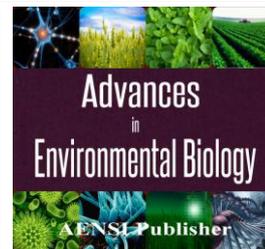




AENSI Journals

Advances in Environmental Biology

ISSN-1995-0756 EISSN-1998-1066

Journal home page: <http://www.aensiweb.com/AEB/>

Morphology of Safavid Era Palaces

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 July 2014

Received in revised form 27 August 2014

Accepted 12 October 2014

Available online 3 November 2014

Keywords:

Palaces, Plan, Safavid, Morphology, Decorations, Architecture

ABSTRACT

This study aims at clarifying common principles and similarities between Safavid era palaces' morphology and architecture. The common grounds for the above palaces are shape, plan, building, materials, location and usage. The reasons for Safavid kings to construct palaces are first, hostility, conflict and competition with ottoman government. They were always in war so the construction of beautiful palaces and structures was a way to show off the majesty and glory of Safavid government. Second, commercial interactions, meeting foreign ministers and existence of a palace to serve them were reasons for Safavid kings to start constructing palaces across Iran. Third, Safavid kings themselves were able to appreciate art works so they hugely supported artists and architects who, in turn, deployed their at most art and talent to create the best architectural works. Although most palaces share similarities on plan, materials and shape, they are different in decorations and usages.

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To Cite This Article: Ali Asghar Mir Fattah and Chiman Hosseini, Morphology of Safavid Era Palaces. *Adv. Environ. Biol.*, 8(12), 1190-1195, 2014

INTRODUCTION

In their most luxurious shape, palaces aren't just a building. Rather, they are a complete complex with 1 mile length and 1.5 miles width. This complex has been designed to all private and official needs of the court. Accordingly, it has been considered as the huge private residence for the king and its entourage along with facilities for his bodyguards such as barracks, armory, stables and various courts for his authorities, all situated within the palace walls. These buildings included gardens, springs as well as a very strong complex which made the entrance into the whole complex manageable. Since the palace courtyard included a mosque, bathroom and more often a cemetery, it is obvious that the goal of constructing such strong constructions was to keep them away from the outside life. On the other hand, one single palace, in its simplest form, could be limited to a single building and divided into two private and public sections. Open space was in access of the public and the upstairs was for king's private life. In these palaces, outdoor space was bigger and of much more importance. Enclosing palaces within gardens is a realization of the heaven. Perhaps, the lack of defense and presence of aperture-filled walls, springs and generally bright designs are also representative of heavenly mansions and palaces dedicated to believers. Dome is the other feature representing the sky.

Isfahan Chehel Sotoun:

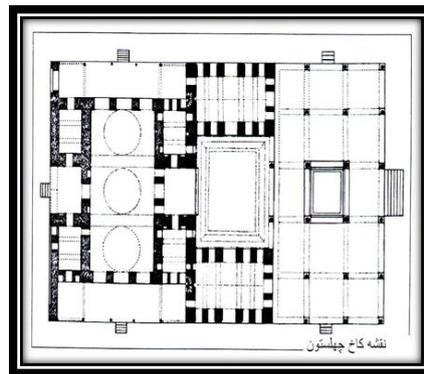
It was built in 1057 AD, during the reign of shah Abbas I under the area 67000 square meters. It was the levee and a place for holding national ceremonies and a hospitality palace for formal guests and foreign ambassadors. This palace holds a central hall with four peripheral rooms. One of its outstanding features is the paintings and decorations on wall plasters pictured by Iranian artists led by well-known artist of the time, Reza Abbas.

This hall consists of 18 pillars and some has even 20 pillars, reflexion of which within the pond has caused to call it 40 Sotoun (pillars). It has two big rooms on the north and south. The Great hall has even been decorated with mirrors on the ceiling. There are also verandas on both sides of king hall and a big pond opposite the hall, inside of which is decorated with mirrors, tiles and paintings. Also, there are 4 stone lions in the pond pouring out water through their muzzles.

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Picture 1: Exterior façade of Isfahan Chehel Sotoun Palace (internet source)



Picture 2: Plan of Isfahan Chehel Sotoun Palace (internet source)

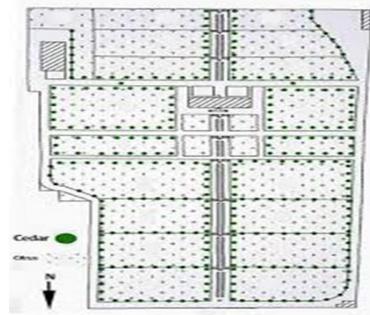
Eight Paradise Palace:

The building is an eight unequal side with 30 m length and 35.26 m width and of two stories. The first floor is 20 m higher the ground and the palace's entrance goes through steps on the east and west. There are verandas surrounding the palace, the ceiling of which is on two wooden pillars. The veranda has a way into an 8 lateral hall, situated on the four big sides of the hall. There are also a variety of symmetrical rooms. The central vestibule hall's ceiling is dome-shaped upon which there is a cupola with eight grilled hatches and an exterior false arch with colorful tiles. Besides, there are paintings of birds and animals on the walls.

