

# A Study on the Topography of Isfahan in 1676

by Masashi HANEDA

This is an essay for the reconstruction of the topography and the society of a historic city, Isfahan in the later half of 17th century. Main sources of this study are the description of Isfahan by Chardin, famous French traveller, two useful studies on the architecture, the topography and the epigraphy of Isfahan by Iranian scholars (Honarfar and Mehrabadi), a precious researches on the bazar of Isfahan by Wirth and Gaube, and three kinds of maps (Coste, Seyyed Reḏaxān, Gaube). After fixing the place of city wall, each quarter of inner city and suburb, we analysed the character of urbanism of the Safavid monarchs. Main arguments are the following:

1. There were two cores of commerce and trade, that is the Old Meydān and the Meydān-e Šāh. The existence of the Maydān-e Šāh depended wholly on the Safavid king and his court, while the Old Meydān was always the center of various activities of the city.

2. Most of the houses of high-rank officers were in the south-western part of the city, that is, the new developing parts. These quarters were full of beautiful gardens.

3. The roads of these newly developed quarters ('Abbāsābād, for example) were made up not windingly but straightly. This will be certainly the counter-evidence of the city plan of so-called Islamic City.

4. A careful study on the builder and the time of construction of religious architecture shows that, even if during the period of the prosperity of the new quarters, Dardašt, oldest quarter and its

neighborhoods, were also in full activities. Almost all houses of native notable families in Isfahan were there. That is why the traditional quarters of Isfahan would survive after the fall of the Safavids, while the newly developed parts of the city declined rapidly.

5. Almost all the religious buildings were built by either eunuchs, ladies of the court, or merchants, artisans. Turkish tribal elites didn't invest their property in the construction of the religious institution. This is far different from the example of the Timurid amirs, shown by T. Allen.