



# KASHAN III. HISTORY TO THE PAHLAVI PERIOD

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## KASHAN

### iii. History to the Pahlavi Period

Kashan (Kāšān; Arabized Qāsān or Qāšān) lies at the center of an assemblage of townships and villages that occupy the narrow triangular shaped oasis on the edge of the central Iranian [desert](#) adjacent to the Karkas Mountain range. The fifth millennia BCE ruins of Sialk ([Plate I](#)) is a daunting testimony to the ravages of time at a city which found new life in the Islamic period, reached its peak under the Safavids, and experienced decline in the latter part of the 19th century.

A pre-Islamic connection to what today we know as “greater Kashan” (see map, [Figure 1](#)) is further evidenced by the survival, through the modern period, of the [Central Iranian dialects](#) among [Kashan Jews](#), as well sites such as a man-made cave (believed to be a Mithraic temple) and a Sasanian fire temple both located in the township of Niāsar, some 30 kilometers west of Kashan. Yet there are no references to Kashan in the pre-Islamic sources such as *Šahrestānīhā ī Ērānšahr*. Early geographers such as Ya‘qubi (d. 891) and [Ebn Rosta](#) (d. after 903), a native of Isfahan, only refer to the surrounding villages and townships (Ya‘qubi, p. 275; Ebn Rosta, tr., pp. 182, 85). [Eṣṭakri](#) (p. 201, tr., p. 209), and [Ebn Ḥawqal](#) (p. 370, tr., II, p. 362) make brief, belittling references to



the city's notorious scorpions. The renowned travelers Nāṣer-e Ḳosrow and [Ebn Baṭṭuṭa](#) make no mention of having visited the city. Other early sources credit Zobayda Ḳātun, the city's adopted female patron and influential Shi'i wife of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rašid (r. 786-809), as its purported founder (Qazvini, p. 205). This leads one to believe that the modern city mostly developed during the Islamic period.

A number of early references to a pre-Islamic Kashan may well be anachronistic and can be attributed to the collection of nearby villages and townships. One notable reference relates to a seemingly exaggerated 20,000 men force from Qom and Kashan, led by a certain Āḍargerd, taking part in the deciding battle of [Nehāvand](#) in the year 21/642. Following his defeat, Yazdgerd III is said to have retreated to Kashan on his way to Fars (Ebn A'tam, tr., pp. 100, 105; Dinavari, tr., p. 168; Narāqi, 1966, p. 28; Rajabi, pp. 61-63). Soon after, around 645 and following considerable local resistance, Kashan reportedly fell to the invading Arab army under the leadership of Abu Musā Aš'ari (Balāḍori, pp. 312-14, tr. Hitti, p. 485, tr. Āḍarnuš, pp. 71-72). Moqaddasi (p. 390) even gives a fantastic story of the siege of Kashan by Abu Musā Aš'ari, stating that he resorted to throwing into the walled city (*heṣn*) projectiles filled with scorpions as his ultimate weapon against local resistance.

Kashan's transformation from an agricultural township into a medium-size urban enclave began in earnest in the 9th century under the Buyids when we have evidence of buildings and remains of structures that were damaged or destroyed during a severe earthquake near Ray in 346/957-58 (Karimi, p. 211; Ambraseys and Melville, p. 39). The process was well underway in the second half of the 11th century when Kashan became a city of military importance as a gateway to Isfahan, a Saljuq capital, and continued through the 12th century under Saljuq rule, a period of relative security and increasing urbanization throughout the Iranian Plateau.

Kashan's early evolution into a center of trade and industry followed a familiar Saljuq pattern of moderate state investment in building and infrastructure, including rebuilding of the Friday mosque (originally from the Buyid period and known today as Masjed-e jāme' or Masjed-e kohna), water canals, and dykes for flood management. In addition, a city wall with eight towers and two city gates was built in the 1170s. The wall survived in part through the 17th century, providing security and the nucleus synergy for a growing commercial center in a strategically central location. By 1500, Kashan was reportedly "the most important town of the *Djibal* region after Isfahan"



(Christensen, p. 153; Majd-al-Din Ḥosayni, p. 773; Matthee, 1996, p. 398; Kennedy, pp. 62-63). By the 17th century, we have a list of 93 subject localities (*tawābe*), including villages (*qorā*) and cultivated fields (*mazāre*) in the greater Kashan area (Ṣafi-al-Din Ḥosayni, pp. 278-80).

Kashan's growth in the Islamic Middle Ages was in part due to its relative distance from severe seismic activity (though not immune from it) and the abundance of sanitary drinking water provided by an advanced underground water canal system (*qanāt*, *kāriz*). The city's dry and hot climate, less hospitable to pathogens, may account for higher resistance to trans-regional epidemics. A strong economy benefited from a robust transit trade and a diverse ecosystem that could accommodate a range of activities, including camel breeding at the edge of the Kavir (desert) in the villages of *Ārān* and *Bidgol*, winemaking by the sizable local Jewish community using grapes from the nearby slopes, a thriving textile and silk industry supported by local mulberry trees, and a thriving ceramic industry that benefited from a rare combination of local minerals, most notably *cobalt* (*lājvard-e solaymāni*) and white clay (*sang-e qamṣari*).

A prosperous agriculture was sustained by a sophisticated system of water management mainly centered on the *qanāt*, directing the water from the slopes to farmlands and through the city. In addition to farming, the *qanāt*, combined with the ice pit (*yakčāl*), an evaporative cooling system consisting of an above grade conic structure and subterranean cavity to produce ice in the winter and store for use in the summer, provided a year-round steady flow of safe drinking water. The excess runoff water that ran through the city *saypak* system (a reservoir 7-10 meters below grade fed by a *qanāt* stream that ran through it) was a vital part of a wind and water-cooling system (*bādgir*) and was used for secondary purposes such as bathing, laundry, and dyeing wool and fabric.

Diverse ecology made possible a wide variety of crops. By the 15th century, in addition to the usual grains (wheat, barley, and legumes), Kashan produced cotton and corn, as well as more profitable off-season products, including melons, grapes, and pomegranates, which reached the market as late as "a month past Nowruz" (Zarrābi, pp. 163-71). Almonds, plums, apricots, and dates were exported as dried fruits (Emādi mosque *waqf-nāma* dated 868/1463, and Jahānšāh Qarā Qoyunlu's decree dated 869/1464-65; inscriptions in 'Emādi Mosque, reprinted in Zarrābi, p. 530; Majd-al-Din Ḥosayni, p. 772; Le Strange, p. 227; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 220-21).



Other cash crops including rice and tobacco were produced in the 19th century. Rich natural resources were complemented with urban and rural communities often recognized as hardworking and industrious. According to a sixteenth-century observer, the town's puritan work ethics did not tolerate "an idle person" and children as young as five years old were "set to some labor" (Lionel Plumtree, cited in Christensen, p. 153).

*Religious trends.* Absence of evidence for urban conflicts in medieval Kashan is a noteworthy contrast to familiar and destructive sectarian factionalism in places like nearby Ray. This may be explained by a strain of non-conformity, which influenced patterns of conversion to Islam in rural Kashan. Unlike urban centers with mainstream Mazdean communities and a clerical establishment, Kashan did not have a religious elite who typically would try to cling to privilege through conversion to Islam and loyalty to a given Sunni sect. This reduced sectarian factionalism and urban conflict. In contrast, both the predominantly Sunni Nishapur and the Shi'a-Sunni mixed Ray suffered from sectarian strife in this period.

As early as the 8th century, Kashan was known for its *Khorromite* tendencies (Sadighi, 1938, p. 25; idem, 1993, pp. 226-27, 258). Kashan along with Qom, Ray, and *Āva/Āba* (near Sāva), were often referred to as cauldrons for quasi-Mazdakite and proto-Shi'i sectarian movements, including the heterodox rebellion of 'Abd-Allāh b. Mo'āwia around 128/745, whose belief in reincarnation, transmigration of the soul, and rejection of the *shari'ah* (*šari'a*) gained appeal in Iran after its defeat in Kufa (Hendušāh Nakjavāni, p. 84). Traces of this heterodox tradition are later manifested in Kashan as a center of Noqṭawi and *Babi* activism in the 17th and 19th centuries.

