



The Historical Approach to the Relative Chronology of Caravansarai of Alaki, Near Marand

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Abstract

Due to the importance of Tabriz in various historical periods after the Mongol's invasion to the end of the Qajar period, as continuously being the capital city or the residence city of the prince, entrance to this city has been reflected in various reports. Most of the foreigners who entered Iran from European countries came from Caucasus Road to Tabriz and reported many buildings on their way. Moreover, this road was one of the most significant roadways for Caravans on the Silk Road, where various residential buildings have been constructed. Alaki caravansarai is one of the most important roadside accommodations in Northwest Iran, and so many reports about it and the quality of its façade decorations can be traced in the travelogues of foreigners who traveled to Iran. Its vastitude and elegant entrance gate nevertheless, this building has unfortunately been neglected and was about to be ruined in the 19th century and afterward. However, the beauty of its entrance gate has gained the attention of many people and has been reported in many sources. Based on the ornaments used, recent sources in the history of architecture have estimated its date to the 12th century and Ilkhanid Abū Sa'īd Bahādor Khan and the Timurid period. These sources based their estimation only on the type of ornaments used on its entrance gate and its probable that the existence of dated artworks of the Ilkhanid period nearby, such as the Mihrab of Marand's Jame Mosque, has influenced this speculation. This article aims to meticulously study this building in various travelogues, al-Waqfiyya al-Rashīdiyya, and other sources in the history of architecture and discusses the ornament types used and their history. The detailed study of the documents and sources indicated that this building could belong to the presidency period of K̄āja Rašīd-al-Din Faẓl-Allāh, and based on his emphasis to establish this building, can be dated 1297-1309. The ornaments, moreover, indicate the transient period from brickwork to tilework which happened in the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

Alaki Caravansarai, Archaeological Remains, Historical Resources, al-Waqfiyya al-Rashīdiyya, Ilkhanid period.

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1. Introduction

The recognition of the construction date of a building can certainly help a lot to study and realize its historical evolution and architectural styles. In the past, Marand city was one of the main entranceways for foreign travelers to Iran from the Caucasus path towards Tabriz. For this reason, besides inner-city caravansaries, other caravansaries were built in the suburbs of Marand City, including some very famous ones. Two names of Alaki Caravansarai and Airandibi Caravansarai have been sited on Jolfa to Marand Road, and Yam Caravansarai on the Marand to Tabriz Road was mentioned in historical sources. The latter example has been restored at present. Alaki caravansarai was located at 13th kilometer to the North of Marand in an area called Harzand. Gemelli Careri (1704: 116) and Madam Dieulafoy (1887: 37–38) have presented photos and descriptions of this caravansarai in their travelogues. Other historians and archeologists such as Wilber (1969: 176–177), Seyyed Marandi (2014: 212–215), Siroux M (1949: 57), Kleiss, W.(1972: 186–187) and Kiani and Kleiss (1983: 499) have also mentioned this caravansarai and have dated it based on its decorations. Unfortunately, the remains of the caravansarai were ruined in 1990th but parts of its foundation and decoration have been discovered in archeological excavations, whose findings have been published (Moradi & Omrani, 2014). Accordingly, this architectural monument consisted of a four-iwan plan with nine towers (Fig.13) and a magnificent entrance gate with impressive decorations. Until 1990, some architectural parts of its entrance gate remained (Seyyed-Marandi, 2014, p. 213) whose pictures have been published by architectural historians (Blair & Bloom, 1984; Siroux, 1949, p. pl. IV-3; Wilber, 1969, p. Pls.179-180). Moreover, Nemati Babaylou and Saidi Mehrabad (2020) studied the issue of the Endowment of this caravansarai and the related documents has been thoroughly.

One of the main points that can be achieved from the previously written documents is the date of the construction of this building. Some researchers have no clear idea about the exact date of this building and pertain it to the Ilkhanid era (Seyyed Zanozi, 1979: 269–271). In the documents of Iran's National Heritage Registration Organization, this building is registered to the Safavid period without mentioning the exact date (East Azarbaijan Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization Website, 2005). Seyyed Marandi (2014: 213) believes it belonged to the reign of Abū Sa'īd Bahādor Khan, the last Ilkhanid king in Iran, (1316-1336). This assertion is done without providing certain evidence. It seems that the artworks of this period in Marand, especially the inscription date on the Mihrab of the Friday Mosque (1331) (Siroux, 1956) and the date given by Wilber (1969: 176–177) for caravansarai have influenced this assertion. The field studies of the decorations found in the archeological excavations of this caravansarai and its historical photos indicate that this monument could belong to date before Abū Sa'īd.

Therefore, the present article aims to explore the dating of this building. To this end, the analysis of written as well as visual documents and archaeological finds will be pursued. This caravansarai was one of the most magnificent buildings of its time in the region, further escalating the necessity for its recognition. The required data in this study have been collected through field and library methods and then presented via descriptive and analytic methods. Written documents were analyzed, and to determine the dating of the building, field studies, including area visits and photographic documentation of the fragments have been applied, and

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the results have been compared with historical images. Finally, all the evidence has been analyzed towards attaining the research aim.

2. Research methodology

The required data in this study have been collected through field and library methods and then presented via descriptive and analytic methods. For this purpose, written documents were analyzed and, in order to determine the dating of the building, field studies including area visits and photo taking of the fragments have been applied and the results have been compared with historical pictures. Finally, all the evidences have been analyzed towards the attainment of answers to the research questions.

3. The geographical location of the Caravansarai

Regarding the name of Alaki, it can be certainly asserted that it is taken from an area by this name. Although no signs of this area cannot be found on maps nowadays, but, in the past, there was an area known as Alaki Plain which is attested and used by the local residents. Chardin (1811:316) mentions passing the Alacou area before Marand and asserts that people believe that Hulagu had built a city in this area which was later destroyed in Iran and Ottoman war. The name Alaku is also marked on the Empire of Iran's map (Fig. 1) which was drawn by Emanuel Bowen in 1747 (Bowen 1747).

Alaki caravansarai is located at 13th km to the North of Marand City (Moradi and Omrani 2014) in an area known as Harzandat. This area includes rustic parts of New Harzand and Old (Atiq) Harzand and their agricultural lands. By studying the historical documents, especially the endowments of the area in the Endowment Book of Rashidi (al-Hamedani 1977:157), it cannot be certainly asserted that the lands of this caravansarai belong to the rustic areas of New Harzand or Atiq Harzand (Nemati Babaylou and Saidi Mehrabad 2020).

Seyyed Marandi (2014:212) has mentioned at least three caravansaries in the Harzand area towards Darediz mountain pass without indicating their names, but in most sources, only Āyrāndibi and Alaki caravansaries are mentioned. Being abandoned, fast destruction in the modern period, and lack of sufficient archeological studies have caused problems in naming this caravansarai. One of these problems is using the name Āyrāndibi caravansarai instead of Alaki. But due to the fact that, in the past, caravansaries often took the name of the area where they located, and based on the comparative geographical specifications of Atiq Harzand and New Harzand villages and Āyrāndibi area (Fig. 2), the two caravansarais can be considered separately. According to Seyyed Marandi (2014:212), the Āyrāndibi caravansarai, whose foundation stones have only remained now, was located at 6 kilometers from the Alaki caravansarai.

1. This book was registered in Memory of the World Heritage in 2007.



Fig 1. A part of the map of the Empire of Iran, drawn by Emanuel Bowen(1747).

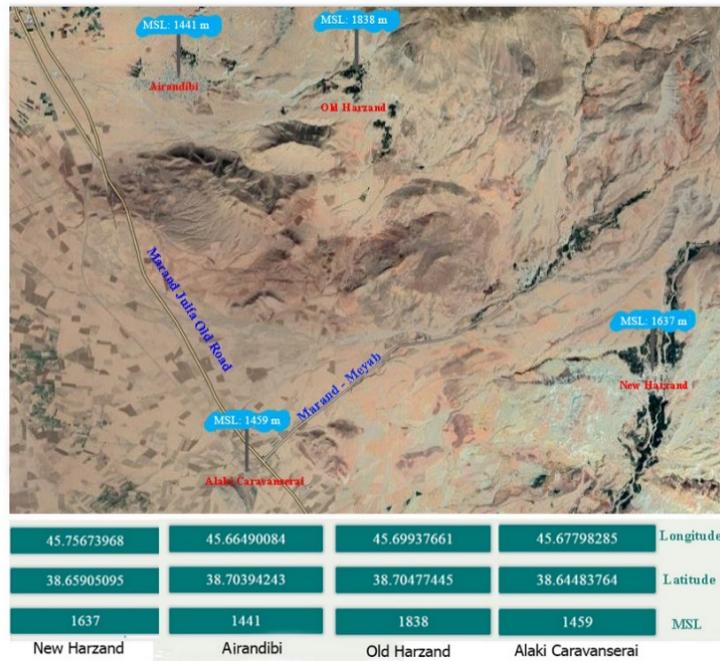


Fig 2. Geographical specification of the Caravanserai and its neighboring areas.

4. Document Review

4-1. Historical and archeological studies

In many sources, Alaki caravanserai has been explained as having great foundations, composed of black stone in two layers (Kleiss 1972:186–87; Siroux 1949:57; Wilber 1969:176). Kleiss has also mentioned the ruins of another building at 115 meters of this caravanserai with illustrations of the masons' signatures carved on its stones. Following their archaeological studies in Alaki, Moradi and Omrani(2014) have also reported the existence of such figures on the stones of its southern entrance gate. By comparing them to the similar samples in buildings in Darband, Pasargadae Persepolis, Kangavar, Shahr-e Ghor, and Farhād Tarāsh, all

of which belong to the Sasanid period, they have speculated that these bases could belong to a building from Sasanid period in this area which had been reused in order to expand Iran's trading paths. During Moradi and Omrani's excavation, the building mentioned by Kleiss had been totally destroyed, and it seems probable that the discovered stones by them belonged to the building mentioned by Kleiss, not Alaki.

Some archeologists and art historians have mentioned the Alaki caravansarai and given explanations about it which are followed, all of which could deem important in studying the Alaki caravansarai and its ornaments.

