Key Factors Influencing the Formation, Expansion, and Longevity of the *Waqf* System in Astan-i Quds Razavi

Abulfazl Hasanabadi[1]

Abstract

The history of *waqf* (endowment) in the Islamic world dates back to old times, and this noble tradition has had a significant impact on Islamic society from its inception. One of the most successful examples of the longevity and effectiveness of *waqf* institutions in both the Islamic world and globally is Astan-i Quds Razavi. This endowment institution, dedicated to Imam Reza (PBUH), boasts a long-standing historical presence in Iran and, throughout its flourishing existence, has exerted considerable political, social, and economic influence. This article begins with a brief definition of *waqf* and then examines the establishment of the *waqf* system within Astan-i Quds Razavi. It traces the institution's expansion and development over various historical periods, highlighting significant events and milestones. Finally, the study addresses the major impacts this endowment institution has had throughout its history. The research findings reveal that cultural endowments in Astan-i Quds Razavi began with the donation of Qur'anic manuscripts in the early centuries. From the tenth century onward, with the official establishment of Shi'ism in Iran and the growing significance of Mashhad as the spiritual capital of the Safavids, Astan-i Quds entered a phase of expansion and prosperity as an endowment institution. Its continued development was ensured by the direct administration of the highest ruling authorities throughout different historical periods, as well as the persistent devotion of Imam Reza's (PBUH) followers across centuries.

1. PhD in Local History and Researcher at the Foundation of Islamic Research of Astan-i Quds, Mashhad, Iran. (ahassanabady1@yahoo.com)

1. Introduction

Linguistically, the Arabic term *waqf* means to stand still, remain, or come to a halt. In Islamic jurisprudence, *waqf* refers to withholding property from transfer while dedicating its benefits to charitable causes (Dihkhuda 1998). More precisely, *waqf* is defined as *taḥbīs al-aṣl wa tasbīl al-thamara*, meaning that the principal asset is immobilized, preventing any form of sale or gift, while its generated benefits are distributed to the beneficiaries (Jabiri ʿArablou 1983, 181).

In *waqf*, an individual dedicates a portion or the entirety of their property during their lifetime for the sake of God, ensuring that the principal asset remains intact while its generated benefits are utilized (Mustafavi Rajaʾi 1972, 60). Considering the physical asset endowment, *waqf* is termed *ṣadaqa al-mawqūfa*; in light of the perpetual allocation of its benefits, it is called *ṣadaqa al-jāriya*; and considering its irrevocability, it is referred to as *ṣadaqa al-mutabwila* (Kabīsī 1985, 18).

If no specific duration is designated for the *waqf*, it remains a *waqf* indefinitely; however, if a fixed period is determined, it is classified as *ḥabs* (Shahabi 1964, 3).

Various discussions have emerged concerning the regulations, benefits, and principles governing *waqf*. While differences of opinion exist regarding its legal stipulations, there is unanimous agreement across diverse perspectives and scholarly opinions regarding its benefits. In terms of its beneficiaries, *waqf* is categorized into special *waqf* and general *waqf*. The latter applies to endowments for public causes such as mosques and mourning ceremonies, whereas the former pertains to *waqf* dedicated to one's progeny and descendants. In all cases, the conditions set forth by the endower must be adhered to (Shahabi 1964, 5).

The Astan-i Quds Razavi—considering the nature of its *waqf* and the way its revenues are allocated—falls under both general *waqf* and special *waqf*. It qualifies as general *waqf* due to its public utility for pilgrims and local residents, while it is deemed special *waqf* since it has been endowed with the specific intent of serving Imam Reza (PBUH) and is primarily dedicated to his associated expenditures.

A review of the existing research indicates that various books and articles have been written on the subject of Astan-i Quds. In terms of books, both general and case studies on its history have been conducted. Among the most significant works are: *The History of Astan-i Quds or the Devotional Court of Razavi* (Motamen 1969), *The Sun of Suns or the History of Astan-i Quds-i Raḍawī* (Kavianiyan 1976), *The History of Astan-i Quds* (two volumes) (Atarudi 1992).

Among these, *The Encyclopedia of Astan-i Quds* (Group of Authors, 2014–2020), a two-volume work comprising 826 articles, holds special significance. It covers broad

themes such as notable figures, honorary titles, subjects and professions, locations, manuscripts, museum relics, and organizational structures.

Additionally, *The History and Administration of Astan-i Quds-i Razavi during the Qājār Era* provides an in-depth analysis of the administrative history of the institution during the Qājār period while also offering a retrospective view of its earlier developments. This work examines fundamental topics such as the evolution of the administrative structure of Astan-i Quds and the impact of major political events in Khurasan on its governance during the Qājār era (Naqdi 2020).

