



Heritage of Islamic Civilization in Persia Era of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629 CE)

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Article Info

Article History

Submitted 15-07-2025

Revised 17-08-2025

Accepted 25-09-2025

Published 02-10-2025

Keywords:

Cultural Heritage;

Islamic Civilization;

Safavid Dynasty;

Shah Abbas I;

Islamic Chaliphate

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Abstract

This study analyzes the cultural heritage of Islamic civilization in Persia during Shah Abbas I' reign (1588-1629 CE), focusing on the interplay between political power, religious identity, and cultural expression. Using a historical research method (heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography), and an interdisciplinary lens, the study addresses gaps in the literature by combining art historical, political, and social perspectives. The results show that monumental architecture (Imam Mosque, Meidan Emam), textile arts, and economic policies were not only artistic achievement but also tools for legitimizing Safavid rule and reinforcing Shia identity. Isfahan, as the capital, exemplified integration between religion, economy, and culture, supporting the dynasty's political stability. This cultural legacy later shaped modern Iranian national identity. This research contributes to the dynamic understanding of Islamic civilization and the relevance of cultural heritage in the contemporary context. The implications of this research encourage the preservation of cultural heritage as an instrument of diplomacy and inclusive history education. The study's originality lies in its holistic approach combining material and non-material analysis, distinguishing it from previous partial studies.

Penelitian ini menganalisis warisan peradaban Islam di Persia pada masa Shah Abbas I (1588-1629 M), dengan menyoroti keterkaitan antara kekuasaan politik, identitas keagamaan, dan ekspresi budaya. Menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah (heuristik, kritik, interpretasi, dan historiografi), serta pendekatan interdisipliner, studi ini menjawab kekosongan literatur dengan menggabungkan perspektif sejarah seni, politik, dan sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa arsitektur monumental (Masjid Imam, Meidan Emam), seni tekstil, dan kebijakan ekonomi tidak hanya mencerminkan kemajuan estetika, tetapi juga menjadi alat legitimasi kekuasaan dan pembentukan identitas Syiah. Isfahan, sebagai ibu kota, dirancang sebagai pusat integrasi agama, ekonomi, dan budaya yang memperkuat stabilitas politik. Warisan ini kemudian menjadi dasar identitas nasional Iran modern. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman dinamis peradaban Islam dan relevansi warisan budaya dalam konteks kontemporer. Implikasi penelitian ini mendorong pelestarian tinggalan budaya sebagai instrumen diplomasi dan pendidikan sejarah yang inklusif. Nilai orisinalitas terletak pada pendekatan holistik yang menggabungkan analisis material dan non-material, berbeda dengan studi sebelumnya yang parciel.

A. INTRODUCTION

The reign of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629 CE) can be called the golden age of the Safavid dynasty in Persia. During this period, Islamic civilization experienced significant progress in various aspects of life, including architecture, art, economy and science. Isfahan, the new capital city built by Shah Abbas, became a symbol of glory and a center of Islamic civilization that rivaled Istanbul and Delhi in its grandeur and cultural influence. Shah Abbas' success in reorganizing government structures, strengthening the economy through the silk trade, and developing art and architecture, made him one of the most influential rulers in the history of Islamic Persia. However, interpretations of the legacy are often fragmented between the perspectives of art, religion and power.

The legacy of civilization from the era of Shah Abbas is one of the most important studies to understand the intellectual and cultural heritage of the Islamic world. UNESCO, for example, has designated several sites from the Shah Abbas era as world cultural heritage, demonstrating international recognition of their significance (*Meidan Emam, Esfahan*, n.d.). In a time of increasing attention to cultural diplomacy and civilizational relations across the ages, these relics are not just art, but also a reflection of ideology, power, and ongoing cultural identity.

