

# A Historical Review of House Entrances in Sabzevar from Safavid Era to Pahlavi Era

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**Abstract:** A house entrance does not just serve as a communication space; rather, it also has social and cultural functions. A house entrance is not only a doorway to the building but also a passage that helps to recognize the position of the house and to indicate the stature and character of the house members. A house entrance is a gate to enter the building, establish communications with the house members, and engage with their culture. A house entrance is the first point of contact between the outside and the inside of the house, representing the cultural, social, and economic position of the house members. House entrances are influenced by the situation prevailing in society and transforming social, economic, and cultural factors. Thus, they have a special role and position. The main research questions are: What were the characteristics of the entrances in the past architecture? How did entrances maintain a special position in the spatial organization of house architecture? Furthermore, were entrances influenced by various factors in a historical context? Hence, we seek to respond to these questions by focusing on entrances to Sabzevar's houses. In this connection, we aim to investigate the role and position of the entrances in the traditional architecture using case studies and fields surveys in Sabzevar and address the historical development of entrances from the Safavid era to the Pahlavi era. The features of the entrances in these areas are described, and their key and identity-making architectural elements are discussed. This will help us better understand traditional Iranian architecture.

**Keywords:** house entrance, Sabzevar, Safavid to Pahlavi

## Research Questions

1. What is the historical developmental trend of Sabzevar's house entrances from the Safavid to Pahlavi era?
2. What are the identity-making elements of Sabzevar's house entrances?
3. What are the factors affecting the architectural development of Sabzevar's house entrances?

## Research Goals

1. Understanding identity-making elements of Sabzevar's house entrance architecture
2. Understanding factors affecting the architectural development of Sabzevar's house entrances

## Research Significance

1. Research on historical Iranian houses to better understand the residential architecture
2. Gaining more knowledge about the old architecture
3. Studying the historical house architecture of Sabzevar as a historical city which is less studied

## Introduction

A house entrance does not just serve as a communication space; rather, it has social-cultural functions, also. A house entrance is a doorway to the building and a point of contact that helps to recognize the position of the house and indicates the character of the house members [1, 2]. The view of an entrance is sometimes simple and free-standing for some security and interest reasons, as some entrances are made hidden from the observer, and

some are sometimes so notable and outstanding far from any security reasons that reveal the house members' positions [3, 4]. A house entrance is a beginning to engage and establish communications with the members of a house and their culture [5]. In other words, entrance spaces are not only built to meet material needs but also to meet cultural needs and behavioral patterns, and social values [6]. Serving as the first point of contact between the outside and inside of the house, entrances have always been affected by the situation governing the society, especially the security situation, as they provide security for the members of the house and comfort for the residents. Entrances, as stated, were either held away from the eyes of the observers or were so noticeable that they revealed the culture and position of the members.

Della Valle stated: "To understand the poverty or wealth of an Iranian, his house portal should be looked at; i.e., the larger and more gorgeous, the wealthier, and the humbler and more inferior, the poorer..."

"In Iranian cities, house portals are mostly built small and ugly so that soldiers and commanders would not have a greedy eye of it and do not throw out the landlord aiming to settle there" [6].

"This feature which differentiates the poor from the rich and the noble ones from the inferior led many of the officials to deceive people by making their house entrances very ugly and humble so that they would be concealed from the eye of the people and be less prosecuted by government agents" [6].

Historical reviews suggest that as the social-cultural situation of the society changed, the entrances also changed, which were characterized by an inside-to-outside and invisible-to-visible trend, gradually representing a more conspicuous and prominent architectural trend in the minds of the people. In the Qajar era, the designs sought to maintain the old architectural basics and values, which gradually changed, with the principles and hierarchy of access, unlike the past, transforming into a fast and immediate view of the building which tended to exteriority than interiority. Meanwhile, the decorations represented at the portals were solely used for sumptuousness and glorification.

This study aims to investigate the entrances from the Safavid era to the Pahlavi era, specifically the case studies in the Sabzevar City, which are less subjected to changes.

### Research Method

This study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It also uses library sources and field surveys. In the research nature, the main part concerns the historical Sabzevar's house entrances, which occur at a point in the past, i.e., the study deals with the past and emphasizes the qualitative elements. The study also investigates the case studies of Sabzevar's houses. To this aim, "Mashhadi" and "Jafarzadeh" Houses, which date back to the Qajar era and whose entrances are less damaged, are examined. Also, other cases are investigated to gain knowledge of Sabzevar's house entrances.