A growing anti Shi'i bias is evident in the Saljuq period sources, which make repeated pejorative references to Kashan as an apostate (*rāfezi*) stronghold (Rajabi, p. 87; Qazvini Rāzi, pp. 77, 80, 404, 445, 453). Eṣṭakri (tr., p. 166) refers to its inhabitants as imbeciles (*sakif al-'aql*), a cynical reference to their nonconventional beliefs.

Chief among the adversaries of the Shi'is in the 12th century was the celebrated minister and scholar *Nezām-al-Molk* (1018-92), who referred to Kashan inhabitants as "entirely *rāfezi* and *sab'i*" (sevener, i.e., Isma'ili) and their leaders as magicians (*maš'udān* [sic]), a characterization that could reflect his own fear of the rising of militant Isma'ilis (Nezām-al-Molk, pp. 216, 283-85, 311).



According to Rāvandi's *Rāḥat al-ṣodur* (written around 1205), Šams-al-Din Lāḡeri called on Sunnis to “vindicate the honor of the Four Companions (i.e., Caliphs) by throwing fire into the four places of *bāṭenis* (Qom, Kashan, Āba and Tafreš).” In another passage relating to the city's resistance in the 594/1198 siege, he rebukes the *rāfezis* of Kashan for “rejecting the *ejteḥād* of the *mojtaheds*, only praying three times a day, refusing to give alms (*zakāt*) and for going to Ṭus [Imam Rezā's shrine] for *ḥajj* pilgrimage” (*ba ḥajj ba Ṭus ravand*), thus drawing a community of organized Twelver Shi'is (as suggested by Bausani) with distinct anti-clerical tendencies (Rāvandi, 1921, pp. 30-31, 393-95; Bausani, p. 294). Such nonconformist tendencies were enough for Ebn Baṭṭuṭa to refer to inhabitants of Kashan as Shi'i extremist (*ḡolāt*; Ebn Baṭṭuṭa, tr., I, pp. 196-97). Even under Buyid rule, a period of relative tolerance toward Shi'ism, Qazvini Rāzi, the author of *Ketāb al-naqz*, bitterly complains about the patronage by 'Azod-al-Dawla (r. 949-83) of Hamadān's alleged “anthropomorphic and deterministic *mošabbēhiān wa mojberān* [Sunni] heretics who, as penance (*mokāfāt*) for their gains, curse the Shi'is of Qom and Kashan by calling them *rāfezis*” (p. 202).

Early Shi'ism in Kashan was noteworthy for its messianic tendencies, which made it distinct from its post-Safavid legalistic tradition. According to thirteenth-century accounts, every morning a group of fully armed notables and descendants of Imam 'Ali (*kāndān e 'Alawi*) in Kashan in ceremonial attire rode on horses to the outskirts of the city and surrounding villages in anticipation of the coming of the Hidden Imam, only to return disappointed. A similar practice has been reported in Sabzevār by the *Sarbedārs* in the 14th century (Yāqut, IV, p. 15).

Messianic piety is also manifest in a Kashan ceramic piece dated 1312, where Imam 'Ali's horseshoe is reproduced in a raised rim disc. The inscription recounts the dream of a Kashan citizen in which Imam 'Ali introduces his offspring, Imam Mahdi, and asks that a sumptuous shrine be built at that spot for pilgrims. Upon waking, the man finds an impression of the Imam's horseshoe on the scene (Lewis, p. 38; Komaroff and Carboni, p. 269. Fig. 56).

Kashan, like Qom, has been referred to as Dār al-Mo'menin in recognition of its numerous Shi'i shrines (*emānzāda*) attributed to early settlers from the family of Imam 'Ali, including the shrines of Ḥabib b. Musā b. Ja'far, Hārūn b. Musā b. Ja'far, Ḥasan b. Musā b. Ja'far, Solṭān 'Aṭābakš b. Musā b. Ja'far, and Amir Aḥmad b. Musā b. Ja'far (Zarrābi, pp. 428-35). There is also a shrine in Kashan ascribed to Bābā Šojā' Firuz Abu Lo'lo'a, 'Omar b. Kaṭṭāb's assassin,



who is considered a native Shi'i saint (Ẓarrābi, 437-38, 560-62). According to the local narrative, he was a native of Kashan who fled Medina and received protection in his Shi'i homeland (for him, see Yusofi Eškavari, pp. 198-99). The shrine possibly dates from the late Il-Khanid period (777/1375-76). The shrine was reconstructed during the Safavid and Qajar periods and is currently closed down as a conciliatory measure to reduce anti-Sunni tensions and may even be under threat of demolition (Ẓarrābi, pp. 428-33; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 186-88; Reżā Mahdavi, at <http://fararu.com/fa/news/93/>, accessed July 2017).

*Urban notables.* Despite Kashan's association with anti-Shi'i rhetoric in Iran's Sunni dominated environment, the rise to power of numerous high officials from Kashan in the Saljuq administration, including a number of Shi'is, can be explained by pragmatism towards Shi'is in practice, fluidity of sectarian beliefs, especially in the absence of a fully developed Shi'i jurisprudence (*feqh*) and the Shi'i practice of dissimulation of faith (*taqiya*). The notables played a critical role in the development of the city through building mosques, *madrasas*, libraries, dams, bridges, *qanāts*, caravansaries, bathhouses, orphanages, and infirmaries, and by supporting them by establishing generous endowments. One contributing factor in training administrators was Kashan's reputation as a center of learning during the Islamic Middle Ages. According to the *Hodud al 'ālam*, "Kashan is a very pleasant town. Arab [settlers] are plentiful. From it come many clerks and literati (*dabirān wa adibān besyār kizand*)." The scholar Abu'l-Reżā Fażl-Allāh Rāvandi (d. 588/1192), himself from a learned and influential Kashan family, refers to his home town as maker of the "corps of ministers and financial managers" (*ashāb-e manāṣeb-e wazir wa mostawfi*), and "a majority of the royal secretariat" (*bištar-e dabirān-e dawlat-e solṭān*) came from Kashan, the "source for literary scholarship and the seat of experts of the Arabic language" (*manša'-e adab wa maḥall-e fożalā-ye loḡat-e 'Arab*). He further reports that Kashan's fame in arts and calligraphy was such that "Wherever a masterful work of calligraphy is found in Iraq, people assume that it is done by a Kashani or a student of a Kashani" (*kaṭṭ-e Kāšānist yā az Kāšāniān āmuḵta ast*)" (*Hodud al 'ālam*, p. 143, tr., p. 133; Rāvandi, 1921, p. 51).

The learned class, many from the city's five *madrasas*, formed a trusted cadre with regional loyalties who were available for service to higher-ranking patrons. A number of notable families such as descendents of Rāvandi showed remarkable continuity and produced several generations of prominent scholars, literary figures, and philanthropists through the end of the 14th



century (Narāqi, 1966, p. 65). Kashan secretaries found new influence after the death of the great Saljuq minister Abu ‘Ali Ḥasan Neẓām-al-Molk (d. 485/1092), when they were seen as allies of the Turkish ruling class opposing the dominance of Sunni orthodox elements. A number of high-ranking officials from Kashan were also known as renowned scholars of their time. Abu Naṣr Ṣaraf-al-Din [Anuṣervān b. Kāled Kāšāni](#) (d. 532/1137-38), whose name suggests a renewed interest in the pre-Islamic heritage and a claim for continuity with Sasanian nobility (*awlād-e akāser*), was a trusted Shi‘i superintendent of public projects under Neẓām-al-Molk, a minister under the Abbasid caliph Mostarṣed (r. 1118-35), and in the Saljuq court under Maḥmud b. Moḥammad (521/1127) and Mas‘ud b. Moḥammad (529/1134-35). The Ṣarafiya madrasa and library that he founded were functioning through the end of the 13th century (Amin Aḥmad Rāzi, II, pp. 448-49; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 58-59; idem, 1969, pp. 108-09). ‘Ezz-al-Din Kāši, a notable scholar-minister from Kashan, who was known for his knowledge of algebra and management (*estifā*), was executed by Rokn-al-Din Ṭoḡrel III in 588/1192 (Kvāndamir, II, pp. 525-26; Henduṣāh, p. 301; Lambton, p. 248; Bausani, pp. 292-93; Browne, 1914, I, pp. 360-62; Monši Kermāni, p. 98; Rajabi, p. 105).