Previous studies on the cultural heritage of Shah Abbas I's reign have tended to focus on certain partial approaches. In general, the literature review can be categorized into three main approaches. Firstly, Islamic architectural and art studies, such as those by Sheila S. Blair (1992) and Hana Hanifah (2015), which highlight the beauty of buildings in Isfahan as a cultural heritage of Shah Abbas' reign, but lack the ideological and symbolic meaning behind them. Second, political and religious studies of the Safavid dynasty, as described by Roger Savory (1980) and Andrew J. Newman (2012), which focus on the consolidation of power and the formation of Shia religious identity, but have not linked it to cultural and civilizational expressions in depth. Third, economic and urbanization studies of the Shah Abbas era, such as Rudi Matthee (2021), on the important role of silk trade and urban development in strengthening the Safavids, have not explained the economic dimension in relation to the architectural form of the city. Thus, this research can be an attempt to fill the gap in integrating ideology, economy, and art within the framework of power that later became the legacy of civilization. In addition, most studies rely on European accounts

and often ignore local primary sources such as the *Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi* manuscripts.

This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the heritage of Islamic civilization in the era of Shah Abbas I through an interdisciplinary approach. The main focus is to understand the connections between the buildings, social systems, and structures of the city of Isfahan in representing Safavid political power, religion, and cultural identity. In addition, this study aims to utilize a primary source that has been neglected in previous studies, *Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi* translated into English by Roger Savory under the title *The History of Shah Abbas the Great*. Thus, this study addresses the literature gap through an interdisciplinary approach of art history, social history, and political history.

Based on preliminary findings, this research argues that the heritage of Islamic civilization during the time of Shah Abbas I was not only limited to artistic beauty or architectural splendor. Rather, it became part of a symbolic strategy in legitimizing dynastic power and strengthening Shia religious identity amid the dominance of Sunni power in the surrounding area in the 16th to 17th centuries. Based on Edward Said's theory of cultural representation (Said, 1994: 3), the Safavid dynasty's cultural heritage of the Shah Abbas era can be understood as a power project and a process of civilization identity formation. The research of this historical object is not only limited to aesthetic aspects, but also ideological and political. The initial assumption of the research states that the heritage of Islamic civilization in the era of Syah Abbas I was part of the leader's efforts to maintain as well as represent the ideology and culture of the Safavid Dynasty.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis in this research is the heritage of the Safavid Dynasty civilization during the reign of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629 AD), especially in architectural forms and works of art in the city of Isfahan, Iran. The main focus of this research is the cultural heritage and representation of power contained in the heritage, including public buildings, as well as policies constructed by Shah Abbas I. The research is qualitative with a historical approach.

The type of research used is qualitative with a historical approach. In accordance with the approach, the research stages consist of: topic selection, heuristics (source collection), verification (historical criticism, source validity),

interpretation (analysis and synthesis), and historiography (historical writing) (Kuntowijoyo, 2005: 69). The stages of historical research were used to trace and reconstruct the cultural heritage of the Shah Abbad I era (1588-1629). Data were obtained from primary sources, such as the *History of Shah Abbas the Great* (a translation of the *manuscript Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi*, and several related modern historiographical works by prominent historians. The research also utilizes Edward W. Said's (1994) theory of cultural representation to interpret how power, religion, and identity were constructed through the physical forms and cultural narratives of the Safavid Dynasty.

The main sources of data in this study are secondary sources of scholarly literature and translations of primary works such as Eskandar Beg Munshi *Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi*, as well as modern academic works by renowned authors such as Roger M. Savory, Andrew J. Newman, and Rudi Matthee. In addition, visual data from architectural documentation and UNESCO world heritage sites in Isfahan are also used to strengthen symbolic and historical analysis. The data collection technique used is literature review by searching and collecting credible sources, in the form of books, journals, theses, and historical documents relevant to the research topic. The search was conducted through libraries (Pascasarjana UIN Bandung and Dispusipda Jabar), as well as online academic databases (JSTOR, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Internet Archive, and other sites).

