Architecture
Image Studies

Vol.6, Issue 4, pp.734-748, 2025
DOI: https://doi.org/10.62754/ais.v6i4.677

https://journals.ap2.pt/index.php/ais/index

The Waqf System in Safavid Isfahan: Religious Authority, Urban Development, and Socio-Economic Transformation

Zahra Rustam gizi Islamova[1]

Abstract

The institution of waqf (endowment), a significant component of Islamic legal and social traditions, is based on allocating property for charitable purposes and ensuring its perpetual benefit to society. As a structure that prohibits the sale or personal use of endowed property, the waqf system historically played a crucial role in promoting public welfare, supporting education, and financing religious infrastructure across the Islamic world. During the Safavid era—particularly in the 16th and 17th centuries—Isfahan emerged as a major political, cultural, and economic center. The city's reconstruction under Shah Abbas I was largely supported by waqf resources.This article examines the functions of the waqf system in Safavid Isfahan, the endowment policies of Shah Abbas I, and the influence of waqfs on the city's urban planning and socio-economic development. Drawing on primary sources such as Iskandar Beg Munshi, Hasan Beg Rumlu, and Evliya Çelebi, as well as subsequent historical research, the study analyzes the religious, economic, and social significance of waqfs and explores the transformation of Isfahan into a religious and administrative center of the Safavid Empire.

Keywords: *Safavid Period, Isfahan, Waqf System, Islamic Economy, Urban Planning, Religious Institutions.*

Introduction

Within Islamic law, waqf represents a foundational institution through which property is allocated for charitable purposes and dedicated to the perpetual benefit of society. By prohibiting the sale, inheritance, or private appropriation of endowed assets, the waqf system served as one of the principal mechanisms supporting public welfare, religious education, and community infrastructure in the Islamic world. The Safavid state, in particular, placed considerable emphasis on the organization and regulation of waqfs, integrating them into the broader religious, social, and economic spheres of governance.

This study explores the role and impact of waqf properties in Isfahan during the Safavid period, focusing especially on the comprehensive endowment policies pursued by Shah Abbas I (1587–1629). His reforms included reconstructing the city, expanding its architectural landscape, strengthening Shiʿi religious institutions, and establishing a sustainable urban-economic model supported by waqf income. The analysis is grounded in primary historical sources and modern scholarly literature.

Shah Abbas I implemented a deliberate strategy to transform Isfahan into a centralized religious and economic hub. Endowments played a central role in shaping this vision: revenues from endowed lands, markets, and commercial stalls were allocated to the construction and maintenance of key monuments, caravanserais, aqueducts, and other infrastructural elements. Consequently, a cyclical waqf-based economic mechanism emerged, becoming one of the essential drivers of the city's prosperity and growth. The foundation of New Isfahan reinforced this model, intertwining Shiʿi ideological principles with economic and administrative functions and elevating the city to the status of a major religious center of the Islamic world.

During the Safavid period, waqf lands were primarily used to support religious and social institutions. Waqfs were categorized into two major groups: charitable (khayri) and private or familial (dhurri). Charitable waqfs aimed at promoting public welfare by financing mosques, madrasahs, caravanserais, bridges, aqueducts, and hospitals. Through these waqfs, scholarly life was sustained,

[1] PhD in History, Lecturer Department of Azerbaijan History (Faculties of Natural Sciences), History Faculty Baku State University, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9530-4263, E-mail: zahraislamova@bsu.edu.az

stipends were provided for students and clerics, trade routes were facilitated, and essential urban services such as water supply and medical care were maintained.

Private or familial waqfs functioned mainly to protect the economic security of a lineage. These endowments ensured the financial stability of family members across generations through the allocation of land, commercial properties, and other income-generating assets. While primarily created for familial benefit, many private waqfs also incorporated charitable obligations, dedicating a portion of their revenues to the poor, religious institutions, or other community services. Thus, familial waqfs simultaneously preserved property within a lineage and contributed to broader social welfare.

Safavid Endowment Policy and Its Architectural-Educational Framework in Isfahan

The architectural, educational, and socio-economic framework of Safavid endowment (waqf) policy is most clearly illustrated through the example of Isfahan. One of the most remarkable manifestations of this policy is the Shah Mosque (renamed the Imam Mosque after 1979), whose construction lasted from 1611 to 1629. This monumental complex, along with the surrounding educational and commercial structures, was financed almost entirely through waqf revenues. Income generated from endowed lands, market stalls, urban shops, and agricultural estates was systematically allocated to maintain mosques, madrasas, charitable institutions, and a wide spectrum of public services.

The administrative management of these endowments—overseen by the **Ṣadr** and high-ranking Shiʿi clerics—contributed simultaneously to strengthening religious ideology and meeting the educational, economic, and social needs of the city's population. Through this dual function, the waqf system became a powerful instrument in shaping Isfahan into a major intellectual and spiritual center during the reign of Shah Abbas I.

Isfahan as a Center of Science and Learning

Shah Abbas I pursued a conscious policy of transforming Isfahan into a "center of science and education," integrating cultural development with urban reconstruction. Numerous madrasas were erected in different districts of the city, particularly in the vicinity of Naqsh-e Jahan Square and adjacent to the Shah Mosque. These institutions did not confine themselves to religious training; they served as vibrant cultural academies offering instruction in philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, literature, Islamic jurisprudence, and medical sciences.

Madrasas functioned as hubs for intellectual exchange and elite formation. They educated both scholars rooted in traditional Islamic sciences and a new generation of thinkers who contributed to the philosophical and scientific climate of the Safavid capital. In doing so, they strengthened the ideological infrastructure of Safavid Shiism while simultaneously cultivating administrative and scholarly elites indispensable to the functioning of the state.

Endowment Property as an Urban–Economic Mechanism

The endowment properties associated with architectural landmarks—such as Chahar Bagh Street, Naqsh-e Jahan Square, and the monumental complexes erected under Shah Abbas—created an organic linkage between commerce and public welfare. Safavid endowment policy thus transcended purely religious concerns; it served educational, economic, and urban-planning functions. Endowments funded infrastructural development, sustained public institutions, and supported artisans, merchants, and scholars in the growing metropolis.

This comprehensive model reveals a fundamental distinction between Safavid and Ottoman waqf policies. While the Ottoman waqf system was tightly integrated with urban planning and operated as a mechanism of economic sustainability, the Safavid system focused more intensely on financing religious, cultural, and educational institutions. Consequently, Ottoman architecture tended toward unified functional complexes, while Safavid architecture privileged monumental, symbolic, and decorative design principles (Turkish-Iranian Architecture, pp. 131–134).

