

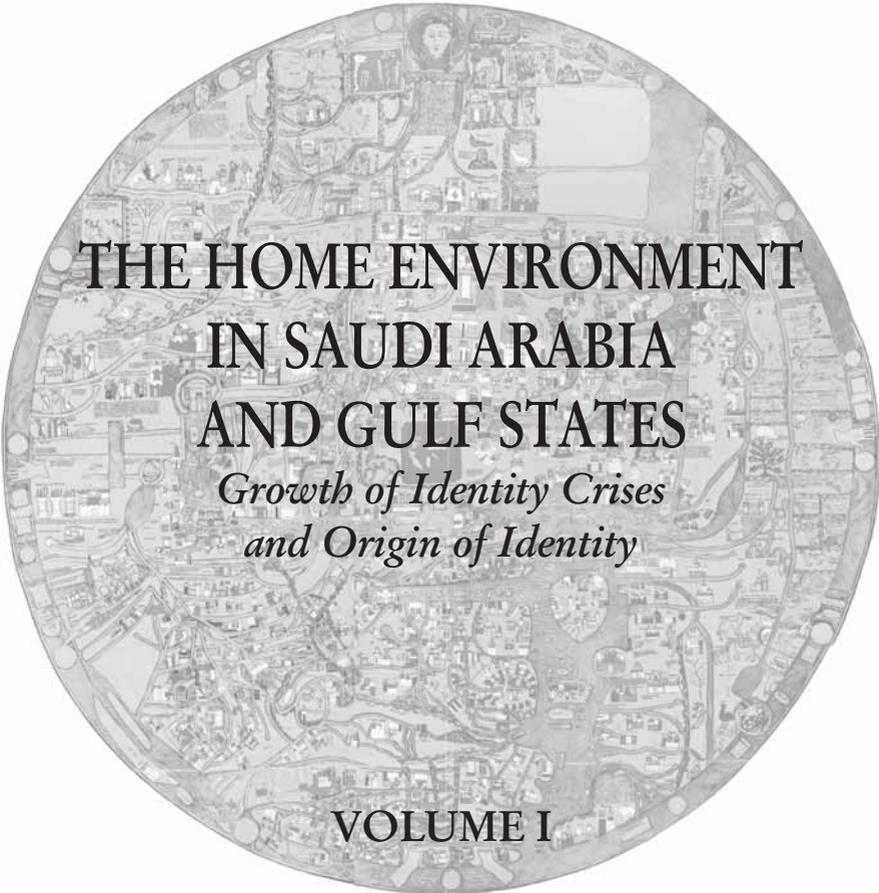


FACOLTÀ
DI SCIENZE POLITICHE

CRiSSMA

CENTRO DI RICERCHE SUL SISTEMA SUD E IL MEDITERRANEO ALLARGATO
RESEARCH CENTRE ON THE SOUTHERN SYSTEM AND WIDER MEDITERRANEAN

MASHARY A. AL-NAIM



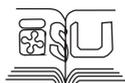
**THE HOME ENVIRONMENT
IN SAUDI ARABIA
AND GULF STATES**

*Growth of Identity Crises
and Origin of Identity*

VOLUME I

CRiSSMA WORKING PAPER

N. 10 - 2006



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Milano 2006

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**The Home Environment
in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States**

Growth of Identity Crises and Origin of Identity

PREFACE

by
VALERIA FIORANI PIACENTINI

Be that as it may...

I have been fascinated by the Gulf, its physical challenges and its intellectual life for many years now. I first visited the Gulf in 1972. I was a young academic and the President of my University, then it was the Trieste University, submitted my name to the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs as the historian-member of a joint team in charge of studying the island of Harmuz. It was a cathartic experience and a wonderful period. We camped in the wilderness on the small islet of Harmuz, in the shadow of the “Portuguese fortress”, and there I spent three months under the (virtual) leadership of Professor Umberto Scerrato.

From then on I began to wander around the Gulf as part of ethno-anthropological teams or conducting archaeological studies into the mercantile dimension of the Bandar and Kingdom of Harmuz and the caravan-routes connecting this once glorious maritime outlet with the Iranian continent and Central Asia on the one hand, and the Arabian Peninsula on the other.

Memories of the fragrance and the atmosphere, the dust, the intense heat, the vivid reds and whites of these barren lands, their harsh salty plains and sandy yellow deserts, scanty wells and steep indented blackish mountains, violet skies and imposing ruins which

have survived the ravage of centuries, the deep silence of the nights and the soft whisper of the wind always come flooding back.

The Gulf: Seaboard and Hinterland, the twofold dimension of this unique sea, within a unique time-space framework. The hard conditions of life there seemed however to have preserved codes and practices deeply rooted in a more or less remote past, helping to account for the far-reaching activities that social groups (coastal communities and inland peoples) have so far been able to conduct, notwithstanding the marked contrast between an already entrenched modernity and a lively popular tradition: the plastic image of a still continuing definite mercantile and cosmopolitan dimension.

Since 1972 politics and ever changing strategic targets have profoundly reshaped life in the Gulf, and things have moved very fast. However, human intervention did not undercut the roots of this magic world and its culture. Modernity stepped in. Modernisation, westernisation, globalisation...new ages and new dimensions have rapidly entered the history and life of this region, dramatically altering its image, affecting its physical and human environment. Themes of research also changed dramatically: history became international relations and political science; urbanisation, modernisation and westernisation brought with them the crucial topic of tradition. Education is at the core of this stage and of internal and international debates and conferences.

However, life is full of coincidences.

It was therefore with great pleasure that, during one of the annual *July Seminars for Arabian Studies* held in London, I met Professor Mashary Al-Naim and was able to listen to his paper. While the Western world was centred on globalisation, democracy and freedom, the Arabian world was in search of its own identity, tradition and historical sequence. Thus, a multi-disciplinary exchange of views took place with this distinguished scholar, and I was fascinated by Professor Mashary Al-Naim's approach to the cultural connections of the Gulf region, its individual people as much as general patterns and ecological environments. In particular,

I was deeply impressed by the case he produced, that is to say the Saudi Arabia experience and Hofuf. It proved to be puzzling, suggesting new methodological approaches and new clues to the re-reading and understanding of literary sources. Thence, a vivacious collaboration took place. New concepts came to the fore, reflecting the interplay of the various aspects of time and space, focusing on individual case studies: the geographical development of the Gulf, the *fereej* system, its ‘social time’ (meaning the way a society organises its time, for example, how sedentary people in the oasis are influenced by their agricultural land), and individual time (that is, how an individual organises his or her time). Another aspect I was fascinated by was the “monumental – architectural – architectonic” approach to the thorny issue of modernisation vs. tradition, that is “identity”. This meant to break down certain barriers and enter history with its cultural heritage, its various components and historical phases, irreplaceable evidence of the region’s peoples and of the cultural influences exercised there by other “worlds” with their individual cultures and respective models of organising “space and time”. This also meant to complement textual evidence with material data provided by other sources (for example, archaeology, epigraphy, numismatics, and monumental evidence).

This book reflects the interplay of these various aspects. It provides fresh evidence and overviews that, in turn, lead to specific case studies, such as that of Hofuf. All in all it provides new, fresh “thoughts”, to stimulate further research and new studies, to shed new light and enable this region to be explored from north to south: a major cultural, economic, demographic, urban study. This is extraordinary given the international significance of the Gulf: no longer and not only a lake of globalised, westernised economic opportunities, but still a route to many other places, a bridge between the Mediterranean basin and the Indian Ocean, between Arabia, Africa and the Asian continent, where its cities have always been prominent centres of power and civilisation, which determined the fortunes of the world revolving around it for millennia. We are

facing a well-documented identity and culture no longer neglected or ignored vs. a Westernised modernity. We are confronted with solid and well-documented reality, which provides a new impending model of “home environment” and identity.

A new age...

A new age is dawning, conventionally referred to as the “oil and gas new age”. An age of non-distance, of revolutions and new ideologies. The historical frame of reference may conclude that the Second World War marked a turning point for the whole system of security and international relations. It put the final seal on the undisputed centrality of the Energy-Factor and its markets, thus reshaping bipolar confrontation, the process of economic and market globalisation and the build-up of a new world order characterised by new actors, new riches and new values.

The second half of the last century witnessed an atmosphere of anachronisms and contradictions, dominated and conditioned by scientific discoveries. New ideas seemed to take flight and regional cultural barriers collapsed to give way to new forms of cultural “globality”: the urbanisation process, modernity vs. tradition. The Gulf people and the Gulf environment were no exception.

At the end of the last millennium, the Information and Communication Revolution began to give way to a new and more frightening revolution, the Bio-Technological Revolution, which nowadays is emerging on the world stage as a new power. Neither the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991) nor the post-bipolar era promoted any realistic change towards new fundamental cultural opportunities or broader measures to establish a more visible, coherent institutional policy structure. In a different way, it accelerated the critical goal of political and economic change in the Gulf, providing unsatisfactory alternatives, significant liabilities, without undercutting the roots of those negative factors which were destabilising the region.

In this context, the dominant factors were uncertainty, violence, micro-macro criminality, abuse of power and oppression, regional conflicts and new forms of conflict. Corruption prevailed, together with illegal trafficking and crime, and the indiscriminate exploitation of the environment added natural disasters and new forms of human catastrophe.

At the dawn of the third millennium, all these realities still represent a worrying, new challenge and demand a positive reshaping of civil and political society. And within this broader framework the transitional residential context of the Gulf has definitely brought the issue of identity and tradition to the core of this worrying stage – as properly underlined by Professor Al-Naim, and lively debated also within the Arabian region. And there is no doubt that within this broader framework the home environment acquires a crucial role as a precious instrument for maintaining a balanced relationship between physiological and psychological needs, avoiding gaps and conflict between generational cultures, between traditional education and the dominant culture of today – western –, avoiding conflict in an otherwise deeply divided society which faces the dramatic confrontation of the inescapable process of modernisation/westernisation with a still deeply-rooted tradition.

It is concerns such as these which, several years ago, alongside IT and bio-technology, gave life to new intellectual stimuli destined to have a marked impact on the third millennium and the new system which men are forging within a new world order: Man and Mankind, History and its Philosophy, the Universe and its Laws, Modernisation and Tradition.

The dominant culture of today – western – is essentially pragmatic: geo-politics, geo-strategy, geo-economy are among the main issues of western as well as non-western literature when confronting the new post-bipolar order. This trend is forcing scholars, academics, thinkers, government officials and opinion makers to define anew religious-cultural identities in the light of a new set of assumptions about the world and its creation, about the

universe and cosmos. At the core of it history, man and mankind nourish a new and lively debate. A reciprocal relationship must continue and this must involve society in its entirety, amalgamating it, creating new links between civil and political society, and, through a careful balance of technological development and the preservation of ancient traditions, making possible social and economic justice. Both form the basis of order, stability, security and development within – and never outside – their own cultural tradition and environment.

This is a central topic, the only and best approach to stimulating the reform vital to any long-term policy. The expression “the world is a global village” is a well-known cliché. But this global village is pluralistic in a religious and cultural sense as well, and within this global village Arabian civilisation has forged its own order and dimension.

In my personal opinion, Professor Mashary Al-Naim’s masterly study enhances this reality, viewed against the backdrop of the local horizon. He casts new light upon a crucial issue – identity. Change and resistance in the Gulf societies, with specific regard to Saudi Arabia – through a special lens, that of home environment / identity, without undermining the roots of a traditional culture and its vigorous heritage, preserving its own life and system notwithstanding a rapidly developing society.

Within this anthropological dimension, relationships are viewed beyond myth and the veil of legend and shared in cooperation with the impending factor of a westernised modernisation with its concrete culture. The case study of Hofuf represents a pivotal moment; it is a key-factor on the stage of this historical process.

...and a new methodological approach

Professor Al-Naim’s methodological approach has a strong impact and plays a crucial part in this study.

At the dawn of the third millennium, the thread of history takes us back to new methodological approaches. There is a clear

worldwide perception that a new version of history is required, and we are moving towards a new “global history” and new methodological lines of research, which must be, at one and the same time, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. The material culture comes in, not so much and no longer as an alternative atheistic approach to history and the universe (as it was only a few decades ago), but as a key to the understanding of facts and events, a no less precious clue to the re-reading of all available literature and all available sources. The intellectual world is facing a new historiographical debate, a debate into which the Islamic world has also entered. Professor Al-Naim’s study authoritatively opens a new intellectual and historiographical trend. Knowledge and the vision of the world and its new order are translated into a new philosophy of culture and history. Rationality, historicity of scientific knowledge, nature and experience, nature and human *ratio*, science and ethics, science and its language, dialogue and the great ideologies of past eras and the present, revolution and power, modernity and socio-cultural bonds...these are among the main themes discussed and dealt with. Here, tradition takes form, emerges as a result of mankind’s need for a certain predictability, it becomes a relevant element in the traditional culture of the ordinary people. We are facing and confronted with the relativity of cultures, the antitheses between culture and civilisations – thus provoking further reflections.

The importance of history as the discipline capable of enhancing “our knowledge of Man” had already been stressed by Fu'ad al-Shayb in the course of a seminar held in Cairo in the nineteen-seventies, when he stated that the existence of a conflicting approach to the study of history “is a healthy sign” that ought to be encouraged. Muslim cultural debate is by now privileging such new methodological lines. History can no longer be a recurrent event, representing itself endlessly as if it resembled a concatenation of birth and death, love and hatred, fear and revenge, battle and truce. To write history is a sort of pioneering adventure, a conquest. Seen in this light, human civilisation – in all its varied spiritual and

material aspects – becomes a succession of experiences and their cross-fertilisation, a mimesis of ideas and opinions. Consequently, human progress can be seen also as a transcendental-dialectical movement, full of benefits and promises. In this scheme of things, history does not represent the usurpation of God’s sovereignty and legitimacy, unassailably placed beyond the realm of human endeavour. Having man as its subject, history has to be the biography of a constant struggle to overcome human nature, to understand the past in order to live the present and plan the future, to explore the possibility and work out the modalities of developing better mutual understanding as an essential requisite for a truly pluralistic world order and society.

Thus, beyond the new technological and economic dimension, Man and the spiritual dimension of human existence are a critical factor that cannot be disregarded. Modernisation, progress, efficiency, growth, production do not clash with principles such as social justice and economic progress, or with Man’s inherent need to transcend and reach out to the Creator.

The social resistance emerging from the overlapping between the concept of modernisation and the concept of westernisation in the Gulf-home environment has obviously encouraged researchers and architects to search for identity, translating this social resistance into forms.

This means tearing the veil, opening up to “mobile pluralism” – as properly stated by the Author. For architecture, this also means borrowing from the past, opening up to history in order to re-read, adapt and apply the laws of tradition and its identity in all its aspects and in harmonious and orderly sequence. According to the Author, these human activities do not conflict with development and technology; they constitute progress and result in gradual improvement, provided they take place within the harmony of the cosmic order of tradition. They must occur within pre-determined perimeters and on the basis of a fixed axis: a reflection of the organic traditional Arabian-Islamic conception of the cosmos and its

interrelated components as opposed to the negative impact of western images on the Gulf cities and their urban structural system. They must not become a faint-copy of western-inspired nationalism.

Seen in this perspective, after many years of in-depth research carried out by the Author of this book, this undoubtedly represents a thorough analysis of and approach to a crucial issue. The methodological line of research gives a lucid picture of physical and social organisations in the external domestic space in traditional Gulf cities. Of paramount interest are the chapters dedicated to Hofuf – a splendid, glorious city and oasis dating back centuries. The perceptual and collective identities in domestic spaces are accurately depicted: the process of identification, the phenomenon of continuity and change of identity in its home environment through the various phases of its life and history.

If one compares the material and socio-political environment of the Gulf in earlier decades of the last century with that of this decade, it may seem as though one is comparing two different worlds. Nevertheless, the society of the native population has itself changed remarkably little. To a foreigner – and scholar – attitudes, values, the culture formed under different circumstances continue to be essential to the family's life and its environment. They still are essential features and components in the interaction of this multinational society and the recently created state realities and structures. Seen precisely from this perspective, the concepts of identity and home become central, and in this book they are masterly explored and their theoretical aspects and empirical reality skilfully dealt with.

This study definitely helps not only the interested outsider, but all of us – scholars and international community – to understand the Gulf and its pluralistic society from a historical perspective and sequence up to and including the present social and institutional complexity.

It may also provide this same interested reader and/or scholar with a systematic clue to the interpretation of events leading up to

the present situation, special focus being dedicated within the Gulf environment to Saudi Arabian society and the many challenges of this new age, basically represented by modernity and a “westernised” process of modernisation. This study, whilst enhancing the consolidation of an inescapable political and institutional process, aims at providing a different model based on tradition and home environment spaces. It works out the building of a consensus based on identity, group identity and protection without coercion, behind the façade of a short term “democratic process” destined to explode with even greater force later on.

Milano, 23rd April, 2006

INTRODUCTION: SEARCHING FOR ARCHITECTURAL IDENTITY IN SAUDI AND GULF CITIES

1. Prologue

Traditional societies in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Region showed very harmonious relationships within their home environments. This ceased to be the case when these societies were exposed to rapid economic and social change in the second half of last century. Those values and experiences which were inherited for centuries have been threatened by the new actors in the built environment: designers and governmental institutions; they have broken the previous relationship between the people and their physical settings.

It is expected that Gulf people will resist the new imposed forms. This is because people tend to distinguish themselves from others through different communication systems, and the built environment is one of those systems that enable people to express their identity. Therefore, they will resist those elements which may prevent them from expressing themselves. This resistance is because people always search for a device to enable them to maintain a balanced relationship between physiological and psychological needs.

The transitional residential context in the Gulf has brought the question of identity to centre stage. This work, however, is not interested in the reasons behind the need for identity in the Gulf home environment; rather it aims to understand and describe the

impact of this phenomenon on the development of the private house form in the city of Hofuf. How has the private house responded to individual and group expression in the home environment? The subject of this study is continuity and change of identity in the Saudi home environment in general and in the city of Hofuf in particular. We are trying to identify those cultural aspects and values which play an essential role in the creation and reinforcement of people's identity in their home environment.

2. Identity: Change and Resistance in the Gulf Societies

'...collective identity search is symptomatic of the fact that some modern social systems deprive people of psychological "payoffs," the lack of which, expressed by terms such as alienation, meaningless, identity problem, motivates a mass grouping for activities and symbols with which to restore or find new identity. ... When mass movements become concerned with identity, they develop certain characteristics, such as "ego-screaming," concern with costume and self-ornamentation, style rebellion, concern with emotional gestures rather than practical effects...'¹

Understanding the impact of self and group expressions on the development of house form and design requires answers to several questions. Among these questions are: What is meant by self and group expression? What is meant by identity? Is there any specific way to create an identity in the home environment? Is there any fixed definition for the concept of identity? If there is such a definition, what about the mechanism of social change? To what extent has this dynamic mechanism influenced the existing identity? Can we argue that the concept of identity is a dynamic phenomenon that may change over time and take different forms? And if so, can we trace a spatio-temporal path for the continuity and change of identity and its physical representation in the home environment? This book is concerned with all these questions. However, we need

¹ Klapp, O. (1969) *Collective Search for Identity*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., p. vii.

to discuss some of them in a preliminary way here to introduce the issue of identity in the Saudi home environment, its roots and its consequences.

The purpose of the following discussion is to present the issue of identity as a phenomenon associated with the drastic transformation that social and physical traditions in Saudi Arabia have passed through. We are looking for continuity and change of identity in the home environment, how people preserve or change their identity. This discussion will introduce the issue in its broadest perspective. Concepts such as traditions, modernisation, and westernisation will be addressed with special consideration of their role in enhancing the search for identity in the Saudi home environment.

2.1 *Tradition vs Modernity*

Many traditional societies have been influenced by the process of modernisation, especially in this century. Traditional society in Saudi Arabia has been transformed from isolated regions constituting small villages scattered here and there, to a modern country with large cities and a huge transportation network. The radical and rapid transformation that took place in Saudi Arabia was a result of the increase in oil revenue after World War II². This influenced the traditional political, economic, and social orders and increased the gap between traditional orders and the new orders³. A new way of thinking was created within the old societies contradicting the previous one. Traditional societies were dependent on traditions and customs as codes for organisation while contemporary modern societies are strongly influenced by rationality. The faith of modern societies is usually based on science, pragmatic reasoning and

² Lebkicher et al. (1960) *Aramco Handbook*, Netherlands, Arabian American Oil Company, p. 74. Also Facy, W. (1992) *Riyadh: The Old City*, London, Immel Publishing, pp. 302-3.

³ Lipsky, G.A. (1959) *Saudi Arabia: Its People, its Society, its Culture*, New Haven, HRF Press.

utilitarianism, while traditional societies tend to believe in the legitimacy of scriptural teaching and traditional norms⁴.

While tradition contrasts with modernity, they cannot both exist in isolation in a society. This can be contrasted with C. B. Wilson's (1988) statement that 'society cannot be both modern and traditional at the same time'⁵. The 'strands of tradition', however, may continue in modern societies even when the society to which they belong has disappeared, but we should realise that these strands do not reflect the whole tradition⁶. The view that sees traditions able to continue in modern societies can be linked to what Shils suggests when he stresses that the ambiguity and flexibility of traditions had enabled the new concept to survive and develop. In that sense, traditions

'... often possess sufficient ambiguity and hence flexibility to allow innovations to enter without severely disruptive consequences. Then, too, patterns of traditional beliefs (and their accompanying practices) do not form such a rigorously unitary whole; some parts are more affirmative toward modernity, or at least less resistant toward innovation. Many traditional beliefs are not so much objects of zealous devotion to symbols of the past as they are the resultants of a situation without alternatives. Once alternatives become visible and available, what appeared to be an immobile tradition might well yield to a new practice'⁷.

Despite the common belief that a society becomes modern only when it totally rejects its traditional socio-cultural bonds, continuity

⁴ Lerner, D. (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, New York, The Free Press, pp. 48-9. Also Shils, E. (1966) *Political Development in the New States*, Paris, Mouton & Co. Shils indicates that the traditional societies are 'attached to beliefs and rules which guided past practices, and which are regarded as guides to right practice in the present. The attachment to these beliefs is firmer or more intense than it is in modern societies, and it is more widely shared throughout the society'. (p. 31).

⁵ Cited in Fu, C. (1990) *Regional Heritage and Architecture – A Critical Regionalist Approach to a New Architecture for Taiwan*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, p. 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷ Shils, E. (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 32.

of traditions in modern societies is essential. This is not to say that the society will be both traditional and modern, but as Popper explained, tradition emerges as a result of our need for a certain predictability in our social life. In this regard tradition provides order and regularity in our social environment, and it provides us with the possibility of communication⁸. Without tradition 'there can no longer be reliance on the accepted norms'⁹. However, 'tradition is not a matter of a fixed or given set of beliefs or practices which are handed down or accepted passively'¹⁰. Rather, as Wright (1985) has argued, 'tradition is very much a matter of present-day politics ...'¹¹.

Continuity of traditions or their strands in modern societies can be seen as a sort of internal resistance by people to balance between the deep rooted values and the new values. Nasr shares this view and adds that tradition 'is related etymologically to transmission' and contains within the scope of its meaning the idea of 'transmission of knowledge, practice, techniques, laws, forms and many other elements of both an oral and written nature'¹².

Tradition, in this sense, is seen as a mechanism which has no authority but 'forms the most important source of our knowledge and serves as the base of our thought and action'¹³. Rapoport defined tradition as a model resulting from the 'collaboration of many people over many generations'. For him, tradition 'has the force of law honoured by everyone through collective assent'. Therefore, respect for tradition by the community members gives 'collective control', which works as 'discipline' for a community¹⁴.

⁸ Popper, K. (1968) 'Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition', in his *The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, New York, Harper and Row, pp. 120-35.

⁹ Rapoport, A. (1969) *House Form and Culture*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, INC, p. 6.

¹⁰ Morley, D. & Robins, K. (1995) *Spaces of Identity*, London, Routledge., p. 47.

¹¹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹² Nasr, S.H. (1981), Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, p. 67.

¹³ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981) *Tradition, Continuity, and Change in the Physical Environment: The Arab-Muslim City*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, MIT, Cambridge, p. 254.

¹⁴ Rapoport, A. (1969), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Rapid urban growth is usually associated with socio-economic change¹⁵. Similar to other Arab countries the conflict in Gulf cities is between borrowed elements, which are largely physical, and inherited elements, which are mostly values and beliefs¹⁶. This has produced numerous social problems for the Saudi home environment. What has happened to Gulf cities in the last three decades is almost complete urban transformation¹⁷. It is debatable whether this physical change caused the social change or vice versa¹⁸. What is clear is that an obvious contradiction appeared in Saudi society between tradition and modernity. Thus, the ability of the contemporary built environment to meet the cultural demands of Saudi society may be questioned.

¹⁵ Payne, G. (1977), London, Leonard Hill, p. 3.

¹⁶ Jarbawi, A. (1981), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Cincinnati, University of Cincinnati, p. 33.

¹⁷ The process of change started in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s and reached its peak by 1970s. For example, Dalley indicates how rapid the development was in the 1970's in Saudi Arabia. He stated that 'in Saudi Arabia where development is running probably faster than anywhere else in the world. Concepts which may appear acceptable this year will probably be rejected next year as totally unacceptable'. Dalley, K. (1976) 'The Current State of Play in Saudi Arabia', *RIBAJ*, May, p. 166. This was attributed to the acceleration in the oil revenues. The decision was made by the government to utilise the fortune in modernising the country by implementing five year development plans, begun in 1970. These plans aimed to develop the economical and human resources and enhance the social sector and physical infrastructure. The consequence of these plans was the total transformation of the physical environment in many Saudi cities (See the second Chapter).

¹⁸ Behavioural-environmental studies addressed three views regarding the impact of physical environment on people's behaviour, including environmental determinism, environmental possibilism, and environmental probablism. Environmental determinism insists on the deterministic nature of the built environment on human behaviour. Possibilism argues that the physical environment 'provides possibilities and constraints within which people make choices based on other, mainly cultural, criteria'. Probabilism suggests that the physical environment provides 'possibilities for choice and is not determining, but that some choices are more probable than others in given physical settings'. Rapoport, A. (1977), Oxford, Pergamon Press, p. 2. Also see Broady, Maurice (1966) 'Social Theory in Architectural Design', 81, (January), pp. 149-154.

2.2 Westernisation and Social Resistance

In the previous discussion we explained the importance of traditions in contemporary Gulf society. The continuity of traditions, however, does not contradict with the concept of modern society because traditions have the ability to continue and develop over time. In the following discussion we will try to grasp the reasons that have inflamed the need for identity in the Saudi home environment. We can confidently attribute the need for an identity in the Gulf to the overlap in people's minds between the process of modernisation and the concept of westernisation. If we go back to the early part of last century, there was no need to search for or even talk about identity in the Gulf cities. However, the search for identity was started by the first direct contact with western culture in the 1930s.

It is not only the Gulf that confuses the distinction between westernisation and modernisation; it is a worldwide phenomenon largely due to western writers who frequently define any modernisation process as an adoption of western cultural, economical, and political models¹⁹. Klapp, for example, indicates that the problem of identity is the price which developing societies should pay for the technological advancement. He said:

‘... it is ironical to see underdeveloped countries marching into the future as though they were going to receive the blessing of technology and abundance without the price of self-doubt that seems to go with them. Probably they would say, “Give us the tractors first and we’ll be glad to take on the luxury of worrying about identity problems”²⁰.

¹⁹ Eisenstadt, N. (1966), Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall. He writes: ‘Historically, modernisation is the process of change towards these types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African countries’. (p. 1). Also, Payne, G. (1977), *op. cit.*, pp. 13-20.

²⁰ Klapp, O. (1969) *op. cit.*, p. 4. He illustrates several example from non-western societies (Japan and India). In these examples he explains how these societies become confused about their identities. These societies stressed the old traditions as a refuge from the sense of

Costello also indicated the western influences on the Middle Eastern Countries in the second half of this century²¹. Generally, western influences have developed a desire to maintain the local culture all over the world²². Hakim shares these views and he indicates that, three decades after World War II a backlash between the traditional and modern values spread over the Arabic-Islamic World, which brought the issue of identity in the built environment to centre stage²³.

The major argument of western studies about modernisation stresses that non-western societies become modern only when they interact with western societies, especially when they are 'invaded, defeated and exploited by the West'. What is clear is that the west is 'evidently, a name always associating itself with those regions, communities and peoples that appear politically or economically superior to other regions, communities and peoples'²⁴.

It is necessary here to clarify that an overlap between the concept of 'modernisation' and 'westernisation' is widely found in non-western societies. However, this misinterpretation was originally

rotteness. (p. 15-6). In the Arab world, Daniel discusses the concept of 'Westernisation must mean modernisation'. He indicates the resistance of the Arabic societies to the modernisation due to its western origin. He states 'Arabs ... can hope to modernise in a way characteristic of their own cultural history. Their profound resentment at a hundred years of political, economic and cultural interference will ensure that they will take Western technology with a minimum of Western Ideas ...' Daniel, N. (1971) 'Westernisation in the Arab World' in Michael A., London, Anthony Blond, pp. 516-25.

²¹ Costello, V.F. (1977), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

²² For example in Japan it was expected that 'economic transformation necessitates a transformation in society which shifts Japan inevitably closer to the ideals, values, and ways of the West. In due course, the homogenising spread of Western culture will absorb the remnants of an Eastern tradition ... [what happened is] that the distinctiveness of the Japanese outlook on life still persist and that, in the minds of ordinary folk, things have changed less radically than crude social and material manifestations might suggest'. Jeremy, M. & Robinson, M.E. (1989) Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. xi.

²³ Hakim, B. (1994) 'The 'Urf' and its Role in Diversifying the Architecture of Traditional Islamic Cities', Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 108-127.

²⁴ Morley, D. & Robins, K. (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 159.

generated by western scholars. Many western scholars attributed the modernisation process to western culture. This can be clearly understood from the statement of Shils, that is: “modern” means being Western without the onus of dependence on the West²⁵. This view is shared by Rustow when he states ‘modernisation began in Europe in the Renaissance and spread overseas in the wake of Europe’s expansion’²⁶. Also, Larrain discusses European cultural identity. He states ‘This identity conceived of place as the centre where history was being made and it was able to place and recognize everybody else as peripheral’²⁷.

It is assumed in much of the literature that, as earlier modernisation took place in western societies, it is somehow an intrinsically western process. Only a little thought clarifies the difference between modernisation as a process that may occur at any time in any society, and westernisation which appeared in the colonial era and by which those societies governed by western governments were forced to adopt western living standards.

Modernisation, in that sense, ‘is very much a westernization process; a process which depends largely on imitation rather than on innovation’²⁸. It was a term applied only to non-western traditional societies, and their modernisation efforts were judged by western criteria. This meant that for any society to be modern it should adopt a western model for modernisation. Reoceur (1967) criticises this tendency when he indicates the impact of universalisation on local cultures. He states that:

‘The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great civilizations

²⁵ Shils, E. (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

²⁶ Rustow, D. (1967), Washington D.C., Brooking Institution, p. 1.

²⁷ Larrain, J. (1994) *Ideology & Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence*, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 141.

²⁸ Jarbawi, A. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

and great culture, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind²⁹.

This view is supported by Rapoport when he criticises the impact of westernisation on other cultures. He states:

‘There is a danger in applying western concepts which represent only one choice among the many possible, to the problems of other areas, instead of looking at them in terms of local way of life, specific needs, and ways of doing things³⁰.

Modernity as a philosophical concept is widely integrated with the concept of westernisation in the Gulf. These two concepts were ambiguously connected in both literature and people’s minds which increased resistance to the physical changes in contemporary Gulf’s home environments. Jomah, for example, confused the processes of modernisation and westernisation in his study about the house in the western region of Saudi Arabia. He states ‘The environmental stress that took place in Hedjaz in the middle 1900s is usually described as “Westernization” or “Modernization”³¹.

Because the clash was between two completely different cultures and life patterns, modernisation in the Gulf is widely interpreted as westernisation. This enhanced the sense of threat to the identity and enhanced the internal social resistance towards the introduced concept³². Abercrombie in his visit to Saudi Arabia in 1966 said

²⁹ Cited in, Frampton, K. (1980), London, Thames and Hudson, p. 314.

³⁰ Rapoport, A. (1969), *op. cit.* p. 129. Also Lomax and Berkowitz had criticised this phenomenon when they said: ‘Man’s total heritage of life-styles can contribute to the future, without giving precedence any longer to the European social and easthetic practices that accompanied the rise of industry’. Lomax, A. with Berkowitz, N. (1973) ‘The Evolutionary Taxonomy of Culture’, *Ekistics*, Vol. 36, No. 213 (August), pp. 77-84.

³¹ Jomah, H.S. (1992) *The Traditional Process of Producing A House in Arabia During the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Case of Hedjaz*, Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, pp. 325.

³² Abercrombie, S. (1975) ‘The Middle East: Design, Politics and Policy’, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 11-13. He states ‘Certainly the Middle Easterners do not want from us cultural – and certainly not religious – missionaries. In general, their beliefs, their dress, food, decorations, prayers and

‘whenever I went, I found the Arabians welcoming the 20th century, but never with open arms’³³. People in Arabia, at that time, were very reactive against modernisation. In every aspect of life they thought about the impact of imported values and technology on their morals and social values. As Abercrombie’s Saudi friend said ‘modernization we want, we need, and we will have ... but on our own terms’³⁴.

This resistance never changed even when the whole of Arabia was exposed to extensive change in the 1970’s³⁵. Dalley³⁶ indicates the resistance of Saudis to western influences in the 1970’s. He states:

‘A matter of great concern to the Saudis is the influence of foreigner on the morals and social habits of the people ... The Saudis are probably quite right not wanting to be influenced by our ways, but it is difficult to see how it can be avoided if they are insistent on paying for hundreds of years of “development” in decades’³⁷...

Al-Awaji also indicates in 1971 that traditional values still dominated the social life in Saudi Arabia. He states ‘The dominant social value system ... is still traditional. Not only [has it] continued to dominate, but also [it has compelled] institutions to adapt their behaviour to its demand’³⁸. In the 1970’s and 80’s, several researchers

ways of behavior are infinitely more firmly established and devoutly practiced than our own’. (p. 12).

³³ Abercrombie, T. (1966), “Saudi Arabia Beyond the Sands of Mecca”, Vol. 129, No. 1, pp1-53.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁵ We can link this social resistance and what the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aimed to preserve in the 1960’s. Assah mentions that the ministry aimed ‘to assist in directing balanced social development in the kingdom with the aim of raising the standard of the citizens, improving their living conditions and providing them with the necessities for happy and dignified life, at the same time preserving and reinforcing spiritual and moral values with the object of building a progressive integrated community’. Assah, A. (1969), London, Johnson Publications Ltd., p. 252.

³⁶ One of the British architects who worked in Saudi Arabia for several years.

³⁷ Dalley, K. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 166.

³⁸ Cited in Anderson, G. (1984) *Differential Urban Growth in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia: A Study of the Historical Interaction of Economic Development and Socio-Political*

indicate that Saudi society was still persisting on its traditional way of life. In 1977, Costello indicates that, among the Middle East countries, Saudi Arabia had minimal European influences³⁹. Shirreff also shares this view when he states in 1979 that ‘in Riyadh, the conflict between traditional and modern, ethnic and foreign, is most marked’. He discusses the possibilities of change in the social traditions of Saudi Arabia. However, he concludes that ‘the resistance is strong, and in 1978 it was felt to be tightening up’⁴⁰. Anderson supports this view when he states ‘traditionalism still pervades Saudi Arabian society’⁴¹. Also, he indicates that traditions found a way to continue in the modern Saudi society. He states that ‘the traditional forms of social interaction which ensure cohesion within tribal society have found accommodation in modern Saudi Arabian organizations’⁴².

Thus, the issue of identity arose as a result of the association between the modernisation process and westernisation. It is thus argued here that the need for identity in the Gulf cities is widely associated with the threat that people felt as a result of the rapid changes that traditional Gulf societies have experienced in the last three decades.

2.3 *Searching for Identity*

It is clear that the social resistance that emerged from the overlapping between the concept of modernisation and the concept of westernisation in the Gulf-home environment has encouraged many researchers and architects to search for identity in contemporary Gulf built environment. It is necessary to discuss how this social resistance translated into forms. The following discussion

Charge, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Baltimore, Maryland, University of John Hopkins, p. 160. (Anderson’s parentheses).

³⁹ Costello, V.F. (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 1, and 81.

⁴⁰ Shirreff, D. (1979) ‘Saudi Arabia’, Essex, England, pp. 315-38.

⁴¹ Anderson, G. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 163.

aims to present a general review of the yearning for identity in the Gulf in the past two decades. In relation to this discussion, Kalpp mentions five reasons by which struggle for identity can be intensified in any society. Two of them in particular can be used to understand what has happened in the recent Gulf built environment⁴³. The first is 'the breaking up of old traditions in connection with modernization and acculturation'. The second is the 'mobile pluralism' which is 'great movement of persons from one status, subculture, class, community ... This means pressure to adjust one's identity with situations, rather than holding fast to one image'⁴⁴.

From the previous discussion, two main questions arise. Has the need for identity in the contemporary Gulf cities emerged to say, 'Here we are, despite the drastic changes and foreign influences; this is our identity'? Or has it emerged as a kind of vestige from the superior western culture that directly influenced the social and physical orders in the Gulf? It is important to clarify here that the following discussion is not intended to answer these two questions; rather it will try to discuss them broadly to set a context for our discussion of the built environment.

As a result of the rapid change in the 1970's, a sense of not belonging became the main issue in the home environment in the Gulf built environments, since people suddenly found themselves in a completely different physical environment. For example, Ben Saleh

⁴³ For other reasons see *Ibid.*, pp. 15-20. Also he lists twelve identity troubles as follows: 1) a feeling of being blemished, or that there is something wrong with one's self, 2) self-hatred, 3) touchiness, over sensitivity, being easily wounded, 4) excessive self-concern, 5) a feeling of alienation, 6) the feeling of unrealised (nobody appreciates me), 7) hankering to be somebody else, 8) excessive consciousness of role-playing in real life, 9) excessive other-directedness, 10) the grounds of one's self-assurance are shaken, 11) an unresolved ethical dilemma so severe that it is in fact an identity crises, 12) despair in the absence of a physical threat to existence or career (pp. 11-3).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-7.

(1980) indicated the loss of traditional identity in the Saudi built environment. He said:

‘Recent buildings have lost their traditional identities and have become hybrids of exotic character in their architectural form, main concepts, arrangement of spaces, organization of elements, and building techniques employed’⁴⁵.

Konash agrees with this view and he criticises the lack of knowledge of western firms that practised in Saudi Arabia about the local culture and suggests a collaboration between Saudi and foreign architects⁴⁶. Al-Hathloul also studied the impact of western urban concepts in the contemporary Saudi cities. He suggested that Arabic-Islamic traditions which formulate the needs of Saudi families should be respected in any future building regulations⁴⁷. Fadan goes further in his criticism and attributes the loss of traditional identity to the social changes in the region. He states ‘attraction to Western life-style have drawn Saudi attention away from developing a clear and concise understanding of the evolution of a traditional living environment’⁴⁸. These studies agree on the negative impact of western images on the Gulf cities.

At the time concerned, however, people were fascinated by western images. For example, Boon mentions that contemporary homes in the Gulf were strongly influenced by colonial villas in the

⁴⁵ Cited in Al-Gabbani, M. (1984), *Community Structure, Residential Satisfaction, and Preferences in a Rapidly Changing Urban Environment: The Case of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished PhD, Michigan, University of Michigan, p. 275.

⁴⁶ Konash, F. (1980), Unpublished Master Thesis, Albuquerque, New Mexico, University of New Mexico.

⁴⁷ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981) *op. cit.*, (the study introduces for the first time the impact of Western urban concepts on the Saudi-home environment. Also, it suggests that ‘urban form within the Arab-Muslim city is to be found not within the physical elements themselves but within their system of arrangement (the rules of conduct), then these elements can be adapted or can even change so long as their system of arrangement or their relationships remain constant’. p. 266).

⁴⁸ Fadan, Y.M. (1983), Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, MIT Cambridge, p. 15.

Middle East⁴⁹. Al-Gabbani finds in his study about Riyadh that ‘most of the housing units constructed follow western models which symbolize prestige and use costly imported materials’⁵⁰. Abu-Ghazzeah indicates that modern architecture in Saudi Arabia is seen to be ‘culturally destructive’. He criticises the desire by Saudi architects to reflect images of economic and technological development through the adoption of ‘western design’. He attributes this situation to the ‘disassociation of the privileged business elite from their cultural roots’. These people tried to express themselves in the home environment by images mainly borrowed from the West. This then encouraged the middle classes to imitate the western images that were created by the business elite group⁵¹. This is not to say that people did not express their socio-cultural values and express themselves in their homes, but that people experienced new things for the first time, and hence they were attracted to them. Personal and social identities were expressed through extensive alterations to those houses later on⁵².

In the 1980’s a mix of western, traditional, and historical (mostly Arabic-Islamic) images were found in the Gulf home environment⁵³. This reflects the consciousness by designers and people to create visual identity in the home environment⁵⁴. Mofti, for example,

⁴⁹ Boon, J. (1982) ‘The Modern Saudi Villa: Its Cause and Effect’, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 132-143.

⁵⁰ Al-Gabbani, M. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 275.

⁵¹ Abu-Ghazzeah, T. (1997) ‘Vernacular Architecture Education in the Islamic Society of Saudi Arabia: Towards the Development of an Authentic Contemporary Built Environment’, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 229-253.

⁵² Al-Naim, M (2003) “Learning from the Gulf Madina: Study of the Urban Perceptual Identity”, 1-2 June, 2003, pp. 68-79.

⁵³ Musa’ad Al-Angari (the former mayor of Riyadh) mentioned in 1983 that Riyadh had several architectural styles such as European, Islamic, and vernacular. *Assyasa* (Kuwaiti Newspaper) (6-2-1983).

⁵⁴ We can link the consciousness about the traditional and historical forms in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s to the criticism of modern architecture by many architects and historians. For, example Venturi (1966) in his book ‘Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture’ paved the way for postmodern architecture. Malcolm attributes the failure of modern architecture to its

criticised the situation of new buildings which derived their physical forms from different resources. We can see some buildings strongly influenced by the world wide prevailing trends in architecture, such as postmodernism and regionalism. Other examples are extremely formal and far from local cultural images, such as Greek or Roman classical images. In the best cases, we can see some buildings imitating traditional forms or borrowing some forms from Arabic-Islamic architecture such as Mamluk architecture⁵⁵.

Most of the studies into the built environment in the Gulf cities have attributed the lack of identity to borrowed physical elements. The focus was on the impact of borrowed forms on visual identity rather than paying more attention to relationships between people and the surrounding physical objects. Therefore, most of the suggestions to maintain identity in the contemporary home environment were centred on re-using traditional images. Boon, for example, suggested that in order to have an identity, it is important to revive urban traditional images⁵⁶. Al-Nowaiser reached the same conclusion when he indicated that, in order to reflect ‘a genuine sense of identity’, it is necessary to find ‘valid features of architectural heritage’ to incorporate into the contemporary Saudi home environment⁵⁷.

inability to understand the relationship between the physical space and social space and its ignorance of the traditional pattern and historical continuity. Frampton shares these views and he stresses that modern architecture isolated itself from society due to its rational and industrial tendency. Frampton, K. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 9; Kaufman, J. (1982), Unpublished PhD Thesis, Los Angeles, University of California; Malcolm, M. (1974), London, RIBA Publications, p. 16-7.

⁵⁵ Mofti, F.A. (1989) “Transformation in the Built Environment in Saudi Arabia”, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 17-26.

⁵⁶ Boon, J. (1982) *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁵⁷ Al-Nowaiser, M.A. (1983) *The Role of Traditional and Modern Residential Urban Settlements on the Quality of Environmental Experience in Saudi Arabia: Unyzeb and New Alkabra in Alkasssem Region*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, California, University of Southern California, p. 328.

These views helped and accelerated the emergence of an architectural trend in the Gulf in 1990s⁵⁸. This trend concentrated on external images and specifically on recycling the traditional images in the new buildings. However, this trend is still far from the real need of people in the Gulf. Few years ago, one of the Saudi newspapers⁵⁹ discussed this matter under the title 'Issue: our contemporary buildings have no identity'. The editor stated that 'the architectural crisis of our contemporary buildings increases day after day ... a confusion of images is the only description for our contemporary buildings'.

We can argue here that what happened, and is still happening, in the built environment in the Gulf is a reaction to this sense of loss of identity⁶⁰. Borrowing from the past is used as a tool to maintain visual identity in Saudi Arabia. This is clearly understood from what Al-Shuaibi⁶¹ states that 'designers of various disciplines always borrow from the past, whether ancient or recent'⁶². Abu-Gezzeh also encourages those buildings which he calls 'hybrid regional architecture'. For him, this type of buildings 'reflects both modern and traditional influences'⁶³.

⁵⁸ We can go back further and attribute this trend to the Doxiadis plan for Riyadh city in 1968. This plan suggested that 'in any new comprehensive planning legislation, special building rules and regulations should be drafted to ensure the maintenance of the basic principles of local architecture (i.e. internal courtyard, etc.) without necessarily mimicking old and absolute architectural forms and construction techniques'. (Cited in Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 174).

⁵⁹ Al-Yaum (Arabic newspaper), No. 8698 (2/4/1997) (see App. VI).

⁶⁰ Early attempts to re-use traditional images in contemporary buildings started in the late 1970's especially in governmental buildings. This can be attributed to the worldwide raised consciousness about the local cultures. Al-Naim, M. (1996) 'Culture, History, and Architecture: Qasr Al-Hokm District in Riyadh', Saudi Arabian Airline Magazine, Vol. 20, No. 9, pp. 12-17.

⁶¹ Saudi Architect.

⁶² Salam, H. (1990) (ed.), Proceedings of International Seminar, Sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Indonesian Institute of Architects, Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia, p. 38.

⁶³ See Abu-Gezzeh, T. (1997).

3. Significance of the Study

Although an important current issue, identity as a concept and as a system has not been clearly defined⁶⁴. The search for identity in the Gulf has attempted to narrow it down to a form and visual image that can be achieved through the design process, rather than a comprehensive social phenomenon constituted by day-to-day interaction between people and their surrounding physical objects. In this sense, this study is concerned with the social side of residential settlements and will address the issue of identity as a phenomenon inherently linked with people's values. This is not to say that the study will not be concerned about physical aspects of identity, but to stress the importance of understanding identity in its social and physical contexts. We argue that socio-cultural values play a vital role in enhancing and consolidating people's identity in their home environment. The questions, however, are which values will do this job, and whether those values have the capability to continue over time. Study of people's values is essential for understanding the impact of people's need to be identified in their homes and on the formation of the home itself over time. Rapoport points out the importance of values in understanding physical forms. He states that:

‘... the values and rule systems of different groups help understand the urban forms which their choices produce. Values thus affect the definition of problems, the data used and solutions proposed’⁶⁵.

Seeing identity from its social dimension in the Saudi home environment is rarely discussed. However, some studies have tried to investigate the connection between social values and physical form. For example, Al-Nowaiser compares the traditional and modern home

⁶⁴ The identity of Saudi cities is considered among the national issues. For example, the Saudi agenda in the United Nation conference raised the issue of maintaining the architectural identity in the contemporary Saudi cities. Ministerial Committee for the Environment MCE, (1995), Agenda 21: Saudi Arabia, p. 16 (Arabic).

⁶⁵ Rapoport, A. (1977), Oxford, Pergamon Press, p. 24.

environment. He indicates that the modern home environment has less social interaction than the traditional one⁶⁶. Also, Al-Soliman tries to study how social values are expressed physically in the traditional and modern built environments⁶⁷. Bahammam also studies the social reasons behind the alterations that people made in their houses in Riyadh⁶⁸. While Al-Hussayen examines the role of women in the traditional and contemporary built environment in central Arabia⁶⁹. This kind of study provides us with some general understanding about the vital role of socio-cultural values in the formation of the contemporary Saudi home environment. However, these studies are still far from the exploration of how people express themselves in their home environment.

Since the 1930s there has always been a search for identity in the Gulf home environment. This desperation to maintain a sense of identity has taken two approaches. First, there is a conscious search for identity, by which decision makers, designers, and people (through the designing of their houses and/or their alteration and modification later on) impose certain forms and spatial relationships to reinforce and/or reformat the house image. Second, there is an unconscious search for identity. This is manifested by the meanings that people embody in the spaces and things around them (how people continue to maintain these meanings and how they create new meanings over time). This study is simply trying to understand the collaboration of these two approaches in forming the contemporary private home image in the city of Hofuf.

The main question of this study, thus, is: To what extent has the image of contemporary residential settlements in the Gulf been

⁶⁶ Al-Nowaiser, M.A. (1983), Op. Cit, p. 280.

⁶⁷ Al-Soliman, T.M. (1991) 'Societal Values and their Effect on the Built Environment in Saudi Arabia: A Recent Account', Vol. 8, No. 3, Autumn, pp. 235-255.

⁶⁸ Bahammam, A. (1992) *An Exploration of the Residents' Modification: Private-Sector Low-Rise Contemporary Housing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis. Michigan, University of Michigan.

⁶⁹ Al-Hussayen, A. (1996), Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh.

influenced by the continuity and change of traditions (socio-cultural values and past experiences)? In other words, is it possible to trace the constant and changeable values by which people maintain or recreate their identity in their home environment?

In this sense, there are some other questions the study will try to answer:

- 1 To what extent are we able to define the mechanisms that work in reinforcing a sense of identity in contemporary residential settlements in the Gulf?
- 2 Identity can be expressed in the home environment by people who have the ability to create certain composition from the collaboration of physical and social aspects. In this light, are we able to trace the continuity and change of identity in the home environment over time? In other words, to what extent are we able to understand the meaning of things in the home environment and how those meanings change over time?
- 3 Is it necessary to have certain physical forms to express identity or is it possible to express it by various devices?
- 4 In the light of the above questions, to what extent has house form in the Gulf home environments developed to accommodate continuity or change? Can we identify those core values which have played an essential role in the formation of contemporary private houses in the city?

4. The Hypothetical Frame

Today's issue lies in our ability to understand social dynamism and what people think about their home identity; why they need to identify themselves; how traditions work in the society; and why people create new traditions. This study argues that every society has continuous traditions. They may change and take different forms but their existence is essential for the society to survive. As

Rapoport states 'for any group to survive' it is important that 'there must be continuity at some level'. Traditions have the ability to maintain a certain continuity within a group⁷⁰.

The Gulf people have tried to maintain a certain continuity which can be linked to the strong impact of their religion⁷¹. These traditions can be linked with what Rapoport named the 'cultural core'. He differentiates the cultural core from 'peripheral' values, which are modified to changes in life circumstances. His argument is that the cultural core continues as a determinant factor in the creation of individual identity and as a mechanism by which members of a group communicate their collective identity. He states:

'... since cultures change, there is also the question of how long a group maintains its identity, that is, remains recognizable both to itself and to others as being distinct since it takes agreement by both parties to maintain group boundaries ... In this connection, I have suggested that the distinction between the core of culture (which changes little and slowly) and its periphery (which changes quickly) is potentially useful for the analysis and design of built form, particularly in situation of rapid culture change ... These core elements maintain the identity of the group'⁷².

In that sense, a change in lifestyle may influence the peripheral values and modify them to cope with the new way of living, but those values which enable the people to generate meanings in their built environment will continue in their function.

⁷⁰ Rapoport, A. (1986) "Culture and Built Form-A Reconsideration", In D.G. Saile (ed.), *Essays in Built Form and Culture Research*, Lawrence, University of Kansas, pp. 157-175.

⁷¹ Hamdan finds that Islamic values had not been changed in Saudi Arabia because 'Islam in Saudi Arabia is not only a religion, but also a way of life'. Many traditions are linked to religious values. Nasr shares this view and has said 'Tradition is inextricably related to revelation and religion, to the sacred, to the notion of orthodoxy, to authority, to the continuity and regularity of transmission of truth...'. This means continuity of religious values indicate continuity of those relevant traditions. This is not to say that only those traditions which linked with the religious values will continue overtime, but to say that these traditions and some other traditions can be seen as core values. Hamdan, S. (1990), Unpublished Ph.D., Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, p. 149; Nasr, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁷² Rapoport, A. (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 157-175.

The cultural core will find one way or another to continue in contemporary societies. The strength of these values depends on the degree of resistance by any society towards change and the ability of its members to preserve their cultural core. Continuity of identity of any society stems from these core values. We are not arguing here that the existence of these values ensures full continuity of identity; they will, however, play an essential role in creating a new identity. As Bloom states, in a change of life circumstance, 'individuals may make new and appropriate identifications. Individuals may also seek to protect and enhance identification already made'⁷³.

Rapoport presents two definitions for the concept of identity. The first stresses the importance of continuity of identity. This means that identity referred to the 'unchanging nature of something under varying aspects or conditions'. While the second definition concerns with the 'condition of being one thing and not another'⁷⁴. However, in the first meaning the implicit and explicit resistance to the introduced objects, images, lifestyles, etc., by people play an important role in the continuity of certain meanings for a long period of time. Habraken introduces the concept of implicit and explicit constraints as two mechanism that enable us to evaluate the form. He argues that in the time of producing a new form there is an internal mechanism that forces the form to take certain shapes. These shapes are compatible with people's past experience, belief system, norms and lifestyle⁷⁵.

For the purpose of this study, it was necessary to develop a hypothetical model to enable the researcher to examine the questions of the study. The proposed framework consists of three main assumptions connected together to create a continuous process in the home environment (Fig. 1.1).

⁷³ Bloom, W. (1990), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 50.

⁷⁴ Rapoport, A. (1981) 'Identity and environment: A cross-cultural perspective', in J.S. Duncan (ed.), London, Croom-Helm, p. 6-35.

⁷⁵ Habraken (1985), Cambridge, Massachusetts, Awater Press, pp. 63-66.

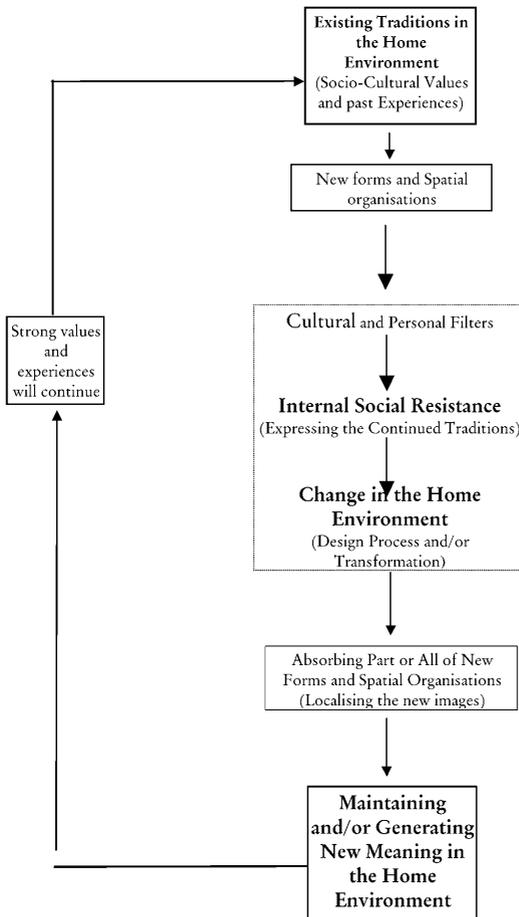


Fig. 1.1. The hypothetical resistance model in the Gulf home environment.

The first assumption is that, in the city of Hofuf, there have been continued traditions (socio-cultural values and past experiences) which have influenced people's conscious and unconscious actions in the home environment.

The second assumption starts from the fact that the house consists of functional spaces, which people use daily. Each space is related to other spaces to create the spatial organisation. This organisation of spaces is strongly influenced by the continued traditions, core and peripheral values and experiences. Moreover, this spatial organisation is represented by the house form. A house then, consists of many parts related to each other and creates one composition.

The second assumption is that despite the external and technocratic forces that imposed certain forms and spatial relationships in the private homes in Hofuf, people always develop internal resistance to these forms and spaces, mostly unconsciously, in the direction of local culture. The internal resistance emerges from existing and continued traditions. These traditions will infiltrate the new forms and relationships and modify them over time⁷⁶. This exposes the private home to extensive and continuous changes to meet people's continued traditions, either by the design process (development of house design in the Gulf) or by the transformation of existing houses.

