

# Chapter I

## The Shrine of Imām Rizā, its *Vaqf* Endowments and *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*

### 1. Mashhad and the Shrine of Imām Rizā

The literal meaning of *mashhad* is “Place of Martyrdom” and this etymology already explains that the present town grew around the tomb, shrine and sanctuary of one of the most venerated figures of Iranian-Shiite Islam: the Eighth Imam, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Rizā. Invited to Khurāsān by the ‘Abbāsīd caliph al-Ma’mūn to become his heir and successor he was martyred in the year 818, according to Shi’i tradition, and buried in the village of Sanābād, outside of Nawqān and close to the city of Tūs.<sup>1</sup> Gradually, his tomb developed into a venerated shrine, but the town known by now as Mashhad only gained prominence after the Mongol invasion which had led to the devastation of major urban centers of Khurāsān such as Marv and Nīshāpūr.<sup>2</sup> By the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Mashhad had replaced Tūs as the capital city of Khurāsān. Often quoted is the note by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa on the large town with its noble mausoleum and the impressive dome over the tomb of al-Rizā.<sup>3</sup> Important sayyid families settled there<sup>4</sup> and one should keep in mind that the veneration of the sanctuary was linked closely to reverence to the descendants of the prophet and the *ahl al-bayt*, not exclusively to explicit Shiite denominations.

The large scale architectural development of the shrine and the emergence of Mashhad as a transregional center of pilgrimage, however, began considerably later under the Tīmūrids in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> The impressive architecture from that period still characterizes the modern layout of the sanctuary’s court yards and monumental

<sup>1</sup> Most recent, Pierce (2016), pp. 76–79; also Tor (2001).

<sup>2</sup> For detailed accounts of the shrine’s history see the works by ‘Alī Mu’taman (1969), Muḥammad Kāzīm Imām (1970), ‘Aṭārūdī (1992–93), Maḥdī Sayyidī (1999) and the dissertation by May Farhat (2002). A year-by-year chronological narrative can be found in Mudarris Raḡavī (1999). A major source for most accounts is the second volume of I’timād al-Salṭana’s *Maṭla’ al-Shams* (1885). A recent and concise encyclopaedic summary on Mashhad is Streck and Hourcade (2007).

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (1929), p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Ḥasan-ābādī (2008) on the history of the Raḡavī sayyids.

<sup>5</sup> Clavijo (1859), pp. 109–110.

iwans. The patronage exercised on behalf of the shrine by Gawhar Shād (d. 1457), the wife of Shāhrukh Shāh (r. 1409–1447), was to become an exemplary model for future rulers. The magnificent Friday Mosque she built was supported by generous endowments, managed as a separate entity right up the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

Under the Ṣafavid dynasty the shrine of Imām Riżā was transformed first into a symbol of the new Shi'i state and second into a 'national' Iranian pilgrimage destination. Consequently, it was presented and extolled as an alternative to the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbalā, both repeatedly under Ottoman control during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, and even as a substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca.<sup>7</sup> Personal piety, as in the case of Shāh Tahmāsp (r. 1524–1576), cannot be strictly separated from motifs of dynastic legitimacy and religious politics. After he had recovered the town from the Uzbeks in 1528, he immediately set about repairing the damage done to the city and its shrine.<sup>8</sup> The threat by the Shaybānids continued until 1598, when the town was retaken again by Shāh 'Abbās (r. 1587–1629). While he had designated Iṣfahān as the new capital of the Ṣafavid Empire, he equally expressed his devotion to Mashhad through a pilgrimage on foot in the year 1601 and established major endowments for the shrine, several of them listed also in *Āthār al-Raḏavīya*.<sup>9</sup> Support of Mashhad and the shrine of Imām Riżā had become an integral part of Ṣafavid religious identity. This is reflected also in the reports by European travelers who describe the importance of Mashhad as a center of pilgrimage, its wealth and the miracles attributed to Imām Riżā.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the attempts by Nādir Shāh Afshār (r. 1736–1747) in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to reverse some of the exclusively Shi'i religious policies of the Ṣafavid state, he himself continued the active patronage of the Mashhad shrine. His endowments were linked to the sanctuary in several ways and his lavishly equipped mausoleum served as a model for many later *vaqfs* provisioning both private burial places and public charity inside the shrine.<sup>11</sup> Nādir Shāh had made Mashhad his capital and his successors who sustained the limited Afshārid principality up to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were instrumental in also supporting the shrine's activities. Most important for the future development of the shrine was the short rule of 'Ādil Shāh (d. 1749), also known as 'Alīqulī Khān, a nephew of Nādir Shāh who set down

<sup>6</sup> O'Kane (1987), Wilber (1987) and especially Mahdī Sayyidī (2007) on the Gawhar Shād Mosque.

<sup>7</sup> Farhat (2014).

<sup>8</sup> Morikawa (1997).

<sup>9</sup> Melville (1996), McChesney (1981), *Āthār al-Raḏavīya*, documents no. 4, 5 and 149 (*vaqf* in the form of a *farmān* on the occasion of his pilgrimage).

<sup>10</sup> Examples from the 17<sup>th</sup> century: Chardin (1811), vol. 6, p. 59 and Kaempfer (1712), pp. 156–157.

<sup>11</sup> Naqdī Kadkanī (2004) and Sālik Bīrjandī (2005). His *vaqf* is listed as no. 24 in *Āthār al-Raḏavīya*.

the first administrative guidelines for the sanctuary and its endowments.<sup>12</sup>

With the advent of the Qājār dynasty the architectural development of both shrine and city advanced further. The number of pilgrims increased throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as can be fathomed by the growing infrastructure provided for them.<sup>13</sup> The Qājār shahs, as well as many individuals from among the rising Qājār nobility took an active interest in the *Āstān-i Quds*. During the early Qājār period, the province of Khurāsān was still unstable, partly because of the constant threat from Turkmen raids.<sup>14</sup> James Fraser who visited the town and its governor Mīrzā Mūsā Khān in 1822, gives a contradictory picture of Mashhad, the shrine and its religious establishments. While he mentions the considerable commerce of its bazaars, he describes the city on the whole as rather destitute and estimates the total of its inhabitants to have been only around 23.000.<sup>15</sup> Fath-‘Alī Shāh (r. 1797–1834) renovated central buildings of the shrine and probably initiated the building of the “New Courtyard” (*ṣaḥn-i jadīd*) towards the end of his reign. Also his successors, Muḥammad Shāh (r. 1834–1848) and Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (r. 1848–1896), contributed to further repairs and decorations of the shrine’s architecture.<sup>16</sup>

The catalogue of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* was completed under the aegis of Muzaḥfar al-Dīn Shāh (r. 1896–1907) who following Qājār tradition remained closely attached to the shrine and his affairs. Already during his reign at the turn of the century, the transnational connections to the Russian Empire and Afghanistan became more pronounced and influenced the fate of both sanctuary and town. Moving further on into the Constitutional period, the shrine and Mashhad became the site of open conflicts, culminating in the Russian bombardment of the shrine area in 1912.<sup>17</sup> A new era began once Pahlavī rule under Rīzā Shāh was established in the 1920s and major innovations and reforms concerning the shrine were carried out. The urban planning and modernization efforts of the 1930s drastically changed the urban structure and appearance of the shrine, turning Mashhad into an experiment in

<sup>12</sup> More on the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh* below.

<sup>13</sup> Estimates range from 30.000 in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to 50–100.000 in the later Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh period, Mu’taman (1969), pp. 238–239.

<sup>14</sup> On the political situation in Khurāsān Noelle-Karimi (2014), pp. 205–242.

<sup>15</sup> Fraser (1825), pp. 439–473. There is unfortunately little information on the administration of the shrine: “Of the internal economy of the establishment, or the arrangement of its servants with their various duties, I learned little more; it is not, indeed, a very intelligible subject to a stranger, or one regarding which it could be easy to obtain information; neither would it prove very interesting to the reader...” (p. 456). On Fraser, see Soudavar Farmanfarmaian (1996) and (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Ritter (2006), pp. 724–729.

