



A Comparative Analysis of Semantic Values in Liminal Spaces of Traditional Houses (Case Study: Yazd Traditional Houses)

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Received:02/ 07/ 2018; Received in Revised from:20/ 11/ 2018; Accepted:13/ 12/ 2018

Abstract

A house is a space where humans grow and live with their families feeling secure with a sense of attachment. The architecture of the traditional Iranian houses not only has taken on physical and functional importance as architecture, but the role of architecture in the association of meanings and transmission of concepts also has a special place. Liminal spaces in traditional houses are part of the apparent form carrying multiple meanings. In these spaces, there is a possibility of common interaction and exchange with adjacent spaces, this demonstrates the ability of liminal spaces to confront multiple concepts that make it the focus of meaning. This applied research was conducted as a descriptive-analytical study with the interpretivist approach to describe the valid theories and opinions of theorists by ranking the concepts and notions hidden in liminal spaces. Then, by preparing a questionnaire from the residents and field study of samples of traditional housing in Yazd, the identified indicators have been analyzed and evaluated by a comparative method. Research findings suggested that liminal spaces are represented by a definable concept by physical elements (such as porches and entrances) in traditional houses consisting of various semantic layers perceived objectively (physical concepts) and subjectively (subjective concepts). In addition, it was revealed that all indicators had considerable physical manifestations in threshold spaces on five value levels, fostering the link between the physical form and content on all semantic levels. Moreover, restoring part of the lost identity of the Iranian house architecture seems possible by prioritizing, recreating, and incorporating these indicators into the modern housing models.

Keywords: Semantic Value, Liminal Spaces, Traditional Housing, Yazd.

Article Type: Research Article

Introduction

A city has a symbolic structure in which a set of signs and interactions is set up between nature, culture, space, and society. The physical and spatial characteristics of cities can be influential in terms of the dynamism and persistence or changes in the social relations and culture of the nations. The liminal urban spaces are the manifestation of the culture, civilization, and scientific and technological advancement in society.

Agora, an urban liminal space in the classic era, significantly contributed to the establishment of the socio-cultural relationships of the citizens. In the traditional cities of Iran, squares along with bazaars and religious spaces were significant liminal spaces. In addition to these spaces, traditional housing architecture was also vital in the formation of the individuals' personalities and their behaviors; thus, addressing it, in particular, seems necessary in this



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DOI: 10.22111/IJAS.2019.5964

Publisher: University of Sistan and Baluchestan

Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies

2019, Vol. 9, No. 1.

tumultuous era. It is also undeniable that a house carries a meaning that is considerably faded due to its compromised qualities sometimes reduced to a shelter (Hamzehnezhad and Dashti 2016:25).

It is possible to understand the application of these concepts to contemporary architecture by analyzing the different constituents and elements of traditional houses and explaining the pertinent concepts. In this regard, it is evident that the notions of liminality and the liminal space play a major role in the quality of architectural spaces. Many experts define a liminal space as an element that carries subjective concepts and meanings and is beyond a physical element separating two or several spaces. The meanings hidden in liminal spaces of traditional houses call for an insight into different levels of meaning. In the current paper, after providing a theoretical research framework on the concept of liminality and significant liminal spaces in the urban and architectural structures, the authors addressed the recognition and understanding of liminality in the physique and meaning of the traditional housing spaces. Then, in the following, depending on the census of the thinkers on the leveling of the various layers of meaning, the identified indices were classified and evaluated through measures such as examining the maps, field observations, questionnaire, hierarchical analysis methods, and pair comparisons.

Terminology

Porch: a gallery and arch; an elevated roofed perch; an open house; a door.

Entrance: door; gate; entrance permission; right to enter; portal; beginning; entry (Velasstone 1996:

557); entrances allow for the transition from a space to another.

Limen: It is derived from the Latin word “limen” which means “threshold” and “boundary” (Husseinzadeh 2010).

Liminal or liminality: It is the equivalent of the Latin word “Liminal”, which means “being in the liminal state” and it has a special place in the theories put forward by Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner, etc. (Thomason 2009: 5). In these theories, each “stage of transition” involves changes, especially in the social status of the user of that stage.

House: the synonyms of this word are home, homestead, habitation, dwelling, residence, room, building, place of residence, domicile, and lodging place. Regardless of the special notions associated with each of these words, all of them refer to a harbor or a resting place. They represent a place perceived through the sacred/non-scared, inside/outside, private/public, and safe/unsafe dualities.