After facts and data have been collected, analysis is carried out using narrative analysis that refers to historical hermeneutics to be able to understand the deepest meaning of events or heritage objects/buildings. The analysis process includes the hermeneutic arc (combining explanation and understanding), misemis I-II-III (understanding and shaping the story through narration), and the world of the text (cultural heritage is seen as a text that opens a new world of meaning) (Ricoeur, 1984: 76-77). The analysis is done interpretatively to understand the cultural heritage that reflects the political, economic, and ideological vision of Shah Abbas I, as well as to understand the meaning contained in the contemporary context by using Edward W. Said's theory of cultural representation as stated in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Shah Abbas I and His Reign

Shah Abbas I, who was born on January 27, 1571 AD, and died on January 19, 1629 AD, ruled Persia from 1588-1629 AD. He succeeded in strengthening the Safavid Dynasty by repelling Ottoman and Uzbek forces that threatened Persian territory. In addition, he established a standing army that brought stability to the kingdom. Abbās I also moved the capital to Eşfahān, which later developed into the center of Persian culture and administration. During his reign, art and trade flourished, making the era the peak of Persian cultural glory (Savory, n.d.).

Shah Abbas I is widely remembered as the most influential leader in the history of the Safavid dynasty. He is often seen as a reflection of the ideal of a just king in the ancient Persian tradition (**Dzikra et al., 2024**). Admiration for his leadership emerges not only from historical records, but also from the testimonies of his contemporaries who praised his integrity, generosity, and lack of corruption during his reign. His reign was an important turning point in the transformation of Persia from a steppe-style society dominated by tribal structures, to a more established and semi-bureaucratic royal system. This change is evident in the way history was written at the time: whereas earlier historical narratives were more general in nature and emphasized the legitimizing claims of the Turko-Mongol legacy, from the late 16th century historical writing shifted to emphasize the Safavid dynasty as the center of Persian power. Persian identity was also strengthened, reflected in the use of Persian in religious texts and poetry, and the replacement of Arabic with Persian on official currency (Monshi, 1930: xxiii).

The Safavid dynasty reached its peak during the reign of Shah Abbas I, who created a strong, stable and reform-oriented system of government. It was a hereditary monarchy in which the ruler had the full support of the political elite, including the Shia Itsna Ashariya clerics and the elite Ghulam troops who played an important role in the defense and consolidation of power. The reign of Abbas I was a major transformational point in Persian history, marking a new beginning in the construction of a more organized state structure. Despite the dynamics and political shifts of the previous succession, the emergence of Shah Abbas I was a long process influenced by history, religious tradition and the development of thought. All these

foundations helped shape the new direction of Persia as a country with a strong cultural identity and a respected centre of civilization (Supriyadi, 2024: 44).

In the military and political spheres, Shah Abbas was known as a formidable strategist. He was fully committed to reclaiming territories lost to external attacks and domestic turmoil. In the face of the Ottoman power, which was superior in numbers and equipment, Abbas relied on his skill in tactics to balance the situation. Although he initially had to sign a disadvantageous peace treaty by losing strategic territories such as Azerbaijan, Qarabag, Sirvan, Dagestan, Baghdad, and parts of Kurdistan and Lorestan, he soon turned his attention to the eastern front. There, he managed to repulse the Uzbek forces and recapture important territories such as Mashad and Herat. Shortly after, his general, Farhād Khan Qaramanlu, managed to re-secure areas on the Caspian Sea coast such as Gilan and Mazandaran, previously conquered territories. Having strengthened his position in the east, Shah Abbas refocused his attention to the west, formed an alliance with the Georgian rulers, and continued the conflict against the Ottomans who were by then weakened by the long war against Habsburg Austria as well as internal rebellions (Matthee, n.d.).

In the economic sector, the Safavid dynasty achieved progress in many areas, including agriculture, trade and industry. The political stability created during the reign of Shah Abbas I was an important factor that encouraged overall economic growth. The conquest of the Hurmuz Islands and the renaming of the port of Gumrun to Bandar Abbas strengthened the kingdom's position on the sea trade route between East and West, which had previously been a bone of contention between European powers such as Britain, the Netherlands and France. With control of this port, the Safavids gained complete control over one of the most important international trade routes. The main agricultural areas were located in the Fertile Crescent, which produced a variety of superior commodities. Trade became the leading sector of the Safavid economy as the strategic presence of Bandar Abbas made the region a gathering place for foreign merchants.

