

ARCHI-CULTURAL PARALLEL OF PERSIAN AND TURKISH BAZAAR ALONG THE SILK ROAD CASE STUDIES: REY, TABRIZ AND ISTANBUL BAZAAR

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Introduction

History reveals that human beings were depending on each other for their survival on the earth. They had to exchange their commodity and goods for their various requirements. Everything was not available in one place; various materials were found in various places. Therefore, people had to travel to find out their needs and requirements. This was the way that a network for such traffic and transportation was developed and later on they called it the Silk Road.

Most of the important intersections along the Silk Road were bazaars. This research focuses on the comparison of the physical layout and the culture of architecture of Iranian and Turkish traditional covered bazaars in the context of Rey, Tabriz and Istanbul.

The analysis in this paper indicates that there are various similarities among the architecture of the bazaars along the Silk Road. These have been defined through comparison of various architectural elements, which has been used in both countries Iran and Turkey. In this research, comparison of the physical layout of traditional covered bazaars of the two of the most important regions of the Silk Road routes in Persia (Iran) and Ottoman Empire (Turkey), that influenced the culturings, architecture and legal characteristics of the era are studied in the context of Tabriz and Istanbul respectively. In fact the word of Bazaar itself is originally Persian which has transferred to the vocabulary of various nations and finally to the English as well.

Method and the Scope of the Research

The method of this study is basically a kind of comparative analysis of culture of architecture among various nations along Silk Road. This analysis has done through plans, sections, elevations, various details, views and functions of the Bazaars of Rey, Tabriz & Istanbul. These cities were locating in the middle part of Silk Road, connecting east to west and their bazaars have been the hub of various socio commercial activities.

Although the city of Rey had one of the oldest bazaars of Persia but unfortunately it has been damaged by Mughal attacked and all its documents were lost. Therefore, this article focused on comparing the functional, spatial structures as well as the architecture of the Turkish and Persian bazaars in Tabriz and Istanbul in details, and Rey in general.

The scope of this research is limited to the study of three manifest bazaars and their function to prove their similarity and finally the impact of Persian bazaar on creating such kind of urban design for commercial activities along Silk Road.

Silk Road

The Silk Road actually was an ancient trade network, connecting the East to the West. The Silk Road trade system was created by interactions between China B.C.E. and their western neighbors. The Silk Road was not one road but many (Fig. 1); it was actually a network of roads, generally going from east and west, but with spurs into southern Iran, the northern Eurasian steppe, and south over the Hindu Kush to the Indian subcontinent [1].

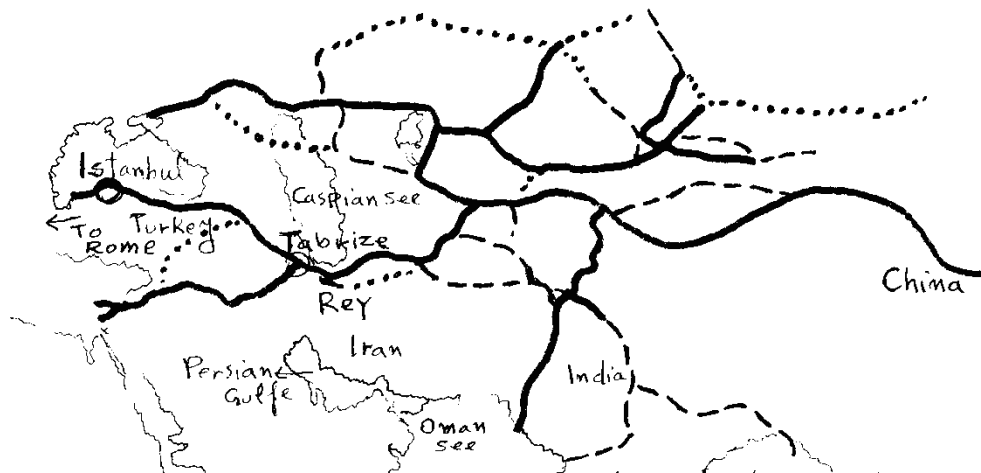


Figure 1: ___ Silk Road 2nd BC to 4th AD - - - - 5th century AD to beginning of 13th AD
.....From 13th AD to 16th century AD
(Source: Authors on the bases of ICHHTO, 2009)

Bazaars

Originally, bazaar is a Persian word. It is not only a place for commercial activity but also a place where many other cultural activities have been taking place. It has a great social capital [2].

