A REVIEW ON THE CONCEPTS OF TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE BY MULLA SADRA’S AL-HIKMAT AL-MOTA’ALIE

ABSTRACT

Paying little attention to the roots of today’s architecture has departed the contemporary architecture from its conceptual origins. However, the single application of traditional architecture principles does not fulfill the demands of today’s life. Although by peering into the traditional Iranian architecture, principles and specific ideas implicit in the Islamic wisdom of Iran are revealed. In addition to maintaining the values of traditional architecture, a new approach to architectural design can also be achieved by recognizing and integrating these principles with the necessities of today’s life. The article aims to answer whether it is possible to create a link between the traditional Iranian architecture concepts and the principles of contemporary rational architecture, similar to what Mulla Sadra, the great Persian philosopher, created between the Iranian ancient wisdom and al-Hikmat al-Masha which was solely a rational philosophy. To achieve the mentioned aim, first Mulla Sadra’s intellectual structure has been studied, after modeling al-Hikmat al-Mota’alie. Then the traditional architecture has been analyzed in order to recognize its being (al-Wojud) and essence (al-Mahiyat). The priority of being has been introduced in the next step, followed by levels of being. The next pace was to discuss the structure of Mulla Sadra’s thinking method in architecture. The results of study indicate that the process of communication between ancient wisdom and al-Hikmat al-Masha explained by Sadra can be classified in two phases, cognizing and integrating. In the stage of integration Sadra used rational reasoning to prove the issues that have been obtained through intuition and the same trend can be applied in architecture. The intuitive aspects of traditional architecture can also be presented within the framework of today’s rationalist architecture in two steps, including cognizing and integrating.

KEYWORDS:
al-hikma; al-mota’alie; being of architecture; essence of architecture; the primary of being (asalat al-wojud)

INTRODUCTION

The study of traditional Iranian architecture and the review of executive plans and contemporary urban appearance indicate that paying little attention to the values of traditional architecture has led to the separation between contemporary architecture and the roots of traditional architecture. To avoid this crisis, studies are needed to develop strategies for integrating the contemporary architecture with the values and concepts of traditional architecture. This issue has existed in Iran since the arrival of European architecture and there have been a number of architects who have always tried to keep links with traditional architecture in their designs, for example, architects such as Houshang Sayhoun, Kamran Diba, Hossein Amanat, Nader Ardalan and so on. The mentioned architects have tried to express both culture and history of Iran in contemporary buildings. However, most of these meanings are expressed through the physical elements and less attention to have been paid to the conceptual roots of the traditional architecture of Iran.

This study seeks to examine and search for the conceptual roots of traditional architectural by using Mulla Sadra’s ideas and approaches, first to recognize the traditional Iranian architecture and then to take advantage of its positive aspects in contemporary architecture. Researchers such as Henry Corban, Dariush Shayegan, Ayat-Allah Mohammad Khamenei and so on have written a lot on the issue of recognizing Mulla Sadra’s philosophy (al-Hikmat al-Mota’alie). As the National Foundation of Mulla Sadra attempts to cognize the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra, promote it and...
educate and review al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie. But so far little attention has been payed to the communication between architecture and Mulla Sadra’s al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie and not enough experts have studied the concepts of traditional architecture, using Mulla Sadra's point of view.

It seems that by cognizing and integrating taken from al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie principles can be achieved for contemporary architecture. The principles revive values in traditional architecture. In today's Iranian architecture, there are also differences in the basics of contemporary architecture and the main traditional architecture. This difference could be partly due to considering the rational aspects of contemporary architecture without considering intuitive aspects and original concepts of traditional architecture. It seems that by reviewing and classifying Mulla Sadra's thinking process and its applying in the theoretical principles of architecture can link between intuitive concepts implicit in the traditional architecture rationalist contemporary architecture.

Linking the two categories of traditional and contemporary philosophy is expressed by Mulla Sadra in two phases; cognizing and integrating. In this context, questions arise like whether Iranian traditional architecture can be recognized through his thoughts? In this case, can the familiar concepts of traditional architecture be combined with the contemporary architecture? With responses to these questions efforts have been done to emulate the principles of al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie and to recognize and promote the value of traditional Iranian architecture as a result.

