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Selective Re-creation of Remembrances: The Case of Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil, Iran

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Abstract

This is an inquiry into the functionalisation of a historical monument in the World Heritage List, on defining a social and cultural identity through a process of selective re-creation of remembrances, that is constituted by a common sense of longing for the idealized past. The Case of Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil, Iran includes a core zone that is subject to the historic preservation processes under the guidance of ICOMOS; and a buffer zone that is left for renovation to achieve a complete sense of a historical old town with a great contribution of new buildings and spaces that look historic without being historical. It is argued that there is the lack of a guarantee provided by the international world heritage organizations for securing and sustaining the sense of place of the local communities that is challenged by a number of purposes including the touristic function of the World Heritage property. For the case of this study it is revealed that either for the touristic function or for some other purpose, not all the urban communities of the past are equally emphasized and protected in the current realm. Based on the literature review on the concepts of cultural heritage, authenticity, sense of place and their contribution to the act of place making, this study reveals the ongoing process of displacement of an unwanted past for creating an urban historicity.

Keywords: *Sense of Place, Authenticity, Counterfeit Historic Architecture, UNESCO World Heritage, Social Sustainability*

Hatıraların Seçici Yeniden Yaratımı: Erdebil, İran'da Şeyh Safi Al-Din Hangah ve Türbe Yapı Grubu Örneği

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Öz

Bu çalışma Dünya Mirası Listesine alınmış bir tarihi eserin, idealize edilen bir geçmişe olan ortak özlemden beslenen, seçilmiş hatıraların yeniden yaratılması süreci ile sosyal ve kültürel kimliği yeniden tanımlamak için işlevlendirilmesini inceler. İran'ın Erdebil kentinde, Şeyh Safi al-Din Zaviye ve Tapınak Yapı Grubu'nun ICOMOS rehberliğinde yürütülen tarihi çevre düzenleme projesi, tarihi yapı koruma ve onarım çalışmalarını içeren çekirdek bölge ile tam anlamıyla eski bir kent merkezi görünümüne kavuşturulmak üzere yenileme için ayrılmış olan bir ara bölgeden oluşmaktadır. Çalışma, bu miras mülkü özelinde, özellikle ara bölge düzenlemelerine odaklanarak yerel toplulukların zaman içinde katmanlaşarak kurdukları yer hissini koruması veya sürdürülmesi konularında uluslararası dünya mirası koruma organizasyonları tarafından desteklenen bir garantinin olmadığını tartışmaktadır. Çalışma konusu alanın düzenlenmesinde güncel durumda kültür turizmi için işlevlendirilme ya da diğer bir sebep ile geçmişte yaşamış kentsel topluluklara ait farklı katmanların tamamının eşit derecede vurgulanmadığı ya da korunmadığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Kültürel miras, özgünlük, yer duygusu kavramları ve bu kavramların yeri yapmaya olan katkısına odaklanan yazın taraması ile bu çalışma, istenmeyen bir geçmişin yerinden edilmesi ve kentsel bir tarihsellik yaratma sürecini açığa çıkarmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yer Hissi, Özgünlük, Sahte Tarihi Mimari, UNESCO Dünya Mirası, Sosyal Sürdürülebilirlik

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, *heritage* and *authenticity* constituted two significant concepts about the historic settings that have been subject to critical discussions by leading researchers. In this paper, a special emphasis was paid for the criterion of achieving and sustaining the 'sense of place' in any given historical setting. It is crucial to understand the way a world heritage is comprehended by the local and the international authorities and the way it is embedded into the local sustenance of its sociability, sense of place, and sense of community.

In their work, Jiven and Larkham (2003) give evidence from various researchers that the 'sense of place', in Norberg-Schulz's terms, does not necessarily require historical authenticity or morality; but the adoption of the users and occupants of the historic sites. As they conclude their question about the relationship between 'sense of place' and authenticity, they stress that "positive experiential value" is needed to sustain the value of the authentic. Values of people who occupy and use places are important and the international conventions do not necessarily guarantee the security of the sense of place (Jiven and Larkham, 2003). In these terms, keeping everything frozen is inappropriate in preserving the sense of place in the urban scale, however, as Ouf (2001) remarks, this should not be confused with the concept of creating a historical illusion, or 'Disneyfication'. On the contrary, he confirms that honesty of an urban conservation project requires authenticity (Ouf, 2001, p.74).

