

TABRIZ'S POL BAZAAR AS A MEMORY PLACE

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ABSTRACT

Bazaar is a traditional public space in the Iranian cities, and has always been a great section of commercial activities in urban life. Bazaar is not only the commercial center of traditional cities in Iran but also the center of social, cultural, political and religious activities.

The case study of this paper is the covered bazaar of Tabriz in the north west of Iran, with bridges which is connecting two separate parts of bazaar. In fact its hundreds of bridges built over the course of centuries, most of which are still in use today, and Tabriz probably has one of them.

The Tabriz Historical Bazaar Complex is embodied with a largest integrated, covered brick structure and is the important economical-social system. Due to its strategically setting along the Silk Road, it has had strong interaction with other cultures in the world, from antiquity until the present.

Tabriz bazaar has effected economical, cultural and political movements in Iran and has been a prototype for Persian urban planning.

The main aim of this study is to explain the role of bazaar over bridges in the Tabriz historical bazaar and the difference of the Tabriz bazaar over bridge with other that is similar in other countries. The objective of this study is to explore the architectural features and strategic situation of Pol Bazaars which are the reminder from past as memory places.

Keywords: Bazaar over Bridge, Bazaar, Tabriz

1. INTRODUCTION

Tabriz is located on the northwestern part of Iran and covered by mountains so the region has a cold climate. The city has faced with many civilizations and cultures during the history so it has a rich history. Tabriz with its important geopolitical location is located on the main trade routes, as a hub of religion and culture is among the world's important cities. In different points of the history the city has confronted with several earthquakes natural disasters and economic depressions. Despite the great changes during the history this city managed to survive and continue to its life.

History discloses this fact that the people in order to survive need to be connected to each other. Goods' trade is considered in order to satisfy their different needs and wants. Everything is not available in a distinct place, and different materials are available in different places of

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the world. Due to this reason people in order to satisfy their needs start to travel to other points of the world. A network has been developed in order to make this communication and latterly named as Silk Road.

Tabriz Historical Bazaar Complex is one of the most important international commercial centers on the path of the Silk Road. Due to the location of this complex, it has been considered one of the largest and most important commercial centers of the West and East for many centuries. The Silk Road's most important lifeline has been the trade caravan's route from West to East and vice versa. It has spread from China and beyond to Tabriz, and has turned the city into a main commercial hub. The old city of Tabriz had many gates, which connected the city to other important cities while showing the wide-ranging communications within the city. Silk Road trade has been establishing throughout Tabriz. The connections extend from beyond Caucasia to Arab countries and include other areas such as the Middle East, Africa, Istanbul and many European countries. The Silk Road route was the most important connection way between Mesopotamia and China throughout the ancient world and connected eastern and western nations for 4000 years.



Figure1.1. Silk Road in Iran and the situation of Tabriz on the Silk Road

Tabriz Bazaar has been one of the commercial pols of Iran during the history and its structure has been interesting for the architects, researchers, explorers and tourists. Physical development of bazaar during the centuries extended it to the other side of Mehrânroud River in north and created some problems in case of relation and commerce. It seems that the bridges of bazaar are the strategy for solving the problems in the past.

Tabriz Historical Bazaar Complex is a most complete example of a commercial-cultural system. With the largest integrated covered architectural body, including the most various trade spaces and the most sustainable social-economical structure within the world's Bazaars and the only city which has Pol-bazaars. It was inscribed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in July 2010. It received to Aga Khan Award for architecture in 2013.

The Pol- Bazaars are components of these complexes, and availing connection between two different parts of the Grand Bazaar had an important role in economic boom.

The aim of this paper is to look at the Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex and design of Pol-Bazaar as a memory place in the building of the bazaar. And the characteristic relationship between Pol-Bazaar and grand bazaar. Tabriz Pol-Bazaars will be compared with other bazaars

on the bridges in the world. Therefore, it is different role compared to other existing bridge over the word.

This study tries to understand the design principles of Pol-Bazaar and how it became as current design due to different changes over time.

