

# Explaining the Relationship between the Architectural Signs and Symbols of the Zoorkhaneh with Heroic Rituals and Behaviors\*

Zohreh Masoudi<sup>a</sup>- Kourosh Momeni<sup>b\*\*</sup>- MohammadReza Bemanian<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> M.A. of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Jundi-Shapur University of Technology, Dezful, Iran.

<sup>b</sup> Associate Professor of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Jundi-Shapur University of Technology, Dezful, Iran (Corresponding Author).

<sup>c</sup> Professor of Architecture, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.

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## ABSTRACT

Zoorkhaneh (House of Strength) is one of the cultural-sport and original buildings in Iranian architecture and it has been the growth and instruction locus of a great many of heroes who have caused the enhancement of the society's cultural-ethical level through their moralities. In the heart of the Zoorkhaneh' architectural context, there are latent symbols and signs that can increase their spatial qualities. The architecture of such a special building has been neglected in the history of Iran's architecture for many reasons. After the Islamic revolution and imposed war, the attentions were directed once again at the zoorkhaneh-based sports and zoorkhanehs' physique. This study has been carried out in line with manifesting the importance of the symbols existent in the zoorkhanehs and the necessity for their continuation in designing the zoorkhanehs' physique; the study is also looking for an answer to the question as to "what are the behavioral properties created in the heroes by the signs and symbols in the zoorkhanehs?"

The present study's research method is qualitative of the descriptive-analytical type. In order to reach an answer to the study question, the chart "the process of the environment's effect on the residents' behaviors" and the significations of the signs existent in the zoorkhaneh were used. Then, the extracted information has been matched with the heroes' behaviors. The study is qualitative research of the analytical type. The investigations show that some of the heroic properties stem from the physical signs and symbols in the zoorkhanehs. The entrance of the zoorkhanehs creates such a characteristic as humbleness in the individuals. The platform reminds attendants of such attributes as respecting the elders, paying more attention to the lower social classes and looking for virtuousness. The pit creates such moralities as humbleness, piety, and religiousness, simple living and unity in the individuals and the booth results in hospitality and paying attention to traditions in the athletes.

**Keywords:** Symbol, Zoorkhaneh, Heroic Behavior, Zoorkhaneh's Architecture, Zoorkhaneh's Physique.

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\*\* E\_mail: K\_Momeni@jsu.ac.ir

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Every environment has properties and symbols that influence the type of individuals' behavior. "Zoorkhaneh is an institution featuring subtle philosophical concepts that is mainly based on the promotion of theology and defense of the homeland and wronged people. In Zoroastrianism, robustness and health are considered as a national duty and religious obligation for everyone. It was based on these same traditions and beliefs that the ancient Iranians used to learn various kinds of sports for supplying themselves with health as well as creating a spirit of magnanimity. It is stated in Avesta's teachings that the deeds of the heroes should be stemmed from common sense. The champion warrior had to be always a leader and fight the evil manifestations of Devil" (Toloukian, 2009, p. 19).

The ethics-driven behaviors of the heroes and zoorkhaneh -goers are vivid. The investigation of the source from which these good virtuous properties that are shared by all sportsmen are stemmed and what are their causes is amongst the notable points. Does architecture have an effect as a physical art and a container for the zoorkhaneh-based activities on the formation of these dispositions or not? The subject of the present study pertains to areas like psychology, architecture, ancient sports, and ethics.

## 2. STUDY BACKGROUND

The human mind is a symbol-making and sign-processing structure. Signs enable the establishment of a better relationship with the peripheral environment. Grutter writes that symbol is the sign with contents beyond the instantaneous effects and that it can be analyzed semantically. The symbol is a means for formal objectification of the mental content. A sign is not prepared to act as a symbol but it gains symbolic value in the course of time. Semantic perception of a sign is feasible if the receiver has previously learned its concept. Symbols and some signs have mental aspects and are functions of the observer and the cultural environment (Grutter, 1987, pp. 501-502).

Our sensory experience of our peripheral world and recognition and identification of the environmental stimuli as well as the relational measures to them is called the perception process. Human beings acquire information about the environmental elements via the perception process (Abbasi, Habib, & Mokhtab-Ameri, p. 296). In their minds, human beings consciously or unconsciously engage in matching their experiences with shapes; thus, in order to figure out the meanings of the signs existent in the zoorkhaneh, there is a need for having basic information. This information can be more sought in Iranian culture and the history of ancient sports.

The manmade products and processes of the

environment are called artificial environment (Didehban, Pourdeihimi, & Rismanchian, 2013, p. 38). As an artificial environment in relationship with the human, zoorkhaneh is the locus of developing physique and psyche. In zoorkhanehs, the sport movements are carried out in adherence to certain rites. Meanwhile performing these movements, eulogy, and praise of the Immaculate Imams, especially his highness Imam Ali (PBUH), and poems containing ethical themes are spoken aloud.

## 3. STUDY METHOD

The present study's research method is qualitative of the descriptive-analytical type. In order to reach an answer, the "process of the environment's effect on the residents' behaviors" and the meanings of the signs in zoorkhanehs are utilized. Then, this information is matched with the behaviors of the heroes. The areas influencing the present research are psychology, behavioral-motor sciences, architecture, and ancient sports.

