CONTEXTUALIZING PALIMPSEST OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN AN URBAN HERITAGE SITE: Case Study of Chahar Bagh, Shiraz - Iran

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Abstract
A landscape or site, which has been inhabited for long, consists of layers of history. This history is sometimes reserved in forms of small physical remnants, monuments, memorials, names or collective memories of destruction and reconstruction. In this sense, a site/landscape can be presumed as what Derrida refers to as a ‘palimpsest’. A palimpsest whose character is identified in a duality between the existing layers of meaning accumulated through time, and the act of erasing them to make room for the new to appear. In this study, the spatial collective memory of the Chahar Bagh site which is located in the historical centre of Shiraz will be investigated as a contextualized palimpsest, with various projects adjacent one another; each conceptualized and constructed within various historical settings; while the site as a heritage is still an active part of the city’s cultural life. Through analysing the different layers of meaning corresponding to these adjacent projects, a number of principals for reading the complexities of similar historical sites can be driven.

Keywords: Heritage; palimpsest; collective memory; urban memory; Chahar Bagh

INTRODUCTION
Heritage is a series of socially constructed interpretations of the past, which might be represented through historical sites and contexts. This social construction might be either visible through the perspective of historical architecture in a heritage site or semi-buried layers of destruction and reconstruction, which might be still present in the collective memory of city dwellers.

Discipline of Geography seems to be the founder of studies on the interface collective memory and space focusing on the spatial presentation of social memory, cultural memory and collective memory. However, scholars from the Geography discipline has mostly focused on monuments, memorials and museums as places of sacralisation of national imaginaries (Till, 2003), and there seem to be a gap in addressing the role of historical sites as a heritage in the collective memory of a nation or the architectural discourse of a city. Although numerous studies have been conducted on the interface of memory and the sites of memory as a built environment, the built environment perspective has hardly been investigated in the literature. Additionally, most of these studies are considering the heritage spots that have been designed and planned to retain and keep the memory (such as museums and memorials). Each heritage site can be a potential case study for investigating through the layers of memory in the city and among the residents.

In this sense, a site/landscape can be presumed as what Derrida (1998) refers to as a “palimpsest” in the collective memory of city dwellers. A palimpsest whose character is identified in a duality between the existing layers of meaning accumulated through time and the act of erasing them to make room for the new to appear, and therefore to allow life to continue on it.

There is a duality very much like the one inherent in the heritage as palimpsest, in the discipline of architectural design and other neighbouring disciplines of landscape design or urban design: the duality between pure conservation of the existing, or its erasure in the favour of the new. This reading of Derrida’s “palimpsest” can create a new approach to reconciling this duality or rather utilizing it as
an asset in the process of analysis and design; therefore, crafting a new method of understanding the site and its context with all of the complexities. In reading the context as a palimpsest, it becomes a sheet of paper which preserves indefinitely, but is quickly saturated. A slate, whose virginity may always be reconstituted by erasing the imprints on it, does not conserve traces. The palimpsest, similar to the ‘mystic pad’ (Derrida & Mehlman, 1972; Freud, 1961) fulfils both these roles: conserving the traces, and being receptive to the new writing.

The approach of this study to context is based on an architectural analytical process of design to read the context and derive the landscape historical potentials as a heritage. In both acts of erasure/destruction and writing/building, there is a creative or hermeneutic potential to create new layers of meaning or to manipulate the present layers of historical meaning existing of the site. So not purely conserving them in their totality, but using their complexity as a pivotal point of reference for the design.

Countries with a vast and tumultuous history may be filled with urban palimpsests, which contain layers of social and cultural history and memory. The City of Shiraz with more than 2000 year history of urbanity consists of historical sites, which have been situated in the process of destruction/construction through the history of the city. The ‘Cha har Bagh’ site in the historical centre of Shiraz is chosen as a case study for this paper. Chahar Bagh is located in a context with various projects adjacent to one another; each conceptualized, constructed and reconstructed in various historical settings. The site is still an active part of the city’s cultural life representing a perfect case for a palimpsest heritage site.

