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Original Research Article

Applying Historical-Based Measures in Modern Urban Management
(Case Study: Tang Paradise, Xi'an, China)

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ABSTRACT

The modern applicable approaches in urban management have resulted in the unification of the historical parts of the cities with the newly built areas. The centrality of protecting the historical parts of the cities by using various solutions has established sustainable development for such cities. The priority of protecting the historical parts of the cities by applying multiple solutions has established a sustainable developed area in these kinds of cities. The Tang Paradise Park is an example of a historical-based approach, specifically the buildings established along the main axis, which are representing the historical architecture of China in the present era. This study has evaluated and analyzed the urban process of the mentioned project as a case study based on the definitions and international charters written for the protection of cultural heritage. Moreover, for getting a clear result, the specialized terms of 'Protection' and the related definitions have been applied by using the experiences of other historical cities. Given the comparative study is an approach in case studies, such a process is either the reconstruction of the past, similar to what happened in the city reconstruction of Warsaw after the war, or it is modeled the ancient architecture of China; but, the architectural model in the axis of Tang Paradise Park is an imitation of the past styles of Chinese architecture. This kind of architecture neither represents the past architectural style of China nor reflects its present status, as it has created a fabricated pattern of architecture and urban planning. This article is based on the hypothesis that a historical-based approach in architecture and urban planning is a great threat to the authenticity of historical urban spaces. For example, the axis of Tang Paradise in Xi'an City, which is the mere repetition of the past styles of Chinese architecture and urbanism has caused an eclectic approach in the historical urban spaces.

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Introduction

Today, urban measures in the historical areas are not only classified as an urban issue, but also provide a great opportunity to improve the lifestyle of citizens, introduce local culture, and increase economic benefits. In this regard, the country of China, focusing on this reality, has applied various approaches in historical parts of the cities. China's transition towards an advanced country and its historical background is a suitable platform for moving toward development. Therefore, China's modern architecture and urban planning, especially in the post-reform era, has taken a comprehensive approach to using the above opportunity. Therefore, modern architecture and urban planning in China, specifically in the post-reform era, comprehensively used this opportunity. It seems that the historical-based approaches in the major cities of developed countries, for example in some parts of China, have led to some kind of rush interventions as executive activities in this field have exceeded the required technical principles. In this case, Tang Paradise Park is a clear example of historical-based architectural activities regarding modern urban interventions in China. The project, located in the historical city of Xi'an, is one of the major urban plans based on a historical approach in northwest China at present. After reviewing the research background, the historical city of Xi'an and the Tang Paradise project has been studied and analyzed based on the historical intervention. The concepts of urban interventions such as 'reconstruction' and 'renovation' have been studied by focusing on similar world experiences such as the reconstruction of Warsaw in comparison with the mentioned project. To do this, related international conventions and standard charters have been considered as a standard structure for analyzing the features of the case study and making a final conclusion. The Tang Paradise project has been studied and investigated from several aspects due to its historical features and tourist attractions. In this case, Luo Qi and Wen Zihan, have studied urban planning and architectural design methods by targeting garden design planning in Tang Dynasty to address the modern design of urban public gardens based on Tang Paradise as a case study. According to them, it is a project in accordance with classic garden planning which has created urban open spaces in line with the needs of modern-day citizenship (Qi & Zihan, 2018, 11). Moreover, urban cultural space is of great importance for sustainable development from social and economic aspects (Whang 2, Zhan, Xu & Yan, 2019, 502). In a similar study with a rather conservative approach, the possibility of flexible use of originality for the protection and restoration of historical places in contemporary urban planning has been evaluated by addressing Gujiang Garden in Chang'an, Xi'an city in ancient China (Xinguo, Gang, Yingjis, Meihuo & Xuo, 2018, 63). The existence of a garden in the urban space of China has always been one of the interesting topics, with an evolutionary process over the years. Building gardens in the urban space of China has always been of interest, and has gone through an evolutionary path throughout history. Among these spaces, Suzhou Gardens are considerable, which have been studied by Zhang and Lian, focusing on the plans of the area and reviewing its evolutionary path in connection with the urban texture. They have shown that having developed ideas for making a garden with an enriched landscape on a small scale would be achievable (Zhang & Lian, 2021, 16). The significance of stating this garden in connection with the Tang Paradise project is due to its historical authenticity, while the idea of making Tang Paradise Park according to Tang Dynasty Garden Design is mainly for tourism development.

