

Original Research Article

Reading the Street Landscape throughout Iranian Civilization

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Abstract | Street is a primary component of the establishment of cities. Given the continuity of its functional dimensions over time, it constitutes a key element in the appearance of the spatial organization and subsequently, of the urban landscape. The functional role of the street has been merged with its other roles, to be precise: the social, cultural, economic, or political; fact which caused the complexity of its existential dimensions. Thus, this role constantly oscillates on a spectrum between the function (access, passage) and the user's experience in the urban space. The present paper is an essay on reading the street landscape to state its role in explaining the meaning of the city, by going through a historical trajectory around the cities of Iran from Antiquity until the end of the Safavid reign. The question of this research is How did the street, as a multidimensional element, influence the formation of the material and semantic aspects of Iranian cities before and after the emergence of Islam? The hypothesis of this research is The street landscape in Iranian cities has always had a ritual character and its role has been to conduct the nature of the urban landscape from a sacred fact toward a social one during the historical evolutions in Iran.

Keywords | *Street, Iran, Islam, City, Role.*

Introduction | In Persian, the term "city" comes from Khashtahar [خَشْتَهَر], the verb to Khashi [خَشی کردن], meaning reigning and governing (Dekhoda, 1998). On the other hand, it joins the term Khoreh [خوره] in the signification of a divine glow thanks to which some creatures dominate and reign over others. Persian mythology mentions an eternal paradise, the creation of which was reserved for the king invested with the Farreh-e Kiyani [فره کیانی], a divine glory (Barati, 2003: 14). Accordingly, ritual and religious beliefs have played a fundamental role in the establishment and the evolution of streets in ancient Iranian cities. The deep impact of rites gave birth to a structured mythological space, represented by hierarchical cities with cross streets and scattered buildings. The numbers, orientations, width and length of the streets, the distance between the dwellings and the city wall, as well as the dimensions of the places were all representative figures for the populations of the time; This reflection is represented in the perpendicular

arrangement of the streets of the ancient cities of Hatha [هترا], Darabgerd [دارابگرد] and Firouzabad [فیروزآباد]. A passage from the Vendidad [وندیداد] collection of Zoroastrian laws, mentions (Darmesteter, 2009, as cited in Mohamadian-Mansoor & Hatami-Majd, 2022, 257) a major climate event evoking the myth of the deluge of Noah. Ahura Mazda [هورامزدا] orders King Jamshid [جمشید] to build an underground city (Tafazoli, 1975, 80) to preserve purest human beings, plants and animals. This legendary city, Varjamkard [ورجمکرد], is designed according to a square plan with equal sides, each complying with a riding field equal to 1008 steps (Gobineau, 1985, 28-30), a garden city (Nouri, 2019, 42) organized around a central channel bordered by trees and gardens, reflecting the idea of a celestial paradise on earth. The physical model of the city (Fig. 1) is experiencing a geometric plane ordered with parallel passages. A water canal perpendicular to the passages crosses the entire city and distributes branches to reveal streets planted at the edge of the streams. The space

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around the water canal covers 50 steps on the sides to reach a green space covered with gardens with fruit trees. The entrance to the water canal is located where natural water affects the wall constituting the unique entrance to the city. At the end of the city (the point opposed to the entrance), in the empty extent surrounded by the last row of houses in the residential area, there is a space that is perhaps the place that burns the eternal fire. Housing is located in an ordered row along the passage. The gardens of the houses are not separated by walls: they meet to finally catch up with the main green space of the city around the water canal (Saeidnia, 1995, 324). In this document, Ahura Mazda dictates an act to King Jamshid who can be considered the oldest example of Iranian urban sets:

“Article twenty-five: O Jamshid, it is up to you to arrange a large cave, and to design on each of its four sides, a field of horse racing [square shaped].

Article thirty: The upper part of the cave, must be designed nine alleys, six in the central part and three in the lower part. In the upper alleys, a thousand couples of men and women must be housed, six hundred couples in the central alleys, and three hundred in the lower alleys (Darmesteter, 2009, 72-82).

The history of the formation of the city of Varjamkard and its structure imagined by researchers constitute an obvious manifestation of mythological thought in culture and life at the time of Iranian Antiquity. The city, as a guardian of society against disasters and dangers, underlines its ritual, spiritual, and sacred role. This spiritual thought materializes in the form of an urban network, physically reflected in its streets. Thus, the morphological and functional evolution of streets in Iranian cities, from antiquity to post-Islamic times, is perceived as the reflection of the urban landscape and the way in which citizens apprehend the city.

