PRIVACY AS A CULTURAL VALUE IN TRADITIONAL IRANIAN HOUSING; Lessons for Modern Iranian High Density Vertical Development (HDVD) Housing

Siyamak Nayyeri Fallah*1,2, Akram Khalili 1,2, Mohammad Tajuddin bin Mohd Rasdi1
1University Technology Malaysia, Skudai, Malaysia
2IA University, Nour, Iran
*siyamknayyeri@yahoo.com

Abstract
The role of value of privacy in shaping Iranian culture is vital. In contrary to modern middle-class Iranian high density vertical development housing, this cultural principle plays a great role in shaping spatial organization of Iranian traditional housing. The aim of this study is to establish a framework to improve spatial organization of modern Iranian high density vertical development (HDVD) housing through lessons learnt from traditional Iranian housing. In this regard, to reach the aim through qualitative approach and case study strategy, this value of the Iranian traditional housing was investigated. The data collection methods to collect data from middle-class traditional and modern high-density vertical development (HDVD) housing, were multiple tactics as direct observation, open-ended expert interview, semi-structured and focus group interviewing, taking photo, and plan layout. As conclude, it was reached that privacy as a principle governing all aspects of life has had deep impacts on spatial organization of traditional Iranian housing. Thus through using the spatial concept of privacy learnt from traditional Iranian housing can formulate recommendations to betterment spatial organization of middle-class modern Iranian HDVD housing.

Keywords: Culture; privacy; Iranian traditional housing; high-rise housing; hierarchy

INTRODUCTION
One of the most important principles which are considerable in Iranian traditional architecture, especially after Islam, is the principle of privacy (Pirnia, 2005). This cultural value is much related and influenced by the physical environment where people live in (Rapoport, 1969). From this point of view, this study will highlight the important principles relating to cultural value of privacy found in traditional Iranian housing and establish a framework for designing better spatial organization for modern Iranian housing. This is because the Iranian traditional housing portrays excellent evidence of how housing spatial organization are shaped by the values of privacy (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000). This paper is a position paper within a larger study attempting to determination of the better relationship between Iranian cultural values and spatial organization of Iranian middle-class high density vertical development (HDVD) housing. In this regard, two cases of study in terms of middle-class Iranian traditional and modern HDVD housing have been selected. To study middle-class traditional housing, the Taj house located in Kashan, Iran as the most common ordinary and excellent conserved original middle-class traditional housing was chosen. Additionally, to find the privacy problems faced by families within middle-class Iranian high density vertical development (HDVD) housing, three blocks of this type of housing located in the new town of Parand, Iran as the symbols of the future trend of Iranian architecture (Kalantari Khalilabad & Eskandari Noudeh, 2008) were selected.

This paper has been divided into five sections. It starts by providing a theoretical framework introducing some related theories and perspectives in terms of culture and its’ values and principles. The next section describes the concepts and foundations of traditional Islamic-Iranian architecture and especially housing to develop a critical concerning of the Iranian principles toward
achieving desire privacy. This section includes three subsections to describe some important physical principles of traditional Iranian housing toward obtaining privacy. The following section discusses the aim, research methodology, and data collection methods and procedure. In addition to, the selected cases for study and related sampling strategies will be clear in this part. The forth section of this article includes the analysis procedure. The last section of this paper is the part of conclusion and recommendations which includes the conclusions of the study and proposes some recommendations to improve spatial organization of middle-class modern HDVD housing through lessons learnt from traditional Iranian housing in terms of the value of privacy.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The house is an institution created for a complex set of purposes. Since a house is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by cultural milieu (Rapoport, 1969). Culture can be broadly defined as the beliefs, value systems, norms, mores, myths, symbols, language, behavior and structural elements of a given group or society (Onibere, Morgan, and Mpoeleng, 2001). Additionally, Rapoport (1969) believes that culture is the total equipment of ideas and institutions and conventionalized activities of a people. In short, culture is multi-layered. Stephan (2004) suggests two layers (visible and invisible), Lee (2004) propose three layers (basic assumptions and values; beliefs, attitudes and conventions; systems and institutions; artifacts, products, rituals and behavior). Based on figure 1, it can be proposed combining basic assumptions and values to form the inner core of culture. It is argued that ‘basic assumptions’ are factors which are deeply held by the society, constituting the invisible core ideas that inform the other layers, whilst ‘values’ involve observable culture that the society claims to hold. Group members are unlikely to share identical sets of ‘beliefs and attitudes’ which make up the second inner layer, which consists of expectations of how people behave in various situations. The second layer influences the third layer, consisting of systems and institutions. These are structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. Culture is associated with social groups, and people are simultaneously members of a number of different groups and categories. The third layer consists ‘rituals and behavior’ (non-material elements), and finally the forth layer is encircled with a split outer layer of culture composed of material items like architecture (building). Cultural products include the visible and easily described elements of culture which have an immediate emotional impact. Designers tend to overlook incorporating the inner core layers of culture and design products that are based mainly on the outer layer (Lee, 2004).

