

## Placeness in Architecture: Principles of Attitudes to Placeness in Iranian Caravanserais (Case study: Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, Iran)

### Abstract

This research aimed to explain the principles of attitude towards a place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan using structural elements and such components as view and body, order, identity, and memorability, representing the placeness of this Caravanserai. The present study uses a qualitative philosophical and inductive reasoning approach and library and field-based data-gathering methods to conclude that the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan has a simple, environmentally-compatible view which indicates simplicity. Meanwhile, what has given this building's placeness importance is that it arouses emotions of the observers who behold a building structure with green and commercial spaces in the region where it is located. In the meantime, structural and repetitive elements of the structure of this caravanserai have established unity, which underlies one of the most basic factors of attitude to place because it creates a unique picture. For this, one would claim that a phenomenological approach to the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan suggests that the semantic dimensions and unique identity of the place indicate the interconnection and rich interaction between the place features of this structure and the mental conceptions of the users. Therefore, establishing an extricable link with the surroundings' social, cultural, and environmental components. In sum, the caravanserai is considered a place with a stable identity due to the historical and cultural importance it has gained from its architectural components.

**Keywords:** *place attitude, body and view, order, identity, Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan*

**Mohammad Marzban Rad, 1 Mohammad Hassan Talebian 2\*, Eskander Mokhtari Taleghani 3**

*1 Ph.D. student, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Emirate Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran*

*Email: m.marzbanrad@yahoo.com  
Contact number: 09125389298*

*2 Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran*

*Email: mh.talebian@ut.ac.ir  
Contact number: 09124248022*

*3 Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran*

*Email: esk.mokhtari\_taleghani@iauctb.ac.ir  
Contact number: 09121388492*

### Research Questions

#### Main Question

- Should specific design models be explained to design the periphery of the historical buildings?

#### Secondary Questions

- How can the phenomenology attitude to place be used to qualitatively improve the contemporary urban structures surrounding the historical buildings in the city of Damghan (Case study)?
- Which components of explaining and understanding place phenomenology in the structure of contemporary buildings surrounding the historical buildings in the city of Damghan (Case study)?
- Does it need to explain specific design models for coordinating the structures of the buildings surrounding the historical texture of contemporary cities?

### Introduction

The place is a concrete representation of living in the world; place denotes spatial and temporal stability and consistency of living in the world, which is a meaningful part of space characterized by social relations (Amdu et al. 2016, 152). Thus, the reality of a place always reveals its definition within the heart of a social process. Spatial perception indicates peoples' link with the place, which is a component of place deeply connected with human values, thereby expressing processes and memories created in the wake of presence at the place

(Cheng & Daniels, 2016, 847). Each place has its specific spirit and characteristics, which reveal its special features. Man needs to perceive a sense of place. As a result, perception of place refers to an intimate and identifiable interaction with a place where man lives. In the meantime, the use of place cannot be reduced to the level of movement behaviors and sensual effects, emotional experiences, or rational perceptions. This usage involves all these dimensions at once; however, positivists reduce the concept of usage into its components to generalize the place experience because the place offers a diversity of situations for establishing human interactions (Tuan, 2010, 45). A place of this kind is not created in the light of objectivism and by a perspective that measures it simply based on usefulness. Thus, placeness seeks to create an environment that involves ambiguities and an endless level of meaning. Although one of the main components of experiencing space is the understanding of space or content or its message, the human confrontation with the artificial environment and even natural environments is not only limited to the perception of the environment's meanings (Meesters, 2019, 203). Consistent with the current century developments, modern architecture neither finds its roots back in its past nor does it interact with the local culture. This has thus reduced residents' belonging emotions and diminished the sense of attachment as a factor in turning spaces into environments with specific sensual and behavioral characteristics for people. It is worth noting that interaction between space and people inside it helps the place structure to achieve an excellent level. The confrontation between space and its structural elements,

together with its components such as body and view, order, identity, and memorability, represent place attitude in historical sites (Heydari & Behdadfar, 2016, 119). To explain this problem, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which the principles of attitudes to place are represented at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan. The research is founded on the hypothesis that from among principles of attitude towards a place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, the component of order and identity have had a greater role than other components. Thus, the main questions of the research are as follows: How are principles of attitude towards place represented at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan? Furthermore, which components of attitude to place have a greater role in the placeness of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan?