Concerning journal articles, a substantial body of work has been published, particularly in the *Documents Office* (*Office of Records*) and later in the *Journal of Research on Documentary and Archival Studies*, a four-volume collection printed during the 2000s and 2010s by the *Astan-i Quds Center of Records*. Notable studies include *The Custodians of Astan-i Quds during the Safavid and Afsharid Periods* (Hasanabadi 2008b), *The Vice-Custodian at Astan-i Quds* (Souzanchi 2006), *The Service Regulations for the Night Duty at Astan-i Quds in 1928* (Husayni 2002), *The Social Status of the Endowers of Astan-i Quds Razavi Estates* (Nazarkardeh 2012).

The significance of this article lies in its comprehensive examination of the formation and expansion of Astan-i Quds as a *waqf* institution, aiming to introduce the key elements that have shaped its development.

2. The Formation of the Administrative Structure of Astan-i Quds

Due to the presence of the shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH), the holy city of Mashhad has always been a focal point for his devotees and admirers. His sacred mausoleum has served as a spiritual sanctuary and stronghold for Shiʿa Muslims, inspiring his followers to express their devotion through the noble tradition of *waqf*. Endowments to the Astan-i Quds are of two kinds:

1. *Waqf* of Books: The earliest documented instance of book endowment dates back to 939.[1]
2. *Waqf* of Land, Estates, and Real Property: Historical sources reference the endowment of land to the sacred shrine. In particular, the author of *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī* explicitly notes the donation of land by Ghazan Khan (Maḥmūd), the Ilkhanid ruler.[2] However, no official records remain to substantiate this claim. The oldest documented endowments of Astan-i Quds-i Razavi, with surviving Books of Endowment, date back to 1524 and were established by ʿAtīq ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad Malik Ṭūsī.[3]

Initially, the shrine's administration was minimal and managed by a small number of individuals known as *naqībs* (overseers).[4] These individuals were selected from among the ʿAlawīs and the *naqībs* of Ṭūs. In addition to their role as *naqībs*, they also held the responsibility of *klīddārī* (keyholding) of the shrine.[5]

It appears that the position of *naqāba* (overseer) was initially held by families of the Zaydī and later transitioned to Ḥusaynī Sayyids (*sādāt*). By the 11th–13th centuries CE, the Musawī Sayyids assumed control over the administration of the shrine. In the 15th century CE,[6] the custodianship and *naqāba* positions were jointly held by the Razavi and Musavi Sayyids, a structure that persisted into the Safavid era.[7]

The Safavid dynasty in Iran introduced unique characteristics not commonly observed in other ruling dynasties. One of their most defining features was the establishment of a centralized religious authority based on Twelver Shiʿism to advance their objectives. The Safavids had a long-standing familiarity with *waqf* and were deeply committed to its organization. Consequently, the systematic administration of endowments flourished under their rule, and the Safavid monarchs actively promoted the expansion of *waqf*. Among them, Shah ʿAbbas was recognized as one of the most significant benefactors, endowing vast tracts of land to Astan-i Quds.

According to historical records and extant documents, the official administration and supervision of the shrine began between 1501 and 1555, when Shah Ṭahmasip appointed the first officially recognized custodian for Astan-i Quds, which can be grouped into two:

1. **The Spiritual Aspect of Administering the *Ḥaram***: This included the position of keyholder and supervision of the sacred premises, which were held by the *naqībs*.
2. **The Material Aspect of Managing the *Ḥaram* Properties**: During this period, the administration of *waqf* properties was under the jurisdiction of the Ṣadrs[8] and ministers appointed by the Safavid kings. These officials were deeply involved in all matters related to land, taxation, administrative affairs, and *waqf* management. Their extensive authority sometimes led to conflicts with local governors.

The gradual expansion of *waqf* properties during the Safavid period contributed to the formation of the earliest administrative structures within the *ḥaram* complex. A significant shift occurred when the custodian of Astan-i Quds was appointed directly by the Safavid kings, who also exercised direct oversight. The explicit stipulations in *waqf* deeds, which designated the Safavid king as the custodian and prohibited the

