

Review Article

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STRUCTURE OF AN IRANIAN-ISLAMIC CITY AND ITS  
COMPARATIVE COMPARISON TO SANA'A CITY**

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**Abstract**

In the Islamic ideology, the Iranian-Islamic culture is the same Islamic transcendental culture blown into the spirit of the skeleton of Iranian culture. The culture has established appearance under the dominance of a particular social system, which in turn, it has created a different social and cultural structure in the cities after the appearance of Islam. In researches carried out regarding Islamic cities during past years, the investigation on the indicators and attributions of the skeletal structure of Islamic cities played a more prominent role. In the present study, through a different view into the Iranian-Islamic cultural and social structure and nature, it has been attempted to investigate on the cultural and social organization of the Islamic city, Sana'a. The aim of the present study is to explain an Iranian-Islamic city from a cultural and social viewpoint and to compare it with the Islamic city, Sana'a comparatively. This study has a descriptive-analytical nature and it is attempting to analyze and pluralize the theme through an attributional method and library resources in order to achieve reasonable results. The results represented that having cultural and historical centers, Sana'a is recognized as one of the most valuable Islamic cultures which has social and cultural features common with those of an Islamic-Iranian city, in particular with respect to the elements playing a prominent role. Among the elements, the following ones were observed: the element of the mosques as the centers of religious and social communications, the element of houses and residential regions as the places for conducting social and individual communications and observing the privacies, the cultural feature such as conducting the cultural and religious ceremonies and celebrations particularly the Muslims' festivals, the birthday of prophet of Islam, the rites of hajj, and etc. These features represent the unity and correlation of Iranian Muslims with all Muslims of the world.

**Keywords:** Iranian-Islamic city, social and cultural structure, Sana'a city

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**INTRODUCTION**

Islam has been observed as an urban religion by many researchers. Despite the fact that the piety is considered as the only assessment resource, the teachings of Islam perform in urban environments as best as possible. Also, Islam pays a particular attention to responding to the social, economic, and culture demands ([www.muslimheritage.com](http://www.muslimheritage.com) by saoud, 2017). The Islamic city became a serious issue for the first time in the first quarter of the twentieth century (Grabar, 1983). Islamic city is a term provided by European researchers proceeding to present the western views through substantial studying of the Major-Muslim cities and seeking to define the actual nature of Muslim cities. Also, they believe that they may recognize particular patterns and features of the urban planning as Islamic (Moser, 2018). The western researchers' general method in the first years of the twentieth century was according to Islam as a base for interpretation and urban morphology (Hakim, 2002). Like other cities of non-Islamic civilization areas, using urbanization methods of the civilizations which were overcome by Islam, and relying on the new cultural forms and patterns in urbanization which resulted from a new religion in the conquered lands, an Islamic city has some features having many interfaces and some distinguishing traits in comparison to other non-Islamic cities. The features of an Islamic city are categorized in three domains of economic, skeletal, and social which some of them have exterior appearances like market, Arg, and castle. Also, some other features appear in the form of social organizations like guilds, sectional unions, and religious and ethnic segregations. Weber had studied the social identity and structure of an Islamic city in comparison to contemporary cities in west. In a definition of an urban community, Max Weber recognizes five features of fortification, market, independent court having least internal independent laws, associations relying on individuals' free selection, and relative

independence of administrators' and broker's authority (Weber, 1996). Abu Lughod believes that there have been differences between the Islamic cities in a range of different cultures. These differences have roots in geographical, historical, and institutional varieties of Islamic regions and the Islam is only one of the factors generating difference between Islamic cities (Abu Lughod, 1989). The researchers investigated the effectiveness of Islam mainly in three classes of cities including: Arbil which has had an organic development and Damascus which has a Greek-Roman design origin which were located in the territory of Islamic lands gradually with the development of Islam. The third class were new cities built by Muslim militaries in conquered lands, such as Tunis (Maurice, 2002). As the colonialism began, the lives of the classic Islamic cities ended because in the cities of northern Africa, middle east, central Asia, and subcontinent of India, along with French, Russian and English colonialisms, a deep metamorphosis happened in the native configuration of the eastern Islamic cities which is the same policy of duality beginning in both classic and modern cities at that time (Ehlers, 1994) when the influence of the Islamic beliefs was not as colorful as the pre-colonialism era. This time is accounted as the end of prosperity in the life of the classic Islamic city (Rabbani, 2006). The old city of Sana'a has had a several-thousand-years old history as an Islamic-Arabic city and is recognized as one of the most significant samples of extraordinary urban civilizations (Elsheshtawy, 2010). According to the existence of valuable resources, it has been known to have a high level of architectural and urbanization culture. In the present research, the mentioned city is compared as a sample of Islamic-Arabic city with an Iranian-Islamic city. Also, the social and cultural structures of both samples of cities would be investigated.

