The Impact of Religious Tomb Buildings on the Formation of Iran Cities in Islamic period
Case Study: The Role of Ali Al-Saleh in the Formation of Saleh Abad City (Ilam)

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Abstract
During different human periods, many factors have influenced the formation of cities. Sometimes one or more factors constitute city including mountains, rivers, building, roads, religion, and customs. Religion as a cultural element is the source of change and difference in various countries. The orders of Islam religion is such that they can be achieved easily in urban environment. Then Islamic governments were established, and city development was their goal to show their strength and achieve idealistic, social and political purposes. Ideals and duties of Islamic government embody in the city. In Islamic period, the first example of impact of on building as a religious factors in city development can be identified as prophet’s mosque in Madineh city. Religious buildings have a great influence in formation and development of many cities in Iran and in Islamic realm. Considering their abundant historic, artistic, religious and social impacts on architecture, focusing on these buildings can lead to creation or development of cities in this territory to be introduced as a tourist destination and exhibit the architecture of Islamic city. Ilam province, located on common borders of Iran and Iraq on the direction of migration and exile of Alevis, is home to many Imamzadeh and their companions Shrines in its cities and villages due to the impassable mountainous. This study aims to investigate the effect of Ali-alsaleh Shrine (pbuh) as a cultural and religious element in the formation of Saleh Abad city located in Ilam province. According to library and field studies and based on history of the shrine existence in Hegdandasht region and the prepared development map of city, it can be conclude that this shrine as a religious tomb building in Islamic period is the only factor of city formation and growth in a hot and arid climate. Noted city has taken its name from this shrine, and has been known as Saleh Abad.

Keywords
**Introduction**

Shrines, after mosque, are the most common public-religious buildings in Islamic architecture. Shrines have pierced in the origins of Iranian cultures and there is almost no city unrewarded of this (Kiani (A), 2007:58). These buildings are factors for the settlement of population, urbanization expansion and prosperity at each location (Hillenbrand, 2010:272). The current geography of Ilam province embraces many holy shrines. Most villages and districts that somehow provided accommodation have had holy shrines. Geographical situation which is more impermeable than the central regions of Iran, and the first bio-region known as Jebal (the Mountains), is the direction for migration of the leaders and political figures such as Alevi and their children due to pressures of Bani Ummayah and Bani Abbas caliphate. Shiite morale of residents with the religious sentiments of the people in this part of the country is the reason for the presence and settlements of Imamzadehs in the province (Khaital, 2011:267). Having introduced the background, many Imamzadehs including Salah-aldin Mohammad, Ali Alsaleh are buried and commended by the people of this region. Naming the villages and towns after Imamzadehs that are affiliated to Shiites indicates the depth of the attachment to these people. Imamzadehs can characterize a village or be the name of a city or village. The holy city of Mashhad, Mazar-i-Sharif, Astaneh-ye-Ashrafiyeh and Imamzadeh Hashem are among the examples (Ghoravi, 1997:10). The emergence of city and settlements of Ilam, besides bio-climatic aspects, is dependent on the presence of the holy shrines.

Saleh Abad is one of subordinates of Mehran County in Ilam province. One of the most significant features of it is the role of Ali- Saleh shrine in the emergence and growth of city. This city is located in the direction of Holy Shrines. Reopening of Iran and Iraq’s boundary in Mehran County and the presence of martyrs tomb and cemetery are effective factors that influence population growth and physical development of this city from religious aspect. This paper tries to discuss the formation of the city based on the relationship between the city and the Imamzadeh.

**Research Questions**

1. How religious factors can be effective in emergence of urban culture?
2. How the shrine of Ali- Alsaleh is effective in the arrangement and structure of Saleh Abad city?

**Research Hypothesis**

1. Religious factor as the cause for strengthening the sense of place can be considered as a reason of settlement and growth of urban culture.
2. Creating a pilgrimage and accommodations enclosure, can be considered as the most important factor influencing the organization of Saleh Abad city.

**Research Methodology**

The current study investigates the role and impact of shrines and religious tombs on formation and development of Iran cities in Islamic era using library studies and documentations. In the next stage and by utilizing library research methodology, field studies and the history of urban development in Saleh Abad is discussed and the historical layers of the city and the shrine in this formation and development is identified. Due to lack of valid documents in historic development of Saleh Abad, the authors have shown the city developments through maps.

