



SOCIOECONOMIC THREADS OF FAITH: INTERROGATING SHAH ABBAS I'S SHAHI MOSQUE THROUGH MARXIAN INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to explore the intricate relationship between economics and architecture, employing Marx's framework to unravel the decision-making behind the construction of Shah Abbasi mosques. Marx's perspective, emphasizing the economy as the foundational base, dismisses alternative explanations rooted in politics or religion as primary motivations for architectural choices. An analysis of significant religious and political centers, including Qom, Khorasan, Qazvin, Tabriz, and Ardabil, revealed an absence of Shah Abbasi mosques, challenging explanations solely based on religious or political considerations. Subsequently, attention turned to economically vital cities like Gilan, Isfahan, and Bandar Abbas, where the flourishing silk trade and the North-South Silk Road influenced the construction of caravanserais and baths, prioritizing economic structures over Shah Abbasi mosques. Supporting the claim that economic factors influenced the mosque construction, the presence of Shah Abbasi mosques in economically prosperous regions like Farah Abad and Isfahan was highlighted. Conversely, the absence of a Shahi Mosque in Bandar Abbas was attributed to security concerns and the perceived risk of foreign attacks. Through the application of Marx's framework, it becomes evident that the economic base, reflective of material conditions and production forces, played a pivotal role in shaping the architectural landscape of Shah Abbasi mosques. The spatial distribution of these mosques aligns with economic hubs, reinforcing Marx's assertion that economic structures profoundly influence societal manifestations, even in architectural endeavors.

Keywords: Economics, Architecture, Marxian analysis, Shah Abbasi mosques, Spatial distribution

INTRODUCTION

The monumental edifices of Shah Mosques, with their intricate domes and towering minarets, stand as testaments to the grandeur of past civilizations. Yet, beyond their aesthetic splendor, lies a complex interplay of socio-economic forces that influenced their construction. This paper delves into the motivations behind the building of Shah Mosques through the analytical lens of Karl Marx's economic base framework. Marx's theory posits that the economic structure of a society, encompassing production, distribution, and the relationships formed therein, serves as the foundation upon which all other societal elements rest.

In applying Marx's economic base framework to the study of Shah Mosques, we aim to unravel the hidden threads connecting economic forces to the architectural marvels that have endured centuries. According to Marx, the economic base comprises the means of production, including the relationships between those who own the means of production (bourgeoisie) and those who labor (proletariat). By examining the economic underpinnings of societies in which Shah

Mosques were erected, we seek to understand how these structures were shaped by the prevailing modes of production, class struggles, and the dynamics of power.

Marxist analysis allows us to explore how the ruling elites, often representing the economic elite, utilized the construction of Shah Mosques as a means to solidify their authority and assert their economic dominance. The luxury of these mosques may be seen as a manifestation of the surplus generated by the economic base, serving both religious and political agendas. Furthermore, Marx's framework prompts an investigation into the labor relations and class structures that contributed to the creation of these architectural wonders.

As we traverse the historical landscapes in which Shah Mosques emerged, we will scrutinize the economic determinants that guided the decisions of rulers and financiers. By considering Marx's concept of the superstructure, which includes cultural, political, and religious institutions, we will analyze how the economic base manifested itself in the physical form of Shah Mosques, acting as symbols of economic prosperity, social hierarchy, and imperial might.

This paper seeks to contribute to the scholarly discourse on the interplay between economics and architecture, using Marx's framework to unveil the intricate connections between the economic base and the construction of Shah Mosques. Through this exploration, we aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the socio-economic motivations that shaped these iconic structures, transcending conventional interpretations such as religious and cultural factors and revealing the economic narratives embedded in their timeless grandeur.

Theoretical framework

In the evolution of societal existence, individuals inevitably form "definite relations of production, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production" (Marx, 1859, p. 4). This concept, derived from Karl Marx's seminal work, "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy", lays the groundwork for understanding how the totality of these production relations shapes the economic structure of a society. The economic structure, as Marx asserts, serves as the real foundation upon which arises a legal and political superstructure, giving birth to specific forms of social consciousness.

As Marx eloquently states, "The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political, and intellectual life. (Marx, 1859, p. 4)" This means that it is not the consciousness of individuals that determines their existence but rather their social existence that shapes their consciousness. At a critical stage of development, Marx contends that "the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production (Marx, 1859, p. 4)" leading to an era of social revolution.

