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Phenomenological Reading of Continuous Creation Historical Symbolic Centers of Isfahan city

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ABSTRACT

The city of Isfahan in Iran has historical centers that represent different paradigms: “narrative-mystical,” “rational-philosophical,” and “scientific.” The “Buyid “ and “Safavid” dynasties built symbolic centers with “ontological” dimensions, bringing unity to the city under a centralized government. Naqsh Jahan Square is a historical symbolic center that encompasses all dimensions of human existence and allows individuals to rise above themselves. This research aims to understand the process of continuous creation and the factors influencing it, focusing on the historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city. The research method is qualitative, using hermeneutic phenomenology, historical-interpretive, case study, and logical reasoning approaches. Information is gathered through a systematic review of historical texts, examination of scientific, mystical, philosophical, and physical-spatial opinions, field observations, interviews, and content analysis. The historical symbolic center of Isfahan city is described as a complex with a physical-spatial character, starting from the origin of the old square, passing through the market, and reaching Naqsh Jahan. The continuous creation process is dependent and interconnected, involving “topology,” “functionalism,” “morphology,” “landscaping” and “typology,” which all contribute to the relationship between humans and the place, creating mutual perception and meaning.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical cities mainly have symbolic centers with essential and timeless values, which are based on the combination of "religious-mystical", "rational-philosophical" and "scientific" Paradigms. The scientific paradigm ignores the relationship between beings and existence both from a historical and an existential point of view, and in such an attitude, the world is reduced to subjects such as subjects and objects. In such an attitude, the world is assumed to be an image before the knowing mind (Ahmadi,2019). Symbolic centers tell about the unifying principle of the world and are places that bring existence and creatures together and bring them to unity. Therefore, they are orderly, cohesive, life-giving, identity-giving, etc. A face that has emerged in the historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city in a complete form. This city, as the third capital of the Safavids, was able to create this type of center within itself and maintain it until today. Such a thing makes the selection of the case sample of Isfahan city and its historical centers meaningful for conducting this research. Referring to the historical periods of Iranian civilization before Islam and the Islamic era, the center has always recovered its system in an evolutionary form from Iranshahr to the Safavid utopia from successive accumulation in historical layers, so that in this time process, Al Boyeh As the first independent Shiite political system, it left its mark in the form of a unified center on the Iranian cities of "Ji" and "Yehudieh" in the 4th century AHDuring the Safavid era - which after The Buyid dynasty, was able to establish an independent central government based on the official religion of Shiism - and based on the views of the Isfahan divine school the city center, in mutual relation with The Buyid dynasty old square, created an accumulation of place values. Kend and the role of the world, as a symbolic center, imposes a role of that world on this world. The system of the Islamic Republic as an independent Shia political system was formed by the dominance of the religious paradigm (religious-mystical) and with reference to the values of the early

days of Islam, and later by entering the scientific paradigm it tried to find its life and identity in Continuity with the past but preserve and promote it in a contemporary way, in the field of urban planning, succeed in establishing a suitable and symbolic center that can physically and spatially translate the fundamental concepts of "independence", "freedom" and "Islamic Republic" like the golden era of the past. It has not been brought to the fore..The current research, with a phenomenological approach, seeks to read the value-creating rules of historical symbolic centers through the re-reading and recognition of the city of The Buyid dynasty, the city of Safaviyya and their central collections. Such a matter develops the approach to the research topic from understanding meaning to creating meaning. In this attitude, it is a center with an identity whose essence is continuous creation in continuity with the past, but in relation to the achievements of the time. A way that has shaped places with identity based on the imagination and thought of two worlds and with the accumulation of past values and historical continuity.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The background and theoretical framework of the current research should be organized based on the concepts of symbols and symbolic centers on the one hand and the continuous creation components of these centers on the other hand. The way that includes the studies done from ontological to biological dimensions and is based on internal and external studies in this field. Based on such an approach to the subject, Seyyed Mohsen Habibi considers the Islamic-Iranian city in the horizon of its historical evolution from the unification of the four "Ummah" , "Religion", "Government" and "Guilds" in the center of the city as one of The components of the foundation of the city reach unity (Habibi, 2017). In his view, the foundation of the city forms the main foundation of the city and it is a collection that connects roads, nodes, cores, edges, signs, buildings and neighborhoods together (Habibi and Maqsoodi, 2019)

. Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar in the book "The sense of unity" (2012) based on the Isfahan school and also Ibn Arabi's point of view, believe that exemplary concepts have the ability to manifest in material elements. In this regard, they point to examples such as four arches, domes, gates, etc. In this view, the place that has the world is settled on the earth and faces the sky, and it is in such a state that the place finds a qualitative dimension. David Seamon influenced by ontological phenomenology, introduces the center where things, people, experiences, meanings and events gather together and make the center active, stable and identity (Seamon, 2018). Montgomery refers to the medieval centers and the presence of religious elements in them, stating that in these centers, the human gaze is drawn to the sky and ends in heaven. Therefore, to reach it, you need bitterness and hard work (Montgomery, 2013). Based on Heidegger's ontology, Christian Norberg Schulz seeks to organize the place with the view of the existential structure and based on the elements of "origin", "path" and "destination" and the revelation of the truth based on a better understanding of the world of place (Norberg Schulz, 2013). In this view, the origin is the place from where a person starts moving and after walking the path, he reaches the destination (center). symbolic center is formed in the place where the horizontal (on the ground) and vertical (in the sky) axes meet, which gives holiness to the place. These horizontal and vertical axes seek the revelation of existence and beings (Norberg Schulz, 2013). In his opinion, the center is a place where a meaning emerges (Norberg Schulz, 2014). He seeks to find the language of urban planning and architecture. This language has the ability to reveal things and express meanings well. He calls the physical alphabet of this language topology, morphology and typology which finds a structure between the earth and the sky (Norberg Schulz, 2019). Tadao Ando in his work titled space poetry (2013) deals with the concepts of totality, context and time, which can be expressed in the form of topology, func-

tionalism and typology (Ando, 2013). Richard Sennet made the concepts of totality, context and time important in his researches. He used time based on "tradition" and "modern". He saw the language of architecture and urban planning in relation to topology which is placed on a social basis. The mentioned elements have historical values and get their meanings based on the existential structure (Sennet, 1990). Juhani Pallasmaa has studied the field of architecture and environment with a phenomenological view. According to him, phenomenology seeks to reveal the essence of things and it is achieved through a pure attitude towards phenomena. In his belief, architecture mediates between the world and the human mind, and in such a state, it expresses the manifestation of human existence (Pallasmaa, 2015). According to him, architecture, like a human being, needs to find its roots because it originates from various environmental, historical, cultural - social and political factors (Pallasmaa, 2013). Kenzo Tange emphasizes on the four components of form, function, symbol and structure and considers urban planning and structuralism architecture to emerge from them. According to him, the place is a field for human physical activities and establishing interactions between them in a symbolic way (Hamidi et al., 1998). In the book "City construction based on artistic principles" Camillo Sitte sought to follow the organization of today's places based on the organization of historical places, that is, to transfer the aesthetic values of yesterday's places to today way (Sitte, 2018). Lynch has been looking for the language of architecture and urban planning in the area of the city's appearance to make sense of its entirety. He seeks to discover the world of people and reads their mental image by asking questions. The result of such research is the lack of proper readability of the road surface. Therefore, Lynch sought to structure the path based on components in order to make it coherent in the overall form. Therefore, it proposes five imaginable factors (neighborhood, node, sign, edge and road) in this regard to help the legibility of

metropolises. In his view, neighborhoods as the origin in relation to the orderly road has recovered and he considers node as the center in the old city. In this view, the legibility of the route is increased by relying on elements such as edges and signs, and ultimately it directs the incongruous appearance of the metropolis towards legibility (Lynch, 2013). Christopher Alexander looks for language and grammar as a model to create a place with meaning and to organize it in such a way that the event of life takes place in it. He emphasizes the four components of "totality", "levels", "context" and "structure" in this regard. In his opinion, if the totality of space is organized according to a hierarchical system from the particle of space (building) to its whole, the event of life will take place in it, and man and place will be influenced and influenced by each other in an interwoven whole. He considers this integrated whole in each of the levels of space as a function of a strong center that is both unifying and life-giving. From this point of view, interconnected entities need centers (Alexander, 2003). Alexander seeks to establish a meaningful connection between the categories of "world", "place" and "life". He has a structural attitude towards the world and man and seeks to build a place with meaning (Alexander, 2013).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research is placed in the category of qualitative methods and in the framework of the understanding paradigm, and is based on the interpretive phenomenological approach, which is also known as hermeneutics. Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology is a type of phenomenology founded by Heidegger (Shosha, 2012). This approach is based on understanding the mental structure on the one hand and receiving the meaning and understanding the text on the other hand. The topic and nature of this type of research is based on understanding the truth as it is, and it is obtained through reading, seeing and asking. The way that finally led to the understanding and reading of related texts - especially historical and philosophical texts - based on the