**Research Background**

With the increase of Islam impact in Iranian territory, shrines and holy tombs have become buildings that influenced Islamic architecture in various historic, artistic, religious and social aspects (Khalaj, 2003:5). Both large and small tombs were known by different names based on their shape and function to honor the memory of the deceased (Nazari Arshad, 2005: 324). With the spread of Shiism in the early centuries of Islam, towns and villages have become centers for the life of Imamzadehs where they became a place for pilgrimage after their demise (Hosseini & Zeraat Pisheh, 2011: 2). In the first two centuries of Islam, the burial place of the Prophet’s companions or his holy family were marked protected from wind and rain. Hence, it is not unlikely that the first tombs were built by Shiites and followers of the Prophet and his family to preserve the memories of the past, especially of Imams and Imamzadehs for honoring them (Momeni Dehghani, 2012:4). From the first century to the third century AD, there is no Shiite tomb in Iran, which could be attributed to a certain date. After the martyrdom of Imam Reza (pbuh), he was buried in Mashhad. Therefore, the largest and most important Shiite religious shrines was formed in Iran. The emergence and spread of shrines started from the fourth century AD that can be attributed to migration of Imamzadehs and Sadat to Iran and their martyrdom or demise in the territory or the formation of governments and local states. Shiite dynasties
The significance of Islam is not limited to the interests of the city, having a city is considered an imperative. In the city, responsibilities and ideals of Islamic state are embodied and the implementation of the provisions and regulations issued by the Islamic State requires a specific authority. At all times of Islamic state-regardless of place or time-arranging the city, its organizing or founding one was a prevailing concern that showed ideals and powers of the Islamic state for the next eras. (Habibi, 2008: 50). Governing the city is rooted in the Islamic thinking to the city and other Islamic social and political conditions. The factors forming city features include natural and man-made and human factors which have their own attributes and variables (Table 1). Man-made factors such as buildings and monuments, combined with human components such as religion and located in good position to natural factors can be effective in strengthening the urban character. In addition, texture and spatial structure of the city is one of the most important aspects of the urban identity; because the formation of the city physical fabric is the reflection of beliefs, and cultural experiences that can be received in the form of human components. Hence knowledge of this part of the city can lead to learning more about social, economic and cultural factors. In fact, the physical urban fabric provides a possible visual identity of the city and it is more accentuated (Neufel, et al, 2009: 59); (Table 1). The most important aspects considered in the physical identity can be briefly stated in the following table (Ibid: 60); (Table 2).

According to the table, cities having religious background including Mashhad and Qom carry the largest share in physical identity which enriches the settlements in the city.

Different views exist about the development of urban elements according researchers. William Marche believes that Islam is distinctly urban and urban life is compulsory for Muslims according to religious and Islamic law. George Marche, as an intellectual in the field of Islamic cities such believes that since Islam is a city religion, the mosque are located in the center of the city as an Islamic religious-political center (Falahat, 2011: 37); (Table 3).

Having compared research findings of the above intellectuals, it could be concluded that most of researchers emphasize that the religious factors have been effective in the development internal organization of Islamic cities. For instance, the tomb of Imam or religious and pilgrimage factors have been able to explain the city’s future development of
Variables
Factors
natural
Mountains, rivers, hills, plains

built
buildings, roads, neighborhoods, squares, urban block

human
Culture, language, religion, customs, literacy

Table 1. constituent components of a city personality. Source: Noufel, et al, 2009: 59.

Table 2. constituent elements of city physical identity. Source: Noufel et al, 2009: 60.

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Masbzan and Mehrjanqazaq cities enjoyed prosperity and development until the third and fourth century (Yaghoubi, 1977:43,44). From this time on, for various reasons, including earthquake (Izadpanah, 1984: 472), the conflict between Iran central governments with the Abbasid Caliphate and local governments like Atabakan Lorestan and Lorestan governor and the Mongol invasion that devastated many cities, the area lost its past prosperity and development. From this time onwards people chose the nomadic life over urban life to avoid the war and paying taxes (Moradi, 2010: 107, 108). The foundations of Ali Al-Saleh dates back to Mongols (Derakhshandeh, 2011: 179), to the seventh century and the governing of the nomads in land of Ilam, that can be the main cause for not having a city due to the shrine untill the forced resettlement of nomads.

Saleh Abad is located about 40 kilometers southwest of Ilam city in Ilam province. It had 758 inhabitants in the 50s and became a part of the district and capital of Mehran County in 1964 (Comprehensive plan of Saleh Abad, 2006:48). The old name of the city was changed from Hegdandasht to Saleh Abad due to the shrine (Fig. 1).
Table 3. Islamic city related-theories and the impact of religious component on the growth of Islamic cities. Source: authors.

