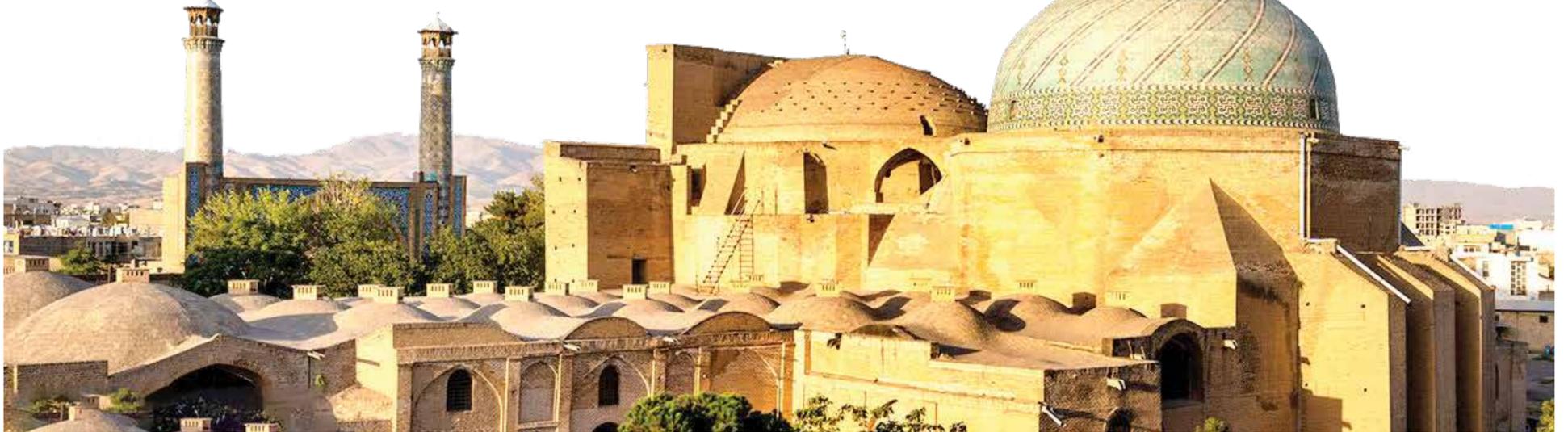


Grand Mosque of Qazvin in need of restoration



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The city of Qazvin, the capital of Qazvin Province, known as the heaven of historical treasures, has a majestic 1000-year-old mosque, adorned with a mesmerizing turquoise dome. This architectural marvel stands as a symbol of the city's rich heritage, unwavering faith, deep appreciation for art, and the love of its people.

The Atiq Grand Mosque, also known as the Grand Mosque of Qazvin, holds the esteemed title of being one of Iran's largest and most ancient grand mosques. This magnificent building is recognized as Iran's largest four-*ivan* mosque, showcasing architectural marvels from different eras throughout history.

The original structure of the ancient mosque was built on a fire temple, dating back to the Sassanid era. Currently, the majority of the fire temple remains can be found within the southern section of the monument.

This magnificent mosque was built upon the order of Harun al-Rashid, the fifth Abbasid caliph, in 808 CE. Sadly, during the devastat-

ing Mongol invasion of Qazvin, a significant portion of the mosque, including its splendid southern *ivan* (portico), was razed to the ground. However, in the following years, dedicated efforts led to its restoration and reconstruction, ensuring that its glory and significance endure.

As tourists step into the grand courtyard of the Atiq Mosque, they are instantly mesmerized by the breathtaking magnificence of this historical treasure. Spanning over 4,000 square meters, this mosque proudly displays the pinnacle of Islamic and traditional architecture. Its awe-inspiring dome, adorned with exquisite tilework, and the elegant minarets that grace its surroundings, truly embody the essence of grandeur and cultural heritage.

