METHODOLOGY OF
MOSQUE-ORIENTED BUILT ENVIRONMENTS
CASE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY MOSQUES OF
IRAN'S CITIES

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In the desirable society of Islam, the gathering place and pivot space is "the Grand Mosque". This can be observed in establishing the al-Masjid an-Nabawi by the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). In a situation where many immigrants were deprived of a house and shelter, the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) established the al-Masjid an-Nabawi, which became a space for the faithful people to gather around the Prophet's guardianship. This process was also adopted in establishing the subsequent cities, such as Baghdad where the congregational Friday mosque was the gathering space in the middle of "the round city".

During the Renaissance, by virtue of secular humanism, Divine principles were rejected to be a guideline for social life and replaced with the findings and creations of autonomous human intellect. Francis Bacon in *New Atlantis* (first published in 1627) chose a college as the center of the city instead of a temple or a church. A similar process is also observable in contemporary cities of Iran, especially the capital Tehran. Studying the theoretic bases and the prophetic traditions, this article has searched for the strategies to revive the social role of the mosques by suggesting that, in designing the contemporary cities of Iran, the emphasis should be on "the network of mosques" instead of the "transport network". The center of the city would be the Grand Mosque, and the city would be divided into districts, which would be centered on their own neighbourhood mosques.

Keywords: Islamic city, Islamic architecture, Mosque design, Mosque functions.

Introduction

If we admit that the main role of an architect and an urban designer

is to design a life container, and we consider their duty as to promote the quality of human social life through adjusting the space and the shell, then before we could design a construction or a city, we should have an appropriate image of the desirable community and architectural solutions which result in the improvement of human life; therefore, hereunder a desirable community based on the Islamic teachings will be briefly discussed.

Foundations and Theoretical Framework

According to the Islamic beliefs, the human being in all of his choices is subdued to the Divine's "formative (*takwīnī*)" will and does not have the power of disobedience, he – for the purpose of development and sublimation context – is provided with this chance in the limited opportunity of the world to either act against the "legislative (*tashrī'ī*)" will of God, or he may subjugate his will to the legislative Divine's will and join the way of "improvement" and right path.

The influence of the human will is not limited to personal life, rather it affects history and the community. Within the community extension, the human wills are conjoined to each other and achieve a real unity; as in the human body, what makes it a unit and coherent body is the unifying will that is dominant over all of the body parts. The community's unity too, is made from the unit wills dominance. The wills being knotted to the unit will, a kind of collective character is made which is noted by the holy Qur'ān as the fire leaders and the light leaders, and about the fire leaders we have in the Qur'ān: *"… and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide). He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment, and lead them into the Fire (as cattle are led to water): But woeful indeed will be the place to which they are led!"* (al-Qur'ān, XI:97-98). The personage of each nation and country is so conjoined to the personage of the leader they are following, that they have become one personage and found a common destiny, up to a level that on resurrection day, they are called with the names of their *Imāms: "One day We shall call together all human beings with their (respective) Imāms"* (al-Qur'ān, XVII:71).

Eventually it joins one of two streams of historical guardianship, and

weakens one of them and strengthens the other one: *"Allah is the Protector of those who have faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light. Of those who reject faith the patrons are the evil ones: from light they will lead them forth into the depths of darkness. They will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein (For ever)".* (al-Qur'ān, II:257).

When the products and subjects (including architecture and urban design) of these two streams of guardianship are placed in their own course of history, they become resources which can create higher capacities (whether for development or for aberrance).

As a result of the emergence of a fundamental change in the western social values and worldviews since the Renaissance, mankind didn't continue following Divine commands. Instead he chose his autonomous intellect's findings and creations as a guideline for his social life. The influence of this change on urban design can be traced in *New Atlantis* written by Francis Bacon where he chose "the Salomon house," a college, as the center of the city instead of a temple or a church. The college was "the very eye"[1] of the desirable described kingdom, and an institution which "above all hath the preeminence"[2] Bacon knew that the institutions of each society should correspond to the new social covenant.