In this transformative era, it is essential to distinguish between the "material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science (Marx, 1859, p. 4)" and the ideological forms through which individuals become conscious of and grapple with these conflicts. Just as individuals cannot be judged solely by their self-perceptions, a period of transformation cannot be accurately assessed by its consciousness. Instead, "this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the



conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. (Marx, 1859, p. 4)"

Furthermore, Marx posits that "no social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient to have been developed (Marx, 1859, p. 4)" and new relations of production do not replace older ones until the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society. This underscores the notion that mankind sets itself only "such tasks as it can solve," as the problem itself arises when the material conditions for its solution are already present or in the process of formation.

Jameh Mosque

Jameh Mosques are considered one of the most important religious and social spaces in the Islamic world, and in every period, the best and most excellent architectural designs and decorations have been specific to these mosques (Sultanzadeh, 2015, p. 364). After the advent of Islam, Muslims built large mosques called "Masjid al-Jama" or "Masjid Juma'ah", which was considered the main element that differentiated between the city and the countryside (Habibi, 2000, p. 42). The geographical location of Jameh mosques, the continuous presence of different strata of people in them, and the possibility of communicating between them have made these mosques important places in Islamic cities (Mosadeghie Amini, 2001, p. 223). In the history of Iran, Jameh Mosque has been under the direct influence of sultans and those in power. Especially in the case of the mosques of the capital cities, where the direct supervision of the king was directed, this is more true (Sultanzadeh, 2015, p. 223) This importance goes back to the various functions of the mosques and their role in the social and political affairs of the governments, which include the holding of various religious and political ceremonies such as Friday prayers and various celebrations of the year, and public announcements of the government were mentioned to the people. Also, in some periods, it was customary for the royal sermons of the kings, and their first speeches were held in the mosques of the capital (Nasiri & Nasiri Moghadam, 1994, p. 21). According to historical sources, the history of building the Jameh Mosque goes back to the beginning of Islam, when the second caliph asked his agents in Islamic lands to build them for Friday prayers (Mosadeghie Amini, 2001, p. 223). The attention of the kings and princes of each period to the Jameh Mosque of the city also caused these mosques to find new political, social, and cultural dimensions. In such a way that the history of the Jameh Mosque of every city tells the story of the minor history of that city (Klampak, 2007, p. 99).

The main components of Jameh Mosque

The first component of mosques is to hold Friday prayers in them. From the lexical point of view, the combination of the word "jameh" with "mosque" is found in Arabic texts, and the meaning of "Al-Masjid al-Jaami" is a description of a mosque that gathers people to pray, especially Friday prayers. Also, the Jameh Mosque was called the Juma (means Friday) Mosque because Muslims gather in these mosques for Friday prayers on this day (Badkoube, 2014). The second component is the issue of Itikaf in the Jama Masjid. One of the most important issues raised in Shia jurisprudence and a point of disagreement among many scholars is clarifying the meaning of the Jama Masjid for Itikaf. During the time of Shah Abbas, a group of jurists did not consider it permissible to hold Itikaf¹ in any place other than the Jame Mosque. Therefore, it is necessary to



deal with this component to better understand the condition of Jame Atiq Mosque its relationship with the Shah Mosque, and the motives of Shah Abbas in building this mosque.

Friday mosques had other functions in different historical periods, such as The coronation of the king and his speech (Nasiri & Nasiri Moghadam, 1994, p. 21), a place for people to gather, and a center for broadcasting news and information (Mosadeghie Amini, 2001, p. 223), holding Eid prayers and religious celebrations (Chardon, 1986, p. 121). However, these cannot be considered the main characteristics of the Jameh Mosque, because there is much evidence about the holding of such ceremonies in mosques and other places. For example, Eid prayers are often held in mosques, which were roofless places on the outskirts of cities (Badkoube, 2014) and sometimes the great mosques in cities had an effective social function and were places for people to gather (Mosadeghie Amini, 2001, pp. 222-226).