### **Research Literature**

Included in major studies conducted on the present research topic is the one by Pourmand and Fallah (2013), who used the descriptive-analytical method in their paper "Phenomenological review of the place; re-reading of the spatial identity of historical textures" to conclude that the structural environmental identity and organization of human-made places. Empty and full spaces tell of a need for a meaningful relationship with residents and representation of residence and lack thereof. Using the phenomenological research methodology, Seamon, (2013) concluded in his paper "Role of place in the phenomenology of dynamic spaces" that from a phenomenological point of view, the place is not an environment physically separate from relevant people. Rather it is an indescribable phenomenon that usually disregards peoples' experiences. In the meantime, this phenomenon is typically multi-faceted, dynamic, and complicated. It includes a production process through which a place, with its meanings and experiences, including place attachment, is changed.

On the other hand, from a holistic perspective, it is a dialectically productive phenomenon. In their article "Explanation of human and place relations in the process of designing architecture using a phenomenological approach," Negin Taji et al. (2017) used a descriptive-analytical method to conclude that at the initial stages of the design process (understanding of the problem), both phenomenological approaches of place can be used. At this stage, the use of place spirit as a guide for design in the design profession is both possible and obligatory; thus, the sense of place can be used with the participation of the stakeholders to create the capacity for an effective relationship between the individual and the place in the design process.

Moreover, the cognitive-based phenomenological approach can be used to learn from the design process and improve the relationship between the design and the real user. In this state,

the success of the plan in the creation of the sense of place can be measured after it is used. In their article "Representation of semiotic role in the process of transitioning from space to place in the historical complex of Sa'd Al-Saltana Ghazvin," Sekhavat Doust and Alborzi (2018) (that is shown in Diagram 2) used the descriptive-analytical method and the questionnaire and interview tools to conclude that the space user takes into account belongings, mental perceptual conceptions, assumptions, and experiences with the place (historical complex of Sa'd Al-Saltana) and its qualitative features such as sense of place and identity, memorability, permanence, and interaction with values of the space, conformity with the space and arousal of emotions to perceive and conceive qualitative concepts of the place. Given the research and theories in this regard, the background to the approach to place was determined, as most of the research emphasized the mental dimensions, conceptions, and social and cultural aspects of deep place perception. As stated, the present study looks to understand the representation of the principles of attitude to place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai to offer placeness criteria at the Iranian historical sites. It should be stated that no study has ever been undertaken in this regard.

### **Theoretical Foundations of the Research**

#### **Place**

The concept of place has been studied in various disciplines such as architecture, urban design, geography, psychology of the environment, etc. Various definitions of place have been provided, sometimes complicated and ambiguous. In general, definitions of place can be divided into two general categories; place as a geographical location, and place as a container for the transfer of meaning (Amdur et al. 2016, 152). The first category tends to focus on the structural and physical dimensions of a place. In contrast, the second category emphasizes the meanings and concepts inside the place, positing that these meanings distinguish a place from a simple geographical location (Tuan, 2010, 45). In this approach, place refers to a space where the human interacts with his surrounding environment. The place is characterized not only by its physical context but also by a spectrum of social and psychological processes where it occurs, and it is not only embodied inside the physical position. However, it is also full of symbolic meanings, emotional attachments, and feelings that people have in a specific situation (Stedman, 2012, 565). Hence, the place is not a static container for the physical and living characteristics; rather, it is a phenomenon resulting from a set of social and cultural mechanisms which attribute special values and meanings to it (Cheng & Daniels, 2016, 847).

#### **Perspective of Designers and Users of Placeness**

The meaning of a place is a factor that distinguishes it from other places and spaces. Some theorists maintain that meaning is created by the design of the structural environment. For Alexander, the environmental structure texture serves as a sign and transfers meanings. Thus, the meaning of a place is formed by the designer's attention to physical environmental features, including combination, forms, highlights, color, sounds, light, etc. (Alexander, 1979, 59). He also argues that meaning is created in a building where a combination of these elements is arranged along each other. If this building is supposed to be constructed at another place, the initial meaning, or as he put it, the initial sense of place, may no longer exist. Also, others hold that the environment does not have any meaning by themselves; rather, humans give meaning to it (Bonta, 2014, 46). In this connection, a group of theorists believes that the designer uses signs and symbols in both structure and

