

## The progression of the utilization of Islamic local culture in the formation of housing spaces (Case study: housing in Dehdasht city)

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**Abstract:** In this paper we analyze the concept of culture in the indigenous and modern architecture in which we are looking for similarities and differences between them. Abundance of ethnic in Iran due to the different culture is the main cause of symptom and symbols which has different meaning in different cultures. Dehdasht's architecture is one of the richest examples of vernacular architecture that has faced changes due to the other cultural elements especially the influence of western culture. During the last half-century the architecture of this city has faced crisis because of the economic and social conditions. One of the most important issues is the influence of cultural values in this city which has caused problems in the field of housing because of the lack of coordination between people and governmental institutions. According to the past guidelines and using patterns, like yards and open spaces, it would be good reason for mental relaxation of the people.

**Key words:** Culture; Vernacular architecture; Modern architecture; Symbol; Economy

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### 1. Introduction

According to the title, this study analyzes the concept of culture in two types of architecture; therefore, knowing this kind of architecture seems necessary. Because of that, in order to understand the issue more clearly defined, providing a clear definition of the indigenous and modern architecture with reference to the scholars who had enough studies in this field, paves the way in comparing and examining the concept of architecture in these two fields.

According to the Paul Oliver's definition of vernacular architecture, this kind of architecture is a kind of architecture which grows from within the societies, and during the times, it adapts itself with social, environmental and technological conditions and evolves and it becomes compatible with values, economy and way of life in cultures that generate them. In summary, vernacular architecture is a kind of architecture which is people's architecture, it is produced by people not for them (Noor Mohammad, 2009). In this definition, one of the main features of vernacular architecture which is people's participation in building, it is considerable and also paying attention to the values and its harmony with nature.

In another place, Rappaport defines vernacular architecture as: this type of housing (vernacular) is a spontaneous expression of changing values and it is a house and world view and it is a way of life (Rappaport, 2009). In his point of view vernacular

architecture tries to create balance with nature rather than trying to dominate it and they know the reason of its excellence over stylistic architecture which investigates the relationship between the human made environment and nature made environment (ibid.).

There are various definitions about different perspectives which we will refer to them briefly.

Modern means being general, new and however being new in the outside world is precedent in making the world of though new. Most of the people believe that "modernity" means triumph of the human reasoning over the beliefs (mythical, religious, ethical, philosophical belief, etc.), development of the "scientific" and "wisdom" (rationality) and adding the ethics of critical perspective which are associated with: "manufacturing", "trading", formation of the "rules of exchange" and gradually domination of the "civil society" on "government". In this regard, modernity is a set of "culture", "politics", "economics" and philosophy" which has been growing from the fifteenth century, in other words, from the emergence of "new astronomy", invention of "print" and discovery of America up to now or to the last decades (Pakzad, 2010). Modernity means" an attempt to remove things that Fransis Bacon defined as "idols of mind". It means the convictions and cultural belief which formed the cultural memory of the west in middle centuries (ibid.).

### 2. Definition of culture

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At the age of Voltaire (late eighteenth century), there were two attitudes on the scientific studies on human communities. The first one emphasized on moods and its most important one was the Philosophy of History by Hegel (1801) and the second one underlined traditions and mores and their pioneers were Adelung and Herder. These two attitudes were presented in a book by Voltaire entitled "Essay on the Manners of Nations (or 'Universal History') (1756)". According to Adelung, culture means decorum and training and Herder regards it as nurture of talents. The first appropriate application and definition of "culture" was initiated at Taylor era. In 1871, he bravely named his book "Primitive Culture" and presented a formal and straightforward of "culture". Some of the most applicable definitions of "culture" are as follows:

Taylor (1871): Culture is a set of knowledge, art, religion, law, morality customs and any type of capability and habit which man obtains in the society as a member of it (Darioush Ashouri, 2005).

Wissler (1920): Culture is all social activities by its most extensive meaning such as language, ownership system, decorum, techniques and profession, art and related issues (Darioush Ashouri, 2005).