Ṣadrs from interfering in *waqf* affairs, laid the foundation for a unique form of internal power and autonomy that has been maintained to the present day.
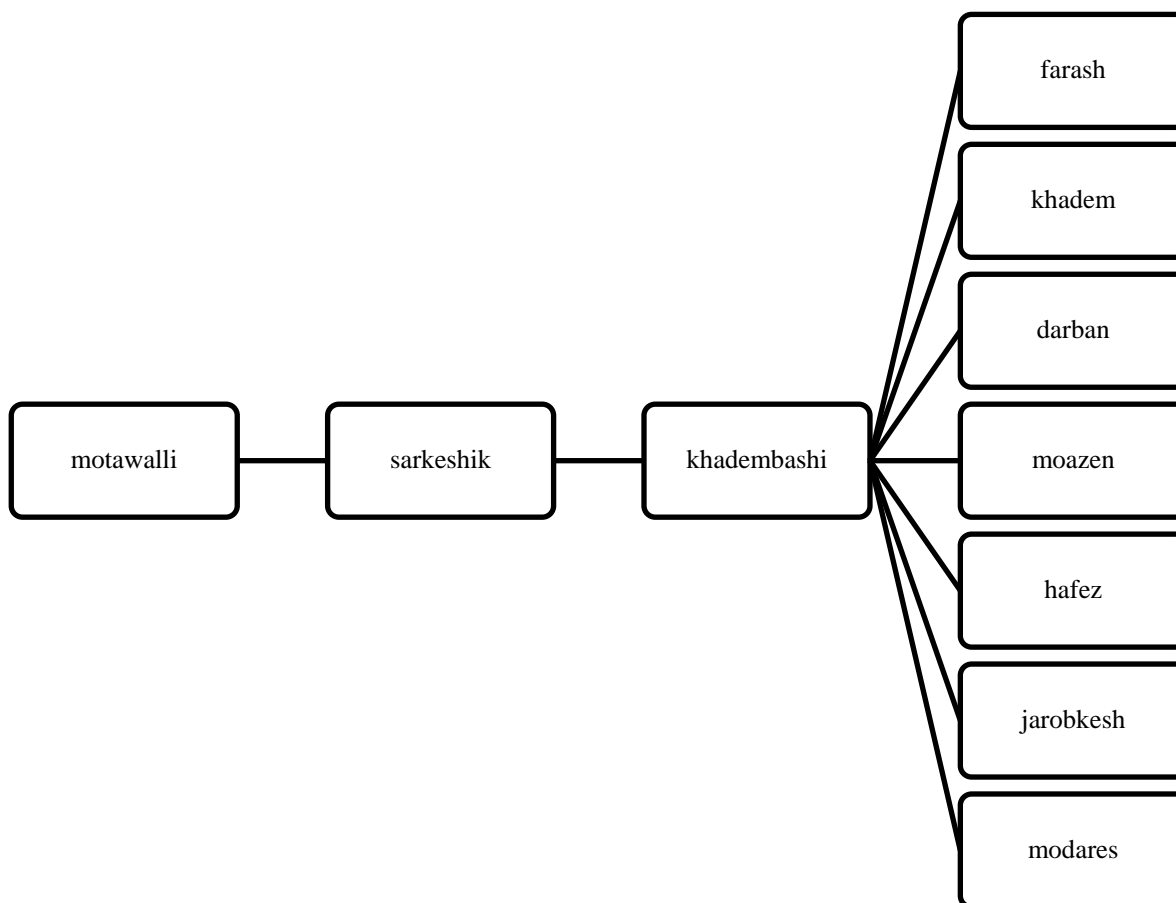
Document No. 1: Organizational Chart of the Administrative Structure of Astan Quds during the Safavid Era (hassanabadi ,2003: 36)

A new phase in the expansion and systemization of *waqf* lands, along with the administrative structure of Astan-i Quds, can be traced back to the reign of Shah Abbas I. After the conquest of Mashhad in 1598 and the establishment of relative stability, the *ḥaram* complex received significant attention (Munajim 1987, 271), leading to numerous *waqf* endowments. Records indicate that 73 Books of Endowment were established during the Safavid era (Tala'ī 2018, 132). The Astan-i Quds archive, which contains 69,000 pages of documents from the Safavid period,

illustrates the systematic growth of administrative structures from this time onward. This development continued until the late Safavid era.

The management of the sacred sites initially relied on three supervisory shifts, which later expanded to five. Additionally, a structured financial and administrative system, modeled after the central Safavid court, was implemented. This foundational system was preserved and gradually expanded over different periods.

From the late Safavid period (1721) until the rise of Nadir Shah and his subsequent assassination (1747), Astan-i Quds experienced a phase of relative instability. However, due to its *waqf* nature and religious significance, it remained more stable compared to the country's broader political turmoil. The claim that Nadir Shah entirely disregarded *waqf* matters has been somewhat exaggerated (Sifatgul 2000, 255–277).

The early Qajar era (1795) witnessed a decline in central authority in Khurasan due to Turkmen incursions, leading to a period of stagnation in Astan-i Quds until Mīrzā Mūsī Khān assumed custodianship in 1833. Little historical information is available about this phase. However, from 1833 until the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, Astan-i Quds experienced significant expansion in both its sacred sites and administrative framework. Influential custodians such as Mushīr al-Dawla, Sepahsālār, and Mīrzā Saʿīd Khān Anṣārī were appointed from the capital to oversee extensive infrastructural improvements. In 1920, the first official regulation for sacred sites was drafted by Rukn al-Dawla, the custodian of Astan-i Quds (Rukn al-Dawla, Document No. 20703).