**Theoretical principles**

**Islamic culture and city construction**

The Islamic culture with the motto of equality, brotherhood, and vertical and horizontal motivations has caused dynamism in the urban society and among the people in a way that at first, a close relation was established between the concept of city and Islamic culture, and the first Islamic state was established in the city. The Islamic culture emphasized the family's privacy and its values. Hence, all orders and laws were planned in a way influencing the city constructions and they gave a particular identity to their morphologies which are different with those of other cities over the globe (Soltanzadeh,

1994, Ziari, 2003). Indeed, the influence of the Islamic culture on the emergence of city and its organization method has been always resulted from the following elements: central mosques, markets, regional mosques, schools, friaries, tumuli, Hussayniyas, Tekyehs, denomination type, endowments, and encouraging the people to construct charitable buildings and institutes. Also, the influence of Islamic culture on construction of housings was based on the principles of being veiled, introspection, simplicity, self-sufficiency, forbidding wrong, and paying attention to family (Ziari, 2003). Therefore, a mixture of native culture and Islamic teachings causes a kind of identity formation for the city and the citizens in any region.

**Table.1. The theological and ideological factors of Islam in cultural and social relations of the cities in the Islamic era**

| Principle of not hurting                               | The individual decisions and rights should not cause hurting the others   |
|--|---|
| Principle of cohesiveness                              | Paying attention to the ecologic status of the building and the family's demands  |
| Principle of privacy regulation                        | Mostly, the personal privacy regulation is considered without others' supervision on the residential environments                                       |
| Principle of having right for receiving light and air\ | It means the construction of the high-rise buildings causing lack of reception of the sunlight and fresh air in others' residential units is prevented. |
| Respecting the others' assets                          | No action must be carried out reducing the value of the others' buildings and assets (Shokouei, 2006)   |

**Table.2. The general feature of social and cultural structure of the Islamic cities**

- **Natural laws:** The first essential principle defined in the Islamic cities if the topographic conditions representing uses such as courtyard houses and loggia and narrow alleys which are different based on climatic conditions and maintaining the privacies;
- **Cultural and religious beliefs:** The Islamic cultural beliefs have separated the public life from the private and individual sector. It is why the plan of an Islamic city including the narrowed streets is a plan in which the religious thought has separated the public proper from the private ones;
- **Principles of design with roots in religious laws:** i.e. the skeletal and social relation between the public proper and private proper and between the neighbors and the social groups. Meanwhile, the principle of the private section has resulted in creating high walls more elevated than a camel. These principles had been also influential on the property rights;
- **Social principles:** Grouping the social organization of an urban society is on the basis of cultural view and ethnic origin. Therefore, the skeletal development of the city has a direct relation with familial cohesiveness, and religious, social and defensive features;

**Source: Authors' findings adopted from the references**

**The concept of an Islamic city**

In the Islam religion, the city has sanctity, munificence, and prestige unto God as the Islamic city is a place for a Muslim's residence and life. In this regard, in verse 91 of An-Naml Surah, Quran, it is talked about giving sanctity to a city. In the view of the Islam religion, the city is a lively place and an active focus of life. Also, among other features of the city being pointed to by the Islam religion, a plenty of construction, existence of plans, and finally, lack of class differences in the city may be mentioned (verse 15, Surah Saba). The concept of Islamic city oversees the social and skeletal identity of a city. The Islamic city is a city its social relations are organized on the basis of religious values and its physical appearance reminds its residents' identity (Bagheri, 2007). When a city is given an Islamic attribution being constructed by its thoughts and beliefs, then the artificial tracts emerge on the basis of the Islamic school and teachings (Ea'tezadi, 1998). The Islamic city reflects the economic, political, social and cultural factors, and among them the followings can be mentioned:

- Accommodating the city's artificial environment to the natural features
- Formation of a cultural center on the basis of religious beliefs

- Reflection of the Islamic rules according to the public and private domains of founding the social organization based on ethnic and racial similarities (Saoud, 2002).

**The social nature of the Islamic city:**

The Islamic cities are constituted of several distinguished districts emerged on the basis of race, religion, trade, and or use. In this regard, Lapidus states: "the local society remained an important aspect of social life according to racial or tribal origins, religion, trade, or the followers of political and religious leaders" (Danton, 2004). With respect to the relation and interdependence of the individuals in an urban society in the view of Islam, the verse 200 of Surah Al Imran (The importance of unity and social cooperation) can be mentioned. Also, Social solidarity is another feature of an Islamic city which may be improved through applying some mechanisms. For instance, Verse 10 of Surah Al-Hujurat introduces one of the excellent methods of social unity as "propagation of the brotherhood culture among the faithful people". Also, planning for citizens' participation may result in improving the social unity. In an Islamic city, coexistence of ethnic and racial groups implicates cultural pluralism and respecting to different cultures. Indeed, the approach of Islam for urbanization and

urban planning is a cultural approach (Tavakkoli Nia et al, 2016).