This study focuses on the new development plan of Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil which was accepted to the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010 in the category of *a group of buildings*. It presents the extension project of the preservation site as an urban intervention of a development plan to be built in "harmony" with the Ensemble, as expressed by Yousafi (2014), the director of the archaeological excavations of the property, with an active role in preparing the development plan of the site (Yousafi, Alizadeh Sola, & Tavousi, 2014).

The tensile nature of the discussions on heritage preservation which intersects the issues of preservation, repair, reconstruction, conservation, (anti)restoration, cultural identity, sense of place, and social sustainability requires a specific attention for constructing the discussion for this study. Another focus that is crucial to the specific case of this study is the univer-

sal value of the heritage property and the challenging nature of touristic function of a World heritage and its service for the cultural and national identity definition of its local society. In this study, our method of inquiry is the documentation of the past and upcoming progresses of the Ensemble's surrounding setting so as to discuss the completed and expected interventions that set up an exclusive utilization of the heritage property with a specific focus on the sustenance of its sense of place.

Debates about Heritage and Authenticity

The opposition between restoration movement represented by Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and anti-restoration movement by John Ruskin represent two attitudes about the sustenance of the sense of place (Nasser, 2003). Viollet-Le-Duc's work dominated the era of restoration which was concerned with achieving a complete whole as a new monument, rather than preserving an old entity (Glendinning, 2003). This was an attitude that might add completely new parts to a building in the style of the original (Plevoets and Cleempoel, 2011). John Ruskin on the other hand, leading the era of 'romanticism', claimed a total rejection of restoration and declared it an immoral activity that violates the 'ancestral piety' (Glendinning, M., 2003).

Camillo Boito having experienced the debate between restoration ideology and conservationism endorsed a critical attitude to decide for consolidation and repair instead of restoration and completely rejected additions and renovations. He also claimed any additions or alterations applied on the monument in time should be considered as parts of it and, therefore, should be protected. His ideas were constituted in the Athens charter (1931) which declared that excluding the style of any given period should be avoided (Chung, 2005). The 1964 Venice Charter, on the other hand, expanded the scope of definition for a historic monument from single architectural works to include their urban or rural settings (Article 1 of the Venice Charter, 1964). In 1975 Amsterdam Declaration, the social factors of historic towns were included in the heritage definition. The Washington Charter in 1987 included "all urban communities" of the past as the object of preservation to express "the diversity of societies throughout history". (Article 1:1 of Washington Charter, 1987, cited by Ahmad, Y., 2006). Today, the explanation on the UNESCO website of the reason to

protect heritage summarizes the motive for the increasing universality of heritage protection: "Building intercultural understanding: through protection of heritage and support for cultural diversity. UNESCO created the idea of World Heritage to protect sites of outstanding universal value (UNESCO, 2012)."

As Nasser explicates, after the turn of architectural and socioeconomic practices of the second half of the 20th century, the aim to achieve pure authenticity was replaced and urban conservation has started to mean the integrity of physical, spatial, and social conservation. The aim was converted into making a towns' development be recognizable and continuous, which requires the conservation of the traces of the communities of the past. However, Nasser (2003) cites Larkham (1996) who asserts that this is not completely possible as the buildings are adapted to the modern use (Nasser, 2003).

Larkham (1990) remarks the obliterating effect of retaining the visual appearance of historic areas on the historical and architectural significance of buildings. Nasser exemplifies the variety of ideas about the adaptation and alteration of the historic buildings and their environments which mainly represent a variety of arguments about the adaptability of the historic buildings to the modern use. As he puts it, the problem is the amount of change that is open to criticism (Nasser, 2003, p.470).

The work of Riaubienė (2007) expresses authenticity as a primary concept in heritage preservation, which has emerged in the 20th century. The attempts to set a universally valid code of criteria for authenticity failed. It remained dependent on the cultural values and there is no space for a static or inflexible set of criteria (Riaubienė, 2007). Lowenthal (1992) comments that authenticity is reduced by time and change, through the alterations of us and our environments. Besides, according to him, authenticity has an ambiguous meaning, having "... a fluid boundary between truth and falsehood (Lowenthal, 1992)."

In his work Lowenthal (1998) defines heritage: "Heritage exaggerates and omits, candidly invents and frankly forgets, and thrives on ignorance and error." He explains *selectively forgetting* as a mode of fabrication of heritage to alter the past. "It [heritage] selectively forgets the evil or indecorous or incomprehensible in acts of oblivion and bowdlerizing (Lowenthal, 1998)." This can be the explanation of creating harmonious environments to bring back the longed past.

