The Role of Nationalist leaders in the Emergence of National Architectural Movements in Iran, 1924 to 1942

Jamaleddin Soheili

Assistant Professor of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, Qazvin Branch, Islamic Azad University, Qazvin, Iran

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Abstract

Political evolutions and struggles of 19th century prepared the ground for realization of nationalities and emergence of nationalist movements. The realization of national identity in countries such as Iran, turkey and Egypt was partly due to the emphasis of governments on glorious history or ancient modernity of these nations. Emergence of nationalism in any country is affected by political, social and religious factors during the history of that country. In Iranian contemporary history also this process is dependent upon opinions and thoughts of a number of nationalism modernists and intellectuals. Their intellectual products of this group played a significant role in emergence of nationalistic grounds in various social intellectual and even artistic areas. This paper tries to study the thoughts and opinions of Iranian intellectuals played roles in formulating principles in the field of nationalism which had influenced the emergence of national architectural movements in various intellectual social and even artistic fields. Then classification of nationalistic architectural tendencies that affected by nationalist intellectual approaches is addressed and it is followed by explaining the characteristic of nationalistic tendencies and some sample of the works of that period are presented.

Keywords: Nationalism, Architecture, Liberal, Religion, Ancient – oriented Approach, Iran.

1. Introduction

Nation consists of a group of people that united via linking elements such as language, race, religion, territory or geographical area, culture and history, economic relationships and political factors. A person considers himself as belonging to a certain group according to the above – mentioned elements tries to distinguish himself from other groups. It should not be thought that in order to create a nation all of these elements are necessary because in some cases, presence of one or more of those elements has led to creation of a nation and there is no single rule for creation of any nations. Thus the importance of each element forming a nation varies between various nations. In the last decades of 19th century, political and social situation of some west Asian countries was transformed and between 1880-1900 /1300-1320 AH works a number of authors and writers were published in Tehran, Istanbul, Cairo, Teftis and Kolkata who all pursued modernism based on keeping national values.

In Iran, This group consisted of writers, political, officers and even intellectual business men who distributed modern thoughts and fought against autocracy and backward via publishing articles, treatises and books and tried to create an ideological and intellectual basis for changes and reforms and to do what had been neglected in the past.

Members of this group had two main characteristics. Firstly, most of them lived over season used to travel between various countries and secondly, most of them can put into both groups of constitutionalists and cultural and social modernists on the basis of their works.

Meanwhile, people were assisted by intellectuals and clergymen in fighting foreign capital and government civil service and obtained a significant majority in first parliament. This group demanded freedom (i.e. free trade), equality (i.e. being equal with nobles and dignitaries in advantages), centralization (i.e. an strong central government) and nationalism (i.e. fighting against foreign capital dominance).

Tendency of Iranian intellectuals towards Germany is also a point that cannot be ignored. In this period a group of poets, authors and journalists advocate Germany because of dissatisfaction with Russia and English. Intervention in policy affairs of Iran meanwhile a group of Iranian experts went to Germany came back together and after a comprehensive reflection concluded that west modernity should be adopted. Of course, it was patriotism that led them towards modernism and west. Thus appearance of nationalism occurred via different approaches in Iran.

Corresponding Author Email: Soheili@qiau.ac.ir
2. Research method

Considering the content, this research is a qualitative one. At first a historical study is conducted but the basis of this research is an interpretational – historical one and research approach (theoretical framework) is based on the influence of environmental, formative and semantic factors.

3. Leaders of nationalistic thoughts

A) Liberal nationalism

Mirza Malkom Khan Nazem-od-doleh

Mirza Malkom Khan is one of the individuals who are subject of conflicting judgments during the last 100 years. Some exaggeratedly consider him as the founder of modern government and democracy – seeking ideas and some other consider him as a manifestation of flattery towards the west and dependence upon foreign agents. But both proponents and opponents do not deny his fundamental role in Iranian intellectual trend and movements who is seeking political revolution. In his works Mirza Malkom Khan addressed the reasons for failure and retardation of Iranians and offered his solutions.

"After representation of factors that led to Iranian retardation Malkom puts himself at medical status and prescribes treatment. In doing this he looks at European and using various devices tries to explain to his readers that the drug for all diseases is found in that "terrestrial paradise". We provide his own word so that no doubt remains: "We who have been convinced about the truthfulness of these sciences and definitely know that relief of government is dependent upon accepting these policies (modernism) only say that these sciences are available in Europe and have become the primary tools of life in this period and we should also accept the rules of these sciences" (Akbari, 2005, p. 37).

