Social Bazaar and Commercial Bazaar: Comparative Study of Spatial Role of Iranian Bazaar in the Historical Cities in Different Socio-economical Context

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Abstract

There is an influential idea tries to explain the structure of Iranian historical cities based on bazaar in contemporary architectural literatures. In contrast, the Core idea of this paper is illumination the differences of the social and spatial role of Iranian bazaar in the historical cities before the Modernization in the 1930s. The main approach of this study is based on analyses of the spatial structure using Space Syntax through the axial analysis technique regarding the social and economical context of Iranian historical cities. The case studies are the city of Dizfoul and Shushtar in the South-west; moreover Kerman, Shiraz and Isfehan are concerned as typical Iranian cities.

The result of this study argues that the Iranian cities before the Modernization can be defined in two types based on the idea of bazaar. The first city type includes cities with non-merchant economy. In this city type, bazaar is a purely retail cluster and it does not include other socio-cultural spaces. Therefore, this type of bazaar, named as ‘commercial bazaars’ in this study. ‘Commercial bazaars’ not only were not the most integrated part of the city structure but also were not the centre of social activities. The second city type includes cities with bazaar-based economy. Bazaar in this type of cities is the centre of the social and economical activities of cities. Therefore it is called ‘Socio-commercial bazaar’. The socio-commercial bazaars are a type of bazaar which is usually known as Iranian Bazaar. Socio-commercial bazaars generally have a linear form and this type of bazaars is the centre of spatial configuration of cities. Consequently, this study, by showing different social and spatial role of Bazaar, makes a challenge for the Idea which modeled all Iranian cities based on structure of Bazaar.

1. Introduction

Bazaar is considered in Iranian urban studies as one of the most significant socio-spatial systems in Iranian cities. The study of bazaar in spatial level as well as socio-economical is a key issue to realize how urban socio-economical structure and spatial structure interact to each other during traditional era. Therefore, this paper is concerned to study of bazaar and its spatial role in different socio-economical context before the modern transformation. The modern transformation in Iran happened mainly in the first decade of 20th century.

The main object of this paper is attempting to social and economical explaining of the differences of spatial role of Iranian bazaar which is shown in studies in the background of this paper. Mainly the Iranian bazaars are recognized as the main spatial structure of cities, this idea are clearly shown in Karimi’s studies (1998) in some Iranian most known cities like Shiraz and Kerman, his spatial analyses have shown that, the most integrated part of urban system located within bazaar in his cases before the modern transformation. However the spatial analyses of Dizfoul have shown that although the bazaar of Dizfoul is
one of the main city elements, it’s not similar to typical or famous Iranian bazaars. Then I try to look at this point in more cases to explain these differences. In order to do that, this study is concentrated on these questions; to what extent the spatial configuration of Shushtar, as sister city of Dizfoul, is similar to Dizfoul. If there are similarities between the spatial configuration and the role of bazaar in Dizfoul and Shushtar, is it possible to introduce an idea which is to explain their structure and some other cities such as Shiraz and Kerman. Moreover, how this differences of the spatial role of bazaar can be explained. Therefore, the main case studies are the city of Dizfoul and Shushtar; additionally Kerman and Shiraz as supplementary cases, which are studied and analyzed by Karimi (1997, 1998).

This paper is structured in three main parts. The first part will review the idea of Iranian typical bazaar and its social and spatial role. The spatial explaining of this part is a summary of Karimi’s result (1997, 1998). The second section after a short historical background of Dizfoul and Shushtar, will describe the result of the spatial analyses of these two cities. The spatial analyses are based on Space Syntax through the axial model technique in this study. After the first two sections, paper will be engaged with a social and economical discussion to achieve to the conclusion of paper at the end.

2. Bazaar and its character in Iranian typical cities

Urban sociologists, urban planners and designers generally explain the bazaar as the heart of Iranian city. In socio-economical level; although the main part of the famous bazaars is formed by retail, the bazaar is not entirely a retail cluster. “Iranian bazaar is a unified, self-contained building complex of shops, passageway, and caravanserais, interspersed with square (Meydan), religious buildings, bathhouses (Hammam), and other public institution” (Bonine, 1990, p.21). Friday mosque, which is the main religious and political centre of the city, and bazaar always found together. Therefore the Friday mosque is sometimes next to or part of the bazaar. Moreover, bazaar is the place to celebrate an important political event, or refusing to celebrate such an event to express political disagreement (Floor, 1990). Moreover, bazaar is the main urban space to organize important ritual ceremonies for instance, during Ashura ceremony even function of large number of commercial spaces are temporary changed for this ritual ceremonies. Ashura ceremony is the most important social and religious event for Iranian urban society.

