

IMPACT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHTS ON IRAN SCHOOLS ARCHITECTURE: TRANSFORMATION OF AN INTEGRATED PLACE FOR LIVING, STUDYING AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Introduction

There are few documents about schools in Iran before Islamic period. It is written that Jundi Shapur University which was established during Sasanian period was among greatest educational centers in the world at that time. [1] After Islam was spread throughout Iran, schools continued their existence by influence of Islamic thoughts. At first Islamic thoughts in Muslim's holy book -The Quran- was taught in mosques by prophet Muhammad (PBUH). New Muslims gathered around him in a circle shape and listened to the lessons of Islam. This made the traditional form of teaching called "loop teaching"¹. Some of homeless Muslims (Mohajerin) who stayed in a podium near the mosque called people of Sofeh². By growing the Islam society, mosques were not sufficient for educating all Muslims and also capable of settling Muslim who wanted to study. So schools were founded to answer those needs and gradually made their way through evolution.

The paper discusses how Islamic thoughts have Impact on Iran schools architecture.

According to Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Hadith which says: "A moment of thinking is more valuable than thousand years of [just] praying", praying without knowledge is condemned in Islam. The Holy book of Muslims, Quran, is also encouraging Muslims to think thoroughly about everything. Professor Seyed Hossein Nasr states in his book "Islamic art and spirituality" that sacred architecture and calligraphy are two major arts flourished in Islamic history which may be said have issued from mosque [2]. Because of abstraction in both arts which has mutual sense and the prohibition of painting realistic figures calligraphy became so important in Islamic architectural ornamentation.

Islamic Thoughts and Teaching System

In early Islamic Period Islamic thoughts were taught in mosque by loop teaching system. Accommodation of students happened to be in the mosque or on podium near the mosque. Religious practices and ritual ceremonies also were held in the mosque. After generation of Islam and extension of Islamic studies there was a need for initiate schools based on Islamic thoughts. There were limitations for people to attend in holy places in Islamic rules called Shariat. So there should be a separation between three major activities held on schools, "living", "studying" and "religious practices". Absence of greenness and Qibla direction had influence on architectural formation. Congregational prayer which is held in the mosque

needs a wide hall to accommodate a large population and the front wall in which Mihrab is located should be blinded. These provisions made architects to manage the activities by true circulation through spaces. The presence of the Master in the school at madras amongst students while educating has come from Tariqat. Madras³ places not in geometrical central of school, but has a power on locating within the Hojreh⁴.

Iran Schools Transformation through History

First Islamic Schools literally is said to be founded in 4th century AH in Baghdad named Beit-al-Hekma which means house of wisdom. [3]The nearest formal prototype to school at that time was caravansaries, many Hojreh^s assembled round a courtyard which accommodated students. Schools called Nizamieh in Seljuks period was planned to be in four-Ewan pattern. Madras located in four or two side of the school, usually had Dome and was a place for teaching, praying and social gathering.

At Safavid period another kind of schools immersed which called mosque-schools. They were a combination of mosque and schools and were transformed in Zandieh and Qajars period. There were three main types of such schools:

1. Schools separated by levels: These schools formed in two levels. The school is located in down level and the mosque in up level or vice versa. Example: Agha Bozorg mosque-school in Kashan.

2. Schools separated by different courtyard. Example: Molla Ismael mosque-school in Yazd.

3. Schools separated by zone and not a different level. Example: Marvi mosque-school in Tehran.

Historical Period	Century	Explanation	Special features	Examples
Early Islam	1 st AH	Mosques were the place for studying Islamic thoughts	Living, studying and religious practices was held in the mosque.	Medinna Mosque
Abbasid	2 nd and 3 rd AH	In addition to mosques, before Islam schools like Jundi Shapur University were used for studying Islamic thoughts		Jundi Shapur University
Buwayhid	4 th AH	First Islamic schools was established	Libraries and Bazars was formed whole the schools.	Beit-al-Hekma in Baghdad
Seljuks	5 th and 6 th AH	Nizamieh schools was established with four-Ewan pattern	Living, studying and religious practices was held in the school following caravansaries pattern	Nizalieh school in Baghdad, Heidarieh school in Qazvin
Ilkhans	8 th AH	Schools were influenced by special characteristic of Ilkhans architecture-high proportion	Living, studying and religious practices was held in the school.	Ziayied school in Yazd

Timurid	9 th AH	Followed Ilkhans pattern	Living, studying and religious practices was held in the school	Parizad school in Khorasan
Safavid	10 th and 11 th AH	Immerge of mosque-school pattern	Mosque and school were worked together	Chahar-Bagh school in Isfahan
Zandieh and Qajars	12 th and 13 th AH	Continuance of mosque-school pattern	Mosque and school were worked together	Agha Bozorg in Kashan

Table 1: Historical development of architectural transformations of Iran schools after Islam (By Author)

Conclusion

The Islamic thought including Shariat and Tariqat has an influence on formation of architecture of schools in Iran. Architecture of schools providing a place for the occurrence of three major activities: “living”, “studying” and “religious practices” through ages, made different type of schools in spite of all other architectural consideration such as site limitations, environmental circumstances, structure and etc.

Notes

1. The interactive “loop teaching” had to be the most traditional method of teaching in Iran. In this method, the teacher sat next to a pillow or a column, and students had to sit in front of teacher or next to him and they made the loop strata. How the students sat beside the teacher was related to the level of achievement and amount of knowledge. Students who were more active sat closer to the teacher in the circle, and those with lower levels of knowledge sat with the new students on the opposite of the teacher. The finest students or the other scholars sat next to the teacher on both sides. The public or the completely new people made new layers of loops and sat in the second and third loops behind the first loop. The loops were usually specified based on the name of lessons; the philosophy loop. [4]
2. Sofeh means podium and is a place for resting.
3. Madras is a kind of large classroom for gathering students in traditional system of education in Iran.
4. Hojreh here means a student room.

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