

**An Inquiry into Iranian Architecture
Manifestation of Identity, Symbolism, and Power in
the Safavid's Public Buildings**

Rafooneh Mokhtarshahi Sani

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Prof. Dr. Elvan Yılmaz
Director (a)

I certify that this thesis satisfies the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Munther Mohammed
Chair, Department of Architecture

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture.

Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Numan
Supervisor

Examining Committee

-
1. Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Numan
 2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nakis Karamagarali
 3. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yonca Hurol

ABSTRACT

During the last decades, many developing countries including Iran have been faced serious identity challenges in almost all socio-cultural aspects. Architecture also, which always has had the major role in maintaining cultural and/or social identity, has experienced the similar dilemma. Therefore, questing for national/cultural identity has been one of the architectural priorities at recent times in Iran. On the other hand, architecture and its national/cultural characteristics usually have been based on past and traditional factors. Since the arrival of Islam (642) in Iran, it was only during the Safavid period that a local Iranian dynasty could have control over Iranian territory. Consequently, Safavid period is significantly important in defining Iranian religious belief, language and culture. From this time onward, Shiite doctrine has been the official religious belief in Iran, as well as use of Farsi language and renewing many Persian cultural factors.

The Iranian sociologist, Ali Shariati, who, nevertheless, expressed considerable criticism of the Safavids and the religious beliefs held during this period, has been one of the most popular scholars during the last decades among Iranians. In fact, Shariati's thoughts have been used as a foundation for the Iran Islamic revolution (1978-9) and as a result of this we have the current Iranian socio-cultural environment. Thus, it appears that for the purposes of investigating the Safavids and re-reading the architectural characteristics of public buildings during this period, the Shariati view is a helpful source. On the other hand, most of the Shariati's criticisms of the Safavids were related to political power. In order to understand the concept of this power, the work of the French philosopher, Michel Foucault is used as a major source of this study. Foucault's idea about power appears

to be relevant in respect of understanding the political power structure of the Safavids. On the other hand, Foucault was familiar with Iran as is evidenced by his various writings about the Iran Islamic revolution, in addition to his admiration for the Ali Shariati. In sum, Shariati and Foucault thoughts have been used as tool to accomplish exploring the power and religious belief during the Safavid period. However, since ‘power’ and ‘religious belief’ during this period created the Iranian ‘identity’ and these three factors have been manifested in architecture through ‘symbolism’, various thoughts regarding ‘symbolism’ and ‘identity’ have been studied.

The architectural study has focused on architecture of public buildings, since generally social/cultural identity and architectural characteristics have been manifested in this type of buildings. The sample study has been limited to Isfahan the capital city of Safavids and its major public buildings. Totally thirteen buildings, which have been the most important remained Safavid public buildings with almost the original layout, have been explored in the sample study. These buildings have been chosen with various functions such as palace, mosque, bridge, and madrasa to have a holistic view of Safavid public buildings.

The results of this study emphasized that the architecture of public buildings during this period was highly symbolized. Symbolism was in fact the language of this architecture to reflect Safavid’s contemplation on political power, religious belief, and identity. Accordingly, as a result of analyzing the architecture of the public buildings during the Safavid period and integrating those effective factors, the architectural characteristics of this period, can be placed into five categories: “floating impression”, “horizontality through repetition”, “inward-outward flow”, “illusion”, and “contrast & dualism”.

ÖZET

Son yıllarda, İran dahil, birçok gelişmekte olan ülkede, sosyo-kültürel alanların genelinde ciddi bir kimlik çelişkisi yaşanmaktadır. Mimarlık, her zaman kültürel ve/veya sosyal kimliği sürdürmekte büyük role sahip olmuştur. Bu nedenle, son zamanlarda İran'da ulusal/kültürel kimlik sorgulamasında, mimarlık öncelik taşıyan bir konuma gelmiştir.

Diğer taraftan, mimari ve onun ulusal/kültürel karakteristikleri, temelini genellikle geçmiş ve geleneksel faktörlere dayandırmaktadır. İslam'ın İran'a (642) gelmesiyle beraber, sadece Safavi Dönemi'nde, yerel İran'a ait bir hanedanın İran'a ait bölge üzerinde hakimiyeti gözlenir. Sonuç olarak, Safavi Dönemi'nin, İran'a ait dinsel inanç, lisan ve kültürün tanımlanmasında önemli bir etkisi olmuştur. Bu dönemle birlikte, Şii doktrini, İran'da resmi dinsel inanç olarak kabul görmüştür. Buna ilaveten Farsça ve yenilenen birçok fars kültürel değerlerinin de benimsenmesine olanak sağlamıştır.

İranlı sosyolog Ali Shariati, Safavi'leri ve o dönemdeki dini inançlarını oldukça fazla eleştirmesine rağmen, son yıllarda İran'luların en popüler araştırmacılarından biridir. Hatta, Shariati'nin fikirleri, İran İslam Devrimi'nin (1978-9) temelini oluşturmuştur. Bunun sonucu olarak, İran'a ait mevcut sosyo-kültürel çevre oluşmuştur.

Böylece, Safavi'leri araştırmak ve bu dönemin kamusal binalarının mimari karakteristiklerinin yeniden tanımlanması için, Shariati'nin görüşleri, yardımcı bir kaynaktır. Shariati'nin Safavi'lere karşı eleştirilerinin çoğu, siyasal iktidarla bağlantılıydı. Bu siyasal iktidarın altında yatan fikri anlamak için, yapılan çalışmada Fransız filozof Michel Foucault'un çalışmaları ana kaynak olarak kullanılmıştır.

Foucault'un iktidar hakkındaki fikirleri, Safavi'lerin siyasi güç yapısını anlamak açısından, önemli bir rol taşımaktadır.

Diğer taraftan, Foucault'un İran hakkında bilgi sahibi ve Ali Shariati'nin hayranı olduğu İran İslam Devrimi hakkında yazdığı çeşitli yazılardan anlaşılmaktadır. Kısaca, Şeriat ve Foucault'un düşünceleri Safavi Dönemi esnasında iktidar ve dinsel inançların araştırılması açısından, bir araç olarak kullanılmıştır.

Ancak, İran'ın 'Kimliği'nin' oluşmasında o dönemin 'İktidar' ve 'Dinsel inancı' etkili olmuştur. Belirtilen bu üç faktör (Kimlik, İktidar ve Dinsel İnanç) mimaride sembolizmi ortaya koymaktadır. Buna bağlı olarak, sembolizm ve kimlik ile ilgili çeşitli düşünceler irdelenmiştir. Bu çalışma, kamusal bina mimarisine odaklanmıştır. Genellikle sosyo-kültürel kimlik ve mimari karakteristikleri, bu tip binalarda daha belirgin olarak kendini göstermektedir. Bu örnek çalışma, Safavi'lerin başkenti olan Isfahan ve O'nun ana kamusal binaları ile sınırlandırılmıştır.

Toplam olarak, Safavi dönemine ait, on üç tane orjinal düzenlemeye sahip, en önemli kamusal binalar örnek olarak araştırılmıştır. Bunlar saray, cami, köprü ve medrese gibi Safavi Dönemi kamusal binalarının bütünselliğini gösteren farklı fonksiyonlardan seçilmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın sonucu, Safavi Dönemi'ne ait kamusal bina mimarisinin, yüksek ölçüde sembolik etkisinin olduğunu vurguluyor. Sembolizm, Safavilerin siyasi iktidar, dinsel inanç ve kimliğini yansıtan mimari bir dil oluşturmaktadır. Safavi Dönemi, kamusal binaların mimari ve ona bağlı kavramlarının analizi sonucu olarak, bu dönem mimari karakteristiklerini beş grup altında toplamak mümkündür. Bunlar, değişken/hareketli etki, yatayda tekrar, iç-dış akış, yanılısama ve ikili – tezat olarak sıralanabilir.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It has been long time, since the arrival of Islam (642 AD), which Iran has been inseparable part of Muslim cultures. Many Iranian scientists, philosophers, poets, and artists have been contributed in development of Muslim cultures enormously. That is the same for other Muslim cultures too; however, interpretation of Islam is not the same among diverse Islamic countries.

In fact, religious beliefs generally have different meanings for various cultures. This reality in Islam, still, is more apparent because it is a social religion, which has advices for everyday life. Consequently, in each region, interpretation of Islam has been influenced by other factors such as culture, socio-economical factors, political powers, other religions, etc. For instance, it is well known that Islam is opposed to nationalism. In Iran, but, Islam or rather the Iranian interpretation of Islam, known as Shiism, has acted as a foundation for Iranian nationalism.

As expressions of Islam are various in different societies, they also change within the same society. For example, contemporary Turkish or Egyptian people may not interpret Islam the same as they did in previous centuries. Then, to talk about Islamic cultures, it is better to consider interpretations and expressions rather than just a single “Islam”. Since these expressions are different from country to country and from region to region, we are dealing with complex of manifestations in architectures. On the other hand, this multiplicity of manifestations does not deny the

real fact of shared characteristics of being Muslim. In other words, it is better to look at Islamic cultures as a large puzzle, which although pieces are different from each other, together they make a single image.

Iran, though, has special place in this puzzle, on account of its Shiite religious belief. Iran, like other parts of the Islamic world, upheld the Sunni belief up to the Safavid period (16th- 18th). During this period, the official religion of Iran has been changed to Shiism. This transformation has not only had a far-reaching impact on Iranian culture and, consequently, its architecture, but also it was the first step towards establishing a national identity. From that time until now, Iranians have upheld the same religion, belief, and language.

During the Safavid period, many Iranian (Persian) cultural and traditional factors were integrated into Islam. In the architecture of this period, many architectural forms, designs, and layouts have deep roots in the pre-Islamic period of Iranian architecture. In respect of such integration, the distinguished Iranian contemporary sociologist, Ali Shariati, had referred to Safavid Shiism as a tradition and a custom rather than an ideology (Shariati 2008, p.37). He emphasized such division in order to make Safavid Shiism understood correctly. He stated (Shariati1979b; Shariati2008, p.111) Shiism should be a revolutionary belief, which could bring better future for Shi'a Muslims. Shariati's ideas which found great popularity among ordinary people in Iran before Islamic revolution, very soon expanded all over the country. That is why many scholars (Bayat 1990) believed that he had an important role in creating the Iran revolution in 1978-79.

However, since Safavid period, Shiism in Iran has had fundamental role in defining Iranian culture, identity, nationalism, etc. In fact, because Shiism has such great influence in almost every aspect of life in Iran, Shariati tried to develop the

Iranian understanding of Shiite belief. Overall, these considerations emphasize the significant role of Safavids and Shiism in Iranian culture.

In Iran history, Safavid period stands rather close to the modern time [Appendix 2]. Thus, the origin of many cultural and social factors in today Iran should come back to this period. For example, traditional ceremonies of Nowruz, Charshanbe-suri, Sizde-bedar, Taziye, etc. at present time are very similar (if not the same) to the Safavid period.

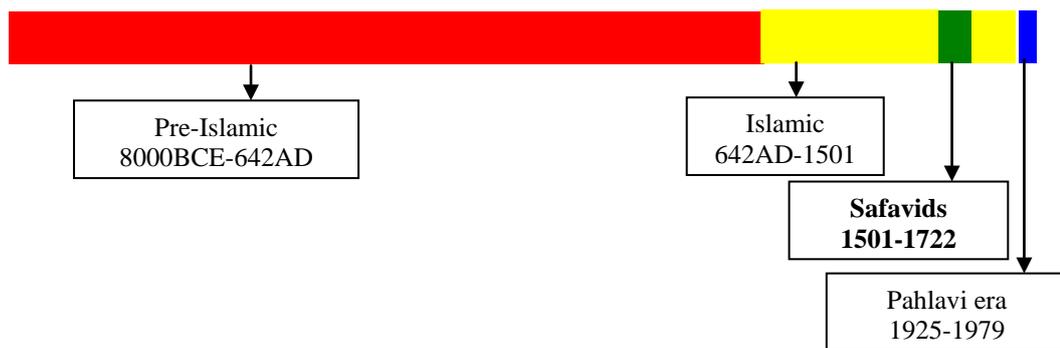


Figure 1: The summarized diagram of Iran history timeline

In addition, Safavids were the only Iranian dynasty after Islam, which had control over all Iranian territory. Roger, the specialist in Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, in replying the question of ‘why is Safavid history important?’ states:

“...first, the whole of the area historically considered as constituting the heartlands of Iran, was reunited under the rule of a Persian king for the first time since the Arab conquest...second, Shah Isma’il I declared the Ithna’Ashari rite of Shi’i Islam to be the official religion of the Safavid state. This was the first time since the advent of Islam that a major Islamic state had taken this step...third, it should not be forgotten that Iran, under the greatest of the Safavid shahs, Shah Abbas I, reached a level of power and prosperity never before achieved in Iran’s post-Islamic history...”(Roger1995)

Cleveland also states that after Mongol invasions, during the sixteen century, the central Islamic lands recovered their political unity and cultural vitality within a new imperial synthesis represented by the Mughal Empire of Delhi in the east, the

Safavid Empire of Iran in the center, and the Ottoman Empire in the west (Cleveland 2004, p.37). Safavid architecture, also, has been known as one of distinguishable types of Islamic architecture. For example, Hoag refers to the Safavida as one of the great innovators in Islamic architecture development. Hoag claims that three Islamic empires; Safavids, Ottomans, and Mughal differed from all previous Islamic regimes because:

“...each had developed a certain self-consciousness, a kind of national self-awareness similar to the contemporary evolution which from the culturally rather homogenous lands of the Middle Ages created the varied European nations we know today. Each of the three adapted the architectural forms, ornament, and materials locally available and made of them a unique and wholly individual style ...” (Hoag, In Alsac 1997, p. 447)

In the broadly accepted classification of Iranian architecture according to the Iranian architecture scholar ‘Karim Pirnia’ (Pirnia 2005), Isfahani style (architectural style of Safavid period) has been differentiated from other types of Iranian architecture. His classification consists of five styles of Pre-Islamic: Parsi and Parti styles, Post Islamic: Khorasani, Razi, Azari, and Isfahani styles. This classification emphasizes once more on importance of architectural characteristics of this period in Iranian architecture.

In spite of such importance, although there are many studies related to Iranian and Safavid architecture, most of them are limited in investigating the development of forms, figures, and decoration. In other words, there are few studies, which focus on architectural backgrounds and effective factors in creation of those forms and figures. In fact, uses of traditional characteristics and looking for originality have been the primary focus of today’s Iran architecture. By considering this fact that Safavids acted as founders of Iranian cultural and social identity, then Safavid architecture also might stand as foundation of today’s Iranian architecture. In that

case, working more through searching in architectural backgrounds, reasons, and philosophy behind the Safavid architecture might be a useful approach to apply those traditional factors in contemporary architecture.

Accordingly, this study has been tried to open a new way for understanding the traditional architecture of Iran during the Safavid period. Interpreting the religious and political architectural symbols in Islamic architecture and especially in Shiite doctrine appears to be an original look toward the past. During the Safavid period, political power and religious belief joined each other to define an Iranian identity. These three aspects of ‘identity’, ‘religious belief’, and ‘power’ have been manifested in architecture of especially public buildings through ‘symbols’. The relationship between those factors can be summarized in a three dimensional diagram:

However, all these factors were influential on people. Then people or in better words, society made the relationship between those effective factors, while architecture was in the core of pyramid.

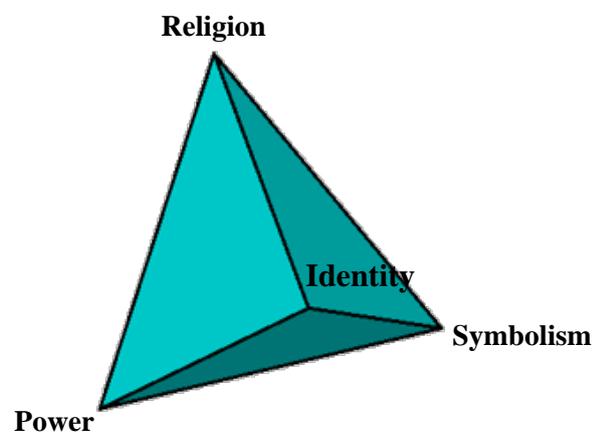


Figure 2: Four effective factors in formation of public buildings architecture during the Safavid period

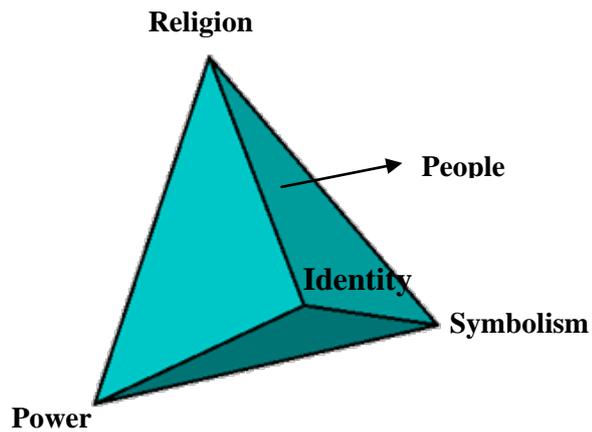


Figure 3: Determining role of people on four effective factors in Safavid public buildings

However, for different buildings, some of these factors were more important. The diagram might be observed as a dice, which its view can change but nothing is going to change in essence. All the factors are related together. Therefore, it depends from which point of view and for which type of building, the architecture of this period is studied. In other words, four sides of this diagram show the four possible factors to analyze the architecture of this period. Each time one of these factors might stand at the peak of diagram (center), to show the superiority of that factor over the others.

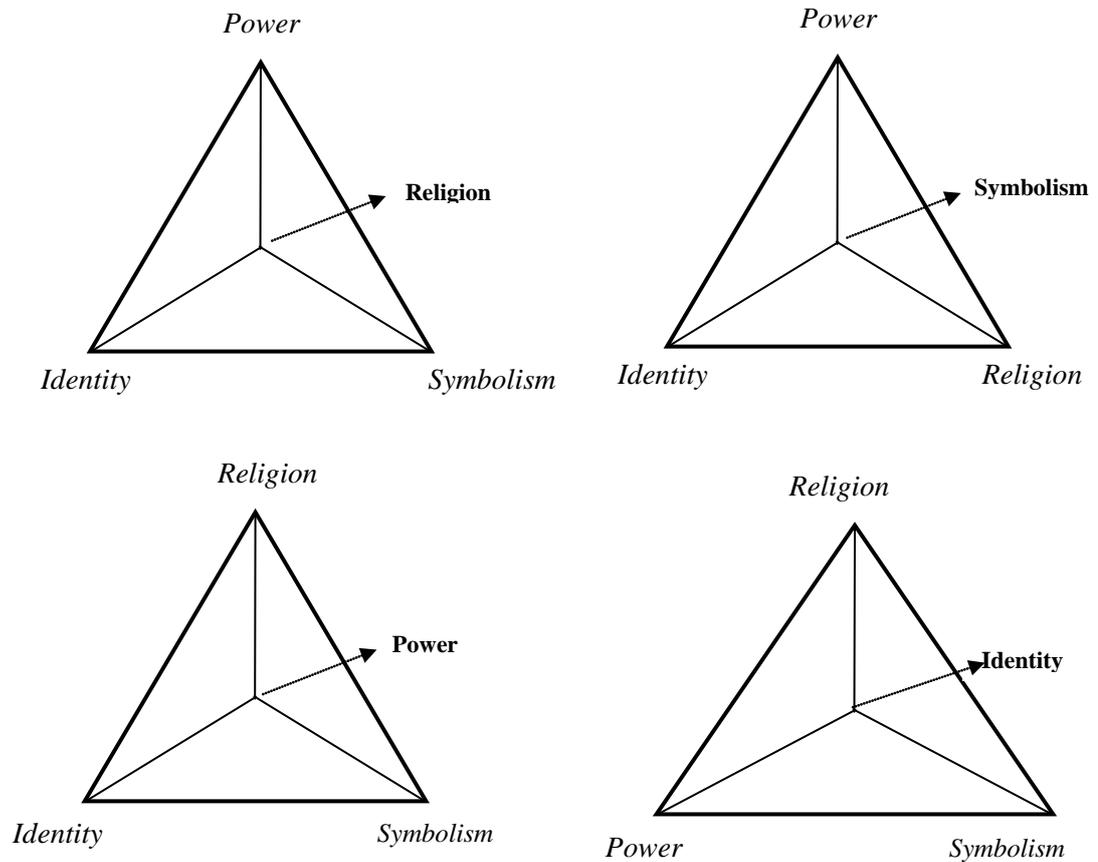


Figure 4 : Four possible factors to analyze the public buildings during the Safavid period

Then, the four key words of ‘identity’, ‘religious belief’, ‘symbolism, and ‘power’, were the focus of dissertation. These effective factors, however, have been expressed in architecture through several characteristics as they have been introduced and determined in the sample study part.

1.1 Approach

The first motivation and the starting point of this study was “Identity” and the famous slogans accepted by all developing nations during the last decades; “We must stand on our own feet”, “We must find our place in the modern world”, “We must nourish ourselves from our own cultural resources”, “We must return to ourselves”. It is relatively long time that such slogans have been repeated in almost every

developing country including the Muslim cultures. The immediate following question however is that how this “return to ourselves” should be realized.

In reply to this primary question, various solutions have been offered, although some of them turned into wrong directions. For example, in the Middle Eastern countries and for some radical Muslims, returning to self has now become equivalent to the revival of frozen traditions, fanaticism and even a return to the uncivilized, indigenous traditions. The idea of “returning to self” sometimes has been so much misunderstood that perhaps the people who first suggested it, now would like to release themselves of the blame (Sharati 1970b).

Apart from such misunderstanding, the quest for coming back to the original values of each culture highlights the importance of history and tradition. Traditions, customs, and history are the main parts of culture of each society. These factors were and still are effective in formation of identity of a culture and nation. Therefore, if we believe history is part of today’s identity then it is necessary to look at that history once more with critical eyes and with a fresh approach.

In view of that and in the case of traditional architecture of Muslim cultures, several forms and symbols as the reference forms have been introduced so far. For instance, dome and minaret have been the strong symbols of Islamic architecture. It could be the same for use of courtyard, Ivan or some decorations and traditional motives.

To produce a cultural design, then, most of Muslim architects have focused on giving modern impression to these traditional forms and symbols. Although, it seems these forms still cannot tell much about the identity of Muslim societies

including Iran. As Iranian remarkable author, *Jalal Ale-Ahmad*, correctly questions the attitude of modern architects toward use of these traditional forms:

“... Have architects ever thought about why there are dome and minaret in building of a mosque? Does being modern just mean making these elements for instance larger or smaller? Since there is speak-louder, is it necessary to make minaret anymore? It is possible to build a concrete dome larger than Shah Mosque dome in Isfahan just based on one column, then should we keep chahar-tagh structure? Is it because we did not have any reformation in religion, we should not have any in architecture too?...” (Ale-Ahmad 1978, p.31)

In fact, it is correct that these forms have had symbolic values for architecture of Muslim cultures. It is understandable and right that traditional architecture is a valuable source of inspiration for a cultural architecture at present time. But perhaps the more important questions are ‘why these symbols appeared?’, ‘should these symbols apply in the same way in the architecture of present time?’, ‘If these traditional forms and symbols can be changed in contemporary time, these changes should happen according to what criteria?’ On the other hand, creation and development of such symbolic forms were based on a view and philosophy, which might have been changed in the contemporary time. Then it would not be possible to refer to those symbols as contemporary architectural characteristics.

Accordingly, this study has focused on finding the effective factors in formation and development of Iranian architectural characteristics. In this inquiry, and by referring to the Iranian cultural heritage, such as philosophy, literature, and poems, it appeared that religious belief has had fundamental role in Iranian culture as well as all other Muslim cultures. However, since Iran is the only Shiite state among other Muslim cultures, religious belief seems to be more active in this culture. The masterpieces of Iranian traditional poetry and literature are the ones, which describe

religious beliefs. Yet the religious point of view can be seen in modern novels and poems too.

For instance, according to Ali Shariati (1970a) in all masterpieces of great Iranian (Farsi writer) poets such as Saadi, Hafez, and Rumi just the story of feelings, expressions of the spirit and their understanding of God could be seen. One cannot even identify objectivity and materiality in these kinds of literature and poems. Most of new novelists, musicians, and artists also have showed the same sensitivity. In contrary to the majority of, for instance Western new movies, which are mostly about the description of objects and common everyday life, in popular Iranian movies or theaters, this description of ordinary life is somewhat integrated with their interpretations of the spiritual life too.

In spite of the significant role of religious belief in Iranian culture, however, there are few studies, which focus on religion and its relationship with Iranian cultural issues. As Ozkan states, this lack of interest is a more or less general problem of all Muslim cultures and has had various reasons:

“...Owing to its institutional establishment and intrinsic strength, as well as its political nature, faith has always been a toned down, if not neglected factoring analysis of cultural life. The overpowering strength of faith as a determining component of life-style has perhaps been neglected in many cases, due to fear of offence, but, mostly, due to the dogmatic and therefore “untouchable” nature of almost all faiths...”(Ozkan 1996, pp. 181-186)

Ozkan also emphasizes that religious belief and its relationship with the built environment is seldom explored at least in Muslim cultures. Although according to him, religious belief and its affects on cultural matters is one of the essential factors for identifying architectural characteristics. Ozkan believes the spread of modernity as the most practical ideology and being implicitly secular, does not encourage in

contemporary societies the exploration of the relationship of faith to other issues such as buildings and architecture (Ozkan 1996, pp. 181-186).

On the other hand, to study such relationship and search for cultural identity, the tools and/or ways, which are going to be used, are the other important factors. In view of that, investigating cultural and traditional issues and quest for identity, is better to be done by use of tools, which are related to that tradition and culture. In other words, If 'we' want to know 'ourselves', then there should be a look for other tools and different understandings of "self" which belong to 'our' culture and character.

To explain the insufficiency of using outsider tools/ways for understanding Islamic architecture, Muslim scholar Serageldin makes an example as he states:

"...I can describe the reality we live in this room by taking a yardstick, which is a very useful tool, and by measuring the size, the length, the height and describing all the curves in this room. It is a description of the reality, but does not include the temperature or the humidity of the room. Neither of these would be captured by a yardstick. It does not mean that the yardstick is not accurate but that we need other tools..." (Serageldin 1990, p.45)

Shariati also in a similar statement criticizes the attitude of some contemporary scholars who just focus on understanding and using outsider sources instead of putting effort to know their own culture's view and way of life. As he states:

"...we spend our energies and efforts to know people such as Brecht, Beckett, and so forth who have nothing to do with our own condition. If I were a German, I would worship Brecht, but since I am an Iranian, I cannot understand him and I do not know what he can do for me. The fact is that Brecht's prescription is not good for my pain; he has a neurological problem, but I have a stomachache. Further, he has gone through two world wars and three centuries of machinism, but I know neither what a world war is nor machinism and bourgeoisie..."(Shariati 1968)

As a result, in this study, ideas, and thoughts of Ali Shariati, which has been effective in formation of Iranian culture at present time, has been used as tool/key to open the investigation of Safavid architecture. Shariati's point of view, especially in the analysis of religious belief of Iranian Shiite during the Safavids, leads the study to the other important factor during this period: political power. For exploring the structure of political power, its influences and relationship with other factors, thoughts, and ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault was the other main source of this study. Foucault and his writings is one of the greatest sources for investigating political power. In addition, although he is an outsider for this study, he was familiar with Shariati's thoughts and Iran situation, due to his several travels to Iran and some articles, which he wrote about Iran and its political and religious structure.

In the words of Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, Foucault first visited Iran in September 1978 and then met with Ayatollah Khomeini at his exile residence outside Paris in October (Afary&Anderson 2004). He traveled to Iran for a second visit in November, when the revolutionary movement against the shah was reaching its zenith. During these two trips, Foucault was commissioned as a special correspondent of the leading Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, with his articles appearing on the first page of that paper. He published other parts of his writings on Iran in French newspapers and journals, such as the daily *Le Monde* and the widely circulated leftist weekly *Nouvel Observateur*. Student activists translated at least one of his essays into Persian and posted it on the walls of Tehran University in the fall of 1978 (Afary&Anderson 2004).

During these trips and some other travels, which he made after revolution, he explored the Shah's political structure and the newborn revolution. He found this chance to talk with ordinary people, clergies, students, and other journalists in Iran. He enthusiastically during this period admired returning of religion into politics by calling Iran's experience as creation of "political spirituality". However later according to Yang "... in spring 1979, Foucault wrote an open letter to Khomeini's Prime Minister Bazargan, urging respect for the legal rights of the accused..." (Yang 2005).

Foucault, who died at 1984 five years after Iran revolution, impressed by Iran Islamic revolution and wrote; "...Islam — which is not simply a religion, but an entire way of life, an adherence to a history and a civilization — has a good chance to become a gigantic powder keg, at the level of hundreds of millions of men..."(In Yang 2005). Later Yang (2005) states some scholars such as James Miller called Foucault's thought and idea about Iran revolution a "tragic and farcical error", while other scholars saw enduring values in his turn toward political spirituality. For example, Yang refers to James Bernauer's point of view who has written several books on Foucault and theology, "*Religious discourse has an enormous power to move people to take action, to see beyond their immediate self-interest,*" Bernauer says. "*And Foucault had an ability to see this, to see past the pervasive secularism of French intellectual life, that was quite remarkable. For better or worse, political spirituality is with us, and Foucault was one who helped us to focus our sights on it*" (Bernauer, in Yang 2005).

One of the main concerns of Michel Foucault regarding Iran and its revolution was the role of Ali Shariati and his ideas in Iran society. Yet, according to Leezenberg, "...One major source for the notion of political spirituality,

acknowledged as such by Foucault, is Ali Shariati...”(Leezenberg 1999). Foucault emphasized the essential role of Shariati in political and religious structure of Iran and his popularity among Iranians by calling him “...*the invisible Present, of the ever-present Absent...*”:

“...This is where we encounter a shadow that haunts all political and religious life in Iran today: that of Ali Shariati, whose death two years ago [R.M. date of death: 1977] gave him the position, so privileged in Shi'ism, of the invisible Present, of the ever-present Absent...” (Foucault 1978).

Foucault, which shortly before and after revolution was in Iran, described Shariati like a national hero as he says: *...After a year in prison, shortly after having gone into exile, he [Shariati] died in a manner that very few accept as having stemmed from natural causes. The other day, at the big protest in Tehran, Shariati's name was the only one that was called out, besides that of Khomeini...*”. In other place, Foucault after giving a short biography of Shariati and stress on his French education, highlighted the importance of Shariati’s teachings for Iranians by saying: *“...he [Shariati] taught that the true meaning of Shi'ism should not be sought in a religion that had been institutionalized since the seventeenth century, but in the sermons of social justice and equality that had already been preached by the first imam...*(Foucault 1978).

In sum, it seems Foucault was thinking like an Iranian during the Iran revolution at 1978-9. In addition he impressed by Shariati’s thoughts. He defined and understood Shiism in Shariati’s way, as most of Iranians did too during the revolution time. All these concerns make Michel Foucault the best outsider source for a study, which focuses on issues such as ‘identity’, ‘symbolism’, and ‘political power’ in Iran.

1.2 Methodology

The social science studies generally have made use of ‘qualitative’, ‘quantitative’ or both approaches as their methodology. This study is a qualitative research, which tends to acquire an in-depth understanding of Iranian architecture during the Safavid period. As a qualitative research, the dissertation investigates the ‘how’ and ‘why’ architecture has been developed during this period in Iran.

Since the contemporary Iranian architecture has faced various challenges regarding to cultural issues, the study tends to open a new way toward understanding the traditional architecture of Iran. Accordingly, re-reading/re-defining the Safavid architectural characteristics was the initiative aim of the study.

Such common cultural/social characteristics generally are more apparent in the monumental and public buildings of any culture. Thus, the study has been limited to investigate those architectural characteristics in Safavid public buildings. On the other hand, since architecture of public building is generally under influence of political power, cultural issues, and social factors, various theories and ideas regarding to ‘power’, ‘symbolism’ and ‘identity’, and their manifestation in architecture have been studied too.

To define the background theory, however, thoughts and ideas of Iranian sociologist Ali Shariati and French philosopher Michel Foucault were the main sources. Those thoughts have been used as tool/key to explore the effective factors of ‘power’, ‘identity’, ‘religion’, and their manifestations in Safavid’s architecture. By use of such tools from one side and analyzing and interpreting the architecture of public buildings in the sample study, from the other side, the study has been developed.

In comparison to quantitative studies, usually qualitative researches need smaller but focused rather than large random samples, thus the sample study has been limited to the Safavid public buildings in Isfahan, the capital city of the Safavids. Totally, thirteen public buildings have been examined in this study. These samples are the most important public buildings, which have been remained from the Safavid period in Isfahan. Collecting information for sample study, mainly relied on analysis of these buildings, however, direct observation was the other research method. Based on such analysis and the theoretical background, the architectural characteristics of public buildings during the Safavid period in Iran have been initiated.

1.3 The problem

Iran like many other developing countries is in the middle of a big transformation and change in the contemporary time. This conversion from traditionalism to modernism has been created various challenges in almost all economical, cultural, and social aspects of life as well as architecture. As a result, most of modern Iranian architects are in the crossroad of identifying within Iranian traditional architecture or Western modern architecture at the present time. Yet the ones, who are looking for expression of Iranian characteristics in their modern designs, mostly limit themselves by repeating some traditional forms or orders.

On the other hand, even for use of those traditional forms, almost there is no agreement between contemporary Iranian architects. Part of this problem comes back to the way Iranian architecture has been studied so far. Usually, studies on Iranian culture and especially architecture have been divided in two periods: pre-Islamic and Islamic. Thus, even the architects who look for manifestation of Iranian architectural

characteristics have to make choice between these two periods. Some architects take the pre-Islamic period as truly Iranian cultural period, while the others by emphasizing on importance of Islam, focus on Islamic Iranian architecture.

Such discussions in contemporary architecture, has created chaos especially in respect of the modern architecture in large cities of Iran. For example in Tehran streets, it is possible to see a building with Persian pre-Islamic forms and decoration, which has been build just adjacent to the other one with traditional Islamic features. If we consider buildings, which have completely Western appearance including various styles like Post-modernism, Modernism, Deconstructionism, etc, in this view, the dimension of this confusion would be more apparent.

Therefore, looking for a common interpretation of Iranian architecture, which can be used by the two major groups (Islamic and non-Islamic), might be almost the correct focus. This common interpretation, however, should not be just limited to introduce some traditional forms and shapes since these forms have been used repeatedly in various buildings during the contemporary time [Appendix one]. In other words, searching for architectural background and reasons of creation of traditional architecture forms and orders might open new perspectives in quest for national architectural identity.

1.4 Aims and objectives

This study has focused on finding Safavid architectural characteristics. There are many similarities between present time Iran and Safavid period, such as similar language, religious belief, cultural factors, etc. Therefore, the search for a national architectural identity at present time is better to include an examination of the architecture of this period too.

On the other hand, to bridge between past and present, there should be a fresh look and critical view towards the tradition. It is important to know how and why traditional architectural characteristics had created. Accordingly, exploring the Safavid architectural characteristics, as well as finding the effective factors in creation of those characteristics was the main aim of the study. By analysis of those effective factors and their influence on creation of architectural characteristics, it has been tried to give a new reading from Safavid architecture in Iran.

1.5 Limitations

The study has been limited to the Safavid period architecture, because of similarities between this period and contemporary time. In addition, from this time onward, Iran has been taken Shiism as the official religious belief. This transformation had extensive impact on Iranian culture as well as Muslim cultures in general. On the other hand, the cultural and/or social architectural identity usually appears in the architecture of public buildings. Therefore, study limited to search for architectural characteristics of public buildings during the Safavid period in Iran. In addition, study has limited to find those characteristics in orders, arrangements and principles rather than decorations and ornamentations.

In this inquiry, it appeared mainly four factors of “political power”, “Identity”, “symbolism”, and “religious belief”, were effective in formation of Safavid architecture. Accordingly, these four factors created the main frame for studying the architectural characteristics of public buildings.

CHAPTER 2

IDENTITY AND ARCHITECTURE

2.1 Definition of Identity in Contemporary and Traditional Societies

During the last decades, identity crisis has been the common problem of many cultures and nations. In fact, “identity” has been one of the most complicated psychological, political, and cultural concerns in the contemporary century. Contrary to the traditional life, which there was no doubt or serious argumentation about identity, it seems identity is the problematic part of modern life. It does not mean, however, in traditional societies there was no need to think or talk about identity and sense of belonging. But as Taylor (1991, in Sayer 1996) says, in traditional life the process of identifying was so unproblematic, which perhaps people were not even aware of its existence.

Yet probably one can claim the initial difference between traditional and modern life lies in the way people define their identities. In traditional societies, generally social structure could give preliminary identity factors to the people. Moreover, this given identity remained almost unchanged during the lifetime. People, therefore, were not allowed to choose their identity. As American philosopher, Sean Sayers states:

“...In a community of this kind [traditional], identity is inseparable from the individual's place in a rigid and hierarchical social structure and system of values. This place is not chosen by the individual; it is regarded

as something naturally determined and unalterably given by birth. The lord is born a lord, the commoner a commoner: these are fixed and immutable identities. In such societies, the individual is identified and constituted in and through certain of his or her roles ... "I" confront the world as a member of this family, this tribe, this city, and this nation. There was no "I" apart from these..." (Sayers 1996).

In contemporary societies, however, these shared values and frameworks are somewhat disappeared. The family, city, or the nation cannot attach a special identity to the ones. Identity is not a socially given issue anymore and people are free to choose or change their identity. Above all, sometimes developing and changing the identity is encouraged by authorities. For example changing the work place, social class, or even the nation by immigration, most times have been evaluated as positive actions in the modern life.

A similar change had happened in architecture too. Contemporary architecture is sometimes not bounded to for instance its material, sometimes to its immediate environment, and sometimes even its cultural base. Modern science, technology, and materials have given this chance to the architects to design and build almost any type of building. Such developments, however, have had lead to a sort of anonymous architecture in many countries. Thus, the general view of many cities in the world is so similar to each other, which it is sometimes hard to distinguish this city from the other one. On the other hand, variety is a major characteristic of contemporary architecture, which recalls variety in the identity of users. Many people are living in buildings with no sense of belonging. Since built environment has direct affect on human behavior, investigating the various types of identity and its relationship with architecture has been one of important responsibilities of contemporary architects.

2.2 Identity

Identity or “identitat” in Late Latin (Merriam-Webster online dictionary) is “*sameness of essential or generic character in different instances*” and “*the distinguishing character or personality of an individual*”. In Oxford Dictionary, identity is defined as “*who or what sb/sth is, state of being the same*”. Identity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the world in which we live (Woodward 1997, p.1).

People, who live in a society, take some kind of individual identities like name, nickname, reputation, and social status in their contacts with the others. By participating in some social activities and sharing some interests, duties and works with the other people in a group, people may have a group identity too. This identity can be defined by being a member of special club, social activity or even as part of school or work environment. In other words, people need to know they belong to what tribe, nation, and race, where their main and permanent origin is, and what culture and civilization they had.

Therefore, there is a great variety of identities including national identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, social identity, and individual identity while Passi (2002) talks about ‘Ideal’ and ‘factual’ identity too. According to Passi (2002), Ideal identity points to collective, normative narratives on spatial identity, which are most effectively exploited in the fields of nationalism and cultural/economic regionalism. These narratives bring together elements from the past and the present of a region in a selective way. Factual identity means those forms of identity that may manifest themselves in social action, for example in the active formation of associations, firms, and organizations that actors establish in a region. Passi concludes; *Ideal identity implies that ideologies may play a key role in discourses on regional*

identities, which are potentially laden with economic, cultural, and political interests, for instance with power (Passi (2002).

Identity, which also has been interpreted as sense of belonging, is one of the most important basic needs in the famous human needs hierarchy, which was proposed by American psychologist Abraham Maslow (1970). In this hierarchy, he assumed our needs are arranged in terms of their potency. Although all needs are important, some are more powerful than the others are. Maslow arranged these needs in a way that the lower needs in the pyramid are the more powerful ones. Sense of belonging and identity in this hierarchy comes just above safety needs. This low level indicates how fundamental this need is. Being below esteem shows, we first want to join a group, and then gain the self-esteem and self actualization.

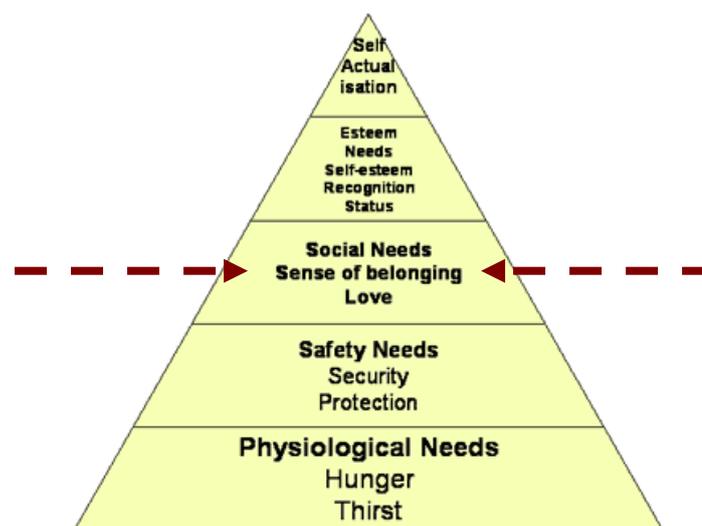


Figure 5: Maslow human needs hierarchy

Identifying something generally is based on three main parts: object, image and then as a result, identity (Ghasemi 2004, p.43). Object is something, which exists in reality; it is part of the immediate and measurable environment. Therefore, object is the same for everybody. Image is a kind of mental picture, which will be created after observing objects. Therefore, image or mental picture would not be the same for

different observers. For example, when a group of people are visiting a building (object) for the first time, their explanations (images) from the same object usually are not the same. Some of them may say it was a large building; the other can refer to its ornaments, openings, and so on. Such interpretations, however, are usually under influence of the observers' memory, experience, character and the way they understand their environment. In other words, identification is filtered through observers' individual and/or social identity.

