



## Reflection of Principles of Iranian Vernacular Music and Ritual Ceremonies in Designing Urban Spaces

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**ABSTRACT:** Urban design is a multidisciplinary field, consisting of both science and art. The physical aspect together with the non-physical aspects related to human – like meaning and function – along with the presence of human beings, make a successful and dynamic place to be used by people in a good way. Undoubtedly, culture as a response of a society to its requirements and a means to ensure the quality of life, is one of the most important factors that can help designers in creating an appropriate plan. Every ethnic group use specified rhythms, proportions and scale in its cultural products. As every ethnic group is accustomed to a specific kind of music, in terms of psychological aspects, it will make a more comfortable relationship with the rhythms in its own music style. If an urban designer extracts urban design principles out of the rhythm in the music and ritual rhythmic frolic of a specified ethnic group, he or she could apply them in the design process of urban spaces to create much more beloved spaces for the related ethnic group. This article first studies Iranian ethnic groups (Kurds, Lures (Bakhtiaries), and Turks are three selected ethnic groups discussed in this article)<sup>1</sup> music and traditional frolic via collecting data both with observation and descriptive methods, extracts the hidden regularizing principles. Then analyze the regularizing principles. After that, through an in-depth interview of the target groups, elaborates these principles and finally proposes an innovative framework for designing urban spaces of these mentioned Iranian ethnic groups. Finally it is concluded that the potential of artistic indigenous values such as folk music and ritual rhythmic frolic would increase the quality of their urban design.

**Keywords:** Music, Ritual Frolic, Iranian Ethnics, Urban Design, Urban Space.

### INTRODUCTION

Iranian culture with its bright background has been rewritten by foreign cultures and unfortunately nowadays just few representations of the Iranian rich culture can be seen in different fields of art. In the past centuries, despite political and governmental changes, Iranian culture not only has not been destroyed but also it has been enriched remarkably. Astonishing examples of traditional architecture, urban planning and urban design stands for the influences of the Iranian culture in their designs. Today lack of attention to culture in design is easily visible in all urban built form of Iranian cities; buildings and

urban spaces are designed with non-Iranian features and methods, so that they are not acceptable for the people. With regard to culture that reflects the identity of the country and the roots it has in the ethnic groups, cultural considerations can help designers to present creative, reasonable and successful plans. This article attempts to upgrade reach urban design principles for creating better urban spaces for different ethnic groups based on keeping alive the Iranian culture (Arbabzadegan, 2011).



## METHODOLOGY

In general, the methodology of this research is analytical. In this way we have tried to identify the primary issues which are essential for generalizing the extracted regularizing principles. These principles are basically concerned with two important aspect of the culture, i.e. traditional local music and ritual ceremonies. This is for the purpose of design of local urban spaces with sense of belonging and identity. So, at the beginning of this article we try to identify the music and traditional ceremony of the Iranian ethnic groups by descriptive method and extract their hidden regularizing principles. Afterwards we make our best to analyze these principles and finally apply the extracted principles in urban design process. For this purpose these major ethnic groups of Kurd, Lure and Turks are selected. Then, we performed in-depth

interviews on target groups to elaborate data extracted in the previous step of the study. After that by overlapping these data and results of the in-depth interviews we try to achieve design principles for creating urban spaces. With this method the research tries to find whether attention to subculture in urban design can be effective in the success of space creation and the interaction between different spaces and humans (Arbabzadegan, 2011). Also we try to show that considering sub-cultures' arts can be helpful in returning the lost identity of the contemporary urban spaces. According to nature of the research basic assumption is that to achieve the optimal design principles of urban spaces, it can be possible through a combination of physical elements (i.e. visual images) and non-physical elements (i.e. cultural images) pertaining to the consumers of urban spaces.

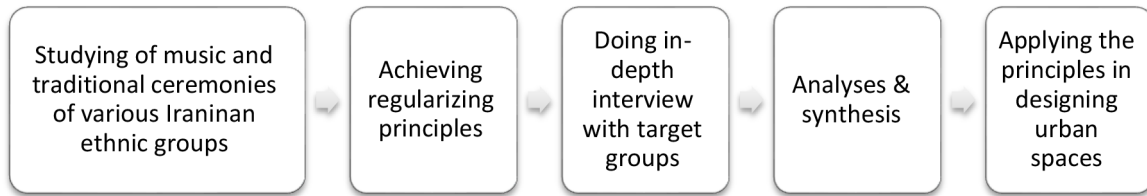


Fig. 1. The Process of Achieving Regularizing Principles for Urban Design by Properties of Music and Ritual Rhythmic Frolic of Various Iranian Ethnic.