### Theoretical Foundations of the Research

In entrances to traditional houses, all structural combination principles, including hierarchy, symmetry, and interiority, are fully executed; thus, the house entrance is an outstanding, symmetrical, and indirect space that only constitutes an external frontispiece of the most decorated houses. However, considering the interiority of the houses and lack of security in the society, the entrance is decorated simply to avert the attention of others. The entrance is usually located in the adjacency of one of the corners of the house, which has an enclosed and specific space, with the entrances of two or several houses connecting to the passageway in a single setting like a dead-end or vestibule. The space created at the beginning of the alley or vestibule, which serves as a space to enter into the houses, is decorated and connected to the sides of the passageway by a door; this enclosed space is also known as a gated alley [6] (Image 1). The entrances of traditional houses consist of some components, which are: pishtaq<sup>1</sup> (Persian term for a portal projecting from the facade of a building), platform, doorway, door with such components as a doorstep, knocker, cloon (also a kind of knocker), ornamental doornail (studs), portal opening/hole, vestibule, and corridor. These components not only provided areas for meetings, talks, waiting, and entry but also directed the entrants based on their gender (man or woman), the quality of their presence, and

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<sup>1</sup> the formal gateway to the porch

relations with the family (e.g., individual and collective, personal, social, short-and long-term relations) to various spaces of the house. The house portals were either completely simple or had few decorations made of brickwork, plasterwork, or a combination. The decorations were also proportionate to the landlord’s social situation. Orsolle says:

*“If the landlord went for a Haj pilgrimage, he would carve the image of Cypress trees in the form of plasterwork over his house portal, leading people to recognize the house landlord is a Haji”.*

Over the portal laid tile or marble inscriptions of various forms containing Koranic Verses and Hadith, names of the holy five members of the Prophet’s Household, the guardian’s name, and construction data.

Sometimes, on top of the house portal was a space called *upper storey*, which had a door to the roof. Most houses had a vestibule and a corridor of which one or several directions were led to different parts of the house. The vestibule plan could take on various octagonal, semi-octagonal, hexagonal, or quadrilateral forms. However, the vestibule size depended on the landlord’s financial ability. Vestibule ceilings were covered by wooden beams, plaster or plaster layers, and brickwork. The vestibule was considered a waiting place, around which were platforms for sitting. The house corridors of about 1 meter wide were mostly straight or L-shaped but spiral at times which were used to connect the vestibule to the courtyard space [6]. Each entrance space with its components, which had their specific functional roles, helped identify the entrance. Thus, these components need to be investigated to understand better the entrance and the spaces constituting them. The following table gives the indicators and explains the factors such as view, movement, access to the forms and decorations to analyze the entrances in the cases intended.

The entrances are examined in terms of the structural, movement, and behavioral elements, a form of the entrance, type of materials, and decorations. The following table uses the above indicators to describe the entrance components of the Mashhadi House.

**Table 1:** Indicators studied at the house entrances (Source, author: 2020)

Review of the indicators					
	Structural elements	Form and shape of the entrance	Type of materials and decorations	Components	Movement and behavioral elements
Entrance	Forecourt, pishtaq, doorstep, platform, portal, doorway, vestibule, corridor, porch, archway	Geometry and proportions, plan and frontispiece form  Recess and relief, projection in high relief, skyline	Brickwork, tiling, stalactite work, cymatium (uppermost molding at the top of the cornice), framing, inscription, material  genus/material and color, type of texture/fabric	Door, knocker, chain, genus/material, type, etc.	View and movement toward the building directly or indirectly, the hierarchy of access to the building

The entrances are examined in terms of the structural, movement, and behavioral elements, the form of the entrance, type of materials, and decorations. The following table uses the above indicators to describe the entrance components of the Mashhadi House.

**Table 2:** Indicators understudy at the Mashhadi House (Source, author: 2020)

House		Mashhadi							
Era		Qajar							
<b>Entrance</b>	Number of entrances		Entrance 1	Entrance 1					
	Simple- sumptuous		Sumptuous	Sumptuous					
			Symmetrical	Symmetrical					
	Visible-invisible (hidden)		Visible	visible					
	Outside view of the courtyard	Direct	✓	✓					
Indirect		-	-						
<b>Accessories</b>	Knocker, cloon, ornamental doornail		✓	-					
	Platform		✓	-					
	Window		✓	✓					
Hierarchy of entrance	Yes	✓							
	No	-							
<b>Structural elements</b>	Corridor		✓	-					
	Forecourt		✓	-					
	Doorstep		-	✓					
	Pishtaq		✓	✓					
	Doorway		✓	✓					
	False arch		✓	✓					
	Vestibule		-	-					
	Passage		✓	-					
<b>Shape and form</b>	Façade	Symmetry			✓		✓		
		Recess	✓	✓					
		Flat	-	-					
		Projection	-	-					
	Skyline	Changing height	✓	✓					
		Same level as the wall	-	-					
		Recess-		-		✓			

	Groundline	stairway												
		Same level as the surface												
		Projection of the surface-stairway	-	√	-	√								
	Framing	Rectangular												
		Circular pilaster	-	√	-	√								
		gusset-false arch												
<b>Decorations</b>	Brickwork		√	√										
	Tiling		-		-									
	Inscriptions		√		-									
	Cymatium		√		√									
	Stalactite work		-		-									
	Painting		-		-									
	Distinction	Texture	√		√									
		Color	√		√									
Materials		√		√										
<b>Materials</b>	Bricks		√		√									
	Clay and cement		-	√	-	√								



**Image 1:** Main entrance to Mashhadi House (Source: Author 2020)



**Image 2:** Second entrance to Mashhadi House

(Source: Author 2020.

