Effect of culture, religious beliefs and traditions on residential built forms – *A Study on Islamic countries.*

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Abstract :
This research is meant to instill the importance of understanding how the culture and human behavior influences in the built environment. The vice-versa effects of the built environment on the users are discussed, reviewing the influence of cultures, Traditions and beliefs in design to provide opportunities for the students, researchers, Designers and decision makers to identify various aspects of psychological, cultural frameworks and sociological influences in architecture and built environment. . The influence of Islamic principles, practice and values are also discussed to understand the culture of Islamic countries. This work is dependent on a theoretical foundation of previous related references, analysis, interpretation and comparative case studies, Some tools used were interviews, analytical site visits and questionnaire, the research succeeded to recognize the interpretation of heritage of different cultures in designing the elements (form, space, color etc.) in their architecture and built environment

Key words **–Privacy, Culture, Built forms, Sociological, Psychological, Traditions, Religiosity**

I. INTRODUCTION

There can be many different cultures and religious beliefs as there are many different communities and each communities has its own beliefs, values and traditions, to make the research with more clarity and legible the study has limited to only Islamic religion and its culture and beliefs effecting the built forms, The aim is to sustain these traditions and beliefs even in the contemporary age.

II. INTRODUCING ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES ON FAMILY VALUES SHARIA

The traditional architecture in Islamic societies was the product of Islamic beliefs and values of the inhabitants. The design of traditional Muslim homes is subject to guidelines from principles outlined in Islamic Sharia Law, which are derived from the Holy Quran as well as hadiths and sunnahs, Traditional Islamic teachings involve guidelines that have direct applications in the domestic spaces. The principles of Privacy towards family, Religiosity, and Generosity towards guests are central to these guidelines; each principle has a significant effect on the design of Muslim homes, as well as on the organization of space and domestic behaviors with in each home.

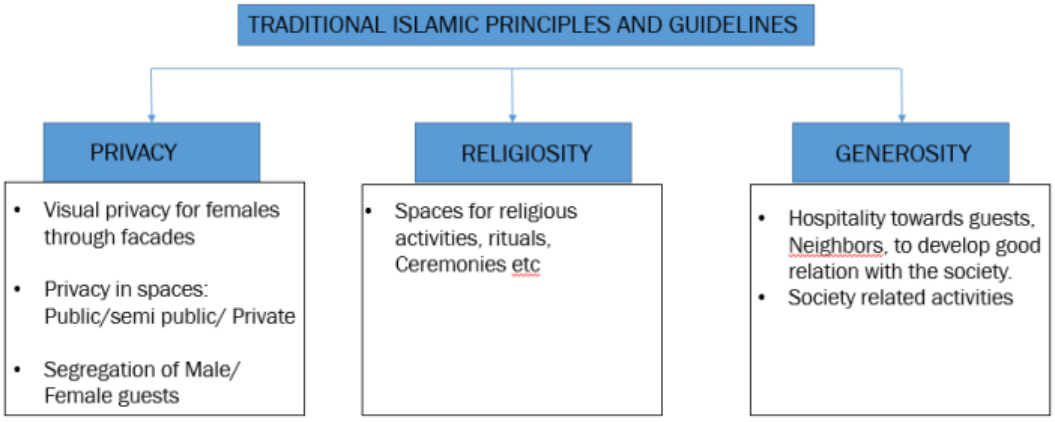


Image showing the Principles and guidelines of Islam towards residential built forms, *Source : Author*

Design considerations involve the control of visibility through visual privacy, females are visually protected from outside strangers, in a traditional Islamic society, and architecture is in accordance to the cultural and religious demand

III. SCOPE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY

A comparative analysis of case studies from different Islamic countries is done for example residential building typologies of Oman, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia etc. the analysis is based on mechanisms like Architectural and sociocultural background where in the Architectural mechanisms are the spatial organization and physical structure. Behavioral patterns space sequences (open, semi open, closed), functional area classifications (Private and public zones) are done. Climatic features, Building configurations, material and color, ventilation and lighting, Ornaments and details are studied. Apart from this the sociocultural aspects like the family structure, Neighborhood organization, privacy and territory, Religious ideology, traditions, beliefs and customs based in different regions are also analyzed.

The study distinguishes and compares the cultural values with the Islamic worldview in built environment. Recognizes the different influences and meanings found in the built environment and understanding of psychological and sociological factors as the need and consideration in building design according to typologies. A review of places/ building at different parts of the Arab world. The meaning of the built environment as interpreted by different people/ ethnic groups and also religions, Appreciation of the environment with special emphasis on details is done. Built Environment and Islam, Islamic Values and House Design Islamic Influence on Decorations in buildings are highlighted, Analysis on different Building Types



Google map showing the selected countries for case study, *Source: Author*

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

As we analyze, the relation between human behavior and the built environment have two facets, social conditions and spatial conditions Social conditions are related to the activities in which you meet people and spend time social interaction, and engagement with the society and community. Spatial conditions relating to the physical properties of built environments such as the Space, area, size, the locations and positioning of objects and information. Built environments are the settings within which people carry out activities in spatial conditions with specific social content for the setting. The social content and the spatial conditions form a core-defining relationship that serves as one structured setting is an essence of built environment.

