

Recognizing the Distinctiveness of Traditional Iranian Houses based on Physical, Social and Cultural Components of Identity

Abstract

Despite the development and progress in contemporary housing, up till the present time, this issue bestows fundamental problems and weaknesses in the society of contemporary Iran. One of the most significant explanations for this is the disregard of the structures of Iranian residential architecture towards identity in the previous periods, which is somehow attached to the Iranian human identity. Perhaps returning to the basic principles of Iranian housing and recognizing and applying the correct principles of their construction is the main solution to the complications that have plagued contemporary Iranian housing as traditional houses in all historical times and periods have best encountered the needs of their residents and users. Considering that one of the ways to detect the identity of the structures of traditional Iranian housing is to study the identity related elements in their architecture. By using a descriptive-analytical method and through the study of various library and documentary sources along with their content, this research has been able to identify and extract indicators and sub-indicators related to such factors. The results of the research indicate that with the correct knowledge of the elements and characteristics of the identity of the architecture of traditional Iranian houses and their optimal and principled use in contemporary housing, the current complications of users living in such spaces can be raised considerably. Of course, this does not mean that these factors and elements were used in contemporary residential architecture in the same way as in the past, nevertheless, it is compulsory to harmonize them with the innovative residential architecture.

Research aims:

1. Recognizing the identity of traditional Iranian houses.
2. Familiarity with the physical, cultural and social elements of identity in Iranian households.

Research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of traditional Iranian houses?
2. How can the pattern of traditional Iranian houses be applied in the present era?

Keywords: Traditional house, Iranian architecture, distinctiveness, identity.

Introduction

Traditional Iranian architecture has always been a manifestation of indigenous-traditional patterns throughout the history of Iran. These patterns originate from the individual and collective culture of the individuals that were formed, developed, manifested and perfected by such people in the context of time. Traditional Iranian architectural works, originating from the culture, spiritual and divine worldview of Iranians have had fixed and antiquated attributes that have had different physical representations to respond to temporal and spatial conditions. Principles that have created an architecture with a historical continuity of three thousand years and that is successful in creating places. With the advent of modern architecture, these fundamental and valuable principles of the past architecture of Iran lost their strong position and were replaced by principles that have no adaptation to the identity structures of this region. This is more evident in the architecture of residential spaces (houses). The basic belief of the research is that by referring again to the forgotten or lost principles and values of traditional architecture, especially traditional residential architecture, and reviving these values, the current unhealthy living conditions can be enhanced. In this way, it is necessary to first recognize the identity-building structures of traditional Iranian houses and after adapting and coordinating these principles with the new architecture, such features should be applied in contemporary housing. Unfortunately, despite numerous researches to identify the components and recognizing elements of traditional architecture, a large number of contemporary Iranian architectural community still do not have a proper understanding of the principles of traditional architecture. Therefore, in this article, the author intends to examine the three components of physical, social and cultural identity-making in the architecture of traditional Iranian houses and classify the parameters associated with each feature. To do this, the concept of physical, social and cultural identity in architecture ought to be studied first and then such components should be searched in Iranian historical houses.

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, several works have examined the elements of identity in traditional Iranian houses. An article entitled "Identifying Elements in the Traditional Architecture of Iranian Homes" is a case study of the House of the Apostles in Yazd: by Bemanian et al; in this article, the authors conclude that components of national identity such as national values and norms, myths and national symbols of cultural and geographical heritage have been influential in traditional house architecture. In another article entitled "Identifying elements in the traditional Iranian architecture of Iranian houses (a case study of the House of Pride of Boroujerd) by Khomsloui and Sajjadzadeh (2013) has been written and the authors are driven by the entry of foreign cultural elements and changes in the identity of the Iranian society has made it necessary to recognize the elements of identity in traditional houses. In the mentioned researches, the physical, cultural and social elements have not been directly addressed.

The research method used in this paper is descriptive-analytical and aims to identify the physical, social and cultural identity elements of traditional Iranian houses. The research process is as follows: first, in the theoretical part of the research, by studying library and documentary sources, comprehensive information on topics such as identity, historical houses, architecture of traditional Iranian houses, as well as physical, social and cultural Iranian traditional houses are presented. Then, by categorizing the obtained data and information and analyzing their content, the parameters and physical, cultural and social factors of identity of traditional Iranian houses are identified. In general, the process of conducting the following research is accomplished in three stages: In the first stage, reviewing the research literature on the categories of identity, traditional house architecture, identity-making factors of house architecture will take place. In the second stage, classification and organization of information and data obtained and their content analysis is considered and finally in stage three the extraction and identification of physical, social and cultural identifiers of traditional Iranian houses is obtained.

Conclusion

In recent decades, traditional Iranian housing has not been able to withstand the urban structure, lifestyle and new construction pattern and the opportunity to express and preserve its identity and by accelerating population growth and migration, it has encouraged uneducated and hasty crowds, also the practice of mass construction, and the summing up of all building motives in business, the relationship between housing architecture and the characteristics and nuances of Iranian life was gradually severed. Therefore, in order to reconstruct the forgotten pattern of the indigenous life of the Iranian people with changes commensurate with today's life, it seems necessary to pay attention to housing in the past architecture of Iran. It is worth mentioning that the re-use of the principles and rules of traditional Iranian housing in contemporary urban housing, in the first place requires a correct and principled knowledge of all the components of the architectural identity of such historic houses. Hence, the present study scrutinizes and recognizes the three main components of the identity of the architecture of traditional Iranian houses, including physical, social and cultural, and classifies the indicators and sub-indices related to each of them separately. While listing all the parameters related to these three components, the author has provided an example of each feature in order to determine exactly which of the proposed factors has been applied in which specific part of the historic houses. It is hoped that by accurately and meticulously recognizing all the elements and identifying factors of traditional Iranian houses, including social, cultural, physical, political, religious, etc., and their adaptation to the new residential architecture, the current situation of housing in Iran will be improved and this study will be an important and effective step.

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