## STUDYING MUSIC AND RITUAL RHYTHMIC FROLIC OF VARIOUS IRANIAN ETHNIC GROUPS

Every ethnic group has rhythms and proportions in its cultural products and the relationships between them can be achieved through an abstract process. Repetition of elements with a specific order in terms of formal aspect (motion, emphasis, shape, form, color, graphic, texture, etc.) is called rhythm. Repeated elements, gives a sense of order. Also differences in repetitive elements prevent too much uniformity and cause diversity. Tighing together common things together is the impressive role of rhythm. Arraying the same elements all together increases the sense of regularity. Rhythmic repetition of elements helps to create a distinctive structure in space (Pakzad, 2006, pp142). Eyes tend to put things of a type in the same bunch. In music, like in architecture, rhythm is a simple principle in playing an artistic piece in order to induce a sense of solidarity and integration. All kinds of repetitions in music can be the result of increment, or division of a

whole, or any combination of categories, without having been clearly defined (Pierre von, 2005, pp. 40-41).

Vernacular music and folk frolic are amongst valuable cultural aspects that by considering them one can apply the appropriate rhythm in the process of urban spaces design for different Iranian ethnic groups. As every ethnic group is accustomed to a kind of local music, in terms of psychological aspect, it will make a more comfortable relation with the rhythms in its own music style. If an urban designer extracts principles from the folk rhythm in music and vernacular frolic of the ethnics, he or she could apply them in the design process of urban spaces in order to design a more regular and reasonable forms with good sense of belonging and identity. In this relation various ethnic groups are studied.



Fig. 2. Ceremonies & Rhythmic Frolic, A: Kurdish, B: Lori, C: Turkish

## 1. Kurds

### A) Studying Kurdish Music and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design

Kurdish music has a very important role in the routine life of Kurdish people. Many Kurdish experts believe that Kurdish music is one of the most original Iranian music styles, which maintained its properties among popular Iranian folklore over numerous centuries. Kurdish music is one of the most prominent and influential music style among different types of the local music styles. Some researchers believe that the emergence of Kurdish music has helped a lot to keep alive the language, literature, culture, and history of the Kurdish people. Kurdish music is one of the most significant cultural features of the Kurdish nation. Freshness, vitality, and mystical atmosphere of the themes in relation with particular thoughts and beliefs in historical, religious and ethnic

context, are its important characteristics.

Kurdish music is played in Shur Dastgah<sup>2</sup>. Thus knowing the rhythm of Shur Dastgah helps us to apply this rhythm in urban spaces design.

The Intervals in Shur Dastgah<sup>3</sup>:

- The interval between the first and second degree: three quarters of the step<sup>4</sup>
- The interval between the second and third degree: three quarters of the step
- The interval between the third and fourth degree: A whole step
- The interval between the fourth and fifth degree: three quarters of the step
- The interval between the fifth and sixth degree: three quarters of the step
- The interval between the sixth and seventh degree: A whole step
- The interval between the seventh and eighth degree: A whole step (Safvat & Karen, 2009, p. 88)<sup>5</sup>

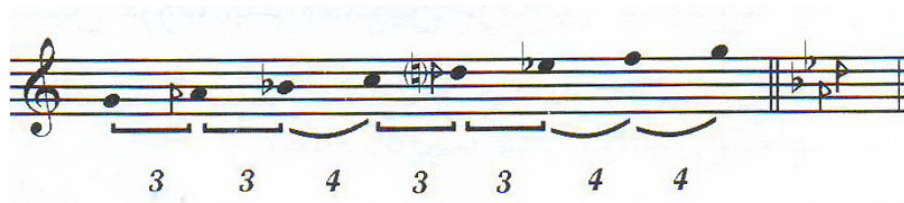


Fig. 3. Intervals in Shur Dastgah (Safvat & Karen, 2009, p. 88)

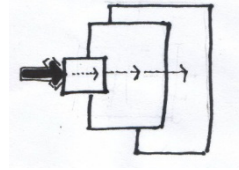


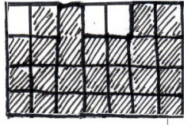


**Extraction of Regularizing Principles**

Some songs start with silence, and will gradually rise. Rhythm is an essential component of Kurdish music.

