

The Change in the Functional Concept of the Courtyard from the Past to the Present; Case Study: Religious People of Qom

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ABSTRACT

The concept of residential open space in Iranian architecture has fundamentally changed in recent decades due to changes made by the massing system in cities and the appearance of a new concept, i.e. semi-private courtyard, in apartment housing. In the present study, it is attempted to examine the changes in the uses and activities of the courtyard by reviewing the existing literature. Then, the status of past concepts in the minds of contemporary people is analyzed with the emphasis on everyday life activities by field study. The literature review of this research is historical and interpretative and the ethnography is performed both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, the attitude of the religious people selected in Qom is enquired qualitatively, and then, open-ended interviews are used for qualitative research to provide a more reliable ethnographic interpretation. For qualitative research, six religious families of middle income, who are living in a courtyard house or apartment in Qom, are selected (for each model of housing= 3 samples) considering a given period, and the information used in this study are extracted from long-term semi-structured interviews. According to the literature review on the courtyard in Iranian architecture in the Islamic period of Iran, housing has basic concepts of privacy, female space, the concentration of domestic activities, and the sacred space from a religious and social perspective. Case studies of this study show that although the conceptual reality of the courtyard has been removed from everyday life, middle-aged generations have still a mental image of the courtyard as a center for activity and space connected with nature and the sky (as a sacred element). The image is undeniable. However, the modern concepts of domesticity (family life) and the insignificance of housework make the later religious generations reluctant to use the courtyard with its basic uses.

Keywords: Courtyard, House, Uses of Courtyard, Concept of the Courtyard, Female Space, Sanctity of the Place.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The courtyard with its pool and garden is a collective memory among the people of Central Iran. This memory is not the only reason for this space. In the debates on the fundamental cultural differences between West and East in the field of architecture, the courtyard (especially in the form of the central courtyard) has a special place. In following the tradition of the modern era base on the introduction of new roots to old affairs (i.e. the tradition established in declaring the Primitive Hut as the origin of architecture by Laugier) Le Corbusier introduced scattered monastic monasteries in France as a model and productive cell of the house, and Mondrian defended it against Dastil by suggesting the cell as the unit generating home, street, and city (Overy, 1997, pp. 119-120). In this model, along with the other three models introduced in this tradition (Laugier's primitive hut and Quatremère de Quincy's tent and cave- Groat & Wang, 2005), a common essence is observed in the concept of home from the view of Westerners, and it is the unoriginality of open space as a basic part of the house while a different situation is observed in the Iranian architecture discussed at least in the geographical and cultural field and approximately in the whole Islamic architecture. In Iran and also existing historical houses in Central Iran, what makes a building a house is primarily the configuration of its open space (Herdeg, 1990), then, the rooms become meaningful according to this configuration. This attitude is based on the fundamental relationship between the concept of home and family, because in this culture, the house is primarily a place accommodating the "family" and considering this "group of people" in the house, as the first thought of the house, determines the boundary between small and large societies. House is an enclosed space composed of walls and with no ceiling that distinguishes this group from other human beings on earth. Rightly after this distinction and perception and not before it, "us" is considered as a distinct group and the right relationship between "us" (family) with each other and with the environment is raised. In this secondary understanding of the concept of the house, the separation of space (distinguishing between the types of the presence of "us" with and without each other) and the protection of space (against climatic and environmental factors) are raised. This secondary understanding, after understanding our open space, leads to the production of closed and semi-closed room and space. According to this interpretation, "courtyard" is the core of a house in Iran. This centrality has emerged on the centralization of major family activities in the traditional courtyard so that most domestic behaviors occur completely or partially in the courtyard. Therefore, the issue of the uses of the courtyard in the house is an issue that can somehow show the success and efficiency of the courtyard objectively. In this research, first, the issue of change in the use of the Iranian courtyard and specifically the debate of the

"reduced" use of the courtyard are explained. Then, the functional-conceptual patterns of the traditional courtyard are reviewed and categorized. In the field study, in two quantitative and qualitative stages, the status of past concepts of the courtyard in the minds of contemporary people (with an emphasis on everyday activities) is reviewed and analyzed.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT: IS THE REDUCED USE OF THE IRANIAN COURTYARD AN EXTERNAL COMPULSION OR A PROFOUND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION?

