

## The Welcoming Roles of Iranian Traditional Buildings Entrances

Ahad Nejad Ebrahimi<sup>1</sup>, Mohammad Taghi Pirbabaei<sup>2</sup>, Fahimeh Shahiri Mehrabad<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant professor, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Master Student in Islamic Architecture, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran

*Received: September 16, 2014*

*Accepted: February 26, 2015*

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### ABSTRACT

Salutation and Greeting at the beginning of visiting has a significant role in Iranian culture. After the advent of Islam which was emphasizing respect to guests in Quran verses and Hadith, equality and fraternity notions were added to the culture which leads to changes in Islamic urban framework. Despite the simplicity of walls and the similarity among houses which show equality between the rich and the poor, the connection point of houses to public passages, was a place for owner greetings and expressing fraternity to the pedestrians and guests who intended to enter the house. In this study, 21 traditional houses in traditional context and 58 contemporary dwellings (apartments and houses with yards) were investigated based on explanatory descriptive method in 3 cities of Iran. Furthermore, hidden religious concepts in greeting (invitation, welcoming, permission and acceptance) were evaluated and their manifestation in traditional Iranian framework (Safavid and Qajar period) in cultural domestic setting was also studied. Finally, continuation or absence of these concepts at the moment of entering the privacy of present houses will be discussed.

**KEY WORDS:** Entrance, Invitation, Welcoming, Entering the house, Salam

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Formation patterns and urban evolution are formed based on constructors' believes as well as users of the urban area. In an Islamic city the concepts such as equality and fraternity, protecting privacy, peace and security have been effective in joining and connecting urban divisions and sections. In this architecture the way of connection between believes and paradigms lead to space identity formation. Passing the passages and alleys as the vital paths of the city, the pedestrian sees nothing except covered passageways, mud walls, colored and decorated entrances. [1]Believes that religion has offered a specific image of the universe and constructors attempted to represent this image in their buildings. Due to creation of pause spaces, entrances as the connection point of different urban spaces (residential, devoutness, service and etc...), urban passages and public passageways are appropriate places for stating ideas and specific concepts. Architecture is the expression of discipline and value. It is the place of tranquility, serenity and inspiration from divine realm. It is the place of silence and worship so entering this place must show it. [2]

Muslim architect made use of traditional art to make the meaning objective. Traditional art is based on sacred actions which are means of transferring wisdom to a sacred nature.[3]The origin of traditional art is not merely humanistic. This kind of art is full of mysteries which explain the meaning with the help of its inherent secrets. This meaning sends messages in the form of art and represents itself as mysterious as it can. [4]Greeting and welcoming In Iranian decorum are among the first and the most important things at the moment of entering a place. The duty and the right of the host and the guest are highly emphasized in Islam. Security, peace, tolerance and acceptance are implied in these concepts. Hitherto there have been so many studies about "Salam"<sup>i</sup> terminology and the representation of this concept in Islamic architecture. Noticing the environmental psychology regarding the guests satisfaction at the moment of entering the house is highly seen in most of eastern cultures which are closer to human being nature. [5]

In this study the representation of the concepts in "Salam" at the entrance of traditional houses is investigated. The traditional entrances of this study are selected among the architecture of Safavid and Qajar ages \_the last periods of constructing traditional entrances. 76 houses with yards and 56 apartments were selected in Mashhad, Kerman and Tabriz in order to evaluate the characteristics of contemporary houses entrances. The aim of this study is to analyze the reaction of religious believers and the way these concepts are represented in entrance framework, it also assesses the emotional experience of the person who enters the building from the moment of entrance to arrival at the interior space. During the study traditional entrance frameworks of Iranian houses are analyzed regarding the

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\*Corresponding Author: Ahad Nejad Ebrahimi, Assistant professor, Architecture and Urbanism Faculty, Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran. Email: ebrahimiahad@gmail.com

greeting and welcoming concepts and finally the presence of these characteristics in contemporary dwellings will be discussed.