Literature Review

Various researchers have studied the history of architecture and town planning in Iran, trying to analyze

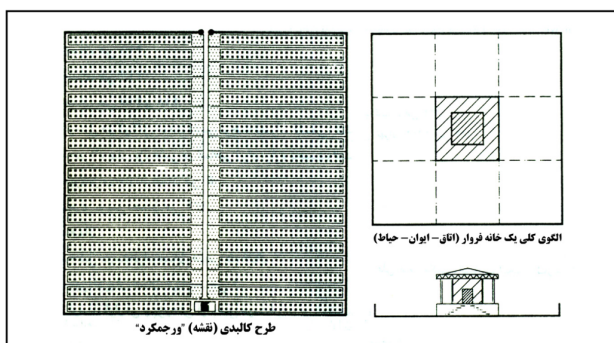


Fig. 1. Structural plan (map) of the mythological city of Varjamkard. Source: Saeidnia, 1995, 495.

the identity of the street. This research can be classified into two main categories:

- Historical and archaeological studies: this category explores the influence of cultural and ritual beliefs on the training of cities. Archaeological excavations in ancient Iranian cities like Persepolis and Susa illustrate this approach, by providing precious information on the streets and the social structure of the time. They reveal that the streets were used not only for traffic but also as ritual spaces.
- Contemporary studies: in recent years, the studies have focused more on the symbolic and conceptual aspects of the streets. These types of studies examine the impact of social and cultural developments on the emergence of streets, in particular the effects of modernity and Western influences on the presence of inhabitants in urban areas. The mentioned researches illustrate the deep transformations in the structure of the streets of Iranian cities.

Research Methodology

This study is mainly based on historical sources. The history of Iran, from Antiquity to the end of the Safavid era, is categorized according to the content, in different periods to analyze and assess the place of streets in the cities of each era. The methodology follows the following steps:

Data collection: Information comes from various sources, including historical texts, scientific articles, archaeological reports, and cartographic and iconographic archives. These sources also include travel accounts and visual databases.

Study and classification: The data is classified according to a chronological approach. The objective is to study the evolution of the role of streets in specific periods and to analyze concrete cases to better understand cultural and social influences on their conception. The choice of examples follows the availability and access to clear and precise historical and iconographic documents for an in-depth analysis.

Analysis: Selected study cases are evaluated according to criteria from descriptive and visual sources. This analysis makes it possible to identify the “role” of the streets in the city through the different eras, by highlighting the dominant models and tendencies in their design.

Results: The study highlights the impact of traditional thought on street training and offers a comparison between the streets of antiquity and those of the classical era in Iranian cities.

Streets In The Cities of Ancient Iran

• The Elamites

The oldest urban traces discovered in Iran date back to the prosecution period, especially in the cities of Susa

[شوش] and Shahre-Soukhteh [شهر سوخته meaning the Burnt City], which date from around 5000 years. In Shahre-Soukhteh, founded in 3200 BC. and inhabited until 1800 BC., the remains of three streets with an average width of 3.5 meters, separating the residential districts are observed. Housing was built there irregularly along the tracks, with entries overlooking the street. One of these streets led to a quadrangular place (Seyed-Sajadi, 1986, 57 & 58). In Susa, the precision and organization of residential spaces and the street network testify to the know-how of builders and architects of the time (Kiani, 1986). Unlike other civilizations where the temple constituted the heart of the city, in Susa, it was the market and a large place that served as a central point for the gatherings of citizens. The houses were aligned along rectilinear streets about 9 meters wide, while the districts of noble families included solid residences with spacious passages and places facilitating traffic. The French archaeologist Jean Perrot¹ (2013) analyzes in detail the urban structure of Susa in his work *The Palace of Darius at Susa*: “The city of Susa, at the Elamite era, dominated a large plain and extended over a single hill. The architects of King Darius restructured this old hill by dividing it into four distinct sectors thanks to a network of streets. Under the Achaemenid Empire, the city presented a striking contrast: on the one hand, an organized and majestic palatial complex, a reflection of government power; On the other, a dense and unstable urban district, marked by a nomadic lifestyle and devoid of the characteristics of real urbanization” (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Urban complex in Susa. 2600-2450 BC. J.-C. Map from the archives of Javier Álvarez-Mon. Source: Matthews & Fazeli Nashli, 2022, 345.