2.2.1 Individual/ Personal identity

Individual or personal identity is based on the primary need for conceptualizing the 'self'. This perception appears early on in the life, when toddlers start to discover their individuality. At this time, usually they have a teddy bear or a doll, through which they learn about their own identity; "*I am not my teddy*" or my doll (Changing Minds. org). Later on, they can put a distinction between the "self" and other objects in their immediate environment.

Most of the understanding from environment is filtered through understanding of self (Hoyle, n.d.). It means usually we are not thinking by realities, rather we are thinking by our understanding of these realities, and it will give us a sense of identity. In this process, the most important factor in making those images is the "self". Although "self" is the initial factor in sense of identity, surprisingly there is no widely accepted definition or description for it. Even, the philosopher, and psychologist William James (In Hoyle, n.d.) termed the self as "*The most puzzling puzzle with which psychology has to deal*". In view of that, through history many scholars have tried to define "self" or "I" in various ways. One of the most famous

examples, however, comes from Descartes (In Damasio1994), as he simplified this definition to *“I think, therefore I am”*.

On the other hand, in the process of learning about “self”, usually there is the possibility of mixing identity by “habits” (Vaknin 2005). In the example of toddlers and their teddy bear or doll, although children are learning about the difference between “self” and doll or teddy, they get used to them too. Thus if their teddies is removed, they will be upset. That is the same for adults. Usually there are many things around us, which we get used to them subconsciously. And perhaps we feel more comfortable, when we are in relationship with all of them. In other words, sometimes we tie our well being and sense of belonging to our habits and routines. If some of these habitual routines are removed, we suppose our identity is lost or hurt.

That is why, as Vaknin states, *“when we ask people “who” they are, most people resort to communicating their habits”* (Vaknin 2005). They will relate themselves to their work, their house, their car, and so on. Yet none of these can be their real identity because their removal, in the words of Vaknin (2005), does not change their essential identity. What makes our essential identity is our personality not our habits. The same matter is valid for architecture too. When we are talking about identity in architecture, we should refer to the main essential characteristic of architecture, not some forms (habits) which in fact we get used to see them as our heritage. [Appendix 3]

2.2.2 Group/Social identity and architecture

One of the primary needs of human being is to be belonged to someone or perhaps somewhere. This need directs people to create different social groups and activities, in which they know and support each other. In a group, however, people

should be ready to put the group ahead of their own interests. This includes accepting group values and beliefs, even if they are not fully satisfying for all group members. As a result, in a group, sense of identity has to change from “me” to “us”.

As it states in the website of the Australian national university school of psychology, the Social Identity theory after Adorno’s social theory and Heidegger, was developed by Polish social scientist Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979. This theory involves three central ideas: “categorization”, “comparison”, and “identification”. The first one indicates that we need to categorize objects in order to understand them in an easier manner. In a very similar way, we categorize people to have a better understanding of social environment. We use social categories like black, white, Australian, Christian, Muslim, student, bus driver. It helps us to have a primary understanding of the people we are talking and thinking about them. Similarly, we need to put ourselves under one of these categories too. It will give us a reference to define appropriate behavior in the society. Passi also in a similar statement, emphasizes on importance of categorization in identity debates by saying: “... ‘Identity’ is hence basically a form of categorization, where boundaries are used to distinguish one area domain or social collectivity (‘us’) from others...” (Passi 2002).

The second idea “comparison” comes from the need to evaluate ourselves by comparing with similar others. According to Tajfel and Turner (as it comes in website of the Australian national university school of psychology), usually group members compare their group with others in order to define their group as positive, and therefore by implication see themselves in a positive way. Such tendency, motivate people to maximize the positive aspects of their own group and minimize

its negative aspects. It means groups that see themselves in high status on particular dimensions will choose those as the basis of comparison.

The third idea, identification, consists of two parts: personal and social identification. In a group, sometimes we think of ourselves as “us” or “we” and other times we think as “me” or “I”. It means that sometimes we are thinking as a group member and sometimes as unique individual. Thinking of us as a group member and thinking of us as a unique individual are both parts of our “self-concept”. The first is referred to our social identity and the latter is referred to our personal identity.

Social identity in architecture, usually, manifests through regional or national characteristics. These regional/national architectural characteristics come from comparing different types of architecture. Some building types, forms and orders are assumed to be belonged to a nation, region, or city. Then buildings, which follow the regional/national design approach, will be evaluated as belonged to that culture. Moreover, these regional architectural characteristics generally have high positive values for the people of that region.

2.2.3 Dynamic character of identity and Iranian architecture

Identity according to Lin (2002) has multiple levels and is changeable depending on various circumstances. In fact, one of the interesting and at the same time confusing aspects of identity is that it is not a constant and unchangeable phenomenon. In other words, time has a central role in the identity definition as for example, our personal identity changes during the lifetime constantly in respect of changing experiences. The social identity also is dynamic. For example, at first, we are somebody’s daughter / son, then we will be student of one school/ college/

university, later most probably we will introduce ourselves, as somebody's wife/husband, or employee of special company, and it will go on.

The same matter goes for social identity too. Human societies are frequently in contact and interaction with each other. Thus, in the course of time, they are changing and modifying each other. This modification may happen in the scale of a small society or an entire nation and culture. By different wars, immigrations, common trades, or other kinds of interactions, cultures are changing all the time as for example; there are many Western cultural factors, which have roots in Eastern culture and vice versa.

Therefore, to think about identity, it is better to think of a production rather than an object; as Hall sees identity as *'a "production", which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'* (Hall 1997, p.51). Correa also in a supportive statement in reply to the question what is identity says, *"... It is a process, and not a "found" object. It may be likened to the trail left by civilization as it moves through history..."* (Correa 1983). Being a process indicates that identity is not a fixed entity which can be lost or found. To a certain extent, we can talk of understanding, revealing, reproducing, and improvement of identity.

Because of dynamic character of identity, it is usually difficult in architecture to quest for a certain type of architectural identity. This difficulty is getting more, if we consider that architecture cannot be identified easily according to political boundaries. Sometimes when we are talking of architecture of one country, its political boundaries may not cover its entire cultural and architectural territory. For instance, Greek or Persian architecture had much more larger area of influence than their contemporary borders. On the other hand, sometimes there are many cultural

differences between various parts of one country. With such differentiation, it is too difficult to look for a unified culture and architecture in these countries. For instance, different ethnics, religions, and languages exist in the India.

This diversity is more apparent in architecture, by considering different climatic conditions in this country too. All these various and sometimes contradictory factors are parts of Indian culture which makes the task of questing identity a complex charge in such countries. There are some other countries like Iran, which may have both conditions. Iranian or Persian architecture has a broader area than its political boundaries and at the same time, different types of architecture may be identified inside these boundaries. Therefore, questing for identity in architecture is somewhat complicated process.

2.3 Architecture and Identity

Webster's dictionary gives following definitions for architecture:

The art or practice of designing and building structures and especially habitable ones,

Formation or construction as the result of a conscious act,

Architectural product or work,

A method or style of building.

In fact, it is true that architecture is the art and science of designing buildings, but it can be much more than that too. Architecture may have direct affect on human behavior. Sometimes it can influence personal and social character of its users. Architecture can provoke various feelings. For example, buildings can imply glorious feeling like a triumphal arch and tell about victories or they could be

peaceful and comfortable like a home. Architecture may convey moral values too. Buildings can symbolize divinity in a religious architecture, for instance.

In view of that, from ancient times onwards, many buildings have been built, which even sometimes did not serve a functional reason. Huge structures of Egyptian pyramids or tombs in Islamic architecture are just a few examples. These buildings have been built to carry messages not only for their own time but also for the future. Some of these monumental structures sometimes have been found such powerful symbolic charge, which a city or even a nation has been known by them. For example, the first image of Paris is Eiffel tower, Istanbul is known by Hagia-Sophia, which is used now as a mosque, or Isfahan by Shah square. There are also some other buildings and/or architectural types, which may symbolize common culture of many nations. For example, minaret and dome usually stand for the entire Islamic architecture world.

By use of this function of architecture, usually there is this attempt in some countries to make huge structures. These very tall or extremely large buildings would be the sign of power and perhaps wealth of a country. These monumental buildings are messengers of their nation and cultures and through them; a special territory introduces itself to the world. Making use of the symbolic language of *the tallest building in the world* or, for cities perhaps, *the staging of the Olympic Games* (Sydney, Beijing, Barcelona,...) to announce their presence to a world of nations are some examples of using buildings as sign, in recent century (King 2004, p.5). Sometimes the need to have such symbolic buildings encourages countries to import the technology necessary to construct them too. Petronas Tower in Kuala Lumpur, water storage towers in Kuwait, or Burj-ol-Arab tower in Dubai are just some few examples from this kinds of buildings.

In short, looking to architecture from this point of view, will lead us to understand it as something more than science or art in its ordinary meaning. It is a language, perhaps the language of a culture and the way of life of its people. In this look, architecture will turn to be a mediator for reflecting the collective spirit of society.

On the other hand, architecture has to reply different needs of society. Some of buildings are mostly for serving peoples' everyday needs, while the others are mostly loading by symbolic meanings. For example, a house is a place that mainly should respond the fundamental physical needs, although it may carry some meanings and values too. Alternatively, a mosque is a place, which must be able to reply metaphysical and divine needs, although the primary physical needs cannot be forgotten too.

Thus, it is necessary here to put a distinction between these two types of buildings: the first type is architecture for the everyday life and the second one is known as monumental architecture. Formation of architecture for the everyday life might be mostly under influence of environmental needs. These buildings initially should be able to protect their users from unfriendly environmental conditions. Thus, sometimes the climate and environmental conditions have the major role in creation of architectural identity of this type of buildings. On the other hand, monumental architecture or public buildings usually stand to carry symbolic meanings, characteristic and prestige of a culture. The collective spirit and social, national identity of a specific region would be manifested by such structures. Therefore, investigating the public buildings and their architectural characteristics is more relevant to the subject of cultural/national architectural identity as the focus of this study.

2.3.1 Global/ Regional architectural identity

After industrial revolution, the world has arrived at a new stage. More or less everything related to the past, has been changed rapidly. New technology and quick access to all benefits of knowledge and sciences through word wide web have brought about major changes in perception of life as well as architecture during the current time.

In architecture by making use of new technology, stronger and more affordable buildings have been made. New construction techniques have given this chance to the architects to make wider spans and taller structures. New building materials are usually cheaper, easier to obtain and more resistant. Use of modern machines have been increased the speed of construction process. Cheaper and faster constructions have been made everywhere in the world.

In view of that, in contemporary architecture it seems there are two distinct patterns of practice in developing countries: working through globalization or regionalism. Architects in these countries are confronting with Western modern architecture from one side and from the other, their traditional architecture. Thus, it seems their main choices are limited to follow either this or that one. However, it is not the first time in history that this distinction has happened between minor and major cultures; often cultures have had direct or indirect influence on each other (Banani 1961, p.1). This dialogue between cultures generally helped the hosted culture to develop and build up more fresh and powerful culture. In contemporary times, however, the rhythm of changes is so fast that even for major cultures it is hard to adopt to those changes. Thus, limited chances will remain for minor cultures to learn and develop.

This may explain why more homogenized cities have been appeared in the architectural world. In fact, in the process of transformation from traditional to modern architecture, most of especially developing countries not only have been imported the technology but also the architectural design too. Thus, it appears in most of developing countries, it was not given enough thought to improve the traditional architecture. Architects in these countries in some cases, left the tradition and accepted the modern architecture with no question.

While, there are many advantages in adaptation with the progressive modern world and architecture, there is no value in imitation. During last years, glass office boxes and gray apartment blocks can be seen everywhere in the world. It has been proven that this kind of homogenized architecture sometimes may cost more and be less efficient in some places. For example, in hot arid regions, perhaps constructing such structures is cheaper, but because they are not energy efficient, in long term they might cost more. Moreover, these buildings generally do not give the necessary sense of belongingness to their users. Then such structures could lead to increase social problems and transgressions.

There are some argumentations, however, that in contemporary time the need for buildings is an urgent need, and sometimes it will not give architects this chance to think about cultural issues. These argumentations although might be more or less relevant to some types of buildings such as residential or office buildings, architecture of monumental and/or public buildings should contain cultural values and regional characteristics.

Consequently, regional identity and its architectural characteristics have been at the center of attention during the last few years. Many architects have been tried to seek for such regional values by coming back to the traditional architecture. As for

example, Lin (2002) speaks about “...*The shift of intellectual emphasis from modernity (homogenizing processes of cultural imperialism and Westernization) to postmodernity (fragmented global cultural transformation processes with great diversity, variety, and flexibility)*...”. On the other hand, Passi states regionalism implies positive connotations:

“...Like the word ‘identity’ in general, this phrase also has positive connotations, partly as a result of the implicit assumption that a regional identity joins people and regions together, provides people with shared ‘regional values’ and ‘self-confidence’, and ultimately makes the ‘region’ into a cultural economic medium in the struggle over resources and power in the broader socio-spatial system...”(Passi 2002)

The search for regional architectural characteristics, sometimes in Muslim cultures has been ended up to repeating the traditional architectural forms. Some of architects, who had great enthusiasm about returning to the cultural factors, created a kind of cyberspace for themselves, which they were not able to see the growing number of modern buildings in their societies. In fact, although imitation of so-called Western-modern architecture is not a correct approach, the solution is not in repetition of traditional architecture too. Accordingly, the correct answer might be found in compromising the regional and global values. In view of that, it would be more appropriate to look for correct approaches in architecture rather than solutions [Appendix 1].

2.3.2 Islamic architecture, Iranian architecture and regional Identity

Iranian architecture as an important part of Islamic architecture world has reflected some general Islamic architectural characteristics. There are, however, some differences between architecture of various parts of Islamic architecture world. Such variation, although is usual for it to exist between different cultures, in

architecture of Muslim cultures, has been caused a deep doubt even about using the “Islamic architecture” term. For example, architectural historian, Dogan Kuban, clearly states that *there cannot be only one “Islamic architecture” but numerous regional and national developments* (In Alsac 1997, p.447).

Because of such differences among Muslim cultures, it would not be possible to talk about Islamic architecture identity in general. In fact, diverse parts of the Islamic world have various cultures, traditions, and architecture. Thus, the more or less correct view would be in respecting those varieties although it does not deny the real fact of sharing the idea of being Muslim.

In other words, in architecture of Muslim cultures, there are some similarities, which have been defined by common forms, orders, and symbols, while each region has kept some local characteristics too. For example, generally minarets and domes are the signs of Islamic architecture in all Muslim countries. There are, however, different methods of construction, variety of decoration and even diverse forms for building these symbols in various Muslim cultures. Accordingly, to define Islamic architecture identity/characteristics, it would be more appropriate to study each region independently. If the characteristics of each part of the Islamic architectural world classifies properly, then it would be possible to have a correct view to the identity of Islamic architecture.

2.4 Summary

Identity has been a major category in social sciences in recent years. The rapid move from traditionalism to the modernism in many cultures has been created various challenges regarding different types of identity such as individual identity, social identity, cultural identity, national identity, etc.

In architecture, also problematic issues of identity have been the focus of both practical and academic debates. By arrival of new technology, the architecture in many countries moved toward a kind of globalized architecture. Latter, however, this kind of standardized buildings created many problems including the identity crisis. Consequently, most of architects especially in developing countries, by using the advantages of modernization, prefer to work more through regionalism [Appendix1].

On the other hand, the dynamic character of identity has been made the quest for architectural identity even more complicated. It is important to stress that in regional and cultural identity as well as regional/cultural architectural characteristics, one of the effective factors has been the political power (Passi 2002) [chapter 4]. Generally, state power of each nation and culture tries to define its architectural characteristics and identity in order to legitimize its existence within and outside the society.

Identity claims can take symbolic forms in architecture. Many architectural symbols have been stand as cultural and sometimes even as national symbols. Symbolic attribute of architecture especially is more important to quest the cultural/national identity, which usually manifest in the public buildings. Then next chapter has been dedicated to investigate the symbolic aspect of architecture.

CHAPTER 3

SYMBOLISM AND ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE

3.1 Definition and significance

“A symbol is “something that stands for, represents, or denotes something else” (Oxford English dictionary). In the words of Hall (1996) a lion for example, in all essentials, it is just a large, fierce, tawny, loud-roaring animal of the cat family. Once we begin to call it the ‘king of Beasts’ or ‘Lord of the Jungle’ it is on its way to become a symbol. Later he adds, “*It seems we have a natural tendency to create symbols in the way we are thinking or in art...*” (Hall 1996)

Use of symbols is not limited to a period of time or a specific society. In fact, as Mitford (1996, p.6) states, whether we live in commercialized societies or communities relatively unchanged by time, we are surrounded by signs, images, and ideas that are often highly symbolic. Signs and symbols have been inseparable part of all cultures and societies since pre-historical time. Even some scholars such as Eliade believe in importance of symbols as ‘consubstantial with human existence’, as he states:

“...Symbolic thinking is not the exclusive privilege of the child, of the poet or of the unbalanced mind: it is consubstantial with human existence, it comes before language and discursive reason. The symbol reveals certain aspects of reality – the deepest aspects – which defy any other means of knowledge. Images, symbols and myths are not irresponsible creations of the psyche; they respond to a need and fulfill

a function, that of bringing to light the most hidden modalities of being...” (Eliade 1991, p.12)

He interprets symbols as openings of immediate reality. According to Eliade, the symbolism adds a new value to an object or an activity without any prejudice whatever to its own immediate value. In addition he states: “*...in application to objects or actions, symbolism renders them “open”; symbolic thinking “breaks open” the immediate reality without minimizing or undervaluing of it: in such a perspective this is not a closed Universe, no object exists for itself in isolation; everything is held together by a compact system of correspondences and likeness...*” (Eliade 1991, p.12)

3.2 Symbol, sign, representation

Grabar (1979a) for defining symbolism compares ‘symbol’ with ‘sign’ and ‘image’. By making such distinction, he states that between these three factors, symbol has a remarkable place, because symbols contain some “charge” values, which is given to them. In addition, symbolic meaning depends on predetermined convention, habits, or agreements, which are not in the object but in those who share it. As an example, Grabar says; “*...As a tower for the call to prayer, the minaret is but a sign suggesting a function; it becomes a symbol when it reminds one of Islam, when it appears on stamps identifying a specific country or when it serves to design a space. In other words, while the sign attribute is fixed, the symbol attribute is a variable, which depends on some “charge” given to it or on the mood of feeling of the viewer...*” (Grabar 1979a)

In differentiation between symbol and sign, Mitford also states that symbols have a deeper meaning; “*a symbol is linked in function to a sign, and the two words*

are often used interchangeably, but usually the symbol has a deeper meaning, a symbol is something that through its nature or manifestation reflects or represents something more insightful than itself” (Mitford 1996, p.6). Later by some examples, she explains that a fire, for instance, may symbolize the flames of the sun, which itself has qualities of warmth, light, and creative power, and is therefore equated with the life force and manly creative strength. Meanwhile, a sign is an object or idea, which *represents* or points to something else. An advertisement, for example, reminds us of the product it is prompting; a road sign indicates conditions ahead; and a gesture expresses a mood.

It might be correct here to stress on differentiation between ‘symbolism’ and ‘representation’ too. According to Gombrich (1972, p.124), we are used to make a clear distinction between representation and symbolization. As an example, he says a painting may represent an object of the visible world, a woman holding a balance, or a lion. It may also symbolize an idea. To those familiar with the conventional meanings attached to these images, the woman with the balance will symbolize Justice, the lion symbolizes Courage or the British Empire or any other concept conventionally linked in our symbolic lore with the King of Animals. Then, Gombrich clarifies another kind of symbolism that he calls it private symbolism. As he states:

“... [through private symbolism] an image can become the expression of the artist’s conscious or unconscious mind. To van Gogh the orchard in bloom may have been a symbol of his returning health. These three ordinary functions of images [representation, symbolization, private symbolization] may be present in one concrete image- a motif in a painting by Hieronymus Bosch may represent a broken vessel. Symbolize the sin of gluttony and express an unconscious sexual fantasy on the part of the artist but to us the three levels of meaning remain quite distinct...”
(Gombrich 1972, p.124)

Harries, however, by reducing the difference between symbol and representation, claims that both may be considered as signs: “...*both symbol and representation stand for or signify something else, both may thus be considered signs, but a representation must in some way resemble what it represents ...*” (Harries 2000, p.98). Later he explains that such ‘*resemblance*’ does not mean that what it represents must look just like it. As he states, a map of Washington, D.C., for example, does not look very much like the city, but once one has understood the form of representation, the resemblance becomes quite clear. Afterward, Harries (2000, p.98) corrects that we should not call the map a symbol of Washington, although its form of representation certainly relies on symbols. Some understanding of the way maps represent and should be read is assumed: for example, moving up on the map usually represents going north; if a different orientation is chosen, this will in all probability be indicated on the map. Often maps include a legend, giving the scale and explaining some of the symbols. To understand these symbols is part of understanding the chosen form of representation, of knowing how to read the map. The same goes for reading the floor plan or the section of a building – or for reading a pictorial representation.

3.3 Symbols and cultures

Symbols have fundamental role in defining cultural characteristics. Similarities and variations between different cultures usually can be read from their symbols. Alternatively, as Eliade states, different cultural styles come from realization of their various symbols, images and so on, as he says “...*The history of a symbolism is a fascinating study, and one that is also fully justified, since it is the best introduction to what is called the philosophy of culture. Images, archetypes, and*

symbols are variously lived and valued; and the product of these multiple realizations of them is largely constitutive of the different “cultural styles” of life...”

(Eliade 1991, p.172)

In addition, symbols may act as openings of a culture. By reading and interpreting symbols, a culture has this chance to communicate. In fact, symbols are one of the important factors for understanding the history. Regarding this matter, Eliade points that:

“...after all, it is the presence of the images and symbols that keeps the cultures “open”: starting from no matter what culture, the Australian no less than the Athenian, the “limit-situations” of man are fully revealed, owing to the symbols that sustain those cultures. If we neglect this unique spiritual foundation of the various cultural styles, the philosophy of culture will be condemned to remain no more than a morphological and historical study, without any validity for the human condition as such...” (Eliade 1991, p.174)

3.4 Symbolism and architecture

Architecture can be used for symbolic purposes too. Use of buildings for conveying symbolic messages is not something new. In fact, it has been done since very early times onward. Such monumental structures usually make use of strong building materials. Then, these symbolic messages not only could be understood at the time of their construction, but also they can be understood by future generations too. Perhaps it is one reason for interpreting architecture as a language or a text to read.

However, it does not mean that symbolism in architecture is limited in monumental buildings or just meets spiritual needs. In fact, symbolic aspects can be seen in every type of buildings, from huge monumental buildings to small ordinary houses. The symbolic loads of each type of architecture may differ but more or less every building carries some symbolic messages. Yet some scholars believe that

separating 'spiritual' and 'material' in architecture makes no sense. As Eliade for example states: *"...For to archaic thinking, such a separation between the "spiritual" and the "material" is without meaning: the two plans are complementary. The facts that a dwelling house is supposed to be at "the Center of the World" does not make it any the less a convenience which answers to specific needs and is conditioned by the climate, the economic structure of society and the architectural tradition..."*.(Eliade 1991, p.177)

On the other hand, a building, which does not meet minimum symbolic or spiritual meanings, may not be called a real architecture. Even if such buildings can answer 'material' needs, they cannot give the sense of place to their users. For example, Harries (2000, p.99) compares today's mobile homes, designed to provide basic shelter at a modest cost with an ordinary homes. As he points perhaps, mobile houses stand for basic shelter, while at the same time they carry a host of connotations, for example "cheap", "mobile", and "temporary". Some of these implications meet with resistance from those who, usually for economic reasons, find it convenient to live in such not very homelike homes; Harries, however, states *"...In any case, people will try by applying some additions to these houses; make them more like real houses. For example by adding porch, fake shutters, or a lamppost make the mobile home more like a real house, where the idea of what "a real house" should look like will no doubt differ with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and individual dreams..."*. (Harries 2000, p.99)

It means, need for signs and symbols is not something fantasy or a luxury, sometimes and for some buildings it could be a serious need. In the case of houses, perhaps symbols are important in term of achieving the personal identity too while public monumental buildings mostly should represent the social identity.

3.5 Symbolism and Islamic architecture

The architecture of Muslim cultures like every other culture has contained some symbolic aspects too. Some of these symbolic charges are common between all Muslim countries and some have been defined for special territories. For example, minaret has been a common strong symbol of Islamic architecture. As Alsac explains “...minarets created relations with the letter “alif” of Arabic alphabet. The letter with which the name of God, that is Allah, begins. Because of this upright position, this structure assumed to symbolize straight forwardness, correctness, etc...” (Alsac 2004, p.162) Domes, which usually were used in structures of mosques, in the course of time have found a very strong symbolic character too. That is why dome has been used in building of many new mosques, although by invention of new technology and structural systems, there is no need for them anymore.

Except these two popular architectural symbols, there are some other common symbolic forms, however, it appears Islamic architecture has low symbolic charge in comparison to other types of architecture. The main reason of such low contribution comes from the religion of Islam, which is against any formal representation of religion. Such attitude has had an essential role in use of images, signs, representation, and symbols in Muslim cultures. Islamic culture, consequently, as Grabar points rejected any effort to produce symbolism in comparison to the other religions: “...Islamic culture as a whole consistently rejected any attempt to compel specific symbolic meanings compare to those of Christianity and Hinduism (with their symbolic connotation in plan, elevation, and decoration)...” (Grabar 1979a).

Unlike many other religions, in Islam there is no restricted advised form, shape, or rule for making religious buildings. In Islam, everybody can worship God

almost everywhere without any special ceremony. In fact, the first mosque in Islam was part of Holly prophet's home, later on, through centuries mosques have been found various types. The architectural elements of minaret, dome and mihrab, have been added later to the mosques. Kuban (1980) believes that such few religious limitations and freedom for changes are not only necessary but also can be called as strength of Islamic culture. As an example, he says:

"...the tradition does not say the HAJJ must be made on donkey, on camel, on foot, by car or by airplane. If the Koran and Sunna had prescribed physical forms, nobody could ever have added to Mecca and the form of the pilgrimage would have remained unaltered; neither could the route between Safa and Marwa have been covered nor tunnels built under the rocks to ensure the pilgrims to Mina are protected. It is certainly difficult to define the symbolic content of traditional Islamic forms if so radical a change in environment can occur in the very heart of Islam and in close proximity to the symbol of symbols..." (Kuban 1980).

He concludes that there is no reason to insist on a continuity of forms if this is rejected by history of Islam itself. Grabar (1979a) also believes that symbolism in Islamic cultures is more based on 'means' rather than 'visual' or forms. He clarifies low symbolic charge of Islamic cultures does not mean that *"...there are no Muslim symbols and signs, but they consist less in visually perceptible features than in memories of men and events: the place where something took place or where someone did something..."* (Grabar 1979a)

Even if Islamic symbolism is not limited only to 'memories of men and events', it appears difficult to find a confident formal expression too. Islamic symbolism probably can be defined by order, proportion, and composition of forms too. As Gombrich says this is another kind of symbolism:

"... The objects in our sublunar world have different qualities, some, like heat and cold, dryness and moisture, are elements and thus wedded to the world of matter. Others, like brightness, colors and numbers –

that is proportion- appertain both to our sublunar world and to the celestial sphere. These mathematical shapes and proportions, then, belong to the higher order of things. Shapes and proportions, therefore, have the most intimate connection with the Ideas in the World Soul or the Divine Intellect ...” (Gombrich 1972, p.171)

It seems more acceptable to talk about such kind of symbolism for Islamic cultures. In other words, that is correct that Islam has been against any formal representation, but it has not opposed symbolization of orders and principles of nature. For instance, four-Ivan pattern, which had been used in mosque, madrassa and carvansaray in Iran and Central Asia, has roots in symbolization of four direction or four elements of nature. There are some other general principles too, which may be seen in architecture of Muslim cultures. For example, Burckhardt mentions to interiority, centrality, and public-private separation as distinguishable guidelines of Islamic architecture; as he states “...*What distinguishes Islamic architecture is first its interiority, and second its centrality... Third, I stress the independence of housing from public domain. I think these guidelines are quite sufficient for domestic Islamic architecture in general...*” (Burckhardt 1979)

The Indonesian art historian, Sadali (1979) refers to ‘unity in multiplicity’. Grabar also highlights the ‘interiority’ and ‘centrality’ as basic principles in addition to use of geometry, symmetry/asymmetry, and relationship to the environment, as he says:

“...There is the notion of interiority with its association of privacy. There is centrality. There is rather more complicated phenomenon of geometry and, specifically, the geometry of the house in its relationship to the street. These are the symmetrical/asymmetrical relationships. Finally, there is relationship to the environment and a perception of space and the way in which one uses space as it exist...” (Grabar 1979b)

In sum, perhaps it is possible to say Islamic symbolism deals with order and principles more than figures and forms. Mahdi (1979) specialist in Islamic

philosophy, states that use of this kind of symbolism is mainly for reflecting the whole-to-part relationships of God's creation. However, even if we put our assumption on symbolism in order and principles, use of such symbolized orders is not the same for different Muslim countries. Then investigating architectural symbols of each Islamic cultural region can aid to have a holistic view from Islamic architecture symbolism.

For example, Symbolism in Shiite doctrine of Iran and its manifestation in architecture have had some similarities and differences with general Islamic symbolism. Traditional Islamic architecture of Iran during the Safavid period, reflect the same general principles of 'interiority', 'centrality', and 'unity in multiplicity', while some other Shiite doctrine factors were symbolized in Safavid architecture too. The belief in twelve Imams and the last hidden Imam, for instance, has been manifested in public buildings. Some other Shiite believes also have been symbolized in architecture of public buildings [Chapter6].

3.6 Summary

During the resent years, many efforts have been dedicated to the revival of cultural architectural values in most of Islamic countries. In view of that, few Islamic architecture forms and symbols have been introduced as reference forms by Muslim architects; many contemporary buildings, thus, have been designed by repeatedly use of such symbolic forms. The major reason for limited number of Islamic architecture symbolic forms comes back to the religion of Islam, which does not support any formal representation of religion. Such attitude has given low formal symbolic charge to the Islamic architecture in general. Then, the search for Islamic architecture symbolism should not be limited to the formal symbols. Creation and development of

those symbolic forms were based on thoughts and philosophy, which understanding those thoughts might be more useful [chapter 5]. Such approach especially appears to be more practical for Islamic architecture, due to its variety and opposition to formal representation.

On the other hand, symbolism in architecture of especially monumental and/or public buildings has been under influence of other determining factors such as power, cultural identity, belief, socio-cultural factors, etc. Between these factors, however, power has had the determining role in creation of monumental/public buildings in almost all cultures. Many monumental buildings have been erected by various rulers through history to be the sign of their power. Accordingly, in the next chapter the structure of power, its characteristics and relationship with architecture, has been explored.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICAL POWER, MUSLIM CULTURES, AND ARCHITECTURE

4.1 Politics and symbolism

Political power has always used symbols to convey its message. The American political scientist Murray Edelman, in his first, now classic, book, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, continues his quest to understand the influence of perception on the political process by turning to the role of art. He argues “*political ideas, language, and actions cannot help but be based upon the images and narratives we take from literature, paintings, film, television, and other genres. Edelman believes art provides us with models, scenarios, narratives, and images we draw upon in order to make sense of political events, and he explores the different ways art can shape political perceptions and actions to both promote and inhibit diversity and democracy*”. (Edelman 1995, p.162)

Conquergood also emphasizes on role of symbols in public policy and political power by saying:

“...The binding force of culture, by and large, is a web of symbols that enables people to control and make sense out of experience in patterned ways. We should have learned from the history of colonialism, slavery, and Nazi eugenics that the way one group in power sees and imagines another group of people can set the stage for

violent action. A democratic society does well to attend to the dominant images it puts into mass circulation, particularly media representations of vulnerable groups. Images and symbolic representations drive public policy...” (Conquergood 1996, pp 11-17)

Yet at present time, political parties have their own symbols. For example, ‘Elephant’ is the symbol of Republican Party or ‘Donkey’ is the symbol of Democratic Party in America. “The hammer and sickle” has come to represent various communist parties and socialist states since the Russian revolution. Alternatively, “the Swastika” represents the Nazis and neo-Nazis since it has been used by these groups. Overall, symbols have been used broadly for the political purposes. It appears then, symbolism not only might stand as the language of culture, but also most of times political power communicates through symbols.

4.2 Power, social structure, belief system, and architecture

How can architecture and power or politics be brought together? Is there any common ground? And if there is so, how power and architecture could collaborate? In fact, the expression of power has always been one of the functions of architecture (Grabar 1987, p.48). Architecture has been seen as a dependent art, science, or profession. Through history, usually architecture has been led and controlled by wealth and power. Many monuments have been erected by architects signified the glory of a ruler or a victory. The quarrying of stones, the brick works, the planning of buildings and the organization of work team, the use of often expensive material for decoration, these and many other activities, demanded financial supports and a legal authority that was usually available in the past to only a few rich ruling princes (Grabar 1987, p.65). This is the same in contemporary time too; although the type of authorities has been changed in present time, politics is seen as a component of architecture, planning, and participation. This is probably the reason of calling

architecture *enslaved* by some scholars like the Polish ecologist Skolimowski, as he states; “...architecture is not for the first time enslaved by the system. Indeed it has been the un-avoidable fate of architecture that it has nearly always served some masters. The architect has always been a servant: of a regime, of a society, of an individual sponsor...” (Skolimowski 1972)

On the other hand, Vale claims usually large public buildings convey political power messages. Even in the contemporary time, in the absence of kings and rulers, Vale argues there are business, cultural and governmental elites, which have control over images; these elites need ‘official’ sorts of architectural monuments to demonstrate their ongoing power and legitimacy (Vale 1999, p.391).

Power, however, is not an isolated area of human affairs, but a part of the total system within which a given society is governed (Skolimowski 1972). As Skolimowski says “...Politics does not determine social structures though it may so appear. Rather, the social structures prevailing in a given society and characteristic for a given society generate appropriate political structures” (Skolimowski 1972). Prior to social structure, power is represented by belief systems and ideologies. Concerns to this fundamental role, Skolimowski believes that politics and even socio-economical systems grow from the foundation of ideology:

“...ideology is then conceived as the foundation on which the socio-economic system rests. Out of this system grows the system, which we call politics with its rules, regulations, morals, and prohibitions. Architecture is moulded by the system called politics, by its socio-economic basis and variety of other forces...” (Skolimowski 1972)

The importance of social structure and its influence on architecture have made some scholars to believe that architecture is in fact the reflection of social structure. Sorkin (1972) for instance, states *architecture represents a visible*

crystallization of social organization, also, he believes that architecture can act as a tool to *subvert the course of history*:

“...if it is true (which it certainly is) that architecture represents a visible crystallization of social organization and is, at a certain scale, paradigmatic of social relationship, then it must be true if these physical relationships were to be reorganized in accordance with the implications of a desired state of social consciousness, society would, ipso facto, be itself reorganized...” Sorkin (1972)

Vale in a similar statement claims for *the most authorities, the challenge to construct forward-reaching symbols has been matched by a need to build links to the past* (Vale 1999, p.391). This process involves *the construction of visually improved narratives of an idealized heritage designed to serve an equally idealistic future* (Vale 1999, p.392).

On the other hand, the idea of relation between social organization and architecture, represent “style” in the form of expression. Historical differences between various cultures rest not only upon taste rather on differences of social systems and ideology: “*architecture must be an expression of the ideology of society, and style must be the vehicle of that expression. Historical changes keep on informing new meanings to old forms*”, Aman (In Saifi 2006, p.25) argues. Accordingly architecture has expressions where ideological meanings are inserted to it; *form alone cannot “vehicle ideas” and spring out from it rather they are added to it through practice, hence ideological content is interchangeable as they are not a prerequisite of form*” (Aman, In Saifi 2006, p.25)

4.3 Discipline, power, and architecture

Prior to contemporary time, French philosopher Michel Foucault (1995) in his revolutionary book: *Discipline and Punish* argues that in the seventeenth and eighteenth century: “... one can speak of the formation of a disciplinary society...”

He argues “...modern power is tolerable on the condition that it mask itself-which it has done very effectively...”(Foucault, In Rabinow& Dreyfus1982, p. 130).Generally, it might be said that the disciplines are techniques for establishing and ensuring order, for instance, in a society. In such society, power is extremely extended. As Foucault describes in disciplinary society three criteria may fulfill as tactics of power:

“...the peculiarity of the disciplines is that they try to define in relation to the multiplicities of tactics of power that fulfils three criteria: firstly, to obtain the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost (economically, by the low expenditure it involves; politically, by its discretion, its low exteriorization, its relative invisibility, the little resistance it arouses); secondly, to bring the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible, without either failure or interval; thirdly, to link this “economical” growth of power with the output of the apparatuses (educational, military, industrial or medical) within which it is exercised; in short, to increase both the docility and the utility of all the elements of the system...” (Foucault 1995, p.218)

Foucault states that in disciplinary society, punishment has shifted its locus from the prisoner’s body to his soul. Many disciplinary methods had long been in existence – in monasteries, armies, workshops. But in the course of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he states that the discipline became general formulas of domination. They were different from slavery because they were not based on a relation of appropriation of bodies; indeed, the elegance of the discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great. However, besides these, Foucault describes another group of people in modern societies who are subjected to bio-politics. These are hidden from the society who are subjected to psychological discipline.

Then Foucault maps on a series of examples some of the essential techniques that most easily spread from one to another; *“These techniques defined a certain mode of detailed political investment of the body, a new micro-physics of power”*

(Foucault 1995, p.139). Later he explained that describing them will require great attention to detail: beneath every set of figures, he believes that, we must seek not a *meaning*, but a *precaution*; we must situate them not only in the inextricability of a functioning, but in the coherence of a tactic.” *They are acts of cunning*”.

Concern to importance of details Foucault claims “*discipline is a political anatomy of detail. ‘ detail’ had long been a category of theology and asceticism: every detail is important since, in the sight of God, no immensity is greater than a detail, nor anything so small that it was not willed by one of his individual wishes*”. (Foucault 1995, p.140)

Foucault (In Rabinow 1991, p.184) argues that detail in disciplinary society is important “...*because little things lead to greater...*”. He believes control of space is an important part of discipline as a technique: “...*the control of space was an essential consistent of this technology. Discipline proceeds by the organization of individuals in space...*” .(Foucault, In Rabinow& Dreyfus 1982, p.154)

According to Foucault (1995, pp.141-149), discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space. To achieve this end, it employs several techniques:

- Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself, It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony...

- But the principle of “enclosure” is neither constant, nor indispensable, nor sufficient in disciplinary machinery. This machinery works space in a much more flexible and detailed way. It does this first of all on the principle of elementary location or partitioning. Each individual has his own place; and each place its individual. Avoid

distribution in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyze confused, massive, or transient pluralities. Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed...discipline organizes an analytical space. And there, too, it encountered an old architectural and religious method: the monastic cell. Even if the compartments it assigns become purely ideal, the disciplinary space is always, basically, cellular...

- The rule of functional sites would gradually, in the disciplinary institutions, code a space that architecture generally left at the disposal of several different uses. Particular places were defined to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communications, but also to create a useful space...

- In discipline, the elements are interchangeable, since each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others. The unit is, therefore, neither the territory (unit of domination), nor the place (unit of residence), but the rank: the place one occupies in a classification, the point at which a line and a column intersect, the interval in a series of intervals that one may traverse one after the other. Discipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations...in organizing “cells”, “places” and “ranks”, the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation...

4.4 Power, architecture, and place

One way of increasing the power of authority or a dominant group is to make the place theirs by giving it sacred value and monopolizing its meaning. Increasing sacred values will cause to absorb the similar people into the place and as a result, it will increase their power. The new additional sacred values and places will have direct and indirect affects on culture and social identity. In fact, most of times there is an attempt by dominant groups to combine power and culture or belief system of a society under their ideology. Through this combination, all in-group members will support power automatically. Regarding that, Friedland specialist in terrorist situations and professor of psychology at Tel Aviv University states:

“...they do this through combining culture and politics as each is an instrument to obtain the other, in this way; they attempt legally to exclude other cultural practices so as to increase the place’s sanctity, thereby causing the migration of their kind into the place and therefore increase their own numerical weight and to further their own political power. These characterizations justify dominant groups’ exclusionary practices and boundary making...” (Friedland, In Saifi 2006, p.20)

Therefore, it seems place and its geography have an important role in obtaining and understanding the power. For example, Foucault emphasizes on organization of place for maintaining the power. He refers to Jeremy Bentham’s plan for the Panopticon (1791) as the model of a disciplinary technology; Panopticon as Foucault describes is a clear example of how power operates:

“...Bentham’s Panopticon is the architectural figure of this composition. We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the center, a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other. All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy...” (Foucault 1995, p.200)

Later Foucault summarizes that the Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. However, he makes it clear the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form.

