

Bazaar in Iranian Public Culture

Vahid Rashidvash*¹, Mahmoud Joneidi Jafari²

¹Dept. of Anthropology, Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

²Asst. Professor at Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran, Iran

*Corresponding author

Vahid Rashidvash

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Abstract: The evidence implies that bazaar is one of the cultural and social places in Iranian society and among different ethnic groups and cultures. It is important to consider this striking place which has been the concourse of people from past to present and it has retained its role among the people. Also, it has retained its role and effect on people's lives despite the existence of virtual and online markets in today's world. In this paper, it was tried to historically investigate the evolution of the bazaar phenomenon and its different economic, cultural and social functions through library method with a descriptive approach in order to examine its positive role or negative consequences, especially the level of its effectiveness in the public culture of Iranian people by clarifying its evolution in numerous historical periods.

Keywords: Bazaar, Public culture, Bazaar history, Bazaar economy.

INTRODUCTION

Intertwining of various relationships of marketers has created numerous social and cultural roles and it has had special place in the past and present society. The interaction between seller and buyer has created numerous and different cultural spaces which provide a proper context for cultural studies on the bazaar.

Bazaar comprises a variety of guilds with relatively distinct boundaries and each of these guilds have their own subcultures, and in many cases, these subcultures reflect themselves in the life style, tastes, and even in the language of that guild's members. Bazaar is considered as the most public and social places formed in the societies. The term "bazaar" literally means the place to buy and sell the goods and foodstuffs, and or a roofed alley with shops in its both sides [9]. It is a place in which economic relations are taken place and manifestations of communal culture and human communications are abundant in it. In the historical past, bazaar was considered as the main communication pathway of the city's people and the physical space and bazaar structure positively and optimally responded to the diverse human needs through this pathway. Bazaar has comprised of public places such as bath, school, mosque, drinking fountain, palestra, and coffee shop which altogether create a complex and organ-like context which has responded to the people's needs in terms of communication, different parts of life, and economic, social, religious and political activities [14]. On the other hand, culture is a wide and multi-dimensional term which includes various cases of bio-subjective area. The culture is a set of cognitions, and technical, economic, traditional, religious and social behaviors which defines a certain human community [1]. Accordingly, pursuing the

cultural and social functions of the bazaar has an unlimited diversity which includes all aspects of human life.

Definition of Bazaar

Bazaar means a place to sell and buy the goods. The term "bazaar" is a very ancient term and it has existed in some of Iranian ancient languages. The term "bazaar" has been used as "Vazaar" and with combinations like "Vazarag" (marketer) and "Vazargan" (merchant) in Middle Persian language and it has been used as "Vajaar" in Parthian language. This Iranian word has entered into the languages of some countries such as Arab, Turkish, Ottoman, and some European countries which had commercial exchanges with Iran [13]. The term "bazaar" has been taken from Pahlavi word "Vacar". The French term "bazaar" has been taken from Portuguese language and Portuguese people have taken this term from Iranians [4]. The term "bazaar" which is "Vacar" in Pahlavi language and "Abcari" in ancient Persian, is composed of "Aba" which means the place of assembly and infinitive of an action which means grazing. Bazaar is a place to sell and buy the goods, foodstuffs and clothes, or it is a square for trading, and many enigmatic and metaphorical combinations are also made from this term such as turbulent bazaar, aazaar garnishing, bazaar touting and etc. In three-language inscription of

Shapour I, this word has been stated as Rastag-Vazar (Raasteh or Rasteh Bazaar). This term has been probably taken from the hypothetical ancient Persian term “carana-vaha” which means marketplace [5]. In Persian language, the term “bazaar” is a place’s name which means place to sell and buy goods. Although this term is currently used more for permanent, main and ancient markets of ancient cities, it was absolutely used in the past in a simple form and sometimes with prefixes and suffixes with the meaning of a selling and buying place. The term “bazaar” has a broad concept in Persian literature and it was used in the meaning of a crowded and busy place, the reputation and importance of individuals and etc. [13]. In Islamic countries, bazaar functionally had a relation with important political, economic and religious centers and each guild has its own phylum in which there was not any place for other occupations and industries and that part of market was famous with the name of that guild [5].

