Musallā Siyahoo City and the Spatial Principles and Religious Laws Governing at its Designing

1Hamid Reza Ameri Siahouyi, 2Maral Aeineh Beigi

1PhD in Urbanism and Architecture, Assistant Professor, Payam-e Noor University
2MA student, Payam-e Noor University of Bandar Abbas

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 15 April 2014
Received in revised form 22 May 2014
Accepted 25 May 2014
Available online 15 June 2014

Key words:

ABSTRACT

Background: Musallā. Objective: Musallā and the Spatial Principles and Religious Laws Governing Its Designing. Results: The whole world is a temple for worshiping the God. Conclusion: Generally we can conclude that the following principles have to be considered in building Musallās: Islamic ideology, Originality, Competence, Simplicity, Beauty and charm, Popularity.

INTRODUCTION

One of the necessary conditions for the places such as mosques and Musallās is that they have to be completely clean. Every Muslim who wants to do his/her prayer has to be clean of any mental or physical uncleanness. In other words, not only the mind and heart of the prayer has to be clean but his clothes and the place of his/her praying has to be necessarily clean as well; otherwise, his/her pray is not accepted by God.

The mosque and Musallā is the court of the god who is absolutely clean. No un-clean person deserves to be his audience. Thus the mosque and Musallā and their physical spaces has to be free of any uncleanness. In relation to the physical space of the mosque and Musallā, the Muslims not only have to avoid any unclean spaces and activities, but they have to avoid doubtful jobs. This is why in the Islamic traditional architecture, the mosques are built in a way that their physical space is surrounded and separated from the outside spaces that are probably unclean. Unfortunately, this pattern is not respected in today’s Iranian Islamic architecture. Nowadays, we repeatedly see that the mosques and Musallās are closed to their surrounding and adjacent buildings, and even within the Musallās some unclean places (such as WCs) are very close to the praying area vertically or horizontally. This closeness is religiously and psychologically obscene and disagreeable. This is while in the traditional architecture, WCs had no physical contact with the inner praying area but they were completely outside the mosque and Musallā [2]. The main principles to be considered in designing Musallā are as follow:

- Cleanliness
- Grandeur and glory of the entrance of the mosque and Musallā
- Privacy area (allowing entry, waiting area)
- Divine intention (change direction)
- Closeness of the mosque and Musallā to public bathrooms
- Shabestan (nave) entrance
- Protecting the mosque and Musallā from the unclean land uses
- Decoration of the mosque and Musallā
- Qibla specifications
- Lack of difference in the spatial and physical qualities of the different parts of shabestan (nave)
- The importance of the Muslims’ pathway and its effect on the architecture of the mosque and Musallā
- Considering the pathways within the mosque and Musallā in their planning
- Shabestan (nave) specifications
- Spatial dimensions, sizes and forms
- The wall toward Qibla has to be the longest wall

Corresponding Author: Maral Aeineh Beigi, MA student, Payam-e Noor University of Bandar Abbas, Iran
• Avoiding the activities that are obscene and disagreeable in the mosque and Musallā
• Shabestan (nave) of the mosque and Musallā has not to be used as the pathway
• Ban of carrying weapons in the mosque and Musallā
• Suitable distribution of the mosques in the city [2].

2. Samples of the historical Musallā:
2.1. Masla Mosque (Qamamah Mosque):
Masla Mosque is the first mosque in built in western Medina and it is the closest mosque to Al-Masjid Al-Nabawi. To clarify the position of the mosques, it is to be mentioned that there are three types of mosques in any city: the first one is the mosque of the neighborhood; the second one is the Jama mosque (grand mosque); and the third one is Musallā. Musallā is built outside the city and it usually includes a wide yard surrounded by the walls without any roof.

The original building of the Masla mosque has 26 m length, approximately 13 m width, with a total area of 338. This mosque is now extended and reconstructed in a new style. In this region, three other newer mosques (Mosque of Ali Bin Abu-Talib, Amr Bin Al-Khatab mosque, and Abu Bakr Mosque) are active now. There is yet newer mosque in the region (Mosque of Uthman Ibn Affan) that has been built between the three mentioned mosques and the Mosque of Bilal Ibn Rabah [9].

Fig. 1: Reconstructed Musallā of Masla Mosque (source: Howzah Library, 2010).

