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ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY AND THE EVOLUTION OF COURTYARD: A CASE STUDY OF A HAVILI, OLD CITY LAHORE

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Abstract

A courtyard in buildings plays an important role in determining climatic setting, as well as physical and [1]psychological environment for the residents. This paper focuses on the evolution of courtyard houses in light of the teachings of Islam. Islamic planning, in terms of structures, spatial arrangement and form, determines the socio-cultural features of its community. In Islam, a house is represented as a shelter where families can enjoy their privacy and ease within the domain of Islamic values. For this, a detailed study of various courtyard housing has been carried out, probing their history, evolution, form and elements. A side reference of the Islamic ideology is also studied for a better understanding of an Islamic courtyard house. The analysis concludes that with only a few exceptions, the courtyards functions the same in both the contemporary and Islamic worlds-providing privacy and fully ventilated dwelling. This study provides appropriate architectural design strategies that could promote the use of Islamic values in modern yet contemporary courtyard houses worldwide.

Keywords: evolution, courtyard houses, Islamic architecture, Walled city, *havilis*, courtyard

1. Introduction

A courtyard is referred to as an enclosed open-air space; an uncovered space that is completely or partially bounded by walls or structures, usually one forming part of a castle or huge houses.[1] Courtyards or open spaces are most commonly placed in the heart of structures. Due to their span and connection with all parts of the building, they were used as a gathering place for the inhabitants, both occasionally and on daily basis for different chores. Edward (2006)[2] revealed in his book that, courtyards do not belong to any particular historic period, but that their presence has been marked in

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[1]S. Abdulac, "Traditional Housing Design in the Arab Countries," Paper presented at the Urban Housing, *Proceedings of the Second Seminar* (Harvard, 1982), 17-21.

[2]B. Edwards, *Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future* 1st ed. M. Sibley, M. Hakmi and Peter Land, eds., Taylor and Francis, 2005.

almost in every period on a different scale. Their architecture was shaped depending upon their cultural and physiological significance in particular eras.

Courtyards can be classified into two categories i.e. interior and exterior courtyards. Interior courtyards acted like atriums placed somewhere in the middle of the dwelling surrounded by other rooms. Whereas, exterior courtyards border the house by providing a protected area. They are adjoined with the dwelling units but are not surrounded by the rooms.

The courtyard goes way back since the prehistoric ages (5400bc-7500bc): Ancient civilizations, more than 5000 years ago, starting from Egypt, Iran, China and Mesopotamia, to the classical civilizations of Greece, Rome and Byzantine up till the medieval Europe. The Sumerian courtyard house, with its Indoor looking to the sky and the closed outdoors was notably identified as the most famous courtyard house in Mesopotamia.
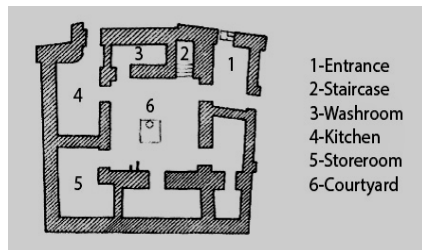

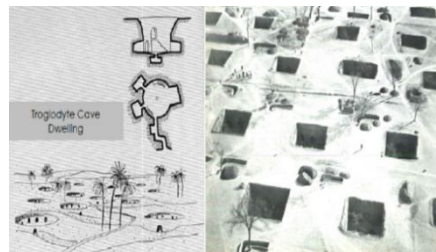**Fig-1.**Plan of House at Ur, Mesopotamia   **Fig-2. T**roglodyte African Cave courtyard dwelling

This form of construction has always been present, ever since humans started constructing houses.[3] Generally, this design is more recognizable in the arid climate of the Middle East. Gradually, courtyards transformed from open to cover; so that the activities that once took place outdoors, could begin to take place indoors. Followed by the Mesopotamian civilizations, in the Middle East empires; modern state of Kuwait had also used courtyards in its residential houses apart from temples and palaces. Courtyards were found in Greek and Roman civilizations as well. Usually, these courtyards were surrounded by a row of columns in public buildings, and by rooms and stores in private houses.

According to the Islamic ideology, a basic house or dwelling is the model of simplicity. This attribute of simplicity has been taken from the shape of the holy house called the House of Allah (*SWT*). (Ka'aba).Ka'aba is built in the form of a cube which is considered as the modest shape and relates to the religious beliefs of Muslims. The design of the house is also influenced by the teachings of Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. In this context, the traditional courtyard house was designed to represent the

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[3]D. Bridson, *Courtyard Housing Study-Djingis Khan and The Kingo Houses* (2012), 34-56.

paradise with an enclosed garden that contains a pond in the middle as divine patterns.[4]

