

Original Research Article

Reidentification of the Constituent Elements of an Alley Landscape in the Historical Fabric of Yazd*

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Abstract | In the historical fabric of Iranian-Islamic cities, an alley is not merely a passageway for movement and transition between neighborhoods; rather, it functions as a spatial entity that, in addition to facilitating movement, provides a place for pause, interaction, conversation, and human encounters. Due to the presence of people and their perceptual abilities, an alley can hold various meanings. Considering the alley as a landscape, this study aims to reidentify the constituent elements that form the overall landscape of alleys in the historical fabric of Yazd by expanding the related literature on the concept of alleys. The main question of this research is: Beyond their physical and structural manifestation, what semantic and subjective dimensions do the elements shaping the overall landscape of alleys in the historical fabric of Yazd encompass? This study consists of two main parts. In the first part, an attempt was made to identify the landscape elements of alleys through field observations using techniques such as photography, sketching, and filming. In the second part, these elements were individually examined to understand their objective and subjective dimensions through a literature review and the analysis of written sources such as books and articles. The findings of this study indicate that the landscape of a typical alley in the historical fabric of Yazd consists of elements such as passageways, “darbands” (narrow alley gates), “sabats” (vaulted structures over alleys), walls, “pirneshins” (built-in seating along walls), and trees and vegetation. These elements, beyond their physical presence, also possess specific functional roles and symbolic meanings within the historical urban fabric of Yazd.

Keywords | *Landscape, Urban Landscape, Alley, Landscape Elements, Historical Fabric of Yazd.*

Introduction | In the Iranian-Islamic city, the alley (“koocheh”) is a fundamental element that plays a highly significant role. In the traditional fabric of Iranian cities, an alley is not merely a passageway; rather, it is a multidimensional space that serves multiple functions for the city’s residents (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). As a pathway and a communal space, the alley is the most important collective space, playing a crucial role in fostering shared memories, collective identity, and the realization of neighborhood communities in Iranian neighborhoods (Mansouri, 2013). This space

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simultaneously functions as both a private and public place, facilitating social interactions while maintaining personal and private boundaries. In Iranian-Islamic urban patterns, alleys have generally been associated with concepts such as privacy, neighborhood relations, and social participation. Their formation has been influenced not only by climatic and urban planning considerations but also by cultural and social needs. Consequently, in the traditional fabric of Iranian cities, the alley is not merely a physical element but also a meaningful cultural and social entity that simultaneously fulfills both individual and collective needs (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). Given these characteristics, the alley in the historical fabric of Iranian cities can be considered a landscape phenomenon. Landscape is a concept that

refers to a human-centered environment in which the objectivity of space, as a result of combination with its subjectivity through a continuous and fluid perceptual process, transforms into a form of place that is no longer limited to physical and structural dimensions. Instead, it simultaneously encompasses subjective aspects shaped by human interpretation. This subjectivity is inherently linked to the objectivity of the environment, making it essentially impossible to separate the two dimensions that constitute the landscape (Atashinbar, 2009).

As a landscape, an alley is composed of various elements that together form its overall character. These elements, beyond their physical presence, embody and generate a range of semantic and subjective dimensions that have emerged throughout history due to human interaction with them, as well as natural, social, cultural, economic, and climatic factors. This study, by considering the alley as a landscape case study, aims to examine and analyze its constituent elements. By doing so, it seeks to expand and develop the concept of the alley within landscape literature and provide a holistic understanding of alleys and their landscape components. For this purpose, the research focuses on the historical fabric of Yazd as one of the most distinguished examples of an Iranian-Islamic city. Yazd is one of Iran's oldest and most unique cities, recognized for its distinctive architecture and historical urban fabric, and it has been inscribed as the first Iranian historic city on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The city presents remarkable examples of alley structures within the Iranian-Islamic urban context, making it a suitable case for studying and identifying the landscape elements of alleys.

Research Objective and Question

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to expand the concept of the alley in the Iranian-Islamic city as a landscape and, through a holistic approach, reidentify the objective and subjective elements that constitute its landscape. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the body of research related to this topic while highlighting and introducing the valuable components that shape this urban element as a whole within the historical fabric of Iranian cities. In this regard, the main research question that this study aims to answer is "beyond their physical and structural manifestation, what semantic and subjective dimensions do the elements shaping the overall landscape of alleys encompass, and how do these dimensions collectively shape the perception of the alley's landscape?"