The Constitutional Revolution and its aftermath directly affected Astan-i Quds during the late Qajar period (1906–1925). Due to their religious affiliations, many of its leaders opposed the constitutionalists, particularly regarding the latter's insistence on governmental oversight of Astan-i Quds. This persistent struggle led to a prolonged period of instability, during which mismanagement and the incompetence of some officials even resulted in the institution falling into debt (Adib Harawi, *n.d.*, 190; Ilahi 1999, 376–394).

One of the most significant events of this period was the Russian shelling of the sacred shrine in 1912, which desecrated the *ḥaram*.[9] Another major event was the rebellion of Muḥammad Taqī Khān Pisyān, which reflected broader efforts to establish greater external oversight over Astan-i Quds. These developments led to the formation of a Reform Commission, laying the groundwork for substantial administrative changes in the following years.

Despite these challenges, the Qajar period witnessed substantial *waqf* endowments to the shrine, and its administrative structure expanded significantly. This growth was closely linked to the increasing formalization of governmental institutions during the Qajar era, evident in the proliferation of titles and positions within both the Qajar court and the administrative hierarchy of Astan-i Quds.

The first Pahlavi reign (1925–1941) marked a period of fundamental transformations in Astan-i Quds. From 1926 onward, major reforms were implemented in its administrative system, affecting both its bureaucratic structure and sacred sites. Many departments were renamed or restructured, and the supervisory shifts of shrine servants were reorganized (Kavianiyan 1976, 373). Additionally, a new administrative charter was drafted to align with contemporary needs (Husayni 2002, 11–29).

During this period, Astan-i Quds embraced elements of modernization, including the establishment of the textile factory, an electricity plant, and the Shah Reza Hospital—initiatives in which Asadi[10] played a pivotal role. However, one of the most significant and tragic events of this era was the Goharshad Mosque incident, where a violent crackdown led to the killing of protestors in the ṣaḥn (courtyard) of Goharshad Mosque.

During the second Pahlavi period (1941–1979), the administrative framework established during Asadi's tenure was expanded, and new offices were added as needed. The sacred precinct also gradually grew, as demolitions in the surrounding area increased the shrine's spatial footprint. Additionally, Astan-i Quds intensified its economic activities, establishing industries such as sugar refineries and food production enterprises.

Following the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Astan-i Quds entered a new phase of expansion, strategically utilizing its vast resources to enhance its cultural, religious, and social influence. It played an active role during the Iran-Iraq War, particularly in rebuilding Hoveyza and providing logistical support.

One of the features of this period was the broad-based growth of Astan-i Quds' administrative structure, particularly in the cultural sector, largely due to the vision of its custodian, Ayatollah Ṭabasī. His leadership had a profound impact on Khurasan's cultural and religious landscape. Since the revolution, Astan-i Quds has experienced substantial advancements in cultural and economic sectors, with statistical reports indicating significant growth across multiple domains.

3. The Significance of Astan-i Quds

3-1. Religious Significance

The shrine of Imam Riza (PBUH) holds a unique status as the only tomb of a Shi'i Imam in Iran, and it has been revered since its inception—even by Sunni-ruled dynasties. This religious significance became even more pronounced under the Safavids.

From historical times to the present, millions of pilgrims have traveled annually to Mashhad, profoundly influencing the city and the entire Khurasan region, leading to the development of numerous institutions and service centers catering to visitors. Within Astan-i Quds' administrative structure, specific departments are dedicated to addressing the religious needs of both pilgrims and local residents, extending their influence globally. Among the numerous *waqf* endowments of Astan-i Quds, a substantial portion is dedicated to religious activities, including mourning ceremonies, religious festivals, and Islamic seminaries. This deep involvement in religious affairs has made Astan-i Quds an active participant in these matters, shaping the religious landscape of Mashhad and beyond.

The sacred shrine of the Eighth Imam serves as a significant religious and ideological stronghold, exerting a profound spiritual influence on Shi'a Muslims and even Sunnis in Iran. It plays a crucial role in shaping religious thought through the support of past religious schools and,[11] in the present era, seminaries, as well as by attracting Shi'a intellectuals. Since its establishment, the Seminary of Mashhad has been regarded as one of the foremost centers of scholarly and intellectual activity within the Shi'a world.

3-2. Political Significance

Since the establishment of the administrative organization of Astan-i Quds during the Safavid era, its status as an influential institution in the region of Khurasan and even Central Asia has garnered the attention of the ruling authorities. However, the extent of its influence has varied across different periods. Due to Khurasan's geographical remoteness from the central government during the Safavid era, Astan-i Quds was considered a political decision-making institution. It was even responsible for paying the salaries of state gunmen stationed at border regions such as Herat (Mahbub 2006, 187–223).

Document No. 2: A sample of a pilgrimage voucher seal from Astan-i Quds during the Safavid period.

