A new age in Iranian architecture began with the rise of the Safavid dynasty. Economically robust and politically stable, this period saw a flourishing growth of theological sciences. Traditional architecture evolved in its patterns and methods leaving its impact on the architecture of the following periods.

The appearance of new patterns based on geometrical networks in the development of cities gave order to open urban spaces and took into account the conservation of natural elements (water and plants) within cities. The establishment of distinctive public spaces is one of the most important urban features of the Safavid period, as manifested for example in Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Chahar Bagh and the royal gardens of Isfahan.

Distinctive monuments like the Sheikh Lotfallah (1603), Hasht Behesht (Eight Paradise Palace) (1699; pl. 1) and the Chahar Bagh School (1714) appeared in Isfahan and other cities. This extensive development of architecture was rooted in Persian culture and took form in the design of schools, baths, houses, caravanserais and other urban spaces such as bazaars and squares. It continued until the end of the Qajar reign.

The confrontation of Iran with western civilization that began with the Qajar reign brought political and social modernization to Iran during the period stretching from 1800 to 1979. This upheaval naturally engendered a transformation of architecture, and, eventually, the rise of a novel architecture in Iran. The spaces that Iranians are presently living in today were born of this process that we propose to review in relation to trends in the contemporary architecture of Iran.

THE QAJAR ERA (1800-1925)

The first stage of Iran’s modern architectural development took place during the Qajar period. It happened as a result of the reforms enacted by the princes and their allies, such as Agha Mirza MirzaTaghi Khan, Agha Mirza MirzaFathAli Khan, and intellectuals like Mirza Malek Khan, Mirza FathAli Khan A khondzadeh who pursued the rational rules of law and the development of public education and welfare. With economic independence and its aim, these authorities laid the groundwork for the appearance of a new Persian architecture. The increase in communications between
THE Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)

With the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty, architecture was modernised in a new way. Socio-political planning under the authoritative rule of government with the aid of westerners was the key to the period. During the rule of Reza Shah (1925-1941) the industrialisation of the country began to take place; road and rail networks were built, in conjunction with a marked Europeanisation of social behaviour. Education, the economy and culture all figured prominently on the agenda. Under the influence of the West, while reconstruction efforts in Turkey headed by Mustafa Ataturk led to imitation and rivalry, during the two decades of Reza Shah’s rule, the government played an active role in the execution of civil projects. Western architects were invited to design new buildings for the first time, and the construction plans were executed with great speed. As a result, the traditional design of many cities changed significantly. This period also saw the development of factories, government offices and universities, and the use of new building materials like steel, cement and glass. New construction techniques brought with them a variety of styles or trends of European and Iranian origin.

‘Eclectic Fusion’ with an Emphasis on Iranian Architecture

This trend embodied nationalistic and progressive goals and looked back to the example of pre-Islamic architecture. It was also strongly influenced by the Nader Shah of the 18th century. Neoclassical European architecture was applied to the design of governmental buildings for schools and banks and its influence was particularly felt in the plans of the buildings through an application of symmetric hierarchy and geometric forms. Buildings like the National Police Headquarters (1933) are good examples of this trend. The combination of these two approaches – European and Iranian – was such that European architecture and especially the Neoclassical style found a specific expression of its own. The entry gateway of Maidan Mahshahr (1931) and Hasian Abad Square (1932) are superior examples of this trend.

Purely European Architecture

This tendency developed as a result of the progressive aims of certain intellectuals. In this type of architecture there was no sign or influence of Persian forms. It was often brought to Iran without any adjustments. Tehran Railway Station (1927), the Ministry of Justice (1928), the University Departments of Medicine (1934) and Tehran University’s Campus (1934) were examples of this trend under the reign of the first Pahlavi. Mohsen Foroughi, Vatan Hovanesian, Ali Sadegh, Kajghabadi Zafar Bakhsh, Paul Aikar, Gabriel Garekanian, and Iraj Mahirni were the proponents of this process.

Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979)

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi rose to power in 1941, but from that year to 1951 a limited amount of development occurred due to political conditions in the country. After 1953, and especially from 1960 to 1979 with the aid of substantial oil income, important strides were made in economic, education, health and medicine. Because of the economic consequences of the government’s policies, development became equivalent to investment. The cultural dimension of this work was less well considered, and one of its consequences was the hurried and uncalculated importation of Western ways.

The establishment of modern educational institutions like the School of Fine Arts encouraged a vogue for modern Western architecture. Meanwhile, socio-political reasoning pushed Iran towards industrialisation, and led to the speedy growth of urban areas. In this respect two trends can be analyzed here.

