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Tomb Architecture as a Continuation of Poetic Thought: A Spatial Reading of the Works of Saadi, Hafez, Khayyam, and Ferdowsi

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Abstract


In Iranian culture, the tombs of poets have long been regarded not merely as burial places but as symbolic and meaningful spaces that reflect the cultural, literary, and philosophical identities of their occupants. This study explores the relationship between architectural form and decorative elements of poets' mausoleums and the intellectual, personal, and poetic styles of the poets themselves. Its primary aim is to identify how the literary and philosophical elements of each poet are embodied in the architectural character of their tombs. Employing a qualitative, descriptive-analytical methodology, the research uses field observations, visual analysis of architectural elements, and the study of historical and literary texts related to each poet. It also draws on theoretical frameworks in spatial semiotics, literary criticism, and aesthetics to analyze the data. Through a comparative and interdisciplinary examination of selected cases—namely, the mausoleums of Hafez, Saadi, Ferdowsi, and Khayyam—this study seeks to answer the following questions: Can architectural form serve as a visual language for the poet's thought? And what design patterns might be defined for creating tombs that align with a poet's character? The findings reveal a meaningful relationship between the architectural space of these mausoleums and the poets' intellectual styles. For instance, the garden-like and enigmatic structure of Hafez's tomb resonates with the mystical and romantic themes of his poetry. At the same time, the geometric clarity and purity of Khayyam's mausoleum reflect his philosophical and scientific mindset. The innovation of this study lies in its integration of architectural knowledge with literary criticism to interpret memorial spaces.

Keywords: Poets' tombs, Architectural form and ornamentation, Intellectual themes, Poetic style.

1 | Introduction

In Iranian culture, poets are revered not only as masters of language but also as inspirational figures shaping the historical, cultural, and spiritual identity of society. Across the broader Persianate world, they have held a distinguished social status and played a significant role in influencing public sentiment and cultural direction.

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Their elevated stature has led to their recognition as intellectual and cultural leaders, held in deep respect by their communities.

In Iran, this reverence has deep historical roots. Poets have traditionally enjoyed high status—even among kings and statesmen—which ensured that their legacies were honored long after their deaths. A prominent manifestation of this enduring respect is the construction of their tombs, which have become focal points of public admiration. Many of these tombs, such as those of Saadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi, Rumi, Khayyam, and Nezami, have evolved into cultural landmarks and tourist destinations.

These mausoleums are more than mere burial sites; they are symbolic spaces that reflect the soul, thought, and literary style of the poets. Architectural form, decorative elements, spatial composition, and visual symbols within these tombs convey deep messages rooted in the poets' worldviews, personalities, and the themes of their poetry.

It is at this point that the art of architecture is called upon to enter this domain. Inspired by Gropius' statement that "every building is a cultural witness", architecture has the capacity—and indeed the responsibility—to introduce these cultural treasures most compellingly. Through the design of refined and meaningful architectural forms, the tombs of great poets can become a mirror reflecting their lives, thoughts, poetic style, and personal character. In doing so, a unique synthesis of two profound arts—poetry and architecture—can emerge. If successfully realized, this fusion not only serves to preserve and present the cultural and intellectual heritage of the nation but also holds the potential to enhance cultural tourism significantly.

In this regard, the necessity of this research lies in addressing the semantic dimension of memorial architecture, reviving the deep connection between literature and architecture, and developing thoughtful design models for contemporary cultural tombs in Iran.

The core research question is as follows:

Is there a structural and meaningful relationship between the physical characteristics of Iranian poets' tombs and their intellectual themes and poetic styles? What architectural similarities and differences can be observed between the tombs of various poets in relation to their literary identities?

Despite the construction of many tombs for cultural figures—especially poets—these spaces have often been designed using repetitive or purely symbolic templates [1], with little attention paid to aligning the architectural space with the poet's literary content and philosophical worldview.

Antoniades affirms this view, stating: Poetry and literature are two powerful tools for architectural design. Poetry, as a collection of written words, summarizes the collective consciousness of people and represents a unique expression of space and place—an essential element of any national, regional, or local design.

Accordingly, the objectives of this research include:

- I. Analyzing the architectural form and decorative elements of the tombs of selected Iranian poets (such as Hafez, Saadi, Ferdowsi, and Khayyam)
- II. Identifying reflections of poetic style and philosophical thought in the spatial and ornamental structure of the tombs
- III. Proposing a conceptual design model for tombs based on the poet's personality and intellectual content

The existing research gap also indicates a lack of comprehensive and comparative studies in the field of architecture that explore the harmony between form, ornamentation, and the ideological themes of Iranian poets. Most prior works have been limited to historical or aesthetic aspects.

With this in mind, the present study seeks to examine the architectural forms of poets' tombs within Iran and compare them to the life, thoughts, character, and poetic styles of the poets themselves, ultimately to determine whether the architectural expression of their tombs effectively conveys their intellectual and personal identity.

