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### Original Research Article

## A Landscape Look to Zurkhaneh, Reasons of its Creation and its Functions

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### Abstract

**Problem statement:** Zurkhaneh has been a place for sports and personality transcendence in ancient Iran. A place where there is lots of ambiguity in its origin and its reason. But this ambiguity has not prevented the emergence of commonalities in theories about Zurkhaneh. The extracurricular functions of Zurkhaneh in the society of ancient Iran have been studied in all theories. It has made this element doubly important in the Iranian city.

**Research objective:** In this paper, with the aim of studying the landscapes of Zurkhaneh, different theories related to the emergence of Zurkhaneh have been discussed and the functions of Zurkhaneh have been analyzed to study it as a landscape.

**Research methodology:** The method used in this research is descriptive-analytical and documentary and library studies by studying and analyzing data extracted from the valid books and papers.

**Conclusion:** Various theories attribute the formation of the Zurkhaneh in Iran history. From the Mehr religion to the Safavid era. And each has stated reasons and symbols for the argument. In studying the landscapes of Zurkhaneh, it has been determined that Zurkhaneh has different functions such as a social place to gather, promote and propagate religion, education, education and culture, helping and supporting people and holding various rituals and ceremonies in addition to sports. A review of these functions can demonstrate the Zurkhaneh not as a historical place but as a unique cultural landscape.

**Keywords:** *Zurkhaneh, Landscape view, Reasons, Function.*

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## Introduction

Zurkhaneh is an important symbol in the urban structure of Iran, particularly after the Safavid era. One of the important elements rather than its famous function as a place for sports, it has played an effective role in the atmosphere of traditional Iranian society. Various cultural, social, educational, religious, etc. functions that have had operational and highlighted outputs in early period of Iranian history.

What comes from the name of Zurkhaneh has been a place of testing and overcoming the opponent and training for this purpose (Rahavard, 1956, 143). In the simplest definition, Zurkhaneh was a place where men played sports and it was mostly built in the back alleys of the city (Seddiq Imani, 1964, 6). Traditional Iranian gym where athletes perform a series of traditional gymnastic movements and bodybuilding (Roshar, 2004, 50). A popular institution that has evolved throughout history, it is a place where physical activity was performed (Goodarzi, 2004, 151). and at the same time, it is a source of identity that different parts of it is in coordination with each other to create a heroic identity. An identity that has various functions for society such as protection, support and social cohesion (Aminizadeh & Bastani, 2014, 81). Athletes in Zurkhaneh in addition to strengthening the body, it also has strengthened their faith. Thus, people with faith, forgiveness, chivalry and morality have been raised in Zurkhaneh (Montazer Al-Ghaem & Haghi, 2018, 72) This sport has been the only sport that begins with prayer and ends with prayer (Askari Nouri & Taheri Khoshno, 2009, 137). This distinguishes the Zurkhaneh from other traditional sports venues in other ancient cultures. The basic principles of this urban element have been the cultivation of body and mind together. As in the traditional Iranian society, Zurkhaneh is regarded as a sacred place to cultivate the body and strengthen the thought and morals (Blockbashi, 2004, 38).

Landscape is a word that has variety of meanings, one of the most common meaning is the continuous visual perception of a preconceived or random view or frame, or it is a complex mechanism that allows the explanation and presentation of places in the world (Nunesh, 2013, 50). Actually, landscape can be regarded as another type of place that is the product of human-environment interaction in outdoor spaces. It has the feature of place and product of human experience in space. However, the landscape space is really different from the architectural space (Basouli, 2018, 34). Landscape is the intersection of geography and history where something occurred and there is a special narrative. A spatial social environment and a cultural image that can be said to be a media that is cuddled up and embodied in the material and imaginative thoughts of different societies (Habibi, 2010, 42). With this description, the landscape is beyond a place and is a unique combination of what is seen and what can be interpreted. When an element meets perspective function, it becomes a living and dynamic being that is influenced by man and the connection of the surrounding society. A place that is not merely a body and has a special meaning and identity.

