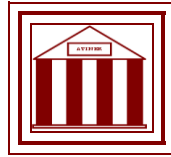


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Role in Formation of Venice:  
A Comparative Study between Işfahān  
and Venice**

**Elham Saffarzadeh  
Assistant Professor  
Shahrud Islamic Azad University  
Iran**

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Athens Institute for Education and Research  
8 Valaoritou Street, Kolonaki, 10671 Athens, Greece  
Tel: + 30 210 3634210 Fax: + 30 210 3634209 Email: info@atiner.gr  
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## **Cross-fertilization of Cultures and its Role in Formation of Venice: A Comparative Study between Işfahān<sup>1</sup> and Venice**

**Elham Saffarzadeh**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Shahrud Islamic Azad University**  
**Iran**

### **Abstract**

In early Middle Ages, when the lands to the east embodied the perceived location of paradise for the post barber Europe, city of Venice came to acquire a hybrid identity infused with Eastern characteristics and was influenced by Oriental culture in all artistic fields. The question raised by this research is that if the structure of the city has also been influenced by the Oriental cities.

In a comparative study, based on the historical findings and the analysis of urban form of the two cities, a series of similarities has been clarified: The coexistence of religious buildings with those of royal power in the heart of the city (at a time when cathedrals were still outside the cities); the association of important functions with trade (at a time when markets were still held outside the walls); the juxtaposition of commercial, religious and civic functions (which was a defining feature of the mercantile city); the grouping of corporations into zones, aligning craft workshops and gathering each craft in its own space (the characteristic layout of the bazaars, too); and the provision of structures for foreign traders: all are similarities which verify the influence of Oriental cities in Islamic era on Venice development, that reinforces the orientalist's theory which believe Venice has created an identity for itself out of Oriental culture, to compensate the lack of ancient Roman past.

**Keywords:** Venice, Işfahān, commercial cities, urban structure, guilds, bazaar

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### **Contact Information:**

**E mail address:** [elsaffarzadeh@gmail.com](mailto:elsaffarzadeh@gmail.com)

**Mobile:** +989123381776

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<sup>1</sup>A Town and Province in Persia

“The Venetians deserve especial notes as the only European people who appear to have sympathized to the full with the great instinct of the eastern races.”

John Ruskin,  
*The Stones of Venice*

The residents of Italian northern cities abandoned their lands when were attacked by the Huns<sup>1</sup> in 452 and Lombards<sup>2</sup> in 568. These refugees, due to repeated barbarian invasions, already had the experience of creating habitable cities when they settled Venice: an island in a marshy lagoon with no easy access. The important religious and governmental entities<sup>3</sup> were afterwards transferred to this island and Venice City was formed (Carile and Fedalto, 1978). The puzzle that researchers have tried to solve during two centuries is that whether refugees entered a city with the Roman relics and built Venice over the ruins of that ancient city or they arrived in a marshy land and started to build the city from scratch. Some researchers believe that in fifth century Venice consisted of a set of marshy islands in a shallow lagoon, and its few residents, inhabiting vulnerable residence, had no natural resources except for fish and salt. That marshy land has not been attractive for the Romans to conquer and it has been an island which was sometimes used as a place of exile (Franzoni, 1970). Some other researchers, whose studies are based on the archeological discoveries in Venice, consider it as a Roman city. Some objects, which belonged to Roman era, were discovered during repair of The *Fondaco dei Turchi* (The Turks' *Funduk*<sup>4</sup>), that is now The Venice Natural History Museum. These discoveries persuaded the researchers to find the relics of Roman Centuriation<sup>5</sup> in Venice. The notes written by the Venetian historians such as Giovanni Diacono<sup>6</sup> and Marin Sanudo<sup>7</sup>, which refer to existence of magnificent churches in Venice before eleventh century, were other factors that proved existence of Roman history in Venice and also validated the studies of this group of researchers as the result. Recently the Venetian researchers have announced that formation of Venice dates back to eleventh century according to precise historical studies. They suggest that there are no historical records that deal directly with the existence of some buildings before eleventh century.

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<sup>1</sup>A group of nomadic people who, appearing from east of the Volga, migrated into Europe c. ad 370 and established the vast Hunnic Empire there.

<sup>2</sup>A Germanic tribe of Scandinavian origin who conquered the Byzantine Italy in 568. They established a Lombard Kingdom in Italy, later named Kingdom of Italy, which lasted until 774.

<sup>3</sup>The Patriarch (which was an office in the Roman Catholic church) of Aquileia, Bishop of Altino and Torcello.

<sup>4</sup>A term of Greek origin (πανδοχεῖον) used, particularly in North Africa, to denote hostelries at which animals and humans can lodge, on the lines of the caravanserais or *khāns* of the Muslim East. These hostelries consist of a court-yard surrounded by buildings on all four sides. “Funduk.” Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition. Brill Online, [http://www.paulyonline.brill.nl/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/funduk-SIM\\_2400](http://www.paulyonline.brill.nl/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/funduk-SIM_2400).

<sup>5</sup>A method of land measurement used by the Romans.

<sup>6</sup>The oldest Venetian chronicle lived at least until 1018. His chronicle probably starts in 994, goes up to 1008. He was chaplain of Duke Pietro Orseolo II (991-1009) and belonged to the circle of the ducal officials.

<sup>7</sup>Marin Sanudo, Italianized in Marino Sanuto the Younger (May 22, 1466–1536) was a Venetian historian.

They believe the Venetian historians have distorted the history of Venice, because they have been wage-earners of the ruling religious power that tried to make Venice a rival of the fallen Rome and make a religious reputation for it. Therefore, they recorded the date of establishing Venice as twenty-fifth of March<sup>1</sup> in 421 and claimed the existence of magnificent religious buildings in this city during fifth century (Calabi and Morachiello, 1987).

Assuming eleventh century as the period in which Venice was formed, this era should be considered the acme of Mediterranean-Islamic civilization relation. The dominant culture at that time was Arab culture: it influenced not only the Mediterranean, but also Persia. Due to significance of trade in religion of Islam, trade became the main factor of the cities' formation and development. The merchant townfolk of oriental cities assumed a more active role in political life, eventually acquiring power and forming the government. This type of city, in which the merchant citizens have become the predominant players, spreads from the East to major Mediterranean centers such as Venice (Naser Eslamī, 2011). Indeed, Venice leads the way as a thorough-going economic, military and political reorganization. Through long-distance trade it reaches beyond continental boundaries and comes into contact with oriental civilization, moving away from Byzantine and Lombard tastes, falls under the spell of eastern cultures whose influence would prove an enduring one, both in art and urban structure (Delfino, 2003).

Many cultural products came from Persia to Venice during the early Middle Ages through the actual travel of individuals. Ancient Persia charmed the nascent Venetian Republic with its miniatures, craft glassware, inlaid metalwork, carpets, fabrics and items that have been widely studied. Although orientalism in Venice has been the issue of many researches, the influence of oriental cities on the structure of Venice has been barely discussed (Naser Eslamī, 2011, Howard, 2007 and Crouzet Pavan, 2001). In explanation of urban structure of Venice and its difference with other European cities, scholars have always used the term "Oriental mode" (Arcangeli, 2007). However, this is a vague connotation which lacks a precise concept. This research for the first time, discusses the structure of Venice in comparison to Işfahān. The choice of Işfahān city to be compared with Venice city is based on two reasons: first, Işfahān and Venice, in the same period have been the capital of two governments of which commerce was the main fundamental of their existence. This property was a significant factor in forming the structure of the two cities. Secondly, Işfahān and Venice, each has been referred to as a "Gateway" at a certain stage, the one that of the East toward the West and the other of the West toward the East. It means that these two cities due to impressive scale of traffic in between, have been the centre of a thorough cross-fertilization of cultures in all religious, scientific and artistic fields.

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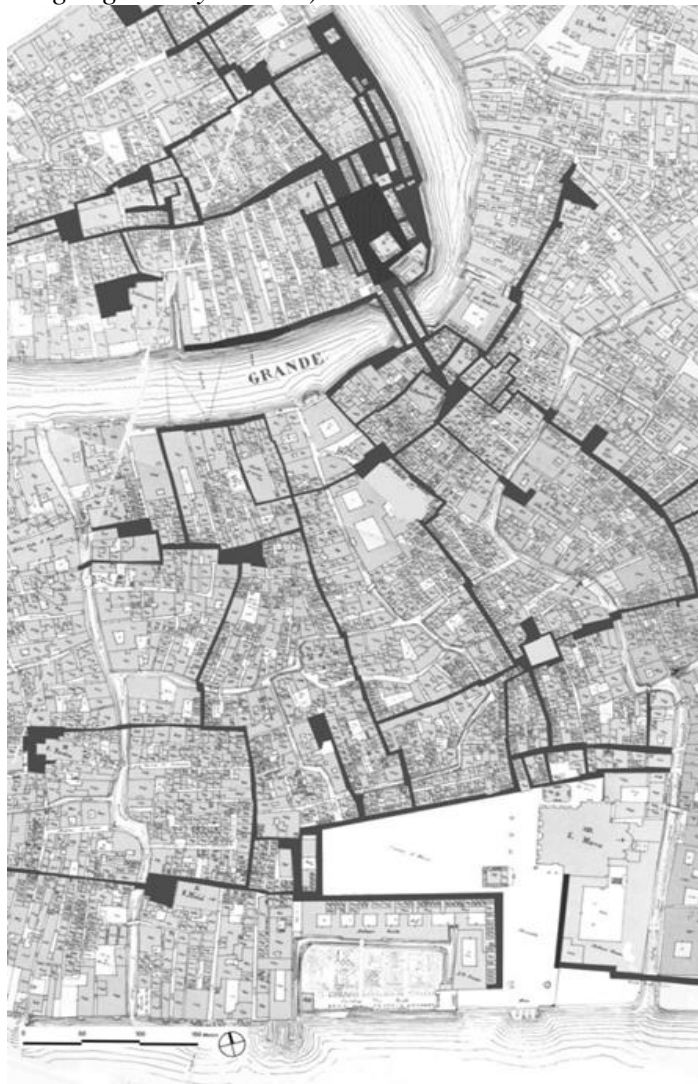
<sup>1</sup>The traditional founding is identified with the dedication of the first church, that of San Giacomo at the islet of Rialto, which is said to have been at the stroke of noon on twenty-fifth March 421. which is observed by many Christians the day of Annunciation.