Research Background

Due to its valuable characteristics, the alley in historical

Iranian cities has long been a subject of interest for Iranian researchers. Mansouri (2021), in an article introducing the alley as a landscape, sought to distinguish it from a mere passageway and holistically addressed its semantic and subjective aspects. In another study, Mansouri (2013) highlighted the alley as one of the key elements shaping the spatial structure of the Iranian-Islamic city. In another collaborative research, Mansouri & Shabani (2021) examined the concept of territoriality in alleys, exploring its formation and influential elements. Additionally, Shabani et al. (2024) further emphasized the concept of territoriality in alleys, discussing the physical and behavioral components that shape territorial boundaries in the neighbors of historical Iranian cities. Abdi Malek Kalaei et al. (2021) focused on identifying only the latent semantic components within alleys of Iranian-Islamic cities through a case study of the historical fabric of Sari city in Iran.

On the other hand, the city of Yazd, due to its outstanding architectural and urban characteristics, has attracted the attention of another group of researchers. In this regard, Tavasoli (1989) examined the valuable aspects of the historical fabric of Yazd and proposed a set of principles and urban design methods for intervention. In another book, Khademzadeh (2009) explored the concept of neighborhoods in Yazd's historical fabric, identifying and analyzing the elements and components that constitute neighborhoods, such as centers and edges. Ali Modarres (2020), in his research, discussed the architectural dimensions of Yazd from its initial formation to the transformations brought about by modernizing, from the Constitutional Revolution to the establishment of the Islamic Republic. Abbasi Harofteh & Tabatabaei (2024) focused on the architectural aspects of Yazd's historical fabric, proposing optimal strategies for intervention to preserve and maintain its authenticity. In another article, Abbasi Harofteh & Sadeghian (2020) examined patterns of neighborhood structures in Yazd's historical fabric, introducing a set of architectural design principles and qualitative indicators to assess neighborhood relationships. Additionally, Yazdi et al. (2021) analyzed Qajar-era houses in Yazd's historical fabric, investigating the relationship between the structural components of vernacular houses in the hot and arid climate. Moreover, Behzadfar & Nourmohammadzad (2011) utilized the concept of "structure" to develop a conceptual model for studying the physical morphology of Yazd's historical fabric.

A review of the existing literature on the topic of this study indicates that the landscape aspects of alleys in Yazd's historical fabric, as well as the identification of the elements constituting this landscape, have received

limited attention. Therefore, this article aims to expand the research literature on the concepts of alleys and landscapes while addressing this research gap.

Research Method

This study falls within the category of qualitative research in terms of its nature. The research process consists of two main stages: In the first stage, the study aimed to identify the key elements that shape the landscape of alleys in the historical fabric of Yazd. To achieve this, the authors conducted a field visit to Yazd's historical fabric from May 20 to May 24, 2024. During this visit, the elements contributing to the alley's landscape were identified using direct observation and tools such as sketching, photography, and videography. Subsequently, these elements were examined based on their appearance (quality) and frequency (quantity) within Yazd's historical fabric to determine which elements play a more significant role in shaping the alley's landscape. In the second stage, after identifying the elements constituting the alley's landscape, the landscape dimensions of each element were studied separately. To achieve this, a library-based research method was employed, gathering relevant data from books, articles, and written sources. The collected data were then summarized and analyzed based on the objective and subjective dimensions they addressed concerning the landscape elements of the alley. Finally, after categorizing the analyzed data, the study's findings were presented using a descriptive approach.

Theoretical Foundations

- The concept of landscape

Landscape is a part of the environment where humans reside and perceive their surroundings through their sensory and cognitive experiences (Maghsoudi et al., 2020). It has a significant impact on the quality of human life and is directly related to one's understanding of environmental patterns, processes, and aesthetics (Atashinbar, 2009). Thus, the concept of landscape refers to a form of human-environment interaction in which reality is understood as a combination of objectivity and the way that objectivity is perceived or represented (Mansouri & Shafia, 2020). Through this human-environment connection, an environment is transformed into a landscape—a place-bound phenomenon that not only possesses external dimensions but also subjective dimensions, shaped by the perceptual framework of its observer, i.e., the inhabiting human (Hemmati & Saboonchi, 2021). For this reason, the landscape should be considered a form of place distinguished by its unique dimensions and characteristics (Maghsoudi et al., 2024). Landscape, as a place, is the product of

human-environment interaction in outdoor spaces and the result of human experience within space. It serves as an intermediary realm between architectural and urban spaces. Throughout history, landscape has emerged through the interaction between humans and their environment, shaped by society within the framework of natural, historical, cultural, ritualistic, and economic conditions (Mansouri, 2010).