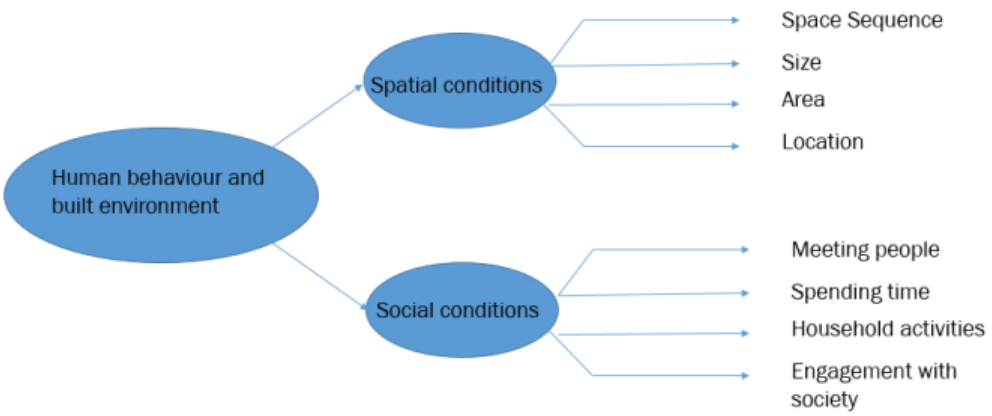


Image showing the two facets of human behavior and the built forms, *Source: Author*

V. VISUAL PRIVACY IN THE ELEVATIONS OF TRADITIONAL MUSLIM HOUSES IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Visual privacy is defined as the ability to conduct the everyday activities at home without being observed by outsiders. Visual privacy differs from culture to culture, but in Islam it is a central important concern in the society. The women in Islamic cities consider visual privacy as the central element in housing environment
The elevation elements like the balconies, openings, Entrances are designed to achieve visual privacy in facades



Images showing the Privacy in elevation elements in Arab residences, *Source: Pinterest*

VI. VISUAL PRIVACY IN THE PLANS, HIERARCHY OF SPACES IN A TRADITIONAL MUSLIM HOUSES IN ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

Spatial distribution in Islamic culture, the segregation of spaces is done as per gender, from this perspective we can analyze the architectural, social and physiological dimensions of privacy became fundamental to the daily life of people in Arab countries