A critical aspect of this influence concerns the role of monarchs and their deputies as custodians of the shrine. From the Safavid period onward, Iranian monarchs assumed the position of custodians of Astan-i Quds, viewing their intervention in its affairs as their rightful prerogative. However, due to their distance from Mashhad or their governmental responsibilities, they appointed deputies to manage Astan-i Quds, who were formally referred to as *mutawallī* (custodian). The custodians of Astan-i Quds, whose status fluctuated under different governments, wielded substantial power due to their direct ties with the ruling authorities. Nonetheless, those appointed as the shrine custodians in Mashhad primarily served as the monarch's deputy, and their authority was limited both by the king's approval and the stipulations of the endowment's benefactors regarding the custodian's powers. These powers were contingent upon the strength of the central government, with an inverse relationship between the two: when the central authority was strong and exercised greater supervision over Mashhad, custodians remained under stricter control. Conversely, when central power weakened—particularly given Khurasan's distance from the capital—the custodians' influence grew due to their access to both material and spiritual power.

A notable phenomenon is that, in some cases, the custodian held both significant political and religious authority. This dual influence, coupled with the substantial financial and institutional backing of Astan-i Quds, often elevated its position above even that of the central government's representatives. In instances where there was no alignment between the two, tensions occasionally arose. Consequently, from the Qajar era to the end of the Pahlavi regime, figures emerged who simultaneously held the positions of both governor and custodian of Astan-i Quds, jointly managing affairs.

Overall, the custodian, as the head of Astan-i Quds and the direct deputy of the king—and, following the Islamic Revolution, the representative of the *walī-yi faqīh*—engaged in various interactions with governmental and religious representatives in the region. These factors, along with Khurasan's strategic importance in the eastern part of the country—particularly concerning Afghanistan and Central Asia—have endowed Astan-i Quds with a significant political, social, and military standing.

3-3. Social Significance

One of the most crucial aspects of Astan-i Quds's importance lies in its role within social history and anthropology. Understanding social classes, jobs, and occupations of a given period, religious beliefs and ideological currents, social and religious groups, the role of women in society, challenges faced by different social strata—such as

famine and drought—living conditions, dietary habits, clothing, and administrative development all contribute to a broader understanding of social evolution across various historical periods. Due to the large number of endowments and the inherently social nature of their expenditures, Astan-i Quds has historically maintained close connections with different social classes.

The administrative structure of Astan-i Quds can be examined in two distinct sections:

1. Administration of the Sacred Precincts. This structure was originally established to manage the affairs of the shrine. During the Safavid era, it initially operated with three duty shifts, later expanding to five shifts, and continued with minor modifications until the end of the Qajar period. Within these shifts, positions such as *sarkeshīk* (chief shift officer), *khādim-bāshī* (chief servant), *khādim* (servant), *farāsh* (attendant), *darbān* (gatekeeper), and *kafshbān* (shoe caretaker) were assigned specific duties under a formal set of regulations. Until the end of the Qajar period—before administrative reforms in Astan-i Quds—the shift structure formed the core of its administrative organization. From the Pahlavi era onward, this department became one of the key components of Astan-i Quds's administration. However, in contemporary times, significant changes have been introduced to the management structure of the sacred precincts.

2. Astan-i Quds's administrative structure was initially established to oversee endowment affairs and organize *waqf* properties. Over time, the administrative framework also grew as the number of endowments expanded. During the Qajar period, these responsibilities were managed under Dār al-Tawliya. However, from the Pahlavi era onward, a central organization was formed to oversee the institution's diverse subdivisions.

Today, this large endowment-based institution employs over 10,000 official staff members in Mashhad and various other regions of Iran. Thousands of seasonal workers also collaborate with it, contributing to its extensive operations.

The examination of various surviving documents from this religious endowment institution reveals its substantial significance in terms of bureaucratic literature, official correspondence, and social stratification. The titles and honorary designations used in these records reflect a distinctive administrative style, shedding light on the development and expansion of bureaucratic structures, official correspondence formats, document letterheads, writing conventions, numerical record-keeping methods, and financial accounting systems—many of which are not found in other archival sources. Some specialized terms related to financial records, decrees, royal

orders, revenue registers, and economic terminologies are unique to the documents of this institution, underscoring its administrative importance.

A noteworthy aspect of Astan-i Quds's 500-year-old administrative history is the process of its formation and gradual expansion. Across different historical periods—whether in the Safavid era or later—it has served as a representative model of the bureaucratic system of its time. This is particularly significant because, until the late Qajar period, when archival systems began to take shape in Iran, no other organization in the country had such systematically preserved records. The comparison of Astan-i Quds's archives with other historical documents confirms the authenticity and continuity of this administrative evolution.

Due to this institution's endowment-based nature and the necessity of adhering to benefactors' original intentions, many of the establishments formed within Astan-i Quds have not been abolished over time. Instead, they have undergone transformations and adaptations while preserving their core functions. Examples of such institutions include the former Dār al-Shifā and today's Razavi Hospital; the old Karkarāqkhāna and today's textile factory; and the old Zawārī Factory and today's Ḥaḍratī Guesthouse.