The examples he gives range from Great Britain to United States of America, from Greece to Switzerland. According to him, false information is a method to sustain societies, especially based on the claim of superiority among others. Proceeding from the arguments of Lowenthal (1998) on the difference between heritage and history, we understand that heritage is more real than history when the concern is the sustenance of a society (Lowenthal, 1998). Similarly, Edson discusses heritage invention and adaptation as the consequence of changing and expanding social patterns that does not fit the practices and institutions of the past (Edson, 2004).

In his work, Levi (2005) cites the results of a study conducted at San Luis Obispo, California, which displayed that “constructing fake historic architecture was viewed as a sign of respect for the community’s history, rather than debasing it.” His work explicates that fake historic architecture is approved in the Western World to a certain extent, as in the New Urbanist Cities of USA unified styles of fake historic architecture is adopted as a method to reinforce the sense of community (Levi, 2005). And it is also not unfamiliar to meet fake historic architecture as an advertisement strategy for tourism.

“Less genteel, less educated, and less reverential modern audiences often prefer empathy to authenticity. At sacred shrines of the famous such as Stratford or Mount Vernon the public may demand the real thing, but elsewhere authenticity yields to Tussaud or Disney. Unlike scholarly experts, most people are pretty relaxed about authenticity.

Though unconvinced at heart, most tourists are readily satisfied by any make-believe experience with the slightest whiff of truth (Lowenthal, 1992, p.93).”

Yet Levi (2005) refers to tourism professionals who warn against unreal historic places are less attractive to both tourists and residents. As he underlines in his study, critics have emphasized the reduced appreciation of historic buildings when historic and fake historic styles are mixed (Levi, 2005, p.157). With a quotation from Huxtable’s work (1997), he expresses the claim of architectural critics to advocate “a living history” approach that allow new buildings to reflect contemporary styles while preserving the old.

Tourism and Conserving the Sense of Place

Nasser (2003) discusses that sustainable tourism should be a significant part of sustainable planning for the heritage places, which considers managing conservation and development with a balanced nature for responding preservation, economic, and sociocultural needs together (Nasser,

2003). However, it is a challenge to combine the tourism function with preserving the authentic historic character in districts with historical monuments. As Nasser relates, the tourism function risks the predominance of the conservation values for the sake of 'consumerism of heritage'. "With the emergence of a greater number of destinations competing for unique tourist experiences, traditional historic places are undergoing a redefinition and reinterpretation of their cultural heritage in order to be competitive and attractive (Nasser, 2003, p. 467)." The management and planning of historic areas has to handle a consensus in-between the demands of the two distinct functions of conserving heritage and touristic consumerism. Nasser's study (2003) is presenting a community and culture lead agenda to make this possible. He claims not only the historic authenticity of the cultural heritage but the authentic features of a local culture, as the object of conservation from the possible damage of its objectification as a product of tourist consumption (Nasser, 2003).

Regarding Lowenthal's definition of heritage, the fluid and adaptable nature of heritage through invention of forgetting constitutes a threat on the 'sense of place' and collective memory, while merely focusing on tourism and disregarding the local culture may reduce it to an object of touristic consumption. In order to avoid this threat, three distinctive foci can be identified to consider on dealing with the challenge for touristic function and heritage conservation. They are; operating tourism to support and strengthen the local identity, achieving an appreciated global value and compete with its equivalents, and definition of actual authenticity to be conserved under the influence of global impact.

According to Orbasli (2002), tourism as a global growth industry has begun to play a significant role in conservation and economic regeneration (Orbasli, 2002). Ouf (2001) reveals that urban conservation is a costly process which leaves tourism as a major source of finance and hence a major determinant for its concepts and methodologies (Ouf, 2001). However, authenticity may remain limited with the listed monument, and not adapted to the surrounding settlement, with a similar agenda of creating an attraction point for culture tourism. Ouf (2001) expresses the challenge of authenticity in environments that surround historical properties: "authenticity in urban design needs to be dealt with sensitively, as it involves conserving streets, alleys, buildings, social practices and community cultural beliefs that are spread over a large urban area. Keeping authenticity

in architecture is definitely much easier since it only covers a small area of one building or a part of a building and is mainly focused on physical architectural details (Ouf, 2001, p.74)". It is needed to attach a heritage meaning and function to the conserved space which may include economic, cultural, social or political purposes.

According to Nasser (2003), The exploitation and creation of culture is a consequence of the relationship between tourism and heritage, and this happens when tourism is given a central role in the local economy (Nasser, 2003). As economic problems have a great weight on the conservation issues of the historic sites, the tourism economy may come to require unbalanced expensive changes in the form, function and structure of places.

