

The Role of Traditional Market in the Traditional Islamic Cities : Case Studies of Tabriz Bazaar and Grand Bazaar Tehran

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Abstract

Trade has been regarded as the most important form of social exchange, it is one of the main activities of humans, an activity which establishes specific spaces and places called Bazaar. As a traditional public space in Islamic cities, bazaar has always been a great section of commercial activities in urban life. Despite of that, a bazaar also serves as an important platform of social, political, cultural and religious activities. Islamic cities are distinguished from all cities of different historical periods by Bazaar. Bazaars are crucial in giving a sense of integrity to the concept of traditional Islamic cities. Bazaars provide coherence among various parts of cities, such as residential areas, so as socio-economical, political and trade centers. This condition indicates that bazaars play important roles in traditional Islamic cities: 1. they interconnect different parts of the city's structure physically; and 2. bazaars play a crucial role in a city's social, political, and cultural structure that bring unity among citizens and developments of city. Bazaars serve as an element that connects the main urban functions and promise the city's economic and social life. Therefore, implementing development plans that would provide bazaars better integration in relation to the city as a whole is necessary. The aim for this research is to explain the role of bazaars in terms of socio-economic and politics in traditional Islamic cities. Also, a general look on the effect of modernization to traditional bazaar. Accordingly, the most important questions for this research are: 1. What is the socio-economical and political role of bazaars in traditional Islamic cities? 2. How do bazaars play out their respective role in the integration of these cities? 3. What is the aftermath of urban modernization to traditional bazaar?

Keywords: traditional bazaar, traditional Islamic cities

1. Introduction

Origin from Persian word, "market" (bāzār) refers to a range of economic and architectural forms from covered bazaars, temporary markets, and small neighborhood strips of shops in alleys to abstract understandings of markets as sectors of the economy involved in trade, especially those not under the control of the state banking system. A traditional bazaar usually contains commission agents, hawkers, wholesalers, peddlers, long-distance merchants, brokers, craftsmen, shop assistants and money-changers. Besides its commercial functions, the traditional bazaar consists of a thorough system of social institutions, including mosques, guilds, bathhouses, religious schools, and religious circles. Besides providing venues for socializing, bazaar in a traditional Islamic city also serves for political change. Souq is another word used in the Middle East describing an open-air marketplace or commercial quarter. In Muslim World, the rising of large bazaars as well as stock trading centers contributes to the developments and creation of new capitals and thus new empires. Isfahan, Golconda, Samarkand, Cairo, Baghdad, and Timbuktu as the examples of new and wealthy founded along trading routes and bazaars.

The bazaar in the Islamic city has been

- (1) a central marketplace for trading and craft, located in the old quarters of the city;
- (2) along with the mosque, a primary area of intensive sociability; and
- (3) a sociocultural characteristic of a traditional urban life-style;
- (4) a socioeconomic and stronghold of religious establishment; and
- (5) a fortress of preparation and initiation of political protest movements.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Bazaar from the Past to the Present

As a traditional public space in traditional Islamic cities, Bazaar has always accommodated a great section of commercial activities in urban life. As time passed, it became the indivisible part of each city and a place for trade of commercial goods and craft from all around places, near and far off. The interrelated of bazaar and urbanization are well stated through and as a matter of fact, no traditional Islamic city can be imagined without bazaar. Historical documents show that bazaar has existed in Iranian cities and towns since 3000 B.C. The bazaars of Islamic cities are among the greatest products of the Islamic civilization which there were none of any counterpart in the ancient east, such as in Greece, ancient Rome or even the Europe of middle ages.

Meanwhile, Islam gained control over a large part of the world, and bazaar has become a common and absolute feature of the cities under its domination. Gathered in a compressed space and in a uniform and continuous form in the center of an Islamic city, bazaar shows the uniqueness and originality of an Islamic city in the commercial constructions. Even today, regardless the drastic changes in social and urban structure of cities, bazaar still is one of the unique feature of an Islamic city. In this regard, economy and religion may be considered as two basic elements which, from the very beginning of the establishment of Islamic bazaars, have intervened together in the expansion of the bazaar. Even today, They still remain the basic element of difference between the operation of this kind of bazaar and other bazaars (modern and luxury markets in the Islamic countries and the shopping malls of non-Islamic nations).