2 | Literature Review

In the pre-Islamic era, tomb construction in Iran typically took the form of rock-cut chambers, Chahartaq (four-arched structures), mastaba-like forms, and cliff tombs. These structures carried spiritual significance, rooted in the particular beliefs of the time. With the advent of Islam, tomb architecture began to evolve alongside religious buildings such as mosques, reflecting Islamic funerary rituals and beliefs surrounding reverence for the deceased [2].

From the Safavid period onward, the tradition of tomb-building experienced a decline, and secular tombs gradually gave way to the shrines of religious saints [3]. Nonetheless, throughout the Islamic era in Iran, tomb architecture became one of the most common types of buildings after mosques. Beginning in the 4th century AH (10th century CE), and with the emergence of various local dynasties in the eastern and northern regions of Iran, the construction of tombs flourished and continued into later Islamic periods.

A notable feature of these structures is the correlation between their architectural and decorative characteristics and the social status of the deceased. In general, ordinary individuals were buried in modest tombs, while prominent figures were commemorated with more elaborate structures [2].

The golden age of memorial design in Iran came during the late Pahlavi era, particularly under the influence of architects such as Hooshang Seyhoun and Mohsen Foroughi. Iconic works such as the Avicenna Mausoleum in Hamedan and the Saadi Tomb in Shiraz were designed during this period. [5,6] The design principles established by Seyhoun and Foroughi gave rise to a number of nationally significant memorials, ranging from Avicenna's mausoleum and the tomb of Nader Shah and Ferdowsi in Tus to André Godard's Hafezieh and Foroughi's Saadiyeh [4]. Within this broader cultural movement, the construction of poets' tombs gained special prominence.

Unfortunately, in recent decades, this important tradition has been met with neglect. Significant literary figures such as Nima Yushij, Sohrab Sepehri, and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales still lack proper tombs that reflect their cultural stature and poetic legacy. This calls for renewed attention and a more respectful architectural response to honor these influential poets.

2.1 | Analysis of Saadi's Writings and His Mausoleum

One of the forerunners of global culture, whose literary charm and eloquence remain unmatched, is the wise mystic, sociologist, and noble poet of Shiraz and Iran, Saadi Shirazi. His lyrical prose has left an indelible mark on the fabric of the Persian language and literature, and his eloquent, melodic expression has become proverbial among both common people and scholars. His works have been translated into more than eighty languages around the world. Due to his literary mastery, he has been granted honorific titles such as Afṣaḥ al-Mutakallimīn (the most eloquent of speakers), Ustād al-Sukhan (Master of Speech), Pādshāh-i Sukhan (King of Speech), and Shaykh al-Ajall (The Most Eminent Sheikh).

Saadi is unrivaled in the realms of rhythmic prose and romantic poetry. His writing is marked by elegance, strength, clarity, and a deep sense of balance. However, his most notable literary characteristic is what classical critics describe as *Sabl-i Mumtani*—a style that is simultaneously simple and profound. Despite the depth of meaning, imaginative richness, and refined structure, his language remains accessible and graceful.

- *I rejoice in the world because it rejoices in Him*
- *I love all creation, for it all comes from Him*
- *The children of Adam are limbs of one another*
- *Created from the same essence*
- *If one limb suffers misfortune*
- *The others will not remain at peace*
- *If you are indifferent to the suffering of others*

- *You do not deserve to be called human*
- *Saadi says: A virtuous man never truly dies*
- *It is those who are forgotten who are truly dead*
- *The human body is noble due to its human soul*
- *Not merely through wearing beautiful clothes* [5].

Thus, Saadi's words are simple yet profound, widespread and universal, eloquent yet balanced, timeless in their appeal. They transcend generations and never grow old. With this literary legacy in mind, we now turn to the architectural analysis of his mausoleum to discover how these traits are reflected in its spatial and visual design.

Saadi's tomb, known as *Saadiyeh*, is located in Shiraz at the very site where he lived and was buried. The first structure over his grave was erected in the 7th century AH by Shams al-Din Muhammad Sahib-Divani, the renowned vizier of Abaqa Khan. Over the centuries, the tomb was renovated and rebuilt multiple times.

The current structure was constructed in 1950 (1329 SH) under the initiative of Ali-Asghar Hekmat and the National Monuments Society of Iran. It was officially inaugurated in May 1952 (Ordibehesht 1331 SH). The modern tomb was designed by Mohsen Foroughi, a modernist Iranian architect, in collaboration with Ali Akbar Sadegh. Drawing inspiration from the Chehel Sotoun Palace and elements of traditional Iranian architecture, they created a synthesis of classical and modern styles.