Imitating western methods Malkom presents foundation of constitutional government as a solution to Iranian problems and towards this end he established Qanouen newspaper, focused in order to promote his ideas. Malkom mentions Iranian pre-Islamic civilization with respect and implicitly considers the conquest of Iran by Muslims as the cause for disappearance of this great civilization but he does not believe in efficiency of this civilization in present world and states that in order to restore Iran following from the west and adoption of European civilization should be put in perspective. Here there is a paradox in Malkom's word i.e. if pre-Islamic civilization of Iran was an advanced one then why Malkom himself do not believe in its efficiency at present?

B) Religious nationalism

1- Seyyed Jameleddin Asadabadi

Many experts believe that Seyyed Jameleddin Asadabadi is one of the most outstanding Muslim leaders who deeply influenced the emergence process of the awakening movements based on power and greatness of Muslims throughout the history. Repeating that "In order to find the reasons for Muslims fall and abjectness we should return to ourselves" He has founded a dialogue known as "return" discourse.

Though at first he sought to found a single Islamic government for all Islamic territories in order to restore greatness of Muslims but later he proposed the idea of "Islamic unity". In this idea various Muslim nations are linked together; they consider equity and consultation as the basis of their own government and Quran as their leader. He invited all Muslims to unity but he added: "I do not mean that in all affairs the ruler should be one single person because doing such a thing may be difficult. But I hope that the ruler of all Muslim territory and their unity axis would be Quran and all governors try to protect each other as a united body because their survival depends upon unity" (Akbari, 2005, p. 20).

In addition to these internal factors Seyyed Jamal also frequently referred to the role played by foreign element and west nation’s colonialism as another factor for returning back the declining trend of Islamic society. His opinions appeared in his books and Orvatol-vosgha newspaper published in Paris (1884) and can be summarized as follows:

(1) Returning to Islamic original tradition and removing superstitions from Islam

(2) Conviction of blindfold traditionalism and pure imitation

(3) Favoring Muslims unity and fighting against local nationalism causing impairment of Islam against common enemy.

(4) Fighting against despotism of rulers and accepting west political philosophy principles.

(5) Accepting new science and technology that would lead to Islamic world in progress and strength (Behnam, 2007, p. 94).

2- Mirza Yousof Mostashar-od-doleh

Mostashar-od-doleh was one of the brilliant figures of modern reformist bureaucracy who also made religious approaches popular in the society. Despite this fact he proposed his special strategy for implementing political innovation plan and presented a new approach to that. He compiled his ideas on Iranian distress and the way of curing it in a treatise and named it as "one word" by one word he meant "modern law" which is compatible with religion. In his view, Europian strategy was the same as Islam principles and Basics which Europe had discovered and employed them and erected such a wonderful construction and we had neglected them and involved in these dark days.
Finally, Mostashar-od-doleh can be considered as a modern reformist but with a peaceful policy towards religion who tries to coordinate Europe laws with religious rules significantly and at the same time he also promoted non-secular modernism. In addition to this, it should be noted that Mostasharoddoleh is also considered as the father of religious democratic thought.

C) Ancient oriented nationalism

1- Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzade

Mirza Fath-Ali Akhundzade is considered as an outstanding expert among intellectuals of Qajar era. Studying investigation about his opinions and views, it is inferred that he considers "despotism" and "fanaticism" as two important bases of Iranian retardation. Akhundzade considers despotism as one type of arbitrary governments in which the king is not committed to any law and have complete control on life and property of people. The noteworthy thing is that his analysis took place in Iran. Akhundzade considers the appearance of despotic government in Iran and decline of Persian government as contemporaneous. This viewpoint, presents him as an anti-Arab and ancient-oriented nationalist; a visionary nationalist who entirely defend pre-Islamic governments and considers them as democratic in order to prove his hypothesis. But the reality of history shows another things and Akhundzade neglects ugliness and uncleanness of some ancient kings and on the other hand considers the whole Islamic period as a dark. Apparently he forgets that 4th and 5th centuries of Islamic period are of the most brilliant periods of Iranian civilization.

In Akhundzade’s view, fanaticism as the second factor led to Iranian distress consists of a mixture of superstitious thoughts and deeds, based on it, superstition and visionary thoughts convert into reality and deceive humans. Also this thought prevents people to adopt modern learning. In this new custom he promotes, creating a new identity is unavoidable. Thus nationalism should be based on ancient honour and belief in new religion should be based upon that.

2- Mirza Agha khan Kermani

Mirza Agha khan was mostly influenced by intellectuals, thoughts of the Enlightenment and viewed those intellectuals and their works as prophets of new era and new holy books. In his view, the essence of natural law was growth and progress in material aspects. Mirza Agha khan presented a theoretical pattern for explaining historical failures of the Iranian and other east nations and by relying on, addressed the pathology of the factors having effects on Iranian distress. In his view, the main reason for Iranian backward dates back to the time they diverged from natural law and basics and involved in despotic and fanatic government.