One of the oldest mosques in Iran - which, according to some historians, dates back to the beginning of Islam - is the Atiq Mosque of Isfahan. This mosque has been desired by different governments throughout history, in such a way that you can see works from the era of Al-Buye to Qajar. The location of the mosque in the city of Isfahan and its capital in different eras of Iran's history has caused those in power to pay special attention to the mosque and its context (M. Pirnia, 2001, p. 144). In the Safavid era, the abundance of religious and cultural buildings, including mosques, shows a kind of religious management, which is one of the factors that stabilize its power and survival. The association of jurists with the government in this field made the mosques in this period acquire a governmental function and assume a part of the management of social behaviors.

In the early 11th century, Shah (means king) Square was located on the southwest edge of the city and was far from the central business district of the city. Any attempt to bring businessmen and professionals from Haroon Velayat Bazaar to Shah Square should be accompanied by efforts to increase traffic through the square. The center of the old bazaar was the Friday Mosque. A large mosque whose origin dates back to the Seljuk period. It was natural that Shah Abbas tried to create a center similar to that in the area of New Square. Placing the mosque at the southern end of the square at the points that forced the people of Isfahan to pass through the new bazaar twice, once to reach the mosque and again when leaving it, could have been very appropriate.

This plan was certainly a part of the overall plan that the Shah clearly expressed, and that was to bring Shah Square to the point where it would surpass Harun Velayat and become the main business center in the city (McChesney, 2006, p. 64).

It appears that Shah Abbas arranged the Naqsh Jahan Square (Shah Square), at least from a certain period onwards, to weaken the old square, and it seems that he succeeded in achieving his goal. Chardin, who visited Isfahan after the Shah Abbas period, in his description of the old square of Isfahan mentions he found it a place full of old people and ragged people and many ruins. He describes it as "... an area called the old city, and there are no great buildings and works worth noting in It does not exist. The houses are small, low, piled on top of each other, and have absolutely no gardens like in other parts of the city. The alleys are narrow and dark, the air is suffocating, the poor and needy people are in the lowest living conditions, and in fact, it is a labyrinth that needs guides" (Chardon, 1986, p. 264).



In addition to the motivation that was explained, it is worth mentioning that the construction of a large Jame Mosque in Isfahan, in the same way as the old Jame Mosque, was one of the wishes of Sultan Muhammad, the father of Shah Abbas the first. It is not far off that this factor is a double motivation for the initiative to build a new mosque in Isfahan, the capital (Mehrabadi, 1973). One of the proofs of this neglect is the inscriptions that have fallen from the Safavid era in the Atiq(old) Jameh Mosque. In these inscriptions, there is no name of Shah Abbas Kabir, as the restorator, and this is while the kings before him, such as Shah Ishmael and Shah Tahmasab, and then the kings after him, Shah Abbas II, Shah Suleiman, and Shah Sultan Hussein have been named as the founders of the repairs and beautification of different parts of the mosque (Godard, 1993, p. 79). The tradition of building restoration in Isfahan Jame Mosque has been a long-standing tradition with a long history, and even during the period of Shah Abbas, forty columns were added at the western end of the mosque (Honarfar, 2008, p. 130) and renovations were made in the mosque. But Shah Abbas was not the benefactor of any of these measures. This work was done by people like Mohammad Hakim Isfahani in this period (Honarfar, 1971, p. 148). Another evidence of Shah Abbas' neglect of the old mosque is his attempt to use the materials of this mosque in the construction of a new mosque, which will be mentioned further.

Trying to use the materials of the old Jame Mosque in the construction of the Shah Mosque

According to the sources, the necessary marble for the buildings of the Shah Mosque was not available according to the speed of construction that Shah Abbas intended. For this reason, he planned to use the marble stones of the Atiq Jameh Mosque "which, of course, is considered to be the destruction of the said ancient mosque, which is much bigger and also much more beautiful than the Abbasid Mosque and one of the most beautiful mosques in the country"(Chardon, 1986, p. 125) leads to But two major factors have been listed for his desisting from this work. First, there is the mediation of Isfahan clerics. They went to Shah Abbas and dissuaded him with the argument that this action may be considered a license and example for his successors and it is not far off that the Shah's mosque will also suffer such a calamity in the future to build another mosque(the same). Also, in the book "National Artifacts of Isfahan" it is stated that Shah Abbas intended to destroy the Jame Atiq Mosque and use its materials in the Shah Mosque, but the scholars of the city prevented him due to the incorrectness and impermissibility of this act (Mehrabadi, 1973, p. 664). The second factor, which has been mentioned as the most important factor in more sources, is the discovery of a marble quarry, in the vicinity of Ardestan (al-Saltaneh, 1988, p. 108). This discovery was not only a reason for Shah Abbas to withdraw from his decision, but it was also interpreted in various sources as a sign of the sincerity of the intention and good faith of the Shah and the founders of the mosque.