History of Bazaar in Iran

The history of settlements whose economies relied on the production of handicrafts and commercial industries dates back to ten thousand years ago. One of the settlements whose economy relied on the cultivation of cereals and livestock and it somewhat reached to the stage of unilateralism and urbanization was a settlement close to Kermanshah which its history dates back to 9000 years ago. Numerous examples of settlements have found in different parts of Iran which along with their economies relied on the production of handicrafts including Zageh hill in the plain of Qazvin (late 7th Ah), Silk hill in southwest of Kashan (6th Ah), Eblis hill in Bardsir region of Kerman (5th Ah), Hasanloo hill in southwest of Urmia lake (6th Ah), Yahya hill 225 km far from Kerman (5th Ah) and burnt city in Sistan (3rd Ah) where some evidence has been found indicating the existence of handicrafts workshops and commerce spaces in them [10]. There are signs of metalwork or pottery workshops in some of the settlements existed before the establishment of Maad government or contemporary with it such as Hasanloo hill in Azarbaijan belonging to 9th and 10th centuries B.C. In some of Maad’s settlements, craftsmen were also worked in an organized manner and it can be also said that market was distinctly formed in their cities [13]. The Achaemenid Empire established an efficient economic and administrative system for the management of vast territories under its domination and struck a gold coin called as “Drik” and a silver coin called as “Sikl” to facilitate economic exchanges. Some of taxes such as tribute and gate fees, ransom of the port and ransom of the market have been mentioned in the texts related to this period. The social and economic relations of Achaemenid period imply the formation of some kinds of cities in which bazaar was considered as a public and important space which was very crowded. In some cities of the Sassanid and Parthian periods, bazaar was become one of the key elements of the city. Bazaar had been the most important highway and

communication path of the city which started from the most important and crowded gates and reached to the main center and square of the city and sometimes it extended to other gate(s) [7]. The country's economy was based on the agriculture and commerce during the Parthian period and Parthian government was well aware of the importance of Iran’s commercial situation and it had the trade monopoly of many kinds of goods between east (China and India) and west (Rome, Greece and other area), and a few cities have been established along the important business routes and necessary facilities for moving commercial caravans were established along the important roads such as caravanserai, warehouse, markets, and spaces for supplying various kinds of goods. In this period, marketers founded a coherent guild organization so that according to some available documents and evidence, some craftsmen such as silver makers, jewelers and metalworkers as well as marketers had a chief for their guild [13]. The urbanization was expanded in Islamic era and many small old towns were developed and a number of new cities were built in some parts of the country, especially in the border or communicational areas. In some new cities like Kufa and Basra, an open space was specified for bazaar where retailers and merchants went at the beginning of the day and spread their fare wherever they found and they could stay there till night. In the other words, a space was specified to be a market place in which there was not any fixed place for people; however, gradually and after the expansion of these cities, some spaces were built little by little as shops and a permanent market was formed in a part of city [3]. The first century AH is not considered as a brilliant period in the development of urban bazaars, because no powerful Iranian government had been formed which could expand the pillars of life and urban structure in a desirable way. However, from third century onward and gradually with the emergence of Iranian and local governments for governing the country, the prosperity of the economy and the subsequent development of the country considerably began to flourish. Taherian, Deilamian, and Samanian were among the first Iranian governments which took effective measures for the progress of the country. In Ghaznavid and Seljuk periods, the domestic economy was also flourished due to the existence of powerful governments and Iranian culture was considered more and more. In the historical resources of the fourth to sixth centuries such as Hodud-al Alam Men-al Mashreghe al Marqrib, Varah-al Arz, AL-Masalek va-al Mamalek, Bukhara history, Rahee al-Sadour and Ayat al-Sarwar, Naser Khosow’s travelogue, there are many texts about the increase in the production of handicrafts in cities and even in some big villages and their exports to the cities of other countries [13]. In seventh century, following the Mongol invasion, many cities were destroyed and the country’s economy was declined. In Ilkanid period, some reforms were taken place in economic and social fields with the efforts of some Iranian ministers and scientists such as Khaje Rashid al-

Din Fazlullah. Khaje Rashid al-Din Fazlullah established a small town so-called Rob Rashidi near Tabriz with thirty thousand houses, one thousand five hundred shops, twenty four caravanserai, a number of mosques, schools, baths, dyeing workshops, mints and a paper mill. During Timurid period, some developmental activities were carried out in some parts of the country, especially in eastern regions such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Romero, Herat and Mashhad, and other big cities of the country, and numerous buildings including caravanserai, mosques and schools were constructed close to them.