"historical-interpretive" approach, the direct and first-hand experience of the researcher through "case study" and the discovery of the human world based on the "qualitative" approach. The city of Isfahan was chosen as a case study to conduct this research. In this context, the physical-spatial features of the historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city, including the old square complex, the market and Naqsh Jahan square, and the remains of the old Safavid dynasty (Chaharbagh and its complementary elements) based on direct observation and hands-on experience. First, the researcher accepted in relation to the qualitative measures, the statistical population of this research, in addition to the people who lived in the centers who had direct experience of the place, also includes experts and specialists who either had the experience of living in the symbolic historical centers of Isfahan or had work experience. Related to these centers. In this regard, semi-structured interviews were used. For this purpose and according to theoretical texts in this field, the number of interviews should be enough to reach relative saturation so that new data and information are not presented (Bonger et al., 2009). After the interviews were completed, they were categorized and based on the method of directional qualitative content analysis, data extraction was provided. In this type of analysis, first of all, the perceptions and feelings of the interviewees about the basic concepts of the research in relation to the research centers are discussed and later the key words are extracted, compressed and categorized and in order to achieve the necessary meanings, Semantic areas are referred to. This research based on the seven stages known as Colaizzi (1978) advanced the analysis. First, all the participants' descriptions were read after the interviews were completed in order to familiarize them. In this type of analysis, the perceptions and feelings of the interviewees about the basic concepts of the research in relation to the research centers were discussed. Second, extraction of important sentences and third, formulating their meanings and categorizing them based on the qualitative

content analysis method, with three open, central and selected codings, keywords, extraction, compression and categorization were done. To achieve the necessary meanings, it is referred to the semantic areas. Fourth, the pre-completed steps were put back and forth in previous coding clusters to eliminate inconsistencies. Fifth, the results were comprehensively described. Sixth, the formulation of the previous stage was done in the form of a statement. In the seventh and last stage, in order to ensure the results, interviews were conducted with some people who participated in several meetings of the findings. To analyze and categorize the finding MAXQDA software was also used.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The city of Isfahan was chosen as a case study to conduct this research. In this context, the physical-spatial features of the historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city, including the old square complex, the market and Naqsh Jahan square, and the remains of the old Safavid dynasty (Chaharbagh and its complementary elements) based on direct observation and hands-on experience. First, the researcher accepted (Figure 1).

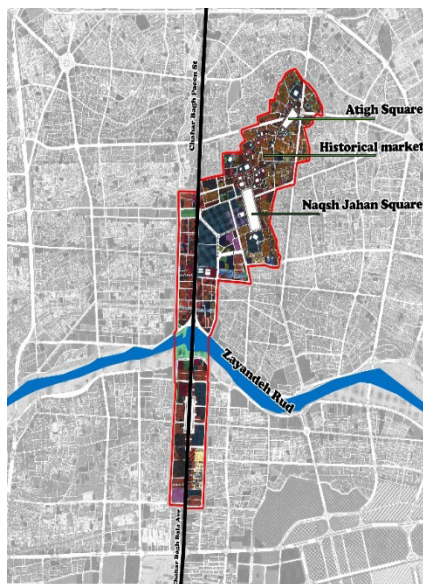


Figure 1: The spatial territory of the research

The findings from the interviews were expressed in relation to the lived experiences of the centers by the contacts. Based on the unit of analysis (the lived experience of space), coding units were extracted and the most important ones were coded separately for spaces and people, which are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Based on theoretical concepts and foundations, as well as field observations and interviews conducted with both groups, the meaning areas in which the findings of this section can be read in their framework are based on an existential structure that people in situations they are placed differently from it and according to the same existential situation, they express their lived experience in the place. The most abundance of basic concepts from the perspective of the audience's lived experience is dedicated to the symbolic nature of historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city. A facet that places the possession of existential structures in the next rank. Such a result shows that the interviewed people, despite having different existential positions, have been able to get a proper understanding of the characteristics of these centers. This is due to the unique characteristics of such spaces. "Enlivening", "identity-giving" and "gathering" are the three main characteristics of historical symbolic centers, which have been given special attention in the literature of urban design today, and urban spaces that have a high population capacity are considered lively spaces. It is remembered. Paying attention to the ontological dimensions and the existential structures of historical symbolic centers, along with their biological dimension, is one of the other things that have been emphasized. For continuous creation of historic symbolic centers should take into account several features in the form of a model, one of which is the use of the method. The creation of such centers focuses on "scientific", "religious", "philosophical", "mystical" and negates the mere view of scientific methods. In addition, paying attention to the values of the past and continuous creation them today is