Sultan Mosque (Shah Mosque)

King or Sultan mosques are one of the types of mosques that appeared in different periods. The builders of the royal mosques moved the center of gravity of religious affairs from the Jameh mosques to such mosques so that those whose names were associated with the mosque would also be at the center of attention. We can also mention the advertising function of Shah's mosques so that the work could be a reflection of the greatness and glory of its maker. In the Safavid period, this principle materialized by emphasizing the diversity of mosque decorations and building large complexes such as Naqshjahan Square. The Shah Mosque of Isfahan is one of the

most beautiful mosques in Iran, the construction of which began in 1020 AD and its architect was one of the greatest architects of Iran, Ustad Ali Akbar Esfahani (M. K. Pirnia, 2001, p. 291). Pope (1881) describes this masterpiece of Shia architecture as "This building represents the culmination of one thousand years of mosque building in Iran. Shaping traditions, ideals, rituals, and religious concepts, a map that was slowly perfected by combining older and simpler types, large construction elements, and decorations, all of them were unified in the Shah Mosque, with the greatness and splendor that made it one of the largest buildings in the world" (Pop, 1991, p. 217).

Among the innovations of this Shia building, we can mention the following:

1. Annexation of Naseri and Sulaymaniyah schools in the southeast and southwest fronts of the courtyard of the mosque.
2. Strict compliance with the proportions of the building components, while the surface area, the grandeur of the height, and the complexity of the architectural plan.
3. The relationship and type of placement of the mosque in relation to Naqshjahan Square and the use of architectural genius in the installation of the entrance hall with a 45-degree rotation angle to position the mosque's altar towards the Qibla. (Akbari, 2013, pp. 20-27)

Farahabad Shah Mosque

Farah Abad Mosque is a part of the Farah Abad historical complex which was built during the Safavid era (Shah Abbas I) No dated inscription has been found on the building, but it is estimated that it was built around 1025 AH. Among the buildings of the historical city of Farahabad, only the mosque has remained due to its popular location (Rouhi, 2013).

Isfahan Shah Mosque

Shah Mosque, which is also known as Jame Mosque, Soltani Mosque, and Imam Mosque, is one of the mosques in Naqsh Jahan Square in Isfahan, which was built during the Safavid era and is considered one of the important buildings of Islamic architecture in Iran. This building is an immortal masterpiece of architecture and tile work in the 11th century of Hijri. Shah Mosque (Abbasi Jameh Mosque or Imam Mosque) of Isfahan by order of Shah Abbas I Safavid and with the support and patronage of the Safavid government (Babaie & Haug, 2012) in the middle of the south side of the newly established Naqsh Jahan Square with the architecture of Master Ali Akbar Esfahani as a Jameh Mosque. It was built in the new city of Isfahan.

The Abbasi Jame Mosque is located on the south side of Naqsh Jahan Square in Isfahan and within the boundaries of the Safavid government. has it. The main entrance of this mosque is located on the south side of the square, and other entrances are in the neighborhoods around the building (for faster and easier access by the people of the neighborhood).

Important political and religious Safavid cities

First, to prove the thesis of the research, we must prove that other reasons such as political or religious importance were not involved in choosing the location of Shah Abbasi Mosque. In this regard, we will examine the most important political and religious Safavid cities. These cities are as follows:



1. Ardabil: the spiritual capital and the origin of the Safavids
2. Tabriz: the first capital of the Safavids
3. Qazvin: the second capital of the Safavids
4. Isfahan: the third capital of the Safavids
5. Qom: Tomb of Hazrat Masoumeh
6. Khorasan: Shrine of Imam Reza

In the mentioned cities, except Isfahan, the previous buildings were restored or expanded, but there is no sign of the construction of the Shahi Mosque in them. Despite the great prosperity of the Razavi shrine complex in Mashhad, only the construction of the porch, and the reconstruction of the Shah Timuri mosque and the holy shrine have been limited, and there is no trace of the Shah Abbasi mosque.

