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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

A STUDY OF THE FORMATION OF THE  
TRADITIONAL MARKETS IN THE HISTORIC  
CITIES OF THE MUSLIM WORLD: CASE STUDY  
OF CASBAH CITY, ALGIERS

BY

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for the degree of Master of Science (Built Environment)

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## **ABSTRACT**

The traditional markets have played a significant role in the development of historic cities in the Muslim world; they were developed through time in response to socioeconomic and cultural needs of the society. The aim of this study is to investigate the process of formation and working of traditional markets in historic cities of some of the Muslim world, in order to suggest some guidelines for their improvement and conservation. To achieve the aim the existing condition and problems being faced by traditional markets of Casbah city, Algiers were examined in order to determine their past and present characteristics and the nature of the effects to which they have been subjected. A broad range of information was collected from various sources and through a field survey carried out in the selected case study of Casbah city, Algiers. The collected information was analyzed with particular regard to the special character. This study is an attempt to address the important issues that have been raised in the historic cities of the Muslim world and it is hoped that it is going to be a significant contribution to the subject of Islamic architecture and urbanism as well as conservation. Detailed conclusions have been arrived at the end and specific suggestions are intended to assist in examining problem in depth and helping in developing sustainable guidelines for the improvement of the current situation in the traditional markets in the historic cities of the Muslim world.

## ملخص البحث

لقد لعبت الأسواق التقليدية دورا أساسيا في تطور المدن التاريخية بالعالم الإسلامي، وكان هذا التطور استجابة للمتطلبات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية والحاجات الثقافية للمجتمع المحلي. تهدف هذه الدراسة لبحث مراحل تكوين ونشأة الأسواق التقليدية وآليات عملها الداخلي في المدن التاريخية في العالم الإسلامي بغية طرح بعض المقترحات من أجل تحسينها و حمايتها. ولتحقيق الهدف المنشود قامت هذه الدراسة بتشخيص الظروف الحالية والمشكلات التي تواجه السوق التقليدية بمدينة القصبة التاريخية بالجزائر من أجل تحديد خصائصها في الماضي والتأثيرات التي واجهتها في الحاضر. وقد بنيت هذه الدراسة على بعدين أحدهما نظري تمثل في كم من المعلومات المجمعّة من مصادر مختلفة؛ والآخر ميداني أجري حول مدينة القصبة بالجزائر التي اختيرت كدراسة حالة. حيث أجري تحليل لكل المعلومات في إطار طابع الخصوصية. وهكذا جاءت هذه الدراسة لطرح القضايا المهمة التي تواجه المدن التاريخية بالعالم الإسلامي، أملا أن تكون مساهمة مفيدة في الهندسة المعمارية والعمران الإسلامي. وأخيرا، تقدمت الدراسة- في خاتمتها- بجملة من التوصيات لطرح الإشكالية بعمق من أجل تطوير مقترحات تحسين الوضعية الحالية للأسواق التقليدية بالمدن التاريخية في العالم الإسلامي.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Built Environment.

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Ahmed Tauseef  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Built Environment.

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and Environmental Design

## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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**A STUDY OF THE FORMATION OF THE TRADITIONAL MARKETS IN  
THE HISTORIC CITIES OF THE MUSLIM WORLD CASE STUDY OF  
CASBAH CITY, ALGIERS**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work  
to my beloved wife and family  
to all my friends and  
to every one who is living under the shadow of Islam

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

UNESCO	United Nation Economic Social Culture Organization.
PSMV	Plan de Sauvgarde et de Mise en Valeur( Conservation Plan).
ICOMOS	International Council On Monuments and Sites.
NCHC	National Cultural Heritage Commission.



**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE SUBJECT**  
**AND THE AIMS OF THE STUDY**

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study is to investigate the process of the formation of traditional markets as one of the most important elements of the historic cities in the Muslim world. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part sets out the background of the study. In section 1.2 a brief description of the traditional markets and their significance in the historic cities of the Muslim world is given. The aim and objectives of the study are discussed in section 1.3. In section 1.4 the methodology used to assemble detailed information about the subject is identified. Finally, conclusions are made.

**1.2 TRADITIONAL MARKETS IN THE HISTORIC CITIES OF THE MUSLIM WORLD AND THE IMPACT OF CURRENT CHANGE**

Less than thirty years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 10 AH / 632 AD, Arab armies had conquered large territories in southwest Asia and northeast Africa. They also put an end to the Persian Sasanian Empire. By 732 the new empire was to extend from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent to Spain and the Pyrenees. The heart of the new civilization which it generated lay in the centre of ancient civilizations, from Persia through Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine to Egypt. (Alsayyad. N, 1991). (Figure1.1).