The Iranian courtyard has been the most important quality living space for the Iranian people, which has been completely destroyed in recent times. Among many factors causing this, on two of which there is a consensus: 1. The promotion of apartment housing; and 2. The municipal massing rule in recent decades.

In the case of apartments, the only remained space nearly similar to the courtyard is in the complexes, i.e. "their open spaces which are located on the north or south of the building and are still called the courtyard." These courtyards are transit spaces that are used to pass and stop cars and provide no choice for residents, despite their private ownership. Especially the courtyards on the south side are completely overlooked. In houses where the main building and entrance are located on the north side of the lot and the yard on the south side, the courtyard can be more influential due to its location and being minimally overlooked (Haeri, 2009, p. 165); However, it does not have the capabilities of the past courtyard at all (Einifar & Ghazizadeh, 2010).

The second issue is the row massing rule, which is referred to as the 60-40 rule. With slight changes, it has been the governing rule in ordinary buildings throughout Iran in the last four decades (Bandarabad, 2010). As an example of the criticism of this rule (40% of the land area on the south side is allocated to the courtyard), one can mention Fernand Bena's analysis (Assistant Professor at the University of Tehran at that time). He first referred to the spontaneous emergence of the model presented by this rule in Tehran as a result of fabric modernization (Bena, 1977). Then, he discussed the role of this model in destroying the quality of the courtyard. About the side effects of this rule, in addition to the limitation on the location of the building and the courtyard that limited the architects and employer to achieve a good plan, he mentioned the followings: a two-dimensional attitude towards the city, the lack of attention to the third dimension in the master plan, the building owners' tendency for ostentation due to the alignment of the facades next to each other, and thereby the disturbance of the general image of the city, and the loss of the sense of "citizenship". This ostentation also prevents the light and view of the neighbors due to taller height. Fernand Bena's early analysis still retains its validity, and this phenomenon has been effective in

the destruction of the quality of residential open space in various ways.

In this research, first, it is attempted to review the extensive uses of the Iranian residential courtyard according to previous studies, and their analyses and interpretations. Then, through a field survey, the findings on tradition are tested in the contemporary situation and the survival of the concepts in people's minds is investigated in relation to a specific issue, i.e. "the function and use of residential open space".

3. THE FUNCTIONAL CONCEPT OF THE COURTYARD

Rapaport (2007) considers six attributes for the central courtyard: 1. A special type of privacy, 2. A special collective and individual behavioral setting, 3. A communication center, 4. A generator of integrated texture, 5. Climate efficiency, and 6. Enhancement of social isolation. According to him, the priorities of the attributes are the same as the abovementioned (i.e. climate is the fifth priority). In another study (Farokhzad & Modiri Dovom, 2014), eight main attributes are considered for the courtyard: the creation of privacy and protection of women, climate function and creation of a suitable sub-climate, creation of a natural landscape without removing privacy, visual and physical connection between inside and outside [outdoor space], the presence of nature in the home, the arena of family life, reduction of noise pollution, unification and organization of different spaces of the house. In general, numerous conceptual-functional studies have been carried out on the Iranian courtyard. However, there is no study on the people's mindset of the functional concept of the courtyard using the ethnographic method.