The entrance to the Saadiyeh complex is aligned with the main tomb axis. The mausoleum itself covers approximately 257 square meters and is composed of two perpendicular iwans (porticoes) at varying elevations. Saadi's grave lies at the intersection of these iwans, housed within an octagonal structure topped by a turquoise-tiled dome.

From the outside, the tomb has a cubic form, fronted by eight brownish-red stone columns. Its exterior is decorated with travertine stone and glazed blue tiles, creating a vibrant and joyful aesthetic. In contrast to the cubic exterior, the interior has an octagonal layout adorned with marble walls and multicolored and lapis-blue glazed tiles. On the left side, the structure opens to an arcade with seven arches, each featuring inscriptions from Golestan, Bustan, Qasa'id, Bada'i', and Tayyibat, carefully selected and inscribed by calligrapher Ebrahim Buzari. This arcade, with its darker flooring, leads to the nearby tomb of the poet Shurideh Shirazi [1].

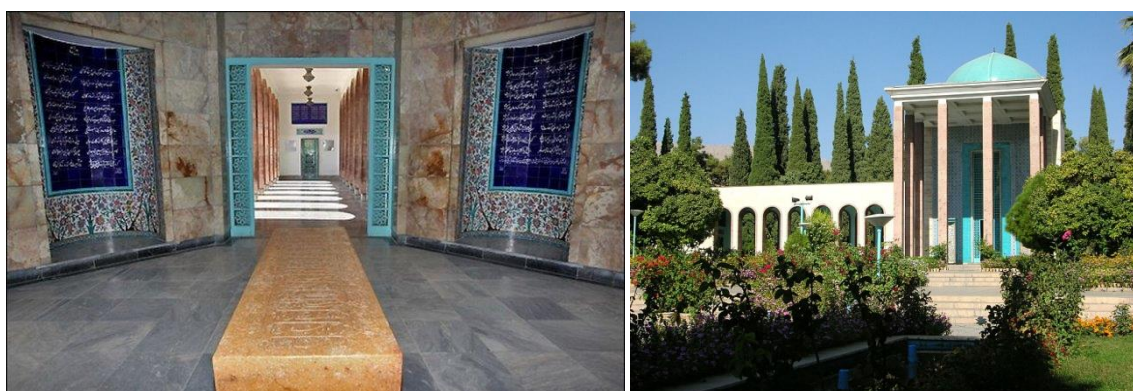


Fig. 1. Tomb of Saadi (Saadiyeh, Shiraz).

In an article titled "A Critical Review of Saadi's Mausoleum with Emphasis on the Principles of Tomb Design," the authors argue that "the current mausoleum of Saadi, which was designed in a modern style during the Pahlavi era, lacks the appropriate spatial hierarchy and architectural form typically expected in tomb structures. Since the primary function of a mausoleum is to fulfill the spiritual needs of its visitors, the designed space fails to evoke a sense of sacredness in the minds of its audience" [6].

In response to this critique, it must be noted that while such a viewpoint may be applicable to religious mausoleums, it does not fully address the fundamental principles underlying memorial tombs such as that of Saadi. One of the key considerations in designing commemorative tombs is to reflect the poet's thought, character, life, and literary style—features that should be evident in the architectural expression of the structure.

With this in mind, an analysis of the overall form and decorative elements of Saadi's mausoleum reveals that the structure, much like his poetry, is both solid and dignified. Despite its simplicity, the architectural elements and decorations are rich and refined, mirroring the elegance and composure of Saadi's verses. The building embodies both grandeur and balance, key traits of Saadi's literary work.

The diversity and harmony of colors used in the mausoleum also parallel the broad yet coherent range of themes in his poetry. Considering that "the use of traditional archetypes and motifs has consistently been a focus for contemporary Iranian architects," this mausoleum successfully reflects that principle. The fusion of traditional Persian and modern architecture in the structure beautifully echoes the universal and multifaceted nature of Saadi's poetry—a language that speaks to all nations.

2.2 | Analysis of Hafez's Poetry and Mausoleum

Hafez is the most distinguished poet of the medieval era in our land. With language and expression far beyond the comprehension of the general public, he boldly and unapologetically ventured into the perilous domain of religious and political critique. His masterful and enigmatic language placed him among the uncompromising reformers of his time, unbound by factional allegiances and unafraid to challenge prevailing norms.

One of the unique features of Hafez's poetry is his masterful choice of words and their artful arrangement, supported by literary devices and vivid imagery. When aiming to draw attention to the futile religious disputes of his time and to call humanity toward transcending blind prejudice, he eloquently writes: Pardon the strife of the seventy-two sects, for they saw not the truth and followed tales.