In the field of industry, many factories sprung up around this port to support economic activities. Meanwhile, bazaars were built in the city of Isfahan so that people could be more involved in economic activities. To support trade relations with other nations, the Safavid government also provided foreign representative offices that served as diplomatic liaisons and protectors of trading partners' interests. In the religious sphere, Shah Abbas adopted a more tolerant policy than his

predecessor. He no longer required the adoption of the Shi'a sect as the only official teaching, and granted freedom of worship to the Sunni community. In fact, Christian leaders were given the freedom to practice and spread their teachings, as the Armenian population grew to become an important part of Isfahan society. This policy of diversity strengthened socio-religious life in Persia. One symbol of this tolerance is the construction of the Vank Church in Isfahan as a form of respect for the non-Muslim community that coexisted peacefully under Safawi rule (Lathifah et al., 2021).

Isfahan (currently located in Iran), was the new capital built by Shah Abbas. The city has a long history. Isfahan was first founded by the Persian King Yazdajird I (Bukhtanasar) and was ruled by Islam in 19 A.H./640 A.D., during the reign of Umar bin Khattab. When Shah Abbas I of the Safavid dynasty made Isfahan the capital, the city developed into a vast and beautiful royal center (Asadi, 2023: 43). Isfahan is situated on the Zayandeh River, with three large bridges adorning the city and characterizing its architectural beauty. The city is filled with magnificent buildings: palaces, schools, mosques, minarets, bazaars, and houses of dazzling architectural design. However, the city's history is also full of battles. In 625 A.H./1228 A.D., Isfahan was invaded by Mongol forces who conquered most of the Islamic world and made it part of Mongol rule. Later, in 790 A.H./1388 A.D., Timur Lenk also conquered the city in a major invasion of Islamic territory. Subsequently, in 955 A.H./1548 A.D., Isfahan came under the rule of the Ottoman Turkish Sultanate. In 1134 A.H./1721 A.D., the battle between the Safavid king, Husayn Shah, and Mahmud Al-Afghani marked the end of the Safavid dynasty's heyday. The city of Isfahan finally came under the rule of Nadir Shah in 1141 AH/1729 CE. Despite the many changes in power, Isfahan remains a symbol of beauty with monumental buildings. One of them is the Shia Mosque built by Shah Abbas I, which is now considered one of the most beautiful and magnificent mosques in the world (Sewang, 2017).

2. The Integration of Architecture, Art and Economy in the Era of Shah Abbas I

After the death of Shah Abbas in 1629, Isfahan had become a successful and flourishing city. Shah Abbas left behind 162 mosques, 48 colleges, 1,802 spacious apartments for caravanserais, and 273 public baths. During this period, the Safavid dynasty could be called an Islamic civilization that was on the same level or several levels more prominent than the other two major Islamic empires of the same period

(in the fields of science and art). The Safawiyah Dynasty has contributed to efforts to advance Islamic civilization, which can be seen in the fields of economics, science, art relics, and historical buildings (Kusdiana, 2017).

The Safavid Empire witnessed rapid developments in architecture, especially in religious buildings. In this period, many mosques and madrassas were built, often adorned with elaborate ceramics and large, prominent domes. The Imam Mosque in Isfahan is one of the iconic examples of this architectural style, with a large courtyard surrounded by four iwan and a dome decorated with brightly colored tiles. Iwan, a signature element in Safavid architecture, is often used to create grand gateways leading into buildings. An iwan is a curved open space that has three walls on its inner side and features a highly decorative arch in the center (Reza Khajegir et al., 2018: 40).