Ancient City of Xi'an and Tang Paradise Project

Xi'an is placed in the center of the Guanzhong Plain, and its development is due to the presence of an expanded fertile land in which it is located. The Xi'an name was used as one of the six major historical capitals of China during the Ming Dynasty (Wu, 1979). Xi'an city was the capital of Shaanxi Province from the 5th Western Zhou Reign to the 6th Tang Dynasty according to the history of China, which included together about 16 dynasties of 1133 years. Xi'an has been the political, ancient capital, and cultural center for more than one-third of China's history since the 11th century BC for 3000 years (Zhu & Wu, 2003).

The two dynasties of Tang (618-907 AD) and Ming (1368-1644 AD) played a significant and major role in the urban pattern of Xi'an City (XCUCRC, 2000). Tang Paradise lies in the Qujiang New District, Xi'an City, Shannxi Province, with 66.7 hectares of building areas and 20 hectares of lake areas inside and is established with an investment of 1.2 billion yuan (Tang Paradise, 2021). It is completed on a large scale in the southeast of the ancient city of Shi'an and is under construction in some other parts.

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The project covers multiple areas of urban places such as the urban axis, gardens, palaces, huge water features, and other related items. The Xi'an project is an example of China's efforts at a local scale to implement nationalism by defining and legalizing the production and using heritage, and presenting an issue that is relevant to both local and international tourism markets (Zhu, 2018). However, the urban spatial structure is unclear due to the insufficient historical literature and archeological findings, which has led to a gap in existing research ideas and methods (Lu, 2018, 66). While the ancient Xi'an city may have had a brilliant historical identity, the current modelled city is still looking for a proper urban appearance. Although, the magnificent heritage of Xi'an city attracts a huge number of tourism, but there is still a lack of significant commercial trade, foreign direct investment, or capacities to contribute in economic development of this specific urban area (Rothschild, Alon & Fetscherin, 2012, 96). In the following, the urban axis of Tang Paradise Fig. 1 has been analyzed.



Fig. 1. The aerial view of the Tang-Paradise axis in Xi'an city over the historical Pagoda; An example of a historical-based approach in modern urban interventions by using ancient architecture. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org.

The Axis of Tang Paradise, Reconstruction or Urban Renovation?

Terminology and specialized expressions of urban planning have a basic role in applying concepts, progressing, and expanding approaches being used for urban interventions. The importance of these expressions and definitions in this field is targeted from two aspects: first of all, in scientific communities, the use of common definitions for implying scientific concepts is absolutely required.The presence of contradictory expressions and definitions can disrupt the transmission of concepts and complicate the understanding of specialized contentions. Secondly, the advancement and expansion of any scientific area require the foundation of relevant specialized background based on the related terminology and definitions. In other words, the presence of specialized expressions and terms allows the expansion and advancement of various sciences (Erfany & Dizani, 2019, 49.) In this study, the related expressions to the Tang Paradise project including "Reconstruction" and "Renovation" have been analyzed. In this study, the international conventions and related charters were addressed. The significance of these documents related to the cultural heritage of each country has been stated in Nara Document, Article 8 as follows: "It is important to underline a fundamental principle of (UNESCO, 2009) to the effect that the cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all. Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. However, in addition to these responsibilities, adherence to the international charters and conventions developed for the conservation of cultural heritage also obliges consideration of the principles and responsibilities flowing from them. Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values" (ICOMOS, 2006). Applying the related charters and conventions to evaluate the Tong Paradise project makes the analysis and conclusion in this study aligned with the relevant international rules and regulations, as by relying on them, the approach of this research has been presented. To follow this approach, the specialized expressions and terminology in reconstruction and renovation fields based on the experience of reconstruction of the city of Warsaw were applied in couple with the international conventions and charters relating to the Tang Paradise project to analyze the research outcomes. The definition of reconstruction points to rebuilding a structure due to the need to access or benefit from its structural-building integrity, without considering its artistic, historical, and aesthetic aspects (Falamaki, 2005, 64). For instance, the reconstruction of the historical urban texture of Warsaw, which was completely destroyed by the Nazi Germans, was based on the architectural survey (RÖLÖVE) for identification of buildings and areas that were prepared for another reason earlier. Within a few years after the