## Methodology of Research

In order to bring out the effects of these influences, a comparative and analytical method has been adopted, so that the similarities and the differences can be more easily grasped.

The main theme tackled in particular, is the historical development of the commercial structure of these two cities. In both of them we have a system composed of a civic centre and a commercial centre linked by a commercial road. Venice is organized on the basis of two separate poles around which the urban fabric developed: on the one hand the St. Mark's Square and on the other the market of Rialto, linked by the Mercerie which is the principal commercial path of the city.

**Figure 1.** Venice, Plan of Market of Rialto and St. Mark's Square linked by Commercial Paths (Catasto Austriaco 1838- 1842, Commercial Paths and Buildings are highlighted by Author)



City of Iṣfahān is developed around two monumental squares: Naqš-e Jahān and Hāruon velāyat (Maydān- i Kuhna or Old Square). A continuation of the bazaar links the first one (the civic center) to the latter which is the commercial heart of the city.

**Figure 2.** *Iṣfahān, Plan of Old Square and Naqš-e Jahān Square linked by Bazaar, 11-17 Century. (Commercial Paths and Buildings are highlighted by Author)*



Using historical findings and the information derived from analysis of those two systems, a series of similarities has been clarified which have been classified into four categories: Importance of guilds, Interaction between political, religious and commercial powers, Importance of foreign traders for the government and the predominant role of merchants are the principal factors in shaping the structure of two cities. For more clarification, these four mentioned concepts have been elaborated on the map in order to reach more comprehensive results compared to “Hybrid identity” and “Oriental mode” terms.

### **Main Factors which Approache the Structure of These Two Cities:**

The structures of both cities might look different at first glance, both in terms of form; and the relation between form and function. But analyzing the plans of both cities, we come to the conclusion that four important strategies have been effective in forming the urban structure of both cities.

#### *Importance of Guilds*

Guilds refer to a group of townsmen engaged in the same occupation, who elect their own chief and officers, who pay guild taxes, and whose group has fiscal and administrative functions (Blake, 1999).

The organization of artisans, shopkeepers, and traders into separate corporations is not peculiar to Iran or to Islamic countries. Such corporations were the natural outcome of the structure and needs of pre-industrial society. Sjoberg has shown that in such society's guilds are universal phenomenon, “not necessarily in specific cultural content, but certainly in basic form<sup>1</sup>” (Sjoberg, 1965). As Floor mentions Government in pre-industrial society concerned itself mainly with collection of taxes, provision of public services, and the maintenance of law and order. To maintain order and security and thus to ensure the collection of taxes, the government had to provide some organization of economic life.

Işfahān's economic vitality was tied to the mosque and its various guilds through the diverse trades carried on in bazaar workshops and stores. The social hierarchy of the bazaar had the big merchants (*tojjār*) at the top of the pyramid, the headmen (*kadkodā*) and the masters (*ostād*) of artisans and shopkeepers of well over 100 guild-like associations (*aşnāf*) at the middle level, and the masses of apprentices (*şāgerd*) and footboys (*pāadow*) at the bottom, with some marginal elements such as poor peddlers, dervishes, and

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<sup>1</sup>Sjoberg distinguishes the following functions of guilds: 1. Guilds have the monopoly of a particular occupation; 2. guilds have rules for the selection of membership; 3. training only occurs within the guilds; 4. guilds see to the maintenance of workmanship; 5. guilds are a channel for voicing political demands; 6. members may assist each other by pooling resources; 7. the feeling of mutual welfare is strong; 8. guilds have religious and ceremonial function.



beggars at the lowest level (Ashraf, 1981). The bazaar's internal hierarchy had a big impact on the structure of bazaar.

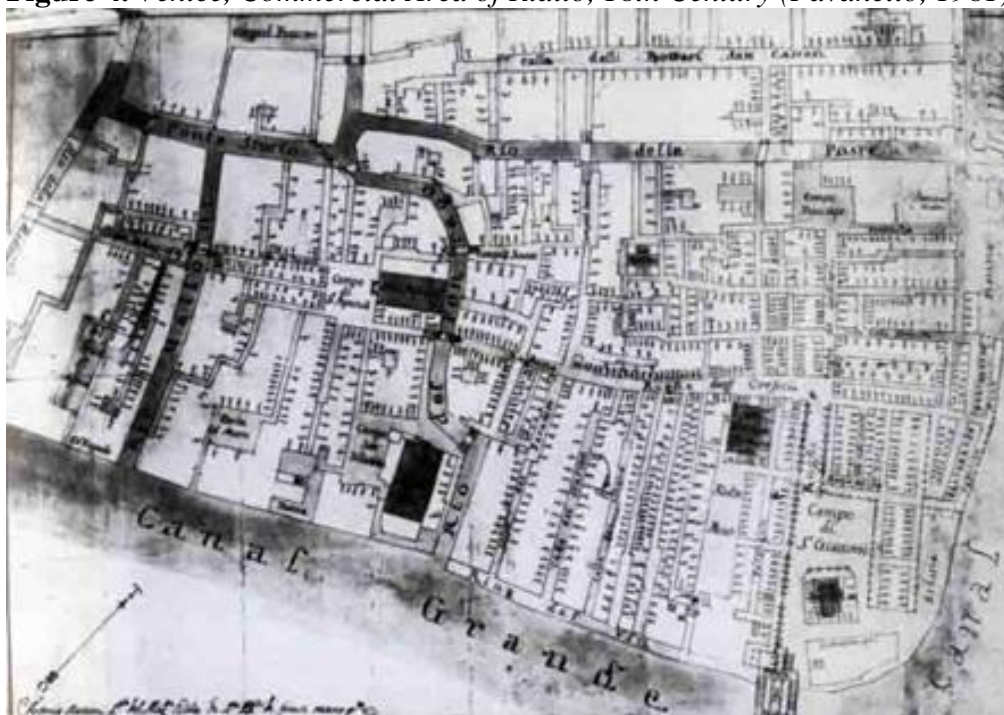
In bazaar of Iṣfahān professions which supply valuable goods, were gathered in a place called *Ḳaysāriyya* (royal bazaar). Other professions had their own special *rāsteh and dehliz* (the main and peripheral streets and corridors inside the bazaar), *sarāy* and *timče* (economic complexes without any residential possibilities) and sometimes their own *cāravanserai* (economic complex with residential possibilities). All this places were named after its particular profession.

