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## The Destructive Culture or destructed by culture...! A study on cultural practices and expressions as the primary causes for damages in historic-cultural properties - A case study of Iran

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### Abstract

Natural deterioration is only one of the identified threats to historic properties. There is a broader range of threats including natural and climatic effects and also human activities. The human acts are not limited to such anti-social behaviors that in behavioral sociology are known as vandalism; they also include culturally approved acts such as cultural rituals, etc. that are truly valued by their entire society. Sometimes these cultural acts could directly or indirectly cause damages to historic properties. This raises an important dilemma vis-à-vis to the preservation of cultural heritage and its tangible and intangible values: What should we preserve, the cultural property or the cultural practice? How is it possible to prevent damages to historic properties, but also to be able to preserve cultural practices that are essential characters to Cultural Landscape richness? In the preservation of cultural heritage, and more particularly those subjects related to the cultural landscape, understanding the integrity of the historic property and its related cultural beliefs support its success and authenticity.

This paper considers three such kinds of cultural behaviors from the wide variety of Iran's cultural geography and analyzes their psychological, social and traditional aspects in order to examine the possibility of multi-preservation methods for these difficult cases.

**Keywords:** *Vandalism, Cultural landscape, Cultural values, Cultural believes, Preservation.*

### Introduction

Study of various historic places and visiting different regions across the country of Iran, either if they were the most well-known and perfectly

preserved places or hardly accessible historic areas, reveal an important fact as the source of a common problem<sup>1</sup>: people who are interacting with such historic places. In condition assessment studies in historic properties, these kinds of damages are defined under a general category called the human-caused damages. However, this paper attempts to

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cover those acts that are resulting in unconscious destructions, which is also in opposition with what “Vandals” do to properties. Such kinds of acts could be a part of socio-cultural practices, rituals or cultural beliefs. It should be noticed that in many cases, such destructive acts are not easily recognizable to be considered in condition assessment studies, as they are completely different from the regular human-caused damages to historic properties. Consequently, most often, preservation plans for such properties lack the conceptual relationship between these places with their historical settings and socio-cultural behaviors. Indeed, a sociological and anthropological issue which requires planned researches as a threat to the cultural heritage resources.

Tradition is not the only source for the above-mentioned behaviors; but also, socio-cultural habits, cultural rituals, and public beliefs or in other word superstition, could also reflect them. Although such acts might appear unnecessary and unpleasant, however, once their integrity with the human culture and his/her cultural habitat are revealed, then the former definition will lose its reliability. The issue becomes even more sensitive when it comes to the subject of Cultural Landscape as an essential character in cultural and historic properties, particularly in the World Heritage Sites.

### **Proposition and hypothesis**

One of the preliminary leading subjects in the creation of Cultural Heritage Preservation is human-caused damages. Review of the history of cultural heritage preservation is filled with selective preservation and demolition activities, particularly during the 19th-century urban renewal movements, which accordingly brought up the importance of prevention movements against such destructive activities. Since then, many preservation-based discussions have emphasized the human acts threats for historic properties. On the other hand, the concept of the Cultural Landscape became an important topic in preservation discussions of the late 1970s. In 1976, the Brussels Charter made a specific reference to

the Cultural Landscape as an important term for the cultural heritage preservation in its setting. However, in many countries, this subject remains undeveloped. Especially that, many cultural behaviors which might even look destructive are indeed, valuably affecting the enrichment of living heritage in traditional societies. Therefore, many international gatherings, including the Nara Document on Authenticity and Burra Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, has specified this subject. What is missing in this process is the identification and study of those social activities which has been previously expressed as destructive behaviors that should be banished from the society, without consideration of their cultural characteristics.

### **Methodology**

A systematic and continuing research study should be developed according to the importance and sensitivity of the concepts of culture, cultural practices, and other related categories under this umbrella. In particular, research with a focus on anthropological factors should be included in cultural landscape studies, to convey the intense integrity of the cultural acts with preservation of historic properties, which was the method of this study. This paper discusses three individual cases using the mentioned research methodology, in an aim to get better results.

