Use of Cultural Symbols for Transferring House to the Home in the Case of Famagusta

M. Sokhanvar and S. M. Shahidipour

Abstract—One of the essential requirements for the human beings is the house for living. This is necessary to make the place of satisfaction for contemporary houses residents by attention to their culture. In this article represented the relevant theoretical literature on cultural symbols by use the architecture semiotic to construct the houses as a better place for living. In fact, make a place for everyday life with changing the house to the home is one of the most challengeable subject for architects all around the world. The target of this article is to find Cypriot houses cultural symbols that assist architect to design and build contemporary houses, to make more satisfaction for its residents according to Cypriot life style and their culture. This paper is based on researching the effect of cultural symbols on housing, would require various types of methods. However, this study focuses on two methods, which are quantitative and qualitative. The purpose of the case-specific study is to finding the symbols that used in contemporary houses by attention to the Cypriot cultural symbols in Famagusta houses.

Keywords—Houses, home, architectural symbols, cultural symbols.

I. INTRODUCTION

ONE of the most influential on the developing of architecture is the power of the place that has known and correspondingly practiced. Scholars from a variety of approaches have explored people's sentimental relationships. 'Sense of place' is the related key concepts that revealed in the literature. The place identity is an included of three interdependent parts, which irreducible to the other physical appearances or features, observable "activities", "functions" and "meanings (symbols)" [1].

Places interpreting specific meanings, symbols, memories, emotions and values, that shared with people who belongs to a social group. Therefore, different groups represent a place in dissimilar ways. Lyons claim that groups to describe and define their identity use certain social memories [2]. Social groups use of the symbols in their houses commonly unconsciously to transfer their houses to the home. The Symbols has been worked as an Architecture language. In fact, architecture has been a powerful vehicle to transmit the message of cultures and communicate with its form, material and other features instead of spoken words.

M. Sokhanvar Dastjerdi is with Eastern Mediterranean University Department of Architecture, Famagusta, Northern Cyprus (phone: +905338880814, e-mail: mr.mj.sokhanvar@gmail.com).
S. Shahidipour is with Eastern Mediterranean University Department of Architecture, Famagusta, Northern Cyprus (phone: +905338239568, e-mail: mehranshahidipour@gmail.com).

"A house is a meaningful cultural object" that illustrate the people, who built the building, residents and dwellers identity that observe with their houses form, directly relevant to the culture and world viewed of specific local [3]. Houses have used to generate the space to explicit feeling, ways of thinking, and social processes, and to provide arenas for culturally defined activity as well as to supply physical shelter [4]. The most focus in this paper is on cultural symbol that how it can influence the architecture and houses form for changing the house to the home. Culture interferes in the way of people's life, produce and build houses dynamically.

According to the home definition and its word origin it seems clear that one of the significant way for transferring the house to the home is use of the cultural symbols. Therefore, according to Eco [5], involvement in semiotic field requires to examine the entire cultural concept as if they represent a sign so that one can realize the message that conveys through that sign for the purpose of communication. As a result, there might appear some fields of study, which the signs become so challenging including architecture. Cultural symbols and their hidden meaning refer to the people whom lives' together with the same thinking way, life style and background. Symbols and architecture by Eco [6] is regarded as a system that conveys the messages to audiences who expects to hear as a sort of agreed terms. In fact, according to Eco's explanation regarding semiotic architecture, it can be noted that the area that semiotic architecture mainly deal with, is that how signs and codes are represented in formal architectural design. As a result, a group of cultural meaning has become of serious concerns by those signs and symbols. This can best be explained through Gottdeiner and Hutchison's [7] argument who believe that architectural semiotics as the main category includes some subcategory such as spatial semiotics, which simply examines the reflection of the culture through designing houses [8].

II. SIGN AND SYMBOL

Although semiotic theories are controversial in their natures, they have been given strong emphasis in anthropological studies regarding cultural issues, which seeks high attention to be paid on its organizational anthropologists as semioticians. According to Barley, Bearing in mind the various sources of disagreement among anthropologists, however, each believe representation and examination of the cultural semiotics by members of a group is based on realization of the cultural concepts [9].