• The Achaemenids

Many architectural traces of the Achaemenid era bear witness to a certain classification in the construction of the streets. Urban planning reflects the artistic and political greatness of the Empire, in particular through majestic streets decorated with imposing bas-reliefs, illustrating the power of sovereigns. In Achaemenid cities like Persepolis, the streets mainly had a centralized architectural and political function. On the other hand, information on the urban fabric and the residential districts of ordinary inhabitants remains limited. The idea of a straight and wide street, bordered by trees and landscape elements, is visible in Pasargadae. The discovery of stone canals and fountains along the streets clearly shows that the whole city was integrated into a green space composed of gardens (Fig. 3). These large routes, embellished with fountains and rivers, linked the different units of the city. In Persepolis, the orientation of the buildings followed the axis of the monuments built on the monumental terrace and was part of their extension. The alleys joined the other streets and passages to right angles and the buildings themselves were designed with remarkable geometric precision. Most water pipes went under the streets, and their layout identifies the connection between the different traffic routes from the start. This rigorous organization of space testifies to the high level of urban planning under the Achaemenids (Varjavand, 1991).

• The Parthians

With their reign of five centuries, the Parthians have introduced new developments in street development. The most common urban structure under the Parthians is based on a checkered plan or a network organization. Economic centers such as markets and craft districts were generally located along the axes leading to the gates of the city, arranged parallel and perpendicular to each other (Kiani, 1986, 112). “Doura-Europos”, one of the emblematic cities of the Parthian period, was entirely designed according to a checkered plan (Fig. 4). It included eleven streets arranged in parallel in the longitudinal and transversal directions, thus creating a hundred rectangular blocks. Each block housed various buildings and architectural sets with various functions (Varjavand, 1991).

• The Sassanids

The Sassanid dynasty was based on the accession to power of Ardashir 1st, who took advantage of the weakening of the Parthians, mined by their incessant conflicts with Rome and the internal struggles between the Parth's princes. Claiming that legitimately, it is the Persians who own the sovereignty and not the Parthians, Ardashir re-allied the anti-Greek and anti-Parth factions.



Fig. 3. Pasargadae; Reconstitution of the perimeter of the Royal Palace. Source: www.kamaustine.com.

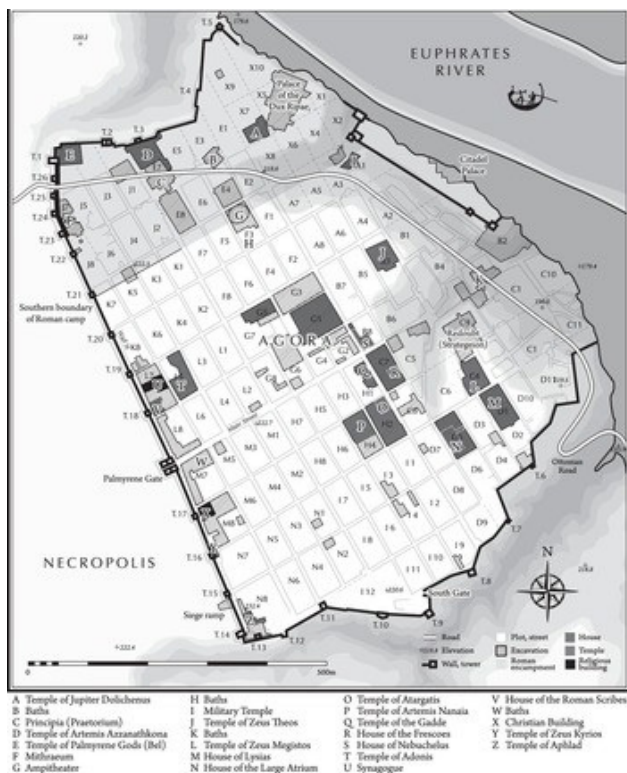


Fig. 4. Plan of the Parthian city of Doura-Europos (Fortress of Europos), a multicultural city (Jewish, Parthian, and Roman) located on the banks of the Euphrates, in current Syria. This city went under the domination of the Parthians in the 2nd BC. and became, in the 1st century BC., the front of the Empire on the Romans. Source: Andrade, 2013.

