

# نگاهی نو به تاریخچه و معماری پل الله وردیخان

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## چکیده فارسی

این مقاله در بر دارنده دیدگاه‌های محققان مختلف و پژوهش‌های آنان در باره پل الله وردیخان است و به طور مختصر، بررسی دو موضوع مهم را هدف عمده خود قرار داده است. اول اینکه سازنده پل کیست و منابع در این باره چه می‌گویند؟ دو دیگر، بیان این نکته که در تاریخگذاری پل یعنی زمان آغازین ساخت و انجام آن، خطای فاحشی روی داده، پس زمان واقعی آغاز و انجام آن کدام است؟ علاوه بر این دو دیدگاه، ویژگی‌های مختلف معماری نیز بررسی شده است.

**کلید واژه:** پل الله وردیخان، سی و سه پل، صفویه، معماری و طراحی.

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# *A New Look To the Date and Architecture of Allah Verdi Khan ridge*

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## **Abstract:**

This article contains the views of different scholars and their researches about Allah Verdi Khan Bridge. In this brief study two important points have been highlighted. First, who is the probable constructor of the bridge and what the references tell about it. Secondly, the explanation about the grave mistakes of the foundation and completion dates of the bridge and thus argument about the exact date. In addition to these two points various architectural characteristics have also been highlighted.

**Keywords:** Allah Verdi Khan's Bridge, Sio Seh Pul, Safavid, Architecture and Design.

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# *A New Look to the Date and Architecture of Allah Verdi Khan Bridge*

## Introduction:

Allah Verdi Khan Bridge or Sio *Seh* Pul is one of the most important architectural pieces of Safavid era in their capital city of Isfahan and has become very famous due to its output and location. Due to this reason, a lot of studies with reference to its architecture, construction techniques, and contemporary art of the bridge have found dating error on the basis of the sources and available documents. This error was occurred because of the fact that this bridge was mistakenly related to the bridge of Golpaigan. In this article the exact date will be highlighted through various historical references and traveler accounts.

According to the architectural evidence, the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge was constructed during the reign of Shah Abbas Safavids (996-1038/ 1588-1629), which is situated at Chaharbagh Street in the city of Isfahan. The bridge was built over the river Zayendeh in the north- south direction and during Safavids the Old Chaharbagh and New Chaharbagh or Hazar Jareeb (Thousand Acre) areas and Armenian quarters were also constructed adjacent to each other (Iskander Beg Munshi, 1350:544-545; Dilavaleh, 1348:41; Kempfer, 1350:189; Flandan, 1356:163). The historical sources have referred this bridge with different names such as *Chahel Cheshmeh*, *Allah Verdi Khan*<sup>1</sup>, *Chaharbagh*, *Julfa*, *Sio Seh Cheshmeh*, and *Sio Seh Pul* (Iskander Beg Munshi, 1350:544; Tavernie, 1336:396; Sharden, 1345:152; Flandan, *op,cit*; Curzon, 1349:56; Isfahani, 1368:42; Dusarsi, 1362:181; Brogesh, 1368:381; Jaberi Ansari, 1322:190). It has been called Chahel Cheshmeh because of the fact that in the initial construction it had 40 arched openings (Iskander Beg Munshi, *op. cit*).

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1. From celebrated commander of Shah Abbas Safavid who was actually Armenian from Georgia and came as a slave during Shah Tahmasp I and was converted to Islam. Gradually he reached to the position of the Incharge of Special Slaves. Allah Verdi Khan died in 1023 Hijri.

Application of the name Allah Verdi Khan was due to its construction with his hand (Shardan, 1345:op.cit) and since it is situated on the Chaharbagh Street and adjacent to the Julfa quarters the bridge was also called as Chaharbagh and Julfa (Ibid). In recent time, however with mistake, with respect to the number of the arches it has, the bridge has been also known as Sio Seh Pul, though the number of existing arches /vaults are 34 (Neekzad Ameer Hussaini, 1335:18; Honarfar, 1344:487).

Historical sources of the Safavid era have not mentioned the name of the builder of the bridge and thus, Tavernier is the first traveler mentioning the name of Allah Verdi Khan as the founder of the bridge (Tavernier, 1336:396). Following him other traveler accounts and historical documents have put forward his name as the maker of the bridge (Shardan, 1345:152; Kempfer, 1350:189; Flandin, 1356:163; Curzon, 1349:56; Brogsh, 1368:380; Jaber Ansari, 1322:190). The writing of Figarua, Spanish Ambassador to the court of Shah Abbas gives more strength to the view of Tavernier. His saying that Allah Verdi Khan would have built the bridge had also doubted in the same period (Figarua, 1362:211-216) and this doubt and number of accusations have considerably pointed towards the enemies of him, although Allah Verdi Khan was charged with the expenses of the construction of the bridge (Ibid). In spite of all, the reluctance to the specifying of the name of the founder of the bridge has been viewed with due attention to the construction of a bridge at Lar in Shiraz in 1010 by the assistance of Allah Verdi Khan (Munajjem, 1366:211-216). Due to the accumulation of experiences Shah Abbas appointed him alone to complete the work. In this way, after the construction of the bridge his name was famed as to builder, not that name who had founded it in real sense.

