

The Spatial System in the Islamic City of Iran¹

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Abstract

City as the supreme symbol of the human civilization has developed in two different directions in Iran over time: before the advent of Islam when aristocracy ruled in Iran and religious figures acted as the mediators between men and God, the city had an appearance dictated by certain individuals. After the Arab conquest of Iran, the ideology that Islam introduced, i.e. regarding all as equals, shook the foundations of the aristocratic society of the time. As a result, people realized that they could directly connect to God without any mediator and this led to the removal of the positions of certain religious figures in the country. As a result, the city in the Islamic era became a modern outcome of the Islamic civilization due to the changes in the thoughts and beliefs of the Iranians. The spatial organization of the city thus became different from the pre-Islamic era. The new city was based on the needs of the society and its strengths were the public functions of which the most important was the mosque acting as a place for social gatherings and multiple functions.

Keywords

The spatial organization of the city, The Iranian city, The Islamic city, Social relations, The centrality of the city.

Introduction

City is the most outstanding manifestation of civilization. Various existing historical sites including Bishapur (Sarfaraz, 1987), Takht-e Soleyman (Sarfaraz, 1968), Nishapur and Gandeshapur (Pigulevskaia, 1993), Darabgard, Estakhr, Eyvan Karkhe, Al-Mada'in and Firuzabad (Huf, 1986) are clearly indicative of the unique characteristics of Iranian cities. The spatial organization of Sassanid cities bespeak of how they were raised based on the interests of the Sassanid elite group under the influence of the caste society of this empire. Reigning over Persia for four centuries, Sassanians truly reflected the then Persian culture in the cities they constructed. Sassanid cities were organized in a symbolic manner to suit the needs and demands of the royalties.

"Cities were raised orderly and according to plans, most of which...were constructed in the shape of a Chalipa [Persian cross]. They were fortified with heavy walls...the living and trading areas of the mass were separated from the governmental areas housing offices, shrines and the castle." (Hof, 1986: 187)

The spread of Islam in Persia was followed by a change in the common Persian thought and religion. As a result, the shape of Persian cities underwent a change as well. The idea that cities are constructed based on the collective thought pattern of the society is nowadays widely accepted. "European researchers believe that the features or typology of specific Islamic cities were influenced by Islamic thought and culture. In other words, they considered Islam as the basis of their interpretations of morphological paradigms" (Abu-Lughod, 2004: 21). Two factors were highly influential in construction of Islamic cities: the first was the "social equality" propagated by Islam, which radically deformed the basis of the spatial organization of Sassanid cities being formerly based on a caste society; and the second was the emphasis put by Muhammad (PBUH) and the first Imam of the Shia, Ali (AS), on construction of cities as a necessity for establishment of Islamic societies. Therefore, a new approach to the establishment of buildings and

cities flourished in Iran: the Islamic-Iranian city.

There is an abundance of statements attributed to Muhammad, quoting his emphasis on the public and the creation of societies. For example, "Whosoever separates himself from the society for an inch, abandons Islam unless he returns" (Allameh Tabatabaei, 1968 V6: 297) or another narrative quotes: "God helps the society" (Javanshir, 2000: 61).

Hypothesis

The metamorphosis of the spatial organization of the Iranian city in comparison to historic Persian cities has its roots in the change of Persian mentality about the city. The spatial organization of the Islamic-Iranian city is derived from Islamic thought and traditions as a united system (comprising deep-thinking and religious ordains). The most important factor in this regard is the definition of society and its prominent role in the development of human from Islam's point of view. However, the Islamic-Iranian city has some unique characteristics which distinguish it from other Islamic cities. Such characteristics originate from local traditions and experiences of native Iranians in organizing their cities.

The Layout of the Pre-Islam Iranian City

Religion was the most outstanding factor in shaping the mentality of pre-Islam Iranians. The pre-history Persian religious traditions revolved around the goddesses Mehr (Mitra) and Anahita, Mazdisna orders and Zoroastrianism. They shared a lot in common and this was the reason religious beliefs were transferred from one tradition onto another. Worshipping of Mehr and Anahita in different eras, (pre and post-Zoroastrianism) albeit with different divine positions, and many other shared beliefs in their interpretation of the universe, nature, human and society created a specific worldview based on which the caste society was acceptable and welcomed during the Sassanid Empire. "During this time, different Aryan strata of the society were separated: (1) religious leaders and worshippers, (2) soldiers and army officers, (3) farmers, (4) craftsmen and tradesmen" (Joneidi, 2007: 95). Falamaki

even speaks of limitations in social trafficking and believes in some sort of spatial isolation in which “Citizens’ social trafficking was restricted to restricted dimensions, and movement from one place to another was intra-sectional only.” (Falamaki, 1988: 214)

Society, as is known today, was not even known to ancient Persians. The connection between man and heaven through divine elements –often natural phenomena– satisfied their spiritual needs. Therefore, construction of cities did not aim at developing interpersonal relationships. A city developed and reached perfection through religious traditions and their manifestations in the structure and spatial organization of the city. In this process, the significance of “relations” between individuals was ignored. As a result, the spatial organization of the city did not help the establishment of human interrelationships. The hierarchical structure of the society further prevented this development.