METHODS

In this research interpretive-historical and descriptive methods have been used to investigate Mulla Sadra’s philosophical approach in traditional architecture, an attitude that can lead to the recognition and revitalization of great values and concepts of traditional Iranian architecture. The survey is mainly a qualitative research.

The research data were obtained by reviewing books and documents. This study reviews the principles of al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie in a systematic structure, with a focus on the impact of his philosophy in architecture. Mulla Sadra's definitions have also been proposed to explain al-Wujud and al-Mahiyat in architecture.

STUDYING THE INTELLECTUAL STRUCTURE OF MULLA SADRA

Four hundred years ago, the Iranian philosopher Mulla Sadra, established a philosophy which was named al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie. He established al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie relying on the existing philosophical knowledge and his own spiritual experiences. He was trying to achieve and develop methods for understanding the truth of universe. By the time the fundamental dispute arose among the philosophers adhere to the rational principles and those who believed in intuition, the philosophy of al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie were expressed.

While a group of philosophers believed that the truth can only be gained through wisdom and another group believed in austerity and intuition as the only ways to achieve the truth, Mulla Sadra combining these two thoughts linked between the traditional intuitive fundamentals and the new rationalist principles. Perhaps Mulla Sadra's biggest innovation was to establish this relationship.

Al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie represents the history of philosophy in Iran. It includes the integration of ancient wisdom of Iran and philosophy Aristotelian rationalism. It is believed that before Aristotle, a chain of philosophy in the east was formed which was named al-Hikmat al-eshragh.

But Aristotle did not accept the origins of al-Hikmat al-eshragh and as a result he established a philosophy which was named al-Hikmat al-Masha later. In fact, al-Hikmat al-Masha is a way to achieve the rational and theoretical issues through thinking [1]. This philosophy is in contrast with al-Hikmat al-Eshragh which is based on intuition.

After the arrival of Islam in Iran and obligation to use of the Arabic language, Arabic translation of Aristotle's books that promote rational philosophy has been used in scientific centers of the Middle East and the Muslim philosophers studied and evaluated many of those translations.

One of the most powerful philosophers was Avicenna, who created a philosophy based on the limited principles of Aristotle in his youth. He named his philosophy which was far superior to the translated books in terms of depth of vision and unity, and diversity of issues, al-Masha school of Aristotle [2].

Later young philosopher Suhrawardi, announced that the rationalist approach of Aristotle is not sufficient. Suhrawardi thought that the principles and rational reasoning are not merely sufficient to cognize the truth. Suhrawardi questioned Avicenna's point of view and believed that Intellectuals who only rely on rational principles to understand the truth and regard thinking and reasoning enough to get to know the true wisdom, can't find the source of truth. He believed that mystics such as Bayazid Bastami and Sahl-e Tostari are against philosophers like Avicenna and Farabi. He also believed that they have been able to attain the pure truth through intuitive knowledge and intuitive connection [3].

Mulla Sadra established his thoughts on the connection between these two types of thinking, Avicenna's thoughts and Suhrawardi's thoughts; because Mulla Sadra was among Avicenna’s followers who believed in al-Hikmat al-Eshragh.

He had a deep understanding of Suhrawardi and believed that by considering his ideas and thoughts and developing and expanding their implications, he would be able to complete what Suhrawardi didn’t have the opportunity of doing [4]. In fact Mulla Sadra reasonably explained Suhrawardi's thoughts and was successful to link Suhrawardi’s
thoughts and Avicenna’s thoughts which had roots in Aristotle's philosophy.

MODELING AL-HIKMATA AL-MOTA’ALIE

By examining Mulla Sadra’s thoughts it can be distinguished How to communicate between creativity and reasoning. Mulla Sadra was certainly seeking an analysis of the ontology. He believed that to understand the truth creativity and intuition are required in addition to rational reasoning. As he had a lot of information in the field of philosophy, he also utilized the spiritual experiences he had achieved during years of prayer and purity in ontology.