By studying the remains of the entrance gate of this caravansarai, Maxime Siroux believes that this caravansarai belongs to a time before the settlement of Mongolians and, by considering the date of such decorations in two buildings of Momineh Kātūn of Nakhchivan and Gonbad-e Kaboud of Maragheh, dates it to early 12th century, concurrent to the reign of Eldiguzids in Azerbaijan (Siroux 1949:57). Wilber has mentioned that, despite the caravansaries in Iran are generally pertained to Shah Abbas Safavid, the local residents in this area pertain this caravansarai and its remains to Hulāgu Khan. He has dated this caravansarai to around 1330-1335, concurrent to Sarcham Caravansarai (1332-1333). He also believes that the type of inlaid tiles used in the building had not been developed before 1310 and belongs to a time after this date (Wilber 1969:176-77). By studying this caravansarai in 1967, Wolfram Kleiss has introduced it by Āyrāndibi name and, in its description, based on the magnificent brickwork in its entrance gate, dated it to the Timurid period (Kleiss 1972:186-87). Though this theory has later been revised by Kiani and Kleiss's study (1983:499), as pertaining to the Ilkhanid period, following Wilber, local authors such as Seyyed Zonouzi (1979:269-71) and Seyyed Marandi (2014:212), date the construction of this building to the reign of Abū Sa'īd Bahādor Khan in the year 1331.

4-2. The travelogues

Many tourists from the 11th to 20th centuries have trotted the Caucasus to Tabriz (or the reverse) path¹, some of whom have mentioned the caravansaries on the way or explained their characteristics. For various reasons, such as organizing the notes after the travel, mistakes have occurred in the description of the location or the characteristics of these caravansaries in some travelogues. This has happened to two of the main caravansaries in the suburbs of Marand, namely Alaki, and Yām.² To understand which caravansarai has been mentioned in the travelogues, this point could be clarifying that the Alaki caravansarai is located at the North of Marand, on the old Marand-Jolfa road while, the Yām caravansarai is located at the South of Marand on the Marand-Tabriz Road (Fig. 3). Due to the fact that in some travelogues, the names of these caravansaries are not certainly dependable,

1. Nāšir-i Khusrau (1045) , Ambrogio Contarini (1473-7), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1632-68), Evliya Çelebi (1640), Jean Chardin (1664-1677), Gemelli Careri (1693), Pierre Amédée Jaubert (1806), Auguste Bontems (1806-7), Gaspard Drouville (1812-13), Morris De Kotzebue (1817), Baron Feodorkov (1834-5), Mary Leonora Woulfe Sheil (1856), Heinrich Karl Brugsch (1860-1), Naser-al-Din Shah Qājār (1873), Jane Dieulafoy (1881), Williams Jackson (1903), Khalil Irāqi (1910), Mirza Sāleh Shirazi (1928), Fred Richards (1930), Etesām al Mulk (1932) and Haj Sayyāh (1937) have passed through Marand.

2 Yām Caravansary has been completely rehabilitated into a tourism site and renamed as Payām-e Marand Tourism Complex(Seyyed-Marandi 2014:205).

as a result, characteristics of the caravansaries at the suburbs of Marand were studied in the following travelogues: Gemelli Careri, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Auguste Bontemps, Morris De Kotzebue, Heinrich Karl Brugsch, Mirza Sāleh Shirazi, Jane Dieulafoy and Williams Jackson.



Fig 3. The geographical location of Alaki and Yām Caravansaries, respectively on the North and South of Marand.

In most travelogues, the name of caravansarai is not directly mentioned and its geographical location is only given. Among them, based on the geographical information, Bontem, Mirza Sāhel Shirazi, Dieulafoy and Jackson's travelogues have described Yām caravansarai and Alaki is accounted for in Brugsch's travelogues. Tavernier has talked about the existence of two caravansaries, such as the Alaki caravansarai, before Marand, and both caravansaries have been mentioned in Careri and De Kotzebue's travelogues.

The descriptions of the five travelogues correspond with the location of the Yām caravansarai but cannot be documented for Alaki. The description of Madam Dieulafoy and the design she has introduced for this place (Fig. 6) are completely compatible with Alaki caravansarai. This is confirmed by corresponding with the picture presented by Wilber (1969:176–77) (Fig. 5) and Siroux (1949:57) (Fig. 7), though its geographical location has been mistaken with Yām caravansarai. Siroux (1949:77) and Seyyed Marandi (2014:213) have also cited Dieulafoy's mistake in describing the location of Alaki caravansarai as Yām. Dieulafoy has also mentioned the repair of caravansarai in Safavid period, which, itself, has led to this mistake. In Bontemps, De Kotzebue and Jackson's travelogues much information has not been provided about Alaki caravansarai and is limited to just mentioning the presence of a caravansarai. For this reason, the analysis of that information will not be much fruitful. As a result, it can be claimed that only in five travelogues, including Gemelli Careri, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Morris De Kotzebue, Heinrich Karl Brugsch, and Jane Dieulafoy, Alaki Caravansarai has been mentioned. Gemelli Careri wrote that after passing the Araxes River for 14 miles, they arrived at a small caravansarai in Dareduz (Darediz) valley and stayed there. The next day, after going another 15 miles on a rocky road and passing a frightening deep valley, they arrived at Alaki-Hulāgu caravansarai with a brick

