

The Importance of the Historic Pilgrimage Monuments in Urban Spaces of Iranⁱ

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Abstract

Iran in terms of architectural culture - urbanization and the wealth of its valuable historical works, without a doubt, is one of world's most significant countries, works that must be very well maintained.

One of the major issues in current architecture and urbanization of a country is the preservation of its urban spaces and ancient historical architecture and the different viewpoints on how to preserve these spaces and valuable old buildings.

Since these works represent the historical identity of their own time, we should diligently preserve and protect these structures as symbols of national culture and the bond between yesterday, today and the future generations.

In this study, which is based on archival and fieldwork research, the role and importance of pilgrimage mausoleums, and the physical changes resulting from their repair or restoration on shaping the urban spaces will be examined and evaluated.

Keywords: Pilgrimage mausoleum, urban space, historic preservation

Recognition of a nation's history and culture is possible through understanding of human thoughts as their mental setting. One way of understanding the human thought, is understanding the tangible structural manifestations of their mental blueprints. In other words, the human mind manifests itself through the cultural landscapes and heritages, and in particular, the historical monuments and cemetery mausoleums pilgrimage.

The importance of recognition, protection, and preservation of these historical and cultural monuments as researchable historic and cultural documents is so great that it introduces study, design, and operational groups into this field, who attempt to cooperatively restore and preserve these monumental structures.

The city is a phenomenon that contains everything that belongs from the past, present and future. On one hand, there is technology that is being used to improve the everyday life of each citizenship, and on the other hand, there are human social aspirations that should be considered much better and be accepted to improve the psychological state of each of a city's citizens.

A city has a major feature of being socially connected to all its community buildings. That is why we feel satisfied and contented by introducing the city we have lived in to our family, as a city becomes a part of each of its citizen.

In recent years, with the society's rapid pace towards industrialization and the rapid growth of industrial and scientific production and the unpreparedness of the social and cultural practitioners to deal with these rapid changes, irreversible visual abnormalities have been created in the city's traditional skeleton. Continuation of such a trend with increased rate of urbanization and influx of immigrants into the city took on a broader scale to the point that destruction and renovation has become a symbol of modernity and modernity has been regarded as being valuable. Historical monuments, and pilgrimage mausoleums and shrines have not been immune from this issue and with so inconsistencies and disparity in the body of the city have been formed.

Therefore, today the traditional city of yesterday can hardly be a representative of the memories that it withholds from the past, except for the memories that remains in the minds of its citizens.

It is hard to remind and explain how these cities have come along and what kind of memorable history-making days they have been through, to the people who arrive from near and far.

Following such devastating damages that have been caused to the valuable works of architecture and urbanism, the passionate people of this country who are involved in the fields of arts and culture have seriously been attempting to preserve the remainings of our precious past.

Currently the main problem that is faced in preservation and restoration of architectural and urbanism and especially in the maintenance of cemetery monuments, and pilgrimage mausoleums, which is the subject of this article, is the unprofessional interference of non-specialists in the field of restoration and preservation.

Unprofessional approaches such as the ones stated, not only starts to destroy the historical identity of a city, but it also transforms these structures to abnormal structural patches that lack the previous significant regional and native historical identity, and until we fail to recognize the role of historical and cultural monuments in the identity of a city we will not be able to culturally revive a society, and so gradually there will be no difference between diverse cities, such as Tabriz, Isfahan and Tehran.

An additional important factor in the restoration of historical structure is that restoration cannot solely rely on the restorer's mental models for urban and architectural spaces and shouldn't be carried out without consideration for an era's demand.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that architecture is a function of its environment and it is an era's demand that affects the urban architecture and therefore the importance of these structures is because they are resulted from the demands and the needs of the people that have created them, and congruent with the relevant technical, economical, cultural, and social models of their time. Since these structures are the products of their time, the preservation and restoration of them, as symbol of our national culture and as a sign of the relationship between the past, present and future generations, becomes our responsibility.

In this regard, it is imperative that the creation of a new building in the vicinity of an historical monument, should respect the historical original structure while fulfilling its intended production. Done so, not only the supplementary added buildings would not flaw the original monument but it also increases the knowledge of such historical monuments in

the minds of its citizens, which adds to the prosperity and the prestige of the their cities relevant history.

For instance in Zanjan province, in the old cemetery of Soltanieh city, and close to Imamzadeh Ibrahim's tombstone (Figure-1, front), which is important for its Seljuks-style decorations, a memorial building was added to the courtyard of this monument that is utilized as martyrs cemetery (Figure-1, back). This memorial has not altered or flawed the historical or cultural values of the shrine but it is also a representative of two architectural periods in each other's close proximity, and hence it preserve the Islamic architectural symbols of the city's and respects the native and cultural identity. The co-existence of the two structures benefits both buildings, in such way that the addition of the martyrs memorial building revitalizes the shrine's visual presentation, and in return Imamzadeh Ibrahim's shrine authenticates the architectural importance of the supplemented building.