Meaning: truth; essence; reality; the opposite of form; hidden; the inside; the opposite of the apparent; the words “meaning”, “spirit”, and “inside” are considered to be synonyms for carrying the same meanings.

Liminality

Victor Turner analyzes the term “liminality”, which signals a shift in the human condition, in his book in 1967 (Zaho 2004). He approves Arnold van Gennep’s three-fold structure of liminality (i.e. preliminal, liminal, and postliminal stages), but focuses mainly on the liminal stage (Table1). He defines the preliminal phase as the stage of separation that entails the symbolic behavior reflecting the separation of the individual from

Table 1: The spectrum of liminality according to Arnold van Gennep

Phase 1: Incorporation(preliminal)	First encounter with the liminal state	preliminal stage	Levels of liminality layers (van Gennep)
Phase 2: Transition (liminal)	The individual is somewhere in-between two states: he is neither here nor there and he is detaching himself from the 7 liminal stages	liminal stage	
Phase 3: Separation(postliminal)	The individual experiences the transition from the liminal stage	postliminal stage	

an earlier fixed point in the social structure. Turner defines the liminal phase as the phase of transition and transformation, which lacks all of the characteristics of the antecedent and subsequent phases (Ibrahim 2012: 7).

Van Gennep and Turner define liminality as the state between detachment and attachment, where the person is confused. Concerning existence and time, Martin Heidegger argues that the individual and the world are not separate from each other. Louis Kahn also defines the limen as a delicate phenomenon governed by silence and light and describes it as the moment of inspiration.

The liminal phase is extremely powerful and provides a distinctive form of energy. It also has considerable potential for harming the individual or offering him great opportunities (Figure1) (Szakolczai 2009: 142).

Liminality may be destructive or constructive. Destructive because a person can permanently make wrong, and constructive because it can find new opportunities, roles, and discoveries within society (Thomason 2009: 15).

Many experts focusing on the architecture, or the thoughts expressed on the concept of liminality, introduce it as an element with mental concepts and meanings and state their definitions beyond a physical element to split two spaces. For example, in Deleuze's language, architecture liminality is a place or time of interactions and reactions of various levels by their encounter, and new concepts and meanings emerge. The "becoming" processes occur in liminality. De-territorialization and territory selection occur in liminality; a process that is being free from space and previous regularities and entering new games (Pouralam 2017).

