellishment of this palace not merely as a royal residence but also as a signifier of his own origin, wealth, social status, and power. The patronage of this palace was a means for Sadr-e Isfahani to show off his resourcefulness in bolstering Fath Ali Shah's status as an emerging king. Sadr-e Isfahani also aimed to present Isfahan as an agreeable and appropriate city to house the seat of the throne if Fath Ali Shah chose to. As Danesh artfully composed in his ode, the king could have chosen Isfahan and resided in this city rather than making things difficult on himself, possibly pointing to the construction of a new palace complex in the Golestan Palace at Tehran. Despite all the efforts put together to construct this lavish and spacious palace for Fath Ali Shah in Isfahan, it seems that the palace remained an empty showbox erected in hope of attracting the king to Isfahan. Yet even an empty and awaiting showbox ought to be worthy of the status of both Fath Ali Shah and his Amin al-Dowleh, to flaunt their glory in front of the standing Safavid monuments.

Towards a Shift in Artistic Taste

With respect to the architectural manifestation of this *emarat*, what caught the attention of European visitors is a set of agreeable differences between this new work and the

⁶⁹ Ibid, 32

standing Safavid monuments. Referring to their descriptions of this building, presented earlier in this section, they use phrases like “a very good specimen of the style and workmanship of the present day,” “a cheerful, clean and comfortable habitation,” “elegantly fitted up” apartments, “superb structure,” “executed in a more simple and light,” “the plainest,” “less costly, less gorgeous, and less overpowering in splendor,” and the decorations of *emarat* demonstrating “a great advancement in the true principles of the ornamental invention.” As these phrases indicate, the Emarat-e Sadri was the best example of a palatial structure in Iran and a comfortable residential building for the royal household in terms of its architectural design and spatial arrangement. At the same time, even the apparently negative adjectives such as the plainest, simple, light, and less costly suggest a transformation in the architectural practice and style that must be evaluated in the context of nineteenth-century global modernizations.

Given that Sadr-e Isfahani was one of the wealthiest men of his time, these characteristics cannot be simply justified as lack of resources. As Baqi’s statement on this *emarat* suggests, Sadr-e Isfahani might have spent a considerable sum for accomplishing this *emarat* in a short time (*be andak zamani*). Although not devoid of exaggerations, Baqi maintains that due to the rush (*hojum-e kargozaran*) of laborers and abundance of money (*vofour-e derham o dinar*), a vibrant atmosphere was created (*shur o ghogha-yi bala gereft*) while erecting this building.⁷⁰ Estimated by later accounts, he must have spent around 100 thousand tomans for the completion of this *emarat*.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Seyyed Abd ol-Baqi Isfahani, *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh*, 31.

⁷¹ Heydar Ali Nadim al-Molk Isfahani, *Tarikh Mokhtasar Isfahan*, 156.

Rather than linking these characteristics to the availability or shortage of resources, I suggest reading these transformations as indicators of new architectural taste in Isfahan that gave a distinct form and spatial arrangement to this palace. Since nothing has remained of this *emarat* to speculate how it was different from existing palaces in Isfahan, a comprehensive assessment of its architectural and decorative program is impossible. However, observers' comments on this building emphasize the creation of a spacious and comfortable space for inhabitation in a simpler manner which can be a hint to a paradigm shift in the conception and perception of form and function.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the spatial composition of this *emarat* represented a new design paradigm where the domed chamber and *talar* concept, associated with the seat of the king, was integrated into the courtyard layout, regularly perceived as private quarters for women and prevalent in domestic architecture. In this marriage of concepts, the officiality and ceremonial functions of the *shahneshin* were negotiated by the elements of comfort and convenience expected from a residential quarter. It seems that this new composition came with other experimentations in design as observed in the adaptation of octagonal palatial towers and the use of *pilot* plan in other palaces supervised by Sadr-e Isfahani and built at this time. Presumably, the effects such as lightness and simplicity might be the results of these architectural experimentations with construction materials, forms, and techniques.

As the court chronicler Vaqaye' negar highlights in his panegyric of this *emarat*, the Emarat-e khold-e Barin was a novel (*badi* ') and unprecedented palace unknown and

unrealized in former dynasties.⁷² Following on his description of Fath Ali Shah's intentions for erecting a new palace in Isfahan and among Safavid palaces, he made sure to mention the novelty and uniqueness of this *emarat*.

The Pictorial Program in the Emarat-e Sadri

Despite the similarities between this *emarat* and adjacent Safavid palaces, almost every European visitor has noted differences in the execution, quality of decorations, and embellishments in these buildings, as earlier noted. The extensive walls and ceilings of the Emarat-e Sadri were covered with a variety of expensive decorations including wall painting, mirrorwork, woodwork, stained glass windows, gilding, and carving. Morier's detailed description of this *emarat* casts light on the superb decorations of this palace:

Proceeding on the left side of this court [andaroun], a door opens into a specious of green-house called the Narengistoon, in which there are only young orange trees. From this there is but one step into the principal court of the building, one whole side of which is occupied by the King's apartments or drawing-rooms. [...] The walls are very richly painted with bouquets of flowers, birds and animals. The arch, which occupies the side facing the great window, is a beautiful composition of glass and painting, and was the neatest specimen of decorative art which I had then seen in Persia. The ceiling is highly ornamented; gilded flowers and bright looking glasses glisten on every side, and give great liveliness and gaiety to the whole. Behind this another room is equally well painted; the upper windows are here most artfully constructed of plaster, which is pierced into small holes in a great variety of figures and flowers resembling the open work of lace and admitting a pleasing light. [...] Under the great room are summer apartments excavated under the ground, which in their season must be delightful retreats. They are all wainscoted and paved with marble slabs, and water is introduced by cascades, which fall from

⁷² Sadeq Vaqaye'negar, *Tarikh-e Jahan Ara*, 644.

the ground floor, and refresh the whole range. A passage leads to the bath, which, though small, is elegant. The domes are supported by columns, taken from the Armenian churches at Julfa.⁷³

Porter recounts that the interior decorations consisted of “the usual groundwork of flowers, and gold, and pieces of mirror; but all are disposed here, with a design and a grace, which conspicuously show a great advancement in the true principles of the ornamental invention.”⁷⁴ William Ouseley was also astounded with the craftsmanship and the spatial experience of the audience hall in this *emarat* and states: “It possesses one chamber of peculiar beauty, gilded and painted with considerable elegance, and receiving light through stained glass, fancifully disposed in handsome windows, and of different colours so vivid as to excite, during sun-shine, an idea of most brilliant jewel work.”⁷⁵ Charles Texier, French architect, gives a detailed description of this *emarat*’s rooms and particularly admires the lavishly decorated hall dedicated to the prince. He notes the use of Yazd alabaster additionally embellished with floral carvings and arabesque paintings. In the main hall intended for the prince, he observes two figures of dragons carved and gilded to adorn the kingly platform.⁷⁶

⁷³ Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 167.

⁷⁴ Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia, &c. &c. : during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820*, 417.

⁷⁵ William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 27.

⁷⁶ Charles Texier, *Description de l’Arménie, La Perse et La Mésopotamie* (Paris: Typ. de F. Didot frères, 1842), 125. “Le palais de Narangistan (l’orangerie) est également situé au milieu d’un petit jardin. compose d’un pavillon carré, éclairé au centre par une coupole. Les autres bâtiments, formant autant de pavillons différents, se distinguent tous par une construction originale; ils portent le nom de Sa/fer-Amarat, Amarata-Sader, Serpouch-Amarat et Angouristan. Ces différents pavillons sont tous décorés de peintures et de tableaux d’histoire qui ne man- quent pas d’intérêt, et qui prouvent que l’art de la peinture chez les Persans peut arriver à un certain degré de perfection. Dans l’intérieur des chambres,

Of these notable decorations, the pictorial program of this *emarat* and specially concentrated in its audience hall added to the artistic value of this complex. As all visitors of this *emarat* have unanimously mentioned, the walls and niches of the main hall were covered with several life-size portraits of ancient and modern kings.⁷⁷ Not surprisingly, the portraits of Fath Ali Shah and his sons had occupied the main space in the “King’s apartments or drawing-rooms,” as Morier puts it. Buckingham also confirms that “The portrait of the king himself occupies the chief place in every apartment: sometimes represented as seated on the chair or throne of the state; at others, reclining at the divan, surrounded by his sons and officers of the court.”⁷⁸ Morier describes the position of these portraits and their reception by local spectators and states:

The front room is adorned by two portraits of his majesty, on one side seated on his throne, and on the other in the act of killing a deer in a chase on horseback. There are also other pictures, of which the most remarkable are those representing Timoor or Tamerlane, Jengiz Khan, and Jemsheed. [...] The other rooms in this department are similarly decorated and gilded; and in some hang portraits of the King, to which

le soubassement est ordinairement décoré de grandes plaques d’albatre oriental, riche et magnifique matière, dont les carrières sont situées, dit-on, sur la route de Yezd. Mais, non contents de la splendeur des tons et des accidents de la pierre, les Persans décorent en outre ces plaques de fleurs et d’arabesques peintes. La dorure et les glaces brillent partout dans les compartiments des voutes; de grandes fenêtres, dont les boiseries représentent des polygones variés, découpés avec art, sont closes par des verres de couleur, pour la fabrication desquels les Persans avaient jadis une certaine réputation. Dans une des salles de l’un des palais, on remarque, au-dessus de lestrade destinée au prince, deux figures de dragons en relief et dorées, qui sont déjà un avant-scoût de l’art des Chinois transporté dans cette partie de l’Asie. Les plafonds sont, comme je l’ai dit ailleurs, un composé d’arabesques inextricables et impossibles à décrire, car nous n’avons pas dans notre langue de mots pour désigner les détails de ces compartiments.”

⁷⁷ Texier, *Description de l’Arménie, La Perse et La Mésopotamie*, 125.

⁷⁸ Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 234.

the natives, as they approach, *all make an inclination of the head.* [emphasis added]

79

The representation of the royal portrait and his family in mural painting was a common practice under Fath Ali Shah's reign. There are other examples of these wall paintings in the contemporary mansions and palaces erected in Tehran, Karaj, and Soltaniyeh.⁸⁰ Layla Diba argues that "the construction of these palaces gave an impetus to a whole new development in Persian painting."⁸¹ Not only this was practiced in the decoration of new edifices, but the king's and his sons' portraits also covered the walls of some Safavid monuments during their restoration (e.g. Hasht Behesht Palace). These depictions of royal presence can be better understood in the context of parallel courtly ceremonies in which the king's portrait was produced and sent to other emperors and countries as a representative of his might and royal status. About the prevalence of life-size portraits in the early Qajar period Layla Diba states:

Beliefs in the lifelikeness of images and their quasi-magical ability to evoke powerful emotions provide an explanation for the prevalence and persistence of the

⁷⁹ James Morier, *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809*, 167.