### **Outcomes**

The outcomes of this research would be considered as preliminary results due to the originality of the research topic and its new concept, and therefore it is not recommended to be either referred to other such kinds of social acts nor be omitted from such research studies. Indeed, this paper should be able to create a reliable measure for developing other similar researches and can be used as a model along with other studies. This fact is important to prevent failures, like what was experienced in other comparable projects. For instance, such projects for the targeted tourism villages, which the use of wrong metrics for the research controversially caused many

irreversible cultural damages to rural life across the country, even in the desert or forested regions. The biggest achievement of this research would be the determination of the complexity of the relationship between such kinds of habits, beliefs, and socio-cultural practices as character-defining features of the cultural landscape approaches. Also, to admit this fact that prevention of such behaviors potentially causes damages to the concept of cultural landscape.

### **Damages to the cultural and historic properties**

In studies of historic properties, the causes of decay are divided into two general categories: Exterior causes and Interior causes, and each one includes different subcategories. The exterior causes are then studied under three main subjects: natural factors, biological factors, and human factors. The subcategory of human factors includes social and political causes such as war, inappropriate management in respect of historic places, and regulatory challenges (e.g., inheritance laws). Nevertheless, there is also another issue which either individually or in a relationship with other aspects can cause damages to historic properties, but most of the times get forgotten. It is not far from reality that this issue is almost one of the common causes of damages to the historic properties and more specifically the most ordinary adverse visual effect.

In behavioral sociology, the act of destruction of public or governmental properties, are called Vandalism<sup>2</sup> Sometimes destructive acts affect historic properties or artworks. Some researchers will call this action the “Vandalism of Art.” In spite of this, with analytical studies on the concept of vandalism and such behaviors, the question arises that, would all such kinds of activities in the context of historic properties be identical as vandalism?

For a better understanding of all the aforementioned factors, in the following sections we begin with a brief review of the statement of vandalism, then other behaviors and their difference with vandalism will be discussed.

### **Vandalism**

It is not easy to make a clear statement of all social disorders. Nonetheless, vandalism, as an unusual social activity, in theory, is known among of those social disorders that a person will consciously desire to damage or destroy public properties. Vandals are greatly motivated to destroy whatever is beautiful and belongs to the public. Psychological and sociological studies define this conscious opposition with the modern civilization, which also has a long history, as “Vandalism.” (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 23)

Scholars believe that vandalism is generally an acquired skill that potentially grows in a proper context. The social situation, economic condition, poor living conditions, social hierarchies, and other similar factors will increase its effects. In psychology science, this disorder is identified as the result of inner conflicts which appears as irrational behaviors in social activities and consider it as a direct outcome of generational gaps, accordingly, unconscious emotional reactions in the younger generation. (Feuer, 1973: 8)

In this manner, some theorists point to the Oedipal Complexes which cause disagreements between parents and their children or older generation (Keniston, 1969: 83). Majority of sociologists who work in this field, almost with no doubt accept this attitude in the studies of social disorders as a cause of vandalism. Richard Flacks, calls these behaviors a direct result of oppositions to dictated orders by parents who are highly affected by their leading society. Therefore, he believes that vandalism is a primary reaction of a younger generation to reflect their anger, disagreement, and disappointment with un-equity, limitation, discrimination and dictated orders by their governments (Flacks, 1970: 63). On the other hand, sometimes aggression and practices of vandalism, are specifically designed to increase the awareness of neglecting higher level social parties to the poverty and discrimination of the lower class (Aronson, Wilson, Akert & Sommers, 2015: 197). Generally, inappropriate management in accordance with adulthood as the most active period

of life, the lack of effective plans to improve the life condition, economic situation, cultural issues, free time, reliable social media, and public education, will increase such kinds of activities in societies.

Sometimes the sense of being ignored becomes a great motivation for destructive acts which theoretically varies from vandalism, but the destructive results in public properties are similar (Janoren, 1988: 33).