2.2. Musallā Complex, Heart:
Unfortunately only a few part of the complex has remained undestroyed. The building was destroyed by Abd Al-Rahman Khan by the insistence of the British commanders in 1885. Currently, the Musallā Complex of Herat has only a grand mosque, Goharshad Religious School, and two minarets. In this regard, Bartold writes that the Herat Musallā was located in the northwest part of Herat. Generally speaking, Muslims use Musallā as a place for gathering in two occasions: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha [9].

2.3. Musallā of Yazd:
The current Musallā of Yazd is known as the Musallā School. This school is located in the new Musallā space (Near Amir Chakhmaq Square in Yazd). The original Musallā was a wide trapezoid-form area (75*70m). According to a map provided by Abd Al-Qafur Taheri in Tazkera Jalai, the original Musallā of Yazd had a mosque and a school in two floors. The classrooms were located in both floors. Since the land of the floor of the school was used as a water well, the lower floor was relatively deep and some gardens were built around the yard.

2.4. Musallā of Mashhad:
This Musallā is located in Mashhad, 1 km away from the east of Panj-Rah Street. The Musallā includes a long veranda and two porches at the sides. This monument was used in special ceremonies such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, collective praying, etc. there are two inscription strips round the buildings in form of the tiles dating back to 1676.

The monument is decorated by the tiles in the facade and by stucco and Muqarnas in the internal body of the veranda. Moreover, an inscription is seen within the Mihrab (dating back to 1657) designed by Haji Shojah Isfahani. This building is currently used as tile workshop [5, 9].

2.5. Musallā of Naein:
Naein is an Iranian city in Isfahan province located in the west of Isfahān. There are two Musallās in this historical city. The older one is Atiq Musallā and the other one is called New Musallā. These two Musallās are near to each other, both at southwest of Naein. Atiq Musallā has destroyed during the history and currently it is ruined with a platform and a brick dome.
2.6. Musallā of Tehran:

This Musallā is a place for political and religious Friday Prayers and other special ceremonies. This Musallā is indeed a large complex containing spaces and buildings that not only have the capacity for millions of prayers, but it is a cultural center for promoting and training religious and cultural issues. The most important buildings and spaces of the Musallā of Tehran are as follow:

a. Main building of the Grand Mosque, including an open space and variable roofs (in accordance with the season), roofed flexible porches with suitable lighting, sound, and cooling and heating installations for mass easy gatherings.

b. Service facilities and installations, including spaces and buildings for parking lots, but terminals, bazar, bathrooms, security offices, etc.

c. Cultural buildings, including seminar halls, library, exhibitions, religious school, cafeteria, etc.

d. Administrative facilities, including the office for conducting the prayers, accommodation for the national and international guests, bank, post office, telephone center, etc.

e. Green and open (recreational) spaces, including the green spaces, gardens, temporary resorts for families, playgrounds for kids, etc.

f. Spaces for future developments

Fig. 2: Plan and northern façade of the Musallā of Mashhad.

Fig. 3: Three dimensions of the 8-fold Musallā of Naein (source: Iranian Cultural Heritage website).
Fig. 4: The replica of the Musallā of Tehran (source: Musallā of Tehran website).

3. Spatial elements in designing the Musallā:

3.1. Minaret:
Lexically speaking, minaret means the place of light. Another name of the minaret is Ma’zanah meaning the place of Adhan (call for praying). In Islamic narration we can find out that the mosques had no minaret at the times of Prophet Muhammad. Ali bin Jafar says I asked Imam Kazem “is the call for praying in minaret is a tradition of Islam?” and he replied “every on earth can be the place of call for praying. At the times of Prophet Muhammad there was no minaret in the mosques”.

3.2. Dome:
There is no evidence of any recommendation for building the dome for mosques and Musallās in the words of the religious leaders and Imams. Apparently, the building of the dome has not been a current tradition at the time of the prophet and Imams. We don’t know what they would react if they see the domes of the mosques if they see such a space on the praying places. They would call it as an undesirable novelty, or they would confirm it as a suitable innovation. Anyway, we know that in Islam, the Muslims can do everything permissibly unless they are forbidden to do it. Since there is no evidence that emphasize on the prohibition of building the dome on the mosques and Musallās, thus we assume it as a permissible space. Such a construct can be regarded as impermissible if its building doesn’t lead to profusion and squander [4].

3.2. Mihrab:
Mihrab is a semicircular niche in the wall of a mosque that indicates the Qibla; that is, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca and hence the direction that Muslims should face when praying. Its building is permissible according to the Islamic Fiqh although the permissibility of the “inner Mihrab” is doubtful.

