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### Original Research Article

## Sociocultural Factors Influencing the Durability of Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan

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### Abstract

**Problem statement:** Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan is a grand outstanding ancient monument of the Islamic era. It has been a subject of interest for several studies, but most of them have simply covered its physical features, and its cultural and social aspects have been neglected. Moreover, Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan is a monument that has continued to endure throughout centuries. Therefore, this research attempts to find cultural and social factors influencing the historical importance of Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan. Furthermore, it attempts to discover how these factors have caused the physical and functional durability of this building over time, especially when the rules and craftsmanship of protection and restoration were not yet identified.

**Research objective:** The purpose of this study is to identify sociocultural factors influencing the durability of Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan throughout history relying on historical references and documents (i.e. the mosque's inscriptions) and contemporary research. The results of this study can assist in developing the most convenient strategies for maintenance based on social participation and the preservation of life and structure of ancient sites.

**Research method:** This study is based on the grounded theory, using data that have been systematically gathered and analyzed during the study. According to this theory, open coding was done at first until reaching a theoretical saturation. Then, codes were classified and analyzed until obtaining selected codes.

**Conclusion:** Results show that five major cultural and social factors have played a critical role in the endurance of Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan, including attendance, participation, founding and dedication culture, variability, and modernity, which have protected Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan from collapse for centuries.

**Keywords:** *Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan, Durability, Cultural and social factors.*

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### Introduction and problem statement

The mosque is employed not simply for praying and thus differs from those places of worship. It covers both religious and social affairs. “The social purpose of the mosque is to create solidarity inside the community and to strengthen the social relations between individuals. [...] In the traditional Islamic communities, the mosque was being used preferably because people were assuming it as a multi-purpose place for worship and gathering, reading Qur’an, holding political decision-making sessions, and a place for rest. Such utilization reflects the concept of the umma (a synonym to the nation) that has been prevalent in Medina since the time of the Prophet Muhammad” (Mortada, 2008, 126-127). Accordingly, there is an irrefragible link between the mosque and the social life of Islam. Here, we aim to find cultural and social factors influencing the preservation of life or durability of the ancient Jāme’ Atiq Mosque of Isfahan. This study also attempts to find cultural and social factors influencing the life or endurance of Jāme’ Atiq Mosque of Isfahan. Although various historical, archaeological, architectural, structural, and aesthetic features of the mosque have been studied and acquainted, most of the studies have been conducted on the reading of historical values of the monument (Qalenoee & Kalantari, 2013, 18). Therefore, less research has targeted its cultural and social aspects

and features. However, according to Godard, we cannot view this mosque as a architectural building, and, further cultural features should be respected when describing it (Godard, 1937, 68-70). This mosque is a building ahead of the simple physical architectural structure, and like many ancient monuments, it has not become a stagnant structure. As Galdieri states, we should find “why some buildings, especially this mosque, come with a special history and story, but others, such as Safavid, Mamluk, Mongol or Ottoman noticeable buildings, despite huge reconstructions and restorations over time, fail to own such a historical sense. “Can cultural issues be involved in answering this question?” (Galdieri, 1991, 243). Thus, “this mosque is an alive building in an alive city, even though it is constantly evolving” (Grabar, 2009, 39). Therefore, this study tries to study the cultural and social factors influencing the survival of Jāme’ Atiq Mosque of Isfahan throughout history. (The word survival is referred to as durability in this study). Today, the mosque is accepted as a national and global heritage (as a UNESCO World Heritage Site), and its relationship with people has been restricted under strict legal protections. Besides preserving part of its function, the building has become a place for tourists to visit, but it is yet a place to visit by various Isfahan’s walks of life (Fig. 1). The results of this study can contribute to developing approaches based