He established his royal palaces in strategic sites like Qal'eh Dokhtar [قلعه دختر] and Ardashir-Khwarrah [اردشیرخوره] and, in 224 AD, lit the large Mazdayasna sacred fire in the center of Firouzabad [فیروزآباد], thus marking its ascent (Sarfaraz & Firouzmandi, 2002,

244). Under the Sassanids, cities were built according to rigorous and ordered plans, with a rectangular structure and a cross diagram defining the main axes. Like the Parthian cities, they were protected by ramparts and moats, and the city was compartmentalized there according to social classes.

Darabgerd [دارابگرد], who acquired particular importance at the beginning of the 3rd century AD as the first Sassanid capital (Yousef-Jamali & Salimi, 2008, 151), had four main doors, located at the cardinal points, which served as entries to the main arteries of the city. Between these avenues were the residential districts. Today, differences in the width of the openings practiced in the city's circular enclosure suggest that the north door was the main entrance (Fig. 5): not only is it wider than the other streets, but it is also perfectly aligned with the central rock, on which the royal citadel was built. In addition, the gentle slope connecting the citadel to the north facilitated the access of this avenue to the main entrance to the government complex (Karimian & Seyedein, 2010, 75).

The historic city of Bishapur [بیشاپور] is considered to be the first city of Persian antiquity with a written urban history. It was founded in April 266 AD by Ardashir Babakan (Sarfaraz & Firouzmandi, 2002, 262). Bishapur's organization is based on two perpendicular avenues, forming a grid plan. Secondary streets, parallel to these axes, complete this structure. The main north-south avenue, aligned on the royal road, connects the main door of the city to its center before extending to the southern enclosure (Fig. 6). The secondary routes are made up of streets parallel to the main axis, strengthening the checkered structuring and clearly distinguishing the different areas of the city. The network of streets and alleys divides districts according to a rectangular plan, each sector being organized to meet the daily needs of the population (Sarfaraz & Teimouri, 2007, 99). The Bishapur Foundation was part of a desire to represent the greatness and the divine glory of Shapur 1st, in rivalry with the Roman cities. Among its major urban characteristics are its establishment at the foot of a sacred mountain, its domination on the surrounding plain and the adoption of a checkered plan inspired by the Achaemenid cities such as Susa and Persepolis.

In the city of Ardashir-Khwarrah, also known as Firouzabad, the interior of the city is structured according to a radial plan, resembling a wheel whose 10 main axes divide the city into 20 equal districts. Two of these axes, marked by four monumental doors, follow the cardinal directions, creating a cross plan (Fig. 7). Many circular and concentric streets ensure an indirect link between the city center and the residential, commercial, and craft

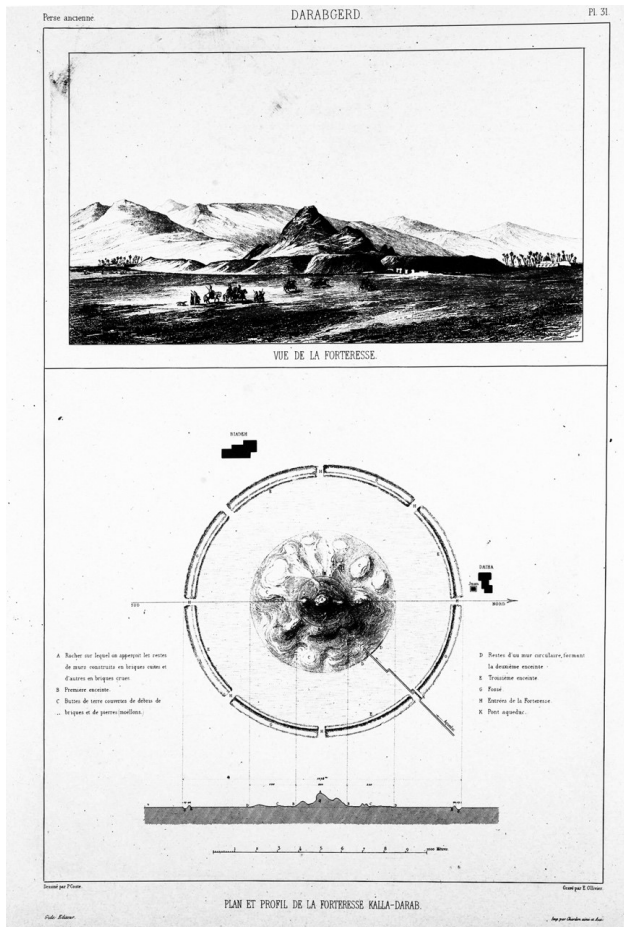


Fig. 5. Panoramic view of the citadel (top), Sketch of Darabgerd by Pascal Coste (1840-1842); Circular city, ramparts, ditch, and transverse cut (bottom). Source: Flandin & Coste, 1851.