It is certain that the Islamic view has had a fundamental effect on the conceptual organization of the courtyard that must be considered beyond historical issues (Nari Ghomi, 2010). At the same time, Rapaport (2007), in his extensive study, knows the central courtyard as an alternative to many micro mechanisms of privacy that should be resorted to in the absence of a central courtyard. According to him, the climate efficiency of the central courtyard is less important than other attributes. About this, he referred to an example in Baghdad where he observed the complete climate inefficiency of the courtyard. This is also true in the hot and sultry climate in the south of Iran. Ahmadi (2005) has introduced different layers of the concept of the central courtyard in relation to human beings and nature and aimed to generalize the relationship between the central courtyards with the concept of sustainable development (Ahmadi, 2005). This article introduces six main layers of the central courtyard, including cosmic concepts, archetypal concepts, social concepts (privacy), and climatic concepts (orientation, protected sub-climatic space, wall-to-open space ratio). Rapaport (2007) and Noghrekar et al. (2014) have emphasized

the role of the courtyard as a social center for the family in recognizing the concepts of the courtyard (traditional courtyard) from the contemporary point of view, and known it to be affected by three factors (materials, water, and adaptability). (Noghrekar, Hamzenejad, & Bagheri, 2014).

Regarding Islamic or Islamic-related concepts of the central courtyard in the traditional world, the most important conceptual theory is that the central courtyard is a "female space", which is based on the non-Muslim scholars' perception of the appearance of the Muslim community, i.e. the separation of the whole built space based on gender in Islam. According to the scholars' analysis of Islam-related environments, market spaces and streets are male spaces (Peterbridge, 2000, p. 195; Costello, 1989, pp. 127-9), and this is also a more or less established issue in indigenous cultures- even in West (Rapaport, 2005, pp. 204-8). Topological features presented for the presence of men and women in the built space by Islam is a subject for which there are solid Islamic principles (Nari Ghomi, 2010).

Another conceptual theory considering the central courtyard as the main center of the house is that the courtyard is a sacred space in the house. To explain the Islamic space, proponents of mystical-allegorical theories have sought it, mainly with the Sufistic approach, to show how in pre-modern Islam, the mysterious experience is inevitably related to most aspects of life, including creative practices (Akkach, 2005, p.5). For example, in the same reference, for the central courtyard pattern, six axes are considered for the conceptual origin of the central courtyard. This is derived from the analysis of "Ibn Arabi" who considers the inside-out spiritual movement through the axes as an exemplification of matter. Nasr (1996) has emphasized the symbolic significance of empty space and courtyard in terms of the dematerialization and known the creation of vacancy as the introduction for the emergence of meaning (Nasr, 1996). This symbolic debate has been considered so serious in the recent period (Klein, 2014) so that some have known the emergence of the concept of empty space as a basic issue in modern architecture due to its originality in Islamic and Eastern issues and the impact of this culture on early modernists such as Samper and Adolf Luce. According to Ardalan and Bakhtiar, like the garden, the courtyard is an image of paradise and heaven (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2002, pp. 47-48) and Shayegan (1993) has accepted more or less the same feature (Shayegan, 1993). In terms of the spiritual manifestation, Stierlin considers the courtyard to be more authentic than the closed space and provides a special method for analyzing the meaning of open space, in which immateriality decreases from open to closed space and is considered the most important factor for the emergence of spirituality in the courtyard (Stierlin, 1998). Stierlin's analysis also greatly relies on the concept of vacancy, which is linked to the obstruction of light (as the principle of immateriality in space from the Enlightenment view).

In this attitude, the ritual-social use of the central courtyard has been emphasized less than other uses although there are specific theories in this regard. Regarding the relationship between the central courtyard and Shiite rituals, a relatively novel theory (albeit, without sufficient evidence) has been presented in the study entitled "The life of Shiite and its effect on the architecture of the courtyards in traditional houses of Yazd" (Beigzadeh Shahraki & Karegar Shuraki, 2013). This article hypothesizes the origin of religious use for the courtyard (apart from the mystic perspective).

According to the concepts of the Iranian courtyard existing before the modernization of housing can be discussed under eight topics, six of which are the same topics mentioned in the study entitled "The Nature of the Courtyard House: A Conceptual Analysis" by Rapoport, as discussed at the beginning of this section. The other two cases are the femininity of the courtyard space and its ritual and sacred role in Iranian life as briefly justified above.