The Society of contemporary Iran cannot be considered as an exception. In order to achieve the Islamic lifestyle, Iran must use the management and advancement patterns which are different from the common models of western development. A civilization can be divided into three dimensions: hardware, software, and human resources.[3] The hardware is the physical and sensible products of the society, while the software is a compound of ideologies, philosophy, and science, etc. Pursuing the requirement of an Islamic lifestyle exposes the structural weakness of the government experts who were trained in the software which produced the western civilization and could not produce rationality and different products, and even at least, it hasn't been agile or optimized for such a production. The researchers' investigations indicate the penetration of humanist, secularist and rationalist foundations into the common theories of human sciences, but in practice the Muslim specialists also are in the habit of seeing the universe, the human being and knowledge in a different way and knew that they, in practice, offer the products

which had been similar to the ones of their western colleagues; an experience about which the English physicist Paul Davies declares: "Many practicing scientists are also religious. Following the publication of *God and the New Physics*, I was astonished to discover how many of my close scientific colleagues practice a conventional religion. In some cases they manage to keep these two aspects of their lives separate, as if science rules six days a week, and religion on Sunday."[4] That's because the intertwined system of foundations, methods and theories of different sciences do not allow for influence and change in the scientific structure by the personal foundations of the researcher; and this issue creates a new necessity in revising the software which generates the scientific theories including the foundations, method, logic and the philosophy dominant over the method and logic. Therefore, we can imagine a specialist in architecture or urban design who is Muslim and performs the Qur'ān and Prophet's commands, but in professional life, according to the professional teachings that he had been subject to, and according to the standards and laws that are dominant over his job quality and profession, he is a soldier in the stream of secular civilization and makes effort in its solidification and supremacy.

On the following, this article tries to investigate upon the principles and requirements in designing the mosques based on foundations and methods that are more compatible with Islamic teachings; in this direction, the position of mosques in Islamic civilization should be taken into consideration.

The Position of Mosque in Islamic Civilization

In Islamic jurisprudence,[5] we can see three kinds of mosque regarding the position of it within the structure of the Islamic community: the central mosque, the grand mosque of the towns, and the local mosque.

Central Mosque

The central mosque is the sacred house of God, about which the supreme God says: *"Remember We made the House a place of assembly for men and a place of safety"*. (al-Qur'ān, II:125). The house

of God is the main center for the global community of Islam and a pivot for the formation of the global population. In subsequent rankings, Masjid an-Nabawī and the Al-Aqṣā Mosque have a global role. The reason beyond the fact that performing a prayer in these mosques results in special effects and special rewards is that if a person performs a prayer in these mosques, the reward would be equal to that which a group of people would receive, and saying prayer in these mosques is as reviving the Islamic community.[6] These mosques are the first-ranked mosques which are considered as a pattern for other mosques of the Islamic nation and in fact are the centers for the formation of the total of Islamic nation.

The Grand Mosque of the Town

The House of God is a place where all the Muslims of the world gather. Two other mosques are also the gathering places for the Muslims on various occasions. In the next level, we have the mosques of the town. In every city, there should be a grand mosque in which the Friday prayer is held, forming the social texture of the city. In historical cities of Muslims, the grand mosque together with the government headquarters (*dārul imārah*), governmental tribunals and the judicial center formed the heart of the city. The grand mosque is the main core which distinguishes between the city and the village. For example in Baghdad the congregational Friday mosque was the gathering space in the middle of "the round city" of Manṣūr. Of course, merely considering that in a historical period, some Muslims or their governors chose a special style for their clothing, housing, or urban design, does not make that style "Islamic," rather attributing something to Islam means that it is coordinated with and according to the Divine legislative will. Such a claim requires a methical proof. In order to ascribe any command or action to Islam, we need special regulations and principles to which the science of jurisprudence is respondent. As we have in the jurisprudential definition of a city: The city is a place where we can find a governor or a judge.[7]

However; the orientalists and western researchers and many of their eastern Muslim students[8] have defined Islamic architecture according to the architecture of some Muslim societies and have come to results

which differ from the jurisprudential results. For example Jean Sauvaget considers the Bazaar as the center of an Islamic city but not the grand mosque.[9]

The Local Mosque

The local or district mosques are in the third place among other mosques. The grand mosque and local mosques function in urban and neighbourhood scales respectively. Throughout history, Muslim cities had some mosques within the residential districts in which the daily prayers were held. Regarding the number of mosques in a district, each district might have more than one mosque considering the religious, economic or social conditions.[10]

In this way the structure of Islamic society is formed; a structure in which the Imam of the Islamic nation (*Ummah*), the Friday prayer leaders and the local mosque prayer leaders are placed respectively. This structure is an organizational structure indicating that the Islamic nation (*Ummah)* is formed around and defined by the mosques.

The Functions of Mosque According to the Islamic Texts

The most evident functions of the mosque include: abundant remembrance of God, performance of prayers, worship, and *I'tikāf.*[*4]

"Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure". (al-Qur'ān, XXII:40).

"... while ye are in retreat in the mosques". (al-Qur'ān, II:187).