The instrument of gathering and collecting information in the area of heroes' moralities and behaviors has been library research. In order to verify the accuracy of the gathered materials, the data were compared with some of the athletes and the activities of several zoorkhanehs were investigated. In line with investigating the reliability and validity, of the country's 160 historical zoorkhanehs that mostly date back to Qajar and Pahlavi Eras and largely have been destroyed and have lost their prior function, 13 prominent zoorkhanehs that their documents were existent and their buildings were still sound and stable, were investigated. Amongst these 13 zoorkhanehs, Khajeh Kheyr, Shahverdi, Shohaday-e-Kasnaviyeh, Nirumand, Khaneqah, Tayyeb, National Bank, Sha'aban Ja'afari (Shahid Fahmideh), Talachi, Astan-e-Quds, and Ferdowsi can be pointed out.

## 4. ZOORKHANEH S' ARCHITECTURE

The physique of the zoorkhaneh is similar to Tekiyehs that are per se similar to Khanqahs resembling ancient Iran's fire-temples. This similarity in appearance can be due to the similarities in the rites and rituals exercised by mysticism and the followers of Fotowwat (magnanimity) School to the ones exercised by athletes in zoorkhanehs all of which are produced by the Iranian thought and stemmed from the properties of Iran's ancient culture. After Islam, ports, Khanqahs or Tekiyehs became the centers of the mystics and sources of the heroes as well as the cavaliers following the magnanimity school and this is why the zoorkhanehs' shapes are in this regard similar to these places (Ensafpour, 2007, pp. 239-241). The designing of the zoorkhaneh's building is rooted in the pre-Islamic era's architecture, especially Parthians. This style was completed after Islam and the zoorkhanehs' buildings took their current shape. Sport-houses were

constructed in levels below the ground floor in the past, like bathrooms and crypts due to the tradition of being secretive (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 62).

Zoorkhaneh was usually constructed in the adjacent of other holy buildings as it was considered sacred. This issue can be rooted in ancient Iran's teachings. But, there is no other sign in this regard except that there are links between the semiotics of the construction and architecture of the zoorkhanehs and some of the temples like Mithra worship-house and fire-temples (though it is somewhat probabilistic). During the Islamic period, the bond between the zoorkhaneh and the religious centers became more accentuated (Abdolhosseini-Targhi, 2011, p. 59). The interior shape of the traditional zoorkhanehs was octagonal and a pit was dug in the middle of the zoorkhaneh and booths were made in its periphery. In the booth which is the entrance of the zoorkhaneh, a platform named "Sardam" in Persian was constructed. The roof above the pit was higher than the other roofs with a window installed therein. The zoorkhanehs' pits were built in square and hexagonal shapes in proportion to the building and wooden rods were installed on the edges so that the pit can be prevented from collapsing due to the power of strikes by the hands of the wrestlers or by the sportsmen's bumping. The lighting and ventilation of the zoorkhanehs were not optimal in the past (Parto-Beizai-Kashani, 2013, pp. 35-36). The exterior view of the zoorkhaneh was often four-sided with a dome and/or finial-like vault that allowed air and sunlight to enter through the orifices into the zoorkhaneh (Abdolhosseini-Targhi, 2011, p. 60).

James Freezer described zoorkhaneh in the 19th century in the following words: "... this zoorkhaneh is like a bathroom to which we entered through a dark corridor and, after passing through a passageway, reached an octagonal cellar underneath a dome established on a circle of columns. The zoorkhaneh's pit was inside this circle that had been cast with flat wooden boards in the periphery up to a height of six feet. The spectators' seats were between this place and the external wall at a good height ... the plaster-covered ceiling was painted with images of heroes that are wrestling and performing various stunts" (Freezer, 1985, p. 157).

## 5. STUDY THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The constructed environment is connected to the peripheral environment. The recognition of zoorkhaneh is imperfect without the recognition of its peripheral environment. Lang believes that "the environments in the periphery of the human beings incorporate terrestrial, social and cultural contents each of which influences the lives of the people, their attitudes towards the constructed environment and their expectations of the designers" (Lang, 2002, p. 85). Amos Rapoport (1969) adopts a sociocultural approach towards the environment. He considers the environment as a series of object-object, object-people and people-people interrelationships that encompass complex internal relations between four elements of space, time, meaning and relation (Rapoport, 2005). An artificial environment potentially supplies users with various things. The capabilities of the constructed environment support some of the behaviors and restrict some others (Lang, 2002, pp. 92-94).

"Zoorkhaneh's environment" and "its peripheral environment" and "their interrelationships" influence the individuals. The method of combining the elements in the zoorkhaneh is in such a way that it latently features the possibility of potentially accommodating religious-ethical activities and supporting similar behaviors. A collection of the environment's competencies in a special position can create a potential environment for human beings' certain behaviors therein. The environment embraces a set of behavioral settings<sup>1</sup> that are located inside one another and have common traits. This behavioral setting has two main elements including behavioral indicator pattern and physical environment. The physical environment is a physical structure, a combination of related levels and consisted of a special pattern. The environment's competence is divided into direct and indirect sets (Chart 1). In direct competence, the activities are supplied by the environment whereas indirect competence includes things like symbolic meanings. If the environment has the capability of supplying behaviors of certain types, it does not mean that those behaviors would definitely occur but if a place lacks the required competence, no behavior would occur (Ibid, pp. 118-120).