Economically important cities

The cities of Safavid era Iran in two forms of developed cities and constructions with pre-designed spatial dispersion on the silk trade route during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1038-996 AH) in the three northern, central and southern parts of Iran, for the production, distribution, and export of goods. They were employed. Analysis of the economic relations of the Safavid era cities in Nishan Iran after Islam, for the first time in the Safavid era, the institution of the economy was formed at both national and international levels (foreign trade) (Godarzi, 2008, p. 342).

The national economy, having the three sectors of urban, rural, and pastoral economy and managing organized organizations such as markets, industries, and guilds, included a huge part of Iran's economic structure (Godarzi, 2008, p. 324). The Safavids, by activating the internal trade capacities of Jews and Banyans (Gujarati Indians) and expanding foreign trade by Armenians, developed and built cities to implement economic policies as best as possible, into three areas: cities that produce raw materials, intermediate cities, and exporting cities. (port cities) divided that in the next sections, we will discuss examples of these types of cities. The role and position of some urban centers of the Safavid era such as Farah Abad Sari in the north of Iran, Isfahan in the center, and Bandar Abbas in the south of Iran have been discussed. The reason for choosing these cities is mainly the nature of processing and exporting cities. This hypothetical model of the spatial arrangement of cities, especially in the process of commercialization of Iran in the era of Shah Abbas I (1038-996 AH) with the silk trade, has found a more realistic form.

In general, producing cities were responsible for the production and cultivation of silkworms, and northern cities were included in this group. In the next group were industrial cities that were engaged in converting raw materials (manufactured silk) into goods, such as textiles such as carpets, and fabrics in weaving workshops. The central cities of Kashan, Yazd, and Isfahan are in this group. In these cities, the active weaving workshops were responsible for the production of the most important export goods from silk, i.e. textiles such as woven carpets and exquisite fabrics. It is necessary to explain that this group of cities played an intermediary role and the system governing them was based on the small commodity system in the urban economy.



In the last stage, there were port cities and exporters in the south of Iran that carried out the transportation and export and import of goods. It is important to mention that some areas, such as port cities in the north of Iran, actually could implement the triple process simultaneously, but due to the large volume of exchanges and the location of the economic target markets in the south, this did not materialize and only communications. The trade of northern regions was focused on trade with tsarist Russia.

By implementing the aforementioned economic approach, the opportunity to involve all the cities from the north to the south of the country and to commercialize large parts of the country was provided. Also, with the activation of the north-south trade route and the deactivation of the east-west land highway that led from the Ottoman territory to Europe, the political and economic pressure of the Ottoman Turks on the Safavids was reduced to a great extent. It is obvious that in realizing this, the serious participation of English and Dutch companies in the south and the complete commercial isolation of the Portuguese as well as the foreign policy of the Shah in establishing new economic ways are undeniable (Tagavi & Hashemi Zarajabadi, 2011, pp. 59-60).

The mechanism of the cities of this period, like the Middle Ages in Iran, was in such a way that the raw materials were transferred from the urban influence area - mainly the villages - to the city, and the desired product was produced. Then the produced products were entered into the distribution cycle and placed in the flow of trade in the field of economy within the city or outside the city. Another economic performance of the cities was focused on the activity of part of the productive forces that were employed in the agricultural economy sector (Yousefi Far, 2011, p. 104).

Farah Abad Sari

The historical city is located in a village with the same name. One of the important factors that had an influencing role in the development process of Farah Abad city spaces is the network of communication roads. Shah Abbasi Road, as the most important economic and strategic route in the region, created a safe and healthy route between the northern cities of Iran and the southern regions of the Alborz mountain range. This road started from Isfahan and ended in Farahabad, Sari.

Although the existence of the impassable mountains of Alborz and numerous rivers, forests, and swamps were among the natural obstacles to creating a network of regular communication routes, Shah Abbas's long-term goals in the economic development of these areas eased these problems. Therefore, with the construction of this road, the northern regions of Iran from Gasgar to Estrabad were connected to the Central Plateau. Among other actions of Shah Abbas was the plan to diversify the population of this region due to the existence of a suitable environment.

