

Review Article

**DESIGNING THE “GILAKI” LANGUAGE CULTURAL CENTER BY
UTILIZING FROM VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURAL PATTERN
(INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE AND LOCAL
DIALECTS ON LOCAL CULTURAL CENTERS DESIGNING)**

***Marjan Kaffash Majidi**
Guilan Art & Architectur University
**Author for Correspondence*

ABSTRACT

In this article an attempt has been made to study the cultural factors which affect the architecture through identifying the relationship between the Gilan’s culture and its architecture. The obtained results reflected the fact that the related factors such as the proportions, order, component’s composition, elements and their relationships and symbols and signs should be considered in the design process, in order to have a relationship between the culture of a society and its architecturally built environments. The results also suggested that Gilan’s literature is an expression or indication of those concepts which are related to the theoretical principles, attitudes and perspectives of Gilan’s culture; and the reflection of these elements in the design of the “Gilaki” language cultural center can establish a good relationship with its users and also properly represent the culture, civilization and language of Gilan.

Keywords: *Gilaki Language, Cultural Center, Vernacular Architecture, Native Culture*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development of any society depends on its cultural background, regardless of other factors. The Ideas, worldviews and art of a nation reflect its cultural status among other nations. Throughout history, the Expression of the ideas and worldviews of ethnicities is always made possible through language, literature and other arts. Meanwhile, some ethnicities -like Gilaks- have a special significance, due to the long and illustrious history in the literature and arts. Among these groups, the Iranian people, and especially the Gilani ethnic group can be cited. Unfortunately for some reasons, our culture and civilization has been neglected of its deserved attention and has failed to achieve its rightful place in the cultural arena. Neglecting the cultural background can lead to irreparable damage to the identity of a nation, so it is crucial -more than ever- to make efforts in introducing and maintaining the literary and cultural heritage of the country, especially in Gilan. On the other hand, along with the impact of economic, environmental and climatic factors, the architecture of a building must encompass all the ideals and values of the society in terms of arts and culture. The cultural spirit that flows in a building is affected by the intellectual, humane and artistic factors related to that realm. In consequence, the architecture transcends its purely material and physical dimension toward achieving a lasting effect, which is rooted in cultural concepts, messages, urban signs and old and persistent values, and it becomes a work of art that will be the sign and relic of the region in the minds of the public.

An architectural work in Gilan should possess the Gilak spirit and culture and should bear the message of many hidden environmental factors of community in its physical manifestation by the abstract expression of geometric composition and architectural space and by being transferor of spirituality, authenticity and its existential truth -just like any other art- which would enhance the cultural dignity of any person who would visit and stand upon it. In other words; a significant and lasting architectural work, will be a specific manifestation of the artistic and cultural heritage of the environment, and along with other products and manifestations of the built environment, will gain a special status in the minds of people as the meaning, concept and weight of the urban space.

Therefore it is essential to establish professional interactions among the literati, not only in Iran geographical area but also in the wider area which somehow have been influenced by the Persian and Iranian culture in terms of literature, attitudes and beliefs. Therefore, due to the changes in geopolitics of

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the Countries around the Caspian Sea, and the efforts of these Countries and some other neighboring countries in introducing Iranian poets, scholars and mystics as their own literary and cultural heritage, it is crucial more than ever to develop, research and publicize the works of these scholars, poets and mystics and to keep the language and literature of Iran alive.

In this paper an attempt has been made to study the relationship between the Gilaki literature and the fundamental, cultural and artistic factors in the design of a building, and to introduce the concepts which can be used in creating an architectural body inspired by that literature, in order to lead a identity-less typical construction design toward a complete and significant architectural work by identifying the connection between the literature and architecture of Gilan; an architectural work that could represent the aspirations, history, culture, talents, tastes, ideas and art of the Gilan community. In Parallel to this insight, attention to the realities and functional needs of the structure is also important in achieving excellence in the architectural expression and the architecture's message will be visible in this stage.

Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, this article tried to answer to the following questions:

1. What is the relation between the Gilaki language and the physical space design in Gilan?
2. What kind of effect have the language and literature of this region had on the vernacular architecture of Gilan?
3. How can the interactions between the native Gilaki language and culture and the vernacular architecture of Gilan lead to the proper design of the buildings in this area?

