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ABSTRACT: Symbolism as a means of conveying words and pictures has approximated many works of Persian architecture in the form and meaning. Thus it seems so important to study the iconic and symbolic elements of Persian architecture due to the status of signs and symbols and their application in architecture. In this paper, we seek to find and review the roles of symbols in Persian architecture. Also we attempt to take advantage of the cultural and physical signs and symbols in Persian architecture which have caused the formation of identity and place value of our architectural spaces and have recorded it as the eternal symbol in our history.

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INTRODUCTION

Human has always attempted to create concepts to release him from the mundane world to seek for a supernatural support. Hence he has always sublimated his handwork to make an eternal memoir. Human could just create instead of “symbolizing”, but he was seeking for immortality so he perpetuated himself inside God who would never die. Therefore human started to symbolize. Symbols refer to a higher level and represent an eminent truth.

Thinking on meaning and conscience for appearance is a process which has been always discussed in all societies. Conscience and appearance are two inseparable concepts; there is a deep meaning and conscience beyond each appearance. This implicit meaning can inspire the different phases of receiving. It can be considered as a skeletal concept to leave the material or it can be considered as the visualization of truth. The material skeleton is a phase of the visualization of truth which does not refer the concept.

But it refers to a truth which a phase of expression. In the modern era, by ignoring the historical symbolization there was no encoding in life and language, but it came in the post modern era in a superficial manner. In the contemporary era, there is nothing left from symbol except an encyclopedia to define it.

In the contemporary era and particularly in the post modern era, it has only been attempted to label some stereotypical elements by constructing symbolic places. This issue can be seen in important and public urban structures. Although some symbolic structures have been constructed by the use of technology, but our main discussion is on avoiding some stereotypical elements, we want to know, what is

symbolization in architecture? And what kinds of feature make a structure to be as the sign and symbol for a city?

Research objectives

The purpose of this research is to determine the concept of sign and symbol and its way of affecting the design on public urban places. Through identifying this concept and the noble sign and symbols of Persian architecture, its influence on the design of the contemporary public buildings in Iran can be determined.

Research background

Symbolization is one of the oldest ways of expressing concepts. So that human express himself in the form of symbol and tries to communicate with others via symbolic signals (animals, humans, plants, combinational). In visual arts, symbol is defined as the visual paraphrasing of an abstract subject by changing its dynamic characteristics to specific qualities of shape, color, motion and so on.

There have been many discussions on signs and symbols and also many structures have been constructed as the urban signs and symbols. For example Jocernt Utzon was the Danish architect of Opera House of Sydney and Mr. Amanat was the architect of Azadi tower in Tehran. In terms of theoretical issues we can refer to the views of Muslim scholars on the Schwann, Nasr and Burckhardt.

Methodology and data collection

This research is basic and applied and is based on library studies. This research attempts to investigate the theoretical issues and the importance of symbols in expressing meanings, creating the

identity sense and the fixation in public urban structures. Hence after defining these concepts, the various views on signs and symbols in Persian architecture will be identified. Then the role and the importance of these elements and signs will be examined in the design of the contemporary public buildings in Iran.

Theoretical framework

An introduction to the concepts of “sign” and “symbol”

What is sign? Pierce says that the contemplation can be done only in the shade of sign. Signs can be verbal, non-verbal, figurative, or phonetic but these are not meaningful by themselves and we can add meaning to them. [10]

According to Pierce: sign in language, word and other communicative systems are something that implicit something else.

The triple categorization of Pierce is from the various signs and symbols. Symbols have implicit meanings besides their explicit meanings.

In other words, a word becomes symbolic when it refers to something more than its explicit meaning. So symbol has a wider unconscious aspect.

Looking for something which is hidden under the explicit concepts, may lead to a prolific insight. Our understanding of identity can be proved through signs. We have derived our concepts from a prefabricated list of signs and symbols. [10]

When we cross a street and see a traffic light, we know that the red light means “stop”. A musician, who opens his notebook, sees special signs and he knows their meanings.

The red light and musical notes are signs which give certain information. But when a poet says: my beloved is such a red rose, while we know the meanings of all the words but we know that this sentence has an implicit meaning. The one-to-one relation of these independent words and their context is not sign, but it is symbol. Recognizing these two concepts is so important in understanding the art. Sign has a true quality. Symbol combines these signs with implicit meanings. In other words the concept of symbol is something more than it expresses. Pearl has a beautiful shape and curvature and mathematically it is concurrent, but when Joceran Utzon uses the shape of pearls to make an opera hall on a small island, the result will be something like a sail or gull. It can be considered symbolic since inspires the thoughts and feelings beyond the pearls.