**Table.3. Social and political features of an Islamic city**

| Faces                       | Features  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Social and Political</b> | - Security of the city and citizens' benefitting from various social and economic results existing in the city;                   |
|                             | - The Islamic city has a social spirit resulted from Muslim's self-residence;   |
|                             | - Social structure of Islamic city should have both elements of social security and economic security (Lack of class difference); |
|                             | - The Islamic city is a focus of worshipping and a center for propagation of Islamic theism and a sign of an absolute society;    |
|                             | - The Islamic city has regularity, goal and beauty;   |
|                             | - The Islamic city is a free location having freedom of speech, thought, and correct acts;  |
|                             | - The Islamic city is a location in which a citizen's sanctity, identity and honor is protected;                                  |

Source: Authors' findings adopted from the references

**The cultural structure of an Islamic city**

Skeletal and physical system is an exterior shell and an apparent appearance of a city; Inside of the city is its credential and cultural nature. The skeletal system while having an abundant influence, its orientation of culture and credential nature is not deniable. The substantial ideals of an Islamic city lie in its internal layers and the criteria dominating on the citizens' relations although its skeleton in this bed is of importance and not independent from it because of the cooperation and the interrelation the skeleton establishes with its inside. There is no doubt that a city which is desirable for the Islamic culture is a city its residents believe the common sky of all religion's beliefs, and it provides the causes for venerating the human kind like other religions emphasizing on human's munificence and self-esteem (Bavandian, 2008). In an Islamic city, before anything, the behaviors and citizenship principles which are on the basis of Islamic teachings and the prophet's Sunna implicates the Islamic being of the city. Not every city full of mosques, domes and minarets is an Islamic one, but the manifestation of citizens' thoughts and beliefs in the city's appearance represents its identity. In an Islamic city, three principles must exist culturally: justice and meritocracy, venerating the citizens, benignity, and finally economic prosperity which helps the two first principles (Emad & Sanaei Rad, 2008). It seems the Islam's attitude towards urbanization and urban planning is essentially a cultural approach. There are many cultural principles being considered in Islam which some of them are: not applying the loss, interrelation and interdependence which emphasize on ecology and improve its resulted values, privacy, respecting the others' ownership, not blocking the pathways temporarily or permanently, encouraging to be clean, encouraging to be responsible and to rely on public superego, and etc. (Mohammadi & Sheikh Beiglou, 2008). A live and dynamic culture necessitates referring to the collective memory continuously which manifests in the shape and icon of its cities construction. Disappearance of these materials and elements result in loss of identity and in final, cultural dependence (Galantay, 2004).

**The social structure of an Islamic city**

The word "city" reminds a society which should be coherent, warm and united. All of a city constitutes a house (Bemat, 1990). The social structure of urban life in Islamic civilization may be observed at least in four major elements. These elements which are accounted as a historical feature of urbanization in Islam include government, nation, guilds, and districts. In this order, the main components of the social system of the cities have a close relation with those of the city's appearance. The castle and governor's seat had been a center for administration and government of the city, the mosques and schools had been a religious center, the market

had been a center for guilds, and the districts of the city had been a center for the life of social, ethnic, racial, and religious groups (Ansari, 2002). Indeed, the social organization of an urban society was on the basis of cultural-perspectives-based, ethnic-origin-based, and common-sibling-based groupings. Therefore, the development has been moving in the direction of satisfying these social demands particularly the kinship unity, defense, social order, and religious actions (Ghanizadeh, 2006). The social and legal issues were under researchers' and religious thinkers' control who were living in a place close to the main mosque (the main social institute) and the social life, where there were most of the debates. The principle of personal privacy was converted to a rule and these cases along with the ownership law were among the factors determining the shape or form of the Islamic city (Mohammadi & Sheikh Beiglou, 2008). In order to further investigate, some of the social features of an Islamic city which are on the basis of various references are mentioned as follows:

**Social correlation:** i.e. a particular correlation and social linkage establish between the residents of the cities to secure their rights and to protect their interests against the governors and hostile groups.

**Trade associations:** The investigations on the trade associations in the Islamic cities exist in most of their associated works in which it is emphasized on the governors' exploit of the guilds to receive taxes (Turner, 2000). Sometimes the Islamic guilds existed for the purpose of maintaining the trade secrets and standards, and adjusting the rates (Beaumont et al, 2017).

**District coherence:** The unity in the districts was in a way classifying them based on ethnic, religious, professional, and occupational differences (Kheirabadi, 1997) and all of them constituted completely independent structures (Rimon, 1991). The mentioned feature implicates this fact both in the Iranian Islamic cities and all other cities like Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, and Baghdad (Turner, 2000). The existence of the districts in contrast to each other is among the manifested traits of the cities in the Islamic era regardless of their locations (Habibi, 2004).

**Administration of city:** In Islam, the government's dominance on the administration of city has a root in the Islamic thought regarding the city and other social and political conditions of the Islamic regions (Piran, 1991). In the Islamic cities, the governors were determining the way a city is administrated. Participation of people or their representatives was also following the governors' will and confirmation (Kheirabadi, 1997). Also in Iran, the governments of cities were established in the framework of a land government, and the city had a

special administrative organization for internal government. The governments' heads in the administrative divisions were also governing on the administrative organizations and the local government of the cities (Ashraf, 1974). The individualism in the administration of a city and its influence on the other managers' (e.g. Sheriffs' and Darughachis') views regarding that city is a manifest feature of Islamic city management (Beaumont et al, 1990).

