

## **Analysis of the life and works of Architect Ali Tabrizi Famous Architect of the Ottoman Empire**

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### **Abstract**

This article is written based on the summary of the book named *Life and Works of architect Ali Tabrizi (Asir Ali-Ajam Ali)* written by Mahmoud Ghorbani in 2019 and all the contents mentioned in the book without interference are summarized separately in this article. According to this book, the artists of Tabriz had a significant impact on the creation of art schools in the architecture of Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and even Central Asia and India, and this city was the center of science and art production and had an art school for itself in every field. In this article, the life and works of the architect Ali Tabrizi, who is the creator of the Turkish art school in the Ottoman Empire, is discussed.

**Keywords:** ali Tabrizi, architecture,  
Ottoman Art School, Tabriz Art School

### **Introduction**

Tabriz is one of the oldest cities in the world. According to the excavations carried out in the Iron Age cemetery, it dates back to at least more than 1500 years BC. In the later era of Islam, it was prominent as a city. In the Seljuk era, it became the strongest and largest city in Azerbaijan. From the 12th to the 16th centuries AD, it was the capital of Atabakan of Azerbaijan, Khwarazmshahians, Ilkhanids, Chupanids, Jalayerids, Qara qoyunlu, Aq qoyunlu and Safavids, and it has been the crown prince since the Qajar era. Arghun Khan built a city in the western part of Tabriz in a region called Sham with the name of Arghuniyeh. There, he created magnificent buildings such as a garden, Adlia pavilion (justice court) and a Buddhist temple. Then, during the period of Ghazan Khan, the city of Arghunieh was developed under the name of Ghazanieh. A large mansion was built in the middle of the city, which had buildings such as the Jame Mosque, Shafi'I and Hanafi religious schools, observatory, Dar al-Shefa (hospital), library, Bait al-Qanun (justice court), Khanqah, Sadat's house, the trustee's house, bath and other buildings. The collection of these buildings was considered the most beautiful architectural examples of Tabriz which was built in 1297 AD and there was not like it in other parts of Iran.

The minister, Khwaja Rashiduddin Fazlullah Hamedani, built Raba Rashidi town, in the north of Tabriz, in 1300 AD which had 30 thousand beautiful

houses, 1500 shops, 24 caravanserais, schools, hospitals, teachers' houses, doctors' houses, student residences. Zarrabkhaneh (a mint), university buildings, paper mill building, dye house, weaving workshop, mosque, library, orphanage [Dar al-Masakin], guest house [Dar al-Diafe], water mill and other buildings were built. Khwaja Taj al-Din Alishah Jeilani also built a large mosque next to Mahad Mahin neighborhood [Miyar Miyar] in 1311 AD and built a big stage in it, which was bigger than the porch of a palace in Mada'in. The covered market of Tabriz was also expanded and a part was added to it, which was called Ghazani market, and it was the most prosperous market of its time in the world. According to Hamdullah Mostofi, there were such great buildings in Tabriz that were not similar to them anywhere in the world. With all these settlements, scientists, industrialists from Iran, China, Anatolia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt were settled in the towns of Shanb Ghazan in the Rashidi quarter and they developed all the arts within themselves, and Azerbaijan became a scientific center in the 14th-15th century. It became the culture of the East, and according to Hamdullah Mostofi, Tabriz during the Ilkhanate period was known as Qobbat ol-Islam.

The school of Tabriz found prosperity during Al-Jalayerids (jalayerids) period and Sultan Uweis Kafi built a palace with twenty thousand rooms in Tabriz and called it Dolatkhana. During this period, Tabriz is one of the centers of presence of artists. With the arrival of the Timurids, Timur moved a large number of artists from Tabriz to the east (Samarkand and Herat) and transferred the artistic essence of Azerbaijan to Central Asia. Among the craftsmen that Timur took from Tabriz to Samarkand in 1386 AD, there were many engineers, architects, builders, stonemasons, carpenters, ceramic producer, tile makers and engravers. But Tabriz itself was still the base of art and profession. A little later, Qara Quyunluh (1410-1467 AD) and Agh Quyunluh (1467-1501 AD) reached Tabriz, and in this period, Tabriz became the center of a new school of art called Turkman school. The Blue Mosque was completed in 1465 AD by the order of Jahan Begum Khatun, the wife of Shah of Qara Qoyunlu. This building, which is an architectural masterpiece of Azerbaijan, is called Firuzeh (turquoise) of Islam. Uzun Hasan AQ Quyunlu built the Nasriyeh Mosque in the north of Sahib al-Amr Square, whose gold-colored walls and turquoise tiles fascinate the viewer. The main and executive center of the Turkmen school is Hasht Behesht Palace. This palace was completed in 1487 AD. It had eight corners and each corner had 18 rooms. Sultan Yaqub, the son of Uzun Hassan, expanded the complex of this palace and added buildings to it. In this complex, there were mosques, schools, hospitals, guest houses, shrines, guest rooms, bare aam (public room), meeting and resting places for the king. In 1502 AD, Shah Ismail

made this city his capital after kicking out the last survivor of the Aq Qoyunlu from Tabriz. Shah Ismail captured Herat in 1510 and got hold of the treasures of Herat school and its artists and brought some **-The reasons for the presence of Tabrizi artists in the Ottoman court**