Through the process of forming and reforming the private house in the Gulf, people either consciously and/or unconsciously have been expressing themselves as individuals and groups by maintaining and/or generating new meanings in their home environment. This leads us to the third assumption.

The third assumption is that the existing identity of the present private home in the Gulf is a mix of continued, developed, and new traditions, meanings, and experiences.

⁷⁶ Rapoport discusses the cultural and personal filters by which people modify their perceived environment. He states 'that the objective and perceived worlds are separated by an information filter (knowledge) and an attitude filter (goals). Rapoport, A. (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 38.

The aforementioned assumptions propose that people use their cultural filters (socio-cultural values and past experiences) and personal filters (preferences and habits) to resist new forms and spatial concepts that may be introduced into any home environment. It is important to clarify that 'resist' does not mean 'refuse'; rather it means adapt and localise new images and associate them with existing meanings (both continued and newly developed ones).

5. Aim of the Book

While architects prefer to design a new and strange house in order to make it conform with their aesthetic values, inhabitants prefer to have it suitable for their socio-cultural values. Therefore it is important to provide the designers with the ability to understand the continued cultural values in order to respect them in their future designs. The main goal of this study is to understand and describe those aspects which motivate people to adopt and refine the internal and external elements in their home design in general, and those which are related to expressing individual and group identities in particular.

This book aims to understand how people's need to identify themselves as individuals and a group influences the form of the private home in the Gulf cities. Identity is seen in this study as a phenomenon which has a very dynamic nature. Therefore, our purpose is to show that identity is a phenomenon created and given new life by people who make and use the built environment. This study also tries to say that the present trend in the contemporary architecture in the Gulf, that has tried to use specific forms, traditional or historical, as a way of creating the sense of identity in the home environment, will create a forged identity. Identity should be expressed by people rather than be imposed on them.

The aim behind this understanding is to point the attention of decision makers and designers to the importance of the continuity of the cultural core in contemporary residential settlements rather than the concentration on forms and shapes, which may conflict with the

core values and then may change. In this sense, the study tries to develop a set of recommendations regarding the future of the home environment in the Gulf, for both existing and future development.

6. Cultural Resistance and Home Environment

In order to fulfil the objectives of the study it was decided that an ethnographical research method would be used. Graphical and visual data as well as observing people's lifestyles were felt to be essential in this study because we are looking for the process that people follow in their interactions with the physical forms to express their individual and collective identities in their home environment. In order to make use of the collected data a structuralist approach was followed by combining the semiotic and symbolic approaches as a philosophical technique for interpreting the data.

Home environment can be understood, according to Rapoport as 'that system of settings within which a particular set of activities takes place'⁷⁷. This system manifests the physical and social identity of people and can be described as a

'system of settings that has particular environmental quality ... and which people choose (within given constraints) on the basis of lifestyle (and ultimately culture) to match their ideals, values, images and so on, and to be supportive of their activities (including latent aspects), their lifestyle and so on'⁷⁸.

⁷⁷ Rapoport, A. (1985) "On Diversity" and "Designing for Diversity", in B. Judd, J. Dean, and D. Brown (Eds), Canberra, Royal Australian Institute of Architects. (See Rapoport, A. (No Date), Newcastle Upon Tyne, The Urban International Press, pp. 373-97. He also states 'The diversity of cultural landscapes generally, and home environments, is the result of different groups with different lifestyles making home environments congruent and supportive with these lifestyles. They may do this through designing and building, but more typically today they do it through choice and subsequent modification and personalization...' (p. 383).

⁷⁸ Rapoport, A. (1990) 'Environmental Quality and Environmental Quality profiles', In N. Wilkinson (ed.), Newcastle (UK) Urban International Press, p. 75-83. Also see Rapoport, A. (1985) 'Thinking about Home Environments', In Irwin Altman & Carol M. Werner, New York, A Division of Plenum Publishing Corporation, pp. 255-286.

Dovey describes home environment as ‘one thoroughly imbued with the familiarity of past experience. It is one the environment we inhabit day after day until it becomes taken for granted and is unselfconscious’⁷⁹. The study aims to understand and describe those mechanisms by which people reinforce their individual and group identities in their private homes. However, in order to study any house it is essential to look at it in its context. House form is strongly influenced by the planning systems, block arrangement, lot size, shape and infrastructure.

Home for Werner ‘is the setting for the development and maintenance of a variety of interpersonal relationships ... it provides an ideal setting in which to contemplate temporal and physical factors that are important in the formation and progress of relationships’⁸⁰. The scope of the study will cover the private house. This will not include the apartment dwelling, for example, because in Hofuf this type of housing is not common and only newly married couples use it. The reason behind our concentration on private housing is because of the need to focus our study on the house type in which people reflect maximum participation. This is not the case for the apartment building where most of the residents live temporarily and have no right to alter their apartments.

7. Book Organisation

This work is in two volumes. Volume I covers the situation in the Gulf home environment from a political and socio-cultural perspective, the theoretical debate about identity and home environment and the first part of the empirical analysis. Volume II

⁷⁹ Dovey, K. (1985) ‘Home and Homelessness’, In I. Altman and C.M. Werner (Eds) New York, Plenum Press, pp. 33-64.

⁸⁰ Werner, C.M. (1987) ‘Home Interiors: A Time and Place for Interpersonal Relationships’, Vol. 19, pp. 169-79. She stressed that home ‘is an excellent setting in which to ground theories of inter-personal relationships’. (p. 170).

illustrates and analyses the continuity and change of identity in Saudi and Gulf home environments.

After the introduction, in the second Chapter of this volume, a comprehensive review of the experience of change in the Gulf home environments is carried out. This part scrutinises the valid literature about the home environment in the Gulf cities and analyses it according to the idea of social resistance. The discussion tries to trace the attitude of people towards their home environment as well as to interpret their approach towards maintaining their identity in their private homes. It is important for this study to build up a clear picture of the concept of identity in the Gulf cities built environment. It depends on those previous studies which have already been carried out in the area, as well as on a visual survey carried out by the researcher in 1995. Furthermore, in order to cover the whole experience that the Gulf home environments have passed through, the analysis concentrates first on the early changes in the home environment, where people still had maximum freedom to create what they liked in their homes, and secondly on the late period of change, when the government institutions were established and were involved in the home environment.

The concepts of identity and home are explored in the third Chapter. This part tackles the notions of identity and home from their theoretical side. It is necessary to study the concept of identity from its physical, social and temporal aspects. Concepts such as object, values, and memory have been elaborated and discussed in order to define the meaning of identity. The meaning of home also has been discussed. This chapter aims to give an idea about the difficulties of defining both identity and home, as well as to provide different possibilities for the researcher to develop an operational model to study continuity and change of identity in the home environment. Identity is seen from different standpoints including cultural, social, group, and personal standpoints. For example, the relationship between cultural identity and personal identity is discussed. The aim is to create a link between the concept as a

philosophical issue and the need of people to identify themselves in their built environment.

The fourth Chapter will reinforce the concept of identity in the home environment, and it aims to provide the researcher and the reader with cross-cultural examples around the following questions: How have people expressed their individual and group identities in the home environment? How have they maintained or changed these identities? Here we expand the discussion about the concept of identity to understand how it works in the physical context. An operational model has been developed to depict the process of identification in the home environment. In this chapter four types of identity with different strengths and levels have been developed to enable the researcher to describe the phenomenon of continuity and change of identity in the Hofuf home environment.

The subsequent chapters mainly discuss the continuity and change of identity in Hofuf's home environment. They are strongly linked to each other in the sense that they represent the chronological development of the home environment in the Gulf. The fifth Chapter, for example, analyses the concept of *fereej* in the traditional home environment. The *fereej* was a mechanism of making identity in traditional Gulf cities. This chapter tries to give a lucid picture about the physical and social organisations in the external domestic space in traditional Gulf cities.

The main objective of the sixth Chapter is to discuss how people of traditional Hofuf expressed their perceptual and collective identities in their internal domestic spaces. This chapter includes three main sections, spatial organisation, rituals and ceremonies of the internal domestic spaces, and the use of decoration as visual symbols in the traditional house. It concentrates on those spaces by which people expressed their identity, such as male reception and family living spaces.

The reconstructed traditions and experiences presented in the last two chapters of Volume I will be used in Volume II as criteria to evaluate the continuity and change of identity, which values and

experiences are continued, which ones change etc. The first Chapter of the second volume, for example, aims to record and interpret the people of the Gulf's reactions towards the first contact with the western culture. It consists of three parts. The first part deals with the indirect influences of the western urban concept on the *Assalhiyyah* neighbourhood (planned in 1904). The second part aims to trace the acceleration of change in the private house in the Gulf. It covers those neighbourhoods which had been constructed between 1940 and 1960. This part emphasises the implication of direct contact with western material culture and how private houses in the Gulf responded to these changes. Both parts also explain the mechanisms by which the local people have localised several forms, spatial organisations, and technologies, and how they gave them collective meanings known and understood by local community. The third part covers a critical period in the development of home environment in the Gulf cities, which started when the government institutions introduced into the home environment. With the inauguration of the first comprehensive building regulations in 1960, the relationship between people and their homes took a different path. In this period, private houses in the Gulf are seen in transitional situation. They are a mix of new and old in terms of organisations and components, but they have one common external image: that is, abstract concrete façades.

The second Chapter of Volume II presents recent private home developments in the Gulf. It covers those neighbourhoods which have been constructed in the last two decades of the 20th century. The purpose here is to describe those mechanisms by which people have expressed themselves in their private homes. Tracing the core values and experiences that are still working in the home environment is the main goal. For this purpose, this part compares and contrasts the different responses of people, which have been described previously, towards maintaining or generating meanings in their private homes. Spatio-temporal paths for development of

traditions, things, images, forms, spatial organisations, etc., can be derived.

The concluding remarks are presented in the last chapter, which aims to illustrate and summarise the whole study, to link it together, and at the same time to re-introduce the hypothetical model in its final shape. The hypothetical model, which is introduced and discussed in detail in Volume I, is re-produced in Volume II, but in a form of spatio-temporal relationships with summarised examples taken across the study. The last chapter of the work also discusses the main recommendations regarding the future of the home environment in Hofuf and introduces several areas for future research.

CONCEPT OF IDENTITY: CULTURE AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE GULF

1. Prologue

Identity as a concept has social and physical connotations. It constitutes a collection of cues recognised by a group of people at a specific time and place. People and places, however, are exposed to change over time. In that sense, identity may change and people may resist this change because they want to feel that they maintain a certain level of continuity. However, continuity of identity is a very debatable concept. Every society faces a real challenge to maintain its identity for any length of time, especially under conditions of rapid economic and technological change.

The purpose of this book is to study how people have preserved or changed their identity in the home environment in the Gulf cities. However, it is important first to carry out a general review of the home environment in Saudi Arabia. This review will be very useful in identifying the main forces that may influence people and places in Gulf cities. The discussion that follows aims to clarify how the concept of identity is perceived by people, designers, and authors in the Gulf today. A lack of identity in the contemporary home environment in Gulf cities is indicated by many authors⁸¹. This raises

⁸¹ For example, see Konash, F. (1980); Boon, J. (1982); Al-Nowaiser, M. (1983); Mofti, F.A. (1989); Alangari, A. (1996) *The Revival of the Architectural Identity: The City of Arriyadh*,

the following questions: What do we mean by identity? How do people express their personal and social identities? Is there any action we need to take to maintain individual and social identity? This work aims to answer these questions. However, the purpose of this chapter is to understand why the search for an identity has become an important social and intellectual issue in the Gulf.

In the introduction to this study we introduced a hypothetical model of resisting new forms in the home environment. This model sees the identity in the home environment as a dynamic phenomenon. It can change and reform over time within the frame of the cultural core of society. This chapter tries to use this model to conduct a general critique for the experience of change in the Saudi home environment. The goal here is to guide the author in the in-depth study of the Gulf cities.

Historically Gulf States have experienced drastic urban changes since the late 1930s through to the present day. For that reason this review is limited to this period. The author has tried to trace people's physical reactions towards urban change, and investigate how these reactions have shaped their identity over time. Unfortunately, there is very little literature about identity in the home environment in the Gulf⁸². This meant the author had to make several visits to some of the main cities in Saudi Arabia (Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah, Dammam, Khobar, and Hofuf) and the main cities in the Gulf States to carry out a diachronic visual survey⁸³. This survey aimed to trace some of the external physical characteristics that people tried to express in their homes to maintain their personal and social identities.

The following discussion attempts to analyse the experience of change in the Gulf home environment with special emphasis on the

Unpublished PhD Thesis, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh; Abu-Ghazze, T. (1997).

⁸² Many researchers have indicated the lack of identity in the contemporary home environment in Gulf States, few studies have been carried out about this issue. For example Alangari (1996), has recently finished his study about Riyadh. His study is mainly about the monumental projects that have been erected in Riyadh in the last two decades.

⁸³ Completed by the researcher in summer 1995.

ways that people have used to adopt new forms in their home environment. The aim is to understand the general reactions of people towards the change over time. Identity is a social system, and unless we view it from this perspective we cannot understand how people realise it in their home environment. In this sense, we are looking for the relationship between people and their home environment rather than explaining the reasons behind any changes identified.

2. The Experience of Early Change (1938-60)

‘The relative importance of other people and physical forms in shaping place identity implies that distinctions made between self, others and physical environments continually serve to define bodily experiences and consciousness of the unique persons. It would seem that the home, in terms of the kind of opportunities it affords people for personal and social action and how these enable self impression and expression is one profound centre of significance to a sense of place identity’⁸⁴.

Gulf States consisted of several traditional societies. Despite the fact that these societies shared the same source of values, the Arabic-Islamic culture, each region still had specific social and physical characteristics⁸⁵. The socio-cultural values and physical environment of each society have been disturbed by the introduction of western urban concepts in the last four decades. However, the first interaction with the new urban concept is very important in building up a spatio-temporal path for the relationship between people and their home environment in the Gulf over time.

⁸⁴ Sixsmith, J. (1986) ‘The Meaning of Home: An Exploratory Study of Environmental Experience’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 6, pp. 281-298.

⁸⁵ Konash, F. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 83. He states that in Saudi Arabia, ‘people are different, even within every culture there are sub-cultures. There are differences between eastern and western, and between city people, villagers and Bedouins’. See also Talib, K (1983) *Shelter in Saudi Arabia*, London, Academy Edition, and King, G. (1998) *The Traditional Architecture of Saudi Arabia*, London, I.B. Tauris.

2.1 *The Early Physical and Spatial Conflict*

In Saudi Arabia the origin of contemporary residential settlements stems from the early part of this century when Aramco (Arabian-American Oil Company) built its housing projects in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia between 1938 and 1944 (Fig. 2.1)⁸⁶. These projects introduced for the first time a new concept of space and a new home image. It is possible to say that this early intervention has had a deep but not immediate effect on the native people. It made them question what they know and how they should behave. In other words, this early change can be seen as the first motive for the social resistance to the new forms and images in the contemporary Saudi home environment.

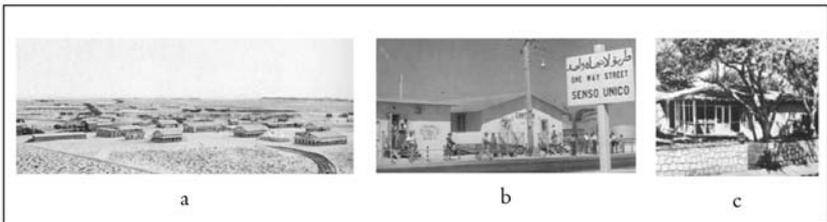


Fig. 2.1. The new housing image of Aramco in the 1930s and 40s. a) The early American camp in Dhahran (1930's). b) American camp in Ras Tanurah (1950's). Source: Facy, W. (1994) *Story of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia*, London, Stacy International, p. 92 & 96. c) One of the early houses in the American Camp in Dhahran. Source: Leblicher et al. (1960), *Op.cit.*, p. 196.

The significant impact of this experience presented itself in conflicts between old and new in local society. The threat from interfering outside elements to the social and physical identity created for the first time a social reaction towards physical environment. Resistance to the new is expected in the early stages of change, but we need to know how people reacted to the changes and

⁸⁶ Aramco built its first camp in Dhahran in 1938, then in Ras-Tanurah in 1939, and by 1944 in Abqaiq. Shiber, S.G. (1967) 'Report on City Growth in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia', in his *Recent Arab City Growth*, Kuwait, p. 428.

how deeply the people's image was influenced by them.

The conflict between traditional cultural values and the introduced western physical images was very limited at the beginning of modernisation; the native people followed what they knew and tried to implement it in their daily lives, including their homes. However, the contrast between traditional images and the new images in the minds of local people can be considered the beginning of physical and social changes in the Saudi home environment.

The first indication of a conflict between the local culture and western culture can be ascribed to Solon T. Kimball, who visited Aramco headquarters in 1956. He described how the senior staff (American) camp in Dhahran was completely imported from United States. He said:

No one westerner would have difficulty in identifying the senior staff "camp" as a settlement built by Americans in our southwestern tradition of town planning. It is an area of single-story dwellings for employees and their families. Each house is surrounded by a small grassed yard usually enclosed by a hedge⁸⁷.

This American camp, which introduced new spatial concepts, contrasted strongly with the surrounding home environments in the old cities in the region, Hofuf and Qatif.

The native people still persisted with their own spatial concepts and images and resisted the imported ones. They considered them as strange things. Therefore, when Saudi workers and their relatives 'moved in, they took over any empty land available and erected basic shelters and fences of locally available material, separated from each other by narrow irregular footpaths'⁸⁸.

This created 'a community of mud-brick and timber houses, built in a traditional and comfortable way'. (Fig. 2.2)⁸⁹.

⁸⁷ Kimball, Solon T. (1956) "American Culture in Saudi Arabia", *Transaction of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Ser. II, Vol. 18, No. 5, (p. 472).

⁸⁸ Shiber, S.G. (1967), *op. cit.* p. 430.

⁸⁹ Shirref, D. (1980) 'Housing-Ideas Differ on what People Want', *Middle East Annual Review*, in J. Andrews and D. Shirref *World Information*, Essex, England, pp. 59-62. Also, Al-Hathloul (1981), has said: 'The initial growth of Dammam and Al-Khobar in the late 1350's[H]/1930's and early

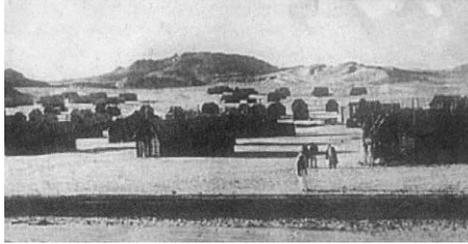


Fig. 2.2. Saudi Camp in Dhahran in 1930's and 40's, Source: Al-Youm (Local newspaper), No. 9016 (20-2-1998).

Kimball noticed this community and described the Saudi camp which was built adjacent to the senior staff camp as ‘neither planned nor welcomed’. He added that ‘these settlements represent the attempt by Arabs to establish a type of community life with which they are familiar. Here the employees, mostly Saudis...’ Kimball recognised the insistence of the native people on their own identity through his description of the Saudi camp as ‘an emerging indigenous community life’⁹⁰.



We need to mention here that in the first two decades of change several alterations appeared in local people’s attitudes towards the home. What Kimball described is the position of native people from the first direct contact with western culture. People, at this stage,

1360's[H]/1940's was not planned in an orderly fashion. As the population grew, people took over any available land and erected basic shelters and fences of local materials. Following the traditional pattern of Arab-Muslim cities, the streets were narrow and irregular'. (pp. 145-6)

⁹⁰ Kimball, S. (1956), *op. cit.*, (p. 472).

refused the change and stuck with what they knew. This is not to say that the new images had not influenced people; however, they were in the process of developing a new attitude towards their homes. This attitude was not yet fully formed to reflect how deeply the new images broke the old idea of home.

The government and Aramco were not happy with the growth of these traditional settlements⁹¹. Therefore, by 1947, the government had asked Aramco, who employed American engineers and surveyors, to control the growth around the oil areas. This created the first planned cities in Saudi Arabia, which followed a gridiron pattern, Dammam and Khobar (Fig. 2.3)⁹². The spatial concepts and house images that were introduced into these two cities accelerated the impact of the new housing image on the local people, not only in these two new developments, but also in surrounding old cities.

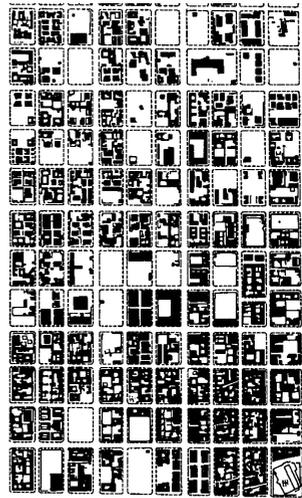


Fig. 2.3. Planning System of Al-Khobar. We noticed that native people were still influenced by what they know. Traditional patterns were used in the large blocks and a traditional house form was used. Source: Candilis, Draft Master Plan, Al-Khobar, 1976, p. 45.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 473.

⁹² Shiber (1967). He describes the plan of Al-Khobar as: 'It covered only about one quarter square mile North of the company pierhead storage yard. The blocks averaged 130 by 200 feet with separating streets of 40 and 60 foot widths'. Moreover, he indicated how the new plan ignored the existing Saudi settlements. He states 'Here again, the gridiron pattern was oriented north-south. No consideration was given to the mushroom growth of temporary structures and those were demolished to open the new streets'. (p. 430). Also, Al-Hathloul (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 146.

For example, in Hofuf, local people developed a new term called *Bayt Arabi* (Arabic house). Similarly, in Masqat they used the term *Bayt Semeet* (cement house)⁹³. This meant that people had realised that there was a difference in material, form, and spatial concepts between the Arabic house, which is the house they had known all their lives, and another type of house which had no definition except ‘new house’⁹⁴. Before the introduction of the new concepts of home to the area people did not need to define their home because there was only one type of home, and every member in the society knew and used it. Therefore, the appearance of these terms in Gulf cities is considered by the author to be the first indication given by local people that they felt any kind of threat to their identity.

2.2 *The Consolidation of the Early Conflict*

As we discussed earlier, this new type of house, which later became known as a villa, was imported originally in the 1930s, but it was developed in the 1950s when the Aramco Home Ownership Program forced people to submit a design for their houses in order to qualify for a loan⁹⁵. People relied upon Aramco architects and engineers to design their new houses, because there were few architects in Saudi Arabia at that time⁹⁶. In order to speed up the process, Aramco architects and engineers developed several design alternatives for their employees to choose from. However, all these designs adopted a style known as the ‘international Mediterranean’ detached house (Fig. 2.4)⁹⁷.

⁹³ Al-Naim, M.(2000) “The Cultural Connotations of the Local Terms in Gulf Architecture”, *Al Ma'thurat Al Sha'biyyah*, GCC Folklore Center, Doha, Qatar, No. 57 (January), pp. 7-35. (Arabic).

⁹⁴ Al-Naim, M.(1993) *Potentiality of the Traditional House: A Case Study of Hofuf Alhasa*, Unpublished master thesis, Dammam, King Faisal University, p. 98.

⁹⁵ Lebkicher, R. et al. (1960), *op. cit.*, pp. 212-16; Shiber, S. (1967), *op. cit.*, p. 431; Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁹⁶ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁹⁷ Al-Hathloul, Saleh & Anis-ur-Rahmaam (1985), *op. cit.* p. 208.

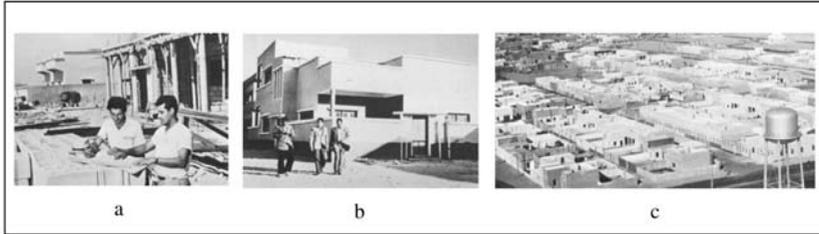


Fig. 2.4. Villa type in Dammam (1950s). a) Aramco architects and engineers in 1950's. b) Villa-type in Dammam in 1950's. c) A neighbourhood in Dammam in 1950's appeared as a result of Aramco Home Ownership Program. Source: Lebkicher et al. (1960), *op. cit.*, pp. 212-14.

Compared to what happened in the Eastern region, few changes occurred in Riyadh in 1930's and 1940's. However, an indication of social change can be found in those suburbs constructed at that time. For example, for the first time in the city, the new neighbourhoods were classified according to economical and social status⁹⁸. Still the construction methods and style were completely traditional. Facey described the changes in Riyadh in 1940s as:

'Despite the mushrooming development of the city outside the walls, traditional methods of construction continued to be employed. The local architecture had to be adapted to the creation of buildings for government and the royal family on a scale hitherto unimagined by local craftsmen'⁹⁹.

The aforementioned situation completely changed in the 1950s because King Saud succeeded his father in 1953 and decided to

⁹⁸ Facey, W. (1992), *Riyadh the Old City: From its Origin Until the 1950s*, London, Immel Publishing. He states that 'The growth of suburbs in the 1930s and 1940s took, broadly, two forms. Low-income groups, such as the bedouin labourers and mechanics, congregated in concentrated suburbs to the east and south of the old city. The royal family and the well-to-do, by contrast, built their palaces and residences to the north and west, and adopted more spacious pattern settlements' (p. 300).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

modernise Riyadh¹⁰⁰. This was manifested by two other relevant events that took place in Riyadh. The government built the royal residential district, known as *Annasriyyah*, in 1957, through which reinforced concrete was introduced to Riyadh for the first time¹⁰¹. The conflict between new and old in the minds of local people became an important issue in Riyadh because it was facing radical physical and social change. This was manifested in the construction of *Al-Malaz* neighbourhood which was also completed in the late 1950s (Fig. 2.5)¹⁰².

The urban concepts that were implemented in Riyadh were similar to those in Dammam and Khobar¹⁰³. Nevertheless, there was an initial difference between the two experiences. In the case of *Annasriyyah* and *Al-Malaz*, the whole projects, including planning, designing and construction, were completed by governmental agencies. People who used the residential units were given no chance to express their opinion about the houses they would use. Generally, with Aramco and Riyadh housing projects

‘... a completely different conception of a house, cluster, and neighbourhood has been introduced. It starts from the tiny details of the house construction,

¹⁰⁰ Facey indicates that ‘Riyadh during the reign of King Saud underwent prodigious growth. The King was determined that the new fabric of the city should reflect its status as capital of a modern nation. Traditional, local methods and styles of architecture and planning gave way entirely to imported ones. Henceforth cement and reinforced concrete took over. Grid-plan streets and arterial roads appeared...’ (p. 317).

¹⁰¹ Abercrombie, T. (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 10. He describes *Annasriyyah* as: ‘The mile-square palace complex was a city within a city, complete with mosques, schools, shops, and playgrounds. Rows of sumptuous villas lined the four-lane avenue leading to the giant pink reception hall’ (p. 10).

¹⁰² Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), Fadan, Y.M. (1983). This project was created to house the governmental employees when King Saud transferred the governmental agencies from Makkah to Riyadh in 1953.

¹⁰³ ‘The physical pattern of Al-Malaz follows a gridiron plan with a hierarchy of streets, rectangular blocks, and large lots which in most cases take a square shape. Thoroughfares are 30 metres in width, main streets 20 metres, and secondary or access streets 10 and 15 metres’. Al-Hathloul, S. & Anis-ur-Rahmaam (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 208.

and spreads to the internal spatial organisation of the rooms and finally to the external appearance and the relationship of the house to those in the neighbourhood¹⁰⁴.

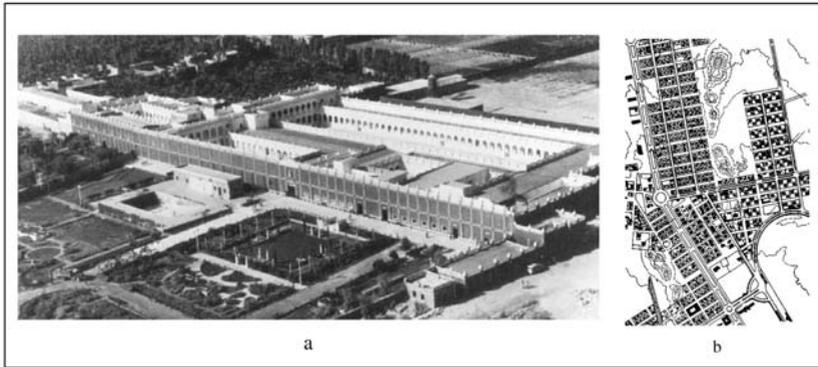


Fig. 2.5. New images in Riyadh (1950s and 1960s). a) *Annasriyyah* in 1957. Source: Facy, W. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 321. B) *Al-Malaz* planning system. Source: Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 164.

The imposing of the new house image was still limited to governmental and Aramco employees many of whom had experienced different cultures, either because they were not natives of Saudi Arabia or because they had studied abroad. However, these two major changes in Riyadh raised questions about the meaning of the home and disturbed the previous mental images of the local people. This can be observed by the way first *Annasriyyah*, and then *Al-Malaz*, were called New Riyadh¹⁰⁵.

The increasingly obvious contrast between old and new made people start to think about their options. Their identity was under threat by new and continuing urban change. Several questions appeared in their minds. Should they preserve their own traditional identity or adapt to change? Should they stick with what they knew

¹⁰⁴ Fadan, Y.M. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 160.

or make use of the new concepts and technology? Certainly, people are usually more enthusiastic about experiencing the new, especially if it is associated with a distinguished social class, such as governmental employees, who appeared as a highly educated elite in an illiterate society¹⁰⁶.

In a similar fashion to what happened in the eastern region, many people who lived in the traditional areas in Riyadh kept their traditions in buildings and remained in their traditional houses right up until the late 1960s. The impact of the new images was very clear but society was not yet ready to step towards the social and physical changes. Nevertheless, people in the traditional areas did make a few changes to imitate these images introduced by the new houses in *Al-Malaz*.

The mud surfaces of the traditional houses were plastered with cement and the edges of the house parapets were topped with a thin layer of cement to reflect the sharp and neat edges of the concrete. These changes extended to the old style wooden external gates which, were replaced by steel ones with shades similar to those in the *Al-Malaz* houses. It is apparent, then, that concrete structures with their neatness and sharp edges became a very common symbol used by people in Saudi Arabia to communicate modernity (Fig. 2.6)¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁶ Alangari (1996), argues that *Al-Malaz* project 'inspired the populace to imitate and copy the new residential prototype (the villa) for several reasons: firstly, the project was sponsored by the Government, so it was an authorised scheme by the decision makers showing how modern [Riyadh] should be; secondly, it was the first residential public project to be executed in the capital with modern facilities and landscape boulevards in contrast with the dusty and unhygienic traditional residential quarter'. Therefore, 'to the society it became the dream living environment'. (p. 267).

¹⁰⁷ Al-Naim, M. (1996) "The Role of Symbol in Architecture: A Critical View for Contemporary Saudi Architecture" *Al-Qafilah*, Vol. 45, No. 5, pp. 37-42 (Arabic).



Fig. 2.6. The mud surfaces in the traditional houses in Riyadh plastered by cement and the traditional house gate was replaced by a concrete one because it reflects modernity. Source: Visual survey 1995.

The agreement amongst people in the traditional areas of Riyadh about the meaning of modernity is a clear indication of their ability to create and develop new meanings within their home environment. Also, the manner in which they expressed this meaning was a very important step in absorbing the new images. This meaning of modernity was also found in other regions of Saudi Arabia. For example, many people in Hofuf changed their traditional house gates to imitate the gates in the new houses. The interesting point here is that, even if the change does not lead to better conditions, people will still pursue it in order to imitate what carries status in society¹⁰⁸. This is what happened in Hofuf when people substituted their beautiful decorative gates for abstract forms because they were symbols of modernity (Fig. 2.7).

¹⁰⁸ Al-Naim, M & Mahmud, S. (2004) "The Potentiality of Traditional Houses in Accommodating New Functions: A Tale of Hofuf and Dammam in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia", *Proceeding of Symposium of Housing (2) (Affordable Dwelling)*, Riyadh, (28-31 March 2004), pp. 669-686.



Fig. 2.7. A number of traditional house gateways transformed to imitate the new house types in 1950s and 60s in Hofuf. Source: Visual survey 1995.

Another important phenomenon found throughout the Gulf can also be associated with the early conflict between old and new. When old cities expanded outside their old boundaries, the new houses which were constructed in the new areas carried both local and imported images. This produced unique house forms in each region which still distinguished them from other regions. Moreover, the use of imported images was controlled by their ability to communicate the local meanings that people associated with them.

For example, in the cities visually surveyed by the author, hybrid forms were found in neighbourhoods constructed adjacent to the traditional areas. These forms had a similarity to the local traditional forms, but they also contained new images which had already been localised symbolically to communicate modernity, such as the concrete gate, sharp lines and edges, etc (Fig. 2.8)¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁹ See also, Al-Harbi, T.H. (1989) *The Development of Housing in Jeddah: Changes in Built From the Traditional to the Modern*, School of Architecture, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne, p. 111, and Al-Naim, M. (1996) "The Impact of Social Change on the Intra-Urban Migration in the Saudi Cities: The Case of Hofuf, *Addarah*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 179-214 (Arabic). Al-Harbi finds that the neighbourhoods that were constructed in Jeddah in the 1940s had traditional forms.



Fig. 2.8. A number of homes in Makkah constructed in the 1940's, 50's, and 60's contain traditional and modern images. Source: Visual survey 1995.

This hybrid form existed also in the two new cities in the eastern region, Dammam and Khobar, especially in those neighbourhoods which constituted the original settlements (Fig. 2.9)¹¹⁰. For example, Al-Said studied the growth of the original settlement in Dammam, Al-Dawaser neighbourhood¹¹¹. He found that, between 1930 and 1970, this neighbourhood grew from 56 to 250 residential units 'mostly typical courtyard residential units as a result of contentious house subdivision and room addition'. (Fig. 2.10)¹¹². The situation was similar in Khobar, where the house style was influenced by the prevailing traditional styles in the region. Even though several modern settlements appeared in these two cities due to Aramco

¹¹⁰ In the 1920's, two small fishing settlements were established in Dammam and Khobar occupied by Al-Dawaser tribe. Al-Said, F. (1992) *Territorial Behaviour and the Built Environment. The Case of Arab-Muslim Towns, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished PhD. Thesis, Glasgow, University of Glasgow, p. 217.

¹¹¹ The original settlement was described by MOMRA in 1981 thus: 'The dwelling unit and clusters were added onto or joined to one another according to needs of the inhabitants. Neither the open space nor circulation pattern were predetermined. They resulted from the accidental disposition of dwelling units and the definition of family territorial holdings'. (cited in *Ibid.*, p. 225).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

programmes, people in the original settlements insisted on the traditional house form¹¹³.



Fig. 2.9. Damman between 1940s and 1960s. a) Damman (*Al-Dawaser* neighbourhood in the 1940's). b) Part of *Al-Dawaser* neighbourhood and the new development in 1960's (traditional area became denser and the traditional style continue). Source: Aramco.

We can argue that people, at that time, were still influenced by their previous experience and were able to express this very easily since building regulations were not yet applied. This meant that people had maximum flexibility to decide the form of their houses. It is important to note here that most people in the Gulf still had a strong connection with their social, physical and aesthetic traditions, all of which were strongly reflected in their home environment.

We propose here that this attitude towards the new images reflects the way in which they become important communication tools in the community. This raises important questions: Was it an internal mechanism developing to absorb the new? Did the localising of these new images by associating understandable social meanings form the main step towards internalising these images in the

¹¹³ In the 1960's Damman municipality had power to apply Aramco's building regulations. However, this was applied only for the Aramco neighbourhoods. Al-Said said 'even though Damman municipality has complete control over its streets and building regulations, the neighbourhood has only been affected by the creation of a major street ... in the north, and the winding of south street ...' (p. 234).

collective memory? If so, this internalisation of the new images was the first stage towards generating a new identity in the home environment.

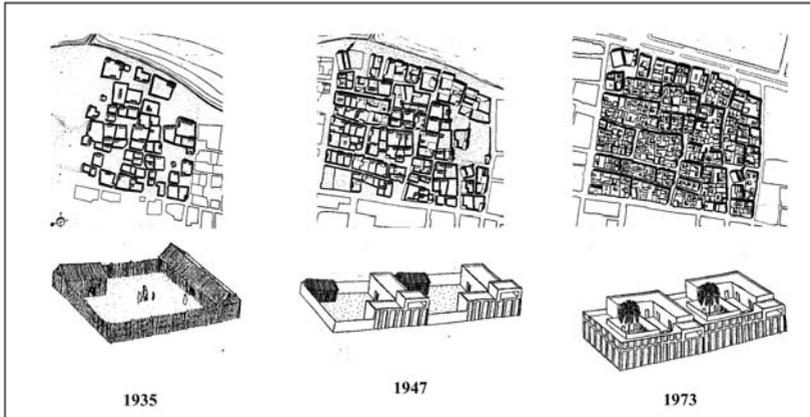


Fig. 2.10. Growth of *Al-Dawaser* neighbourhood in Dammam (1935-73). Source: Developed from Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.* pp. 228-235 and p. 246.

Generally, two main lessons can be derived from the early changes in the home environment. On the one hand, there is the people's persistence in reserving their existing identity. This is reflected in their tendency to use certain physical elements in the home environment to communicate to each other. Replacing the old communicative elements by acceptable new ones, on the other hand, is an initial step in the acceptance of change in the home environment. This evaluation and selection of what is acceptable for reflecting social meanings is a very important step.

According to the resistance model, the above mentioned mechanism can be seen as process of absorbing and internalising the new selected forms until eventually they become part of the collective memory. As we noticed, the new forms had been filtered at the personal and cultural levels. New local meanings had been

associated with the new forms and in some cases they mixed with the traditional form to produce a new local form¹¹⁴. We can argue that what happened was a process of identification where people strive to find for themselves a place in the modern era of the Gulf home environment.

3. The Experience of Rapid Change (1960-Present Day)

In the previous discussion we tried to demonstrate how people interact with changes in their home environment. We noticed the attempts by local people to evaluate the new in order to localise some elements that are able to convey social meanings. The desire by people to alter their existing identity and to adapt to changes can be considered as one of the social mechanisms by which the society creates a balance between old and new. However, the modernisation process in the Gulf continued to drive people from their original physical environment, and this created a new challenge for people who had already experienced some change and were ready to accept more.

A new situation occurred in the 1970s, manifested in the direct interference by the government in the home environment. Up until this point, the change experienced had a limited impact on the people's collective mental image. Generally we can attribute this situation to three factors, represented by the changes in the economic, educational, and communication systems in the Gulf and their impact on the family¹¹⁵. Contemporary communication

¹¹⁴ Al-Naim, M. (2002) "Cambiamenti di Paradigmi nell'Architettura Araba Contemporanea", In Portoghesi, P. & Scarano, R. (2002) *L'Architettura Del Mediterraneo*, Roma, Gangemi Editore, pp. 149-166. (Italian)

¹¹⁵ Abercrombie, T. (1966), *Op Cit.*, p. 14; Konash, F. (1980) *op. cit.*, p. 36; Al-Suba'ee, A. (1987), *Oil Discovery and its Impact on the Social Life of Eastern Province (1930-1960)*. (Arabic); Hamdan, S.S. (1990, *op. cit.*, p. 209. The impact of economic development enabled the government to subsidise people in Saudi Arabia to change their old houses and move to a new house type. Changes within the Saudi family structure took place very early. The contact with western concepts and lifestyle changed family structure, led to decreased interest in the extended 'kinship

systems, coupled with economic and technological development, changed most of the local characteristics of traditional societies¹¹⁶. The contemporary media in Gulf States contributed in introducing a taste for modern housing to the Gulf family. The family, which was witnessing radical change in its economic status, was influenced by commercial advertisements¹¹⁷.

The following discussion will try to clarify the characteristics of the new meanings that arose in the Gulf societies. Explaining the reactions of people towards the changes in the home environment is of utmost concern because this will lead us to the process which people followed to maintain their cultural core. The changes took different forms and influenced every aspect of life. Almost every citizen in the Gulf was influenced by government policies to replace traditional urban, economic, educational, and communication, etc., systems with modern ones¹¹⁸. These changes resonated throughout

network' and accelerated the move to the nuclear family. The economic change was limited to a certain group of people, the middle class, at first, but then extended to include a wide range of people in the country, especially after the formal education programmes by the government in the second half of this century. Another important factor, which accelerated the change within traditional Saudi families, and increased the size of the middle class, was the formal education of women. This was prohibited in traditional society because there was a belief that the true role of a woman was in her home and it was a matter of pride that women stayed at home and only left on being transferred to their graves.

¹¹⁶ Morely, D. and Robin, K. (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Commercial advertisements were mostly prohibited on the Saudi TV until the mid 1980's. However, newspapers were allowed to advertise commercial goods. Al-Khaldi, M. 'The Role of Shopping Mall and the Satellite Channels in Spreading the Consumption culture', *Al-Yaum* (Arabic newspaper), No. 8692. (2/4/1997).

¹¹⁸ It seems that modernisation of the old Saudi cities was enthusiastic due to the desire to originate a unified national identity after the unification of the country in 1932. In this sense, melting the social and physical diversities of the local societies in Saudi Arabia into one unified society, was a very important goal for the government. In a heterogeneous society such as Saudi Arabia, the challenge of building a new society would lead to the emergence of a common Saudi model of citizenship. The term 'melting pot' was used by Babad and Benn to refer to the idea that 'differences between groups will disappear and society will be characterized by uniformity, equality, and the acceptance of one salient ideology'. Babad, E., Birnbaum, M., &

the home environment. How were personal and social identities modified to absorb the changes? What were the new meanings that occurred in the Saudi home environment? Why and how did they internalise their new identity in the home environment? These are some of questions this part will attempt to answer.

3.1 *Institutionalising the New House Image*

The desire to create a modern country in a short period brought about total physical change to most Saudi cities¹¹⁹. As in the Middle Eastern countries, the process of modernisation in Saudi Arabia 'is largely physical and heavily imitative of the western model's external departments and life styles'¹²⁰. This is manifested in the unified governmental planning policies throughout the kingdom. However, prior to 1960, most of the attempts to regulate and control the

Benne, K. (1983) *The Social Self: Group Influences On Personal Identity*, London, Sage Publication, p. 28. The attempt to create a national identity in Saudi Arabia was associated with the application of unified economic, educational and urban policies. For example, King Faisal in 1966 explained the policies of the Kingdom. He said 'Our country is large and the population is scattered. In the next ten years we must build 10,000 miles of new roads. We must encourage industry, foreign trade, improve our agriculture, expand our communications facilities, build and staff more hospitals'. (cited in Abercrombie, T. (1966), *op. cit.* p. 13).

¹¹⁹ This phenomenon is found in most Arab countries which tried to achieve modernity rapidly. Lerner mentioned this issue, they said: 'what happened in the West over centuries, some Middle Eastern now seek to accomplish in years' Lerner, D. (1958), *op. cit.*, p. 47. This rapid change coupled with a lack of local design and construction firms to accelerate the gap between the traditional culture and the new introduced culture in the Saudi home environment. Abercrombie, S. (1975), *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13; Kelly, K. & Schnadelbach, R.T. (1975) 'Dry Prospects in Saudi Arabia', *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, October, pp. 442-44; Konash, F. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 2; Shirref, D. (1980), *op. cit.*, p. 59. They clearly criticise the role of the western firms that worked in Saudi Arabia in the construction boom. These firms imposed the western physical image without any consideration of the local culture and image. Kelly and Schnadelbach (1975), mention that western designers in Saudi Arabia 'must consider whether they will give their wealthy, often inexperienced clients, the fashionably too-tall buildings and too-broad streets they often crave; or whether they will attempt to meet their *real* needs'. Shirref (1980), said that an 'architect who has used precast concrete in New York or Sydney will be tempted to use it in Riyadh'.

¹²⁰ Jarbawi, Ali B. (1981) *op. cit.*, p. 21.

growth of Gulf cities were partial and had limited impact¹²¹. By 1960, the first real building regulations in Saudi Arabia were issued in the form of a circular by the Deputy Ministry of Interior for Municipalities¹²². This circular as Al-Said mentions, is

‘the turning point in [the] Saudi Arabian contemporary built environment physical pattern and regulations. It required planning of the land, subdivision with cement poles, obtaining an approval for this from the municipality, prohibited further land subdivision, controlled the height of the buildings, the square ratios of the built [are] required set backs ...’¹²³

Still, these regulations took fifteen years until they regularly applied in all Saudi cities. This is clearly traced from the confirmation of the master plans that were initiated for all Saudi regions between 1968 and 1978¹²⁴. For example, the first master plan was executed by

¹²¹ In an interview with Dr. Said Farsi (former mayor of Jeddah) in Al-Madina (Arabic Newspaper) No. 12529 (3-8-1997), he indicated that ‘the real modern planning in Jeddah and other Saudi cities was started in 1958. This was with the co-operation with ... United Nations, which sent Dr. Sayed Karim who later recommended to create the first office for city planning. The first resident expert in this office was Dr. Abdulrahman Makhloof between 1959 and 1963’.

¹²² These regulations as follows: 1) Prior to the issuance of building permits, confirmation must be made of the existence of concrete posts. 2) Plots are to be sold according to their drawn and established boundaries, and should be strictly prohibited from further subdivision. 3) Height should not exceed eight metres, except with the approval of the concerned authority. 4) A built-up area generally should not exceed sixty percent of the land area, including attachments. 5) Front setbacks should be equal to one-fifth of the width of the road and should not exceed six metres. 6) Side and rear setbacks should not be less than two metres and projections should not be permitted within this area. 7) Building on plots of land specified for utilities and general services should only be permitted for the same purpose. 8) Approval of the plan does not mean confirmation of ownership limits [boundaries] and the municipality should check the legal deed on the actual site. 9) The owner should execute the whole approved plan on the land by putting concrete posts for each plot of land prior to its disposal either by selling or building. See Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6; Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 257.

¹²³ Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, pp. 258-9.

¹²⁴ Al-Hathloul, S. & Anis-Ur-Rahmaan (1985), *op. cit.*, pp. 208-11. This can be seen from the master plans that were launched in all regions in Saudi Arabia between 1968 and 1978. These master plans were as follows: Western Region by Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners in 1973; Central and Northern regions by Doxiadis and Ekistics, completed in 1975;

Doxiadis for Riyadh between 1968 and 1973¹²⁵. This plan confirmed the setback regulations and applied planning system similar to what had been used in Khobar. It presented the grid as the most desirable pattern to be followed in the planning of Riyadh as well as in other cities of the country.

Despite the fact that the Saudi home environment witnessed building regulations from the beginning of the change, however, their impact on the home environment at first influenced neither house form nor the surrounding spaces. This was because the government had not yet developed institutions to follow up these regulations¹²⁶. However, with the establishment of the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs¹²⁷ and Real Estate Development Fund (REDF) in 1975, the government became aware of the need to follow up the construction of private houses that had benefited from the loans¹²⁸. However, the strict application of these regulations 'institutionalised' the villa as the only house type in Saudi Arabia¹²⁹.

Eastern Region by Candilis, Metra International Consultants (France) in 1975-76; Southern Region by Kenzo Tange & UTREC in 1977-78.

¹²⁵ Al-Hathloul (1981) *Op Cit.*, p. 174.

¹²⁶ The first regulation, the Municipalities Statute, was issued by the government in 1937 under the Royal Order No. 8723, Rajab 1357 H. This order defined the role of the municipality in supervising the city, including construction. This statute was followed by another one called 'Roads and Building Statute' in 1941. Al-Hathloul, S. & Anis-Ur-Rahmaan (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 206.

¹²⁷ Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 257.

¹²⁸ Johns, R. (1977) 'Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Annual Review*, pp. 287-308; Sherriff, D. (1979), *op. cit.*, p. 331; Al-Saati, A.J. (1989) "Housing Finance and Residents' Satisfaction: the Case of real Estate Development Fund (REDF)", *Open House International*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 33. Also, Al-Soliman, T.M. (1991), *op. cit.*, pp. 235-255. The Real Estate Development Fund (REDF), was established in 1975 to provide people with interest-free loans to build new houses. For example, between 1974 and 1987 more than 440,000 new homes were constructed in different Saudi cities as a result of government loans.

¹²⁹ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 171.



Fig. 2.11. A number of villas constructed in 1950's by the Aramco Home Ownership Programme in Dammam. Source: Visual survey 1995.

It is important at this stage to consider the position of the people in relation to the rapid developments in the home environment. If we go back to the beginning of the period of change we can generalise that Aramco's developments in the Eastern region of Saudi Arabia in general, and Aramco's home ownership programme in particular, may be considered the origin of the physical contradiction that appeared later in the Saudi home environment (Fig. 2.11). The home style that was imposed by Aramco's programme in the 1950s continued to have a powerful impact until the 1970s, especially since the building regulations supported and encouraged it. This could be seen very clearly when owning a new detached house (villa) in Saudi Arabia became a social symbol of personal and social identity¹³⁰.

¹³⁰ Al-Saati, A.J. (1989), *op. cit.*, pp. 33-41; Al-Hathloul, S. & Edadan, N. "Housing Stock Management Issues in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia", *Housing Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4. pp. 268-79; Gabbani, M. Al- (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 275; Abu-Ghazze, T. (1997), *op. cit.*, p. 237.

Modern building materials, especially concrete had a very strong image. We noticed in the previous section how people transformed their traditional façades with concrete gateways and cement plasters. Table 2.1 shows that the cement block became an important building material in the 1960's. The mud construction system which was common in the 1940's and 50's became less important. This indicates how deep the new images that were imported by Aramco influenced the Saudi home environment.

Table 2.1: Construction Materials Used by Aramco's Employees (1962 and 1968)

Type of material	1962	1968
Cement block	70.8	84.3
Mud brick	15.0	9.1
Barasti (palm leaves)	5.1	3.4
Tent	1.2	-
Furush (sea rocks)	0.8	1.7
Company portable	0.4	-
Other (mostly wood)	6.7	1.5

Source: Shea, T. W. (1972) 'Measuring the Changing Family Consumption Patterns of Aramco's Saudi Arab Employees -1962 and 1968' In D. Hopwood (ed) *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics*, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, p. 249.

We can attribute the emergence of a symbolic role for the villa-type house to the appearance of a middle class in the 1950s. This class included a mixed group of people from all over the kingdom, but mostly employees of the oil companies and the government. These people were characterised by their literacy and experience of

material culture¹³¹. This class 'brought about cultural contact between Saudi society and the Western world'¹³², and tended to express its status by residing in the new dwelling type, the villa¹³³. Due to their contact with the other cultures, the members of the middle class were strongly influenced by the villa type housing that spread throughout the Middle East in the colonial era and which was associated with people at high levels of administration¹³⁴.

The villa represented modernity and the people's attitude was based on 'the stylistic association that "modern", as expressed in the modern villa style, is "good", by virtue of being modern'¹³⁵. The villa's ability to present individual identity and originality through uniqueness of design may also have led to its rise in popularity since conformism of the traditional society was beginning to be seen as 'backward' and individualism as 'modern' and therefore intrinsically 'good'. Jomah notes the sense of individualism that distinguished house design in the cities of Makkah, Jeddah, and Madina in the middle of this century. He considers these styles to be representative of a shift from a 'tradition-directed' to a 'self-directed' pattern of social organisation¹³⁶. For him 'the concept of home was ... reduced from the traditional spiritual home to the modern physical and spatial one'¹³⁷.

¹³¹ Abercrombie (1967), talks about the contradictory faces of Riyadh in the 1960's. One of his Saudi friends said 'It's becoming a city of two different worlds'. Moreover, Abercrombie described his friend: 'Born in Riyadh and schooled in California, Soliman felt perfectly at home in both'. (p. 5)

¹³² Fadan, Y.M. (1983) *op. cit.*, p. 74.

¹³³ The appearance of such a class, however, conflicted with the egalitarian characteristics of traditional society, where rich and poor live closed to each other. This increased the conflict between old and new and the issue of identity appeared as a social problem, especially with the acceleration towards change in the following years.

¹³⁴ Boon, J. (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 140.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹³⁶ Jomah, H.S. (1992), *op. cit.*, pp. 327-28.

¹³⁷ Jomah, H.S. (1992), p. 328.

Individuals always surround themselves with specific objects to communicate with other members of the community. The need to express a common meaning in the home environment encouraged the villa type to become the device which enabled the Saudi family to express its new social status. In that sense, the home can be seen as a dynamic dialectic process between individuals and their community¹³⁸. While the Gulf family expressed its wealth and modernity by owning and living in a villa, they used the uniqueness of their villa form to represent their personalities¹³⁹.

3.2 Transformation of the New House Type

The desperation of families to achieve social status by owning a new villa, coupled with the interference from the government, through building regulations, created an unstable situation in the home environment. This manifested itself in the people's insistence on communicating their cultural core with their surrounding objects, especially in their homes. Therefore, external and internal alterations were made by people in their villas. These alterations created a contradictory image in the contemporary Saudi home environment¹⁴⁰.

For example, most of the villa-type dwellings in the *Al-Malaz* project in Riyadh were transformed to meet the local social values. This means that when the new model was imposed on the people,

¹³⁸ Altman, I. & Gauvain, M. (1981) 'A Cross-Cultural and Dialectic Analysis of Homes', In L. Liben et al. (Eds) *Spatial Representation and Behavior Across the Life Span: Theory and Application*, New York, Academic Press, pp. 283-320.

¹³⁹ Altman and Guavain (1981), state that 'the uniqueness and identity of a family is often reflected in the construction of individual homes'. They add that 'a family's identity is often symbolised by the number and variety of rooms in its home'. (p. 296)

¹⁴⁰ For example, to provide privacy for the home gardens, metal sheets were used by people to increase the height of their house fences. Also, most of balconies were closed because they cannot be used. The alterations include the form as well as the spatial organisation. Al-Hathloul, S. (1981); Bahammam, A. (1992) *An Exploration of the Residents' Modification: Private-Sector Low-Rise Contemporary Housing in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan, University of Michigan.

they tried later to adapt it to express themselves and satisfy their socio-cultural values¹⁴¹. Al-Said studied the transformation that took place in *Al-Malaz* between 1960 and 1991 (Fig. 2.12). He attributes the alterations in *Al-Malaz* villas to the existence of hidden rules amongst the residents, he named them as ‘unwritten rules’. These rules stemmed from the ‘traditional Arab-Muslim territory type’¹⁴².

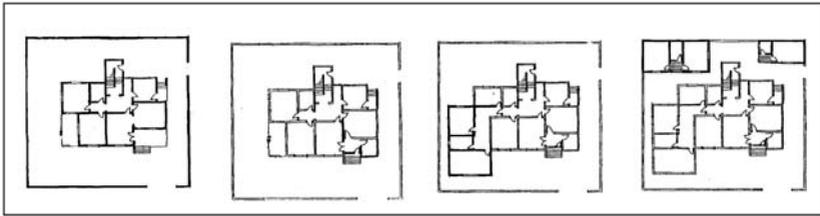


Fig. 2.12. Transformation of *Al-Malaz* villa.
Source: Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.* p. 267.

Bahammam finds that most of the Saudi families in Riyadh made alterations to their private houses to meet their social needs¹⁴³. This phenomenon created an external physical contradiction in the home environment because, in general, satisfaction of the cultural core is more important than the physical appearance of the house¹⁴⁴. This

¹⁴¹ Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 170.

¹⁴² Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 266.

¹⁴³ Bahammam states: ‘The residents’ modifications constitute a positive and not a negative reaction to their contemporary villa-type dwelling. The residents, with such alterations and addition, shape their built environment as they shape their life patterns. They arrange their residential setting to fulfil their needs and requirements; producing dwellings that fit their lifestyle-dwellings that have special meaning for their inhabitants. Furthermore, the resident’s modifications are very clear indications that their needs have been ignored and are not satisfied. The residents, by carrying out these modifications, transfer their subjective reality (needs) into an objective reality (physical setting)’. (p. 327)

¹⁴⁴ Abdulla Omar Khyat (well known Saudi writer) criticises the alterations that had been made by people in one of the housing project in Jeddah (apartments buildings). He states ‘Some people closed the balcony; other used it for a satellite’. Also he mentions that some

view is shared by Al-Hussayen when he attributes the alteration that people made to their houses to the ignorance of the role of the women in the society by the designers and decision makers¹⁴⁵.