![Figure 1: Layers of culture Adapted from Spencer-Oatey (2000)](image-url)
On the other hand and based on Rapoport (1969), buildings and settlements are the visible expression of the relative importance attached to different aspects of life. It means that, the house expresses the fact that societies share certain generally accepted goals and life values in terms of religious, social, and familial values. In this regard, religion affects the form, plan, spatial arrangements, and orientation of the house (Rapoport, 1969). In determining nature of religion, it can be said that it is not a universal or inevitable characteristic, merely one of the cultural choices possible. Since religion forms an essential part of cultures. It means that, the physical setting provides the possibilities among which choices are made through the traditional ways of the culture (Rapoport, 1969).

All traditional architecture has a cultural base (Norberg-Schulz, 1993; Rapoport, 1990). Cultural values are qualities which are essential for building houses and sustaining them over time. In this regard, Bianca (2000) said that tradition means the chain of revealed truth, wisdom and knowledge, which is transmitted and renewed generation by generation. This linking is various successive layers of temporal existence to the primordial reality which originated them (Ferdowsian, 2002; Khalili et al., 2014). In this regard, one of the most vital values which supported by religious and beliefs is privacy. It means that privacy is the most important feature of cultural values within architecture. Based on figure 1, privacy is derived from the second layer of culture as figure 2.

Privacy is usually an interpersonal happening that deals with interaction among people. The key point in the concept of privacy is the ability to control people or groups in visual or audio interactions. In this regard, there are various theoretical approaches to privacy analysis. Based on Westin (1970), the first type of privacy is loneliness, which means the person takes full advantage of his privacy. He considers closeness and intimacy as the second type of privacy. This type of privacy is more sensible in cases like closeness of family members. From other view of point, Altman and Werner (1985) believe in human’s tendency to set their closeness and distance with others, and consider any imbalance in this relationship as undesirable. Moreover, Ittelson, Proshansky, and Rivlin (1970) conclude that the important and effective factors in privacy facilitate controlling and restraining space - or territory- and determining the condition of the territory. Additionally, based on Rapoport (1980), privacy is the process of setting a boundary between people and it determines how a person interacts with others.
Based on mentioned theories and through conceptualization of the privacy, the surrounded physical environments play an important role in shaping people's life (Little, 1987). Thus it can be said that the residents' life environment is in strong relation with their cultural, personal, and social identity (Dovey, 1985; Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff, 1983). Thus, the role of physical environment to obtain privacy is complicated and vital (Hill, 1969; Jourard, 1966). In addition to, Chermayeff and Alexander (1963) suggest that there must be physical audiovisual boundaries both between family and outside world, and between family members. On the other hand, the role of gender is defined as another aspect for distinguishing and appropriating. The house that was related to women’s territory was entirely distinguished from the men's public space (outside the house). But even inside houses there were gender differences related to functional specialization of internal space (Roberts, 1991).