**Figure 3.** *Iṣfahān, Royal Bazaar , 17th Century. (Herdeg, 1990)*



Venice was a full-scale trading city, which did not depend on the rural districts and corporations. Especially merchants, fed the political power of the city. When an economic activity became more prosperous than the other in Venice, the pertinent corporation had a more significant role to control the city. The area of the market on both sides of the Grand Canal also branched out commercial paths which were differentiated particularly: fine fabrics and jewelry products was placed in Mercerie, spices in S. Bartholomeo, and normal fabrics in S. John Crisostomo, proximity of *fondaco* (italianized of *funduk*) and market and grouping in certain streets of shops with the same type of goods, are features found in Islamic bazaar, though not unknown to the Central European markets. Using the names of blacksmiths, mirror workers, tuckers, and grocers in St. Mark area indicates that the city was formed based on the corporations. With the development of the city, other passages were formed perpendicular to these passages, each bearing the name of its own profession. This shows the value and dignity of corporations and indicates that they were regarded as the main elements of the society.

**Figure 4.** Venice, Commercial Area of Rialto, 18th Century (Pavanello, 1981)

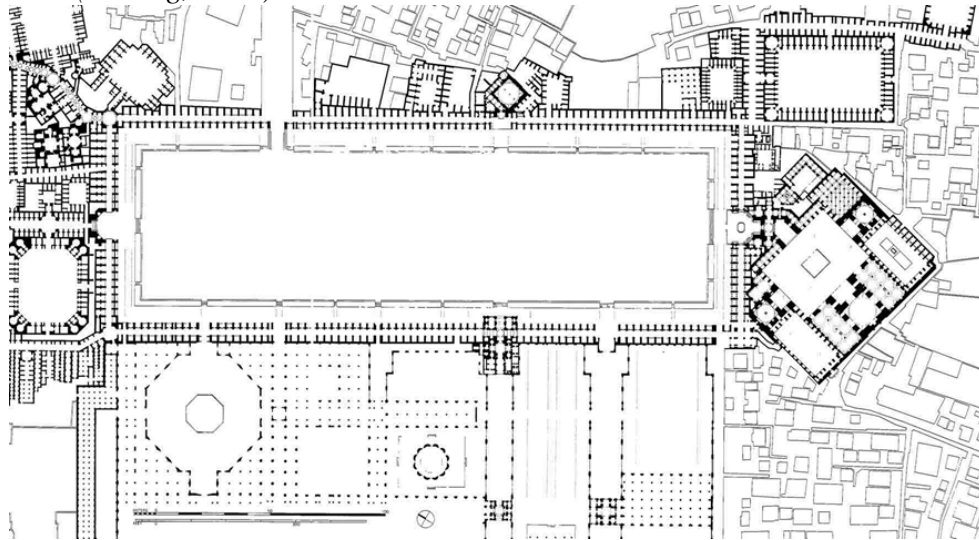


*Interaction between Tree Powers and its Influence on the Form of the City*

Işfahān and Venice are two governmental-trade centers. Trade, even in its physical form, is interdependent of religion and politics.