Table 1: The most significant semantic units extracted from the interviewees in the researched historical centers (first group: having direct lived experience) (source: authors).

Component/ Center	Naqsh-e Jahan square	Historical market	Old square
Unit of analysis) lived experience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Wow, you know, beauty. It makes one wonder. I also saw the “Tian-an-men” square of China, but here is something else. You know that you are leaving this material world here. ✓ When I enter the field, I feel God’s presence. What kind of people were they who could make such places? God bless the likes of Sheikh Bahai. ✓ The greatness of this field makes one wonder and think. You have to sit for hours and live this place. ✓ Only the one who has seen that world can create the role of the world. Its name is also the way, the role of that world to this world. ✓ What kind of life did we live in the past? May God have mercy on you, all our families lived in one house. We all had the same mood. With the elders leaving, we also separated and we don’t want to see each other anymore. ✓ One of the characteristics of water is that it gathers people around it. At the mouth of Zayandeh River, people used to gather around the water. Being very happy together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ There is a sense of vitality in the market. I feel good here. businessman, here they have the accounts of this world and the other world. ✓ Today’s market is not the same as before. The market has been emptied of its original population. A new series has arrived in the market. Fairness and morality have gone aside. ✓ The work routine in the Historical market was based on a master and an apprentice. Because of this, they learn ethics and character. ✓ The essence of man is to work. God gave this substance to man because he is constantly working. This is the essence that makes marketers struggle. The old bazaars used to work with the same people, so they were fair. ✓ When a person enters the market, it is as if he entered a stream of water. He takes the human with him. You leave, but you don’t feel lonely and lost. ✓ Old trades in the people. Being familiar with people’s pain. Because of this fairness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I have done many ambassadors, but nowhere is like here. The connection established in this space is unique. ✓ This makes me think. There is no other place like this. That’s why I come here often. ✓ In the old market, there are still people who are authentic because their relationship with God is strong, that’s why they are fair and well-known. ✓ Today’s houses are soulless and boring. I come here to have a little variety.
The characteristics of historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city through inter- views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attraction ✓ belonging ✓ Conversation ✓ Beauty ✓ greatness ✓ bringer ✓ Relaxing ✓ lively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Linker ✓ Belonging ✓ dynamic ✓ a diary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ bringer ✓ Belonging ✓ Beauty ✓ Relaxing ✓ historicity
Extracting the fundamental concepts of research through interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existence and beings ✓ Life and identity ✓ symbolic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Life and identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Existence and beings ✓ Life and identity
Extracting the components of reproduction through the statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Topology ✓ functionalism ✓ Landscaping ✓ Typology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Morphology ✓ functionalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Topology ✓ functionalism ✓ Landscaping

Table 2: The most significant semantic units extracted from the interviewees of the second group (specialists and experts) (source: authors).

The main components	Semantic units	Interviewees
Extracting the fundamental concepts of research through interviews	✓ Existence and beings	M1 / M2 / M6
	✓ Life and identity	M1 / M2 / M4 / M6
	✓ symbolic	M1 / M2 / M3 / M4 / M5
The characteristics of historical symbolic centers of Isfahan city through interviews	✓ Identification	M1 / M2 / M4 / M6
	✓ bringer	M1 / M2 / M6
	✓ connector	M2
	✓ meaningful	M3
	✓ Presence and sociability	M 4 / M 5
	✓ Based on culture, philosophy and mysticism	M1
Extracting the reproduction components from the statements	✓ Topology	M1 / M3
	✓ functionalism	M 1 / M 6
	✓ Morphology	M1 / M2 / M5 / M6
	✓ Landscaping	M 4 / M 5
	✓ Typology	M3 / M5 / M6

another component that is neglected in today's urban planning and architecture and needs to be revitalized in this field. In the historical system, special attention is paid to such a thing, and a clear example of it happened in the new center of the Safavids (Naghse Jahan Square) with the revival in the center of The Buyid dynasty (Old Square), and it was able to create a meaningful revival by multiplying the achievements of the time. Based on the discussion and summation of the findings from the previous stages, it is understandable to read the process of continuous creation of historical symbolic centers based on "topological", "functional", "morphological", "visual (landscape)" and "typological" components. A method that finds its order by referring to a case example as follows.