Another famous example of religious architecture of this period is the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque located in Isfahan. It has a meticulously decorated dome, decorated with tiles featuring very intricate patterns, while the background tends to be simple and geometric. In addition to religious buildings, the Safavids also erected many palaces, gardens and bridges. The Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan is a notable example of this type of construction. Founded by Shah Abbas I in the 16th century, it was used to welcome important guests and hold celebrations, with two main halls filled with beautiful paintings, sculptures, tapestries and furniture. One of the other interesting architectural developments of this period was the distinctive city planning in Isfahan. The city was designed on the principle of rigid symmetry, with Chahar Bagh Avenue as the main street that bisected the city and was flanked by gardens on either side. This concept went on to influence many cities in the region, making it a model for future urban planning (*Safavid Architecture / Characteristics, Examples & Facts*, n.d.).

The magnificent architectural remnants of the heyday of the Safavid Empire in Isfahan can be found at Maidan Imam, a vast square covering an area of 500 x 160 meters. Maidan Imam has become an important symbol of Safavid rule. Today, the complex attracts tourists from all over the world. This magnificent square is bordered by long walls on all four sides. Each side features historic buildings from the Safavid era, including the Shah Mosque in the south, Sheikh Lutfallah Mosque in the east, Ali Qapu Palace in the west, and the famous main entrance called the Bazaar located in the northern part of the complex (*Warisan Kerajaan Safawi (1)*, 2012).

Shah Abbas' reign marked the peak of artistic development in Persian history. Under his guidance, the carpet weaving industry flourished, and Persian carpets began to adorn the residences of European nobility. In addition, the trade in textiles, including brocade and damask, brought enormous wealth. The kingdom also took full control of silk production and distribution, making it an exclusive state right. In the fields of illustrating manuscripts, bookbinding, and ceramics, the work produced during Abbas time is hard to rival. Likewise in painting, the works of this period are among the most revered and remembered in the history of Persian art (Savory, n.d.). Thus, art during the time of Shah Abbas played an important role in the Safavid dynasty's economy, becoming a strategic component in the economic system of the Shah Abbas era. Through art, the dynasty managed to expand its market, strengthen domestic economic stability and strengthen international trade relations.

Initially, within the scope of the domestic economy, the two main pillars of the Safavid dynasty were pastoralism and agriculture. Shah Abbas later succeeded in bringing economic success to his country through the intelligent utilization of international trade routes. The Safavid economy was the most prosperous of any government that had ruled Iran since the Mongol period, and possibly even richer than its successors until modern times. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Iran excelled in the silk trade, which was made a royal monopoly by Shah Abbas, and this monopoly was very effective. The organization of the silk trade in the 1620s is considered one of Shah Abbas' great economic achievements. Annual silk production could reach 1,672,000 pounds, most of which was exported (Savory, 1980: 196-197).

Shah Abbas's policies in these various aspects were certainly an attempt to strengthen Shia identity, as part of the integration of elements in his reign. Thus, the period of Shah Abbas shows a pattern of interaction between art, economy and architecture, as a whole, rather than as separate sectors. These three main pillars that underpinned the rise and glory of the Shawiyah civilization were directly integrated with the political and economic goals of the empire in an effort to create stability, prosperity and legitimacy. The city of Isfahan, as the new capital, was redesigned to become a center of civilization that combined artistic aesthetics, economic functions, and religious-political structures.

There were several factors that encouraged the progress of Islamic civilization during the Safavid Dynasty of Shah Abbas. First, the skill and authority of the leader, namely Shah Abbas in managing the government. Among the several characters

possessed by Shah Abbas were lovers of science, tolerant, accomplished politicians, reliable warlords, modern and open. The second factor was the geographical condition consisting of fertile areas for agriculture and strategic areas for trade. Third, the stability and security of the country supported the implementation of development in all fields. Fourth, the participation of the people in the Safavid Dynasty's society was another factor that strengthened the government of Shah Abbas. And finally, the open foreign policy of Shah Abbas became a factor in realizing progress, by establishing diplomatic relations with European countries (Kusdiana, 2017: 194-197).

