Continuity and Change in Persian Architecture: The Archetypal Heritage

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Abstract

This paper examines the principle of continuity and change in Persian architecture, highlighting how archetypal spatial patterns persist across centuries while accommodating cultural, environmental, and technological transformations. Drawing on Walter Gropius's notion that architecture mediates between tradition and innovation, the study examines the enduring presence of the courtyard archetype, often centered around a water feature, in residential, civic, and religious buildings. From Sassanid palaces and Zoroastrian temples to Safavid urban squares, traditional houses, caravanserais, and madrasas, this spatial model demonstrates both functional and symbolic resilience. The analysis extends beyond architecture to Persian visual culture, showing its reflection in miniature paintings, carpet designs, and cinematic representations, where centrality and water serve as unifying motifs. Through a Gestalt-oriented perspective, the paper emphasizes how principles of rhythm, balance, and axial order create perceptual coherence across changing forms and contexts. By following the evolution of these enduring patterns, the study reveals a continuous dialogue between historical memory and contemporary adaptation, illustrating how Persian architecture integrates practical needs, spiritual meaning, and aesthetic values. Recognizing these archetypes enables modern architects to connect with a deeply rooted architectural heritage, thereby bridging the past and present while informing future design strategies.

Keywords: Persian architecture, central courtyard, architectural archetypes, cultural continuity

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Introduction: Continuity and Change

Walter Gropius's 1952 Harvard lecture, "*Architecture: A Vehicle for Communication*," though not explicitly titled "*Continuity and Change*," is widely associated with that very theme—an idea Gropius evoked repeatedly to describe one of the central challenges facing modern architecture. For Gropius, the task of the architect was not to break from the past in pursuit of the new, but rather to negotiate a meaningful synthesis between tradition and innovation. Architecture, he argued, must respond dynamically to evolving technological, social, and cultural conditions while maintaining an organic continuity with historical precedent.

From this perspective, the notion of *"continuity and change"* offers a compelling conceptual lens through which to understand the historical evolution of architecture. Though Gropius was speaking from within a Western modernist tradition, the principle resonates deeply with the enduring logic of Persian architectural practice—a tradition marked not by rupture but by persistent transformation, whereby form and space are continually reinterpreted in response to environmental, material, and cultural realities. Persian architecture exemplifies a dynamic system in which formal adaptations are guided not only by practical necessity but by an enduring architectural vocabulary capable of absorbing change without losing coherence. (Pope, 1965, p. 112).

Figure 1
Fire Temple (Tappeh Mill), Rey, Iran, 3rd–7th c. CE (Sasanian)

Figure 2
Tarikhaneh Mosque, Damghan, Iran, Mid-8th c. CE; Minaret CA.1026–1029 CE

A clear example of this is found in the use of earthen construction techniques, which have evolved over centuries in response to regional climates and available materials. These techniques do more than meet functional needs—they draw upon and reinterpret inherited

spatial archetypes, demonstrating a profound continuity in architectural thought. This can be observed in the historical mosque of Damghan, where brick construction reimagines the monumental stone architecture of the Sasanian era. The arches, in particular, do not merely replicate earlier forms; they translate the tectonic and symbolic language of ancient precedents into a new material context, preserving spatial memory while producing something formally distinct. In this gesture, the architecture enacts both continuity and change, offering a visual and spatial manifestation of historical dialogue.

To analyze this endurance beyond surface resemblance, a Gestalt-oriented lens is useful. Persian architecture privileges legible wholeness—ordered courtyards, axial hierarchies, dome–iwan sequences, and clear figure–ground relations—so that parts read as moments of a coherent field (Arnheim, 1974). What persists is not a fixed image but a set of perceptual principles: rhythm, balance, centrality, and spatial enclosure calibrated to climate and use. This constancy enables resilience—an openness to innovation that remains anchored in cultural memory.

The paper proceeds in two moves. First, it clarifies what is meant by "Persia," arguing that political geography alone is insufficient and proposing a phenomenological reading attentive to the cultural atmosphere of place. Second, it traces one foundational archetype across time, following its transformations rather than narrating a strictly linear history. The aim is to show how a durable architectural grammar accommodates change, allowing Persian architecture to renew itself while staying recognizably itself.

Where is Persia?