Natural phenomena such as fire and water were believed to be divine. They became symbols which overshadowed the “relation” between people and the city. In Firuzabad, a circle-shaped Sassanid city located at Fars province, a minaret with a fire shrine on the top raised at the intersection of two perpendicular diameters of the land marks the center of the city. The cross (Chalipa) shape of the city also indicates the man-heaven “relation” and the authority of Goddess Mehr in the mentality of ancient Persians (Fig. 1). In some other historical sites, water pools built at the center of the city represent, through centralizing this part of the city, the divine “relation” between man and heaven manifested in worshipping of Anahita. (Fig. 2)

The pre-Islam Naraq Village “consists of a main passage (water path) as the backbone of the village, and a water pool as the functional and spiritual center. Considering that the city started developing from downtown, there is the possibility of convergence of the old spiritual center with the ones in the next eras” (Derakhshanfar, 2009: 53)

Therefore, a divine entity –which was a natural or mystical phenomenon– constituted the center of the city. The symbolic approach to spatial organiza-

tion resulted in cities which were homogeneous in shape. It is quite expectable, therefore, that any description of Sassanid cities focuses on visual, rather than behavioral, organization. “The cities which were raised before Islam had organized structures like rectangles with streets [reaching from one side to the other] like belts. These streets diagonally intersected with the main pivot and occasionally run around the rectangle shape of the city.” (Abu-Lughod, 2005: 82).

The emphasis of old Persian traditions on the “relation” between man and the universe without any intrusion of human interrelationships laid the ground for establishment of a caste system. Society had no real identity. Everything was limited to individual and the divine element, and what defined man’s ideals was the “relation” between these two. Therefore spatial organization heavily relied on divine elements rather than the flow of life and human relationships. Gradually lineage and hereditary rights became a distinguishing factor and people were categorized into either the high caste (royalties)



Fig 1a. Firuzabad City (Bishapur), Source: Kiani, 1987: 87.

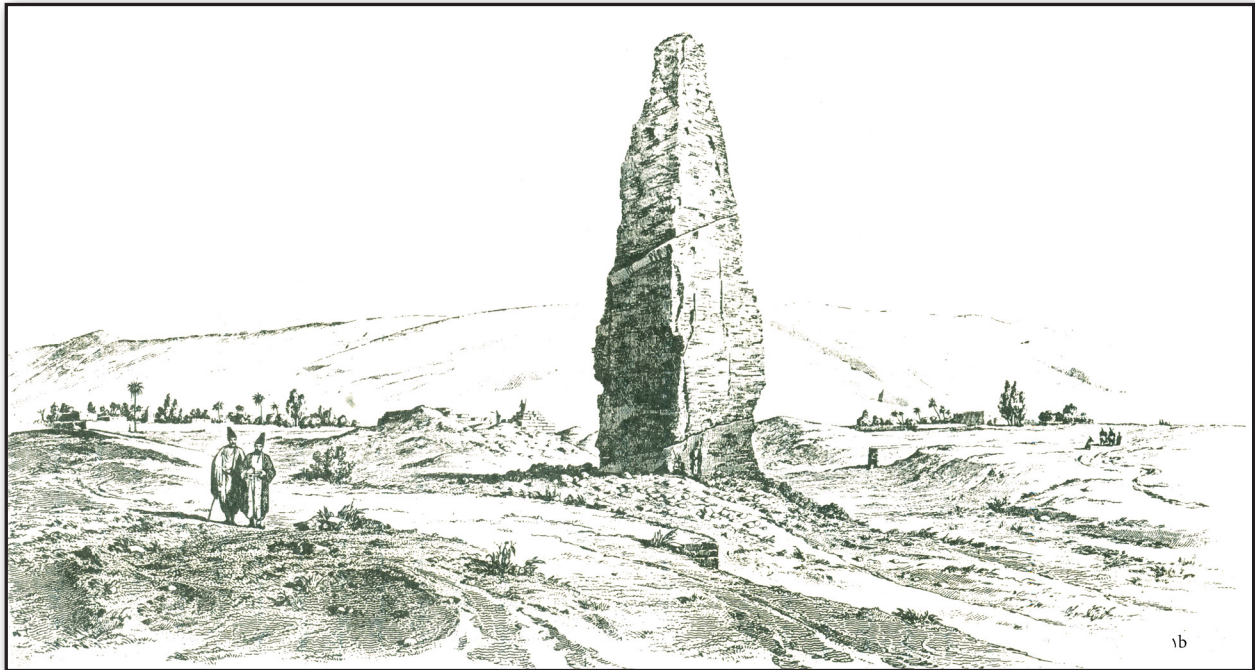


Fig 1b. minaret of Firuzabad City (Bishapur), Source: Kiani, 1987: 82.

or the low caste (common people) from the time of birth. Their efforts and works were irrelevant in this matter. The belief in the inherent difference between individuals resulted in monopolization of the

city space by the high caste constituted of religious leaders, royalties and warriors. Others who had no relation with the divine element were marginalized. This interpretation of divinity, space and human



.Fig 2. The presence of water and tree in the central city of Bukhar, 2009. Photo: Ayda Alehashemi

can be clearly seen in the Old Persian languages. “In Persian language, ‘city’ is related to ‘country’ and ‘kingdom’. For example, the word ‘xaštar’ means both ‘city’ and ‘kingdom’” (Joneidi, 2007: 37). The king was considered a divine person. The mass were not even allowed to visit him. He communicated with them through his agents. Therefore, the word “king” was a divine element and the word “city” gained a spiritual meaning. Many scholars believe that ‘šahrestân’ or ‘šahr’ [city] was a heavenly entity. “Since the king possessed divine grandeur, he rules over the world and the city belongs to him only. It seems that he was the one by whose will a city was constructed or a place was promoted to ‘city’. Later, after the spread of Islam, the villagers who inhabited the city –known as ‘šahrestân’ in contemporary Persian– moved to the margins of the city and established what today we know as old traditional cities. From linguistics point of view, the word “šahr” [city] has been derived from a word which means ‘to rule’” (Barati, 2006: 7). Studies of Firuzabad and Bishapur indicate that apart from governmental or religious sections and the habitat of special groups of the societies, other components of the city such as the market, workshops and the inn, which symbolized social activities and the flow of life, have not been found around the defensive walls (Fig. 3).

