THE STRUCTURE OF MOSQUE MANAGEMENT

ASSOC. PROF DR MOHSEN MANTEGHI
The Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute
manteghi@qabas.net

ABSTRACT

As a meeting place for believers and theists, mosque requires a careful planning in order to fully benefit the Muslims. Therefore, the strategies for increasing the benefits of mosque can be investigated through studying and considering the aspects and features of mosque.

1. Mosque system

Mosque’s functions are the result of a combination of measures and activities that affect the mosque. Through systematic relations, this combination forms a system and can produce results for the society. In order to clarify this issue, we should first define the concepts and features of a “system”.

A “System” is a group of related constituents which, because of the interdependence of constituents, have made a new general entity. In a system, every constituent is dependent on the other constituents. That is, the constituents interact with each other. Generally speaking, systems abound in the whole universe.

Considering the definition of system, whenever three main features combine, the term “system” can be applied to any entity. These features are:

- The concept of general entity: A general entity is formed when a number of constituents, besides each other, make a whole and are considered as one thing or phenomenon.
- Mutual relations: Mutual relations are formed when the constituents interact and affect each other.
- Goal: The new whole, with mutually related constituents, is formed in order to achieve a clear goal. Any system should pursue a specific goal.

Therefore, mosque can be regarded as a system. All the factors affecting a mosque, such as human, material and physical factors create a new whole named mosque which is controlled by the interrelations of these factors. On the other hand, all these factors and components pursue the single goal of gaining spirituality. In addition to the tree-fold features, every system has specific components. The components of mosque include:

- Input

Input is what enters the system and makes possible its functioning. In the system of mosque, input includes the prayers, financial resources, serving staff, programs, physical amenities and....of course, some input are of more importance. For example, human resources who attend the mosque as prayers...
or those in charge of mosque can be influential in mosque’s freshness and dynamism or its inactivity and stagnancy.

- **Process**

When the input enter the system, they are affected by some measures and undergo some changes. These measures are called the “process”. After entering the mosque, praying and benefiting from the preacher’s sermon, the prayers show a new change in attitude. The process of change occurs in the spiritual atmosphere of the mosque and seclusion of praying the Unique God.

- **Output**

Output is the product of system. The input that enter the mosque system get subject to changes and then go into the environment as output. Mental change and spiritual awakening resulted from prayers and supplications before God are among the outputs of mosque system. Of course some parts of this input may not change or get affected during this process.

Imam Hasan Mojtaba (pbuh) refers to some of the results of attending mosque and pinpoints eight benefits in this regard:

«من أدام الاختلاف إلى المسجد أصاب أحد تمان: ايها محكمة و آخا مستفادا و علماء مستطرفما و زكمة متنظرة و كلمة تنللة على الهدى أو تردد عن رد و ترك الذنب حياء أو خشية ترتكذ الذنوب حياة او خشية» (صدوق، 1413ق، ج1، ص238)

He who frequents the mosque will gain one of eight things:

- using a decisive (Quranic) verse
- finding a good friend
- getting authentic information
- receiving an expected mercy
- a word that guides to the right
- a word that saves from perdition
- desertion of sins shyly
- desertion of sins fearfully

- **Feedback**

After a period of activities and ceremonies, or an event in the mosque, those in charge of mosque analyze the programs. In these analyses, they remind each other of the experiences to be used for conducting the next ceremony. Learning from past experiences is named feedback.

- **Environment**

Naturally, every system operates within an environment. Mosques in every area or city are influenced by various external factors. Mosques are affected by local, urban, national and international events. They can also impact on their environment.

2. Mosque structure
In order to operate more effectively, mosque structure requires management. Using proper input and utilizing efficient processes does not happen by chance or by incapable individuals. Thus, mosque management is defined as:

“planning, organizing, optimally using the facilities and resources, guiding and controlling for the effective use of human and financial resources in order to achieve the sacred aims of mosque.”

A significant part of measures required for the efficiency of mosque activities depend on management abilities. Mosque is established for fulfilling spiritual or innate needs. Therefore, the arrangements in a mosque are different from those common in other structures and organizations. There is no time limit on man’s spiritual needs; accordingly mosque management should act in way that makes the mosque structure permanent and ever-lasting.¹

Mosque is the house of God; its main manager, therefore, is God himself. After prophets and the infallible Imams, those who exercise God’s vicegerency on earth are responsible for managing the mosque. In the time of occultation of Imam Mahdi (pbuh), Guardainship of the Islamic jurist (wilayat al-Faqih) and the well-qualified religious jurisprudents are responsible for the management of mosque. Today, because of the Islamic Revolution, Iran is blessed by wilayat al- Faqih as the ruler of the Islamic government and all across the country, Friday Imams are assigned to run the affairs of mosques in each city. Mosque structure can hence be studied under the following rubrics:

2.1. Friday prayer leader

At the era of occultation of the infallible Imam, the Islamic government is led by the guardianship of the jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih). This jurist takes on the position of the ruler of an Islamic government and the representative of the Infallible Imam (‘a). On the other hand, based on Shi’a Islamic jurisprudence, when a place is legitimately endowed to a mosque, it belongs to all Muslims and the endower does not have the right to determine a trustee for that mosque.² Therefore, God is the owner of mosque and what belongs to God, belongs to His successor i.e. the Islamic ruler.