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. The merchants and traders were the most influential group in the traditional urban society, because of economical supporting of the religious activities and leaders.

In spatial level, the bazaar is explained as a centre of the spatial system of Iranian cities. Mainly, bazaar is usually formed in a linear form and public and socio-cultural spaces are organized through this linear form (figure 76). Karimi’s spatial analyses of six Iranian cities by axial modeling are clearly shown this point in the best way. His case studies were Kerman, Shiraz, Hamedan, Semnan, Kermansah, and Ghazvin. His studies show that the most integrated part of spatial structure is located in bazaar without exception in all of his cases. In other words bazaar is the core of spatial structure of cities. Therefore bazaar is the destination of all main routes. In some cases such as Kerman, bazaar is the most
integrated part of urban structure in local scale as well as global scale (Karimi, 1998). In Kerman the spatial core, which is bazaar, is expanded from west to east and the main rout connects this core to the rest of the system. In this case bazaar is clearly exhibited in a linear structure. In Shiraz as well as Kerman the core structure of the city is bazaar mainly formed in a ring form and its structure is extended to north and south (Figures 77).

Simply speaking, the bazaar is not only the main socio-economical centre, but also is unsurprisingly the main spatial structure of Iranian city. This spatial system is the spine of global structure of city as well as a spatial system to organize the main public, socio-religious and commercial spaces of cities.

3. The city of Dizfoul and Shushtar

3.1. A short historical background

Dizfoul and Shushtar are situated in province of Khuzestan in south west of Iran. Khuzestan is known as one of the most ancient regions in Iran. Khuzestan, similar to other ancient settlements, includes three rivers; Karoon, Diz and Karkheh which are the largest rivers in Iran. According to ‘The Cambridge History of Iran’, ‘Sasanid Empire’ (226-651 A.D.) gave a great attention to Khuzestan by construction of a massive irrigation system. This irrigation system has been constructed when ‘the ancient Persian tradition of large scale hydraulic engineering was combined with the unique Roman experience in masonry’ (Yarshater, 1983, p. 563). This combination and the new technology in irrigation system were based on Persia-Rome war. Persia-Rome war after long time in the early 3rd century was finished, when Shapur inflicted a great defeat on the Roman army, and captivated the emperor Valerian. Large numbers of Roman prisoners were settled by Shapur in Khuzestan, where they built extensive irrigation system in Shushtar, Dizfoul and Karkheh (Frye, 1953: 43). Dizfoul and Shushtar are usually remarked by their Sasanid bridges which act as a
dam as well. In other words these Bridges were a part of irrigation system in Khuzestan in Sasanid epoch. This shows a typical scene that the agricultural revolution was happened based on a large scale irrigation system. The importance of this revolution for urban development was identified by Wittfogel, who argues that ‘management of large irrigation system’, ‘surplus of food and productions’ and ‘division of labour’ caused to emerge ‘urban societies’ which were not based on kinship. This kind of society may be named hydraulic society (Pacione, 2001 and Carter, 1983).

3.2. Spatial analyses of Dizfoul and Shushtar

The global integration based on the axial model of Dizfoul is shown in figure 78. The centre of the integration of the city matches the geographical centre of the city and generally the integration value of the system decreases from the centre of the city outwards, especially towards the north and south edges. The most integrated line in the city was situated in the west of the bazaar. The bazaar was formed beside the most integrated line not through the integrated part of system. However, the bazaar formed within the main integrated area of the city. The main global structure of the city is extended from the centre to the north and south of the city; in other words, it is extended in a linear form and parallel to the river. This spatial structure intersects another integrated thoroughfare which is perpendicular to the main spatial structure of the city in the south of the bazaar (figure 78).