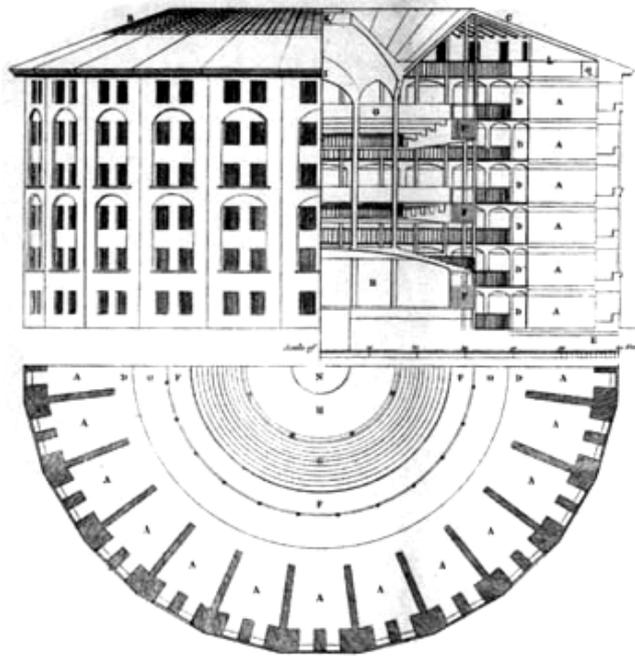


Figure 6 : Plan of the Panopticon, photo: Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and punish – the birth of the prison*, Vintage books, 1995, p 145

Panopticism, in short, arranges things in a way that exercise of power is not added on, from the outside. Rather, it is a mechanism that increases the power from inside. In the words of Foucault “... *the external power may throw off its physical weight; it tends to the non-corporal; and, the more it approaches this limit, the more constant, profound and permanent are its effects: it is a perpetual victory that avoids any physical confrontation and which always decided in advance...*” (Foucault 1995, p.203)

According to Foucault, Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power; because of its mechanisms of observation, it gains efficiency and ability to penetrate into men's behavior (Foucault 1995, p.204). Panopticism can be integrated into any function (education, medical treatment, production, punishment); it can increase the effect of this function, by being linked closely with it. These techniques for increasing the power and its influence, however, are not new. Different rulers have used most of them for a long time. But as Foucault mentions the way that these techniques were integrated to each other and used again in Panopticism, was new: *"...Most of these techniques have a long history behind them. but what was new, in the eighteenth century, was that, by being combined and generalized, they attained a level at which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process..."* (Foucault 1995, p.224)

4.5 Political power of the King in Muslim cultures

Since geography of place has an essential role in understanding the political power and its relationship with the other factors, it is necessary to study power allied to the society. For instance, through the medieval period and after that, King Sultan was the first and the last source of power everywhere in the Islamic world. Architecture, art, literature, and even philosophy of Muslim world reflected this point of view. Political power of the king was not only very strong for public but also it was effective in the private life of people. Such extremely extended power generally came from the way kings legitimized their power: from integration of power and religious beliefs.

One of the aspects of power is that its subject is free human beings not slaves. The other aspect is that power in order to be bearable, tries to hide or in the words of

Foucault, *power tends to mask itself* (Foucault 1988, p.86 & Foucault 1995). The success of power and its acceptance depends on its ability to be hidden. That is why, political power always has been tried to legitimize its existence by use of different sources like hiding behind the religious beliefs.

For finding such legitimacy, political power usually needs to get enough support from scholars, religious leaders, and so on. These intellectuals could provide the required foundation for legitimizing the power. They could interpret the religious rules and advices in a way, which support political power of king. In fact, legitimacy makes power and authority more humanistic. Most of legitimizing systems, however, after application looks like irrational from some aspects. But these systems most of times can sustain power in any circumstances.

To link power and religious belief in Muslim cultures, kings and sultans called themselves 'Zillullah', the Shadow of God (Arjoman 1984). For example, Suleyman the magnificent called him self as:

*“Slave of God, powerful with the power of God, deputy of God on earth, obeying the commands of the Qur'an and enforcing them throughout the world, master of all lands, **the shadow of God over all nations**, Sultan of Sultans in all the lands of Persians and Arabs, the propagator of Sultanic laws (Nashiru kawanin al-Sultaniyye), the tenth Sultan of the Ottoman Khans, Sultan, son of Sultan, Suleyman Khan...*

Slave of God, master of the world, I am Suleyman and my name is read in all the prayers in all the cities of Islam. I am the Shah of Baghdad and Iraq, Caesar of all the lands of Rome, and the Sultan of Egypt. I seized the Hungarian crown and gave it to the least of my slaves...” (In Hoker 1996)

Most of Iranian kings also had the same claim that they are the shadow of God. Kings of course were the symbolic shadows of God. However, their behavior most of times was very cruel and immoral. Therefore, it was clear people would question the alliance of kings and religion. To prevent such questions, however, the Muslim scholars who were supporting the kings, found convincing explanation. They

advised people that looking for something completely reasonable and pleasant in this world is impossible. According to them, even rain has some harm. For instance, Ibne-Azragh between two extremes of having a king that rule Muslim society or anarchy finally accepted the power of king and states: *“It is inevitable to have a king. Because without a king it is impossible to make people do their religious duties. God by kings more than Koran can stop people from sins”*. (In Firahi 2003, p.205)

In addition, Iranian religious researcher Firahi states that kings usually tried to have a kind of mysterious existence (Firahi 2003, p.213). They were not in direct contact with the ordinary people. Making division between private and public appearance of a king was the other smart way for supporting his authority, since some improper and perhaps impious actions of the king could reduce his legitimacy. Therefore, it was necessary to veil king. Accordingly, his wrong private life actions could not influence his political power.

Kings were exaggerating their splendor and majesty in various ways. For example, Firahi states that some kings even used of animals for such purposes: *“...Ibn-e-taghtaghi reported that whenever Azed-dollah had public meeting, several elephants, lions, and leopards, were in chain around him...”* Then he added that all of these had done for increasing king’s power in people’s eyes (Firahi 2003, p.214).

Public meetings of Shah Abbas, the magnificent, is the other example. Iranian historian Nasrollah Falsafi (2004, p.1260) describes when Shah Abbas had public meetings, nine or ten young handsome attendants (khajesaray) dressed in expensive cloths were standing behind him. Behind these khajesaray there were elder attendants who were carrying guns. The head attendant was standing close to the Shah. On the right side of the king, Vazir, governors, and administrators according to the importance of their positions were standing. And on the left side of Shah,

religious leaders according to the hierarchy of their importance were standing. Falsafi claims that Shah Abbas put the religious leaders on his left side on purpose, to show that political men are more important than religious men.

On the other hand, Firahi (2003, p.221) states that the political organization of Islamic society mainly was based on a triangle of “people”, “religion”, and “king”. One of the necessary elements of such division was supposing people as weak, insufficient citizens whom without a powerful king cannot benefit from religion. As he points “...*The political power of king was the essential link between people and religion. [It was supposed that] without such power, society and religion cannot stand long. Therefore, in contrast to the religion that one religion is adequate for all time, need to have a king claimed to be a daily need...*”.(Firahi 2003, p.221)

In analyze of this kind of power, it is worthy to mention the concept of pastorship (individualizing power) by Foucault since pastoral power seems similar to the power of Muslim kings. For investigating the relationship between the pastorship and state, Foucault begins by establishing the uniqueness of the concept of the leader as shepherd as it developed in Judaism and early Christianity. Then Foucault in differentiation between Greek and pastoral power asserts:

“...First, pastoral power is held over a people bound together by faith in their God, while Greek political power is over a land that belongs to the gods. Secondly, pastoral power requires the continued presence of the shepherd; Greek power only the laws laid down by the lawgiver. This is because, thirdly, “pastorship” is “a matter of constant, individualized and final kindness,” whereas the Greek leader need only intervene in the lives of his people in times of danger. And finally, the shepherd’s efforts are geared completely toward the good of his flock, even a glory, not available to those he leads...” (Foucault, In Holland 2002-3, pp.79-97)

4.6 Religious leaders' power during the Safavid period

As far as political power of Sultan legitimized by religious beliefs in Muslim societies, religious leaders had a very important place in the society. The political power of religious leaders especially was very strong in Safavid Shiism. In Safavid Shi'a belief, in each era there should be a religious leader who is the representative of hidden Imam. He knows the religious rules and advices better than anybody else does. Then, only this Shi'a leader has the right to legitimize the power of king. Such point of view, which to some extent existed formerly in Muslim cultures, during the Safavid period has been supported extremely. Because of integration of political power and religious beliefs, however, such process was an automatic support for the power of king.

According to Firahi (2003, p.309) in Shiism, the political society has been divided in two groups: majority of ordinary people and few religious leaders or Mojtahed. As far as in Shi'a belief of Ijtihad, ordinary people do not have any power over the religious leaders (Mojtahed), then these religious leaders had very extended power. Then Firahi compares Shi'a political science to Sunni in order to show that Shi'a leaders have had more power:

"...Shi'a Ijtihad, in contrast to Sunni sect, believes in intellectuality. It means it can make mistakes. But it has a double face. In one side, it is possible to teach Ijtihad [religious education] to everyone, and then it has an equalized, fair, and humanistic character. On the other side, Shi'a Ijtihad is dividing the society into two groups of religious leaders and the following ordinary people. It is obvious that such division has authoritative, controlling character...in Shi'a thought it is impossible for people to have control over religious leaders. How it can be possible to control the ones whom their duty is to teach and expand religion? Such control even is a sin. Therefore, the humanistic character of Ijtihad does not include normal people. Only religious leaders may criticize each other..." (Firahi 2003, p.310)

Keddie also pointed that the history of Iran's clergy is unique in the Muslim world and forms a background to clerical participation in the two major twentieth-century Iranian revolutions, the constitutional revolution (1905-1911), and the Islamic Revolution (1978-79). The peculiarity of Iranian Shiism according to her is in clerical hierarchy, as she says, "... *Once the twelfth Imam was said to be in hiding, there was no legitimate leadership, and gradually there developed the idea that leading clerics, through their knowledge, could best judge the infallible will of the Imam. This led ultimately to a kind of clerical hierarchy where leading clerics, and sometimes a single top leader, were seen as the source of correct belief and action as well as the recipients of religious taxes to be disbursed. ...*"(Keddie 1998)

4.7 Summary

Political power usually has used architecture to convey its messages since early historical periods. Within the area of architecture, especially large public buildings have been loaded by the power's favorite symbolic messages. It could be one reason for knowing architecture as a dependent profession by some scholars.

Regarding the development of power, Foucault (1995) speaks of the formation of a disciplinary society during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Foucault states that in disciplinary society, punishment has shifted its locus from the prisoner's body to his soul. Then the power tries to mask itself by various ways. Panopticism according to Foucault, for instance, was one of these ways during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Panopticism is a mechanism to increase the power and it can be integrated into any function (education, medical treatment, production, punishment); it can increase the effect of this function, by being linked closely with it.

On the other hand, one of the key parts of discipline as a technique in a disciplinary society is control of space. According to Foucault, discipline proceeds by the organization of individuals in space; then Panopticon plan has been re-introduced by him as an architectural sample for such space arrangement.

The other way of increasing the power of authorities is to make the place theirs, by bringing the similar people as them in a place. Giving sacred values to a place is one way to absorb other people who recognize and share the same belief. In Iran, for instance, during the Safavid period, many Shi'a clergies immigrated from Lebanon and Bahrain to the Iran. Iran as the only Shi'a state was safe and wealthy place for Shi'a Muslims during this period. Thus, these clergies were great supporters of Safavid rulers.

Power, however, cannot be effective within an isolated area of social interactions. In fact, political power is based on some other factors such as geography of place, beliefs, and socio-economical factors. For example, in Iran during the Safavids, the political power of king has been known as the essential link between people and religion. Then to understand the power, it is necessary to study it allied to the society. Accordingly, in the next chapter all the effective factors of 'Identity', 'Belief', and 'Power', have been brought together to study them in the case of Safavid period.

CHAPTER 5

Political power, religious belief, and identity in Iran during the Safavid period

5.1 Shiism and power during the Safavid period

Historically, Iran has been known as one of the most important parts of the Islamic world. The interpretation of Islam, however, in Iran has differed from the other Muslim countries since the Safavid period. During this period, Twelver Shiism has been chosen as the official religion of Iran. This transformation from Sunni to Shiite has had long lasting effects on Iranian society, culture, and architecture. As in modern times, many religious beliefs and traditions are comparable with this period. It is hard, at least for Iranians, to think of Iran without being aware that they are Shi'a. Even those members of the population who are not religious, feel bound to adhere to some particular traditional customs. These customs, which are inseparable and integral parts of Iranian culture, have deep roots in Iranian Shiism.

There is no evidence however, to show that Shiism was the original religion of the Safavid leaders. In fact, the Safavid dynasty had its origins in a Sunni Sufi order, which had grow in Azerbaijan, North-west of Iran (Keddie 1998; Cleveland 2004, p.51). Its founder was Sheikh Safi al-Din (d.1334) from Ardebil, where his shrine exists to this day. Originally, he was Sunni, although his Safavid followers

when came to the power, they tried to emphasize on their Shiite beliefs. Bosworth describes this conversion as:

The family [Safavids] headed a Sufi order... originally orthodox Sunni in complexion, but in the mid-fifteenth century the leader of the order, Shaykh Junayd, embarked on a campaign for the material power in addition to spiritual authority. In the atmosphere of heterodoxy and Shi'i sympathies among the Turkmen of Anatolia and Azerbaijan, the Safawiyya gradually became Shi'i in emphasis. (Bosworth 1996, p.279)

There are some testimonies, which show Shah Ismail I, the founder of Safavid dynasty was not even a restrict Muslim. Most of his victories had happened with the help of Shi'ite Qizilbash Turkoman tribesmen who wore a hat with twelve tassels in honor of the twelve Imams. But the king himself, seems, was not a Shi'a believer. As Morton has put it, "the behavior of Ismail and his court was highly unorthodox in any Islamic terms right up to the end of the reign" (In Morgan 1999, pp. 22-23). As a noticeable example, he quotes the court's attitude towards alcohol, "wine was indulged in among the Qizilbash in the reign of Ismail, not shamefacedly and in private as an illegal vice, but openly and with enthusiasm as part of public rituals"(Morton, In Morgan 1999, pp. 22-23).

Therefore, this question will raise that why Shiism has been introduced as official religion of Iran in Safavid period. Akhavi by emphasizing on enforcement of new religion compares Safavid to Fatimid in Egypt and Buyid in Iran:

It is worth nothing that it was enforced, and with great brutality: conversion from Sunnism was not voluntary, and not a few of those who declined to take that step were executed. This was something of a new departure. There had been states ruled by Shiism in the Islamic world before most notably the Fatimid and Buyid empires. But no attempt had been made by such governments to compel their subjects to change their allegiance from one form of Islam to another, more favored variety. (Akhavi 1980, p.23)

With such kind of brutal attitude, it is hard to believe that Safavids chose this religion because they were true believers. In fact, it seems, Safavid kings needed

Shiism, to legitimize their power inside Iran and to stand in front of their strong neighbors. Most of historians, thus, as Morgan describe this involuntary conversion to Shiism to reasons of state, a kind of political calculation and a sense of identity: *“The advantage of Shiism, in the eyes of shah Ismail and his advisers, was not that it was necessarily true, but that it served to differentiate Persia from the Ottoman Empire, to provide the new Safavid state, whose people perhaps lacked a sufficiently nineteenth-century concept of national feeling, with a sense of a distinct and coherent identity: Shiism = Persia”* (Morgan 1999, pp. 22-23)

Therefore, during this period, religion and power integrated to each other. Political structure of Iran was relied on religious base and vice versa. As there was no existing Shi'a religious establishment in Iran, Safavids made use of Shi'a clergies of other countries (Cleveland 2004, p.52). In first years of occupying the power, Safavids forced or encouraged Shi'a clergies to immigrate to Iran. Between them, Shi'a clergies that came from Jabal-Amel in Lebanon had the main role in organizing Shiism in Iran. Later, however, these foreigner religious leaders were replaced by the Iranian ones.

This political attitude of combining power and religion had certain reasons. Safavids in a relatively short time could conquer a large area, which almost makes today's Iran territory. Keeping power over such vast territory, of course had high cost. Safavid kings by introducing themselves as shadow of God, and devoted to the last Imam, tried to get full support from population. During this period, some religious leaders attempted to make people understand Shiite in a way to sustain the power. For example, Iranian Safavid philosopher: Sabzevari, , which after Majlesi had an essential role in setting up the Safavid Shiism, states, *“...There is no time without Imam...In all time there is an Imam, which for some reasons is hidden. And*

during this time that Imam is hidden, if there is no fair, knowledgeable king which can control the society, then there will be a huge chaos in the world. Thus, it is necessary to obey a king for having an organized society...” (In Sefatgol 2001, p.498)

Then, people had to follow the king since obedience to the king meant obedience to the God. Such belief was of great help to the authority to keep power in their hand with low economical and political cost. Any opposition to the king had been taken as opposition to the Shiism and Islam. Sometimes, even, there was no need to take care of some small rebellious actions. People would do that by themselves.

In addition, some Shi'a beliefs, as believing on hidden Imam and waiting for him, could lead the society toward a politically quiet attitude. The promising future of justice, freedom, and prosperity, which the hidden Imam will bring to the world, was a good reason for Safavid rulers to encourage people waiting for him. The American historian and specialist in Iranian history, Keddie also states, “...*The other major branch of Shi'is, the Twelvers, believed that their Twelfth Imam had gone into hiding but would return as the messianic mahdi. In early centuries this belief promoted a politically quietist attitude of waiting, but later some Twelvers became activist...*” (Keddie 1998). The other advantage of composing power and religion was laid in collecting soldiers for various fights between Safavids and their inside or outside enemies. These fights were called Jihad and religious rules of Jihad was considering for them. Participating in these Jihads was a religious duty and could guarantee heaven in the other world. Thus, always there were enough volunteers for such fights.

5.2 Sufism in Safavid period

This kind of legitimization through religion was not only limited to the Shiism. Safavids, which were Sufi in their origin, had changed most of Sufi principles in their favor too. Most of scholars, thus, found Safavid Sufism completely different from what it was formerly since Sufism in this period was getting very close to Shiism (Shariati 2008, p.105). Sometimes, even it is hard to distinguish some of their principles from each other. For example, Lewisohn, specialist in Persian and Sufi literature, points that:

...at the first sight, Safavid Sufism appears to be a completely different world from pre-Safavid Sufism. It is infused with extremism (ghuluww) and fuelled by fanatical Qizilbash dersichisme, repackaged, decked out in a parti-coloured cloak of Shiite piety, its most celebrated exponents' diction and lexicon tainted by their Arab colleagues in the madrasa, all of whom are steeped in the semi-alien language of Lebanon from whence so many Safavid "ulama" hailed....(Lewisohn 1999, pp. 65-66)

Safavid kings were not only claiming to be the shadow of God, but also they called themselves master Sufi too. Therefore, their Sufi Qizilbash followers and supporters had to show similar respect and obedience, which they were showing to their ideological masters. For instance, Lewisohn mentions the behavior of Shah Ismail as, *"...Shah Ismail's shiitized reorientation of Sufism was tinged with his self-conception as not only a Sufi master, but the veritable hand and shadow of God on earth. He inherited the bloodthirsty and ruthless nature of his father and grandfather, and was notorious for his readiness to massacre those who disagreed with his political or religious views..."* (Lewisohn 1999, p.70)

Safavids were making use of Shiism to keep power over ordinary people and they were converting Sufism to get better support from their Qizilbash tribesmen. Morgan supports this thought by stating that, *"...the Safavid theocracy and "totalitarian state" as Roger Savory termed it, was based on a politicalization of the*

Sufi master-discipline relationship, focusing upon an idolatrous cult of personality built around the ruler as both “perfect master” and absolute monarch...” (Morgan 1999, p.24)

However, Safavids emphasis was more on their Shiite character rather than their Sufi origin. They slowly transformed from being Sufi masters (sheikh) to Persian kings. In this transformation, it seems Iranian Sufism gradually was getting closer or in better word vanishing into Shiism. As Iranian religious historian, Sefatgol, states, “... *Safavid leaders transformed from “great Morshid” to “king of Iran”. Therefore, the type of relationship between Qizilbash and their Great Morshid, which was Sufi relationship, gradually changed to the relationship of a king and its slaves...”* (Sefatgol 2001, p.597)

5.3 Safavid Shiism and Shariati

Iranian sociologist, Ali Shariati, in his distinguished book: *Alavi Shiism and Safavid Shiism* stressed the politicization of Shiism in Safavid period. In a remarkable passage, discussing his view, he (Sharitai 2008, pp. 34-37) said there are two kinds of Islamic/Shiite faith: movement faith and institution faith. Then he clearly stated his preference for interpreting Shiite as movement faith although Safavids institutionalized Shiism in any mean.

Shariati attempted to push Iranian society towards a new understanding of Islam as an ideology, which could provide a better future. In his writings and lectures, he often repeated that Iranian Shiism is not a revolutionary religion, which he believed Shiism should be. As Shariati stated, “...*sometimes religion is taken as an ideology, at the other times it is taken as a social custom. Religion as a social custom is composed of a totality of inherited beliefs, inculcated sentiments, imitation*

of fashions, relationships, mottos, traditions, and the unconscious practice of particular percepts...” (Shariati 2003a, p.317)

He constructed a balance sheet of the two kinds of Shiism and considered their treatment of the following concepts: visayat¹; imamat²; ismat³; valayat⁴; shafa’at⁵; ijtihad⁶; taqlid⁷; adl⁸; duah⁹; intizar¹⁰; gheybat¹¹ (Shariati 2008, pp. 258-261). The following table shows differences between these two Alavi and Safavid Shiism according to Shariati (Translation from Akhavi 1980, p.152).

¹ appointment as trustee (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

² Imam is any one of 12 infallible members of Prophet Family. In shi’a belief after holy prophet, 12 Imam had the responsibility of leading the Muslim society (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

³ chastity, to the point of immunity from sin (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

⁴ guardianship of jurist (Encyclopedia Britanica)

⁵ mediation (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

⁶ Ijtihad is the process whereby a very educated Muslim makes up his own ruling on the permissibility of an Islamic law just for himself. This person would be labelled a 'Mujtahid'. An uneducated person is not permitted to do this and must follow the ruling of his Imam instead (Islamic dictionary)

⁷ Taqleed means 'emulation' or 'copying' another individual. In Islam, Muslims do taqleed of a scholar who they believe preaches the correct thing in fiqh [jurisprudence - religious law]. They do this by following his opinions concerning fiqh issues (Islamic dictionary)

⁸ justice (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

⁹ prayer (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

¹⁰ waiting for the imam (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

¹¹ the imam’s occultation (Akhavi 1980, p.152)

Table 1: Balance sheet of Ali's Shi'ism and Safavid Shi'ism

(Shariati 2008, pp. 258-261)

	Ali's Shi'ism	Safavid Shi'ism
visayat	The prophet's appointing, by God's command, the most suitable and right people in his family, on the basis of knowledge, to leadership	The principle of government by designation, based on dynastic inheritance founded on descent and kinship alone.
Imamat	Pure, revolutionary leadership for guiding the people and the true construction of society, leading to the latter's awareness, growth, independence of judgment by human beings who incarnate the religion.	Belief in 12 pure, sacred and preternatural souls, superhuman beings who are the only means of approaching and having recourse to God; of mediation; 12 angels to worship, hidden creatures, akin to deities.
Ismat	Belief in the imams' piety, purity of ideas and social leadership; the imams as leaders responsible in their faith, knowledge and rule over the people; i.e., a rejection of traitorous government, of following an impure man of learning, of a deceiving clergyman who is connected to the apparatus of the caliphate.	A special and exceptional feature of hidden creatures, who are not made in man's image, who cannot err; belief that those 14 pure souls [i.e., Muhammad, Fatimah and the 12 imams] have such infallibility; i.e., proof of the naturalness of a traitorous government; acceptance of the impure world; of a wrong doing clergyman with ties to tyranny.
valayat	Friendship for, and leadership and government by, Ali, alone, because he is the supreme example of servitude to Allah. His leadership because he is a bright light of right guidance and sincere scout for the caravan of mankind; his government because man's history has yearned for the justice freedom and equality of his five years of government, which the nations need.	Just loving Ali and therefore being exempt from any responsibility; guaranteeing heaven and not falling into the fires of hell; belief that valayat is irrelevant in the creation and administration of society, since it helps Allah; whereas in the world nature is at work.
Shafa'at	A factor for securing the born of salvation	A means of unworthy salvation
Ijtihad	A factor for the movement of religion through time; the companion of history, permanent revolution and integrative revolution in the outlook of religion; a legal perfection and reconciling in changes and development of the system.	A factor of stultification and ossification; a block to progress, change and transformation; a means of blasphemy and perfidy; an absolute censure of any new act on the path of religion, system, life, thought, knowledge, society, everything.
Taqlid	A logical, scientific, natural and necessary link between a layman or non-specialist with an "alim" of religion on practical and legal questions that have a technical or expertise aspect to them.	Blind obedience to a clergyman; absolute subordination, with no questions asked, to the mind, opinion or decision of a clergyman; or, in the words of Koran: worship of a religious man of the spirit.
Adl	A belief in an attribute of God, that he	A controversy over the attributes of

	is just, that the world is based on justice; that the system of society and life must also be based on justice; that the system of society and life must also be based on it; that tyranny and inequality are an unnatural and anti-God system; it is one of the two pillars of religion, the objective of prophet-hood.	God that is relevant for the after-life; anticipation or assignation of duty for God in the sense of what judgment will He render at the resurrection. On this side of death it is irrelevant, since prior to death the discussion of justice is related to Shah Abbas; give to Caesar what is his and to God what is God's. The world is the domain of Shah Abbas's reign; the hereafter that of God.
Du'ah	A text that teaches, makes aware, inculcates good and beauty; an act that uplifts the spirit and brings one nearer to God.	An incantation mechanically uttered that makes one secure, narcotizes, provides vain hopes, bring rewards that have nothing to do with one's circumstances, substitutes for heavy responsibility.
Intizar	Spiritual, ideational and practical preparedness for reform, revolution, changing the world situation, decisive belief in the elimination of tyranny, victory of justice, and the coming into its own of the deprived class, the masses' inheritance of the earth, in tandem with true, self-made men for the world revolution.	Being at spiritual, ideational and practical ease in submitting to the status quo; explaining away corruption; fatalism about everything; rejecting responsibility; despair about reform; prior surrender before taking any step.
Ghaybat	The people having responsibility in charting their course; belief; one's own leadership and social and spiritual existence; appointing leaders among the people who are aware, responsible, pure – who can substitute for the Imam.	Negation of everyone's responsibility; suspending all the social ordinances of Islam; inutility of any act; viewing the acceptance of any social responsibility to be illegitimate on the pretext that only the Imam can lead, one can only follow the Imam; one can be responsible before the Imam, but since he is in occultation, there is nothing one can do about anything.

(Shariati 2008, pp. 207-216)

<i>Etrat</i>	The fourteen member of prophet's family; the twelve Imams, Fatemeh and Mohammad and the as symbolic Muslim family, to guide people, to support Sunnat and Koran	Putting Etrat ahead than Sunnat and even sometimes Koran, to legitimize dynastic inheritance and ethnical values.
<i>Taghiye</i>	Two kinds of tactics: first, believers are entitled to lie in defense of their faith, second, to keep the unity in Muslim societies, such as what Ali did.	Lying to preserve the believers not their faith.

5.4 Iranian Identity and Shiism

Shariati criticized Safavid Shiism as a customary religion; however, he believed a customary religion makes the national continuation of a society possible throughout the generations and centuries. According to Shariati, Safavid Shiism mostly has been created to serve this nationalistic desire. As he said:

...The grand feat of the Safavid dynasty lay in the fact that from three different elements, they synthesized a single element. Specifically, they combined the three elements of royalism, nationalism, and Sufism with the end product which was “sugarcoated” as Shia’ism. They handed it over to us and we are still consuming it. (This particular brand of Shiism, Safavid Shiism, gave birth to the existing Iranian national banner, which was chosen as a result of confrontation with the Turks, Arabs, and Russians)... (Shariati 2003a, p.317)

He remarked that because of this combination of nationalism and religion, the religious mourning event of Ashoora had (and still have) conflict with the national Iranian New Year celebration –*Nowrooz*. Then it was not clear that people should mourn or celebrate during these days, when it happened for the first time during the Shah Abbas’s reign. Finally, Shah Abbas advised the populace to mourn on the tenth and celebrate on the eleventh! *“...The elements of nationality and religion were mixed in the form of a concoction called Safavid Shia’ism. This was a sort of nationalism, which combines with its own particular cultural, historical, literary, and subjective elements, as well as its particular spiritual products and thus a single spirit _religion _manifestation itself. This is the religion of nationalism...” (Shariati 2003a, p.317; Shariati 2008, p.108)*

Therefore, probably one can say that Safavid leaders established the foundation of today’s Iranian identity. As Keddie states, they got this role because they could establish a common religion, also they were able to unify a large area, which almost makes Iran now:

“...Although they were, like most rulers in Iran since the mid- eleventh century, Turks, the Safavids are often seen as founders of the modern Iranian state. This is because (1) they unified a large territory comparable to modern Iran and (2) they established a common religious base in Shi’ism. It is, however anachronistic to present this as a national state, and the Shi’i religious identity, largely forced on Iranians to distinguish them from the Sunni Ottoman and Uzbek enemy states, was far more important than any hints at a national identity. Shi’ism remains a primarily unifying force today...” (Keddie 1998)

Farhi on the other hand, states there have been many different iterations of Iranian national identity, including linguistic, territorial, ethnic, and religious, However *“if at one time language was the primary defining characteristic of the modern Iranian, at another juncture religion became the principal marker of Iranianness”* (Farhi 2005, pp. 7-22). Choosing religion as unifying factor, however, was a smart way regarding to variety of ethnics and cultures in Iranian society too. Iran is a large country with various ethnics, cultures, sub-cultures, and even languages such as Fars, Turke, Lor, Baloch, Kord etc. such variation existed in the present time too. By choosing Shiite belief and Farsi as official religion and language, different social groups came together to create a nation and support this new empire.

Atabaki, however, believes the Safavid attempted to introduce greater political unity through centralization and institutionalization of Shi’ism, created for the Iranians a new, defensive identity in relation to those who lived beyond their borders. He points, *“...for the subject of Safavid Persia, defined themselves not by their own “national” characteristics, but rather by local exclusion, i.e. through a negative definition, comparing themselves with their immediate Sunni Muslims neighbors”* (Atabaki 2005, pp. 23-44).

Keddie (1998) highlights that Shiism has become largely intertwined with Iranian national identity down to today. According to her, often it is impossible to

say if a trend or identification is Iranian national or Shi'i, particularly since Iran is the only Shi'i state as well as the only Iranian one. This identification is so strong, which she is trying to make it clear that *"...attempts to view Muslim Iranians as always Shi'i or proto-Shi'i are ideological, not factual..."*.

Moreover, many pre-Islamic traditions and customs renewed from Safavid period onward. In fact, many of the present day rituals and ceremonies in Iran are a continuation of the ancient customs. The observances and terminology used in rituals of death such as 'Cheleh' (40th), 'Haftah' (7th), 'Sal' (year) etc are very similar to its' pre-Islamic days (Price 2001a). Renewal festivals such as Persian New Year, Chahar-Shanbeh-Suri, and Shab-e-Cheleh are also deeply rooted in the ancient tradition. There are however, some sayings, which Shiism during this period got close to Zoroastrian, the Persian pre-Islamic religion. For example, Price states, *"...In the process Islam grew steadily more Zoroastrianized, with adaptations of funerary rites, purity laws, and a cult of saints, (12 Imams) springing up in place of the veneration of the 12 major deities, Eyzads. The Zoroastrian figure, Saoshyant, who comes at the end of the time to save the world finds a place too and is replaced by the Time Lord, Imam Zaman, the venerated Shiite 12th Imam."* (Price 2001)

Shariati, also, believed Safavid Shiism was integrated too much to Persian culture. He states, the manifestation of Islam in Iran becomes the manifestation of the Persian collective spirit, which sometimes can be even unrelated to Islam. As he said:

...once I came across a portrait of Ali with moustaches twice as long as those of Shah Abbas' in the hand of a student in Europe who was from the "Druz" denomination. I asked him who he was, whereby he responded, "Ali (PBUH)!" now look at the Iranian drawings of Ali and Mohammad (PBUH); they both look like Persians. The prophet looks like Zoroaster, his Arabic attire has changed, so has his make up! These are religious symbols, traditions, and mottos; this is what Durkheim talks about when he uses "manifestation of collective spirit. (Shariati 2003a, p.317)

However, this manifestation of collective spirit is not limited to the Iran. Later he discussed that it is just the same for other religions, like e.g. Christianity. The manifestation of Jesus in Europe was turned into the manifestation of the western's collective spirit and the European spirit emerged as Christianity, according to Shariati. *He stated, "...Mary was a Palestinian Jew; look at the western Mary, she is blond with maroon eyes. How did she come to be French, American, British...? the same is true about Jesus, who, as the present western deity, resembles a movie star rather than an Israeli prophet. He is blond with blue eyes and fair skin! Why does Jesus change race? Because Christianity has nothing to do with either Jesus or Palestine. Christianity is the manifestation of the Jesus' followers."* (Shariati 2003a, pp. 317-318)

Another example of combination of Safavid Shiism and Persian culture has been brought by Marzolph, professor in Islamic studies and scholar of narrative culture of Islamic Near and Middle East states. He indicates in Iranian narratives the religious characters of Shiite have been described similar to Persian heroes or kings. As he says:

...Rostam, Persian heroes in Shahname, had special abilities and he was always in service of Iranian kings. Whenever, Iranians are in trouble he was there to save them from all dangers. On the other hand, there is Ali: the first Shi'a Imam, the first Muslim, the winner of Kheibar battle, and Shi'a leader (Vali). In traditional narratives, storyteller for attracting people and responding to their psychic, religious, and national needs has made these two heroes close to each other. Rostam was the Persian pre-Islam hero but in these narratives, he has accepted Islam. And because of that, Imam Ali shows special attention to him at the end! Ali becomes Rostam's religious leader. In this way, Iranian hero, Rostam becomes Muslim and Islamic hero (Ali) becomes Iranian..." (Marzolph, In Firahi 2003, p.125)

Price (2001a), also, believes there are many similarities between some Safavid Shiite beliefs and the Persian ones. For instance, she mentions to Alameh Majlessi, the respected religious authority during the Safavid period, and his book.

His well-known book *Bihar al Anwar* (Oceans of light) that contained doctrine of Iranian Twelver Shiism became the standard text for Shiite religious observances since the Safavid period onward. According to Price (2001), this book is very similar to Sassanian codes of observances outlined in 'Dinkard' and 'Vandidad'.

5.5 Economical structure of the institutions of Religion

One of the important factors in institutionalizing religion in this period was its economical structure. Religion always was getting enough support from political structure. But the best way, which can make an institution long lasting, is its economical independency. This independency for Safavid religious structure came from expanding the Waqf system. Through the legal provisions of waqf, the wealthy were encouraged to invest their income in socially useful pious constructions available to the whole community (Grabar 1987, p.77)

This system, although, existed before Safavids, during this period was expanded extremely. King and royal families were generally the main donators and land was given them, while the others were encouraged to make various buildings such as shop, carvansara, store, water storage, public bath, etc in those lands. The income of these buildings was spent for the cost of religious buildings like mosques and maddrassaes. This income was not only enough to build new structures, but also religious students (Talabeh) and clergies could have relatively comfortable life with it. In this period numerous mosques, madrassa and other religious Shi'a buildings like imamzadeh and tekiye were built by income of Vaqf buildings. This powerful economical structure was a great help to Shiism to grow by itself although it was never separated from politics.

5.6 City, power, and Religion

The other important issue about Iranian religious structure in this period is the creation of big religious cities. Most of these cities had somewhat religious character before Safavids but during this period, this character was getting more significant. Except Isfahan, which as the capital city was the main place for religious activities, cities like Mashad, Qom, Kashan and Shiraz found an important religious character too. According to Sefatgol between them, three cities of Isfahan, Mashad and Qom were the main religious cities. This emphasis on religious aspect of cities came from confrontation with other neighbors, especially Ottomans, which had control over main Muslim cities:

“...as result of confrontation with Ottoman which had control over Mecca and Medina , Safavid introduced Mashad as the main religious city for Shi’a Muslims. This city gradually transformed to the most sacred city in Iran. In this era, because of Ottomans, doing the necessary pilgrimage to Mecca was getting gradually harder for Shi’a Muslims. This city had the similar function and it was acting as the religious and cultural shield...” (Sefatgol 2001, p.229)

Therefore, the pilgrimage to Mashad often came to be regarded as a substitute for the pilgrimage to Mecca. Still there is this slogan among Iranians that Mecca is the pilgrimage place for wealthy people and Mashad is for the poor ones. The other sacred cities for the Safavids were in Iraq: Najaf, the center of Shi’a theology, and Karbala, the site of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. Thus, the land of Iraq, which was sacred to both Ottoman Sunnite and Safavid Shiite Muslims, became a troubled region and the Safavids loss to the Ottomans was a source of profound grief (Cleveland 2004, p.56). In short, Safavids not only gave a common religion to the Iranians, but also tried to replace the holy Muslim cities with the similar ones

inside Iran. These cities still has kept their sacred value and many national and/or international pilgrims visit them regularly.

5.7 Summary

During the Safavid period, power and religion combined to create a powerful kingship. The Twelver Shiite sect and its unique place in the Islamic world provided a strong national identity for Iranians from this time onward. This new identity was a great help for Safavid rulers to stand in front of their inside and outside enemies. Therefore, Safavid rulers were supporting the Shiism as well as getting support from it.

Accordingly, even some legends were made to tie Persian royalties to Islam. The famous one that still ordinary people believe on it, is the legend that (Imam) Husayn; the martyred son of (Imam) Ali had married captive Sassanian princess Shahrbanu, the 'Lady of the Land'. Through such stories, and many other attempts, Iranian Safavid royalty tried to tie themselves to the religion of Shiism. As Persian kings had been attached themselves to the religion of Zoroastrian.

In fact, the history of royalty and religion combination in Iran goes back to Pre-Islamic period. During the ancient Persian emperors, the two sources came together in the institution of sacred kingship. Zoroastrian religion was the legitimate source of political and social control before Islam, specially during the Sassanids, right before the Islamic period.

The religious structure, which power was adjacent to it was quite successful during the Safavid period. It was a long lasting structure, which developed gradually. This religious structure established with great excitement and enthusiasm. Then slowly but surely it was institutionalized. Such structure was not only functional in

Safavid period, but also Iranian culture, beliefs and identity in modern time stood on this foundation.

Safavid rulers were the main economical and political supporters of Shiism. And the success of religious structure mainly was because of this full support. Through such combination of power and religion, Safavid kings could be powerful rulers and Iranian Shiism was converted to a big institution. An institution that not only in Safavid's territory but also in all over the Muslim world was active and effective. In last years of Safavid period, this process by emphasis on Iranian tradition, language and culture entered in a new stage. Many religious sources were rewritten in Farsi language. Thus, religion was a great help for establishing Iranian nationality. In that case, we may refer to this period as "Safavid revolution" in Iran history. Accordingly, Safavid architecture also should reflect such great reformation in Iranian identity, religious belief and political structure.

CHAPTER 6

Manifestation of religious belief, power and identity in public buildings during the Safavid period in Iran – Isfahan

Architecture has been a strong arena to convey the message of cultures since early historical periods. Architecture, however, does not have this chance to communicate with the spoken words. Rather, usually symbolism has been act as the language of architecture. Therefore, investigating the symbolic aspects of architecture and revealing the meaning of those symbols might be useful in terms of understanding the architecture of each culture.

Safavid architecture of Iran also has made use of symbolism. The symbolic aspect of architecture of this period especially was highly important in architecture of public buildings. These buildings usually were erected to be signs of the existence of a new nation and identity in the Islamic world. Then, investigating in architecture of this period might be useful to find those important symbolic aspects.

In this study, it has been found out that three factors of ‘identity’, ‘power’, and ‘religious belief’ were important and intertwined during the Safavid period. Those issues were manifested in architecture through ‘symbolism’. Among these three factors, identity and religion in Shiite belief during the Safavid period have had a very strong correlation [chapter 5]. Therefore, to investigate this relationship, thoughts of Shariati has been used as the key component to interpret the Safavid architectural symbolism. Shariati has had important criticisms about the link between

Shiite belief and Iranian identity during the Safavid period, as his point of view still is effective in contemporary Iran. On the other hand, to explore the impact of power on Safavid architecture, ideas of Foucault has been used as the key source. His understanding of power and disciplinary society has been built the ‘power’ indicators of this study.

In the sample study, thirteen buildings in Isfahan, the capital city of Safavids, have been analyzed. Isfahan during the Safavids became the catalyst for an explosion of Persian culture that spread to the other Safavid cities and continued for centuries (Cleveland 2004, p.54). The chosen buildings are the most important public buildings remaining from the Safavid period. In looking for influence of those effective factors of ‘identity’, ‘power’, ‘religious belief’ and ‘symbolism’ in architecture of public buildings, except analysis, an observatory view also has been used. Through combination of theoretical background and analysis/observation method, five architectural characteristics (mostly in arrangements) were distinguished. These characteristics are named in this study as ‘Floating impression’, ‘Horizontality through repetition’, ‘Inward, outward flow’, ‘Illusion’, and ‘contrast & dualism’.