- Urban landscape

The urban landscape is a type of landscape that, according to John Turner, constitutes the fundamental essence of a city—it is what humans perceive from the built environment of a city (*ibid.*). The urban landscape is a reality shaped by the perception of various tangible urban manifestations, including buildings, spaces, activities, sounds, and scents, experienced by individuals as they engage with the city (Salehinia & Niromand, 2018). Accordingly, the urban landscape can be understood as the fluid perception of citizens toward their city, closely associated with symbols and physical elements that embody historical aspects and social events. It reflects the hierarchy of perceptual territories in relation to social life, history, and the function of the city. The concept of urban landscape extends beyond the physical structure of the city and does not solely emphasize its visible physical elements or the city's appearance (Karimi et al., 2023). The urban landscape encompasses the spatial aspects and characteristics of urban places (Aminzade, 2015), which are revealed through human experience and interaction with the environment. It emerges as a shared phenomenon between physical form, events, and the subjective experiences of inhabitants (Majidi et al., 2019). As a result, the urban landscape possesses both tangible and intangible dimensions, which are perceived as a product of the interaction between its constituent elements (Karimi et al., 2023). Due to the place-based nature of the urban landscape, its components, according to Edward Relph's place theory, can be analyzed through three interconnected dimensions: physical form, function (activity), and meaning. The physical and functional aspects relate to the objective (tangible) dimension of the urban landscape while meaning falls under its subjective (intangible) dimension (Heidari et al., 2014). These three dimensions are deeply interwoven within the elements that shape the urban landscape, making their separation virtually impossible. In other words, whenever humans engage with the city and its spaces, they encounter an urban landscape composed of multiple elements. Each element embodies both physical and functional characteristics, as well as layers of cognition, evaluation, judgment, meaning, and ultimately, human perception. The urban landscape, possessing its dual tangible-

intangible nature, is interpreted through the perception of physical elements within the city via human senses. Over time, through repetition and memory formation, it acquires deeper cultural and experiential significance, emphasizing human culture and lived experiences (Karimi et al., 2023).

- The alley as an urban landscape

Linguistically, the Persian word Kooche (alley) is composed of two parts: “Kuy” (meaning neighborhood, district, or a section of the city) and “-che”, a diminutive suffix. Therefore, Kooche can be understood as a small neighborhood or district. Based on this definition, it can be stated that the term not only conveys the concept of movement, which is inherently perceptible within the alley but also simultaneously suggests pause and stoppage in this urban space (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). Fundamentally, an alley is a type of pathway. However, due to the semantic significance embedded in the word’s structure, it cannot merely be regarded as a route connecting two points. In other words, this urban space possesses qualitative and meaningful dimensions that distinguish it from a simple passage (Barati & Zarringhalam, 2013). In Persian language and culture, alleys have been associated with various qualitative attributes—for instance, “Kooche Ashti Konan” (Reconciliation Alley), “Kooche Bonbast” (Dead-end Alley), “Kooche Nagozara” (Impassable Alley), “Kooche Bagh” (Garden Alley), and “Kooche Bazar” (Market Alley). In all these linguistic combinations, the alley embodies a spatial quality that, unlike a street, does not solely emphasize movement and transit but also incorporates specific activities and spatial characteristics derived from collective experiences and historical memory (ibid.).

In Iranian cities, the alley has long functioned as a place of collective life. Historically, alleys have been social spaces where people interact, exchange news and information, and support one another. These social interactions contribute to the creation and reinforcement of a sense of place, social cohesion, and the formation of a strong local community. The alley plays a fundamental role in shaping neighborhoods and, on a larger scale, in perceiving the city itself. As a highly interactive space, the alley enables social interactions, fosters collective perception, and contributes to the spirit of the place (S. A. Mansouri, personal communication, December 8, 2024). In Iranian cities, alleys function as the lifelines of the urban fabric, playing a crucial role in preserving urban identity. The alleys of a city often carry its history and collective memories, reflecting its past and transformations over time. Thus, they serve as significant spaces for shared experiences, collective

memory formation, and the realization of a strong neighborhood community (Mansouri, 2021). Preserving alleys in historical urban contexts is therefore essential, as it equates to safeguarding the historical memory of a city (ibid.).