In contemporary terms, Persia is often associated with the region known as the East. But where, in truth, is this "East"? Too often, the term is used to refer to a generalized area, one that glosses over the distinct identities, cultures, and histories it encompasses.

The etymology of East and West is not merely about cardinal directions; each evokes an entire world within cultural imagination. Unlike North and South, which can be more readily explained through geographic phenomena such as the angle and intensity of sunlight, East and West are less tied to physical orientation and more deeply connected to symbolic and cultural meaning. While the natural conditions of light and season may appear similar, their significance only emerges once a point of reference is established. It is this point of origin that imbues East and West with meaning.

Figure 3
Landscape of Persia

In the traditional Persian worldview, however, spatial orientation was conceived differently. These directions were not determined by external geopolitical frameworks but by a cosmological and cultural understanding of space, rooted in the sun's movement and the perceived boundaries of the inhabited world (Yarshater, 1983).

As Abbas Kiarostami says:

> In a bird's eye
> The West is where
> The sun sets.
> And the East is where
> The sun rises.
> That's all.

On the other hand, the East draws upon a rich array of spiritual and metaphysical traditions that do not necessarily follow the same dichotomies. Persian philosophy, like other Eastern systems, tends to emphasize unity rather than duality, intuition over reason, and the interrelatedness of being rather than its categorization. Thinkers such as Zoroaster, Suhrawardi, and later Rumi explored the relationship between light and existence, the harmony between the visible and the invisible, and the poetic essence of dwelling in the world (Corbin, 1993). Thus, while the West may look to Greece and Rome as the foundation of its worldview, the East, and Persia in particular, refers to a different lineage—one where wisdom is often poetic, the sacred is intimately woven into the everyday, and architecture itself becomes a form of philosophical expression.

With this introduction, the path of our description and understanding of Persia is determined. Although it pays attention to geography, it also follows a poetic path of understanding.

Persia as a Cultural Domain

Figure 4
The Greater Persian World

The term *Persia*, as used in this paper, warrants clarification, as modern political boundaries do not reflect the full historical and cultural extent of the region. Historically, *Greater Persia* encompassed a vast area of Central Asia and the Middle East. This included not only the geographic core of contemporary Iran but also extended to parts of Central Asia, Afghanistan, the Caucasus, southern Russia, and Pakistan (Frye, 1989; Yarshater, 1983).

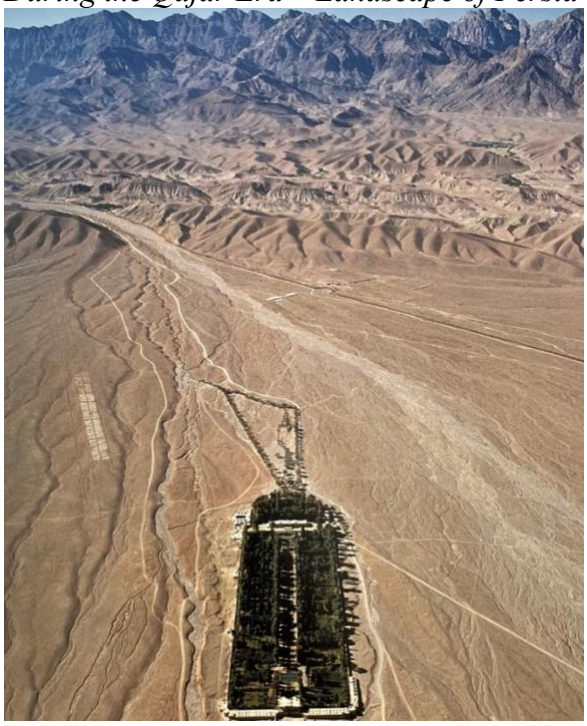
While present-day Iran represents the heartland of this ancient domain, Persian cultural and linguistic influence has long extended far beyond its borders. Even in the absence of political control, the imprint of Persian civilization is evident across regions—from Central Asia to the Caucasus and parts of East Asia—through shared rituals, customs, architectural forms, and literary traditions. The widespread presence of Persian manuscripts, poetry, and celebrated figures in these areas attests to this lasting influence.