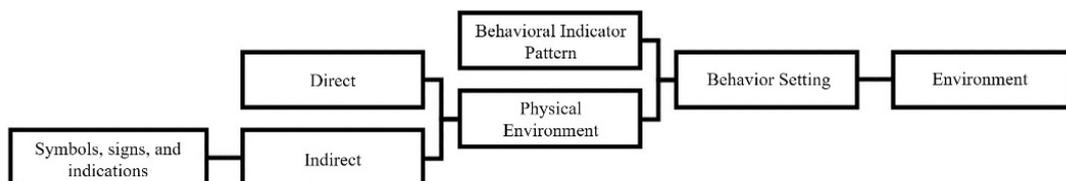


Chart 1. The Relationship between Signs of an Environment with the Environment Itself

According to Rapoport, the environment influences the behavior through cues and individuals act based on their reading of the environmental signs (Rapoport, 2005). When an environment was recognized, the behavior

in proportion thereto would be offered; thus, it can be thought that the athletes read the zoorkhaneh's signs and exhibit behavior in proportion to the zoorkhaneh based on their prior recognition.

Based on the conclusion of the thinkers' theories, the authors know factors like experience, meaning of symbol and cultural, social and religious teachings as effective on the formation of certain behaviors in a given

environment (Chart 2) and the repetition of a behavior in an environment turns in to a behavioral pattern and by attending the environment, the individuals find themselves obliged to observe that behavioral pattern.

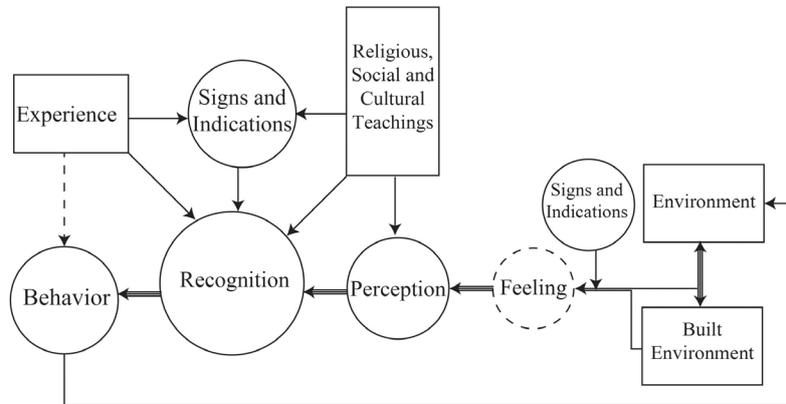


Chart 2. The Relationship between the Environment and Residents' Behaviors

By attending the zoorkhaneh, individuals receive and feel its signs and marks; but, their feelings are not exact in this stage; hence, in chart 2, the "circle of feeling" is illustrated in dashed lines. "The transferring of the stimulus's effect from the sensory receptors to the central nerves is called feeling which creates a potential and tangible reaction in the behaviors" (Irravani & Khoda-Panahi, 1992, pp. 23-24).

Information obtained from the environment and zoorkhaneh is organized in the observer's mind and subsequently, the perception is formed. "Perception is a mental process in the course of which the sensory experiences become meaningful through which, the human being understands the relationships between the affairs and meanings of the objects" (Ibid, p. 25). Based on chart 2, the stage following perception is recognition. In this stage, information becomes more precise based on various teachings, prior experiences and meanings of components in such a way that the highest possible level, i.e. recognition, is attained. Recognition is the process of acquiring, organizing and using the mental information that leads to "knowing". In the recognition stage, the zoorkhaneh's signs and marks are completely interpreted and all of the information from which an athlete has to receive is

perceived.

Meaning is the most important part of perceiving the environmental elements and contributes to the recognition of the concepts hidden in the environment's physique (Chart 2). Meaning refers to a qualitative and nonmaterial concept describing the inseparable forms of a phenomenon, on the other hand. Meaning includes all of the mentalities created by a stimulus for an observer (Rapaport, 2005, p. 7). Therefore, meaning is formed in the perception process and, in other words, "any perceptual process leads to the creation of meaning in its various levels and ranks" (Kazemi & Behzadfar, 2013, p. 77). Perception of the symbolic meaning is difficult and it often occurs through associating the meanings of special and intangible concepts. The perception of these meanings entails the recognition of the society wherein the constructed environment has been manifested. In fact, cultural differences cause the perception of different meanings of an environment. Rapaport believes that it is not the things accommodating meaning rather meaning exists in the human mind. Due to the same reason, various individuals perceive different meanings by looking at various elements of the zoorkhaneh (Rapaport, 2005).

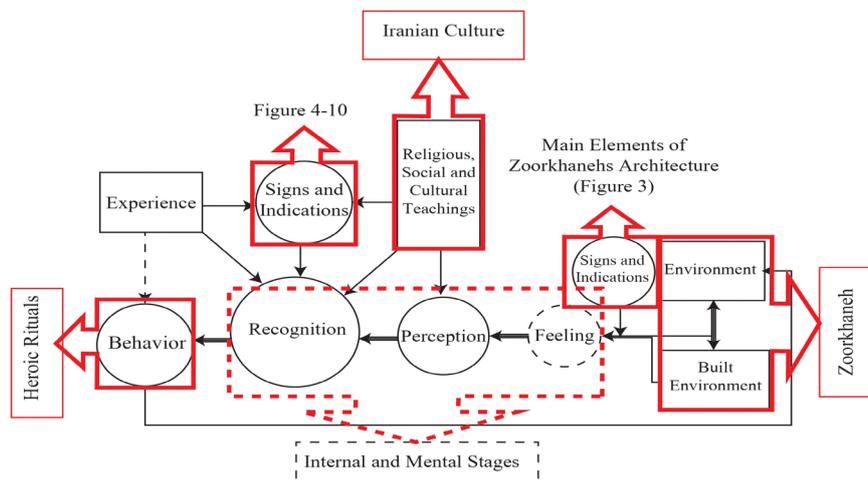


Chart 3. The Relationship between the Zoorkhaneh's Environment and Heroes' Behaviors

If the signs and symbols are matched with the individuals' prior teachings, a pleasant feeling is created in the individual. The more the individuals unravel a larger number of symbols, the more this sense would become accentuated in them to the extent that the individuals would feel their own selves as a part of the environment which would subsequently appear more familiar to them. Based on the obtained recognition, the individual would show behavior in proportion to the zoorkhaneh's environment. Behavior is the reaction shown to external action and is physical, rule-base, and descriptive. The repetition of this cycle creates the behavioral habits of the zoorkhaneh (Chart 3).