tower entrance gate. A large brick caravansarai has been built which has a fountain in the middle of its yard with clear and refreshing water. The next day, having gone 10 more miles from Marand, they arrived at a beautiful caravansarai called Yāmchi which had sufficient capacity for so many travelers and four large brick towers had been built in its four corners (Gemelli-Careri 1704:11). In Gemelli Careri's text, the existence of three caravansaries of Darediz, Alaki and Yām has been mentioned and the difference between Alaki and Yām caravansaries has been explained by referring to the number of towers in Alaki caravansarai. This fact that can be evidently seen in their architecture. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier mentions the existence of a caravansarai on Jolfa to Marand road - near Marand - which is magnificently built with nicely cut stones (Tavernier 1676:49-50). Dieulafoy describes the caravansarai for which she provides a picture that corresponds with Alaki as today, the caravan stopped in the ruins of one of the 999 Shah Abbasi caravansaries. The building is rectangular and its walls are built with red strong stones and possesses defensive towers. A part of the entrance gate is destroyed and the remains have ceramics with beautiful blue tiles and red bricks. This caravansarai, like similar ones, was a shelter for bandits for a while (Dieulafoy, 1887:38). De Kotzebue has explained that, after passing Alamdar and Gerger¹³ villages, they stayed in a caravansarai near a high impassable mountain, whose entrance gate had blue embossed decorations (Von Kotzebue 1819:121-2). He also mentions an old caravansarai after Marand and before Soufiane which corresponds with the geographical location of Yām caravansarai. Heinrich Karl Brugsch has mentioned the ruins of a caravansarai at the left side of the road after passing Harzan village which is called Abbāssijeh, meaning this caravansarai has been built by Shah Abbas. He then describes its features as having sufficient space for caravans, their cattle and loads. Their buildings are so strong that, even the royal castles of the time, are not comparable to them.

The foundations of this kind of buildings have been built with large blocks of stone and mortar. They possess magnificent and interesting decorations on walls and tile inscriptions on their large entrance gate, their rooms, the stables and water wells, as well (Brugsch 1862:162-63).

4-3. Historical documents

Al-Wqafīyya al-Rashīdiyya which is hand-written by K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din Faẓl-Allāh Ṭabīb Hamadāni and includes a complete description of Rab'-e Rashidi endowments is considered as one of the most prominent documents about Ilkhanid architecture studies (al-Hamedani 1977). The original copy of this book written by its author is kept in the Central Library of Tabriz. In the al-Wqafīyya al-Rashīdiyya in the third chapter, the second part, the twelfth section, named sustenance conditions, the name of Alaki caravansarai in Harzand region is mentioned and an allowance is set for its travelers (Fig.4). According to the varied writing forms of this caravansarai name in Persian, including Alaki (الکی), Alāki (الاکي) and Ālāki (آلاکي) in various sources and also referring to the name of New Harzand village in the text of the Endowment book and appointing the people of this village as trustees; it can be considered as corresponding with Alaki. It is important to note the explicit reference of K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din to the construction

1. The present Hadi Shahr

of the caravansarai by his own order (al-Hamedani 1977:157), which indicates that the caravansarai had been built and was being used at the time of writing the Endowment book (1309-1318) (ibid, XXXI). There is an ancient judicial document belonging to the end of Rabi al-Thani month in the year 791 AH (1389) in the museum of the University of Tabriz, in the text of which the issue of Alâki lands in Harzan is mentioned. The issue under discussion is the resolution of the dispute between *Ḳvāja Ġiāt-Al-Dīn Moḥammad* and the descendants of Sultan Pir Ayub and other peasants of Harzan village, over two of the six proportions of Alâki region, which as a result of this document, considers these two proportions to be specific to the subjects of the ancient village of Harzan (Nawabi 1953). The point that bears importance in this document is that one of the plaintiffs is *Ḳvāja Ġiāt-Al-Dīn Mohammad* son of *Ḳvāja Rašid-al-Din Mohammad Tabrizi* that both are similar to *Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh* and his son. But *Ġiāt-Al-Dīn*, the son of *Rašid-al-Din Fażl-Allāh Hamedani*, was not alive on that date. On the other hand, *Ḳvāja Rašid-al-Din* has never been known as Tabrizi. Therefore, it seems that, on the mentioned date, due to the similarity of the names and based on the documents of Endowment book of Rashidi, the purchase and endowment of Alaki lands by Rashid al-Din has been abused. In general, this document, in which the name of Alâki is completely mentioned, and the claim of this person could confirm the belonging of the items mentioned in the *al-Wqafīyya al-Rašīdiyya* to Alaki caravansarai.