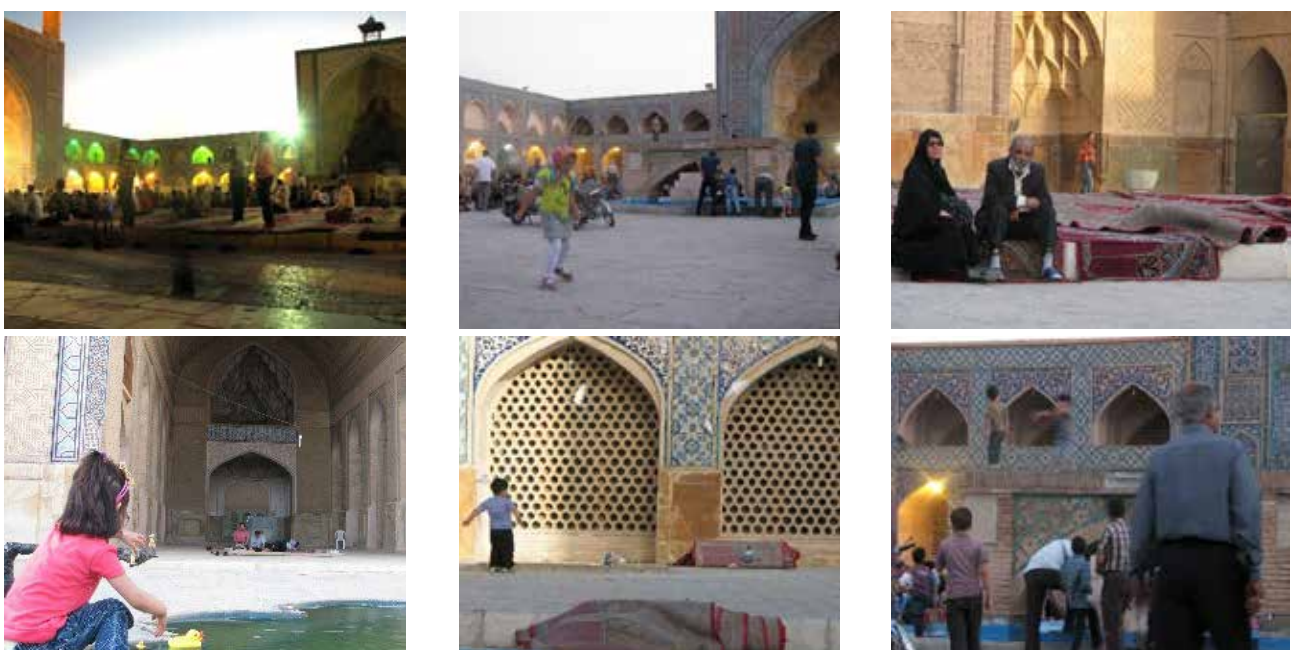


Fig. 1. The presence of various Isfahan’s walks of life in the Jāme’ Atiq Mosque, and preserving its function and living inside it. Source: Authors’ archive.

on native culture and public participation to ensure the durability of this ancient site.

### Theoretical foundations of research

The literature review can help us define the term “durability” in this investigation. The durability is associated with terms such as permanence, stability, immortality, and eternity. In Dehkhoda Dictionary, the word “durable” originates from the Pahlavi term of staying and refers to someone who stays somewhere for a long time or permanently and who stays or decides to wait, and the word “stability” indicates strong, constant, eternal, and permanent (Dehkhoda, 1998). Durability means permanence; that is, what can last and continue. According to David Keith Lynch, “durability” is the degree of resistance of a city’s elements against decay and breakdown. It indicates having the ability to operate for a long time (Pakzad, 2002).

In various studies parallel to our research, different terms have been used for durability and associated concepts, indicating that there is yet a huge gap to determine the exact and scientific meaning of these words in the field of architecture. It has been attempted to formulate the concept of durability and its difference with sustainability through some case studies. The author in this research considers “meaning and spirituality, attention to culture, the use of archetypes, and the ability to attract the audience” as factors contributing to the durability of historical monuments and the distinction between durability and stability (Shafieian Dariani, Pourjafar & Ghobadi, 2014, 32). In another study, it has been attempted to explain to what extent immortality is rooted in physical attributes, and to what extent is it rooted in culture or metaphysical factors? In this regard, besides classifying and then reviewing and criticizing various theories correlated to durability and immortality of architectural works, the study considers durability as a concept associated with the physical structure and eternity as a supra-physical aspect. And though the physical structure of many of enduring architectural monuments continues to survive, they are not alive and thus fail to build culture and life for people, and thereby, are not eternal and are dead while they are durable at the

same time (Forouzandeh, Noghrehkar & Hamzehnejad, 2009). Simply put, this research attempts to reflect the presence of meaning and sense with the durability as eternity. Similarly, another study has considered the presence of meaning as a factor for immortality. This research has dealt with the issue of eternity in the field of urban planning in Rome (Italy) as a case study. According to the researcher, spiritual roots and foundations give immortality to the urban fabric and any kind of human settlement (Pourjafar, 2003).

The word “eternal” means forever, permanent, stable, and enduring (Dehkhoda, 1998). The term durability refers mainly to the physical features of the work and its physical resistance to erosion over time and various factors (Harris, 2005, 346). In the book “Architecture and the Secret of Immortality”, Alexander Christopher discourses the pattern of events that are deemed to be the main components of the structure. Each culture perpetually identifies its pattern of events with the names of the physical elements of the place, where these events occur prevalently (Alexander, 2011, 60). Any building that is formed based on these patterns and is in harmony with them will gain the eternity feature. It is through these patterns that eternity in architecture is associated with culture. Accordingly, the eternity of a monument is linked to its relationship with society and the activities of that society in it. Alexander’s concept of eternity is close to the concept of durability utilized in this study. Still, the word “externality” refers to being alive from the start of the formation of a building to the future and forever, while this is not conclusive for the future of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan. Another study has also reflected Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan as an ancient monument that is still alive and running, where the word “being alive” has been used for this concept. This study considers a huge volume of protective interventions as the basis for this “survival” throughout history (Aminpour, Owlia, Abbasi Harofteh & Kalantari, 2013, 27-37). This study has considered some cultural and social factors as contributors to the “survival” of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, which all have directly impacted the mosque’s structure.

However, this study employs the word durability to describe the survival of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, which means preserving the mosque’s structure, function, and dynamics. The foregoing studies have recognized culture as a solid feature in the face of the building. They have neglected to investigate the role of the cultural force of society in protecting the building and its life. This work attempts first to identify this cultural force and then ascertain its social mechanism contributing to the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan.