Today in Iran, Friday prayer leaders are known as having the highest spiritual and cultural position in all cities. They are appointed by the supreme spiritual leader (Wali Faqih) to execute the duties assigned to them. Based on the hierarchy accepted in the institution of clericalism, Friday prayers leaders are the highest ranking clergymen in the cities. The congregation leaders perform their duties under the supervision of Friday prayer leaders.

In the view of supreme Islamic jurisprudents, running mosque affairs is assigned to the Islamic ruler. In the hierarchy of clericalism, this responsibility shifts from Wali Faqih to the Friday prayer leader in each city. Thus, congregation leader is at the highest level of mosque structure.

2.2. Dominating organizations

¹ a piece of land endowed to a mosque cannot be used for other purposed and will remain a mosque forever, except for exceptional cases mentioned in jurisprudential books
² For more information, refer to the rules of endowment in jurisprudence books such as Tahrir al-vasile, volume 2 and Estefta’at, volume 2, page 147
In order to manage the mosque more effectively and realize mosques lofty aspirations, a coordinating organization is needed. The Charity and Endowment Organization is responsible for organizing and ensuring coordination among mosque activities.

2.3. Congregation leader

The highest position in mosque belongs to congregation leader who runs the mosque with the cooperation of the board of trustees. The congregation leader must possess a set of virtues and merits and must be above the rest in knowledge, piety, and justness. The spiritual position of congregation leader prepares the ground for resolving mosque issues.

2.4. Board of trustees

Mosque is a public organization which is run by the people in the neighborhood. People help in construction, maintenance, utilization and development of mosque. The cooperation of people in running the mosque is in the form of a group of trusted individuals as the board of trustees. This board is appointed or elected from among the pious people in the neighborhood. Consulting each other, the trustees manage and supervise the affairs of mosque by their different abilities.

Based on the Islamic teachings, those who manage the mosque must possess some merits including:

- believing in Allah and the Last Day;
- performing Salat (prayer)
- giving Zakat (alms)
- fearing none but Allah. (having the courage to oppose the non-divine programs and activities of those in power)
- having Ikhlās (sincerity of intention)

Some of these features are mentioned in the holy Quran:

إِنَّمَا يُعَمَّرُ مَسْاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَعَلَّهُ أُوْلَئِكَ أُخْبِرُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتِدِينَ (توبه، آيه 18)

The Mosques of Allah shall be maintained only by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day; perform As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat and fear none but Allah. It is they who are expected to be on true guidance.

Thus, ordered hierarchically, the Friday prayer leader, Charity and Endowment Organization, congregation leader and board of trustees are four groups that are in charge of managing the

1 Kenz al-A’, al, volume 7, page 655, hadith 20764
mosque structure. Any of the above-mentioned levels has a range of responsibilities to fulfill mosque’s spiritual and material needs.

3. Mosque Pillars

In order to accomplish its predicted goals and to function successfully, an important organization, such as mosque, needs some pillars. Dynamism and integrity of mosque depends on its pillars. Here, these pillars and their features and conditions will be dealt with so that the ground work is laid for realization of a perfect mosque in the Muslim society.

3.1. Divine intention

Mosque structure fundamentally differs from other ordinary buildings. It is the house of God. Therefore, those constructing mosque must have the divine intention of satisfying God. Al-Dirar mosque, in the era of Holy Prophet (pbuh), is a perfect example regarding the importance of divine intention in founding a mosque. 1 God the Exalted has mentioned this issue in verses 107-109 of chapter Repentance. In these verses, God prevents believers from saying prayers in mosques that have not been founded on piety.

Indeed the mosque that has been founded on piety (from the very first day deserves that you should stand in it)

3.2. Congregation leader

The congregational prayer in a mosque is led by an Imam (congregation leader). He is the only one whose permanent attendance at prayers is emphasized. According to religious teachings, mosques need a permanent congregation leader (Rateb Imam). The permanent congregation leader has superiority over the others, although the others might be higher in position. In Islamic jurisprudence books, congregation leaders are required to have many features, which shows the importance and value of this position. Paying attention to the stated features indicates the influential role this pillar plays in mosque’s dynamism. The features are: faith, justness, maturity, 2 sanity, being a legitimacy child, being male, 1 physical health.