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Regardless of serious attempts to clarify the symbolic foundation term among the scholars, still there is difficult to find consensus about the symbol application. The lack of common idea might be due to the variability of terms and concepts, including symbol, icon, signal, sign, etc. There have been exceedingly attempt to categorize the symbolic factors; still, the clarification of the symbolic factors is not an easy task.

Sinha claimed the base of the true symbol is under the people conventionality and communicational by using the shared understanding [10]. Therefore, to find one of the symbol fundamental definitions could beginning with Peirce theory.

Peirce claimed each sign consists three related parts, which are sign, object, and interpretant [11]. For understanding this definition better, mentioning the sign as the indicator, for instance, a drawn figure, an expression, cloud as a sign for rain. The object to which the drawn figure or word expressed attaches, or cloud signifier the rain. The unique and innovative feature of Peirce's account is the interpretant, which is the best idea of as the comprehending that it requires for the sign and object relation. Interpretant is not just a dyadic relationship between sign and object because the meaning of a sign is obvious in the interpretation that it creates in sign users.

For Hiltunen, interpretation as well as an issue, and signal dimensions, form the shape of the future sign [12]. Kuusi demonstrates the shape and position that mentioned above, dimensions concerning the Peirce's sign in Fig. 1 [13].
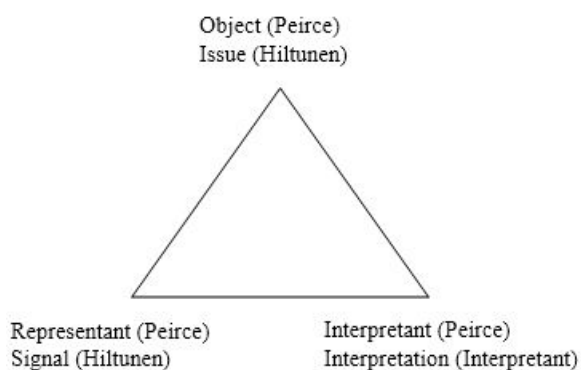

Fig. 1 Sign's triadic model of Peirce and future sign of Hiltunen [13]

In the Fig. 1, a group of signals such as (representants based Peirce's opinion) and issues (objects based on Peirce's opinion) are comprised from three dimensions of the sign.

III. CULTURAL SYMBOLS

Symbols established of culture in the different ways such as flags, certificates, signals and many more are symbols. Therefore, fundamental of symbolism is humans that communication without it would be inconceivable. Language is the most symbolic aspect of culture. In addition, art, politics, religion and literature are other approach that symbolism also plays a role in as well as in natural attraction, commerce and science. Symbolism is foundation state of being male or female by concerning social or cultural differences that nationality and ethnic are construction and conveyance. Human beings create meaning; categorize their knowledge, control society and manifested emotion by the initial way. Some scientists, such as Geertz, utilize the symbol such as a veneer term "act, relation, or quality for any object which serves as a vehicle for a conception" [14]. In the history of symbols, culture has been thought by a group of scholars such as Dieterlen [15] and Schefold [16] as a key factor in symbolic developments. Cultural symbols might best be defined through Schefold's thoughts who argues that individuals' house, traditionally, is a three-dimensional fact that create space, protects it by some boundaries. In this regard, the concept of cultural space might be formed through the initial indigenous models that have existed since creation, and gradually completed by models surrounding the environment in the entire universe. Therefore, one of the initial cultural symbols emerge from environmental issues rather than universal one [17].

IV. WORD ORIGIN AND DEFINITION

The field of housing is regarded as one of the essential issues of social life, and many scholars such as Dunn [18] tried to demonstrate its value in individuals' life by referring to it as the undeniable fact in life management. Many scholars from various directions have investigated the term home. Some examined its origin and linguistic background in order to discover its background. Investigations over the term home, documented the works of Hollander [19] who believed that home belongs to the Indo-European word family of kei, which means something precious and originated from German language heim or heem, which refers to a place for rest. He also mentioned that the concept of the house in German language is not only a place that family live there, but it conveys the feeling of being at home.

Similarly, Benjamin et al [20] have defined home as the place where not only settles people physically, but culturally and socially as well as psychologically. More recently, literature has emerged more findings about the origin of 'home'.