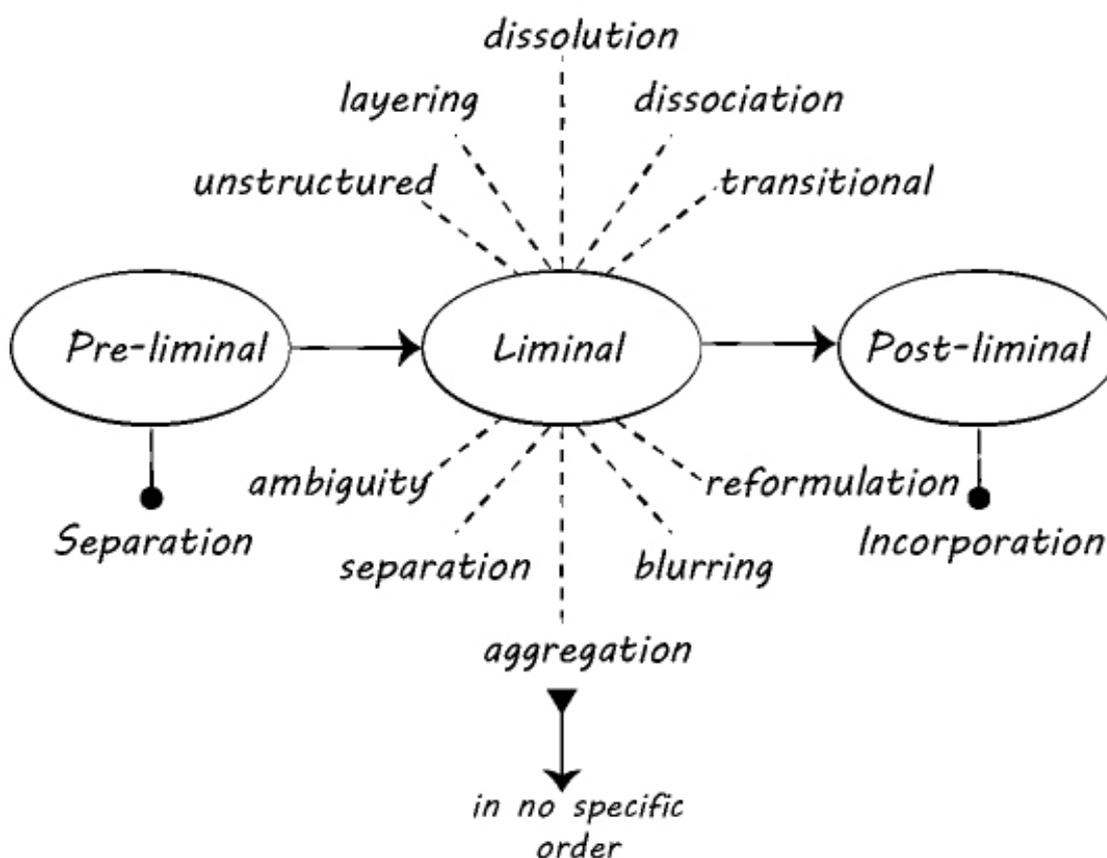


Figure. 1: Liminality features according to Victor Turner

Urban Liminal Spaces

The “ancient” word represents the visual and physical identities to understand their functions in the most beautiful way. Urban spaces can establish socio-cultural relationships between citizens. Liminal spaces in the traditional cities were centers to meet, participate, and contact citizens, and establishment of socio-cultural relationships between them. These spaces not only were places for socio-cultural relations and communications but also these relations were influential in the formation of our cultural behaviors (Trancik 1986: 90100).

Agora, one of the urban liminal spaces in the classic era, significantly contributed to the establishment of cultural-social relations of citizens and providing democracy. In other words, focus on society rather than the individual is obvious in the space making of the ancient cities (Morris 1994: 36). Agora was first formed in a region in which two streets intersect naturally. This space did not follow a particular geometric form and found a regular geometric form over time (Zarei 2000: 236). Excavation of about 30 hectares of the Agora of Athens reveals artifacts from the Neolithic to the New Age. Archeological evidence indicates that in the Bronze Age (1100-1600 BC) and Iron Age (700-1100 BC), this place was used as a cemetery,

which is considered a liminal space between this world and afterlife in the public culture. Agora cannot be defined independently from its surrounding buildings and as an urban space only. According to the works and artifacts found in the Agora discoveries, various historical books and resources related to Athens city, and accumulation of all the significant and public urban buildings around Agora, the interactions, communications, and relations formed in the classic Athens can be investigated regarding this urban space. Such an urban space can be seen in the Roman forums in which spaces transferred the role of Agora of the classic period to the Roman period. These forums could show the relations established in the classic Agora within themselves to some extent.

In Iran, for the first time, the concept of the square was formed as a liminal space in the Seleucid period when the ideas of urban planning in ancient Greece prevailed. A square, which similar to its origin- Agora, is the center of administrative, commercial, and cultural exchanges (Saberifar 2006). In contemporary urbanism, squares, parks, streets, and alleys are considered liminal urban spaces (Figure2).

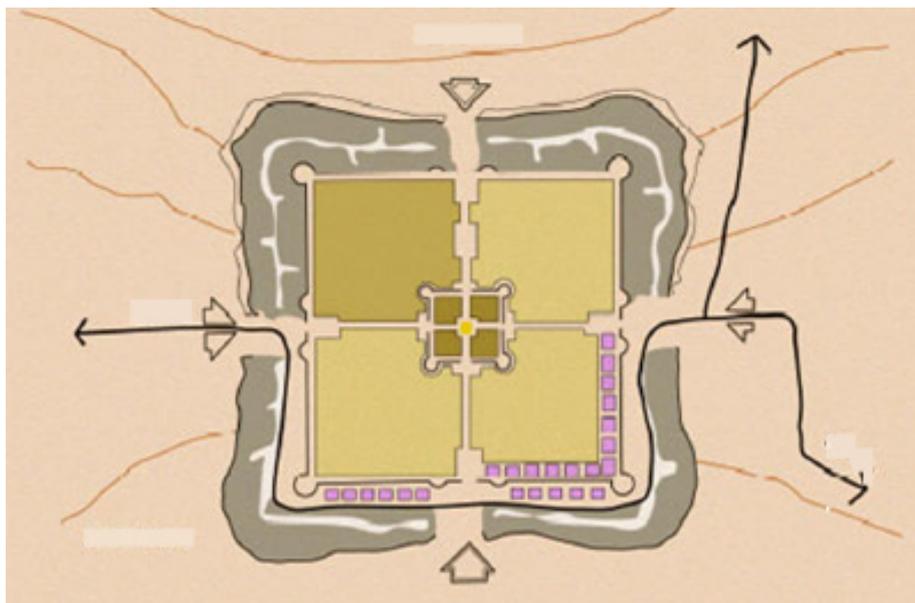


Figure 2: Role of liminal spaces in the physical structure of Sassanid cities (After: Morris 1994: 48).

