PURSUING THE CONCEPT OF EXISTENCE IN THE DESIGNS OF CIVIC CENTERS: THE 17TH–18TH – CENTURY PERSIA

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Abstract. In recent decades, the concept of existence is increasingly becoming a significant subject in contemporary studies of architecture. However, its concerns in architecture cannot be denied in the last centuries. In the 17th-century Persia, a philosophical movement had effects on the concept of existence, which coincided with the urban developments, and the establishment of novel civic centers. With respect to philosophical backgrounds of architecture, this study aims to interpret the concept of existence in the designs of civic centers. For this purpose, the primacy of existence to essence, and bestowing of presence are illustrated to analyze the presentations in the designs of civic centers in that era. Then, the presentations are categorized to elucidate manifesting units in the designs of civic centers. Finally, the result of this study presents principles applied in the designs of civic centers, based on the concept of existence.

Keywords: design, civic center, existence, presence, essence, 17th- century Persia.

Introduction

So far, several philosophical thoughts have been presented on the concept of existence (Wahl, 1969). By means of an investigation, it would be realized that the concept has become a fundamental subject in philosophy (Macquarrie, 1973); to the extent that it has been argued that the world is understood with existence, and vice versa (Heidegger, 1962). Regarding the profound ties of philosophy and art, pursuing a general attitude toward the concept of existence in architecture seems to be puzzling due to the severalty of the thoughts.

However, in some epochs, coincidence of philosophical movements with architectural developments has provided valuable opportunities to investigate the foundations of architecture. Fundamentally, each built environment is a mode of presence and manifestation (Shayegan, 2013). Since architecture, like other art works, is strongly tied to the unconcealment of truth's being (Hofstadter & Kuhns, 1964), interpreting the concept of existence has merits to deeply deal with its foundations. Accordingly, to study the concept in each era, it is necessary to concern about principal events which tie philosophical movements to architectural developments.

One of the notable events that affected the historical development of architecture began in the late 16th-early 17th-century Persia which was ruled by Shah Abbas I. According to Roemer (1986), "the shah's interest in the intellectual and artistic culture of his time is unmistakeably evident, sometimes in the form of unique works of art, and certainly also in the large number of artistic achievements that appeared". In fact, the construction of a great number of novel buildings coincided with a philosophical movement which led to a revolution in some concepts, especially the concept of existence. In this respect, it is pertinent to interpret the novel civic centers, which includes a number of notable buildings, in that epoch based on the revolutionary concept of existence.

Initially, some studies on Persian philosophy investigated the effects of Persian theosophy on Persian Arts. In this case, Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1987) hypothesized the effects of the 17th-century philosophical movement on Persian landscape architecture. Afterwards, a great number of studies have investigated the philosophical-architectural ties in the 17th-century Persia. Notably, some principles of urban design have been presented in the work of Seyyed Mohsen Habibi (2008). In one of the chapters of his book

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entitled *Delaciteé à la ville*, Habibi propounded *Isfahan School of Urban Design* which concerns about the urban design of the 17th–18th Century Persia. He considers the establishment of civic centers as the most significant syntax of the structure planning in that era. These principles, then, are exemplified in the work of Zahra Ahari (2006). Indeed, the principles, such as hierarchy, unity, and multiplicity, would reveal the importance of dealing with the concept of existence in the designs in that era.

Besides, Iranian Academy of the Arts held a series of conferences in 2006 on the arts and the philosophy of the 17th–18th century Persia, which was called *congress of Isfahan School*. Some of its published articles on architecture and urban planning concerned about topics relevant to the concept of existence. Among the articles, on one hand, the concept of hierarchy (Okhovatti, 2009) as well as the philosophical context for configuring that-era cities were discussed (Doost Sani, 2009), and on the other hand the novel architectural-urban products in that era were explained (Falamaki, 2009). That is, the representation of the articles has intensified the necessity of pursuing the philosophical concept of existence in the civic centers of the 17th–18th century Persia.

Therefore, this study investigates how specifically civic centers can be interpreted based on the philosophical concept of existence in the 17th–18thcentury Persia. Also, it can help researchers investigate the foundations of philosophical-architectural ties. It is worth noting that the result of this study can clarify a part of the historical process of the ties.

1. Methodology

In order to study the concept of existence, this paper is based on the architectural interpretation of its relevant philosophical subject matters. In the first place, the study briefly discusses the concept of existence by means of its terminology. Then, in order to understand the concept of existence in the 17th-century Persia, the study refers to Mulla Sadra, who represented the most revolutionary argument on the concept of existence which later had a great impact on the successor philosophers. To do so, the subject matters on the concept of existence are extracted from the argument, and thereby, they constitute the architectural interpretation of civic centers as the concurrent architectural achievements. It is tried to establish analyses (Figures 1, 5) on the 19th-century engravings of the centers done by Pascal Coste for their validation (Flandin & Coste, 1851). In the next step, the units of civic centers are categorized to focus on the concept of existence in the centers. Finally, the result of this study presents the models that rely on the concept of existence in the 17th–18thcentury Persia.

2. The concept of existence

This section, firstly, presents a brief review of the concept *existence* and its relevant concepts needed to figure out the

concept itself. Then, in order to find a framework for pursuing the concept in the civic centers, it takes a glance at the subject matters on existence in philosophical arguments.