**Privacy preference and sex segregation:** Families' and individuals' privacy preference in the private life, and segregation of males' and females' activity areas is a common trait in most of the social communities which has even a root older than the government of Islam (Costello, 1992). The Islam was emphasizing the private and safety trait of the family life. The houses were almost flat and built at the same level. The city included a set of houses which their façades were not representing their internal form and space or their importance. The streets were narrow (with a width of two meters) (Benevolo, 1990). Disposing the women from the economic activities in particular in the activities in the markets caused limiting their attendance in the public spaces along with the men, and the freedom of activity in the Islamic cities for the men was far more than the women. The most important public spaces for women were public bathrooms used for conversations and visits (Costello, 1992). The rule of Islamic veil is among the reasons differentiating between an Islamic society and a non-Islamic one in the social life of women in the cities (Abu Lughod, 1987).

**Urban public arenas:** In the Islamic cities, the public spaces were limited to mosques, markets, and bathrooms, and the public spaces were fewer than private ones (Costello, 1992). Reduction in the importance and numbers of public spaces in the cities, had a root in the social mores and beliefs of the Islamic society (Benevolo, 2017).

#### The meaning and concept of an Iranian-Islamic city

In an Iranian-Islamic city, the social, cultural, and historical features are explained in an Iranian theme and on the basis of Islamic and cultural teachings in the Islamic society. An Iranian-Islamic city consists of theoretical foundations and theories associated with the principles and values which should be observed in design, planning, and creation of an environment for Muslims' life, and the relationship between the human and the environment (whether natural or artificial) and all other fellows should be governing. These principles and values would be extracted from the Islamic teachings and have important factors of national culture (which are not in contrast to them). In general, the main source of the principles governing on all Muslims' actions including urban planning is the holy Quran and the prophet's Sunnah (Naqizadeh, 2000). In an Iranian-Islamic city, the orientation of human and his communications is investigated in the four following cases:

- Human's relation with God
- Human's relation with himself
- Human's relation with universe
- Human's relation with his fellowmen (Holy Quran).

Regarding the Iranian-Islamic city, the Islamic attribution may be referred to city as a human-made thing created on the basis of Islamic teachings and serving the human being and conducting him towards Islamic values while responding to his material demands. Explaining as "Iranian" represents the local evidence of the subject. Also, on other hand, the Islamic being of a city represents that it should remind the Islamic values. In Holy Quran, in fact, the Islamic city is compatible with human's demands and his ideology genre. Hence, it is necessary for the life space to be coordinated with the lifestyle defined by Islam. Being Iranian has also contained a rich record and history full of Iranians' intelligent experiences. In an Iranian-Islamic city pattern, the dominant factor is the Islam religion and all social and skeletal indicators and elements of urban social life are definitely identified based on that factor (Baa'li, 2003). In Iranian-Islamic cities, the linkage between religion and skeletal system has also resulted in social linkages in the urban scale, as the role of Tekyehs, Hussainiyas, and devoting and mourning houses in the social structure or the "secondary structure" of cities may be mentioned in investigation on the importance of religion and religious ceremonies in Iranian social life. The places of this structure are some locations for holding different parts of the Muharram ceremonies and etc., and the pathways connecting these places to each other is passed by mournful people and visitants (Ahari, 2015). The initial structures of an Islamic-Iranian city are affected by the government's ideas and the secondary structure is completely instituted by people, and they established communication and linkages between the spaces through construction of Tekyehs, devotion, mourning ceremonies, and groups from a Tekyeh to another which was stabilized over the time. Therefore, the ethnic-racial variety of the social context of the city has resulted in formation of districts as self-sufficient and autonomous social-administrative units. Also, lack of government's direct involvement in district affairs has caused the establishment of a new relation of authority in them in the shape of different secondary associations including gymnasiums, Hussainiyas, mosques, and Tekyehs. In addition to social controlling of districts, these associations were proceeding to establish social relations in specific spatial formats. These haunts have been social elements establishing the identities, and have had group nature, and have established common correlations and interactions among the individuals, in a way that a part of the space was converting to a haunt due to the spirit governing on the group relations. It means that the overlap between the religious spaces and the conventional spaces encompassing social life has resulted in stabilizing the skeletal and social solidarity of Iranian-Islamic city.

**Table.4. The main social-cultural elements of the ancient Iranian-Islamic cities**

**Mosques:** They have devotional, political, cultural, and social structures in the social system of Islam; they are as the major elements of establishing the skeletal, spiritual, and social identity in all Islamic societies over the history due to their importance, universality, and prominent position in the Islamic cities (Naqizadeh, 2013). These elements also apply other features like multi-functionality both visually and culturally;

**Market:** This element was located outside the major mosque whether before or after the emergence of Islam in Iran, and it had different parts including Sera, Caravanserai, small and large mosques, and etc. which would have professional classifications including Kayseri, etc.;

**Arg:** It was as a political skeleton and a focal point for governors' and dependent employees' settlement. It was playing a key role as a coordinated pattern in a space associated with market and Jama Masjid which was usually located in a Rebaz (a city wall) (Nazarian, 1995);

**Residential district:** Districts of an Iranian-Islamic city have a particular geographical unity in their own social structures. The dead ends, alleys, passages, and the centers of the districts were combined with the public elements and they bestowed an identity on them. Also, Caravanserais and gymnasiums caused a relative independence in the districts through playing their particular social

roles (Daneshpour & Shiri, 2015);