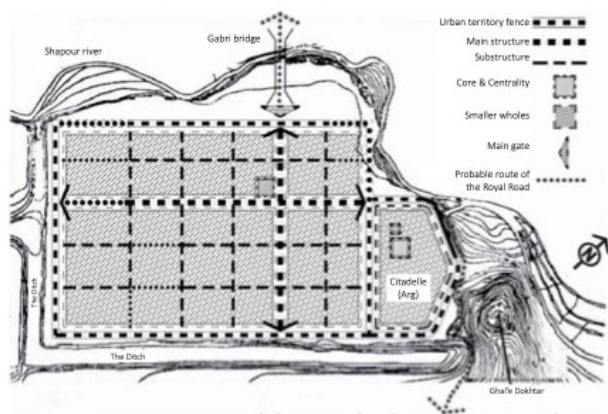


Fig. 6. Space organization of the city of Bishapur. Source: Sarfaraz & Teimouri, 2007, 100.

districts. The structure of the city follows a quadripartite model in the shape of a cross, with a temple of fire in the center, testifying to a cosmological and symbolic conception inspired by the beliefs of ancient Iran: “The city of Firouzabad (Ardashir-Khwarrah) is surrounded by a reinforced rampart, a ditch about 55 meters wide, and a raw brick enclosure with four main

doors located in the four axes of the city [...] In the center of the city, at the intersection of the axes, stands a huge quadrangular tower about 20 meters wide and 40 meters in height” (Huff, 1986, 187).

Iranian Streets In The Post-Islamic Era

• **From the beginning to the 7th century of the Hegira**
 In the first century of the Hegira, the Umayyads established Damascus as a capital, but with the arrival of the Abbasids around 133 H. (750 AD), the power was transferred to Baghdad, the ancient capital of Sassanid kings. This alteration marked the start of cultural and architectural exchange between Islam and Iran. During the first centuries of this interaction, notably under the Samanids, the Ghaznavids and the Seljuks, a new artistic, architectural, and urban approach developed, combining Islamic ideas with the Sassanid architectural heritage. Mansouri (2007, 57) insists that the first Islamic cities, still strongly influenced by the Sassanid models, distinguished themselves from the ideological cities of Iranian antiquity by the presence of a real social and collective space: “The Iranian cities of the first centuries of Islam had not yet had time to translate the religious principles into architectural and urban forms. Their main characteristic was to abandon the bipolar model of antiquity in favor of an urban organization based on equality and justice”. At that time, the city structured around three main types of tracks: (1) The alleys [koocheh کویچه], which ensured access to residential neighborhoods and included dead ends and private passages; (2) The markets ways [bazaar بازار], commercial arteries in which economic, social and political activities were concentrated; (3) The passages [gozar گذر], larger and linear, connecting several districts and incorporating public spaces. The winding alleys quickly led to a wider passage, allowing a clear reading of the space and preventing the pedestrian from being lost (Fig. 8).

• The Timurids

At the beginning of the 7th century of the Hegira (13th AD), the Mongolian conquest under Tamerlane moved the center of Islamic Arts to Samarkand and Bukhara. During this period, the street became a central element in the Timurid garden cities. A notable example is Avenue Ghorogh (Fig. 9), bordered by cypresses, which linked the Firouz door of Samarkand to the Delgosha gardens (Baber, 1929, 30 as cited in Haghghatbin, 2010, 40). The majestic streets built in the big cities of Khurasan, like Herat and Samarkand, testify to the richness and patronage of the Timurids. In Samarkand, they connected key places such as the Place du Registan, the Bibi Khanum Mosque, the Tamerlane Mausoleum, and the royal gardens. The street then acquired a symbolic



Fig. 7. Aerial view of the city of Firouzabad (Ardashir -Khwarrah), showing the intersection of the two main axes in the spatial organization of the city. Source: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org>.