2.1. Terminology

In many philosophical texts, the term *being* has interchangeably been used for explaining existence. Generally, *wujūd* is the equivalence of *existence* in Persian language (Nasr, 2006). Originally, it is an Arabic loanword and widely used in some languages. *Wujūd,* also, is interchangeably considered as the dignity of something or somebody; in practice, it is implicitly used as the meaning of *body* (Dehkhoda, 1993). For example, this meaning has been used in Saadi's and Hafez's Lyrics (ibid). Accordingly, the word *wujūd* could relate some concepts to its philosophical concept.

Specifically, *existence* is regarded as one of the most important concepts in architecture. In order to elucidate being in space, Heidegger states that "the above is what is on the ceiling; the below is what is on the floor; the behind is what is at the door" (Norberg-Schulz, 1971). In this regard, Norberg-Schulz (1980) considers place to be "a concrete term for environment" and the space where life occurs. Hence, in the area of architecture, it is hypothesized that place is "an integral part of existence" (ibid).

Another relevant term to define existence is essence, or quiddity. Many researchers have considered a perpetual link between *existence* and *essence*. For instance, "Anthony Flew clarifies essence as 'the notion of a fixed and timeless possibility of existence' …." (Johnson, 1994). According to Johnson (ibid), "Essence is the quality of which the facticity of something is the instantiation, either conceptually or actually, that quality by which something is what it is, the being that *is* the doing". For instance, bazaar-ness depicts the essence of bazaar: it is comprised of shops and pathways without which bazaar-ness could not be determined. To sum up, essence is the consequent of qualities upon which an entity stands.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between essence and existence to the extent that each ones is necessary to realize the other. Essence implies the quality consequent of a fact, while existence alludes to the fact of being. Also, place has a major role for perceiving existence in space.

2.2. The primacy of existence to essence

In the 17th-century Persia, one of the most important subject matters in the philosophical debates was the primacy of existence to essence, which was first argued by Mulla Sadra. In this era, "Mulla Sadra affected an entire revolution in the metaphysics of being by substituting a metaphysics of existence for the traditional metaphysics of essences" (Corbin, 1993). He repeatedly argued about the nature of existence to prove that it "can only be experienced", and then to show that "mystic experience is a cognitive experience" (Rahman, 1975). Thereby, he based the metaphysical principals of his philosophy on the primacy

of existence, which has been celebrated by his followers and researched by many of the contemporary scholars (Al-Kutubi, 2015).

Prior to Mulla Sadra's argument on existence, Muslim philosophers thought that essence of things was what bestowed reality on them (Nasr, 2006). Even it had mostly been stated that essence of things is immutable; essence is just what it is, and its existence in mind does not necessarily mean its being in reality, and externally being is an attribute added to essence (Shayegan, 1990). In other words, essence is the subject, while being is its attribute. However, Sadra did not accept the distinction of existence from presence or reality, and rejected that existence stands without reality because this concept contradicts the concept of existence (ibid). There is an autonomous unity between essence and existence (Mulla Sadra, 1988).

Mulla Sadra argues that "the structure of all essences stands on the foundation of a single unity" (Kamal, 2006). According to him, "Existence remains the single immutable reality at the root of all things. But it also displays an infinite number of shades, colors, modes, and modalities" (Mulla Sadra, 2014); Thus, it cannot be described as a concept. In his view, it is not possible to point out an essence till it turns to exist (Mulla Sadra, 2001). He argues that essence follows existence like a shadow, the one that follows a particular individual (Morris & Mulla Sadra, 1981). "And whenever the being is one, the quiddity is likewise one, not many. But if the being ends up at a certain limit and stops there, then it is specified by the quiddity following from that limit" (ibid). Nevertheless, he argues that there are strengths and weaknesses in essence that lead to changes, mutations, and evolutions, except Necessary Existence who is the sheer reality of existence that no being can be assumed more perfect and intense than Him (Shayegan, 1990). "In general, the more powerful and the more intense the being becomes, the more perfect it is in essence, the more completely comprehensive of all notions and quiddities, and the more (capable) in its activities and effects" (Morris & Mulla Sadra, 1981). From his standpoint, the fact that things are subjected to diminution and intensification shows the hierarchical order of being (Kalin, 2004). In a sense, strong effects are provided by intense existence which has particular essence. However, essence is not immutable.

For Mulla Sadra, the concept of *istiḥżār* (which means, in Persian language, bestowing of presence) indicates the primacy of existence to the authenticity of essence (Shayegan, 1990). As he believes, "Presence implies something concrete and particular" (Kalin, 2004). Since the fact of being has strengths and weaknesses, the strengths and weaknesses denote essence. From his perspective, the knowledge attained by presence is direct and indubitable (Kamal, 2006). Finally, the metaphysics of existence leads to the metaphysics of presence which is a type of manifestation or witnessing (Shayegan, 1990). To illustrate Mulla Sadra's ontological view, it is worth noting that he regards the mode of existence of physical world as dancing, and

the world itself as a man (Emami Jomeh, 2009). Thereby, the degrees of presence determine the modes of harmonies in the physical world.

Consequently, bestowing of presence can be applied to elucidate the primacy of existence. In this regard, it can be stated that the more intensity presence has, the more strength existence would have. Indeed, the concepts *istiḥżār,* foundation of a unity, and then the hierarchical order of being, allude to the primacy of existence. In fact, many successor philosophers after Mulla Sadra followed these revolutionary concepts.