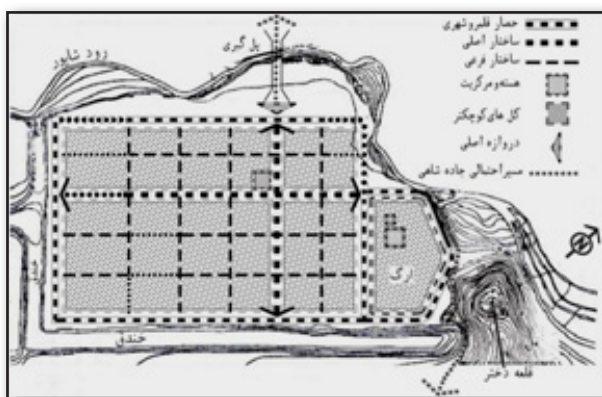


Fig 3. The subsystems of the spatial organization of Bishapur. Source: archive of Teimouri.

Emergence of Islam and the New Concept of Society

With the spread of Islam in Persia in the seventh century A.D., the concept of society as a whole whose identity was independent of its single constituting components became the basis of city formation in the Persian culture. “Rules and regulations penetrated social, economic and political life with all its details, and even the appearance of cities was influenced by Islamic rules and regulations.” (Osman, 1997: 13)

Islam recognized society as a real entity with a significant role in the destiny of mankind and realization of religious ideals. Many Islamic teachings which have their roots in the Holy Quran or the sayings of Muhammad are proof of the significance of the society’s role in the development and perfection of mankind. This matter had been ignored by previous religions and traditions. The Holy Quran ennobles society and speaks of its divine fate just as for each individual while prescribing a great deal of religious orders about it, denoting The Holy Quran's determination to define society's regulations. “The goal of non-religious societies is collective benefit from the materialistic gains of life; this is the worldly goal of human life albeit collectively and shared by all not individually” (Allameh Tabatabaei, n.d: 43).

The last verse of Al-e Emran Surah in the Holy Quran says: “O believers, be patient and tolerate the difficulties together, and establish relations with each other and be God-fearing, haply you will prosper.” As can be seen, God first invites individuals to “patience” and then invites to collective tolerance. The patience of every single individual is the support of another one’s tolerance. The result would be a sturdy collective will which is stronger than any single one. God then invites to establishing “relations”. This means that a society should create relationships between and among its constituting components and functions, whether at ease or in hardship (Allameh Tabatabaei, n.d:90). “In this verse, God says that if the Muslim society follows the straight path and avoids other ones, this will prevent it from scattering and will preserve its

unity” (Allameh Tabatabaei, n.d: 98).

Affiliation of many of the Islamic orders with social life prepared the ground for establishment of a unified Muslim society (ummah). This requires a place in which social life can grow. “The word ‘Medina’ has been derived from the word ‘din’ [religion], which has its roots in the Aramaic and Arabic languages, and it is Semitic. Acadians and Assyrians also used the word ‘din’ to refer to city. It can be understood from the text of the Holy Quran that the word ‘Medina’ refers to a place which has an administrative, judicial and political system and is ruled by a governor or ruler. The difference between a city and a village in the Holy Quran is defined by the existence of a judicial system”. (Osman, 1997: 19)

“The change of the name of ‘Yasrib’ to ‘Medina’ is an instance of management of the change in outward appearance (the form) in relation to the essence. Muhammad –peace be upon him– changed the name of ‘Yasrib’ to ‘Medina’ when he entered this city.

God approved this act of Muhammad. The Holy Quran quotes only the hypocrites as using the name ‘Yasrib’, indicating the fact that believers had changed the name of the city to ‘Medina’ and that it was only the disbelievers who named the city as “Yasrib” despite the ban on the name on the part of Muhammad. (Qoran 33:13)

Upon seizing Persian lands, Muslims began reconstruction of cities from their centers as the symbol of a new order and society. The constituting components of a center in this era were the mosque and the market. Gradually this came to form up the heart of the city. This type of center played a significant role in reshaping the caste society and giving a true identity to the city.

This new identity was based on collective thought and social activity. This approach was different from the ideological approach and the caste system. Its difference with the former lies in the concept of society and with the latter is the Islamic beliefs and traditions. Some features of Islamic thought were highly influential in construction of new cities, the most important of these features will be discussed.

Social Equality

The Holy Quran states that everyone is equal, and the difference between people is a degree of their piety, which is behavior-related and acquiring rather than being dependent on lineage and origin. Verse 13 of Hojorat Surah says “Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you.” This approach transforms the city from the exclusive property of the chosen strata to a place which belongs to every single citizen.

The daily life of every social group flows in the Islamic-Iranian city. Unlike the past, it is the type and significance of the activities of the residents which determines the spatial organization of the new city and not the symbolic and ceremonial elements. The result is that the main components of the city have public functions. The adjacency of these components, which is the result of a realistic approach and prioritization of function, builds up the structure of the city. The most important factor in this regard is the nobility of a society whose members are equal in rights. In this era, public functions and paths are the two pivotal elements whose existence is possible only through equality; otherwise the spatial organization of the city, similar to previous eras, would be defined by the hierarchical structure of the society. The mutual relationship between the new social order and public needs and interests is indicative of equality between people.

“The image which can be presented from the social order in this era would underline the equality and brotherhood among Muslims, negation of all social preponderances and differences which would create social classes. Only that society is favorable whose members, possessing equal power, live their ‘worldly life’ and acquire a specific position in the ‘other world’ based on the amount of their good deeds and public services.” (Falamaki, 1988: 222)

In Islam, realism surpasses idealism when it comes to the society. From Islam’s point of view, the citizens of a city have equal legal rights regardless of their wealth. This approach ennobles society and at the same time respects individuals. “Islamic cities acquire one of the ongoing essences in their gentle transformation: different localities in the form of

ethnic, religious, cultural and dialectal communities are formed with specified privileges and laws which are determined by the ruler and not through physical barriers” (Cuneo, 2005: 64).