*Surviving the invaders.* Kashan’s centrality and prosperity attracted tribal invaders. As a source of social stability, the notables provided support for resistance and recovery when the city occasionally came under attack by various invaders, but acquiesced when facing an overwhelming adversary such as the Mongols. During a Saljuq dynastic conflict in 532/1137-38, when Malek Saljuq b. Moḥammad contested the throne, Kashan and its surrounding villages suffered extensive destruction, looting, and mass killings. A bloody siege came to an end only after Majd-al-Din ‘Obayd-Allāh (d. 535/1140-41), founder of the Majdiya madrasa and other institutions, paid 7,000 gold coins to the assailants (Narāqi, 1996, pp. 59, 66-67; idem, 1999, pp. 110-11; Rāvandi, *Divān*, pp.74-90). He was a nephew of Abu Ṭāher Ṣafi-al-Din Esmā‘il Kāši, another influential administrator of public projects under Neẓām-al-Molk who, in appreciation for his services, granted him “Kashan’s entire *divāni* income (*soyurḡāl*)” (Narāqi, 1966, pp. 56-58). However, the notables were not always capable of protecting the city. Kashan became the target of an even more destructive attack by the rebel commander Atābak Miājoq in 594/1197 during the dynastic conflicts of the [Khwarazmshahs](#). Despite an organized local resistance during a bloody four-month siege, and the assailants’ promises for safety of the residents, a widespread pillage ensued. The assailants even dug under the houses and found treasures, presumably including caches of



local precious ceramics (Rāvandi, 1921, p. 393).

During the first wave of Mongol invasion after a defeat in Isfahan in 1228, the retreating Mongol army looted Kashan, seemingly facing little resistance (Eqbāl, p. 398). Kashan was spared during Hulāgu Khan's invasion, in part through intercession by Hulāgu's vizier Naṣir-al-Din Ṭusi, and it seems to have even prospered through leadership of the likes of the scholar Henduṣāh b. Sanjar Naḵjavāni, who was the governor of Kashan in 674/1275, and 'Ali b. Bahā'-al-Din b. Šams-al-Din Jovayni, who was executed there on the order of Arġun Khan in 688/1289 (Eqbāl, p. 506). By 740/1340, greater Kashan's tax revenue, *hoquq-e divāni*, had reached 117,000 gold coins (compared to 275,000 for Tabriz; Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi, p. 74, tr., p. 72).

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were a period of decentralized rule and tapering anti-Shi'i tensions, during which Kashan seems to have experienced self-sufficiency and stability. By the 1470s, Giosofat Barbaro, the Venetian envoy to the Āq Qoyunlu court, estimated Kashan's population as a seemingly exaggerated 20,000 households (i.e., approx. 90,000 people; Petrushevsky, p. 507), which is close to the population number of Venice or Florence before the Black Death. Barbaro was impressed by the abundance of Kashan's cotton and silk textile products available for purchase on any given day for as much as ten thousand ducats (Barbaro, in *Safar-nāmahā-ye veniziān*, p. 89).

The second half of the 13th century was a critical period for innovations in Kashan's precious ceramic production in the form of a highly specialized overglazed technology (see CERAMICS xiv). The required capital for such breakthroughs most likely came from the local elite's investment in crafts and industry. Kashan's unique tiles and *mehṛāb* pieces were designed to illuminate interior spaces and accentuated a string of Shi'i mosques and shrines in Naṭanz, Varāmin, Mashhad, Karbala, and Baku. Their disappearance may be explained by the shift of production to less expensive tiles for exterior decoration in the Timurid period (Watson, p. 154). Sustained development in this period is also evidenced by Kashan's building projects. By the turn of the 14th century, under the Il-Khanid Maḥmud Ġāzān Khan (r. 1295-1304) and possibly as part of Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh's vision to transform Iran's urban spaces, one of the three Dār al-Siādas, for care of orphans, the poor, travelers, and pilgrims was constructed in Kashan. The document of the pious endowment (*waqf-nāma*) delineates generous grants that paid for education of disadvantaged young women and burial expenses of the poor. It contained a mosque, a *madrasa*, a Sufi inn (*rebāṭ*), and a monastery (*kānaqāh*; Rajabi, pp.



127-28; Narāqi, 1966, p. 90).

Much of the city's development was owed to administrators who returned home following a lucrative career and invested their wealth in the city. A certain Shaikh 'Ezz-al-Din 'Ali Jamāl Kāšāni (d. 713/1314) was a favorite secretary of the renowned Il-Khanid governor Bahā'-al-Din Moḥammad Jovayni (d. 678/1279), who was known for his oppressive style of government. 'Ezz-al-Din reportedly "relinquished all earthly positions at a young age by his own will and not [political] necessity" and lived the rest of his life in Kashan, where he spent all his wealth on charities (*kayrāt wa ṣadaqāt*). He refused donations from the Il-khan, perhaps due to concern over possible appropriation of his endowments (Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšāni, pp. 151-52).

The more extensive 'Emādi complex (built in 764-75/1463-74; see [KASHAN v. \[2\] HISTORICAL MONUMENTS, Plates I-V](#)) was founded by Amir 'Emād-al-Din b. Amir Mo'in-al-Din Šebli Širvāni (d. 882/1477). He and his two brothers Tāj-al-Din and Zayn-al-Din Širvāni adopted Kashan after they retired as high officials of Jahānšāh Qarā Qoyunlu (r. 1438-67). A marble covered square at the center of the complex became the city's focal point for centuries. It included a restored Saljuq period mosque (also known as Masjed-e Maydān), an infirmary (*dār al-šefā*), a madrasa, and a water-clock tower (*'emārat-e waqt*) designed by a certain Mawlānā Faqr-al-Din Moḥammad Kāši known as the inventor (*moktare*). Details of the generous endowments of this complex are inscribed in a *waqf-nāma*, which specifies allocations for preachers, prayer leaders, instructors, and seminarians who were required to pass semi-annual examinations, as well as the *mo'addin* (the one who calls people to prayer), administrators, and custodians. 'Emād-al-Din's brothers are credited for building Menār-e Zayn-al-Din and Kāvāja Tāj-al-Din Mosque. Both structures survived through the 19th century (Majd-al-Din Ḥosayni, p. 772; Rajabi pp. 150-54; Fayzi, pp. 128-37; Żarrābi, p. 295; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 203 ff.).

Kashan also had a productive cultural life during the Il-Khanid and Timurid periods and produced philosophers, mystics, and literary figures such as the poet and Avicennian philosopher [Bābā Afzal-al-Din Kāšāni](#) (d. 610/1213-14); the mystic and [Ebn al-'Arabi](#)'s eminent commentator Kamāl-al-Din 'Abd-al-Razzāq 'Āref Kāšāni (d. 731/1331); the historian and master mosaic craftsman Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšāni (d. 739/1338); the astronomer and mathematician 'Emād-al-Din Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad Kāši (d. 766/1364), whose work also includes a commentary on Persian music; and the renowned mathematician [Ġiāt-al-Din Jamšid Kāši](#) (d. 832/1429) and his nephew and associate Mo'in-al-Din Monajjem



Kāši, who collaborated with him in the building of the Ulugh Beg's Samarqand *zij* (Narāqi 1966, pp. 81-84 and the cited manuscript sources).