## 2. Entrance

“Door “is a pathway to pass from one place to another. It is a transmission. We can express it either as a mechanical concept or a need to change the awareness. While the entrance accepts the body, this mysterious geometry also provides the space for mind and wisdom. [4]Entrance is a place where the public connection with the family privacy takes place. Therefore this space has to prepare the person so that he enters the building. What happens is being separated from “moving” and “transit”, then “pause” at the entrance, and entering the “twilight”, “silence” and “peace” of the porch by the guest? This kind of silence and tranquility at the time of looking forward to hearing host voice to be welcomed and greeted, invites us to think and relax for some minutes. Based on the entrance function, the plan and its complexity, height and proportion, decoration and coating vary in different buildings. In spite of sharing most of the entrance characteristics, buildings seem different regarding the use of them. Based on the identity and function of entrances, they are used differently in dwellings. Most of the entrances are in the form of indented and salient. These indentions are with Peerneshins<sup>ii</sup>. The size of the platforms is different according to the entrance space, the building function and the passageway. This part is somehow precedes the main framework in public and public utility buildings in order to emphasize and signify its importance. At its two sides, there are two semi columns connected to the wall. Minarets are replaced instead of these columns in some mosques. The concept of permission is less important in public, religious and service places. The more the publicity of a place, the more the freedom of entering. Entering these places is accompanied with necessity, so the entrance manners in these places are different from those of others. The concepts of guest and hospitality are of significant importance in houses. Since invitation, permission, accepting and greeting are crucial concepts at the time of entering a private place. Different parts are formed in the entrance path in order to protect the privacy and respect hierarchies. Porches and corridors as a filter limit the sight and control the entry. Asking permission out of the door, waiting at the porch and greeting the host, all are taking place while the guest is walking along the corridor. In the following the characteristics of entrances will be analyzed.

### 2.1 entrance elements

#### 2.1.1 Sardar<sup>iii</sup>

Doorway as the secret of threshold is the most appropriate place in intuitive geometry. In order to affect the human understanding and make him focuses on magnificent values entrances. [4]

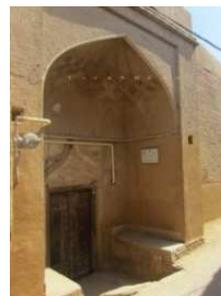


Fig.1.Taaaj houses entrance, Esfahan    Fig.2.Emam jome houses entrance, Kerman    Fig.3.Toraab houses entrance, Yazd

The most notable parts of the passages are houses entrances. It is an opening which transforms the passing into entering. Transom as the most external part of the house is the first element which welcomes the guest. The size of the transom and the amount of decoration are influenced by the building importance and the financial status of the owner. The elements of transom are platforms, the door and its frame, engravings, semi domes at the top of the door and decoration of the entrance door. In the past there were two “Darkoob”<sup>iv</sup> on the entrance door. One of them was a metal ring and the other was the same as a metal hammer. The former was used by women and the latter by men. [6]The engraving texts Darkoob. The height of transom, annexed elements of the transom such as semi columns and minarets are the elements which make difference between houses and public places. There are tile works of Quran verses around the door in the mosques and schools. The other designs of the tile works are as Eslimi end geometrical motifs. A large area of the entrances in mosques devoted to engravings. Entrance transoms of Hammams<sup>v</sup> are decorated with tile. These entrances are along with stairs downward. Cisterns are also with stairs at the entrance and are decorated by geometrical designs. [7] Caravansaries and inns entrances are recognized with geometrical and

eslimi design. the only tile work decoration of home entrances are a little engraving on which some verses or sacred words or verses such as “Besmellah”, “Va en yakaad”, ”Enna fatahna”, “Mashaa’allah”, ect, are inscribed. The semi dome was brick made covered by Tore design. “Muslims minds not only observe the quantities but also the reflection of rational ideas in geometrical designs and forms.”[8]There is a small engraving on which the name of the architect or the founder is inscribed in both public buildings and houses. These engravings contain the date of the construction and deed of endowment in more important places.