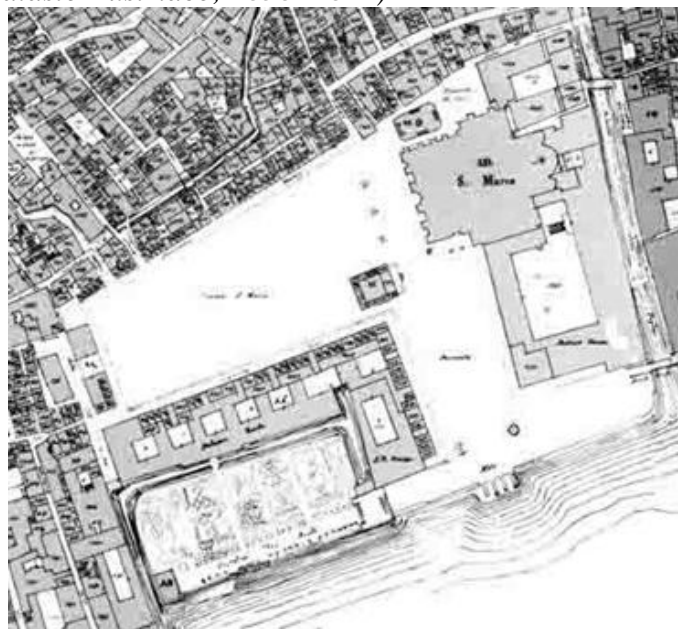
The seat of Government in Işfahān from the beginning of the city formation until the Şafawid era (fifteenth century) was a square named Hāruon velāyat (which later in Şafawid era became to be known as Old Square). The start of square's formation probably might have been concurrent with the old bazaar of the city. The bazaar and the square were the core of the city where Işfahān led a radial development around it. In thirteen century, in the era of Salđjūkid the three main components of power in Persia were gathered around this square: *Dowlatxāneh* or the seat of government, the Masjed-e Jāmé or the center of religious power and the old bazaar of the city or the center of economic power. In 1598, when Shāh'Abbās decided to move the capital of his empire from the north-western city of Qazvin to the central city of Işfahān, he ordered the construction of another square especially for the Nawrūz (the Persian New Year) Celebration. With the construction of this square named Naqş-e Jahān, (Exemplar of the World). The centrality of the city shifts from the old square to the new one. By building it, Shāh'Abbās would gather the three main components of power in Persia in his own backyard; the power of the clergy, represented by the royal mosque, the power of the merchants, represented by the imperial bazaar which surrounds the square and of course, the power of the Shah himself, residing in the Ālī-Qāpū Palace.

**Figure 5.** *Isfahān, Plan of Entire Complex of Naqš-e Jahān and Surrounding Buildings: The Ālī-Qāpū Gate (1598) on the Western Edge of the Square, which was served as a Viewing Stand and the Entrance Gate into the Cluster of Government Buildings; Directly opposite the Ālī-Qāpū Gate, the Shaikh Lotf-Allāh Mosque(1602) is attached to the Eastern Side of the Square; Along the Long Axis of the Square is the Entrance to the Ḳaysāriyya (Royal Bazaar) at the Northern Edge; It Is on Axis with the Entrance of the Masjed-e Šāh to the South. (Herdeg, 1990)*



From the beginning of the city formation in 828, the relics of St. Mark the Evangelist was purloined by two Venetian merchants from Mesrita in Alexandria and latter was transferred to Venice (Carile and fedalto, 1978). Therefore, the Duchy of Venice, which was going to be the queen of Adriatic waters, linked her history intimately with the myth of Orient. The magnificent St. Mark's Church, which is in fact St. Mark's shrine, was constructed, near the old castle of the Doge of Venice, in an area dominant by St. Mark's lagoon, where the Duchies' economic status was dependent on. This layout is based on an Eastern strategy employed in the Islamic cities where political, religious, and even commercial powers are intermingled and inseparable. This layout underlines at the same time the acumen of her ruling elite in dealing with political matters as well as a remarkable amount of cynicism in taking care of her own interests, which allowed a city with little or no main land possessions until the fifteenth century to enjoy a thriving economy and play a powerful political role in the world for many centuries, surviving for over a millennium until modern times. It was this almost perfect balance and interaction of religious esprit, chameleonic diplomacy, and an unsentimentally practical mercantile system that turned Venice into the most respected trading and political partner of Near East.

**Figure 6.** *Venice, Plan of Entire Complex of St. Mark: St Mark's Basilica, on the Eastern Edge of the Square; The Piazzetta dei Leoncini is an Open Space on the North Side of the Church; Beyond that is the Clock Tower (1499); To the Left is the Long Arcade along the North Side of the Piazza, End of Sansovino's Libreria (Mid-16th Century), whose Main Front Faces the Piazzetta. (Catasto Austriaco, 1838- 1842)*



After signing the peace of Constance contract by Friedrich I Barbarossa in 1183, fundamental changes have been done in administrative system of Italy. The Italian cities retained local jurisdiction over their territories, and had the freedom to elect their own councils and to enact their own legislation, as well as to keep their Lombard League. Yet their consuls had to take the oath of fealty to the emperor and receive the investiture from him, Imperial judges had the prerogative to judge appeals and some districts in Italy were placed under direct imperial administration. This political reforms result in crucial changes in the forms of cities and in this way the state organization is settled in governmental palaces. The empty space in front of these palaces turned to an important urban square (Schultz, 1992). In this era, the Old St. Mark's Square is developed and finds novel aspects suitable for Venice republic. After the Constantinople conquest by Venetians and with transferring the capitals of the columns, sculptures and other architectural decoration from conquered capital to Venice and installation of them in heart of the city, namely St. Mark's Square, the square is no more the entrance of a harbor but a monumental space which has a memory of a war, a conquer and the fall of a Republic<sup>1</sup>. During the first decades of the twelfth century, prosecution buildings known as the

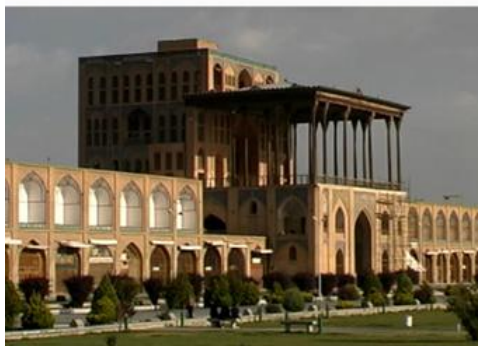
<sup>1</sup>Following the Italy defeat from Napoleon in 1807, the San Gimignano Church in western part of the square was demolished and an administration of justice-like edifice was erected as the residence of the Napoleon in Venice which is called the Napoleon corner. This is the most important change which was done in square up to now.