*The Safavid period.* The rise of the Safavids meant that Kashan was transformed from a Shi'i minority center to one favored by a Shi'i state. The welcoming ceremonies for Shah Esmā'il I (r. 907-30/1501-24) during his first arrival there in 909/1503 and his subsequent visits in 925/1519 and 926/1520 was marked by festive celebrations, bazaar decorations, and public audiences accompanied by music, wine drinking, and exchange of gifts with city elders in the Fin pavilion, which took on the role of a center for royal leisure and entertainment (Kvāndamir, IV, pp. 473-75; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 95-100; idem, 1969, pp. 61-63; Rajabi, pp. 213-16).

Kashan's prominence in the early Safavid period was in part due to the rise of Qāzi Moḥammad Kāši, a skillful administrator and scholar. His early support for Shah Esmā'il when he declared Kashan's autonomy from Turkmen rule highlights the role of the city's notables in the rise of the Safavids. Later, Qāzi Moḥammad shared the influential office of chief of religious/judicial administration, *ṣedārat*, with Šams-al-Din Lāhijāni while holding the office of military commander (*emārat*) as well as governorship of Yazd, Kashan, and Shiraz (Roemer, pp. 229-30; Rumlu, pp. 39, 87, 110, 146; Pārsādust, p. 603). He was nevertheless executed on Esmā'il's order in 915/1509 for "shedding the blood and appropriating the property of Muslims" (possibly of Sunni landowners) and for his debaucheries (*fosuq wa fojur*), an indication of his public disregard for tenets of the Shari'a, though he may well have paid the price for his dominant political position (Kvāndamir, IV, pp. 473-75; Rumlu, p. 146; Koršāh, p. 37; Pārsādust, pp. 609-10).

Later under Safavid rule, even though Kashan did not produce any high-level administrators, it did enjoy a favored position. In 932/1526, Shah Tahmāsb I (r. 1524-76) exempted the inhabitants from all overdue taxes in consideration for the excesses and heavy taxes they previously endured and for their determination to eliminate "injustice and schisms" (*zōlm wa bed'at*). Shah 'Abbās I (r. 1588-1629) revoked taxes on burial ceremonies and a levy on scales and measuring instruments. He also bestowed free rent for the month of Ramadan to all Shi'i tenants on state owned property. Shah Šafi I (r. 1038-52/1629-42) prohibited levying extra sale taxes on non-resident merchants (prescripts of the 'Emādi mosque, in Rajabi, pp. 155-65; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 214-20, 222-23, 226-30).



Although removed from chronic wars on the periphery, Kashan was not immune from destruction and occasional conflicts emanating from the center. Shah Ṭahmāsb's renegade brother *Alqās Mirzā*, in collaboration with the Ottoman Sultan Solaymān, plundered Hamadān, Qom, and Kashan (Zarinehbab, p. 85). Perhaps in an attempt to alleviate the wounds of this invasion, Ṭahmāsb built an orphanage in Kashan for forty boys and forty girls. The youngsters were instructed by "Shi'i male and female teachers" and after puberty the youngsters were matched for marriage to one another in order to make room for new orphans (Eskandar Beg I, p. 123, tr., I, p. 204, cited in Narāqi, 1966, p. 101).

Even more destructive was the siege of Kashan by the *qezelbāš* chief Mohammad Khan Torkamān around 992/1584. He had been discharged as a governor during Sultan Moḥammad's dynastic civil war and was seeking to regain his position by joining in a palace coup against the shah's wife and the power behind his throne, Mahd-e 'Olyā. During the siege, an extremist Shi'i preacher, Mawlānā Ḥasan Wā'eẓ, provoked the "naive" inhabitants to attack Torkamān's army while uttering a magical verse to scare off and disperse the enemy. The result was the beheading of hundreds of local militia. The subsequent looting and obliteration reportedly turned the city into a "home of owls and foxes." After months of fighting, Kashan finally came under central control in 1586 under 'Abbās I (Afušta'i, pp. 223 ff.; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 110-11; 'Āṭefi, I, pp. 204-5; Rajabi, p. 226).

As part of a scheme for centralization and subversion of tribal influence, Shah 'Abbās I dislodged Kashan from the *qezelbāš* fiefdoms (*toyul*), assigning it first as crown *kāšša* land and later as part of the pious endowments (*awqāf*) that he personally controlled (Szuppe, p. 92; Roemer, p. 273).

The reign of Shah 'Abbās I has been referred to as the most illustrious period in Kashan's history. His extended stays, sometimes lasting for months, made the city an unofficial secondary capital and a center for the silk and textile trade and industry. Among urban development projects under him was a landscaped boulevard (*čahār-bāḡ*) leading to the large palace square (*maydān-e dawlat-kāna*). Elaborate festive bashes in Kashan's main square, including polo, wrestling, fantastic fireworks, and a variety of animal fights, sparked much excitement among the populace and at times led to fierce communal clashes (Eskandar Beg, p. 1111, tr., p. 537; Rajabi, pp. 231, 237; Sherley, tr., pp. 79-83; Figueora, tr., pp. 238-48; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 270-72).



Shah ‘Abbās’s most notable building project in Kashan was the expansion of the Fin royal palace complex, also known as *Bāḡ-e Fin*, with elaborate fountains said to have been designed by Shaikh Bahā’-al-Din ‘Āmeli, the Imami scholar and author commonly known as Shaikh Bahā’i, and became a model for the Lahore Shalimar gardens (1637-41). The adjoining royal inn, mentioned as Iran’s best guesthouse, was covered in marble and tile and was 200 meters in length and width (Narāqi, 1969, pp. 61-66; Herbert, p. 219). The dignitaries’ residence and bathhouse was surrounded by scenic gardens. The palace complex was part of a larger project that included a royal *qanāt* dedicated to the palace, a dam (*band-e ‘abbāsi*) in Qohrud and new roads and aqueducts. It was completed in 1010/1601-02 at an estimated cost of 10,000 *tomans* (65,000 pounds). The income producing properties including the bazaar expansion was endowed for urban improvements (Narāqi, 1966, pp. 129-34; idem, 1969, pp. 321-24). In 1628, Sir Thomas Herbert praised the “noble city” and its estimated 4,000 households, as “in compass not less than York or Norwich,” and for its “industrious and civil people,” its “fairly built” houses, many with decorated walls, and its superior government (Herbert, pp. 218-19). By 1673, according to John Chardin, the city was 77 square kilometers in size with 6500 households (most likely including surrounding townships and villages) and 40 mosques (Chardin, II, pp. 462-63).

Shah ‘Abbās took pride in the beauties of the Fin palace and showed them off to foreign envoys and dignitaries who, according to one source, were received with elaborate welcoming ceremonies, including music and dance by unveiled women (most likely non-Muslim slave women) and young boys (Rajabi, pp. 228, 233, 235; Silva Figueora, tr., pp. 238-48). The city’s special affinity toward Shah ‘Abbās I is evidenced by extensive mourning ceremonies that marked his death (Falsafi, new ed., I, pp. 427-28). Shah ‘Abbās body was buried in the shrine of Ḥabib b. Musā in Kashan, a temporary arrangement that became permanent (Narāqi, 1969, pp. 155-56).

*Religion and culture.* As a Shi’i center, Kashan provided safe haven during Shah Esmā’il’s mass killings of Sunnis in places such as Isfahan, from where the historian Fażl-Allāh b. Ruzbehān Ḳonji fled, who completed his anti-Shi’i polemic *Ebṭāl nahj al-bāṭel* (manuscript kept at the British Library) in Kashan in 909/1504. However, in a swift reversal of the spirit of toleration, Kashan Sunnis were forced to flee the city, and Fażl-Allāh b. Ruzbehān fled much further away to Samarqand (Abisaab, p. 28; Şafā, IV, pp. 538-40; Amoretti, pp. 618-19).