SPACE AND SOCIAL MEMORY

Social perspectives on memory became prominent in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. Collective memory has been defined as the shared experiences of a community or society. According to Till (1999), collective memory is not the accumulation of dwellers’ memory, rather it consists of the activities that have made a version of the past which resonate with individuals. Foot and Azaryahu define collective memory as “a matrix in which time and space are used separately and in combination to embed shared historical experiences and a sense of a shared past in the public life of a community or of a religious or social group” (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007).

Studies on the collective memory have been conducted on a wide-ranging interdisciplinary literature, including psychology, history, geography, sociology, archaeology, and built environment. However, when it comes to the studies toward the interface of memory and spatial configuration, city or heritage, the number of these disciplines decreases dramatically. In the literature written on the interface of social memory and sites of memory, the works of the Maurice Halbwachs as a sociologist and Pierre Nora as a historian have been particularly significant and the founder of more recent spatial collective memory studies particularly in geography and built environment.

Halbwachs’ studies upon places and sites of memory provided a convenient entree for collective memory studies in geography and built environment. Halbwachs (1992) has argued that when there is a double focus such as a physical object or a material reality (which he exemplifies in a statue, a monument or a place) group remembrances can remain in existence. In this sense, a historical site as a heritage can be considered as a material reality in order to resonate a social or collective memory in the architectural representation of a city.

Following Halbwachs’ work, Nora (1992) has discussed how certain sites, by provoking emotional effects, may embody some memories of the nation. She has argued that the self-reflexively of memorial sites may be necessary to embody certain memories because the real memory had withered away in modern society. As sometimes the place of a certain memory changes through time and the nation no longer live in the environments of memory, Nora argues that creating archives, maintaining anniversaries and organizing celebrations might be necessary in order to preserve a national memory (Nora, 1989: 12).

Halbwachs and Nora’s works have inspired several scholars, especially in geography, writing on the material landscapes and cultural performances of collective memory. However, the literature on place and memory is mostly focused on national commemorations or the political dimensions of public memory in relation to expressing power and authority. According to Foote and Azaryahu most
research on the collective memory of specific sites has focused on wars, revolutions, and other major historical events especially from the last three decades (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007). Atkinson (2007) also argues that most discussions has revolved around higher profile heritage sites and places of commemoration. He suggests that there is a need to look further into the everyday places and social memories that are constituted throughout society at different scales.

Till (2003) in identifying the sites of memory counts museums, monuments, cemeteries, statuary, public buildings, squares, streets, historic preservation projects, plaques, and memorials, as well as the rituals, images, and practices associated with them as places of memory. However, the literature of collective memory has been mostly focused on more high profile (and to some extent political) sites of memory (such as memorials, monuments and museums) and the role of other heritage sites such as streets and squares have been overlooked. Although cities serve as powerful symbols and sources of memory, the number of studies on the collective memory of urban spaces from a built environment perspective is very limited and exclusively focused on Western cities and context (Boyer, 1996; Crinson, 2005).

Architectural theorist, Aldo Rossi, inspired by Halbwach’s study, was the first person who introduced the concept of urban memory to the literature of built environment (Rossi, Eisenman, Gihrardo, & Ockman, 1982). Rossi had a unique approach to the idea of collective memory in a city. He has anthropomorphized the city, in a sense that the city has a memory that remembers through its buildings. Therefore, for Rossi the preservation of heritage sites and buildings is parallel with the preservation of memories in the human mind and can serve as a preservation of a nation’s urban identity.

Following Rossi, Boyer (1996) in her book, The City of Collective Memory, seeks to link the collective memory and urban transformation. Boyer has argued that the city fabric contains memory traces of earlier architectural forms and city plans. Boyer through investigation of some case studies has explored how city images are developed and how they relate to the everyday urban life and collective memory. She argues that political and economic concerns direct representational images of the city and influence its collective memory.

Most recently, scholars such as Crinson and Huyssen has studied urban memory and collective memory through different case studies, mostly focused in European and American cities (Crinson, 2005; Huyssen, 2003). According to Foot and Azaryahu the scholarship on the collective memory and space is rich for some periods and places, but weak in others, particularly in Latin American, Asia, and Africa (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007). Therefore, what is lacking in the literature is the gap of sufficient collective memory studies in the Eastern or Middle Eastern context. This study aims to investigate the layers of history in relation to the collective memory and architectural representation of the city, in the context of a historic site (Chahar Bagh) in the Middle Eastern city of Shiraz.