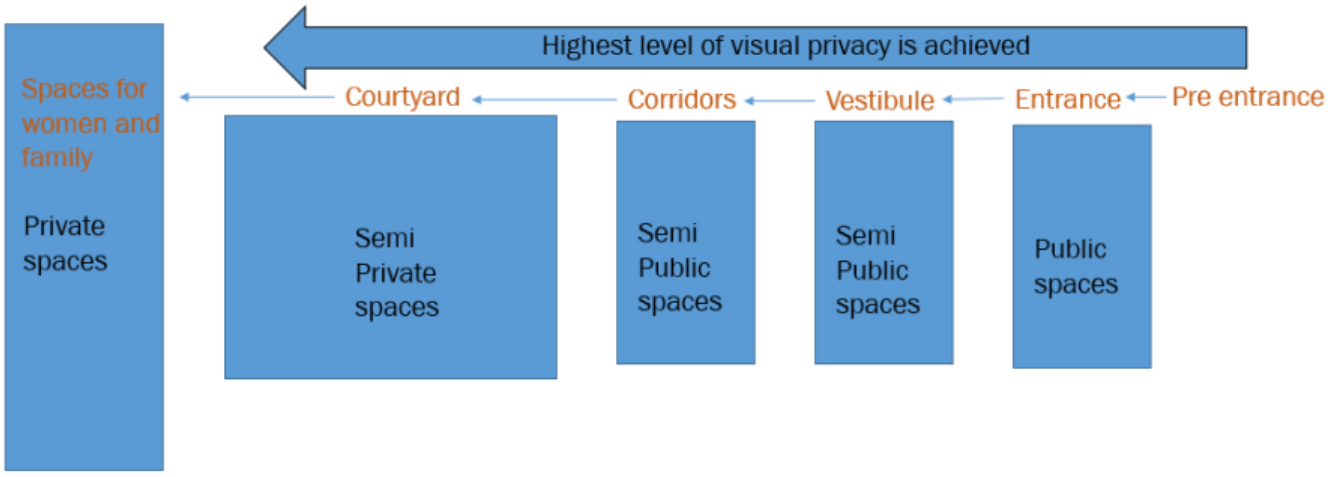
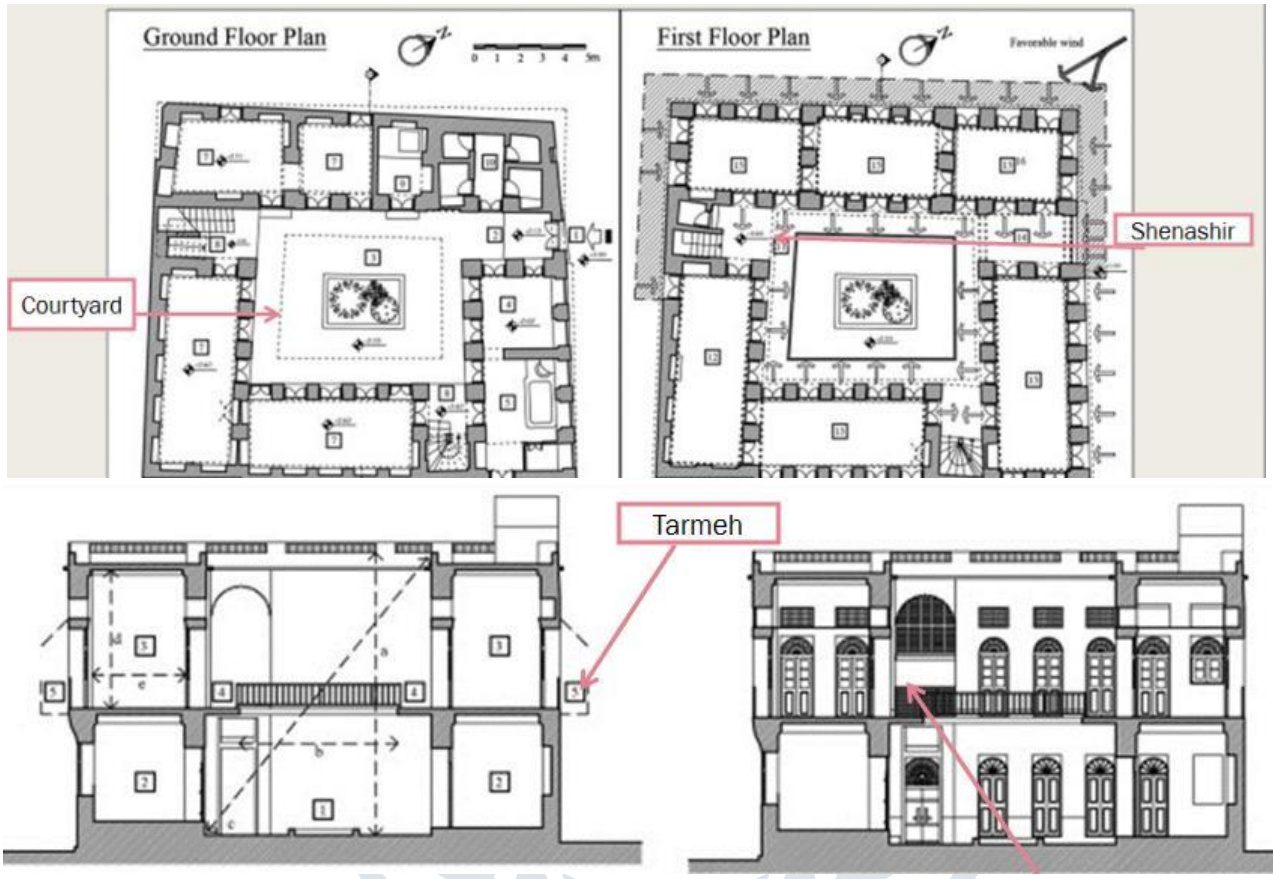


Image showing the Hierarchical movement pattern indicating the highest level of privacy for residents
Source: Author

VII. CASE STUDY 1 - IRAN

The traditional buildings in hot-arid region of Iran were introverted. Besides the climatic reasons, these inwardly looking houses provided a private and personalized space for house habitants. , this characteristic is not only related to the climatic conditions but also cultural and social elements as well (Tavasoli an Iranian democracy activist and politician 2002). All activities happen in are hidden from strangers. "The placement of the entrance doors of houses should come within the principle of maintaining private life and ensure that no offence is caused to neighbor's privacy. Muslim jurists agree that these doors should not be opened opposite to or near each other and they should be offset in order to prevent the person standing at an entrance from looking directly into the house opposite or Adjacent" (Mortada,2003 a journalist and a political advisor) The movement from entrance to the heart of houses happens by hierarchy.