In this regard, other scholars, like Aronson, confirm the potential acquisition in aggressive behaviors. They also go beyond this issue and say that the future generation does not only repeat such acts, but they will also create new ways to them (Aronson, et al., 2015: 130). It should be noticed that in such studies, different factors like age, gender, population, inconsistency, and family, are considered as influencing factors on the typology of the acts of vandalism and their popularity (Clinard & Meier, 2014: 208). Additionally, other factors such as equipment and the snowball effect<sup>3</sup> are among affecting issues (Janoren, 1988: 30).

### Types of Vandalism

Vandalism as an act of social disorder divides into two parts based on types of vandals: Individual vandals and Group vandals. This also includes their missions, as the Group vandals organize their acts based on planned protests, social, and political pleas, while in Individual Vandalism, the act is unplanned and it's usually an emotional reaction to a psychological or social matter (Fig1).

Although the damages caused by the Group Vandalism are more visible and notifying, in reality, the Individual Vandalism will have a broader, deeper, and more permanent damages to the economy and the society. This consists of a wide range of public and private facilities, like public benches, green spaces, trash bins, lightings, libraries, transportation facilities, ATMs, public pools, and signal poles; And private or semi-private facilities like restaurants, theaters, elevators, stadiums, and clubs; Or even artworks like statues, preserved objects in museums, or the museums. In addition,

sometimes even bomb attacks, when a cultural or public facility is targeted rather than people, will count in this definition. In another hand



Fig1. Destructive behaviors caused by psychological problems and momentary violence. Photo : [www.myaspergerschild.com](http://www.myaspergerschild.com)

when a cultural property gets threaten or damaged due to the ignorance of the governmental system, an act of hidden vandalism (governmental vandalism) is happening.

Cultural Vandalism is another definition created by some of the cultural heritage scholars in response to the destructive activities in cultural properties, though, using such a definition requires more cautious. In most of the times, the act of such interventions in historic properties appears as a result of public unconscious activities, which is different from the acts of vandalism that attempt to destroy cultural practices/properties. There is a conflict in the distinction between socially accepted cultural



Fig. 2. Destruction of public properties after a football game. Source: [www.ISNA.ir](http://www.ISNA.ir).

practices from what historic preservationists call cultural vandalism. Indeed, the former is different from such social disorders. Like what was defined previously, vandalism is an intentionally planned destruction of public properties (Mohseni Tabrizi, 2004: 14-17), while cultural expressions and practices represent respect and faith to historic properties even if over time this would cause damages.

### **Cultural Landscape**

The theme of Cultural Landscape is such a broad category and mostly so delicately connected to the cultural setting (Historic sites, contexts, etc.) that with a tiny mistake could be missed. It is possible that the reflection of such concepts that occur in social activities, cultural rituals and beliefs of people in a region could be observed nearby of cultural properties. Human interaction with his/her natural environment is called Cultural Landscape (Janoren, 1988: 27). Since we get born, we as a human being are integrated with our surrounding environment, trapped in the life cycle and connected to our belonged culture. In a larger perspective, this includes all features of human life in interaction with his/her surrounding environment: aspects of daily life activities including eating habits, clothing, facilities, or more complicated social issues, such as political relationships, communication, and beliefs. In another word, practically creative activities, which potentially evolve and renew (Aronson, et al., 2015: 32). Additionally, although the terms of Cultural Landscape might be comparable with other concepts like "View" or "Panorama," however, the purpose of the cultural landscape is not only nature or the visual scenery (Janoren, 1988: 35). This term beyond its visionary concept, contains the idea of understanding, identification, communication, and spiritual and psychological interaction with the actual subject. In the area of cultural heritage, this would perfectly replicate the relationship of a historic-cultural property with people who their life is directly or indirectly connected to it. Therefore,

Cultural Landscape represents a complete image of the cultural identity of a place in all its aspects, rather than a single physical entity.