Lowie (1937): Culture is a series of things that an individual obtains from its society, i.e. beliefs, customs, art, habits, clothes, food and professions in the form of an inheritance by formal and informal education and teaching systems.

**2.1. Culture and civilization**



**Fig. 1:** Rappaport has presented a theory of culture as determining factor in the form of house  
 Source: a review of theoretical fundamentals in architecture-2005

To confirm the theory of "non-material determining factors on the form of building", first some theories must be rejected which regard the main causes as climate and technology. According to the role of climate in form of architecture claims that the main preoccupation of each individual is creation of a shelter due to climactic factors and Rappaport regards it as the determinism of climate in determining form of building and here, a house.

Rappaport asks a question. What is the reason for the diversity forms in the same climactic places? For example, in Greece, there are both houses with courtyard and those without a courtyard. In southern America, which was not the origin of the houses with courtyard, why such type of houses could be seen? Whether the determining factor here is climate as well? Rather, in a land where climate do not exert any pressure on its residents, there could be seen a variety in the construction of different shelters. The main examples of these conditions

Until the time of Taylor, there were not main differences between civilization and culture. However, after this era, three different theories on the difference between civilization and culture were emerged which the most significant of them was the definition proposed by Alfred Weber. He regarded civilization as a series of objective, technical and social data and related culture to some religious practices such as religion, philosophy and art. He believed that the civilization is accumulative and un-restorable, and the components of culture are so changeable (Darioush Ashouri, 2007).

**2.2. Social culture and relations**

Individuals form the essential components of a society. Each individual has a specific role in a family and each member has some responsibilities versus other members. Various activities manifest themselves in the area of architecture.

Culture-oriented researchers present a very important theory in this regard. They believe that the house in each society is typical of culture at that society (Gholam Hossein M'emarian, 2005).

Based on a social-cultural attitude, building is a product of nature, society, ideology, life style, mental and social requirements, material needs, personal and common needs, economic resources and accessible techniques (Gholam Hossein M'emarian, 2005).



could be seen in Oceania (GholamHosseinMe'marian, 2005).

Fig. 1 and 2: two houses with four platforms in Abianeh and Zavareh despite climactic variety. The similarity in the application of a map shows the effectiveness of other factors except for climate in the selection of the form of buildings (M'emarian 2005).

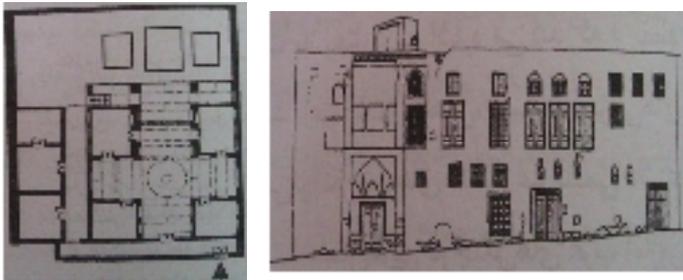
**2.3. Social-cultural factors**

The form of a house is the result of physical pressures or any other relevant reason. Rather, it is the result of social-cultural factors. The form of house could be changed due to climactic situations, building construction methods, accessible materials and technology but they could not be regarded as primary factors. Rappaport regards them as second degree or shift making factors.

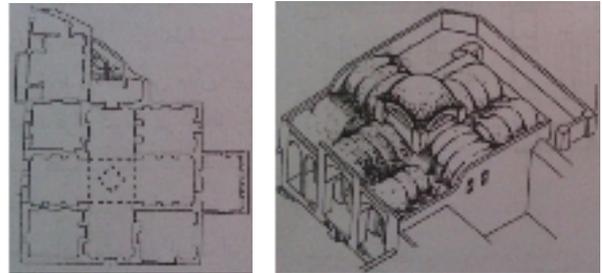
Here, Rappaport regards religion as a very important driving factor. This factor has the

capability (in primary societies and pre-industrial era) to affect fundamentally the form of houses and buildings and guides them in a special form. The religion present a definite picture of universe and building designers attempt to show this picture in their own building. Rapport interestingly present an

example as tribal houses in an African country named Mali. In two villages of Dogan and Bambara in Mali, any social even and issue can have two aspects including material and applied, and symbolic.