The Role of Isfahan in the Safavid Endowment System Before Becoming the Capital

Even prior to its selection as the Safavid capital, Isfahan held strategic importance due to its location at the crossroads of major trade routes. Throughout its history, the city played a significant political and military role. Although Isfahan's political prominence diminished after the Seljuk period, it retained a measure of economic, cultural, and religious status until the rise of the Safavids.

Isfahan as a Strategic Military and Administrative Center

Its military value is particularly evident during the late Aq Qoyunlu period. The **Battle of Isfahan (1497)**—where the ruler Göde Ahmed was defeated—demonstrates the city's strategic relevance. Alvand Mirza's struggle against his brother Muhammadi Mirza, during which Isfahan became a refuge and military base, further highlights its strategic utility (Hasan Bey Rumlu, pp. 349–350, 354–355). Its central position on the Iranian plateau enabled control over major trade routes and made the city a natural staging ground for military mobilization.

These early indicators explain why Shah Abbas I later chose Isfahan as the political heart of the Safavid realm.

Isfahan During the Early Safavid Rulers

In the early Safavid period, the city served primarily as a military encampment and winter residence.
According to **Khaja Zeyn al-Abidin Ali Abdi Beg Shirazi's** *Takmilat al-Akhbar*, Shah Ismail I spent the winters of 1504 and 1512 in Isfahan (Shirazi, pp. 27, 33). **Abdullatif Qazvini** also notes that important political events—including the reception of news regarding Sultan Selim's death in 1520—occurred while the Shah was in Isfahan (Qazvini, p. 55). Moreover, in the *Ahsan al-Tawarikh*, we see that Isfahan functioned as a strategic operational base during Shah Ismail's campaign against Babur Shah for Kandahar (p. 438).

These records collectively illustrate that Isfahan was not merely a city the Shah passed through; it was a secure residence, a military headquarters, and a center for administrative coordination during campaigns toward Khorasan, Azerbaijan, and the Persian Gulf.

Endowment Policy Under Shah Ismail: Decentralized and Tribal-Based

During the formative years of the Safavid dynasty, the waqf system had not yet been centralized. Shah Ismail I's endowment policy was shaped primarily by the need to secure the loyalty of Qizilbash tribes and consolidate political authority. As a result, waqf administration relied heavily on the initiative of Qizilbash emirs and local elites.

According to Iskandar Beg Munshi, the Qizilbash emirs were the main agents implementing religious and waqf policies across Safavid territories. One of Shah Ismail's closest supporters, Yadigar Ali Sultan Khulafa of the Talysh tribe, endowed numerous mosques, madrasas, and charitable buildings (Munshi, Vol. II, 2011, p. 1894).

In addition, the tax-exempt status of waqf property made it an attractive mechanism for feudal lords wishing to protect their assets. Landowners frequently endowed lands, shops, caravanserais, mills, gardens, irrigation canals, and even mines. Once endowed, these properties became inviolable and exempt from taxation—an incentive that encouraged the proliferation of waqfs in the early Safavid period (Munshi, Vol. II, 2011, p. 2040).

Local Qizilbash Patronage and Early Endowments in Isfahan

Isfahan's early architectural and religious development also benefited from Qizilbash patronage. The city's governor Durmuş Khan Shamlu, one of Shah Ismail's leading commanders—renowned for his military role in the Merv and Chaldiran campaigns—constructed the shrine of Harun-e Velayat, completed in 918/1512. After his death, Mirza Kamal al-Din Shah-Husayn, who succeeded him as governor, erected the adjacent Ali Mosque in 1522 (Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, pp. 108–109).

Shah-Husayn's background as a trained architect and mason reflects the strong connection between political authority and architectural patronage in early Safavid Isfahan. His rise from a local administrative role to a high-ranking deputy—through loyalty and service to Durmuş Khan and later to Shah Ismail—is recorded in *Ahsan al-Tawarikh* (p. 443).

Although early Safavid sources provide scattered references to the involvement of Qizilbash nobles and ghulams in the waqf system, they do not allow for a precise reconstruction of Isfahan's role within the broader waqf network. Nevertheless, available evidence suggests that during the first half of the 16th century, Isfahan functioned more as a **regional center** within the Safavid endowment system rather than a centralized administrative hub—a status that would dramatically change after the ascension of Shah Abbas I.

The entrance gate of the Ali Qapı palace, expanded by an additional two floors above its original Timurid structure, thus evolved into a multifunctional political and ceremonial space. It served not only as the residence of the royal guards and judicial officials but also as an elevated platform from which the Shah and members of the court could observe public festivities, polo matches, and military parades taking place in Meydan-e Naqsh-e Jahan. The architectural transformation of this gate into a monumental palace façade symbolized the centralization of political authority and the articulation of Safavid sovereignty through urban aesthetics (Najaf, A, Najafov R, 2025).

The Centrality of Waqf in the Economic Functioning of the Capital

The transformation of Isfahan into the new capital under Shah Abbas was not merely architectural; it relied fundamentally on the integration of waqf revenues into the city's administrative and economic mechanisms. The entire urban development—from the construction of monumental mosques such as the Shah Mosque and the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, to the maintenance of bazaars, gardens, bridges, and caravanserais—depended on waqf income derived from landholdings, commercial properties, and agricultural estates.

This system enabled:

1. **Autonomous financial sustainability of religious and public institutions**
   Income from waqf-controlled shops, urban markets, and agricultural lands funded the salaries of clerics, teachers, students, judges, and mosque officials.
2. **Maintenance and expansion of urban infrastructure**

   Waqf revenues were used to restore water channels, maintain public gardens, and sustain the massive irrigation systems fed by the Zayandeh Rud.
3. **Strengthening of Safavid Shiʿi ideology**

   By directing waqf income toward the construction of Shiʿa religious edifices, the Safavid administration strengthened clerical authority and promoted doctrinal uniformity.
4. **Economic integration of newly settled groups**

   Armenian merchants of New Julfa and Azerbaijani-Tabrizi merchant families in Abbasabad also operated within a framework of semi-autonomous waqf organizations, facilitating trade, taxation, and integration into the metropolitan economy.

Thus, the waqf institution became deeply embedded in the fabric of Safavid governance, acting as a stabilizing financial mechanism that supported both ideological and practical state-building objectives.

Expansion of Chahar Bagh and the Urbanization of the Southern Sectors of Isfahan

The construction of the Chahar Bagh promenade, initiated in 1596, represented one of Shah Abbas's most ambitious urban projects. Designed as a royal avenue symbolizing dynastic grandeur, Chahar Bagh stretched from the Naqsh-e Jahan complex southwards to the foothills of Mount Soffa. Along its length, new residential quarters, gardens, pavilions, and educational institutions were construted.