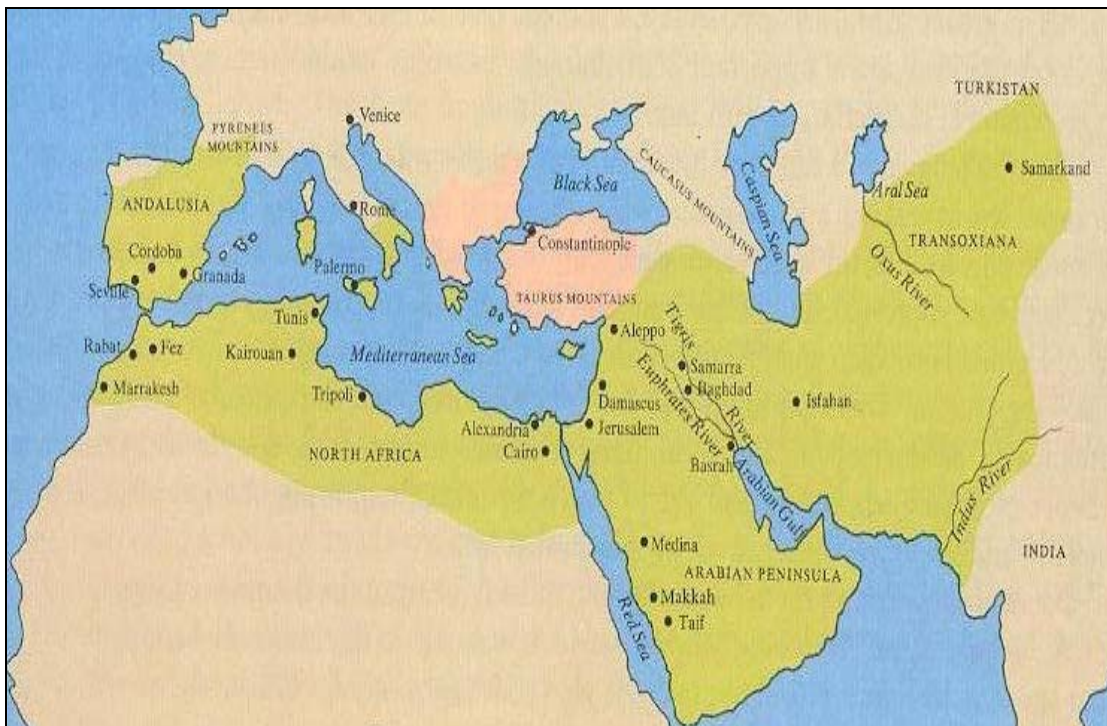
The historical significance of the Arab conquests can hardly be overestimated. Egypt and fertile Crescents were united with Persia and India politically, administratively, and most importantly, economically. The great economic and cultural divide that separated the civilized world for a thousand years prior to the rise of Islam, the frontier between the East and the West formed by the two great rivers,<sup>1</sup> that created antagonistic powers on either side ceased to exist. This allowed for the free flow of raw materials and manufactured goods, techniques and skills, agricultural products and luxury items, people and services, and ideas, methods, and modes of thought.

The Muslim world soon assumed a key position in intercontinental trade, which remained unchallenged from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century AD. Many luxury items, such as spices, incense, fine cloth, rugs and precious stones, which were in great demand in Medieval Europe, had to be transported through the Middle East. The “Silk Road” through Iran and Central Asia, as well as the frankincense trail through Hījāz, served these intercontinental transactions. They were complemented by the sea routes through the Indian Ocean, the Gulf and the Red Sea, all leading to major Muslim port cities, for commercial exchanges. (Shaban M A, 1990). (Figure 1.2).

In addition, the caravan routes of the Hajj, passing through intermediate stations such as Tunis, Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus before eventually converging in Makkah, established an equally important network, which performed both religious and economic functions. Many of these ancient cities were convenient stations on the age old caravan routes. Their central markets, besides serving as an outlet for local production, were also equipped for stocking merchandise and for wholesale and retail trade in imported goods. (Andre R, 2002).