In 1023, Shah Abbas ordered the forced migration of Armenians, Ukrainians, and Georgians from the northwestern regions of Iran and the Karabagh region and their transfer to the cities of Farah Abad, Ester Abad, Barforosh and other northern cities (Turkman, 1998, p. 881). The displaced manpower was able to allocate one-tenth of the national production of this product by cultivating silk (Savagheb, 2007, pp. 97-121). During this period, the amount of silk produced in Mazandaran and Gilan states was 24840000 kg, which was 65% of the total silk



production of special lands(Nawidi, 2007, p. 169). Relevant information can be seen in Table No. 1.

Table 1. (Falsafi, 1972, p. 229)

| City | Yearly Silk Production (Kg) |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| Gilan | 2160000 |
| Shirwan | 324000 |
| Khorasan | 324000 |
| Mazandaran | 432000 |
| Qarebaq | 576000 |

This led to the growth of the economic bases and ports of Farahabad, Barforosh, Mashhadsar, and Esterabad in the northern states of Iran. Due to this structural transformation, the image of the northern cities of Iran changed from a place for the entertainment of the kings and the Safavid court to a dynamic environment for commercial and economic activities with the northern neighbor - tsarist Russia.

One of the important variables that put Farah Abad ahead of the ancient city of Sari as Darul-Hokuma is the presence of a large physical space, which Rabbino considered to be the widest part of the marshes in Mazandaran, where the distance between the mountains and the sea in this area is at its maximum (17 farsakhs)(Rabbino, 2004, p. 25).

As a port city, Farah Abad played the main role in the trade process, because the city of Sari was considered a place of buying and selling and commercial and urban exchanges. On the other hand, Farahabad played an executive role in commerce due to having a suitable environment for storage, transportation, and loading of goods, and Sari has become a decision-making city due to its dense urban fabric and the lack of suitable spaces for carrying out these activities. Was.

As mentioned above, one of the economic measures taken by Shah Abbas I in Mazandaran was the forced migration of Armenians, Kurds, Georgians, and the people of Shirvan and Karabagh in Azerbaijan to areas identified as susceptible to silk cultivation(Savagheb, 2007, p. 53). that in addition to reducing their destructive power in organizing ethnic and tribal rebellions and uprisings, their power was used in the development of the economy of newly founded cities.

Also, the forced immigration policy caused demographic changes and accelerated the formation of a new demographic composition and the creation of a multicultural society. One of the most obvious examples of these migrations is the migration of the Karabagh and Shirvan tribes of Azerbaijan, which took place in 1023 AD. occurred. In this year, a combination of



Jewish, Muslim, and Armenian populations of 15,000 people moved to Mazandaran (Turkman, 1998, p. 586).

Esfahan

According to historical sources, the death of Shah Tahmasab I and natural events such as devastating floods and lack of drinking water for Residents, on the other hand, is some of the most important factors in the change of the capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1006 AD. It is mentioned (Turkman, 1998, p. 586).

The reign of Shah Abbas I (1038-996 AH) can be safely considered as the second stage of Safavid urban development, in which the physical development of the urban fabric and the creation of an urban complex along with economic and social dynamics as a model in most cities of this period were followed. became. According to some historians and Safavid scholars, the reasons for choosing this city as the capital are rooted in geographical factors - fertile plains and sufficient water resources such as Zayandeh River - (Orouj Beyk Beyat, 1959, p. 259), economic (changing the trade route from east to west to north - South) avoiding the invasion of rival forces - Ottomans and Uzbeks - (Lockhart, 2004, p. 413), reducing the powerful force of Qazalbasha in the power structure, preventing the division of votes and tension between political and religious categories (Monajem Yazdi, 1987, p. 131) and The life and financial security of the residents has been affected by natural disasters such as seasonal floods and earthquakes. However, what confirms the choice of this seal city is that Isfahan, as one of the industrial cities, is considered an important passage in the cycle of foreign trade through the new trade route from North to South Iran.

Among the reasons for this assumption, we can refer to the first-hand sources of travelogues that deal with this issue. For example, we can refer to Chardon's travelogue, which deals with weaving industries and related workshops, and acknowledges that the best zarbaft and semin tar fabrics were produced in the cities of Yazd, Kashan, and Isfahan (Chardon, 1986, p. 896).