Hypothesis

The main purpose of this study was to establish the relationship between Gilaki architecture and its culture and language and it was assumed that, if the proper linkage be established between the community's expectations from the architecture and the Gilan's historical vision of art and culture, a physical architectural body can be achieved that would be recognizable by public and experts in terms of functionality, association with the geographical area and its relation to the Gilan's culture.

Gilaki Language

Iranian culture is the result of the common life of many communities and ethnicities, and the Persian language and literature have been developed by all these groups over the centuries. The Persian language spoken throughout Iran's history is divided into three periods of ancient, Middle, and modern. Gilaki language is one of the Northwest branch Iranian languages which is common in Gilan and Deylamstan and is the native language of the most people in Gilan province as well as small communities in the neighboring provinces of, Mazandaran, Zanzan and Tehran.

Gilaki language is one of northwestern Iranian languages and is generally considered as one of the Caspian languages which include Gilaki *et al.*, and some languages of Tati and Semnani. Historically, these languages are derived from Parthian (Pahlavi) language. Gilaki language consists of three dialects of Biepassi (Western Gilan), Biepishi (Eastern Gilan, Biepish) and Galeshi. People in northwest of Gilan, speak Teleshi which is another language from the family of Caspian Sea area dialects. This language is very close to Mazandarani language, but Gilaki is also the spoken language in the western part of Mazandaran province.

Many of the books and divans of Gilak's language (Gilan and Mazandaran) from the poets and writers from the past have remained unpublished, but a significant number of old and new books are also been published. But the beginning of contemporary Gilaki literature should be considered in Gilan and west Mazandaran and in the time of forest Movement (Nehzat e Jangal) headed by famous Gil and Deylam commander, and the martyred president of the republic of Gilan ,Younes Ostadsarayi (Known as Mirza Kuchak Khan). During this period, two schools emerged in the Gilaki literature. One of them was inside the forest movement and the other one outside it. Prominent examples of Gilaki poetry in the forest movement are the works of Mirza Hosein khan Kasmaye, Nadimi Gilani and Mirza Kuchak Khan himself. Most of these works was published in the jungle newspaper, Official newspaper of the Gilan Republic.

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Features of the Gilak Poetry

Gilaki poetry is in common folk language and full of emotions; the colorful culture of the people is clearly reflected on it.

- The poetries are based on classical rhythms and prosodic forms.
- In terms of content, the poetries are deeply involved with society and life of the people.
- Gilaks poetry is image oriented, because images unveil the nature and life of the people.
- Gilaks poetry is often in the form of “Ghazal” (Abbasi, 2012).

Gilaki Music

Gilan literary works including music and poetry have been employed in their own place as powerful tools in promoting Gilan culture. A society can bring order to its own human organisms and convert people to its color and cause with the help of its social and cultural heritage. Therefore, Culture has been maintained despite coming and going of many generations, and through the expansion of cultural heritage has made the development of society possible.

Gilak literature, poetry and music is a mirror that reflect the efforts that have been made to keep the Gilan cultural heritage alive through many ups and downs and should therefore be honored and celebrated. This attention is not limited to reverence and praise of the radiant and glorious times of the past, but it also includes the efforts to maintain and promote this common cultural heritage and to improve the cultural ties. In order to achieve this goal the extensive interaction and consultation of literati of this region is necessary to promote this art and to ensure the flow of fresh blood in the veins of this precious heritage. This interaction and consultation is a worthy event that should be held in an appropriate and proper place in accordance with the view of literature as a cultural value (Toghiani, 2005).

The Mutual Relationship Between Gilaki Culture and Literature

Culture is essentially the spiritual and material values of an ethnicity in its existence which may be indicated through phenomena such as art, morality, myth, literature, etc.; so culture, in its general concept put Literature under its covers, and the literature nourishes on cultural elements that itself leads to the development and strengthening of cultural elements and principles. Thus, Gilak culture and literature act in a bilateral relation which has an impact on architecture. With proper regard to the literary history of Gilan, it can be found that literature and culture with all their extent influence and reinforce each other. Rich and entrenched cultures can be found wherever valuable literary works have been created and in return extensive and profound cultures have always been the origin and context of the emergence of worthy literary works.