Procuratie Vecchie (Old Procuratie<sup>1</sup>) were constructed around the square. In 1495, Renaissance urban changes in Venice were initiated by the construction of a clock tower in the St. Mark's Square. This tower was located at the crossroad of the most important commercial center in this city that is called by Tafuri the main life artery in Venice. Calabi believes that this tower had been the house of a panel of prosecutors, who had been sent to Rialto, which was known as the economic heart of this city, to supervise commercial affairs. Construction of this tower in the axis of St. Mark and St. Theodor columns suggests that commerce, as an integral part of governance and religion (each of which had its own base on the St. Mark's Square), had been of great concern to the Republic of Venice (Tafuri, 1969). In the sixteenth century, following the Renaissance municipalization that transformed the form of Italian cities, the St. Mark's Square gained its ultimate format. This square was reconstructed as the ancient Roman Forums, like many other squares located in the other cities including Rome, Florence, Vigevano, and Loreto (Lotz, 1989). Despite all the changes occurred to the form and function of the square, its commercial functionality never ceased. That is to say, by the reconstruction of the porch surrounding the square, which comprised unisized shops, commercial activities were set in order (Crouzet-Pavan, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup> The termin "Procuratia" comes from "Procuratori della Repubblica", the highest position of the Magistracy after the doge, whom they were originally meant for.

**Figure 7.** *Isfahān, Photos of Naqš-e Jahān Square and Surrounding Buildings (From Top to Bottom): Naqš-e Jahān Square seen from Top of Royal Bazaar; the Shaikh Lotf-Allāh Mosque; Courtyard of Masjed-e Šāh; The Ālī-Qāpū Gate*





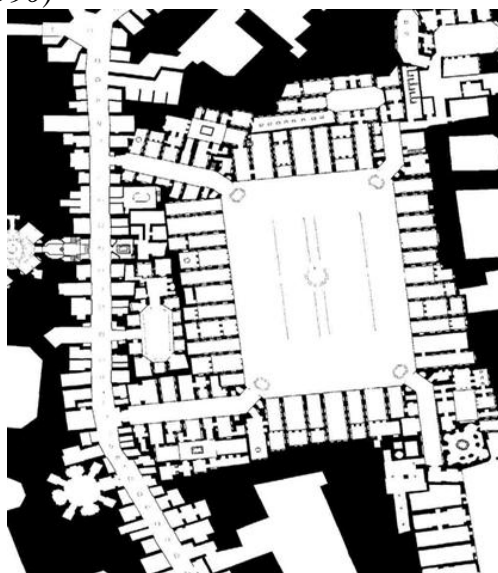
**Figure 8.** Venice, Photos of St. Mark's Square (From Top to Bottom): the Piazzetta seen from St Mark's Basilica; (1499); the Long Arcade along the North Side of the Piazza which Lead to the Clock Tower and the Entrance of St Mark's Basilica; St. Mark's Square seen from the Lagoon



*Significance of Foreign Traders*

One of the important structures of commercial cities is a space that is allocated to foreign traders. Caravanserai<sup>1</sup> in Işfahān and *fondaco* in Venice were the important commercial centers for merchants who had special importance for the government or their commercial relationship had a significant role in economy and prosperity of the city. *Fondaco* in Venice and caravanserai in Işfahān have a similar typology; however, they are completely different in terms of the urban role and the relation to the commercial texture in which they are located. Under 'Abbās, Işfahān became a very cosmopolitan city, with a resident population of Turks, Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Indians, Chinese and a growing number of Europeans. They were housed in the many caravanserais that were dedicated to them, and they mainly worked as merchants and money-changers (Blake, 1999).

**Figure 9.** *Işfahān, Golšan Caravanserai, located on the Işfahān Bazaar, 17th Century (Herdeg, 1990)*



In Işfahān, caravanserai is a part of the Grand Bazaar, which is in strict conformity with that. The yard of a caravanserai is not an enclosed place, but a passing place. As the building of a Caravanserai was of paramount importance for the bazaar, the yard of a caravanserai was the place of exchanging news, ideas, thoughts and a permanent fair for merchandise, which had been carried from faraway lands.