Before the Chaldiran war in 1473 AD, there was a battle near the village of Bashkent located in Otluq Beili, between Uzun Hassan AQ Qyunlu and Sultan Muhammad II, the Ottoman Emperor, which led to the defeat of the Turkmens of Azerbaijan. Diyarbakir was captured and many Turkmen court artists migrated to the Ottoman Empire. The defeat of the Turkmens of Aq Qoyunlu by the Safavid army in 1494 AD is another factor that caused some Azerbaijani artists to be sent to the Ottoman art workshop. The support of the Ottoman sultans to the artists and granting them many privileges while the political situation in Iran was unfavorable, was not ineffective. The strictness of Shah Ismail and his prejudices against the acceptance of the Shiite religion by the people caused the migration of many Sunni artists from Tabriz to the Ottoman court. Chaldiran war is also one of the important cases of the migration of Azerbaijani industrialists and artists to the Ottoman court. In 1514 AD, with the defeat of Shah Ismail from the Ottoman sultan Selim I, he entered Tabriz and took many artists from Tabriz with him first to the city of Amasya and then to Istanbul. Shah Ismail also moved many artists from Tabriz first to Qazvin and then to Isfahan.

**-The influence of Tabriz school artists on the formation of Istanbul art school:**

After the conquest of Istanbul by Sultan Muhammad Fatih in 1453 AD and the permanent capital of Istanbul, it caused the growth of the arts in this city. All the treasures and collections of the great kings of Azerbaijan, including the art treasures of the Ilkhanids, Jalayerids, Turkmens and Herat, which were collected in Tabriz and fell into the hands of Shah Ismail, after the defeat in the Battle of Chaldiran and the arrival of Sultan Selim in Tabriz, all these works along with Tabriz artists were sent to Istanbul. Today, the archive of Top Qapi museum contains items captured by Sultan Selim from slaves, Hasht Behesht palace, Mehtarkhane(martial music) and art professors. Also, during Shah Tahmaseb's time, he also sent the artistic masterpiece of Tabriz, Shahnameh Tahmasebi, to Ottoman Empire which caused the influence of Azerbaijan and Tabriz art school on Istanbul art school. Top Qapi Museum has "Ahli- Heraf" offices, which has collected the names of artists and students, their regulations and salaries. According to this book, most of the artists of the Ottoman court before the half of the 10th century of the Hijri were Tabrizian. Shah Qoli, one of the artists of Tabriz, created a new style in the Istanbul school known as "Sabksaz". The artist Habib Tabrizi played a great role in the art of tiling in Ottoman Empire.

artists like Behzad to Tabriz. They completed the incomplete copies of the Turkmen era and added illustrations in the style of Safavid Qizilbash.

Many of these tiles were used in the royal ceramic workshop of Istanbul under the supervision of architect Aladdin (architect Ali Tabrizi). All these painting movements took place with the cooperation of the painter Shah Qoli.

**-Architect Ali Tabrizi:**

In Ottoman documents, his name is used as Ajam Ali, Mimar Ajam Alisi, and Asir Ali, in this way, it is pointed out that he is from Azerbaijan and Tabriz. Sometimes he was confused with another Ottoman architect whose name is Ali and was nicknamed Aladdin. During the time of Sultan Salim, about 3000 scientists, poets, artisans, physicists, merchants and men of science and art were taken from Tabriz to Istanbul. In Hossein Arslan's book, his name is given as "Khwaja Pir Ali", supervisor of teachers. In his book, Hossein Effendi mentions Khwaja Pir Ali or as "Great Masters" and it is clear that there were certainly many works by him in Tabriz that no longer remain. The word Khwaja means "educated, teacher, trainer". The word PIR means "master, leader, someone who is an expert in any profession". In Istanbul, he became known by his new name, Memar Ajam Ali, "an architect from Iran and Azerbaijan". In 1519, Sultan Selim gave him the position of chief architect. In his dedication letter, Memar (architect) Ali introduces himself as "the great master, skilled chief engineer and known as the outstanding architect Alauddin Ali Beg son of Abdul Karim" and in the other dedication letter he introduces himself as "the perfect and great master and skilled engineer and chief architect, Alauddin Ali Beg son of Abdul Wahhab". Some people considered him to be a doshirme. That is, from the Yeni Cheri corps, which were Christians who were separated from their families and were trained to take on the duties of a Diwan(court of the king).

