

"Haft Menbar" Path of Identity Segregated from the Historic Zones of the City

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Abstract

Birjand is a city in south of Khorasan province in Iran. The city is located in the heart of arid zones, with a population of 170000 persons. The map of the city is the result of juxtaposition of two urban morphologies, the organic and the ordered pattern. As a result, like many other cases, the organic part has been interrupted by the ordered pathway organisation and the historic tissue is suffering from disorders functionally and socially. In ordered part of the city, the arteries and their frontages are active parts of the city. In organic parts, the historic parts are dispersed and segregated and the main skeleton, including the "Haft Menbar" pathway, although in some parts are still visually active and in some ceremonies like "Ashoora" play a crucial role, but functionally play a small role in everyday life of the city.

In this paper, it has been attempted to measure by mental maps the degree of the users' perception of their environment, using different techniques. By computer analysis the permeability, and in some extent, visibility of urban tissue will be demonstrated, and the possibility of creating connectivity between historic parts and "zones of identity" will be measured. Analyzing the actual situation of the city the guidelines for creating more active environment would emerge. By enhancing the focal points of the historic urban axis and creating connectivity and, in the same time, promoting a stronger whole-part relationship, the city would enjoy more active and joyful life.

"Haft Menbar" Path of Identity Segregated from the Historic Zones of the City

Birjand is one of the cities in South Khorasan, a province of Iran. The city is located in the hot-arid region of the eastern part of Iran near the Loot desert (a desert in the central part of Iran).

In spite of many beautiful places and historic zones, Birjand like small old cities has encountered the degradation and deconstruction of historic parts of the city. The historic skeleton of the city has imported a lot of memories in its heart but the functionality of its buildings have damaged by the migration of people from these zones to the most modern parts of the city. Movement of people to the other parts of the city has changed the patterns of movement across the city, and has had serious impacts on the patterns of city life. The lack of vitality and the weak connections between historic parts have created remote sections that can be remembered only as residential quarters of a small city not the main skeleton, showing parameters of identity and character.

In this paper, it has been attempted to analyze the map of the city to recognize the role of Haft-Menbar pathway in defining the structure of the city and its urban scale in the whole – part relationship. By studying the magnets along the pathway, and their presence in the users' minds, it has been essayed to survey the perception of the users from the zone of study.

The map of the city is the result of juxtaposition of two patterns; geometric (ordered) and organic. The axial analysis of the whole city of Birjand, figure1, shows the most integrated arteries correspond to Jomhuri Boulevard, Hakim Nezari Avenue and Montazeri Avenue, making a turbine pattern, connected to the zone of the old citadel of the city (figure2) .The old Bazaar is parallel to the most integrated avenue (Jomhuri Blvd.) and shows a low depth from it. The Haft-Menbar, which is located in the south of Montazeri Avenue, is separated from the zone of bazaar .In spite of its symbolic meaning, Haft-Menbar shows low depth from high integrated axis, but is segregated from the bazaar pathway (that is active during the day, and does not show a high rate of pedestrian movement during the peak hours of activity). The activities that are besides the Haft-Menbar are active only during the period of Ashoora (the period when religious ceremonies are held for Imam-Hosseini during ten days of the year).

