ARCHITECTURAL DECORATION UNDER SHAH 'ABBAS

by

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ABSTRACT

In 1006/1597-8, Shah 'Abbas I moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, and implemented the construction of a complex of buildings around a great square, or Maydan. Four of these structures were chosen for study: the 'Ali Qapu on the west, which began as the guard gate to the palace precincts and became a center for public receptions; the Shaykh Lotfollah Mosque, on the east side of the square; the Masjid-i-Shah, the congregational mosque at the south end; and the Maydan wall as a whole, the Qaysariya Bazaar portal and the bazaar complex to the north. The last group of structures is taken as a whole as it is the embodiment of the commercial center of the plan.

Several aspects of each building are examined: the form, the decorative plan, and the function. The decoration on the buildings is carefully designed and uses a variety of media. Following an outline of the governmental structure and society, hypotheses are advanced about the significance of each part of the above analysis, and conclusions are drawn about the symbolic nature of each building.

From this analysis it can be seen that the structures of the Maydan complex have symbolic meanings central to the

Safavid monarchy, and function both as working architecture and as propaganda for the state. Within the Maydan, called Naqs-e Jahan Square, or Picture-of-the-World, are buildings associated with theology, law, religion, and the secular functions of the state. These symbols are carefully defined by the decorations on the buildings (or the lack of decoration), and while the style of the decorations is consistent, the compositions vary widely according to the function and wider meaning of the building.

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DEDICATION

To all those who made it possible:

My parents, Frank and Helga.

INTRODUCTION

A. Thesis Statement

In Islamic architecture, there are few buildings as beautiful and decorative as those of the Safavid Shah, 'Abbas I, in Isfahan. They have been described in glowing terms by everyone from the Italian nobleman Pietro Delle Valle in 1617, to twentieth century travelers. And yet, though the buildings have been described by Islamic scholars such as Godard and Pope, none of the decorations has been catalogued or studied.[1] In an effort to begin filling this lacuna, I have devised a system of defining and outlining the various types of decorations found on the buildings around the great square, or Maydan.[2] Half of this thesis is devoted to this catalogue.

The other half of the thesis is an attempt to discover the manner in which the buildings function within the society of the period, and how their appearance and function affect each other. This will be accomplished by analyzing the historical references to the building, its known or traditional function, and its decoration.

When Shah 'Abbas moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1006/1597-8[3], he laid out a series of gardens and buildings and roads in a manner that suggests that there was a grand plan behind the design. Delle

Valle calls it a 'Tetrapolis", and the area in which these new structures were built is called the Naqs-e Jahan, or Picture of the World, which is itself a suggestion that a microcosmic section of an ideal world is displayed in the new buildings of Shah 'Abbas' Isfahan.

In order for this view-of-the-world to hold, the area must be representative of many elements of society and all economic levels. In the following chapters then, this, too, will be explored. The conclusion will deal with the various findings in the chapters preceeding it.

It is essential to understand the motivational forces behind the architectural realities seen in the Maydan complex; therefore, the section that follows will outline the events of the Safavid dynasty's history. This history is based on several references including the Cambridge History of Islam, v.1,[4] and the only contemporary history of the reign of 'Abbas: History of Shah 'Abbas, by Eskandar Monshi,[5] which is by its style more telling of the philosophy and political pressures under which the dynasty lived than any other single study published since then. The author is a rare individual who did not let his need for imperial favor stop him from revealing some of the idiosyncracies of the Shah, though the section dealing with this topic is labeled: "On Shah 'Abbas; Authority and Despotic Behavior, Which are

Divine Mysteries".[6] The tone of the book is one which shows that the Safavid dynasty, even after one hundred years on the throne, still needed to justify its legitimacy to that throne, as did many other contemporary monarchies. Eskandar spends considerable time on the ancestors of 'Abbas, their descent from the Prophet Muhammad, and the subsequent establishment of the Safavid dynasty.

Section 'C' of the Introduction gives needed information of a technical and structural nature, and explains some of the consistent tendencies of the decorations, regardless of the media in which they are executed. The various media and designs are also explained in separate sections.

Chapter One deals with the city, the changes that 'Abbas made, and describes the palace and the Maydan square. Chapters Two through Four each deal with one building: respectively, the 'Ali Qapu, Shaykh Lotfollah Mosque, and Masjid-i-Shah. Each building is described with its history and decorative program, and its function in the society is discussed, as it can be determined from the history, decorations and plan. Each of the three buildings is unique in some way, and although two of them function as mosques, they are very different in their structure. The third building, 'Ali Qapu has had a

checkered history, beginning with its use as the guard gate to the palace precincts, and continuing through its subsequent use as reception center and private dwelling.

Although the thesis is about architecture, it is not about structure, thus little will be said about the internal functioning of the fabric of the buildings themselves. This information is very difficult to obtain without archaeological investigation, and the only building whose complete structure has been analyzed is the 'Ali Qapu, which has been published by the IsMEO's project director E. Galdieri in Esfahān: 'Alī Qāpū.[7]

This thesis is concerned with an aspect of art history which is absolutely essential: social function. Objects are not suspended in a vacuum, they operate, for better or worse, in the society which commissions and uses them. Many of them are created for some purpose other than usefulness or beauty. The patron may have a number of ulterior motives behind his sponsorship of an object. In the Conclusion, these motives will be discussed.

B. History

The Safavid Dynasty arose from less than royal ancestors who were landowners in northwest Iran. They moved to Ardabil and eventually became known for their piety. Safi al-Din (650-735/1252-3-1334) for whom the dynasty was named studied with a Sufi master and upon the master's death inherited his following. In the next 150 years, the Order expanded, gathering followers throughout Iran, Syria, and eastern Anatolia, at the same time discarding some of the more orthodox Sufi beliefs and taking on a more Shi'a slant.[8] During this time, also, the Order took a more apparant interest in the mundane and involved itself with politics. It had a number of encounters with the ruling dynasties, and in 906/1501, Isma'il, the leader of the now, Safaviyya Order, and a descendant of Safi al-Din entered Tabriz and proclaimed himself the first ruler of the new Safavid dynasty of Persia. He also claimed that the new state religion was to be Ithna Ashara Shi'a Islam. Within the next ten years, he and his followers conquered and converted all of Persia, from Herat to Baghdad.[9]

Isma'il's successor, Tahmasp (r. 930-984/1524-76) had the onerous duty of turning an essentially military machine into a working administration without losing any of the force necessary to keep at bay the Ottomans to the west and the Ozbegs to the east.[10]

Power struggles between the Turkish military leaders and the Persians appointed to administrative posts plagued more than one Safavi ruler, including Tahmasp and 'Abbas I, his grandson. The system of military power was not only based on ability to lead in battle, but the ability to muster and maintain a certain number of troops, taken from the tribes to which the leader belonged or from the land assigned to him to rule by the Shah. These state lands were ruled almost autonomously, and the setting up by Tahmasp of a central bureaucracy, which was strengthened by 'Abbas, disturbed this system.

Shah 'Abbas took the throne at 17, displacing his father Muhammad Khudabanda. The years between Tahmasp's death and the crowning of Shah 'Abbas (997/1587) had been fraught with constant power struggles among the aristocracy who used the royal family as pawns in their feuds. Once in control, 'Abbas reduced the powers of the Turkish military leaders (Qizilbash[11]) who had been behind much of the trouble, and for his personal body guard formed a regiment of troops from the minorities in the country including Circassians, Armenians and Georgians who had no loyalties to the Qizilbashi.

Not only was 'Abbas an able military leader, spending more than twenty of his forty regnal years successfully warring with one or the other of his neighbors and expanding the Iranian territories, but his

administrative organization continued to operate for a hundred years after his death, to the end of the dynasty.

'Abbas was succeeded by his grandson, Safi (r. 1037-52/1629-42) who took little interest in affairs of state and spent much of his time on his own pleasures. Several of the projects started by 'Abbas were completed in Safi's reign, but the strength of the bureaucracy was no doubt responsible for this.

'Abbas II (r. 1052-77/1642-66) was the only later Safavi who in any way came close to slowing the decline of the dynasty. Though he was somewhat erratic, his administration, for the most part, was sound and just. Several building projects were begun in his reign, such as the additions to the 'Ali Qapu described in Chapter 2, and some repairs to the shrine of the Imam Riza in Meshhed, who was one of the Imams of the Shi'a sect.[12]

For the last fifty-four years of the Safavid dynasty under Sulayman (1077-1105/1666-94) and Husayn (1105-35/1694-1722), the government was in the hands of the harem eunuchs who completed the destruction of the Iranian economy. Finally the Afghans made a rather disorganized attempt at revolt, and succeeded, in 1722, in taking Isfahan. Some of the court fled to the north where they held nominal sway due to the lack of cohesiveness of the Afghan control. After a series of contretemps led by various tribes, the last of the Safavid heirs was removed

from even titular rule by Nadir Shah Qajar in 1148/1735.

In retrospect, it can be seen that the dynasty's collapse was begun by 'Abbas himself. He made two inadvertent changes which, when carried to extreme later, undermined the stability of the dynasty. The first was the change in the education of the heirs to the throne. 'Abbas, perhaps due partly to the knowledge that he had usurped his father's place, had all of his immediate heirs either executed or blinded, leaving only his grandsons to succeed him. He also had his children educated in the harem, a system of control that was continued with disastrous results later. The traditional education of the heir was based on the lala system, under which the prince was installed as titular head of one of the provinces under the care of a lala, who in 'Abbas' case was a Qizilbash officer, who not only ran the provincial administration but also saw to the boy's training in government, leadership, warfare, and in any cultural refinements he may have deemed necessary.

The system adopted after 'Abbas' reign left the children in the care of the women, slaves and eunuchs. The character of the personalities of the last rulers of the dynasty demonstrated the sort of training they received under this care.

The other change 'Abbas made was to shift the control of some of the state lands to the crown or to the

personal control of the Shah, who had them administered by the central bureaucracy. The original reason for this transfer was to pay for the new army 'Abbas organized from the minorities. In subsequent reigns this transference was continued until most of the land was held by the crown and oppressively governed by the bureaucracy, a situation that contributed to the economic breakdown and revolt mentioned earlier.

On the whole, though, 'Abbas' reign was a positive one, the most important factor of which is the energy and personal concern for the country which 'Abbas showed. On his ascension, 'Abbas had found chaos in the government, and threats of annihilation from his neighbors; his own seat on the throne was won by usurpation, and his peers were a threat to his position. On the other hand, as the Safavid heir, he was not only the head of the state but also head of the Ithna Ashara branch of Shi'a Islam, and the head of the Safaviyya Order of Sufis. This made him an absolute monarch in more ways than any of the contemporary European kings.[13] It is not surprising, therefore, to see concrete expressions to all concerned of the strength and might of 'Abbas and his country. One of the media 'Abbas used is the architectural project of the Maydan complex; the symbols expressed there will be discussed in the Conclusion.

'Abbas' organizational and leadership abilities

are seen in even a quick glance at his accomplishments. He not only reconquered all territory lost to the Ozbegs and Ottomans at various times, but he gathered together the structure and implemented the system of centralized bureaucracy which only ceased to function with the complete collapse of the dynasty. In both warfare and government the key to his success seems to have been the eclectic synthesism he applied to his reorganizational programs. This synthesism can also be used to describe the tenor of the whole society.

'Abbas reordered the system of both government and army with an element which the Seljuks and Ottomans had found effective: the introduction of the minorities into the traditional organizations. These people would be completely loyal to the Shah, because there was less pressure from competing family and tribal ties felt by the well-established aristocracy. These minorities were used to offset the power struggles between the Turkish and Persian factions in all sectors of administration. 'Abbas' new government was based on a five man council including the Shah's most intimate advisor who was a Qizilbash officer, two minority officers from different sections of the army, the head of the cavalry who was another Qizilbash, and the head of the bureaucracy, the wazir, who was a Persian.

Within the government 'Abbas also reduced the power of the clergy, who were another potential source of friction, and this helped to continue the secularization of the government which helped the non-Muslims contribute as effectively as 'Abbas demanded. 'Abbas also allowed great religious freedom and even permitted several Roman Catholic Orders to build convents in Isfahan.

While the power of the clergy was reduced, 'Abbas never went so far as to alienate them in any way, and his own personal piety is recorded throughout the History. 'Abbas clearly recognized the advantages accruing to the head of the state religion within the country, and his diplomatic ability is clearly demonstrated in his handling of the various religious representatives who visited court, including the head of Islamic institutions, the Sadr.

'Abbas' foreign policy was as organized as his domestic one. At this time in world history, Europe was expanding its trading potential through the use of long maritime shipping routes. This effectively cut into the land routes established hundreds of years previously which passed through Iran and carried nearly all goods traded between the Orient and the West. Now, the country could be by-passed entirely. To offset this, and to help in his struggles against the Ottomans, 'Abbas encouraged contact with Europe, and the group of non-Muslims who contributed

to the Safavid state was expanded even further by the ambassadors, merchants and travelers who trouped through the capital city to court.

'Abbas gave support to the crafts in his own country, too. To trade these goods, he brought in a group of Armenian Christian merchants with wide international contacts and built the Isfahan suburb of New Julfa for them.

The synthesizing tendency is seen in the intellectual community as well, in a group of philosophers who have become known as the School of Isfahan.[14] They include such court favorites as Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski, and Shaykh-i Baha'i. Each of these men was a master of more than one science, and used this mastery to teach the interrelationship between the parts of the world and the cosmos, the necessity of dealing with both esoteric and exoteric knowledge, and the overriding guidance received from divine gnosis. The character of their philosophy is epitomized in the person of Shaykh Baha'i, or Baha'ad-Din al 'Amili,[15] who was the architect of the Masjid-i-Shah (Chapter 4). He was also a Sufi, a poet, a mathemetician, and an astronomer. He held the post of Shaykh-al-Islam in Isfahan (the supreme religious authority), and was minister of Awqaf (the religious foundations), and was supervisor of affairs pertaining to the religious law in Isfahan.

Shaykh Baha'i's writings include volumes on theology, Arabic grammar, algebra, astronomy, Qur'anic commentary, and Sufi writings in both Arabic and Persian. Until his influence was felt, each science was a separate discipline whose borders were carefully guarded from intrusion, and yet the force of the Shaykh's work and personality was so strong that his writings became the standard references.[16]

In the arts, a slightly different attitude is struck, but here, again, a certain amount of eclecticism is evident. In literature, and poetry specifically, few new ideas were introduced, but the old ones were expressed in new ways, or old styles were revived. Shaykh Baha'i revived the style of Rumi (604-72/ 1207-73), the Seljuk poet. The technical limits of poetry were explored, also, and new extremes of wit, paradox, and exaggeration were found.

The visual arts parallel closely the poetry found at the Safavid court. Refinement of technique was the major emphasis. Although in painting one sees what may first appear to be a new subject, upon closer inspection one finds that only the treatment of it is new. The figure now is abstracted from any narrative, and is set by itself, or with a small group of other figures, in an outdoor setting or in a rather sketchily appointed interior. The artist has selected one object, the figure, with

which to display his mastery of technique, and in Persian painting, technical mastery is the brushwork.

There seems, too, to have been a burst of experimentation with materials which were often outside the realms of the other decorative arts media; some final products were dismal failures, others were extraordinarily successful. In the textile media, including rugs, the technical effects while brilliant, shortened the life of the object, due to the materials employed, such as gold and silver threads which soon wear away. The great success of the age was the clading of buildings with painted glazed tiles, or haft rangi. Even here, though, there was a defect. The bonding agent used did not hold up as long as expected and before the end of the dynasty, many of the tiles had to be reapplied.

C. Technical Data

1. Architecture, General

All of the buildings of this thesis were constructed of brick. With the exception of the Maydan, all curtain walls, or facades, are of fired brick. The inner structure of walls may be one of three types: fired brick, sun dried brick, or rubble.

Stone was used in some foundations, and for some pillars. Marble is used to cover decorative dados, stairs, and built-in benches, called saku.

Wood was used as extra support in inner structures, and for railings and screens. From the analysis carried out for IsMEO by R. Orazi,[17] few of these wooden features are original.

All construction is arch and vault, and the pointed or carinated arch is used in most cases. Domes cover some large spaces, such as the sanctuary of the Masjid-i-Shah. Dome-vaulting is often used in ceilings and is distinguished from the true dome by the fact that the dome-vault does not necessarily extend to the upper surface of the ceiling, and it is often supported at the shoulder by the surrounding structures. A true dome is self-supporting and stands above any other close roofline, whether or not it is set on a drum.

The most distinctive feature of the architecture

is the eyvan used on all of the structures. This feature has been used in Persia since the Parthian dynasty (250 B.C.-A.D. 224), and the most impressive extant early monument is the Sasanian[18] palace at Ctesiphon, Taq-i-Kisra, where the great eyvan measures 23m wide by 28m high, with the long axis measuring 45m. The room thus formed is spanned by a single vault which is open along its profile at one end and closed at the other by a wall. All eyvans are constructed in this manner, whether they are large rooms or shallow porches, although as will be seen, most of the eyvans here have a ceiling of a half dome-vault, which connects the profile of the arch to the back wall.

2. Decorative Spaces

Each structural surface is divided into one or more decorative spaces, each of which may be further divided. Wall surfaces have three major divisions: dado (or foundation), the lower wall, and the upper wall which is the structural connection to the ceiling. These divisions are made more for visual balance than for any structural reason. All dome-vaulted ceilings have their own decorative space, but with carinated vaults the wall decoration may continue to the apex of the vault. Very often the upper and lower wall space will be separated by a band carrying either inscriptions or floral decoration. This band may turn up the soffit of the eyvan arch and continue

to the apex.

The division of the wall decorative spaces is most often into rectangular panels with the long axis vertical. The majority of these panels have an internal division that follows the carinated arch used throughout the buildings whose profile is set into the rectangular panel, with upper spandrels.

These decorative spaces are delineated in four ways. The first is by the use of decorative brick. A header row of the brick is set around each section of the panel. These bricks are plain, glazed with a single color, or are alternated with amil, which are glazed strips of ceramic which are set over the bonding material. The plain or glazed brick may also be cut on the diagonal, as it is in several parts of the Masjid-i-Shah.

The second defining element is indentation, often used with the decorative brick. Many panels are set into the wall by the height of a brick and the internal divisions within the panels are recessed by the space of another brick.

The third manner of definition is the guard band. This element is not only used to separate the panel from the wall, but also to separate different motifs within the design. The guard band is a thin line of single-color paint or glazed material. Some decorative spaces use three of these lines, usually blue and white or turquoise.

In the 'Ali Qapu, brown and black are also used.

The fourth element is the wide decorative border, which is found around larger panel sections and is used to fill narrow running spaces, such as the aforementioned bands between upper and lower wall spaces.

There are two reasons for the appearance of these two border elements. First is the compliance with the traditional designs seen in the other decorative arts, especially rug design. In some Safavid rugs the outer edge may be circled by two or three decorative borders, each, in turn separated by one or more guard bands.

The second reason for the borders is the technical problems set up by the use of the ceramic media. Each panel is made up 'off site' and when installed, must be fitted to the exact dimensions of the architectural panel, the adjustments necessary are made by the addition of the border and one or more lines of the guard band.

The size, shape, and overall placement of the decorative spaces are largely determined by the architectural elements of each structure. Not only is each structural member subtly accented with the decorative spaces thereon, but the human element of the observer is always taken into consideration. For instance, when a wall is divided into several panels, each will be small enough to be easily viewed in its entirety. If a large space is covered with a repeating pattern, the repeat

will be small enough to be recognized without the observer being compelled to move.

Architectural elements are emphasized in many ways. They may be outlined with the border elements, or their three-dimensional qualities may be accented by giving each plane a separate decorative panel. This is especially evident in the complex ceiling constructions, and the transitional areas between wall and ceiling seen in all buildings.

An element of these buildings which can be both architectural and decorative is the muqarnas, or stalactite vaulting found in several places in the three buildings. There are actually two types of this structure, one, which is true muqarnas, is suspended from the brick structure, and is decorative; the other, called katar-kar, is an integral part of the pendentive or squinching of the transition between the wall and ceiling.[19] Without a complete archaeological analysis of each building, it is difficult to tell which is used, and since this is not a thesis related to the structural details of the architecture, all of such elements are called muqarnas. The device, seen in fig. 1, affords the designer many small panels in which to exhibit his facility with the decorative media, and in the three buildings, while the muqarnas is covered with not a wide variety of designs, it is of consistently high quality patterns which fit the

size and shapes of the curving spaces. In the two mosques, the medium used is mosaic faience, and in the 'Ali Qapu, plaster which is pierced and decorated with raised and painted plaster designs is used.

3. Designs

The designs used within the buildings of the thesis are based on those used throughout all the decorative arts of Iran. The spiralling patterns are found in all media, and the tracery designs are seen especially in the textiles of the period. Many panels of decoration are direct copies from those used on rugs.

Much restoration work has been done on all of the decorations of the buildings discussed in the thesis and this work is recognizable by changes in style and color.

In the chapters on the specific buildings the designs will be divided into three themes: Vegetal, Geometric and Figural. The classification of the designs is based either on subject matter or the manner in which the design is composed.

Theme One: Vegetal

Vegetal designs are based, however loosely, on plant life. They are composed in two distinct manners: Type One: Spiralling, and Type Two: Tracery. The

spiralling designs are the most plentiful, all these designs are contained in and designed for the space which they occupy. Tracery designs are closely related to the media of textiles and are set up in repeating sections which may be extended infinitely.

The designs used in the vegetal theme are all based on combinations of vines of two sorts. The first is the arabesque vine which has along its length the arabesque bud, and no other motif, except perhaps, small cartouches at the branchings of the vine. (See the Glossary for definitions of all motifs.) Two variations of the arabesque bud are found in Plate One. This motif is founded on a leaf-like design whose various parts are outlined by the color of the vine to which it is attached. The variation seen in the lower right of the plate is like a bud whose petals are just unfolding, which may give the motif its name. The real flower or leaf from which this design is taken is not known.

A special category of arabesque vine, seen in Plate Two is filled with a floral vine.

The second sort of vine used in these designs is the floral vine, constructed with various palmettes (examples of which may be found in Plates Three and Four), flowers, buds, lanceolate leaves, and leaflettes spaced along the length of the vine. An example of the floral vine is found in Plate Five.

A cartouche, often combined with the vine elements in the designs, is an enclosed element outlined with a line of plain color, an arabesque vine, or a cloud band-like border. Cartouches can be seen in Plate Six, and in Plate Five, the element with the brown ground. Large cartouches often have within themselves another self-contained design, as in both plates already mentioned. All cartouches are bilaterally symmetrical along the vertical axis, and a special category, of which Plate Six is one, called the medallion, has designs which are repeated in each quarter.

Type One: Spiralling. In the basic spiralling design, the vines branch and spiral in an ordered manner across the ground and the design is bilaterally symmetrical along the vertical axis. When the large cartouche is used, the ground color of this element is of a contrasting color.

The two vines, when used together may spiral in counter movements, or they may do so concentrically. The arabesque vine will set up the major rhythm because it is either thicker or of a color of greater contrast to that of the field. Detailed inspection is often necessary to detect the minor counterpoint of the floral vines, and the flowers on them seem to float on the ground with no visible means of support.

It is often impossible to tell where the vines

originate unless a large cartouche is used in the design, in which case, the vines usually issue from the outline of this element.

Variations. In two areas, the spandrel and the dome or dome-vault, the ordering of the spiralling will be more regulated, due, in both cases, to the shape of the space. In the spandrel, an example of which is seen in Plate Seven, the design will originate in the diagonal center of the area, that is the axis set up by the bi-section of the upper ninety degree corner, and the vine(s) will diminish to the oblique angles. In this diminution, the curve of the spiral will become tighter, and the motifs along the vine, smaller. In the case of the dome, the vine will be set up in several vertical sections, and the spirals will diminish toward the center, as seen in Plate Eight.

A third variation of the spiral design, type one, is that used in a linear manner, such as in a border; a simplistic example of this is seen in Plate Nine. The elements of this design are not fully developed into a circular spiral but meander along making only half circles before breaking off and beginning again in the opposite direction. Other borders are much more complex, and may have arabesque and floral vines and various palmettes within them.

The fourth variation is the Shamsa, or sun burst

pattern, seen in fig. 2. Technically, the design is a variation of one using a large central cartouche of a special outline. The whole design is divided into two areas, each with a separate ground color. The outline between is usually a reciprocal of some kind. (A reciprocal is a pattern whose contiguous positive and negative outlines are mirror images of each other.) The designs within the two sections are often slightly different, as has been seen with other designs using cartouches, but both usually use at least one of the vine elements.

The Shamsa is used in almost all of the dome or dome-vault ceilings in the two mosques, and in the original decorations of the entrance of the 'Ali Qapu, but not in its upper floors.

The significance of the design is that it is often related to the symbol of Allah as light wherever it is seen, whether in a ceiling or on some other object.[20] The Qur'anic reference appropriate to the design as seen in ceiling decorations is Sura 24: 35-6. The passage begins: "Allah's light commandeth the heavens and the earth", and continues, "(Such light is also found) In premises which Allah has permitted to be honoured and wherein His name is oft repeated---wherein He is glorified at noon and eventide..."[21] This passage refers to the mosque in which is found most of the Shamsa designs.

Another variation of the spiral designs is also

one to which a symbol is attached. This is the vase motif, which, in actuality is another cartouche. The design is seen in all the buildings, and in prominent places in the two mosques: in the entrance eyvan of both, and on the qibla wall in the sanctuary of the Masjid-i-Shah. The design may be seen in fig. 3. The outline of the vase, composed as any other cartouche, is in the form of a small-footed, wide shouldered vase from which issue the other elements of the design. A.U. Pope, Architecture,[22] associates this motif and the vases carved from the marble foundation of both mosques with the older symbol which he calls the "cosmological tree of many seeds issuing from the vase of the waters of life" which is seen, he says, on Sumerian seals, Achaemenid columns, and in Sasanian carvings (all of these dynasties inhabited the Near East before Islam). He goes on to relate that the triple cable moulding seen in both mosques is a symbol of the living vine; the cable moulding also issues from the vase. This tree of life symbol is actually seen almost universally throughout the world and is commonly used as a symbol of fertility.

The vase may, indeed, be related to this old symbol, but the same cartouche outline used in prayer rugs is associated with the mosque lamp, which is hung before the mihrab niche, and again is related to 'Allah as light. Another part of the Qur'anic passage noted above is: "His light may be likened to the niche which doth enshrine

a torch---a torch enclosed in crystal glass---the crystal glass effulgent as a brilliant star." (S.24:35)

The 1539 Ardabil Carpet (fig. 4) ties all of these symbolic designs together. In the central ground of the carpet, which was made specifically for the Safavid shrine in Ardabil which is also a mosque, is a large Shamsa medallion with a yellow ground; around this medallion are smaller oval cartouches, from two of which are depending vases 'hung' on thin lines representing chains or ropes. From the opposite end of the lamps issue the floral vines which fill the ground of the central field outside the Shamsa. The pivotal object is obviously the vase/lamp, which seems not only to represent a lamp hung from a ceiling Shamsa, but the "tree of life vase" seen in the decorations of mosques.

Type Two: Tracery Designs. These designs use the same motifs as the spiral designs, but they use the composition systems of textiles, with small sections of repeated patterns. Each of these designs could be continued indefinitely. Examples of these designs can be seen in the muqarnas faience of fig. 1 and in Plate Five. Plate Five gives a good representation of the type as a whole, and one can see that the vines in these designs do not in fact spiral, but rather crisscross each other in net or tracery forms. Faience of this sort is found in both mosques, and painted plaster in the 'Ali Qapu. Those

found in the 'Ali Qapu are quite a bit more complex, using various combinations of motifs to make border-like tracery, the lacunae of which are filled with palmettes, cartouches, and vines (see figs. 25-27).

Theme Two: Geometric, including inscriptions

In this theme is seen the manipulation of pure abstract shapes with straight lines, as seen in Plates Ten and Eleven. Inscriptions, both geometric and cursive are included in this theme because Kufic script, which is in itself geometric, is found in many of the decorative spaces covered with geometric designs. The designs themselves are in all cases made of glazed brick cut into the geometric shapes and pieced together.

Monumental inscriptions are found on the two mosques in large numbers, and play a large part in the decorative scheme of the two buildings. The content of the inscriptions is religious in nature, for the most part, but unfortunately, the text has not been translated into a western language. The text, however, is published in Ganjinah-i Athar-i Tarikhi-ye Isfahān, (A Treasure of the Historical Monuments of Isfahan), by L. Hunarfar.[23] The content of these inscriptions must await proper translation and study, and the final work on the symbolic interpretation of the decorative plans of the mosques will have to include this material. The other inscriptions, found in all three buildings, are of a mundane nature, recording the

date and some dedicatory phrases relating to either the building as a whole or to the part on which the inscription is found. These dedicatory panels are one of the best sources of dated material for the buildings and their subsequent repairs. Each date can be interpreted in several ways, though. It can be the year in which the building or repair was commissioned, or the date it was finished; it can also be the date the decorative material was designed or the year in which it was put in place. In some cases, as in that of the Shaykh Lotfollah sanctuary decorations, it may be assumed that the dates are those of the completion of the installation of the decorative ceramic, for the sequence follows that used by the workers as they fitted the faience, removing the marks of the scaffolding as they worked down from the apex of the dome to the floor. All the dedicatory inscriptions may be found in the article "Isfahān", by A. Godard in Āthār-e Īrān.[24]

The monumental cursive inscriptions are all of white faience on blue ground, and the script is thuluth which was developed for just such monumental use. These cursive inscriptions were often designed by the foremost calligraphers of the day, and some of those in the mosques are signed by these men.

Kufic script was used very early in Islamic history and has continued to be used in conjunction with the geometric decorations, or when a particular visual

clarity is needed.

Theme Three: Figural

These designs are naturalistic representations of either animals or people. The occurrence of these designs is limited to the 'Ali Qapu, with one exception in the Masjid-i-Shah discussed in Chapter Four. Although there is no proscription of figural representations mentioned in the Qur'an, they are not used in mosques. This attitude developed in the early years of Islam and, with few exceptions, has continued throughout its history. T. Burckhardt, in Sacred Art in East and West,[25] gives two reasons for this:

> One is negative, namely, that of eliminating a presence which might set itself up against the Presence---albeit invisible---of God, and which might in addition become a source of error because of the imperfection of all symbols; the other and positive purpose is that of affirming the transcendence of God, since the Divine Essence cannot be compared with anything whatsoever.

O. Grabar, in The Formation of Islamic Art,[26] discusses a variety of early Islamic evidence and reaches a somewhat more prosaic conclusion:

> The conclusion that emerges, then, is twofold: there was indeed a consciousness in the ways that early Islamic art reached its avoidance of representations, and this consciousness was less the result of some a priori doctrine than of a response to the formal vocabulary available to the Muslims.

and:

> To conclude then we might say that under

> the impact of the Christian world of the time, Islam sought official visual symbols of itself but could not develop representational ones because of the particular nature of images in the contemporary world. Precise historical circumstances, not ideology or some sort of mystical ethnic character, led to the Muslim attitude.

Whatever the initial reasons, the decorations in the religious buildings continued to be abstract or derived from plant life.

The figural representations found in the 'Ali Qapu follow quite closely those found in other media. The birds and animals depicted are in the same style as those in manuscripts and decorated objects. The figures are in the same style, too, as those done by the famous artists of the day. As mentioned in the history section, above, the style was changing and the figures are now seen in garden settings, completely divorced from any narrative. The figure itself had become the subject.

One other motif which appears in all the buildings and is outside the categories above, is the cloud-band. This motif was introduced into Persian art from China and became very popular in all the decorative arts. It is especially well handled in ninth/fifteenth century mosaic faience architectural decorations. The motif can be seen in figs. 35 and 47.

D. Decorative Media

1. Ceramic (or Faience)

It must be realized that in the three divisions within the ceramic media of decoration, the designs are executed by three different crafts: brick by bricklayers; mosaic faience by tile setters; and polychrome tiles (or haft rangi) by tile painters. Thus, the first two crafts are essentially masonry, while the other is closer to ceramic art.

Single color glazed tile or brick

The decoration is produced in two ways: after the clay body is shaped and dried, it is, 1) glazed and fired, or 2) bisque fired, glazed and refired. If the first method is used, the glaze must be able to withstand the higher temperatures of bisque firing. In the second process, which is also used to make the large blocks from which the mosaic faience pieces are cut, each glaze can be fired at the temperature proper to produce the best color from each glaze.[27]

Glazed masonry, the oldest of the three types, was used as early as the Near Eastern culture of Warka, c. 3300 B.C., and is suited primarily for geometric designs although it is used on the surfaces of domes which have curvilinear designs where the eye must fuse the sections of straight lines into the rhythms of the curves.

Mosaic faience

After the large blocks are produced as in process 2 above, they are cut into the shapes needed for the pattern. The pieces are fitted together in sections and bonded from the back with plaster; mosaic faience panels can be seen in fig. 1. A small adz-like tool is used to cut and shape each piece of mosaic.

Mosaic faience has its roots in the glazed cut brick of the sixth/twelfth century seen on such monuments as the Minar-i 'Ali, Isfahan, 529-50/1131-55, and in the tomb at Maragha, 542/1147.[28] These structures have turquoise inscriptions and some simple vegetal designs. It was not long thereafter that multicolor and fitted pieces appeared, and by the eighth/fourteenth century, on the tomb of Oljeitu, 707-13/1307-13, at Sultaniya, mosaic faience was found in light and dark blue in both geometric and curvilinear designs. In the ninth/fifteenth century monument built by Gawhar Shad, at Meshhed, 821/1418, geometric and floral designs are highly defined (see fig. 54).

In the tenth/ sixteenth century, under the Safavids, mosaic faience is used less often, due perhaps to the slowness of its production. Godard, in Art of Iran[29] cites an instance of one multipetaled flower element which took at least a day to make.

Polychrome or haft rangi (seven colors) tiles

In this method, the smaller square tiles of clay are moulded, dried, and fired. Thin lines of manganese, which turns brown/black in firing, are used to outline the design. The various glaze colors are then filled in, and the whole tile is refired (see fig. 5). The designs used on these tiles are limited to the technical capabilities of the glazes and the complexity of the design must take into account the liquidity of the glaze as it is fired.

Although glazed tiles were found at Samarra which date to the mid-third/ninth century, most of the early tiles used in Islam date to the seventh/thirteenth century. Some were found at Sava with a date of 676/1277, and others of lustreware with raised calligraphy can be found which date from 626-733/1229-1333.[30] Compact spiral florals and meanders appear in these tiles, and both geometric and cursive calligraphy.

Two-color painted tiles appear at Samarkand in the ninth/fifteenth century on the Shah Zinda monument which are star shapes of light and dark blue filled with floral patterns.[31] Also in the early ninth/fifteenth century (820-40/1417-37) Gawhar Shad built her musalla at Herat, and on the dome of the tomb are other painted tiles at the base of the flutes, on which appear highly stylized Kufic, and florals. Some of these tiles are not flat, but curve around the ribs of the dome.[32] There are few tiles extant from the rest of the ninth/fifteenth and

the tenth/sixteenth centuries, but with architecture in the time of Shah 'Abbas, the painted tile becomes the most widely used form of colored decoration.

2. Paint

Paint, usually water based, is used as the most significant decorative media of the 'Ali Qapu. Its resistance to weather is slight, and it is not often used on the exterior surfaces of buildings, although remnants of murals have been recently uncovered in the entrance eyvan of the Qaysariya Bazaar portal.[33]

E. Sims, who is working on the problem of mural painting in the Safavid era, states that the designs are executed by one group or craft, "whether they are doing florals, animals or figures",[34] and that there is a consistency of style which is close to that seen in manuscript paintings.

3. Plaster

Decorative plaster is one of the older media used in Islam, and in the Safavid buildings, here, the tradition is revived in the sixth floor of the 'Ali Qapu. The plaster was applied in two steps, the first is the flat wall surface to which the second, or decorative element is added. This second thick layer is then cut away to the underneath layer leaving raised areas in the forms of

floral designs, as seen in fig. 6. These floral designs follow those used in all other decorative areas discussed in the thesis. The designs are then either gilded or painted in various colors.

4. Stone and Brick

Decorative brick appearing in the buildings has been discussed in the preceding section under Decorative Spaces. Panels of another decorative form of brick were found in the restoration of the 'Ali Qapu and are described in Chapter Two.

Stone has been mentioned also, but the decorative qualities of the use of marble have not. The projecting corners of walls of the two mosques, which have marble dados, are carved in the shapes of vases.

5. Wood

The railings and screens mentioned above are fashioned into geometric patterns. Those seen in the visual material in the thesis are reproductions based on the few original remains; some such fragments were found in the 'Ali Qapu during the course of restoration.

6. Glass

Glass, in various colors, was set into plaster frames, and put into the window openings. A very few

pieces were recovered from the 'Ali Qapu, but not enough to reconstruct the original. See Chapter Two.

E. Color

The color of the decorations provides one of the strongest impacts on the viewer. The color schemes of each building set up the prevailing atmosphere of that particular space. The symbolic significance of color has been discussed in various publications with indifferent success. All are of modern date and since there is no evidence contemporary with the objects discussed, the conclusions are purely speculative.[35] The only color with a traditionally recognized association is green, which is the color of the Prophet Muhammad.

The two different color schemes are seen in the buildings of the thesis, one is seen in spaces covered with ceramic decoration, and the other is that found in the 'Ali Qapu where the surfaces are painted.

1. Ceramic

The two dimensional motifs used in the ceramic decorations are of high intensity spectrum colors of dark lapis lazuli blue (cobalt base glaze), yellow (lead), turquoise (copper), emerald green (copper), yellow/gold (lead), and white (tin); tints of blue and green (iron); plus earth tones of red/brown (manganese/lead), and black (manganese).

The field or ground color of the panels of ceramic decoration is most often dark blue, with a few

panels in white, yellow and turquoise. Glazed masonry with geometric designs has a limited range of colors including turquoise, white, and blue or black, with accents of yellow and red/brown. The ground color is most often turquoise.

The designs of glazed ceramic, due to their color scheme, are defined within a very shallow visual space. In almost all other compositions where there are large areas of blue, such as landscapes with sky, the blue will visually recede into or 'behind' the surface of the medium and leave quite a deep optical space in which to place other parts of the design, especially if the colors of those other parts are aggressive ones like yellow or white which have an opposite visual effect from blue, and advance toward the observer. In the ceramic designs, though, the brightness of the colors cancels most of the aggression/ recession phenomena and leaves the colors settled on much the same visual plane. That is not to say, however, that there is no interaction of the colors, quite the opposite is in fact the case. It is much more tiring for the eye to look at intense high contrast designs, than it is those which have colors of less intensity and which are all of the same hue, such as those seen in the 'Ali Qapu (see below). In fact, when the eyes become fatigued with the bombardment of intense color, the images received by the brain begin to shimmer. This phenomenon happens when

looking at the designs of ceramic, and gives them an incidental motion. This motion is very intrusive if one is inhabiting such a space for any length of time.

2. Paint

The second color scheme is that pertaining to the areas decorated with paint, whether used in monochrome, as the gilt plaster decorations in some parts of the sixth floor of the 'Ali Qapu, or in polychrome as in other areas of the building. This scheme is based on a wide range of earth tones including browns, red/browns, black, and Paynes Grey.[36] Other colors used are white, and tints of blue and green. Most of the designs are set on tan plaster which has a unifying influence because it is a tint of the earth color, brown. A few panels have painted-in ground colors of red/brown, or grey. In some panels, especially those with figures, an attempt has been made to show three-dimensionality with the use of shading.

Due to the factors above, the impact of the designs, while immediate, is much less aggressive than those using the media of ceramic.

FOOTNOTES

[1] A. Godard, Art of Iran, (New York, 1965); and "Iṣfahān", in Āthār-é Īrān, (Paris, 1937) hereafter: Godard, "Isfahan"; U. Pope, Persian Architecture, (New York, 1965) hereafter: Pope, Architecture; and with P. Ackerman, Survey of Persian Art, (Tokyo, 1964) hereafter: Pope and Ackerman, Survey. Other important sources of descriptions of the buildings are: J. Hoag, Islamic Architecture, (New York, 1977); D. Wilber, Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions, (Rutland, 1962); H. Stierlin, Ispahan, (Geneve, 1976); N. Ardalan and L. Bakhtiar, Sense of Unity, (Chicago, 1973) hereafter: Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity; and perhaps the most important is the work done by the Italian Institute for Middle and Extreme Orient (IsMEO) who have carried out the survey and restoration work on all the buildings in the Maydan area. Their preliminary report is published as: G. Zander, ed., Travaux de Restauration de Monuments Historiques en Iran, (Rome, 1968) hereafter: Zander, Travaux; the final report on the work done on 'Ali Qapu is: E. Galdieri, Eṣfahān: 'Alī Qāpū, (Rome, 1979) hereafter: Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu.

[2] The system of transliteration I have adopted is that used in Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World, A. Welch. I have chosen this system for clarity and ease of reading, knowing that Islamic scholars will be able to recognize any transliterations.

[3] Throughout the thesis, two dates will be given: first is that used in the Islamic world, the Hegira date, or that which begins in A.D. 622, the first year of the 'Islamic era'. These dates are computed on a lunar calendar. The second date is that of the usual western Christian era.

[4] P. Holt, A. Lambton, and B. Lewis, eds., Cambridge History of Islam, (London, 1970), Part III, 5; p. 394ff.

[5] Eskandar Beg Monshi, History of Shah 'Abbas, (Tarik-e Alamara-ye'Abbasi), (Boulder, 1978). Hereafter: Eskandar, History.

[6] Eskandar, History, p. 525.

[7] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu.

[8] The Sufis are the mystic branch of Islam, and the Shi'as are the second major division within Islam after Sunnis which have a slightly different view of some of the major dogmatic decrees. For explanation of this and other aspects of Islam, see: Gibb, H., Mohammedanism, (London, 1949).

[9] These two cities, now in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, had at various times belonged to Iran.

[10] Both of these dynasties were Sunni. Each had been warring with Iran for many years.

[11] Qizilbash means 'red head', and was applied to the followers of Isma'il because of the red head gear that they adopted. It later came to mean the Turkish elements of the Safavid hierarchy.

[12] The Imam Riza was the eighth of the Shi'a Imams who died 203/818.

[13] For explanation of the power base of the Safavid dynasty, see: Savory: "The Safavid State and Polity", Studies on Isfahan, v. 1 (of 2), (New York, 1974), pp. 179-212. The two volumes are hereafter referred to by author, article and Studies on Isfahan.

[14] Nasr, S., "The School of Isfahan", in History of Muslim Philosophy, v. 2, (Wiesbaden, 1966), p. 904ff.

[15] Listed in the History, p. 247, as Shaikh Baha al-Din Mohammad. See also, History, pp. 247-9; 1189-90.

[16] Ibid, p. 1189-90. The Shaykh was so popular that at his death many men of all classes vied with each other for the honor of acting as pall bearers and at the funeral the Naqs-e Jahan Square was so full that men were pressed tightly against one another and the pall bearers had difficulty making progress against the crowd.

[17] R. Orazi, Wooden Gratings in Safavid Architecture, (Rome, 1976).

[18] Sasanian dynasty: c. 226-641 A.D.

[19] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 62-64.

[20] A. Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World, (Austin, 1979), p. 194, refers to a Shamsa design used in the colophon of a manuscript.

[21] Qur'an, trans. by Amir-Ali, H., (Rutland, 1974).

[22] Pope, Architecture, p. 136.

[23] Hunarfar: (Esfahan, 1965).

[24] Godard, "Isfahan".

[25] T. Burckhardt, Sacred Art in East and West, (London, 1967), p. 101.

[26] O. Grabar, The Formation of Islamic Art, (New Haven, 1973), p. 75-103. Quotations are from pp. 93, and 98-99.

[27] The kilns used were fired with wood, and were notoriously difficult to handle, as can be seen by studying any number of examples of pottery or tiles. This can be seen in fig. 5.

[28] Godard, Art of Iran, p. 299, for the Minar-i 'Ali; p. 230 for the tomb at Maragha.

[29] Ibid., p. 318-319, and fig. 227.

[30] D. Wilber, The Architecture of Islamic Iran, (New York, 1955), p. 113, for the shrine at Sava of the Imam Sayyid Ishaq.

Pope, Architecture, p. 165, and Plate XV following p. 132.

[31] W. Blunt, The Golden Road to Samarkand, (New York, 1973), p. 141.

[32] Pope, Architecture, Plate XVIII, which, unfortunately has been inaccurately labelled.

[33] I have not been able to find pictorial evidence of them or any dates for their execution, so they have been eliminated from the discussion of the portal found in Chapter One.

[34] Taken from personal correspondence with Dr. Sims.

[35] For examples of such speculation see: Ardalan, N., "Color in Safavid Architecture: The Poetic Diffusion of Light", Studies on Isfahan, pp. 287-293; and Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity.

[36] Paynes Grey is a color which, when diluted, becomes a blue-grey.

CHAPTER ONE

ISFAHAN, THE PALACE AND THE MAYDAN.

A. The City

The city of Isfahan has a recorded history which begins with the 'Abbasid Revolution, 132/750.[1] Islam came to the area a hundred years earlier, but the indigenous population, in several small villages, changed little. After the 'Abbasids claimed the area, they set up a mosque in a little settled area between two of the larger towns, and in 156/772-3, began another mosque at the site of what today is the old Masjid-i-Jami, or Friday Mosque, in the northeast section of the city. The area grew, and most of the villages were incorporated into the larger complex.

In the Buyid era (334-416/945-1025) part of the city was walled, at the center of which was the Masjid-i-Jami, and a citadel was built to the southeast (almost directly to the east of the Maydan). The Buyids also enlarged the Masjid-i-Jami, built other mosques, large residences, and the Madreseh, or Islamic school, of Ibn Sina.

The Seljuks (416-653/1025-1256) enlarged the city and one of the Shahs, Tugril Beg (429-55/1038-63), used it as his capital.

With the Mongol invasion (653/1256), the city reverted to a rather minor trading city, but it remained intact as other cities under Mongol domination did not.

The Safavids (907-1135/1501-1722), including Shah 'Abbas before 1006/1597-8, used the city as a place of recreation, although it was also a provincial seat, and had a fortress which was razed in 999/1590-1.[2]

The city has a river, the Zayanda, which flows in all but the most severe droughts. Ground water is also available. The river had, at various times, been diverted to the towns and villages in the area through canals, and part of the plan of Shah 'Abbas used new canals for the same purpose. The banks of the river had been the site for palaces and gardens, as they were under Shah 'Abbas. It must be remembered that the river was not a transportation route, so none of the economic community had settled their businesses there.