Human imagination and his/her inner thoughts are a response to his/her interaction with the real life, which occurs in his/her behaviors and beliefs (Ahmadi AliAbadi, 2001: 12). Regarding cultural heritage conservation, understanding of this fact, particularly, when it combines with the concept of cultural landscape, will be an important task. Because increasing the public knowledge about the national cultural heritage values will work as an incentive force in economic improvements and increase social activities (Isar, 1986: 12). It should also be mentioned that most of the difficulties affecting cultural heritage preservation activities are affected by their integrity with the people's daily life and the conflicts with outside affecting decision makers.

### **The cultural practices and their damages to historic properties**

In previous sections, we discussed different categories of causes of damages to the historic properties. One of them is human-caused damages, which include any kind of distortion in the structural stability or the original elements of the property. These kinds of activities are identified as dangerous acts. However, as it was mentioned previously, despite the potential threats in some activities, they also embody other considerable concepts. Such behaviors express aspects of the cultural authenticity of people of a region or even a common issue for the human being. Three case studies were selected from different regions with different cultural identities to make a better understanding of this subject, which come in the following pages.

1. One of the preliminary acts, known as vandalism in historic properties, is graffiti (defacing), a complicated cultural act that could be found anywhere. Though, any other incident can also be a memorial of an event and valuable to be preserved. Among them are the traces of the bullets

of Russian war cannons in Arg-Alishah in Tabriz from the Iran-Russia war, and the remains of bullets

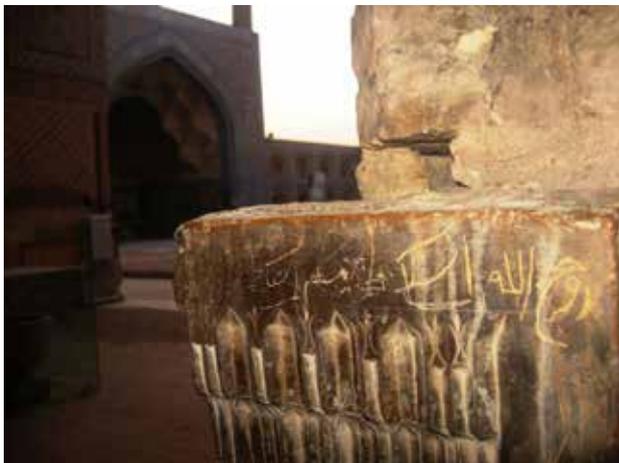


Fig. 3. Defacing, stone veneer, Eastern Eivan of Shah Mosque, in Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Isfahan. Source: www.sahebnews.ir



Fig. 4. Defacing on the walls of Sheikh-Garden Caravanserai, Saveh. Text in Farsi:

فراق دوستان دیدن، نشانی باشد از دوزخ  
 «معاذالله غلط گفتم، که دوزخ زو نشان باشد»

راغم این حروف؛ مشهدی حسین، ولد ملا عبدالرزاق، روضه خوان و مدیح(؟) خوان تبریزی از همه کسان التماس دعا دارم. سنه ۱۲۷۱

(English, free translation: Separation from your beloved is just like a hell, Oh, Lord! I shouldn't say that, how the hell could remind me of my love" Mashadi Hosein, the son of Molla Abd al-Razzaq wrote these letters and asks for your prayers.). Photo: Keyhanpoor .

in the Sepah-Salar Mosque's walls in Tehran as a memorial of the attack to the parliament during the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. However, here the purpose is the written scripts or drawings on the surface of historic properties using a tool. There is almost no historic property which survives defacing. Graffiti/defacing is a common act in most of the

human cultural activities and has a long history. This paper will discuss Iran's cultural region.

