

Architectural Aesthetics and Cultural Identity: Dialogue and Integration of Place, Tradition and Modernity

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Abstract: This research analyzes the complex relationship that exists between cultural identity and architectural aesthetics, suggesting that architecture is a holistic symbol of human culture. As a fundamental component of human existence, architecture thoroughly captures the artistic details that cannot be separated from a society's structural, historical, political, economic, and social features. In this paper, we highlight the fact that people in all communities attempt to construct architectural structures that reflect their norms and values by using material elements as a medium for expression. The impact of changing cultural and social attitudes on architectural development is a critical factor in driving transformation in communities. Culture plays a crucial role in determining architectural identity, as architectural forms become concrete representations of cultural norms and societal values. This study examines various historical buildings in Iran from different eras as representative instances. The study emphasizes the close relationship between community identity and culture, emphasizing that architecture, as a social phenomenon, both originates from and continues to reflect cultural influences.

Keywords: Architectural Aesthetics, Cultural Identity, Iranian

1. INTRODUCTION

Architecture is an adequate representation of cultural identity, combining the concrete and intangible elements that form a civilization. Examining the relationship between architectural aesthetics and cultural identity explores the complex interactions that exist between history, values, and community design (Alraouf, 2021; Flores, 2020; Li et al., 2019; Ravankhah et al., 2019). A society's architectural traditions, social conventions, and historical narratives are all fundamentally woven into the fabric of that society, thereby expressing its cultural identity (Esteban-Guitart et al., 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019). An architect takes on the role of a storyteller, conveying a culture's character via architecture. A structure's aesthetics express the goals and ideals of the community it represents in addition to its usefulness (Abusaada & Elshater, 2021). This multidisciplinary explores in which architectural forms generate an awareness of identity, serving as a visible representation of cultural continuity or change (Belabas et al., 2020). Explore how design decisions

reflect cultural narratives and pull back the layers of a community's identity via the prism of architectural aesthetics (Bickle, 2020; Shirvani Dastgerdi et al., 2020). This research attempts to investigate the function of culture in creating architectural aesthetics and cultural identity based on document analysis and library studies, operating under the premise that architecture is a comprehensive representation of human civilization.

2. RELATED WORKS

Study (Sabie et al., 2020) recognized that there needed to be more in the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) related to the study of immigrants and their cultural identities inside family environments. A paper-based cultural probe was devised by the investigators to facilitate the process of migrants envisioning their ideal houses, thereby stimulating recollections associated with domestic environments. The results of their study revealed a significant desire to recapture historical events, engage in the oral transmission of space-related narratives, and engage in innovative design practices that transcend conventional constraints. Research (Zhang et al., 2020) focused on Suzhou Kunqu Opera and used a questionnaire to gather data from both local people and tourists. A structural equation model was constructed to examine the interrelationships among different components and their impacts. The study's findings indicated that cultural identification exerted a favorable influence on consumption intentions within the context of heritage tourism activities. The result supports the notion that cultural identity serves as a potent catalyst for stimulating tourists' inclination to engage in consumption. Article (Lami & Mecca, 2020) presented a systematic structure for decision support in the analysis, graphical representation, and assessment of the societal viability of construction activities. The approach utilized a combination of three methodologies, namely the "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)" analysis, to gain a structured comprehension of the project and identify optimal design strategies. Paper (Taher Tolou Del et al., 2020) employed a qualitative approach to examine the correlation between historic buildings and preservation, while a quantitative approach was utilized to evaluate the association between semantic values and conservation. Based on the findings of the analysis, we can infer that the examination and analysis of architectural heritage preservation is an appropriate field of study. Author (Ribera et al., 2020) presented a novel and cost-effective assessment framework for determining the "Highest and

Best Use (HBU)" of historical structures. The approach considers the social, cultural, and economic significance of these buildings while also emphasizing maintaining their authenticity and natural appearance. The early selection of potential functional destinations, which are technically viable, urbanistically permissible, economically advantageous, and historically valid, was facilitated by the execution of the Analytic Hierarchy Process. Research (Udeaja et al., 2020) investigated the contextual limitations faced in Surat and the corresponding efforts performed to incorporate heritage as a fundamental component of urban development and administration. The study's findings underscore the importance for individuals in the field of the estate to recognize Surat's complex and varied cultural history as an essential resource that was safeguarded through community involvement.