It is clear, then, that the forces of change within a society cannot totally succeed in shifting its core values because they are strongly ingrained and have an innate ability to survive. Even the aggressive imposition of new values represented by sudden physical change is only partly accepted while the rest is resisted or adapted over time. The physical contradictions, which appear in the present Gulf home environment, can be attributed to the internal resistance by members of the society in order to preserve these values (Fig. 2.13). It is necessary therefore to consider social dynamics as well as continuous core values as main factors in achieving an understanding of continuity and change of identity in the home environment.



Fig. 2.13. Two villas in Hofuf (people altered the façades of their houses to provide more privacy for the front setbacks by using metal sheets to increase the height of their house fences). Source: Visual survey 1995.

The aforementioned situation completely contrasts with what happened in the early period of change, when the external form was used as a communicative tool conveying the symbol of modernity. This can be attributed to the fact that people in the early period of

people used the balcony for animals such as goats and chickens. *Okaz* (Arabic newspaper), No. 11252 (7/6/1997).

¹⁴⁵ Al-Hussayen, A. (1996), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

change still lived in their traditional houses, which were physically and socially compatible with life patterns at that time. Even when people moved out, they carried with them the traditional spatial concepts and organisation and applied them in their new houses. The hybrid form that resulted from symbolising modernity was a vital step to absorbing change¹⁴⁶. The situation was totally different for those citizens housed by oil companies and the government in villa type accommodation since they had no choice but to adopt new spatial concepts and organisations. The people's reaction to this situation was a very drastic alteration of those houses, which were constructed in the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's throughout Saudi Arabia.

3.3 Prevailing Trend in the House Design

Despite the fact that the form which was used as a symbol of modernity in the early period of change continued in the villa type, which they moved to later, people still made various alterations to the interior of their villas that contrasted with their outward appearance. This does not mean that individualism in the house form is no longer valid in the present home environment in the Gulf, simply that if the external appearance is not compatible with socio-cultural needs, people will tend to satisfy social norms even if they create a contradictory external form.

We can link the above mentioned situation with the current prevailing trend in the Gulf, which recalls the traditional external images in contemporary houses. By using traditional forms which have proved their suitability over many years, people express the desire to eliminate contradictions in the external appearance of their contemporary homes. In the author's opinion, this borrowing from the past will not solve the problem because the interior and exterior of the home should ideally express one entity, which is not so in this case.

¹⁴⁶ See Volume II.

Nowadays, re-circulating traditional images has become a phenomenon in most Gulf cities¹⁴⁷. The attempts by government to revive the traditional architecture of Riyadh in the 1980s influenced most people of Arabia¹⁴⁸. Therefore, many people are now enthusiastic about using local architecture as a resource for the design of their new homes. Furthermore, in some cities which have no deep roots, such as Dammam, the people from different regions of Saudi Arabia who have settled in the city recall images from their region of origin (Fig. 2.14). This reflects the desperation of designers to create a sense of continuity in the contemporary built environment in Saudi Arabia.



Fig. 2.14. Different images in the City of Dammam representing the re-use of traditional forms. Source: Visual survey 1995.

The desire to recreate traditional images is discussed by Rybczynski. He states “This acute awareness of tradition is a modern phenomenon that reflects a desire for custom and routine in a world characterized by constant change and innovation”¹⁴⁹. The impact of

¹⁴⁷ *Asbarq Al-Awsat* (Arabic newspaper), No. 5882; *Al Riyadh* (Arabic news paper), No. 10370 (14/11/1996); *Al-Yaum* (Arabic newspaper), No. 8664 (5/3/1997). This phenomenon has spread throughout the whole kingdom. Local people in every region have tried to revive their own local architecture.

¹⁴⁸ Alangari (1996), the whole study talks about the attempts of reviving the architectural identity in the city of Riyadh. Most of the examples that had been used represented re-circulating the traditional forms as the only trend of reviving the architectural identity in the city.

¹⁴⁹ Rybczynski, W. (1986) *Home A Short History of an Idea*, Middlesex, Penguin Books Ltd., p. 9.

external forms on people's image is a result of the strong connection between what the eye sees and the perceived environment. People tend to evaluate the visual quality of the surrounding environment according to their past experiences. In that sense, the sentimental reaction towards the traditional images in Saudi Arabia can be attributed to the sadness and emptiness felt by people at the loss of these images rather than an expression of their actual identity.

The direct use of the traditional image in present home design is criticised by many authors because, as Al-Hathloul mentions we should look at the present from our own perspective because it is different from the past¹⁵⁰. As a Saudi academician states: 'our contemporary houses have no roots. What we have now is ornamentation in the façades rather than paying attention to the home interior and respecting the surrounding spaces'¹⁵¹.

Despite the cultural and sentimental messages that these contemporary hybrid forms express, the use of these images, as we said in the beginning, may reveal a sense of visual continuity, but it will not reflect the actual people's identity. Compared to the early hybrid form in the beginning of the period of change, which was congruent with the internal social mechanism, the contemporary hybrid form is considered a kind of architectural fashion not linked with internal social action; rather it expresses the desire by architects to communicate visual cultural meanings.

In fact, identity is an issue which has no clear boundaries and can change from time to time¹⁵². If we consider that the traditional form reflects our roots, this does not mean that it expresses our own identity. Identity in the contemporary Gulf home environment should reflect the Gulf society with its contemporary morals and values. It is necessary for us to understand ourselves and the forces at

¹⁵⁰ Al-Hathloul, S. (1992) "Authentication of Modern Architecture", *Al-Muhandis*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 46-7 (1412 H) (Arabic).

¹⁵¹ *Al-Riyadh* (Arabic newspapers), No. 10412 (26/12/1996). The dialogue was with Dr. Majdi Hariri.

¹⁵² See the third and fourth Chapter.

work within our society and to respect them rather than impose ready made forms and convince ourselves of their validity to represent our identity. In this sense, our identity should be inspired from within, and should proceed from our own understanding out to the whole surrounding world, from our interaction with all aspects of everyday life.

Meaning in the home environment emerges from the interaction between people and physical objects. However, the social requirements change over time, which means that the associated physical objects will also change, or at least the meaning of the physical form will change. For example, while the traditional house consisted of a limited number of multi-purpose rooms, the new economic power of the contemporary Gulf family increased demand for larger numbers of rooms by family members, which naturally increased the whole house¹⁵³. Furthermore, the increase in number of women working outside the home, which followed the spread of education, forced many families to employ a house maid and/or nanny. This new situation developed eventually to become another tool to express social status. Also, the meaning of the kitchen changed from a dirty place to a place associated with the main living spaces that may be exposed to visitors¹⁵⁴.

The aforementioned changes in the home either in the external or the internal domains reflect how things may change in society. People tend to experience new things; this will pave the way to internalise a new identity in the home environment. Unless there are

¹⁵³ Doxiadis Associates (1977) 'Formulating a Housing Program for Saudi Arabia', *Ekistics*, Vol. 44, No. 261, pp. 105-8.

¹⁵⁴ On several occasions the researcher of this study was involved in designing some houses in Hofuf, Mubarraz, Dhahran, Dammam, and Khobar. In 1993, the owner of a house in *Addana* neighbourhood in the city of Dhahran argued with the researcher about the kitchen in his new house. He said 'I will spend a lot of money in the kitchen, therefore, I want it to be exposed to visitors'. To meet the desire of the owner, the design of the house was developed by associating the kitchen with the living room. This tendency is common amongst Saudi people currently and reflects the new attitude towards domestic space and the meanings that may be associated with them in the future (See Volume II).

continuous shared values which have the ability to control the relationships in a society and regulate the changes, society will fall into a chaos.

5. Summary

Identity, similar to other social phenomena, may change over time, which means that each generation will express its identity from its own perspective. This is not to say that society will shift from one discrete identity to another, but people will interact with new technological inventions and foreign ideas etc. Lifestyle, hence, may change and new meanings for useful things will be created. In many cases the strands of past experience will influence people's evaluation of the new things, thus enabling them to choose those new things that provide them with a sense of continuity. According to the pressure that people may be under, all or part of the old identity may continue. In that sense, in spite of this long chain of physical and social change, we cannot say that the old identity of the local societies in the Gulf has completely disappeared.

In this chapter, we have tried to examine the reasons which have led to the search for identity in the contemporary Saudi home environment. One of the main reasons uncovered was the confusion between the terms modernisation and westernisation in Gulf society. This phenomenon is common in many non-western societies today. However, in Saudi Arabia the situation has an added dimension because of the deeply held religious belief of its society. The resistance which the people have shown to social change reveals that even where there is a total physical change, people will keep up the vital traditions that maintain continuity for society, which we have termed 'cultural core'.

The link between tradition and the cultural core has emerged from the religious and social connotations of the traditions. The cultural core, as we mentioned previously, has the ability to survive over time. Its existence is essential to regulate the non-verbal communication system in any society. We proposed that in the early

period of change, cultural core played a vital role in developing an internal social mechanism to absorb change. Despite the hybrid form that emerged due to this mechanism, a high sense of continuity may have existed in the home environment at that time. In the later period of rapid change, the cultural core also continued to have a role. This was manifested in the wide drastic alterations to the villa type housing. Even though these alterations contradicted the external appearance of the villa, people made changes in their houses to meet their religious and social values. This showed the importance of respecting the cultural core, which exists in people's minds and begins its organising and communicating role when people start to live in the new houses.

One important issue regarding identity should be mentioned, that identity is not something given to society, but something that should emerge from the interaction between individuals and groups in society and between the whole society and the surrounding physical objects. Therefore, in order to really understand the issue of identity, we should first explore the meaning of identity to people and what their mechanisms are for expressing it in the built environment, rather than impose certain forms on them and try to convince them about their validity as a reference for their identity. This study sees the prevailing trend in Saudi Arabia for borrowing from the past as a kind of architectural fashion developed and enhanced by architects and not as a decision made by the people.

Study of the mechanisms that enable people to express their personalities and develop readable codes in the community requires from us a clear understanding of the relationship between physical change and social dynamism. It is necessary to mention here that every physical object may change over time according to the change in its use by people. In that sense, new meanings may be attached to this object. Change in the meaning of the object over time, thus, may reveal how societies change and adapt to new circumstances. This is what we assume happened to the villa type housing. At first, owning a villa became a social symbol reflecting the status of the

family. Later, when large number of people moved to villas, owning a villa lost its role as a social symbol. A new social symbol will take or has already taken its place in the society. This could be manifested in the type of building materials used, furniture, etc.

In general, people tend to express themselves in their built environment, which means that, in addition to the explicit constraints such as building regulations, the spatial relationships and the physical forms will respond to the implicit, socio-cultural constraints. People tend to identify themselves by using their surrounding objects. Moreover, this process of identification can take place both consciously and unconsciously. The process will absorb imported physical forms either by giving them a specific meaning compatible with core values or will modify these forms to meet the existing meanings.

IDENTITY AND HOME: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

1. Prologue

In the previous two chapters we discussed the concept of resistance in the Saudi and Gulf home environments. We concluded that identity is a dynamic phenomenon. It reflects the time and place and is associated with economic and technological situations. Our argument is that there is always tension between new and old in the Saudi and Gulf home environments. This tension is what makes people resist innovations and modify them to meet local needs. We should realise house designs in any new area are, as Tipple states 'only the beginning of an on-going development process rather than a blueprint for once-for-all development'¹⁵⁵. In the Saudi home environment we noted that there is an on-going process of resistance initiated by people to localise the new forms.

This work aims to study and understand how and why people tend to identify themselves in their home environment. What are the mechanisms they used to attain or renew their identities? For this purpose, we need to explore two main concepts, identity and home. This chapter aims to discuss identity and home from different perspectives.

¹⁵⁵ Tipple, A.G. (1998) 'User-Initiated Extensions as the Way Forward for Low Cost Housing Estates', Paper presented in the 15th Inter-Schools Conference on Development (29-31 March), Cardiff, University of Wales.

Identity is a wide concept; it is difficult to define it in a few words. However, this study looks at the implication of identity for the house form. In this context, it is necessary to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding for those ideas that relate to both identity and home. For example, identity can be seen as constant continuity of the physical characteristics of the home environment or it may mean a continuity of the collective memory of any group of people. Scrutinising those related concepts will provide us with a wide view of identity and home and how they overlap.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with the concept of identity, its physical, social, and temporal aspects. In the second section, home as a physical and social concept has been elaborated. The main purpose here is to define the meaning of home and how it can express its users' identity.

2. The Meaning of Identity: Conceptual Framework

‘Since identity consists of concepts, rather than qualities ... it is always to some extent arbitrary, challengeable, and changeable – when people change their minds. While identity does not require agreement, it does require a certain conjuncture or coincidence between what a person claims for himself and where others place him’¹⁵⁶.

Sense of identity is one of the fundamental human needs¹⁵⁷. Fromm classified human needs into five main categories: relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, sense of identity, and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion. He added that a sense of identification emerges from the needs of human existence. In this

¹⁵⁶ Klapp, O. (1969), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Human need can be defined, as in Doyal and Gough, as ‘a *motivational force* instigated by a state of disequilibrium or tension set up in an organism because of a particular lack’. Doyal, L. & Gough, I. (1991) *A Theory of Human Need*, London, Macmillan, p. 35.

sense, individuals and groups will strive to identify themselves to and with other individuals and groups¹⁵⁸.

In the search for the meaning of identity, it is necessary to discuss the different possible meanings that are related to our study. The American Heritage Dictionary (1991) lists three definitions for the term 'identity'. The first is that identity is seen as a 'collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known'. The second definition sees identity as a 'set of behavioural or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group'. And finally, the third defines identity as a 'quality or condition of being the same as something else'.

Being the same as something implies being different from something else. This leads us to what Benswessi calls 'identity of' and 'identity with'. He states that 'identity of' is 'the persistent sameness within oneself ... a persistent sameness which allows a thing to be differentiated from others'¹⁵⁹. Stone argues that to have identity similar to a specific group means that you are different from members of other groups. He states that 'identity is intrinsically associated with all the joining and departure of social life. To have an identity is to join with some and depart from others, to enter and

¹⁵⁸ Fromm, E. (1955) *The Sane Society*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Also, Rutledge summarises several studies about human needs. He illustrates the Robert Ardrey, Abraham Maslow, Alexander Leighton, Henry Murray, and Peggy Peterson theories. The need for identity was a common need in these studies, which indicates that searching for identity is innate in human beings. Rutledge, A. (1985) *A visual Approach to Park Design*, New York, A Wiley – Interscience Publication, pp. 59-67. Chadirji lists three basic needs for human beings including, utilitarian, symbolic, and aesthetic needs. The need for identity is considered part of the symbolic need. Chadirji, R. (1995) 'Criticising the Architectural Trends in the Eastern Arabic World', Paper presented in the workshop of 'Theory and Practice Conflict in the Traditional Architecture', ((16-18 January), Bahrain (Arabic). Also, see Chadirji, R. (1995) *Dialogue on the Structure of Art and Architecture*, London, Riad El-Rayyes, p. 98. (Arabic).

¹⁵⁹ Benswessi, (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 18.

leave social relations at once'¹⁶⁰. 'Identity with' refers to those shared characteristics that create the sameness, therefore 'by saying who we are, we are also striving to express what we are, what we believe and what we desire'¹⁶¹.

Brittan (1973) stresses the importance of behavioural and spatial characteristics in the creation of identity. He states 'the notion of identity is not just ... a labelling process, but also ... as an *announcement* on the part of the individual about his interpersonal and structural location, his situation'¹⁶². Therefore, we need to understand 'identity of' and 'identity with' in the context of the first two definitions, where identity is defined in its physical and social contexts.

Several theoretical and philosophical writings have elaborated the term 'identity'. Most of these mentioned the difficulties of providing one complete definition for the notion 'identity' due to its many shades of meaning. However, our purpose in this section is not to review this literature but to explore it in order to enable us to consolidate the hypothetical model, which we introduced in the introduction of this study. The approach we follow in this theoretical discussion depends on constructing a conceptual framework able to bind the main ideas and perspectives that elaborate the meaning of identity.

The following discussion will investigate three concepts related to and overlapping with identity. These ideas are: bodily or physical object, values, and collective memory. It is important to mention that we cannot understand the concept of identity by exploring these concepts individually. Rather it is necessary to grasp the overlapping ties between them. In general, the purpose of this discussion is to

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Jones, R.K. (1978) 'Paradigm Shifts and Identity Theory: Alternation as a Form of Identity Management', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd, pp. 59-82.

¹⁶¹ Weeks, J. (1990) 'The Value of Difference', In Jonathan Rutherford (ed.) *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, London, Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 88-100.

¹⁶² Cited in Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 64.

dismantle the concept of identity into its main components to understand how it works in the home environment.

2.1 *The Concept of Physical Object*

‘The object we make is within a system ... connects us to a larger world. Our product is, in that way, a social affirmation. By the use of style, a fashion, a method, a technical convention, or a symbolic meaning we identify ourselves as part of a social group ... The artefact, apart from its practical purpose, has the power to express cultural ties and maintain old customs ... The thematic system is our way to socialise, not by bodily movement or words, but through things’¹⁶³.

The concept of body is parallel to the concept of identity. This view emerged because of the importance of bodily continuity to perform the continuity of identity. However, human beings tend to use things and give them certain meanings to express their image, preference, etc.¹⁶⁴. In some literature, home is viewed as the most important object, after the human body, by which people represent personal identity. Dovey supports this view when he states ‘the house is commonly experienced as a symbolic body’¹⁶⁵. This view is shared by Despres when she states ‘after the body itself, home is seen as the most powerful extension of the psyche’¹⁶⁶.

What is important for this study is the house form. If we see the house as a physical object, therefore, what is the relationship between the form and the physical object? Read, for example,

¹⁶³ Habraken, N.J. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁴ For example, Read discusses how utilitarian objects became sacred ones. Read, H. (1966) ‘The Origin of Form in Art’ In Gyorgy Kepes (ed.) *The Man Made Object*, New York, George Braziller, pp. 30-49.

¹⁶⁵ Dovey, K.(1985) ‘Home and Homelessness’, In I. Altman and C.M. Werner (Eds) *Home Environment* New York, Plenum Press, pp. 33-64. He adds that ‘There is evidence that this kind of symbolism, whereby the meaning of body, house, and world are gathered in the form of the house is widespread in the indigenous world’.

¹⁶⁶ Despres, C. (1991) ‘The Meaning of Home: Literature Review and Directions for Future Research and Theoretical Development’, *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Summer), pp. 96-115.

defines the form as ‘the shape imparted to an artefact by human intention and action’¹⁶⁷. Swinburne says that a physical object constitutes substance and properties. This view goes back to Aristotle, who distinguished between substances and properties. For Aristotle, the substances are the ‘individual things’, e.g., one physical object, while the properties ‘universal’, which can be possessed by many different physical objects. In this sense, the form of physical object emerges from the forms that are given to its properties or what Swinburne named ‘matter’¹⁶⁸.

This concept enables us to see physical objects from two perspectives. First, any physical object is an independent entity and it has its own identity. Second, groups of individual objects may create one ‘unitary object’¹⁶⁹. Both views see the mechanism of creating the form of physical object from two different scales. This mechanism is what Hirsch calls ‘bodily unity’, which is

‘... rooted in our primitive, pre-conventional experience of unity. And it seems that only our innate constitution can plausibly account for the specific and complicated conditions that a portion of the world has to satisfy if it is to be experienced primitively as a unit’¹⁷⁰.

Heidegger, for example, introduced the term ‘structural unity’. For him identity can be understood as a structural unity, which consists of certain coherent aspects that seek unification¹⁷¹. Hirsch supported the concept of structural unity by introducing the concept of ‘unitary object’, where the object consisting of several parts seeks to synthesise and unify to produce one unitary object. He developed

¹⁶⁷ Read, H. (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁸ Swinburne, R. (1984) ‘Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory’, In Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identity*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp. 1-66.

¹⁶⁹ For example, a table is one ‘unitary object’ consisting of several individual objects. Table in this sense, has its own ‘implicit frame’ by which we are able to define the table whatever design it takes. See Hirsch, E. (1982) *The Concept of Identity* Oxford, Oxford University Press.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

¹⁷¹ Heidegger, M. (1960) ‘The Principle of Identity’, In *Essays in Metaphysics: Identity and Difference*, New York, Wisdom Library.

two main criteria to understand unity. The first is the 'spatial connectedness', where the parts of an object can be connected continuously, which maintains its spatial connectedness. Second is 'dynamic cohesiveness', where the parts of an object tend to remain together under various pressures to maintain the object's cohesiveness¹⁷².

In this situation, the concept of bodily unity highlights one of the innate mechanisms that enable human beings to identify things. This view, thus, sees that people tend to differentiate between things and look at them as synthesised compositions or as 'unitary objects'. This means that the process of synthesising things is an innate biological mechanism. Its functions are to enable human beings to identify things by relating them to each other and give them specific unitary meaning. This can be linked to what Freud had explained about the process that people will pass through to identify objects in their life stages. He said:

'First, identification is the original form of emotional tie with an object; secondly, in a regressive way it becomes a substitute for a libidinal object-tie, as it were by means of introjection of the object into ego; and thirdly it may arise with any new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct. The more important this common quality is, the more successful may this partial identification become, and it may thus represent the beginning of a new tie'¹⁷³.

We see physical objects as forms. Forms, in this sense, are responsible for conveying the meanings of objects. The implicit frame which is usually part of our ability to see objects as units enables us to identify the instrumental or the utilitarian meanings of any objects such as a table, a chair, etc. However, there are also the associational or the cultural meanings which objects may also convey. The latter meanings have developed over time and have emerged from the long relationship between people and used

¹⁷² Hirsch, E. (1982), *op. cit.*, pp. 236-263.

¹⁷³ Cited in Bloom, (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 28.

objects. This view is supported by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton when they state that:

‘Humans display the intriguing characteristic of making and using objects. The things with which people interact are not simply tools for survival, or for making survival easier and more comfortable. Things embody goals, make skills manifest, and shape the identities of their users. Man is not only *homo sapiens* or *homo ludens*, he is also *homo faber*, the maker and user of objects, his self to a larger extent a reflection of things with which he interacts. Thus objects also make and use their makers and users’¹⁷⁴.

Sir Philip Dowson explains the importance of social meaning of architectural form. He states ‘Architecture is a fabric that clothes society. It should be human and reassuring, and, as when we dress ourselves up, it should be meaningful ... it should communicate’¹⁷⁵. Habraken goes further and indicates that the objects are usually used by people as devices to create collective meanings. He states:

‘The form binds people and defines a social circle simply by being there; what is said about it only tells us something about the relation between people and the form. And about their relations through the form ... the form will exist as long as people agree to have it. It is the role of the form to connect, in its peculiar way, people with diverse opinions, quite apart from whatever other functions it must perform and messages it is expected to carry. In this way we live with our forms and through our forms as naturally as we live with one another’¹⁷⁶.

Two problems appear from depending on the object only to understand the meaning of identity. The first problem is that the meaning of a physical object depends on how people see and evaluate objects. However, this leads us to another idea, which is the use of objects. Use in this sense plays an important role in generating

¹⁷⁴ Csikszentmihalyi, M. & Rochberg-Halton, E. (1981) *The Meaning of Things: Domestic System and the Self*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Benswessi, A.H. (1987) *A Study of the Concept of Identity: Towards an Architecture as a Harmonious Identifiable Fabric*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, USA, p. 72.

¹⁷⁶ Habraken, N.J. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 83.

meaning for physical objects. However, due to changes in lifestyle, the use of objects may change, which leads to change in the meaning of objects.

The second problem is the nature of a physical object, because it consists of parts and these parts may change or at least the relationships between these parts may change, so that the meaning of object may change. To overcome this problem, Swinburne argues that what makes the 'substance' similar to the previous one is the 'matter' that makes up the substance. However, he admits that despite gradual replacement of the matter over time, the substance will remain similar to the previous one¹⁷⁷. This opinion holds that an object may maintain its identity despite the replacement of some of its constituents.

For example, home as one physical entity can be changed due to changes in lifestyle. Consequently, the elements that constitute home will suffer some changes. The transformations that may occur to parts of a dwelling may produce a completely different dwelling, in the physical sense. In this case, we cannot say that the original dwelling completely disappears because some of the original meanings continue in the transformed one. This can be linked to what Swinburne explained when he said that 'appearance changed gradually with time'. The process of transformation needs continuous observation, and when we are not observing the transformed object, we think that sudden changes have occurred in it¹⁷⁸.

Our attempt to understand the role of physical objects in creating a sense of identity is one step in a series which should be taken to understand identity in general and identity in the home environment in particular. As we have noticed, exploring the concept of identity from the physical perspective led us to ignore many important social

¹⁷⁷ Swinburne, R. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

and temporal aspects where the meaning of an object is gradually developed and continuously modified.

2.2 *The Concept of Values*

'Identity [is] ... an integral aspect of a sociology of religion that insists on the necessity of taking into account the various dimensions of man's personality'¹⁷⁹.

Values have an essential role in the construction of individual and group identities. They motivate individuals; constrain groups; and reinforce and reform society and culture¹⁸⁰. It is necessary to understand the meaning of values and how they construct individual and group identities. Values, as Sorokin mentions, stand for 'the qualities of being of use, being desired, being looked upon as good'¹⁸¹. They also include the whole of human actions. Whitehead (1938) shares this view when he states 'our experience is a value-experience'¹⁸². Swinburne also had said 'A person's character is his way of viewing the world and his dispositions to kinds of action. That is, it consists of his most general beliefs and purposes'¹⁸³. For

¹⁷⁹ Gopalan, S. (1978) 'Identity-Theory Against the Backdrop of the Hindu Concept of Dharma: A Socio-Philosophical Interpretation', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd., pp. 119-132.

¹⁸⁰ For example, in a study made by William Christian on a valley in northern Spain, he found that religious places have an important role in creation of the sense of identity and guide people to form their community. Mol, Hans (ed.) (1978, a) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd., p. Also, Lewins (1978), found in his research of Italian and Ukrainian communities in Australia that religious beliefs had a direct influence on ethnic identity and group identity. Lewins, F.W. (1978) 'Religion and Ethnic Identity', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd, pp. 19-38.

¹⁸¹ Cited in Cowell, F.R. (1970) *Values in Human Society USA*, An Extending Horizons Book, pp. 44-5.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁸³ Swinburne, R. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 63.

him, belief will change only if there is new evidence, while purposes can change overnight¹⁸⁴.

Shaker discusses a number of definitions for what she calls 'values premises'. Values, for her, refer to 'the place of human beings in the scheme of things' and they reflect 'the temporal direction and significance of human history'. They also imply 'beliefs about the meaning of life' and 'conceptions of moral worth'. By them human beings can define 'good and bad'¹⁸⁵.

Values then, as a set of concepts, work together to enable human beings to evaluate and control their actions. They help people to differentiate between things and provide them with the ability to say that this is suitable for us and this is not. In this sense, values constitute rules and concepts to generate meanings and mechanisms to mobilise these meanings. Duncan for example, explains that values in housing are 'not autonomous or mysterious in their origin but are rooted in individual consciousness and action'¹⁸⁶. The purpose of understanding and studying people's values is to enable us to understand how people identify themselves as individuals and as groups in their home environment. Lawrence explains how values work as a communication system. He states 'communication between different groups of people clarifies one or more systems of domestic customs and values in a society at precise points in time'. He adds that 'values, as well as domestic roles, routines and rituals, are not simply expressed by individuals: they are acquired, nurtured, transmitted, reinforced, or modified by interpersonal communication'¹⁸⁷. This interpersonal communication will provide the balance between individuals and social structure.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 63-4.

¹⁸⁵ Shaker, F. (1972) *Modernization of the Developing Nations: The Case of Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Purdue University, pp. 196-7.

¹⁸⁶ Duncan, J. (1981) *Housing and Identity Cross-Cultural Perspectives* London, Croom Helm Ltd., p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Lawrence, R. (1991) 'The Meaning and Use of Home', *The Journal of Architecture and Planning Research*, Vol. 8, No. 2, (Summer), pp. 91-95.

2.2.1 Mechanisms of Values

In this study we will use Mol's four mechanisms. These mechanisms include objectification, commitment, ritual and belief systems¹⁸⁸. They preserve and generate identity over time by internalising the new identity. This internalisation can be sudden or gradual; also it may be directed to groups or to individuals.

Objectification

Mol defined the notion of 'objectification' as 'the tendency to sum up the variegated elements of mundane existence in a transcendental frame of reference whereby they can appear more orderly, more consistent and more timeless'¹⁸⁹. Gopalan explains the term objectification as a visualisation mechanism of the way in which ideals are conceived¹⁹⁰. The process of objectification depends on man's ability for abstract thinking and using symbols. Moreover, we can argue here that the purpose of objectification is to 'project a conception of reality'. It is 'a system of values or a meaning structure in a transcendental realm'¹⁹¹.

Commitment

This mechanism is strongly related to the 'priority-setting'. It consists of two parts. The first is the action or the investment of time, energy, or emotion¹⁹². The second is the valuation of the investment. To a group or social identity, commitment is a prerequisite for its functioning¹⁹³.

¹⁸⁸ Mol, (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

¹⁸⁹ Mol, H. (1976) *Identity and Sacred*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp. 264-65.

¹⁹⁰ Gopalan, S. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 123.

¹⁹¹ Manju & Sinha, B. (1978) 'Ways of Yoga and the Mechanisms of Sacralisation', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd, pp. 133-150.

¹⁹² Hardin, B. & Kehrer, G. (1978) 'Identity and Commitment', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd, pp. 83-96.

¹⁹³ Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 185.

In this sense, if we understand the objectification as a mechanism of generating meanings, commitment should be seen as a way by which people mobilise their collective meanings. Therefore, the degree of commitment can be seen as the sum of identity attributed to a given belief system. In other words, identity can be seen as consisting of a specific system and the commitment is the mechanism that the individual and group have for protecting the belief system by mobilising it over time.

*Ritual*¹⁹⁴

For Mol rituals consolidate identity. He states that:

‘Ritual maximises order, reinforces the place of the individual in his society and strengthens the bonds of a society vis-à-vis the individual. Through repetitive, emotion-evoking action, social cohesion and personality integration are reinforced – at the same time that aggressive or socially destructive actions are articulated, dramatized and curbed’¹⁹⁵.

Durkheim (1965) states that ‘through [ritual] the group periodically renews the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social nature’¹⁹⁶. Moreover, rituals have the potentiality to restore sameness through their repetitive nature. They ‘re-commit’ certain system of meaning to memory¹⁹⁷. Rituals and commitments to these rituals maintain group identity over time.

Belief System

Hardin and Kehrer argue that belief systems can be seen as ‘the cognitive aspects of identity’¹⁹⁸. Belief system is the main mechanism by which other mechanisms gain their existence. Signs and symbols,

¹⁹⁴ American Heritage Dictionary (1991) defines the term ‘rite’ or ‘ritual’ as a ‘prescribed or customary form for conducting a religious or other solemn ceremony’.

¹⁹⁵ Mol, H. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 13.

¹⁹⁶ Cited in Manju and Sinha, (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 141 (his parenthesis)

¹⁹⁷ Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 191.

¹⁹⁸ Hardin, B. & Kehrer, G. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 85.

for example, attained their meanings from the belief system which allows people to communicate through these symbols. It creates the order, the rituals, by which individuals and groups present a common interest and consolidate their collective identity.

Borhek and Curtis (1975) define a belief system as ‘a set of related ideas (learned and shared), which has some permanence, and to which individuals and or groups exhibit some commitment’¹⁹⁹. Yet, a belief system consists of constant and changeable parts. They mention seven elements that make up the belief system: values, criteria of validity (the means that are used to determine the validity of any particular statement), logic (the rules that relate each substantive belief to another within the belief system), perspective (related to the concepts of identity of, and identity with, where the group see themselves as different from, or related to, others), substantive beliefs (constant facts), prescriptions and proscriptions (sense of norms), and technology (‘associated beliefs concerning means to attain valued goals’)²⁰⁰.

Habermas indicates the importance of a belief system in maintaining levels of communication between the generations of any society. He states ‘a social system has lost its identity as soon as later generations no longer recognise themselves within the once-constitutive tradition’²⁰¹. We see the belief system in this study as the source that enables people to recognise meanings in their daily life. If the mechanism of objectification is responsible for generating meanings, the belief system is responsible for these meanings having the meaning they reflect.

2.2.2 *Levels of Values*

In any society there are certain traditions and experiences handed down from one generation to another. We name them the ‘cultural

¹⁹⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-5.

²⁰¹ Habermas, J. (1974) ‘On Social Identity’, *Telos*, Vol. 19, (Spring), pp. 91-103.

core²⁰². These core values maintain a kind of continuity in the society. New values also will find a place and will interact with continued values. Continuity and change of socio-cultural values cannot be measured easily, but we can describe how and why certain values have continued over time and why other values have changed and modified. Allen Wheelis argues that ‘identity is founded ... on those values which are at the top of the hierarchy – the beliefs, faiths and ideals which integrate and determine subordinate value’²⁰³. In this sense, we need to classify values to distinguish between dominant and subordinate values.

According to Mol socio-cultural values can be divided into three categories, religious values, cultural values, and social values²⁰⁴. However, in this study values will be classified into religious values, conventions, and habits. Social values imply those conventions that have developed locally and find agreement by at least one group over a long period, while the individual values are related to those habits by which individuals express their preference and images.

Religious Values

Gopalan sees religion as a ‘product’, which is the sum of the values fixed by God or developed by human thinking and social interaction, and a ‘process’ by which that product shapes personality²⁰⁵. Lewins argues that religion reinforces identity. He states ‘with a strong religious tradition regional identity is further reinforced by the measure of social control which local religion obtains’²⁰⁶.

²⁰² The phrase ‘cultural core’ in this study is seen as a set of high values, mostly religious, but also it constitutes some changeable values, conventions, which have the strength of the religious values but in a specific time and place. This is why we consider the cultural core as containing the most enduring, but not constant, values.

²⁰³ Cited in Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-17.

²⁰⁵ Gopalan, S. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 124.

²⁰⁶ Lewins (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 25.

In a time of rapid social changes, as in Saudi Arabia, religion can function as an identity anchor. Jones argues that religion supports the identity by regulating the commitment of the individuals in society. Those values are part of the religion. They are considered as religious roles and principles, and have strong impact on the people's daily life²⁰⁷. Al-Soliman argues that there is great exchangeability between the religious values and social, economic, and educational values²⁰⁸. Most of the time, religious values have a strong relationship with the organisation of time, space, communication and meaning²⁰⁹.

Conventions

Similar to the religious values, there are some values that have power and impact on the daily life of the people²¹⁰. These values have the importance of religious values but they may be limited by time and place, which means that they are suitable for specific people in certain time. They can be influenced by life circumstances, for example if the circumstances change they may adapt to meet the new circumstances. They are called 'conventions' or 'Urf'²¹¹. Hakim discusses the meaning of conventions and he illustrates different views and definitions by Islamic scholars. Generally, most of the definitions agree on certain key phrases such as, 'accepted by people', 'compatible to their way of thinking', 'considered to be of good character', 'a way of doing things', and 'constantly repeated'²¹².

²⁰⁷ Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²⁰⁸ Al-Soliman, T. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 247.

²⁰⁹ For example, in terms of the organisation of time, we can see the impact of one of the most essential daily rituals, the five prayers, on the daily life of Saudi society.

²¹⁰ Al-Naim, M. (1992) 'The Ideal House', *Al-Iqtisad* (Dammam, Saudi Arabia), No. 227 (April), pp. 56-61 (Arabic).

²¹¹ Hakim, B. (1994), *op. cit.*, pp. 108-27.

²¹² *Ibid.*, p. 109. He lists several definitions for the term 'Urf'. These definitions were put forward by a number of Muslim scholars:

- 1) What is accepted by people and is compatible to their way of thinking and is normally adopted by those considered to be of good character (Al-Ghazali, d. 1111).
- 2) Action or belief in which persons persist with the concurrence of reasoning powers and which their natural dispositions agree to accept as right (Al-Jurjani, d. 1413).

In the Islamic culture, good conventions were accepted as one of the sources of regulation for daily life '*fiqh al mu'amalat*'. But their use should not abolish or cancel a ruling from the *Quran*, or *Sunna* (the Prophet's sayings) or a principle of *Shari'a* (the most constant values). The holy *Quran* mentions the importance of the conventions, the translation of the meaning of the verse (7:199) being 'take things at their face value and bid to what is customary [or accepted by local tradition], and turn away from the ignorant'²¹³. But, conventions are very dynamic and can be changed with time. Thus, their practice in the Islamic *shari'a* is reflected in specific time and place. This means that we can find certain conventions were used in the past and are not acceptable in the present; or we can find some conventions acceptable in a specific community and not acceptable in another community with different customs²¹⁴.

The conventions, however, can be initiated in several ways, such as the order or encouragement of the local authority, inherited from previous generations, or generated locally by the response to certain circumstances or changes in the environment. Hakim differentiates between two types of conventions, public and private. On the one hand, public conventions are established and followed by a large community or many communities. Private conventions, on the other hand, are followed locally by one small community or group of people²¹⁵.

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- 3) A habit or way of doing things that is constantly repeated, and which settles well and is accepted by people considered of good character (Ali Haider, d. ?).
 - 4) What is customary to a people and which they follow in their sayings, and acts and in what they reject (Abdul-Wahab Al-Khalaf, d. 1956).
 - 5) The habit (or custom) of a people in their sayings or acts (Mustafa Al-Zarka, born 1904).
 - 6) What is customary to a people and which they follow in their living pattern (Abdulaziz Al-Khayyat, born 1923).

²¹³ Hakim, B. (1986) *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles* London, KPI limited, p. 144.

²¹⁴ Hakim, B. (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 110.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

Habits

There are several individual values that determine people's daily lives. These values create kinds of rituals in the daily life of individuals and subgroups (families). In this regard, Hakim explains the meaning of habits and stresses the place of the motive in conceiving the habits. He states:

‘The origin of habit ... is initiated at the individual level. For every act there must be an impetus or reason. This impetus could be external to the individual, or it could emanate from within. So if the person feels content with his act in response to the impetus (whether it is external or internal), and it is repeated, then it becomes a habit...’²¹⁶.

For Hakim, the habits are different from customs or conventions, because the custom emerges when the individual action, or habit, is spread and repeated by the community. He stated that every convention is a habit, while not every habit is a convention²¹⁷. However, unless the habits find their way to become conventions, they will be more exposed to change over time. This is because ‘the evolution of values and attitudes is slower than the evolution of behaviour’²¹⁸.

One important point should be mentioned: that is that habit is controlled by religious and cultural values. Therefore, if we attribute individual identity to habits, we mean those specific characteristics such as taste, preference and daily routines which can be different from one to another. But shared values, religious and conventional, control the individual values²¹⁹.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 110.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

²¹⁸ Bernard, Y. (1993) ‘Flexibility in the Usage of Dwelling’, In Marjorie Bulos & Needet Teymur (Eds) *Housing: Design, Research, Education*, England, Avebury.

²¹⁹ For example, the way we dress in Saudi Arabia is a public convention. In this sense, we use dress to express our social identity. However, society stresses using this dress and forces the individual to dress similarly to all community members. On one occasion my father was angry with me because he saw me wearing a different style outside the house. He told me that I should follow tradition in my dress. In this case, individual and subgroup identity is controlled

2.2.3 Values and Continuity of Identity

To recapitulate, the concept of value is wide and includes several types and levels of value. The role of value in defining and consolidating individual and collective identities is essential. It is obvious that the religious values are the most constant and influential factors that maintain continuity of identity over time. However, in the built environment, the social values, or conventions, constitute the most important values because the built environment is dynamic and requires those strong and flexible values that maintain shared ideas and behaviour and at the same time adapt to the new changes that may occur over time.

When we mentioned the concept of the ‘cultural core’, we indicated that it consists of both religious and social values. This means that core values are seen in this study not as a constant set of rules but as a set of rules working to maintain people’s identity in a specific time and place and link them with their past and future. One important point needing to be mentioned here is that in many cases social values have developed from religious values. For example, privacy is a religious principle but people interpret this principle in different ways from one place to another and have given it different forms from one time to another. What is important for this study is that people usually use the most constant values to develop less constant values to cope with the changes that may occur in their home environment.

In relation to the previous concept, the physical object, values work as criteria for selecting, modifying, and absorbing the new forms that may be introduced to any home environment. People’s identity, in this case, can be maintained not only through the

by group and social identity. Moreover, physical aspects (the form of dress in this case) that are used to reflect certain traditional socio-cultural values still have their importance in contemporary Saudi society. One important point should be clarified regarding this example. That is, the dress (in term of its form) was developed and several improvements were added to it to suit the change in life circumstances. This means that even if the conventions continue, some changes and improvement may occur to them.

continuity of the physical objects but also through the continuity of meaning of the physical objects. The relationship between the physical objects and people's value is critical in understanding continuity and change of identity in the home environment. This is because values are very important motives for resisting new forms in order to adapt them to meet local needs.

2.3 *The Concept of Collective Memory*

'What a person believes about his identity may be different from what he claims publicly. We only take public memory claims to be evidence of personal identity when we believe them to be honest, to express genuine memory belief'²²⁰.

'What this account makes necessary for identity with a "past self" is not that one remembers the actions and experiences of that past self but that one has "memory continuity" with that past self – memory continuity consisting in the occurrence of a chain of memory-connected person – stages'²²¹.

In the previous discussion we have admitted that physical objects are not enough to understand the continuity of identity in the built environment. We have established a need for viewing the concept of identity from different angles. Continuity of physical object, in this perspective, is not enough for the continuity of identity. What is important is the meaning of physical objects. The discussion presented the values as rules and mechanisms of generating meanings in the daily life. The levels of values informed us about the dynamism of generating meanings. However, one important aspect still needs more investigation, and that is the temporal aspect of identity. In the following discussion we will review the role of collective memory in the continuity of meaning over time. Our assumption is that, in any community, the continuity of physical

²²⁰ Swinburne, R. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

²²¹ Shoemaker, S. (1984) 'Personal Identity: A Materialist's Account', In Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne, *Personal Identity*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p. 81.

objects cannot reflect a continuity of identity unless the meaning of these objects continues in the collective memory of that community.

The word ‘memory’ refers to what Hunter mentions: ‘what the person does and experiences here and now is influenced by what he did and experienced at some time in his past’. Therefore, when we talk about ‘a person’s memory we are almost always drawing attention to relationships between his past and his present activities’²²². Hunter indicates two main accomplishments by which memory of past experiences enables a person to adjust to present circumstances. The first is recalling, that is, ‘of reproducing in the present some absent event from the past’. The second is recognising, which mainly deals with ‘identifying some present event as being familiar from the past’²²³.

What is important for this study is the role of memory or past experience in the continuity of identity²²⁴. This is because past experience plays an important role in the expression of personal identity and enables shared values to continue in present and future home environments. Blee has mentioned that ‘Traditions and memory represent the projection of identity into the time dimension’²²⁵. Oliver, for example, finds that in ‘each new settlement the design elements of a past tradition are re-established’²²⁶. Lawrence shares this view when he states ‘the personal history of

²²² Hunter, I. (1957) *Memory* London, Penguin Book Ltd., pp. 14-5.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²²⁴ We can relate this concept to what John Locke called ‘bucket theory’. This theory sees the mind of new born baby as a ‘*tabula rasa*’, ‘an empty slate’. Gombrich in his discussion of this theory has said ‘nothing could enter this mind except through the sense organs. Only when these “sense impressions” became associated in the mind could we build up a picture of the world outside’. He added that ‘without a pre-existent framework of “fitting system” we could not experience the world’, Gombrich, E.H. (1979, 1984) *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art*, London, Phaidon, p. 1.

²²⁵ Blee, M.J. (1966) ‘The Meeting: Man and Man-Made Object, Architectural Implications’, In Gyorgy Kepes (ed.) *The Man Made Object*, New York, George Braziller, pp. 76-89.

²²⁶ Oliver, P. (1975) *Shelter, Sign & Symbol* London, Barrie & Jenkins, p. 26.

past experience of houses and family life has had a significant relationship with those ideas and images which ... users have used during the participatory design process for their future houses'²²⁷. This means that people will give their new homes already known meanings to maintain certain continuity of their individual and group identities.

The philosophical view that emphasises the importance of memory in the creation of identity argues that the absence of continuity of memory in some particular case involves the absence of personal identity. As the founder of this view, John Lock argues that memory or what he calls 'consciousness' constitutes personal identity²²⁸. Lock mentions that the capacity to remember makes up the identity over time²²⁹.

Shoemaker introduces the term 'past self' which has more to do with 'memory continuity' than remembering the actions and experiences of that past. In this sense, memory continuity depends on the 'memory-connection' of 'person-stages'. For example, if two person-stages belong to the same person, it should be that the latter contains memories of experiences contained in the earlier one.

Past experience, thus, represents the role of memory in the creation of present and future identity. In this sense, Lawrence finds that 'the influence of past experience has been strong in ordering the priorities of the residents with respect to the design and construction of their houses'²³⁰. Dovey supports this view when he says 'homes of our past set the ground for our very perceptions of attractiveness and ugliness'²³¹. As we noticed, memory is an important factor in creating a sense of identity in the home environment because people tend to do what they know rather doing new things. This is strongly

²²⁷ Lawrence, R. (1983) 'Understanding the Home Environment: Spatial and Temporal Perspectives', *Housing Science*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 13-25.

²²⁸ Swinburne, R. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

²²⁹ Shoemaker, S. (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 77.

²³⁰ Lawrence, R. (1983), *op. cit.*, pp. 20-23.

²³¹ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 37.

linked to what Gill (1972) said ‘we desire what we know; and only what we know can we desire’²³².

Hume in the eighteenth century elaborated the concept of memory. For him ‘memory’ is a mechanism of producing the identity, not only in understanding it. The concept of ‘memory’ strongly connects with Hume’s view about identity when he mentions that identity can be discovered by ‘perception’ rather than by ‘reasoning’. Perception, in this sense, is a communicative tool to understand and evaluate the built environment. Memory in this regard plays an important role in the environmental cognition and evaluation. Hume said ‘the true idea of the human mind, is to consider it as a system of different perceptions ... which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect...’²³³.

As in the memory of individuals, public memory can be seen as a device by which people define and control their personal identity. In this case ‘a given group recognises itself through its memory of a common past’²³⁴. Moreover, the concept of ‘collective memory’ becomes essential for the understanding of identity. As Morley and Robins argue, ‘the cohesion of collective identity must be sustained *through time*, through a collective memory, through lived and shared traditions, through the sense of a common past and heritage’²³⁵.

Hunter discusses three phases of memory. The initial phase is the phase of learning and it ‘requires time and involves a complex of activities which are themselves derived from previous learning’. The final phase is ‘remembering’. It also ‘involves a complex of activities whose execution is affected by various circumstances’. One of these influences is the learning phase while the other influence is derived

²³² Cited in Benswessi, (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²³³ Hume, D. (1967) *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford, Clarendon Press (First Edition was published in 1739), p. 261.

²³⁴ Morley, D. & Robins, K (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 46.(their italics)

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

from the present circumstances. The intervening phase 'is that of retaining the interval between learning and remembering ...'²³⁶

The memory phases are strongly related to what we mean by the temporal aspect of identity. (Or we can call it recreating the sense of identity). This because 'we recreate, in the here and now, the salience of some event, or experience, or piece of information from our past.'²³⁷ For example, familiarity with the previous home environment represents the initial stage, the learning stage, where people know and use the meanings of objects to communicate their personal and social identities. While the final stage is the remembering of the previous meanings to mobilise them in the present home environment. The intervening phase is the time that people take to absorb the new images and concepts.

3. Home and Identity

'Home is demarcated territory with both physical and symbolic boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control access and behavior within. Although this center is clearly distinguished from its surroundings, it is also strongly oriented within it. This orientation is to the compass points, the celestial bodies, the surrounding geography, and the access routes. To be at home is to know where you are; it means to inhabit a secure center and to be oriented in space.'²³⁸

This section deals with home as an environmental context that people use to express their individual and group identity. The following discussion tries to link the concept of home with the previous discussion about identity, its social and physical realms. As we have said, through the relationship between the physical object and people's values, the built environment in general and the home in particular respond to human needs. However, human needs are many and they have no specific rank or order. They could have

²³⁶ Hunter, I. (1957), *op. cit.*, pp. 16-9.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²³⁸ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

different meanings for different people, and their order may change according to the priorities of the individuals or the groups. Nevertheless, there are some essential needs, such as food and refuge or shelter to satisfy basic physiological needs. When a human being satisfies his/her physiological needs, (s)he then looks after psychological needs, such as identity, aesthetic needs, belonging, etc.

Psychological needs play an essential role in defining the meaning of the home and the objects inside it. Rapoport discusses the significance of human needs in defining the characteristics of any culture. He states 'What is characteristic and significant about a culture is this choice, the specific solution to certain needs'²³⁹. In this sense, the basic needs, such as comfort, light, sitting, and sleeping, should have specific solutions to satisfy them, which are different from culture to culture and affect the house form differently.

3.1 *The Concept of Home*

'Dwellings reflect the degree to which cultures and their members must cope with common dialectic oppositions, namely, individual needs, desires, and motives versus the demands and requirements of society at large.'²⁴⁰

Home is a human phenomenon. As much as people feel at home so they belong to a deep and intimate place and group of objects. Home, as Heidegger described it, is 'an overwhelming, inexchangeable something to which we were subordinate and from which our way of life was oriented and directed, even if we had left our home many years before'²⁴¹. However, the concept of home is very ambiguous; some define it as merely a shelter and some attribute to it cultural and spiritual roles.

Rapoport discusses the cultural dimension and its impact on the house form. He presents five main cultural factors by which the house has attained its form. The first factor is human needs, which

²³⁹ Rapoport, A. (1969), *op. cit.*, p. 61.

²⁴⁰ Altman and Gauvain, (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 287.

²⁴¹ Cited in Relph, E. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

will influence the house form differently. The second factor is the family, where differences in the family structure play a significant role in relation to the house form. The third factor is the position of women, where the need to provide privacy for the women greatly influences the house form. The fourth factor is the need for privacy. However, privacy is different from culture to culture and the forms of the house will respond to these differences. For example, in some cultures houses are open and in others they are closed or subdivided, etc. The last factor is the social intercourse, where every culture has its own religious values, customs, conventions, and habits of social interaction²⁴².

Relph states that 'Home is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community, the dwelling-place of being. Home is not just a house to live in; it is not something that can be anywhere, that can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable centre of significance'²⁴³. Duncan explains how different groups view their houses. The first group, which has collectivistic structuring relations, sees the house as 'a container of women and goods', whereas the individualistic group views the house as 'a status symbol critical to one's social or personal identity'²⁴⁴. Dovey supports this view when he mentions that home is different from house. Home is not self-contained but emerges from its social and spatial dialectics²⁴⁵. Therefore, the 'house is static, but home is fundamentally dynamic and process oriented'²⁴⁶.

Lawrence also differentiates between 'house' and 'home'. He defined house as 'a physical unit that defines and delimits space for the members of a household. It provides shelter and protection for domestic activities.' While he sees home as 'a complex entity that

²⁴² Rapoport, A. (1969), *op. cit.*, pp. 46-103.

²⁴³ Relph, E. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 39.

²⁴⁴ Duncan, J. (1981) (ed.) *Housing and Identity Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, London, Croom Helm Ltd., pp. 2-3.

²⁴⁵ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

defines and is defined by cultural, sociodemographic, psychological, political, and economic factors'. In the cultural dimension, Lawrence presents home as a unit reflecting cultural and social values and conventions. In this situation a 'range of variables needs to be considered ... more than the explicit and manifest function of housing'. In the socio-demographic dimension, factors such as 'age, gender, household structure, and religion' have a direct impact on the design and use of home interiors. In the psychological dimension, 'the home serves as a means of communication with oneself, between members of the same household, friends, and strangers'²⁴⁷.

Benswessi also argues that designing a house as merely shelter differs from designing a home. Because certain psychological needs should be maintained in the home, 'a home as a harmonious identifiable fabric requires a search for a meaningful form that involves a powerful mental image that extends beyond the functional and structural realities'²⁴⁸.

In the Arabic-Islamic culture there are several differences between *bayt* (house) and *maskan* (home). House is related to the physical entity while home is related to people who live in the house. The difference here is between physical and human, between the products and the use and meaning of the product²⁴⁹. The differences between house and home have been indicated in the holy Qur'an on different occasions. In verse (24: 29) God says 'It is no fault on your part to enter houses not used for living in ...'²⁵⁰ In this verse, the word houses is a translation for the Arabic word *boyout*, plural of *bayt*, while the phrase 'living in' is a translation for the act of *sakan* or as mentioned in the Qur'an *miskounah*. This is a clear distinction

²⁴⁷ Lawrence, R. (1987) 'What Makes a House a Home', *Environment and Behaviour*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 154-168.

²⁴⁸ Benswessi, (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 81.

²⁴⁹ Al-Naim, M. (1997) 'Functional and Aesthetic Harmony in the Built Environment', *AlQafila*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (may), pp. 38-43) (Arabic).

²⁵⁰ Ali, A.Y. (1989) *The Holy Qur'an* Brentwood, Aman Corporation, p. 873.

between house, which could be any physical shelter, and home, which only exists if there are people living in it. In another verse, God said ‘It is Allah who made your habitations [*boyoutikom*] homes [*sakana*] of rest and quiet ...’ (16: 80)²⁵¹. This verse clearly indicates that sense of home is achieved through a ‘home making process’.

Dovey developed three approaches for understanding the concept of home including home as an order, home as an identity, and home as connectedness. Home as an order consists of spatial, temporal, and socio-cultural orders. In the spatial order, home finds its roots and its forms in the three ‘universal structures of environmental experience and action’. Firstly, there is the ‘triaxial structure of the human body’ by which people distinguish between up/down, front/rear, and left/right. Secondly, there is the ‘structure of our actions in space’, which includes grasping, sitting, walking, manipulating, looking, hearing, smelling, etc. Finally, there is the ‘structure of the world’. These three structures see home as a ‘range that can include neighbourhood, town, and landscape’²⁵².

In the temporal order, home represents ‘a kind of origin; we go “back” home even when our arrival is in the future.’ It ‘includes not only direct experience of place over time but also familiarity with certain spatial patterns from other places in the past experience’. Therefore, home can ‘extend to a familiarity with the past process through which the forms of the environment have come into being’. In the socio-cultural order, people’s values and social practices influence the form of the house. Therefore, home should adapt to changing social circumstances²⁵³.

Home as an identity as Dovey explains ‘is primarily affective and emotional, reflecting the adage *home is where the heart is*. Identity implies a certain bonding or merging of person and place such that

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 658.

²⁵² Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

²⁵³ Ibid., pp. 37-39.

place takes its identity from the dweller and the dweller takes his or her identity from the place'. For him, there are spatial and temporal identities. Home as spatial identity 'is not a matter of the representation of self-image', but 'it also entails an important component that is supplied by the site itself'. While temporal identity is manifested in the memory and past experience which help 'to create our current experience of home'²⁵⁴.

Home as connectedness is 'a schema of relationships that brings order, integrity, and meaning to experience in place – a series of connections between person and world'. In that sense there are 'connectedness with people', 'connectedness with the place', 'connectedness with the past', and 'connectedness with the future'²⁵⁵.

Despres presents four interpretations for the meaning of home, including territorial, psychological, socio-psychological, and phenomenological. In the territorial interpretation, the concept of control and security determines the territorial satisfaction. In this sense, 'dwellers are allowed to exert control over the space and behaviours which take place within it'. In the psychological interpretation, home is defined as a 'symbol of one's self'. In the socio-psychological interpretation, home represents the symbol of social identity. In this sense, it will play an essential role in the inhabitants' self identity and connect it with the larger community. And finally, in the phenomenological interpretation, home is seen as a dynamic process or 'a process that can only be experienced along time and that peoples' particular life events influence their experience of home'²⁵⁶.

Sixsmith lists 20 categories for the meaning of home. These categories are happiness, belonging, responsibility, self-expression, critical experiences, permanence, privacy, time perspective, meaningful places, knowledge, preference to return, type of

²⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 39-43.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 43-4.

²⁵⁶ Despres, C. (1991), *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101.

relationship, quality of relationships, friends and entertainment, emotional environment, physical structures, extent of services, architectural style, working environment, and spatiality. However, Sixsmith classified these categories into three modes of experiencing the meaning of home including the personal home, the social home, and the physical home²⁵⁷.

In the personal home, home represents the ‘centre of meaning and a central emotional and sometimes physical reference point in a person’s life which is encapsulated in feelings of security, happiness and belonging’²⁵⁸. For him, there is a distinction between a sense of belonging and ‘those aspects of home that contribute in some way to the person’s self identity’. On the one hand, self expression can be created in the home through the structure, layout, home exterior, decoration, furniture, etc., where ‘the home becomes a place where the person can just “be themselves”’. On the other hand, the understanding of home and experiencing it creates ‘strong ties between that environment and the person. These can become integral parts of the person’s history and sense of identity and continuity’²⁵⁹.

