

An Analysis of the Concepts of Architecture and Construction in the Holy Qur'an with a Divine Civilization-Building Approach

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 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.524034.1464>

Introduction

Numerous Qur'anic verses emphasize the importance of cultivating and developing the earth, presenting it as one of the fundamental purposes of human creation. In the contemporary world, interdisciplinary studies that integrate religious scholarship with engineering—particularly in the fields of Islamic architecture and urban planning—have gained increasing significance. According to the Qur'anic worldview, humanity is entrusted with the responsibility of developing the earth within the framework of divine unity (*tawhīd*), justice, and service to creation. In Q. 11:61, God declares: “*He brought you forth from the earth and settled you therein to cultivate it.*” This verse establishes humanity's responsibility for the proper development, cultivation, and stewardship of the earth. In *al-Mīzān*, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī interprets *isti‘mār* as God's command and expectation that human beings should cultivate and revive the earth in accordance with divine purposes. Within this perspective, human beings, as God's vicegerents on earth, are viewed as civilization builders, cultivators of the earth, and mediators between the terrestrial and the heavenly realms.

Materials and Methods

Focusing primarily on authoritative Qur'anic commentaries—especially *al-Mīzān*—this study seeks to analyze the conceptual foundations of construction and architecture in the Holy Qur'an while identifying their theoretical implications for contemporary architectural practice. Employing a qualitative thematic-conceptual approach, the research investigates the role of architecture and construction within the Qur'anic worldview and explores their relationship with the concepts of divine unity, responsibility, and learning from history. The study first extracts key Qur'anic vocabulary related to construction, habitation, buildings, development, cultivation, and living environments. Terms such as *bayt* (house), *qaṣr* (palace), *burj* (tower), *sadd* (barrier), *isti‘mār* (cultivation), *maskan* (dwelling), and *khilāfah* (vicegerency) were selected as the principal analytical categories. Relevant Qur'anic verses were subsequently examined through authoritative commentaries, including *al-Mīzān*, *Tafsir-e Nemuneh*, and *Majma‘ al-Bayān*, in order to identify their ethical, aesthetic, and functional dimensions. Historical structures mentioned in the Qur'an—such as the palaces of the people of ‘Ād, Pharaoh's tower, and the barrier of Dhū al-Qarnayn—were then analyzed in light of the principles of Islamic architecture to evaluate their role in civilization-building and historical reflection. Finally, the Qur'anic teachings concerning construction were compared with contemporary concepts of sustainable urban development and Islamic architecture. Particular attention was devoted to principles such as sincerity of intention, justice, moderation, avoidance of extravagance, and environmental balance. To enrich the theoretical framework, interdisciplinary scholarship in civilization studies, Islamic

philosophy, and architecture, including the works of contemporary scholars such as Hadi Nadimi and Seyed Mohammad Mehdi Mirmomtaz, was incorporated into the analysis.

Results and Findings

The concept of "home" in the Holy Qur'an is expressed through several distinct terms—including *bayt*, *dār*, *manzil*, and *maskan*—each reflecting a different dimension of human habitation. *Bayt* refers to the human dwelling, the House of God, the dwellings of Paradise, and even the homes of certain animals such as the spider. *Dār* most frequently denotes the eternal abode, as in expressions such as *Dār al-Salām* and *Dār al-Muqāmah*, emphasizing humanity's ultimate and everlasting destination. Derived from the root *n-z-l*, *manzil* conveys the meanings of descent and settlement while also referring to places of tranquility and stability. *Maskan*, originating from the root *s-k-n*, emphasizes peace and serenity, presenting the home not merely as physical shelter but as a place of spiritual repose. Within the Qur'anic worldview, therefore, the home transcends its physical function to become a space for security, moral education, family life, and communion with God. These principles are reflected in Islamic architectural traditions, particularly in the design of traditional Iranian houses and cities through harmony with nature, protection of family privacy, and the creation of spiritually tranquil environments.

Alongside these conceptual foundations, the Qur'an refers to several historical structures, including the monumental palaces of the people of 'Ād (Q. 89:7), symbolizing civilizational arrogance, and Pharaoh's tower (Q. 40:36–37), representing political domination and human pride. These structures are presented not to glorify material achievement but to encourage reflection upon the fate of civilizations that employed their technical capabilities in rebellion against God. Likewise, in describing ancient peoples such as 'Ād and Thamūd, the Qur'an simultaneously acknowledges the magnificence of their architecture while condemning ostentation and purposeless construction, as expressed in the verse: "*Do you build on every high place a monument merely for amusement?*" (Q. 26:128). This perspective clearly distinguishes architecture inspired by faith from architecture driven by materialism. The Qur'an consistently emphasizes spatial justice, moderation, avoidance of extravagance ("*Do not be wasteful*"), and the wise utilization of resources. Beyond their social and economic functions, architectural structures are also portrayed as expressions of cultural and religious identity. Buildings such as mosques and monasteries embody collective faith and contribute to the continuity of Islamic civilization. In this perspective, architecture serves as a bridge between earth and heaven, exemplified by the Prophet's Night Journey in Sūrat al-Isrā', where the connection between al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā symbolizes humanity's spiritual ascent from the material world toward the divine realm. Qur'anic architecture, therefore, is not merely enduring construction upon the earth but also a bridge linking humanity with God and embodying the true meaning of civilization.

Conclusion

The Qur'anic concepts of construction, development, and architecture demonstrate that building activities are not merely responses to material needs but constitute an integral part of humanity's divine mission to cultivate the earth, establish civilization, and fulfill the responsibility of divine vicegerency. This mission is founded upon the principles of *tawḥīd*, justice, moderation, and spirituality. By presenting historical examples of the architectural achievements of former nations, the Qur'an warns against the dangers of arrogance, self-glorification, and extravagance while offering a model of sustainable and human-centered construction. Within this framework, buildings should not merely fulfill physical functions but should also promote tranquility, remembrance of God, and social justice. The findings of this study indicate that the Qur'anic worldview provides a coherent theoretical foundation for architectural design and construction by emphasizing the harmonious balance between material and spiritual dimensions. Applying these Qur'anic principles can enrich the cultural and spiritual quality of human living environments and offers a civilization-building strategy capable of addressing many of the challenges facing contemporary architecture and urban development.

Keywords: civilization, construction, development, Holy Qur'an, architecture.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding statement

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

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:How to cite

Rouhi, Safoura & Borzo, Shahin. (2025). An Analysis of the Concepts of Architecture and Construction in the Holy Qur'an with a Divine Civilization-Building Approach . *Quran, Culture And Civilization* , 7 (2), 119-137.
<http://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.524034.1464>