After experiencing progress after progress, the Safavid Dynasty then began to experience a downward movement. The causes of the dynasty's decline and destruction were the inconsistent system of shah succession, opportunistic government figures from the qizilbash, gulam, harem, and ulama, the declining loyalty of royal supporters to the Safavid Dynasty, and the prolonged conflict with the Ottomans. While the direct cause was motivated by the emergence of the Afghan invasion of the capital city of Isfahan in 1722, so Syah Hussein handed over the royal crown to Mir Mahmud, the Afghan leader (Kusdiana, 2017: 203).

3. Safavid Cultural Heritage as a Representation of Civilizational Identity

Through the development of the Safavid Dynasty that had experienced rapid progress in various aspects, the real contribution that had been made by the Safavid Dynasty played a role in reducing the decline of Islamic civilization that had lasted for several centuries before. For the Persians, the presence of the Safavids has provided a kind of 'national state' to the Iranian nation with its new identity, namely the Shi'a sect, which until now remains a powerful element of their nationalism (Kusdiana, 2017: 202).

The strong roots of Shi'a Islam in the Safavid dynasty are a testament to the application of Shah Abbas' rule, which actively used culture to shape and assert the identity of Islamic civilization. In this case, cultural heritage was not only a product of civilization, but also a political and spiritual tool built as a medium for shaping the image of a distinctive Islamic-Persian civilization. This heritage is not limited to material (physical appearance), but also non-material heritage (such as tradition, science, and language). The material cultural heritage of Shah Abbas' time consisted of monumental architecture, textile and carpet crafts, as well as trade infrastructure.

While the non-material cultural heritage is in the form of Shi'a religious traditions (such as the celebration of Ashura and pilgrimage to the tombs of the Imams), sciences (madrasahs and patronage of Shi'a scholars), and language and literature (such as Persian as the language of administration and culture, Arabic as the language in the context of law and religion, and religious poetry and Sufistic) (Marika, 2003).

The cultural heritage of the reign of Shah Abbas I (1588-1629) contributed greatly to shaping the religious and cultural identity of modern Iran. Through the institutionalization of Shia Itsna Ashariyah as the official religion, the construction of religious education centers, and the revitalization of the city of Isfahan as a spiritual and administrative heart, the Safavid dynasty strengthened its political legitimacy while instilling a distinctly Persian Islamic foundation. As Andrew Newman (2012) argues, the religious and symbolic transformations undertaken during this period not only redefined Iran's socio-political structure, but also marked a fundamental shift from Sunni to Shia traditions as the main framework of national identity that continued until the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 20th century (Newman, 2012).

In addition to domestic influences, the cultural legacy of the Shah Abbas era also had a broad impact on the global landscape of Islamic civilization. Monumental architecture such as the Shah's Mosque and the development of Safavid visual arts (including miniatures, calligraphy and Persian carpets) represent non-Arabic Islamic aesthetic values that prioritize harmonization between spirituality and visual beauty. In the context of a multicultural Islamic world, this legacy reinforces the narrative that Islam exists not only as a legal system (fiqh) but also as an adaptive and reflective cultural civilization. Shah Abbas' artistic and urbanistic approach not only represents religious authority, but also enriches the variety of Islamic cultural expressions that continue to be referenced in the development of Muslim art and architecture today (Asadi, 2023).

Discussion

This research shows that during the reign of Shah Abbas I, the Safavid dynasty succeeded in creating a strong civilizational heritage through the construction of monumental architecture, the development of fine arts and textiles, and the strengthening of Shia religious identity. Isfahan as the center of government was not

only established as a political city, but also as a cultural, economic, and spiritual space that reflected the glory of Persian Islam. In addition, non-material cultural heritage such as religious traditions, madrasa education and literature helped strengthen the collective identity of the Safavid society that continued into the modern era.