Figure 1. Opera House – Sydney, Australia

Symbol, unlike the sign, has no certain meaning. The meanings inside a symbol are as wide as the various feelings it inspires. In Christianity, Saint Peter is identified by the sign of “key” but its meaning can only be found within the Christianity.

In visual arts, there are many explicit symbols. In the expressionistic portrait of “scream” by Munch, 30 Kandinsky works from the tragedies of First World War are expressed symbolically.



Figure 2. Portrait of Scream

Signs and symbols of Persian architecture Persian garden

Garden has always been considered as a holy place in Iran due to the warm and dry climate of this country. Hence it wants a design based on the holy views. The hidden concepts which have played a role in the design of Persian gardens include the universe and the belief to its division into 4 parts by 4 rivers, the life tree, and its location at the center of the world, the promised heaven and the exit of 4 rivers from Eden.

The constituents of garden are water, wind, soil, sun (fire) which needs the decision made by human to be totally green. Looking at the nature especially the sky, stars and sun inspires the movement and time in human and guide him to a simple numeral discipline.



Figure 3. Persian gardens

Chiasm

Cross or Chiasm with a history of 7000 years was found for the first time as a Swastika in Khuzestan. Hertsfeld called it the sun carrousel. [2]

Chiasm is a general code which includes the existence levels such as the major and minor worlds. Hence theosophy, wisdom and art, know the code language and allegory as the best tool to impart the truth, because there is no extremity in thinking about the code content. This thinking includes the tangible and intangible universe, in this regard in each trivial thing, there is a total whole. [2]

Chiasm and Swastika are the unity factors of letters or words at their center point. The center of Chiasm is the unchanging center which is considered as the place of equilibrium, peace and the peace of paradoxes.



Figure 4. Different patterns and plans of Chiasm

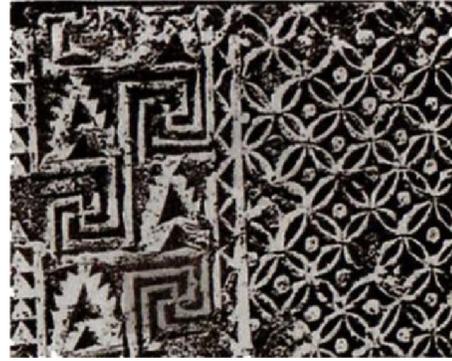


Figure 5. A part the tore on Sam palace located on the Khajeh mountain, Chiasmic patterns

Number 4

Since Chiasm has 4 directions and 4 tops, it is necessary to examine the content and form of the number 4 in terms of encoding. (quadruplet is the basis of confirming every totality, to believe in the totality of something 4 aspects should be considered for it. hence the versatility direction has 4 aspects first we should know that there is something (feeling and understanding), second we should figure out that what the wisdom is and if it is useful for us, third to see if we accept the feeling and finally where is the destination of that thing)[2]. The first verse of Quran, In The Name Of God, is consisted of 4 words. Otad (Nails in the world) are 4 which mean the 4 principles of the universe. So the number 4, before Islam or after it, has been always considered as a holy number and has been the number of integrity and equilibrium. Chiasm is a symbol of sun and a faith code. Lodick Muller believed that Iranians have used Chiasm before they scattered and this is the reason for its public spread in the countries that Indians and Europeans remained. So Chiasm dates back to the early location of Iranians. Chiasm can be seen in all fire temples, NiyaSar fire temple is a good example.

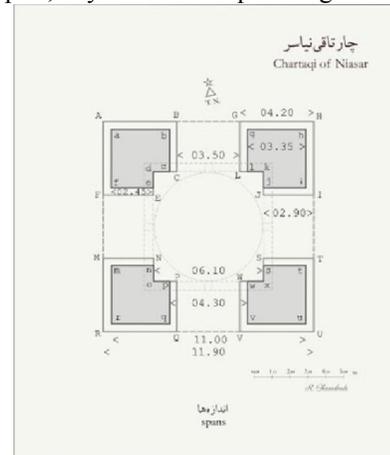


Figure 6. NiyaSar penthouse

Symbolization in contemporary Persian architects Symbolization in the works of Farhad Ahmadi

Farhad Ahmadi in his symbolization approach sees the dynamic culture both in the past and future. He makes a bridge from symbol to communicate with culture. He tries to show the dynamic culture. Communicating with culture can be conceptual or implicit or it can be created via the similarity to the previous examples.