Lahore (Pakistan) a semi-arid area in Pakistan is enriched with preserved urban settlements of the past. During the early settlements of Lahore, an inconclusive period, most of the architectures were influenced by invaders who were trying to leave their mark. One of the early settlements of Lahore is Icchra; the walled city. Now there is a consensus among the historians that Mahmud of Ghazna or his slave General Malik Ayaz founded, the present day walled city, where there was a definite settlement already. Akbar divided the early Lahore into 36 districts out of which belonged to the walled city also known as *guzars*. Apart from the invaders, other factors which affected the architecture of Lahore were geological, geographical, climatic, religious, social, economical and historical changes. Among the spectacular Mughal architecture found in the walled city were the *havilis* expanded on areas of 2-3 hectares. In contrast, a common house usually took 200-300 sqm. These *havilies* are known to be the early survivors of the Akbar's period. The existence of a total of 54 *havilis* was earlier documented out of which 44 are no longer found.
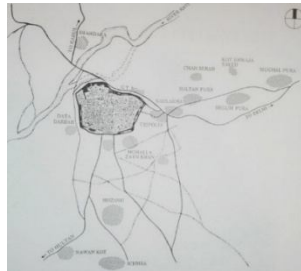

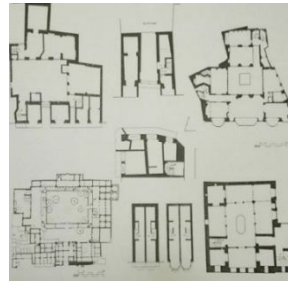
Fig-4.Map of early Lahore city and surroundings   Fig-5.Plans of traditional houses

2. Case Study of a Typical *Havili* – An Early Courtyard Dwelling

This *havili* is located in *Mandi Bazaar*, Lahore. From three sides, it is surrounded by houses, whereas one side of this *havili* faces a bazaar[5]. Originally, was known to be owned by professional local singers. Records reveal that the *havili* has gone through rental courses since then. The *havili* is built on huge land. It's has a large courtyard, and it is a four storey high structure in which the basement is inaccessible.

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[4]Abdulac, Traditional Housing Design in the Arab Countries, In *Urban Housing*. ed. Margaret Betley Sevcenko (Cambridge: Massachusetts: Agha Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, 1982), 17-21.
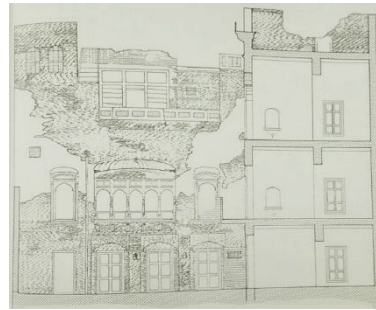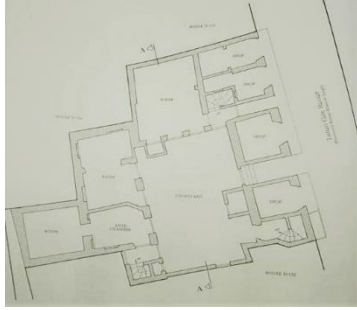
[5]Ibid., 4-38.

Fig-7.Ground Floor Plan of the *Havil*   Fig-8.Section showing openings in the courtyard

Fig-9.Entrance and street view

Fig-10.Internal views of the Courtyard

Form of the *havili* is a typical thick masonry, geometrical layout with a single rectangular shaped internal courtyard connecting all the rooms. The courtyard connects all three upper floors except the basement. As far as the Zoning and Segregation of this *havili* is concerned, the *havili* has shops (public zone) on the eastern side and the entrance directly opens into the courtyard. There are two *nishistgahs* (TV Lounge) on the first floor on the eastern wing that open into the street via three sets of *Jharokas* (Balcony).[6] Almost every event of the family is held in the courtyard. Focusing on the accessibility part the *havili* has one entrance in the eastern wing facing the main bazaar. The same entrance is for the visitors and the family use.
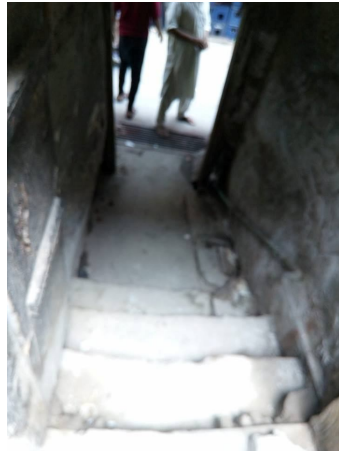
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[6]Ibid., 39-40.