From another perspective, the alley functions as a spatial element enabling movement within the urban structure. The movement begins at the private threshold of the home (the door) and extends to the most public urban spaces, such as markets and squares. This spatial role in linking private and public realms grants the alley a distinct position within the neighborhood structure (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). In this context, the alley not only facilitates access and mobility but also serves as a venue for various cultural and social events, including ritual ceremonies, religious gatherings, public assemblies, and even children’s games. Consequently, it becomes a key element in shaping navigation patterns, spatial legibility, and urban orientation, ultimately enabling individuals to establish an identity-based connection with their environment (ibid.). As a result, alleys become markers of urban memory, reminding individuals of what they have seen and experienced in the city (von Meiss, 2008). Therefore, in addition to being a key element in the structure and framework of neighborhoods, alleys also contribute to shaping the underlying order and perceptual organization of residents’ understanding of the neighborhood and city structure (Habibi, 2003).

Based on the above discussion, the alley can be considered a landscape that, by being situated within the urban fabric, can also be recognized as an urban landscape. This urban landscape initially emerges through physical elements and is then perceived through its functions, events, and meanings. Over time, it influences residents’ unique understanding of their neighborhood and city, shaped by collective memory, cultural exchange, social interaction, and eventfulness.

Research Findings

• Elements constituting the alley’s landscape - Pathway

The pathway is a fundamental part of the alley that enables movement and circulation. In the historic urban fabric of Yazd, pathways can generally be classified into two categories: Secondary pathways, which are located within alleys and are significantly narrow. Primary pathways are embedded within passages and serve as the main communication arteries that connect neighborhoods and key urban centers. A passage functions as a major route within the historic core of Yazd, linking various districts and urban hubs while playing a crucial role in the city’s

livelihood and connectivity. Compared to the passage, the alley's pathway has a lower degree of public accessibility, yet it remains an essential element in shaping behavioral and spatial territories within the alley's structure. The alley's pathway, influenced by neighborhoods, property boundaries, and ownership divisions, typically appears in winding and irregular forms. This lack of uniformity enhances spatial diversity, increases the sense of invitation, and encourages pedestrians to explore and engage with the space (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). Additionally, due to its distinct organic and geometric structure, the alley's pathway often features recesses and openings, which create spaces for pause and social interaction. These spatial domains, in some cases, transform into spaces for children's play or neighborly conversations, where individuals pause for a few moments and engage in social interactions (ibid.) (Fig. 1).

- Darband

"Darband" is essentially a part of the alley, a semi-public dead end that is winding, short, narrow, and sometimes gated or covered, leading to a few houses (Khademzade, 2009). It serves as an intermediate space between the private domain of the home and the public domain of the alley. While some darbands in the past had doors that were closed at night, most lacked doors, relying instead on architectural design to prevent strangers from entering. Additionally, due to the secure and private atmosphere they provided, these spaces facilitated neighborly interactions and shared activities among adjacent houses (Abbasi Harofteh & Sadeghian, 2020). In fact, this quiet and secluded space allowed residents to gather and communicate without the interference of strangers in this semi-public environment. As a result, these spaces functioned as an extension of the home, fostering closer relationships, greater proximity, and enhanced social interactions among residents and their neighboring houses (Khaksari et al., 2006). Beyond serving as neighborhood hubs, darbands were often family-oriented clusters, meaning the residents of houses within them were frequently related by kinship, thus

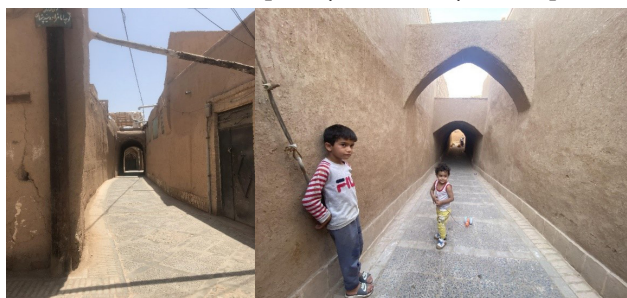


Fig. 1. A view of the pathway in the historical fabric of Yazd, a dual space for movement and pause. Photo: Fatemeh Rezaei, 2024.

creating small familial communities (Khademzade, 2009). Consequently, in the historical fabric of Yazd, darbands are considered the most prominent and defining elements of neighborhood identity (Abbasi Harofteh & Sadeghian, 2020). Due to their physical characteristics and functional advantages, darbands in Yazd's historical urban fabric function as protective enclosures, offering privacy, security, human-scale proportions, and climatic comfort. These attributes strengthen neighborhood ties and create a serene, intimate space sheltered from external disturbances (ibid.).