Development of Social Activities through Formation of Ethnic Localities and Guilds

In a city with a hierarchical structure, people are divided into groups based on the amount of power they hold. However, a city which is devoid of such classification has a homogenous structure in which citizens do not have exclusive ties with each other or their habitat. A Sassanid city is an example of the former and a modern city is an example of the latter. Therefore, non-hierarchical cities are not necessarily modern cities in which lack of a central power and the traditional structure of the city would lead to realization of an internal societal power. The ghetto and the marginal sections of the city are examples of areas which are created illegally as a result of external forces. These areas do not have the hierarchical structure of a traditional city nor do they have the capacity of civilization development.

“Iranian cities in the early Islamic era did not yet have the opportunity to change traditions into space and form. Their main approach was to avoid traditional polarized structures and establishment of a city governed by justice and equality” (Mansouri, 2007: 57). The new approach taken by Islam to construction of cities disturbed the traditional division of city based on social classification on the one hand and prevented unsystematic aggregation of citizens on the other. The goal was a city with the capacity of formation of a real society, social progression and healthy social functions, leading consequently to the development of civilized life.

“The network of connections between the city subsystems (localities) was one of the main factors of formation of a [unified] system since adjacency of the constituting components without proper connection between them would never result in formation of a locality. This formation would be realized only if there is a network of connections between the constituting components (users, the body, func-

tions, etc.).” (Noormohammad Zadeh, 2004: 75)

The Islamic approach led to construction of cities with semi-independent sections which were established based on ethnic or social convergence. The result was that the people with shared interests and ideals were juxtaposed and the capacity for social activities and development of civilization further increased. On the other hand, the city acquired a solid structure. The spatial organization of the city in this era was based on social structure rather than symbolic architecture (huge edifices devoted to the chosen strata). “Local communities were an important aspect of Muslims’ life. A society which contained socially homogenous localities was ideal for ethnic shared interests, trade and political and religious groups. While there was not any dependent economic association, solid links existed between localities” (Danesh, 2011: 26).

These semi-independent areas called localities were small systems within the city which balanced the structure of the society and enabled the continuation of economic and social differences. Although this approach seems incompatible with economic and social justice at the first glance, it served well in balancing the structure of the society to prevent injustice. There is a difference between social justice and absolute equality and similarity in Islam. Islam accepts the equality which is the result of hard work or talent.

Social Centrality

The Holy Quran’s realistic approach to social life led to nearness of religious devotion to other social activities. Therefore, the center of the Islamic city became a religious, social and functional complex whose constant relationship with the citizens inarguably highlighted its central role and significance in the spatial organization of the city. “The position and significance of the Jameh [congregational] Mosque at the center of the city was the basis of urban planning. The first building to plan was the congregational mosque” (Osman, 1997: 219). In Iran, however, this mosque was not necessarily a congregational one. Congregational mosques were constructed only in a few Iranian cities. When

Muslims seized Persian lands, they settled in the independent localities and their first attempt was building a mosque which symbolized the new rule and stood as both religious symbols and a place for social gathering.

It was expectable that these newly constructed buildings with such function became the center of the localities and subsequently defined the main passages that connected the different localities of the city. This type of centrality is different from the one discussed by Osman. In fact, it was the mosque which defined the center and not the other way round. The next step of development of the center was aggregation of public spaces and on top of it, workshops and stalls in the proximity of and on the way to mosques. "The center of the city was majorly devoted to economic transactions". (Raymond, 1991: 40) "The main elements of the center of the city were shops the aggregation of which formed the market" (Ibid: 51). Therefore, the Islamic city was a combination of public buildings and shops, and the center was clearly distinguishable.

The Role of Roads in Formation of Cities

Roads are the most recurrent element of cities, playing a significant role in the function cities perform. From Islam's point of view, the city is the means to realization and formation of the society. This demands that the entire space of a city be used for this purpose. Roads are the most significant elements of a city. Because of the trafficking and presence of citizens through and in such places, they are ideal for social relations and development of civilization. We might say that the road is the primary manifestation of mankind (Le Corbusier as cited in Ashouri, 2009: 43). According to Appelyard (2003), the main roads of the city have symbolic value, acting as the city's guide book and are the most eye-catching sights of the city. The roads of the third world countries are deemed as social and cultural centers, and not mere passages which connect one point to another.

Islam invites Muslims to preserve the confines of the road as well as keeping the roads clean and illuminated and sprinkled with water are indeed

suggestive of vitality of roads within cities. Muhammad said that "I saw a man in heaven who had uprooted a tree which was in the way of people" (Javanshir, 2000: 93).

Mosques as Muslims' holiest place should not be razed down under any circumstances, unless a path goes through it. The fact that mosques are the most appropriate samples of architectural studies during different eras and that it is feasible to observe the rhythm of historic changes in just one of them, is due to its sacredness, granting no permission even to its partial destruction. This point effectively demonstrates the significance of the roads in both cities and Islamic societies.

The earliest orders of Muhammad concerning Medina were about roads, their width and the proper way of using them. "Determination of the dimensions of private passages were upon their owners and in case of a dispute, Muhammad's saying was deemed the decree, who said 'If a dispute arises about the width of a passage, consider the width seven zar'" (Osman, 1997: 176).

Formation of roads and linking spaces and the regulations related to them led to their ennoblement and improvement of their functionality from mere urban spaces to public spaces and finally to social spaces. The alley is the most significant element of social space in the Islamic city, playing a large part in social experiences and formation of neighborhoods. Relationship with neighbors is a civil issue which is not dependent on kinship; rather, shared life and participation in governing the living area predominantly determines it. Islam's orders about neighbors as well have been influential in defining roads and passages of the Islamic city. "The ownership rights in Islam states that a nearest neighbor's ownership takes precedence over the overall rights of the society, leading, in turn, to the formation of narrow passages like a maze" (Abu- Lughod, 2004: 199).