On explaining the factors that encourage fake historic architecture, Levi (2005) addresses its role in supporting tourism, which in turn provides advantages for local economy and communities' sense of pride. This, as he explains, is a consequence of the success of well-preserved authentic historical districts that encourage the construction of fake historic architecture. However, as he puts it, "[t]he important historical attributes of a city may be lost by the development of an historical theme environment (Levi, 2005, p.149)." Additionally, the extended commercial services for touristic areas often distort what is required to serve for local populations (Nasser, 2003). Similarly Orbasli (2007) states: "There is often an inherent conflict between the desired 'experience' of the tourists, the reality of a destination and the aspirations of the local population (Orbasli, 2007)." Admitting the economic potential of tourism, she argues: "Only tourism planning that directly benefits local interest and the local economy will serve a realistic continuation of heritage (Orbasli, 2002)." Regarding the issue of sustainable tourism, she is claiming the requirement of local-level direction and control to be effective, on achieving a sustainable development in the management practices of historic places.

However, it is not always the economic practices that disturb the integral completeness of the historic buildings. Most of the time, the idealized touristic perception and the ideal form of presenting a historic building is subject to criticism for triggering that disturbance. Orbasli (2002) declares that there is a risk of ignoring the depth and dynamism of the urban environment in favour of sterile settings (Orbasli, 2002). Regarding this problem, Nasser (2003) discusses the attitude of *selectivity* in the conservation plan of historic districts, which means favoring certain periods above oth-

er periods that the town has evolved through till today. Being a basis for tourist attraction is one reason to this problem, which leaves less favoured areas out of attention (Nasser, 2003).

The case of Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil and the interventions in its *Buffer Zone*

Culture tourism in Iran:

The work of Nezhad & Henachi (2014) reveals the growing awareness and expertise in the conservation and heritage tourism in Iran. As they explicate, during and right after the Iran-Iraq War, there was very little opportunity to develop a conservation movement in Iran until the beginning of 1990s, when the legislative, administrative, social and economic bases of the organization was established. Similarly, as Abdi (2001) expresses, archaeology had served for the identity of the Pahlavi government, and was rejected until 1990's as a pseudoscience by the reformist government. As he points, it was the same time when "antagonism toward pre-Islamic Iran" ended with the Rafsanjani's visit to Persepolis (Abdi, 2001). After mid-1990s, conservation strategies for urban patterns became a subject of consideration, which meant the expansion of the conservation issue from single buildings to urban settings (Nezhad & Henachi, 2014). This was also the time young graduates of archaeology and conservation faculties provided a labour power to trigger the developmental force on conservation studies. The restoration works had been funded by the support of local societies and studies to apply for the World Heritage Organization to list historic monuments started at this period. By the mid-1990s, conservational achievements has developed with a growing power. Nezhad & Henachi (2014) present some of the achievements the organization has achieved till today as follows: opening more than forty state and private museums, having ten historic monuments added to the World Heritage List and applying for others (IRNA, 2014), increasing the funds for tourism accomplishments, expanding opportunities for education and signing contracts with cooperating partners from neighboring countries. Grigor (2005) reveals that it was after January 2000, when the Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Ayatollah Mohajerani in Kish started a revival for the recognition of the importance of tourism industry. (Grigor, 2005, p.545).

The process of including Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil in the World Heritage List

The Shrine dates back to 16th century and appears to have had a construction process until the end of 18th century, built as a complex responding a variety of the needs of local residents and travelers, ranging from healthcare to education; from physical to spiritual. It was an entity constituting religious, charity, social, cultural and educational facilities. States Rizvi: "By the sixteenth century, this shrine could be seen as the physical manifestation of Safavid society's attitudes toward life, death, and eternity." (Rizvi, 2000a, p.323). It represents the training and educational philosophies of the Safavid tradition with the diversity and richness of spaces for a variety of purposes. In addition to a number of private local or foreign experts' research studies, Hassan Yousafi led the study on the ensemble which was conducted by archaeological works of ICHHTO (Iran's Cultural Heritage Handicrafts and Tourism Organization) (Yousafi, et. al., 2014).

The Ensemble was nominated to be included in the World Heritage List with an application report prepared by this organization (ICHHTO, 2009). On account of the repair and reconstruction research and work that has been continued for several decades by a variety of institutions before and after the 1979 revolution; the nomination report was based on three distinct zones defined as 'the protective boundaries' of the historic property and its environment (Figure 1).