3.3. Yard:
The Dome of the Rock (Qubbat As-Sakhrah) is the oldest available Islamic building located on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem rom which Prophet Muhammad ascended to Heaven. It was initially completed in 691 CE at the order of Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik. The 8-fold foundation of the mosque includes a central space with a dome on it. The outer wall of the mosque is covered by rich mosaic decorations.

3.4. Minbar:
Minbar or pulpit of the mosque and Musallā is mainly an external component because it is usually constructed as a component independent of the mosque or Musallā. It is usually made of wood, metal or stone. Sometimes the Minbar is made as a dents part of the wall of mosque and Musallā. In Islam, the first Minbar (pulpit) was constructed for the Prophet Muhammad.

3.5. Shabestan:
In Islam it is not permissible to pray in front of the open doors because the open door is the place of movement of people and this movement makes the mind of the prayer disturbed. Thus it is better to build he door of Shabestan and praying places opposite to Qibla direction to avoid any mental disruption for the prayers at the time of praying [4].
3.6. Ladies entrance:
We couldn’t find any recommendation by the religious leaders about the assignment of an exclusive and separate entrance for ladies. Although the mosque of the prophet has a door named “ladies entrance” but its history is not clear. In Islamic historical text, the assignment of such an entrance dates back to the Caliph II; although Ummar has quoted a sentence from the Prophet at the time of constructing his building that had said “I wish to assign a separate door for ladies”.

3.7. WC and ablution place:
According to Islamic traditions, it is better to build the WC and ablution place outside the mosque and Musallā. There is a Hadith by the Prophet Muhammad who has said “don’t build the WC near the mosque and Musallā.

4. Architecture of the mosque and Musallā in Islamic texts:
Any responsible and committed designer has to consider the following three pillars in designing and building the mosque and Musallā:

a. The designers have to know the missions of the mosque and Musallā and the role of these sacred places in different areas so that they manage to build the mosque and Musallā in accordance with those missions and roles.
b. The designers have to know the laws and customs of the mosque and Musallā because such knowledge help them design the mosque and Musallā in a way that the practice of religious orders in the mosque and Musallā is possible at best.
c. The designers have to be familiar with the religious recommendations about how to build the mosque and Musallā. Principally, although the normal and accepted architectural rules are considered in constructing any building, these rules for the construction of mosque and Musallā follow the recommendation of the religious leaders.

Obviously, some recommendations are common and knowing them doesn’t require referring to the religious texts. Indeed some religious recommendations are to emphasize the issues that the human himself can understand it alone [10]. Undoubtedly, like any other buildings and construction, Islam believes that the construction of mosque and Musallā is a matter of time, place and taste of the designers. Basically, it is not possible to construct all buildings in all times and places with a single pattern, and every building follows its own principles and patterns. This is true for the construction of mosque and Musallā. The important point in building the mosque and Musallā is that they can meet the needs of the prayers and enable the mosque and Musallā to do their important missions. However, Islam has some general advices for the way of designing and constructing the mosque and Musallā. Naturally, the mentioned advices are directed toward fulfilling those missions and goals. Some Islamic advices for building the mosque and Musallā are as follow [12]:

- Simplicity of the building
- Originality of the building of mosque and Musallā
- Inscribing Quran’s verses on the walls of the mosque and Musallā
- Heightening the building of the mosque and Musallā
- Ease of cleaning of the mosque and Musallā
- Compatibility between the area of the mosque and Musallā with the population of the region
- Creating the library and cultural centers beside the mosque and Musallā
- Constructing the parking lots for the mosque and Musallā
- Colors in the mosque and Musallā

Some of the Fiqh principles for the designing of the Musallā are as follow:
1. The design and construction of the mosque and Musallā and their decorations mustn’t be in a western style reminding unreligious or antireligious architecture. If such architecture promotes the foreign un-Islamic cultures it is illegal.

2. The plan of the mosque and Musallā has to be simple

3. If the yard of the mosque and Musallā is waqf (appropriative and devoted) it is not permissible to make a garden or planting trees, etc. in the yard of the mosque and Musallā.

4. Constructing high minaret and wall for the mosque and Musallā is permissible, but the people have to consider the Islamic limits.

5. It is not permissible to build battlement and balcony for the wall of the mosque and Musallā.

6. It is permissible to roof the open yard of the mosque and Musallā for praying in winters and summers.

7. It is permissible to cook or wash the dishes or clothes in the yard of the mosque and Musallā because the yard is not considered as the integral component of the mosque and Musallā.

8. If the people want to make rowzah (Soaz) in the mosque and Musallā and so they put black covers on the walls of the mosque and Musallā or they bring catering facilities in the mosque for the same reason, such activities are permissible if and only if they don’t disturb praying and hurt the mosque.