Topology

Symbolic historical centers of Isfahan city, starting from the old square and continuing to Naqsh Jahan The aspect that places the market in the role of a link between the two. These centers are located at the intersection of two natural axes (Zaindeh Road) and artificial (Chaharbagh) and in a place that brings together different communities in the form of neighborhoods .

The old square of the city has always played a role as the center and the routes ended in this destination from different directions. One of the main entrances of this square ends at the market. In the Islamic period, this square was the gathering place of all the central elements (Rasmi et al.,2023). The old square is positioned in the middle of the Al Boyeh era city and Naqsh Jahan stands in the middle of the old and new city. The physical organization of the city in the Buyid dynasty period was based on the central core in the middle and a set of neighborhoods around it (Figure 3) and the organization of the new city next to the old city was based on two old and new structures in the Safavid era, the organization of soft elements (water and plants) in relation to hard elements (artifacts) is one of the characteristics of the city in this period. The governing objectives of the organizations indicate the spatial distribution of social classes in the city spaces and their combination in the center, and the combination of leisure and activity is seen in the organizations. The unity between the old city and the new city is established through the unity of the old and new center (Figure 4).

(Source: Bavand, consulting engineers, 2017)

functionalism

Urban space is defined in different ways. Factors such as the type of land use, land ownership, etc., a good urban space can promote democracy and make people responsible. The ideal public space is defined and determined by qualities such as utility, comfort, safety, importance and comprehensiveness, etc (Danesh Pajouh and Akin,2023). The semantic implications of the old square based on its structure indicate adherence to historical contexts . The orientation of the complex towards the Qiblah (a part of the identity of the complex) , the existence of two triple structures (Government Palace/ mosque/ Market) and (Harun Velayat/ Hazrat Ali Mosque /Market) with the semantic implications of unity between the Ummah, unity between religion and politics , and unity between this world and the hereafter , and the existence of the square as a central place for connecting movements (horizontal and vertical) in the direction of shaping a rich world It can be read from the meaning based on the relationship between things (Figure 5) .The field of the role of the world in the field of name is the role of that world on this world, which gives meaning to the connection of the earth and the sky. At the level of the collection, due to having human proportions in dimensions and size and unity between life and identity, it has been able to establish greatness, authority and order in it, so this collection has regained its meaning through the combination of symbolic elements and through establishing In the middle of the old and new city, it moves towards the unification of the society. At the level of the elements of the collection, the vertical structure (connection with the top/wholeness) and horizontal (wholeness) as well as the use of symbolic elements such as the dome, minaret, etc., and the organization of the market in front of the Shah Mosque - which symbolizes the world and the hereafter It expresses - and the organization of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in front of the Ali Qapu Palace - which represents the symbol of religion and politics - is one of

the characteristics of this historical symbolic place (Figure 6). In this built environment, there are symbolic elements (the Imam Mosque and Sheikh Lotfollah) and symbolic elements (the market and the government palace) which are of different sizes and scales and in special situations two by two in relation to each other. It is organized and through commercial elements in the body, it has provided the context to combine the components with each other in an enclosed space, measuring 510 x 160 meters. The richness of this collection comes from the fact that each of its buildings implies a special meaning and their combination has expanded the meanings in two other levels of the environment (at the level of the buildings and at the level of the complex).