**Mashhadi House:**



**Image 3:** Plan of Mashhadi House (Source: Cultural Heritage)



**Image: 4 The main entrance to Mashhadi house**  
(Source: author)

The Mashhadi House had two entrances, one was located in the main axis of the building and could be accessed from the main passageway, and the other, which was secondary to the main one, could be accessed from the alley. The first entrance, which was visible and not hidden from the eyes, was more important because it sumptuously represented a specific geometric form and shape in the eyes of the people. This entrance is distinguished by the form, shape, decorations and accessories, setting, and creation of forecourt and green geometric spaces and fountains. The main entrance has a straight view of the courtyard and involves an access hierarchy. This hierarchy begins from the space in front of the entry to the forecourt, extends to the green space and the pool in front of the entry, and leads to the inside of the house by passing through an elevated surface and going up several steps. Upon going through the doorstep, doorway and pishtaq, the hierarchy continues to the vestibule, the corridor, and the porch, then to the inside of the building and leads to the courtyard. Here, the movement path creates openness and compactness, changes spatial dimensions, and creates diverse details and decorations along the way in order to create concurrent pause and movement and inclination to move towards the inside.

The main entrance, formed at the main axis and emphasizes the geometric order and form symmetry, is located in the north sidewall. In order to create a frontispiece and emphasize the entrance, five false arches are created in the wall, with the main entrance formed in the middle-axis false arch. The main entrance frame is formed by recess and a projected rectangular face-brick frame. The frame and the false arch create two gussets inside the frame, making it specifically outstanding. Changing the skyline and height of the frame body and changing the type of the material and the texture, compared to the surrounding texture, give more appeal to the frame. The use of special brickwork in the main entrance frame distinguishes it from the surrounding texture made of clay. The use of Mohri bricks (bricks decorated and molded with motifs), which involves recess and relief, creates light and shade at the end of the frame and the cymatium while the diverse brickwork of the mainframe is distinguished and visible from the body and the main frontage of the building.

The wooden door is decorated with knockers for men and women and a row of ornamental doornails on the top and bottom which, on either side, laid the Pirneshin and platform, with the entry made through the downward passage, accessed by stairs.

The second entrance, accessed by the adjacent alley, was used by people, servants, and family members. Although secondary to the main entrance, the second entrance is also important and receives attention.

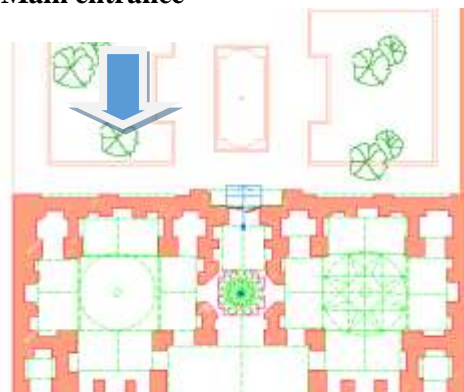


**Image 5:** Second entrance to the Mashhadi House (Source: authors)

This entrance becomes outstanding with the changing of the form and shape of the body, the false arch, the framing, and the brickwork, thus turning into a glorious portal, clearly seen by the public. The entrance takes the form of a false arch inside a brick-made rectangular frame which creates gussets on top of the entrance door decorated with brickwork. The top of the entrance false arch and the end of the frame are decorated with stringcourse. Two brick-made rectangular piers on both sides of the entrance not only create projection but also light and shade on the entrance facing. The entrance becomes outstanding and visible from the view of the passageway when the height-to-body ratio changes, thus leading to the courtyard through an elevated surface and going up several steps. This forms a kind of movement and access hierarchy when moving from the pishtaq, the doorstep, and the corridor through the doorway and the false arch with an elevated surface, a movement rotation, and a courtyard view.

#### **Mashhadi House: Forecourt**

##### **Main entrance**



**Image 6:** Mashhadi House Plan (Source: Cultural Heritage, 2018)

**Forecourt** refers to a large and wide area built before the pishtaq. This part is aimed to signify the entry of the building and to distinguish it from the passage space. The body of the forecourt is nicely decorated, as that part of the forecourt space which embraces the entry space of the building has the best decorations and design patterns. The forecourt is situated by the square or passage is called the fourth frontage (usually facing the unwallled wide-open entrance). The forecourt boundary is determined by the walls and pavement, changing the



height and creation of a platform, or changing the type of pavement. The forecourt area is also distinguished from the passage or square space. Setting up gardens, ponds, and fountains proportionate to the forecourt space makes it outstanding and emphasizes its private realm. The pond or the fountain are situated along the symmetrical axis in front of the pishtaq and the entry door.

