INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

WORKING PAPER SERIES

COSMOPOLITAN URBAN LEGACIES

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2025
Volume 345

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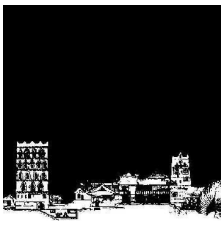

TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS WORKING PAPER SERIES

Volume 345
Contents

COSMOPOLITAN URBAN LEGACIES

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements
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'OH, EAST IS EAST AND WEST IS WEST, AND (…) THE TWAIN (CAN) MEET': TWO DILLIWALLAHS (RESIDENTS OF DELHI), TWO COSMOPOLITANISMS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DELHI

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'OH, EAST IS EAST AND WEST IS WEST, AND (…) THE TWAIN (CAN) MEET': TWO *DILLIWALLAH*S (RESIDENTS OF DELHI), TWO COSMOPOLITANISMS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DELHI

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This Paper takes a position that cosmopolitanism is a multivalent phenomenon that permits a non-western reading of this idea. Situated in the culturally eclectic Indian subcontinent, I make the following assertions: cosmopolitanism was not exclusively a 'western' import to the region courtesy colonization; as a character trait, it did not necessarily always conform to the western construct of an urbane, peripatetic male, assimilating novel cultural influences through his exposure to the world and lastly the so-called drivers of cosmopolitanism were as diverse as were its manifestations. I focus on two strands of cosmopolitanism, first of the Mughals via their Persian-ization and second, the result of British colonization that imported 'western' cosmopolitanism to the subcontinent. Both these strands were disparate till the subcontinent's nineteenth-century politico-social circumstances forced them to face each other.

The resultant entanglement is examined in the city of Delhi, a site of transcultural – Mughal and European – engagements. Employing a built-environment lens, I explore this transcultural-ism via the architectural enterprise, that I assert is a cosmopolitanism-driven architectural adventurism, of two Dilliwallahs, Begum Samru, an 'eastern' woman and ruler of a principality near Delhi and Major Robert Smith, a 'western' man and Company military engineer posted in Delhi. By positioning both these patrons and their architectural actions i.e., their respective Kothis (loosely mansions) built in Delhi – that are treated as sites of 'east-west' cultural entanglement – I aim to answer some of the questions that the tradition and cosmopolitanism discourse raises. I conclude by asserting that the two Dilliwallahs and their Kothis exhibit two cosmopolitanisms, each an outcome of different circumstances, where neither the 'east' or the 'west' overwhelm each other but 'meet' and co-exist thus validating cosmopolitanism's multivalent nature.

1. INTRODUCTION

Given the conventional currency of cosmopolitanism as a 'western' idea in academia and the more recent discourse on its ambivalence as a concept, I take a position that cosmopolitanism is a multivalent phenomenon that contrary to Kipling's verse allows his so-called 'East' and the 'West' to 'Meet' thus permitting a non-western reading of this idea that I engage with in the Paper.[1] Taking advantage of the ambivalence embedded in cosmopolitanism as a concept, I eschew the Stoics' and Kant's 'citizen of the world' discourse and turn to scholars like Elias and Bourdieu who have defined cosmopolitanism as a disposition of sophistication manifested via cultural practices to make my argument in the Paper.[2] Further, with scholars unanimously asserting the centrality of cultural plurality in the cultural cosmopolitanism discourse, I rely on Epstein's transcultural-ism to situate my argument that postulates a crossing of cultural boundaries by individuals to operate in what Pratt calls 'contact zones'.[3] I deploy this theoretical framework in a colonial setting with its concomitant notions of power and identity to interrogate how the colonizer and the colonized negotiate the east-west cultural entanglement that results due to colonization. By doing so, I

concur with the non-western cosmopolitanism discourse thus negating the western idea's viability as a prescriptive concept.

Situated in the colonized and culturally eclectic Indian subcontinent, the 'east' of Kipling's east-west binary, I make the following assertions: one, cultural cosmopolitanism – that scholars agree is rather difficult to define precisely thus validating its multivalence – was not only a 'western' import to the region courtesy colonization, other versions also existed; two, as an attribute, cosmopolitanism was not necessarily exclusively vested in the western construct of an urbane, peripatetic white male assimilating novel cultural influences through his exposure to the world and lastly the so-called drivers of cosmopolitanism were as diverse as were its manifestations making the concept truly multivalent. To build my argument I specifically focus on two among many other strands of cultural cosmopolitanism in the colonized subcontinent. First, as evidenced during the reign of the Mughals – Kipling's 'east' – via their Persian-ization whose elements had been assimilated into an eclectic compendium of traditions that outlasted the dynasty's political life. Second, the result of colonization by the British East India Company (henceforth EIC) – Kipling's 'west' – that brought 'western' cosmopolitanism of post-Enlightenment European provenance as a cultural import to the subcontinent. It was the subcontinent's nineteenth-century politico-social circumstances that brought these two disparate strands 'Face to Face', to continue quoting from Kipling's seminal verse, thus compelling them to negotiate each other in Pratt's 'contact zone'.