Mulla Sadra named his school of philosophy al-Hikmat which includes large areas of science and integrates Suhrawardi's mysticism with Avicenna's philosophy. Al-Hikmat is mainly like a bridge where the integration of philosophy and mysticism is possible and Mulla Sadra has used it to benefit the characteristic of both philosophical and spiritual schools. It is remarkable that Mulla Sadra never assumed al-Hikmat as what can be achieved merely through experience, and inspiration, and intuition. And therefore the structure of al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie is established on reasoning and intuition [5]. Intuition and reasoning together are required to recognize the truth in al-Hikmat. This characteristic can be extended in architecture too. It is not sufficient today only to pay attention to the rational aspects of architectural construction. It seems that it is also required to consider spaces and elements similar to intuition in the design process. It can be noticed that traditional architects influenced by intuitive mysticism, in addition to rational features and functionality of architectural spaces, have considered spaces that resemble intuitive concepts.

Before establishing al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie, Mulla Sadra’s spent a period of austerity and worship in a remote village called Kahak. During this period that is the golden age of his spiritual life he reached the stage of intuition and became capable of perceiving the philosophical truths with his heart instead of his mind. Subsequently he completed his philosophical school as a result. It can be acknowledged that Mulla Sadra’s abilities can have roots in the knowledge resulted from his studies and also his teachers’ training (Mulla Sadra’s teachers include Mir Damad, Sheyke Bahayi and Mir Fendereski). Mulla Sadra's special feature; the depth of information and philosophical knowledge, he has helped him in establishing his new school, al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie. He didn't assume that just knowing philosophical issues was enough but used to think deeply about philosophical issues and examine and scrutiny them precisely from beginning to the end. With the power of the research he managed to pass the surface of reasoning and philosophical arguments and reviewed difficult philosophical issues with an overall and comprehensive view. Thus it can be said that his ability to establish al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie, had roots in his extensive information and a complete understanding of the facts. Therefore it is clear that the first step in this combination is fully cognizing. This cognition had been primarily obtained through al-Elm al-Hosuli (the achieved knowledge) and ultimately completed by al-Elm al-Hozuri (the intuitive knowledge). As a result, we can assume creating links between rational thinking and intuitive thinking as a process that has two main phases, the first phase is cognition which is gained by applying al-Elm al-Hosuli and al-Elm al-Hozuri and second, integrating.

In a similar way, a comprehensive cognition is required in traditional architecture to enter the stage of integrating. In fact the scrutiny of the mentioned two phases begins with cognizing the traditional architecture and continues with linking the traditional architecture and contemporary architecture according to the structure of Mulla Sadra’s integration.

COGNIZING THE TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE

In the point of view al-Hikmat al-Mota'alie, each phenomenon consists of two dimensions which are referred to as being and essence. Therefore cognition can be understood in two ways, being as it is present and essence which differentiates in description from other phenomenon and answers the question of Quidity and states the essence. In fact each phenomenon can be viewed from two aspects thus can and answer two questions; one is the question of being and the other is the question of Quidity. Al-Wojud confirms the being of a phenomenon and insists on its presence and existence and al-Mahiyat explains the features of the item and explains the Quiddity (diagram 1).

![Diagram 1: Dimensions of cognition, source: authors](image)

If we try to observe architecture from this point of view, two dimensions of architecture would be represented as the following, its essence and its appearance in reply to materialistic needs which belong to specific time or place and takes variety of forms at different times and places. This substantive dimension, is in relationship with the dimension of al-Wojud which is derived from the being dimension of architecture. The essence of each architectural masterpiece has also a being and recognition of the essence is dependent on its existence. The being dimension of architecture has features beyond the world of material. Because of its relation with the
Therefore the essence of existence unity (al-Wahdat al-Wojud). In this order it has an intermediate essence in which earth and sky, angle and heaven, material or appearance come together and unit [6]. It means that the being dimension of architecture is related to the world of sense. The higher the architect becomes at existential level, the higher and more heavenly would become his architecture (diagram 2).