**Pishtaq:** It refers to an indoor or semi-open space like the porch designed and built-in front of the entry doorway and accessed from the passage space. This space is also called forecourt. Stoppage and waiting are made here to enter the building. The height of the pishtaq is usually greater than other adjacent surfaces and locations, which indicate the significance of the building and its position [6]. Pishtaq was decorated with tiles in many buildings and involved inscriptions that contained materials on the date of construction and the guardian's name, and some verses of the holy Koran [6].

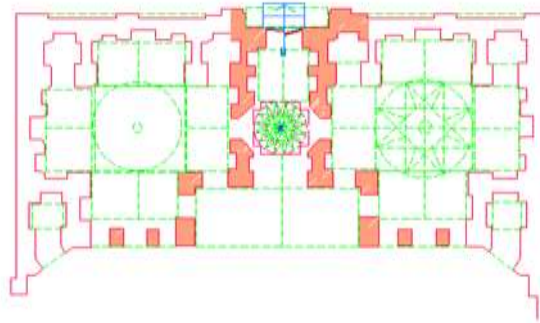


**Image 7:** Mashhadi House main entrance (Source: author, 2018)

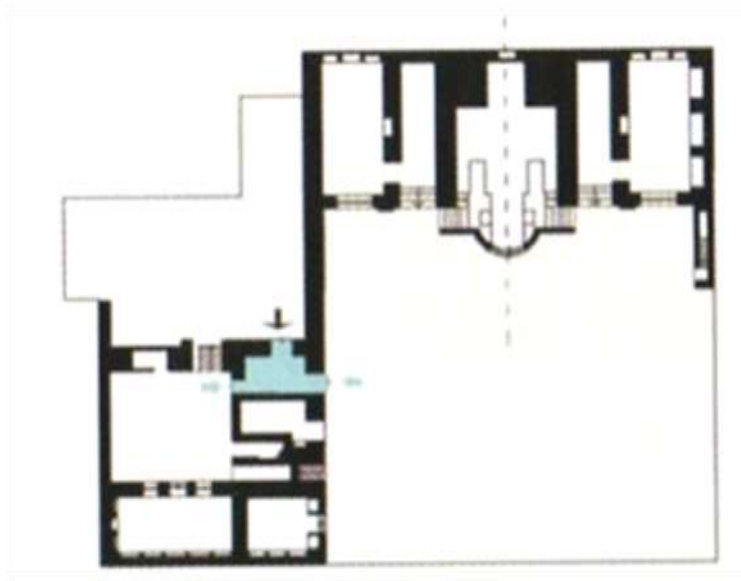
**Platform:** Platform refers to a place of rest on both sides of the entrance to wait, talk and rest. A platform was made in pairs on both sides of the pishtaq. The platform was also called Pakhoreh, Pirneshin, or Khajeneshin. Furthermore, around the vestibules and some entry spaces were platforms designed for people who wanted to speak with the landlord and were not required to enter the house. A platform was a place for taking rest, talking to the visitors and guests, which underscored the behavioral patterns and customs of the people and the respect the landlord for the visitors and guests.

**Doorway:** It refers to a small space where the door is situated. From a construction point of view, the doorway is a space that is walled on both sides and where the entry framework is installed. The doorway vault, also called lintel, is arched or horizontal. Arched vaults are usually constructed with bricks and horizontal vaults by wooden beams (Ibid, 74).

**Vestibule:** A vestibule (also called heshti or heshteh khaneh) refers to a space after the doorway connected to the alley and courtyard of the house, which is used to divide the entry path into inside and outside directions. It also aims to protect house privacy, welcoming and accompanying the incoming people. It is also a place for making a pause. Inside the vestibule are various elements such as sitting places, lanterns, etc., designed with different patterns [7]. On the body of the vestibules were sittings to initially welcome the guests who were invited to the outside section if they wished. The geometric form and shape of the vestibule reveals a height-to-entry space scale [7] and may take on octagonal, semi-octagonal, rectangular forms, etc.



**Image 8:** Mashhadi House plan (Source: Cultural Heritage)



**Image 9:** Jafarzadeh House plan (Source: Cultural Heritage)

**Jafarzadeh House entrance and vestibule; place where the area is divided into inside and outside**

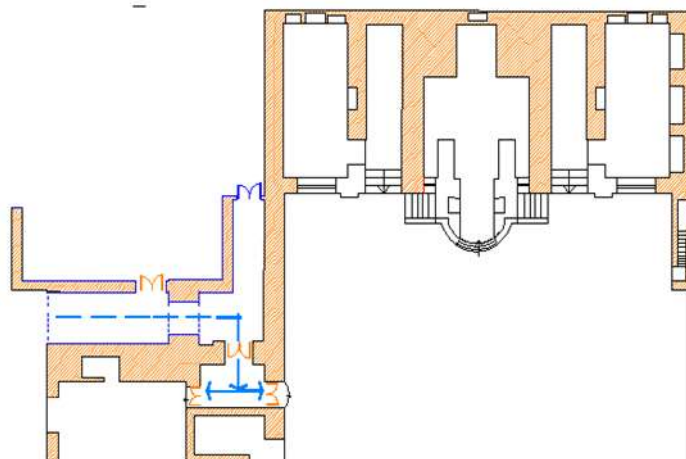


**Image 10:** Entry to the corridor (Source: authors, 2018)



**Image 11:** Entry to the outside (Source: authors, 2018)

Entry to the house was first made through the corridor, where it had several doors to the neighbors' houses, which led to an open-roof vestibule door and the inside and outside areas. The vestibule is a completely private alley with an open roof, with a separate door for the inside and the outside courtyard.