**Urban heritage as the palimpsest of collective memory**

Sometimes collective memories of a nation are grounded in particular places within a city. In this sense, urban space can perform as a receptacle of collective memory. However, the process of this reception is somewhat complicated. Halbwachs in stressing this complexity have argued that:

“The place a group occupies is not like a blackboard, where one may write and erase figures at will. ... The board could not care less what has been written on it before, and new figures may be freely added. But place and group have each received the imprint of the other. Each aspect, each detail of this place has a meaning intelligible only to members of the group, for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society, at least of what is most stable in it” (Halbwachs, 1980: 128).

It was Halbwachs’ belief that the urban space is more complex than just a blackboard of collective memories. Yet, this composite structure might more resemble a palimpsest. A palimpsest refers to a “writing material or manuscript on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for a second writing; monumental brass turned and re-engraved on reverse side” (Sykes, 1976). Creation
of a palimpsest occurs through the tripod stages of writing, erasure and rewriting (Galpin, 1998). However, the boundary between erasure and rewriting does not seem to be rigid. Sometimes erasure might eventually happen through the act of rewriting.

The palimpsest concept is frequently used in various scientific fields. It has a long usage in archaeology (Bailey, 2007) and most famously in Freud’s study of the unconscious. According to McDonagh (1987), Freud’s Mystic Writing-Pad is one of the models of the mind that flank the concept of the palimpsest. The mystic Pad is a common children’s toy, which fits Freud’s theories of the human “perceptual apparatus” (Galpin, 1998). In identifying the difference between a mystic pad and a palimpsest, McDonagh has argued that both mystic pad and palimpsest allow the retention of the inscription; however, unlike the palimpsest, the mystic pad is not able to bring about the inscription recollection (McDonagh, 1987). Resultantly, Jacques Derrida in his essay, "Freud and the Scene of Writing", have stressed on the significance of palimpsest for its historical specificity (Derrida & Mehlman, 1972). Traces of history may be conserved through the act of destruction while being receptive to the new writing (construction).

The urban space can be conceived as a palimpsest, conserving traces of identity elements specific of each historical era (Robinson & AlSayyad, 2001). In an architectural exemplification of a palimpsest, the tripod stages of writing, erasure and rewriting change their nature to construction, destruction and reconstruction. Similar to the inscription stages, in the architectural representation the boundary between destruction and reconstruction can be blurry.

The collective memory of city dwellers is the interface where the past is embodied in the present by means of shared cultural productions and reproductions (Foote & Azaryahu, 2007) and architectural representation of an urban space can perform as a form of this production or even reproduction through the act of erasure/reconstruction. Rossi, as an architecture theorist, has argued that the urban space itself is the locus of collective memory.

“One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like the memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the locus of the collective memory. This relationship between the locus and the citizenry then becomes the city's predominant image, both of architecture and of landscape, and as certain artefacts become part of its memory, new ones emerge. In this entirely positive sense great ideas flow through the history of the city and give shape to it.... Thus the union between the past and the future exists in the very idea of the city that it flows through, in the same way that memory flows through the life of a person; and always, in order to be realized, this idea must not only shape but be shaped by reality” (Rossi et al., 1982).

Sometimes a part of a city may turn into a “memory-scapes” (Edensor, 1997) encompassing the history of a nation in layers of architectural configuration. Layers pertaining to different historical eras may occur through buildings and structures; some might have been demolished and reconstructed, but the traces of the past eras are blurred even in the demolished.

A BACKGROUND TO THE HISTORY OF SHIRAZ

Shiraz, the sixth largest city in Iran after Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, Tabriz and Karaj is the centre of Fars province in southern Iran. The city is located 895 km south of Tehran and 100 km north of the Persian Gulf. The earliest reference to the city, as Tiraziš, is on Elamite clay tablets dated to 2000 BC found in the south western corner of Shiraz city (Cameron, 1948). According to some Iranian mythological traditions, it was originally erected by Tahmuras Diveband, and afterward fell to ruins (Conder, 1827). Although the foundation of Shiraz was before the Islamic period, the city became the provincial capital only in 693 A.D, after the Arab armies conquered Estakhar (the nearby Sassanian capital). As Estakhar fell into decline, Shiraz grew in importance under the Arabs and several local dynasties. The Buyids (945-1055) made it their capital. Although Shiraz was spared from destruction during the Mughal invasion, the town was devastated by Timur (1387 and 1393), by great floods in 1630 and 1668, by the Afghan invaders in 1724, and by the earthquakes which partially destroyed the city in 1789,1814, 1824 and 1853 (Clarke, 1963; Lockhart, 1939; Wilber, 1962). During the Safavid
period (1502-1722), security and prosperity returned to Iranian cities and was maintained for about two centuries. The governor-general of Fars put great effort in beautifying Shiraz. He duplicated Shah Abbas's famous Chahar Bagh at Isfahan (Arberry, 1960; Lockhart, 1939) and constructed a magnificent palace in the great square of Shiraz.