performance to inculcate the meanings to the environment. Others maintain that the role of uses of the place is very important in shaping the meaning to the place (Berdoulay, 2016, 87), that is shown in Diagram 1. For Meesters, different people have different motivations and needs and thus perceive various capacities of the environment and give meanings to the environment with behaviors they expose (Meesters, 2019, 203). In this connection, Amos Rapaport was concerned with the different meanings architects and users held for the environment. For Rapaport, the human mind uses forms and images to create schemata, thus giving meaning to the surrounding environment. On the other hand, he suggested that the peoples' culture influenced mental classifications and schemata, i.e., humans give importance to the objects and phenomena based on their culture and uses the meanings to classify those phenomena (Heydari & Behdadfar, 2016, 119).

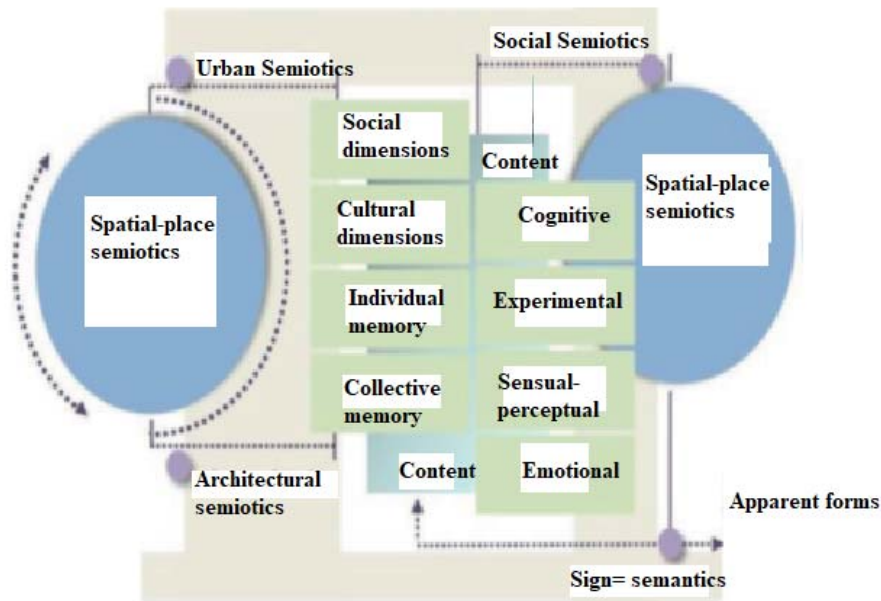


**Diagram 1: Developmental trend of mental factors pf place (Berdoulay, 2016, 87).**

**Social Semiotics of Place**

As shown by definitions in the realm of urban and architectural semiotics and the importance of meaningfulness and social and cultural dimensions in the semiotic approach to place, the subject matter of social semiotics in the urban space and sign-semantics has been raised to investigate different aspects of semiotics approach in the reading of places. Considering the relation between space and its meaning under the influence of cultural, social, experimental, and semantic contexts, reference to these metaphorical concepts of space can be regarded as the first stage of social semiotics in urban space (Lagopoulos, 2009, 175). Many theories related to urban semiotics have been

founded on social semiotics. The social semiotic approach in urban semiotics is aimed at criticizing behavioral geographical methods, concentrating on the urban structural fabric, and disregarding the meanings related to the urban space's social, cognitive, experimental, and emotional dimensions. Consistent with the social semiotics, the image of the city is formed using the individual and collective memory of the citizens, which helps connect various paces (Linda & Kolomyeytsev, 2014, 126). As stated previously, one would refer to the importance of the effects of cultural and cultural contexts on space semiotics.



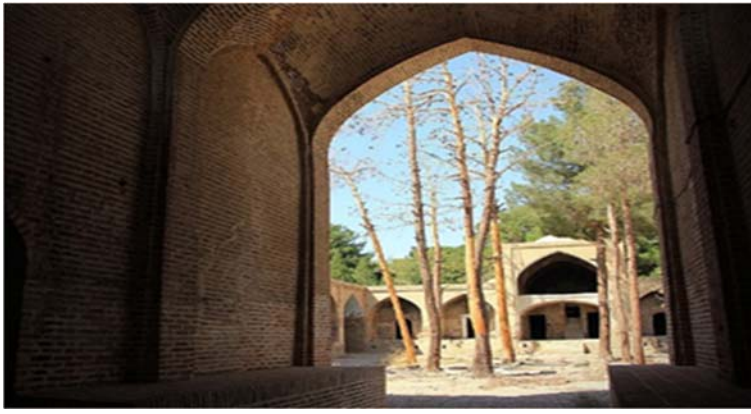
**Diagram 2. Introduction of different aspects of semiotics application in spatial-spatial studies (Sakhawat Doust & Alborzi 2018, 48)**