After indicating the reasons for Iranian distress, Mirza Agha khan tries to present the solution and proposes some viewpoints in this respect. The solution proposed by him is based on three principles. The first is trying to acquiring science, techniques, art and in one word European civilization. According to this, the second principle of Mirza Agha khan for saving Iranian is adoption of new political bases of European which is the establishment of national government and extension of social and political freedom. He explicitly believes in foundation of a constitutional government in this respect. According to Mirza Agha khan's viewpoints, nationalism is the third principle for saving Iranians. In nationalistic ideology of Mirza Agha khan, home country is the focus and is a paradise on the earth.

"The constituent elements of Iranian nation in Mirza Agha khan's view were Persian language, Aryan race, Zoroastrian religion and Iranian culture and history. Language was very important for him and he believed that consistency of a nation depends upon the consistency of it's language and if the language of a nation disappears, it loses it's nationality ... That is why he strongly praises Ferdowsi and believes that if Ferdowsi's Shahname was not published, Persian language would converted in to Arabic language and Iranians would loss their identity and their nationality changed just like people of Sham, Egypt and other African countries" (Ghamari, 2001, p. 60).

4. An introduction to nationalist tendencies

The main basis of the nationalism is based on some aspects of social culture and political concepts that tries to motivate the society members to provide their national benefits and the defense of country. (Shirazi & Younesi 2011)

Since late 19th century, the main issue in Iran was how legal institutions should be formed, developed and enhanced. Thus a new element entered to our national identity due to the changes occurred outside of the country and that was attention to European modernity and international features. On the other hand constitutional revolution in 1960 was also one of the movements formed in social–human milieu of Iran country. But constitutional revolution was followed by dictatorship of Reza khan. Thus such factors as constitutional revolution, effects of achievements and progress of Iranian elite and west and change of governance from Ghajar to Pahlavi are factors that prepared the ground for creation of nationalist thoughts in Iran.

"In order to resolve the problem of identity in Iran, some type of harmony should be created among three sources in Iran, Islam and west liberalism. Iran and Iranism is a historical and territorial source of identity. Islam is a spiritual and moral source of identity and an extensive political and social ideology. West liberalism is a philosophical source with economic, political and even cultural functionalities." (Sariolghalam, 2007, p. 43).
A) Liberal national identity

Liberal nationalism advocates claimed that the reason for progress of European countries is due to enacting laws having reasonable basis and if such laws presented and acted upon it appeared in Iran, Iran would also progress similar to European countries.

"Liberal national identity was the first form of nationalism appeared in Iran at early current century and was same as the nationalism appeared in west and turned into a great revolution in France. values honored by this type of nationalism consisted of freedom , equality , brotherhood and national sovereignty all had western origins and practically appeared in constitutional revolution" (Ghamari, 2001, p. 72).

One of the aims of Iranian liberal nationalists was to reach a high level of progress and improvement and in order to achieve this aim; they hoped that schools and factories would create in Iran in a modern style on the basis of western modernity.

B) National – religious identity

At first glance it seem that nationalism and religion cannot converge because nationalism follow certain goals at country – wide level but religion has more general aims associated with human guidance, while nationalism seeks to establish national sovereignty and fight against such factors as religion limiting this sovereignty. Direction of religious nationalism in Iran has been against the ruling autocracy. Among other important aims followed by religious nationalism, removing foreigners influence and preventing their dominance over Iran can be mentioned" (Ghamari, 2001, p. 78). Obtaining freedom and equality by limiting autocracy and establishment of constitutionalism was targeted by religious nationalism.

C) Ancient-oriented national identity

Iranian nationalism emerged as it’s novel shape since the end of 19th century, revived with the help of government policies and sometimes it was used by governments in order to make mythical old times and thereby prove their genuineness and legitimacy. This glorification of ancient orientation also occurred in some other countries and even in societies having no continued history helped in creating national unity. "considering the fact that at the beginning of 20th century, novel nationalism with a global definition was inserted in to global arena, thus in Iran, Iranian nationalism was also fully informed of the historical awareness importance and knew that how this historical background could spread nationalist feelings. Reza shah also significantly exploited national unity weapons in pursuing his goals which one of them was ancient-oriented architectural style" (Kiani, 2004, p. 67).