Elsewhere, in his critique of the oppressive elimination of dissenters through accusations of heresy—a hallmark of authoritarian regimes grounded in monolithic thinking and intolerance—he composes:

- *Do you know what the harp and lute declare?*
- *Drink in secret, for they proclaim excommunication*
- *They say, 'Speak not of love, and hear it not*
- *Such are the troubles they are declaring.*

Beyond his refined diction and elegant composition, another crucial element in Hafez's poetic ornamentation is metaphorical language. When lyrical elements serve to portray the decline of despotism and the inevitable transformation of political power, metaphor becomes indispensable:

- *O dawn of hope veiled behind the unseen,*
- *Arise, for the dark night is at an end.*
- *All that pomp and luxury promised by autumn*
- *In the end, bowed before the spring breeze.*
- *Rejoice, O heart! A messianic breath approaches*
- *From his fragrant sighs comes a sign of someone dear.*
- *Wail not for separation's grief, for last night,*
- *I cast a fortune, and a savior appeared.*
- *Is it possible that the tavern doors reopen,*
- *And untie the knot of our tightly bound affairs?*
- *If they were closed for the sake of the pious,*

– *Take heart—it may yet open for God's sake.*

After Ferdowsi, Hafez is considered the most politically engaged voice in Persian literature, yet his poetry reveals minimal overt political content. This subtlety stems from his use of metaphors, allusions, and refined poetic devices—tools with which he elegantly adorned his verses. His artful use of poetic ornamentation adds layers of meaning and mystery to his work, enabling multiple interpretations, even contradictory ones: His speech is such that it allows for numerous interpretations, sometimes entirely divergent.

Thus, we are dealing with a deeply enigmatic poet whose mausoleum should reflect these very characteristics, becoming an embodiment of his personality and thought. Understanding this, we now examine his tomb and seek out these qualities in its design.

In 1935 (1314 SH), Ali Asghar Hekmat, then Minister of Culture, in collaboration with Ali Riazi, head of the Fars provincial cultural department, and under the supervision of archaeologist and scholar Ali Sami, implemented the design proposed by French architect and Iranologist André Godard. The current structure of Hafez's mausoleum is the result of that project and draws architectural inspiration from the Zand dynasty era.

In addition to its architectural style, the tomb of Hafez can be examined through a spiritual and mystical lens. Located opposite a bustling street, this placement can symbolically represent the entrapment of modern humanity within the industrial world; so long as one is caught in that noise, Hafez's depth remains inaccessible, much like how the tomb is hidden from view while standing in the street. Upon entering the complex and distancing oneself from the clamor, a sense of detachment from material attachments begins to set in.

The main entrance is from the southern courtyard, where two flights of stone stairs lead to a platform with a portico consisting of nine steps. As is well known, the number nine holds special significance in Persian mysticism and literature, symbolizing the celestial spheres. Ascending these steps metaphorically represents a spiritual ascent—rising from the material world to the divine realm—a key concept in Sufi literature. Along this symbolic ascension, veils are lifted, and gradually, the truth (the tomb) is revealed, shining forth like the sun.

The tomb itself features eight beautifully adorned stone columns supporting an octagonal dome. These eight pillars can symbolize both the eight gates of paradise and the 8th century AH, the period in which Hafez lived [6].

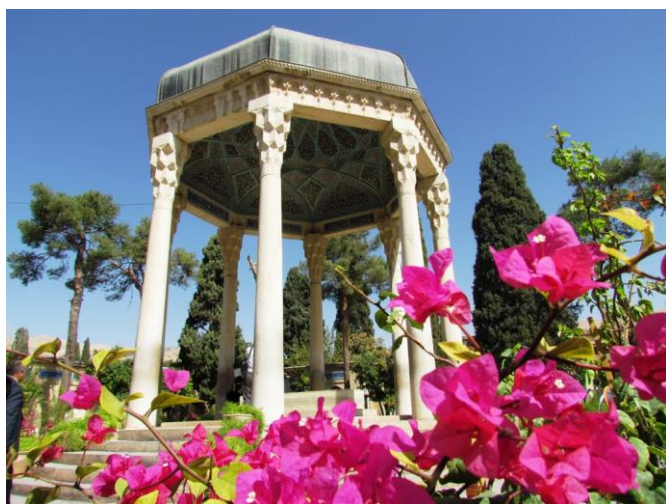


Fig. 2. Tomb of Hafez (Hafezieh, Shiraz).

Amid this intricate architectural ensemble, the tombstone of Hafez is elevated one meter above ground level and is encircled by five concentric steps. Above the mausoleum rises a copper dome, designed in the segmented form of a dervish's hat—*tark-tark*—resting upon eight columns, each ten meters tall. The interior

of the dome is adorned with seven-color mosaic tiles arranged in intricate Islamic geometric patterns. Additionally, eight verses of Hafez's poetry are inscribed in Thuluth script on monolithic stone slabs set into the ceiling of the tomb [7].