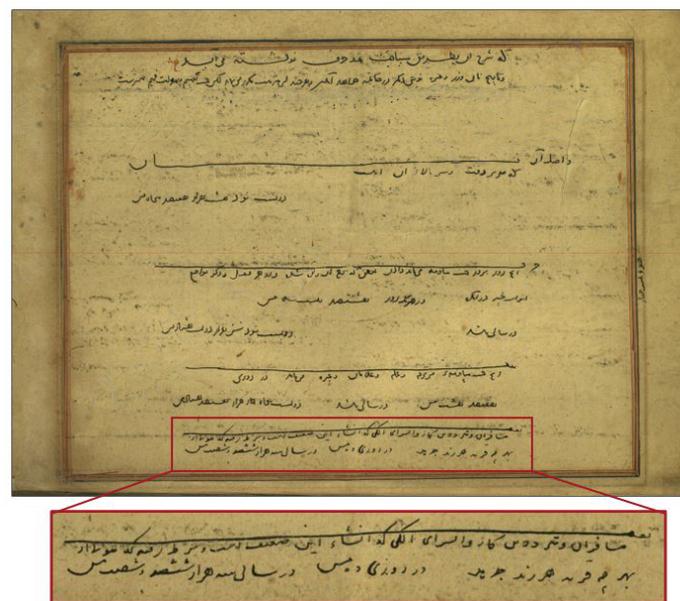


Fig 4. Part of Endowment book of Rashidi in which Alaki Caravansarai is mentioned (by permission obtained from Central Library of Tabriz).

4-4. Historical images

The oldest surviving image of the Alaki entrance gate is a gravure drawn by Dieulafoy in 1887. In this picture, the entrance gate is drawn from the southwest angle and the wall on the north side is relatively intact. After her, Maxime Siroux and André Godard took pictures of this caravansarai at an angle close to Dieulafoy's drawings, which was published in Siroux's 1949 report. Siroux's photo indicates the destruction of the northern side of the eastern wall (entrance gate wall). Donald Wilber also recorded images of this caravansarai, which is

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stored in the University of Michigan archives and was taken in 1939 (Wilber 1969:177). However, Wilber obtained most of her information on Ilkhanid architecture from 1942 to 1946 (Blessing 2015) and reported that the gateway was destroyed in those years. These images show a situation similar to the Siroux's photo. Until that time, the entrance arch of the caravansarai was intact. But the image taken by Wolfram Kleiss in 1967 shows the destruction of the northern base of the arch and the surrounding walls, and only the southern base is visible in the image (Kleiss 1972:TAFEL 53); A situation that can later be observed in the pictures of Sheila Blair in 1984. Seyyed Marandi also filmed this complex in the 1980s, the archive of which is not available. Blair's photos are the last available images of the caravansarai's entrance gate, showing only a small section of the south base of the entrance gate and part of the inscription.



Fig 5. The images recorded by Wilber (by permission obtained from Michigan University).

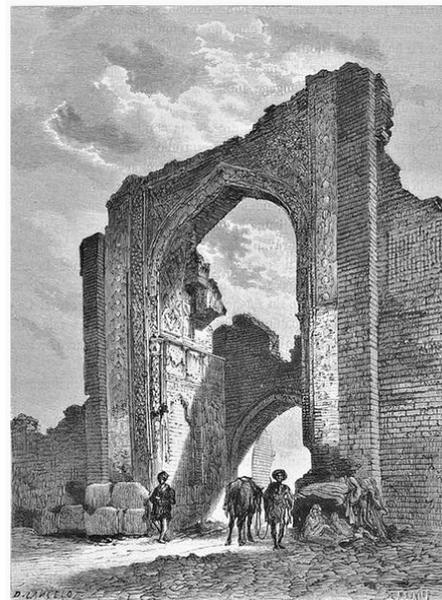


Fig 6. The engraving recorded by Madam Dieulafoy (Dieulafoy 1887).



Fig 7. The images recorded by Maxime Siroux (Siroux 1949:Pl.IV.3).



Fig 8. The images recorded by Wilber (by permission obtained from Michigan University).



Fig 9. the images recorded by Wolfram Kleiss in 1967 (Kleiss 1972:TAFEL 53).



Figs 10-12. the images recorded by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom (1984) (by permission obtained from Blair and Bloom).

5. Architectural Remains

5-1. Architectural Characteristics

It is not possible to thoroughly study the architecture of the Alaki Caravansarai, due to the complete destruction of the building, the conversion of the caravansarai's lands into archeological sites and the rural construction carried out on parts of the building grounds, as well as the limited excavations done. Therefore, the data so far are presented based on studies of the history of architecture and archeology. Archaeological studies indicate that this caravansarai has generally a rectangular plan with nine towers and a magnificent entrance gate, though Wilber (1969:176) and Seyyed Marandi (2014:213) have reported ten towers. Archaeological excavations carried out have revealed the architectural remains of up to a quarter of the plan of this caravansarai, which shows a 50-by-60-meters rectangle shape with a brick body on a platform of huge black ashlar fine stones. The courtyard of the caravansarai is also rectangular in dimensions of 30 by 40 meters. Based on the documents, it can be stated that a period of expansion of space in the building has been done by removing a part of the rooms