There are several theories on the origin of Zurkhaneh and the reasons for its creation. But what matters more than the reasons for its origin is the meaning and identity of its elements that have found throughout history. Studying the different functions of Zurkhaneh in different eras can be regarded as a landscape approach challenges the purpose of defining the position and meaning of Zurkhaneh in Iranian society. Various functions have been narrated in the documents. Different narrations that show the complexity of the depth of this simple element in the Iranian city. In this study, concerning on Zurkhaneh and with the analysis of the origin of its formation and the extra-sports functions

of Zurkhaneh in the urban and social structure in ancient Iran, its transformation into a special urban landscape in which Iranian identity has been studied.

### Research hypothesis

In order for a place to become a landscape, it is necessary to deal with the relationship between the place, man and society in order to gain a certain perception of it. It seems Zurkhaneh, rather than its architectural body and appearance, has a certain identity that Iranian society has maintained over time. This valuable building has been formed for various reasons and in its long life has had many functions in the Iranian city. These functions can define a different identity for Zurkhaneh, so that it can be interpreted not as a historical place, but as an important landscape in the Iranian city that can have a special place in landscape tourism.

### Research methodology

The method used in this research is descriptive-analytical. Documentary and library studies have been conducted based on the collection of authoritative books and papers related to Zurkhaneh, and the initial data have been shown descriptively after review and study. By reviewing and analyzing these data, an analytical inference has been made to examine the ideas of Zurkhaneh and its functions.

### Origin of Zurkhaneh

The word Zurkhaneh was first introduced by the late Dr. Mohammad Moein in Farhang Moin, and then the editors and compilers of Dekhoda Dictionary used the definition of Dr. Moein and added information into Zurkhaneh. This term is entered literature from around the Safavid era (Elahi, 1994, 727). The term Zurkhaneh is composed of force (Zur) and house (Khaneh). The word Zur may mean strength and power or it means the holy water of Zur that was

drunk in the monastery. Due to the old drinks in the Zurkhaneh, and because of a number of similarities between the cup-drinking ceremony in the monastery and the Zurkhaneh. Zurkhaneh is customary, there is a great similarity between the culture of Moghaneh and the culture of Zurkhaneh (Nikobakht, its formation was formed has led experts to look at this important element from different angles, and by matching its features with some symbols, narratives and socio-cultural components in the past, the creation and reasons for its creation in time attribute to the history of the ancient land of Iran. The study of the origin of Zurkhaneh is important, because it can help define its identity and understand its insight. Because perspective is an objective element that is formed in the mind of the society associated with it, has takes place throughout history and is influenced by the culture, beliefs and lifestyle of each historical period. In general, three eras have been stated regarding the origin of Zurkhaneh in the studies.

**A. The origin of Zurkhaneh and its structure is derived from the idea of Mehr:** One of the narrations that has been presented by some experts in the last fifty years is that, the formation of Zurkhaneh and ancient sports are based on the emphasis of Mehr ritual. Some regard the Zurkhaneh in Iran to be more than three thousand years old (Zarei & Siah Sarani Kojouri, 2018, 722). Regarding some symbolic and content similarities between Zurkhaneh and the beliefs in the Mehr religion, it is thought that this sport was formed at that time and has been established in Iranian culture over time.

The origins of ancient Iranian sports, as its name suggests, date back to pre-Islamic era. This sport inspired by pre-Islamic religious thought (Mehri religion and Zoroastrian religion) and many beliefs and rituals of those religions have been shown in this sport (Heidari & Dolatshah, 2013, 70).

The identity of heroism and chivalry has

existed among Iranians in the past, the source of which should be sought in the religion of Mehr (Aminizadeh & Bastani, 2014, 68). The ancient Iranians believed that their spiritual happiness would be possible as a result of having a healthy and strong body (Doostkhah, 1992, 141). This is due to the fact that one of the great goals of Iranians in martial arts and wrestling, in the past has been for preparing themselves for wrestling and hand-to-hand combat (Kazemeini, 1967a, 29). On the other hand, the building of Zurkhaneh and its customs because of numerous reasons are, similar and close to the customs of Mehr, and these customs have been perceived by Zurkhaneh workers (Elahi, 1994, 732), have been studied by different people.