Those characteristics although might be found in other types of Islamic architecture too, the collection of them in addition to their symbolic value based on Shiite belief, differentiate the Safavid architecture from the others. Interpreting and contemplating the symbolic meaning of these architectural characteristics has been made by use of “Identity+ religious belief” and “Power” indicators in this study.

6.1 Floating impression

In *Twelver Shiite* doctrine, there is the belief that the last Imam (from twelve Imams after prophet) still is alive and keeps go on guiding people. He will be one of the signs of *Akhirat* (the other world). Muslims believe that future of world will be bright and happy. One day, even if it is the last day of the world, everything will turn to be perfect. This optimistic belief, which actually is not only limited to the Muslims, in Shi'a belief is accompanying with waiting (Intizar) for the last Imam from twelve Shi'a Imams. He will bring justice, divinity, faith, prosperity and more.

In Safavid architecture, this belief manifested through making buildings (especially their roofs) as floating objects in the sky. The Safavid domes usually appear suddenly above the horizontal skyline. As if, there is no connection between these -usually dome roofs- and their base or ground. Such design approach, might symbolize the mysterious existence of the last Imam, which is somewhere between heaven and earth.

In addition, such design approach could symbolize the general perception of Twelve Imams in Safavid understanding of Shiite belief. According to Shariati [chapter 5, p81] Safavid Shiite introduced Imams as superhuman beings, 12 angels to worship, sacred and preternatural souls. This metaphysical existence of Twelve Imams apparently was symbolized by giving the floating impression to the domes, the place that is not belonged to the ground or the sky.

This characteristic has been followed in interior design too. The focal elevated part of roof or dome generally has been separated visually from the lower parts. For example in the connection point of *Lotfollah* mosque's dome to the base, there is a horizontal series of repetitive openings. These openings, which bring in the natural

light, make a strong light boundary between the dome and its base. Thus, it seems the dome is floating in the air from the inner view. From the outside, also impression is the same. The skyline of *Naghshe-Jahan* square, which this mosque placed there, for nearly 500 meter, is horizontal without any single movement. Suddenly the dome of this mosque appears above this monotonous skyline. There is no in-between space or form; the dome seems to be hanging from the sky.



Figure 7: Lotfollah mosque, Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Persia other than history*

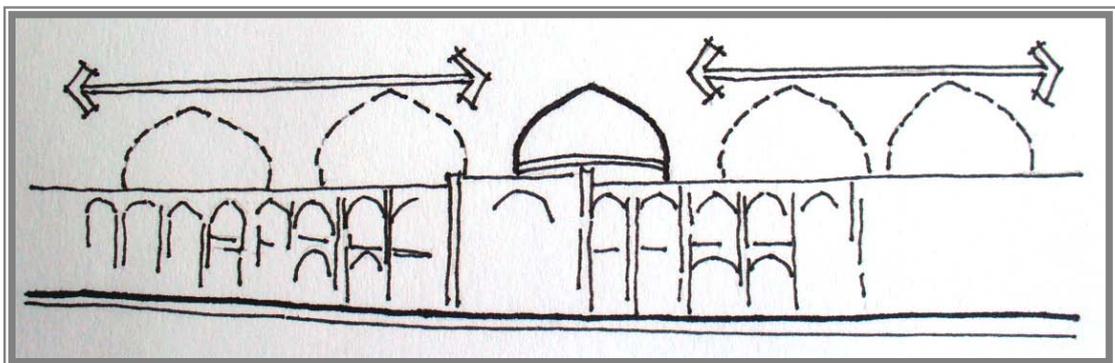


Figure 8: Floating impression of Lotfollah dome in horizontal direction

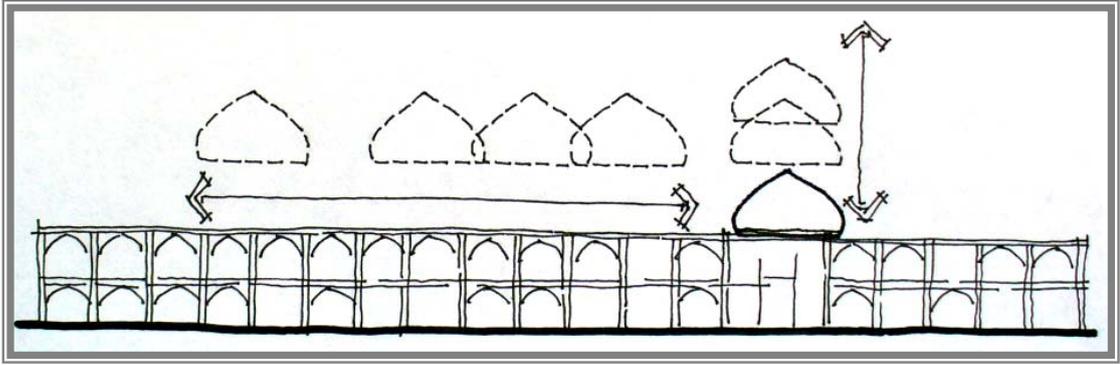


Figure 9: Floating impression of Lotfollah dome in vertical direction



Figure 10: Inner view of Sheikh-Lotfollah dome'
Photo:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Esfahan.jpg>

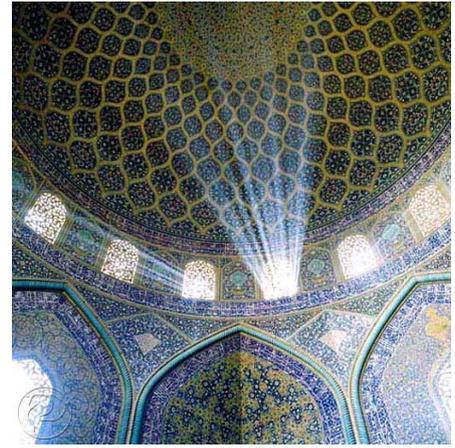


Figure 11: Inner view of Sheikh-Lotfollah dome, photo: *Persia other than history*

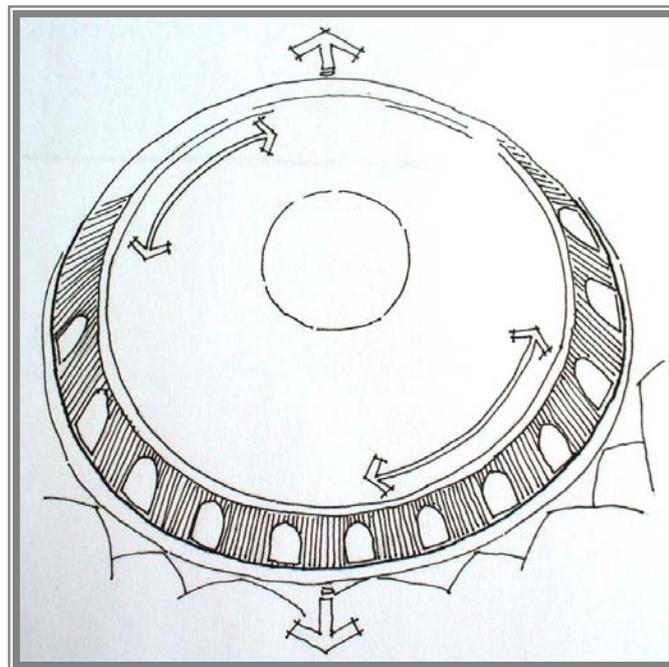


Figure 12: Floating impression inside Lotfollah mosque

Putting a light boundary in conjunction to the edge of dome, in fact was not an innovative approach. The difference is in numbers and place of these openings. In other domes, such openings can be seen in the other parts of indoor space too. For example, usually in Ottoman mosques, although there is such light boundary, there are other openings in facades and other smaller domes too. However, in most of Safavid domes, this boundary is the main place which light could come inside the space. That is why perception of space is different between for instance Safavid and Ottoman mosques. It is worthy to mention that in Safavid architecture such design approach, generally was limited to the main dome space and the other parts of building could have several openings in various locations.



Figure 13: Beyazit Mosque, Ottoman period, Istanbul, Photo: Rafooneh M.Sani

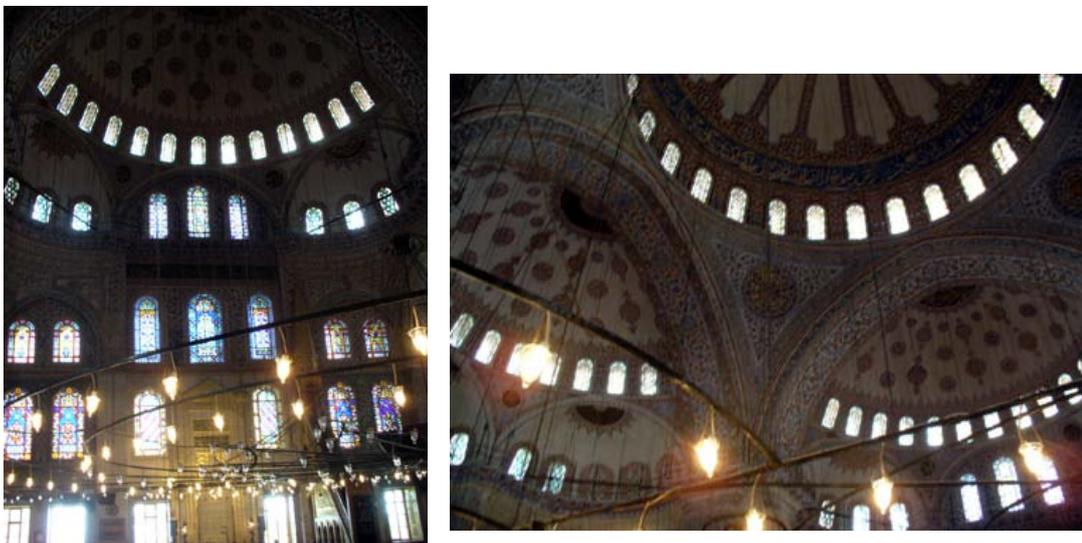


Figure 14: Blue Mosque, Ottoman period, Istanbul, Photo: Rafooneh M.Sani

This floating impression, which is accompanying by emphasizing on horizontal level, was quite often in this architecture and it was not limited to mosques or dome structures. For example, there is no dome in the *Aliqapu* palace, which is sited in front of the *Lotfollah* mosque although the similar design approach has been used for this building. This building contains two parts: the Ivan in upper part of building, which is light and semi open and the lower part, which is massive. The lower part however, has the same height and similar facade to the other buildings next to it. Then, the lower massive part is unified with the other building to create a long horizontal line. The semi open space of Ivan with its Mirror decorated columns appears on top of this horizontal line to give the impression of floating object, a kind of immaterial architecture.

The *Aliqapu* palace was the place which king was visiting the people or attending in some ceremonies. He was standing in the Ivan and watch over *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square. As Cleveland says, the Safavid shahs were accepted as the divinely inspired representatives of the Hidden Imam (Cleveland 2004, p.110). Perhaps by this design approach, the divinity of king's power and/or tight relationship between religion and power was symbolized. The location of palace, which is in front of *Lotfollah* mosque (mostly king was used this mosque) is another emphasize of this connection.

On the other hand, the floating Ivan over repetitive units of shops can stand as the symbol of ever present power, as if king is everywhere and watches over people. *Aliqapu* Ivan also can stand everywhere above the *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square. This layout is similar to what Foucault describes in *panopticon* [chapter 4, p.63]. In *Panopticon* plan, power is somewhere in the main central tower, although nobody can watch the person in the tower, he can clearly observe the others. In *Naghsh-e-*

Jahan square, power is not only in the tower (*Aliqapu's* Ivan) and can observe people from the top but also it can move horizontally.



Figure 15: Aliqapu palace, Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

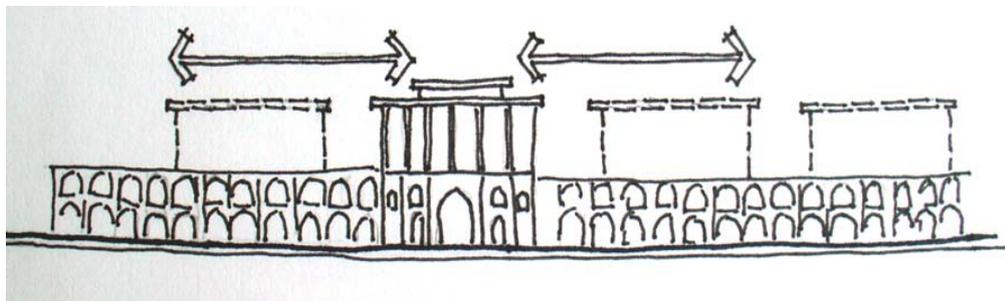


Figure 16: Floating impression in Ali-Qapu palace

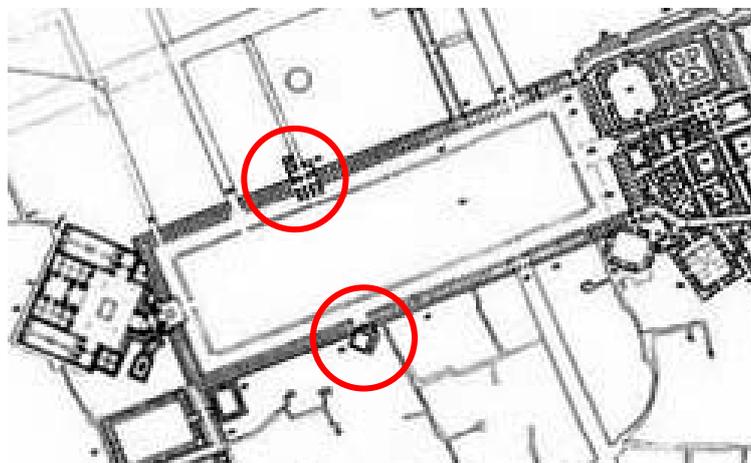


Figure 17 : Aliqapu palace and Lotfollah mosque in front of each other in Naghshe-Jahan square

The light-Floating impression can be perceived in indoor space of *Aliqapu* too. As in these pictures appear, the roof of music room was designed similar to the *Lotfollah Mosque*. A row of openings separates the upper part of roof from the rest, although this building does not have domed roof. However, the impression is similar, as if roof is floating in the air.

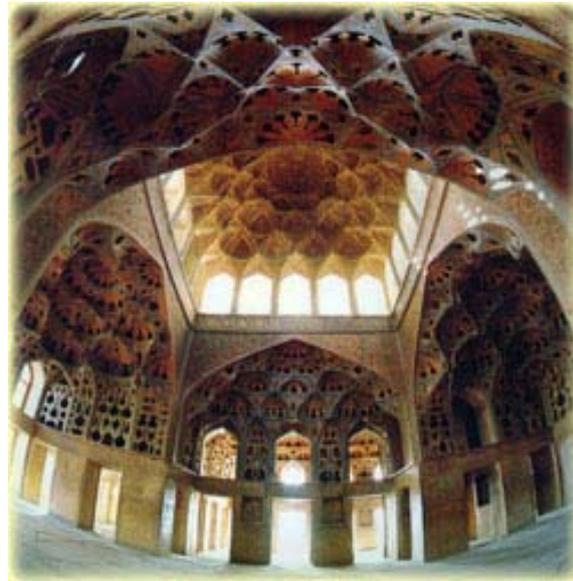


Figure 18: Aliqapu palace, Music room, *photo: <http://aspahan.persian-horse.ir>*

The same characteristics achieved in the building of *Darb-e Imam Shrine*, which the main part of it has been built during the Safavid period. The dome appears immediately on top of horizontal skyline of building without any forms in between.



Figure 19: Darb-I Imam Shrine, Isfahan, Iran, *photo: <http://archnet.org/library>*

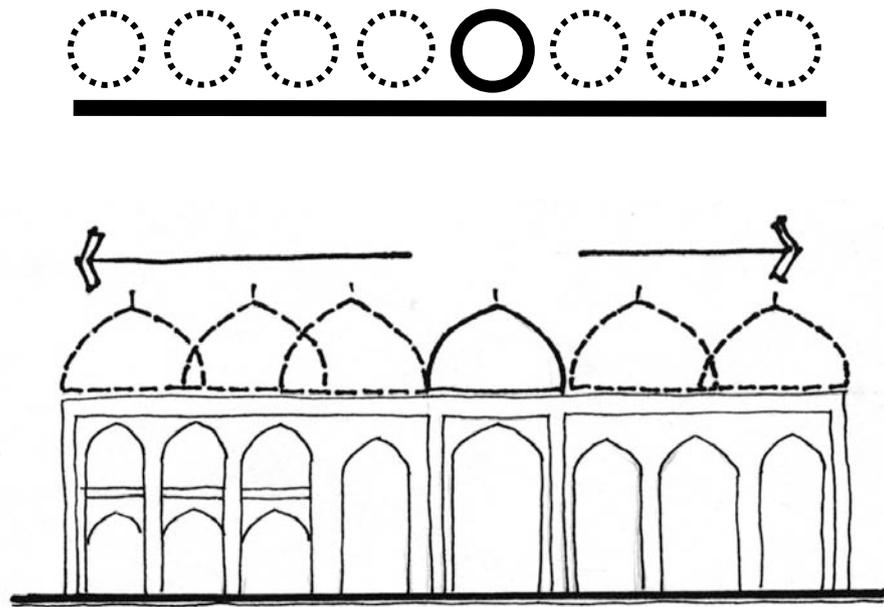


Figure 20: Floating impression in Darb-I Imam Shrine

Among the other buildings, which have the same characteristics, it is possible to mention *Madrasa Madar-e Shah*. Building which was built in late Safavid period, in outside view shows the floating impression. The dome can be everywhere above the horizontal level of repetitive cellular units. This cellular design is very similar to Foucault's explanation for disciplinary design, segmented spaces in order to have control over them.

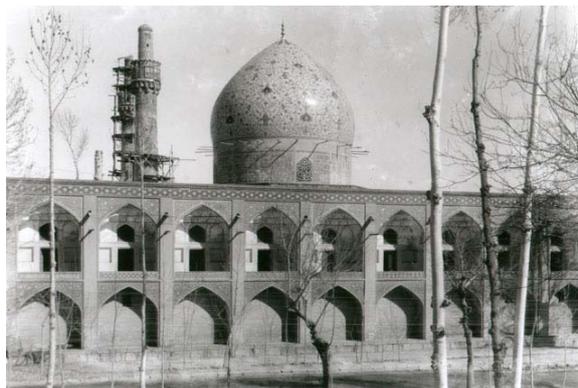


Figure 21: Madrasa Madar-e Shah, Isfahan, Iran, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

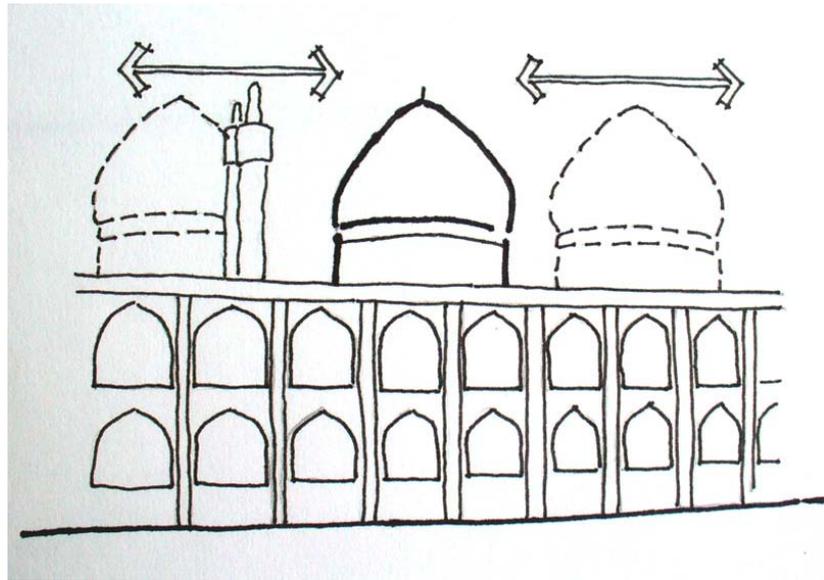


Figure 22: Floating impression in Madrasa Madar-e Shah

The floating impression, however, manifests in a different way in structure of *Tohid-Khaneh* building. In this building, which had religious function (*Khaneghah*) during the Safavid period, the main dome was placed inside the courtyard, far from the center. There is no form and space to support the placement of dome. The dome structure has a polygon base with twelve sides, probably as symbol of twelve Shi'a Imams. This symbolic structure can stand everywhere in the courtyard which is surrounded by repetitive cellular units. It could symbolize the metaphysical, superhuman character of the twelve Imams in Safavid Shiite, as Shariati states [chapter 5, p.81]. The twelve Imams (12-side polygon) have had completely different character and nature from ordinary people (repetitive cellular units around the courtyard).

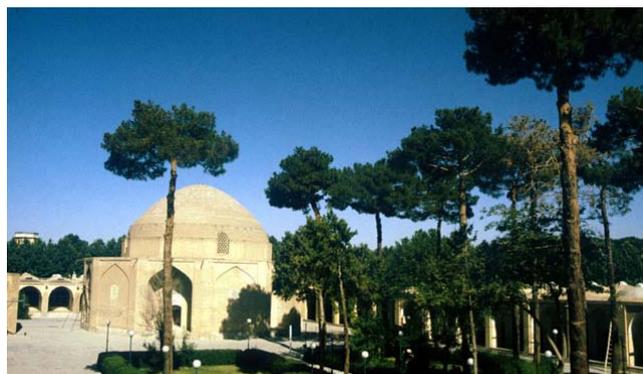


Figure 23: Tohid Khaneh, Isfahan, Iran, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

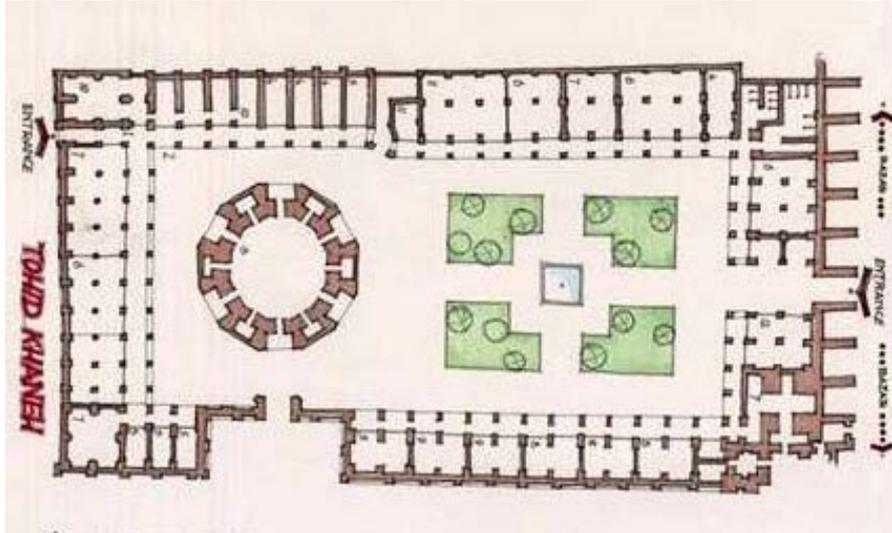


Figure 25: Plan of Tohid Khaneh, Isfahan, <http://archnet.org/library>

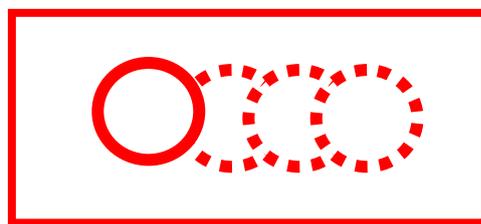
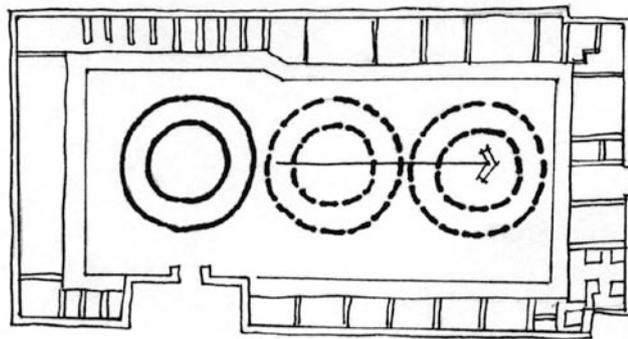
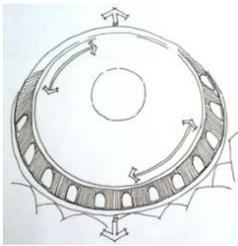


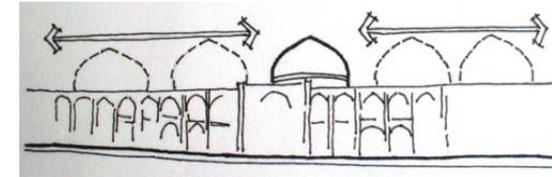
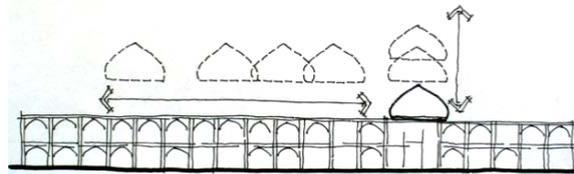
Figure 24: Floating impression in Tohid Khaneh

Table 2: Analysis sheet of “Floating Impression” characteristic

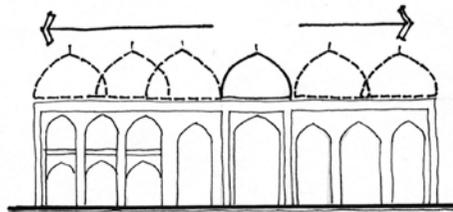
Usually upper part of buildings (roofs) perceived as if they were floating in the air; not strictly tied to the ground, losing touch to the ground



Lotfollah mosque



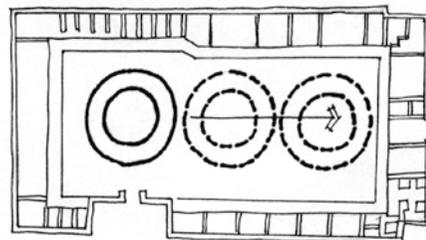
Darb-I Imam Shrine



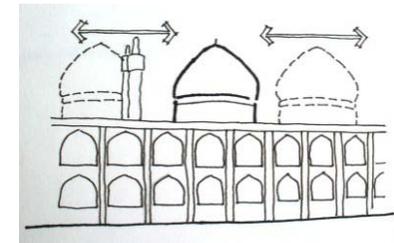
Aligapu palace



Tohid Khaneh



Madrasa Madar-e Shah



6.2 Horizontality through Repetition

One of the common architectural characteristics of Safavid period is emphasis on horizontal level. This quality gave calm and peaceful appearance to this architecture. For instance, in huge *Naghshe-Jahan* square with the approximate dimension of 500m by 168m, the skyline is completely horizontal except in its four focal points. The horizontality has been emphasized by repeating cellular units (as shops) all over the periphery of this square. This layout, probably symbolized the simplified Shi's world to three existence: the human being (repetitive units), Twelve Imams (floating domes or veranda) and the God (sky).



Figure 26 : Naghshe-Jahan square, Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: flight over ancient cities of Iran*

Moreover, in Shiite doctrine waiting for the last Imam who has been gone to occultation is one of the major beliefs. This belief during the Safavid period had turned into a prior surrender before taking any step from people [chapter 5, p.82]. Waiting for the return of the Last Imam has been inculcated into beliefs by Safavid rulers, because it should be a quiet passive attitude. The horizontal quiet appearance of Safavid buildings could stand as symbolization of this belief. Manifestation of the other Shiism principle of imitation (*taghlid*) also supports the symbolic horizontal

characteristics. According to imitation principle, the ordinary people should always follow *Alim* (scholar) of religion on practical and legal questions that have a technical or expertise aspect to them [chapter 5, p 81]. In other words, people are all in the same rank (repetitive units); just *Alim* has a different superior position.



Figure 27: Lotfollah mosque in Naghshe-Jahan square, Isfahan, Iran, Photo: Rafooneh M.Sani

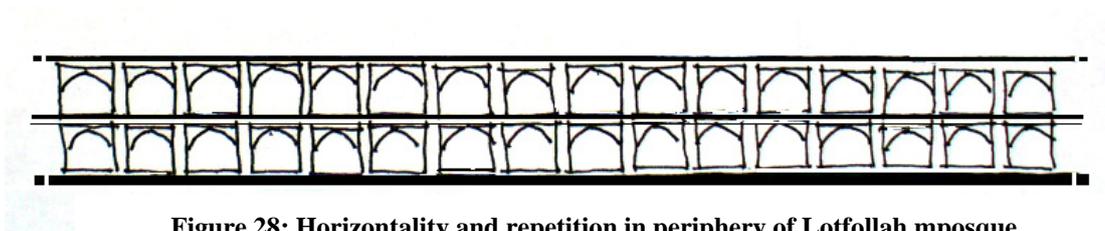


Figure 28: Horizontality and repetition in periphery of Lotfollah mosque

Bridges are other examples of such horizontal architecture. There are many bridges in Isfahan, since this city is divided in two parts by one of the biggest rivers in the middle part of Iran: *Zayande-rood*. However, almost all Safavid bridges by use of repetitive cellular units followed the common horizontal appearance. Even *Siose-Pol* Bridge, which is the longest bridge in Isfahan with 300m length and 14m width, intrepidly has been made totally horizontal by use of repetitive units. This horizontal calm layout exaggerates by reflection of bridge structure in the River.



Figure 29: Siose-pol [Bridges of 33 arches], Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

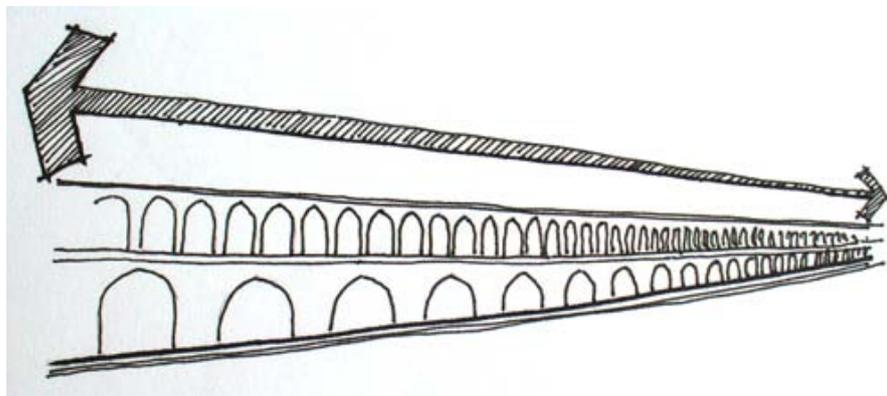


Figure 30: horizontality through repetition in Siose-Pol Bridge

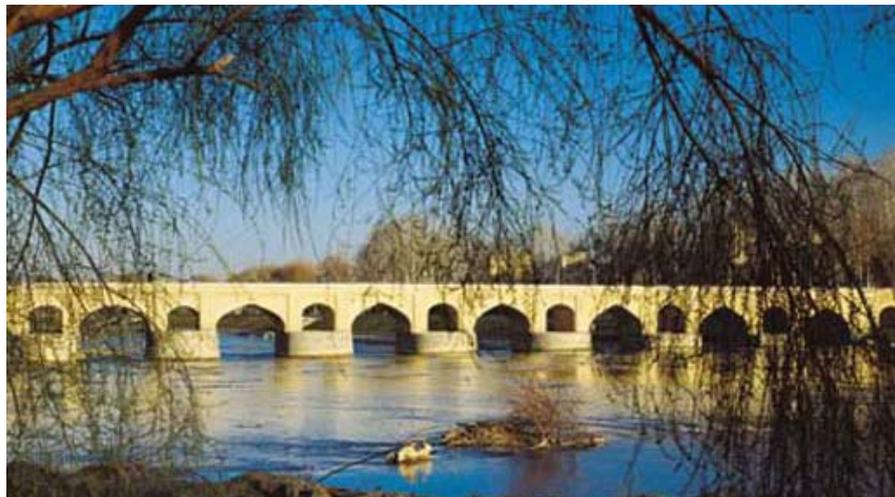


Figure 31: Marnan Bridge, Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Persia other than history*



Figure 32: Saadat-Abad and Shahrestan Bridges in Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

The other important bridge in Isfahan, *Pole-Khajoo*, contains the same characteristics, although it has slight height difference at the middle. Safavid Kings to watch different ceremonies on river has usually used the small room at the middle of the bridge.



Figure 33: Khajoo Bridge, isfahan, *Photo: Rafooneh M.Sani*

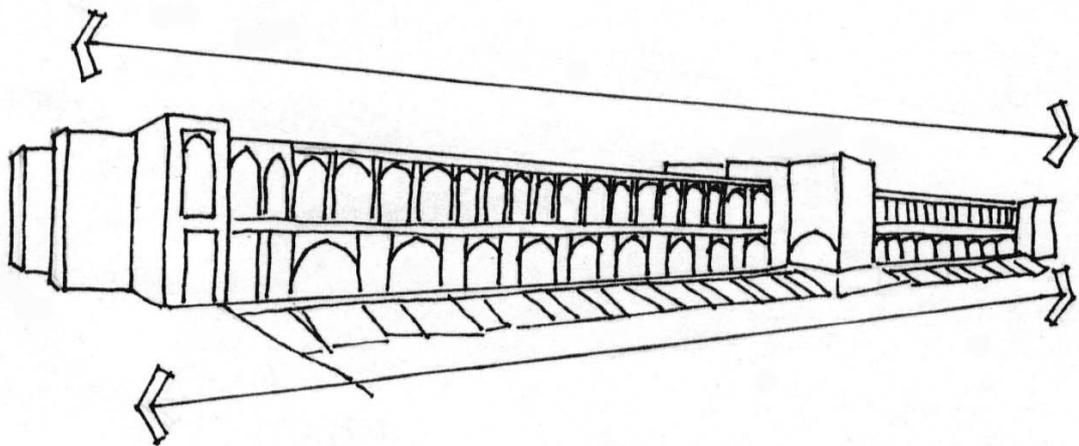


Figure 34: Horizontality through repetition in Khajoo Bridge

Here another question will arise that perhaps in traditional architecture, it was the only way of building bridges. The Ottoman bridges almost have been built during the same period, although they did not have the same appearance with Safavid bridges. It appears Safavid architects chose the strictly horizontal repetitive layout on purpose.

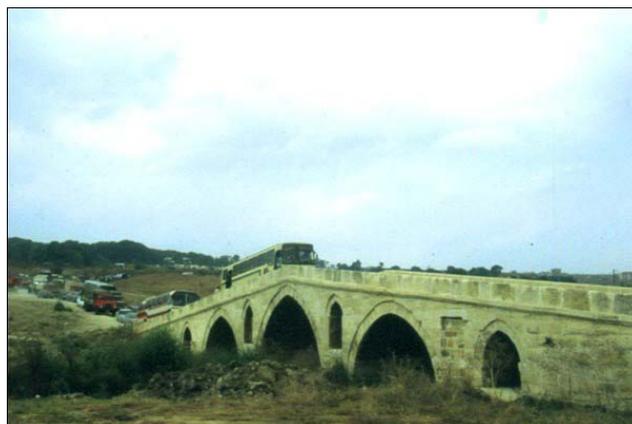


Figure 35: Haramidere Bridge near İstanbul, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection

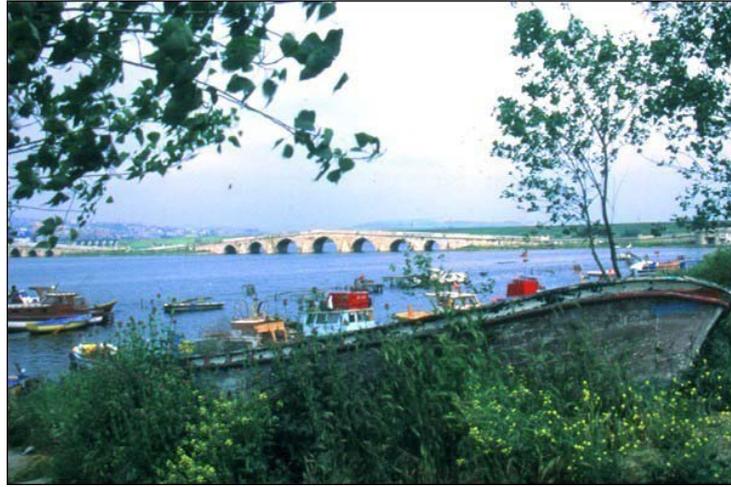


Figure 36: Büyükçekmece Bridges near İstanbul, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*



Figure 37: Fatih Bridge over Tunca near Edirne, Turkey, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

This emphasis on horizontal level was used broadly in different buildings of other cities too. Even for the buildings, which had hierarchy in their form and elevation, the horizontal level was highlighted. For instance, *Amir-chakhmagh* mosque in city of *Yazd* contains of two horizontal wings. The skyline of these horizontal sides has been continued to connect each other on the main façade. In addition, the proportion of upper level helps to perceive entire composition as two or perhaps three horizontal boundaries.

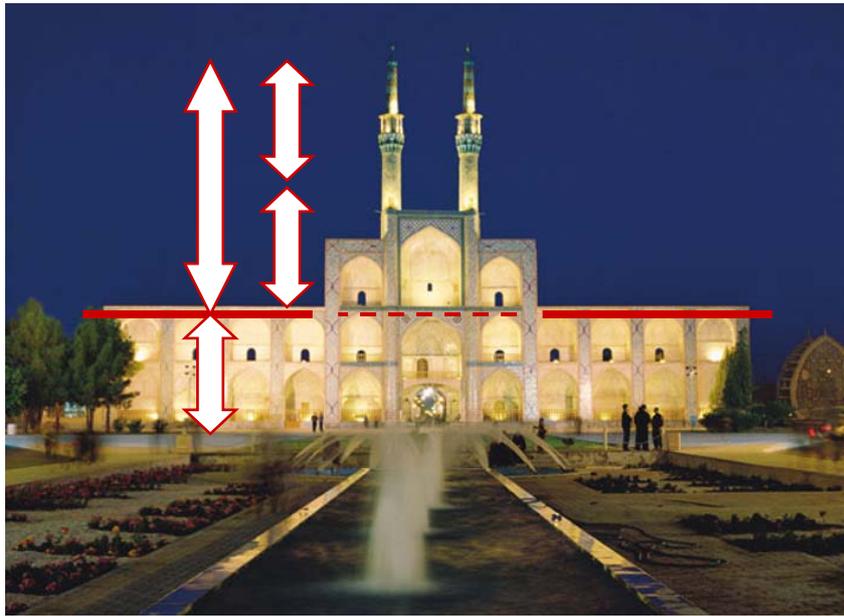


Figure 38: Amir-chakhmagh mosque, Yazd, Iran, *Photo: Persia other than history*

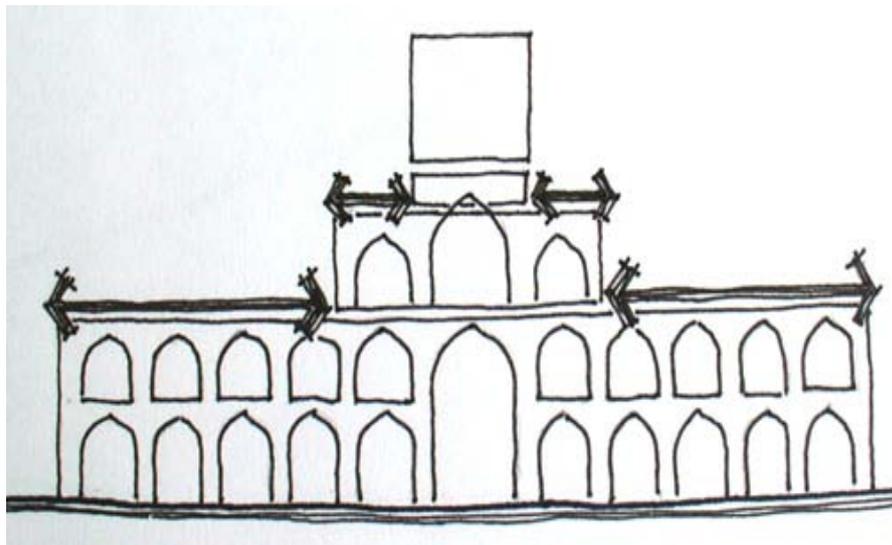


Figure 39: horizontality in Amir-Chakhmagh mosque

In short, it is possible to perceive one of characteristics of architecture in this period as horizontal architecture, which only in some rare focal points it turned into vertical approach. The contrast between the horizontal and vertical parts however was very strong. That is why still in visual perception the entire structure is horizontal. It is also possible to look at these vertical elements as connection points of sky and ground, divinity and mortality.