Shiraz was initially circular in shape; however, the regular pattern of the city soon changed to an organic structure like other Iranian cities, comprising the main elements of such cities. The form of the city stabilized in the 15th century and its shape from that time until the 20th century exhibited a fair representative of a typical traditional Iranian city before modernization (Karimi, 1998). Shiraz's decline started with the Afghan raids in the early 18th century, several earthquakes, and an internal uprising. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the city again came back to life and splendour under the benevolent attention of a regent-ruler, Karim Khan Zand (Boyle, 2011; Wilber, 1962). Twenty-seven constructions in Shiraz, of which sixteen remain today, was attributed to Karim Khan Zand. Although the prosperity of Shiraz was seriously interrupted by the decline of the Zand Dynasty (1794) and Tehran took the place of Shiraz as the Capital, Shiraz remained one of the most important provincial cities during the Qajar period. The city consisted of eleven distinct quarters (mahalleh), inhabited by separate communities with powerful social cohesion (see Figure 1).

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.jpg)

**Figure 1.** The historical neighbourhoods of Shiraz (Source: Author based on Behpoor, 1383).

The metamorphosis of Shiraz into a modern city began with the attempts of Reza Khan (1925-1941), the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979). After the first period of modernization, the growth and development of Shiraz became radically different from its traditional pattern. A regular pattern of modern networks was superimposed on the historic core as the common pattern of expansion, and the organic shape of the traditional area has been trapped inside the enclosed and segmented historic core (see Figure 2).
The development of the city has been historically focused along two perpendicular axes. The north-south axis, which is named as Hafez Street has been consistently present in the different periods of Shiraz development. This axis has been the backbone of the structure of the city. However, the east-west axis has changed with every key era of development. Since the Buyid era, the east-west axis has moved toward the south with the three key historical periods in the development of Shiraz (see Figure 3).
A BACKGROUND TO THE HISTORY OF SHIRAZ CHAHAR BAGH

Chahar Bagh is a Persian-style garden layout originated from the time of Achaemenid Empire. In Persian, chahar means four and bagh means garden. The Chahar Bagh in Isfahan, Iran, built by Shah Abbas in 1596, and the garden of the Taj Mahal in India are the most famous examples of this style. In Shiraz, the north-south axis or Hafez Street is considered as Shiraz Chahar Bagh, which was built to be a duplicate of the Safavid Chahar Bagh in Isfahan. The axis connecting the Quran Gate to the Isfahan Gate at its furthest southern point has always been a key focal point in the city’s historical development. In the contemporary situation of Hafez Street, or Shiraz Chahar Bagh, only a few historical gardens and buildings have remained intact (Asadpour, 1386).

Investigating the old paintings, pictures and tales about Shiraz reveals a few characteristics about the historical city and specifically the north-south axis. Interestingly, there have been several visitors mentioning this axis in their stories, descriptions, paintings and pictures, which can indicate the layers of memory registered within the history of this street. Exploring and comparing the painting by Andre Daulier Deslandes in 1664, tale of Charden, the French tourist that visited Shiraz in 1674 and several other visitors afterwards may uncover the tale and layers of history in this street (Table 1). The Chahar Bagh Street had been a road with a great gate (Quran Gate) surrounded by vast gardens with semicircular gates and a pool alongside the way. Through the gardens’ gates, there were pavilions and square fountains. The street was ended with the grand bazaar famous as Vakil Bazaar.