4. A STUDY OF THE FUNCTIONAL CONCEPT OF THE COURTYARD FROM THE VIEW OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE OF QOM

The following case study aims to obtain the concept of the courtyard from the contemporary users' view. Therefore, among the various factors affecting the understanding of the concept of space, people's view of current activities performed in the courtyard space was selected for the study. This choice can be justified considering the importance of activity in theories of sense of place (Falihat, 2005 & 2006; Christopher, Kytta, & Stedman, 2017) and especially the famous model of David Canter, who considers it as one of the three main factors of place. The study of the use of space and purposeful behavior, which called "activity" or "action" by Canter is more important than studying just behaviors in space (Canter, 1988, p. 11). Williams (2014) considers activity and attendance to be important in both studies on "place attachment" and "place meaning" (Williams, 2014). Castello considers the attitude of perceptual psychology and its dominance in architecture and urbanism a reason for the lack of in-depth consideration of the subject of activity in the study of the environment meaning and emphasizes the social psychology plan as a factor for "action" and "activity" (Castello, 2010, p. 62).

According to what abovementioned, to study the claim made in the contemporary analytical literature on the reduced presence of the courtyard in actual life and also people' mind of the courtyard with an emphasis on the religious concept of the courtyard, a survey was developed among the religious people of middle income in Qom. In this survey, the main assessment tool was a questionnaire consisting of questions on the importance of performing a diverse set of activities in

the courtyard, i.e. those activities may not be popular right now but have played a key role in the history of the courtyard, as well as new activities. In order to obtain the most courtyard-related activities, in addition to the literature review, a brainstorming session was made among a number of architecture experts living in Qom and after eliminating duplicate and similar cases, 21 main items were selected for investigation. These activities were divided into five categories: eco-friendly activities, main family activities, specific social activities, specific service activities, and non-specific activities of the courtyard. The first three categories include activities related to the socio-religious analysis of the courtyard (along with common activities) abovementioned, and the latter two categories include the marginal activities of the courtyard.

5. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was first carried out quantitatively among selected groups of families (purposive sampling¹, Iman, 2009, p. 316). In the selection of these families, their belonging to the Islamic lifestyle was considered as one of the inclusion criteria to study all the concepts mentioned in the literature from their views. Accordingly, they were selected based on the previous knowledge of families, their daily behavioral patterns, and their own beliefs of their belonging to a religious group. Open-ended interviews were then used for qualitative research to provide a more reliable ethnographic interpretation. The quantitative study was performed by distributing 113 questionnaires among people aged 19 to 65 years. In terms of house type, 61 questionnaires were filled out by the residents of courtyard houses, and 47 of them by the residents of apartment houses (five questionnaires were filled out by the residents who were tenants of different house types). In distributing these questionnaires, it was attempted to fill out each questionnaire by one of the members of each family, as its representative to provide the diversity of views required for conducting this research. The questionnaires were distributed in hospitals, universities, family, and friendly gatherings, and the subjects were purposefully selected considering their belonging to the target people studied.

Regarding the qualitative research, it should be noted that the studied samples were six families selected considering 20-year periods (20-year periods representing the decades from which the couples began their shared lives, two couples from each of the following periods: The decades of 1. The 2000s and 2010s, 2. 1980s and 1990s, and 3. 1960s and 1970s). They were religious people of middle income who were residents of two types of houses (apartment and courtyard house) in Qom City. Moreover, they were selected considering the possibility of in-depth study (i.e. having a relative familiarity with the researcher and the availability of their living space for long visits). The data used in this study were extracted from long-

term semi-structured interviews (a total of about 2 to 3 hours per household). Considering the femininity of the courtyard in the Islamic tradition as one of the items emphasized in the literature, choosing women as the main interviewees can be better justified.

