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NEW LIGHT ON SHAH 'ABBAS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ISFAHAN

The Iranian city of Isfahan, located in a rich oasis on the western side of the Dashti-i kavir (Great Desert) and close to the geographical center of the country, has long been the site of urban settlement, favored not only by its position at a nodal point on the ancient routes from the Caucasus down to the Persian Gulf, but crucially by the Zayanda Rud (or Life-giving River) on which it stands—one of the few perennial streams on the Iranian Plateau and a vital resource for irrigation and agriculture. As is the case with many other provincial centers, Isfahan has at different times been more than merely a regional capital, but has served as the principal seat of a major ruling dynasty. This was particularly so under the Seljuks in the twelfth century,¹ but never more so than under the Safavids (1501–1722), when Shah 'Abbas (r. 1588–1629) made Isfahan his capital around the turn of the seventeenth century. The definitive date of this move remains a subject of scholarly debate,² and is one of the topics to be addressed here. Under 'Abbas and his successors, the city saw a rapid expansion, particularly in the districts south of the old center and on either bank of the Zayanda Rud, most dramatically with the development of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (Square on the Plan of the World) and the palace quarter to the west of it. This is still the area with the greatest concentration of architectural monuments of the Safavid epoch and the district with the main buildings described by contemporary chroniclers (fig. 1).³ Despite the attention paid to the city and the descriptions that abound in both the travel literature of the period and later scholarly studies, there remains considerable imprecision in establishing when individual buildings were started and completed. This is partly due to the nature of construction work, which might continue over a lengthy period and not be adequately recorded in the fabric of the

buildings themselves, but also to the tendency of the documentary sources to record a description of all ongoing architectural patronage under one or two fixed dates. When a new source of information is found—such as the work on which this study is based—it is not always easy to harmonize the evidence it provides with the existing body of information. In the present case, indeed, fresh information may raise as many issues as it resolves. This paper aims to address some of these questions, with respect to the main architectural developments inaugurated during the long and prosperous reign of Shah 'Abbas, concluding that building work was almost continuous throughout the first two decades of the seventeenth century rather than being concentrated in a few discrete phases.

The starting point for this discussion is Robert McChesney's seminal article "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbas's Building of Isfahan,"⁴ which made accessible the descriptions of 'Abbas's development of the city in Afushta'i Natanzi's *Nuqāwat al-āthār fi dhikr al-akhbār* (The Choice Traces in Mentioning Events), Munajjim Yazdi's *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī* (The History of 'Abbas), Iskandar Beg Munshi's celebrated *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* (The History of the World-Adorning 'Abbas), and Junabadi's less well-known *Rawḍat al-ṣafawiyya* (The Safavid Garden). Two of these texts have been made more accessible since McChesney's article through the publication of printed editions.⁵ As he noted, "the third volume of Fadli al-Isfahani's *Afḍal al-tawārīkh*, if located, may also provide new information about 'Abbas's great urban design."⁶ Since then, the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh* (The Best of Histories) has been located,⁷ although not yet fully utilized, and a more substantial study of the manuscript did indeed suggest that the work might contain further details of the embellishment

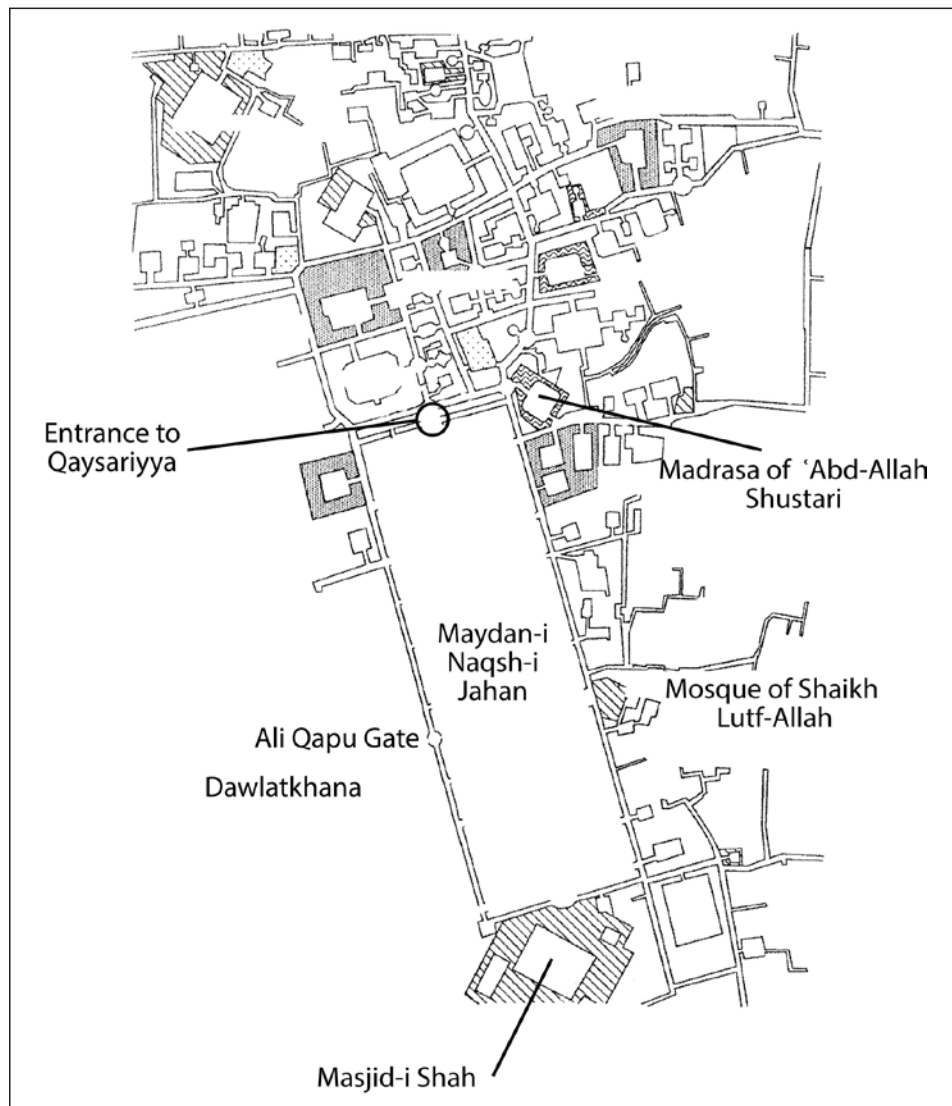


Fig 1. The Maydan-i Shah, showing the main monuments referred to by Fazli Beg. Map derived from Masashi Haneda, "The Character of the Urbanisation of Isfahan in the Later Safavid Period," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, *Pembroke Papers 4* (London, 1996), 374, fig. 2. (Map: C. Scott Walker, Harvard Map Collection)

of the new Safavid capital.⁸ The opportunity provided by a visiting fellowship at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University in early 2014, together with work on the edited text of the chronicle of Fadli b. Zayn al-'Abidin Khuzani Isfahani (hereafter Fazli Beg),⁹ has prompted a return to this question, with the aim of identifying additional evidence of 'Abbas's building program in Isfahan and indeed elsewhere.

It turns out that Fazli's history of 'Abbas does not provide as much new data on the urban development of Isfahan as on other aspects of his reign. On reflection, however, it is clear that, combined with details already published in my earlier article, much of the "new" information provided by Fazli Beg is not without interest and gives a sense of the scope for further research. There are indeed many fresh passages to be found in the *Afḍal al-*

tawārīkh that will be of interest to historians of Islamic architecture: they concern not only Isfahan, but other important building complexes in Ardabil, Farahabad, and Mashhad, which will be the subject of future studies. Here, we will focus on Isfahan. In view of the considerable volume of work already written on this topic, the modest aim of this paper is to present the relevant passages in Fazli's chronicle as an addition to the existing documentary evidence.¹⁰

THE *AFDAL AL-TAWĀRĪKH* AND OTHER SAFAVID CHRONICLES

First, a very brief introduction to the *Afdal al-tawārīkh* and its importance as a source for the history of 'Abbas, with regard to its previous misidentification and the extent to which it offers a different view of the reign from that found in the other Persian chronicles.¹¹ As previously noted, for many years the manuscript Dd.5.6, housed in the library of Christ's College, Cambridge, was miscatalogued as a copy of Iskandar Beg Munshi's *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* before being identified by the present author as the third volume of a little-known chronicle of the first Safavid rulers of Iran; like the other two extant volumes, which cover the reigns of, respectively, Shah Isma'il (r. 1501–24) and Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524–76), it is a unique copy. Consisting of 579 folios (1158 pages), the manuscript deals with the long and crucial reign of Shah 'Abbas in very great detail.

The author, whose name is given in a crossed-out passage on fol. 20r, belonged to a well-established family of bureaucrats and officials, and the work contains many references to other Khuzani family members.¹² He was born in 1593 and served in various capacities in the provincial administration, mainly in the Caucasus, between 1608 and 1624, which accounts for the enormous wealth of data on the province and on Safavid relations with Georgia.¹³ He then gained a post in Kirman in 1625, possibly short-term, after which he evidently remained at court. After the death of Shah 'Abbas and the political purges that soon followed the accession of his grandson, Shah Safi I (r. 1629–42), Fazli Beg left Iran for India. There, he continued to work on his chronicle, which was never completed; in fact, all three volumes are in some way defective and bear the signs of continuing revisions.

Ms. Dd.5.6 is dated 1045 (1635); volume 2 (now in the British Library, Or. 4678) was completed in the author's own distinctive hand in India in 1049 (1639). This example of Fazli Beg's handwriting allows us to identify his authorship of the numerous marginalia in the volume on 'Abbas. The fact that this was not only written outside Iran, but was never finished, helps to explain both why it had no impact on later Safavid historiography and why the author takes a more independent and distinctive line, remote from the pressures of court patronage. It may also explain discrepancies in details, although factual divergences are common enough in medieval historical writing and it is often impossible to decide where the "truth," or greater accuracy, lies.

The misidentification of the Christ's manuscript is not surprising, given that the first two pages of the text are indeed copied from Iskandar Beg Munshi's *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, no doubt to replace pages missing from the beginning of the volume at the time of its sale to Jean-Baptiste Gentil in Fayzabad (Faizabad, Awadh) in the 1770s. The relationship with Iskandar Beg's work does not end there, however; apart from the fact that it is the only other contemporary chronicle to cover the whole reign, it follows the *'Ālam-ārā* closely in terms of its annalistic structure and the choice and sequence of topics covered. Furthermore, Fazli Beg himself refers to his relationship with Iskandar Beg and explains how the latter began his work on the *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī* in 1010 (1601) and he himself began work on the *Afdal al-tawārīkh* over the winter of 1025–26 (1616–17), a point seemingly reflected in the manuscript (fol. 375r), suggesting a heavy reliance on Iskandar Beg up to this date, which also marked the completion of the first volume of the *'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*.¹⁴ Both sources share the same flawed chronological system, which tries unsuccessfully to combine the hijri lunar calendar with the twelve-animal solar calendar and the regnal year of the shah.¹⁵ For all the great wealth of information it contains, Fazli Beg's chronicle provides very few dates. He was no Venerable Bede, and events or information that he places in one annal are often reported by Iskandar Beg—and other sources—in a different year. There are few ways to control this and anyway, there is no guarantee that dates, when given, are reliable; for now, it is enough to observe that some of Fazli Beg's information departs quite significantly from that given by Iskandar Beg,

calling into question, at least, the reliability of what has been universally considered up till now to be the principal contemporary source for the reign of Shah 'Abbas. In some cases the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh* does not merely complement or expand the information found elsewhere, but contradicts it in ways that complicate what we currently understand about the building program of Isfahan.