Continuity in this piece of music makes it pleasant. Syllable Poems and repeated literature are used in this piece of music. Freshness and vitality are the other specifications of the Kurdish music.

**Table 1. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from Kurdish Music**

Perceived concepts of Kurdish vernacular music	Position of use	Regularizing principles	Extracted Schematic patterns
Kurdish music starts with powerful rhythms with natural gentle movements. Faster rhythm leads to more vitality.	Plan - Facade - Pavement (design turning point )	Transformation	
Sudden changes in sequence after the same sequence	Grain & texture of Plan - Facade - Pavement	Contradiction	Turning points 
Contiguous communication	Details of urban spaces, plans layout, facades of urban spaces	Rhythm	
Proportions in the rhythm of Kurdish music after repeating the two harmonious notes which are played against one, finally the two harmonious notes are played with a rhythm that goes to its peak)	Plans layout, pavement, facade's details	Proportion	


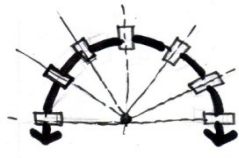


**B) Studying Kurdish Traditional Frolic and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design**

Kurdish ritual frolic is a Poussette and includes various types. In all types of the Kurdish frolic, people

gather in a ring shape and turn around the central point from left to right. There is a leader (Sarchobi Kesh) who guides other members by twisting a piece of cloth. Each person catches hand of the person on the left by his right hand which is called the state of "Gavani"(Author's own studies).



**Table 2. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from the Kurdish Traditional Ritual Rhythmic Frolic**

Perceived concepts of Kurdish Ritual Frolic	Position of use	Regularizing principles	Extracted schematic patterns
Harmony in Kurdish ritual rhythmic frolic	Harmony among the grain, texture and color of façade and pavement of urban spaces	Rhythm	
Dancing in a circle and a half circle path	Plan - Façade - pavement	Concentration and continuity	
Placement of two contrasting but harmonious elements together	All components of urban spaces	Transformation	
Central placement of one element and peripheral formation of the others	Plans layout, pavement, façade's details	Concentration	

### ***Extraction of Regularizing Principles***

Harmony is the main feature of the Kurdish traditional frolic. Having harmony with the central element (leader) is another feature. Another point of this local traditional ritual rhythmic frolic is movement, and continuity in a line is significant.

### ***2. Lurs (Bakhtiaries)***

#### ***Studying Lori/Bakhtiari Traditional Music and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design***

Local music of Lorestan in comparison with the music of the other Iranian ethnic groups is limited and usually played in “Mahour Dastgah”. Cultural mixture

with Mahour makes a Gousheh<sup>6</sup> that is called “Khosro”. This Gousheh among Iranian traditional music is usually performed in “Shur dastgah” and the performance in “Mahour” is unique to Lori people (Bakhtiari).

Most of ethnic songs (especially in Lorestan) have been played in “Mahour”. These songs have contacts with the spirit of gallantry and heroic of Bakhtiari people.

#### ***Intervals in Mahour Dastgah***

- The interval between the first and second degree: A whole step
- The interval between the second and third degree: A whole step
- The interval between the third and fourth degree: A half step
- The interval between the fourth and fifth degree: A whole step



- The interval between the fifth and sixth degree: A whole step
- The interval between the sixth and seventh degree: a whole step
- The interval between the seventh and eighth degree: A half step (savat & Karen, 2009, pp118)
- Fig. 4. Distances in Mahour Dastgah, (Safvat & Karen, 2009, pp. 118)



- Extraction of Regularizing Principles  
Starting with silence is the common feature of Bakhtiari music and the Kurdish one. The songs generally have rise and fall times. Syllable poems and repeated verses in Bakhtiari music is less than the Kurdish one.