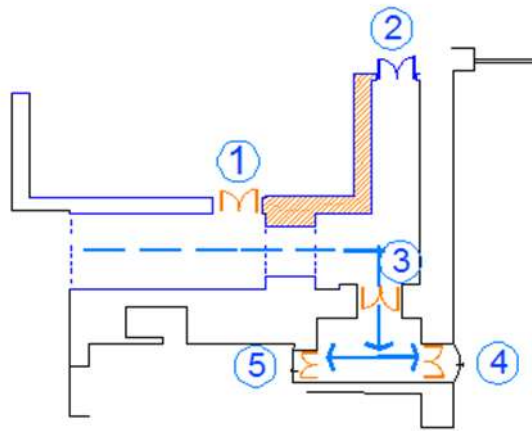


**Image 12:** Mashhadi House plan (Source: Cultural Heritage)

At the Jafarzadeh House, the movement path begins through the corridor and then the vestibule. In the corridor, path stands neighboring units and the vestibule, which, after the corridor, divides the space into inside and outside.



**Image 13:** Main entrance (Source: author, 2018)



**Image 14:** 1 and 2 (neighbor's entrance); 3 (Main entrance); 4 (entrance to the inside) and 5 (entrance to the outside) (Source: author, 2018)



**Image 15:** Inside entrance (Source: author, 2018)

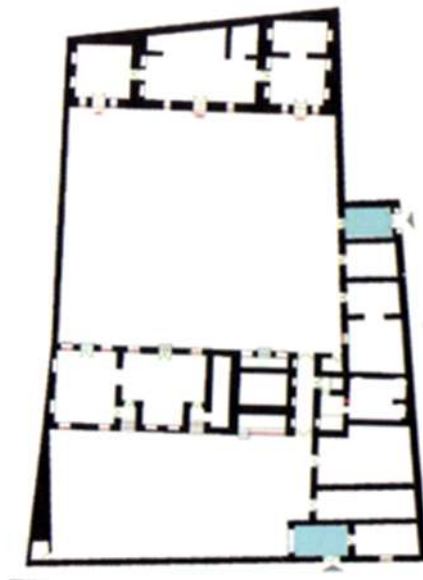


**Image 16:** Neighbor's entrance (Source: author, 2018)

A review of the examples indicates that the entrances usually have no direct access to the courtyard, which, in order to preserve the house privacy, a long and meandering path should be taken to get there. This is the case in two Shariatmadar and Moahammadian Houses.



**Image 17:** Entrance to the Shariatmadar House (Source: Hamid Me'mari)

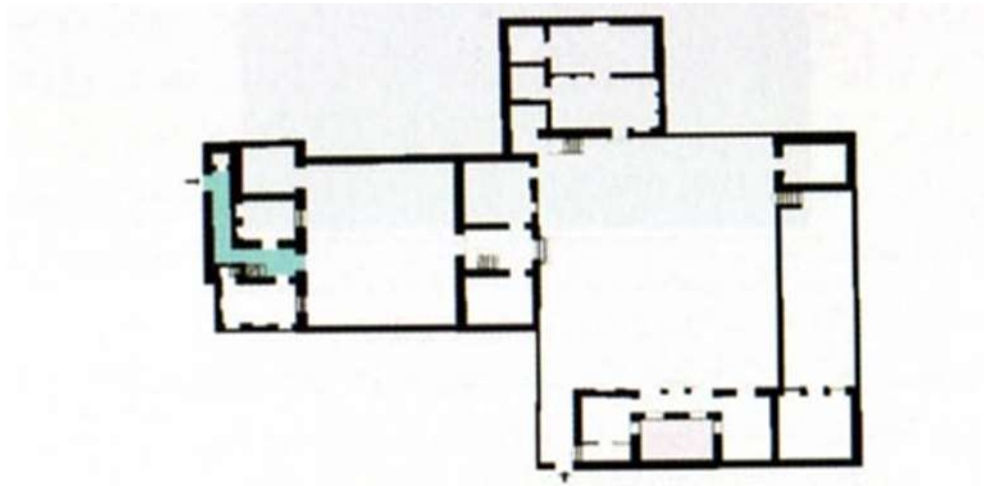


**Image 18:** Shariatmadar House plan (Source: Hamid Me'mari)

The Shariatmadar House had two small doors with an indirect view of the courtyard, leading through the corridor and the vestibule. The southern entrance is located in the courtyard corner, and the other is perpendicular to the courtyard axis (above images). The next example is the Mohammadian House, where the rotation of the entrance inhibits the direct view of the courtyard (image below). The key point is that a door was laid between the vestibule and the courtyard because it could help protect the privacy of the house and make it more secure against strangers.