The interior ceiling is decorated in symbolic colors that reflect mystical themes: turquoise blue symbolizes paradise; crimson evokes the wine of pre-eternity; white and black represent night and day and the passage of time; and dark brown symbolizes earth. The exterior of the dome simultaneously evokes the celestial sphere and resembles the segmented headdress of qalandars and dervishes.

When such elevated symbolic elements from Persian-Islamic mysticism and culture are interwoven in this manner, the resulting tomb becomes a true architectural reflection of a figure who himself embodied the ideal of the Persian mystical rogue—a truth-seeking sage cloaked in nonconformity [8].

As Alexander Christopher writes in his book "Architecture and the Timeless Way of Building" [9]:

Each thing is coherent to the degree it is free from internal contradictions. If a thing is at war with itself, it is incoherent; the more it is free from inner conflict, the more whole, vibrant, and flawless it becomes.

Considering this insight, one can say that the integration of diverse symbolic elements in the design of Hafez's mausoleum achieves a profound unity. Despite each component carrying its own distinct and often enigmatic meaning, they do not clash internally; rather, they come together in harmony to form a cohesive whole. This synthesis allows the structure, like Hafez's poetry, to resonate deeply with the emotional and cultural sensibilities of the Iranian people [8].

Thus, the design and construction of Hafez's mausoleum, much like the poet's own character and verses, is both coherent and enigmatic. The architectural language of the shrine flows with profound mystical meaning, where metaphor, allusion, and symbolic elements are not merely decorative but rather intrinsic features of the space, just as they are of Hafez's poetry.

3.2 | Analysis of Ferdowsi's Poetry and Mausoleum

Hakim Abol-Qasem Ferdowsi, one of the greatest poets in the history of Persian literature and the author of the *Shahnameh*—Iran's national epic—enjoys global fame. Many consider him the greatest Persian-language poet. He was a patriotic and culturally devoted poet who, with deep knowledge of his ancestors' history, created a timeless masterpiece. As he declares, he labored for thirty years on this work, even sacrificing his inherited wealth for its completion, and only turned to the royal court for support when he had become destitute.

Mohammad Ali Foroughi—an esteemed writer, scholar, and expert in Persian literature—regarded Ferdowsi's purity of language and moral integrity as among his key virtues. Throughout the *Shahnameh*, not a single obscene or vulgar phrase can be found. Unlike many poets, Ferdowsi avoids crude humor or lewd expression. Even when recounting stories that traditionally involve sensitive or shameful themes, he chooses the most refined and delicate words. Another notable aspect of his poetry is its promotion of chastity and moral integrity—he does not allow his heroes to succumb to base desires. The story of Siyavash and Sudabeh clearly illustrates this.

Broadly speaking, Ferdowsi's epic is a vast drama depicting the tumultuous journey of human life from fall to ascension. It offers a guide for humanity from hell to paradise, led by the divine light of wisdom (Kherad), as expressed in the famous verses:

- *Wisdom is the crown of sovereigns,*
- *Wisdom the adornment of the noble.*
- *Know wisdom to be eternal life,*
- *Know wisdom as the essence of existence.*

Najibi [10] "Interpretation of the Paradoxical Concepts of Fall and Ascension in the Transcendent Philosophy and Theoretical Mysticism".

The central theme of this grand narrative is humanity's constant struggle with internal and external demons. The human condition, as portrayed in the *Shahnameh*, fluctuates between states of hell, purgatory, and paradise—an ongoing battle in which human dignity is forged. Najibi emphasizes that this is why the *Shahnameh* is replete with moral counsel and the principles of justice and generosity, which are presented as the keys to attaining virtue and greatness:

- *Fair Feraydun was no angel born,*
- *Not of musk or amber was he formed,*
- *Through justice and generosity did he earn greatness,*
- *You, too, can be a Feraydun—be just and generous.*

And what greater goodness than Ferdowsi's timeless counsel to humanity:

- *Reflect upon the fleeting nature of time,*
- *Make justice and reverence your practice,*
- *Incline toward goodness and harm no one,*
- *This alone is the path to salvation.*

Thus, we are faced with a figure who constructed one of the most solid and enduring edifices of morality and wisdom through poetic verse, dedicating his life and fortune to this cause. The resulting structure, built from the universal language of human nature, is impervious to the ravages of time:

- *For thirty years I toiled with pain,*
- *To breathe life into Persian once again,*
- *I built a lofty palace of verse,*
- *That wind and rain shall never curse.*

In light of this, Mehdi Najibi turns to an examination of Ferdowsi's mausoleum and explores how these attributes are embodied in its design.

The original mausoleum of Ferdowsi was first designed by the French architect André Godard in the form of an Egyptian pyramid. Although partially constructed, the plan was ultimately rejected by Mohammad Ali Foroughi, then head of the National Heritage Society of Iran. Eventually, Iranian architect Hossein Lorzadeh designed and built the mausoleum in a style inspired by the architecture of Persepolis and the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae. Years later, architect Houshang Seyhoun undertook a renovation and redesign of the tomb, preserving and refining the previous design.