The fact that the life is so short and fragile, the passing



Fig 5. Two examples of defacing on the Northern wall in the Nations Gates, Takht-e Jamshid (Parseh). Photo: M. Keyhanpoor, 2003

time, and learning from the past with a great desire for immortality have been some of the causes of the creation of graffiti in historic properties in Iran. There are many examples that confirm this statement, such as many phrases, words, symbols, and many other features found on the surface of historic or modern properties, trees, cliffs, stones in the mountains, walls of caves, and other places. However, our concentration is on the historic properties and visual and structural damages caused by such kinds of acts. Attention to historic properties and expression of satisfaction or frustration in visiting of those places can be tracked over time in various examples. Such expression is depicted either by defacing a part of the property or through written resources like poems or travelogues. An instance of such written resources is the Khaghani's famous and long Ghasida (Ode), which wrote on his way to Haj (Mecca). In this poem, he talks about the ruins of Sasanid great architecture in the ancient city of Tisfun. Text in Farsi:

«هان! ای دلِ عبرت بین، از دیده نظر کن، هان  
 ایوانِ مدائن را، آیینهی عبرت دان  
 یک ره، ز ره دجله منزل به مدائن کن  
 وز دیده دوم دجله بر خاک مدائن ران...»

(English description: The poet is pointing to the ancient ruins of Tāq Kasrā located in current Iraq, as a symbol of the fragility of the life).

Or a rich poet by Omar Khayyam: Text in Farsi with English translation:

آن قصر که جمشید در او جام گرفت  
 آهو بچه کرد و رو به آرام گرفت

بهرام که گور می گرفتی همه عمر  
«دیدى که چگونه گور بهرام گرفت

That palace in which Bahram (Jamshid) took the cup,  
(there) the fox has whelped, and the lion taken its rest;  
Bahram who used always to take the wild ass (gur)  
Today see how the grave (gur) has taken Bahram,  
The subject is also reflected in the words of many  
elder scholars of the fields of theology, preaching  
and philosophy. In this regard, the complicity of the  
fragility of the life and the immortality of the greatest  
humanmade architectural features encouraged many  
people to create the traces on these places. Of course,  
this easy but complicated idea, in some cases turned  
to an extraordinary opportunity for modern studies,  
since they provide us original information about the  
past time, past people, and their thoughts.  
Based on the modern Historic Preservation theories  
any kinds of such acts are destructive. On the other  
hand, those historic graffiti are now important  
documents that reveal some parts of our history and  
have been carefully preserved and interpreted. For  
instance, an interesting collection of historic written  
graffiti works dating back from early times after  
Achaemenid era (500 BC.) until the contemporary era,  
in the Tachara palace in Takht-e Jamshid, indicates  
the memories of famous and unknown people.  
Some of the scholars call this palace the Museum  
of Calligraphy. Study of these texts demonstrates



Fig. 6. A view from the Tachara Palace (Darius the great's private palace), Takht-e Jamshid (Parseh). Photo: Keyhanpoor, 2003.

many important names and other information which  
shows the importance of concentrated studies  
about their aesthetic, historic, archival, and  
anthropological values.

The graffiti works can be seen anywhere, in great  
mosques in historic cities, tombs of famous religious  
people/scientists, and even caravanserais. A great  
desire for making a long-lasting memory for future



Fig. 7. A memorial inscription in six lines on the western wall of the Southern Eivan in Tachara Palace, Takht-e Jamshid (Parseh). Text in Farsi and some parts in Arabic:

ز عهد فریدون و ضحاک و جم	«کرا دانی از خسروان عجم
ز دست حوادث نشد پایمال	که در تخت مُلکش نیابد زوال
سریر سلیمان، علیه السلام	نه بر باد رفتی سحرگاه و شام
خُنک آنکه با دانش و داد رفت	بآخر ندیدی که بر باد رفت
که بی شک بن کامرانی خوری	الا تا درخت کرم پَروری

کَتَبَهُ ابراهیم سلطان بن شاهرخ، فی سنه ست و عشرين و ثمانمائه»

(English Description: this short poem includes five lines and is about the fragility of the life. The poet names several famous ancient Persian emperors from the Ferdowsi's Shahnameh: Fereydon, Zakhak, and Jam, he also talks about the prophet Solomon, and notes to their power and wealth, as instable features. The poet at the end talks about the kindness, knowledge and fairness, as everlasting features of our life. He introduces himself at the end as: Ibrāhīm Sūltan ībn Shāhrokh.). Photo: Keyhanpoor, 2003.

generations come to light with a review of such works.  
Besides its popularity among all human societies,  
this issue is a definite cultural act which should be  
considered in Cultural Landscape studies. We should  
not ignore or object such cultural behaviors that have  
universal popularity. We indeed should try to create,  
multiple solutions that help to preserve historic  
properties but also prevent such threats.