2.2. Bazaar in Urban Fabric of traditional Islamic cities

Each Bazaar varies based on their size, importance, functions and locations in different cities of Iran. Greater bazaar can be found in cities located alongside trading routes (like Silk Way) while the others which were distant from these routes had a weaker bazaar. In general, bazaar can be categorized into three types;

- i. "Periodic Bazaar; totally scattered throughout the city without any architectural space and intended solely to be a place for exchanging goods
- ii. Urban Bazaar; as a popular urban space which welcome commercial activities along with social and cultural activities of people
- iii. Local Bazaar; a smaller type of urban bazaar which is less importance and was allocated to a particular area or district of the city or town"

For examples, Bazaars in Isfahan belong to the Urban Bazaar category which covered public passageway and is surrounded by shops and stores in two sides. It was a place for shopping, walking, socialization, and cultural interaction of people. It could be deemed as the most important and influential public space in Isfahan and any other ancient cities and towns of Iran. The Bazaar of Isfahan consisted of two parts, the old section, which started from the old square, nearby to the Friday mosque, and the new section, which started from Naghsh-e-Jahan square and connected with the old section. By the 11th century, the old square had become the center of the city after Isfahan was selected as the capital of Saljuqid era. It had a castle, a drum house, a qaiseria and shops selling silk, brocade, materials, precious stones, jewelries, ivory and many other goods. There were some peripheral markets radiating from the old square along the main streets from at least that time. The 1.5 Km shopping street is still the main street in the bazaar, as well as the longest vaulted bazaar street in the world.

3. Social structure inside bazaar

The internal social structure hierarchy of the bazaar had the big merchants at the top of the pyramid, the headmen, the masters artisans and shopkeepers at the middle level, and vast amounts of apprentices and footboys at the bottom, with some marginal elements such as poor peddlers, beggars, and dervishes at the lowest level.

4. Role of bazaar in politics, bazaar-mosque interdependence.

For many centuries, the bazaar and the mosque, as indivisible twins, have served as the primary arena of public life in urban Iran. In pre-modern era of Islamic cities, bazaar and the mosque are two principal networks of sociability beyond the kinship relations. Combined, the bazaar and the mosque made a world in which the city dwellers organized their everyday communal life. Obtain from this communal network was an active relationship between the bazaar and the mosque with political consequences of utmost significance in traditional Islamic cities.

"Iranian bazaar is a unified, self-contained building complex of shops, passageway, and caravanserais, interspersed with square, religious buildings, bathhouses, and other public institution". Friday mosque, which is the primary center of religious and political of the city, always bond together with bazaar. Therefore the Friday mosque is usually next to or part of the bazaar. Furthermore, bazaar is the place to celebrate an important political event, or refusing to celebrate such an event to express political disagreement.

Throughout history, Bazaar and religion have long established peaceful cooperation and always helped each other to fight against apostate governments. Bazaar plays a dominant role in political movements such as Mashrouteh 6 Movement and Iran's revolution. It is notable that security and order are essential for business growth and supposed to be provided by the government. That is the reason bazaar has always been cautious about its relationship with the government, though when time comes, it never stopped supporting the public movements towards impious government.. Religion is an indisputable factor in Islamic society so that every bazaar includes one or more mosques as the sign of extrusive role of religion in bazaars. Michael Bonain believes that mosques and other religious centers played an important role in formation of bazaars so that usually the mosque gates and main rastes are in the same direction. Religious rituals were common in bazaars and they were held with the attendance of merchants and clergies. Such rituals is important and contribute to empower relationships between bazaar and clergies.

5. Role of bazaar in socio-economic and contributions to state

Namely, bazaar was not only the commercial centre of cities but also the centre of social, cultural, political and religious activities, as Mansour-Falamaki (1992) has described the Iranian bazaar as centre of social representation of city like piazza for European cities during the Middle Ages and Hiroba in Japanese cities. In this social and economical context, Ashraf (1979) has pointed out, merchants were at the top of social level of the bazaar. Because of their economical support to the religious activities and leaders, the merchants and traders were the most influential group in the traditional urban society.

Undoubtedly, bazaar plays a dominant role in economy, as it is the fundamental reason of formation of bazaar. However, other roles such as social, political, cultural and religious were never surpassed by the economic role. This explains the crucial role of bazaar in the city and its main role which is to supply public demands. It has always saved its top priority. Iranian bazaars were the foundation of national economy. Even though their traditional role become much less important nowadays, they are still the center of wholesaling and have the authority to determine prices. As a result, the main bazaar of each city is still the main element of that city's economy.^[4]

The bazaar served the state as the financial source of taxes, duties, custom dues, road tolls, credit, and corvee for the political and military notables. As in return, the governing notables provided the bazaar with overall protection and overall administration of justice. Daily activities of the bazaar concerning quality of products and merchandise as well as the fairness of prices and accuracy of weights were also under the supervision of state.