The plan for the 'new' city may have included the whole of the area as seen in plan 1, taken from a description by the Italian traveler Pietro Delle Valle, but that part which is still recognizable today is the half of the Chahar Bagh north of the river, and the space between it and the Maydan. This section is seen in plan 2. A description of the plan of Shah 'Abbas is given in the History:

> The Shah spent the winter of 1006/1597-8 at Isfahan, residing at the Naqs-e Jahan palace and spending most of his days in hunting and his nights in feasting. In the spring of 1007/1598, he approved plans for the construction of magnificent buildings in the Naqs-e Jahan district, and architects and engineers strived to complete

them. From the Darb-e Dowlat, which is the name for the city gate located within the North precincts, he constructed an avenue to the Zayanda-rud. Four parks were laid out on each side of the avenue, and fine buildings adorned each. The avenue was continued across the river as far as the mountains bounding Isfahan to the south. The emirs and officers of state were charged with the creation of the parks and the construction of lodges on a royal scale within the parks, each to consist of reception rooms, covered ways, porticos, balconies, finely adorned belvederes, and murals in gold and lapis luzli.

At the southern end of the avenue, there was to be a vast garden, terraced on nine levels, for the pleasures of the king's guests; it was to be known as the 'Abbasabad garden. The river was to be spanned by a bridge of special design: it was to have forty arches and, when the river was in spate, water would flow through all of them. The southern and northern portions of the avenue met at this bridge, and the total length of the avenue, as far as the 'Abbasabad, was one farsak. On each side of the avenue, water flowed through channels, and the trees were planted along them---planes, pines, and junipers. A stone conduit was also constructed down the center of the avenue to form another channel for water. In front of the buildings in the parks, ponds were to be constructed of the size of small lakes.

The emirs, nobles, and superintendents of buildings put the architects and engineers to work, and many magnificent buildings, and splendid gardens, have been completed in the last eighteen years, the whole scheme being the product of the Shah's fertile imagination. The gardens were planted with both shade and fruit trees, and the buildings were decorated with novel designs in gilt and embelished with the works of artists. Perhaps Sadir and Kavarnaq were their equal; otherwise it is hard to imagine that their peer exists anywhere in the world. Later on, the suburb of 'Abbasabad was built to the west of the Chahar Bag to afford lodging to the Tabrizis, as will be related in due course. Shah 'Abbas spent many hours beautifying Isfahan with buildings, parks, attractive residences with porticos and belvederes, the Qeysariya and Chahar Bazar markets,

> mosques, bathhouses, and the magnificent Mesr-e Jame caravanserais. The chronogram for the commencement of work on the Chahar Bag is: 'The sapling bore fruit in accordance with the Shah's wishes.'[3]

From this description it can be seen that there was some sort of palace in the area already, possibly in the garden of the Chihil Sutun, which would account for its being laid out in a different manner from the others. There is no way of knowing what kinds of structures were extant at the time, but archaeological work seems to indicate that there were no large permanent structures in the area of the Maydan, at least.[4]

From the description and the plans, it will be noticed that the plan is along two axes, the Chahar Bagh, and the Zayanda-rud, which organize the city space into square units. On plan 1, the city is laid out with one zone only for the native population of Isfahan, the other three are for minorities brought in by war or imported by the Shah for his own purposes.[5]

In plan 2, the palace precincts take up the space of the two northerly gardens on the east side of the Chahar Bagh and all the space between it and the Maydan. An interesting point obvious on plan 2 is that the Chahar Bagh and the Maydan do not have the same axial directions. This has become a hotly debated point with Islamic scholars, as no one really knows why it was done. There is, on one hand, no reason to have the axes the same, just

as there is no reason not to have them alike, except that the symmetry of the city plan is disrupted thereby. One contributing factor to the placement of the Maydan axis may be that the qibla is within a few seconds of being 135°SW of the north/south axis. The fact that the angle is so precise argues that the directions were not accidental.

It will also be noticed that the Maydan is not mentioned in the description of the plan in the History, which leaves unanswered the question of whether Shah'Abbas laid out the Maydan originally, or just formalized an already established market place with a wall, bazaar and shops, which are mentioned.[6]

B. The Palace

The Safavid Shahs had used Isfahan as a hunting retreat for a number of years. Shah 'Abbas spent many winters in the city before 1006/1597-8, and a palace is mentioned in the History in 998/1589-90. A 'new palace' is mentioned and called Naqs-e Jahan in the year 1005/1596-7.[7]

This generally locates the palace in the vicinity mentioned above. What the details of the structures are though will never be known, for even most of the plan that he laid out later has disappeared. The best description of the palace precinct is that by Chardin, the French jeweler, who reached the city in 1078/1667 during the reign of 'Abbas II. Plan 2 is taken from this description.

The palace is a rather amorphous grouping of buildings including baths, workshops, kitchens, living quarters, and various pavilions set in gardens. Each area has its separate structures which, from the plan, can be seen to be at some distance one from another. This would seem to specialize each area's function and yet little is known about the Shah's private use of any. One can presume that a certain structure was set aside for sleeping and the interaction of the various members of the Shah's family and household, but beyond that, all is speculation.

Unlike the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1138-69/1628-58), whose daily ritual was recorded by his biographer,[8]

Shah 'Abbas schedule is unknown so that no reconstruction can be made from it of the various structures that he was likely to inhabit over a given period of time. The functions of one of these buildings, the 'Ali Qapu, will be studied in Chapter Two.

3. The Maydan

The Maydan wall was begun in the first phase of the plan for the city, and subsequent additions were made later.[9] It is quite unlikely that more than a little of the projecting upper course of the wall is original, as the construction is of sun dried brick. The wall was originally of one story, with the shops of the bazaar along the back of the internal corridor, as seen in plan 5. The carinated arched niches, each 6m across, could as now have been either open between the Maydan and the corridor or fitted with windows and doors.

The second phase of construction of the wall was about the same time as the second phase of the construction of the 'Ali Qapu (see Chapter Two). This, as seen in plan 6 added the second story, and extended the niches into the Maydan. The description of the structure in the History is: "...rows of shops flanking the Maydan, with apartments over".[10] Whether these "apartments" are just rooms or, rather, living spaces, is not mentioned. This second phase must have been completed by 1025/1616, for the description of it was finished then.[11]

The mean dimensions of the Maydan are: 524.02m x 158.85m; the Square is not an exact rectangle. Plan 3 shows all the dimensions and also the relative positions of the four portals. The average width of the wall, including the internal bazaar is 15.5 m. The alignment

of the long axis of the Maydan is $11^{o}25'$ north-northwest.

An outline of the whole Maydan is found in plan 4 as it appeared in 1969. The four portals, one on each side, seen in detail in plans 9, 10, 11, 12, are the entrances to the four 'Abbas building complexes of the Qaysariya Bazaar (N), 'Ali Qapu (W), the Masjid-i-Shah (S) which was not begun until 1021/1611, and the Shaykh Lotfollah (E). In the eleventh/seventeenth century there were few if any other large passages through the wall.

Due partly to the lack of decoration, and partly to the paucity of published information, the Bazaar and its portal will be discussed below, rather than in a separate chapter, as are given to the other three buildings.

The three story Bazaar portal arch, seen in figs. 9-10, stands 21m high and is 11m wide, cross section and plan are seen in plans 7-8. The portal spandrels are decorated with mosaic faience, seen in fig. 10, set in a pattern of a pair of centaurs shooting over their shoulders at a dragon-headed creature with a snakelike body. The restoration of the spandrel shown in fig. 10, is poorly done, and the figures are confusing, so that it seems that the body of the dragon is part of the tail of the centaur, which should not be the case. Godard, in "Isfahan" says that the figures represented Sagittarius, under which constellation the city of Isfahan was 'born', and a large serpent.[12]

At the top of the portal is a room in which music was played at sunrise and sunset when the Shah was in residence. In Studies on Isfahan, A. Bakhtiar describes this as a Zoroastrian custom which survived the Islamic takeover.[13]

The two chamfered walls are much like those of the portal of the Masjid-i-Shah, with a balcony, and an arched door below. The side walls have carinated doors which lead to the peripheral bazaar of the Maydan wall.

Directly behind the portal, as seen in fig. 11, (looking south to the entrance portal) are six bays of the internal bazaar corridor, and the entrance vault for the royal caravansarai which is to the west, or right side of the picture. Each bay has a dome vault ceiling pierced by an oculus at its center allowing light into the space. To the east of the portal is the entrance to the royal mint, which can be seen in plan 4.

The geometric decoration of the ceiling of the foreground space in fig. 11, is likely not of the 'Abbas era, but the spandrels are in a style typical of the period. Few of the spaces of the internal bazaar are decorated, with the noted exceptions, and the exterior of the peripheral Maydan bazaar has only the upper balcony ceiling panels outlined.

Within the spaces of these bazaars, and the temporary markets set up within the Maydan itself, was

carried on all the business of the city. Aside from this, there were coffee houses, mosques, baths, and brothels within the bazaars. Thomas Herbert gives a description of the area and of the activities of the Shah therein:

> The North aisle of the Maydan hath eight or nine arched rooms, usually hung with lamps and latten candlesticks, which being lighted (as 'tis usual, especially at the Festival of Lights, which they call Ceraghan) give a curious splendour. Thither the Potshaw and others frequently resort for pastime, as tumbling, sleight-of-hand, dancing girls, and painted catamites (that nefandum peccatum being there tolerated). At the furthest end North is the mint, where we saw one day silver coined, gold the second, and next day brass. Not far thence are cooks'-shops, where men use to feed the helpful belly, after the busy eye and painful feet have sufficiently laboured.[14]

A. Bakhtiar, in Studies on Isfahan, sums up the bazaar portal: "The Qaysariyah is an impressive structure, as befits a side of the Maydan, but it is more simple and direct than the principal features on the other sides, indicating the essentially business and commercial nature of the bazaar itself."[15]

Thus, by its impressive structure and the restraint of its decoration, the bazaar declares its nature, not only as a structure of the Shah 'Abbas plan, but also as a pragmatic example of functioning architecture.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Golombek, L., "Urban Patterns in Pre-Safavid Isfahan", Studies on Isfahan, p. 18ff, for a comprehensive early history of the city.

[2] Eskandar, History, p. 612. The citadel was used not only to defend the city, but to hold important prisoners, including the Shah's father and brothers.

[3] Ibid., p. 724-5.

[4] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 8. Trenches were sunk in the Maydan, Bazaar, and around 'Ali Qapu, and no traces of earlier buildings were found.

[5] See Introduction; New Julfa was settled by Armenian Christians who took active part in the commercial life of the city and country.

[6] Eskandar, History, p. 536.

[7] Ibid.: palace, p. 602; 'new palace', p. 698; Naqs-e Jahan, p. 706.

[8] B. Saksena, History of Shahjahan of Dihli, (Allahabad, 1962).

[9] Galdieri, E., "Two Building Phases of the Time of Shah 'Abbas I in the Maydan-i Shah of Isfahan", in East and West, v. XX, n. 1-2, pp. 60-69.

[10] Eskandar, History, p. 536.

[11] Ibid., p. xxiv.

[12] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 121.

[13] Bakhtiar, A., "The Royal Bazaar of Isfahan", Studies on Isfahan, p. 320.

[14] T. Herbert, Travels in Persia, (New York, 1972), p. 128-9. Herbert was secretary to the English expedition led by Dodmore Cotton, which reached the city in 1037/1627.

[15] Bakhtiar, "Bazaar", Studies on Isfahan, p. 321.

CHAPTER TWO

'ALI QAPU

A. General Description

In the west wall of the Maydan, slightly south of the center, is the 'Ali Qapu, or high gate (see fig. 12). The structure was originally the gateway from the palace precincts to the Naqs-e-Jahan Square and evolved into a major public building for the Safavid court. This evolution, in five phases, spans the years from approximately 1037/1598 to 1075/1664. The specific dates for the building and all its constructional phases are indeterminable, and speculation on this subject can be found in Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu.[1]

Through the complete structural analysis and restoration of the building, the physical extent of each of the phases of construction has been determined by the IsMEO team. It was found that the building that Shah 'Abbas used is that part which is behind (to the west of) the wall of the Maydan and was constructed in three phases. (In all plans, this building will have shaded structural walls.) The forebuilding with its distinctive porch roof was built much later, as described in the history section below.

The original structure of two stories, the gateway, was an integral part of the first phase of Maydan

building.[2] The facade (see plans 13 and 14 and the conceptual reconstruction in plan 15) closely resembled that of the Shaykh Lotfollah Mosque across the square, and many of the decorative details remained under the subsequent alterations, as can be seen in figs. 21, 22. Galdieri speculates that the central atrium may have been covered by a dome, thus increasing the similarity to the mosque, opposite, but there is no remaining evidence for this theory, due to subsequent construction.[3]

From the plans (13, 14) one can see that the two floors are structurally alike, consisting of four rather small corner rooms (numbered 1-8): each of 1-6 measure 3.3m square, and 7 and 8 measure 2.8 x 4.1m.[4] These rooms connect with the central cross eyvans, each measuring 4.5 x 4.8m, on the north and south. The rooms of the east side on the second floor (7, 8) also lead to shallow balconies which overlook the Maydan. The front and back doors on the east and west complete the four sides on the first floor and are reflected in the second story by balconies. The central space is the two story atrium, 7.8m square (fig. 13). The second floor is reached by two spiral stairways on the west wall, one beginning just inside the west door, and one on the outer wall.[5] The stairs are illustrated in fig. 30.

The ground floor corner rooms are undecorated and dimly lighted, and thus are assumed to be storerooms,

but the second floor rooms have fireplaces and are decorated with painted plaster, thus rendering them habitable in Galdieri's estimation.[6]

The distinguishing features of this first phase of construction are the heavy support walls and the utilitarian nature of the whole. The only highly decorated area is the central atrium which would have been seen by anyone passing through the gate.

The second phase of the building was begun within a few years of the completion of the first phase and was one which elevated not only the structure but also the function of the building. It now became a reception center and a place in which to view the activities of the Maydan. There is even some evidence to support the supposition that Shah 'Abbas used the building as his royal palace in Isfahan.[7] This subject will be further discussed in section B: History.

The probable appearance of the facade during this second phase is seen in plan 19 and the layout of the rooms in plans 16-18. The third floor of the building (first of phase two) has the central or main hall, measuring 7 x 10m, with east and west balconies, seen in figs. 14 and 25. Doors on the north and south walls of the hall open into the other rooms of the floor (9-14). These paired rooms have the following measurements: 9-10, 3.3 x 4m; 11-12, 4.1 x 4m; 13-14, 2.8 x 4.1 m. They are small

but exhibit the same elaborate vaulting and decoration of the main hall as can be seen in comparing fig. 14 with figs. 20 and 27. The evidence of the doors which lead to the central side rooms, 11, 12, indicates that these rooms, at least, were used as anterooms to the hall. The configuration of the side rooms is quite similar to the rooms on the floor below.

The fourth floor plan is considerably different from those below it (see plan 17). The central space is the upper part of the main hall, and triangular windows, seen in fig. 14, 25, look into it from rooms 17, 18. The six side rooms have the following dimensions: 15,16, 4.5 x 7m; 17, 18, 3 x 4.2m; 19, 20, 3 x 5m; the balconies off rooms 17, 18 measure 2.5 x 5m, and the west central balcony measures 4 x 3m. The central eastern space is the upper part of the third floor balcony. Each side room is well lighted and has a fireplace. These rooms could have been the quarters to which Figueroa, the Spanish Ambassador[8] referred in his diary as the 'Women's quarters'.

The fifth floor, plan 17, is a strange space, seen in fig. 28, tucked between the supports for the central hall two floors below and the vaulting of the fourth floor ceilings. As seen in plan 18, it consists of five small rooms, each measuring 2.5 x 3m, and long connecting corridors that are only 1m wide. Galdieri speculates that it was only a 'set piece' of architectural

frivolity, for though finely decorated, the rooms are low ceilinged and poorly lit.[9]

The consistent features of this phase of construction are an elaboration of decorative features, a lighter atmosphere due to a multitude of windows and doors, and more complexity of the support members. This last feature is seen in fig. 14 in the upper wall of the main hall on floor three, where the structural elements bordering the triangular windows are actually the lower part of 'fork-like' ribs which support the ceiling vault.[10]

The third phase, completed ca. 1022-25/1614-17, is the last of the Shah 'Abbas era. This phase, consisting of the sixth floor of the building, shows little in common with the rest of the building, for it is a series of interconnected spaces, the lower walls of which are no more than groups of pillars between which were hung doors. The floor as a whole allows a much more free-flowing traffic pattern. The plan (20) shows a cross-shaped central room which has a square turret raised above the level of the common roof, pierced by five grilled windows on each side, seen in fig. 16. Plan 21 shows a conceptual rendering of the Maydan facade as it appeared at the end of the third phase of building.

Floor six is bilaterally symmetrical on the east-west axis, with pairs of rooms on the east front, 28, 29, measuring 2.9 x 3m, and 26, 27, which measure 3 x 4.9m.

The former pair has a shallow balcony looking out on the Maydan. Another balcony on the same wall connects with the east wall of the eyvan which forms the east cross-member of the central room. The pair of rooms in the center of the north and south walls, 30, 31, measure 4.2 x 6.4m. The third pair of rooms, 32, 33, exhibit their own small balconies which overlook the palace precincts; these rooms measure 3 x 6.3m. Centrally located on the western wall is another room, 34, measuring 4 x 3.3m, which, when compared with its counterpart on the east, points up the fact that the 'central' room is indeed shifted to the east of the north-south axis by more than a meter. The two small rooms, 35, 36, which measure 1.8 x 5m, are also support spaces for two other rooms tucked above, which may have been musicians' galleries. These upper rooms open onto the central room by way of the eyvans to which they are contiguous.

Each of the rooms of the upper floor, the central one of which has always been called the 'Music Room',[11] is elaborately decorated with plaster muqarnas, hung from the structural ceiling. This muqarnas is painted and pierced with outlines of bottles and flasks. The lower wall space of the rooms was once decorated with small panel paintings, most of which are now lost. They may have been quite like the decorations of the musicians' galleries, an example of which can be seen in fig. 29.

Similar figural decorations were also on the lower walls of floors 3-4 (phase two).

The 'Ali Qapu has the only visible exterior facades of the buildings studied, except for entrance portals, and the decoration thereon, though integral with the interior, is dictated by the articulation of the exterior architectural members. The result of this, as seen in plans 10, 11, 12 is a pleasant, though repetitious, combination of arched spaces broken into grilled rectangles and carinated windows. Plan 10, the west facade, is closest to the original of the four. All of the decorative tile work, due to its stylistic characteristics, is undoubtedly of a date later than the architecture.

B. History

In part A three phases of construction were discussed. Two others took place after 1037/1629, when Shah 'Abbas died, and there were many subsequent restorations. These five phases of construction may be seen in the conjectural models in fig. 32.

The specific dates for each of the first three phases of building cannot be determined, but in 1022/1614, Figueroa, the Spanish Ambassador (in Persia, 1022-24/1614-16), wrote a description of the building in which he mentioned what is clearly the top floor. Another description of the building is given by the Italian traveler Pierto Delle Valle, who said that the building was unfinished in 1025/1617.[12] A reception given by Shah 'Abbas for Vali Muhammad Khan, the ruler of Transoxania and Turkestan, in 1019/1611, is described by Eskandar Monshi as taking place in the private apartments of the Shah. At this festival, the "usual recreations" of the Shah were provided for his guest; these were "watching polo, archery competitions, and fireworks displays in the Naqs-e Jahan Square"[13]. From this report it would seem that the 'Ali Qapu was by then being used as a reception center, although throughout the History, the building is never referred to by a separate name, but rather is described as part of the Naqs-e Jahan Palace, which one takes to include the whole of the palace precincts to the west side of the Maydan

between the Square and the Chahar Bagh, as seen in the map of the Maydan area, plan 2.

Also at this same reception, it is said that "Dexterous musicians and melodious singers banished care from all hearts, and beautiful girls from Iraq and Khorasan delighted the guests by their dancing"[14]. No mention is made, however, whether these entertainments took place in a special room, such as the Music Room of the sixth floor.

The IsMEO investigations have led Galdieri to state that the original structure (that is, phase one) was an integral part of the Maydan project and that it was undoubtedly begun at the turn of the century.[15] The initial concept of the guard post seems likely to have been retained until the whole of the Maydan was defined, or at least through the first few years of the century. The second phase and its change of function for the structure could only have happened when it was realized that the activities of the Maydan, such as those mentioned above, were to play an important part in the court life of 'Abbas' capital city, and an adequate viewing spot was needed.

The third phase is a logical extension of these plans, when it is considered within the context of the other projects carried out within the years 1019-21/ 1611-13, which included the inception of the Mashid-i-Shah,

the partial rebuilding of the Imam Riza shrine at Meshhed, and the construction of the winter palace at Asraf.[16] Since Isfahan was the capital of the country, it would naturally need the most elaborately decorative architecture, and the sixth floor of the 'Ali Qapu is nothing if not decorative. The impression left on visitors to this capital city bears out the worth of these projects. The Italians compared the city's Maydan to the piazza in front of St. Mark's in Venice, and Herbert compares the square to the market places of the Royal Exchange in London and the Place-Royal of Paris. Of the city he says it is not inferior to the greatest of any throughout the Orient.[17]

The structure of Shah 'Abbas remained unchanged until the early years of the reign of Shah 'Abbas II (1052-77/1642-67), when in 1057/1647, the fourth phase of construction added the forebuilding with its large balcony, or talar, which intrudes into the space of the Maydan. This structure (on the east side in plans 13-15) contains several large rooms on two levels, and the floor of the talar has a pool which is served by the water tower on the north built at the same time. The importance of this balcony space can be assumed to have been great, for a large stairway was also built to this level on the south side.

The last phase of construction took place before 1075/1664, when Tavernier, a commercial traveller from

Antwerp,[18] describes the building much as it looks today. This last phase added the roof over the talar, and the south stairway was redone.[19]

Damage to the building was done in several earthquakes, and Shah Sultan Husayn (1105-35/1694-1722) rebuilt the talar east facade with geometric decoration on plaster. Most of the repairs were of a cosmetic nature and did little to repair structural damages, although some of the architrave beams of the Music Room were replaced at one time.

Inscriptions on the entrances of the building refer to Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar (1261-1308/1848-1894), who had decorative work done in 1270/1857. The building was subsequently converted to offices, and many of the original spaces were altered for that purpose.[20] The governor of Isfahan, brother to the Qajar Shah Muzaffar al-Din (1310-1311/1896-1907), used the building as a private dwelling. It was thereafter used for various activities, and its structure deteriorated. Between 1958-62, some measures were taken to decrease the movements of the building by installing ties and beams. The IsMEO team began its work in 1964, and has restored the building to the way it looked after the completion of phase five work.

C. Decorative Plan

1. General

The decorative spaces of the 'Ali Qapu follow the architectural styles of the three phases of the construction. The first two floors have very little of their original decoration extant, but some designs can be reconstructed from the fragments uncovered in IsMEO restoration work. The original entrance eyvan, plan 15, had its complete interior covered with painted plaster in a combination of rather heavy gold and red vegetal designs as seen in figs. 21, 22, and 34. The second floor balconies (which correspond to the upper vertical rectangular spaces on the facade plan) had similar designs. The other decorative elements are found in the four square panels divided into "rotating sun" designs executed in brick and amil in blue.[21]

There is no decoration in the ground floor otherwise, except for the atrium which is more in the style of the second phase of construction. The second floor is, however, fully decorated.[22] There are a few decorative details on the facades of the lower floors, such as tiled spandrels, but it is not known if these are original, and they will thus be excluded from the discussion of design motifs.

The second phase of construction, floors 3-5,

is decorated throughout in a style which is on one hand less heavy and on the other more assertive and diverse than the first phase plan. The whole of the second phase carefully follows the architectural members, as seen in figs. 14, 15, 19, 20, and 25-28, using both guard bands and wide border elements to emphasize the decorative panels and the three dimensional aspects of the architecture. The designs of this phase are not only the usual vegetal spiral motifs, but there is also a large group of infinitely extendible designs like those used in textiles. Two types of figural designs are also included, one incorporated into the vegetal designs which uses birds and animals in what can only be called "partial" landscapes, for although there are trees and flowers present, they and the animals use a ground line based either on the lower border element or on one of the larger cartouche motifs; this can be seen in figs. 35 and 36.

The other figural designs are closer to those used in miniature paintings and are of human figures set in stylized naturalistic landscapes, as in fig. 29. These panels are all on lower wall surfaces and are in a very fragmentary form.

Phase three decoration returns to purely spiral vegetal motifs on the upper sections of the walls and on the ceiling. The designs are done in raised plaster which is gilded and painted, and the ceilings are completely

covered with suspended muqarnas vaulting which has been incised with outlines of flasks and bottles. There is speculation that these openings were used to hold the Shah's collection of Chinese ceramics, which he later gave to the shrine at Meshhed, and behind some of the openings are shelves for such objects, but there is no real substantive evidence for this speculation.[23] The muqarnas is also treated with the raised plaster designs. The lower wall space of the sixth floor also had human figure groups, but they have suffered the same fate as those of the lower floors.

The upper wall spaces of all the decorated floors are in fairly good condition, due in part to the natural division of the wall space into two horizontal sections by the use of an architrave panel placed just above the internal doors. Thus the lower walls which would receive the most wear could be redecorated independently of the upper reaches.

In analyzing the phase two rooms, I determined that there are at least three hands at work, though all use the same style. Each room seems to have been done by one hand entirely, except for the main hall. Two different hands may be seen by comparing room 20, fig. 19 with room 12, fig. 20. The execution of the various motifs such as the flowers exhibit the distinguishing characteristics of each. The hand in room 20 also appears in the main hall

ceiling, along with possibly one other.

Within the course of the restoration work done on the sixth floor by IsMEO, fragments of stucco and colored glass were found, but not enough pieces were recovered to determine whether many of the windows had been glazed with such materials. Galdieri speculates that it is possible that the upper windows in the turret of the Music Room may have been treated in this fashion. Stained glass windows were described by Delle Valle.[24]

Figueroa also mentions that gilt shutters (gelosia) were used in the building.[25]

2. Themes, Patterns, and Special Motifs

The variety of designs in the 'Ali Qapu is large. Both vegetal and figural designs appear, but geometric and calligraphic ones are very limited.

The majority of the interior decorations are done with paint on plaster, either on the flat of the wall or on raised and carved plaster decoration.

The colors used in the interior are earth tones of several tones of brown, both sienna and umber, black, Paynes Grey, white, light green and light blue; the painted panels are most often on tan ground, but some have grey or red/brown.

Theme One: Vegetal

Type One: Spiral. The original phase one decorations of the entrance eyvan are of this type. Those in the ceiling of the eyvan are found in figs. 21 and 22, and are dense designs of heavy floral vines on a light ground issuing from dark cartouches filled with other vines. The whole is surrounded by a reciprocal treble guard band fitted to the decorative space. Outside the guard bands, the ground is dark and traces of other vines and flowers can be seen. A central star-like cartouche can also be seen at the top left of fig. 22. The vertical panel from the entrance facade (fig. 34) differs from the ceiling only in that the colors of the vines and ground are reversed; the style is the same.

The designs of the sixth floor (phase three) are in a similar style, but the elements are not as heavy. As seen in figs. 16-18, 24, 39, 40, and especially 23, which shows the colors of the designs, the style of the floor is noticeable for its uniformity and the fineness of the details of both panels and borders.

The cartouches used in conjunction with the animal figure panels are combinations of arabesque vines with cloud bands and palmettes, as seen in figs. 33, 35, and 37, and point up the extraordinary detail used throughout the building: the cartouches in the above figures are all less than a meter across and are from 7-9 meters above

the floor.

Most of the borders are the usual meanders of vines circling various palmette motifs. There are exceptions, though, which will be discussed in the next type.

Type Two: Tracery. The majority of the rooms in the phase two area are decorated with designs of this type; examples can be seen in figs. 14, 15, 19, 20, 25-28, and 38. The largest variety of these designs found together in one room is in the main hall where squinches and central panel of the ceiling, the six rectangular panels and two of the carinated niche panels of the upper wall exhibit such patterns. Notice the complexity with which the tracery 'compartments' are delineated. Fig. 20 has other examples of this complex composition.

The borders exhibiting these designs are seen in fig. 38, right edge, on the rib of the vault, and in fig. 19 on the rib in the lower right. That in fig. 19 is an interesting combination of cloud bands enclosing a field darker than the general ground on which are large lotus palmettes.

Theme Two: Geometric

As mentioned, there are few geometric patterns used, except those executed in brick in the first phase facades. An example of such a design can be seen in figs. 41 and 42 with the rotating sun pattern. Another of these

brick patterns is found on the same facade (east) in the second phase; both of these panels were covered by later building.

The fragments of grills found in the restoration process were in geometric designs. A window grill reproduced from the originals can be seen in fig. 40.

Script. All the monumental inscriptions have been published and translated in 'Ali Qapu, pp. 151-59. None of them dates before the restorations done by Sultan Husayn sometime after 1113/1697.

Theme Three: Figural

Animal. Two types of animal scenes appear in the building. The first is of birds, as seen in the ceiling panels of the main hall, figs. 14, 25, and in details figs. 33, 35, 37. Many types of birds are used, both song birds and waterfowl including nightingale, stork, and duck.

The second type, seen in figs. 19, 20, 38 and in detail, fig. 36, has a combination of birds and mammals. The detail gives the general layout of all of the panels available: on the left is a wolf, and to the right are three cloven-hooved animals which seem to be a deer, an antelope, and one other with curving horns which may be another antelope. Around them are flowers and above the wolf is a bird-filled tree. This scenario is in most of the side rooms of the third and fourth floors in the

squinch panels, in mirrored pairs with a vase-like cartouche filled with flowering vines as the central motif. Three variations of this composition are seen in figs. 19 and 38. Note the cartouche above the 'vase' in fig. 19, which has a pair of long-tailed birds, either pheasant or phoenix which are also the only residents of the trees. The scene in the squinch of fig. 20 is slightly different, emphasizing the tree rather than another element. One can easily see that the scale of the paintings remains the same throughout the building, and by comparing the four examples one can determine that the composition is set by the size and shape of the panel.

The combining of the abstract vegetal motifs and these naturalistic animals is unusual; if the two are together, as they are in some manuscript paintings, they very seldom interact with each other, as they do here, especially as in fig. 35 where the stork is actually standing <u>on</u> the cartouche.[26]

Human. The figural scenes including humans must, unfortunately, be represented by one example, fig. 29, for the others are either lost or are in very fragmentary form. All except the example shown and one or two others were in panels on lower wall spaces. Fig. 29 is in the small galleries, ostensibly for musicians, of the sixth floor Music Room.

The fragments that survive indicate that all of the compositions are much the same as that in fig. 29. E. Grube, in "Wall Paintings in the Seventeenth Century Monuments of Isfahan", Studies on Isfahan, mentions that in the main hall there are several persons in what seem to him to be erotic poses: "Couples sitting in each other's laps or in close embrace immediately recall the erotic paintings of Riza-i-'Abbasi who, if not the creator of these wall-paintings, undoubtedly furnished the models for them."[27] Grube also mentions the well-preserved group in the galleries, including fig. 29, and says that there are reclining figures of a man, a lady, and several standing figures, all in landscapes. He defines all the paintings: "They are all in repose, relaxed, in leisurely non-activities: The perfect image of a class so well-known from the large number of album paintings of the later sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries."[28]

Figural compositions were often placed in the back wall of niches such as that seen in fig. 20, center-right. This placement would act as a frame and separate them from the overall tapestry of the wall space. The effect of the rooms of the 'Ali Qapu is of a series of faceted jewel boxes lined with brocade textiles. In the same article in Studies on Isfahan, Grube sums of the decorative plans of three similar buildings: the 'Ali Qapu, and the Chihil Sutun and Hast Behest, two pavilions:

But in spite of this subdivision of the potential pictorial area of large wall surfaces into small units, painting clearly emerges as the main element of architectural decoration in these three buildings. It is not employed only in specific areas or for specific subjects but literally covers the entire interior surface of the buildings, and most of the exterior recessed areas such as the talars and ivans in a tight continuous pattern. In this sense painting becomes truly the interpretive agent of tectonic values, emphasizing the arches of vault, the central circular elements of cupolas, the divisions between wall and vault spaces. Painting defines and interprets architecture but it also envelops it. In this it repeats the effect, and is employed in the same way, as the decorative tilework of the mosques and the madresahs of the city, where above a marble or alabaster dado the entire wall surface up to the apex of the vaults and domes is covered in a continuous succession of panels and bands, culminating in the 'bursting sun' of the domes.[29]

D. Decoration and Function

Documentation about the public use of the 'Ali Qapu is substantial, and almost all the travelers have some description of the receptions held there. The problem, as usual, is that these descriptions are, at best, repetitious, and vague and give none of the more mundane uses, if any, to which the building was put. The structure was obviously a place of public reception, but other than Figueroa's residence within, and his reference to the use by the court ladies of the rooms on floor 4, one must guess at the activities of the rooms. Personal items like furniture and the braziers which supplied heat were portable, so no clue remains about the habitability of the spaces.

The Shah and his court, rather like earlier European rulers, pursued an annual migratory route about the country, securing the frontiers, dispensing justice, and seeing to public works projects. The major forms of recreation were hunting, games of polo, and the aforementioned receptions. The ambulatory nature of this body was also due, in part, to inadequacies in the economic system which made it impossible, except in large cities, to feed a stationary group of people which numbered several hundred who not only were 'non productive' but expected the utmost in luxury and service.

From the History, one can detect another reason for the annual migration: the climate. The court usually returned to Isfahan in the fall and often spent the winter and spring there, moving to another place in the summer heat. In the later years of Shah 'Abbas' reign, winter quarters were often at Asraf, and fall and/or spring was spent at Isfahan. The machinery of the central administration of the country, however, stayed at Isfahan, and there are several references to this bureaucratic presence in the History.[30] It is possible that some administrative work was carried on in the building, but Galdieri deems it unlikely that parts of the building were, in fact, offices.[31] With what, then, are we left? The building is a series of highly decorated amorphous rooms, perhaps largely uninhabited, except by the occasional transient important personage, or used by the court to receive foreign guests, hold large public receptions, or view the many spectacles held in the Maydan. In short, it is a piece of court architecture, and we may never be able to be more specific as to its uses.

This conclusion can be seen in several architectonic ways. First, as Galdieri mentions, there is a decided trend toward refinement in the structural members of the upper floors. The brick and plaster "curve with great docility, almost touching the limits of resistence of such poor and delicate materials."[32] This

refinement does not happen in the first phase of construction, floors 1-2, which is solidly based on the traditional ideas of support: the walls are almost too thick, and the spaces are rather ponderous. However, when the second and third phases of the building are analyzed, the change is considerable. The middle floors, 3-5, have a much lighter feel, the rooms are free-flowing, interconnecting spaces, with much light and more articulation of wall and ceiling details. When one reaches the top floor, with the Music Room, the walls almost disappear, and the real architectural ceiling is covered with the fantasy of the muqarnas.

The decorations of the building follow this trend toward lightness and fantasy. Grube, in his article in Studies on Isfahan, says that the figural works are like framed paintings placed on a wall already covered with floral patterns.[33]

Further support of the court aspects of the building is found in the figural decorations and their adherence to the traditions established by the miniature painting of the period. Grube, in the same article, says: "In other words, these figurative paintings not only correspond in general iconography and style, as is obvious from even a superficial comparison, to the manuscript and album paintings of the seventeenth century, but they are identical in their fundamental form and, one may safely assume, in their principal function and meaning."[34] He

defines this function as one "...that visualized the political and cultural aspirations of the ruling house of the time."[35] Thus the function of the rooms is defined by its decorations: the leisurely taking of pleasure, drinking wine with friends, genteel conversation, and perhaps a little flirtation.

The non-figural decorations follow that outlined by the figures since they faithfully use the patterns of the textiles and rugs made for the court and thus mirror and support the feeling of luxury and the richness of life found within this milieu. Even the animal scenes remind one of another pursuit of this aristocracy, the hunt, which was the favorite sport.

When one considers the activities taking place in the Maydan, it can easily be seen that the strategic position of the 'Ali Qapu almost necessitated its additions and change in function from a guard gate to a place for viewing the games of polo, the reviews of the troops, and their feats of horsemanship and skill in shooting and swordsmanship; all of these aspects of court life encourage the skills necessary to support the 'political aspirations' of the ruling class.

The deeper meanings behind the architecture and its decoration are harder to see but merely extend the statements made above. It is well known that in pre-Islamic Iran and throughout the Near East, the activities

of the court were illustrated on the buildings erected by the rulers. In Mesopotamia, the palace of Asuranasirpal II, at Nimrud, in Iraq, (c. 875 B.C.), has scenes of battle, rituals, and hunting; and Persepolis, in southern Iran, the ritual city of the Achaemenids (561-330 B.C.) has on its walls processional figures.[36] These scenes are not for the edification of the populace, but rather, are positive reinforcement of the State through the depicted activities. This is done not just for the edification of the rest of the court (and visitors), but for the continual reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the ruler's actions.

In the reign of Shah 'Abbas, the hunt was still partly a show of the power and strength of the ruler, rather than a mere sport, and even the activities outside in the Maydan showed to the spectators the wonder and might of the dynasty. So, too, were the receptions inside the 'Ali Qapu a show of the wealth and power of the monarchy, and not just relaxations, although they were certainly that, and often degenerated into carouses. The staging provided by the decorations of the 'Ali Qapu subtly accented these nonverbal communications of the underlying meanings of the various activities. The quality and variety of these decorations, incorporating the finest examples of both figural and nonfigural designs, also point out the advantages of living in or trading with this society.

Thus, by its architecture, decorations, and location, the 'Ali Qapu is found to be a piece of court architecture used as a center for both leisurely and active participation in the life of the court of Shah 'Abbas.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, pp. 38-40.

[2] Ibid., p. 38.

[3] Ibid., p. 14-15.

[4] Zander, Travaux. See fig. 18, p. 164, an architect's drawing of one of the ground floor rooms.

[5] These stairways, which Delle Valle mentions, play an important role in functional determinations, for they are narrow, steep, and in the first phase, had no windows; Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 14, supposes that they were designed for use only by the guards. They were, however, continued up through the building, and used until phase four construction after Shah 'Abbas' death.

[6] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 13-14.

[7] Eskandar, History. On pp. 1045-6, Monshi relates that a banquet was held "in the Shah's own apartments". This certainly can be taken to mean that the Shah was closely associated with these rooms but does not indicate permanent habitation of them; one could say, however, that part of his residence was, indeed, the 'Ali Qapu, which will be further discussed in parts B and D.

[8] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 38, note 1. The travelogue of Figueroa was unavailable to me; this small excerpt has much perinent information.

[9] Ibid., p. 17. He discusses the functioning of this floor. See also, Zander, Travaux, fig. 17, p. 163, for cross sectional drawings of the rooms.

[10] Ibid., p. 58-60. He discusses the structural members of the building.

[11] Ibid., p. 20. In the discussion of this room it is noted that, in fact, it has perfect acoustics.

[12] Ibid., p. 38; and Herbert, Travels in Persia, p. 128. In 1628-9, Herbert also says that "the building" does not obtrude into the street, but it is not entirely clear to which building in the palace he is referring.

[13] Eskandar, History, p. 1045-6.

[14] Ibid., p. 1045.

[15] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 38.

[16] Eskandar, History, pp. 1059-66; a recounting of most of the projects begun during these years.

[17] Herbert, Travels in Persia, pp. 126-7.

[18] Stevens, Sir Roger, "European Visitors to the Safavid Court", Studies on Isfahan. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, (p. 124) and all the other travelers vital to an understanding of the record of this period are listed and discussed.

[19] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, gives details of the construction phases in chapter one.

[20] Ibid., p. 37.

[21] Ibid., p. 12, note 3. Similar designs are found in the southeast and northwest eyvan facades of the MIS courtyard. See fig. 4, chapter on Masjid-i-Shah.

[22] This decoration is noted in 'Ali Qapu, p. 13, but no other description is given nor any pictorial evidence. I have been unable to discover anything further about them.

[23] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 19, note 2, discusses the pierced muqarnas decoration.

[24] Ibid., p. 50. The fragments were lost so that it has not been possible to reconstruct the windows.

[25] Ibid., p. 38, note 1.

[26] The cartouche in fig. 35 is the '  ' shaped one seen in the ceiling of fig. 14.

[27] Grube, Studies on Isfahan, p. 516.

[28] Ibid., p. 516.

[29] Ibid., p. 518.

[30] Eskandar, History; for example, p. 952.

[31] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 3, note 1.

[32] Ibid., p. 6, note 1.

[33] Grube, Studies on Isfahan, p. 515.

[34] Ibid., p. 517.

[35] Ibid., p. 517.

[36] F. Krefter, Persepolis Rekonstruktionen, (Berlin, 1971) and R. Barnett, Assyrian Palace Reliefs, (London, 1960).

CHAPTER THREE

SHAYKH LOTFOLLAH MOSQUE

A. General Description

On the east side of the Maydan is the Shaykh Lotfollah Mosque,[1] a mosque of the 'kiosk' type, consisting of only a domed prayer hall.[2] The building has five external sides, three of which follow the internal alignment to the qibla, as seen in plan 25, the main floor; the other two follow the Maydan alignment. The structure has three floors, one below ground (plan 26); the sanctuary chamber is common to the two upper floors, and the drum and dome of the sanctuary project above the roofline.

The entrance portal recess, seen in fig. 43, measuring 18m wide by 10.5m deep by 14.5m high, is squarely indented into the Maydan wall and mirrors the original portal of the 'Ali Qapu on the opposite side of the Maydan.[3] The back wall of the recess is just behind the doors to the internal corridor of the Maydan; above these doors are second story balconies.[4]

The facade of the entrance eyvan is an integral part of the portal recess and has no minars.

The eyvan niche, surrounded by a turquoise cable moulding, seen in fig. 44, is 8.5m x 4m x 14.5m high, and has six rows of muqarnas squinching in the ceiling. Two inscriptions identify the structure as a mosque. The

dedicatory panel above the screened window in the upper wall, and the band which separates the upper and lower wall spaces, are both seen in fig. 44.

The entrance door, 1.75m above the floor of the Maydan, opens into a vaulted triangular vestibule which realigns the visitor to the internal structure. In the south wall of the vestibule is the entrance door to a stairway to the lower floor (marked 'A' on plan 25). The main corridor of the building begins to the northeast and is a series of faceted dome-vaulted bays, 3-4m square, supported by transverse carinated arches crossing the hallway which spring from engaged columns. From the vestibule, the floor of the hallway slowly rises .5m to the level of the sanctuary floor, and along its length, through various breaks in the walls, the hall connects the divergent parts of the structure.

The first break in the hallway is that on the southeast wall in the first bay which is a screened 'window', 'G' on plan 25, into the sanctuary, 1.5m x 3m (the space is at floor level in the sanctuary, as seen in fig. 45, and is large enough to have originally been another entrance to this chamber). The hall is next broken on the northwest wall of the third bay by a door to the anteroom, 'B', which leads to the auxiliary prayer chamber, 'E', and to the side door, 'H'. In the corner bay, the wall is pierced by the door to the upper floor, 'C',

and a double window, 'G', the upper section of which curves into the ceiling squinch. Another screened double window cuts the wall in the bay before the entrance to the sanctuary, and at the end of the hallway, to the east, is another auxiliary prayer chamber, 'E', with a double window.

All of the piercings of the hallway are of different sizes and proportions and display a randomness which indicates that some of them were added after the original design was established.

The auxiliary prayer chambers, the designation of which is due to the appearance of a mihrab in each, are 5m square, and have dome-vaulted ceilings. Each has the wall space extended by some means on each wall, either by simple carinated arched niches, or by more elaborate means, as with the northwest wall of the northwest chamber, where the niche extension is chamfered and has a faceted ceiling.

The sanctuary chamber is 19m square, and has simple squinches in the corners of the walls which not only transfer the drum of the dome to the walls but make up four of the eight large decorative wall panels in the chamber above the dado. These eight panels with carinated tops are outlined by turquoise cable moulding and wide bands of inscriptions, as seen in fig. 45, which emphasize the verticality of the two story decorative spaces. Small panels fill in between the points of the eight large panels and help shift the circle of the drum to the square formed

by the walls.

In the sanctuary, the panel above the entrance door is pierced by an arched opening which begins 8m from the floor and connects the sanctuary chamber to the hallway of the upper floor (see plan 27; a similar opening cuts through the outer wall of the upper hallway at this point which allows a filtered light to enter the sanctuary). Smaller windows appear in the upper sections of each of the other wall panels (but not in the corner sections), two of which can be seen in fig. 45; on the right, the window above the screened opening to the lower hall opens to the upper corridor, also.

The drum exhibits sixteen screened windows and a single shell dome caps the room.

The mihrab, the total space of which equals the size of the entrance door, is 2m x 1m x 7m and has three rows of muqarnas squinching in the exedra.

The lower floor, plan 26, is reached by three stairways, the main one of which (marked 'A' on plans 25 and 26) has already been mentioned as beginning just off the main floor vestibule. This stair leads to two successive anterooms, 'N', 'O', on plan 26, and then to the major hall which is directly below the main sanctuary and has the same dimensions in plan. A second stairway, 'J' leads directly to the hall from outside the southwest wall, and is reached only through a covered hall, 'K' on plan 25,

which seems to have no other function and no other connections with the main part of the building.[5] The third stair, 'L', leads from the north wall, just to the west of the side door, to a vaulted hallway and another small room. This hallway may give access to the main chamber, but the two openings are only slightly over .5m in width, much narrower than any other space used for passage in the building. The hallway does, however, lead to another doorway on the southeast wall.

The main chamber of the lower floor, called a shabistan or winter prayer hall by Ferrante,[6] directly under the main sanctuary, is 19m square and approximately 3m high.[7] The cross vaulted ceiling is supported on four octagonal pillars and twelve engaged columns, outlined in in plan 26; the walls have indented panels in each bay. The major entrance on the northwest wall is from the two auxiliary rooms and the stairway from the vestibule above.

The three small auxiliary rooms to the north and west of the shabistan are regular rectangles; the first room, 'N', measures 7.5m x 3.5m and has a high grilled window on the west wall, the outside of which can be seen in fig. 44 in the lower right next to the steps. The second, 'O', measures 7 x 4.5m with chamfered corners and a faceted vault ceiling. A small grill connects with the floor of the hallway above and provides the only light. The third room, 'P', measures 3m x 8m; the east end is

chamfered and has a small niche in it; the ceiling is vaulted with two supporting transverse arches.

The upper floor, plan 27, is similar in configuration to the main floor with a long connecting hallway, 'R', and the central chamber common to the first and second floors. The stairway from the main floor, 'C', leads into a small anteroom, 'Q', and into the hallway, seen in fig. 46, which is constructed in the same manner as the main corridor below. Two auxiliary prayer chambers, 'S', are repeated as on the main floor with the exceptions that, in the northwestern chamber, the chamfered niche is slightly larger, the entrance is through two doors to the hallway, and a door pierces the 'mihrab niche' giving access to a series of small rooms, 'U', which overlook the entry recess.