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reconstruction, according to the written documents of Europe, these reconstruction activities were completely according to the original structure in full detail. From the end of the 1960s onwards, other opinions emerged that while did not ignore the enthusiasm of the patriotic Poles, introduced another modern method for achieving the same mission (ibid.) (Figs. 2 to 5).

According to "The Burra Charter", Article 20, tilte of Reconstruction, "Reconstruction is appropriate only where a place is incomplete through damage or alteration, and only where there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state of the fabric. In some cases, reconstruction may also be appropriate as part of a use or practice that retains the cultural significance of the place (ICOMOS, 2006, 21). Following the World War II the destroyed city of Warsaw was renovated relying on the architectural survey documents of the historical buildings before the war. But, the buildings located in Tang Paradise, were rebuilt, without having been destroyed before.

According to the mentioned charter, article 18: Restoration and reconstruction should reveal culturally significant aspects of the place (ibid.). While in case of Tong Paradise project except the Pagoda building (Big Wild Goose Pagoda) was recently built fig 6 Therefore, the historicist approach in Tang Paradise is completely different from the reconstruction of Warsaw, and it cannot be classified as a historical reconstruction project like what implemented in the city of Warsaw.

The historicist approach adopted in Tang Paradise Park axis is a kind of imaginary or fabricated reconstruction and in other words, it is close to the 'Urban Renewal', which can be defined according to either of the following expressions: A) a complete removing of whole structure of a building replaced by a new reconstructed structure. B) Reconstruction measures to give the urban space an appearance of a renovated place, without targeting complete renovation and full destruction of buildings to make a new structural foundation. C) Renovation of the outer appearance of the buildings located on both sides of the roads, to give the passer-by (present people, workers, residents) a renewed feeling of place (Falamaki, 2005, 74). The side buildings of Tang Paradise can be classified as a type of urban renewal where a traditional architectural style of a specific time in history has been recreated in the present era.

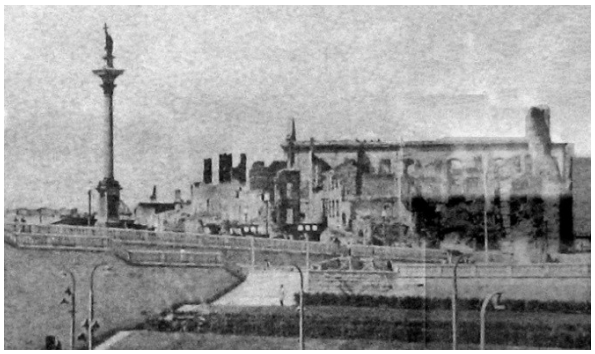


Fig. 2. An old photograph of the destruction of historic monuments in the city of Warsaw during World War II. Source: Photo by Author, Summer 2008, Historical images from the museum of Warsaw.



Fig. 3. The post-war reconstruction of the same historical building in Warsaw. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2008.