Bazaar is also a symbol of traditional architecture of Persian Islamic art & architecture which is best visible in Iran and Turkey.

In Iranian architecture, bazaars are formed either organic or planned, and usually located at the centre of the cities, the layouts are usually linear in shape, positioning the public and socio-cultural spaces through this linear form [3]. They were usually constructed during the periods of great economical growth and welfare [4]. Moreover, bazaars have always defined the major street of urban fabric, connecting two major entrances of the city [4].

On the other hand, in Turkish architecture, "Bedesten", the covered and enclosed core building, where the most expensive and valuable goods are exchanged, determines the formation of the whole bazaar, as can be seen in Bursa, Edirne or Istanbul covered bazaars [5]. Contrary to usually timber framed shops, "Bedesten" and "Arastas" of the Turkish bazaars are predesigned and built in single sessions without any expansion. Since, the ownership status as mentioned before, belonged to the "Vakifs", as long as there is demand, and as long as the "Vakifs" had the capital, shop strips were built within time and the bazaar continued to expand horizontally. Thus, although in both cultures, both organic and pre planned bazaar systems, developed from linear strips are seen, contrary to the articulated and clustered Iranian bazaars, Turkish bazaars formed through connection of "Rastas" acting as gridiron building blocks [6]. Bazaar have been the pulsating heart of most of famous Iranian & Turkish cities, They were also forming various origin and destination along Silk Road, located mostly at the intersection of two important route of Silk Road.

Rey Bazaar

Rey formerly was one of the great cities of Iran. Its ruins of Ashkani Palace on Cheshm-e Ali hill, located near Capital of Iran, Tehran. The remains of the ancient city sprawl out the eastern side of the modern city of Shahr-e-Rey, located just a few miles southeast of Tehran. The Silk Road in Iran connected the cities of Tous, Neishapour, Damghan, Gorgan, and Rey.

Rey was famous for its decorated silks, of unsurpassed artistic perfection, and for ceramics. Only two architectural monuments survive the tower of Toghril (1139) and a partially ruined tower [7]

Shahr-e Rey lies along the major migration routes taken by the household of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his followers. Imam Reza (AS) crossed this route to Khorasan. When Alavids ruled Mazandaran, Shahr-e Rey was a passageway for Shias who sought protection in Mazandaran in the 3rd and 4th centuries AH (10th and 11th centuries AD) [8].

Rey Bazaar is located to the north of Abdol-Azim's shrine, which is comprised of two sections and a crossroad is formed at their intersection. Since old days, it has been a center for the sale of spices, traditional herbs and commercial goods which were imported by traders via the Silk Road. The structure of the bazaar is constructed from plaster, baked brick, raw mud brick and mud. It dates back to the Safavid era and is approximately 500 years old [9].

Construction technology of Rey Bazaar is of point vault arches & domes.