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first issue examined in the present study was the desire of people to have a courtyard and do activities in it. In the quantitative study - as shown in Figure 1 - all activity areas in the courtyard are relatively important to the community under study on average. One of the three fundamental concepts of the "central courtyard" from Rapaport (2007)'s view, namely, a center for centralizing activities, is still valuable from the view of the majority of the study population. In the qualitative study, this issue manifests itself as the real for the owners of the courtyard houses and as a deep feeling of nostalgia for the apartment dwellers who lived in the courtyard houses in the past. For example,

an interviewee of the 1940s, about the courtyard of their former house, said: "At the beginning of our shared living, we lived in a house with a courtyard jointly used by us and several close relatives. This yard was actually a space for doing all of our activities and we spent most of our time in it. Even after we became independent, the yard was an important part of our home where we did many of our activities. But, now we have to stay in the apartment and we are very upset that the construction of apartments is developing in the city." The interviewee of the 1360s also said: "We have already lived in an old courtyard house but due to the poor accessibility and worn-out texture of the neighborhood, we moved here. In our former house, the courtyard was an active space and we had a garden that was fresh and green during different seasons. In this house, although we still have a garden and tried to follow some of our activities in a limited way, due to the lack of privacy and the protests of the neighbors, we were gradually forced to leave the garden and our activities".

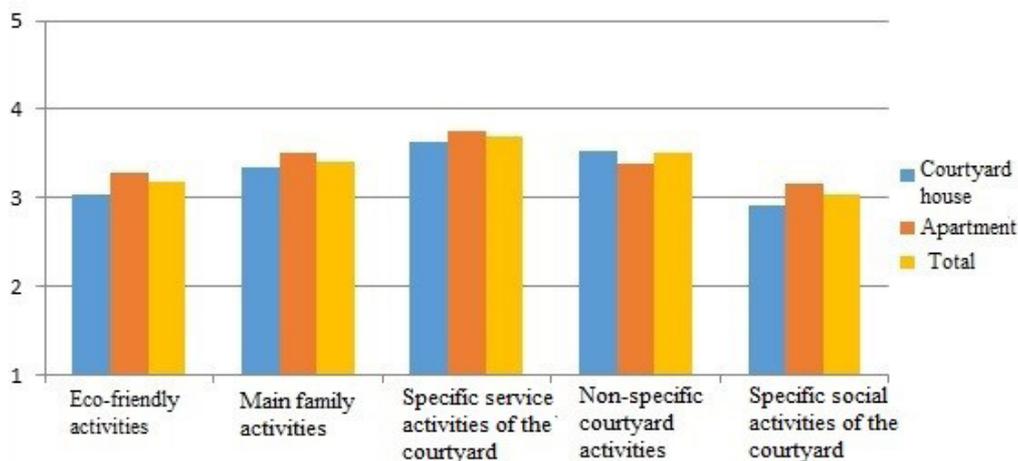


Fig. 1. Average Importance of Each Category of Courtyard Activities from the Views of Different Respondent Groups (Residents of Apartment and Courtyard Houses) and Total Results

Table 1. General Characteristics of Courtyard Activities from the View of Respondents

Category of Activity	The Opinions of the Families of the 1960s and 1970s	The Opinions of the Families of the 1980s and 1990s	The Opinions of the Families of the 2000s and 2010s
Eco-friendly activities of the courtyard	All eco-friendly activities, except animal keeping, were important for this group.	Among the activities, exercise and animal keeping were not important for this group, because they themselves stated that they don't do exercises.	All eco-friendly activities, except doing exercises, were important for this group (they stated that they do not do exercises).
Main family activities	All activities, except the courtyard as the personal sanctum, were important for this group.	All activities were important for this group. Only the issue of courtyard as the personal sanctum was less important for the family of the 1980s.	The two activities of sleeping in the courtyard and family gathering were relatively insignificant for this group.
Specific social activities of the courtyard	All activities, except interaction with strangers, were important for this group.	Only the courtyard as a place for social events was not important for the family of the 1980s.	All activities were insignificant for this group.

