Manifestation of Cultural Events in the Physical Structure of Iranian Traditional Cities (Case Study: Zanjan)

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Abstract: Performing cultural events has always been a fundamental basis of communities' cultural identity and has ever been one of the most influential elements in urban physical (physical configuration) aspects and non-physical (spiritual) aspects. In Iran cultural events are graciously placed and are of enormous potential in sense of belonging to place which takes place in two levels: 1. the effect of cultural events on urban physical aspects 2. the effect of cultural events on spiritual aspects. This study aims to explore and pinpoint the real importance of cultural events and their effects on the physical structure of traditional city fabric in Iran. The structure of cities in Iran shows a perfect accordance between the main structure and the spatial system with collective cultural events such as 9th and 13th of Muharram. Along with the processions, mourning groups have witnessed the emergence of focal city points around which a compressed residential district has emerged.

Key words: Cultural events · Urban physical aspects · Urban non-physical aspects · Physical structure

INTRODUCTION

Apartment complexes have been built based on intricate calculations to answer the residents' needs. A complex matrix of environmental, financial, political, geographical, continental factors in addition to beliefs, customs and traditions has shaped them. Cities with historic regions bear a myriad of memorable symbols that create homogeneity, the sense of place and identity as well as continuity of group memories [1]. These days, though, extension of cities in Iran take place regardless of this intricate collection of factors, so such cities fail to meet their resident's needs and cannot provide the basis for those healthy relations expected from residential complexes. In this regard first the researcher would analyze some global examples of beliefs affecting the city structure. Accordingly, the research hypothesis would be presented as: "cultural events are of utmost importance in formation of Iranian urban physical aspects and model the spatial system of traditional cities in Iran.
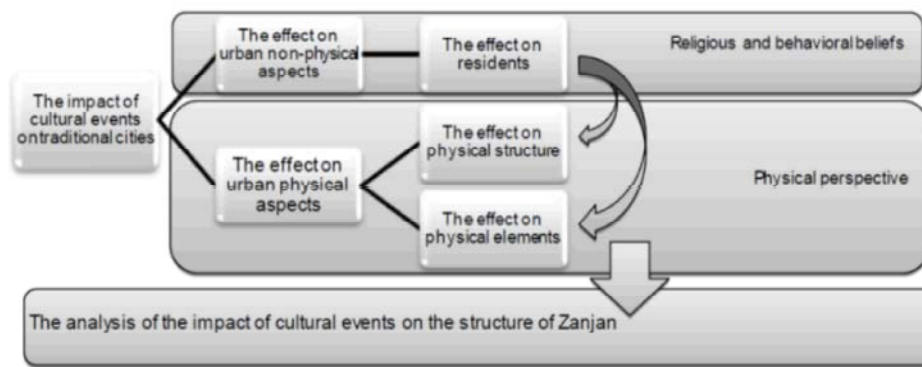
Objectives: Identify and clarify the effects of this ritual on the formation of the physical structure of Iranian cities, so on the points mentioned above, the research question would be as follows:

- How does this cultural event affect the formation of the skeleton of traditional Iranian cities and what is the nature of this effect?
- How does this cultural event affect the special system of traditional Iranian cities and what is the nature of

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the process of choosing a method to cope with this very research's demands, an attributive (analyzing the context content) method was chosen along with field research not only on the physical structure of city but also on a better recognition of the ritual as well as the group movements and behavior. Finally, comparing the maps of city and the procession movements made context for analysis and then confirming the hypothesis.

In this regard in first step the impact of cultural events surveyed in the city history and ancient cities by searching in text and historic documents then according to hypotheses' Zanjan as an Iranian city which its old fabric has remained choose and the structure of survey analyzed with maps and pictures. So the analytical matrixes designed and the ideas tested in the each matrix.