**Research Methodology**

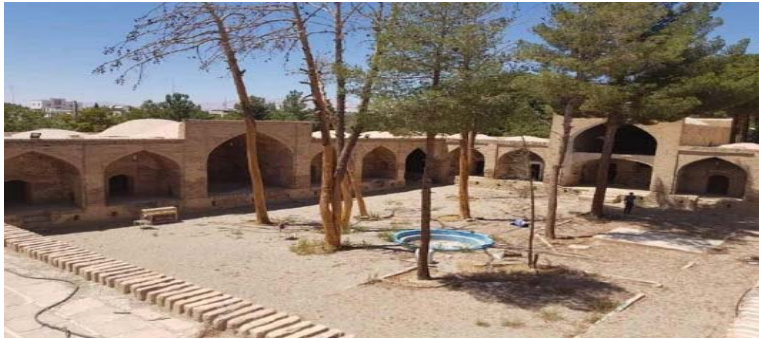
This research fell under fundamental research aimed at authentic and innovative exploration to increase the scientific load and better understand the concepts of the discipline and professions. This research is also a developmental-applied study that provides the necessary scientific context for resolving current and future issues. The present research uses an interpretive method in the data-gathering section. Here, descriptive methodology reviews the concepts, theoretical perspectives, and previous studies. In this method, credible foreign articles, books, and articles are first measured. Then the note-taking method is used to extract appropriate content and develop the theoretical sections' content structure. Also, the present research uses the interpretive-historical method to read theoretical basics and selected places. Also, logical reasoning and content analysis are used to analyze the principles of attitude to place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan.

**Introduction and Review of Case Study**

The Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan has great historical value due to its large area, location in the city center, and proximity to the historical building of Chehel Dokhtar and the offspring shrines of Imam Jafar and Imam Mohammad. The Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan is located in the city center of Damghan and is close to the World Tour inn. This building falls under the intra-city four-porch caravanserais, which has 20 chambers. The building entrance lies at the southern front, including a two-story portal (Image 1). Also, the northern porch of the building is founded on two stories. The facing of this building is simple without decorations, with four chambers placed in all four porches, laying along each other symmetrically. Also, the caravanserai courtyard is rectangular and has 31\*21 m dimensions (Image 2). It should be stated that this caravanserai is structured in the form of a load-bearing wall and an arch, with the major materials including bricks, stones, wood, and plaster mortar.



**Image 1: Entrance portal of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan (Author, 2021)**



**Image 2: Courtyard of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan (Author, 2021)**

### **Shah Abbas Caravanserai**

The city of Damghan is strategically important because it lies in the proximity of historical zones and green spaces. For this, a perception obtained from this caravanserai based on understanding its peripheral space is highly different from the one obtained by library studies about this work. Upon making a personal visit to the site and performing field surveys, this is because the researcher concluded that the nearby buildings, especially commercial sites, had failed to preserve and restore this caravanserai. Commercial buildings located in the proximity of the caravanserai and the green spaces in the surrounding witness many people who interact with each other daily. However, unfortunately, the failure to use this building and its destruction over time, followed by the infliction of much damage to the site, led the Shah Abbas Caravanserai to turn into a demolished one. Meanwhile, in the historical site of “Shah Abbas Caravanserai,” the term readability is more representative because the site does not enjoy spatial complexity; this has made the viewer obtain a broader knowledge of the building and its periphery in the initial minutes of the visit. This knowledge is also obtained because of the simplicity of the plan, the simplicity of the volume and main form of the building, the type of the fabric, and the simplicity of the building body materials both inside and outside the site.