Table 1. Tale of travelers (Source: Author based on Faizi & Asadpour, 2013 & Asadpour, 1386).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveler</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tale</th>
<th>Sketch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andre Daulier Deslandes</td>
<td>1664</td>
<td>The image is a cityscape from the edge of Allahoakbar and Quran Gate showing a street surrounded by gardens and trees.</td>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Charden</td>
<td>1674</td>
<td>The image is a vast street surrounded by gardens as long as 180 meters that all have semicircular gates. Upon the gates, there are pavilions. The doors of the garden are symmetrical and in front of one another. In the middle there is a square fountain with marble edges filled with water. This street ends with the Grand Bazaar.</td>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornelis de Bruyn</td>
<td>1704</td>
<td>The image is presenting Quran Gate, which opens to a linear street surrounded by gardens and tall trees.</td>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niebuhr</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Niebuhr image is not as green as previous travelers. The picture has been drawn after the reign of the Safavids. Although the Ali Ebne Hamzeh Shrine has been drawn, there is no sign of gardens and palaces. The reason could be the damages occurred during the time in between the over through of the Safavids and the start of the reign of the Zandis.</td>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brugsch 1860 In Brugsch painting, there is no sign of Quran Gate. However, the gardens seem to reappear on both sides of the street. The garden that is on the right side has an entrance from the north. In this picture there seems to be no sign of a fountain.

One of the most important elements of the north-south axis is the Gate of Quran and the edge of Allaah-o-akbar in the north and the bridge over the Khoshk River in the south (see Figure 4). These two elements denote the physical border of the axis. The history of the gate over the Khoshk River goes back to the time of the reign of the Al Buyid’s and has been reconstructed many times. Another major element of the axis is the shrine of Shah Mir Ali Ebne Hamzeh located in the southern part of the axis. The shrine is originally from the era of Azadollah E Deylami. During the Safavids and then during Shahryar Zand, vast reconstructions were done on the memorial centre (One was by Seyed Morad Khan Zand another from Mohammad Zakhi Khan and finally by Moyed Aldole Tahmaseb Mirza). For the convenience of travelers and pilgrims, Karim Khan built a bathhouse and a motel in front of the memorial centre, which were torn down eight decades ago and replaced by a school and a street. During the Ghajar period, the memorial cemetery was destroyed by an earthquake in 1239 but then renovated and restored in 1260.

Different gardens around the axis of the Gate of Quran to the bridge of Ali Ebne Hamzeh and the flow of water in between were the key features of the Chahar Bagh constitution in Shiraz. The gardens were all placed one after another by the natural gradient of the ground. One of the gardens with many historic references is famous as Jahan Nama and was originally part of the desert of Jafar Abad. During the reign of the two monarchies Ale Mozafar and Ale Inju, this is before the attack of Teymor Gorgani; this garden was very much exquisite. In 1607, the greatest of the Safavid monarchs, King Abbas I, planted a tree in Jahan Nama. Later the garden went on to become famous for all of its grand and sublime trees. Jahan Nama Garden was originally named Vakil Garden and constructed by Karim Khan Zand half a century before its name was replaced by Jahan Nama.

Karim Khan Zand built another garden close (with about 10 meters distance) to Jahan Nama and bordered it using brick walls. The natural slope of the land caused the gardens to be in two levels. As a result, this garden has been named as the Nether Jahan Nama (Jahan Nama Payin) in the Persian historical texts. There is also a possibility that this garden has been constructed in the Safavid era (Asadpour, 1386). About 50 years ago, Shiraz’s first textile factory was built in this garden.
Right across from Jahan Nama, there was another garden famous as Garden No (see Figure 5). No was placed close to the Gate of Quran and just across from Jahan Nama and had a great and complex pavilion. This garden was originally built during the Safavid’s era and was quite abandoned for a while after, but during the Zand and Ghajar eras it was renovated and was even complemented with a great place. Writing by both Charden and Tavernier indicate that the mentioned gardens were, in fact, built in the Safavid period (Asadpour, 1386).

The other determining element of the axis is water. The water from Rokn Abad, which would travel from the heights of Bamo Mountain in the north, would pass the edge of Alahoakbaar irrigating all of the Shiraz gardens. The well of Rokn Abad was founded by Rokn Aldoleye Deylami in the year 924. It could be concluded that the cemetery, building of the Gate of Quran and the well of Rokn Abad have all existed for centuries and the axis that connects all of them was constructed during the Safavid Empire.