<sup>17</sup> Adīb Haravī’s *al-Ḥadīqa al-Ražavīya* (1947) presents a vivid memory of the events. For an interesting perspective on the lives of ordinary people in Mashhad demonstrating that illicit activities were widespread even in a holy city, see Vejdani (2014).

modern urban planning in Iran.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. The Role of *Vaqf* in the Development of the Town and the *Āstān-i Quds*

The institution of *vaqf*, shrines and sites of pilgrimage form a natural symbiosis.<sup>19</sup> Shrines and their infrastructure are dependent on regular income to finance the up-keep of their buildings, to pay salaries for employees and to provide social, religious and educational services. While donations from pilgrims, individual patronage by rulers and commercial activities (i.e. the sale of candles, amulets etc.) can provide additional revenues, only endowments based on real-estate and landed estates can guarantee lasting stability and security. Thus the legal institution of *vaqf* or Islamic endowments has been crucial for the development of both the town of Mashhad and the shrine complex known as the *Āstān-i Quds* (“Holy Threshold”). Mashhad is therefore no exception to other places of Islamic pilgrimage, including of course the Ḥaramayn of Mecca and Medina, as well as the Shi’i sanctuaries at Najaf and Karbalā.<sup>20</sup> In the Iranian or Persian context we should point out the importance of *vaqf* for shrines and venerated sites as diverse as Ardabīl, the birthplace of the Ṣafavid order,<sup>21</sup> Balkh or Mazār-i Sharīf as one of the alleged burial places of ‘Alī,<sup>22</sup> Qum with the shrine of Fāṭima Ma‘šūma<sup>23</sup> or the shrine of Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Aẓīm in Ray.<sup>24</sup>

In the case of Mashhad and the shrine of Imām Rizā both the continuity in the establishment of endowments for the shrine are striking, as is the economic might derived from *vaqf* properties up to the present day. Despite certain periods of financial decline, when the shrine administration was weak and the overall political circumstances were not favorable to the fortunes of the *Āstān-i Quds*, the situation of the Mashhad sanctuary is unique in so far as changes in dynastic rule never drastically affected the shrine. The *Āstān-i Quds* also can be considered one of the very few genuine Islamic institutions in Iran that managed the transition into modernity without lasting loss of influence; it even profited from new opportunities and extended its range of activities continuously. Today it controls not only large land-holdings and agro-businesses, but also a conglomerate of food industries, real-estate companies and firms active in the field of engineering and mining.<sup>25</sup>

This accumulated wealth is the result of a long tradition of personal bequests

<sup>18</sup> Stratil-Sauer (1937), Ecochard (1971) and (1975), and Schafi (1984).

<sup>19</sup> For a wider context of the institution of *vaqf* in Iran, Werner (2015), pp. 35–68.

<sup>20</sup> Morikawa (2007), (2012), (2014) and (2016).

<sup>21</sup> Rizvi (2011).

<sup>22</sup> McChesney (1991).

<sup>23</sup> Fischer (1980), pp. 114–118.

<sup>24</sup> Kondo (2015).

<sup>25</sup> Hourcade (1989). Details under [www.aqr.org](http://www.aqr.org) (header of *iqtiṣād*).

made in favor of the shrine.<sup>26</sup> Both in older literature as well as in modern studies, detailed lists with names of famous founders have been compiled from various sources and demonstrate the long history of endowments to the shrine.<sup>27</sup> The motivation of individual founders was often multidimensional: selfless desire to do charitable and pious deeds could well be accompanied by the desire to be recognized as benefactor. Even older than the endowment of land and real estate is the tradition of donating valuable manuscripts and ritual objects as *vaqf* to the shrine. Many endowments were also a combination of private endowments (*vaqf-i khāṣṣ*), supporting family members, descendants or a personal mausoleum, and public donations serving pilgrims, lighting or upkeep of the shrine (*vaqf-i ʿāmm*). The line between public and private is not always to be drawn easily, as even 'private' endowments often enlisted religious services, such as prayers or Quran recitals, housed in the sanctuary or in Mashhad. So the endowments regularly were at the heart of larger economic processes that involved the sanctuary, the town and its inhabitants, the villages around the city as well as the many pilgrims.

The endowments or *mawqūfāt* of the *Āstān-i Quds* were part of intricate economic cycles which ultimately benefited the shrine as well as the town and its inhabitants. When Mīrzā Faẓlullāh Khān, one of the most prominent administrators (*mutavallī-bāshī*) of the shrine in the Qājār period, established a series of endowments in 1271/1855, one of them comprised a central building inside the shrine complex.<sup>28</sup> This building had altogether 17 rooms which were to be rented out to prominent 'ulamā on pilgrimage. The expected revenues were then to be used to light glass lanterns on the front façade of the building, for four hours every night and throughout the whole night in the month of Ramaẓān. The building thus is both the object and the target of the foundation; it houses pilgrims to the shrine and attracts more with its splendid illumination. As regards the founder, he too accepts multiple roles, as administrator of the shrine he receives generous royalties from many endowments, at the same time he endows large sums from his private fortune to the shrine and initiates numerous building projects.<sup>29</sup>

The earliest preserved *vaqf* deeds go back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century *hijrī*, such as the one by 'Atīq 'Alī b. Aḥmad Malik Ṭūsī from 931/1525,<sup>30</sup> already including landed estates in the hinterland of Mashhad. The range of landed properties belonging to the shrine soon surpassed the narrow boundaries of Mashhad and Khurāsān and expand-

<sup>26</sup> An overview in 'Aṭārudī (1992–93), vol. 2, pp. 551–623.

<sup>27</sup> 'Aṭārudī (2001) with a list of famous founders and information on sources. The monumental biographical dictionary by Jalālī (2007–08) also has a section on founders in vol. 3 on office-holders and founders.

<sup>28</sup> *Āthār al-Raẓavīya*, no. 6, 7 and 8. On the *vazīr-nizām* Mīrzā Faẓlullāh Khān Nūrī and his work on behalf of the shrine, Jalālī (2008), vol. 3, pp. 283–286.

<sup>29</sup> Werner (2009), p. 174.

<sup>30</sup> Markaz-i Khurāsān-shināsī (1999), p. 72.

ed far into present day Afghanistan, in particular the area around Harāt, Middle Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>31</sup> Agricultural land was rented out over long term lease contracts; thus income was stable, but not necessarily very high and the danger of losing control over properties remained a constant risk. Equally important was endowed real estate inside or close to the shrine area such as shops, baths, rest-houses and water supplies (*qanāts*). Shorter leases and direct control of tenants assured higher returns and the immediate connection to the shrine economy was crucial throughout the centuries.

The role of *vaqf* in providing necessary infrastructure should not be underestimated. Among the early *vaqfs* from the Ṣafavid period, dated 1023/1614, is the endowment of a water course (*nahr*) by Shāh ‘Abbās connected to the central courtyard of the shrine for the free use of all Muslims. As administrator of this foundation, Mīrzā Ulugh Mashhadī, coming from a prominent Raḡavī sayyid family had been appointed. While the actual beneficiary in this case is the general public and only indirectly the sanctuary, the importance for the future development of the shrine is obvious as is the patronage of both local sayyid families and the shrine by the Ṣafavid monarch.<sup>32</sup>

As diverse as the endowed objects, including also material objects such as chandeliers, lamp stands, candles, books and manuscripts, were the purposes and aims of the *vaqfs*. Perhaps astonishingly, the majority of foundations provide funds for lighting (*rawshanā’ī*) and heating.<sup>33</sup> Both the religious and practical connotations of illuminating the courtyards, buildings and chambers of the shrine are significant here. Although not directly related to the shrine’s daily operations, funds for mourning ceremonies commemorating the martyrdom of Shiite Imams (*ta’zīya-dārī*) are mentioned in many *vaqf* deeds. This is a general trend during the Qājār period, but is further enhanced in the context of the Mashhad sanctuary where the memory of Imām Riḡā is particularly important. Repairs and general maintenance play a major role, as do salaries for servants (*khādim*, *farrāsh*) and Quran reciters (*ḥuffāz*). Active support for pilgrims is part of many detailed provisions, whether for food and clothing, health or accommodation. Still, in comparison to the positions mentioned before, pilgrims do not receive the lion’s share of the endowments’ revenues. The same is true for students and professors, in comparison to the capitals of Iṣfahān and Tihrān, religious schools (*madrasas*) are rarely provided for in the context of the *Āstān-i Quds*. Some endowments also provide for orphans of sayyid families.

Estimates on the actual income collected by the shrine administration vary and are difficult to evaluate. Since the Ṣafavid period up to the present day, this resulted in numerous rumors and hearsay claims on the actual or supposed wealth of the

<sup>31</sup> Karīmīyān (1999) on properties in Harāt.

<sup>32</sup> Rawshanī Za’farānlū (1990).

<sup>33</sup> Thābit-niyā and Sūzanchī Kāshānī (2002), Sugiyama (2010). Werner (2015), pp. 93–113.

shrine and those in charge of it. Chardin reports that Shāh ‘Abbās desired to know the extent of the shrine’s income and while given a false account, he still was amazed by the amount offered.<sup>34</sup> Today, the enormous wealth of the *Āstān-i Quds* and its tax-free revenues are a regular topic among Iranians, especially in the diasporic press. In the case of Persian sources (such as the numbers given in the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh*) the actual accountancy balance in *tūmān* and *kharvār*, denominating income in cash and kind, only vaguely reflect real prices and values. At the same time, estimates given by foreign visitors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are based on rough guesses and are rarely free from political agendas of their own. Thus Curzon mentions in 1892 the estimated total of 60.000 *tūmān* and 10.000 *kharvār* with an equivalent of 17.000 pound.<sup>35</sup> Donaldson in the 1930’s quotes the sum of \$250.000 for the year 1878, pointing out the highly improved administration under Rizā Shāh (and increasing revenues),<sup>36</sup> while Yate claims that the revenue of 20.000 pound is “mostly eaten up by hordes of hungry attendants.”<sup>37</sup>

### 3. Administration of the Shrine and its Endowments

An exhaustive analysis of the administration of the *Āstān-i Quds* and its historical development has not yet been written; especially needed is a long term perspective that would cover various periods from the early Safavid period up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following remarks are therefore of a preliminary nature and to a large degree based on very recent research carried out in Iran. Archival sources, in particular the largely untapped funds of accountancy single-sheet documents (*fard*) and ledgers,<sup>38</sup> are of special importance in this regard, as they contribute to counterbalance the still dominant myth of a corrupt and inefficient shrine administration, serving primarily its own interests. The book *Āthār al-Ražavīya* is a product of the shrine’s administration and thus constitutes a vivid testimonial to its activities.