I narrow down the place of this east-west cultural encounter to early nineteenth-century Delhi, the site of Mughal-British politico-cultural one-upmanship. The Mughals, whose culture was traditionally regarded as the fount of urbanity, encountered the British who brought their own version of urbanity to the subcontinent. As the two jostled for political power, their cultural attributes also entangled to produce many cosmopolitanisms. I aim to demonstrate the simultaneous existence of two cosmopolitanisms in the city. To do this, I draw attention to two contrasting *Dilliwallah*s (implying simply resident of Delhi) – from a bevy of their more famous contemporary cohort – who have traditionally been peripheral-ized previously in scholarship.[4] *Begum* (honorary titular address of an elite Muslim woman) Samru – an 'eastern' woman – ruler of a small principality, Sardhana, near Delhi, who in no way subscribes to the western construct of a cosmopolitan, and Major Robert Smith – a 'western' man – an EIC military engineer posted in Delhi, who conforms to the western stereotype. I examine how these two protagonists negotiate the complexities of the cultural cauldron of nineteenth-century Delhi by crossing the boundaries of their own cultural milieu to explore the other. This act produces unconventional and by extension marginalized cosmopolitanisms.

Using the built-environment lens, I focus on the architectural actions of the two protagonists. I eschew the macro environment i.e., urban space, the conventional theatre of the cosmopolitan, and instead choose to

dwell on the microenvironment i.e., the private spatial realm. This stance helps debunk the notion of cosmopolitanism being only a publicly demonstrated attribute. The buildings under scrutiny are the *Begum*'s and Smith's respective dwellings, called *Kothi*s (loosely mansion), in Delhi that were commissioned around the same time and built in proximity to each other. Relying on textual and visual archives and on fieldwork (both dwellings exist even as they have been altered extensively over time), I critically position both dwellings as sites of east-west cultural entanglement to demonstrate how both *Dilliwallahs*, the 'eastern' *Begum* – who chose to Anglicize – and 'western' Smith – who chose to Mughalize – negotiated the prevailing east-west binary to straddle different worlds simultaneously. In the process each exhibited, what I call, a transculturalism driven architectural adventurism that shall be discussed in detail in the Paper. I will demonstrate that the *Kothi*s, both urban landmarks and conversation pieces among *Dilliwallah*s, were a feisty architectural-ization of their patrons' east-west duality that allowed them to interpret a microcosm of cultural influences on their own terms by crossing boundaries but without discarding their roots. I conclude by asserting that the two *Dilliwallah*s and their *Kothi*s demonstrate two cosmopolitanisms, each an outcome of different circumstances, where neither the east or the west overwhelm each other but 'meet' and co-exist thus validating cosmopolitanism's multivalent nature.

2. BEING COSMOPOLITAN

Conventionally, the European worldview universalizes cosmopolitanism in the western (in the context of this Paper it implies Britain as empire) mold leaving little or no room for other versions to populate the discourse.[5] This scholarly standpoint made the privileged, white, well-read and itinerant male – a construct of the European Enlightenment – as the embodiment of cosmopolitanism. This construct operated in the public realm as the attributes of cosmopolitanism were showcased to the world at large. Additionally, the discourse also made corporeal mobility an essential pre-condition for cosmopolitanism as the itinerant male imbibed new cultures via extensive travels and their overt demonstration was a marker of his status. In other words, a cosmopolitan was constructed as a privileged, empowered elite male who had the intellectual and material wherewithal to assume multiple identities.[6]

The above scholarly construct has been challenged as scholars have critiqued the universal-izing western notion to theorize other versions of cosmopolitanism.[7] This has led to the emergence of the discourse of cultural cosmopolitanism that forms the theoretical framework of this paper.[8] Cultural cosmopolitanism is centered on the idea of cultural plurality thus making transcultural-ism an essential ingredient for cosmopolitan behavior. Epstein underscores the defining attribute of transculturalism as having the ability to liberate oneself from one's own culture while at the same time not becoming enslaved to the other culture.[9] In other words, the essence of transculturalism lies in its practitioner's ability to integrate the other culture

with their own and this occurs 'at the boundaries of our own culture and at the crossroads with other cultures through the risky experience of our own cultural wanderings and transgressions'.[10] As culture-driven cosmopolitanism also embraces non-corporeal mobility as its driver, this crossing of boundaries is as literal as it is figurative and is contextual to the paper owing to Smith being highly itinerant, while the *Begum* being the complete opposite.

Of the many attributes of cosmopolitanism, I turn my attention to adventurism. Adventurism is characterized by breaching boundaries; a feisty expression of the self; a daredevilry of sorts; a defiance of convention and an appetite for risk that makes its practitioners called adventurers stand out among their peers.[11] By focusing on the unconventional persona of *Begum* Samru, I also aim to dispel the notion that to be an adventurer – by defiance of established traditions, beliefs and practices to chart one's own path – is the sole prerogative of a male. Further, for the purpose of the Paper I have architectural-ized this attribute into what I refer to as architectural adventurism.[12] Operating within the ambit of a culture-driven cosmopolitanism and transculturalism, architectural adventurism I assert, implies the ability to take informed risks of one's own volition by defying prevailing stylistic trends and crossing boundaries to integrate via assimilation/adaptation/reconfiguration the architectural fashion of the Other in one's own building ventures. The drivers of this so-called reckless architectural behavior can be varied including prevailing circumstances and available opportunities but are all underpinned by a strong personal conviction. From the standpoint of established stylistic norms, this breaking away results in both the patron and the building positioned at the crossroads and not being able to fit as it were within the accepted architectural framework, resulting in an awkwardness that leads to their marginalization in popular perception, in the archives and in the discourse as has been the case with the two protagonists of the Paper. Indeed, both the practitioners of architectural adventurism and their product, i.e., the building, become conversation pieces as a curiosity. However, even as being odd comes with a price for both the patron and their patronage, this does not deter individuals like the two *Dilliwallah*s under discussion, to take risks via their building ventures.