Liminal Spaces in Architecture

Liminal spaces have caused a kind of purposive discipline among the spatial arrangement of architecture. This discipline is a result of hierarchy, which gives identity to the architectural spaces. Observing hierarchy is one of the most important principles in the Iranian architectural spaces, including the evolution from the external and public space to the internal and private space. In-between spaces or joints (articulation) can be physically represented at the interfaces. These elements have sometimes extremely powerful distinctive characters with characteristics independent of their adjacent spaces and function as a limen and threshold for leaving one space and entering another (Alalhesabi and Daneshmand 2011). Van Gennepe, Turner, Martin Heidegger, Ian Buchanan, Gregg Lambert, Louis Kahn, and Deleuze have articulated different definitions of liminal spaces, with each definition mirroring a different aspect of this notion. In architecture, a liminal space is a threshold or gate for entering the artistic dimension of space. A threshold is a space that embraces the feelings or impacts leading to subsequent freedom of the subject from subjectivity and multiplicity. As a result, the perception of such an experience does not solely occur in the real world or real architecture, because the virtual architecture and space are also capable of creating these experiences (Pouralam, 2017: 2).

Liminality makes the transition to new spaces possible. This transition brings about transformation. Moreover, there are two forms of liminality: physical and sensory. Some transformations seem transient such as transformations occurring at the boundary of emotions. Some others are more complicated, causing longer transitions. Numerous factors are also involved in the genesis of every phenomenon, and each factor is associated with a different liminal space. Therefore, each factor could be discussed in detail in a separate study. Liminality in architecture proposes a model of liminality concerning each realm, which enables the architect to devise the principles and fundamentals of that space (Noghrehkar 2013: 2). Liminal spaces bring targeted order to different spatial spaces in architecture. This order originates from a hierarchy that gives identity to the architectural spaces.

Adherence to this hierarchy is one of the most important principles in the architecture of spaces in Iranian architecture, which involves the evolvement of exterior spaces and public spaces to interior and private spaces. The classification of spaces into the interior and exterior spaces represents a simple yet substantive duality. It is extremely easy to define and establish the boundary between the interior and exterior spaces, and this boundary can be shown by a platform, a line, etc. The combination of this word and space creates a notion beyond the notion of the objective “physical separator”. Hence, “the entrance space”, “the liminal space”, or “the entry” represents a space that has a semantic quality as well as the objective and subjective dimensions (Table 2). In this regard, Schultz states: “as the link between the interior and exterior spaces, the threshold leads to an integrated understanding and experience of a place” (Shultz 2008: 40-43).

Table 2: Components of liminal spaces in the sociocultural context

liminal spaces		
interior space	exterior space	
sociocultural context		
Physical factors	Communicative functional factors	Semantic factors

As put by Blonov: “the contrast between the outside and the inside underlies any perception of the space and it can be traced in human’s entire life”. Humans need the interior and exterior spaces as well as the ability to switch between these two spaces. Hence, these two are not utterly separable for there is a more or less ever-lasting link between these two spaces. This is because both of these spaces constitute the human environment and they are vitally essential. In Iranian architecture, liminal spaces were the cause of reflection of the unity of the interior and exterior spaces. They were the surroundings and parts of buildings and the surroundings had a substantive role in architectural thinking (Haeri 1999:34).

Liminal Spaces in Traditional Houses

Considering the previously mentioned documentary studies, which are based on the opinions of different scholars on the “liminal space”, a liminal space has several distinctive features. One of these characteristics having a fundamental role in the definition of liminal space is that liminal space is manifested between the two spaces with contradictory physical, functional, or semantic characteristics. Such a space is created, for example, between the interior and exterior, the public and private, the previous and next, and similar dual spaces. Liminality is the emergence of unity between two or several spaces and the integration of contradictory elements. Moreover, a liminal space owes its meaning to the presence of humans and the deep mental impacts it has on humans in the liminality process due to its transitory nature.

The authors believe that among the different physical spaces of traditional houses, liminal spaces have mostly appeared in the “entrance” elements and “porches”. The “entrance” liminal space acts as a bridge connecting the interior to the exterior spaces of the building. It functions as a joint between the private interior space and the public exterior space.

