

Historical Evolution of Qajar House of Baqeri in Gorgan*

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ABSTRACT: Iranian historical houses constitute a significant part of the architectural heritage of the country both qualitatively and quantitatively though due research is not conducted on them. This study investigates the physical evolution of Qajar House of Baqeri in Gorgan and attempts to monitor life stream over its lifespan. The study also investigates the effect of external transformations on architectural evolutions in this house. The study adopted a combined approach and cited evidence both from the building and its periphery. The study revealed that the architecture of this house corresponds to the lifestyle, social milieu, economic conditions, technology, beliefs and tastes of its residents over the course of its history. Each of these factors was found to influence the creation of house atmosphere consistent with form, scale and proportions of the building.

Keywords: *Qajar dynasty, Gorgan, spacial evolution, Baqeri house.*

INTRODUCTION

From among the remnants left over history in cities and villages across Iran, houses are the closest spaces to people to experience the quality of Iranian architecture and attachment. Apart from geography, human may be said to have continually both influenced and been influenced by buildings and their architecture at the macro and micro levels. In other words, studying the architecture of human habitats may help understand human lifestyle and interaction with spaces. In the vicissitude of architecture history in the realm of Iranian culture, house architecture has always held an outstanding niche accepting variable internal and external appearances across the vast geography of Iran.

Qajar houses take a great share of historical houses in Iran so that a good many of them still stand in different cities and villages and even accommodate residents. While the then kings and policy makers tended to change the structure of urban spaces, build public buildings and develop new unprecedented buildings, the house architecture also shows a

broad range of spacial and structural evolutions though it was often lay people who ordered the architects build such houses. A review of available documents and written research reveals that contemporary researchers have not paid due attention to evolution of houses during the Qajar Reign. The available literature mainly reports an impersonal account of house environment as well as maps and pictures. Researchers have also neglected implementation methods and building details or they have left these to restoration specialists. However, spacial quality and formation of buildings may not be well understood without paying due attention to construction issues. Lack of distinction between such specialties as architecture and construction further supports the importance of this investigation. Researchers have also failed to address the people's lifestyle and social milieu internalized in the body of these houses when they were built. The neglect for these important issues has restricted research reports to the description or criticism of form, circulation, filled and unfilled spaces and proportions. The present study investigates the historical evolution of Qajar house of Baqeri in Gorgan province. It also addresses the architecture and construction of the house, social-historical changes in Gorgan city and Sarcheshmeh neighborhood simultaneously to document the spacial evolutions.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The researchers surveyed the house in detail and the available plans were collected and categorized according to the preparation year. Various sources were used and cited in the present study. The study adopted an interpretive-historical approach with a survey design.

Literature review

Unfortunately, there are few relevant sources available. The two academic sources available on this house include an M.S thesis in restoration and a student term paper in architecture. The latter study has made admirable attempts to collect data from old residents of the house. The experts with Cultural Heritage Bureau in Golestan province prepared a report on the pathology of this house in 2003 though they made no reference to its evolution. The book entitled *New Life, Old Body* provides but a few pictures and an inexact plan of the house. A short article in *Golestan Encyclopedia* also addresses the house and its characteristics in general.

Research sources and evidences

The present study drew on four types of sources to examine the historical status and evolution of the house:

Written sources: these sources, which were addressed in the literature review, make no citable reference to formation and evolutionary process of the house. Thus, some sources not directly related to the research topic were used to identify the historical background of Gorgan and its neighborhood.

Oral accounts by old residents and architects: as despite public mansions such as mosques and mausoleums, there is almost scarcity of written or citable documents such as deeds of endowment, government decrees, inscriptions and historical records on private houses and since architecture was not a matter of written documents – so that traditional architects are anonymous-before the modern era (Qayyoomi Bidhendi, 2007,22), the accounts of people who have seen such buildings in not-distant past bear a considerable importance. This source, however, suffers from deficiencies, as it is rather impossible to delve into distant past. Considering the average age of eyewitnesses, one may not expect them to remember the events far beyond seven or eight decades. Another problem is lack of a professional look or sufficient accuracy in these people, which may result in occasional contradictions in their reports. Still, their accounts are considered as a noticeable source of information, which may become cumulatively worthwhile if sufficient evidence is found to support them. In the case of Baqeri house, such data were usually self-supporting or at least there was no negating evidence to deny them.