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<td>On construction of the Islamic city</td>
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**Formation Process of Saleh Abad Urban Structure**

Islamic city can be divided to physical components including the city structure and spatial components comprising space and city spirit (Cultural studies of Saleh Abad Research, 2011:61). Saleh Abad lacks an Islamic urban physic while benefiting from an Islamic space and atmosphere due to the existence of Ali Al-Saleh shrine. The significance of the city according to the contemporary construction of the city, can be identified as the continued functioning of the shrine and its spiritual role in the formation of new cities. In other words, even today religious element

![Fig. 1. The situation of Ali- Alsaleh shrine in Saleh abad city. Source: Google earth- 2014/2/20.](image-url)
are capable of shaping and strengthen elements and processes associated urban development. Saleh Abad benefits from religious potentials for its being located near a holy shrine. In other words, the shrine is the strongest potential of the town (Saleh Abad conducting plan, 1385: 48). In the following t he architectural history of the shrine is introduced and its urban elements are expressed.

Imamzadeh Ali Al-Saleh is located on the southwest side of Saleh Abad city (The conducting plan of Saleh Abad, 2006:49). The stone inscriptions of the old building dates back the building to 1265 AD during the reign of Naser Aldin Shah, the Qajar king, with an area of 240 square meters, two minarets and a dome (Moradi, 2011:318, 319); (Fig. 2).

The stone inscriptions show that the shrine building started in Safavid era and has been rebuilt in the Qajar era. The current shrine building was expanded to one thousand square in 1362 AD. Shrine building has 9 naves, a dome and two minarets. The materials used in the façade include brick, moqarnas and tile decoration (Derakhshandeh, 2011:179);(Fig. 3).

There only existed the shrine for a long period of time and this place was deserted and only the nomads would settle there in winter (No. 1).

Thereafter, the area behind the shrine (No. 2) was formed as a graveyard. In the next stage the courtyard (No. 3) was added and a part of it was made into a cemetery, where burial is now no longer the case. Later, a garden known as the “Shrine Garden” (No. 4) was shaped; containing surrounding fence used privately. This sets a bond between the garden and the tomb shrine, as a garden-shrine area. In the years after, a brick building of police station (No. 5) has been constructed that can be considered as the second largest building after the shrine in Saleh Abad city. In another period, the county’s adobe building was built and a number of tribes were forced to be settled around. This can be stated as the starting stages of building formation and construction and emergence of Saleh Abad city (No. 6).

A few years after the initial formation of residential area, a number of tribes were settled in the 7th area again. Currently this area is used as a park of the Shrine which is purchased by the Imamzadeh’s Endowment organization income.

The communication road from Mehran city (in the East) and Ilam city (in the north) crosses through Saleh Abad which is considered as Saleh Abad’s main road. This road was asphalted in 1974 and 1975 (No. 8). After the mentioned items, district 9 was allocated to construction of residential houses and an elementary school was built there.

District 10 was completed after the residential district 9 and middle and high schools in this area have been constructed.

Due to increasing population and especially the people’s belief to be buried by the Imamzadeh, people began to pre-purchase the grave places and this territory belonged to the city’s first inhabitants. Therefore, district was allocated to cemetery which is divided into two parts; martyrs burial and the burial places for public (District 12). Due to increasing population of the city after the war and the city’s renewal in Ilam province, adding a cultural venue in the city was essential which led to the construction of a library and green space around the shrine in 1993 (District 13).

Hence, structural development of Saleh Abad
indicates a religious discipline based on topographic and economic patterns. The below figure shown the city growth briefly. According to the figure, the city nucleus is the shrine building and all axes, constructions and urban zones were shaped surrounding the nucleus (Fig. 4).


Conclusion
Reviewing the evolution of Saleh Abad city and the history of Ali Al-Saleh shrine presence in the region shows that the formation of the city is influenced by the shrine according to two aspects; firstly the presence and settlement of the people in this area due to religious beliefs, and secondly due to governmental investment in creating a city since it is located on the borders and considered a strength both from political and security aspects (Diagram 1).

The presence of shrine is vivid in the urban geography. The first designers have paid attention to elements location and urban services and placed the shrine at the center of development growth despite its being out of center. Therefore, the shrine is placed on a higher level from the whole city topographically and outbursts as an urban element. The inter-urban and suburban connection network are figured based on appropriate access to the shrine and the open public space is determined around the shrine and this place is highly populated during religious rituals. Saleh Abad benefits from a religious spirit due to the presence of shrine, however, it does not have the physical aspects of an Islamic city due to separation of spatial factors from physical ones. Table 4. Briefly explains the religious factors in formation of physical identity of Saleh Abad city.

![Diagram 1. Formation trend of Saleh abad city. Source: authors.](image-url)
Table 4. Detection of religious instrumental elements in physical identity of Saleh Abad city. Source: authors.

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