The high consistency of Shah Abbas in integrating political power and cultural vision was the main factor behind the formation of this cultural heritage. Systematic efforts to make Shia the state ideology also strengthened the spiritual foundation and identity of the nation. The construction of mosques, madrassas and bazaars was integrated, which indirectly created a synergistic relationship between religion, economy and art. This strategy answers the dynasty's need to build political legitimacy not only based on military power, but also through enduring cultural symbols.

This finding is in line with Newman's study (Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire) which emphasizes the role of Shah Abbas in reshaping Iran's religious identity. However, this study adds a broader perspective by emphasizing the relationship between material and non-material heritage as a representative unit of Persian Islamic civilization. While Matthee (Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan) focuses more on the dynamics of politics, economics and state control during Safavid rule, this study broadens the focus by linking cultural heritage directly to the construction of Islamic civilizational identity and the continuity of its influence into the modern era. This represents a new contribution in connecting the symbolic and cultural dimensions of Shah Abbas's legacy as a complex form of Islamic civilizational heritage (Matthee, n.d.).

The cultural heritage of the Shah Abbas era represents a model of Islamic civilization that emphasizes not only religious doctrine, but also aesthetics, education and social planning. This shows that Islamic heritage is not singular, but influenced by geographical and political contexts. This research confirms that Persian Islam has its own civilizational characteristics, which enrich the treasures of world Islamic history and open up further discussion on the diversity of cultural expressions in Islam. The Safavid cultural heritage is twofold: on the one hand it serves as a source of inspiration for modern Iranian culture and national identity, but on the other hand it also reinforces the exclusivity of sectarian (Shia) identity that creates tensions with the Sunni Islamic world. The relevance of this heritage is

also seen in how contemporary Iran still makes Isfahan and the aesthetic values of Safawi Islam a symbol of national civilization amid the challenges of cultural globalization.

The results of this study indicate the need to preserve Islamic cultural heritage as part of strengthening national identity and cross-cultural understanding in the Islamic world. The government and educational institutions can develop a more inclusive Islamic history curriculum and display the contribution of Persian civilization proportionally. In addition, cultural diplomacy through art and architectural heritage can also be an alternative soft power approach in building relations between Islamic countries in the contemporary era.

D. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the legacy of Islamic civilization in Persia during the era of Shah Abbas I reflects the Safavid dynasty's remarkable achievement in uniting political power, religious vision, and cultural expression into a single civilizational entity. The main findings of the study highlight how monumental constructions such as the Imam Mosque and Meidan Emam square, as well as the development of miniature painting, textiles, and calligraphy served not only as aesthetic symbols, but also as political and religious instruments to strengthen Shia identity and legitimize power. Isfahan under Shah Abbas became a city of civilization that brought together scholarly, religious, economic, and artistic centers in harmony, making it a model Islamic city with spiritual and cultural appeal.

Scholarly, this research makes an important contribution to the study of Islamic civilization by offering a perspective that integrates material and non-material cultural remains as a complex representation of Persian Islamic identity. It also expands the understanding of the relationship between cultural symbols and power, and confirms that Islamic civilization is not singular, but contextual, dynamic, and rich in local expressions. By comparing the work of Newman and Matthee, this study shows that cultural heritage serves not only as a historical record, but also as a source of contemporary identity that continues to be reinterpreted by modern society, especially in the context of Iran today.

However, this study has limitations in terms of data coverage and scope of analysis. The primary focus on the era of Shah Abbas I limits the exploration of the dynamics of Safavid civilization as a whole, including the period before and after him.

In addition, the limited visual or artifactual primary sources reduce the depth of analysis of the artistic and architectural technical dimensions. Therefore, further research could be directed at examining the social aspects of preserving Safavid cultural heritage in the modern era, tracing the transformation of the symbolic meaning of the heritage, and expanding the area of study to the transnational dimension of Persian Islamic heritage in the context of the wider Islamic world. Thus, this research not only contributes a new understanding of Islamic civilization in Persia, but also opens space for the development of interdisciplinary studies that connect history, architecture, art, theology, and cultural studies within the frame of global Islamic heritage.

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