Characteristic of the shrine administration since the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a growing independence from other state governed institutions, such as the office of *ṣadr-i khāṣṣa* who nominally was in charge of all endowments in the Safavid period.<sup>39</sup> Of symbolic importance, also from the Safavid period onwards, is the arrangement between the “ruler of the age” (*sulṭān-i ‘aṣr*), who claimed nominal control over the

<sup>34</sup> Chardin (1811), vol. 6, p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> Curzon (1892), vol. 1, pp. 162–163. His chapter on Mashhad (pp. 148–176) provides further information.

<sup>36</sup> Donaldson (1933), p. 184.

<sup>37</sup> Yate (1900), pp. 334, 346 who also estimates the number of pilgrims at only 30.000 per year.

<sup>38</sup> See Hasanabadi and Mahbub (2009).

<sup>39</sup> On the offices of *ṣadr*, Floor (2000).

sanctuary, and his acting representative, appointed as *mutavallī* or *mutavallī-bāshī*, therefore sometimes also listed under the impersonal heading of *niyābat-i tawliyat-i ‘uzmā*.<sup>40</sup> Many official appointments to positions at the shrine were conferred by royal or princely decrees, while the day-to-day administration was handled internally. This basic understanding of an apparent division between nominal and actual administration of the shrine was continued even after the fall of the monarchy and the revolution of 1979 when Rūḥullāh Khumaynī appointed ‘Abbās Vā‘iz-Ṭabasī to the *tawliyat-i Āstān-i Quds*, a position he held for thirty-seven years until his death in March 2016.<sup>41</sup> His successor, Sayyid Ibrāhīm Ra’īsī, was then immediately nominated by the revolutionary leader Sayyid ‘Alī Khāmīnā‘ī. Any administrative history of the Raḡavī shrine is hence also an analysis of the changing relationship between various forms of central state government and the sanctuary as a living and increasingly autonomous entity.

The most important official at the head of the *Āstān-i Quds* was indeed the *mutavallī* of the shrine.<sup>42</sup> Prior to the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavī no such official position appears to have existed. For centuries, the shrine had been in the hands of individuals chosen from among established sayyid families, addressed as *naqīb*.<sup>43</sup> During the early decades of Ṣafavid rule, the position of *kilīddārī* (guardianship over the shrine’s keys) was in charge of buildings and internal affairs, while financial and fiscal matters related to properties were administrated by external officials (*ṣadrs* or *vazīrs*). Ḥasan-ābādī refers to the *vaqf* deed dated 957/1550 over properties in Gunābād as one of the first instances where reference to Shāh Ṭahmāsp as *mutavallī* of the shrine was made: only from then on mention of the shrine’s *mutavallī* in *vaqf* deeds of the *Āstān-i Quds* became a regular feature.<sup>44</sup> The first person appointed officially as *mutavallī* of the *Āstān-i Quds* was Asadullāh Iṣfahānī with the dismissal of a certain Mīr Darwīsh Beg Ṣafavī in 962/1555. There are several trends in both the selection and the changing role of *mutavallīs* during the Ṣafavid period.

<sup>40</sup> Valā‘ī (1965). There is a frequent misunderstanding in the literature about the office of the *nāyib al-tawliya* which is not necessarily the title of the *mutavallī* acting in lieu of the ruler, but can designate a separate function, Sūzanchī (2006). In the Qājār period the appellation *mutavallī-bāshī* becomes more frequent.

<sup>41</sup> Khumaynī also made it clear that no other authorities, such as the *Jihād-i Sāzandagī* or the *Vizārat-i Irshād* have no right to interfere in the shrine’s affairs, ‘Aṭārudī (1992), vol. 2, p. 695.

<sup>42</sup> Ḥasan-ābādī (2006) for a detailed list and description of *mutavallīs* and their respective tasks and duties. An overview in ‘Aṭārudī (1992), vol. 2, pp. 692–694. Also exhaustively Mu’taman (1969), pp. 224–234. More recent with further details ‘Alizāda Birjandī and Nāṣirī (2013).

<sup>43</sup> Morikawa (1997), pp. 10–18. Ḥasan-ābādī (2006), p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> Ḥasan-ābādī (2006), pp. 75–76. Ḥasan-ābādī provides no further reference on this *vaqf* deed. The deed is listed in *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* as document no. 129 in the category of *mawqūfāt-i muṭlaqa* without a *vaqif*.



While earlier appointments tended to be given to individuals from prominent 'ulamā and sayyid families outside of Khurāsān, later on, local office holders became more frequent and at the same time more powerful. This tendency continued during the Afshārid period.

A detailed perspective of the number of offices and duties involved in the administration of the *Āstān-i Quds* in the later Ṣafavid period can be gleaned from the description contained in the manual *Dastūr al-Mulūk*.<sup>45</sup> The *mutavallī* of the Mashhad shrine is introduced as one of the highest-ranking religious functionaries of the Ṣafavid realm, directly appointed by the ruler. He has to oversee the multiple departments of the shrine, including the library, the pharmacy, the hospital, the candle manufacturing and the carpet storage rooms as well as its numerous employees: listed are i.e. doormen, gardeners, Quran reciters and the musicians of the *naqqāra-khāna*. *Dastūr al-Mulūk* refers to an internal structure that emulates the central administration: below the *mutavallī* is placed a superintendent (*nāzir*), a chief accountant (*mustawfī*), chief guards (*sarkishikān*) and chief retainers (*khādim-bāshīyān*), assisted by a number of scribes and secretaries (*munshīyān*). The salary of the *mutavallī* was derived from the endowments' income as the legal one tenth, the other salaries were deducted and paid after this and endorsed by him. The rotating system of the "five guards" (*panj kishīk*)<sup>46</sup> appears to have been established already by that time as was the complicated system of issuing vouchers (*barāt*) that had to be sealed by the *mutavallī*, the *nāzir* and the *mustawfī*, before the storekeepers (*anbārdārān*) were allowed to hand out remunerations in kind.

As stated above, the actual authority and power of a *mutavallī* depended much on the relationship between the shrine's administration with the government's officials and ultimately the ruler. At most times the *mutavallī* was at the head of the administration and thus responsible for paying the employees' salaries and the overall financial and fiscal budget. He was in charge of correspondence and to various degrees of written decrees, orders and appointments, unless they were handled by the court or the governor of Khurāsān. Although most properties tended to be leased and rented out over longer stretches of time, agricultural affairs and urban construction required regular attention by the *Āstān-i Quds*. Returning to the issue of endowments, it should be emphasized that many *mutavallīs* were also founders of extensive *vaqfs*, facilitated or encouraged others to establish foundations in favor of the *Āstān-i Quds*, or bought additional properties from surplus proceeds. Of course, the daily management of this increasingly large institution and overseeing the needs

<sup>45</sup> Mīrzā Rafī'ā/Afshār (2001), pp. 494–495; Mīrzā Rafī'ā/Marcinkowski (2002), pp. 79–84, facsimile pp. 416–420; Mīrzā Rafī'ā/Floor and Faghfoory (2008), pp. 5–7. While both translations have their merits, they should be consulted together with the original.

<sup>46</sup> The *Ṭumār-i 'Alīshāh* mentions that only during his reign the number of *kishīks* was raised from three to five, *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, p. 18 of the original, p. 10 of the edition.

of pilgrims remained foremost in the duties of the *mutavallī*.<sup>47</sup> He was assisted by a number of administrative departments and their respective officials.<sup>48</sup> The *kishīks* or guard units that worked on a rotating basis in charge of pilgrim affairs were headed by several *khādim-bāshīs* or *sar-kishīks*.<sup>49</sup> Of importance was the chancery of the shrine that issued official correspondence, partly under the supervision of the *muhrdār* (seal-holder), and in close cooperation with the *dīvān* or accounting department, modeled on the central government's administration. Accountants and scribes were instrumental for the smooth running of an increasingly complicated internal bureaucracy.<sup>50</sup>

The basic structure of the shrine administration as established in the Ṣafavid period remained stable and was continued right into the Qājār period, at first with only minor modifications. Still, it took the Qājār dynasty time to consolidate their hold over Khurāsān and only after the crown prince 'Abbās Mīrzā was sent to the province, are we witness to an efficient and active *mutavallī* with the appointment of Mīrzā Mūsā Khān in 1248/1832 who was the at the same time loyal to the shrine's interests and to the Qājār monarchs.<sup>51</sup> Quite confusing in this regard is the multiplication of sometimes real, but frequently only honorary positions and titles during the late Qājār period: 'Aṭārūdī provides a long list of examples, ranging from honorifics such as *Arfa* 'al-tawliya to positions such as the *ṣadr al-ḥuffāz*.<sup>52</sup> Other positions reflect the increase in the numbers of pilgrims, such as the position of *ziyārat-nāma-khwān-bāshī*, the head of guides in charge of explaining rituals and prayers inside the shrine to newly arriving pilgrims.<sup>53</sup>

The administration of the *Āstān-i Quds* has left behind one of the most impressive collections of archival material for the Early Modern period of the Islamic World. The administrative documents of the shrine from the Ṣafavid period alone, spanning the period between 1589 and 1735, consist of more than 69.000 pages and have been registered in the UNESCO "Memory of the World" heritage program.<sup>54</sup> The material available for the Qājār period is even more voluminous and rich in content. Efforts have only recently begun to make use of this unique source material that will shed further light on the administrative and economic affairs of the *Āstān-i*

<sup>47</sup> Ḥasan-ābādī (2006), pp. 80–84, with a *raqam* from Shāh Sulṭān Ḥusayn, dated Ramazān 1110 (March 1699), detailing the duties of the *mutavallī* and complementing the description of *Dastūr al-Mulūk*.