The entrance is, in fact, a space that determines the shift in direction for leaving the urban space and entering the building, and it differentiates the spatial expansion and resting place in front of the building from the passageway (Figure 3). The porch is also a liminal space that separates the exterior from the interior space, allowing for the spatial expansion and establishment of a link between the private and semi-private parts of the house. The porch is a bridge connecting the sky to the earth, functioning as a threshold between the natural environment of the yard and the abstract environment of the interior space. As a semi-open space, it facilitates the transition from the outdoors to the indoors and connects these two spaces (Figure 4).



Figure. 3 : *The liminal space between the hallway and foyer ceiling (source: Haj Ghasemi 1998).*



Figure. 4: *The porch of Mortaz House, Yazd: the liminal transitory space of Mortaz House in Yazd that connects the indoors and outdoors (After: Haj Ghasemi 1998).*

Levels of Meaning

Based on the analysis of meaning from different aspects, this notion refers to all of the mentalities evoked in the perceiver by a stimulus when the perceiver compares it to their experiences, goals, and intentions (Habib 2006: 7;quoted from Rapaport, 1990). What is important about the process of forming a meaningful perception is to consider man and the world in a two-way relationship, according to which man cannot understand the subject without regard to the world in which he lives. Hence, perception is a general structure based on the biological behaviors led by the sublime meanings and conceptual awareness, which are the requisites for perception and are its integral constituents (Merleau-Ponty 1998: 207-222). Other concerns include the discovery and experience of the meanings in the environment and whether an individual’s perceptions exist in the “environment” or the “beholders’ minds”. Hence, it sounds necessary to study the various viewpoints and stands on different levels of meaning and the methods of classifying meaning regarding the importance of the mechanism of discovering and experiencing the meanings of place.

The comparative analysis of the various classifications of meaning suggests that some levels and highlighted concepts are shared by different theories. Moreover, all of these classifications could be categorized into two groups, viz. explicit meaning (objective), and implicit meaning (subjective) categories, as shown in the (Table 3). Objective (explicit) meanings are often perceived as soon as the individual is exposed to the physical space through the senses and they require “aggregative perception”. However, subjective (implicit) meanings are more complicated and involve the intermediate and deep layers of perception. These meanings are perceived through sensory experiences, and in the next stages, perceptions are created subjectively by virtue of intuition. Moreover, the perception of the mysteries and deeper levels of implicit meanings, such as symbolic meanings, calls for a deep bond between humans and the environment in the socio-cultural context of society.

Table 3: Classification of meanings of environment based on the opinions of different scholars

Theories of the meaning of environment	Explicit meaning (objective)	Implicit meaning (subjective)
Gibson	Immediate-preliminary	Functional-instrumental, affective-emotional, cultural-historical (value-oriented), symbolic-semiotic
Barthes	First degree (including the presentation of information)	Second and third degrees (including symbolic notions)
Morris	Referred	Valued
Bourdieu	The primary level (including the physical properties of the phenomenon)	The secondary level (including the symbolic meaning of the phenomenon)

Identifying and Categorizing Research Findings

According to the above discussion, the different levels of meaning are classified into two major categories, which form the basis for our analyses. The first category includes “meaning in place”, which is associated with the physical and environmental features of a place and is influenced by the values. The second category includes “the subjective meaning”, which is affected by functions, emotions, values, sociocultural factors, and symbolic values. Victor Turner’s theory of place suggests that there are three layers of liminality in the transition hierarchy. These three layers are the pre-liminal, liminal (boundary), and post-liminal phases. Based on this classification and the phenomenological approach, the authors of this article read the semantic values hidden in the liminal spaces of traditional houses. According to the type of perception of passers-by from the threshold spaces, a total of 25 indicators were identified in 5 semantic categories. When going through each of the three stages of liminal spaces, these people perceive a particular state of concepts which are classified in (Table 4) based on the type of meaning, nature, and perception.

Table 4: levels and manifestations of semantic values in the traditional house liminality spectrum