2. HISTORY OF TABRIZ GRAND BAZAAR

To provide background information for Tabriz Bazaar and its past experiences, it is better to look to the history of the city structure and development of the covered bazaar. Tabriz Bazaar was located in the central part of the city, among the other prominent establishments of that time. Place which could be still considered as the trade center of the city even after the modernization. Modern and traditional shopping centers have been constructed around Tabriz Grand Bazaar over the time. Consequently Tabriz downtown is considered as the traditional and modern trade center. The functional continuity between the zones of inner bazaar and its outside is one of the main reasons in creation of a special sense of place for the bazaar. This continuity between bazaar and its surroundings creates special meanings for the bazaar.

Commercial relationships of Tabriz city with other main cities of the world, and cultural transactions, led to various effects on global values from east to west, and the existence of this bazaar is essential for trading such big volume of goods. Also, it has had global popularity for trading the unique goods such as Tabriz carpet, silk textile and clothing.

Today's bazaar, which belongs to the period of Gajar, has been destroyed may times. Hence, the historical background of Tabriz Bazaar shows that the bazaar has an importance role in the memory of the city (Soltanzade 2001) (Esmaeili Sangari and Omrani 2008).

Tabriz trade structure is one of Tabriz's valuable resource which is one of the factors that made Tabriz to become very important. Trade from the past is one of important reasons for people communication. This public place made several social activities and cause to creation of main locations. Tabriz as one of the important trade centers during the history has harbored big trade deals and many trade structures.

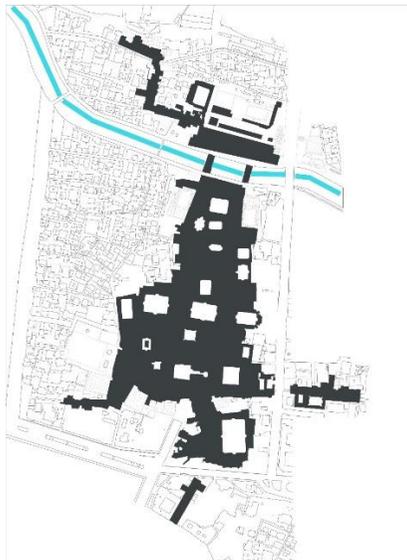


Figure 2.1. Plan of Tabriz Bazaar at present. D. Rostamzade.

As it can be seen from the map, bazaar has developed as time passed and it has progressed till the north border of the city which was surrounded by the river. Bridge is built in order to cross the river. These bridges used not only as a pathway for passengers but also trading could be done with the aid of stores in two sides of the bridge. Therefore, construction of these stories helped bazaar in a case of trading. Considering the aforementioned information, if Tabriz Bazaar did not develop, there would not be a reason to build the bridge and we would not have this memory of place.

3. THE BAZAAR OVER BRIDGES AS A MEMORY PLACE

3.1. Bazaar Over The Bridge In World

Pol bazaars are consisting of several shops in row because of ongoing trade. The Pol bazaar in Iran can be considered as a part of whole bazaar and link two different parts of the bazaar. But in other samples of other countries only the function of trade on Pol Bazaars were accomplished. For example the Pol Bazaars in Turkey (Bursa) and Italy (Florence, Venice). In other words, two opposite sides of Pol Bazaar do not restricted only for trade. The Irgandi Bazaar in Bursa remains from the year of 1442. It has been damaged by earthquakes and dynamites. In 1949 the repairs have been made on it such is reinforcing by concrete and increasing the height of structure. Nowadays different shops exist on this bridge like handcrafted products shops after its restoration in 2004 (Eyüpgiller et al. 2004).

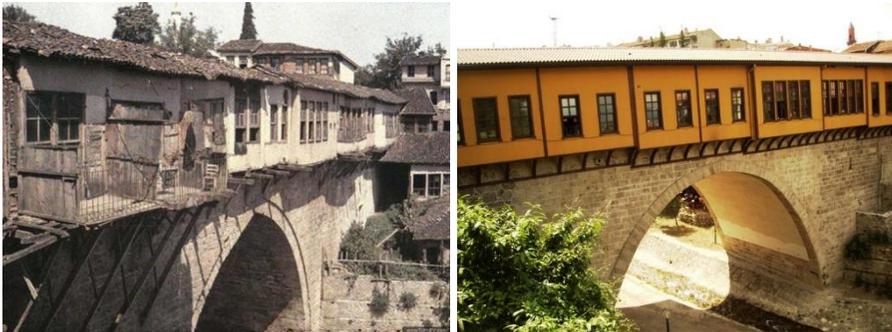


Figure 3.1.1. Bursa Irgandi Bridge's previous and current appearance (Eyüpgiller et al. 2004)

Rialto Bridge in Venice which constructed by wood before 16th century has been restored by stone (Natalie 2009). The trade is available over this bridge and the traffic of trade and transportation ships under it. This bridge is one of Venice's well known symbols.