Tabriz Bazaar

Since Tabriz was located on Silk Road route, it was one of the most important commercial centers in Iran and in the world in past (Fig 2&3). It was the center of exchanging European commodities; therefore, it was famous in the world [10]. Among famous travelers, who visited and described Tabriz bazaar in different centuries are Moqaddesi in the 4th century, Yaqoot Hamavi in the 7th century, Marco Polo in the 7th century, Ibn Batooteh in the 8th century and Hamdollah Mostoofi in the 8th century. In addition, Sharden gave a great detail of it. He considered it as the largest bazaar in Asia with 15,000 shops [11]. According to the bazaar separation by The Mehran Rood River into two parts of the bazaar, the north part has lost its importance and has been neglected. A large part of the Bazaar area is located in the south of the Mehran Rood River [10]. The existence of the river has caused the formation of bridge-bazaars (Bazaars created on bridges) along the "Rasta", leading to the north of the Bazaar. A large number of entrances are one of its important and outstanding elements [12]. Although Persian Bazaars were established in Achaemenid era. Religious places like mosques for Muslim are usually built in Bazaars too.

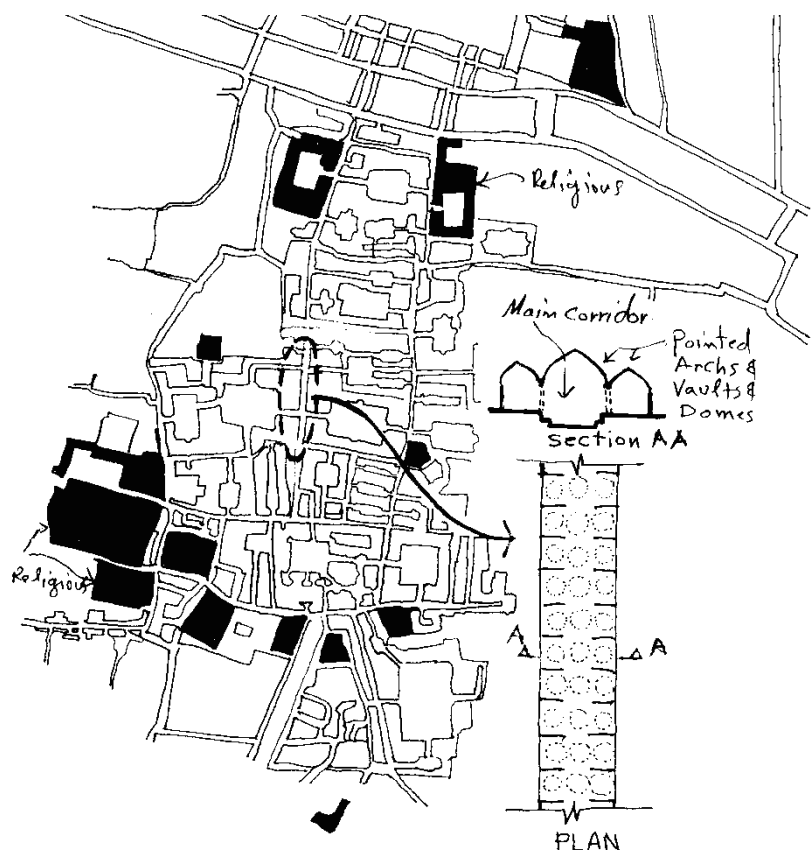


Figure 2: Layout plan & detail of Tabriz Bazaar, Source: Authors

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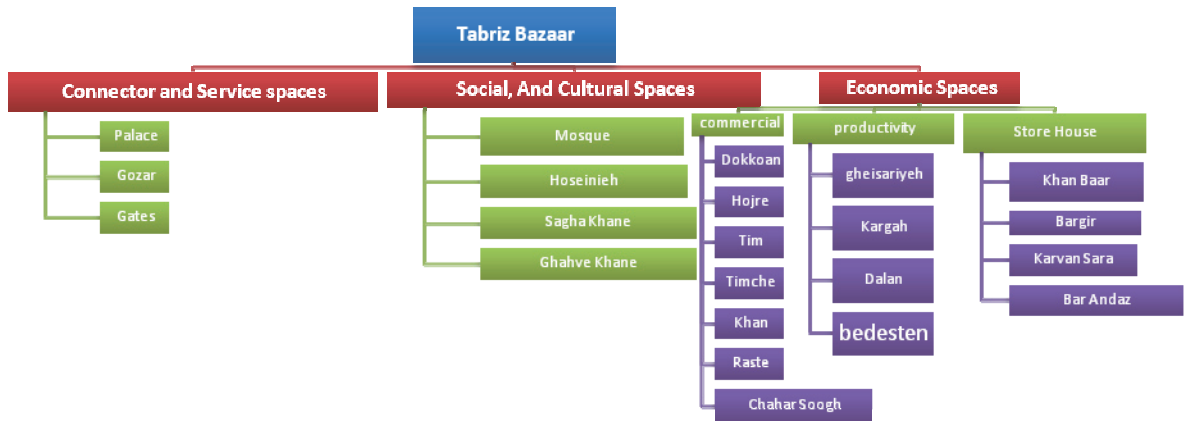