In order to make the roads' life flow more vibrantly, workshops, stores and inns were constructed in their proximity. The new roads became centers for social activities by themselves through which citizens could use different services and fulfill their dai-

ly needs. The public functions of the city join the roads too step by step. The main road, connecting the two gates of the city, gradually forms the market. The functionality of the market as the center of economic transactions on the one hand and as a social space on the other resulted in the ruling government to make certain policies with the aim of improving the functionality and appearance of the market as the backbone of the city. This approach to the road, which transformed it from a mono-functional to a multi-functional component of the city, is inseparable from the religious thought pattern of Islam. "The emergence of the market in Islamic cities dates back to Muhammad (peace be upon him). He was the first person to build a market near the localities of Medina, and this was the beginning of a great evolution which occurred in Islamic cities and lived on" (Osman, 1997: 239).

The formation of different types of roads which take up their names based on their social role and functionality in creating a habitable realm for the citizens bespeak of Islam's tremendous attention to the function and capacity of roads in shaping an Islamic utopia. "The main idea of William Marché is that Islam is basically a city religion and based on its regulations, urban life is mandatory for Muslims...He proposes that the vital elements of an Islamic utopia are the congregational mosque, the adjacent market and the public bathhouse" (Falahat, 2011: 37).

Passage is a way with its linking function dominating its other functions. However, alley is a place in which people live. Because of its duality in function and meaning, the Islamic alley results in more visual readability (Fig. 4). At the first glance, there is a superficial similarity between the alleys of the Medieval Europe cities and those of Islamic cities. The Islamic city has two types of passages: alley and street. Alley is an intra-locality path, which has its own subtypes such as dead-end. Street, on the other hand, is an inter-locality path and is connected to the main structure of the city. A street is wider than an alley, and public spaces are located along it. In comparison to the shape of an alley, a street is straight. The alley, with its tortuous shape, cuts the street. Therefore, a pedestrian never loses his/her way. Despite crossing

the street and gradual change of direction, the alley perfectly preserves its readability. Bemat (1989: 13) proposes that high population density is the characteristic feature of the Islamic city and its citizens are the essence of urban life with private abodes as the constituting units. Alleys have tight connections with local life but their function excludes economic transaction and leisure. Therefore, alleys and streets are not visual scenes and unlike the spatial organi-

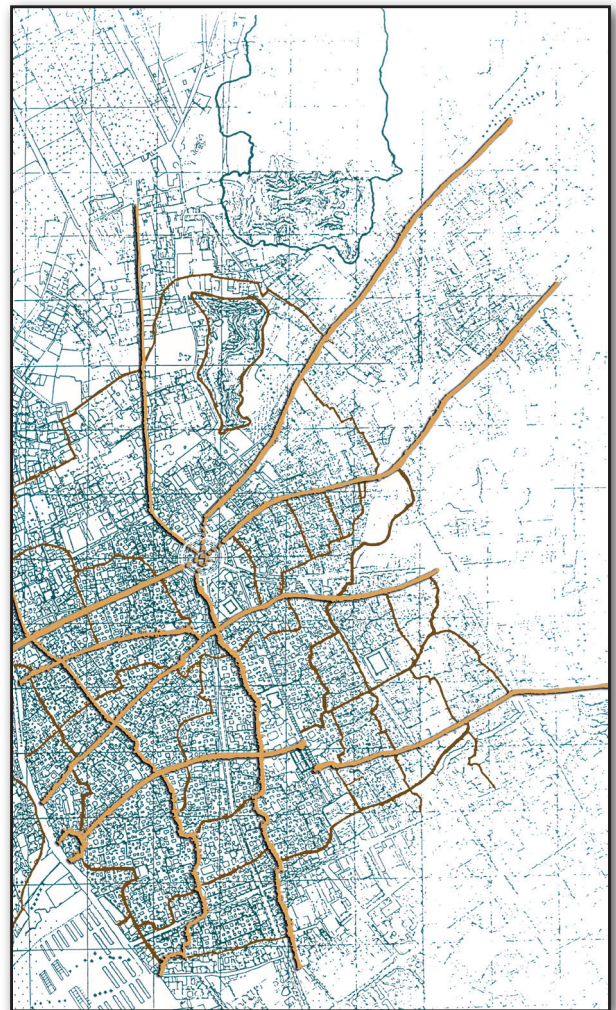


Fig 4. Bi-level access roads and passages are the unique characteristics of Islamic passages, leading to the improvement of their legibility and functionality. Their tortuous form, alongside their dazzling sceneries, makes them memorable. The main streets are straight-lined, helping legibility, and the alleys are windy but accessible, cultivating in aesthetic effect through provoking the feelings of bewilderment and enticement, achieved by a unique perspective. Source: Mansouri, 1997: Fig20.

zation of western cities, there is no perspective in them. Considering the discussion presented in this paper, his proposition seems improper.

Iranian Urban Design: Tree and Water

If we assume that any attempt in improving the special role of the Islamic city and transforming it into a public space originates from Islam, then we may say that urban designing in these cities stems from ancient Persian aesthetic traditions. Water and tree have always been divine elements for Iranians, and they have been used in improving the visual designing of the Islamic-Iranian city. The most important religious places of ancient Persians are attributed to goddesses Mehr and Anahita and the divine trees and pools which were located near the shrines of these two deities. Therefore, a strong spiritual bond formed up between water and tree which later influenced Iranian aesthetics. This Iranian approach to urban designing was adopted in constructing public spaces of all sorts and sizes. Therefore, the center of localities in Iranian cities and villages were adorned with aged trees and water pools. Many of the divine places which have been constructed near water pools and springs are the reminiscent of ancient traditional Persian beliefs which are based on naturalism and worshipping of Mehr and Anahita (Javadi, 2007: 16).