The mausoleum comprises three main parts. The central section is the most significant: a marble tombstone measuring approximately 1.5×1 meters and 0.5 meters in height rests atop a marble platform at the core of the structure. The second section consists of a square hall made of marble, its interior adorned with decorative tilework. Four tall columns with large capitals stand at the corners of this hall. The third part is a terraced platform also clad in marble, upon which the tomb chamber is set. Numerous verses from Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* are engraved on its walls.

The architectural style recalls Pasargadae and the tomb of Cyrus the Great. At the same time, the image of a winged man above the southern side of the main structure evokes the architectural symbolism of Persepolis.



Fig. 3. Tomb of Ferdowsi (Tus, Razavi Khorasan).

At the outset, the total area of Ferdowsi's mausoleum was 945 square meters, and scenes from the Shahnameh were carved onto its walls by the finest sculptors. However, due to inadequate technical assessments and failure to properly analyze the soil's bearing capacity at the construction site, the structure soon began to suffer from moisture absorption and foundation settlement. These structural issues emerged within the first few years, and even three decades of maintenance failed to resolve them.

Eventually, under the direction of the National Heritage Society and the supervision of architect Hooshang Seyhoun, the mausoleum was rebuilt based on his design, which was inspired by the tomb of Cyrus the Great. As part of this renovation, the surrounding garden and an adjacent museum were also added to the complex.

The exterior appearance of the previous building closely resembled the current structure, but the interior was smaller and narrower, featuring two narrow doors on its eastern and western sides. The current edifice, with a foundation area of approximately 900 square meters, is made of concrete, stone, and tile. While the overall form mirrors that of the previous mausoleum, the upper section, unlike before, was constructed hollow rather than solid.

The walls are built using stones sourced from the Tus region, and the interior ceiling is adorned with mosaic tilework influenced by decorative elements from both the Achaemenid period and Ferdowsi's era. The combination of these features results in an architectural form that evokes the tomb of Cyrus the Great at Pasargadae.

Vitruvius, the Roman architect and engineer before the Common Era, writes in *Ten Books on Architecture*: Symmetry is a proper agreement between the members of the work itself and the relation between the different parts and the whole general scheme, in accordance with a certain part selected as a standard. Therefore, in complete buildings, the various parts must have precisely symmetrical proportions relative to the overall design [11].

The overall form of Ferdowsi's mausoleum is also cubic and symmetrical, forms known to convey a sense of solidity and gravity best. As such, we witness the construction of a strong and enduring monument rooted in the authentic culture of Iran, which echoes the essence of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh. This mausoleum, while exhibiting grandeur and dignity, is adorned with the most beautiful national, ethnic, and cultural elements, just as the Shahnameh itself is embellished with the most elegant verbal and semantic expressions.

Ultimately, the tomb evokes the poet's celebrated verse:

- *I have built a lofty palace with verse, /One that will not be harmed by wind or rain.*

(Mehbobeh Kurdi, Ali H. Razani & Leila Moderi, 2024. "Psychological analysis of the behavior of war commanders in the mythological and heroic period of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and Homer's Iliad and Odyssey")

4.2 | Analysis of Khayyam's Poetry and Mausoleum

Hakim Omar Khayyam of Nishapur is one of the most outstanding scholars and national figures of Iran. He possessed a profound knowledge of all the sciences and disciplines of his time, including philosophy, astronomy, cosmology, wisdom, mathematics, medicine, history, literature, and jurisprudence. He was even well-versed in Quranic exegesis, despite it not being his primary field of expertise, and dedicated his life to research and inquiry across these domains.

Since the focus here is on the analysis of his literary works, we shall set aside the other areas of his contributions and limit ourselves to exploring the characteristics of his poetry.

Khayyam's poetry, composed in the form of rubaiyat (quatrains), is short, rhythmic, simple, and unpretentious. Free from poetic affectation and artifice, it is both passionate and eloquent, conveying profound philosophical meanings born of the reflections of a great sage in response to the mysteries of existence. In the world of literature—and especially in English-speaking countries—he is among the most renowned Persian poets. His fame extends far beyond literary circles, primarily due to the translations of his Rubaiyat by the English poet Edward FitzGerald, who introduced Khayyam's deep philosophical ideas to the broader world.

Most of Khayyam's poetry is in Persian and Arabic, and the central themes often revolve around wonder at the mysteries of creation, fatalism, the pain of existence, an awareness of death, seizing the moment, and the enjoyment of the present. His philosophical reflections primarily revolve around two or three recurring motifs: the reminder of death, the regret for the impermanence of time, the vanity of worldly pursuits, and the fact that in the course of life, we remain unaware—unable to discover what we seek, and ignorant of where we have come from and where we are headed.

