Ways to protect the cultural heritage of Koya district

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Abstract

Many trends through time have expressed within its essence Man's will to control nature and things and get them into equilibrium; seeking for balanced situations that refer to the past and predict the future, while reflecting values and their indicators in all disciplines. This is why initiating a continuous cultural and anthropological project for Koya district, would surely feed and be fed by the values of this district, which was the birth place of many intellectuals, literates, religious men and politicians. According to this view, this paper intends to clarify and illustrate the demands of the cultural act (educational, literary, esthetically, and intellectually) in developing the district in order to enhance the vital spirit of this land in Kurdistan. This paper has a general introduction that highlights the geographical and historical nature of Koya district, the origins of its name, and strategic importance, then discusses heritage and novelty through indicating urban renovation concerns with clarifying its applicable approaches, and ends with some conclusions and recommendations.

Keywords: conservation, preservation, cultural heritage, Koya, Kurdistan.

1 Introduction: natural enclosure and cultural essence

1.1 Origins of the name

There are several opinions about the origins of the name "Koya", T.A. Huwaizi documented some of them: as some said that the name during Islamic conquests was [Kosar] which means a mountain zone. Others said that the original name was [Kothar] but it became [Koisanjaq] after Islamic conquests, as Muslims and Ottomans raised the "Allai Sanjaq" which means the noble flag of the prophet

over the old citadel which is known as “Qog basha”. J. Baban refers to other opinions like that of G. Talabani who said: “the original name of [Koisanjaq] was [Koi-San-Ja] which means the mountain where the Sultan resides”. Sh. Fattah has another opinion as he says: “May be they used to collect the agricultural goods there in a governmental stores at some epoch, these stores were, therefore, called [Ko] which means a group” [1]. While Kh. Ma’asoom believes that [Koya] comes from [Ko] which means mountain, so the name would mean the mountain zone [2]. All these opinions expressing Koya’s natural, human, and cultural enclosure, and refer to city’s location over mountains.

1.2 Geographical enclosure

This gorgeous district is located to the south of Bawaji mountain (1260m) and to the west of Haibat Sultan chain of mountains (1092m) where each of Seri Kosar (4km to the north), Chnarok (5km to the north east), and Hamamok (500m to the east) resorts are located on, and from the south and west of the district there are the hills and wide plain areas that goes to the Lower Zab river. This district with its five townships (Shorsh, Sktan, Ashti, Sikrdkan, and Taqtaq) is one of Erbil ten districts, and is (620m) above sea surface.

1.3 Historical testimony

Koya is one of the historic cities that has many evidences of old building types and heritage which include citadels (like Qishla, fig. 1), Khans, and Qaisseries that were built according to deferent architectural styles with various types of ornaments (especially for enhancing roofs, doors, and windows), and of the available raw materials in Kurdistan environment like stone, wood, gypsum, and reeds. Some of the historical references denote that this district was existed in 2500 BC, this was revealed by discovered and recorded archeological sites.

Figure 1: Koya Citadel – Qishla [6].

1.4 Strategic site and location

Site refers to the specific limits of a place on the earth according to the coordinate system (longitudes and latitudes), while location means that area which is occupied by a phenomenon and ends with its limits. Koya has a strategic site and location within Kurdistan region considering the following:

- a. Its site is among three important provinces; Kirkuk (89km), Erbil (75km) and Suleimany (115km), so it provides a vital connection among them.
- b. Its location is dynamic, as it is open and expandable through its current or future master plan.
- c. Terrains, hills, and mountains form its geomorphologic features, and draw attention to its natural resources and scenes; as it offers a perfect land for investment in infra and ultra structures, especially in tourism with all its artistic and cultural requirements.

Regarding the former points and issues, one can figure out the following:

- a. Kurdish environment refers to the professional treatment with nature and its challenges that provided living approaches that go with those natural and human resources and seasons' virtues.
- b. Historical evidences refer to the flexibility of Man's comprehension to his role through centuries, and that reflects the historical intensity of this district that expresses tremendous harmony between geographical and historical qualities.
- c. Human act that shows humans will to stay, develop, and keep the national identity.

2 Heritage and novelty

2.1 Urban renovation concern

Practically, the researcher within his dealing with the past and renovation the present, used to face a challenge of what are principles and criteria that should be considered in renovation and development, and the types of treatments, as architectural heritage has its own character that shows the historical essence and living types that depend on the type of relationship between Man and nature, and that requires putting specific standards; for:

- a. Protecting historical heritage regarding its importance and big role in improving human conscious.
- b. Starting renovation and development considering the past values and qualities, and inspiring wisely from its features.
- c. Focusing on architecture; whether it was heritage and/or a material to study, as a part of the national spirit, and durability and continuity in that life connection would enhance self esteem.
- d. Adopting and expanding touristic, cultural, and artistic projects that may enhance economy, living, and urban level.

According to this, equilibrium becomes a reality that would be dealt with efficiently with skills, and good experience, regarding also the requirements of historical, geographical, legitimately, geometrical, and economical interaction in evolving renovation and development and the required mechanisms.

So, the main concerns of renovation and development are: the time-place, human will, methodology, and funding. Considering these issues, viewing the past with pride to draw the future, would assure the required qualities and values of such important beautiful past-future continuity.