3. Civic centers and bestowing of presence

Totally, three main civic centers were constructed in the 17ᵗʰ–18ᵗʰ-century Persia, which could be interpreted through the philosophical foundation of that time. The first and most important one was Naghsh-i Jahan Square which was constructed in the capital city of Isfahan. Another one was Ganjali Khan Square constructed in the state capital of Kerman. The Last one, which was constructed in the 18ᵗʰ century, was Madar-i-Shah Center located in Isfahan. Accordingly, this section deals with bestowing of presence in these three civic centers.

3.1. Naghsh-i Jahan Square

In the 17ᵗʰ century, the establishment of a novel civic center beside an old city was the most notable construction in Isfahan city. "Yet if the novelty of the Isfahan of 1630 has been overestimated, one must concede that it offered a unique combination of qualities" (Hillenbrand, 1986). Particularly, the civic center gathers some of the most important buildings around a square called Naghsh-i- Jahan Square (Figure 1). The bazaar, with its uniform modules, presents its particular essence around the square. In fact, each of the buildings is present on each side of the square and also on each of the two main axes of the square, which is surrounded by the bazaar.

The highest vertical elements belong to Shah Mosque which is placed on the southern side and on the main axis of the square. To the observers who stand inside the square, the distribution of the elements is particular due to the rotation of the principal axis of the building with regard to the square in such a way that it helps to show the maximum number of main elements placed along the axes of the building (Figure 2). As mentioned earlier, both existence and essence have strengths and weaknesses, so it is reasonable that the elements and spaces of the royal mosque occupy a considerable part of the southern side of the square. In fact, the architect's solution to depict the presence of the mosque is using a hierarchy through freely showing the sides of its simple elements, which intensifies the particularity of its entity.

On the western side of the square, placed vis-à-vis Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, the masses of Ali Gapu Palace are visible in each part of the square for the observers. Its placement and presentation establish a secondary axis in
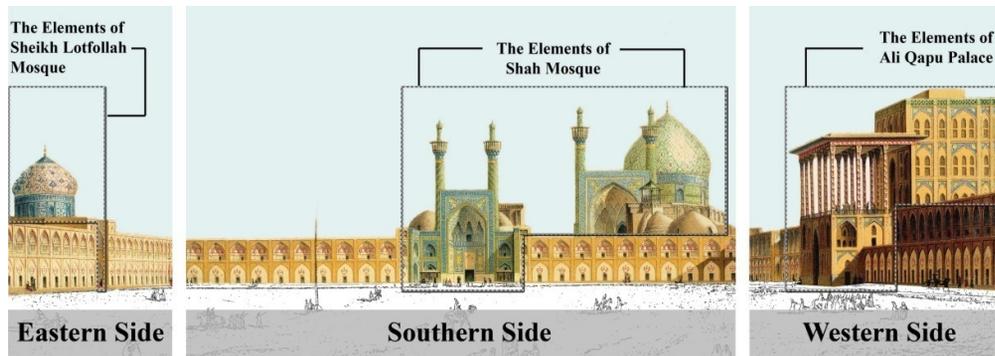
Figure 1. Each of the main units is present on each side of the civic center
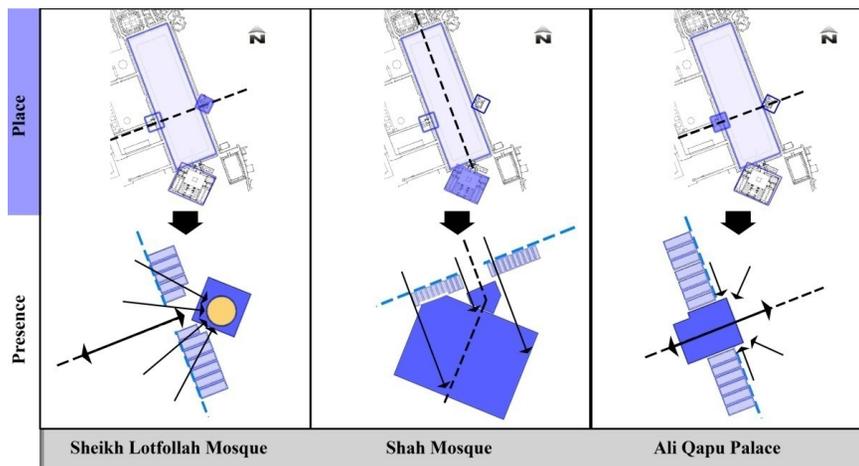(adapted from Pascal Coste, Wikimedia)

Figure 2. The particular modes of hierarchy are the main solution for bestowing of presence in
Naghsh-i Jahan Square

the square, which intensifies being of two units based on their places on each side of the axis. However, it is not exactly considered at the middle part of the square. The perfect geometric shapes of its masses, which are erected on rectangles, can allude to the relation between the order of perfection and the intensification of existence (Figure 2). In order to manifest the strength of presence, the special location of the unit provides a hierarchy on the western side of the square.

On the eastern side, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, with its unique dome, is presented to the observers through the center. As the exterior walls of the mosque have receded from the precinct of the square, the forecourt provides manifestation of the dome for anyone who stands beside the unit (Figure 2). The unique shape of its dome, together with its surface materials, manifest its particularity on the eastern side. For this unit, which is smaller than the other main units of the square, the main solution for presenting the unit is implementing a hierarchy obtained due to the pure and perfect form of the dome. Furthermore, the forecourt, in addition to presenting the qualities of walls of the mosque, intensifies an axis which affects the presentation of this unit in the square.