The very environment of the ensemble is marked as the Buffer Zone under the control of ICHHTO, the owner of the ensemble property. The existing new constructions in the 'first area buffer zone' are the museum and Āli Qāpu Mosque, completed within the short-term schedule of the proposed development plan of the site. As stated in the nomination report the closest target was finalizing the semi-constructed projects, which were located in core zone and buffer zone. The approval of this nomination report displays the fact that the designs, functions, and historic styles of the new buildings of the first area were approved by ICOMOS (2010a).

In the evaluation report of the Ensemble and its protection plan published on the UNESCO website, the only criterion visible for the built properties in the buffer zone has been attained by local regulations about the limitations to the height of the new buildings. (ICOMOS, 2010b, p.127)

ICOMOS has examined the Ardabil Master plans and the precautions taken for the protection of the historic properties, regarding the buffer zone of the Ensemble. It is written in the report: "ICOMOS observes that the area selected to surround the nominated property as the buffer zone is well thought-out and is large enough to ensure the adequate indirect protection of the nominated property." Therefore, it becomes clear that the primary concern is the *protection* of the nominated property (ICOMOS, 2010b).

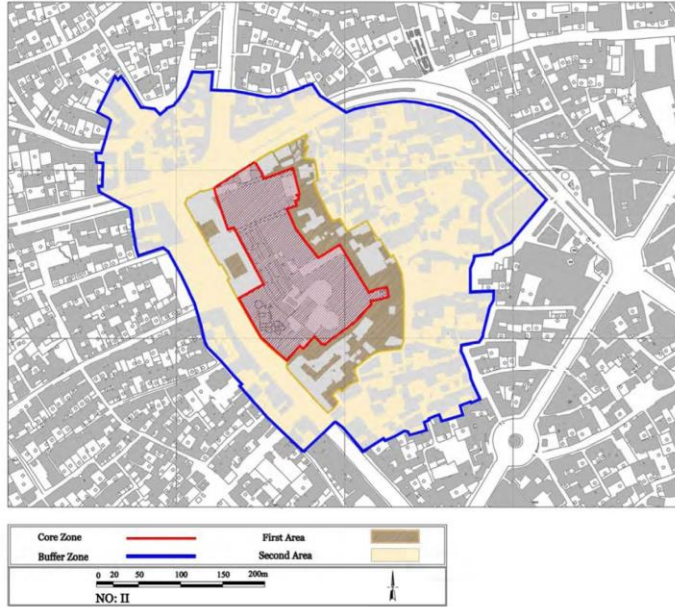


Figure 1. Map displaying 'the protective boundaries' of the Ensemble in the nomination report (Source: ICHHTO 2009)

Regarding the new construction zone which is the buffer zone in the plan, ICOMOS had been informed about the design approved by ICHHTO with its features such as "respecting the forms and materials of traditional architecture" and "rebuilding shops in vernacular style". The consideration explicated by ICOMOS was about the limitation of glazed areas designed for the shops with an architectural control (ICOMOS, 2010b).

As the nomination report expresses, ICHHTO has established two separate areas in the Buffer zone (Figure 1). It is understood that the regulations were in development progress at the time the report was prepared, and for both areas in the buffer zone there was that item about the new constructions: "Architectural designs and outward appearances of struc-

tures, which may compromise the visual integrity of the area must be in accordance with the surrounding structures (ICOMOS, 2010b).” It is apparent that there weren’t any expression or limitation about any historic look of the new constructions regarding the buffer zone, which includes the adjacent buildings to the Ensemble.

This inquiry requires reading the two distinct interventions taking place in the surrounding Buffer zone of the Ensemble. One of them is about the removal of interventions of the recent past that were in use by the local communities before the renovation process, and the other is on the new constructions in the Buffer zone of the protection site.

One of the interventions in the Buffer zone was expressed by the work of Rezazadeh & Peighami (2013), which was refraining the environment from irrelevant or unfamiliar masses so as to respect the historical heritage. This was namely the removal of the previous square and mosque at Āli Qāpu, which was explained to be one of the most significant mosques in Ardabil, (Rezazadeh & Peighami, 2013), and this attitude does not match a similar legitimizing expression in any of the charters that are currently valid. Only within the restoration ideology could we find an explanation about sterilizing the setting, if the primary intention were taking the monument and its site to the *original* state. However, considering the new touristic functions, the continuing motor traffic passing through the buffer zone, the invented New Āli Qāpu mosque and museum that was built in the 1st part of the Buffer zone and their historic look, the commercial shops inside these invented historic buildings and the small shopping center erected at the site of the previous mosque corroborate that the development plan was designed to achieve an entirely new situation mainly based on the touristic and commercial function of the area.