3-4. Cultural Significance

The initial establishment of Astan-i Quds's endowments was primarily centered around the endowment of books, and numerous *waqf* properties have been dedicated to cultural expenditures. This has led Astan-i Quds to emphasize cultural affairs significantly, particularly following the Islamic Revolution. Today, numerous cultural institutions operate within this grand organization, including the Central Library of Astan-i Quds, along with over forty affiliated libraries; the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences; Imam Reza University; the Islamic Research Foundation; and the Razavi Cultural Foundation, which oversees boarding schools. Additionally, the Artistic Creations Institute is another cultural entity within Astan-i Quds.

3-5. Economic Significance

From its inception, the economic institutions of Astan-i Quds were established to fulfill the intentions of benefactors. Historical records indicate that various buyūtāt (departments) existed within Astan-i Quds, such as the Sharbatkhāna (refreshment house), Karkarāqkhāna, and Shamā'ī Khāna (candle house). Over time, these facilities expanded during different historical periods.

A particularly important aspect is that Astan-i Quds played a pioneering role in establishing modern industries in Mashhad and even across Iran. It was at the

forefront of developing factories for spinning, sugar production, electricity, food industries, and the livestock sector, among other things. Today, Astan-i Quds oversees more than one hundred economic enterprises operating in diverse sectors.

3-6. Scientific Significance

The presence of Imam Reza (PBUH), revered as the *ʿālim āl Muḥammad* (Scholar of the Family of the Prophet), provided an ideal setting in Mashhad for the development and expansion of seminaries and academic institutions. This phenomenon has continuously evolved in response to historical needs and circumstances. Before Astan-i Quds was established as a religious endowment institution, most scholarly and research activities were conducted in non-formal educational settings within religious schools around the shrine.

The renowned Imāmī jurist and muhadith of the fourth century AH, Ibn Bābawya, delivered five of his hadith transmission sessions in Mashhad. Similarly, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan Ṭūsī (d. 1067), famously known as Shaykh Ṭūsī, spent his early years in Ṭūs and Mashhad, where he is believed to have benefited from the presence of local scholars. Moreover, Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Rustam, a prominent Shiʿa jurist and theologian of the 11th and 12th centuries CE (d. 1131), resided in Mashhad for a significant period. Additionally, Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Shūhānī, a student of Abū ʿAlī Ṭūsī, also spent years in Mashhad (Ibn Isfandiyar 1941, 130).

With the official recognition of Shiʿism and the transformation of Astan-i Quds into a powerful religious institution, systematic policies were gradually adopted to support scholars and academics. One of the most significant manifestations of direct support from Astan-i Quds for scientific and research activities was the establishment of the teaching position within the institution. From the Safavid period until the end of the Qajar era, a hereditary teaching position existed within Astan-i Quds, allowing scholars and intellectuals to hold formal academic roles.

Following the capture of Mashhad in 1598, Muḥammad Jaʿfar Razavī was appointed as the first official teacher at Astan-i Quds. His sons, Mīr Muḥammad Saʿīd Razavī and Muḥammad Zamān Razavī, later became notable scholars in Mashhad. Other influential scholars associated with shrine-based academic circles and the Gawharshād Mosque include Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh Razavī, Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan Razavī, Muḥammad ʿAlī Razavī (a student of shaykh Anṣārī), and Muḥammad Bāqir Razavī, author of *Shajarah-yi Ṭayiba* (Hasanabadi 2008a, 176–181).

In the modern era, Astan-i Quds has undertaken serious initiatives to promote and expand scientific endeavors in line with contemporary needs. Examples of this

transformation include: The Mīrzā Jaʿfar School being converted into the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences; Madrasah-yi Razavīya evolving into the Razavi Cultural Foundation; the establishment of additional academic institutions, such as Imam Reza University and the Islamic Research Foundation

These developments reflect the institution's continued commitment to intellectual and scientific growth across different historical periods.

Imam Rezā (PBUH)			
Imam Javād (PBUH			
Abū Jaʿfar Mūsā al-Mubarraqʿ			
Abū al-Makārim Aḥmad b. Mūsā			
Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Aʿraj			
Abū ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad Naqīb			
Abū al-Ḥasan Mūsā Naqīb			
Sayyid Muḥammad			
Āqā Sayyid ʿAlī			
Sayyid Jaʿfar			
Sayyid Abū Muḥammad			
Mīr ʿĪsī			
Mīr Abū al-Futūḥ			
Mīr ʿAlī			
Mīr Ḥusayn			
Mīr Yār			
Mīr Maḥmūd			
Mīr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad			
Mīr Ghiyāth al-Dīn ʿAzīz			
Mīr Muḥammad			
Mīrzā Abū Ṭālib			
Mīrzā Muḥammad Badīʿ			
Mīrzā Ghiyāth al-Dīn			
Sayyid Muḥammad Taqī Razavī			
Mīrzā ʿAbd Allāh			
Mīrzā Ḥabīb Allāh			
Mīrzā Ḥusayn (Quds)		Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim	
Muḥammad Razavī Mujtahid		Sayyid Ṣādiq Mudarris	
Mīrzā Abū al-Ḥasan	Mīrzā Aḥmad	Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Mudarris	Mīrzā Ismāʿīl
Mīrzā Shāh Taqī	Mīrzā Ḥusayn		Muḥammad Bāqir Razavī