TRADITIONAL IRANIAN-ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE; CONCEPTS AND FOUNDATION

After the arrival of Islam to Iran, the culture, religious and art of this land mixed with new factors. Beliefs, religious rituals, principles, spirit of thinking, traditions, characteristics, attitude of generations and other characteristics of people are illustrated are merged with the existential nature of Iranian housing whose track is traceable in all of the past architectural works.

The principles governing Iranian traditional housing have deep roots in the culture, religious, and attitude of this country. Privacy, as an Islamic-Iranian principle governing all aspects of life, has formed Iranian traditional housing and has had deep impacts and outcomes on its spatial organization and function. In this regard, with a look at the related verses of the divine Quran, as the strongest source of learning the principles, the features of privacy from Islamic perspective will be understood.

The development of Islam provided mental work and knowledge especially in relation with guidance and direction in life according to religious principles and obligations (Seyfian & Mahmudi, 2007). Qur’an, aside from the basic materials and principles, determines a tool whose parts have to be explained and completed. The recurring order to obey God puts the acts of the prophet immediately after God's word as a source of law (Hakim, 1989). Therefore recognizing the custom, sayings and the deeds of prophets and infallible Imams as a divine source that completes Quran is very important. On the subject of privacy it can be referred to verses 27, 31, and 61 of Noor surah and also verse 23 of Nesa surah and also verse 80 of Nahl surah. In these verses the way of clothing, the private territory of a house and privacy of conversations are objectively referred to. Respecting other’s privacy and not intruding that even with direct look are stressed. In this regard, Quran explains different behaviors according to respecting other people’s privacy and the way of acknowledging one’s arrival to the house members and others. The verses 27, 28, 29 of Noor Surah states some points on how to enter house and how to ask for permission to enter and codes of behavior (Hakim, 1989). The verses 30 and 31 of Noor surah, discuss the matter of intimate people and recognizing them and the importance of not looking and respecting privacy (Nayyeri Fallah et al., 2014, 2015). Recognizing intimate people is important because it is necessary to an appropriate design and observance of the principles and valuable rules.

According to Makarem Shirazi (1982), verses 59 and 60 Noor surah elaborates the ways of entrance and asking for permission to parents’ private space and in verse 61 there are some exceptions for those who can enter the houses of relatives and the like without permission and can even eat without asking, and indeed these verses discuss how to enter other people’s sanctum and its manners. Knowing these rules and principles we can make a suitable design. The fact that Islam mentions that immature children should ask for permission before entering parents’ sanctum, shows the allocation of separate spaces for children and parents even in immature ages and verses 23 and 24 Asra Surah, discusses intimate people and behavioral and verbal manners for people living together in the same house, and it is actually presentation of approaches to consider while designing internal spaces of a house.
Additionally and based on mentioned issues, traditional Iranian housing consists of elegant design, grace and accuracy since Islam and along with it Islamic principles of worldview has had undeniable impacts on the identity and its formation. In this regard, explaining privacy in order to identify the determining factors, its formation origins, and its effects on the spatial-structural organization of Iranian traditional housing to improve the spatial organization of the modern Iranian housing is vital. Because the value of privacy had a great role in shaping spatial organization of all the buildings like the value of spatial hierarchy, introversion, and linkage with nature ranging from huge and large public buildings to houses and from public urban spaces to semi-public and more private places during Iranian traditional era. Some of these spatial characteristics are as follow:

**Introversion as a Key Concept**

Introversion involved in the formation of traditional Iranian housing. This principle is a concept that has existed in Iran’s architecture as a value and it is visible and understandable in different forms which have deep roots in the Iranian cultural attitudes. By emphasizing on the importance of culture, it should be mentioned that Iranians considering their idea of housing and family, have tended to a sort of introversive architecture (Seyfian & Mahmudi, 2007). Principally, in the formation of traditional housing, residents’ special beliefs have been influential.

After the new worldview in Islam and formation of values such as privacy it was renewed and apart from security issues (Omer, 2010), it showed new principles and values to buildings with yards in the best way possible that can be considered as the perfection of buildings with central yards (Nayyeri Fallah et al., 2014). It means that the territory of family and public life was distinguished from each other beautifully.