**Research method**

The study is based on a qualitative design and “grounded theory”. Data were derived through the real documents of the monument, i.e., the structure of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, and from the inscriptions as the historical literature of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan and written sources, including historical texts on Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan and other associated studies. Some steps of the analysis process are given in tables 1 to 4 to explain the subject and describe how to reach the research framework. Entitled “attendance and its contribution to the meaning of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan”, tables 1 to 4 includes steps from open coding to selective coding (Fig. 2) and reaching one of the five factors discussed in this study. The last table of this section presents the continuation of the same trend for the five factors discussed in this study.

**Findings**

According to the methodology section, five main factors were identified as the main cultural factors influencing the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, including attendance, participation, founding culture, dedication culture, and updating and variability in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan.

**• The effect of attendance on the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan**

Attendance is a leading factor in the durability of the mosque. If we contemplate the “need to preserve the land use” as a substantial reason for historical attention in preserving living ancient monuments, then the ability of the building to preserve the user (i.e. the building’s attendance) is the main reason for preserving the land use and durability of the building. Simply put, “being in the context of time and understanding the requirements of protection in the past, most of the protection interventions identified in Iranian architecture will gain clear and reasonable causes. Although these causes are varied, they share general features, which can be classified under the central theme of continuity of function” (Abbasi Harofteh, 2015, 46). The cultural potentials of the Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan in creating the quality of attendance are studied in figure 3.

**- The sense of belonging**

The durability of historic fabric, both in the present and throughout history, depends on humans’ presence and

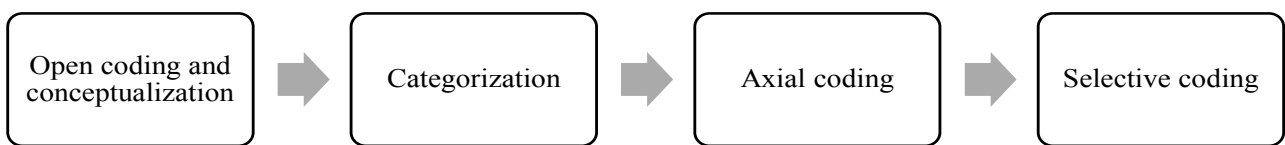


Fig. 2. The research process. Source: Authors.

Table 1. Data conceptualization and coding. Source: Authors.

| Reference  | Data   | Concept   | Research step |
|--|--|---|---------------|
| A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin’s portrait of a seventeenth-century empire, 1996 | “Religious professors and students gather to teach and study, below the arches that are closed with a door from the front view” (Chardin, 1993, 501)   | Code: The role of educational function in the presence of users | Open coding   |
| A Journey to Persia: Jean Chardin’s portrait of a seventeenth-century empire, 1996 | “There are rooms in the bookstore’s corridors in which mourning equipment is kept. A coffin house is a place in which several coffins exist to transport the dead to the cemetery [...] The other room is called Chahar Chafor (four tents) because there are four small tents that women encamp them on the grave during burying” (ibid.) | Code: The role of religious function in the presence of users   | Open coding   |



their active relationship with the environment. Therefore, to preserve historic buildings and fabrics, it is necessary to prevent them from abandonment and stagnation on various scales. Historical monuments will survive and endure if the citizens are satisfied to live in their home and enjoy living and staying in their neighborhoods. Under this situation and over time, social interactions and the need for activities in the neighborhood will increase, residents find themselves belonged to their neighborhoods and attend in maintaining and improving the quality of the area they live. This will be the main indicator and reason for the survival of a community (Kalantari Khalilabad & Derakhshani, 2014, 4). Socializing helps

to improve people’s sense of belonging to the district. An elevated sense of belonging to the living space leads the building or texture attendance and, consequently, ensures its functioning. Therefore, attendance and socialization in the more general sense are amongst the factors influencing the durability of architecture (Khaleghian & Salehi, 2019).

An indicator of this sense of belonging is the people’s support for the Atiq Mosque against Shah Abbas’ decision to use the materials of this mosque to construct the Grand Abbasi Mosque, which has led to Shah Abbas’ withdrawal from this decision (Chardin, 1993, 459-460). The acceptance of the Grand Abbasi Mosque by people

Table 2. Categorization of concepts. Source: Authors.

| Category  | Concepts  | Coding step    |
|---|---|----------------|
| The role of multiple functionalities of the mosque in the presence of users | Code: The role of religious function in the presence of users   | Categorization |
|   | Code: The role of educational function in the presence of users | Categorization |
|   | Code: The role of political function in the presence of users   | Categorization |
|   | Code: The role of divine function in the presence of users      | Categorization |

Table 3. Axial coding. Source: Authors.

| Axial code  | Categories  | Coding step                     |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| The role of attendance in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan | The role of multiple functions of Jāme’ Mosque in the presence of users           | Axial coding (causal code)      |
|   | The role of believes and trust of people in Jāme’ Mosque in the presence of users | Axial coding (interactive code) |
|   | The role of quality of access to Jāme’ Mosque in the presence of users            | Axial coding (grounded coding)  |

Table 4. Selective coding. Source: Authors.