Paper of (Fadli & AlSaeed, 2019) examined the present condition of Qatari architectural heritage, urban conservation strategies, and modern digitization and archiving principles to establish an environmentally friendly and accessible archiving platform known as the "Qatar Historic Buildings Information Model (Q-HBIM)" platform. The study's results provided a clear understanding of the concepts underlying the utilization of "Building Information Model (BIM)" technology and procedures in the development of innovative tools for transforming architectural heritage. Article (Vuong et al., 2019) witnessed a growing trend towards multidisciplinary and diverse methodologies to understand the processes of cultural exchange and adoption. Subsequently, the study proceeded to analyze the results mentioned above and proposed incorporation of Bayesian statistics into the realm of social sciences as a whole, with a specific focus on its use in the examination of cultural advancement and architectural alteration. Author (Vardopoulos, 2019) attempted to clarify several justifications for the significance of adaptive reuse within the broader context of sustainability considerations. The obtained results have substantial practical importance. Study (Tawayha et al., 2019) examined the distinctions between "vernacular and contemporary residential" structures in the urban context of Nablus, focusing on the building scale. The research findings facilitated an understanding of the extent to which constructed residential buildings in the city departed from sustainability principles while highlighting the alignment of the ancient town with such regulations. Additionally, the study provided the potential for architects and stakeholders to acquire insights from the strategies employed in vernacular architecture.

3. COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS AND CULTURE

Architecture aesthetics is the artful synthesis of form and function that transforms the built environment into a visual symphony that stimulates senses and emotions. It extends beyond structural design to include the careful selection of materials, shapes, and spatial layouts to create settings that evoke awe and contemplation. Aesthetic considerations in architecture are critical, influencing perceptions of the world and making the character of the surroundings. Architecture aesthetics expresses cultural beliefs, technological progress, and individual creativity, from the eternal elegance of classical styles to the avant-garde expressions of contemporary architecture. Architects develop structures that serve practical needs but also improve the human experience by encouraging communication between the built environment and the observer.

The group's shared beliefs, values, rituals, and traditions create its culture, which is the basis of a people's identity. Culture is a dynamic textile. It includes how people express themselves, the rituals that connect, and the shared myths that define people's perspectives. Culture is a reflection of the past and a guiding force for the future, providing a sense of belonging and an overview of social interaction. It shapes the way they recognize, communicate, and understand the world, from language and art to culture and rituals. Culture, in its many forms, encourages unity, celebrates diversity, and serves as a reservoir of human creativity. Culture, becoming a living thing, changes, adapts, and impacts every element of our lives, navigating the complex textiles of human existence. The theoretical framework illustrating the correlation between culture and architecture can be characterized through four distinct descriptions (Table 1).

Table 1: Description of Architecture and Culture

Architecture and Culture	Architectural description	Cultural Scope
Perceptual	The mental attitude toward the constructed environment	Psychology
Functional	Due to the interaction of social components	Sociology
Functional	Concerning human life and incorporating practical activities	Anthropology
Conceptual	Artistic creation that contains a mental elevation at the end	Aesthetics