> Persian art and architecture have a rich heritage that stretches far beyond the borders of modern-day Iran, from the Abbasid monuments of Baghdad to the splendid Timurid buildings of Samarkand and Bukhara. This merging of influences resulted in a distinctive artistic style that spread through the Middle East, reflected in monumental architecture and in art forms that range from expressive miniature paintings to sumptuous carpets and ceramics. (Stierlin, 2012, p. 25)

Richard N. Frye (1989) defines Persia as encompassing all lands and peoples where Persian languages are spoken, as well as those influenced by Persian culture. In his view, Persia includes large portions of the Caucasus, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, and even extends to China and western India through cultural diffusion.

Landscape and Climate of Persia

Figure 5
View of Shazdeh Garden (Mahan, Kerman) – Built c. 1850 (Initial) and Expanded c. 1870 During the Qajar Era – Landscape of Persia



Persia, a vast and ancient land, unfolds as a living mosaic of natural wonders and a tapestry of light and landscape, where each region tells a story of resilience, beauty, and transformation. From the towering Alborz Mountains in the north to the sun-scorched deserts of the central plateau, the land's diversity is mirrored in its climate.

Rising majestically along the southern edge of the Caspian Sea, the Alborz Mountains are the northern sentinels of Persia. Their snow-capped peaks, including the revered Mount Damavand, pierce the sky, casting their long shadows over the fertile plains below. These mountains not only shape the climate but also the spirit of the land, providing a sanctuary where the cool, moist air nurtures lush forests and vibrant life.

Stretching from the northwest to the southeast, the Zagros Mountains form the backbone of Persia. Their rugged ridges and deep valleys have been the cradle of civilization, witnessing the ebb and flow of empires. The Zagros, with their rich biodiversity and ancient oak forests, offer a stark contrast to the arid expanses of the central plateau, creating microclimates that sustain diverse ecosystems.

To the south lies the Persian Gulf, a warm embrace that has long been a crossroads of trade and culture. Its waters, shimmering under the relentless sun, reflect the golden hues of the desert sands. The coastal plains are characterized by high humidity and scorching summers, where the heat is tempered by the cooling sea breeze, influencing the architectural forms and lifestyles of the region. In the north, the Caspian Sea offers a subtropical climate, where the land is kissed by the moisture-laden winds from the sea. This region is a tapestry of dense forests, verdant hills, and fertile plains, where agriculture thrives.

But, at the heart of Persia lies the vast expanse of the central deserts—the Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut. These arid lands, with their salt flats and shifting dunes, are among the hottest and driest places on Earth. Yet, within this harshness lies a profound beauty, where the play of light and shadow creates a landscape that is both desolate and mesmerizing.

Water, scarce in many parts and is also revered for its life-giving properties. In the arid central plateau, qanats channel subterranean streams, whispering life into oases. Along the Caspian coast, the abundant rainfall nourishes lush forests and fertile plains. In the south, the waters of the Persian Gulf moderate the climate, offering a cool respite from the intense sun.

Although forests and mountain ranges are present throughout the region, it is the vast plains and expansive deserts that most vividly define its characteristic landscape. These open terrains, shaped by centuries of wind, sun, and minimal rainfall, create a powerful impression of space, silence, and light. The sheer scale of the deserts—such as the Dasht-e Kavir and Dasht-e Lut—establishes a dominant geographical identity, influencing not only the physical environment but also cultural expressions, architectural responses, and modes of habitation. In this context, the landscape is not merely a backdrop but an active agent in shaping the experience of place.

Birthing an Archetype

Figure 6

Relief of Taq-e Bostan, Figure of Anahita – Dated to the Late 3rd–4th Century CE (Sasanian Period, Reign of Khosrow II)

As discussed in the section on Persia, a significant portion of the Iranian plateau is characterized by a hot and arid climate, where the availability and preservation of water is not just a necessity, but the foundation of survival. In such an environment, agriculture, livestock, and settlement planning, and even spiritual life, were deeply intertwined with the management of water resources. The significance of water in Persian life extended far beyond its utilitarian value. Across ancient civilizations, water was revered as a divine life-giving force. In the Indo-Iranian spiritual tradition, this reverence was embodied in the figure of Anahita, the goddess of water, fertility, healing, and purity. Anahita's worship predates Zoroastrian monotheism and was often practiced in conjunction with Mithraism. Yet her importance endured well into the Zoroastrian period—unusual for a polytheistic deity in a monotheistic culture—testifying to her profound cultural and symbolic influence (Boyce, 1983).