**Network of streets, walls, and facades:** The linkage between the districts are divided into dead ends, quasi-private, private, and public via a narrow network of serpentine streets. Also, some gates leading to some districts existed in the city wall, and in the exterior part of the wall, there were Muslim's and Jews' cemetery;

**Schools:** In the Iranian-Islamic cities, the schools had been some places for training and social activities on the basis of the constituted culture level, and had contained institutions and special related organizations such as bureaucracies and religious centers (Kiani, 2000);

**Square:** In Iranian-Islamic cities, the square along with the market were playing an important role and encompassed some structures of the Islamic city like Jama Masjid and some administrative and public institutes. On this basis, the square had numerous performances, for instance, the Naqshe Jahan square has played political, economic, social, and cultural roles in the history of Isfahan city;

**Religious buildings:** include mosques, Imams' tomb, libraries, Hussaynias, friaries, Tekyehs, charity institutions, seminaries, holy monuments, and etc. which have had an eminent honor and respect unto the people in Iranian-Islamic societies (Komeili & Khodaei, 2011);

**Source: Authors' findings adopted from the references**

Therefore, in an Iranian-Islamic city, whatever exists is a transfiguration of environment, culture, rite, and tradition; whatever is considered in an Iranian-Islamic city is to observe all principles of the native life. Indeed, an Iranian-Islamic city is a transfigured cultural form of its environment.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Some studies are conducted in this regard particularly with respect to the Islamic cities and their skeletal elements, but regarding the social-cultural structure of an Iranian-Islamic city and its comparison to the Islamic-Arabic cities, no investigation has yet been carried out. Now, the results of the researches the domestic and foreign predecessors carried out regarding the Islamic and Arabic cities are investigated. A study regarding the influence of the culture on the Islamic values and attitudes in the Iranian-Islamic cities conducted by Aman Pour and Saeedi in 2017, led to the result that represents the culture has established a particular class system in construction of Iranian-Islamic cities before the Islam governed by the social system and the Persian, Hellenic, and Parthian patterns. In another study carried out by ICOMOS in 2016 through UNESCO regarding the Iranian-Islamic city, Yazd, the obtained result represented that the globalization could not harm the traditional context of the city, and still, a peaceful coexistence does exist between three religions of Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. In year 2014, regarding the sustainable development of the historical cities and the cultural identity of Iran, Mazdak Irani represented that the base of the historical culture is considered as a foundation for the sustainability of the architecture of Iranian-Islamic cities. In year 2018, in an analytical study on the content of Iranian-Islamic and Arabic cities of the first and the middle centuries, Asgari, Ahmadi, and Barati represented that the foundational studied components are not merely special to Arabs or Iranians, but they are resultant of a synergistic relation of the external process of emergence of Iranian-Islamic city development. In a paper carried out by Ahmad Heidar and Taleb in year 2014 regarding the reuse of one old district in the Sana'a city called Harra, the results represented that the change in the context of the classic districts causes residents' dissatisfaction and annihilation of their privacies. In year 2017, regarding the influence of construction of Osman mosque in the Ottoman era, Mohammad Ahmad Abdullah Rahman Enab explained that construction of this mosque lead the people to be close to God and to interact further with each other. In a study regarding the structure, form, and architectural culture of Sana'a city in year 2015, Soltanzadeh & Sadeqi Moqaddam represented that there is a significant relation between the Islamic culture of the city and its form, history, architecture, and social structure. Also, in year 2018,

in an investigation started by European orientalist on the cultural geography, architecture, and etc. in the Islamic cities, Moser recognizes the Islam as essential, and explores researches regarding the Muslim cities governed by Muslims beyond the Islamic city concept.

**METHODOLOGY**

The present research has a descriptive-analytical method and a comparative approach. The method of data collection studies the library and attributional references and proceeds to explain the concepts of an Iranian-Islamic city and compares it to the Arabic-Islamic city, Sana'a comparatively while investigating the social-cultural organization of the Iranian-Islamic city.

**THE STUDIED AREA**

Yemen is a country located in the western south of the Asia continent and it is limited to the western south and the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, and its capital city is Sana'a ([www.Yemen-nic.info](http://www.Yemen-nic.info)). The lands of Yemen have at least an antiquity of 3000 years ([www.cs.nmsu.edu/~fmohamed/ancient-ye.html](http://www.cs.nmsu.edu/~fmohamed/ancient-ye.html)). Before the emergence of Islam, Yemen was a part of Saudi Arabia, but the substantial event in this country was after the emergence, i.e. after 630 A.H. This country is located in the entrance of Bab-el-Mandeb and has an area equivalent to 527970 square kilometers. It is ended to Oman from the eastern north and to Saudi Arabia from the north ([library of congress federal research division](http://www.libraryofcongress.gov/federalresearchdivision), 2008). By 2018, this country has a population of 28915284 people and a growth rate of 2.35 percent ([www. Population. net/ yemen](http://www.Population.net/yemen), 2018). Its greatest province and capital city is Sana'a having a population of 1937451 people by year 2018, and it is located in the western south of Yemen ([http://www. world population review .com](http://www.worldpopulationreview.com)). according to the narratives, the Sana'a city was constructed by Sam, Noah's son, and this city admitted the Islam religion in year 623 A.D. ([www. britannica. Come place sann,a](http://www.britannica.com/place/sanna)). This city was also an important political center which was among two ancient capital cities of Sabian era (Lamparkos, 2005). In terms of geographical position, the initial core of the city is located in the middle of Yemen plain and on the foots of the Naqm mountains and the region of the city is surrounded by other mountains. The Sana'a city initiated its development in the middle ages, and in 1984, its old core was registered in the world heritage by the UNESCO due to its unique architecture (Petzet and Koenigs, 1995). In year 2004, the old city of Sana'a was announced as the cultural capital city of Arab world ([www.cities alliance sana,a org](http://www.citiesalliance.org), 2016). This city has an antiquity of more than 2500 years old ([www. Muslim Heritage, 2006](http://www.MuslimHeritage.com)).