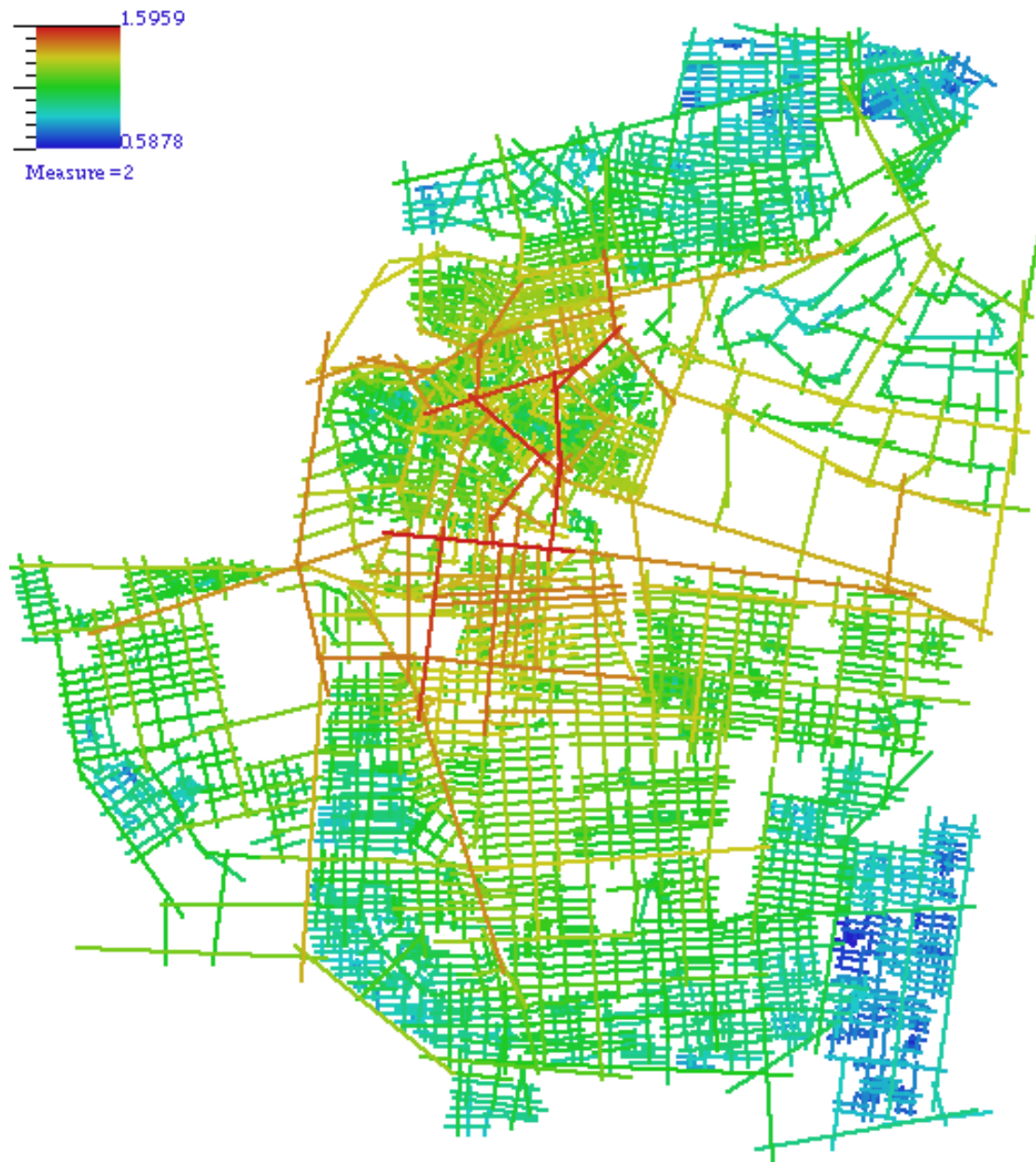


Figure 1
Axial Analysis of Birjand city, integration n

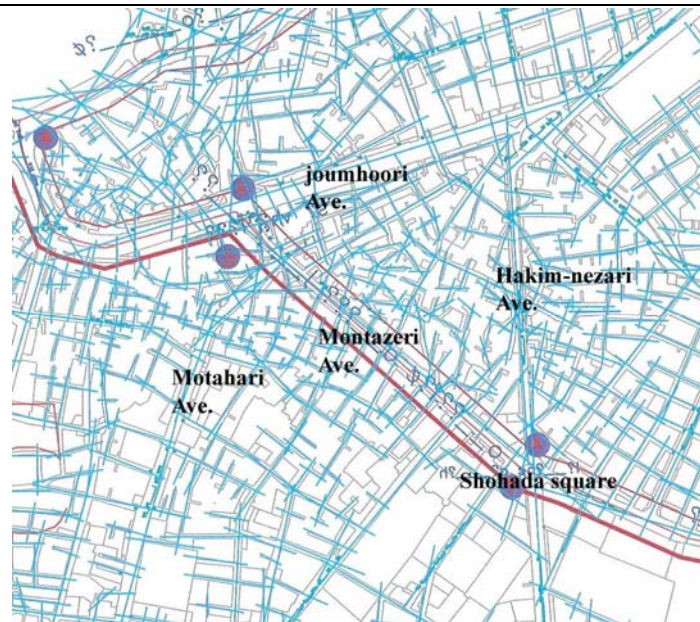


Figure 2

The juxtaposition of the map of the city and The axes shown on the map in the zone of study