<sup>48</sup> A detailed discussion, following in large parts the *Tūmār-i 'Alīshāh*, Mu'taman (1969), pp. 254–265.

<sup>49</sup> Mu'taman (1969), pp. 305–307.

<sup>50</sup> Mu'taman (1969), pp. 358–362. 'Aṭārūdī (1992), vol. 2, p. 696.

<sup>51</sup> Valā'ī (1965). Mūsavī-nizhād (2011).

<sup>52</sup> 'Aṭārūdī (1992–93), vol. 2, pp. 702–704.

<sup>53</sup> Valā'ī (1965) with a valuable selection of appointment decrees for this hereditary position.

<sup>54</sup> Details under [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).

*Quds*.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4. The Catalogue of Endowment Deeds: *Āthār al-Ražavīya*

*Āthār al-Ražavīya* was written by Ismā‘īl Khān Hamadānī in 1317/1899, incorporating 170 documents, most of them *vaqf* deeds. A number of questions might be raised concerning this work, the foremost being quite simply: What exactly is *Āthār al-Ražavīya*? What kind of text are we dealing with and why was it published towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Iran as a lithograph print?

One might best describe *Āthār al-Ražavīya* first and foremost as a catalogue of endowed properties belonging to the shrine of the Eighth Imām in Mashhad, which is the most obvious definition, also provided by its author. Beyond that, it can be described as a collection of documents, mainly endowment deeds, but also other forms of judicial records including even the reproduction of telegrams. The *mutavallī* of the shrine in the late 1960’s, Bāqir Pīrniyā, calls it simply a *daftar*, a ledger or notebook in his introduction to Mu’taman’s encyclopedic history of the Ražavī shrine.<sup>56</sup> Rizā’ī in one of the few detailed studies on the work introduces it as a *fihrist*, a register or index, but somehow fails to appreciate its character as a ‘book’.<sup>57</sup> We can also understand *Āthār al-Ražavīya* to be a claim to properties supposedly under the jurisdiction and in the possession of the shrine. Thus it is a hypothetical catalogue, since the reality of exercising control over properties and deriving income from them is quite different from listing a property as having been part of a *vaqf* several hundred years ago. The collection could then be seen as a statement, an affirmation of claims, an assertion of legal rights and a self-conscious performance by the shrine’s administration. And despite its outwardly administrative and sober character, it is the performative aspect of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* that makes it such a unique work.

All of this can also be read into the work’s title and its multiple possible translations: “Vestiges of the Ražavī Shrine,” “Monuments of the Shrine of al-Rizā” or “Holdings of the Holy Threshold of Imām Rizā”—as none of this really expresses the semantic multiplicity associated with *āthār*: traces, vestiges, monuments, remains or works—for practical reasons we will maintain the original title in the following. It is crucial to understand that this catalogue does have a *title*; in other words, it should not be taken for granted that a catalogue of deeds should carry a title commendable for a book. What does this tell us already about its author’s, compiler’s or editor’s

<sup>55</sup> Hasanabadi and Mahbub (2009), Maḥbūb Farīmānī (2001) and Ḥasan-ābādī (2003). Further exemplary studies can be found in the journal *Daftar-i asnād* published in irregular intervals by the *Sāzmān-i Kitābkhāna-hā, Mūza-hā va Markaz-i Asnād-i Āstān-i Quds-i Ražavī*.

<sup>56</sup> Mu’taman (1969), pp. 6–7. Mu’taman himself also mentions it as the *Kitābcha-yi Ṣadīq al-Dawla*, *ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>57</sup> Rizā’ī (2005), p. 50.

understanding of his work? It is in his eyes not a mere catalogue or ledger; it is a published and printed book and he desires it to be perceived and recognized as such. This confusion about whether *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* should be conceived as a book or not, can be clearly seen in one of its early western receptions. The Presbyterian missionary Dwight M. Donaldson, a resident of Mashhad and intimate expert of the shrine and its architecture, voices his doubts in the 1930s:

“In the year 1900 a catalogue of the various properties belonging to the Shrine of the Imam Riḡa was published by the Azamu’d-Daulah. A very small edition of this book was issued, however, and it is only intelligible to those who take great pains to unravel what is evidently its intentional obscurity. Large grants of property were made to the Shrine by successive rulers of Persia and official registers have been kept which are called “tomárs,” or rent rolls. These give the annual income in cash, or in produce, for the many fields, gardens, shops, bath houses, mills, etc., that are included in confusing detail. There is no summary given anywhere in the book to show the total value of the income from these properties, and consequently it has been necessary to classify, condense, and summarize these records, with the result that the total annual income at that time appeared to be approximately \$235,000.”<sup>58</sup>

Neither for the contemporary audience for whom it was written, nor for the modern historian there was or is anything obscure in this book. It is true, however, that it is not easy to read due to its frequent use of *siyāq* as accountancy script, the legal language of the deeds, the many place names and its handwritten character. It is also not astonishing that *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* does not resemble a European or American account book; still it is remarkable that already thirty years after its publication, due to the massive changes in the administrative practice and writing systems of the early Pahlavī period, it was regarded as a relic from a time gone by.

The importance of this catalogue goes well beyond its contents, but first of all it is the contents that matter most to the economic and social historian of 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran. Beyond the surface, it is the mindset that created this catalogue, its genesis, development and metamorphosis that tells us about how the shrine developed a self-awareness of itself and its own identity. The catalogue builds deliberately and consciously on previous attempts to record inventories of the shrine’s properties. Thus it includes in full the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh*, the earliest attempt from the 18<sup>th</sup> century when Mashhad was under Afshārid rule, to list the endowments of the shrine.<sup>59</sup> It also builds on the efforts made by a well-known *mutavallī* of the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century, Mīrzā Muḡammad ‘Azud al-Mulk, the second large *ṭūmār* (scroll) included

<sup>58</sup> Donaldson (1933), p. 183.

<sup>59</sup> Included as the first document of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*.

in Hamadānī's work.<sup>60</sup> Although not directly quoted, there can be no doubt that the author was also aware of another famous work, written some years earlier, *Firdaws al-Tavārīkh* by Nawrūz 'Alī b. Muḥammad Bāqir Fāzil Baṣṭāmī which included a large chapter on the shrine's endowments with specific examples.<sup>61</sup> Also, a number of manuscripts from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century exist that followed a similar aim: the registration of endowments and endowed properties belonging to the *Āstān-i Quds*. An example is the voluminous manuscript entitled simply *Kitābcha-yi mawqūfāt*, kept in the Majlis Library, that comprises all movable and immovable *vaqf* properties, such as jewels and golden objects, books, landed estates, gardens, hamlets, baths, shops and real estate of the *Āstān-i Quds-i Ražavī*, listing also the names of office holders and employees of the shrine. It was compiled under the aegis of the *mutavallī* Hājī Mīrzā Muḥammad Khān Majd al-Mulk in 1285/1868 and builds on the work accomplished under his predecessor 'Azud al-Mulk.<sup>62</sup> A list of the shrine's endowments is also included in the monumental history of Khurāsān by I'timād al-Saltāna, entitled *Maṭla' al-Shams*.<sup>63</sup> The major innovation of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* is thus twofold: the new arrangement of its material and the fact that this work was printed.

*Āthār al-Ražavīya* is thus in itself a hybrid text that quotes and reproduces its predecessors. Furthermore, it is also indirectly a list of the many capable and committed administrators of the shrine, it can be read as a handbook on how to create endowments, and it serves as a reminder to Qajar monarchs and nobility to guard the sacrosanct institution of *vaqf* and to maintain the shrine's traditions. If we look at it from a diachronic perspective, it marks a major step in the history of the shrine that began to develop its own distinct identity under the Timūrids, gained major royal patronage from the Ṣafavids, remained stable even under the contradictory religious policies of Nādir Shāh Afshār, and finally reemerged under Qājār rule, where it established its financial and economic autonomy in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Āthār al-Ražavīya* also stands on the threshold of modernity, solidifying and upholding the shrine's status even under Rizā Shāh Pahlavī. Already during the reign of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh the shrine had been among the first public buildings in Iran to receive independent electricity,<sup>64</sup> while in the 1930s one of the most modern hospitals of Iran was built in Mashhad and the city became the focus of urban planning.<sup>65</sup> These steps into modernity were continued during the Pahlavī period and extended unabated during the Islamic Republic. There again the shrine's independence vis-a-

<sup>60</sup> The second document of *Āthār al-Ražavīya*.