| Coding selective codes (final step of coding)                                     | Axial codes   |
|---|---|
| The role of attendance in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The role of a sense of belonging in continuation of attendance</li> <li>- The role of multiple functions of the mosque in continuation of attendance</li> <li>- The role of quality of access to the mosque in continuation of attendance</li> <li>- The role of believes and trust of people in continuation of attendance</li> </ul> |
| The role of participation in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The possibility of attendance of people in restoring and reconstructing different parts</li> <li>- The possibility of attendance of people in religious ceremonies</li> <li>- The possibility of the formation of social relations in the mosque and participation in it</li> </ul>  |
| The role of founding culture in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presence and action of public founders</li> <li>- Presence and action of governmental founders</li> </ul>  |
| The role of dedication culture in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Land and property dedication</li> <li>- Dedication of properties</li> <li>- Dedication of equipment (c hydraulic, carpet, etc.)</li> </ul> Other axial codes   |
| The role of variability and updating in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Variation resulted from population growth</li> <li>- Variation by religious reasons</li> <li>- Variation by the change in the desirability</li> </ul>  |

has not been as much as the Atiq Mosque throughout history, and this sense of belonging to the mosque is considered as a reason for people’s attendance.

**- Multiple functions of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan**

In Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, there has been a sort of events throughout history that have turned the mosque into a place beyond its function as a place of worship. These multiple functions have been a leading factor in increasing the attendance of mosques throughout history. Multiple functions of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan identified in this study include being a place to give in trust, a place for teaching and school, a library, a place of mourning, a court, a place for propaganda and political and religious debates, and a shelter, besides being a place of worship (Table 5).

Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan was primarily a place of worship. According to Mafrokhi, “people gathered for each prayer were not less than 5,000” (Honarfar, 1971, 79). Muslim worship in the mosque is more valuable for God and from this perspective, religious beliefs are amongst the leading reasons for the presence of Muslims in the mosque.

Another function of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, which has always been discussed in various historical sources, was educational use. Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan was likewise a place of mourning for the dead and had places to hold

this religion in Islam. This action was well accepted in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan so that there were several special spaces for this work in this mosque.

The Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan has further historically been a place for a variety of political events, from the issuance of government decrees to political disputes. Throughout history, Isfahan has always been involved in various religious and political conflicts<sup>1</sup>, and Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, as a focal and influential point in the city, has always been linked to these conflicts. During the Seljuk dynasty, the Ismaili (Bateniyeh) sect also began some intentional conflicts and destruction in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan. As Jaber Ansari states: “That year, under the rule of Muhammad II ibn Mahmud, the Ismaili mystics set the mosque on fire for its repository of books” (Jaber Ansari, 1943, 198). Among them, we can refer to the conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis and their influences on Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan. A prominent and influential political and religious conflict that has affected the physical changes of the mosque is the conflict between Taj al-Mulk and the Nizam al Mulk during the Seljuk dynasty. The dispute between the two Seljuk ministers will then lead to drafting inscriptions against each other or boasting their power in the inscriptions<sup>2</sup>. Because there was a mosque hosting all people, and the inscriptions were the political pillar of the newspaper that informs the people about

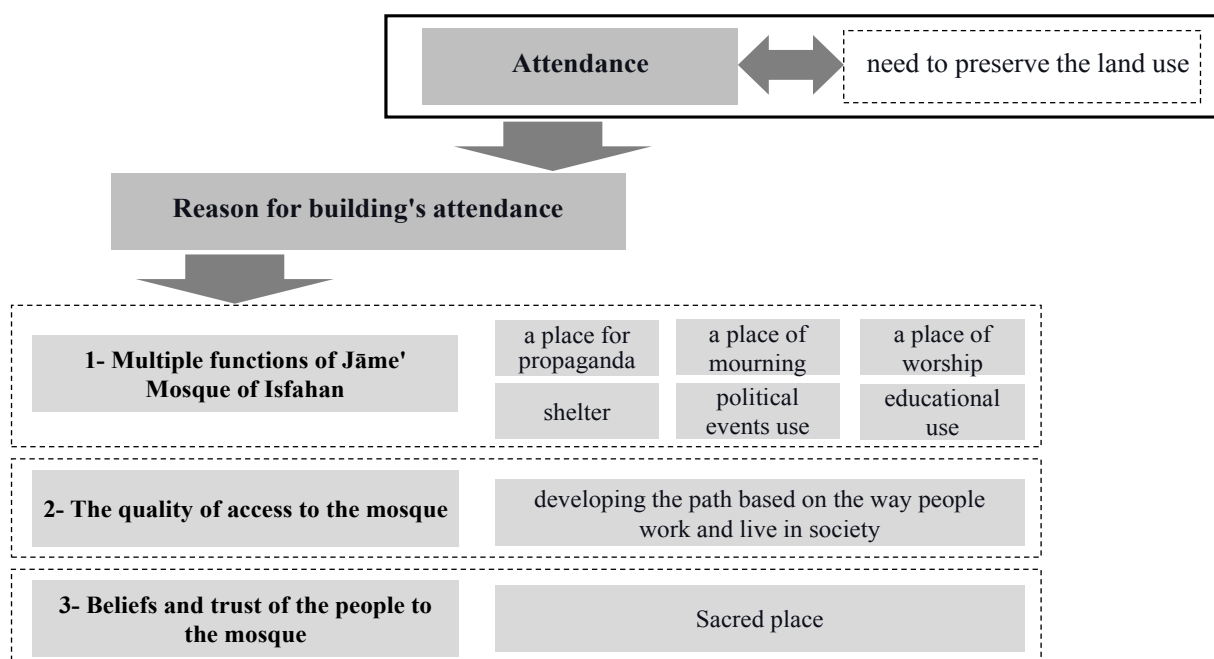


Fig. 3. The cultural potentials of the Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan in creating the quality of attendance. Source: Authors.