Blunt & Dowling [21] which most probably defines the fundamental categories of housing have classified home as one of the categories of housing, which its inhabitants have the sense of belonging in it. In addition, Rapport and Dawson referred to home as the "cultural norms and individual fantasies" [22]. The concept of culture in Rapport and Dawson's [22] definition reflects the idea of Somerville [23] who describes the culture as the society comprises basic element with culture as a separate and independent phenomenon in it.

V. HOUSE AND HOME CONNOTATION

Numerous studies have attempted to explain the fundamental role of the housing in constructing of the

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individuals' identity in social life [8], [24] and in creating the social status [25], [26]. Furthermore, in describing the connection between identity and housing, a group of scholars [27], [28] argued that identity is a determinant factor in an organization of the house as well as its barriers based on their own cultural taste [29].

In order to describe the importance of connotation that is carried out by a specific word, it is worth mentioning to refer to psychological facts such as schema that has been suggested by Myers [30]. Schema or schemata is a mental system through which words are processed and categorized in different groups of names, people, situations, places, etc.[30].

A schema is a procedure that acquires in the culture and performs a variety of application. For example, it is used to comprehend, systematized, and categorized the knowledge that is received by human and will be employed for simplification processing for the coming message so that it decreases the probability of confusions [31]. "The built environment is more or less isomorphic with the social system that is developed within it. Also because no human environment of any consequence can be perceived as a physical object in isolation from its social implications and behavioral activity patterns" [31]. The schema theory applied in relation to the connotations carried out by the word housing has been explained by Cold and Nasar as aesthetics includes two categories: formal aesthetics and symbol aesthetics [32], [33]. Nasar pointed out the formal category is simply the physical characteristics such as shape, color, size whereas; symbol aesthetic is the combination of meaning between these factors from a personal point of view [33]. Therefore, it can be comprehended that the meanings created by buildings is an effective method to tell others who we are and vice versa. This fact is clearly reflected by Robinson by stating, "The spatial world in which we live tells us who we are. We find our self within it, we respond to it, and it reacts to us. By manipulating it, we affirm our identity" [34].

The focus of research on housing has put an enormous attention on the quality of housing in order to establish a well-designed connection between the members of the local area. According to the Blunt & Dowling's definition of the home as "a method of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging", other scholars take a further step by considering the importance of a home [21]. In fact, its significance has been suggested to vary based on the conditions in sociological, economical, and cultural contexts.

VI. FIELD STUDY

Cyprus as a third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea cause of strategic location is influenced by the distinctive country and civilization. Thus, Cyprus culture tied with different history. In fact, identifying the Cypriot houses requires that investigate on the Cyprus architecture history and illustrate the characteristics of these periods. The multilateral history has created the identity and culture for Cypriot people and certainly affected on Cypriot houses style. Cyprus history

influenced with thirteen significant world power such as Egyptian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Venetian, Ottoman, and the British that each of them has its unique architectural symbols to represent the attitudes, customs of civilization and culture of their own time [36]. Greek and Turkish Cypriot people in 1971 have had this opportunity to govern together independently [35]. However, Greek and Turkish Cypriot participate in governing did not continue for the long time (just three years). Cyprus divided to the two parts with political boundary defined in 1974, the southern area for Greek Cypriot and northern area for Turkish Cypriot (after Turkish military intervention). Nine years later in 1983, Turkish Cypriot established the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) and this government independence is continued until now. By attention to this brief background, it is not unexpected that dominant effects and some similarity of cultural, religious and political form and style of architectures appears in Cypriot houses.

A. Brief History of Famagusta

Famagusta is a one of the north Cyprus city in eastern shores of the island. Famagusta was the crusader of French Kingdome in 14th century. French gothic leaving the legacy of numerous architectural construction in to the Walled City. In addition, Venetians ruled the city before Ottomans victory. All of these cultures left behind vestiges of their magnificent architecture in this city. In the recent years, Famagusta has experienced the most rapidly of construction architecture in island. This high rate of construction whether individual houses or apartments well-established field to create captivating zone for constructions companies for investment on housing field.