<sup>61</sup> In the bibliography under Nawrūz 'Alī b. Muḥammad Bāqir.

<sup>62</sup> *Kitābkhāna va Markaz-i Asnād-i Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī*, No. 9071. 'Atāruḍī (2001) with a list of further sources.

<sup>63</sup> I'timād al-Saltāna (1883–85), vol. 2, pp. 499–500.

<sup>64</sup> Werner (2015), p. 112.

<sup>65</sup> See above, especially Stratil-Sauer (1937) for the modernization of the 1930s.

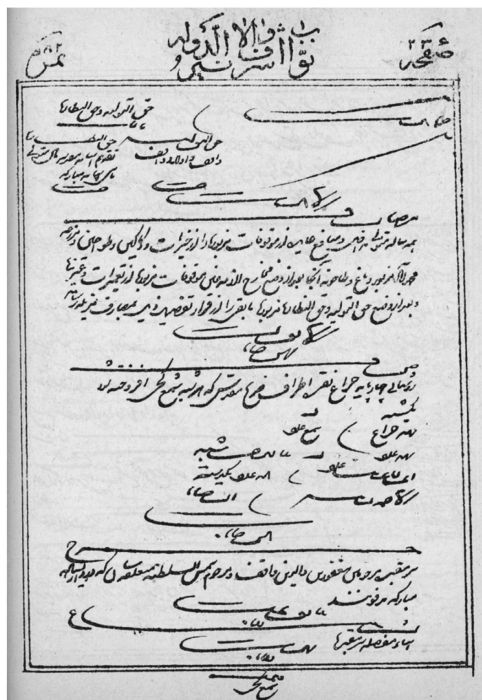


Image 1. Sample page from *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*:  
*Vaqf* deed by Sulṭān Ḥusayn Mirzā Nayyir al-Dawla  
 (document no. 82, p. 236)

vis the authorities and the state became almost legendary, turning it into an industrial, religious and educational-cultural complex that today dominates the province of Khurāsān and whose sphere of influence extends well beyond the borders of modern Iran into Afghanistan and Turkmenistan.

#### 4.1 The Author and his Intentions

The margins of the title vignette present the author as both a devotee of the Raḡavī shrine and a servant of the state, and give his name as Ismā'īl, son of the late Ḥabībullāh Mustawfī Hamadānī. The initial start of this book project is mentioned as the first Rabī' al-avval of the Year of the Boar (*tonguz yıl*) 1317, equivalent to 10 July 1899. The work was produced in response to a direct order from the shrine administration, and the author set out to collect, arrange and prepare for publication all the manuscripts of the endowments, naming the result *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*. The title



Image 2. Title vignette of *Āthār al-Raẓavīya*

vignette itself declares the book to be the list (*ṣūrat*) of the *vaqf* deeds of the Holy Shrine of the Eighth Imām, prepared at the time when Āqā Ṣadīq al-Dawla held the office of chief administrator (*mutavallī*) of the shrine and being a summary compiled from the holdings of its library. The name of the *mutavallī* is acknowledged in addition to the title of the book as “*min muntakhabāt al-Ṣadīqīya*.”

At the bottom of the title vignette a single *bayt* is placed that contains a symbolic declaration of service to the shrine, echoing the initial self-stylization as *kalb-i āstāna-yi raẓavīya* (“dog of the Raẓavī threshold”):

شاهی چو تو را سگی بیاید      من باشم اگر سگ تو شاید

Shah, when you'd be in need of a dog    I should be your most suitable servant<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Actually a variation of a well-known verse by Shaykh 'Abbās Qumī in his work *Mafātīḥ al-jinān*:

شاهی چه ترا سگی بیاید      گر من بوم آن سگ تو شاید

That the production of the book was a long process can be gleaned from another date that marks the completion of the table of contents, given as the tenth Dhī al-ḥijja 1317,<sup>67</sup> equivalent to 11 April 1900. Noticeable about the table of contents is in particular the “modern” layout, unusual for a lithograph print even around 1900, featuring a tabular chapter arrangement with corresponding page numbers. The same is true for the diligent pagination and the running headers over each page that facilitates the reader’s orientation.

The book itself begins with a preface, headed by the title and official seal of Imām Rizā, representing the shrine, and a repetition of the full title of the work as *Kitāb Āthār al-Raʿavīya min muntakhabāt al-Ṣaḍīqīya*. The work is dedicated to both Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh and his Prime Minister Mīrzā ‘Alī Aṣghar Khān Amīn al-Sulṭān (1858–1907), and credit is given in particular to the latter as having realized the necessity to put the affairs of the shrine in order. Such ‘order’—and indeed the necessity for orderly arrangements is most frequently invoked (*naẓmī shāyista va qānūnī*)—has been entrusted to the head of the shrine’s administration: Mīrzā Muḥammad Rizā Ṣaḍīq al-Dawla.

He had been appointed, according to the preface, on 17 Shavvāl 1316, equivalent to 28 February 1899, as *mutavallī* of the shrine. In a short time, states the introduction, he had managed to improve the overall situation of the shrine’s affairs and since he ceaselessly invested the vigor, and day and night busied himself to increase its revenues, especially paying attention to its financial administration, he finally gave instructions to note down summaries of the *vaqf* deeds available as manuscripts in the shrine’s library and prepare them for publication. The primary reason given for this major undertaking is that thus the good works (*ma’āthir*) of the forefathers would be properly recorded and might serve as a reminder of their deeds. Their names would be mentioned and remembered when studying this book: “Such-and-such person had at such-and-such time made a lasting donation (*ṣadaqa-yi jāriya*) as a reminder of himself. Even now, with centuries gone by, his donation remains free from changes and safe from appropriations.”<sup>68</sup> This book, he continues, would be demonstrating an infinite number of such examples. Finally, the actual author introduces himself as the one charged by the authorities of the shrine with the compilation of this book: Mu’tamad al-Sulṭān Mīrzā Ismā’īl Khān Hamadānī, *mustawfī-yi khāṣṣa-yi dīvān-i a’lā*. He was assisted by Mīrzā Dāvud al-Ḥusaynī al-Mudarris, with the title of Bahā’ al-Tawliya, acting as head of the finance department of the shrine (*vazīr-i vaṣāyif*). Thus ends the preface and the author moves on, introducing the first large document and at the same time the first compilation of the shrine’s properties, the *tūmār* of ‘Alīshāh.

Commenting on and in a way deconstructing the “official” main text of the

<sup>67</sup> Erroneously given as 1217 (sic!).

<sup>68</sup> *Āthār al-Raʿavīya*, p. 4 of the original preface, p. 3 (edition).



preface are the notes inserted in the margins. The author himself is re-introduced as the one entrusted with the organization and arrangement of the present book by his “employer”, the *mutavallī* Ṣaḍīq al-Dawla. Now, the reasons for the work’s composition are spelled out more clearly: the properties of the shrine, consisting of particular and general endowments (*mawqūfāt-i khāṣṣa va muṭlaqa*), had become mixed up, so that strictly speaking they had left the confines of legally correct rules and their revenues were not spent anymore according to the original intentions of their founders. So Mīrzā Ismā‘īl Khān had visited the library and read through the *vaqf* deeds, kept there as originals or transcripts, producing summaries of each one with the name of the founder, the properties endowed, the proposed expenditures and conditions and its date. This is exactly the way the excerpts of the *vaqf* deeds have finally been organized. Thus, nobody can infringe on these properties and their revenues. This explanation differs somehow from the more idealistic explanation of the main text and was sealed by the *mutavallī* in the month Ṣafār 1317 (June 1899).

The author, Ismā‘īl Hamadānī, was aware of the difficulties of his task. Quite telling are his opening remarks prior to the actual edition of the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh*. He cautions the shrine’s supervisors (*nāzirīn*) that in the original of the *ṭūmār* some sums in the calculation of cash and kind did not actually add up, showing a deficit or an addition in their calculation. Also several formularies did not adhere to the strict rules of *siyāq* writing. He reports that he had taken the matter to the chief administrator who advised him to copy the original without changes—Hamadānī as the author explicitly asks the reader not to be blamed for these apparent faults.<sup>69</sup>

We can see that the decision to copy blindly was not to the taste of Ismā‘īl Khān who obviously felt the urge to correct and improve on the original manuscript of the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh*. On the other hand, the decision of the chief administrator to stick to the original should possibly not be seen simply as a preference for blind and uncritical copying, but as an expression of fidelity to the original (and perhaps also to avoid adding new errors to an already corrupted register). His critical stance can also be seen in his remark in the margins (signed Ismā‘īl), at the end of his reading of the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Alīshāh* and prior to his reproduction of the *Ṭūmār-i ‘Azud al-Mulk*, where he explicitly refers to the endorsements of leading ‘ulamā as guarantee for the correctness of the following text. He consequently faithfully reproduces all these endorsement remarks and seals, a practice common in the writing of copies (*savāds*), but innovative in the form of the present compilation.<sup>70</sup> Seen from the outside, it is important to realize that the compilation of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* was not a mechanical task, but involved difficult editorial discussions and decisions.

