

How modernism met tradition in Tehran

(Housing development based on collaboration between tradition and modernity in Tehran during the second Pahlavi period)

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Abstract

This essay investigates the housing development of Tehran by considering Iranian's domestic traditions during the modernization of the city in the second Pahlavi period. Tehran as a capital city of Iran since Qajar dynasty has observed all the transitions in architecture from the past to contemporary making it like a museum preserving collections of all evolutions. The influence of modern movement in Iran as an undeniable request of the Pahlavi dynasty had impact on many aspects in the city like housing architecture and urban planning. The impact of modern movement in Iranian architecture is called as Semi-Modernism architecture, which is a result of the encounter between tradition and modernity during the Mohammad Reza Pahlavi period. This style was generated by western-educated Iranian architects and had gradually impact on housing architecture. This study categorize housing development in Tehran in three new types of houses, which partly belonged to the international modern movement and partly became unique as Iranian modern houses. By classifying the new house typology into three types including detached houses, row houses, and high-rise apartments, this study discovers how architecture enables to transmit some aspects of domestic traditions of a traditional house like privacy in house and neighborhood scale and the concept of centralization of a yard in interior plan of the new modern patterns.

Key words: domestic traditions, privacy, house center, traditional house, modern house, Tehran

1. Introduction

Iran was never an isolated country and based on its location in the Middle East and the path of the Silk Road always providing a connection between eastern Asia and western countries. Along with the evolutions of modern movement in the Western countries, the wish of modernity from internal requests pushed Iran for modernization. Therefore, Iran became a place where western countries were ready to affect and locals demanded such influences. Although the country was never a colony of a western country, the influence of modernity as a prior fact in colonialism (Barlow, 1997), changed the situation of Iran as a semi-colonialism of western countries. The desire of modernization for Tehran, which started in Qajar dynasty, enormously requested and expedited from Reza Shah Pahlavi, and later culminated during his son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.