

Narrative and Dwelling

Notes on Tabriz old houses

Mohammad Reza Shirazi

Abstract

We need past for our projections. Past, as a written text, must be read, and good readers do not get fascinated at all. Tabriz old houses are texts which have not been read carefully yet. This essay, based on four readings, narrates four narratives:

First narrative: transparency

The history of Persian architecture is the story of transparency. Transparency aims to decrease materiality of architecture. Transparency is based on these elements:

- Courtyard: Courtyard is the scene of senses and events. It gathers water, trees, sky, earth, wind, rain... in a void space, and celebrates this presence.
- Water: Water, in the pool of the courtyard or in the poolhouse, reflects the surrounding and deepens the space.
- Orosi: Orosi is the celebration of color. As a mirror of Paradise, it passes the light through and renders the Tanabi.
- Ivan: Ivan, creates horizontal and vertical transparency. It covers the main spaces of the house.

In Pahlavi era, these elements of transparency diminish slightly, and the houses become heavy and dim.

Second narrative: Hierarchy

Hierarchy is the obsession of threshold. Entrance, needs changes and transitions and hierarchy ensures these changes. The interval between exterior and interior is not a line, not a distance, but a distance in distance.

Loosing this difference, we loose hierarchy as well.

Third narrative: Privacy

Privacy is the result of differences between interior and exterior. Within house there is a private realm. The hierarchic organization conserves this privacy. Loosing the elements of hierarchy-doorway, hashti, and so on- means to loose privacy.

Fourth narrative: Axis

Axes, are the essence of the hidden geometry of the Persian architecture.

In Tabriz old houses, we used to have 2 axes: main axis and secondary axis. Main axis, as an organizer of the house, arranges main spaces – tanabi, poolhouse, ivan...- carefully. In most of the Pahlavi houses, axes are not organizers.

■

These four narratives, narrate us a grand narrative as well, narrative of declination. In this declination, we encounter a continuous disorder. Nowadays, the text of Tabriz old houses is very confused and ambiguous. Tabriz old houses are homeless. Types have been diminished all. We live in a typelessness now.