Category of Activity	The Opinions of the Families of the 1960s and 1970s	The Opinions of the Families of the 1980s and 1990s	The Opinions of the Families of the 2000s and 2010s
Specific service activities of the courtyard	All activities were important for this group.	The issue of storing appliances in the courtyard has become insignificant for the family of the 1980s.	The presence of a toilet and the storage of appliances in the courtyard have lost their importance.
Non-specific activities of the courtyard	All activities were important for this group.	Only the issue of the specific service activities of the courtyard has lost its importance for the family of the 1980s.	Among various activities, hanging clothes on clothesline and the courtyard as a space for washing have lost their importance.

To better understand the respondents' mind of courtyard activities, the discussion on minor issues (in terms of the five categories of activity) is continued.

6.1. Eco-Friendly Activities of the Courtyard

Eco-friendly courtyard activities include "sports", "animal keeping", "gardening" and "sun-catching activities". In the quantitative study, these activities are relatively important for the respondents on average. In this regard, a noteworthy point is the significant importance of these activities for apartment dwellers, indicating the impact of the lack of a private courtyard for apartment dwellers on their responses.

The activity "gardening" was important for all the families studied. About this, the interviewee of the 1990s said: "The presence of flowers and plants is one of the motivations for the attendance of people in the courtyard and provides the peace of the home." The interviewee of the 1960s added her historical experiences to this issue: "Both of our old houses we lived in after being married were very large and I think the garden, courtyard, and pond will never find their true meanings today. Of course, the issue of privacy is also very important. Qom seemed to be a very beautiful city in ancient times because most houses were two-story and the courtyards could be used."

The activity "animal keeping" was important only for the sample family of the 2010s and the rest of the sample families considered it less important. The interviewee of the 1970s said: "Keeping birds, chickens, and roosters is very troublesome. They make the house space dirty." In contrast, the interviewee of the 2010s said: "I love keeping birds at home because their sounds provide a soothing atmosphere in the house and their presence is exhilarating".

6.2. Main Family Activities

The main family activities which are performed in the courtyard include "family gathering", "children's play", "personal sanctum" and "sleeping in the courtyard". According to the quantitative study, they are more important than eco-friendly activities. These activities are also more important for apartment dwellers than for courtyard house dwellers.

Among various types of activities in this category, sleeping in the courtyard was important for the sample

families of the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s, while it was not important for others. It can be said that for those who have experienced sleeping in the courtyard, this activity is significantly important. However, it should be considered that two of these three interviewees were the apartment dwellers and the elimination of this experience from their lives may a reason for the importance of this activity from their view. The interviewee of the 1980s said: "Sleeping in the courtyard is a very pleasant experience and someone who has tried it once will definitely found this. Now, we live in an apartment, and miss the courtyard and sleeping under the open sky." In this regard, the interviewee of the 1990s added: "Sleeping outdoors and using natural ventilation is a very good activity and in our previous house (which is now private and courtyard) we used the spaces of the courtyard and roof to sleep in the summer. But, now we are not using them as before because of the warming of summer nights and the change of homes." In contrast, the interviewee of the 2000s said: "Sleeping in the courtyard is not a good activity in my opinion, because due to the existence of cooling devices, there is no need to move the bedclothes daily. Moreover, the inside air is better than outside air."

Defining the courtyard as a personal sanctum was insignificant for only two interviewees (of the 1970s and 1980s) and the remaining interviewees considered it very important. The two interviewees considered the courtyard a family and social space and knew the rooms as private spaces. The interviewee of the 1970s said: "In my opinion, the courtyard is not a private space, but rather a social or service space, and I think this is the room that has a personal sanctum aspect." In contrast, the interviewee of the 1990s said: "Praying causes better inner feelings and enhances the concentration, and I think it is very good to use the courtyard space for these purposes. The courtyard is a very positive and enjoyable space for studying activities because of the absence of TV, etc. and the use of the open air."