The bazaar was formed in a grid system and has a convex form and it is mainly formed as a retail cluster and it does not organize other socio-cultural spaces within its spatial system. In order to make the bazaar more accessible the city fabric in the first step wrapped itself around it, then this intermediary system was connected to the larger structure of the city by groups of main routes. This organic logic to connect a main area to the whole system has emerged in other cities too. For instance, in the city of Ghaidaia in Algeria, this spatial form of the city was formed to connect the Friday mosque in the centre of the city to the whole system (Fig. 79).

The local/global Scattergram of Dizfoul (Fig. 80) shows two distinct areas: Firstly, the central spine (the core integrated area) which includes the bazaar, Friday and the majority
Figure 78: Global integration of the city of Dizfoul (1929), bazaar is signed in a grey background
Figure 79: The city of Ghardaia in Algeria, the Friday mosque is marked with a star, Ref: Benevolo, L. (1980); and the city fabric around the bazaar, bazaar is marked in an ellipse, and Friday mosque; Dizfoul (1929)
of mosques and shrines. Secondly, the area, which is around the city core and has lower global integration value. This part of the city is generally a residential area. This spatial condition is detected by Karimi (1997) in his cases as well. Furthermore, although Friday mosque is located in the main global area of the city, it is not connected to the bazaar like typical Friday mosque in other Iranian cities that Friday mosque is formed within the bazaar.

Figure 81 shows the global integration of the city. As it is seen, the main global structure of the city is generally extended from north to south. The most integrated part of the system is in the geographical centre of the city. The most integrated line is in the west of the bazaar and like Dizfoul it is not located within the bazaar. The global integration value decreased towards the edges of the city on the west and east. Namely, the west and east edges of Shushtar are the most segregated part of the city.

The bazaar of the city is situated in the centre of the city and it exhibits a convex (and grid) structure. The bazaar is formed alongside the most integrated line but it is not linearly extended along the most integrated thoroughfare. The bazaar of Shushtar similar to Dizfoul is a retail system and it does not include socio-cultural spaces such as religious school or Friday mosque. Furthermore, the Friday mosque is not close to bazaar at all, and its situation does not have a high global integration. It implies that the Friday Mosque does not have a significant global role in the city structure, which is an unusual outcome in the Iranian city.

The scattergram of the global integration against the local integration (R5) of Shushtar is shown in Figure 82. This scattergram shows three distinct systems in the city structure which are similar with three parallel clusters on the scattergram: firstly, the part of the graph which is shown as ‘A’ is the city core and it is generally the most integrated part of the city. In other words, it includes the most integrated line and the lines located on or three steps away from the most integrated line. The second cluster (marked ‘B’), which has high local value but there is a gap between it and the spine of the city in global values. It is around the city core and has a lower global integration value and finally the third one which is marked by ‘C’; this part of the scattergram includes the rest of the city or generally segregated part of the city.
Figure 81: Global integration of Shushtar (1933), bazaar and Friday mosque are signed
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Figure 82: Local against global integration scattergram (R5/Rn) of Shushtar (top) and the location of the area A, B and C in the city (middle) and local integration against global integration (R5/Rn) scattergram of Shushtar. The bazaar axes and the axes around the Friday Mosque are selected which are represented by different dot in the scattergram (bottom).

The situation of the bazaar and Friday mosque in the spatial structure of the city can be investigated by scattergram (Figure 82). The bazaar area is clearly on the city core, which marked ‘A’, where the legibility of the spatial structure is stronger than the other parts of the structure of the city. Moreover, this scattergram shows that, the Friday mosque is not situated on the spatial core of the city; however it has a high local value within the city structure. In the other words, the bazaar and Friday mosque are not situated in the same spatial system in Shushtar.

3.3. Summary of the spatial analyses

As the result of these analyses bazaar in Dizfoul and Shushtar are not similar to typical Iranian bazaar in two levels. Firstly in spatial level, the most integrated part of axial models are not located within bazaar and secondly the spatial system of bazaar do not organize the main public, social and religious spaces in these two cities. For instance,
in contrast with typical Iranian bazaar which is the main space to organized the ritual
ceremonies, in Dizfoul and Shushtar bazaar have never play a role in order to do the ritual
ceremonies. Simply speaking, the structure of bazaar is not integrated enough to organize
the socio-cultural spaces of city. Secondly, the usual spatial relation between bazaar and
Friday mosque is not exist in these two cities. However, this situation that the Friday
mosque and bazaar are not integrated can be seen in Kermanshah and Yazd too (Bonine,
1990).