In addition to these historical references, the permission to establish a trading house for the British trade delegation in cities such as Isfahan and Shiraz during the era of Shah Abbas I can be considered an indicator of the potential capabilities of these cities in the area of production and business (Navaei, 1991, p. 12), which is a small At one time, it caused business elites such as Armenians, Jews and Banyans (Gujarati Indians) to enter the cycle of economic competition along with Muslims. In confirmation of the industrial performance of this city, it should be noted that in Isfahan during the Safavid era, the workshops or production factories were divided into two sectors: governmental and local. The production workshops that were under the direct supervision of the government were known as the Royal Biotat, which included 32 workshops with an average worker population of 150 people (Chardon, 1986, p. 1420).

Isfahan in the era of Shah Abbas, with two simultaneous functions of the political and commercial city, became one of the economic policy-making cities and played a role in influencing regional and international developments in the political, economic, and social fields. In the meantime, the writings of European travelers are proof of this claim (Delavale, 1991, pp. 35-36; Figueroa, 1984, p. 211; Kempfer, 1984, p. 185).



According to historical documents, the period of glory and economic prosperity of Isfahan city took place during the reign of Shah Abbas I. The most important physical transformation of the city at this time is the change of the triple seti structure (Arg, Sharestan, and Rabz) of the cities of the early and middle Islamic centuries to a new structure in the form of urban complexes. These collections in an organic form created the central core of the cities of this period. The residential areas of the city are also in the form of separate areas based on ethnicities, professions, and religious components in a centralized manner, indicating a peaceful coexistence between different social strata. In this period, the central core of the city was created in the southwestern part of the old city of the Seljuk era around the center of the square under Naqsh Jahan Square (founded in 1011 AD) (Gobe, 1986, p. 290).

The main constituent elements in this square include the Shah Mosque (Imam Mosque) on the south side, Aali Qapu Palace on the west side, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque on the east side, and the continuation of the Bazaar and Sardar Qaisarieh on the north side. To persuade and encourage people to exploit the new city, and to connect the ancient Jameh Mosque in the old square with the new Jameh Mosque in the square, the connecting element of Qaysarieh Bazaar was used in the northern part.

In this way, the center of economic gravity of the city shifted towards the new square and brought development and improvement to this new urban area. The presence of a large number of caravanserais around Naqsh Jahan Square, which served as temporary docks, adds to the economic prosperity of the complex. In fact, along with other elements of royal and religious architecture, the Qaysarieh Bazaar is considered a symbol of the urban economy of Isfahan in the era of Shah Abbas (Blake, 1999, p. 115).



Abbasi Port

One of the important developments of the 11th century during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1038-996 AH) was the conquest of Hormuz and the repelling of the Portuguese from the southern islands of Iran in 1031 AH (Vosooghi, 2005, p. 273). The fall of Hormuz, first and foremost, is a sign of the deterioration of a special distribution system, which was based on the support and full efficiency of the flow of goods transfer in the world. In this way, the fall of the Portuguese fortresses coincided with the complete domination of East India companies over large parts of Asian and European trade and reduced the development of the Persian Gulf trade, but did not stop it, and the importance of Iran in international trade continued after the fall of Hormuz. stayed in place Although the European companies were only looking for silk trade in the first years, a little while later they realized the transit position of Iran and did their best to establish relations with Iran and exploit its full capacities (Steensgaard, 1974, p. 398).

This led to Hormoz Island being completely removed from Iran's maritime trade cycle and replacing Bandar Abbas as the main center of maritime exchanges for 120 years. Until the beginning of the 11th century, Bandar Abbas was a small village called Gamron, which was captured in 1022 AH by Imam Quli Khan - the governor of Fars - with a population of about 200 people.

The way of establishing buildings and creating beautiful scenery in this port city was of such a quality that eighteen years after the revival of this port, a European traveler wrote about it:

Bandar Abbasi, a city that only eighteen families lived in when I first got to know it. Now, it has become the largest city and comparable to the best city in England in terms of trade, in such a way that no similar city can be found in Asia (Boothby, 1647, pp. 43-44).