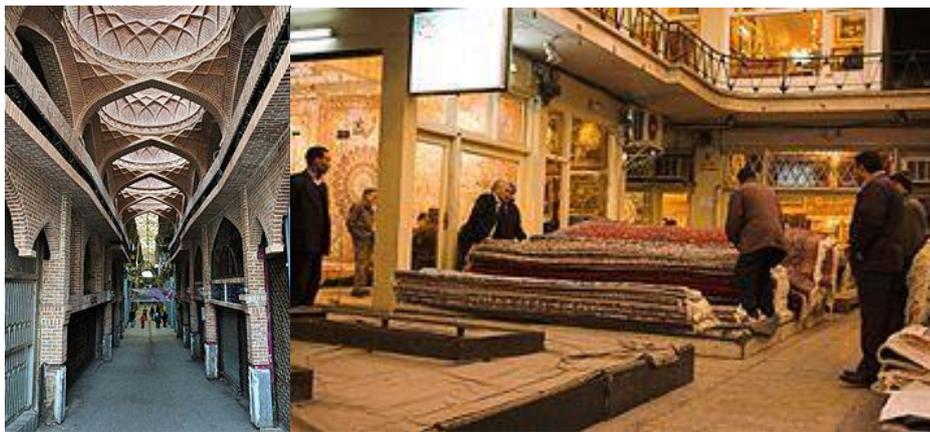
6. The impact of recent socioeconomic changes to traditional bazaar

The rapid growth in the population and physical size of Islamic cities nowadays has led to the creation and developments of many new shopping areas. In large and rapidly growing urban centers such as Tehran, Tabrīz, Mašhad, Isfahan, Shiraz, Ahvāz, and Kermānšāh, this growth and expansion could not be contain within the physical boundaries of the bazaar. As a result, shift of retail sales and trades from the bazaar areas to the other parts of the new avenues happens and become increasing in numbers. In addition, the introduction of public transportation required that some of the new businesses to be relocated outside of the bazaar. For example, in Tehran, food wholesalers moved from the bāzār to Kīābān-e E' dām, while wholesalers of building materials relocated themselves in the Kīābān-e Qayyām area. Often the cases, the development of new avenues led to the relative decline of retailing in the bazaar itself. For example, In Qazvīn, many stores moved from the old bazaar to the modern main avenues largely because the need to be close to their new, mostly middle-class customers. These developments led to the decline of sections of the bazars of some cities. For example, in Kermānšāh, even the central section of the bazaar, where the better quality goods, were offered, showed signs of physical deterioration. The changes in the bazaar become highly uneven, especially in may larger cities. In Tehran, for example, the oldest sections of the bazaar became the shopping area for the urban poor and rural customers, whereas other sections geared themselves to the more middle-class . In Malaya, parts of the bazaar were being converted to storage space, while the other parts to the lower-ranking crafts and trades.

6.1. Case Study of Tabriz Bazaar

The Bazaar of Tabriz is a historical market situated in the city center of Tabriz, Iran. It is one of the oldest bazaars in the Middle East and the largest covered bazaar in the world. In July 2010, the bazaar was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Tabriz Bazaar has also been an active place of political events, apparently, it plays an important role in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution in the last century and Islamic Revolution in the contemporary time.

From the fore past, one of the many powerful functions of Tabriz Bazaar was protect a very vast national and international limited area. In recent decades the inattention of urban projects expose cadence it. Nowadays Tabriz bazaar has various roles in historical and commercial as well as residential ones. With surrounding areas of 421 hectare in total, 13340 commercial units, production units which include 24 percent of all commercial units in Tabriz. This shows the massiveness of various activities in this part of city, which provides the most needs of people. Furthermore, most of political departments such as governorship, governess, community and economic affairs organizations are located in this part. The presences of different activities in the area of Tabriz Bazaar have cause of the decreasing quality of commercial values. In trying to revive the identity and book keeping of Tabriz Bazaar, it is necessary for changing and updating the existing land use not to build the new commercial units. Tabriz Bazaar has been one of the most important and grateful from the Islamic-Persian era till now as well as the main business, manufacturing and international trade center of Persian Carpet. It has a good position in the national and international trucking to Europe transit.