![Figure 3: Introversion; The indoor yard of Taj House, Kashan, Iran (Source: Authors)](image)

**The Linkage between Architecture and Nature**

Based on the Iranian cultural beliefs, the important point in the link between the architecture of traditional houses and nature is the emphasizing on the privacy (Seyfian & Mahmudi, 2007). Buildings are always built in such a way that in combination with nature and using its elements, bring inside the natural environment and hold it. From this point of view, architecture is significantly released in the nature to join it and lends itself to nature. In the Iranian traditional architecture, the main link with nature is bound with more important and valuable principles that derive from worldview of the architect and society. That is why gardens and yards in many cases whether in public buildings or private ones, natural spaces are embedded in artificial ones (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000).
As summary, according to Stierlin (2012) the origin of the symbolic existence of structural bodies of Iranian architecture is seen in paradise. This matter is a pattern that comes from the elements of paradise gardens in the view of the architect which emphasize to the link with nature. Even in designing and building Iranian gardens it can be seen that tall around walls form the private inside space.

**The Design Value of Hierarchy**

The value of hierarchy, as one of the main principles in the world has had the most influences in the formation of privacy in the framework of Iran’s traditional architecture. Hierarchy is one of the principles governing the sets and parts of the objects that are either naturally in the universe as a whole or are designed and created by humankind and considering the fact that technically the existence of creatures in the universe is bound by certain defined hierarchy, therefore its undeniable role in defining the parts of a whole and giving identity to it is noticeable (Seyfian & Mahmudi, 2007).

According to Naghizadeh (2000), in the Islamic worldview, in the universe, any object has a particular place and status whose value and status is determined by its characteristics of its hierarchy. The built environment also follows this rule and its parts have particular status according to its values and status of the activities that is done within it and the people inside and their relationship with other adjacent parts. These features are related to the physical characteristics and adjacent spaces. Also, to form to an architectural building, the principle of hierarchy causes the formation of spatial territories with different functions and forms spatial boundaries. In this regard, when the elements of a building are divided into different territories with distinguishable framework and function, actually transfer from one territory to another immediately and without preparing the necessary conditions is undesirable (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000). In short, the important point is that applying the principle of hierarchy in spatial urban and architectural systems, with separating public territories from private ones and classifications in usage have more significant role in emphasizing privacy in spatial organization toward creating spatial continuity.

**RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research seeks to identify the cultural values of traditional Iranian housing in terms of features of privacy. This study then will use the learnt values as a guideline to improve the quality and spatial typology of the middle-class modern Iranian HDVD housing. Based on the aim.
of this research, through constructivism paradigm (Creswell, 2007), qualitative approach and instrumental multiple case study strategy, physical features of privacy as an important part of Iranian-Islamic cultural values within middle-class Iranian traditional and modern high-rise housing will be investigated. In this regard, three cases of study of the middle-class Iranian traditional and modern housing were selected. Accordingly, through criterion sampling strategy, one middle-class traditional Iranian housing (Taj house located in Kashan-Iran) which is empty conserved and original house, and also through random purposeful sampling strategy (Abolmaali, 2012), three blocks of modern middle-class Iranian HDVD housing located in Kuzu district of new town of Prand-Iran, which is the symbol of the trend of Iranian housing in the future (Kalantari, 2009) were collected.

To increase the accuracy of findings, the data collection methods through triangulation are a combination of direct observation, open-ended expert interview, and taking photo for traditional Iranian housing and direct observation, semi-structured single face to face, semi-structured focus group interviewing, and taking photo for collecting data from modern Iranian HDVD housing. The phase of data collection procedure was done by main researcher and two research assistants during 4 weeks. After the preliminary investigation by technique of overt direct observation, and during the phase of final investigation, the researcher and research assistants did semi-structured interview with 5 experts about traditional Iranian middle-class housing and 15 respondents of the residents of middle-class modern Iranian high-rise housing. The time of each single face to face interview which was with Farsi language was around 25-35 minutes and for focus group interviewing, this time became around 50-65 minutes.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on analysis, the results show that the physical environment of traditional Iranian housing had a great role to achieve desire privacy for settled families. It means that, the ability of architecture within traditional Iranian housing is one of the most focal parameters to enhance the quality of residents’ life. These parameters like hierarchy and introversion cause shaping human values which are under cultural understandings of residents about housing and its’ quality in terms of privacy. Additionally, the findings of the research show that the spatial organization of these housing is as a complex mechanism to support residents’ religious and familial life through very exact space differentiation. These differentiations lead people to have their personal and interpersonal territories. As a result, these territories created opportunities for residents to have better housing environment.

