

Half the World



Is Isfahan



*Isfahan*

*Urban Development and Analysis*

*Rana Amirtahmasebi*

# *Contents*

*Iran's Brief History*

*Historic Development*

*Block Study*

*Building Types and Urban Fabric*

*Neighborhoods*

*Civic Structure*

*Design Proposal*

History

**Iran before Islam**

The documented history of Iran begins with the Achaemenian dynasty dating back about 2500 years ago. A significant era marked by decisive unification of the Pars tribes during the reign of Astyages and his grandson, Cyrus, who initially formed an extensive, centralized and mighty empire. Ironically, Achaemenian's most remarkable military expedition against the Greeks took place in 480 B.C. resulting in both the Iranian's defeat and Seizure of undisputed power by Alexander. During Achaemenian's period, a lot of political and financial decisions were made to make the empire work better. Cyrus and Darius the great were geniuses in leading the country towards prosperity. Economy was glorious and several roads were made to make the trade easier.

For example "Silk Road" was one of the ancient trade routes which led to Kashgar from two opposite directions of north and south. Extending westward to Samarkand, Marv and Balkh in northern region of Iran, passing through Central Asia leading to ancient Greece. This major historical route connecting the west to the east was known as the Great Road of Khorasan or

"the Silk Road", as previously mentioned. This road is specially important for our study about the city of Isfahan which was one of the cities near this route. The pre-Islam civilization of Iran takes pride in such innovations, particularly because the management and maintenance of the "King's Great Road" 25 Centuries ago constituted great honor for Iranians among all nations.

The "Throne of Jamshid" or Persepolis was chosen as Iran's capital during the rule of Achaemenians. However, the corner-stone of Persepolis was laid during the reign of Darius I - after whom each king added more sections to the site. Also the cities of Susa, Babylonia and Ekbatan each in turn served as the nation's capital.

After Achaemenid dynasty which was vanished by Alexander, and after the death of Alexander in Iran, one of his commanders, Slokus, made a new dynasty in 312 B.C. which ruled Iran for about sixty five years.

. They were soon out of power by a new rising Iranian dynasty called Ashkanids which ruled Iran from 247 B.C. for four hundred and seventy years. Ashkanid are one of the most influential Iranian dynasties which defended the country against the Roman empire during the years.

The last Persian dynasty before Islam is Sassanid dynasty which survived for four hundred and twenty seven years. It was one of the two largest empires of civilized world of that time. During the rule of Ardeshir, the founder of the Sassanide dynasty, a very powerful centralized government developed and for the first time in Iran the religion of Zoroaster (the Iranian prophet) was declared as the official religion. A faith whose essential pillars are laid upon virtuous thoughts, virtuous words, and virtuous deeds.

The Prophet of Islam, Mohammad (was born in the city of Mecca during the rule of Anushirvan Sassani, and was chosen as the completion of all prophecy and the last prophet during the reign of Khosrow Parviz

(610 A.D.). Weakness of the Sassanide government, oppressions of the Kings, and at the same time Islam's rising power were the imperative factors which led to the victory of Islam's army over the Iranian military in the course of numerous battles. The Prophet Mohammad migrated to Medina from Mecca (622 A.D). Thus, this particular year was chosen as the base of the Muslims' calendar owing to the indisputable effect of this migration. At that time, Islam spread mainly in the Arabian Peninsula, and after the prophet in the Southern parts of Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and all of Egypt as well as northern part of Syria embraced Islam.

**Islamic Iran**

The first century of Islamic Iran was spent on fights and switching power from Umayyed Arabs to Abassid Arabs. When the atmosphere got calmer and all opposing groups lost their wars, several different parallel dynasties were ruling Iran. These governments, each were established in different parts of the large empire and were mostly of Iranian origin with Islamic and Arab supporters.

The expedition of the devastating mogul tribe to Iran began 1256 B.C. and the last Persian King of the dynasty, Sultan Jalal-e-din Kharazmshah was overthrown by Gengiz's army and later put to death. The period of Mogul chieftain's rule in Iran was the most oppressed era the nation had ever seen and the conditions did not change until the founding of the Iranian dynasty, the Safavids, and the rule of Shah Ismeal.

The Moguls were removed from Iran's political scene after about 300 years by the Safavids, and Shah Ismeal was crowned in Tabriz. During the reign of Safavid dynasty relations between Iran and European and other countries expanded and Iran's powerful centralized government, during Shah Abbas's rule, established political and economic ties with great leaders such as Queen Elizabeth, Philip II the king of Spain, India's Akbar shah and also put an end to the domination of Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. The Iranian culture and art once again flourished during the Safavid rule and architecture, carpet-weaving, miniature painting, gilding and handicrafts found special development.



The map of Persian Empire

## ISFAHAN

*The Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

## Iran's Brief History

After the Safavids, alternately weak and strong governments came to power among which the government of Nader Shah Afshar, Karim Khan Zand, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, Naser-e-din Shah and Mozafar-e-din Shah are noteworthy. During the rule of Nader Shah, The Russians were expelled from Iran, the booties which the Ottomans had taken from the country were recovered, Kandhar and Delhi became parts of Iran and once again the Iranian territory was expanded and included a vast area of Southeast Asia. Oppression and tyranny became prevalent in the course of the Qajar dynasty's rule due to treason of courtiers and the Kings' powerlessness and inattention to the state of affairs. The unprecedented and historical measures of Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Kabir, Naser-e-din Shah's prime minister, such as dispatching students abroad for higher education, printing of newspaper, compilation of laws, etc. made him an immortal historical personage.

The new era began with the reign of the Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Shah, commander of a Kazak battalion, occupied Tehran on 22 Feb. 1920, and five years later crowned himself the King with the support of England. In 1941 under pressure by England, he abdicated the throne in favor of his son Mohammad-Reza and was exiled to Johannesburg in South Africa where he later died. Mohammad-Reza ruled for another 40 years and was put down by the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Islamic government is ruling Iran since today.



*Persepolis- The ancient palace of pre-Islamic Iran*

*The map of the silk road*