⁸⁰ Kianoosh Motaghedi, "From the Chehel Sotun to the Emarat-e Divani of Qom: The Evolution of Royal Wall Painting during the Reign of Fath-'Ali Shah," *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*, 2021.

⁸¹ Layla S. Diba, "From the Miniature to the Monumental: The Negarestan Museum Painting of the Sons of Fath Ali Shah," *Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online*, published 28 October 2020. The last example included in Diba's discussion is a mural from Isfahan, allegedly from Hasht Behesht Palace and signed by Mihr Ali, dated 1243. For the latest contribution on the early Qajar wall paintings see: Kianoosh Motaghedi, "From the Chehel Sotun to the 'Emarat-e Divani of Qom: The Evolution of Royal Wall Painting during the Reign of Fath-'Ali Shah," in *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*, vol. 11, *The Idea of Iran* (I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 127–55.

figural tradition in Iran's history. Such beliefs found renewed vigor in Qajar times under the patronage of Fath Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834) and his successors.⁸²

Other than Mihr Ali, sent from Tehran, responsible for the portraits of the *emarat*, there is no evidence of other artists. This attests to the importance of these portraits for Fath Ali Shah and his representation of kingship. Floor explains the role of these portraits in the expression of kingship in Fath Ali Shah's court:

In particular, Fath 'Ali Shah (1798-1834) stimulated an unheard of production of paintings in various forms so that the world would know him in all his might and glory. One of the early paintings of Fath 'Ali Shah, made by Mihr 'Ali, was so much to his liking that it was copied many times, although each time the shah was seen fitted out in different clothes. These paintings were either done al fresco on walls of palaces and mansions or in oil on canvas and placed in appropriate niches in the same buildings. These royal paintings, like anything else royal (a robe of honor, a royal decree, were viewed and handled with great respect. They also given as farewell presents to visiting Europeans and Asian dignitaries and ambassadors. Malcolm observed that the envoys of Sind 'carried, among other presents to their Prince, a picture of His Majesty, Fattah Ali Shah. This painting was carefully packed in a deal box; but the enclosed image of royalty could not be allowed to pass through his dominion without receiving marks of respect hardly short of those that would have been shown to the sovereign himself. The Governor and inhabitants of Busheher went a stage to meet it: they all made their obeisance at a respectful distance. On its entering the gates of the city a royal salute was fired; and when the Envoys who had charge of it embarked, the same ceremonies were repeated, and not a little offense was taken at the British Resident because he declined taking a part in this mummary.⁸³

⁸² Layla S. Diba, "Invested with life: Wall Painting and Imagery before the Qajars," 16.

⁸³ Floor, "Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqashan) in Qajar Persia," 135.

A comparison between the figural paintings of the contemporary palaces such as the Soltaniyeh, Soleimaniyeh, Negaristan, Qasr-e Qajar, and this *emarat* suggests that Sadr-e Isfahani's new palace followed the same thematic pattern in portrait paintings. Enthronement and hunting were the two major themes of Fath Ali Shah's portraits that were also depicted in the Emarat-e Sadri. Textier gives a description of a large enthronement painting in this *emarat*:

Dans la grande salle de réception du palais d'Amarat-Sader, à Ispahan, on remarque un grand tableau représentant Feth-Ali-Schah sur son trône, au milieu de ses enfants et de ses ministres. Cette peinture, exéculée avec un fini précieux, est fort admirée des Persans; ils louent fort la ressemblance des personnages. Ce tableau a cinq mètres cin-quante centimètres de longueur sur trois mètres de hauteur.⁸⁴

In this 5.4 by 3 meters-enthronement mural, the king is seated on a platform, most likely Takht-e Tavous, and his ministers and sons were standing in his attendance. A similar composition found in other contemporary palaces is the famous mural illustrating the New Year reception (*Saf-e Salam*) held in the first day of Noruz. The Negaristan Palace, in the vicinity of Tehran, contained a fine example of these murals that could casts light on the possible composition and rendition of such painting in the Emarat-e Sadri. Although this mural is now vanished, its various reproductions exist in different collections. In the Emarat-e Sadri's enthronement painting, as Textier observed, Sadr-e Isfahani was in attendance along with two other minsters to the left of the king. Textier refers to Sadr-e Isfahani by his epithet "Amin" in this scene.⁸⁵ Similar to his description, in the reproductions of Negaristan

⁸⁴ Textier, *Description de l'Arménie, La Perse et La Mésopotamie*, 128.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 129. "À la gauche du schah sont ses trois principaux ministres: Mirza-Chefñ, Hadji-Méhémet-Uzun-Khan-Emin, ministre de la guerre, et Mirza-Vézikouli, ministre des fñances."

Palace mural, Sadr-e Isfahani is the first figure in the lower row standing to the left of the throne and facing Fath Ali Shah [Figure 42-46].

Another example of this kind survived in situ, a more modest version, is the royal portraits in the Soleimaniyeh Palace at Karaj. As discussed earlier, the main hall of this palace also featured the murals of the king and royal family on both lateral walls facing each other. While these murals highlight the progeny of the dynasty by producing the first life-size portrait of the founder of the Qajar dynasty, Aqa Mohammad Khan, the murals in the Emarat-e Sadri depict Fath Ali Shah among princes, ministers, mythical and historical kings. According to the dimensions provided by Texier and Morier's descriptions, the enthronement scene in the Emarat-e Sadri would have been similar to the one in the Soleimaniyeh Palace, albeit a customized version where the king appeared with only three of his ministers, including Sadr-e Isfahani, and the eldest princes.



Figure 5-42. The Court of Fath Ali Shah at the Nowrooz Salaam Ceremony. c. 1830, Linen; pencil underdrawing with bodycolour and gold paint | RCIN 1005133.

<https://www.rct.uk/collection/1005133/the-court-of-fath-ali-shah-at-the-nowrooz-salaam-ceremony>⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Explanation provided by the Royal Collection Trust website: “Reduced copies of a group of life size murals which once covered three walls of the reception hall in the Negaristan Palace outside Tehran. Commissioned by the King of Persia, Fath Ali Shah (1722-1834), the murals were completed in 1812-13 by a team working under the supervision of the principal court artist Abdullah Khan and portray an imaginary New Year's reception at the Persian court.”



Figure 5-43. A closer view of the painting to the left of Fath Ali Shah.



Figure 5-44. A closer view of the central section of the painting, depicting Fath Ali Shah enthroned on the Takht-e Tavous and 12 of his sons.



Figure 5-45. Attendees on the right side of the king in the salaam ceremony.



Figure 5-46. A closer view of the painting that shows Sadr-e Isfahani standing to the left of Fath Ali Shah in the Negaristan mural.

The execution of the portraits of Fath Ali Shah and the Qajar princes was employed according to a coherent pictorial program designed and promoted in the Qajar court. The

body of the king and his court companions were the major themes for the wall decoration of the urban and suburban royal palaces. Despite Safavid wall paintings that portrayed denizens of Isfahan and Safavid kings holding royal audiences, this period's wall paintings concentrated on the king himself and his extensive progeny. His image appeared as an emblem of kingship to adorn royal spaces. To extend his royal presence over his dominion, he appointed court painters such as Mirza Baba and Mihr Ali to spread his image the way it seemed worthy of royal representation [Figure 47, 48]. The paintings in the Emarat-e Sadri were no exception. Ouseley claims that "Mihr Ali of Tehran," the well-known court painter, was in charge of painting these scenes within ten or twelve years. Mihr Ali's signature can be found on the recently identified paintings of the Emarat-e Sadri sold at Christie's and Sotheby's.⁸⁷ As Willem Floor states:

An early Qajar painter, Mihr 'Ali, painted life-size portraits on the walls of a new palace in Isfahan as well as the oil paintings of Fath 'Ali Shah in the Amery collection. He was one of the teachers of the celebrated Abu'l-Hasan Ghaffari. He produced lifesize portraits of Fat 'Ali Shah, of which nine are known to be his.⁸⁸

Mihr 'Ali in 1842-43 was granted the title of *naqqash bashi* (head painter) in the Qajar court.⁸⁹ Although Floor has not provided the name of the new palace in Isfahan, our evidence here confirms that it must be the Emarat-e Sadri. Mihr Ali was assumed the title of the head painter of the court about 40 years after the completion of the paintings in the Emarat-e Sadri. Despite this fact, his competence and skills were comparable to the Safavid

⁸⁷ William Ouseley, *Travels in various countries of the East, more particularly Persia*, 27.

⁸⁸ Floor, "Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqashan) in Qajar Persia," 146; Also see: B.W. Robinson, "A Royal Portrait of Fath Ali Shah Qajar by Mihr Ali," 72.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 128.

paintings in travelers' eyes. For Buckingham, the decorations in this *emarat* resemble the Safavid models, and the portraits have been executed "as well as any of the older paintings of Ispahan."⁹⁰

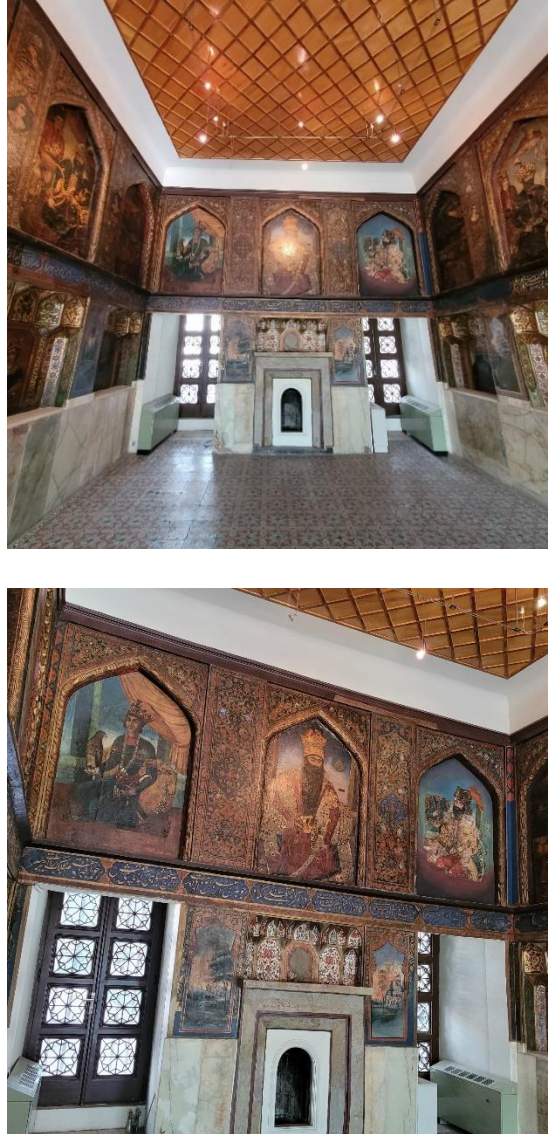


Figure 5-47. One of the flanking halls of the Marble Throne Hall, the Golestan Palace, Tehran. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021. The walls are covered with the portraits of the kings, princes, architectural scenes, etc. A band of poetry in Nasta'liq script separates the upper life-size paintings from the smaller figural and floral decorations of the lower level. Fath Ali Shah's portrait is located at the middle of the wall.