Images above showing Plans and sections of traditional Iranian house with privacy elements residences, *Source: Google search*



Images above showing the traditional courtyard house of Iran *Source: Google search*

Behavioural pattern:

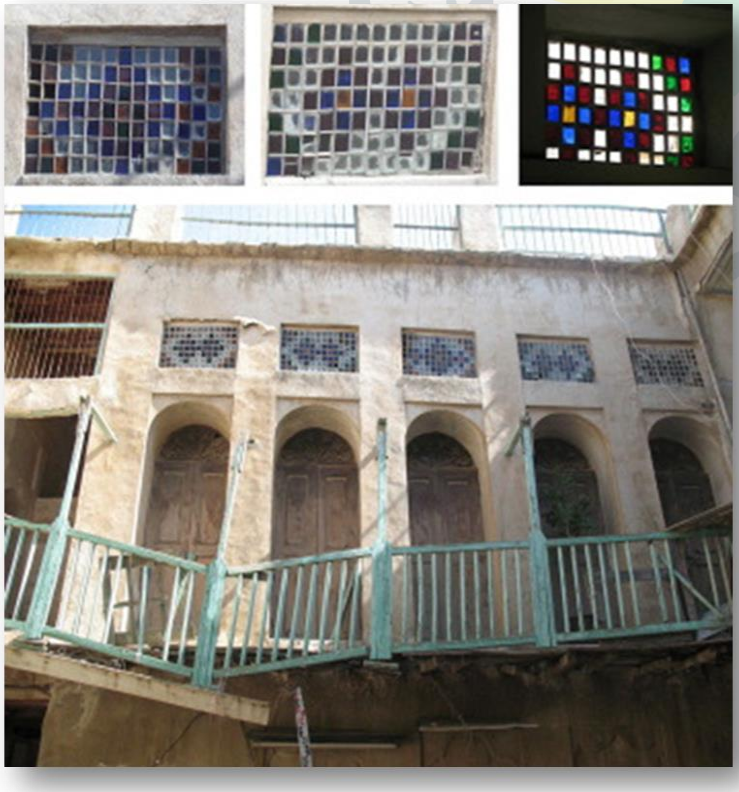
On the first floor, there is a room named Majlesi which is used as the guests' reception room.
The sitting room (the Beneshin room) is on the first floor and used for family members.
The Cuddy room (the Pastoo room) is a room near the sitting room which has lots of niches and closets
The roof is used for sitting and sleeping in summer nights. Also, the Tarmeh and Shenashir
In some cases, the bathroom is placed besides the main building as a separate building which is connected to each other.

Spatial Organizations in Iranian house:

The spaces organization is based on the maximum use of wind-flow in the spaces while preserving the privacy introvert designing with privacy preservation The elements in buildings are the entrance, corridor (or vestibule), courtyard, staircase, rooms, Tarmeh, Shenashira, Kitchen, Restroom, Bathroom, Water-storage, Pit place (Spring house), Store, Roof.
In most of the buildings, the spaces are organized around the central courtyard by a central method. There is a semi-open space (like the Tarmeh or the Shenashir) between each open-space and closed-space

Tarmeh	Shenashir
	
The Tarmeh is a place which is opened at least on one side and sometimes has no roof. It is used as a temporary seasonal sitting place or as a corridor and place for connecting several spaces	The Shenashir is a semi-open and interfacing space between interior and exterior spaces and it is like a veranda that is made of railings and canopies made of wooden material.

Images above showing the Privacy elements in house of Iran *Source: Google search*





VIII. CASE STUDY 2 - SYRIAN HOUSE:

The foundation of Syrian culture is thousands of year's old, influences have come from the many invaders and traders that came through the country in generations past. The Romans, Ottoman Turks, Arabs, French, and many others have all left their fingerprints on the people and culture of Syria. The traditional house design, as several studies discussed, seems to appropriately reflect the culture and social life of Syrian society in the past, the traditional courtyard house is the dominant type, mainly influenced by Islamic Law.

Although Syria is categorized as a secular country, the majority of the populations are Muslims, and therefore Islamic doctrines have a dominant influence on culture and thus on traditional housing design. Family sanctity and privacy – especially women privacy – have a high priority in Islam and thus in traditional Syrian society. Islamic Law has even detailed buildings instruction such as the placement of windows and the heights of adjacent buildings, and also regulated the responsibility of neighbors to each other to meet religious requirements and to protect the private life of family and neighbours. The courtyard house has traditionally prevailed in Syria, as in other Arabic and Islamic countries, and strongly reflected the Syrian culture and family life at home at its time. Family sanctity and privacy were strongly emphasized in traditional housing design by separating private life from public and by segregation of women to fulfill their privacy. Since the home in traditional life of Syrian society was the only domain of women, the courtyard/s was essential in almost all traditional houses providing an open space where they could do all the housework, activities, occasions and social life, one allocated to women called Haramlek and usually located on the first floor, and another part allocated to men called Salamlek and usually located on the ground floor. That does not mean that there was only this style of living in Syria, but there are limited different styles of living and many forms of the special arrangement inside Syrian houses are due to the variety of existing religions and sects. In the past, the cluster form of settlement was the main type of urban design in Syria and due to the Islamic influence the outside façades of the whole residential settlement were quite similar and simple