In order to preserve and restore the deteriorated dome of this magnificent mosque, various sections, including the dome chamber and courtyards, have been equipped with scaffoldings for the past 50 years. However, these restoration efforts have been delayed and the presence of scaffoldings has hindered the use of some

parts of the mosque's sacred space. Director General of Qazvin Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Alireza Khazaeli said, "The installation of the scaffoldings during the initial phase is intended to ensure the preservation and conservation of the mosque's dome. However, the repairs have not yet been completed."

"Based on the contract between Qazvin University Jihad and our team, highly qualified young experts specializing in conservation and structural engineering are working together to carefully remove the scaffoldings of the mosque. Their expertise ensures the preservation and maintenance of this historical site, symbolizing our dedication to safeguarding our cultural heritage," he said.

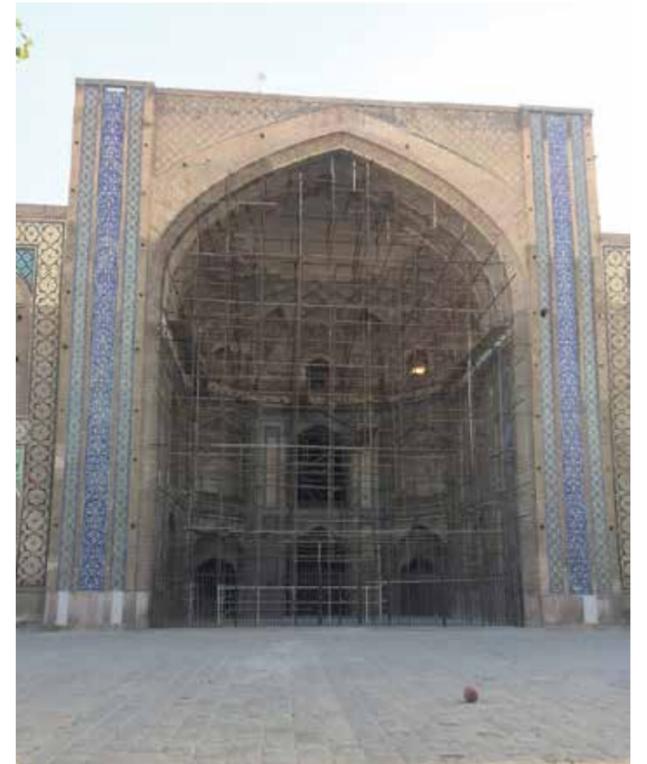
Conducted studies show that there are some weaknesses in the structure of the ancient dome of the mosque. However, the consultant has come up with recommendations to rectify these weaknesses.

Ali Delzendeh, the manager of the project for restoring and rein-

forcing the dome of the mosque, emphasized the historical significance of the monument, making it one of the most crucial projects in the entire province. It is imperative that this building, along with other historical structures throughout Iran, be preserved by the expertise of Iranian engineers and experts. Experience demonstrates that placing trust in Iranian experts ensures the success of restoration projects.

He noted that in the late 1940s, an Italian team, based on their experience in diagnosing damages to Western structures and even Iranian buildings, studied and examined solutions for the restoration of the Grand Mosque of Qazvin. As a result, they installed scaffolding in the mosque.

"The related studies were done in three stages. The first and second stages were carried out with planning and presenting questions, then examining them and providing the results and solutions. In the third stage, the proposed solution is reviewed and re-evaluated to ensure the main restoration and repair of the building is done with complete confidence."



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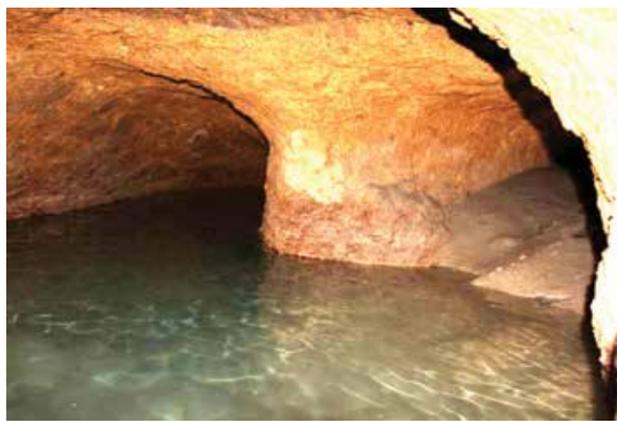
Hamedan, a tale of ancient origins and qanat legacy