Old pictures and photos: the oldest aerial photos of Gorgan date back to 1956 (Fig. 1), which illustrate some parts of the house. A collection of private photos from Baqeri family provided further data⁶ (Fig. 2).

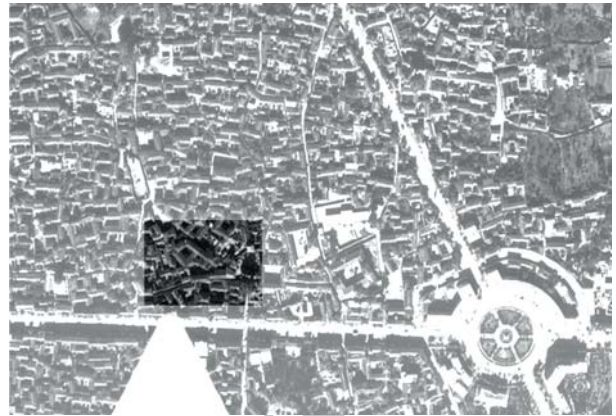


Fig. 1: The first aerial photo of Gorgan in 1956 (Source: National Cartographic Center).



Fig. 2: Memorial photo taken in the first guest courtyard of the house in 1931, which provides information on the flooring status of the yard at the time (Source: Baqeri family archive).

Data collected from the house: Baqeri complex and its structural components are the most important source of data for this study. A review on restoration documents particularly cleaning and layering operations revealed significant information about this building. For example, there were lots of covered vaults and niches as well as filled Chalkorsi and ornaments concealed under wall plaster and brick floors, which were discovered during layering and sampling. In some sections of the building, such clues as pointing techniques, connection of corner bricks, stairways concealed under the

platforms round the courtyard, shir'sars , incised lintels and destroyed walls helped identify the evolution of construction process. This information mainly supported the assertions of old residents of the house.

DISCUSSION

Gorgan in Qajar era

Astarabad city, renamed as Gorgan in 1937, lies in a region with a history of several thousand years of human residence. According to archeological investigations and historical sources, the history of local civilization dates back to over six thousand years ago in the region that is considered as one of the oldest provinces and a hub of culture and civilization in ancient Iran (Qaemi, 2008:7). Astarabad city has survived as an important settlement over the course of history. Still, Qajar dynasty brought about a particular reputation to the city as it was considered as hometown of Qajar family. Some writers contend that Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar, the founder of Qajar dynasty, was born in Astarabad Plaza neighborhood (Ma'tufi, 1995:247). A glance at Astarabad during the Qajar reign reveals that its development and prosperity at the time depended not only on its particular natural location and on lying on the Silk Road but also on Qajar political inclination to establish ties with Russia. Indeed, this city may be said to have played a significant role in regulating relations with the powerful northern neighbor, Russia, so that the establishment of Russian consulate in Astarabad during the reign of Fath Ali Shah further supports this claim. Besides, tribal wars and conflicts within Qajar tribe influenced the city and its people several times, leaving devastating legacies behind. In physical terms, great attempts were made during this era to build or restore royal buildings such as restoration of Safavid palaces and construction of a few mansions during the reign of Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar, which is known as Aqa Mohammad Khani complex (Ma'tufi, 1995,251). Travel books may help illustrate the urban atmosphere and buildings in Astarabad in this era. James Baillie Fraser who was staying in Astarabad in 1822 describes the urban environment. He contends that Astarabad was then 3.5 miles in perimeter surrounded by a thatch wall. As with other Persian cities, it was suffering decadence. Houses were beautiful wearing interesting facades. The architecture and coloring was beautiful. The houses were mostly built of wood and constituted porches whose roofs stood on timber columns. The architectural style was open and light showing Indian tendencies. The houses had pitched roofs covered with tile and straw. Houses were also built outside the city walls. Houses often had tower-like windcatchers with tile roofs. Avenues were paved with sewage running through them. Despite bazaars in Shiraz and Isfahan that had vaulted ceilings, the bazaars here had straw-covered roofs.

In late Naseruddin Shah period, Mirza Ebrahim reports that the city constituted three main neighborhoods including Nalbandan, Sabze Mashhad and Meidan (Ma'tufi, 1995:278). A study of other traveler books written by Lord Curzon and

Jacques de Morgan who visited the city in later years reveals the inappropriate urban environment and poor physical health of public buildings during the reign of late Qajar kings. However, these travel writers have mostly addressed public buildings such as governmental mansions, mosques, tombs, public bathrooms and bazaar but have scarcely described the architecture of houses.