- Sabat

Linguistically, sabat, as described by Pirnia (2005), refers to a space for human comfort in the urban environment. It is a covered passageway within an alley, which may be roofed using wooden beams in a flat form or vaulted with arches. Typically, a room from an adjacent house extends over the sabat, often featuring one or two windows that offer a view of the alley (ibid.). Beyond its physical function, a sabat provides shade, regulates sunlight exposure, and allows for brief pauses in movement, while also enhancing the stability of alley walls. However, it also plays an important social and urban role. Typically, at the intersection of main and secondary pathways in the historic fabric of Yazd, a Sabat is constructed. Along with the spatial expansion in its vicinity, the Sabat serves as a symbolic element in defining the boundaries of main and secondary pathways and the territory of alleys. As a result, the Sabat plays a crucial role in enhancing the legibility of Yazd's historic urban fabric (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). Moreover, from a social perspective, the space beneath the Sabat serves as a hub for social interaction and the formation of diverse activities. In some Sabats located at the intersections of main and secondary paths within Yazd's historic fabric, features such as Saqqākhāneh (public water dispensers), shrines, and even small shops can be observed. These elements transform the Sabat into a place for pause, rest, and social interaction, while also facilitating ritual, religious, and economic activities (Fig. 2).

- Walls and facades

Walls serve as the defining boundary between public and private spaces and are essential elements that shape the identity of an alley. Facades and walls outline the spatial boundaries of an alley in its cross-section, defining its edges and physical enclosure. They form the threshold between the home—a place of security and comfort—and the alley, a space for urban interaction and communal life. Thus, walls act as the key element in separating these distinct spatial categories within the historic fabric of Yazd while also marking the alley's territorial limits (Mansouri, 2016). The height of walls generally corresponds to the



Fig. 2. The play of light and shadow created by the sabat in the historical fabric of Yazd, enhancing urban readability. Photo: Saba Mirzahosein, 2024.

height of adjacent buildings and their floors. However, in many cases, walls are considerably tall, and due to the narrow width of pathways, they contribute to climatic comfort by shading and moderating heat during hot seasons. Visually, this enclosure creates a narrow and intimate space, offering a degree of privacy and security that encourages pedestrians to walk through and explore (Shabani & Mansouri, 2021). Beyond their functional role, walls reflect the cultural values and beliefs of the residents. In Yazd's historic alleys, monochrome walls contribute to the distinctive character of neighborhoods, making them appear as a cohesive, singular mass—as if they have been shaped from a unified material. These walls are typically made of mudbrick and plaster, presenting a simple, uniform aesthetic. Unlike modern urban facades, they are neither diverse nor visually loud, aligning with the introverted architectural principles embedded in Yazdi culture. As a result, the private lives of residents remain hidden, with no external expression or reflection on the alley's walls (Sartipi Isfahani, 2023) (Fig. 3).

- Pirneshin

Pirneshin is a type of public furniture found in alleys, referring to the platforms on either side of the entrances of some houses. Pirnia (2005) uses the term “pakhoreh” to describe the two platforms flanking the entrances of historical houses. These platforms are generally used for seating elderly individuals, allowing for social interaction in the alley by accommodating different age groups. Additionally, pirneshin serves as a place to pause, rest, and interact with neighborhood residents and passersby

(Mahdavi-pour et al., 2013). On the other hand, these dual platforms provide a seating area for individuals conducting business with the homeowner, who do not need to enter the house but instead sit there to converse and interact with the homeowner (Pirnia, 2005). Therefore, it can be said that the alley transforms into an urban space through pirneshin, making it beneficial and accessible for individuals with various abilities, ensuring that no user group is excluded from utilizing the alley space (Hosseini & Norouzi-an Maleki, 2012). However, it is important to note that the term pirneshin does not seem to have been common in historical periods. According to Jalali-e Milani et al., (2023), this term was not widely used in past architectural literature, and its origin appears to stem from the frequent sight of elderly individuals seated on the platforms on either side of the entrances of historical buildings. Historical texts suggest that the platforms on either side of entrances likely represented a place for seating passersby, the elderly, and others (ibid.) (Fig. 4).