This enduring reverence is powerfully depicted in the Taq-e Bostan reliefs, where Anahita appears alongside Ahura Mazda, the supreme god of Zoroastrianism. In the coronation scene of Khosrow Parviz, Anahita stands to the left of the king, mirroring the position of Ahura Mazda on the right, both flanking the monarch.

Anahita’s symbolism resonates with universal archetypes of water as a source of life, rebirth, and purification—motifs that continue in Hindu rituals in the Ganges, in Christian baptism, and in the practices of the Mandaeans of southern Persia, one of the last surviving Gnostic religions, for whom water remains a sacred element in every rite.

Given Anahita’s exalted status, it is no surprise that her temples were constructed with the same reverence and architectural precision as fire temples and Mithraic sanctuaries. Among the most distinguished is the Anahita Temple at Bishapur—a remarkable structure that embodies both spiritual grandeur and symbolic clarity.

Figure 7

Anahita Temple, Bishapur – c. Mid-3rd Century CE (Sasanian)

The temple is organized around a square plan, a layout characteristic of fire temples, featuring a central courtyard enclosed by roofed corridors. Yet, in contrast to the fire-centered design of Zoroastrian shrines, the heart of this temple contains flowing water: a broad, shallow pool fed by subterranean channels. This substitution is more than functional—it is deeply symbolic, placing water, the sacred element of the goddess Anahita, at the spiritual and spatial core of the sanctuary.

In this context, the Anahita temple—and Persian architecture more broadly—becomes a mirror of cosmology, a material embodiment of belief systems, and an architectural response to the physical constraints of its environment. Light, water, fire, and geometry converge in the Persian architectural tradition not merely as elements of construction but as carriers of meaning, shapers of atmosphere, and extensions of sacred thought. These values and sensibilities form the foundation of the Persian Gestalt, in which architecture is never just built—it is composed, revealed, and experienced as a living symbol of the world.

This same conceptual framework is evident in the Takht-e Soleyman Fire Temple complex in Takab, one of the most significant Zoroastrian religious sites of the Sasanian period. Here, a large, natural spring-fed lake occupies the center of a fortified sacred precinct. The complex is carefully organized around this body of water, and the presence of the lake becomes the generative force for the spatial composition of the entire ensemble. The fire temple, although focused on fire as the central element of Zoroastrian worship, is situated in close dialogue with water. The centrality of water in this context is not coincidental; rather, it reflects a deliberate spatial and spiritual decision.

This model is not limited to sacred architecture. It extends to royal and civic buildings as well, such as the Palace of Ardeshir Babakan near Firuzabad. Constructed with a monumental iwan and a domed hall, the palace is organized around a large pool that reflects the architecture itself, creating a powerful sense of symmetry. Just as the water physically reflects the building, it also reflects the philosophical ideals underpinning Persian rulership and cosmology, and one that positions water not only as a practical resource but also as a spiritual and aesthetic center of architectural composition (Huff, 1986).

The architectural pattern of placing water at the heart of the built environment became one of the defining characteristics of Iranian architecture. This timeless concept spans centuries and

various building typologies. This centrality of water is not merely a climatic response but represents a deeper cosmological and metaphysical orientation rooted in Persian thought. Understanding this pattern is crucial for grasping the essence of the Persian Gestalt—a worldview in which architecture, nature, and spirituality are intertwined—and the archetypal foundations of Iranian spatial culture.

Figure 8

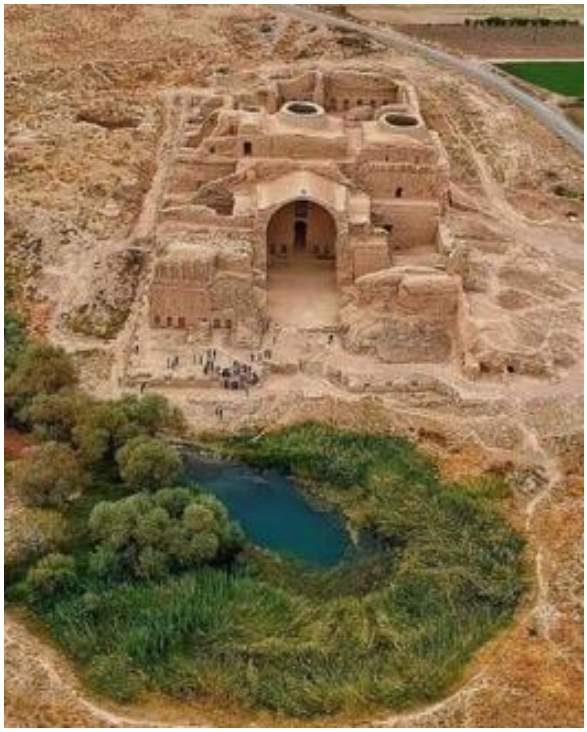
Fire Temple of Takht-e Soleyman (Azar Gushnasp), Takab, Iran – Constructed During the Sasanian Period (5th–6th Century CE)