An octagonal room 'T', at the southwest end of the hallway has a series of niches in its walls, one of which is the screened window above the entry door, seen in fig. 44. The tiled space, 'W', seen in fig. 47, is the connecting space to the sanctuary chamber discussed above. This area seems to have the only polychrome decoration in the upper floor.

B. History

Four dates are available from the fabric of the building:

1011/1602-3	Decoration of the facade of the portal
1012/1603-4	Inscription band of the portal
1025/1616	Decoration of the interior of the dome of the sanctuary
1028/1618-9	Decoration of the Mihrab

Other dates:

(1032/1622-3	Death of the Shaykh Lotfollah Meysi)
1930s	Restoration work
1954-6	Restoration work

In the History,[8] Eskandar Monshi mentions the building and that it was a part of the plan devised by Shah 'Abbas for his city. In the winter of 1006/1597-8, the Shah spent much time in implementing the plans. The structures of the Maydan were begun either that year or in the beginning of the next; thus the Shaykh Lotfollah was begun sometime in the year of 1001/1598. The next date, 1011/1602-3, is the date given in the dedication panel which was installed with the tiling of the portal. The lower floor must have been done by this time, and some of the first floor walls, but as it is not known in what sequence this or any other buildings were constructed and

decorated, the structure may have been considerably advanced. It is interesting to note that there is a year's difference between the dates on the portal, and this information gives some indication as to the time needed to assemble and install the mosaic faience used here.

The next two dates, 1025/1616, and 1028/1618-9, confirm this because, in order to cover the scaffolding marks, the interior of the sanctuary would have been decorated from the top of the dome, down. The former date is on the inscription band of the drum, the latter, in the mihrab which indicates that more than three years were needed to complete this room (the dome itself would have been clad with its decoration before the drum decorations were emplaced.)

The next date is that of the death of the Shaykh Lotfollah Meysi. This man served under Shah Tahmasp and became known for his abilities in jurisprudence and theology. He was attached to the shrine at Meshhed during the first part of 'Abbas' reign and with the troubles with the Ozbegs which actually began before 'Abbas was crowned, in 996/1587, the Shaykh moved to the court at Qazvin. From Qazvin he was sent to Isfahan where he settled near the mosque (this move was made presumably after the mosque was begun, for the building is used to describe the area of his residence.) He thereafter was

appointed as Imam (prayer leader) of the mosque and continued there until his death. The notes in the History say that he lived in the mosque and lectured on jurisprudence and Hadith and "continued to give instruction in the religious sciences, to examine theological problems, and to carry out his duties as prayer leader. His opinion on theological problems carried great weight."[9] All of this gives us the only indication that the mosque was used for some purpose beyond the widely quoted but rather shaky supposition that it was the personal prayer hall of the Shah.

It is quite possible that restoration work has been done on the building throughout its history, but the only recorded instances are those within this century, the first in the early Thirties (see fig. 51), when the revetment of the portal was removed, and the second in the Fifties when extensive work was carried out.

C. Decorative Plan

1. General Description

The decorative plan of the Shaykh Lotfollah is one predominantly of the vegetal theme, almost equally divided between types one and two. There are no figural designs, and the geometric designs cover only the exterior drum of the dome and the dado of the hallway, both replaced. The other important part of the decorative plan is the inscriptions.

The decorative spaces are contiguous and accented in the same manner as the Masjid-i-Shah, with guard bands, borders, recessed panels, and brick, both unglazed and in yellow and blue.

Glazed masonry is used on the exterior of the drum and dome, in the spiral cable mouldings of the portal and sanctuary, and in the interior of the dome. Mosaic faience is on the upper portal eyvan, the interior of the dome and drum, in the small transitional squinches between the walls and drum, on the large corner squinches and on the mihrab niche of the sanctuary, and on the balcony. Haft rangi tiles are on the lower wall panels of the portal, on the main floor hallway, the flat wall panels of the sanctuary, and the dados of all spaces.

There is no decoration in the upper or lower floor except that noted, and in the shabistan on a 'plinth'

which is mentioned in Zander, Travaux, but neither explained nor described.[10]

2. Themes, Patterns and Special Motifs

Due to the variations within each media, the descriptions of each theme will be further divided in this way. The tiles of the hallway and the dados will be excluded, because of their uncertain dates.

Theme One: Vegetal

Type One: Spiral. Mosaic Faience. The portal upper wall is mosaic, as seen in fig. 49 and the majority of the panels have the various combinations of arabesque and floral vine scrollwork picked out in blues, tan, white, black and red/gold. Several panels, as those on the flat of the wall in the lower row in fig. 49 have the vase cartouche issuing floral vines.

In the sanctuary, the mihrab has panels similar to those of the portal; there is a vase panel in the lower center of the upper section.

Mosaic is seen in the triangular and lozenge-shaped squinch panels of the transitional space between the walls and the drum. The lozenge-shaped panels contain concentrically spiralling white arabesque vines and turquoise floral with small white flowers and red/gold buds, amidst which are lozenge-shaped plaques of Kufic-style script. The smaller panels have two floral vines,

one of red/gold with palmettes and lanceolate leaves of red/gold and white, and the other of turquoise with white flowers, all of which can be seen in fig. 50.

The drum has panels of spiralling arabesque and floral vines with large ogival cartouches in turquoise, filled with white vines, alternating with spiralling 'filled' arabesque window grills (also seen on the outer drum in fig. 7).

The interior of the dome is a combination of diminishing ogival panels filled with both types of vegetals, and a central Shamsa, with a design very similar to that used in the larger of the panels of the transitional space. The two parts of the dome design are separated by a reciprocal trefoil.

The balcony, except for the domed ceiling has arabesque and floral vines on a ground of either buff or dark blue.

Haft Rangi. Polychrome tiles are in the four panels of the lower wall of the portal. The back wall has two panels with a simulated prayer rug with a vase issuing floral vines in the central part, as seen in fig. 44. In the sanctuary, the four flat panels of the walls have spiral designs on them, in mirrored pairs, 'BB' and 'CC', on plan 25. The panel on the southeast/northwest walls is found in fig. 45, on the right, and is seen in Plate One. It is a blue arabesque vine with floral

vine fill, and concentric floral vine on buff ground (which is the clay body, either unglazed or with a clear glaze over it).

The other pair of tile panels is on the left of the same fig. 45, and in fig. 50, at the top, and is a very dense arabesque vine in yellow and a white floral vine with white leaf palmettes.

The exterior of the dome has another of the arabesque and floral vine combinations, but in glazed brick.

Type Two: Tracery. Mosaic Faience. The type two designs appear on the portal along with the type one designs, as they do in the sanctuary mihrab. In both places, the ceiling is of this type.

In the interior of the dome, is another example of the type two nature. These, too, are mixed with those of type one, and alternate by row with them.

Another type two design is found on the four large corner squinch panels in the sanctuary. These four panels, 'AA' on plan 25, are based on the trilobed quatrefoil and are possibly the most intricate pieces of mosaic faience ever assembled. The panels can be seen in fig. 45. Each quatrefoil has a double line around it, white and black, and all the arabesque buds are fielded with another color. The buff quatrefoils are on a dark blue ground filled with white lotus palmettes, lanceolate leaves, and

star flowers placed along a turquoise floral vine.

Theme Two: Geometric, Including Inscriptions

Abstract patterns and Kufic script are found on the exterior drum only, between the windows, and on the spandrels of the windows themselves (see figs 7 and 8). The Kufic of the upper half of the panels between the windows is quite exaggerated, and that on the lower half of the panel in the white stars is the same as that on the Masjid-i-Shah, as seen in Plate Eleven, as is the geometric pattern surrounding it. All of these patterns on the drum are of single color glazed brick. It is quite likely that all of this material has been renewed.

Three panels of cursive script appear on the entrance portal (fig. 44 and 45). The two above the screened window were undoubtedly installed by one of the later monarchs, as they are of a completely different design and script from the original ones, one of which is now in the lower floor hall. The other band of inscription on the portal is that separating the upper and lower wall space. It is one long panel which runs over the three walls, and is dated 1012/1603-4.[11] This and all of the other original script of the mosque is signed either by 'Ali Riza-i-'Abbasi or Baqer-i-Banna, and this panel was signed and dated by Riza, as can be seen on the far left in fig. 49.

The sanctuary panels are outlined with bands of the same calligraphic script, and the drum of the dome has two running panels, as seen in figs. 45, 48 and 50. The script is thuluth, white on blue mosaic, ornamented with extraneous diacriticals, but clearly legible nevertheless. The content of the inscriptions awaits translation, but is associated with the Shi'a sect.[12]

D. Decoration and Function

The study of the decorations of the mosque must be limited to a small area which is still covered with the original design. The obvious choice is the sanctuary and the balcony on the second floor taken as one space. The only problem with this is that one can never be sure that the tile work is original.[13] The stability and endurance of the mosaic faience is such that, with much greater assurance, it can be called original.

Since we do not know the dates of the tiles, we must concentrate on the mosaic. What can be learned from these designs? It is clear that there are two styles used within the sanctuary. The first is derived from the Timurid craftsmen, such as those who worked on the Blue Mosque in Tabriz, 870/1465, seen in figs. 52 and 53, and the Gawhar Shad Mosque in Meshhed, 821/1418, of fig. 54. Both of these buildings use the combination of unglazed brick with mosaic in complex patterns of vegetal materials. The designs also employ both the spiral and the lattice designs. This style is seen in the corner panels in the sanctuary and in the inner dome designs.

The second style is that seen in the other panels in the sanctuary and in that of the balcony. There is, here, an increase in the monumentality and strength of the vines which is not seen in the designs

of the Timurids. This is especially true in the panels of the balcony, where the vines are in sharp contrast to their ground color, as seen in fig. 47. There are fewer elements in the design, and each has adequate space of ground around it to define it, yet not enough to isolate it from the unity of the whole. When fig. 47 is compared with fig. 53, one can see that it is mostly the change in color which achieves this separation, but one can see too, that the designs of the Blue Mosque are much denser than those of the Shaykh Lotfollah.

It is this second style which is transferred to the tiles which are seen in the sanctuary of the Shaykh Lotfollah (and in the whole of the Masjid-i-Shah), and which needs further documentation.

It is obvious that much time and effort was spent on the decorations of the Shaykh Lotfollah and from its history one may see that the building had some part to play in the operations of the 'new city' which Shah 'Abbas built.

The evidence indicates that the part that the building played was that of a center of worship and learning led by the Shaykh. There were rooms in the upper floor which could house not only this man but visitors who might have come to consult him about matters on which he was an expert including theology and law. He was both admired and respected by Tahmasp and 'Abbas,

and for his long service to the religion and country was given the post in the mosque.

What the building seems to symbolize, then, is the importance of theology and law in the State, partially vested in the person of the Shaykh Lotfollah; this could well be the reason it is also called the Sadr Mosque.

It has already been mentioned that the traditional function of this mosque is quoted as being the private mosque for the Shah.[14] The practical logistics of this theory, however, are questionable. The Shaykh Lotfollah is across the Maydan from the gate to the palace (the 'Ali Qapu); the space between the two buildings is 159m, and it was used for a market place and caravan stop most of the time. It seems somewhat impractical to expect the Shah to traverse this space five times a day to pray. Not only is it impractical but also unsafe. He could, of course, very easily have made the building <u>one</u> of the places at which he prayed, especially if the mosque had the above mentioned association with the <u>sadarat</u>.[15]

In conclusion, what is seen in the Shaykh Lotfollah is a building prominent in the plan of the Naqs-e Jahan Square which is carefully decorated with ceramic of high technical form. Its function is, or was, multipurpose in that it could serve as a building used by those involved with the religious institution of the country[16] and also by the Shah in his function as the

head of that religion. It also served, and still does, as a mosque.

The decorations within the mosque underline the importance of the building by their quality and the prominence of the inscriptions (of Shi'a Hadith).

The functions of the building are limited by the architecture since its form excludes large gatherings like those found in congregational mosques that include a large courtyard and the usual symbols of a mosque like minars or a guldastah as found in the Masjid-i-Shah.

Therefore, the Shaykh Lotfollah is a mosque which is also a symbol of one aspect of the State.

FOOTNOTES

[1] For the other names see: Godard, "Isfahan", p. 96; Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 11. It has also been called the Sadr Mosque and the Fath 'Allah Mosque.

[2] See D. Wilber, The Architecture of Islamic Iran, p. 35-6, and J. Hoag, Islamic Architecture, p. 352. A kiosk mosque is one without the other usual characteristics of a mosque, such as the courtyard, eyvans, auxiliary prayer halls, and minars.

[3] See chapter on this building for discussion of original portal, or, Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu.

[4] These balconies have been restored and will be deleted from the discussion of the building.

[5] This area has been heavily restored, the latest being by Godard in the 1950's.

[6] For discussion of the Shabistan, see: Ferrante, 'La Mosquée de Šaiḫ Luṭfullāh à Ispahan: Relevé Planimétrique', in Travaux, p. 427.

[7] There are no photos of this area; the height is from a verbal description by A. Welch.

[8] Eskandar, History, discussion of plans for Isfahan, pp. 724-5. See also, Introduction, above.

[9] Ibid., p. 1230.

[10] There are in fact, traces of plaster and decoration on the jamb and wall of the upper floor room 'T', which can be seen in fig. 46, on the left side. Not a clear enough view is available, though, to make an estimate of its date or style. This painted decoration indicates that there might have been two decorative plans for the building, one for the more public functions involving its use as a mosque, the other for the inhabitants or those who met with them.

[11] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 96-8 for translation of this panel.

[12] The nature of the inscriptions was related to me by Dr. A. Welch.

[13] This problem is particularly unfortunate here, for the style of the four wall panels in the sanctuary is of the period with both filled and thin arabesque and floral vines. The design of these tiles is closely aligned to that of the window grills and could be dated in this manner if it were not for the fact that grills, next to tiles, are the most likely objects to be damaged.

The monumentality of the design of walls 'BB', one of which is to the right in fig. 45, is in accordance with the trends of the era, also. The unusual nature of these two panels however, is the manner in which they are executed. The ground is buff, and the vines are dark blue arabesque filled with white floral vine as seen in Plate Two. The unusual feature is that the tiles have a high gloss glaze where the design is, but the ground, uncolored clay body is either unglazed entirely or has a mat glaze thereon. This method follows that seen in the corner squinch panels, the exterior of the dome, the Shamsa in the interior of the dome, and in the balcony. None of these spaces is, however, clad with tiles.

If these tiles were original, one could trace the transference of designs from one decorative technique to another and establish a line of emergence of the technique which was to become, with the Masjid-i-Shah, characteristic of Safavid decorations. One could also define the influence that the mosaic's technical limitations had on the early tile designs and just where these influences were discarded.

[14] A. Pope, Architecture, p. 207.

[15] There are some architectural problems with the building which do not, in fact, argue for either of the above functions for the building. None of them, however, excludes the uses to which the building was put. Since these problems are architectural and not decorative ones, they are beyond the scope of this thesis and will be fully explained in a projected article on the subject. The problems involve the function of the lower floor, and the various elements of architecture related to it, including the stairways and the auxiliary rooms of the other floors. From the configuration of these members, the building seems to have originally been designed as a

tomb. If this is the case, however, the plan was abandoned before the first inscription was placed in 1011/1602-3, and no mention is ever made of this auxiliary use. The most logical occupant for the tomb would, of course have been Shah 'Abbas himself, but there are other possibilities, too. At the time just before the building of the Shaykh Lotfollah, the holy city of Meshhed was overrun by the Ozbegs (who were Sunni), and the shrine of Imam Riza was damaged. Shah 'Abbas may have been planning to move the Imam's remains to a safer place. The city was recovered before 1011/1602-3, however.

[16] It must be remembered that the religious community and the judicial system are inseparable.

CHAPTER FOUR

MASJID-I-SHAH

A. General Description

At the south end of the Maydan is the Masjid-i-Shah, built between 1020-1077/1611-1667, also called the Mehedi Mosque.[1] It is a symmetrical four eyvan[2] mosque, planned with sanctuary and side prayer halls along the qibla wall, prayer chambers behind the cross-axis courtyard eyvans (on the southeast and northwest), and a great central courtyard; side courtyards were added later. The four eyvan plan developed early in the sixth/twelfth century, and became the standard for Persian congregational mosques,[3] of which this is the primary example built by Shah 'Abbas.

As seen in plans 28 and 29, and figs. 55 and 56, the mosque portal is a five-sided bay, 24.5m wide and recessed 15m behind the facade of the Maydan. The whole is reflected by an octagonal pool, measuring 7m in diameter. The four side walls are 13m high, and each has a balcony on the second floor; those on the chamfered walls are decorated by four rows of muqarnas. The lower walls are pierced by doors which lead on the east and west to the Maydan bazaar, and southwest and southeast, to auxiliary rooms which may at one time have been shops.

The back wall of the bay is the entrance eyvan, 15m wide and 24m high, flanked by twin minars rising to

33.5m whose single balconies are supported by four rows of muqarnas. The eyvan is 5m deep and bordered by a triple cable moulding. It has a half-domed ceiling with eight rows of muqarnas squinching above a second story balcony.

The double-leaf arched doors of the eyvan open into the square vestibule,[5] 7.5m x 17m high. The space is extended, north and south, by carinated niches below the drum of the dome, which sits 9.5m above the floor. The profile of the niche is repeated on the south wall by an opening through to the northeast courtyard eyvan which is saved from being an egress to the courtyard by a saku, or low bench, across the space. Entrance to the courtyard and the northeast eyvan is gained by side corridors generating from the north and south niches of the vestibule, as can be seen in plan 29. Between the vestibule and the northeast eyvan, the principal axis of the mosque turns 45^{o} to the southwest to face the direction of Mecca. The shift is accommodated in the northeast eyvan by a triangular bay with a faceted half-domed ceiling at the inner end.

The major vault of the northeast eyvan has an arched profile which rises to 23m. The expanse of the eyvan measures 14.5m x 20m and is paved with turquoise and white tiles in a geometric pattern. The facade of the eyvan, as seen in fig. 57, measures 22m x 25m as do those

of the northwest and southeast eyvans.

The courtyard, seen from the northwest in fig. 58, is 50 by 60 meters, with the long axis running southeast-northwest (also called the cross axis). A two-story arcaded wall surrounds the whole with regular arched niches repeating on each floor of three sides. The courtyard has a reflecting pool measuring 18.5m x 14m, and two plinths are used for outdoor prayer and have a recessed 'niche' in the southwest end which indicates the qibla.[6]

The upper level of the courtyard wall flanking the northeast eyvan has accommodations for personnel; there are shallow interconnecting balconies and small dome-vaulted cells, each 3m square, behind each niche opening. The lower sections of the wall are 6m deep bays, the first of which on each side of the eyvan is the exit of the side corridors. This hall is separated from the otherwise interconnected dome-vaulted recesses by a saku, which can be seen in the foreground of fig. 59.

The southeast and northwest eyvans are structurally almost identical to each other. The articulation of the decorative spaces of the inner surfaces is not the same though, and the splay of the southeast eyvan manifests a triple cable moulding. A comparison of fig. 58 and 60 will also show that the northwest eyvan is topped by a guldastah, or muezzin's ciborium,[7] and that there is a screened window above the entrance door to the prayer

chamber.

The prayer chambers are each 13.5m square. They are found behind the cross-axis eyvans, and are each covered by a dome pierced by four windows; the apex of the dome is 14m high. Each chamber has a mihrab which is flanked by arched doorways leading to the side courtyards on the south and west corners of the complex.

The courtyard walls to the northeast of these cross-axis eyvans and their prayer chambers shelter the entrances to rooms which may at one time have been shabistans (prayer halls used in inclement weather). They were originally constructed in bays covered by 7m square dome-vaults supported by piers and transverse arches. The hall next to the northwest eyvan is unchanged, but that next to the southeast eyvan has undergone much structural change, and now rises only one story behind its section of courtyard wall. Plan 28 shows the outline of this structural change as it also shows the changes that have taken place in the latrine area of the building, which is to the north of this shabistan, and to the east of the vestibule.

The southwest halves of the courtyard walls flanking the southeast and northwest eyvans seen in fig. 58 and 60 have two arched openings which lead to the side courtyards, and upper niches which, like the northeast sections of the walls, are connecting balconies.

The southwest wall of the courtyard, seen in the extreme right of fig. 58 and in fig. 61, is articulated in a manner which differs from that of the other three walls, since it has only one set of arcade niches at each corner and a single large arched opening, 11m wide; both of these lead to the prayer halls which flank the sanctuary.

The southwest, or sanctuary, eyvan, measures 27m x 33m high, and is guarded by a second set of minars which rise to 49.5m. This is the entrance portal for the sanctuary which is 21m square, and has the principal mihrab, or prayer niche, and minbar, or pulpit; the qibla wall of this room is seen in fig. 62. This room connects with the side prayer halls through three doors on each side wall, as noted in plan 29, and is lighted by an arched opening above the largest of these doors on each side. There are also eight screened windows in the inner shell of the dome which pierce the drum of the outer shell which rises to 50m. The dome's outer shell is slightly bulbous, an effect produced by corbelling the overhang.[8] For a clearer view of the construction of this section with its eyvan refer to plan 30.

As noted on plan 29, the auxiliary prayer halls extend for the entire 42m depth on either side of the southwest eyvan and the sanctuary, and are each 20m wide. The eight dome-vaulted bays rest on transverse keel arches supported by three central piers. Note in fig. 63, that

the mihrab in each qibla bay with its window above, is mirrored in each side wall bay by niches and windows, two to each bay, that lead out to the side courtyards.

The side courtyards on the south and west corners of the building with their single-story arcaded walls, were constructed after the death of Shah 'Abbas, and will be discussed only in section B, History, below.

B. History

Shah 'Abbas	1020/1611	Commissioning of building
	1025/1616	Tiles of the entrance portal; first dedicatory inscription
	1033/1623-4	Death of Mir Jamal al-Din Kashi
	1035/1625-6	Tiles of northeast eyvan
	1038/1628-9	Tiles of the mihrabs of sanctuary, southeast prayer chamber, east prayer hall
Shah Safi	1038/1629-30	Tiles of interior dome of northwest prayer chamber
	1040/1630-1	Marble foundation; second dedicatory inscription in marble of entrance portal
Shah Sulayman	1077/1667-8	Inscription in portal of southwest wall of west side courtyard
Nadir Shah (Afshar)	1149-60/1736-47	Restorations
'Ali Murad Khan (Zand)	1193/1779	Restorations
Muhammad Shah (Qajar)	1261/1845	Restoration of southwest eyvan after earthquake
Sultan Ahmed Shah (Qajar)	1310/1909-10	Restoration on splay of northeast eyvan

1932-4 Restoration done by

A. Godard

Shah 'Abbas ordered the construction of the Masjid-i-Shah in 1020/1611, according to his biographer, Eskandar Monshi.[9] It was not an original part of the planning for the Naqs-e Jahan Square. Eskandar Monshi says that Isfahan's residential dwellings had a reputation throughout the world, and since the Shah wanted his mosques and religious buildings to be equally famous, he had the caravanserai at the south end of the square demolished and commissioned in its place a mosque which "would be without equal in Iran and possibly in the entire civilized world."[10]

The entrance portal was fitted with its first dedicatory inscription in 1025/1616. During this time it may be assumed that construction work was progressing on the inner structure around the courtyard. In 1033/1623-4 Mir Jamal al-Din Kashi dies, and Eskandar Monshi, who notes it in the History, says that the man had been the prayer leader of the Masjid-i-Shah "last year".[11] From this note, it would seem that the mosque was in use, no matter how far advanced the construction or decoration.

The next date is on the northeast eyvan: 1035/1625-6, again involving the completion of the decorative work on that part of the building. The date 1038/1628-9 is on the mihrabs of the sanctuary, the east prayer hall, and on that of the prayer chamber of the southeast eyvan.

From these dates, it can be seen that the building was about three-quarters complete by the death of Shah 'Abbas in 1038/1628-9. The northwest side was tiled within the next two years. From this evidence, it would seem that the structure was tiled from the entrance, around to the east and south, and finished to the west and north.

There are gaps in the dates of the inscriptions, and it is not known whether the construction progressed in the same direction, or if the whole was raised at once.

Superficially the structure appears to have been constructed in one process, but such is not the case when the architectural evidence is studied. It can be seen that the building was modified shortly after Shah 'Abbas' death.

It is known that the marble foundation stones were not in place until at least 1047/1637, as the traveler Olearius mentions them in his log.[12] By this date, also several parts of the original structure had been modified. The most significant of these changes appear in the auxiliary prayer halls. It has been noted that there is a date for the mihrab of the hall to the east of the sanctuary, but not for that on the west: there is no inscriptional material at all in the west hall. The qibla walls of the two halls are also not alike structurally. The east hall, seen in fig. 64, has an inscription band around the outer edge of each of the two mihrabs, above

which the wall thins. The two windows in the upper section of the wall have one screen each, on the inside. In comparing fig. 64 to fig. 63, it will be seen that the wall of the west hall has no structural thinning, and the windows have two screens, on both inner and outer surfaces. The decorative space of the west hall is continuous in each bay, whereas in the east hall, it is divided into smaller panels in the lower register, with tympana above the mihrabs. Another feature of these halls has already been mentioned in the description: the large entrance arch next to the sanctuary eyvan. These arches are inconsistent with the rest of such architectural elements throughout the complex. The articulation of the reveal is tripartite as seen in fig. 58; no other arch opening is more than chamfered. Note that due to this opening, the other parts of this wall are put out of balance with the rest of the courtyard.

The alterations of these spaces could be due to the special emphasis thought necessary for the qibla, but this choice does much to break up the otherwise stately unity of the whole courtyard.

The second structural change noted in the complex is that of the side courtyards. The date on the portal on the qibla wall of the west one is 1077/1667-8 in the reign of Shah Sulayman,[13] who cut the portal in the wall; he may indeed have built the whole of the

courtyards. It can be seen in fig. 65, that the courtyards were not part of the original plan, for the back side of the central courtyard wall has been modified to fit the plan of these side courtyards. The central panels of the upper arcade have been bricked in, as seen in the right of fig. 66. These courtyards also have the only other entrances to the complex: the portal already mentioned and the side doors on the northwest and southeast walls near the cross-axis prayer chambers. Notice also, in fig. 55, that the south courtyard has been further modified on its southeast wall to accommodate nine, triple dome-vaulted spaces, one for each of the arcade bays along the wall, less the side portal.

The third modification of the structure is seen in the left of fig. 55, and in figs. 65 and 66. It is the extension of the wall between the west courtyard and the northwest prayer chamber to include a long windowed stairway which terminates at the guldastah. The date for the side stairway is not known, but it is very similar to the second stairway at 'Ali Qapu which was finished before 1077/1667-8 and may be of the same era.[14]

The last noted change is the decoration of the side courtyards, since not all of the visible surfaces are covered with decoration as seen in the rest of the building.

After these modifications of the structure in

the eleventh/seventeenth century, there were various cosmetic and structural restorations. The first two by Nadir Shah (1149-60/1736-47) and 'Ali Murad Khan (1193/1779) are listed in Pope and Ackerman, Survey, but are unsubstantiated by extant inscriptional dates on the building.[15] The next restoration is dated 1261/1845, and was undertaken by Muhammad Shah. The work was on the facade of the sanctuary eyvan which had been damaged by an earthquake.

The splay of the northeast eyvan carries the date of 1310/1909-10, when the mosaic faience was replaced, as seen in fig. 70. Godard, "Isfahan",[16] states that the repairs which he directed for the government took place between the years 1351-3/1932-4, but he does not elaborate on the work carried out.

Such is the rather sketchy history of the Masjid-i-Shah. Without extensive architectural probing, it will remain imprecise. The history of the decorations now on the building is even more likely to remain speculative, unless more evidence is brought to light about the glazes and designs favored by the various craftsmen throughout the four hundred year history of the building.

C. Decorative Plan

1. General Description

The decorative plan is one of variation within a narrow range of both designs and decorative spaces, the effect of which gives the structure an atmosphere of unity.

Three media are used within the complex: glazed masonry found on the minars, the outer dome of the sanctuary and the portal of the entrance; mosaic faience used on the entrance portal, many of the curving surfaces such as muqarnas and for some inscriptions; and painted, or haft rangi, tiles which cover most of the building.

The disposition of panels on the decorative surface is accomplished in two ways. First the panels may be contiguous as seen in fig. 60 in the interior of the northwest eyvan. Or, second, they may be surrounded and separated by a common design which I have named a 'matrix' design, as seen in the facade of the same eyvan and the courtyard wall next to it. The choice of either of these methods of articulation is often determined by structural necessity, as it is with the courtyard wall where the width of the supporting wall for each arcade niche determines the space for the matrix.

Neither of the methods of articulation is unique to the Masjid-i-Shah, as can be seen in fig. 69,

which is the mausoleum of Isma'il Samanid, Bukhara, dating 295/907. The lower wall has the rectangular panel surrounded by pattern, and the architecture contains panels which are conjoined by their border.

Every decorative panel and architectural member has strict definition. Four methods are used: the two border elements, guard band and wide border; indentation; and rows of brick, glazed and unglazed. All of these elements are fully explained in the Introduction.

All the designs used in the mosque are of two dimensional stylized motifs of high intensity colors including dark blue, yellow, turquoise, white, light green, light blue, brown and black.

The designs within each panel are carefully scaled to that space. Whether they are of type one or type two classification, the size of the flower, vine, etc., is considered within its context, and control is exercised with the number, size, and position of each element of the design. To illustrate this, compare fig. 68 with fig. 72, which is a panel from the Vakil Mosque, Shiraz, and of the late eighteenth century. In the latter panel, the clarity of the work is sacrificed to the overcrowding of the elements, and the whole seems visually too heavy for the space it occupies. This panel may attest to the high state of the glazers' art, with the many shades of glaze used, but the serenity and overall unity found in the panels

of the Masjid-i-Shah are absent. In fig. 68, each element of each design is clear and well defined, yet no one element dominates the whole which floats lightly upon the field.

In the decorative spaces of the mosque, no design is ever repeated on an adjacent panel, nor are spandrel designs ever the same as their arched panels. Walls facing each other on inside surfaces may be mirror repeats, and identical minor panels may flank major ones.

2. Themes, Patterns, and Special Motifs

The majority of decoration in the Masjid-i-Shah is of the vegetal theme, type one. The designs, used in both mosaic faience and painted tiles, are of similar plan, yet small variations of detail give them variety.

Fig. 1 shows a selection of designs in mosaic faience of both types of vegetal theme designs.

Theme One: Vegetal

Type One: Spiralling. Within the category, all of the variations listed in the Introduction are used. In the majority of the panels in the mosque, the basic patterns of the vine elements are set on a ground of dark blue, and are themselves of a light color, yellow or white. When they are used in combination, the arabesque vine remains light, and the floral vine generally becomes

turquoise. In such designs, the arabesque vine will always dominate, for two reasons: first, the arabesque vine is heavier, or thicker, than the floral; and second, the light color of the arabesque vine stands out against the blue ground as the turquoise floral vine does not. When the ground color is light, the arabesque vine will be brown or black, the floral will remain turquoise, and the arabesque vine will retain dominance.

Type Two: Tracery. There are few of these designs in the mosque, but they are found in significant places: the entrance portal has a set of mirrored panels in the lower section of the side walls plus those in muqarnas; the matrix of the courtyard is covered with another as seen in Plate Five; the sanctuary eyvan has others; and the outer dome of the sanctuary is clad with another.[17]

Theme Two: Geometric, Including Inscriptions

All the geometric patterns are made exclusively of single-color glazed ceramic or brick found in carefully selected places within the mosque: the shafts of the minars, the drum of the sanctuary dome, and the back of the portal facade, as seen in fig. 67. Other geometric patterns seen within the building are most likely restorations. All are type two designs.

Within the theme are seen combinations of

abstract patterns and Kufic inscriptions, all of which are based on the multiplication of a single square unit into a grid of horizontal and vertical lines. These patterns can be seen in Plate Ten, which is the base of the sanctuary minar, and in Plate Eleven, which is taken from the sanctuary minar shaft above the balcony. The inscriptions found on the shafts of both sets of minars are designed in the same manner, as can be seen in fig. 74, which is the west entrance portal minar.[18] The whole of the shaft designs are found in fig. 67. The colors used in these patterns are turquoise, white, dark blue/black, red/brown, and dark yellow/gold.

Calligraphic inscriptions are an important part of the decorative plan of most mosques and fulfill the iconographic role of the figural work found in other non-religious buildings.[19]

In the Masjid-i-Shah, cursive inscriptions are found in all the eyvans separating the upper and lower wall spaces, above the entrance portal door and in a band around its facade. They are also found around or above all mihrabs with the noted exceptions, below the inner domes of the sanctuary and the southeast and northwest prayer chambers, on the outer drum of the sanctuary, and just below the balconies of the minars. Single tile inscriptions of stylized Kufic, such as fig. 75, are found in several areas of the mosque, as in the northwest

eyvan and in the entrance portal recess.[20]

An example of the importance of the inscriptional material is noted by L. Golombek, in her article, "Anatomy of a Mosque: The Masjid-i-Shah in Isfahan", p. 10.[21] She refers to a verse found repeatedly on the inscriptions of the eyvans: "I (that is, the Prophet) am the City of Knowledge, and 'Ali is its Gate. He who wishes knowledge should come to the Gate."[22] She does not, however, give specific instances of this inscription nor does she identify its source.

The word "Gate" would refer to the eyvan as a portal and the symbol derived from this Golombek says, is that "...the portal...became a gateway to salvation".[23]

It is known that the finest calligraphers worked on the inscriptions for buildings. Included in the Masjid-i-Shah is work by 'Ali Riza-i 'Abbasi, who signed the dedicatory inscription of the entrance portal dated 1025/1616, and Muhammad Riza-i-Imami, who signed that of the side courtyard, 1077/1667-8.[24] Others listed in Pope and Ackerman, Survey, p. 1188, are 'Abd al-Baqi Dani-Shan, and Muhammad Salih.

Theme Three: Figural

With one exception, there are no figures in the Masjid-i-Shah, either animal or human. The exception is in a small panel in the back wall of the balcony of

the entrance portal, in which is seen a mirror pair of peacocks set on either side of a flowering vase. In her article in The Islamic Garden, Annemarie Schimmel noted that the peacock is, "A bird usually connected with Spring and Paradise owing to its dazzling beauty."[25] The mosque has long been associated with an image of paradise, and H. Stierlin substantiates this theory in his book, Ispahan.[26]

For various reasons thoroughly discussed in O. Grabar's Formation of Islamic Art, pp. 75-103, an aniconic attitude developed in Islam although there is no formal proscription against figures in the Qur'an. It is, therefore, rather surprising to see such a figure here. There are, though, similar contemporary panels in a room in the Imam Riza shrine at Meshhed, which may indicate that a slight change was being made in this attitude by 'Abbas or by his theologians.[27]

D. Decoration and Function

The uses of a mosque are many, including as a place of prayer, a school, a community center, and a place for quiet and study. Therefore, the space of a mosque should be multi-purpose and its parts left as undefined as possible.

The space of the Masjid-i-Shah, however, seems to be rather more carefully defined than in other mosques, as there are several architectural features to which are attached religious, though not necessarily ritualistic, symbolism which help to make the mosque a unified Islamic building.

The first of these features is the minar, found in pairs on the entrance portal and on the facade of the sanctuary eyvan. The traditional function associated with these towers is the call to prayer sent out by the muezzin from the structure. In the book, Formation of Islamic Art,[28] Grabar mentions that the function of the tower changes in Persia, and the traditional use is taken over by the guldastah found, here, over the northwest eyvan. He goes on to state that the new function of the tower is to define the mosque as an "Islamic" space. In a country recognized by this time as Islamic, this may no longer be necessary, but the minars certainly indicate that the building is a mosque. Within the building, the second set of minars would reinforce this statement and

help to direct the worshipper to the qibla.

The second feature is the accented portal, which, with its high wide facade and the ceiling curving down to the much smaller exit in the back, literally channels the occupant of the building into certain areas of the structure. The accented portals are at the entrance to the building and on three sides of the courtyard. The entrance portal directs one into the mosque; and northwest southeast, and southwest eyvans lead to the prayer chambers. The northeast eyvan, with a facade similar to the others but of different internal structure (seen in fig. 57), clearly indicates visually the transition into the mosque that has taken place. It may be for this very reason that the architecture of the eyvan is different than the others, but in the Masjid-i-Shah it also facilitates a clearly framed view from the vestibule to the sanctuary (in fig. 61).[29]

The third feature is the mihrab niche which is found on all qibla walls. There are mihrab niches in the three prayer chambers and in the prayer halls.

The fourth element is the dome. The dome has long been associated with the vault of Heaven,[30] and can be connected with the Shamsa design and with the mosque as the image of Paradise. Within the mosque there are four chambers which are covered with domes: the entry vestibule, the prayer chambers of the cross axis, and

the sanctuary.

The fifth item is the minbar. This 'pulpit' is used to deliver the Khutbah, which is "both a sermon and an act of allegiance of the Community to its leader."[31] Minbars are usually portable and wooden, but in the sanctuary of the Masjid-i-Shah is an unusual one of the same marble as that of the dado; the minbar has its own decorative space and is attached to the qibla wall, as can be seen in fig. 62.

In addition to these architectural accents, there are decorative ones listed in Graph 2, some of which are motifs and others which are compositional trends seen in the designs to which the motifs belong. Some of these decorative accents have symbolic significance and all help further to distinguish the space in which they appear.

The first motif is the yellow leaf palmette, seen in Plate Three, which is an element in the floral vine. It is a distinctive motif found all through the designs of the mosque, but in the sanctuary, prayer chambers and prayer halls, it is most predominant and appears like a series of bright stars in the darkness of these spaces.

The second, the floral leaf, seen in two forms in Plate Twelve, and in the matrix pattern of the sanctuary, fig. 62, is a complex motif whose shape is like a

leaf but which is composed of dense flowers. The third, the vase, already described in the Introduction, is found in carefully selected sites, beginning with the peacock panel in the entrance eyvan. It also appears in the muqarnas squinching above the panel, in the lower wall panels of the prayer chambers, as can be seen in fig. 62, and in the panel in the back wall of the principal mihrab.

The compositional trend which is most noticeable is that toward more yellow. This is accomplished by using denser designs with motifs like the leaf palmette, larger cartouches as in fig. 63, many of which have yellow ground color, and panels in which the field is yellow, as appears on the qibla wall of the sanctuary.

The appearance of more green in the prayer chambers is perhaps incidental, but since it is the color of the Prophet, and of the Prophet's family and descendants (including the Safavis themselves), its occurrence here indicates a possilbe religious symbolic significance.

It may be noted also that along the major axis of the mosque, the decorative spaces are defined with blue and yellow glazed brick cut on the diagonal.

From the foregoing and the two graphs it can be seen that a hierarchy of space within the mosque is set up, based on the incidence of the items in the two sets. The sanctuary appears at the top, having all of the items, next are the prayer chambers of the cross axis, and then

the prayer halls on either side of the sanctuary.

What this hierarchy seems to show is not a definition of space as it relates to the formal uses to which the building may be put, but one which relates to a realization of the whole space as a symbolic unified manifestation of Islam: because of the similarity among the various panels of tiles, and the appearance of the various elements listed above, each separate hall or room has its association, no matter what its use, to the world united by Allah and protected and regulated by His power.

The realization of this unity by the inhabitant or visitor may take many forms, one of which is that as one enters the building, one is directed by the architecture to experience certain aspects of the structure. From the bright light of the entrance, one goes into the dark vestibule and from here one is given a view of the sanctuary illuminated by the light from the courtyard at the end of the long axis of the complex. One is then directed through a rather dark corridor and released in the central courtyard. From this large space, one is redirected by the two cross eyvans and/or the sanctuary eyvan into a domed prayer chamber which is decorated in a very specific manner. From here, the decoration indicates a manner in which the building may be further explored visually for

within the chamber is the only recognizable object in the mosque, the vase. From this issue vines like those covering most of the rest of the building. From the vase, and its associations with the mosque lamp and the mihrab niche, and the light of Allah represented by the Shamsa in the ceiling of the dome above, come the keys from which the unity of the whole is realized.

A second, though more direct, form of realizing this unity involves the key presented by the inscriptions. It can be seen from Graph 2, that inscriptions are on all of the major parts of the building, and even from a distance the minars of the entrance portal announce that this is a place associated with Allah, for the inscription bands which spiral down the shafts all begin with this word in huge Kufic letters (seen in figs. 56, 67, and 74).

In the entrance portal, as noted in the history, are two dedicatory inscriptions and several religious verses, which introduce one to the structure, giving the necessary information that it is an Islamic Shi'a building. From the content of the inscriptions one could determine what the patron who selected them thought was a necessary statement about making a transition into a mosque.

As one moves into the courtyard, other inscriptions are presented, including the four eyvan bands, the sanctuary one of which continues into and around the

sanctuary chamber, literally connecting the two spaces, and forcing the observer to enter the inner space. Finally, there is the inscription over the mihrab, which is a Shi'a Hadith which reasserts the importance of the figure of 'Ali in the worshipper's attainment of Heaven.[32]

That the mosque can work effectively on both of these levels to the same end is due to extraordinary planning on the part of the architect and builder and the coordination of all the craftsmen who worked on the building, whether calligrapher, ceramist, bricklayer or tile setter. No matter how the building is studied, each part is an ordered part of a total unity.

The unity expressed by the building is not only one of a religious nature in the abstract sense. It is one also of the Shah and his concept of himself within the life of his country, both as the head of the religion and as the head of the state. As the former, he was the representative of the religion, and as the latter of the organization which could create such a striking example of the devotion and esteem with which the religion was held in the country.

Further symbolism of the building and its political nature will be discussed in the conclusion.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 116, found in the account of the traveler Olearius (1637) that the mosque was called Mehdi Saheb e Zamam after the twelfth Imam; Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 11, uses the spelling "Mehedi". Eskandar, History. uses the name Masjid-i-Shah, p. 1038. The use of Jum'a is found also in Godard, p. 116.

[2] See Introduction for explanation of eyvan.

[3] The earliest extant example of sixth/twelfth century architecture using this plan is the Masjid-i-Jami at Sacara, 530/1135. See: D. Wilber, The Architecture of Islamic Iran, (New York, 1955), p. 35.

[4] The decorations on the portal recess are several groups of restorations which may be used to note the various styles throughout the history of the building.

[5] The word 'vestibule' is used by Pope and Ackerman, Survey, v. III, p. 1186; Golombek, L., "Anatomy of a Mosque: Masjid-i-Shāh of Iṣfahān" in Iranian Civilization and Culture, Montreal, 1972, p. 6, hereafter: Golombek, "Anatomy" ; and J. Hoag, Islamic Architecture. The word is not functional in nature, as it is in western Christianity, and is merely in the same relative placement structurally within the building.

[6] Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity, p. 105, discuss this point.

[7] O. Grabar, Formation of Islamic Art, (New Haven, 1973), p. 120.

[8] Pope and Ackerman, Survey, p. 1181.

[9] Eskandar, History, pp. 1038-39.

[10] Ibid., p. 1038.

[11] Ibid., p. 1232.

[12] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 112, says that Olearius mentions this. However, in the History, Eskandar says that a marble quarry was found near Isfahan the same year the building was commissioned and that that marble was used on the building.

[13] Ibid., p. 113. The inscription band states that Sulayman completed the complex that 'Abbas began.

[14] The element referred to here is the second stairway built on the south side of the 'Ali Qapu completed during the fifth phase of construction. See, Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, and the chapter below on the same building. Dr. Galdieri at IsMEO, is making a study of the stairway mentioned. See, Galdieri, "Les Palais d'Isfahan", in Studies on Isfahan, p. 391, note 5.

[15] Pope and Ackerman, Survey, p. 1188.

[16] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 115.

[17] There are others, such as that in the vault of the northeast eyvan, but they are restorations.

[18] Notice that due to the spiralling of the bands of the inscriptions on the shaft in a counter-clockwise manner, the inscription, which runs from the top to bottom of the shaft, is upside down. This brings up the iconological question of whether all inscriptions are meant to be read or were presented as an act of piety by the patron. Though the problem is outside the realm of this thesis, the answer, here, is that the legibility has been sacrificed for the continuity of the design, since, as can be seen in fig. 16, the designs of the other shaft spiral in the opposite direction. In the case of the horizontal bands of the eyvans, they are much more legible.

[19] This aspect of the decorative plan will be discussed under Theme Three: Figural.

[20] The single tile inscriptions of the portal recess are almost surely restorations, and the tile in fig. 75 alleged to be from the Masjid-i-Shah, is in an American museum. The inscription bands of the top of the northeast eyvan are also restorations.

[21] Inscriptions are important whether they are translated or not: they were perceived as expressions of revealed knowledge. See, A. Welch, Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World, pp. 22-23, for a concise review of the development of this attitude in Islam.

[22] Golombek, "Anatomy", the parenthesis is hers.

[23] Ibid., p. 10.

[24] Godard, "Isfahan", p. 113. He mentions that Muhammad Riza-i-'Abbasi did work on the shrine of Imam Riza in Meshhed which is dated 1059/1649-50 and 1085/1674-5.

[25] Schimmel, A., "The Celestial Garden in Islam", in The Islamic Garden (Washington, D.C., 1976), p. 20. There are other interpretations of the peacock. Indries Shah, in The Sufis, (Garden City, 1964), p. 437, associates it through rather involved symbolism, to the expansion of the mind through the use of the higher faculties. Also see the works of the Seljuk mystic poet Ibn al-'Arabi (560-638/1165-1240). He associates the peacock to various spiritual things as in the Tarjuman al-Ashwaq, (London, 1911), which is a collection of mystical odes, where he analogizes the peacock with the spirit in which good actions are undertaken. Ibn al-'Arabi has always had a great influence on Persia; see E. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, (Cambridge, 1969), v. 12, pp. 497-501.

[26] H. Stierlin, Ispahan. It is the premise of the book.

[27] One of these panels, dating 1021/1612, may be seen in Pope, Architecture, fig. 305, p. 228.

[28] O. Grabar, Formation of Islamic Art, p. 120. For this and the other architectural elements see also, D. Kuban, Muslim Religious Architecture, (Leiden, 1974), which discusses the various parts of the mosque, including the minar, and the development of architectural style.

[29] Instances of this portal in such a form, are not hard to find, see: Pope, Architecture, for plan of Masjid-i-Jum'a, Isfahan, p. 108.

[30] Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity, p. 74.

[31] O. Grabar, Formation of Islamic Art, p. 106.

[32] A translation of the verse by my colleague, N. R. Neyastani, is: "It has been related from the Prophet God's peace be upon Him and on His following, verily He said: O, 'Ali, were a servant of the servants of God, like Noah (who arose amongst his people and spent his wealth in the path of God and his life was prolonged until he brought thousands of proofs upon his predecessors and lost his life as a wronged one) not to turn unto you, he would indeed not have breathed heavenly breezes."