- Trees and Plants

The presence of green spaces and plants in the central courtyards of historical homes in Yazd is very important. However, these elements usually have a less prominent presence in the alley. In fact, the presence of plants in the alley generally manifests as branches of trees that, by extending over the mud-brick and clay walls of adjacent houses, expose themselves to passersby and individuals present. These trees, through their shading and unique beauty, contribute a distinctive quality and sense of liveliness to the alley space (Naghizadeh et al., 2012). Moreover, trees play a crucial role in regulating environmental conditions in hot and dry climates, providing climatic comfort. They effectively reduce direct sunlight exposure and its reflection in the alley, mitigating the reflection of sunlight from the ground and walls, thus moderating temperatures. Additionally, trees



Fig. 3. Uniformity and simplicity of the alley walls in the historical fabric of Yazd. Photo: Fatemeh Rezaei, 2024.



Fig. 4. Pirneshin as urban furniture and enhancing presence.
Photo: Fatemeh Rezaei.

and plants significantly help reduce dust and wind in the alley while increasing ambient humidity (Afshari Basir et al., 2017). On the other hand, the presence of trees and plants in the alley also conveys cultural symbolic meanings. The foliage of trees and plants in the alley symbolizes the generosity and hospitality of the residents toward the alley, neighbors, and passersby, extending the beauty found within private spaces to the public realm to be shared with others. This fosters social bonds among neighbors and community members, strengthening the sense of place. Furthermore, the hanging branches and leaves may signify an appreciation for nature and reflect a sense of naturalism among the alley's residents, conveying meanings of blessing, growth, and continuity in Iranian culture (Fig. 5).

Discussion

The alley is a manifestation of an urban landscape as it simultaneously encompasses both objective and subjective dimensions. Furthermore, due to its landscape quality, this element can also be considered a type of place. The alley, as a cohesive landscape and place, is composed of a collection of elements that, according to Relph's analytical model regarding the study of place-based phenomena, possess two concurrent objective-subjective aspects. The objective aspect of these elements includes physical and

functional (or activity-related) characteristics, while the subjective aspect generally encompasses the meanings derived from human interactions within the cultural-social context.

Overall, the alley in the historical fabric of Yazd is made up of elements such as pathways, sabats, darbands, walls, pirneshin, and plants and trees. In terms of physical structure, the pathway is typically shaped in a dense and winding manner due to land ownership constraints. The function of the pathway is to provide access and connect the alley to other alleys, neighborhoods, and urban centers. Additionally, these alleys, due to their geometric structure, offer spaces for conversation, interaction, and children's play. The unique physical characteristics of the pathway produce meanings such as attraction, dynamism, liveliness, and invitation. The darband is another element constituting the landscape of the alley. Physically, it is a narrow dead end that serves as an urban junction and entrance for residential units in the alley; however, it is associated with meanings such as security, privacy, human scale, and comfort. The sabat, one of the most important elements of the alley's landscape, consists of a covered space at the intersection of main and secondary pathways, functioning as an urban landmark that enhances the readability of the urban space. Additionally, the sabat plays a key role in controlling sunlight exposure in the alley by creating shade and light contrasts, thus providing a desirable environment for residents. It is also one of the primary places for pausing and stopping in the historical fabric of Yazd, attracting various social, ritualistic, and even economic activities. In this context, the sabat generates meanings such as familiarity, refuge, tranquility, sharing, and stillness. The walls and facades are the main elements defining the space of the alley. Their presence delineates the territory of the alley. Walls in the alley are usually tall and made of simple, uniform materials like mud and clay, featuring minimal decorations. In addition to their boundary function, walls also provide climatic shading, producing meanings such as the boundary between inside and outside, simplicity, uniformity, harmony, and unadorned quality in the alley's landscape. Pirneshin is a type of urban furniture in the alley. This dual-sided platform serves as a space for pausing, sitting, resting, and social interaction. Due to its reference to elderly individuals in its nomenclature, it can also evoke meanings of dignity, respect, as well as comfort, and stillness. Trees and plants are the only non-architectural elements that play a role in the alley's landscape. These elements typically exist behind the walls of houses and are indirectly related to the alley's landscape.