Two main questions are directly raised. Firstly; why does not the bazaar play the most
significant role in spatial structure of Dizfoul and Shushtar like Karimi’s cases which are
the typical Iranian cities? Secondly; why are non-commercial land use taken place within
the most integrated part of these cities. This paper is concerned on the first question by
discussion in socio-economical context of Iranian cities.

4. Social and economical background of Dizfoul and Shushtar

At the first step, the general condition of Dizfoul and Shushtar can be reviewed. There are
several reports about the bazaars of Dizfoul and Shushtar, described them as ‘unimportant
bazaars’. For instance Najm-al-Molk, who visited Dizfoul in 1882, wrote; “Dizfoul has not
a creditable bazaar” (1962, p. 23). Curzon, who visited Shushtar in 1889, wrote, “there are
no khan, or caravanserais in bazaar, for merchants such as are usually found in Oriental
cities” (Curzon, 1892, p. 368).

The question is that, why did these cities not have a bazaar similar to Kerman or
Shiraz? One may say that, neither Dizfoul nor Shushtar was a big city and these two
were two small towns before the modernization. This argument can not be true, because
Dizfoul and Shushtar were named as a big city in south west of Iran at the end of 19th
century by ‘the Cambridge history of Iran’. Moreover, Najm-al-Molk (1962) reported the
population of Dizfoul as 45,000 and the population of Shushtar by 20,000 in 1882.

This situation of the bazaar may be able to be explained by the economic structure
of these cities. As already mentioned these cities were formed based on an ancient large
irrigation system and even during Islamic period, Dizfoul and Shushtar had agricultural
based economy. These agricultural systems were basically governed by land lords and their
families during 19th and early decades of 20th century. To achieve a clear idea about this
situation, it needs to be explained in more detail.

The idea Rent-Capitalism, as an urban economical system, was used by Hans Bobek in
his paper in 1948 to explain socio-economical structure of Islamic-oriental cities. Although
his idea was faced with some challenges, Ehlers, with new study, has tried to show the
ability of Bobek’s idea to explain socio-economical condition of some of Iranian cities before
the Modernization of Iran. Bobek’s idea represent oriental-Islamic cities which exploit
villages, however Wirth(1974) showed that the correlation between cities and villages was
not a exploitation based and cities should be seen as a centre to manage and improve of
economy in that context. However all of these literatures show the close relation between
city and villages around, as union socio-economical system in Iran. Ehlers believes that,
this condition not only is detectable in oriental-Islamic city but also in some sense can be
seen in third world countries. The reason is, in non-industrial context the agricultural area
and a bazaar are two essential needs for cities (Ehlers, 2001). Ehlers has tried to explain
legibility of Bobek’s model by study of Dizfoul as specific case study. He has pointed out,
“The relation between city and village and the importance of villages as a main foundation
of urban economy can be seen in middle and small cities in Iran” (Ehlers, 2001, p. 225). His study in 170 villages around Dizfoul shows more than %72 of 150,000 acre agricultural area was belonging of habitants of Dizfoul before the Modernization. His report shows that, although this condition can be seen in other cities, this percentage is extremely high in Dizfoul. “The wealth agricultural land around the city mainly was belonging of land lords (city habitant) therefore, they had significant social and economical situation in the city” (Ehlers, 2001, p. 254). This condition can be seen in Shushtar as well. According to Floor, Shushtar was divided into two social parts and each part has its leader or head. The leaders were selected from ‘Kalantar’ and ‘Marashi’ families which were the richest land lords in Shushtar (Floor, 1987).

One of the key ideas of Ehlers (2001) is that the city and villages around are a component in a larger system based on a hierarchy from small, middle and the large city. Therefore cities interrelation has effect in national scale as well as region scale. In this interrelation, national network of distribution of production and merchant roads are essential because, cities are the centre of workshops to produce and export to villages as well as other cities or even other countries. Therefore, the geographical location of cities and their connection to national and global merchant road affects economy of cities and its bazaar. The main traditional merchant roads were the Shahi Road (the Royal Road) in national scale, and the Silk Road and Spice Road, international roads, in the historical period of Iran (Fig. 83). The Silk Road connected the European countries to China and the Spice Road connected the European countries to India.