Since most of these conflicts concern chronology, a very rapid survey of the characteristics of the other "four sources" is desirable, since any resolving of the discrepancies between them must be informed by an appreciation of the context in which these four authors were writing and their respective merits as historians.¹⁶

Afshṭa'i Natanzi's chronicle covers the period from the death of Shah Tahmasp in 984 (1576) to 1007 (1598).¹⁷ He began his work in 1590, at the age of 60, inspired by Shah 'Abbas' expedition to Shiraz that year to deal with the rebellious Ya'qub Khan, and ends it with 'Abbas's defeat of 'Abd al-Mu'min Khan Uzbek and reconquest of Herat in August 1598, both major stages in the shah's taking control of his kingdom.¹⁸ For the present purposes, it is important, therefore, to note that he was actively composing his work at the time of the shah's first visit to Isfahan, that he was an exact contemporary of the events he describes and must have been an eye-witness to some of them, and that he had access to well-placed sources of information. In terms of its structure, Natanzi's chronicle is episodic, not organized in annals, but he does give dates, rather sparingly, with reference to the hijri lunar calendar, and follows a broadly chronological narrative, although this is not always clear, nor consistent with other accounts.¹⁹ As reported by McChesney, Natanzi records building activities in Isfahan in the years 998–99 (1590–91), 1002 (1593), and 1004 (1595–96).

Junabadi's *Rawḍat al-ṣafawiyya* is similar in many respects to Natanzi's chronicle, notably in that he appears not to have been a court official or in government employment, and shared with Natanzi an interest in poetry.²⁰ The *Rawḍat* covers the history of the Safavids from the reign of Shah Isma'il I until 'Abbas's conquest of Baghdad in 1034 (1624). The work was begun in 1023 (1614) and completed in 1036 (1626–27); he mentions that he was writing about Isfahan in 1026 (1617), a little after the events concerned.²¹ More importantly, like Natanzi's, his work is episodic in its treatment of history

and follows only a loose chronological framework, with relatively few precise dates.²² As noted by McChesney, Junabadi concentrates his information about the development of Isfahan in one main section, under the year 1012 (1603–4), following an earlier, "undated" passage.²³ Like Natanzi, therefore, Junabadi was also a contemporary of the reign of 'Abbas, for the knowledge of which he claims his own direct experience and participation in events.²⁴

Iskandar Beg's chronicle of the reign of Shah 'Abbas needs no introduction, long being regarded and used as the standard primary source for the period.²⁵ Unlike the work of Natanzi and Junabadi, his chronicle is organized in annals, though the significant problems with his chronology have already been noted. Nevertheless, his narrative of the reign can generally be equated with the sequence of events provided by other authors, including Fazli Beg (who provides even fewer precise dates than Iskandar Beg). For the present purposes, it is useful to underline the fact that, not unlike Junabadi, Iskandar Beg concentrates his account of 'Abbas's construction of Isfahan under two annals, namely 1006 (1597–98) and 1020 (1611), giving the impression of two distinct moments of building activity, of which he also provides a separate summary list.²⁶ Iskandar Beg was a *munshī* (secretary-scribe), closely connected with the court and the bureaucracy, and therefore well placed for access to reliable information. Nevertheless, despite being his junior, Fazli Beg considers the material he received from his own relatives, such as his brother Muhammad Beg, to be much superior, for instance, in his account of the reception of the Ottoman Mehmed Pasha in 1017 (1609).²⁷ Like those of Junabadi, Iskandar Beg's descriptions of the construction of Isfahan were written by 1025 (1616), after which neither author refers to the matter again.

All these documentary sources present chronological problems, which to a large extent can be calibrated against the detailed framework provided by the court astrologer Jalal al-Din Munajjim Yazdi, whose work is arranged in annals according to the Islamic hijri lunar calendar, with other chronological or astrological indications, in the form of a diary—hence its apt secondary title, *Rūznāma-yi Mullā Jalāl* (The Journal of Mulla Jalal). It does indeed read at times like a daily record of events at court and, bearing in mind his professional qualification and the fact that he was in regular attendance on

the shah,²⁸ his evidence carries great authority. Unfortunately, his diary continues only down to late 1020 (February 1612);²⁹ although it is rich in dated information, the details he provides are not always internally consistent. It remains, however, a valuable corrective to the work of less punctilious authors, such as Iskandar Beg and Fazli Beg. As noted by McChesney, Yazdi gives a more continuous account of the building works in Isfahan, under the years 1000 (1591–92), 1005 (1596), 1006 (1598), 1011 (1602–3), and 1020 (1611).

All these sources, therefore, are more or less contemporary and involved in the events they recorded; Fazli Beg actually represents the next generation, writing somewhat later, though still within 'Abbas's reign, largely on the strength of evidence from family members who were themselves important figures in the Safavid bureaucracy.

A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY OF BUILDING WORK IN ISFAHAN

With these points in mind, let us start with the information provided by the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh* on the construction of the new Safavid capital, drawing attention to where this differs from or expands upon existing evidence.

998–1001 (1590–93)

First, it is noteworthy that, unlike some later authors, Fazli confirms the early interest of 'Abbas in developing Isfahan that was reported by Natanzi.³⁰ In 998 (1590), Fazli records that the shah went to Isfahan and stayed at the Mahdi Palace in the Naqsh-i Jahan (*'imārat-i mahdī-yi naqsh-i jahān*) created by Shah Isma'īl, where he drew up plans for buildings and gardens.³¹ Qadi Ahmad Qummi (d. ca. 1606) also refers to the shah entering Isfahan and residing in the *dawlatkhāna* (palace) of the Naqsh-i Jahan, an exemplar of the gardens of paradise.³² We note here already something of a persistent problem of terminology and a lack of precision in the descriptive sources; it is not clear what distinguishes an *'imārat* (single edifice) from a *dawlatkhāna* (perhaps a palace complex) containing the royal residence and offices, and later, a *sarā* (palace).

The first chronological discrepancy arises here, for Fazli makes this statement in connection with 'Abbas's lengthy sojourn in the city on his way south to deal with affairs in Fars, that is, in early 1590, before setting off for Shiraz in June, whereas Natanzi mentions 'Abbas's plans for the city on his return from Yazd and before heading back to Qazvin in late December 1590.³³ This is only a minor difference, but it does mean that Fazli's statement, if correct, is evidence that the shah initiated development of the city during his first visit there.

We may concur with Stephen Blake that this should be seen in the context of 'Abbas's assertion of control over southern Iran, a major concern in the early years of his reign.³⁴ This does not necessarily mean, however, that the capital was shifted at the same time and that Qazvin ceased to be the center of government from this date, although there appears to be a statement to this effect in the account by the later chronicler, Junabadi.³⁵ Apart from questions of terminology and the fluid use of epithets such as *Dār al-Mulk* and *Dār al-Saltāna* (seat of rulership) for both these (and other) cities, it is interesting to note that on his return to Qazvin in January 1591, 'Abbas drew up plans for new streets and buildings around the Bagh-i Sa'adatabad,³⁶ which suggests that he had not lost interest in developing Qazvin.

Junabadi specifically mentions that the *maydān* (square) in Isfahan was at this time extended to the front of the shrine (*imāmzāda*) of Harun-i Vilayat;³⁷ the square was thus enlarged and developed, thereby improving it for polo, *qabaq* (literally "gourd," referring to the wooden target used for a royal archery game), and other sports. This certainly makes sense, and is consistent with the account in Natanzi, who also mentions the preparation of the *maydān* for *qabaq*, polo, and equestrian sports, along with the rebuilding of the old bazaars (the word *ta'mūr*, "rebuilding," does not indicate new construction). It seems this much can logically be associated with the existing urban space, rather than a fresh development. It is also clear from the context of his report, and the date 999 (1590–91) immediately preceding this narrative, that Junabadi is associating these first building plans with 'Abbas's presence in the city at the time of the Fars campaign.³⁸

We will consider the arguments surrounding this issue shortly. Meanwhile, Natanzi states that the whole first stage of development of the bazaars and extension of the *maydān* was finished in a short time, which may

be accurate if it refers to the area round the Harun-i Vilayat. Fazli continues that before leaving Isfahan for Qazvin, 'Abbas acquiesced to the request by some of the notables of Isfahan, such as Muhammad Amin Husayniyya and Mir Taqi al-Din Muhammad, the *kalāntar* (mayor), to destroy the castle of Tabarak, to prevent rebels from using it as a stronghold to dominate the city.³⁹

Three years later, according to Fazli, in his annal for 1001 (1592–93), 'Abbas was again in the city and bestowed many favors on the people, granting a one-year remission of taxes. He drew up a plan for the construction of a lofty building (*'imārat*; within the *dawlatkhāna*?), the bazaar, the *maydān*, and the *qayṣariyya* (covered bazaar).⁴⁰ It is unclear to what extent, if at all, this refers to the old city center, or to the development of a new area round the Naqsh-i Jahan garden, but his information is essentially similar to that provided by both him and especially Natanzi for 1590 (as above). Fazli places this in the context of the shah's presence in Isfahan on his return from eastern Iran after abandoning his intention to visit Mashhad, which Natanzi puts in Muharram 1001 (autumn of 1592), stating that 'Abbas went to Isfahan in view of his concern to develop the city (*binā bar tavajjuhī kih nisbat bih 'imārat wa tartīb-i dār al-saltāna-yi Iṣfahān dārad*).⁴¹ Yazdi, whose chronology is generally much more rigorous and reliable, does not mention any visit to Isfahan at this time, but he does give details of work planned a year earlier, in Safar 1000 (November 1591), before 'Abbas left for Yazd and soon afterwards for Ardabil.⁴² Yazdi gives essentially the same information as Fazli Beg, referring to 'Abbas drawing up plans for the *maydān* of Isfahan, the bazaar, and the *qayṣariyya*;⁴³ it is reasonable to assume that both accounts refer to the same single occasion, but not clear which date (1591 or 1592) is to be preferred.

Interestingly, however, Fazli continues that 'Abbas ordered that the old *qayṣariyya* (*qayṣariyya-yi kuhna*, i.e., the bazaars in the old center) should be destroyed; after touring and feasting in the gardens of Isfahan, he set off back to the *Dār al-Saltāna*, Qazvin, for the winter.⁴⁴

This echoes the earliest report, by Natanzi, on the rebuilding of the bazaars and construction of a new

qayṣariyya but perhaps implies that 'Abbas's intention from the outset was indeed a radical relocation of the center of the city's commercial activity, rather than a simple redevelopment of the old quarter. Only Junabadi gives a hint of the rivalries and opposition caused by the creation of 'Abbas's new quarter, but he does so in terms of 'Abbas's original intention to modernize and restore the old quarter, which, he says, was misconstrued by the powerful owners of the shops there, leading the shah to desist from this plan and start afresh elsewhere.⁴⁵ Among those mentioned is Mir Muhammad Amin, the *naqīb* (leader of the sayyids) already encountered in connection with the destruction of the castle of Tabarak. Junabadi dates this opposition to 1012 (1603–4), that is, in the context of the completion of the shah's definitive shift to the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan; but it serves as an introductory background to the move and makes it clear that 'Abbas's original building activities were at least partly directed at the Harun-i Vilayat area, as argued by Blake.⁴⁶

Before progressing further, it might be useful to summarize the position so far. Natanzi, Yazdi and Fazli Beg all provide very similar, laconic statements about 'Abbas's initial orders concerning Isfahan, given over various early visits to the city between 998 and 1001 (1590–93), involving repairs, extensions, and possibly some destruction, as well as new building, in the bazaar area, the *maydān*, and the *qayṣariyya*. Junabadi, writing in 1026 (1617), states that at least some of this activity concerned the old commercial center, as indeed is logical. Blake's contention that these developments were connected exclusively with the area round the Harun-i Vilayat has attracted considerable opposition,⁴⁷ and it is worth reviewing the evidence once more, before turning to the subsequent passages that clearly refer entirely to the development of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan.

In support of Junabadi's observation about the extension of the old *maydān* (*maydān-i kuhna*), we may note that it should be taken together with his later statement about opposition to 'Abbas's plans for the old center, and that the two reports are compatible and consistent. If, as seems to be the case, his remarks about the concerns of the local notables have been accepted in the secondary literature, it is necessary to accept the remarks also about the expansion of the *maydān* near the

shrine of Harun-i Vilayat: an extension of this square presumably would have necessitated some modification to the surrounding buildings. If it were simply a case of accepting or rejecting Junabadi's testimony (and rejecting it is to deny him any credibility as a source), it would be a straight choice, but other evidence must be taken into account.