Arg	%45	Moheban-e-zahra	%16
Ghaleh-paeen	%25	Khajeh-ha Mosque	%38
School of Shokatieh	%22	Ashoora mosque	%51
Pouria-ye- valee Sport hall	%0.09	Hosseinieh Shokatieh	%0.09
Water Reservoir	%35	Khezzr mosque	%29
The religious girls' school	%16	Hosseinieh bahreman	%0.06
Hooseynieh-e- hadavi	%0.09	Museum of celebrities	%0.06
Heidar-hassan Mosque	%22	Jameh alavi mosque	%0.03
Goud -hosseynieh	%16	Hosseinieh of downtown	%12
Imam reza hosseiniyeh	%22	Fatemiyeheyat	%12
Arasteh hosseinieh	%16	Masooieh Religious school	%0.09
Hadavi	0	The Asadi cross mosque	%0.03
Navab hosseynieh	%16	Bi-bihaji hosseinieh	%0.06
Zahra daralshafa	%41	Dareh-e-sheikhan	%0.03
Chahar-derakht mosque	%35	Khayatha Hosseynieh	%0.03
Jan-nesaran hosseiniyeh	%0.03	The martyres' 'museum	%0.03
Ayati mosque	%35	The old post office	%12
Hosseinieh zargarha	%0.03	The Boy's religious school	%0.06
Jameh mosque	%22		
Dokhtar akhond hosseynieh	%0.03		
Hosseynieh goud	%12		

Table 1

The percentage of the appearance of the important magnets in the mental maps

According to the 200 interviews held between the habitants of the city, in spite of the weak connection of the main artery of "Haft Menbar" with other parts of the city, the magnets persist in the mental maps of the inhabitants, which shows that weak connectivity of the pathway configuration have no impacts in the importance of magnets in the people's minds. Table 1 indicates the percentage of the appearance of the magnets in mental maps, and the location of the magnets is shown in figure 3. Concerning the general structure of the maps, according to Appleyard's category (1969), 50% of the maps are spatial and 50% are sequential maps, indicating that the people using the urban space of Haft-Menbar recognize the general structure of the pathway.