Cities of the New Silk Road

By changing the traditional east-west route (the same land route as the Silk Road), which was a policy of depriving the Ottomans of the revenues of this route, Shah Abbas I relied on the north-south route, that is, from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. The security of the previous route had been jeopardized many times during the Ottoman campaigns to Iran, and the transit received by the Ottomans both increased the price of goods at the destination and strengthened his enemy's financial base. Following this policy, Iran's trade route joined the sea route and international trade network. This caused forced and voluntary migration of merchants. On the other hand, due to the creation of security and the construction of caravanserais and comfort facilities along the routes or in the economic centers that were far from the attacks of the Ottomans and Uzbeks, the distribution of merchants from north to south of the Safavid territory took an orderly form. It became a meeting place for merchants of cities that were far from the war zones. This dispersion of merchants included the cities of Gilan, Mazandaran, Ardabil, Tabriz, Kashan, Yazd, Isfahan, Kerman, Shiraz, Lar, Hormuz, Bandar Abbas and the Persian Gulf (Rahmati et al., 2020, p. 103).

These cities gained serious economic importance and because they were on the new path of silk trade, many caravanserais and baths were built in them, but they never became an important economic center except for Gilan and Bandar Abbas. For this reason, we do not see the appearance of Shah Abbasi mosques in them.

Cities with Shah Abbasi mosques

Only Isfahan and Farah Abad have the Shah Abbasi Mosque along with a complex of baths and markets. According to the previous introduction and research hypothesis, it is expected to see the existence of the Shah Mosque in Bandar Abbas. The main reason for the lack of a royal mosque in Bandar Abbas is Shah Abbas I's lack of confidence in protecting this area and keeping it away from enemies. Due to the possible war and the destruction of important buildings of the city by the Europeans, who had a lot of power in the Persian Gulf at that time, and the history of its occupation by foreigners, it did not have the necessary security for the residence of the king and the construction of the royal mosque complex.

CONCLUSION

Mosques have long played an essential role in the religious, social, political, and economic life of Muslims. Especially, Jameh Mosque has been the main focus of public gatherings as an element of urban identity. These mosques contained the thousand-year collective memory of people all over Iran. After converting from Sunni to Shia, the Safavids, like any other conqueror, sought to build monumental elements representing their sovereignty, and to harmonize the urban system with their policies, they established royal mosques. The new rulers of Iran destroyed all the Sunni monuments, but they could not destroy the mosques, the last symbol of



the people's previous identity, due to the sanctity of the building, although Shah Abbas first intended to do so, he was dissuaded by the mediation of religious elders. However, the question of our research was why Shah Abbas did this important innovation only in Farah Abad and Isfahan.

To elucidate the roots of the decision to construct Shah Abbasi mosques through Marx's perspective, it is essential to understand Marx's assertion that the economy serves as the base, with other elements forming the superstructure. This assertion dismisses alternative explanations, including political and religious motives, as primary drivers for architectural decisions.

Taking a cue from Marx's viewpoint, an analysis was conducted on the absence of Shah Abbasi mosques in significant religious and political centers of the time, such as Qom, Khorasan, Qazvin, Tabriz, and Ardabil. The findings indicate that these locations, despite their religious and political significance, did not witness the construction of Shah Abbasi mosques. This absence challenges explanations rooted solely in religious or political motivations.

Subsequently, we looked at the most economically vital cities of the era. Gilan, Isfahan, and Bandar Abbas emerged as focal points of silk production, trade, and export due to the flourishing silk trade and the establishment of the North-South Silk Road. In cities along the Silk Road, the construction and prosperity of caravanserais and baths took precedence over the establishment of Shah Abbasi mosques.

Supporting the claim that economic considerations influenced the decision to build Shah Abbasi mosques, the presence of these mosques was noted in Farah Abad and Isfahan, aligning with the economic prosperity of these regions. Conversely, the absence of a Shahi Mosque in Bandar Abbas is attributed to security concerns and the perceived risk of foreign attacks that could jeopardize the city.

By applying Marx's framework, we discern that the economic base, reflecting the material conditions and forces of production, played a decisive role in shaping the architectural landscape. The spatial distribution of Shah Abbasi mosques correlates with the economic hubs of the time, underscoring Marx's contention that economic structures profoundly impact societal manifestations, even in the realm of architecture.

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