**Image 19:** Mohammadian entrance (Source: Hamid Me'mari)



**Image 20:** Mohammadain entrance plan (Source: Hamid Me'mari)

**Corridor:** A corridor links the vestibule space to the courtyard and provides access between the two spaces. It also changes the passage and the pathway and provides privacy along an indirect path toward the courtyard. From a spatial structure, a corridor is a narrow space. However, the width of the corridor varies in proportion to the function of each. It is also a spatial and perceptual space that serves as a passageway [6]. Inside the corridor and along the pathway to the courtyard lie niches where lanterns are held to provide lighting for the corridor. The corridor walls are also decorated with plasterwork and stalactite work (Image 21 of Mashhadi House). A corridor is considered a passageway that creates a spatial contrast between the vestibule space to the courtyard and the dark to the light space.



**Image 21:** Corridor to the courtyard at the Mashhadi House (Source; author)



**Image 22:** Kian House (Source: author, 2018)



**Image 23:** Jafarzadeh House (Source: author, 2018)

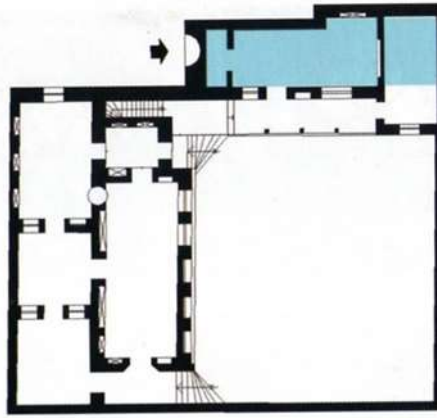
**Archway:** It refers to a part of the passageway which is roofed. It is a curved covered structure forming a passage or entrance. The roofed passageway in warm cities creates shade and desirable space for the movement or staying of the people [6]. In winters, it helps protect passersby against rainfall. It changes the uniformity and monotony of the passageway by creating a shade and light space which then causes spatial contrast and diversity of the path. It also plays a key role in the access hierarchy of the building. Several neighboring house doors may lead to it, which unify and define the neighboring units and establish security for them; thus, turning the passageway into an exclusive space for the neighbors (Image .... Jafarzadeh House and neighbors). One of the major functions of the archway is its passive defense in urban defense. This passivity of defense helps it protect the neighborhood and establish security and privacy for the neighborhood and its territories.

In some cases, the archway is located down the alley and passageway whose proportions fit two or several pedestrians, not allowing the riding people to be frequent there. This compelled the riders to dismount and pass by the passage on foot as this divested them of power. The archway was used to hide the house entrances from the public view and distracted the attention. On top of some archways inside the passageways in the residential neighborhoods were spaces used for short or long accommodations. The urban defense served as a watch and a sentinel to overlook the passageway and protect the neighborhood [6].



**Image 24:** Passage to the Kian House and neighbors (Source: authors, 2018).

Under the archway and on its body were niches that diversified the area, created beauty, and served as places for lanterns by nights, which helped light the passage (Image ..... Passage to the Kian House and neighbors



**Image 25:** Kian House plan (Source: Hamid Me'mari)

Over the archway laid some adjacent houses which served as spaces. The image above shows part of the Kian House laid on the archway.

**Image 26:** Kian House (Source: author, 2018)

**Door:** One of the major elements of an entrance space is the door, which mainly functions to control the internal and external spaces and provides security for the house. House doors are mainly rectangular, though the Qajar era saw some houses with non-rectangular doors. They were mostly made of wood with metal knockers on two parts with a row of studs on the top and the bottom.



**Image 27:** Door (Source: author, 2020)

**Knocker and Chains:** The knockers installed on the doors had an informing function. On each door laid two metal knockers, one was hammer-shaped with a bass sound used by men, and the other was a chain-like shape with a high-toned sound used by women [6]. This signified the importance of attention to privacy and security for the house members.

**Doorstep** refers to the part of the framework built on the lower side, which distinguishes the two spaces and indicates house privacy. It also defines the beginning of the entry and allows for the passage into privacy; with the individual passing by, it steps into the house privacy and begins to access the spaces and arrive in the main building. The doorstep is built in a smaller frame to help individuals enter the house slowly and respect the house members.