3.1 An overview of Iranian Culture and Architecture Throughout History

During the early period of the "Qajar dynasty," Iran's architectural work exhibited a consistent and progressive development. Nevertheless, the evolution of various shapes and patterns in design has been influenced by a multitude of factors, including advancements in manufacturing techniques, the utilization of novel materials, the evolving expectations of employers, and modifications in design itself. Nonetheless, these changes have followed fundamental principles and features that remain unchanged. The presence of architectural continuity has led to the preservation of cultural continuity throughout several aspects of Iranians' lives. The continued existence of life and the development of architectural structures have led to the establishment of architectural standardization and coordination. During this period, the architectural results had a direct impact on the cultural aspects, and there needed to be more precise differentiation between these two domains. The emergence of the Qajar dynasty caused significant transformations in the various aspects of people and social life. These changes were influenced by external factors, such as international developments, as well as chaos inside the region. Despite the presence of "political, social, and economic issues and limitations," even certain government officers held the belief that the most feasible path for national development was to accept European practices in the realms of society, technology, and culture. The impact of this specific technique on architectural design resulted in the creation of an imitation of aesthetics. The architectural and cultural qualities that held the most significance encompassed specific perspectives, especially in relation to the form and ornamental components. However, the architectural constructions continued according to conventional architectural principles, thereby maintaining cultural continuity through the incorporation of underlying levels within the architecture. During this era, there was a shift towards a modern historical revival that emphasized patriotic sentiments and everyday expressions while deliberately breaking from the traditional Qajar architectural style. This approach aimed to align with the progression of contemporary architecture. The development of culture during this particular era was predicated upon three distinct factors: Initially, there was persistence in the utilization of traditional design and construction approaches for residential units and religious structures, particularly in medium and small urban areas. Secondly, this study examines the manner in which European or Russian neo-classical forms are integrated and composed alongside critical aspects of Iran's architectural work, such as "wishbone arches, Mogharnas, and traditional materials." Finally, it is

essential to take the architectural aspects of the pre-Islamic era as well as their integration with modern practices. Traditional customs continue to impact how architecture is perceived in society. A conventional style that drew inspiration primarily from post-Islamic architectural forms replaced the classic beauty of the ancient era. The early 1950s experienced a change in the architectural landscape from the dominance of contemporary and international aesthetics to the rise and expansion of local architectural styles. Following this change, critical thinking inside the modernist framework evolved. Traditional architecture observed a noticeable difference during this time, moving toward a concept-oriented approach. Using native materials and symbolic shapes was part of this strategy, which demonstrated the architect's strong ties to the native culture. In this historical era, symbiotic relationships were formed between the arts, sciences, and society at large, which led to an integrated role for architecture in people's lives. The architectural movement that developed in the late 1960s, known as the quest for identity, experienced revival due to the Islamic Revolution and the prevailing intellectual climate of the era. This period was characterized by a strong desire for political and economic autonomy, which had significant impacts on various aspects of society, including architecture. The focus on identification preferences revolved around the pursuit of religious identity, with a particular focus on revitalizing the notion of Islamic Architecture and urban development. The following are the factors that may affect the architectural spaces: material, environment, functional, and cultural factors, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Architectural Spaces Affecting Factors

Factors	Description
Material	Material, Construction Technology and Science, And Financial
Environmental	Climate, Natural Surroundings, and Environments Created By Humans
Functional	Biological Instruments, Technological Aspects, and Active Behavioral Patterns
Cultural	Innovation and Creativity, Beauty, Fashion and Taste, Culture and Sustainable Patterns

4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The connection between environment and culture must be recognized before the relationship between architecture and culture can be

understood. The concept of the environment, along with culture, is subject to social construction, whereby it is formed and affected by various factors that impact people's confidence. The significance of occurring when facilitating cultural transformation is significant, as the standards of conduct observed inside an area are indicative of the underlying cultural values. The understanding of the impact of the environment, encompassing both tangible and spatial elements, becomes evident. Architecture is the discipline concerned with the organization and integration of "subjective and objective" surroundings continuously and constantly. The investigation of the relationship between culture and construction, specifically in the field of psychology, highlights the importance of considering the interaction of people and their constructed surroundings. This perspective suggests that culture encompasses in which humans interact with their constructed surroundings and can be classified into two distinct groups, 1) Conventionalized patterns of behaviors, thinking processes, and emotional experiences, 2) Products that emerge as a consequence or extension of the behavioral patterns and thinking processes exhibited by people within a specific sociocultural environment

4.1 A Cultural Identity's Symbol is Architecture

Every civilization that operates under a managed system, along with any accompanying philosophy, possesses distinct objectives and ideals. The primary function of culture is to manifest theoretical ideas by means of concrete manifestations. The process of architecture is essential in facilitating this shift. Architecture has historically served as well as continues to serve as a genuine indicator of a nation's cultural identity. The combination of a nation's ability to produce fine furniture and lusters against its regular construction of inferior structures on a daily basis suggests a disturbing state of affairs within the society, which includes systemic inconsistencies and a shortage of organizational capacity. Culture may have an influence on the development of architectural spaces in two distinct ways: 1) By implementing behavioral laws and regulations, an effective system of organization and spatial hierarchy can be established. 2) The construction of beliefs, archetypes, etc, facilitates the generation of significance inside architectural spaces.