If this building had complicated materials and decorations, the rich elements could invite the observer’s eyes towards itself, thus attracting greater moments of his senses. It should also be noted that the presence of green spaces and gardens as well as the Chahar Bagh plan in the middle of the courtyard, and the presence of a pond not only purified the environment but also improved the aesthetic aspects of the caravanserai. Consequently, the user’s perceptions and feelings are more involved in the space and environment, which distracts him from the passage of time. The unity and visual balance seen in the elements constituting this building, including structural elements, form rhythms, color, texture, and materials, etc., have greatly contributed to the general view of this building. Moreover, not only is the viewer informed of the history of the place and different time layers which have affected the site (from the Safavid era to the present time), but he is also made aware of the current and past uses (from a caravanserai to become a military barracks), and of cultural and identity characteristics of the building and the way the issue of place in this site is viewed.

### **Principles of attitude towards a place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan**

Many consider attitude towards a place to be taken from a relation between the individual and the environment. Thus, the understanding of place is formed at the moment of presence, whose structural characteristics help understand the place. For this, place characteristics of historical sites, which help




perceive the historical identity of each land, can be determined by the body and view, order, identity, and memories. It is noteworthy that if any of these components is missing in the place, its clarity will be lost for the observer, thereby having no meaning. The building view is perceived by the citizens and users of each building. If a building view is inappropriate, unreasonable, unrelated to the surroundings, undesirable, insecure, etc., how can it be expected to create an appropriate mental image in the citizens? The use of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai building is generally associated with the moment the user faces the building or has a presence there. When entering the caravanserai, the user and the observer begin to find out that it is the body and view of the building that reveals the general characteristics of the site in its entirety, not to mention that the building tells of its character, including its materials, forms, and proportions. Thus, to perceive and describe the role of the place in this building, one can refer to the situation where the environment matters most for the people, and that moment is arriving at this building. This is because this will give the site a special identity and change the users' perceptions and feelings. When entering the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, the user first confronts the entrance and its proportions, seeing him/herself in a position of humility and inferiority. Then, upon entering the courtyard and exposure to the water pond and plants there, s/he gains a state of composure and mental comfort, as if s/he is stripped of all the fatigue and exhaustion and begins to smell the fresh air. In the next step, he receives a sense of the courtyard environment to behold structural elements, such as the arches, materials, colors, etc., and analyzes them with his/her preconceptions. The Shah Abbas Caravanserai demonstrates a simple view compatible with its surrounding environment. It indicates simplicity and gives placeness to the site. When the user arrives at the site, his/her emotions are aroused and motivated by its proximity to the region's green and commercial spaces. For this, once the user sees the site for the first time, a new place is discovered in his/her mind because this caravanserai is full of diversity and multiplicity, and thus cognition occurs when the individual has had the previous familiarity with this place. Thus, one would suggest that the body and view of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan aimed at creating sensual and visual perceptions in the user are characterized by the form and texture of the building, relatedness with the surrounding environment, sequence and continuity in constant sightings, reminiscence of historical-social and cultural events, which affect the meaning, simple forms, composure, and mental state of the human being, with the presence of plant elements and water pond influencing the mind of the beholder. The resulting order is perceptual. This order at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan is represented in the form of an integrated and coherent (rectangular) state and the repetition and movement

rhythm in the forms of the external environment and internal spaces. It is also represented in the form of balance and symmetry in the plan, volume, and view, with every structural element in the building corresponding together through the totality. For this, this building is ordered based on unity and integration and thus can reveal unity and the place climate of the individual. Order at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan is derived from the perceived elements (e.g., continuous and symmetrical rhythm, direction at one point), the similarity between structural elements, and the group tendency to see the elements which have created together a good form (balance, uniformity, simplicity, etc.). Thus the user views the building's homogeneity this way. It should be mentioned that the order at this building helps strengthen the perceptual organization and excellence of this caravanserai, which also helps create a link between the structural elements. In this building, mass and volume are combined by using certain geometry and proportions and simple complete forms that help reveal the created spaces. Disregard for the human scale in volume and external facing of the building to create the visual impression for the observer is a strong factor because it will reduce the individual's visual contact with the surroundings and gradually get him/her enclosed inside the space, though not so much inculcating the feeling of fear on him/her. Meanwhile, in the design of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, the difference in the enclosure from a scale and building body proportions strengthens the contrast component, as the presence of natural elements inside the courtyard of the caravanserai has added to the visual attractions of the site. At the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, identity is derived through the historical events and, consequently, the elements inside the space, which, as if, tell of their usages, together with the structural components of this building. When seeing the building, the user begins to observe its determined boundaries and spatial realms where humans have a presence. In the architecture of this building, middle and intermediating spaces are focused much attention. Meanwhile, this building has an introverted maturity that has displayed an individual interpretation of its historical and social-cultural context through the forms, materials, rhythm and movement, balance and symmetry, and proportions. It should also be stated that this building has represented the historical and cultural traditions of the society. The category of communication in the identification of people in a society is an element that, in the past, created relatedness among different people; thus, caravanserais were the ones that helped them to get to know each other's similarities in social dimensions. People used to communicate with each other when taking rests at the caravanserais and make each other aware of observations of their places. A caravanserai played a key role in creating unity and uniqueness among its users. It should be noted, however,