As Christopher Alexander insightfully states in *The Timeless Way of Building*,

> The patterns of events have always been inextricably linked to the place. Every building or city is ultimately made up of these place patterns and nothing else. These patterns are the atoms and molecules that make up the building or city. (Alexander, 1979, p. 65)

The persistence of this archetype is evident in its Gestalt continuity, extending from the Sassanid Palace of Ardeshir Babakan (c. 224–240 CE) to the Safavid palaces of the 17th century, such as Ali Qapu and Chehel Sotoun. Despite the temporal distance and the shifting socio-cultural contexts, the essential spatial logic of a central, ordered structure remained intact, while its expression adapted to new aesthetic, functional, and ideological requirements. In this way, the archetype demonstrates both resilience and flexibility, enabling it to adapt to changing cultural values without compromising its underlying form.

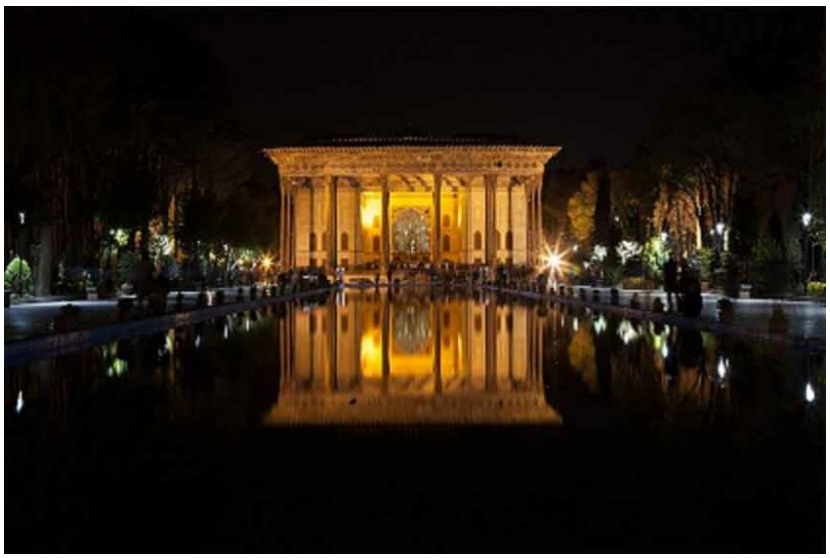
Figure 9
Palace of Ardashir I (Ardashir Babakan), Firuzabad (Fars, Iran) – Built AD 224 (Sasanian Period)



In this way, the ancient model continually adapted itself to the cultural and ideological needs of its time. This enduring pattern—a central water feature around which architecture is organized—was not merely symbolic. Its success lay in its profound adaptability to ritual, belief systems, natural values, environmental conditions, and functional needs.

Development of the Arceotype

Figure 10
Ali Qapu Palace, Isfahan – c. 1597 CE (Safavid Era)



This model evolved across architectural typologies. In residences, it appeared as the *howz* (pool) in the center of traditional courtyard homes, creating a focal point for daily life and providing evaporative cooling in the harsh summer heat. In mosques and madrasas, the central courtyard, featuring water ablution pools, offered both spiritual purification and thermal regulation. In caravanserais, it served as a serene, shaded respite for traveling merchants in the midst of the desert, while in palatial gardens, it reflected paradise itself, as expressed in the concept of *chahar bagh* (the fourfold garden), a manifestation of the Quranic vision of heaven.

Figure 11

The Central Courtyard in Traditional Iranian Houses Across Historical Periods, With a Central Pool

Architecturally, central courtyards in traditional Persian houses are typically enclosed by high walls, establishing a strong sense of privacy, security, and inward orientation. Within this protective shell, a cool microclimate is skillfully created through a careful interplay of shade, vegetation, and water elements.