Figure 3.1.2. Venedik Rialto Bridge's previous and current appearance (Natalie 2009)

3.2. Tabriz Bazaar Over Bridge

The root of Pol-bazaar word is Persian, and it is formed from Pol and Bazaar words. Pol means bridge and Bazaar means Bazaar, and it refers to a kind of Bazaar which constructed on a bridge. The bridges on Mehrānrūd River of Tabriz after the development of the Bazaar and joint to the Bazaar complex entitled as Pol-Bazaar and known as this name among public.

The Bazaar of Tabriz covers a wide space, and is considered as the largest roofed structure built by humans. Due to increasing demand of space, the bazaar was developed towards Mehrānrūd River.

The northern areas of the bazaar were connected to the southern bazaar by two bridges. The most creative usage of these bridges can be seen in Pol-Bazaars (bazaars on the bridges). Existence of bazaars' bridge in the past is proved by old maps and handmade drawings of tourists.

Documents related to Tabriz's flood contain a map of Tabriz and the Mehrānrūd River along with houses, buildings, this document also includes twelve hand made designs showing buildings of the city as well as the tow Pol-bazaars.

This map was designed by Mohammad-Ebn-Iraj-Ghājār, which was prepared in order to calculate the losses of the flood in 19th by the order of Fathali Khān, the governor of the city. (Tehrani 2006)

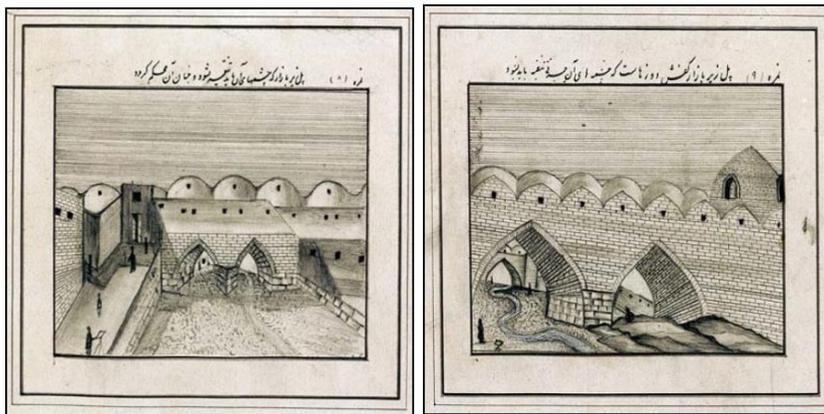


Figure 3.2.1. Pol-bazaars along the Yemen-duzan bazaar. (Eastern) and Pol-bazaars on the Aji-chai River (Tehrani 2006)

We can see another sketch in the travel account of Fred Richards in 1931. These images only show one of the bridges, which is near to the Sahib-al-amr mosque. In Fred Richards's original book, you can see the following image described as "bazaar on the bridge, Tabriz" (Navari et al. 2009)

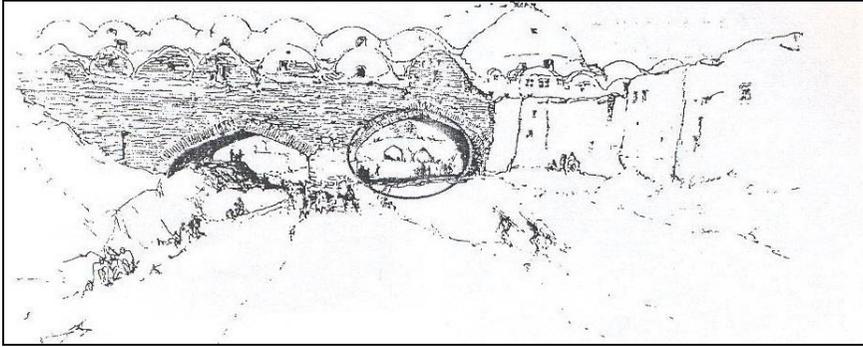


Figure 3.2.2. Fred Richard's sketch -The bazaar on the bridge (Soltanzade 1997)

According to Fred Richard's travel account, "The two sides of the river, which flow near the bazaar, its flood is popular, and streets leading to the bazaar are widened and repaired while a dam has been constructed. Persian Bazaars are one of the finest and most populated places. One of the most attractive parts of the city is the bridge which joins the bazaar to the square" (Mahindokht 2001).