Farhad Ahmadi thinks time is everlasting, he seeks for an everlasting memory in the unconscious, but he pays less attention to the symbolization through the last architectural elements. It seems that he has followed the historicity in cultural complex in Dezfool.

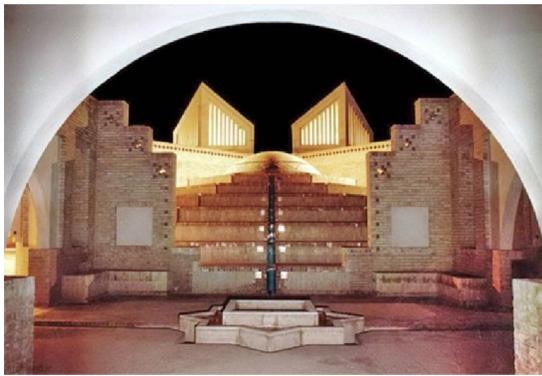


Figure 7. Cultural complex in Dezfool

Symbolization in the works of Hossein Sheikh Zeynaldin

Zeynaldin as one of the most famous architects in Iran uses the justified symbol of sign as it has been created before and its continuity has been the result of how people lived there. He says: using symbol at the present works is at the beginning. He has used many previous forms to create a pleasure feeling of tradition.

He talks on the embassy of Iran in Tokyo: The big arch is a sign of the first country which made a revolution in architecture by inventing the arch in Chaghazanbil. The concrete bar which defines the entry door is a new interpretation of the old sunshades in Iran, or when we enter the hall it seems as if we entered a yard which is an important element of Persian architecture. He was seeking for the functional concepts of Persian architecture to change with modern functions.



Figure 8. Embassy of Iran in Tokyo

Symbolization in the works of Seyyed Hadi Mir Miran

Miran is an architect who has combined the old familiar and the new foreign in his works. Most of his projects try to represent the predetermined concepts. His symbolization climaxes in history: the desired relation can be provided through concepts, symbols, signs, myths, and cultural memories. He tries to deepen the issue to communicate with Persian culture through the use of previous architectural forms.



Figure 9. Sport complex in Rafsanjan

Miran uses the various kinds of symbolization to represent his works. He used a subject similar to the central library of Riga by Goonar BirKertes to design the national library. He refers the work to a mountain: Damavand. The dominant form of both designs is similar to a mountain with similar hillsides. The left hillside is longer and has concurrent fractures and the right hillside is shorter and is like a square at its end. The first one's design is based on a metaphor from the crystal mountain of Lithuanian myths and the second one's design is based on the Damavand Mountain in Iran.

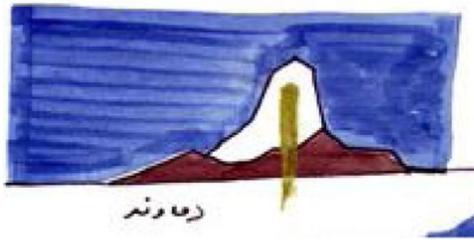


Figure 10. Sketch of Mir Miran derived from the Damvand Mountain

The monument of Azadi tower



Figure 11. The monument of Azadi tower

With no doubt, the Azadi tower is one of the most successful examples of a free interpretation of the past Persian architecture in the form of modern architecture. Hossein Amanat designed the Azadi tower in 1345 when he was 26 years old and finished it in 1350. In this tower the Persian architecture from the ancient era to Islamic era is summarized without the use of repetitive elements. The arches in the spans have been started before the Islam and lead to the arches after the Islam. Also this monument is influenced by the Persian gardens and architecture after the Islam. by comparing this monument with the ancient Iran's museum you will see that the arch is repeated exactly in the building of museum, while the Persian arches in the Azadi tower are used an innovative way.



Figure 12. The roof of Azadi tower inspired by the Islamic Shamse

Conclusion

In this paper these questions are answered: what is symbolization in architecture? What features make a symbolic structure? How can the Persian signs and symbols in the ancient architecture effect on the design of modern places?

At first we explained the reasons of proposing such questions, and then we introduced the meanings of sign, symbol and concept and then the immanent symbols in Persian architecture. We also discussed the views of contemporary scholars on sign and symbol, and examined the symbolic works of modern architects. Finally we should say that, we tried to achieve a design which is not only the signs and symbols of something, but we believe that the symbols in the past have rooted in beliefs, traditions and culture and truths. Skeleton symbols could be a good response for the used functions because each sign and symbol is used functionally in relation with normal features.

So we believe that using the past symbols is not enough for the symbolization, but we must know that these symbols are complete and eternal.

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