Architectural historian and archeologist have identified the distinctive style for different architectural periods in Cyprus. Despite, different group in distinctive times use the same style of architecture for their own purpose. This architectural style such as domes in Byzantine architecture, broad eaves and vertical windows for Ottoman are clearly observed according to historian building that belonging to the specific time. However, by investigative on the new architecture style in Cyprus also according to results of designer's interview it seems that the symbols have used in recently constructions, generally come from Ottoman (1571-1878) and British Colonial (1878-1960) periods. All of these periods impact by Mediterranean tendency make the Cyprus style with specific cultural symbols.

B. Interview Result

According to interview with the Construction Companies designers and academicians architects, most of the construction company's designers and architects claimed because of the buyers taste they do not have the opportunity to use the cultural symbols in their designs. In addition, the designers and architect that attended in interview have a tendency to the modern style. They believe that; rate of the

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buyers shows this fact 'ignoring the cultural feature in their design help them to attract the more buyers'.

Moreover, this group of the architect mostly gets their first idea from some other architect. Therefore, it could be one reason to ignore the Cypriot culture during the design process inadvertently.

According to the interview result, the most of the cultural symbols that have used in the contemporary houses come from recently periods, Ottoman and British Colonial. The arches, wide balcony and the 'cumba' are the symbols that all of them mentioned as the Cypriot houses symbols. However, they have used these symbols seldom with the some changes to make more adoptability with the modern style.

They mentioned that differences between design of individual houses and apartment type are the client ideas. It means architects use the buyer's idea about the house in the individual cases. However, it is impossible to use this approach for apartment type of housing. Therefore, architects and designers trust their previous experiences.

The arches, wide balcony, vertical windows the interior corridor traditional materials and precast mosaic are the features that designers motioned during the interview.

C. Content Analysis Result

According to the content of previous chapters of literature review and comparing with the result of interviews (out of 28 Cypriot architects and designers) and symbols that used in Cypriot houses several codes obtained. These obtained codes are the symbolic features, which are more known for the Cypriots architects and designers. The using rate of these codes shows that, which one is more familiar (chart I).
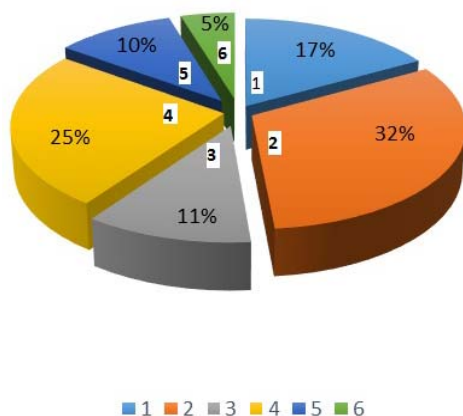

Fig. 1 Content analysis result (chart index: 1. Cumba, 2. Balcony, 3. Corridor, 4. Arch, 5. Vertical window, 6. Precast Mosaic)

The chart one divided into the six parts that each of them is observing and assess the cognizance symbol. According to chart, the 'balcony' (32%) is the most familiar housing symbol and the 'precast mosaic' (5%) is less familiar than other symbols.

D. Results of Cypriot Tendency by Attention to the Housing Cultural Symbols

Out of 68 Cypriot, were asked about three different houses photos to evaluate their interest and tendency. Because of the Cypriot houses symbols, these houses photos were different. However, all of the houses are built in the Cyprus. The result of Cypriot tendency observed in Table I.

TABLE I
RESULTS OF CYPRIOT TENDENCY BY ATTENTION TO THE HOUSING CULTURAL SYMBOLS

	Image 1	Image 2	Image 3
18-30	16 (%)	19 (%)	65 (%)
31-40	9 (%)	27 (%)	64 (%)
41-50	0 (%)	0 (%)	100 (%)

Cypriot inhabitants tend to change these symbols to show the modern and contemporary houses for today life without the exaggerating and old style of symbols. However, most of them with the rich background prefer to have the house with the cultural symbols whether with the new interpretation or original style.

E. Cypriot Houses and Their Cultural Symbols

By attention to the colors, wide balcony, entrance, and comparing with traditional houses in Famagusta, it seems that Cypriot contemporary houses use the cultural symbols in various houses futures. In fact, the wide balcony that have used in contemporary houses is one of the British Colonial housing symbol (Fig. 2). According to architects and designers opinion and result of interview, the wide balcony is one of the housing symbols, which also than the relationship with architectural period of Cyprus, is relevant by the climate condition of an island.