Totally, the main units manifested in the square are bazaars, two mosques, and palace. Their qualities, together

with their different functions, in a center, and their associations in bolstering the hierarchy in the square are clearly pointing to a structure of essences in a unity. That is, the bazaar-ness can be simultaneously perceived with other essences in such a way that it is not dispersed from other essences. The combination of different qualities and overt presence of all of them in the square can allude to bestowing of presence. The particular modes of hierarchy, by means of sizes, placements, and shapes, are the main solution to present the harmonious combination that can result in a harmonious unity.

3.2. Ganjali Khan Complex

Another prominent civic center, constructed in the 17th century, is Ganjali Khan Square in the city of Kerman. Units of the center involve a *madrasa*, a public bath, a mint, and a mosque, all of which are placed around a square (Figure 3). The square is 100*50 meters in such a way that pathways of the bazaar are extended on three sides of it (Pirnia, 2006). "The bazaars comprise a series of adjacent shops each consisting of a deep domed bay, and are linked by a similar line of shops on the west side of the maidan" (Hillenbrand, 1986). "An impressive 12-sided chahar-su with deep radiating niches takes up the south-
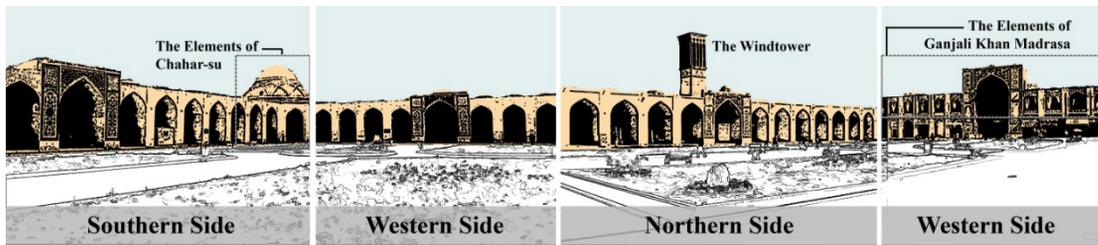
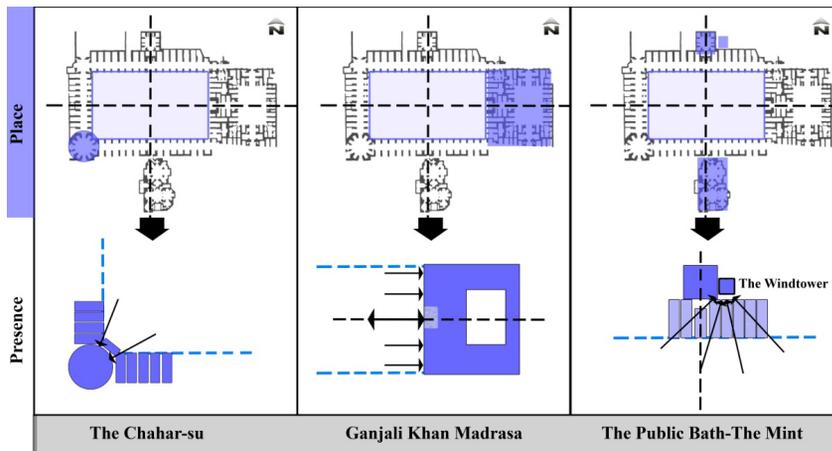Figure 3. Various combinations of qualities are manifested in Ganjali Khan Complex

Figure 4. The modes of hierarchy provide the presentations of the unit combinations
on two sides and one corner of the center

west corner of the complex" (ibid). Furthermore, the portal of *madrasa* is placed on the middle part of the eastern side of the square, which intensifies the main axis of the square. Another axis of the center could be considered in the relation between the public bath and the mint. However, none of their elements are directly manifested inside the square. Indeed, in the square, some architectural elements are separately manifested from its main units.

The eastern side has two floors that, today, contains some shops on the ground floor and some rooms on the first floor. The uniform structure of the bazaar is extended to the upper level, which defines the modules of *madrasa* rooms. However, the proportions of the modules manifest the combination of different qualities on the eastern side of the square. Nevertheless, the hierarchal eastern wall of the square can allude to the intense presence of a unit it belongs to. In other words, the whole eastern side makes a hirearchy in size in relation with the other sides that expresess the strength of this side in the square (Figure 4).

Inside the center, although the bazaar connects the mint to the square, no part of its masses is visible for the observers who stand inside the square (Figure 4). The presence of the windtower erected beside the square signifies its particular being; even its vertical shape portrays a salient element by means of a diferent proportion on the northern side of the square. With this respect, the presence of windtower implies an important place on the northern side, which is beside the axis of the mint. Hence, the structure of essences on the northern side of the center

is intensified through manifesting the combinations of qualities. However, they are presented separately from the mint configured as one of the main units.

Another important element manifested inside the square is a dome on one of its corners. In fact, it is erected on chahar-su at the cross point of the bazaar pathways, which makes a strong relationship with bazaar. In one sense, presenting the dome on just one corner of the square manifests a particular place which is, in fact, the intersection of bazaars. Hence, it can manifest an important point of the bazaar (Figure 4). Accordingly, placing the dome at the corner of the square intensifies the directions of the square sides which are comprised of bazaars that connect different essences of the civic centers.