In the past, the word Ajam was mostly used for Khorasan and Turkistan, and the Ottomans also called Azerbaijan the land of Ajam, and the educated called it Ajami. Sevil Karimova mentions in her book that because of Memar Ali's cooperation with Prime Minister Ibrahim Pasha, who was later executed, he was in prison for a while, and for this reason, he was known as Asir Ali. Document 7624 of Top Qapi Museum is mentioned as "Ghulame Shahed" so that he was given the title of captive. Unfortunately, Frans Babinger and Leo Arane Mayer, have mentioned him in their books as "Ajam Isa". Aladdin Ali Beg from Ajam "Tabriz" is the same person with the architect named Aladdin Ali son of Abdullah who was in the association of Ajams, but some consider them to be two different people. Rafikal Malul Rich considers the architect Ali bin Abdullah to be the same architect as Ajam Ali. The dedication letter of the

architect Asir Ali Tabrizi introduces himself in the dedication letter of "the master and the famous engineer of the chief architect, especially Aladdin Ali

- 1- A mosque next to Yeni Qapu
- 2- Eight shops and some lands
- 3- Seven other shops
- 4- in Gharib Igitler Agassi neighborhood, a house consisting of three shops, seventeen rooms...
- 5- A house in Qizil Tash neighborhood
- 6- House and shop in Siliuri Qapu neighborhood
- 7- A house with a bakery and two rooms in Hamamchi Mohiuddin neighborhood
- 8- Two shops in Balat Qapu
- 9- House in Ahri neighborhood
- 10- House in Koja Jameh neighborhood
- 11- House and shop in Orne Qapu neighborhood
- 12- House, shop and bakery in Isa Qapusi neighborhood
- 13- The house around Yeni Baghche
- 14- House, shop, and a stable in Akerman neighborhood
- 15- House, shop, etc. in Manisa Chelabisi neighborhood
- 16- The house and the shop in Galata next to the artillery

The children of Memar Ali are Hamza Chalabi, Hassan Chalabi, Shami Khatun, Siti Khatun and his wife Fateme bint Hilal. He has done charitable work, including the establishment of schools. The architect Ali Tabrizi was very rich and all architects in the Ottoman Empire had high salaries. Architect Ali was a follower of the Khalvati Sect and built and dedicated many pillars. Two sects of Khalvati and Hurufi were common in ottoman empire, and the Khalvati had their roots in Azerbaijan, but the oppression of the Safavid government made them all flee to Ottoman, and the roots of the Khalvati disappeared in Tabriz.

#### **-Early Ottoman architecture**

It was prevalent until around 1500 AD and was derived from the Seljuk style architecture and includes:

- 1- Single dome mosque
- 2- Pillared mosques / Shabestani
- 3- Angular mosques or guesthouses
- 4- Mosques with a central dome

#### **-Classical Ottoman architecture**

It started from Bursa and reached Istanbul and spread within the Ottoman borders and its scope extended to Hungary, Iraq, Syria, Egypt and even India. There was a big dome and small domes around it. Bricks were used in the Seljuk period, but stone was used in the Ottoman period. After the 16th century in the Ottoman Empire, the construction of important buildings was done by "Khase Memarlar Ojaghi (special architects) ", a committee of court architects under the leadership of the master architect with the title "Khase Sarmemar Bashi" and the architect's

Beg son of Abdul Karim". The endowments made by Ajam Ali are:

colleagues and skilled workers. Also, they were responsible for the capital's water affairs, and Memarbashi and Su Naziri were "water supervisors" in the same group. The first chief architect of the Ottoman Empire is architect Ajam Alisi/ architect Ali Tabrizi.

Godfrey Goodwin in the book "Ottoman Architectural History" believes that the renovation of the military fortifications of Sultan Selim's period and the city walls were the first architectural works of Ali Tabrizi. Also, he believes that one should look for his other works in Iran, Syria and Egypt. In his book "Ottoman Architecture in the Period of Suleiman the Magnificent", Aydin Buksel considers the Jaisri Bridge of Mustafa Pasha in Bulgaria and the Khasaki Khorram Sultan complex in Aq Sarai in Istanbul to be the works of architect Ali Tabrizi. Architect Ali has built eight fountains in Amasieh and several fountains in Top Qapi. The architect Ali Tabrizi, by removing the side spaces that belonged to the Bursa style, placed the central dome directly on the walls without using a base and added the communal plan to the classic Ottoman architecture.