CONCLUSIONS

A. The Decorations of the Buildings

Although the decorations of each building have been discussed, I should like to take some time to compare their decorative plans, and architectural structure.

The two mosques are in many ways alike in their decorations. Each is literally covered with brightly colored glazed ceramic decorations. In both cases the decorations are limited to those of a vegetal nature or to inscriptions (with the noted exception in Chapter Four.) The Shaykh Lotfollah shows a somewhat larger range of designs, perhaps due, as mentioned, to the changes being made in style and media at the time of decoration. Both mosques exhibit careful planning in their decorative spaces and in the designs used in those spaces. The quality of the ceramic and the execution of the designs are consistently high, and the cost of the decoration must have been phenomenal, much greater, in fact, than the 'Ali Qapu which is only painted, a much less expensive medium. (This is one aspect of the structures which is impossible to determine and is seldom mentioned in any writings, either contemporary or modern. Its significance will be taken up later.)

The 'Ali Qapu has a much wider range of both media and designs. It had none of the traditional decorative restrictions placed on it. One could well ask why

it, too, was not clad in ceramic, and the question has no definitive answer. (Tiles were used in other palace buildings of a somewhat later period.) It could be due to the ambulatory nature of the court, and the tradition of building new palace structures frequently and in many parts of the country. (Shah 'Abbas built ten such complexes during his reign which are listed in the History.[1]) It could also be due to the speed with which the structure could be decorated and finished if painted and cut plaster were used instead of the more involved ceramic decoration. The political symbolism which affects a decorative program will be discussed in the next section.

The structural forms of the two mosques give them their real differences. Each is a special type of structure. The Shaykh Lotfollah is the kiosk type which is used for small mosques, for shrines, and tombs; due to its size, it was more restricted in its range of functions than a larger mosque like the Masjid-i-Shah.

The Masjid-i-Shah, on the other hand, is a large four-eyvan plan, with a central courtyard and several large prayer halls. It also has smaller auxiliary spaces which extend its range to include all the functions that can be assigned to a mosque, including worship, central meeting place, school, library, and residence for its attendants and passing scholars and students. (It even has a latrine which may once have included a bath.) It has large spaces for gatherings such as at the Friday

worship, and small ones for retreat, quiet study, and meditation.

The minar, a feature common to most mosques, is a signal difference between the two buildings. The Masjid-i-Shah has four, and the Shaykh Lotfollah has none. It has been noted that the feature is not necessarily functional as the tower from which to call the faithful to prayer; but as a symbol of a mosque, and thereby of Islam, it is significant. It is partly because of the absence of this feature that much speculation has been put forth as to the nature of the function of the Shaykh Lotfollah.[2]

There are few similarities between the two mosques and the 'Ali Qapu structurally. There is a feeling of intimacy in the 'Ali Qapu that is lacking in the other two buildings which is partly due to the sizes of the rooms and partly to the manner in which the decorations are executed. It can be readily understood that the two are connected. The relatively larger halls of the mosques (the smallest of the group meeting chambers in the two mosques are the side prayer chambers of the Masjid-i-Shah which measures 13.5m square, while the largest room in the 'Ali Qapu is only 7m x 10m) indicate that the inhabitant of the space is, of necessity, at a greater distance from the decoration. There is a proportional loss of detail with increased distance from the observed design. Closeness of observation invites detail and the intimacy of the

space is dependent upon that detail. Detail assumes a whole which can be broken into many manageable parts; the smaller those parts, the less the image is able to overwhelm the observer. The 'Ali Qapu has both small spaces and detailed designs. In contrast to this, the decorations of the two mosques are domineering by the size of their panels, even though, as stated above, each panel may be easily seen in its entirety. (The whole mosque space, however, is united into a more easily understood whole by the similarly designed panels.)

Another difference between the two mosques and the 'Ali Qapu, also related to intimacy, is the color schemes which are employed in the decorations. The mosques are bright with intense spectrum colors, and 'Ali Qapu is filled with earth tones on tan ground, certainly less dominating for the humans who would occupy the space. By their primary colors, the decorations of the mosque spaces announce their presence as those of the 'Ali Qapu do not, and the alteration of small and large, light and dark spaces in the mosques continually redirect the inhabitants' attention to the structure. The 'Ali Qapu, on the other hand, sets up an atmosphere of colors ordinarily seen by the observer and retires, leaving the human inhabitants to their own devices.

While both color schemes are significant in their differences, the conformity within each to its scheme gives

each a unifying quality which ties the disparate architectural parts together.

The unity seen in the decorative plans and color scheme of the mosques has been discussed in Chapter Four. It applies equally to the mosque of Shaykh Lotfollah as both are symbols of Islam, an underlying precept of which is unity (tawhid). This concept of unity in Islam is often associated with the indivisibility of Allah and His presence in every thing. This aspect of tawhid was taken up by one of the Safavid philosophers mentioned in the introduction, Mir Damad. In speaking of this philosopher, S. Nasr, in "The School of Isfahan" says that some of Damad's thoughts on tawhid were that:

> The Divine Being by His essential unity encompasses all things; His unity is before, with and after both dahr (the relationship between the immutable and the changing) and zaman (time). His unity before dahr is the unity of His command; with dahr, the unity of the universal intellect; after dahr, the unity of the universal soul, unity with time, and unity of the elements and compounds.[3]

Unity within the space of the mosque is connected not only with the philosophical aspects just stated, but the unity of the seemingly divergent activities of life seen to come together within the building, which can receive guidance from the religion.

B. Political Aspects of the Buildings

The disparity between the functional necessity of the buildings in question and their actual appearance indicates a motive beyond need which prompted the Shah to build as he did, or even at all. If there was no ulterior motive, why then was there so much effort expended on the two religious buildings when the influence of the religion they represent was waning and the Shah was attempting to secularize the government by creating new systems for activities which had always been traditionally handled by the religious community? Why, in fact did he not use those resources on a palace structure or a fortress, both of which were certainly more secular.

The answer is that the buildings are, in fact, politically motivated, and one aspect of the rather complex political motivations is that the mosques represent the Shah as the head of the religious community. This statement is connected with the power structure of the state and ultimately returns to the question of the legitimacy of the Safavids and their continuing need to prove this legitimacy.

The unrest in the religious community is directly linked to the problem of legitimacy, as it is to the secularization of the government.

If the legitimacy of the Shah was once and forever proved, many of the state's problems would disappear. The problem was involved with the power base

since the regime rested on the ability of the Shah to receive unquestioned loyalty and obedience based on his infallibility of judgement and interpretation of law. Traditionally, infallibility stems either from direct descent from one of the Twelve Imams,[4] or by being one of their designated representatives on earth. The Safavids had tried to prove themselves both of these things. They had devised a genaeology which asserted that they were descendants of the Eighth Imam (Ali Riza, 203/818, whose shrine is in Meshhed). As such they had as much right as the traditional representatives, the mujtahid (or those who could give opinions on questions of sacred law; they were within the class of 'ulama, or religious scholars), to make pronouncements, and their infallibility was assured. Therefore, the government could function without the mujtahids. If the Shah was, indeed, who he claimed, the question of secularization within the government became academic.

The second motivational factor which can be related to the political symbolism of the buildings is that which had to do with Iran's standing in the international scene. As far as the Western world was concerned, Iran was a country of modest worth. Its political raison d'etre was as a restraint on the real threat to Europe which was the Ottoman expansion. In the Near East, however, Irad had a more prestigious reputation, even though it was Shi'a. 'Abbas needed some statement of the might of the

Iranian Shi'a world to those who might scoff. He used the buildings of the city of Isfahan for this purpose. The History relates the reason behind the building of the religious monuments: "The Shah wanted its (Isfahan's) mosques, seminaries, and pious foundations to be the finest of their kind in Iran, and to rival the temple at Mecca and the mosque at Jerusalem."[5]

While this might sound slightly heretical, it does, on the other hand give his indirect opinion of his religion. He obviously felt that it could compete with any other part of Islam and that his monuments were as valid as those considered by others to the holiest.

It is a measure of his success, or rather that of the city and the buildings of the Maydan, that every traveler to the court brought back some description of them. They tended to compare them to the most grandiose monuments in their own land, many of which had also been built as political statements of religion or the State.

A third aspect of the motivations for the construction of the buildings and their political nature was the support that the Shah gave to his people. Three sections in the History deal at least in part with affairs of those not considered to be the Shah's peers. These sections are: Discourse 5: On Shah 'Abbas' Justice, Concern for the Security of the Roads, and Concern for the Welfare of His Subjects; Discourse 9: On Shah 'Abbas' Concern for the Rights of His Servants and His Avoiding

Laying Hands on Their Possessions; Discourse 10: On Shah Abbas's Breadth of Vision, and His Knowledge of World Affairs and of the Classes of Society.[6]

Discourse 5 states that the Shah had always been concerned with the welfare of his people, and he wished them to enjoy peace and security, and to be free from hardships attendant on their station.

As the head of the religion, the Shah's building of the Masjid-i-Shah, a mosque directly related to the people because of its congregational possibilities, is as much a statement of his concern for his people as is the dispensing of free food or the cancelling of taxes during Ramadan,[7] or the throwing out of coins and trinkets during a fete.

Thus not only were the buildings a statement of the power of the Shi'a sect, but also of the might of Islam and Iran through the infallibility of the Shah's judgement and his depth of concern for every aspect of life.

The media and color differences between the decorations of the mosques and the 'Ali Qapu can be used to point up the different types of symbol which can be associated with the buildings. The symbol that the ceramic decorations of the two mosques represent, as both religion and the Shah, is a much more abstract symbol than is that represented by any of the media used in the 'Ali Qapu. To the great majority of the people who would view the

'Ali Qapu, the building would be the only concrete representation of the State and its structure. Its austere and looming exterior would be an effective means of imparting both the threat and the support of the State which represented order, security, and taxes. For those using the interior of the structure with its painted plaster decorations, the presence of the Shah and his governmental representatives would be directly seen and felt, and while the 'Ali Qapu from a distance could represent the machinery of the government, its interior was much more effective as an extension of the atmosphere in which the government operated. The interior decorations, then, are not a symbol, but are scaled to the group of people who activate the symbol of "the state". Thus the decorations must be subordinate to that group, who will themselves broadcast the message of the State symbolism, rather than being the media for communication as are the decorations in the two mosques which, in order to be effective, must be direct and aggressive.

C. The City Plan

To any visitor to the court of Shah 'Abbas, the area described by the Maydan and its accompanying structures can be taken to be the center of the city, and from its name, might well be the center of the world. From the analysis of the area and its structures, some new details can be added to this plan which support the supposition that, indeed, there is a 'view of the world' within this space. The outline of these details is seen in plan 31.

On the north side of the Maydan, and indeed surrounding and filling the square, is the commercial aspect of the society which Shah 'Abbas carefully supported. Two particular structures of this area must be mentioned. Both are behind the Bazaar portal, which as has been noted, is much less grandly decorated than the others of the Maydan wall. These two structures are the royal caravansarai and the mint, both discussed in Chapter One. The mint gives weight to the importance of the area, since it is the concrete center of the trading district and is run by the State.

The second structure, the royal caravansarai, as mentioned by Galdieri, is one of the centers for visitors to the city and one of the first places in which many of them would stay.[8] Its position at the north end of the Maydan gives support to his supposition that the Safavids used compulsory perspectives[9] with some deliberation, and positioned this 'hotel' in the bazaar district in order

to take best advantage of the planned view.

What the visitor saw, then, from the portal, was, to his right, the court or state, whose watch over the rest of society is kept from the 'Ali Qapu, which from his perspective, is the tallest building in the area. At the south end of the square is the building representing the religion, the Masjid-i-Shah, with its blue dome glittering, and the four minars proclaiming its function. The decoration sets it apart from the more mundane aspects of the square and makes a statement not only about the importance of the religion but of the Shah and his concern for the people who worship there.

Finally, on the left of the viewer is the Shaykh Lotfollah Mosque, a somewhat more anonymous place that, even though highly decorated, does not proclaim its purpose with minar or huge encompassing portal recess with pool. By its nature, and from its historical connection with the sadarat, both theology and law, it is the fourth keystone in the well ordered society.[10]

Thus, within the space of the Maydan is a three dimensional representation of the society: commerce, the state structure, religion and theology and law, all carefully planned to fit together into a harmonious and unified whole. The visitor receives a view of an immense space filled with the everyday interactions of the people surrounded by commerce, state, law and religion, yet also supported and protected by them.

The Shah, of course, received a somewhat different view which begins with his entry to the city through the Chahar Bagh.[11] The city is immediately recognizable as an ordered entity. Each garden is planted and designed according to his specifications (see Chapter One), and harmony and beauty predominate. From the palace precinct, the Shah can observe his ordered society laid out below him by mounting to the third floor eyvan balcony of the 'Ali Qapu. The visual perspective from here is as compulsory as that of the visitor, for though one is above the whole, the horizon is clearly limited by the Maydan wall straight ahead, with the Shaykh Lotfollah, and at an equal visual distance to the right is the south wall with the Masjid-i-Shah. This perspective would put the sadarat and the religion, two pillars of the power base, within comfortable reach.

In the preceeding sections of the conclusions it has been seen that each of the three major buildings of the Maydan could be designated as part of the symbols related directly to the Shah as head of the State and religion. The economic association represented by the Maydan wall itself, and the Bazaar district behind the north portal is somewhat less clear, but is, nevertheless, just as strong. As Savory points out in the article already cited in Studies on Isfahan, "...the Safavid shahs had become the largest capitalists in the state; they amassed goods in the royal workshops, and were

themselves major employers of labor; they made it a deliberate policy to attract European merchants to Iran by offering them security and favorable trading conditions; and they used 'their Armenian subjects as their trading agents for disposing of the chief exportable commodity, namely silk'."[12]

Thus, from the Maydan, one can see the encapsulated ordered view of the world, or Naqs-i Jahan suggested by the name of the district. Each building or complex, by its function and decoration is a facet of that view. Though each functions independently within its own sphere, each is a part of Iranian life and its order and unity, symbolized ultimately by the person of Shah 'Abbas.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Eskandar, History, p. 535-37.

[2] It certainly functions as a small mosque and always has. It is mentioned in the History as a mosque, and all the travelers from the west describe it as such. It is only recently that the question of its use as the 'personal chapel' of the Shah has come up.

[3] S. Nasr, in History of Muslim Philosophy, p. 920. The parentheses are mine.

[4] The form of Shi'a religion practiced in Iran is based on a belief in the enlightened nature of Muhammad, 'Ali and their heirs. They recognize twelve such men, the Twelve Imams (or spiritual leaders), the last of whom disappeared in 260/873-4. His return is still expected, and he is called the Hidden Imam.

[5] Eskandar, History, p. 1038. The parentheses are mine. Jerusalem, next to Mecca and Medina, is the holiest spot in Islam.

[6] Ibid, p. 523-33.

[7] Ramadan is the ninth month of the year wherein fasting is observed during the day and feasting in the evening.

[8] Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, p. 7-8, note 4.

[9] Compulsory perspectives are those which are defined or directed by architecture or plantings. They confine the view to a limited area set up by the surrounding objects or structures.

[10] There is no real separation between the various aspects of religion in Islam, but the division is made here, between the physical functioning of the worship of 'Allah represented by the Masjid-i-Shah (although the space was used in many ways), and the place in the bureaucracy that the sadarat had, which is represented by the Shaykh Lotfollah (though this building, too, was used in several of the same ways as the Masjid-i-Shah).

[11] It is obvious that 'Abbas' entry into the city was not necessarily through the Chahar Bagh, but it is the most convenient and direct route to the palace. Visitors also used this entry way.

[12] Savory, Studies on Isfahan, p. 196. The internal quotation is from Tadkhirat al-Muluk, trans. by V. Minorsky, (London, 1943), p. 14.

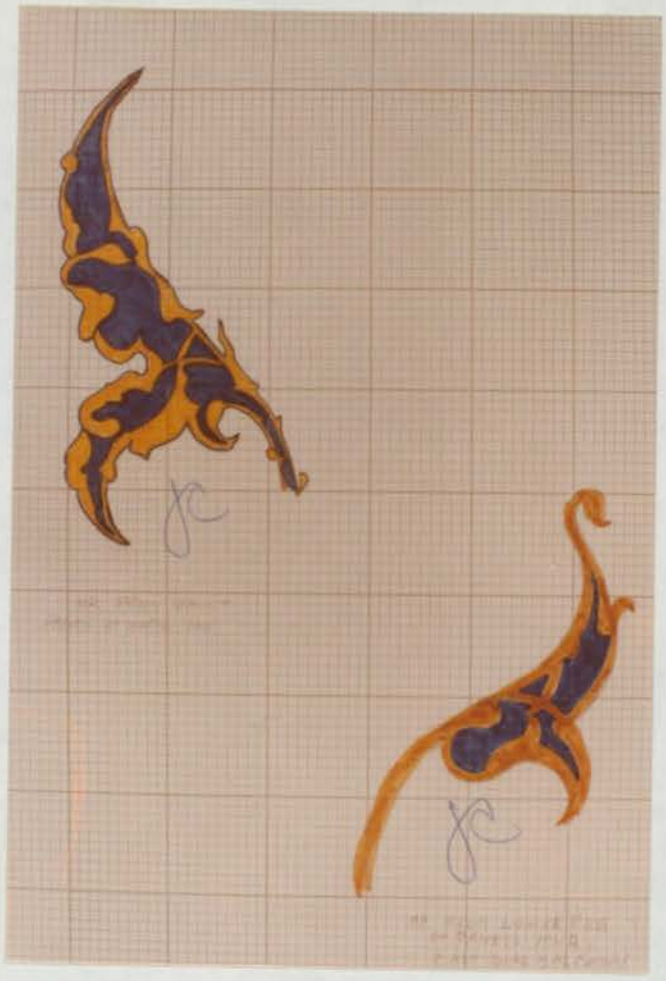


Plate One: Arabesque buds

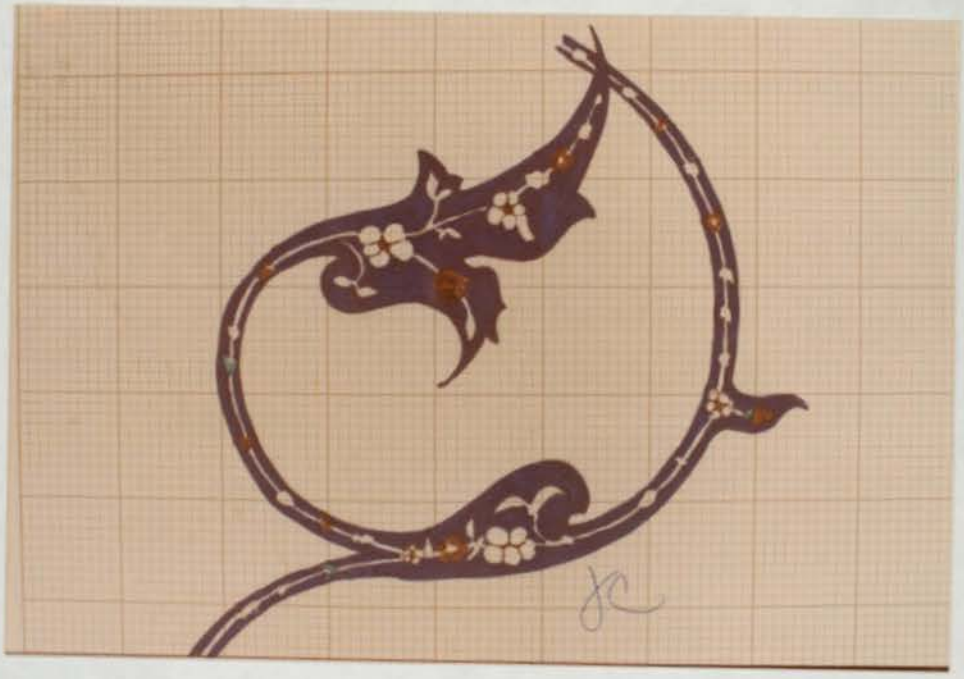


Plate Two: Arabesque vine, filled with floral vine

Plate Three: Yellow leaf palmette

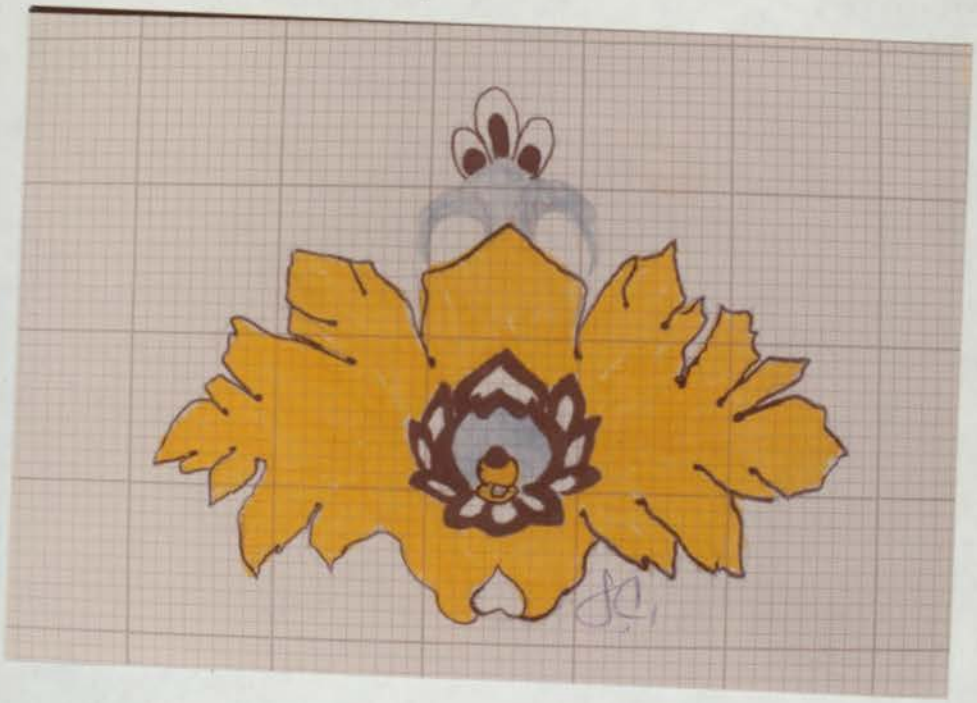


Plate Four: Lotus palmette

Plate Five: Tracery design with large cartouche

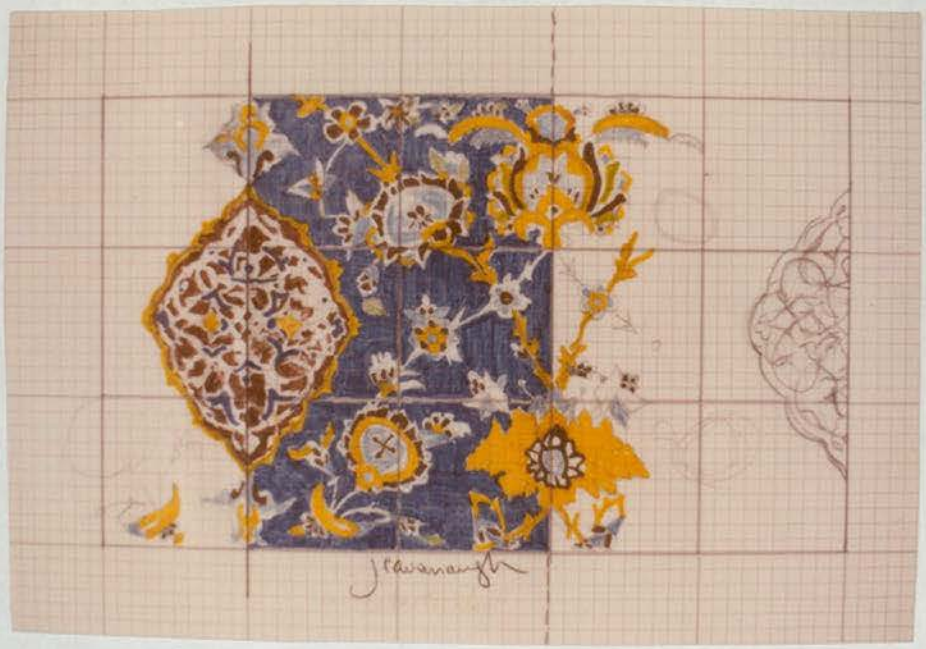


Plate Six: Medallion cartouche

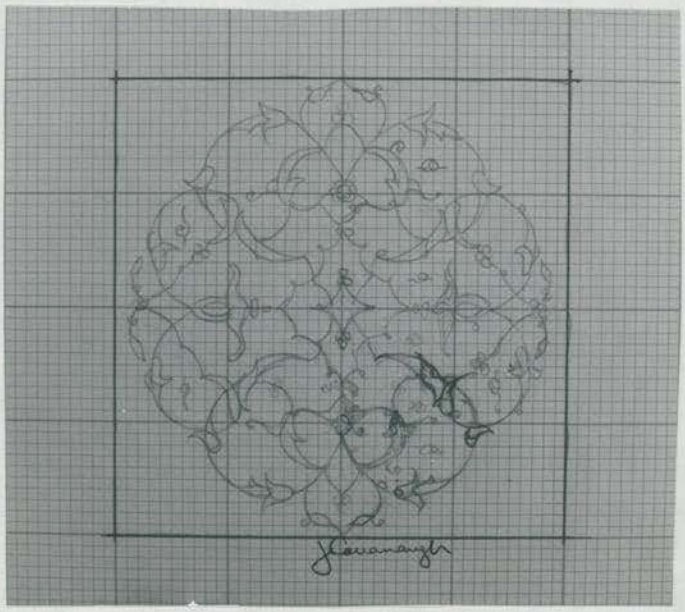


Plate Seven: Arabesque design on spandrel

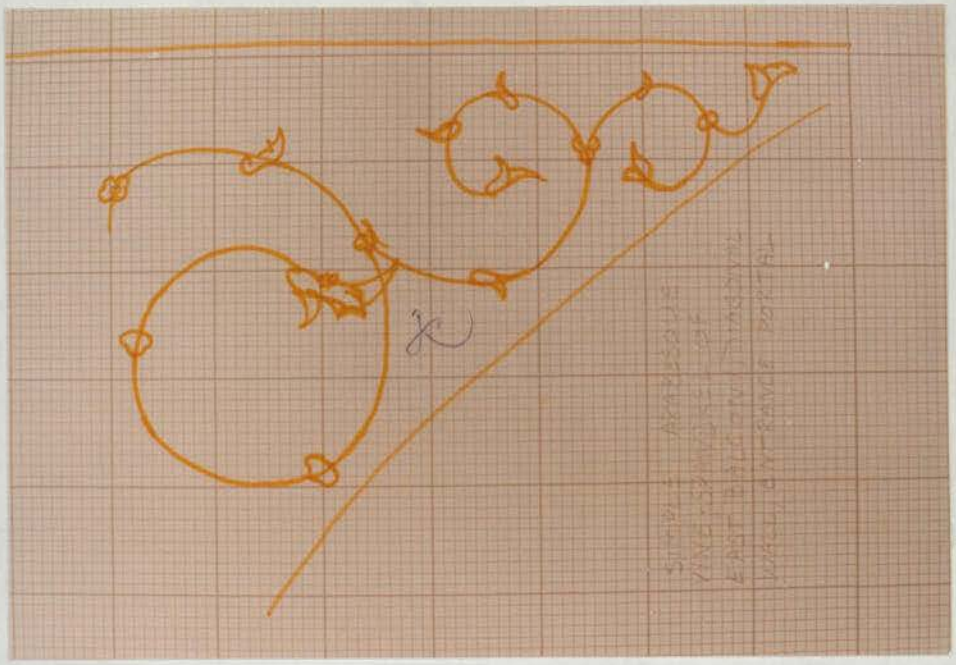


Plate Eight: Arabesque design on dome, Masjid-i-Shah minar cap

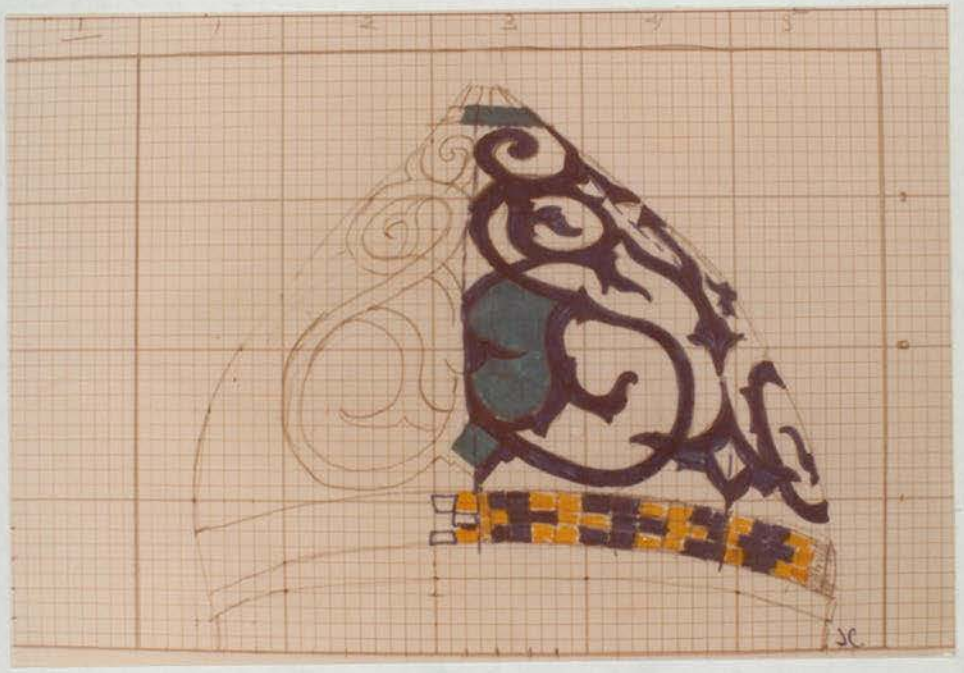


Plate Nine: Meander border design, Masjid-i-Shah minar, (detail of Fig. 74)

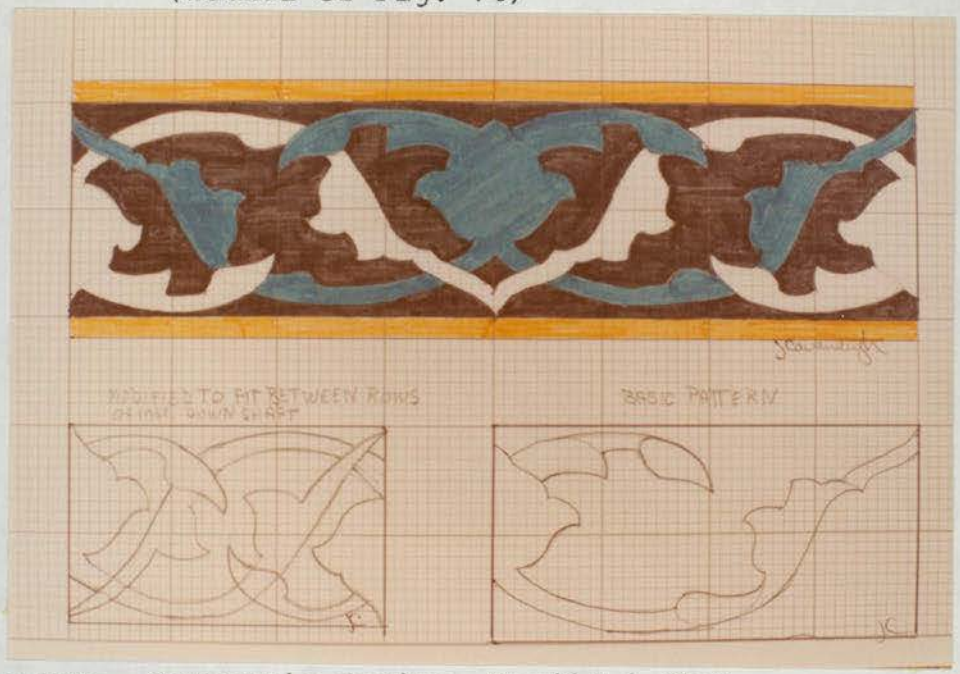
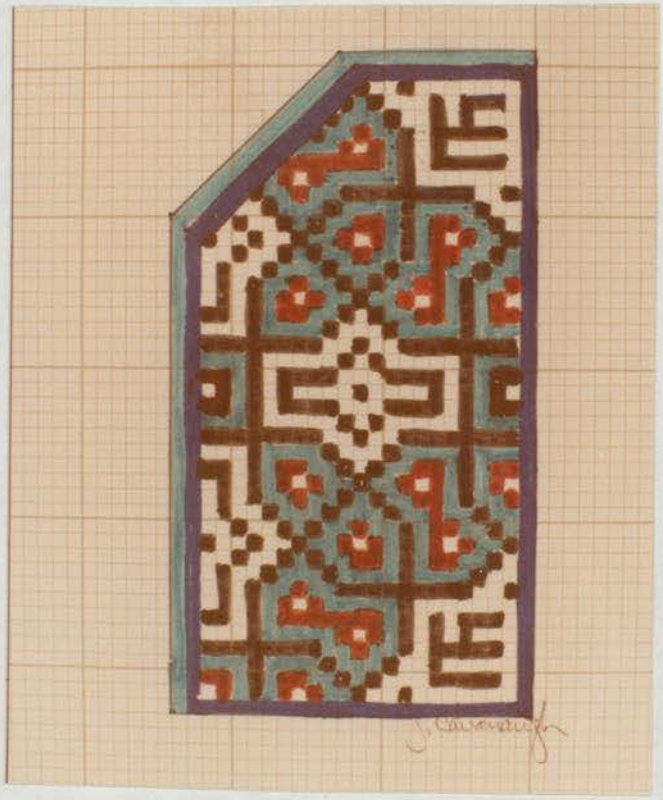


Plate Ten: Geometric design, Masjid-i-Shah



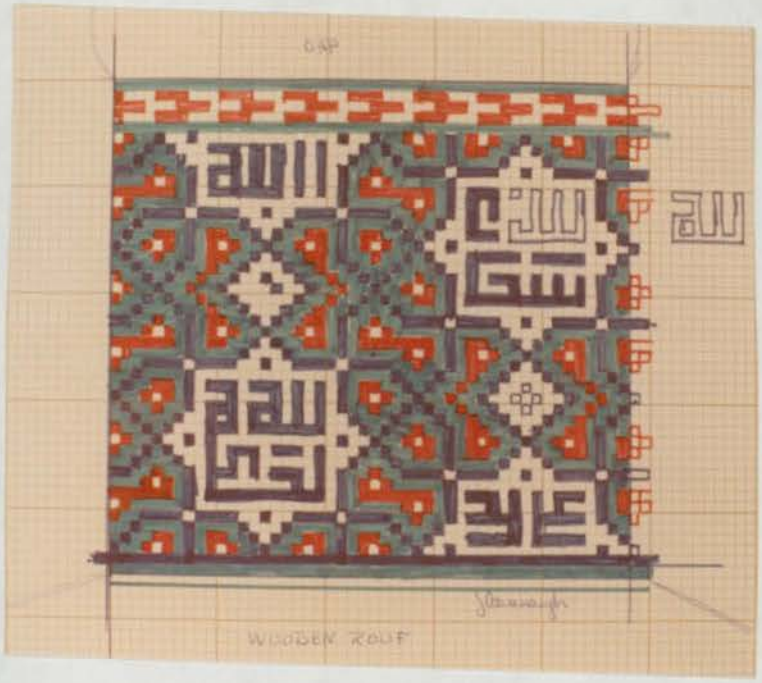


Plate Eleven: Geometric design with Kufic script, Masjid-i-Shah

Plate Twelve: Flower leaf design variations

Fig. 1. Mosaic faience muqarnas, Masjid-i-Shah
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 96)

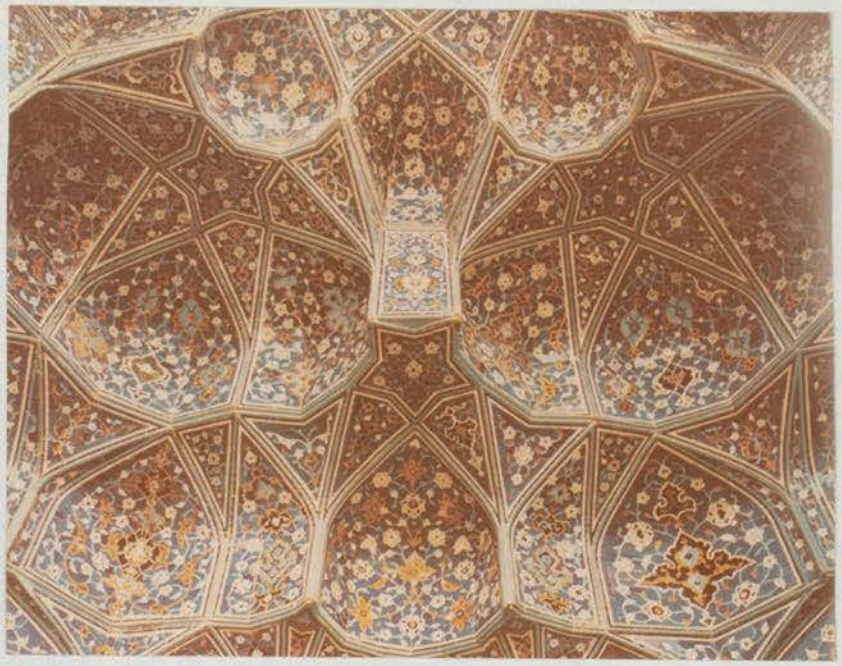


Fig. 2. Shaykh Lotfollah, interior of dome with Shamsa
(Pope, Architecture, p. 220)

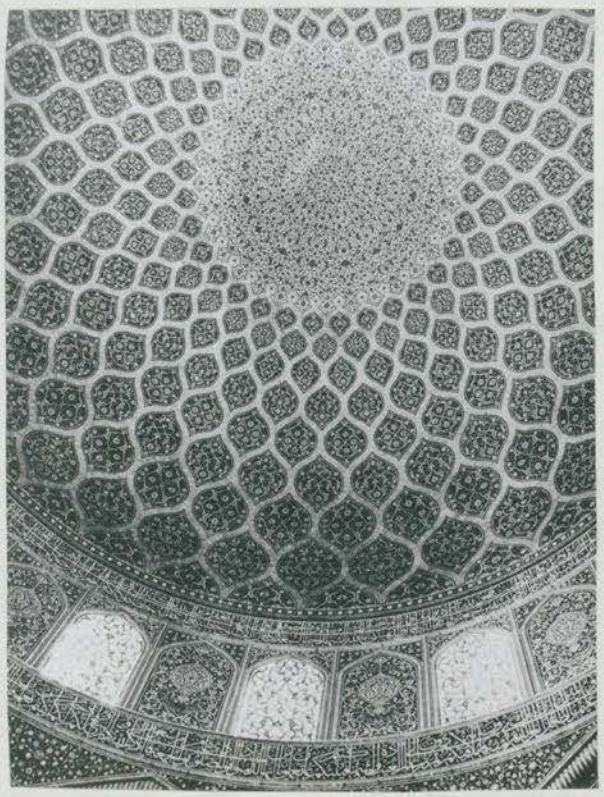


Fig. 3. Vase cartouche, mosaic faience.
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 37)

Fig. 4. Ardabil Carpet
(Dimand and Mailey, Oriental Rugs at the Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1973, Fig. 68)

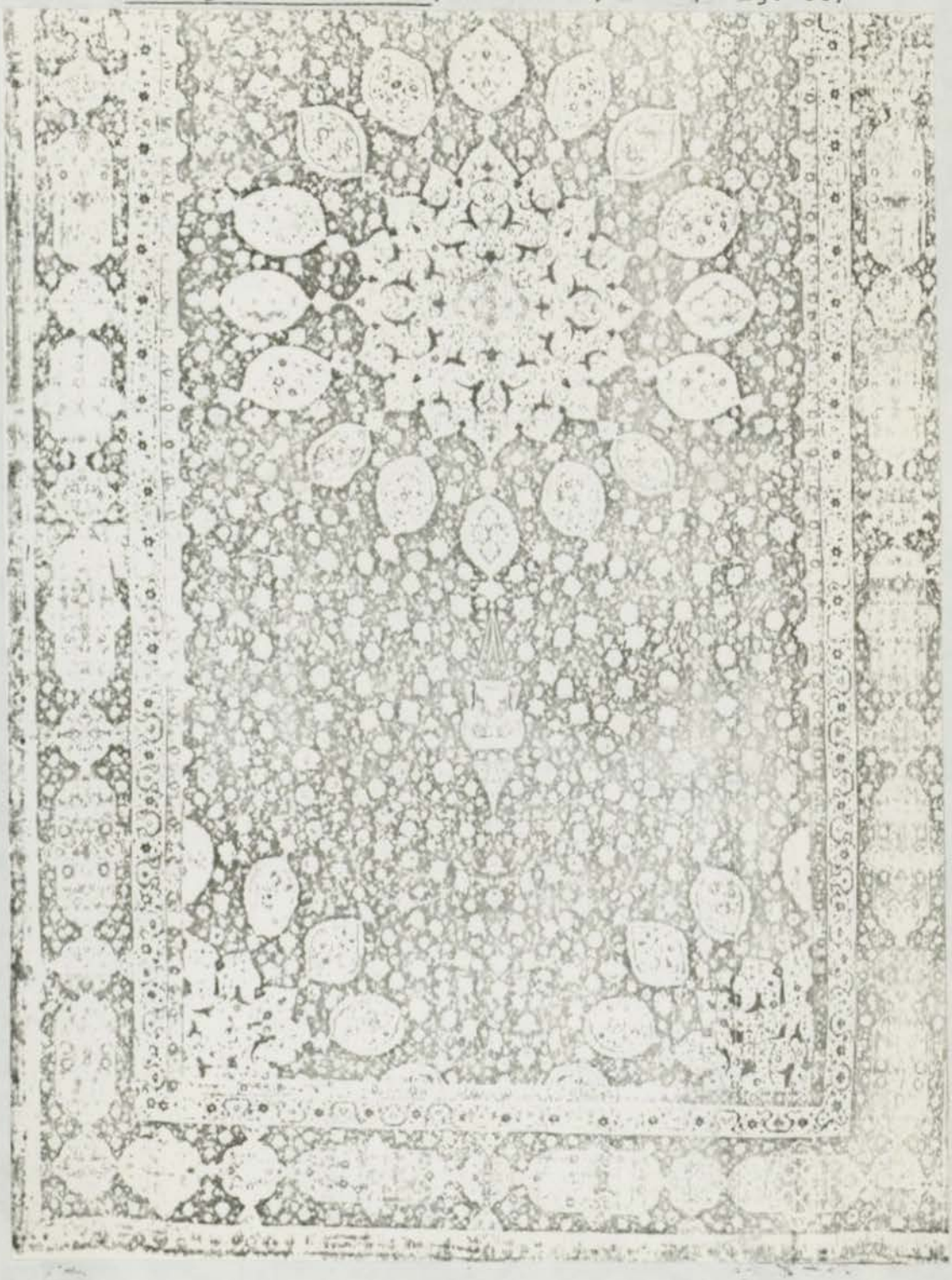


Fig. 5. Haft rangi, or polychrome tiles (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 125)

Fig. 6. Raised and painted plaster, 'Ali Qapu (Galdieri, Ali Qapu, no. 104)

Fig. 7. Mosaic faience window grill and geometric masonry, Shaykh Lotfollah
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 63)

Fig. 8. Shaykh Lotfollah drum panel: from top, thuluth, Kufic, geometric masonry (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 60)

Fig. 9. Imperial Bazaar portal
(Ardalan, Unity, p. 121)

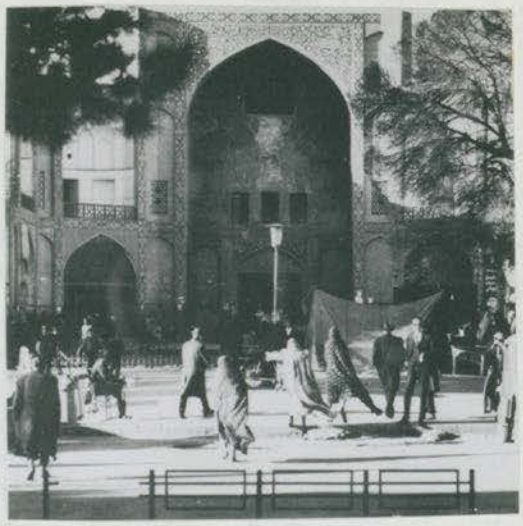


Fig. 10. Portal spandrel
(Holod, Studies on Isfahan, p. 341)

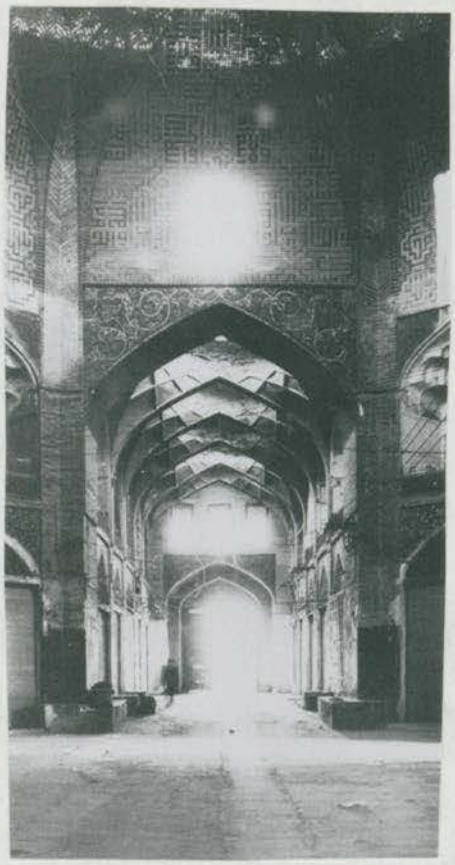


Fig. 11. Bazaar interior looking south to portal
(Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity, p. 119)

Fig. 12. 'Ali Qapu, Maydan facade
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, no. 1)

Fig. 13. 'Ali Qapu, atrium
(photo: IsMEO)

Fig. 14. 'Ali Qapu, main hall, floor three (photo: IsMEO)