RESULTS

A general introduction into Baqeri house

As an outstanding building in Gorgan historic texture, Baqeri house is almost 150 years old, which is considered as a valuable exemplar of local residential architecture. Baqeri family used to live in this house from late Naseri era to almost one decade ago. The house is located between Nalbandan and Sarcheshmeh neighborhoods, lying to the south of an old thoroughfare in current Gorgan – a passageway running through bazaar and Tekieh Nalbandan to Emamzadeh Noor and Tekieh Sarcheshmeh (Fig. 3 and 4).

From among the old houses, Baqeri house is one of the biggest and finest ones. The territory is 1950 square meters in sum with 1555 square meters indoor and half-open spaces. The house constitutes a combination of alternate open and closed spaces based on a particular complex arrangement in which non-geometric, numerous courtyards play a significant role. Though an in-detail study of the spaces reveals a clear discipline in the arrangement of pillars and openings, a general observation of the building obscures the disciplined geometry so that no particular order is noticed. Besides, marked differences in proportions and components of inside and outside facades further support the hypothesis that the house is not built all at once.

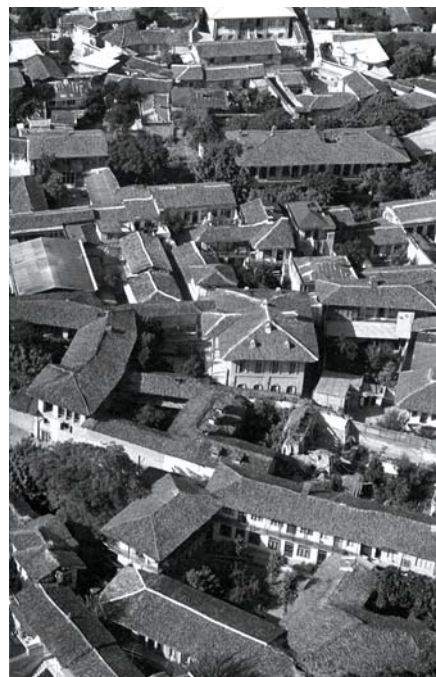


Fig. 3: Aerial photo of Baqeri and Taqavi houses
(Source: From the Iran's sky)

Another considerable point about the building architecture is a prudent combination of extrovert architecture with the dominant introversion of the house. As it accounts for people's culture and social relations as well as climatic demands, this extroversion is observable in the distinguishable relations between internal spaces and outside thoroughfares through various openings and northern balconies. Some windows open to the forest views.

Careful attention to peripheral comfort and climatic architecture is a valuable asset to Baqeri house. In hot and humid summers in Gorgan, the inside space provides a comfortable condition for the residents making the climatic nuisance bearable. The broadness of spaces, avoidance of spacial compression, various openings, good relations between open and closed spaces, double or triple openings to each room, thick pillars and appropriate direction are some of the climatic features of architecture in this house, which provide comfort for the residents through protruding roofs to help stay clear of summer sunshine. Tiled roofs with brims along with uplified ground floor standing higher than the ground are adequate strategies to resist the devastating effects of rainy climate and ground moisture in this region.

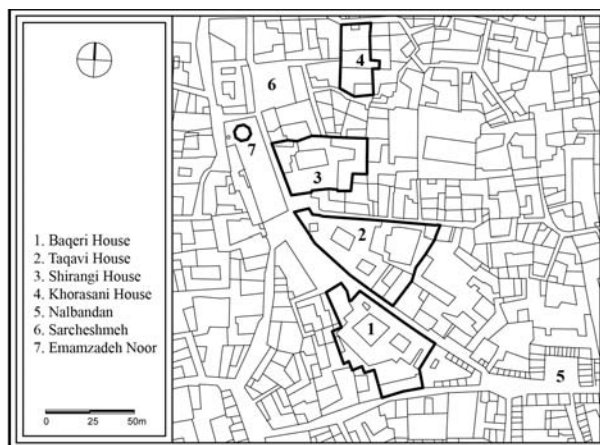


Fig. 4: Location of the house in the neighborhood and peripheral outstanding buildings

Various construction materials are used to build the house, which include wood, brick, thatch, stone, chalk and glass though the spirit of the building is embodied in the outstanding woodworks. Doors, windows, balustrades and shir'sars embody the finest artistry so that each one of them may be considered as a masterpiece per se. Moreover, utilization of various types of wood with different profiles in different components such as bridges, lintels, beams, brackets and shir'sars accounts for the adroit understanding, selection and utilization of appropriate materials on the part of the architects. The strength and flawless resistance of these woodworks to moisture over decades accounts for the architects' knowledge of different woods and their qualities.

