

Khiaban (the Street) as an Ancient Percept of the Iranian Urban Landscape: An Aesthetic Reading of Lalehzar Street, the First Modern Khiaban in Iran

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Abstract : Lalehzar was one of the main streets in central Tehran in late Qajar and 1st Pahlavi (1880-1940) and a center of attention for the government. It was a natural walk during the last decade of the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah (1880-1895). However, this street lost its prosperity status under the 2nd Pahlavi and evolved from a modern cultural street to a commercial corridor. Lalehzar's decline was the result of the immigration of the upper class from the inner city to the northern part and the consequent transfer of amenities and luxury goods with them. It seems that during Lalehzar's six decades of prosperity, this khiâbân has received an aesthetic look, which has made it enjoyable and appreciated by Tehran's people. Various post-revolutionary urban management measures have been taken to revive Lalehzar and improve the quality of its urban life. Since the beginning of the Safavid era, the khiâbân was accompanied by the concept of urban space, and its characteristics are explained by referring to the main axis of the Persian Garden with rows of trees, streams, and a line of flowers on both sides. The construction of a street inside the city as an urban space benefits from a mental concept as a spiritual and exciting space, especially in common forms in the Persian Garden. Before that, the khiâbân was a religious and mythical concept, and we can even say that the mastery of this concept led to its appearance in the garden. In Tehran, Lalehzar Street is a gateway to modernity. The aesthetic changes in Lalehzar Street, inspired by Nasser al-Din Shah's journey to Europe around 1870, coinciding with the changes in architectural and urban landscape movements around the world between 1880 and 1940. The Shah is impressed by the modernist urbanism and, in particular, the Champs-Élysées in Paris. A tree-lined promenade with the hallmarks of the Persian Garden is familiar to Nasser al-Din Shah's mental image of beauty. In its state of mind, the main axis of the Persian Garden has the characteristics of a promenade. Therefore, the origins of the aesthetic of Lalehzar Street come from the aesthetics of the khiâbân. Admitting that the Champs-Élysées served as a model for Lalehzar, it seems that the Shah wanted to associate the Champs-Élysées with Lalehzar and highlight its landscape aspects by building this street. Depending on whether the percepts have their own aesthetic, this proposal seeks to analyze the aesthetic evolutions of the khiâbân as a percept towards the street as a component of the urban landscape in Lalehzar. The research attempts to review the aesthetic aspects of Lalehzar between 1880-1940 by using iconographic analysis, based on the available historical data, to find the leading aesthetics principles of this street. The aesthetic view to Lalehzar as an artwork is one of the main achievements of this study.

Keywords : Lalehzar, aesthetics, percept, Tehran, street

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