In the first place, we are told that Shah Isma'il also made some adjustments to the *maydān* at the start of his reign, on the occasion of his stay in the city in 915 (1509–10), after passing the winter in Shiraz: the *maydān* seemed narrow (*tang*) and he ordered that it be broadened. He spent a week there riding (*asb tākhtan*) and shooting at *qabaq*, before heading for Hamadan.⁴⁸ This is echoed by his exact contemporary, the author Amini Haravi: the shah pitched his tents there (Isfahan) and enjoyed riding (*asb tākhtan*) and practicing archery (*qabaq andākhtan*) in the *maydān* there.⁴⁹ We may also note the same author's statement that Isma'il's earlier prolonged residence in Isfahan for his winter and summer quarters in 910 (1504–5) had been profitable for the merchants' business while the shah and his entourage (*khadam va ḥashar*) were there. "The ruined houses were restored through the auspicious arrival of the royal army (*lashkar-i Īrān*); the palace (*sarā*) and recently destroyed places were revived and the shah made the *ḥarīm* of Isfahan a mansion (*nishīman*)."⁵⁰ The same year saw the elimination of the rebel Muhammad Karra, who, after being captured in Yazd, was brought in a cage to the *maydān* in Isfahan and burned alive.⁵¹ The question is, which *maydān*? Iskandar Beg places this in the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan, and this is followed by later scholars, including Blake.⁵² This seems to me illogical, if for no other reason than that such an event would best achieve its desired effect in a heavily populated public place, and forces a choice: is Iskandar Beg, writing after the construction of the new *maydān*, more accurate in his account of the reign of Shah Isma'il, than Junabadi, writing at exactly the same time, about the reign of Shah 'Abbas? It would be more natural for Junabadi also to refer automatically to the new, recently completed *maydān* for 'Abbas's patronage, but he specifically mentions the old one.⁵³ Unfortunately, in view of our defective knowledge about the *maydān-i kuhna*, it is all too easy to airbrush it out of history along with its physical

disappearance.⁵⁴ It is important to note that it was still used for polo games well into the reign of 'Abbas.⁵⁵ The same absence of information means that we have no real idea of the shape or development of the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan before 'Abbas's constructions there, other than that it was a *maydān* in the garden area (*bāgh*). The question of antecedents, particularly the matter of the orientation of the new *maydān*, is best tackled by Masashi Haneda, but his comments are also pertinent to the question of its demarcation and the buildings that may have ringed it.⁵⁶

If Isma'il's patronage of the city, such as it was, seems incontrovertibly to refer to the old city center, it is also clearly the case that he himself resided outside the urban core in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan, where he evidently rebuilt or restored the existing structures later associated with his name, including the *ḥarīm* (private quarters) and *sarā* mentioned by Amini above, and referred to as the *'imārat-i mahdī* by Fazli Beg.⁵⁷

It appears that little changed in Isfahan during the reign of Shah Tahmasp, although by the end of Muhammad Khudabanda's reign (1578–87) there was evidently considerable destruction of the original *dawlatkhāna*, or palace buildings, which had become uninhabitable,⁵⁸ necessitating 'Abbas's earliest instructions for refurbishments.

This is not to say that there are no problems with Junabadi's account of the extension of the old *maydān*, chiefly that he says it was 300 *jarīb* long, a dimension he also gives later for the Naqsh-i Jahan square, suggesting a confusion in his mind between the two spaces;⁵⁹ the figure he gives is anyway a gross exaggeration.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, I believe the main problem is with the interpretation of his evidence, which concerns only the *maydān* and its enlargement, rather than with the information itself. It is consistent to suppose that Natanzi also refers to this space, and some rebuilding round it. Fazli Beg specifically refers in his annal for 1001 (1592–93) to orders for the destruction of the old *qayṣariyya*, which must be seen in the context of continuing development there, as one would expect from the newly active shah. At the same time, however, for reasons well-rehearsed elsewhere, there seems little doubt that 'Abbas quickly appreciated the opportunities for developing the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan as a focus for the royal residence and

surrounding amenities, and started to draw up plans for a new *qayṣariyya* and, with it, the extension of the markets towards the new square.⁶¹ The identity of the *dawlatkhāna* clearly refers to the construction or reconstruction of the royal palace in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan, previously used by Shah Isma‘il and earlier rulers.⁶² That these developments proceeded apace is clear from the accounts that follow (see below).

In other words, we can perhaps already discern a twin focus in ‘Abbas’s activities, one involving the bazaars and commercial district round the Harun-i Vilayat and the other the development of the residential and imperial area to the south—similar to other examples of royal quarters being located in garden areas away from the busy urban center, but now also consistent with the Safavid vision of incorporating them into an integral part of the seat of government.⁶³

1002–1005 (1594–97)

Returning to Fazli Beg’s text, the following year, 1002 (1593–94), the shah organized a trip to Isfahan as a way to entertain the Uzbek chief Nur Muhammad Khan, together with the Khwarazmian Hajji Muhammad Khan, both of whom had taken refuge at the court in Qazvin.⁶⁴ The visit is dated from 9 Safar 1002 (November 4, 1593) to 2 Jumada I 1002 (January 24, 1594) by Munajjim Yazdi, who does not mention either the Central Asian guests or any construction work, confining himself to recording a *bon mot* concerning riddles uttered by ‘Abbas on the roof (*sic*) of the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan.⁶⁵ The visit is recorded in considerable detail by Natanzi, together with important information about the construction of a new palace on the *maydān*, which unequivocally refers to the new square, and also mentions another building round it; his dating of the visit is also rather precise, referring to the dispatch of Alpan Beg in early Safar (November) to build a suitable residence beside the Naqsh-i Jahan *dawlatkhāna*, which he accomplished on the eastern (*sic*) side of the building in a short space of time.⁶⁶ The shah himself left Qazvin on 1 Rabi‘ I (November 25) and arrived a week later at Dawlatabad, just outside the city, having meanwhile dispatched Hajji (or Hajim) Khan to Rayy. A magnificent *istiqbāl* (welcoming party) at the Tuqchi Gate had to be postponed due to a heavy downpour, and the shah entered the city five days later;

the 15,000 troops lined up to greet him assembled “in the *maydān* in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan.” Here, the shah, having left the *dawlatkhāna* and entered the *maydān*, went onto the roof of the madrasa of Khwaja Malik Mus-tawfi, “which is situated opposite the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan,” to watch the parade; this is presumably the roof referred to by Munajjim Yazdi. The discharge of volleys from the 15,000 musketeers caused darkness and terror. The event ended with ‘Abbas pouring fruit down from the roof as largesse for the stampeding crowd below.⁶⁷

Fazli Beg is the only author to contribute additional information to this account, providing further details of the shah’s progress to the city via displays of lights (*chirāghān*) in the main towns on the way, organized by Alpan Beg, the Yasa’ul-bashi (aide-de-camp) going on ahead of the party, and an *istiqbāl* at the caravanserai at Sardehan, flanked by 30,000 troops (*sic*) for the benefit of the Chinggisid chiefs.⁶⁸ Beyond the Tuqchi Gate, the ground was spread with carpets and precious textiles.⁶⁹ Fazli Beg continues:

The buildings (*‘imārāt*) of Naqsh-i Jahan had been appointed for the accommodation (*nuzūl*) of the Chinggisids and when they had arrived for feasting and conviviality (*ṣuḥbat*), Alpan Beg was to accompany them to his own residence (*makān-i khud*), while the shah would hasten to the buildings (*‘imārāt*). As had been decreed, the most and the best of it (the palace?) had been built.⁷⁰

The shah then spent several days relaxing in Isfahan, and:

during that time drew up the plans for the Chahar Bagh and the building of the Guldasta. [...] The *qayṣariyya* and the *chahār bāzār*, which had been founded beforehand, were half finished; more planners (*ṭarrāḥihā*) then came to the shah’s attention and they designed a *ḥammām* in the Guldasta;⁷¹ prostitutes and singers were then given permission, on the orders of Alpan Beg, to entertain the Chinggisid sultans while they waited for news from Khurasan.⁷²

These texts by Natanzi and Fazli Beg indicate clearly that—whatever the initial developments may have been around the old *maydān*—the *qayṣariyya* and the *chahār-bāzār* must be associated with the development of the northern side of the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan. As for the palace complex, however, the *dawlatkhāna* was evidently still inadequate for royal entertainment, and

it was necessary to erect a separate building to house the shah's guests, while the *maydān* itself in this garden quarter was perhaps still not fully delineated and certainly contained no new structures suitable for the shah to use as a vantage point to survey the square. The madrasa of Malik Mustawfi, opposite the palace grounds, was evidently situated near the later location of the Shaykh Lutf-Allah Mosque, which must have been constructed close to the same site.⁷³

According to Fazli Beg, the shah brought Shaykh Lutf-Allah with him on the journey from Qazvin, and drew up the plan for the mosque opposite the Ala (*sic* 'Ālī) Qapu (Gate) of the *dawlatkhāna*, which is very tall and well arranged. Overseers (*sar-kārān*) were appointed, as Fazli adds in a marginal note at this point, to:

bring it to completion and to call it the Masjid-i Shaykh Lutf-Allah. The great Shaykh himself was appointed to supervise the rooms and nighttime prayer halls (*shabistāns*) and the places allocated for ascetics and worshippers. After it was completed, the Friday prayer and other religious obligations would be performed there, the reward for which would be a legacy for the fortunate era of the shah (*haẓrat-i a'ālā*); and it was decreed that, for the renewal of the performance of retreat and worship, a sum would be allocated for the needs of his mosque from each of the incomes of the properties and commercial establishments of the crown land administration (*khāṣṣa-yi sharīfa*), and every year the tax collectors of the settlements (*qaṣabāt*) round Isfahan should give the amount requested by the Refuge of the Sadarat (*ṣadāratpanāh*, i.e., the Shaykh).⁷⁴

This very precise account, if accurate, provides evidence (missing elsewhere) showing not only that Shaykh Lutf-Allah was indeed closely associated with the construction and even design of the mosque from the outset, but that this development occurred a decade earlier (in 1593–94) than usually assumed: the conventional date for the construction is 1011 (1602–3), supported by inscriptions from 1012 (1603–4) and 1028 (1618).⁷⁵ It also gives explicit details about how the project was to be funded.

Since this is the first passage in Fazli's chronicle that departs radically from the other literary sources, the question arises of his reliability. First, a general observation that applies equally well to how we read all our sources—including Junabadi's text, which has caused such dissension over the question of the Maydan-i Har-

un-i Vilayat: as noted above, it is not reasonable to pick and choose the information that seems to agree with what we think we know, and reject what does not fit, any more than it is logical to accept a "new" piece of information and then reject everything that contradicts it. Rather, as our knowledge base increases, we have more elements of the puzzle to fit together into a coherent narrative. As for Fazli's statements about the city this year (1002 [winter 1593–94]), we should note first that it is internally consistent with his previous reports, and second that it is logically acceptable. The context of the first of many visits of Chinggisid khans from Transoxania (as well as other potentates) provides a rational pretext for the need to develop appropriate accommodation in a royal residential district that was just beginning to take shape, and is consistent with the evidence of the earlier author, Natanzi. The existence of a madrasa opposite the *dawlatkhāna* must have suggested to 'Abbas a suitable site for developing a royal counterpart symbolizing religious as well as secular authority—and here there is also a context that makes such a development at this moment understandable.