Document No. 4: The Genealogy of Official Teachers of Astan-i Quds from the Safavid to the Qajar Period (Source: Hasanabadi 2008a, 181).

3-7. Hereditary Service

The sacred shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH) can be regarded as the world's biggest historical center of family-based service, where multiple generations of various families have proudly served across different roles. Employment within the shrine has played a crucial role in shaping sub-identities within its institutional structure.

A historical review indicates that until the late Qajar period, most prominent families, as well as many ordinary residents of Mashhad, were connected in some way to the shrine's administration. Employment at Astan-i Quds generally consisted of two categories: Service shifts within the shrine and administrative positions.

These positions were hereditary, typically passed from father to son. While no strict eligibility criteria were in place, an individual had to demonstrate general competence and moral integrity. The process of appointment usually involved: A formal request from the candidate to the monarch, the issuance of a royal decree, and final confirmation by the shrine's custodian. After a father's passing, the eldest son would inherit the position, though in some cases, it could be transferred to other family members, such as a nephew (Hasanabadi 2018, 168–179).

This hereditary employment tradition lasted for over three centuries, leaving an extensive record of family lineages in Mashhad's documented history. The preserved archival records of Astan-i Quds provide invaluable insights into this legacy, illustrating how numerous dynastic families maintained their affiliation with the shrine across multiple generations.

4. Conclusion

Astan-i Quds serves as a remarkable example of how *waqf* institutions function across various religious, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions in the Islamic world. Due to its affiliation with Imam Reza (PBUH), it has always been a focal point of devotion and has played a pivotal role in harnessing the diverse capacities of *waqf* to establish itself as a key historical entity in Mashhad, Khurasan, and even Iran.

This influence stems from two primary factors: its continuous interaction with political powers throughout history, and its enduring institutional nature.

The lasting nature of *waqf*, which emphasizes adaptability in response to changing conditions, has enabled Astan-i Quds to evolve and expand over several centuries. While preserving its foundational endowment-based structure, it has successfully adapted to new functional demands based on the requirements of different historical periods. This ability to balance continuity and transformation has been instrumental in its sustained growth and relevance over time.

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Notes

1 The oldest Book of Endowment is a handwritten Qurʾān, cataloged under numbers 30315–30313, which was endowed by Kushwād ibn Amlās. It was transcribed in Isfahan during the rule of Amīr Naṣr ibn Aḥmad Sāmānī and later dedicated as a *waqf* to Astan-i Quds. For further details, see Fazel Hashimi (2004, 5).

2 Ghāzān Khān endowed *Farhādjard*, *Farhādān*, and *Mukhālif Sarāy*. Today, *Farhādjard* remains listed among the endowments of Astan-i Quds and is considered one of its significant *waqfs*. For further details, see Khafi (1960, 134).

The endowments of the Astan-i Quds can be grouped as follows:

1. **Absolute Endowment:** These endowments are under the control of Astan-i Quds, but their Book of Endowment has been lost, making their administration and purpose unclear. Due to the absence of documentation, they are classified as *muṭlaqa* (absolute, unspecified), and the custodian (*mutawallī*) of Astan-i Quds has the discretion to determine their allocation.
2. **Restricted Endowments (*Mawqūfāt-i Mukhtaṣar*):** The custodianship of these endowments is assigned to the ruling monarch of the time or a prominent religious authority.
3. **Specified-Administration Endowments (*Manṣūṣ al-Tawliya*):** Although the revenues from these endowments are designated for Astan-i Quds, their custodianship remains with the descendants of the original donor.

3 The *waqf* of ʿAtīq ʿAlī Munshī, established in 1524, is among the largest endowments of Astan-i Quds. It comprises various properties, including Kinh-Bīst, the Sangūr farm, the Kārīz-i Pāyīn farm, the Shāh-Ṭughāy farm, seven and a half shares of the Akhlamad irrigation channel, shares of *Astana* in the Radkān village, five out of fourteen shares of the Kāhū farm, the entirety of the Chāh-Khāṣṣa farm, the entirety of the Manzil-Ābād farm, four out of seventeen shares of the Chāh-Naw farm, the Āghcha (Ḥaḍratī) bathhouse, and the Kalūkh watermill located in Ṭuruq.