In the social home, the relationship between people and home is characterised by ‘the place being home’. In this sense, ‘home is not only a place often shared with other people but is also a place allowing entertainment and enjoyment of other people’s company, such as friends and relatives’²⁶⁰. In the physical home, the ‘physical entity embraces not only the physical structure and style of architecture but also the human space available’. In this sense, the physical home will ‘act as a focus of the person’s activities, memories and experiences, indeed their sense of identity’²⁶¹.

²⁵⁷ Sixsmith, J. (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 287.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 291-292.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

3.2 Home as an Expression of Identity

'Home occupies a psychological role and is used to display aspects of identity. People enjoy the opportunity for self-expression. They attribute meanings to domestic space and show their values and creativity in decorating the front of their houses'²⁶².

Home can reflect a wide diversity of environmental and cultural experiences. The house form is generated gradually as a result of interactive forces between the dwellers and the physical environment. Individuals and groups tend to express their identity in their houses over time.

Altman and Gauvain understand the home as a dynamic dialectic process. They introduce two pairs of opposites to understand the meaning of home, the identity/communality dialectic and the accessibility/inaccessibility dialectic. They argue that the home not only serves to express the self, either as an individual or in relation to the community, but it also serves as an important device for the people to regulate their openness and closedness. Home, therefore, is seen as partially 'reflecting both the unique identity of its occupants as well as their communality with broader culture'²⁶³.

Dovey also sees home as a dynamic dialectic. He developed three dialectics, spatial, social, and appropriation. The spatial dialectic, for example, can be between inside and outside. In that sense home is seen as 'a room inside a house, a house within a neighborhood, a neighborhood within a city, and a city within a nation'. The social dialectic represents identity through the oppositions of self/other, identity/community, and private/public. Finally, appropriation is 'a dialectic process through which we take aspects of our world into our being and are in turn taken by our world'²⁶⁴.

²⁶² Jin, J.H. (1993) 'Home as Expression of Identity', In Marjorie Bulos & Necdet Teymur (Eds) *Housing: Design, Research, Education*, England, Avebury, pp. 181-192.

²⁶³ Altman, I. & Gauvain, M. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 286.

²⁶⁴ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, pp. 44-48.

3.2.1 *Home as an Individual and Collective Medium*

Cooper sees the house as symbol of self²⁶⁵. In that sense, Kron has written that:

‘Personalizing is the human way of adapting to environments. Making them fit us physically and psychologically and socially. It serves two important functions: one, to regulate the social system in a house – direct traffic, keep the peace (and the quiet), and thereby control privacy; and two, to express identity, tell the world – and ourselves – who we are’²⁶⁶.

Despres shares this view when she discusses three main needs that should be fulfilled in any home: physical security and health, privacy, and social status. Physical security is one of the fundamental needs of the human being, but this need is used psychologically to reflect certain meanings for users and to send messages to others. In that sense, ‘the experiential quality of home as spatial dialectic between the interior private world and the outside public world has been used to explain the meaning of home as refuge’²⁶⁷. In that sense, houses in the past had functions more than shelters; they worked as symbols of the community status.

The family uniqueness and an identity will be reflected in the creation of individual homes. Accordingly, ‘home environment is integral to and reflects a variety of social and cultural values regarding individual and family identities’²⁶⁸. Altman and Guavain state that ‘the uniqueness and identity of a family is often reflected in the construction of individual homes’. They add that ‘a family’s identity is often symbolized by the number and variety of rooms in its home’²⁶⁹.

²⁶⁵ Cooper, C. (1972) ‘The House as Symbol of Self’, *Design and Environment*, No. 3, pp. 30-37.

²⁶⁶ Kron, J. (1983) *Home-Psych: the Social Psychology of Home Decoration*, New York, Clarkson N. Potter, p. 45.

²⁶⁷ Despres, C. (1991).

²⁶⁸ Jin, J.H. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 182.

²⁶⁹ Altman and Guavain (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 296.

Moreover, we can argue here that the families will strive to preserve their social and physical symbols in their home environment. Therefore, analysing the traditional kinship system will not only provide us with development of social structure in the contemporary residential settlements, but also it will enable us to understand the degree of persistence of the families to preserve their social and physical symbols. This view is supported by Duncan when he said that home 'is an extremely important aspect of the built environment, embodying not only personal meanings but expressing and maintaining the ideology of the prevailing social order'²⁷⁰.

The importance of social status stems from the desire of a human being to express her/himself and inform others about her/his socio-economic status. Throughout mankind's history, this psychological phenomenon was one of the most important mechanisms that influences the house form. However, every culture has its own customs and conventions regarding the social status and the meanings that individual and group give to the home were different from culture to culture.

The relationship among the individual, group and social identities, motivates individuals to express their identity by informing the new members in the society about their socio-economic status. In that sense, if an individual, on the one hand, belongs to an 'impermeable' social network and her/his socio-economic status is known to all members, there is no need to use the home decoration and furniture to display her/his social status. On the other hand, if the individual is a member in a 'permeable' social network and (s)he needs to interact with new members of the community, in this case home, decoration, furniture arrangement, etc., will be used to inform those new members about her/his social status²⁷¹. Jin shares this view when he says:

²⁷⁰ Duncan, J. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²⁷¹ Bernarad, Y., Bonnes, M., and Giuliani, V. (1993) 'The Interior Use of Home: Behavior Principles Across and within European Culture', In E.G. Arias *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 81-101.

‘... the form of houses varies between different socio-cultural groups. Different socio-cultural groups have different tastes, perceptions, and use of space. The categories to be used to describe self, personality, and social identity vary between the groups²⁷².

3.2.2 *Home as a Physical and Social Image*

The question that this part tries to discuss is why the house form is used to express individual and group image²⁷³. From the previous discussion we find that the house is strongly connected with the everyday life and used to express individual and group identity. It is an ongoing process which reflects people values and taste over time. Habraken supports this view when he indicates that each period has its way of producing things and the process of production depends on the social structure²⁷⁴. Nasar shares this view; in his study of home styles in Los Angeles and Columbus, Ohio, he found that, in each city, the respondents showed consistent patterns of response towards home style. He argues that ‘style is dynamic’ in the sense that the interaction between the object characteristics and individual’s representations of the past experience create the individual experience of objects²⁷⁵. The perceptual identity in the house, thus, can be seen as a process of representation of self through the house form.

Altman and Chemers have found that residents of the middle class suburban home tend to add the family initials to screen doors. Moreover, the identity themes reflect American suburbia, where the houses have similar designs. In these suburban areas, the residents tend to express their personal identity by repainting their houses in different colours²⁷⁶. Habraken also found that tenants of the public

²⁷² Jin, J.H. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 191.

²⁷³

²⁷⁴ Habraken, J. (1985)

²⁷⁵ Nasar, J. (1993) ‘Connotative Meaning of House Style’, In E. Arias *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 143-67.

²⁷⁶ Altman, I. & Chemers, M.M. (1980) *Culture and Environment*, Monterey, CA, Brooks-Cole, pp. 143-167.

housing in Chile tend to paint their parts of the large building façades, while in Cairo people tend to paint around their windows. The purpose of this painting is to express their identity in their territory²⁷⁷.

This supports the argument by Rapoport that most people tend to express their perceptual identity by using the semi-fixed elements²⁷⁸. There are some fixed elements in the home façades, for example, reflecting the impact of socio-cultural values on the expression of certain uniqueness and identity. In this connection, Altman and Gauvain point out that homes in the Middle East have blank walls facing public streets. Also, they show that the windows of the upper floors in the Moslem communities in West Africa are placed so that they cannot see neighbouring homes²⁷⁹.

Home decoration and furniture arrangements are widely used to reflect individual and social identities. People rarely participate in activities 'without meaning and without goals'. Therefore, Kron sees 'decoration' as 'personalization'. He says 'personalizing is marking your environment to let people know where your boundaries begin and end, and putting your personal stamp on a space and its contents'²⁸⁰.

Despres says 'Placing objects with special meaning or specific aesthetic properties within or around the home, arranging the furniture, as well as maintaining the home are all territorial behaviours most often referred to as personalization'²⁸¹. This will indicate that 'decorations can be symbolic of a state of mind in the same way that territorial marking is symbolic of "ownership and intended use"²⁸². Altman and Gauvain find that, although the decor

²⁷⁷ Habraken, N.J. (1982) *Transformations of the Site*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Awater Press, plate I, c and b.

²⁷⁸ Rapoport, A. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁷⁹ Altman and Gauvain (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 308.

²⁸⁰ Kron, J. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁸¹ Despres, C. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 99.

²⁸² Kron, J. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 218.

and furniture arrangements of American homes reflect and symbolise the desire of the dwellers to differ from others, the middle class homes have similar furniture arrangements²⁸³.

Shared values influence the arrangement of the furniture and the interior decoration and reflect the identities of individual and community. Lawrence finds that the past experience plays an important role in the planning and decoration of home interiors. He states ‘the position of some furniture in the future houses of the users has a relationship with the spatial organization of the present apartment of each family’²⁸⁴.

In this sense Korn has written that ‘the home and its decoration is not always a symbol of one’s personality; it can also be a symbol of group membership, or a combination of personality and membership in varying proportions’²⁸⁵. Jin found that the Society Hill residents in Philadelphia follow a typical way in their home decoration. He states that ‘The individual home is considered and decorated as part of a whole neighborhood’²⁸⁶.

Moreover, the classification of the home into front and back, requires a continuous care of the stage region, the front, where visitors enter. It is part of the process of reflection of social status. The living room, for example, is ‘the center ring of symbolic interaction where the id is overruled by the superego – where “I” meets “them” more than halfway, where we show how well we have internalized the aesthetics and values of our class’²⁸⁷.

3.2.3 Home, Use, and Identity

Francescato defines the word ‘use’ as ‘any interaction of people with their residential environment, including perceptual, affective and symbolic processes that may not necessarily be related to

²⁸³ Altman and Gauvain (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 293.

²⁸⁴ Lawrence, J. (1983), *Op Cit.*, pp. 20-23.

²⁸⁵ Kron, J. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²⁸⁶ Jin, J.H. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 186.

²⁸⁷ Kron, J. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 92.

actions²⁸⁸. Arias states that ‘use gives meaning to housing, and at the same time meaning guides how housing is used’²⁸⁹. Moreover, Studer elaborates on the definition of ‘use’ and he argues that ‘use suggests overt behavior, the employment of objects or ideas to facilitate an action’²⁹⁰.

Francescato has said that ‘Housing is a system with multiple customers’. In that sense, home can reflect different meanings for different people. For example, home is understood by its users differently from planners, bankers, developers, etc. Therefore, we need to know customers in order to know the meaning of home. Home, thus, is ‘bound to have a variety of meanings, depending on the goals it meets for different groups or people’²⁹¹. In our case, the user is the customer. Accordingly, we need to investigate the relationship between the ‘use’ and the ‘meaning’ of home and how they generate individual and social identities.

The meaning of home stems from its users, because meaning is implicit in use. Therefore it is convenient to see ‘use as manifesting *effective* behavior, and meaning as manifesting *affective* behavior’²⁹². Meanings that users give to their home and the objects inside it, thus, reflect their preferences, images, and needs. In other words, they reflect their personal and group identities.

Therefore understanding the users’ meaning becomes central in order to understand the meaning of home. Rapoport has written ‘in the case of housing, giving meaning becomes particularly important because of the emotional, personal and symbolic connotation of the house and the primacy of these aspects in shaping its form as well as

²⁸⁸ Francescato, G. (1993) ‘Meaning and Use: A Conceptual Basis’, In E. Arias *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 35-49.

²⁸⁹ Arias, E. (1993) *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, Aldershot, Avebury, p. 1.

²⁹⁰ Studer, R. (1993) ‘Meaning and Use: A Basis of Understanding’, In E. Arias (1993) *The Meaning and Use of Housing*, Aldershot, Avebury, pp. 29-34.

²⁹¹ Francescato, G. (1993), *op. cit.*, pp. 37-9.

²⁹² Studer, R. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

the important psycho-social consequences of the house'²⁹³. Habraken also has stated that 'The house ... can only be judged from inside. We must go in to use it'²⁹⁴.

Goffman introduces the concepts of 'front region' and 'back region' to make a distinction between two domains in the home. The front region, on the one hand, is the area where the visitors are presented²⁹⁵. It is like a stage 'where actors present images they wish to convey to an audience'²⁹⁶. On the other hand, the back region is more private and it is unavailable to the guests.

Lawrence argues that, if spatial form and use of domestic space has a social meaning, then it is necessary to understand the constitutive rules or conventions, which make this meaning possible. He stresses the importance of the classification of spaces and their associated activities, the social conventions and customs that are associated with the use of the spaces, the social roles, routines, and rituals. He adds that the use of space influences the classification and grouping of the domestic spaces inside and outside the home.

For Lawrence, the classification of domestic spaces and the demarcation of activities inside them are defined by cultural, socio-demographic and psychological dimensions. These three dimensions determine the organisation of the spaces inside and outside the home and establish the relationships between different spaces and how and where they are located in the home environment. We can attribute the classification of domestic spaces to various factors such as privacy and preference. In the case of privacy, certain behaviour will influence the association or demarcation of specific spaces in the house. This can be attributed to the separation between the male and female spaces, which will classify the house into male and female

²⁹³ Rapoport, A. (1968) 'The Personal Element in Housing-an Argument for Open-Ended Design', *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, (July), pp. 300-307.

²⁹⁴ Habraken, J. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 90.

²⁹⁵ Goffman, E. (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday life*, London, Penguin Books, pp. 109-140.

²⁹⁶ Altman and Gauvain, (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 312.

spaces. The preference depends on the people's lifestyles, e.g., some people prefer to eat in the kitchen while others prefer to eat in the dining or living rooms. In this case, we can see the kitchen associated with or demarcated from the dining or the living rooms. In addition to privacy and preference, there are other criteria that can interpret the classification and usage of domestic spaces, such as social roles, routines and rituals.

Domestic space does not correspond to a specific function; rather its use is attributed to socio-cultural values and the role of male and female in the society. In this regard, Lawrence introduces four interrelated oppositions to enable us to classify the domestic spaces, 'front/back', 'public/private', 'day/night', and 'clean/dirty'. The oppositions front/back and public/private will imply that the house is classified into spaces overlooking the street, and other spaces which overlook the back yard. For example, those spaces which are exposed to the guests, public spaces, are located in the front, while those spaces which are hidden from the visitors, private spaces, are located at the back. However, the classification of domestic space either in the front or in the back depends on the social image and meanings that people attribute to that space.

The oppositions day/night and clean/dirty are also influenced by social images. For example, we notice that the dirty spaces, such as the laundry, are associated with certain spaces, such as the kitchen, and demarcated from others, such as the living room or reception areas. Moreover, we can see domestic spaces as intended for day activities, such as entertaining, talking, etc., or night activities, such as sleeping. This classification will determine the location of space either in the front or in the back, in the public domain or in the private domain. In addition, this will divide the house into groups of domestic spaces interrelated to each other and governed by socio-cultural values²⁹⁷.

²⁹⁷ Lawrence, R. (1982) 'Domestic Space and Society: A Cross-Cultural Study', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 104-130.

In this connection, Bernard discusses the flexible usage of space inside the dwelling. He argues that space cannot be fixed to one function because there are several semi-fixed elements, such as furniture, which 'would enable the change in usage of rooms in relation to life cycle, and allow for new choices'. For him, the usage of space can change for two reasons. The first reason is attributed to the design of the space, where space is exposed to change after its users' experience. The second reason is that space will lose its functional value at some point in its life cycle. The second reason is common and frequently occurs in the domestic spaces due to the changes in people's lifestyle and the changes that occur to the family such as growing children, divorce, marriage, etc²⁹⁸.

Bernard discusses the importance of rituals in the preparation and eating of meals in France. He argues that the preparation and eating of meals indicates changes in lifestyle. Bernard found that a large number of people prefer to eat the mid-day meal at home, whatever the distance or difficulties. As we noticed, carrying out activities in domestic spaces is strongly governed by the implicit constraints, social values, conventions, social roles, rituals, and routine. However, there is another dimension which influences the usage of space. Technological development introduces several habits and changes in lifestyle which, in consequence, changes the usage of space and indeed introduces new domestic spaces²⁹⁹. In this sense, Kose found in his study of the Japanese house that the mechanisation of the household work and mass media and TV have changed the lifestyle of the Japanese family³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁸ Bernard, Y. (1993) *op. cit.*, p. 168.

²⁹⁹ Bernard, Y. (1991) 'Evolution of Lifestyles and dwelling Practices in France', *The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (Autumn), pp. 193-201.

³⁰⁰ Kose, S. (1993) 'Changing Lifestyle, Changing Housing Form: Japanese Housing in Transition', In Marjorie Bulos & Necdet Teymur (Eds) *Housing: Design, Research, Education*, England, Avebury, pp. 193-206.

4. Summary

The two main concepts of this work, identity and home, have been introduced in this chapter. We have found that these two concepts are interwoven and complement each other. While identity is a very subjective phenomenon, home has both subjective and objective aspects. The objective aspects of home deal with physiological need, while the subjective aspects are responsible for the psychological need. Identity in this sense represents the psychological side of home and deals with the home making process.

Identity has been discussed from its three main sides, physical, social, and temporal. As a philosophical, psychological, and physical concept, identity is a very wide issue. It was clear from the beginning that the notion 'identity' is an ambiguous concept. Therefore, to define its boundary was one of this chapter's main goals, and we have tried in it to develop a general boundary for identity. However, it will be defined and developed again in the next chapter to meet the goal of this study.

As with identity, home is a very wide concept. Although most literature has common conceptions about home, still it has no clear definition. Home as a physical entity is different from the sense of home which could be felt in a very small room inside a house as well as in a whole city or country. This wide range of homes makes the subject difficult and ambiguous. What is important for this study is identity in the private homes of the Gulf region. This will be discussed in more detail in the last two chapters of this volume. However, next chapter aims to find a theoretical link between the filtering model, which we discussed in the first and second chapter, and the concept of identity in the home environment.

PROCESS OF IDENTIFICATION IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT: DEVELOPING A THEORETICAL MODEL

1. Prologue

In the study of the continuity and change of identity in the home environment, several concepts and variables will intersect and overlap. This is because it is quite difficult to define clear boundaries for both identity and home. As we discussed in the previous chapters, identity and home are two interrelated concepts. They can be seen as processes rather than final products. Still, it is essential for this study to find a way to define these boundaries because we need to understand why identity as a phenomenon is interwoven with home environment, and how we can describe this phenomenon

This chapter aims to define the boundaries of identity in the home environment. Moreover, it looks to develop operational spatio-temporal paths for identity, its growth and re-growth in the home environment. These paths are seen by the researcher as very common and to be found in any home environment. However, the main goal behind the need for these paths is that they will help the researcher in gathering, classifying, and analysing the main data. In other words, these paths are very important in delimiting the scope of this study because they will define the limits of the scope of identity in the home environment.

In general, six steps have been followed to develop the spatio-temporal paths. In the first step we have tried to narrow down the

main concepts that may overlap with identity by establishing a relationship between identity and meaning. In the second step we have strengthened the relationship between identity and meaning by establishing two dimensions for identity. In the third step we have defined the boundary of identity further by introducing four types of identity in the home environment. The fourth and fifth steps see identity as a dynamic concept that can grow and re-grow over time, while the last step deals with the construction of spatio-temporal paths for the growing and re-growing of identity in the home environment.

2. Identity and Meaning

'In human terms, the goal of communication is not merely the transmission of information, but also the interpretation of information, the elucidation of its meaning. In turn, interpretation implies a hermeneutic viewpoint, an acceptance of diversity of meanings. Different interpreters will find different meanings in the same information, depending on their experiences, intent, interests, goals and a number of other factors. So if we wish to define the meaning of housing we first must ask: Meaning for whom?'³⁰¹

In the previous chapter, we concluded that the concept of identity should be seen from three main aspects: physical aspects where the perceptual communications are manifested through objects which people make and use, social aspects by which people produce and mobilise meanings, and finally temporal aspects where the meanings of things continue in individual and collective memories. Nevertheless, we need to discuss another important aspect which has a major relationship with the concept of identity. This aspect is physical and spatial meaning of the home environment. It is obvious that without meaning no identity can be established. This is why it is essential for this study to clarify the overlapping of these two concepts.

³⁰¹ Francescato, G. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

The meaning which we are after is what message identity seeks to send to others. In other words, if expressing identity is the goal, meaning is the mechanism of performing this goal. The three aspects of identity (physical, social, and temporal) can be considered as the aspects of generating, developing, and continuing meanings. This is because it is difficult to understand the purpose of meaning and how it was generated, developed, or continued without explaining the medium in which this meaning is mobilised.

It is, in fact, difficult to separate identity from meaning. In this sense, the following questions need to be discussed to understand how identity and meaning in reality are interwoven concepts. For whom is meaning generated? How is it developed? And by whom? And how is it understood by people?

Meaning in this work is seen as a process of identifying people, places, things, etc. It is linked completely with people's values and their world view. Mankind throughout history has attempted to consolidate his existence by producing meaningful objects to expressing his beliefs, attitudes, and values. Therefore, meaning can be seen as 'an attribute of an object or idea that makes it of emotional value or concern, arousing in a person or persons certain associations, cognitions or effects. Such elements stand for and communicate particular ideas or values of agents who present them in order to confirm an intention'³⁰². Nevertheless, meaning is not something apart from function, and it is an important aspect of the function. It is important and central in the built environment. Therefore, it is used to express self and represent the collective identity. In this sense, meaning is:

'A central mechanism linking people and environments. It may even influence perception, making it selective through the affective response to subliminal cues, greatly influences cognition ... and dominates evaluation,

³⁰² Studer, R.G. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 29.

preference and choice, so that even “aesthetics” may be an aspect of meaning; meaning thus dominates action³⁰³.

Rafael Moneo has written that ‘architectural form must support such meaning: that is, its meaning in the collective memory through which one may then understand work, assimilate it and situate it in the world of known objects’³⁰⁴. Moreover, physical forms extract meanings by encoded information that people decode. Therefore, in the time of filtering and interpreting this information, the actual physical forms guide and channel people’s responses³⁰⁵. Therefore, evaluating the built environment depends on people’s response to the meanings it has rather than detailed analysis of it. This evaluation is mostly implicit rather than explicit and depends on the individual and cultural images and ideals.

We can say that ‘meanings are in people, not in objects or things’³⁰⁶. Bonta shares this view, he writes of ‘the meaning of things which are not in themselves meaningful, but which acquire meaning because of our familiarity with them; in other terms, because of social usage and convention’³⁰⁷. Oliver indicates that similar forms in different cultures may denote different meanings. He states:

It is in the nature of the abstract symbol that any connotations attached to it are projected by man and not intrinsic to the figurative character of the symbol itself. As a result, many symbols may take on different meanings in different societies, though the motif may remain essentially the same³⁰⁸.

³⁰³ Rapoport, A. (1990) ‘Levels of Meaning and Types of Environment’, In Y. Yoshitake, R. Bechtel, T. Takahashi and M. Asai (Eds) *Current Issues in Environmental-Behaviour*, Tokyo, University of Tokyo, (see Rapoport A. (no date) *Thirty Three Papers in Environment-Behaviour Research*, Newcastle upon Tyne, The Urban International Press), pp. 513-528.

³⁰⁴ Cited in Benswessi, A. (1987), *op. cit.* p. 78.

³⁰⁵ Rapoport, A. (1982) *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach*, Tucson, The University of Arizona Press.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁷ Cited in Benswessi, (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 78.

³⁰⁸ Oliver, P. (1975) *Shelter, Sign & Symbol*, London, Barrie & Jenkins, p. 21.

In this sense, we can argue that, despite the change which may have occurred in those objects which carry certain meanings, then provided they are strong enough, meanings will find a way to continue. In other words, our argument is that objects can be considered as a medium in which people mobilise certain meanings to identify themselves as individuals and groups. If this medium is exposed to change, a temporarily unstable situation will appear until strong meanings find another medium.

The question is, are we able to identify strong meanings from those weak and changeable ones? In general, meanings can be classified into three levels: denotative, connotative, and associational. Denotative meaning is instrumental and utilitarian. Connotative meaning refers to the symbolic and aesthetic meanings³⁰⁹. Associational meaning implies those hidden aspects of meaning which develop from the deep relationship between people and objects. Association as Relph explained constitutes ‘a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security, a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world’³¹⁰.

The aforementioned classification can be linked with the three levels of meanings which Rapoport introduced: ‘high-level’ meaning, which is related to cosmologies, cultural schemata, world views and philosophical systems; ‘middle-level’ meaning, which is related to those aspects communicating identity, status, wealth, power (it is related to the latent rather than instrumental aspects of activities, behaviours, and settings); ‘low-level’, which is related to everyday life and instrumental meanings³¹¹.

To recapitulate, a connection between the levels of meanings, the three levels of socio-cultural values (religious values, conventions, and habits) and levels of memory is vital to understand why meaning can develop and why it has different strengths. For example, people

³⁰⁹ Nasar, J. (1993), *op. cit.*, pp. 144-149.

³¹⁰ Relph, E. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³¹¹ Rapoport, A. (1990), *op. cit.*, pp. 520-521.

tend to respond to religious values constantly and over time. They form people’s world view and deepen their relationship with the surrounding environment. Thus, this type of value strives to establish high-level or associational meanings. Conventions are more related to the middle level or connotative meanings. While habit can be linked to the low level or denotative meanings. This is to say that identity, with its high-level meaning, is more constant and has the ability to continue over time.

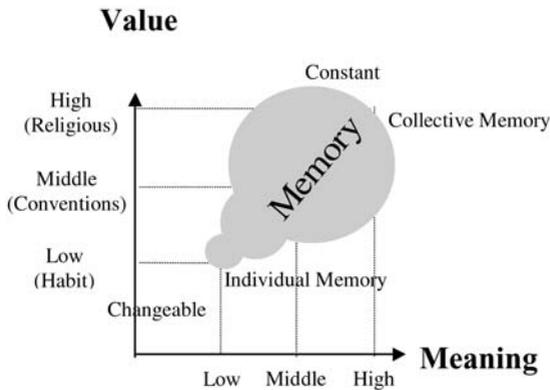


Fig. 4.1. Aspects of identity in the home environment.

In the above diagram (Fig. 4.1), we can see that high meanings always have a strong connection with high values. This type of meaning is part of the collective memory and tends to continue over time. It has the ability to be mobilised in another medium if its original medium is changed. The low meanings, on the other hand, are connected with individual values. This type of meaning is not common and is usually developed by an individual or a sub-group (family). It is very dynamic and has the ability to adapt to changing life circumstances. What is really essential for our study is the third type of meaning, the middle-level, located between the other two

meanings. The middle-level of meaning is strongly connected with what we called ‘conventions’. If we recall the meaning of conventions we will find that this type of meaning ranges from very strong meanings (almost similar to high-level meanings) to low-level meanings. This type of meaning, thus, is flexible in some cases and rigid in others. It is adaptable to changing life circumstances in certain times and unchanging in others.

The argument here is that identity and meaning are two concepts that have the same goal; that is sending messages and identifying individuals and groups from each other. In order to construct spatio-temporal paths for the continuity and change of identity in the home environment, it is necessary to see identity and meaning as having the same characteristics. However, meanings as we have seen have different levels and strengths. This requires us to search for those aspects which are inherited in the concept of identity and can be classified into levels and strengths.

3. The Dimensions of Identity

‘... self identity, or the knowledge of the self, is defined in relation to broader social entities rather than isolated subjects. It is a multi-level concept, that includes the personal self, which refers to the awareness of one’s body, thoughts, moods, emotions, perceptions, gestural expression and character of physical being; the social self, which refers to the process by which objects become objectified forms of consciousness and come to be embodied in the consciousness of others; and cosmic self, which refers to the human drive toward a large harmony of things in general³¹².

Our objective is to construct a clear view about identity in the home environment. The foregoing discussion concludes that identity consists of a complex of relationships among its physical, social, and temporal aspects. We found that there are strong and weak identities. There is strong identity in the sense it has the ability to mobilise strong meaning while weak identity always relates to

³¹² Despres, C. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 101.

isolated individual meanings. This ranking is what makes us see identity as a wide and dynamic concept. In the following discussion we will elaborate identity more and focus it down to two main dimensions. These two dimensions see identity as a dialectic phenomenon consisting of horizontal and vertical relationships.

While the horizontal dimension deals with perceptual and associational aspects of identity, the vertical dimension tries to understand how individuals and groups express their perceptual and associational identities. Group identity in this perspective could be extended to represent as small a group as an extended family or as large a one as a nation.

3.1 Perceptual and Associational Dimension

When we discussed physical objects, we mentioned that, if we depend on objects only as a source of understanding identity, two main problems might appear. One of these problems is the meaning of an object itself³¹³. This is because we have different levels of meanings, strong and weak. This means that some objects will resist the change more than other objects. However, it is necessary for this study to develop a way to describe this ranking of meanings. This will enable us to identify those resistible meanings as well as their associated physical elements in the home environment. The method that is used here to describe this rank of meanings is by classifying the home environment into perceptual and associational identities³¹⁴.

Perceptual identity deals with senses, by which we can feel the physical and non-physical aspect of the built environment. For Rapoport the term 'perception' is more than a mechanism of visualising things, rather it is a communicative mechanism by which we are able to describe how the perceived environment is constructed. He mentions three interrelated aspects in the built environment related to the term 'perception', including environmental perception, environmental cognition, and

³¹³ See the third Chapter.

³¹⁴ See Rapoport, A. (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 19-28.

environmental evaluation. These three aspects should be understood as one process for recognising and using objects as communicative devices. The environmental perception is the 'direct sensory experience of the environment for those who are in it at a given time'. In the environmental cognition, perception is used to define, classify and categorise the built environment. Finally, in the environmental evaluation, perception is used to evaluate built environment. Perception, thus, 'deals with how information is gathered and obtained, cognition with how it is organised ... and preference deals with how it is ranked and evaluated'³¹⁵.

In the case of perceptual identity, we are interested in those perceptual characteristics that distinguish any physical object from other objects. Habraken has explained the ability of physical forms to express the people's needs. He states that a 'physical system shared by society, is like a language. It has its limitation of grammar, but one can tell any tale in it'³¹⁶. By our perceptual ability, thus, we can communicate identity by making forms. Moreover, Habraken claims that forms enable us to know exactly what they mean without being able to say it in words. He introduces the concept of a 'thematic system', which enables us to distinguish between the physical configurations and the agreements that are implied in them. For him it is necessary to distinguish between the 'variants' or the artefacts and the 'structure' or the agreements that we read in the artefacts. He argues that the 'variants' are visible, while the 'structure' is hidden in the 'variants'³¹⁷.

In the associational identity, on the other hand, we are interested in those social characteristics that distinguish individual and groups. Therefore 'identity tends to be less a concept which emphasises its reflective nature than a social interactionist concept which flourished in the human scene of cynicism and pretence'³¹⁸. Belief systems,

³¹⁵ Rapoport, A. (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³¹⁶ Habraken, (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

³¹⁸ Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

objectification, rituals, and commitments have essential roles in the construction of associational identity. Therefore, 'one way of viewing identity is to think of it as consisting of a particular belief system and the mechanisms the individual has for maintaining the belief system'³¹⁹.

Several psychologists and philosophers have discussed how society, through its individuals, subgroups and groups maintains its identity over time. Berger, for example, states 'Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity with a specific, socially constructed world ... one identifies oneself, as one is identified by others, by being located in a common world'³²⁰. As we argued in the previous discussion a dynamic dialectic between different levels of identity is essential and continuous. This dynamism stems from the tendency of human beings to develop certain customary and acceptable values over time to enable them to socialise with others.

Associational identity can be linked with the concept of collective behaviour which is used by Smelser (1962). He stresses the importance of 'generalized beliefs' and values in directing social movements in the circumstances of rapid social change³²¹. Swinburne also argues that 'the essential properties which make the form of a person would include ... not merely shape and physiological properties, but a kind of way of behaving and a capacity for mental life of thought and feeling'³²².

Mead argues that a human has a nervous system capable of reacting in itself to symbols and signs which enable each one to communicate to others. In this sense, there is in the human creature an obvious distinction between body and self, between 'physique' and 'consciousness'. Mead (1934) states that:

³¹⁹ Hardin, B. & Kehrer, G. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³²⁰ Cited in Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 65.

³²¹ Abercrombie, N. et al (1994) *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology* London, Penguin Group.

³²² Swinburne, (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 6.

‘... there are two general stages in the full development of the self. At the first of these stages, the individual’s self is constituted simply by an organisation of the particular attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward one another in the specific social acts in which he participates with them. But at the second in the full development of the individual’s self that self is constituted not only by an organisation of these particular individual attitudes, but also by an organisation of the social attitudes of the generalised other or the social group as a whole to which he belongs³²³.

Moreover, Rapoport states that ‘in any given cultural realm there are some shared associations that could be reinforced through consistent use³²⁴. Associational identity, thus, deals with the latent aspects of activities, their meanings and the specific ways they perform. In this way, identity can be communicated by those aspects, in the built environment, which support particular core values that are part of the shared values of a specific group.

However, the perceptual and associational aspects of identity complement each other. Identification is seen as ‘the mechanism of internalising the attitude, mores and behaviour³²⁵. It is also the mechanism by which people give meaning to things. Parsons argues that identity is ‘the core system of meanings of an individual personality in the mode of object in the interaction systems of which he is part³²⁶. Moreover, social relationships ‘provide the meaning that is attached to a particular focus of identity³²⁷. In this sense, it is important to know how the perceptual objects are connected to the associational domains.

³²³ Cited in Bloom, (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 32.

³²⁴ Rapoport, A. (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³²⁵ Bloom, (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 50.

³²⁶ Cited in Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 64.

³²⁷ Gordon, D.F. (1978) ‘Identity and Social Commitment’, In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, cross-cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd., 229-241.

3.2 *Individual and Group Dimension*

It is Erikson who gives the concept of identity its individual and collective dimension when he states ‘The term “identity” expresses ... a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself ... and a persistent sharing of some kind of characteristics with others’³²⁸. He says that identity refers to, firstly; ‘a conscious *sense of individual identity*’, secondly ‘an unconscious striving for a *continuity of personal character*’, thirdly ‘as a criterion for the silent doings of *ego synthesis*’, and finally can be seen ‘as a maintenance of an inner *solidarity* with a group’s ideals and identity’³²⁹.

The horizontal dimension of identity concludes that interrelated relationships always appear between the physical and social aspects of identity. In this section we will focus on the concept further by discussing its vertical dimension, individual and group. In this sense, identity might be established by a range of social units. Mol lists three levels of identity, personal or individual identity, group identity and social identity³³⁰. Beals makes the circle wider by including cultural identity in addition to personal identity and social identity³³¹. It seems that he includes group identity in social identity. Morley and Robins discuss the concepts of ‘nation’, which implies social identity as a general idea that involves ‘people in a common sense of identity and its capacity to work as an inclusive symbol which provides “integration” and “meaning” as it constructs and conscripts public images and interpretations of the past “to re-enchant a disenchanting everyday life”’³³².

³²⁸ Erikson, E. (1980) *Identity and the Life Cycle*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company (first published in 1959), p. 109.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³³⁰ Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³³¹ Lewins, F. (1978), *op. cit.*, 20.

³³² Morely, David and Robin, Kevin (1993) ‘No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home (Land) in European Culture’, In Carter, Erica, Donald, James & Squires, Judith (Eds) *Spaces & Places: Theories of Identity and Location*, London, Lawrence & Wishart.

Rapoport elaborates more on this subject. He argues that the social unit can range from all humanity to the individual. He says that human identity is established through opposition between culture (human) and nature (non-human). Group identity can be seen through different groups, for example, farmers vs. nomads. Sub-group identity can be examined in different scales, such as, men vs. women, kinship groups, etc. Finally, individual identity, which creates a limiting case of group identity, can be seen in terms of role, such as me vs. others³³³.

This part focuses on the dialectic between the different levels of identity. For example, individual identity can be seen clearly in contemporary western culture; therefore, personal identity becomes very important. In traditional cultures, on the other hand, social structure is distinguished by the extended family. Therefore, individual identity is not important and the emphasis tends to be on group identity³³⁴. This means that there is always a dialectic between individual and group identity. A shift from one identity level to another is vital in coping with changes. Mol shares this view when he indicates that, in the time of great change, the emphasis will be shifted from social identity to group identity³³⁵.

Beals goes further and points out that the appearance of a new social identity will reflect the individual's and group's commitments. Therefore, if the level of participation decreases, a new social identity will express this change. He states 'when the most general level of participation is below the societal level, alternative identity foci will arise which register, subsume and interpret the abstract or coercive societal relationship'³³⁶. Bloom argues that 'a personality acceptable to the immediate social group is a simple necessity for social survival – social survival being synonymous with physical survival'³³⁷.

³³³ Rapoport, A. (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 14-19.

³³⁴ See volume II.

³³⁵ Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 10-14.

³³⁶ Cited in Lewins, F. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

The stability of any social system is not based purely on 'structural constraints and balances', but is based on social norms and conventions which characterise that society's members and which creates what Durkheim calls a 'collective conscience'³³⁸. For Durkheim the word 'conscience' refers to the moral attitude of the individual. The term 'collective conscience' refers to an 'external normative order or social fact'³³⁹. Durkheim states that 'the totality of beliefs and sentiments common to the average citizens of the same society forms a determinant system which has its own life; one may call it collective or common conscience'³⁴⁰.

This collective conscience can be linked to what Bloom named 'common identification'. He says 'Inasmuch as a group of individuals shares a common identification, there is the potential for that group to act together to enhance and protect that shared identity'³⁴¹. He explains how the individuals behave within the group frame when he states that 'through a shared identification, individuals are linked within the same psychological syndrome and will act together to preserve, defend and enhance their common identity'³⁴². He adds that people who share a common identity tend to work as one unit and 'mobilise as a coherent mass movement'.

Parsons defines identity in terms of social and cultural environment, he also implies that identity is a 'dynamic behavioural mechanism of the human organism'. Moreover, he stresses that identity is constrained by society, and he acknowledges the biological basis but not as a central concern of his theory. For him, identity moves from being mainly concerned with the formation of individual identity to its position as a fundamental base in any general theory of social structure and action.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³³⁹ Abercrombie, N. et al (1984), *op. cit.*, p. 82.

³⁴⁰ Cited in Bloom, W. (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Parsons introduced the term ‘social dupe’ in which human creatures were subject to society and society’s need. He defined three major types of need. Firstly, those which mediate in person-to-person relationships, secondly, those which mediate between the person and cultural standards and thirdly, those which mediate between the person and society³⁴³. For him, certain control should be established by socialisation over the organic need system. He states that ‘the *first* fundamental necessity of socialisation is to establish *control* through social interaction over significant organic need system’³⁴⁴.

Habermas argues that humans and community seek, through the ‘self-reflective’ symbolism of identity, meaningfully to locate themselves in their profane and cosmic environment. In this sense, the central theme is that humans and society try actively to find both terms of locating and creating their ‘proper and ‘true’ identity. He introduces the concept of an identity-securing interpretative system. For him, it is the match between the identity-securing interpretative system and the realities of social existence which legitimates the structure of any social system.

For Habermas, dynamism of identity is presented in his discussion of the identity-securing interpretative system, which acts as mediator between the individual or the group and social structures. Therefore, if the symbolic mediation is not appropriate, certain changes will occur to maintain psychological security. These changes will be manifested either in the changes of the interpretative system or change in the social structure³⁴⁵.

As we noticed, collective identity has a strong influence on individual identity, yet the sum of the individual identities comprise the collective identity. This indicates that the individual is not a

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁴⁴ Parsons, Talcott & Bales, Robert F. (1968) (First Published in England in 1956) *Family Socialization and Interaction Process*, London, Lowe & Brydone (Printers) Ltd., p. 170. (his italic)

³⁴⁵ Habermas (1974), *op. cit.* See also Bloom, W. (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 47.

static entity, being completely determined by the society in which (s)he lives. In this sense, Goplan introduces the concept of dynamic-individual³⁴⁶. This concept explains that individuals possess internal mechanisms that enable them to modify themselves to the new circumstances. We can link these mechanisms with our previous discussion about values where a person's actions are controlled by religious, social, and personal values. Through these three levels of values which individuals possess, their belief system is constituted. While by the other three mechanisms, which are objectification, commitment and rituals, meaning will be generated and mobilised. This dynamic process occurs in the individual level but can be expressed collectively in the group and social levels.

Lewins discusses the view of Daniel Bell in the individual and group identity. He says that we can look at the individual identity as effective 'ties providing the subjective or individual basis for emotional support', while the group identity refers to 'that quality which binds a group through a common set of material interests'³⁴⁷.

Groups, thus, have various mechanisms to channel their members' images and make them feel they belong to a distinct group. These mechanisms include geographical isolation, specific dress, maintaining their own language, and cultural and social isolation³⁴⁸. For Duncan the relationship between individuals' consciousness and the social structure is what makes certain meanings in home environment collectively understandable. He states that:

'Whereas ... certain types of behaviour and attitudes towards the house are influenced by structural conditions in a society, it should become clear ... that social structure does not in itself determine the consciousness of individuals,

³⁴⁶ Goplan, (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 124.

³⁴⁷ Lewins, F. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³⁴⁸ Shaffir, William (1978) 'Witnessing as Identity Consolidation: The Case of the Lubavitcher Chassidim', In Hans Mol (ed.) *Identity and Religion: International, Cross-Cultural Approaches*, London, SAGE Publication Ltd., pp. 38-57.

but that the relationship between consciousness and structures is highly complex³⁴⁹.

The degree to which members of a group will respond as a whole to maintain their collective identity will depend upon certain 'historical and extential bonds within the group, length of time passed together, class, ethnicity, religion, ritual and the degree to which that particular identification is crucial to the general identity'³⁵⁰. Therefore, a group of individuals, in the same environmental circumstances, tend to follow the same process of identification to internalise the same identity. Similarly, they will act together to protect and enhance their shared identity.

The reasons behind the need to understand why individuals and groups express their identities in their home environment is our desire to understand the dynamic dialectic between individual and group or what we call individual and collective identities, individual identity in the sense that everybody has her/his own preferences and images. The uniqueness of house form and the spaces inside it is part of this identity. It deals with the question: why are private homes in Hofuf different from each other? While collective identity sees these preferences and images as part of a shared common identification. This identity deals with how private homes in Hofuf are similar

4. Types of Identity in the Home Environment

'The identity may occur at many levels from the physical to the spiritual and in different modes from the individual to the collective'³⁵¹.

As we have seen, a continuous dialectic between identity dimensions is necessary for the continuity and change of identity in the home environment. In this part we need to go further by founding a set of identities that have different strengths. This set of

³⁴⁹ Duncan, J. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³⁵⁰ Bloom, (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 40.

³⁵¹ Blee, M.J. (1966), *op. cit.*, p. 80.

identities is developed from the possible relationship between the identity dimensions. Four types of identity have been developed, and these are ‘individual perceptual identity’, ‘individual associational identity’, ‘collective perceptual identity’, and ‘collective associational identity’ (Fig. 3.2).

	Perceptual	Associational
Individual	Individual Perceptual Identity	Individual Associational Identity
Group	Collective Perceptual Identity	Collective Associational Identity

Fig. 4.2. Types of Identity.

Individual perceptual identity is dynamic and can be changed easily. It is related to individual preferences and mainly associated with utilitarian forms. It deals with how a person sees the form of something and how he perceives its meaning. This identity is related more to low-level meaning. When a person builds a deep relationship with the surrounding objects and spaces, (s)he is in the process of creating his associational identity. Individual associational identity needs more time to exist because it assumes that a person has an intimate relationship with the surrounding objects and spaces. These objects and spaces, in this sense, reflect personal belief and attitude. This type of identity depends on how an individual sees the world and how he or she objectifies meanings to reflect his or her own belief. In general individual associational identity is influenced by collective associational identity (Fig. 4.3).

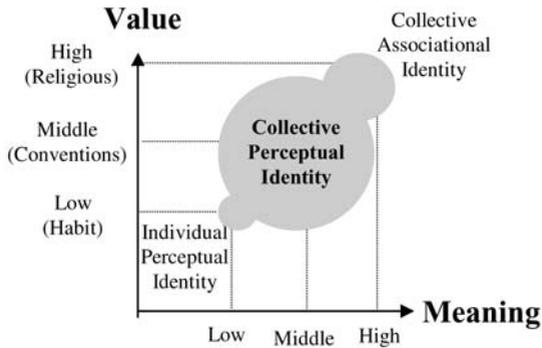


Fig. 4.3. The relationship between value, meaning, and types of Identity in the home environment.

Collective perceptual identity in the home environment is usually represented by certain forms with the ability to send, as it were, collective meanings. These forms may be inherited from previous generations (for example, traditional forms). Also, new forms may find a common acceptance by a group of people. Then they will associate them with collective meanings. This type of identity usually contains connotative meanings and forms an important part of the identity of home environment.

Collective associational identity is less dynamic. This identity represents what we call the ‘cultural core’. It can be expressed by physical forms, but it will continue even if the physical form changes. This means that the new physical form will be modified to meet the collective associational requirements.

5. Identity as a Dynamic Process

‘The concept of identity aiding the process by concretely visualizing the *personal* and *social* aspects of the dynamism³⁵².

³⁵² Gopalan, S. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 124.

The preceding discussion aimed to establish a basic theoretical basis for studying identity in the home environment. However, the main challenge that faces anyone studying identity in the home environment is the dynamism of people's preferences, judgements, etc. Human associational requirements are never fully accommodated by the built form. We create these forms to support our purposes. However, our 'sociophysical requirements generally change before they can be met'³⁵³.

Therefore, we need to see identity in the home environment as a dynamic process, which mainly consists of different relationships that may occur between people's socio-cultural values and the possible physical forms. This is not to say that identity will change from time to time, but to say that identity, with its four types, will change from one level to another. It can be at a strong level. Then it can be changed to weaker or stronger levels according to the changes in life circumstances. This means that establishing an identity in the home environment is a gradual and continuous process.

While change in people's preferences and lifestyles will change the home environment, maintaining collective identity will consolidate it and will resist change and direct it to express the inhabitants' personalities. This view is supported by Mol who refers to change as differentiation and identity as integration. Therefore, he states, 'differentiation of function must be counterbalanced by integration or stabilization of function'³⁵⁴. For Mol, sign and symbol make for greater flexibility and more efficient change, which means that they have to be counterbalanced by other signs and symbols to represent stability, conformity and security.

However, some conflict may occur between the younger generation and the older generation in the case of frequent exposure to the surrounding cultures³⁵⁵. The younger generation will not share

³⁵³ Studer, R. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁵⁴ Mol, H. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

³⁵⁵ Shaffir, W. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 49.

the older generation's perspective on how to organise their lives, which will weaken the collective identity of the community. On this point, Jones criticises the view that identity is static and fixed, and he stresses the importance of social interaction in the creation of identity. He states that the concept of identity is a result of various social experiences 'situated' within a series of social relations and 'placed' as social objects³⁵⁶.

Cultural practices and codes cannot be understood without reference to change over time. The 'dynamic process' of the built environment refers to change in people's life cycle and modification in lifestyle over time. Time, thus, is 'not merely a component, but rather an inherent aspect of human-environmental phenomena'³⁵⁷. Thus the study of the process of change in domestic spaces will shed light on the understanding the dynamic process of the home and enable us to grasp the new meanings that may be embodied in domestic spaces.

The process of change and adaptability, thus, is an essential mechanism that enables us to preserve our identity. This occurs because of the dynamism of the psychological mechanisms of human life. Therefore, unless we are able to adapt to changes, we can not reproduce our individual and collective identities. In this sense, identity can be seen as 'a dynamic adaptive mechanism'³⁵⁸. Similarly, the home environment can be seen as a dynamic adaptive mechanism by understanding the response of people to their built environment and the changes they have made to cope with new lifestyle.

The dynamic process in the home environment deals with how people relate to their physical forms and what are the particular meanings they attach to these forms. On this Rapoport states:

'The study of man-environment interaction ... needs to be approached, at least in part, through a study of symbols and imagery and, consequently, the

³⁵⁶ Jones, R.K. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³⁵⁷ Francescato, G. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 45.

³⁵⁸ Bloom, W. (1990) *op. cit.*, p. 50.

study of popular design needs to be approached through a study of popular imagery and its sources. We need to study the variability and constancy of such images, synchronically and diachronically³⁵⁹

Two main characteristics, thus, are used to explain the dynamic relationship in the built environment. First, this relationship can be understood diachronically where the interactive actors, the socio-cultural values and possibilities of physical forms, build up changeable relationships through time. Second, the dynamic relationship can be understood synchronically where the interactive actors in the built environment will create a specific built form in every specific period of time³⁶⁰. This specific built form will be a result of the relationship between the continuous values and possible physical forms at that period of time.

Our argument is that searching for identity in the home environment will put some forms under continuous change because these forms are chosen to be the media for expressing the users' identity. Identity in this case implies that a certain degree of resistance towards the circumstances should preserve the continuity of the cultural core and strong experiences. This resistance can be explicit or implicit. However, in the previous discussion we mentioned the importance of bodily continuity and continuity of memory as mechanisms that indicate the continuity of identity over time. However, we cannot understand the continuity of identity unless we understand it as a dynamic phenomenon.

Hume discusses how the concept of duration plays an important role in the continuity of identity over time. The notion 'duration' implies either change or continuity over time. To understand the continuity of an object through time we need to know first whether

³⁵⁹ Rapoport, A. (1973) 'Images, Symbols and Popular Design', *International Journal of Symbolology* (USA), Vol. 4, No. 3 (November), pp. 1-12.

³⁶⁰ 'Diachronic' and 'synchronic' had been used by the Swiss scholar Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistic studies. Many writers had used these terms in art, architecture and man-environment studies. Gombrich, for example, discussed the use of these two terms in his study of the decorative art. Gombrich, E.H. (1979, 1984), *op. cit.*, p. 193.

the object is constant or changeable. The constancy of the object means that we cannot say that an object is the same as itself, unless we mean that the object existing at one time is the same as that existing at another³⁶¹.

The physical object will respond to this change in order to be able to reflect new meanings. In this case, the transformation of the physical forms needs to be gradual. Hume states that ‘the change of parts [need] be not sudden nor entire, in order to preserve the identity, yet where the objects are in their nature changeable and inconstant, we admit of more sudden transition’³⁶².

Hirsch sees continuity of identity as a mechanism for maintaining identity over time. He relates the concept of continuity to the ‘unity-making relationship’ which binds the ‘successive stages’ of a ‘single persisting object’³⁶³. The unity-making relationship can be understood through two considerations. First, there is the ‘continuity of qualitative change’ or ‘qualitative continuity’. Second, there is the ‘continuity of locational change’ or ‘spatiotemporal continuity’.

Like Hume, Hirsch discusses the necessity of the gradual change of the physical object to identity. Therefore, in the case of change, the object should be related to the previous one. He said ‘an object’s qualitative changes are continuous if, at any given time, the object is very similar to the way that it is at neighboring times’³⁶⁴. He explains the qualitative continuity in the sense that an object is either qualitatively constant at all times or undergoes continuous qualitative changes over time. In this sense we can argue here that the continuous qualitative changes in the built environment mean that a series of small changes occurred in the physical environment when people tried to select among the possible media to express their individual and collective identities over time.

³⁶¹ Hume, D. (1978), *op. cit.*, p. 201.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 258.

³⁶³ Hirsch, E. (1982), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

The spatio-temporal continuity, on the other hand, means that the place that is occupied by the object changed over time. As in qualitative continuity, spatio-temporal continuity is distinguished by its continuous movement which is composed of a series of ‘small movements’. In this sense, the object’s overall location in space must suffer some degree of discontinuity³⁶⁵.

In the foregoing discussions we have presented identity as a dynamic phenomenon at the same time as we have stressed the importance of its continuity. These two characteristics seem, at first, to contradict each other. However, what we would like to present here is that identity is both a changeable and enduring phenomenon. This is what we call growth and re-growth of identity in the home environment.

6. Growth of Identity in the Home Environment

‘Growth of identity is more than the search for a form that reflects a static self-image; it is dynamic and may indeed actively resist equilibrium ... The growth of identity requires a certain freedom of interaction between present and future, between our experiences and dreams’³⁶⁶.

We hypothesised that people have two filters, personal and cultural. These two filters are used by people to modify new forms and localise them to convey personal and social meanings. Existing forms as well as new forms will pass through gradual transformation until they meet the existing traditions in the home environment³⁶⁷. This process of transformation in the home environment is called in this study the ‘process of identification’. The following discussion aims to construct hypothetical spatio-temporal paths for the process of identification in the home environment.

These paths try to develop a way to describe and measure the four types of identity in the home environment and how identity grows

³⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 15-22.

³⁶⁶ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³⁶⁷ See the first Chapter.

from one level to another. We assume that every type of identity is found in the home environment. Expressing all the four types through one medium makes this medium a very localised form. However, most home environments contain these types of identity in part, especially collective associational identity, which needs a long time to develop. Our argument here is that there is always a tendency to establish a strong identity in the home environment. This means that a move from low-level meaning to high-level meaning is vital to create a sense of home and belonging to the whole environment. It is thus necessary to trace how the four types of identity may be formed. Therefore, constructing possible paths for the formation of the four types of identity is very important if we are to describe the growth and re-growth of identity in the home environment.

In the home environment we have physical and social realms. What we have tried to construct in this chapter is a frame or model to enable the researcher to describe the process of identification in the home environment. We argue that we cannot understand this process unless we see the home environment as a process containing continuous physical and social dynamism. This means that it is difficult to find permanent identity in the home environment because identity will grow through the dynamic process of the home environment from a low-level to a high-level. This is not to say that every low-level identity will grow and become high-level, but that growth of identity is vital in seeing the home environment as dynamic human phenomenon.

In Fig. 4.4, we try to link the process of producing identity introduced by Mol, with the process of perceiving the built environment developed by Rapoport³⁶⁸. These two processes help the researcher to develop a mechanism to describe how people

³⁶⁸ For more detail see the third Chapter, and the identity dimensions in this chapter.

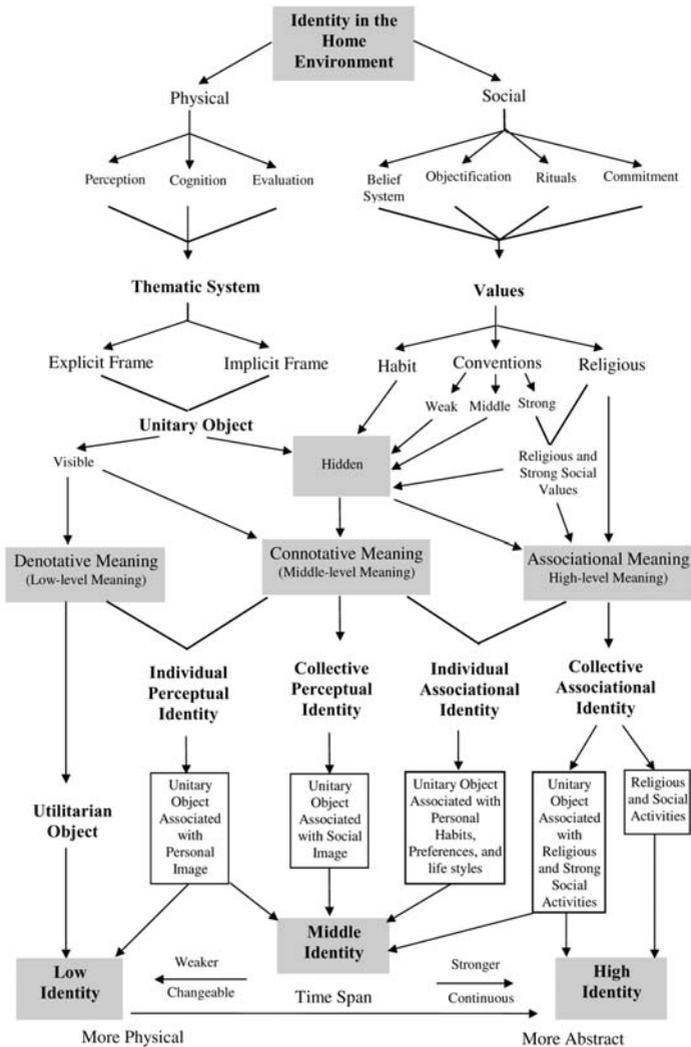


Fig. 4.4. Levels of Identity in the Home Environment.

generate and grow their individual and collective identities in the home environment. Mol's mechanisms have enabled the researcher to simplify the complicated relationships that distinguish the generation and growth of identity in the social realm. By these mechanisms we have tried to understand how people use their levels of values, which include religious values, conventions, and habits, to establish different levels of meanings. This occurs through the interaction between these mechanisms and the physical realm.

