



# 'ABBĀSĀBĀD CARAVAN STATION

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'ABBĀSĀBĀD, flourishing caravan station of the Safavid period. It was located 92 km southeast of Varāmīn in the Sīāh-kūh, and it lay on the Safavid royal highway which led from Isfahan to the Safavid fortresses in Māzandarān. The itinerary was: Isfahan – Dombī – Čahārābād – Sardahān – Qaḷ'a-ye Sangī – Kāledābād – Āb-e Garm – Safīdāb – 'Abbāsābād – Rāh-e Sangfarš (a causeway across the salt desert) – Rasma – Amīnābād – Fīrūzkūh (Gadōk) – Pol-e Safīd – Sārī – the fortresses of Faraḥābād and Ašraf. 'Abbāsābād is notable for the remains of four constructions of the Safavid period.

1. The Kārvānsarāy-e Šāh 'Abbāsī is a freestone building with brick dome, strongly fortified with angle towers (thirteen-sided) and wall towers (nine-sided). It is a caravansery of medium size, 67 m along its principal (north-south) axis, 73.5 m along the transverse axis. The principal axis is terminated by a gateway at each end. The building has twenty-two guest rooms, each entered through a small front *ayvān*; these rooms are oriented toward the central, four-*ayvān* court (38.5 by 30.5 m). One of the rooms in the west *ayvān* is a more elaborate, two-story space for special guests. There are three extensive stables with domes above their main entrance (on the north) and corner areas. The structure has no preserved inscriptions. Judged from its plan, however, and on the basis of the masons' marks used by Shah 'Abbās I's court architects in Isfahan, the caravansery may have been built at the beginning of the 17th century.



2. Kārvānsarāy-e ‘Ayn-e Rašīd lies on the caravan route 3 km southwest of Kārvānsarāy-e Šāh ‘Abbāsī, on the way to Safīdāb. (There is also an older brick building, heavily damaged by earthquakes, near a saline spring.) This caravansery was built before the Šāh ‘Abbāsī. It is of average size: 52 m along its principal, west-east, axis; 56.5 m along the traverse axis; and it forms a court (25 by 20 m) with four *ayvāns*. Round towers fortify the walls and their angles. Inside, stables run continuously around the building. There are twenty-four guest rooms fronted by small *ayvāns* and facing the court. Again there are two gateways at opposite ends of the principal axis. The site is watered by a sweet water spring in the Sīāh Kūh. The building can be assigned to the early Safavid period on the basis of architectural details.

3. The Ḥaramsarāy is about one km south of the Šāh ‘Abbāsī. On three sides (covering an area of 52 by 50 m) it encloses a square court (37 m on a side), while on the north side two great halls flank an *ayvān* which opens into the court. The west and south sides of the building open only onto the outside. Water is brought in along the principal (north-south) axis through canals from, ultimately, a spring in the Sīāh Kūh. The plan of the halls resembles those of buildings on the same royal highway at Dombī, Čahārābād, and Safīdāb. It seems justified, in view of the abundant wildlife of the region, to regard the Ḥaramsarāy as a hunting lodge. M. Siroux identified the buildings at Dombī and Čahārābād as barracks, (see bibliog.), but the rich architectural ornament in all these buildings does not indicate that they were designed to be military quarters.

4. The Rāh-e Sangfarš is a stone-paved road (ca. 5 m wide) which begins 6 km north of Šāh ‘Abbāsī and crosses the salt desert (*kavīr*), stretching north for about 35 km toward the caravan station of Rasma. It is built up as a causeway with bridges over occasional saline watercourses. The road was built at ‘Abbās I’s order.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Gabriel, *Erforschung*, p. 86 (map drawn by Thomas Herbert). Herbert describes the Šāh ‘Abbāsī caravansery at “Syacow” and traversed the Rāh-e Sangfarš (see, e.g., the French tr., *Relation du voyage de Perse et des Indes orientales*, Paris, 1673, pp. 267-68).

Siroux, *Anciennes voies et monuments*, pp. 13, 29, 91, 277; on Dombī and Čahārābād, *ibid.*, pp. 100f.