Among the new *Jabal 'Āmel* jurists (*mojtaheds*) who helped shape a legalistic Shi'i narrative, 'Ali b. Ḥosayn b 'Abd-al-'Āli Karaki Moḥaqqueq-e Tāni (d. 1585) taught and adjudicated in Kashan (Abisaab, p. 153). However, the local ulama, in keeping with the tradition of their predecessors, are known for works other than Islamic law. Mollā Faṭḥ-Allāh Šarif Kāšāni (d. 988/1580) was the author of the well-known Qur'an exegesis in Persian, *Menhāj al-šādeqin*. The renowned scholar, poet philosopher Mollā Moḥsen-Moḥammad *Fayz Kāšāni* (d. 1679) is celebrated for his attempt to integrate philosophy, Sunni mystic legacy, and legalistic Shi'ism in his 120 books and treatises. He was attacked by conservative jurists for his conciliatory views and was buried in the outskirts of the city, away from the city cemetery (Salmāni, p. 231, cited by Qarā'ati). With the exception of a few works on astronomy and mathematics, Kashan's tradition of scientific inquiry underwent a decline by the end of the Safavid period.

Kashan's Shi'i roots found expression in other areas of religious life such as the cult of mourning (*rawza-kvāni*), a centerpiece of an increasingly popular Shi'i identity. The melodic elegy hymns in praises of the Shi'i Imams by the two notable composers Moḥtašam Kāšāni (d. 996/1588; for him, see *Šafā*, V, pp. 792-99) and Mirzā Šaraf-al-Din 'Ali Ḥosayni Kāšāni, also known as Bābā Ašraf (both patronized by Shah Ṭahmāsb I), remain popular to this day (Falsafi, III, pp. 6-10; Rajabi, pp. 332-33; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 106-7; idem, 1969, pp. 191-93).

A new Shi'i popular culture evolved around anti-Sunni ceremonies such as *'Omarsuzān*. The festival centered on the tomb of the afore-mentioned Bābā Šojā' Abu Lo'lo'. On the anniversary of Caliph 'Omar b. al-Ḳaṭṭāb's death, the crowds cried insults with music and dance around a clay statue filled with grape syrup. As a finale, the crowds stabbed the statue and drank the grape syrup as a symbol of the caliph's blood (Šafi-al-Din Ḥosayni, MS British Library, Or. 8375, fols. 159-60 [the passage has been deleted in the published version by Modarresi]; Šuštari, p. 87; Rajabi, p. 64 n. 2). As part of the sacrificial feast (*'Id-e Qorbān*), an Islamic feast celebrated on 10 Du'l-ḥejja, the camel sacrifice (*šotor-qorbāni*) was particularly elaborate in Kashan and accompanied by public singing and dancing. This occasion often led to clashes among urban factions, otherwise uncommon prior to this period (see *CAMEL v*; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 103-5).

Kashan's literary scene flourished partly because disinterest of the Safavids towards poetry liberated it from the formalities of court patronage. Addressing a wider audience, poetry and prose of Kashan in this period to an



extent moved away from flowery style and complex metaphors that had characterized court poetry. A prolific literary scene centered on coffee houses where music, dance, and storytelling embellished the work of poets among artisans. A biographical dictionary of Kashan poets in 1016/1607 lists over 50 poets of various quality and significance in greater Kashan, a number that was rivaled only by that of Isfahan (Naṣrābādi, pp. 239-40, 282; Taqī-al-Din Kāšāni; McChesney, pp. 248-49).

Aside from these circles, among the noteworthy professional poets was the celebrated **Kalim Kāšāni** (d. 1061/1651), who found prominence in the court of Mughal emperor Shah Jahān. He was born in Hamadān, but his education in Kashan and possibly the city's literary fame can explain his association with Kashan. Kashan's literary production seems to have continued through the late 18th century and significantly contributed to the literary revival known as literary return (*bāzgašt-e adabi*) in the Qajar era. Šabāḥi Bidgoli (d. 1218/1803-4?), a true artisan poet farmer who forgo poetic rewards, never left his hometown of Bidgol. His student Faṭḥ-'Ali Khan Kāšāni with the sobriquet Šabā (d. 1238/1822-23), known as a founder of the "return" movement, benefited from Kashan's literary ambiance (Partow Bayza'i, in Šabāḥi Bidgoli, pp. ii-x; Żarrābi, p. 368; Šafā, V, pp. 1170-81; Hedāyat, 1937, pp. 458-63; Browne, 1929, IV, pp. 258-63).

A variety of forbidden pleasures persisted under the pious surface of the Dār al-mo'menin. Shah Ṭahmāsb I, in a rescript dated 1534 that was publicly displayed, refers to a testimonial of his own "repentance" and proscribes all sales of alcohol, cannabis (*bang*, *ḥašiš ma'jun*), music, singing halls, brothels, gambling houses, and pigeon flying (*kabutar-parāni*). It orders tax collectors to exclude all tax income from such establishments. It further prohibits beard shaving, playing of the tambourine (supposedly by sexualized "coffee boys" according to Matthee, 2005, pp. 169-70), and other instruments of indulgence (*ālat-e lahw*), beating drums in *kānaqāh* assemblies and use of young boys (*amāred*) in bathhouses. A harsher undated rescript by **Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn** (r. 1694-1722) demonstrates the futility of such decrees. It once again prohibits collecting "substantial" (*mablaḡ-e kaṭir*) taxes from the sale of alcohol, gambling houses, and brothels. It bans betting on animal fights and pigeon flying and orders corporal punishment (*ḥadd*, punishment for forbidden acts) for non-repenting offenders and those who do not report such offenses (inscriptions of 'Emādi Mosque; cited in Ġaffāri, 1969, pp. 211-13; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 230-33).



Yet public demonstrations of piety by rulers could not overcome the appeal of nonconformist tendencies during the Noqṭawi revival around the years leading to the Islamic millennium (1591-92), when Kashan and the nearby [Anjedān](#) became caldrons of Noqṭawi activism, and the township of Ārān reportedly had a Noqṭawi majority. Despite an initial resolute resistance, the movement was crushed in face of persecution by state-sponsored hegemonic and legalistic orthodoxy (Taqi-al-Din Kāšāni, pp. 693-94; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 102-3, 120-21).

Under Shah ‘Abbās I, a draconian anti-Noqṭawi campaign got off to a fierce start when, in 1592, he personally beheaded Mir Sayyed Aḥmad Kāši in Naṣrābād near Kashan (Falsafi, II, pp. 343-44; III, pp. 45-51). He was a leading and defiant Noqṭawi figure who had earlier received a decree from the Mughal emperor, Jalāl-al-Din [Akbar I](#) (r. 1556-1605). Many of his covert local followers were compromised and subsequently executed by the Shah’s decree. Among Noqṭawi notable poets and artists with modest backgrounds, Mir ‘Ali-Akbar Tašbihi Kāšāni (for him, see Golčīn-e Ma‘āni, I, pp. 221-30) escaped persecution and received patronage under Akbar. There he joined a group of Persian intellectuals influential in the formation of the syncretic “divine religion” (*din-e elāhi*; Taqi-al-Din Kāšāni, pp. 324-32; Abbas Amanat, pp. 367-92). Afzal Dotāri (d. 994/1586), a leading young musician, accomplished poet, and astronomer was executed for his radical Noqṭawi beliefs including dismissing the Shari‘a as trivial and futile (*sahl wa ‘abat*; Taqi-al-Din Kāšāni, pp. 456-57; Rajabi, p. 305; Falsafi, III, p. 45). The Jewish merchant poet, Sarmad Kāšāni, who underwent conversion to Christianity and Islam before becoming a naked Jain ascetic, was executed in 1661 (Naṣrābādi, pp. 310-11; Šafā, V, pp. 1228-30), two years after the execution of his patron, the enlightened Indian prince philosopher [Dārā Šokuh](#).

