



## The Iranian–Islamic Utopia from the Perspective of Abolqasem Ferdowsi Tousi

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### ABSTRACT

As an ideal and conceptual image of the city, the utopia of any society reflects its underlying ideas, values, and aspirations—elements that evolve over time in response to social, cultural, and economic transformations. Although utopian images differ in form and scale, they consistently correspond to an idealized conception of the city. From ancient periods through the Islamic civilization, this concept has been articulated in diverse forms by Iranian thinkers and scholars. In the contemporary context, redefining and applying utopia as a practical model for urban design has become increasingly significant. This study examines the concept of utopia within Iranian–Islamic civilization, with particular emphasis on the intellectual framework of Hakim Abolqasem Ferdowsi Tousi. Its primary objective is to analyze and develop a conceptual framework based on Ferdowsi’s vision of utopia and to explore its implications for Iranian–Islamic urban planning. Using qualitative content analysis, utopian concepts embedded in the narratives of Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh* are systematically examined. Subsequently, the interrelations among these concepts within the broader framework of Iranian–Islamic utopia are investigated through a narrative review approach. The findings indicate that the Iranian–Islamic utopia, understood as a concept transcending time and place, emphasizes wisdom and knowledge and offers an enduring ideal model for contemporary cities confronting present-day challenges.

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## 1. Introduction

Throughout history, thinkers and philosophers across cultures have sought to construct images of ideal societies. Although these images vary according to historical context and geographical location, they generally function as expressions of human aspirations and ideals (Zarrinkoub, 2007; Tabatabaei, 2001). An ideal society is often imagined as an alternative to prevailing conditions and serves as a conceptual lens through which possibilities beyond the existing order may be understood. Such visions may emphasize transformation, liberation, or, at times, adopt a compensatory orientation.

As noted above, the relationship between utopian thought and culture has been a persistent theme throughout intellectual history. In Iran, from mythological periods through the Iranian–Islamic civilization, utopia has emerged as a central motif shaping the cultural imagination, often infused with a monotheistic worldview (Moftakhari, 1997: 6–8). Conceived as an ideal realm beyond immediate realities, this utopia has frequently been envisioned as a paradisiacal space in which collective aspirations are fulfilled. In contemporary thought, it has also acquired a critical and emancipatory function in response to the challenges facing modern cities. Accordingly, examining this concept through the perspectives of thinkers who shaped Iranian–Islamic civilization—and identifying its defining characteristics—appears essential for conceptualizing the framework of an Iranian–Islamic city.

## 2. Methodology

This study seeks to develop a conceptual model and theoretical framework for the Iranian–Islamic utopia from the perspective of Hakim Abolqasem Ferdowsi. To this end, the research employs a mixed qualitative methodology combining textual analysis, qualitative content analysis, and a hybrid systematic review. The systematic review method enables the comprehensive identification, evaluation, and synthesis of existing studies, thereby providing a coherent and reliable analytical foundation.

Adopting an interpretive approach, the research aims to identify and explicate the core concepts of Ferdowsi's worldview and their role in shaping the Iranian–Islamic utopian ideal. In terms of its purpose, the study is theoretical and foundational; methodologically, it is descriptive–systematic, grounded in rational analysis and historical documentation. Through careful and reflective engagement with primary texts and secondary sources, the research seeks to uncover the conceptual relationships embedded in Ferdowsi's literary corpus..

## 3. Findings

The final conceptual model of the Iranian–Islamic utopia, developed through detailed content analysis of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* and a systematic review of relevant scholarly literature, encompasses political, social, economic, environmental, and heroic dimensions central to Ferdowsi's vision of an ideal society.

The political dimension emphasizes transparent and just laws, equitable distribution of power, and participatory governance structures. Justice, political stability, protection of citizens' rights, and governmental transparency constitute its primary indicators.

The social dimension focuses on family support, public participation, and the strengthening of social cohesion. It highlights social justice, public welfare, and the enhancement of positive social interactions, alongside the promotion of equal opportunities and psychological and social well-being.

The economic dimension centers on the equitable distribution of wealth and resources, fair division of labor, and the reinforcement of local production. Through sustainable employment, economic prosperity, and public welfare, this dimension establishes economic justice as a foundational principle of Ferdowsi's utopia.

The environmental dimension underscores the preservation of nature and sustainable development. Key elements include conserving and revitalizing natural spaces, promoting gardens and parks, utilizing sustainable resources, and fostering harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural environment—an essential principle in Ferdowsi's ideal vision.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the Iranian–Islamic utopia through the intellectual lens of Ferdowsi, with the aim of constructing a conceptual model grounded in the themes of the *Shahnameh* and systematic scholarly analysis. Close engagement with Ferdowsi's work reveals that, beyond epic and heroic narratives, he articulated enduring moral and social principles for organizing and governing an ideal city. These principles—rooted in justice, social welfare, respect for nature, and environmental sustainability—collectively emphasize the necessity of cities capable of balancing material, spiritual, and social needs.

The resulting conceptual model highlights key dimensions such as physical and psychological well-being, economic and social justice, public welfare, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of cultural and historical identity. Although expressed through poetic and literary forms, these dimensions can be interpreted as lasting strategies for envisioning and constructing an ideal and balanced city within the Iranian cultural tradition.

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