Features of Gilan Vernacular Architecture

Indigenous and traditional architectural features of this region are as follows:

Buildings in these areas are usually singular due to the high humidity of the air and soil which enables them to use the Airflow around them; buildings are typically constructed on an elevated ground floor or deck and lack any basement to avoid the high moisture content of the soil. Most rooms are connected with outdoors on two fronts, In other words the building is surrounded by courtyards and open spaces and there are several openings within building in front of the wind direction and also the opposite. In some parts of this region, buildings have two-story and the second floor is often used in summer to use the benefits of air currents. The first floor has less air flow and heat exchange with the outdoors, and is often used in winters. Roofs are sloped (4 slopes with steep gradient) to move rain water is as soon as possible. Roofed porches that sometimes cover a wide area have an important role in the use of semi-open spaces particularly during the rain. Through the most of the year and due to the climate conditions, major part of life activities is carried out on these porches. Predicting protection for the building against the cold winds of winter is essential in the architectural design in this region. So the Western and North Western Front of buildings which are exposed to the cold winds of winter are often protected through different procedures. Wood, cob and adobe are the main materials used in the walls and wood planks, pottery, tin or Gali plant are the materials used in the sloping roof and have a good compatibility with high humidity of this region. The use of large sash windows with colored glass was common (especially in aristocratic houses) which was giving the main room double functions. In the cold winter days, closing the sash windows was

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transforming the space into a warm room, while raising the sash in summer or hot days was causing the air flow into the room and the transformation of room into a porch.

The multi-layered main facades and spaces with a maximum porosity in the outer layers (Tabbaz, 2008). Taking all these factors into consideration however seems difficult, but successful examples of indigenous architecture in the past, give us hope that solving contemporary problems with accordance to the environment is not unlikely and impossible.

The Concepts of Vernacular Architecture in the Architecture of Gilan

• Proportions

Architectural proportions of the plans in the region are in form of 1 to 1 ratio (square) or elongated rectangle with a ratio of 1 to 2; but many of the buildings have proportion of 1 to 1.5 approximately. Considering the climate and the sun angle in summer and winter this proportion is the best response of vernacular design. The windows in most buildings, are vertical rectangle with a ratio of 2 to 1, And the openings of the main facade of home consist up to 90% of the surface. Urban housing tries to align the openings on each other, unlike rural buildings which have no deliberation on the establishment of the first and second floor door and windows on top of each other.

Dividing the surface of walls in patio and hall into vertical rectangles using the slender porch pillars, creates elegant stretched proportions and gives an eye-catching rhythm to the outer layer the façade. This rhythm has special emphasis on the horizontal elements of the columns at the bottom and top and the strength of the vertical rectangles, but lower horizontal element are always stronger and firmer to enhance the visual stability of the building (Khakpur, 2007).

• Form and shape

The architecture of the area strictly avoids polygons and curved forms and simplicity can be seen in in all parts of the building whether in plans or the facades (Khakpur, 2007).

• Geometry

Dominant Geometry in Gilan vernacular architecture is based on the simple square or rectangle shapes which ultimate combination creates a single pure rectangle. The geometry of the second layer facade in rural buildings is based on three section divisions and this order can be seen in every part of the whole. The examples of this geometry are the rooms with one door and two windows on either side of it; but in general, the whole building does not emphasize on symmetry. In the end, the observance of balance and proportions of human scale is the sense that is created in the viewer by the size and volume of the building (Alimardani, 1980).

• Construction Materials

Construction materials become lighter from the bottom up and the porosity and the openings also increase to create more visual balance in the structure, Thus leading visual center of gravity to the lower levels which strengthen the sense of strength in the building. Extensive use of plant materials and coatless wood and decorations (Khakpur, 2006)

• Color

The use of varied colors on the external walls and roofs of the buildings is common, which is consistent with the green natural color of the area and considering the low intensity of sunlight and high hours of cloudy sky in each day, it is also more resistant to fading.