The state of originality depends on the state of the object at the time that it was built in; it apparently disregards all other ephemeral phases that the object was subject to and therefore the lived experiences of that object. As Lowenthal (1992) expresses it, “... original ... was only a temporary phase in the ... lifetime career (Lowenthal, 1992, p.83).”



Figure 2. The destroyed square and mosque in Āli Qāpu (Source: شهردار از عکسهای و قدیم اردبیل (n.d.). Retrieved April 01, 2016)

It is understood that the demolished mosque had a significant place in the social and cultural habits of the society, which was intended to be sustained in the development proposals. The point that the fundamental function of the square and the mosque was protected by building up a new mosque and a new design as the gathering place might not guarantee that the sense of place could be sustained. Instead, these social activities were used as agents to make the newly erected building be adopted easily and quickly.



Figure 3. The Destroyed Mosque in Āli Qāpu (source: قاپو عالی مسجد قدیمی عکس اردبیل (n.d.). Retrieved April 01, 2016)



Figure 4. The Destroyed Mosque in Āli Qāpu (Rezazadeh & Peighami, 2013).

Diba & Dehbashi (2004) assert that the traditional architecture in Iran being rooted in Persian culture, continued to develop throughout the Safavid era until the end of the Qajar reign. According to them, the influence of Iranian architecture from the Western civilization, which was the birth of the spaces of today's Iranian life, begun during the Qajar period. It was a period in between 1800 and 1979, which ended with the Islamic revolution in Iran. Therefore, the thing that was intended to be removed is more likely the products of a process that has lasted for almost two centuries with inevitable traces on the genetics of the society, rather than simple mistakes.

Nevertheless, this influence was not only in architectural style. In the modernization process of Iran, Grigor (2005) states, "... architecture became a vital aspect of public instruction, its public presence in urban centers served to create, define, and frame a normative and canonical sense of history, aesthetic value, progress, and modernity (Grigor, 2005)."



Figure 5. Old Āli Qāpu Square and Mosque before demolition. (Rezazadeh & Peighami, 2013)



Figure 6. 3D Model view of the completed development project (Source: Tabnak. (March, 2015). اردبیل گاه شهید محله ساماندهی برای طرحی. Retrieved April 01, 2016)

The Tabnak newspaper article by Saman Abizadeh (2014) comments that there is an urge to meet the longed historic core of the city, which is expected to appear as displayed in Figure 6. Examining the current situation of the area (Figure 7) to compare it with the completed project, a major intervention of building up an invented historical old town setting can be identified.¹ Based on this project it is possible to expect a great demolition of the local residential neighborhood in the near future.

Sharifi & Murayama (2013) indicate that the most important characteristic of a traditional Iranian city is its *integral* structure. However, replacing the current integrity of the urban land with a pseudohistorical integrity of the past may bring out a set of criticisms about the limits of intervening into a local community for the sake of recreating a past scene based on issues of touristic development and place identity. Regarding that, argues Lowenthal (1992), obsession with a specific period of past and neglecting anything before or after that "... reflect uncertainty about our own authenticity (Lowenthal, 1992, p.81)." Regarding another common problem about invented historicity, Boyer (1992) cited by Levi (2005) states: "The construction of fake historical images can hurt efforts toward historic preservation because historic preservation often becomes secondary to the development of these historical theme environments." Relevantly Lowenthal states: "Indeed, the

¹ Sargin reveals a similar approach concerning discontinuity of collective memory in Turkey, practiced via attempts to create a culture of architecture based on the urge of awakening Ottoman glory and Islamic ideology (Sargin, 2004).

more faithfully any aspect of the past is recaptured, the less lifelike the result (Lowenthal, 1992, p.86).”



Figure 7. Satellite view of the current condition of the completed renovation project area (Source: Google Haritalar, Retrieved April 01, 2016)

Similar to the old Āli Qāpu Mosque, the gate to the Shrine that was used before the development of the historic complex (Figure 8) was demolished. According to Rezazadeh & Peighami (2013), one of the reasons for this decision was explained to be the second storey added in the Pahlavi era. Although ‘not having any historic value’ could have been a plain explanation to this decision, their expressions about the intervention of the pre-revolutionary era as a reason to demolish attracts attention. This appears to be a kind of sterilizing attempt for the complex, which have been an attitude subject to criticism in different periods of the history. However, as the evaluation report expresses, ICOMOS has recommended to “[p]roceed with the plans to re-establish the original access to the Shrine and provide the World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS with detailed information on any progress made (ICOMOS 2010b, p. 131).”