## Background of the Construction

Before making Isfahan his capital (Ibid, p.161; Iskander Beg Munshi, 1350:544) in winter 1006/1597 and after put special attention to that city which are reflected in the construction of the open fields, market places, streets and garden there. According to Iskander Beg Munshi's account Shah Abbas in 1005 set forth for the construction of the Chaharbagh street and in 1006 reconstruction works of Abbasabad or Hazar Jareeb areas were started to create a city form river Zayendeh. In the same year he planned to construct a bridge on Zayendeh river to connect the old Chaharbagh and Abbasabad (Ibid, p.13, 151, 162-163). Historians have mistaken the date of the completion of the bridge by relating the record of Mirza Ali Naqi Kamrayee (923-1031/1529-1622) about Golpaigan Bridge with that to the bridge of

Allah Verdi Khan in Isfahan (Nakhjuwani, 1345:79; Ibid, 1350:4-5, 7-8). Historians have referred to the manuscript of Mullah Ali Naqi Kamrayee

Which have been endowed to the library of Madarseh Sepahsalar by Mirza Hussain Sepahsalar (1298) which highlights this notorious error. In the epigraphic note of the manuscript that contains (Copy of the 5 verses quote a phrase:

"Time of the Jarbadeghan Bridge that is famous, has been completed reflecting the view" and in the last line of the couplet the date 1005 has been mentioned. In the other work of the manuscript nothing has been written about Allah Verdi Khan Bridge in Isfahan (Copy of the manuscript of kamare, p.360). From other phrase conflicting question arises that how is it possible that the big bridge such as Allah Verdi Khan whose construction was ordered in 1006 had already completed in 1005. However, according to the writing of Mulla Jalal Munajem, the construction of the bridge was completed in 12 rajab 1011 (Munajem, p.237; Jaberi Ansari, p.190) and Shah Abbas also built "Khana-e Dilgusha Shadash Tarikh" to commemorate the completion of the bridge. The first couplet has mentioned the date of 1011 (Munjem, 1366: op.cit) and Shah Abbas also built 'Khana-e Dilgusha Shadash Tarikh' to commemorate the completion of the bridge. The first couplet has mentioned the date of 1011 (Munajem, op.cit).

Nothing has been mentioned regarding the designer or the architect of the bridge and the description of Jalal Uddin Munajem that "well known and experienced architect and designers were employed" is not satisfactory, too (Ibid).

## Architectural Features

From architectural point of view this monument (that has been recorded in the list of historical monuments with serial no. 110 (Meshkuti, 1349:54) has highlighted to the important points that the riverbed of the Zayenda on which the bridge had been constructed does not have much intensity and only due to its large width, it looks full with water (Figarua, 1362:221). Foundation or the real base of the bridge was made with lime and stone and gradually constructed above with the help of brick and plaster. Construction materials, used by Safavid architects were always, keeping in view the ecological condition of Isfahan. With this arrangement, walls were built with brick and the lower parts or pillars with the help of stone. Sidewalls were constructed on both side of the bridge with the intention of the

protection of the riverbank, which also helps the river course in the long run. The dais of the bridge with the increase of the water level in the Zayendeh River helped to irrigate the nearby farms and gardens (Richards, 1343:55). System of water reserve in the small basin before the pillars was of the river was during summer or at the time of the shortage of water which flew from the sloppy part below the bridge. The bridge has 290 meter long and 13/75 meter wide( Moatamidi,1321:93) rested on 34 pillars each with a diameter of 3/49 (Pop,1967:1234). Upper part of the pillars has been constructed with bricks while the lower part that is in the water is spherical stone. These pillars from both side measuring 3 meters forward (Shardan, 1345:151) and both the extremes up to few meters are covered with the big stone slabs for the purpose of firmness and to protect from erosion. The shape of the pillars has created 34 fountains with arches, which have been extended to the total length of the bridge. From north to south the order of these opening arches are: 2 opening of 3/5 meters; 28 are of 5/20 meters; one is of 3/5 meter; 2 are 5/6 meter; and one opening of 3 meters. So far as the width of the bridge is concerned, there are famous Shah Abbasi arc on the brick arches on every two pillars and also the arched roof measuring 537 meters like the way of hawkers between every four pillars (Mahmoodiyan,1348:154). Floor and sheep area of the bridge and the riverbed up to about 13/5 meters east have been constructed with stone chips(Ibid; Kempfer,1350:189; Deulafoa,1361:213).Waterways are present in this section, which guides the water to section below and bottom of the river. Fencing the floor of the bridge and riverbed and creation of waterways apart from facilitating water, also help clearing blockade, damages around the pillar and erosion of riverbed. This fencing work was possibly due to the sedimentation activity of waterways. The bridge contains four pairs of stone towers, which are more than three meters in diameter that are rested on the strong pillars and give more solidity to the construction, in the event of arriving army divisions and the transitions of heavy cargo.