Figure 3: The Persian Bazaar elements, source: Authors

Istanbul Bazaar

The Grand Bazaar is a historical trade centre more than 500 years in the historical peninsula of Istanbul, Turkey [13]. The construction of the core of the future Grand Bazaar started during winter 1455/56, shortly after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople. Sultan Mehmet II let erect an edifice devoted to the trading of textiles (Fig. 4&5).

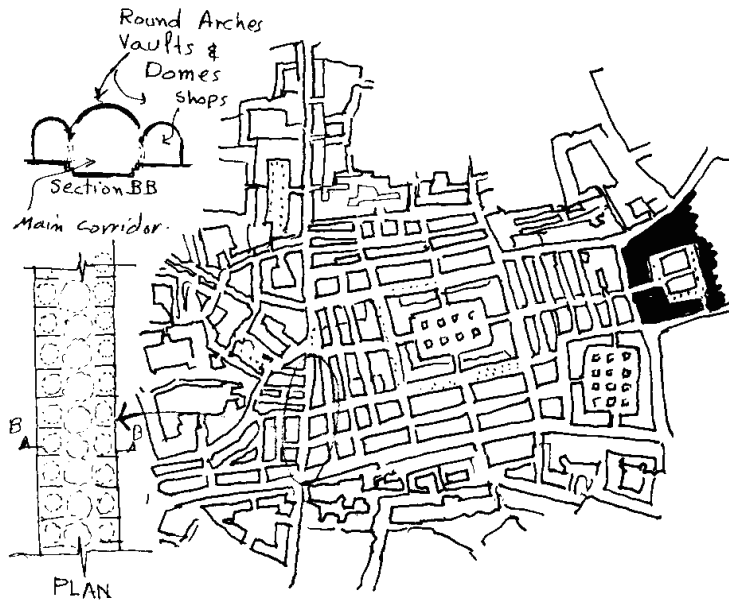


Figure 4: Lay out plan and detail of Istanbul Bazaar, Source: Authors

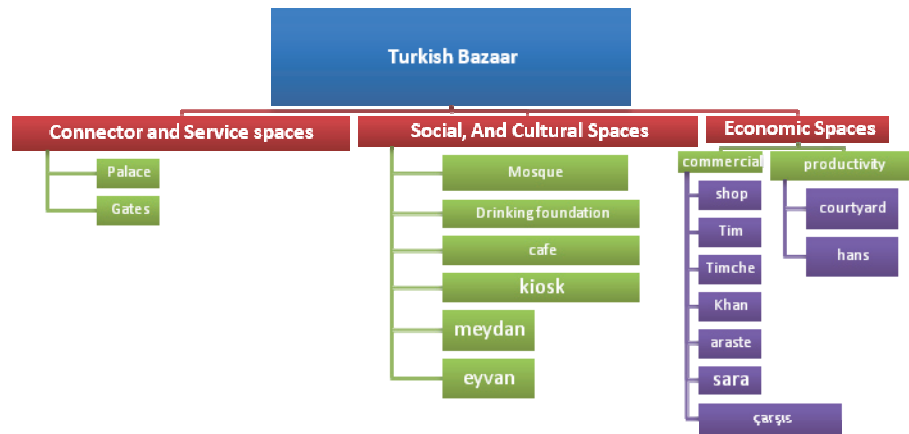


Figure 5: The Turkish bazaar elements, source: Authors

Conclusion

Bazaars in Iran, Turkey and India are more than local markets for the barter of traditional goods and handicrafts. They are urban marketplaces where national and international trade is conducted. These are urban spaces where political news and gossip have been shared. Religious and national symbols have been usually on display, and various social classes have been mingling. Comparison of the bazaars of Tabriz, Istanbul & Delhi shows many similarities in terms of architecture configuration, social network, proportion parameters and function in their various traditional urban spaces (Fig. 6&7).