Figure 8. The destroyed old main entrance to the Ensemble (Rezazadeh & Peighami, 2013)

In our case, the problem of selectivity as discussed earlier with reference to Nasser occurs not only for the touristic purposes. The less favoured building was destroyed for the sake of emphasizing the existence of the favoured one. Whilst, the age and favourability of any past context are time-dependent values; the attitude of a certain time, which is the past of the future, may prefer one over another and demolish its less favoured one. Therefore, it would be rational to assume the selective attitude may risk the sustenance of today's interventions to the future.

Parallel to the objectives identified by Nasser's study regarding the sustainability of the heritage environments based on their touristic and conservation concerns, long term planning has been developed for the area. However, protection of the cultural heritage as a natural resource and not overexploiting it are questionable regarding the conversion of the existing place identity with touristic and re-created cultural concerns. The acceptance of change and development to ensure continuity can be regarded as a strategy for the place; however, the continuity of the past also remains questionable as the basic cultural discourse is weighted mostly on religious meanings and practices. Therefore, it is also questionable to assume an assured continuity of the meaning of the place. The work of Lowenthal (2004) claims such selectivity as "ulterior motives — to demonstrate or buttress cultural superiority, temporal priority, piety or power — are crucial in fashioning and refashioning art and antiquities (Lowenthal, 1992)."

The work of Rezazadeh & Peighami (2013) explains the approved reconstruction proposal for the historical portal of Āli Qāpu. Unlike the portal, side sections of the portal structure had no documentation to apply a reconstruction. These side parts therefore, have been constructed according to the proposal developed with reference to similar historical buildings' dimensions, construction methods and structural systems; indicating difference from the portal with a separation as the portal was an actual reconstruction of its historic original.

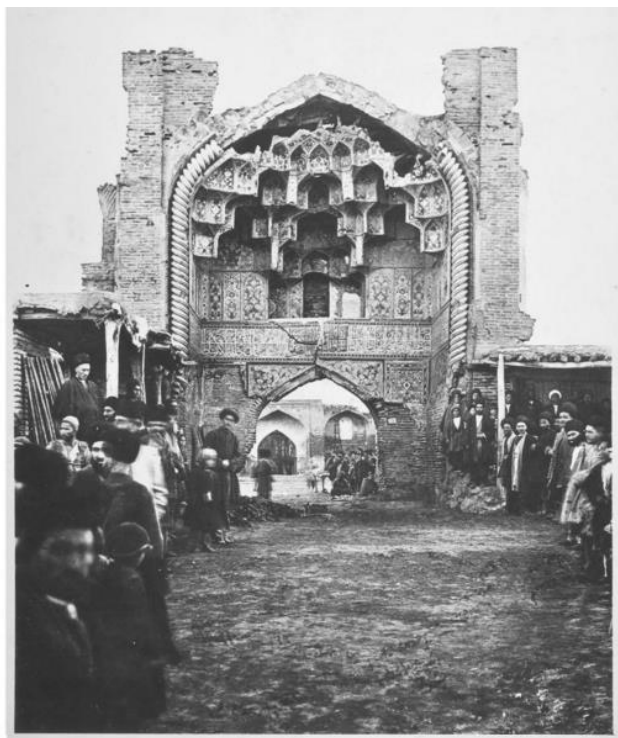


Figure 6 'Ali Qapu Gateway, Ardabil. From Friedrich Sarre, *Ardabil, Grabmoschee des Schech Safis* (Berlin, 1924). Courtesy of Documentation Center, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Fine Arts Library, Harvard College Library.

Figure 9. The condition of the Āli Qāpu Portal at the beginning of the Century (Rizvi, 2011).

The idea of completing the monument with reference to similar structures reflects the flexible understanding of the current restoration paradigm that primarily considers the touristic sustainability of the setting. This appears to be the primary reason for the attempt to reload the monument into a competed state that overlaps with the restoration ideology of Viollet-De-Luc. However, separating the new construction from the reconstruction of the original portal with a sign to indicate that the completed part is not original, reflect the attitude of the 20th century that was founded by the Athens Chart in 1931.