![Diagram 2. Cognition of architecture, source: authors](image)

**AL ASALAT AL WOJUD (THE PRIMARY OF BEING)**

Since two existences can’t be described for each phenomenon and each phenomenon holds only one existence considering the regulations in the world of material, this question shall be answered for every phenomenon to come true, whether the primary and priority is with its being or essence? In the past, a group of philosophers believed in primary of being and the others believed in primary of essence without having a convincing reason or proof for it. To answer this question, Mulla Sadra, states that, sometimes human beings consider an essence apart from being; it means that they ignore the external part of being of the phenomenon. In other words, different from being, essence is not in a form which necessarily comes and follows external realization. So it is being that is the principal in realization of creatures and objects.

Therefore by recognizing the being and essence of architecture, Mulla Sadra found out that the being of architecture is in relation with intuition aspects of architecture and the essence of architecture answers the rational aspects. Here considering the principals of Mulla Sadra’s al-Asalat al-Wojud in architecture, reality shall be considered as the being of architecture and intuitive aspects of it. Although today many experts have considered the essence of architecture for its primary and have paid little attention to being intuitive aspects of architecture [7].

Studies, have shown that in traditional architecture paying attention to intuitive aspects and in fact to the being of architecture was of great importance; traditional architects have executed those aspects of al-wojud mentioned in physics which were suitable for their time along with the substantive aspect of architecture. As in Islamic architecture functionalism and expediency are two principles of aesthetics [8].

In order to determine this issue in Mulla Sadra’s point of view, about the essence of a phenomenon like a Mosque for example, the essence of it is not more important from the its being and therefore it can be stated that Sadra have considered the being dimension of a Mosque higher than its essence.

Now as Mulla Sadra have gained cognition first by al-Elm al-Hosouli (the achievable Knowledge) and then by al-Elm al-Hozouri (the intuitive knowledge), to complete the discussion of cognition in architecture it is necessary that first the traditional architecture should be discussed through achievable knowledge in detail. And this is possible by paying much attention to features and studying documents related to the masterpieces in traditional architecture.

**COGNITION OF BEING AND ESSENCE IN TRADITIONAL ARCHITECTURE**

Tradition in word means, way, method, nature and disposition. The word "tradition" has its roots in the word transport which means to change place. It can be concluded that the lexical meaning states a stable and transportable item and not something which becomes old, obsolesce, change or transform. Since objects start to change or distract or transform or revolute considering the materialistic aspect and they decline during time, they can’t stand for something which tradition has the duty of its transportation, because the unstable case doesn't have the honor to transport [9]. This concept states that the traditional architecture consists of architecture features which are transported from one generation to another. In fact those group of buildings that the attention and priority has been given to being of architecture in their design, gain the validity and value to be transported to the next generation.

Tradition means the facts and principles which have divine origins and have been inspired to humans and the whole realm of cosmic. The upstream of the tradition is spiritual, something which is traditional is inseparable from inspiration. Therefore tradition is inseparably related to intuition, religion, stability, spiritual life, science and art. The presence of spirituality in traditional architecture can’t be ignored. Therefore, the traditional architect also considered his duty as a sacred thing because he has viewed his place in a sacred chain which connected him to the architect of the world. Architects have believed in God as the architect who has raised the sky up the great world and all the world and creatures in that have been created by him beautifully and fully functional and so no damage can be discovered in that. In a similar way traditional architects have built the construction of the people of God by spiritual manners and have copied the mansion of God in order, functionality, beauty and conviction. Construction shall be built in accordance with the architecture of universe so that it doesn't stand against the system of nature but to be a part of it [10].