Shardin has mentioned one thousand eight hundred and two caravansarai in Isfahan during the Safavid period [13]. The security provided in Safavid period and the development of Iran's foreign relations led to the expansion of foreign trade as well as the prosperity of the production of various types of products. The prosperity of domestic and foreign trade led to the growth of urbanization and urban development, and bazaars of big cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Qazvin and Shiraz were expanded greatly and new series of shops were built alongside the old ones and a number of caravanserai were established next to each of these markets. In the year 1011, Imam square (Naghshe Jahan) and a mosque were built in the southern part with the order of Shah Abbas. Then, several bazaars and a number of caravanserai were built in the northern part around the square. Tabriz was the most important city in Safavid period after the city of the Isfahan. Olia Chalabi who traveled to Tabriz in the year 1050 at the time of Shah Safavi, recorded the number of the city's shops about seven thousand shops and caravanserai about two hundred and seventy-two. After Safavid period, there were no significant steps in the development of urban spaces and markets, and it was only in the period of Karim Khan Zand that important development activities were carried out in Shiraz. At the time of Karim Khan and according to his orders, a large market was designed and a few caravanserais were built in Shiraz, which are now considered to be the most valuable buildings in the city. In the Qajar period, Tehran was rapidly expanded as the capital of the country and the main market of the city formed from the Safavid period was expanded along the major axes of the city and numerous markets and caravanserai were built and added to it. Also, a new mosque was built in market complex in the Fath Ali Shah era. In this period, there were few developmental activities in some of the big cities, and the markets for such cities had a typical development proportional to the increase in the city population [1].

Bazaar culture

Bazaar has a profound root in Iranian customs and spirits so that shopping malls and streets with all the luxuries and decorations and magnificent glamor of their buildings cannot stop the old market and accuse it to stay away from the convoy of civilization. Bazaar is

still standing in front of the new and modern economic centers and it calls Iranian and foreign tourists to itself and it is smiling conformably with dignity to every newcomer away from the rage and controversy of the city, where there is no tricks and disputes and business and transactions are done in safety, kindness and fairness [8]. Bazaar was the most important axis and communication path in old cities and majority of people's transportation was taken place in it. In the other words, bazaar was the most important communicational channel of the city that not only people, goods and assets flowed through it, but also news and advertisements were informed to citizens through it, because information was verbally produced by people so that when the government wanted to inform people about something, some people who were called blazer or honorary first spread the news in the main market of the city with a loud voice [13]. Until Qajar period and the beginning of the Pahlavi period, young to old men wore hat and turban and the naked head for men was also unusual and it was considered as a style and covering the head with a hat or turban was a part of clothes. Those people who wore their special hat including skullcap, knitted hat, felt hat, cutaneous hat, and custom hat were called "Mukala" and those who wore turban and Scarf were called "Moamam" and turban did not merely belong to Mullahs, Scholars and clergies. The marketers also wore a sort of scarf like a turban around their hat so that if they were Seyyed, then they selected a green scarf and if they were not Seyyed or Allam, then they used beige, light yellow and brown textile which were known as the "Haji Aghaie" turban or "Haji Bazari" turban, and their cassock was like a coat up to knee. The marketers' scarf and garment were totally different and distinct from those of clergies who used turban and cassock. Also, some of the old marketers, especially in the religious cities of Mashhad, Qom, Kashan, Yazd, still wear in the traditional style of Qajar period consisting of turban, cassock and espadrille. In the modern ear, along with the change in the social life of Iranian people, the suit was replaced by traditional clothes, and hat and turban were removed and men got used to naked head [8].