Historical evolution of the house

In this section, we would delineate the historical evolution of

the building based on the available sources, research evidence and in-detail surveys. This section is further subdivided into evolutions in the territory and evolutions in indoor spaces.



Fig. 5: Main façade of the house from the northern passage before the restoration operation

Evolutions in the territory

The territory of Baqeri house is located at the center of Gorgan historic texture in Qajar era. The territory lies on the borderline between Nalbandan and Sarcheshmeh neighborhoods that were considered as wealthy neighborhoods in the past. Some historic houses such as Baqeri, Taqavi, Shirangi and Khorasani houses (Fig. 4) that are located within these neighborhoods are considered as big wealthy mansions comparing with other historic houses in the city. A scrutiny of available sources showed only one instance of territorial change in Baqeri house, which consists of the devolution of 40 square meters of Matbakh courtyard to the next-door Hosseinieh in early 1960s.

Evolution of indoor spaces

Comparing with the territorial changes in the house, indoor spaces have undergone much greater transformations though it is not abnormal. A study of the issue revealed the following evolutionary stages.



Fig. 6: A view of the northern front of first family courtyard before the restoration operation

The first building devastated before the construction of current buildings

Some evidence suggests that there were buildings within this territory that were destroyed before the present building was built. Still, live eyewitnesses from Baqeri family have neither seen nor heard of them, which suggests that they might have been built by earlier owners before Baqeri family dwelled there. In this regard, supporting evidence was found during the restoration operation. For example, two tandoors were found with remaining ash still inside, which seem unlikely to belong to the present building because one of them was located in the second family courtyard just before entrance of a four-door room and another was close to the first one inside the same room. Considering the evidence form similar architecture and the function of elements such as tandoors, it is unlikely that architects of the present house have built them in such locations so that tandoors should have been part of an extinct older building. Besides, a water tank and an oven in a living room and a toilet in one of the courtyards were found; however, none of them is compatible with the function of existing spaces. In sum, we may conclude that there have been other buildings in this territory before the construction of present ones though we may not comment on their ownership.



Fig. 7: A view of courtyards and building B during the restoration operation

Early development of the present complex (1860s)

Two important points should be made about the development of buildings in the present complex. Some structural, architectural or even oral evidence helped identify the precedent or succedent construction of different parts of the building. In adjacent buildings, these evidences more confidently lead us to understanding the developmental process of the construction. In buildings not adjacent to each other, we are less confident to determine the precedence of construction so that we form our judgment based on differences in architectural style, material wear, logic of construction in its territory and particularly oral evidence. Another point is about the dates so that even if we assure the evolutionary process of the building construction, we may not report an exact date of construction. Thus, the dates reported here are approximate and inexact except for the

dates our eyewitnesses insist on their accuracy. For example, an eyewitness reported the construction date to be in 1867 (1246), as he had heard of his great grandparents. Our data is not sufficient to either support or reject this date and we are not even confident whether it is a lunar or solar Hijri date. Although the eyewitness contends that the date is in solar Hijri, we still feel uncertain as the lunar Hijri calendar was in vogue during the Qajar era. In case the date is in lunar Hijri – which is not unlikely, there appears to be a 37-year difference in our estimation of the house construction date than it was in solar Hijri. Still, the only date for the beginning of the construction is 1867 (1246) so that we would consider this as the hypothetical date of construction.