In the map of (Gharachi Dāghi), and (Asadolā Khān), we see the place of bridges labeled as bazaar legend (Figure 3.2.3.).

The map of (Gharachi Dāghi) was prepared in 1297 from A. H. and map of (Asadolā Khān) in 1327 from A. H. is also shown. These two old maps indicate the existence of a bridge in recent times (19th). (UNESCO)

According to studies, on the Pol-bazaars, we can say that these two bridges are built during the reign of Naser-al-din Shah (King of Ghājār, 18th century). With reference to Fred Richards's handmade design, and comparing it with handmade designs of Tabriz's flood, we can reach the conclusion that one of these bridges has been destroyed during Tabriz's flood (1288 Hejira- 1870) until Fred Richards's journey (1310 Hejira – 1931) while another one did not last for a long time. (UNESCO)

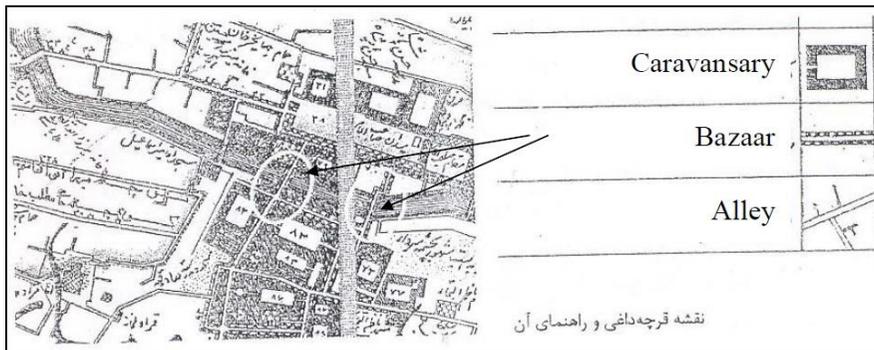


Figure 3.2.3. The map of Tabriz bazaar (Gharachi Dāghi 19th) (Tehrani 2006)

In recent years, the City Development Organization of Tabriz, decided to execute plans, which make profit for various parts of bazaar north of river. Northern parts of Tabriz Bazaar have increasingly become poorer, because it has been separated from the southern more profitable part. Its shops have become less profitable than the southern parts. For the joining of these two

parts of the bazaar and balancing their values, the best solution seems to be the solution that people have long reached, to rebuild Pol-bazaars.

As we can see in ottoman miniature artist combining the bazaar with the governmental square, which has been included in the bazaar of Tabriz, is common in many cities of Iran. Such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Esfahan. (in 17th century) (Soltanzade 2001)



Figure 3.2.4. Miniature map of Tabriz, in the time of Shah Tahmaseb Safavi designed by Nasooh-metraghchi-Osmani. Bazaar, Joining the main squares and complexes and main centers of city of Tabriz. (Navari et al. 2009)

Human activities and interactions and the architectural features of the space have the most important effect on making a location as an amazing place. If a place is able to make good memories in people's mind the possibility of returning to that place is more. Therefore the place creates and attachment feeling for people (Eleni 2004).

Tabriz Pol Bazaars are known as trade centers and transportation network from the past days. Therefore we can call it as a memory place. The Pol bazaar is only available in Tabriz Grand Bazaar. So this memory makes this bazaar different from the similar types. It is obvious from its name that the trade is active on the bridge. Tabriz Pol bazaar is constructed as a row of face-to-face shops. Two sides of the Pol Bazaar are covered and people trade here.

Tabriz Grand Bazaar has been made and developed on two lines (axles) and in continuation of these two lines the Pols have been constructed. Thus Tabriz Grand Bazaar became as a whole without division of it to several parts, by construction of these bridges.