Spirituality explains the reflection of spiritual worlds in carnal and physical constructions. The nature of issuance of spirituality is the spiritual world which is placed higher than the world of the carnal world and
the combination of these two is not allowed. As the first one is related to spirit and the second to flesh. On the other side the thing that can return human beings to the spiritual life also represents the sacredness because only what comes down from the spiritual world can help the humans to return back to it. Therefore spirituality states a magical reflection of spiritual case in materialistic and heavenly world on earth. It is a divine thing which makes earthy human being aware of its spiritual nature [11]. Tradition is that unit fact which is the hearth and up stream of all realities. All traditions are the earthy reflections of eternal patterns and are finally linked to a stable pattern or primordial tradition [11]. Based on this, the facts that represent the spirituality in tradition are primordial patterns. These primordial patterns are visible in the architecture of constructions which never become old during time and years. Such constructions are perdurable because the presence of primordial patterns in their design shows the importance of the being dimension of that architecture for the architect (Figure 1).

Therefore the presence of eternal constructions in traditional architecture is in fact the being of traditional architecture (Diagram 3).

![Diagram 3. The role of archetype in traditional architecture, source: authors](image)

It is one of those reasons that make the traditional constructions perdurable and valuable. Beside the achieved cognition, by experiencing the traditional spaces which are designed as archetypes, and are structures related to unconscious, we can understand these concepts clearly by intuitive cognition.

![Figure 2. Eram garden of Shiraz, presence of archetype of the lost heaven, source: archive of authors](image)

As it was mentioned Mulla Sadra has benefited intuition and logical reasonings of the rationalism philosophy to understand the truth. He has observed truth through intuition and by deep philosophical studies and extensive scientific information has set integration as the core of his job. Therefore to recognize architecture based on al-Hikmat al-Mota'alle, and in order to create perdurable architectures in present time, it is necessary to give originality to the being and intuitive aspects of architecture. In this manner suitable and logical integration is set between intuitive aspects which were emphasized and used in the past and the substantive and physical aspects to fulfill the needs of modern life. Therefore mere imitation from the physics of traditional architecture does not answer the modern architecture's needs.

**TASHKIK AL-WOJUD (LEVELS OF BEING)**

Al-Wojud is manifested in all essences (al-Mahiyyat) that each has its own format, shape and characteristics. Despite the diversity, there are common features in all essences, it means that al-Wojud is common in al-Mahiyyat. Although al-Wojud is a common principle in all objects, there are varying degrees of it which in different objects. This difference
in degrees of al-Wojud would cause difference in object definitions and essences and makes plurality in a philosophical style and therefore tashkik al-Wojud can be achieved [2]. That is why architects who consider al-Wojud, search not only for the being of architecture, but they also design the body and essence of architecture very accurately and full of delicacy.

Therefore the issue of plurality in unity and unity in plurality can be explained in this way, according to the formal point of view of al-Hikmat al-Mota’alie plurality exists in instances of al-wojud but it doesn’t exist in al-wojud itself and things are considered to be mainly unit (Figure 4). All things, including al-Wajeb al-Wojud (God) and al-Momken al-Wojud (things that can possibly exist) are levels of the truth [13]. It is interesting that this issue has been repeatedly emphasized in the design of buildings in traditional architecture. In Islamic culture dome maintains its ancient image and meanwhile, it is the living manifestation of the Islamic ontology. Al-Wajeb al-Wojud is a chain of supreme meanings that has been greatly emphasized and surrounds all the creatures at the same time, as the dome surrounds the inner space and the vault of sky surrounds all creatures. The movement of al-Wajeb al-Wojud is from the peak of arch, which symbolizes unity, to its down, which symbolizes plurality [14].

-Mota’alie, the Cognizing of architecture is discussed by al-elm al-hosuli (the achieved knowledge) through the study of architectural history and theoretical principles and it becomes feasible by al-Elm al-Hozuri (the intuitive knowledge) through experiencing the architectural spaces. It is necessary to study of the concept of Integration first under the next heading.

INTEGRATION

Mulla Sadra has presented two main sources to express his opinion. He considers the rational and logical approach to philosophy as the first source, but his other phrases indicate that he has presented inspiration (al-Yahy) as the second source. In this method, inspiration and intuition have been accepted as certain elements of thinking. Mulla Sadra believes in intricate combination of wisdom and inspiration and not wisdom and inspiration next to each other [15]. What is noteworthy is his proficiency in both methods of wisdom and inspiration. Therefore proficiency in the two issues of wisdom and inspiration is necessary in the phase of integration (Diagram 4).