2.2 Cultural classification for historical heritage in Koya district

- a. Written heritage: includes all kinds of historical text documentaries that documented district's initiating and evolution, and other issues that deal with the various aspects of epistemology, and human knowledge.
- b. Oral heritage: includes that kind of heritage which is transferred socially from one generation to another through time, such as legends, songs, types of music, folklore dances, etc.
- c. Physical heritage: includes old buildings and their ruins, like citadels, forts, khans, and traditional houses.

About written heritage, one can find here and there some information that refer to the vital role of this district through various epochs, and the influential individuals who were born and lived there and became the leaders of the intellectual, cultural, literature, and political revival, like M. J. Zada (Malai Gawra), and his son Masood, and the national poets Q. Koyee, M. T. Wardi, and Dildar (the writer of Kurdish national anthem), as well as other patriots like Sheikh Kh. Hawrami, Haji Mala B. Agha Huwaizi, the president J. Talabani, and F. Ma'asoom, etc; while oral heritage is related to the social continuity and transferring through generations. There's no doubt that Kurds as other people have their own myths, legends, tales, and folklore songs, and that require documenting this kind of heritage as part of protecting such active heritage. The physical heritage for Koya district is remarkably concerned in evaluating the human growth and transformations, as the existing archeological remains which indicate their epochs, made the city as a vital joint between past and future. The district is enriched with architectural heritage and traditional buildings which have their own special characteristics, such as:

- Qishlai Koya citadel that was located in the middle of the city and built on the top of a hill, as part of a defense system just like other forts and citadels.
- Qaisseries as an architectural type where various local facilities and commercial activities are handled within, as Haji B. Agha Hwaizy Qaisseri (the old Qaissari) (1840) and Qaisseri Nwe (the new Qaisseri) (1904).
- Traditional houses with their windows, wooden doors, basements, columns, and courtyards which are contributed in creating a comfortable environment through all the seasons in such a mountain nature. Those houses have lots of common details with Baghdadi eastern houses [3].

But unfortunately, this kind of heritage didn't find the required care and suitable treatments (restoration, maintenance, or rehabilitation, etc.), so the

physical condition became very bad through time and due to the mistaken official routines.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

3.1 Conclusions

- Koya district has a strategic location that connects three important provinces together, and it was well-known for being a commercial and cultural center.
- Its nature gives it its geomorphologic characteristics which were used by residents to create suitable living types that meet its climate's needs, such as choosing their building materials from the existing natural resources and that was clearly shown in the cultural and artistic remains.
- Historical evidences indicate the genuineness of this district, and its contribution through its long age in enhancing human situation and controlling nature, and the evidences refer to Man's great will of living and looking forward future.
- Unfortunately, most of historical evidences suffer the natural erosion through time, as well as the bad official routine that made them only ruins that hardly enhance the collective memory instead of involving them in enhancing urban scenes that is good for inspiration and achieving time continuity.
- Cultural background for this district refers to the national conscious that longs to gain the essential rights. Poets might be the pioneers of expressing this longing, like Q. Koyee, M. T. Wardi, Dildar, Khadim, Awni, S. Odal.
- The way of dealing with the national heritage in its various aspects needs to be more considerable and draw more attention, and start treating it with serious and thorough practical procedures and mechanism.

3.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are meant to enhance heritage recent situation, and these recommendations are addressed to three destinations (governmental offices, civic society organizations, and society and mass media):

3.2.1 To the Governmental Offices

As the executive power that is responsible of directing and taking care of the various living types, and has also the moral responsibility of protecting heritage in all its aspects, and that requires the followings:

- Illustrating the importance of the historic heritage via mass media, journals, and catalogs that enhance patriotism. In addition to putting signboards and signposts that identify the remains and lead people to them.
- Maintaining archeological sites and taking professional procedures to protect them, like compensate people for their cultural properties and have them in governmental ownership; and rehabilitate them by applying new activities like art and cultural galleries, or turn them to a museum for district's heritage.

- Activating legal awareness and protection for such sites and keep them enclosed by barriers to prevent the external negative impacts.
- Making committees to document the oral heritage to use it as a reference for coming researches and studies.
- Commemorate the literary and artistic icons via significant sculptures, and architects should refer to great Kurdistan as the big national dream.
- KRG information ministry is recommended to take care of and focus on: publishing the literature of intellectual, literary, and artistic icons; and traditional industries and craftsmanship; as well as, dedicating a day for the district and celebrate it with a festival that show the traditions and cultural activities; and also preparing and publishing a tourist guide for identifying archeological/cultural sites.

3.2.2 To the Civic Society organizations

Those organizations are in contact with different social strata that vary in their educational level. Those organizations are recommended to:

- Participate in various activities (cultural, literature, and/or artistic) that improve patriotism and encourage sacrificing for this district.
- Establish intellectual, literature, and art forums and taking care of them through programs that could keep them going on and in the other hand discover new talents and skills in order to improve them.
- Document the heritage manually and electronically to preserve the cultural memory and then using it in renovation and development processes.
- Coordinate and be in contact with significant organizations, associations, and unions to exchange expertise and show human efforts that seek for expanding the circle of general knowledge.

3.2.3 To society and the mass media

Through:

- Letting people be aware of the precious value of their heritage and its importance in enhancing the national character and collective memory.
- Clarifying the importance of activating citizens' role in protecting historical heritage and the critical need of their participation in supporting and maintaining the traditional and cultural industries and craftsmanship.
- Representing the national conscious and culture through positive behaviors that indicate the positive role of the citizen and his right required act.

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