The Development of the School of Modernism and the International Style in Architecture (1941-1979)

This process, which occurred in the design of new structures from 1953 to 1961, was now applied to almost all building types. During this period numerous governmental and commercial buildings were erected and many residences were built without consideration for local characteristics or climatic conditions. In Tehran and in other cities like Tabriz, Yazd, Mahshahr and Khorasan.

It is worth noting that during these decades, profit-making attitudes infiltrated the construction led to the exclusion of all ornamental elements and the use of a minimum variety of materials (brick, steel and glass), and paved the way for developers to build and sell increasingly uniform structures regardless of location. Unfortunately, the problem that this method entailed continues to have an impact in contemporary Iran.

Nevertheless, well beyond the range of the developers, monuments like the Senate (Islamic parliament), the Ministry of War (1939) and the Ministry of Oil building (Yaftal-Estehlab and A Balad-e Farmanfarman, 1969) were built under the influence of advanced international Modernism and erected today as distinct examples of modern Iranian architecture.

This distinct presence of International Modernism continued until 1979, and we can see its influence in buildings such as the Takhti (Aminieh Stadium, 1966), the City Theatre (1971), the Azadi Sports Complex (1973), and the Ministry of Agriculture (1975), all designed by reputable architects such as Shahriz Arvand, Ali Sardar Alkhami and A Balad-e Farmanfarman.

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Although the International Style and the school of Modernism were strongly promoted by architectural schools and firms like Ažad and Mahboubzadeh, there was a strong movement towards a cultural identity in Iranian architecture, especially from the Qajar era. Architectural elements from both cultures were applied to façades and plans were designed with the inspiration of universal principles and references specifically Iranian tradition of space with nature. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art designed by Houshang Seyhoun (pl. 26) was an attempt to create a variegated and Iranian spirit but at the cost of creating a rupture between architecture before and after the Revolution. The effort to create an Islamic identity became a dominant concern.

A certain pluralism and variety of viewpoints were a special feature of architecture during the two decades after the Revolution, and especially during the 1990s. On the one hand, creating architecture and urban planning to correspond with the values and ideals of Islamic society was an essential element in this period. On the other hand, western influence trends like Post-Modernism and Deconstructivism also played a role in Iranian architecture. Several trends can be distinguished:

**Revitalization/Rejuvenation**
During the 1980s and 1990s efforts to rejuvenate Islamic culture were a priority. The use of materials like brickwork and tiles, and ornamental elements like calligraphy, were part of the effort to give Islamic spirit to buildings. This approach was not confined to specifically Islamic architectural types, and forms like central gardens, domes, or arches were frequently seen.

Many of the residential and governmental buildings in Tehran and other cities were built under the influence of the Shah's aesthetic and urban planning preferences. The Iran Cultural Centre (1979), the University of Yazd (1988), the Organisation of the Hajj (1991), the Allame Dehkhoda University in Qazvin (1990), the Sharif University Mosque (1993), the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art designed by Kamran Diba (pl. 5); the Iranian Centre for Management in particular were designed with the inspiration of universal principles and reference to specifically Iranian tradition of space with nature. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art was also influential.

A great deal of the projects in this period were developed through professional and educational gatherings and the presence of individuals like Nader Ardalan and Kamran Diba in which history and tradition were considered as indispensable parts of the Iranian architectural identity. Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar's research for the book The Iranian Unrest was also influential in this period as a result of some exemplary buildings related to this trend came into existence, such as the Iran Cultural Centre Management Studies (today the main Sadeh Uiversity) designed by Nader Ardalan (pl. 26); the University of Jondi Shapour (Ahvaz, 1984); the new city of Shushtar (1974, pl. 4, 5) and the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art designed by Kamran Diba (pl. 25). The Iran Centre for Management in particular was designed with the inspiration of universal principles and references specifically Iranian tradition of space with nature. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art was also influential.

**Eclecticism Related to Western Post-Modern Architecture**
In the mid-1980s and under the influence of western architecture, an eclectic architecture came into existence with a number of architectural elements of Iranian architecture and combining them eclectically with the western Post-Modern style. Certain buildings displayed influences ranging from Post-Modern architecture to Neoclassicism and Iranian architecture, especially from the Qajar era. Architectural elements from both cultures were applied to façades and plans were designed with the inspiration of universal principles and references specifically Iranian tradition of space with nature. The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art was also influential.