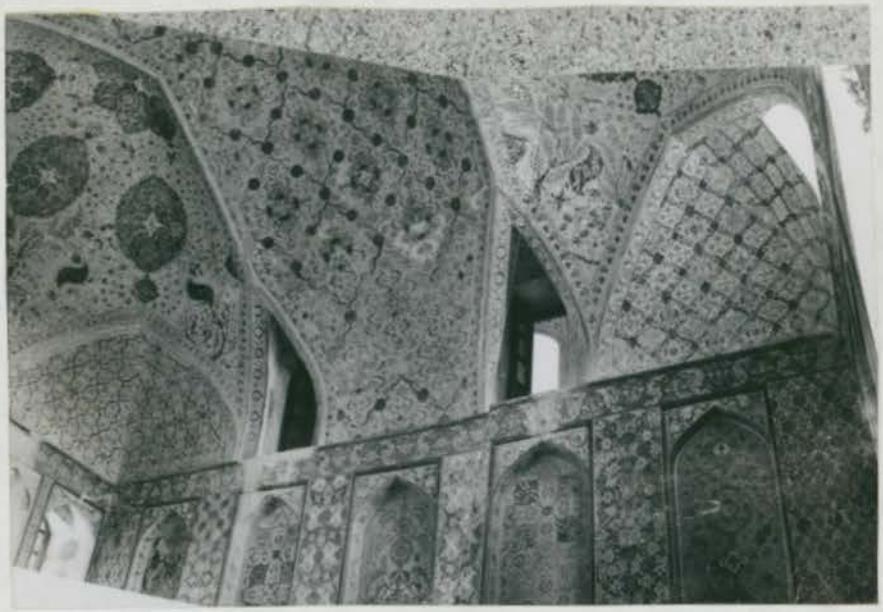


Fig. 15. 'Ali Qapu, room #15, fourth floor (Zander, Travaux, Fig. 68)

Fig. 16. 'Ali Qapu, Music Room, sixth floor
(photo: IsMEO)

Fig. 17. 'Ali Qapu, incised panels and raised plaster, sixth floor (photo: IsMEO)

Fig. 18. 'Ali Qapu, muqarnas ceiling, sixth floor (photo: IsMEO)

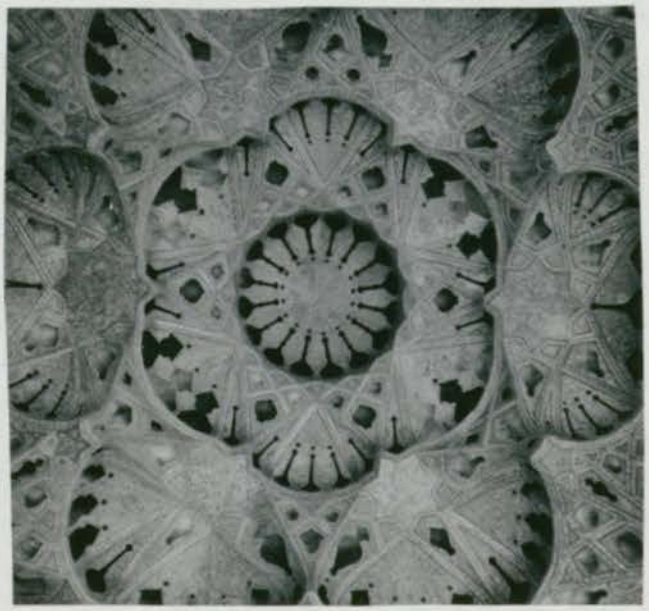


Fig. 19. 'Ali Qapu, room #20, fourth floor (photo: IsMEO)

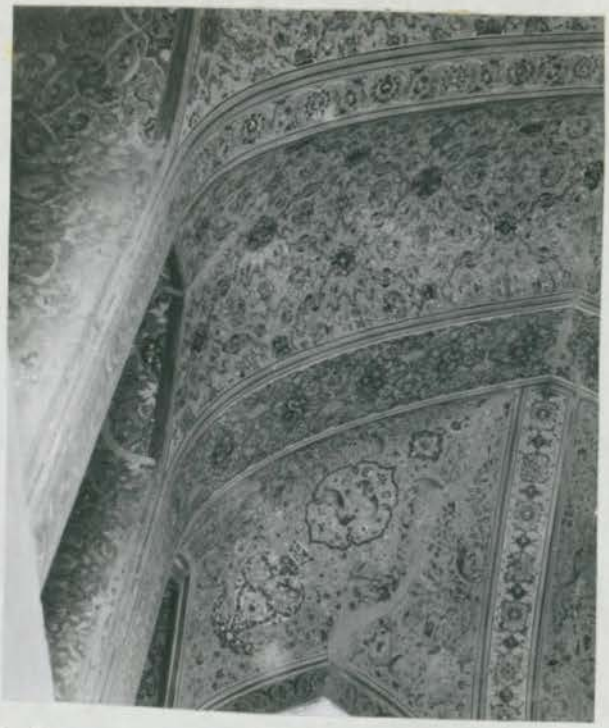


Fig. 20. 'Ali Qapu, room #12, third floor (photo: IsMEO)

Fig. 21. 'Ali Qapu, original decoration of entrance eyvan (Zander, Travaux, Fig. 52)

Fig. 22. 'Ali Qapu, original decoration of entrance eyvan (Zander, Travaux, Fig. 53)

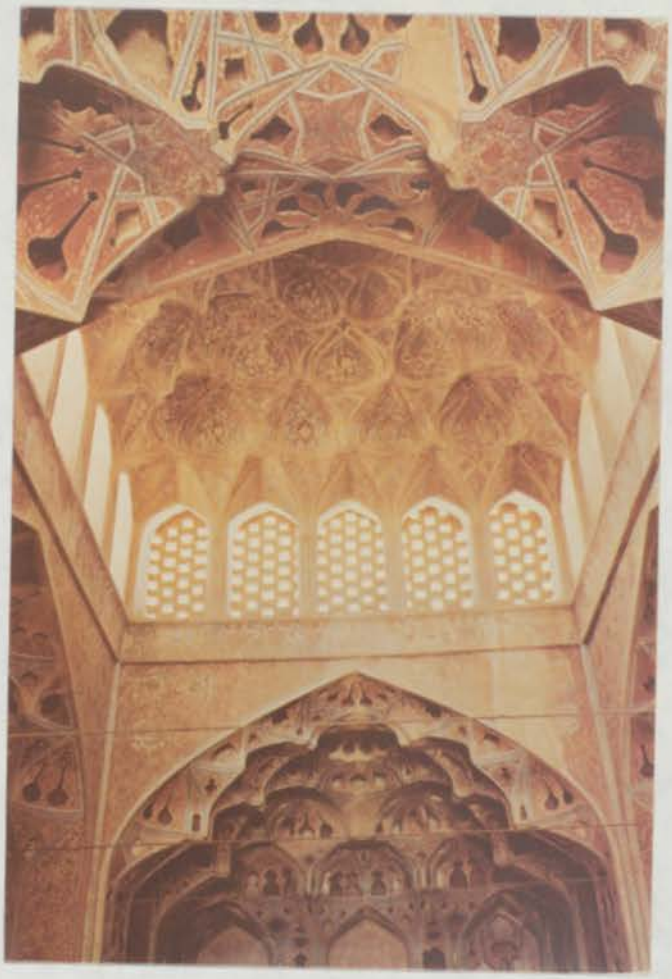


Fig. 23. 'Ali Qapu, Music Room, sixth floor
(Pope, Architecture, Plate XXX)

Fig. 24. 'Ali Qapu, raised and painted plaster, sixth floor (photo: IsMEO)

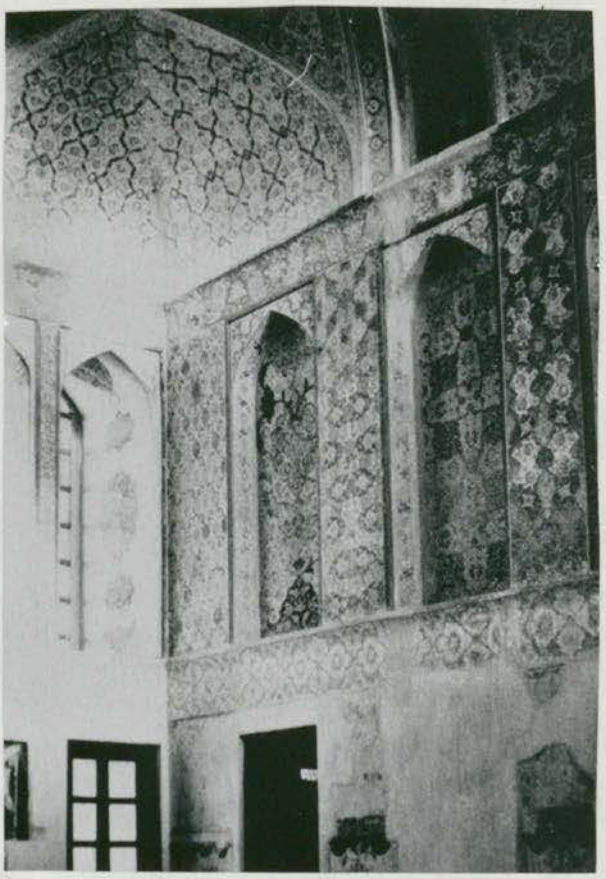


Fig. 25. 'Ali Qapu, main hall, third floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 62)

Fig. 26. 'Ali Qapu, room #18, fourth floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 69)

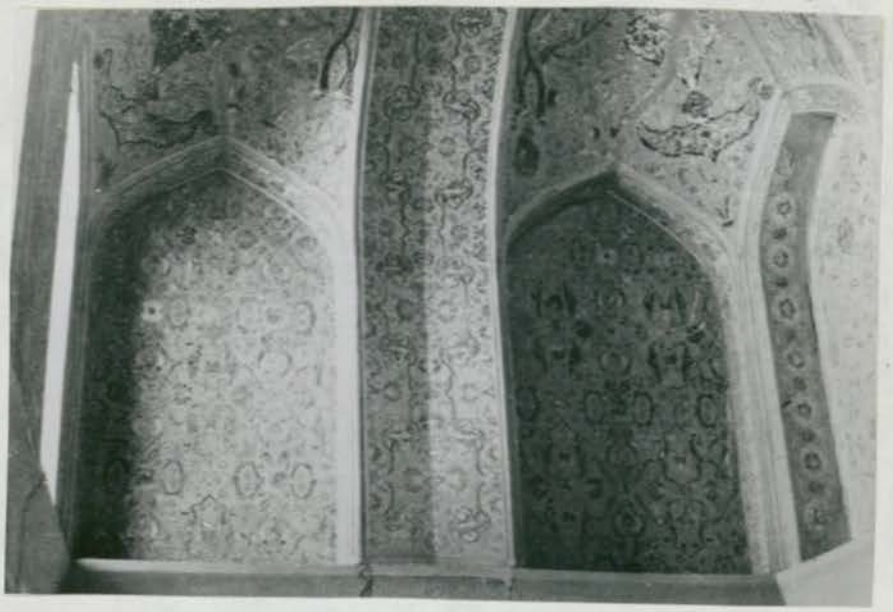


Fig. 27. 'Ali Qapu, room #13, third floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 71)

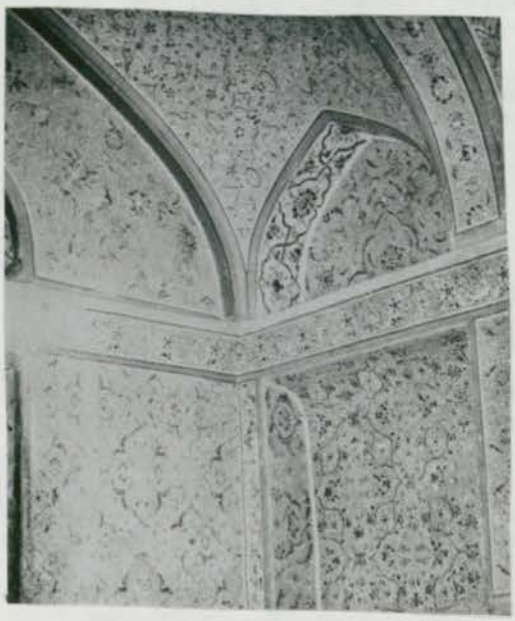


Fig. 28. 'Ali Qapu, rooms 21 and 25, fifth floor (Zander, Travaux, Fig. 70)

Fig. 29. 'Ali Qapu, mural with reclining figure in musicians' gallery, sixth floor (Holod, Studies on Isfahan, p. 537)

Fig. 30. 'Ali Qapu, spiral stairway (Hunt and Harrow, Iran II, p. 81)

Fig. 31. 'Ali Qapu, atrium, ground floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 58)

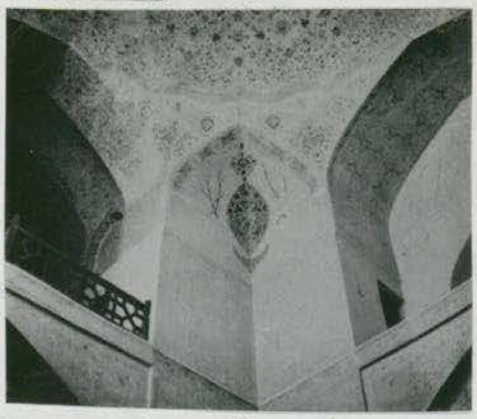


Fig. 32. 'Ali Qapu, construction phases
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, #I-Va)

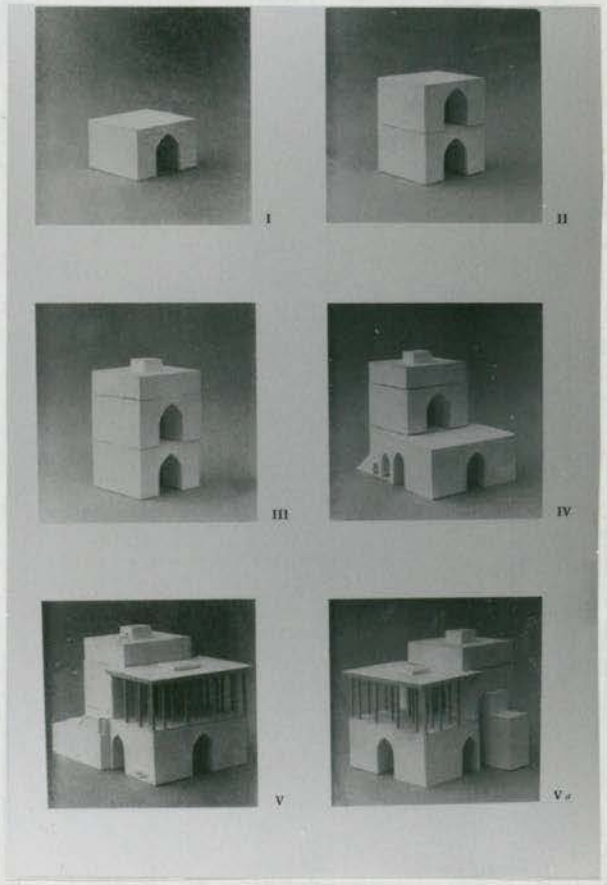


Fig. 33. 'Ali Qapu, detail of ceiling panel, main hall, third floor (photo: IsMEO)

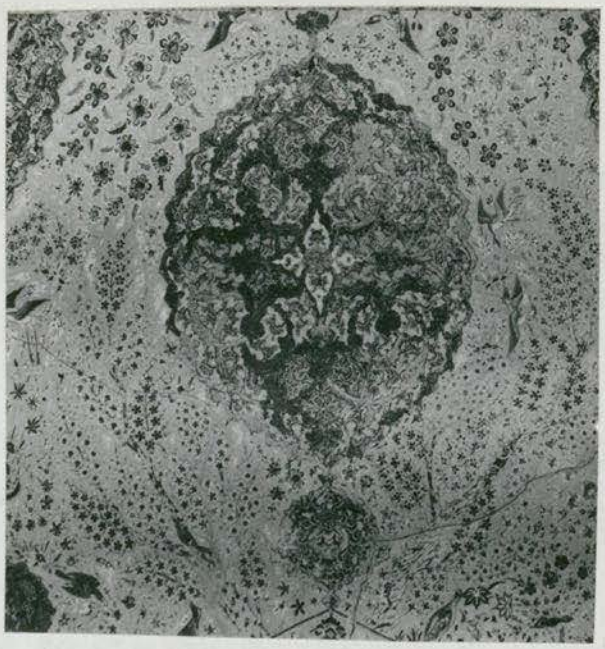


Fig. 34. 'Ali Qapu, original decoration of entrance eyvan facade (Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, no. 7)

Fig. 35. 'Ali Qapu, detail of ceiling panel, main hall, third floor (photo: A. Welch)

Fig. 36. 'Ali Qapu, detail of animal panel (photo: A. Welch)

Fig. 37. 'Ali Qapu, detail of ceiling panel, main hall, third floor (photo: A. Welch)

Fig. 38. 'Ali Qapu, room #18, fourth floor (photo: A. Welch)

Fig. 39. 'Ali Qapu, south eyvan niche of Music Room, sixth floor; detail of Fig. 23 (photo: IsMEO)

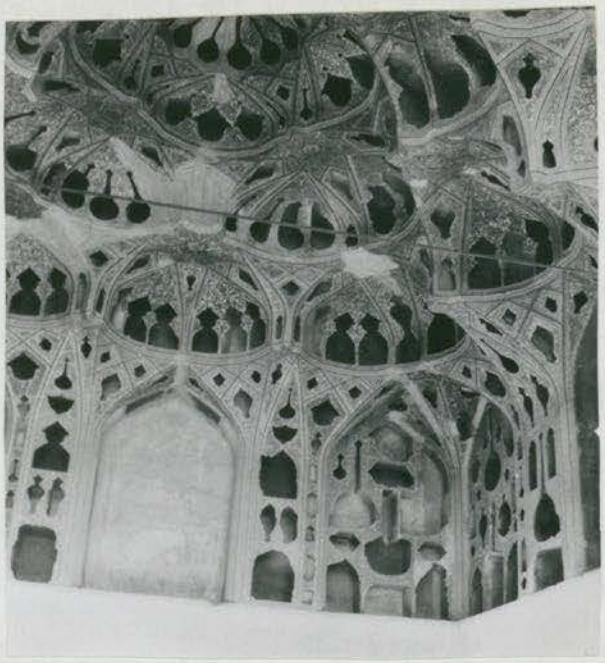


Fig. 40. 'Ali Qapu, ceiling of turret, Music Room, sixth floor (photo: IsMEO)

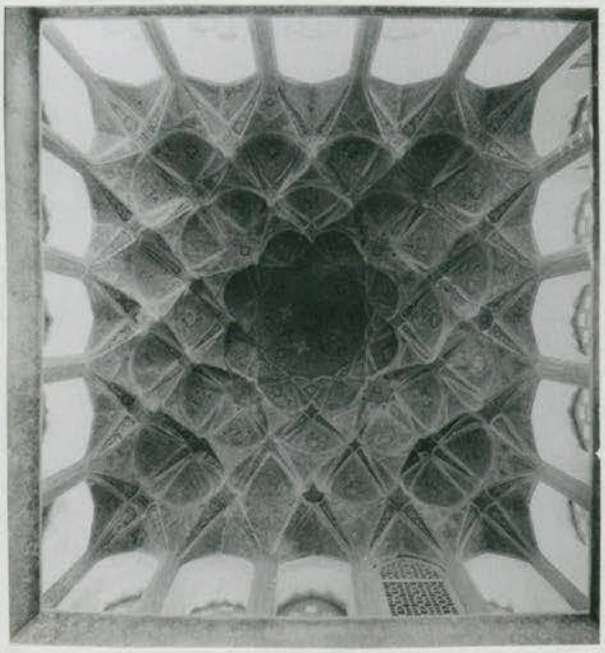


Fig. 41. 'Ali Qapu, rotating sun brickwork pattern, original Maydan facade (Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, Fig. 7)

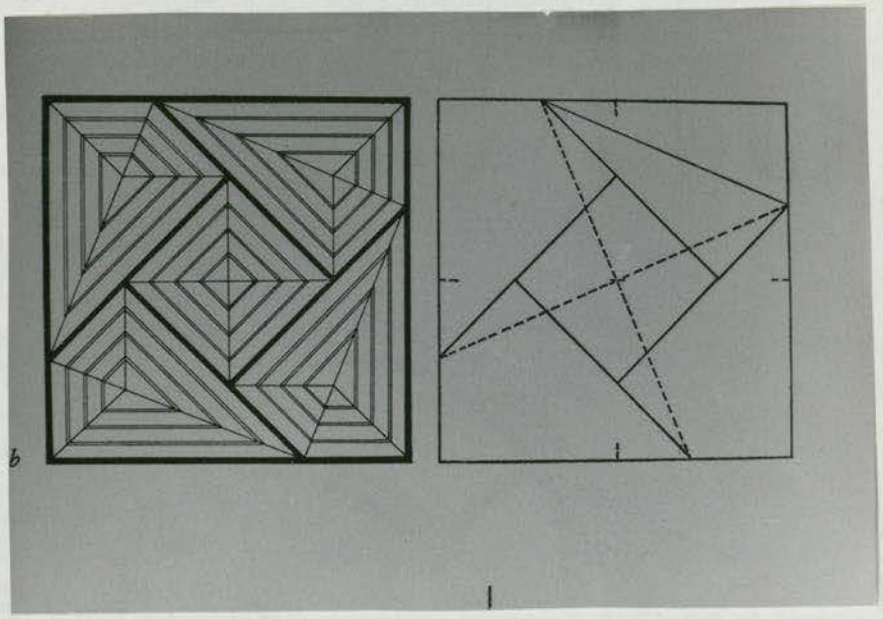


Fig. 42. 'Ali Qapu, rotating sun brickwork, original Maydan facade (Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, no. 5)

Fig. 43. Shaykh Lotfollah, Maydan portal
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 53)

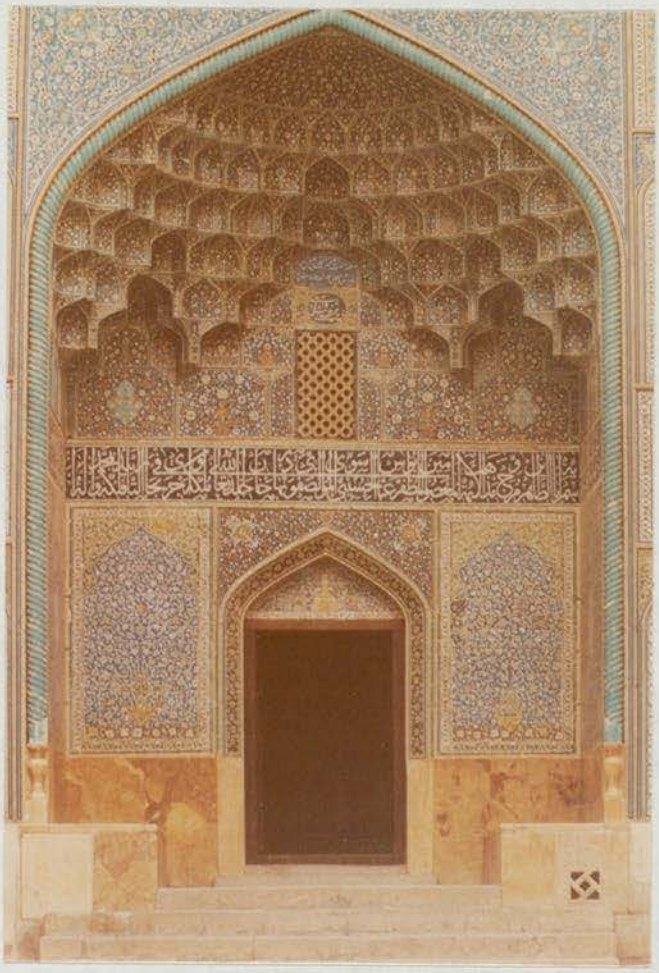


Fig. 44. Shaykh Lotfollah, entrance eyvan
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 57

Fig. 45. Shaykh Lotfollah, interior of sanctuary (Pope, Architecture, p. 218)

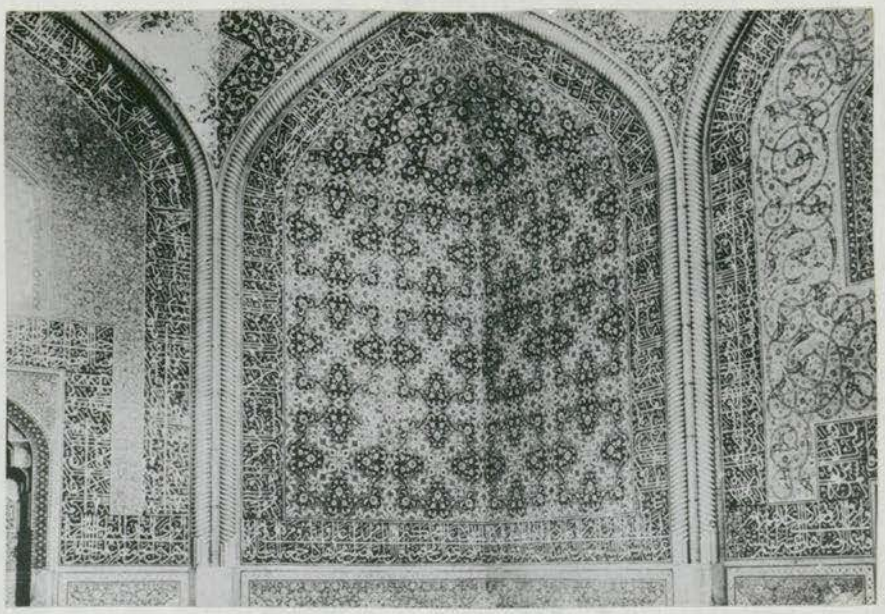
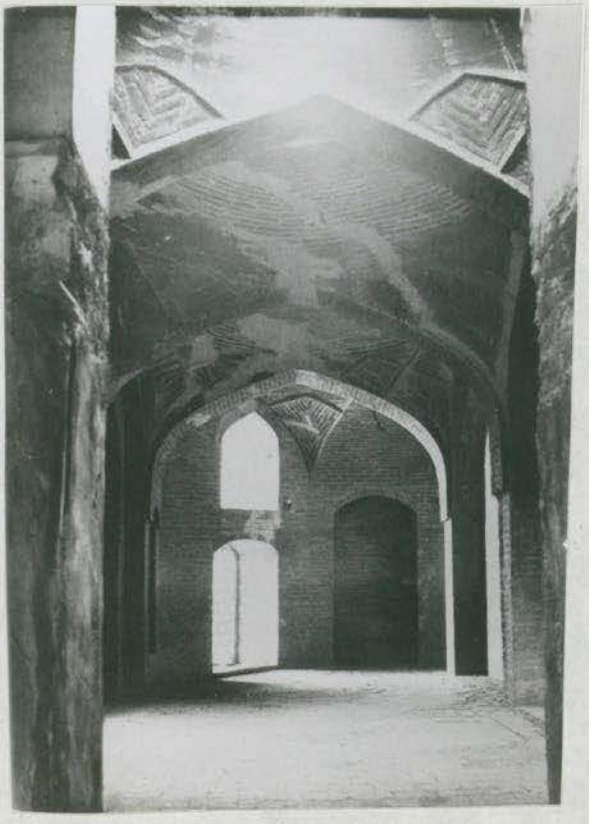


Fig. 46. Shaykh Lotfollah, hallway, second floor (Godard, Athar-e Iran, p. 433)



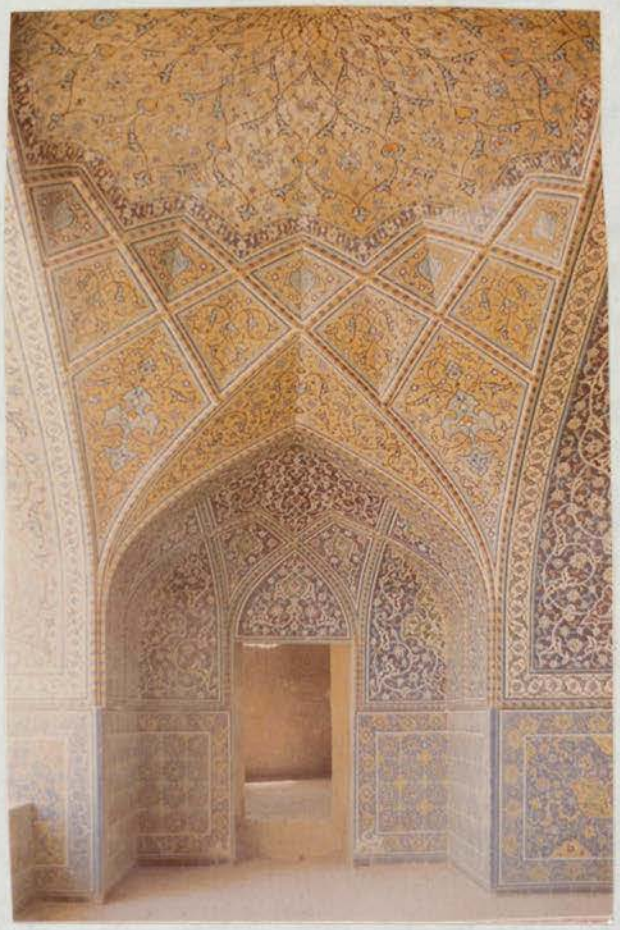


Fig. 47. Shaykh Lotfollah, balcony of sanctuary
(Pope, Architecture, Plate XXII)

Fig. 48. Shaykh Lotfollah, sanctuary, interior of dome (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 65)

Fig. 49. Shaykh Lotfollah, entrance eyvan (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 55)

Fig. 50. Shaykh Lotfollah, sanctuary mihrab
(Stierlin, Ispahan. p. 68)

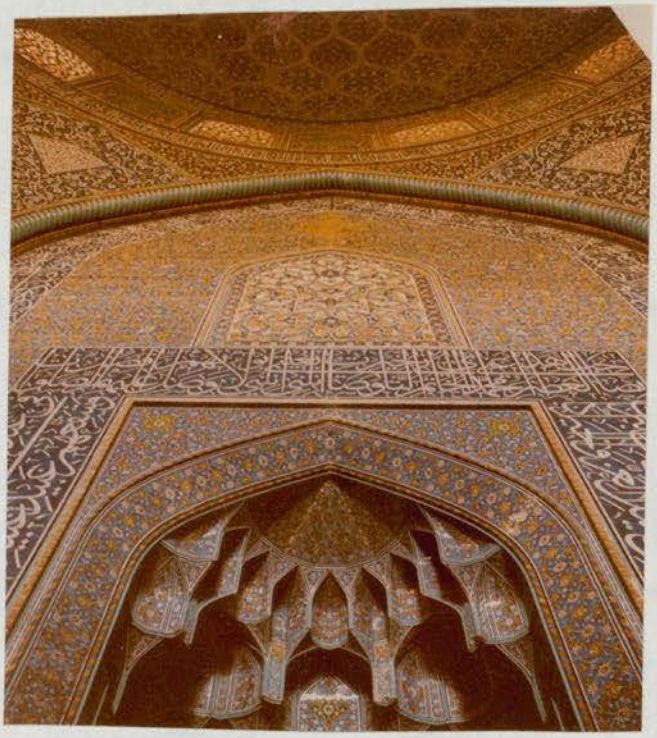


Fig. 51. Shaykh Lotfollah, restoration work in progress, early twentieth century
(Galdieri, East and West, Fig. 7)

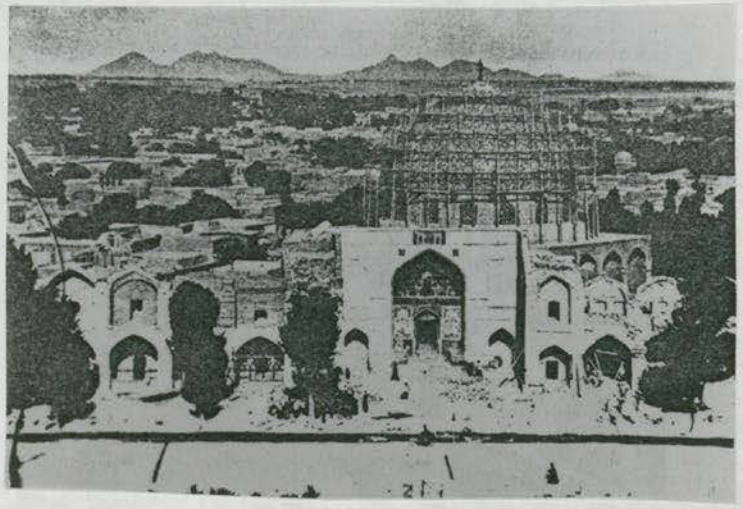


Fig. 52. Blue Mosque, Tabriz
(Pope, Architecture, p. 205)

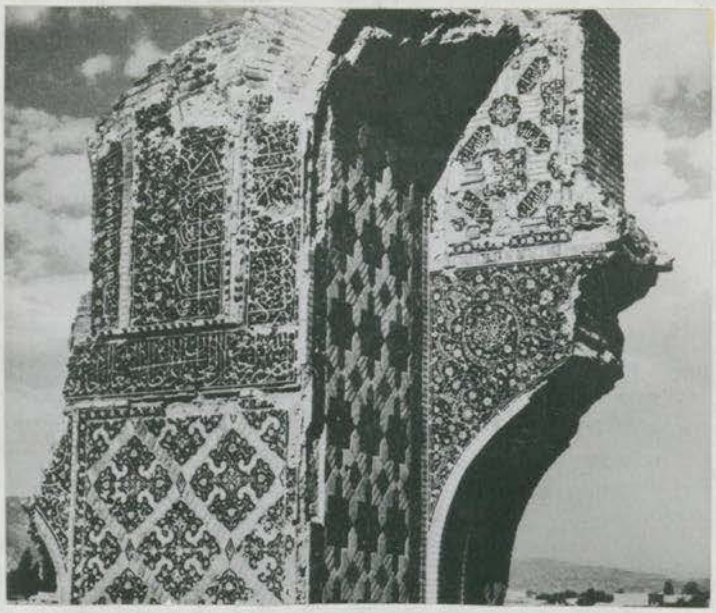


Fig. 53. Blue Mosque, Tabriz
(Pope, Architecture, Plate XVII)

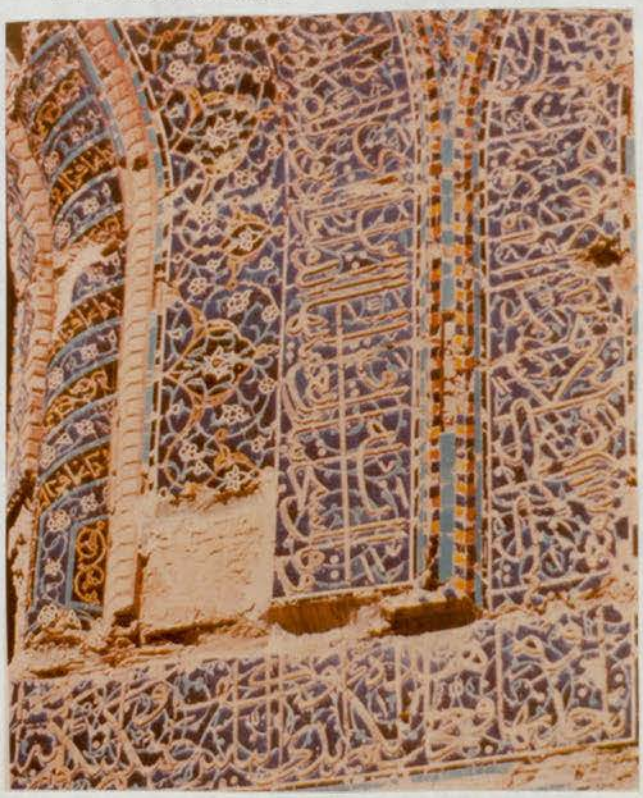


Fig. 54. Gawhar Shad Mosque, Meshhed
(Pope, Architecture, p. 202)

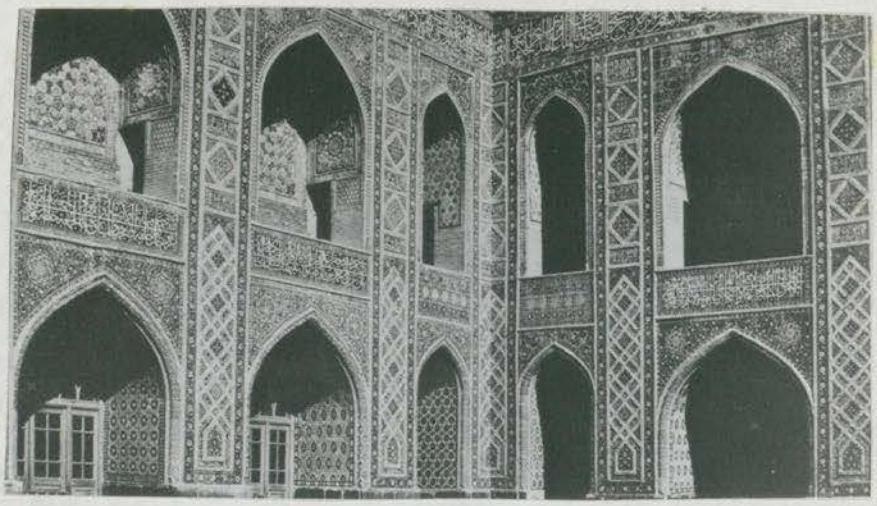


Fig. 55. Masjid-i-Shah, aerial view from southwest
(Vogt-Goknil, Mosquees, p. 99)

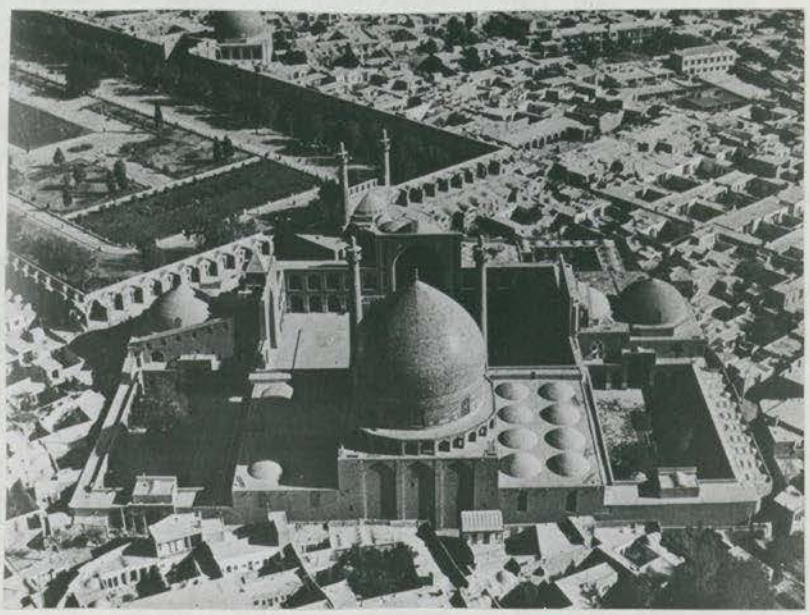


Fig. 56. Masjid-i-Shah, Maydan portal
(Pope, Architecture, p. 212)

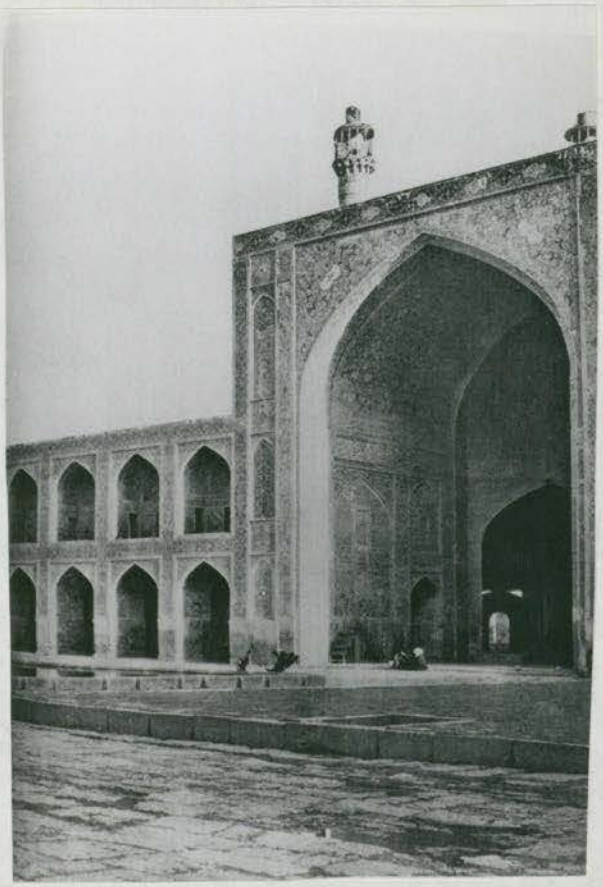


Fig. 57. Masjid-i-Shah, northeast courtyard eyvan (Pope and Ackerman, Survey, p. 468)

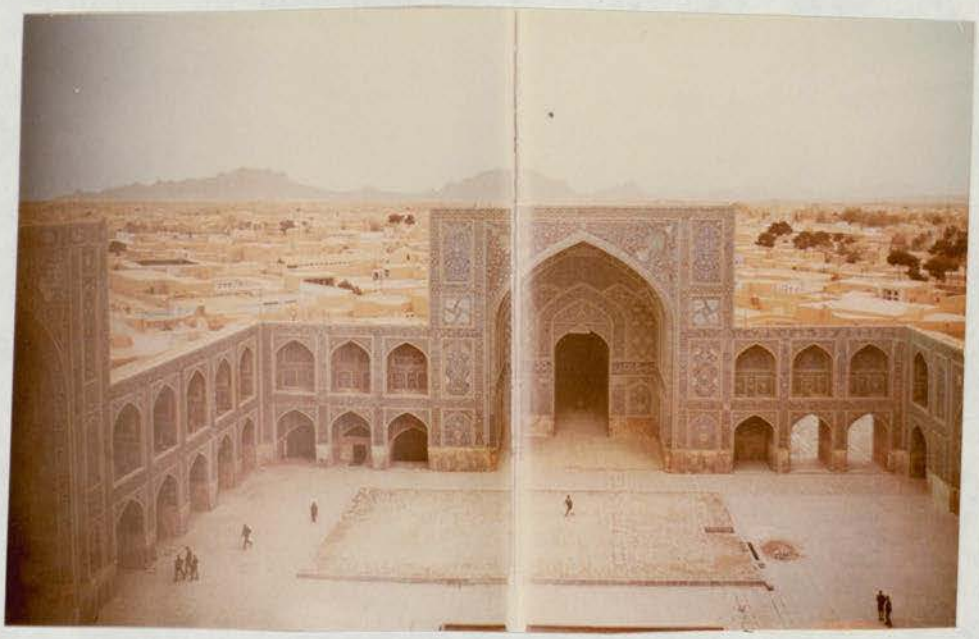


Fig. 58. Masjid-i-Shah, courtyard with southeast eyvan (DuRy, Art of Islam, p. 220)

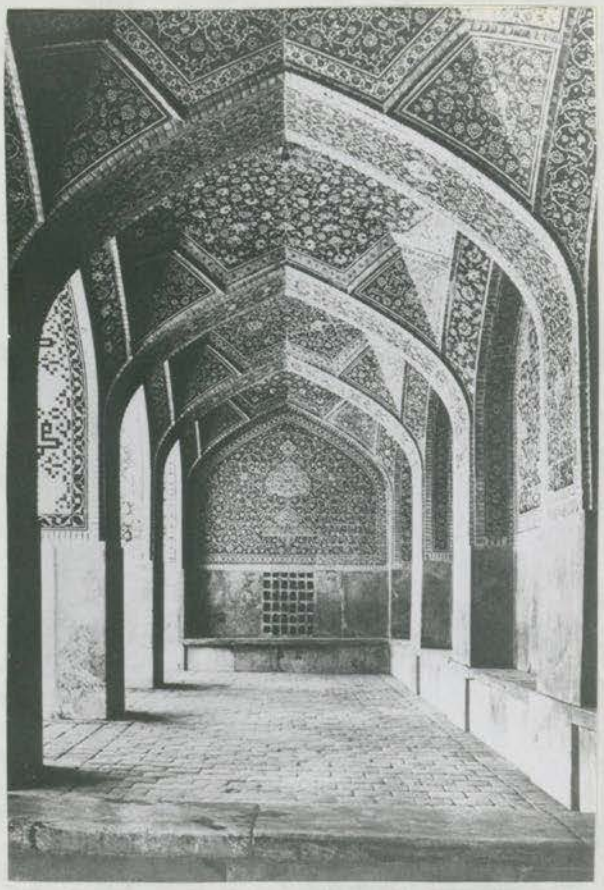


Fig. 59. Masjid-i-Shah, interior of courtyard arcade (Vogt-Goknil, Mosquees, p. 108)

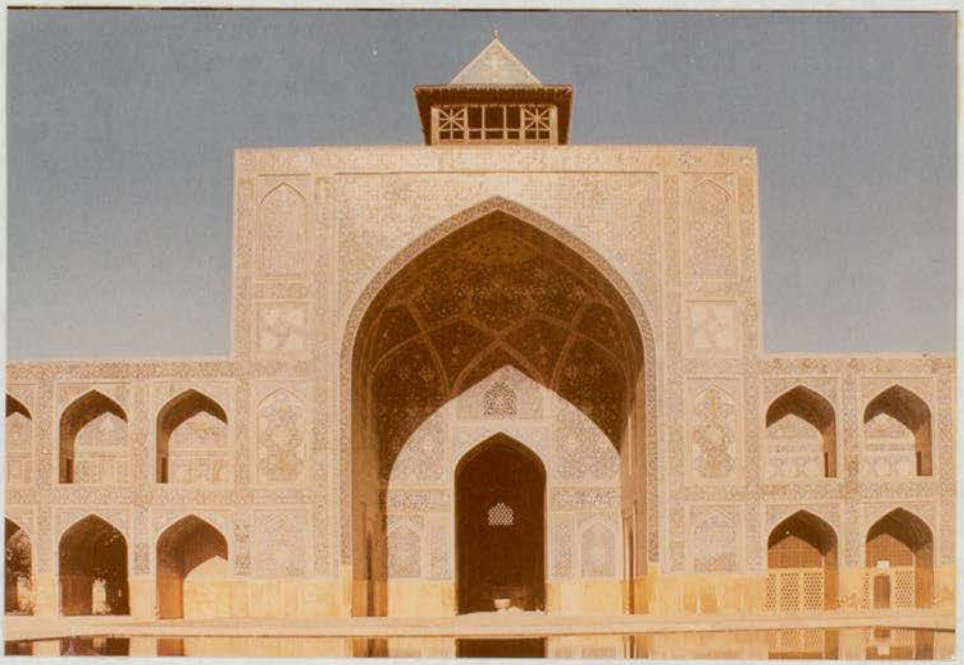


Fig. 60. Masjid-i-Shah, northwest courtyard eyvan
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p.113)

Fig. 61. Masjid-i-Shah, southwest, or sanctuary eyvan (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 99)

Fig. 62. Masjid-i-Shah, interior of sanctuary
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 141)

