



The Sense of Unity : The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture

Nader Ardalan, Laleh Bakhtiar

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Despite its extraordinary richness, Islamic architecture has rarely been studied for its conceptual and symbolic significance. In *The Sense of Unity*, a handsomely illustrated volume and the first extended work of its kind, Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar examine the architecture of Persia as a manifestation of Islamic tradition and demonstrate the synthesis of traditional Persian thought and form. The most fundamental principle of Sufism, the inner, esoteric dimension of Islam, is that of unity in multiplicity. This view sees in every aspect of reality a reflection of a transcendent source which is given symbolic expression through all of man's activities, most directly and importantly through his works of art. The authors of *The Sense of Unity* show how all the elements of the Islamic architecture of Persia from the simplest architectural unit to a complex urban environment are woven around this central doctrine and thus are best understood as multiple manifestations of unity. *The Sense of Unity* is illustrated with photographs, drawing, charts, and tables which are an integral part of its argument and which exemplify, in abundant and striking detail, the principles discussed in the text. Presenting to the Western reader for the first time the insights of the Iranian cultural tradition, the book also offers a stimulating new way of thinking about man and his relationship to his milieu.

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