### 6. ANALYZING THE SIGNS AND SYMBOLS OF THE MAIN ELEMENTS IN THE ZOORKHANEHS' ARCHITECTURE

Art has no other way than encoding, symbolic methods and allegory for entering the area of meaning and content (Manan-Reisi, Noghreh-Kar, & Mardomi,

2014, p. 81). Charles Peirce, a scientist in the area of semiosis, realizes sign as an element indicating another by way of which it becomes understandable or associates meanings (Bani-Massoud, 2005, p. 159). Pierre Girou knows sign as a tangible stimulus or essence the image of which is associated in our minds with the mental image of another stimulus. The first stimulus serves the provoking of the second stimulus with the objective of establishing a relationship (Girou, 2004, p. 39). The first stimulus should be so distinct and unique that it can only and only rouse the second stimulus. In fact, the mental process of referring the first stimulus (which is objective) to the second stimulus (that can be both objective and subjective) is comprised of a course of action in which an element is formed as a sign reflecting a concept in the mind (Turkashvand & Majidi, 2014, p. 7). The main elements of the zoorkhaneh are entrance, booth, pit, and platform (Chart 4). Each of these pillars incorporates certain signs and symbols.

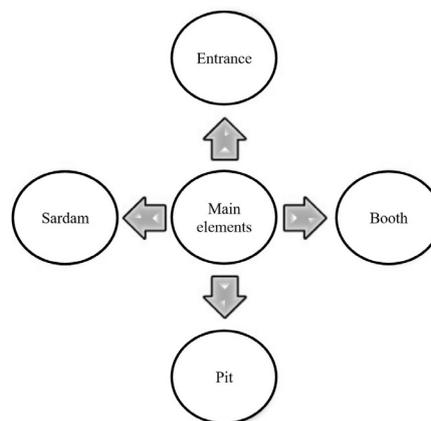


Chart 4. The Main Elements of the Physique of Zoorkhaneh

#### 6.1. Entrance

The first primary element in zoorkhaneh 's physique is the entrance. "The old zoorkhanehs usually had two doors. One of them was opened to the outside environment and an alley and the other one ended in a short corridor that was opened to the zoorkhaneh. The first door was tall and the second one was short so that the athletes were obliged to lower their heads before the holy zoorkhaneh" (Ensafpour, 2007, p. 232) (Fig.

1). Some believe that the shortness of the door was deemed necessary for the removal of haughtiness in the athletes in the thought of the idea that the performing of the championship and heroic operations might create selfishness in them (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 62). Amongst the other reasons for the shortness of the entrance door of the zoorkhanehs in the past, especially during the Arabs' period, was hiding it from the eyes of the governmental agents (due to their opposition to such sports).



Fig. 1. Entrance Door of Shohada Zoorkhaneh in Dezful (Fakouri, 2008)



Fig. 2. Sardam in Shahverdi Zoorkhaneh (Safari, 2013)

### 6.2. Sardam (Platform)

There is a platform around the pit with the height of one meter for master (Morshed) to sit which is called Sardam (Fig. 2). "In Borhan-e Ghate", Sardam [platform] means the head singer and the place for signing. In Amid Dictionary, it means Khanqah and the gathering locus of the dervishes. In Persian, it is the abbreviated form of "Sarir-e-Dam Bar Aavardan" meaning "the seat of the head singer" (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 69). The term's root can be sought in the dynasty of Khaksariyeh Dervishes. This dynasty established the group of water-carriers and, because they used to sing during distributing water, water-carriers' house was built for their oration; this place was accommodated with manifestations of poverty and a sample of the instruments for the jobs attributed to indigent life

and, because this center was the headquarter of their singings and reciting, it was called Sardam [singing place] that was gradually changed in its meaning to platform and consecrated. Since the class of the heroes was considered amongst the seventeen groups constituting the dynasty of poverty following the mysticism principles as well as the lead of a person called Pouria-ye-Vali, the zoorkhaneh's instructor was called master and the platform he sat on was termed Sardam (Parto-Beizai-Kashani, 2013, p. 46). Thus, "Sardam was a holy place in the customs of the aforementioned classes; the master sits on it with a pure body and it is considered equal in value to the rostrum in mosques" (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 70). Therefore, it has roots and messages of teaching magnanimity in society (Chart 5).