- *In this circle where our coming and going is set,*
- *No beginning nor end can ever be met,*
- *No one has ever truly spoken this truth,*
- *Where do we come from, and where are we going [12]?*

Another defining characteristic of Khayyam's poetic expression is its dignity and intellectual depth. His poetry reveals that he was not a man of jest or lightheartedness. He was a sage and philosopher—a learned thinker—and his verses are not aimed at rhetorical flourish or poetic ornamentation. Instead, his goal was to address the most fundamental and existential concerns of humanity. As such, he is a poet who transcended the realm of poetry, and his deep understanding of sciences such as philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy is reflected in his verses:

- *O you who came ablaze from the spiritual realm,*
- *Now bewildered in the five, four, six, and seven's helm,*
- *Drink wine, for you know not from where you came,*
- *Rejoice! You know not where you'll go again,*
- *Since fortune never bent to a wise man's will,*
- *Count the heavens as seven, or count them still as eight,*
- *In the end, we die and all hopes fall away,*
- *Be it a wolf in the wild or an ant in the clay [13].*

From the time of Khayyam's death in 510 Solar Hijri (1131 CE) until 1335 SH (1956 CE), his resting place remained in a state of ruin. It wasn't until the renowned architect Hooshang Seyhoun, who at the time was overseeing construction projects for the National Heritage Association with the collaboration of Hossein Jodat, that the tomb was relocated from its former site (adjacent to the shrine of Imamzadeh Mohammad

Mahrooq) to its present location. The design and construction process of the new mausoleum continued until 1341 SH (1962 CE).

Regarding the relocation, Seyhoun stated:

Since the previous site of Khayyam's tomb was physically attached to the shrine of Imamzadeh Mohammad Mahrooq, no construction there could offer the tomb the independence and prominence it deserved.

Architecturally, Khayyam's mausoleum is one of the most significant and innovative buildings of its time, in both form and technique. The structure stands 22 meters tall, with a steel frame and concrete shell. The triangular structures surrounding the monument evoke the form of a tent (Kheymeh)—a symbolic reference to Khayyam's name, which means tent-maker.

The structure rests on ten pillars, and from each pillar, two diagonal spiral blades ascend, meet at the top, and descend on the opposite side. These intersecting forms create ten large lozenges, each of which is decorated with abstract and modern calligraphic renderings of Khayyam's quatrains in Shekasteh Nasta'liq script, inspired by the great Persian calligrapher Mir Emad.

These blades form one of the most complex geometrical designs in Iranian architecture. Both the number ten—the first two-digit number and the basis of our numeric system—and the geometric structure symbolize Khayyam's mathematical brilliance. The movement and crossing of the blades create interwoven spaces, offering views of the Nishapur sky through their openings. Near the top, the intersections form interlaced star shapes that gradually shrink as they ascend, ultimately culminating in a five-pointed star at the dome's apex—a celestial symbol of Khayyam's identity as an astronomer.

As previously noted, Khayyam's quatrains are inscribed in the lozenge-shaped spaces using the Shekasteh Nasta'liq script, and remarkably, this was the first time in Iranian architectural history that this uniquely Iranian script was employed. Additionally, these lozenges are adorned with floral and vine motifs made with mosaic tilework, emphasizing Khayyam's poetic nature.



Fig. 4. Tomb of Khayyam (Nishapur).

Around the tower, beside the springs, a wide circular platform was built with the mausoleum at its center. It was entirely constructed from granite stone, with triangular-shaped elements and alternating recesses and projections that somewhat resemble the form of a tent—an allusion to Khayyam's name. His father was a tent-maker, and Khayyam ('tent-maker') was chosen as his surname for this reason.

Moreover, turquoise-tiled pools—designed in the shape of seven-pointed stars—symbolize the seven heavens, the seven celestial spheres, and the seven hills, once again referencing astronomy and the celestial sciences, in which Khayyam was also well-versed.

Altogether, the complex was created in a poetic atmosphere, surrounded by tall, old trees, and—just as Khayyam himself had wished—his tomb remains open to the sky, where 'flowers rain down upon it in springtime [14].

As we know, Iranian architecture is deeply centered on aesthetic beauty, and geometry is a powerful tool that enables the Iranian architect to measure spatial proportions and to create balance, harmony, and beauty on Earth.

The design and construction of Khayyam's mausoleum is a prime example of this philosophy. It demonstrates not only the technical knowledge and architectural skill of its designer but also his mastery of geometry and mathematics, which enabled the creation of a structure with a unique and beautiful geometric form.

Furthermore, the architect had a deep understanding of Khayyam's life and multifaceted personality, a point affirmed by Master Hooshang Seyhoun himself when he said:

Khayyam essentially had three personas: mathematician, astronomer, and poet—and all three had to be represented in the design of the tomb.