We hypothesise that the more the physical object is associated with religious and strong social values, the more it becomes part of the collective memory, and the more it is able to endure over time. On the other hand, the more the physical object is associated with personal image and habits only, the more it is liable to change over time.

7. Process of Identification in the Home Environment

“The identities of cultural groups are achieved symbolically. There would be no culture without symbolic systems to represent that culture. ... culture not only seeks its identity in symbolic forms, but it also seeks to maintain itself through such forms³⁶⁹.”

In the previous discussion we tried to enlighten those aspects which contribute directly to the growth and re-growth of identity in the home environment. We indicated that identity will grow from a lower level to a higher one. Each level has a range of strengths. Some of the collective identities, for example, are stronger than others. Despite that, identity will become less dynamic when it reaches its highest level, it will suffer from a relative movement over time because of the change in the evidences, beliefs, lifestyles, etc.

We admit that change in the home environment is vital for people to interact with it and adapt themselves to changing circumstances. Therefore, the gradual growth of identity types and levels is what we

³⁶⁹ Bourassa, S. (1991) *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, London, Belhaven Press, p. 91.

called 'process of identification' in the home environment. This term was used by Dovey when he discussed the home making process³⁷⁰. In our case, this term will be used to discuss the different ways that identity in the home environment is established, re-established, and grows over time. Moreover, it will be connected with the four mechanisms that were introduced by Parsons to bridge the gap between human nature and stability of social systems. These mechanisms are 'primary adaptation', the 'mechanism of relative deprivation', the 'mechanism of internalisation', and the 'mechanism of reinforcement'.

For Parsons, 'primary adaptation' is the mechanism of perceiving changes or what he calls 'perception of errors'. He states that:

After the imposed situational change which in its beginning marks the transition from the stable state of the old system ... into the new adaptive phase ... the primary 'problem' of the system is that of adapting to an altered situation and developing a meaningful cognitive orientation to the definition of *what* it is that has changed ... The primary cognitive starting point is what we will presently call the "perception of error" in the sense that the presumption of gratifying experience within a certain situation proves to be in error, and first this has to be 'taken in' as a "fact". We may call these mechanisms in this phase those of "primary adaptation."³⁷¹

In the second phase a positive help which he called 'support' is given to the ego to cope with the great change that occurred. 'This consists in giving enhanced positive gratification to *part* of the old motivational system, which is allowed by a set of reactions to the selective character of this gratification within the personality system and in its relations to objects'. In the third phase the new structure will become part of the personality. Finally, in the last phase, 'the newly internalised is consolidated and reinforced'³⁷².

³⁷⁰ Dovey, K. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 34.

³⁷¹ Parsons, T. (1964) *Social Structure and Personality*, USA, The Free Press of Glencoe: A Division of The Macmillan Company, p. 218.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 219.

These four mechanisms can be used to understand the process of localising the new forms in home environment. In this sense, when a new form comes to the home environment, people will both evaluate the existing forms and try to adapt the new one. In general, if the circumstances change, two processes occur at the same time in the home environment. These two processes are identification of the new form and re-identification of the existing form (Fig. 4.5).

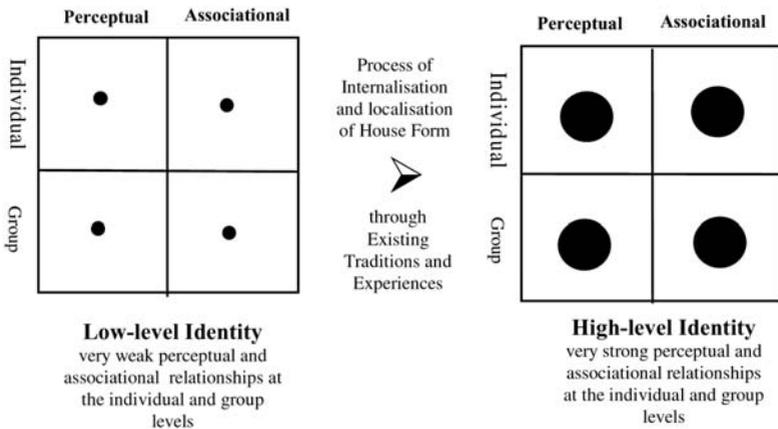


Fig. 4.5. Growth of Identity.

In order to study these two processes, it is necessary to develop a number of criteria to provide the researcher with the ability to measure how identity grows and re-grows in the home environment. Therefore, three main criteria and two supplementary criteria have been developed (Fig. 4.6). The main criteria consist of three levels of identity including low, partially developed and high levels. In low-level identity, perceptual and associational relationships are very weak in both individuals and groups. Partially developed identity is where perceptual and associational identity are partially expressed by both individuals and groups. While high-level identity deals with very strong perceptual and associational relationships by both

individuals and groups, the other two criteria deal with measuring how supplementary developments consolidate a new identity in the home environment. So we have partial development of new perceptual and associational identities and re-creation of a high level identity.

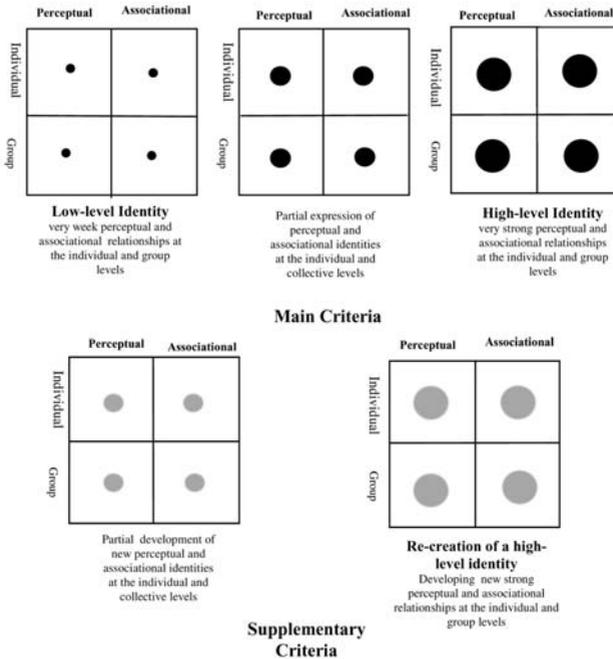


Fig. 4.6. Main and supplementary criteria of identity in the home environment.

7.1 *Re-Identification of Existing Identity*

‘Since nothing is perfect, and, indeed, since even our ideas of perfection are not static, everything is subject to change over time’³⁷³.

The existing forms in the home environment will respond immediately to new circumstances, such as technological changes, new images, new concepts, new lifestyles, etc. Existing identity will adapt to these changes, so that alteration to this identity will take place gradually. In general, two main paths can be developed to discuss how existing identity might respond to changes over time.

7.1.1 *Continuity of Existing Identity*

Some of the existing forms which are associated with high-level meanings usually have the ability to continue over time. These forms have a strong resistance to change because they constitute an important part of people’s daily life (such as buildings for worship) (Fig. 4.7). Series of small changes may occur to these forms over a long time but still these small changes will not break the continuity of identity.

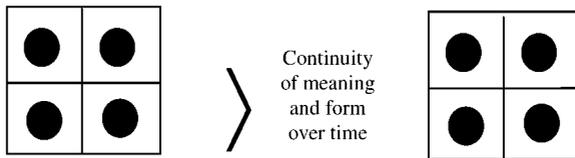


Fig. 4.7. Continuity of meaning and form of the existing identity.

7.1.2 *Partial Continuity of Existing Identity*

In the case of change, many of the existing forms will suffer from partial or total transformations. Parts of perceptual and associational identities will continue in the transformed form. Later on, these

³⁷³ Petroski, H. (1993) *The Evolution of Useful Things*, London, Pavilion Books Limited, p. 22.

partial meanings and forms may have the ability to interact with the new forms and meanings. This process can end up with a re-created high-level identity. In general we can find five cases of partial continuity of existing identity in the home environment³⁷⁴. Firstly, there is the continuity of associational and parts of perceptual identities. In this situation, the re-identified identity may consist of continued associational meanings and a mix of old and new perceptual meanings (Fig. 4.8, A).

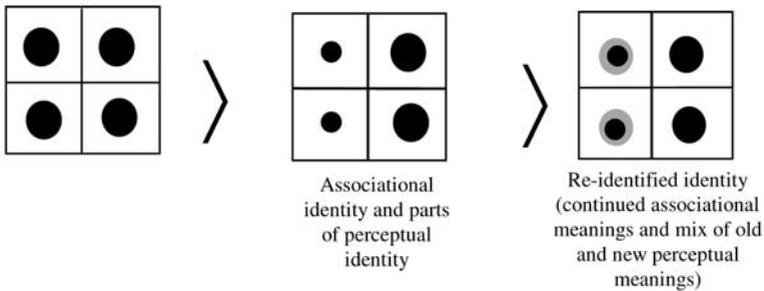


Fig. 4.8. (A) Continuity of associational identity and parts of perceptual identity.

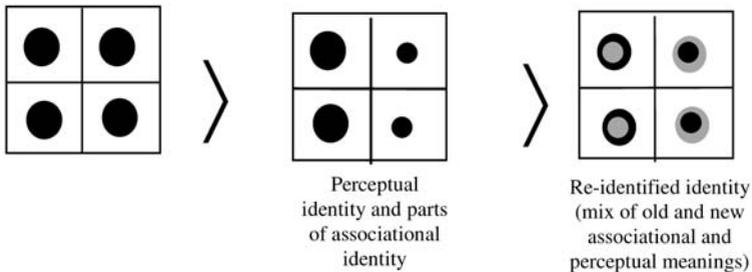


Fig. 4.8. (B) Continuity of perceptual identity and parts of associational identity.

³⁷⁴ As a matter of fact, we can find endless cases in the home environment. However, we selected the common cases only.

Secondly there is the continuity of perceptual identity and parts of associational identity. In this case, the re-identified identity may consist of a mix of old and new associational and perceptual meanings. This is because perceptual identity will transform to satisfy the new associational requirements (Fig. 4.8, B).

Thirdly, there is a possibility that parts of all identity types will continue. In this case, as in the previous case, a mix of old and new perceptual and associational meanings may interact and create a new identity. Still we assume that the continued perceptual parts will become weaker and may diminish over time (Fig. 4.8, C).

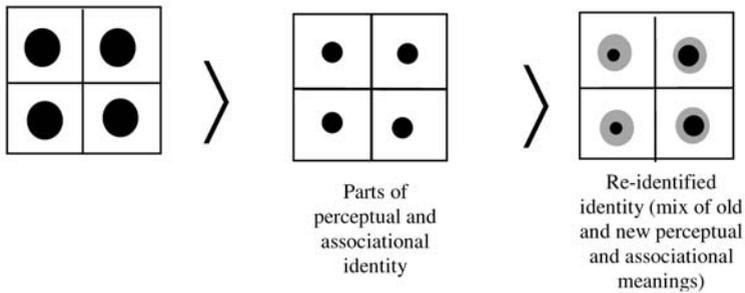


Fig. 4.8. (C) Continuity of parts of associational and perceptual identity.

Fourthly, there are some cases where we can find the associational meanings while their original associated forms have completely disappeared. In this situation, the transformed form may develop an identity with continued associational meanings and dynamic perceptual identity (Fig. 4.8, D).

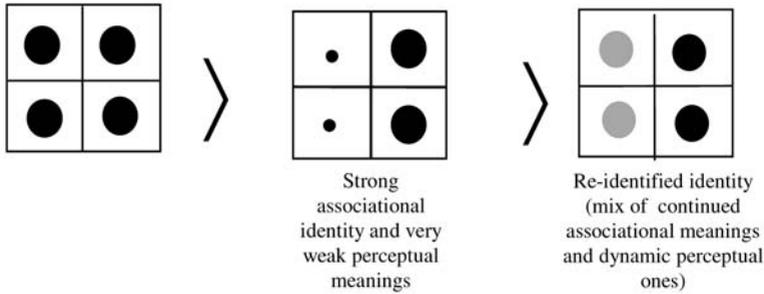


Fig. 4.8. (D) Continuity of Associational identity.

The fifth situation deals with those cases where perceptual identity continues while the associated meanings change completely³⁷⁵. Usually the original identity has very weak associational meanings. (Maybe those meanings are associated with conventions that are not applicable any more). In this case, the images and forms have very strong connections with people’s collective memory. They represent certain meanings, and they may be very sentimental or historical; therefore they continue over time. However, the transformed form may take two ways: either these forms and images continue and are associated with new associational meanings or they change and mix with new forms and images and still they may be associated with new associational meanings (Fig. 4.8, E).

³⁷⁵ In many cases the form may continue but over a long period of time its original meaning may change completely. Oliver (1975) supports this phenomenon when he states: ‘There are many examples of specific motifs which have been diffused over many centuries and over thousands of miles, have assumed different meanings among different societies, and have sometimes lost their meanings or acquired new ones’. (p. 21). Oliver also presents the example of the continuity of Pennsylvanian Dutch signs as perceptual and decorative motifs in a contemporary house façade in Switzerland while their associational meanings have completely disappeared (p. 23).

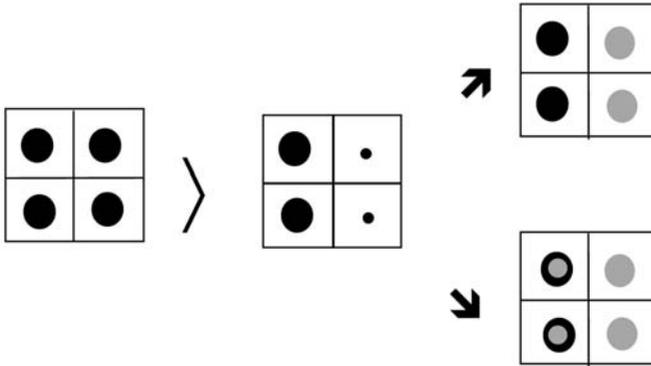


Fig. 4.8. (E) Continuity of perceptual identity.

7.2 Identification of the New Forms

In the case of a new form, the perceptual and associational relationships with both individual and group are very weak. People have still not yet built any relationship with it. The main question here is, how can forms move from the abstract form to the meaningful? To answer this question we need to develop a number of spatio-temporal paths for the process of localising forms in the home environment. In other words we will try to describe the possibilities that people have to build perceptual and associational relationships with the new forms at both individual and group levels.

7.2.1 Collective Action

In some cases a collective action takes place in the home environment. People in this case will express their shared values and re-instate their communal physical images. Oliver supports this concept when he writes:

‘The symbolic connotations of the building to the society take precedence over such considerations of resources or comfort. So a people that has moved from one region to another may take with it a building form that is

inappropriate to the climatic context and cling to it because in terms of its symbol value, it is necessary to the community³⁷⁶.

When people move from one area to another and construct their houses collectively, the individual and collective perceptual identities work together to create the connotative meanings in the home environment. Still, people may not yet develop their associational identities. By the use of houses, people gradually attach associational meanings to the surrounding objects and spaces and build an intimate relationship with the whole environment. Oliver also shares this view when he indicates that ‘Only over the passing of generations may the adaptations of form and structure ... take place³⁷⁷.

In this case, people first will increase the strength of their individual associational identities in their private homes. To do this, people may transform their houses slightly to meet their associational requirements. We should admit here that following the establishment of the individual associational identity, the collective associational identity presumably developed partially. Eventually perhaps the new form will be associated with an associational meaning and become a medium for expressing associational identity (Fig. 4.9).

The aforementioned scenario applies for those who moved from one area with a common background and past experiences. However, in some cases collective movements may occur by people from different backgrounds and with different past experiences. In these cases partial development of the collective perceptual identity may appear in the home environment, but it will take a longer time for people to express their collective associational identity³⁷⁸.

³⁷⁶ Oliver, P. (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁷⁸ For example Kellet in his study of two spontaneous settlements in Santa Marta in Colombia, South America, gives an account of how the people, in the construction of their homes, established their collective perceptual identity immediately. This can be attributed to

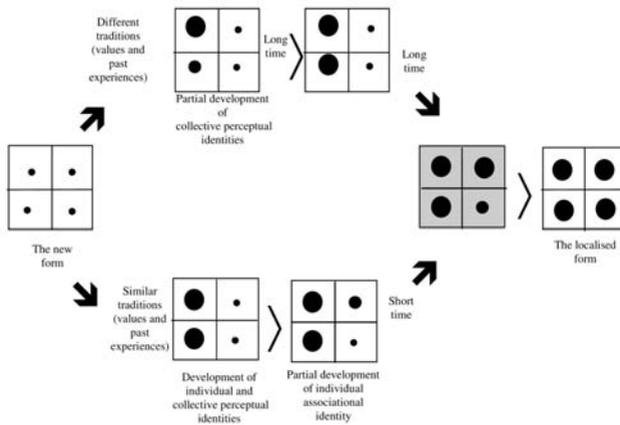


Fig. 4.9. Collective action path.

7.2.2 Personal Action

This situation assumes that the new form will be introduced at the individual level (for example, individual house design). In this case, individual perceptual identity will be established. This identity, as we have seen, is very dynamic and usually associated with low-level meaning. Usually the individual form will vanish unless other people find it suitable for them. In several cases people like other people's forms and try to imitate them in their own houses. If this happens, a collective perceptual identity may develop³⁷⁹. This is not

the collective action that resulted from the collective move to the area. Kellet, P. (1995) *Constructing Home: Production and Consumption of Popular Housing in Northern Colombia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Newcastle, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne. In such cases people usually construct their collective perceptual identity very quickly but it may take some time to develop their collective associational identity, especially if they originate from different places.

³⁷⁹ For example, Gombrich discussed the development of the uniform which was transformed from 'a utilitarian outfit into a ritualistic object'. Usually this type of development starts as a personal action then it will find acceptance at the collective level. This is why 'Not all "phenotypes" which look similar are derived from a common ancestor'. Gombrich, E.H. (1979,

applied to those forms which have collective perceptual meanings (such as traditional forms).

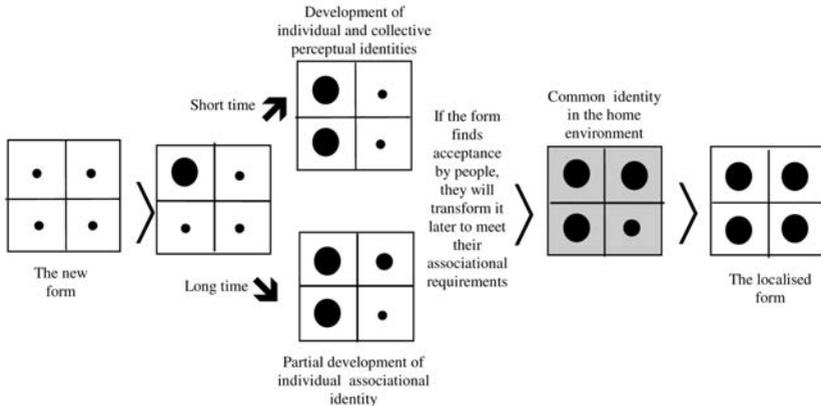


Fig. 4.10. Personal action.

Perceptual individual identity exists in each home environment because every one has his or her own preference, image, etc. For example, a person may see a house façade or a piece of furniture and then apply it in his or her own house. To develop a collective perceptual identity from this weak and isolated identity needs a long time and it may not necessarily succeed. This is because, as Oliver indicated, individual expression needs to be ‘within the symbolic norms that the society recognises’³⁸⁰. However, in some cases the new forms find acceptance by people and develop into a medium for a collective perceptual identity very quickly (Fig. 4.10).

1984), *op. cit.*, pp. 227-8. In fact when the form starts at the personal level it will take long time to develop. During this time past experience will modify it and bring it to the collective understanding. So, it is possible to find many similar forms with different origins.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

7.2.3 Imposed Collective Action

This relationship is unstable because it assumes that collective perceptual identity has been formed before individual perceptual identity. In fact, in some cases in the home environment, a collective form may be imposed on a whole environment, such as a government housing project. This collective form is seen by outsiders as a collective identity while insiders may not share the same feeling. This form, on one hand, will not stand for a long time because people will try to alter it and express their own perceptual and associational meaning in it. Usually the transformation will take a long time but in some cases people will change their houses immediately³⁸¹. An alien form may be developed from this individual transformation. However, individual and collective associational meanings can be developed at this period. Later on, people may develop a new perceptual identity associated with their traditions and past experiences (Fig. 4.11). On the other hand, this form may be accepted by people. In this case individual perceptual identity will be developed in a very short time. Gradually, an individual and collective associational identity may be associated with this form.

³⁸¹ One of the best examples of this phenomenon is the study of Abu-Lughod for the transformation that has been made by the migrants in the city of Cairo. She said that migrants shared the same past experience of village life because they usually came from the same village and concentrated in one area in the city. Migrants tried to reproduce their village life in the city. It is common to find sheep in the street. Also, on many occasions the inhabitants built communal ovens, especially on occasions such as Ramadan. Abu-Lughod, J. (1972) 'Migrant Adjustment to City Life: The Egyptian Case', In Gerald Breese (ed.) *The City in Newly Developing Countries*, London, Prentice Hall International Inc., pp. 376-388. The researcher visited Al-Sharabiyya in 1991. He found that what Abu-Lughod mentioned was slightly changed because the government stopped people from building ovens in their houses. However, the communal oven still existed and virtually village life can be seen in the whole neighbourhood. This persistence of people in mobilising their past experiences can be considered as process of identification. Migrants in this case preferred to maintain their identity by transforming the whole environment in its macro and micro level to express their collective perceptual and associational identity.

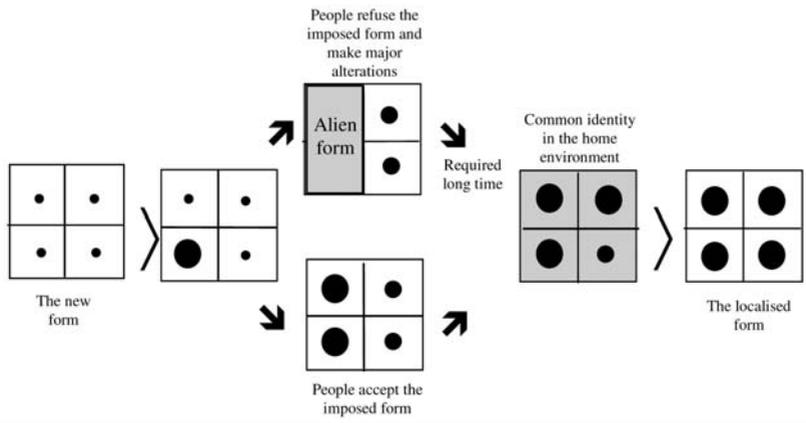


Fig. 4.11. Imposed collective action.

8. Summary

Identity is a very subjective concept always accompanied by some ambiguities and undefined boundaries. It was a challenge for this study to develop describable criteria with which to study and analyse the continuity and change of identity in the home environment. This is because there are always difficulties arising with any attempt to study identity and define its boundaries. Despite these difficulties, this chapter has aimed to establish a justifiable way for understanding identity in the home environment.

What was important for this study are those factors which make meanings take various levels and strengths. For this purpose, we found a link between meanings, values, and memory. We hypothesise that the more meaning is associated with strong values the more it becomes strong, and the more it expresses collective memory. Identity, sometime understood as a specific meaning, aims to express a specific individual and/or group. Therefore, this chapter tries to build a relationship between the concept of identity and the concept of meaning. However, meanings have different levels and

strengths. This introduces another issue which needs to be clarified, because we cannot build the relationship between meaning and identity unless they are equivalent.

To establish a relationship between meaning and identity, we searched for those aspects in the concept of identity which can be ranked and classified according to their strength. This objective was implemented by developing two dimensions for identity. The horizontal dimension constitutes perceptual and associational meanings and the vertical dimension deals with how individuals and groups evaluate and express perceptual and associational meanings in their home environment. These two dimensions have dynamic dialectic characteristics, which means that there is a dialectic between individual/group and perceptual/associational. Moreover, these two oppositions, or what we call dimensions, interrelate and overlap. This dialectic also helped us to see identity as a very dynamic phenomenon.

Still, it is essential for this study to understand how the dimension of identity can be linked with the level of meaning. For this purpose, we studied the possible relationships between identity dimensions and ended up with four types of identity. These types are individual perceptual identity, collective perceptual identity, individual associational identity, and collective associational identity. They have different strengths and can be ranked in different levels. As with meaning, we classified identity into three levels: low identity, which is mostly associated with low-level meanings and mainly concentrated in individual perceptual identity; middle identity, which is mostly associated with middle-level meanings; and high identity, which is associated with high-level meanings and mainly concentrated in collective associational identity. In general we can argue here that we can find middle identity as the common level in the home environment. This is not to say that the other two levels do not exist but that middle identity contains a wide range of identities starting from weak identity, if it is close to low level identity, to strong identity, if it is close to high identity.

Finally, this chapter has tried to furnish the way for the researcher to carry out the field work by establishing a number of spatio-temporal paths for growth and re-growth of identity in the home environment. Two directions have been developed to meet this objective. The first is re-identification of the existing identity, while the second direction deals with the identification of the new forms. These hypothetical directions and paths provide the researcher with the ability to organise the collected data and analyse them.

THE CONCEPT OF *FEREEJ*: MAKING AN IDENTITY IN THE TRADITIONAL GULF HOME ENVIRONMENT

1. Prologue

Traditional home environment needs to be seen from its external and internal domains. The external domain, on the one hand, deals with the location of the house and its relation to other houses in the home environment. This domain is always organised with hierarchical spaces to balance between the private and public, inside and outside. On the other hand the internal domain deals with the interior of homes, their fabric, use, objects, and decoration. It provides a clear picture of the lifestyle of people. There is still in the Gulf traditional home environment a transitional domain where semi-private activities are held. This domain embodies very deep meanings and is associated with symbolic messages.

It is difficult to understand how people express their identities in their physical home environment without understanding their social and cultural frames, grasping the belief systems, and exploring the devices used to communicate those beliefs. This study tries to explore those hidden frames and beliefs that constitute identity in the traditional home environment. As Duncan states:

“The environment serves as a vast repository out of which symbols of order and social relationships can be fashioned. It serves ... not only to represent

meaning to the individual creator but also to others who share a common perspective or who at least can understand the meaning that is encoded...³⁸²

One way to analyse the physical environment is to explain why and how this environment took its form. This can be achieved by seeing the traditional home environment in the Gulf cities as a series of social systems translated over time into spaces and territories, arranged in a certain organisation and related to each other in a specific way. These social systems consisted of several beliefs and traditions developed over time to define people's lifestyle. They worked as a non-written law to control social interaction.

The hierarchy of the social system was the main source for understanding the dominance of certain traditions over others. This is clearly observed when these traditions which were related to the communal social system dominated most of the traditions in the other individual and sub-group systems. In this sense, defining those social systems as what we call in this study 'kinship levels' was one of the main steps to analysing the traditional physical environment.

As we argued in the previous chapters, the concept of identity is very dynamic and people tend to express their identity by different physical means. In the case of change local society, through its shared values, will strive to produce new meanings to maintain a specific identity. The interest here is to understand the mechanisms by which the shared socio-cultural values of the people of the Gulf worked to construct particular identity in the past. This step is very crucial for the next part of this study (the contemporary home environment) where the identity of the home environment is discussed in a very transitional context. By understanding how people in the Gulf established their identity in their traditional home environment, a base can be found to evaluate the continuity and change of identity in the contemporary residential settlements. This

³⁸² Duncan, J. (1985) 'The House as Symbol of Social Structure', In Irwin Altman & Carol M. Werner, *Home Environments*, New York, A Division of Plenum Publishing Corporation, pp. 133-151.

chapter tries mainly to analyse the concept of *fereej*, and its social and physical impact on the traditional home environment in Gulf cities. A special concern is given to the question of how this concept existed and why.

2. The Concept of *Fereej* in the Traditional Home Environment

The concept of *fereej* in traditional Gulf home environments encompasses the basic structure of social interrelationships that we might call extended clans. This concept expresses the intimate relationship between people and their physical environment. Also, it expresses their collective identity as well as their individual membership of a group and the whole society. Being a member of a *fereej* means that a link with both people and place has been developed; the sense of home in this sense stems first from the feeling of being part of a social and physical place called *fereej*.

Fereej as an environmental and social concept implies the sense of grouping and is considered as a reference for individuals and groups and links them with the whole community. In many cases it carries the family name of the group living in it. This system expresses the idea of 'lineage', where many generations from the same clan maintain a certain continuity over time by defining their territory with it and keeping it as part of the community's shared image. It also embodies the norms, customs, and values that people developed over centuries to organise themselves in their home environment. When we say 'this is a *fereej*' we mean that homogeneous relationships have been found in the place, homogeneous in the sense that the concept of *fereej* cannot be found unless a minimum of shared values, norms, and habits already exists and these are being practised by those who live there.

2.1 *The Family's Environmental Behaviour in the Fereej System*

Prior to analysing the *fereej* system in the traditional home environment in the Gulf it is useful to give a brief description of society. This is because, as Werner said, 'it is important to link

interpersonal relationships to their physical context³⁸³. In the Gulf the family represents the basic unit that all social institutions revolve around. The family as a social unit holds the major social functions and is responsible for maintaining and reproducing core values over time. Interactions among families were what gave the traditional community in Gulf States its uniqueness. Through such interaction new generations internalised and practised the social values and conventions and developed their own individual and group identities.

It was common in old cities of the Gulf to live within an extended family. The nuclear family, which is composed of the parents and their children, was rarely found unless as part of an extended family. The extended family in traditional towns in the Gulf consisted of a number of nuclear families living together in one dwelling or several dwellings close to one another. The members of the extended family usually maintained an intimate relationship and interacted within the limits of mutual and interdependent bonds. These limits were imposed by the family norms and customs and mainly determined within the frame of the rights and obligations of individuals and the type of relationship they had with other members of the extended family.

Usually the extended family consisted of more than one generation, and in many cases consisted of three generations. The members of these generations were socially and economically integrated. This type of relationship is what we name in this study 'primary relationship'. This relationship existed among the nuclear families that constituted the extended family in the traditional community. It formed the basic family values and conventions which influenced the whole society and its associated physical environment.

Family Daily Life

In the Gulf traditional community there were two main factors that directly influenced the time and place of activities. These two

³⁸³ Werner, C.M. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 173.

factors were, firstly, the daily acts of worship, such as the five prayers, the weekly prayer on Friday, and the annual religious festivals, such as the fasting of Ramadan, and secondly, people were linked with nature, for instance through the climatic seasons (summer/ winter) and time (day/ night)³⁸⁴. We can in fact add two more factors, which are mainly related to the impact of the long-standing traditions of the city which had established very deep conventions regarding social interactions and to the agricultural land, which influenced the spatial and physical characteristics of the traditional home environment in the Gulf.

The life of individuals and groups in traditional Gulf cities mainly revolved around these four factors. The responses of people to the first factor can be traced from the concept of time that was mainly shaped by worship activities. The five daily prayers, for example, controlled the meeting, visiting, and eating times. This routine in daily life encouraged several conventions. For example, people expect visitors at specific times without appointment.

The impact of nature on people's daily and seasonal activities can be seen from the way people organised and used their domestic spaces³⁸⁵. In this part we will try to concentrate more on how these factors influenced people's environmental behaviour. For example, in the summer people carried their activities in open spaces, while in the winter they shifted to enclosed spaces.

The third factor has more to do with the social structure. In this, people developed several rituals, some of which are still used in contemporary society in the Gulf Cities. For example, the spatial organisation of the traditional community had been influenced by the basic social relationships (the single extended family). The long standing traditions of the community can be seen from the set of rules

³⁸⁴ In fact most traditional societies had these two factors. However, in Saudi Arabia they have been indicated by Al-Hussayen, A. (1996), *op. cit.*, p. 118.

³⁸⁵ For more detail see volume II.

which had developed over a long period of time to organise the visiting rituals between people in the main residential quarters in the old city.

The fourth factor is that the people of the area were deeply influenced by their agricultural land³⁸⁶. They developed their own industry and rituals that are related to this geographical and economical feature. For example, society was divided into two groups, those who worked on the farms and those who owned the farms. The relationship between these two groups influenced, for example, the spatial organisation of the male reception spaces. Usually when the workers visited the owners they came on their donkeys. Therefore an animal court developed, associated with the reception spaces in the owner's houses.

As has been indicated earlier, the daily life pattern was shaped by the above four factors. In this section we will go further by highlighting some daily activities that were influenced by these factors. We need, however, to mention that it is difficult to separate these factors from each other because every activity in the traditional environment was influenced by one or more factors.

In the traditional environment, an extended family lived in the same house. The oldest man in the house had the power and control over his sons, grandsons and their wives³⁸⁷. He organised things and gave orders to everybody who lived in the house. The youngest men in the family could not be separated from the family house until their father died. In many cases they continued to live together for a long time even after their father died (the oldest son would replace him), but in the end either they divided the house or sold it and moved to separate houses to create new extended families.

³⁸⁶ Palgrave, W.G. (1866) *Narrative of Year's Journey Through Central and Eastern Arabia (1862-3)*, London, Vol. 2, p. 146.

³⁸⁷ In fact this phenomenon was found in most Arabian societies. In Saudi Arabia, for example, Salah states that the 'family is usually headed by the oldest male member. When sons marry, they often continue to live at home or in an adjoining or adjacent home. Consequently it is not unusual for several generations to live together. Salah, S. (1978) *Panorama of Saudi Arabia*, Dhahran, IPA, p. 11.

Daily life in the traditional environment started before sunrise when the *najmat assebh* was seen by people (a group of stars appear in the east before sunrise, an occurrence used by people in the Gulf as an indicator for the time of the *Fajar* prayer)³⁸⁸. This was the first indication of the impact of nature on people's daily life. People in the traditional home environment slept in open spaces, such as on the roof and in the courtyard, in the summer. Even if they moved inside in the winter, they still had the link with the sky through the courtyard which connected most of the internal rooms and provided them with ventilation and light.

In the traditional home environment, men should attend the mosque to perform the *Fajar* prayer (5-6 a.m. in the winter; 3-4 a.m. in the summer). It is rare that a man did not attend the prayer. If he did, people in the same *fereej* would ask about him. This obligation made daily life start one hour before sunrise because men had to prepare themselves to go to the mosque to attend the prayer. During the prayer period, women performed their prayers at home and then prepared the breakfast by milking the cow and preparing the coffee. When the men returned from the mosque they had their coffee either with the family or with guests.

People usually expected some guests immediately after the *Fajar* prayer³⁸⁹. In some houses, this was considered a daily routine. The men's reception spaces in these houses were usually open all day. The woman usually prepared the fire while her husband was in the mosque because she knew that he would be accompanied by some guests³⁹⁰. The visit rituals in the Gulf were a very important part of traditional daily life. This is why some men spent their whole daytime in the

³⁸⁸ Interview with a woman. She also indicated that nowadays people cannot see the sky because they live in closed houses.

³⁸⁹ This convention still exists in Hofuf in a few houses. The researcher attended several *Majlises* early in the morning immediately after the *Fajar* prayer (one of them in the house of Sheikh Abdulrahman ben Ahmed ben Abdullatif Al-Mulla). Coffee and dates are usually offered on such occasions.

³⁹⁰ For more detail see volume II.

men's reception spaces and received guests. They also practised some of their business in these spaces. For example some merchant families used the men's reception spaces as commercial offices. The father of the family stayed in the *majlis* and entertained his visitors and clients. If he needed to do some private business usually he had a room for that³⁹¹. Some old men had no work; they just stayed in their *majlises* and entertained their visitors while their sons worked.

After breakfast, usually dates and coffee and sometimes milk, people went to their work. Some people, especially the elderly, stayed in the open *majlises* or sat on a mud bench called *daka* (Fig. 5.1). These benches were usually located in the entrance of the house or in the *sabats*, the shaded areas around the house. The outside domain was mainly for men. This was why men could sit and enjoy their time in the external domestic spaces without getting in the way of their neighbours. In the meantime, women did their work at home. It is important

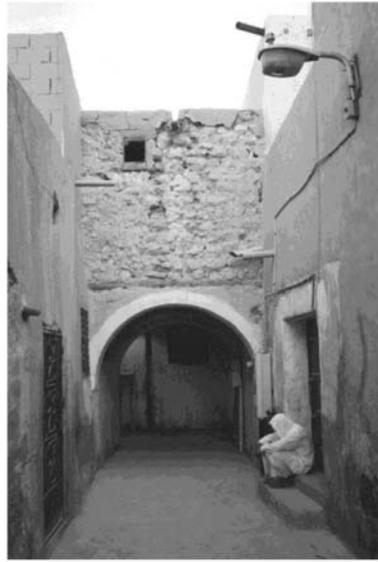


Fig. 5.1. Old man sitting on *daka* in *Alkut* (Hofuf), source: Author

³⁹¹ Usually a merchant has a box called *bushtakhtab*. This box is usually used as an office drawer to keep the business papers.

to mention that the use of spaces in the traditional home environment was strongly connected with the role of men and women in the community. As we noticed men could sit outside home without trespassing on the women's domain. Similarly with the women's *majlis*, the women worked or entertained their neighbours in the roof without being interfered with by men.

Usually lunch would be presented by ten o'clock in the morning because daily life in the traditional city was very short³⁹². The dinner was also prepared very early, immediately after *Asr* prayer (around 4 p.m.). Before 1913 there was a virtual curfew in the city at night. This is why people got to bed after the *Isha* prayer (around 8 p.m.). Between the *Maghreb* prayer and the *Isha* prayer (5-6 p.m. in the winter; 6-8 p.m. in the summer), women could visit their families because it was dark so that no men could see them. Also by this time, men had no obligations so they could join their wives and visit their families together.

The oldest woman in the house (the wife of the head of family) was the only woman who could answer the door if a woman visitor came. Usually, her daughters-in-law could not entertain any female guest unless their mother-in-law is not in the house or unless she gave permission.

Every woman in the house had a job. These jobs were decided and distributed by the oldest woman in the house. The housework was mainly done by the younger women, while the oldest woman usually entertained herself with her friends in *duba* time (between 10 a.m. and midday). In the afternoon every woman in the house prepared the sleeping area for her husband and children. This routine work changed slightly according to the seasons. For example, in the summer women went upstairs to the roof and cleaned the mattresses of dust; then they spread some water on the roof surface to cool it

³⁹² Some people had their lunch earlier than this time. If the householder needed to go to the farm he had to take his lunch by seven o'clock in the morning. He would take his dinner after *Asr* prayer (around 4 p.m.).

down. Also they filled a few water bottles to have cold water at night. The whole family also took their dinner in the roof and spent some time talking and telling stories before going to sleep.

The most restrictive values in the traditional Gulf cities were those which dealt with the role of women in society. The women's domain was, and still is, the most prohibited domain for men³⁹³. If any woman wished to visit her neighbour she would use the opening between the roof parapets. It was prohibited for women to go outside in the daytime. One interviewee informed the author that if a woman wanted to visit her father's house she would do so at night. Also, she would be accompanied by her husband or her family maid. All these precautions were needed even if her father's house' faced her house.

A woman could not show her face to unrelated men but only to her closest relatives, the *mabrams* (such as her father, sons, brothers, grandfathers, nephews and husband). In fact the unmarried young women could not even show their faces to unrelated women. In 1924 Mackie indicated that:

'... during the whole of my stay there [in Hofuf] I never saw a woman's face... It is rare that one sees little girls unveiled after they have reached the age of six or seven. Even when they are working in the gardens cutting barley or lucerne or gathering firewood they still retain it'³⁹⁴.

This full separation between male and female domains divided the activities in society into two main groups, those activities related to men and those related to women. This distinction was not parallel because women's activities mainly occurred at home and they rarely had any public activities³⁹⁵.

³⁹³ In fact this attitude is not only in Hofuf. In many tribal and peasant Arabic societies the women's domain is considered the most restricted for men. See Dodd, P. (1973) 'Family Honor and the Forces of Change in Arab Society', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 4, pp. 40-54. Also, Sweet, E. (ed.) (1970) *People and Cultures of the Middle East*, New York, The Natural History Press (two volumes).

³⁹⁴ Mackie (1924), *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

³⁹⁵ Most of the women practiced their activities in their houses except those poor families and widows who had to carry out some commercial activities. Also, on occasions a group of

The position of women in society influenced the whole home environment in the Gulf and forced the house to follow certain organisation to meet the need to segregate males and females inside the house. As we have noticed, women mainly lived in very private spaces. They were separated from outside by a very complicated circulation network starting from the bent entrance in the house to the opening in the roof parapets to minimise outside interactions.

It is still the case that women in the traditional home environment have their own activities. For example, usually a group of women gather in one house, normally a widow's house or the house of the oldest woman if her husband is not in. They visit each other through the roof routes and spend the whole morning working together, mainly sewing. They call this meeting *duba* tea. Every woman comes with her basket and they sit in a circle. They work and chat, and sometimes they sing and tell stories³⁹⁶. This time is considered the principle time for women to socialise with their neighbours because all men are either at their work or sitting in their *majlises*.

If a woman needs support income and she cannot sew, usually she will work in trade from her house. Many widows have a room in their house used as a mini shop to sell women's clothes and cosmetics³⁹⁷. Usually old women visit her at the *duba* or *zuber* times to buy what they need. In most cases they spend a long time there because, firstly, there is no man in the house and secondly, because

women went swimming together. There was a public spring called *ummikbrisan*. This spring was divided into two zones, one for men and the other for women. The women's part was walled on all sides to maintain full privacy for women. Cheesman (1924) noticed this spring. He said 'The spring itself rises in a large pool about 150 yards across, from which the distributing channels radiate ... On the north side is an enclosed bath-house for women' (p. 74).

³⁹⁶ The researcher recorded some of these stories. In fact most old people know these stories because men and women usually tell them for amusement, especially when they include poems and songs.

³⁹⁷ This is also found in the traditional home environment in central Arabia. Al-Hussayen, A. (1996), *op. cit.* p. 120.

more than one woman usually meets in this house³⁹⁸. It seems that women in the traditional home environment have tried very hard to create their own realm and their own social world by using every single opportunity to socialise with other women in the *fereej*.



Fig. 5.2. Traditional home environment in Hofuf. Source: Modified from Aerial photograph (1935), Aramco.

³⁹⁸ The researcher remembers that when he was a child he visited a widow's house with his mother in *Anna'athil* quarter. Usually many women gathered in that house though most of them did not need to buy anything; rather than they wanted to socialise with other women.

People in the traditional environment depend on each other to do many things. For example, only large houses in the *fereej* contain an oven or a grinder. Women usually gather in one or two houses to bake collectively. When grinding rice or wheat, usually two women sit facing each other and each one of them uses a wooden stick called a *maigana*. They create a rhythm because each one of them follows the other in pounding with the wooden stick. These activities described above are considered the main entertainment and socialising activities for women in the traditional home environment. This exclude the marriage ceremonies where women celebrate and gather for seven days in some cases.

2.2 *The Social Spectrum of the Fereej System*

Traditional home environments in Hofuf, which is considered one of the oldest cities in the Gulf, is seen in an aerial photograph, form three large masses. It is difficult to notice any physical difference between the three old quarters that formed the traditional Hofuf, *Alkut*, *Arrif'a*, and *Anna'athil*, except that every mass has its distinctive shape (Fig. 5.2). In the physical sense every quarter forms one large mass where houses, streets, and open spaces mixed together to create irregular shapes and patterns (Fig. 5.3). Still, this physical unity hides very diverse social relationships. What we mean by the word 'diverse' here is the desire to display a discrete identity, which is the main goal behind the concept of *fereej*. This word has nothing to do with 'heterogeneity' because the traditional society of the Gulf was very homogeneous, but there was a desire by every clan or group of related clans to be identified as distinct from the other clans in the society.

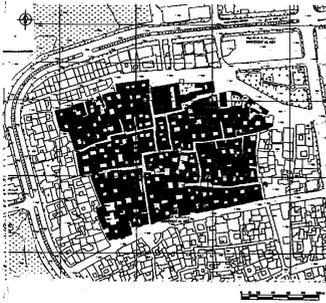


Fig. 5.3. Unitary physical mass of the traditional neighbourhood (*Alkut* and part of the northern *Arrifa*). It is impossible to define the hidden boundary of the *fereej* system. Source: Aramco.

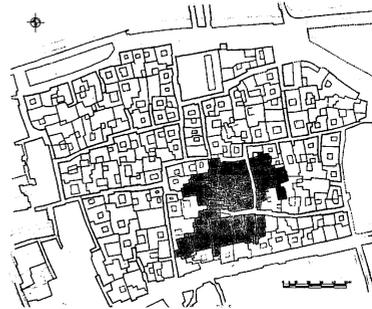
The concept of *fereej* in its innate characteristics implies both homogeneity and diversity. It has homogeneity in the sense that individuals who live in the physical place form one unified group. Diversity refers to the desire to be different from other groups. The *fereej* is a homogeneous system because it binds its members to one internal frame. Every member in the *fereej* has the ability to define people and the places that belong to the *fereej*. The *fereej* in its physical characteristics is similar to any other *fereej* in the traditional home environment in the Gulf, but its social and territorial meanings are different from others.

The desire to be identified developed hidden boundaries, by which the masses of the traditional quarters were divided into

smaller units (Fig. 5.4). Every unit was called by the local people a *fereej*. This means that the *fereej* system is a social mechanism more than a physical one. However, the physical representation of the traditional home environment was strongly influenced by the requirements of this system



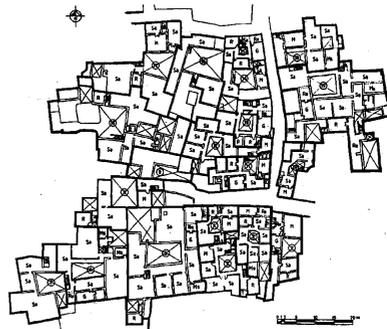
(1) Mass of houses in the northern part of Alkut



(2) No physical boundaries for the *fereej* in the traditional home environment



(3) Ground floor plan



(4) First floor plan

Fig. 5.4. In the traditional home environment it is difficult to find physical boundaries between the different *fereej*s, Source: Developed from Al-Musallam, A. (1995), *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4 & 11-12.

The concept of *fereej* in its social connotation can be seen as a synonym of the notion of *hamola* which was used by local people in

the Gulf to identify those families who carried the same name and lived together as group in one place. It is sometimes called *Bayt* 'house', which is always used to define the name of the whole clan. The *hamola*, in this sense, denotes the relationships which existed within, and to some extent between, the extended families from the same clan in the traditional Gulf. It implies the basic organisation principles around which traditional clan life has evolved. The main essential quality of the *hamola* was the fact that it had continuously lived as a group in the same place. It means a domestic social unit consisting of individual families, mainly extended, related by blood and inter-marriage. The *hamola* embodies the concept of 'genealogical' line extending from the past, through the present, and into the future³⁹⁹. Individuals and families have a clear picture of the *hamola's* norms and beliefs, which is mainly compatible with communal beliefs, and worked out quite clearly in the matter of daily routine and expected behaviour.

The *hamola* is considered the basic concept of the intermediate kinship in the traditional community of the Gulf. Each clan prefers to live as a group (one *hamola*) and creates its own *fereej*. *Fereej* in this context is a group reference. The *fereej* system derived its continuity in the traditional home environment from the inter-family marriages which tended to bind an individual to his clan by more than one bond.

The concept of *fereej* was a result of the interaction between different families in the traditional community. The desire to create a reference for family members and link them to a unified social and physical symbol was the main impulse behind the emergence of *fereej* in the traditional home environment in the Gulf cities. Still, we need

³⁹⁹ The notion 'genealogical' is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as a 'record or table of the descent of a person, family, or group from an ancestor or ancestors; a family tree'. In Hofuf, *hamola* is refers to the concept of continuity of the family name.

to understand how the social interaction in the traditional community had generated the *fereej* system.

The principles of domestic spatial organisation can be understood only by grasping the dynamic traditional kinship system which worked for a long time to mediate between the individual and family needs and the obligations of the whole community. The kinship system was divided into three levels, primary, intermediate, and communal (Fig. 5.5). Each one of these levels was associated with specific norms and conventions which were ultimately reflected in the way that people interacted in this level. The role of the family here was to inform and mobilise the basic norms and conventions throughout the generations⁴⁰⁰. While the relationship between different extended families, either from the same *hamola* or related *hamolas*, created the intermediate level of kinship, the *fereej* system resulted from this level where specific groups (a *hamola* or a number of related *hamolas*) lived together and interacted with the whole community as one group. Finally, it was the communal relationship which gave the traditional community its identity and consistency. This is because communal shared values were found at this level. Therefore, the other two levels of kinship adapted and worked within this frame of community beliefs.

To recapitulate, it is possible to say that the physical consistency of the traditional Gulf home environment was mainly a result of the internal homogeneity that existed in every *fereej* as well as the fact that this system usually works under a strong frame of communal beliefs. It is important, first of all, to mention that *fereej* is a mechanism of expressing group identity. The need for clustering existed in people's minds, which was reflected in their collective behaviour towards their physical environment.

⁴⁰⁰ The researcher interviewed several old men. All of them said that nowadays young men interacted improperly with the community. The old custom had changed because the role of the family had been changed. Children joined schools and had no chance to learn from their fathers, while in the past children mainly joined their fathers and learned from them the family norms and customs.

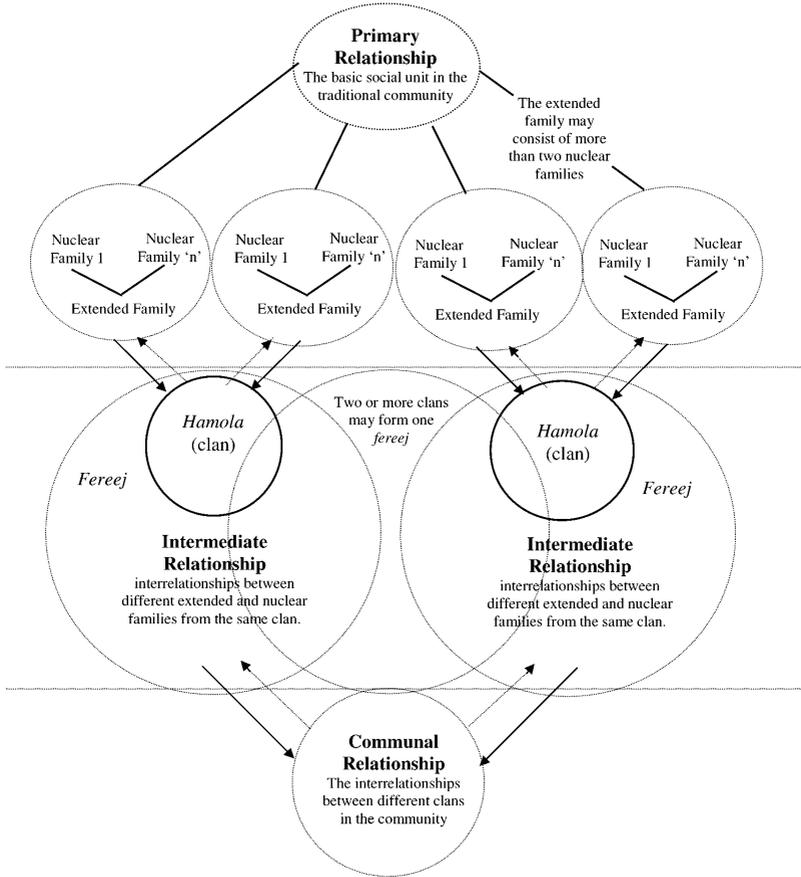


Fig. 5.5. The social system in the Gulf traditional home environment.

3. *Fereej* System: from Social Organisation to a Place Making

The foregoing discussion explored the basic mechanism of socialisation in the traditional communities of the Gulf. A

distinguishing social character has been presented, that is the interpersonal relationship of the family members or what we called 'primary relationship'. This relationship was responsible for family cohesiveness and identity. Its impact on the physical environment is seen from its micro level where changeable social and physical aspects mutually co-exist to produce the dwelling and its intimate spaces. As we noticed, the primary relationship worked as a mechanism to balance the dynamism of social and physical environments with the need for stability and a sense of identity.

The kinship relationships in traditional Gulf societies had classified the community and categorised the individuals and groups. The residential unit, in many cases, emerged as the physical symbol of the family's origin⁴⁰¹. We can argue here that families and groups in the traditional home environment in the Gulf developed several symbols and cues to preserve their identity within the community. Rapoport discusses the process of clustering. He attributes this phenomenon to the 'selection and choice of particular environmental quality, so that the city becomes a set of areas of different groups which tend to define themselves in terms of "us" and "them". There is a process of inclusion and exclusion, of establishing boundaries and stressing social identity by use of cues and symbols'⁴⁰².

The question which this part of the study aims to address is why there was a need for aggregation in the traditional home environment. As we have mentioned, life circumstances may change: people die and move from one place to another. A sense of continuity, therefore, may be threatened if these circumstances are not absorbed. In the traditional community, there was an internal mechanism to overcome the change in life circumstances. This

⁴⁰¹ Oliver, P. (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 13; Shetty, Rajmohan (1990) "The Impact of Kinship Systems on the Generation of House-Types", *TDSR*, Vol. I, No. 11, pp. 49-60.

⁴⁰² Rapoport, A. (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 248.

mechanism, as we mentioned, is the inter-family relationships or what local people in the Gulf call *hamola*.

The degree of aggregation or separation of the spatial formation of the traditional home environment in the Gulf was strongly influenced by the clan arrangements, by communal shared beliefs, and by women's role in society. Society, as Hillier and Hanson argue, follows two ways of establishing 'definite spatial form'. The first way is that 'it arranges people in space in that it locates them in relation to each other'. The second way mainly deals with the physical responses of the social arrangement. Society 'arranges space itself by means of buildings, boundaries, paths, marks, zones, and so on'. By these two arrangements a society 'acquires a definite and recognisable spatial order', which enables us to recognise the ways in which members of any society 'live out and reproduce their social existence'⁴⁰³.

In Hofuf, for example, many people attributed the origin of the word *fereej* to the Arabic word '*furja*' plural '*furaj*' which means the small opening in a wall. This small opening was usually found in the party walls between houses to connect different houses in the *fereej* by roof footways. Some of openings have doors and other do not. Vidal supported this observation when he notices this phenomenon in Hofuf in 1955. He finds

'...that one street door gives access not to one house but to a small yard around which clusters a whole compound of several three or four-storied houses. These houses are inhabited by members of the same extended family and are usually mutually accessible from the roof level, although they have separate ground floor entrances'⁴⁰⁴.

⁴⁰³ Hillier, R. & Hanson, J. (1984), *op. cit.*, pp. 26-7.

⁴⁰⁴ Vidal, F. (1955) *The Oasis of Al-Hasa*, Dhahran, Arabian American Oil Company, p. 82. This was noticed by Vidal at the time where the home environment in Hofuf had already experienced change. This shows that people in traditional home environments in Hofuf kept the closest relationship in their houses and the footway was still working at a primary social system even when the traditional environment experienced change. In fact the *fereej* completely declined in the traditional areas later on (see volume II).

This roof footway is used by women only because they were not allowed to go outside in the day time⁴⁰⁵. If a woman wanted to visit her neighbour, she could use the roof route⁴⁰⁶. The role of women in society required them to be out of men's sight. This translated into a physical configuration involving houses becoming more aggregated. Moreover, this footway defined the boundary of the *fereej* both socially and physically. Those houses connected by the footways formed the *fereej*, which might over time include new members or exclude others.

This tradition stemmed from the basic communal system of traditional society in the Gulf where men represented the dominant party. However, it was very important to satisfy the women's needs for socialising at the same time as protecting them from men's eyes. This was fulfilled by the roof routes, which extended the domain of the women to include the whole *fereej*. This provided full separation between men's domain and women's domain and enabled women to create their own community. Conventionally people respected these roof footways and did not disturb the privacy of neighbours. This is why there was no need to use doors for the openings in the roof routes.