Iranian Architecture of Public Spaces

Iranian cities in the pre Islamic period were arranged in a way that kept people of different social classes separated from each other. This physical separation of social classes within urban space meant that some of the splendid sites of the city were not accessible to all members of a society. The infrastructure of ancient Iranian cities did often incorporate spaces such as city squares, but they were not public spaces. Furthermore, those areas of the city that were openly accessible to citizens were not generally in important areas of the city.

Square is the most outstanding architecture of public spaces in Iranian cities. Other types include forecourt, religious buildings (tekieh) and intersections (vâsodgâh). Architecture of public spaces in Iran

has its roots in ancient Persian architecture which lived on during the Islamic era. Rectangle geometry, closed designing, rapid and simple rhythms (Fig. 5) and highlighting of connection points and color contrasts are the shared features of Iranian squares and religious buildings, which in spite of the variety of form, have similar aesthetic effects. The same architecture techniques can be seen in Iranian forecourts and intersections, which both have random and heterogeneous structures. The vaults and walls which complement visual connections give a unique coherence to the total scene, which serve to stimulate Iranian aesthetic sensations (Fig 6).

The Iranian architecture of public spaces is in fact the modernized form of the traditional Persian architecture which existed long before Islam. The origin of this aesthetic approach is the meaning

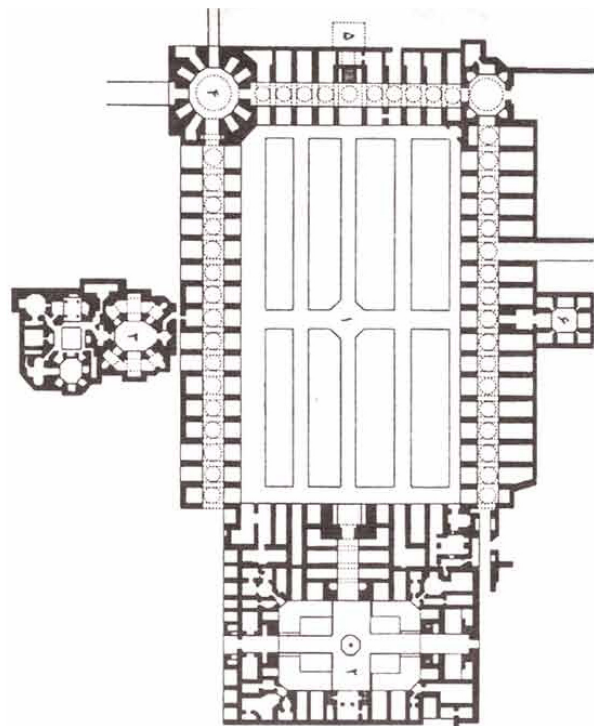


Fig 5. Slow and rapid rhythms in Ganjali Khan Square, Kerman.

Source: Mansouri, S.A. (1997), Fig.79.