![Diagram 4. Ontology resources, source: authors](image)

Mulla Sadra investigated almost any issue first with the method of al-Hikmat al-Masha and discussed issues within the framework of this school. According to Mulla Sadra the first base to achieve the truth is wisdom but it is not capable to solve the problems of metaphysics. Thus a wise philosopher should not stop halfway and should not deprive himself of intuition. He believed that what achieved through Intuition can be proved by reasoning, as the invisible provisions of nature can be proved by mathematics.

![Diagram 5. The structure of Mulla Sadra’s thinking method, source: authors](image)
Now the question is whether we can use this structure in order to integrate the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture and the rational aspects of contemporary architecture which is responsive to the needs of today’s life. In this context two stages are discussed which means that cognition and integration should also be examined about architecture. Mulla Sadra’s ontology can be used in the first step to cognize architecture and recognize its being (al-Wujud) and essence (al-Mahiyat). After this stage and in order to perform the integration, it is necessary to examine the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture and the needs of contemporary life.

Table 1. Considering Mulla Sadr a’s method as a pattern for architecture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mulla Sadra's Thinking Structure</th>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Architecture</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cognizing</td>
<td>Cognition the meaning of architecture (relying on Mulla Sadra's ontology)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>integrating</td>
<td>Combining the rational theory of al-Masha and intuitive wisdom of ancient Iran</td>
<td>Combining the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture and the needs of contemporary life</td>
</tr>
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source: authors

After recognizing the being (al-Wujud) and essence (al-Mahiyat) of architecture, the generalization of Mulla Sadra’s integrated approach will be discussed in architecture in order to create a rational relationship between the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture and the essence (al-Mahiyat) of contemporary architecture.

Diagram 6. The structure of Mulla Sadra’s thinking method in architecture, source: authors

According to the above chart, firstly it is necessary to consider the issue in al-Hikmat al-Masha. In fact this phase is to ask the question of the research ahead which defines the problem and seeks to answer it in the start point of the path. According to Integration process to answer this question, you first need to consider the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture. In fact the aspects of being (al-Wujud) in traditional architecture have to be argued so that it can be proved by reasoning. Finally the conclusion of present study would complete the discussion and the initial question will be answered ultimately.

CONCLUSION

The values of hidden concepts in Iranian traditional architecture are undeniable. It is possible to maintain these values and their usage in appropriate physics for today’s life. Studies show that by considering Mulla Sadra’s thoughts as patterns and applying the forming structure of al-Hikmat al-Mota’alie guidelines can be achieved. By using these guidelines the gap between traditional architecture and contemporary architecture would eliminate.

As Mulla Sadra linked between the ancient wisdom and the new philosophy, it is possible to create a similar connection in architecture. Mulla Sadra created this link through two phases including cognition and integration. During this process he proved the traditional intuitive method through the rational reasoning and stated it in the language of al-Hikmat al-Masha. Therefore the implicit concepts of traditional architecture can also be stated in contemporary architecture through the two phases of cognition and integration. Mulla Sadra’s source is not just reason, similar to the source of al-hikmat al-Masha, which has neglected inspiration. It is not mere inspiration and intuition either, similar to Mystics and Sufis who consider reasoning disable of understanding the truth. According to al-Hikmat al-Mota’alie, the truth in each phenomenon first would be perceived through intuition and then it would be proved by rational and philosophical reasoning. Therefore to express the mentioned principles in architecture, the first stage includes the cognition of architecture through studying documents and experiencing the architectural spaces and the second stage includes the integration of traditional concepts and the principle of contemporary architecture.

According to the principle of al-Asalat al-Wujud, it is necessary to study the being of traditional architecture (al-Wujud). And according to the conducted surveys al-Wujud is in fact the intuitive aspects of traditional architecture which can be investigated through reasoning. In order to prove the priority of the intuitive aspects of architecture, it can be acknowledged that presenting the being of traditional architecture in the essence of contemporary architecture is required to maintain the values of traditional architecture in designing a body which suits the needs of today.

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