Reason	Perception	Value type	Essence and significance	Indicator	The reading of values in the liminality spectrum		
					Pre liminal (separation)	Liminal (transition)	Post liminal (incorporation)
explicit	Aggregative	Semantic values in the space	Immediate-preliminary (level1)	Incorporation and separation Balance	Separation Imbalanced	Limitation Balanced	Incorporation Imbalanced
				Spatial organization	Non-organized	Ordered / organized	Non-organized
				Consistency	Unequal sizes (open, bright)	Proportion (roofed, half-bright)	Unequal sizes (closed, dark)
				Transition	Movement of the consistent component	Stagnation and flow	Movement of the inconsistent component
Implicit	Contemplative	Subjective semantic values	Functional-instrumental (level 2)	Continuity	Downfall (light)	Continuity	Descend (dark)
				Dynamicity	Static (outside)	Dynamic	Static (inside)
				Interaction	Outside world	Interaction	Inside world
				Flexibility	Transformative	Flexible	Expandable
				Spatial hierarchy	Hierarchy (open, public)	Hierarchy (roofed, semi-private)	Hierarchy (roofed, private)
			Affective-emotional (level 3)	Impression	Impressible	Impression	Impressive
				Confusion	Transparency	Ambiguity	Complexity
				Peace	Turbulence	Peace	Peace
				Affiliation	Attachment	Affiliation	Correlation
				Expectation	Entry	Expectation	Exit
			Cultural-value-based (level 4)	Privacy	Public privacy	Privacy	Private privacy
				Reclusion	Reclusion shared with others	Reclusion shared with others	Self-reclusion
				Identity	Without identity	Creating identity	With identity
				Understanding	Process	Understanding (concentration)	Product of a process
				Respect and reverence	Invitation	Reverence (modesty)	Respect
			Symbolic-semiotic (level 5)	Abstraction Inspiration	Natural Presence (limitless)	Abstract (semi-natural) Inspiration	Abstract Emergence (limited)
				Ambiguity	Façade	Ambiguity	Inner reality
				Centralized and	Objectivity	Unity and plurality	Mentality
				Creation	Existence	Creation	Being

Analysis and Evaluation of Semantic Values of Threshold Spaces in The Body of Traditional Housing in Yazd

The different steps for implementing, acquiring, and analyzing the research conceptual framework are as follows:

1. Understanding the liminal architectural elements in 5 traditional houses in Yazd (Arab House, Lari House, Semsar House, Mortaz House, and Rasoulia House) based on the results from the documentary research, field observations, and interviews with the residents.
 2. Identifying the role of physical elements in liminality.
 3. Finding appropriate examples and preparing the documents required per element.
 4. Implementing the indices of “semantic values in the place and mind” in 5 classes (immediate-primitive, functional- instrumental, emotional-sentimental, cultural- value, symbolic) in the conceptual framework and determining the relationship with the matrix concepts.
 5. Introducing appropriate examples of the entrance and porch elements.
 6. Calculating the score of the liminality indicators on different levels of semantic values for the cases of traditional houses in Yazd and completing the matrix based on the observations, research background, and interviews with the residents Plot the coordinates of the meanings in the location of each element of the space.
 7. Obtaining the frequency of each of the concepts in the traditional housing architecture of Yazd.
- The recorded semantic values of liminality in the traditional architecture of Yazd are listed in (Table 5) based on our findings. In this table, scores 0 to 1 measure the indicators in liminal spaces.

To evaluate the 25 indicators of the semantic concepts of Liminal Spaces, 5 traditional Houses in Yazd city were selected, including the houses of Rasoulia, Lari, Samsar, Arab and Mortaz. An example of how to evaluate these indicators in the physical space of one of the above traditional houses (Rasoulia) is presented in (Table 6). The criteria of these evaluations were based on theoretical documents of research, field observations, a survey of maps, interviews with residents and experts.

Similar analyzes were performed for the other 4 traditional houses and the evaluation of all 25 indicators in the entrance and porch spaces of these samples was done with the said criteria. Due to the limitations of this article, analytical tables of these 4 houses were omitted but the summary and average of results and scores are given in (Table 7).

Pairwise comparisons of the indicators and criteria were carried out on 5 levels of values with the corresponding 5 semantic indicators to determine the weights (importance levels) of the criteria and indicators. The importance coefficients of the criteria and indicators were calculated using expert opinions. To this end, matrices formed by the indicators and the corresponding levels were provided to the experts and the final weights of each value level and indicator were obtained based on their geometric mean values. The pairwise comparison matrix of the main indicators is presented in (Table 8).

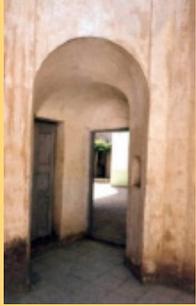
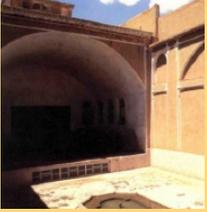
After building the model in Expert Choice and entry of pairwise comparisons of indicators, the weights of the main indicators of the semantic values of the liminal spaces and their priorities in traditional houses were obtained as listed in (Table 9).