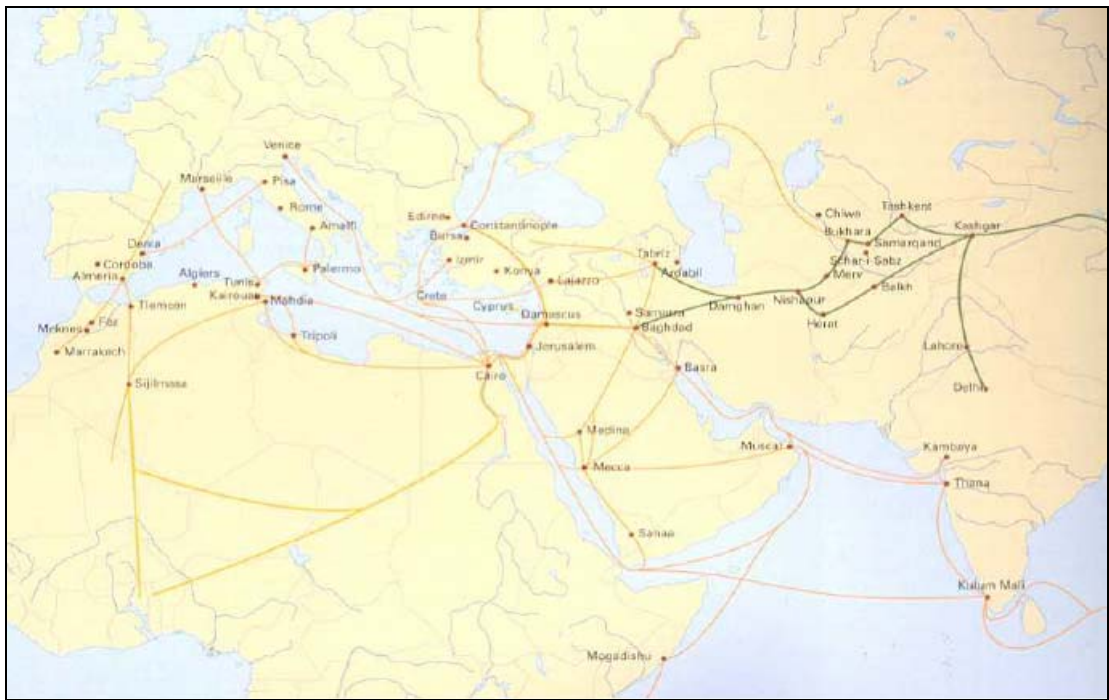
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<sup>1</sup> Tigris and Euphrates (Dajla and Furat in Arabic)



(after Monika)

**Figure1.1:**  
**Map of the Muslim world (732 A D)**



(after Walter )

**Figure 1.2:**  
**Trade route map of the Muslim world**

The trade road through Iran and Central Asia, as well as the frankincense trail through Hijāz, served these intercontinental transactions.

In such circumstances, commerce became a vital component of Muslim urban life, and the markets always occupied a prominent position in the cities of the Muslim world along with the main mosque and related public buildings. Such intense commercial activities led to the development of many types of specialized buildings to accommodate various commercial functions, in markets that gradually became the most conspicuous element of the historic cities of the Muslim world. (Hisham. M, 2003).

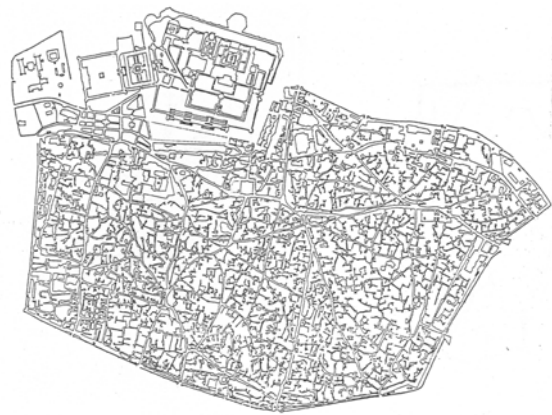
At this stage it is appropriate to describe the special structure of such historic cities that can be seen all over the Muslim world, such as Marrakesh in Morocco, Casabah in Algeria, Kairouan in Tunis, Cairo in Egypt, Aleppo in Syria, Isfahan in Iran, Istanbul in Turkey, Herat in Afghanistan, and Lahore in Pakistan. All these historic cities appear to share some common characteristics and a somewhat similar urban form. (Akbar, J, 1988). (Figure1.3).

A typical historic city in the Muslim world was often surrounded by a fortification wall, having a number of gates, the only access and egress points. The street system in a typical historic city appears to consist of these types of streets. The primary streets entered the city from different gates and met each other near the main mosque and divide the whole city into a number of residential quarters. (Bianca, S, 2000). The secondary streets often join two or more primary streets and divide a residential quarter into smaller residential units. They tend to house shops needed for the day to day activities of the inhabitants in the residential quarters.