Fig 1: Sanaa City's Geographic Location

**DISCUSSION AND EXAMINATION**

**Cultural structure of Sana'a city:** The culture points to all of a civilization's material and moral values; beliefs, ideologies, and etc., or the factors the human has acquired socially, historically, and economically (Islamic Architecture magazine, 2014). The urban spaces are some effective cultural environments which may be influential forms of the infrastructures and the intellectual society (Danesh, 2010). A city is a reflection of the Islamic values. In addition, the Islamic cities have similar features and particular architectural forms. In the viewpoint of Islamic beliefs, there is a strong Islamic cultural network in each part of the Islamic city (Sayyed, 2012). Amos Rapoport believes that the role of cultural factors, in particular the religious beliefs of people in creation of the human habitats is often a symbol of an objective style based on cultural construction theory. Also, Hillier believes that the cultural structures, and the social, administrative, and religious beliefs affects the damaged towns (Rahimi, 2008). The historical core of the Yemeni city comes back to the first

and second centuries, and in the sixth century, the holy prophet of Islam issued the order of constructing the city (Ahmed Haidar & Talib, 2013). The old city of Sana'a is a sample of human's settlement which is associated with the Islam history directly, and it involves the history of development of Islam (Soto, 2013). Hanson & Benevolo believe that the physical shape of the houses and importance of their secrecy are influenced by the religion of people in Sana'a. Also, Koneo emphasizes the role of cultural rite and folklores, and cults both in the physical form and in the social structure and cultural studies of the Islamic city, sana'a (Homafar, 2013). The influence of Islamic thought and culture is observed in the whole construction of Yemen country and Sana'a city. The religious ceremonies are especially one of the most manifest remainders of the Islamic culture in Yemen country (www.Musiem heritage. Com, Rohab, Soaud, 2017).

**Islamic ceremonies:** Because of Islamic beliefs, the Yemenis unite in particular days. All ceremonies are performed with a high honor and according to the Islamic culture.

Table.5. Islamic and cultural ceremonies of Sana'a

| Row | Date                             | Event                    | Description  |
|-----|----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1   | Muharram                         | Prophet's anniversary    | hegira<br>The first day of year (Islamic calendar) |
| 2   | Since Ramadan 29 until Shawwal 3 | Eid al-Fitr              | The day after the end of Ramadan                   |
| 3   | Dhu al-Hijjah 3-9                | Eid al-Adha              | Hajj   |
| 4   | Rajab 27                         | Laylat al-Qadr           | -  |
| 5   | Rabi' al-awwal                   | Islam prophet's birthday | -  |

Source: Authors' finding

**Great Mosque of Sana'a:** It was named Masjid al-Kabir (Grand mosque) and it was a strong cultural factor and among the first mosques ever built by saint Mohammad's order in the Muslims' world (lewcock, 1983). The structure of the mosque has an original artistic feature in Islamic architecture. In this mosque, the cultural and educational role is prominent, and it has a great library inside which is observed as a context for prosperity, culture, and Islamic education. Integration of cultural activities in mosques and urban districts, spatial and visual communications between the city centers, and accommodation to all central sections of the city, is one most

prominent feature of the Islamic city, Sana'a which is specified according to the historical findings regarding Sana'a's architectural, social, and cultural context. The form and architecture of the mentioned mosque is affected by changes in various eras. These substantial changes are seen in the deformation and architecture of the city at the time of Islam emergence in the first Christian century. This cultural orientation had been in the middle of the north-south axis in which the gates of Yemen and Levant are located in its two ends (Soltanzadeh & Sadeghi Moghaddam, 2015).