Figure 12

Central Courtyard in Urban Caravansaries

The pools and fountains at the center of these courtyards serve a dual purpose: functionally, they lower ambient temperatures through evaporation, and symbolically, they express ideas of purity, life, and renewal. Water, in this context, becomes both a physical necessity and a metaphysical presence.

Persian residential architecture acts as a vital mediator between the natural landscape and the built environment. This relationship is most clearly articulated in the courtyard house, where the central open space not only regulates climate but also serves as a spatial and symbolic core. Nature is invited in, but always within a carefully structured frame. As noted by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "In traditional Islamic and Persian art, the presence of water is not merely for aesthetic delight but reflects metaphysical truths—the reflection of the heavens, the purification of the soul, and the center of order" (Nasr, 1987).

Figure 13
Abbasi House, Kashan, Constructed Late 18th Century CE

Thus, this architectural logic represents more than a pattern—it is a worldview made spatial, a gestalt that fuses functionality with meaning, and matter with spirit.

The development of the central courtyard archetype is pervasive in nearly all typologies of traditional Persian architecture. One of its most enduring applications is found in the design of caravanserais—both urban and out of the city—which consistently adopt this model. In these structures, the central courtyard serves not only as a spatial and organizational core but also as a practical element. The water basin located at the center provides essential drinking water for weary travelers and their animals, reinforcing the integration of function and symbolic form.

Figure 14
Zein-o-Din Caravanserai, Yazd – Built 1606 CE (Safavid Period)

This architectural pattern was particularly suited to the extensive network of caravanserais along the Silk Road, which traversed the Iranian plateau. These roadside inns, spaced at regular intervals, offered rest and security for caravans navigating the arduous trade routes, and the central courtyard configuration proved to be an adaptable and resilient typology. Over time, variations in form emerged in response to site conditions, aesthetic developments, and functional needs. However, the essential spatial logic of the courtyard remained intact.

As Walter Gropius (1965) emphasized, the architectural principle of "continuity and change" is observable in the evolution of Iranian caravanserais. A particularly innovative example is the Zein al-Din Caravanserai, located between Kerman and Yazd. While this structure employs a rare circular plan, it nevertheless preserves the defining element of the central courtyard. This continuity highlights the enduring influence of the archetypal spatial organization rooted in Persian architectural heritage. The design of Zein al-Din not only reflects a creative reinterpretation of traditional forms but also underscores the persistent relevance of historical spatial logics within evolving architectural expressions.

The central courtyard typology finds one of its most refined expressions in the architectural layout of mosques and madrasas (Islamic schools). These spaces were not only religious or educational centers but also cultural and social hubs, and the courtyard functioned as the spatial and symbolic heart of these institutions.

Figure 15

The Greater Persian World

In mosques, the central courtyard (sahn) frequently contains a pool or fountain for ritual ablution (wudu), an essential practice in preparation for prayer. The physical act of purification is thus performed within an architecturally demarcated and symbolically charged space. As Oleg Grabar notes, the presence of water in Islamic architecture is not merely functional but

also serves a metaphysical purpose, representing purity, paradise, and the divine presence (Grabar, 1987). In schools, the courtyard becomes a tranquil zone for intellectual reflection and scholarly gatherings. It mediates between individual study rooms (hujra), lecture halls (darskhaneh), and communal prayer spaces. According to Nasser Rabbat, the design of madrasas during the Islamic Golden Age followed a model where "the central courtyard became the space of intellectual community" (Rabbat, 1997, p. 145).

The continuity of the central courtyard model is evident across nearly all typologies of Persian architecture; however, its evolution in two distinct domains—urban public spaces and interior architectural environments—is particularly noteworthy.