Figure 1 – Imamzadeh Ibrahim in city of Soltanieh (Front) in province of Zanjan and at the (Back) the martyrs' memorial cemetery

whereas in the village of Dastjerd Olya in north of Qazvin, Imamzadeh Abazar shrine was constructed in the late Safavid, with its dome tiling from the early Qajar, and its portico and chamber façade renovated during the current era. An evident incongruency is noticeable in this renovation between the body and the dome of this building, which has adversely affected the visual aesthetic of the historical monument, which could have been avoided by choosing a proper façade consistent with the dome that could have preserved that historical and visual importance of this building (Figure 2).



Figure-2 Imamzadeh Abazar in Dastjerd Olya village in north of Qazvin

Today, restoration and preservation of historic buildings that utilize the latest technology and building materials, has become perfectly normal and reasonable, which register the footsteps of the modern current architecture in the historical building, provided that they will not introduce any damages to the building's historical identity. In other words, while the hidden underneath layers of the building should be restored with modern materials and techniques, the exterior appearance of the building should be restored by being faithful to the building's original entity. A relatively good restoration example for this point is the repair that was carried out on Kharaqan towers located in Avaj in Qazvin. This repair took place after an earthquake that shook the city of Avaj and it was performed in a manner that preserved the original versatile brickwork, and the beautiful spirit of this historical monument (Figure 3-5).



Figure-3 Kharaqan towers in Avaj after the earthquake



Figure-4 Kharaghan towers in Avaj during the repair



Figure-5 Kharaghan towers in Avaj ,Qazvin

Another example of a restoration inconsistent with the original state of the building is in Changori village in Zanjan, in a building that is known to be Imamzadeh Ahmad's shrine. This monument was restored with modern material that created a twofold crisis. On one hand the dome restoration performed with plated silver alloy (tar layers), and the body with inconsistent bricks, has destroyed the beautiful historical original brickwork and tiling of the of the dome and the shrine's body, and on the other hand the restored building now retains destructive moisture in the building that results in additional erosion over time, and as a result the historical authenticity of the whole monument was vanished in an unprofessional attempt to restore (Figure 6-7).



Figure-6. Imamzadeh Ahmed Shrine in Changori village before restoration,Zanjan



Figure-7. Imamzadeh Ahmed Shrine in Changori village after restoration,Zanzan

An example of a proper successful restoration is seen on the west side of Martyrs square in Salamgah Street in Qazvin at Prince Hussein monument. The original construction date of this monument goes back to the eighth or ninth century, and has undergone multiple restorations, neither of which has affected the spirit and the originality of this monument, and so today this monument is outstanding among Qazvin historical buildings, in terms of its preserved architectural style, and artistic values (Figure-8).



Figure 8 - Hussein shrine in the city of Qazvin

Undoubtedly, restoration is the first step in maintaining the identity and originality of an Iranian Islamic pilgrimage monuments towards the protection of their cultural heritage and commitment to Islamic Iranian architecture as an effective elements in shaping the urban space. Therefore the most significant effects of a successful monument preservation are as follow:

1. Maintenance of integrity and identity of an area's local, national, architectural and urban identity
2. Preservation and promotion of cultural identity and authenticity

3. Personalization of historic and regional spaces
4. Personalization of city appearance
5. Revitalization of urban environment
6. Harmonization of city
7. Maintenance and enhancement of visual and aesthetic quality of urban environment
8. Preservation architectural quality of the city
9. Integration of neighborhood bodies
10. Identification of signs of strengthening in
11. Clear presentation of Islamic symbols and signs
12. Attention to models and principles of traditional value
13. Capability of affecting modern construction
14. Strengthening and development of culture and Islamic values in architecture and urbanism
15. Emphasize on Iranian – Islamic architecture
16. Utilization of symbolic role of pilgrimage as a turning point in holy Shiite cities
17. Capability to respond to psychological and emotional needs of citizens
18. Feasible study of architecture of traditional city in the past and the present in order to achieve the constructing values and principles that governs their structure and Implementation of these principles in current human knowledge and attainment of novel values and principles in architecture of urban design

Analysis and Conclusions

In an era that restoration of our identity and the expansion and development of the city at the same time are inevitable, attention to associated container (environment) and content (behavior) becomes a crucial regulatory standards in creation of our interactive and responsive urban environments.

Given that architecture in urban spaces plays an intermediary role between religious behavior and cultural-social context and since historical and pilgrimage monuments have affected various dimensions of Iranian-Islamic models and life styles, architecture plays an important role in shaping and influencing our urban spaces.

Consideration for identity and cultural authenticity, adherence to Islamic ethics and principles in construction, preservation of a city iconic factors, and emphasis on regional identity were the discussed topics in this study. To achieve these goals, attempts on preservations and restorations of pilgrimage monuments, and historical buildings should be carried out from both physical and spiritual perspectives. If construction of modern buildings are deemed necessary, conservation and respect of the historical monumental buildings and the spaces in its vicinity should be taken into consideration, and the historical monuments should never be eradicated in substitution for a modern building.

Resources

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ⁱ . Based on Ph.D. Teases