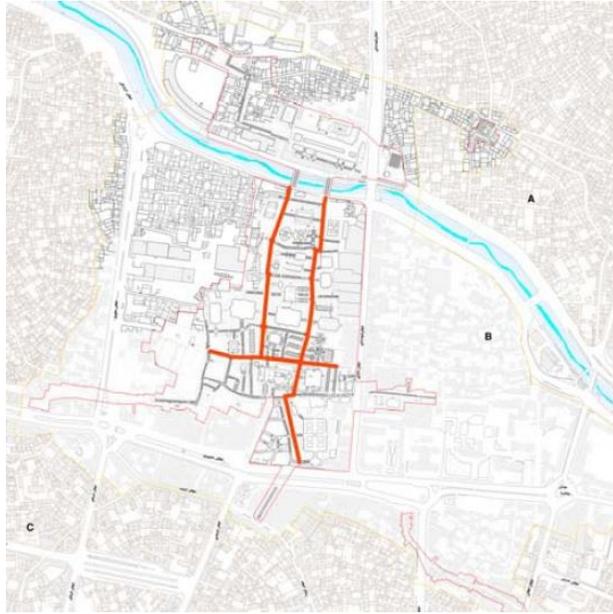


Figure 3.2.5. Today's Tabriz Bazaar two axles (UNESCO)

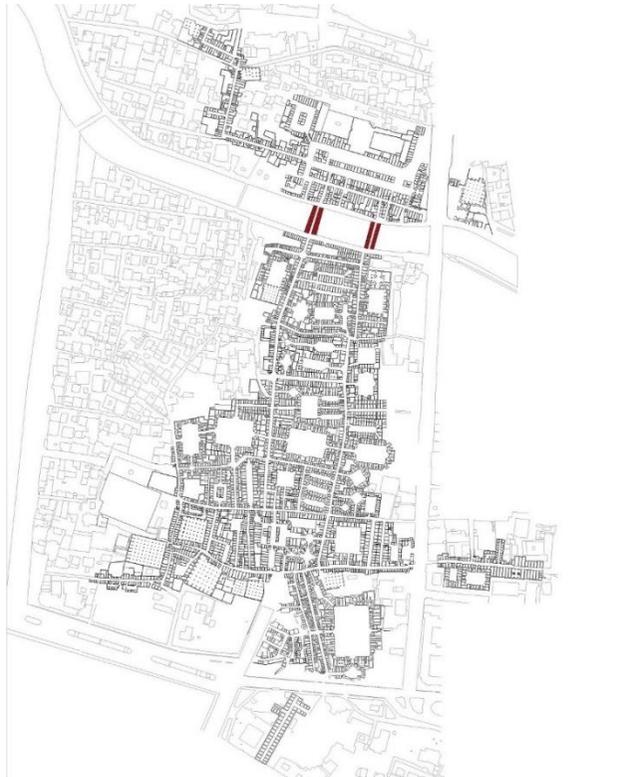


Figure 3.2.6. Today's Grand bazaar and Pol Bazaar situation plan (D. Rostamzade)

Bridges are located in the northern part of Grand bazaar. Two Pol bazaars which still remain from past are Meydan bridge and Sadeghiye bridge. Meydan bridge links Yemen- duzan and Bakırcılar together. Whereas Sadegiye bridge which is located in western part, links Bakırcılar and Sadegiye together.

These bridges which are extending from North to South lines have 43 meters length. In addition have approximately 14 meter width. The height of shops are roughly 2.8 meter and to the summit of dome is almost 4.6 meters. The height of bridge is almost 5 meters (Iranshenasi Grup Research 2013)

Table1.The raw material which are used in construction of these bridges

Element	Floor	Arch, Vault& Dome	Doors	Frames of Windows
Building Material	Brick	Brick	wood	wood