9. I’tikaf has to be practiced in Grand Mosques where different classes of people can attend, not in the local neighborhood mosques where a specific group of people can take part.

10. The requital and reward of praying is equal in all parts of the mosque and Musallā’ but praying in places that are not parts of the mosque and Musallā has not a reward equal to praying in the mosque and Musallā.

11. Mosque and Musallā has a religious limit. It is not legal to broadcast the music in the mosque and Musallā if the music doesn’t accord with the religious limit of the mosque.

12. The yard of the mosque can be used for religious, cultural and intellectual and military trainings, but the administrators have to consider the waqf rules of the mosque and Musallā.

13. If the Imam stands in the Mihrab followed by the prayers, the praying of those prayers who have stood in the first queue of the praying is correct if they can see the Imam. The praying of those who stand in the first queue but fail to see the Imam is not correct.

14. If a column stands between the two prayer and inhibit their view, it disturbs the connectivity of the prayers’ queue, but if the columns stands in the left or right side of the prayers it cause no problem because it doesn’t disturb the view of the prayers.

15. The connectivity of the prayers’ queues has not to be disrupted in all modes of the praying. If the obstacle is a network and the holes of the network is big enough to see the forward prayers it is permissible.

16. It is permissible to install a buffer (e.g. a curtain) between the queues of men and women.

17. The floors of the prayers have not to be different, but it is permissible for Imam to stand on a higher place.

18. The praying of a prayer who stands behind the column is correct if he/she can see at least a part of the front prayers’ queue.

19. If in praying, the distance between the prayer and Imam, or between the prayer and his/her front prayer is more than a big step, the praying of that prayer is correct but it has not as the praying of other prayers [4].

20. The height of the Imam’s standing place has not to be more than a man’s span. But if the height difference between Imam and the prayers is more than a span, the praying is correct. Moreover, if the land is downhill and Imam stands in the higher point of the land, the praying will be correct if the slope of the land is not too much to call the land as a flat land.

21. The slope of the mosque floor has to be designed and built in a way that the difference between the height of the prayers’ forehead and knees at the time of prostration is not more than four fingers.

5. **Quantitative characteristics of the spaces (per capita):**

   Different standards can be proposed for the primary and secondary per capita spaces. But since the secondary per capita spaces would be variable depending on the special needs and conditions, thus their per capita has to be obtained case by case. Moreover, the needs of the contractor are important and effective on determining the dimensions of the secondary spaces. Since the main and most primary components of the mosques and Musallās are their Shabestan and ablution room, we will focus on these two components of the mosques and Musallās in following paragraphs.

   Shabestan is a big and wide hall for congregational prayer, though it is used for individual praying as well. However we have to notice that the Shabestan has other functions besides the praying including the obits, Quran trainings, etc. Thus in order to determine the per capita spaces of Shabestan, we have to be flexible enough to consider its secondary functions as well.

   The Shabestan floor is divided into following spaces:
   - Space occupied by the prayer
   - Space occupied by the utensils
   - Space occupied for utilizing the utensils
   - Space occupied for the prayers’ movements
On the space occupied by the prayer we have to consider that it is not possible to calculate the percent of the male and female prayers precisely. Such a calculation will inevitable ignore some conditions because the ration of male prayers to female ones is very variable and consequently unpredictable. So any decision on the limits of the areas is relative and dependent on different factors. However, in order to determine the width and length of the space occupied by the prayer, since there is no statistic available about the average stature of the Iranian men and women, one can come to some conclusions after conducting some field studies [15].

Table 1: Needed space for the congregational praying [15].

| Equation for obtaining the needed space for the congregational praying per the queues and number of the prayers regardless of the Imam |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| \((ny) \times (mx) = S\) | \(N \times (xy) = S\) |
| \(n= number \ of \ the \ praying \ queues\) | \(x= width \ of \ the \ occupied \ space \ by \ each \ prayer\) |
| \(x= mean \ of \ the \ prayers \ in \ each \ queue\) | \(y= length \ of \ the \ occupied \ space \ by \ each \ prayer\) |
| \(S= space \ occupied \ by \ the \ congregational \ praying\) | \(N= total \ number \ of \ the \ prayers\) |

The area needed by each prayer for doing his/her pray is a rectangular with area of \(70 \times 130 \text{ cm} \ (0.91 \text{ m}^2)\). This value is the base for calculating the desirable needed space for praying to the number of the prayers. Of course for determining the space area of the Shабестan, the mentioned value has to be obtained based on the mean of total number of prayers during the year not the maximum number of the prayers in special occasions. The above per capita space is surveyed in normal conditions when the prayers’ queues are not intensive. When the prayers’ density is high, the mentioned per capita space is reducible to at least \(0.55 \text{ m}^2\). Indeed if we divide the floor of the Shабестan to \(0.91\), then we can obtain the number of the prayers in normal conditions and if we divide it to \(0.55\), then the number of the prayers is obtained in high-density conditions [4].