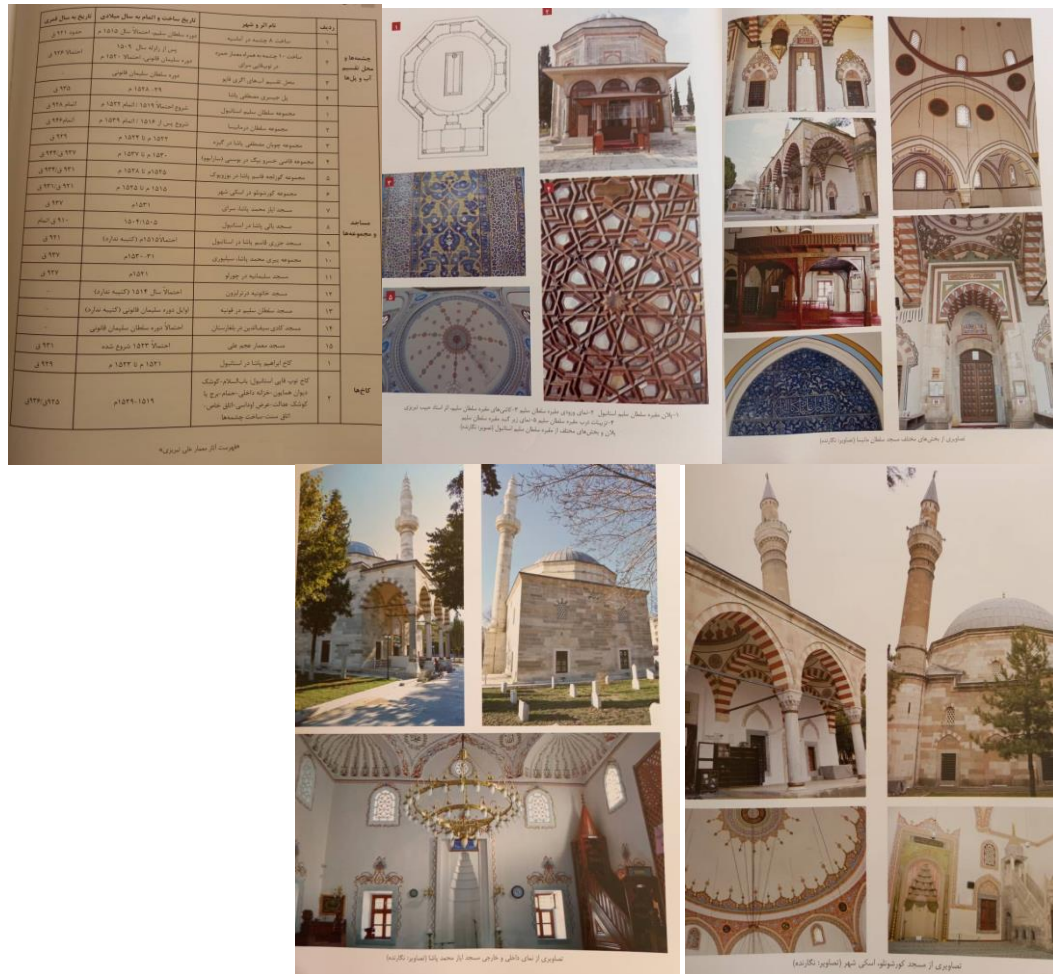
Sultan Selim Mosque is the most complete work of architect Ali Tabrizi. Architect Sinan has always been a follower of architect Ali and sometimes the works of architect Ali have been attributed to him. For example, Mustafa Pasha's shepherd complex in Gebze and Ibrahim Pasha's palace in Sultan Ahmed Square in Istanbul, all of which are the work of architect Ali Tabrizi. The Sultan Collection in Manisa, the Sultan Salim Mosque in Konya are among his other works. Only the mosques built by the sultans had two minarets and the rest had one minaret. Architect Ali has also built collections for ministers and governors, including two collections of Shepherd for Mustafa Pasha in Gebze and Eski Shahir. For Qasim Pasha, he built a complex of mosques, schools, children's schools, mansions, caravanserais and baths. The collection of Qazi Khosrow Beig, which he built in the Bosnian palace. Mohammad Pasha's Pir complex in Silyuri and Istanbul, in Bulgaria he built Kadi Seifuddin Mosque, which is called Banya Bashi. Bulgarians consider it an ancient work. Jalal Asad Arseon considered the architect Asir Ali Tabrizi to be the master of architect Sinan and the founder of Turkish classical architecture.

#### **-Conclusion**

Although many names and nicknames have been mentioned for the architect Ali Tabrizi and sometimes his works are even confused with the works of the architect Sinan, but he was a special architect and the first architect of the court of the Ottoman Empire and had many endowments that

show his rank and power. He is considered to be the creator of the Turkish art school in the Ottoman

Empire.  
 The sample works of architect Ali Tabrizi includes:



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