2. Since the Islamic medieval, construction of  
tombs become very popular in Islamic societies and  
particularly in Iranian cultural geography. Attempting

to bury dead bodies beside the graves or tombs of holy people was truly valued, to send the soul of deceased to the heaven and that will rest in peace. Affected by this burial culture, many monuments have survived from destructive threats overtime and sometimes even the building got expanded in this way. For instance, mausoleum complexes such as Sha-I Zenda necropolis in Samarkand, Marinid tombs at Fes[z] in Morocco, and Aswan tombs in Egypt. (Hillenbrand, 1995: 262-263) In other examples, burials happen adjacent to the tomb, and without any new construction, although other structures, such as caravanserais and similar facilities might exist in that area. Such kinds of burial culture have been popular since the early Islamic eras in Iran.

Unfortunately, some of the identified and nationally registered historic tombs were demolished in the past, for renovation and expansion purposes. This kind of interventions in historic religious properties has always been a complicated disagreement between the Cultural Heritage Organization and Waqf Organization. However, the focus of this section is specifically



Fig. 8. A view of a historic tomb in Shisheh Riz, a section of the City of Jalgh in Iranian Balouchestan. Photo: Keyhanpoor, 2003.

on a unique example of a local burial ceremony as a destructive cultural practice seen in various tombs or famous cemeteries in Saravan region<sup>4</sup> located in Sistan and Balouchestan province. This brings to sight a popular culture of burial traditions in search of peace and calmness for the dead body which is still in practice in some villages. The repetition of this act will cause irreversible damages to historic properties over time.

According to a local belief, the body of premature infants, dead born infants, or infants died soon after they were born, should not be buried in public cemeteries or in a normal way. Instead of that, to protect their other children from death or to avoid of such bad fortunes to repeat in the future, the dead body will be placed in the walls of historic tombs.



Fig. 9. The body of a dead infant is wrapped in white fabric and buried in the wall of a historic tomb in Shisheh Riz, a section of the City of Jalgh in Iranian Balouchestan. Photo: Keyhanpoor, 2003.

In this method, a small hole is created with taking out one or two pieces of the original Khesht (Adobe) or bricks from either interior or exterior walls of the building and then place the wrapped dead body in white fabric (Kafan) as a shroud, inside it. Finally, this small grave is covered with small pieces of khesht and in-kind plaster.

Condition assessment and structural studies in some of the tombs in this region, shows a common structural problem caused by such kinds of burials, that threatens their stability. Due to the removal of a large number of kheshts from the walls or sensitive structural parts of these tombs, the deterioration process of these buildings accelerated.

3. Cultural behaviors representing traditions or tightly connected to a historic place or property have an important place in Cultural Landscape studies which has been neglected. Tales, proverbs, and oral literature are examples of folklores in living heritage. Local tales are full of examples of supernatural powers veiled in the soil of a mound, or materials of a building. Such strong beliefs about a place, or a building can sometimes turn to an unconscious threat to it. Takht-e Soleiman<sup>5</sup> World Heritage Site located in West Azerbaijan is another example of local people interaction with historic properties. Takht-e Soleiman introduces a rich collection of historic buildings from different historic periods and includes Sasanian, 7th century Islamic, and Ilkhanid structures. The Sasanid Fire Place, columns of the Public Auditorium, and



Fig. 10. One of the wall-columns of the Azargoshansb Char-tagh (the Fire Place), Takht-e Soleiman World Heritage Site, West Azerbaijan. Photo: Keyhanpoor, 2005.

the Western Eivan are built with red brick. Also, some Ilkhanid structures: The Octagonal Palaces behind the Sasanid Western Eivan. Within the documentation process of the architectural features of these places, all the Sasanid detached and fallen bricks were collected and stored in a place for further studies and future conservation works.