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Graph 1: The project structure

Investigation in Urban Design Literature and Previously Published: In this regard, here is discussed the opinions of those scholars who have referred, in one way or another, to this Subject and the relation between the city physic and its events as well as the link between the space and its residents:

Rossi: Rossi argues that the city is both *collective* and private; and is "composed of many people seeking a general order that is consistent with their own particular environment." [2]. Any regular changes that we observe in the *city bear imprints of the daily life of its citizens*; and we can trace and understand these different layers through a systematic, analytical method. Cities are not static, they change all the time and they are part of what Rossi calls *urban dynamics*.

The key focus of his method is the concept of process – that is, urban transformations over time – which enables him to make sense of the past, present and future. In order to operationalize this method, Rossi introduces four further concepts:

- *The concept of urban skeleton or urban plan.*
- The concept of *typology*.
- The concept of *locus* and *history*.
- The concept of *urban dynamics*.

First of all, *Rossi understands of urban history*. *History*, explained according to Rossi, is analogous to a *"skeleton"* whose condition serves as a measure of time and is measured by time [3].

Bacon: Bacon acknowledges *city* as the *greatest human outcome* and *the result of its residents' decisions* [4]. To prove his ideas, *he discusses the configuration of old cities* like ancient Athens and talks of kinesthetic systems; the routes which connect the whole city and make for a homogeneous whole [5]. *One of the most outstanding examples* of these historical routes is the *route for peoples' movement in Aetna's ceremony in ancient Greece.* "Although Athenians always used this route for one reason or another, walking in it sure reminded them of the beautiful, glowing marches all had witnessed during their childhood" [6].

Rapoport: Rapoport believes that urban form (and whole landscapes) can thus be interpreted. In many traditional cultures sacred schemata and meanings are the most important ones and cities *in those cultures can be understood only in such terms*. In other cultures health, recreation, "humanism," egalitarianism, or material well-being may be the *values expressed in schemata and hence are reflected in the organization of urban environments*. Hence the widely differing nature of settlements and cultural landscapes in Spanish and Portuguese South America, in New England and the Virginias in the United States, in the United States and Mexico [7].

Hall: In his view, *spaces* with fixed displays (the extended material dimensions of ownership) *have hidden, internal sketches which are rooted in culture and cultural designs. "The design of villages, complexes, cities* and the intervention in the suburban areas are *not accidental*, rather, they *follow a design which is quite revolutionary in comparison with the time and culture*" [8].

Hall defines city with an eye on the relation between the city and culture: "*city*, apart from any other issue, *talks of the culture of those who have made it*; it is the extended version of a society that performs many of its complex, inter-connected functions about which we know nothing" [9].

Relph: In his view, such selection or concentration of the *identity of a place into one feature depends*, of course, on local circumstances and on the purposes and experiences of the author and is not especially relevant to the present, more general discussion. What is significant here is the way in which physical setting, activities and meanings are always interrelated. Like the physical, vital and mental components of behavior that Merleau-Ponty (1967) identifies, it is probable that they constitute a series of dialectics that form one common structure. Physical context and activities combine to give the human equivalent of locations within the 'functional circle' of animals [10]; *setting and meanings combine in the direct and empathetic experience of landscapes or townscapes; activities and meaning combine in many social acts and shared histories that have little reference to physical setting*. All of these dialectics are interrelated in a place and it is their fusion that constitutes the identity of that place. Physical appearance, activities and meanings are the raw materials of the identity of places and the dialectical links between them are the elementary structural relations of that identity.

This analysis of the components of identity of place is not, however, complete. There is another important aspect or dimension of identity that is less tangible on the identity of places than these components and dialectics, yet serves to link and embrace them. *This is the attribute of identity that has been variously termed 'spirit of place',* 'sense of place' or 'genius of place' (*genius loci*)—all terms which refer to character or personality. Obviously *the spirit of a place involves* topography and appearance, economic *functions* and *social activities and particular significance deriving from past events and present situations*—but it differs from the simple summation of these. Spirit of place can persist in spite of profound changes in the basic components of identity [11].