facing the pond to increase the dimensions of the courtyard in later periods, and the walls of the building with defensive towers in the corners and the defensive semi cylindrical towers along all the sides of the building have been reinforced. On the four sides of the plan, accommodation rooms for caravans, and in the space behind them, stables and other service sections had been located, which are mentioned by Maxime Siroux, and Brugsch in the description of the caravansarai features. According to the plan, the caravansarai had four-Ayvān (iwāns) and a regular rectangular courtyard. One of the important points of the plan is the columns in the space behind the northern rooms and the two sides of the southern side, which have been used to build larger openings to cover the roof in these parts (Moradi and Omrani 2014). The development of two-Ayvāns plans of early twelfth century of Khorasan into four-Ayvāns plans of the Ilkhanid period in Tabriz School is one of the architectural turning points of the Ilkhanid period (Ajourloo 2010). The caravansaries before this building were generally closed on all sides to resist the weather conditions, and for this reason, the design of the Alaki caravansarai can be considered as one of the oldest caravansaries with a plan of four ayvāns in NW Iran (Moradi and Omrani 2014). The building is made of bricks with dimensions of $5 \times 22 \times 22$ cm, on rubble stone. The entrance gate is built on a base of rectangular cubic ashlar fine stones and has a width of about 4.40 meters (Kleiss 1972:186–87). Use of a combination of brick and ashlar stone has been one of the architectural characteristics of northwestern Iran (Wilber 1969:177) Kleiss (1972:187) mentions the existence of a building located at 115 meters northwest of the caravansarai in the 1971 excavation activities, on the stones of which, there have been seen two types of stonemason marks. Moradi and Omrani(2014) have also reported similar marks on the stones of this caravansarai.

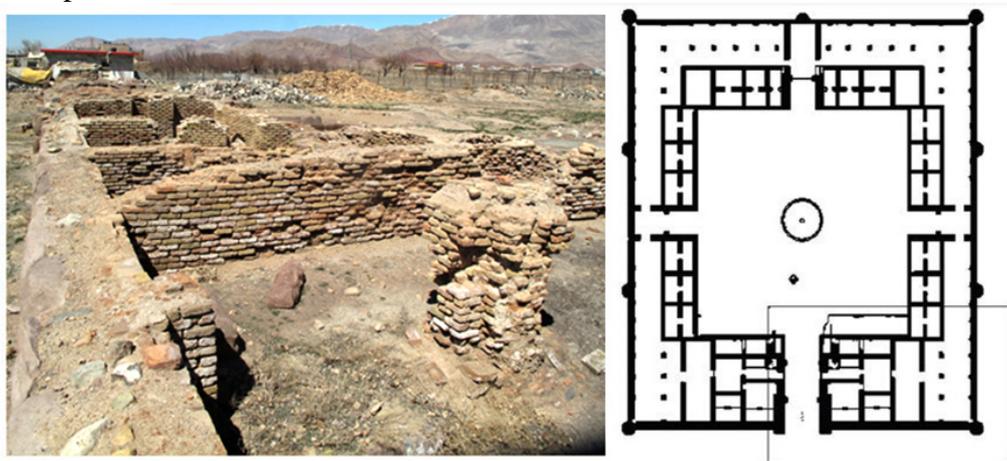


Fig 13. the excavated part of the caravansarai (Ali Nemati-Babaylou, 2022) and reconstructed plan based on the foundation work on its spatial $\frac{1}{4}$ (Moradi and Omrani 2014).

5-2. Decoration

The comparison of the images and historical descriptions with the remains obtained from archeological excavations (Fig. 14) indicates that the main architectural decorations of this caravansarai include brickwork and tileworking, and in most cases, a combination of them. Pieces with inlaid and glaze engraved (Loâb-Parân) tileworking techniques can also be seen among the discovered fragments, but the main decorations of the building are a combination of tiles and

bricks. Despite the differences in the color of the glaze and body in various fragments, it seems that the method of making them was the same, and the differences in the color of the glaze in some fragments can be due to the differences in the amount of metal oxides in the composition of glaze. It seems that non-glazed large pieces (bricks) are made with initial molding and final grinding, but tile pieces mainly indicate their being cut from larger pieces. Other decorations include entrance gate inscriptions, in which two different techniques have been used. The main facade of the caravansarai is facing west and the entrance includes Muqarnas decoration, tileworking, inscriptions and, using brick coffering (noghul) and brick partition wall (spar) in the internal parts (Moradi and Omrani 2014). Matching the archaeological discoveries with the historical images and the descriptions of the decorations by Wilber (1969:176–77) and Kleiss (1972:186–87) indicates the application of different types of decorations as follows:

Inscription

The study of Wilber's photos and description of the entrance gate shows that it had at least three inscriptions. The first inscription around the entrance arch is in the Kufic script, which is also mentioned in the travelogues and parts of it have been found in archaeological excavations. This inscription was made of unglazed ceramic on a blue tile background about 25 cm wide. Part of this inscription can be seen in the pictures taken by Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom in 1984. According to Khanykov and George Miles, this inscription was probably a Persian text or poem. Khanykov considers it similar to the Kufic inscription of Momineh Kātūn Mausoleum in Nakhchivan¹ (Wilber 1969:176–77). The reading of this inscription is very important because there are few inscriptions in Persian before this date.

The second inscription was located inside the entrance gate and below muqarnas decoration above the inner arch of the entrance. Wilber reports that it is a type of white mosaic tile on a dark blue background, but his image of the only word left on it has similarities with stuccowork. This inscription was in Thuluth script or its subdivisions. These types of inscriptions in the tradition of Islamic architecture are generally construction inscriptions that include the year of establishment and the founder of the building. Wilber reports another inscription below this inscription on the hexagonal geometric decorations on the north and south walls inside the entrance, which is technically similar to the second inscription. Archaeological excavations have also discovered fragments of white inscription tiles on a dark blue background.