Mehrdad Bahar in the introduction of the book *Socio-cultural study of Tehran Zurkhanehs*, the common customs in Zurkhaneh states that they are related to the Mehr religion in Iran and Rome (Goodarzi, 2004, 165). In another article, he regards the origin of this sport as the idea of Mehr and regards examples such as being naked, masculine, deep set etc. to be the effect of the ritual of Mehr in this sport (Heidari & Dolatshah, 2013, 58). Some scholars have suggested other reasons for adapting this place to Mehr. As Mehri rituals were often performed in caves, but in cities where there were no caves, these temples were built in the basement. In other words, the temples had to be placed in a pit. There were no holes and light in these temples (Seirafi, 2009, 20).

**B. Zurkhaneh originated in Iran after the Islamic era:** Another time to which the emergence of Zurkhaneh is attributed is the beginning of Islam and after the Arab invasion of Iran. Some experts believe that Zurkhaneh was actually a secret place for the Iranians to prepare for the fight.

By establishing and expanding the Zurkhaneh throughout the country, the Iranians established the first centers of independence behind the scenes of sports camouflage, and began to grow

stronger with a bar that resembled a sledgehammer and a Kabadeh, which is like bows and stones instead of shields, and actually imitation weapons of war. They fought to build their bodies stronger for better use of the main weapons of war (Kazemeini, 1967b, 55).

and And Zurkhaneh has been the center of secret training for the fighters of the Iranian liberation movement after the Arab invasion. Zurkhaneh tools are similar to the weapons of the past. Iranians who intended to go out against the Arabs practiced war in secret and underground places (Elahi, 1994, 731).

According to this theory, in Islamic era, with the spread of Sufism, monasteries<sup>1</sup> and Zurkhanehs were combined (Aminizadeh & Bastani, 2014, 68) and the establishment of Zurkhaneh at that time was decided by Ayaran. Ayaran was a group that emerged in the middle of the first century AH. Some historians have regarded their connection the Sassanid era. Brave, gentle and selfless men whose job was to take part in various wars, sometimes engaged in robbery and had strange customs (Askari Nouri & Taheri Khoshno, 2009, 139). Zurkhaneh has been a place for Ayaran gathering (Insafpour, 1974, 21). According to this theory, some correspondences between Zurkhaneh ritual and Ayaran ritual have been studied.

One of the etiquettes of Zurkhaneh is to strip the hero naked during sports, because during the war, Ayaran had to go to war with their naked bodies to express their ultimate self-sacrifice, and only wore a limp around their waists (Bakhoda, 2013, 187).

And in another part The building of Zurkhaneh, in its shortness and weightlessness, is similar to a hideout, and its pit remains like a hole in a pool, and the Fatian and Ayarans first made movements and sweats in the morning in the bathhouse and the hole of the pool and prepared their bodies (ibid., 176).

And The nakedness of the champions in

Zurkhaneh may be inspired by the idea of Ayaran and Shatran (a branch of Seifi Fotovat) who went to war with their naked bodies, and this action is believed to be due to their intense interest in Hazrat Hamza Seyyed al-Shohada who did not wear clothes in wars (Heidari & Dolatshah, 2013, 63).

In this theory, it is believed that there were documents that indicate the prevalence of wrestling and the names of the heroes of the battlefields at that date, but it was destroyed during the Moghal invasions of Iran (Kazemeini, 1967a, 30).