However, these are not the only functions of the mosque. It is recommended for Muslims to devote a place in their houses as the prayer ground, as it is referred to by *Bukhārī* in chapter "The mosques in the houses".[11] However, the mosques are not places merely for saying prayers and they are different from prayer grounds, as they are fundamentally different from synagogues, churches and the temples of

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*I'tikāf is an Islamic practice consisting of a period of staying in a mosque for a certain number of days, devoting oneself to worshiping during these days and staying away from worldly affairs. Ten days *I'tikāf* in the holy month of *Ramadan* is a regular *Sunnah.*

Sikhs and Buddhists. The mosque is the house of God, the house of people and the house of *Imāmah*. The mosque is the house of a God Who is not merely the God like a retired watchmaker but also He is a live, permanent and protective God *"Whose hands is the dominion of all things".* (al-Qur'ān, XXXVI:83). This realm means the monarchy over every single thing. *"Is it not His to create and to govern?"* (al-Qur'ān, VII:54).

The mosques, first of all, are the houses of God and the houses of *Imāmah: "Behold! We gave the site, to Abraham, of the (Sacred) House".* (al-Qur'ān, XXII:26). Ibrāhīm, mentioned in this verse, is the very same one who had attained the position of *Imāmah: "And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said: "I will make thee an Imām to the Nations."* (al-Qur'ān, II:124). Preparing the "site of the House" for Ibrāhīm means that this place has been allocated for the position of Imamate. The mosques are the houses of *Imāmah* and leadership,* and the relation between *Imām* and *Imāmah* is formed through the structure of the mosques; therefore, it is the mosques which make the community. The word "House" has a special concept in Islamic thinking and jurisprudence. The house is the center for nurturing the human being; it is a place where the individual personality of mankind is formed and is considered as the family's privacy. There is also another kind of house which is the Islamic community's house (the mosque), the central mosque of which is the house of God. Concerning this "house" the holy Qur'ān says: *"The first House (of worship) appointed for men was that at Bakka: Full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings".* (al-Qur'ān, III:96). In fact, the first house built for the people is the very house which is in Mecca that is a cause of guidance for the people of the world. Out of this verse, it can be concluded that this house is not the only house being built for the people, but also all the mosques are constructed for the people; however, that special mosque was the first, making it a blessed construction and a guidance for the people of the world.

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*Having this view, there would be no need to struggle over the issue whether to call the Prophet's (ﷺ) mosque (Masjid al-Nabawi) as the house of Prophet (ﷺ) or the mosque of the town. (For example see: Ayyad, Essam S., 2013, 'The Mosque of the Prophet or the House of the Prophet?' *Journal of Islamic Studies,* XXIV:3, Suez Canal University, pp. 273-334).

Therefore, the purpose of the mosques is to educate and rear both the individual Muslim and the Muslim nation. These two types of Muslims are mentioned in the following verse: *"And remember Abraham and Isma'il raised the foundations of the House (with this prayer): "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us: For Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-knowing".* (al-Qur'ān, II:127). Up to here, the Islam is individual, *"And of our progeny a people Muslim, bowing to Thy (will);* (al-Qur'ān, II:128). At this level the Islam is considered as collective. The process of rearing the human community is like this. The process of rearing the society starts from rearing a complete person and continues by rearing his family and results in the emergence of the Muslim nation.

The emergence of "the Muslim nation for you" is the purpose of establishing the mosques. This purpose has a lot of prerequisites and requirements. The Muslim community means a community that is surrendered to the commands of God, and the relations among the members of that community are based on obeying God. All the mosques are the centers for managing and rearing such a community. For this reason, since the very beginning of Islam, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) in the mosque both led the society and educated and reared the Muslims.

Some Prohibited Functions

According to the following traditions, selling and purchasing, administering legal punishments, and announcing a lost item are among the prohibited functions inside the mosque.[12]

According to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ): *"If you heard a man seeking for aberration in the mosque, tell him: God will not reply you, and indeed the mosque is not a place for such things"*[13]

Strategies to Promote the Social Status of the Mosques

As it was mentioned in previous section, the mosque is the base of Islamic civilization and the network of mosques is the path of leading the Islamic nation. In different civilizations, you can find some buildings which had a basic role in forming the society and gathering the people;