Fazli Beg's account of the visit to Isfahan follows immediately on his report of the suppression of the Nuqtavi heresy (a Sufi movement founded in 1397 by Mahmud Pasikhani) of Darvish Khusraw, which saw the shah abdicate for three days in favor of Yusuf the quiver maker.⁷⁶ Shaykh Lutf-Allah is named by Fazli Beg as one of the senior 'ulama whom 'Abbas involved in deciding the fate of the Nuqtavis and carrying out their punishment.⁷⁷ What better moment to follow up this crisis with a powerful endorsement of Shi'i orthodoxy and begin to give this concrete form in the shape of religious patronage. It is notable that Fazli states that the mosque would be used to perform Friday prayer, the legitimacy of which had been a rumbling issue throughout the first Safavid century.⁷⁸ Sussan Babaie has already noted how the conjunction of such factors helps account for the development of the mosque;⁷⁹ here, we merely suggest that Fazli's description underlines the fact that these factors were already applicable in 1594. Although the bulk of the information comes in an authorial marginal note and was therefore written some time later than the other contemporary accounts, this does not alter the fact that it is embedded at a point in the text clearly

written much earlier. Finally, we may note that his kinsman Mirza Hidayat Najm-i Sani was among those senior officials involved in the arrangements for the shah's visit that year and would have been a source of eyewitness information.⁸⁰

We can therefore accept that plans for the development of the *maydān* in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan area were already well under way by the end of 1594, with some projects in progress (the *qayṣariyya* and *chahār-bāzār*, the *dawlatkhāna*), and others being initiated at this date (the Chahar Bagh, and Mosque of Shaykh Lutf-Allah), as 'Abbas began to assert his authority in both the political and religious spheres. From the start, by these instructions, the shah may well have been initiating a coherent vision for long-term development of the city,⁸¹ anticipating a transfer of the capital from Qazvin, but this did not take place until the building works were more advanced.

The chronological problems remain, however, as we note that Munajjim Yazdi dates the design of the Chahar Bagh to the shah's visit in late Safar 1005 (October 1596),⁸² a visit not specifically mentioned by either Fazli Beg or Iskandar Munshi.⁸³ As there are several such discrepancies in the dating of specific building projects, it is perhaps easier to assume that they reflect different stages, from first conception to foundation to completion, rather than a one-to-one correlation between a building and a particular date, as many of them must have been several years in the making.

Of more concern is the need to reconcile the information provided by Natanzi, who under the year 1004 (1595–96) provides an extremely detailed account of building works in Isfahan and especially the decoration of the walls surrounding the *maydān*, and Munajjim Yazdi.⁸⁴ The latter refers briefly to the shah's visit to Isfahan in Jumada I 1004 (January 1596), and the astonishing display of lights and fireworks that greeted him—the main topic also of Natanzi's account, with dates that more or less match, although they do not agree.⁸⁵ By contrast, Natanzi does not mention any visit in 1005 (1596–97); indeed, he appears to pass over this year entirely, following the shah's visit to Isfahan in 1004 with the start of the expedition to Khurasan in 1006 (1597–98).⁸⁶ This permits Yazdi's account to stand uncontested (rather than supposing that both refer to the same

visit under different years), although we may note that Iskandar Beg puts the design of the Chahar Bagh in 1006 (see below), and quotes the same chronogram that Yazdi gives for 1005.⁸⁷ In other words, much of Yazdi's information for 1005 is unique, and it is perhaps not impossible that it could equally well be associated with the following year.

1006–1011 (1598–1603)

According to Munajjim Yazdi, Isfahan became (*muqarrar shud*) the Safavid capital in mid-Rajab 1006 (mid-February 1598), due to the need to counter persistent Uzbek raids on the Yazd district. The date of the transfer is also recorded by Iskandar Beg over the winter of 1006 (1597–98), the first time he mentions the subject of 'Abbas's vision for the city. Both authors give several details about the work accomplished or initiated that year, which there is no need to repeat.⁸⁸ There is no particular reason to accept Blake's belief that this occurred earlier, although it is entirely plausible that the move may have been in 'Abbas's mind from the outset. Junabadi's statement that the town became a *Dār al-Mulk* may be taken to reflect its reclamation as an official center of regional government after falling out of imperial control in the previous reign. Fazli Beg provides additional information about the progress and continuation of construction in the city, once more mainly in a marginal note.

After *Nawrūz* (New Day, i.e., the first day of the Persian solar year),⁸⁹ the shah set off for Isfahan (here as always, Fazli provides a detailed list of the senior officials who went out to greet him, including Mirza Hidayat). He goes on, "The splendid buildings of the *dawlatkhāna*, the gardens, the hammams, the *chahār-khiyābān* and the *sūq* having been designed, problem-tackling architects (*mu'āmirān-i mushkil-guzīn*) were appointed to bring them to completion." In the margin, Fazli adds the following more precise information, as far as I know, not found elsewhere:⁹⁰

The shah went to a madrasa opposite the bathhouse (*ḥammām*) at the end of the *chahār-sūq*, which is by the *qayṣariyya* and the polo *maydān*, beside the 'Ali Qapu, and determined that it should be completed according to the wishes (*farmūda*) of Mawlana 'Abd-Allah-i Sani Shushtari. They should make a water channel (*nahr*, the Fadin Canal)

that ran from the *maydān* and the gate of the *qayṣariyya* on the Naqsh-i Jahan to flow through the madrasa. This was begun on the shah's orders and in two years it was completed. A post was established for students and researchers according to the decision of the Refuge of Excellence, Mawlana 'Abd-Allah, who would teach in that lofty dome every day and a place (*makān*) was assigned beside the mosque (*ṭaraf-i masjid*).⁹¹ It was decided that, with the permission of the Divan of the Lofty Razawi-Deputyship of Guidance (*Dīwān al-Hidāyat al-Wilāyat al-'Alīyyat al-Raḍawīyya*), the clerks of the land holdings and commercial enterprises of the crown estates (*khālīṣa*), which he himself had set up in Isfahan, should treat this as an urgent matter. It was known as the madrasa of Mawlana 'Abd-Allah and the *'ulamā* and *fūṣalā* prayed and studied and discussed learning there.

Once more, as in the case of the Lutf-Allah Mosque, Fazli provides clear information about the establishment of a major Shi'i religious building in the environs of the *maydān*, this time for one of Shaykh Lutf-Allah's main contemporaries and rivals, 'Abd-Allah Shushtari (d. Muharram 1021 [March 1612]), a scholar from Najaf. Fazli also indicates how the building was to be financed from the royal budget, with reference to a specific council (*dīvān*) whose task was to advise on matters of Imami doctrine, in this case presumably questions of independent reasoning (*ijtihād*).⁹² Assuming his report is accurate, we may conclude that the construction of the madrasa was completed circa 1008 (1600).

Fazli makes no specific reference to the change of capital this year and his rather general statement in the body of the text implies that work was still continuing on the royal projects in the palace area and especially on the northern side, not that they were inaugurated or completed at this time. It also suggests that 'Abbas was actively trying to bring these projects to completion. We may note in passing that on his triumphant return from the conquest of Herat in Rajab 1007 (February 1599) lavish tents and awnings were erected in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan for a prolonged spell of feasting.⁹³ Shortly afterwards, in connection with the festival of lights organized to mark the shah's visit to Isfahan in 1009 (1600), Fazli Beg records the *qayṣariyya* and the *chahār-bāzār* of the *maydān* in Isfahan as being recently completed.⁹⁴

According to Munajjim Yazdi, 'Abbas arrived in Isfahan on 14 Rabi' II 1009 (October 23, 1600) and stayed there over the winter and for Nawruz, leaving for his

pilgrimage on foot to Mashhad in early 1010 (late summer 1601).⁹⁵ Fazli Beg also has 'Abbas in Isfahan for Nawruz at the beginning of the Year of the Ox, in March 1601 (which fell in 1009), but incorrectly records this in his annal for 1010. He mentions that the shah feasted and relaxed in the city, in the gardens and buildings that had been designed.⁹⁶

Munajjim Yazdi has some interesting information about 'Abbas's activities in Isfahan during the winter of 1009 (1600–1601), first about a trip he made along the banks of the Zayanda Rud to explore the possibilities of bringing its water to Isfahan,⁹⁷ and, more interestingly, about his visit to the parks and gardens on 10 Shawwal (April 14, 1601), as well as his outing to see the Uzbek and Georgian envoys and watch a polo game on the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat.⁹⁸ Whatever else one may conclude about the rival development of the new *maydān*, this remark makes it clear that the old *maydān* was still functioning and could serve as a polo pitch.

In fact, Munajjim Yazdi provides further details of the progress of 'Abbas's plans in his annal for 1011 (1602–3), following the shah's return from his Balkh campaign (November 1602). He mentions the completion of the *maydān* at the entrance to the palace, surrounded by two rows of shops and other amenities, as well as the *qayṣariyya* and buildings in the bazaar, which was the focus of attention in the first phase of development. To signal and confirm the completion of the project, Yazdi records that on Thursday, 27 Jumada II 1011 (December 12, 1602), the bazaaris (merchants of the marketplace) moved their operations from the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat.⁹⁹ They occupied the new quarters, which were endowed in the name of the Infallible Imams, along with the parks and gardens of the Chahar Bagh. He also mentions that by 12 Rajab (December 26), all this construction work, including the Allahverdi Khan Bridge, was completed.¹⁰⁰ Essentially the same information is given by Junabadi, including the hints about opposition from the interested parties in the old *maydān* area (but no report that they moved to the new *maydān*), and also in the context of 'Abbas's return from the disastrous Balkh campaign, although he concentrates his account of the development all into one text, dated 1012 (1603–4). His report, written fifteen years later, is anachronistic,

not least in referring also to the Masjid-i Shah (Friday mosque), which was not begun for another eight years after 1012.¹⁰¹

Fazli Beg has nothing much to add to these accounts (especially the combined summaries of the whole development of the city by Iskandar Beg and Junabadi), but he does document ‘Abbas’s continuing efforts to develop the capital, once again in the context of the shah’s return from the Balkh campaign in the winter of 1602–3. He writes that after celebrating the Nawruz of 1603 and dispatching Hasan Khan to recapture the fort at Nihavand, the shah busied himself with the “restoration of gardens and the organization (*tartīb*) of buildings, striving for an increase of lofty constructions. Casting his eye on the location that had been the old *Dār*

al-Saltāna of the [Seljuk?] sultans of Iran, he put it in order and, buying many properties from the owners of those districts, he planned gardens and cultivation.”¹⁰² It is not clear whether this refers to an area round the old city center, or, as might be assumed, locations within the new palace precincts to the southwest.

By this date then, early 1603, there is concrete, consistent and reliable evidence of the completion of the commercial buildings at the northern end of the square and the perimeter development of Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan (except on its southern edge), the construction of the Madrasa of ‘Abd-Allah Shushtari, and the start of work on the Mosque of Shaykh Lutf-Allah, while other projects seem to have continued to be under construction (see table 1 and fig. 1; see also table 2 on page 171).

Table 1. Fazli Beg’s chronology of the construction of Isfahan.

Hijri annal	Date AD	Description	Alternative dates	Source
998	Early 1590	‘Abbas draws up plans for buildings and gardens; orders for Tabarak to be demolished.	Late 1590	Natanzi
1001	1592–93	Plans for <i>dawlatkhāna</i> , <i>maydān</i> , bazaar, and <i>qayṣariyya</i> ; old <i>qayṣariyya</i> to be demolished.	October 1591	Yazdi
1002	1593–94	Buildings in Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan for visitors; plans for Chahar Bagh, Guldasta, and hammam in Guldasta; <i>qayṣariyya</i> and <i>chahār-bāzār</i> “half finished”; founding of Mosque of Shaykh Lutf-Allah.	1005/1596 1006/1598	Yazdi Munshi
1006	1598	<i>Dawlatkhāna</i> , gardens, hammam, and <i>chahār-bāzār</i> urged towards completion; work starts on Madrasa of ‘Abd-Allah Shushtari.	1012/1603	Junabadi
1008	1600	Madrasa completed (implied).		
1009	1600–1601	<i>Qayṣariyya</i> and <i>chahār-bāzār</i> recently completed.		
1011	1602–3	Restoration of buildings and some new constructions; old palace area restored; purchases land for development. Begins development of ‘Abbasabad for Tabrizis.	1020/1611	Yazdi
1013	1605	Begins development of New Julfa for Armenians.		
1016	1607–8	Work starts on Allah Verdi Khan Bridge.	1006/1598 completed 1011/1602	Munshi Yazdi
1017	1608	‘Abbas inspects progress on bridge.		
1018	1609	Urges progress on bridge and further constructions.		
1019	1611	<i>Dawlatkhāna</i> and <i>qayṣariyya</i> noted as finished.		
1020	1611	Founding of Masjid-i Shah (Friday mosque) (under 1019/1610).		
1033	1624	Urges progress on completion of mosque.		