On the other hand, for calculating the per capita space of the ablution of the mosque, first of all we must determine the needed taps for a specific number of prayers. Then we can calculate the needed space for ablution in front of each tap. Then, predicting the needed area for the waiting space, movement of the prayers and other subsidiary needed spaces of the ablution room we can obtain the total area of the ablution rooms for the mosques and Musallās. To determine the number of the needed taps, the following 6 items have to be considered:

- Total number of the prayers in Shабестan
- Number and percent of the prayers who do ablution to the total number of the prayers
- Number of the prayers who do ablution in peak time
- Peak time of the ablution room
- Mean time of ablution in front of each tap
- Mean time of all practices being done in the ablution room by each prayer.

**Number of taps in the ablution room** = \(\frac{\text{mean of the ablution time} \times \text{number of prayers in peak time}}{\text{Peak time of the ablution room}}\)

We have to note that the abovementioned equation is suitable for obtaining the number of the taps of the ablution room for predicted conditions when all prayers are going to do ablution at the peak time. Needless to say, the prayers come to the mosque for doing their ablution and praying gradually and not all in sudden. In the above equation, the increase of the peak time will lead to the reduction of the needed taps. For example, if the peak time is increased twice, then the needed taps will be half for the prayers. Here we can obtain the needed number of the taps by assuming the number of prayers who do their ablution at the peak time and by determining a rational duration for the peak time of the ablution room. The total number of the prayers at the peak time can be obtained by considering a ratio of the prayers who do ablution to the total number of the prayers.

The determinant factors in calculating the number of users of ablution room and WCs of the mosque can be summarized as follow:

- Quality of the place of the mosque and Musallā.
- Other land uses around the mosque and Musallā.
- The way of connection between the mosque and Musallā to the main street.
- Quality of the ablution room.
- The distance between public urban WCs to the mosque and Musallā [4].

Now, having the mean of the prayers who use the ablution room and the ratio of the peak time to the number of users, we can determine the needed taps for the ablution room of the mosque and Musallā. Moreover, having the needed per capita space for the ablution and the per capita space for WCs, we can determine the needed total area of the ablution room and WCs to the total area of the men and women Shабестans. The area of the women’s shabestan is usually one-third of the whole area of the shabestan and two-third of the men’s shabestan area [4].
Conclusion:

The whole world is a temple for worshiping the God. Everywhere we can pray the almighty, knee for in front of his court and call his name. The Muslim architect is connected to the world through his heart and soul; and follows the plan of the god’s world to create a smaller world. Indeed Musallā is such a smaller world being created by the Muslim architect. Musallā is the best place for Muslims’ praying. On the relation between the Muslim and Musallā, Islamic narrations resemble them to the fish and water. Since the final home of the Muslim is the heaven, thus Musallā is the entrance of the heaven and it is one garden of the heaven’s gardens. Using brevity and analogies, the Muslim architects apply the most meaningful shapes and forms in the buildings and their decorations. They make their work more valuable by using the inscriptions of the Quran verses and Imam’s words and make the Musallā as the manifestation of the God’s beauty [2]. As a place for prostration and humility and linking with the almighty, mosques and Musallās are very sacred in the Islamic culture which makes the Muslims away from the mundane temporal passions and desires.

Another objective of the sacred architecture is to remind a single religion and to facilitate the collective worship. Since different religions have different sacred rituals, sacred architecture acts as an expressive and functional form of those sacred rituals. Islam is social in full. The last verse of Al Imran Chapter of Quran says “O ye who believe! Endure, outdo all others in endurance, be ready, and observe your duty to Allah, in order that ye may succeed.” The most basic commands of Islam (including Haj, Salat or praying, Jihad, Infaq, etc.) are all collective practices. Thus the mosques and Musallās are the center for the unification and solidarity of the Muslims [2]. Generally we can conclude that the following principles have to be considered in building Musallās:

- Islamic ideology
- Originality
- Competence
- Simplicity
- Beauty and charm
- Popularity

REFERENCES