Figure 16
Shah Mosque, Isfahan

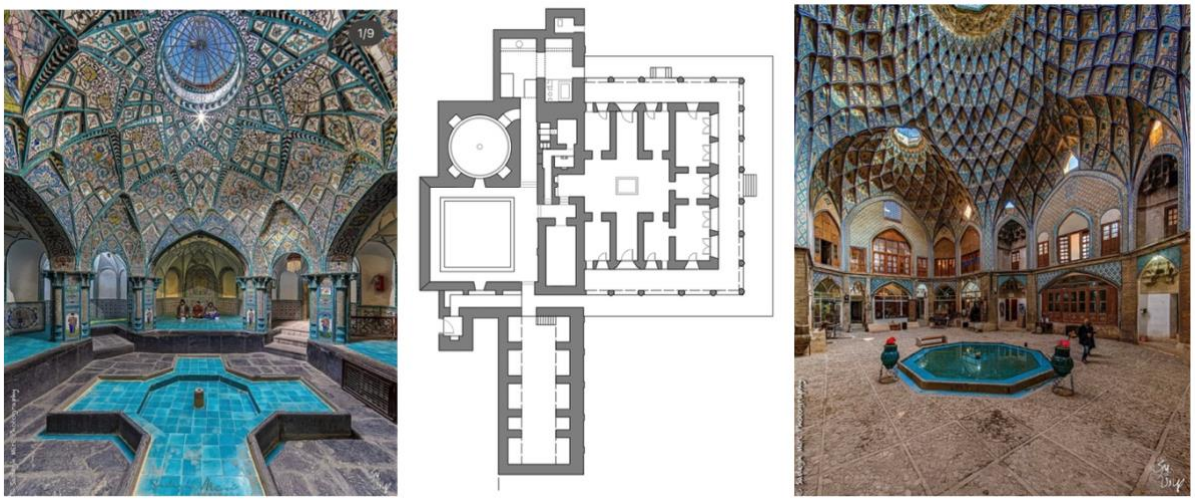
A prominent urban manifestation of this model is Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan, one of the most significant achievements of Safavid urban planning. Here, the spatial logic of the traditional courtyard house is expanded to an urban scale. The vast open space at the center functions analogously to a residential courtyard, creating an enclosed yet open civic nucleus. Around it, cardinally oriented structures such as the Shah Mosque, the Ali Qapu Palace, the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, and the Imperial Bazaar frame the space with functional and symbolic coherence. As Lisa Golombek has observed, this square integrates political, religious, commercial, and social functions into a unified spatial composition, echoing the gestalt of introverted Persian architecture on a monumental civic scale (Golombek, 1992).

Figure 17
Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Isfahan, Built 1598–1629

The application of this archetype in interior spaces is equally significant. In structures such as public baths (hammams), the central placement of water not only had symbolic resonance but also practical functionality, serving the bathing rituals in an enclosed, often domed, environment. The integration of light through oculi in the ceiling and the reflection of water on tiled surfaces further enhanced the sensory experience, reinforcing the connection between purification and architectural space.

This architectural logic is strikingly evident in commercial architecture as well. The Timcheh Amin al-Dowleh in the Kashan Bazaar exemplifies the synthesis of functional space and archetypal form. Despite being a covered commercial hub with elaborate muqarnas vaulting, the central water basin anchors the spatial composition. Here, the presence of water is not functionally necessary, yet it persists, highlighting the enduring symbolic weight of water and the courtyard archetype in Persian architectural thought.

Figure 18
The Greater Persian World



This phenomenon extends even into private, residential interiors. In the Sadrzadeh House in Sirjan, for instance, a water basin occupies the center of the reception hall, a space traditionally reserved for social gatherings. As Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar assert, such configurations express an “inner spiritual order” (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 1973).

Pattern Repetition in the Arts

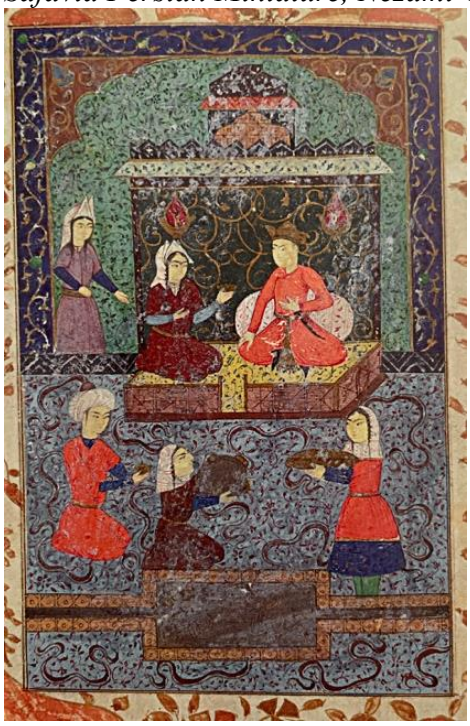
The continuation of this archetype, with the centrally placed water element, can be observed in Persian art, particularly in the tradition of miniature painting. Persian miniatures, which share stylistic affinities with Chinese and other Eastern painting traditions, are deeply connected to the philosophical and cultural concepts of Persian civilization.