**Image 28:** Doorstep (beginning of the entry into the inside) (Source: author, 2020).



**Image 29:** Sabzevar houses portal (Source: Hamid Me'mari)



**Image 30:** Portal (Source: Hamid Me'mari)

**Portal:** A portal is a part of the entrance space atop the entrance door. This space symbolizes the character of the building, which is manifested outside the house and aimed at decorating it. It is considered the most decorative external facing of the building (decorated with tilework, brickwork, stalactite work, and inscriptions),

which is a manifestation of the art of the interior architecture in the exterior for the public. The portal of each house reveals the architectural art of the house in a frame outside the house. This art shows the architectural structure of the house and the religious beliefs of the house members, as demonstrated by the inscriptions. The Forouhar painting on the portal of the Zoroastrian houses and Koranic verses on the portal of Muslim houses are examples of this. Inscriptions over the portals refer to peoples' religious beliefs, which retell the identity and character of the builders and the landlord. The tiled inscription over the portals reveal not only the identity of the building (year of construction and name of the architecture) but also the religious belief; for example, since the members of the family every day pass under the portal decorated with Koranic verses, they, as they believe it, will be immune from any harms. On the other hand, the portal of every house represents the superiority and social-economic position of the landlord, which draws more attention.



**Image 31:** Portal inscription of Dr. Motavalli House, which manifests his social position (Source: Hamid Me'mari).

Portals in Sabzevar's houses are given special importance and draw the attention of landlord and architects, as well, because they and the brickwork not only indicate the art of the architect constructing it but also shows the hallmark of its designer, which contained special decorations, meticulously designed by the architect. The importance is revealed by the brickwork, Mohri bricks, and brick-carving techniques that involve specifically geometric motifs and shading and arrangement designs embodied in the form of framing and the cymatium.

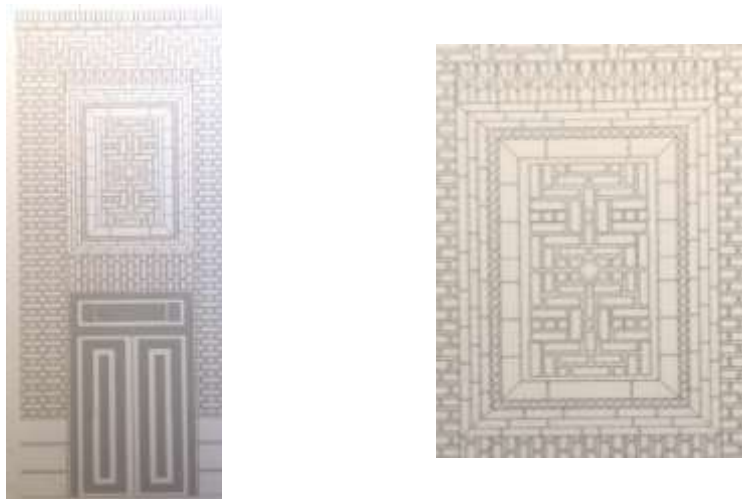


**Image 32:** Kolah Farangi Neighborhood portals (Bricklaying design and use of Mohri bricks on the cymatium; stretcher bond in the arched stringcourse framing in the lintel) (Source: author, 2020).

#### **Relation of portal motifs with carpet motifs:**

Motifs worked out on some portals are highly similar to carpet patterns and are inspired by regional carpet patterns, which indicate the close relationship between the art of architecture and the regional carpet art. Thus, one would say that the art of carpet weavers has been embodied in architecture. The motifs on the portals of the

traders' houses have tended to stand out due to their professions, indicating their affluence among the public. This is also noted in the interior phase and inscriptions and on the portal facing the Nasrullah Zadeh House.



**Image 33:** Portal motifs in Nasrullahzadeh House (Source: Hamid Me'mari)



**Image 34:** Portal motif in the Kolah Farangi neighborhood (Golandaz motif in the middle and edges taken from the flower and carpet patterns) (Source: author, 2020).

Over the house, portal lays a window with a Koranic inscription atop with the bricks arranged in a horizontal and vertical line under the window, framed by a projected brick strip. Another frame is repeated on the edges, with two projecting stretcher bond brick columns framing the entire set in the edges, on top of which lie a mohri brick skyline, suspending brick stalactite work and floor-laying bricks. The entire set indicates the art of the architecture and the diversity of the brick arrangement techniques over the portal frame.



**Image 35:** Kolah Farangi alley portal (Source author, 2020)

A row of bricks, arranged along with each other, along with mohri bricks, are formed in a stretcher bond way on the metal-framed cymatium of the edges, with the middle frame decorated with carpet patterns and Suvastika designs, flanked by brick strips.



**Image 36:** Portal (Source; author, 2020)

Suspending brick stalctite work is a major characteristic of Sabzevar's architecture. This type of stalctite work is used as a cymatium in all traditional buildings, including over the portals and interior cymatium. This work gives special beauty to the building and obstructs the view as it is placed at the end of the frame. Sabzevar's architects call the brick arrangement on the cymatium "Sele Chini."

The architecture of the portals in the late Pahlavi era gradually had their complex brickwork diversity reduced, turning into simple and fewer motifs, mostly seen over the entrances. However, there were also some tile-based inscriptions and elements of the upper storey on the portals.