Architectural and Social Transformation Along Chahar Bagh

During the first decades of the 17th century, the avenue developed into a multi-functional ceremonial and residential axis:

- Royal gardens (bāghs)—including Bagh-e Hezar Jarib—were endowed to finance public and religious institutions.
- Public pavilions served as social gathering spaces for residents and travelers.
- Elite mansions housed Safavid nobles, high-ranking administrators, and wealthy merchants.
- Commercial districts emerged around small bazaars and caravanserais connected to the promenade.

The construction of the Allahverdi Khan Bridge (Si-o-Se Pol) further expanded the city across the south bank of the Zayandeh Rud. Commissioned by Allahverdi Khan Undiladze, the Georgian ghulam commander, the bridge also formed part of a waqf endowment whose revenues were allocated to the maintenance of educational institutions and public infrastructures along Chahar Bagh.

The Role of New Julfa and Abbasabad in the Endowment System

The settlement of Armenian merchants in New Julfa (after 1603–1604) introduced a new socio-economic dynamic into the endowment infrastructure of Isfahan:

- Armenian merchant families received plots of land and commercial rights under Safavid protection.
- Many churches, schools, and community buildings were financed through Armenian communal waqfs.
- The economic vitality of New Julfa, especially its silk trade, indirectly funded major royal constructions through taxation and state-endorsed waqf channels.

Similarly, the Abbasabad district, created for merchants displaced from Tabriz, became a hub of artisanal and commercial activity. Its development was supported by a mixed waqf system that included both state endowments and private family waqfs, further illustrating the hybrid economic strategies of the Safavid state.

The Consolidation of Religious Authority Through Architectural Endowments

The monumental architectural complex of Meydan-e Naqsh-e Jahan—which included the Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Qapı Palace, and Qeysariyya Bazaar—functioned as the embodiment of Safavid religious and political ideology. Each structure was directly supported by its own system of waqf properties.

Shah Mosque

- Entirely financed through royal waqfs
- Endowed with agricultural lands, markets, mills, and caravanserais
- Revenues allocated to the salaries of scholars, prayer leaders, Qurʾān reciters, students, and custodians
- A major institution for the dissemination of Twelver Shiʿi scholarship

Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque

- Built without a minaret or courtyard, reflecting its specialized purpose for court religion
- Its endowments supported elite religious education
- Served as a platform for legitimizing Safavid clerical authority

Qeysariyya Bazaar

- One of the largest commercial complexes in the Islamic world
- Functioned as a major source of waqf revenue
- Linked the old Meydan-e Kohna to the new Safavid city
- Supported not only religious institutions but also hospitals, caravanserais, and educational centers

Through these mechanisms, Shah Abbas created an **integrated ideological and economic system**, in which endowments financed religious authority, and religious authority legitimized the centralized Safavid state.

Isfahan as the Nucleus of a Centralized Waqf Administration

By the early 17th century, Isfahan had become:

- **The administrative center of waqf revenues**
- **The ideological heart of Twelver Shiism**
- **The economic hub of Safavid imperial trade**
- **The architectural showcase of Safavid cultural identity**

Unlike the early decentralized Qizilbash-based waqf system under Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasib, the waqf administration under Shah Abbas evolved into a *centralized, bureaucratic institution* overseen by the Ṣadr al-Ṣudūr, high clergy, and specially appointed managers (mutawallis).

This centralization served three principal objectives:

1. Reduction of Qizilbash political autonomy

   Waqf revenues were redirected from tribal elites to clerical and state institutions.

2. Strengthening of clerical authority

   The ulama played a major role in managing waqf income, aligning religious institutions with state diplomacy.

3. Ensuring financial independence of public institutions

   This allowed religious schools, hospitals, roads, caravanserais, and mosques to function without constant reliance on the central treasury.

Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque and the Centralization of Religious Authority

The two other major monuments of Naqsh-e Jahan Square—the Mosque of Sheikh Lutf-Allah and the Shah Mosque (initially known as the New ‘Abbasi Mosque)—embody, in architectural form, both the political–economic interdependence of the Safavid Empire and the institutionalization of Twelver Shiism as the state religion. The Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, located on the eastern side of Naqsh-e Jahan directly facing the Ali Qapu Palace, was not a congregational mosque but a royal oratory. It expressed the personal piety of the Shah and his household and primarily served the devotional needs of the ruler’s entourage.

Sheikh Lutf-Allah himself was among the most prominent Shi‘i scholars of his time, originating from Jabal ‘Āmil in southern Lebanon. He was one of a number of learned figures invited to the Safavid court to help (re)formulate, codify, and disseminate the Sharia principles of Twelver Shiism. As Abisaab notes, such scholars were central to the Safavid project of constructing an orthodox Twelver Shi‘i legal and theological framework (Abisaab, pp. 81 ff.). According to Iskandar Beg Munshi, the invitation of Sheikh Lutf-Allah Tabasi to Isfahan during the reign of Shah Abbas I illustrates the deliberate policy of concentrating religious authority in the capital. By royal decree, Sheikh Lutf-Allah was brought to the *dār al-saltana-yi Isfahan* and appointed as imam and teacher in the mosque erected on Naqsh-e Jahan Square for his use (Munshi, vol. I, 2009, p. 282).

Munshi further indicates that the sheikh was entrusted with responsibilities over the endowments of the *sarkār-i khāssa-yi sharīfa*, which shows that scholars did not merely function as religious authorities but also played an important role in the supervision and administration of waqf property. This integration of learned authority and waqf management reveals the extent to which religious elites were embedded in the fiscal and institutional mechanisms of the Safavid state.

Conversion, Sharia Practice, and the Social Role of Scholars

An episode recorded by Adam Olearius provides an illustrative example of the continuing application of Sharia rules in the Safavid state and the central role of Shi‘i scholars in that process. Olearius recounts the case of a Christian inhabitant of Isfahan who, having fallen into economic ruin over the course of three years, applied to the Supreme Gate to convert to Islam (Olearius, cited in Bayram, p. 176). The fact that this procedure was carried out in accordance with formal regulations at the Supreme Gate—the administrative and religious center of the empire—demonstrates the institutionalized nature of conversion and the visible presence of Sharia in socio-legal practices.

At the same time, the anecdote highlights the impact of economic hardship on individual religious choices and the way in which conversion could function as a strategy of social and economic repositioning. Such conversions, carried out under scholarly supervision and within the framework of waqf-supported institutions, further enhanced the authority of religious scholars and strengthened the social position of endowment-based institutions as arenas of integration and discipline for new Muslims.

Waqf, Urban Space, and the Building of a Religious–Economic Capital

Although the religious, educational, social, and economic functions of Isfahan as a center of waqf-based institutions can be traced back to the time of the earliest Qizilbash rulers, monumental religious and charitable complexes remained relatively limited prior to Shah Abbas I. With the transfer of the

capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1598, systematic efforts were undertaken to transform the city into the economic, cultural, and religious heart of the Safavid Empire. A central pillar of this strategy was the consolidation and expansion of Isfahan's waqf system.

