



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

Hamidreza Saremi ¹ , Mana Vahidbafandeh ² 

1. Associate Professor, Department of Urban Planning, Faculty of Arts, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author) Email: saremi@modares.ac.ir
2. PhD Candidate in Urban Planning, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran. Email: mana.vahidbafandeh@modares.ac.ir

Article Info

Article type:
Research Article

Article history:

Received: 04 December 2024
Received in revised form: 22 August 2025
Accepted: 03 September 2025
Published online: 22 December 2025

Keywords:

Ferdowsi, Iranian-Islamic Utopia, Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, Utopia, Wisdom.

Cite this article: Saremi, H.; Vahidbafandeh, M. (2025). The Iranian–Islamic Utopia from the Perspective of Abolqasem Ferdowsi Tousi. *Social Theories of Muslim Thinkers*, 15(4): 59-90. <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.384445.1742>



© The Author(s).

Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jstmt.2025.384445.1742>

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 (Moftakhar, 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.

Author Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conceptualization of the article and writing of the original and subsequent drafts.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Ethical Considerations: The authors avoided data fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and any form of misconduct.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Abbaspour Esfandan, Hassanali, & Ranjbar, Ahmad. (2014). Manifestations of utopia and the ideal ruler in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*: A study of the story of Siavash. *Mystical and Mythological Literature*, 10(35).

Bagheri, Hamideh, & Khojiev, Mohammad. (2020). An examination of utopia in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. *Studies in Literature, Mysticism, and Philosophy*, 5(4).

Bina, Yousef. (2024). Dystopia and its types in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*. *Epic Knowledge and Wisdom*, 1(1), 23–42.

Claeys, Gregory. (2020). *Utopia: The history of an idea*. London, England: Thames & Hudson.

Dehqani Jafari, Mahmoud. (2011). The utopia of the Sage of Tus in the *Shahnameh*. *Iranian Studies Research*, 1(1), 1–12.

Hosseini, Maryam. (2006). Women's utopia. *Women in Development and Politics*, 4(3), 117–131.

Kumar, Krishna. (1987). *Utopia and anti-utopia in modern times*. London, England: Basil Blackwell.

Levitas, Ruth. (1990). *The concept of utopia*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Mannheim, Karl. (1943). *Ideology and utopia: An introduction to the sociology of knowledge*. London, England: Routledge.

Moftakhari, Hossein. (2014). Iran and Islam: Iranian identity and Islamic heritage. *Historical Inquiries*, 4(2), 93–111.

More, Thomas. (1516). *Utopia*. Habsburg Netherlands.

Nazari, Najmeh. (2010). A comparison of utopia in Ferdowsi and Sa‘di. *Mysticism in Persian Literature*, 2.

Plato. (1943). *The Republic* (trans. not specified). New York, NY.

Tabatabaei, Vahid. (2020). *Photography in the post-utopian condition: A study of the works of Robert Frank and Diane Arbus in America during the 1950s and 1960s*. Tehran, Iran: Ketaab-e Pergar.

Zarrinkoub, Abdolhossein. (1991). *Aristotle and the art of poetry*. Tehran, Iran: Amir Kabir.