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1 Some Hypocrites (munafiqs) built the Al-Dirar mosque to make mischief and to disunite the Believers and asked the Holy Prophet to lead prayer there. Holy Prophet Muhammad had it destroyed by fire while he was returning from the Battle of Tabuk (which occurred in the 9th year Hegira[1])

2 If the followers are adolescents, the congregation leader can be someone their age.
Moreover, in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), it has been mentioned that some individuals can never be congregation leaders. A congregation leader must not suffer from leprosy or vitiligo. Those who have received lashes for committing an open sin cannot become an imam of the congregation. Following someone who is not accepted by people or is not competent for leading a congregation is Makrooh (detestable).

Besides leading the prayer, another duty of congregation leader is preaching sermons. As the history of Islam shows, Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) was the first congregation leader. He both led the prayer and preached to the congregation.

3.3. Prayers

Mosque is established for the believers to pray and worship God. Realization of mosque’s aims and objectives is possible in light of the congregation of prayers and followers. It is a place where the Muslims worship God. Therefore, without prayers, mosque will have no real meaning. Thus, Islam commands: “Pray your daily prayers, especially sunset and night-time prayers, congregationally in the mosque. One must not neglect to go to mosque without any excuse.”

In different hadiths and fatwas of Faqih, attendance of all the Muslims at mosque is emphasized. But attendance of the neighbors and those who hear the call to prayer (Azan) is more specifically highlighted. The neighbors are prohibited from offering their prayers individually at home, without any excuse.

Those in charge of mosque should strive to make mosques a popular attraction and to remove barriers to people’s attendance in the mosque. Mosque’s activity and dynamism depends on praying people’s attendance in the mosque. Thus, numerous narrations express that Muslims are under some obligations to the mosque, and as they do not carry out their obligation, mosque complains about them to God. It complains about people who do not frequent the mosque. Based on these narrations, some Faqih regard abandoning mosque as Makrooh (detestable). On the other hand, they encourage people to frequent the mosques in which no one prays. They regard this as Mostahab (recommended).

On the day of resurrection those who think about mosque in their hearts and minds when leaving the mosque are under the protection of God’s mercy until they return to mosque. On the importance of timely and consistent attendance at the mosque, The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

A person, who answers the call of the muezzin, enjoys God’s divine mercy and his reward is paradise.

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1 Meeting all conditions, a woman can lead the congregation of women.
2 The leader is not allowed to sit while the followers stand; a mute leader cannot lead speaking followers.
3 In hadith books such as Man la Yahzeroho al-faqih, vasaels al-shia, Tahzib al-ahkam … there are chapters entitled “the merits of congregational prayer”, “congregational prayer and its value”, “congregational prayer”.
4 A blind man went to the holy Prophet (p.b.u.h) and said he is sorry he cannot attend the mosque. The Prophet told him to fasten a rope from his house to the mosque so that he can frequent it..
5 Tahrir al-vasile, volume 1, page 152
Volume 1, page 597 al-Orvat al-vosqa,
7 Al-khesal, page 343
Mosque is where people, who look for spiritual and behavioral elegance, attend. The Holy Prophet (PBUH and his progeny) has said:

When you see a man frequents the mosque, consider him as a faithful man. Because God says only those who believe in Him make God's mosques thriving.²

3.4. The place of Mosque

In Arabic, masjid (mosque) is the name of a place for worship or prostration in prayer. It means a specific place for saying prayers. Today, there are numerous mosques in different cities and countries. This shows that many people believe in Islam and are interested in this religious emblem. There are special commandments and rules about endowing a place to building a mosque. Mosque rules state that when a piece of land is endowed to build a mosque, the land does not belong to the owner anymore and no one has the right to reign over it. Therefore mosques cannot be sold and the place will permanently remain a mosque.

In the view of Faqīhs, building mosques in usurped lands, public pathways and cemeteries is haram (religiously forbidden). Building mosques on Najes (unclean) land is not allowed. Moreover, changing Christian or Jew temples into mosques is not allowable. Mosque is so respectable that treating it with irreverence is a cardinal sin. On the other hand, mosque’s cleanliness is highly emphasized and those who clean the mosque will be amply rewarded.³

As a spiritual and religious emblem, mosque should be a symbolic representation of servitude to God. It should be convenient and beautiful, but not luxurious.⁴ The primary mosques in Islam were roofless Shabestan (a roofed area in a mosque for praying). Gradually, architects and artists added to their beauty by building domes and minarets. In designing mosques, the designers should take advantage of elements such as light, color, architectural developments to create a simple, beautiful and spiritual atmosphere. They should also use high tech heating and cooling systems and audio visual equipment.

1 Jame al-akhbar, page 68
2 Mostadrek al-vasa’el, volume 3, page 362, hadith 3786
3 In Fiqh terminology, Cleaning mosques is referred to as kens al- masjid. Those who clean mosques will be rewarded by Houris (a beautiful maiden who awaits the devout Muslim in paradise) (Mostadrak, volume 3, page 384)
4 Islamic jurisprudents prohibit decorating mosques with gold and silver
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