Thus, gathering several qualities based on a unity in Ganjali Khan Square can allude to bestowing of presence on each side. One side of the square is allocated to the *madrasa*, organized on the main axis, and the other units are distributed on the other sides, like the placements of units of Naghsh-i Jahan Square. All the more, the presentation of an element can signify being of a unit.

3.3. Madar-i Shah Center

The civic center constructed in the 18ᵗʰ-century is called Madar-i Shah which is located just off Chaharbagh Avenue (Figure 5). "Its merits lie in the serene and rational disposition of the three constituent units" (Hillenbrand, 1986): a *madrasa*, a bazaar, and a caravanserai. Also,
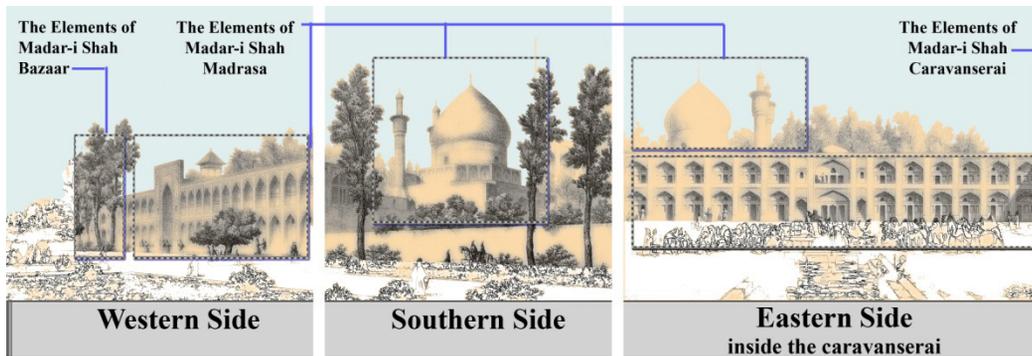
Figure 5. The structure of essences is manifested in Madar-i Shah Center
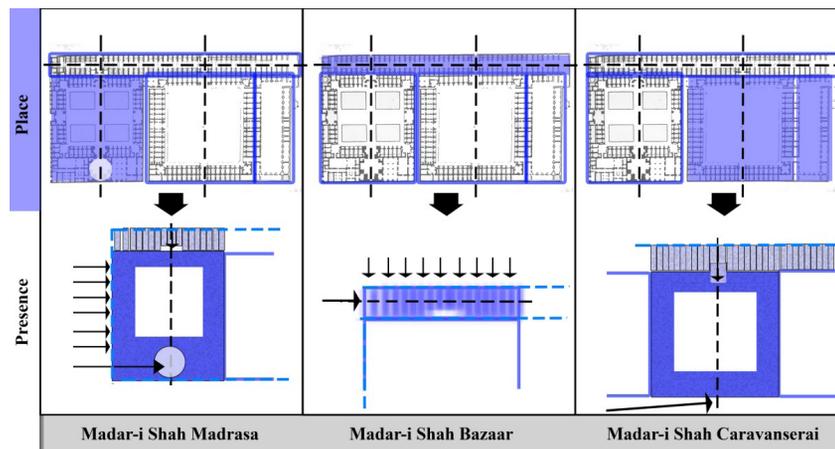(Adapted from Pascal Coste, Wikimedia)

Figure 6. The Bazaar is intertwined with the other units along its path in Madar-i Shah Center

the center has a stable, with its narrow rectangular shape, which is the farthest part from Chaharbagh Avenue and directly connected to the caravanserai. The design of the units relies on a "rigidly symmetrical and axial plan" (Blair & Bloom, 2007). In fact, the bazaar makes the other units along its pathway accessible by means of some entrances.

On the northern side of the center, the bazaar organizes the other buildings along its path. Two entrances, inside the bazaar, connect the bazaar to the other units, which can manifest being of units intertwined with the bazaar (Figure 6). Although the entrance doors are limited frames inside the bazaar, the courtyards, placed posterior to the entrances, provide comprehensive visions to the inside of the units of the complex for anyone who stands beside the entrances. Hence, many of the unit elements could be visually shared with the elements of the bazaar and amplify the multiplicity of essences inside the bazaar through bestowing of presence inside the bazaar.

The *madrasa* is placed in the southwest of the center, which is the most contiguous unit to Chaharbagh Avenue (Figure 6). In fact, this matter intensifies the presence of the building among the central units. In addition, the highest vertical elements belong to this unit, which alludes to its intense presence. To present the major inner elements of the unit to the outside, the circle-based shapes of the elements facilitate comprehensive perception of the elements for the observers. These elements are manifested through southern and western side of Madar-i Shah Center.

The caravanserai is the largest unit placed in the middle part; it is surrounded by other units of the civic center somehow in such a way that only one of its exterior walls is exposed to outside the center (Figure 6). The building lacks any high vertical elements raised out of its walls to manifest its presence to outside the center, while its large courtyard provides the manifestation of its inner elements inside the unit. However, its intense interconnection to other units intensifies the role of their elements for pursuing the concept of existence inside the unit. In this regard, for people who stand inside the caravanserai, the raised vertical elements of the *madrasa* can allude to juxtaposition of the *madrasa* and caravanserai, which strengthen the combination of unit essences. Hence, the caravanserai is heavily affected by the qualities of the *madrasa*.