for example in some pre-Islamic cities of Iran like other similar cities around the world, the palace or the castle of the governor was at the center of the city:
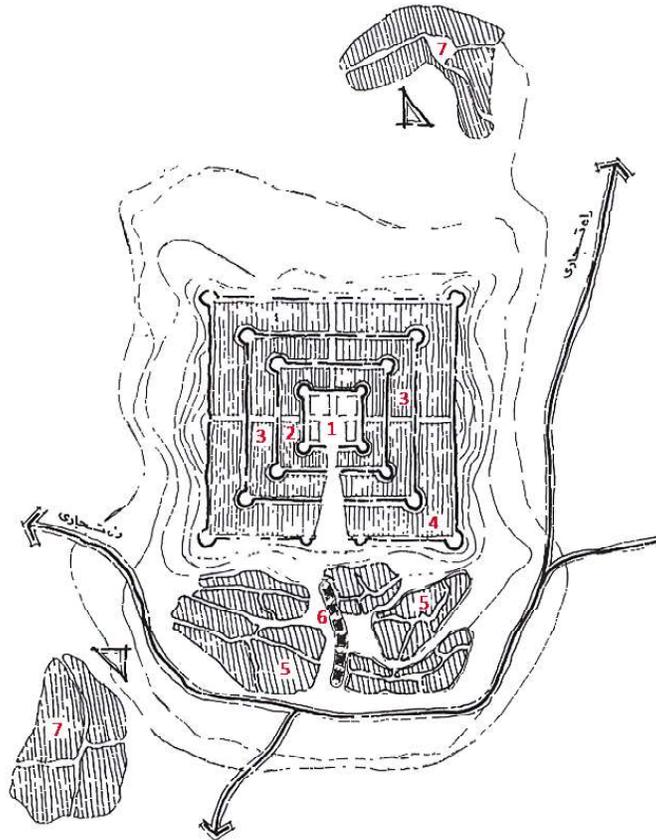

Fig. 1
The typical city layout during the period of Medes[14]
The descriptions on the figure:
1) The king's palace; 2) storages and treasuries; 3) residence of the king's slaves;
4) barrack; 5) city; 6) market place (*bāzār*); 7) residential areas

Aristotle suggests a "free agora" for the city which "should be clear of all merchandize".[15] Of course the Greek's Agoras did not stay committed to this request of Aristotle and gradually admitted the various economic and social activities. Romans too, in coordination with administrative systems and the special needs of their collective life founded the forums. The main activities being conducted inside the forums included

performing the administrative and political affairs of the citizens, doing commerce and sometimes dealing with some religious affairs. However, the situation is totally different in Japan. In that land, since long centuries ago till the present time, the predominant political and social systems did not have a space for the individual as a free element and placed the human beings along the defined intellectual and behavioral axes of the system. The image of this can be found in the geometry dominant over the cities of Japan. "Hiroba" as "a place for collective life" in Japan, never had a form like the squares of Rome or Greece. The basic pivot of the city had been a street, on both extremes of which the temples were usually placed. These temples comprised some open spaces which had usually been closed to the people and were merely allotted to the rituals.[16]

Fig. 2
The plan and a section of collective space in Japanese cities[17]

In Islamic cities, a situation different from these two eastern and western patterns is dominant. Here, the mosques have a courtyard being opened to the people and people are free to gather in it; however, this gathering should not be under economical purposes (as in traditions where doing business and selling or purchasing are banned in such zones)[18] and there should be no intention of ostentation or expressing the oratorical or poetic arts and the time should not be passed on fun and play or vanity; and also the mosque, unlike what was common in pre-Islamic cities of Iran, should not be under the control of a dominant or tyrant class of people. In this direction, one must notice the difference of freedom in the viewpoint of Islam and in the Greek meaning of it. In the humanistic meaning, freedom means to remove the barriers from the way of achieving what the ego seeks for.[19] However, in Islamic teachings, the passions have been declared as the greatest enemy of mankind, and freedom is expressed as getting released from the shackles made by passions and mundane beauties for the Divine flight of the mankind, as expressed in the following Qur'ānic verse, *"... and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them.* (al-Qur'ān, VII:157). From this perspective, mankind does not possess even his own body or life and whatever he has is a trust from the wise Lord, and he is only permitted to use them in the way of worshiping, which is the way of prosperity and felicity. With this view of life and society, the courtyard of the mosque is defined as a place for the collective life of the believers, and the Islamic city is defined as a mosque-oriented city.

The important question raised here is whether the strategies experienced by mankind which were used to change a place into a center, could be implemented for the mosques as well? The most important strategies are as follows:

- Increasing the height of a building
- Decorating the building
- Using new, attractive and creative forms
- Creating the temperature and environmental comfort
- Implementing the attractive functions for different people at different

ages, especially the recreational and commercial functions and creating the common urban needs.