Generally, the bazaar of Dizfoul and Shushtar, such as many other Iranian cities, had a regional scale because they were not connected to the main traditional merchant roads. Therefore, it had not a major effect on the economy of the city, on the other hands, the wealth agricultural location caused to form the economy of such a city based on agriculture. In contrast, famous or typical bazaars were formed in some cities with a significant commercial situation. This type of bazaars were formed in cities which were the capitals of Iran in different periods such as Shiraz, Tabriz, Qazvin, Isfehan and Tehran; and in cities such as Kashan, Yazd, Kerman and Hamedan, which are connected to the main merchant roads. The commercial activities in this kind of bazaar have global scale as well as regional and local scale. The commercial situation has effect on industry of cities as well. For instance carpet industry was highly improved to export to other cities and countries in the cities such as Kerman and Kashan. In contrast the main workshops in Dizfoul produce goods which are consumed by local and rural people. In this context, Ehlers has pointed out that the idea of Wirth to describe city as a centre of organization and innovation is more related to large cities and the Bobek’s idea of Rent-Capitalism is more related to middle and small cities (Ehlers, 2001).

This economical context of Dizfoul and Shushtar caused not only agricultural based urban economy but also land roads were at the top of this economic organization. Land lords had a strong relation with clergies and they economically supported the social and religious activates. Therefore they were the most influential social group in the city of Dizfoul and Shushtar. Indeed, land lords played the role of the bazaar traders at the social and economical levels in these cities. In this socio-economic context, bazaar was not the main centre of the city economy and bazaar traders were not the most influential social class of urban society. In other words, bazaar had lost its socio-cultural role and plays a pure retail and commercial role in the context of Dizfoul and Shushtar.
5. Sum up and conclusion

Although this study is a short study about the Iranian-Islamic cities before the Modernization, it shows evidence of the idea that the organic cities produce their own configuration and order. In other words, as Lefebvre says, every society produces a space, its own space. This study has suggested that the bazaars of Iranian cities can be divided into ‘commercial bazaars’ and ‘socio-commercial bazaars’. It implies that the socio-economical and spatial role of bazaar in each group, are different.

The bazaar of Dizfoul and Shushtar can be named as ‘commercial bazaars’ or ‘retail bazaar’ which was usually formed by retails and showed grid form. The main specification of these bazaars is, the bazaar is a retail clustering and the bazaar structure does not play the role of main city structure to arrange the socio-cultural buildings and spaces. Therefore, the commercial bazaars are neither the most integrated part of the city structure nor the centre of the social activities. These types of bazaars emerged as a result of an urban economy based on non-merchant system. Simply speaking, when the bazaar is not the economic centre of the city it is not the social and spatial centre of the city as well.

In contrast, the typical and famous bazaars are the core of the urban economy and can be named socio-commercial bazaars. These types of bazaar are not only the main structure of the city economy but also the centre of the spatial structure of the city and the bazaar organizes the social activities, public buildings and spaces through its structure. Therefore these bazaars are the centre of the social and economic activities of cities.

The famous bazaars were generally formed in cities which have their economy based on merchant system. Large numbers of these bazaars were formed in cities which were the capitals of Iran in different periods such as Shiraz and Isfahan. The second group, such as Kashan, Yazd, and Hamedan, are situated on the Silk Road, the Spice Road, and
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the Shahi Road. In addition, generally, the cities around the Central Kavir (the central desert) could not have an economy based on agriculture therefore its economical structure was based on the bazaar. We can argue that, cities in wealth agricultural situation may also have a great merchant situation therefore their economies are based on bazaar or merchant economy.

Consequently, this study suggests that firstly, spatial role of bazaar in the Iranian cities structure has taken effect from the economical and social role of the bazaar. Secondly, the Iranian bazaars can be divided into two types, the commercial bazaars and socio-commercial bazaars. Therefore, explaining the Iranian city through the certain roles of bazaar may lead us to a misunderstanding of the city structure while, explaining of the Iranian city by regarding the social and economical structure of city can be more successful.

This study concludes that the city elements may play different roles in the spatial configuration of the various cities. The result of this study suggests, although there are common specifications in the historical Iranian cities, there are also differences in their structures. The differences of the spatial role of the bazaar in the historical Iranian cities are an evidence for this claim.

**Literature**

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