During this time, we noticed that local people, attempt to collect historic red bricks either from standing structures or the fallen bricks and take them to their homes. According to local beliefs, these red bricks, when they are stored in stables will prevent livestock diseases, specially parasitotic diseases such as ticks.

This issue becomes more important when we understand that the occupation of these people who are so tightly integrated to this World Heritage Site is agriculture and Livestock, and the traditional livestock has an important place in its cultural landscape.

### **Objection, Preservation, or elimination of the cultural practice**

The reviewed examples are representatives of so-called cultural practices that do not comprise destructive purposes like vandalism acts. Although none of those individuals or societies intentionally attempt to destroy properties, however, the consequences of their acts could cause adverse effects. Probably, the only common aspect between these examples is the desire of persistence. Of course, all three reviewed cases are important regarding anthropology studies which were not the subject of this paper.

Excluding the case of graffiti as a popular act in all societies, the other two cases were of micro-cultural issues from particular regions. The question is that what is the role of cultural practices in cultural heritage preservation studies? For sure, when the cultural landscape becomes the approach of the preservation issue, all the cultural interactions with historic properties are important. Therefore, in the best scenario, making limitation for some of these cultural interactions can permanently change the aspects of living heritage. And, is it possible to avoid this fact that most of the shared cultural beliefs by the past, and contemporary people are hidden beyond the controversies of reality and imagination? Thus, will the concept of cultural heritage have any value if all of such acts should be changed or eliminated? In the first study, the desire of writing on the surface of historic properties was captured in many places as a popular action. There is no logical explanation for such activities, except that they are the symbols of vandalism. However, those particular examples of the creation of a memorial adjacent or inside of long-lasting historic properties depict the desire

for immortality. Sometimes, individuals voluntarily mention it in graffiti (e.g., Part of a graffiti: the purpose was the creation of an everlasting memory). Therefore, the aspiration of long-lasting and send a message to the future generation is a valuable issue and needs to be preserved.

According to this fact, some preserving decisions could be the creation of specific places beside historic sites for such activities, or even using electronic and digital facilities to save memories and present them to the public.

The second study, the dead infants' burial, in terms of preservation issues and also health concerns would not be acceptable. However, in cultural landscape preservation studies, this is considered as a socio-cultural practice in accordance with many other cultural factors of a region, which cannot be eliminated. Indeed, this is a part of a complex of acts. Additionally, it should be notified, that nowadays, tombs and other kinds of burial places are not as valued by locals as they were in the past. Due to the changes in religious attitudes, such kinds of places are not faithfully appreciated anymore. Thus, this cultural behavior regarding ethnographic factors, are important matters for the believers. On the other hand, although these tombs are not locally valued in the same way of the tombs located in Central regions of Iran. However, they are valued as a revival place, especially for local women or those individuals who buried their children there, so when they pass these places, they show their sympathy. It is important to know that many locals believe these places are the house of ghosts (elf) and hesitate to stay inside for long. Probably a comparable measure for such believes, is what people from the central regions call "Aāl." In another level, it might also be compared with those believes which cause certain behaviors defined as cultural practices. For instance, brief pauses, avoidance of going on a trip if somebody sneeze, coloring eggs in black to avoid evil eyes, also heating Esfand seeds over the flame, animal sacrifices (caw, sheep, chicken, cock, etc.) in ritual ceremonies, celebrations, or funerals, animal

sacrifices to protect springs, rivers, and qanats from draught, and many others. All such acts are cultural expressions and practices which at first might seem very simple or not important, though they are so tightly integrated with people daily life and believes, and should be carefully studied, especially when it's about historic properties.