Fazli's evidence confirms what one would actually expect to be the case, that work continued on various projects and was not all completed by 1603. Our other sources, by contrast, do not refer to any further construction work until the years 1020–21 (1611–12).

1012–1020 (1603–1611)

Shah 'Abbas was absent from the capital between September 1603 and November 1607, when he was on his successful campaign in northwest Iran against the Ottomans.¹⁰³ Nevertheless, according to Fazli, after Nawruz of 1013 (March 1605), 'Abbas gave orders to resettle the silk-weaving (*julāhī*) Armenians of Chukhur-Sa'd (Yerevan), who had been earmarked for deportation to Isfahan. The shah instructed Mirza Muhammad, the vizier of Isfahan, and Mir Jamal al-Din Muhammad Sukhta of the *khālīṣa* (crown estates) administration to give a district for buildings and houses to "those who were merchants" on the far side of the Zayanda Rud, opposite the Tabrizi community. Fazli notes that two years earlier (i.e., in 1011 [1602–3], according to his chronology),

by royal command, Hajji 'Inayat-Allah and Sayyid Hasan Mutaḥḥarriqa Tabrizi were brought from Iraq and drew up the plan for 'Abbasabad. Each of the groups mentioned was allocated 3, 10 or 20 *jaribs* (each *jarīb* being 62 cubits) for building, according to his needs. The shah purchased the area for development from the Isfahani owners of the nearby Shamsabad and Bidistan¹⁰⁴ and other villages, and gave them [the incomers] the land. Each according to his circumstances spent from 3,000 to 100 tumans on construction, and 2,000 houses or more were planned on a grid (*ṭarḥ*) and on a street most of them having water running through the middle of the houses; hammams and gardens were designed and they strove to bring it to completion.

Each of the Armenians built a house according to his circumstances and ability and set up his trade and management of his affairs. Khwaja Safar and Khwaja Nazar, who were mayors (*kalāntars*) and nobles among the Julfans, on entering Isfahan, came opposite the Tabrizi community [i.e., on the other side of the Zayanda River], and they too built lofty buildings. Lands and excellent properties were given in quarters near the city also for those who engaged in agriculture and cultivation, and houses were arranged for them.¹⁰⁵

Once more, Fazli throws new light on the development of this district and its timing, although his account is somewhat imprecise, combining the development of 'Abbasabad, to the west of the city, for the Tabrizis, with new Julfa, to the south, for the Armenians. Either way, Fazli here provides much more precise information about the development of 'Abbasabad, including its planners; his account is much earlier than the equally precise information provided by Yazdi, according to whom the Tabrizi quarter was established six years later, at the end of Safar 1020 (May 13, 1611).¹⁰⁶

The evacuation of the Armenians in 1605 is well documented.¹⁰⁷ If correct, Fazli shows that the Tabrizis were already there before the arrival of the Armenians in 1605, possibly as a result of the prolonged Ottoman occupation of the city and the slow return of the inhabitants in the wake of 'Abbas's reconquest of Tabriz in 1012 (1603).¹⁰⁸ The alternative, discussed by McChesney, is their arrival in the aftermath of the campaigns around Tabriz in 1019 (1610).¹⁰⁹ The movement of Tabrizis to Isfahan seems equally likely on either occasion, in view of the destruction of property and the effects of the shah's scorched earth policy. This would require a straight choice between the exactly contemporary evidence of Yazdi and the somewhat later but more circumstantial report of Fazli Beg. It is possible that there is some confusion here between the development of the urban suburb (*shahr*) of 'Abbasabad and the gardens, later called Hazar Jarib, situated further away to the south, at the end of the Chahar Bagh, the development of which is described much earlier by both Yazdi and Iskandar Beg.¹¹⁰ However, the Hazar Jarib was situated south of (behind) New Julfa, whereas Fazli's account of the location opposite the Tabrizis on the other side of the river seems unequivocal, so it is not easy to discern whose is the correct version of events.

In the course of his general description of building works in the city in 1012 (1603), Junabadi also gives an account of the Bagh-i 'Abbasabad, clearly to be identified with the site south of the river, and connected to the north via the Chahar Bagh and the Allahverdi Khan Bridge (see below).¹¹¹ Like Iskandar Beg, he says he will refer to the development of the suburbs of "Tabrizabad," Julfa, and Shamsabad in due course, but he does not do so in a way that explains these developments in relation

to each other. He mentions only Julfa and thus implies that Tabrizabad followed later, perhaps supporting the evidence of Yazdi and Iskandar Beg (although we might accuse Yazdi also of simply conflating earlier developments into a single account under 1020 [1611–12]).¹¹²

Similar issues are raised by another piece of detailed evidence provided by Fazli Beg that is not consistent with information given in other sources. According to the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh*, the Year of the Sheep, 1016 (1607–8), was a critical one for ‘Abbas’s building ambitions; his annal contains accounts of work in Ardabil, Mashhad and Mazandaran, which will be the subject of a separate study. In the late autumn of 1607, ‘Abbas returned to Isfahan after a prolonged absence on campaign in northwestern Iran and a devotional visit to Mashhad to give thanks for his successes, travelling over the stone causeway across the salt desert, which had now been completed.¹¹³ Once in Isfahan, he was presented with a petition from Allahverdi Khan, governor of Fars, to build a bridge over the Zayanda Rud. Fazli clearly presents this as the Khan’s initiative—most other sources mention that it was the shah’s idea and that he assigned the work to Allahverdi Khan. The shah gave permission for the work to be started and urged every effort to be made to complete it. In a marginal note, Fazli adds that

the architectural work on that elevated construction should be entrusted to Mir Jamal al-Din Muhammad Jabiri, son of one of the great Isfahani families and in the service of Allahverdi Khan. Good builders and carpenters with their tools were sought from the province of Fars and its environs. The design of the building of the bridge was to be on three levels (storeys), such that the eyes of the beholders were astonished. No one had ever seen such a good building over the water, which could become a place for the world to stroll (*sayrgāh-i ‘ālam*), with structures that allowed people to decamp [from their homes] for a few days and nights and stay there without becoming weary of it. It was all built of marble and yellow dolomite (*yaraqān*) stone and grey granite (*abgha*), which the pen is powerless to describe. By the good fortune of the shah, it took [only] five years to complete.¹¹⁴

This account is interesting for a number of reasons, first for the details about the architect, previously unknown, and also for the date.¹¹⁵ Munajjim Yazdi, essentially reliable with his chronology, puts the completion of the work five years earlier, in 1011 (1602);¹¹⁶ Iskandar Beg,

much less reliable (consolidating all his information together into two single accounts), dates the completion of the work even earlier, in 1006 (1598), though from a later perspective, in connection with the laying out of the Bagh-i ‘Abbasabad.¹¹⁷ Junabadi also, like Iskandar Beg, links the construction of the bridge—which he describes in some detail—to the development of ‘Abbasabad and the Chahar Bagh continuing across the river, in his account of the year 1012 (1603), i.e., implying agreement with the earlier date given by Yazdi, except that his general description is undifferentiated as to the sequence of building; he says it took three to four years to complete.¹¹⁸ Fazli’s account is also clearly linked to, and a logical consequence of, the development of Julfa on the other side of the river, mentioned previously. Support for his (later) date is that he continues to provide evidence of the work in progress on the bridge after 1607 (see below). It may be possible to reconcile the details given by Munajjim Yazdi and Fazli Beg by suggesting that the project was begun in 1011 (1602), following Yazdi, and brought (almost) to completion five years later, in 1016 (1607), following Fazli Beg. A similar solution, in reverse, could be applied to the development of the ‘Abbasabad quarter for the Tabrizis, supposing its initiation in 1011 (1602–3) (following Fazli Beg) and its completion in 1020 (1611) (following Yazdi). The logical necessity of the bridge for the development of the Bagh-i ‘Abbasabad and Chahar Bagh, the district of New Julfa, and, to a lesser extent, the urban suburb of ‘Abbasabad, suggests that 1011 (1602) is the correct date for the initiation of work on the bridge, which in reality must have taken several years to complete.

The bridge clearly became a major amenity even before its completion, and we find ‘Abbas himself enjoying it. After overseeing more projects at Farahabad in Mazandaran, he returned to Isfahan in early 1017 (1608),¹¹⁹ where he spent several days touring the city and saw that work was in progress on the Allahverdi Khan Bridge as planned—before going to inspect the site of his Kuhrang River (*Āb-i Kūhrang*) project, the goal of which was to divert its water into the Zayanda Rud (more than doubling its flow).¹²⁰ The coincidence of the work on the bridge and the investigation of the potential for increasing the flow of the river is understandable, as a successful diversion would surely have affected the design of

the bridge. But it is neutral in terms of deciding when the project was begun, for Yazdi documents 'Abbas's interest in the scheme from 1012 (1603), which is consistent with his date for the founding of the bridge the previous year;¹²¹ Fazli Beg, who first mentions the scheme in 1016 (winter of 1607–8),¹²² is similarly consistent. The shah was also reported to have been at the end of the bridge, the plan for the footings of which had been laid out (*ṭarḥ-i asās-i ān mīrīkhtand*), discussing the honest handling of financial transactions with the I'timad al-Dawla (chief minister), Hatim Beg Urdubadi.¹²³ Later, in the autumn, when the latter returned from overseeing work on the Kuhrang scheme, he organized a great feast on the bridge that Allahverdi Khan had started, to celebrate the fact that *some of it* had been completed (evidently enough for it to be serviceable):¹²⁴

for a week the Shah relaxed and partied with the nobles and great ones of Isfahan, as well as the poor, the needy, and the ragamuffins (*rinds*). Each level (*ṣuffa*) and iwan of the building above the bridge was assigned to one of the ladies (*khātūns*) and sultans and intimates (*muqarrab*); each was decorated [differently], from *majlis* (gathering) to *majlis* and occasion to occasion, each one adorning the party face to face with the other, so it became the envy of the gardens of paradise.

These details suggest that Fazli's account is essentially reliable and consistent with the chronology of the period. He reports the shah again strolling with his entourage, including the refugee Ottoman Jalali (*Celālī*) rebels, in the gardens and walking at the end of the Allahverdi Khan Bridge during the Nawruz holidays of 1609, and urging the sultans and the pillars of state to arrange buildings and gardens to develop and beautify the paradise-like city.¹²⁵ The shah's interest in these projects and impatience to see the work finished shines clearly through all these accounts.

'Abbas then spent another substantial period away from the capital,¹²⁶ during which time he could not personally supervise construction work in Isfahan. Shortly after the shah's return in early 1611, the Uzbek chief Wali Muhammad Khan sought refuge with 'Abbas. He was welcomed in spectacular style by the shah and, on entering Isfahan via the Tuqchi Gate, was escorted into the city.¹²⁷ All authors give extended accounts of the reception of the Khan and his entourage, which included a

tour of the city and its newly constructed buildings proudly shown off: the *dawlatkhāna* and the *qayṣariyya*, from the roof of which the visitors watched a mighty artillery display before descending to a feast in the famous Mahdi Palace (*khāna-yi mahdī*) in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan.¹²⁸ Fazli Beg expands on this detail, mentioning that the shah had allocated a place for the Khan to stay in the private quarters of the *dawlatkhāna* (*dawlatkhāna-yi khāṣṣ*), but Wali Muhammad Khan was not content with this,¹²⁹ and it was determined that carpets would be spread out in the *'imārat-i mahdī*, which the late Shah Isma'īl had built in the Naqsh-i Jahan.¹³⁰ It will be recalled that Fazli also notes that this is where 'Abbas stayed on his first visit to the city (see above), though its separate existence is not identified in other sources: it was presumably the prototype of the later *dawlatkhāna*. Fazli remarks that 'Ali-Quli Khan, charged with organizing the Uzbek visit, had already been instructed to spread carpets in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan palace (*'imārat*) and arrange a place for them by the royal workshops (*kār-khānājāt*). The shah himself rose to propose they retire to rest, and 'Ali-Quli Khan suggested that they be taken to the lofty buildings that had been prepared for them.¹³¹ Many other details are supplied by Fazli—including the placing of entertainers in the upper rooms of the shops overlooking the *maydān*—and by other sources.¹³² The main point to emphasize is that, by this date, the bulk of the new construction in the city was complete and in use, including the second line of shops facing the *maydān*, and that 'Abbas used the opportunity provided by the Chinggisid's visit to show off the new capital in all its splendor.