the events. Grabar points to these inscriptional disputes between the two and concludes that “in fact, we will never know whether the king or Nizam al-Mulk thought about the dome that the mosque was in a bad situation, or whether they destroyed part of the static column to build their new dome instead” (Grabar, 2009, 89-90).

All this means that architecture was a way of showing the thoughts and beliefs of these people, inviting the observer to see thinking and making choices, and inviting their beliefs without war or bloodshed. This function does not finish here. But government decrees are also evident in the form of inscriptions to inform people, and especially in Persian, in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan (Fig. 4).

The presence of various religious groups collectively in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan also provides special cultural circumstances in the mosque that have influenced its physical evolutions and dynamics. Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan offered the opportunity for sending messages by individuals to the audience. These messages varied depending on the sender. Political characters were sending political messages and religious characters were sending religious messages. Also, mystics and others were sending their own message through the mosque to others and future generations. At first

glance, it may seem that religious diversity has led to the destruction of the mosque, but contrarily, it has caused the preservation of the mosque in the shadow of political and religious disputes to bring up themselves more and win the hearts of the people and raise themselves through construction and restoration measures in the mosque. And every sect and group that harms the mosque has been hated and cursed.

**- Beliefs and trust of the people in the mosque**

Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan has been used as a refuge by the people of Isfahan, and this sheltering role is closely related to the sanctity of this mosque in the minds of Isfahan’s people. Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan is a holy place where the life and property of people should not be invaded, and whoever attempts refuge in this place is safe, and God will protect him in his shadow. Interestingly, the sacred scene of the mosque was more in the beliefs of the people, whilst the kings saw the mosque as a place to show their glory. People’s beliefs about Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan and its sacred place in their minds have played a leading role in its eternity (Table 6).

**- The quality of access to the mosque**

The opportunity of comfortable access to the mosque from different parts of the city by different groups of

Table 5. Case studies of evidence, multiple functions, and function variability role in attendance. Source: Authors.

| Case studies of evidence  | Factor extracted from evidence                                |
|---|---|
| In the book Mahasin-e Isfahan (Virtues of Isfahan), written during the Seljuk dynasty, Mafrokhi Esfahani speaks about the educational function of the mosque: “Next to each wall is a sheik (patriarch), and a group of students around him is engaged in the task of teaching or mortification. The beauty of this building is due to the dispute of jurists and the debate of scholars and the controversy of theologians and the advice of preachers. There are sufies, scholars, and people who live in worship in the mosque and continue their lives by glorifying and praying. Opposite the mosque is a library with various rooms and reservoirs. The library was built by Abu al-Abbas Ahmad al-Dhabi, and he has collected books on all kinds of sciences that have been picked over the years by the former scholars and literature” (Honarfar, 1971, 79). | Attendance (multiple functions) of teacher and school         |
| “Under one of the domes, there is another large pool built and there are other small pools in different parts of the mosque, especially next to the bathhouse” (Chardin, 1993, 501).  | Attendance (multiple functions) of mourning costume           |
| During the Seljuk dynasty, the Ismaili (Batenieh) sect planned some conflicts and intentional destruction in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, about which Jaber Ansari states: “That year, under the rule of Muhammad II ibn Mahmud, the Ismaili mystics set the mosque on fire for its repository of books” (Jaber Ansari, 1943, 198).   | Attendance (multiple functions) of political events – library |
| State orders can also be observed in inscriptions and public information, and in Persian in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan. The following are examples of related state orders issued: An inscription stating that “after defeating the Uzbeks, Shah Tahmasb I of Safavid dynasty has forgiven the funds of the shepherd Beygi of the Isfahan capital” (Honarfar, 1971, 150); or “the decree forbidding the entry of nobles and servants of the kingdom into the homes of the people” (ibid., 84); or the decree banning the taking of money and issuing remittances to the houses and neighborhoods of Isfahan by Shah Ismail Safavid dated to 911 AH (ibid., 86); and “the decree of Shah Tahmasb Safavid on the forgiveness of two thousand tomans of Isfahan tax and its functions” (ibid., 88).   | Attendance (multiple functions) of political events           |
| The people of Isfahan took refuge on Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan during the attack of Massoud Ghaznavi (Abu Naeim Isfahani, 1998, 33). Or in a harsh winter, they took refuge in the mosque and burned some of its wood to warm themselves (Jaber Ansari, 1943, 197).   | Attendance (multiple functions) of shelter                    |