**Fig. 2:** Four-plat form buildings in Zavareh  
Source: a review of theoretical basics in architecture-2005



**Fig. 3:** Four-plat form buildings in Abianeh  
Source: a review of theoretical basics in architecture-2005

While providing he land owner with profitability, agricultural lands are a reflection of universe order and discipline; their villages are constructed in pairs to indicate earth and land, and farms are formed in a spiral form because the native people in the villages believe that house is a model of universe in a small scale size. Such cultural and social factors affect a wide spectrum of other issues. For example, one behavioral pattern of Iranians during their ancient history has been and is "caring the guests". Each Iranian considers paying respect to guest as a critical necessity. To know the history of this behavior, it is possible to refer to various documents. The existing documents confirm this behavioral characteristic since the time of Korus, Sassanid era and since the time of Islam submission by Iranian. This behavior manifests itself in buildings in different shapes. The assignment of a space for guest is one reaction to this behavior. The formation of special distinct building for guests has been common in some classes of society and what is regarded as "an exterior place" in building confirms this issue (Gholam Hussein M'emarian, 2005).

**2.4. Social-cultural borders and architectural borders**

In 1970s and 1980s, the thinking of Rappaport and Oliver were developed, and social and cultural

criteria were considered as a tool for architecture and civil engineering.

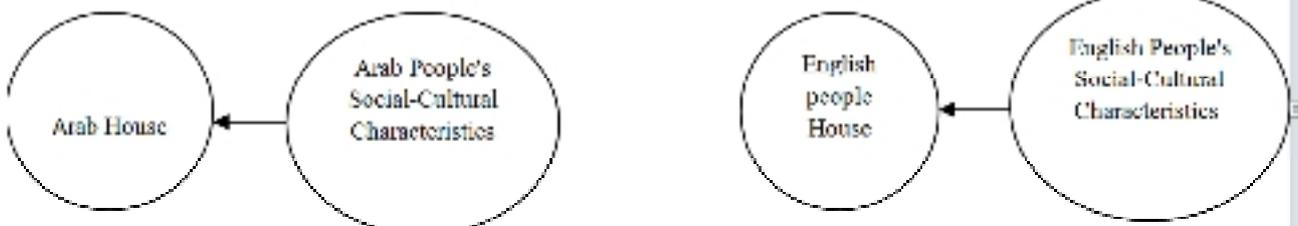
As climactic attitude developed among different lands, each land tried to present its architecture based on its alphabet, words and grammar. The following quotation approaches us to cultural and architectural borders,

"The house of an Englishman is his castle".  
"Welcome to the house of an Arab, this is your house"

The above quotations are derived from two different cultures. In the first, it is indicated that house has the same function as a castle for English people and it has a highly private space. Unlike other European lands, do not like multi-family buildings and are interested in a separate and independent four-wall houses. The second quotation indicates the behavioral characteristics of a Muslim Arab. The quotation is started with a welcoming sentence, what could be seen in Eastern countries and especially Muslim countries. In the continuance of the quotation, the host offers his home to the guest to show respect to the opposite side. Behavioral patterns are seen in the body of building and a house as well.

It could be said that Arab houses have dimensions which distinguish those from other houses (here, English houses) (Gholam Hussein M'emarian, 2005).

It is possible to show this distinction in the social-cultural aspects.



**Fig. 4:** Rappaport presents culture theory as a determining factor in the form of a house  
Source: a review of theoretical fundamentals in architecture-2005

**3. House**

The word "Khaneh" (house) which is today widely applied was used for referring to "room" in

the past. A private room was called *Vestakh* and *Vesagh* and the word "Sara" was used to refer to "house" at those times. In Southern Iran, "*Khaneh Sara*" was common. When man came out of cave, the first thing he need was a shelter or house, so it could be said that the oldest form of a house is house.