Set within the broad contours of the discourse as outlined above and using the lens of the built-environment, I go on to critically examine the east-west cultural entanglement in Mughal and British ruled Delhi.

3. COSMOPOLITANISMS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

Given that cultural plurality is a pre-condition for certain types of cosmopolitanism as articulated above, it would certainly not be an exaggeration to claim that the subcontinent has sustained the cosmopolitan way of life as evidenced through its chequered history of incoming foreign influences interacting with the local tradition. Among the several strands of cosmopolitanism that have existed in the subcontinent, I focus on

two that prevailed in the nineteenth century, i.e., the pre-existing Persian-ized Mughal tradition and the incoming European tradition as discussed below.

Mughal Cosmopolitanism

The Mughals cultivated a culture that drew on Persianate influences since the reign of *Badshah* Akbar (r.1556-1605) who declared Persian as the official language of the Mughal court. This made them part of a larger Persianate cultural geography, spread over Iran, Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, with their cultural amalgamation subscribing to a transregional cosmopolitanism.[13] This cosmopolitanism entailed the pursuit of 'urbanity, aristocratic learning, refined manners, cultivated conversation, and good taste'.[14] In the subcontinent, it was referred to as *Adab* (loosely etiquette) and was nurtured in the Mughal court. Mughal nobles, bureaucrats, officials, poets and scholars, bound by the lingua franca i.e., Persian, exchanged ideas and immersed themselves in Persianate forms of dress; culinary habits; music; literature; art and architecture.[15] As a marker of urbanity, *Adab* was meant to be flaunted as men-turned aesthetes turned public and private space into a theatre for its overt display.[16] On the other hand, *Pardanashiin* (veiled) elite women also cultivated *Adab* that was showcased within the confines of the *Zennanna* (secluded living quarters for women). From the court, this impulse was transmitted throughout the empire as cultivating *Adab* was perceived as a symbol of elevated social standing that allowed its practitioners to vicariously bond with the Mughals. In fact, not becoming a part of these sophisticates implied being socially and culturally inferior.

As the political fortunes of the Mughals waned following the subcontinent's colonization, *Adab* transformed into a formidable cultural force, a sort of a Mughal soft power – to articulate it in the contemporary parlance – that comprised a network of imperial, literary and artistic interests, with its existence no longer contingent upon the political fate of the once-powerful dynasty. This cultural compendium of soft power was in public perception, the only arbiter of urbanity even as the subcontinent came under British rule who brought their version of cosmopolitanism to the subcontinent.

British-induced European Cosmopolitanism

The British notion of cultural cosmopolitanism was rooted in the post Enlightenment ideal of human curiosity that in turn propelled the Grand Tour. This late sixteenth-century phenomenon was a pilgrimage of the European continent undertaken by aristocratic young men to broaden their horizons by engaging with the outside world and in the process acquiring knowledge, refined taste, social sophistication and status while being away from home.[17] Indeed, the Tour was a rite of passage entailing the study of history, philosophy, music, art and architecture that once accomplished would transform the young man into a cosmopolitan who was equipped to face the challenges of the world.

Collecting was an integral part of travel. Travelers carried objects of interest such as drawings, paintings, etchings and sculptures from their travels back home to showcase in their 'Cabinet of curiosities', the latter a must in every cosmopolitan's home as a symbol of his explorations.[18] From the standpoint of architecture, the focus of the discussion here, amassing information about buildings happened in several ways. The Tour offered firsthand experience of architectural remains to travelers. They recorded these historic sites via writing and drawing. Additionally, painters were often commissioned to portray men posing against a famous architectural ruin to capture the moment for posterity. Further, interaction with art and architecture connoisseurs whom travelers encountered during their travels helped build their architectural knowledge. This compendium of architectural knowledge constituted what I call a 'Cabinet of Architectural Curiosities'. This comprised a mix of physical objects i.e., texts, drawings, models, plaster casts and even actual building fragments and intellectual capital by way of an understanding and appreciation of the architectural trends of places visited. Just as the conventional cabinet, this cabinet too added value to the patron's worth as an architectural connoisseur that was then showcased in public. A prominent way of doing this was by using some constituents of this cabinet in actual buildings to set a new stylistic trend as was famously the case of the introduction of Palladianism in Britain.[19] Indeed, while buildings themselves could not be transported like other objects of interest, architectural styles and ideas collected in the cabinet of architectural curiosities could certainly cross boundaries and become available for use. Additionally, it was not necessary to travel to Italy or elsewhere to build in the classical style or any other style as even armchair travelers had direct or indirect access to the cabinet to cull a style or styles for use in their architectural ventures.