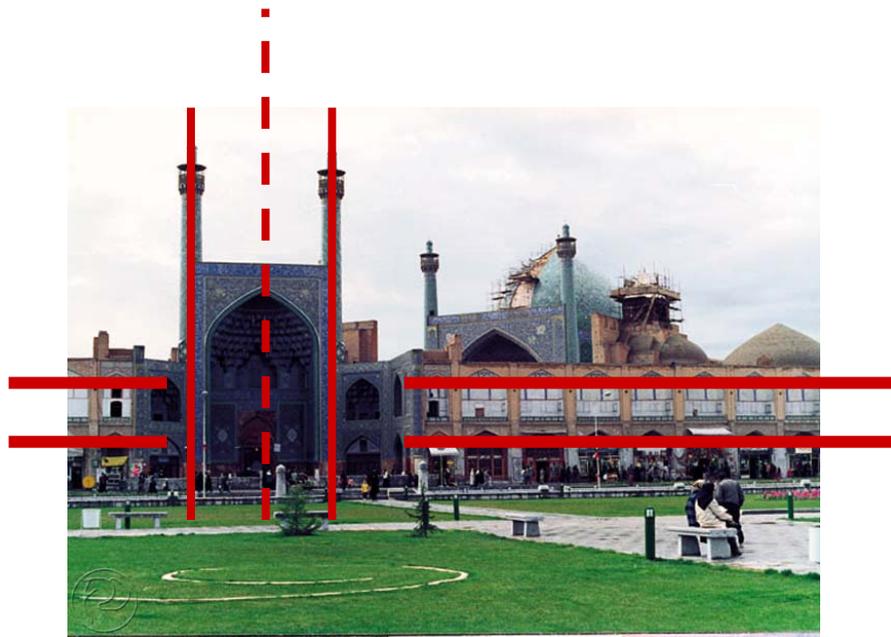


Figure 40: Shah Mosque, Isfahan, Photo: Persia other than history

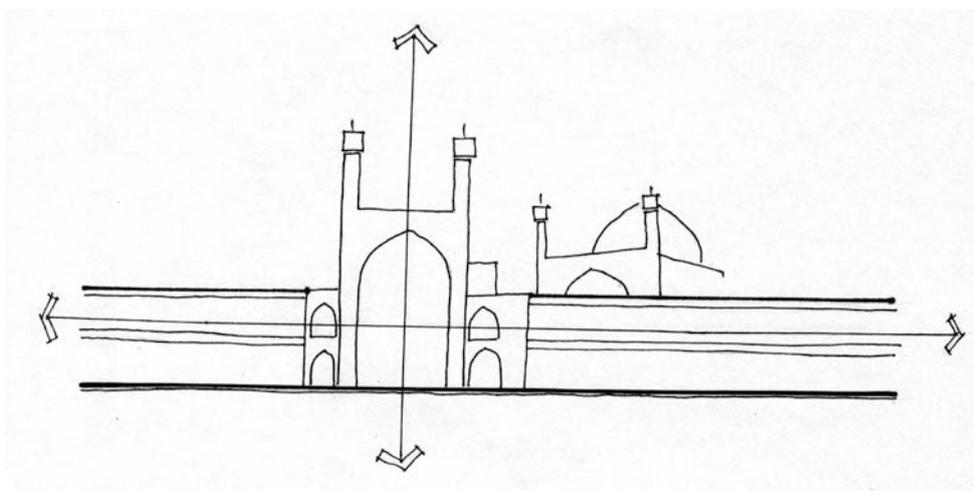


Figure 41: Horizontal and vertical in Shah Mosque

Even in the *carvansaray* building, which seems more reasonable to make the corners (towers) a little higher than the other parts, the horizontal pattern was kept. The whole structure always was horizontal except the entrance, which had vertical design approach.



Figure 42: Lasjerd Shah Abbasi Caravansary in Semnan, Iran, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

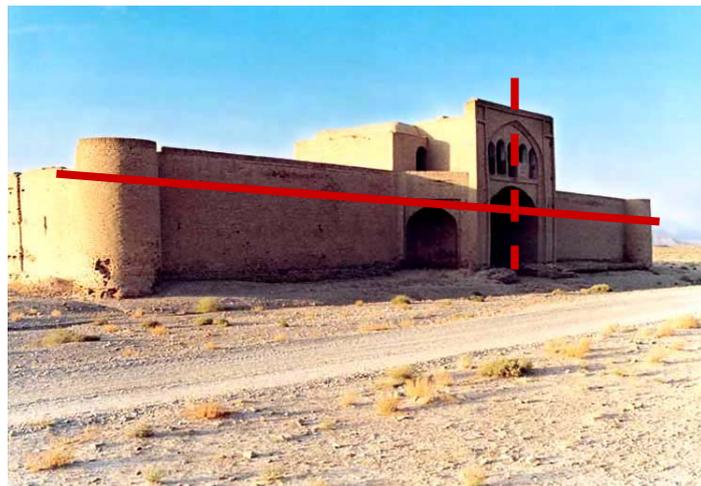


Figure 43: Shah Abbasi Caravansary in Damqan, Iran, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

This emphasis on horizontal level by repetitive cellular units, according to Foucault may be interpreted as manifestation of power in buildings too. Such horizontal perception usually comes from the repeated units, which have the same forms, heights, proportions etc. Cellular design, create segmented space, which aid power to put individuals in fixed places. To show that individuals are anonymous and only one superior power (vertical element) exist. Alternatively, as Michel Foucault states it can be the manifestation of discipline in architecture: “...*In discipline, the elements are interchangeable, since each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others. The unit is, therefore, neither the territory (unit of domination), nor the place (unit of residence), but the rank...*” (Foucault 1995, p.145). The horizontal characteristic of Safavid architecture, which comes from use of repetitive cellular units, appears to be similar to what Foucault describes as disciplinary space.

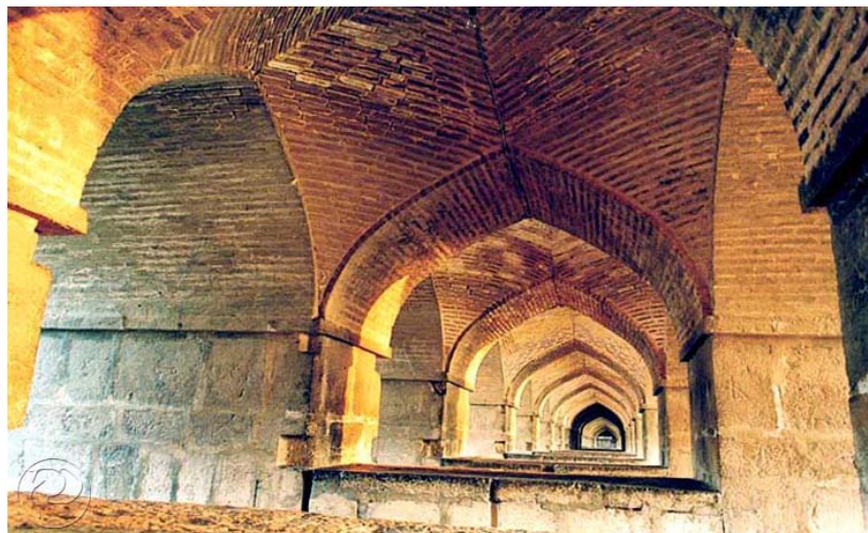
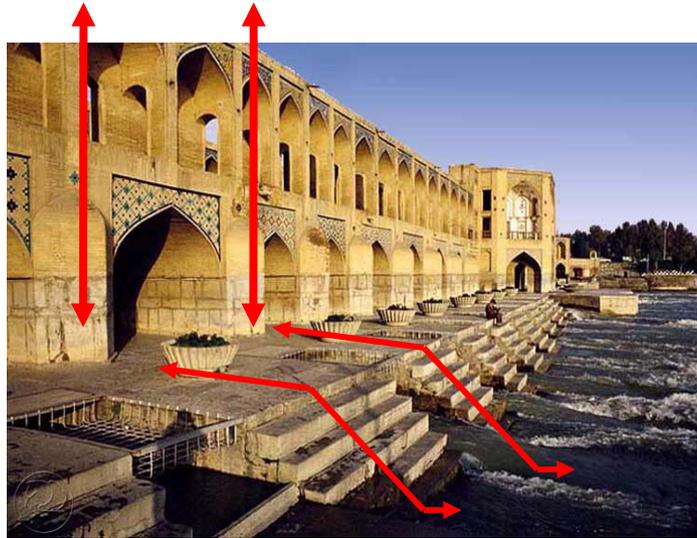


Figure 44: Repetitive cellular units in Khajoo Bridge, isfahan, *Photo: Persia other than history*

Such characteristics in modern time not only did not change by invention of new technology (electricity), but also as it can be seen in the photo, the cellular design has been reinforced.



Figure 45: Siose-pol [Bridges of 33 arches], Isfahan, *Photo: Raoneh M.Sani*

The horizontal character also could be perceived in the elevation of ‘Hakim mosque’, an important mosque remaining from Safavid period.



Figure 46: Hakim mosque, isfahan, *Photo: <http://www.archnet.org/library>*

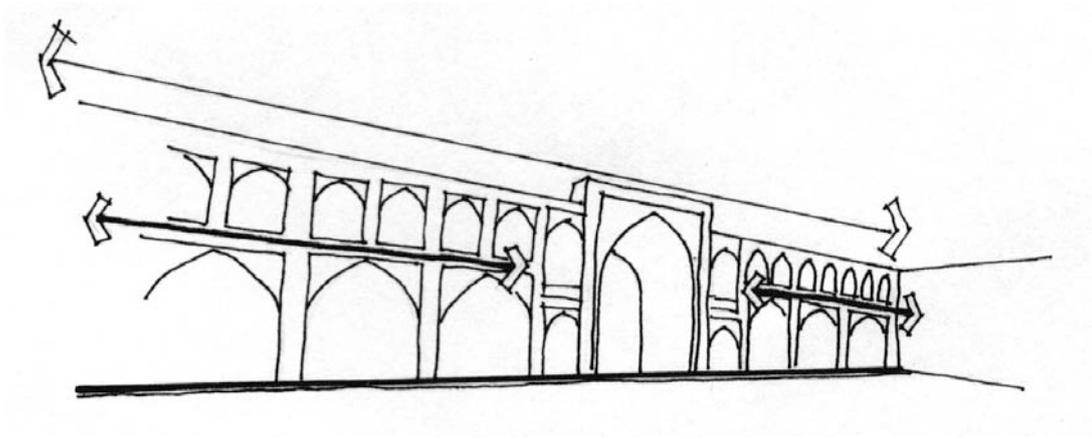


Figure 47: Horizontality through repetition in Hakim mosque

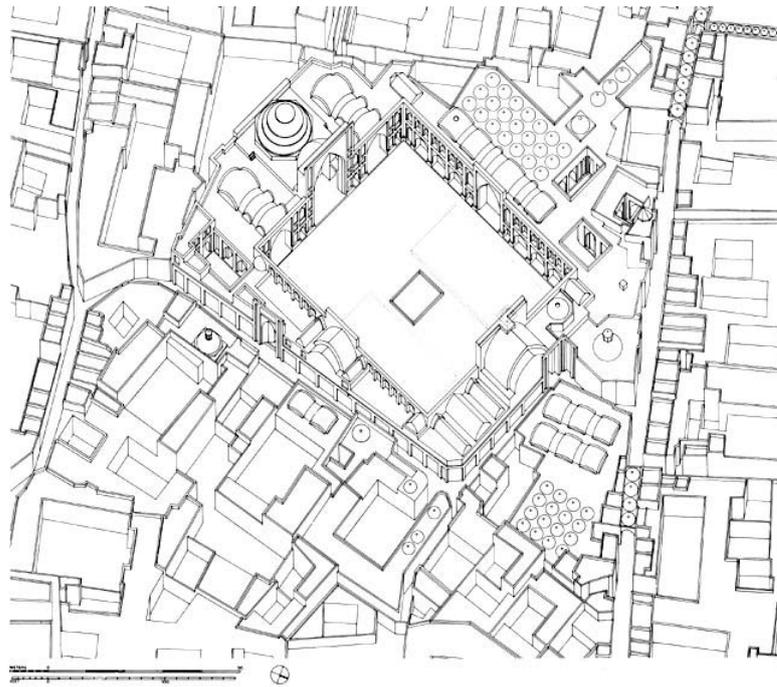


Figure 48: Msjed Hakim, isfahan, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org/library>

Madrasa Madar-e shah (the school of king's mother), which has been built during the late Safavid period, reflects the same characteristics. The cellular repetitive arched units have given a horizontal appearance to this building.

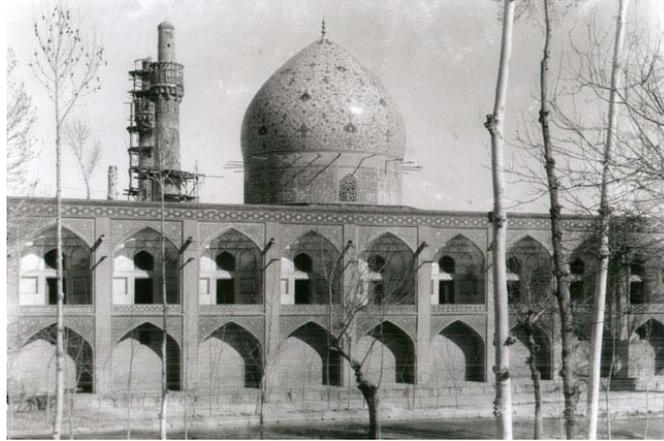


Figure 49: Madrasa Madar-e Shah, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

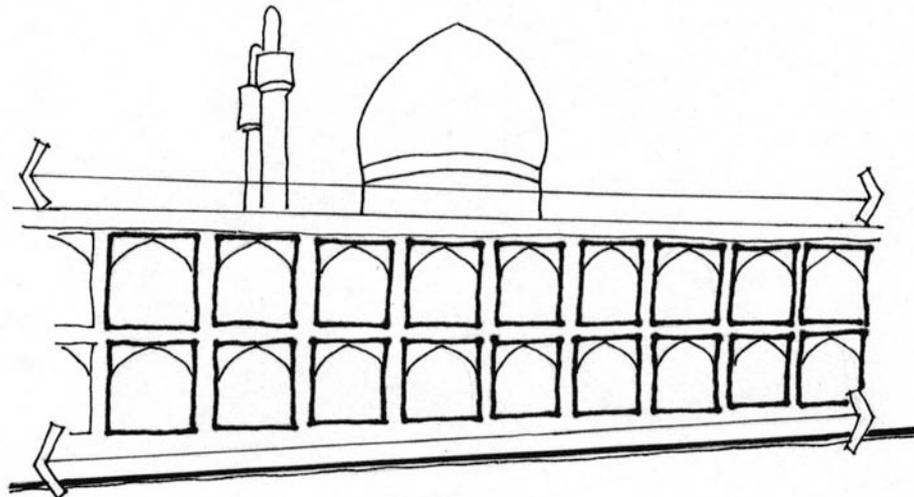


Figure 50: Horizontality through repetition in Madrasa Madar-e Shah

Darb-e Imam Shrine is the other example. The main part of this building belongs to the Safavid period, later some reconstructions have been applied, however, the horizontal characteristics of building still is readable.

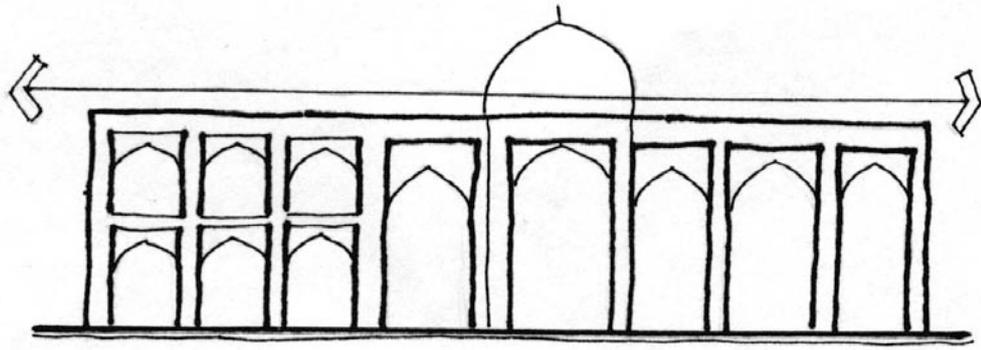


Figure 51: Horizontality through repetition in Darb-I Imam Shrine



Figure 52: Darb-I Imam Shrine, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

During the Safavid period, many palaces have been built all around the country, although few of them have been remained. Three of the most important remaining Safavid palaces have stayed in Isfahan; Chehel-Sutun palace (Palace of forty columns), Hasht Behesht palace (Palace of eight paradises), and Ali Qapu palace. Since palaces are the single buildings and they should reflect the power of kings, it sounds logical if their design contains a strong hierarchy. Safavid palaces, however, have been built with the horizontal layout, even to some degree, by use of repetitive units.

Chehel Sutun palace has been named as forty columns palace because of the reflection of twenty wooden columns of veranda in the pool. In eye level, this building is completely horizontal. The columns almost could stand as the repetitive fragmented units of disciplinary space.

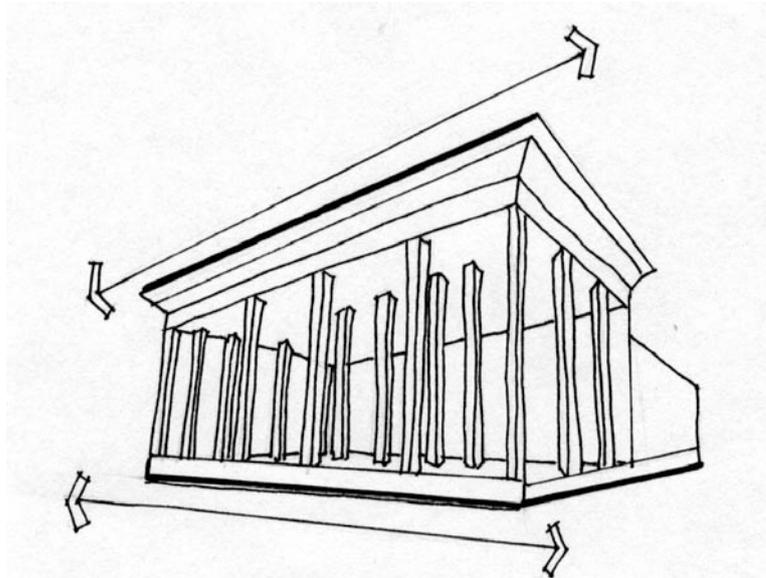


Figure 53: Horizontality and repetition in Chehel Sutun palace

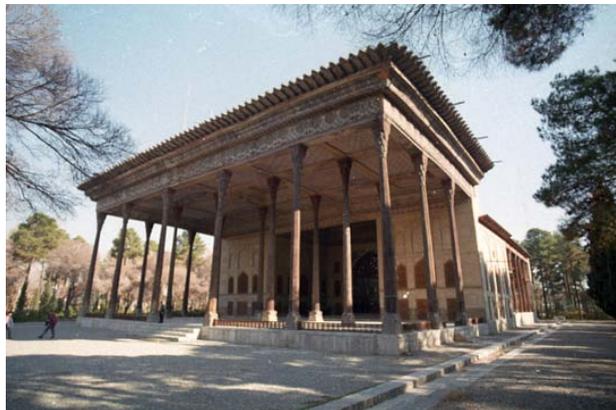


Figure 54: Chehel Sutun palace, photo: Raooneh M.Sani



Figure 55: Chehel Sutun palace, reflection of columns in the pool, photo: <http://www.chnpress.com/tourism/Attractions/Esfahan>

Hasht Behesht palace has octagonal plan and has been built at the middle of a large garden. It is the reason why it has been called the palace of eight heavens. This palace although has different design approach, still follows the horizontal characteristics.

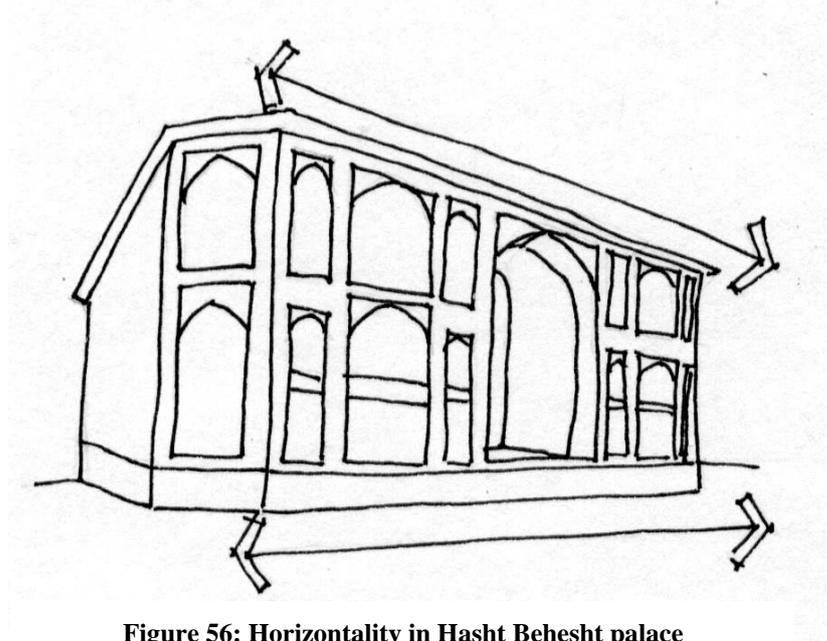


Figure 56: Horizontality in Hasht Behesht palace



Figure 57: Hasht Behesht palace, Photo: Rafooneh M.Sani

Ali Qapu Palace was the official palace of Safavid kings, mainly used for governing purposes and not for living. This multi-story palace has a veranda, which watches over the Naghsh-e Jahan square. In various ceremonies, such as New Year celebration, mourning in Ashoura, polo games, etc. kings stand in this veranda to visit people. The building has the same characteristic of horizontality, although the placement of veranda above the square (people) shows the superior position of king perfectly.

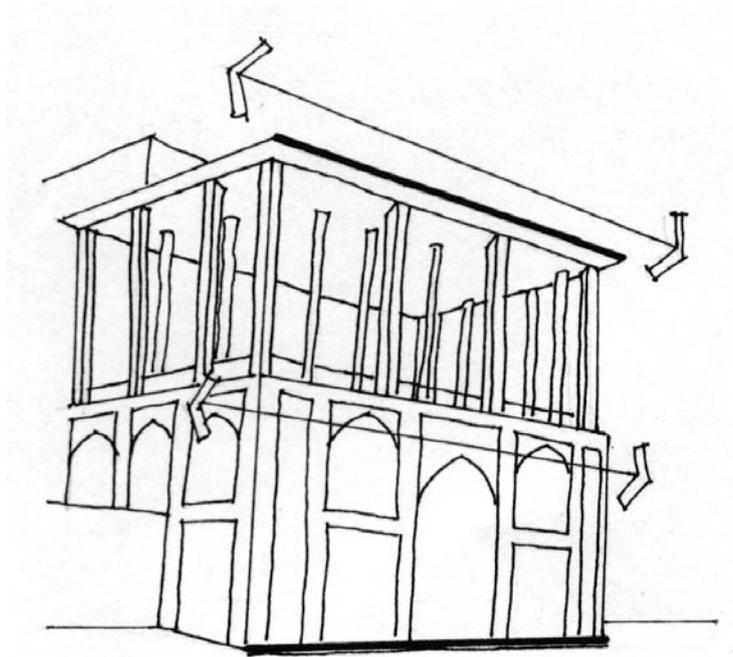


Figure 58: Horizontality and repetition in Ali-Qapu palace

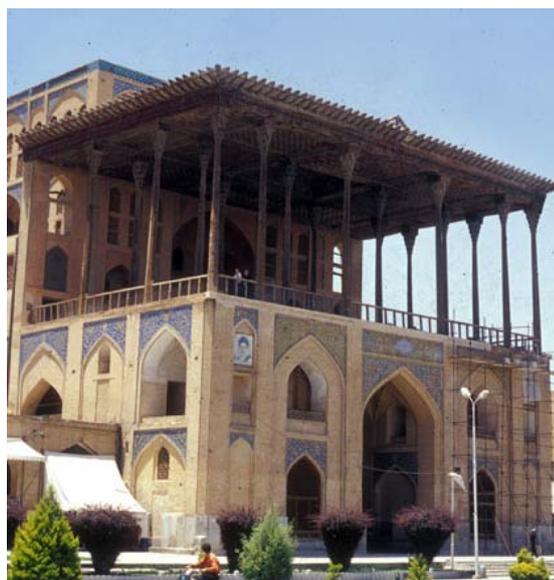


Figure 59: Ali Qapu palace, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

Tohid-khane building, which has been built almost adjacent to the Ali-Qapu Palace, also, has the same horizontal characteristics by use of repetitive cellular units. This building had religious function during the Safavid period and is used as Arts University at the present time.

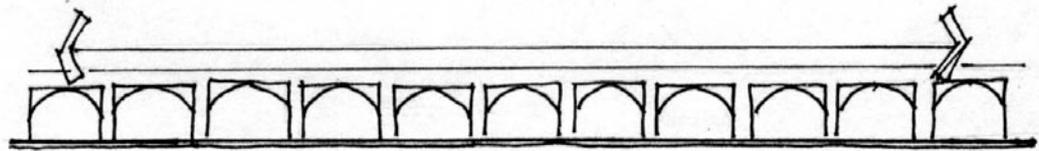


Figure 60: Horizontality through repetition in Tohid Khaneh

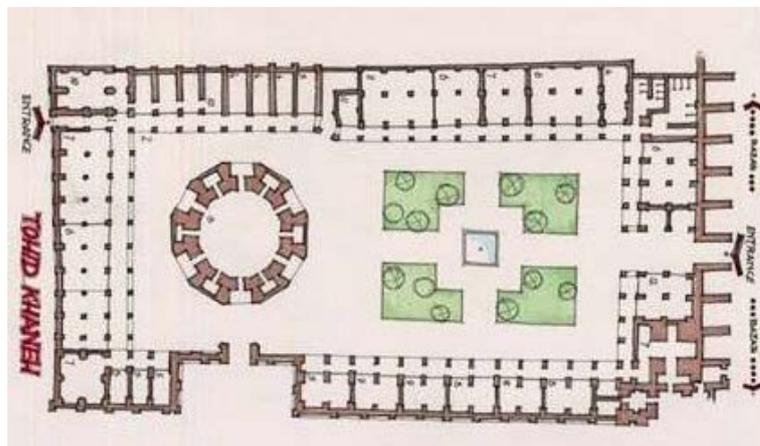
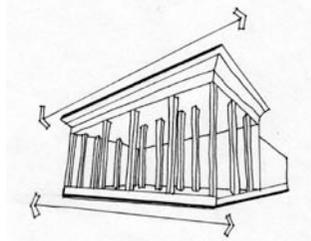


Figure 61: Tohid Khaneh, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

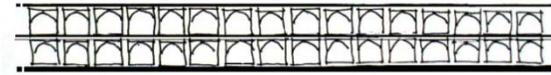
Table 3: Analysis sheet of “Horizontality through repetition” characteristic

Emphasizing on the horizontal level by use of repetition, Stability, dependability, touched to the ground

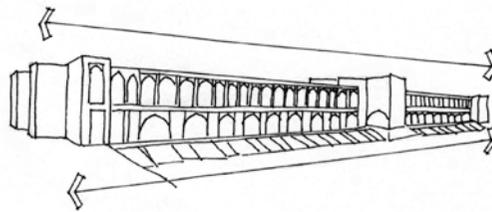
Chehel Sutun palace



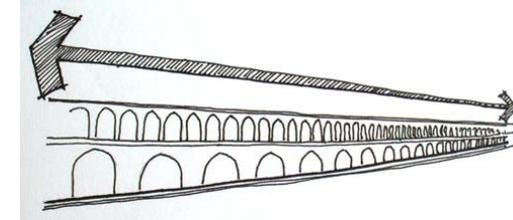
Lotfollah mosque



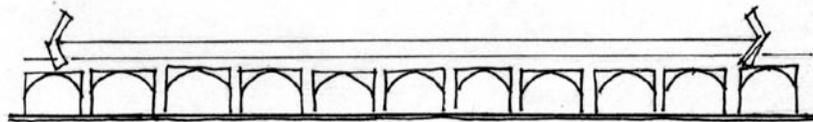
Khajoo Bridge



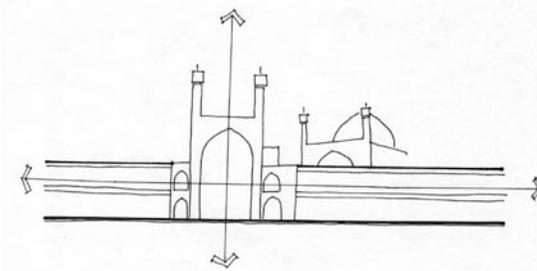
Siose-pol Bridge



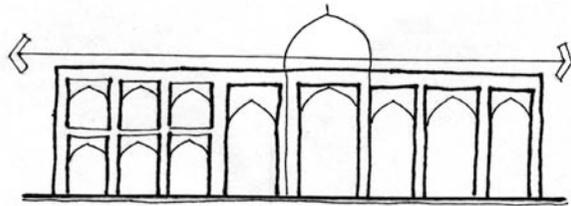
Tohid Khaneh



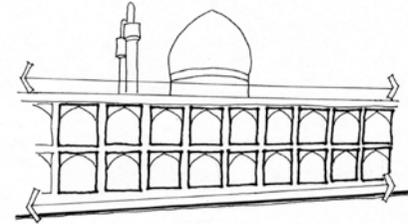
Shah Mosque



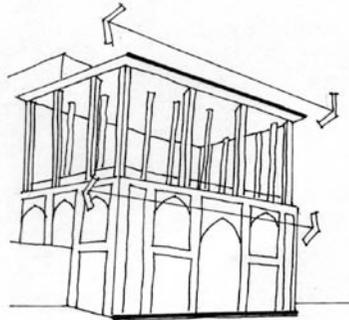
Darb-I Imam Shrine



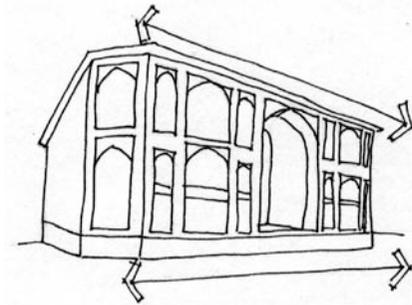
Madrasa Madar-e Shah



Ali Qapu palace



Hasht Behesht palace



Hakim mosque



6.3 Inward, outward flow

One of the main differences between Shiite and Sunnite beliefs has related to the secret meaning of Koran, which Shiite clerics claim they can explain it. According to Shiite belief, twelve Imams after holy prophet were able to access the hidden meaning of Koran, and after them Shiite religious leaders are able to interpret Koran. As Aysha states: *“The Quran and Sunnah not being the end of the story ... This is a reference to tawil, esoteric interpretation of Holy Scripture that goes beyond the literal, linguistic meaning of the text and penetrates to a hidden meaning that is often the adverse of the literal reading. Only the Imams had access to this secret knowledge and they passed it down to their pupils, the Shiite clergy...”* (Aysha 2006)

The importance of esoteric interpretation of Koran in Shiism makes some scholars such as Henry Corbin states that even Shiism philosophy might be distinguished by it:

“The Shi’a philosophers usually pride themselves in explaining the inner secret meaning (batin) of the Koran and the traditions as opposed to their outer or apparent meaning (zahir) as taken by the Sunni.... Some orientalist have considered this adherence to the hidden, as opposed to the apparent, meaning of Islam norms and ideas as the classic characteristics of Shi’a philosophical thought. This is why Shiism has been described as “the sanctuary of Islamic esotericism” (Corbin, In Amin 1987, p.2)

This belief had lead to several approaches in architecture. For example, buildings have been made more open toward outside during this period. It seems architects tried to take attention to the inner spaces. In other words, they wanted to give a hint to the visitors that there might be a different world and meaning except the outer appearance. Such openness, however, achieved by respecting the role of privacy, since the inner space was not totally exposed.

Such space flow can be interpreted as symbolization of Shiism principle of Ijtihad too. In spite of the general importance of 'Tawil' in Shiism, the 'Ijtihad' principle has been acted much more active in the Iranian society since Safavid period. Gleave explains Ijtihad as "...the effort exerted by an individual scholar in his search for a clear and unambiguous ruling from the sources of law. Since the legal sources, almost by design, require extensive interpretation, society requires expert interpreters. These expert interpreters perform tasks which the rest of society either do not wish to perform, or cannot perform due to a lack of skills. The exercise of these skills by interpreters is termed *ijtihad*, and the interpreter is the *mujtahid* (Gleave 2002).

To emphasize the significant role of Ijtihad, Shariati claims that *Ijtihad is the pride of Shiism*, he states that *Ijtihad moves Islam ahead of the times... it gives the religion a dynamic, progressive character*, then religion does not stop in specific society or time...since Ijtihad is based on free interpretation, open understanding and transformative spirit, religious laws can be adjusted to the peoples needs in all times (Shariati 2008, p.232).

The lively, open nature of Ijtihad principle manifested in Safavid architecture through giving dynamic character to the space; as if inner and outer spaces flow into each other. During this period, public buildings are rather more open toward the outside.

On the other hand, again according to Shariati, "Ijtihad" during the Safavids almost lost its dynamic, free political character and became to be a block to progress and change. Therefore, during the Safavid period, although the relationship between inward and outward was stronger, it was not a dynamic connection. Inward (source of law) and outward (people's understanding) of spaces were related, but most of

times there were transitional spaces (Mujtahid) between them. The relationship between inside and outside most of times was directional. It was going to dictate people how to perceive the space; then it was not a free interpretation anymore. It was guided directional interpretation. On the other hand, the inward and outward of spaces could be perceived differently, as the outer meaning of Koran can be different from inner meaning of it.

For example, creation of four Ivan pattern in mosques, madrassa, and caravansary, can be interpreted as representation of Ijtihad in architecture; the extra Ivans make the relationship between inside and outside more open and dynamic. Space is not closed in itself; rather, comparing to two-Ivan pattern, there is more dynamic link between inner and outer spaces. In addition, these extra Ivans were the openings to the inner space (inner fact of Koran).

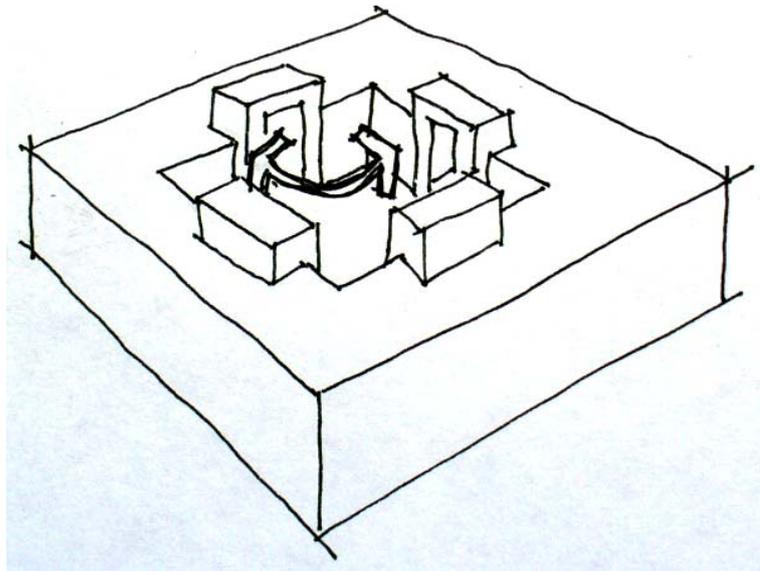
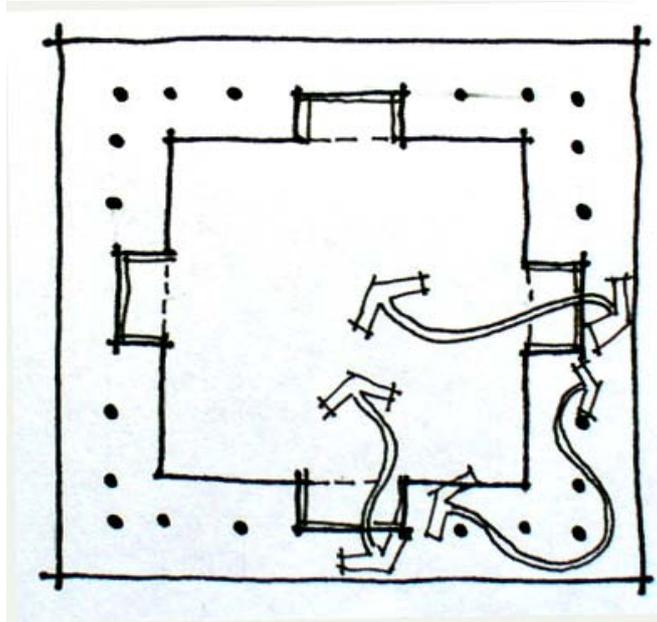


Figure 62: Inward Outward flow in four Ivan buildings



Figure 63: Friday Mosque, *photo: Rafooneh M.Sani*

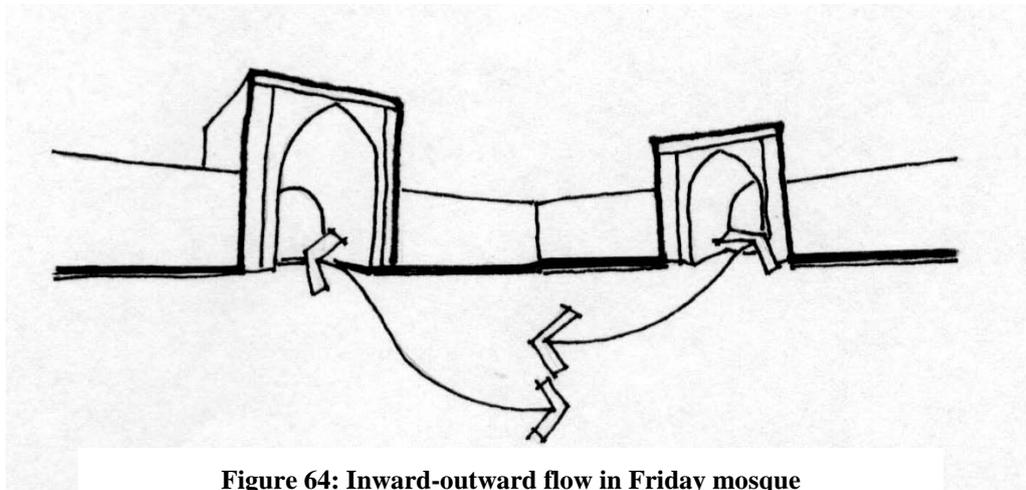


Figure 64: Inward-outward flow in Friday mosque



Figure 65: Shah Mosque, *photo: <http://www.archnet/library>*

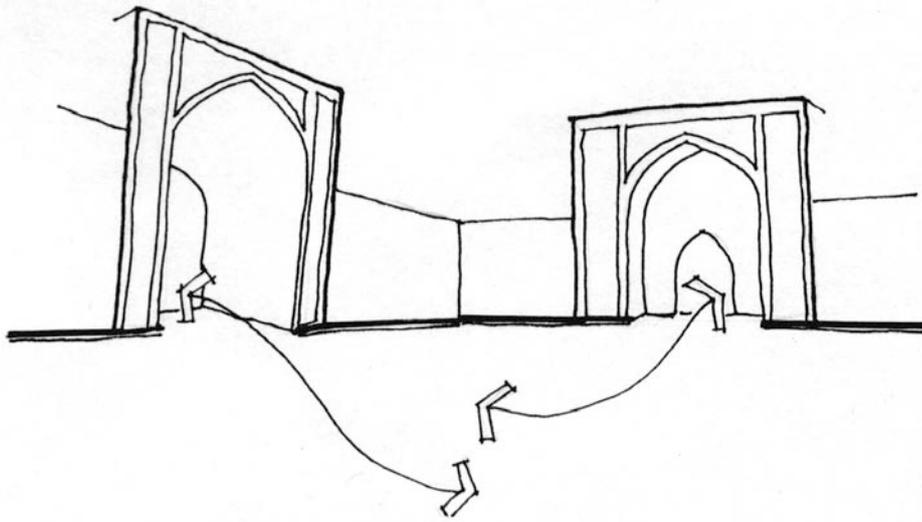


Figure 66: Inward-outward flow in Shah Mosque



Figure 67: Hakim Mosque, photo: <http://www.archnet/library>

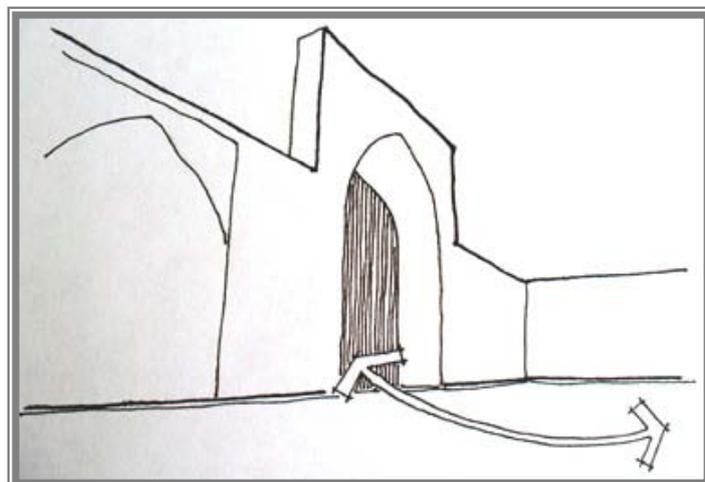


Figure 68: Inward-outward flow in Hakim Mosque

The horizontal structure of bridges can stand as the manifestation of Ijtihad too. *Siose-pol* Bridge, which has been made totally horizontal, might look like a monotonous structure to some visitors. The experience of passing over this bridge, however, has a different story. The repetitive arches on two sides of the passage over bridge make a kind of view frame. Through these frames, of course it is not possible to see the entire environment in one look, rather each time a part of river is visible.