**Image 37:** Portal in the Paderakht neighborhood (Source: author, 2020)

On both sides of some houses, entrances laid glazed bricks and decorative shapes and projecting stringcourse column capitals (Image 37). The entrances thus lack a platform, and a lack of a platform next to the entrances

suggests the removal of some social functions of the entrance spaces, which served as places for people to sit and spend leisure time. The piers on the two sides of the entrance are mostly simple and without any decorations as they are just covered by simple brickwork. In a few cases, the plinth of the wall was made of stone and nice decorations, which served to make the entry space more beautiful (Image 10). In most houses, the general entrance form no longer had the simple previous form, with the doors made out of metal, usually without knockers and chains, and some others with simple and free-standing portals, rarely containing inscriptions, though decorated with brickwork. As stated above, most houses had windows; these windows were, however, regarded as major elements in the exterior phase integrating into the entrance space. They were used on the top of the portals. The windows are not the only elements to be incorporated in the entrance space; rather, the cymatium, the rooftop ledges, cornice, plinth, and the wall surface were incorporated into some architectural combinations, giving some architectural combinations a different view of the entrance space. All elements of the Sabzevar's houses and entrance elements changed from the Safavid era to the Pahlavi era. A series of changes were initially made to the surfaces and then embraced the whole fabric. That is to say, first, the entrance decorations changed which were followed by judas holes, windows, with some other elements such as platform, corridor either changed or were completely removed. The entrance facing was also affected as to all structural elements, including the platform, vestibule, columns, false arch, etc., were removed. Even the materials used in the construction of the entrances were changed. To describe the formation of the entrance spaces, two factors of social and economic situations can be considered, which played out to be pivotal issues. As observed, houses of the nobles, traders, and middle classes were affected by these factors and saw fundamental transformations. This trend saw most indicators changing in the structural aspect, which then damaged the identity of the buildings.

<b>Entrance characteristics of Sabzevar's Houses</b>		
<b>Era</b>	<b>Feature</b>	<b>Variables</b>
<b>Qajar</b>	<b>Traditional</b>	Entrances are located next to the secondary passageways and near the house corners; entrances are wide-open or enclosed; observance of the principles of hierarchy and interiority (indirect entry); observance of the principle of symmetry; clay, brick facing; high and simple walls (without judas holes or windows); the presence of pishtaq and wide platforms; the presence of narrow and low-rise doorways; rectangular wooden doors with doorstep, knockers, studs, bolts, colon, very small peepholes; portals with simple inscriptions; upper storey, vestibules, and corridors
<b>Pahlavi</b>	<b>Modernity</b>	Entrances are located next to the main passageways and in the middle of one of the main building frontages; wide-open entrances; non-observance of the principles of hierarchy and interiority (direct entry and exterior space); non-observance of the principle of symmetry; brick facing; decorated short and tall walls (with peepholes, windows, columns and pilasters, false arch, projected objects, and decorated piers); lack of pishtaq; the presence of narrow and decorated platforms or lack of which; the presence of wide and high doorways; the presence of metal doors; the presence of decorated portals and sometimes lack of which; lack of upper storey, vestibule, corridor, and aisle.

## Conclusion

A house entrance does not just serve as a communication space; it also has social-cultural functions. A house entrance is a doorway to the building and a factor that helps to recognize the position of the house and indicates the stature and character of the house members. Like other traditional houses in Iran, the spatial structure of traditional Sabzevar's houses suggests greater attention being paid to the social position and state of the family. These positions are manifested in architectural spaces, especially in the entrance section, as it is the first place the entrant comes in contact with. The entrances and the way they are formed represent the characters of the family, the privacy of the people inside, the legibility of the entrance, and the social position of the landlord. The art of brickwork formed with celeh chini, stalactite work, and different motifs inscribe over the portals reveal the architectural techniques. The motifs suggest carpet motifs and flower patterns that symbolize the Heavens and reveal the public religious beliefs. A series of changes were initially made to the surfaces and then embraced the whole fabric. In this connection, we investigated the role and position of the entrances in the traditional architecture using case studies and fields surveys in Sabzevar to address the historical development of entrances from the Safavid era to the Pahlavi era. The features of the entrances in these eras were described, and their key and identity-making architectural elements were discussed.

## Glossary

*The word swastika is from Sanskrit and a blend of sw = good and astika = being. In ancient Iran, such a symbol was called "Gardoune Mehr."*

*Gardoune Mehr is a broken cross with 90° sides to the right or left. It is usually in a horizontal direction or at an angle of 45°. The direction of rotation may be clockwise or counterclockwise.*

*This symbol was one of the symbols of Mithraism - a religion that was common in Iran before the rise of Zoroaster - which reminds of the four main elements of water, wind, soil and fire. A group of researchers maintain that this symbol stands for the sun that has been transformed over time. Some also argue that in early societies, people respected the cross as a symbol of fire.*

*Gardoune Mehr is a part of the cultural heritage of the Aryan tribes, whose commemoration dates back to ancient times.*

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