Defining the courtyard as a place for family gatherings was very important for all samples. In the meantime, it is an insignificant activity only for the interviewee of the 2010s. The interviewee of the 1980s said: "In our courtyard house, we spent our all family time in the courtyard because our courtyard was a greenery space with very good conditions in terms of privacy."

The activity "children's play" was very important for all samples. However, some interviewees stated that children's play in the courtyard may disturb their domestic activities. The interviewee of the 1960s said: "I am very upset when I see today's children. Because their low mobility causes them sick and they try to discharge their emotions when leaving their houses because in the apartment they cannot do this due to the neighbors' protest against running and making noises." The interviewee of the 1980s added a new point to this discussion and said "I have a little grandson who lives in an apartment. His room has a small balcony and he spends all his playing time in this small space. Although it is very small, he eagerly guides us there and shows us that space when we go to their house".

6.3. Specific Social Activities of the Courtyard

Social activities of the courtyard include "communication with strangers", "welcoming and seeing off guests", and "social events". These activities are the least important among all activities according to the opinions of the respondents.

Communication with strangers in the courtyard was important for most samples except those of the 1970s and 2010s. These two samples were the residents of the courtyard house, indicating the tendency to have the courtyard for this activity by the apartment dwellers. However, the existence of the courtyard as a boundary between the place of residence and strangers (such as meter reader, etc.) and reducing the possibility of people entering the living space were very important for all samples. The interviewee of the 2010s said: "I basically do not communicate with strangers such as neighbors, etc., so all people coming to my house are familiar ones." The interviewee of the 1990s had the opposite opinion: "I consider the courtyard as the boundary between private and public lives. Many times, for example, when a neighbor wants to say something to me, I prefer to perform this conversation in my house rather than in front of the door and since my house may be messy when she is coming, it is better to perform this conversation in the courtyard where there is no non-mahram." The interviewee of the 1970s also said: "In my opinion, the courtyard is a personal space in which some clothes may be hung or a service activity is taking place."

Defining the courtyard as a place for social events were important for families with more traditional attitudes (of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s). The interviewee of the 1960s said: "Having a courtyard, especially a large one, is very good for holding social ceremonies such as parties or even weddings, etc. Because this courtyard can both help the separation of male and female genders and also the gathering of people does not make space warmer or cause other problems. We used to hold all the ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, etc. at home." However, the younger interviewees do not consider it necessary to hold such

activities in the courtyard and in the house in general, because according to all of them, holding such events make the house dirty and it is effortful to clean it after the event. The interviewee of the 2000s said: "Our house is too small to hold ceremonies. But in general, I think it is better to hold these ceremonies outside the house because in addition to making the house dirty, it is difficult to serve guests".

6.4. Specific Courtyard Activities

The specific activities of the courtyard include "vehicle parking", "maintenance of appliances", "toilet in the courtyard" and "cleaning the courtyard". According to the quantitative study, these activities were the most important activities of the courtyard for the respondents. The presence of a toilet in the courtyard was very important for all the samples studied. Only the sample of the 2010s considered this issue less important than others. In this regard, the interviewee of the 1960s said: "In the past, the toilet was located very far from the building and in the courtyard. In addition to the mobility of people, this distance caused the odors and gases emitted from it to be removed without entering the living space. But today ... there is a small distance between where we are eating our meals and the location of the toilet. This causes a lot of diseases and infections for the family members and I think it is very wrong." The interviewee of the 1990s, referred to a slightly newer history of it, and said: "In the newer courtyard houses, at least the sanitary service was provided with natural ventilation and connection with the courtyard while today it is located next to the bedroom without any ventilation and natural light." Cleaning the courtyard was one of the most important activities for all of the samples. The interviewee of the 2010s said: "Cleaning the courtyard is a very important issue. Because in the house where the courtyard is located in the front part of the house, it is the first place to be seen when the entrance door is opened. Therefore, if it is dirty, it gives the impression of the owner being dirty person to strangers".