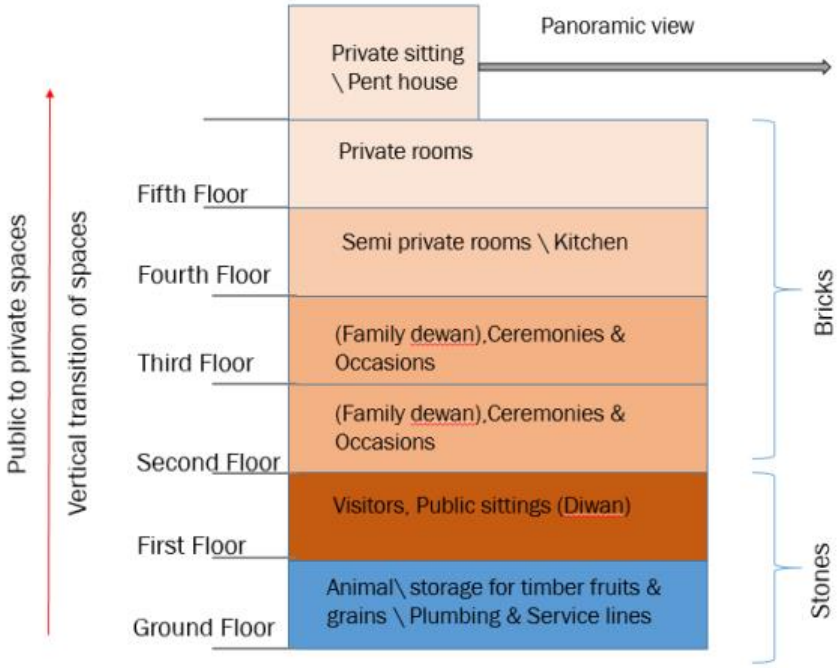
Images above showing the traditional residences of Syria with courtyards and visual privacy in their facades.
, *Source: Google search and Pinterest*

IX. CASE STUDY 3 - YEMENI HOUSE:

The Yemini traditional houses are unique in its form and they are not designed by or the plans are not drawn on the map but the traditional craftsman's mental map, these are visually striking houses which have been adapted to its surroundings, with regard to the materials and geography of the land. One of the oldest cities in the world: Sana'a. This dense, walled city projects the urban character typical of traditional Arab cities and contains many building types unique to Southern Arabia. The most striking of these is the tower house, which looms above as one walks through the narrow, winding streets of the old city.

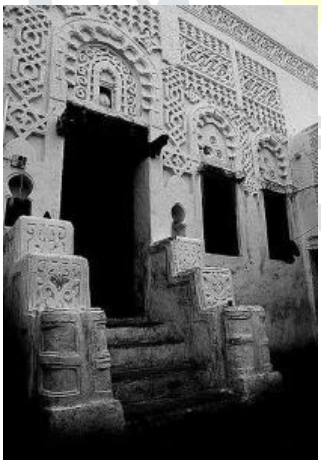
Most tower houses are at least five stories high, and some reach as many as eight or nine. Their origin lies in the remote villages where farmland was scarce and verticality was the only means of accommodating the settlement of people with efficient use of the land. Height also provided the necessary overview to protect a settlement and its crops from marauding tribes.





Section above showing the traditional residences of Yemen with vertical Hierarchy of spaces Source*: Author*









Images above showing the traditional residences of Yemen with visual privacy in their facades.
, *Source: Google search and Pinterest*

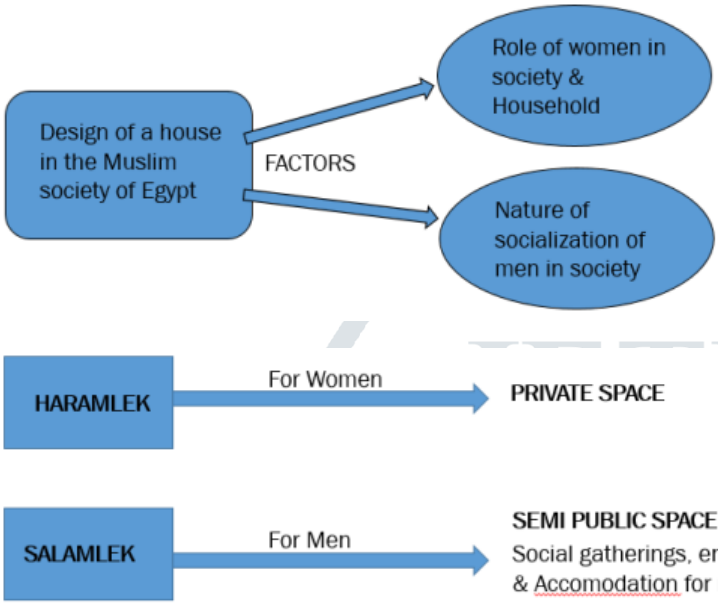


Images above showing the traditional residences of Yemen sculpted meticulously along with the geographical nature of the surroundings.

