Absorption of Historic Villages within Tehran City: The Tangible and Intangible Consequences

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Despite evidence of a rural-urban dichotomy, scholars throughout the world have examined the link between these two sectors in depth in recent decades. In the Iranian context, both rural and urban spaces have undergone physical and socio-cultural transformations to support their interwoven relationships. Urban areas have noticeably begun to spread into the countryside in recent years, especially in Tehran, the capital. While rural localities were once among the most remarkable representations of the architectural and cultural heritage of Iran, in recent decades, urban actions have had a significant impact on the rural heritage from several perspectives. Significant changes
have been observed in the tangible and intangible structure of these rural territories by virtue of massive urbanisation, rural-urban migrations, technological advancement, and urban-biased policies. More specifically, the government’s centralized approach and urban focus has facilitated boundless urbanisation. In addition, the concentration of population and economic functions in the Tehran region has been accompanied by an extended urbanisation process in the region through which Tehran City has spread into broader territories. During this process, the adjacent historic villages have been effectively engulfed by Tehran City, leading to an economic, morphological and cultural restructuring of these communities.

This paper seeks to generate meaningful insights into the tangible and intangible transformation of one of the villages that has become assimilated within Tehran City as a case study. By studying aerial and satellite images, it examines physical changes in the rural landscape at both the land and cluster levels and, thereby, highlights how the studied village has evolved into an integral element of a metropolis. This paper also examines how changes in the physical fabric of the assimilated village has generated a hybrid of a rural and urban environment in which more urban elements are evident. These recent physical changes in the built fabric have imposed socio-cultural shifts that have effectively resulted in the eradication of close human relationships in the rural society.

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Maryam Shafiei is a PhD candidate at the School of Architecture, the University of Queensland (UQ). She holds a Master of Architecture from Art University of Tehran and BSc in Architectural Engineering from the University of Tehran. She has worked as an Architect in several architecture firms in Iran and taught in prominent universities both in Iran and Australia. Her research interests span subjects in urban history and rural/urban morphology, especially the examination of physical changes in historical rural and urban settlements, and their implication for the preservation of heritage values in these settlements.

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