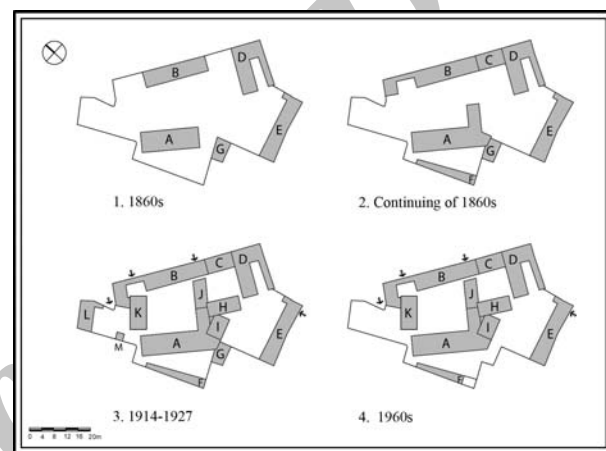


Fig. 8: Evolution of the house over time

Adjoining the available information and evidence extracted from the building, eyewitnesses and other sources of data, we may conclude that the first constructions were made in three main spots of the territory. Two spots of these sections (Building B+C+D and Building E) function as separators to cut off the home interiors from the public passageway, which seems reasonable as initial construction in an empty territory. This section accommodates three out of four house entrances. The third spot (Building A+G and Building F) is almost located at the center of the building adjacent to service areas such as kitchen and HavijKhaneh (food stockroom). The second floor of Building B is like a two-sided veranda that overlooks the first family courtyard from one side and the avenue from the other. This instance of veranda overlooking avenue is a unique feature of architecture in this house. Buildings A and C are one-storey buildings while Buildings B, D and E are two-storey ones.

Addition of new buildings and completion of courtyard enclosures (1910s)

The enlargement of Baqeri family about fifty years after the initial buildings encouraged the owners to add new buildings

to the complex. While the initial buildings tended to separate the home interiors from the outside environment, the five latter buildings led to the development and enclosure of family courtyards. Except for Sections L and M that were used as stable and straw barn, other buildings constructed in the latter era are residential. Sections H, I and J are one-story buildings while Sections K, L and M are two-story ones. The spacial relation of residential sections H, I, J and k with older buildings help understand their establishment style. Building H is constructed parallel to the body of Building C so that it helps develop the first guest courtyard along with Building J. Buildings K and J surround two sides of the first family courtyard while Building K functions as the boundary between family life and stable territory. Section I is located so that its outer body stands parallel to Building E forming the second family courtyard. This suggests the architects' special attention to the development of courtyards and separation of inner and outer territories. This may help account for the irregular geometry of courtyards, which may relate to the subordination of the courtyards to surrounding buildings and of buildings to non-geometrical peripheral passageways. Besides, the gradual development of the complex and lack of a preplanned design may also help understand this issue. Upon the completion of this stage, the house took its final form when the Baqerifamily was most populated (between 1914 and 1927).



Fig. 9: A view of second-floor rooms and veranda of Building B

The onset of changes

From 1937 to 1945, the house underwent several changes. The concurrence of these changes with socio-political changes may help understand the reasons for them. Some of these reasons include the prevalent uncertainty in international community due to World War II, political reforms in Iran following the first decade of abolishing Qajar dynasty and establishment of Pahlavi regime, development of modernism and inclination of social groups particularly the rich or educated towards western culture, the demise of tradition and introduction of modernity, emphasis on nationalism as well as leading people towards the recognition of pre-Islamic Persian culture. Moreover, the enlargement of Baqeri family and a need for new buildings, the

development of new materials, techniques and architecture and even new ornaments may also account for these changes. A list of these changes is presented below.

1. The first step in the changes was the removal of tiled roof of one-story Building C in 1937 and the addition of the second floor. The room added in the second floor fills the void space between Buildings B and D. These changes brought about alterations in the plan of Building C first floor so that the first floor that originally constituted two rooms, a three-door and a four-door room, was changed into a big room, a closet and a staircase. The evidence found during layering process clearly shows the earlier divisions, ornaments, fireplace and the removal of the dividing wall between the two rooms. Besides, a building entrance adjacent to this section was made narrower due to the construction of the staircase and a toilet. The added floor was different from other parts of the building in terms of architecture: big square windows, a small balcony to the avenue and lack of shir'sars on the roof edges are some the major differences between this floor and other sections of the building.
2. When the second floor was added to Building C, architectural changes were also made in Building B. In this regard, the two-sided veranda of the second floor, which was referred to as a unique feature, and the one-way veranda of the first floor were changed altogether into a few rooms. Windows and small balconies were renovated consistent with the second floor of Building C. Moreover, small square windows were opened in the first-floor wall to the northern passageway (Fig. 5).