These were partly of a technical nature: Shall one attempt to be faithful to an original or rather present an arithmetically correct version, a text where numbers and

<sup>69</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, p. 19 (original), p. 10 (edition).

<sup>70</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, p. 67 (original), p. 59 (edition).

calculations add up? And they were related to questions of intent: Shall the catalogue serve as a handbook of properties, and thus as a reference work? Or shall it be perceived as a representation of the might and importance of the shrine that displays the deeds of the forefathers, their *ma'āthir*? In such a reading it would fulfill the same functions as a historiographical text that legitimizes the shrine's existences and dominion. These different perspectives are negotiated between the main text and the margins—similar to modern texts that negotiate such issues between the main text and the notes.

This progress of negotiation also concerns the person of the actual author, Mīrzā Ismā'īl Khān Hamadānī, who appears, disappears and re-appears in the introduction several times. This becomes clear once more when one looks at catalogue entries of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* in modern libraries today. Several mention the shrine's administrator, Ṣadiq al-Dawla as the author, confusing the actual author/compiler with the patron or commissioner. We would suggest that Ismā'īl Khān Hamadānī self-consciously was aware of his achievement, that he saw his contribution as an important editorial enterprise and wanted to be accepted as the author of his book. Without carrying it too far, this equally reflects the attempts by the shrine as a whole to take up new ideas and re-invent itself, moving forward into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

We can establish a rough chronology of the compilation of the book, along the various dates mentioned. The starting point was in any case the appointment of Ṣadiq al-Dawla as *mutavallī* of the shrine which is given with the date of Shavvāl 1316/February 1899.<sup>71</sup> Within a couple of months the project must have gained shape, the first authorial statement on the composition by Ismā'īl Khān in the margins of the introduction is dated Ṣafar 1317/June 1899. This corresponds with the official start of the book's compilation as given in the title vignette as Rabī' al-avval 1317/July 1899. In less than a year the book was ready to go to print. The date of Dhī al-ḥijja 1317/April 1900 is given twice as the date of completion: once in the table of contents at the beginning of the book, and again in the closing remarks (*khātima*) that introduces the calligrapher who prepared the lithograph plates as Mīrzā Tāhir Ṭabīb al-Mashhadī, with the first third of Dhī al-ḥijja 1317/April 1900. So this quite laborious work of compiling *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*, collecting the original sources, reading them, preparing the summaries and having the final book written and prepared for printing was accomplished in just one year. While Ismā'īl Khān has certainly had help from inside the shrine's library cum archive, the compilation remained his responsibility and a high amount of personal involvement.

<sup>71</sup> *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*, p. 3 of the original preface, p. 3 (edition).

#### 4.2. Structure and Internal Organization

The overall structure of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* is as follows: the preface (*dībācha*) is followed by the two *tūmārs* (no. 1 and 2) and the tax exemption decree (no. 3), the largest group is then constituted by the particular (*khāṣṣa*) *vaqf* deeds listed along their geographical distribution (no. 4 to 113), then follow *vaqf* deeds without specific provisions (*muṭlaqa*, no. 114 to 144) and a number of *varia* documents at the end (no. 145 to 170).

The highly innovative approach chosen by Ismāʿīl Khān Hamadānī becomes even more apparent, once one compares his arrangement with the two earlier *tūmārs* by ʿAlīshāh (1160q/1747) and ʿAzud al-Mulk (1273q/1857), both reproduced at the beginning of his catalogue. The *tūmār* carrying the name of the Afshārid ruler ʿAlī Shāh (better known under his throne name of ʿĀdil Shāh), is a document of mixed content, combining an exhaustive list of properties and their specified income, including endowments by ʿAlīshāh himself, with detailed regulations for the management of the shrine (*dastūr al-ʿamal*) with respective expenditure calculations.<sup>72</sup>

The ʿAzud al-Mulk *tūmār* dedicated to and authorized by Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh Qājār by a royal decree (*farmān*), on the other hand, is a detailed list of *vaqf* properties, arranged geographically.<sup>73</sup> As one of the endorsing witnesses, Muḥammad Raḥīm, emphasizes that despite all diligence, errors in place names and borders might have occurred in the redaction of this *tūmār* because of the age of many documents and the distance in time.<sup>74</sup> Mentioned are also current tenants, especially those running shops and real-estate inside the shrine, while the respective income of these properties is not listed at all. In a comment concluding this *tūmār* it is stated once more that many properties had been unjustly usurped and in order to safeguard the present status, all administrators of the shrine would receive a copy of this collection to facilitate cross-referencing.<sup>75</sup>

Ismāʿīl Hamadānī now applies a third approach in that he goes back into the library and archive of the shrine to collect the original *vaqf* deeds, arrange them and transcribe their contents. This is crucial as it allows to verify the origin of endowed properties and to prove that they belong to the shrine. It also makes it easier for the administration to allocate funds according to their originally intended purposes. This in turn would strongly contribute to the credibility of the shrine and help to acquire new donations and endowments—as every respective founder has an interest not only to be charitable and beneficial, but also to be recognized for his or her deeds in the future. Most founders also have a keen interest that the specific aims and

<sup>72</sup> An excellent summary in Muʿtaman (1969), pp. 257–261.

<sup>73</sup> Transcribed as document no. 2 in *Āthār al-Ražavīya*.

<sup>74</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, p. 69 (original), p. 61 (edition).

<sup>75</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, pp. 130–131 (original), p. 125 (edition).

objectives of their foundations would be respected. Thus Ismāʿīl Hamadānī is able to achieve his own intentions in the composition of this book, as mentioned above.

The catalogue does not only feature a prologue (*dībācha*) but also an epilogue (*khātima*).<sup>76</sup> Reiterating the dedications from the prologue, the names of both the current monarch of Iran, Muẓaffār al-Dīn Shāh Qājār, and of his prime minister, Mīrzā ʿAlī Aṣghar Khān Amīn al-Sultān, are evoked, together with the contemporary governor of Khurāsān and Sīstān, Muḥammad Taqī Mīrzā Rukn al-Dawla. This auspicious constellation, we are reminded, led to the appointment of Ṣadīq al-Dawla as *mutavallī* of the Raẓavī shrine. In only a short time, and through his good administration, the affairs of the Holy Threshold became well ordered. In other words, ‘the loose papers of hope were bound’ and the intensive and combined efforts led to an increase in income from the endowments while necessary repairs were initiated. Again, on Ṣadīq al-Dawla’s order the *vaqf* deeds of the library were systematically transcribed by Ḥājji Mīrzā Ismāʿīl Khān Mustawfī Hamadānī with the assistance of Āqā Mīrzā ʿAbd al-ʿAlī, the copyist (*muṣahḥiḥ*) of the shrine’s library, the book was written by Mīrzā Ṭāhir Ṭabīb al-Mashhadī, servant (*khādim*) of the third watch (*kishīk*). It is remarkable how clearly the various levels and hierarchies of everybody involved in the production of this book are laid down, from the monarch down to the scribe and corrector of the third watch. The book also features a separate colophon vignette, introducing the printing house in Tehran and his owner Shaykh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Rizā-yi Tihirānī who explicitly exhorts the reader to report any mistakes and shortcomings.

The table of contents shows the wide distribution of properties, spread out over most of Iran and beyond. Ismāʿīl Hamadānī maintains the geographical arrangement used by ʿAzud al-Mulk, beginning with properties inside the shrine area, moving on over Mashhad to Khurāsān and then into other provinces of Iran and neighboring countries. Clearly separated in his catalogue are those *vaqf* deeds and properties that fall under the category of *muṭlaqa*, meaning they are ‘independent’ from special rules and stipulations on expenditure. Their income can be dispensed based on the discretion of the shrine’s administration. This special category of *vaqf* deeds and documents is placed at the end of the catalogue. For the economic development of the shrine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the *muṭlaqa* endowments were of special importance since they allowed the *mutavallīs* to take liberal decisions on where to invest income and to actively acquire new properties. Ismāʿīl Khān’s own definition at the beginning of this section is very clear: “Property (*milk*) bought by the *mutavallī-bāshīs* and trustees of the Holy Threshold from income and proceeds (*ḥāṣil va manāfiʿ*) and turned into *vaqf-i muṭlaqa* in favor of the auspicious shrine (*sarkār-i fayẓ-āthār*).”<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *Āthār al-Raẓavīya*, pp. 362–363 (original), p. 310 (edition).

<sup>77</sup> *Āthār al-Raẓavīya*, prior to document no. 114.

In some instances and in order to stress an argument, Ismā‘īl Khān Hamadānī inserts additional documents, such as decrees (*farmāns*) or telegrams. Thus, right at the beginning of the catalogue, following the *tūmār* of ‘Azud al-Mulk, the author inserts a petition sent by telegram to Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh requesting tax exemptions for the shrine.<sup>78</sup> This initial emphasis on tax exemptions is mirrored by another decree issued by Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh at the end of the catalogue.<sup>79</sup> These two royal decisions form a bracket that hold the catalogue together and communicate the urgency tax questions had for the shrine administration. In the *muṭlaqa* section of properties, Ismā‘īl Hamadānī lists a number of sale contracts (*qabāla*) to register properties of the shrine that were acquired by the trustees of the shrine.<sup>80</sup>

One must keep in mind that *Āthār al-Ražavīya* is not a comprehensive and all-inclusive register of all *vaqf* deeds and endowments ever established in favor of the *Āstān-i Quds*. It is by nature incomplete and only reflects what at that particular moment had been available to Ismā‘īl Hamadānī in the shrine’s library. Some deeds were not obtainable; some entries had to remain incomplete. In such cases, additional documents, such as court verdicts (*ḥukm*) could replace original *vaqf* deeds and serve as legal documentation. In a document from 1255/1839 Ḥājjī Mīrzā Muḥammad Ḥasan, known as Ḥājjī Muṭtahid, issues a verdict on the *vaqf* status on land and water rights in the district of Chinārān.<sup>81</sup> More detailed studies are necessary to understand the exact relationship between Ismā‘īl Khān’s entries and the original documents, as has been demonstrated by Umīd Rizā‘ī with regard to the endowments made around 1892 by Sardār Muḥammad ‘Alam Khān, governor of Balkh and Badakhshān, and commander over Turkistān.<sup>82</sup>

The entries themselves follow a clear and coherent model of structured summaries that might be compared to the practice of producing *regesta historiae* on medieval charters and decrees. The standard entry on a *vaqf* deed dispenses with all formulaic text parts from the original and follows the four most important characteristics of any endowment. Based on accountancy praxis and *siyāq* writing, the ‘key words’ *vāqif* (the founder), *mawqūfāt* (the endowed properties), *maṣārīf* (expenditures) and *tawliyat* (administration) are drawn out and form headings (‘*unvān*’) under which the condensed information is noted down. Under the first heading, *vāqif*, we usually find the date of the original document and the name of the respective founder of the endowment. The second heading, *mawqūfāt*, lists the properties to this endowment with their location. In case of several distinct properties, such as several villages or water courses, these are again separated by sub-headings. The

<sup>78</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, together three documents including the petition with the positive reply by the Šadr-i a‘ẓam and the Shāh, document no. 3.

<sup>79</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, i.e. document no. 170.

<sup>80</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, documents no. 115, 116, 123, 125, 165, 166, 167 and 168.

<sup>81</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, document no. 50.

<sup>82</sup> Rizā‘ī (2005).

third heading, *maṣārīf*, meticulously lists the purposes and aims on which the income shall be spent. Additional stipulations are listed under the heading of *sharṭ* (pl. *shurūṭ*). All questions related to the endowment's administration are treated under the last heading of *tawliyat*. This is in most cases a rather short rubric that names the administrator (*mutavallī*) and the superintendent (*nāzir*). Quite often, the administration is ultimately delegated to the *mutavallī-bāshī* of the *Āstān-i Quds*, sometimes he is named for this position already from the start. This straight, uniform and simple organization of data allows the expert reader to quickly locate and comprehend the key information provided in a particular *vaqf* deed without having to read through the legal formula and ornate prose that characterizes many endowment deeds.

#### 4.3. Statistical Analysis of Documents included in *Āthār al-Raḥavīya*

Any statistical analysis of the documents recorded in *Āthār al-Raḥavīya* and the contents of the *vaqf* deeds can only be approximate. While Ismā'īl Khān made a serious effort to collect and include all documents available to him, his compilation of *vaqf* deeds is obviously not complete. Some documents certainly escaped his attention and many have been lost over time for various reasons. In particular, any conclusions on historical periods prior to the Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh era must be treated with care.

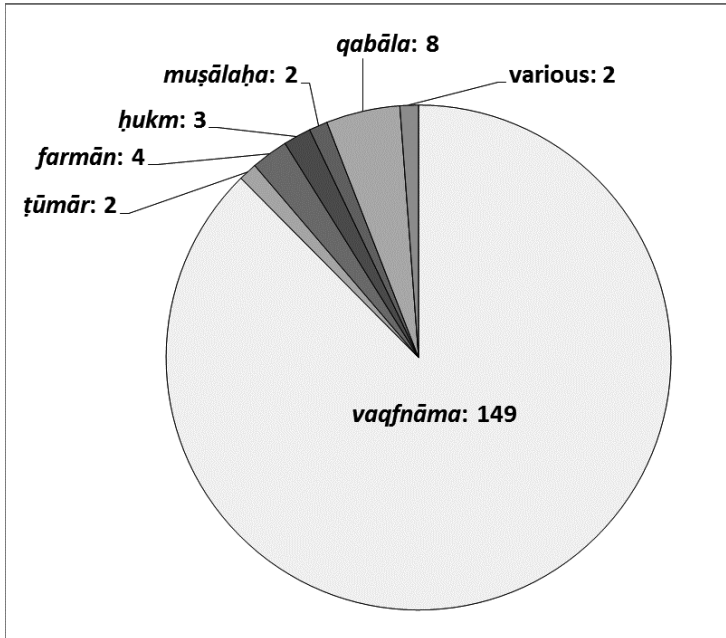
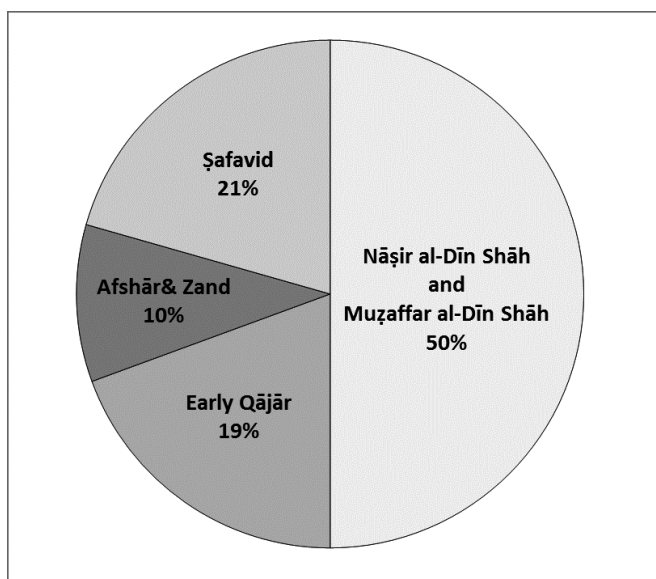


Fig. 1. Types of documents in *Āthār al-Raḥavīya*

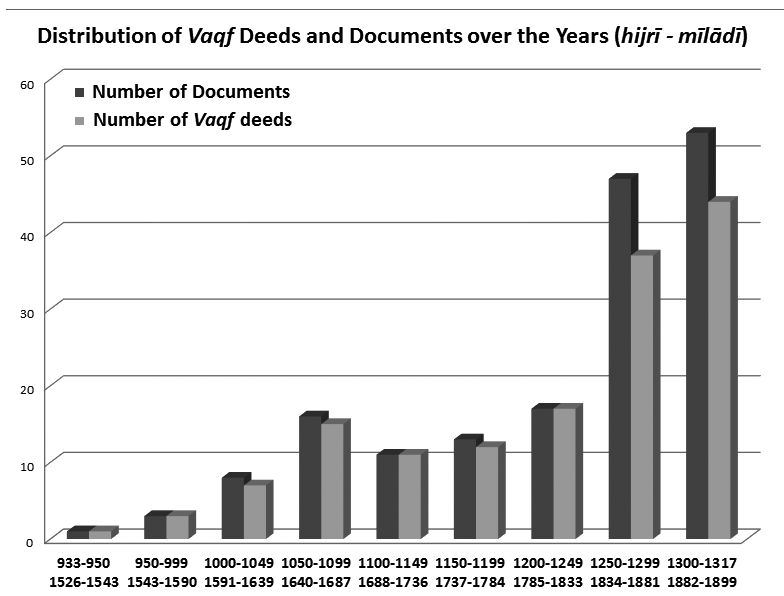
Any analysis is therefore first and foremost an attempt to structure and comprehend the material available in *Āthār al-Ražavīya*. Only then can we make an attempt to identify certain trends that would have to be verified against other sources.

As pointed out above, the catalogue is devoted in the first place to summaries of *vaqf* deeds, complemented by other types of documents, if necessary. **Figure 1** shows the distribution of document types in the catalogue with 149 *vaqfnāmas* out of a total of 170 documents. In addition to the *vaqf* deeds we can find four royal decrees (*farmān*), eight sale contracts (here simply named *qabāla*), three court verdicts (*ḥukm*) and two contracts of settlement (*muṣālaḥa*).

It is not surprising, given the date of the work's compilation that the majority of documents in *Āthār al-Ražavīya* stem from the period of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's rule (1848–1896). The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was overall a prosperous period for the shrine, due partly to a number of outstanding, capable and committed *mutavallīs*, but also reflecting demographic and economic growth that resulted in a larger number of pilgrims and more individuals establishing endowments on behalf of the shrine (see **Figures 2** and **3**). Especially noticeable is the boost in activity in the last two decades prior to the publication of *Āthār al-Ražavīya*. Seen in absolute numbers, the correlation between the number of documents and the amount of *vaqf* activities between the first and the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is correct, including the 18<sup>th</sup> century under Afshārid rule. On the other hand, to conclude that the overall number



**Fig. 2. Documents in *Āthār al-Ražavīya* along historical epochs and dynasties**



**Fig. 3. Documents in *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* (along years in Hijrī/CE)**

of endowments more than doubled from the Ṣafavid to the Qājār period cannot be substantiated from such a mere count of documents in *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*. A great number of smaller *vaqfs* did certainly not survive and today's archival records show that several important endowments from the Ṣafavid period were not recorded in Ismā'īl Khān's catalogue.