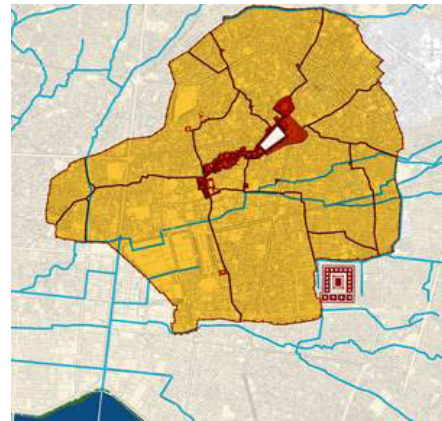


Figure3: The city of Isfahan in the AlBoyeh period

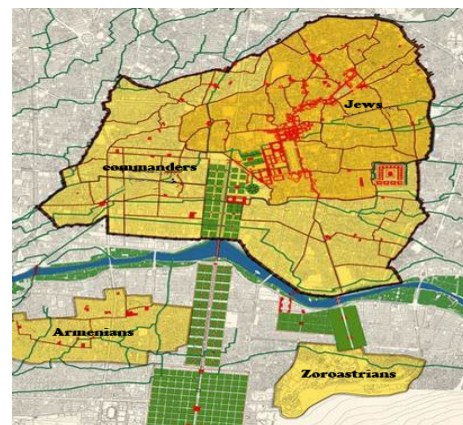


Figure4: The city of Isfahan in theSafavid period (Source: Daneshma, technical-specialized monthly, 2016)

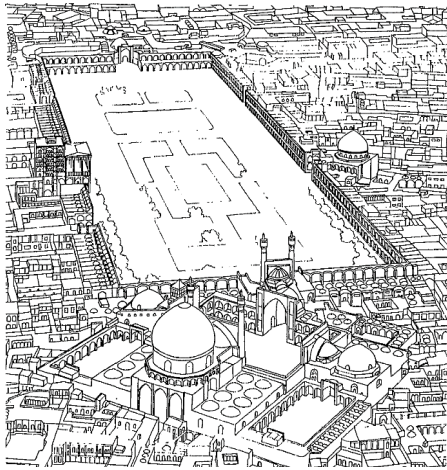


Figure 5: Naqsh Jahan square in the Safavid period

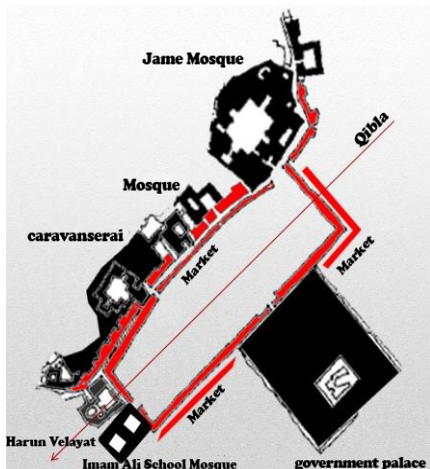


Figure 6: The old square of Isfahan city in The Buyid dynasty period

(Source: Daneshma, technical-specialized monthly, 2016)

Morphology

Morphology includes the origin, path and destination, which form a structure to order the space. This structure can depict the whole place. In the historical part of the city of Isfahan, which includes the north of the Zayandeh River, the morphology of the place/center is visible based on the structure defined in the form of the Old Square, market and Naqsh Jahan complex, despite the interventions in the contemporary era. In this structure, the center sits in the position of

the destination and has a morphological system that by referring to the historical periods of its origin, it can be defined as Imam Ali Square, the route as the market, and the destination as Naqsh Jahan Square. It has been playing its role since yesterday till today. Construction and structure, construction and spatial organization in the Islamic - Iranian city are always based on a systematic order, putting the components together and forming a coherent and coherent whole. In this systemic - structural order, each component finds a

specific position and role. In addition to this, hierarchy is another characteristic of this system, which has a hierarchical position, except for the space to the whole space. The city of Isfahan and its historical centers also have such an order in the structure of the city in such a way that there is a specific origin, route and destination in them and the center always takes the place of the destination. It is based on this system that the old square is the origin for the destination Naqsh Jahan and from the market. The historical market plays a detailed role here in order to establish a good connection between the two centers. An element that has a dominant commercial role, has a structural order and has accepted complementary functions within itself (Figure 7).

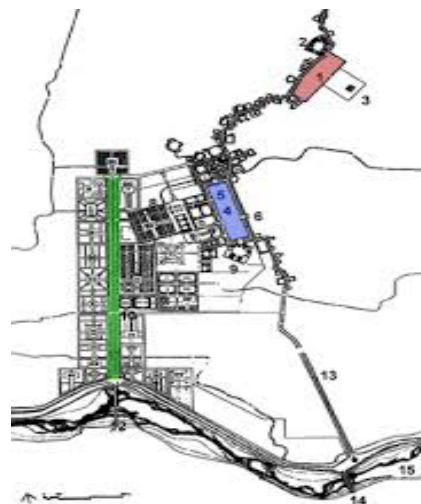


Figure 7: Morphological system of historical centers of Isfahan city (source: authors).