**c. Zurkhaneh was established after the Moghal invasion of Iran:** The Moghal invasion of Iran marked the beginning of great changes in the history and society of the Iranian land. Proponents of this theory believe that Zurkhaneh emerges as a popular institution with a political origin and with a national and religious approach after the Moghal invasion (Goodarzi, 2004, 168) and actually the origin of the name Zurkhaneh is generally from the Moghal era. And it reaches its peak in the Safavid era (ibid, 164) and the uprising of the Sarbadars<sup>2</sup> and even the Safavids is under the influence of Zurkhaneh (Kazemeini, 1967b, 55)

The sages and scientists, who are the guides and leaders of the people, because they knew the benefits of sports and its necessity, sought to provide a means by which people could regain their health, strength and power through exercise and sports. The creation of Zurkhaneh is the result of the thoughts and ideas of this group of people. This means that in remote places and in hidden basements, they established holy centers (Rahavard, 1956, 140).

As the history shows, the first person to design the Zurkhaneh in the style that still remains the hero of Mahmoud Pouria Vali. He lived in the second half of the seventh century (ibid., 141) and (Seddiq Imani, 1964, 6). This era coincides with the spread of Sufism in Iran, as Sufis in

monasteries and temples cultivate their souls to confront the enemy. They were preparing the outside (soul) and the heroes were preparing to fight the external and internal enemy in the Zurkhanehs by strengthening their physical strength (Heidari & Dolatshah, 2013, 59). One of the signs of Sufism's influence in ancient sports is the resemblance of monasteries and evils to Zurkhaneh (Darogheh Kazem, 1999, 75).

The reason for Sardam<sup>3</sup> in Zurkhaneh dates back to the era of of Sufism. Some also believe that by sitting in such a place, the Murshid could easily perform the rituals and compliments of Zurkhaneh on the right side of those entering and leaving (Amid, 1953, 211).

And The reason of building a domed roof and a glass window at its highest point is the athletes' attention from the bottom of the pit to the endless sky and the embodiment of the existence of the infinite essence of transcendence, where all the actions and behaviors of athletes are performed inside the pit and under the roof of Zurkhaneh (Askari Nouri & Taheri Khoshno, 2009, 142).

**d. Zurkhaneh was formed during the Safavid era:** One of the most popular theories about the formation of Zurkhaneh is this period of history. There are many reasons for this theory. One of the important reasons is the lack of reference to Zurkhaneh in Persian literature before Safavid era.

Zurkhaneh and its gymnastic programs seem to have arisen when wrestling had become a respectable profession, although it seems that it was not mentioned in Persian books until the end of the seventeenth century (Roshar, 2004, 55). And (Goodarzi, 2004, 164).

According to this theory, although some sports roots may already exist in the Zurkhaneh system, but the sport of Zurkhaneh as it is performed today, dates back to the period of Islamic Iran (Jafari & Ghasemi, 2013, 140) and Thus its architecture and symbols are derived from Shia symbols.

In Islamic architecture, the dome has become a special symbol for places of journey and Shia holy shrine (*ibid.*, 152).

### Functions of Zurkhaneh

Understanding a work or product depends on understanding its position and its relationship with its community. Actually, the connection that a place has with man and society can give it a landscape identity, so that the place can be interpreted. If Zurkhaneh as a cultural work can be understood correctly and comprehensively as well as to what is viewed from the perspective of today's science, it goes beyond, would be measured and analyzed in the field of thought and civilization that emerged from it (*Afsarian, 2016, 80*). The complexity of the emergence of Zurkhaneh in Iranian history also affects its functions. Each of the theories presented in the previous section, expressed by different experts, has different functions for this sports venue. Sports that have made this place have a special place in Iranian culture other than functions and the preservation of national identity. Some of these functions are:

**a. Promoting Shia Religion:** Regardless of the history of Zurkhaneh, the most important identity that has been acquired for this place throughout history has been a sacred and ritual place for the Shia religion. Zurkhanehs have been sacred places that have been active in promoting Shiism and strengthening the beliefs of this thought, and in different eras, while preserving these teachings and passing them on to the next generations, succeeded in its institutionalizing Alawiism<sup>4</sup> among the classes of society (*Jafari & Ghasemi, 2013, 140*). The place of religion in Zurkhaneh is such that it shows this place as sacred as far as Zurkhaneh is regarded as the second mosque (*Bustani & Aminizadeh, 2013, 124*), this sport gradually became so connected with Shia teachings and was integrated with it, that performing sports movements without

resorting to Shia beliefs is a soulless thing (*Jafari & Ghasemi, 2013, 141*). at a time when Shia religious ceremonies were severely attacked, and Husseiniyahs and Takayas were under control and sometimes closed, Shia recitations resonated in Zurkhanehs and early morning (*ibid.*, 161). This function has given a special meaning to Zurkhaneh. A sports place that has found a religious and sacred function.