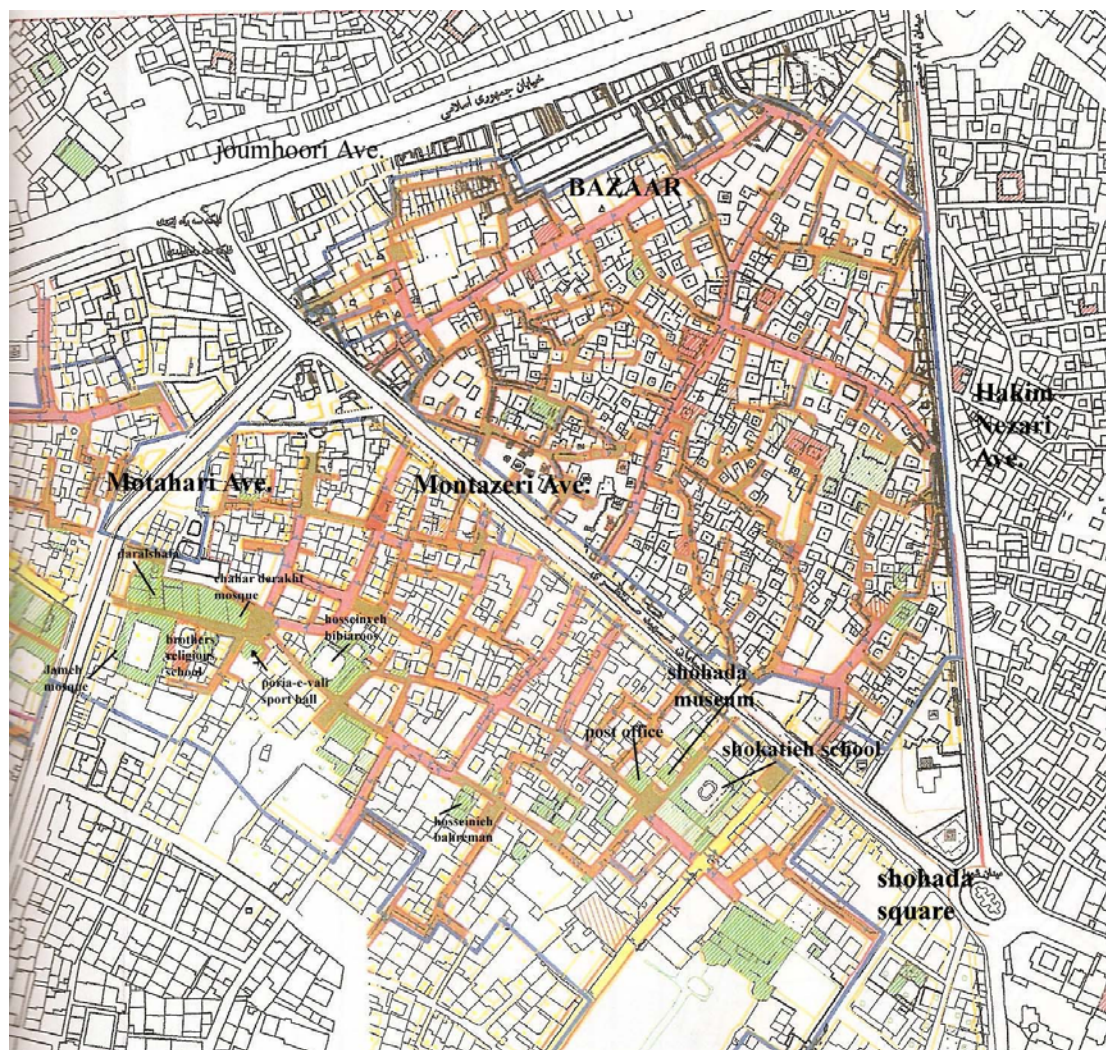


Figure 3
The Haft- Menbar pathway and the location of the magnets (Zista Architectural Atelier)

As the blueprint plan of the city shows, the connectivity of the paths has been enhanced and some efforts have been done to renovate the facades and replace or adapt the old functions with new land-use suggestions; The change of the two old houses to the museum of "Shohada" (martyrs) and the museum of scientists and celebrities are among these suggestions that helped strongly the rehabilitation of the Haft-Menbar pathway. The analysis of the facades of the historic pathway defines a strong archive of architectural details of facades of historic buildings (figure4). The guidelines for construction of new buildings can be extracted from the remaining parts of the old façades. Iranian cultural heritage organization has considered and registered the Haft-Menbar pathway as a historic zone and attempted to propose some alternatives to renovate the pathway configuration and the activities beside it. Figure 3 demonstrates the widening of the arteries in the recent proposals. Comparing the result of the axial analysis and the proposal of official authorities,

concerning widening the pathways, shows some coincidences and a few contradictions as follows: The widening would not change the pathway configuration's model and it would not change the depth of the pathway from the main artery of Montazeri Ave. (one of the high integrated axes in the trapezoid of the most integrated axes in the zone of study). So according to the axial analysis, these changes would not ameliorate the rate of pedestrian movement during the days of the year.