Table 5: The scores of the semantic values of liminal spaces in traditional houses of Yazd

Score range	Score 1	Score 0.75	Score 0.5	Score 0.25	Score 0
Manifestation					

Table 6: A comparative analysis of the semantic indicators of liminal spaces in Rasoulian House

Levels of meaning	Physical space							Indicators	Example		
	Porch			Entrance					Plan	section	
	Inner door	Stairs	Porch	Entrance door	Portal	Foyer	Hallway				
Immediate-preliminary (level 1)								Incorporation and separation	Preliminal	Liminal	Post liminal
								Balance			
								Spatial organization			
								Consistency			
								Transition			
								Spatial organization			
								Consistency			
								Transition			
								Balance			
								Spatial organization			
Functional-instrumental (level 2)								Consistency			
								Transition			
								Consistency			
								Transition			
								Consistency			
								Transition			
								Continuity			
								Dynamicity			
								Interaction			
								Flexibility			
								Spatial hierarchy			
								Dynamicity			

								Interaction	
								Flexibility	
								Spatial hierarchy	
								Dynamicity	
								Interaction	
								Flexibility	
								Spatial hierarchy	
Affective-emotional (level 3)								Impression	 
								Confusion	
								Peace	
								Affiliation	
								Expectation	
								Confusion	
								Peace	
								Attachment	
								Expectation	
Cultural-value (level 4)								Privacy	 
								Reclusion	
								Identity	
								Understanding	
								Respect and reverence	
								Reclusion	
								Identity	
								Understanding	
								Respect and reverence	

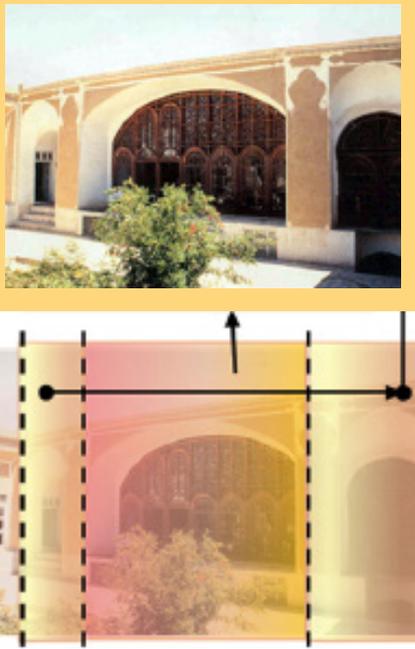
	●	◐	◑	◒	◓	◔	Reclusion	
	◕	◖	◗	◘	◙	◚	Identity	
	◛	◜	◝	◞	◟	◠	Understanding	
	◡	◢	◣	◤	◥	◦	Respect and reverence	
	◧	◨	◩	◪	◫	◬	Understanding	
	◭	◮	◯	◰	◱	◲	Respect and reverence	
	◳	◴	◵	◶	◷	◸	Abstraction	
Symbolic-semiotic (level 5)	◑	◒	◓	◔	◕	◖	Inspiration	
	◗	◘	◙	◚	◛	◜	Ambiguity	
	◞	◟	◠	◡	◢	◣	Centralized symbolic geometry, paintings	
	◤	◥	◦	◧	◨	◩	Creation	
	◪	◫	◬	◭	◮	◯	Inspiration	
	◰	◱	◲	◳	◴	◵	Ambiguity	
	◶	◷	◸	◹	◺	◻	Centralized symbolic geometry, paintings	
	◼	◽	◾	◿	◿	◿	Creation	
	◾	◿	◿	◿	◿	◿	Centralized symbolic geometry, paintings	
	◿	◿	◿	◿	◿	◿	Creation	

Table 7: A comparative analysis of the manifestations of the five levels of semantic values in the liminal spaces in Yazd traditional houses

Immediate – preliminary		Functional-instrumental Immediate –preliminary		Affective-emotional		Value-cultural		Symbolic-semiotic	
Indicator	Total score	Indicator	Total score	Indicator	Total score	Indicator	Total score	Indicator	Total score
Incorporation and separation	22.5	Continuity	23.75	Impression	23.25	Privacy	26.25	Abstraction	13.5
Balance	17.5	Dynamicity	23	Confusion	18.25	Privacy	24	Inspiration	22.25
Spatial organization	21.5	Interaction	22.5	Peace	20.75	Identity	23	Ambiguity	15.25
Consistency	21.75	Flexibility	19.5	Attachment	23.75	Understanding	23.5	Centralized symbolic geometry, painting	22.5
Transition	23.25	Spatial hierarchy	27.5	Expectation	23.25	Respect and reverence	25.75	Creation	21.5
Mean (35)	21.3	Mean (35)	23.25	Mean (35)	21.85	Mean (35)	24.5	Mean (35)	19