**b. A place to perform religious resources:** In addition to promoting Shia thought, the Zurkhaneh has been a place for performing religious rituals such as Ashura<sup>5</sup> mourning. In such a way, on different occasions such as the Taziye of Imam Hussein (AS) poems were recited or the propagation of Jafari Shia religion was done (*Afsarian, 2016, 83*). This, due to the position of the Shia religion among Iranians, particularly from the Safavid era onwards, deepened the religious meaning of Zurkhaneh. During the Safavid period, Sardam became an important pulpit for the spread of the Shia religion among the people, especially during Ramadan and also during the days of mourning for Imam Hussein (*Jafari & Ghasemi, 2013, 155*).

**c. Promoting a sense of nationalism:** In addition to religious identity, it is mentioned as a national element in all narrations related to the establishment of Zurkhaneh. Thus, the elements in it were designed in a way that could stimulate this feeling. Zurkhaneh has been regarded as a social institution to strengthen the national and religious spirit of the people, and to transmit the Iranian mythological and epic culture in society (*Blockbashi, 2004, 38*). Belief in nationality and a sense of belonging to the Zurkhaneh is really strong among arch Greco-Romanologists. They regarded Zurkhaneh as the homeland and had lots of respect for the homeland and consequently for Zurkhaneh (*Bustani & Aminizadeh, 2013, 116*). Zurkhaneh is a place to strengthen the spirit of nationalism to the highest degree. Epic and national poems recited by Ferdowsi, along with

the heartfelt song of Murshid, have a profound effect on the nationalist spirit in the people present in the Zurkhaneh (Aminizadeh & Bastani, 2014, 69).

This function can introduce Zurkhaneh as a special landscape that has a national and religious identity. Although Iranian Islamic architecture as an important concept has different symbols, but few architectural elements can be found that could define these two meanings together for society.

**d. People are the same:** In Zurkhaneh, wealth and social status are not considered and it is the only position of sportsmanship, piety and purity that governs the ranks of individuals (Kazemeini, 1967b, 61) and the position of individuals is a fan of the tradition of respect for elders and veterans (Yasini, 2016, 37). Nudity inside the Zurkhaneh, which helps the egalitarianism of individuals, is itself the basis for equality and brotherhood (Elahi, 1994, 739). The similarity of people in the Zurkhaneh environment has made it possible to create a balanced interaction between this element and the people of the community, and to pave the way for a common understanding of space.

**e. An association for the lower classes of society:** Zurkhaneh is a place where people can distinguish themselves from others, to achieve a kind of social integration (Roshar, 2004, 53). Usually these people were from the lower classes of society who could communicate with each other in this place and establish and display their power. This is because the morality of Zurkhaneh is actually a kind of aspiration of social justice that the poor have always sought in the heroes of salvation (Elahi, 1994, 740). Zurkhaneh is one of the most popular figures and it is a reliable support for the poor and the manifestation of truth, courage, resistance to oppression, cruelty and tyranny (Zarei & Siah Sarani Kojouri, 2018, 722).

The communities that made up the members of

the Zurkhanehs were the minimum wage workers, the concierges, the water-carriers, the porters, the woodcutters, the selahkesh, the sumpter, (low-income sellers) who did not have much income or were mystics and thinkers who were the spiritual leaders of these classes (Yasini, 2016, 37).