3.1 *Physical Formation of the Fereej System*

Every extended family lived in a single house. After the death of the head of the family, the sons usually divided the house into a number of houses (Fig. 5.6). This created another type of extended family which was usually expressed physically by a small private

⁴⁰⁵ The dominance of men in the public domain is not only a feature of the traditional home environment in Hofuf but it is in most traditional Arabic Societies. Al-Shahi, A. (1986) "Welcome, my House is Yours": Values Related to the Arab House', In A. Hyland & Ahmed Al-Shahi *The Arab House*, Proceedings of the Colloquium held in the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 15/16 March 1984, pp. 25-32.

⁴⁰⁶ Group interview in Mr. Ibrahim Al-Shu'aiby's house, 19-11-1996; Personal interview with Mrs. Latifa Al-Najjar, 25-11-1996; Personal interview (conducted by Ahmed Al-Mulla) with Mrs. Mariam Abdullah Al-Mulla, 10-7-1996.

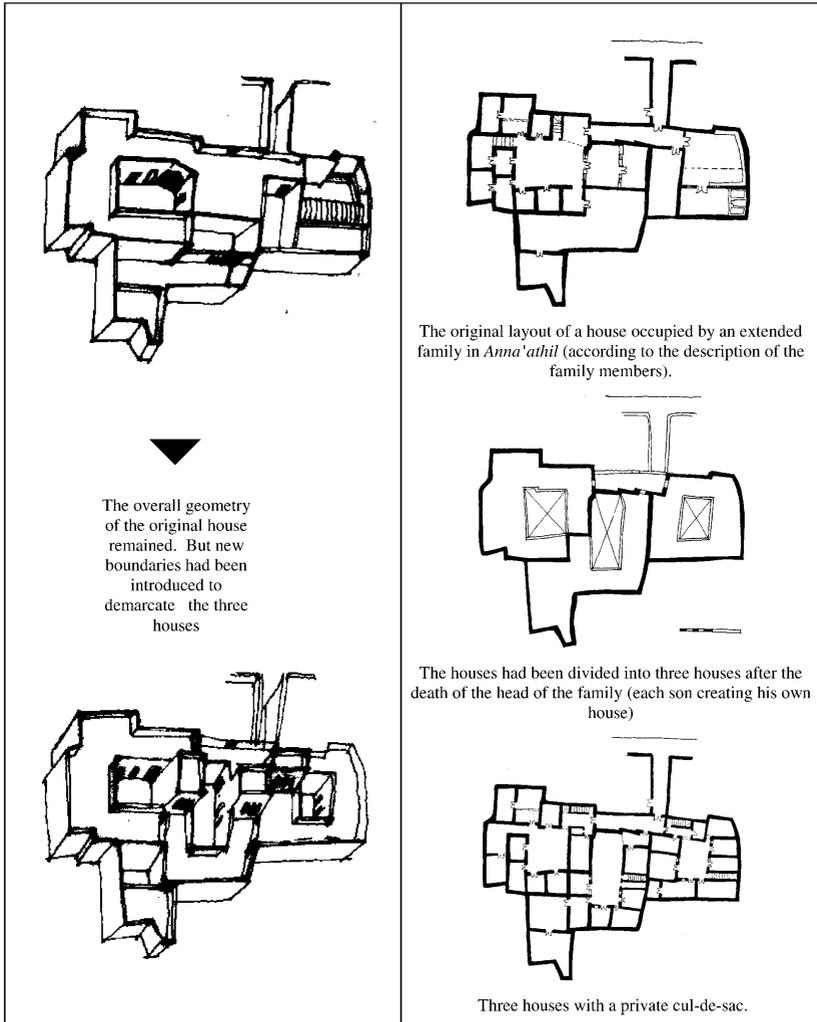


Fig. 5.6. Division of the traditional house (a mechanism for producing the physical entity of the *fereej* system). Source: Author.

cluster within the *fereej*. This close relationship was then considered more private than other parts of the territory that were occupied by the same *hamola*. This type of relationship was characterised by more roof footway connections, and houses usually clustered around a cul-de-sac and sometimes around an open space called a *baraha*. Vidal notices this phenomenon and states:

‘As rule, the houses are built around a central courtyard, which in old times apparently was quite spacious. It seems that living spaces eventually got to be at a premium in Hofuf, regional insecurity forcing people to live inside the walled area and the town being forced to accommodate the population increase without enlarging its limits. Another house, and later two or three of them, would be built around the same courtyard to accommodate the sons of the owner of the original house and their families’⁴⁰⁷.

This clustering expresses the desire of a family to be defined from the surrounding families. In most cases the division of the main house created a *sikka sad* (cul-de-sac) to provide accessibility to the deepest houses. In many cases these clusters form new *fereej*s. However, it is difficult to attribute the origin of the *fereej* system to this phenomenon only because in many cases groups of people collectively move from one place to another and create a *fereej*. Still, in traditional societies the division of houses due to the expansion of the extended family was one of the main mechanisms that created this system.

Cul-de-sacs were the end of the circulation network. Many *sikkas* narrowed or tapered into smaller ones and ended up with a cul-de-sac, which usually led to a cluster of houses owned by one extended family or families from the same *hamola*. The cul-de-sacs were considered more private than *sikkas*. People in traditional Hofuf preferred houses which were located in cul-de-sacs for security and

⁴⁰⁷ Vidal, F.S. (1955) *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2. In reality this phenomenon cannot be attributed only to regional insecurity. The interpersonal relationship between the family members and their social and economic interdependency are the main factors that made them assess social and physical clustering as of high social value.

privacy reasons⁴⁰⁸. One of the interviewees, for example, said ‘Our old house was located in a *sikka sad* (cul-de-sac). It was very secured and nobody could enter our private street unless he needed to visit us’.

They call those houses which were located in cul-de-sacs ‘*sindouq*’ which means box. In the traditional home environment, people use the *sindouq* to keep their private and valuable belongings. This name reflects the importance of privacy and security for people where women and children can transfer from one house to another by using this secured and private place. It is clear that this collective behaviour influenced the physical morphology of the traditional environment by increasing the number of cul-de-sacs. Also, it encouraged people to live in more aggregated places.



Fig. 5.7. Private cul-de-sacs connecting a group of houses from the same family in *Anna'atbil*. Source: Field work.

Most of these cul-de-sacs had a door to give the inhabitants, especially the women, more flexibility to visit each other (Fig. 5.7). For example, women could visit each other without covering their

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Sheikh Ahmed ben Ali Al-Mubarak and Mr. Ibrahim Ben Abdulrahman Al-Shuaibi.

head or face. The door was usually closed in the absence of men to provide the women with maximum freedom. This physical representation can be seen as a symbol of identity by saying to other members in the *fereej* 'this is our place'.

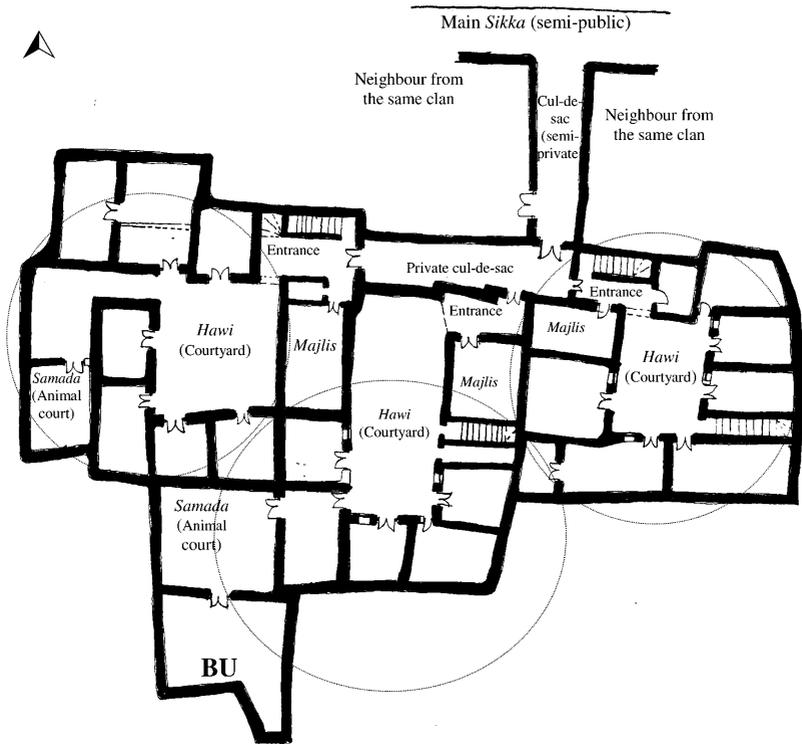


Fig. 5.8. The dynamism of the traditional home environment at its micro level, where new cul-de-sacs may appear and others may disappear. Source: Author.

Moreover, the shape of the cul-de-sac is very dynamic to reflect the dynamism of the family circumstances which may change any time. The dynamic form of the cul-de-sac is mostly due to two mechanisms in traditional settlements (Fig. 5.8). Firstly, the 'easement right'⁴⁰⁹ where others have the right to pass to their properties through the cul-de-sac, which means that if a house has been divided into two or more dwellings, the right to pass into all the new houses was reserved, which in many cases creates a new cul-de-sac. Secondly, in many cases, the cul-de-sac is considered part of the surrounding house; therefore, changes in the house strongly influence the shape of the cul-de-sac. For example, if anybody buys these houses and decides to connect them or demolish them to build a new house, the cul-de-sac may disappear.

4. Continuity of the *Fereej* System in the Traditional Home Environment

The question of continuity of the *fereej* system in the traditional home environment has still not yet been explored. If the social and physical entities of the *fereej* have been established how will they continue over time? In the natural course of things people die or move from one place to another; families divide into smaller units or aggregate into large extended units. So has the *fereej* system adapted with these changes? How has it maintained its identity? The following discussion tries to give an example of how this system has retained its existence over time in the traditional home environment in the Gulf.

We already mentioned that the extended family may have divided into a group of families so that the original house also may have been divided to accommodate those families. Moreover, people may move to another place if the number of the family members increases. In this case, the identity of every *fereej* has maintained over time by a

⁴⁰⁹ The term easement right in Arabic is called '*Haq Al-Irtifaq*'. It means, as Al Ba'ly (1985) said 'the ability of the individual (alone or with herds) to pass through other's property in order to arrive at his property' (Cited in Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 114.)

communal religious principle: that is the mechanism of *shuf'a* (pre-emption)⁴¹⁰. Generations over time cannot break the homogeneity of the *fereej* because this principle has given the members of the *hamola* authority over those who want to sell their houses to outsiders. It is based on religious and legal rights. Akbar defined this principle as:

‘...the right of the co-owner to substitute himself for the purchaser if the other co-owner(s) decide to sell his or their share. The pre-emptor stands in the shoes of the purchaser and takes the property subject to prior equities, thus reducing the number of owners in the owning party’⁴¹¹.

The *shuf'a* as basic religious principle is a communal shared value used to control the dynamism at the micro level which was associated with the primary relationship. Because the family as a social unit is in fact changeable the physical associations of the extended family may change over time. Therefore, as we noticed, the *shuf'a* worked in the traditional home environment to maintain group continuity by giving the *hamola's* members the authority to prevent strangers to break down the homogeneity of their *fereej* throughout generations.

What is really interesting about this mechanism is the ability of the community (macro level) to maintain social identity by regulating the dynamic relationships which may occur in the primary and intermediate kinship (the micro level). To some extent we can argue that, at the communal level, the traditional home environment was constant over time. This principle maintained the homogeneity of the use and meaning of the *fereej* system over a long period of time and kept its identity consistent even through changing life circumstances⁴¹².

⁴¹⁰ Akbar, J. (1988), *op. cit.*, p. 258.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 131. He added that ‘*Suf'ah* derives from the Prophet's tradition that “the right of pre-emption is valid in every joint property, but when the property is divided and the way is demarcated, then there is no right of pre-emption.”’

⁴¹² Al-Naim, M. (2004) “The Dynamics of a Traditional Arab Town: The Case of Hofuf, Saudi Arabia”, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, Volume 34, London, (Paper from the Thirty Seven Meeting 17-19 July 2003), pp. 193-207.

In most cases the neighbours (who were usually from the same *hamola*) will buy the dwelling if any one in the *fereej* decides to move to another place or change his house for a bigger one. Even if they do not need the house, they will look for another close relative to move in. The only change which may occur is that the private cul-de-sac becomes less private if any one from the *hamola* (outside the extended family which has been divided) buys a house in it. The cul-de-sac may keep its door but the level of privacy needs some time to recover its previous quality.

The *fereej* system was associated with high-level meanings which have the ability to continue over time. This system showed very strong resistance to change in the traditional home environment because it constituted an important part of people’s values and ideas. Despite the series of small changes that were continually occurring at its micro level, still these small changes did not break the continuity of its perceptual and associational identity. It is very important to emphasise that individual identity was replaced by the *hamola* identity or group identity. Nevertheless at the house level, individual identity, as we will see in the next chapter, has been expressed, but within a communal frame (Fig. 5.9).

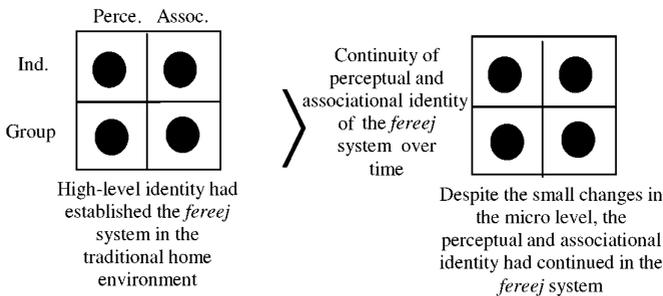


Fig. 5.9. The perceptual and associational identity of the *fereej* system had continued for long time in the traditional home environment.

5. The *Fereej* as a Territorial System

In the foregoing discussion we have tried to explore the concept of *fereej*, its meaning and use and its continuity and change in the traditional home environment. We concluded that there was a high-level of identity expressed by the members of the *fereej*. This identity was maintained over time because it expressed the identity of the *hamola*, the genealogical line, the roots that extend from the past and strive to continue in the future. The *fereej* system symbolically was an expression of the continuity of its authenticity.

However, we need to understand how this system had worked in the traditional home environment. So far we have mentioned that the traditional home environment of the Gulf cities consisted of three main quarters, each quarter containing a number of *fereej*s. It is very important in this respect to understand how the members of different *fereej*s interacted. What was the mechanism used to delimit the *fereej* as a defined territory? We have already discussed the importance of the roof routes to define the members of the *fereej*, to include and exclude members.

One *fereej* in *Anna'athil* quarter in the city of Hofuf has been selected to enable us to analyse the concept of territoriality in the *fereej* system. The emphasis was on how this system existed and how it was continued over time. The *fereej* selected was occupied by two *hamolas* living adjacent to each other and forming one *fereej* called *fereej Annu'aim wa Almulhim*⁴¹³. The name is derived from the two

⁴¹³ It was significant for this study to investigate the fabric of the *fereej* system and the way of living of its users. Therefore, this particular *fereej* was selected to enable us to carry out the physical and social analysis of this system because it is more accessible and the researcher has more data about it. It is the place where the researcher of this study was born, and he lived in it for more than sixteen years (1967-83). As member of the community, the researcher witnessed the end stage of this system in the traditional home environment and practised some of its traditions. This is not to say that this part of the study fully depends only on the experience of the author about the selected *fereej*. It also depends on a very deep study carried out by applying a multi-sources strategy for data collection to reconstruct the social and physical environment in the selected area. This was done by carrying out three case studies in depth.

hamolas who lived in it⁴¹⁴. The name of the *fereej* actually was part of the *hamola* status in the community. It was possible to find small families living in the large *hamola's fereej*, because the traditional community was egalitarian. Many interviewees said that small and poor families had lived with large ones and socialised with them without feeling that they were outsiders. Still, the name of the *fereej* reflects the dominant *hamola*. The *fereej's* name became part of the large *hamola's* identity because the *fereej* itself was used by the community as symbol of communication and a way of communal interaction.

The selected *fereej* can be considered an example of the territorial mechanisms at work in the traditional home environment in Hofuf. It consisted of group of houses, a mosque and *Madrasa* (not every *fereej* has *Madrasa*)⁴¹⁵. It had a main spine, oriented east-west, by which the *fereej* is divided into two territories, north and south. The main spine intersected with another spine oriented north-south, so that the *fereej* was divided into four main territories. In the eastern part the northern territory was occupied by *hamolat Annu'aim* and the southern territory was occupied by *hamolat Almulhim*. In the western part, the northern territory was occupied by *Almulhim* and the southern territory by *Annu'aim*.

Despite both *hamolas* having intermarriage relationships, each one of them tried to define itself within the *fereej* by delimiting its territories. It is important to explain this behaviour because this

This involved measuring the houses and interviewing the original residents. Moreover, measurement of the group of houses, including the three selected cases, was carried out in order to understand the relation between houses in more detail. The researcher also interviewed many of the *fereej's* former inhabitants, especially old men and women.

⁴¹⁴ The name of the *fereej* is almost always derived from the family or families who occupy it, but with some *fereej's* occupied by artisans, the name may be derived from a trade such as *Annijajeer* which means the carpenters. However, from the historical documents, the researcher found that in most cases the name of the *fereej* was derived from the *hamola* who live in it. For example, in *Alkut* quarter there were *Al-Jugaiman*, *Al-Bobaker*, etc. In *Anna'athil* quarter they were *Al-Shuaibi*, *Al-Mazrou'*, etc.

⁴¹⁵ The Arabic word *madrassa* means a school.

attitude supports the idea that the process of identification is a main facet of social behaviour with a very deep impact on the spatial and physical environment. One of the interpretations of this attitude is that these two *hamolas* occupied this land and formed this *fereej* at the beginning of the *Anna'athil* quarter. It appears to be the origin of this quarter because this *fereej* is adjacent to *Alkut*, which existed before *Anna'athil*. When they moved to the new area each one occupied a piece of land and constructed the houses of the *hamola*'s members in it⁴¹⁶. Later when the number of families increased the area of the *fereej* expanded by including new areas or houses and expanding the *fereej* territory (Fig. 5.10).

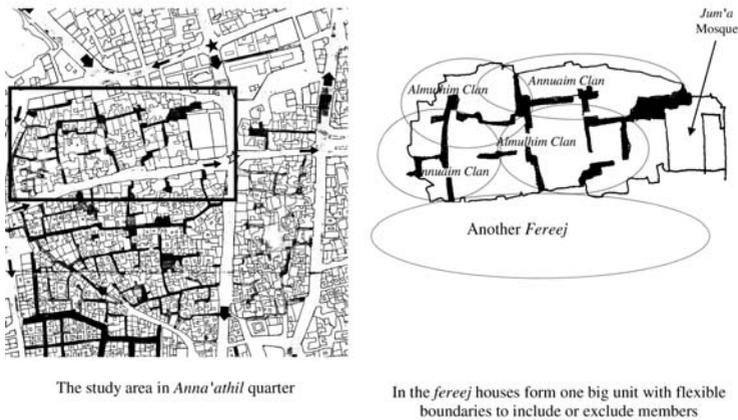


Fig. 5.10. The selected *fereej* in *Anna'athil*. Source: Author.

⁴¹⁶ This division may be related to the tribal system in Arabia which influenced the early Arab-Muslim towns such as Basra and Kufa, where every tribe selected territory to build houses for its members. Al-Hathloul, S. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 36. In fact, we can attribute the emergence of the *fereej* system to this old convention which may have dominated the construction of the early quarters in the sixteenth century, but there were many *fereej*s in traditional Hofuf that emerged from the expansion and division of the extended families of one *hamola*.

The *shufa'a* was one of the main supporting mechanisms that helped both *hamolas* to continue over time in their locations without any interruption. For example, one of the old men who lived and constructed his house in this *fereej* said, 'When I decided to build a new house for my family I bought a group of small adjacent houses in my *fereej*. Then I re-connected them as one big house'. This indicates that there was a life cycle for the houses in the traditional community. The larger houses were divided until they became very small; then, they might be re-connected or completely rebuilt as one large house. Another man said:

'For me the situation was different. I bought a group of small houses in my *fereej* and some from another *fereej* which was adjacent to my houses at the back. They let me buy these houses from their *fereej* because they knew that I would include them in my *fereej*. It was almost an unwritten agreement. This group of houses were excluded from that *fereej* and included in mine. They became part of my house, which was connected at ground and roof level with my *fereej*'s houses and *sikkas*'.

By this mechanism the *fereej* system maintained its identity and homogeneity, and also permitted the *fereej*'s members to expand or shrink their territory by including or excluding new members. It prevented the strangers from breaking down the social and physical solidarity of the *hamola*, and it supplied the intermediate relationship with basic values and conventions that helped every *hamola* in the traditional community to continue as one group.

The above example shows that an interaction between any *fereej*'s member and members from other *fereej*s could happen any time. We can divide the traditional home environment into three territorial levels. Firstly the *fereej*, which consists of members of the 'home group', secondly the quarter, which consists of a number of adjacent *fereej*s (the members of the *fereej* are considered, in the case, members of an 'adjacent group'), and thirdly there are the members

of the communal group, which includes the whole traditional home environment (Fig. 5.11)⁴¹⁷.

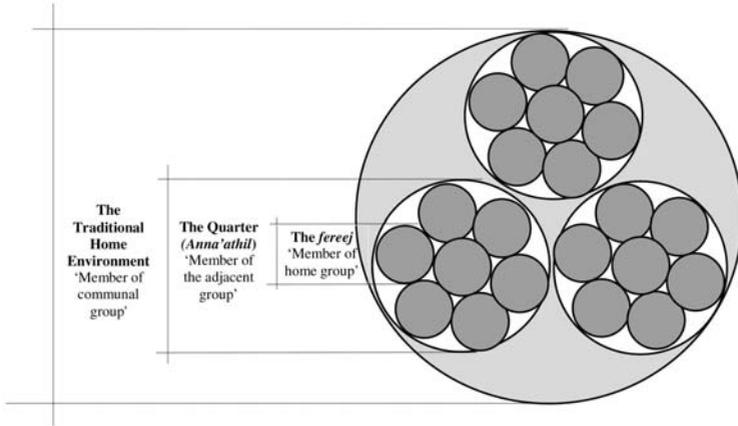


Fig. 5.11. Territorial demarcation of the traditional home environment in the Gulf.

This territorial demarcation is seen clearly in the way that members of the community interacted with each other. At the *fereej* level members interacted as one group. Several kinship bonds tied them together and made them one unified group. In some cases, the members of the adjacent group behaved as one group, especially in special occasions. For example, there was a well-known custom of communal visiting in traditional Hofuf especially on the *Eid* festival. On the first day *hamolas* in each quarter would greet each other, with, for example, the northern *fereej*s in *Alkut* visiting the southern

⁴¹⁷ This analysis is based on the three territorial demarcation levels that are mentioned by Martin, R.D. (1972) 'Territoriality and Demarcation of Land' In Ucko, P., Tringham, R. & Dimbleby, G. (eds.) *Man, Settlement and Urbanism*, England, Duckworth Co. Ltd, pp. 427-445. He states 'Full social groups tend to live in increasing proximity, with the consequent development of some kind of acceptance behaviour between adjacent groups. This would lead to three levels of distinction among conspecifics: "member of home group", "member of adjacent group", "member of foreign group"'. (p. 442)

ones. On the second day, the inhabitants of *Arrif'a*, *Anna'athil*, and *Assalbiyyah* visited the inhabitants of *Alkut*. On the third day the inhabitants of *Alkut* returned the visit. The adjacent group, in this situation, represented the members of the whole quarter. They behaved as one group, which means that people of every quarter felt that they belonged to one large territory.

The *fereej* system, which was a product of the intermediate relationships among different extended and nuclear families from same *hamola* or relative *hamolas*, aimed firstly to identify every group from other groups in the community; and secondly to identify the public and private spaces in the home environment (Fig. 5.12). In reality this classification was expressed through interaction between people and their environment. Every member of society knew the rules and followed them.

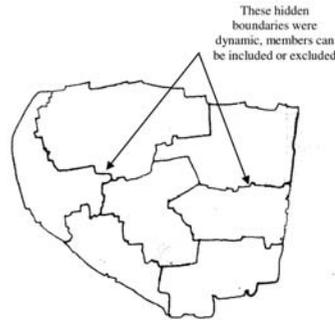


Fig. 5.12. Hidden boundaries divided the traditional quarter of *Anna'athil* into social and physical units.

Source. The author⁴¹⁸.

The communal relationship is seen through the consistency in the traditional home environment. The whole environment expressed one identity. Outsiders cannot see the internal clustering

⁴¹⁸ The boundaries here are identified according to information from a number of in-depth interviews with old people who used to live in *Anna'athil*. It was impossible for the researcher to identify the exact boundaries because firstly these boundaries were dynamic and could change from time to time, and secondly the exact boundaries needed surveying for every house in the quarter, which is impossible now because traditional areas have already been exposed to drastic transformation and their original inhabitants have already left them for other areas. However, what is presented in this figure is more or less the zoning of the old *fereej*s in the quarter, identified by the researcher through showing people maps of the quarter and discussing with them how the boundaries were.

or the dynamism that occurred at the family level, but they can see similar physical and social characteristics. This means communal relationship dominated the other relationships and regulated them to follow the shared values and conventions of the whole community. At the family level a mix of individual habits and social and religious values worked together to produce family identity. However, family identity was part of the group associational and perceptual identity because primary and intermediate kinship levels adapted and worked within this frame of communal beliefs (Fig. 5.13).

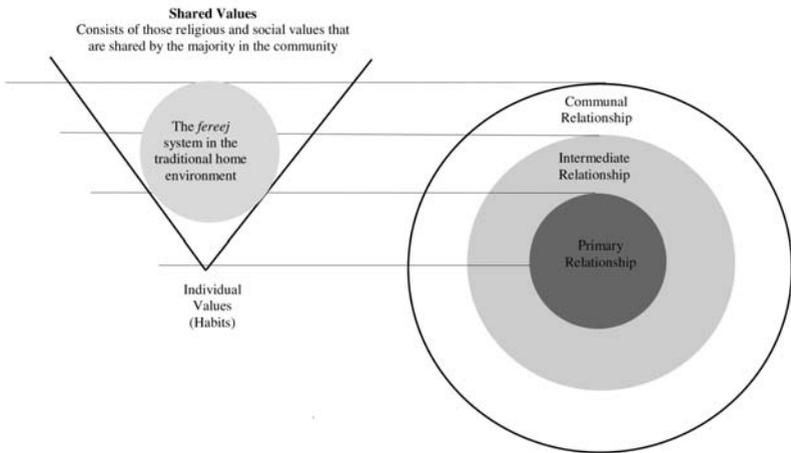


Fig. 5.13. The *fereej* system in the traditional home environment is mainly located at the intermediate kinship level but it adapted to the frame of communal beliefs.

It is clear that the conventions associated with the *fereej* system in traditional cities encouraged people to develop solutions to express their group and subgroup identities. As has been mentioned, the whole quarter was considered one mass and the *fereej*s were not usually precisely defined. Still, people reorganised themselves and defined their territories through their interaction with the physical spaces. The spatial order that developed in the traditional home

environment was dynamic enough to absorb the social changes that occurred at the micro level. In this sense, the *fereej* may extend or shrink according to the extension or shrinkage of the roof footway. This reflects how people developed their own mechanisms to include or exclude members in the physical territory.

The concept of 'control' will determine the hierarchy of territories in the home. In this connection we can see that private spaces in the home were controlled by their users and accessibility to those spaces needed the permission of the controller in most cases. The public spaces, on the other hand, were controlled by the whole *hamola*, which means no restriction in using them by members. In this case we can argue here that the territory 'gives the controller a space to use at his discretion. It gives him freedom within its boundaries to arrange forms as he pleased'⁴¹⁹.

The concept of *fereej*, in its physical sense, worked as a mediator between the most private part in the home environment, the dwelling, and the whole community. In its social meaning, it had been employed to define the different groups in society as well as to provide them with a certain level of security. This reflects the persistent need to maintain clan identity by defining its territory socially and physically. Territoriality, therefore, can be understood as a 'self/other boundary mechanism that involves personalisation or marking of a place or object, and communication that it is "owned" by a person or group'⁴²⁰. The whole home environment, in this sense, was marked by hidden boundaries into definite group territories.

Those boundaries were used by groups to communicate with each other by saying 'This is our territory'. It was a process of making places where individuals and groups in the community used physical spaces to express their values, their own way of living. It is important

⁴¹⁹ Habraken, N.J. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁴²⁰ Altman, I. (1975) *The Environment and Social Behavior: Privacy, Personal Space, Territory, Crowding*, California, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, p. 107.

for this study to understand how the physical spaces in the traditional home environment were used as a means to mobilise people's values and communicate people's identity.

6. The Use and Meaning of the Physical Environment in the Fereej System

This subject will be discussed partially in this chapter and partially in the next chapter, when we analyse the dwelling in the *fereej* system. Understanding the hidden meanings that people embodied in the physical forms around them can be understood from the use of these physical objects. As we discussed in the previous chapter, meanings can be understood at three levels. There are direct meanings, which can be understood through the form of the physical object. There are meanings that cannot be understood unless a physical object has been used and interacted with people's daily routines. This type of meaning is usually hidden, and people use it to communicate with each other although they cannot describe it. Finally, there are those meanings which can be understood only in relation to other meanings in the context.

It was very important here to discuss the concepts associated with the *fereej* system in the traditional house. Although we will discuss the traditional dwelling in a separate chapter, those transitional spaces which had dual functions in the traditional home will be introduced in this chapter. This is because they functioned as a link between inside and outside. Their symbolic meanings were directed to outside more than inside.

6.1 *The Use and Meaning of External Domestic Space*

Rapoport discusses the concept of home range, which is the 'usual limit of regular movement and activities which can be defined as a set of settings or locales and their linking paths'⁴²¹. The physical

⁴²¹ Rapoport, A. (1973) 'Some Perspectives on Human Use and Organization of Space', *Architectural Association Quarterly* (UK) Vol. 5, No. 3 (July/September).

components of any typical *fereej* consisted of streets developed hierarchically to correspond to the levels of relationships in the traditional community. *Sikkas* in the *fereej* formed the main network; they were connected with the other *sikkas* in the other *fereej*s and finally linked with the main street. The intersections of *sikkas* created open spaces called *baraha*. However, *baraha* could be found between houses even without the intersection of main streets, and almost every *fereej* has *baraha* because, in addition to its climatic function of circulating the air, *baraha* acted as children's playgrounds. Moreover, they provided space for some communal activities such as marriage ceremonies, when people used them as dancing areas in addition to places to prepare coffee and food (Fig. 5.14)⁴²².

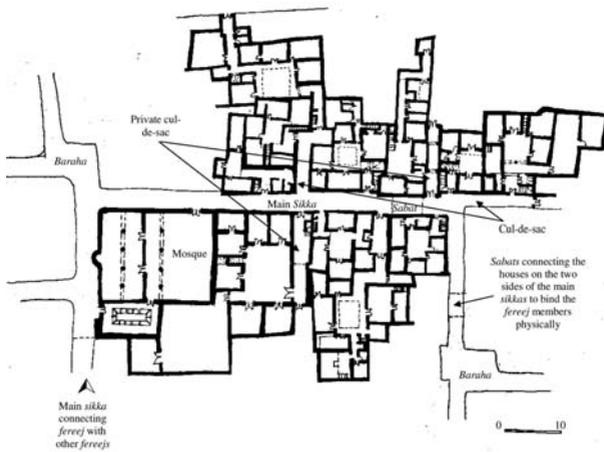


Fig. 5.14. Part of a *fereej* in *Anna'atbil* quarter (Hofuf) shows the main physical elements that every *fereej* had. Source: Author.

The *fereej* as a social and physical system was used as a system of defining public and private spaces in the home environment. Within

⁴²² Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*

the *fereej*, spaces varied from semi-public to private spaces (Fig. 5.15). The semi-public space consisted of the main *sikka* and *baraha*. These spaces were public for the *fereej* inhabitants and strangers were allowed to use them to reach other *fereej*s⁴²³. Still, it was part of the inhabitants' responsibility to question passers-by if they appeared more than once or if they were suspicious about them. The cul-de-sac was used as a semi-private space and not every inhabitant in the *fereej* was allowed to use other inhabitants' cul-de-sacs. It was a convention that men only appeared in another's cul-de-sac if they wanted to visit one of the inhabitants. There were also more private cul-de-sacs, which were mainly part of a large house or connected houses that were inhabited by one extended family. This space was more private and mainly used by family members⁴²⁴.

The hierarchy of external domestic spaces allowed people to develop an intimate relationship with spaces around their private houses. There was no space in the *fereej* that was public, except to its inhabitants. This made the *fereej* function as a private place for the

⁴²³ This can be linked to the concept of 'territorial functioning' which refers to 'a system of interlocked attitudes, sentiments, and behaviors concerned with who has access to what particular spaces and what activities go in those spaces ... Thus, cognitions and expectations regarding who has how much control in a space, or over others in a space, who has how much responsibility for what goes on in a particular location, and whether one will see strange or familiar faces in location'. Taylor, R. & Brower, S. (1985) 'Home and Near-Home Territories', In Irwin Altman & Carol M. Werner, *Home Environments*, New York, A Division of Plenum Publishing Corporation, pp. 183-212.

⁴²⁴ Hiller, R. & Hanson, J. (1984) states 'the public space of the settlement is a kind of interface between the dwelling and the world outside the settlement, the former being the domain of the inhabitants and the latter being the domain of strangers. How this interface was handled seemed to be the most important difference between one type of settlement and another; and such differences were a function of the same two types of relation that had been so important in analysing interiors: the relations among inhabitants, and the relations between inhabitants and strangers'. (p. 17).



Fig. 5.15. Physical expression of the *fereej* (group of houses, irregular streets, *sabats*, cul-de-sacs, and open spaces) with hidden physical boundaries. Source: Al-Subai'ee, A. N. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 88.

whole group. As we have noted, strangers were only allowed to pass through. They did not have the right to stay and use those spaces used by the *fereej* inhabitants as public spaces. A sense of shared ownership was very strong in the minds and the behaviour patterns of the members of the *fereej*. This increased the sense of belonging and provided people with the ability to use the external domestic spaces as part of their houses.

Families, for example, were never worried about their children outside home. In the *fereej* there was full security due to the hierarchy of outside spaces. Because the external domestic spaces were very intimate to every house in the *fereej*, parents never said to their children ‘Don’t go outside’ because they knew where they would go and that they could reach them at any time. Children mainly stayed and played within their *fereej* boundary (Fig. 5.16). *Baraha* or main *sikka* were the main playing areas for the boys while girls mainly played inside one of the houses or in private cul-de-sacs.



Fig. 5.16. A group of children play in *Alkut* (Hofuf). Source: Author.

Sikkas and *barahas* carried the *fereej*'s name because mostly there was some overlap between the name of *fereej* and its spatial and physical elements. *Sikka* and *baraha* were the shared spaces in the *fereej* and they were used by all the inhabitants of that *fereej*. If anybody mentioned the name of the *Sikka* or *baraha* he meant the

name of the *fereej*⁴²⁵. However, sometimes a *fereej* occupied by more than one clan had more than one *baraba* or *sikka*. In some cases, these elements carried names different from the *fereej*'s name, mostly the name of the family (usually some extended families in every *hamola* have a distinguishing name either related to one of their ancestors or the profession of the family) who lived in that *sikka* or *baraba*, but those names were uncommon and unfamiliar to outsiders. They were used only to identify the territory of that family within the *fereej*.

6.2 Use and Meaning of the Sabat

The roof footway influenced the morphology of the *fereej* by making the houses almost equal height. It encouraged *sabats*, which are extended rooms over the main *sikka*. *Sabat* was used, in many cases, to connect the houses in the two street sides⁴²⁶. It is the element which truly expresses the physical binding of the traditional home environment. In the *fereej*, there were the main *sikkas* which divide dwelling masses into irregular sectors, and the *sabat* binding these sectors and making them one unitary mass. This element existed in every *sikka*. This is because it was the element which enabled people in the traditional home environment to create the

⁴²⁵ For example, in *Anna'atbil* there was *Barabat Ashu'aibi* which was part of a *fereej* with the same name. In *Alkut* also there was *Sikkat Albubaker* or as some people call it *Sabat Albubaker* which was part of a *fereej* with the same *hamola* name. In fact, some places in the *fereej* became references (landmarks) to inform others about the location of the house. The insiders (the inhabitants of a *fereej*) usually did not use these names among themselves, but they used them when they explained the location of their houses to outsiders.

⁴²⁶ Al-Elawy discusses three reasons behind the need for *sabats* in Hofuf. The first reason was to support two high walls on both sides of a street. The second is the need for more space by the occupants to accommodate their extended family. The third reason was for them to be used as bridges between two houses to enable women to move from one house to another without actually leaving the house. Al-Elawy, I.S. (1976) *The Influence of Oil Upon Settlement in Al-Hasa Oasis, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D., Durham, University of Durham, pp. 190-1.

boundary of their *fereej*s. It helped them to include and exclude members over time (Fig. 5.17).



Fig. 5.17. *Sabats* in the traditional home environment had worked as connection elements which bound the *fereej* physically. Also they created a contrast between shade and light and provided places for old men and children to enjoy themselves in the external domestic spaces in a hot arid climate. Source: Author.

The *sabat* also enriched external domestic space in the *fereej* by creating contrast between shade and light, and between heat and cold. The word *sabat* is usually used to refer to a place underneath a bridge room which was mainly part of a main *sikka* or a cul-de-sac. In fact, by the existence of a bridge room, a distinctive place underneath was created. It was different from the rest of the street in the sense that it had certain different functions. It provided the old men with an external place protected from the hot sun and in the

summer it was used for sitting. In a hot humid climate like in the Gulf, such places were very important. In some *sabat* there were *dakas*, which are benches constructed of mud used for sitting⁴²⁷.

Sabat in its function helped the extended family to expand their houses while in its external meaning it expressed the group identity of the *fereej* members by translating genealogical bonds into a physical bond. It was also a territorial device whereby the territory of the *fereej* could expand and bridge the physical barrier (main street), linking the whole environment by a strong physical bond.

6.3 Consistency of Physical Morphology

The arrangement of houses followed certain rules to maintain neighbours' privacy. Because the roof was a main entertainment and sleeping place for the family in the summer time, the morphology of traditional houses, especially those which faced each other in the main *sikka*, developed to protect the privacy of family zones, the courtyard and roof. This was done by locating the mass of the second floor around the courtyard and towards the edge of the external wall that faced the main *sikka* (Fig. 5.18).

It was part of convention to situate the men's reception spaces in the front of the house. This is because these spaces expressed the status of the family as well as being a place where the family could interact with other families in the *fereej* and with the whole community. It is clear that the internal spaces of the traditional house responded to the communal requirements of the *fereej* system by expressing symbolic messages in its external appearance (Fig. 5.19).

⁴²⁷ Harrison illustrates a number of photographs in 1924 showing how people of the oasis used the *sabat* as sitting place. Harrison, P.W. (1924) *The Arab at Home*, New York, p. 46.

It was a spatial principle in the traditional house to have three distinct zones, guest, family, and animal. The location of each zone was controlled by communal needs. The men's reception spaces were at the front, the family spaces in the middle, while the animal spaces were at the back. Those dirty and unpleasant spaces were taken away from visitors' eyes while those spaces used to interact with the community were situated at the front. The family spaces were located in the middle both to be protected by the mass of the guests spaces, which were mainly either two storeys in height or located in the first



Fig. 5.18. A view taken from the old Emirate building in the northern part of *Alkut* shows the mass of the first floors. They had always formed the main façade of the house to protect the family zones and to let the members of the community use their roofs freely. Also, they express a symbolic meaning by connecting the men's reception spaces with external domestic spaces. Source: Aramco.

floor, and to be connected with the neighbours' family spaces by roof footways.

The *majlis*, in this context, was part of the family identity but it was, as we will see in the next chapter, strongly connected with communal requirements and conventions where men, especially old men, used to stay in the *majlis* all day and entertain their visitors. The *majlis* was part of semi-private zone because visitors had only to call out before entering the *majlis*. On the other hand the *majlis* became a very private space if men were not in the house because it then took on the role of one of the family spaces. This convention was developed at the primary level to satisfy communal requirements. In fact, not every family could afford to have a large

house so the dual use of the *majlis* by males and females minimised the size of the house and made it possible for the family to have a men's reception space. However, it is very important to mention that women rarely used the *majlis* because the social domain was very limited. It was strong enough to force every member in society to follow it despite the locations of the *majlis* in the house.

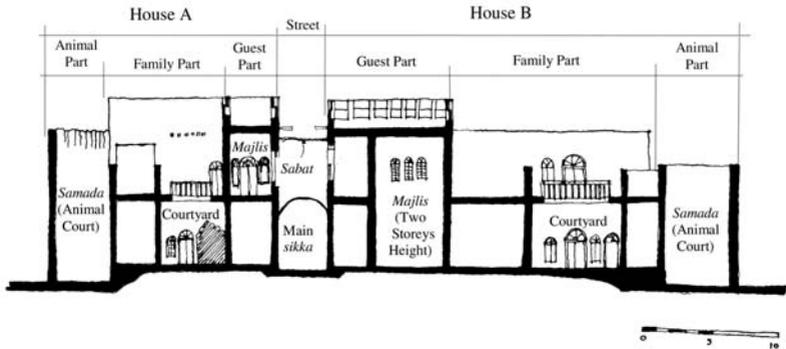


Fig. 5.19. Section in the study area in *Anna'athil* (Hofuf) show two houses facing each other (the family zone protected by the mass of the guest area). Also, the arrangement of spaces is influenced by the communal need where guest spaces were located in front and the most unpleasant spaces (animal courts) located at the back. Source: Author.

6.4 *The Use and Meaning of the House Façade*

The communal physical meanings that had been expressed by people in the traditional *fereej*s can be seen in the house façades. The elements which formed the traditional house façades were mainly associated with the men's reception spaces. Because the external home environment was dominated by men, the physical symbols developed to satisfy the men's needs for communal interactions. The openings in the façades indicated the *majlis* and its *riwaaq* in the first floor. What is fascinating about the external appearance of the traditional house is the consistency and harmony between void and

solid; between those internal spaces and the need for a link with the external domain (Fig. 5.20).

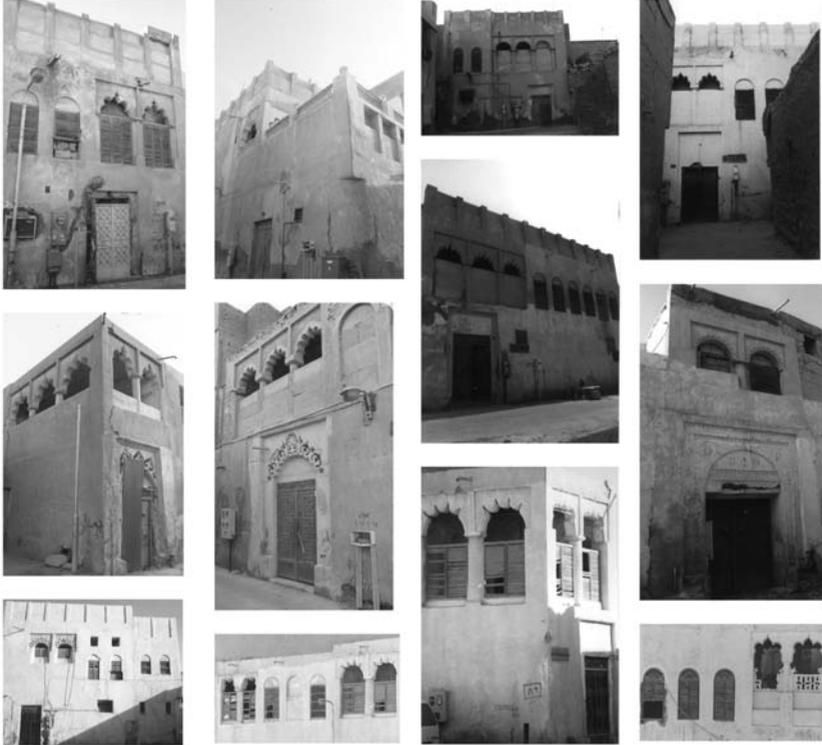


Fig. 5.20. *Majlis riwaaq* (loggia) with its openings that appeared in the house façades as two decorated arches (three or four arches are found sometimes but usually not more than that) looking toward the main *sikka*. They connected the guest part in the house with the communal domain. By situating the loggia over the main entrance a strong relation emerged between the house gate which is the domain that separate inside from outside and the men's reception spaces. This relationship embodies a message of hospitality. It says 'welcome' to the visitor.

Source: Author.

It is quite important to understand the influence of the *fereej* system on house façades. The goal here is to understand those non-verbal meanings that were used by people in the traditional community. To start with, we need to recall the three parts which constituted the traditional house in the Gulf cities. They had specific territorial principles and were strongly connected with territorial principles in the spaces outside the home⁴²⁸. Because the spaces around the house had a higher territorial level they influenced the internal spaces, especially those which were immediately connected with the external space. This dialectic between inside and outside generated the traditional house façade. For example, those houses located in the main *sikka* had a different relationship with external space from those in the cul-de-sac. The physical expressions in both cases have been developed in such a way as to link the house with the communal spaces, which resulted in two solutions for interacting with the *fereej*'s external space. Houses in the main *sikkas* established a more visual relationship with outside space and had more physical ability to communicate the family's status than those houses in the cul-de-sacs.

This was clearly seen from the relationship between the male reception spaces and the main streets. This part can be seen as transitional area between the private spaces, used by family, and communal spaces. The male reception part creates the house façade in this case. A visual relationship developed later between the male reception space and the external space through openings and sound. This relationship was decoded by community members as an

⁴²⁸ That hierarchy refers to the arrangement of items according to levels. This means that hierarchy of domestic spaces can be arranged according to certain levels. Habraken (1985) introduces the concepts of 'inclusion' and 'division' to understand the levels on which territories can be arranged. In that sense, the term 'inclusion' refers to the fact that 'each territory finds its location in another, large one' (p. 131). The concept of 'division' can be understood by seeing the home as large territory divided into private spaces, bedrooms, occupied by included territories and public spaces, staircases, corridors, etc., shared by all included territories.

invitation to join the gathering. This was not the case with the house located in the cul-de-sac.

Male reception spaces, in this case, became deeper and segregated from the main façade. However, people preferred to live in houses located in cul-de-sacs, which means that it was obvious that they would work to develop alternative devices to communicate with the *fereej* community. Well known people, for example, left their main doors open in the day time to receive guests. This convention was widely practised by heads of extended families who usually stayed in their *majlises* receiving their guests. In this case the door of the private cul-de-sac would be open – a sign that to link the inner part of the house with the communal space. Another interesting sign is that private cul-de-sacs were used as sitting places.

The main façade in Gulf's traditional house responds strongly to the relationship between the members in the community. There was a strong dialectic between privacy as one of the most important needs for every person, and communality. This can be associated with the main religious principle which required from every one to have permission to enter other people's houses. God said 'Ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you, in order that ye may heed'⁴²⁹. It is quite important to understand how this religious value influenced the physical form of the traditional house in the Gulf.

Because there was a need to link the men's reception spaces with the external domain, the spatial relationship inside the house developed to respect this need. Segregation between the family part and the guest part was achieved by situating the guest part at the front of the house and developing several devices to link it with the communal domain. The entranceway, for example, developed in such

⁴²⁹ Ali, Y.A. (1989), *op. cit.*, 24: 27. See also Aba Al-Khail. Abdulaziz (1988) 'The Quran and Sunnah, the Basis of Interpretation of the Arabic House and Mosque Architecture', *Albena*, Vol. 8, No. 43 (September-October), pp. 3-7.

a way as to be used as a regulator to maintain family privacy as well as to provide maximum interaction between the external domain and the men's reception spaces.



Fig. 5.21. The entrance of the traditional house, started by a decorative gate in the main *sikka* to express the status of the family and communicate with the community. Source: Author.

As Altman and Gauvain have indicated, gateways and entranceways throughout history have had ‘mythological and religious significance’⁴³⁰. According to Raglan (1964) the thresholds of homes separate between the ‘cold cruel world’⁴³¹ and the ‘warm protective heaven of the home’⁴³². The decoration of the entranceway in traditional cities indicated the uniqueness of the family’s identity and communality (Fig. 5.21). By the uniqueness of the decoration patterns, the family expressed its status and identity, while using similar principles and positions of decoration in the gateway can be seen as symbol of the family ties with the *fereej* community and the whole of society. The care taken over the decoration of the entranceway symbolises an invitation and respect for the guest who will use the gateway to enter the house.

The entranceway was called by local people *debreez*. It was divided into two zones forming an L shape in the plan. However, in large houses, especially those which have the men’s reception space in the ground floor, the entranceway might consist of more than two zones. Both spatial principles shared the need to provide maximum privacy for the family section as well as easy connection for the men’s reception areas with external spaces in the *fereej*. The first zone in both cases became an extension of main *sikka* or cul-de-sac inside the house only when the *majlis* is open for visitors. In this situation, guests will shout out, calling the oldest man in the house by his son’s name *ya abo flan*⁴³³. This place was considered part of the semi-private zone in the house, because it was connected directly with the external spaces in the *fereej*. Also, it was used as a symbolic

⁴³⁰ Altman, I. & Gauvain, M. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 298.

⁴³¹ Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁴³² *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁴³³ *Flan* in Hofuf means any person. People use the word *flan* when giving examples, like the English ‘so-and-so’. We use it here to replace the oldest son’s name. Of course visitors will use the actual name of the older son. For example they can say *ya abo muhammed* or *ya abo abdularahman*.

place where families usually placed seating (*dakas*) to attract visitors (Fig. 5.22).



Fig. 5.22. Entranceway used as sitting area for visitors in *Alkut*. This phenomenon is also found in some private cul-de-sacs. Source: Author.

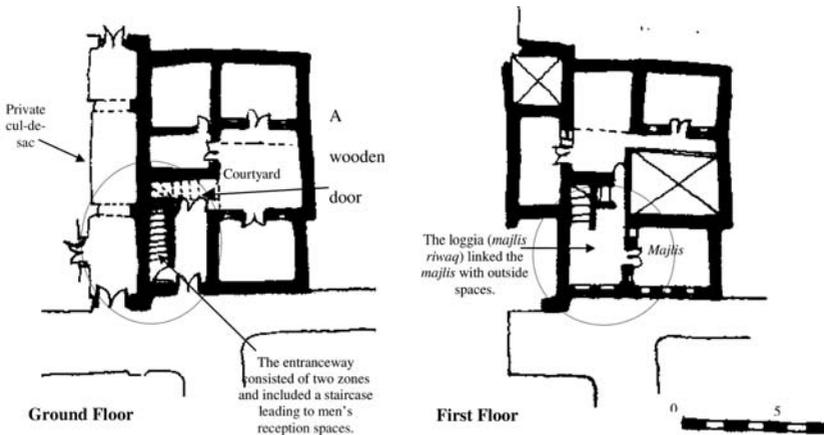


Fig. 5.23. A house in *Anna'athil*. Source: Author.

The staircase that led to the *majlis* upstairs or the guest zones in the first floor was positioned close to the main gate of the house to let the guests reach the men's *majlis* without any interruption to the family part. This was the main principle in the spatial organisation of the traditional house (which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter).

The second zone was mainly the family section in the house. A wooden door usually separated sharply the guest zone from the family zone in the entranceway. This door was always closed if there was any guest in the house, and women used the roof footways if they needed to visit their neighbours. In reality the existence of the second door indicated that the guest places in the house were considered by the traditional community in Hofuf as belonging to the communal places, where members of the *fereej* and visitors from different *fereej*s met each other and entertained. This was symbolically expressed by opening the main gateway all day so that any visitor could just shout and enter the house (Fig. 5.23).

The entranceway in the *fereej* system might extend to public spaces. For example, the gate of the private cul-de-sac represented a separation between two different domains, those which could be used by every inhabitant of the *fereej* and those which were restricted to the inhabitants of the cul-de-sac. The house entranceway in this case started by the gateway of the cul-de-sac. In some cases, the second door that separated the family zone and the guest zone in the entranceway represented the house gateway. The cul-de-sac in this case became the zone that led to the men's reception spaces (Fig. 5.24).

The house façade, especially in those houses which had the *majlis* upstairs, developed to inform the passers-by that there were men in the *majlis*. This was achieved by developing the *majlis riwaq* to have

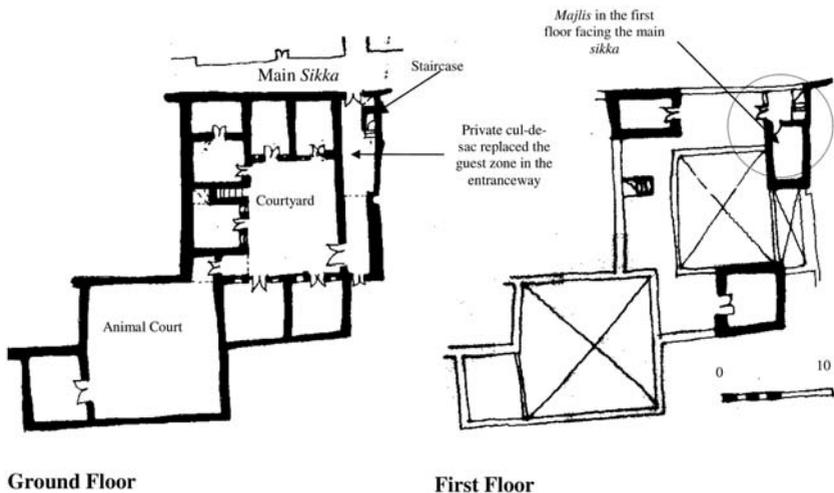


Fig. 5.24. A house in *Anna'atbil* (Hofuf) shows how the entranceway in the *fereej* system may extend to places shared with other inhabitants. Also, the staircase which led to the male reception space in the first floor was located adjacent to the door to be easily seen by the visitors without going deeper into the cul-de-sac. Source: Author.

two decorative arches over the main gate, which transmitted the sound, but not clear words, to passers-by⁴³⁴. The message might also be transmitted through a number of windows positioned in a linear organisation in the *majlis* wall overlooking the main *sikka*. The whole composition of the house façade communicated with the community and invited them to enter the house (Fig. 5.25)⁴³⁵.

⁴³⁴ The arch was one of the main distinctive physical features in Hofuf. Last century Palgrave said 'The comparative elegance of domestic architecture in Hofuf is due to the use of arch ... [which] gives to this province a lightness and a variety unknown in the monotonous architecture in central and northern Arabia'. Palgrave, (1866), *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁴³⁵ Al-Naim, M. (1997) 'Functional and Aesthetic Harmony in the Built Environment', *Alqafila*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (may), pp. 38-43) (Arabic).

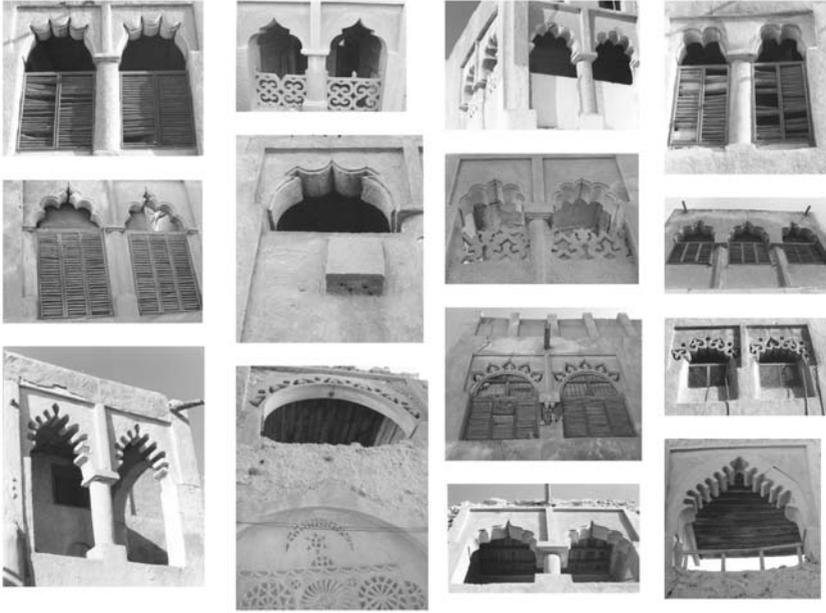


Fig. 5.25. Loggias (*majlis riwaq*). The photographs show the diversity within the unity that people in the Gulf used to express their identities. Family identity was maintained by the uniqueness of the arch forms while communality was maintained by the repetition of principles both in their basic forms and their location in the façade.