As travel extended beyond European borders to encompass other regions notably the so-called Orient, the cabinet of architectural curiosities grew larger through what were perceived to be exotic acquisitions. Additionally, European colonization introduced another form of travel undertaken by the cosmopolitan. As the far-flung colony was experienced firsthand, its cultural novelties including buildings opened new avenues for exploration. Contrasting with the Grand Tour, colonial travel's mainstay was service to the empire. Typically, travelers comprised an array of males including officials, artists, missionaries and military adventurers. Experiencing the colony and negotiating its culture was part of the imperial knowledge gathering exercise.[20] The tools for recording architectural sites and remains in the colony were no different from those employed on the Grand Tour as sites were documented via writing, painting and drawing undertaken by the self or commissioned. Additionally, the Tour had equipped the colonizer to view the architectural enterprise of the non-European world using the ocular lens of ancient Greece and Rome and the same was put to use by the British when engaging with the subcontinent's highly diverse compendium of architectural remains.

I now turn my attention to nineteenth-century Delhi where the study is situated to critically examine the 'contact zone' where two disparate cultural cosmopolitanisms – Mughal *Adab* and the European version

brought by the British – came in contact. In fact, the city can be regarded as a classic case of Kipling's 'east' and 'west' literally coming 'Face to Face' as the Mughals continued living in the city – occupying the most enduring symbol of power, the *Qila* (Palace-fort) – alongside the new colonial rulers who were engaged in carving out their own enclave. As both parties engaged with each other politically and culturally, Delhi became a site for many cosmopolitanisms to flourish.

4. DELHI: A CULTURAL MICROCOSM

Politically speaking, nineteenth-century Delhi was in a state that scholars have called 'Twilight' i.e., an era marked by a struggle for political and cultural one-upmanship between the waning Mughal dynasty and the politically ascending EIC.[21] This battle was layered and complex as the two parties exercised a politically cautious and expedient camaraderie that was manifested publicly by tolerance towards each other's cultural traditions. With this east-west, politico-cultural entanglements, nineteenth-century Delhi, was a cultural cauldron where Mughal and western traditions were entangled, and I assert that the city became a site where two types of cosmopolitanisms existed. The eastern Mughal-ized tradition – characterized by traditional Mughal *Adab* and its concomitant patronage of literature, music, art and architecture that was regarded as the epitome of urbanity even in the nineteenth century – and the western European tradition – a modern, metropolitan cosmopolitanism whose urban culture was of European provenance – were embodied by *Dilliwallah*s including the two protagonists of the Paper, who negotiated it via complex processes of assimilation/adaptation/reconfiguration.

Even as the Mughal dynasty was a spent force, the British were in awe of its formidable lineage. That the British were directed to adapt to some aspects of Mughal culture in the interest of empire should not be surprising. In keeping with this mandate, some high-ranking EIC officials posted in the city went beyond this forceful public posturing to earnestly engage with *Adab* as they Mughal-ized by adopting Mughal habits, fashion, art and architecture, without abandoning their own cultural roots. Such men have been derisively referred to as 'Nabobs' (Anglicized version of the Mughal title *Nawab* that was an honorary titular address for a Muslim male elite) in colonial archives.[22] Their own compatriots rebuked them for what was popularly described as 'going native', while the city's Indian elite bemusedly regarded them as curiosities. Delhi's EIC officers-turned Nabobs – David Ochterlony, Charles Metcalfe, William Fraser and Thomas Metcalfe – had already set a precedent through their Mughal-ization to varying degrees from the extremely flamboyant to the restrained. Indeed, Smith was not the first British resident of the city to be impacted by the prevailing cultural climate.

On the other hand, the city's Indian elite, comprising imperial family members and other court officials, aristocrats, traders, writers, poets of repute and the like, encountered the incoming western tradition and engaged with it to advance their own varied interests. Against the backdrop of Mughal *Adab* still operating as the fount of urbanity in popular worldview, the British presence gradually introduced to the Indian male elite elements of European culture that some of them engaged with via fashion, habit, education and patronage of art and architecture. With time this cultural adoption gained momentum and was institutionalized. This phenomenon, described by scholars as an awakening of *Dilliwallah*s to the culture of the west, has been called the Delhi Renaissance, a lesser cousin of the more famous Bengal Renaissance.[23] The Delhi Renaissance resulted in formally introducing to the city's Indian elite men, western science, philosophy, literature and the English language in an institutionalized setting provided by the famous Delhi College.[24] Equipped with this knowledge that they chose to accept and adopt on their own terms, these elite set out to improve the intellect of their brethren. Notably women were conspicuous by their absence from this intellectual awakening. It is equally important to underscore that despite their westernization Indian elite were not accepted by the British as one among their own. Moreover, they were regarded as curiosities even by their own. In such an ambivalent cultural environment, building ventures that attempted to negotiate the east-west cultural entanglement were no different.

The British encountered Delhi's centuries old living architectural tradition that was predominantly represented by a large corpus of Mughal era architectural remains. The British who idolized the classical tradition as a leitmotif of cosmopolitanism, responded to this corpus using the same lens. Their sentiments ranged from indifference to admiration and all else in between as they recorded the city's architectural remains.[25] From the British perspective, the subcontinent's architecture in general fell short of expectations both in terms of intellectual and aesthetic merit thereby reaffirming the empire's agenda to control and redeem the colony from its perceived architectural bankruptcy.[26] While the attitude towards Delhi's architectural remains was no different, the city's Nabobs adopted a contrary stance as they went 'native' via architectural adventurism and resorted to using Mughal design elements in their buildings. The elements were sourced either from their cabinet of architectural curiosities amassed during their stay here or came from the site itself. The most remarkable representation of this architectural adventurism was manifested in the British Residency, the fulcrum of EIC's power in the city, raised by its Mughal-ized patron, Resident David Ochterlony, the quintessential Nabob.[27] Following in Ochterlony's footsteps were other EIC officials including Robert Smith. While I concede that Smith was not as flamboyant as his other Delhi based English peers, he nevertheless exhibited a remarkable architectural adventurism that I explore via his dwelling built in the city.