Geometric decorations

Apart from the combination of bricks and tiles in the exterior of the entrance gate, at least four geometric patterns can be seen in the decorations of this entrance gate. The first is the geometric pattern of the twelve-pointed star, which is used in the exterior view, and its apparatus (Ālat) is unglazed and in relief, and its interstice region (Loqat) is a turquoise glazed tile (Fig.14). The second is a

1. The text of the poem of Momineh Kātūn Mausoleum in Nakhchivan is as follows: We turned and the time is passed / we pass away but this remains as a memorial (ما بگردیم بس بماند روزگار / ما بمیریم) (این بماند یادگار (Ajrloo 2020).

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 geometric pattern, next to the first one, and contains a five-pointed geometric pattern. The spandrel in the corner of the arch forms the third geometric pattern, which is only visible in Wilber's image and appears to be similar to the second pattern. The fourth pattern includes hexagon form and a six-pointed star, which is used on the inner sides of the entrance gate. In this pattern, the stars are with turquoise glaze and the hexagons are without glaze.

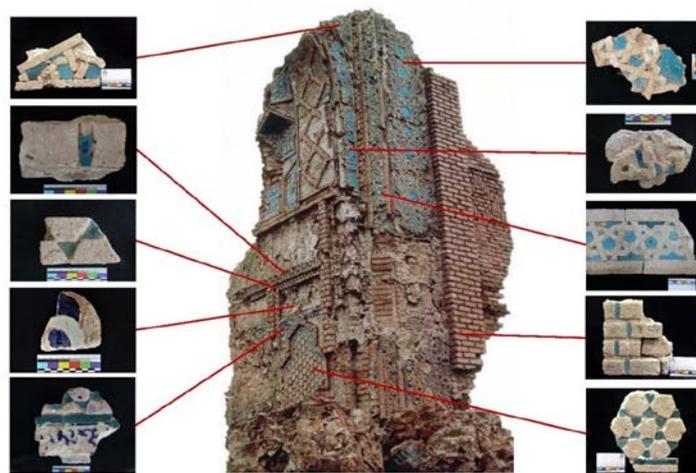


Fig 14. the comparison of the decoration discovered in archeological excavations with Blair and Bloom's photo.

6. Results and discussion

According to the evidence mentioned above, it can be generally concluded that the building of Alaki Caravansarai was probably intact until the end of the 17th century, and from these years until about 1880 CE / 1297 AH, most parts of it were damaged and destroyed (Table 1).

Table 1. The status of the building in various historical reports

Source	Visiting year (CE)	Building status
Jean-Baptiste Tavernier	1632-1668	No evidence of destruction
Gemelli Careri	1694	Intact
Morris De Kotzebue	1817	Intact
Heinrich Karl Brugsch	1860-1861	Damaged and abandoned
Jane Dieulafoy	1880-1881	Only the entrance gate left
Maxime Siroux	1940s	Only the entrance gate left
Donald Wilber	1942-1946	Only the entrance gate left
Wolfram Kleiss	1967	The south arch basis left
Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom	1984	The south arch basis left

Based on most documents and the various datings proposed by historians, this building belongs to Ilkhanid era, but the theory of its belonging to the reign of Abū Sa'īd Bahādor Khan, the last Ilkhanid king, is not correct. According to the al-Wqafīyya al-Rashīdiyya and the direct reference by K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din, the construction of this building was carried out by K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din himself. Since the text of the endowment book was written in 1309 BC/ 709 AH (al-Hamedani 1977:30) and, additions were added to it before the time of K̄vāja's assassination in 1318 BC/718 AH, with reference to the endowment book's emphasis on determining the tariff paid by the travelers, it seems that the caravansarai was complete at this time and was being used. Therefore, according to the time of K̄vāja Rašid-al-Din's ministry, its date can be attributed to 697-709 AH / 1297-1309. In addition, the quality and method of construction chosen for the decorations also confirms that this building belongs to mid-Ilkhanid period, because the use of a combination of tiles and bricks in architecture was common in Seljuk and Anushtegin (Khwarazmian) dynasties, and gradually, was replaced by tile work in Ilkhanid period. So that, in late Ilkhanid and early Timurid periods, the art of inlaid tileworking became completely popular and replaced brickwork (Kiani, Karimi, and Quchani 1983:13–16). The various decorative methods used in this entrance gate do not exactly have the characteristics of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, but include a variety of decorative types of both. For example, the combination of bricks and tiles before that had been experienced in northwestern Iran in buildings such as the Kabood (Blue) Dome tomb tower of Maragheh (1195/592), Momineh K̄ātūn tomb tower in Nakhchivan (1185/581) and in some Seljuk buildings in Turkey such as İzzeddin Keykâvus tomb in Sivas (613/1216) (Nemati-Babaylou and Alimadadi 2020). The type of brickwork is also consistent with the artifacts discovered from the decorations of Gilāneh Kharābeh caravansarai in Nakhchivan. But a more advanced form of the combination of brick and tile in this period is observed in eastern Iran in Malek Zuzan Mosque (1213/610). On the other hand, inlaid tiles were not completely widespread in the seventh century and were limited to some buildings in Iran and Anatolia such as Malek Zuzan Mosque in Khāf, Karatāy and Sirchāli schools in Konya (1236/634). Therefore, in terms of decorative types, the mentioned date seems to be correct for the building because it shows the transition time from the combination of tiles and bricks and the prosperity of the inlaid tileworking. The gradual change in the decoration of the buildings from brickwork to tileworking is one of the points of transfer of Seljuk to Ilkhanid architecture (Ajourloo 2010), as a result of which, geometric tiles with a combination of bricks and tiles have been used to decorate the structural elements of the building at the entrance of Alaki Caravansarai. This caravansarai is one of the oldest buildings in the northwest of Iran, in which the technique of inlaid tiles and engraved tiles has been used to perform some part of the inscriptions and decorations. The engraved glaze technique can be seen in Iran from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, but, compare to other techniques, has been used less. This technique can also be seen in some 13th century Anatolian buildings such as İzzettin Keykâvus Tomb and the tomb in Boroujerdi school of Sivas. This technique has been used in Alaki in the spandrel of decorative brick coffering in the form of plant motifs and an example of it has been discovered in archeological excavations. The combination of plant and geometric designs and