Figure 10. Perspective for the final design of the Āli Qāpu Portal with its side additions (Rezazadeh & Peighami, 2013)

Other than the new constructions of the core zone, one of the new constructions in the buffer zone is the Āli Qāpu Grand Mosque, constructed as a substitution for the demolished old mosque of Āli Qāpu. It is located at the northwestern part of the ensemble, partly at the place of the old square. The work of Rezazadeh & Peighami (2013) explain the reason for changing the location of the mosque as being due to the change in the route and relocation of the Sheikh Safi Street that is adjacent to the Mosque. They also present the new minarets of the mosque, which were located as a city icon for the complex at the junction of Sheikh Safi and Taleqani Streets, on the North Western corner. Unlike the sides of the an-

tique Āli Qāpu portal, this mosque does not have any historical trace of a previous existence. Nevertheless, the mosque has a historic exterior look that appears to have resulted from an intention to displace the collective memory of the previous one. Furthermore the cultural and religious priorities and practices seem to lead the implantation of an Islamic symbol (the minarets) as an icon for the site rather than using the listed monument itself as the urban icon of the Ensemble. However, it also reminds of Hewison's claim (1987) that attending to symbolism of the past to identify the present landscape and its inhabitants is the consequence of a kind of a panic for the loss of confidence with the future.



Figure 11. The New Āli Qāpu Mosque during the mourning ceremony for the murder of Imam Hossain, an ancient Islamic ritual (source: InterAZ (n.d.). Ērdəbildə qarlı havada izdihamlı Tasua mərasimi keçirilib - Fotolent. Retrieved April 01, 2016,

On the other hand, the importance of the mosque as an implantation within the shrine complex appears as a requirement of the Ardabil people's sense of pride. As suggested in Rizvi's work (2000b), during the Safavid Era "... [t]he shrine's unique relationship to imperial power brought it a great deal of attention, by chroniclers, foreign travelers, and of course, its royal patrons" This may have given way to its becoming "the crowning

glory of Ardabil.” Rizvi comments “Perhaps it is because the people of Ardabil are proud of themselves in being staunch believers and see the shrine as representative of their early links to Iran’s conversion to Shi’ism (Rizvi, 2000b).” In IRNA News Agency’s article in 2014, it is declared that the Islamic methods of replacing the old mosque of Āli Qāpu with the new one aimed the revival of historical and cultural identity as well as old texture (construction) of Ardebil city.

Regarding the entrance as the main yard and administrative division, Rezazadeh & Peighami (2013) confirm that on the entrance side of the complex, there is no historical authenticity except for the portal. They also stress that, before the development plan, the structures were not similar and in harmony with the main yard (square). They express that in the final stage of the design, which was approved by ICHHTO; the surrounding of the entrance (sides of the portal) was destroyed and was reconstructed so as to be in harmony with the other sides of the main yard (square). Lowenthal (1992) prefers to characterize as “authentically *fake*” those that have been remade after removing the trace of a past experience, when what was remade had actually been existent in the past (Lowenthal, 1992, p.89). However, he does not identify making what was not there in the past after the removal of the actual past as in the case of Āli Qāpu Mosque.

Conclusion

As being ratified by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, the Sheikh Safi al-Din Khānegāh and Shrine Ensemble in Ardabil belong to an international community of appreciation. Internationality would bring the global agreement about the value of the object of heritage that might separate it from the definitions of heritage made by Lowenthal (1992). However, the surrounding site (buffer zone) of a listed monument has the potential to serve for what heritage serves as Lowenthal defines it. As the Organization is arranging the international assistance for protecting heritage, it is reasonable to limit the range of intervention from outside the context where the internal cultural dynamics under persistent transformation may remain implicit. UNESCO’s *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible*

*Cultural Heritage*² (2003) would address these issues, however; the concerned heritage value of the Ensemble does not include the concern of that convention.

From many definitions of the concepts of authentic and fake, it seems possible to arrive at a conclusion that legitimizes itself under the great excuses like cultural diversity, source of identity and cohesion for communities that are expressed by UNESCO on its website. However, another expression on that website requires specific attention, which includes *human rights* as a fundamental part of a holistic cultural governance. This attention is crucial for a better understanding of the danger of losing the sense of who we are, especially when our identity is defined by a will other than ours. This danger includes the loss of our rights to the city as a human right, which might include the right to choose what to remember; the right to be in the authentic places of remembrances; the right to sustain the sense of place of individual remembrances of hometown, the right to protect the places that reminds experiences, the right to resist against the unfamiliar dictations on familiar places, and the right to protect and defend the self-developed place attachment and identity. It is an urgency to include this danger within the risk definitions adopted by the world heritage organizations.

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² UNESCO (2003). Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Retrieved March 25, 2016, from <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/convention>

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Āli Qāpu Portal