One of the reasons for the survival of Zurkhaneh in history has been its belonging to lower social classes. Actually, being in the heart of society has led Zurkhaneh to have different functions in different eras according to the conditions and requirements, and to be maintained by the same society.

**f. Communication:** There were various elements in the urban space that created a platform for communication between the people and citizens. Zurkhaneh is a traditional communication center in Iranian popular culture. Traditional communication centers in Iranian society as well as other similar societies have played an undeniable role in the formation, moral education and determination of the origins of these societies and their individuals (Elahi, 1994, 726).

Zurkhaneh as well as the mosque, public bathhouse and coffee house or tea house form the social and communicative centers of Iran (Roshar, 2004, 74).

The human need for communication in the society of ancient Iran has defined a special function for Zurkhaneh so that people can overcome their needs and expand their interactions with society.

**g. Helping others:** In the past, benevolence and helping the needy has been associated with the sporting spirit of Zurkhaneh (Zarei & Siah Sarani Kojouri, 2018, 721). The space in the Zurkhanehs and the activities and going and coming of the elders and heroes to this place, seeing them in the local community went to the Zurkhaneh to consult and get help and see these people.

The people of Zurkhaneh were mostly those who went to Zurkhaneh to solve the problems of their daily or professional life rather than sport (Elahi, 1994, 740).

and Zurkhaneh helps to create a supportive atmosphere among the people who do Zurkhaneh sports. This supportive atmosphere is strengthened in the form of aid (Bustani & Aminizadeh, 2013, 122).

**H. Education and culture:** Apart from being a sports venue, Zurkhaneh has become a school for providing high moral and religious education and introducing its pious models (Montazer Al-Ghaem & Haghi, 2018, 89). Treat the audience, including athletes and observers. Zurkhaneh customs teach people to fall, order, respect, self-sacrifice, politeness and generosity (Aminizadeh & Bastani, 2014, 76) & (Blokhashi, 2004, 38).

The architecture and music of Zurkhaneh have features such as simplicity, populism and walkaway that bring them closer to the characteristics of being educational and provide a tool for education (Afsarian, 2016, 81).

Due to the sanctity and religious status of Zurkhaneh, particularly after the Safavid era, the role of Zurkhaneh culture was of special importance. In a way that over time, Zurkhaneh itself had a special culture. A culture that was formed and institutionalized over time.

**i. Gathering of rebels:** The atmosphere of Zurkhaneh has had a special sanctity for a long time and it has been mainly a gathering place for people who have been brought up in a heroic school. But in some times and communities for disturbed reasons, this place has become a gathering place for wicked person. In some cases, Zurkhaneh has been used as a gathering place for the repressive forces in the form of street club wielder and has acted as a paramilitary and informal force to exert pressure on the people (Elahi, 1994, 740).

Not only is it a place of brareally, chivalry, and other traditional values, such as generosity, patience, and chivalry, but it is also known as a haven for wrongdoer people. Men who give their arm force to someone who pays them more (Roshar, 2004, 49).

The expression of this function is important because it indicates the negative use of space that is distinguished with its sanctity from from other sports spaces. In other words, in the course of history and according to the conditions of the time, at certain moments, this sacred space has been given to the incompetent people who formed a part of society. However, this has not harmed the original identity of the Zurkhaneh.

**j. Promoting a spirit of chivalry in society:** Being humble and chivalry have spread not only in sports activities and in the Zurkhaneh pit, but also outside the Zurkhaneh pit, for example to the community, and have left positive effects. The poems used are often epic poems that create a spirit of chivalry and bravery among people present in the Zurkhaneh (Blockhashi, 2004, 38). Belief in nationality and a sense of belonging to the Zurkhaneh is very strong among wrestlers. They considered Zurkhaneh as the homeland and had a lot of respect for the homeland and consequently for Zurkhaneh which has led to promotion in the minds of society. (Bustani & Aminizadeh, 2013, 116).

**k. A place for gathering:** In the simplest narration, Zurkhaneh is a traditional gathering place (Elahi, 1994, 738). A place where different people from different social groups came together. It is important to note that this place was built by young people and relatively lower classes (Jafari & Ghasemi, 2013, 154).

