



Anar Caravanserai, Kerman Province

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ABSTRACT

Caravanserai has played a key role in the growth and prosperity of trade, the expansion of cultural relations and the spread of traditions, and the creation of cultural recognition and understanding throughout the history of Iran. The creation of a wide network of caravanserais in Iran with special architecture and influenced by the climate and environment has become a vital solution for the creation, expansion, and integration of business networks inside Iran, and this has been important since the Safavid era with the construction of caravanserais known as Shah Abbasi. The special architecture of caravanserais and their importance and place in the history of Iranian architecture is such that in 2023, 56 Iranian caravanserais were registered in the list of world heritage sites. Kerman province is one of the richest provinces of Iran in terms of sequence and historical sequence and significant historical monuments, which has a special place in archaeological studies and architectural history; unfortunately, its northern areas, especially the Anar district, have received less attention from archaeologists and researchers in the field of cultural heritage. In 2019, Anar city was investigated archaeologically and 120 artifacts were identified. Historical buildings had an important place among these, and the two caravanserais of Astaneh and Bayaz are identified in this survey, which will be introduced below. These two caravanserais belong to the Safavid period and have been completely restored and renovated in different periods, especially in the Qajar and contemporary periods.

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Introduction

Kerman Province is located in southeastern Iran and encompasses over 11% of Iran's total area, making it the largest province in the country. Kerman is the ninth most populous province in Iran and is considered one of the country's most important and historic provinces. Kerman is the most important city in southeast Iran. The province of Kerman also has more than 660 nationally registered sites, with 7 sites listed as UNESCO World Heritage sites (Fig. 1).

The Anar district is located in the northwest of Kerman Province. Anar was designated as a district in May 2002. Amin Shahr, the rural districts of Hossein Abad, Deh Raeis, and Torab Abad are among other areas in this district. Anar is bordered to the north and northwest by Yazd Province, to the east and southeast by Rafsanjan District, and to the west and southwest by Shahr Babak District. The majority of the people in Anar are engaged in agriculture, with pistachios being its main agricultural product due to water scarcity and low water quality. The Anar, meaning "flowing waters," comes from the attributes of Anahita, the ancient Persian goddess.

Methodology

In this paper, we have utilized various methods to regulate and present information. Basic information was gathered through archaeological surveys conducted in the Anar

District in 2020. To fully document the sites, we visited the site location, employed satellite and aerial images, captured photographs, and created architectural plans. Additionally, we conducted library research and comparative studies based on published information about Iranian caravanserais, with a particular focus on the studied area. By comparing the identified caravanserais with existing samples and establishing a relative chronology, we adjusted the research background. This paper highlights the significant role that communication and commercial roads have played in the development of urbanization and civilization in the center of the Iranian plateau. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of caravanserais in facilitating the continuity of life and maximizing the efficiency of these roads.

Discussion

Archaeological Investigations in Anar district

The archaeological survey of Anar District, Kerman Province, was carried out in June 2020 with the permission of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute. During these projects, all cities and villages of this district were visited, and many areas were surveyed. Before surveying each district, aerial photographs, maps, and Google Earth images of the region were reviewed, and then, after identifying the areas of interest, all the marked locations were visited. The assistance of local guides and officials was also obtained in all the areas (Fig. 2).