Bazaar economy

The livelihood of people in the society has been the main concern of the human in all periods of the human history. And in today's world, the economies of societies or the way the produce, distribute and consume are important issues to be considered according to the culture of the society. Are traditional markets based on traditional economy or industrial economies or they are fed from both old and new economies? What is certain is that market economy is managed based on traditional industry and parent industries, and any kind of industries from traditional to machinery industries all require the market and a place to supply and sell which can be in traditional markets, streets, exhibitions and or squares. The Iranian traditional bazaars are usually the place of supplying

and selling light and small handicrafts which are produced in small and large workshops of all cities and villages of the country. The automotive industry is a huge industry, but thousands of large and small workshops throughout the country produce various car parts and send them to a large assembly hall so that the labor is not concentrated in a certain place. And in the same way, the clothing industry which is a small and light industry invokes traditional markets that its various production and supply stages are carried out in a vast chain throughout the country and it does not need heavy, dense and concentrated investment which creates labor problems. This economy strengthens the Iranian traditional markets associated with mass of people and small industries rarely encounter with competition, crisis, blockade, stagnation, stops and strikes. For this reason, bazaar which has continued its way throughout the history has a more intimate relation with this type of economy.

Coffee shop in bazaar

During more than 5,000 years of Iranian history, the Iranian community which has been a civil society and the source of hope and dynamism recognizes that it is necessary to fill the leisure time of the people after daily activities in a place so-called coffee shop. This occupation has its root in the history of this land so that it reached its peak in Safavid period, and eventually it gained a guild association as the first guild of crafters [15]. In the past, the coffee shops and butcher's shops in the bazaar covered their walls with dramatic screens of the epic and mythological stories of Shahnameh and religious images which were considered as a part of decoration. The coffee shop in bazaar was a gathering and meeting place for brokers, and some outsourced transactions were taken place there. Also, other occupations like hairdressing, shoemaking, restaurants, and coffee shop painting as well as portray drawing played a role in the heart of the big old coffee shops and each of these occupations took place in a corner of coffee shop and occupied a place as small as a chair and a desk. The rentals were paid weekly or monthly to the owner of the coffee shop. A remarkable number of coffee shopkeepers were well-known people whose coffee shops were the place of respectable people. There was a big coffee shop in each passage and each alley has its own coffee shop which sheltered the idle and unemployed people. However, coffee shop in the bazaar was more important than other place in the city and it was a hangout place for all people [8]. In the old coffee shops, tables and chairs were used very little, and customers generally sat on the benches, seats or legs or on the floor, and there were people from every guild in the coffee shops including army, state leaders and government officials, clergies, tradesmen, and champions. However, the place of each guild was distinct and certain. The place of elders and powerful people was on the couch, the officials and clergies sat on the seats, businessmen and itinerants sat on the bench, and beggars and unemployed people sat

on the floor. Tea and hookah were used together and hookah was both of its kinds, dray and wet. Stony or clay "Dizi" was the usual food in coffee shops and its aluminum type is common today. This food sometimes was ordered with Kabab and rice for outside which served in a covered dish.

Iran's Important and Commercial bazaars

Bazaar in Iran has a long history so that Iran's bazaar has been noted in the writings of travelers and many logbooks. Here, some of historical bazaars in Iran are mentioned:

Tehran Bazaar

It is assumed that a small part of Tehran's current bazaar has been the main core of Tehran's reclamation before Safavid and Shah Tahmaseb periods. At the time of this king, bazaar was established simultaneous with the establishment of Tehran's towers. At that time, a part of bazaar was roofed and a part of it was hypaethral [12]. The main building of Tehran bazaar dates back to the Qajar era and reign of Fath Ali Shah, which was built in 1222 and 1243 Hijri. This bazaar is one of the most important trading places in Iran and it is astonishing in terms of its fundamental and economic structure.

Tabriz bazaar

Tabriz bazaar is one of the largest and most beautiful Iranian markets due to its geographical situation which is located in the direction of the Silk Road and Iranian gateway to Europe and it was constructed in Qajar era. The city of Tabriz was located on the road to trade since ancient times. In addition, the production of handicrafts and various types of goods for export to other cities was considered as an important part of its economic activities. For this reason, the Tabriz bazaar has been one of the most important markets in the early Islamic centuries and had a special reputation and it covered a vast area of the city to respond to business activities [14]. The date of the initial construction of Tabriz bazaar is not exactly clear, but some believe that the current bazaar of Tabriz is related to the late Zand dynasty after the earthquake of 1193 AH and Qajar era, and new magnificent markets were built in it at the time of Abbas Mirza, which are very spectacular. Tabriz has been considered as one of the most important trade centers in Iran. This city has gained universal reputation during its trade with Europe through Russia and Ottoman routes and the center of Southern Plateau of Iran. Sharden has mentioned the glory of Tabriz bazaar before destruction of its domes and beautiful vaults due to earthquake [6].