Fig 2: Sana'a mosque

**Social and skeletal structure:** The Yemen Arab Republic was formed in 1990. The main part of the social structure of country is tribal, and the tribes are the major and structural foundations of the government ([www. Muslim heritage. Com](http://www.Muslimheritage.com), Rohab, Soaud, 2017). By attendance of Islam in Yemen, the Islamic symbols such as mosques, bathrooms, markets, and the special architecture developed and caused a significant economic and architectural growth in various sections of country (Madbouly, 2008). The overview of Sana'a had also not been organized stochastically, and there was a special planning and architecture in organization and formation of the buildings (Almadhaji, 2007). Before Islam emergence, Ghumdan palace was one of the prominent stages of the development of Sana'a city which may be considered as the first city core initially. In different Islamic eras, the contexts of Sana'a's cultural heritage have been maintained illustrating its importance as a global cultural heritage. Indeed, the main

shape and the features of the city are associated with old principles (Arti, 2001). The old part of Sana'a consists of two major areas which are commercial and residential. The commercial regions of city lead to the market and have two gates (Bab al-Yaman and city gate). The residential section of the city is divided into three regions: El-Kat from west to east and close to the arm palace; Sharq al-Sura in the west of the market located in the city center (Suq); al-Sura in west. The components and skeletal structure of the city are districts and residential section, mosques, open spaces, water springs, gardens, and bathrooms. In terms of social interactions, not only the native people of districts were using the internal space services but other residents of districts could also use those services (e.g. bathrooms) due to the communality of the public spaces (ahmad Haidar & Taleb, 2013).

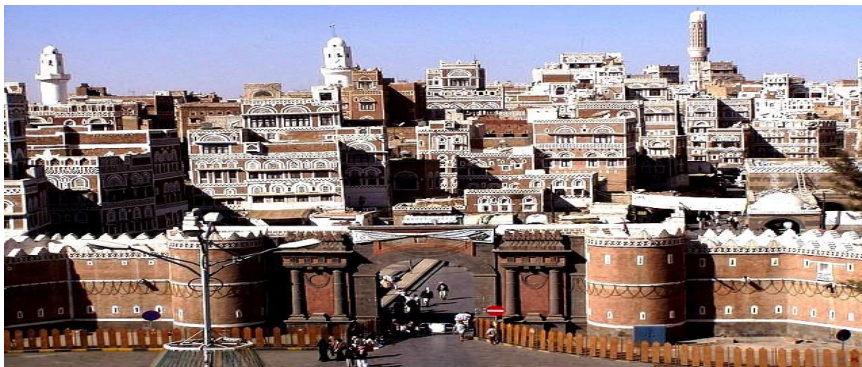


Fig 3:Yemen gate in the current days

**Houses and residential districts:** the residential districts represent the largest section of city having human scale and also represent the religious values of an Islamic society ([http// www.Unesco.org](http://www.Unesco.org)). Hanson & Benevolo believe that the physical shape of houses in Yemen are on the basis of secrecy, beliefs, and religion. Also, Ko Ono emphasizes the role of culture and religious ceremonies both in the physical formation of city and concept of an Islamic one and in the structure of social and cultural studies of city (Homafar, 2013). The typical houses in Sana'a are called "Borj (tower)" having vertical position (Sayyed, 2012). Some families live together e.g. even two or three families. In some cases, a house belongs to a Sheikh and he has assigned that to the members of the tribe (Lewcock, 1983). In the direction of establishment of social linkage and helping to eliminate the social class system and annihilation of tribalism, the residential houses of the city belong to three classes:

- Plan of small spaces of houses with an area of 35 to 70 square meters in two stories (workers' and low-level servants' class)

- Plan of moderate space of houses with an area of 150 to 250 square meters in four to seven stories (moderate class of the society and the farmers)
- Large and cluster houses surrounded by tower houses (Borjs) which have courtyards and an area of 600 to 1000 square meters in 6 to 8 stories belonging to wealthy people (traders, governors, and judges).

In this city, the individuals' social positions are determined in the districts (social hierarchies are according to the classification of Borjs) (Ahmad Haidar & Taleb, 2013). A part of the old towers of Sana'a date back to four centuries before the emergence of Islam religion. It should be noted that after 1976, the people of traditional section were transferred to outside of the old section of the city, and merely, the low class of the society remained in the old section of the city. In the city, there are more than 6000 traditional tower houses (Lewcock, 1993).



Fig 4: Sana'a House

**Mosque:** It is the first place outside Saudi Arabia where Islam was introduced. The most important treasure remained since the Islam emergence era outside Saudi Arabia is the great mosque of Sana'a which is one of the oldest Muslims' mosques in the Islam world where the greatest religious and historical documents of Quran are observed. The mentioned mosque is among the elements of seventh A.H. century and the most ancient version of Quran is considered as the greatest Islamic treasury of the Yemeni city. It is located in the middle of the old section (Harvard Karmer, 2015). In Sana'a city, mosque plays an important role as an educational and cultural center in the society. From social viewpoint, the serious issues and problems of individuals of society are solved in mosques instead of courts. Also, in this holy place, the wanderers and travelers are fed and sheltered. In the society of Yemen, mosque acts as a place for holding cultural events, and it is used for acts like marriage, separation, and funeral (Ahmad Haidar & Taleb, 2013).

