

Research Paper

Analyzing the Cultural Heritage of Historical Houses in Kazaj Village with an Interpretive Approach

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary world, sites of cultural heritage play an important role in local development, but, in Iran, local culture does not seem to be very based on cultural heritage. Despite the tangible cultural richness of historical buildings and their distribution in the less developed and rural areas of the country, cultural legacy has not been considered as a desirable element of development yet. This study discusses the "historical home" of the people in the village of Kozj with an interpretive approach. It considers the interpretation of village houses desirable enough for the local development and the identification of local values. Historic houses are, in fact, the available precious heritage that can shed light on the past societies. The study deals with the experiences of the residents in the village through the hermeneutical interpretation of the historical architecture of the village. In this regard, the cultural landscape of the village is extracted and interpreted phenomenologically through small collections of data. Also, through the hermeneutic cycle, three stages of human life are identified and interpreted.

Key words:

Cultural heritage, Home, Phenomenology, Development, Kazaj

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

In the contemporary world, cultural heritage sites play an important role in local development. In Iran, however, local development has not been based on cultural heritage. Despite the cultural richness of contemporary buildings such as those in his-

torical textures of cities and the dispersal of those buildings in less developed and rural areas of the country, cultural heritage has never been considered as an important factor in the process of development. With respect to the specific nature of research in the field of archaeology, this study adopts a specific methodology to explore the issue of "house". As a case study, the historical houses in the village of *Kazaj* are interpreted to detect the unique aspects of life in the past. Historical houses are actually the

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available documents that can provide valuable information about the societies in the past.

2. Methodology

This research uses the method of hermeneutic interpretation to explore the historical architecture as well as life experiences regarding the concept 'home' in the village of *Kazaj*. In this context, using small sets of collected data, the cultural landscape of the village is described as a hermeneutic phenomenon, and three stages of hermeneutic circles are extracted and interpreted.

3. Results

Kazaj enjoys a harmony of elements that is derived from the concepts of mythology and style. Houses in *Kazaj* have a prelogical concept of architecture. The village is dwelled by creative people who are connected both to themselves and to the ecology. In such a situation, the coherence of humans with nature, other animals and plants makes life eternal. Based on the genealogy of the house in the village, there are three types of home and human life. After spending a long time in the caves, people began to think about other shelters. The first human houses were like a grave, a pit in the ground with some bedding which allowed the residents to relax on cold nights. The depth of the earth, like a cave, was for human beings and a victim of life. Cave-houses were made almost in the shape of a circle so as to maintain a sense of movement in life. Archaeological excavations have provided evidence for this kind of houses on the ancient hills of Sarab and Asiab in the west of Iran.

4. Discussion

The early houses were built in the form of excavated land, and something similar to a cave was arranged through the ceiling. Gradually, mud houses were also built. Land houses, or introverted houses, that resulted needed to protect their people. Therefore, light and air came to be the most important elements needed for mud houses, as they were for cave houses. Old houses have a square structure and one outlet. This kind of structure was meaningful just like the shape of a cave house. The main element in these two types of structure was the "cover". Mud houses were intended to protect their human dwellers from air, soil, water and light, as the basic constituent elements of the world. In these houses, the roofs were placed on the top of each other for the sake of better illumination. The edges of this type of houses formed the sides of a cube. This kind of structure would better protect the residents' belongings because mud is an insulator for heat and cold.

In this way, man in a struggle with nature, dominated the earth and got settled in a certain place. He was able to build fixed dwellings and use his technical power to develop them. Sunny houses, or extroverted houses, were the other development in the field of house construction. They were actually extroverted in the sense of being open and exposed to the sun. The remoteness and continuity of residence in the village of *Kazaj* is intertwined with the spirit and primitive nature of the village. Nowadays, the place is associated with the concept of sunny houses. These houses have clear windows and verandahs open to the outside world, providing an opportunity to view the world in full light and the infinity of the land. Interpretation of the houses in *Kazaj* provides information on the life experiences of the people there.

5. Conclusion

Investigation of house structures in *Kazaj* is the interpretation of nature and traditions in different periods of human life, including cave dwelling, predation, animal husbandry in the period of earthen houses, and, ultimately, cosmopolitan life in sunny houses. Each of these periods has resulted in a different set of life experiences that are quite evident from the nature and the houses in *Kazaj*. These life experiences actually depict three important stages of human life that could extend to other parts of Azerbaijan province, Iran. The study of the village reveals a process of evolution from cave to house. This has given the place a land and air identity. Understanding this identity can contribute to making plans for rural development in Iran.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest