

Abstract

The key focus of this thesis is to explore and explain the 14th-15th century houses of the Yazd-Ardakan plain and its evolution. Due to the prosperity of the region in this particular period and the presence of Muzaffarid family in Maibud, we used the term Muzaffarid houses. However, this typological tectonic is not limited to the region and can be seen in the wider late medieval Islamic context.

The structure of thesis is divided in three main parts, including six chapter; firstly, the theoretical and conceptual background subdividing into two chapters; secondly, the case studies with three more chapters; and thirdly, synthesis which includes the final chapter.

The first chapter provide a wider methodological background in reading and interpretation of the domestic architecture. Different schools of morphology and typology and their links to the analysis of vernacular architecture are explained. This is believed to be a useful methodological platform for the current study.

Chapter two traces the available knowledge, literature and archaeological evidences on the traditional Persian houses. This part begins chronologically with the archaeological findings of ancient dwellings and continues to the architectural survey of more recent standing houses. It is summarised that although we know evidence and even detail of the ancient monumental architecture, there hardly exists a clear idea of what a pre-17th century house might look like.

The third chapter, however, aim at extending our knowledge of socio-economic and political condition of the region in the Muzaffarid era. This has been defined as a dynamic period for the region. The social and cultural dimension of such a political climax and their interaction with the mode and model of living is discussed.

Chapter four is where six examples of the Muzaffarid houses of the region are catalogued and introduced. Combining with maps, drawing and illustrations, their principle typology characteristics are framed.

The issue of dating is the focus of the fifth chapter. A comparison study of houses and their ornaments coincide with the contemporaneous monumental buildings helped to suggest a timeline for such typology. With a slight variation, such house typology is believe to be common in the region for almost three centuries, from 13th to 16th century.

The final chapter begins with a synthesis of the Muzaffarid type of housing. Then, in an analytical attempt the origin of the Muzaffarid houses, based on a *char-sofeh*

primary cell is theorised and its future continuity and discontinuity is scrutinised. Architecturally, this historical evolution is defined both holistically and element by element.

In conclusion, the Muzzafarid house and its historical evolution is defined as a design heritage. It is not a mere architectural typology, but materialises a sustainable way of living throughout history until modern time. The durability and permanency of its elements with a particular focus on *ivan* is defined as a key theme in the development of Persian architecture and civilisation. Lastly, the significance of such study and its contribution in conservation and management of built heritage is stressed.

Keywords: Muzaffarid houses, Typology, Evolution, Ivan.