Halprine: It seems the importance of his work is due *to people's special experience* in a way that he constantly stresses *the role of people and their movements* in perpetuity and *permanence of a city and acknowledges the urban life as dependent to it*. He also knows the city physic including the old and new buildings next to each other as a chain connection between the past and present [12].

In Halprine's view point, a city is a mixture of pre-planned, glowing art and some evolving designed elements in which people get the chance to participate. *As a result, each city is the outcome of the creative art of the society and needs continuous, investing participation of all the citizens* [13].

Lynch: Lynch believed that the study never proved its basic assumption, except indirectly, via the emotional tone of the interviews: the repeated remarks about the pleasure of recognition and knowledge, the satisfaction of identification with a distinctive home place and the displeasure of being lost or of being consigned to a drab environment. *Succeeding studies have continued to collect this indirect evidence*. The idea can be linked *to the role of self-identity in psychological development*, in the belief that self-identity is reinforced by a strong identity of place and time. A powerful place image can be presumed to buttress group identity. The pleasures of perceiving a complex, vivid landscape are frequently experienced and recorded.

It is reasonable to think that a featureless environment deprives of some very important emotional satisfactions. These convictions have been reinforced by many expressions of popular culture, as well as findings in psychology, art and the sociology of small groups. (As to the role of surprise and disorder, I return to that below.) Nevertheless, it is true that this central assumption remains an assumption; however it may be shored up by anecdote, personal experience, or its connection to the structure of other ideas [14].

Jacobs: The attack on results has endured as the image of her book. Her methods—alternative principles for city design—have been neglected, but *they are important indicators of an urban design based in real life social situations and use.*

Her suggestions for visual order are of a different nature. Arguing that the city can never be a work of art because art is made only by selection from life and a city is life at its most complex and intense, she suggests instead that the role *of urban design should be 'a strategy of illuminating and clarifying life and helping to explain to use its meanings and order* [15].

Madanipour: Urban design therefore can be seen as the *socio-spatial management of the urban environment using both visual and verbal means of communication and engaging in a variety of scales of urban socio-spatial phenomena* [16].

Alexander and Poyner: The patterns themselves are not to be regarded as complete designs, but as a sketched minimum framework of essentials, a few basic instructions, a rough freehand sketch, to be shaped and refined not so much on the drawing board but in use and construction. *They provide the designer with a useable,* but not predetermined, *series of relationships between everyday life and spaces. Even those patterns which are closest to the traditional spatial concerns of urban design*—where, for instance, Sitte is frequently cited by Alexander—are either introduced, researched or expressed in terms that deal explicitly with people's use of places [17].

DISCUSSION

The Effect of Religious Beliefs on Formation of City Structures: Religious beliefs have been influential in formation of many ancient and medieval cities, to name a few some of which are mentioned here:

Greece: one of the brilliant historic examples of human procession is the parade in Athena ceremony in Greece which was magnificently held every year and every four years and was a vital social event in Athens.

    The ceremony's path was more than simply a city road; it was more a part of regional movement network which linked the most sacred parts of Greece and this way was considered a sacred way and the main street of Athens. This road was indeed a main structure along which all commercial, industrial and political activities that made up the urban life were developed [18].

India: in Indian urban planning a symbolic form named Mandala [19] was used. Human establishes order in his environment through his constructing activities and this fact is attained only through strict pursuing of VestaPrusha Mandala plan [20]. Many villages and towns in traditional India were ''planned according to a religious symbolism, which governed the layout of wards and streets, the location of temples, monasteries and village halls….'' [21].

Rome: Rome used to reflect a celestial image on earth, contain the axis of the world and have the world being divided into four parts in it. The city had been sacred and used to be founded along with certain complicated rituals and in a definite way. The most important phase had been plowing the city which, in another word, can be referred to as sanctification and consecration of a part of the land and dividing it into four parts and linking the four parts together implementing mythology and certain rituals. Through sanctifying and consecrating the land, the city would emerge. The space would also be molded as a holy sketch and its physical formation was of less magnitude. [22].