6.2. Case Study of Grand Bazaar, Tehran

The Grand Bazaar is an old historical bazaar located in Tehran, the capital of Iran. Located at the Arg Square in Southern Tehran, it is split into several corridors over 10 km in length, each specializing in different types of goods. It has several entrances, with the main entrance being the entrance of Sabze Meydan. Despite shops, the Grand Bazaar of Tehran also has contained banks, mosques and guest houses. The bazaar providing strong links between the clergies and the middle class traders and is viewed as a force of conservatism in Iranian society. These forces provides strong support to the 1979 Revolution. As one of the most important bazaars in the country, the Grand Bazaar of Tehran was a center of pro-revolutionary feeling and finance.

There were reasons behind the bazaar class worked hard to help advance the revolution. The regime of the monarch Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was anathema to the bazaaris, who seemed set to lose out as the country industrialized; and they feared that they would be left behind and their status in society would be reduced. Furthermore, "bazaar class," throughout Iran were thus even more inclined to aid the revolution as these traditional economic forces did not benefit from the 1974–1978 oil boom. As a result, the Grand Bazaar of Tehran

was a fortress of support for the revolution, which positioned itself in a dangerous position, that is opposite the monarchy. The Grand Bazaar continues largely to support the establishment, particularly as conservative political forces often adopt a low tax, laissez-faire approach to bazaaris.

Today, the Grand Bazaar is still plays an important role in commercial activities. However, much of the trade and finance in the city has been moved to the Northern Tehran. Addition to the traditional goods on sale, the market for watches and local jewellery is apparently growing, most probably for the benefits of tourists. As is in keeping with the market spirit, tourists are encouraged to haggle. The bazaar is busiest around afternoon, and between 17:00 and 19:00. As of October 2005, plans are in place to construct a hotel in the southern section of the bazaar, in order to make the bazaar more hospitable and to regain some of its importance.

7. Discussion

From the case study above, we learned that bazaar plays a very important role in developing cities. It contributed to social, economy and also politic. The structure and location of the bazaar determines the effect of the bazaar. As discussed, Tabriz Bazaar which located in East Azarbaijan has a central position and it is the only city with more than a million populations. From its geographical aspect, it plays a role in shaping the socio-economic and political in the country. Besides, Bazaar also links cities to cities. When the neighborhood provinces grow, the population in Tabriz also increases. With the expansion in Tabriz, the bazaar has become the source of economy in Tabriz. The bazaar has won the plaudit of outsider and filled with goods from Asian and European. As there are outsiders, it influenced the culture and socio-economy in the area. Bazaar brings new life and identity to the city.

Bazaar is the significant creation in Islamic city. It contributes in all aspects in a city. But nowadays due to the fast development in modern society, the traditional bazaar has been changed and there are fewer bazaars can be found. The size and rate of population growth as well as urban development, the pattern of development of new avenues in relation to the bazaar, the distance of modern area from the bazaar areas, and the accessibility of the bazaar areas to public transportation are among the main factors that have influence to the overall position of the bazaar in the processes of rapid urban growth and socioeconomic development.

7.1. Comparison between Traditional Bazaar and Modern Shopping Centers

While shopping malls provide spaces that are more modular and had a more commercial function, Bazaars architecture provides a variety of spaces from the form and function viewpoints. While shopping malls always consists conglomeration of relative businesses and dispersion of irrelative businesses have been lost and usually shops with different lines of business have been located next to each other, shops of the same line of businesses were located in certain rastehs in bazaar. While shopping malls usually lack the communicative function, Bazaars possessed the communicative function and they also worked as the crossover of the city. While shopping malls do not play any political role, Bazaars played a significant role in people's political lives. While shopping malls mostly don't have priority for choosing the construction site, bazaars were adjacent to important city elements such as mosques, schools and government bodies.

8. Conclusion

Bazaar is the significant creation in Islamic city. The development of society, economic and social have changes the status of bazaar in modern era. Due to the studies, we learned the impact Bazaar has created to the cities. Bazaar has its value in a city and the relationship between human is important. From the past, bazaar is always the heart of a city and it works perfectly in achieving all the aspects in developing and combining the cities. Bazaar was the perfect place for economic, political and socio-economy. It also provides spaces for people to interact and spend leisure time. But sadly this culture are not preserved and applied in modern era. Replacing it was the modern shopping malls. Shopping mall is mainly for commercial use and no other role. Shopping mall do not designed for non-commercial activities. This causes the decrease of people interaction in cities. In this modern era, there is more and more shopping mall as the economy source in the cities. If there is no other choice in preserving Bazaar, can shopping malls play the role of Bazaar in a modern way? In a nutshell, places with function and role like bazaar should be preserve or design in cities to benefits people.

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