, *Source: Google search and Pinterest*

X. CASE STUDY 4 - EGYPT - ISLAMIC ERA

Islam brought many influential factors to Egyptian society. These factors, traditions and teachings left their marks on house design and planning. In Egypt, religion was not only a code of ethics, but a way of life. It has provided a civic code that has influenced social behavior and social interactions. The code, the religious dogma, and what is dictated by socio-cultural considerations changed planning and designing in Moslem society. Privacy was a matter of respect and dignity for both individuals and society.
The courtyard was introduced to architecture in general, and to the house in particular because it was an appropriate solution to the privacy. The house is oriented toward the court, and the presence of few windows in the outer walls reduced the noise and different nuisances Amenity, quietness, and coolness too were brought into the house (Al-Sheshtawy, 1979).



Diagrammatical representation of factors affecting Residential built forms of Egyptian traditional houses , *Source: Author*



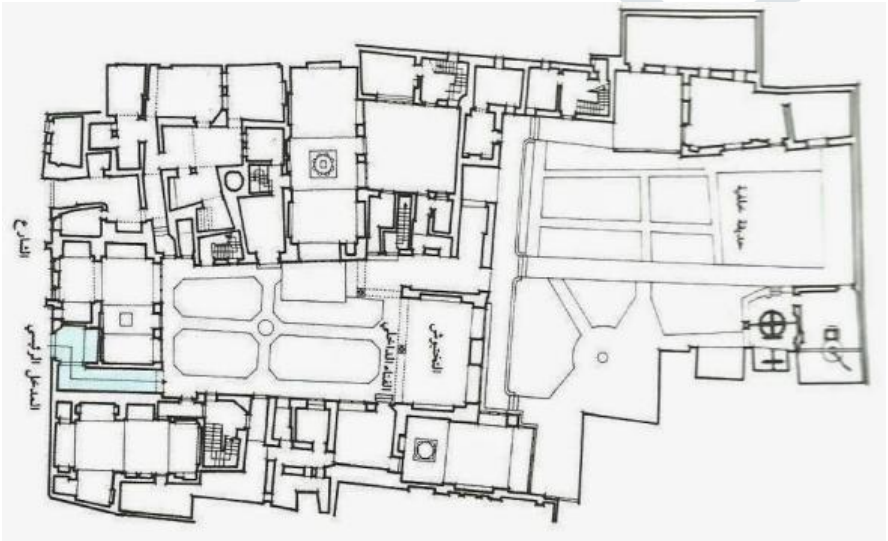
Private and public spaces for Male and female visitors
Source: Author







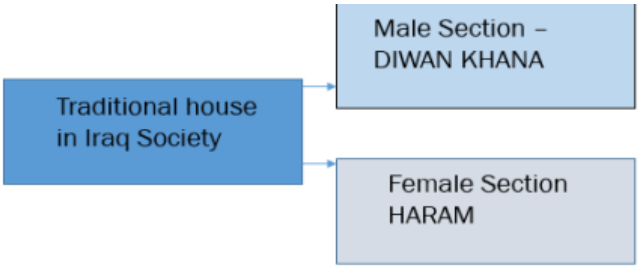




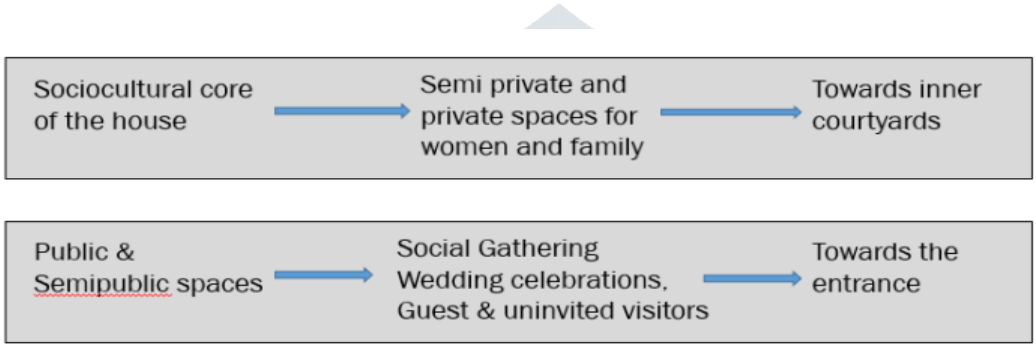
Plan pictures of Bayt al-Sahaymi
(Bayt means home)
Source: google