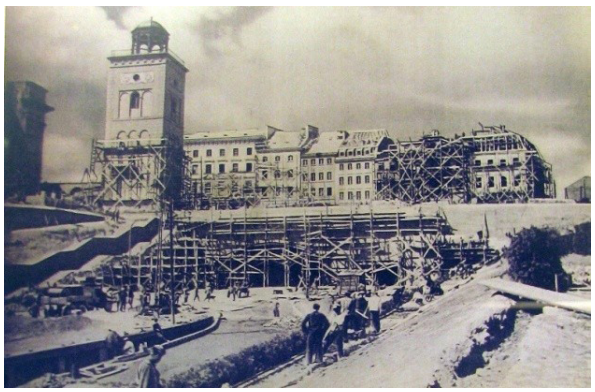


Fig. 4. An Old photograph of historical monuments in the reconstruction of Warsaw after the World War II. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2008, Historical images from the museum of Warsaw.



Fig. 5. The reconstructed historical monuments in Warsaw. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2008.

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Fig. 6. Big Historical Goose Pagoda, the original monument in the Tang-Paradise. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2010.



Fig. 7. Tang Dynasty architecture style, with huge new buildings that are built on both sides of the Tang-Paradise. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2010.



Fig. 8. Tang Dynasty architecture style, with huge new buildings that are built on both sides of the Tang-Paradise. Photo: Ehsan Dizani, 2010.

According to a research study, it has been shown that protecting identity and maintaining daily life is vital for tourism management in ancient cities (Wang, Lu, Xu, Wu & Wu, 2019, 415). But in the Tang Paradise Project the issue is completely the opposite, because for implementing this urban plan, everything left from the past architecture was completely removed except for the pagoda monument (Big Wild Goose Pagoda), and a new urban space was created. However, according to the "Venice Charter", article [6]: "The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale. Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or modification which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed" (ICOMOS, 2006, 13).

The architectural features of the mentioned project are quite compatible with the past architectural style as by joining to other works such as the original pagoda building (Big Wild Goose Pagoda), it is possible to be applied for architectural survey in the future (Figs. 7 & 8).

While constructing new buildings in historical sites using the past architectural styles merely relying on the aesthetic aspects might bring inevitable consequences. These kind of urban activities should not be allowed to continue in any circumstances and such demands and actions should not be implemented. These kinds of architectural organizations based on ancient architecture are opposite to the great teaching of history, as there has never been a return to the past time, and human beings have never returned from the path once taken. The masterpieces of the past generation indicate us the special and unique way of thinking in each generation and the aesthetic ideas they were presenting as the set of technical resources of their own time creativity. The desperate imitation of the past patterns is kind of presenting a fabricated identity, which means placing a "duplicated" work at the level of an "original" work because renovating the past condition would not be possible simply by applying a new technique of past style that has been left behind today. It is nothing but a claim that is devoid of any vitality and movement. It is something far from the unification of [past and present], as merging the "duplicated" with "original" work might suppose to be a pure style of work, but is nothing more than an imitation work of reconstruction, moving toward devaluing the original evidence that is intended to be preserved and protected (Samadi Randi, 1997, 172); In other words, the originality of

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the historical urban space is the forgotten item of the Tang Paradise project in Xi'an city.

Conclusion

Regarding ancient cities, the accepted relevant scientific regulations of urban interventions should not be overlooked at all, as disregarding these principles will bring inappropriate outcomes in the future. The mission of reconstruction of the historical Tang Paradise axis was to recreate an urban work with a historical-based approach to centralize the antiquity of the Tang Dynasty. This target street and the giant buildings reconstructed on both sides of it according to the Tang architectural style have no historical references. In other words, the Tang architectural style in a historical area has been a kind of imaginary renovated or reconstructed work without any reliable historical evidence in the contemporary era. The combination of original historical architectural works with the past architectural representation in the present era is the most obvious problem of this project. Although from a tourist's perspective, it may be interesting to encounter the past glory of Chinese architecture in the present era, it hardly attracts the attention of experts and those interested in the originality of historical cities. In conclusion, adopting a solid historical-based approach in urban planning, without considering the originality of the urban space, lowers "original" work to the level of an "imitation" work that misrepresents the real history of architecture in historical cities.

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