4. Iranian architecture nationalism in first Pahlavi era

In the field of architectural nationalism most of experts believe that architects with that approach have sought to use pre-Islamic architectural elements. Vahid Ghobadian believes that formation of “national style” occurred in this era. From their viewpoint, national style is display of some ancient architectural ornaments in first Pahlavi era architecture.

In classification of first Pahlavi era architectural styles, Mostafa Kiani also introduced 3 architectural styles i.e. traditional style, ancient style and modern style and believed that nationalism in architecture of this era was one branch of ancient architectural style. It is worth to note that in first Pahlavi architectural era, in addition to special attention of government to ancient orientation in architecture, architects in this era, in addition to experience ancient orientation also paid attention to some post-Islamic architectural factors and occasionally tried to express national identity in Iranian architecture through applying national – religious identity by combining pre- and post – Islamic architectural elements and ornaments. Thus first Pahlavi era can be considered as the beginning of nationalism in Iranian architecture and emergence of these movements was on the basis of 3 major form of being influenced by social trends as follows:

A) Nationalist architecture based on tendency towards west modern architecture

Active and extensive presence of foreign companies, mostly German ones, which generally were active in construction of state buildings for example municipalities and police headquarters buildings in various Iranian cities
such as Tabriz, Orumie, Shiraz, Rasht, Gorgan, etc. led to formation of a type of architectural nationalism on the basis of west modern architectural models while leaving some limited ornaments relating to pre-Islamic period in building elevations. Among the other characteristics of this nationalist movement in architecture using materials on the basis of modern architectural features can be noted. Among this group of buildings the following can be mentioned.

1- Justice Ministry palace, by Gabriel Gueverkian, Tehran, 1937 -1946
2- Iranian National Bank, by Mohsen Foroughi, Tabriz (Fig. 1)
3- Iranian National Bank, Tehran market branch, by Mohsen Foroughi, 1941 (Fig. 2)
4- Iranian National Bank by Mohsen Foroughi, Shiraz

First, buildings were already existed and used as public buildings, mosques, Shrines, theological schools and sometimes personal houses. Since central government authority did not influence the design and construction of this sort of buildings, it can be said that the new period had almost no effect on their traditional historical trend. Second, buildings were designed on the basis of new needs and modern life style. In relation to these buildings, various architects tried to express the national identity of Iranian architecture along with preserving post-Islamic architectural elements and ornaments and sometimes combining them with pre-Islamic features. Among these buildings the following can be mentioned.

1- Hospital Shah Reza (Imam Reza peace be upon him) by Karim Taher zadeg Behzad, Mashhad 1928.
2- Central Post Office, by Nicholai Markov, Tehran, 1934
3- American College (Alborz High School) by Nicholai Markov, Tehran, 1925
4-Iranshahr School, by Andre Godar, Yazd, 1934 (Fig.3).

C) Nationalist architecture based on tendency towards pre-Islamic architecture

Throughout 18th and 19th centuries, gap for archeology reached its maximum level in USA and Europe along with publish of various books on Rome and Greek old ruins archeological excavations and explorations and also establishment of museums and this had a serious effect on formation of architecture and the product of this insight was emergence of 2 styles of Gothic and Neo classic. Iran also witnessed the presence of scientific figures such as Arthur Pope from USA and Andre Godar from France in the field of Iran post architecture studies. Holding significant congresses with approach to introduction of Iranian ancient art to other countries and also International millennium congress of Hakim Ferdowsi in Iran and establishment of national works council in 1925 were among the factors led to promotion and extension of archeology in Iran.

In revival of and exploitation of ancient oriented architecture, Pre-Islamic architectural works were
considered. Columns, capitals, stairs and ornamental designs and so on were borrowed from Sassanid and Hakhamanid eras. Of course, respecting the necessity of devising new functions there was no need for considering the pre-Islamic pattern of plan, design and architectural space. Buildings constructed in this period with ancient nationalist tendency can be studied in two following types:

**First:** Ancient elements and symbols were used in the elevations. Among this group the following could be indicated.
1. Ferdowsi’s Tomb, by Karim Taher zadeh Behzad, Toos, 1934
3. Police Headquarters palace, by Ghilich Baghlian, Tehran, 1936
4. Iranian National Bank saving fund by Heinrich, Tehran, 1936
5. “Anooshirvan-e-Dadgar” School, by Markov, Tehran, 1936 (Fig. 4)
6. Iran’s Booth in Brucel world Exhibition, 1935 (Fig. 5)

**Second:** Buildings in which design of volumes were conducted based on ancient structure without direct imitation of forms or elements of Hakhamanid, Ashkanid or Sassanid architecture. In this group of buildings, architects in their transition from uniform repeat and imitation and by relying on their taste and preference turned to design works which could be a representative of architectural character of their own time, though in this process there were ancient orientation traces. Among them, the following buildings can be indicated:
1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by Gabriel Guevrkian, Tehran, 1933-1937 (Fig. 6)
2. Iranian Ancient Museum, by Andre Godar, Tehran, 1933-1935
3. Isfahan National Bank, by Mohsen Foroughi, 1942 (Fig. 7)

As previously mentioned, during 20-year ruling of first Pahlavi, considering the evolutions and influence of west modern architectural thoughts, Iran became a bed for emergence and formation of several various types of architecture:
1. Modern Architecture
2. Traditional Architecture
3. Iranian Ancient – Oriented Architecture.