Through studying the narrations inserted in the domain of construction and the function of the mosque, we can answer this question:

A report from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) negates the strategies of increasing the height or decorating the building or making it dominant over others, and recommends making an awning:

The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: *I see you building your mosques high after I am gone, just as the Jews built their synagogues high and the Christians built their churches high.*[20]

The holy Prophet (ﷺ) said: *I was not commanded to build high mosques. Ibn Abbās (ﷺ) said: You will certainly adorn them as the Jews and Christians did.*[21]

According to a narration by Ibn Zia from 'Ā'ishah (ﷺ), by increasing the population of the Muslims, they increased the area of the mosque and after a request by the Muslims, the holy Prophet (ﷺ) allowed them to install an awning made from the body and branches of the palm for the mosque. Then, it started raining over the Muslims and it was dripping from the ceiling of the mosque. Those who attendees of the mosque asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to allow them to cover the roof with mud, but the Prophet (ﷺ) did not let them and ordered them to follow the method of his Excellency Moses (عليه السلام) which was building an awning from straw and dry firewood. 'Ā'ishah (ﷺ) says that the condition of the mosque had been the same till the time the holy Prophet (ﷺ) passed away.[22, 23]

Also it is narrated from *Behaqī* that the awning of Moses (عليه السلام) had been such that when he raised his hand, he could touch the ceiling. (Anṣār – *supporters* – gathered a sum and took it to the Prophet (ﷺ) and suggested to reconstruct and adorn the mosque, and said up to what time should we say prayer under this ceiling that is a date palm's straw. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: the ceiling of my brother's mosque Moses (عليه السلام), was like that, and I will not return from his way.[24]

Maybe the spirit of all these commandments can be stated as negating the physical and material self-glorification

Bin Malik said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: *The Hour will not begin until the people compete in (building) mosques.*[25]

Of course it should be mentioned that this simplicity was not an obstacle for the mosque to serve as the heart of the Muslims community.[26]

However; studying the historical performance of the Muslims in most of the regions of the world indicate that this principle is not followed, and for the purpose of worshiping God and promoting it, some methods are taken that are negated by the religion. Regarding the theoretical importance of this issue, we will briefly talk about the necessity of subordination to our master in the methods in addition to the necessity of subordination in goals and purposes:

Methodology of Islamic Thinking:
Subordination without Comprehending the Philosophy

The understanding that a command is dispatched from the Supreme God should be enough reason for the believers to submit to it, because He is the Lord and owner of everything. Of course a believer is aware that his Lord is wise, knowledgeable and merciful, and He will not command but from the domains of mercy, wisdom and knowledge. But this subordination is not due to a comprehension of the philosophy of an action, but merely because of the Divine's command. This is the foundation of obedience. Performing a physician's command is not called obedience. If the patient himself comes to the physician's recommendation, whether by studying or by experience, he will execute that knowledge, and there would be no need for the physician's recommendation. What we mean by obedience, is in fact obeying the Lord. This is what is interpreted as the covenant of obedience. This covenant is in fact the translation of – *Āmannā* – *"we started believing": "Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed".* (al-Qur'ān, III:193). *Āmannā* means the covenant of obedience. It can be perceived from the ending verses of the *Sūrah Baqarah*: "The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. *"We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers." And they say: "We hear, and we obey".* (al-Qur'ān, II:285). In this

verse the words "They declare" describes believing – *Āman*. Here the words "we started believing" – *Āman* – means "they declared we hear and obey". "Obedience" is a condition for the faith covenant. When the faithful people say "O' our God, we started believing in you", that means O' God, we accepted you as our Lord and guardian and obeyed your apostle, and surrendered ourselves to your commands. Most of the time, the most difficult Divine tests are taken in this way as the Satan was commanded to prostrate for a creature whose creation from soil he witnessed. The supreme God definitely could create his vicegerent from the best and the noblest materials, but in order to examine his servants, he prescribed for them to be created from worthless clay, and made the angles and the Satan witness the creation of him, but the Satan declared: O' God please exculpate me from prostrating to mankind so that I worship you in a way that nobody had worshiped before. And the supreme God said to him that if you want to worship me, you have to worship me in the way that I commanded you.[27] Two other famous examples were given from the life of the Prophet Ibrāhīm (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), who was commanded to slaughter his son, and Prophet Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), who witnessed the slaying of an innocent boy by Khidr (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام), which show that our capacity to understand is finite while the way of paradise and bliss is infinite and the main role of our intellect is identifying the Divinely approved guardian who can guide us to that infinite goal.[28] It does not mean closing rationality and reason, but it suggests a different methodology which Instead of creating and inventing solutions based on an independent mankind intellect, seeks to understand and discover the solutions that the all-wise, *Allah,* has revealed.