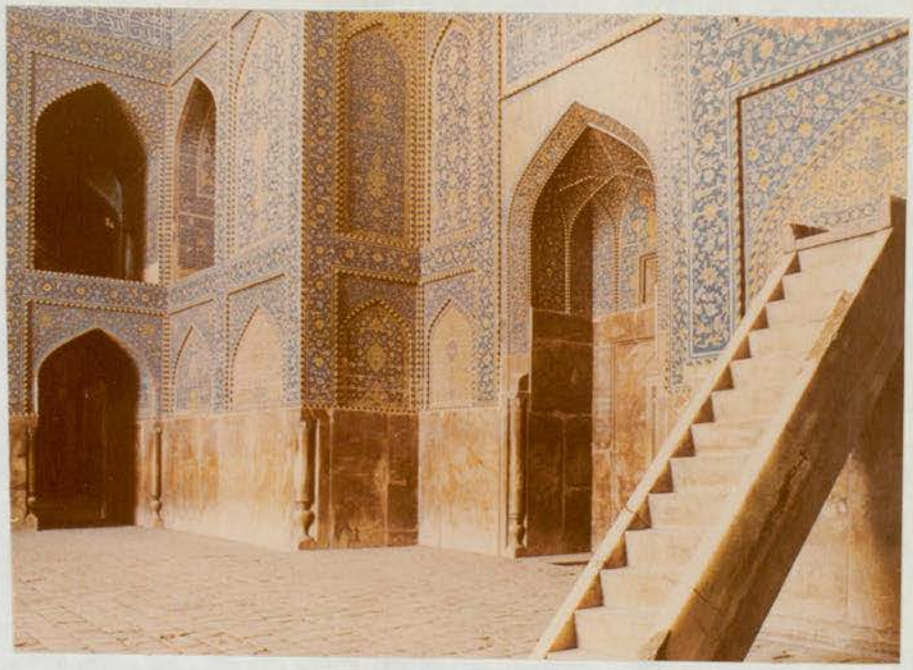
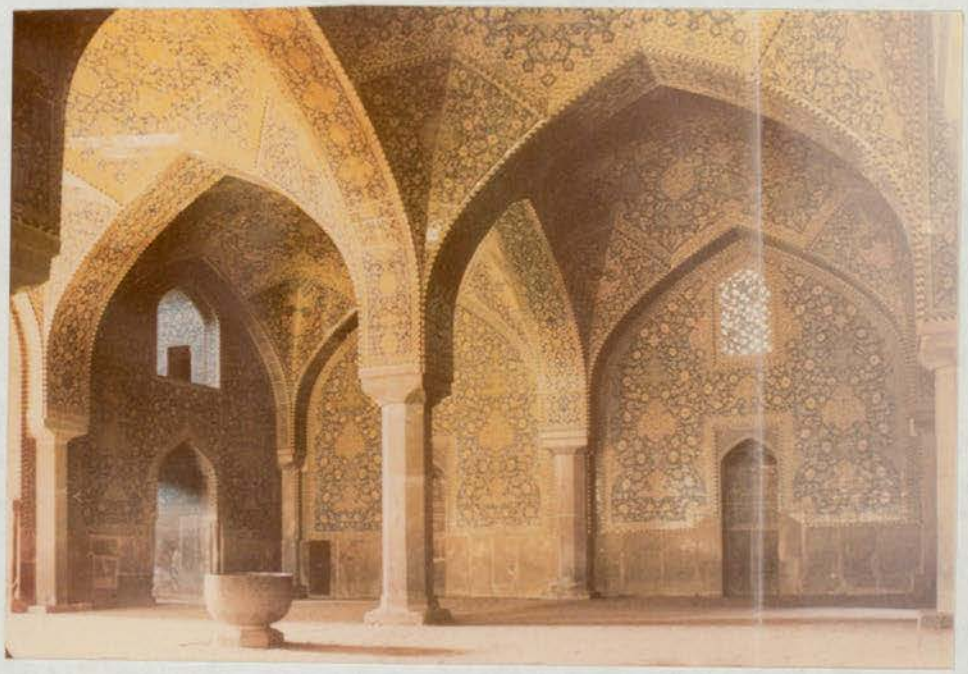


Fig. 63. Masjid-i-Shah, west side prayer hall
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 130)



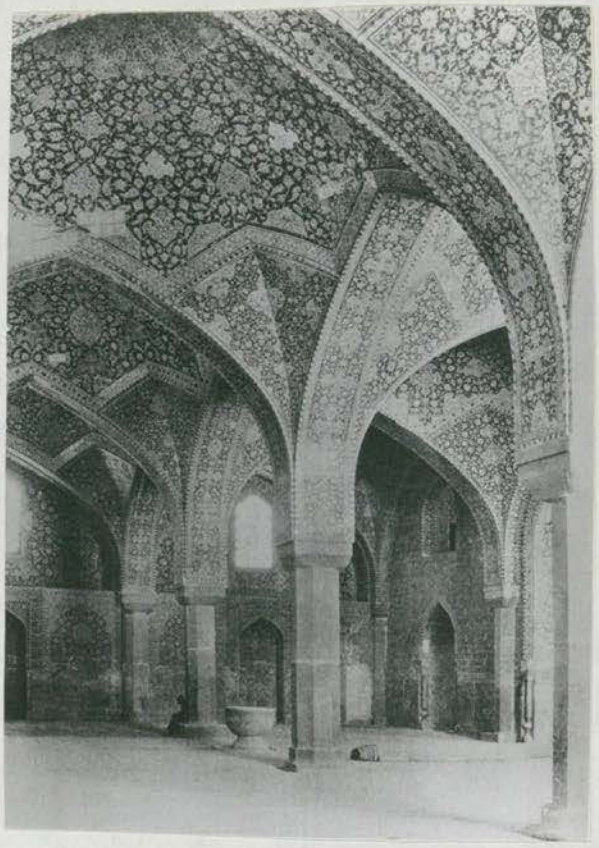


Fig. 64. Masjid-i-Shah, east side prayer hall
(Pope and Ackerman, Survey, p. 469)

Fig. 65. Masjid-i-Shah, west side courtyard (Holod, Studies on Isfahan, p. 395)

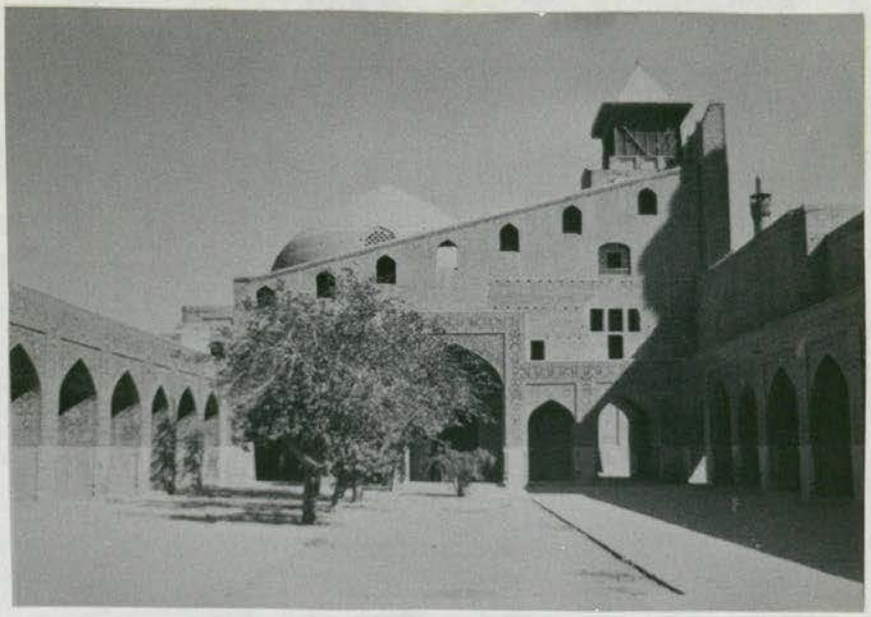
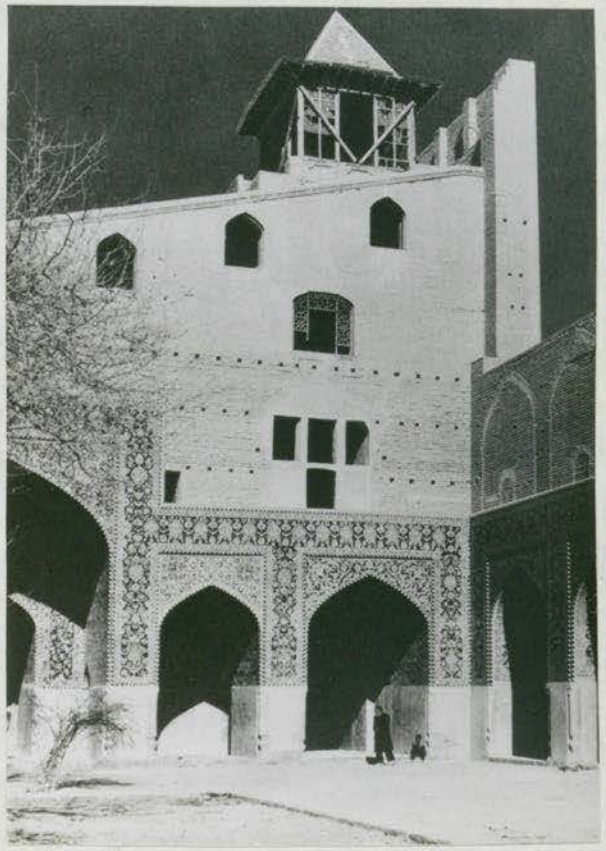


Fig. 66. Masjid-i-Shah, west side courtyard, detail of Fig. 65. (Blunt, Isfahan, Pearl of Persia, p.75)



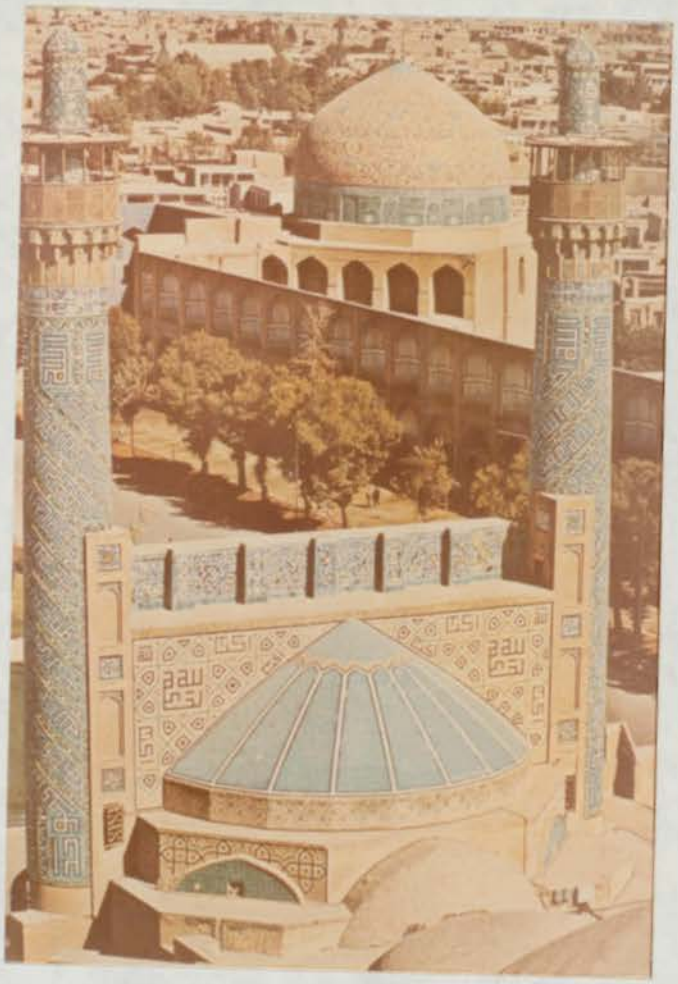


Fig. 67. Masjid-i-Shah, south face of entrance portal (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 81)

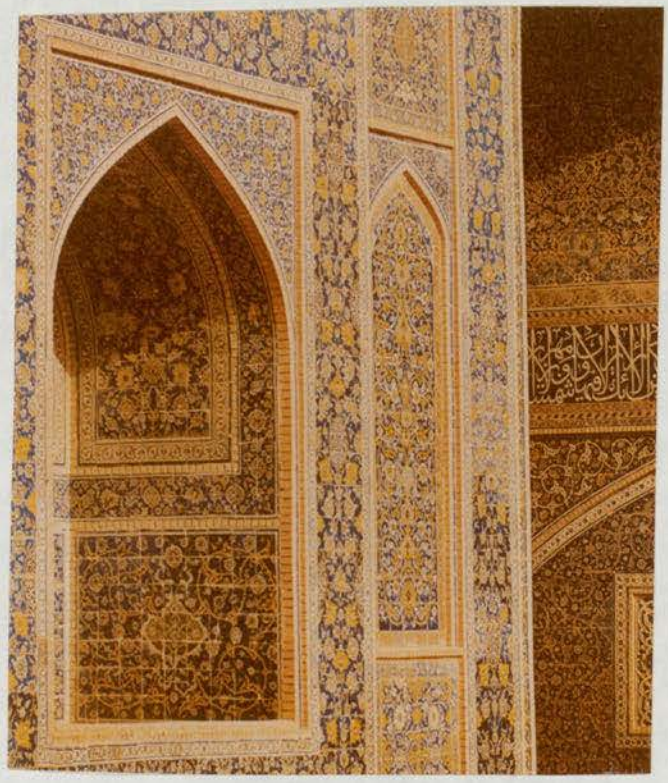


Fig. 68. Masjid-i-Shah, balcony of northeast courtyard arcade and interior of northeast courtyard eyvan (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 104)

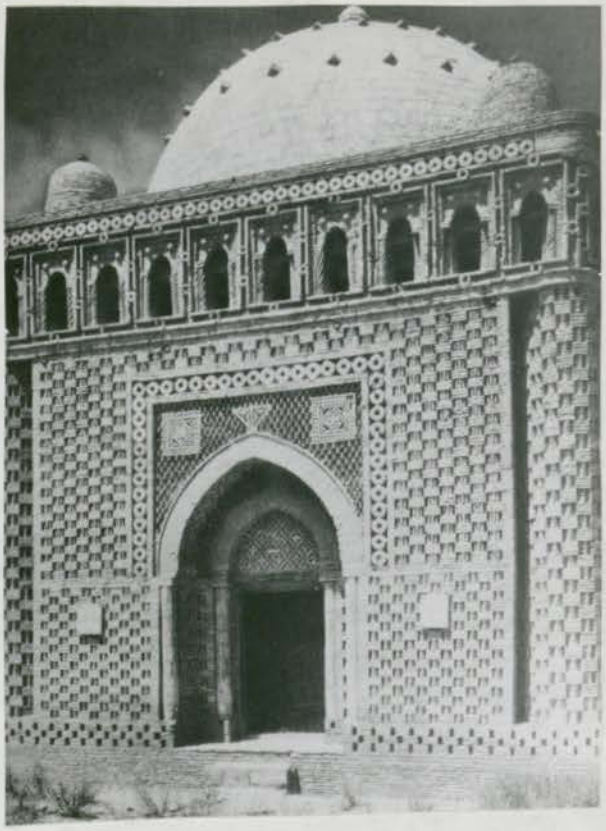


Fig. 69. Tomb of Isma'il Samanid, Bukhara
(Pope, Architecture, p. 83)

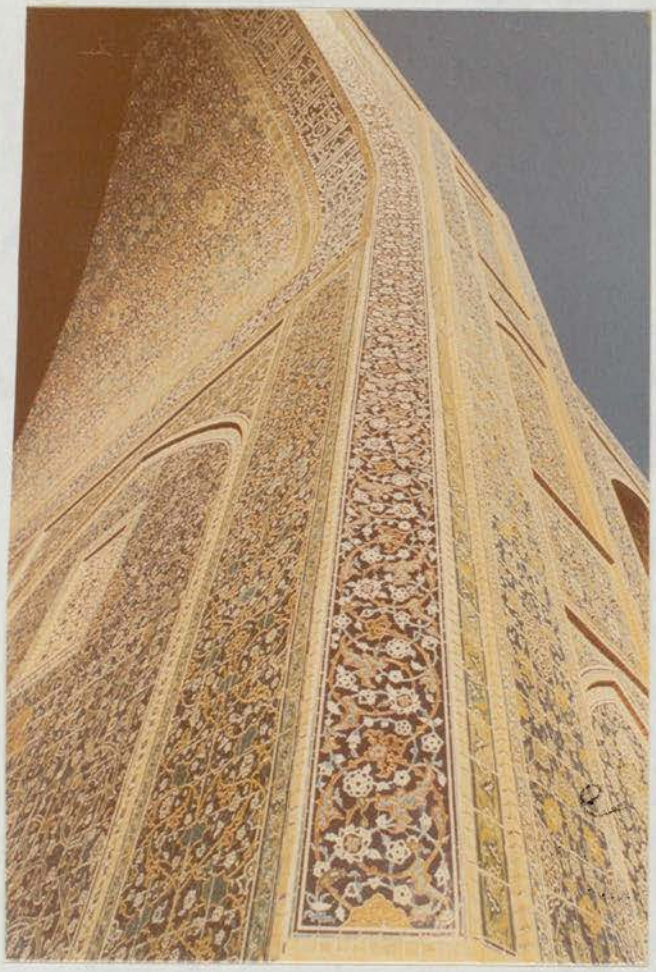


Fig. 70. Masjid-i-Shah, splay of northeast courtyard eyvan (Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 109)

Fig. 71. Safavid rug
(Welch, Shah 'Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan, p. 83)

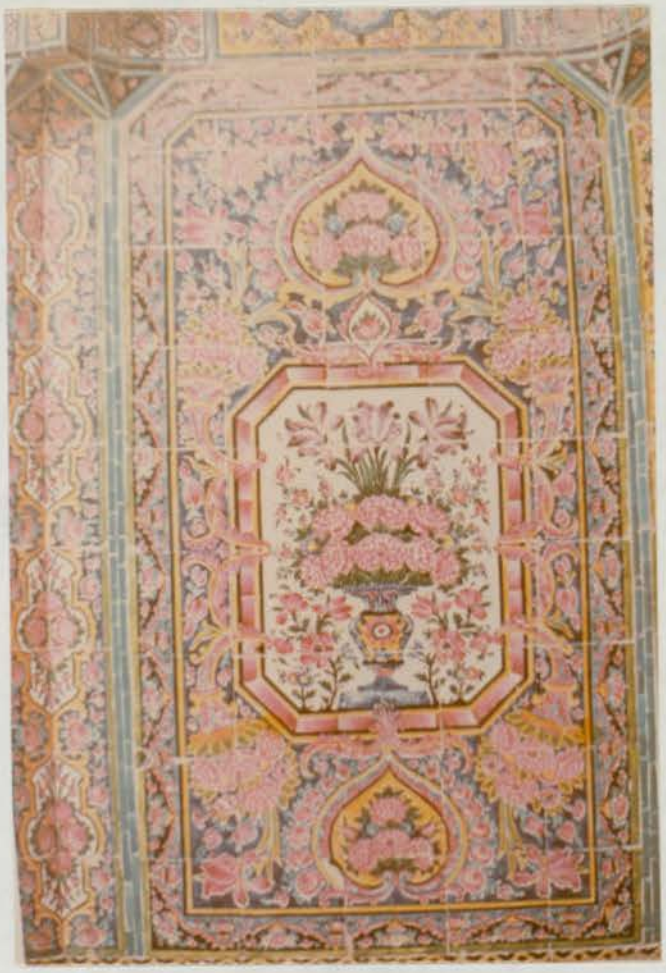


Fig. 72. Polychrome tiles, late eighteenth century (Hunt and Harrow, Iran II, p. 100)

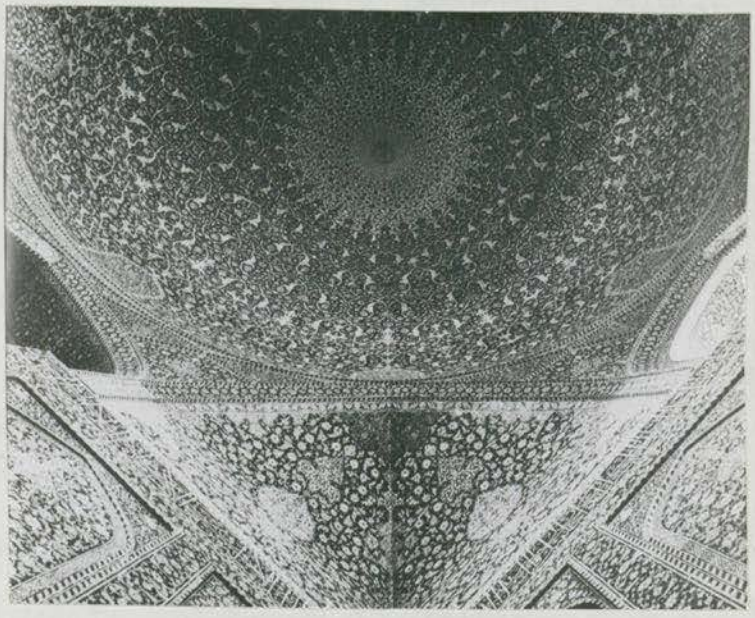


Fig. 73. Masjid-i-Shah, interior of sanctuary and dome (Vogt-Goknil, Mosquees, p. 113)

Fig. 74. Masjid-i-Shah, minar shaft and cap
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 101)

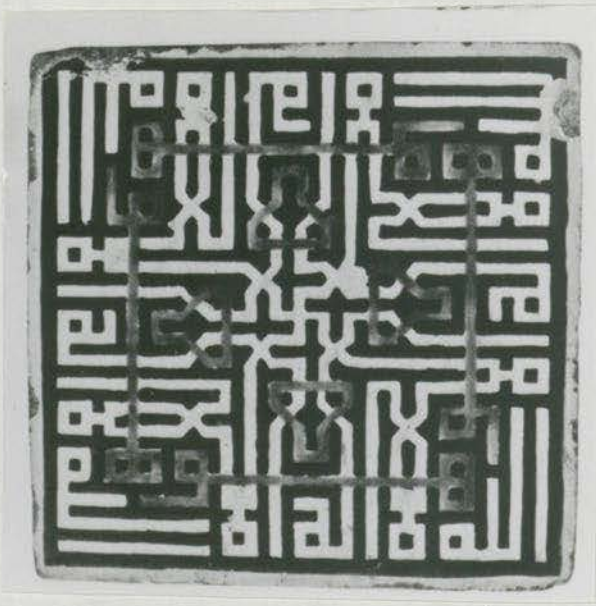
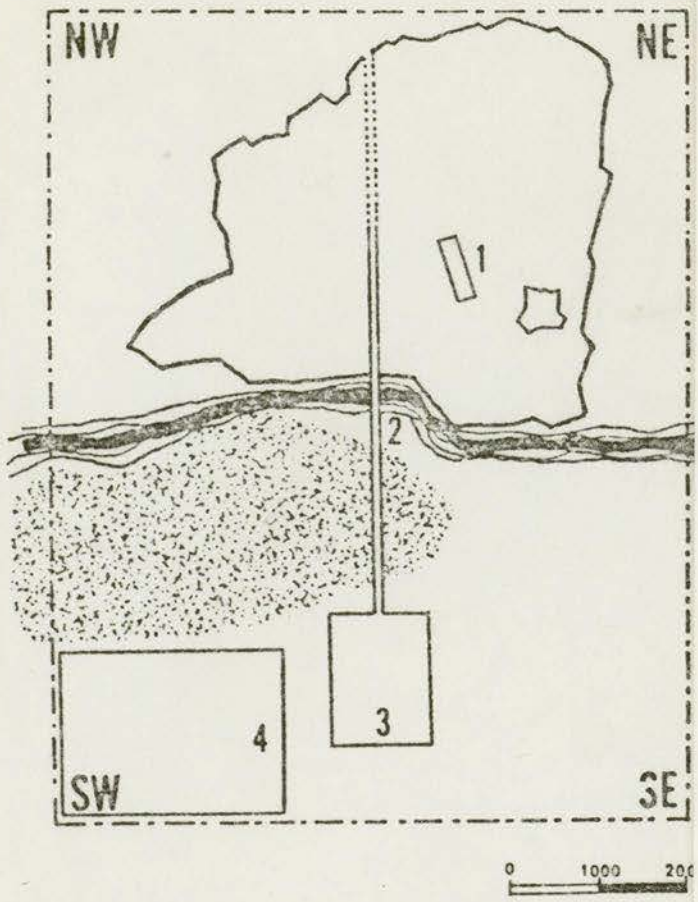


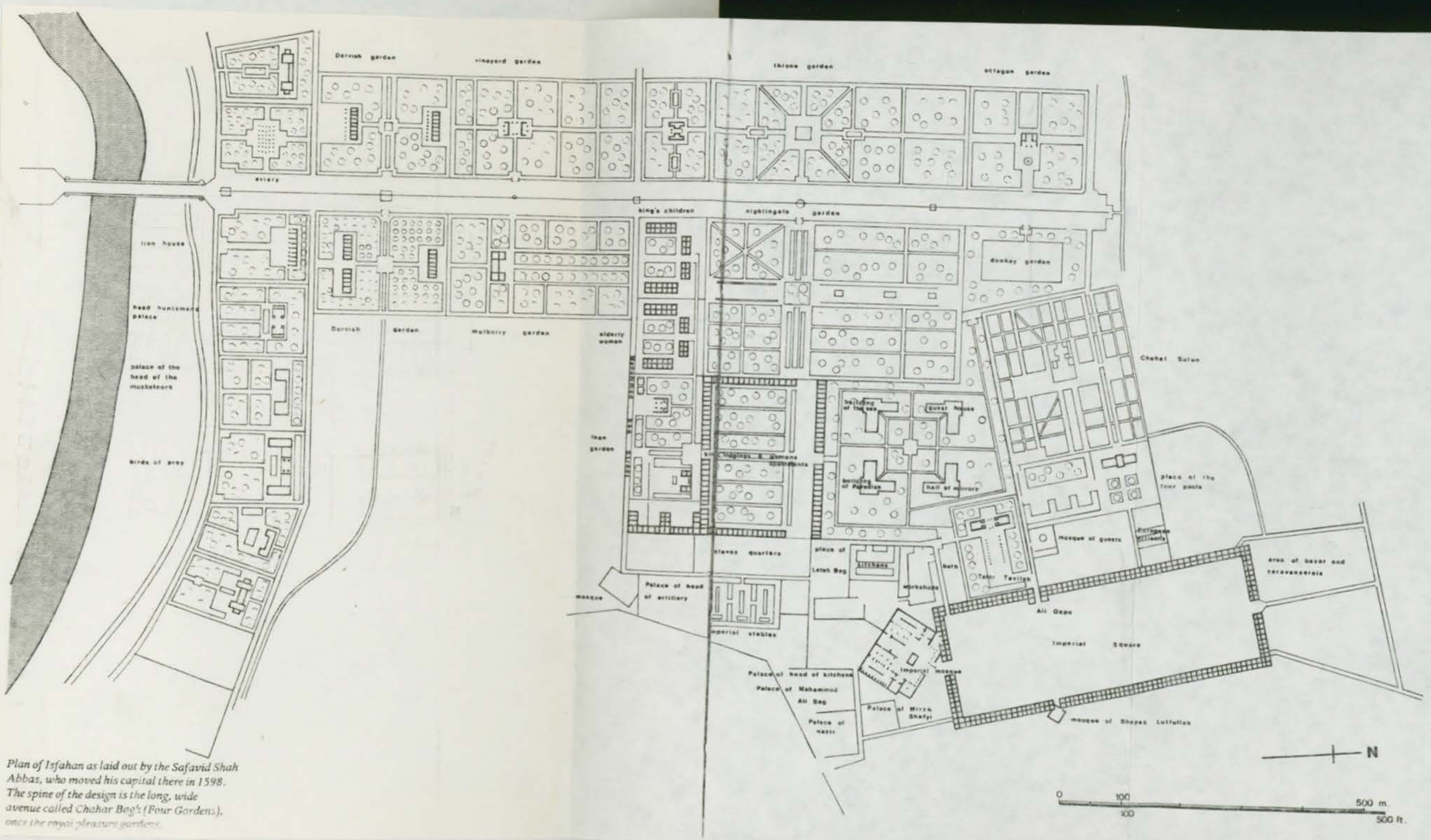
Fig. 75. Tile painted with interlace Kufic, seventeenth century (Welch, Shah 'Abbas and the Arts of Isfahan, p. 52)

Plan 1. The four sections of Isfahan
(Galdieri, East and West, p. 61)



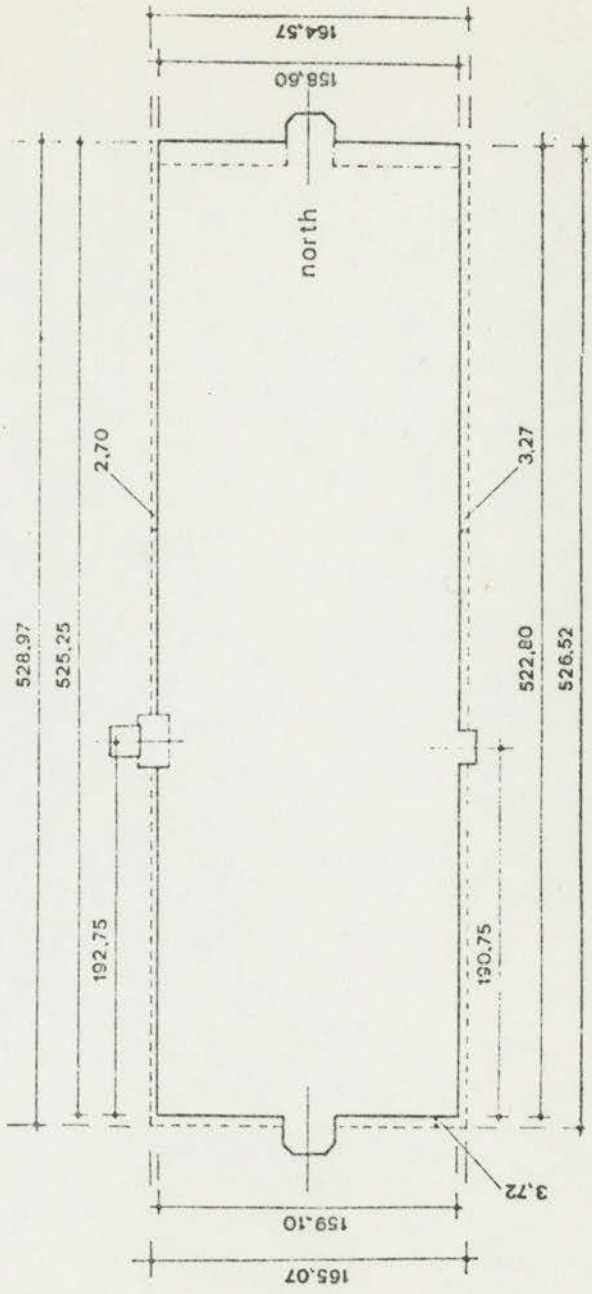
Isfahan. The Tetrapolis of Šāh ʿAbbās I, after the
too was conceived of according to the principle of the Čah
— divided the city into four sections: to the northeast, the
and the royal zones; to the southwest, Ğulfā, city of the A
bristān, zone of the infidels, mostly represented by Zoroastı
refugees from Tabriz, Assyrian Christians, Chaldeans, etc.

Plan 2. Shah 'Abbas' additions north of river
(Wilber, Persian Gardens and Garden Pavilions, p. 81)



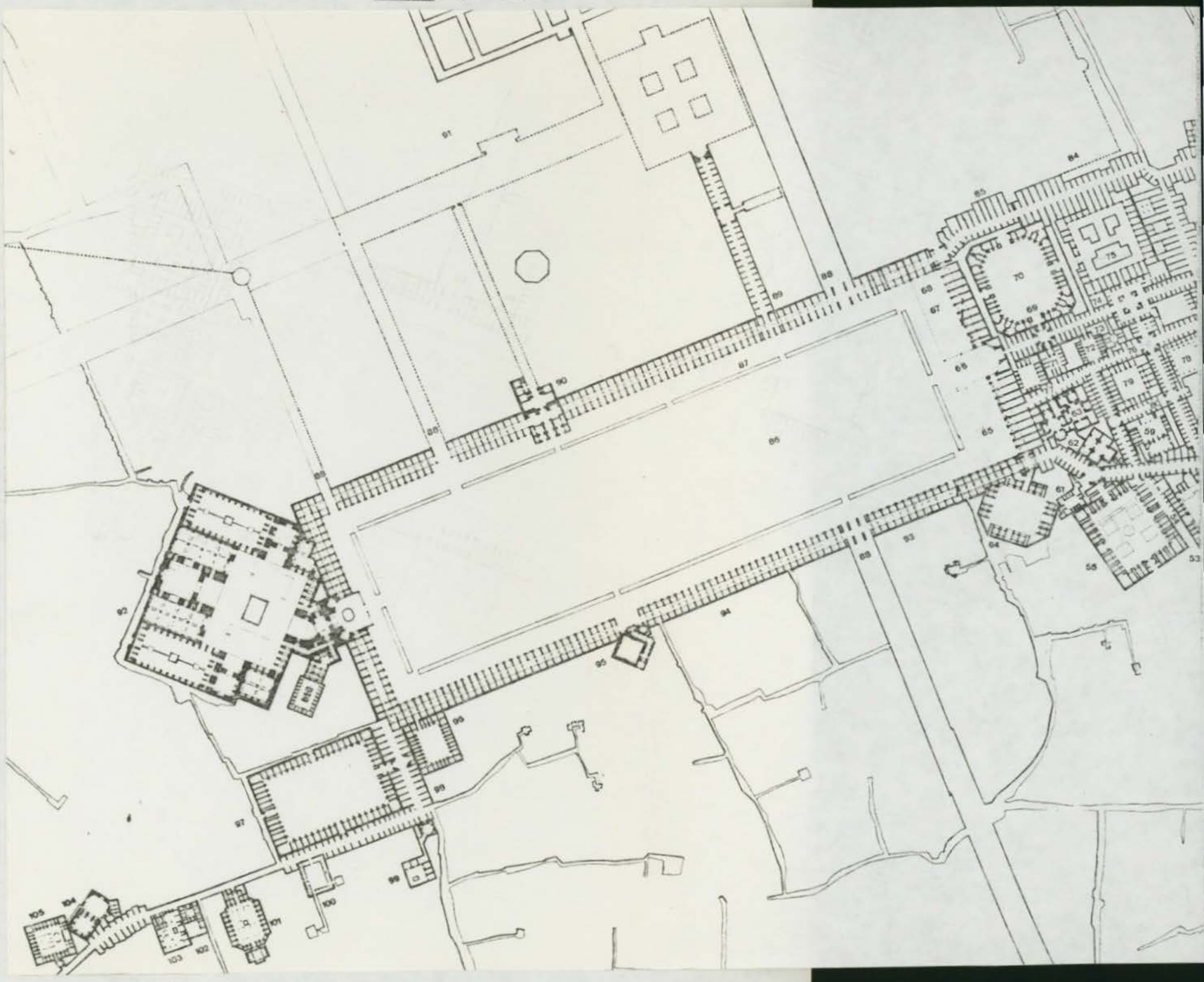
Plan of Isfahan as laid out by the Safavid Shah Abbas, who moved his capital there in 1598. The spine of the design is the long, wide avenue called Chahar Bag's (Four Gardens), once the royal pleasure gardens.

Plan 3. Maydan, with demensions
(Galdieri, East and West, p. 64)

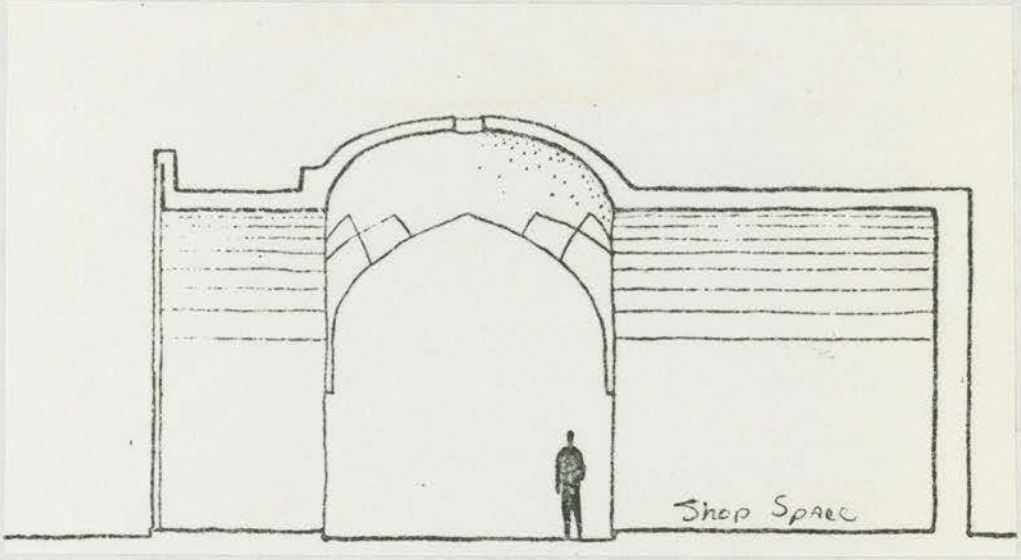


Isfahan, Maydān-i Šāh. Schematic plan of the various phases. The continuous line shows the present line; the dashes show the line of phase A; the dots and dashes show the area occupied by the foreparts of the building towards the Qaysāriya Bazaar.

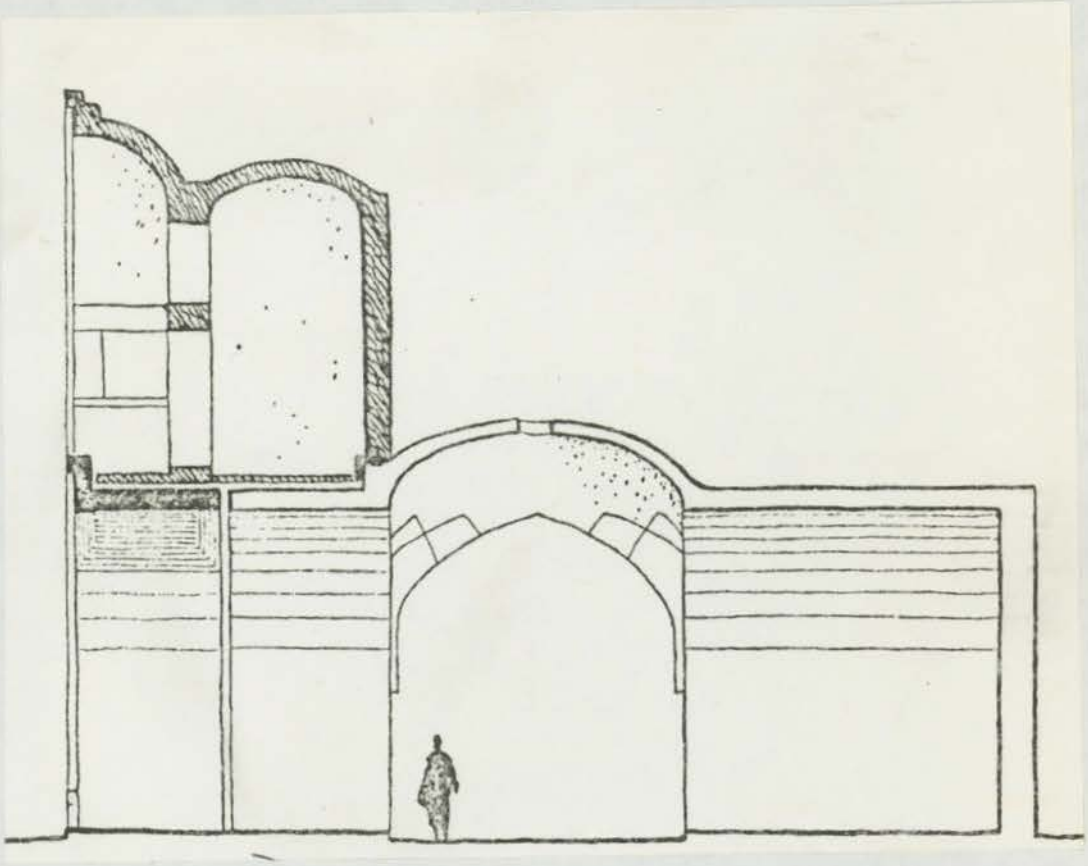
Plan 4. Maydan
(Ardalan and Bakhtiar, Unity, p. 98)



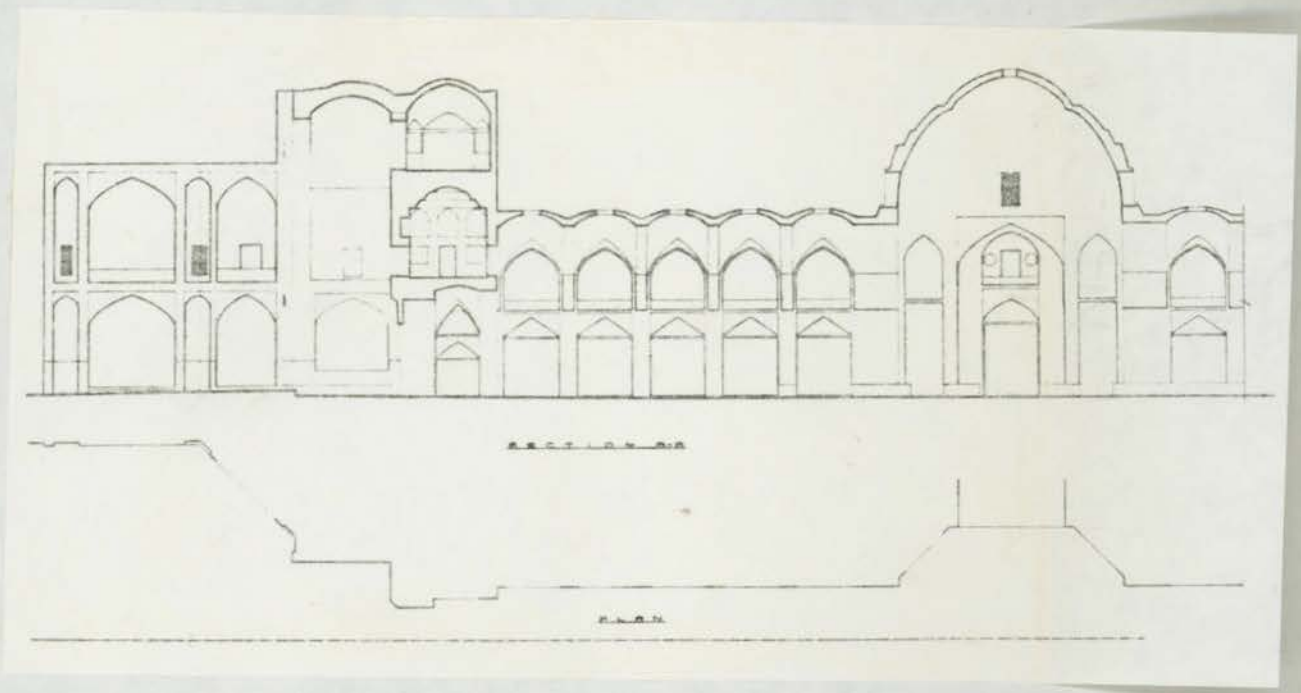
Plan 5. Maydan wall, phase one
(Galdieri, East and West, p. 62)



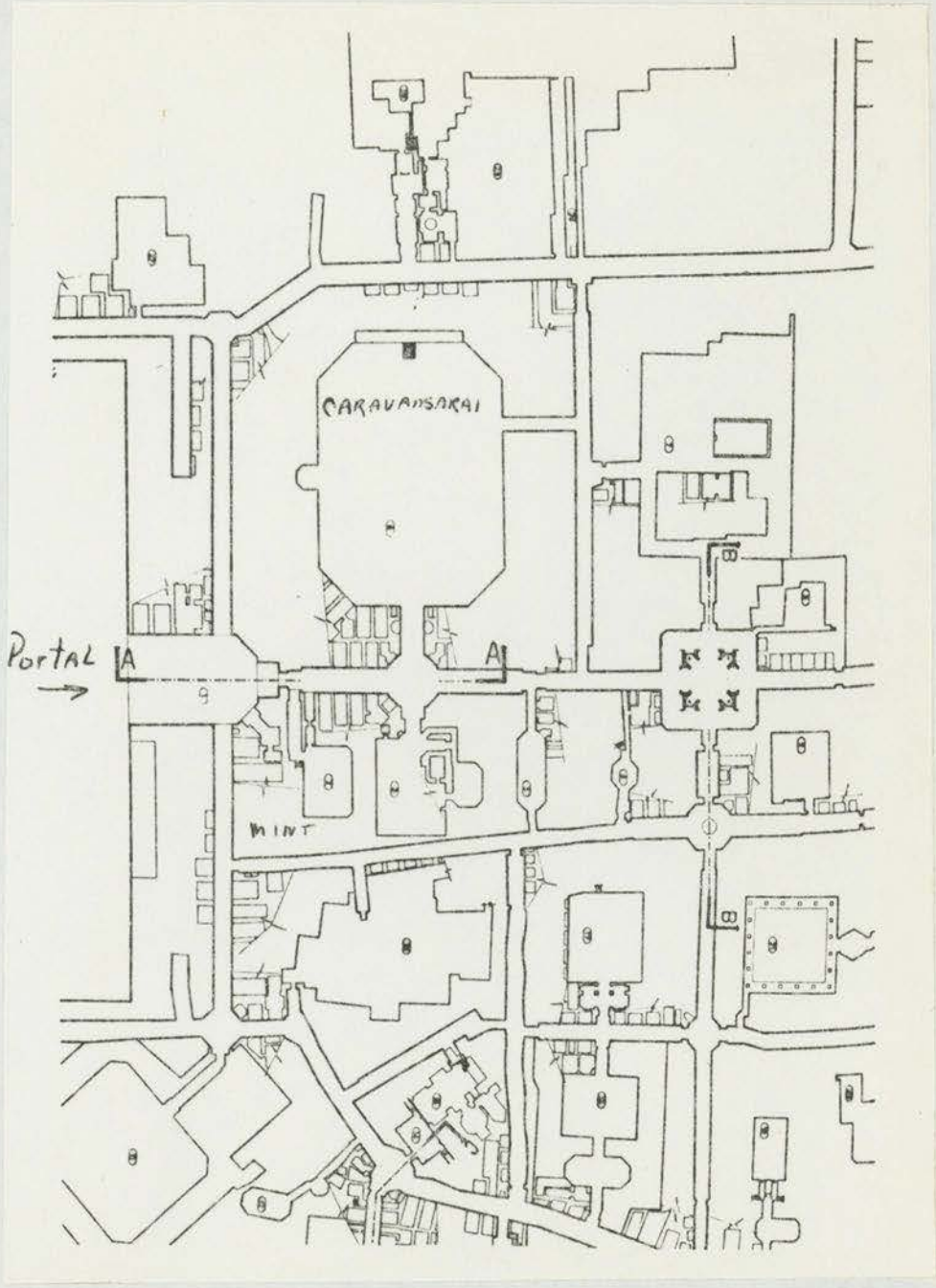
Plan 6. Maydan wall, phase two
(Galdieri, East and West, p. 62)