The similarities of the bazaars of Persia and Turkey present the types and elements of the spatial configuration. Accumulation of various architectural elements in forms of “Rarays”, “Rastas”, “Carşıs”, “Charsugs” and such are the key factors of Persian and Turkey bazaar formation. The location of tradesmen, or artisans, the semantic or social relations of these are other issues of bazaars to be dealt with. In detail, we can strongly mention that Bazaars were the hub of commercial & social activity along Silk Road and they were a kindly traditional CBD in most of eastern cities along the Silk Roads.

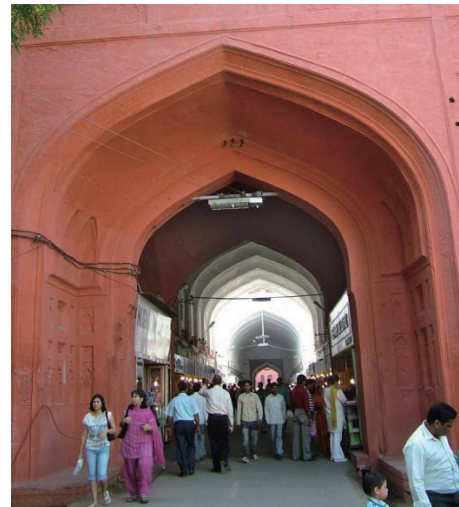


Figure 6: Mina Bazaar in Delhi, Source: Authors

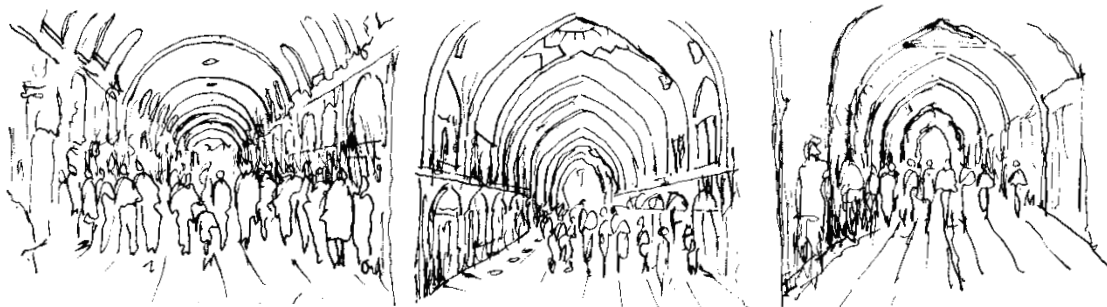


Figure 7: From left, View of Istanbul, Tabriz & Rey Bazaar

The tradition of planning, design and construction of Persian bazaar has its influence on other countries, like Turkey, Central Asia and India (Bazaars of Samarkand & Bokhara and Mina bazaar of Delhi are the good examples.), which is out of the scope of this paper to discuss about them.

Usually all the bazaars have specialized sections of various land uses and functions. These sections are like silver & gold sellers, leather, shoes, bags etc. Carpet seller, wooden works, glass & mirror seller, silk, cotton, Copper seller and many others. Due to this types of arrangements customers could find their best choice with a reasonable price.

Notes

For further information you can see the following:

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