In the houses, depending on the scale, a delicate distinction is created between personal and public life and its elements include interior and exterior parts, *Barband* (post tagged), courtyard and its gardens, corridor, Hashti, etc. sub-scale was used in the construction of smaller houses, and the most beautiful houses are created by sub-scale. In the plan and design of such houses, Iranian golden proportion is utilized which is constructed of a rectangular in a six-Zelman. Five-vestibule, three-door and other courtyard elements are based on this proportion (Mohammad KarimPirnia, 2006).

### 3.1. House from the perspective of Islam

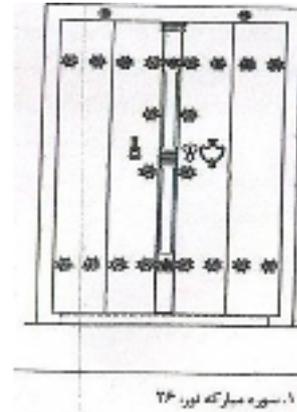
Islam has presented valuable and constructive teachings on all the aspects of human life. Although, perhaps, the issue of house and residency is not something important from the view of people, Islam pays special attention to house, its residents and man's responsibility toward house (Islamic Theology, 2006).

In the past, in Arabian culture, everyone was allowed to enter a house from entrance gate or ceiling of another house without permission. Assuming that the residents of such houses required the minimum privacy right for doing some practices, such way of entrance was a type of violation of the privacy of those residents. Islamic religion significantly changed such way of behavior. The Prophet received divine inspiration and addressed the Muslims that "Oh Muslims, never enter any house without making the residents informed, say hello to the residents (and) this is better for you to do, hoping that you submit" (Islamic Theology).

The Prophet advices to Ali (peace upon him): "Oh Ali! Life is three things" a broad house, a beautiful woman and an agile horse".

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "somebody who constructs a house for showing pride and fame, he is forced to bear that house to the seventh floor till the Day of Judgment and the house appears like a burning fire around his neck. There is no way to forgive him expect his repentance" (Islamic Theology, (85) [247].

In Islamic lands, there has been a variety of solutions to make residents informed of entering the house including Knocker and ring. Knocker was used for men with rough noise and ring was used for women with a low voice. The researchers who work on culture and its relevant issues pay special attention to these topics (Gholam Hussein M'emarian, 2005).



**Fig. 5:** The application of knocker and ring on the door  
Source: a review of theoretical principles in architecture-2005

### 3.2. The types of houses

In Iran, based on climactic situations in its different parts, there are different houses such as *Galipoush* houses in Northern Iran, corridor-bearing houses in Western Iran, corridor- and platform-bearing in some parts and also other interesting forms of house construction. However, the main goal is to construct a house. With this view, constructions and covers are not the determining factors in formation of spaces, and they could be considered as instruments to change the final form of houses (Mohammad KarimPirnia, 2006).

If the climate is perceived as the main factor in designing of houses, there must be a small plan as well, while there are a good variety of houses in this small house.

### 4. Formation of Dehdasht city

Dehdasht civil context could be regarded as one of the most valuable and distinguished cities in terms of the value of architecture and local civil engineering. The old context of Dehdasht (BeladShapour) has a distinct identity, climate and culture. However, unfortunately, despite having such historical treasure related to Safavid era which was once called *TakhtGhapou*, the new city is forming regardless of some critical issues such as climate and culture.



**Fig 6:** A view of the historical context of Dehdasht city  
Source: the author-2013

The most of the residential buildings is devastated and of them, some parts or single rooms

in a scattered form are left which Gavbeh in this regard says:

"None of the residential houses was in a situation to create some designs in them through technical devices. As if these houses had three courtyards and three corridors. The height of domes was 4 m, the walls had some niche same big as the window, and they had two layers in some part. Along with such single corridor houses, there were apparently some

houses with a corridor and their corridor was located over the hub of entrance door. Civic residential buildings were constructed in one or two floors and sometime with cellar. In the covering of buildings, vault and Tovizeh, spring vault, lime vault (Taq cheshmeh , KhenjehPoush, dome(Gonbad) and semi-dome in different types could be seen (Gavbeh, 1980).