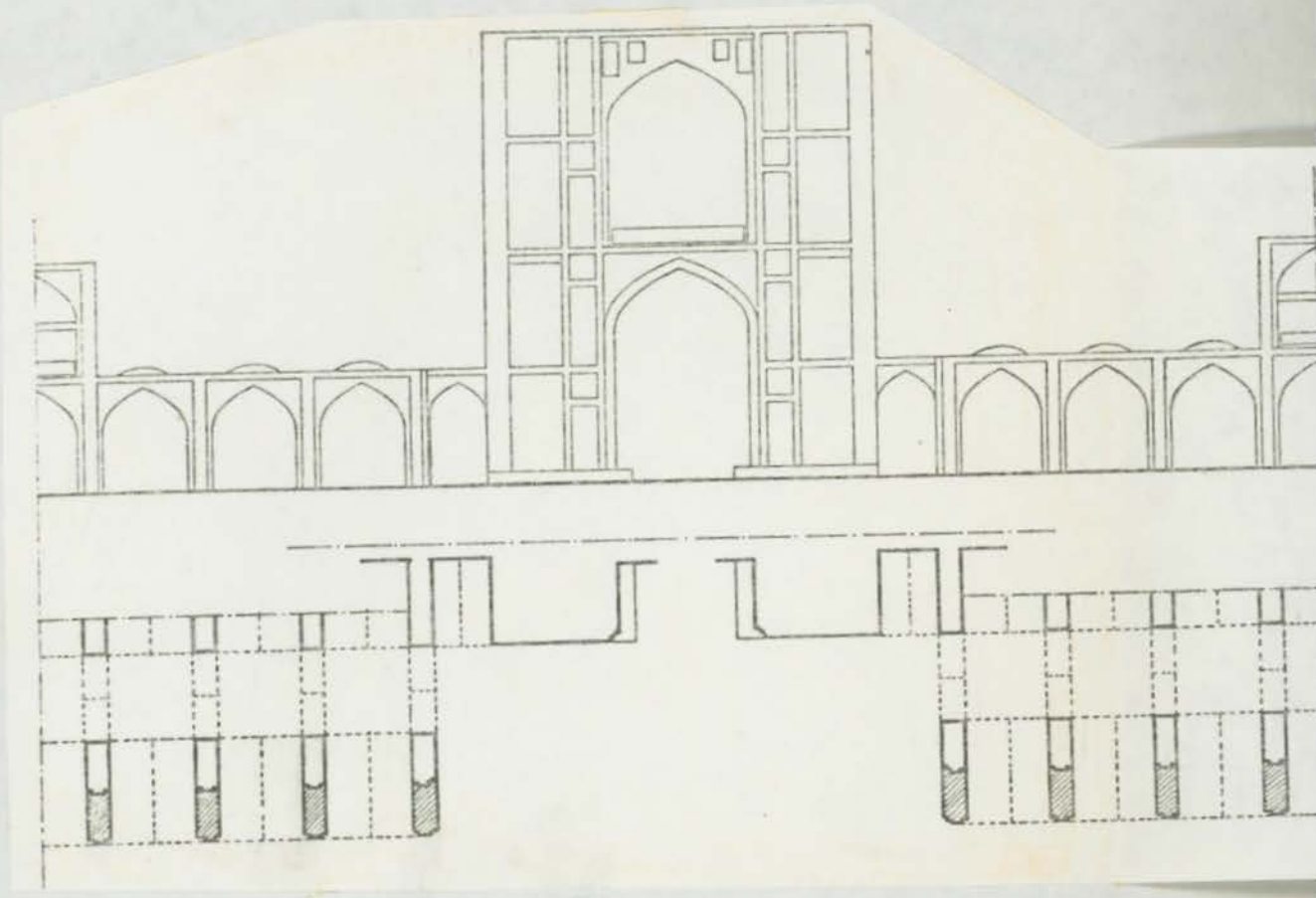
Plan 7. Bazaar portal cross section
(Holod, Studies on Isfahan, p. 336)



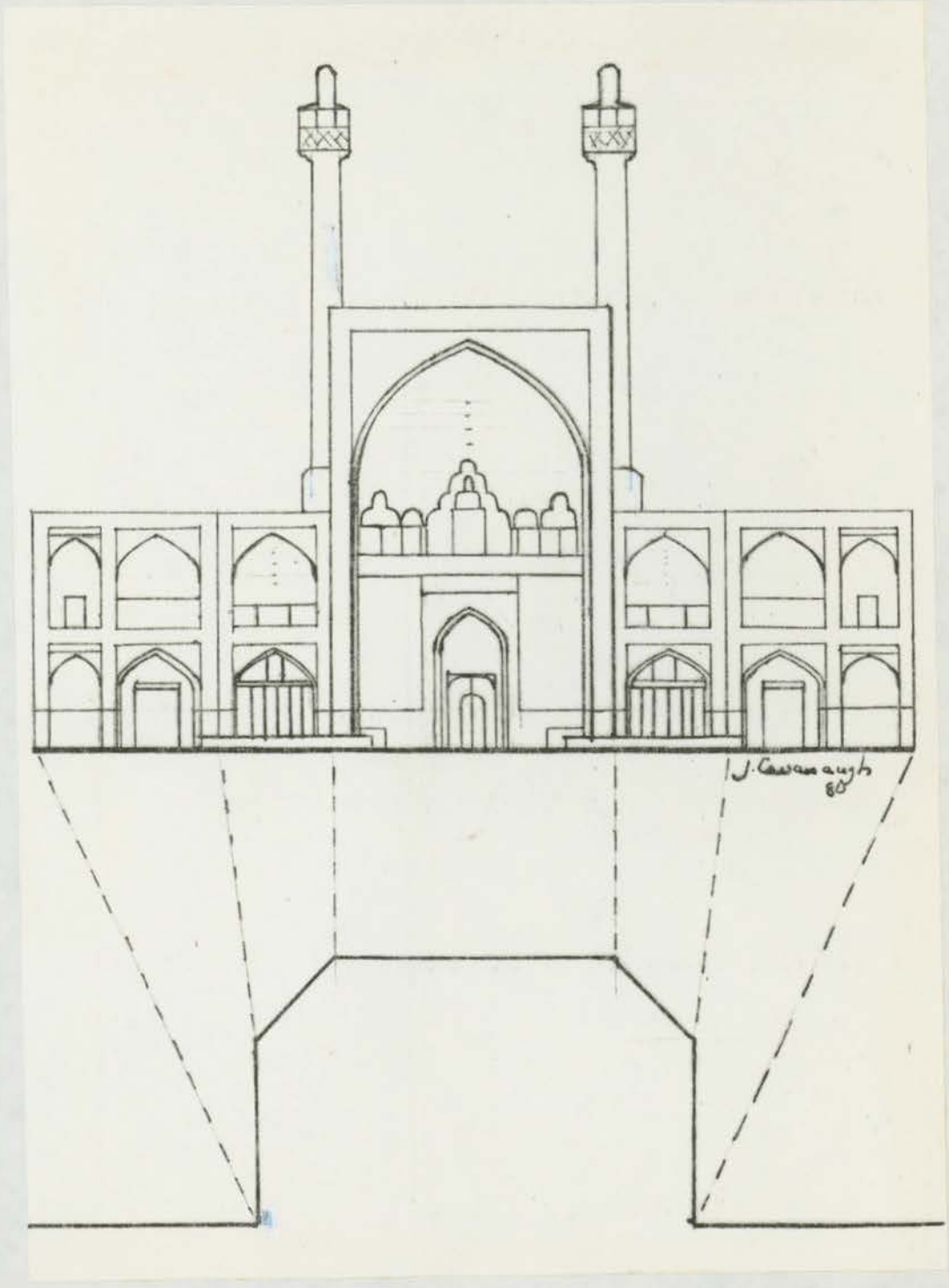
Plan 8. Bazaar
(Holod, Studies on Isfahan, p. 337)



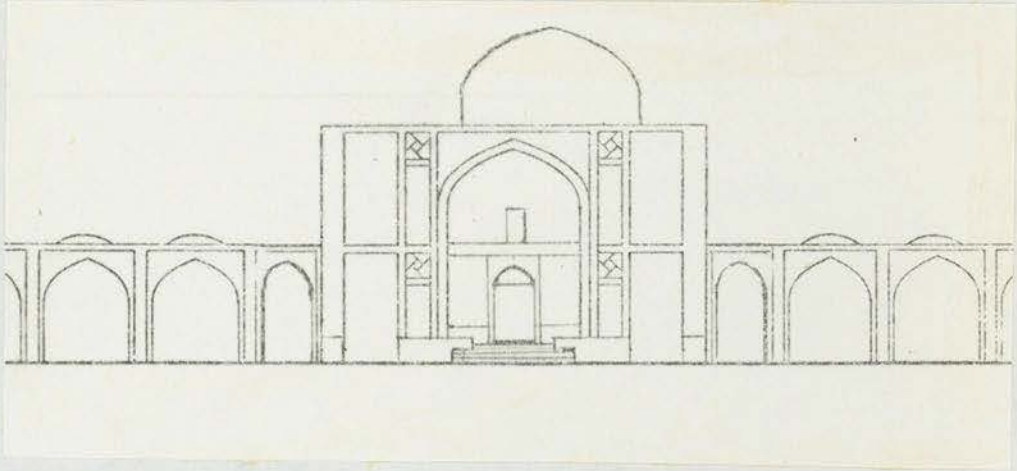
Plan 9. 'Ali Qapu Maydan facade, phase two
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, Fig. 16)



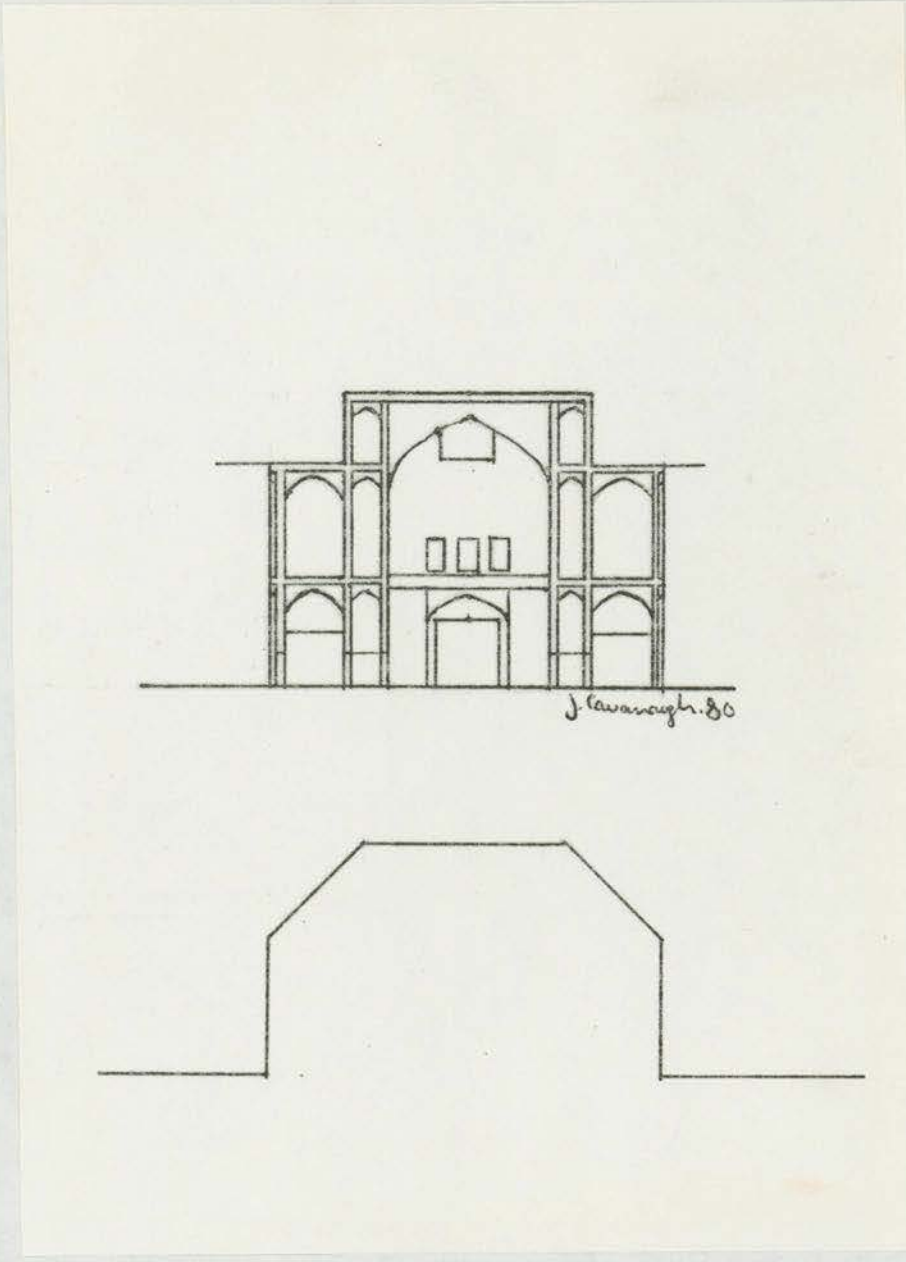
Plan 10. Masjid-i-Shah Maydan facade



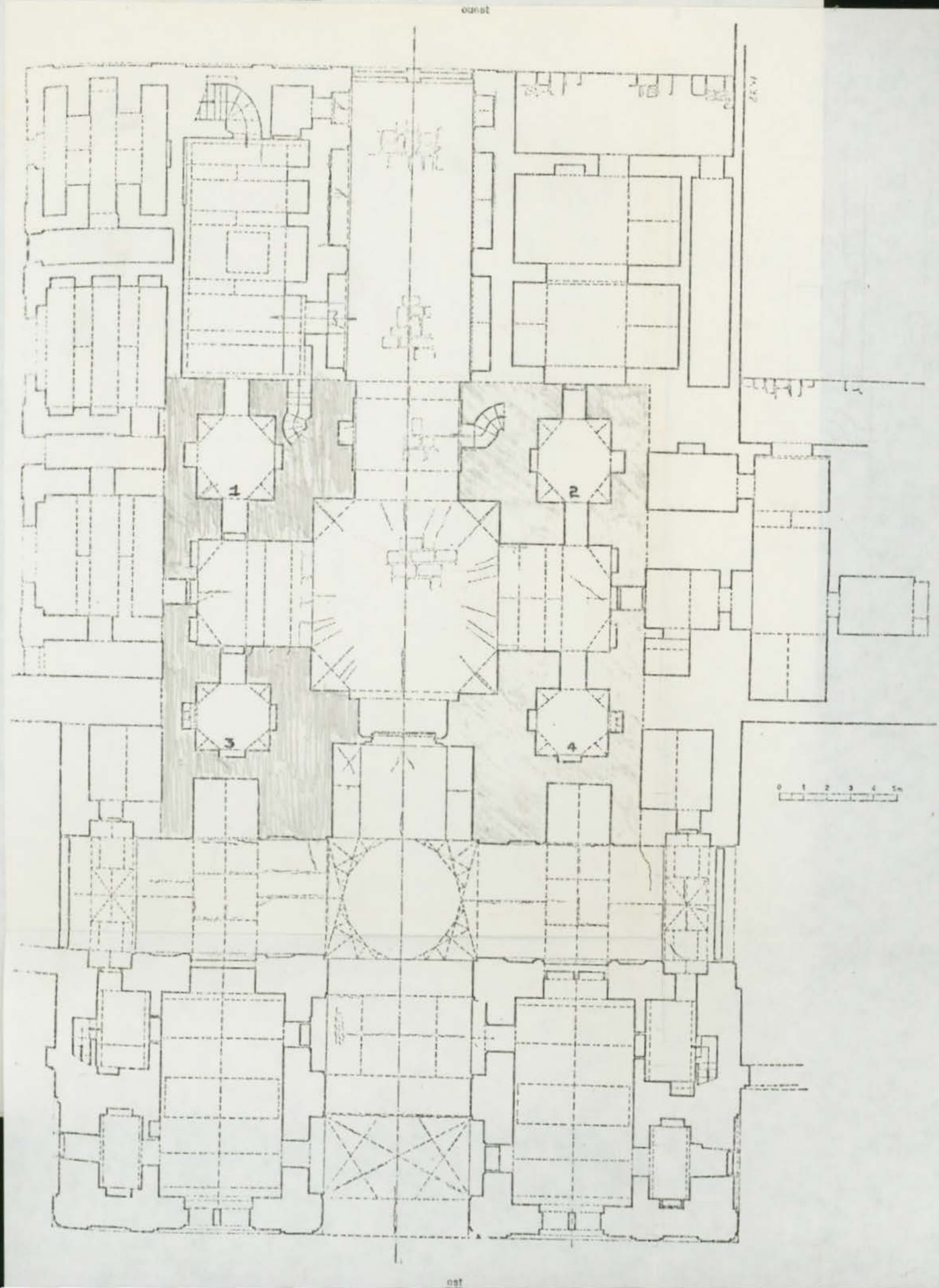
Plan 11. Shaykh Lotfollah Maydan facade



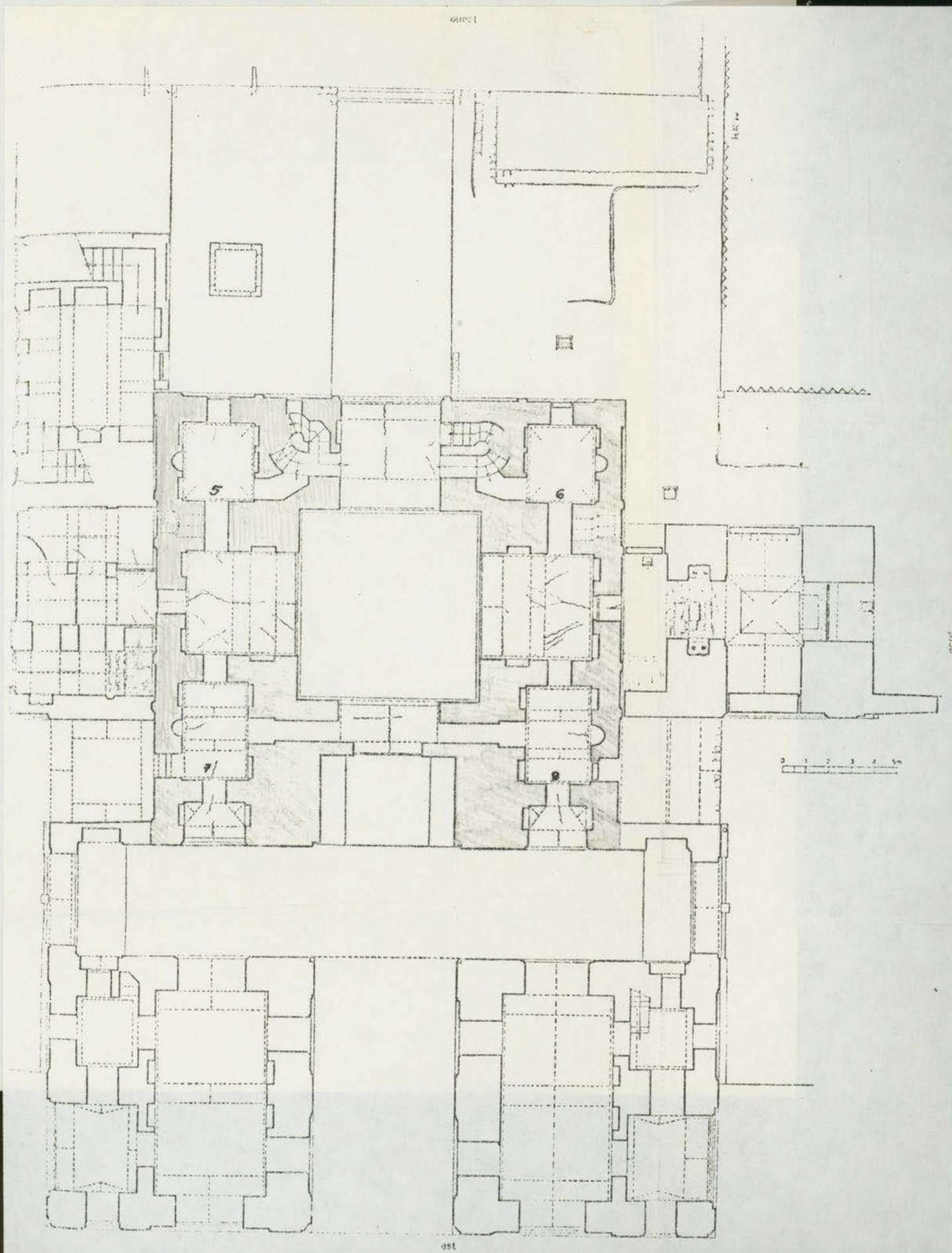
Plan 12. Qaysariya Bazaar Maydan facade



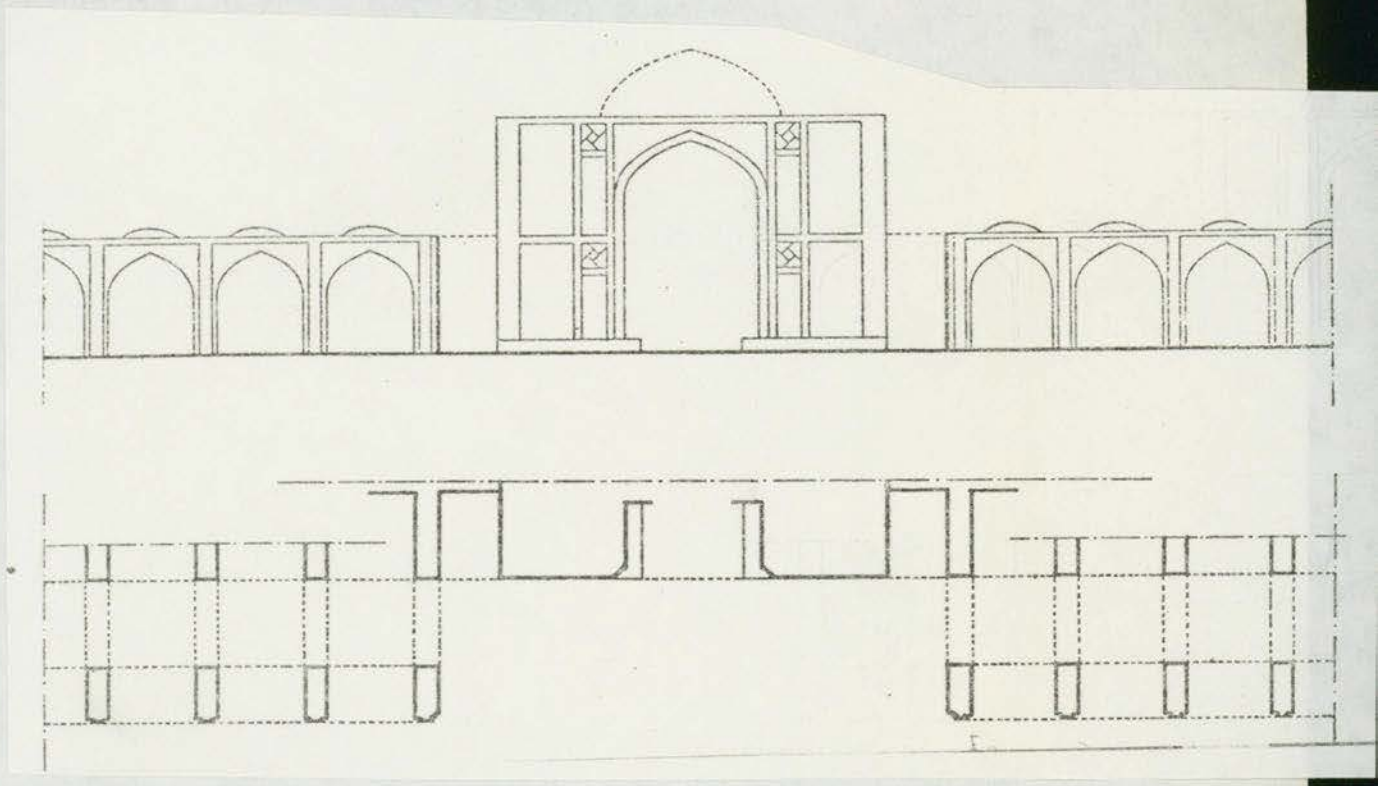
Plan 13. 'Ali Qapu, ground floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 1)



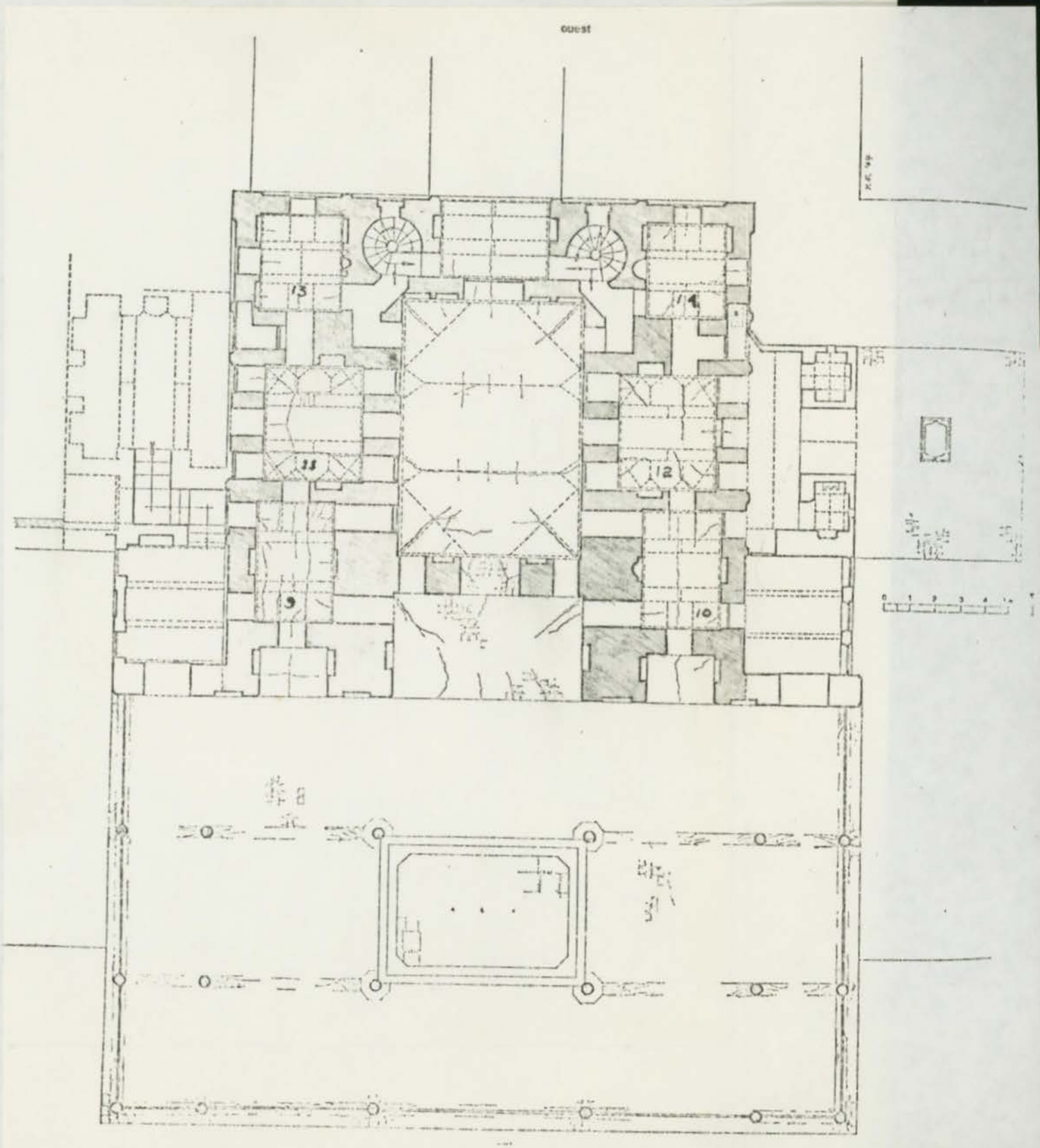
Plan 14. 'Ali Qapu, second floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 2)



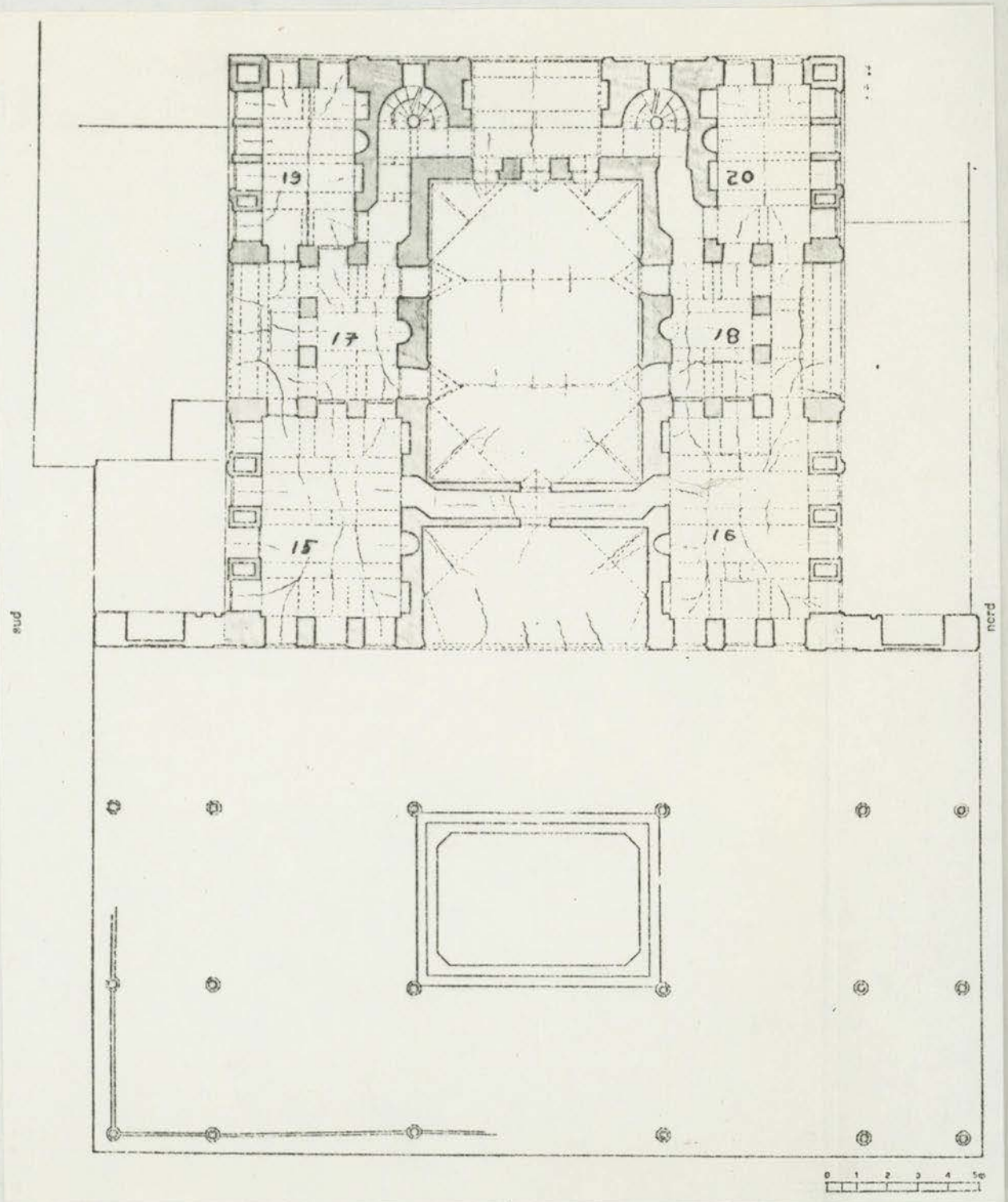
Plan 15. 'Ali Qapu Maydan facade, phase one
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, Fig. 4)



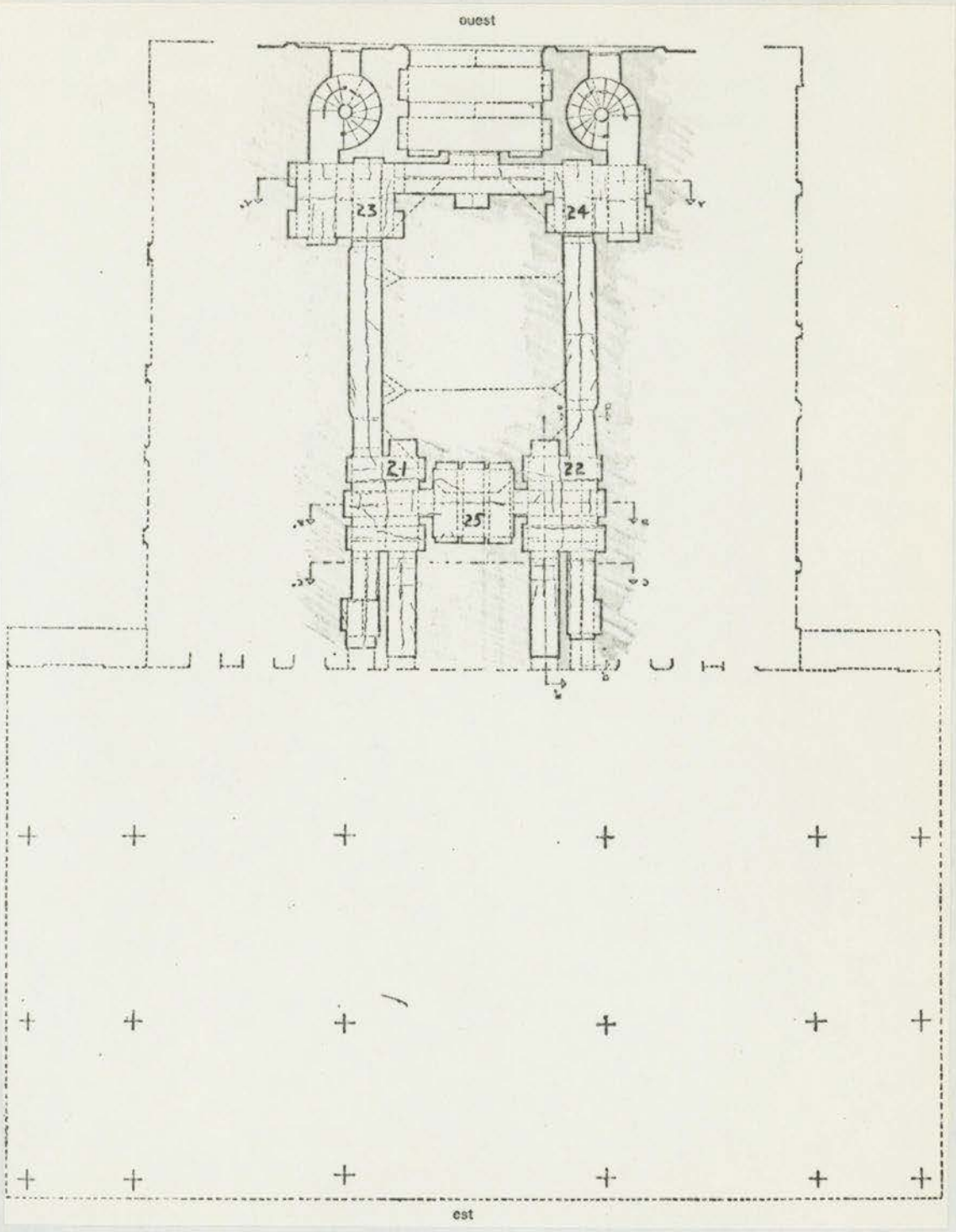
Plan 16. 'Ali Qapu, third floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 4a)



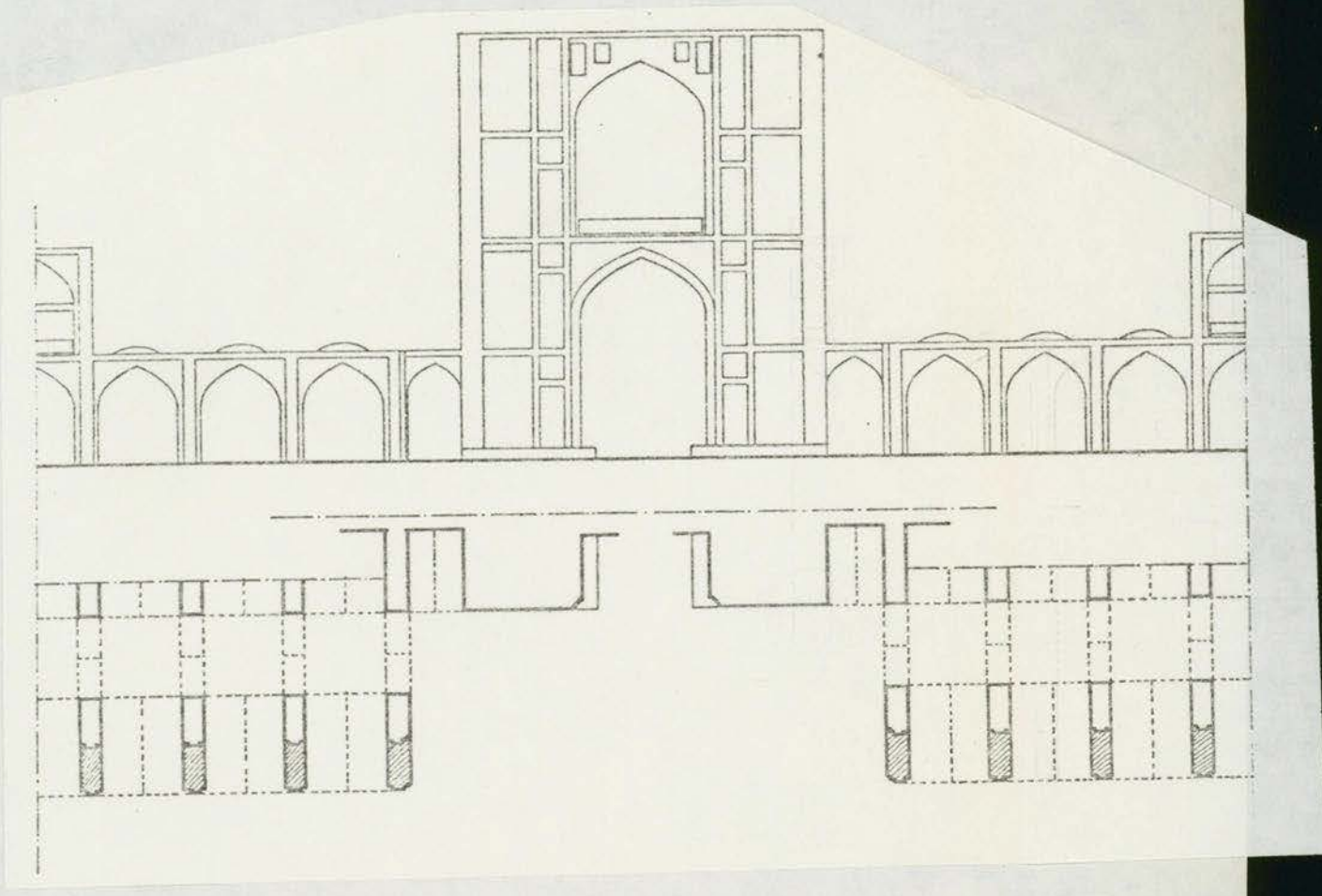
Plan 17. 'Ali Qapu, fourth floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 5)



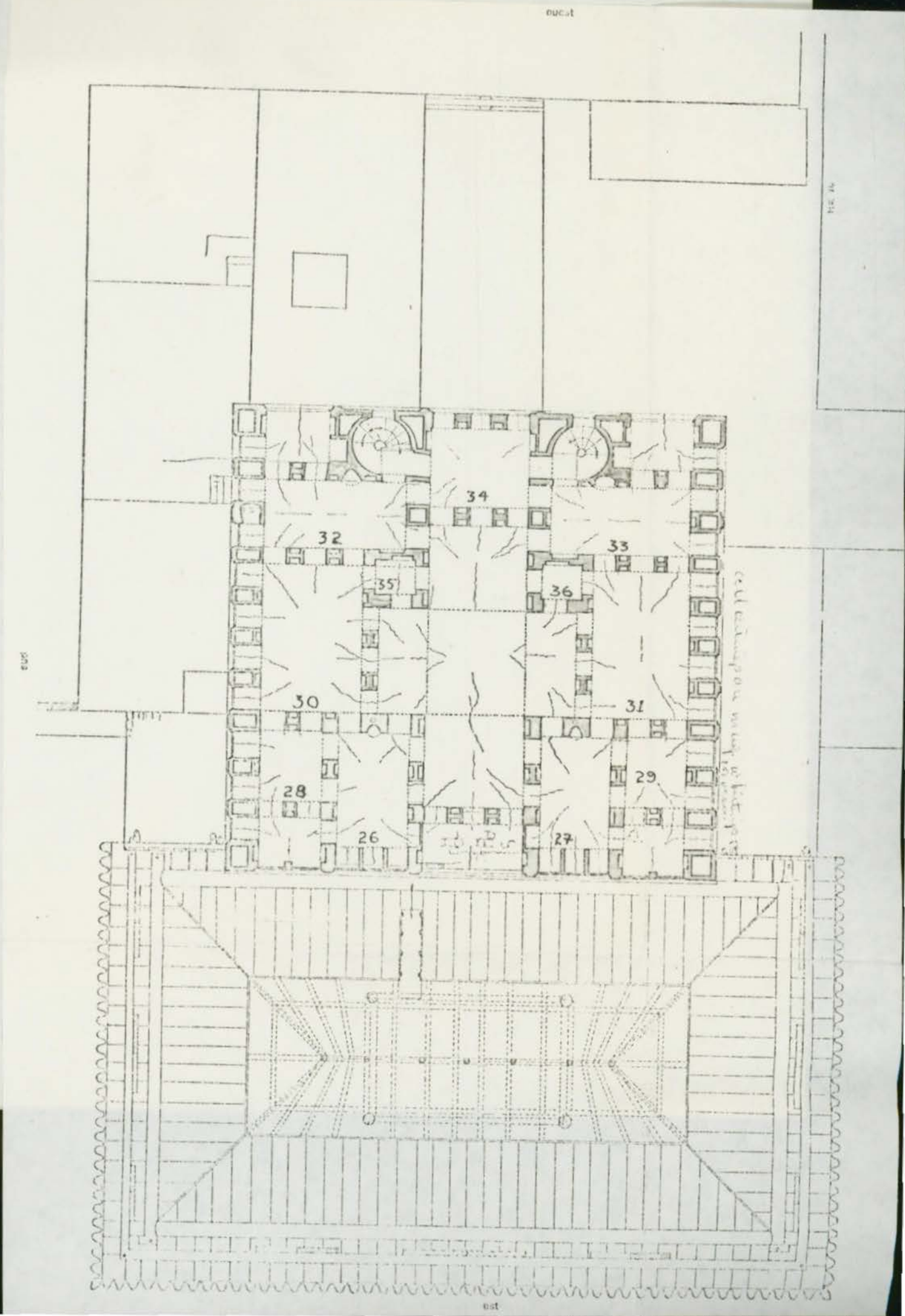
Plan 18. 'Ali Qapu, fifth floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 6)



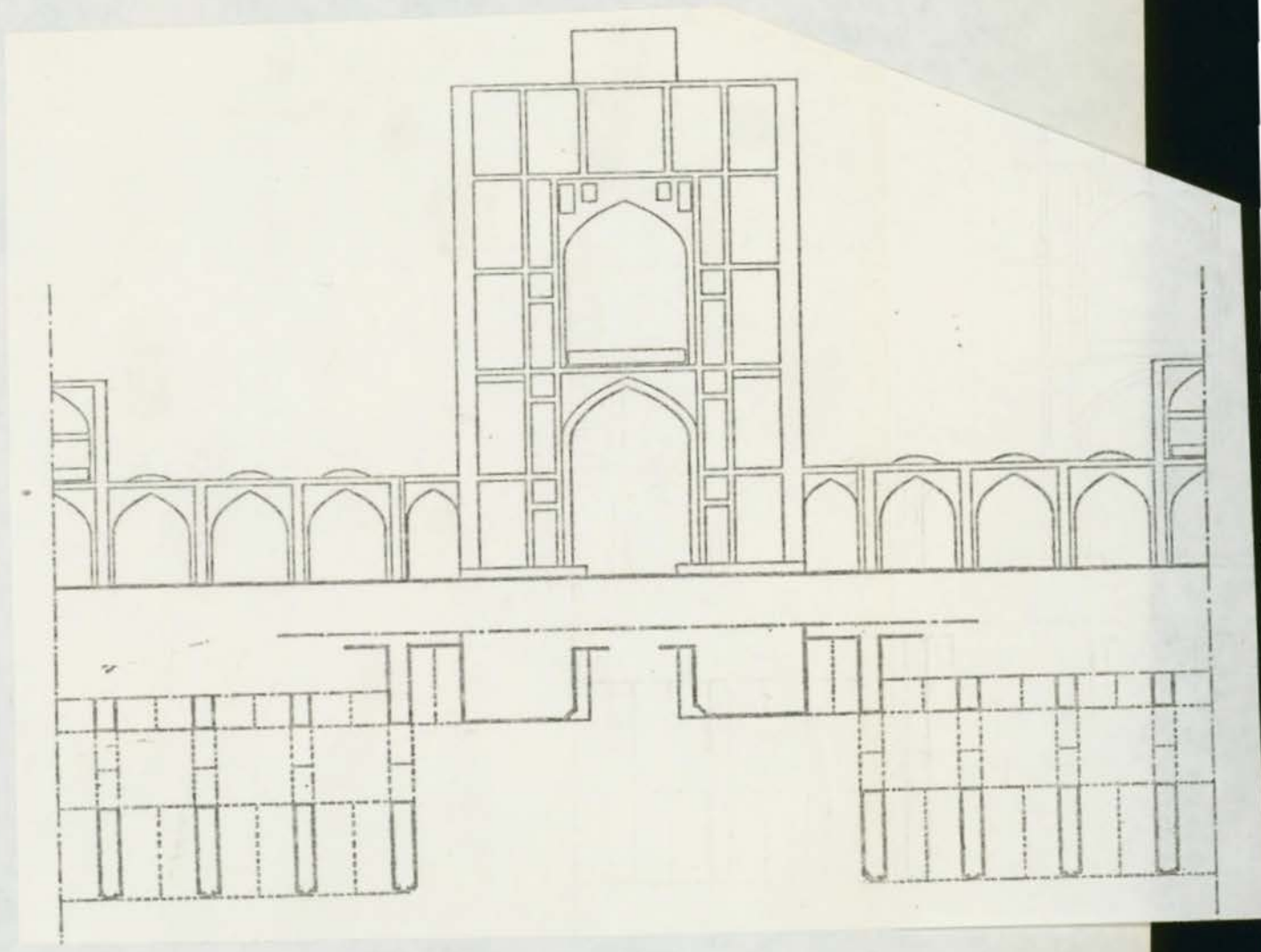
Plan 19. 'Ali Qapu Maydan facade, phase two
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, Fig. 9)