4 The position of *naqābat* (chiefship) emerged during the reign of al-Mustaʿīn, the Abbasid caliph. The first individual to hold this title was Ḥusayn ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Dhī al-Damqa ibn Zayd, who, in the year 865, requested al-Mustaʿīn to appoint a *naqīb* for the ʿAlawīs. The primary reason for establishing the *naqābat* among the ʿAlawīs was the increasing number of the descendants of Imam ʿAlī (PBUH). The Abbasid caliphs introduced this position as a means to appease the ʿAlawīs.

The *naqābat* was a highly esteemed position in scholarly and administrative terms, as its legitimacy was established through a decree issued by the caliph. The responsibilities of the *naqīb* included:
1. Preserving the genealogy of the family,
2. Registering the names of offspring,
3. Preventing family members from committing sins, and
4. Supervising the marriages of the women and daughters of the family.

5 In the early centuries, the *ḥaram* (sanctuary) consisted solely of the mausoleum itself, and its caretaker, known as the keyholder (*klīddār*), was responsible for opening its doors at designated times during the day and locking them at night. With the establishment of a structured administrative system during the Safavid era, the position of keyholder evolved into an official post within the Astan-i Quds hierarchy. This role remained significant among prominent families until the Pahlavi period and, during the Qajar era, was held by the Shahīdī family.

6 Abū al-Fatḥ Nāṣir ibn Zayd, Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Zayd ibn ʿAdnān, and Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad Abū al-Futūḥ were members of the Zaydī family who held the title of *naqīb* in Mashhad. Following the Zaydīs, the *naqābat* of the Sayyids (descendants of the Prophet, PBUH) was assumed by the Ḥusaynī *Sayyids*, who were descendants of Tāj al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl and Ḥasan al-Afṭaḥ. Among them were notable figures such as Muḥammad Sharīf al-Shahīd, Sayyid Fakhr al-Dīn ʿAlī ibn Murtaḍā, Sayyid Muṭahhar ibn ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad al-Shahīd, and Sayyid ʿIzz al-Dīn Yaḥyā ibn Abū al-Faḍl.

7 The presence of the Mūsawī Sayyids in Mashhad and their involvement in the *ḥaram* dates back to the 5th and 6th centuries AH. This is evidenced by their names inscribed on the *Sultan Sanjari* tile inscription (1118) and the *Khwarazmshahi* water basin. By the 7th century, the Mūsawī Sayyids successfully acquired the position of *naqābat* in Mashhad. One of the earliest *naqībs* from this lineage was al-Sayyid Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Aʿrābī ibn Abū al-Qāsim Ḥamza ibn Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim.

In the 9th century, two groups of Razavi Sayyids migrated to Mashhad. The first was Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Razavi, who moved from Qom to Mashhad and engaged in teaching. His son, Ghayāth

al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAzīz, was among the *naqābs* and respected Sayyids of the city. The second figure was Raḍī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī, who arrived in Mashhad during the reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn Bāyqarā and also took up teaching. His son, Mīrzā Muḥsin Razavi, was regarded as one of the city's prominent scholars and dignitaries. After the arrival of these Sayyids, the position of *naqābat* became divided between these two branches and continued in this manner until the Safavid period.

8 The historical origins of the position of Ṣadr trace back to the pre-Safavid era. However, its primary function during the early Safavid period was both military and religious, whereas, by the late Safavid period, it had become primarily religious. Some of the major responsibilities of the Ṣadr included overseeing the affairs of the Sayyids, scholars, and endowments and supervising *waqf* properties, particularly those managed by the *Sayyids*. It appears that, especially during the mid-to-late Safavid period, the Ṣadr also assumed the responsibilities traditionally held by the *naqīb*. Consequently, the role of the *naqīb* evolved into something distinct from its pre-Safavid function.

In 1515, the first individual in Khurasan was appointed to the office of Ṣadr. His authority extended to Herat, and his judicial jurisdiction as a religious figure covered a vast region from the borders of ʿIraq-i ʿAjam and Azerbaijan to the farthest reaches of Ṭukharistan.

9 As an example, Muḥammad ʿAli Razavi did not receive any salary from Astan-i Quds during his tenure as custodian and personally paid off 100,000 Tomans and 1,000 Kharvār of grain to settle the shrine's debts. For more details, see Vala'i (1965, 99–120).

10 Muḥammad-Valī Asadī (1878-1935) was known by the titles *Miṣbāḥ-i Dīwān* and later *Miṣbāḥ al-Salṭana*. He served as the Deputy Custodian of the Astan-i Quds-i Razavi during the reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi between the years 1931–1935.

11 A notable example of a religious school is the Mirza Jaʿfar School, which underwent a transformation following the victory of the Islamic Revolution and was converted into the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences.