

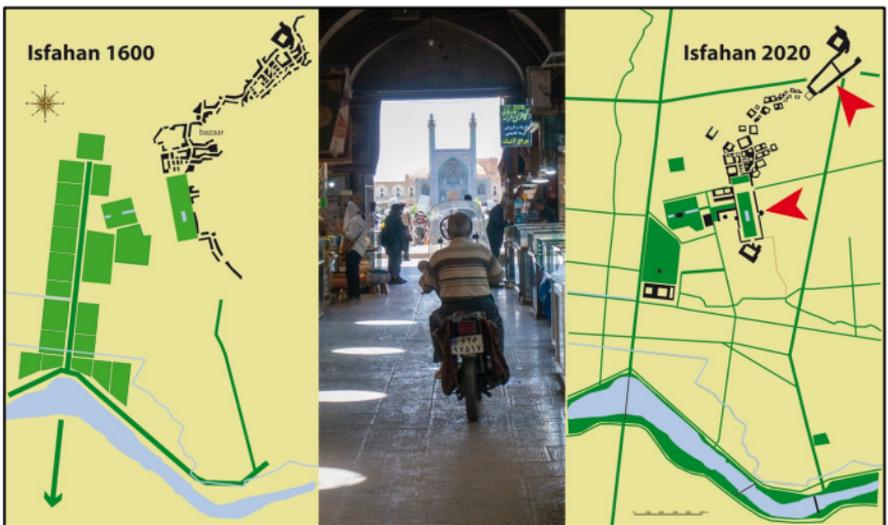
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bazaar -6- sjah

2022

The bazaar could traditionally count on warm interest from rulers, including Shah Abbas I (see the photo above).

When Isfahan became the country's capital in 1598, Shah Abbas I had an expansion plan drawn up in which the bazaar played a not unimportant role. He wanted a new, green city next to the old city. He built a huge square on a trading route that already had a bazaar — see the lowermost red arrow in the drawing below. He added buildings around the square and a bazaar with two aspects: one that was inward-facing and introvert, and one that was outward-facing and extravert. Seen from the famous square, the bazaar takes on the form of a shop front (see the photos below).



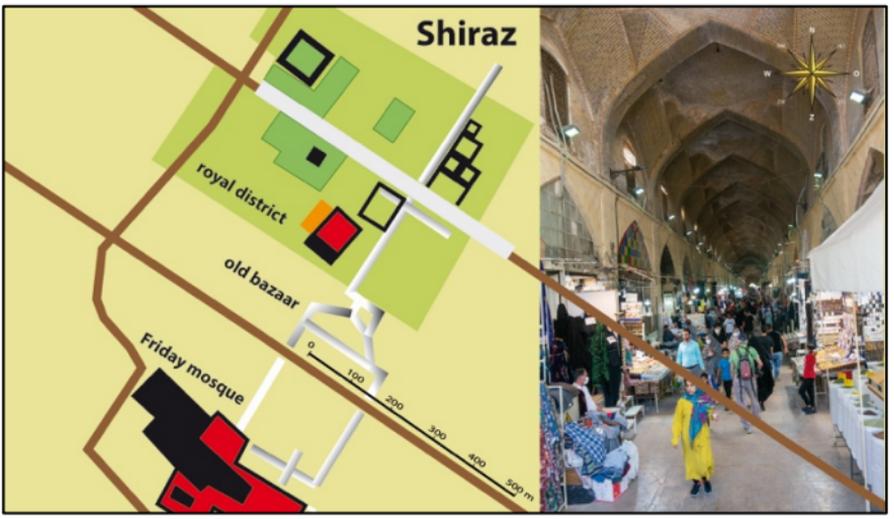
Incidentally, the square looked different in the time of Shah Abbas I. It served as a place for playing polo and for military parades and was in fact an unpaved stretch of mud. Now it is a neatly mown park with fountains, a place where locals sit on the grass and chat to one another as evening approaches.



A similar square with adjoining bazaar was built in the north of the city centre a few years ago. It became possible after an underpass was built for the roads, allowing a direct path again from the old bazaar to the Friday mosque to the north (see the uppermost red arrow in the drawing above). This second square has been not nearly as successful as the one mentioned above. The bazaar on the east of the square is languishing, for instance. In our opinion, the biggest problem with this square is the lack of greenery. It makes the square feel rather uninviting (compare the photos of the two squares below).



Like Isfahan, Shiraz was also the capital for a while, namely from 1750 to 1789. The then ruler Karim Kahn had apparently drawn lessons from his predecessor's plans in Isfahan because he too added a new, green district — the royal district — to the existing city centre. He extended the existing bazaar by building a new bazaar about 500 metres in length, and added a mosque, bathhouse and several caravanserais. He could not foresee that his bazaar (in the green area in the drawing below) would be cut in two in the 1930s by a straight road. That blunder has now been rectified with the construction of an underpass and metro, whereby the straight road has been given a new function as a promenade. Now people can once again walk leisurely back and forth between the southern and northern bazaars.



After years of neglect, the various caravanserais on either side of the bazaar passages are being renovated. The photo below shows a caravanserai that will eventually house a government institution.



Karim Kahn's legacy is being restored to its former glory, although without the camels. The bathhouse and mosque have also acquired a new function: they have become tourist attractions. We will come back to this topic in 'Bazaar 9'.

Next... Bazaar 7 – modern times