**SHIRAZ CHAHARBAGH AS AN URBAN PALIMSEST IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF SHIRAZ ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY / CITY DWELLERS**

There are two questions that this argument seeks to respond to, first of all how the Chahar Bagh site in Shiraz is a palimpsest, and secondly, how the appropriation of this terminology to this particular site helps to elaborate a comprehensive reading of the site that does justice to not only the remnants of the history it bears, but also to the unrepresented and the unembodied. The second question is how the concept of regarding sites of cultural heritage as a Derridian palimpsest can help create a more comprehensive and totalizing urban view of those locations.

In regards to the first question, this site, the Chahar Bagh axis, bears the remnants of almost every key historical period of the city’s transformation, its conflicts and socio-political changes. In the Safavid and Zand periods, this street was the key entrance axis to the city from Isfahan. Therefore, it had been a pathway for several travelers and visitors as well as the war troops that have marched down this path to invade Shiraz or to defend it. Through the cities’ many structural transformations,
the start of this axis has remained the key entrance to the city and thus it holds a certain weight in the public and historical image of Shiraz; a conclusion that can be drawn from the Daulier paintings of Shiraz in 1664 (see Figure 6).

The Chahar Bagh axis is reaching out of the historical core of the city into its key entrance in the north. In a totalizing look, the axis development is attributed to the modern city of Shiraz (not the traditional core); however, Chahar Bagh holds an important place in the cultural heritage of the historical city of Shiraz, because of its relative small distance to the historical core, the importance of the burial and memorial locations and also the importance of the gardens located adjacent to the axis (see Figure 7). Its actual development in the modern periods with the national garden and Shiraz University main campus during the Pahlavi era strongly weaves the site into the contemporary urban life and public memory of the city.
The city of Shiraz, with more than 2000 years of history has been through a turbulent past, filled with dramatic socio-political changes. With the key structural location of the Chahar Bagh site through this long history, the street has been prominently present through Shiraz changes and developments. In the contemporary post-revolutionary Iran, the site and its adjacent plots have been further developed, and now the ministry of culture and guidance headquarters and the national library are located in it. Therefore, Chahar Bagh still remains canonical in the cultural life of the city. Several tourist attractions and two hotels are also placed on this site.

These changes have always been a combination of loss of the old and creation of the new. Their history has always been a locus of oblivion and remembrance. In the case of Chahar Bagh, with its key role in the image of Shiraz and specially its image as a tourist attraction and a land of gardens and roses, Shiraz image has turned into a very fantasy-like garden image. There can be traced an overall tendency to forget the losses and turmoil’s in favour of all that is in keeping with the fantasy-like image of the city, which has existed through its history. Even now in the off-hand analysis of this location, what is recalled is first and foremost, these remnants in keeping with the image of Shiraz as “The city of Gardens”. The socio-political turmoil has been repeatedly painted over in favour of the picturesque and the poetic. These parts of the palimpsest, the forgotten and the invisible are what the introduction of this paper may add to a comprehensive understanding of the site.

As much as the built environment concerns in an initial look, the Chahar Bagh heritage site has offered several layers of history in forms of building and remnants. However, what is not vivid in this initial look is the layers that have been destructed, removed or forgotten unintentionally or sometimes knowingly to overlook a memory. Chahar Bagh as a palimpsest embraces these memories thorough buildings, landscapes, art and crafts, tales and occasionally stories. Sophisticated and Comprehensive studies may reveal the deeper, more destructed/forgotten layers of this palimpsest and there is always a possibility for the heritage researchers to discover the more profound intangible levels of history.

The Chahar Bagh site consists of memories, layers of meaning and cultural implications as well as architectural remnants in the form of objects or spatial configurations. In the discourse of urban morphology when the concept of palimpsest is referenced, it is mostly concerned with the architectural and the urban objects and the historic layers. The relation between these layers is supposed to have a static property, or at the very least they are ruled over with certainty. This is also the case in a palimpsest, when just the appearance of the layers of partially erased texts is concerned. In this sense, cities are not comparable with the human mind. However, when the focus is not just put on the appearance of the physical construct of cities but on the intangible underlying spatial systems, deep similarities between cities and human mind, as it is understood by Freud, can be uncovered. Spatial layers in cities and their interrelations, like unconscious and conscious memories in a human mind, are dynamic and ever changing. The reference to the metaphor of palimpsests can be useful when the content of the texts, and not just their appearance, is the focus of consideration. The concept of palimpsest has been used for opening the discussion and directing the attention towards the intangible and dynamic aspects of historical layers in cities. The dynamism of the intangible layers in urban systems is most clearly explained through the concept of spatial configuration, pioneered by the founder of space syntax theory (Hillier & Hanson, 1984).