A salient example of this archetype appears in the illustrated manuscripts of Nezami Ganjavi’s Khamsa, such as the image provided here. In this scene, the architectural interior of a palace frames a courtly moment: the enthroned king, surrounded by attendants and female figures, is positioned in a symmetrical setting. At the core of this arrangement lies a rectangular water basin—rendered with delicate brushwork and stylized patterns of flowing water—which anchors the composition both visually and symbolically. The presence of water at the center of the royal hall evokes traditional Persian paradigms of the archetype, which are mentioned.

In the famous Haft Paykar miniature, Bahram Gur is shown seated beside a pool in a domed pavilion, with the central basin reflecting the dome above. Likewise, the miniatures illustrating Ferdowsi's Shahnameh often feature palace scenes where courtyards, gardens, or pavilions are organized around a central fountain or pool.

Figure 19

Safavid Persian Miniature, Nezami Ganjavi's Khamsa, 16th Century



Moreover, this spatial archetype is also echoed in the architectural representations within the miniatures themselves. For instance, in Timurid and Safavid illustrated manuscripts, buildings are frequently depicted with open courtyards, symmetrical layouts, and an axial basin that reflects real architectural practices, such as those seen in the Chehel Sotoun Palace in Isfahan or the Timurid gardens of Herat (Grabar, 1987).

Persian miniatures act as condensed cultural texts that reflect broader archetypal principles present in Persian architecture and aesthetics.

In the tradition of Persian carpet weaving—much like in Persian miniature painting—we find the reflection of shared architectural and artistic archetypes. One of the most prominent of these is the archetype of centrality, particularly symbolized through the theme of water. This motif manifests not only in gardens and architecture but also in the intricate internal designs of Persian carpets, such as the one depicted here, a finely woven Kerman carpet.

Figure 20
16th Century Kerman Persian Carpet

This carpet's composition is emblematic of the chahar bagh (four-part garden) and the chartaq (four-arched structure), where a central axis or space, often featuring water, forms the heart of the design. In the carpet, this is echoed through the large, ornate central medallion, which mirrors the placement of a water basin at the intersection of architectural axes in traditional Persian garden pavilions and courtyard houses (Blair & Bloom, 1994).

The layered borders of the carpet, each filled with its rhythmic patterns and enclosed scripts of flora, serve a purpose beyond decoration. These concentric borders draw the viewer's eye inward, creating a visual pilgrimage toward the symbolic center. Much like how traditional Persian buildings are organized to lead inhabitants toward a central, serene courtyard.

In this way, the carpet becomes more than a decorative object—it is a portable piece of architecture, a woven microcosm of paradise that transforms interior space and carries metaphysical symbolism into the domestic realm.

Examples of references to the courtyard and the life going on in it are also clearly evident in cinematic works. This centrality of the courtyard in everyday life is powerfully portrayed in Ali Hatami's film Mother, where the courtyard becomes the emotional and ceremonial heart of the home. It is not merely a space for circulation or climate control; it is the axis of memory, ritual, and gathering. Family interactions unfold around this space, underscoring the enduring cultural and symbolic significance of the courtyard as more than architectural—it is a space of domestic sanctity and communal identity. In Dariush Mehrjui's film *Mom's Guest*, the courtyard and its central pond serve as the unifying element for all the residents of the house. In the final scene, a joyful feast is held in the courtyard beside the pond, symbolizing connection, community, and shared life.

Figure 21
Two Scenes of the Mother *Movie (1989) Directed by Ali Hatami*

Conclusion

The archetypal patterns observed in Iranian architecture illustrate just one path within this rich tradition. Yet, they reveal a persistent thread of *continuity and change* across millennia. Despite historical disruptions, the culture maintained its trajectory of growth and transformation, offering lessons for future architectural innovation. Recognizing these ancient models allows contemporary architects to connect meaningfully with a deeply rooted and historically evolved architectural heritage.

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