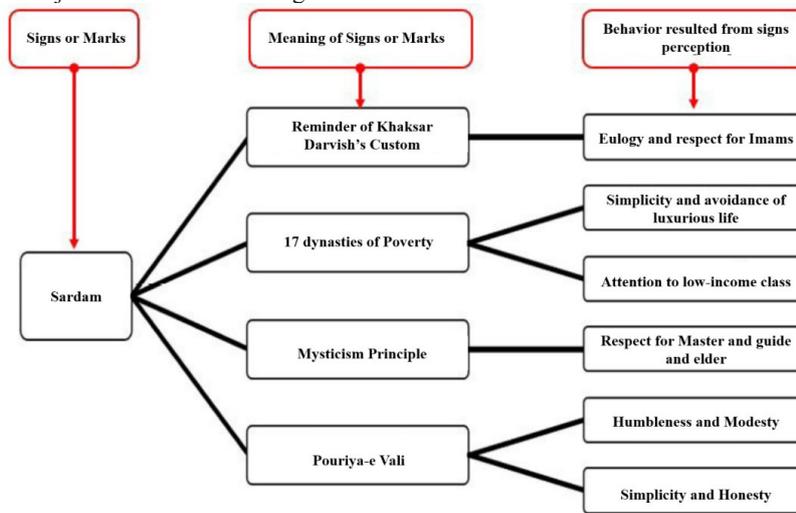


Chart 5. The Effect of the Platform on the Behaviors

#### 6.2.1. Chain (In Kabbadeh and for Connecting Bell) and Bell

The inverse brass bowl connected to the chain above the platform with an iron pellet inside it that is hit to make a jingling sound by the master when necessary (Ensafpour, 2007, p. 237).

In the past, the signaled strength and respect. The bell was hit in the public gatherings for the individuals who were well-known in heroic terms (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 71). When the heroes reached the perfection stage, they tied bells to their waists and arms for indicating the degree of their heroism (Parto-Beizai-Kashani, 2013, p. 48). "The final conclusion is that the bell and chain along with platform entered the

zoorkhanehs since their emergence; these were hung over the platform and the bell was hit for showing respect to the heroes who had just stepped into zoorkhaneh as well as upon their exit" (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 71). Chain and bell signify association and serving justice in Fetian (magnanimous persons) Culture. This tradition is rooted in Sassanids' culture inherited from the kingship period of Anoushirvaan. In order to keep the people satisfied and also to be in close touch with the wronged persons, Anoushirvaan hung a bell on the palace's gate in such a way that he could hear its sound upon its being hit (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 251). Therefore, the chain and the bell mark the elegance, power, ability, and justice (Chart 6).

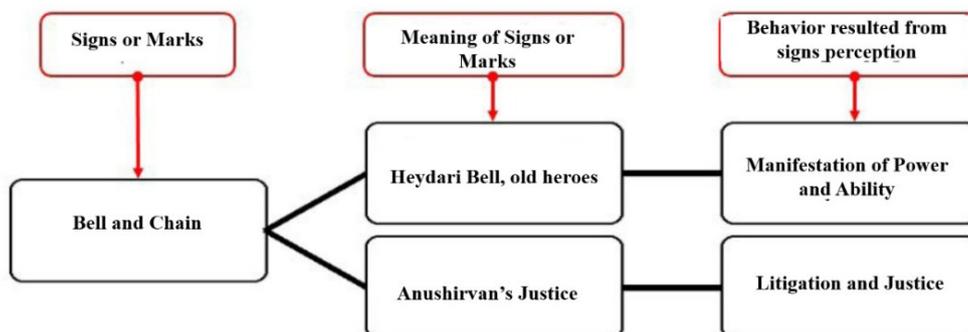


Chart 6. The Effect of the Bell and Chain on Behavior

### 6.2.2. Master (Morshed)

Cavalier is the title formerly used in the zoorkhanehs for referring to the persons who instructed wrestling and other sports and “by cavalier, the war veterans who also taught others are intended” (Pareto-Beizai-Kashani, 2013, p. 23). Veterans were responsible for guiding towards magnanimity and instructing the zoorkhaneh’s rites and heroic techniques. During the recent century, the title “cavalier” has been downgraded to the limit of the zoorkhaneh’s tonbak player albeit by a complimentary appellation as master (Ensafpour, 2007, pp. 167-289). “Upon reaching the mastery rank, tonbak-players were given the right to use woolen mantle and the masterhood crown of dervishes; they also used to decorate their crown with piebald patches during the money-collecting ceremonies and celebration times. Sophisticated and well-experienced masters enjoyed the same respect paid to the veterans” (Ibid, p. 290). Master is the symbol of elder, chief, and dervish.

### 6.3. Pit (Gaud)

Pit is a mostly octagonal cavity, approximately 70cm to 100cm in depth. “it can be understood from the old paintings as well as the images in the ancient curtains and manuscripts that Iranians used to display dramatic actions, war and wrestling in the low spots so that the people can watch the incidents of the scene from the elevated ground in the periphery” (Ensafpour, 2007, p. 284). “Considering the fact that a piece of land was excavated in the form of a circle in the past with the flooring soil being screened and softened for wrestling, this circle might have been the basis of the pit’s formation” (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 67).