Based upon this fact, prevention of such damages to historic properties requires tolerance and patience to introduce appropriate solutions with multifunctional preservation approaches. A preservation scheme for this particular case is the design and creation of a place in adjacent to the targeted tombs for the previously discussed burials, so with respect to local cultural believes, it also protects historic properties. The third study, displacement of original historic materials from the historic properties to the stables in the village, as a destructive cultural act is similar to the other two cases. However, with more research, we found that elderlies are the more active individuals of this behavior rather than young people. Thus, the proposed solution was to produce the same red bricks and make them look old and historic, so when people came, they were given these reproduced bricks instead of originals. In this way, concerning local believes we were able to prevent such destructive acts. It should be mentioned that folklores and local tales besides enrichment of cultural aspects, sometimes are an empowering tool for the preservation of properties, and settlements. In another word, the concept of cultural landscape is hidden in such kinds of practices.

## Conclusion

Study of cultural practices like what was discussed in this paper and attention to their importance as integrated issues to the cultural landscape help them to be truly understood. In parallel with the cultural beliefs reflected in cultural acts; many social acts are also representing a belief or ideology, which needs more concentration. In cultural studies, there are so many examples of social and cultural practices that have been solely considered meaningless or even

superstitions. International declarations, charters, and guides in the definition of cultural heritage endorse that socio-cultural context creates both cultural property and cultural practice. Sometimes, cultural aspects can affect on the form and design of historic properties, which in most of the times are overlooked in the studies of historic properties, and therefore, conceptually missed from a definition. This neglect will then lead to the declaration of one-sided statements, which specifically in a confrontation with cultural geographies connected to historic properties could not respond to all the cultural heritage concerns, especially when it comes to the definition of boundaries for cultural heritage properties which also include cultural landscape. In addition to this fact that cultural practices in relationship with other concepts such as religion, political, and society, can be unique at one place, it is also possible that such activities happen in other places rather than the historic property, or there might be other related beliefs causing such actions. Thus, the concept of the cultural landscape should be searched beyond the physical aspects of the property. In conclusion, a comprehensive understanding of this subject helps to reveal the importance of the integration of cultural practices in relationship with cultural properties and proves the value of their preservation.

### Endnote

1. Since due to the nature of my job as a historic preservation specialist with different responsibilities in the Cultural Heritage Organization, I had to travel across the country and had the chance to visit many historic properties and sites, I believe, this is one the most important threats and cause of damages in historic properties, and even equivalent to the damages caused by natural factors.
2. The term Vandalism finds its roots in the word of Vandal. Vandal was the name of a Germanic-Slavic tribe who during the fifth century lived in a section between Oder and Vistula Rivers. Under the leading of King Genseric (428-477 A.D.), they invaded the Gaul and Spain territories. They also could expand their borders into the Carthage, Roman Province of Africa and the Mediterranean. Their habit was to sack and loot the places they invaded (like what Mongolian did when they entered Iran). Today the term of Vandalism which comes after this historical reputation refers to senseless, destructive acts.
3. The Snowball Effect; The move of small snowballs in slopes and affected by the wind which gets larger as they move down. It is defined as the unconscious repetition of a former act, which in most of the cases will have adverse results. Also, in a short time from the beginning of the repetition, the original cause of the act,

get lost.

4. The City of Jalgh is located in Saravan County, Sistan and Baluchestan Province. The city has a beautiful scenery surrounded by several palisades. Its ancient history is observable from so many historic sites and properties located in different parts of the city. The current garden city of Jalgh contains three historic sections: Shisheh Riz, Sorou, and Kouhkan. Each section of the city introduces numbers of historic properties. The section of the Jalgh, from which the city derives its name from it, remains unknown, but concentrated studies will help to reveal more information about this mysterious section.

5. Takht-e Soleiman cultural heritage site, located 45 kilometers far from the City of Takab in Western Azerbaijan, was nominated for World Heritage Sites List in 2004 as the first Iran's nomination since the revolution, and it is the fourth listed World Heritage Site in Iran. The importance of this site is its outstanding natural and cultural landscape. In addition to its stunning and breathtaking landscape, it also represents a rich vision of living heritage in terms of the integration of the local's cultural practices and the historic properties and ruins. This includes various issues from naming natural phenomenon like the Soleiman Prison, the Soleiman Stable (Barn), Belgheis Fortification, and the Dragon Stone, to myths, tales, and proverbs.

6. Peganum Harmala plant

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