*Trade and industry.* Kashan’s main cash crops in the Safavid period were tobacco and opium. The city found prominence as a center for the processing, manufacturing, and distribution of silk by 1540. The decline of Solṭāniya as a silk trading center after Timur’s death in 1405 had made Kashan a hub for export of silk to India through the Persian Gulf (Matthee, 1999, pp. 19, 28). Precious weaves such as gold and silver brocades (*zarbāf*) were made using locally produced silk as well as highest quality of pure white silk from northern Iran. Velvet, satin, and taffetas from Kashan, Yazd, and Isfahan formed about 70 percent of Iran’s export to Russia by 1558 (Matthee, 1999, pp. 30, 36, 41-42). Shah ‘Abbās I was particularly keen on improving silk



production by employing European expert advice (Pietro della Valle, tr., pp. 572-73). According to Chardin (III, p. 4), a village near Kashan employed a thousand households of silk weavers. This seemingly exaggerated figure is mirrored by another observer around 1679 who claims that in Ārān alone, 20,000 looms operated by “young and old men and women” were producing fine velvets and gold embroidery (McChesney, p. 248; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 216-22).

Like fine silk and silver and gold brocaded carpets, Kashan’s well-known precious textile products, *zarbāf*, had domestic uses, with the royal court as their primary patron in the 17th century (Spuhler, p. 719; Rajabi, p. 229). Thomas Herbert, who in the 1620s was part of a British trade mission to the court of Shah ‘Abbās I, was particularly impressed by Kashan’s “spacious and uniform Bazaar, furnished with silk, damasks, and carpets of silk, silk and gold, and coarse thrummed [fringed] wool; no part of the world having better or better-colored... [owing to its] singular art in dyeing or colouring of silks, and staining of linen-cloth.” He further quotes a report that in 1600, “[there was] more [raw] silk brought in one year into Kashan than broadcloths are into London.” He admired the city’s leather products as having “lively flowers and knots, and in beautiful colours” (Herbert, p. 218).

*Fall of the Safavids.* The 18th century was characterized by the fall of the Safavid Empire followed by periodic interplay between invading tribes such as the Afghan invasion in 1722 and dynastic feuds such as the rebellion of Zaki Khan Zand in 1763 on one hand, and local notables’ attempts at establishing security and rebuilding on the other. Two years after Kashan was taken by the Afghan army following a short siege, [Ašraf Ġilzāy](#)’s retaking of the city after a local rebellion was accompanied by much destruction and mass killings of young men (Sykes, pp.321, 325; Krusinski, p. 134; Żarrābi, pp. 211-12; Narāqi, 1966, p. 147).

During the years following the defeat of Ašraf Ġilzāy by Ṭahmāsb-qoli (later [Nāder Shah](#)), the intercession of an influential local notable, Mirzā Abu’l-Qāsem Šayḡ-al-Eslām (later Nāder’s envoy to the Ottoman court) led to a decree for tax reduction in 1143/1730 and a two-year tax exemption for reconstruction of the city. Nāder Shah also appointed an independent governor for Qom and Kashan, possibly with the intention of exclusively assigning the city’s tax income for rebuilding efforts. The Jewish community in particular experienced a period of freedom and cultural florescence (Narāqi, 1966, pp. 148-50; Rajabi, pp. 164-65).



Rebuilding efforts were once again interrupted by further attacks from the periphery and the center. In 1747, soon after Nāder Shah's assassination, the city and its hinterland sustained further damage during the campaign of the Afghan chief Allāhyār Khan Ozbak (Perry, p. 14; Rostam-al-Ḥokamā', pp. 227-29). A period of tenuous security under the rule of [Karim Khan Zand](#) (r. 1751-79) was disturbed by the rebellion of Karim Khan's half-brother Zaki Khan Zand, causing considerable destruction to Kashan. However, Karim Khan was able to put an end to the rebellion with the help of local resistance and leadership of the native notable governor, Mo'ezz-al-Din Ġaffāri (Perry, p. 105; Abu'l-Ḥasan Ġaffāri, pp. 220-23; Rajabi, p. 348).

A period of relative stability memorialized by Karim Khan's building of the [Ḳalwat-e Karim-ḵāni](#) pavilion in the royal Fin palace complex soon came to an end with Karim Khan's death in 1779, a devastating earthquake, and the start of a new civil war. A rebuilding campaign launched by the Kashan notable and governor ['Abd-al-Razzāq Khan Kāšāni](#) was underway with remarkable speed, during which masons and craftsmen were recruited from around the country (Abu'l-Ḥasan Ġaffāri, pp. 373-74; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 69, 91; Rajabi, p. 350).

*The Qajar period.* During the decade of long civil wars (1779-89), which led to the establishment of the Qajar dynasty, Kashan changed hands a number of times. This decade was also marked by periodic famines and epidemics in which half of the city's estimated 45,000 population reportedly perished (Żarrābi, pp. 207-10; Nafisi II, p. 38).

After a defeat around 1199/1785 by [Āḡā Moḥammad Khan](#) in the battle of Naṣrābād, the aforementioned Zand governor, 'Abd-al-Razzāq Khan, agreed to surrender his two sons as a guarantee for future payment of a heavy fine (Nāmi Eṣfahāni, pp. 263-66; Şabāhi, p. 105; Rajabi, pp. 361-62; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 159-60). The new shah ordered three of Kashan's villages, Sār, Vādeqān, and Van, sacked and destroyed as retribution for wartime loyalty to the Zands. He also later reinstated 'Abd-al-Razzāq Khan as governor, an indication of the resilience and indispensability of the local notables (Nāmi Eṣfahāni, pp. 263-66; Şabāhi, pp. vi-iix, 105, 119; Żarrābi, p. 216; Rajabi, pp. 361-62; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 159-60).

In 1789, as part of a settlement of a family feud, Faṭḥ-'Ali Shah (r. 1797-1834) appointed his brother Ḥosayn-qoli Khan as governor of Kashan, which was near enough to the new capital for close monitoring. He had previously made claims to the throne and apparently had the support of his mother Maḥd-e



‘Olyā. Three years later, through encouragement of his messianic assistant Moḥammad-Qāsem Beg (known as Mollā Bārāni) of the Birānvand Lor tribe outside of Kashan, he once again posed a challenge to the throne, but was defeated and secretly executed in 1803 (Hedāyat, IX, pp. 336-39, 371-73; for details, see [FATH-‘ALI SHAH QĀJĀR](#)).

Fath-‘Ali Shah’s reign was critical for the city’s growth. His urban development projects included a new seminary, Madrasa-ye Šāh, also known as Madrasa-ye Solṭāni. The mosque and newly endowed crown lands (see [KAṢṢA](#)) were dedicated to the well-known Shi‘i jurist (*mojtahed*), Mollā Aḥmad Narāqi (d. 1245/1829), as part of the Shah’s generous patronage of the Shi‘i clerical establishment. Income from endowments and cash gifts were donated to Mollā Aḥmad for distribution among the needy. Restoration of the Fin palace and addition of a new pavilion made the complex a favorite base for royal hunts and revelry. Fath-‘Ali Shah also ordered a tax break in consideration for the devastating 1817 famine, which had led to mass starvation and reported cases of cannibalism. Nevertheless, as early as 1818, one observer saw Kashan as “one of the most thriving places” in the region (Narāqi, 1966, pp. 244-46; idem, 1969, pp. 247-53; Porter, I, pp. 386-89).

In 1850, Keith E. Abbott, the British consul, estimated Kashan’s population as 30,000. A more systematic state-conducted survey in 1879 reported a population of 62,867 for greater Kashan, of whom 21,699 (4,537 households) lived in the city of 76 mosques, 47 bathhouses, 1048 shops, and 25 caravansaries (Abbott, p. 75; Pākdāman and Eṣfahāni, pp. 18-21).