Based on the plan layout analysis and interpretation, the findings indicate that the middle-class Iranian traditional housing consists six different layers in terms of level of privacy. It means that this spatial organization is the solution to answer residents’ higher level of needs which are based on their cultural values. These layers are public, men social, women social, semi-private, private, and personal private (Figure 5). Additionally, each layer of the mentioned sextette layers conforms to the cultural values and has exact spatial hierarchy toward achieving ideal privacy. Thus these houses were conducive for their residents culturally.
The spatial organization of public layer as outer layer which consist the entrance complex of house, shows the spatial system of privacy from outside to inside the house (Figure 6). This space besides the communicational function is a place to stay, wait and converse. In some cases there are some platforms at the sides for sitting which are used to welcome or companion the guests. In this regard, the entrance was built in a way that people would not directly and immediately enter the building. Thus, after entering to the vestibule, they would enter to a corridor placed on the sides of the vestibule and then enter the yard and other internal spaces of the building (Nayyeri Fallah et al., 2015). The entrance would be built in a way that people couldn’t watch inside from it or from vestibule; because the privacy of the family shouldn’t be intruded by strangers. Additionally, the importance of privacy causes men and women to have two different slots with specific shapes on the door. The slot with low pitched sound was for men and the slot with high pitched sound was for women. This difference helped the house members and the one who opened the door know the gender of the guests from the sound of the slot and be prepared to see them.
Other important points in the Qur’anic verses which have mentioned earlier (the verses 27, 28, and 29 of Noor surah) are the matter of security and freedom in house environment. Undoubtedly, the existence of human consists of two dimensions, personal and social dimensions and therefore he has two private and public life with their particular features and customs and rules. The special boundaries and conditions that people have to observe in their society don’t exist in their private life and they have a sort of freedom in their privacy. Islam has certain orders on this matter and there are several quotes by the prophet and infallible Imams which refer to the smallest points even on the way of knocking, asking, and entering and Iranian Muslim architects do their best to objectify these points.

Figure 6: Analyzing public layer. Taj house. Kashan. Iran (Source: Authors)
The second proposed privacy layer is men-social layer which is located after public area (Figure 7). This part is especially for men social communication. In this regard and based on observation and plan layout analysis, the corridor which connects entrance to this space does not have any sight possibility to inside the house. This part of house usually includes two parts for main guests (Predominantly) and their servants (Gholam Gozar). This separation which is based on social class also emphasize on the principle of hierarchy within each layer of the house.

Figure 7: Analyzing men-social layer. Taj house. Kashan. Iran (Source: Authors)

The inner layer after men-social layer is women-social layer where is around outdoor yard of the house (Figure 8). This recent layer of the house has a few sight limitations because of users’ gender. To hosting men and women who are coming to the house's social layers the outdoor service spaces like outdoor kitchen, sanitary spaces and food storages have been predicts. To show the importance of guest for Iranians and their hospitality which is rooted within their Iranian–Islamic worldview, through linkage architecture and nature, have been tried to make desirable social parts of the house for guests.