This statement reveals the whole essence of the monument. It was this depth of understanding and cultural insight that allowed Seyhoun to create one of the most beautiful architectural works in modern Iran—a monument that not only honors Khayyam but also introduces his complex legacy to the world [15].

5 | Findings

Considering the above-mentioned points, this table illustrates the deep connection between the worldview, personality, and poetic style of four major Iranian poets—Saadi, Hafez, Ferdowsi, and Khayyam—and how these aspects are reflected in the architectural design of their mausoleums. The analysis shows that the architects, by thoroughly understanding the essence of each poet's philosophy and character, managed to translate abstract literary and philosophical ideas into physical and visual forms. For instance, Saadi's tomb reflects his clarity and universality through a simple and elegant structure. Hafez's shrine uses mystical forms and symbolic colors to echo the enigmatic nature of his poetry. Ferdowsi's mausoleum, with its imposing and grand form, mirrors the epic strength of the *Shahnameh*, while Khayyam's tomb uses complex geometric design to symbolize his profound philosophical and scientific mind. This thoughtful integration of poetry and architecture highlights the richness of Iranian cultural expression and the harmony between intellectual legacy and built form.

Table 1. Analysis of the poets' philosophy, personality, and poetic style and their reflection in mausoleum architecture.

Title	Philosophy	Personality	Poetic Style and Literary Features	Representation in Architectural Form
Saadi	Respect for others' beliefs, attention to values	Sheikh, cleric, world traveler	Simple, unpretentious, eloquent, universal	Simplicity of volumes, delicacy of elements, respect for tradition while being modern
Hafez	Carpe diem, focus on spiritual and mystical values	Sage, dervish, wanderer, mystic	Ambiguous, mystical, full of symbolic meanings	The dome-shaped, like a dervish hat, use of symbolic colors and spiritual concepts
Ferdowsi	Revival of authentic Iranian culture, return to values	Sage, knowledgeable in history and culture	Nationalistic, epic, narrative, allegorical, moralistic	Monumental and grand structure, use of national and cultural elements
Khayyam	Critique of worldly concerns, reflection on existence, and enjoying the moment	Mathematician, astronomer, poet, philosopher	Serious, simple yet profound, contemplative	Unique geometric structure, the architectural expression of his multifaceted intellectual identity

6 | Conclusion

In order to identify the true identity of an architectural work, one must consider not only its formal and structural aspects but also its social and cultural roles. Mausoleums and memorials, in particular, hold special significance due to the societal status of the individuals they commemorate and the public's perception of them. These structures are seen as symbols of a nation's culture, beliefs, and ideas—mirrors reflecting collective identity.

A clear example of this is the mausoleums of the poets discussed in this study. As we have seen, these architectural masterpieces are regarded not merely as physical structures but as cultural landmarks with deeper meaning. This is precisely because the architects and designers, fully aware of their cultural responsibility, created works in which the poetry, philosophy, and personality of these great poets are visibly embodied in the very form and spirit of their tombs.

The combination of traditional Iranian architecture and modern design in Saadi's mausoleum symbolizes his universal worldview. The use of simple volumes and cheerful colors reflects the simplicity, clarity, and joyful tone of his poetry. The copper dome of Hafez's tomb, shaped like a dervish's hat, serves as a symbol of the poet's mystical personality. It rests on eight columns representing the eight gates of paradise, with colors carrying spiritual and esoteric meanings, and the steps around the tomb may symbolize the stages of spiritual ascension.

The grandeur and solidity of Ferdowsi's mausoleum, along with the use of authentic Iranian elements in its design, serve as a tribute to the strength of his poetry, his patriotism, and his deep love for national culture and ideals. The unique geometry of Khayyam's tomb, which simultaneously reflects his three identities—poet, mathematician, and astronomer—demonstrates that the architects and designers of these monuments had deep knowledge and understanding of the lives, thoughts, personalities, and poetry of these great poets. This awareness enabled them to create lasting and meaningful structures, so much so that one feels the presence of the poets themselves when standing before these tombs.

Table 2. Evaluation of mausoleums and analysis of the relationship between their form and ornamentation with the Poets' Thought, Personality, and Poetic Style.

Title	Architectural Style	Design Approach	Future Significance	Influence of the Poet's Thought on the Form	Influence of the Poet's Personality on the Form	Influence of the Poetic Style on the Form
Saadi	Move toward modernity	Inspiration from traditional architectural elements	Influential by disrupting the symmetry	—	—	—
Hafez	Neoclassical	Use of historical elements with modern technology	Influential through the replication of Zand-era colonnades	—	—	—
Ferdowsi	Neoclassical	Use of past architectural elements	Influential through the grandeur and majesty of the structure	—	—	—
Khayyam	Neoclassical	Inspired by Khayyam's astronomical and cosmological ideas	Influential through the preservation of geometric proportions and tilework	—	—	—

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Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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