Fig. 2 Two and three-bedroom apartment (Photo by author)

Furthermore, the box form that have used around the balcony is the 'cumba'. The 'cumba' or bay window is the

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box shape of the balcony that come from Ottoman architectural period to supply the secure chance for women to see the outside without being seen (Fig. 3). In the Ottoman, architectural period by Islamic influence used this box form to make the veil for the balcony [37].

Fig. 3 The '*Cumba',* instance of Ottoman houses symbol. (Photo by author)

However, in new houses facade cumba take the new form to make more adaptability with the modern houses style (fig. 4).

Fig. 4 Use of cumba with the new interpretation in Famagusta modern houses (Photo by author)

Arch is a familiar component in Cypriot traditional houses, which has been used as the vernacular construction system. However, arches in contemporary houses have been used mostly as the façade or/and entrance ornaments. In fact, use of arches in exaggerating way makes monotonous sense for inhabitants. Therefore, architects attempted for changing the original shape of them to make the new interpretation by using the angles and other innovation designs. In the contemporary houses, architects try to create the vertical form of windows by connecting the horizontal windows with the frame.

The vertical frame usually connects the three or more horizontal windows to each other to simulate the vertical form of window (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 The vertical windows at the front of the building facade. (Photo by author)

F. Plan Analyzing

According to the traditional houses plan and compare with the contemporary houses plan, some similarity is observed. The religious mostly influence the plan of the Cyprus houses. Therefore, in Cypriot houses attempted to separate the bedrooms from the living room by using the doors and/or corridor that stand between the bedrooms and living room. In the new building plan, the corridor is between the bedrooms and living room that clearly similar to the traditional houses plan in Famagusta. The corridor helps to have better ventilation inside the house and separate the living room from bedrooms to make the more private space (plan I). The difference between the traditional houses and the contemporary houses is that, in relation to the hot climate of Cyprus, rooms used to be grouped around a courtyard [38], which is one of the Ottoman period houses characteristic. However, in the contemporary housing because of the limited area and apartment building type, it is impossible to make this traditional solution against the hot climate of the island.
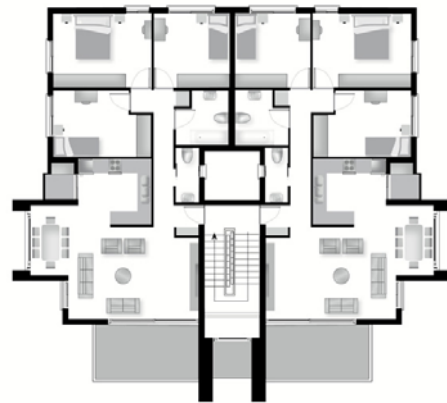

Fig. 6 Plan of three –bedroom [39]

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VII. CONCLUSION

Historical periods, religious and hot climate impact of Turkish culture created the housing cultural symbols for Cypriot inhabitants. Certainly Cypriot people have used these symbols to identifying their house and constructing the home instead of the house whether consciously or unconsciously. The cultural symbols of their housing by investigative in Famagusta clearly observed. In fact, the most of these symbols reflect the Ottoman and British Colonial periods. According to field study, the wide balcony, cumba, arches, shutter and vertical windows in their houses facade are clear instances of Cypriot housing cultural symbols. These housing symbols are reflecting their culture in addition, identify their housing. Moreover, using the intelligent solutions against the hot climate by using the corridor for better ventilation and wide windows are the other characteristics of their houses.

According to the Cyprus architectural housing symbols and investigating on the contemporary houses, it seems these houses have been built by used the some of the cultural symbols in the new interpretation way. However, most of the symbols that found in the contemporary housing are not used consciously. By attention to the interview and other results, Cypriot people prefer to have houses with their cultural symbols unconsciously as their taste. However, using the cultural symbols in exaggerating way make monotonous sense for inhabitants. Therefore, architects and designers have the difficult task to find the best way that using the housing symbols in the true interpretation.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Use of Cultural symbols in contemporary houses is a significant way to transfer the house to the home. However, to reach the more adaptability with the new houses style it could be unavoidable to use the new symbols interpretation. Therefore, it could be necessary to ordain the relevant Cyprus government's rules to preservation the cultural context of the houses.

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