Under Shah Abbas I, waqfs operated simultaneously as:

1. An ideological instrument – promoting and institutionalizing Twelver Shiism;
2. An economic mechanism – financing urban infrastructure and commercial facilities;
3. A stabilizing institutional framework – ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of religious, educational, and welfare structures.

Through waqf revenues, a wide range of institutions were created and maintained, including the Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, the Imamzadeh Ismail shrine, madrasahs and libraries for higher learning, hospitals and healing lodges, caravanserais and guesthouses, public baths, and water-supply installations. The concentration of many of these endowed properties around the central square underscores that waqfs were not merely abstract financial instruments: they were a key component of spatial organization and a strategic tool in Shah Abbas I's attempt to reshape Isfahan into a centralized religious–economic system. A closer examination of the locations of individual monuments further confirms this spatial logic.

Qizilbash Emirs, Ghulams, and the Political Dimension of Waqf

The formation of Isfahan as a religious center and the erection of key monuments cannot be attributed solely to the personal initiatives of the Safavid rulers. State officials and Qizilbash emirs also played significant roles as patrons and intermediaries. The ghulams, in particular, were closely involved in the construction and management of major religious complexes established as waqf entities on royal orders. Their contributions illustrate the political dimension of the waqf system and its function as a tool of centralization.

The management of large complexes such as the Shah Mosque under waqf status and the active participation of ghulams like Allahverdi Khan and Sari Taghi demonstrate the emergence of a waqf structure based on centralized, bureaucratic oversight. The waqf nature of the bazaars and mosques built by Sari Taghi in Mazandaran, for instance, shows that the revenues from these foundations simultaneously supported local economies and enhanced the prestige and authority of the central government. In this way, waqf institutions served not only religious and social purposes but also contributed directly to state-building and political integration.

Commercial Waqfs, Long-Distance Trade, and the Silk Economy

The role of waqf is also clearly visible in Safavid religious policy and economic strategy. During the reign of Shah Abbas I, Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Chahar Bagh Avenue, and related architectural ensembles were largely financed through waqf revenues. The Great Bazaar (Bāzār-e Bozorg) and the shops surrounding the square were major centers of commercial activity, where silk, spices, textiles, and other goods were bought and sold.

As Rudi Matthee notes, Safavid merchants conducted trade over a wide geographical area, establishing overland connections between Isfahan and cities such as Bursa, Aleppo, and Izmir, as well as between Isfahan and Lahore via Farah and Kandahar, Mashhad, and Bukhara, while maritime trade linked Bandar Abbas with Surat and the ports of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts (Matthee, *The Safavid World*, p. 1). The rents generated by these commercial facilities were incorporated into waqf funds, and were earmarked for the maintenance of key religious and educational institutions, including the Imam Mosque and the Chahar Bagh Madrasa, as well as public utility buildings.

Agricultural taxes were also converted into waqf income in order to finance urban institutions—mosques, madrasas, water-supply networks, and soup kitchens for the poor (Robert McChesney, p. 167). This model, in which economic resources were systematically redirected through endowments toward religious and social goals, transformed cities like Isfahan into integrated economic, religious, and cultural centers.

Trade, Waqf, and the Chahar Bagh Axis

By the mid-17th century, the waqf-based trading system had become deeply embedded in the wider Safavid economic network. During his journey to Baghdad in 1655, Evliya Çelebi observed that "hundreds of thousands of camel loads of dates" were brought from Baghdad to the regions of Hamadan

and Isfahan (Evliya Çelebi, p. 582). The shops and caravanserais along Chahar Bagh therefore functioned not only as local commercial structures but also as key nodes in a broader regional trade system.

These establishments were integrated into the waqf framework; rents and transaction taxes derived from them were deposited into waqf funds. The revenues were used, among other purposes, to finance the stipends and subsistence of students and teachers at the Chahar Bagh Madrasa. Shah Abbas I's decision to place silk production and trade under state control is particularly important in this context. Silk imported from Azerbaijan (Tabriz, Shirvan) and Khorasan was sold in Isfahan, and part of the income generated by this trade was allocated to waqf institutions. This arrangement ensured that commercial activity was structurally linked to the endowment system, thereby reinforcing the financial base of religious and educational foundations.

The Harun-e Velayat mausoleum and the Masjid-e Ali, built and endowed by rulers and Qizilbash emirs, were also incorporated into the waqf network and financed through income derived from the surrounding lands, agriculture, and silk trade. The allocation of revenues collected from irrigation systems of the Zayandeh Rud to waqf accounts further illustrates how economic and religious policy intersected through the waqf institution.

Irrigation, Water Control, and Waqf-Based Urban Development

European travelers provide crucial testimony regarding Safavid efforts to develop irrigation and agriculture around Isfahan. According to Tavernier, following the transfer of the capital to Isfahan, Shah Abbas initiated comprehensive measures to reorganize the irrigation system to stimulate agricultural production in the surrounding countryside. Numerous canals were drawn from the Zayandeh Rud to irrigate fields and gardens (N. Suleymanov, p. 395). Tavernier notes that the state closely controlled the distribution of water among villages and farms, and that a *mīr-āb* (water official) oversaw the delivery of water to each household once a week (Suleymanov, p. 396). This shows that the city's water-supply system was firmly under governmental supervision.

Iskandar Beg Munshi records that Shah Abbas even considered diverting the Kurang River from the Rarumazuj region to link it with the Zayandeh Rud, with the aim of alleviating water shortages, and promoting construction, cultivation, and horticulture in and around Isfahan. This ambitious project was entrusted to Mir Feyzullah Shahristani, the local vizier (Munshi, *Tarikh-i 'Alamarā-yi Abbasi*, pp. 1688–1689). The chronicle *Khulāsat al-Siyar* confirms that work on this canal—intended to supply the capital with additional water—was later halted under Shah Safi, even though a tax of 50,000 tumans had already been collected from the surrounding region for the purpose (Pavlova, *Chronicle of the Safavid Times*, pp. 36, 40).

These sources indicate that Shah Abbas not only ordered the mobilization of financial resources but also organized material and moral support for the project, mobilizing engineers, stonecutters, craftsmen, and entire Lur tribal groups as wage laborers. The appointment of Lala Muhubali Bey, head of the ghulams, as overall supervisor of the project further underscores the central role of ghulams in implementing royal construction and infrastructural policies (Munshi, pp. 1688–1689).

Ghulams as Builders and Patrons of Isfahan

In general, ghulams—key representatives of Safavid military power—played a vital role in construction and urban development in Isfahan during the reign of Shah Abbas, as they had under earlier rulers. Acting as agents and protectors on behalf of the Shah, they financed, supervised, and built many of the major components of the new capital and the empire's broader infrastructure.