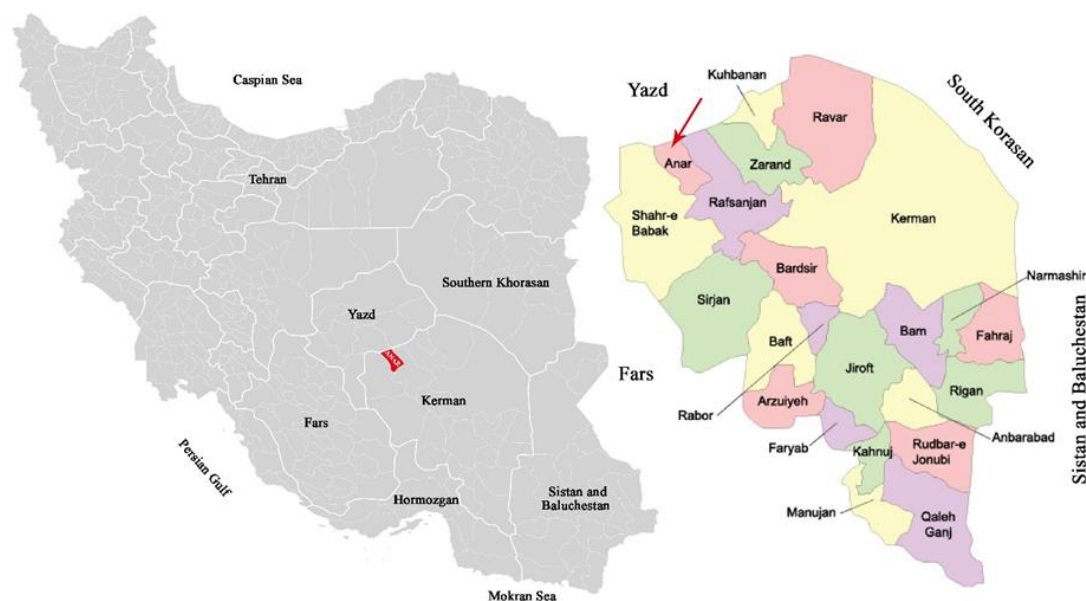


Figure 1: Map of Iran and the political divisions of Kerman Province (Azizi Kharanaghi *et al.*, 2023: 21).

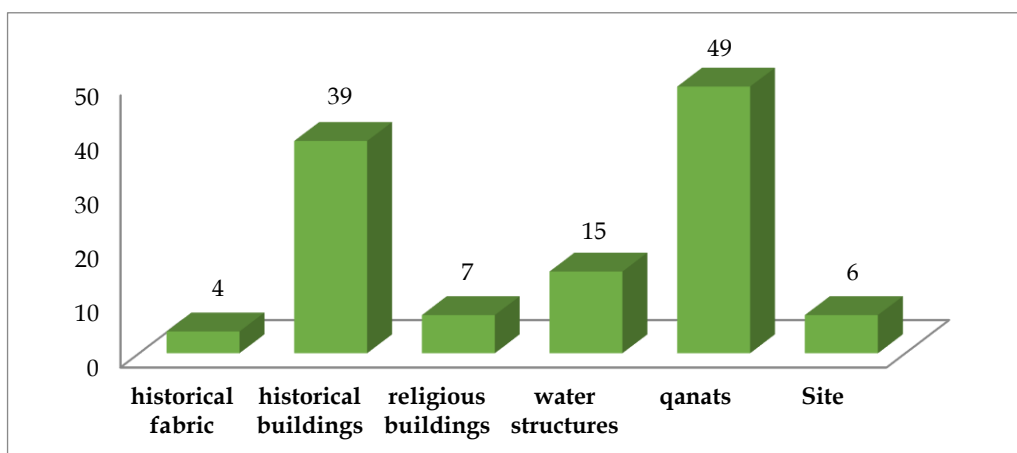


Figure 2: Classification of the identified archaeological remains in the Anar archaeological survey (Azizi Kharanaghi *et al.*, 2023: 23).

During the survey, which was carried out for nearly a month in Anar District, 120 cultural/historical sites were identified, chronologically, the oldest date back to the Epipaleolithic period, and the most recent ones are from the late Islamic era (Qajar/Pahlavi). The identified remains can be generally classified into 6 different categories (Fig. 2), including: 1- Archaeological sites (6 sites), 2- Qanats (49 sites), 3- Water structures (15 sites), 4- Religious buildings (7 sites), 5- Historical buildings (39 sites), and 6- Historic urban contexts (4 cases).

During the archaeological survey of Anar District 39 historical buildings were identified, the chronology of which ranges from the historical period (Parthian/Sassanid) to the late period, i.e. the Pahlavi era (Fig 4). Generally, these remains are divided into 8 different categories. Among them, the Astaneh and Biayz caravanserais are introduced (Azizi Kharanaghi & Jamshidi Yeganeh, 2022).

Research Background on Iranian Caravanserais

The study of historical Iranian architecture shows the development of its characteristics over the past fifteen centuries. In each era, various buildings with different features were constructed in villages, cities, caravan routes, desert areas, mountain passes, and coastal towns, serving diverse purposes. One such building with a unique function is the caravanserai.

Caravanserais have been of particular interest in Iran since ancient times, given the prevailing

social, economic, and religious conditions (Kiani, 2014: 7-13).

Iran's geographical location and its position as a connector between the civilizations of the West and East have made it an important communication hub throughout history, with many travelers and merchants passing through the region. In such circumstances, and considering Iran's climatic conditions and the long distances involved, the establishment of roadside buildings that could provide a resting place and adequate security for travelers became necessary and essential (Shanawaz & Khaqani, 2015: 25).

Caravanserai Architecture

Caravanserais can be classified into three main categories based on the climate: fully covered mountainous caravanserais, caravanserais on the low-lying coasts of the Persian Gulf, and courtyard-style caravanserais in the central regions. Although caravanserai architecture has seen advancements in form over the centuries, and there are similarities within each group, each caravanserai exhibits unique features that are remarkably diverse (Kiani & Claeys, 1983: 9-10).

The courtyard-style caravanserais in the central regions of Iran, which are considered the most important and finest examples in the country, can be further categorized architecturally into several sub-types: circular caravanserais, polygonal courtyard-style caravanserais, caravanserais with columned halls, two porches and four porches caravanserais, and caravanserais with irregular

plans (*Ibid*: 13-15). These caravanserais were equipped with wind towers that brought cool air into the rooms during the summer months (Zalou-Abi, 2013: 15). Most of these caravanserais have a central courtyard, with two or four large porches (vaulted halls) surrounding the central space. This introverted and enclosed plan is a climatic advantage in the hot and dry regions, as the solid exterior shell, except for the entrance, protects the interior spaces from the desert winds and unfavorable weather conditions (Aali *et al.*, 2016: 3). The typical plan of caravanserais in hot and dry regions consists of a central courtyard with rooms around it, and the stables are located in the outermost layer of the building. These structures are constructed using brick and mud (Pourmohammad, 2013: 10).

Astaneh Caravanserai

This caravanserai is located on the eastern side of the Imamzadeh Mohammad Saleh shrine, with a northeast-southwest orientation. It was situated on the historical communication route connecting Kerman to Yazd and Isfahan. The Geography of Kerman by Ahmad Ali Khan Vaziri identifies the builder of this structure as Mohammad Ibrahim, son of Haji Allahverdi from Kerman (Vaziri, 1998: 296).

The entrance to the caravanserai is from the southwest side, with eight small vaulted porches

on both sides of the entrance, built for the accommodation of the caravans. There is a fireplace in the middle of the porches and a niche above the fireplace. The plan of the caravanserai is rectangular with four porches. The total area is around 2,000 square meters, and the entrance has a domed, square plan that connects the entrance door to the central courtyard.

The courtyard plan is an irregular octagon (Fig. 3). On both sides of the central courtyard, there are four small porches and one larger porch, symmetrically arranged with pointed arches. The central porch is deeper than the other chambers and a room is built at the end of each. On the side opposite the entrance corridor are two small porches on the sides and a deeper central porch, each with a room or storage space at the end. A fireplace or stove is built into the wall at the center of all the small porches.

The architectural plan of this caravanserai is similar to the Safavid plans, but it is listed in the National Heritage List as being from the Qajar period. Based on the available evidence, this caravanserai was built during the Safavid era and was later restored, particularly during the Qajar period. Today, it has been fully renovated and is used for accommodation and hospitality purposes.

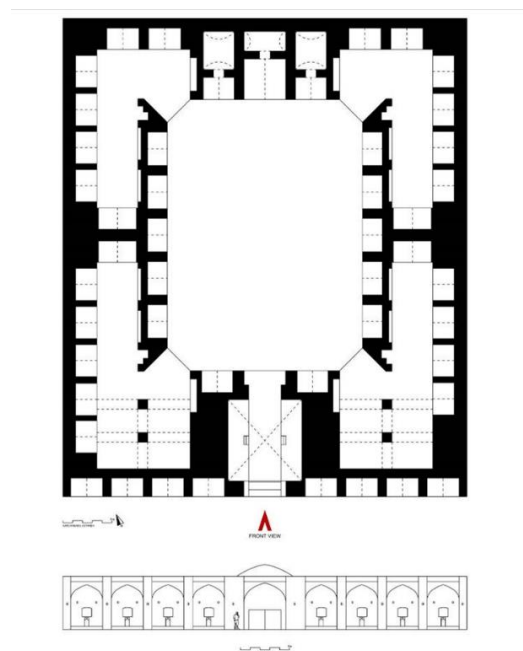


Figure 3: Plan and View of the Astaneh Caravanserai.

Bayaz Caravanserai

This building is located in the Bayaz district, about 150 meters north of the communication road between Kerman and Anar, approximately 25 kilometers west of the city of Anar. The plan of this building is four-iwan (vaulted hall) and oriented in the northeast-southwest direction. The total area is around 2,500 square meters, with a length of 51 meters and a width of 50 meters. All the roofs of the caravanserai are domed, and the entrance is from the northeast side. There are small iwans on both sides of the entrance for the accommodation of the caravans.

There is an open entrance that leads to the central courtyard through a corridor. There are two small iwans on either side of the entrance corridor, with rooms behind them (Fig. 4).

The side opposite the entrance corridor is symmetrical, but the main iwan on that side has collapsed. On the southeastern and northwestern sides, there is a central iwan with two smaller iwans on either side, but the southeastern iwan has also collapsed. Behind the northwestern iwan, there is a two-story space, with the upper level being lower in height.

The construction materials of the caravanserai are brick, mud, and plaster, and its date of construction is attributed to the Safavid to the Qajar periods. Various restoration efforts have been carried out on the building over different eras, and more recent renovations have been done using different techniques. Currently, the structure is abandoned and left in a derelict state.

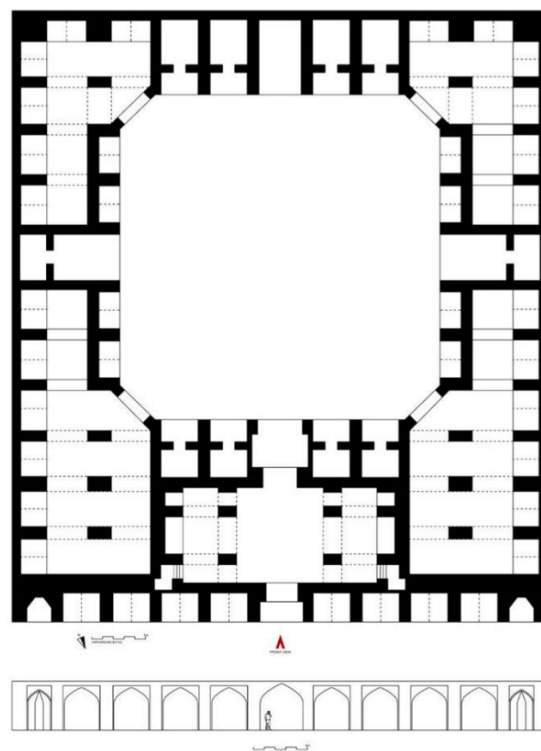


Figure 4: Plan and View of the Bayaz Caravanserai.

Conclusion

Anar is one of the northern cities of Kerman province that was subjected to archaeological surveys in 2020. During this survey, 120 cultural-historical sites were identified. Several historical buildings, mostly from the late Islamic periods, were identified, among which the Astaneh and Bayaz caravanserais were recognized. These two

caravanserais have rectangular plans, central courtyards, iwans (vaulted halls), small iwans, and surrounding chambers, belonging to the Safavid period, which have been completely restored during later periods.

The geographical location of Anar, situated between the main commercial centers in central

Iran (Fig. 5), namely Yazd, Kerman, and Fars, has historically made this area highly important for the passage of caravans, given the dry and desert conditions of the region. The necessity of constructing accommodation centers along the Yazd-Kerman route led to the construction of these two caravanserais. Anar is located on one of the main communication-commercial roads of Iran, and this factor has led to the construction of the Astaneh and Biyaz caravanserais in this area. In addition to the caravanserais, the presence of numerous Ab-Anbars (cisterns) in the region could have also provided the water needed by the caravans in the central Iranian deserts.

In conclusion, the archaeological survey of Anar has revealed the existence of two significant caravanserais, the Astaneh and Biyaz, which are prime examples of Safavid-era architectural heritage that were later restored during the subsequent periods. The strategic location of Anar along the major commercial routes of central Iran explains the importance of constructing such caravanserais to facilitate the movement and accommodation of caravans passing through this area.

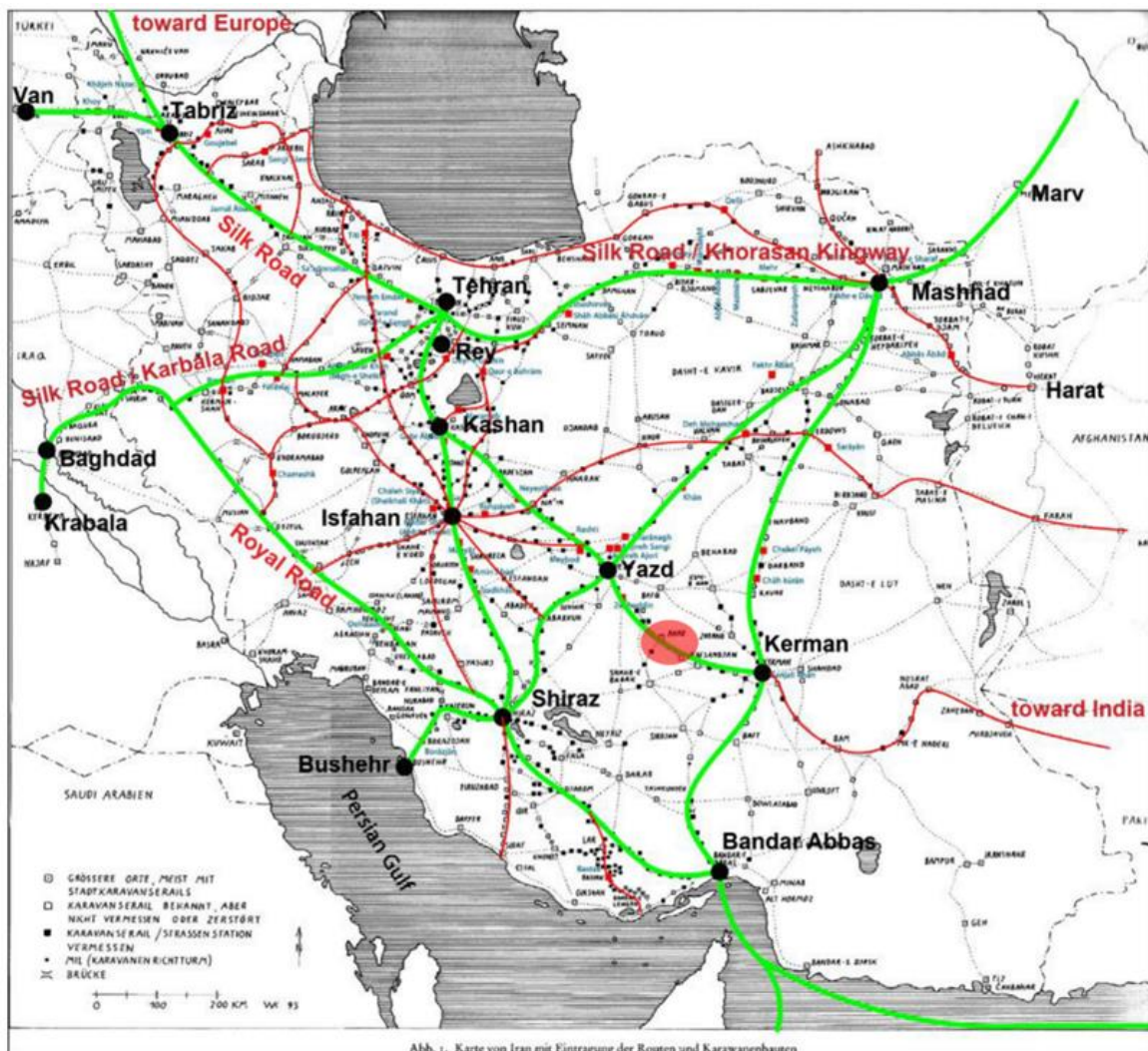


Figure 5: Main and Secondary Commercial Routes and the Location of Caravanserais in Iran (Talebian, 2022: 4), with the location of the Anar Caravanserais highlighted in red in the center of the image.

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