



BĀZĀR-E WAKĪL

BĀZĀR-E WAKĪL, an architectural monument of Shiraz from the reign of Karīm Khan Zand (Wakīl, r. 1163-93/1750-79) and still an important center of business. No contemporary historian gives the exact date of its completion, but Moḥammad Šādeq Nāmī (d. 1204/1789-90) states that during the four years beginning in 1183/1769-70, four *bāzārs*, a square, and an impressive building for use as an audience hall (*dīvān-kāna*) were constructed at Shiraz, in a large space between the citadel and the seraglio, under the direction of some famous architects, artists, and master-carpenters (p. 153). The Bāzār-e Wakīl must therefore have been completed sometime between 1183/1770 and 1187/1774. The site was probably not vacant; it can be inferred from a sketch made in the Safavid period by the French traveler Chardin that Karīm Khan's *bāzār* and other buildings replaced earlier structures dating from at least Safavid times (Homāyūn, p. 16). These had probably fallen into ruin as a result of wars and civil strife, and must have either been rebuilt by order of Karīm Khan or demolished so that the sites and materials could be used for his new buildings. Karīm Khan is said to have conceived the plan of the Bāzār-e Wakīl after he had inspected one of the remaining edifices built in the reign of Shah 'Abbās I, namely the *qayşariya* (market) of the merchants of Lār (Karīmī, p. 68).

The Bāzār-e Wakīl was built on the road from the Tang-e Allāh Akbar to the former Isfahan gate, a short way inside that gate. It runs from northeast to southwest, in the direction of Mecca (the *qebla*). Stone, baked brick, gypsum mortar, and wood were used in the construction of the *bāzār*—stone in the foundations and lower parts and in the raised platforms of the front rooms of



the shops, baked brick in the walls and vaults, wood in the doors and doorways of the rooms. The *bāzār* consists of four sections (*rāsta*) laid out in the form of a cross, the longer northern and southern *rāstas* being intersected by shorter eastern and western *rāstas*. Lord Curzon (II, p. 122) states that the length of the *bāzār* (i.e., of the northern and southern *rāstas* and the space at the intersection) was 500 yards. The space at the intersection, called the *čahārsū*, is octagonal and roofed with a lofty cupola. No trace remains of a pool which once existed in the center of the *čahārsū*, nor of an arcade by the *čahārsū* where, according to Curzon (ibid.), merchants met and discussed business. The southern *rāsta* has forty-one arches up to the *čahārsū*; it used to be called the drapers' *bāzār* (Bāzār-e Bazzāzān) on account of its many drapery shops. The northern *rāsta*, which had forty-eight arches, became known as the hatters' *bāzār* (Bāzār-e Kolāhdūzān) because most of the shops in it were occupied by hatters. The eastern *rāsta*, with nineteen arches, had shops specializing in thread, lace, tape, and braid, and was called the *bāzār* of the braid-makers (*‘allāqabandān*). The western *rāsta*, with eleven arches, was called the *bāzār* of the quiver-stitchers (*tarkešdūzān*), having been occupied in the old days by saddlers and makers of quivers. On the west side of the southern *rāsta* (drapers' *bāzār*) and roughly halfway along it, there is another *bāzār*, with eleven arches, reached through a portal not far from the Masjed-e Wakīl; formerly the precinct of the sword-makers, it is still called the sword-makers' *bāzār* (*šamšīrgarān*).

In addition to the shops, which occupy rooms symmetrically placed inside each arch, five rather large caravanserais containing storerooms and workrooms for merchants and craftsmen were built in the Bāzār-e Wakīl. Four of these caravanserais are in the northern *rāsta*; three are on the east side, namely (from south to north) the Kārvānsarā-ye Rowḡanī, the Kārvānsarā-ye Aḥmadī, and the Gomrok-ḵāna (according to Curzon the biggest), and one is on the west side, namely the Kārvānsarā-ye Qawāmī. The fifth caravanserai, which contains merchants' offices, lies on the north side of the swordmakers' *bāzār* and is known as the Kārvānsarā-ye Fīl (Caravanserai of the elephant).

In order to extend Zand Avenue, the present main street of Shiraz, eight arches and parts of the Qawāmī and Rowḡanī caravanserais were demolished in the early reign of Reżā Shah Pahlavī. Thus the Bāzār-e Wakīl now consists of two parts separated by the eastern stretch of Zand Avenue.

Mme Dieulafoy, who together with her husband visited Shiraz in 1881,



describes most of the city's historic buildings but makes only a passing reference to the Bāzār-e Wakīl (tr. Faravašī, p. 436). E. G. Browne, who was in Shiraz in 1888, mentions that the sale of English and other imported goods was then chiefly in the hands of Armenian and Zoroastrian merchants established in the Rowḡanī caravanserai (p. 314). Curzon (ibid.) describes the Bāzār-e Wakīl as he saw it in 1890, remarking that it was the finest and busiest *bāzār* in Iran and that Shiraz was then a major center of foreign trade. The most vivid picture has been left by the French traveler and novelist Pierre Loti (1850-1923): “We came in through the saddlers’ *bāzār*, which is the finest in the city and looks like an immensely long nave of a church. It was built during the last glorious days of Shiraz, in the middle of the 18th century, by a Regent of Persia named Kirim-Khan who had made the city his capital and restored some of the old dignity and prosperity. It is a long avenue, built entirely of slate-gray bricks, with a very high roof vaulted in such a way as to form a continuous series of small cupolas. A little light enters through ogival apertures, and every now and then a flash of sunshine comes down like a golden arrow, falling sometimes on a superb silk carpet, sometimes on a wonderfully embroidered saddle, or perhaps on a group of women, black ghosts with small white masks busy haggling in low voices” (pp. 107-08).

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