people ensured the continued attendance of people in it. This quality of access was human-centered, unlike today’s mosques, which are mainly accessible by cars. This human-centeredness does not simply mean the existence of a path based on the human body. Rather, it means developing the path based on the way people work and live in society. Reaching the inside and center of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan from outside was unique. Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan is not a statue-like element of the city distinct from its surroundings, like churches in urban areas in the west. “Jāme’ Atiq Mosque of Isfahan has a role beyond a single building due to its wide area, accessibility due to multiple entrances, proximity to residential neighborhoods, bazaars, and the tomb of Allameh Majlisi, as well as its functional role and connection with people’s daily lives. We can even consider it a local square and an urban node (Qalenoee & Kalantari, 2013). This connection is not of defined and common transmission ways, rather, it is a trajectory for the continuation of daily life. The flow of daily life in the city unconsciously

attracts the faithful to the mosque. The person enters the mosque riding on the stream of daily life, without passing a particular hierarchy and encountering a distinct symbol, and even perceiving the moment of crossing the border of daily life towards the worship of God (Fig. 5).

• **The influence of participation on the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan**

Participation means people attendance in the process of maintaining and preserving the life of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan (Fig. 6).

Participation is directly linked with attendance, and participation needs attendance, but attendance does not necessarily lead to participation. Given the essential role of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan in society and the influential relationship between the government and the mosque and its function in governance and political affairs, the possibility of people’s participation and their role is strange. But this role has been endured throughout the mosque’s life. Grabar points out that in Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, a series of restoration efforts were carried out

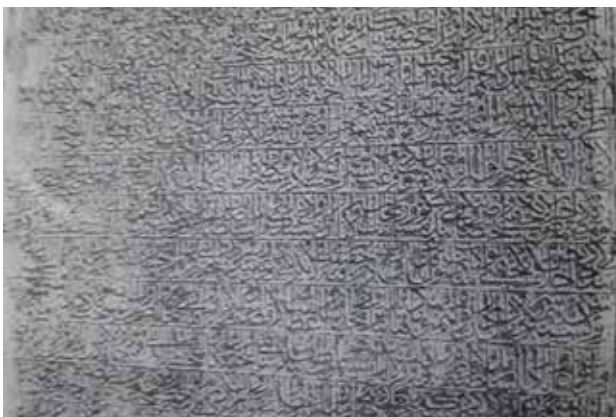


Fig. 4. Royal decrees. Right: Shah Tahmasb Safavid decree banning the entry of nobles, servants, and relatives of the king into the homes of the people. Left: Shah Tahmasb decree on the forgiveness of two thousand tomans of tax. Source: Honarfar, 1971.

Table 6. A case study of evidence, introducing Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan as a shelter and a sacred place; the role of functional diversity in attendance. Source: Authors

| A case study of evidence  | Factor extracted from evidence        |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <p>For instance, “when Massoud Ghaznavi was away, the people of Isfahan revolted on his representative. Massoud invaded Isfahan again” (Kasaei, 1997, 186), and he killed nearly five thousand people there and recaptured the city. At the same event, Massoud’s agents called on all the people of the city to mercy of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan” (Abu Naeim Isfahani, 1998, 33).</p> <p>Another proof showing the sanctity of the mosque in the minds of the people is preventing them from reaching the mosque. In his journey, Chardin states: “People say since Shah Abbas was in a hurry to build a mosque and there was not enough marble available, he decided to destroy the old Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, which is a very strong, beautiful and magnificent building and is larger than the Shah Abbas Mosque, and use marble stones and other materials to construct his mosque, but before realizing this plan, a group of mullahs (religious authorities) threw themselves at the king’s feet and begged him: “The king wants to build a mosque not only for years and centuries but also forever; suppose future kings may wish to build a mosque to endure for centuries and follow your manner and in order to achieve their goal sooner, they will follow your manner and destroy the mosque that their ancestors built and that will last for centuries. At the same time, a large marble mine was discovered in Ardestan, so the Shah gave up the idea of destroying the Jame Atiq Mousqe (Chardin, 1993, 459-460).</p> | <p>Attendance (multiple funtions)</p> |



by craftsmen, without receiving orders from anywhere (Grabar, 2009, 110). The evidence of this claim can be derived from the remaining inscriptions (Table 7).

According to Islam, all people, whether king or servant, rich and poor, slave or free, are the same in the sight of God. Islam is a social religion and, therefore, a Muslim cannot be indifferent to the Islamic society and its physical environment. Participating in the process of maintaining Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan is a duty for each Muslim. And thus, such actions by the people were not unexpected. This is why the culture of Isfahan people's contribution to the protection of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan has caused and assured its endurance.

• **The effect of the founding and dedication culture on the durability of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan**

There is a close relationship between the concept



Fig. 5. The relationship between the building and a network of paths in 1956. Source: Faghil, 1975.

of dedication and founding. The difference is that the founding is more comprehensive in the field of architecture and restoration. “Donors provide the necessary financial resources, but the architecture and the construction process also need a supporter, guide, initiator, and supervisor of the construction process. This is where the founders come into play, and therefore the founders are donors who take on tasks beyond providing financial resources in the construction process” (Adibzadeh, Khaleghian & Saadvandi, 2020). Therefore, the founding culture is considered one of the other cultural fields of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan (Table 8). In Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan, throughout history, people have always been the founders of repair and reconstruction measures on small and large scales. Founding is, in fact, a mechanism that Islamic society has achieved over the centuries to participate in the construction of public buildings. Architecture entails necessities that often require the necessary capital and power to provide them, such as construction, materials, manpower, and more. In private buildings, these requirements are provided by the employer and the property owner, but public buildings need a sponsor to provide them. Founders can be divided into two groups: state founders and public founders, as stated by Ibn Khaldun (Ibn Khaldun, 2009, 421). Big things can be done with the action of the state donors and small things by ordinary people, and the role of both of them in the durability of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan can be recognized (Table 8).

