



ISFAHAN X. MONUMENTS

ISFAHAN

X. MONUMENTS

In the course of centuries of urbanization, Isfahan has gained a large number of significant monuments. According to the French traveler Jean Chardin, in the late 17th century Isfahan housed some 162 mosques, 48 theological colleges (*madrasa*), 1,802 caravansaries, and 273 bathhouses (see [ḤAMMĀM](#); see Chardin, VII, pp. 343-53, 454-57, 363-67, 463, 321-22, 394; VIII, p. 134; XIX, pp. 198-200). Chardin's numbers reflect the extraordinary expansion of the city begun in 1590-91, when Shah 'Abbās I the Great (q.v.; r. 1587-1629) embarked on the reconstruction of medieval Isfahan in anticipation of its designation in 1598 as the capital of the Safavid Empire (1501-1722; see vii, above; see also McChesney, pp. 114-15). The magnificent architecture of Isfahan soon gained the city the honorific title of "Isfahan, half the world" (*Eṣfahān, neṣf-e jahān*; Eskandar Beg, p. 544), and a number of Isfahan's monuments have been designated by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. Unfortunately, only some of this rich architectural heritage has withstood the test of time and survived into the present. This entry will be divided into the following sections:

(1) A Historical Survey.



(2) Palaces.

(3) Mosques.

(4) Madrasas.

(5) Bridges.

(6) Bibliography.