Exploring these sites of cultural heritage and in general the spatial configuration of urban space in the light of history, not as mere transformations, but with the complexity and contradiction of the erasure/construction duality, allows the room to interpret all that has been wilfully ignored or forgotten. The palimpsest of Chahar Bagh has retained remnants of these historical events, sometimes in form, aka the Ali Ebne Hamzeh Shrine and the battle marks left on its decorations and sometimes in public memory and culture, like the memories of the 1979 revolution and the 2009 uprisings, in which the Shiraz University Campus locations were entangled with. In other words, a palimpsest is a politicized collective memory which doesn’t ignore the agency of history in removing parts of itself (the role of oblivion). The memory/oblivion duality is highlighted in this concept rather than downplayed, the same way the erasure/construction dialectic is. And therefore a memory archive or a palimpsest offers what history can no longer offer, and fills in the blanks of what history wilfully forgets.
CONCLUSION

This paper, through investigating the literature of collective memory and its interface with the concepts of memory and images of the city, investigated a historic street in the city of Shiraz famous as Chahar Bagh. Chahar Bagh of Shiraz has been a historical palimpsest consisting of several layers of history as a backbone to the historical structure of the city. However, memory performs in a twofold way. Wherever there is remembering/construction, there exists oblivion/deconstruction. This paper explored two research questions in its argument. First how the Chahar Bagh Axis can be considered as a palimpsest and second how the appropriation of this terminology to this particular site helps to elaborate a comprehensive reading of the site that does justice to not only the remnants of the history it bears, but also to the unrepresented and the unembodied.

In most cases the concept of palimpsest is used to describe historical sites, which have been through a tumultuous and destructive past, as the palimpsest does not ignore the complexity and contradiction of the erasure/construction duality. A palimpsest such as the historical site of Chahar Bagh preserves the traces of what it chooses to erase. As opposed to a modernist semantic that never talks about the things it has chosen to erase or replace, a palimpsest like a historical site is an unclean mess filled with traces of the destroyed, the destructed and the lost. The act of erasure has a corresponding cultural equivalent, which is forgetting. This can be an addition of new layer/layers to the urban palimpsest. To control this process so that it improves the urban qualities in both local and global level, there is a need for an objective understanding of the dynamic interrelation between the intangible (configurational) layers in the urban spatial system. The main intention of this paper was widening the perspective of this kind of understanding.

In short, utilizing the concept of palimpsest for the analysis of urban memory centres can help to reintroduce the invisible remnants of an urban history, which might or might not be a part of its present day culture, into the argument for the design of its future. In the Shiraz Chahar Bagh site, there is at least one important icon from every decade for the past few decades. None of these iconic constructions have ignored the context in which they were located yet they all immensely fall short in comparison to their complexities, dualities, contradictions and dynamism. Utilizing the concept of palimpsest (even at times of a simplistic approach to the concept, which suggests playing with the dualities and dynamics of remembrance/oblivion and erasure/construction) into the process of analysis and design of these historic sites will help reintroduce the concepts that a modernist semantic to analysis leaves behind. This can lead to a more substantial understanding of historical sites; not only in terms of their morphological history, but also in terms of their human history to play into the design process of their future, which in turn is necessary for new constructions that have a more substantial relationship with that history.

All in all, the built environment has a limited capacity for dragging various stages of history to the contemporary realm. As a result utilizing the concept of palimpsests in heritage studies either for research or future developments in relation to the heritage sites may facilitate in uncovering traces of the destruction/oblivion or at least acknowledging the potential for the presence of these layers. Considering each heritage site as a potential palimpsest assists the heritage and other neighbouring disciplines’ researchers to decipher the history in its layers while according the written history to the built one. Matter of course, there will be always a potential for some layers, complexities and dynamics to be decoded in the future through more precise readings and perusals.
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