The early years of the reign of [Moḥammad Shah](#) (r. 1834-48) were preceded by a war of succession, during which Kashan became the scene of rising factional conflict involving local notables and outlaw bands. After consecutive governors including Qajar princes and local notables, who themselves were implicated in the conflict, failed to take control of the city, the shah in 1841 launched a campaign forcing the bandits (*luṭis*) to flee to the nearby mountains “like wolves and leopards.” He then appointed an outsider confidant, ‘Ali Khan Marāḡa’i, as governor and assigned the tax income to the local textile workshop Dār al-nezāra (Sepehr, I, pp. 741-42; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 248-51).

Nevertheless, a general environment of insecurity, periodic gang violence, extortion, and brazen appropriation of the property of merchants was endemic in Kashan through the end of Qajar rule and was mostly a byproduct



of [Ḥaydari and Ne‘mati](#) factional feuds. The *luṭi* factions often acted as private militia for competing land owning notables and ulama, whose rising influence in the urban scene may be attributed to transfer of endowed and state owned land of the Safavid period to private ownership, mostly through expropriation.

In a decree in 1863, after an ‘Āšurā’ procession brawl escalated and drove the city out of the governor’s control, Nāṣer-al-Din Shah (r. 1848-96) specifically instructed his special envoy Moḥammad-‘Ali Khan Ġaffāri Moṣaddeq-al-Dawla to “arrest all the *luṭis*, demolish their homes, and destroy their property without regard to their connections to the ulama and notables.” He arrested and banished some 50 collaborators and, as sign of his authority, ordered the bazaar to stay open round the clock and unattended (Moḥammad-‘Ali Ġaffāri, pp. 19-21).

Tensions resurfaced as part of public discontent in 1865-68 and again during the famine of 1871. On each occasion the governors resorted to heavy-handed methods such as public execution of *luṭi* leaders to restore order. Urban turmoil and defiance of the central authority reached a new height during the years of World War I with the Nāyeb Ḥosayn Kāši affair (discussed below; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 249, 266-67; Madani, pp. 28-30).

Kashan experienced much devastation during the 1865 and 1870-71 famines, which ravaged much of central Iran. However, by summer of 1883 the city had “healthy air and inexpensive and plentiful fruits.” Nāṣer-al-Din Shah abandoned the practice of spending time in the favored Fin palace, which by 1889 was in “state of great decay” and “deserted,” and its beautiful cypress trees cut down. The shah’s disinterest may well have had to do with the dark memory of the execution there of his reformist chief minister, [Mirzā Taqi Khan Amir Kabir](#) (Nā‘ini, p. 84; Curzon, II, p. 16).

In addition to famines and royal neglect, Kashan suffered from the practice of sales of office in the late Qajar period. This practice often resulted in abusive, short-term, local governors who showed little interest in the city’s well-being and were more concerned in generating income to pay for the loans they had taken to purchase the office. When, around 1883, the master (*kadkodā*) of the baker’s guild was unable to pay a heavy fine of 300 tomans for his drunkenness, the governor Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Tork demanded it from the bakers, who in turn closed their shops in protest. A settlement was reached for payment of the fine within one month by raising the price of bread from eight to nine *šāhis* per *man-e šāh* (six kilos). While the bakers gladly agreed to



the seemingly permanent increase, a bread riot broke out. After the governor threatened the local ulama, whom he blamed for instigating unrest, they left the city for the capital in protest, where they launched a royal complaint. Even respected merchants became victims of torture and humiliation for extortion of fees by the governors. An equally abusive extension of sale of governorships was the sale of right for *bastinado* to the governor's agent (*farrāš-baši*), who was often chosen from the ranks of the *luṭis*. His lieutenants had much leeway for public harassment, including demanding a fee for striking whiplashes, not just from alleged offenders of the rule of law (*šari'a*) but also from innocent bystanders (Nā'ini, pp. 86-87; Mehrdad Amanat, pp. 135, 139; Narāqi, 1966, p. 109, n.1; idem, 1985, pp. 75-77).

*The Constitutional Period.* During the reign of Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah (r. 1896-1907), a group of local freethinkers and activists, possibly pressured because of their affiliation to [Azali Babism](#), left Kashan and, as leading journalists, helped articulate a reformist message. Their progressive message finding expression in conservative Kashan is yet another indication of the survival of a literary heritage and an age-old nonconformist tradition at the root of the city's identity. Mirzā 'Ali-Moḥammad Khan Kāšāni founded the weekly *Torayyā*, printed in Cairo in 1898, but two years later handed it to Sayyed Faraj-Allāh Kāšāni and in 1900 founded *Parvareš*, which, according to Edward G. Browne, was "one of the best Persian newspapers, and as regards influence amongst the young Persians held the first place, both exciting the emotion and compelling the affection of the Persian public." Sayyed Jalāl-al-Din Kāšāni founded the influential weekly *Ḥabl al-matin* in Calcutta in 1893. His brother Sayyed Ḥasan Kāšāni was the co-editor of the Tehran edition. There in 1909, he was sentenced to two-year imprisonment for publication of alleged anti-Islamic materials. In 1911, the popular preacher poet [Faḵr-al-Wā'eẓin Sayyed Aḥmad Kāvāri Kāšāni](#) founded one of Iran's first satirical journals, *Mizān*, in Kāšān (Browne, 1914, pp. 58-59, 66-67, 73-74; Ṣadr Hāšemi, II, pp. 57-64, 151-55, 200-213; IV, p. 244).

The optimism of the [Constitutional Revolution](#), including establishment of a modern style school and removal of oppressive government agents, soon turned into despair with a period of escalating instability, insecurity, and violence in the region, led most prominently by Nāyeb Ḥosayn. First known as Ḥosayn Kāši or Pošt-Mašhadi (after a district in Kashan settled by members of his Birānvandi Lor tribe had settled during the time of Nāder Shah), he led as early as the 1870s a band of urban *luṭis*, with ties to members of the ulama and



landed notables who sometimes orchestrated factional conflict among rival gangs. Ḥosayn, who had acquired the semi-official title Nāyeb, along with his son Māšā-Allah (self-styled as *sardar*, ‘commander’), was recruited by the governor Ḥosām Lašgar as his agent (*farrāš*) and later put in charge of security over a portion of the southern trade route. When he and his son lost this authority, they increasingly engaged in banditry, looting, and the abduction of women in Kashan and its hinterland. They nevertheless were supported by anti-Constitutionalists such as ‘Ayn-al-Dawla, the interior minister, and Modir-al-Salṭana, the governor of Kashan (whose second appointment ended in 1909 after a popular protest).

In February 1908, a resistance movement led by local ulama forced Nāyeb Ḥosayn to take refuge at the shrine in Qom, and his son Māšā-Allah fled to Tehran, where he was arrested and sentenced to death but managed to escape with the help of influential Royalist supporters. Becoming even more belligerent, Nāyeb Ḥosayn, with the support of Royalists and Birānvandi tribesmen, attacked the city’s armory in September 1909 and seized sixty camel loads of ammunition. He completely defied the authority of the central government and declared himself in charge of the city and the countryside, collecting taxes, pillaging small land-owners and peasants, and disrupting the southern trade route (Kasravi, p. 546). Numerous attempts to suppress Nāyeb Ḥosayn’s revolt by unskilled Constitutionalist Mojāhedin volunteers or undisciplined Baḳtiāri tribal contingents were unsuccessful, as they were no match for a skillful militia using sophisticated strategy and commando tactics, familiar with the mountainous and desert terrain, and able to recruit from the growing ranks of dispossessed peasants. Nāyeb Ḥosayn’s operations further expanded during the years of World War I, when he received generous cash and weapons as compensation for joining the pro-German Mojāhedin forces. Even the [Cossack Brigade](#) under Rezā Khan (the future Rezā Shah) avoided confrontation with them. By 1919, the loss of foreign support weakened the rebels. Still unable to find a military solution, the government of Mirzā Ḥasan Khan Woṭuq-al-Dawla managed to lure Nāyeb’s son, Māšā-Allāh Sardār, to Tehran with promises for rewards, an official appointment, and a promise of protection by the British Legation. Once cut off from his base, he was detained and executed. Soon after, on 17 August 1919, Nāyeb’s own execution put an end to Kashan’s last episode of tribal aggression and *luṭi* domination (Shuster, pp. 135-56; Narāqi, 1985, pp. 158-59).