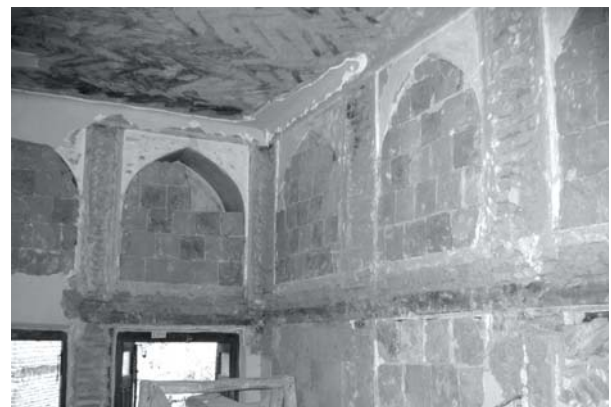


Fig. 10: Discovery of covered Vaults during the layering operation

3. One of the important changes in this era include the flattening of room walls, leveling Vaults and blocking a few doors. These changes were made in all the rooms in sections A, B, C, D and E. The blocked Vaults were discovered during the restoration operation (Fig. 10).
4. Another change in this era includes the removal of herringbone and grille windows opening from the first floor of Buildings A and K to the first family courtyard. A few samples of such herringbone windows are still remaining on two sides of the Building J façade. These colorful grille windows were

replaced with lime plaster and square panes of glass. The openings were also blocked in some sections. The house residents contend that some of the windows were sent to be installed in a summerhouse in Ziarat village and some were sold to antique dealers (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: Blocked openings in the first family courtyard and samples of existing and blocked herringbone windows

The last important architectural change refers to the excavation of the floor in some of the downstairs rooms. This was done to avoid the penetrating moisture from the room floor adjacent to the octagon courtyard in Building K as well as the rooms adjacent to the avenue in Buildings C and D. Then the floors of these rooms were reconstructed using hollow woodworks. The noticeable point about these woodworks is that they are all made of Russian wood imported through Bandar Gaz to Gorgan.

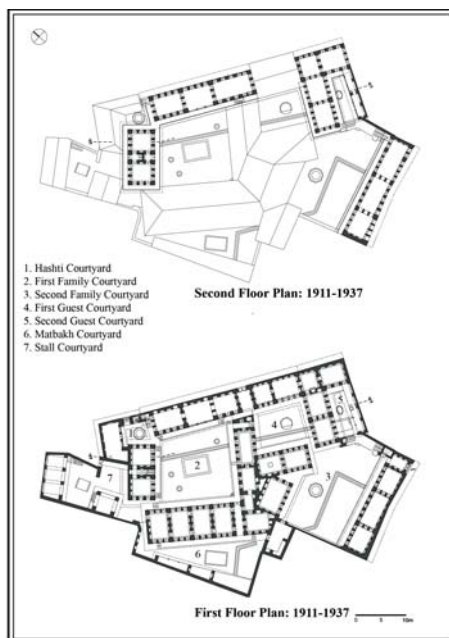


Fig.12: House plan from 1911 to 1937

Changes made in early 1960s

Significant changes occurred in the urban environment in this era, which exerted its direct or indirect effect on the house. Transformations in urban environment, development

of new neighborhoods and people's tendency to live on southern Gorgan foothills, called Nahar-khoran, undermined the economic status of Nalbandan and Sarcheshmeh neighborhoods that were already considered as rich districts. Thus, many residents in these neighborhoods moved to newly-developed districts. In addition, younger generations of these families migrated to big cities such as Tehran or went abroad. Consequently, these neighborhoods gradually were abandoned by old residents who were emotionally attached to the houses and neighborhoods. Besides, essential changes in people's lifestyles and introduction of new appliances such as power, piped water, automobile, oil heaters, stove and fridge brought about changes in some spaces that had lost their functions. Some of these changes include the gradual destruction of the stable, HavijKhaneh (food stockroom), tandoors and kitchen as well as filling cellars with earth and changing pools into garden.

In this period, part of the Matbakh courtyard was donated to the adjacent Hosseinieh to be developed. The decadence of the house began when it was divided among heirs who were reluctant to maintain and restore the house.