Therefore, the access to the *madrasa*, caravanserai, and stable inside the bazaar, in addition to their accessibility from Chaharbagh Avenue, strengthens the structure of essences based on a unity in Madar-i Shah center. The courtyards of the *madrasa* and caravanserai provide the manifestations of units for people walking in the bazaar to perceive the presence of the buildings. The place of stable together with its lack of manifested elements could show the weaknesses of its presence among the units of the center.

4. Presentations of the units

As mentioned earlier, most of the qualities manifested in the civic centers belong to the units with different functions. Although perfect geometric shapes enhance the integral manifestation of qualities, the embodiments of the qualities can differ from one another in terms of their materials, sizes, proportions, and shapes. However, based on what analyzed earlier, there are two types of presentation in the civic centers. One of them is the centralized presentation of qualities on the sides of civic centers. The other one is the presentation of elements distributed along one or more sides of the civic centers, which belongs to a unit. Besides, their bazaars are elongated on the sides of the centers, while their uniform units evince a particular essence in the centers.

4.1. Centralized presentation of the units

For all centralized presented units, a perfect shape contains the qualities which manifest these units in the civic centers. That is, the perfect shape of an element either contains elements and presents them in civic centers or is presented in these centers. Totally, among the mentioned civic centers, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Ali Gapu, the dome and windtower of Ganjali Khan are included in this category (Figure 7).

The dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque is the only element raised on the eastern wall of Naghsh-i Jahan Square. This fact diminishes the possibility of the appearance of visual barriers which conceal the dome in the civic center. It has receded from the precinct of the square, though. Notably, the circle-based shape of the dome is its major characteristic that helps its presentation be identical through the center. Indeed, its prefect shape facilitates the manifestation of reality of the element that conveys a particular quality in comparison with other elements on the eastern side.

For Ali Gapu Palace, the simultaneous presence of an opaque mass in the lower part and a transparent columned space in the upper part convey different qualities

in a particular point on the western side of Naghsh-i Jahan Square. This fact, in relation with the quality of the bazaar, synthesizes a consolidated combination of qualities on the western side of the center. Actually, expanding the mass of unit into the precinct of the Square facilitates perceiving the reality of a unit due to the manifestation of its rectangular faces. Accordingly, exposing the corners of the masses of Ali Gapu Palace is the main basis to identically present it through the square.

In Ganjali Khan Square, the windtower is located posterior to the northern edge of the square. Verticality is the main basis for its manifestation and its narrow shape helps the identical presentation of windtower through the civic centers. Also, the dome of Ganjali Khan is circle-based which makes the whole mass be identically presented through the center. Its placement on a corner of the center establishes a significant point in relation with two sides of the center. Hence, these elements intensify the particularity of their places in the center.

Therefore, some of the elements themselves intensify being of the units in the civic centers. In fact, the major characteristics of the elements are in line with presenting the units identically through the centers, which alludes to manifest the reality of qualities. This way, they establish manifestations, with respect to their reality, on sides of the civic centers to diminish illusions inside the centers. For all these units, they are surrounded by the bazaar on their own both sides.

4.2. Distributed presentation of the units

As mentioned earlier, some orders of unit combinations help presenting their elements along the sides of the civic centers. In this case, the qualities of Shah Mosque, Ganjali khan *Madrasa*, and Madar-i Shah *Madrasa* are presented along the sides of each civic center (Figure 8). Ergo, in order to understand their modes of presence, it is important to deal with the order of the units in relation with the sides of the centers.

For Shah Mosque, the direction of the principal axis grants the presentation of major elements of the mosque

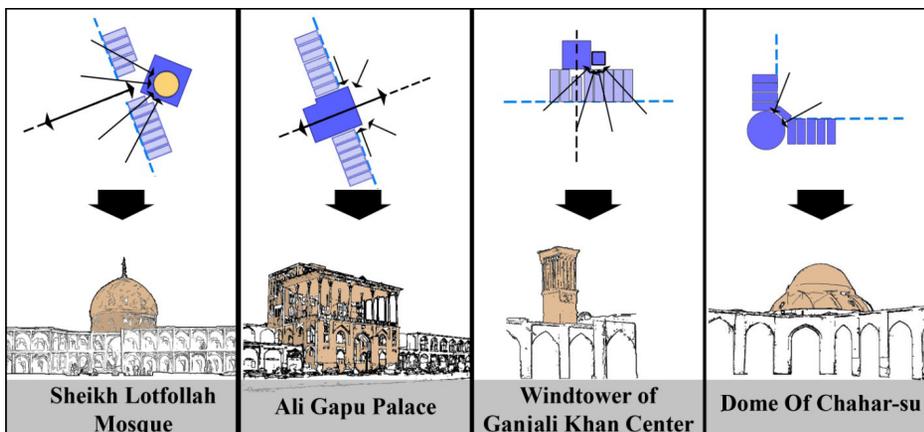| Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque | Ali Gapu Palace | Windtower of Ganjali Khan Center | Dome Of Chahar-su |

Figure 7. Each of the centralized present units is surrounded by a bazaar on each side of the civic centers
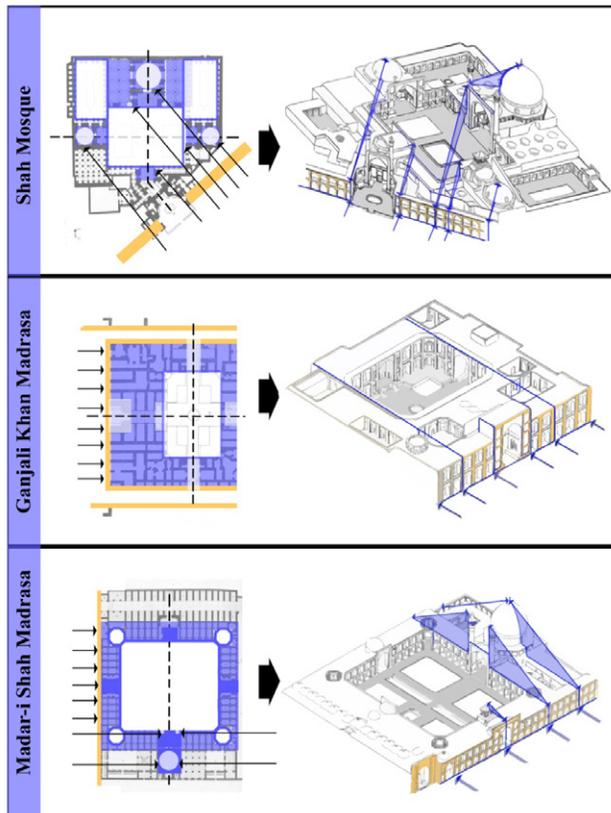
Figure 8. Some orders of the unit combinations are in line with manifesting the reality of distributed elements on the sides of the civic centers

through Naghsh-i Jahan Square. In relation with the principal axis, the elements are organized around three hierarchical courtyards placed symmetrically beside each other. In a sense, the courtyards are the sources of visual connection, and then manifestation of the main elements inside the mosque. Moreover, the modulation used in the design bolsters the presence hierarchies of the main elements inside the mosque. Thereby, all the manifested elements of the unit are engaged in unity with the elements of the civic center, which implies a particular structure of essences. The main masses are placed in the south, west, east, and north of the main courtyard which, on each side, is accompanied by an iwan which enhances the transparency inside the mosque. This fact provides a strong relation between the elements and its precincts, which results in the intense presence of high level elements through the civic center. Indeed, the transparency inside the building allows visual connection between the extents of the building. This matter guarantees the manifestation of the elements that lead to the intense presence through the square. Hence, the hierarchical order of the elements around the courtyards, as sources of visual connection, allows perceiving the presence of the elements inside the mosque, which extends to the civic center.

Ganjali Khan *Madrasa* is the only unit, in addition to bazaars, side of which is directly juxtaposed to Ganjali Khan Square. In fact, the sides of the other units, as stated earlier, are connected to the square through the bazaars. Its design is based on a simple rectangle with a courtyard

centrally placed on the intersection of the two main axes of the building. Inside the *madrasa*, the courtyard provides a visual connection to present the hierarchies of the facades; the four-iwan pattern is the main source of the hierarchies inside the *madrasa*. However, none of its inner elements, placed posterior to exterior walls, are manifested to the square. Although they are not manifested, exposing three sides of the building enhances manifestation of the unit precinct. The manifested elements, placed on the first floor, are distributed along the eastern side of the square based on a modulation that follows the modules of the bazaar. In the case of combination, the modulation allows the hierarchies extend from portal to the courtyard, and also intertwine the bazaar with the unit in order to base the structure of essences on unity. Nevertheless, the *madrasa* provides a hierarchy in the facades of the square since other sides of the square are just at one level in terms of height. This hierarchy culminates when it reaches to the portal of the *madrasa* with its high-raised shape. Accordingly, manifesting the hierarchies alludes to an intense presence along the eastern side of Ganjali Khan Square.

Speaking of Madar-i-Shah *Madrasa*, its dome is manifested through Chaharbagh Avenue, the caravanserai, and its bazaar entrance, which points to its intense presence and distinguished combination of qualities in Madar-i Shah Center. The height differences between the dome and the exterior walls of the *madrasa* initiate the presence of the dome on Chaharbagh Avenue. It is just vis-à-vis the bazaar entrance of the *madrasa* across the main courtyard, which provides a comprehensive manifestation of the elements. Also, the elements on the western precinct of the unit are manifested on Chaharbagh Avenue. In fact, their height does not veil the presence of some inner elements. Moreover, the iwans, by means of their transparencies, unveil the precinct of the unit to enhance the manifestation of the inner elements on each side. Their hierarchies, with respect to the unit modulation, stem in their intense presence inside the *madrasa*. Another hierarchy emerges in the courtyards of the *madrasa*: four small courtyards are placed on the four corners of the main courtyard. These courtyards clearly point to the unit modulation to strengthen the structure of essences on each side. Thus, by means of a particular structure which diminishes the concealment of the inner elements, the hierarchies of the elements and masses are manifested through the civic center.

Thus, one of the main units, in each civic center, is distributedly presented along one side of the center. Its multiple elements usually are erected posterior to the center precinct in such a way that its presence is intensely shared with other parts of the city. This way, it is needed to establish intense hierarchies inside the centers.