Quoting from the book “Badi’e Al-Waqaye’e”, Ensafpour states that Champion Ali Rustay and Champion Dervish Muhammad used to wrestle in the pond of Zaqa Garden, to wit in a place that looked like the zoorkhaneh’s pit; and, Sultan Hussein Bayqara’a and all of the elders used to watch it all around the pond. The zoorkhaneh’s pit has been built following the traditions of Khaksar dervishes and repelling boastfulness is the reason for playing sports on low grounds. The dynasty of Khaksar Dervishes can be traced back to Dervish Kaboli who has seemingly drunk water in his Roped-container to Imam Hussein (PBUH) in Karbala on Ashoura. It is stated that cavaliers and Fetian poets made the pit after the domination of Arabs to be a reminder of Imam Hussein Ibn Ali (PBUH)’s slaughter pit and also for the purpose of getting themselves ready for jihad on the path of serving right and justice. The pit has been often constructed with six sides to exemplify the hexagonal tomb of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and it has also been occasionally made in octagonal or even in a circular form (Ensafpour, 2007, pp. 284-286). Octagon is the middle limit in the process of transforming square (symbolizing earth) to circle (symbolizing sky). The eight heavens, eight ranks of the paradise, eight doors of the paradise and the eighth landmass indicate the holiness of the number “eight” (Mohebbi and Ashouri, 2005, pp.47-51). Since “the most superior rank of the hierarchies of the religious wayfaring and the ultimate goal of the believer is the paradise (Roshan and Sheibani, 2015, p.161), the pit was constructed in an octagonal form to remind the heaven. Chart 7 shows that the pit reminds the tradition of Khaksariyeh Dervishes and the Karbala incident; thus, it drives haughtiness and boastfulness away from the individuals and reminds jihad for God and serving justice.

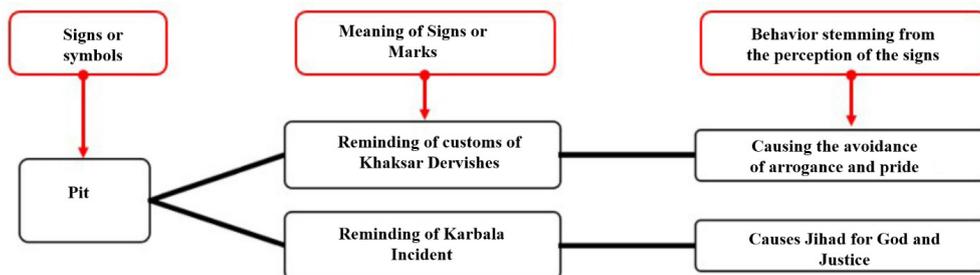


Chart 7. The Effect of the Pit on Behavior

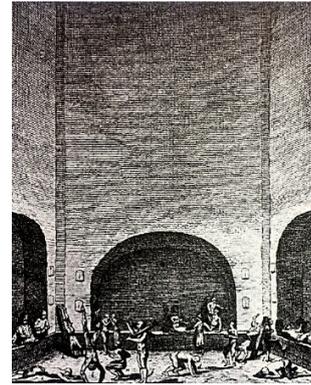
### 6.3.1. Application of Few Decorations

The pit and all the parts in zoorkhanehs (except the platform) are found decorated with few ornamentations in the course of various periods of history (Fig. 3). Since most of the zoorkhanehs were privately owned and belonged to inferior and middle social classes of the society, they are usually found without luxurious

ornaments and the only platform is found with few decorations due to its holiness. The interior body of the zoorkhaneh is covered with the images of the heroes and the portrays of the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them). Ja’afari zoorkhaneh has a lot of decorations for the fact that it was the zoorkhaneh owned by the royal court’s companions (Fig. 4).



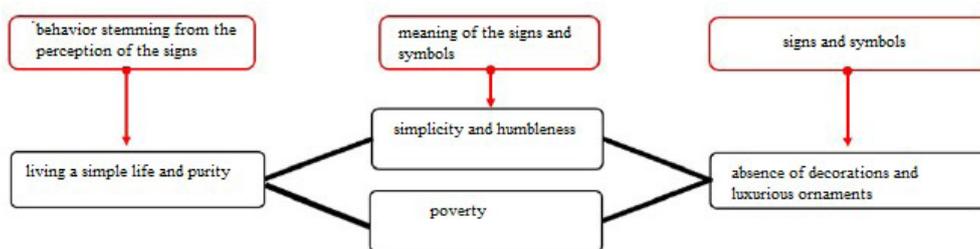
**Fig. 3. Safaviyeh Zoorkhaneh, Drawn during Zandiyeh Era (Travelogue of Carsten Nibore) (Ensafoor, 2007, p. 148)**



**Fig. 4. Status of Shahid Fahmideh Zoorkhaneh at the Present Time (Ghorbani, 2014)**

The lack of decorations in the interior and exterior body of the zoorkhaneh reminds of humbleness and simplicity. It is by the perception of the physical meaning of the zoorkhaneh's environment that simple life and purity are promoted in the athletes' minds

and the repetition of this reminding and notification in every entry of the individual into the zoorkhaneh results in the athletes' selection of a simple way of living as their inherent characteristic (Chart. 8).



**Chart 8. The Effect of the Absence of Decorations in the Body of Zoorkhaneh on the Behavior**

### 6.3.2. Showman

Amongst the most influential individuals attending the pit is the showman. "In zoorkhaneh, the showman is the person with more record or more courage and, as opined by Bastani, he is the person who places his pushup board in the middle of the pit and performs pushups and plays sports in there. The showman should be usually one of the veterans attending the pit" (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 278). "Athletes play sports and perform the moves by keeping an eye on the showman's movements and keeping pace with the tempo of the master's playing of tonbak; thus, the showmen should be very knowledgeable about the niceties and secrets of the ancient sports' moves. Showman should perform pushups and club workout by considering the medium limit of the athletes' talents and abilities so that the weak ones do not wear out and the powerful individuals become convinced" (Ensafoor, 2007, p. 294). Therefore, the showman symbolizes a commander, guide, teacher, and sage.