Between 1602 and 1607, Allahverdi Khan—commander-in-chief (*sepahsalar*) of Shah Abbas's armies—oversaw the construction of the bridge that bears his name. The bridge, spanning the Zayandeh Rud, connected the two sections of Chahar Bagh and became an essential artery linking different parts of the city. Other court and state officials, most of whom were of ghulam origin, were granted land along Chahar Bagh and ordered to construct garden houses and residences there.

Muhubali Bey, leader of the ghulams and "superintendent of the royal buildings in Isfahan," was responsible for many of these projects, including the financing and construction of the Lala Mosque. He also supervised the planning and building of the Abbasabad housing complex (Honarfar, 1965, p. 429; Mehrabadi, p. 666). Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the ghulams, through their involvement in waqf-based construction, were instrumental in shaping the physical and institutional

landscape of Isfahan and in embedding the waqf system within the urban, economic, and political structure of the Safavid state.

Table 1. Key Functions of the Waqf System and Urban Development in Safavid Isfahan

Category	Description	Key Actors / Institutions	Primary Sources / Evidence
Religious Centralization	Establishment of Shi'i institutions; empowerment of the clergy; codification of Twelver Sharia.	Shah Abbas I; Sheikh Lutf-Allah; Shi'i scholars from Jabal 'Āmil.	Munshi (vol. I, 2009); Abisaab; Olearius.
Architectural Patronage	Construction of major religious monuments in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, including Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque and the Shah Mosque.	Royal court; Qizilbash elites; Ghulam officials (Allahverdi Khan, Sari Taghi).	Munshi (2011); Babaie (2010); Honarfar (1965).
Economic Integration Through Waqf	Use of commercial and agricultural revenues to fund religious and educational institutions; linking trade to waqf income.	Merchant guilds; state treasury; bazaar complexes; caravanserais.	Matthee (*The Safavid World*); McChesney.
Commercial Infrastructure	Development of bazaars, caravanserais, and market streets generating revenue for waqfs and sustaining urban life.	Merchants of Isfahan, New Julfa, Abbasabad; bazaar administrators.	Evliya Çelebi (1655); Tavernier.
Water Management and Irrigation	Expansion of irrigation canals from Zayandeh Rud; planned diversion of Kurang River; water taxation and distribution.	Shah Abbas I; Mir Feyzullah Shahristani; Lala Muhubali Bey; *mirab* officials.	Munshi (pp. 1688–1689); Pavlova; Tavernier.
Ghulam Contributions	Supervision and construction of major buildings, bridges, gardens, and residential quarters; strengthening of central authority.	Allahverdi Khan; Muhubali Bey; other ghulam commanders.	Honarfar (1965); Mehrabadi; Safavid chronicles.
Social Welfare and Public Services	Hospitals, baths, madrasahs, libraries, soup kitchens, water systems funded and maintained through waqfs.	Waqf administrators; Shi'i clergy; local officials.	McChesney; Safavid waqf documents (where available).
Ideological Function of Urban Space	Naqsh-e Jahan Square used as symbolic stage for royal authority and propagation of Shi'ism; integration of architecture and ideology.	Shah Abbas I; court architects; religious elites.	Munshi; Babaie (2010).

Table 2. Major Safavid Actors and Their Contributions to the Waqf System of Isfahan

Actor / Group	Role in the Waqf System	Key Contributions	Examples
Shah Abbas I	Centralizer of waqf administration; urban planner; patron of Shi'i institutions.	Moved capital to Isfahan; built Naqsh-e Jahan Square; reorganized waqfs; expanded irrigation and trade infrastructure.	Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, Chahar Bagh, Allahverdi Khan Bridge.

Shi'i Scholars (e.g., Sheikh Lutf-Allah)	Religious and legal authorities; instructors in madrasahs; supervisors of endowments.	Standardized Shi'i jurisprudence; managed key waqf estates; led mosque services; educated elite scholars.	Imam at Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque; overseer of sarkār-i khassa waqfs.
Ghulams (Allahverdi Khan, Sari Taghi, Muhubali Bey)	Military administrators; builders; financial supervisors; patrons through waqf.	Constructed bridges, palaces, mosques; supervised housing projects; provided revenue for waqfs.	Allahverdi Khan Bridge; Lala Mosque; Abbasabad residential complex.
Qizilbash Emirs	Early patrons of religious complexes; contributors to regional waqfs.	Built shrines, mosques, charitable facilities; supported early Safavid religious institutions.	Harun-e Velayat Mausoleum; Masjid-e Ali.
Merchants (Isfahan, New Julfa, Abbasabad)	Contributors to economic base of waqfs; payers of rent and trade taxes.	Operated bazaars, caravanserais; stimulated long-distance trade; provided commercial revenue for waqfs.	Silk trade; spice and textile markets; Chahar Bagh shops.

Table 3. Spatial Organization of Waqf Institutions in Isfahan

Urban Zone	Primary Waqf Institutions	Functions	Impact
Naqsh-e Jahan Square	Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, Ali Qapu, Qeysariyya Bazaar.	Religious ceremonies, royal protocol, commerce, education.	Created symbolic–economic center of the empire; generated stable waqf revenue.
Chahar Bagh Avenue	Chahar Bagh Madrasa, caravanserais, shops, garden complexes.	Education, trade, recreation, urban mobility.	Linked economic and religious institutions; funded schools and teachers.
Surrounding Agricultural Lands	Irrigation canals, orchards, wheat fields, cotton and silk farms.	Agriculture, water management, taxation, revenue generation.	Provided primary income base for waqfs and urban infrastructure.
New Julfa & Abbasabad	Churches, merchant houses, workshops, commercial depots.	Trade, community life, semi-autonomous waqf administration.	Integrated Armenian and Tabrizi merchants into Safavid economy; boosted waqf revenues.

Safavid Religious Policy, Waqf Institutions, and the Transformation of Isfahan

After the Safavids declared Twelver Shiism the official religion of the state, the Masjid-e Ali emerged as one of the most important centers of Shi'i worship and religious propagation in Isfahan. Its dedication to Imam 'Ali significantly enhanced its symbolic value within the Shi'i community. Like other major monuments erected during this period, the mosque's architectural form reflected the ideological foundations of Safavid rule, demonstrating both the dynasty's commitment to Twelver Shiism and its effort to project a distinct Safavid identity. In addition to serving as a religious institution, the mosque functioned as an educational and charitable center, where students and the poor benefitted from waqf (endowment) revenues. Through such institutions, Isfahan's role within the Safavid waqf system gradually strengthened and expanded.