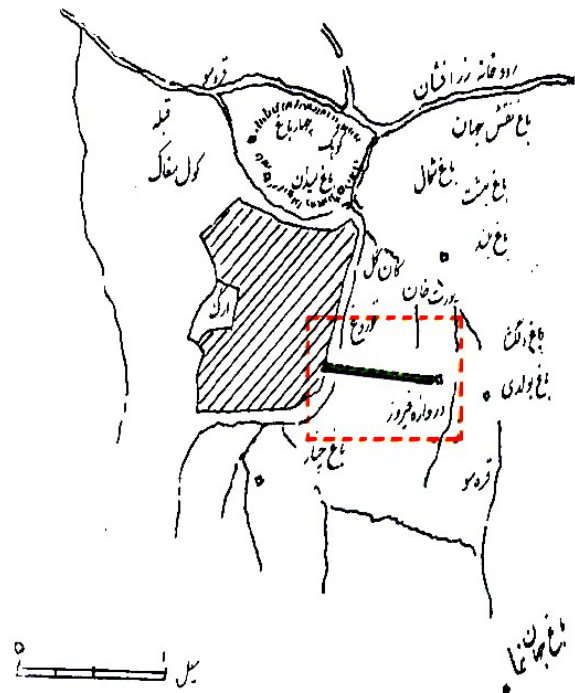


Fig. 9. Historical plan of the city of Samarkand (15th AD). Ghorogh Avenue is indicated on the map. Source: Etezadi, 2020.



Fig. 8. Urban perspective unveiled at the exit of an alley. Bukhara, Uzbekistan. The integration of natural and architectural elements in the winding alleys creates a unique perspective in the city. Photo: Mohammad Atashinbar, 2010.

and spiritual value in addition to its function of access and passage.

The importance of the concept of the street at that time is such that the Shah-e-Zindeh mausoleum (Fig. 10) takes the form of a street lined with tombs, like a bazaar, where space is unified by the route of the track. The Spanish ambassador, Ruy González de Clavijo (1987) writes in a report: “Samarkand is located in a place surrounded by an earth wall with towers and a deep ditch [...] The different parts of the city are covered with fruit trees and vast vineyards whose area sometimes reaches more than

once and a half, that of the city itself and also includes Samarkand. Among these gardens are trails which, in certain places, lead to empty places. Along these roads, communities sell a variety of products, such as food and meat”.

• The Safavids

With the arrival of Safavids, a major transformation of the content and the form of the streets reaches its peak, thus moving away from the Iranian urban landscape from the conceptions of the ancient era. A striking characteristic of the new streets is the presence of a polarizing element at the end of the axis, directing the way towards him and giving direct access. During this period, large and long avenues like the Ispahan’s Chahar-Bagh were built in many cities. Bordered by many gardens, these streets served as public walking spaces.

One of the first streets mentioned in Iranian urban literature is the street of Qazvin, which Shah Tahmasp the 1st had built by drawing on the rue de Herat when he chose Qazvin as a capital. It was a government street designed for public leisure activities and served as an urban break space. On the one hand, it linked Dolatkhaneh (royal palace) and on the other the entrance to the royal palace and the Saadat-Abad garden, thus symbolizing the king’s power and its domination over the urban landscape (Alehashemi, 2012, 6) The structure of this street obeyed strict guidelines testifying to a



Fig. 10. Shah-e-Zindeh mausoleum, Samarkand, Uzbekistan. The site is associated with Qasim Ibn-Abbas, cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, who would have introduced Islam in the region. According to legend, after his beheading, he would have taken his head in his hands and sought refuge in a mausoleum well, where he would have disappeared (MacLeod, 2019, 181). Source: Maryam Mansouri, 2013.

maximum order and one high precision in the design of these elements: the creation of a large and rectilinear avenue, bordered by high and decorated walls; the installation of the Nobles and aristocrats gardens on its sides; planting a double row of trees (oaks, elms, cypress, poplars, willows, mulberry trees); The establishment of two water canals flowing at the foot of the trees. Abdi-Beig Shirazi, the Persian poet living during the Safavid era, draws the mentioned characteristics in his poems by reflecting among others, the decorated walls in the sides [دو دیوار منش از دو جانب], the planted promenade [درختان چنار و نارون، سرو و]، the tree types [از دو جانب صف کشیده صنوبر] and also the water canals [جویش ز دو سوی در روارو] (Abdi-Beig Navidi Shirazi, 1994a, 1994b).