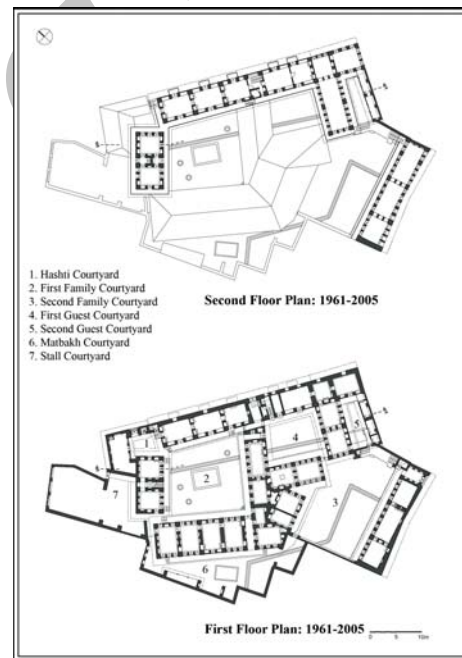


Fig. 13: House plan from 1961 to 2005

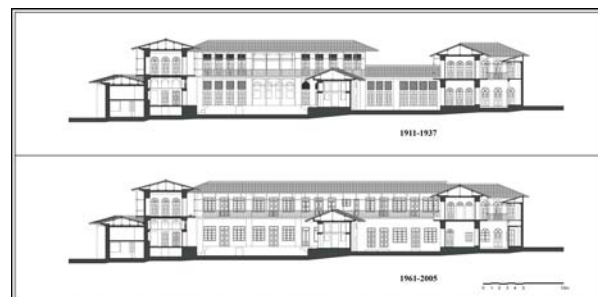


Fig.14: Longitudinal section of the house in two historical eras

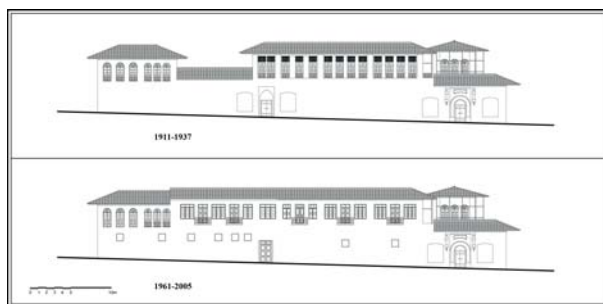


Fig. 15: The main façade of the house towards the northern passageway in two historical eras



Fig. 16: The main façade of the house towards the northern passageway during the restoration operation

Table 1: Factors influencing the changes in house and its architecture

Number	Causes of change	Historical era	Physical indications	Effect on house architecture
1	The family resides.	1860s	-destruction of old buildings in the territory -construction of Buildings A,B,C,D,E,F,G	-initial distinction of inner and outer spaces -introduction of closed and open spaces
		1914-1927	Addition of Buildings H,I,J,K,L,M	-completion of courtyard enclosures -changes in outside front
2	Family enlargement	1937-1945	Addition of a second floor to Building C and changes in the plan of first floor	-changing the sky line of the building to the northern passageway -changing the enclosure of the first guest courtyard -reducing the diversity of shapes in the building
3	Imitation of new house architecture	1937-1945	-construction of a balcony and big windows on the northern façade -addition of openings to northern facade	-changes in northern façade -increased relation between inside and outside spaces
4	Modern tendency and detachment from old architectural features	1937-1945	-removing the details of inner walls of the rooms -filling Vaults -blocking some openings -blocking grille windows -removing the veranda of Building B -using Russian wood instead of local wood	-changes in the quality of closed spaces -reducing half-open spaces -changes in inside and outside fronts -reducing color diversity in the house interiors -changes in architectural pattern of rooms
5	Technical problems of the house	1937-1945	Excavating the floors of a few rooms to prevent the moisture prevention	Changes in the pattern of ground connection
6	Changes in lifestyle	1960s	-destruction of the kitchen -partial destruction of HavijKhaneh -filling southern cellar with earth -changing pools into garden	-reducing closed and half-open spaces -removing waterworks from the courtyards -changes in the architecture of the walls of Matbakh courtyard
7	Changes in urban environment	1960s	-abandonment of rooms as the residents moved to other districts	Some spaces became nonfunctional
8	Religious beliefs	1960s	Devolution of part of the territory to the adjacent Hosseinieh	-reducing open spaces -changing the architecture of Matbakh courtyard
9	Heirs' disregard for the house	1970s-1990s	-changing the stable yard into dump -changing Building E into storehouse -selling old grille windows	-reduced spatial qualities of the building -increased open spaces -gradual destruction of some architectural elements
10	Changed ownership from private to public	2000s	-comprehensive restoration operation -omission of some auxiliaries from 1937-1945 -restoration of changed spaces	Attempts to restore the original architecture of the building before the 1937 changes

Changes made in 2000s

Following the registration of the house as a national heritage²³ and the purchase of the territory by Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran in 2001 and its subjection to Pardisan program ,pilot studies and the restoration process began on this complex . According to the Pardisan program, the house was to be restored to function as a guesthouse.Pardisan executives decided to restore the building to its Qajar status. The restoration project progressed to some extent but stopped in 2010.