⁹⁰ Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 234.

Figure 5-48. A closer view of the king's portrait surrounded by other royal portraits. The room is heavily renovated. Photo: Samira Fathi, 2021.



Figure 5-49. Portrait of Kay Khusraw, by Mihr 'Ali, Qajar Iran, Isfahan AH 1218/1803-4 ad, Christies'

Figure 5-50. A monumental portrait of King Jamshid, signed by Mihr 'Ali, Persia, Qajar, dated 1218 AH/1803 AD. Oil on canvas, mounted on a stretcher, annotated 'Jamshid' in Persian at middle left in nasta'liq script, signed at lower edge 'raqm-i kamtarin Mihr 'Ali, 1218', framed. Sotheby's.

Yet the image of kingship is legible in relation to its past and present as well as the king's subjects and contemporary counterparts. Not only the kings but also denizens of both sexes found a place in the pictorial program of this palace. Buckingham refers to the few paintings of Georgian youths, of both sexes, along with the portraits of ancient and

legendary kings such as Jamshid and Chengiz Khan [49, 50].⁹¹ Even Mughal kings, such as Shahjahan and Farrukh Siyar have been depicted in the kingly cycle of this new palace, as their portraits survived after the destruction of the palace in different European collections attest. Morier particularly notes the portrait of a European prince that adds to the diversity of royal portraits in this pictorial collection:

In this room also there are portraits, one of which, that of a European, is called the shah zade Freng, or European Prince. He is represented in our dress of the sixteenth century, in which indeed all the portraits of the Europeans appear, and which is sufficiently explained by the recollection that Shah Abbas had Dutch painters in his pay.

Clearly, Fath Ali Shah was trying to link his pedigree to Chengiz Khan and Timur as evident in the visual culture of this period. In architecture, the choice of the *hasht-behesht* (9-fold layout) plan over the Safavid *talar*-type was a deliberate deviation from the Safavid palace design. His interest in the Hasht Behesht Palace in Isfahan also confirms this tendency. In architectural decoration also one can see the footage of the Indian decoration techniques such as stone carving that was applied on the dados of the Marble throne hall at Golestan Palace in Tehran and in the Emarat-e Sadri as descriptions imply.

The other clue to reference the Timurid lineage was through the Mughal dynasty, true heirs to the Timurid legacy. The inclusion of the Mughal kings, Shah Jahan and Farrukh Seyar, in the collection of royal portraits in the Emarat-e Sadri, along with the ancient kings of Iran, point to an attempt for linking Fath Ali Shah's royal pedigree to the Mughals [Figure 51, 52]. It can also denote the Naderi conquest of India that added the extensive riches of the

⁹¹ James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia*, 234. The newly discovered paintings of this *emarat* were recently auctioned in the Sotheby's.

Mughal kings to the treasures of the Qajar court. Perhaps the lavish and luxurious appearance of Fath Ali Shah, adorned with gems and precious stones, could have evoked the image of sumptuous Mughal regalia rather than Safavid robes. Ebba Koch confirms this interest in Mughal motifs and writes:

Mughal India was on the receiving side of external cultural influence in the sixteenth century but, by the end of the seventeenth century, the tables turned and Iran looked to Mughal India for artistic inspiration. This reversal is especially apparent in the arts of the Qajar dynasty, which show evidence of strong historic as well as Indian interest.⁹²

⁹² Ebba Koch, “Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj,” 167.



Figure 5-51. Portrait of the Mughal king, Shah Jahan, by Mihr Ali. Detached from the Emarat-e Sadri in Isfahan. Source: Christie's Auction House

Figure 5-52. Portrait of the Mughal king, Farukh Seyar, by Mihr Ali. Detached from the Emarat-e Sadri. Source: Christie's Auction House

The re-production of peacock throne also attests to Fath Ali Shah's interest in Mughal royal imagery. The peacock throne, then called the Sun throne, was commissioned by Fath Ali Shah and supervised and financially supported by Sadr-e Isfahani at this time. The throne was crafted in Isfahan and transported to the Golestan Palace. Since then, this throne became an innate object in the king's portraits. The king was represented enthroned on this throne as the icon of Persian kingship. The production of this throne in Isfahan and under the supervision of Sadr-e Isfahani was magnified and recorded in the presence of his portrait in Fath Ali Shah's royal portraits. Thus, not only Sadr-e Isfahani stood amongst the Qajar

officials close to the king in the paintings, but also he was the one who prepared the jewel-studded royal throne for branding a royal image for Fath Ali Shah [Figure 53].



Figure 5-53. A page from the *Shahanshahnameh* depicting Fath Ali Shah seated on the Takht-e Tavous and his attendees. Source: The Louvre Museum

Hunting was another favorable theme that represented the image of kingship in the Emarat-e Sadri. These ubiquitous depictions of Fath Ali Shah, riding and hunting a wild animal (mostly antelopes), would appear on the walls of the royal palaces or were carved on

the mountains aimed to represent Fath Ali Shah as a vigorous and powerful heir to the Persian throne. These hunting scenes even adorned standing Safavid palaces such as the Hasht Behesht Palace in Isfahan to overwrite the history of the Safavid dynasty with a new one that unites mythical and historical narratives of Iranian kingship [Figure 54, 55].

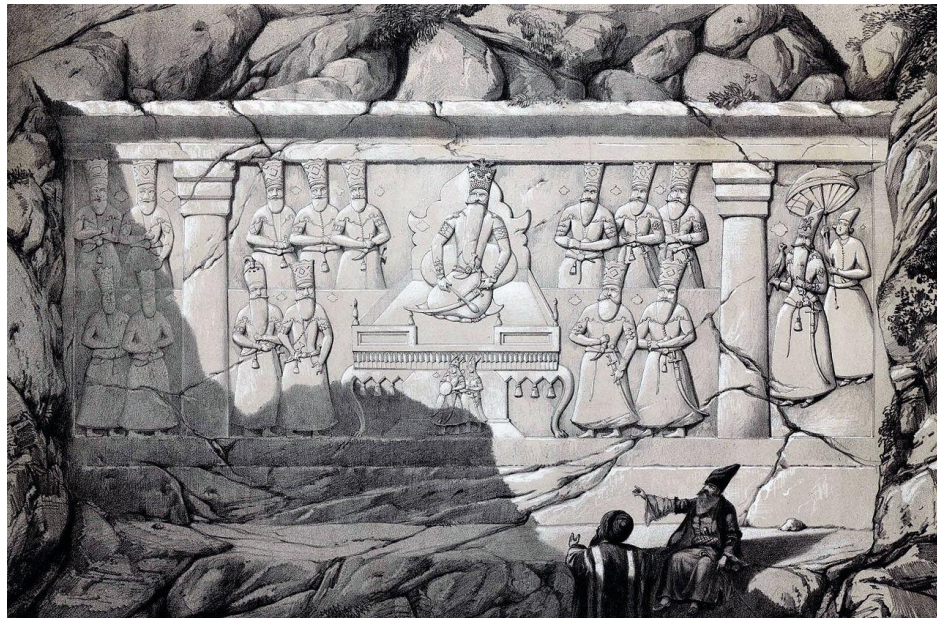


Figure 5-54. Bas-relief représentant Feth-Ali-Châh et les Châh Zadèhs ses fils, à Tchehmèh-i-Ali, près Téhéran. Flandin, 1840, in *Voyage en Perse*, avec Flandin, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851. Source: Wikimedia Commons

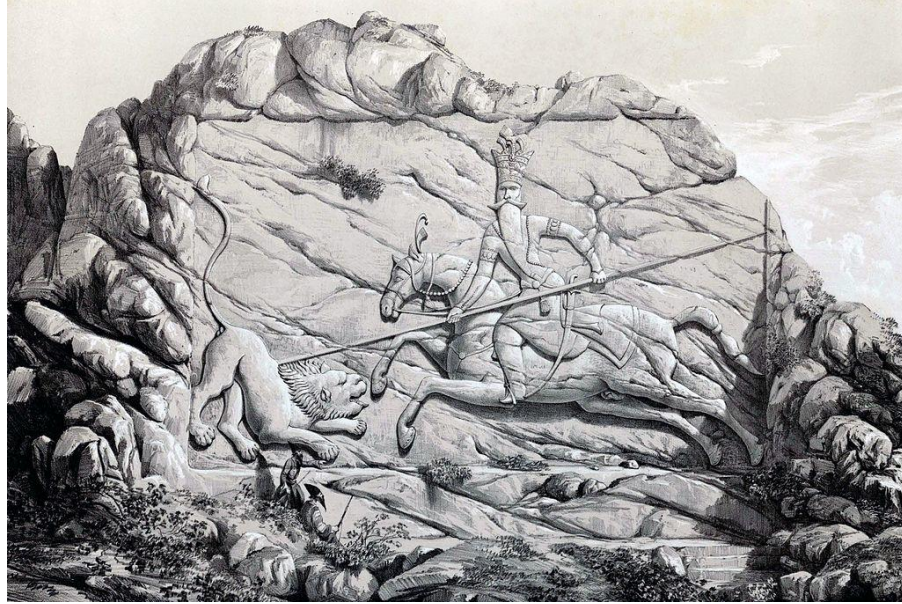


Figure 5-55. Feth-Ali-Châh, bas-relief, Téhéran. Flandin, 1840, in *Voyage en Perse, avec Flandin*, éd. Gide et Baudry, 1851. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Conclusion

The Emarat-e Sadri was as a corporate project representing both the Qajar king and Isfahan's influential governor and patron, Sadr-e Isfahani. Its placement in the heart of the Safavid *dowlatkhaneh* was a powerful statement that signified the Safavid royal legacies' importance for the consolidation of Fath Ali Shah's image of kingship. Not only Isfahan was not forgotten and abandoned, but also its royal precinct was chosen as an appropriate site for the ambitious project of Fath Ali Shah and Sadr-e Isfahani to showcase their power in front of the Safavid monuments. This palace ensured the imprint of Qajar dynasty on Safavid heritage and composed an innovative response in the vicinity of Safavid remains. The palace functioned as an awaiting and empty container for the king's virtual and actual presence; a gallery-box that symbolically re-presented the absent king in Isfahan.