**Urban spaces and elements: they are the second element including castle, wall, and gate:**

- **Castle:** called Ghudman which is beautiful and ancient and up to now, it has been renovated several times so far;
- **Barrier:** includes the major wall, gate (Bab), and defensive towers (Hakim, 1986). The first old core of Sana'a city was surrounded by the barriers of the castles and walls. The city barriers and walls played a defensive role to improve the security and to strengthen the city (UNESCO, 1987). Different gates of Sana'a played prominent roles in economic and social interactions of the city and they included southern, eastern, western and northern gates (www.Alamree.net).
- **Open space (Sura):** it was a social space for various residents of different social classes. One of the largest spaces here, is in the vicinity of Al-Bahr Mosque which is considered as a center for cultural and social interactions. In this space, the travelers and strangers are directed to different sections of the city. Indeed, it is a cultural space for the purpose of social intercommunications and maintaining the identity and culture of Yemen country in the direction of participation of people; (Ahmad Haidar & taleb, 2013).
- **Market:** This is a place to supply goods. Like those of other Islamic markets, among the important features of Sana'a's market system is occupational classification which is related to the mosque (Hakim, 1986). In this city, the market has same direction with the mosque (www.Yemenat.net)
- **Water Spring (Al-Sabeel):** This is a location for thirst quenching of travelers and strangers, and it is considered as an essential component of an Islamic city;
- **Fruit gardens:** These are among the components of central section of the city which are connected to the houses and mosques;
- **Bathroom:** Founding the bathrooms in public places was one Islamic requirement for the purpose of

cleanliness because the maintenance cost of the private bathrooms in the houses was high. These places were constructed by the mosques. This place was also considered as a center for social communications and conversations among people; (Ahmad haidar & Taleb, 2013).

**Pluralization and conclusion:**

An Islamic city is an ambiguous term including those cities which are limited, and a few of Muslim thoughtful people still think of how to solve the issues and problems of the Islamic cities using Quranic ideas. Existence of minorities and majorities among the Muslims has resulted in some challenges in these cities while having differences in heritages and cultures of Muslims' societies, social and gender frameworks, and varied commentaries of Islam religion which itself represents the variety of features in Muslims' societies among other religions. An Islamic city is a resultant of Islamic culture and civilization attracting the scattered cultural elements of the world and creating a new intellectual system through establishment of uniformity and coordination. An Iranian-Islamic city is a city where the symbols of Islamic civilizations having spatial, cultural, social and historical identities is manifested. In such city, an inherent, general, and structural relation is observed between religion, artificial urban space, and individual and social communications. Many of the cultural components of Arab Muslims are also manifested in the arena of Iranian urban society along with other components rising from Islam religion like Quran book and the prophet's morality; beside these two, the Iranian components have attended in the civilization of Islamic-Arabic cities like initial patterns of establishing the religious centers, sanitary installations, and etc. In this attitude, both Islamic and Iranian thoughts played a formative role in manifestation of these cities, and the attendance of a thought (whether Iranian or Islamic) has not resulted in refusing other thoughts (Islamic). This study investigated the social and cultural structure and nature of an Iranian-Islamic city along with the Islamic city, Sana'a at the beginning of Islam entrance to Iran and Yemen. During inductive surveying of the present investigation, while explaining the concept of an Islamic city and its social and cultural structure and elements, the general social elements of an Islamic city including correlation, guild associations, district coherences, administrations of city affairs, privacy preference, sex segregation, and public urban arenas were investigated and compared to the prominent social observed elements of an Iranian city including mosques, market, Arg, residential districts, street networks, walls, facades, schools, squares, religious buildings (Imams' tomb, libraries, Hussaynias, frieries, Tekyehs, charity institutions, Caravanserai, etc. According to these proposed cases, the study on Sana'a city represented that this city is one of the best cultural Islamic relics of the world having a valuable context and a prominent Islamic architecture. Also, this city is considered as the center of studies and Islam propagation in the first century of Islam religion and it attempts to counterbalance the old section and the new one in its new urban design. In this city, the great mosque of Sana'a is located in the city center, and the market



is beside it. The social and skeletal elements of this city which was investigated in the present research, include mosque, districts, and tower-like houses (Borjs), urban space and elements (castle, gate (northern and southern with a social and economic function), barrier), open space (a space for social interactions and intercommunications), market, water spring, fruit gardens, and bathroom. In addition to the thematic plan of the social elements of Sana'a city, the main cultural orientations of the city are formed under the influence of Islamic culture. For instance, the architecture of residential land uses if Sana'a is affected by Islamic culture. The final results represented that in Sana'a city, many of the mentioned functions of the social elements have been common between both Islamic and Iranian cultures including houses and districts (narrow and dead ended alleys as the centers of social interactions and observing the confidentiality and privacies), mosques (with a cultural and social performance and as a place for stabilizing the social relations, solving the differences, and for unity. There are other public and private spaces such as Iranian cities which are separated precisely due to concentration of Islam on the hijab principle and the privacy. Also, the existence of a special story in houses of Sana'a assigned to the females is an example of observing the privacies in this culture and also the Iranian-Islamic culture. Many ceremonies and festivals are held in both above-mentioned cultures which have religious and cultural performances, for instance, praying ceremonies, Eid al-Adha, Eid al-Fitr, Laylat al-Qadr (Rajab, 27), the holy prophet's birthday, and hajj ceremonies which represent common social and cultural features, unity, and correlation of Iranian Muslims, Yemeni Muslims, and other Muslims all around the world on the basis of Islamic civilization and culture.

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