This year (1020) is of particular importance in the documentary sources because it is the date usually given for the foundation of the Masjid-i Shah or Friday mosque on the *maydān*. Yazdi mentions the decision to start work on Friday, 15 Safar (April 29, 1611), and has the further information that on Thursday, 5 Rabi' 11 (June 17), the 'ulama congregated and determined the direction of the qibla.¹³³ Iskandar Beg also mentions the founding of the mosque this year, before the arrival of Wali Muhammad Khan.¹³⁴ There remains some residual ambiguity about the year, as some of the chronograms quoted to mark this event (and the visit of Wali Muhammad Khan) yield the date 1019, the year also given by Junabadi for

the Khan's visit,¹³⁵ but the correct date seems to be clear, namely 1020.¹³⁶

Fazli Beg nevertheless places the founding of the Friday mosque in his annal for the Year of the Rat, 1021 (1612–13), although the chronogram he cites for the work by the poet Wafa'i, cited also by Munajjim Yazdi and Iskandar Beg, yields the date 1020. The indications he provides about the shah's movements and whereabouts between 1019 and 1021 are evidently confused and cannot be reconciled entirely with the data provided by other authors.¹³⁷ Chronology aside, compared with the level of information he usually gives about the shah's enthusiasm for the construction of his capital, Fazli's account of the founding of the Friday mosque on the *maydān* is rather slight, although not without interest. He writes:

It occurred to the shah to draw up plans (*tarḥ andāzad*) for a Friday mosque opposite the *qayṣariyya* in the *Dār al-Saltāna* of Isfahan, which would remain a memorial of the mighty Padshah—for there was a mosque opposite the Lofty Gate (*Ālā Qāpū*) for the teaching of Shaykh Lutf-Allah, but nothing comparable for the *qayṣariyya* [i.e., his concern was for symmetry]. At an auspicious moment, the foundation for the lofty *masjid-i jāmi'* was laid; the oversight (*sarkārī*) of the noble site was entrusted to Muhibb-ʿAli Beg, Lala (tutor) of the *ghulāms* (slave corps), controller of the buildings (*taḥvildār*) of the royal household and superintendent (*amin*) of the affairs of the city.

In a subsequently erased passage, Fazli notes that it was not completed by ʿAbbas's death, but only in the reign of his successor, Shah Safi.¹³⁸ As noted in the secondary sources, information about Isfahan dwindles from this point, and indeed ʿAbbas's interests became increasingly preoccupied with other things—not least, his development of the new royal establishments of Ashraf and Farahabad in Mazandaran, to which he resorted repeatedly in the last decade of his reign.¹³⁹ In addition, he spent long periods on campaign in northwestern Iran, the Caucasus, and Iraq. Although he visited Isfahan a few times after 1612, it was seldom for long and, apart from quite detailed descriptions of the welcome he was given by local officials, there are almost no references to any persisting interest in the city's development. One exception briefly noted by Fazli Beg is in connection with the shah's triumphant return to Isfahan in Ramadan 1033 (July 1624), after his conquest of Baghdad.¹⁴⁰

ʿAbbas spent some time receiving delegations, visiting the gardens and the buildings of the capital, dispensing justice, and rotating the office holders. Also, "he ordered a great effort to be made to complete the noble Friday mosque, which the shah had built in the *Dār al-Saltāna* of Isfahan [and] Lala Beg was overseeing."¹⁴¹ This confirms that the work was still continuing and that the shah maintained his interest, but as it happens, this was to be the last time he came to Isfahan, and thereafter his attention and creativity in urban development was focused almost entirely on Mazandaran. The only aspect of the construction of Isfahan in which he seemed to take a persistent interest was the project to divert water from the Ab-i Kuhrang to the Zayanda Rud, to guarantee ample water for the city,¹⁴² and, less immediately, to enhance communications between Farahabad and Isfahan by completing the extension of the stone causeway that cut across the edge of the salt desert through the Mazandaran jungle.¹⁴³ It is indeed rather remarkable, given the enormous energy the shah devoted to constructing a worthy capital at Isfahan, how quickly he moved on to other projects once this was as good as accomplished, and how little time he felt like spending in the city. The change from public display to more private seclusion as an aspect of his building projects is also noteworthy. Magnificent as his development of Farahabad may have been, it was hardly a public statement of his majesty or his policies, tucked away in one of the most inaccessible parts of his kingdom.

CONCLUSIONS

My aim in this paper has been to present the materials found in Fazli Beg's chronicle that refer to ʿAbbas's development of Isfahan, focusing on information that supplements or questions the pool of existing data, referred to as necessary for comparison. Table 1 (on page 166) provides a chronological summary of this information and table 2 presents it according to the main buildings discussed. Fazli Beg provides several items of information not mentioned by other contemporary Persian sources, falling into two groups: first, details not given elsewhere—such as the construction work on the madrasa (cum-mosque?) of ʿAbd-Allah Shushtari in 1006

Table 2. Fazli Beg’s information on specific buildings.

Buildings/sites	Development history
<i>Qayṣariyya</i> and <i>chahār-bāzār</i>	Planned on ‘Abbas’s visit in 1592. Half completed in 1594. Architects still working on it in 1598. Completed winter 1600–1601.
<i>Dawlatkhāna</i>	Planned on ‘Abbas’s visit in 1592. Buildings in palace precinct for visitors in 1593–94. Architects still working on it in 1598. Completed by 1611.
Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan	Planned on ‘Abbas’s visit in 1592.
Chahar Bagh	Planned in 1593–94.
Guldasta and hammam	Planned in 1593–94.
Mosque of Shaykh Lutf-Allah	Founded 1593–94.
Madrassa of ‘Abd-Allah Shushtari	Development of existing building in 1598. Completed two years later, 1600.
‘Abbasabad residential quarter	Started in 1602–3.
New Julfa	Founded in 1605.
Allahverdi Khan Bridge	Founded in 1607–8; took five years.
Masjid-i Shah (Friday mosque)	Founded 1611. Still in progress 1624.

(1598); and secondly—and more numerous—details that supplement information provided by other authors. This would include the dates for the founding of the Masjid-i Shaykh Lutf-Allah (1002 [1593–94]), the suburb of ‘Abbasabad for the Tabrizis (1011 [1602]), and the Allahverdi Khan Bridge (1016 [1607]). In each case the date he provides differs substantially from previously received information, and it is not always possible to suggest where the correct interpretation lies.

All the sources consulted were contemporary with the events they describe, although Fazli Beg was of a slightly later generation than the others. For much of the crucial period he was in the Caucasus (1608–24), rather remote from events in Isfahan, and only completed his compilation in India. Nevertheless, he clearly had access to authoritative information from members of his family who held important administrative posts in Isfahan, and his evidence is both internally consistent and reported in a coherent historical context. Apart from the specific new information he provides, the main value of Fazli Beg’s narrative is that, unlike the work of Iskandar

Beg and Mirza Beg Junabadi, who concentrate all their accounts of the city’s development into a couple of composite descriptions, he gives a strong sense of the continuous construction of the city and the work done on different buildings over a long period, together with the shah’s tireless energy in pushing the projects forward on all his visits to the city.

Whether we are willing to accept his data when they conflict with the apparently extremely precise records of the court astronomer Munajjim Yazdi may have to await further research. In the meantime, perhaps the best way to reconcile conflicting data is to be cautious about accepting dates for the “completion” of substantial building projects, which probably continued over several years.

Fazli Beg confirms the shah’s interest in developing Isfahan from the time of his earliest visit in 1590, although he sheds almost no light on the vexed question of the initial activity around the old city center and the Maydan-i Harun-i Vilayat. For the rest, his evidence supports Sussan Babaie’s belief in Shah ‘Abbas’s systematic

vision for the design of the new capital and its implementation over two decades.

There is plenty of scope for further work here, not only in harmonizing the new construction data brought to the mix by the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh*, but also in studying other details about the personnel charged with running the city and about leading figures in the bureaucracy and the religious establishment, all of which can throw light on how the city worked.

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NOTES

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1. See the fine study by David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Isfahān in the Saljūq Period* (London and New York, 2010), esp. 23–26 and 75–88, for a brief account of the city and its advantages as a capital. A concise but detailed history of the city is also given by Masashi Haneda and Rudi Matthee, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, s.v. "Isfahan vii. Safavid Period."
2. See, for instance, Michel Mazzaoui, "From Tabriz to Qazvin to Isfahan: Three Phases of Safavid History," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Suppl. 3 (1977): 514–22, and the sources mentioned below in n. 10.
3. In addition to the works already cited, popular but informed descriptions of the city, with lavish illustrations, are given by Laurence Lockhart, *Persian Cities* (London, 1960), 18–31; Wilfrid Blunt, *Isfahan: Pearl of Persia* (London, 1966; repr. 2009); and Francis Richard, *Le siècle d'Ispahan* (Paris, 2007), to mention just a few.
4. R. D. McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah 'Abbas's Building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 103–34.
5. Munajjim Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī, yā, Rūznāma-i Mullā Jalāl*, ed. Sayf Allāh Vahīdīniyā (Tehran, 1987) [hereafter cit. as Yazdī]; Mīrzā Bēg Junābadī, *Rawḍat al-ṣafawīyya*, ed. Ghulām Rizā Ṭabāṭabā'ī Majd (Tehran, 1999) [hereafter cit. as Junābadī, *Rawḍat*].
6. McChesney, "Four Sources," 105.
7. Charles Melville, "A Lost Source for the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: The *Afḍal al-tawārīkh* of Fazlī Khuzani Isfahani," *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998): 263–65.
8. Charles Melville, "New Light on the Reign of Shah 'Abbās: Volume III of the *Afḍal al-tawārīkh*," in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Leiden, 2003), esp. 71, 80–81.
9. Fazlī Bēg Khūzānī Isfahānī, *A Chronicle of the Reign of Shah 'Abbas*, ed. Kioumars Ghereghlou, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2015) [hereafter cited as Fazlī, *Afḍal*].
10. The paper also benefits from other more recent studies of the city and its architecture by Stephen P. Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan, 1590–1722* (Costa Mesa, Calif., 1999); Stephen P. Blake, "Shah 'Abbās and the Transfer of the Safavid Capital from Qazvin to Isfahan," in Newman, *Society and Culture*, 145–64, which essentially reproduces the argument of *Half the World*, chap. 2; and Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh, 2008). See also Sussan Babaie's review of Blake's *Half the World* in *Iranian Studies* 33, nos. 3–4 (2000): 478–82. A further study by Masashi Haneda, "The Character of the Urbanisation of Isfahan in the Later Safavid Period," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville, *Pembroke Papers* 4 (London, 1996), 369–88, has a useful discussion. Many relevant papers are collected in the special issue, "Studies on Isfahan, Parts I and II," ed. Renata Holod, *Iranian Studies* 7, nos. 1–4 (1974), and its bibliography, at 734–55.
11. For a fuller treatment of these topics, see Kioumars Ghereghlou and Charles Melville, "Editors' Preface," in Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 1:xi–lxvi.
12. See also Masashi Haneda, "La famille Hūzānī d'Isfahan (15^e–17^e siècles)," *Studia Iranica* 18, no. 1 (1989): 77–92.
13. Especially utilized in several articles by Hirotake Maeda, e.g., recently, "Exploitation of the Frontier: The Caucasus Policy of Shah 'Abbas I," in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig (London, 2012), 471–89.
14. See Melville, "New Light," 72–73; Ghereghlou and Melville, "Editors' Preface," xlv et seqq.
15. R. D. McChesney, "A Note on Iskandar Beg's Chronology," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 39, no. 1 (1980): 53–63.
16. These brief comments supplement the remarks made by McChesney, "Four Sources," 104–5.
17. Afūshṭa'ī Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat al-āthār fī dhikr al-akhbār: Dar tārikh-i ṣafawīyya*, ed. Iḥsān 'Ishrāqī, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1373 [1994]) [hereafter cit. as Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*].
18. Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City, 2000), 20, 54–57, and chap. 5, comparing Natanzi's treatment of the fall of Ya'qub Khan with other contemporary sources.