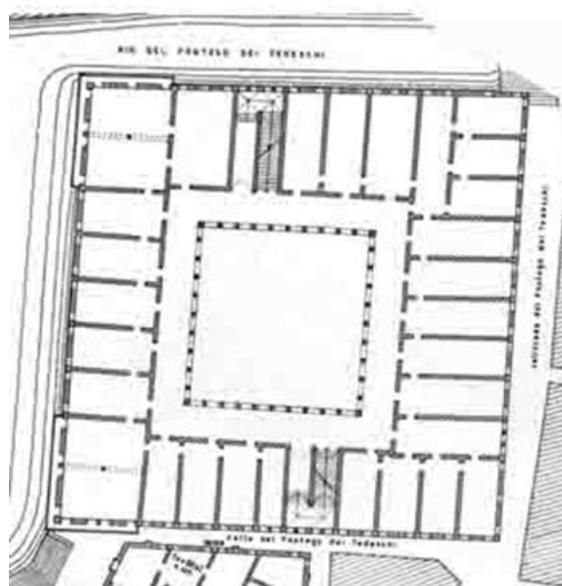
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<sup>1</sup> Caravanserai which means a house for caravan is a Persian word, and it is applied to a typology in which several rooms are located around a yard and it is a transaction center, as well as a place for caravans to stay. “Caravanserai” entered to Greek from ancient Persia and was called *Pendockin* or residence on the way. In Islamic period that was the period of alterations in Mediterranean cities *Pendockin* came into Islamic cities and was named *Fandogh*. From North African, typology of *Fandogh*, moved towards Italy in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century and was called *Fondaco* (Naser Eslamī, 2011).



Over its long journey from Iran to Venice and in an attempt to adapt itself to the culture of another land, *fondaco* has lost the urban feature of a caravanserai having a connection to the bazaar passage. It has been changed into an enclosed building that is independent from the urban texture, which is used to control and limit the foreign merchants' traffic in Venice. As Turks, Germans and Iranian merchants had stable and long trade with Venice; they had allocated some caravanserais to themselves. Being a trading place, *fondaco* was a special centre to perform religious, national and collective rituals<sup>1</sup>. On the one hand, *fondaco* allowed the merchants coming from other countries to have a collective life, and on the other hand, it separated them from the others, as they had to stay in *fondaco* during their stay in Venice. So it became a kind of Getto (Concina, 1997).

**Figure 10.** Venice, *The fondaco dei Tedeschi, situated Near the Rialto Bridge, First Constructed in 1228, then Rebuilt between 1505 and 1508. (Concina, 1989)*



#### *Trade Supremacy and its Influence on the City Structure*

In both Işfahān and Venice, merchants have had an important role in the politics and also in city administration. Merchants were in fact as ambassadors to distant lands, carrying important messages among governments. They, aware of other nation's traditions and cultures, were in search of introducing new technologies and sciences to their own people.

*Tojjār* or big merchants in Iran were an identifiable group; tightened firmly to religious power of the city. Their alliance has developed in several areas and for a variety of reasons. The *bazaarīs*<sup>2</sup> have been allied traditionally

<sup>1</sup>For instance, there was a mosque in Turks *Fondaco* in Venice.

<sup>2</sup>Bazaarī is the name given to the merchants and workers of bazaars.

with the independent *Shī'ite ulamā*<sup>1</sup> in their mutually held belief that the patrimonial mode of administration though often recognized as legitimate on a de facto basis, was in fact only quasi-legitimate. Further, the physical proximity and the interdependence of the mosque and the *bazaar* in the structure of the Islamic town were important factors. The *bazaar* as a closely knit community, in part owing to its enclosed physical space, increased the merchant's awareness of each other's public activities. Paying one's religious taxes, contributing to charitable funds, and maintaining a generally good relationship with the *ulamā* were all signs of piety and, as such, helpful to maintaining one's respect and honor in the *bazaar* community. For their part, the *ulamā* needed the mass adherence of the *bazaarīs* as a basis for their own political power. Encountering the arbitrary and oppressive domination of the governing authority without countervailing powers of their own, the *bazaarīs* needed to be under the protective umbrella of the *ulamā*'s. Furthermore, the religious sentiment and traditional orientation of the *bazaarīs* were reinforced by their ties with the *ulamā*, by the physical setting of the *bazaar*, and by its communal character. These communal and ideological ties led the *bazaarīs* and the *ulamā* to share certain similarities in their life-style and world view. So the *bazaar* and the mosque, as inseparable twins, have served as the primary arena of public life in urban Iran.

In Işfahān, the religious and political center of the city has been Masjed-e Jāmē since eleventh century. This mosque with its eleven entrances (three of which leading to the bazaar) is a prominent example of integrating commercial and religious practices. It's not limited only to this example. The bazaar offered a collection of interconnected courtyards and allies for public activities: and the tradition was that public buildings should always be designed connected to bazaar.

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<sup>1</sup>Refers to the educated class of Muslim legal scholars engaged in the several fields of Islamic studies.

**Figure 11.** *Isfahān, Masjed-e Jāmé (Old Mosque)*



In contrast with most of other European powers of the Middle Ages, the members of the Venetian ruling elite were not great feudal landowners but international merchants: The theft of St. Mark’s body from Alexandria in 828 was only possible because the appearance of Venetian merchants in the Egyptian port raised no surprise. Over the centuries, Venice struggled to achieve supremacy over her rivals in Levantine trade, especially Pisa and Genoa. By the fifteenth century, it had achieved undeniable dominance in the import of Eastern merchandise into Europe. Overseas commercial voyages, threatened by piracy, shipwreck, and warfare, always involved a degree of risk. Yet the enticement of lucrative profits was irresistible. As the Venetian diarist Marin Sanudo, remarked, “it is worthy of note that, just as they have been merchants from the beginning, so the Venetians continue to be from year to year” (Howard, 2007).