Accordingly, the experience of passing over this bridge is a dynamic experience of discovering immediate environment gradually. Most of times, pedestrians prefer to look toward these frames instead of looking straight, which they can see the end of bridge clearly. It appears the Shiism principle of free interpretation (Ijtihad) has been symbolized in such dynamic understanding of space; this type of space is dynamic and more or less open, similar to characteristic of Ijtihad which should be open, dynamic and progressive. On the other hand, such characteristic might stand as manifestation of Shiite belief of revealing the inner fact of Koran (*batin*), which sometimes can be in contrary with apparent meaning (*zahir*). In this bridge, although inner and outer spaces are not separate from each other, and they are visually linked together, but each of them have different character.

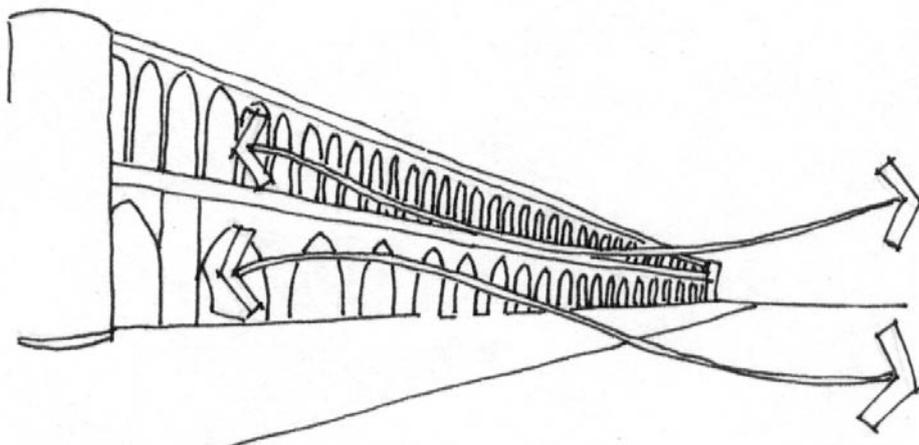


Figure 69: Inward-outward flow in Siose-Pol Bridge



Figure 70: Siose-pol Bridge and view from its arches, Isfahan, Iran, *Photo: Persia other than history*

Aliqapu Palace is the other example. This building has a large veranda, which is placed between indoor space and *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square in front of it. Through this veranda, the inner space has been opened to the outside; the inner-outer relation is freer and more dynamic.



Figure 71: The palace of Aliqapu, Isfahan, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

This layout, however, can be taken as manifestation of power too. Michel Foucault introduced *Panopticon* as architectural figure of mechanism of power [chapter4 pp. 62-63]. There are, however, conclusive similarities between *Aliqapu* Palace veranda and the central tower in *Panopticon* system. The series of cellular shops around the *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square also are very similar to cells in *Panopticon* plan. *Aliqapu* palace although is not exactly in the middle of *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square but it is higher than other buildings. Its high lifted veranda is like a supervisor tower, which can watch over the entire square. All buildings in this square can be monitored from this veranda.

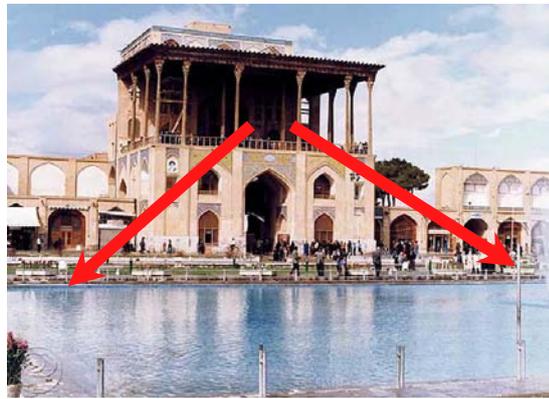


Figure 72: Aliqapu palace, Isfahan, Photo: *Persia other than history*

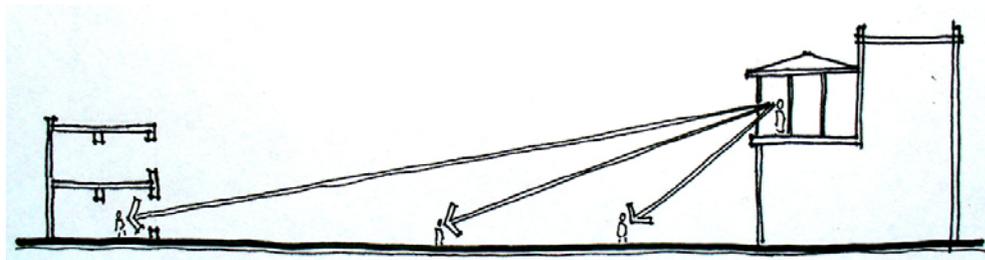
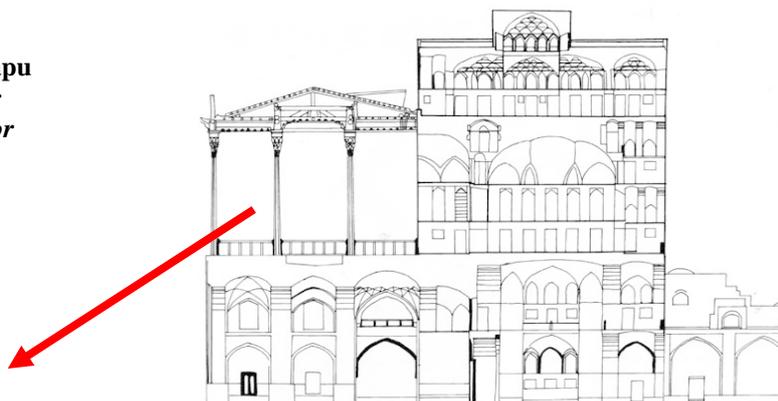


Figure 73: Inward-outward flow in Aliqapu palace

Figure 74: Aliqapu palace, Photo: <http://archnet.or>



On the other hand, to explain the disciplinary society, Foucault (1995) states that in such society punishment has been shifted from the body to soul. In other words, it is more important to have control over soul (inside) rather than body (outside). Thus the soul (inside) should be open; otherwise it would not be possible to control it. People should feel that they possibly could be under watch, even inside their places. The inward outward flow of space in Safavid architecture could create the same impression for people.

The similar approach to Aliqapu can be seen in the other Safavid palaces too. For example, *Chehel-soutun* Palace has a similar large veranda with same wooden thin columns, which provide a more transparent structure.

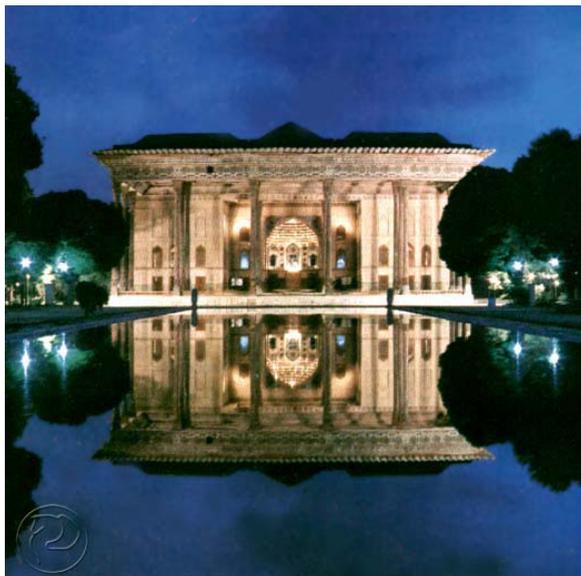


Figure 75: Chehel Sutun -40 columns- palace, Isfahan, *Photo: Persia other than history*

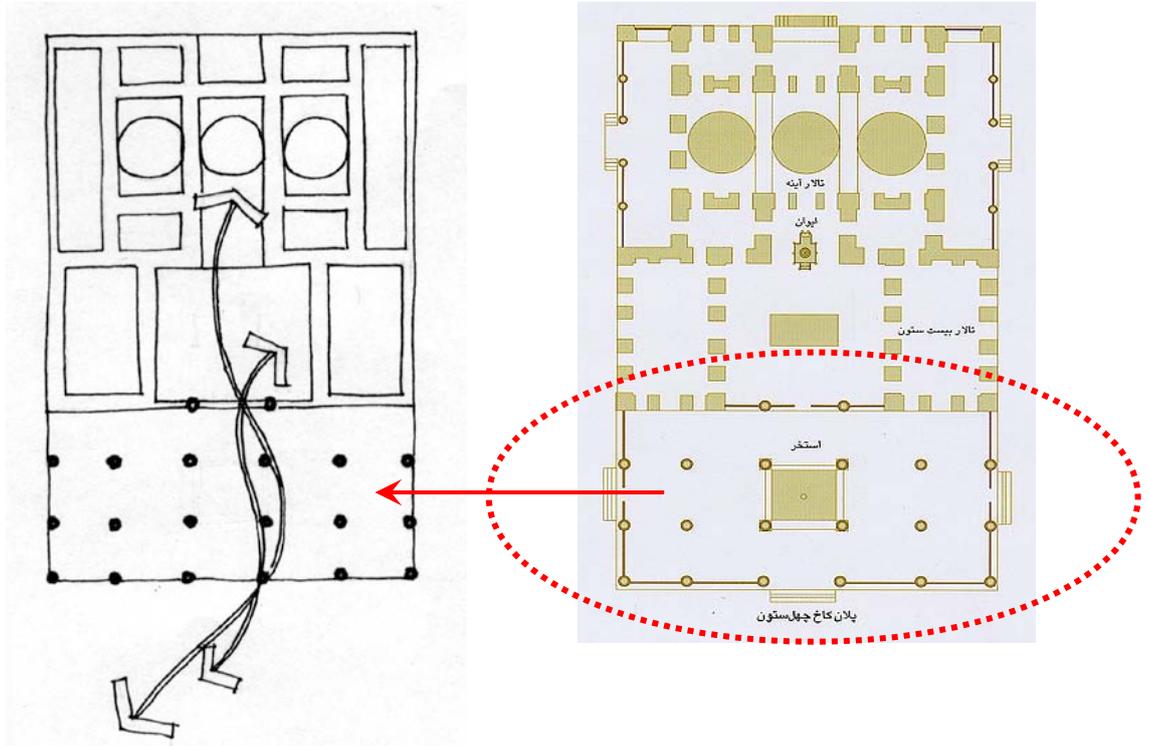


Figure 76: Inward-outward flow in the plan of Chehel-Sutun palace

In Hasht Behesht palace (palace of eight paradises), there are deep semi-octagonal verandas, which connects the inside and outside smoothly, as if space flows from inside to the outside and vice versa. These verandas divide and unit indoor and outdoor spaces simultaneously.

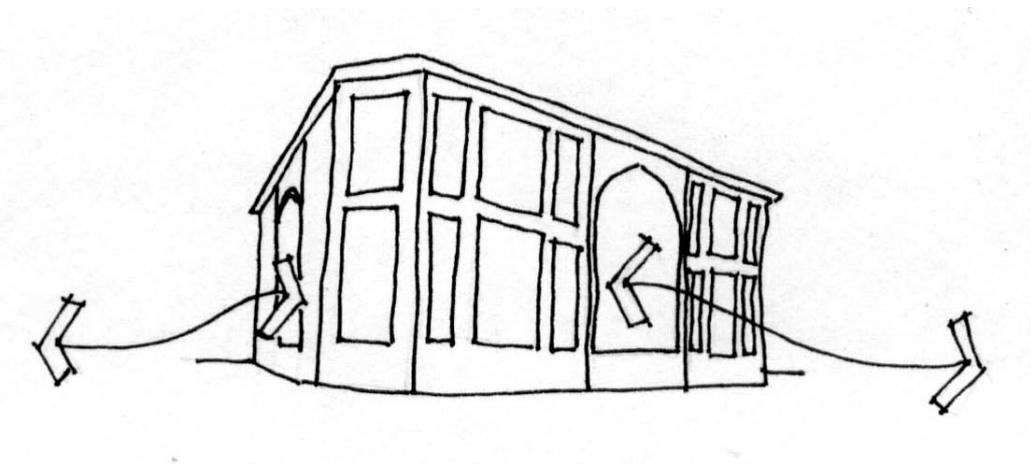


Figure 77: Inward-outward flow in Hasht-Behesht palace

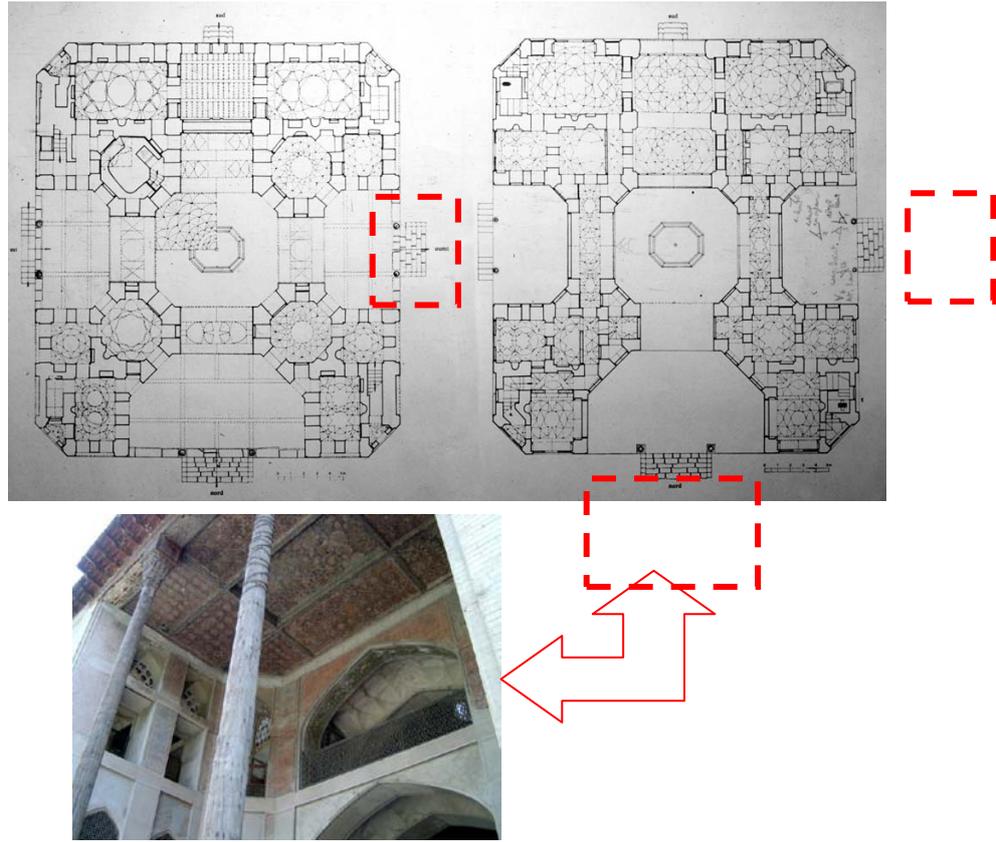


Figure 78: Hasht-Behesht palace, Isfahan, Iran, photo: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Hasht_behesh and <http://archnet.org/library>



Figure 79: Hasht-Behesht palace, Isfahan, Iran, *photo: Rafooneh M.Sani*

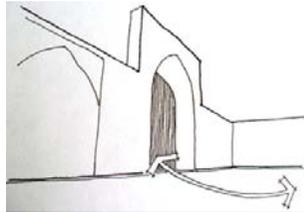
Table 4: Analysis sheet of “Inward – Outward flow” characteristic

More or less free, dynamic relationship between inside and outside of the buildings; continuation

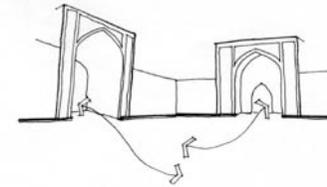
Friday mosque



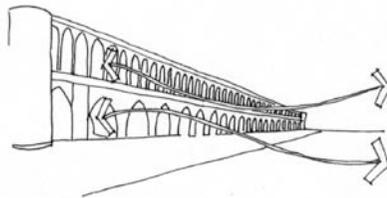
Hakim mosque



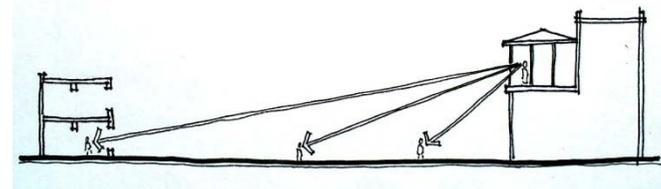
Shah mosque



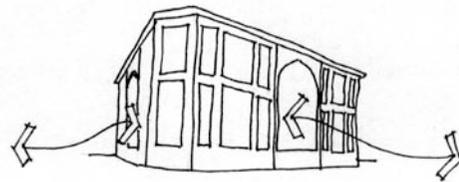
Siose-pol Bridge



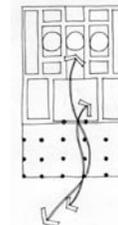
Ali Qapu palace



Hasht-Behesht palace



Chehel Sutun palace



6.4 Illusion

One of the Shiism principles is called ‘Taghiye’, means lying to defend the faith [Chapter 5, p82]. According to Shariati (2008, p.215), ‘Taghiye’ has been consisted of two tactics; firstly the ‘unity Taghiye’ and secondly the ‘hostility Taghiye’. The ‘unity Taghiye’ should be applied when the Islamic society might fell apart if Shiite believers reveal their own true idea. For example, Ali the first Shi’a Imam did not oppose to the first three caliphs, in order to keep unity in Muslim society. The ‘hostality Taghiye’ means lying for protecting and preserving the faith. When the believers act against the ruling system, they are allowed to lie in order to keep their mission protected.

Such belief was effective in formation of another Safavid architectural characteristic, which has been called here “illusion”. Architecture of this period sometimes contains illusive quality. For example, in trying to give immaterial impression to the especially religious buildings, generally the entire surfaces were covered by glazing ceramic tiles. This type of ceramic tile has been invented during the Safavids. Formerly, decoration was mostly brickwork and partially ceramic works, which was constituted to the tectonic structure of building. During the Safavids, ceramic decoration, articulated from the structure of building. In other words, by invention of glazing ceramic tiles, decoration was mostly like a cover for the building. Hutt describes the glazing decorated monuments of Isfahan as:

Under the Safavids, a series of splendid monuments was achieved, particularly at Isfahan, the new capital, where color was all-prevading, covering almost all the visible surfaces of the buildings. Here, decorated turquoise-blue domes float above many tiered facades of equally strong color. (Hutt 1987, p.252)

By this method, architects could save time and decorate buildings faster. In addition, covering the large surfaces by ceramic was given an immaterial quality to

this architecture. As if, buildings contained divinity to symbolize heaven in illusory manner. In this deceptive view, the intense mortal structures looked like light and heavenly. During this period also, Iran was experienced an economic boom and there was an urgent need for various buildings everywhere. Since, these buildings should reflect the Safavid rulers' power and wealth, by being perfect and beautiful, use of this new way of decoration very soon expanded all over the country.

Figure 80: Buildings and their decoration coverage during the Safavid

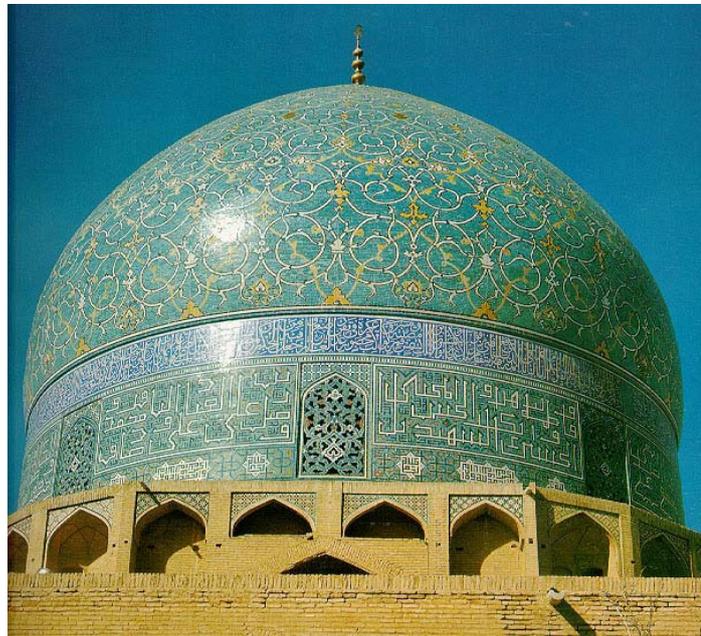


Figure 81: Ceramic tile decoration, Shah Mosque, Isfahan, *photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*

The other example of illusion is Imam (Shah) Mosque in *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square. Because of Qiblah direction, this mosque had to turn about 45 degrees in comparison to the *Naghsh-e-Jahan* square. The general outer view of this mosque however does not reflect such different direction. As Hutt describes, “*so successfully did the architects design this change of axes, which occurs within the entrance complex, that it is almost imperceptible; nor is the general aspect from the square unbalanced*” (Hutt 1987, p.253). This building in view from the outside perceives in harmony with the other buildings. In addition, in an illusory manner, the minarets of this mosque from different places of square are viewed close or far from each other.

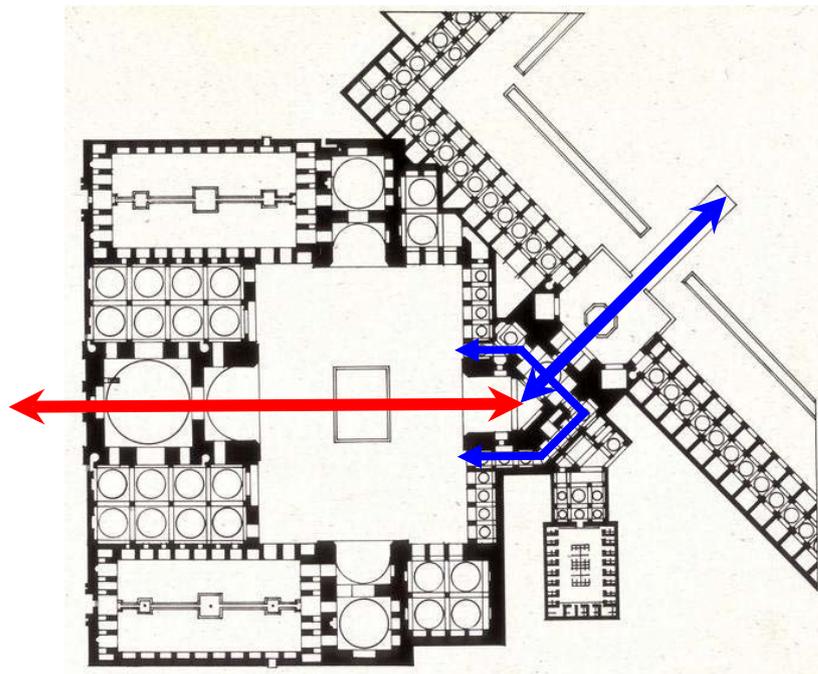


Figure 82: Imam (Shah) Mosque, Isfahan, Photo: <http://archnet.org/library>

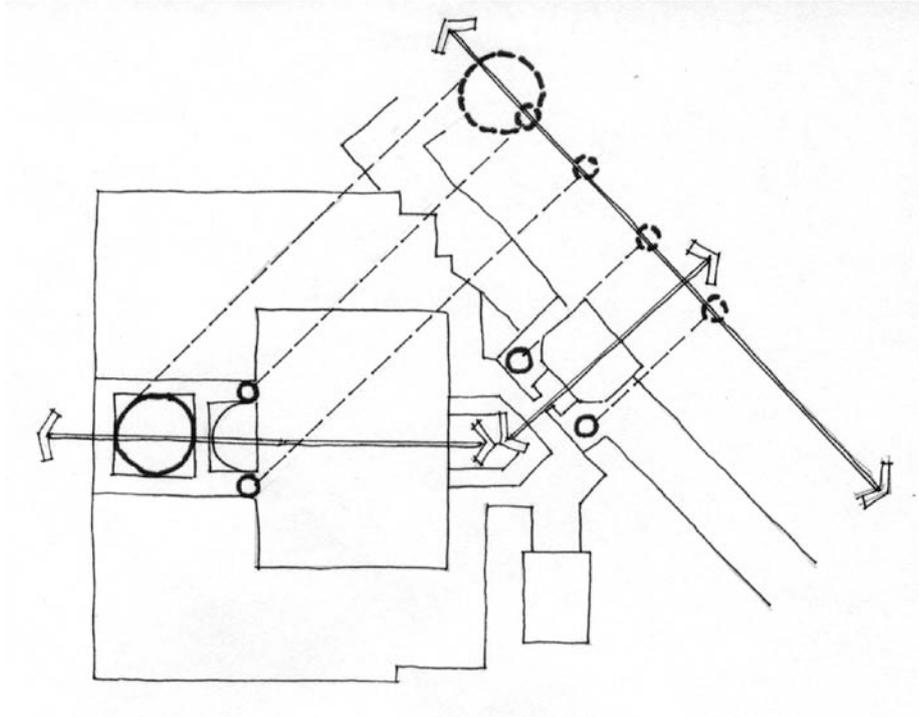


Figure 83: Illusion in direction, Imam (Shah) Mosque



Figure 84: Shah Mosque, Isfahan, *Photo: Persia other than history*

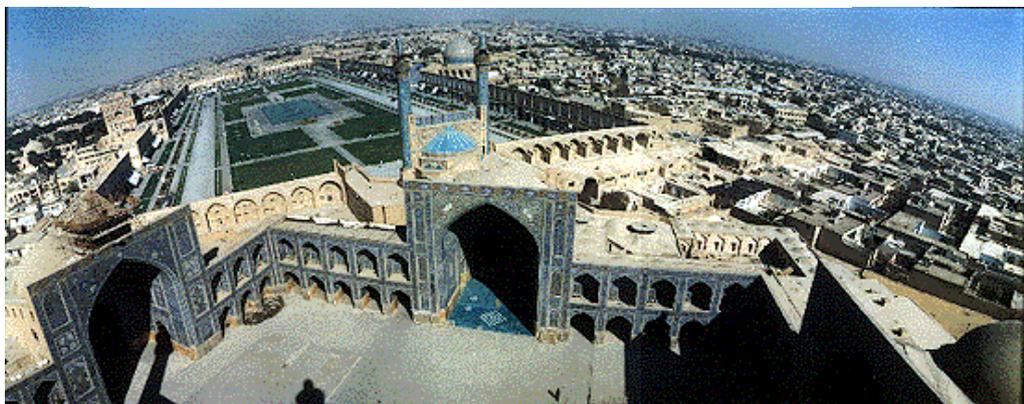


Figure 85: Shah Mosque, Isfahan, *Photo: <http://www.iranlaw.com/images/pic26.gif>*

Imam Mosque minarets have changeable positions in view from different parts of Naghshe-Jahan square. These minarets are not on the same line with each other, although from the square they would be perceived not only parallel but also sometimes close and the other times far from each other.

Figure 86: Imam Mosque, Isfahan,
Photo: <http://www.art-arena.com/Iran/mosque.jpg>

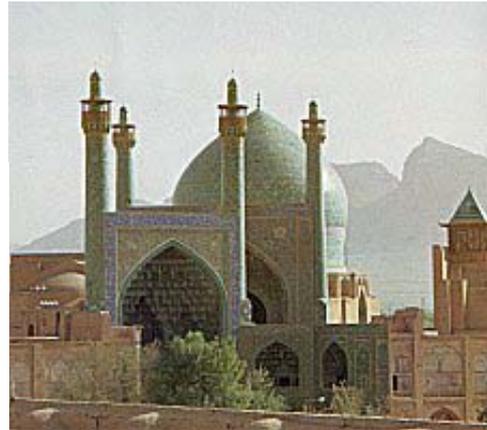


Figure 87: Imam Mosque, Isfahan,
Photo: RafoonehM.Sani



Figure 88: Imam Mosque, Isfahan,
Photo: http://www.topworld.com/asia/Iran_2.jpg



Lotfollah Mosque also is not parallel to the square, although its architecture does not reveal this different direction. The entrance corridor of this mosque is long, twisting, dark, and fully decorated, which makes it very hard to realize the main dome space has different direction from square and entrance.

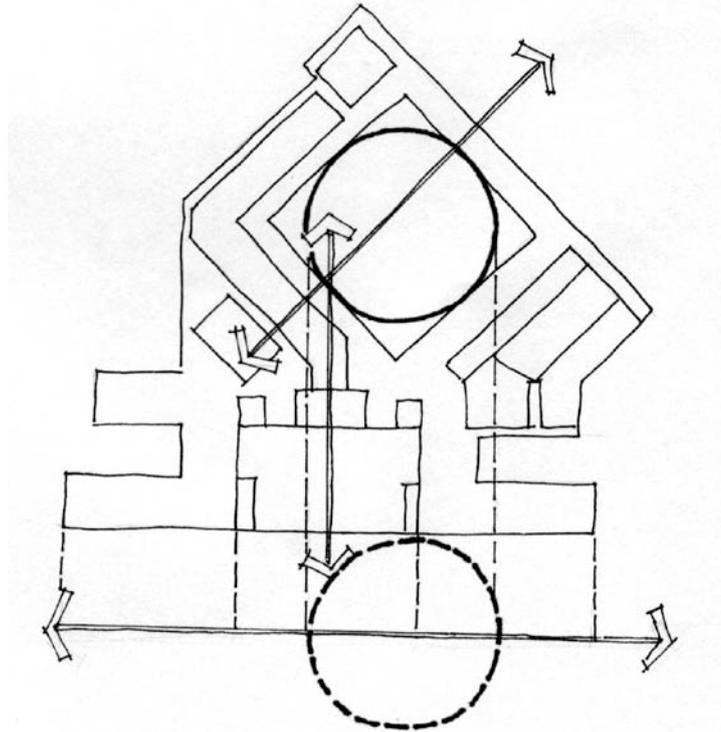


Figure 89: Illusion in direction, Lotfollah Mosque

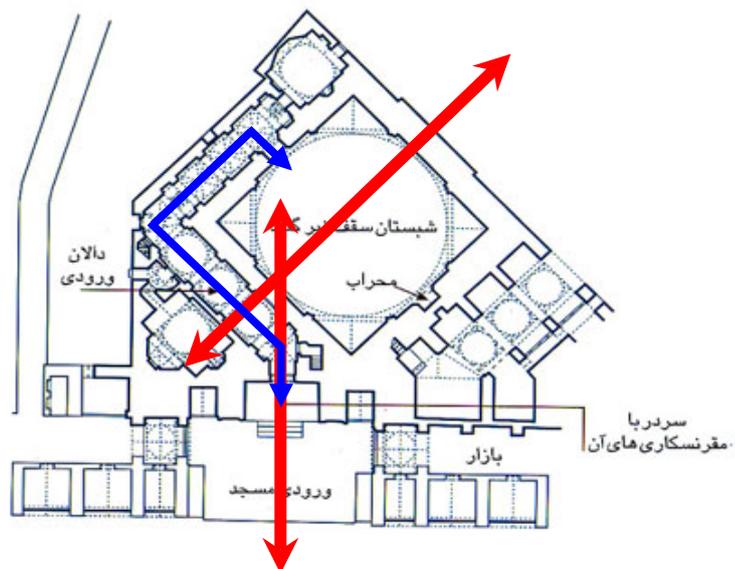


Figure 90: Plan of Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan

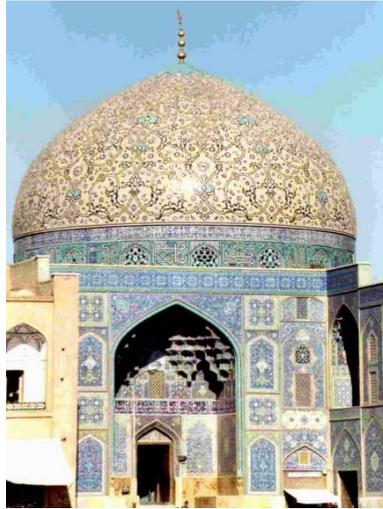


Figure 91: Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan, Photo: <http://olympus.umh.ac.be/images/Iran/Loff.jpg>

The huge *Naghshe-Jahan* square is a horizontal structure. This extremely horizontal appearance might have been chosen on purpose for exaggerating the large dimension of the square. The monotonous repetitive cellular units give the impression of endless movement in the eye level. Above the eye level, however, it would be perceived that although this square is very large; it is not gigantic and endless.



Figure 92: Upper view from Naghshe-Jahan square, photo: <http://www.arcrhnet.org/library>

It appears that the use of illusion was not limited to the *Naghshe-Jahan* square; the structure of most of bridges during this period is horizontal. The *Siose-pol* Bridge is the longest bridge among them, which has been made with total horizontal design. This horizontality in outer view gives the impression of an endless passage to show it longer and perhaps more magnificent than it is. From inside however, because of various dynamic views of cellar arch frames toward the river, the bridge looks like shorter than its real dimension.

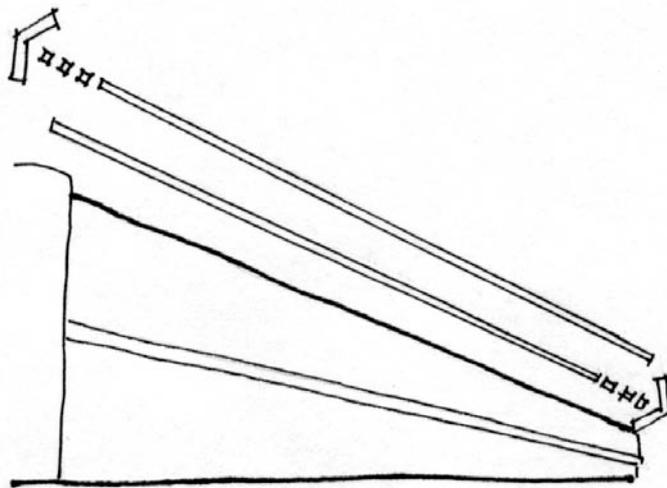


Figure 95: Illusion in dimension, Siose-pol Bridge

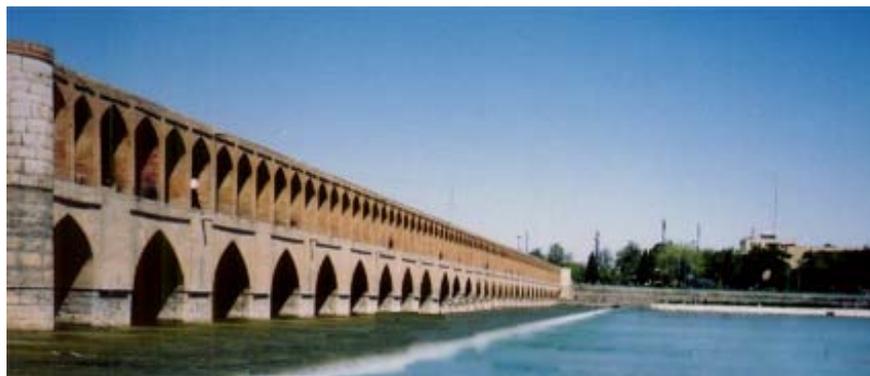


Figure 96: Siose-pol Bridges, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection

The other example is Chehel Sutun palace. The veranda of this palace has twenty columns. The reflection of those columns in the vast frontal pool makes the number of columns as double. Because of this visual illusion, this palace has been called *Chehel Sutun*, which means fourthly columns.



Figure 97: Chehel Sutun, photo: <http://www.chnpres.com/tourism/Attractions/Esfahan/>

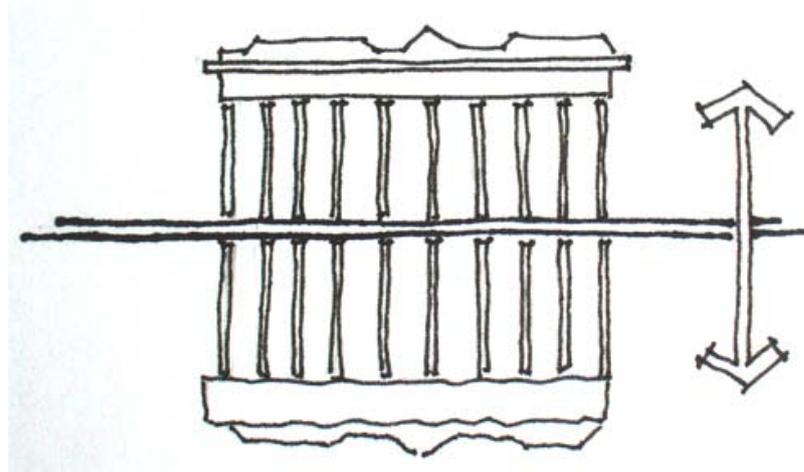


Figure 98: Illusion in Chehel Sutun palace

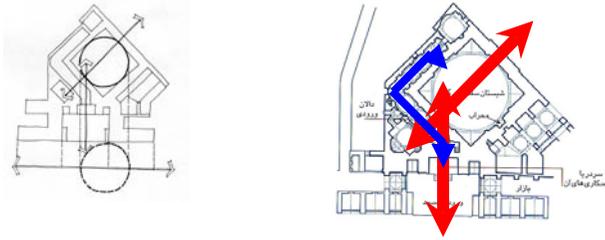
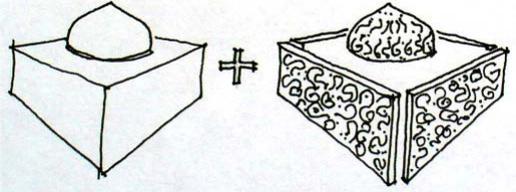
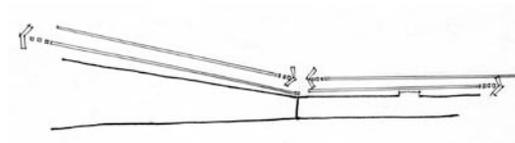
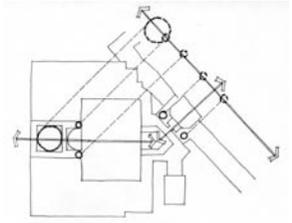
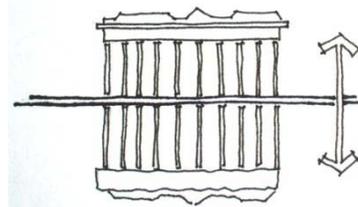
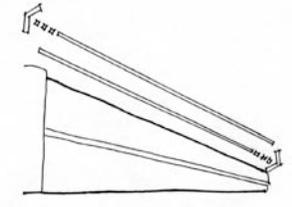
This illusive design was in favor of power too. Safavid kings as well as all other kings were trying to exaggerate their power in various ways. For example, the public meetings of shah *Abbas* the magnificent were arranged in a manner to emphasize his power in the eyes of people. Generally, large groups of attendants,

viziers, religious leaders, etc were attending in these meetings. Even some other Safavid kings were used of wild animals while people visited them [chapter 4, p.67]. That is the same for mysterious existence of kings in most of Muslim cultures. As Firahi (2003, p.213) states since kings did not want to lose their legitimacy because of their often non-religious actions, thus they prefer to have a mysterious life far away from people. Kings had two completely different characters, as shadow of God in society and a normal human being with all possible wrong behaviors in their private life [chapter 4, p.66].

On the other hand, this illusory design might be the hidden message of power to all people that even if you do not believe in legitimacy of power, at least pretend you do (Taghiye). In other words, this message said to people, keep your objections (if there is any) for yourself or perhaps inside your house; whenever you appear in public or you have to be someone else, someone who accept the power willingly.

Above all, the 'illusion' characteristic could symbolize the hidden nature of power. According to Foucault (1988, p.86), power *tends to mask itself* since its subject is free human beings not slaves [chapter 4, p.65]. In other words, power in order to be accepted by people, must hide, and cover itself. Power should be able to deceive people in different ways, such as exaggerating its strength and wealth. The extensive use of glazing ceramic tiles, for example, could be a perfect show off for the wealth of Safavids and at the same time, it gave a heavenly look to the buildings. The illusive design of Naghshe-Jahan square or Safavid bridges showed them larger, longer, and bigger than what they are in reality, to display the power stronger.

Table 5: Analysis sheet of “Illusion” characteristic

<p>Use of visual illusion to show buildings larger, more beautiful, harmonized, etc.</p>	
<p>Lotfollah mosque</p> 	
<p>Naghshe-Jahan square</p> 	<p>Shah mosque</p> 
<p>Chehel Sutun Palace</p> 	<p>Siose-pol Bridge</p> 

6.5 Contrast & Dualism

It seems always there were two contradictory elements in traditional architecture of Iran, especially during the Safavid period. One of characteristics of this architecture consists of composition of the opposing elements, for instance, composition of light/shadow, soft/hard, water/stone, ground/sky, compact/non-compact...

For example, in *Naghshe-Jahan* square, the old bazaar with its organic, dense structure is in contrast with new (Safavid) bazaar, which has been designed with pure geometrical shape around this huge open square.