Eight Paradise is located in Nightingale garden. Ceilings have great mosaics, 2-story walls and piers within the corridors. No part of the palace is similar to the other in terms of decorations and building. There are new objects in each part. There are 4 verandas of two stories established on a marbled foundation. The northern and southern vestibules have high ceilings, high and round pillars with mirrors. The central hall has 8 sides. There are also four stone lions pouring water out through their muzzles.



Picture 3: Exterior façade of Isfahan Eight Paradise palace (internet source)



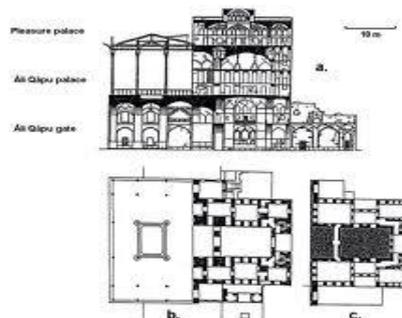
Picture 4: Plan of Isfahan Eight Paradise palace (internet source)

Ali Ghapou Palace:

It is one of the non-religious masterpieces of Isfahan. It has been built in the downtown, with 6 stories and 48 m height. There are special decorative features in each story. The 6th floor is special to formal services and songs. Central hall's wall and surrounding rooms, hollow pargets with the shape of various dishes and a wide range of small and big decanters and paintings by Reza Abbasi and his trainees- which have largely been damaged- are of the features of the palace. The color of the painting on the gatch built on the walls and ceilings, bright shades and delicate paintings of the windows of the main part of the veranda's covered hall, the picture of polo game, spiral staircase towards upstairs. Whole the room is decorated with paintings and gilding. This palace was home to solve the country's affairs and the king's courtier. This palace was a combination of ottoman sultan's palace in Istanbul and shah Abbas' goal was to overshadow ottoman's king. It is a 6-story building, on the roof of which one can see the best view of Isfahan. Each story has special decorations: pargets and painting, miniature making, flower and bushes' paintings and the shapes of wild animals and birds on the ceilings, arches and rooms allowing free passage to one another. 6th floor is specific to the king's formal reception and the community is composed of constructors and musicians in the two upstairs' angles full of miniatures and pargets. There are 110 balls on the both side of the palace. The 3rd floor has 18 pillars made of sycamore wood covered with mirrors and the ceilings of which have been decorated with large painting sheets on wooden tools. In the middle of the hall, there is a marbled pond with various fountains used in different celebrations. The walls of the mansion bear two decorative covers: painting and poems in red Nasta'lig on the background of the pargets beneath a layer of gatch.



Picture 5: Exterior façade of Isfahan's Ali Ghapou palace (internet source)



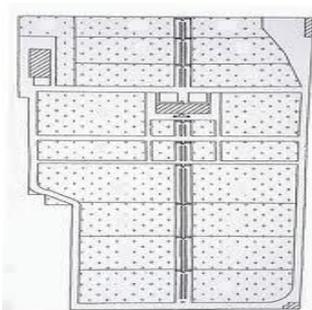
Picture 6: Plan of Isfahan Ali Ghapou palace (internet source)

Behshahr Safi Abad Palace:

It is located among green and spectacular fields and mountains. The first U.K. political and economic convey to negotiate with the Safavid have met at this palace. Most of the political changes and various woods have been lost in burning. It has an observatory on a high hill in the west of the palace. Its altitude is 178m with a square-shaped garden, each side of which 25m built in 2 floors. The palace has an entrance, vestibule and a circular ceiling. The first floor includes lots of rooms and the internal walls decorated with paintings, no trace of which is left. Exterior façade of the palace is decorated with colorful tiles, largely lost in burning and only a little of which is left. Each side contains 6 windows. Materials used: stone, plaster-molding brick, and tile. Craved stones were used for the foundation.