### 6.3.3. Hierarchy

Believing in the hierarchy of the world and moving away from unity to plurality and vice versa can be

realized as the fundamental pillar in the formation of Iran's traditional arts and, in this system, the lofty heaven is of particular importance as the highest rank. Wayfaring towards truth (paradise) is the journey that navigates the mortal earthly mankind towards the paradise (Roshan & Sheibani, 2015, pp. 161-162). This hierarchy is seen in the way the athletes stand as well as during their playing of sports in the pit. In the zoorkhaneh, the sophisticated individuals and the pioneers precede the others; it is also a reminder of the movement towards the Almighty God and the hierarchy of the world of existence.

### 6.3.4. Instruments of Sport (Mill, Kebada, Sang of the Zurkhane)

Amongst the instruments, the existence of which is necessary during performing sports activities in the pit, Mill, Kebada, Sang of the Zurkhane can be pointed out. It is recommended in chapter 43 of the book "Pahlavi Paradise of Sagacity" that "garment of confidence is worn in the hot spot and a shield of truthfulness is kept up in hands and individuals get themselves prepared for the battle against the Ahriman (Satan) by the thankfulness bludgeon and readiness

bow”. Since the aforementioned war instruments are very much similar in their appearances to the instruments of the zoorkhaneh wrestling and sports, it is conjectured that the term “hot spot” in the above statements means zoorkhaneh; so, the shield of

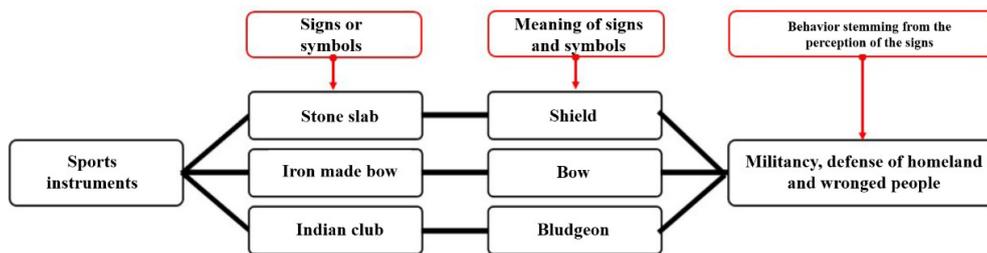
truthfulness would accordingly mean the Sang of the Zurkhane and the thankfulness bludgeon has to be considered as equivalent to the club and the readiness bow is to be envisioned as the very Kebada (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5. Instruments Used in the Zoorkhaneh**  
(Unname, 2014)

Therefore, the goal of performing sports exercises, as well, is the fight with inner and outer satan. They fight with the inner devil so as to acquire ethical virtues and they fight with the outer devil so as to protect the wronged and suppressed people and keep the country

immune to the invaders. Thus, the instruments of zoorkhaneh sports symbolize militancy, defense of the country, defense of the wronged persons and seeking right (Chart 9).



**Chart 9. The Effect of the Zoorkhaneh Sports' Instruments on Behavior**

### 6.3.5. Spining

One of the sports exercises in the zoorkhaneh is spinning. “Spinning is a symbol of rotating and stomping the feet on the ground by the dervishes who used to twirl around their own selves when in a state of rapture. Movement and spinning were of great importance to the mystics and, especially, Mowlana” (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 261). Spinning while beating the feet on the ground in a dancing form (Sama) to the song of the reed and lute frees the bird of soul from the body and prepares it for ascending and wayfaring to the sky and the world of truth. In Mowlana’s school, wayfaring and movement and motion are the causes and signs of life and cessation signifies evanescence (Tafazeli, 1996, p. 36).

### 6.3.6. Dome

In zoorkhaneh, two kinds of roofs were used. Flat roofs in various heights and vaulted roofs. The roof over the pit is usually higher and dome-shaped.

“Besides possessing architectural features, the dome of the zoorkhanehs, holy shrines, and mausoleums also have spiritual value. This belief stems from the periods before the advent of Islam because such roofs were realized as symbols of the ethereal force and the relationship with the higher world. Thus, the athletes’ spinning beneath the dome is a sort of spiritual and metaphysical relationship with the rotation of the world of creation” (Tehranchi, 2009, p. 62). The dome-shaped forms signify the heavenly power in the observers’ minds. Thus, paying particular attention to the dome-like shapes does not only serve the satisfaction of the technical needs rather it is done in line with meeting the spiritual and psychological expectations, as well (Farshad, 1983, p. 302). According to some analyses, the dome is a symbol of the wayfaring in the ego due to its concave and inward form (Noghreh-Kar, 2008, p. 520). The dome is viewed as the external sign of the pit and underlines the important role of the pit (Chart. 10).