4.2 Reflections of Culture

Numerous factors influence artistic creations and architectural environments, which are integral components of cultural manifestations.

The impact can manifest in varying degrees of perceptibility, ranging from overt to subtle. For instance, the presence of a cross within churches serves as a conspicuous and hierarchical marker, demarcating distinct areas within the overall spatial arrangement. The “Iranian Jameh Mosque and its cultural content” in the initial phase of tourist observation remain concealed. Several factors of culture have varying effects on architecture, with easily identifiable while others provide challenges in their identification. One of the notable impacts of the arts on culture is the elevation of certain numerical and geometric elements to a position of significance. The consideration of numbers is influenced by humans' historical understanding of the world order, which has been primarily understood through the visual representation of numerical sequences. Various forms and numbers were extensively employed in ritual practices, artistic expressions, philosophical schools, and other domains. The utilization of symbols and numbers in multiple activities and creative attempts is dependent upon the numerical and visual characteristics of the movement, as well as the elements and features of the shape or number involved.

4.3 Culture's contribution to the Development of Architectural Identity

The elements that were defined as defining cultures, such as rules and values, were components of the broader cultural fabric in any given group. Culture encompasses various dimensions, one is the material component that refers to physical structures such as buildings and factories. Indeed, these phenomena are recognized as integral components of a society's cultural fabric. The connection between culture and architecture becomes apparent as the underlying values, beliefs, and other cultural elements influence architecture. Buildings can be compared to novels that are coated in dust, inviting the reader to explore and uncover their hidden narratives. This approach enables the identification of the cultural characteristics of people and the cultures in which they have developed.

The creation of various architectural schools is influenced by critical shifts in artistic direction and the presence of creative elements. Nevertheless, the primary objective of this attempt is to keep and advance traditional and historical methodologies, occasionally necessitating the reconstruction of existing frameworks. The influence of culture on architecture is a significant factor that naturally leads to the transformation of successful concepts and theories in architectural design. As a result, the appearance of architecture evolves, giving rise to new and various concepts in the field. This study aims to investigate the correlation between

theoretical concepts and ways of culture, with a specific focus on the relationship between theoretical ideas and architecture. Each society possesses an individual culture that serves as the basis for its architectural foundation, with architecture serving as an appearance of its cultural identity. Indeed, architecture has always served as a genuine indicator of a nation's cultural identity. The formation of spaces can be attributed to the influence of the community's culture.

4.4 Iranian Cultural Foundations and their Impact on Architecture

Cultures exhibit diverse aspects. Despite the apparent variations, there are unquestionable similarities in the expressions of each culture. The clear presence of similarities can be observed among various elements of Japanese culture during the seventeenth century, such as literature, architecture, attire, and customs. The company of shared principles within the culture contributed to the emergence of common characteristics in each cultural manifestation. In Persian literature, the lexicon lacks the inherent capacity to encapsulate extensive and more profound implications.

Consequently, poets and researchers went on to use "metaphors, ambiguities, ironies, and other literary techniques" as a means of communicating their thoughts and intended significations. The words within a poem serve as a means for expressing immaterial thoughts by the application of material nature. Hence, many forms of cultural expression have substantial significance, with architecture serving as a prime example of a medium that embodies fundamental cultural meaning. Iran is characterized by the presence of numerous subcultures, each representing a distinct historical period that encompasses a wide variety of traditions and customs. Despite their unique characteristics, these subcultures share common underlying elements that unite them within a broader collective framework.