XI. CASE STUDY 5 IRAQ HOUSE:

The traditional house obtains its priority over public realms as it accommodates the social and cultural aspects of life. It demonstrates, the thresholds of social interaction between male and female members of the same family in the everyday social practices (Alizadeh, 2005). This is reflected in the architecture of the house through dividing it into two distinct parts: male section 'Diwan-khana', and female part 'Haram' (Fethi, 1977).



Private and public spaces for Male and female visitors *Source: Author*



Functional zones in the Iraqi traditional houses *Source: Author*

Physical and spatial treatments with regard to privacy, gender segregation and direct visual contacts have been performed in a manner that shows a deep understanding of social, cultural and religious values.

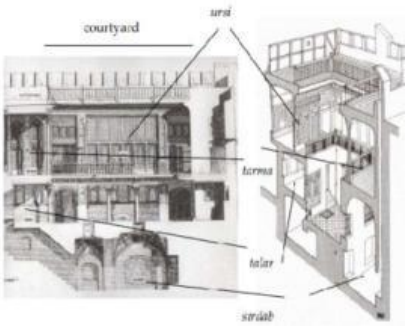
The privacy elements in Iraq traditional houses for womens privacy to watch outside without being noticed by outsiders	**Shanashil**  **Ursi**  

Table showing privacy elements *Source: Google*

XII. CASE STUDY 6 - OMANI HOUSES



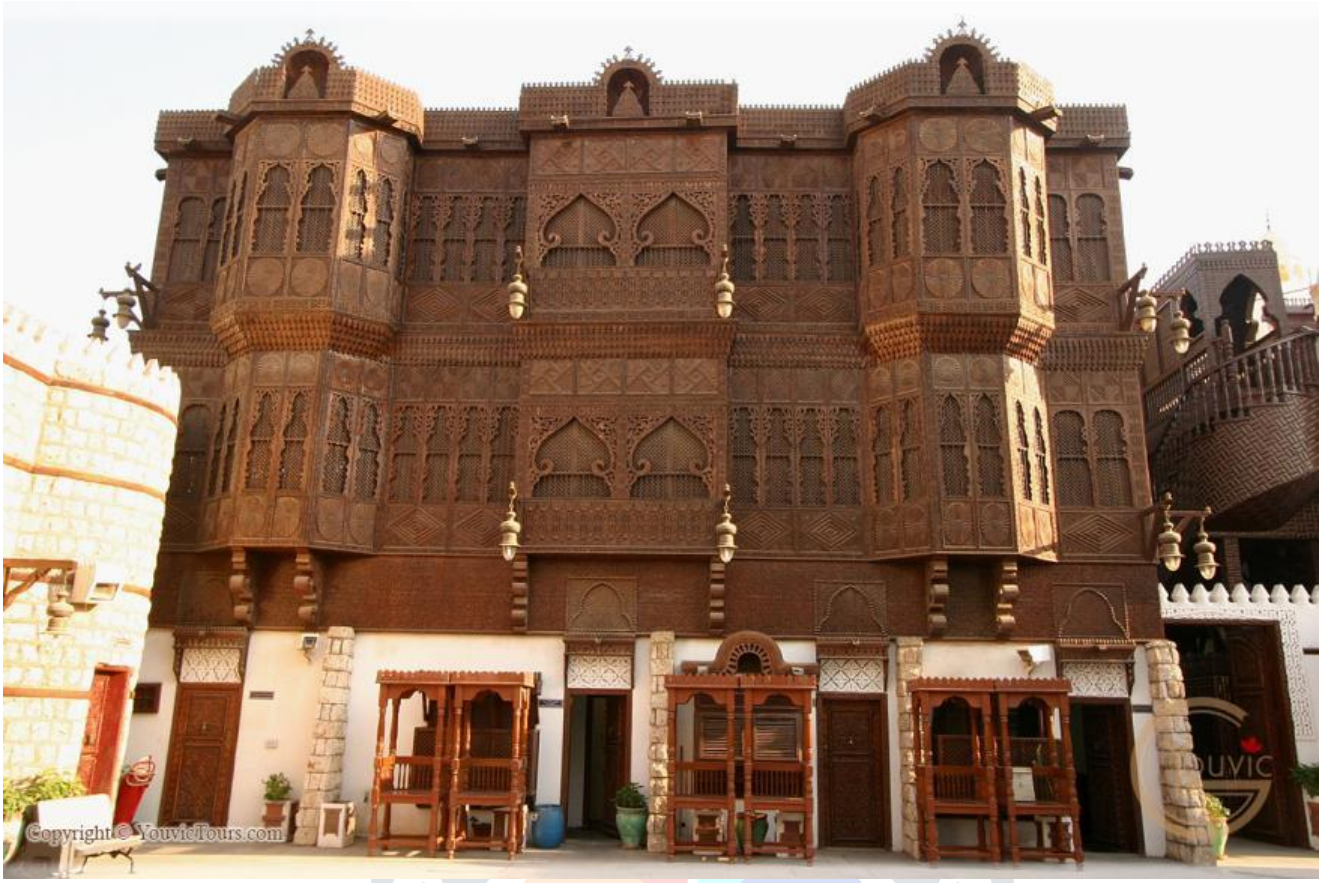


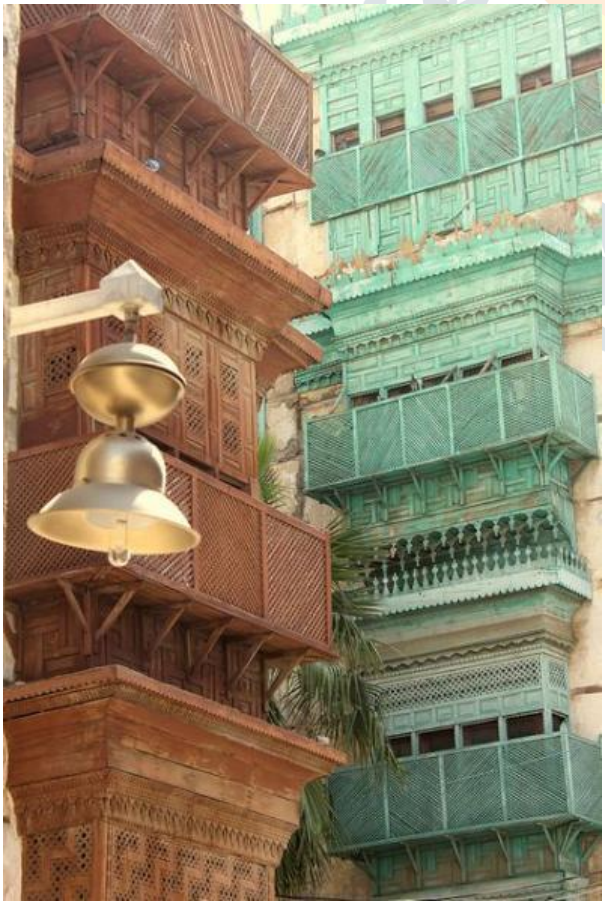


Table showing traditional Harath of Oman. (Harath means group of houses clustered together) *Source: Google*

The principles which affects the house design in traditional Omani architecture relates to Islamic conventions of Privacy, The introverted characters of the dwellings, arrangements and orientation of rooms viewing windows towards the internal courtyards, The bent entrance called the Majaz, the exterior screened windows and the wind catchers called the Malqaf , gender segregation and women privacy with separate entrance and Male and female Majlis for guests are all the distinctive characteristics of the Omani house with features representing the response to high level of privacy required.

XIII. CASE STUDY 7 – SAUDI ARABIAN HOUSES









Photos of traditional houses in old city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. *Source: Google*