Two towers are in the initial section of the bridge and other two of them are at the distance of two arches. The gates of these towers open towards pedestrians crossing, it seems, in order to check heavy forces on the bridge. It seems that the spaces created in the riverbed because of the forces of the water that probably would have caused erosion in the pillars.

Bridge has six thoroughfares; three of them are original *while rest is subordinate and* recreative. The first thoroughfare that is situated on the bridge consists with two gentle slopes in the north and south direction connecting two streets of Old and New Chaharbagh. Thickness of the sidewall of this thoroughfare is 1/82 meter with height of 4/26 and 4/57 meters(Shardan,1345:151).Middle road of the bridge, which is for the

special crossing, for cart, and animal crossings, has 7/63-meter width (Tavernieh, 1336:397). This thoroughfare refreshes the memory about the pedestrian and motor crossing years ago.

Second and third thoroughfares are situated on the eastern and western side of the bridge. Each of them has roofed entrance chambers measuring 2/43-2/73 meter. These thoroughfares are extended in the total length of the bridge where the ceiling is rested on arches and pillars with the height of 7/62-9/14 meter (Ibid). These two thoroughfares with chambers have been separated in between to make the caravan crossing easy and support the proper wind flow (Pope, 1967:1235). These two thoroughfares were just like the modern pedestrian crossings. Frontal rooms, which are like house, have been closed but some of them that are opened probably bring spectacular joy for the river sight. Coordination and order have been followed in between arches of these two thoroughfares, which also have fountains. According to this arrangement on every pillar one arch has been created and on every fountain two arches have been made and this order has been followed through out the length of the bridge (Ibid, 1237).

According to Flandan who had visited Iran in 1257/1841 that the long course of chambers found to be coffee house for the public convenience (Flandan, 1356:163).

Fourth and fifth thoroughfares, which are exited above the corridor of the two sides of the bridge, were also utilized. Entrance to these lines were from the beginning towers of the bridge and were very much crowded when the weather was still not hot where people amused during their leisure times. Protection of the sidewalls and the presence of the latticework through out the lane of the bridge make it more beautiful.

Sixth thoroughfare is below the bridge, at the section where there is waterways. Inside the fountain on every two feet square stone slabs have been fixed on which one can jump or cross the width of the bridge during low level of the water in the river. These are arched thoroughfares, which are extended to the whole length of the bridge. In the western rib of the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge, two daises have been constructed. In one of these room had wall paintings. These paintings were immoral and sentimental scenes had been coming for exhibition (Shardan, 1345:152; Pope, 1967:1235; Morgen, 1967: 1388). It seems that after the completion of the bridge these paintings were made in the rooms.

Historical sources of Safavids period have been indicating towards Ab Pashan (Water Scattering) ceremony below the Allah Verdi Khan Bridge and also Gul-e Rezan (Flower Festival) in that area/ People of Isfahan celebrated the Jashn-e Abrezan (Rain ceremony) in the Bahman month on the bank of Zayendeh in front of the bridge spread up to the end of

Chaharbagh street. Shah Abbas himself, for that ceremony, was present from the early morning and whole day he used to watch the ceremony from one chamber (Iskandar Beg Munshi, 1350:788). During Navruz celebration, too the bridge was decorated and illuminated and Shah Abbas always on the way took part in the Jashne Gul-e Rezan.

### **Conclusion:**

Therefore, this bridge was named Allah Verdi Khan's bridge because of the fact that on the one hand he was in charge of the construction expenses with the order of Shah Abbas; on the other hand he had previous experience of the construction of a bridge at Lar, Shiraz in 1010. In addition to that, the construction of the big bridge like Allah Verdi Khan whose construction order was issued in 1006 would not have been completed in 1005 as was mistakenly emphasized. In sum, this present study shows the bridge was constructed in 12 Rajab, 1011 within a span of five years.



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