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motifs in this building can be considered as one of the first examples of combined decoration of buildings with tiles in Ilkhanid period (Moradi and Omrani 2014).

7. Conclusion

The Alaki Caravansarai can be considered as one of the most important roadside residential buildings in northwestern Iran, which is located exactly on the Silk Road and on the Tabriz-Caucasus-Europe terminus. In this regard, the site has special importance. The size of the building and the quality of the entrance gate, which is recorded in the reports of travelers, as well as by the studies and images of architectural historians, indicate its importance. The quality of the building decoration corresponds to the transition from brick to tile techniques, the combination of these two methods, and the beginning of the popularity of some tile techniques such as inlay. Accordingly, the building can be attributed to a time after the Mongol invasion. On the other hand, according to the text of the Endowment book and the writer's emphasis on the construction of this building by himself, the date of construction of the building can be considered as the time of his presidency until the initial writing of the Endowment book between the years 697 to 709 AH (1297-1309 CE).

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رویکرد تاریخی به گاهشماری نسبی کاروانسرای الکی نزدیک مرند

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چکیده

با توجه به اهمیت تبریز در دوره‌های مختلف تاریخی پس از حمله مغول تا پایان دوره قاجار، به‌عنوان پیوسته پایتخت یا محل اقامت شاهزاده، ورود به این شهر در گزارش‌های مختلفی منعکس شده است. بیشتر خارجی‌هایی که از کشورهای اروپایی وارد ایران شده بودند از جاده قفقاز به تبریز آمده بودند و از ساختمان‌های زیادی در مسیر خود خبر دادند. علاوه بر این، این جاده یکی از مهم‌ترین جاده‌های کاروانیان در جاده ابریشم بوده که در آن ساختمان‌های مسکونی مختلفی ساخته شده است. کاروانسرای الکی یکی از مهم‌ترین اقامتگاه‌های کنار جاده‌ای شمال غرب ایران است که در سفرنامه‌های خارجی‌هایی که به ایران سفر کرده‌اند، گزارش‌های فراوانی درباره آن و کیفیت تزئینات نمای آن یافت می‌شود. وسعت و دروازه ورودی شیک آن، متاسفانه این بنا مورد بی توجهی قرار گرفته و در قرن نوزدهم و پس از آن در شرف ویران شدن بود. اما زیبایی دروازه ورودی آن مورد توجه بسیاری از مردم قرار گرفته و در منابع بسیاری گزارش شده است. منابع متاخر تاریخ معماری بر اساس تزئینات به کار رفته قدمت آن را به قرن دوازدهم و ایلخانی ابوسعید بهادرخان و دوره تیموریان تخمین زده‌اند. این منابع تخمین خود را تنها بر اساس نوع تزئینات به کار رفته در دروازه ورودی آن انجام داده‌اند و احتمال می‌رود وجود آثار تاریخی دوره ایلخانی در نزدیکی آن، مانند محراب مسجد جامع مرند، بر این گمانه زنی تأثیر داشته باشد. هدف این مقاله بررسی دقیق این بنا در سفرنامه‌های مختلف الوقفیه الرشیدیه و دیگر منابع تاریخ معماری و بررسی انواع تزئینات و تاریخچه آنهاست. بررسی دقیق اسناد و منابع حاکی از آن است که این بنا می‌تواند متعلق به دوره صدارت رشیدالدین فضل‌الله باشد و با توجه به تأکید وی بر تأسیس این بنا، می‌توان به تاریخ ۱۳۰۹-۱۲۹۷ اشاره کرد. تزئینات همچنین نشان دهنده دوره گذرا از آجرکاری تا کاشی کاری است که در اواخر قرن ۱۳ و اوایل قرن ۱۴ اتفاق افتاده است.

واژه‌های کلیدی: کاروانسرای الکی، بقایای باستان شناسی، منابع تاریخی، الوقفیه الرشیدیه، دوره ایلخانی.