As we have said, there was always a need to express the uniqueness of the family's identity by the uniqueness of the decoration composition itself. It was rare to find two loggias identical in design and decorative. Still, as with the gateway, a common principle had been used to express collective perceptual identity. In this respect we can say that the individual and collective perceptual identities had been developed to express a deep associational identity which is expressed through hospitality. The visual characteristics of the loggias and the gateway in the traditional house aimed to express collective identity (Fig. 5.26).

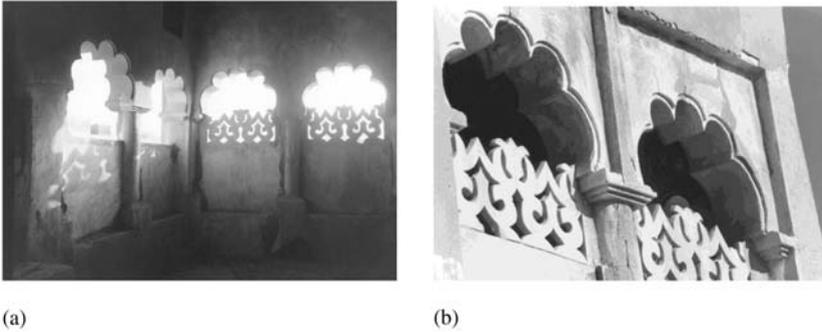


Fig. 5.26. The loggia connects male reception space with the community. (a) The loggia from inside: a space associated with the *majlis* used for sitting in the summer. Also it connected those who used it with the external spaces. (b) The loggia from outside expressed the family status as well as symbolically connected the men's receptions spaces with the community.

Lionising the guests was a major part of traditional daily life in traditional Gulf cities. Originally, as we will see in the next chapter, the *majlis* was associated with a courtyard and always located in the ground floor. The associational meaning of hospitality was fulfilled by the spacious courtyard, which was accessible directly from the entranceway. Later, the *majlis* moved to the first floor. In this case a new form was produced, by developing the combination of the gateway and the loggia, to fulfil the need to interact with the community. The original forms of the *majlis* almost disappeared and were replaced by the new one (Fig. 5.27).

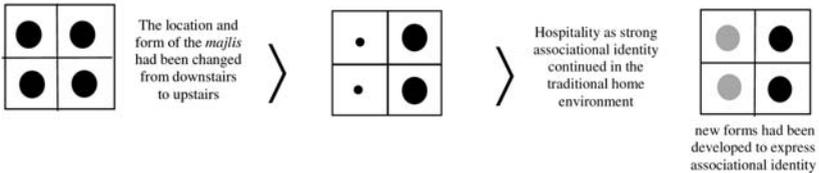


Fig. 5.27. Continuity of hospitality as perceptual and associational identity in the traditional home environment.

Although the house façades in the Gulf traditional cities were mainly developed to express hospitality and communality as collective associational identity, women's interaction with the external world was also expressed. Because women had very limited interaction with external domestic spaces the house façade always expressed a solid plane surface to indicate family spaces. It is possible to say that this lack of ostentation was used as symbol of privacy. Apart from the roof routes, there was a device in the house façade used to link the women with the external world. This was the *tarma*.



Fig. 5.28. Openings in the *tarma* used by women to observe the external domestic space.

Women could use the *tarma*, which was a small box of wood or mud over the main gate to communicate visually and individually with the external domestic spaces. What we mean by 'individually'

here is that a woman could only use this device to see and observe the intimate external spaces. This box had small openings to enable women to observe their children and whatever was going on in the external domestic spaces (Fig. 5.28). (The Arabic word *tarma* means ‘dumb’ or ‘mute’, which means expression without speech).

The openings of the *tarma* were small enough to enable the women to see through without being seen. As part of a woman’s daily routine she would use the *tarma* to observe the external world, following her children while they played outside, or to see who was visiting or knocking on the door if men were not at the house. The *tarma* was never used to contact the outside world verbally; this was the function of the roof routes, where women could meet and socialise. It was regarded as shameful in the traditional community for the voice of a woman to be heard by strangers.



Fig. 5.29. *Tarma* inside one of the upstairs rooms. Source: Author.

This is why this device was developed. It was symbolically used to express the privacy that was the position of women in society.

7. Summary

It is one of the main goals of this study to understand how the local people of the Gulf produced their individual and collective perceptual and associational identities. The *fereej* system developed from a device for maintaining the sense of belonging to a group to a

device used as a medium for expressing family, group, and communal identities. As we noticed, the social quality of the *fereej* influenced most of the physical elements in the external and transitional spaces (men's reception spaces) in the traditional home environment. It made them work within an order by supporting each other and harmonising with individual (family) and communal needs⁴³⁶.

The *fereej* was compatible with people's lifestyle. Clustering of the traditional home environment was fully associated with the desire to be identified. The *fereej* in this case was used as symbol to define those people who lived in it. High homogeneity between these people was an encouraging factor for them to gather in one defined territory, which had provided them with the immediate possibility of helping each other and maintaining their *hamola's* name over time. Also it made them feel more secure, for outsiders could not pass easily undetected into their territories.

It was the *fereej* system that created a balance between the incremental actions which had to be taken for the family to cope with changing life circumstances, and the need for consistency and communality that was crucial for the collective social identity. This dialectic between the family's needs and community's needs produced the spatial and physical environment of every *fereej*. The consistency of the traditional home environment, then, resulted from the repetition of the physical and social characteristics of the *fereej* which worked within the communal frame of values and images.

This study sees the concept of identity as a device consisting of several levels. It can grow and re-grow over time. The concept of 'inclusion' is an important idea in understanding identity in the home environment. As we noticed there was a continuity of the

⁴³⁶ We refer to family as individual in this part because in the traditional environments individual identity was less strong and group identity was a dominant one. Oliver (1975), for example, mentions that 'individual expression is of small importance in vernacular shelter, for the similarity of the buildings within a cluster is symbolic of identification with the group that resides within them'. (p. 12).

perceptual and associational identities at the communal and *fereej* level in the traditional home environment. However, when we come to the micro level we find that the collective perceptual identity had been changed in some elements, such as the introduction of the loggia and gateway as a combined form used to express the hospitality which was part of the collective associational identity of the local people of the Gulf. This new composition had created a new perceptual identity at the house level. Because the *fereej* included the house, the change in the house level had no impact on the collective perceptual identity. It was possible that if the need for communal interaction changed at the family level, the associational and perceptual identity of the *fereej* might change if other families in the *hamola* agreed. The concept of inclusion is very important in understanding collective perceptual and associational identity (collective behaviour always included individual behaviour). It is always possible if any change occurs in the collective level, that a change will automatically appear at the individual one.

It is quite clear that the *fereej* system had created a complete harmonised environment both at its macro level, where different groups socialised and interacted within a distinctive frame of shared values and beliefs, and at its micro level, where the spatial organisation and physical appearance of the house responded by generating and locating the men's reception spaces in a way that symbolically communicated the individual (family) and collective perceptual and associational identities. In the next chapter we need to analyse the house in the *fereej* system. We already have some ideas about the house. However, it is very important to understand how the dwelling has worked in the *fereej* system.

DWELLING IN THE *FEREEJ* SYSTEM: RITUALS AND CEREMONIES IN THE SAUDI AND GULF TRADITIONAL HOUSE

1. Prologue

In the previous chapter we introduced the spatial principles of the Gulf traditional house. The discussion mainly concentrated on the dialectic between inside and outside. As we noticed, the dwelling in the *fereej* system has shown a symbolic interaction with the surrounding space. The men's reception spaces had shaped the external appearance of the house and linked it with communal space. The dialectic between individual and collective identity is seen through the common physical symbols that have been used in the house façade as well as by the uniqueness of the symbolic compositions that every family used to express its social status.

Because individuals behave within the family, *hamola*, and community frameworks, we found that perceptual and associational identities were developed to convey the communal shared values. Individual identity, as we noticed, was still at the minimal stage of existence. This is also related to the finding by many researchers that group identity is more important than emphasising personal differences in the traditional home environment⁴³⁷. This is not to say

⁴³⁷ Rapoport, for example, states 'In the case of most traditional cultures individual identity expressed through dwellings is rather unimportant. Rapoport, A. (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

the traditional home environment in the Gulf ignored the personality, but personality was accomplished within the communal frame. In general, as Oliver states, traditional home environment

‘...takes the form that is seen appropriate to a society’s nature, organisation, family structure, aesthetic. The individual within a tribal or folk culture does not become the form-giver for the society; instead he employs the forms that are essential to it, building and rebuilding within determinants that are as much symbolic as physical or climatic’⁴³⁸.

The external space in the *fereej* system followed a distinctive spatial order known by every member in the community. The question is to what extent the traditional house was linked to the external spatial order. We introduced the example of the men’s reception space (*majlis*) when we discussed the dialectic between personality and communality in the *fereej* system. We found that the guest zone in the entrance hall was considered as an extension of the semi-private space when the male reception spaces were used by guests.

In this chapter, we need to understand how the *fereej* system influenced the whole house formation. The emphasis here is on the meaning and use of the internal domestic spaces. In the previous discussion we tried to introduce the spatial principles of the traditional house. This principle needs to be discussed thoroughly because it embodies the socialising behaviour inside and outside the house. It is not only about spatial relationship; it is in fact a physical translation of people’s relationship. As Hillier and Hanson say:

‘It is the fact of space that creates the special relation between function and social meaning in building. The ordering of space in buildings is really about ordering the relations between people. Because this is so, society enters into

Also, Giddens (1991) states that ‘in many settings of pre-modern cultures ... Appearance primarily designated social identity rather than personal identity’. Cited in Jenkins, R. (1996) *Social Identity*, London, Routledge, p. 15.

⁴³⁸ Oliver, P. (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 12.

the very nature and form of buildings. They are social objects through their very form as objects⁴³⁹.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the internal domestic spaces, their physical and social characteristics. The aim here is to grasp the core values that had enabled people in the traditional community to embody associational meanings to the physical objects and spaces around them.

2. Formation of the Traditional House: Historical Approach

In our investigation of the formation of the Gulf traditional house, several strategies have been employed. A number of houses have been studied and analysed. It is difficult to trace the development of the physical entity of the traditional dwelling, since many of the traditional houses have been transformed or demolished. As we mentioned in the introduction to this study, one of the main objective of the study is to record and document the physical and spatial development of the traditional house.

The traditional houses in the Gulf were courtyard houses compacted in various cluster sizes forming the *fereej* organisation. Most of the houses were two storeys high. Three and four storeys were rare⁴⁴⁰. The dwelling's physical identity was maintained over centuries because, as we will see, a distinctive spatial principle worked as regulator of the internal spaces in the house. In this section we will try to give a lucid picture of the physical development of the Gulf traditional house since the nineteenth century⁴⁴¹. Fortunately, some people in the region still keep some of

⁴³⁹ Hillier & Hanson (1984), *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴⁰ Vidal, (1955), *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁴⁴¹ Some old houses have been measured by the researcher but it was difficult to determine the history of the house. Also, because we are interested in the continuity and change of identity in the home environment it was very important to start from a period where the identity of the house was challenged by change. The traditional house in Hofuf faced some changes since the nineteenth century. Its main existing types have been established since that time. This is not to say that the house in Hofuf never changed before the nineteenth century,

the old papers which prove their ownership of the houses. Some of these historical documents describe the house, its physical components, its boundaries, and its relationship with surrounding houses (Fig 6.1)⁴⁴².

but it was possible for the researcher to trace the spatial and physical development of the traditional house in Hofuf in the nineteenth and first half of last century. In this connection, the study tried to use the available data about the traditional house in Hofuf. In 1866 Palgrave indicated the most common features of the traditional houses in Hofuf. He said: ‘... what however gives to the houses of Hasa their most decided superiority over those of Central Arabia is the employment of the arch, without which indeed there may be building, but hardly construction. The Hasa arch, whether large or small, contracted to a window or spanning the entire abode, is ... never the segment of one circle; but of two ... it is a simple, broad, but pointed arch ... The arch brings other improvements with it; the entire house becomes here much more regular, its apartments wider, its arrangement more symmetrical, light and air circulate with greater abundance and facility; while the roof, instead of remaining a mere mass of heavy woodwork, supported mid-way on clumsy pillars, assumes something of lightness and spring’. (p. 167). He described one of the houses as: ‘... comfortable dwelling, well adapted to the quiet tenor of life ... The K’hawah [coffee place] was small and snug, not admitting above twenty guests at a time; alongside was a second and larger apartment ... and opening on the courtyard; two spacious rooms communicated with this on either side; the one was at our disposal, the other answered the purposes of a nursery ... A kitchen and two secluded chambers ... completed the ground storey; while above were three empty and unfurnished rooms, and a large extent of flat roof’. (pp. 148-9). He mentioned that the domestic furniture in Hofuf was more varied than in other areas in central and northern Arabia. He listed several daily use furniture such as stools, low dinner-tables, cupboards, shelves, and bedsteads. Chessman in 1926 described one of the houses in Hofuf when the reception spaces moved upstairs. He said: ‘There was the usual enclosed courtyard. On each side of the door was a spacious room; one was a coffee-dispensing chamber with a small hearth in the middle ... My quarters were the two upstairs rooms, approached by a sandstone staircase from the courtyard, and the broad veranda running the length of the house supported by a colonnade of sandstone arches. In one room ... the furniture consisted of a chair and two benches, a table, a glass toilet water-bottle, and a glass. The other room was arranged in Eastern style as a reception room, the floor being covered with rugs and cushions ranged all round the room against the walls’. (p. 63).

⁴⁴² Al-Naim, M. (2004) “Using Historic Documents to Describe Traditional Built Environment: Case of Al-Hasa, Saudi Arabia” London, (Paper Presented in the Thirty Eight Meeting of the Seminar for Arabian Studies, 22-24 July 2004).

meanings both physically and functionally in the local people's minds.

These names have deep meanings because they developed and were used for centuries. Oliver, for example, stresses the importance of local names in the study of traditional architecture. He writes:

'The study of vernacular architecture ... should take into consideration the values attached to the terminology used to describe the building and its use. If the symbolic value of a built structure is recognised as something special to the society which builds it, there seems ample linguistic evidence to show that it may still be conceptualised in a linguistic framework which is itself of a different order of emphasis and signification'⁴⁴³.

Rapoport supports this view when he discusses environmental cognition. For him 'the world is made meaningful by naming, classifying and ordering through some conceptual system'⁴⁴⁴. We have already analysed some of the local names and their physical and social meanings when we discussed the *fereej* system. We found it part of people's identity that they have their own names for every single space in their home environment.

One method that has been used to analyse the spatial principle of the traditional house in this study is searching for the local meaning of the internal spaces. For example, the word '*muraba'a*' stands for a square room. In Arabic the word '*muraba*' means square. While the word '*liwan*' locally means a rectangular, and sometimes narrow, room opening on to the courtyard. Both the *muraba'a* and the *liwan* were located in the family part and functioned as multi-purpose rooms. However, the *liwan* could be used as kitchen and was mainly used for family purposes while the *muraba'a* was usually used as main room or a room which could be used as a retreat for women or visiting relatives. In many cases the *muraba'a* had ornamentation,

⁴⁴³ Oliver, P. (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁴⁴⁴ Rapoport, A. (1977), *op. cit.*, p. 108. Also, Habraken indicates that 'names can simply denote a form in its context'. Habraken, J. (1985), *op. cit.*, p. 31.

which was rarely found in the *liwan*. It is clear that the *muraba'a* had a symbolic meaning associated with its use (Fig. 6.2). If the house contained only one *muraba'a*, usually the family used it as reception room for women or close relatives in the day time while they transformed it into a bedroom for the head of the family at night.



Fig. 6.2. In most of the cases *muraba'a* has pointed arch in the middle because it is usually the largest room in the family part. Symbolically, it is decorated and used as women reception space. Source: Author.

Some people in the Gulf attached the word *muraba'a* to the male reception space by saying '*muraba'at almajlis*'. They never attached the word *liwan* to the *majlis*. This demonstrates the importance of *muraba'a*, not only as space, but as a name with a symbolic meaning in people's minds. This was clear from the answers of the old men. They said it was acceptable to have a narrow and dark *liwan* but a *muraba'a* should be spacious, well ventilated and well lit.

Another important example is the word '*hawwi*', which means courtyard. If anyone in traditional Hofuf said '*hawwi*' he meant the family courtyard, though as a matter of fact there was more than one courtyard in the house. For example, there was the male reception courtyard, called '*hawwi almajlis*'. Also, there was the animal courtyard, called '*semada*'. Local people in Hofuf never used the word '*hawwi*' for the animal court, but they used it to refer to *majlis* courtyard. *Hawi* in the family and male reception areas was considered one of the most important spaces in the house. Its walls

were usually covered in ornamentation because it worked both as a transitional open space (in the winter) by connecting the rooms around it, and in the summer it was used as a main sitting space for guests and the family (Fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3. The name *hawwi* (courtyard) always referred to the family courtyard unless it was associated with other names such as in '*hawwi almajlis*'. Its walls were usually decorated because it conveyed symbolic meanings. Source: Author.

In some cases reception spaces were called by the local people '*bayt almajlis*', which means the house of guests⁴⁴⁵. Here is another interesting use for names. Using the word '*bayt*' to define the male reception spaces indicated that, in the first place, the guest spaces were classified by people as special spaces different from other spaces in the house. Secondly, this expression reflects the size of the guest spaces, which in some cases formed a house within a house. Still

⁴⁴⁵ Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 68.

there were small or normal *majlises* sometimes called ‘*dar almajlis*’⁴⁴⁶. By attaching the word ‘*dar*’ to the *majlis*, people referred to the size of the guest space. As we noticed, several names were used to describe the *majlis* in the traditional home environment, which reflects its position and its symbolic role in the traditional community.

Although the internal spaces in the traditional house had more than one function (even the *majlis* was used as bedroom for the guest) a specific name that was usually associated with a symbolic meaning was developed by local people to define and rank the spaces in the house. The above examples have shown that the name of a space was very important for the local people of Hofuf. In the following discussion we will try to analyse the spatial principle of the traditional house and also to discuss the local names and their symbolic and utilitarian meanings⁴⁴⁷.

2.1 *Spatial Organisation of the Traditional House*

Spatial relationship in the traditional house was an expression of the social and physical division between male and female in the community. This led to two main domains inside the house, guest and family, and communal and private. These two domains determined how far strangers could enter the innermost parts the

⁴⁴⁶ The words *bayt* and *dar* in Arabic mean a house. However, in Hofuf, people usually used the word *bayt* to refer to a house, while *dar* is used for a small room always accessible from a larger room.

⁴⁴⁷ Some of the names in the traditional house were influenced by the agricultural products especially dates which are still today the most important agricultural product in Al-Hasa region. Because most of the people depend for their food and everyday items on agricultural products, several devices had been used by people to secure the family needs. Two different spaces to store dates were developed in the house. The first store is called *jussa*, which was a small box built in one of the *liwan* corners (one of the *liwans* was usually used as the main store in the house). The *Jussa* was only used to store the dates for the family’s daily supply. The second store was called a *kandooj* and was used to store the dates for commercial purpose. The *Kandooj* could be found inside or outside the house (there were some stores of dates open in the main *sikka* or in the market) while the *jussa* was found only in the house.

house. The family part was forbidden to strangers and only used by women and close male relatives, while the male part was part of the communal spaces in the *fereej* community if the *majlis* was open for guests.

There was free movement between these two domains if there were no male strangers in the house. For example women could use the male reception spaces to entertain women visitors, but this happened on limited occasions, because social interaction between women was rare and limited to the roof routes in most cases. The *majlis* had a dual function in everyday life by letting women use it, but symbolically it belonged to the male domain.

When we discussed the external domestic space we found that the role of women in society had played an important role in defining the concept of *fereej*. Usually, the openings in the parapets of the party walls between the houses, '*furaj*', connected family domains in these houses because they were used by women only. This system was successful in providing women with the opportunity to create their own social group. This created a clear clustering in society manifested by men's and women's groups. Each group defined itself socially and physically in the community. The whole *fereej* territory became a domain for the woman. Symbolically, the external space in the *fereej* system was a men's space, but women created their external space from within.

It is important to illuminate the way that internal spaces in the house responded to this way of living. It is a very important point to appreciate that the traditional house in Hofuf had three distinctive territories linked together by transitional spaces. Why were the internal spaces arranged in this way? As we mentioned earlier, there was a need to segregate the family part from the men's domain as well as to link it with other family parts in the *fereej*'s houses. Male reception spaces also had to be connected with the communal spaces

in the *fereej*⁴⁴⁸. It is possible here to say that these two factors played a major role in the formation of the traditional house in addition to their maintaining its perceptual and associational identity over time.

The relationship between these three parts in the house was a reflection of the social order of the traditional community. The front part of the house formed the male reception spaces. It represented the front stage where the private and public get together. The middle part was the family spaces, the private zone in the house. Nevertheless it was the domain which women visitors could use. The family part cannot be considered as 'back stage'⁴⁴⁹. This is because its spaces were openly visible to visitors (women). In the traditional house no rooms were dedicated to one function alone, except the utility and animal spaces. The *muraba'a* and *liwan*, which were usually connected immediately to the family courtyard, were used as multi-purpose rooms. This family part was connected with the male reception spaces by a transitional space, the *debreez*. The third part was usually the services and animal court, which was connected with the family part by another transitional space called internal *sabat*

⁴⁴⁸ The position of the house entrance was mainly determined by the location of the *majlis*, which in most of the cases, was situated in the entrance at the right side. The entrances of neighbouring houses were located at a distance from each other. This principle may change in those houses which were located in a cul-de-sac due to the limited spaces. In this case, entrances may be located adjacent to each other and *majlis* may take different positions. This spatial attitude can be considered as a general principle but there were some exceptions. For example, the researcher surveyed and measured two houses located in cul-de-sacs, one of them located in *Anna'athbil* quarter and the other located in the south *Arrif'a* quarter. In the case of *Anna'athbil*, guest spaces were located in the entrance left side to maximise the distance from the neighbouring house, while in the case of south *Arrif'a*, the house was located in the deepest and narrowest part in the cul-de-sac, which provided the house with a door size opening to the cul-de-sac. The *majlis* in the latter case was facing the house gate because this was the only possible location.

⁴⁴⁹ Goffman (1959), introduced the concepts of 'front regions' and back region to make a distinction between two domains in the home. For him, the 'front regions' is the area where the visitors are presented. It is like a stage 'where actors present images they wish to convey to an audience'. On the other hand, the back region is more private and it is unavailable to the guests. See Also Altman and Gauvain, (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 312.

(Fig. 6.4)⁴⁵⁰. The animal court can be considered the back stage of the house, the location of dirty activities and usually well away from visitors' eyes.

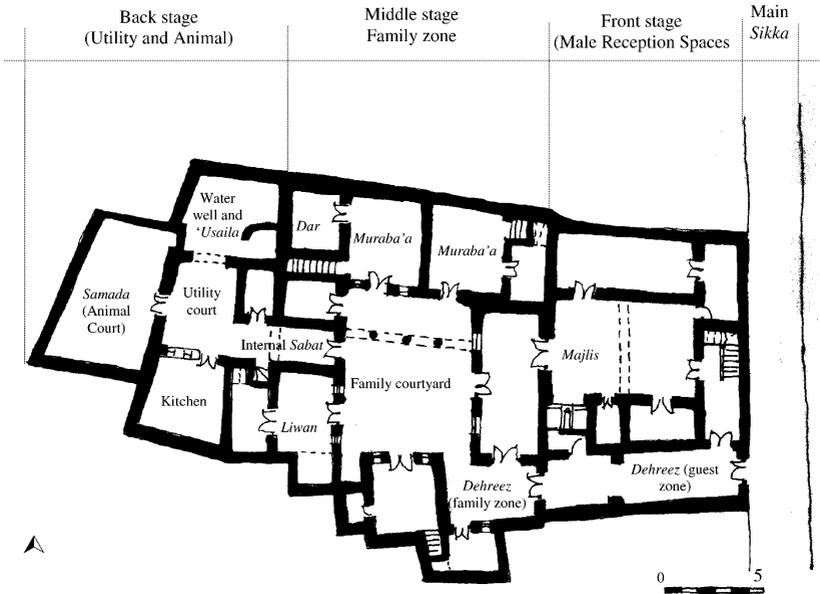


Fig. 6.4. A house in *Anna'athil* showing the three parts of the house.
Source: Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴⁵⁰ Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 66.

2.2 Continuity and Change of the Physical and Spatial Features of the Traditional House in the Gulf (Up to 1950)⁴⁵¹

The main theme of this study is to understand the process of identification in the home environment. This requires from the researcher that he trace any changes that have occurred in the home environment and address their implications for perceptual and associational identities. Although the traditional home environment experienced minimal change during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, a pattern of spatial change has been depicted. The fascinating point about this change is that it occurred only in the male reception spaces, while the family and animal spaces continued without change⁴⁵². This part, is thus mainly a diachronic study of the male reception spaces in the traditional house during the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century.

In the early periods, only prominent people in every *fereej* had *majlises* in their houses (Fig. 6.5). Ordinary people used to use the entrance of their house *debreez* to entertain their male visitors. Women in this case used to move to the roof or to the innermost room in the house to keep themselves away from the sight of the men. Because the *majlis* carried very deep associational meanings, it later became part of every house's identity. Every family needed to express its status by interacting with the community, and the *majlis* was the only space in the house with the capacity to let them do that. As a matter of fact, the *majlis* was not only a place for amusing visitors but was a place where family could show its wealth and social status as well as express its sense of belonging to the whole community.

⁴⁵¹ The traditional house in Hofuf went under drastic transformation after 1950 which is beyond the scope of this study. The researcher had studied the transformation of the traditional house (1950-93) in his master thesis in 1993.

⁴⁵² We traced those changes that transformed the spatial relationship within each part in the traditional house. Often the family and animal parts changed physically because of the need for more room, but their spatial principles continued with minimal change.

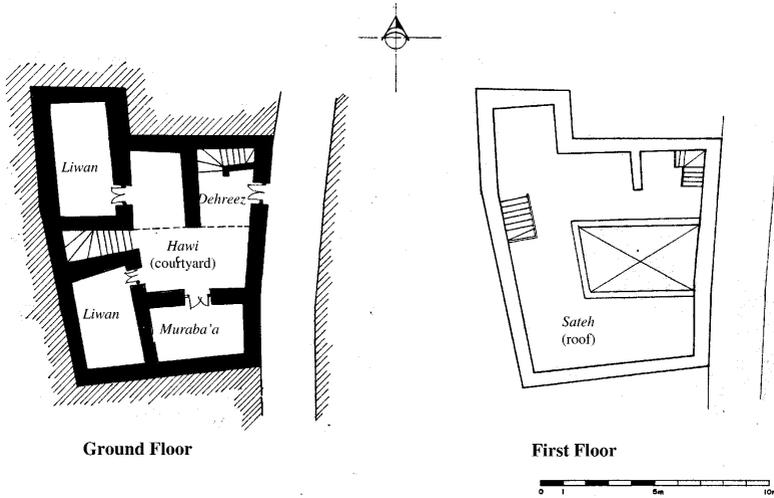


Fig. 6.5. One of the early houses in *Alkut* (The *majlis* in this house was not yet developed because only those prominent people in the *fereej* had one.) Men usually used the entrance to sit while women went upstairs to the roof or used the innermost *liwan*. Source: Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 58.

In the nineteenth century the guest spaces in the Gulf traditional home consisted of a main reception hall called the *majlis* or *murabba'at al-majlis*. This space was connected with the main entrance by a courtyard open to the sky, called *hawī al-majlis* (guest courtyard). Usually, this open space was used as *majlis saifi* (summer setting place). Moreover, it worked as a transitional space between the guest spaces and both family spaces and the house entrance, which increased the freedom for women to use their space in the house without any interruption to their privacy. This open space was also connected with another small open space used for animals, called *semada* (animal court in the guest space)⁴⁵³. Usually, this space

⁴⁵³ In traditional Hofuf people owned palm tree farms but they did not work in them.

either opened on to the guest zone at the entrance, or what local people called *debreez almajlis* or the main *sikka* (Fig. 6.6)⁴⁵⁴.

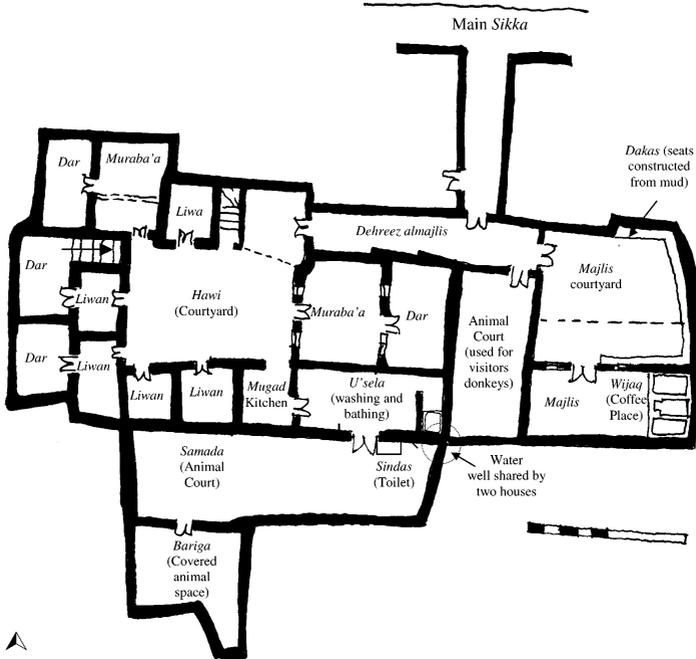


Fig. 6.6. *Majlis* associated with a courtyard in a house in *Anna'atbil*. Source: Author.

They had farmers named *shireech* (partner), who worked in the farms and visited the owner of the farm with their donkeys. The small animal place in the guest part was used for their donkeys. Also, the toilet room connected with it was for the guest. Usually people had a small garden at the side of *majlis* courtyard named *bustan*. This garden was located beside the toilet and the animal court to utilise the water and waste in these two places.

⁴⁵⁴ This depends on the location of the house. If the house was located in a cul-de-sac the animal court in the reception spaces was usually accessed from the entrance, while if the house was located in the main *sikka* it was usually accessed from outside.

The *majlis* hall usually faced north. Some of the well-to-do families had two rooms, the summer room which was located in the south and called *muraba'at almajlis ashshamaliyyah*, meaning the northern *majlis* (because it faced the north), and the winter room located in the north and called '*muraba'at almajlis aljanobiyyah*', the southern *majlis*⁴⁵⁵. The courtyard in this case would be located between these two rooms. The *majlis* courtyard or *hawwi almajlis* was usually semi-shaded. The material used to make the shaded area was palm leaves, and was called *gerd* by local people. It is the same material that was used to make the matts for the *dakas* around the courtyard. The shaded part is flexible to enable the household to remove it in the winter.

Generally the spatial principle of the traditional house in the nineteenth century followed the same order. The house was divided into three parts, guest, family, and animal. The front and most symbolic zone was occupied by the male reception spaces. The family occupied the middle zone connected at one side to the male reception part by the two entrance halls (family and guest zones), and at the other side to the animal zone by a corridor called *sabat dakhily*, or internal *sabat*⁴⁵⁶. Some times the internal *sabat* became larger and contained several facilities such as a kitchen and a small courtyard called *hawwi al'ain* (court of the water well), where the bath is located (Fig. 6.7). For long time these two transitional zones, the entrance and the internal *sabat*, worked, as we will see, to maintain this spatial principle as well as the physical identity of the traditional house.

⁴⁵⁵ Personal interview with Sheikh Ahmed ben Ali Al-Mubarak.

⁴⁵⁶ This internal *sabat* differed from the external *sabat* which was found in the main *sikkas* and cul-de-sacs. The external *sabat* functioned as a connecting point between two different houses on the two sides of the street while the internal *sabat* was a semi-covered passageway connecting the family courtyard with the animal court.

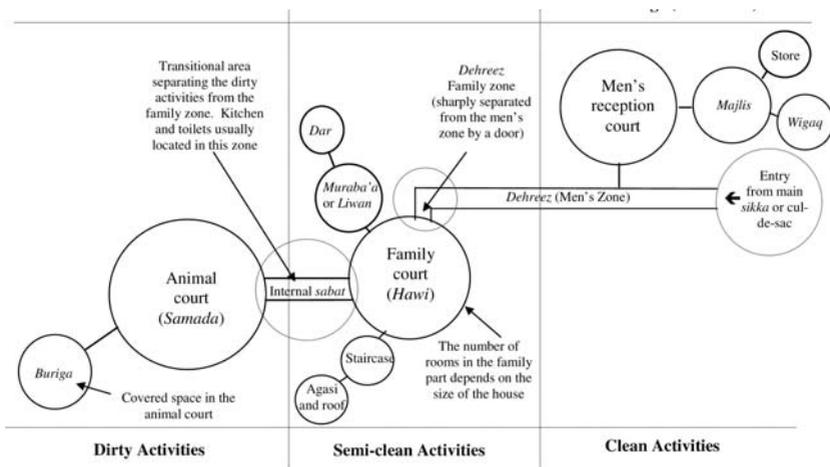


Fig. 6.7. The organisation of internal domestic space in the traditional house (nineteenth century).

By the end of the nineteenth century male reception spaces faced several transformations. The male reception spaces were the only part in the house which was adapted to these changes. The changes appeared firstly by transforming all or part of the *majlis* courtyard into a two storey hall used as a *majlis*, and the previous *majlis* became a room inside the new *majlis*. This room functioned as a guest bedroom, dining room, and storage area. The second transformation was that some houses transferred the *majlis* to the first floor and used the entire ground floor for the family. This happened in the beginning of the twentieth century because many houses were divided due to the limited area of the walled city⁴⁵⁷.

⁴⁵⁷ Vidal, F.S. (1955), *op. cit.*, pp. 81-2.

In the two storey *majlis* hall the reception spaces were still located on the ground floor. This was found in large houses. The reception spaces in this case occupied a large area of ground floor and were usually called *bayt almajlis*. A specific pattern of territorial behaviour was developed to create a balance between the reception part and the other part in the house which was used by the family. The bent entrance (*debreez*) had worked as a regulator for circulation and to provide the family part with full



Fig. 6.8. The family zone in the entrance opening on to the family courtyard with a decorative arch.

Source: Author.

privacy not only from outside but also from inside. The *debreez* in such a case was long and consisted of three halls or more. This is because the entrance halls in many cases were situated around the *majlis* and, thus, were connected with the family part. Usually there was one zone devoted to the guests in the entrance area, while two or more zones were for the family, which was separated from the guest zone by a wooden door. As a general attitude, there was a tendency to reduce the depth of the guest area inside the house by defining the front part by physical devices (Fig. 6.8).

The *majlis* in this case consisted of a large rectangular hall including a coffee making area (*wijaq*), and was surrounded by small rooms called *bakhaar* (Fig. 6.9). The coffee making area either created a small room opening to the main hall with decorative arches, or was located in one of the front corners (usually the left corner) in the *majlis* hall. The *majlis* hall was connected with the guest entrance hall by another transitional hall called *madkehal almajlis*, or entrance of the *majlis*. This hall separated the male reception space completely from the rest of the

house by means of a decorative wooden door to provide maximum privacy for the family inside the house and to enable them to use the house entrance if they needed.



Fig 6.9. *Majlis* of two storeys. Usually it was ventilated and lighted through a number of windows facing north and some time south and east. The coffee place was usually situated in the front zone of the *majlis* hall. Source: Author.

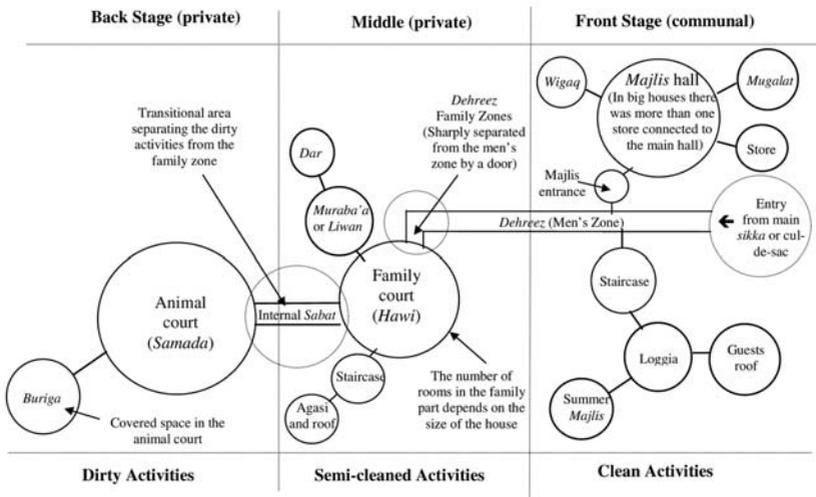


Fig. 6.10. The organisation of internal domestic space in the traditional house (Late nineteenth century and early twentieth century).

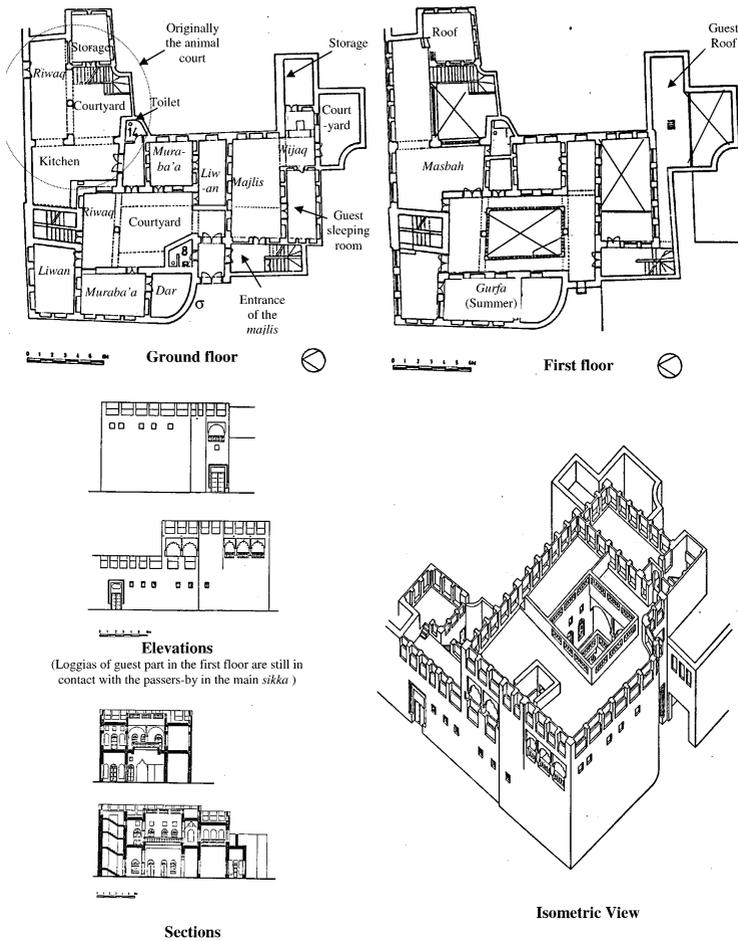


Fig. 6.11. A house in the Arrif'a had a *majlis* of two storeys on the ground floor (part of the old courtyard). Source: Developed from Winterhalter, C. (1981). *op. cit.*, pp. 128-31.

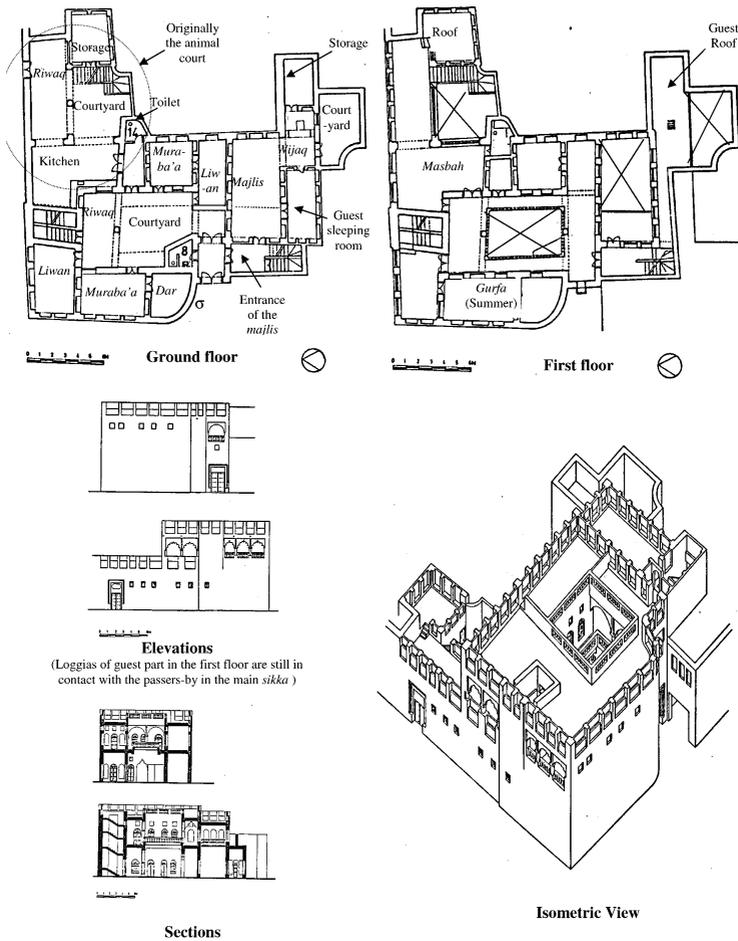


Fig. 6.12. Summer *majlis*. People in the traditional environment treated the summer *majlis* as the main *majlis*. Usually it was ornamented from inside and outside. It was located in the first floor and connected with the *majlis rivaq* or guest roof. Source: Author.



Fig. 6.13. A house with upstairs *majlis*. Because of the division of traditional houses over time, small houses usually had *majlises* in the first floor. Source: Developed from Winterhalter, C. (1981), *op. cit.*, pp. 134-6⁴⁵⁸.

In Fig. 6.10 we can see how the spatial organisation of the front zone became more complicated. It was true that the people of Hofuf transformed the *majlis* court into a *majlis* hall on the ground floor. Still the function of the courtyard was very important for them. A staircase was usually situated in the guest entrance hall or the *majlis* entrance to lead to upstairs guest spaces. In the first floor, the staircase led usually to a loggia with two or more openings to the

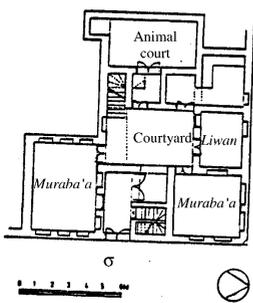
⁴⁵⁸ In this study we used two examples surveyed by Winterhalter in the late 1970's (he was a faculty member in the College of Architecture and Planning, King Faisal University, Dammam, until 1980). By that time many of traditional houses had been transformed especially in respect of the animal courts which were changed to utility places and kitchens. Also, the coffee place had disappeared from many *majlises*. This is because the coffee rituals had been changed.

main *sikka*. The loggia also led to a guest roof and summer *majlis* (Fig. 6.11). Those spaces which were found in the ground floor, courtyard, shaded area and the summer *majlis* were moved to the first floor by creating the loggia, guest roof, and summer *majlis*. The other two parts in the house, family and animal, continued with minimal change (Fig. 6.12).

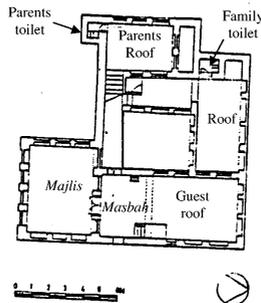
When the *majlis* moved completely to the first floor, the family and animals occupied the ground floor. The male reception spaces had moved completely upstairs but the guest entrance hall remained on the ground floor to link the *majlis* with the external spaces (Fig. 6.13). The main reason behind this change was the division of large houses into smaller ones to accommodate new members in the *fereej*. The entrance in this case consisted of two small halls, one of them connected to the main doorway, which had a staircase leading to the reception spaces upstairs, the other hall leading to the family courtyard and separated from the first hall by a wooden door.

The staircase in the entrance hall led to the *majlis riwaaq* or *masbah* which worked as a transitional space to regulate the circulation upstairs and to provide the required isolation between the guest part and family part on the first floor. The *masbah* usually opened on to a roof to substitute for the courtyard. In some cases, the *masbah* connected with an external *agasi* looking on to the main *sikka*⁴⁵⁹. It is obvious that the courtyard and semi-shaded area had been reproduced in the upstairs male reception spaces. The *majlis* hall in this case is one storey high and connected sometimes with a small room to store coffee, wood, etc (Fig. 6.14). The coffee making space was located in one of the front corners, usually the left corner, in the *majlis* hall, and another coffee place was located in the *majlis riwaaq* or *masbah* for summer use.

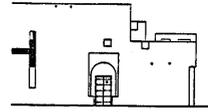
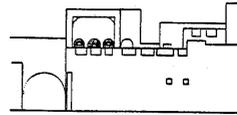
⁴⁵⁹ The form of the *agasi* in Hofuf, similar to *masrabbiyyah* in some cases.



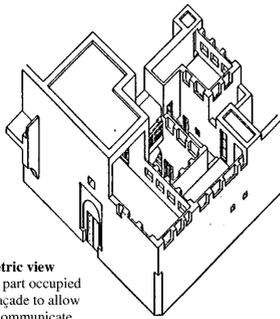
Ground Floor
(Used by family)



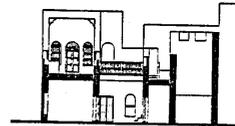
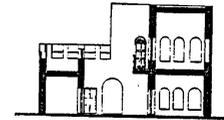
First Floor
(In most cases *majlis* faces the north and is associated with roof to replace the courtyard)



Elevations
(solid façades with decorative gate)



Isometric view
(The guest part occupied the front façade to allow them to communicate with passers by in the main *sikka*)



Sections
(Family part protected by the mass of the guest part)



Fig. 6.14. *Majlises* on the first floor with a hall one storey in height (most of the *majlises* were transformed in the second half of this century. The coffee place almost disappeared). Source: Author.

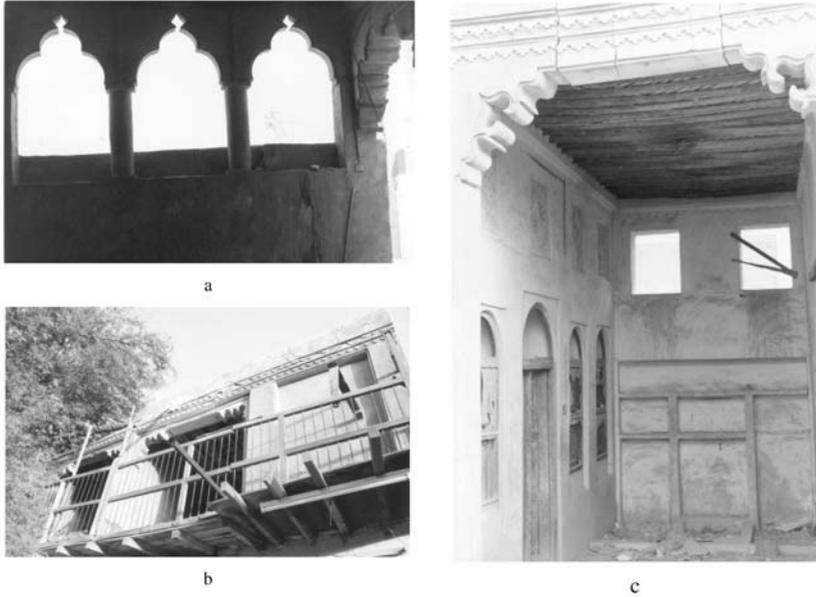


Fig. 6.15. Loggia and *masbah*. (a) *Majlis riwaaq* (loggia) connecting the male reception spaces with the main *sikka*. (b) *Masbah* seen from outside and associated with an external *agasi* to produce the house façade. (c). *Masbah* opened to a guest roof seen from outside. It had a coffee place for summer use. Source: Author.

The male reception spaces became less complicated. They transferred to upstairs but they still occupied the front stage of the house. In the previous chapter we discussed how the loggia worked as a symbolic and visual element, as an indicator for the upstairs *majlis* and how it connected it with the *fereej* community. In fact, there was another element associated with the upstairs *majlis*. This was the *masbah*, a semi-shaded space, which functioned as a transitional space between the upstairs *majlis* and guest roof. It had a striking appearance from outside and, when it was associated with the external *agasi*, formed another solution for the house façade. The function of the loggia and the *majlis* windows on the main *sikka*

were substituted in this solution by a long *agasi* looking on to the main street and linking the *majlis* with the outside world (Fig. 6.15). This is considered another sort of traditional house façade typical of the first half of the twentieth century. Despite the visual differences, the symbolic function of both façades worked to link the house with the *fereej* community.

By developing the *masbah* in the house, several solutions were found by people to enhance the internal and external physical characteristics of the house (Fig. 6.16). As we mentioned, the *masbah* was mainly developed to replace the semi-shaded area in the courtyard which existed in the original *majlis* in the nineteenth century. The first solution provided by the *masbah* was to give the upstairs *majlis* a spacious open space with a semi-shaded sitting place. However, the *masbah* later became a main element in the upstairs spaces. Almost all the family roofs had at least one *masbah*. It was used in the family partly for sitting in the afternoon, as well as a place to protect mattresses from the sun in the day time.

The family and animal parts remained with minimal change except that their size grew smaller. Moreover, the family spaces occupied the front zone in the ground floor without any openings on to the main *sikka*, which kept them away from outsiders sight. This meant that the male reception spaces symbolically and visually represented the front stage of the house even when they moved to the first floor (Fig. 6.17). This was because the guest zone in the entrance was still open to the outside world as well as because the male reception spaces were linked visually through the *majlis* and loggia openings to the *fereej* community.

To recapitulate, the male reception spaces in the Gulf traditional house passed through several changes. We have tried to make a spatio-temporal path for the development of the spatial relationship of the traditional house in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. One of the main findings is that the change only occurred in the male reception spaces. As we have said earlier, a

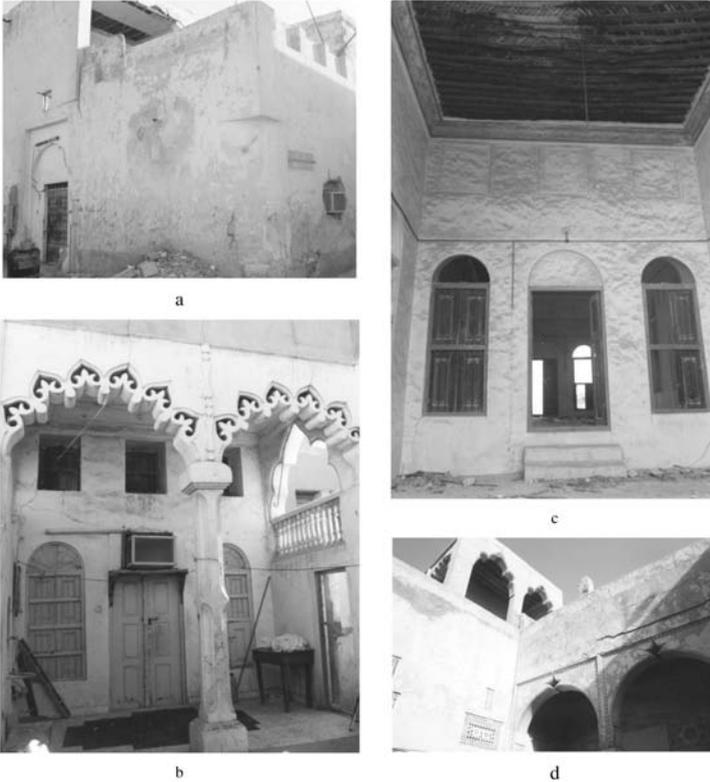


Fig. 6.16. The *masbah* in the traditional house took several forms and locations. a) The *masbah* seen from the main *sikka* to indicate the *majlis* upstairs. b) Two decorative arches opened to guest roof in the *majlis masbah*. c) High roof *masbah* to indicate the *majlis* from outside and to emphasise the importance of the *majlis*. d) *Masbah* in the family part looking to the family courtyard. Source: Author.

change within the family and animal parts had occurred but there was no major spatial change. Every part grew smaller due to the division of the houses to accommodate the increasing numbers of the population. The two transitional areas in the house, the entrance

hall and the internal *sabat*, played a major role in isolating the change within each part. This meant that if any change occurred in the male reception spaces, the family and animal part remained unchanged. As a matter of fact, the family spaces could be the only spaces which continued over time because they were protected by these transitional zones from two sides.

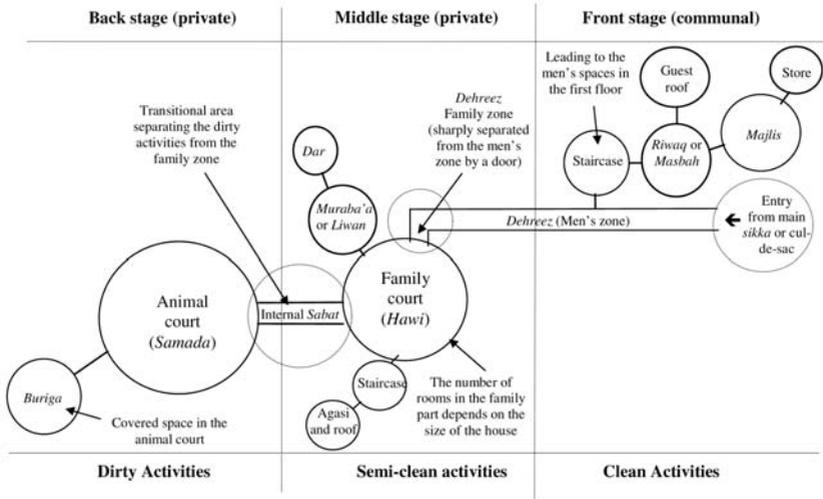


Fig. 6.17. The organisation of internal domestic space in the traditional house (in the first half of twentieth century).

We can argue that, because the male reception spaces had symbolic meaning and worked as a medium for conveying social status and family's identity, a continuous change had occurred on these spaces to enable the families in the *ferrej* community to communicate with each other by adapting new ideas in the guest spaces. The local people believe that the transformation of the male reception spaces first occurred because few people had adapted a new

idea which was imported from a neighbouring society, Bahrain⁴⁶⁰. The two storey *majlis* hall appeared, not because of the need for spaces in the ground floor because the previous spaces were only transformed to absorb the new idea. Since then, the *majlis* with a courtyard became less important and people started to transform their old *majlises* to express their status.

It is clear that a number of elements had been already developed when the *majlis* moved to the first floor. We can say, in this case, that the last transformation of the male reception spaces was almost an adjustment for the large houses when they were divided into small ones. The *majlis riwaq*, summer *majlis*, and guest roof continued as male reception spaces, while the reception spaces on the ground floor were taken into the family parts. The loggia continued as one of the main visual and symbolic characteristics of the male reception spaces on the first floor. However, another symbolic and visual solution had been developed in this process. In those reception spaces which had been associated with *masbahs*, the façades in some cases were developed with an *agasi* looking onto the main *sikka*. This composition had the same function as the loggia openings and the *majlis* windows (Fig. 6.18).

Generally we can say that, although the perceptual identity of the *majlis* was partially changed, the symbolic and social meaning of the male reception spaces continued in the traditional house as a major medium for expressing people's associational identity. When we said that the perceptual identity was partially changed we meant that the spatial relationship and the location of the *majlis* was changed, but the *majlis* hall mainly continued especially, as we will see in the next part of this chapter, in its rituals and visual characteristics (Fig. 6.19).

⁴⁶⁰ The researcher visited several traditional houses in Bahrain to find the source of this idea. This visit was immediately after the completion of the interviews (early 1997). In fact there were no *majlises* similar to Hofuf found in Bahrain but there were some of two storeys in height. For example, the researcher found this type in Bayt Siyadi in Muharaq, but it was different from Hofuf because it was located upstairs. Also its spatial organisation and its relationship with the rest of the house spaces is totally different from Hofuf. However, it is possible that people in Hofuf took this concept and refined it to make it applicable in Hofuf.



Fig. 6.18. External *agasi* linking the *majlis* upstairs with the main *sikka*.
Source: Author.

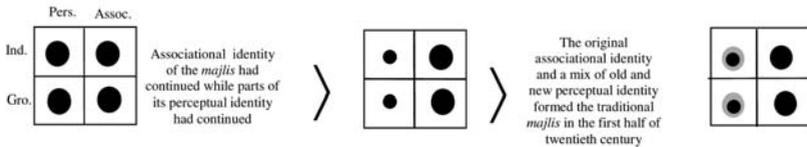


Fig. 6.19. Continuity and change of identity of the traditional *majlis*.