To reclaim Isfahan's royal status, more than anything else, the city required the presence of the king in popular imagination. The architectural configuration and decorations in this palace announced the establishment of order and justice that only the king could bestow upon the city. The king's life-size portraits, hung and painted on the walls of the palaces and urban spaces, guaranteed his presence in the contested ground of Isfahan where the memory of the Safavid empire loomed large. The multistoried octagonal towers at the corners of the palace acted as the eyes of the sovereign, whether the king or governor, always watching his subjects without being seen. The placement of these towers between the public and private realms of the *dowlatkhaneh* implied the king's supervision over either domain. Yet, the high and slender form of the tower signified the singularity and superiority of the king.

Unlike the Ali Qapu Palace which sat on the edge of the vast maidan and functioned as the king's theater box, these towers in the *haram* area provided a panoramic, one-way, and dominant viewing stance befitting the iconic and distant image of Fath Ali Shah. His image of kingship very well accorded with the Ottoman and Mughal kings where the Ottoman Soltan sat behind a grid window in the tower of justice or the Mughal padishah appeared in his iconic and bejeweled regalia behind the *jharokha*.⁹³ In Isfahan, the palace with its pronounced towers enshrined the image of the king's sacred body. Rather than creating a mutual gaze like the Safavid model, during the eighteenth century, the king turned into an icon that must be removed and distanced from his subjects' sight. Ironically, his life-size portraits, with a direct look at the audience, portrayed an imposing but intimate gaze. As Janet O'Brien has recently argued, "In Persian painting, the deployment of the king's body as an exclusive sight and site of power was a trend that emerged under Nader," and

⁹³ See Gulru Necipoglu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces." *Ars orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–342.

perfected under Fath Ali Shah.⁹⁴ And in Isfahan, Sadr-e Isfahani devised a picture frame as spacious as the Emarat-e Sadri to display the king's body at the center of political order and remind Isfahan of its royal status.

Through architectural and textual analysis of this *emarat*, I contextualized its design and meaning with respect to Isfahan's past legacies and contemporary architectural practices across the Qajar domain. The analysis of this palace cast light on possible links between late Safavid and early Qajar palace architecture in Isfahan and Tehran. As I proposed in this chapter, this *emarat* can be considered a mediator between Shah Soltan Hosein's Farahabad Garden-Palace and the Marble Throne Hall in Tehran in terms of spatial arrangement and architectural configuration. Such mediations erected and facilitated by the local and no-royal patrons are crucial to understand the presumed "anomaly" of the Qajar architecture. By bridging the gap between late Safavid and early Qajar period, this "anomaly" presents itself more in the form of a gradual change and modernization and less in the form of break and rupture.

⁹⁴ Janet O'Brien, "Dismembering the Corporate: The Single Portraits of Nader Shah and the Changing Body Politic in Post-Safavid Iran," in *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*, vol. 11, *The Idea of Iran* (I.B. Tauris, n.d. 2022) p 52.

Conclusion: Urban Image of Isfahan

Once this righteous Khan [Sadr-e Isfahani] reminded Isfahan of its paradisiacal pleasures.¹

In this dissertation, I undertook the task of re-presenting the overlooked urban history of Isfahan in a presumably silent and eventless historical period. Through an architectural reconstruction and textual reading of Isfahan, I demonstrated that the city continued to live and change from the late Safavid to the early Qajar period. Not only did the city remain an active location for royal and non-royal architectural and urban patronage, but also its modifications were preconceived and meaningful in each historical phase. I relied on untapped visual and textual sources including historical maps, engravings, architectural drawings, photographs, travelogues, historical accounts, and literary works to unsettle and deconstruct the timeless and static narrative of Isfahan's urban history. I grappled with the troubled moments of the city's political, social, and economic change and searched for traces of alterations in architectural and urban practices. In the end, my own constructed narrative is only another additional layer that complicates the multifaceted and multilayered history of Isfahan.

Through this deconstruction and reconstruction, this dissertation cast some light on the urban developments and architectural practices that entwined new and old as well as present and past in Isfahan. Chapter 2 offered a revision of Shah Soltan Hosein's urban planning project, which not only gradually shifted the *dowlatkhaneh* to Farahabad Palace-garden as a new urban and political center but also reflected his desire to emulate Shah Abbas I's

¹ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 175.

exemplary urban project. The examination of literary sources in conjunction with architectural analyses of this royal patronage portrayed an active and energetic construction campaign intended to both surpass and venerate Shah Abbas I's legacy. The new royal city at Farahabad with its grandiose scale, Great Avenue (chaharbagh), expansive garden, and novel spatial compositions garnered the attention of contemporary observers. This chapter argued that indeed Shah Soltan Hosein was planning to expand Isfahan and link his Farahabad city to the preceding developments through a new chaharbagh avenue. Connecting his New City (*shahr-e naw*) to Shah Abbas I's Hezar Jarib Garden and via that to the Chaharbagh Avenue and Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan, Shah Soltan Hosein left his royal imprint on Isfahan's past and present.

Isfahan remained an important urban and economic center even after the devastating events of the first half of the eighteenth century. As a *Dar al-Salataneh* (abode of kingship) it became a battleground for the claimants of royal legacy. Local governors and tribal leaders strove to reclaim the Safavid past and restore peace in Isfahan. Despite its cultural and symbolic significance, the shift of the capital city to Shiraz and Tehran diminished Isfahan's actual political authority in the post-Safavid era. As Chapter 3 illustrated, by the late eighteenth century a community of local governors, urban elites, and literati in Isfahan partook in the restoration of the city's cultural and urban legacy. The Isfahani Circle of Poets, funded and supported by the local elites and Isfahan's governors, encouraged looking back to the past. They adopted the literary-return style to redress the vanishing glory of the city. Popularizing the style of the old masters in the Ghaznavid court, the poets in Isfahan took advantage of panegyrics to guarantee sponsorship of their literary works by new urban elites. Simultaneously, emerging urban elites seized the opportunity for their self-fashioning

practices in the urban context of Isfahan. These poems turned into a public text that circulated among urban elites, literati, and other learned men across the country to publicize the name and fame of poets as well as the architectural patronages of the patrons. The eloquent panegyrics praised the benevolent undertakings of the new urban patrons, which were supposed to reclaim the city's faded status. As a result, poetic chronograms, *vasf* tradition, and panegyrics converged in a new popular literary genre called panegyric-*tazkira*.

Chapter 1 argued that literary works and particularly *tazkiras* in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century are significant sources for the study of architectural activities and urban patronage of Isfahan. It showed that the heightened interest in *tazkira* writing and panegyric-*tazkiras* was a result of the rise of new urban patrons in eighteenth-century Iran. *Tazkiras* emphasized the human riches of the country, its poets, and dignitaries, at the time the city was under constant threat due to ongoing civil wars. Panegyric-*tazkiras*, as records of material and immaterial patronage of a specific patron, functioned as the conduit of cultural transmission that contained information about the patrons and the description of the built environment of the cities. By the nineteenth century, panegyric-*tazkiras* became a prevalent mode of history writing. Drawing on Nora's notion of *lieu de mémoire*, I proposed that these literary works turned into sites of memory where the tension between the fading memories and the shift to a new historical era could be resolved. It was a transitional moment in which history was mastering the memory; when the memory of the Safavid empire loomed large and the Qajar dynasty was struggling to distinguish itself from that memory. The urban patronage of Sadr-e Isfahani illustrated the connections between urban and architectural activities in Isfahan and the growing interest in panegyric-*tazkiras*. The interlocking of his construction projects with his sponsorship of panegyrists and poets

exemplified the complex underlying nexus of social, political, religious, familial, and personal factors contributing to the transformation of the city in the post-Safavid era.

Chapter 4 delved deeper into the city's reclamation through the construction of Sadr-e Isfahani's three chaharbagh avenues. In line with the Safavid practice of chaharbagh building to develop the city, discussed in Chapter 2, Sadr-e Isfahani restored decayed paths and transformed them into a new urban axis to the east of the Chaharbagh Avenue. This new axis linked the developments of the city on the south to the Seljuk core of the city to the north. Thus, Sadr-e Isfahani recovered an old urban thoroughfare underlining the pre-Safavid history of the city by adopting a Safavid urban design element. These new chaharbaghs functionally differed from the Safavid prototypes. They reflected the new social, political, and religious axes defining the city's new identity and status shaped by Sadr-e Isfahani.

In this process of re-working and re-imaging the royal city, Sadr-e Isfahani adopted chaharbagh avenue type and palace building as effective signifiers of Isfahan's urban and royal status. He recovered the city through these elements to awaken Isfahan's urban memory. Today scholars in architectural preservation and urban development draw our attention to place-memory and urban memory as beneficial tools for the restoration and preservation of heritage sites by evoking a sense of place and belonging.² Isfahan's restoration and preservation process under Sadr-e Isfahani's supervision in a way presents a similar attitude toward post-Safavid urban renewal. More than showcasing his capabilities as a resourceful urban administrator, Sadr-e Isfahani invested in evoking those memories that

² Ali Cheshmehzangi, *Urban Memory in City Transitions: The Significance of Place in Mind* (2021), 17.

were considered crucial for the continuation of Isfahan's urban life. This was a deliberate revision of urban imagination. He was aware that parallel to the economic, agricultural, and architectural developments, Isfahan needed to rectify its damaged image. He did not miss the chance to reverse the dominant narrative of Isfahan's decline by financially supporting the artists who could transform the discourse and create an agreeable image of Isfahan in the public view.