Landscaping

Landscape, which implies the overall configuration of space, connects the earth to the sky in the horizon line and in its four directions to provide the meaning in the center. The appearance of the old square (Imam Ali) in its current state is a square-rectangular place whose width is not equal to each other and is in the shape of a trapezoid. Commercial elements around the place create a cohesive look in a harmonious rhythm. The view of the Jame Mosque, the minaret and the dome of Imamzadeh Harounieh, as well as the Imam Ali Mosque are all in the background. The floor of this place is covered with soft elements (water and plants) and there are paths for walking in the middle of it ([Figure 8](#)).



[Figure 8](#): View of the floor, wall and roof of the old square Imam Ali

Architecture is a cultural heritage and is closely related to social and cultural aspects of life. With socio-cultural developments, new forms of architecture have been formed. This change can be seen in the new market and shopping centers. While the historical markets of Iran have had a precise model that can be used in the design of contemporary commercial spaces ([Al-kuni and Refaat, 2023](#)). Historical market of Isfahan, which creates a path between the two centers of The Buyid dynasty and Safaviyeh, is a nested place that has the appearance of a floor, a wall, and a roof ([Figure 9](#)). This center creates rhythmic rhythms in its components. This spatial sequence in four squares forces a person to stop moving and draws his gaze to the top (ceiling). Such a view provides the possibility of connection between the earth and the sky and establishes a meaningful link between the

material and spiritual dimensions of the place. In the bazaar, the presence of openings to create light and shade as well as air conditioning has both a biological and an ontological nature. The light here is an allegory of the presence of existence, in the light of which things become visible.



[Figure 9](#): The interior view of the historical bazaar of Isfahan city

Naqsh Jahan Square is a place that brings together the community, government, guilds and religion, which are organized in relation to each other. The commercial stands around the square provide the context for the combination of architectural elements ([Figure 10](#)). The configuration of this center creates an image for presenting a meaningful world in the center. The appearance of the floor in this place has undergone changes over time and has been transformed into different forms of riding and walking, a face that it has today through soft elements (water and plants) in this field.



[Figure 10](#): View of floor, wall and roof of Naqsh Jahan square

Typology

Typology is aimed at investigating the types of architecture in the centers. Architecture, like any phenomenon, has a soul, body and face. You have to look deep and search carefully to get the spirit or meaning (Vahedi and Salehi,2023). The architecture of such centers always has a relationship with the earth and the sky, and meaning is provided in this relationship. The types of architecture in the historical centers of Isfahan are placed in cosmic style. In this style of architecture, the inside and outside of the place, the earth and the sky have an unbreakable connection, and elements such as the dome, gate, garden, etc. are exemplary concepts of the eternal world that are determined by material elements. Due to its special geometry, the Grand Mosque of Imam Ali Square has an open courtyard in the middle and arranged porches on its four sides. This central element, with basic forms such as dome and minaret, and with reference to patterns and light, has created a world within itself. This building is connected with Imam Ali Square through an intermediate space and creates a corresponding meaning (Figure 11). The historical market of Isfahan has benefited from introverted architecture. This place is roofed and has regained its linear form. The roof of the group uses the element of the dome to reveal the world of the heavens and the sky inside the market. This central element penetrates light and air through entrances to create a relationship between the earth and the sky (Figure 12).

The architectural type of Naqsh Jahan Square is also placed in the cosmic style. A style that has the exemplary elements of a dome, minaret, entrance and four arches and is established in complete and lofty dimensions and shapes with a vertical orientation. The entrance of the mosques located in the square has a jalokhan, which ends with the entrance and its roof with arches, lifts the viewer up and places him at the top (Figure 13). Entering the two mosques located in Naqsh Jahan Square (Imam and Sheikh Lotfollah mosques) indicates a transition from

a physical position to a spiritual center. A place within you that moves and directs a person to meet and accept by being in a high presence. The aforementioned symbolic center is structured with a morphological order from the origin and the path and becomes a destination for the unity of the plurality gathered in it with a single existence (Figure 14).