The Nāyeb Ḥosayn affair demonstrates how a tradition of benevolent chivalry



increasingly gave way to intensified gang violence in late 19th century but especially after the rampant availability of firearms during World War I. The *luṭīs* who were “no longer satisfied with [cutting] nose and ears (*ektefā ba guš wa bini nakarda*)” murdered those who disobeyed them (Żarrābi, p. 244; Ƙosravi, pp. 311 ff.). The rebels’ audacious behavior defies the stereotype of Kashan’s men as cowards (*bā ḥazm wa jabun*), which presumably originates in the Qajar era as a self-inflicted concession in virility in return for exemption from military service (Żarrābi, p. 235).

*Arts and industry.* Kashan’s visual arts during the Qajar period is rooted in a long tradition of calligraphy and painting and a continuum of belletrist and ceramic cultures with roots in the medieval period. It was energized in the Ilkhanid period by the likes of Moḥammad b. ‘Afif Kāšāni, a resident of Ārān around 1305, known for his illustration of Rašid-al-Din’s *Jāme‘ al-tawāriḳ*, and reached a climax in the Safavid period with three generations of celebrated master painters: ‘Abd-al-Wahhāb Kāšāni, his son ‘Abd-al-‘Aziz, who had taken lessons from Ṭahmāsb but was mutilated along with Kamāl-al-Din Naqqāš Kāšāni in an apparent court conspiracy. The family of the renowned master painter Āqā Reżā Moṣawwer ‘Abbāsi (Reżā ‘Abbāsi) and his father Mawlānā ‘Ali-Aṣḡar Kāši also originated in Kashan, though they took residence in various Safavid capitals (Qāzi Mir Aḥmad Monši, pp. 140-41; Narāqi, 1966, pp. 232-38).

In addition to the aforementioned high level court officials, the Ġaffāri family also produced a remarkable number of historians and iconic artists, among them the 18th-century Zand official, painter, and historian Abu’l-Ḥasan Mostawfi, his great nephew the renowned Qajar painters, Abu’l-Ḥasan Khan Sani‘-al-Molk, his son Yaḥyā Khan, and his nephew Moḥammad [Kamāl-al-Molk Ġaffāri](#). The pioneering film director [Farroḳh Ghaffari](#) (Farroḳ Ġaffāri) was the family’s latest cultural figure. Kashan also experienced a revival of ceramic ware in this period and reportedly produced the country’s best porous containers and drinking vessels (Scarce, p. 934; Wills, p. 191).

Despite numerous setbacks and famines, Kashan’s economy experienced growth through the third quarter of 19th century, largely owing to agriculture and crafts as well as occasional state support of the textile industry. Faṭḥ-‘Ali Shah ordered court purchases of precious textiles, granted tax exemption for weavers (*šarḇāf*), and appointed a superintendent for textiles. Under Amir Kabir, an order for 2,000 uniforms for the modernized military using a new improved cotton textile product helped boost the industry (*Waqāye‘e*



*ettefāqiya*, no. 21). Migration of a group of Jewish traders further helped the textile industry connect to a trading network.

According to Félix Édouard de Sarcey, Kashan, in 1839, with a population of 30,000, was Iran's largest industrial center. The textile industry consisted of a reported 1500 workshops, which housed 1800 looms and produced a variety of precious silk products, that were much admired by Western observer. However, the city's "world-renowned" luxury textile products, such as velvets and brocades that were so precious that even the nobility could hardly afford, had mostly given way to affordable silk shawls for the tribal market. Kashan also produced inexpensive cotton textiles in as many as 6000 small and mostly dilapidated workshops (de Sercey, tr., pp. 170-75; Rajabi, pp. 380-83; Żarrābi, p. 228; Pākdāman and Eşfahāni, p. 22). By the 1850s, in greater Kashan, only 666 looms had survived, the brunt of the Industrial Age's inexpensive imports, "inflation, economic downturn, and oppressive governors" (Abbot, pp. 75-76; Pākdāman and Eşfahāni, pp. 22-23). By 1899, with only 56 remaining looms, Kashan's textile economy "had suffered immensely," making the city noteworthy for its mostly deteriorating bazaar (ʿAyn-al-Salṭana, II, pp. 1385-90). Other sectors such as brassware benefited from advances of the Industrial Age. Imported British copper sheets facilitated production. Some 400 coppersmiths worked in 80 shops in a roaring part of the Bazaar developed by [Amin-al-Dawla Farroḵ Khan Ġaffāri](#) around 1868 (Żarrābi, pp. 227-28; Dieulafoy, p. 197; Abbott, p. 75; Narāqi, 1969, pp. 281-82).

Kashan's agriculture and *qanāt* systems also grew, mostly through the efforts of high officials and local merchants. Farroḵ Khan Ġaffāri was a leading figure in agrarian projects in the 1860s and 1870s, including a new water canal and maintenance of nine *qanāts* (Moḥammad-ʿAli Ġaffāri, pp. 28-31; Pākdāman and Eşfahāni, pp. 17-18).

Like their medieval counterparts, local Qajar notables and merchants were critical in the development of Kashan's urban scene. The Āqā Bozorg Mosque and *madrasa* (see illustrations in [KASHAN v. \[2\] HISTORICAL MONUMENTS](#)), notable for its "depressed" two story design, was financed by a merchant of the Narāqi family, Ḥājj Moḥammad-Taqi Kānbān, in the 1840s in honor of his son-in-law, Mollā Moḥammad-Mahdi Narāqi (d. 1268/1851-52), son of Mollā Mahdi b. Abizar Narāqi (d. 1829) and was completed by the former's son Ḥājj Mollā Moḥammad Narāqi (Narāqi, 1969, pp. 254-62). Another architectural masterwork, Sarā-ye Amin-al-Dawla commercial complex in the bazaar (see [KASHAN v. \[2\] HISTORICAL MONUMENTS, Figure 5](#)), was completed in 1868 by



the prominent Qajar court official and diplomat Farroḵ Khan Amin-al-Dawla (initially Amin-al-Molk). An equally significant caravansary, named after its founder Mahdi Ġaffāri Wazir Homāyun, son of Farrokh Khan, was demolished during the reign of Rezā Shah to make room for a modern square (Narāqi, 1969, pp. 104, 272-76).

An array of merchants and notables of various ranks built impressive and architecturally significant houses and mansions. Those that have survived the brute of the rush for modern urban development remain a testament to the city's long tradition of quality artisanship and affluence of the merchants and landed notables. An outstanding example, the Borujerdi family house (see illustrations in [KASHAN v. \[4\] HISTORIC MANSIONS](#)), is notable for the mastery of its oval shape dome (Narāqi, 1969, pp. 284-96).

Other Kashan notable families produced high-level administrators in this period. Mirzā Moḥammad-ʿAli Khan Kāšāni became Loṭf-ʿAli Khan Zand's chief minister and was put to death on the order of Āḡā Moḥammad Khan Qājār (r. 1779-97). His brother, painter, calligrapher and renowned literary figure, Malek-al-Šoʿarāʾ Fath-ʿAli Khan Šabā, became the governor of a vast part of central Iran under Fath-ʿAli Shah, in consideration for his services during the Ḥosayn-qoli Khan's rebellion (Sepehr, I, p. 53). His protégé, Moḥammad-Taqi Lesān-al-Molk Sepehr, is the author of *Nāseḵ al-tawāriḵ*, a universal history and the official Qajar chronicle of the Nāṣer-al-Din Shah's period.

In the 20th century, Kashan lost much of its importance as a center of crafts, industry, and trade. The rise of the centralized modern Pahlavi state led to the diminishing role of the local notables as community leaders, city defenders, and agents of urban development. Reliance on modern ways such as deep wells at the cost of the *qanāt system* has led to serious environmental obstacles.

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