The textual representations and physical transformations of the city complemented each other for this act of remembering and rewriting history. The mindful selection of specific locations in the city to be restored along with the utilization of locally celebrated urban design models— indivisible from the lived and embodied practices in Isfahan—went hand in hand with the revivification of Isfahan's old urban metaphors in *Madayeh*. The poets in *Madayeh* have consciously and deliberately played with the city's literary tropes and metaphors to depict Sadr-e Isfahani's restoration efforts a great achievement. The most conspicuous and recurring metaphor of Isfahan, "*Isfahan nesf-e jahan*" (Isfahan half the world), which has endured the vicissitudes of the days in Isfahan's history, was also revisited in the hands of *Madayeh*'s poets. In one instance, Rafiqi even audaciously reverses this trope and claims that after Isfahan's revival, now the world is half the city of Isfahan (*jahan nimi ze shahr-e Isfahan ast*).³ Regardless of its hyperbolic gesture, the phrase implicitly reflects a latent vision and desire to place Sadr-e Isfahani's Isfahan as superior to all past versions of the city while staying in the recognizable context of the metaphor.

As the opening verse in this conclusion explicitly notes, Sadr-e Isfahani reminded Isfahan of its paradisial pleasures and, as I demonstrated in this dissertation, this awakening

³ Baqi, *Madayeh*, 38.

was manifested both in the built environment and the textual representations of the city. In addition, this act of remembering was not in any sense confined to the Safavid past and was completed with the act of forgetting and reinscribing. Even though Safavid models were appropriated for Sadr-e Isfahani's renewal project, the living urban practices and conception of space in the form of place-memory played a more profound role in crafting his vision for Isfahan. While Shah Abbas I deliberately invested in formulating Isfahan as a Perso-Shi'i paradise, one can argue that he also admired the urban legacy and place-memory of Isfahan as a celebrated city in pre-Safavid history. Sadr-e Isfahani's new urban axis consisting of chaharbagh avenues spatially and symbolically acknowledged this long urban history and inserted his legacy there.

The act of rejuvenating Isfahan at this moment was a unique phenomenon which was fueled by the agency of the non-royal urban elites and differed from the formal and stylistic "Persian Revival" that the Zand and Qajar courts had adopted in Shiraz and Tehran.⁴ Unlike the "Persian Revival" which borrowed long-lost imagery of the ancient Persian Empires to reconstruct a new imperial identity in the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, the process of Isfahan's renewal was strongly attached to the place and its living memories. In other words, Isfahan was still at the edges of its own golden age moving toward a big change. While nineteenth-century archeological findings provided the "Persian Revival" with new references to draw on, local governors and elites in provincial urban centers drew on living urban practices and continuous place memories. It was in this context that panegyric-*tazkiras* as sites of memory became a suitable device to re-work, re-write, and re-narrate memory and history derived from a living context while allowing the new urban patrons to

⁴ For a discussion on this term see the introduction to this dissertation.

insert their individual and familial legacy in the collective memories of the city. Through this constant evoking and re-constructing Isfahan's memories, these new patrons perpetuated their names woven into the fate of the city in history, and using the *tazkira* genre for this purpose, they indeed claimed the future.

Looking at the eighteenth century as a distinct and transitional period, this dissertation foregrounded architectural practices and urban planning ideas that were gradually re-worked and adjusted from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. Chapter 5 contextualized the design and patronage of the Emarat-e Sadri as a corporate palace-building project in Isfahan. Reconstructed and represented for the first time in this study along with other contemporary palatial architecture, this *emarat* was introduced as a mediator between Shah Soltan Hosein's Farahabad Garden-Palace in Isfahan and the Marble Throne Hall in Tehran in terms of spatial arrangement and architectural configuration. The vacant and awaiting palace—a superb architectural addition to the Safavid palace precinct—functioned as a material manifestation of socio-political ties that ensured the sovereignty of the Qajar king in Isfahan and the significant role that Sadr-e Isfahani played in this representation of power.

This dissertation attested our lack of knowledge about the history of the cities in Iran, especially in this overlooked period. It aimed to introduce new sources that would broaden our knowledge of history through the analysis of non-royal urban patronage, built environment, and literary representations of architecture and urban spaces. The panegyric-*tazkira* examined in this study assisted us in illustrating the ways in which tangible and intangible legacies of Isfahan are perceived, transmitted, remembered, and reinscribed under the patronage of Sadr-e Isfahani. Relying on the findings of this study, the consultation of

panegyric-*tazkiras* will further benefit our understanding of patronage systems in late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Iranian cities. Future research on the architectural history of the cities in tandem with their contemporary literary representations is promising to bridge the presumed break and gap between the Safavid and Qajar architecture and urbanism.

References

Archives

Golestan Palace Photo Archive, Tehran

Library, Museum and Document Center of IRAN Parliament (Majlis Library)

Central Library of Isfahan Municipality

National Library of Iran: <http://www.nlai.ir>

Shahid Beheshti University Archive Center

Bibliothèque de Marseille, Fonds Patrimoniaux

Royal Collection Trust: <https://www.rct.uk/>

The Digital Collection of Middle East Garden Traditions:
<https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions>

New York Public Library Digital Collections: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/>

Archnet: <https://www.archnet.org/>

The University of Chicago Special Collection: <https://www.lib.uchicago.edu>

Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
Archives :https://www.si.edu/siasc/freer_sackler

Brill Online Archive, Russian Military Intelligence on Asia: Archive series, 1651-1917:
<https://primarysources.brillonline.com/subjects>

Harvard Library Digital Collection: <https://curiosity.lib.harvard.edu>

Contemporary History of Iran Archive: <https://www.iichs.ir/>

Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art:
<http://bibliotheque.inha.fr/iguana/www.main.cls?surl=bibliotheque-inha>

Primary sources

Abd al-Baqi Baqi-ye Isfahani, *Madayeh al-Hoseiniyeh*. Manuscript at Majlis Library, MS 7987.

- Al-Isfahani, Mohammad Mehdi ibn Mohammad Reza. *Nesf-e Jahan fi Ta'rif-e Isfahan* (Originally published in 1870). Edited by Manuchehr Sotudeh. Chapkhaneh-ye Mousavi, 1961.
- Asef, Mohammad Hashim (Rostam al-Hokama). *Rostam al-Tavarikh* (Originally published in the early 19 century). Ed. Mitra Mehrabadi. Tehran: Donya-ye ketab, 2003.
- Azar Bigdeli, Lotfali Beyg. *Atashkadeh-ye Azar*. Tehran: Moasseseh-ye Nashr-e Ketab, 1958.
- Belfour, F.C. and M.A. Oxon. F.R.A.S. LL.D. *The Life of Sheikh Mohammad Ali Hazin, Written by Himself: edited from two Persian manuscripts, and noted with their various readings*. London: Printed for the Oriental Translation Fund, 1831. Library of the University of Michigan.
- Bell, John. *Travels from St. Petersburg, in Russia, to diverse parts of Asia: In Two Volumes*. Containing A journey to Ispahan in Persia, in the years 1715, 1716, 1717, and 1718. Part of a journey to Pekin in China, through Siberia, in the years 1719, 1720, and 1721: With a map of the Author's two routes between Mosco and Pekin. Foulis, 1763.
- Bolshov Bakunov Proskuriakov Ogranovich. "Plan of the town of Esfahan with a description. Review by topographers captain Proskuriakov and ensign Ogranovich. Draught by ensign Bolshov and Bakunov," Russian Military Intelligence on Asia: Archive series, 1651-1917 <http://primarysources.brillonline.com>
- Bruyn, Cornelis de. *Travels into Muscovy, Persia, and part of the East-Indies*. London: printed for A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, S. Birt, C. Davis, J. Clarke, S. Harding D. Browne, A. Millar, J. Shuckburgh, and T. Osborne, 1737.
- Brydges, H. Jones. (1834). *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia: In the Years 1807-11*. London: J. Bohn., n.d.
- Buckingham, James Silk. *Travels in Assyria, Media, and Persia: Including a Journey from Bagdad by Mount Zagros, to Hamadan, the Ancient Ecbatana, Researches in Ispahan and the Ruins of Persepolis*. London: Colburn, 1830.
- Coste, Pascal-Xavier. *Monuments Modernes de La Perse Mesurés, Dessinés et Décrits Par Pascal Coste,..., Publiés Par Ordre de Son Excellence Le Ministre de La Maison de l'Empereur et Des Beaux-Arts*. Paris: A. Morel, 1867. [Bibliothèque de l'INHA | Accueil](#)
- Curzon, George N. *Persia and the Persian Question*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Longmans, Green & Company, 1892.
- E'temad al-Saltaneh, Mohammad Hasan Khan, *Sadr al-Tavarikh*. Edited by Mohammad Moshiri. Tehran: Rouzbahan, 1978.

- Flandin, Eugene and Pascale Coste, "Voyage en Perse. Perse Ancienne. Texte. [Title page]" General Research Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed March 19, 2023. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-8f6d-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>
- Hazin, Sheikh Mohammad Ali. *Tazkira-ye Hazin*. Isfahan: Entesharat-e ketabforushi Ta'eed Isfahan, 1955.
- Hoeltzer, Ernst. *Iran dar yeksad o sizdah sal-e pish* [Iran in 113 years ago], trans. Mohammad 'Asemi. Munich: 1976.
- Homaie, Jalal al-Din. *Tarikh-e Isfahan: mojallad-e abniyeh va emarat va asar-e bastani*. Tehran, Homa, 2005.
- Honarfar, Lotfullah. *Ganjineh-ye asar tarikhi Isfahan*. 2nd edition. Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Ziba, 1971.
- Hoseinin Khatunabadi, Abdul Hosein. *Vaqaye' al-Sanin-i va al-A'vam* (Originally published in the 18th century) Ed. Mohammad Baqer Behboudi. Tehran: Ketabforushi-ye Eslamiyeh, 1973.
- Jaberi Ansari, Haj Mirza Hasan Khan. *Tarikh-e Isfahan va Ray*.
- Jenab, Mir Sayyed 'Ali. *Rejal va mashahir-e Isfahan (Al-Isfahan)*. Edited by Rezvan Pour Assar. Isfahan: Sazman-e Farhangi Tafrihi-ye Shahr-dari-ye Isfahan, 2006.
- Johnson, John. *A Journey from India to England, through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia, in the Year 1817*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818.
- Jones, Sir Harford. *An Account of the Transactions of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia: In the Years 1807-11*. London: James Bohn, 1834.
- Khavari Shirazi, Fazlullah ibn Abdalnabi. *Tarikh-e Zolqarnayn*. Ed. Naser Afsharfar. Tehran: Vezarat-e Farhang va Ershad-e Islami, 2001.
- Kinneir, Sir John Macdonald. *A Geographical Memoir of the Persian Empire: Accompanied by a Map*. J. Murray, 1813.
- Kotzebue, Moritz von. *Narrative of a Journey into Persia, in the Suite of the Imperial Russian Embassy, in the Year 1817. Translated from the German*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819.
- Malcolm, John. *Persia: A Poem*. London: Printed by J. Moyes for J. Murray, 1814.
- Marvazi, Sadeq Vaqaye' negar. *Tarikh-e Jahan Ara*. Majlis Library, Tehran. MS 74327-5648.

Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir Tabrizi. "Golzar-e Sa'adat," Edited by Iraj Afshar in Vahid, no 54 (1968): 584-587.

Mirza Mohsen Ta'sir Tabrizi. "Masnavi Jahan-nama." Ketabkhaneh-ye Markazi-ye Daneshgah-e Tehran. MS

Morier, James. *A journey through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople, in the years 1808 and 1809: in which is included, some account of the proceedings of His Majesty's mission, under Sir Harford Jones, Bart. K. C. to the court of the King of Persia.* London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, Paternoster-Row, 1812.

Morier, James. *A Second Journey Through Persia, Armenia, and Asia Minor, Between the Years 1810 and 1816. With a Journal of the Voyage by the Brazils and Bombay to the Persian Gulf. Together with an Account of the Proceedings of His Majesty's Embassy under His Excellency Sir Gore Ouseley.*

Nadim al-Molk Isfahani, Heydar Ali. *Tarikh Mokhtasar-e Isfahan.* Farhang-e Iranzamin, no 12 (1964): 145-173.

Naeeni, Mohammad Ja'far ibn Mohammad Hosein. *Jami' Ja'fari.* Ed. Iraj Afshar. Tehran: Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli, 1974.

Nasiri, Mohammad Ibrahim ibn Zayn al-'Abedin. *Dastour-e Shahriyaran* (Originally published in the 18th century). Ed. Mohammad Nader Nasiri Moqaddam. Tehran: Bonyad-e Moqoufat-e doctor Mahmoud Afshar, 1994.

Ouseley, William. *Travels in Various Countries of the East, More Particularly Persia.* Rodwell and Martin, 1819.

Photographs of Ernst Hoeltzer Scrap Book PK-F-73.152 - Page 57. n.d.
<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:1932437>.

Porter, Sir Ker Robert. *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, ancient Babylonia, &c. &c: during the years 1817, 1818, 1819, and 1820.* Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822.

Rafi'ie Mehrabadi, Abolqasem. *Asar-e Melli-ye Isfahan.* Tehran: Chapkhaneh-ye Ettehead, 1973.

Samar Naeeni. *Tazkira-ye Samar-e Isfahani.* Ketabkhaneh-ye Majlis-e Shoraye Islami. MS 898, No. 12974.

Sultan Mohammad Mirza Qajar (Seyf al-Dowleh). *Safarnameh-ye Seyf al-Dowleh or Makkeh.* Edited by Ali-Akbar Khodaparast. Tehran, Nashr-e Ney, 1985.

Tahvildar, Mirza Hosein. *Joghrafiya-ye Isfahan: joghraphiya-ye tabi'i va ensani va amar-e asnaf-e shahr* (Originally published in 1877). Edited by Manuchehr Sotudeh. Tehran: Entesharat-e Daneshgah Tehran, 1963.

Texier, Charles. *Description de l'Arménie, La Perse et La Mésopotamie*. Paris: Typ. de F. Didot frères, 1842.

Secondary sources

‘Alaie, Ali. “koushkha-ye motabbaq dar baghha-ye Irani” [Multistoried pavilions in Iranian gardens], *Golestan-e Honar* 11 (Spring 2009): 55-67.

‘Alizadeh Moqaddam, Badr al-Sadat, “Hayat-e ejtema’i dore-ye Safavi-ye az manzar Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi,” [the social life of the Safavid period from the lens of Tazkira-ye Nasrabadi] *History and Culture*, vol.51, No. 2, Issue 103 (2019):135-151.

‘Aqili, Seyyed Ahmad. *Takht Foulad-e Isfahan*. Isfahan: Sazman Farhangi Tafrihi-ye Shahr-dari-ye Isfahan, 2019.

Abe, Naofumi. “The Politics of Poetics in Early Qajar Iran,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 10 (2017) 129–157.

Afshar, Iraj. “TADKERA-YE NAŞRĀBĀDI,” *Iranica*, 2000.

Ahari, Zahra, “Building 'New Isfahan,' Narratives and Forms of life,” In *Studies of Iranian-Islamic cities*, No.26 (2017): 27-38.

———. “City, Ceremony, Collective Memory: A Study of the Relation of Ceremonies and Urban Spaces in the Safavid and Qajar Eras,” *Honarhay-e Ziba*, no.47 (2012)

———. "Recognition of Secondary Structure of Iranian Cities in Qajar Period" in *Honarha-ye Ziba* (2015)

———. “The Safavid Chaharbagh: A new concept of urban spaces,” *Honarhay-e Ziba* (2006)

Ahmadi, Maryam. “Chahar Bagh Avenue, Isfahan: Genesis and Demise: Pre-Islamic and Islamic Garden Influences in the Safavid Creation and History of Its Subsequent Degeneration.” Ph.D., Nottingham Trent University, 2016.

Alemi, Mahvash. “Bagh-i Hizar Jarib-i Naw,” <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C174>

———. “A Catalogue of Known Gardens in Safavid Iran,” www.middleeastgarden.com. 2007.

- . “Bagh-i Farahabad,” n.d. <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C178>.
- . “Khiyaban,” [Khiyaban — Dumbarton Oaks \(doaks.org\)](https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/catalogue/C178)
- Algar, Hamid. *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969.
- Alizadeh, Hooshmand. “The Concept of Privacy and Space in Kurdish Cities.” In *Urban Theory beyond the West: A World of Cities*, edited by Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne, 137–56. London; New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Amanat, Abbas. *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir Al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831-1896*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Ashraf, Assef. “A FAMILIAL STATE: ELITE FAMILIES, MINISTERIAL OFFICES, AND THE FORMATION OF QAJAR IRAN.” *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 51 (2019): 43–64.
- Avcioglu, N., & Flood, F. “Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century.” *Ars Orientals*, 39 (2010): 7–38.
- Axworthy, Michael. *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Babaie, Sussan, “In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship,” *Artibus Asiae*, 66(2), (2006): 35-54.
- . *Isfahan and its palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh studies in Islamic art). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2008.
- . “Safavid Town Planning,” in *Safavid Persia in the Age of Empires: The Idea of Iran*, Ed. Charles Melville, 2021.
- . “The Paintings That Turned Persian Art on Its Head in the 19th Century,” June 2, 2018. <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/how-the-qajar-dynasty-turned-persian-art-on-its-head/>.
- . “Nader Shah, the Delhi Loot, and the 18th-Century Exotics of Empire,” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th century Iran*, Ed. Michael Axworthy (Oxford University Press, 2018): 215-235.
- Babaie, S., & Grigor, T. *Persian kingship and architecture: Strategies of power in Iran from the Achaemenids to the Pahlavis*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2015.

- Babaie, Sussan, Kafescioglu, Cigdem. Istanbul, "Isfahan, and Delhi: Imperial Designs and Urban Experiences in the Early Modern Era." *A companion to Islamic art and architecture*. Ch. 33, 2017.
- Babaie, Sussan, Kathryn Babayan, et al. *Slaves of the Shah: The New elites of Safavid Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).
- Babayan, Kathryn. *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (Stanford University Press, 2021).
- Bakhash, S. "ADMINISTRATION in Iran vi. Safavid, Zand, and Qajar periods," Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition, 1982, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/administration-vi-safavid>
- Bakhtiar, Kaveh. "Palatial Towers of Nasir Al-Din Shah." *Muqarnas* 21 (2004): 33–43.
- Bergdoll, Barry. *European Architecture 1750-1890*. Oxford History of Art. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Blake, Stephen P. *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590-1722*. Mazda Publishers, 1999.
- Bosworth, C. Edmund, ed. *Historic Cities of the Islamic World*. Liden, Boston: Brill, 2007.
- Bosworth, Hillenbrand, Elwell-Sutton, Bosworth, Clifford Edmund. *Qajar Iran: Political, social, and cultural change, 1800-1925*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 1983.
- Brignoli, Jean-Do. "« Pascal Coste En Perse (1839-1842). L'apport d'un Orientaliste à La Recherche Sur l'architecture Palatiale : Le Cas d'Isfahan », " n.d.
- . "The Royal Garden of Farahabad and the Fall of Shah Soltan Hosein Revisited," "Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective." edited by Michel Conan. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007.
- Casey, Edward S. "Chapter IX: Place Memory," in *Remembering, Second Edition: A Phenomenological Study* Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Çelik, Zeynep. "New Approaches to the 'Non-Western' City." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 374–81.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Chaichian, Mohammad A. *Town and Country in the Middle East: Iran and Egypt in the Transition to Globalization, 1800-1970*. Lexington Books, 2009.

- Chattopadhyay, Swati. *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism, and the Colonial Uncanny*. Asia's Great Cities. London; New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Cheshmehzangi, Ali. *Urban Memory in City Transitions: The Significance of Place in Mind* (2021)
- Cleary, Richard. *The Place Royale and urban design in the ancien régime*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Conan, Michel. "Middle East Garden Traditions: Unity and Diversity: Questions, Methods and Resources in a Multicultural Perspective." edited by Michel Conan. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2007.
- Crossley, P.K. and Garthwaite, Gene R. "Post-Mongol States and Early Modern Chronology in Iran and China," *JRAS*, Series 3, 26, (2016): 293-307.
- Dadlani, Chanchal. "The City Built, the City Rendered," in *Affect, Emotion, and Subjectivity in Early Modern Muslim Empires: New Studies in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Art and Culture*, Edited by Kishwar Rizvi. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Daniel, Farmayan, & Daniel, Elton L. *Society and culture in Qajar Iran: Studies in honor of Hafez Farmayan*. Costa Mesa, Calif.: Mazda. 2002.
- Diba, Layla S. "From the Miniature to the Monumental: The Negarestan Museum Painting of the Sons of Fath Ali Shah," *Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online*, published 28 October 2020.
- . "Image of Power and the Power of Images," in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785-1925*.
- . "Invested with Life: Wall Painting and Imagery before the Qajars." *Iranian Studies* 34, no. 1-4 (2001): 5–16.
- . "Persian Painting in the Eighteenth-Century: Tradition and Transmission." *Muqarnas* 6 (1989): 147–60.
- . "The Lost Palatine City of Fath Ali Shah," in *International Qajar Studies Association: X-XI, Life at the Court of Fath Ali Shah*, 2011.
- Ellis, Joyce M. *The Georgian town, 1680-1840*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.
- Emami, Farshid. "All the City's Courtesans: A Now-Lost Safavid Pavilion and Its Figural Tile Panels." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 54, no. 1 (2019): 62–86.
- . "Coffeehouses, Urban Spaces, and the Formation of a Public Sphere in Safavid Isfahan." *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 33 (2016): 177–220.