Each form is accompanied by underlying material and concepts. From this perspective, humans are regarded as significant stakeholders who utilize external entities as a means of conveying their internal content and manifesting their thoughts and ideas. Those concepts remain unaffected by impermanent evolutions; nonetheless, each civilization, in its own historical and spatial context, adopts novel policies aligned with its purposes and essential viewpoints of the society, aiming to improve and enhance the perspectives.

5. INDICES COMPARISON IN IRAN

5.1 Naqsh-e Jahan Square

The Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, Iran, is a stunning example of Safavid-era architectural outstanding work. Surrounded by iconic buildings such as “the Shah Mosque and Ali Qapu Palace,” the square exudes a lively cultural atmosphere, perfectly capturing the magnificence of Persian architecture (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Naqsh-e Jahan Square (Source: <https://pixabay.com/photos/Naqsh-e-Jahan-Square-Park-Isfahan-6747306/>)

Cultural Indices: A center of culture, Naqsh-e Jahan Square captures the creative and social energy of the Safavid era. In addition to acting as a hub for politics, the area hosted festivals and polo tournaments, among other cultural events. The Shah Mosque and Ali Qapu Palace, two nearby sites, are decorated with elaborate calligraphy and tilework that reflects the era's artistic and cultural glory. **Architectural Indices:** The magnificence of Safavid urban planning is on display in Naqsh-e Jahan Square's architectural indexes. Famous buildings like the Shah Mosque, which has beautiful tilework and dome architecture, encircle the square. Ali Qapu Palace highlights the complex beauty of Safavid architecture with a blend of Timurid and Persian architectural elements. The plaza is the center of the urban pattern, which showcases the beautiful blending of public space and architecture.

5.2 Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili's Shrine

This place in Ardabil, Iran, is an expression of Sufi mysticism and architectural improvement. The structure, containing Sheikh Safi al-din's tomb, is adorned with fine calligraphy and tilework, providing a calm environment that honors the Safavid era's creative and spiritual traditions (Figure 2).

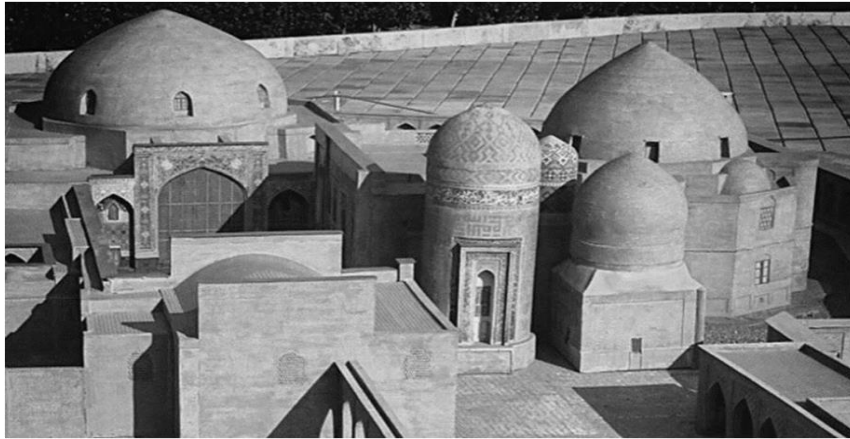


Figure 2: Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ardabili's Shrine (Source: <https://iranparadise.com/sheikh-safi-al-din-shrine/>)

Cultural Indices: It is a hub for spiritual activities and conferences, with traditions in Sufi mysticism. The tomb of the famous Sufi leader Sheikh Safi al-din is located within the complex. Their elaborate calligraphy and tilework, which portray spiritual themes, shed light on the cultural and religious dimensions of Sufi life during the Safavid era. **Architectural Indices:** Architecturally the ensemble is a perfect combination of Persian and Azerbaijani styles. The complex features a tomb, a mosque, a library, and courtyards that were adorned with beautiful tilework, wooden carvings, and Safavid-era architectural features. The architecture of the ensemble represents the spiritual journey and dedication inherent in Sufi rituals, in addition to being functional.