### 2.1.2 Hashti<sup>vi</sup>

Following the entrance is the porch. It is the pause space before entering the house privacy. Islamic architect builds the porch floor with one step downward and elevates the ceiling with some holes to pass the light. Tranquility is taking place and moving is started. Walking in the alleys and arriving at the porches, we must stop to contemplate and select the way. [1]Temperature differences between the porch and outside is very promising. Entering this space makes you feel accepted by the guest. While waiting for the host, the guest may observe the brick-made ceiling without any coating and enjoy the floor designs. Generally the porch has some platforms for sitting or putting a water jar or a torch on it. The access to steps, toilet, stable and guest room was from here. Side corridors were covered so the guest follows the host respectfully.



Fig.4. Toraab houses Hashti, Yazd



Fig.5. Abbasian houses Hashti, Kashaan

### 2.1.3. Karyaas<sup>vii</sup>

Corridor connects the porch to the yard. The porch contains the main entrance, access to the roof, and the corridor. This corridor can be straight, L\_ form or helical. The main aim of the corridor is to protect the inside being observed directly from outside. If the straight form is chosen for the corridor, it reaches to a part of the yard in which the family members do not do any activities. [6] “If someone enters the other’s home, he should feel familiarity and makes the host aware of his sociability, and then he enters and salutes, by this he secures the guest”. [9]Making the host aware of his presence, the guest gives time to him to be ready and greets him.

## 3. Entrance characteristics

Entering a new place is accompanied by “Salam”. What happens in the entrance framework is invitation to home, stopping and getting in, separating the passerby from the pass way and welcoming him home.

### 3.1 Invitation

Having open arms and good behavior toward guests are among the good characteristics of Iranian Muslims. In Islamic Iranian culture hospitality and venerating guests are of high value. Prophet Mohammed states that: the guest brings the food and removes the sins. The guest is the guide of the heaven if guests don’t enter a house, no angel will enter it. [10]Indention in entrances plan shows the invitation.

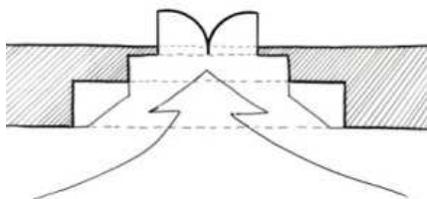


Fig.6. Invitation in entrance plan



Fig.7. The Peerneshin

### 3.2 Welcoming

#### 3.2.1 Greeting the passerby

Transom offer a platform to the passerby on behalf of its owner .a place for pausing and resting at the entrance.

### 3.2.2 Greeting the person who enters a place

Passing the door and getting in, entering into the porch and feeling the coolness, is a different experience which can be obtained by presence and movement in this space. The porch as a mediating space is a privacy for the guest to be ready to enter the home.

### 3.3 humanize the entrance

The size of the transom is according to the public pass way and urban spaces, however, the size of the entrances are proportional to human body. Decreasing forms of the entrance frameworks and offering a friendly and familiar space emphasize the sense of being accepted by the host.

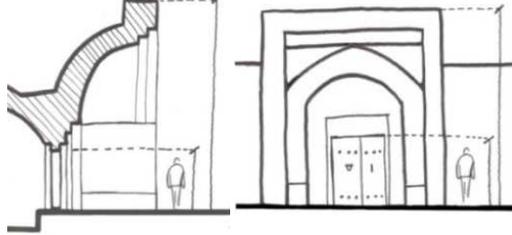


Fig.8.9. Step by step transmission from collective scale to individual scale

### 3.3 Security

The first stage of entering into the house is to settle in “entrance privacy” of the owner. This space with a ceiling belongs to the owner and it has semi private atmosphere.” Permission and consent play an important role in social relations .therefore; they are stated in different religious jurisprudence and also in civil law. One of the differences between permission and consent is that in the former it means allowance and removing the barriers but in the latter it means stating satisfaction. [11]

### 4.3. Tranquility and joy

A simple and even passage with brick made and mud walls and indentations make a different sense. This sense is accompanied by colors diversity on entrances frameworks. Each color has a variety of impressions. [12]