Dedication is a factor that is more accessible to people than the founder. Because the founder needs more

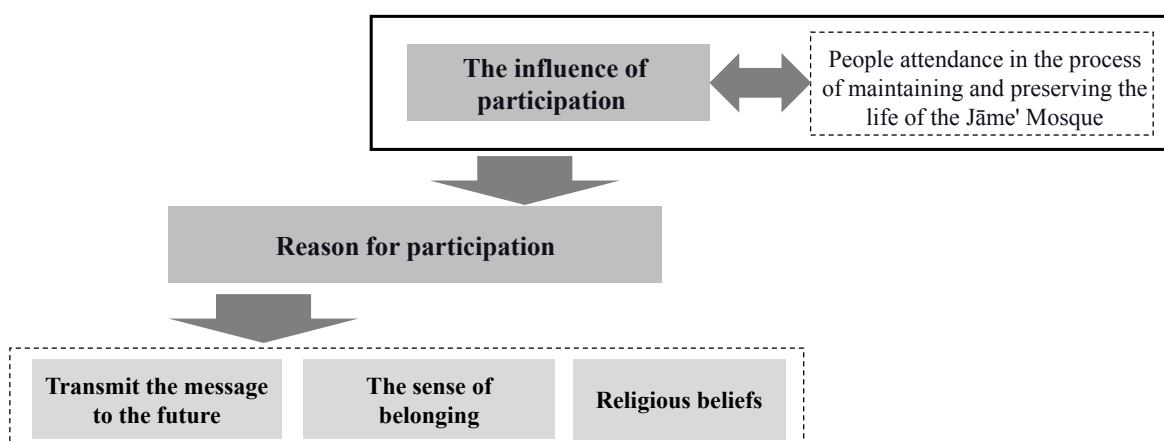


Fig. 6. The cultural potentials of the Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan in creating the quality of participation. Source: Authors.

capital, but the donor can dedicate as much as he/she can, even the size of a candle.

“Dedication is a central human value that shows several functions in daily life and urban activities and an effective social and economic role under the influence of the religious worldview of Islam. Physically, a very effective role can be attributed to the dedication in shaping the spatial structure of the cities of the Islamic era as well as the cities of Iran. The tendency to live forever has always led human beings to, along with continuous work and effort, build buildings that are a source of goodness and blessings during their lifetime as well as after death” (Kalantari Khalilabad, Salehi & Rostami, 2010, 34) (Table 9).

• **The effect of modernity and variability in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan**

Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, during its long history, has maintained its concurrence to public appetite and consequently kept its audience satisfied. It has also maintained its continuity with ancient architecture. Furthermore, it has been evolved during each period according to the aesthetic desire of society.

From a simply physical perspective, it may be thought that a genuine historical monument is one that preserves its original structure without any alteration. But cultural and social approaches view the changes and variability of the building as a value for the historical building that many of historical building has

Table 7. A case study of evidence; signs of public participation in inscriptions of the Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan; Reference: Authors

| A case study of evidence  | Factor extracted from evidence   |
|---|--|
| <p>Strong evidence showing the role of this trend in the culture of Isfahan’s people in preserving the Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan is the inscription available in the mosque, where the restorer has directly mentioned that the purpose of this action is to bring this dead man to the eternal space of the mosque, and whereby beautifully he has stated this in the inscription with this poem: “We matter what role is left from me, as I do not see the universe as eternal” (Honarfard, 1971). Or in other inscriptions: “He (Yousef) was thriving in his charity course, as he walked the path of benefaction and blessing honestly; he built a hall on the mosque’s pool as a place of worship for those faithful; the book of this building is a relic that was left of him in the city of Isfahan” (ibid., 165).</p> <p>Therefore, Yousef explicitly states that he has done this restoration work to preserve his memory, and as long as Isfahan is alive, Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan will endure, and his memory will live on forever. Or in other examples, it is mentioned in an inscription “Mohammad Ali, for whom seditions were fleeing from all sides, because of serving a lot to the masqee, found realized all his wishes; he did not flat a carpet for the masqee because the carpet is of woolen fabric; rather he paved it with a layer of stone and jewel that can be renewed each day by cleaning” (ibid., 161-162). Or another inscription indicates the endowment of a trough, saying “He endowed it to the king of the oppressed, Hussein Ibn Ali, and whoever drinks water says, blasts Ibn Ziad” (ibid., 161).</p> | <p>Participation (public participation in the durability of Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan)</p> |

Table 8. A case study of evidence; the founding culture. Source: Authors.

