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PERSIAN ARCHITECTURE

Persian art or Iranian art has one of the richest art heritages in world history and has been strong in many media including architecture, painting, weaving, pottery, calligraphy, metalworking and sculpture. Iranian architecture or Persian architecture Persian is the architecture of Iran and parts of the rest of West Asia, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Its history dates back to at least 5,000 BC with characteristic examples distributed over a vast area from Turkey and Iraq to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and from the Caucasus to Zanzibar. Persian buildings vary from peasant huts to tea houses and garden, pavilions to «some of the most majestic structures the world has ever seen». In addition to historic gates, palaces, and mosques, the rapid growth of cities such as the capital, Tehran (Architecture of Tehran) has brought about a wave of demolition and new construction.

Iranian architecture displays great variety, both structural and aesthetic, from a variety of traditions and experience. Without sudden innovations, and despite the repeated trauma of invasions and cultural shocks, it has achieved «an individuality distinct from that of other Muslim countries». Its paramount virtues are: «a marked feeling for form and scale; structural inventiveness, especially in vault and dome construction; a genius for decoration with a freedom and success not rivaled in any other architecture». Traditionally, the guiding formative motif of Iranian architecture has been its cosmic symbolism «by which man is brought into communication and participation with the powers of heaven».

This theme has not only given unity and continuity to the architecture of Persia, but has been a primary source of its emotional character as well.

According to Persian historian and archaeologist Arthur Pope, the supreme Iranian art, in the proper meaning of the word, has always been its

architecture. The supremacy of architecture applies to both pre- and post-Islamic periods. Categorization of styles Zoroastrian:

The Parsian style (up until the third century BC) including:

- Pre-Parsian style (up until the eighth century BC) e.g. Chogha Zanbil;
- Median style (from the eighth to the sixth century BC);
- Achaemenid style (from the sixth to the fourth century BCE)

manifesting in construction of spectacular cities used for governance and inhabitation (such as Persepolis, Susa, Ecbatana), temples made for worship and social gatherings (such as Zoroastrian temples), and mausoleums erected in honor of fallen kings (such as the Tomb of Cyrus the Great).

The Parthian style includes designs from the following eras: Seleucid era e.g. Anahita Temple, Khorheh, Parthian era e.g. Hatra, the royal compounds at Nysa, Sassanid era e.g. Ghal'eh Dokhtar, the Taq-i Kisra, Bishapur, Darband (Derbent).

Islamic including:

- The Khorasani style (from the late 7th until the end of the 10th century CE), e.g. Jameh Mosque of Nain and Jameh Mosque of Isfahan;
- The Razi style (from the 11th century to the Mongol invasion period) which includes the methods and devices of the following periods: Samanid period, e.g. Samanid Mausoleum, Ziyarid period, e.g. Gonbad-e Qabus, Seljukid period, e.g. Kharragan towers, The Azari style (from the late 13th century to the appearance of the Safavid Dynasty in the 16th century), e.g. Soltaniyeh, Argi Alishah, Jameh Mosque of Varamin, Goharshad Mosque, Bibi Khanum mosque in Samarqand, tomb of Abdas-Samad, Gur-e Amir, Jameh mosque of Yazd.

The Isfahani style spanning through the Safavid, Afsharid, Zand, and Qajarid dynasties starting from the 16th century onward, e.g. Chehelsotoon, Ali Qapu, Agha Bozorg Mosque, Kashan, Shah Mosque, Sheikh Lotf Allah Mosque in Naqsh-e Jahan Square.

Materials. Available building materials dictate major forms in traditional Iranian architecture. Heavy clays, readily available at various places throughout

the plateau, have encouraged the development of the most primitive of all building techniques, molded mud, compressed as solidly as possible, and allowed to dry. This technique, used in Iran from ancient times, has never been completely abandoned. The abundance of heavy plastic earth, in conjunction with a tenacious lime mortar, also facilitated the development and use of brick.

Geometry. Iranian architecture makes use of abundant symbolic geometry, using pure forms such as circles and squares, and plans are based on often symmetrical layouts featuring rectangular courtyards and halls.

Design. Certain design elements of Persian architecture have persisted throughout the history of Iran. The most striking are a marked feeling for scale and a discerning use of simple and massive forms. The consistency of decorative preferences, the high-arched portal set within a recess, columns with bracket capitals, and recurrent types of plan and elevation can also be mentioned.

Through the ages these elements have recurred in completely different types of buildings, constructed for various programs and under the patronage of a long succession of rulers.

The columned porch, or talar, seen in the rock-cut tombs near Persepolis, reappear in Sassanid temples, and in late Islamic times it was used as the portico of a palace or mosque, and adapted even to the architecture of roadside tea-houses. Similarly, the dome on four arches, so characteristic of Sassanid times, is still to be found in many cemeteries and Imamzadehs across Iran today. The notion of earthly towers reaching up toward the sky to mingle with the divine towers of heaven lasted into the 19th century, while the interior court and pool, the angled entrance and extensive decoration are ancient, but still common, features of Iranian architecture.

Persian domes. The Sassanid Empire initiated the construction of the first large-scale domes in Persia (Iran), with such royal buildings as the Palace of Ardashir and Dezh Dokhtar. After the Muslim conquest of the Sassanid Empire, the Persian architectural style became a major influence on Islamic societies and the dome also became a feature of Muslim architecture.

The Il-Khanate period provided several innovations to dome-building that eventually enabled the Persians to construct much taller structures. These changes later paved the way for Safavid architecture. The pinnacle of Il-Khanate architecture was reached with the construction of the Soltaniyeh Dome (1302–1312) in Zanjan, Iran, which measures 50 m in height and 25 m in diameter, making it the 3rd largest and the tallest masonry dome ever erected. The thin, double-shelled dome was reinforced by arches between the layers.

The renaissance in Persian mosque and dome building came during the Safavid dynasty, when Shah Abbas, in 1598, initiated the reconstruction of Isfahan, with the Naqsh-e Jahan Square as the centerpiece of his new capital. Architecturally they borrowed heavily from Il-Khanate designs, but artistically they elevated the designs to a new level.

The distinct feature of Persian domes, which separates them from those domes created in the Christian world or the Ottoman and Mughal empires, was the use of colourful tiles, with which the exterior of domes are covered much like the interior. These domes soon numbered dozens in Isfahan and the distinct blue shape would dominate the skyline of the city. Reflecting the light of the sun, these domes appeared like glittering turquoise gems and could be seen from miles away by travelers following the Silk Road through Persia.

The colours that the Persians favoured were gold, white and turquoise patterns on a dark-blue background.

The extensive inscription bands of calligraphy and arabesque on most of the major buildings were carefully planned and executed by Ali Reza Abbasi, who was appointed head of the royal library and Master calligrapher at the Shah's court in 1598, while Shaykh Bahai oversaw the construction projects.

That's why the architecture of Iran is very interest and important today.

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