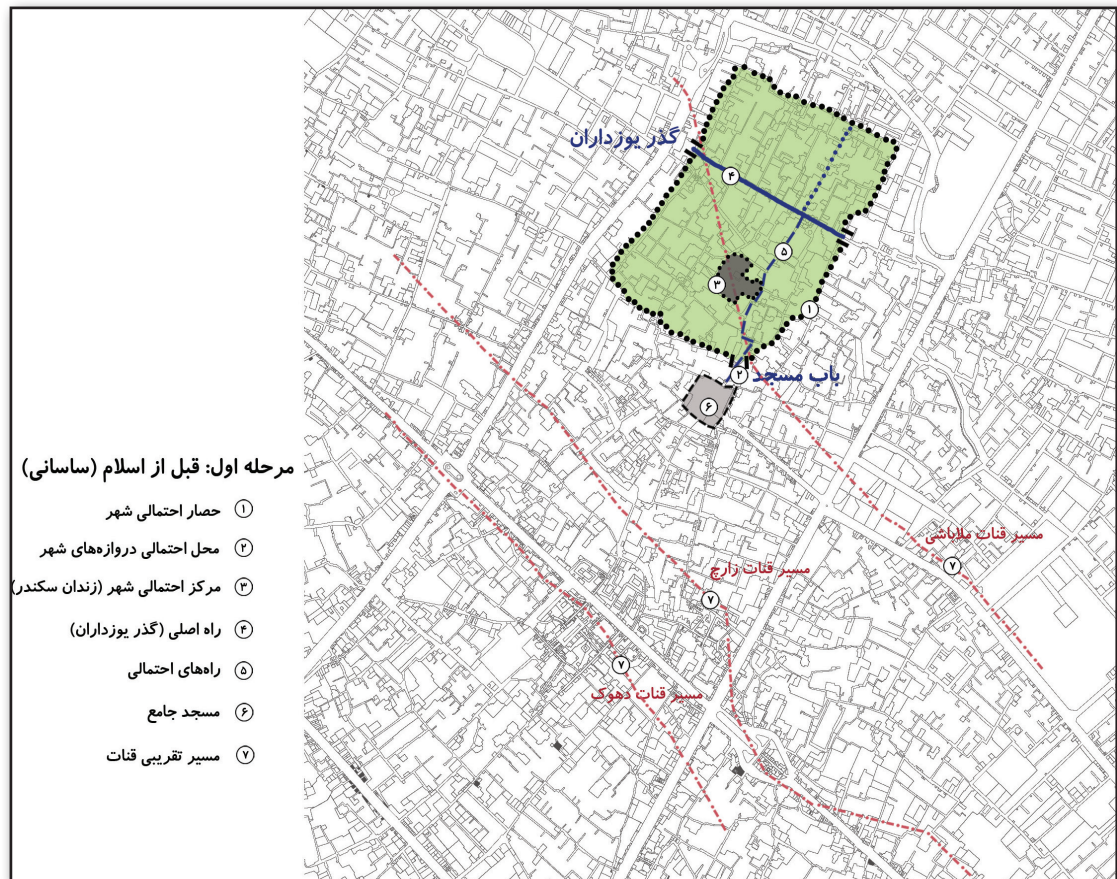
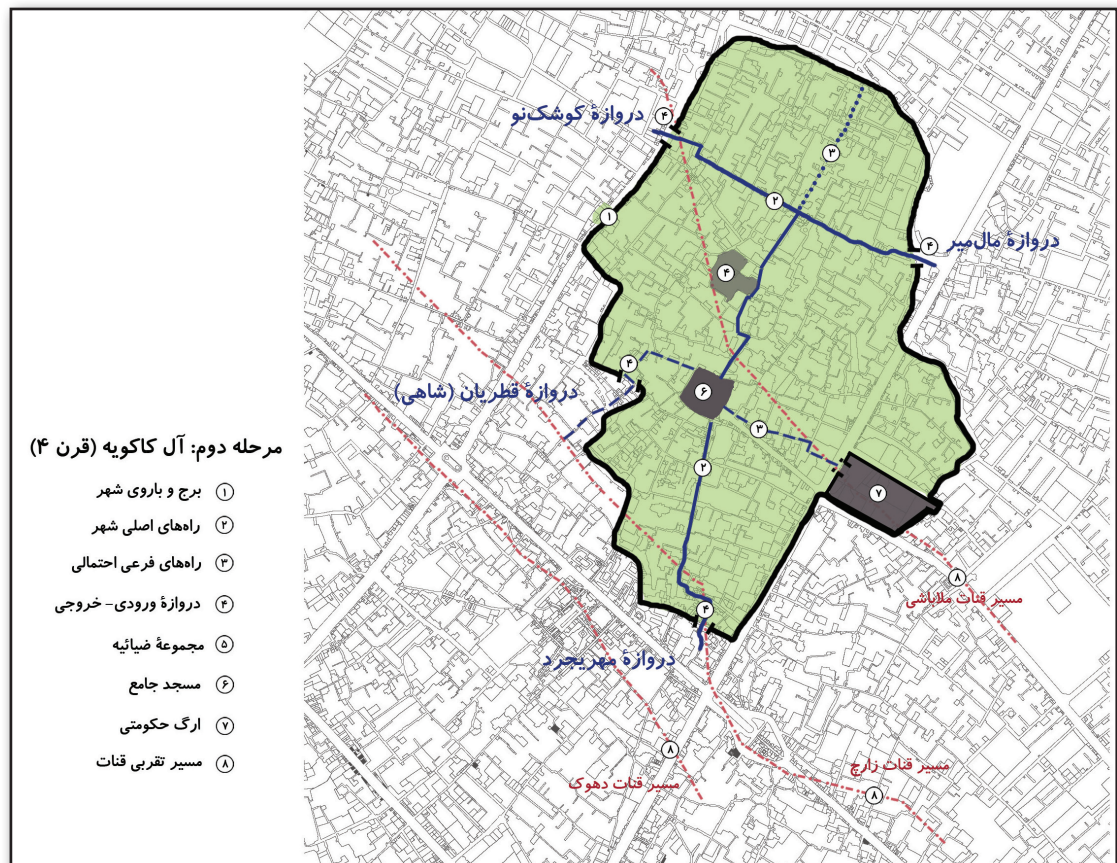


Fig. 6. The study of the spatial organization of Yazd city in four different eras, 2013. Source: Shirazi.