It seems to be a shortcoming of most of Muslim governors during the history that have constructed giant mosques that are felt to be accompanied by self-glorification and materialistic pride. Comparing the two grand mosques of Seljūk (11th century)[29] and Safavīd (17th century)[30] periods in Isfahan may confirm this issue. Such an approach continues today in Islamic societies as well as in other places where Muslims design and construct mosques, and the design of mosques is considered to be the container of artistic creativity[31] of the architect.

Failure to comply with this methodological principle has made it difficult to achieve a mosque-oriented built environment in contemporary cities of the Muslim world, as urban and architectural experts prefer to

pursue the goals of religion with methods that they have "invented", not by methods which have been "discovered" from Islamic teachings. In order to prove this claim, a brief overview of the status of the mosques in contemporary Iran will be mentioned.

This theoretical discussion can be a guide for the Muslim architects and urban planners, to remind us that we cannot adopt just any method or way with the purpose of promoting the Islam or the mosque. But, we may not be able to expect those monarchs, because of whom many disasters have been recorded during the history, to have adhered to the jurisprudential commands and procedures. However, in the case of Iran and especially after the victory of the Islamic revolution we can see that in some cases and despite the guidance given by the leaders of the revolution, the former historical patterns are still being used. In order to illustrate this issue we will discuss about the congregational Friday mosque (*Muṣallā*) as a case study in the next part.

The Condition of Mosques in Contemporary Iran and Some Practical Tips

By the same procedure as mentioned about Madīnah and Baghdad, in historical cities of Iran such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Qazvin, Shiraz, etc. the grand mosques situated at the city central square were the gathering place.

But from the Qajar period (1795-1921),[32] with the arrival of the military and, consequently, political, cultural and economic modernity, gradually the traditional urban patterns were replaced with modern urban patterns. A complete example of this change can be found in the capital: Tehran. The urban plan of the city was designed by General Alexander Bohler, a French professor of military science with a number of Iranian engineers. The pivot of the developed city was a new square (built in 1860's) which called *Toapkhānah* ("The Place of Cannons," or "Artillery Barracks") Square.[33] It was a central courtyard like other old squares but, unlike those squares, it did not include a mosque. Its main function was the maintenance of modern warfare equipment, and the construction of the adjacent building was not a comprehensive mosque, but a building belonging to a modern institution: the "*Shāhī*" (Imperial) bank.[34]

Fig. 3
Toapkhānah square, circa 1890, with *Shāhī* bank instead of a mosque[35]

This square was supposed to bring a completely modern face to the Iranian cities.[36]

During the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and afterwards, the social role of the mosques increased, and some cities began to build new congregational Friday mosques in proportion to the increasing population of the cities.

For example in Tehran, considering the lack of space and the difficulty of access to the Friday Prayer in Tehran University, it was decided to allocate a land with the area of one million square meters to construct the Prayer Ground. In this regard, the contemporary Friday Prayer leaders of Tehran in 1988 wrote a letter to Ayatollah Khomeinī the leader of the revolution to specify their duties; Ayatollah Khomeinī replied:

God willing, you will be successful in making an anti-blasphemy insight, in addition to constructing the Tehran Prayer Ground. Meanwhile, the plainness of the prayer ground should remind us of the plainness of the worshiping place of the Muslims of the beginning of Islam, and the glamour of the mosque buildings of the American Islam should be strongly prevented. The supreme God approves all those who have assisted in

establishing the God's mosques. (November 14, 1988 – Ayatollah Mousavī Khomeinī).[37]

As it can be seen in the body of the letter, Imām Khomeinī as a fully qualified jurist, has explicitly specified the desirable physical conditions for a prayer ground; although in practice, when the job was consigned over to the expertise body, the dominance of mental patterns and university standards and teachings, that are often impressed by the western culture,* caused the prayer ground to take distance from the desirable religious plainness or get affected by the materialistic orientation. Some pictures are provided below:

Fig. 4
Tehran new Grand Mosque, *Muṣallā*[38]

Of course constructing a mosque according to the characteristics provided in the religion requires to provide some appropriate environmental

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*The designer of Tehran Prayer Ground is Dr. Parvis Moayed Ahd, who was first educated in university of Beaux-Arts in the field of architecture and then educated in Paris Sorbonne University in the field of urbanism. In 1956 he attained the Ph. D degree in the field of S.A.D. and also he was given an honorary P.H.D. in the field of architecture (A.A.PHD) by the Sorbonne University in recognition of his cultural services. And also in 1963, in recognition of presenting cultural and architectural plans, he was given the first grade degree of architecture by the England Royal University – A.CH.ASS.SCOL-) *http://www.musalla.ir/tabid/158/ArticleId/46/-46.aspx*

backgrounds. For example one of the commands proposed by Ayatollah Araki in his courses regarding "urban flourishing systematic jurisprudence" negates the vertical development and the building of high and multi-floor constructions inside the cities; and by observing this command, the necessary background for constructing mosques which correspond to Divine commands would be provided. In the present conditions, it would be more difficult to build such a mosque because the symbols of modern civilization, especially the banks and hotels, are being built with full ostentation.