Religious Tolerance and Pragmatic Governance in Sunni Regions

Although Shiism was established as the state religion, Safavid policy—particularly under Shah Abbas I—did not generally enforce repression against Sunni populations. Following the incorporation of Merv, Nisa, and Abivard in Central Asia (modern Turkmenistan), the local Sunni communities were permitted to retain their religious practices. As Iskandar Beg Munshi notes:

"In mosques and temples, Sunnis and Shi'ites live according to their own rites and slogans. Nothing has been imposed on either against their will, nor will anything be imposed. Let everyone go wherever they wish." (Munshi, vol. II, p. 1134)

This testimony indicates that no systemic Sunni–Shi'i conflict occurred within these regions at the time. Shah Abbas's policy toward the Sunni populations of Central Asia can be understood as pragmatic and strategic—designed to maintain political stability, protect local economic resources, and strengthen military control. Permitting Sunni communities to retain their religious identity was a flexible, situational policy shaped by local conditions. Although this tolerance did not contradict the broader goal of advancing Shi'i hegemony, it served as a temporary measure to facilitate state building in newly conquered territories.

Nevertheless, Safavid religious policy could also be severe when rebellion or political resistance was involved. During the Georgian campaigns of 1614–1617, Munshi records that Shah Abbas ordered the conversion of Christian churches into mosques as punishment for uprisings: "Most of the Christian churches and temples were converted into mosques of Islam, and the people of those lands were compelled to accept the faith." (Munshi, vol. II, p. 1572)

This measure illustrates how religious policy could intersect with political and economic objectives—confiscated properties were incorporated into the waqf system, thereby extending state control over rebellious regions. The event demonstrates that the waqf institution was not merely charitable: it was deeply embedded in Safavid mechanisms of imperial governance, territorial integration, and the promotion of Shi'i ideology.

Comparison with Ottoman Waqf Policy

In contrast with the Safavid approach, the Ottoman Empire integrated religious policy with an extensive resettlement (*iskân*) system. According to historian Bahaeddin Yediyıldız, Ottoman authorities encouraged population movement into newly conquered territories and established waqfs to secure religious, administrative, and economic influence. Members of the Ottoman ruling class endowed substantial properties in frontier regions, and the revenues funded teachers, sheikhs, imams, preachers, and their dependents. Special benefits, free lodging, and food in tekkes and waqf-supported institutions facilitated resettlement and accelerated the spread of Ottoman religious and cultural norms (Yediyıldız, pp. 257–258).

This comparison highlights a major difference: whereas Ottomans used waqfs as instruments of demographic transformation and administrative integration, the Safavids relied more heavily on monumental religious architecture and ideological symbolism to consolidate Shi'i authority.

Dynastic Legitimacy and the Marriage Alliance with Sheikh Lutf-Allah

One of Shah Abbas I's key strategies to enhance his legitimacy was his marriage to the daughter of the eminent jurist Sheikh Lutf-Allah. This alliance strengthened the bond between the Safavid monarchy and the Shi'i religious elite and reinforced Abbas's authority in the eyes of scholars and the populace. The Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque—named in honor of the scholar and located directly opposite the Ali Qapu Palace—served as a symbolic and physical manifestation of this alliance. Its proximity to the royal residential quarters underscored its political significance, functioning as a space where legitimate Shi'i doctrine was articulated and where religious authority lent moral weight to Safavid rule.

According to Sussan Babaie, the Masjid-e Shah (Shah Mosque; later Imam Mosque), built on the southern side of Naqsh-e Jahan Square, represents the pinnacle of Safavid monumental architecture. Initiated in 1611 and completed in the 1630s, it was the first congregational mosque constructed by a Safavid ruler in Isfahan. As the formal site of Friday prayer, the mosque embodied the centrality of Shiism in urban life and stood as a visual symbol of the dynasty's religious legitimacy (Babaie, 2003, pp. 44–46).

Safavid vs. Ottoman Architectural Ideology

The Safavid architectural approach emphasized expansive open spaces, monumental façades, and ideological symbolism. Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the largest of its time, articulated a unified visual and ideological program: monarchy (Ali Qapu), religion (Shah Mosque), elite scholarship (Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque), and commerce (Qeysariyya Bazaar). In contrast, Ottoman architecture focused on multifunctional, enclosed külliye complexes offering integrated social services. As noted in *Turkish–Iranian Architecture* (pp. 133–134), this distinction reflects deeper cultural and religious competition between the Safavid and Ottoman empires.

Late Safavid Period: Urban Expansion and Waqf Development

Following Shah Abbas I, the political influence of the Qizilbash declined, yet Isfahan continued to flourish architecturally and institutionally. Despite global economic shifts—such as the decline of overland Silk Road trade—the waqf system remained resilient. Successive rulers, including Shah Safi (1629–1642), Shah Abbas II (1642–1666), and Shah Suleiman (1666–1694), expanded Isfahan's urban landscape.

Key developments included:

- Construction of ceremonial palaces around Naqsh-e Jahan Square
- Expansion of urban districts through the Khaju Bridge and the Chahar Bagh-e Khaju axis
- Erection of smaller mosques and madrasas, often sponsored by royal women or high officials (e.g., Sari Taghi)
- The grand Masjid-i Hakim, built by Shah Abbas II's court physician
- Enhancement of bazaars, caravanserais, and public service buildings

Shah Abbas II's burial in the Imamzadeh Ismail tomb further emphasizes the continued religious significance of Isfahan during the later Safavid period.

Collapse of the Safavid Waqf System

During the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn (1694–1722), the construction of the Soltani (Madar-e Shah) Madrasa–Bazaar–Caravanserai complex marked the last major architectural achievement of the dynasty. However, the shah's excessive religiosity and withdrawal from governance weakened the administrative structure of the waqf system. Following the Afghan occupation of Isfahan in 1722, the destruction of the city, massacre of its inhabitants, and the plundering of its institutions—including its archives and waqf records—brought about the effective collapse of Safavid endowment administration and marked the end of Isfahan's role as the imperial capital.

Legacy of the Safavid Waqf System in Modern Isfahan

The influence of the Safavid waqf system extends into the modern era. Monumental structures such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the Imam Mosque, Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, Chahar Bagh Avenue, and Allahverdi Khan Bridge continue to define the cultural and architectural identity of Isfahan. As a UNESCO World Heritage site, Naqsh-e Jahan Square generates significant tourism income, echoing the waqf system's historical role as an economic engine.

The spatial logic of Safavid urban planning—centrally organized squares, commercial corridors, and waqf-supported religious institutions—remains visible in the city's modern layout. Residential and commercial districts around Chahar Bagh and the Zayandeh Rud still reflect Safavid planning principles.

In the religious and social spheres, Safavid waqf practices survive through modern philanthropic institutions such as the **Bonyads**, which support education, social welfare, and religious activities. These institutions, which came under state control after 1979, constitute a contemporary manifestation of the Safavid endowment tradition.