- . “Discursive Images and Urban Itineraries: Literary Form and City Experience in Early Modern Iran.” *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 18, no. 3 (2018).
- . “Royal Assemblies and Imperial Libraries: Polygonal Pavilions and Their Functions in Mughal and Safavid Architecture.” *South Asian Studies* (Society for South Asian Studies) 35, no. 1 (2019): 63–81.
- . “The New Isfahan: Architecture, Urbanism, and City Experience in Safavid Iran, 1590–1722” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2017)
- Ermitan, Can. “The perception of Saadabad: the 'Tulip Age' and Ottoman-Safavid rivalry,” in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman coffee: Leisure and lifestyle in the eighteenth century*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies. 2007.
- Falahat, Somaiyeh. *Re-Imagining the City: A New Conceptualisation of the Urban Logic of the “Islamic City.”* Berlin: Springer Vieweg, 2014.
- Fathi, Samira. “Promenading in Isfahan’s Chaharbaghs,” *PLATFORM* (October 2021).
- Fayzi, Mahsa. “Barressi-ye emarat-e mosum be ‘Sepehr-e Barin’ dar dasht-e Soltaniyeh bar assas manabe’-e tarikhi va asnaad-e tasviri,” [the examination of the Sepehr-e Barin Palace in the Soltaniyeh prairie according to the historical sources and visual documents], 2019.
- Flood, Finbarr Barry, & Necipoğlu, Gülru. *A companion to Islamic art and architecture* (Wiley-Blackwell companions to art history; 12). Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons. 2017.
- Floor, Willem. “Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqashan) in Qajar Persia,” *Brill* 16 (1999).
- . “Tribal Resurgence in the Eighteenth Century: A Useful Label?” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*.
- Fotoohi, Mahmoud. “Tadkera-ye Nasrabadi,” *Encyclopedia Iranica Online*, [TADKERA-YE NASRĀBĀDI – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](https://iranicaonline.org/articles/tadkera-ye-nasrabadi)
- Garthwait, Gene R. “‘What’s in a Name?’: Periodization and ‘18th-Century Iran’,” in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War*, 9–21.
- Golchin Ma’ani, Ahmad. “Haji Mohammad Hoseinkhan Nezam al-Dowleh Isfahani Sadr-e ‘Azam-e Iran,” *Vahid*, no.51 (1967): 225–231.
- . “Mir Nejat-e Isfahani,” *Vahid*, No. 3, 4, 5, 1342–1343.
- . *Tarikh-e Tazkira-haye Farsi*. Tehran, Ketabkhanhe-ye Sanai, 1984.

- Golombek, Lisa. "Urban Patterns in Pre-Safavid Isfahan." Taylor & Francis, Ltd., *Studies on Isfahan: Proceedings of the Isfahan Colloquium*, Part 1, 7, no. 1/2 (Winter-Spring 1974): 18–44.
- Grigor, Talinn. "Persian Architectural Revivals in the British Raj and Qajar Iran." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2016. 36(3), 384–397.
- . "Kings and Traditions in *Différence*: Antiquity Revisited in Post-Safavid Iran," in *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017): 1082–1101.
- . *The Persian Revival: The Imperialism of the Copy in Iranian and Parsi Architecture*. Penn State University Press, 2021.
- . "Orient oder Rom? Qajar "Aryan" Architecture and Strzygowski's Art History." *The Art Bulletin*, 2007. 89(3), 562–590.
- . *Building Iran: Modernism, architecture, and national heritage under the Pahlavi monarchs* (1st ed.). New York: Periscope Publishing; Distributed by Prestel, 2009.
- Gustafson, James M. *Kirman and the Qajar Empire: Local Dimensions of Modernity in Iran, 1794- 1914*. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Halbawchs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. 1925.
- Hamadeh, Shirine. "Public Sphere in the Eastern Mediterranean," *A Companion to Islamic Art and Architecture*, ed. Finbarr Barry Flood and Gülru Necipoğlu (John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2017): 846–873.
- . "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 1 (2004): 32–51.
- . *The City's Pleasures: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.
- . "Westernization, Decadence, and the Turkish Baroque: Modern Constructions of the Eighteenth Century." *Muqarnas*, 24 (2007): 185–197.
- Haneda, Masashi. "Iran," in *Islamic Urban Studies: Historical review and perspectives*. (1994): 235–279.
- . "The Character of the Urbanisation of Isfahan in the Later Safavid Period," *Safavid Persia: the History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, (London: I.B. Tauris, Pembroke Papers 4, 1996) 369–388.

- Harvey, David, *The Urban Experience*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
- Havik, Klaske. *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture*. *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture*. Rotterdam: Nai010 Publishers, 2014.
- Hermansen, Marcia K., and Bruce B. Lawrence. "Indo-Persian Tazkiras as Memorative Communications." Edited by Gilmartin, David, and Bruce B. Lawrence. *Beyond Turk and Hindu: Rethinking Religious Identities in Islamicate South Asia*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000.
- Hermanson, Marcia K. "Imagining Space and Siting Collective Memory in South Asian Muslim Biographical Literature (Tazkirahs)." *Studies in Contemporary Islam* 4, no. 2:1 (2002).
- Herrmann, Wolfgang. *Laugier and Eighteenth-Century French Theory*. London: Zwemmer, 1962.
- Ja'farian, Rasul. "Lobab: resaleh-ye nafis dar sabk-e zendegi ya tadbir-e manzel,"
 ———. "Shah Soltan Hosein va dastour-e negaresh-e ketabi dar fiqh-e zanan," *Maqalat va Resalat-e Tarikhi*, vol 3. Tehran: Nashr-e Elm, 2016.
 ———. *Maqhalat-e Tarikhi*, Vol. 5, Tehran: Nashr-e Elm, 2018.
 ———. *Safavi-yeh dar 'arseh-ye Din, Farhang, Siyasat*. Vol. 1. Qom: Pazhouheshkade-ye Hozeh va Daneshgah, 2000.
- Koch, Ebba. "Solomonic Angels in a Mughal Sky: The Wall Paintings of the Kala Burj at the Lahore Fort Revisited and Their Reception in Later South Asian and Qajar Art." In *Spirits in Transcultural Skies: Auspicious and Protective Spirits in Artefacts and Architecture Between East and West*. Springer, 2015.
- Lambton, A.K.S. "The Tribal Resurgence and the Decline of the Bureaucracy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).
- Lawrence, Henry W. "The Greening of the Squares of London: Transformation of Urban Landscapes and Ideals." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 83, no. 1 (March 1993): 90-118.
- Losensky, Paul E. "Biographical Writing: Tadhkere and Manaqeb." In *A HISTORY OF PERSIAN LITERATURE: Persian Prose*, V:339–79. I.B. Tauris, 2021.
 ———. "The Equal of Heaven's Vault': The Design, Ceremony, and Poetry of the Ḥasanābād Bridge." In *Perspectives on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, edited by Beatrice Gruendler and Louise Marlow. Wiesbaden, 2004.

- . “The Palace of Praise and the Melons of Time: Descriptive Patterns in ‘Abdi Bayk Sirazi’s Garden of Eden,” *Eurasian Studies*, II. 1 (2003): 1–29.
- Luschey, Heinz. “Der königliche Marstall in Isfahān und Engelbert Kaempfers Planographia des Palastbezirkes 1712,” *Iran*, 1979, Vol. 17 (1979): 71–79.
- Mahmoudian, Safa and Mehrdad Qayyoomi Bidhendi. “The Norm of Mādī: Managing Water in Safavid Isfahan,” *Beiträge zur Islamischen Kunst und Archäologie, Band 5*, edited by Markus Ritter und Ilse Sturkenboom mit Fernando Valdéz Fernández (WIESBADEN, 2017): 57–70.
- Malek, Nilufar. “gozaresh kargah-e maremati-ye Emarat-e Rakibkhaneh,”
- Mallgrave, Harry Francis. *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673-1968*. Cambridge, 2005.
- Marcus, Abraham. *The Middle East on the Eve of modernity: Aleppo In the Eighteenth Century*. Columbia University Press, 1989.
- Masjedi, Hosein and Mahdi Nourian, “Vafa Zavareh-ie va Tazkira-ye Ma’aser al-Baqeriyeh,” [Vafa Zavareh-ie and Tazkira-ye Ma’aser al-Baqeriyeh] *Jame’he Shenasi karbordi*, 1381/2002.
- Matthee P., Rudolph, “Historiographical Reflections on the Eighteenth Century,” *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- . *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.
- McGowan, Bruce. “The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)
- Melville, Charles, ed. *Safavid Persia in the Age of Empires: The Idea of Iran*. Vol. X. I.B. TAURIS Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2021.
- Mikhail, Alan. “The heart's desire: gender, urban space, and the Ottoman coffee house,” in *Ottoman tulips, Ottoman coffee: Leisure and lifestyle in the eighteenth century*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies. 2007.
- Moqtader, Reza. “Bagh-e Farahabad-e Isfahan,” *Mouze-ha* (n.d.): 59–61.
- Motaghedi, Kianoosh. “From the Chehel Sotun to the ‘Emarat-e Divani of Qom: The Evolution of Royal Wall Painting during the Reign of Fath-’Ali Shah.” In *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*. The Idea of Iran, Vol. 11 (London: I.B. Tauris, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022): 127–55.