that one of the main identity-making factors of the caravanserais was the issue of decorations. Since the Shah Abbas Caravanserai is decorated with a brick structure, its identity is thus discovered, as adjacent arches of this caravanserai which include openings, tell of the same identity. At the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, the presence of green spaces, proportions, coordination with the context, and use of natural environmental elements, formative forms, and characteristics have appeared. It is suggested that the elements, signs, and formative factors of the place, mental and visual qualities, and aesthetic considerations are among the inseparable factors of the place, as the totality that has constructed these factors tells of what it means to be a place. The Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan exhibits unity due to its structural and repetitive elements, and for this, it has managed to leave a united image. The main point suggests that the building has an appropriate identity-accepting element due

to its use of natural environmental elements in its courtyard, thus revealing memories in the users' minds. The component of orientation, which is the core component of memorability in each building, has very much visual clarity in the Shah Abbas Caravanserai, which reveals the sense of movement and consistency with the form of the entrance, proportions, and long stretching there. Memories have basic functions in identification with the environment. Hence, because the Shah Abbas Caravanserai is located in an adjacency with green spaces and uses a water pond and trees inside the courtyard, it identifies its context via its meaningful themes and has a unique character. According to the reviews carried out to integrate the concept of place identity into the selected work, in the next step, the structural components of the attitude to the place at the Shah Abbasi Caravanserai of Damghan are analyzed from the perspective of the researcher (Table 1).

**Table 1: Analysis of structural components at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan using the attitude-to-place approach (Author, 2021).**


Component Explanations	Image
<p><b>Materials</b> The form of the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, which is designed proportionate to the context and the surrounding, can communicate with the commercial and residential buildings as well as green spaces surrounding itself. The selection of the type of materials (bricks) as the main materials of the building has made it concerted with its surrounding context and proportionate to the local and regional materials.</p>	
<p><b>Proportions</b> The proportions of this building which stretches more in the longitudinal axis compared to the transverse direction, and the higher stretching of it have revealed the grandeur of this building as compared to the past, which adds to the historical identity of the building. In the meantime, the brick decorations of the building and the type of arches that are lateral all demonstrate the concerted measures used to identify the site.</p>	
<p><b>Lighting</b> To revive and restore the walls, no special lighting has been taken into account; thus, this attitudinal component of the place specifically needs to be reviewed.</p>	
<p><b>Color</b> Because bricks were used in the construction of the wall, the main color is brick, which corresponds to the ground, pavement, and adjacent buildings, which are also made of brick. For this, it helps to prevent visual disturbance.</p>	

## Results

Results from the study conducted on the place altitude towards the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan as regards semantic dimensions and special identity of the place suggest a profound interaction and relatedness of the characteristics of the place under study and their deep link with social, cultural, and environmental components, making the present complex as having historical and cultural importance, and giving sustainable identity to the place. According to the current

reviews and observations of the place under study, the site is a sample of a dynamic and unique space due to its special identity as a historical and cultural site related to the surrounding green space. Its context, use of natural elements in the courtyard of the Caravanserai, adjacency of the Caravanserai with the other sites, quality of the activities there, the importance of holding cultural events and social interactions help increase the sense of place and create mental images for the citizens.