Conclusion

Moreover, the waqf system of Isfahan served as a stabilizing mechanism that integrated political authority, religious ideology, economic resources, and social welfare into a unified administrative framework. Through these interconnected functions, the Safavid rulers—particularly Shah Abbas I—were able to consolidate their power, centralize the state apparatus, and forge a distinct Shiʿi urban identity that distinguished Isfahan from the major Sunni capitals of the Islamic world, such as Istanbul and Bukhara. This multidimensional use of waqf gave the Safavid Empire a durable ideological foundation and allowed the city to flourish despite broader geopolitical and economic shifts.

A notable aspect of the Isfahan waqf system is its dual nature: it simultaneously reinforced Shiʿi religious doctrine and supported a sophisticated economic infrastructure. Waqf revenues generated from agricultural estates, bazaars, workshops, caravanserais, water systems, and artisan guilds formed the backbone of Isfahan's urban economy. These revenues enabled the construction and continuous maintenance of monumental buildings, ensured the sustainability of public services, and created long-term institutional stability. As a result, even in periods of political decline or economic fluctuation, the

waqf system allowed many religious and social institutions to endure, reflecting the resilience of the Safavid administrative model.

The waqf system also played a significant role in reshaping Isfahan's physical and symbolic landscape. The spatial organization of Naqsh-e Jahan Square—with its alignment of royal, religious, commercial, and educational structures—embodied an intentional urban ideology. By placing the Shah Mosque, the Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, the Ali Qapu Palace, and the Qeysariyya Bazaar within a single monumental square, the Safavids projected a visual and spatial representation of their political theology: monarchy supported by clerical authority, legitimized through Shiʿi doctrine, and sustained by economic activity. Waqf-supported endowments enabled the perpetual functioning of this ideological model and transformed urban space into an instrument of religious and political expression.

When viewed in comparison to contemporary Islamic empires, the Safavid waqf system reveals both shared patterns and unique innovations. Like the Ottomans and Mughals, the Safavids used waqfs to support religious institutions and urban development. However, the Safavids differed in their emphasis on monumental Shiʿi symbolism, open public squares, and the integration of waqfs into a centralized clerical bureaucracy. Whereas the Ottomans used waqfs to support a wide network of social complexes (külliyes) and population resettlement policies, the Safavids used endowments more directly as ideological tools to articulate Shiʿi identity and distinguish their political legitimacy from Sunni rivals. These distinctions underscore the waqf system's central role in the Safavid-Ottoman ideological and cultural competition.

Despite the eventual decline of the Safavid state in the early 18th century, the legacy of Isfahan's waqf system endured. Even after the Afghan occupation of 1722 and the partial destruction of the city, many of the core institutions—mosques, madrasas, caravanserais, squares, and irrigation structures—survived thanks to their endowed financial foundations. The durability of these institutions reflects the enduring strength of waqf-based urban planning, which safeguarded religious, educational, and social services for generations. In the modern era, this legacy continues through Iran's charitable foundations (bonyads), which preserve many aspects of Safavid-era waqf structures and maintain social welfare functions rooted in Islamic legal tradition.

Today, the architectural and cultural symbols of Safavid Isfahan—Naqsh-e Jahan Square, the Imam Mosque, the Sheikh Lutf-Allah Mosque, Chahar Bagh Avenue, and the Allahverdi Khan Bridge—constitute not only the historical memory of the Safavid Empire but also key elements of Iran's national cultural heritage. These monuments, many of which are protected as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, attract millions of visitors and generate significant economic value for the region. Thus, the waqf system continues to contribute indirectly to modern economic life, just as it did during the Safavid period.

In conclusion, the waqf system of Safavid Isfahan represents one of the most sophisticated models of religious, social, economic, and urban governance in the Islamic world. It was through the careful integration of endowments into the domains of architecture, administration, religious authority, and commerce that Isfahan became the political and cultural heart of the Safavid Empire. The Safavid experience demonstrates how waqfs could be employed not merely as charitable mechanisms but as instruments of statecraft, ideological consolidation, and urban transformation. This legacy continues to shape the identity, landscape, and institutional structures of Isfahan and stands as a testament to the enduring influence of Safavid political imagination.

Ethical Considerations

This study is based exclusively on historical texts, archival materials, and published scholarly sources. No human participants, personal data, or experimental procedures were involved. All primary and secondary sources have been properly cited in accordance with academic ethical guidelines. The research adheres to the principles of academic integrity, transparency, and responsible scholarship.

Acknowledgements

The author expresses sincere gratitude to colleagues at the Department of Azerbaijan History, Baku State University, for their constructive comments and scholarly recommendations during the development of this research. Appreciation is also extended to the librarians and archivists who facilitated access to rare manuscripts and historical publications relevant to the Safavid period. The author acknowledges the contributions of previous historians and researchers whose works formed the foundation of this study.

Funding Statement

The author received **no external funding** for the research, authorship, or publication of this article. *(If you want, I can rewrite this to include specific grants or institutional support.)*

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest. There are no financial, institutional, or personal relationships that could have influenced the research presented in this study.

