

Historical Development of Bagh-e Dasht in Herat, Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Field Survey of Physical and Social Aspects

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Abstract : Bagh-e Dasht area is situated in the northern part of Herat, an old city in western Afghanistan located on the Silk Road which has received a strong influence from Persian culture. Initially, the Bagh-e Dasht area was developed for gardens and palaces near Joy-e Injil canal during the Timurid Empire in the 15th century. It is assumed Bagh-e Dasht became a settlement in the 16th century during the Safavid Empire. The oldest area is the southern part around the canal bank which is characterized by Dalans, sun-dried brick arcades above which houses are often constructed. Traditional houses in this area are built with domical vault roofs constructed with sun-dried bricks. Bagh-e Dasht is one of the best-preserved settlements of traditional houses in Herat. This study examines the transformation of the Bagh-e Dasht area with a focus on Dalans, where traditional houses with domical vault roofs have been well-preserved until today. The aim of the study is to examine the extent of physical changes to the area as well as changes to houses and the community. This research paper contains original results which have previously not been published in architectural history. The roof types of houses in the area are investigated through examining high resolution satellite images. The boundary of each building and space is determined by both a field survey and aerial photographs of the study area. A comprehensive field survey was then conducted to examine each space and building in the area. In addition, a questionnaire was distributed to the residents of the Dalan houses and interviews were conducted with the Wakil (Chief) of the area, a local historian, residents and traditional builders. The study finds that the oldest part of Bagh-e Dasht area, the south, contains both Dalans and domical vault roof houses. The next oldest part, which is the north, only has domical vault roof houses. The rest of the area only has houses with modernized flat roofs. This observation provides an insight into the process of historical development in the Bagh-e Dasht area.

Keywords : Afghanistan, Bagh-e Dasht, Dalan, domical vault, Herat, over path house, traditional house

Conference Title : ICAH 2019 : International Conference on Architectural History

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : February 21-22, 2019