Unlike their British counterparts, Indians including *Dilliwallah*s did not venture to Europe on a Grand Tour to assemble their cabinet of architectural curiosities, instead they took cue from buildings being built by the British in the subcontinent ranging from the stylistically grand Government House in Calcutta to the modest *Dak* (place for mail carriers and later for officials) Bungalow in a *Mofussil* (provincial) town.[28] The prevalent architectural style was classical whose monumental imagery made it appropriate to showcase power in the colony. Gradually classical elements like orders, semi-circular arches, pediments and stucco ornamentation together with European style spaces like parlor, sitting room, dining room and bedroom found their way into buildings of Indian elite who also continued to retain their tradition layouts and features.[29] In Delhi, the patrons of such stylistically hybrid buildings were elite males including Mughal princes and other aristocrats whose architectural creations like them were perceived as curiosities.[30] Standing out among her male peers on account of her gender was *Begum* Samru who made herself seen and heard in Delhi's political 'twilight', while equally displaying a remarkable cosmopolitanism that I investigate by critically examining her home in Delhi.

I position Major Robert Smith and *Begum* Samru as two transcultural and cosmopolitan patrons who exhibited their negotiation of the city's complex east-west cultural entanglement via a feisty, individualistic architectural adventurism as manifested in their respective dwellings called *Kothi*s.

5. THE KOTHI AS AN ARCHITECTURAL MANIFESTATION OF TRANSCULTURALISM

The *Kothi* transformed from its rather modest seventeenth-century origin as a space for storage into an elite mansion in the late eighteenth century that symbolized the patron's social standing. Competing with other significant dwelling types of the subcontinent namely the Indian *Haveli* (mansion of Mughal era elite) and the colonial Bungalow, the *Kothi* became the preferred dwelling type for patrons who straddled two worlds, i.e., the east and the west. This made the *Kothi* a spatial manifestation of its patron's dual cultural identity.[31] Typically, the *Kothi* borrowed from two domestic archetypes, the extremely extrovert, eighteenth-century Anglo-Palladian villa and the highly introvert, indigenous *Haveli*. The former epitomized British aristocracy and arrived in the subcontinent following colonization and the latter was associated with the subcontinent's elite including the Mughal imperial family. A cosmopolitan patron must have fully appreciated the merits of both these completely disparate domestic archetypes to indulge in an architectural adventurism when it came to building her/his own dwelling. Her/his architectural actions operated in Pratt's 'contact zone' where a transcultural entanglement of the extrovert villa and the introvert *Haveli* occurred that made the *Kothi* an exemplar of transcultural-ism in the domestic space. This architectural approach, I argue was demonstrated by the two *Dilliwallah*s under consideration in the Paper.

In architectural terms, the *Kothi* formed the centerpiece of the patron's estate as the main house that was set amidst gardens and was supported by ancillary buildings. The main house exhibited the patron's transculturalism that was spatially manifested both in the layout as well as in the details. The *Kothi* borrowed the villa's spatial layout that was centered on a central core with wings ensemble. The former comprised the main hall – serving variously as the drawing/dining/*Durbar* (assembly) room – with smaller enveloping rooms with the wings accommodating additional rooms. To this ensemble was attached a portico and a verandah. Further, spatial elements of the *Haveli* like *Bagh* (garden), *Tehkhana* (subterranean rooms), *Zennanna* (female quarters) and *Hammam* (public bath) with its *Sard-khana* (cold-room) and *Garm-khana* (hot-room) were added as per the patron's preference. The *Tehkhana* and *Hammam* offered repose from the heat, while the *Zennanna* was a must have if the *Kothi*'s occupants included women of Indian origin, a usual occurrence. The whole ensemble was set in an open space that too exhibited hybridity with an English garden coexisting with the *Bagh*. The construction material was locally available brick that was finished in lime plaster usually rendered white. Stylistically, the predominant style was classical, and form was articulated using a mix of colonnades, pilasters, pediments, semi-circular arches, rustication, balustrade, and statuary. Added to this compendium were the *Haveli*'s *Chajja* (roof overhang), *Chhatri* (small size domed kiosk), *Jaali* (pierced stone screen), *Jharokha* (overhanging window with a *Jaali* for privacy) and *Aalaa* (wall niche). Additionally, the *Kothi* also had climate ameliorating features that had by now come to be associated with the Bungalow and included a verandah, thick walls, small size fenestrations, louvered shutters and roof level ventilators. Like the exterior, the interior too was culturally hybrid as European style furniture, mirrors, clocks, wall paintings, fireplaces, mantlepieces and decorative details like swags and festoons were found alongside floor level seating, *Jaali*s as partitions, decorative objects and furnishings. The *Kothi* also doubled as a space for showing the patron's art collection. All these elements collectively made the *Kothi* a cosmopolitan space much like its patron.