**Table 2: Place attitude issues at the Shah Abbs Caravanserai (Author, 2021).**

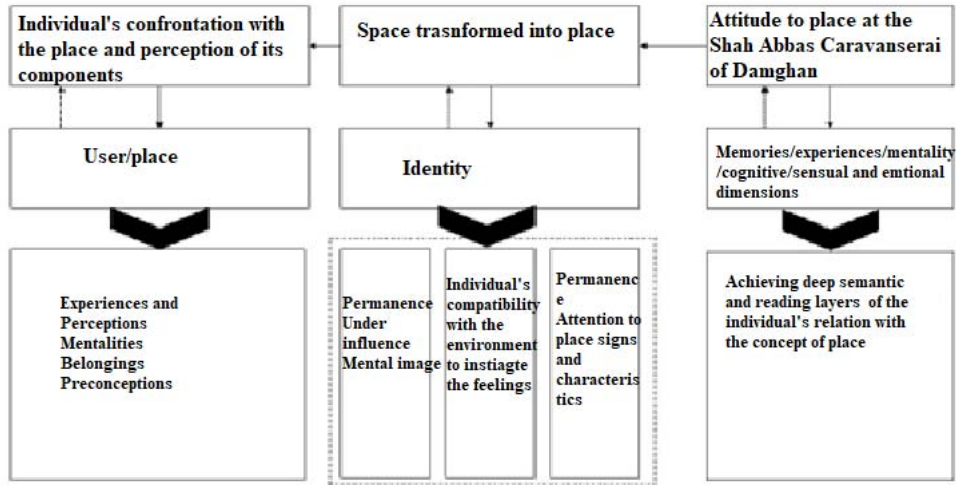
Key components and elements	Explanations
Spatial meaningfulness	Social interactions across history/concertedness with the surrounding context
Giving spirit to the place through structural components	Use of natural and living elements (water and plants) has given spirits to this place
Sensual perception	This sensual perception is made through the structural elements, specifically the natural elements in the courtyard
Integration with memories	Having an identity/place for special interactions/indication of the history and culture of the Safavid era through placeness and structural elements
Identity through structural elements	This site has revealed its identity due to the use and history of the building along with its local materials. This building is a metaphorical one which has, due to its use of natural elements and existing spaces and structural elements, managed to instigate memories and create a deep place identity in the user.
	
<b>Decorations</b>	
Valuable components of place attitude to the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan	Historical events and social-cultural interactions
	Valuable adjacencies
	Interaction with the environment
	Structural and visual elements

## Conclusion

The place reflects a human's awareness of the world, his experiences in life, and voluntary dependencies on the environment. Man is also part of the phenomena that exist around him (reality), which he receives via his five senses and transfers to the mind (objectivity), thus experiencing it via interaction with the environment (perception and behavior) so that he acquires a mentality in the form of a mental image of the environment. In other words, place phenomenology is said to be the human's relationship with the place through the place with the space and the way he is. For this, the concept of place falls under the category of objectivity and has a form and performance consistent with the space definition. Accordingly, what creates a special meaning for the human being, creates

memories in mind, and turns the space from an objective phenomenon into a mental creature is called place. This definition is expressed in the form of space + meaning. Thus, as a result of the link with the place, man considers himself part of the place, thus creating a mental image of that place to perceive the place using his own experiences of the signs, meanings, performances, and characters. Because many of the human behaviors in the environment are influenced by the mentality and meaning of the place, he will discover an unbreakable link with the place. In sum, one would suggest that as long as the place meaning is sought in the physical structure and activities that occur there, nothing will be found; rather, meaning should be sought in the mental images and experiences of humans of place. the role of placeness at Shah

Abbasi's caravanserai in the transitioning of space to place is expressed in diagram 3 by the author



**Diagram 3. Explaining the role of placeness at Shah Abbasi's caravanserai in the transitioning of space to place (author, 2021)**

The present research aimed to investigate the principles of attitude to place at the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan from the perspective of place and its meaningful content, and generally, the process of transitioning from body and view to order, identity, memory, and structural components. For this, the research hypotheses on the use of principles of attitude to place as a complementary role were evaluated to better read the place and qualitatively improve it, as suggested by the literature review, as well as conclusions by the researchers' content analyses and observations conducted. A review of the literature which studied the relationships between the approach to place, surveys, and observations performed at the place under study (Shah Abbas Caravanserai), which is a historical place, involved a spectrum of conceptual-semantic functions. Evaluations suggested that the structural and physical dimensions of the place were more focused on measuring the attitudes to place in historical buildings of Damghan, which would help adopt an approach to meanings and concepts. This is because it is due to the structural elements of place that meaning is created, and it is here where man interacts with the surrounding environment. At the Shah Abbas Caravansary of Damghan, readability tends to be more represented due to its enjoyment of spatial complexity. Consistent with the simplicity of the plan, simplicity of the volume and main form of the building, type of the fabric, and simplicity of the building body materials, either inside or outside, this caravanserai helps the viewer to obtain a fast understanding of the building and its surrounding at the initial minutes of the visit.