Many historical records highlight Hamedan as one of the oldest cities that Persians have ever founded. The fame of Hamedan is mostly indebted to Medes tribes who came together to form the Median Kingdom in the eighth century BCE. Hamedan that was called Ecbatana at the time retained its importance as a summer residence under the Achaemenid Persian kings. Nevertheless, Hamedan's history goes back to as early as stone and copper ages, between 6,000 and 3,100 BCE. During Bronze Age (3100-1500 BCE), Hamedan enjoyed an urban development to which the archaeological site of Pisa northwest of the present-day Hamedan bears witness. The archeological excavations in Pisa revealed a variety of evidences related to the Bronze Age, and the upper layers were awash with Parthian objects. Although Hamedan precedes all known historical empires, the oldest written mention of Hamedan has been discovered in the inscription of Nabonidus who was the last

king of the Babylonian Empire between 556 and 539 BCE.

The next mention of Hamedan has been found in the Bisotoun inscription where Darius the Great describes his victory in 520 BCE suppressing a Median rebellion in

Ecbatana as the rebels' headquarters. The Greek historian Herodotus (484-425 BCE) provides us with valuable information about Hamedan and its development by Deioces as the Medes' capital. Polybius another Greek historian (208-125 BCE) provides more detail about Hamedan that had risen to fame for horse breeding and grain production. Ctesias the Greek physician and historian who served at the court of Persian kings from 416 to 398 BCE ascribes the foundation of Hamedan to the legendary Assyrian queen Semiramis as follows: "When Semiramis arrived in the region of Hamedan, on a flat plain she built a palace more gorgeous than any other palaces she had ever erected. She ordered that a long canal be



An old qanat in Qasemabad village of Hamedan
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dug from Alvand Mountain to Hamedan to supply water". Ctesias's account shows that even in ancient times the prosperity of Hamedan plain was contingent on the water that had to be transferred from Alvand elevations. What Ctesias says about digging a long canal may be an allusion to the tradition of qanat construction that had long been common in the region. We

cannot claim that Ctesias actually means qanat by mentioning such water transfer structures, until we look into the original text to see what word has been translated into "canal". What we can take for granted is the fact that qanats and their irrigation network have always played a crucial role in Hamedan's agricultural production systems. For example, in Ecbatana the

archeological excavations unearthed a network of water canals meandering along the streets of an urban fabric that dates back to the Parthian and Sassanian periods. The remains of those canals are expressive of the important status of water supply systems in the city's socio-economic.

After the invasion of Arabs, Hamedan retained its political and economic status. Although Hamedan remained as an economic hub, its population started to dwindle. Since mid-ninth century, the people who were the descendants of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) migrated to Hamedan in droves until they took control of the city. Their reign lasted for four centuries. In 891 CE, Hamedan has been described as a huge city that afforded to pay an annual tax of six million dirhams, which is a tremendous amount of money that was collected from the farmers and traders. From 931 CE onward, Hamedan was repeatedly invaded. The invaders demolished the city's walls and fortification to make its in-

habitants surrender. At the time, there were two stone lion statues that were gorgeously built on the city's main gate, but both were smashed to pieces by the invaders. Many geographers and travelers who visited Hamedan in tenth century described it as a huge city, which enjoyed a city wall, fortification, watch towers, four iron gates, adobe houses, springs, water ditches and beautiful gardens.

The historical records leave no doubt that Hamedan has always enjoyed plenty of qanats and springs and its urban organization was under the influence of water resources and their geographical distribution. In Hamedan, over the course of history, geometrical formation of urban fabric has been affected by six factors: Food supply, access to greenery, social bonds, security, livelihood and eventually water supply, especially qanats. In Hamedan, qanat could have changed the city's cultural landscape and created a different human ecology, which has defied the natural limitations.