Isfahan bazaar

The oldest part of the Isfahan bazaar was located in a close connection with the Juma Mosque. The market expanded with the radial growth of the city of Isfahan and caravansaries were built connected to the market. The number of caravansaries in Isfahan is over

one hundred. Jeddah caravanserai and King's mother caravanserai which belonged to Shah Sultan Hussein's mother are of the famous caravanserais of Isfahan. This caravanserai is located near the eastern side of Sultani school of Chahar Baq and now it has become a large guesthouse with preserving its interior views and repairing the tiling around its courtyard and adding some extensions to the main building. Isfahan grew during the Safavid period. As the result, its markets are more based on the Safavid foundation [11]. By choosing this city as the capital of the country, its Naghshe Jahan square got importance and the market sequel was extended to this square. Chahar Baq was built in its four sides, so a very large network was created.

Shiraz bazaar

Vakil bazaar is a part of a large set which was built in a vast area between citadel and Andarouni with the order of Karim Khan Zand in Shiraz with collaboration of a group of famous architects and experts of that period between the years 1183 and 1187 Hijri. Vakil bazaar has five caravanserais in which there are warehouses and cellars of merchants and blacksmith's workshops. Of these caravanserais, four caravanserais have been built in the northern part which three of them, that is, Roqan Ahmadi caravanserai and customs office have been built in the eastern part along with the market. The fourth caravanserai so-called Qavami caravanserai is located in the western part. The fifth caravanserai so-called elephant caravanserai is located in the northern part of the Shiegaran bazaar which consists of a set of commercial chambers [2]. There were probably some buildings in the current place of Vakil bazaar, which dates back to Safavid period.

Kerman bazaar

An exquisite set has been remained from Safavid period which consists of caravanserai square, Chahar Souq bazaar, water reservoir, and mint. This collection was named as Ganj Ali Khan who was the ruler of that era. Ganj Ali Khan complex was constructed around a vast square with approximately 4500 meters in the area of old market. The beautiful and famous caravanserai of Safavid period is located in the eastern part of the square and it has been decorated with a well-designed mosaics by the architect so-called Soltan Mohammad and inscriptions with the handwriting of Alireza Abbasi. Ganj Ali Khan's bazaar with about seventy five shops is one of the beautiful markets of Iran which has been endowed to Imam Reza (pbuh). This bazaar extends from Chahar Souq market to Seraji market. The Chahar Souq of this market located in the southwest corner of the square has been constructed with a beautiful, strength and high style. The ceiling of this Chahar Souq has been decorated with the images of market and merchants of Safavid period, which, fortunately, most of it has been

preserved, but it is very old and shows the trace of very ancient days [11].

CONCLUSIONS

In economic thoughts and language, the prosperity peak of transactions in any business is called "bazaar" where geographical location was meaningless and only the optimal cycle and trend of transactions are considered such as gun market, oil market, stock market, Eve night market, etc. However, in traditional Iranian culture, bazaar is referred to the economic and commercial complexes and centers and roofed passages, which has higher commercial credibility and social sanctity compared to the business and dealing centers on the street and shopping malls. Traditionally, market in Iran not only is a business center, but also the manifestation of the taste and art of genuine Iranian architectures. Iranian markets are the memorials of historical eras of Iran's post-Islamic regimes, especially during Safavid and Qajar periods that each of them has its own special features. Iranian traditional markets can be seen in cities of Kashan, Isfahan, Shiraz, Tehran, Yazd, Qazvin, Kerman and Tabriz that each of them once was the capital of Iran and or the settlement of a governor. In the past, market was accompanied by other commercial centers so-called Timcheh, Sara, Qeysariyeh, and so on.

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