In some buildings, a fusion of modern and contemporary architecture was attempted. The result was the creation of buildings like the Cultural Centre of Tehran and the office building at the complex in Isfahan. Some of the structures included the repetition of traditional Iranian elements like arches, wind catchers, domes and half-domes and the use of variations of brickwork next to spaceframes. A sauch an attempt was an attempt to create a verigated and Iranian spirit, but at the cost of...
The western school of modern architecture has been the most influential force from the outset of the Pahlavi era until today. It is still a significant factor in contemporary Iranian architecture. Modern architecture in the post-Revolution era has been shaped in response to economic trends and construction rules and regulations. These buildings follow the fundamental principles of modern architecture, such as pragmatic functionalism in favour of simplicity (exclusion of ornaments), a generous use of glass for cladding, and a use of construction materials that makes them different from their predecessors.

With respect to this trend, the following buildings can be mentioned: the Telecommunications building located on Yousef A. Bad Avenue in Tehran (1994; pl. 28) which has an appropriate functionalism, the Iranian National Library (1996) and many commercial structures in Tehran such as the office building by Mr. Moghimi.

THE APPEARANCE OF SPECIAL TRENDS

Defining the correct position of Iranian Islamic architecture in the post-modern world is the latest point of view. The increasing importance of literature related to linguistic philosophy, post-construction, cultural relativism, and the end of ideology has inspired a sort of mental inflammation in the community of Iranian architects. A pragmatism abstracted from their environment is one of the trends that has developed in this respect, and its most important specifications are as follows:

SCIENTIFIC-FUNCTIONAL (ABSTRACTED FROM THE ENVIRONMENT)

This view, inspired by literary, philosophical and mathematical theories for explaining the concept in the creation of works, originated from the Deconstructivist movement and the developments inspired by computers in western architectural literature. A structural space has been reduced to scientific mathematical space. Environmental comparisons, including history and local tradition are not considered by these theories. A pragmatism, displeased with appearances, and literature that explain the 'Iranian-ness' of the projects, they are mere repetitions of the work of well-known western architects such as Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Libeskind, and others. Due to the limitations of construction technology and implementation in Iran, these works have remained three-dimensional and computer images.

In some schools of architecture, this view, however, has been disseminated, albeit without any deep comprehension of this type of western architecture. Those who defend this kind of thought resort to special rationalisations: linking the theoretical aspects of the trend to some philosophical, religious Iranian grounds. They thus try to give legitimacy and credibility to contemporary Iranian architecture.

CREATING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN IRANIAN ARCHITECTURE AND WORLD ARCHITECTURE

If, during the Pahlavi era, Iranians regarded the achievements of western civilisation as a model and pursued total imitation of western designs, this was merely a special feature of progressive Iranian architecture. During the years that have followed the Revolution, in the struggle to achieve cultural identity, Iranian architects have turned towards revitalisation/fusion or eclectic architecture. Presently, the trend that is emerging among architects is one accompanied by wide analysis and precise criticism. They are taking strides towards recognising 'real' cultures, and resolutions in the opening of minds towards the world at large.

In the meantime, they view the achievements of western civilisation not as a model but as part of human heritage and seek to be contemporary with the world of their own times in an interesting path. By benefiting from their thinking, by incorporating the technological facilities of today together with inspirations from universal Iranian architecture, they may indeed be able to create truly Iranian contemporary architecture.

It seems that with this new process of Iranian contemporary architecture, which is searching for the goal of universal art, it might be possible to create new distinct works in the future. Maybe enumerating a few examples such as the Sports Complex of the city of Rafsanjan (pl. 35), the Jannatabad Park, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Berlin (pl. 31), the Hafezieh residences in the Sadabad palace complex (pl. 34), the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Austria and the Jamshidieh Park, the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Berlin, the Khatam palace in Tehran. Perhaps it might reveal evidence of the beginning of this trend. It is a process that is expected to become one of the main trends in contemporary Iranian architecture.

For illustration of this article, the reader is referred to pls. 1, 4, 5, 23, 29 and 31-35.
1. Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (Eugenio Galdieri) and the National Organisation for the Conservation of Historic Monuments of Iran (Bagher Shirazi), restoration of Hasht Behesht, Chehel Sutun and Ali Qapu, Isfahan, Iran, 1977.

Projects:
1. Hasht Behesht (1699), Isfahan, Iran, restored in 1977.
2. Chehel Sutun (1667), Isfahan, Iran, restored in 1977.


27. Bavand Consultants, A. Ramezanzadeh University, Qazvin, Iran, 1989.