Fig. 5. The presence of branches and leaves of trees and plants in the alley, creating a connection between inside and outside in the historical fabric of Yazd. Photo: Saba Mirzahosein, 2023.

Functionally, they help mitigate and control the harsh climatic conditions of Yazd and also contribute aesthetic value to the alley's landscape. In Iranian culture, trees and plants are considered elements with strong symbolic meanings; thus, they can be linked to concepts such as generosity, the residents' hospitality toward the alley, continuity between inside and outside, naturalism, growth, and blessings (Table 1).

Unfortunately, over the past decades, due to contemporary urban development (Maghsoudi, 2019), a lack of awareness and attention to the multifaceted physical, functional, and symbolic dimensions of the elements comprising the alley landscape has led to the destruction and loss of some of these elements in the historical fabric of Yazd. As a result, the alley landscape has undergone fundamental changes. In fact, due to a lack of understanding of the overall alley landscape and the failure to identify its constituent components, many valuable elements of the alley landscape have sustained significant damage during urban development processes, such as widening and street construction. One of the main issues facing the alley in the historical fabric of Yazd is the lack of access and the ability for vehicles to navigate. The narrow width and the presence of obstacles like sabats have hindered smooth vehicle movement. To address this problem, the alleys have been widened by demolishing the outer walls of houses, which serve as the edge and boundary of the alley space.

Consequently, in addition to the walls, other elements constituting the alley landscape have also sustained serious physical damage. However, it is essential to note that the extent of this damage is not limited to the physical aspects of the alley landscape; it has also impacted the functional and symbolic dimensions of these elements. This has led to a loss of the alley's functions as a space for pausing, conversation, interaction, play, and rest, with an emphasis on its mobility role. In some areas, it now merely serves as a passageway within the historical fabric of Yazd.

Conclusion

This study, emphasizing the alley as a manifestation of landscape in the historical fabric of Iranian-Islamic cities, aimed to expand the literature related to the study of alley landscapes. It identified the components of the alley landscape in the historical fabric of Yazd and examined the objective-subjective dimensions of each element. The main components identified in this study include pathways, darbands, sabats, walls, pirneshin, and plants and trees. These elements, alongside their unique physical manifestations within the historical fabric of Yazd, encompass various functions such as providing access and movement, creating spaces for pausing, interaction, and conversation, serving as junctions between neighboring units, enhancing readability, and moderating and controlling climatic conditions, as well as contributing

Table 1. Components of the Alley Landscape in the Historical Fabric of Yazd and Their Objective-Subjective Dimensions. Source: Authors.

Elements of Alley Landscape	Objective Dimensions		Subjective Dimensions
	Physical Dimension	Functional Dimension	Symbolic Dimension
Pathway (M'aber)	An organic and winding structure that is narrow and tight	Establishing access and a space for pause and social interaction	Invitational, attractive, dynamic, and lively
Dead End (Darband)	A narrow, winding, covered dead end (in some cases)	A junction or vestibule for neighboring units	Security, privacy, human scale, and comfort
Sabat	A covered space at the intersection of pathways	Readability and urban signage, providing shade and controlling the climate for spaces of pause and social interaction	Familiarity, refuge, stillness, tranquility, sharing
Wall (Jedareh)	Tall bodies, simple, and made of uniform materials	Defining the territory of the alley and climate control	The boundary edge between inside and outside, simplicity, harmony, and uniformity
Pirneshin	A platform on both sides of the entrance	A space for pausing, sitting, resting, and interacting	Stillness, comfort, dignity, respect
Trees and Plants	Hanging branches on mud-brick and clay walls	Climate control and beauty	Generosity, hospitality, continuity, naturalism, growth, and blessings

to aesthetics. Moreover, the identified elements in this study generate a range of meanings related to the alley in the historical fabric of Yazd. The most significant of these meanings include invitation, attraction, dynamism, security, privacy, comfort, refuge, familiarity, tranquility, sharing, boundary-making, simplicity, uniformity, harmony, respect

and dignity, generosity, hospitality, continuity, naturalism, and blessings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in conducting this study.

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