Current situation of the house

Following the suspension of restoration project in 2010, the Qajar house of Baqeri is left to itself running the risk of wear and destruction.

CONCLUSION

The present study helped delineate the evolution of a Qajar house over about one and a half century (Table 1). The study revealed technical documents and plans of the house in different eras, which illustrate the historical evolution of the building. A significant finding of the study suggests the consistency of the house architecture with lifestyle, social milieu, economic status, technology, beliefs and tastes of residents in different eras. Each of these factors is equally as important as form, scale and proportion – as architects' especial interest- to create and make changes in the house. Any research on the architecture of old houses will be deficient unless it addresses the above-mentioned factors. The present findings showed that the residents and architects of the house did not tend to see it as a work of art so that beside the incorporation of innovation, ornaments and beauty in the building, they considered their construction primarily as a living place. This finding may be generalizable to other old houses in Iran in case further research supports this.

ENDNOTES

Passing through historical neighborhoods in various cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Tehran, Bushehr, Gorgan, Yazd, Kashan and Shiraz, we may notice various examples of Qajar houses. In this regard, Tabriz and Isfahan contain the most considerable examples so that they may be called the cities of Qajar houses.

For example, since Naseruddin Shah period, the regime started building cinemas, theaters, banks and hotels in Tehran and other big cities.

A glance at PhD dissertations and published books on Iranian architecture shows that they have scarcely addressed the house architecture directly.

The plans drawn from the house include: (a) a plan published in the book *New Life, Old Body*, which contains considerable errors. This plan was prepared in early 1990s; (b) a plan prepared in School of Architecture & Urbanism of Shahid Beheshti University in 1998. Two students of architecture, Zeinab Ala'eddin and Fatemeh Azimi, developed

this plan that is much more accurate than the previous plan; (c) plans prepared by Behnam Qelichkhani and Javid Imanian in 2002, which are the most comprehensive plans available; and (d) updated workshop plans prepared by Kohandezh Company of Architecture and Restoration between 2005 and 2010.

The accounts of a few old residents were used as the reference. The oldest resident was late Mrs. Parvaneh Baqeri who used to live in the house from 1920s to 1958. She also frequented the house after this period as long as Baqeri family and her relatives were living there. Fortunately, she enjoyed an excellent memory so that she could clearly remember the changes made to the house during the three decades she was living in the house. Evidence found in the house supported her accounts.

Some of family photos came to be handy in understanding the house architecture during the early decades of the current Hijri century.

Chalkorsi: Fire-pan hole

Shir'sar (Lion head): Kind of expose wooden beam

The evidence, documents and findings revealed during the research process were organized in tables; however, in-detail reference to them is beyond the scope of this article.

Ashouses in this region do not constitute wind catchers, the word wind catcher here may refer to "raven perch" used as a ventilator for the attic. Old houses in Gorgan, including Baqeri house, typically constitute such ventilators.

Baqeri family is the descendant of late Mohammad Bagher Attar who first built the house. Following his death, his three sons developed and dwelt in the house. Due to their commercial relations with Russian merchants, they are referred to as Baqerov family in some documents.

Tekieh: Center of a neighborhood

Emamzadeh: Shrine

Areas were measured based on the plans prepared in 2002.

Matbakh: Kitchen

Hosseinieh: A Shiite religious building for mourning ceremonies

This is a common name for half-open spaces on the corner of courtyards in Gorgan houses used to store foodstuff.

One may be more confident about the changes in this era, as old residents and house architects remembered the respective changes.

One of the architects of Baqeri house contends that this house in second floor was called Radio Room because the family had set one of the first radios in Gorgan in this room where people collected to hear the latest news on Iran and the world.

It seems that these balconies were built after the same balconies built in the same year in Sahrdari square since it is unprecedented in Gorgan residential architecture.

The simplification of walls, reduction of details and ornaments may relate to the wave of modern architecture reaching Iran at the time – a tendency associated with minimalism, simplicity and lack of ornaments.

Bandar Gaz: A harbor city in west of Gorgan

The house was registered in 2000 under the number 2808.

Pardisan program was developed in 1999 in Cultural Heritage organization aiming at restoring historic buildings, maintaining valuable monuments and assigning them new functions as tourism infrastructure.

Pilot studies and restoration project were conducted by Kohandezh Company of Architecture and Restoration. The documents and plans prepared by this company were used in the present study.

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