**l. Training and job preparation:** Some jobs required special physical training and the owners of these jobs need a place to practice and exercise. In the nineteenth century, going to public or private Zurkhaneh was part of the daily activities of jugglers, bakers, wrestlers and men who in their daily physical activities were regarded a place for physical training (Roshar, 2004, 74).

**m. Holding social ceremonies:** For a long time, holding some ceremonies such as fundraising and regale in Zurkhanehs on various occasions has been common in ancient times (Bakhoda, 2013,



180); (Zarei & Siah Sarai Kojouri, 2018, 722). This ceremony is held on Fridays or religious occasions (Askari Nouri & Taheri Khoshno, 2009, 147) and honors and giving honor to the experienced and ex- hero or help the families of athletes who did not have enough income to spend their lives (Seddiq Imani, 1964, 14). In addition to meeting the needs of individuals, this work has led to the creation of social solidarity (Tavassoli, 1991, 216). Another ceremony that existed in zurkhanehs was Pagoshaee (inving bride for the first time) (Askari Nouri & Taheri Khoshno, 2009, 147). The performance of this ceremony made the community more connected with Zurkhaneh. The performance of this ceremony made the community more connected with Zurkhaneh.

**n. Nurturing the soul:** In the traditional society of Iran, Zurkhaneh was a sacred place for cultivating the body and strengthening the mind and morals (Blockbashi, 2004, 38). Its main purpose was to cultivate the soul and psyche, and a kind of mystical and spiritual journey for the purity and refinement of the inner and outer man through revelation. The transcendent religious, moral, national and epic concepts in this place were expressed in symbolic language and became important (Montazer al-ghaem & Haghi, 2018, 75 & 88) and octrines that include the method and good character of individuals in their personal and social relationships (Yasini, 2016, 45).

Some believe that doing these travels is used to strengthen muscles and maintain health, but athletes believe that if the purpose of these actions was not the need for heavy exercises such as stone throwing, sledge-hammer and desire, etc. but it could be simple and light activities. Do it like all kinds of exercises (Darogheh Kazem, 1999, 74). and The phenomenon of Zurkhaneh as a cultural companion that has an educational role, uses each of its components (whether music, architecture and literature) to achieve the

ultimate goal of education, ethics and wisdom (Afsarian, 2016, 80).

Basically, Zurkhaneh differs from other sports , and what can give this place a different and unique identity is to pay attention to these themes. No sport has paid as much attention to this issue as the sport performed in the Zurkhaneh. Interestingly, if the same sport is performed in a space other than the Zurkhaneh, it does not evoke the feeling of the Zurkhaneh.

**o. Entertainment and leisure activities:** One of the important functions of Zurkhaneh in ancient times was a space for entertainment of different people in society (Blockbashi, 2004, 40). For example, wrestling between two heroes in the presence of the king and courtiers has been one of the entertainments of ancient kings and officials in Iran (Afshari, 1989, 502). This also led the society to interact more with this architectural element.

## Conclusion

There is a fundamental difference of opinion about the time of creation of Zurkhaneh and why it was created. Some regard its origin to be related to several thousand years ago and it is originated from the Mehr religion, and some regard it to be related to the last five hundred years and at the same time with the Safavid era and the promotion of the Shia religion. But what is common in all these narrations is Zurkhaneh's emphasis on cultivating the body along with the transcendence of the soul and mind. In other words, The common point of view in theories is how the Zurkhaneh functions and purposes in the social space of Iran. A function that introduces this place not only as a place of sports but also as a cultural symbol that has unique characteristics. Zurkhaneh is a place of sports where sport is combined with spirit, personality excellence, education and religion and is unique in this respect. If the place is not regarded as merely a physical place, this ambiguity is the reason why

Zurkhaneh was formed, also indicates the creation of this particular geography throughout history, which has taken on the title of Zurkhaneh.