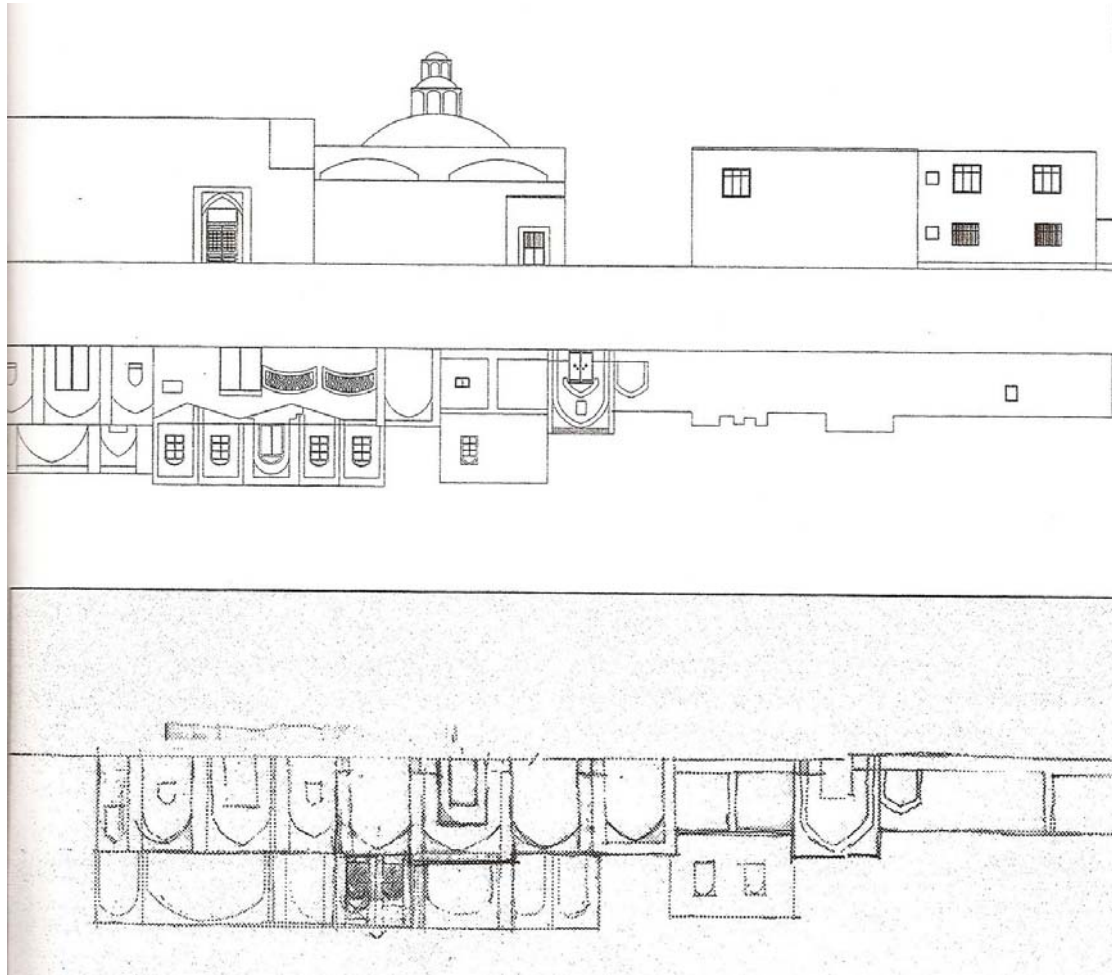


Figure 4

The architectural details in part of the facades of the pathway and some proposals for renovation of the facades

From visibility point of view the alleys of the Haft-Menbar are very narrow and the facades can not be seen in a continuous manner or can not be perceived as a whole entity. The best open views can be captured in nodes of "Chahar Derakht" and Shohada square. Simplicity of architectural details can be seen in all facades, and the most detailed parts are the entrances of buildings and public buildings. Studying the proportions of the windows, doors and sections of the facades would lead us to extract design guidelines for future reconstructions. Change of activities (land-use), and reinforcing the role of the magnets would be the most important strategies for renovation of the area. Enhancement of connectivity in pathway configuration and relating the bazaar with the Haft- Menbar would attract the pedestrians to the area. Renovation of the facades, redesign of the floorscape and reconsideration of the pathway configuration, especially the paths of pedestrians, are the main aspects that should be highlighted in the projects of renovation of "Haft- Menbar".

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