The emergence of Islam around the beginning of the seventh century had a major effect on the lives of the people of the Arabian Peninsula. As their ways of life changed, so did the organization of their built environment, ultimately leading to the concept of the Islamic city.

XIV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The courtyard house is seen as a sustainable type as it was appropriate in ancient times and seems to be so in modern times and in many different regions including various cultures. It exists in both simple and sophisticated communities such as in peasant houses as well as in great palaces. The adaptability of the courtyard house to different climates and cultures was and still is an essential advantage.

Considering house as a private space and property not only highlights its importance as a shelter, but also connects it with psychological concepts having roots in human soul. Todays, being busy with issues such as mass production and housing economy which are the result of modern architecture, make us ignorant of the real concept of house. In order to gain economic profit, houses are built in the shortest time and with the maximum saving in material and consequently, the concept of residence, dignity, and economic values have lost their importance. Pondering characteristic of traditional houses enables us to have a precise understanding of house

Designers at a minimum must:

- Identify the social-spatial co-relationship of built environments,
- Select design schemes that are consistent with the social-spatial co relationship, and
- Construct built environments that afford expected behaviors through proper translation of social content of a situation into the spatial conditions of that setting.
- If designers do not adhere to the above principles of the environmental design process, they risk in producing environmental designs that prompt confusion, disorder, and frustration among users of the built environment.
- People identify a setting because of the successful or logical relating of social content with spatial conditions through environmental design.

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