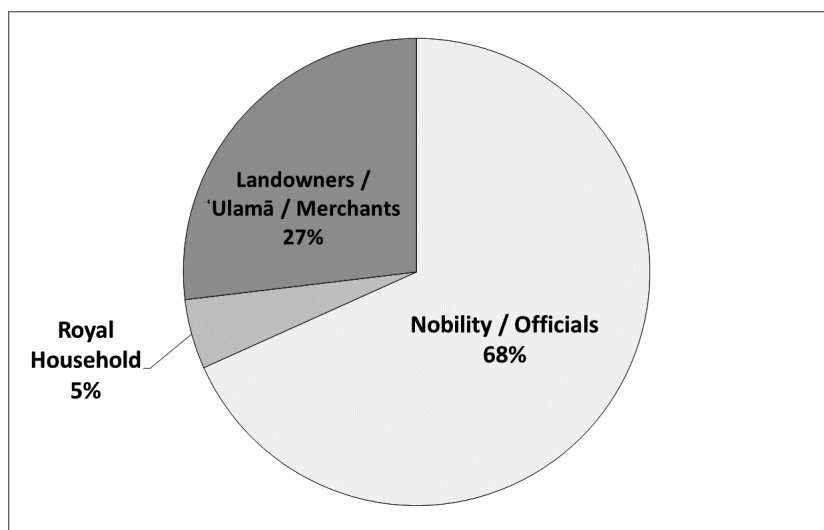
A clear statistic on the geographical distribution and the range of *vaqf*-properties mentioned in the documents contained in *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* is not feasible as many endowments include properties from more than one district or region, especially when it comes to properties in Khurāsān. More than one third of the endowment deeds, however, refer to properties inside the shrine complex and/or the city of Mashhad, emphasizing the strong impact of *vaqf* on urban development. Despite the fact that properties belonging to the *Āstān-i Quds* are spread widely over Iran and adjacent countries—we find considerable properties in Māzandarān, Tih-rān or Kirmān—the prominence of landed estates in the extended province Khurāsān is evident.

This dominance of *vaqf* deeds from the Qājār period equally influences our perception of the social background of the founders, as far as we can deduct information from *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*. *Vaqf* deeds from the inner circle of the court or Royal household, irrespective of dynasties, are relatively rare. This means that royal patronage, including those by royal spouses or princes, while important for their



symbolic value, was not as significant with regard to the mere number of endowment acts. The largest group of founders comes in fact from the class of notables, administrators and other office holders, often in some function related to the province of Khurāsān and/or the sanctuary of Imām Rīzā. In comparison, founders that were landowners, clerics or merchants constitute a solid group, but overall make up only about one fourth of total endowment acts. The male-female ratio among founders (or primary agents in documents) is 156:14, demonstrating that women were active, but perhaps less so than in other statistical evaluations of *vaqf* deeds in Qājār Iran. Cases where women established endowments through a representative (*vakīl*) are here counted as female founders, although the summaries in *Āthār al-Ražavīya* might mention the *vakīl* as the legal founder (*vāqif*). Some constructions are more complicated as in the case of Farangīs Begum, daughter of Khaīfa Sultān, from the early Šafavid period in 970/1563 who through representatives is both beneficiary and founder of a major endowment on behalf of the Madrasa-yi Fāzil Khān.<sup>83</sup>

Expenditures in the endowment deeds, despite their variability and the creativity of many founders, can be assigned to four main groups.<sup>84</sup> Again this statistic is simplified; it does not calculate actual costs and sums, but only notes the frequency a certain endowment purpose appears in the documents. Trends are nevertheless



**Fig. 4. Social origin of founders**

<sup>83</sup> *Āthār al-Ražavīya*, document no. 145.

<sup>84</sup> Werner (2009) with more examples.

evident and contradict primary expectations. Most important are costs for illumination, such as lamps and candles, often in connection with expenditures for heating. Second come expenses for mourning ceremonies on behalf of the Shi'i Imams (*ta'ziya-dārī*), quite in line with the majority of *vaqfs* from the Qājār period which catered to these popular religious festive activities. Third are expenditures for the daily management of the shrine, the payment of salaries to employees, especially servants and Quran reciters (*khuddām*, *farrāsh*, *huffāz*), but also costs for repairs and upkeep of the large shrine complex. The last among these four major budgetary positions are expenses for needy pilgrims visiting the shrine. They can receive food, clothes or shoes; sometimes endowments promise small sums of money to pilgrims from foreign countries. Support for pilgrims was located in the *kārkhāna-yi zuvvār*, a "welcome center" that bundled many pilgrim related facilities, while health services included not only the ambulance (*dār al-shifā*), but perhaps even more important the pharmacy (*sharbat-khāna*) already well-appointed in the Ṣafavid period.<sup>85</sup> The wealth of information contained in Ismā'īl Khān's work cannot be adequately captured through a statistical approach. Much more crucial is the access to individual endowments in their historical context.

## 5. Conclusion: Beyond the Turning Point of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya*

The present edition of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* contributes to the ongoing research on the history of the sanctuary of Imām Rizā in Mashhad, in particular its administrative history. It supplements the enormous task of accessing and analyzing the archival sources available and to contextualize the often detailed information to be found there. The publication of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* in the year 1900 (even more symbolic in the CE calendar) is a turning point in the history of the shrine that signals a much more independent policy of the *Āstān-i Quds*. Our intention is also to rehabilitate the later perception of the shrine's administration as corrupt and ineffective—partly a later historiographical construct of the Pahlavī period and part of their slander of the Qājār dynasty, but also to be found in many contemporary European travelogues.<sup>86</sup> It is thus also an appreciation of the positive role of individuals such as Ismā'īl Khān Hamadānī who was devoted to the development of the sanctuary and its economic and spiritual progress.

If we take the year 1317/1900 as a point of departure for future developments in and around the *Āstān-i Quds*, we realize how close the publication of *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* actually is to the advent of the Constitutional Revolution and the modernization efforts of the 1920s and 1930s. The motif repeatedly voiced by Ismā'īl Khān

<sup>85</sup> Sugiyama (2010).

<sup>86</sup> Yate (1900), published in the same year as *Āthār al-Raḡavīya* is a prime example.

Hamadānī, namely the necessity of a legally correct administration of the shrine's endowments occurs again in the context of the Constitutional Revolution, only a couple of years later. The Bukharan traveler Mīrzā Sirāj al-Dīn Ḥakīm comments on the situation in Mashhad around 1908 and expresses his hope that a rightful constitutional government would be better able to take care of the sanctuary and his *awqāf*:

“On y trouve aussi quantité de fondations pieuses. Les waqf de l'Āstān-e Qods, en particulier, dépassent en richesse l'ensemble du Khorassan. Cependant, aucun d'eux n'est administré selon la charia. Maintenant que l'Iran s'est doté d'un Etat de droit et d'un gouvernement constitutionnel, il se pourrait que ces fondations soient placées sous l'autorité de ce dernier, même si, jusqu'à présent, il n'y a jamais eu en Iran de ministère des waqf.”<sup>87</sup>

In fact, the shrine's administration managed to maintain its authority throughout the upheavals of the Constitutional period much better than could have been expected. Rīzā'ī has recently demonstrated the extent to which the administration of the *Āstān-i Quds* was able to communicate and negotiate with the ministerial authorities in Tīhrān shortly after the Constitutional period in 1914. In fact their administrative apparatus was much superior to that of the Ministry in charge of endowment affairs.<sup>88</sup>

The relationship between the *Āstān-i Quds* and the modernist project of the Pahlavī period was certainly not easy and is characterized by the enforced control over the shrine's properties, as well as by continued attempts to regulate the shrine's administration and leadership. This was achieved through appointments of loyal *mutavallīs* and rigorous urban planning that began in the 1930s and drastically changed the urban landscape of both Mashhad and its sanctuary.<sup>89</sup> If we are looking for an echo of *Āthār al-Ražavīya* in modern historiography, the first modern work on the history of Mashhad was accomplished by the scholar and poet Adīb Haravī in 1947, and his work entitled *al-Ḥadīqa al-Ražavīya* might perhaps be regarded as homage to Ismā'īl Khān Hamadānī whose work not only through its symbolic date signals the beginning of a new stage in the modern history of the shrine of Imām Rīzā in Mashhad.

<sup>87</sup> Mīrzā Sirādj ad-Dīn Ḥakīm (1999), p. 170.

<sup>88</sup> Rīzā'ī (2015).

<sup>89</sup> On Rīzā Shāh's management of the estates, Lambton (1953), pp. 234–235. On urban planning Stratil-Sauer (1937) for the early Pahlavī period; Ecochard (1971) and (1975) on the later period.