**Table 3. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from Lori (Bakhtiari) Music**

Perceived concepts of Lori (Bakhtiari) music	Position of use	Regularizing principles	Extracted Schematic patterns
Rhythms should be soft and gentle.	All components of urban spaces	Rhythm	
Repetitive rhythm should exist.	Plan - Facade - Pavement	Repetition	
In addition to iterative background, risings and fallings are needed.	Turning point in facades and pavement	Contradiction	
Pair of compounds used in the rhythm	Plans layout, pavement, facade's details	Repetition	



**B) Studying Lori/Bakhtiari Traditional Ritual Ceremonies and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design**

Local Bakhtiari ritual frolic are diverse and usually performed in a group. Some of these traditional frolics are performed in slow rhythm and the others in a fast one. In Lorestan, local frolic are performed in a group. Usually several men with wooden sticks in their hands,

make harmonious movement together and women independently move in a circular ring while turning colorful cloths in hands.

**Extraction of Regularizing Principles**

Having harmony, performance in the specified line, making attention to central element, and turning in a circle are the general features of Bakhtaran’s ceremonies.

**Table 4. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from Traditional Lori (Bakhtiari) Ceremonies**

Perceived Concepts of Lori (Bakhtiari) Ritual Frolic	Position of Use	Regularizing Principles	Extracted Schematic Patterns
Having a high harmony	Plan and grain and texture of Facade - Pavement	Rhythm	
Dancing in a semi-circular path	Plan - Facade - Pavement	Concentration and continuity	
Central placement of one element and peripheral formation of the others	Plans layout, pavement, facade’s details	Concentration	
Having harmony with group	Relationship between urban spaces	Proportion	
Emphasis on creating a threefold rhythm	Plan and grain and texture of Facade - Pavement	Contradiction	



### 3. Turks

#### *A) Studying Traditional Turkish Music and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design*

Turkish traditional music, using the quality and character of Iranian music and having contact with daily life, has started a new approach in Iranian music. People of this region in order to preserve cultural heritage, achieved a kind of music that had a very specific identity. Turkish traditional music in Turkish songs is performed in Shur dastgah. The features of this music are as follows:

#### *Intervals in Turkish Songs (Shur Dastgah Derivation)*

- The interval between the first and second degree: A whole step
- The interval between the second and third degree: three quarters of the step
- The interval between the third and fourth degree: three quarters of the step
- The interval between the fourth and fifth degree: A whole step
- The interval between the fifth and sixth degree: A whole step
- The interval between the sixth and seventh degree: A half step
- The interval between the seventh and eighth degree: A whole step (Safvat & Karen, 2009, p. 99)



Fig. 5. Intervals in Turkish Traditional Song (Shur Dastgah Derivation)  
(Safvat & Karen, 2009, p. 99)

#### *Extraction of Regularizing Principles*



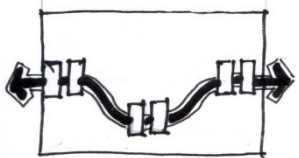
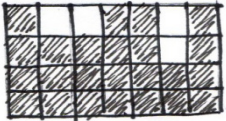
The music has a sharp rise and fall. Repetition of

elements in a specified rhythm is the other feature of traditional Turkish music. Turning points in the music can be applied in designing urban spaces.





**Table 5. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from Turkish Music**

Perceived concepts of Turkish music	Position of use	Regularizing principles	Extracted Schematic patterns
Having Rise and Fall during the Piece	Turning point and grain and texture of facades and pavement	Contradiction	Turning points 
Having Harmony	Plan - Facade - Pavement	Rhythm	
Repetition in Elements	All Components of Urban Spaces	Repetition	
Pair of Compounds Used in the Rhythm	Plans Layout, Pavement, Facade's Detail	Proportion	

***B) Studying Traditional Turkish Traditional Ceremonies and the Extraction of Regularizing Principles for Urban Design***

Azerbaijan's traditional ritual ceremonies with regard to the form and performance are performed individually or in groups, by men or women, with varied number of performers. Therefore it is very diverse and extensive.