References

[1] Abdi Bey, K. Z. A. (1996). Tekmilatul-akhbar (The Safavid period – The history of the eras of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasib). Elm.
[2] Abisaab, R. J. (2004). Converting Persia: Religion and power in the Safavid Empire. I.B. Tauris.
[3] Adam Olearius. (2003). Description of travel of the Holstein embassy to Moscow and Persia (A. Loviagin, Trans.). (Original work published 1906)
[4] Alemi, M. (1994). Chahār Bāgh: A survey of the history and development of the principal boulevard of Isfahan. Muqarnas, 11, 138–149.
[5] Amrahov, Z. (2022). History of Irevan Governorate: 1850–1917 years. Nurlar.
[6] Arjomand, S. A. (1988). The turban for the crown: The Islamic revolution in Iran. Oxford University Press.
[7] Atçıl, A. (2016). Scholars and sultans in the early modern Ottoman Empire. Cambridge University Press.
[8] Atik, K. (n.d.). Lütfi Paşa and the chronicles of Osman. Ministry of Culture.
[9] Aubin, J. (1956). Les princes sunnites d'Iran aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. Revue de l'histoire des religions, 149, 177–201.
[10] Aubin, J. (1988). Etudes Safavides I–III. Studia Iranica, Supplement 3.
[11] Babaie, S. (2003). Isfahan: The building of an early modern capital. Mage Publishers.
[12] Babaie, S., Babayan, K., Baghdiantz, I., & Farhad, M. (Eds.). (2004). Slaves of the Shah: New elites of Safavid Iran. I.B. Tauris.
[13] Beck, L. (1991). Waqf in traditional Iranian society. Islamic Culture, 65(2), 1–21.
[14] Beck, L. (1996). Reconstructing Islamic society: The role of waqf in Qajar Iran. Iranian Studies, 29(1–2), 35–57.
[15] Blair, S. (1998). The Safavid monuments of Isfahan. Ars Orientalis, 28, 1–39.
[16] Blair, S., & Bloom, J. (1995). The art and architecture of Islam 1250–1800. Yale University Press.
[17] Bunyatova, S. (2022). Truth and its theoretical and philosophical models. Bank and Policy, 2(1), 87–93.
[18] Çelebi, E. (2010). Evliyâ Çelebi seyahatnamesi: Baghdad–Basra–Bitlis–Diyarbakır–Isfahan–Malatya–Mardin–Mosul–Tabriz–Van (Book 4, Vol. 2) (S. A. Kahraman & Y. Dağlı, Eds.). Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
[19] Chardin, J. (1995). Travels in Persia (1673–1677). Dover Publications.
[20] Cole, J. R. I. (1988). Roots of North Indian Shi'ism. University of California Press (for comparison).
[21] Evliya Çelebi. (2010). Seyahatname, Book 4. Yapı Kredi Yayınları.
[22] Floor, W., & Herzig, E. (Eds.). (2012). Iran and the world in the Safavid age. I.B. Tauris.
[23] Ghereghlou, K. (2015). Land tenure and fiscal policies in late Safavid Iran. Studia Iranica, 44(2), 191–245.
[24] Gleave, R. (2012). Islamic law in theory: Studies on jurisprudence in honor of Bernard Weiss. Brill.
[25] Grabar, O. (1987). The formation of Islamic art. Yale University Press.
[26] Gürkan, D. A. (2024). Nakş-i Cihan Square: Spatial, architectural and chronological. Belleten, 88(313), 771–810. https://belleten.gov.tr/tam-metin/3773/tur
[27] Hallaq, W. (2009). An introduction to Islamic law. Cambridge University Press (chapter on waqf).
[28] Haneda, M. (1994). The evolution of the Safavid capital. Muqarnas, 11, 69–86.
[29] Hasan Bey Rumlu. (2017). Ahsan al-tavarikh (The best of histories). Uzanlar.
[30] Hoexter, M. (1998). Endowments, rulers, and community: Waqf al-haramayn in Ottoman Algiers. Studies in Islamic Law and Society.
[31] Hoexter, M., Eisenstadt, S. N., & Levtzion, N. (Eds.). (2002). The public sphere in Muslim societies. SUNY Press.
[32] İlter, İ. (1982). An essay on Turkish–Iranian architectural structures. Foundations Journal, XVI, 131–134.
[33] Imber, C. (2002). The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The structure of power. Palgrave.
[34] Iskandar Bey Munshi Turkman. (2009). Tarix-i 'alemara-yi Abbasi (The history of Abbas that adorned the world) (Vol. 1). Education.
[35] Iskandar Bey Munshi Turkman. (2010). The history of Abbas, who adorned the world (Tarixe 'alemaraye Abbasi). East–West Publishing House.
[36] Iskandar Bey Munshi Turkman. (2011). Tarixe 'alemaraye Abbasi (The history of Abbas, who adorned the world). Sharq–Qarb Publishing House.
[37] Kafadar, C. (1995). Between two worlds: The construction of the Ottoman state. University of California Press.
[38] Kazvini, A. (2011). Safavid history (H. Mohemmednejad, Trans.). Ankara.
[39] Kuran, T. (2001). The provision of public goods under Islamic law: Origins, impact, and limitations of the waqf system. Law & Society Review, 35(4), 841–898.

[40] Lambton, A. K. S. (1988). Continuity and change in medieval Persia: Aspects of administrative, economic and social history, 11th–14th century. SUNY Press.
[41] (Though earlier, provides theoretical background.)
[42] Lassoued Ali.,Lachraf L. (2025). The Waqf's contribution to supporting formal education in Algeria (Case study of Sheikh Ammi Said Foundation for Free Education in Ghardaia). Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems, 8(8), 464-478; doi:10.56352/sei/8.8.42.
[43] Matthee, R. (Ed.). (2021). The Safavid world. Routledge.
[44] McChesney, R. D. (1981). Waqf and public policy: The waqfs of Shah Abbas, 1011–1023/1602–1614. Asian and African Studies, 15, 165–190.
[45] Mirfendereski, G. (1999). Waqf in medieval Persia. Tehran University Press.
[46] Muhammad, M. A. (1993). History of the Golden-headed (Trans.). Azerbaijan Publishing House.
[47] Najaf A.N., Najafov R. (2025). Historical Perspectives on Education in Medieval Azerbaijan (10th16th Centuries): Curriculum, Methodology, and Student Mobility. Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems, 8(11), 16–33. https://doi.org/10.56352/sei/8.11.2
[48] Necipoğlu, G. (1995). The Topkapı scroll: Geometry and ornament in Islamic architecture. MIT Press.
[49] Newman, A. (2000). Clerical leaders and Shi'ite movements in Safavid Iran. The Journal of Near Eastern Studies, 59(2), 84–95.
[50] Olearius, A. (2003). Description of a journey of the Holstein embassy to Moscow and Persia (A. Loviagin, Trans.). (Original work published 1906)
[51] Olearius, A. (2003). Travels to Persia (A. Loviagin, Trans.). Akademia.
[52] Oruj Bey Bayat. (2009). Don Juan of Persia: A Shi'ite state's diplomacy. Mage Publishers.
[53] Oruj-bek Bayat. (1988). Don Juan of Persia: Historical–geographic treatise. Yazychy.
[54] Pavlova, I. K. (1993). Chronicle of the Safavids (Essay of Muhammad-Masuma Isfakhani "Khulasat al-siyar"). Nauka.
[55] Pierce, L. P. (1993). Morality tales: Law and gender in the Ottoman court of Aintab. University of California Press.
[56] Savory, R. (2007). Iran under the Safavids. Cambridge University Press.
[57] Şeref Khan. (n.d.). Kurdish history (M. E. Bozarslan, Trans.). Ant Publications.
[58] Singer, A. (2002). Constructing Ottoman beneficence: An imperial soup kitchen in Jerusalem. SUNY Press.
[59] Suleymanov, N. M. (2021). The Safavi State of Azerbaijan in the 17th century (Based on the diaries of J. Chardin, J. B. Tavernier, P. D. Valle and E. Kempfer). Elm.
[60] Tapper, R. (Ed.). (1994). The nomadic peoples of Iran. School of Oriental and African Studies.
[61] Tavernier, J. B. (2004). Les six voyages de Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. Istanbul Research Institute.
[62] Yediyıldız, B. (1994). The role of waqf in Ottoman socio-economic life. Ottoman Studies Journal, 12, 47–69.
[63] Yediyıldız, B. (2003). Foundation institutions in Turkey at the turn of the XVIII century: A social history review. Turkish Historical Society.
[64] Yediyıldız, B. (2012). Foundations and state building in the Ottoman Empire. Turkish Historical Review, 3(2), 141–160.