19. See Charles Melville, "From Qars to Qandahar: The Itineraries of Shah 'Abbas I (995–1038/1587–1629)," in *Études safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard (Paris and Tehran, 1993), 195–224, at 200–205.
20. Ṭabāṭabā'ī Majd's introduction to Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 17–20; so far the work has been little studied or used in the secondary literature. It is not discussed by Quinn, *Historical Writing*, and mentioned only briefly in Sholeh Quinn and Charles Melville, "Safavid Historiography," in *Persian Historiography*, ed. Charles Melville (London, 2012), 215–16, 226.
21. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 762.
22. See *ibid.*, 905–15, for Ṭabāṭabā'ī Majd's helpful list of the author's chronology.
23. R. D. McChesney, "Postscript to 'Four Sources on Shah 'Abbas's Building of Isfahan,'" *Muqarnas* 8 (1991): 137–38, and the discussion below.
24. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 903.
25. Iskandar Bēg Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, ed. Īraj Afshār, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1334 [1956]) [hereafter cit. as Munshī]; translated by Roger M. Savory, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, 3 vols. (Boulder, Colo., 1978–86).
26. Munshī, 1110–11, trans. Savory, 536; trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 112.
27. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 488/fol. 237r; further examples in Gheregrou and Melville, "Editors' Preface," xlvii–l.
28. As confirmed by other contemporary authors.
29. Fortunately, on the other hand, this year seems to mark the effective culmination of 'Abbas's building program in the city.
30. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 376, trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 106.
31. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 74/fol. 39r.
32. Qāzī Aḥmad Qummī, *Khulāṣat al-tavārikh*, ed. Iḥsān 'Ishrāqī (Tehran, 1363 [1984]), 903. In his account, which ends the following year (1000), he makes no reference to ordering construction work, either at the outset or on his return to Isfahan at the end of the expedition (p. 922), or later, when 'Abbas goes briefly to Isfahan at the start of 1000 (October 1591) (p. 1089).
33. Dates in Melville, "Qars to Qandahar," 202–3, table 1.
34. Blake, *Half the World*, 25–26. For a recent treatment of this whole episode, see Rudi Matthee, "Loyalty, Betrayal and Retribution: Biktash Khan, Ya'qub Khan and Shah 'Abbas I's Strategy in Establishing Control over Kirman, Yazd and Fars," in *Ferdowsi, the Mongols and the History of Iran: Art, Literature and Culture from Early Islam to Qajar Persia; Studies in Honour of Charles Melville*, ed. Robert Hillenbrand, A. C. S. Peacock, and Firuza Abdullaeva (London, 2013), 184–200.
35. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 714; cf. Blake, "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 150–51, and his comments on the interpretation of this text, contra McChesney, "Postscript," 137–38.
36. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 90/fol. 48r–v. For Qazvin, see Maria Szuppe, "Palais et jardins: Le complexe royal des premiers safavides à Qazvin, milieu xvi^e–début xvii^e siècles," *Res Orientales* 8 (1996): 143–77, and the discussion in Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 47–55.
37. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 714. This locale was developed under Isma'īl I, with the construction of the Imamzada built by Durmish Khan in Rabi' I 918 (June 1512): see Luṭf Allāh Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-yi āsār-i tārikhī-i Isfahān* (Isfahan, 1344 [1965]), 360–62. Isma'īl enjoyed a lengthy stay in Persian Iraq in 917–18 (from winter 1511 to spring 1513): see, e.g., Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, ed. M. Dabir-Siyaqi, 4 vols. (Tehran, 1362 [1983]), 531; Khvāndmīr, *Habibu's-siyar: Tome Three, The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk, Part Two: Shah-rukh Mirza—Shah Ismail*, ed. and trans. W. M. Thackston, Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures 24 (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 599; Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Freiburg, 1980), 64–65.
38. McChesney, "Postscript," 138, wrongly states that the preceding date is 996, but rightly supposes that Junabadi "had a later time in mind."
39. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 90/fol. 48r. Also in Munshī, 438, trans. Savory, 612, without naming the petitioners.
40. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 120/fol. 62r.
41. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 451; Munshī, 454–55, trans. Savory, 627–28. Iskandar Beg entered 'Abbas's service at this time. Yazdī, 117–18, is uncharacteristically vague about 'Abbas's movements at this point. Fazlī Beg makes no reference to 'Abbas visiting Isfahan in his annal for 1000.
42. Date in Yazdī, 113; cf. McChesney, "Four Sources," 108. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 395–96, also mentions 'Abbas's visit to Isfahan in Muharram 1000 (November 1591), without detail apart from a large-scale hunt.
43. Yazdī, 113–14, McChesney, "Four Sources," 108, without the two chronogram poems.
44. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 120/fol. 62r.
45. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 759, trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 112, and his lengthy commentary on this issue, 117–19, including the identification of the leading personalities mentioned.
46. See further Blake, "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 156–57. Babaie provides cogent criticisms of Blake's reliance on Junabadi in her review of *Half the World*, 479–80.
47. Khvāndmīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 500; trans. Thackston, 587. Blake, *Half the World*, 16; Blake, "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 148, quotes Ghulam Sarwar, *History of Shah Isma'il Safawi* (Aligarh, 1939), 50, and L. Hunarfar, "Maydān-i Naqsh-i Jahān-i Isfahān," *Hunar va Mardum* 105 (1971): 9–10. Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan*, 64; Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 76.
48. Amīnī Haravī, *Futūḥāt-i shāhī*, ed. Muḥammad Riżā Naṣīrī (Tehran, 1383 [2004]), 314.
49. *Ibid.*, 249.
50. Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 480; trans. Thackston, 580. The shah had his winter and summer quarters there that year: Khvāndamīr, *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, 481, 482, trans. Thackston, 581; Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan*, 62; Amīnī, *Futūḥāt*, 246–55.
51. Munshī, 31, trans. Savory, 49. Also referred to by Blake, *Half the World*, 15; Blake, "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 148; cf. Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 76, 78.
52. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 183, merely mentions that Karra was burned in the *maydān* of Isfahan, without further specifica-

- tion. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, vol. 1 (Eton Pote Ms. 278, Cambridge University Library), fol. 144r, also merely mentions the *maydān*. It seems probable that the *maydān-i kuhna* was effectively the only *maydān* at that time.
54. A helpful discussion of the old *maydān* is given by Lisa Golombek, "Urban Patterns in Pre-Safavid Isfahan," *Iranian Studies* 7, nos. 1–2 (1974): 18–44, at 29–31, and fig. 4.
 55. See n. 98 below.
 56. See Masashi Haneda, "Maydān et Bāg: Reflexion à propos de l'urbanisme du Šāh 'Abbās," in *Documents et archives provenant de l'Asie Centrale*, ed. Akira Haneda (Kyoto, 1990), 87–99.
 57. Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 105n29, seems to argue against any development of the *maydān* under Isma'il.
 58. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 233, under 996 (1588), wrongly interpreted by Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 124; there is no record of 'Abbas going to Isfahan at this time: cf. Blake, *Half the World*, 60, 86–88; for Farhad Beg's constructions in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan before the accession of 'Abbas, cf. *Nuqāwat*, 239–41.
 59. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 714; McChesney, "Four Sources," 112; also noted by Babaie in her review of Blake's *Half the World*, 479.
 60. According to A. K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia: A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration* (Oxford, 1953; repr. 1969), 407, an Isfahani *jarīb* is 1,495 square yards; this would yield a total for the *maydān* of nearly 450,000 square yards or 375,000 square meters, whereas in fact the Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan is not quite 90,000 square meters.
 61. For a discussion of the *qayṣariyya*, see McChesney, "Four Sources," 117–19.
 62. For this, see Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 123–25, and the sources quoted.
 63. Ibid., esp. 42–47.
 64. The standard narrative is by Munshī, 464, 468, 473, trans. Savory, 637, 642, 646, with the previous background. For a detailed account of Nur Muhammad's reception in Qazvin, see Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 132–33/fols. 67v–68v. The visit seems not to have been recorded by Junabadi.
 65. Yazdī, 125–27. Iskandar Beg says the shah spent the winter in Isfahan, returning to Qazvin at the end of Pisces (late March). The question of the roof is noted below.
 66. If this is correct, it suggests that the existing *dawlatkhāna* was set back from the perimeter of the *maydān* and that the new accommodation fronted the square.
 67. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 536–40, only partly trans. in McChesney "Four Sources," 106–7.
 68. Sardehan Caravanserai is some 14 *farsakhs* or 50 miles north of the city, indicating the great honor shown to the visitors. The caravanserai is discussed briefly by Maxime Siroux, "Les caravanserais routiers safavids," *Iranian Studies* 7, nos. 1–2 (1974): 348–75, at 361–62.
 69. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 145–46/fol. 74r–v. He makes no reference to the rain and gives no dates.
 70. Ibid., 146/fol. 74v. Fazlī's language is not the most elegant and his meaning is not always entirely clear. Perhaps 'Abbas left to make sure the lodgings were properly prepared, or maybe for his own separate accommodation.
 71. The identification of this Guldasta is uncertain. On Kaempfer's "*planographicum*," the rose garden in the precincts of the palace (labelled r) is called the "*Guldistuun*" (*sic*), which should be taken to mean *gulistān*, not a mistake that a Persian author would make. It does, nevertheless, have an octagonal palace (*palatio*) at its center, in the form that one might associate with a Guldasta. Kaempfer's information and plan date from his visit in 1684–85. See Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum Politico-Physico-Medicarum Quibus continentur variae relationes, observationes & descriptiones rerum Persicarum...* (Lemgo, 1712), 177–79, 188. He makes no mention of a hammam there and it seems a strange place for 'Abbas to identify for development early on. The presence of the hammam suggests rather a location on the north side of the Naqsh-i Jahan Square, by the 'Abd-Allah Madrasa. Alternatively, and more probably, the Guldasta was perhaps the building in a garden of the same name, one of the *bāghs* along the Chahar Bagh: see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 486–87. This was where the corpse of Shah Sulayman was washed and prepared for burial in Qum: see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 660, which suggests that the Guldasta garden perhaps featured a small bath.
 72. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 146/fol. 74v.
 73. Blake, *Half the World*, 158–59; see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 657. Abu'l-Qāsim Rafi'ī Mihrābādī, *Āṣār-i Millī-i Isfahān* (Tehran, 1352 [1974]), 38, suggests that the madrasa should be equated with the *madrassa-yi 'Arabān*, a little to the north in the Imamzada Ahmad district near the Saru Taqi Bazaar (cf. *ibid.*, 222, 270, 481–82), but this would not give a view over the *maydān*.
 74. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 146/fol. 74v. The text is not entirely clear: cf. Melville, "New Light," 81.
 75. McChesney, "Four Sources," 123–24; Blake "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 157; Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 96–97. See further Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London, 2004), 81–87, with references to the career of Lutf Allah and the religious context of the period.
 76. Yazdī, 120–22, dates this episode to late 1001 (late summer 1593).
 77. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 142–45/fols. 72v–74r. See Melville, "New Light," 83–84; and Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2002), 3–7, 100–108.
 78. Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, e.g., 56, 71–72.
 79. Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 56, 95–96, 98.
 80. Haneda, "La famille Hūzānī d'Isfahan," 83. He is mentioned as deceased in 1020 (1611–12) (Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 584/fol. 293r), having been previously reported as departing for the hajj, via Shiraz, in 1016 (1608) (Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 467/fol. 226r). Iskandar Beg describes the suppression of the Nuqtavis after mentioning 'Abbas's trip to Isfahan.
 81. Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 70–71.
 82. Yazdī, 151, trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 108–9.