China: "Ancient cities were designed to reproduce' 'the work of the gods''. The Chinese city is an example: [23]"

    "The traditional form and layout of the Chinese city is the image of the Chinese cosmos, an ordered and consecrated world, set apart by a massive earth engirdle from the contingent world beyond" [24].
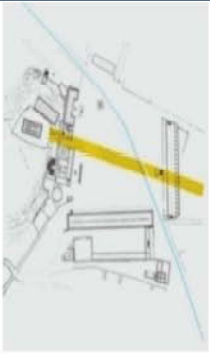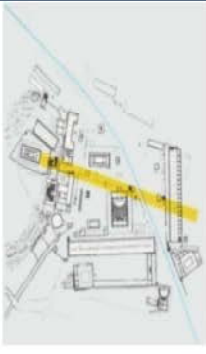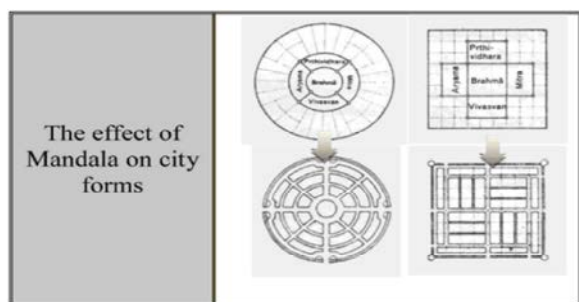

Table 1: Agora development survey
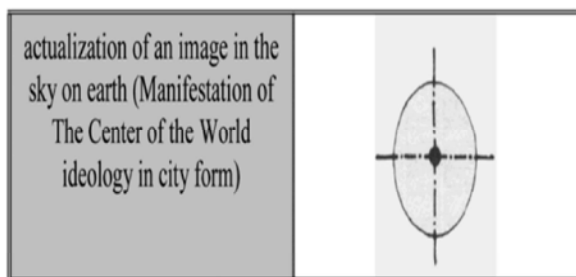
Table 2: Mandala and urban patterns

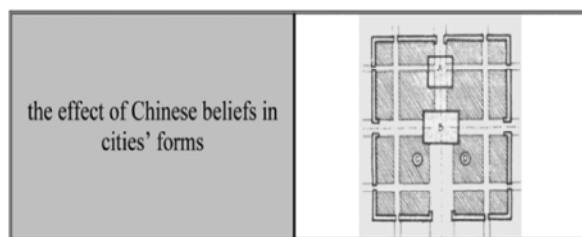Table 3: The effect of beliefs on city form
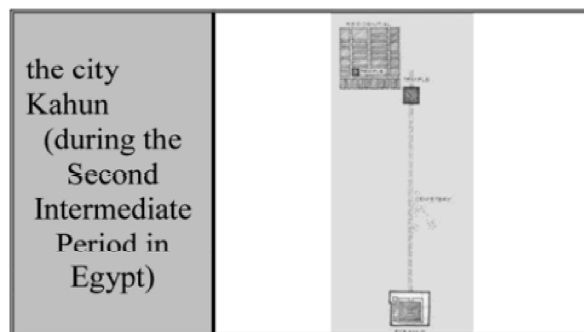

Table 4: Chinese beliefs and city form

Table 5: The city Kahun

Egypt: it seems Egyptian cities are formed through transforming the graveyards to temples and then temples to cities. In other words these cities had a religious basis and their plans are very similar to microcosm models [25]. Bearing the emphasis on after life in mind, Temple (gods' palace) is the symbol of divine residences on earth. It is said that this temple is placed on the primary elevated Iceland which is in the world [26].