**Figure 12.** Venice, Campo S. Salvatore and its Front Space which is connected to Commercial Paths of the City. (Catasto Austriaco 1838- 1842, Commercial Paths and Buildings are highlighted by Author, 2010)

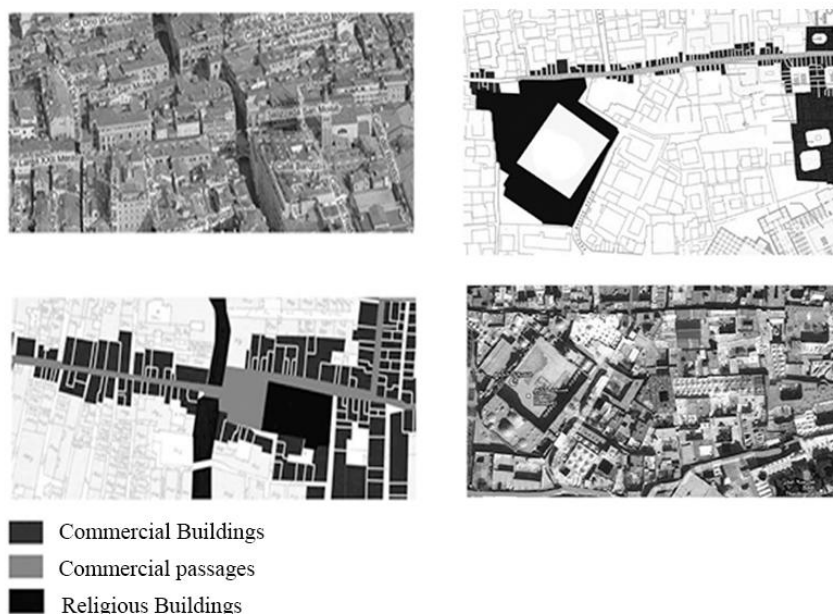


In Venice, merchants control power, wealth and the fortune of the city. Construction of each important building, including schools and churches, is commissioned by the merchants and is in a close relation to the commercial fabric of this city. In Venice, the eldest church of the city is San Giacomo, the place of the first memory of the relationship with the Roman Empire is San Geminiano, the central place founded by the will of Christ is San Salvador, the place in which the republic is identified is San Marco (Concina, 1989) but all these are mixed with commercial structures. The churchyards (in italian *I campi*<sup>1</sup>) are interfered with commercial pathways (in italian *I calli*), creating a mixed working atmosphere. Churchyards are once used for holding religious rituals and at times for holding local bazaars. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, a Florentine merchant makes it possible to open a school of logic and philosophy, which is based at the church of San Giovanni Elemosinario, just in Rialto, in the heart of merchant city. The school was attended by patricians, by religious and merchants from Calabria, Puglia, from Marca Anconitana. So the religious activity interfere itself with the commerce. There are plenty of these examples that show integration between religion and social life in Venice.

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<sup>1</sup>Open spaces in front of the churches in Venice have been called *campo*. They are center of public activities for every quarter of the city. It's like piazza and sometimes as big as a piazza but in this city only St. Mark's square is called piazza.

**Figure 13.** *Interaction between Commercial Passages and the Religious Buildings in two Cities: in the Left (From Top To Bottom): Aerial View of Venice; Salizzada San Moisè which is a Commercial Passage and its Interaction with the Churchyard. In the Right (From Top to Bottom): Isfahān, Site Plan of Hakim Mosque and its Relation with a Bazaar; Aerial View of Hakim Mosque*



## Conclusions

While Venice had its roots in the Latin Europe, it made commercial links with the East and therefore its cultural identity is loaned to the East. The four bronze horses installed in the front of the St. Marc's Basilica that were transferred from a hippodrome to Venice after the conquest of Constantinople, capitals and statues from the Hagia Sophia Church that were used as ornaments, reliefs on the palace walls depicting desert camels and palms and reviving memories of travels to the East, vegetal ornament and pointed arches all over the city show the desire which Venetian had toward eastern culture. The desire which rooted in their praise and their need to form an identity. Tourists, merchants and ambassadors returning from the East would narrate their memories of the desert cities that had turquoise domes, minarets and bazaars. These narrations caused a new model for city construction which could only be evident through a comparative study with an original model. In the process of translation from one civilization to another, essence of the formula has survived but the representational pattern has changed.

In Venice bazaar is not in an Oriental form because it has been adapted to another civilization. As "One Thousand and One Nights" in Europe is not quite similar to its original version written in Baghdād. In conclusion I refer to

Debora Howard who has a clear interpretation for what I've tried to explain: we think of "orientation" as positive, and "disorientation" as negative. For Venetian symbiosis with the East was the *raison d'être* of the city's existence. Whereas historical memory was infused with myth, Venetian communal culture embraced extensive and detailed geographical knowledge, whether acquired through direct experience or at secondhand. Every traveler's tale contributed to the city's shared experience of the East, creating a mosaic of evocative memories of distant lands. Constantly updated by merchant handbooks and diplomatic reports, this vivid picture of life in the Islamic world colored the production and interpretation of art and architecture at home in Venice (Howard, 2007).

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