The architectural hybridity of the *Kothi* made it a popular dwelling type among elite who professed an east-west duality. Several *Kothi*s were built in nineteenth-century Delhi. Topping the hierarchy was the Residency designed like a *Kothi* and built in 1804 by the EIC Resident, Ochterlony by repurposing the seventeenth-century *Haveli* of the Mughal heir apparent, Dara Shukoh.[32] Ochterlony's architectural adventurism in building the most powerful symbol of EIC presence in the city must have served as an exemplar for other *Dilliwallha*s who crossed cultural boundaries particularly his compatriot, Smith. As for the *Begum*, her interpersonal relationships with Europeans, honed her transculturalism as discussed in the next section.

6. *BEGUM* SAMRU AND MAJOR ROBERT SMITH: TWO *DILLIWALLAHS*; TWO COSMOPOLITANISMS; TWO *KOTHIS*

Both the *Dilliwallah*s lived in the city in the early nineteenth century. Smith and the *Begum* practiced two different forms of cosmopolitanisms. Smith embodied the conventional western notion of it that was underpinned by travel particularly within the subcontinent and his exposure to various dimensions of Mughal culture. In sharp contrast, the *Begum* demonstrated cosmopolitanism's non-universal, non-western version as her exposure to the larger world was through non-corporeal mobility where Europe came to her doorstep via external circumstances and personally forged alliances. As two cosmopolitans, who were very diverse in terms of their personal attributes, motives and circumstances, both Smith and the *Begum* stepped into the 'contact zone' to engage with the other culture that went beyond mere aesthetic appreciation. Indeed, their respective *Kothi*s, built in the early nineteenth century, are a testimony to their transcultural disposition.

Robert Smith

Robert Smith came from a family of rather modest means that had old ties with the EIC.[33] This meant that he did not have the wherewithal to go on the Grand Tour as a young man to educate himself. Instead, he joined the EIC as part of the family tradition at the young age of sixteen. Smith more than made up for the lack of the Grand Tour exposure by his military training where he learnt surveying, cartography and drawing, the last was particularly cultivated as a passion. Posted in the subcontinent from 1805 to 1830 initially as an EIC cadet who then rose in the ranks, Smith painted the landscape, people and buildings during the course of his travels. His eye for architectural detail won him not only accolades from his colleagues and officers but also enabled him to comprehend, appreciate and amass his cabinet of architectural curiosities whose primary constituent was his own drawings and sketches. Smith would rely on this cabinet on initiating his own building works as will be discussed shortly.

As a European, Smith must have been fully aware of the value of cosmopolitanism as an attribute. Indeed, he would be desirous to inculcate the traits of the same for occupational and social upward mobility. Smith was a military engineer with a flair for drawing and design and this attracted him to Mughal architecture. His cosmopolitanism was centered on engaging with Mughal architecture in various ways in the midst of souring relations between the British and the Mughals in the nineteenth century. Meanwhile, it is worth pondering how nineteenth-century Delhi contributed to Smith's transcultural cosmopolitanism that in turn drove his architectural adventurism.

It was in Delhi that Smith's experience of Indian architecture climaxed. Smith was posted in Delhi in 1822 as Garrison Engineer and lived in the city (hence I have referred to him as a *Dilliwallah*, despite this

nomenclature being usually reserved for non-European residents of the city whose family had been living in the city for generations) intermittently till he left the subcontinent in 1830. It was in Delhi that he engaged with Mughal architectural remains not simply as sites of interest but as a muse for his drawing and also as historic sites that he was mandated to repair as an EIC engineer.[34] These varied forms of engagement honed his understanding and appreciation for Mughal architecture and led him to assimilate this stylistic tradition in his own building ventures making him cosmopolitan.

Smith is not known to have Mughal-ized like his peers in terms of mannerisms, fashion, habits and cohabiting with Indian women. In fact, little is known about his personal life as a *Dilliwallah*.[35] Smith chose to align with his Nabob-ian peers only in architectural terms and it could be speculated that this was to avoid censure that his Mughal-ized peers had to face in the prevailing politico-cultural scenario. Smith's penchant for Mughal detailing was so tenacious that he continued to use it in all his buildings, even when he was physically far removed from Delhi. This architectural adventurism transcended time and place and was manifested not only in his *Kothi* in Delhi but in the true manner of cosmopolitanism he carried this influence with him and employed it in a completely different cultural context in all his other homes built in Italy, France and in Britain near Devon where he finally retired. This made him one of-a-kind- cosmopolitan.

Before Smith embarked on building his own dwelling in Delhi, he had at his disposal, besides his own surveys and drawings of Mughal architectural remains, *Kothi*s of Indian and European elite that could serve as an archetype. For example, besides the EIC Residency in Delhi, there were *Kothi*s designed by the French military adventurer, Claude Martin, for the Avadh *Nawab*s in Lucknow that Smith had sketched during the course of his travels with the EIC's Commander-in-Chief, Sir George Nugent and his wife, Lady Maria Nugent.[36] Additionally, as a *Dilliwallah* he was probably familiar with the Residency, the city's *Kothi* par excellence. These *Kothi*s, notably those in Lucknow, with their east-west architectural hybridity must have inspired Smith to consider the *Kothi* as the best archetype that would embody his own transcultural cosmopolitan leanings.