RESULTS

The Effect of Religious Beliefs in Formation of Iranian City's Physical Structure: Iranian urban physical aspects can be studied in two levels; physical structure and physical elements where the former is what this study addresses. The structure of traditional Iranian cities is hugely influenced by the culture. Every culture is of three factors, namely 1. Religion and sect 2.Traditions and3.History that all affect the perceptual and behavioral aspects of citizens. Manifestation of conceptual perspectives can be traced into people's customs and traditions (behavioral aspects) that affect the structure of traditional Iranian cities.
Each of these factors is to be discussed widely:

Religion and Sect: With Iranian's utmost resp ect for Muhamed, Allah's apostil and his family, the ceremonies celebrating their births or mourning. Each of these includes specific rituals and still it can be claimed with great certainty that the most effective and intensely felt agony is Imam Hussain's mourning ceremony.

History: With the spread and dominance of Islam in Iran, so many deep changes occurred in people's beliefs and religious persuasions. Those behaviors and beliefs which were opposing the religious persuasions were set aside and those in accordance with people's mentality survived through a tie to religious persuasions.

The mourning rituals on the death of Siyavush (Siyavush's tail is an epic one mentioned in Ferdowsy's Shahname. Siyavush is the one who was unfairly accused of assault and he was innocent but received a death penalty) set the cultural grounds for these cultural events [27].

Tradition: In Iranian culture the belief that religion opposes injustice and tyranny has ever been present.

Customs and Traditions: These events have some unique customs and traditions among which Ta'ziya, Noha, mourning procession and distributing votive offerings can be named.

Ta'ziya: Ta'ziya is a symbolic condolence theater (figure 2). Ta'ziya is a lesson for people on patience and resistance against problems and difficulties. A vast area and some facilities and decorations are needed to reproduce the Ashura event thus it is usually held out of town or in the cemeteries and these days due to lack of space it is not held in big cities.

culture			
	religion	**history**	**tradition**
Religious persuasions	The manifestation of religion can be seen in people's beliefs, customs and traditions.	A link to outstanding historic events	All Iranians treasure the belief that religion resists against tyranny and injustice.
behavioral	The event's customs and traditions are: • Ta'ziya[16] • Noha[17] • Mourning group processions • Distribution of votive offerings[18]		
	the movement of mourning processions determine the main structure of Iranian cities (Noha and votive offering are recited and distributed along the mourning procession path)		
structural	City expansions develop around this structure		

(Left vertical labels: physical structure of Traditional Iranian cities — The main structure of city — The city spirit — The body of city — City expansions)

Table 6: The effect of culture on physical structure of Iranian cities

Fig. 1: Ta'ziya's photos

Fig. 2: Processions's photos

Fig. 3: The path for Zanjan's mourning procession on Tasu'a

Noha: Along with the mourning procession, eulogists recite stories of Imam Hussain and his comrades' movement which recalls the events that happened to them and is all the recreation of a historic event. It also well depicts the link between now and past in a way that people can imagine themselves in that era and space, let the present go and are temporarily absorbed in that tragic catastrophe.

Processions: In these events, people move along a path and grieve for this sad loss. The path mourning processions move along has not changed over years and in spite of expansions and developments in cities, they still remain as the backbone to the skeleton of the city. What everyone call recall is a father, grandfather or a great grandfather talking about the same path being taken on ritual when they were young children (Figure 3).

CONCLUSION

Rituals and the Physical Structure of Zanjan: In Zanjan, like all other parts of Iran, this ritual is held with great respect and enthusiasm as every year tens of scores of people are drawn to Zanjan to take part in these rituals.

The path for mourning procession on Tasu'a (the ninth of Muharram) is illustrated in Figure 4. The journey starts at the Grand Hussainia. The mourning group then goes along Imam Khomeini street (a main street in old fabric of Zanjan) and the other mourners living in northern neighborhoods join the main procession on Enghelab square through Sa'di street, then at the time of evening call for prayer, the procession enters ImamzadehEbrahim's mausoleum, say their prayers there and then through the southern gate the procession enters Mesgarha street and moves through Bazaar till it ends up in the Grand Hussainia.