83. Munshī, 522, 529, trans. Savory, 698, 706, refers to the shah being in Isfahan once or twice in his annal for the Year of the Monkey (1596–97), as does Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 216–17, but both their chronologies are very vague and confused as to the correct hijri year.
84. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 573–79, trans. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 107–8. It is interesting that the list of towns he gives from which troops were to be recruited is the same as that given by Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 89/fol. 47v, in the year 999.
85. Yazdī, 147; he also mentions the orders to erect the portico (*sar-i dar*) over the *dawlatkhāna* at an auspicious hour, under the supervision of Manuchihr Khan Beg, a member of the *ghulāmān-i khāṣṣa-yi sharīfa* (slaves of the royal household), but this perhaps refers already to the shah's return to Qazvin.
86. Naṭanzī, *Nuqāwat*, 579. Munshi also omits almost all the details of 'Abbas's movements that are recorded by Yazdi under 1005; cf. n. 83 above.
87. Yazdī, 151; Munshī, 545, trans. Savory, 725.
88. Yazdī, 161–63; Munshī, 544–45, trans. Savory, 724–25; McChesney, “Four Sources,” 109, 110–11. Yazdī's account otherwise mainly concerns bringing water supplies into the city.
89. He says Nawruz of 1007, March 1599, presumably intending 1006. Yazdī, 162, indicates that 'Abbas was already in Isfahan for Nawruz in 1598. Soon afterwards, the shah set off on his expedition to recapture Herat.
90. Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 244/fol. 109v. For the madrasa, see Blake, *Half the World*, 158, with references cited, esp. Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 470–75. Mihrābādī, *Āṣār-i Millī*, 496, proposes the date 1007 (1599) on the strength of his more detailed account of Shushtari's encounter with the shah and invitation to Isfahan, where he resided fourteen years before his death in 1021.
91. This sentence is not very clear and the identity of the “mosque” is uncertain. Blake's note (*Half the World*, 158) confusingly represents Iskandar Beg's two texts (Munshī, 831, 110), but it is possible that in referring to the madrasa on the northern side of the *maydān* this 'Abd-Allah Madrasa is intended; cf. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 111 and n. 26.
92. Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 81.
93. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 747–48; for the date and further details of this visit, see Yazdī, 91–92.
94. Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 294/fol. 133r.
95. Yazdī, 201; Munshī, 605, trans. Savory, 796, leaves him in Isfahan without noting details of a hunting trip round Qumishah and Shahr-i Kurd. For the pilgrimage, see Charles Melville, “Shah 'Abbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad,” in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, 191–229.
96. Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 297/fol. 133v; Munshī, 609, trans. Savory, 799, no details.
97. Yazdī, 201. Earlier, in 1006 (1598), he reports the diversion of one canal from the river to the Bagh-i 'Abbasabad and other gardens: Yazdī, 162, trans. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 109.
98. Yazdī, 203; also noted by Blake, *Half the World*, 22. Yazdi also reports a ceremony of spreading flowers on the water at the royal hammam.
99. The edited text, 237, reads *maydān bīrūn vilāyat*, clearly a misreading.
100. See Yazdī, 236–37, trans. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 109, for the whole account, which there is no need to reproduce here; see also below for the discussion of the bridge and 'Abbasabad.
101. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 758–62, trans. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 112–14. Junābadī, 765, briefly notes 'Abbas's return to Isfahan from his trip to Mashhad, undated, but early in 1012 (June 1603); see next note.
102. Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 327–29/fols. 150r–151r, at the start of his annal for 1012, but this was still in 1011 (start of the Year of the Hare). He follows this with 'Abbas's expedition to Azarbaijan, neglecting entirely (as does Iskandar Beg) to mention another trip to Mashhad in May–June 1603, before returning to Isfahan and inspecting the possibilities for diverting the Ab-i Kuhrang to the city; on which, see Yazdī, 328–29; cf. Melville, “Shah 'Abbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad,” 195, 197.
103. 'Abbas departed from Isfahan on 7 Rabi' II 1012 (September 13, 1603) and returned on 26 Rajab 1016 (November 16, 1607); Yazdī, 245, 330; Munshī, 638, 755, trans. Savory, 828, 947.
104. Presumably the same as Bidabad.
105. Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 372–73/fol. 172r–v. This passage is translated by Hirotake Maeda, “The Forced Migrations and Reorganisation of the Regional Order in the Caucasus by Safavid Iran: Preconditions and Developments Described by Fazli Khuzani,” in *Reconstruction and Interaction of Slavic Eurasia and Its Neighboring Worlds*, ed. Osamu Ieda and Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo, 2006), 237–71, at 262–63.
106. Yazdī, 413, trans. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 110. See p. 180 in the present volume for the excellent map created by Farshid Emami for his article “Coffeehouses, Urban Spaces, and the Formation of a Public Sphere in Safavid Isfahan.”
107. For the settlement of the Armenians in Isfahan, see E. Herzig, “The Deportation of the Armenians in 1604–1605 and Europe's Myth of Shah 'Abbas I,” in *History and Literature in Iran: Persian and Islamic Studies in Honour of P. W. Avery*, ed. Charles Melville, Pembroke Persian Papers 1 (London, 1990): 59–71; Fażlī's statement that this was decided at Nawruz of 1605 (or shortly before, see *Afḍal*, 370/fol. 171r) is consistent with the other evidence adduced by Herzig. It is worth remarking that Junabadi gives information not confirmed elsewhere about the initial stages of this: Herzig, “Deportation of the Armenians,” 62–63; cf. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 771.
108. Munshī, 638–43, trans. Savory, 828–33.
109. McChesney, “Four Sources,” 125, citing Munshī, esp. 825, trans. Savory, 1032. Cf. Blake, *Half the World*, 185. For 'Abbas's efforts to assist the Tabrizis after the defeat of the Ottomans in 1019, see also Fażlī, *Afḍal*, 470–71/fol. 275r.

110. Yazdī, 162, refers to the Bagh-i 'Abbasabad in 1006 (1598); Munshī, 544, 545, trans. Savory, 724, 725, mentions the garden being laid out in the same year, and says that he will discuss the development of the town later—which, as noted in McChesney's discussion, "Four Sources," 124–25, he does not do.
111. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 760–61, trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 113. See also Blake, *Half the World*, 74–75, 185–86.
112. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 762. Similarly, referring to the orders for the construction of Julfa during the Azarbaijan campaign of 1012 (1603), he says (p. 772) that he will mention this in its own place, but does not do so.
113. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 465/fol. 225r; six years previously, in 1010, it was constructed for the pilgrimage on foot (see Melville, "Shah 'Abbas and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad," 212–13), and later extended into Mazandaran (see below).
114. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 466 /fol. 225v; cf. Melville, "New Light," 71. Thanks to Kioumars Ghahreghlou for help with translating the building materials used.
115. Quiring-Zoche, *Isfahan*, 237–42, provides an account of the Jabiri Ansari family, without reference to this figure.
116. Yazdī, 237; trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 109. Cf. above.
117. See above; Munshī, 544–45, trans. Savory, 724; McChesney, "Four Sources," 111.
118. Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 761–62, trans. McChesney, "Four Sources," 113–14, and his discussion, 125.
119. Yazdī, 339, dates his return to Isfahan as 7 Safar (May 23) this year, via an inspection of the work on the causeway across the salt lake, and his re-entry following his excursion to Silakhur, on 23 Rajab (November 2) (*ibid.*, 349).
120. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 476/fol. 230r.
121. Yazdī, 244; cf. Melville, "Qars to Qandahar," 217.
122. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 472/fol. 229r.
123. *Ibid.*, 478/fol. 231v. Fazlī excised a sentence to the effect that this was the previous year, before the shah went to Mazandaran.
124. *Ibid.*, 483/fol. 234r. The phrase "some of which" is added in the margin.
125. *Ibid.*, 497/fol. 241r, start of the annal for 1018, though Nawruz fell at the end of 1017 this year. Yazdī, 360–61, confirms 'Abbas's presence in Isfahan for Nawruz, in honor of which he arranged a festival of lights in the Bagh-i Naqsh-i Jahan, had flowers scattered at the end of the bridge, and decreed the Chahar Bagh open for women only on Wednesdays.
126. Leaving for the north after once more inspecting the Kuhrang water project: Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 508/fol. 247v. Yazdī, 363, 398, has Rabi' 11 1018 (July 1609) for the shah's departure and Shawwal 1019 (December 1610) for his return; the movements are echoed, without dates, by Iskandar Beg. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 575/fol. 287v, however, has the shah in Farahabad in the winter of 1610–11, returning to Isfahan only after Nawruz of 1020 (March 1611).
127. Yazdī, 414–15, gives the dates 4–15 Rabi' 11, 1020 (June 16–27, 1611) for the khan's stay in the city, though his detailed account of the visit (441–45), is rather less precise and somewhat inconsistent, saying the shah went to visit Wali Muhammad Khan on 13 Rabi' 11, which would be over a week after he arrived and only two days before he left. Yazdī was an eyewitness to and participant in the khan's visit and his record should be reliable, but the printed text has various inconsistent dates and there are numerous departures from the Ms. Or. 6263 in the British Library: cf. Melville "Qars to Qandahar," 209–13.
128. Yazdī, 442.
129. A crossed out phrase mentions that he felt it would be the cause of impoliteness and impudence (*gustākhi*).
130. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 584/fol. 293v.
131. *Ibid.*, 584/fol. 293v–294r.
132. Especially Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 831–33, who says they stayed one month: Munshī, 836–40, trans. Savory, 1044–48. I am preparing a paper on the entire journey of Wali Muhammad Khan; Fazlī's account of the visit altogether extends over pp. 576–95.
133. Yazdī, 411, 414; cf. McChesney, "Four Sources," 111–12, omitting the latter statement.
134. Munshī, 831, trans. Savory, 1038–39, without dates.
135. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 585, and Junābadī, *Rawḍat*, 830, for the visit (he does not mention the founding of the mosque); Valī Qulī Shāmlū, a later source, gives 1019 for both the visit and the foundation of the mosque, in *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, ed. Sayyid Ḥasan Sādāt Nāsirī (Tehran, 1992), 198.
136. According to the inscriptions recorded in the mosque, the first date mentioned is 1025 (1616): Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 427–29.
137. The most reliable of these is Yazdī, whose chronicle ends this year with the shah in Mazandaran late in 1020 (early 1612). Later authors make no mention of the shah being in Isfahan again until early 1022 (late spring 1613). Fazlī's account of the founding of the mosque is placed between a return from Qazvin and departure for Mazandaran, which seems to fit better with other indications for 1020; the very uneven length of his annals for 1019–1021 also suggests the possibility of the disorganization of his material for these years.
138. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 617–18/fol. 313r–v.
139. Melville, "Qars to Qandahar," 213–17; Blake, "Shah 'Abbas and the Transfer," 157–58.
140. The date given by Munshī, 1012, trans. Savory, 1234, writing exactly contemporary with these events.
141. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 876/fol. 483v. As is often the case, Fazlī's sentence is grammatically tortuous, which makes his precise meaning unclear.
142. The shah visited the site in 1028 (1619), on which see Melville, "Qars to Qandahar," 216–17, and again in 1030 (1621): Munshī, 949–50, 959, trans. Savory, 1170–71, 1180. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 746/fol. 383r, refers to 'Abbas's decisions about the scheme, involving Jamal al-Din Muhammad Sukhta Khuzani, the *kalāntar* of Isfahan, in 1026 (1617), and further financial dispositions in 1037 (1628) are mentioned in Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 963/fol. 552r.
143. Fazlī, *Afḍal*, 877–78/fol. 484r–v, under 1033 (1624). Iskandar Beg puts this in 1031 (1622): Munshī, 989–91, trans. Savory, 1211–12.