Robert Smith's *Kothi*

Smith's *Kothi*'s origin has been traced by historians to the seventeenth century as it was the *Haveli* of a Mughal aristocrat, *Nawab* Ali Mardan Khan. The building's history is rather sketchy in the intervening years till the nineteenth century when it is referred to as Fraser's house and also as the Residency, with both claims being contested.[37] It was in the 1820s that Smith, while posted in Delhi, came in possession of what was left of the *Haveli* and transformed it into his home.

Smith's preference to build a *Kothi* was probably influenced by his peers who all chose to officially dwell in *Kothi*s rather than in bungalows.[38] His own design for the *Kothi* seems to have borrowed from Martin's *Kothi*s in Lucknow rather than those in closer proximity i.e., the Residency and other *Kothi*s in Delhi. Smith's design drew on the villa and *Haveli* hybrid and comprised a central domed rotunda as the core and flanking wings. The core had a central hall and enveloping room and the wings too had rooms. Smith departed from the typical *Kothi* layout by resorting to a Baroque layout, probably a personal preference, with rooms and corridors derivatives of the circle. Another departure was the placement of four octagonal Mughal inspired bastion-like turrets at four corners of the core that gave the *Kothi* a fortified appearance as seen in the Lucknow *Kothi*s as well. The turrets had a series of Mughal style Bangla arches along the perimeter topped with a heavy crenellated parapet. Other façade articulation elements included pointed arches, circular windows and a low rise central ribbed dome. The most architecturally adventurous part of the *Kothi* was its subterranean rooms. These comprised a combination of the original and the new in that Smith retained what remained of the Mughal *Haveli*'s *Tehkhana* and went on to add two octagonal, interconnected rooms to create a subterranean *Sard-khana* i.e., a network of cool rooms that offered the occupant respite from the heat. Taking his penchant for Mughal design to a higher level, Smith also painted the walls of this party new and partly old *Sard-khana*, depicting Delhi's architectural history thus creating a picture gallery that can at one level be compared to highly ornate Mughal interiors, that allowed him to remain with his muse permanently. Smith's highly unusual design approach stemmed from his personal conviction about the merit in using Mughal design elements in his buildings. This venture was truly a case of architectural adventurism that went beyond romanticizing Mughal aesthetics via writing and drawing as he made these elements a part of his private domestic world.

Smith's *Kothi* was a landmark in nineteenth-century Delhi as it was prominently sited in the city's European enclave even as its patron maintained a low profile when compared to Delhi's flamboyant Nabobs. The *Kothi*'s hybridity made it a subject of remark as European visitors toured the house and could not refrain from commenting on it, particularly its *Tehkhana*. One such visitor was Major Edward Archer whose memoirs include a detailed account of Smith's cool *Tehkhana* and its paintings.

Fig.1 Robert Smith's *Kothi*: Front View (Source: Author)

Fig.2 Robert Smith's *Kothi*: *Tehkhana* (Source: Author)

Smith however did not confine his adventurism to his Delhi home as the central rotunda and octagonal turrets found an echo in his European homes most notably at Redcliffe Towers, a stately retirement home he built at Paignton, near Devon – the site is famously supposed to have reminded him of the tropics – upon his return to Britain.

Smith's architectural enterprise demonstrates his transculturalism driven cosmopolitanism.

Begum Samru

Begum Samru was born in a Muslim family and grew up to be a courtesan to whom a German military adventurer, Walter Reinhardt (his solemn temperament led to the affixation of the French word, Sombre to his name that mutated into Samru in local parlance), took a fancy.[39] She became his *Bibi* (consort) and settled down with Reinhardt in Sardhana, a small principality near Delhi. The *Begum* became the ruler of Sardhana after Reinhardt's demise in 1778. This was a most unusual occurrence as women rulers were conspicuous by their absence in the subcontinent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Three years after Reinhardt's demise the *Begum* converted to her departed partner's faith by becoming a Catholic. This again was a highly unconventional move as conversion by women to the colonizer's faith was unheard of completely. Additionally, the *Begum* surrounded herself with a bevy of European mercenaries who served as her court officials and her close interpersonal relations with Europeans exposed her to the world at large. As a consequence, the *Begum* epitomized the prevailing east-west dichotomy of the times. She was selective in assimilating European influences as she adhered to her own customs steadfastly, like observing *Purdah* (veiling) when in the company of her own people. Further, she was equally adept at assimilating western practices and habits when in European company in the manner of a transcultural human. She showcased this through her mannerisms like eating at a table; hosting entertainment soirees and lavish banquets in the manner of a European hostess; adopting Christianity later in her life that entailed grand Christmas celebrations and patronizing European artists. These traits, a complete departure from the so-called and normalized womanly traits of Indian women, made *Begum* Samru a subject of remark among Europeans, as opposed to Smith about whom very little is known. Typically, Europeans drawing on hearsay, hardly failed to rebuke her for defying social conventions by which women of her community were typically bound. Indeed, the *Begum* had crossed boundaries as it were on many accounts i.e., becoming a ruler in British ruled subcontinent, turning Catholic and becoming its most ardent champion and being a prolific patron of art and architecture where she not only outdid her male peers but also publicly showcased her transculturalism to the world. These characteristics together made the *Begum* an exceptional personality.