Since these types had emerged in Iran architectural bed in parallel, thus in some buildings a combination of the above–said types was emerged. But in this paper, considering the necessity of studying the way in which nationalism appeared in Iranian architecture, among 4 common types in this period, 3 cases affected by nationalist tendencies were studied and their formation grounds were analyzed.

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Fig. 4. "Anooshirvan-e-Dadgar" School, Markov, Tehran, 1936 (Banimasoud, 2009, p. 201)

Fig. 5. Iran's Booth in Brucel world Exhibition, 1935 (Banimasoud, 2009, p. 185)

Fig. 6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by Gabriel Guevrkian, Tehran, 1933-1973 (Rajabi, 1976, P. 51)
Table 1
The role of social trends in appearance of Iranian national architectural movements

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<th>Nationalist Movements Leaders In Iran</th>
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<th>Example for Architectural Works</th>
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<td>Tendency towards modern architecture</td>
<td>1- Applying west modern architectural patterns in designing volumes &lt;br&gt;2- Exploiting of some of pre-Islamic architectural ornaments in limited parts of building facades &lt;br&gt;3- Quality of construction and material tends mostly towards west prevalent architecture</td>
<td>1- Tehran Justice palace &lt;br&gt;2- Tabriz National Bank &lt;br&gt;3- Tehran market national Bank &lt;br&gt;4- Shiraz National Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1- Seyyed Jameleddin Asadabadi</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Tendency towards post-Islamic architecture</td>
<td>1- Keeping post-Islamic architectural elements and ornaments &lt;br&gt;2- Occasionally combination with pre-Islamic elements and ornaments &lt;br&gt;3- Meeting new needs and modern life pattern</td>
<td>1- Central post office &lt;br&gt;2- Hospital shah Reza (Imam Reza) &lt;br&gt;3- American college &lt;br&gt;4- Iranshahr school of Yazd</td>
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<tr>
<td>2- Mirza Yousof Mostashar-od-doleh</td>
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<td>1- Directly using pre-Islamic elements and ornaments &lt;br&gt;2- Not regarding pre-Islamic plan design patterns and architectural spaces</td>
<td>1- Anooshirvan school &lt;br&gt;2- North side of national consultative Assembly &lt;br&gt;3- Police Headquarters palace &lt;br&gt;4- Ferdowsi's tomb &lt;br&gt;5- Iran's booth in Brucel</td>
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Table 2
Role of world architecture trends in appearance of Iranian national architectural movements

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<th>Nationalist Intellectual Approaches</th>
<th>Picture of trends buildings</th>
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<td>Religious</td>
<td>Isfahan Imam mosque</td>
<td>1-Iranshahr school of Yazd</td>
<td>Andre Godar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2-Hospital shah Reza (Imam Reza)</td>
<td>Karim Taher Behzad</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(2) Iranian Ancient Museum
(3) Isfahan National Bank

(The Author)
### 5. Conclusions

Most of critics believe that Iranian architecture traveled its evolutional path under the influence of internal and external factors up to the end of Ghajarieh period and experienced various ups and downs with keeping its specific identity and originality. At the end of Ghajarieh and beginning of Pahlavi era, Iran witnessed a substantive transformation mostly caused by external factors. This transformation in architectural scope occurred in various political, cultural and social areas known as "revolution and disconnection" period, "transformation and transition" period etc.

According to the above, some Iranian contemporary intellectuals and modernists who a part of their thoughts and opinions partly had a nationalist approach, have created three dominant aspects of nationalism in Iran i.e. liberal, religious and ancient – oriented nationalism.

From the author's point of view, those 3 main approaches led to appearance of 3 nationalist architectural tendencies each having their own specific characteristics; of course it is worth to note that considering the roles played by such factors as ruling systems and architect attitudes, they should be separately addressed. Thus in a general conclusion the role of social trends in appearance of Iranian National architectural movements can be grouped and displayed as the table 1 and in table 2 the role of world architecture trends in appearance of Iranian National architectural movements is shown.

### References