Zanjan's Zeynabiya's mourning group starts the procession on 13th of Muharram. The path is illustrated in Figure 5. It starts from Zanjan's Zaynabiya, then the mourning group enters Imam Street through Middle Sa'di Street and reaches Imamzadeh Ebrahim's mausoleum at the time of evening call for prayer and when the prayer is said, the procession enters Tohid (Mesgarha) through the southern gate and through Southern Sa'di Street the procession return to Zaynabiya.

The path for mourning processions has been the main structure of city over so many years and all cities' expansion and development has taken place around it. The city's key identity points have formed like The Grand Mosque, Sabzeh Meydan (Green Square), Chehelsotoon Mosque, Imamzade Mausoleum and Bazaar. This path is just like a virtual chain holding and linking these elements (Figure 7, 8).

The physical structure of traditional Iranian cities has formed under the impact of group rituals which are rooted in physical and cultural identity of traditional cities. The present research surveyed the post-Islam era and cultural events (9th and 13th of Muharram) with an eye on the city Zanjan and all findings confirmed the conformity of the main structure of city and the mourning procession path over the years. Historical studies show that little by little city development and expansion has taken place on the sides of this path.Along such a path, a solid network ofreligious spaces and related facilities (public bathroom, etc.) form and as this is a religious path religious paces are duly formed near it which are shown in Figure 9.

Fig. 4: The path for Zanjan's mourning procession on the 13th of Muharram

Fig. 5: The paths for Zanjan's mourning processions on Tasu'a and the 13th of Muharram
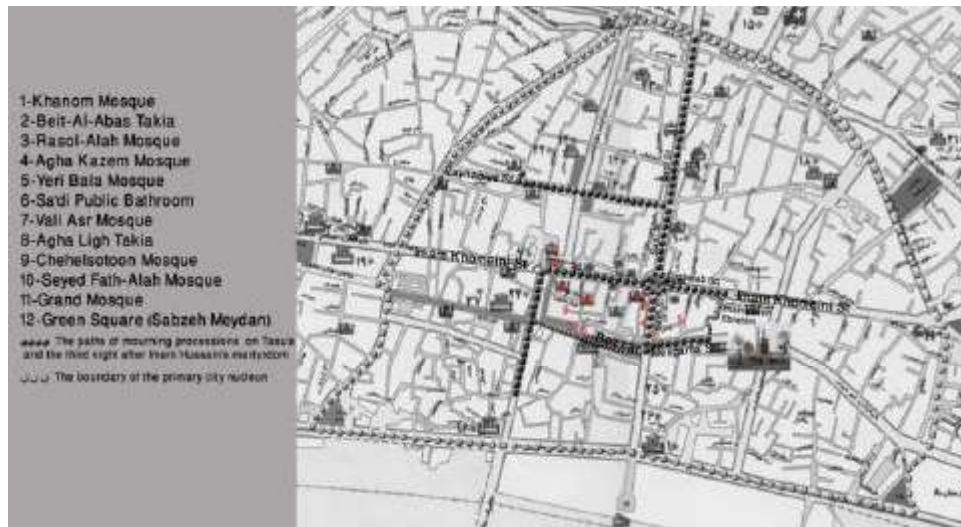

Fig. 6: Photos of identity points

Fig. 7: Identity points

Fig. 8: Map of identity and religious points and the path of mourning processions

The important identity-inducing centers of cities and residential spaces has formed here as well which all have been saved through sense of place, social unity, identity and continuation of group memories. Among the most important outcomes of existence of such identity-inducing centers, which are the focal points to city designers and urban planners these days, are providing a basis for residents' relation with their city and developing a sense of place, improving the concept of citizenship and emphasizing the foundations like cooperation and encouraging the residents to be active and participating urban problems, to name a few. In Iranian traditional cities, existence of such relation evens out the problems that are nowadays common to residential spaces and cities.

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