In spite of the efforts made to construct comprehensive and central mosques, the situation was different for local mosques.

The most comprehensive statistical plan concerning the mosques and religious constructions is the plan provided in 1996.[39] According to this census, in that year there existed 87908 religious places out of which the mosques with the number of 57635 being equal to 72 percent, comprising the largest share. Other religious buildings included the prayer grounds, prayer rooms, shrines and mausoleums. After around 20 years the number of these mosques increased up to 72000. Although this fact indicates a 25% increase in the number of mosques, regarding the increase in the state's population from 60 million in 1996 to 80 million in 2016, the mosques per capita has decreased from 1 mosque per 1041 to 1 mosque per 1111 person. Considering migration from villages to the cities, and the increase in the population density in the cities, more decrease in the mosques per capita has been witnessed at the level of megacities. The targeting for increasing the number of mosques can be calculated under two different criteria, one of them based on population and the other based on the spatial distribution.

According to a plan being conducted in 2012 by the Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution, the access radius for 250 meters was specified as appropriate for the mosques, and thereupon, it was suggested to construct mosques for those districts which lack one. The megacity of Tehran has 1746 mosques, which according to the access standard, there needs to be constructed 992 more mosques in this city. According to the population of Tehran which is equal to 7341554, the mosque per capita in Tehran equals one for 4205 people which in order to reach the state average, there needs to be constructed 5300 more mosques in Tehran.
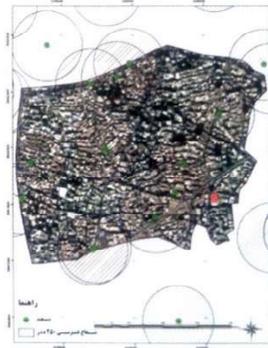
Fig. 5
A sample of the first edition maps: specifying the zones with adequate and
inadequate access radius to the mosques being constructed for Tehran districts and
being under construction for other cities of Iran.[40]

The reviews done by the authors indicate four main barriers in supplying an appropriate mosque which are as follows:

1) Uncontrolled growth of the city and an increase in population density, 2) Dissatisfaction with the plain mosques and trying to make large and luxurious mosques, 3) Not merging the mosque with appropriate and desirable functions, 4) Lack of paying attention to the network of mosques as the pivot of urban development.

A brief description of each item is given below:

1)   Uncontrolled growth of the city and an increase in population density:

The uncontrolled growth of the city and an increase in population density has made the city unbalanced and it has become difficult to equally supply the different functions such as the mosque and other things. According to urban flourishing systematic jurisprudence,[41] and by reviewing the narrations (*riwāyāt*), it can be found out that in Islam the city has some limitations and it would not be desirable for it to be developed without control. This important issue should be taken into consideration in preparation plans of the country.

2)   Dissatisfaction with the plain mosques that are without decorations
       and trying to make large and luxurious mosques:

Constructing large mosques, in addition to the problem of increasing

the costs of construction and maintenance, causes the mosques to exit from the local scale and the possibility of visiting and human relationships are decreased. While through constructing two or a number of small-size mosques instead of a large one, we can have a more impartial and convenient distribution of the mosques and allow more potential for human and emotional bonds. For this purpose, we need to define the city based on different districts that are of identities. The supreme God says: *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other* (al-Qur'ān, XLIX:13). The characteristic of mankind's creation in the form of tribes and branches leads them to be divided into smaller groups. This division makes both recognition and human relations possible, and underlies the increase in tenderness and social supervision. In designing the cities, careful attention should be given to the influence of the scale and providing for the local texture in the process of designing the cities. The idea of the neighbourhood unit which was proposed by Clarence Perry in the 1920's follows such a relation.[42] However, in this idea we can see that the primary school is assigned as the center of the district, while in Islamic cities, this is the local mosques that are the centers of districts.