Figure 11: Jame Mosque located in the old square



Figure 12: Isfahan historical market



Figure 13: Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque



Figure 14: Shah Mosque (Imam)

On the other side of the square, the Aali Qapu mansion and the entrance to the Qaisarieh market show a tall gate as an entrance and in a vertical way. A face that, from the point of view of scale and form, is consistent with the architectural elements in front of it (Imam Mosque and Sheikh Lotfollah) and lead the way to the labyrinth of the government palace and the market. These entrances have vaults and arches, but they do not have muqrans and they distinguish themselves from the entrances in front of them through motifs and use. The entrances here separate inside and outside and lead to places that, despite being material and earthly, have exemplary forms such as arches (Figure 15 and 16).



Figure 15: The entrance to the Qaisaria market



Figure 16: The entrance of Ali Qapu mansion

RESULT AND CONCLUSION

Ontological phenomenological reading has a special relationship with preconceptions, and preconceptions also provide the basis for understanding a subject. Additionally, each impression can be influenced by newer impressions during reading. Truth has multiple faces and life is not static; it is a process of becoming. This is why meanings are constantly evolving. When recreating historical symbolic centers, it is essential to consider their ontological dimensions, existential structures, and biological aspects. A model for recreating these centers should incorporate various methods, including scientific, narrative (religious), philosophical, and mystical approaches. Emphasis should be placed on creating these centers while not solely relying on scientific methods. Furthermore, urban planning and architecture should revitalize the values of the past and continue to create them in today's context. This has been overlooked and needs to be emphasized. Historical examples, such as the new center of the Safavids (Naqsh Jahan Square) and the revival in the center of Buyid dynasty (Old Square), demonstrate the meaningful revival achieved by integrating the achievements of the time into these centers. Today, prioritization of returning to original foundations and principles is considered the most crucial wisdom in Iranian-Islamic architecture and urban planning. This concept has an ontological nature, and the research aims to expand this wisdom and its meaning in the field of urban planning over time. The approach to the research topic has evolved from understanding meaning to creating meaning, prompting the researcher to transition from observation to action in the research process. By exploring the historical periods of Iranian civilization before Islam, the Islamic era, and up to the contemporary time, it is evident that the center has consistently re-established its order in an evolutionary manner, from Iranshahr to the Safavid utopia, through successive accumulation in historical layers. During the Safavid era, after the first independent Shiite political system of Buyid dynasty which had left its mark on the Iranian

cities of “Jay” and “Yehudieh” in the 4th century, the Safavid government, based on the official Shi’a religion, further developed the center of the city in relation to the old The Buyid square, creating an accumulation of place values and symbolically giving a role from the world to this world. This city is divided into two parts: a historical part to the north of the River of Zayandeh Rood natural structure and a modern part to the south. The historical part shows a meaningful continuity with the city’s previous periods (from the Khwarazmian Empire to The Buyid), but there is no such continuity with the modernist city that came after it, making it historical. As a result, the accumulation of values in the city and its centers is negated. This has left the historical city devoid of symbolic places and centers in its contemporary part, and it is completely connected with worldly affairs. While the orientation of this section is still based on the Chaharbagh axis, there is no sign or symbol for a proper understanding of the space. The historical centers of the city of Isfahan have a symbolic language based on a grammar that connects the earth and the sky, imbuing them with deep meanings. However, the new centers of the city lack such meaningful language and grammar. Moreover, the new Islamic civilization approach envisioned by the Islamic Republic system has not found a chance to emerge in the field of urban planning and architecture. Therefore, understanding the historical evolution of symbolic centers is crucial, providing city planners with the principles and grammar governing them to this day. The findings are based on theoretical concepts, field observations, and interviews with the target groups. The findings suggest that people in different situations express their lived experiences based on a common existential structure. The audience’s lived experience is mostly focused on the symbolic nature of the historical centers of Isfahan. This indicates that despite having different existential positions, the interviewed people have a proper understanding of the characteristics of these centers. Based on the research in ontological phenomenology, the interconnected

historical centers of Isfahan city have a significant impact on the world and life. This impact has implications for architecture and urban planning, as these centers have a physical-spatial language that allows for continuous creation within them. This understanding was derived from “reading,” “asking,” and “seeing,” leading to improved validity and reliability of the research findings. The framework for this understanding encompasses components such as “topology,” “functionality,” “morphology,” “landscaping,” and “typology.”

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