Under the reign of Shah Abbas, the 1st, many other streets were built in Iran. At that time, the concept of the street was both that of a passage and a path lined with gardens and trees within public or private gardens, serving as entertainment space; The Ispahan's Chahar Bagh is one of the most emblematic examples of this period. According to existing research, "Chahar Bagh Avenue as an urban space having a physical identity, is designed to trace the

shape of the street, where the surrounding buildings have a role of background; This is an unprecedented fact at the time." (Ahari, 2006, 53) Jean-Baptiste Tavernier³ (1957), a French explorer, mentions in his famous travelogue, a street over 1500 meters long and between 70 and 80 steps wide, bordered by trees aligned parallel to the walls of the gardens of the gardens Royales. Pietro Della Valle⁴ (1969), an Italian explorer, indicates that on certain days, the street was reserved for women's walks, which was unusual for a public space. In the book *Universal History of Abbas the 1st of Iskandar Beig Turkaman* (1972), we find the following description:

"[Shah Abbas the 1st] had a street built from the Naqsh-E Jahan Garden door to the banks of the Zayandeh Rud river. Chahar Bagh gardens were arranged on either side of the street, with sumptuous palaces at the entrance to each garden. The avenue continued to the mountains south of the city. The surrounding grounds were offered to the noble families of the Government of Cairo where everyone designed a garden [...] At their end, a large imperial garden on nine levels was built under the name of the garden Abbas-Abad. The two streets thus merged into a single, with a channel of water running on each side, cypresses, and plane trees planted throughout. A river paved with Pierre was flowing in the middle of the street, leading to a large pool opposite the Palais de Chahar Bagh. Since then, the trees have risen majestically and their fruits seem blessed" (ibid., Vol.1, 195-275). Another remarkable event under Shah Abbas was the splashing festival [آب پاشان] organized in Chahar Bagh: "The day of the Persian New Year, more than 100,000 people of all social classes gathered in the street to spray themselves with water. The influx was such that even the Zayandeh Rud River was temporarily leaning" (ibid., Vol. 2, 758).

Before the reign of Shah Abbas, the city of Mashhad did not benefit from major urban infrastructure, apart from the ramparts built for security reasons. The passage describes the creation of the two main avenues (Fig. 11) of Mashhad under the reign of King Safavid Shah Abbas the 1st (996-1038 H.). These avenues were built along a water channel brought from the source of Kalt⁵ by Amir-Ali Shir-Nawai (884-906 H.) for the development of the city (Haghighatbin et al., 2009, 38-40). During his trip to Mashhad in 1016 H., Shah Abbas decided to create these avenues. The one that led to the upper part of the Imam Reza sanctuary was called Bala-Khiaban (High Avenue), while the one located on the lower side took the name of Payin-Khiaban (Low Avenue). Many foreign travelers have described these avenues lined with two rows of trees and gardens belonging to the rich and powerful:

"The old space of the sanctuary being deemed too small



Fig. 11. Avenue Chahar Bagh, Mashhad. Armin Vambéry⁶, a Hungarian explorer, wrote in his travel story about this avenue: "We went through a long and wide street known as Payin-Khiaban and arrived at the Holy Sanctuary. The street is crossed in its center by a large canal which gives the city a magnificent appearance. Trees are planted on each side at regular intervals, offering shade to passers-by. This development makes Mashhad one of the most charming cities in Iran." (Vambéry, 1973, 284 & 285). Source: Haghighatbin et al., 2009, 42 & 46.

and the iwan (portico) of Mir Ali Shir, located on the south side of the courtyard, considered as unsightly, pure knowledge and the holy taste of His Majesty Shah Abbas ordered demolition Old structures on the east side to enlarge the courtyard. He designed an avenue going from the western door to the eastern door of the city, crossing the sacred courtyard by the porticoes. New channels were built, with a large pool in the center of the courtyard. The water in this basin then flowed towards the eastern avenue, located below the sanctuary (Turkaman, 1972, Vol. 2, 1110).

Among other large streets created under the Safavids, we can cite rue Bagh-e-Shah in Shiraz. The Spanish diplomat Garcia de Silva Figueroa⁷ describes her as:

"A large avenue 2000 feet long and 90 feet wide, perfectly straight, flanked by white plaster walls but no house overlooked it. Behind these walls extended up to two-thirds of the length of the street, magnificent gardens filled with fruit trees and pleasure pavilions [...] The street was so wide and well-leveled that the inhabitants used it for Horse races and archery. In the center of this large avenue, six white marble columns had been erected, each with two feet thickness and a height of about half a lance. They were arranged in pairs, with a spacing of fifteen to sixteen feet between each group. These columns served as obstacles for the training of horsemen [...] The doors of this avenue were perfectly aligned, so that, from each of them, it was possible to see the road by which we had entered, as well as the alley bordered by trees inside the garden. The main avenue of this vast garden was that already mentioned, surrounded by cypress and plane trees. It was 900 feet long and 30 feet wide, and its rectitude was such that, from the entrance to the palace, you could see two doors of the building, the access road, and even the iron door located at an

equivalent distance to an Italian league. These avenues, as described previously, were bordered by imposing cypresses on both sides. These trees were so dense and robust that some had a circumference beyond the length of the outstretched arms of three men together. Their height and righteousness recalled the obelisks of ancient Egypt" (Figueroa, 1985, 131-137).