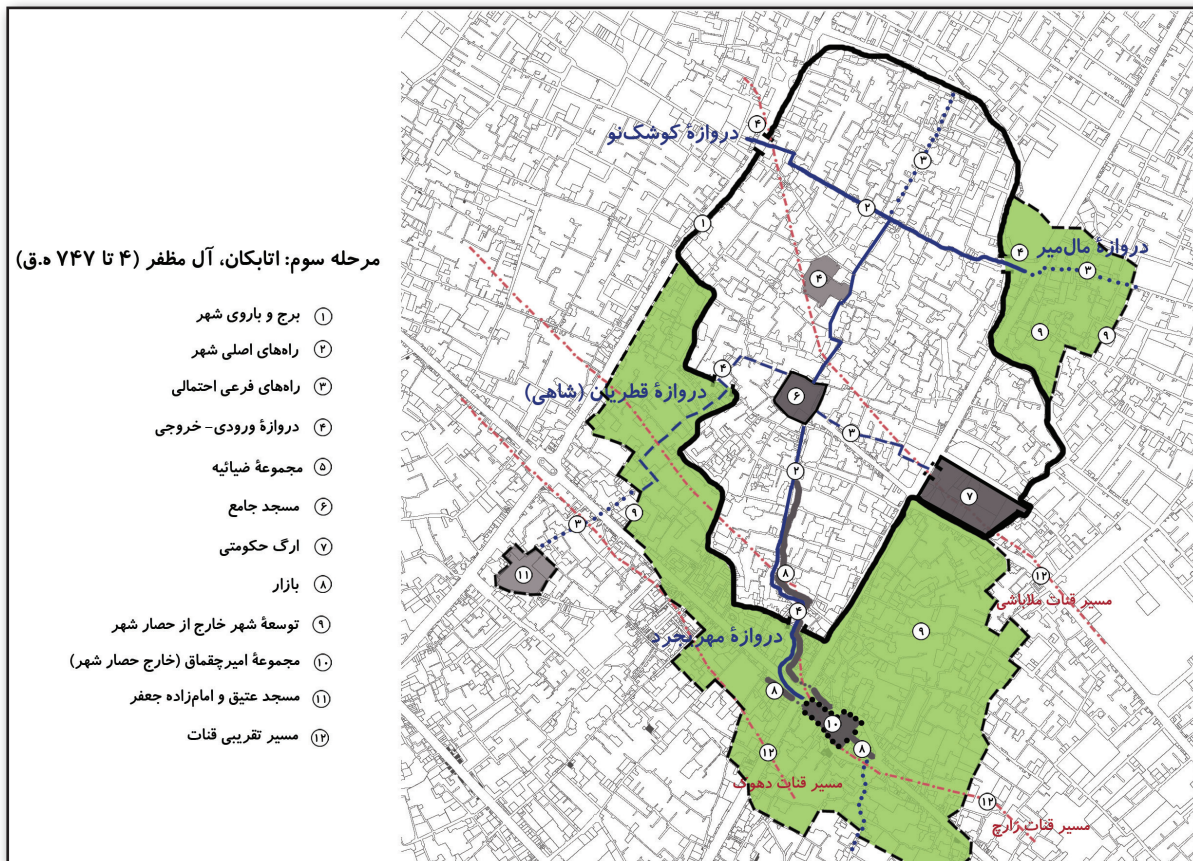
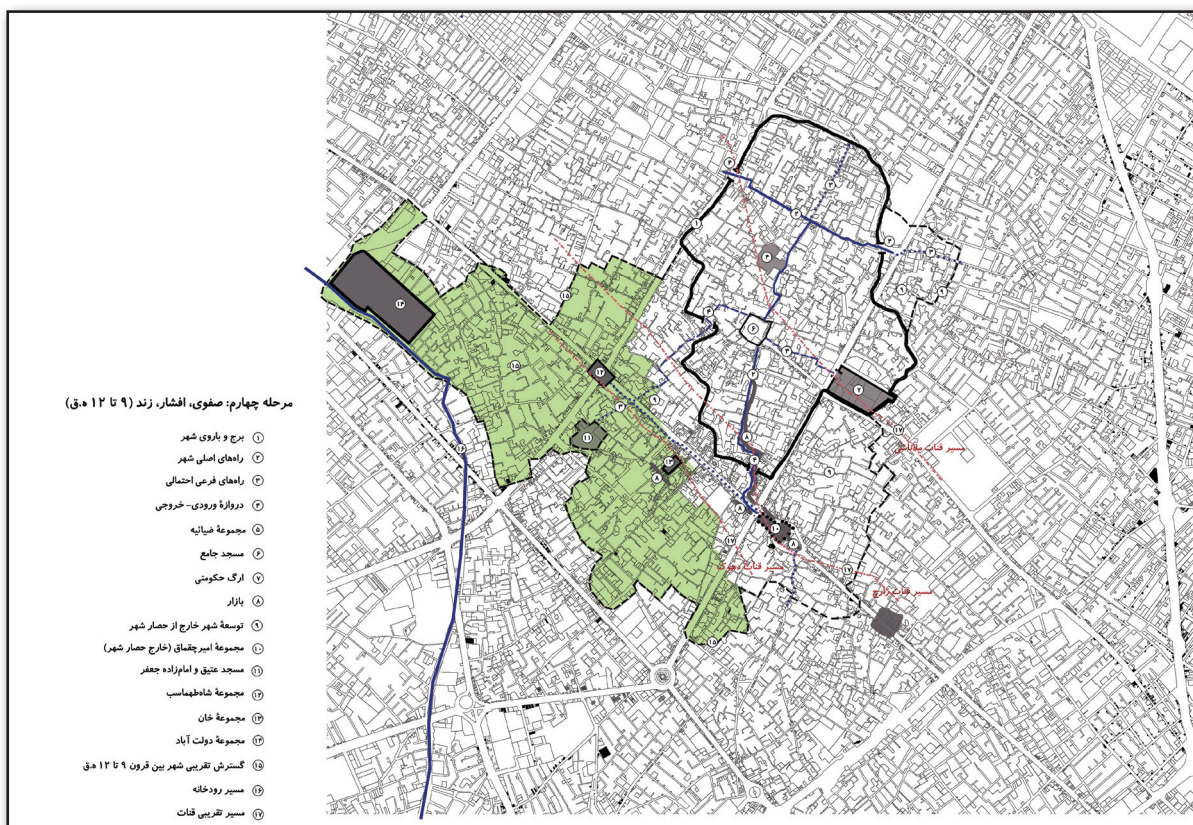


Fig. 6. The study of the spatial organization of Yazd city in four different eras, 2013. Source: Shirazi.



of space and its significance in Persian mythology which emphasized rhythmic, geometric and systemic architecture based on genuineness of shapes reflecting an interpretation of the mystical and ceremonial meanings. The perpetuation of this

approach can be seen in common Iranian architecture. From ancient times, Iranian architectural aesthetics have always been influenced by the mystical Persian symbols.

Conclusion

After the spread of Islam, the spatial organization of the Iranian city underwent radical changes. These changes, resulted from Muslims' new understanding of the concept of society and social life, were totally different from the earlier understanding of what a "city" was. The concepts of community and social relations were not much known in the pre-Islam Iran, and mystical and divine elements defined the structure of the city. The changes that had been triggered by Islam merged with other influential factors in shaping the appearance of the Iranian city and resulted in a revolution. The new features of the Islamic-Iranian cities such as negation of social hierarchy, equal social rights, naturalistic tendencies and unprecedented emphasis on social life were combined with Iranian historical and ethnical identity and aesthetics to create a new pattern. The Islamic-Iranian city built by this pattern shared a lot with other Islamic cities and at the same time preserved its own Iranian features.

Endnote

1. Ms.Zohreh Shirazi, who has an MSc in Landscape Architecture, has been cooperating in doing the related researches and writing the article.

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