5. Result

As discussed earlier, it can be mentioned that all the civic centers in the 17th–18th-century Persia depict structures of essences based on a unity. In this regard, there are two types of establishing unity in civic centers, whether the
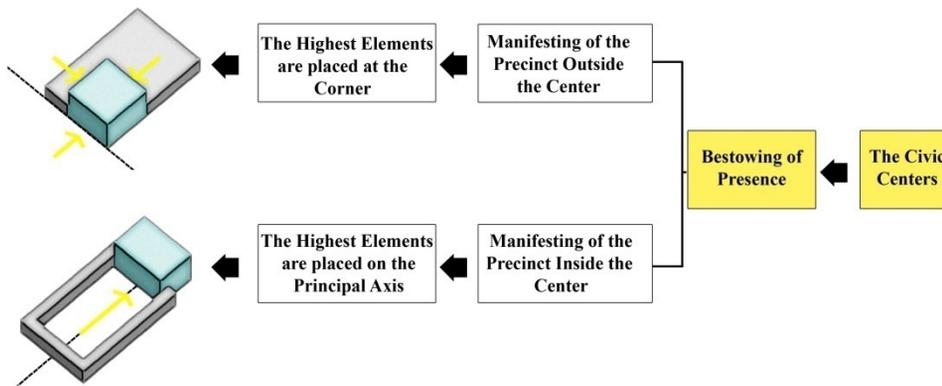
Figure 9. The place of the most intense present elements differs in terms of unity establishment in the civic centers
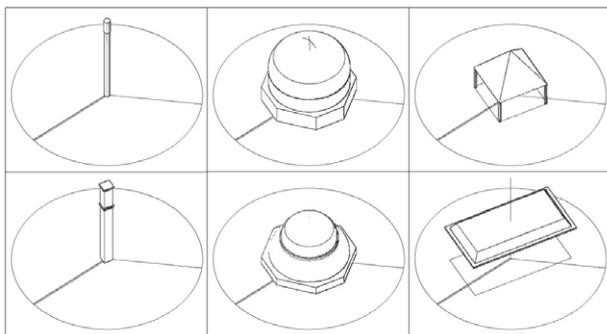

Figure 10. Totally, the elements manifested posterior to the center precincts have narrow vertical, circle- based, horizontal plane, and symmetric shapes
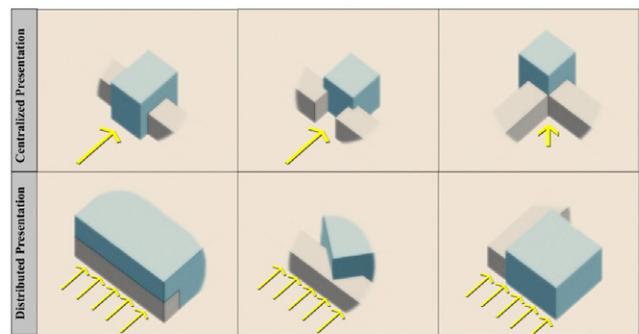

Figure 11. The modes of unit combinations are to present particular qualities on the sides of the civic centers

center precinct is manifested inside or outside the center (Figure 9). With respect to these types, the place of the most intense present elements which have greater impact on other sides is different in the centers. For the centers whose precincts are manifested inside them, the units with the highest elements are allocated on one side of the principal axis of the center. This way, the principal direction of the center can be extended on a vertical direction which intensifies the manifestation of the center. For the center whose precincts are manifested outside it, the unit with the highest elements is considered to be at the manifested corner of the center. This way, the presence of elements, distributed on a side, is intensified in the centers.

Moreover, the civic centers establish structures of unity in cities. Although the precincts of the civic centers are manifested, the presence of their architectural elements is not limited to them. Accordingly, there are two types of presence of architectural elements organized in the civic centers. First, the vertical plane walls with modulations and hierarchies clearly depict the unity of the precincts. Secondly, the bestowal of presence of the elements that are placed posterior to the precincts implies the unity of the centers with cities. It can be stated that most of these elements have circle base, symmetric and horizontal plane, and narrow vertical shapes, which are capable to be identically presented through the civic centers (Figure 10). This way, the presence of the elements accords with their real structure of essences.

Finally, presence of the elements is provided by the modes of combinations of the units that allow it to be conceived through the civic centers. The combinations follow certain hierarchical patterns that lead to the types of presentations of the units discussed earlier. The patterns of the combinations, with the realistic presence of elements, provide the presence of particular qualities on each side, culminating the unity in the civic centers (Figure 11).

Conclusions

In this paper, it is tried to attain design principles that point out a concurrent thought about the concept of existence. Although many qualities of civic centers can vary due to the functions of their units, they can share some patterns in terms of being a structure of essences in cities worldwide. This fact can be considered as a key point to design civic centers anywhere else. In this regard, this paper presents the models which can be compared to the design of other centers for further researches.

The models show that all the discussed civic centers present particular structures of essences based on the unities. Achieved by means of the analyses, these models can help extract frameworks for pursuing unity in the civic centers. Comparing the philosophical thought and the architectural interpretation, it has become revealed that there are strong ties between them. Notably, the concepts *bestowing of presence*, and *structure of essences founded*

on unity can allude to primacy of existence to essence. Also, the harmonious relationship between the elements established in the civic centers is to depict a unity which presents an exemplar of the world and can pursue Mulla Sadra's ontological view about the way of existence in the world. In terms of the place of configuring essences in a civic center, the unity takes place by means of degrees of presence, which would allude to primacy of existence. Then, each unit manifests a particular essence in the centers through the types of presentations. Thereby, their architectural elements, based on their presentations, convey hierarchies to manifest their particular contributions.

Finally, it can be stated that hierarchy is the key architectural solution in the design of civic centers. By means of hierarchy, the centers showed a variety of strengths and weaknesses in the presence of units. Places are determined by verities of hierarchy presentations in the centers to manifest harmony that can allude to bestowing of presence, and primacy of existence.

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