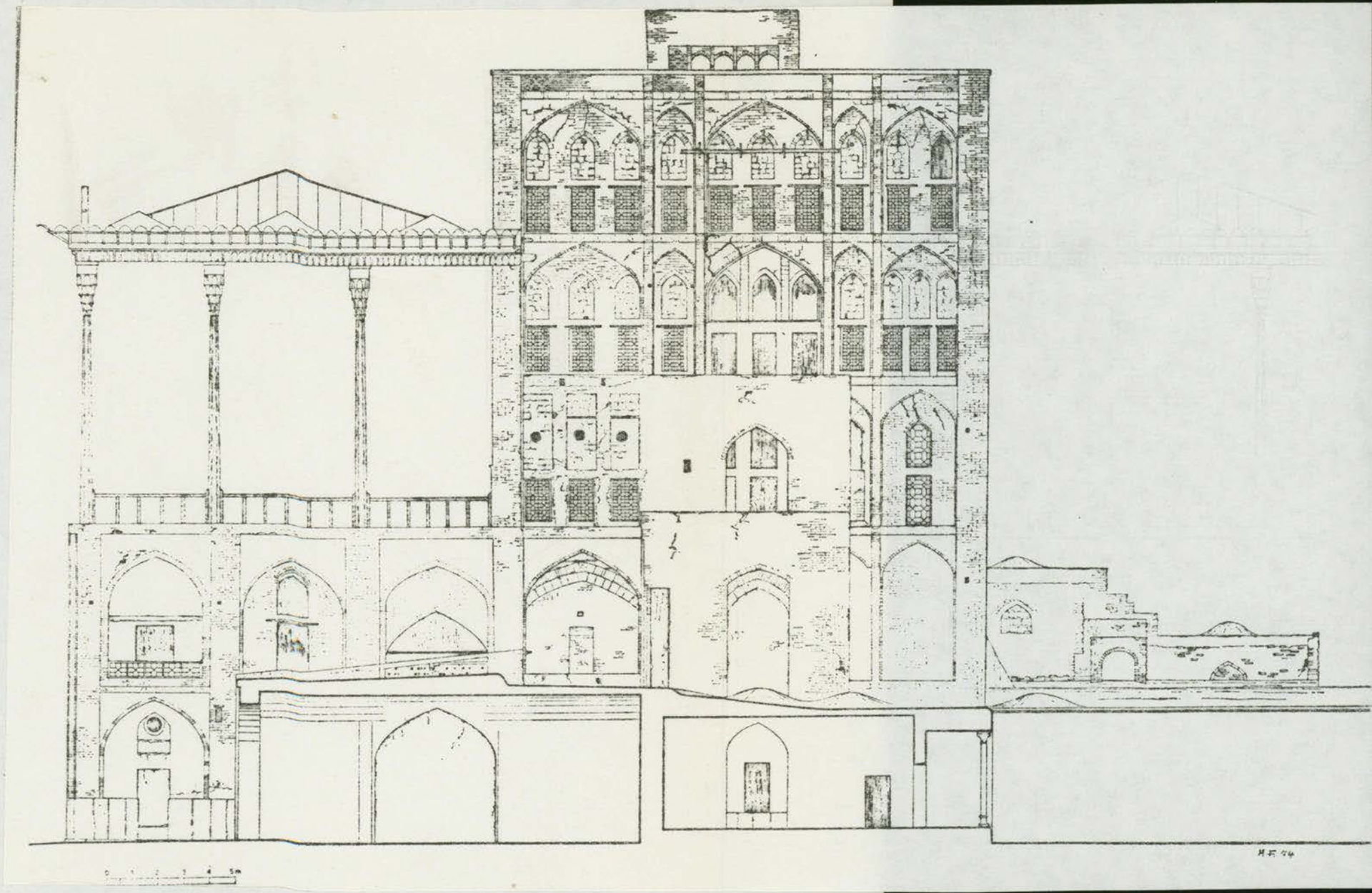
Plan 20. 'Ali Qapu sixth floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 7)



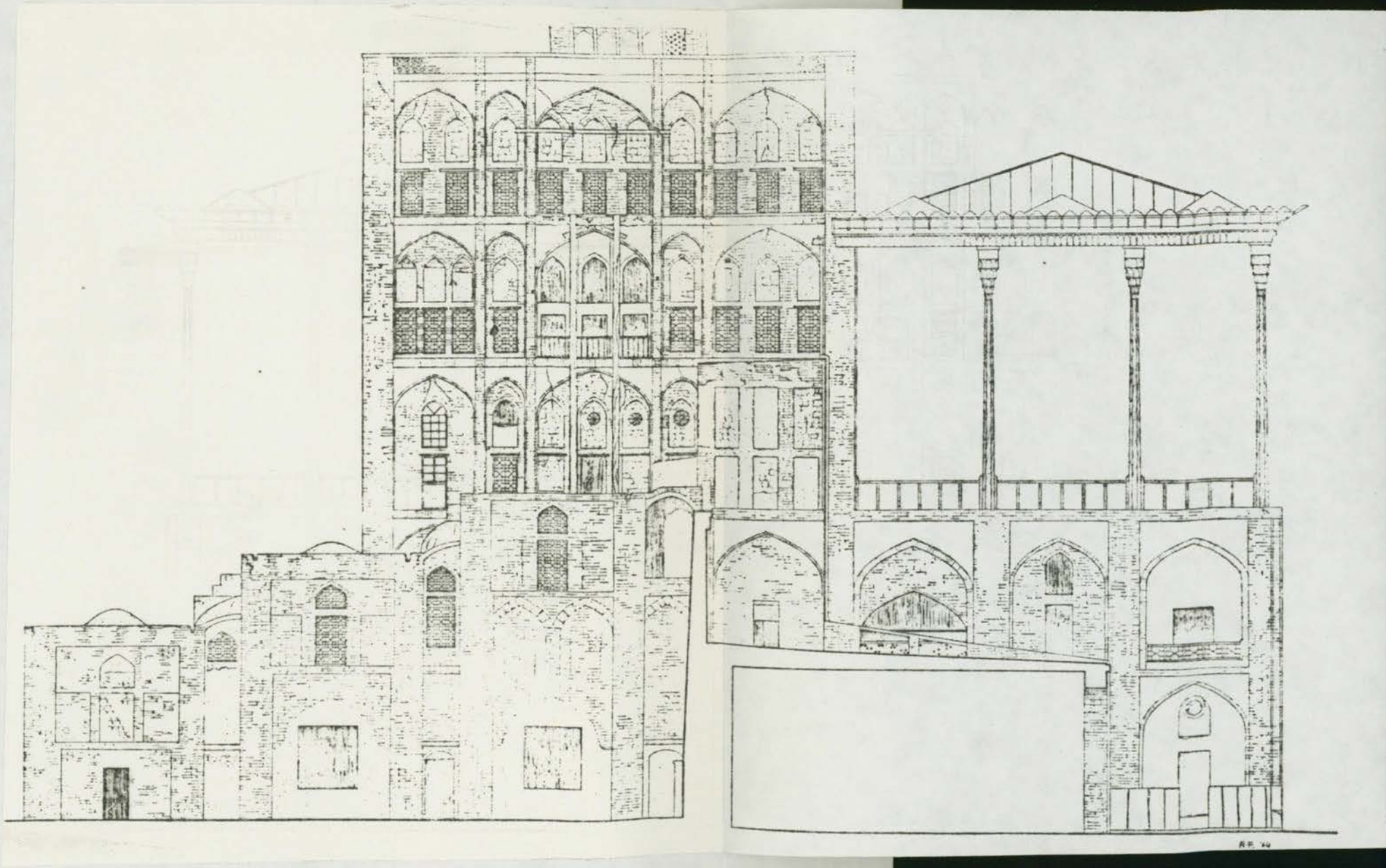
Plan 21. 'Ali Qapu Maydan facade, phase three
(Galdieri, 'Ali Qapu, Fig. 16)



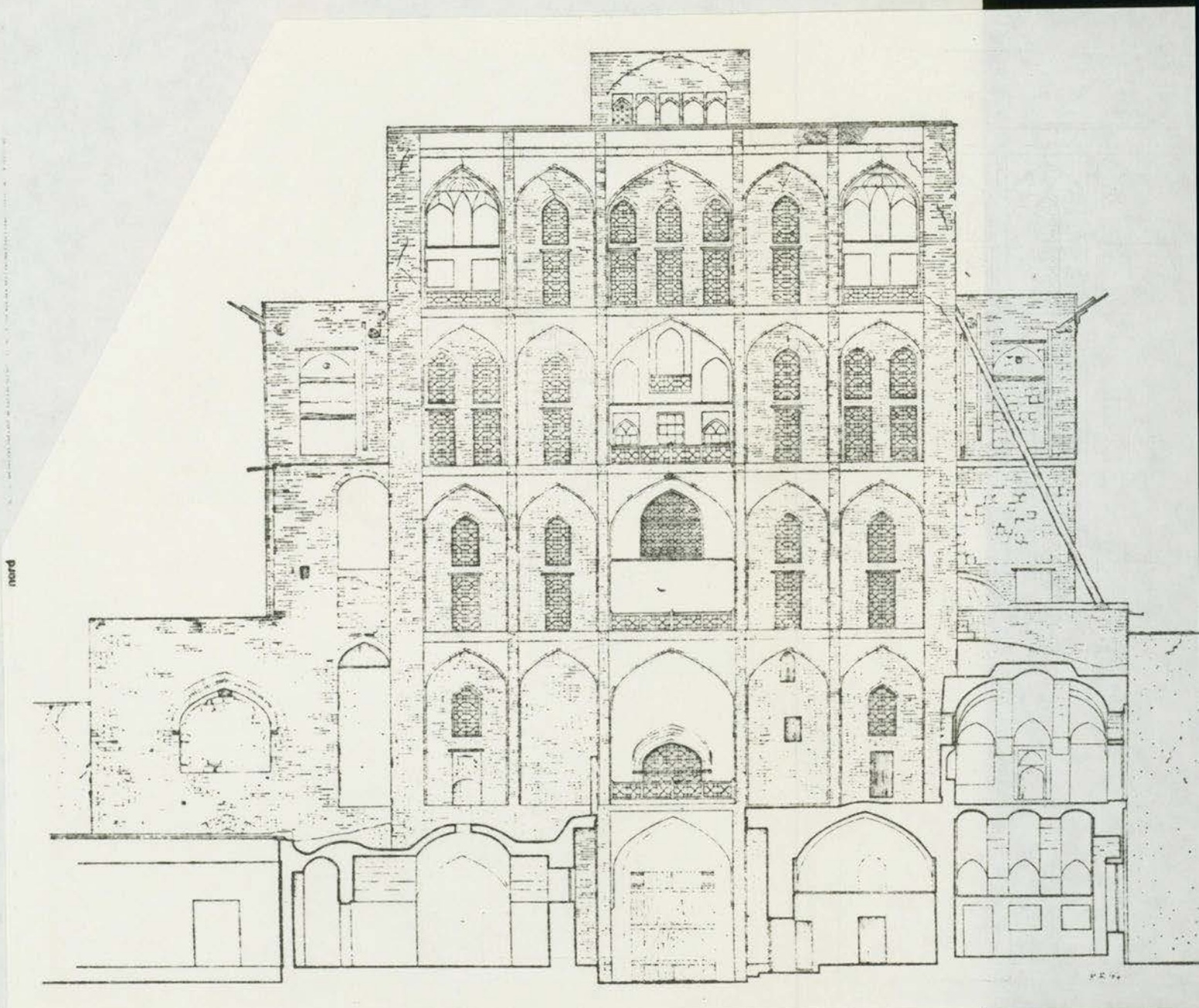
Plan 22. 'Ali Qapu north facade
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 12)



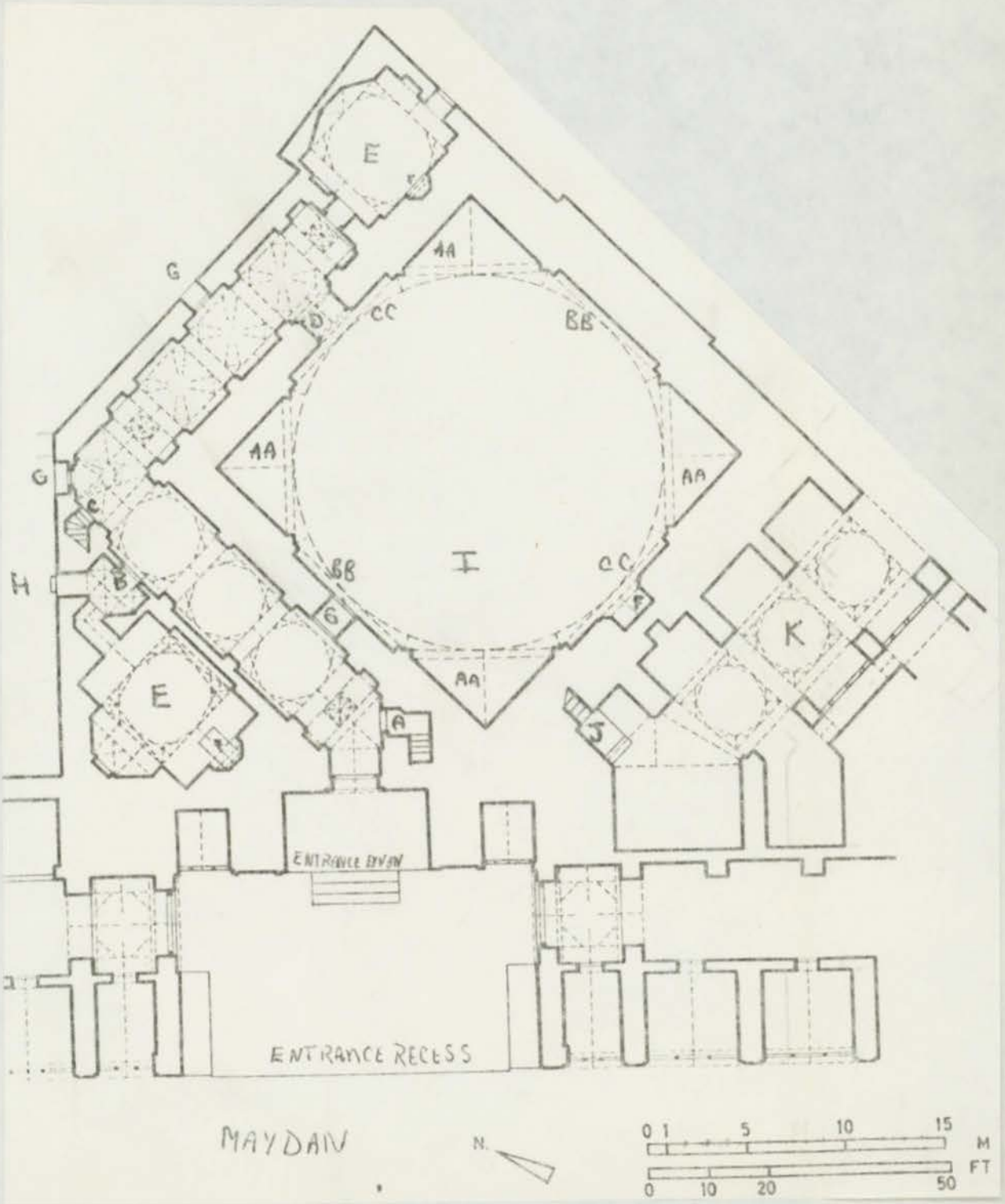
Plan 23. 'Ali Qapu south facade
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 14)



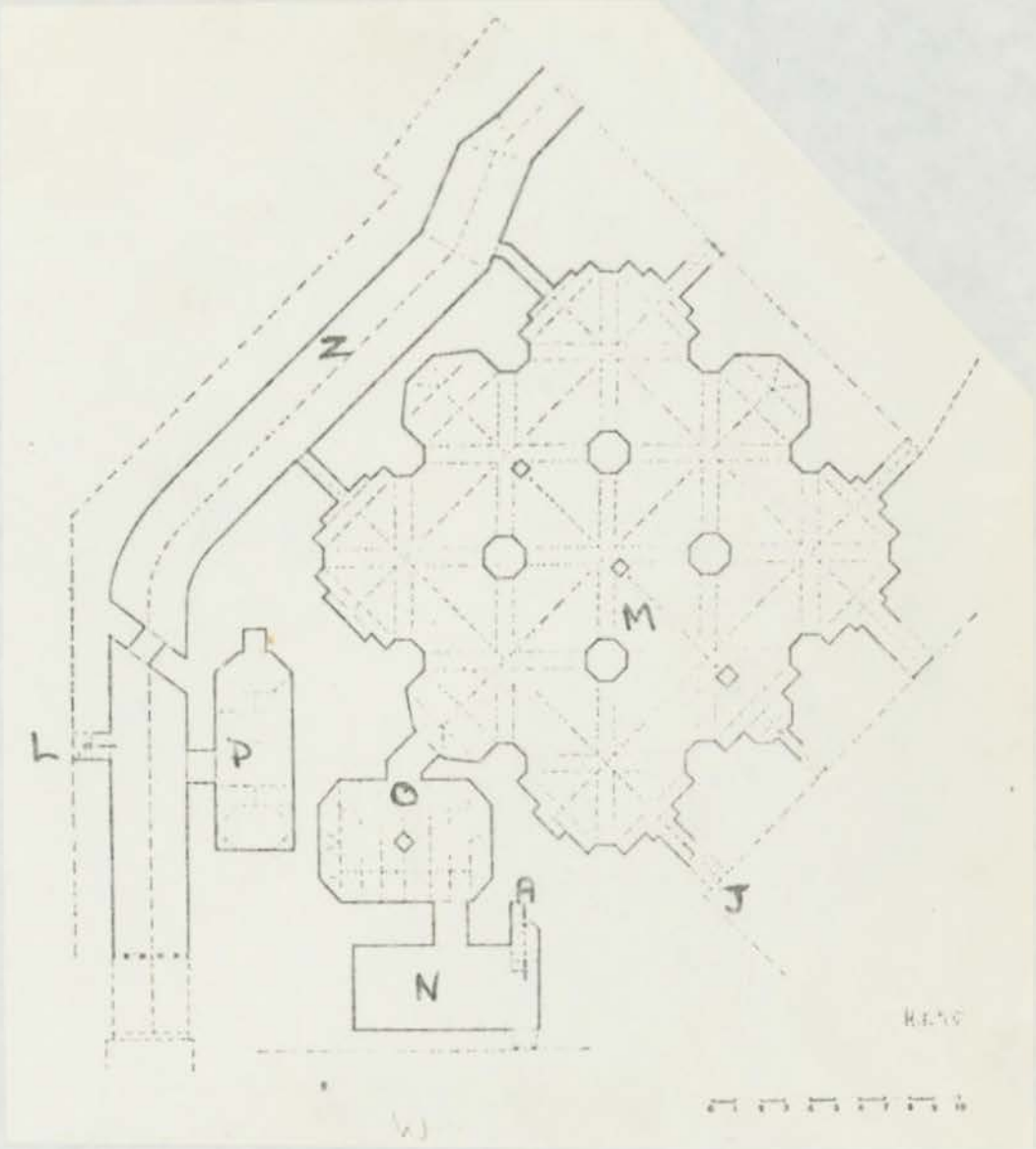
Plan 24. 'Ali Qapu west facade
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 13)



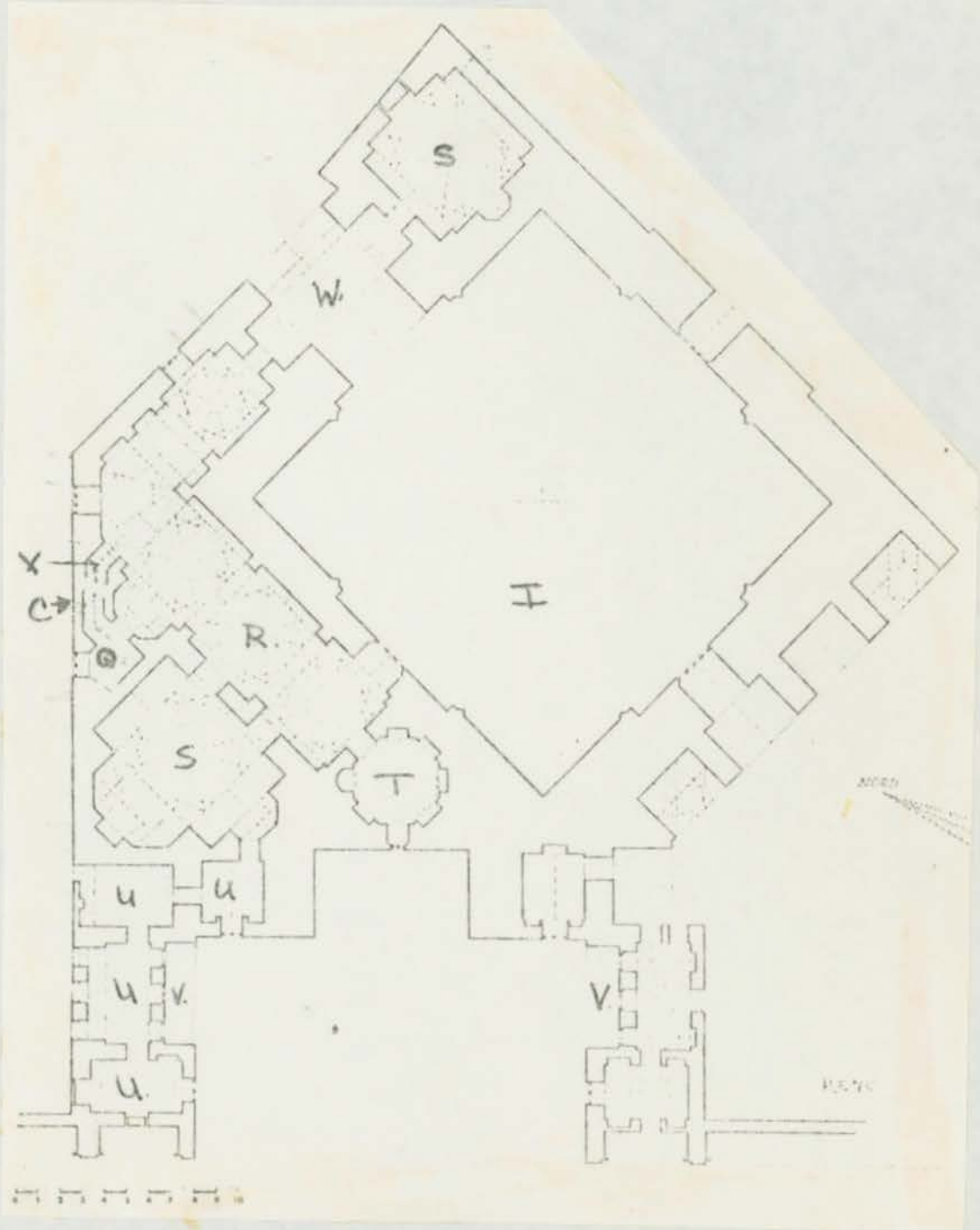
Plan 25. Shaykh Lotfollah, ground floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 2)



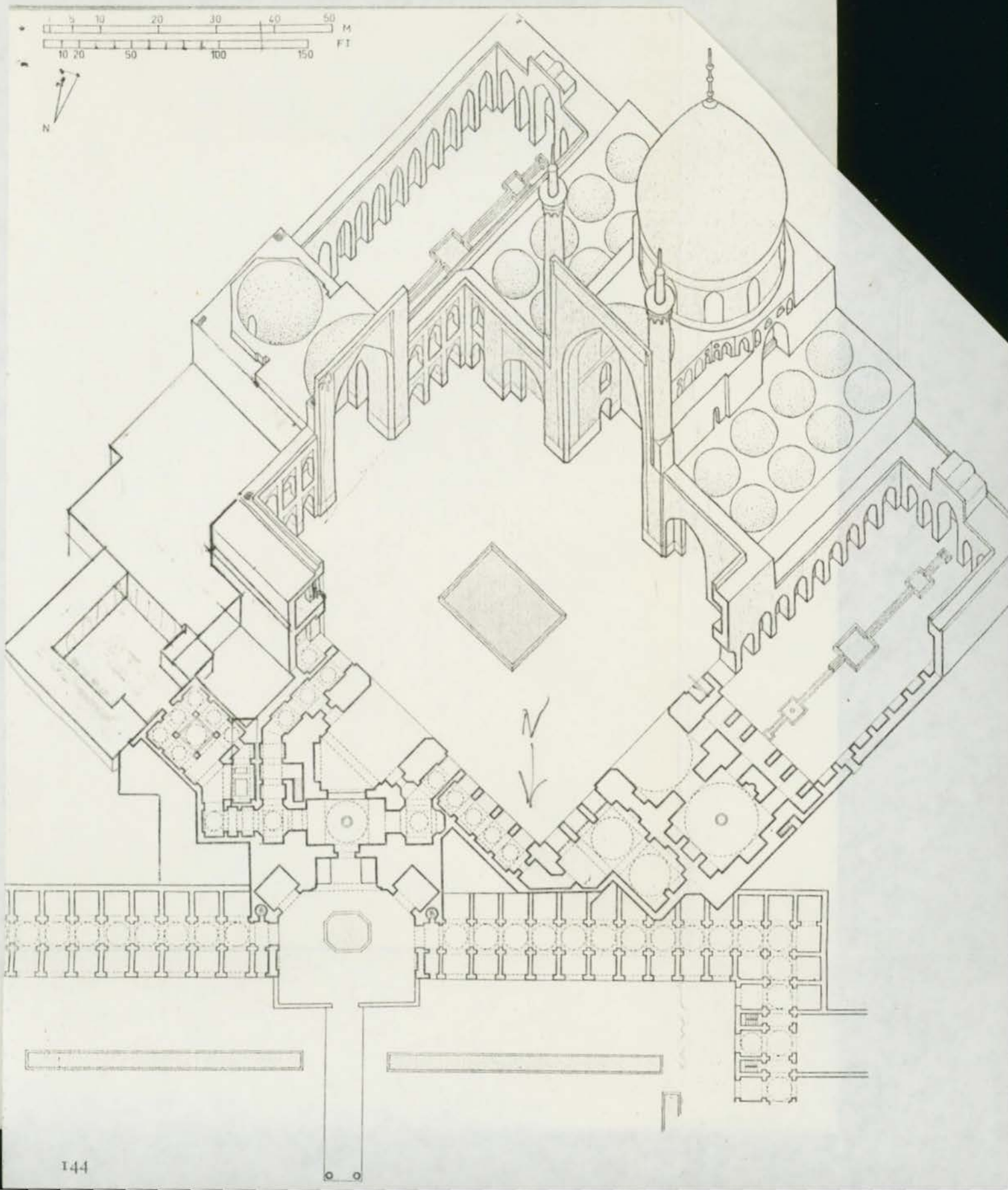
Plan 26. Shaykh Lotfollah, lower floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 1)



Plan 27. Shaykh Lotfollah, upper floor
(Zander, Travaux, Fig. 3)



Plan 28. Masjid-i-Shah, elevation
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 144, modified by J. Cavanaugh)



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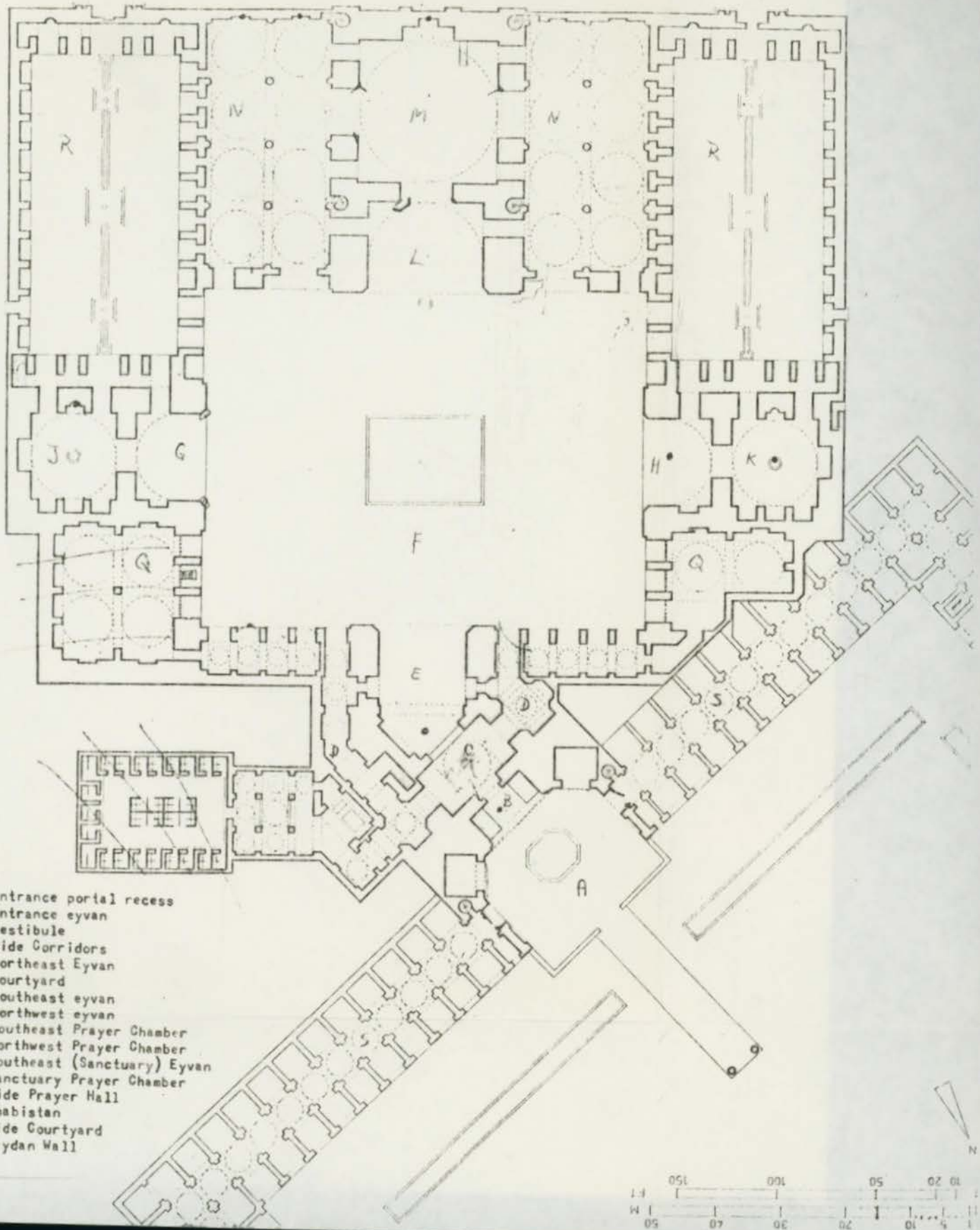
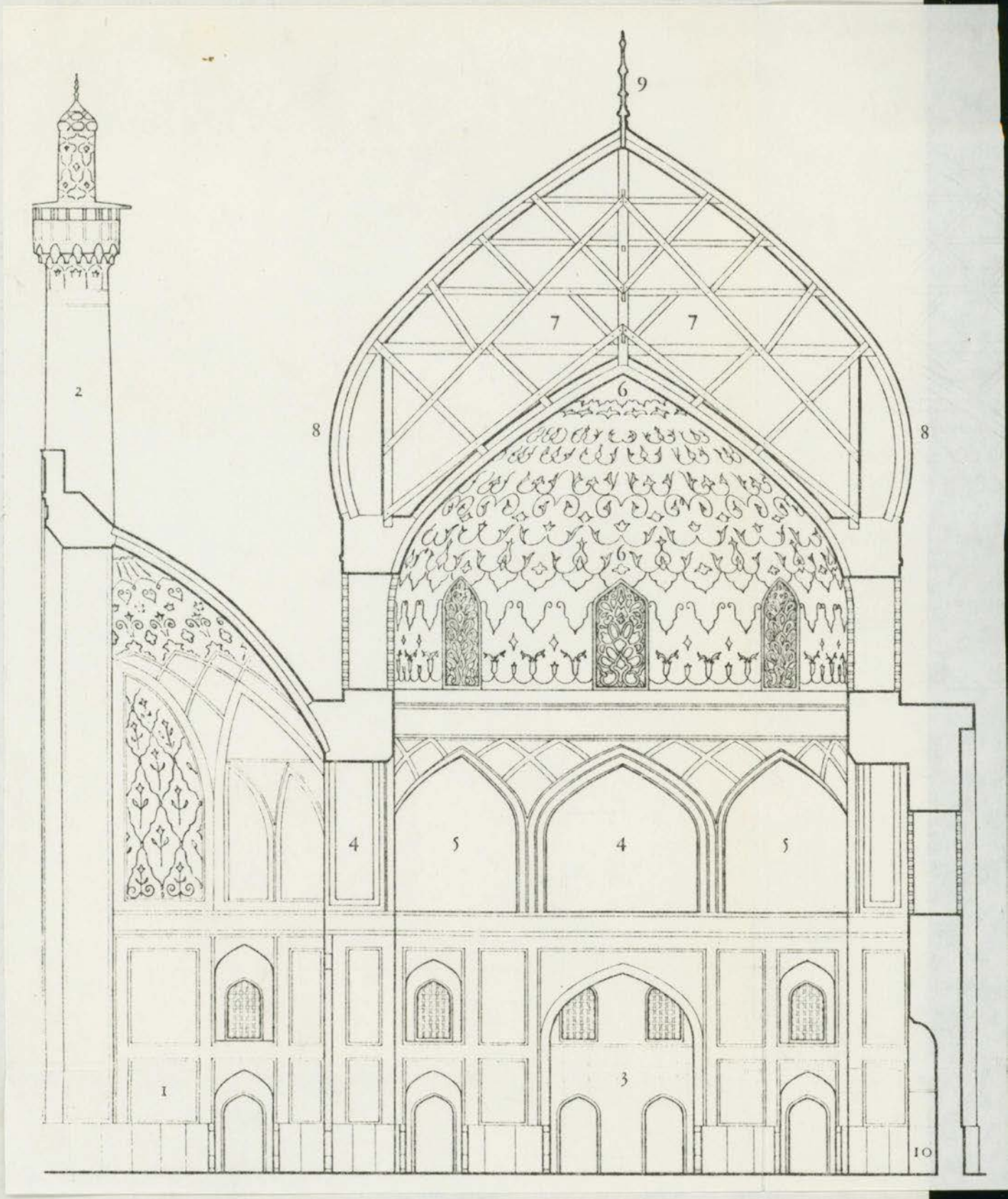
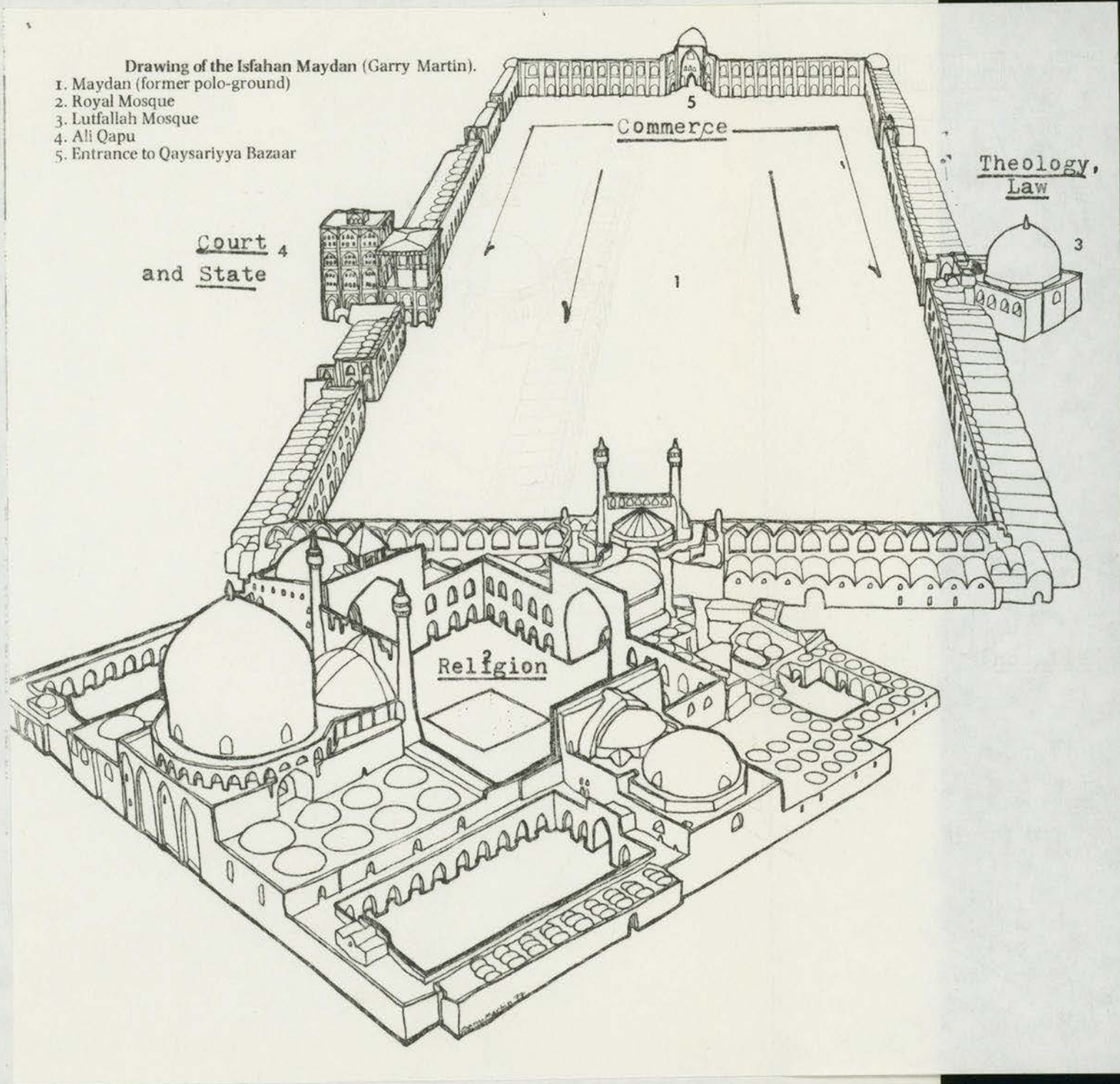
Plan 29. Masjid-i-Shah
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 77)



Plan 30. Masjid-i-Shah sanctuary cross section
(Stierlin, Ispahan, p. 135)



Plan 31. Maydan complex
(Hunt and Harrow, Iran II, p. 74)



GRAPH 1: Architectural

	Sanctuary	Prayer Chambers	Prayer Halls	Entrance Portal	Court Eyvans
Minars	X			X	
Accented Portal	X	X			
Mihrab Niche	X	X	X		
Dome	X	X			
Minbar Location	X				

GRAPH 2: Motifs and Trends

	Sanctuary	Prayer Chambers	Prayer Halls	Entrance Portal	Court Eyvans
Yellow Leaf Palmette	X	X	X		
Floral Leaf	X	X	X		X
Vase	X	X		X	
More Yellow Generally	X	X	X		
Larger Cartouches	X	X	X		
Denser Designs	X	X	X		
Yellow Ground	X				
More Green	X	X			
Yellow/Blue Glazed Bricks	X	X	X		X
Inscriptions	X	X	X	X	X

GLOSSARY

AMIL: Brick decoration: mortar space covered with glazed ceramic.

ARABESQUE: Vegetal motif of curving bud form separated by its outline into its various leaf components. Most common single motif found in the Maydan complex, in all media. See Plates One and Two; also Cartouche, Quatrefoil, Tracery, and Vine.

ARCADE: Line of arches supported by columns or piers.

ARCHITRAVE: Frame around door or window, expanded here to include the tie beam which runs across top of doors and windows of lower wall space, as in sixth floor of 'Ali Qapu.

ASHLAR: A block of finished stone, as opposed to one which is unfinished or roughhewn.

BORDER, MEANDER: Trim at edge of a decorative space which, itself, is decorated with a stylized vegetal vine which curves from one edge of the border to the other. See Plate Nine.

CABLE MOULDING, SPIRAL: An attached three-dimensional finishing decoration resembling a rope or cord. In Islamic architecture they are often used around the splay or the outline of an arch opening or panel.

CARTOUCHE: A complex motif of variable outline which is used as an accent for the greater design. It may be self contained, or its outline may issue parts of the greater design such as the two vine elements. Cartouches may be either open or closed: open cartouches have the same ground color as the greater design; closed ones have a ground of a contrasting color. A cartouche is bilaterally symmetrical along the vertical axis, except those used on spandrels in which case, the axis is shifted to bisect the outer 90^{o} angle. The outline may be in the general shape of a shield, spade, triangle, cloudband, vase, quatrefoil, etc. A medallion cartouche is usually round or oval and the design is repeated in each quarter. See Plates Five and Six.

CHAMFERED: The surface made when a corner of an element of architecture is cut away, usually at a 45° angle. See also, splay.

CHARDIN, Sir John: French jeweler who made several trips to Persia, 1665-77. J. Chardin, Sir John Chardin's Travels to Persia, (London, 1927).

COSTE, Pascal: French artist and architect who, with Eugene Flandin, recorded many monuments and their decorations during their trip to Persia in 1840-1. P. Coste, Monuments Modernes de la Perse, (Paris, 1867).

CURVILINEAR: A design or element thereof consisting of curved lines.

DADO: The lowest part or section of a wall, usually two or more meters high.

DELLE VALLE, Pietro: Italian nobleman who arrived in Persia in 1617. P. Delle Valle, Viaggi...al Persia, (Rome, 1658).

DESIGN: A composition of motifs, or the plan of a building or its decoration. The word is, here, used interchangeably with 'pattern' when discussing a total composition of decoration.

DOME VAULT: See Vault.

ESKANDAR BEG MONSHI: Biographer of Shah 'Abbas: History of Shah 'Abbas, (Boulder, 1978).

FAIENCE: Glazed clay or terracotta. May be single color, cut, and assembled, as in MOSAIC: or several colors may be painted on a square tile, as in TILE, PAINTED TILE, or HAFT RANGI (see also).

FIGUEROA, Don Garcia de Silva y. Spanish Emissary to the Safavid court, 1614-16. G. Figueroa, Comentarios, (Toledo, 1905).

FLORAL LEAF: A complex motif whose general outline resembles an elongated oval leaf. Its elements are small flowers or palmettes and leaves. See Plate Twelve.

FLORAL VINE: See Vine.

FLOWERS: Single motifs used as components of the floral vine or scroll. May be buds of a few petals emerging from stem, or fully open blooms. STAR FLOWERS have five petals with a contrasting circular center. (See small floral elements of the Courtyard Matrix, Plate Five).

GEOMETRIC: Design using straight lines.

GEOMETRIC THEME: That using elements with straight lines. See: Introduction, 3. Designs, above.

GUARD BAND: Thin line of one color surrounding complex motifs, and sections of compositions. Used in both ceramic and painted media.

GULDASTAH: Muezzin's box from which call to prayer is given. One of these is above the northwest courtyard eyvan of Masjid-i-Shah, c.f. Chapter Four.

HADITH: Literally, traditions. These are the collected sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate followers.

HAFT RANGI: Seven colors; name of the polychrome painted tiles.

HERBERT, Thomas. English secretary of Cotton expedition to 'Abbas' court, arrived 1627. T. Herbert, Travels in Persia (1627-29), (Freeport, 1972).

INTRADO: Underside of arch. See also Splay.

KUFIC: Arabic script in which the letters have geometric rather than cursive form. See: Introduction, C. 3.

LANCEOLATE LEAF: A motif whose outline is in the shape of a long narrow serrated edge leaf. See example in Plate Five.

LEAF PALMETTE: See Palmette.

LOTUS PALMETTE: See Palmette.

MATRIX: Design which surrounds a series of decorative spaces.

MAYDAN: Large open square. See Chapter One.

MEDALLION: See Cartouche.

MIHRAB NICHE: The indentation in the wall which denotes that wall as the qibla.

MINBAR: Raised platform at a mosque's qibla wall from which are given sermons and announcements.

MOTIF: Element of design.

MONUMENTALITY: Style of design in which certain elements, such as figures, fill or overwhelm the space in which they are set.

MUQARNAS: Decorative element suspended from ceiling used as the transition between wall and ceiling which is divided into many small intricately fitted planes making up a complex three-dimensional design. Also called stalactite vaulting.

PALMETTE: Stylized motif based on leaf or flower. Seen in outlines such as Leaf (Plate Three) or Lotus (Plate Four).

PATTERN: Synonomous with design.

QAYSARIYAH: Literally, Caesar or Imperial. Bazaar portal area of Maydan.

QIBLA: That direction which points directly to Mecca. In Iran it is to the south-southwest.

QUATREFOIL: A lobed curved outline formed by the cusping of a circle with four lobes.

RECIPROCAL: Pattern whose contiguous positive and negative outlines are mirror images of each other.

SAKU: A low bench or half-wall which may or may not be attached to a wall.

SHABISTAN: Covered prayer hall used in inclement weather.

SHAMSA: Large cartouche variation used in the spiral designs. See Introduction.

SHERLEY, Anthony and Robert: English adventurers who visited court of 'Abbas. Arrived in Iran in 1598. A. Sherley, Relations of Some Travels to Persia, (Amsterdam, 1974).

SPIRAL: The circular movements of the vegetal theme type one designs.

SPLAY: The chamfered surface cut into walls.

SQUINCH: The system of arching the corners of walls to fit onto a circular member such as the drum of a dome or a dome-vault.

TAVERNIER, Jean Baptiste: Merchant from Antwerp; he made six voyages to Iran, 1632-68. J. Tavernier, Six Voyages, (London, 1678).

TRACERY: Those designs which are built on crisscross or net-like interweaving of elements, as in vegetal theme type two.

VASE: See Cartouche.

VAULT: An arched ceiling or roof. The two used in the buildings of this study are the barrel vault and the dome- or faceted-vault.

VEGETAL THEME: Those designs which are based, however loosely, on plant life. See Introduction.

VINE: Connecting motif of the two vegetal elements, arabesque and floral vines.

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