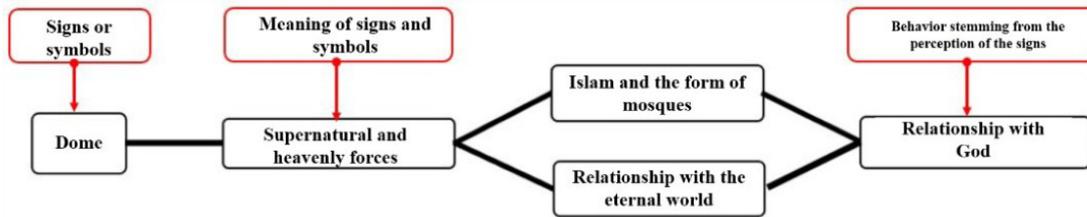


Chart 10. The Effect of the Dome on the Behaviors

#### 6.4. Booth

The fourth element influencing the behaviors of the heroes is the booth. “One of the properties of the building in the public spaces in the past was that places similar to room with rough arch were built around the gathering locus that resembled store and were called booth. If the booth was in Zoorkhaneh or bathroom, the spectators used to take off their clothes there and watched what was happening in the middle section. The roof of the booth was usually shorter

than the main roof” (Ensafpour, 2007, pp. 245-255). The spectators sat in the periphery of the pit and inside the booths to watch the athletes’ performance. This was followed by educational effects and ethical lessons for the spectators. Zoorkhaneh was envisaged as the institution that taught magnanimity and chivalry. The booth reminds of Iran’s traditional architecture and manifests the past and memories of the individuals thereby to make spectators recall such virtues as a return to one’s own origin and veneration of the elders’ traditions and beliefs (Chart 11).

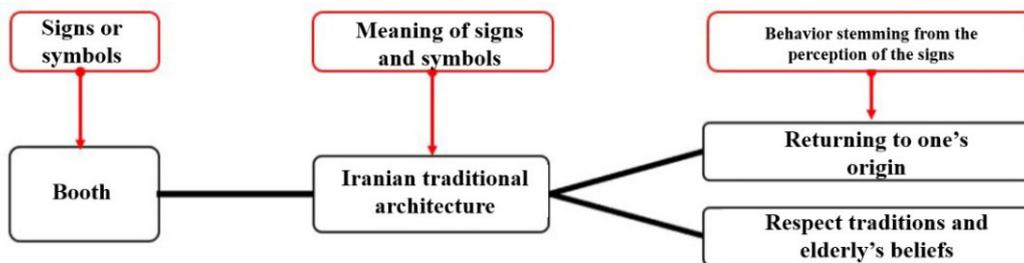


Chart 11. The Effect of the Booth on Behaviors

## 7. STUDY FINDINGS

Based on the aforementioned materials, each of the pillars of the zoorkhaneh reminds certain ethical virtues via its own specific symbols and signs. As an example, pit emphasizes such ethical characteristics like humbleness, avoidance of haughtiness, piety, religiosity, relationship with God, simple living and honesty, veneration of elders, being punctual, militancy and defence of the wronged through symbols and signs like form and apparent shape, shortage and even absence of decorations, hierarchy, moderations, sports instruments and presence of a showman (Charts 7-10) (Table 1). The same holds for the other elements of the zoorkhaneh, as well. Thus, in response to the study’s primary question, virtues like humbleness, simple life and paying attention to the low-income classes, religiosity, paying attention to the tradition and return to one’s own origin, order and justice, respecting elders, militancy, defense of the wronged, unity, seeking virtue and hospitality can

be mentioned amongst the moralities influenced by the signs and symbols in the zoorkhaneh’s physique.

## 8. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of the authors, architecture is a ground for informal learning whether in the physique of an educational environment or on the context of cultural, religious and other environments. The zoorkhaneh’s context, as well, indirectly has words and advice to say to the users. Taking advantage of signs and symbols, the zoorkhaneh’s physique reminds lofty ethical concepts to the athletes; concepts like humbleness, simple life, paying attention to the low-income classes, religiosity, paying attention to the traditions, return to one’s own origin, order, justice, veneration of the elders, militancy, defense of the wronged, unity, competition in exhibiting moralities and hospitality. Table (1) explicates the way in which zoorkhaneh’s physique speaks to the users through signs and symbols.

**Table 1. The Effect of the Meanings of Zoorkhaneh's Signs on Behavior**

Element	Signs	Meaning of Signs	Behavior Stemming from the Recognition of the Signs
Pit	Pit	Khaksariyeh Dervishes' tradition	Humbleness, avoidance of haughtiness and snobbishness
		Paradise, slaughter pit and roped-container used by Khaksariyeh Dervishes for carrying water	Piety and religiosity
	Dome	Sky and the spiritual affairs, roof of the caves in the primitive Mithraism temples	Relationship with God
	No decoration	Simplicity and humbleness and poverty	Simple living and purity
	Hierarchy	Order and organization	Veneration of elders and punctuality
	Club	Bludgeon, war, and power	Militancy, defense of the wronged persons
	Iron-made bow	Bow, war, and power	
	Pushup board	Sword, buoyancy motions	
	Stone slab	Shield, war, and power	
	Spinning	Dervishes' Sama, preparation of the soul for the wayfaring	Piety and virtuousness
Showman	Commander and guide	Respect the teacher and unity	
Sardam [platform]	Platform	Platform's height is a symbol of the loftiness of the individual's position and rank	Veneration of elders
		The seventeen dynasties of indigence	Avoidance of luxuriousness, simplicity, paying attention to the lower social classes
		Rites of Khaksariyeh dervishes	Eulogy of the Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them)
	Bell	Power, elegance, and ability	Seeking and competing for virtues
	Chain (in the iron-made bow and for attaching the bell)	Solidarity and justice, rooted in the tradition of serving justice and demanding justice at the time of Khosrow Anoushirvan	Order and justice
	Master	Elder, chief, dervish	Veneration of the guide and leader
Booth	Booth	Shelf and old stalls, traditionalism	Hospitality, paying attention to tradition, return to own's origin
Entrance	Low height	The span of the initial Mithraism temple caves, hideout, lowering the head and bending	Humbleness

## END NOTE

1. "Behavioral settings" is the phrase referring to a group of activities and the places of their performance.

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