Meanwhile, in this building, the presence of green spaces, the Chahar Bagh design plan in the middle of the court, and the water pond have improved the environmental perspective. For

this, the user's perceptions and feelings get involved in the environment and the space and are distracted from the passage of time. When entering the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan, the user first confronts the entrance and its proportions, seeing him/herself in a position of humility and inferiority; then, upon entering the courtyard and exposure to the water pond and plants there, s/he gains a state of composure and mental comfort, as if s/he is stripped of all the fatigue and exhaustion and begins to smell the fresh air. The Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan has a simple, environmentally-compatible view which indicates simplicity. Meanwhile, what has given this building's placeness importance is that it arouses emotions of the observers who behold a building structure with green and commercial spaces in the region where it is located. In the meantime, structural and repetitive elements of the structure of this caravanserai have established unity, which underlies one of the most basic factors of attitude to place because it creates a unique picture. For this, one would claim that a phenomenological approach to the Shah Abbas Caravanserai of Damghan suggests that the semantic dimensions and special identity of the place indicate the interconnection and rich interaction between the place features of this structure and the mental conceptions of the users. This establishes an extricable link with social, cultural and environmental components of the surroundings. In sum, the caravanserai is considered a place with a stable identity due to the historical and cultural importance it has gained from its architectural components.

## Acknowledgment

I sincerely appreciate the honorable directorate of Emirates Branc Islamic Azad University, who helped us conduct the research.

## Conflict of interest

None.

## Financial support

None.

## Ethics statement

None.

## References

- Alexander, Christopher. 1979. *The Timeless Way of Building*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Amdur, Liron, and Marina Epstein-Pliouchtch. 2016. Architects' Places, Users' Places: Place Meanings at the New Central Bus Station, Tel Aviv. *Journal of Urban Design* 14(2): 147-161.
- Berdoulay, Vincent. 2016. *Place, meaning and discourse in French language geography*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Bonta, Juan Pablo. 2014. *Architecture and its Interpretation: A study of expressive system in Architecture*. London: Lund Humphries.
- Cheng, Antony S., and Steven E. Daniels. 2016. Examining the interaction between geographic scale and ways of knowing in ecosystem management: a case study of place based collaborative planning. *Forest Science* (49): 841-854
- Heydari, A.A., & Behdadfar, N. 2016. Review the different aspects of the meaning of place from the perspective of architects and non-architects. *Bagh-e-Nazar* 43: 128-117.
- Lagopoulos, Alexandros Ph. 2009. The social semiotics of space: Metaphor, ideology, and political economy. *Semiotic journal* 173: 169-213.
- Linda, S., and A. Kolomyeytsev. 2014. Semiotics of the city's pedestrian space'. *Środowisko Mieszkaniowe*, 13: 125-129.
- Meesters, J. 2019. *The Meaning of Activities in the Dwelling and Residential Environment*. Doctoral Thesis. Netherlands: Delft University of Technology mieszkaniowe housing environment, 13: 125- 129.
- Negin Taji, S.; Ansari, M. & Pourmand, H.A. 2016. Investigating the relationship between man and place in the architectural design process using a phenomenological approach. *Journal of Fine Arts, Architecture and Urbanism* 22(4): 80-71.
- Pourmand, H.A. & Falah. H. 2013. Phenomenology of the place for re-reading the identity of the place in the historical context. *Art Quarterly* 16: 181-21.
- Seamon, David. 2013. Place attachment and phenomenology. *Place attachment: Advances in theory, methods and applications* 12-22.
- Sekhavat, N. & Alborzzi, F. 2018. Reflecting the role of semiotics in transitioning from space to place in the historical collection of Saad al-Sultaneh of Qazvin. *Urban Studies Quarterly* 32: 66-47
- Stedman, R. C. 2012. Towards a social psychology of place: predicting behavior from place-based cognitions, attitude and identity. *Journal of environment and psychology*, (34): 561-581.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 2010. *Space and place: The perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press.