5.3 Golestan Palace

Golestan Palace, a jewel of Qajar-era luxury in Tehran, exhibits a blend of traditional and Western concepts. The palace is a visual feast of architectural magnificence as it reveals the stories of Iran's royal history with treasures like the Marble Throne and the Hall of Mirrors (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Golestan Palace (Source: <https://gopersis.com/golestan-palace/>)

Cultural Indices: The Qajar-era Golestan Palace is a cultural treasure trove that reflects the splendor and lifestyle of the Persian monarchy. The palace experienced significant historical events and functioned as a seat of power. The several halls and rooms are home to an extensive collection of paintings, manuscripts, and remains, which provide insight into Iran's Qajar-era cultural and historical fabric. **Architectural Indices:** Golestan Palace's architecture is a harmonious blend of Russian, European, and Persian elements. European-style chandeliers, outstanding mirror work, and tile work could be exhibited in the Marble Throne and the Hall of Mirrors. The palace architecture's combination of Western architectural elements and traditional Iranian architecture highlights the Qajar emperors' varied tastes and the cross-cultural interaction that occurred during their rule.

5.4 Arg-e Bam

Arg-e Bam, a historic castle in southern Iran, depicts the story of a two-millennium-old saga. Its mud-brick architecture, which survived numerous natural disasters, is a testament to the region's cultural legacy and resiliency, encouraging tourists to explore further the region's rich historical heritage (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Arg-e Bam (Source: <https://irantripedia.com/place/arg-e-bam/>)

Cultural Indices: The Bam region's cultural legacy can be seen in the old citadel of Arg-e Bam. Over the ages, the fortress reflected the cultural and social structures of the area by acting as a hub for trade and residential development. The citadel's reconstruction efforts demonstrate the Bam community's perseverance and commitment to maintaining its cultural identity in the face of natural disasters. **Architectural Indices:** Arg-e Bam's architecture is defined by its use of mud bricks, a classic building method modified for the desert environment. The citadel includes a bazaar, a governor's mansion, and a castle that highlight the creative use of

architecture in the area. The buildings are evidence of the Bam people's creativity and their capacity to build an environment that is both sustainable and culturally significant.

5.5 Vank Cathedral

Vank Cathedral, located in Isfahan's Armenian surroundings, shows the architectural magnificence of Iran's Armenian Apostolic Church. Bridging the creative traditions of Armenia and Iran, Vank Cathedral, a cultural gem from the Safavid era, is adorned with vibrant frescoes and sensitive tilework (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Vank Cathedral (Source: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/holy-savior-cathedral-vank-isfahan-iran-373291831>)

Cultural Indices: Vank Cathedral in Isfahan, Iran, is a cultural synthesis of Armenian and Iranian traditions. The Armenian community in Iran uses the cathedral, which is located in the Armenian area, as a spiritual and cultural hub. The cathedral's vibrant murals and holy artworks depict scenes from the Armenian and Persian Christian traditions, providing an insight into the two groups' shared cultural heritage. **Architectural Indices:** Vank Cathedral's architectural style combines Persian ornamentation with Armenian religious architecture. The cathedral has elaborate frescoes inside that illustrate biblical stories and traditional Armenian Church architecture exterior. The architectural indices the cathedral serve as a symbol of the peaceful coexistence and continuous cultural exchange between the Iranian and Armenian communities in Isfahan.

6. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complex relationship that exists between

architectural aesthetics and cultural identity, emphasizing that architecture is a whole symbol of human culture. When considered from a holistic perspective, architecture captures every aspect of the social, political, historical, and structural society. This research highlights the widespread inclination of civilizations to create magnificent structures that reflect their standards and beliefs, employing material components as an effective means of communication.

The dynamic of social and cultural attitudes appears as a key to significant changes in the evolution of architecture. We highlighted how vital culture is in forming architectural identity and how architectural forms are concrete representations of societal norms and values. Through an examination of Iran's ancient buildings over a range of historical periods, the study offers compelling examples of the close relationship between architecture and cultural change. The dogmatic tradition is the outcome of a continuous and identical examination that has been invalidated in contemporary times. When examining the concept of architectural identity within the context of culture and tradition, it becomes evident that modern architecture, which is determined by relevant-day needs, culture, and practices rather than those of old times, has a distinct identity. This identity has endured and will continue to be present in our society indefinitely.

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