Table 8: The pairwise comparison matrix of the indicators based on the analytical hierarchy process

Levels of semantic values of liminality in architecture	Immediate-preliminary level	Immediate-preliminary level	Functional-instrumental level	Affective-emotional level	Value-cultural level	Symbolic-semiotic level
Semantic levels of liminality	Immediate-preliminary	1	1/5	1/3	1/7	1/5
	Functional-instrumental	5	1	1/1	1/3	1/5
	Affective-emotional	3	1	1	1/5	1/7
	Value-cultural	7	3	5	1	1/9
	Symbolic-Semiotic	5	5	7	9	1
Equal important(1) Slightly more important (3) more important (5) extremely more important (7) absolutely important (9)						

Table 9: Priorities of the levels of meanings and notions in liminal spaces of traditional houses in Yazd

Priority	Weight	Size	No.
1	Immediate-preliminary	0.45	1
2	Functional-instrumental	0.22	2
3	Affective-emotional	0.18	3
4	Value-cultural	0.09	4
5	Symbolic-semiotic	0.04	5

Conclusion

Valuing the meanings in traditional houses will reinforce social values by fostering social relationships and interactions, avoiding emphasis on personal interests, and stressing public interests and spiritual elements. Therefore, the study and understanding of the physical and functional dimensions of traditional houses are two of the requisites for discovering the hidden notions and meanings, because through the analysis of the physical and preliminary layers it is possible to explore the link between the physical form and meaning and uncover the meanings and notions by transcending the forms. The most important results of this research in the theoretical and analytical field are as follows:

Liminality is a critical state of physical and sensory transmission that is quite distinct in personality from its previous and subsequent experiences. It

shows the set of fixed principles in the course from appearance to inside and from the body to content, which can be seen in the form of different threshold patterns in each phenomenon. Therefore, the concept of threshold appears in all man-made spaces, including social, cultural, and residential spaces. The liminal physical elements in traditional houses function as a threshold for the communication of semantic notions in the person’s first encounter with these houses. In these situations, humans connect with the events, places, and times and perceive the space and its elements by relating to the non-spatial concepts and values. The role and function of liminal spaces, as the main hidden component of the physical structure of traditional houses, have brought a meaningful identity to these houses. The lack of such an identity can directly contribute to the eruption of a crisis and the emergence of anomalies in spatial organizations. This is one of the challenges arising from the modern housing models, which pretty slightly involve liminal spaces. The liminal space is manifested between two opposing spaces in terms of physical, functional, or semantic; for example, between the inner and outer space, public and private. The liminality is the place where unity occurs between two or more spaces. Another point is that the liminal space, due to its transient nature, finds meaning in the presence of man and his deep mental influences. Therefore, the semantic values of architectural spaces have mainly been represented in the “entrances” and “porches” in traditional houses

based on the liminality concept and the mentioned arguments.

Utilizing a phenomenological approach, the authors of this article unveiled the semantic values hidden in the liminal spaces of the selected traditional houses in Yazd by relying on references, theoretical documents, field observations, plans, and interviews with the residents of the traditional houses in Yazd. The authors selected 25 major indicators listed in (Table 5) on the corresponding levels to obtain tangible analytic results. Afterward, these indicators were analyzed using the qualitative valuation techniques and the study cases. According to the total scores listed in (Table 7), among these values, semantic values of the cultural-value level obtained the highest score and the symbolic-semiotic values obtained the lowest score. Hence, it is concluded that traditional architects highly valued sociocultural issues. Moreover, the lower score of the symbolic values could be attributed to the more complicated and longer perception of these values by the residents of liminal spaces.

The semantic indicators of the liminal spaces of the traditional houses were prioritized using the analytic hierarchy process to increase the reliability of the research findings and the pairwise comparison of the value levels was carried out. The results revealed that as the perception of the semantic values deepens, its priority in designs declines.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to acknowledge the valuable comments and suggestions of the reviewers which have improved the quality of this paper; Also The authors would like to acknowledge editorial board, associate editor and editor-in-chief of Iranian Journal of Archaeological Studies for their sincere cooperation. This article is an excerpt from the Ph.D. thesis of Hassan Mortazavi, entitled "Semantic Values in Liminal Architecture (Yazd Traditional Houses)", written with the help of Dr. Bemanian as the supervisor and Dr. Mojtaba Ansari, as the advisor, in the Architecture Department of the Faculty of Arts and Architecture of Tarbiat Modares University.

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