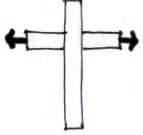
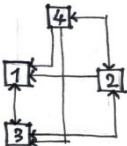
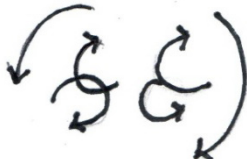
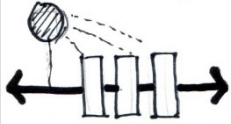
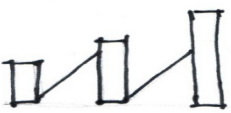
These frolic, which are basically the same but their details are different are performed in many different cultures.

***Extraction of Regularizing Principles***

In Turkish traditional frolic rhythm, speed, harmony and diversity in the movements are the main points. Paying attention to the center is the other feature of this ritual rhythmic frolic.



**Table 6. Extraction of Regularizing Principles from Turkish Ritual Rhythmic Frolic**

Perceived Concepts of Turkish Ritual Rhythmic Frolic	Position of Use	Regularizing principles	Extracted Schematic Patterns
Harmonious movements of hands and feet in Turkish ritual rhythmic frolic	Plan and grain, texture and colors, Plan - Facade - Pavement	Symmetry	
Performance of one movement after another	Plan - Facade - pavement	Proportion	
Dancing in pairs expresses the Turkish interests in pair propotion	Plans layout, pavement, facade's details	Proportion	
Jumping during dancing show the visual concentration.	Plan and grain, texture and colors, Plan - Facade - Pavement	Concentration	
Repetitive rhythm in ritual rhythmic frolic	All components of urban spaces	Repetition	

## CONCLUSION

After studying music and ritual ceremonies of these three Iranian ethnics, a framework for designing urban spaces, including guidelines and principles has been derived. Observing traditional music and folk frolic of different ethnic groups helps to extract regularizing principles to be applied in process of designing urban spaces and establishing a significant relationship between cultural elements and urban design. Extracted principles can be applied in different situations such as: grain and

texture,color of plan, facade and pavement. These can be applied as guideline in urban design. Regularizing principles give primary views in designing urban spaces for different ethnic groups therefore enabling an urban designer to design according to the interests of the specified client/consumer. It should be noted that this article was intended to create a relationship between cultural elements and urban design which guarantee creation of sense of belonging and identity in urban design and can be a prelude for future studies in this field. Table No. 7 shows the summary of the results of this research.



**Table 7. Results of the Extraction of Regularizing Principles**

Ethnics	Regularizing principles for urban design								Important principles that can be applied in urban spaces design
	symmetry	repetition	concentration	Continuity	rhythm	distinction	proportion	transformation	
Kurds	-	-	2	1	2	1	1	2	Concentration-Rhythm-Transformation
Lurs (Bakhtiaries)	-	2	2	1	2	2	1		Repetition-Concentration-Rhythm-Contradiction
Turks	1	3	1	-	1	1	2	-	Repetition-Proportion



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- Faculty of Art, Tarbiat Modares University*
- 2- The term Dastgāh has often been compared to the musical mode in Western musicology. This however does not reflect the correct meaning of the term. The term can be described by noting that a Dastgāh is usually the name of the initial mode of a piece of music being played which is referred to again and again and moreover a Dastgāh identifies a group of modes which are grouped together according to tradition. In short, a Dastgāh is both the collective title of a grouping of modes as well as the initial mode of each group.
- 3- Dastgah: meets the requirement of having a right fourth and fifth feet and interval among notes must be the same and should not resemble to each other and it can have Naghme and Gousheh. For example, Shur, Mahur etc.
- 4- Modulus of shaping Iranian music, which is expressed intervals. Three in the text means three quarters of the step.
- 5- For additional information refer to: Safvat, & Karon, N (2009), National Iranian music, translated by F Taslimzade, S Nick Ketabsaray.
- 6- Gousheh is a song which is in 1 or 1/5 of a dange and does not exceed from many notes and there is not any change in these notes. So one can't specify scale for it and gousheh doesn't have any smaller one. But sometimes shahed and stop notes are regarded.

## ENDNOTES

- 1- For additional information about six Iranian ethnics refer to Arbabzadegan Hashemi S. A (2011), *Design of public spaces in urban sub-cultures based on ethnicity (case study: Region 22 of Tehran)*, Urban Design Master's Thesis, Tehram, Iran: Urban Design and Architecture