The avenues of the Safavid era clearly reflect common principles, testifying to the membership of a predefined design model. These avenues fulfilled two main functions: on the formal level, they served as walks, and on the functional level, they constituted a structuring element in the spatial organization of the city. Over time, they have also played a key role in urban expansion beyond historical centers. Thus, their influence is still visible in the structure of Iranian historic cities like Ispahan, Mashhad, and Qadamgah of Neyshabur.

Summary and Discussion

The street has not only constituted part of the urban infrastructure throughout history but also reflected the history, culture, and social identity of a nation. In addition to its traffic axis function, it served as an urban space where traditions, beliefs, and events took shape. The main manifestations of these dimensions, both in ancient Iran and after the advent of Islam, are classified in Table 1.

From an analytical point of view, although the streets of ancient Iran and the post-Islamic era have many similarities in terms of form and implementation, their role in urban structuring differs fundamentally: in Iran Ancient, the street was an element designed to enhance the symbols of power, thus directing the urban landscape towards the glorification of authority. On the other hand, in the post-Islamic era, the street reflected the dynamism of the social forces, shaping the image of the city according

Table 1. Prominent Indicators of Street Layout in Ancient Iran and After Islam. Source: Author.

Historical era	Distinguished Indicator	Representation	Example
Ancient Iran	The street as the stage of art exhibition	Architecture of the streets	Bishapur
	The street as a network to distribute the power in the city	Importance of the governmental space	
Post Islamic	Dimensions	Readability of the space and adaptation of the users' perception of the space dimensions	Chahar-Bagh (Isfahan)
	Shapes	Creation of tactile micro-spaces and stoppings	

to the interaction between its inhabitants. Thus, in ancient Iran, the importance was given to the ends and the points of convergence of the streets, which gave them their distinctive character. On the other hand, in the traditional period, it is the intermediate space of the street which primates, as a place of life and social exchange.

Conclusion

Unlike the modern era where the streets are designed above all for practical functions, the streets of ancient and Islamic Iran had a preponderant symbolic and cultural dimension, significantly influencing the urban landscape. Ancient times: the streets had a ritual function, generating a mythical landscape for cities. Thus, the symbols of power and urban ornaments and decorations, in combination with the orientation of the streets towards the sacred monuments and the temples, are at the origin of the mythological character of the public spaces of the city.

In traditional times, the street assumed a social role, shaping a pluralist urban landscape in Iranian cities after Islam. During this period, cultural and religious elements were integrated into the streets by associating them with collective micro-spaces. These spaces reinforced the public character of the streets and transformed them into places conducive to social gatherings, markets, and cultural activities. Before Islam, the relationship between the user and the street was hierarchical, while after Islam, it becomes semantic. In other words, in ancient Iran, it is the social hierarchy that defined the poles of the street and linked them directly. The individual then played a minimal role in the definition of his place in urban space. On the other hand, after Islam, it is the aesthetic and symbolic perception of the user that shapes the intermediate spaces of the street. The individual plays a maximum role there, actively contributing to the construction of his urban environment.

Endnotes

- Jean-François Perrot (1920-2012): French archaeologist and head of the French archaeological board of Susa between 1968 and 1979.
- Pascal Coste (1787-1879) French architect and traveler
- Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605-1689) French explorer who visited Persia around 1630.
- Pietro Della Valle (1586-1652), Italian explorer, poet and musician who visited Persia in 1617.
- Kolt Spring (also known as Cheshmeh Gilas, Cheshmeh Golsab or

Cheshmeh Jalas) was one of the most famous springs in the Plain of Tous, located approximately 21 km northwest of the town of Tabaran (capital of the province of All). For more details, see Ansari et al., 1386: 8-12.

- Armin Vambery (1832-1913) Hungarian geographer and orientalist who visited Persia around 1862.
- Don Garcia de Silva Figueroa (1550-1624) ambassador of King Philip III of Spain in the court of Shah Abbas I, he stayed in Iran around 1614.

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