**Fig. 7:** The residential house plan in Dehdasht city, source: The Cultural Heritage Organization- 2011

In a remaining part of the building, an interesting example of additional covers could be seen, and in the most of houses, a thick layer of even black soil could be seen which would act as insulator.

has created a beautiful space and a wall heater is added to its central part (Gavbeh, 1980).



**Fig. 8:** A representation of the material in a traditional context  
Source: the author, 2012

In some houses, after entering a corridor-like space, there are two columns which follow the same main corridor. In the right and eastern part, there is another room which is linked to another room with a dome-like cover. The cruciform under central dome



**Fig. 9:** A representation of structure and the cover beneath the dome  
Source: the author, 2012

In the right and left direction of this room, there are other rooms with sufficient strength. There are reminders of the doors which connect a room to another room which the overall structure of a building could not be recognized due to their almost complete devastation.

The houses in new Dehdasht have similar plans and forms. The direction (northern-southern and eastern-western) has no meaning in this city and personal tastes dominate everything.

Unfortunately, due to the negligence of civil institutions, building constructors are not familiar with civil regulations and rules and the least attention has been paid to cultural, climactic and most importantly the issue of privacy in residential architecture. In addition, there could be seen the impact of western architecture in architectural plans which somehow negatively influences the families.

The similarities of the residential plans in Dehdasht city and the effect of western architecture on the formation of civil structure of Dehdasht city (the design of open plans and loss of privacy)



**Fig.10:** A representation of badly applied material in the new city of Dehdasht  
Source: the author, 2014

Architecture is something beyond history, form and style. Architecture is a result of environmental and cultural factors and the expression of life style of the people who have constructed it.

In the housing construction plan of Dehdasht new city, along with functional and technical issues, some superior values such as culture, tradition, philosophy, originality, civil identity and high human values must be taken into account in the design of buildings in proportion to civil design and regulations.

One of the most important parameters which could be seen in the housing construction plan of Dehdasht is economic considerations. As house construction deals with personal and limited capitals, and mainly attempts to achieve the maximum result with the minimum cost, is more debatable than other construction performances. In personal housing constructions, it could be seen that due to the economic shortages, many factors are neglected and the main goal is to construct a house. However, if technical and legal regulations and standards would provide by professional architects, a high quality output will be achieved. Hope that the current study positively affect the formation of Dehdasht new city.

**5. Conclusion**

**Table 1:** A comparison of local and contemporary houses in Dehdasht city

Climate	Privacy	Material	Climate	Privacy	Material
The houses have a central courtyard	In the residential houses, privacy is kept	Local material has been used	Some houses do not have courtyard	The privacy is not defined	The non-local modern materials are used
Have zones	General areas are distinct from other areas	The material of walls is made of sand and sometimes brick	The formation of city has happened without zone	The general and private areas are mixed	The material of walls is made of cement blocks
The houses have spaces appropriate to the seasons winter and summer	Private areas have privacy and are distinct from other areas	The façade of houses is made of plaster and soil	The houses are designed without considering climate	There is no definition for layering	In building facades, ceramic and tiles are used
The houses have cellar	Kitchen is located in a place where strangers cannot see there	Light colors are used in the facade of building	In these houses, cellar has no position	The kitchens are designed facing general area	The color of façade is selected based on personal tastes
The dimensions of openers are affected by climactic situations	Sanitary service is located out of sight of guests	A combination of sand, plaster and soil has provided the building with an interesting view	The dimensions of openers are affected by personal tastes	For comfort and easier access, the privacy of sanitary service is lost	An inappropriate combination of material has led to the emergence of the facades bereft of any identity

Source: the author-2014

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