Fig-12. Staircase from the Entrance   Fig-13.Staircase from the south wing

From a morphological analysis, one can conclude that there are many differences between this case study and any proper Islamic dwelling. These contrasts are based in terms of the spatial arrangement around the courtyard of the *havili* in walled city, Lahore and how they can be influenced or enhanced on account of the Islamic value of an Islamic house. Even though the *havili* itself shares some antiquate architecture features, there are still few features that need to be discussed carefully to clarify those elements with the Islamic impact.[7]

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

In the Islamic world a house is considered to be a place with miraculous utilities. It is a reflection of the Islamic values where a family gathers to nurture and grow. The analysis on the case study of this *havili* intends to establish as to what extent the typical courtyard house has elaborated the Islamic doctrines that further merged into the Lahore's socio-culture lifestyle. Further conclusions can be drawn through the findings when placed parallel to the four basic Islamic design factors mentioned in the morphological analysis parameters in the Table below:

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[7]Spahic Omer, "Some Lessons from Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) in Architecture: The Prophets' (*SAW*) Mosque in Madinah" *Intellectual Discourse* 18 (2010): 118;Accessed September15,2015

Details	Details	Connection With The Islamic Doctrines
Form	The arrangement of the exterior of the *havili* is rectangle in shape that reflects uniformity with the fabric of the bazaar (area). A central courtyard is the hearth of the *havili* with all the rooms surrounding it. This courtyard not only holds all the house activates but is an excellent source of light and comfort for the residents.	The beliefs for Islamic architecture are essence of the Holy Qur'ān and the Prophets Muhammad (*SAW*) teachings. Simplicity is one of the key principles of Islamic thoughts. A house is a place that can provide comfort and security to the family and neighbors. We can relate to his famous saying, "The best Muslim house is the one where an orphan is treated kindly, and the worst Muslim house is the one in which an orphan is treated badly."[8]
Egregation	The central courtyard helps refrain from isolation in the house and among members in the house as it is utilized for activities of both family and guests. Still there's a need for segregation when the guest is going to use the space for some time. Along with the rooms the basement, cascades are used underneath the courtyard with limited access to it. This insures sufficient air circulation to the basement floor (which is closed now) whereas the first floor is used to segregate the guests from the family members with certain parameters.	Islam preaches its believers to seek privacy of the house thus maintaining the privacy of the house users. The private areas and the public ones are segregated and thus privacy is maintained. The Qur'ān also narrates the verses and the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (*SAW*) that, "Permission is needed as a protection against glance."[9] This applies to both men and women. Especially the women should not be seen by strangers without veil. As is well narrated in the holy verses. "O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses, except when leave is given to you for a meal, (and then) not (as early as) to wait for its preparation. But when you are invited, enter, and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without sitting for it annoys the Prophet, and he is shy of (asking) you (to go), but Allah (*SWT*) is not shy of (telling you) the truth. And when you ask (his wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen that is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. And it is not (right) for you that you should annoy Allah (*SWT*)'s Messenger (*SAW*), nor that

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[8]Ibn-e-Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah,* Book of Etiquettes, Hadith 3679, https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/33
[9]Muslim b Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim,* The Book of Manners and Etiquettes, Hadith 53; https://sunnah.com/muslim/38/53

		you should ever marry his wives after him (his death). Verily! With Allah (*SWT*) that shall be an enormity."[10]
Accessibility	There is just one entrance that serves the users. The location of the *havili* and its surrounding made it so the entrance was designed for both the family and guests. The stairs were designed near the front door to avoid the unnecessary contact every time anybody's coming or leaving. The entrance is a connecting space that not only leads to the courtyard but the rooms as well. Because of having only a single courtyard that is the central vertical loop for all the activities around the *havili*.	The number of courtyards in a dwelling isn't as important as its purpose that the privacy of the house should be maintained while designing the movement inside the house, both vertically and horizontally, "O you, who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded."[11]
Orientation	A detailed study shows that the direction of sacred Ka'aba is not required for the house placement. Still it is fortunate if accommodated during designing one. Inward concentration of the *havili* provides a private and more comfortable space for the family and guests.	The orientation to Ka'ba is a physical mark of respect for Islamic community towards God as per holy Ka'ba. "The foolish of the people will say: what hath turned them from the *Qiblah* which they formerly observed? Say: unto Allah (*SWT*) belong the east and the west. He guideth whom He will unto a straight path."[12]

The detailed analysis verifies that the spatial arrangements of this *havili* reflect respect for the Islamic teachings and *Sunnah*. The form of this *havili* wasn't designed according to the surroundings or the family need, but as per Islamic teachings. Also, it can be safely concluded that there is no segregation between genders inside the house. Separate spaces are adhered to for the members and the guests according to the Islamic teachings. Although, segregation is the best way to provide privacy- whenever strangers or guests are around- yet this courtyard is best for social activities for families and other guests.[13]

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[10]al-Qur'ān, an-Noor 24:27.
[11]Ibid.
[12]Qur'ān, al-Baqara 2:142.
[13]Brian Edwards,Mmagda Sibley, Muhammad Hakmi (Editors), *Courtyard Housing: Past, Present and Future* (Taylor and Francis, 2005), 89-90.

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