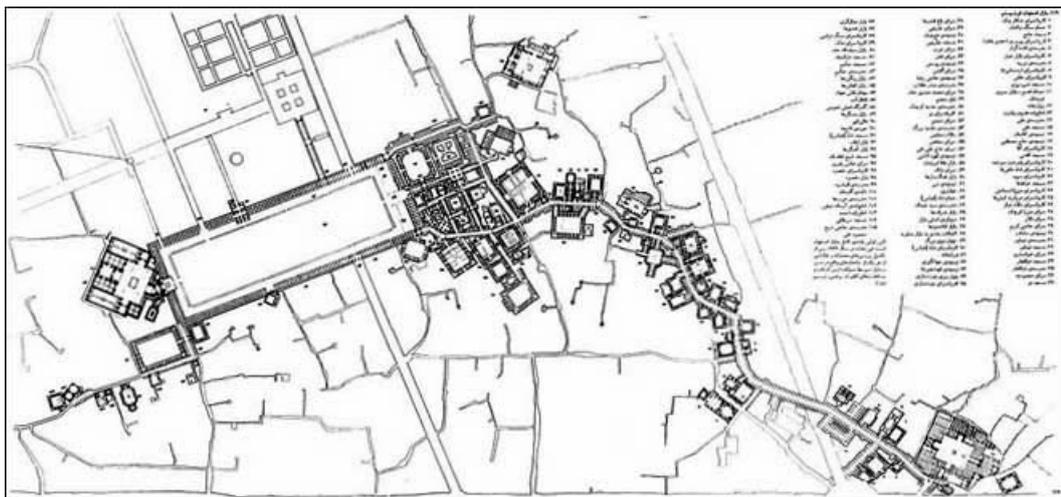


Figure 99: Bazaar of Isfahan, Photo: <http://www.iranchamber.com>

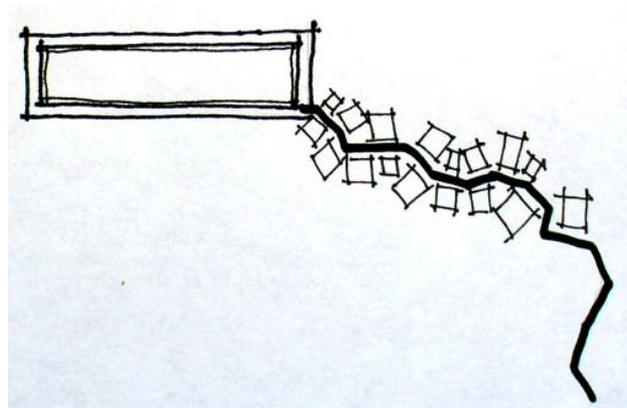


Figure 100: Contrast in old and new bazaar of Isfahan

The use of light in the buildings, which always was in contrast with shade, can be the other example. Playing with light and shadow was not limited to the architecture of this period or even Iran; it was in fact one of the Islamic architectural characteristics. However, the Safavids' use of light and darkness emphasized more on the contrast between them by for example collecting almost all openings in one place or placing the openings on the roof. The number of openings in Safavid buildings usually is limited, although their bigger size brought enough light to the inner space. Such contrast of light and shadow, however, was not limited to the interior spaces; in outer view, also such contrast was visible. For example, Ivan of Aliqapu has strong contrast with the other buildings.



Figure 101: hammam and Bazaar, Photo: Persia other than history

Figure 102: Contrast of light and shadow in Bazaar

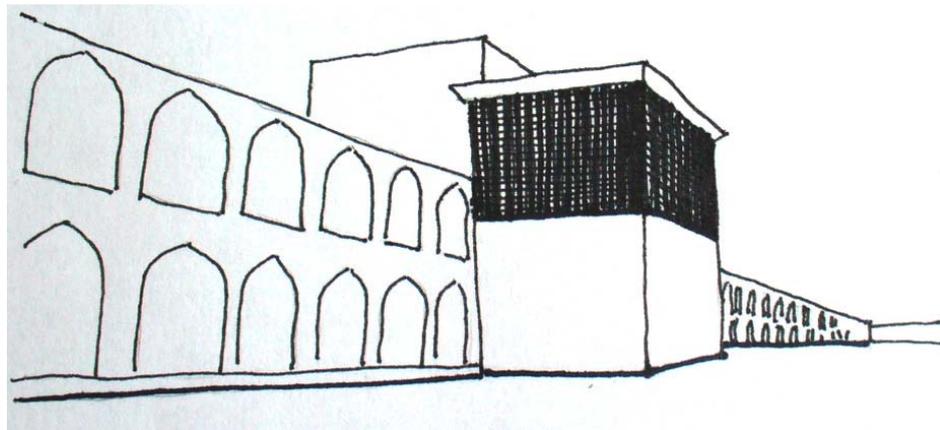
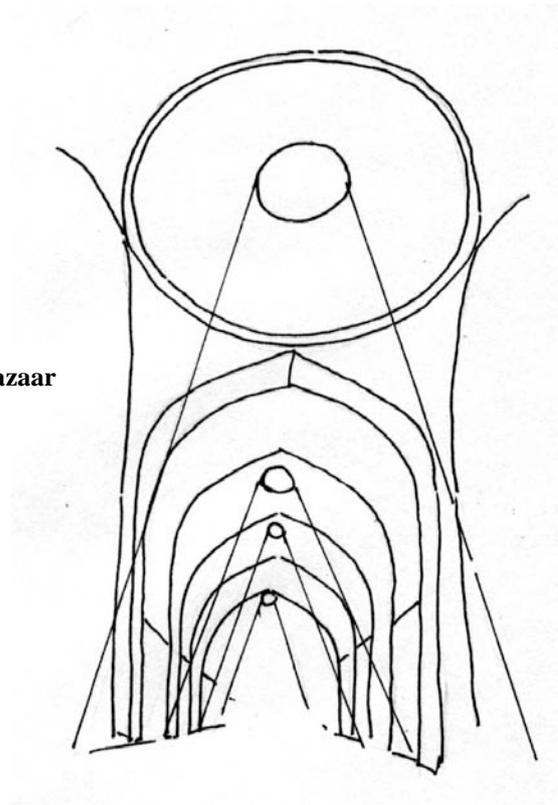


Figure 103: Contrast of light and shadow in Aliqapu



Figure 104: The contrast between light and mass structure, Aliqapu palace, Isfahan,

Photo: Persia other than history

Perhaps one reason of such architectural approach was laid in special Iranian understanding of Islam, which had an important role in Safavid architecture. As Shariati states, Islamic understanding of God is two-dimensional:

“... in order to understand a religion one must see and familiarize himself with its book, prophet, and its best products. Accordingly, the God of Islam is two dimensional: 1) a profile of Jehovah, the Jewish God who is worldly, stern, political, a severe punisher, and despotic; and 2) the God of Jesus who is kind, forgiving, and merciful. All such characteristics for Allah, the God of Islam, can be inferred from the Koran...” (Shariati 2003b, p.234).

Later he discussed that the prophet Muhammad was also a man with two profiles, which combined in one spirit. Muhammad was a man continuously at war, politically and militarily. His aim was to build a modern society and civilization. But above all he was devout and virtuous. Finally, Shariati mentions that - *Ali, Abuzar,* and *Salman* - (which are important religious characters in Iran) are few two dimensional human beings too. They spent a lifetime in the battlefields, military training, and discussion. They were also virtuous on par with the monks and theosophists of the East.

On the other hand, one of the distinguished principles of Shiism is ‘Etrat’ or believing in the Holy prophet’s family members (12 Imams, Fatemeh and Mohammad) [chapter 4, p.81]. As Shariati states, Shiism is based on two fundamental principles of ‘Koran’ and ‘Etrat’; believing in Etrat according to him, would help the Shiite Muslims to know the true direction of Islam and Koran, it would help to know Holy prophet in a better way (Shariati 2008, p.207). Thus, ‘Koran’ and ‘Etrat’ act as double guides for the people. Then, probably, the dualism or use of contrast in architecture as it was explained, was the extension of this philosophy. Traditional architects tried to symbolize Shiite interpretation of Islam in their buildings.

In addition, use of dualism and contrast in Safavid buildings can be the manifestation of power in architecture too, as Foucault states, authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding of mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal (Foucault 1995, p.199). Moreover, Shariati criticizes the Safavid understanding of 'Etrat', which most of times had put in opposition to the Holy Prophet 'Sonnat' and its values. He argues that Safavids had used this Shiism principle to legitimize the ethnical values and dynastic inheritance in their favor.

Such dualism can be seen in often use of double minarets from this time onward. In fact, double minarets from this time, has been sign of Shi'a mosques. Before this period, most of mosques had a single minaret perhaps to symbolize the existence of only one God. The double minarets, however, perhaps symbolized the coexistence of God and ruler, or God and the shadow of God (as Muslims kings usually called themselves).

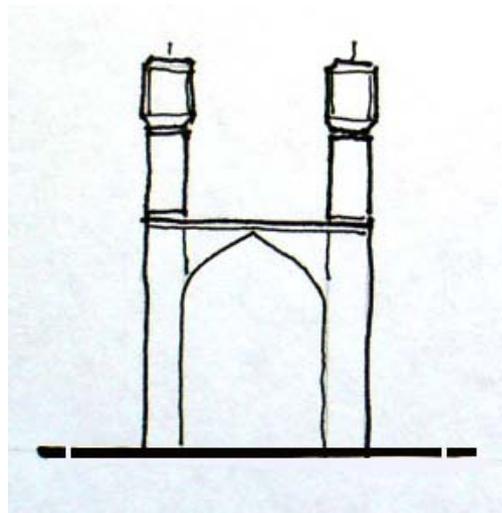


Figure 105: Double minarets



Figure 106: Double minarets of Madrasa Madar-e Shah, Isfahan, Photo: *Persia other than history*



Figure 107: Double minarets of Shah Mosque, Isfahan, photo: <http://www.travel-earth.com/iran>

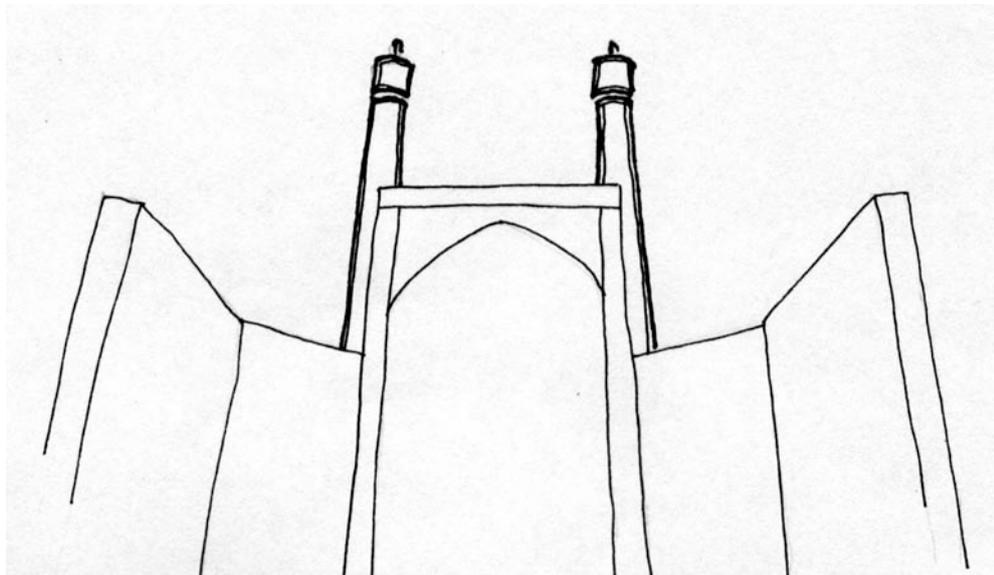


Figure 108: Dualism in double minaret of Shah Mosque

The double domes of Darb-e Imam shrine are the other example of use of dualism in Safavid public buildings. The double domes appear on top of building by impressing a floating impression.



Figure 109: Double domes of Darb-e Imam Shrine, *photo:*
<http://www.isfahan.org.uk/darbimam/darbinam.html>

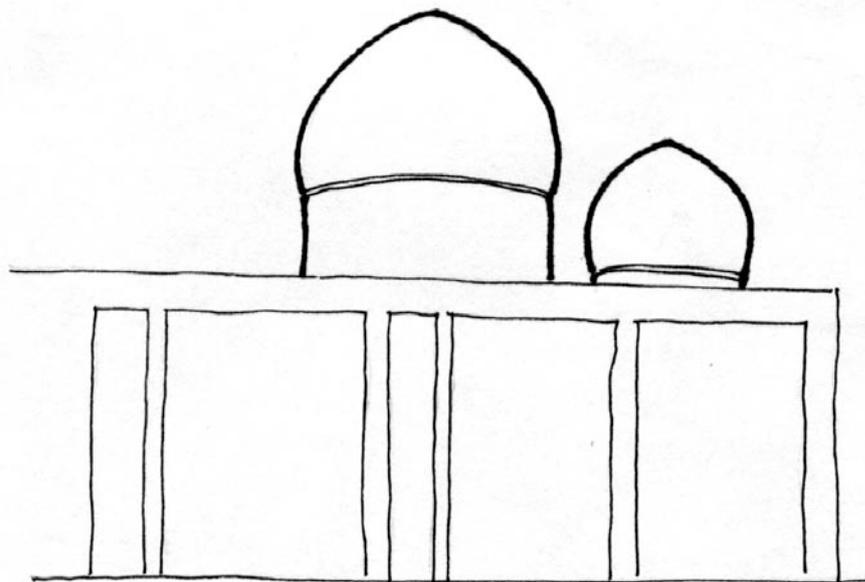
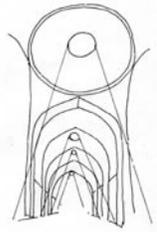
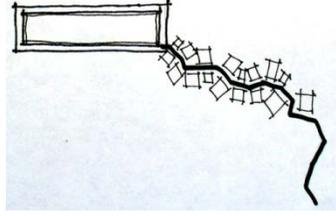
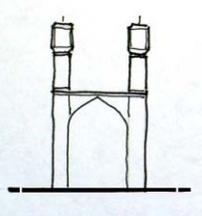
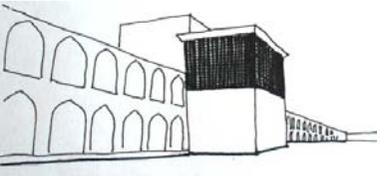
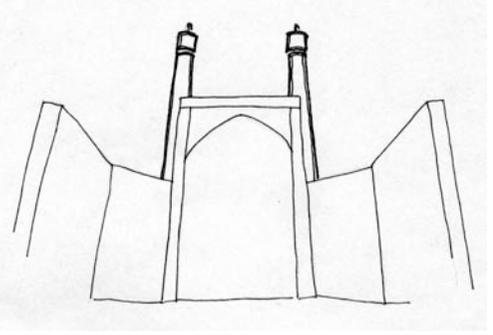
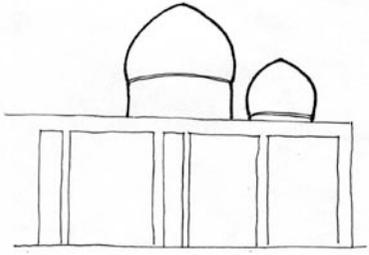


Figure 110: Dualism in double domes

Table 6: Analysis sheet of “Contrast & Dualism” characteristic

Use of opposing elements in buildings, which was usually sustained by duality	
Bazaar 	Naghshe-Jahan square 
Madrasa Madar-e Shah 	Aligapu palace 
Shah Mosque 	Darb-e Imam Shrine 

6.6 Summary

In this study, through a new reading of the Safavid period architecture, some architectural characteristics have been introduced. These characteristics, which usually were applied in public buildings, have been named as “Floating impression”, “Horizontality through repetition”, “Inward-outward flow”, “Illusion”, “contrast, & dualism”.

Floating impression:

In this period, buildings (especially their roofs) were built as floating objects in the sky. As if there is no connection between these –usually dome roofs-and ground. Such design approach may symbolized the existence of last Imam which is somewhere between sky and ground. It can also be a sign of power, which can be everywhere. Or it may stand for both purposes of religion and power. Usually Safavid kings stressed on their religious belief. To say, it was an emphasis of divine power of king.

On the other hand, making such usually huge structures need technology and skill. In addition, they cost highly. It seems there is no other reason, except manifestation of power through architecture, which could produce for instance these large buildings with the floating impression.

Horizontality through repetition:

One of the common architectural characteristics of Safavid period is emphasizing on horizontal level, which only in some rare focal points it will turn to vertical approach. The contrast between the horizontal and vertical level is very strong. Therefore, still in visual perception the entire structure can perceive

horizontal. These vertical elements stand as connection points of sky and ground, divinity and mortality.

This arrangement could be the manifestation of simplified Shi'a world to three existence: the human being (repetitive cellular units), last Imam (floating domes or veranda) and the God (sky). This horizontal perception usually comes from the repeated units, which have the same forms, heights, proportions etc. Such cellular design, which created segmented space, aid power to put individuals in fixed places. To show that individuals are anonymous and only one superior power (vertical elements) exist.

Inward-outward flow:

One of the main differences between Shiite and Sunnite belief is related to inner secret meaning of the Koran, which Shiite philosophers claim they can explain it. This belief had lead to several approaches in architecture. One of these approaches is that buildings are more transparent. This transparency has given a hint to the visitors that perhaps there is another world, another meaning, except the outer appearance. At the same time, they did not open this inner space totally. It seems in this architecture we can see the first approaches toward modern understanding of space as something both indoor and outdoor.

Such connection or continuation between indoor and outdoor spaces which was quite new in Islamic architecture, created the feeling that people are under watch, they may be seen even inside their spaces. Thus, power was existed everywhere, even in indoor spaces.

Illusion:

According to Shiism, the inner fact of Koran can be even in contrast with outer or apparent meaning. Such view was followed in architecture by separation of

inner and outer parts of buildings. For example, ceramic decoration covered the structure. It was possible to cover large surfaces with colorful glazing ceramics to give an immaterial impression, an illusive view from heaven perhaps. Also the general image of some buildings were different from inside and outside.

Contrast & Dualism:

One of characteristics of Safavid architecture consists of composition of opposing elements, for instance, composition of light/shadow, soft/hard, water/stone, ground/sky, compact/non-compact...It seems always there were two contradictory elements in traditional architecture of this period. this contrast may symbolize the character of Prophet Muhammad which according to Iranian Shiism had two profiles which combined in one spirit. Muhammad was a man continuously at war, politically and militarily. His aim was to build a modern society and civilization. But, above all, he was devout and virtuous.

In addition, it can be the manifestation of power in architecture. As Foucault states authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding, mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal (Foucault 1995, p.199).

Table 7 : Summary of Safavid architectural characteristics and symbolization of ‘Religious belief + Identity’, and ‘Power’ indicators

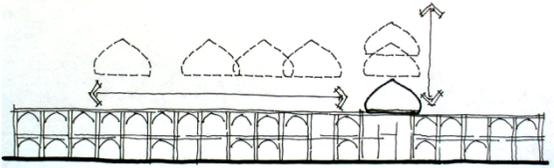
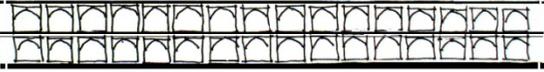
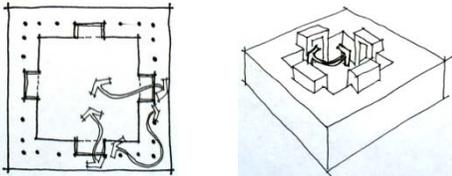
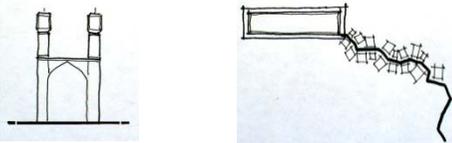
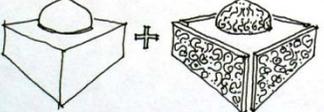
Power indicators	Safavid architectural characteristics		Religion + Identity indicators	
<p>Panopticon</p>	<p>Floating Impression: Usually upper part of buildings (roofs) perceived as if they were floating in the air; not strictly tied to the ground, losing touch to the ground</p>		<p>Perception of Imams</p> <p>Intizar (waiting)</p> <p>Shafa’at (Mediation)</p> <p>Du’ah (prayer)</p>	
	<p>Horizontality through repetition: Emphasizing on the horizontal level by use of repetition. Stability, dependability, touched to the ground</p>		<p>Intizar (waiting)</p> <p>Taqlid (Imitation)</p>	
	<p>Shifting punishment from the body to soul</p> <p>Panopticon</p>	<p>Inward – Outward flow: More or less free, dynamic relationship between inside and outside of the buildings; continuation</p>		<p>Ijtihad (Free interpretation)</p>
	<p>double mode of controlling individuals</p>	<p>Contrast & Dualism: Use of opposing elements in buildings, which was usually sustained by duality</p>		<p>Etrat (Holy prophet family members)</p> <p>Adl (Justice)</p>
<p>masking power</p>	<p>Illusion: Use of visual illusion to show buildings larger, more beautiful, harmonized, etc.</p>		<p>Taghiye (lying for self- reservation)</p>	

Table 8: Summary table of “Floating impression”

(Lotfollah mosque, *Photo: Persia other than history*)



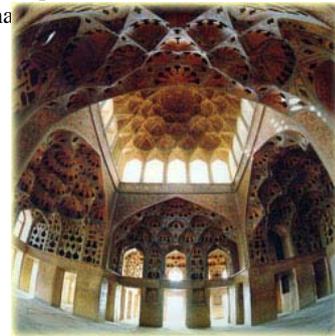
(Lotfollah mosque, *Photo: Persia other than history*)



(Aligapu palace, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*)



(Aligapu palace, Music room, photo: <http://aspahan.persian-horse.ir/ima>)



(Darb-I Imam Shrine, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>)



(Madrasa Madar-e Shah, photo: , photo: <http://archnet.org/library>)



(Tohid Khaneh, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>)

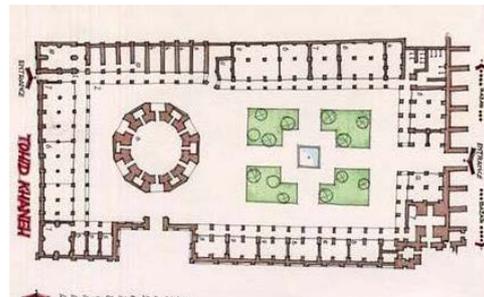
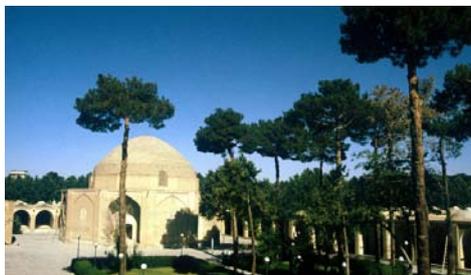
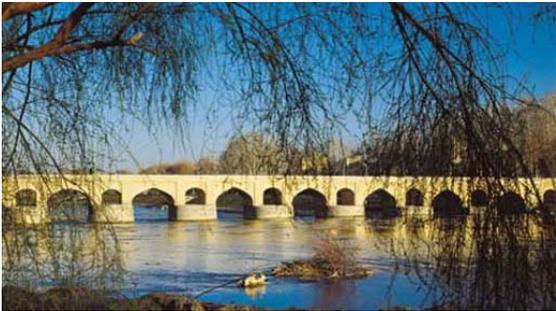
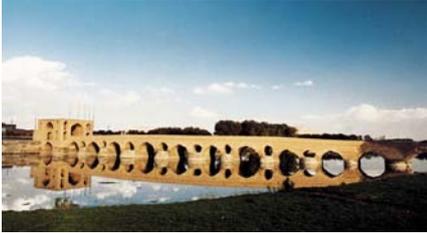
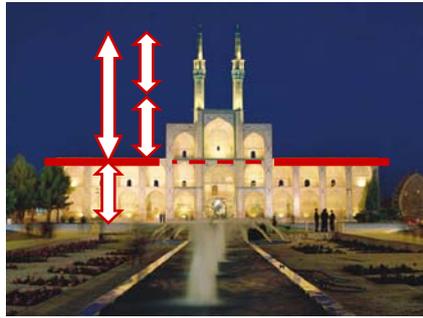


Table 9: Summary table of “Horizontality through repetition”

<p>(Naghshe-Jahan square, <i>Photo: flight over ancient cities of Iran</i>)</p> 	<p>(Lotfollah mosque, <i>Photo: Persia other than history</i>)</p> 
<p>(Marnan Bridge, <i>Photo: Persia other than history</i>)</p> 	<p>(Siose-pol Bridges, <i>Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection</i>)</p> 
<p>(Saadat-Abad Bridge, <i>Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection</i>)</p> 	<p>(Shahrestan Bridge <i>Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection</i>)</p> 
<p>(Khajoo Bridge, <i>Photo: Persia other than history</i>)</p> 	<p>(Khajoo Bridge)</p> 

(Amir-chakhmagh mosque, Photo: Persia other than history)



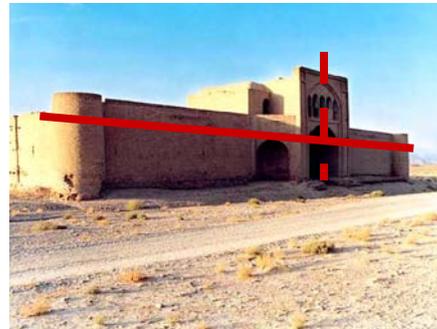
(Shah Mosque, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection)



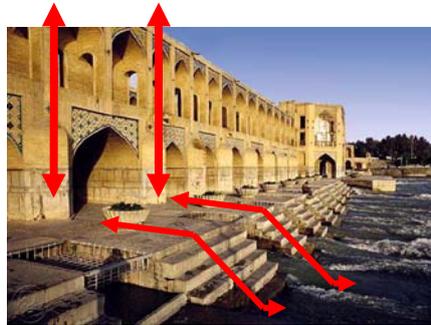
(Lasjerd Shah Abbasi Caravansary, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection)



(Shah Abbasi Caravansary, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection)



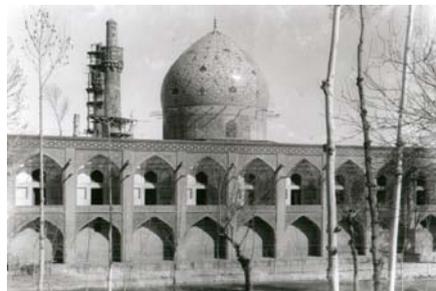
(Khajo bridge)



(Msjed Hakim, isfahan, Photo: <http://www.isfahanmiras.ir>)



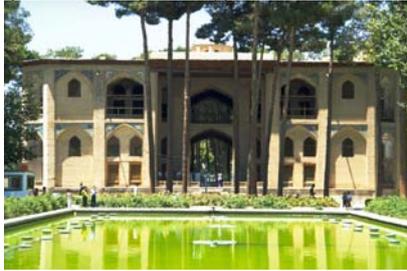
(Madrasa Madar-e Shah, photo: <http://archnet.org/library>)



(Chehel Sutun palace, photo: <http://www.chnpress.com/tourism/Attractions/Esfahan/>)



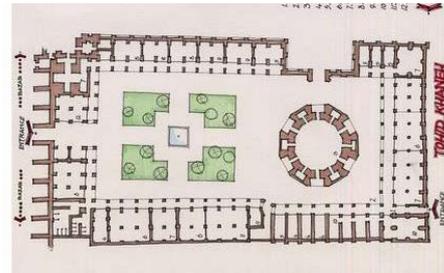
(Hasht Behesht palace, photo:
<http://archnet.org/library>)



(Ali Qapu palace, , photo:
<http://archnet.org/library>)



(Tohid Khaneh, photo:
<http://archnet.org/library>)

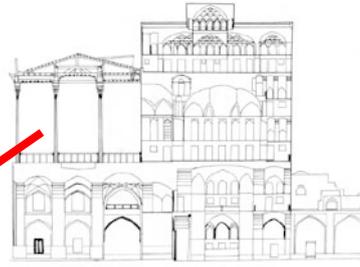


(Darb-I Imam Shrine, photo:
<http://archnet.org/library>)

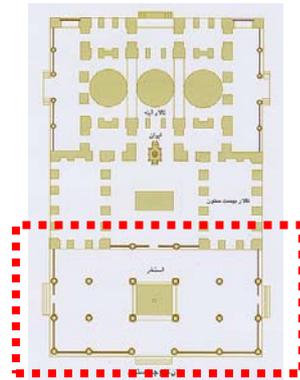
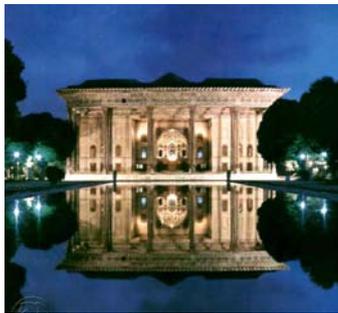


Table 10: Summary table of “Inward, outward flow”

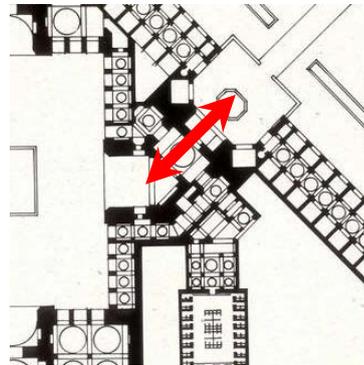
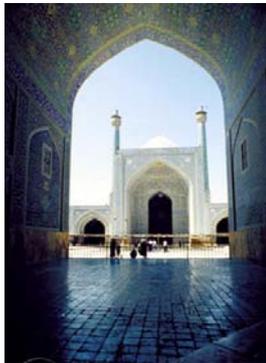
(The palace of Aliqapu, *Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection*)



(Chehel-Sotoon palace, *Photo: Persia other than history*)



(Shah Mosque, *Photo: Persia other than history*)



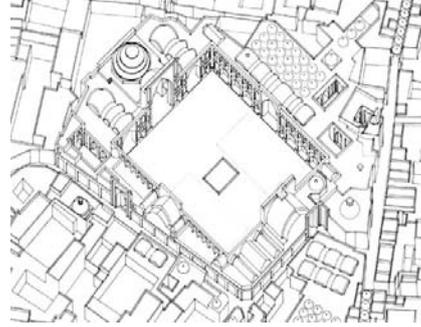
(Hasht-behesht palace, Rafooneh M.Sani)



(Shah Mosque, photo: <http://www.archnet/library>)



(Hakim Mosque, photo: <http://www.archnet/library>)



(Friday Mosque, photo: Rafooneh M.Sani)

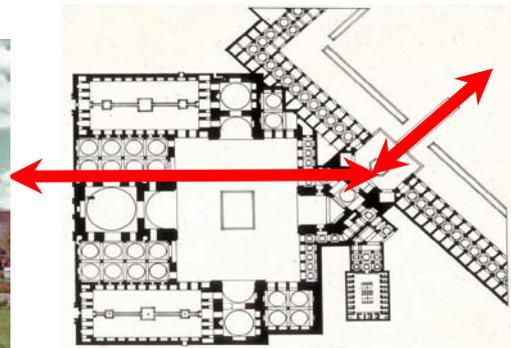


Table 11: Summary table of “Illusion”

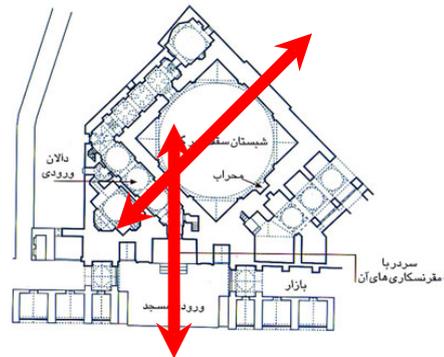
(Shah Mosque, Isfahan, Photo: <http://www.iranlaw.com/images/pic26.gif>)



(Shah Mosque, Photo: http://www.topworld.com/asia/Iran_2.jpg)



(Lotfollah Mosque, Isfahan, Photo: <http://olympus.umh.ac.be/images/Iran/Lotf.jpg>)



(Ceramic tile decoration, Shah Mosque, photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection)



(Chehel Sutun, photo: <http://www.chnpress.com/tourism/Attractions/Esfahan/>)



(Meidan –I Shah, photo: <http://www.arcrhnet.org/library>)



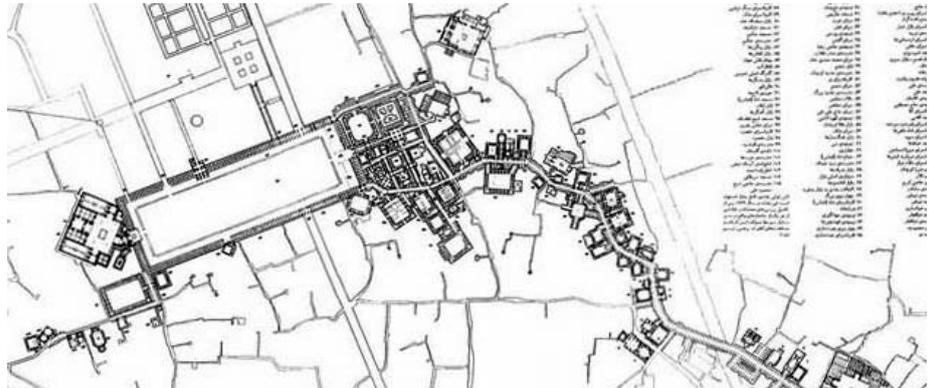
(Meidan –I Shah, photo: <http://www.arcrhnet.org/library>)



(Siose-pol Bridges, Photo: Ustun Alsac photo collection)



Table 12: Summary table of “Contrast & Dualism”

<p>(Naghshe-jahan square, Photo: http://www.iranchamber.com)</p> 	
<p>(Bazaar, Photo: <i>Persia other than history</i>)</p> 	<p>(Aligapu palace, Photo: <i>Persia other than history</i>)</p> 
<p>(Double minarets of Chahar-Bagh Madrassa, Isfahan,)</p> 	<p>Double minarets of Shah Mosque, photo: http://www.travel-earth.com/iran/isfahan-imam-night-ing)</p> 
<p>(Meidan –I Shah, photo: http://www.arcrhnet.org /library)</p> 	

(Hasht Behesht palace, photo:
<http://archnet.org/library>)

(Darb-e Imam Shrine, photo:
<http://www.isfahan.org.uk/darbimam/darbimam.html>)

CONCLUSION

It is a long time that Iranians have taken Islam as their religion. In contemporary time, moreover, the name of this country has been changed to “Islamic Republic of Iran”. Iran Islamic revolution at 1978 was one of the significant events in modern history of world. After revolution, the words such as Islam, Islamic and religion have been integrated with the name of Iran in the media inside or outside of Iran.

Iranians, however, do not have a common viewpoint to the title of “Islamic” to identify with it. Some do strongly agree and the others disagree to with use of Islamic term. Those who identify more with Islam stress the Islamic period and Islamic elements of culture, while the others emphasize more on the Persian pre-Islamic cultural factors.

This means that being an “Iranian” does not have the same meaning for everyone in Iran. Issues regarding the past are important in modern Iranian society as anywhere else. Thus, we are not dealing with a dead past but with a live variable entity, which has different meanings for different groups. In other words, there is no single answer to the question of “*who we are*” for Iranians in contemporary time. Such challenges in identifying with or without Islamic term, confirm the importance of religion in defining Iranian identity.

The same matter is correct for Iranian architecture too. As a significant part of the Islamic world, Iranian architecture has a long history of contribution to the Islamic architecture. Then, its contemporary architectural identity cannot be

something very different from the past. Hence, in order to find the roots of contemporary architecture, the traditional architecture, and its religious structure should be concerned.

On the other hand, identity may not be an autonomous issue. Identity depends on many factors like social structure, power, religion, economy etc. Therefore, since religion and Islam has essential role in all political, social, and even economical structure of Iran, architecture and architectural identity cannot stand as an exceptional case. However, In the process of searching in Islamic architecture we have to face the reality that Islamic architecture is not a homogenous issue too. Also, there is no single expression of Islam. In fact, “Islam” could be seen as a system of beliefs, which is effective in the formation of socio-cultural identity.

At this point, it is better to draw a distinction between religion and religious beliefs or faith. While there is for instance only one religion of Islam, there are different interpretations of Islam, which end up to various religious beliefs such as Sunnite or Shiite belief. Then in architecture, probably it is better to perceive the influence of various religious beliefs rather than just religion. Especially in identity discussion, some core values are necessary to put a boundary for a society to distinguish it from the other. In architecture, religious belief has similar function to make a distinction. In fact, for some societies including Iran, religious belief/faith has a fundamental role in defining national identity. Yet this way of looking to the religion may be useful for societies like Iran, which are witnessing creation of a big gap between religious and non-religious identity. Consideration of Iranian religious belief of Shiism, as Iranian tradition might be useful to fill this gap automatically. People whether religious or not, might agree upon a common identity.

In short, it is not possible to talk about a single “Islam”. Expressions of Islam are not the same for different societies. They also change in the same society. Therefore, perhaps it is better to look at the Islam and Islamic architecture as a large puzzle in, which each piece is different from the others, but still they make a single image [Appendix 2]. Thus, in the case of Iranian architecture, which is one of the important parts of this puzzle, this study has been focused on learning Iranian expression of Shiism and its symbolization in architecture.

Iran with its Shi’a religion has special place in Islamic world. The origin of Shiism as official religion of Iran goes back to the Safavid period. Before this time, Iran, like other parts of the Islamic world, upheld the Suni belief. This transformation has had a far-reaching impact on Iranian culture and, consequently, its architecture. The contemporary expression of Islam in Iran still is similar to Safavid era. Then, it looks that this period may serve as a foundation for Iranian identity in general and the identity of Iranian architecture in the case of this study.

It appears Shiism religion in Iran has been integrated with some other factors such as political power, culture, nationality and identity, etc. Between these factors, power had the essential role in the formation of architecture. During this period, king and royal family were the main constructor of public buildings such as mosques, madrassa, imamzade, tomb, etc.

Then, it seems architectural characteristic in this period, especially architecture of public buildings, was leaded by political power. However, it does not mean that it was for the first time in Iran, architecture integrated with political power. In fact, architecture, (especially architecture of public buildings) always was political in the earlier periods too. The particular aspect of architecture of Safavids period is that, except political factors, architecture intertwined with identity and

religious beliefs too. These factors manifested in architecture through signs and symbols.

On the other hand, many Iranian architects and scholars have been focused on researching and identifying those architectural characteristics, which can define the Iranian contribution to architectural world. As a result of these efforts, several forms and orders have been introduced. Architectural elements such as ivan, sofeh, chahar-tagh and so on are the reference forms for modern architects in this aspect.

[Appendix1]

Some of these forms, however, could be interpreted as the manifestation of power and/or religion in architecture. In contemporary Iranian architecture, however, these forms and orders have been frequently applied everywhere, from simple housing projects and schools to large monumental buildings. Therefore, the understanding of the background and the basis of the creation of such forms or orders will form the basis for supporting their correct approach.

In this study, it has been argued that three factors of ‘identity’, ‘power’, and ‘religious belief’ were important and intertwined during the Safavid period. Among these three factors, identity and religion in Shiite belief during the Safavid period have had a very strong correlation [chapter 5]. Therefore, to investigate this relationship, thoughts of Shariati has been used as the key component to interpret the Safavid architectural symbolism. Shariati has had important criticisms about the link between Shiite belief and Iranian identity during the Safavid period, as his point of view still is effective in contemporary Iran. Shariati in his distinguished book, *Alavi Shiite- Safavid Shiite* summarized the key beliefs in Shiite doctrine and compared the Safavid and Alavi Shiite [chapter 5, pp. 81-82]. His categorization has been used here as the ‘identity+religion’ indicators (table13).

On the other hand, to study the influence of power on Safavid architecture, ideas of Foucault has been used as the main key source. Through explaining the formation of disciplinary society, Foucault believed that power is not in the one person's hand in such society. This kind of power works best when everybody accepts it willingly. Foucault (1995) has pointed some conditions for distinguishing a disciplinary society from the others [chapter 4, pp. 58-64]. His understanding of power and disciplinary society has been built the 'power' indicators of this study (table 14).