3)   Not merging the mosque with appropriate and desirable functions that can take place within the mosque. The second harm is relinquishing some functions which were usually taking place in mosques in the past or the Islamic traditions and commands have suggested them as appropriate. For example, the mosques have been the places for teaching and learning since the beginning of Islam.[43] Gradually and since the fourth century A.H., the schools were founded as the independent establishments. The formal history of the school, regardless of its informal adventure, started since the year 1067 (460 A.H.) by opening the Baghdad Great *Niẓāmiyah* School.[44]

However, positioning of most of seminary schools next to the mosques and bazārs prevents the schools from getting separated from the people's life stream. One of the successful physical patterns in this regard is the pattern of the school mosque which continues till the Qajar era in Iran.[45]

Because of the influence of modernity making way through Iran and affecting the social systems including the education system, we could witness the separation of the schools from the mosques; a separation that has continued up to this time. The harms resulted from this separation has made some activists in the domain of education to make sporadic but effective efforts in bringing the education back to the schools.[46] One of other functions that can be merged with the mosque is the public and specialized libraries. The mosques of the world of Islam have been places for keeping religious and other books since the early history of Islam[47] (since 7th century). Based on a statistic issued in 2014, the per capita of libraries area in Iran is for 170 square centimeter and increasing it has little influence on increasing the per capita of the mosques;[48] however, through planning for building the libraries inside the mosques, we have 7285 libraries being built in Iran mosques which compromise 18858659 books, being used by the number of 1305809 permanent library members.[49] And in the event of the request of the board of trustees of each mosque, the department of the mosques' libraries will allocate a budget for construction or expansion of the libraries inside the mosques. If there is an urgency in the process of designing and ratifying the construction of new libraries inside the mosques, we can promote this relationship as well as the social role of the mosques.

At the present time in the city of Tehran and by an expense incurred by the municipality, 354 Neighbourhood Houses[50] have been built to settle down the problems of the people of the neighbourhood and this duty can be merged with the neighbourhood (local) mosques.

It is noteworthy to say that in order to promote the mosques' social role, the strategies such as creating the commercial, recreational and sport spaces inside the mosques, cannot be used, because these activities are among the negated activities within the narrations and much more studies need to be done about the positioning of these places in the neighbourhood of the mosques.

4)   Lack of paying attention to the network of mosques as the pivot of
      urban development

Since the patterns for comprehensive and detailed plans of the

cities of Iran have been derived from similar western plans, usually there is no independent and special place for the mosques within them and they have the following three parts:

- The urban transit network
- Land use detailed plan
- Technical building codes

As Harvey shows, Urbanization, in the history of western civilization has a very special role in the development of capitalism "[by] virtue of the changing patterns of commodity flows over space and by virtue of the very nature of the created and produced spaces and places over which such movements occur."[51] High-capacity transit ways were used to support the economic interchanges, a process which is compatible with a society whose main goal is economic growth, but if in another culture the main reason for gathering as a society is not an economic affair, it is sensible to replace the urbanization axis of such a society.

As it was said, an Islamic society is based on obeying God, and all the mosques are the centers for managing and rearing such a society. For this reason, it can be proposed that the main part of a comprehensive and detailed urban plan should be a network of mosques, through which flows the will of Divine leaders, all over the society instead of a transit network which guarantees the "commodity flow over space". Of course it doesn't mean an Islamic city doesn't need a transit network or a secular city doesn't have churches or mosques, but the point is which component should be on the position of the pivot of urban development.

Conclusion

The network of the mosques in the Islamic society is the base of the formation of the Islamic civilization and is a way for executing the will of a just guardian who is the base of the unity of the Islamic society. For this reason in detailed plans, it deserves the highest importance. Instead of concentrating on designing the pathways network, it is suggested to design detailed plans based on the mosques' networks. In Islamic commands and narrations, some special functional and physical

features have been suggested for the mosque which all have been summarized in the following Table:

TABLE 1

Desirable and Undesirable Functions and Physical Features of Mosques "According to the Mentioned Islamic Texts"

Desirable functions	Undesirable functions	Undesirable physical features
Worshiping and remembering God	Selling and buying	Heightening the constructions
Prayer	Announcing a lost person	Making the mosque dominant
Education	Administering legal punishments	Decorating the mosque
I'tikāf	Reading myths	Building the mosque for boasting

On this basis, and in order to increase the social role of the mosques, the following items are suggested:

1. The city should be divided into distinct, districts having identities.
2. The local mosques should be designed as the center of the districts
3. The local scale should be observed in local mosques and building the mosques greater than what is necessary should be prevented.
4. The grand mosque should be considered as the center of the city.
5. The grand mosque should be built with appropriate area and enough capacity for the people of the city.
6. The uncontrolled extension of the cities and the unbalance within the population distribution should be prevented.
7. The luxury and squander in decoration affairs in the mosques should be prevented.

8. The mosques should be merged with compatible functions such as the local house, school and the library.

9. The incompatible functions such as the commercial, recreational and sport sections should not be designed within the mosques

10. The structure of the detailed urban plans should be corrected and a network of mosques should be part of the plans as the pivot of urban development.

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