• Decorations

Psychological characteristics of Gilan people are also reflected in the buildings. The unity of inside and outside of the building is a prominent feature of outward-oriented architecture. On this basis there is no need of special decorations inside the building because the visual poverty of this region in terms of beautiful views is minimal.

In Gilan villages which apparently have different culture compared to other areas Women were not present in the house for the most time of the day and were engaged in household economic activities side by side of men outside the house.

The continued absence of women in the house and their activities outside is an important factor for the minimal use decorations inside the house. But basically, the decorations are at their fullest extent in the

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connection points. In these buildings the decorations are used in the beam-to-column connections and balustrade of the porch and the hall (Khakpur, 2006).



Image 1: The column head decorations (Source: Architecture of Gillan's houses)



Image 2: Porch balustrade decorations (Source: Architecture of Gillan's houses)

• Sash Windows in the Openings

The elegant sash windows with colored glass adorn the openings that provide the connection between the room and the courtyard and surroundings. Considering the cloudy condition of sky for the most time of the year sash windows softens the gray color and conceals the cloudy sky. On the sunny days of summer these windows decrease the intensity of the sunlight and create a feeling of decreased temperature (Khakpur, 2006).

• Arcs

A simple arc with a pleasant rhythm can be seen in the façade of many famous houses in Gilan. Halachin arc is the simplest form of these arcs.

Halachin arc (omelette Arc): a semicircular or semi-oval arc similar to the broad arc of an egg which has given it the name, the “omelette” Arc (Khakpur, 2000).

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Image 3: A house in Gilan (Source: Architecture of Gillan's houses)

• *The View in the Gilan Architecture*

In the Gilan architecture, fences do not block the view and just basically specify the border of a building or between two neighboring units and also the crossings. It is worth noting that the large firm cushions were used as the room furniture and viewers had short height visibility. The upstairs rooms also had furniture and had windows with a higher elevation which limited the visual contact with the courtyard. Despite these designs there was no emphasis on blocking the visual continuity through the neighboring yards. The second floor of the buildings had relative field of view on adjacent residential units which is a culturally accepted notion in Gilan. In the urban areas, the privacy of building to protect and conceal the women from the public view also seemed to be irrelevant and obscure (Khakpur, 2006).



Image 4: Another example of the old houses in Gilan (Source: the Museum of rural Heritage in Rasht)

The Reflection of Gilaki Culture and Literature in the form of Architectural Space

Due to the importance of poetry and music in the Gilaki literature and culture, their influence can also be clearly seen in the architecture of Gilan. As rows and rhymes always appear to be the main ingredients of the poems in Gilaki literature, some elements appear to be the main principles of Gilaki architecture. Maybe the styles of these elements go out of fashion, but they will be used in a different way and they will be transformed from one style of architecture to another.

There are some factors that are subsets of culture and have an influence on the artistic works and the architectural space. These influences are sometimes obvious and sometimes intangible, like the intangibility of hierarchy and its cultural content and concept in Gilan architecture. In other words, some

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of the cultural features do not have a uniform effect on the form of architectural space. Some of them are easy and some are difficult to be detected.

One of the reflections of culture in the arts can be seen as the importance of some unique numbers and figures. People's perception of the world order, was being interpreted in form of numerical order as the most tangible form, and it is one of the reasons for the special attention to these numbers. Many of these figures and numbers gained a special application in the ritual activities, arts, schools of thought, etc. The application of each number or figure in each type of activity or art depended on visual and numeric features of that activity and also the properties and characteristics of that number or shape; Thus, those shapes and numbers was being used In the architecture that were compatible with the Mathematical, geometric, quantitative and tangible properties of the intended art as well as the public culture of the region; such as number four, square and circle characteristics, common features of the circle and square, cube, sphere-shaped volumes, four arches and (Beheshti, 1999).