| A case study of evidence   | Factor extracted from evidence |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>In most historical texts, the state founders are mostly noticed. As an example, one of the texts states: “One of them is the old Grand Mosque, and it is known as Jāme’ Mosque. The founder of this mosque is the Sultan of Seljuk, who built it under Khajeh Nezam-al-Molk and has a book in the name of that king. Its nave is very strong, especially known as that unique minister, on four sides of four porches [...] Safavid porch has been restored a lot, but it is suspected that this porch is one of the buildings of their ancestors; it has a book in their name” (Afzal al-Mulk, 2001, 34).</p> <p>Abu Naeem Isfahani further introduces some of the expenses of state property for the Judea Grand Mosque<sup>3</sup> (the original root of the current Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan) and mentions the names of some state founders (Abu Naeem Isfahani, 1998, 131).</p> | <p>The founding culture</p>    |

Table 9. A case study of evidence; the dedication culture. Source: Authors.

| A case study of evidence  | Factor extracted from evidence |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <p>Mafrokhi refers to a person named Abu Mazr Rumi who has dedicated a door to the mosque (Mafrokhi, 2006, 90). Or a stone inscription states: “During the reign of Shah Tahmasb I, the second king of the Safavid dynasty, the servant Amir Aslan Ibn Rostam Sultanullah Afshar Ardloo built a river in Isfahan in adherence of the monarch of the world Sultan Ahmad Mirza, son of Shah Tahmasb. By which, he has conveyed water to Jāme’ Mosque of Isfahan, and dedicated it to the mosque in the name of God (Honarfard, 1972, 165). Or another inscription indicates the dedication of a trough: “The endowment of the oppressed Shah Hussein Ibn Ibn Ali, whoever drinks water, curses Ibn Ziad” (Honarfard, 1972, 161). Or other inscriptions refer to other types of dedication such as a house, heater oil, and more (Honarfard, 1972, 121).</p> | <p>The dedication culture</p>  |

not it, but not about Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan (Grabar, 2009, 51-52). This is the capacity for change that has kept Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan ready to accept new audiences and continue its survival.

## Conclusion

Cultural and social factors influencing the durability of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan can be classified into five main factors. The first influential factor in attendance's quality of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. "The need to preserve the use" and, simply put, keeping the audience, is a central reason for the historical interest in the preservation of living ancient monuments. Other cultural factors influence this cultural factor. Attendance means the cultural or physical potential of a historic monument, which leads to the continued presence of the user in the building. The first cultural factor in attendance is the set of patterns of various events that provide more presence in Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. This pattern of events goes beyond just praying, although the value of worship found in the mosque is itself a factor in the user's continued attendance. Other various functions include educational functions, organization of customs, the formation of political events, and the presence of various religious groups. Different political events and religious beliefs are reflected in the body of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan and inscriptions and influence the process of preservation and maintenance and the dynamism of the mosque's space. Another cultural factor enhancing the attendance of people in Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan is access to and the way of attending Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. Because the process of achieving and attending Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan is not defined by common transmission paths. Rather, it is a trajectory for the continuation of daily life. This is a unique quality that, from viewpoint of urban planning, is perceived as a sole coexistence and compromising with slavery and life. As a result, Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan, both in terms of its various uses and such a strong connection with the daily life of the people in the city, is itself a dynamic city and a living place and serving, and the focal point of the city and a place for daily activities.

People's participation is another cultural factor in the survival of the Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan, which is also

influenced by other cultural factors such as religious beliefs about the need for an active Muslim social role in society, people's sense of belonging to the mosque, and the innate desire for eternity by leaving a sign of himself/herself in the eternal Jāme' Atiq Mosque of Isfahan. This presence and participation, both physically (in the sense of carrying out restoration measures) and spiritually (in the sense of the presence of people in the mosque) have created durability in Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan.

The culture of founding and dedication is another influential cultural factor in the preservation and protection of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. These cultural factors have provided the material and physical necessities required for the restoration and protection of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan throughout history.

Variability and modernity are other cultural features of Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. By these features, the mosque has kept its audience satisfied by respecting their wishes and appetites in various historical periods, and their aesthetic tendency as a powerful cultural factor.

## Endnote

1. From this sentence, we can refer to the conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis and its effects on Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan. Ibn Battuta, an eighth-century Moroccan traveler, describes the conflicts between Shiites and Sunnis on the destruction of the city as follows: "Isfahan, a non-Arab city, is a large and beautiful city. But much of it is now indue to conflicts between the Sunnis and Shiites living in the city. These disputes are still going on, and the people of that city are continually firing conflicts and killing each other" (Ibn Battuta, 1982, 211).
2. Grabar states that in the north and south domes (inscriptions), there is evidence of competition and controversy between the two Seljuk ministers Taj al-Mulk and Nizam al-Mulk. Each of them tried to send a message to their audience and in response to the rival's message. It seems in the track of moral messages, one has condemned another for sin and the other has introduced himself as an innocent ascetic, indicating that Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan has not simply been an architectural and spatial place for praying, but it has given other applications (Grabar, 2009, 68-70).
3. Ibn Hawqal, Moghadasi, Nasir Khosrow, Mafrokhi, Ibn Athir, and Yaqut all describe the Jewish Grand Mosque, which has been replaced by the current Jāme' Mosque of Isfahan (Honarfard, 1971, 68).

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