Table 13: **Identity+religion indicators and their architectural manifestation in Safavid architecture**

Identity & Religion indicators [Shiism indicators] (Shariati 2008, pp. 207-261)	Transitional step to the built environment based on Safavid Shiism	Safavid Architectural manifestations
visayat (appointment as trustee) Imamat (12 infallible members of Prophet Family) Ismat (chastity) Valayat (guardianship of jurist) Ghaybat (occultation)	Belief in 12 Imams as 12 superhuman beings, angels, and/or hidden creatures to worship will give 12 Imam a non-ordinary, non grounded characters. They are not strictly tied to the ground as ordinary people. As if they were/are floating above ordinary human beings. In the Safavid architecture, usually domes – the highest part of building, the focal point, the conduction between ground and above- appear suddenly above the horizontal skyline, as if there is no connection between the dome and the rest of building under it. Domes perceive as floating objects in the air.	Floating impression
Intizar (waiting)	Only the [hidden] Imam can lead, but since he is in occultation, there is nothing one can do about anything. It is in fact, prior surrender before taking any step. People have no responsibility but waiting for his return. People are touched strictly to the ground. They do not have dynamic character, as if they are all standing beside each other waiting for the return of the last Imam which is somewhere between sky and ground. Use of repetitive cellular units in horizontal direction in the Safavid architecture, can symbolize the grounded waiting people for return the Last Imam.	Horizontality through repetition / Floating impression
Shafa'at (Mediation)	The 12 Imam can be mediators between people, which are strictly grounded and God. It is supposed, since the 12 Imam are between people and God, then people should ask through them. Imams go over people. This belief has reflected in the Safavid architecture by means of accentuation on static part (people) rather than dynamic, floating part (12 Imam).	Floating impression
Ijtihad (Free interpretation)	Ijtihad is based on free interpretation from the source of law (inward) to adjust religious laws to the people needs (outward) in all time. However, this interpretation is done by expert interpreters, which is called mujtahid. The rest of society either do not wish to perform, or cannot interpret due to the lack of skills. This belief during the Safavids almost lost its dynamic, free character and became to be a	Inward-outward flow

	<p>block to progress and change.</p> <p>During the Safavid, inward and outward relationship of public buildings were more strong , although this relationship was not completely dynamic. Inward (source of law) and outward (people’s understanding) of spaces could be perceived differently but most of times there were transitional spaces (Mujtahid) between them. The relationship between inside and outside is directional. It was going to dictate people how to perceive the space; then it was not a free interpretation anymore. It was guided directional interpretation.</p>	
Taqlid (Imitation)	<p>This belief has turned in the Safavid period to blind obedience to a clergyman; absolute subordination, with no questions asked, to the mind, opinion or decision of a clergyman. People were assumed to have a static character, with no dynamism to investigate, ask or move.</p> <p>The static and horizontal character of repetitive cellular units in the Safavid buildings can symbolize the ordinary people, which are following the clergy man. The clergymen are not treat as superhuman beings, which 12 Imam do; although people follow them blindly.</p>	Horizontality through repetition
Du’ah (prayer)	<p>An incantation mechanically uttered that makes one secure, bring rewards that have nothing to do with one’s circumstances, substitutes for heavy responsibility.</p> <p>People are touched to the ground. They are static. They can pray to the God, although the 12 Imam are between people and God. They are floating in a space between people and God. It is a relationship between horizontal and vertical.</p>	Floating impression/ Horizontality through repetition
Taghiye (lying for self-reservation)	<p>During the Safavid period, according to this belief people were allowed and encouraged to lie. Lying to preserve the believers not their faith. Lying in the built environment can be symbolized through use of visual illusion.</p>	Illusion
Etrat (Holy prophet family members)	<p>Believing in the value of following the attitudes of Etrat (Holy prophet family members), during the Safavid period, put Etrat ahead than Sunnat (the attitude of Holy prophet) and even sometimes Koran, to legitimize dynastic inheritance and ethnical values.</p>	Dualism
Adl (Justice)	<p>A controversy over the attributes of God that is relevant for the after-life. On this side of death it is irrelevant, since prior to death the discussion of justice is related to Shah Abbas; the hereafter that of God. A contrast between double types of justice, one for this world and one for the others.</p>	Contrast / Dualism

Table 14: Political power indicators and their architectural manifestation in Safavid architecture

Political power indicators (Foucault 1995)		Transitional step to the built environment	Safavid Architectural manifestations
cellular and segmented spaces	Disciplinary space	Disciplinary space contain of cellular, segmented spaces, which are interchangeable. Spaces are not multi-functional. During the Safavids, the use of repetitive cellular units which were put beside each other in a row could symbolize a disciplinary space. Those spaces were exchangeable.	Horizontality through repetition
Disposal of several different uses in space			
interchangeable elements in space			
Discipline as an art of rank		In discipline, the elements are interchangeable, since each is defined by the place it occupies in a series, and by the gap that separates it from the others. The unit is, therefore, neither the territory (unit of domination), nor the place (unit of residence), but the rank... The horizontal character of many Safavid public buildings came from the use of repeated cells, which had been separated from each other.	Horizontality through repetition
Panopticon as model of a disciplinary technology		Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. Many Safavid public buildings contain a dome or an upper part of building, which did not seem grounded. This part is usually perceived as a floating object above skyline, as if the dome can be everywhere above the people and can watch over them. In addition, the uses of transitional spaces, such as Ivan, made the inside of buildings more accessible and open for the power to watch and control from outward.	Floating impression/ Inward-outward flow
authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode		Authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding of mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal...	Dualism/contrast
masking power (Disciplines as techniques of power have low exteriorization, its relative invisibility,		Modern power is tolerable on the condition that it mask itself-which it has done very effectively... The use of visual illusion in the Safavid buildings can symbolize the	Illusion

the little resistance it arouses)	political power, which wishes to be almost invisible.	
Shifting the locus of punishment from the prisoner's body to his soul	<p>Disciplinary power has been different from slavery, because they were not based on a relation of appropriation of bodies. The punishment shifts its place from body (outward) to the soul (inward).</p> <p>Then in architecture this inward (soul) should be accessible. Therefore, inside of public buildings were more open to the outside, in order to be watched over and controlled.</p>	Inward-outward flow
discipline as a political anatomy of detail	<p>Discipline is a political anatomy of detail... every detail is important since, in the sight of God, no immensity is greater than a detail, nor anything so small that it was not willed by one of his individual wishes...Detail in disciplinary society is important because little things lead to greater...</p> <p>During the Safavid, public buildings were highly decorated. A full attention was given to the details. However, due to the lack of time, glazing ceramic tiles has been invented. This type of decoration was articulated from tectonic part of buildings and in an illusory manner this type of decoration could cover the total surfaces of buildings as if it has been part of the tectonic structure.</p>	Illusion

In addition, to explore the sample buildings, the study focused on finding the symbolism in orders and organizations rather than forms and figures [chapter 3, pp. 48-52]. Organizations of form and space has been investigated by various scholars, which perhaps one of the most famous classifications belongs to Ching (1996). This study, however, has focused on ‘perceptual’ and ‘compositional’ organization. This type of organization has been summarized in four categories by Wallschlaeger&Busic-Snyder (1992, p.334). The classification of architectural characteristics of sample buildings is comparable to this view of organization (table 15).

Table 15: **perceptual organizational principles and Safavid architectural characteristics**

Perception theory (Wallschlaeger&Busic-Snyder 1992, p.334)		Safavid architectural characteristics
Organizational principles in 2 and 3 dimensions		
Visual perception concepts/principles		
Gestalt Theory	Figure Laws	
	Grouping Laws	
Figure/Ground	Distinguishing figure from ground	
	Ambiguous figure	
	Stability/Instability	
	Figure closure	
	Figure/Ground Reversal	
	Pattern & Figure/Ground Reversal	
Compositional/Visual Organization	Figure Overlap	
	Balance (symmetrical – asymmetrical)	
	Repetition	
	Horizontality through repetition	
	Harmony	
	Rhythm	
	Variety	
Contrast		
Contrast & Dualism		
Acquired Associations	Dominance	
	floating impression	
	Free Association	
	Familiarity	
	Reading order	
Hierarchies of Information	General to specific	
	Specific to general	
	Chronological	
		Inward–outward flow

Interpreting the symbolic meaning of these architectural characteristics has been made by use of those indicators. In the other words, the sample buildings have visualized those indicators symbolically (table 16).

Table 16: symbolization of ‘Religion’, ‘Identity’, and ‘Power’ indicators in Safavid architecture

Religion + Identity indicators	Safavid architectural characteristics	Power indicators
Perception of Imams	Floating Impression	Panopticon
Intizar (waiting)		
Shafa’at (Mediation)		
Du’ah (prayer)	Horizontality through repetition	Disciplinary space
Intizar (waiting)		Discipline; an art of rank
Taqlid (Imitation)	Inward – Outward flow	Shifting punishment from the body to soul
Ijtihad (Free interpretation)		Panopticon
Etrat (Holy prophet family members)	Contrast & Dualism	double mode of controlling individuals
Taghiye (lying for self- reservation)	Illusion	masking power

In sum, architecture of public buildings during the safavid period was a symbolic architecture. Safavids’ public buildings, which generally had monumental character too, conveyed the message regarding to power. Safavid rulers erected these buildings to establish Iranian social/national identity as well as their attempt to differentiate Iranian religious belief, language, traditions, etc from their neighbors. Architecture of residential buildings or other small-scaled buildings in Iran during this period probably was also symbolized. It is possible to trace the power manifestation in such buildings too. However, since the society leaders were not

directly involved in making small-scaled buildings, it is misleading to look for social/national characteristics in private buildings. Usually these buildings, in addition to the cultural characteristics, carried the individuality of their clients. The architectural characteristic of the Safavid public buildings, which has been investigated in this study, is summarized in table 17.

Table 17: The architectural characteristics of Safavid's public buildings

Buildings	Function	CH1 Floating impression	CH2 Horizontality through repetition	CH3 Inward, outward flow	CH4 Contrast &Dualism	CH5 Illusion
Ali Qapu	Palace	●	●	●	●	—
Lotfollah Mosque	Mosque	●	—	—	●	●
Chehel Sutun	Palace	—	●	●	—	●
Hasht Behesht	Palace	—	●	●	●	—
Shah Mosque	Mosque	—	●	●	●	●
Meidan-e Shah	Open public square	●	●	●	●	●
Hakim Mosque	Mosque	—	●	●	●	—
Friday Mosque	Mosque	—	●	●	●	—
Siose-Pol Bridge	Bridge	—	●	—	—	●
Khaju Bridge	Bridge	—	●	—	—	—
Darb-e Imam Shrine	Religious building	●	●	—	—	—
Madrassa Madar-e Shah	Religious School	●	●	●	●	—
Tohid Khaneh	Religious building	●	●	—	—	—
Total (13 buildings)		6/13	12/13	8/13	8/13	5/13

- Building has the characteristic
- Building does not have the characteristic

However, it seems it is not enough to limit the architectural characteristics in some certain forms or even orders. Architecture and its characteristics are based on so many other factors. These factors are changeable from time to time. For instance, in this study four factors of “identity”, “religious belief”, “power”, and “symbolism” are not fixed issues even during the Safavid period. They were different for diverse types of buildings, different people, and various times. Then it appears for defining the architectural characteristics we can only consider the main guiding principles and rules. Later, however, by use of these guiding principles, some solutions might be offered for today’s architectural identity. On the other hand, by considering the fact that these characteristics were based on manifestation of “power” and “Safavid Shiism doctrine” in architecture, reusing those characteristics in contemporary architecture might be critical. In other words, it is more accurate to

At the end, it is worth mentioning that despite the similarities between this period and present day Iran, things have, of course, changed, and we are in a different era with different needs and different requirements. Therefore, it is probable that some of those architectural characteristics, which were introduced in this study, may not be fully practical for contemporary needs. In other words, this study tried to offer a new way and an original approach for exploring the Iranian architectural identity rather than proposing physical solutions. Therefore, it would be better if a similar study can be done for the present time Iran. Then through comparison, a holistic view of Iranian identity, religion, and political power might be offered. Such view and understanding can be useful to have a correct approach toward future of Iran.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 :

Some examples of modern Iranian architecture

One of the major challenges for architects in almost all developing countries has been to find their place in the more globalized world during the last decades. From one side, it appears impossible not to be influenced by international developments and to base architecture strictly on a regional culture and tradition. On the other hand, one might think that it is harmful to design without reference to the traditions of the past. In order to plan for future correctly, it is necessary to know the past and origin.

However, during the decades most of architects in developing countries in fever of rapid modernization were accepting whatever came from Western modern architecture. There were some others too which by criticizing that blind attitude, were refusing the modern movement. Using modern architecture as a whole package, which we have to take it or leave it, seems not to be a correct approach for many people. In fact, it is possible and better to respect the advantages of both modern and traditional architecture.

Even so, the further question is that how these two extremes should be compromised. Which kind of architecture can belonge at the same time to the contemporary century and to its original culture? Perhaps the primary step through finding the answer of these questions is to investigate the cultural traditional factors. It means we should work through history, but we are also involved in building as

architects for the future. Therefore, in finding our way, from one side we should work through history and from the other side we should focus on architecture. And somewhere between the two there should lay a proper attitude not only to understand the past, but also to help people who will use these buildings in understanding the future.

Following this attitude, some Iranian architects also have tried to incorporate the traditional and modern architecture. These efforts although have not offer a certain correct solution, they are quite valuable in terms of learning from their experiences. The sensitivity, which these architects have shown to the real fact of modern time and at the same time respecting to Iranian tradition and culture might be useful for the future designs too.

Brief historical background

To explore the Iranian contemporary architecture, it is necessary to give a brief historical background of effective socio-cultural factors in formation of Iranian culture. Iran during the contemporary time often is introduced as the only Shi'a Muslim state in the world. As it has been discussed through the study, Shiite belief has been chosen as the state religion of Iran since the Safavid period (1501-1736). Safavids were initially were belonged to a Sunni Sufi religious brotherhood in northwestern Iran (Cleveland 2004, p.51; Keddie 1998). When they came to the power, however, they became Shi'a (Bosworth 1996, p.279).

The unique place of Iran as the only Shiite state in the Islamic world provided a strong cultural identity for Iranians from this time onward, although Iranians never lost their language or cultural identity earlier to this period; they did not become Arabic speakers; nor did they become Arabs (Lewis 1998, p. 54). In view of that, Safavids have been viewed as founder of today's Iranian identity (Keddie 1998). Iran

during the Safavid period enjoyed rapid progress in all cultural, social, and economical aspects. Isfahan, the Safavids capital, contained a carefully planned urban center, richly decorated mosques, royal palaces, luxurious private residences, and a large bazaar, all in a lush garden setting (Cleveland 2004, p.54).

After Safavids, Iran was under control of short lasting dynasties up to rise of Qajar dynasty at 1794. Iran under the Qajar period never could experience the same strength, prosperity, and development as during the Safavids. The relationship between Iran and Europe during this time rapidly increased; the Western influences went beyond ambassadorial and began to fleet in the life of Iranians (Banani 1961, p. 6). Such link, however, was mostly in favor of European countries benefits rather than Iran. During this period, although Iran in contrast to many Middle Eastern countries never experienced the direct colonialism, the West had major influence in almost every aspect of life in Iran (Cleveland 2004, pp. 113-114). Iranian architecture during the Qajars also experienced a clear decline (Diba 1991); many European architectural elements and ornamentation applied in architecture of this period, thus Iranian architecture to the end of this period became somehow the mixture of Iranian and European tastes.

The admiration for European culture was officially encouraged during the Pahlavi era (1921-1978), so the country underwent a phase of intense Westernization (Banani 1961, p. 3). During this period, the Western culture and architecture had taken as a model, however, to establish Iranian national identity, the Iranian Pre-Islamic culture also recalled (Cleveland 2004, p.189; Keddie 1998). Many public buildings had been built in this period, which took pattern from Pre-Islamic Iranian architecture such as National Police Headquarter (1933), Hassan Abad Square (1935) and Maidan Mashgh (1931) (Diba&Dehbashi 2004). The name of country, even, was

changed from Persia to Iran, the land of Aryans, which had been used in Pre-Islamic period.

Such attitude, however, has put in serious challenge following the Islamic revolution at 1978-79 (Diba 1991). The return to the Islamic values as well as respect for Iranian cultural identity has been the main interest in Iranian architecture since the Islamic revolution. In looking for 'Iranian', 'Islamic' identity in 'contemporary' architecture, thus, many architects have been tried to make a reasonable link between these three factors. These efforts, although, have not defined an Iranian style yet, they are valuable sources for younger generations.

Sample buildings:

Academies of Islamic Republic of Iran / Tehran-Iran 1994

Architect: Hadi Mirmiran, source: architect website: <http://www.njp-arch.com>

Figure 111: Academic of Islamic republic of Iran,
photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>



According to the program (Naghsh-e Jahan Pars, 1994), the building consists of two main parts: the academies and the complex of conference buildings in addition to a complementary part. The overall area of the project is about 5500 square meters. The complex of academies includes the academies of Persian language and literature, the academy of science and the academy of medicine and also a library that serves the academies. The most important features taken in to account for the design of this project are as fallows:

- Condensing the building mass in order to free the land as much as possible,
- Innovative deployment of principals and patterns of Iranian historic architecture,
- Unity and coherency in expression,
- Respect for the ground,
- Compliance with historical angel and Damavand,

The comprising elements of the project are: the Entrance space, the Platform (soffe), central courtyard, the dome over the conference complex, the wall of the academies building and a part of the natural topography that deliberately protrudes from the platform. The combination of natural and man-made elements adds to the spatial appeal of the complex. Among the 18 participants of the competition held for designing this project, this proposal won the first prize.



Figure 112: Different views from Academic of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>

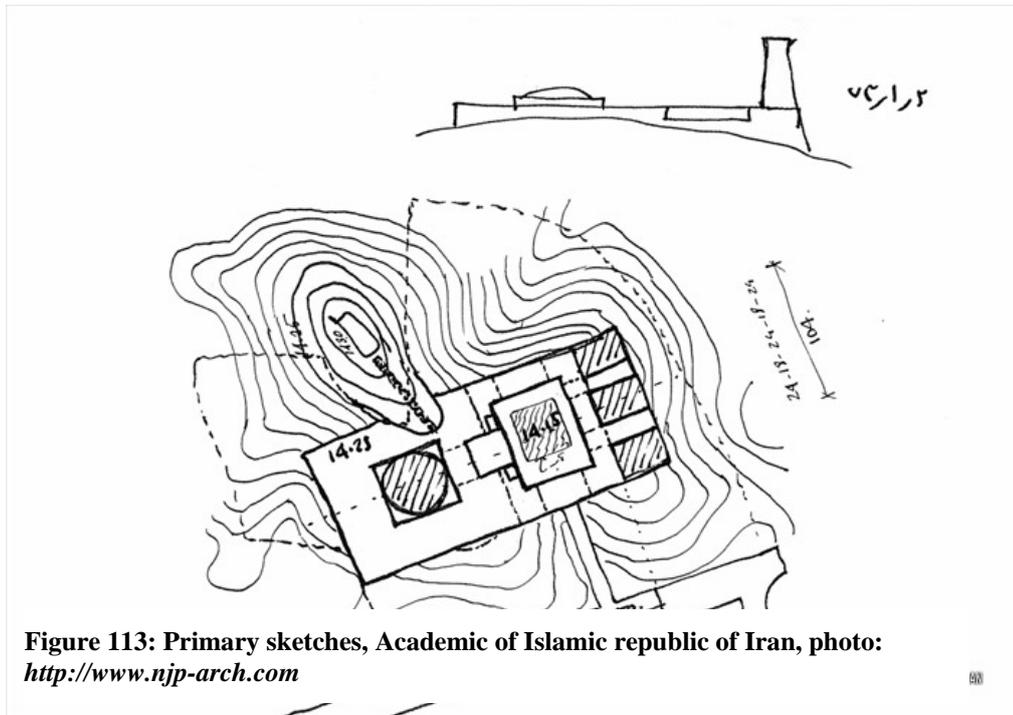


Figure 113: Primary sketches, Academic of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>

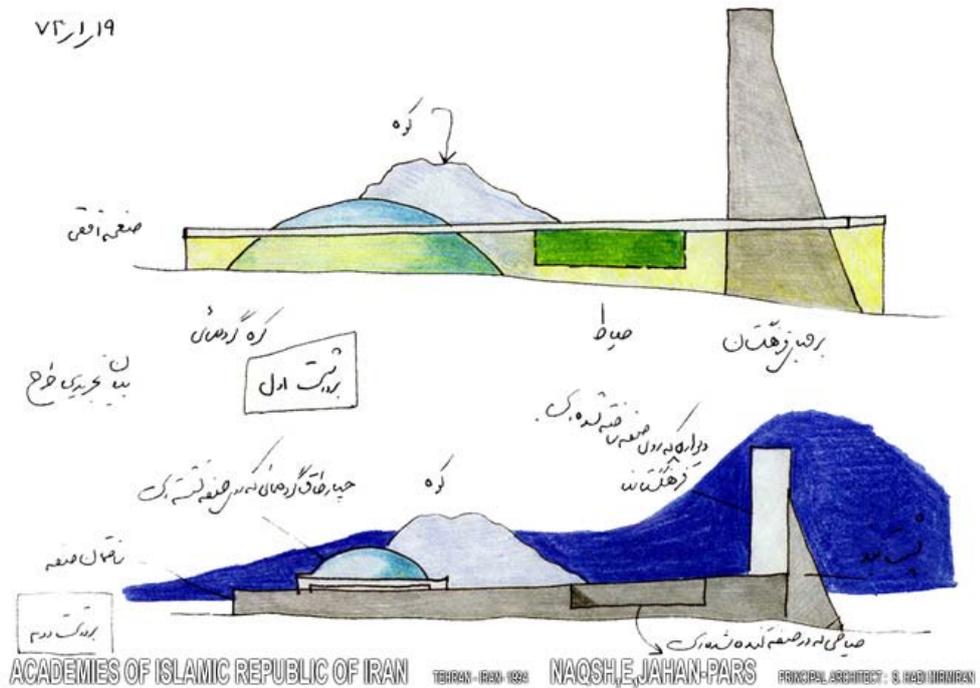


Figure 114: Concept ideas, Academic of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>

National library of Islamic Republic of Iran/Tehran-Iran 1995

The competition for National Library of Iran was held in spring 1995 by the ministry of Housing and Urban Development. N.J.P consultants won the second prize in this competition. The architectural characteristics of the project are as follows: (Naghsh-e Jahan Pars, 1994)

This project comprises three main parts: closed book storage, reading rooms and a transparent skin that encloses the required sectors of the library. The main concept of the project is inspired by this phrase of Naser Khosrow:

" Watch the angel running after the devil Just as the melted gold runs once dripped over the tar "

The objective of applying this literary metaphor is to approach the concepts of knowledge and text (as the registered knowledge) in Iranian culture. This image (In Naser Khosrow phrase) that pictures the light penetrating through the dark space, has been applied in terms of defining a black glazing twisted surface on which the golden object (the closed storage) is set. The golden object resembles a tablet. Tablet represents registration of human knowledge. In Iranian culture, the destiny of universe is engraved in "Preserved Tablet". Therefore, in this proposal, the form of the tablet is employed to represent the closed storage and its settlement under the transparent skin represents its preservation.

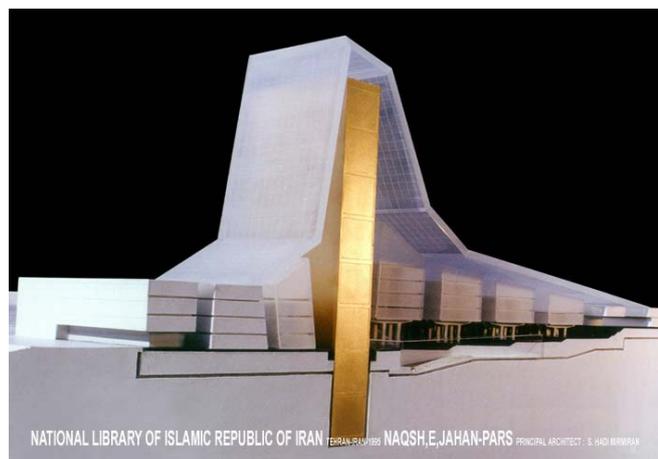
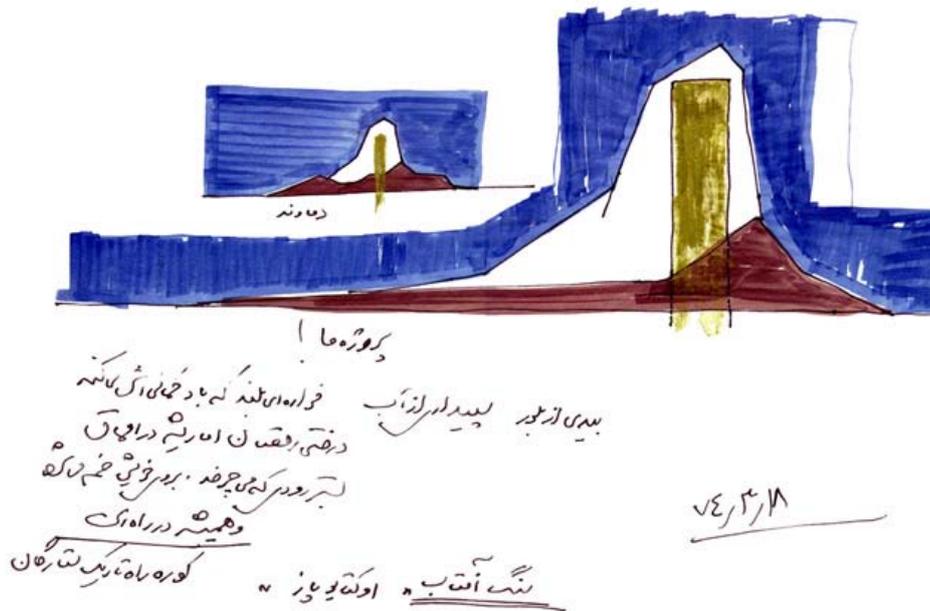


Figure 115: National library of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>



Figure 116: National library of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TEHRAN-IRAN-1995 NAQSH,E, JAHAN-PARS PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT: S. HADI MIRMIAN

Figure 117: National library of Islamic republic of Iran, photo: <http://www.njp-arch.com>

Dezful cultural center/ Dezful-Iran 1995

Architect: Farhad Ahmadi, source: <http://www.archnet.org>

The center consists of a bazaar, a teahouse, a mosque, a library, a visual arts and crafts school, galleries, a cinema, and a landscaped courtyard. In designing this complex, architect used some Iranian Islamic forms like the shape of wind keeper, fountain, bazaar's roof and so on in an abstract way, which by using new technology s/he could see the tradition in a fresh manner.



Figure 118: Dezful cultural center, View to roof structure, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org>

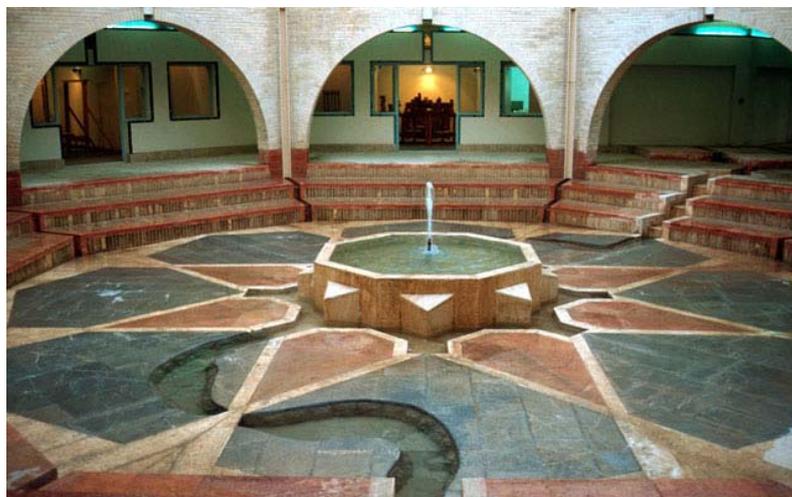


Figure 119: Dezful cultural center, Interior, fountain, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org>

Figure 120: Dezful cultural center, View across courtyard fountain, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org>

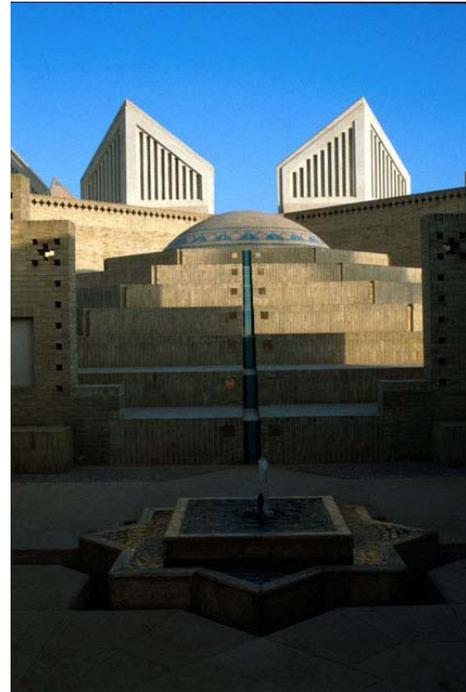


Figure 121: Dezful cultural center, Interior, main porch, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org>

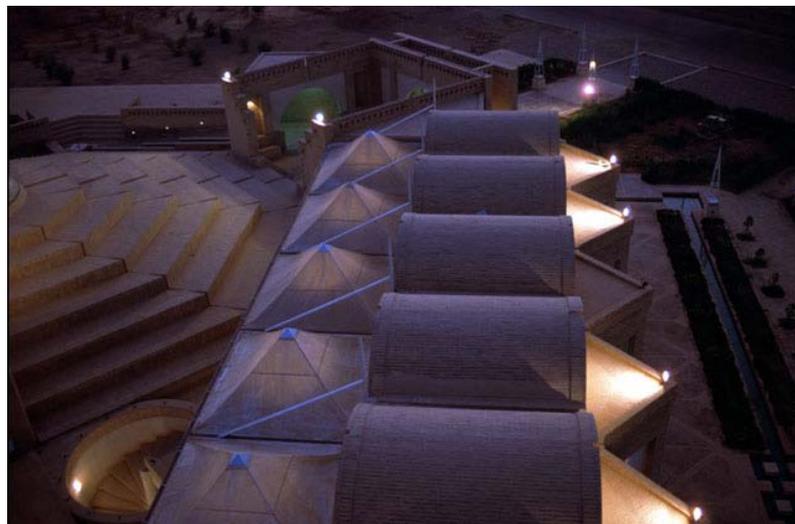


Figure 122: Dezful cultural center, View over cultural center, Photo: <http://www.archnet.org>

Appendix 2 :

Iran history time line

The time line of Iran history can be summarized as such:

Pre-Islamic period

The Median and Achaemenian Empires

Parthian Empire

Sassanian Empire

Islamic Period

Umayyad dynasty

Abbasid dynasty and Iranian Semi-independent governments (Tahirid, Saffarid, Ziyarid, Samanid, and Buwayhid)

Turkish dynasties:

Ghaznavids, Seljuks, and Khwarezmid Dynasty

Mongol invasions and local governments:

Mongol Empire, Ilkhanate, and Timurid dynasty

Safavid Empire (1502-1736)

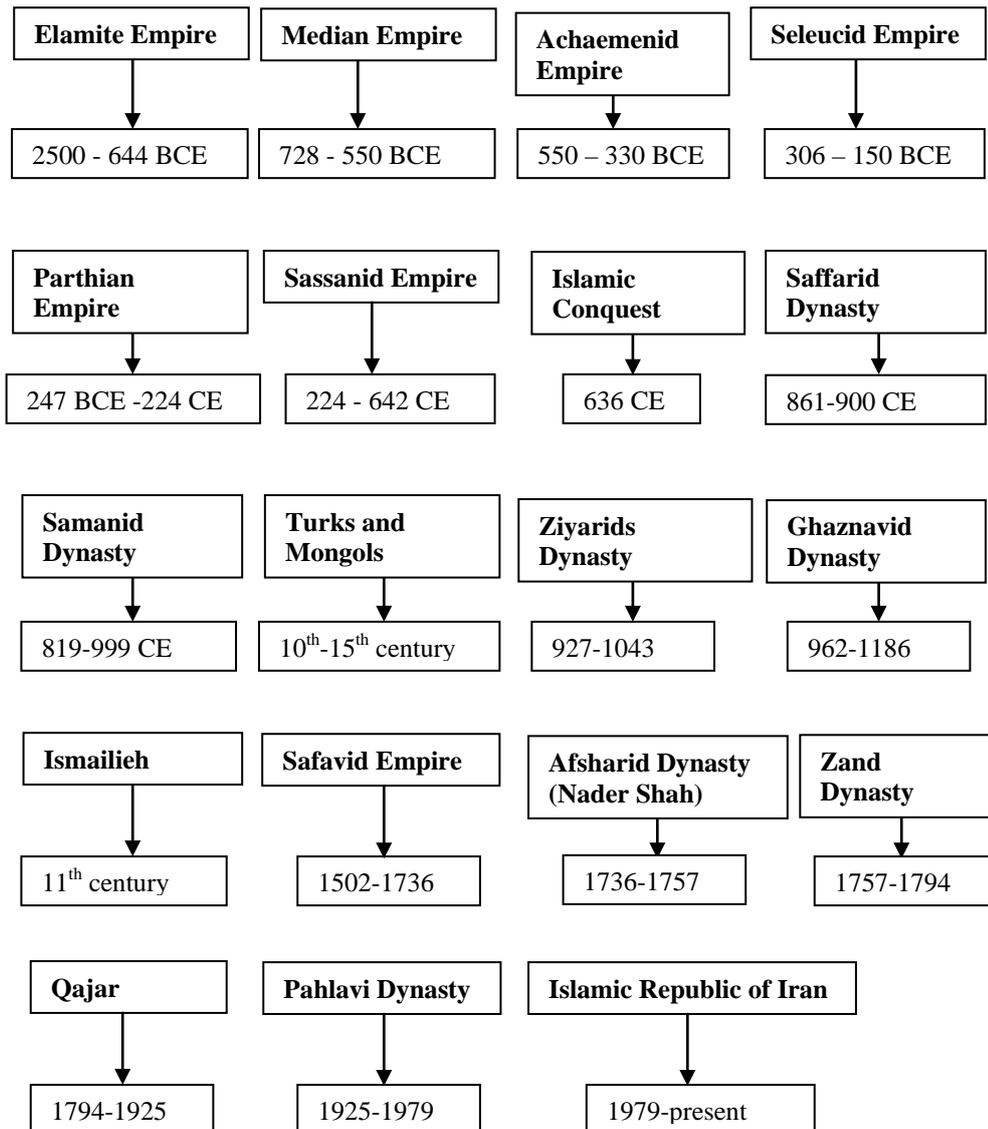
Civil wars and impermanent governments (Afsharid dynasty and Zand dynasty)

Qajar dynasty

Pahlavi

Islamic Revolution

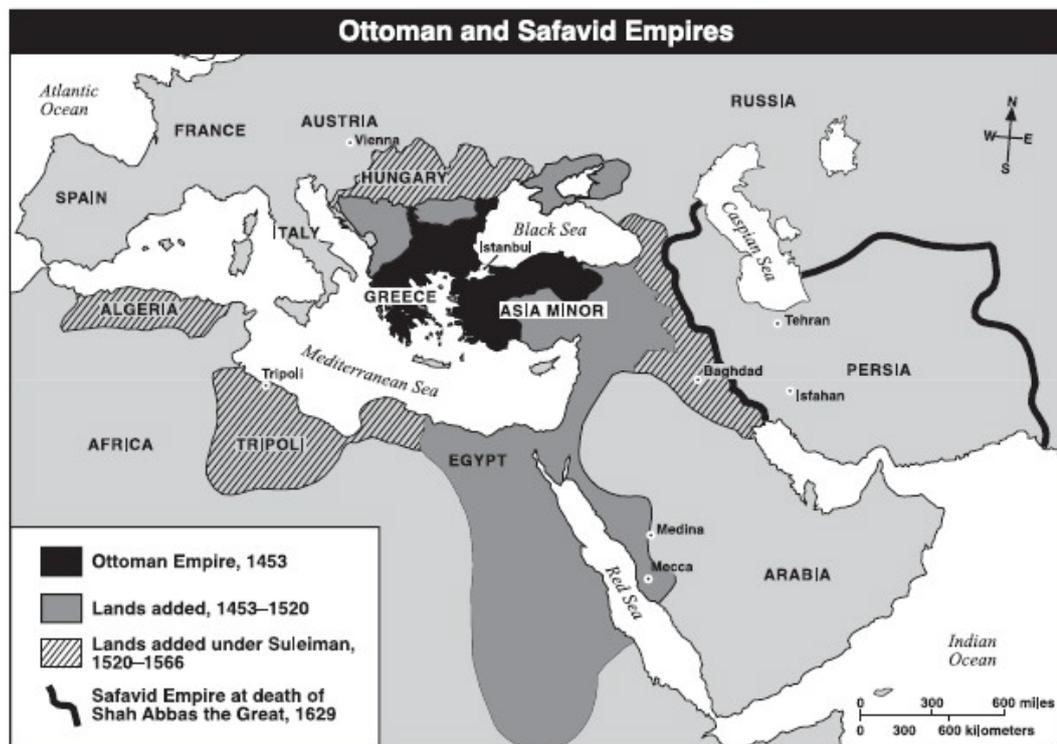
Iran history timeline



(Amend, [On-line]. Available: http://www.iranchamber.com/history/historic_periods.php)



Figure 123: Map of Iran, Safavid period, [On-line] Available: <http://upload.wikimedia.org>



Source: Elisabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, *World History: Connections to Today*, Prentice Hall (adapted)

Figure 124: Map of Iran, Safavid period, [On-line] Available: <http://web000.greece.k12.ny.us/SocialStudiesResources>

Appendix 3 :

Space, memory and identity in the words of Christopher Alexander

In questing identity in architecture, most probably as an initial step it is better to come back to the definition of space and characteristic of it. In fact, space, its use and its definition has major role in architecture. Architectural characteristics most of times depend on characteristics of space, which makes one special place, different, identifiable, and distinguishable from other similar spaces. One of the key factors in making a space different from the other ones is the events, which are happening in a space. Regarding to this matter, Christopher Alexander states that even “...*a building or town is given its character, essentially, by those events, which keep on happening there...*” (Alexander, C., 1979)

Space at least in our memories, usually has been tied to the events, which happened there. In fact, it is hard to recall a memory without remembering where that memory had happen. Later whenever one comes back to the same space, s/he will recall that memory. All of us had the experience of recalling the good memories and pleasurable times, which we spent with our beloved ones in very ordinary, if not bad, architectural spaces. However, later on, because that memory was bond with that special space, we might have a better feeling when we are again in those spaces. In other words, events are not separable from the spaces, in which they happened. In addition, those people, events and activities, will change these spaces to the places.

On the other hand, memory is one of the important factors in achieving sense of belonging or identity in a place. After a while, the spaces and their physical elements, which are linked to the peoples' memory, will be part of their culture. People will be bonded with them. As Alexander states "*...a culture always defines its pattern of events by referring to the names of the physical elements of space, which are "standard" in that culture...*" Therefore, the experience of being in a space with those 'standard' elements, probably recall the familiar memories and as a result people feel that they belong to the place.

These 'standards' physical elements which perhaps can be called symbolic elements have an important role in achieving cultural identity. On the other hand, most of times these symbolic forms or standard elements guide people how to behave in the built environment. People by knowing and recalling these symbolic forms will act as they did before in the similar spaces. However, it does not mean that it is the physical elements, which control the people. Alexander by giving an example of people's behavior in a sidewalk, clearly states that in fact it is not the physical space, which create the activities and events:

"...In a modern town, the concrete spatial pattern of a sidewalk does not "cause" the kinds of human behavior, which happens there. What happens is much more complex. The people on the sidewalk, being culture-bound, know that the space, which they are part of, is a sidewalk, and, as part of their culture, they have the pattern of a sidewalk in their minds. This pattern in their minds causes them to behave the way that people do behave in sidewalks, not the purely spatial aspect of the concrete and the walls and curbs..."

Later, he emphasizes that in two different cultures, people may see sidewalks differently, that is, they may have different patterns in their minds, and as a result, they will act differently on the sidewalks. For example, Alexander states, in New York, a sidewalk is mainly a place for walking, jostling, moving fast. By comparison, in Jamaica, or India, a sidewalk is a place to sit, to talk, perhaps to play music, even sleep.

Therefore, it is not correct to say that these two sidewalks are the same. Each sidewalk is a unitary system, which includes both the field of geometrical relationships, which define its concrete geometry, and the field of human actions and events, which are associated with it.

Thus according to Alexander, patterns (such as sidewalk pattern) are inseparable part of place. He emphasizes that the patterns which are repeating over and over again, everywhere in a definite culture are actually alive patterns in that culture. Use of these broadly respected patterns then might be helpful for giving sense of place as he states:

“...The patterns, which repeat themselves, come simply from the fact that all the people have a common language, and that each one of them uses this common language when he makes a thing...Each person has his own version of this common language, no doubt; but, broadly speaking, each person knows the same patterns, and the same patterns therefore keep repeating and repeating and repeating, always with infinite variety, simply because these are the patterns in the language, which people use...”

These patterns are not necessarily concrete elements, like bricks and doors. They are much deeper and more fluid, Alexander says. More than these concrete elements, the relationship between those elements, which a building or a town is always made, is important and helps to define a pattern. And again as he confirms, of course the patterns vary from place to place, from culture to culture, from age to age;

they are all man made, they all depend on culture. Still, in every age and every place the structure of our world is given to it, essentially, by some collection of patterns, which keeps on repeating over and over and over again.

In spite of the importance of patterns and/or those physical standards or symbols, it seems use of them might not be enough for giving the sense of belonging to a place. In other words, repeating the same forms will not guarantee achieving the similar characteristics. For example, almost all of us had the experience of being in traditional mosques, and at the same time, we have been in modern mosques too. Most of modern mosques although have been made by use of traditional symbols of dome, minaret, mihrab, etc, they fail in giving the same sense of place as traditional ones did. Therefore, this question will raise that if memories are linked to the physical elements of space why use of them will not bring back the same feelings. Alexander tries to reply this question by claiming that “...*beyond its elements, each building is defined by certain patterns of relationships among the elements, which these relationships are not separate from elements themselves...*”

He says to design a porch for example, for the pattern of events “watching the world go by” to happen, it is necessary to have these relationships between physical elements:

“...it is essential that the porch should be a little raised above the level of the street, it is essential that the porch be deep enough, to let a group of people sit there comfortably; and it is essential, of course, that the front of the porch be open, pierced with openings, and that the roof is therefore supported on columns...”

Thus, by just making a porch or any other kind of space with its standard elements, we may not achieve sense of that place. In fact, it is this bundle of

relationships, which is essential, because these are the ones, which are directly fitting with the pattern of events.

Therefore, sense of belonging to a place is integrated to the memories. In addition, physical elements and the relationship between them are important in terms of awakening the same feelings and recalling the memories.