

An Amplification on the Semiotics and Solutions of the Semantic Theory of Ferdinand de Saussure in the Historical Houses of the Qajar Period in the Cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia

Abstract

To explain the symbols and signs in the field of linguistics, there is an approach called symbolism or semiotics. Ferdinand de Saussure, as one of the first pioneers in the field of linguistics, believed that each of the signs that exist in the structure of linguistics, constantly had a cause and a defect that granted them meaning; furthermore, this method includes other areas in addition to the linguistic structure. In the meantime, architecture has not been an exception to this rule due to its artistic structure, and throughout the history of world architecture, it has always been explored by architects in various architectural designs. Among the historical monuments in Iran, those related to the Qajar period, specifically located in the cities of northwestern Iran, namely Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia are studied in this paper. In this study, which emphasizes both interpretive-historical events and the interpretation and meaning of symbols and signs in architecture based on Saussure theories, the functional and conceptual causes of residential spaces from Saussure's semantic perspective is studied in the mentioned cities of Ardebil, Tabriz and Urmia due to having residential houses rich in Qajar culture and architecture. The results indicate that the structures of each building are different in the formation of meaning and architectural concepts in that area, nonetheless, the principles of using the signs in each of the houses introduced in each city are similar.

Research aims:

1. Introducing the symbols and signs used in the historical houses of the Qajar period in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia and the visual and conceptual analogy of each of the signs in the structures used.
2. Assessing the quantitative and qualitative status of historical spaces and houses in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia.

Research questions:

1. What are the symbols of the historical houses of the Qajar period in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia according to the semantic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure?
2. What is the purpose of symbolism and marking in the historical houses of the Qajar period in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz, Urmia?

Keywords: Symbolism, Qajar Historical Houses, Semantic Theory, Ferdinand de Saussure.

Introduction

Iranian architecture has undergone many changes during the Islamic period and these alternations can be depicted in each of the historical stages and geographical regions of Iran. Many of the artworks and monuments of the Qajar era have survived till today. Currently, understanding the nature of these works and their characteristics can play an important role in acknowledging the exact history of architecture in Islamic Iran. In the Qajar period, the cities of northwestern Iran, especially Tabriz, were considered due to the concentration of political and economic forces, hence, many buildings related to this historical period have remained. There are several approaches to the temporal and spatial requirements of historical monuments. One of these approaches is related to Ferdinand de Saussure, who introduces the sign as a "physical" and at the same time "meaningful" subject. According to Saussure, the value of each sign finds meaning in the simultaneous presence of other signs and in connection with them. He considers one of the important topics in semantics to be the subject of different levels of meaning. The first level is the main meaning or reference that indicates the main function of the achievable performance of a subject. The next level is called meaning or implication, which has a symbolic and representative nature. Given the breadth of sign knowledge, it can be concluded that the elements in the

architectural space are subject to concepts that are made possible by the knowledge of semiotic knowledge.

Regarding the background of the present study, it should be said that an independent work with this title has not been written so far, however, a number of works have examined the houses of the Qajar period. An article entitled "Semiotic Analysis of the Fields Affecting the Architectural Decorations of the Qajar period" has been written by Poyafar and Sattari (2018). In this work, the author has studied the influence of the West on Qajar architectural decorations with a semiotic approach. Another article entitled "Reflection on the semiotics of the interior spaces of Qajar houses in Qazvin from the perspective of Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Peirce and Umberto Eco" has been written by Sakhvat Doost and Alborzi (۲۰۱۸) in which Qajar houses are analyzed in Qazvin based on the theories of the mentioned theorists. However, the houses in question in the present study, namely in the cities of Tabriz, Urmia and Ardabil have not been studied so far.

Therefore, the present study investigates the functional and conceptual causes of residential house spaces from a semiotic perspective of Saussure's semantics in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia due to having residential houses from the culture and architecture of the Qajar period. The present qualitative research is composed of several different methods, which include an interpretive-historical approach to the subject under discussion. In the first stage, basic information has been obtained from the biographies, critiques and descriptions of each of the works and surviving examples of the Qajar period.

Conclusion

According to Saussure, understanding the signs is effective in identifying how they function and in the language of architecture of a particular period. Saussure uses semantics from a wide range of semantics and uses an object or work of art to express his intended concepts and meanings. From the issues raised in this study, it can be concluded that the symbols of historical houses of the Qajar period in the cities of Ardabil, Tabriz and Urmia are related to its semantic and content codes, which is based on Saussure's theory that each sign has meaning and concept that depends on the specific period of which the sign has emerged. Studies have shown that the structure of historical houses of the Qajar period is derived from their two socio-cultural and hermeneutic levels. These two levels are structurally contained semantic and syntactic concepts and codes in the structure of houses. At the hermeneutic level, items such as semantics, rhetorical tricks, sign

games, direct meanings and implicit meanings have had an impact on the construction of Qajar houses. Socially and culturally, the intermediate relationship, semantics, time, relationship with context and intercultural relationship have been effective in the construction of these houses.

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