6.5. Non-Specific Service Activities of the Courtyard

The service activities of the courtyard include "hanging clothes on the clotheslines", "service activities", "cooking" and "washing". These activities are the only category that is more important to courtyard house dwellers than apartment dwellers.

The activity of hanging clothes on the clotheslines in the courtyard was very important for all the studied samples except the sample of the 2000s. The reason is her long history of apartment residence (both her and her father's houses were apartment) and the finding of alternative spaces (bathroom and kitchen) for this activity. The interviewee of the 1970s said: "The activity of hanging clothes on the clotheslines in the courtyard is one of the most important uses of the

courtyard for me. Because clothes can be dried in the sun, and our house space does not get wet." In addition to this point, the interviewee of the 1960s added: "We have no choice due to living in an apartment, but one of the reasons for the increase in diseases today is these wrong behaviors. Because clothes are disinfected from many diseases and germs when being dried in the sun." however, some interviewees, like one of the 200s, did not emphasize the need to use the courtyard for this activity: "If our balcony had a cozy space, I would hang clothes in the balcony space, but in the current situation, I hand them in the kitchen to prevent the carpets from getting wet." Or the interviewee of the 2010s who referred to the point of confidentiality in relation to this activity. According to her, since the buildings overlook each other, it is undesirable and very bad to hang clothes in the courtyard.

Defining the courtyard as a cooking space was very important for all the samples studied. The interviewee of the 1970s said: "When I want to fry something I do it in the courtyard and not in the kitchen at all because doing it in the interior space makes it greasy and full of smoke." Referring to her historical experience, the interviewee of the 1960s added: "In the past, our kitchen was a space where only the stove was located and no other activities were performed in it. Therefore, one of the reasons for the health of the older generations is to pay attention to these points. Moreover, the cooking conditions have also changed and with cooking a simple meal, the house space will be full of smoke and grease".

7. CONCLUSION

The literature review of the concept of the courtyard in the Islamic period of Iran indicated the basic concepts of privacy, female space, concentration of domestic activities and the sanctity of this place from a religious and social perspective. Studies also show that the promotion of new urban planning principles and apartment architecture has led to the fact that

in everyday life, the courtyard completely loses its centrality and becomes less important. The present study on the religious people of Qom city shows although the conceptual reality of the courtyard has been removed from everyday life, middle-aged generations have still a mental image of the courtyard as a center for activity and space connected with nature and the sky (as a sacred element). In the case of the younger ones, the existence of this image is undeniable, but the change of perspective cannot be denied either. From the earlier to recent decades, the service activities of the courtyard, including storage of appliances and seeing off of guests, have become more important and, conversely, the original activities of the courtyard, such as family gatherings, have become less important. This implies the aforementioned change of perspective. The most important change is related to the concept of Islamic privacy of the courtyard, which was mentioned by various references, and considering the courtyard as a female space can also be considered a function of it. Some of the interviewees' statements about the ritual uses of the courtyard and even the existence of the courtyard itself show a fundamental change in some principles of the Islamic lifestyle, including the immaterial importance of the open space and green space, as well as the sacred importance due to being under the sky. A religious person who has grown up with everyday Islamic literature, will naturally have a tendency to benefit from this spiritual matter. Similarly, protecting the privacy of men and women in family ceremonies and rituals should encourage people to hold ceremonies in courtyards. However, the modern concepts of domesticity (family life) and the insignificance of housework make the later religious generations reluctant to use the courtyard with its basic uses (because of the difficulty of cleaning). At the same time, another reason for having such a view may be the lack of direct experience of many uses of the courtyard by the younger people. To modify this, media and educational promotion can have an effective role.

END NOTE

1. In qualitative ethnographic research, targeted sampling is more effective than random sampling, because unlike the random sampling, which relies on minimizing the involvement of the researcher in the selection of the sample, this sampling is based on the researcher's knowledge of the case studies and they are selected considering a set of inclusion criteria.

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