- Necipoğlu, Gülru. "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 303–42.
- Newman, Andrew J., ed. *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*. Leiden. Boston: Brill, 2003.
- . "Of Mullas, Manuscripts, and Migration: Aspects of Twelver Shi'i Community Life in the 18th Century," *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism & Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*. Edited by Michael Axworthy (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018): 105–125.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations, Memory and Counter-Memory*, No.26, (Spring 1989): 7–24.
- O'Brien, Janet. "Dismembering the Corporate: The Single Portraits of Nader Shah and the Changing Body Politic in Post-Safavid Iran," in *The Contest for Rule in Eighteenth-Century Iran*, vol. 11, The Idea of Iran. I.B. Tauris, n.d. 2022.
- Ogborn, Miles. *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780*. New York: Guilford Press, 1998.
- Olsen, Donald J. *Town planning in London: the eighteenth & nineteenth centuries*. 2nd ed. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1982.
- Papayanis, Nicholas. *Planning Paris before Haussmann*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004
- Pashazadeh, Gholamali. "Sadr-e Isfahani, Haj Mohammad Hosein Khan," *Adyan, mazaheb va erfān, Daneshname-ye Jahan-e Islam*, vol 29 (Shifteh-Saffeyn, 2020): 468–471.
- Perry, John R. "'ALĪ-MORĀD KHAN ZAND,'" *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/8.
- . *Karim Khan Zand*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.
- Potofsky, Allan. *Constructing Paris in the Age of Revolution*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Rahimi, Babak. "Nahils, circumcision rituals, and the theatre state," in *OttomanTulipss, Ottoman coffee: Leisure and lifestyle in the eighteenth century*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies. 2007.
- . *Theater State and the Formation of Early Modern Public Sphere in Iran: Studies on Safavid Muharram Rituals, 1590- 1641 CE*. Brill, 2012.
- Rezaie, Ramezan, Mousa Reza Bakhshi Ostad. "Naqsh madraseh-haye 'asr Safaviyeh dar gostaresh tashayyo' davazdah emami" [Role of Safavid madrasas in the spread of the Twelver-Imami Shi'ism]. *Adyan va Erfan*, 47(2) (2014)" 215–234.

- Ricks, Thomas M. *Notables, Merchants, and Shaykhs of Southern Iran and Its Ports: Politics and Trade of the Persian Gulf Region, AD 1728-1789*. Piscataway, N.J: Gorgias Press, 2012.
- Ritter, Markus. "The Lost Mosque(s) in the Citadel of Qajar Yerevan: Architecture and Identity, Iranian and Local Traditions in the Early 19th Century." *Iran & the Caucasus* 13, no. 2 (2009): 239–79.
- . *Moscheen und Madrasabauten in Iran, 1785-1848: Architektur zwischen Rückgriff und Neuerung*. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Robinson, B.W. "The Court Painters of Fath Ali Shah." *Israel Publication Society* (1964): 94–105.
- Roxburgh, David. *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Sa'adat Nouri, Hosein. "Rejal-e dore-ye Qajar." *Vahid*, No.50 (1967): 121-134.
- Sadr Hashemi, Mohammad. "Haji Mohammad Hoseinkhan Sadr-I Isfahani Molaqqab be Nezam al-Dowleh," *Yadegar*, no. 8 (1946): 41-57.
- Sajdi, Dana. "Decline, its discontents and Ottoman cultural history: by way of introduction," in *OttomanTulipss, Ottoman coffee: Leisure and lifestyle in the eighteenth century*. London; New York: Tauris Academic Studies. 2007.
- Savory, Roger M. "ĀHĀRBĀĠ-E EŞFAHĀN," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, [ĀHĀRBĀĠ-E EŞFAHĀN – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](https://iranicaonline.org/articles/aharb-ah-e-esfahan) accessed online 2022.
- Sayadi, Nader. "The Fabric of the Early Modern City: Mass Production of Silk and Local Architectural Patronage in Kashan, Iran, Mid-Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Centuries." Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Texas at Austin, 2021.
- Scarce, Jennifer M. "The Architecture and Decoration of the Gulistan Palace: The Aims and Achievements of Fath ° Ali Shah (1797-1834) and Nasir Al-Din Shah (1848-1896)." *Iranian studies* 34, no. 1-4 (2001): 103–116.
- . "The Royal Palaces of the Qajar Dynasty: A Survey, in *Qajra Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change, 1800-1925* (1983)
- . "The Arts of the Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries: architecture, ceramics, metalwork, textiles," *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume 7, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*. Edited by Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and C. P. (Charles Perer) Melville. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

- Schwartz, Kevin "Reformation and Reconstruction of Poetic Networks: Isfahan c. 1722-1801," in *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900* (Edinburgh University Press, 2020).
- . *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Shahidi Marnani, Nazanin "Bagh-e Sa'adatabad Isfahan dar ayineh-ye Masnavi Golzar Sa'adat," *Motale'at Me'mari Iran*, No.9 (2016): 67-85.
- Shirzadfar, Mehr al-Zaman. *Isfahan dar doreh-ye Afshar va Zand*, Isfahan: Sazman-e Farhangi Tafrihi-ye Shahr-dari-ye Isfahan, 2008.
- Soltani, Sima. "Joqd dar Gozar-e Rouzegaran," *Bokhara*, 2010.
<https://bukharamag.com/1389.04.2111.html>
- Sood, Gagan D.S. *Indian and the Islamic Heartland: An Eighteenth-Century World of Circulation and Exchange*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Tamassoki, Zeynab "Edrak-e hoviyyat va tarikhnegari-ye me'mari: kolah farangi va gofteman khod-digari dar Iran-e modern (1659-1925)," [Perception of identity and architectural historiography: kolah farangi and the discourse of self-other in modern Iran 1659-1925], Ph.D. Dissertation, Shahid Beheshti University, 2022.
- Thompson, Victoria E. "Knowing Paris: Changing Approaches to Describing the Enlightenment City." *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 1 (January 2011): 28-42.
- Turcot, Lauren. "The Rise of the Promeneur: Walking the City in Eighteenth-century Paris," *Historical Research*, Vol. 88 (239), Feb 2015.
- Upton, Dell. *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic*. Yale University Press, 2008.
- Vidler, Anthony. "The scenes of the street: transformations in ideal and reality, 1750-1871." *On Streets*. Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1986
- Walcher, Heidi. "Face of the Seven Spheres: The Urban Morphology and Architecture of Nineteenth-Century Isfahan," *Iranian Studies* 33, no. 3-4 (2000): 327-347.
- . "ISFAHAN viii. QAJAR PERIOD" *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2006. [ISFAHAN viii. QAJAR PERIOD – Encyclopaedia Iranica \(iranicaonline.org\)](https://iranicaonline.org/articles/isfahan-viii-qajar-period)
- . *In the Shadow of the King: Zill Al-Sultān and Isfahān Under the Qājārs*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.
- Weber, S. *Damascus: Ottoman modernity and urban transformation (1808-1918)*. Århus [Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2009.

- Werner, Christoph. *A Town in Transition: A Social and Economic History of the Elite of Tabriz, 1747-1848*. Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000.
- Wittman, Richard. *Architecture, Print Culture, and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France*. New York; London: Routledge, 2007.
- Wroth, W., & Wroth, Arthur Edgar. *The London pleasure gardens of the eighteenth century*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books.1979.
- Zarinebaf, F. *Crime and punishment in Istanbul: 1700-1800*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Zoka, Yahya. "Taajha va takhtha-ye saltanati-ye Iran," in *Honar va Mardom*, No. 60, (1967).

Appendix

Appendix I

Sadr-e Isfahani's official appointments:

- Kadkhoda and Kalantar of the city quarter, before 1796
- Bayglarbeygi (governor of Isfahan, Qom, Kashan, Saveh), 1210/1796
- Amin al-Dowleh and Mostofi al-Mamalek, 1806
- Nizam al-Dowleh, 1813
- Sadr-e Azam, 1818-1823

Appendix II

The list of Sadr-e Isfahani's construction projects chronologically ordered:

- 1-Tekiyeh Khan at Paqal'eh Neighborhood (1207/1792)
- 2-Madreseh Khan at Paqal'eh Neighborhood or Masjid and Madrasehh Seyyed al-Iraqeyn (1209/1794)
- 3-Saqakahneh next to the Masjid Jami' (1214/1799)
- 4-Saqakahneh Paqal'eh (1214/1799)
- 5-Madreseh-ye Chaharbagh Sadri (1216-20/1801-05)
- 6- Emarat-e Divankhaneh and Sarpoushideh-ye Sadri between Chehel Sutun and Behesht Ayeen (1215-18/1800-03)
- 7- Chaharbagh-e Fathabad (1216-20/1801-05)
- 8-Bazaarche, Chaharsoo, and Saqakhaneh Husaynabad next to Tuqchi gateway (1216-18/1801-03)
- 9- Saqakahneh and Bazaarcheh next to Madreseh Molla Abdullah (1217/1802)
- 10- Bazaarcheh next to Masjid Jami' (1218/1803)

- 11- Pool and shops of Qaysariyyeh (1218/1803)
- 12-Chaharbagh-e Aminabad (1220-24/1805-09)
- 13-Emarat-e Haftdast-e Sadri or Tagh-e Daad (1220-28/1805-13)
- 14-Chaharbagh Husaynabad Tuqchi (1224/1809)
- 15-Emarat-e Suleymaniyyeh-ye Karaj (1224-27/1809-12)
- 16-Shanzdah Deh Dam (1225/1810)
- 17-Tomb of Aqa Mohammad Kazem Valeh Isfahani (1229/1814)
- 18-Madreseh-ye Sadr-e Bazaar (1234-39/1819-24)
- 19-Najaf Castle (1227/1812 according to Madayeh), a building in the courtyard of Hazrat-e Abbas, Madreseh and Saqakhaneh at Najaf
- 20-Takht-e Tavous
- 21-Seven doors of Sacred tombs at Najaf, Karbala, Hazrat-e Abbas, Kazemein, and Ma'sumeh Qom (undated)

Appendix III

Restoration projects:

- 1-Khaju Bridge (1209/1794)
- 2-Safavid mansions and gardens (1214-17/1799-1802)
- 3-Madreseh-e Molla Abdullah (1217/1802); construction of a bazarcheh and Saqakhaneh
- 4-Bazaarche and Darvazeh-ye Hasanabad (1217/1802)
- 5-Painting of Chaharsoo Naqashi (1217/1802)
- 6-Masjid Jami' specifically the tiled portal opposite the Sabziyan Alley (1218/1803)
- 7-Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan (1218/1803)

8-Water canals: for example, Madi-ye Nezamabad (1219/1804)

9-Emamzadeh Isma'il (1229/1814)

10-Bazaar and Chaharsoo Rangrazan (1232/1817)