The tertiary streets provide access within the residential areas. *Cul-de-sacs* could be attached to any type of streets. A cluster of ten (10) to fifteen (15) houses are often arranged around these cul-de-sacs. They are quite private spaces and are only used by people living there. (Hakim B, 1986).



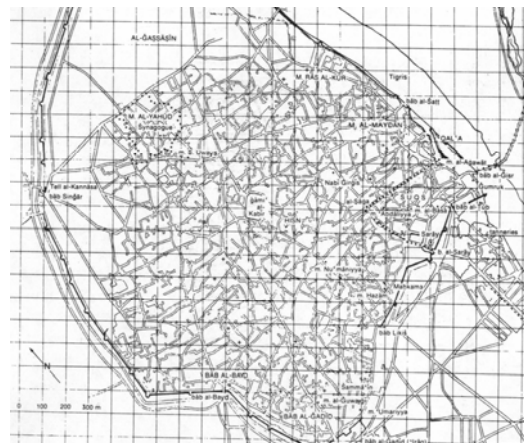
**1. Aleppo, Syria**



**2. Lahore, Pakistan**



**3. Madinah, Saudi Arabia**



**4. Mosul, Iraq**

**Figure 1.3:**  
**Plans of various Historic cities in the Muslim world**  
 Plans showing the similarities of the various historic cities of the Muslim world

The other major element of a historic city in the Muslim world is the main mosque as a centre of the religious, cultural and social activities. The main mosque was often located in the centre (not geometrically) of the city. In the early towns established by Muslims such as Kufa, Basra and Fustat, an open space, often square in shape, was reserved in the centre of the city as a mosque. (Andre R, 2002). Later on it was built, rebuilt and gradually took its classical form. Initially the house of the governor was often attached to the mosque, such as in Kufa, and Basra. However, the residence of the governor was shifted to the periphery of the city in later times. This central part of the city became the administrative, social, religious and learning centre. (Andre R, 2002).

As teaching and learning became more specialized, purpose built buildings such as schools (*madrassah*) were constructed, often located near the main mosque and in some cases away from the mosque. These schools provided training to students in religious and scientific fields; they were often funded by the traders in the nearby marketplace, notables and later on by governments. (Vögt-Göknil, U, 1987).

Pubic baths (*hammam*) were also built for the daily use of the people. It is important to mention here that the Roman baths as they were found in the cities of Syria provided the basic design that was modified to suit the needs of the Muslim society.(Mustapha C,1983). Such public baths (*hammam*) were often located close to the main mosque. (Hisham M, 2003).

From the very early period the markets were located near the mosque. Such markets were frequently divided on the basis of retail and wholesale trade of goods. Retail markets were generally located in the centre of the city along the primary streets. (Hisham. M, 2003). While wholesale markets were located on the periphery

often near the gates.<sup>2</sup> In later periods covered markets were also built to provide a better working and shopping environment in a harsh climate.

In addition to commercial activity, manufacturing has remained an important part of these markets. Manufacturing activity involved the production of finished goods for use or consumption from raw materials such as cotton, wool, silk and leather. There were several kinds of manufacturers in the traditional markets, such as shoemakers, cap makers, dressmakers, dryers. etc. (Walter, W,1998).

The main Mosque, school (*madrassah*), public bath (*hammam*) and market (*sūq*) became an integrated religious, educational, cultural and commercial centre. They were public spaces shared locally by all classes of the population. The central location of markets promoted their social character and became a medium for strengthening social ties between the residents of the community in the historic cities of the Muslim World. (Hisham, M, 2003).

The presence of traditional markets in the historic cities of the Muslim world was considered as one of the most important attributes of their special character, and these markets always occupied a prominent position in conjunction with the Friday mosque. In fact, the presence of these traditional markets is also essential for the continuous survival of the historic cities.<sup>3</sup> In recent years, circumstances have arisen in a number of such historic cities of the Muslim world which are destroying or having an adverse influence on some of the qualities or attributes in evidence. These special attributes, such as traditional markets, are of significant importance, perhaps even irreplaceable, and their loss or diminution is a matter of serious consequence.

The changes in many of the historic cities date from the establishment of European Colonial Governments in various countries of the Muslim world during the

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<sup>2</sup> The example the wholesale market of Marrakesh which is located on the main gate.

<sup>3</sup> The traditional markets have played role into surviving of the historic cities of the Muslim world.