Summary

Meetings, visits and social interactions are the most important factor in maintaining and developing the Gilak culture and language. The acquisition of knowledge and information is the ever growing need of the humankind. Exchange of ideas and views on various issues is essential for the process of decision-making and the development of Gilak language and culture followed by the preserving of Gilan architecture. Without a doubt, the importance of appointments, meetings and congresses in the exchange of information between researchers and scholars is indisputable. On the other hand, the continuous growth of various gatherings and congresses in different provinces of the country should not be evaluated solely from the perspective and aspect of information development. Traveling, visiting different individuals and cultures and observing new themes can also be the reason and incentive for the participation in various meetings and the creation of literary conferences and congresses. Therefore, creators and sponsors of gatherings often plan their meeting in different countries and regions that could be interesting and spectacular for the members and participants from the natural and social standpoint.

Since Gilan has an ancient culture and well recognized history in Iran and also have spectacular scenery and themes, it can be the location for the hosting and formation of literary conventions and congresses. Based on this approach, not only the necessary means for the formation of such gatherings would be provided but also the natural, touristic, and social attractions would be promoted by the provision of other side facilities and comforts to satisfy and please the participants. In this way, the potential for development and investment can be put on display.

CONCLUSION

Considering the issues that were raised, the obtained results were as follows:

- Any work of architecture should be affected by the values, attitudes, beliefs and overall cultural context of the structure location, otherwise, the relationship between the humans and architectural work will not be established.
- If building is derived from its own physical, social and cultural context, it will have harmony with the identity of user and will inspire a sense of self-esteem and of belonging to its audience.
- The use of simple and pure volumes and avoiding the complicated and obscure components In order to match the architecture of the region and easy understanding of building function by the audience.
- The Use of full and empty spaces within the building façade as necessary, In order to match the architecture of the region. (Such as the use of porch in spaces where their function can be used)
- The use of simple and understandable geometry for the audience in order to establish a better relationship between building and visitors and to comply with the indigenous architecture.
- The creative use of indigenous and regional architectural elements in Order to put innovation in the design, in match with structure and to draw the viewer's attention.
- Any novelty must be connected with the previous elements to have an understandable message, thus some factors of the environment should be preserved in the new buildings to maintain the link with the past architecture and ease the process of understanding this link for the audience.

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- Each architectural work should respond to two different types of human needs. First, the material and physical needs where the flexibility of the space increases the ability of environment and can satisfy the audience.
- Second, the psychological needs which indirectly increases the ability of the environment. It is expected that with by use of innovative architectural elements that are somehow connected to our past architecture, and by instilling symbolic meanings in the users and audience, a Sense of belonging and satisfaction can be created in them.
- avoiding the direct use of architectural elements of the past in order to avoid repetition and imitation of old forms.
- Reflection of ideas and values of the time, with the help of a system of visual signs and geometric measures
- Readability and unambiguousness, Simplicity and clarity, Balanced and proportionate composition and interaction and balance between masses and space.
- The use of elements such as sloping roofs, Porch, and sleeper wall (raising the floor elevation compared to the ground elevation) in addition to compliance with the climate are some of the cultural signs of Gilan.
- The use of elements such as portico in a way that while being compatible with climate, would be able to convey a sense of introspection to the audience.
- The use of Lojanak or Rojanak (Roof window) for the proper air ventilation of the space under the roof.
- The use of delicate sash windows with colored glass In addition to having aesthetic values, provide a connection between the room and courtyard and surroundings.
- The application of the symmetry principle within the design of elements and spaces in architecture and façade of the complex, especially in the main axis of access In order to create balance and focus more attention to the building And enhance the grandeur and historical value of the building.
- Maximum use of natural light (Especially In public spaces of complex) In order to create an appropriate and pleasant atmosphere for the users
- The use of water in form of streams and springs in the calm and quiet spots, and in the form of waterfall and fountain in the crowded and noisy spots
- No element should be added to the building as a mere decoration and each element must have aesthetic values within itself.
- The use of geometric relationship and volumetric composition of simple elements in horizontal and vertical surfaces and the combination of full and empty spaces in the building façade and the use of simple and understandable forms (Square, rectangle, etc.) in accordance with indigenous and regional architecture.
- Since Nature has an important role in the most of the Gilak music, poems and quotes, this element can appropriately be used to design.
- The use of prosodic rhymes and Gilak poem refrains in the design of façade and plan.
- The use of Gilan music rhythms in façades.

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