Based on analyzing of the data collected from experts open-ended interviewing, the next layer is semi private zone of the house which includes guest bed room and man work room. This part of house is located as a border between women-social and private layer. Thus to reach to the private layer of the house this border must be crossed (Figure 9).
Women Social Layer

1- Corridor (Dalaan)
2- Outdoor Courtyard
3- Family Room (Women Room)
4- Cooking Room (Matbakh)
5- Crew Room
6- Easy access storage
7- Pesto (Closet)
8- Pishkam (Eyvaan)
9- Main Storage
10- Outdoor yard cellar

To Semi-private Layer

View (a)
View (b)
View (c)
View (d)
View (e)
View (f) (Family Room & Cellar)
View (g)
View (h)
View (i)
After this layer, the layers of private and personal (completely private) as the most inner layers have been organized within Iranian traditional housing. Based on expert interviewing, these layers are completely for family life and entering stranger without permission to these areas is forbidden (Figure 10, 11, 12). Based on plan layout analysis, the private layer of the selected traditional case study involved three levels (First floor, ground and under-ground floors) and the personal layer (completely private area) was designed just in the first floor.
Figure 10: Analyzing first floor of private layer. Taj house. Kashan. Iran (Source: Authors)
Figure 11: Analyzing ground floor of private layer. Taj house. Kashan. Iran (Source: Authors)

Figure 12: Analyzing under-ground floor of private layer; Taj house. Kashan. Iran (Source: Authors)
Because of the physical distance of these parts of the house from the outside, through using water, flowers, and trees the symbolic heaven have been designed for family part. Base on content analysis from expert interviewing, this technique not only creates symbolic meaning but helps family to have more desirable environment and climate.

On the other hand, the findings of the study show that the residents of modern middle-class HDVD housing suffer from the disability of the spatial organization of their housing units in terms of achieving desirable privacy. This is because of lack of strong thoughts and incorrect understanding of modern architecture, in the collapse of past architecture. Based on analyzed data, the spaces of these units can be known as the before entering space, entrance space, kitchen, living room, sanitary space, bath room, and bed room(s). As can be seen in the figure 14 the privacy problems of each mentioned spaces conform to the neglecting the cultural values within spatial organization of modern middle-class Iranian HDVD housing.
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that privacy as a focal Iranian cultural value plays a great role in spatial organization of Iranian traditional housing to response family cultural and religious needs. As the results, the sextet layers of privacy can be proposed. In contrary, because of neglecting the multi-pronged concept of privacy as Iranian family cultural value in the design process of middle-class modern Iranian HDVD housing, the settled families suffer from this architectural weakness. In addition to the mentioned problems, this neglect has had a negative impact on Iranian modern families’ indoor and outdoor lives as the most important features of Iranian cultural and religious values. In this regard, this study suggests some recommendations learnt from spatial concept of traditional Iranian housing in terms of privacy to betterment the spatial quality of the modern middle-class Iranian HDVD housing.

In addition to applying the proposed privacy layers within architectural design process, designing conjunctive spaces between each layer by emphasizing on the principle of hierarchy are recommended. Additionally, by considering the space limitation, designing pause spaces and rotating them within the joint lines of each zone can improve spatial quality in terms of improper direct sight. Also, the principle of linkage with nature can provide the possibilities to reach more private spaces. It means that by designing different forms of some semi-transparent spaces where include the features of nature and artificial lights, the spatial arrangement of each unit can be
divided to two or more parts. This situation can be used as an opportunity to adapt introversion characteristics learnt from traditional Iranian housing into the modern context. It means that using the lessons learnt from traditional context can improve Iranian modern middle-class HDVD housing physically and culturally.

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Holly Quran


**AUTHORS:**

**Siyamak Nayyeri Fallah**

*Doctoral Candidate*

*Department of Architecture,*

*Faculty of Built Environment, University Technology Malaysia, Malaysia*

*Lecturer (Academic member)*

*Faculty of Architecture, IA University of Nour, Iran*

siyamaknayyeri@yahoo.com

**Akram Khalili**

*Doctoral Candidate*

*Department of Architecture,*

*Faculty of Built Environment, University Technology Malaysia, Malaysia*

*Lecturer (Academic member)*

*Faculty of Architecture, IA University of Nour, Iran*

akramkhalili_uni@yahoo.com
Mohammad Tajuddin bin Mohd Rasdi
Professor
Department of Architecture,
Faculty of Built Environment, University Technology Malaysia, Malaysia
mindakritis@yahoo.com