3. Rituals and Ceremonies of Internal Domestic Spaces

In the previous section of this chapter we have tried to discuss the physical characteristics of the traditional house. We found that the people of the traditional community persisted in the symbolic and visual meanings of the male reception spaces. The two most utilitarian parts in the house, the family and animal spaces, continued over a long time with

minimal change. Even those symbolic spaces in the family part, the courtyard and main *muraba'a*, continued in their function without much alteration. We can say that the family part was the most unchanging part in the house because it was associated with the family's daily routine and way of living which continued without major changes until the discovery and export of oil in 1938. As we said, the size of every part in the house became smaller due to the need for spaces to accommodate the increasing number of families who wanted to stay in their own *fereej*.

It is quite important now to understand the symbolic meanings that were associated with the use of internal domestic spaces in the traditional house in Hofuf. We shall concentrate firstly on the male reception spaces and family spaces. We shall talk briefly about the animal spaces but they are not within the main area of concern of the study, which is looking at continuity and change of identity in Hofuf's home environment. As a matter of fact, we have already described the animal spaces and linked them with the other spaces in the house.

3.1 *Rituals and Ceremonies in the Male Reception Spaces*

People in Hofuf say '*almajlis wajihat errajal*', which means that the guest space is the face of man. This reflects the attitude of people towards their house in general and the space used for the male guests in particular. The *majlis* in Hofuf developed to say to guests, either members of the *fereej* community or strangers, 'Welcome. My house is yours'. This is not to say that guests will not respect the house as private property, but because men gathering is one of the common traditions in old Hofuf. The *majlis* had developed to fulfil this need (Fig. 6.20).

The *majlis* hall was divided into three zones. Each zone had a different meaning and was used in specific way. The first zone was called '*sadr al-majlis*' which means the front of the *majlis*. It occupied the front wall which faced the entrance of the *majlis* hall and took up a third of the other two side walls. This part usually contained the



a



b

Fig. 6.20. Furniture of the traditional *majlis*. a) *Majlis* furnished by oriental carpet and cushions. b) Two-storey *majlis* hall furnished with local seats made of wood and covered by cotton and cloths (this *majlis* has been renewed and all the traditional upstairs windows replaced by aluminium windows to allow the owner to use air-conditioning)⁴⁶¹. Source: Author.

coffee place called *wijaq* or *wijar*. Furnishings in this part included mattresses, cushions and oriental carpets. The middle zone was called '*wasat al-majlis*' which means the middle of the *majlis*. This zone had furniture mostly made locally, carpets made of bamboo called *madda* (plural *mdada*) and a wooden box covered with cloth

⁴⁶¹ Although furnishing the *majlis* with sofas and chairs is considered an external western idea, people in Hofuf introduced seats in their *majlises* in the second half of last century. At the beginning seats were produced locally then they were imported from different places. The layout of furniture followed the traditional way.

called *takkaya*. The entry zone, which was usually furnished with wool carpets, was called *taraf al-majlis* (Fig. 6.21)⁴⁶².

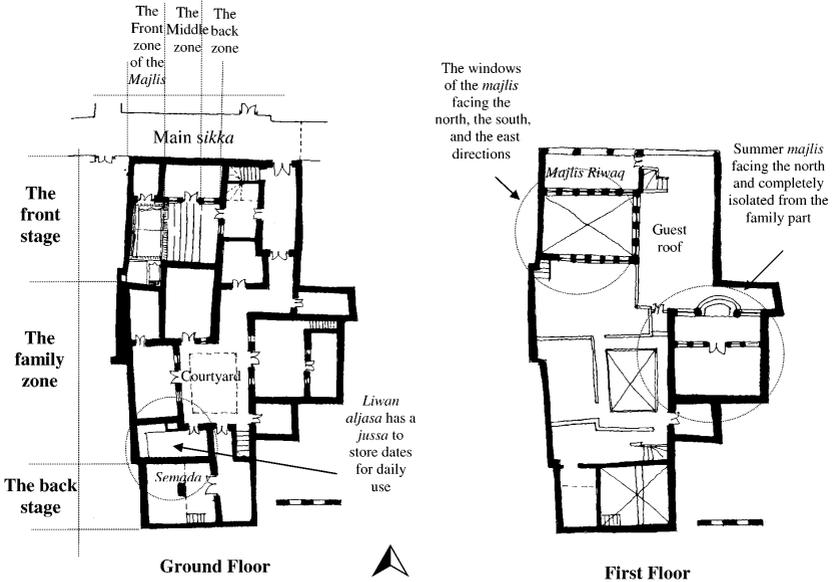


Fig. 6.21. A house in *Anna'athbil* has a two-storey *majlis* hall. Source: Author.

The use of each zone depended on the meaning associated with that zone. The front zone was used by important and older guests and the middle zone was used by less important and younger guests. It was a shameful thing for any young guest to sit in the front zone while older guest sat in the middle. Usually nobody used the entry zone except if the *majlis* was crowded. Visiting strangers always sat in the front even if there was an older guest sitting in the middle.

⁴⁶² The classification of the *majlis* hall into three zones is found in both poor and rich houses. In the houses of the well-to-do families, furniture and furnishings may change because of the ability of the household to furnish the whole *majlis* hall with mattresses, cushions, and oriental carpets. The classification of the *majlis* hall existed even if it was not indicated by the furniture.

The classification of the *majlis* hall, then, has a deep social meaning which was developed over time to identify the status of guests inside the *majlis*. People in the Gulf considered this an important convention and tried to express it through furniture⁴⁶³. Another physical and social space was associated with this convention. This was the coffee place or chamber of the coffee⁴⁶⁴. In most cases the *wijaq* (coffee place) was located in the front zone because the owner of the house should prepare the coffee in front of his guests at the same time as he remained with them and talked to them (Fig. 6.22)⁴⁶⁵.



Fig. 6.22. The owner of the house prepares and presents the coffee for his guests. a) photograph in a traditional house in *Anna'athil*. b) photograph in a new villa in *Almazrou'* neighbourhood (the owner reproduced the traditional *majlis* in his new villa, volume II). c) Photograph in a *majlis* in a small garden inside Hofuf.
Source: Author.

In traditional environment there were two conventions working together to create the form of the front zone in the traditional *majlis*. The guest status was identified through dividing the *majlis* into three

⁴⁶³ Oliver (1975), for example, indicates that 'Among the most important of the elements that determine sitting in shelter are those related to subsistence, and this in turn provides a reason for venerating the location itself'. (p. 13).

⁴⁶⁴ Ritual of preparing and serving coffee is one of the most important customs indicating hospitality in traditional Hofuf. Tayeb, F. A (1983) *An Ethnographic Study of Al-Hasa Region of Eastern Saudi Arabia*, Jeddah, Tihama, p. 38.

⁴⁶⁵ Wealthy people had servants to prepare coffee for their guests; however, most people prefer to prepare the coffee by themselves because this indicates their welcoming of the guests.

zones and furnishing these zones with different furniture, to emphasise the front zone, the place where the household and the important guests sat. This was coupled with the obligation for the householder to prepare coffee in front of his guests and present it to them. It was decorated to become a background for the *majlis* hall (Fig. 6.23).

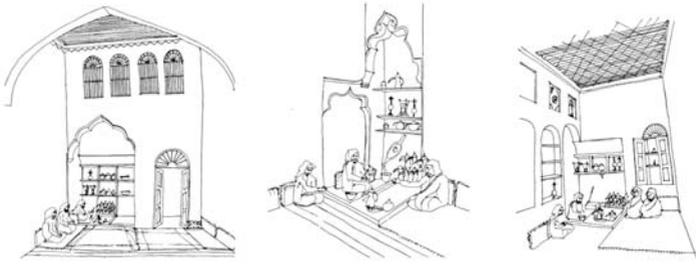


Fig. 6.23. The *wijaq* (coffee place), always located in the front zone in the *majlis* hall. Usually each *wijaq* had a different design. Source: Author.

The coffee place in this case developed from a utilitarian place to a place conveying social meaning, either as an element used to express hospitality or as a perceptual element employed by people to reflect the family status by using it as a decorative background in the front zone in the *majlis* hall. It is clear here that the importance of the coffee place stemmed firstly from its use, and secondly from its location. Its use was associated with hospitality, which conveyed social meaning, while its location meant it was the first scene that guests saw when they entered the *majlis* hall. It was used as a vehicle to convey the family's associational and perceptual identities.

Generally, we can say that common rules were used in the construction and decoration of the coffee place in the Gulf traditional house. Usually this place was located in the left corner of the front zone in the *majlis* hall, while guests sat in the right-hand corner and around the coffee place. The coffee place consisted of two zones, the *wijaq* or *wijar* (fire place) and coffee maker's sitting zone. The name *wijaq* was not limited just to the fire place, but was

also used for the entire coffee place. These two zones formed two rectangles, and in some houses the coffee place consisted of three rectangular zones, two for sitting and one as fire place (Fig. 6.24).



Fig. 6.24. The coffee place worked as an element to reflect both the hospitality and family status by using it as decorative element in the front zone in the *majlis* hall. It was rare that two *wijaqs* had the same perceptual characteristics.

Source: Author.

The rectangle of the fire place consisted of a fire hole and a flat area used for the coffee pots. Towards the wall a stepped wooden table named *maiz* was used to exhibit the coffee pots (Fig. 6.25). The sitting rectangle or rectangles occupied the left corner or the two

sides of the fire place. Usually they were furnished with small mattresses and cushions and sometimes a small chair was used to help the person who prepared the coffee to serve it for the guests from his place, especially since in most cases the householder served the coffee for the guests. The front wall of all rectangles consisted of shelves and small cabinets to store coffee and to exhibit everyday objects⁴⁶⁶. The whole composition was called *kamar*.

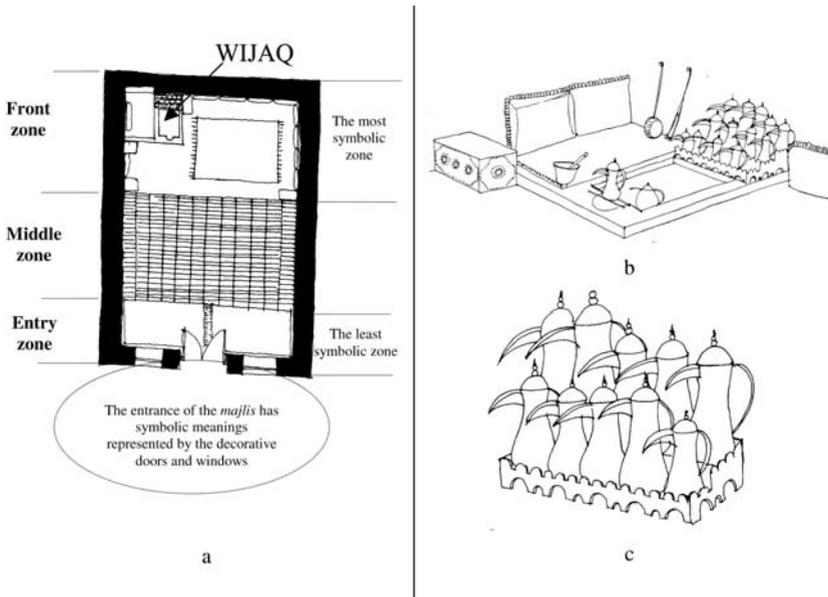


Fig. 6.25. a) A typical *majlis* hall in the traditional house of Hofuf.

b) *Wijaq* consists of two rectangular zones.

c) The wooden *maiz* which was used to exhibit the coffee pots. Source: Author.

The coffee place in the traditional house, as we noticed, consisted of a number of elements found in every *wijaq*. Through its shared

⁴⁶⁶ People only exhibit the objects which were used in the *majlis*, such as frankincense pot, perfume pot, etc.

form, the coffee place became one of the important symbolic elements in the *majlis*. It was used by people to convey the collective identity. Individual (family) differences also were expressed through the ornamentation and small details of the shelves behind the fire and coffee maker's places. Every fire place in every house had its own visual identity. It was difficult to find two identical coffee places⁴⁶⁷.

The desire to express individual (family) identity was not only found in the visual composition of the coffee place, but also in the exhibition of the coffee pots in the *maiz*. The *maiz* consisted of one, two, three, or four steps. The high number of steps means that large number of coffee pots would be exhibited. People in the traditional home environment competed with each other in the exhibiting of coffee pots in the *majlis* hall especially as the coffee place was the most important zone in the guest hall.

The coffee pot is called *dalah* (plural *dlal*). This name is used everywhere in Arabia⁴⁶⁸. People prefer to keep their *dlal* looking very shiny and use only a few pots to serve their guests. Therefore those pots which are used every day are usually kept in the flat surface in the fireplace. It is worth mentioning here that there were different types of coffee pots in the traditional home environment in Hofuf⁴⁶⁹. Each type

⁴⁶⁷ The researcher carried out a visual comparison between the available coffee places in the existing traditional houses in Hofuf to derive the similarities and differences of the coffee place. He found that the components of the fire place were similar in every house but with different design and visual characteristics.

⁴⁶⁸ Al-Baker, M.M. (1995) *Alqabwa Alarabiyyah fi Almoaroth Alsha'bee (Arabic Coffee in Folklore)*, Beirut, Lebanon, Besan.

⁴⁶⁹ Al-Hassa in general and Hofuf in particular were known by their coffeepot makers called *dalat alhasawi*. Different types of coffee pots were also imported from surrounding areas such as *dalat raslan* and *dalat assalhaniyyah* from Damascus. Ibid., p. 117-19. The researcher conducted several interviews in January 1997 with a man interested in the culture of Al-Hassa who has his own private collections of most of the everyday objects in the traditional home environment. His name is Saleh Al-Zufar. He said 'Every craftsmen has his own logo and people in Al-Hassa know the craftsman from his logo on the coffee pots'. Also, Cheesman (1926) described the coffee pot makers in Hofuf when he passed through a street in *Al-Kut* quarter with small coppersmiths'shops. He said 'From daylight to dark, Sundays, Fridays, every

had a different use and meaning and was distinguished by its form (Fig. 6.26)⁴⁷⁰.



Fig. 6.26. Different types of *dallas* (Unitary form with different sizes and shapes).
Source: Author (Private collection and Al-Hasa Museum).

Usually the opened *majlises* received both guests from the same *fereej* and strangers. The householder stayed in his *majlis* all day with his guests except between *Dhuber* (midday) and *Asr* (afternoon) prayers, which was considered resting time. This was applied only when the guests were not strangers. Otherwise the household and relatives stayed with the guest until he took lunch, and then they left him for a rest.

An important tradition deeply influenced the ritual of presenting coffee. That was that guests drank only the coffee which was

day, the metallic ring of their hammers is heard as they bend and beat the copper into coffee-pots with long bird-like beaks'. Cheesman, O.B.E. (1926), *op. cit.* p. 73.

⁴⁷⁰ Four types of coffee pot were common in Hofuf. The first type was called *dalat al-ligma*, which was used to cook the coffee. The second type was *dalat al-mazel*, which was used to present the coffee to guests. The third type was called *dalat al-khamra*, which was used for collecting the remains of coffee. Fourth type was called *dalat al-misfab*, which was used to filter the collected remaining coffee in *dalat al-khamra*. These different types of coffee pot created the visual composition in the stepped table. The large pots, *dalat al-ligma*, *dalat al-khamra*, and *dalat al-misfab*, were exhibited on the higher back steps while the small pots, *dalat al-mizel*, were seen in the lower front steps. Therefore, all pots could be seen by guests. What is clear here is that the desire by people to let visitors see and even count coffee pots was connected with the social meaning associated with the number of pots, which represented wealth and social status.

prepared in front of them⁴⁷¹. This convention was coupled with classifying the *majlis* into three zones to create striking rituals and a striking visual quality in the male reception spaces in the traditional home environment. The taxonomy of coffeepots was also connected with the whole spiritual atmosphere of the guest hall in general and the ritual of presenting the coffee to the guests in particular. The fire place was always ready to cook fresh coffee all through the day, because the fire only burned out at night⁴⁷².

Serving the coffee to the guests also had its rituals. If there were few guests, usually they sat around the coffee place in the front zone. In this case the house owner prepared the coffee and served it to his guests. However, if there were many guests, they were distributed in the front and middle zones and, if there was a crowd, in the entry

⁴⁷¹ The interpretation of this tradition may stem from what Siham Abdulla mentioned, that Arabs in the past loved coffee and when they drank it they were able to distinguish its components and its preparation time. Abdulla, S. (1994) 'Arabic Coffee: Conventions and traditions', *Al-Mathborat Al-Sha'biyyah*, Qatar, Vol. 9, No. 35, pp. 7-20 (Arabic). This fact, however, may have created sensitivity for people and forced them in the beginning to prepare the coffee in front of their guests because they did not want anybody to criticise their coffee so that, over time, it became a convention known and respected by every member of society. Another interpretation for this tradition is that people in Hofuf usually brought their preferred coffee with them when they visited each other which meant that the house owner had to prepare the coffee in front of the guest to show that he was using the guest's coffee. This may have developed over time to become a social convention. This convention, in addition to its role in creating the social and architectural characteristics of the traditional *majlis* in Hofuf, has an economic dimension. Al-Naim, M. (1997) 'The Symbolic Function of the Arabic Coffee in Al-Hasa Region', *Al-Qafilah*, Vol. 46, No. 1, pp. 11-16 (Arabic). People in Hofuf differentiate between *al-qabrwa al-safyah*, which is the pure coffee which is prepared in front of the guests, and *al-qabrwa al-khamra*, which is the remains of the pure coffee collected in the end of each day for re-use by the family members.

⁴⁷² Common steps were followed in preparing coffee in Hofuf. The houseowner usually placed *al-marachi* (two steel bars) over the hall fire to hold the *dalat al-ligma* to boil water. In the meantime he positioned *al-mibmas* (a steel dish with long hand) to roast the coffee, then he put the roasted coffee in the *assarood* (container made from palm trees leaves) for cooling, and then he ground the coffee by *al-hawan* or *arraba*. Finally, he cooked the coffee in boiled water, then he filled *dalat al-mazel* with pure coffee and usually added cardamom or some spices to the coffee.

zone. In this case, the house owner prepared the coffee and, if he had no servants, his son or one of his youngest close relatives served the coffee. He had to stand up and to remain standing until all guests finished their coffee (Fig. 6.27). In both cases the coffee was presented with dates and the server held the coffeepot in his left hand and two or three *fanajeel*⁴⁷³ (small cups) in his right hand. The server should start from the right side, but sometimes a conflict arose about which guest should be served first. Some people preferred to start the coffee serving with the oldest guests or strangers even if they were not sitting on the extreme right. When a guest finishes his first serving, he could ask for another one and indeed usually he could ask for three cups. Then he would shake the cup in his hand to inform the server that he had finished⁴⁷⁴.



Fig. 6.27. Coffee rituals in traditional Hofuf. (a) Guests around the coffee place served by the owner of the house. (b) owner of the house serving the coffee to his guests. Source: Al-Akkad, A.A. (1974) *Socio-Economic Impact of Development Schemes on a Rural Community, Al-Umran Al-Shimaliyah, Al-Hasa Oasis, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished M.Sc., Bangor, University of North Wales, p. 119.

⁴⁷³ Singular *finjal*.

⁴⁷⁴ In traditional Hofuf people said '*illy yshrab akthar men thalatha mabo rajal*' which means that any one who drank more than three cups of coffee was not a man. Personal interview with Abdulrahim Al-Said Al-Hashim (January 1997). This tradition is common in the whole of Arabia, see Abdulla, S. (1994); Al-Baker, M.M. (1995), *op. cit.*, p. 151.

This process was carried out many times every day and it became part of the meaning of the *majlis* in people's minds in the traditional home environment. Coffee smells, the sound of grinding with its continuous rhythm, the names of coffee pots, the ways of presenting coffee to guests, and the whole visual composition increased a sense of place and allowed the family to express its status and communicate with the whole of society. This atmosphere emphasised the collective identity of traditional home environment by informing strangers about their own ways of saying 'welcome'.

3.2 *Rituals and Ceremonies in the Family Spaces*

In the previous chapter we discussed daily family life in the traditional community. We found that the people of traditional home environment lived as extended families. Each extended family lived in one house or adjoining houses. It is our concern in the following discussion to understand how the extended family behaved inside the house.

As we said, the family spaces in the traditional house were protected socially and physically. In the social sense, the family part was forbidden to any male strangers. While in the physical sense, the family part was separated from the outside world by the two zones of the entranceway which fulfilled the need to isolate family spaces from the men's sight. Also, it remained away from any major spatial change due to the existence of the two transitional zones, the entrance and the internal *sabat*, which maintained its physical identity for a long time.

Still, we need to understand how the nuclear families managed to live together in one house. To start with, we need to differentiate between two sets of spaces in the family part: open and closed spaces, symbolic and utilitarian spaces. The family part always had a central courtyard surrounded by rooms (Fig. 6.28). The open space, the courtyard, in this



Fig. 6.28. The courtyard. It was considered the most important space in the family part. Usually it was found in the centre of the house and all the spaces in the house were linked with it. Source: Author.

case was considered the most symbolic space in the family part. It was also the central activity space for the family. It linked the two transitional spaces in the house, entrance and internal *sabat*, and formed a third transitional space. These three transitional spaces formed the main circulation network in the ground floor of the traditional house (Fig. 6.29).

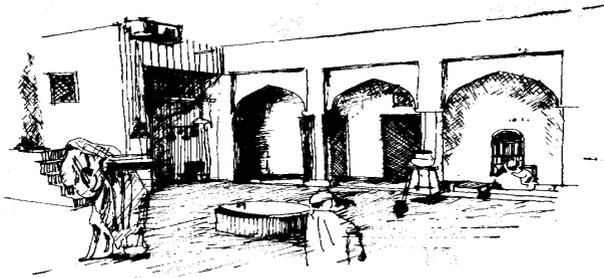


Fig. 6.29. The courtyard was the centre for family activities as well as a place where women could entertain their visitors. Source: Author (reconstructed from several images and interviews).

A covered area with an arcade found in the courtyard, called *riwaq*, existed in many houses. It was usually used for sitting on a summer afternoon as well, providing shade for the main *muraba'as*. In some houses the *riwaq* occupied the four sides of the courtyard. At the top of the *riwaq* was another circulation element called the

agasi. This is not to say that the *agasi* did not exist in the absence of a *riwaaq*, but usually the roof of the *riwaaq* was used as *agasi*. This *agasi* is different from the external *agasi* which formed, with the *majlis masbah*, one of the house façades of the traditional house. However, both of them had the same form though one was inside and the other outside. The internal *agasi* functioned as a gallery around the courtyard and linked all the spaces upstairs. The external *agasi* was used as an extension of the semi-open spaces of the upstairs male reception spaces (Fig. 6.30).



Fig. 6.30. The *agasi*. a) External *agasi* associated with the male reception spaces upstairs. b) Internal *agasi* looking over the courtyard. Source: Author.

The *muraba'as* and *liwans* opened, directly or through the *riwaaq*, to the courtyard. As has been mentioned earlier, *muraba'a* had an important function as a living room where the women in the house retreated with their visitors and relatives. The *liwan* was a utilitarian room and was never decorated even if it was used by the family. For example there was a room in the traditional house called '*illiwan ashshamaly*', the northern *liwan*, which usually was a central activity place for the family in the winter. This room contained a *wijaq* (fire place) but had no decoration. The fire place was found in its

utilitarian form. The *maiz* and coffee pots were not found in this room. Moreover, the word *liwan* is always associated with the utilitarian rooms in the house. For example, there was a room in the house to store the foodstuff called by people '*liwan aljasa*'⁴⁷⁵.

As we said, it was common in the traditional home environment to find several families living in the same dwelling. What is really important in this study is the capacity of the primary relationship to shape the family values and customs. Through this relationship several customs were developed and transmitted over a long period of time. When the extended family interacts with other families it acts as one member. It interacts cohesively in different social contexts. Individual identity almost does not exist and is replaced by family identity⁴⁷⁶. For example, in *Anna'athil* quarter, two brothers with their wives and children lived together in the same dwelling until 1975 when the youngest brother bought a house and moved⁴⁷⁷. A separate room was allocated to each brother. Both families shared the courtyard, the *majlis*, the kitchen, the bathrooms, and the animal court (Fig. 6.31).

To understand how the family spaces were used it is necessary to analyse how these two families behaved and used the spaces in the house. Although these two families lived in the same house, a high level of privacy was achieved. The wives of the two brothers always wore veils to cover their faces in the presence of the two brothers⁴⁷⁸. In fact the two brothers were generally outside the home or sitting

⁴⁷⁵ Usually *muraba'a* and *liwan* contain a smaller room called *dar* used in the winter for sleeping. This room was also used as storage (if it is in the *liwan*). In many cases the *dar* was used as a parents' bedroom while the main room was used by children. In top of the *dar* another room called *kindiyah* was approached either from the *dar* or from the main room by a small staircase.

⁴⁷⁶ From the field work the researcher found that all those who were interviewed had lived in a dwelling occupied by more than one nuclear family.

⁴⁷⁷ In some cases there are more than two families living in the same house, but we selected this case because we need to describe the basic daily use of the family domestic spaces in the traditional house.

⁴⁷⁸ This custom stemmed from a religious principle that women should cover their face in the presence of men. The husband's brother is not among *mabrams*.

in the *majlis* with their guests. When they stayed in the family part, they mainly kept to their private rooms or the common room (the northern *liwan*).

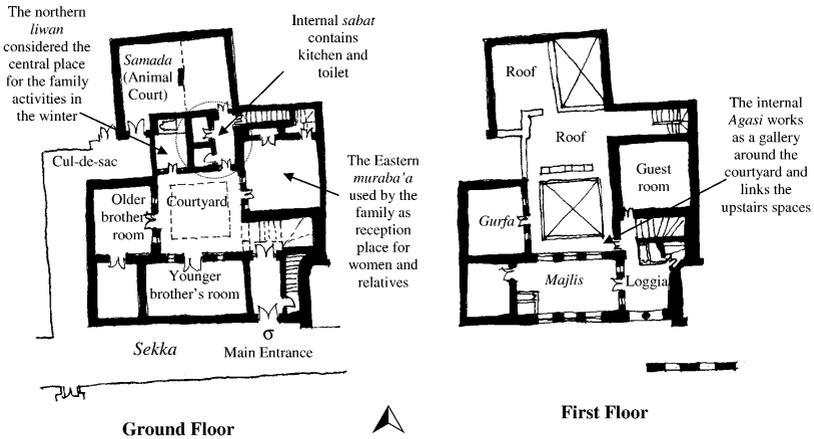


Fig. 6.31. A house in *Anna'athil* occupied by two nuclear families. Source: Author.

The whole family gathered together only for food. For example at lunch time, the whole family, including wives and children, gathered around the food mat. This reflects the importance of food rituals in the traditional community. The women were still wearing their veils to cover their faces. The family members arranged themselves around the food mat in such a way as to allow maximum freedom for the women (Fig. 6.32). The family by means of this ceremony found it suitable for its lifestyle to sit in such a way to let women enjoy their food and share their family. The arrangement provided maximum visual contact between each man and his wife and at the same time a minimum contact between him and his brother's wife.

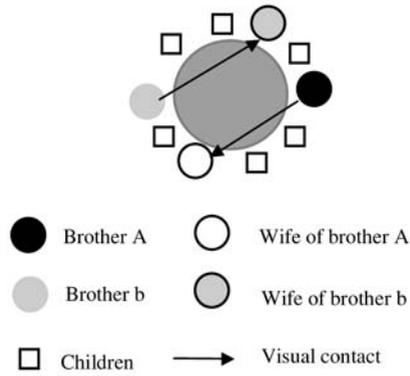


Fig. 6.32. Organisation of the two nuclear family members around the food mat.
Source: Author.

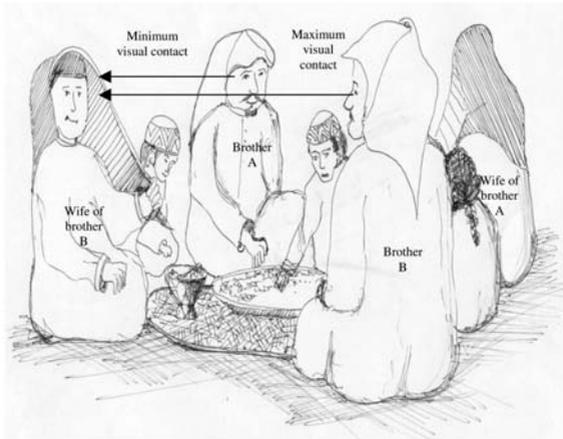


Fig. 6.33. Food rituals and arrangement of the extended family in the traditional home.
Source: Author.

One of the interesting things about this food arrangement is that a woman always sat on the right side of her brother in law. This allowed her to eat with her right hand and hold her veil with her left. She held her veil in a way that it created a side curtain to prevent the visual contact with her brother in law but to show her face to her husband (Fig. 6.33)⁴⁷⁹.

It is interesting to understand how the family used the roof and other common places in the house. The roof space was divided into three zones, one belonging to each family (Fig. 6.34), while the third roof zone was for children. In the summer nights each family transferred to their own roof to sleep and entertain. Full privacy was maintained by a separate staircase and door for each roof. The parents in each family sleep in one roof. The infants slept with their parents while the older children slept on a separate roof. If there were boys and girls usually the girls slept on a separate roof.

The kitchen was a common space in the house. It was very simple. People called it *mugad* because it was mainly a place for cooking. It was located usually in the internal *sabat* and sometimes under the family staircase. The kitchen was a small room containing a fire place which consisted of three stones to hold the cooking pot. The woman usually sat on the ground while she cooked (Fig. 6.35). In the case under study, the kitchen was very

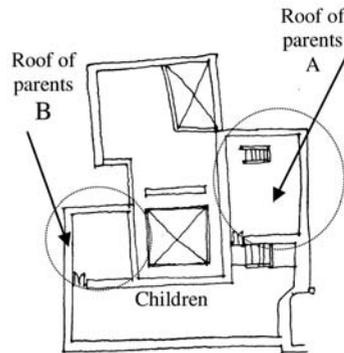


Fig. 6.34. A roof plan shows the division of the roofs. Source: Author.

⁴⁷⁹ This ritual and arrangement was found in almost every extended family in the traditional community. The researcher found that this ritual still exists in the contemporary houses.

small and was accessible from the internal *sabat*. It was a suitable location for the family firstly because it was separated from the living places by two doors. Secondly, it was close to the common spaces, especially the courtyard and the northern *liwan* where the whole family took their food together.

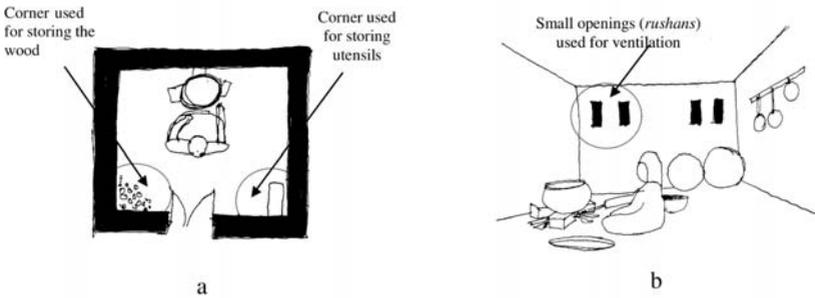


Fig. 6.35. a) A typical kitchen in the traditional house. b) A woman sitting in the ground to cook in the kitchen. Source: Author.

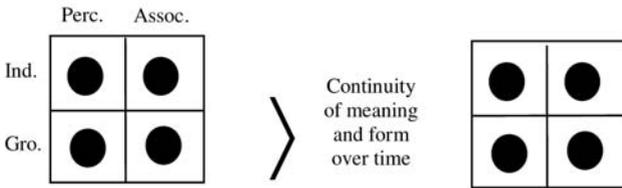


Fig. 6.36. Continuity of meaning and form of the family part in the traditional house.

Generally, the people of traditional environment maintained the perceptual and associational meanings that were associated with the family spaces. This was because this part of the house held a constant function and was strongly linked with the family's values and lifestyle. As we noticed, people developed several physical devices to

protect the family part from any change that might happen in the rest of the house (Fig. 6.36).

4. Decoration and Visual Symbols in the Traditional House

In the previous discussion we tried to analyse the physical and social qualities of the traditional house. We found that there were different levels of meaning that internal spaces conveyed. One of the most important indicators to understand how people expressed the symbolic space in their home environment is the visual form⁴⁸⁰. In the following discussion, we will try to understand why local people decorated certain spaces in the house while they left other spaces without decoration. It is also very important for this study to elaborate the development of the decorative elements in the traditional home environment.

4.1 *The use of Decoration in The Traditional House*

People in the traditional home environment used several means to decorate their houses. We have already discussed some examples, especially the gateway, which was a very important visual element used by people to express the family status. The gateway as a decorative element functioned as a linking point between the external and internal domains. It is also worth mentioning that people had ornamented internal spaces that were only seen and used by visitors. The location of the decoration also was very important. For example, in the *majlis* hall, as we said, the decoration was concentrated on the front zone. The ceilings of the *majlis* hall, main *muraba'a*, and courtyard *riwaq* were usually decorated in vivid colours to impress visitors (Fig. 6.37).

⁴⁸⁰ Oliver, for example, indicates that visual forms usually embody deep and social meanings. He states: 'In graphic symbolism literal images may have profound associations, the attributes of the device being deeply associated with its visual form. By this means, complex philosophical ideas, or the limitless qualities of deity, may be interpreted in visual form, layers of meaning being unfolded as the enlightened teach'. Oliver, P. (1975), *op. cit.*, p. 16.

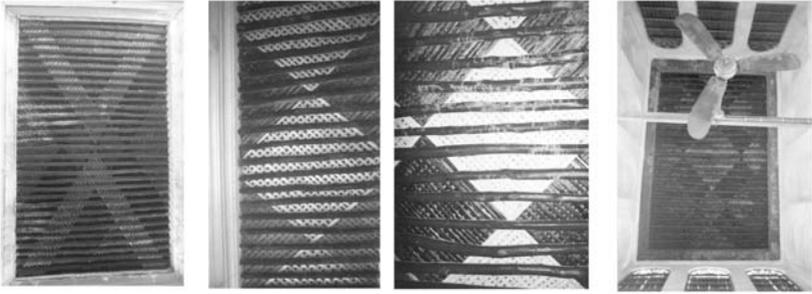


Fig. 6.37. The mangrove pole ceiling of the *majlis* hall, main *muraba'a*, and courtyard *riwaq* always decorated and painted in vivid colours (red, yellow, and orange). Source: Author.

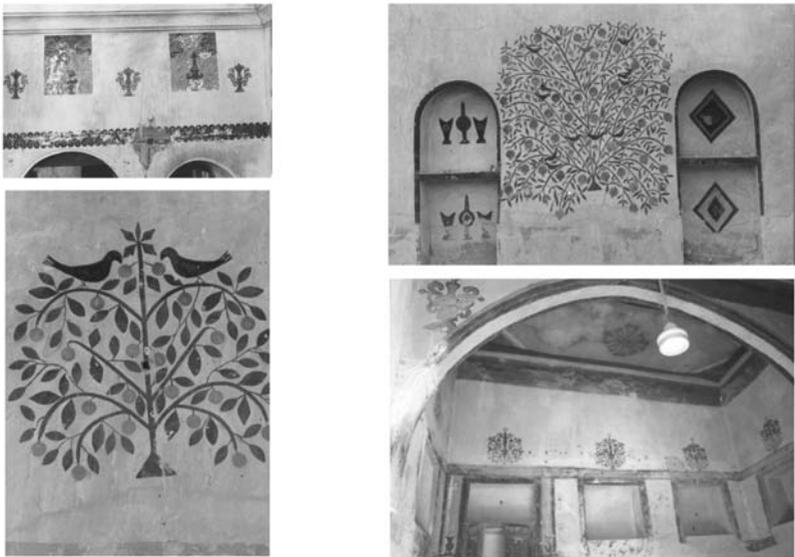


Fig. 6.38. Mural painting in the *majlis* hall and the main *muraba'a*. Source: Author.

As a general principle, the more exposed a location in the symbolic space, the more it had potential to be filled by ornamentation. There was another principle associated with the location of the ornamentation inside the room: the closer the ornamentation was to the visitor's eyes, the more it became refined and neat. Less refined ornamentation was usually found in the distant positions in the room. The ornamentation in traditional home environment had basic rules. Certain materials and techniques were used in almost all decoration⁴⁸¹. Still, there were no two identical ornamentations. The concept of diversity within unity is seen clearly from the different designs and compositions.

The male reception spaces were the most decorative spaces in the house because they were open all day for guests. People in traditional Gulf environment also gave the family courtyard and the main *muraba'a* attention by decorating them. Several ornamentation types were used in these spaces such as mural painting, gypsum ornamentation, and wood carving (Fig. 6.38)⁴⁸². The subjects of the ornamentation were usually derived from the surrounding environment, such as the agricultural land or the daily routine and customs⁴⁸³. For example, the palm tree was used extensively as a decorative figure in different positions and in different ways (Fig. 6.39).

Using recognisable subjects for the ornamentation enhanced its role as a vehicle to mobilise associational meaning. The palm tree as a

⁴⁸¹ See King, G. (1998), *op. cit.*, p. 183.

⁴⁸² In 1866 Palgrave indicated different types of ornamentation in Hofuf. He said: 'Wood-carving is also common; it finds its usual place on door-posts and window-frames ... decorative figures painted on the walls'. (p. 151). See also Al-Shayeb, A. (1985) *Al-Jubail Saudi Village (Architectural Survey)*, Qatar, The Arab Gulf States Folklore Centre, p. 90.

⁴⁸³ Al-Naim, M. (1994) 'Mural Painting in Al-Hasa Traditional Houses', *Al-Qafila*, Vol. 43, n. 7, pp. 40-43 (Arabic); Al-Naim, M. (1996) 'The Palm in Decorative Engravings in Al-Hasa Region', *Al Ma'tburat Al Sha'biyyah*, Vol. 11, No. 43 (July), pp. 7-19. (Arabic).

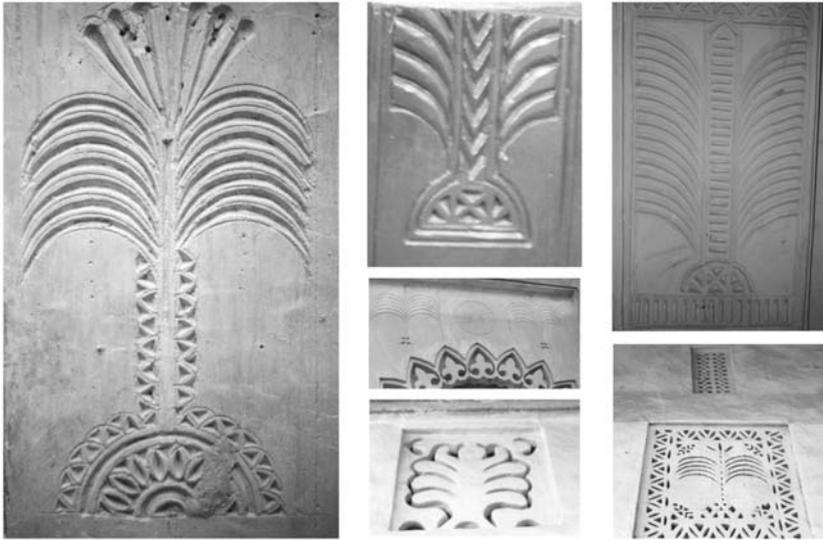


Fig. 6.39. The palm tree was used as decorative figure in traditional home.
Source: Author.

decorative figure reflects both the link between people and their surrounding environment, and the hospitality which was usually reflected by the dates and coffee. It is possible to say that ornamentation was used in the first place to express family status, but by using shared figures as subjects for the ornamentation collective perceptual identity was established.

To conclude, it is very important to state that decoration in the traditional house was mainly used to say welcome to visitors. Because individual identity in the traditional home environment was not clear, it is possible to say that this attitude of decorating the reception spaces only was a result of the need to express the family identity. The other rooms in the house had minimal visual quality because they belonged to the family members and no stranger could use them.

4.2 *From a Utilitarian Form to a Symbolic Form: Development of the Decorative Elements*

The utilitarian form in many cases developed over time to convey symbolic meanings. Read, for example, mentions that the form will pass through three stages. The first stage is ‘discovery of the functional form’. In this case basic needs play a major role in discovering the object that can be used for certain purposes. The second stage is ‘refinement of the functional form to its maximum efficiency’. This happens through trial and error. The frequent use of the utilitarian form will refine it to become an optimum functional device. The last stage is ‘refinement of the functional form in the direction of free or symbolic form’⁴⁸⁴. The form in this case is associated with social meanings which change its role from a mere utilitarian object to a symbolic one.

These three stages can be linked with the hypothetical spatio-temporal path that has been developed in the fourth Chapter. We argued that, in many cases, new forms can be introduced by individuals. The refinement of the form may take a long time but usually starts as personal action. This action may find collective ground and become a shared symbolic medium. In this part of the study we are interested in the development of the utilitarian forms in the traditional house of Hofuf. It was difficult to find many examples; however, we traced two important ones, the *ruwshan* and *rusana*.

The Ruwshan

The *ruwshan* was a small opening found in the walls of any room in the house either on the ground floor or first floor. This opening took a high position in the wall almost closed to the ceiling because it has a climatic function. Through the use of the rooms people realised the importance of such openings to circulate air. Cool air

⁴⁸⁴ Read, H. (1966), *op. cit.*, pp. 41-2 He illustrates a number of examples of the development of prehistoric forms. For example, ‘the ax was divorced from its utilitarian function, and further refined to serve as a ritual or ceremonial object’. (p. 34).

came in through the doors and windows which were opened directly to the courtyard or main *sikkas* in the first floor. These small high openings functioned as a device to remove the hot air from rooms, while the cool air came in through the main openings.

This utilitarian relationship continued for a long time until society found another technological possibility to use these small openings as aesthetic elements. This was manifested in using the gypsum or what people in Hofuf call ‘*juss*’. This material, through its ability to form a solid and thin surface, enabled craftsmen in Hofuf to develop pre-cast units to cover the *ruwshans* by creating small and decorative holes in the gypsum panel. The ornamented gypsum unit, in this case, became a climatic and decorative device. The *ruwshan* visually became a unit consisting of void and solid surfaces, the void part usually expressing the subject of ornamentation and re-circulating the hot air in the room. Later the utilitarian purpose of the *ruwshan* became not the only reason for its existence. For example in many cases the *ruwshan* was used merely as a decorative element (Fig. 6.40)⁴⁸⁵.

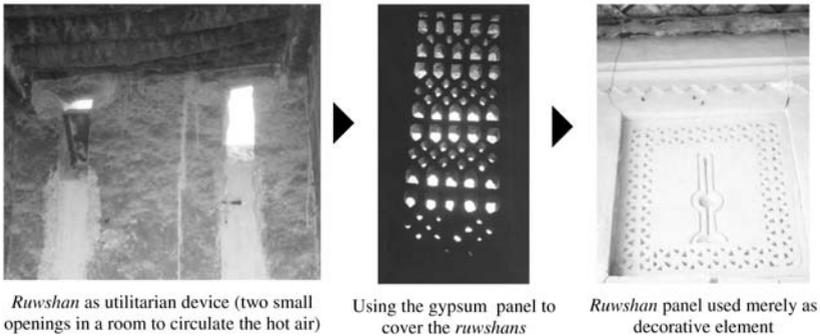


Fig. 6.40. The development of the *ruwshan* from a utilitarian element to a decorative element. Source: Author.

⁴⁸⁵ Personal interview with Abdulrahman Al-Humadi (traditional builder), 1992.

And a medium to express perceptual identity. This was manifested in the major changes that happened to the location and size of the *ruwshan* since it became a decorative element. Visual association became an important factor to determine the location of the *ruwshan*. Unlike the utilitarian stage, where the *ruwshan* was found in any place at the top of the room wall, the decorative *ruwshan* was associated with the main spaces in the house. Also it was strongly influenced by the position of the door, especially in the courtyard. This is because by taking a position over the door it became particularly noticeable (Fig. 6.41).



Fig. 6.41. *Ruwshan* over a room door in a courtyard. Source: Author.

This is not to say that the location of the *ruwshan* did not respond to climatic needs, but people became more aware about the messages that *ruwshan* would send to visitors. For example, in the rooms overlooking the family courtyard, the refined ornamented unit covered the side that looked on to the court while the other side was left unrefined because it looked over the family rooms⁴⁸⁶. This is because visitors, especially women, will see the ornamentation in the courtyard, while inside the room only the family members will see

⁴⁸⁶ As general principle, the ornamented surface of the *ruwshan* has two faces. A refined ornament which mainly looked on to the symbolic spaces and an unrefined surface which looked on to the family and utility rooms.

the ornamentation. Well-to-do families might cover both sides for aesthetic reasons, but this was rarely found in traditional home environment.

This treatment was found also in the upper rooms. If the room looked on to the main *sikka*, the openings overlooking the streets would be covered by a *ruwshan* with the ornamented side showing, while the other openings would be left unornamented coverings. This situation depended on the importance of the room itself. For example, if the room was the main *majlis* or summer *majlis* both sides would be covered by refined ornamented units (Fig. 6.42).



Fig. 6.42. *Ruwshans* looking to the main *sikka*. Source: Author.

This clearly represents how the *ruwshan* was widely used for communicating social status in Hofuf. One last point needs to be mentioned here, and that is the variety of *ruwshan* designs, patterns, and sizes which made it an important element in the traditional home environment (Fig. 6.43). This is because it was used by people to create a unique composition in every symbolic space.



Fig. 6.43. Endless patterns of *ruwshan*. Source: Author.

The rusana

Another utilitarian element in the traditional house was used by people to express their social status. This was the *rusana*. It was a simple shelf used for exhibiting and storing objects, and it was found in every room in the house. The *rusana* was associated with construction systems and building materials⁴⁸⁷. For example in the

⁴⁸⁷ The form of both *ruwshan* and *rusana* was influenced by the construction system in traditional Hofuf. Two construction techniques were used in the traditional home environment of Hofuf. Firstly, there was a mud construction system which was the oldest in the area. It was done in two ways, either *'urq*, which was a continuous solid course of mud layers of sun-baked bricks, laying the bricks to form the wall in the same manner as ordinary bricks, but with great emphasis on joints and well bonded corners. Then, plain mortar covered

early construction system (mud construction system), the *rusana* was very small with a pointed arch. This is because it was technically difficult to make it large. Later when people used limestone in construction they developed larger and more decorated *rusanas*.

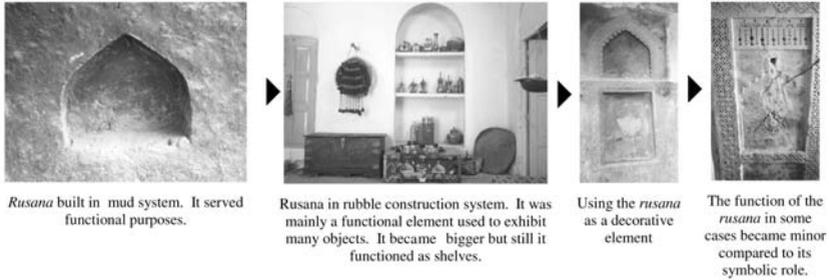


Fig. 6.44. The development of the *rusana* as a symbolic element in the traditional house. Source: Author⁴⁸⁸.

the bricks. Second, the rubble construction system. This system was similar to the beam and post system where the main walls were built by dividing the wall into equal modules constructing the posts, then tying them with a beam made of palm tree trunk (phoenix dactylefera). The openings between the columns were either filled by mud or used for windows and *rusanas*. The main construction material used in this system was stone or *libin* (limestone) bedded in *juss* (gypsum) or mud plastered by *juss*. See Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, pp. 63-5. About the external finishing Cheesman says: in Hofuf the ‘... houses are built of white sandstone blocks faced with sandstone mortar, with flat roofs of timber, and coated with mud’. Cheesman, O.B.E. (1926), *op. cit.*, p. 60. However, the mud coating is not the only finishing found in Hofuf. Most of the houses are plastered with gypsum. Vidal noticed that when he said: ‘House construction follows a fairly regular pattern in the town. Another building material is the local white limestone, roughly faced, bound with mortar and later given a facing of gypsum plaster. The houses of the less well-to-do sometimes have a facing of mud’. Vidal, F.S. (1955), *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁴⁸⁸ The examples that have been studied in the *ruwshan* and the *rusana* cases have been taken from houses which the researcher had, as a result of his fieldwork, already established to come from different periods. It was only after this prior establishment of the relative dates of the houses that the *ruwshan* and the *rusana* were studied, and they were found to display the linear development described.

As with the *ruwshan*, the *rusana* developed as a decorative element. Its utilitarian role in some cases became unimportant compared to its symbolic role (Fig. 6.44). The function of the *rusana*, originally simply to store objects, moved to exhibiting objects, and in those cases where it was located in a symbolic space, people began to decorate it. Thus it began to take on symbolic meanings of its own.

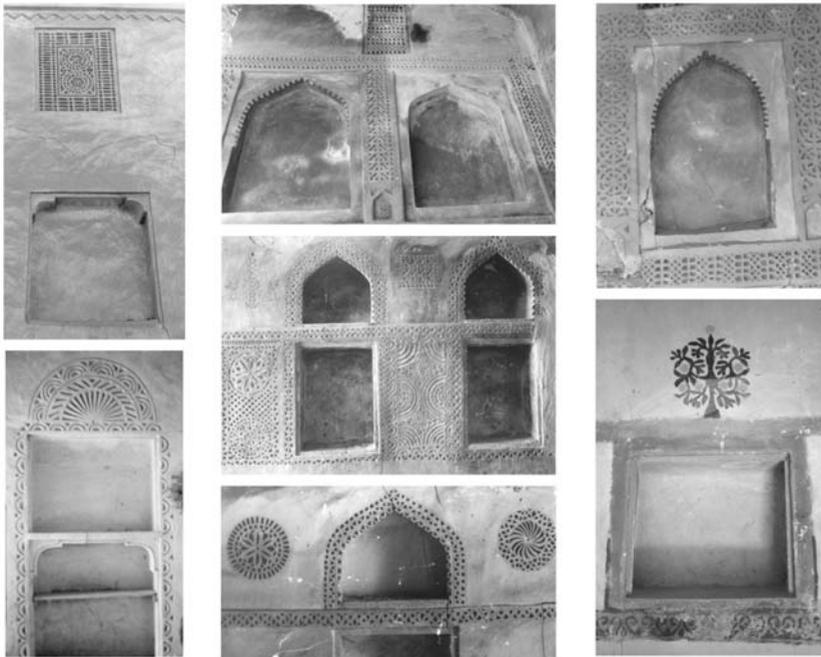


Fig. 6.45. Different forms of *rusana* (used as decorative elements in the main rooms such as *majlis* and main *muraba'a*). Source: Author.

The *rusana* as functional element in the house passed, as we see, through several changes and adaptations to satisfy the perceptual and associational identities in the traditional home environment. It is worth mentioning that this element developed as decorative medium

only in the most symbolic spaces in the house. It remained in its utilitarian form in the family and utility rooms. As with the *ruwshan*, the *rusana* took several forms, patterns, and sizes (Fig. 6.45). This clearly indicates that people tried to find ways to express their individual (family) images by using different forms of ornamentation.

To recapitulate, the development of *ruwshan* and *rusana* from utilitarian to symbolic elements started as a personal action (family action). A few people may have been influenced by the decoration techniques in neighbouring societies and tried to apply what they saw in the houses there. However, the use of the *ruwshan* and *rusana* as decorative elements was completely within the basic decoration principles in traditional Hofuf. This means that when the individual families tried to use these two elements to decorate the internal spaces, they firstly used them in the most symbolic spaces in the house, and secondly they located them in a way that had a visual effect on the visitors of the house.

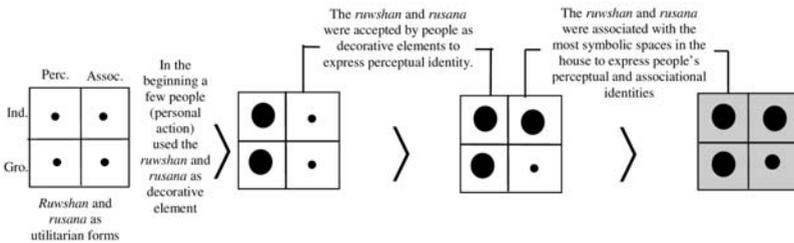


Fig. 6.46. Development of the *ruwshan* and the *rusana* from utilitarian elements to symbolic elements.

In the traditional home environment, any new idea might become a common idea if it was compatible with the people's values and way of living (as well as affordable). This was because the traditional community was very isolated, which meant that people used few ideas but with deep elaboration so that several elements functioned

as communicative media in the community. It is possible that the *ruwshan* and *rusana* passed through this process and became common elements used by people as means to express their perceptual and associational identities (Fig. 6.46).

5. Summary

It is clear that the internal domestic spaces in the traditional house strongly responded to the organisation of the *fereej* system. The division of the house into three parts was mainly developed to link the house with the *fereej* at the ground level, by positioning the male reception spaces in the front, and away from the roof routes by situating the family part in the middle. This order of spatial organisation was very important for the continuance of the *fereej* system over a long time.

Social conventions and lifestyle played a major role in the emergence of this spatial order in the traditional house. The harmony and compatibility of the traditional home environment stemmed from the high response that people showed when they interacted with their physical environment. Because women needed to keep out of men's sight the whole environment was ordered to support this need. At the macro level the whole traditional home environment was divided into smaller units, *fereej*s, which consisted in turn of still smaller units, houses. The house itself was divided into smaller units to define the women's domain. Moreover, the physical elements in the house were developed to keep the women's domain away from the men's domain. As general conclusion, it is difficult to understand why the traditional house was sharply divided into three parts without considering the reasons for the hierarchy of the whole traditional home environment.

The division of the traditional house created a balance between communal and personal identity. This was because the people of Gulf traditional home environment realised that creating a dialectic between their individual (family) status and the whole community could be satisfied by establishing maximum openness of part of the

house to the communal space. This was accomplished by situating the reception spaces at the front stage and linking them visually and spatially with the external environment.

Although the traditional house had passed through several changes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the basic spatial principles continued without major change because they had been linked with the cultural core of the traditional community. The family spaces continued with a very minimum change because they were associated with the primary relationship in the traditional community, the family. Because the family conventions and lifestyle represented the basic source of values in the traditional community, it was difficult to accept major changes in them. Thus a spatial protection for the family part was developed by situating it between two transitional zones, the entrance and the internal *sabat*, to isolate it from any change that could happen at the front or the back of the house.

The *majlis*, as we discussed, had several locations and developed from a room associated with a courtyard to a two-storey space, and then it moved to the first floor. However, the principle of approaching and using the *majlis* continued without any major changes. Also, it remained as the front stage of the house. Different perceptual and spatial solutions also had been developed to maintain its symbolic role in the house. This is because the *majlis* was the main spatial and physical element which conveyed family identity.

It was clear that the names of the internal spaces in the traditional house were deeply linked with the meaning of the space in the people's mind. They constituted an important part of the identity of the traditional house. Although every space in the house was used for more than one function, a specific meaning was associated with each space, which classified it either among the symbolic or the utilitarian spaces. This classification was very important for the traditional community because it identified the location and the use of the space inside the house. Naming the spaces was, then, a cognitive process by which people defined the spatial and visual

quality of their houses and also developed a mental map for the traditional house in general.

We found that the ornamentation in traditional home environment was used in those spaces and locations which were exposed to visitors. It is unusual to find ornamentation in a utilitarian space in the traditional house. Even those spaces used by the family had no decoration, except the courtyard and main *muraba'a* which had a potential to be used by guests. Some of utilitarian elements in the traditional house, such as *ruwshan* and *rusana*, had been refined and associated with perceptual and associational meanings. This completely supports the argument of this study that identity grows and re-grows over time. People always use the surrounding objects to convey their perceptual and association identities. This happened in the traditional home environment when people refined the *ruwshan* and *rusana* and used them as symbolic elements.

To recapitulate, the traditional house in the Gulf expressed the individual (family) and collective perceptual and associational identities, individual identity in the sense that every family employed the various ornamentation patterns and different compositions of the coffee place to express its social status. Collective identity was strongly expressed through the common visual, physical and social language that dominated the whole traditional home environment.

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C.Ri.S.S.M.A.

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