Colors make people sad, excited, encouraged or attentive. Colors influence people in different ways. This effect is related to social and psychological reactions and behaviors. Colors state different kinds of symbolic and colonial information about common status of races. The dominant colors of entrances in traditional Iranian houses are white (gypsum coating and plaster work of walls and semi dome),sky blue and blue (brickwork with sky blue tiles, tile works of seven colors with sky blue background) .blue is an introverted color that is created by God to ease the pain and sorrows in this world. It attracts the eyesight and strengthens the vision. Therefore the blue sky above us penetrates our ideas. [13] This color increases the vital activities of cells and makes people relaxed. Looking at water and sky is emphasized in Islam. [14]In most cultures white is the color of innocence and pureness. This color makes more spaces. Wearing in white is highly emphasized in Islam. Prophet Mohammed states; wear white clothes since it is the best and the purest color and wrap the dead people in a white winding-sheet. Using white at the background of entrances as coating or decorating some parts of the facade, implies invitation and pureness in architecture.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Human beings create what they think about. A part of religious and social believes of the people always are expressed by architecture. These characteristics are related to their religious roots. Therefore discovering, protecting and encouraging them are of high importance. It seems that lifestyles modification, scarcity of the lands for construction, the influence of other cultures on Iranian lives lead to transformation of public passages and omission of some traditional elements. Using transom in contemporary residential architecture with uncommon forms, contrasting and deep colors is a way of showing off not invitation. Living in a hurry, using the present technology, electronic intercoms and cameras, transforming the traditions, economic issues and the influence of other cultures all lead to weaken the concept of “pause” in the movement between spaces.

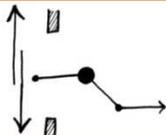
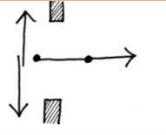
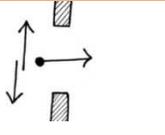
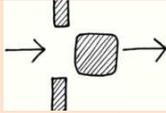
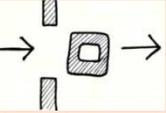
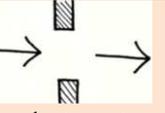
	Traditional houses entrances	Houses entrances with yard	Apartment entrance
<b>invitation</b>	Indentation in plan - The height of transom - Decoration -	Make the door distinctive: color and material diversity Avoid invitation: parallel height the same as the wall	Make the door distinctive: color and material diversity In complexes: making spaces to be seen from outside
<b>welcoming</b>	Platforms for sitting and resting Semi dome at the transom Shadow Transom engraving Pay attention to passerby	The engraving at the top of the door Lack of paying attention to passerby and pedestrian : without welcoming	The engraving at the top of the door Lack of paying attention to passerby: without welcoming
<b>Peace and joy</b>	Use color diversity Use different material Use different height and forms	Imply sense of passing against making peace	Make use of colors to show off Use deep colors instead of light and relaxing ones
<b>Inspire pause</b>			
<b>Protecting the privacy</b>	 Indirect view and entrance Make use of porch and corridor	 Direct view and entrance (toward the yard or interior space)	 Direct view and entrance toward the interior space of the flat

Table 1: the characteristics of contemporary and traditional entrances

Regarding Islam and the hidden Metaphor that is exist in its Sentences; it seems necessary to strengthen these concepts in contemporary and fast lives of present time. Conducting further research about the characteristics and needs of contemporary entrances according to tradition and present society is suggested.

#### Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all participants. Thanks to Babak Shahpasandzade for his ideas that helped us with the forming of the main concept. Especially thanks to Sepideh Marvi for her support.

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<sup>i</sup>It is an Islamic word which contains concepts such as salutation, welcoming, peace, security, friendship. They are expressed at the first of greeting

<sup>ii</sup> A Kind of platform at two sides of the Iranian traditional houses doors, so that people can sit there.

<sup>iii</sup>Portal in Iranian traditional house

<sup>iv</sup>A part of Iranian traditional doors that used instead of doorbell.

<sup>v</sup> The Iranian traditional bathrooms.

<sup>vi</sup> A porch behind Iranian traditional houses portals; a place for sitting, waiting and choosing the path

<sup>vii</sup>Indirect corridor between Hashti and court in Iranian Traditional houses.