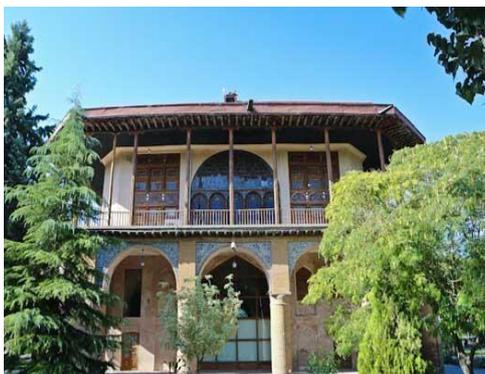
Picture 7: Exterior façade of Behshahr Safi Abad Palace (internet source)



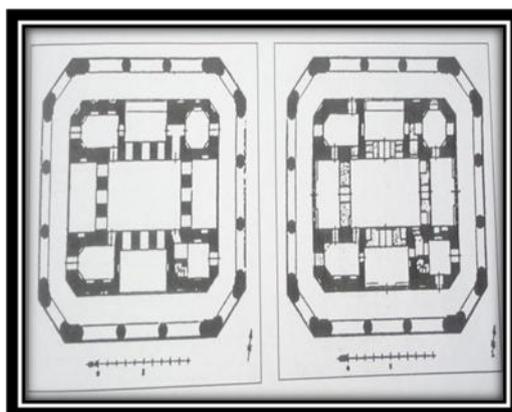
Picture 8: plan for Safi Abad palace (internet source)

Ghazvin Chehel Sotoun:

Its area is 67 thousand square meters. The large veranda is 38m length, 13m width, 14m height with 18 pillars of sycamore and pine wood, polygon-shaped, 16 sided and 8-circular sided. There are four pillars on four stone lions, craved in a way that both lions have one head and water is being poured out of four lions' muzzles. The pond is made of unique marble. On both sides of alcove are portico and king's hall entrance and inside is decorated with mirrors on both sides of the vault. On the sides of the ceiling, there are lines of black writing. Chehel Sotoun mansion and lakes on the sides of the hall are in the center of the garden. It is a detached building. There are 3 cupolas with an outstanding length on the walls of 1147 inches length and width of 451 inches with porticos shaped in circles and on the back of one another. The palace's length is above 1312 inches and width of 902 inches. The spectacular ceilings are decorated with paintings. The hall has 18 pillars with gold decorations, grilled and great windows, beautiful plaster-molding and tiles on the walls and ceilings.



Picture 9: Exterior façade of Ghazvin Chehel Sotoun Palace (internet source)



Picture 11: Plan of Ghazvin's Chehel Sotoun Palace (internet source)

Name of palace	Date of construction	Plan type	Dimensions	Number of floors	Location	Staircases	Decorations	Materials	Usage
Safi Abad Behshahr	1010 A.H.	Square shaped	25 * 25	2	Countryside among hills and mountains	Spiral	Painting, mirrors, grilled windows	Stone, brick, plaster, multi-color tiles	Rest and leisure time
Ali Ghapou	Early 11 century A.H.	Square, rectangular	140 * 386	7	In city	Spiral	Painting, mirrors, colorful glass, grilled windows	Stone, brick, plaster, multi-color tiles	Serving ambassadors and high ranking authorities
Eight Paradise	1080	8 unequal sides	30 length 35.26 width	2	In city	Simple	Marble, different painting for each floor, grilled windows, wooden door	Stone, brick, parget, multi-color tiles	Family use
Chehel Sotoun	1057	Square, rectangular		2 floors	In city	Simple	Paintings, mirrors, parget, multi-color tiles	Brick, plaster-moulding, tile, marble	Serving foreign ambassadors and guests
Ghazvin Chehel Sotoun	Shah Abbas I	8 sides	38* 17	2 floors	In city	Spiral	Paintings, mirrors, grilled windows	Brick, stone, colourful tiles	Guests and ambassadors

Conclusion:

Architecture of Safavid era is of great importance. Since they transferred the capital from Ghazvin to Isfahan due to ottoman's fear, their palaces bear a great deal of similarity in terms of architecture, especially on the materials, shape and appearance of the palaces, internal and external decorations, and the situation of palaces in the downtown. They aimed at drawing foreign guests and ambassadors' attention to Iran's architecture. It was a kind of glory. Most of the palaces were multi-stories and each one had a special decorations. Most of the palaces were built in the middle of gardens to comfort the king and guests. A palace which was used as a resort was in fact a place for getting rest and hunting. Pillars and porticos are available in all palaces. Fountains, small and big halls, grilled windows, wooden doors and colorful glass were of other features of decoration. They used multi-color tiles and strong foundation for construction of the palace. Because Safavid kings were all keen on art, they hugely supported artists and architects. This is why architecture made a lot of progress during Safavid dynasty. The architects employed their own mere art and taste to create a sustainable and beautiful artwork.

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