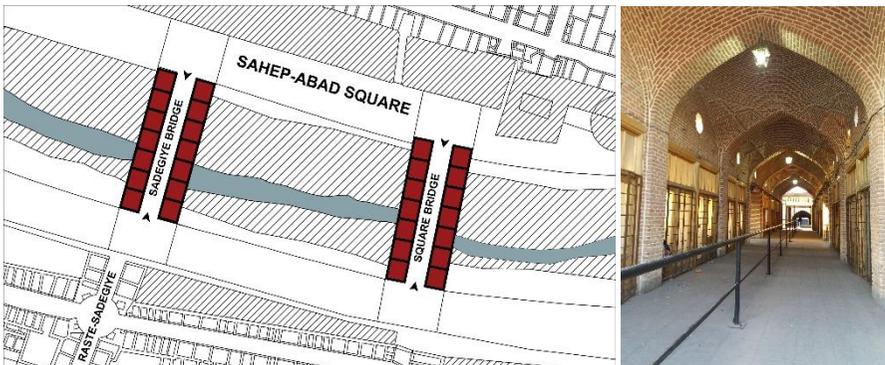


Figure 3.2.7. The ground floor plan of Pol- bazaar and the interior view (D. Rostamzade)

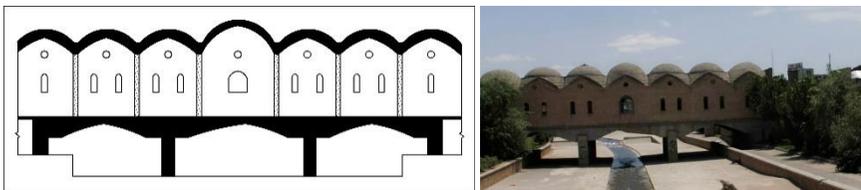


Figure 3.2.8. Section of Square Bridge and the view. (D, Rostamzade)

The corridors between shops in the middle of pol-bazaar are the reminder of general Bazaar parts and the passengers who are walking in these corridors do not feel the existence of river. Their higher altitude compared to Mesgharan, Sadegiye and Yemen-duzan bazaars is the first problem of low trade in these two Pol-Bazaars and one of the factors of economic depression. Their stairways restrict the possibility of goods transportation. Another important reason for these two bazaars depression is their unsuitable structure with other Iranian Bazaars and their unmatched architecture with other parts of Tabriz historical Bazaar.

4. CONCLUSION

Although this is a short study about the Tabriz Pol-Bazar from past up to now, it shows evidence of the idea that the bazaar development and the connection style between two

separate parts of the bazaar by these bridges and the role of these bridges in trade improvement of northern bazaar. In other words, it is not only an ordinary bridge which connects between different parts of the city, but the bridge can be considered as a part of bazaar which comprises the function of trade as well.

The history of the Grand bazaar and bridges of Tabriz is both rich and interesting, and this paper, which deals with only a very small part of that history, is intended as an introduction to that history from the point of view of the interaction and dialogue between the grand bazaar and bridge considerations involved.

When we compare the Tabriz Pol-Bazaar with other similar examples in word, we can say that the main difference between Tabriz Pol Bazaar and the other Pol-Bazaars available on the world the quality of its linkage to the Grand Bazaar. Tabriz Pol Bazaar can be considered as a continuing and also as a component of a whole Bazaar. From structural point of view and the shape it is similar to covered Grand Bazaars. The trade is available on this Pol-Bazaar. In contrast the other similar Pol Bazaars of the world do not have a joint to the Grand bazaar at all. This magnificent feature separates this Pol-Bazaar from others. Another important difference of Tabriz Pol Bazaar is the value of the land, which Pol-Bazaar has been constructed, and the importance of trade in that neighborhood which enhances the trade and causes to construction of the Pol-Bazaar. In other words, the trade booming is one another important reason in construction and development of these Pol Bazaars.

By reviewing Tabriz Grand Bazaar and bridges have had many up and downs over time. Despite all these change the 17th century can be considered as the best economic time of Tabriz bazaar and bridges. Because of economic boom of square in northern part and king palace in that region the trade and consequently economic boom became higher in northern part and increase of trade of shops on bridges.

Currently these shops economic are not good except a few ones, witch sales foodstuffs, crockery, sewing supplies and bike delivery. The reason for this is the lack of economic boom in northern part. The northern part can not attract people for shopping and destruction of the palace is another reason.

Tabriz bazaar has saved its original identity resisting the governmental policies in recent three hundred years. Newly with the registration of Tabriz bazaar in the world heritage list, much attention focused on its revival.

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