Landscape can be regarded as a set of symbols and signs that man has created throughout history in interaction and communication with his surroundings. By studying the various functions that were mentioned from the Zurkhaneh, this special Iranian architectural element can be regarded as a landscape. A sports landscape and its extra-sporting functions, such as religious, cultural, social, educational, etc. have given it a unique identity. The secret of Zurkhaneh's survival throughout history has been its multiaspectuality in Iranian society. As a function becomes less important, other aspects of it become more constant over time. This identity is also special in this respect. On the other hand, Zurkhaneh is defined within the society. Regardless of when it came into being, its existential meaning, its various functions, and its formation at the heart of society have led to a different definition of meaning for it. These are signs that can create a unique landscape which has increasingly emphasized the Iranian and Shia aspect over time.

In summarizing the functions of Zurkhaneh, they can be divided into several general categories: sports, religious, social, educational and cultural, and finally different functions. This diversity of functions shows that Zurkhaneh has different characteristics that distinguish it from any other place in Iran and overseas. Creating it in the back alleys of the Iranian city, mixing it with religion, motivating young people with national religious, epic poems, combining physical and mental excellence, using it for different occasions and its role in creating equal interaction between people in the community, unique features of the place gives it a special identity.

Zurkhaneh's main attention to these several aspects has created functions beyond a sports venue for Zurkhaneh in the community.

Zurkhaneh belongs to the middle classes of the society and the people related to this class who used to travel there. However, this effort was not limited to this class. Hence, functions appropriate to the whole society have been formed around the Zurkhaneh. In addition, due to its special atmosphere and the sanctity that has prevailed in this atmosphere over time, it has used its religious capacities in its customs. And because of this, it has played an effective role in society and social movements.

Another point that can be mentioned is the impact of this place on the culture of its surrounding community. In architecture, culture mainly touches the body and causes changes in the shape and appearance of the building. But in this case, it is the place that has played an effective role in promoting a particular culture in society.

Zurkhaneh, as a cultural symbol of ancient Iran, has a unique potential as a cultural tourism attraction that can represent valuable intangible cultural artifacts and customs and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation during the performance of ancient sports.

According to the above issues, Zurkhaneh can be regarded not as a historical place, but as a cultural landscape, that in addition to its material and physical aspect, has a mental and semantic aspect and despite its simple appearance and a really complex concept. It has concealed in itself and provides the possibility for the viewer to be able to interpret it based on mentality. Reviewing the functions of the Zurkhaneh can be effective in creating a landscape perspective.

This becomes even more important when the coverage of concepts combined with this place creates a perspective that is unique in real way. Particularly if this building and its functions are compared with its counterparts at different times. There are many Zurkhanehs in Iranian cities, some of which are based on ancient buildings. However, the new Zurkhanehs have retained the same style

of architecture and old customs. Explaining the functions and landscapes of Zurkhaneh can play a key role in introducing this place and its customs as an intangible heritage, that is unique to ancient Iran and is a landscape tourism destination, and develop the tourist's insight into Iranian Islamic culture.

## Endnote

1. A khanqah or khaniqah, also known as a ribat among other terms – is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood or tariqa and is a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation.
2. The Sarbadars were a mixture of religious dervishes and secular rulers that came to rule over part of western Khurasan in the midst of the disintegration of the Mongol Ilkhanate in the mid-14th century.
3. Sardam is a sacred and respectable place where the Morshed (coach) can perform rituals of Zurkhaneh for inside and outside spectators having control over sacred god. Seat of Morshed is near the entrance door and on a relatively high stand with crescent or square form arch on which some bell's is/are hanging.
4. The Alawis, or Alawites, are a sect of Shia Islam. The Alawites revere Ali, considered the first Imam of the Twelver school. The group is believed to have been founded by Ibn Nusayr during the 9th century.
5. Ashura, also known as Yawm Ashura is the tenth day of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic calendar. For Sunni Muslims, Ashura marks the day that Moses and the Israelites were saved from Pharaoh by God creating a path in the Sea.

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