

Abstract

The role of cultural dialogue and interaction in architecture (with special reference to the interaction and dialogue between Iran and Greece at Persepolis and Pasargadae)

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Cultural interaction is frequently discussed as one of the most important constructive factors in general, and in art and architecture in particular. Without dwelling on the chronological and archaeological details of the interaction between the Greek and Persian civilizations, the present paper describes the constructive role of this interaction in the past and compares it with contemporary phenomena.

Historical experience has shown that if an interaction occurs in the direction of cultural continuity and/or historical cultural advantage, there follows a break-through in art and architecture. This point becomes clear in Iranian culture in particular during moments of climax such as the Achaemenid period.

Parsa and Pasargadae have been chosen as case studies of the constructive role of Iranian-Greek cultural interaction in the elevation of Iranian architecture during the Achaemenid period. Juxtaposing these ancient paradigms to modern urban and architectural developments in the same region, we can better understand the reasons for both the positive results of cultural interaction in the past and the emergence of problems in modern times.

The imperial Persian state, which so greatly impacted developments in the ancient Near Eastern and Classical worlds during the sixth and fifth centuries BC, united a large number of nations and civilizations in a single world empire with a unique ideology, employing symbols and concepts of universal cultural interactions. The universal character of Persian imperial rule is also reflected in the synthesis of Iranian and foreign elements that led to the formation of the distinct, composite Achaemenid style in architecture.

Recognition and analysis of this process of architectural evolution and of the individual contributions to it by different civilizations, and especially by that of Greece, provides insights that can also be instructive for the genesis of modern theories.