Unlike Smith whose cosmopolitanism drew on his travels, *Begum* Samru's cosmopolitanism did not come from peregrination to Europe as she did not step beyond the subcontinent's shores. Instead, she turned to her immediate context to hone her worldview as she more than made up for her lack of personal experience of different lands by cultivating the manners of a cosmopolitan aesthete by responding to the changes surrounding her after the British occupation of the subcontinent. Relying on her personal interactions with her court officials exposed her to European culture. Among her European court officials, one merits mention. Antonio Regehlini, a native of Vicenza, was a military adventurer-turned architect who designed and executed the *Begum*'s building projects.[40] Regehlini's familiarity with classical architecture enabled him to introduce it to the *Begum* who despite her cultural unfamiliarity with it demonstrated a remarkable transculturalism by assembling her own cabinet of architectural curiosities and then employing its contents in all her buildings. Another form of exposure was the increasingly European-izing urban landscape of Indian cities as buildings, belonging to both the EIC and other Europeans as well an increasing number of Indians sported European architectural styles. Like her counterpart Smith, who carried his compendium of Mughal architectural influences with him when he left the subcontinent to go back home and employed it in his building endeavors, the *Begum* too carried her compendium of European (read classical) architectural elements as she shuttled between Sardhana and Delhi. Further, given the circumstances in which the *Begum* was situated, her personal and political life was highly eventful thus giving her a daring demeanor. This feisty spirit of adventurism that ran as an undercurrent through her life also characterized her approach to building. Indeed, the *Begum* accepted and adapted European architectural features from spatial layouts to elements in her public and private buildings.

What prompted this cosmopolitan behavior is a question worth asking. Was it driven only by sheer personal whim or conviction or was it influenced by more empirical considerations. In the absence of any recorded evidence, it is difficult to assert what drove the *Begum*'s patronage as she adopted European building style in her palatial homes both in Delhi and in Sardhana. This transculturalism extended to her patronage of the arts and is represented most prominently by a collection of 25 European style portraits painted by European and Indian artists whose centerpiece was the *Begum* herself, the last being completely unheard of given that elite Muslim women lived in *Purdah* and did not reveal themselves to the outside world.[41] Recent scholarship on the *Begum* has attributed her cosmopolitanism to her 'political cunning' where her crossing of boundaries has been attributed to a mix of political and personal considerations.[42] Indeed, the *Begum* negotiated the political twilight of the times very dexterously. Her assertion of the self as a ruler – this in itself being a rarity as Indian rulers were predominantly men – through an array of politico-cultural acts in the public domain makes her truly exceptional for her gender as well as for the times. Like her male counterparts, the *Begum* straddled two worlds, one of her own cultural milieus that defined her as a Muslim woman and the other that defined her as a British loyalist ruler in colonial India who was expected to engage with the EIC on their terms. She

maintained cordial relations with both the incumbent Mughal ruler and the EIC. In fact, it was the former who allocated her a very generous plot of land in a prime location in Delhi where the *Begum* built her *Kothi* as she divided her time between Sardhana, her principality and Delhi, the seat of power.

Even as *Begum* Samru spent most of time at Sardhana where she built a large estate, she also spent time in the city as she nurtured her relationship with both power centers. Akin to a lone wolf on account of her gender, she adopted methods to forge camaraderie with both the Mughals and the British. In fact, she turned into a hostess par excellence, again an aberration, hosting soirees in her *Kothi* in Delhi where all important EIC officers were invited. The *Begum*'s banquets – an important event in the city's social calendar that EIC officials looked forward to attending – mirrored the prevailing cultural microcosm that Delhi represented. Like the perfect hostess, the *Begum*'s transcultural-ism was on full display on such events where she sat at the feast table with her male guests as they were entertained in a mix of eastern and western customs. However, it is important to emphasize that the *Begum* was the only woman in this social setting that turned the spotlight on her. Unlike Smith who had a ready reckoner by way of his male peers, no such option existed for the *Begum* who could at best choose to model herself after her male contemporaries. However, *Begum* Samru chartered her own path where a host of politico-cultural conditions shaped her personality including her architectural actions that produced an array of buildings including her *Kothi* in Delhi.

Begum* Samru's *Kothi

Begum Samru's *Kothi* was prominently located, along the east-west bazaar street (later referred to as Chandni Chauk), in close proximity to the Mughal *Qila* as well as to the British enclave. Built in early nineteenth century and designed by Reghelini, the *Kothi* stood on a site that was gifted to the *Begum* by the Mughal ruler, Shah Alam II in 1806 as a reward for her loyalty.[43]

The much-altered but still extant *Kothi* forms part of nineteenth-century cartographic and visual sources that allow its reconstruction. It formed part of the *Begum*'s Delhi estate whose walled precinct had large grounds laid out as a formal garden together with ancillary buildings. In its midst was the *Kothi* approached by a central avenue, lined with cypresses, leading from the enclosure's gateway. The main house had a north-south orientation. Spatially it was a near square in plan as opposed to Smith's Baroque-inspired layout. Nevertheless, the hybrid layout borrowed from the villa its core and enveloping rooms ensemble, while from the *Haveli* it borrowed the *Begum*'s *Zennanna* and her *Hammam* (both difficult to identify today partly due to a lack of mention in coeval sources and due to the many alterations that the *Kothi* underwent over the years). The central core comprised a hall where the *Begum* held her *Durbar*s including her soirees. The rooms that enveloped the *Durbar* Hall were smaller in size and used for various other purposes. It is not possible to identity where the *Begum*'s personal living space, i.e., the *Zennanna* and the *Hammam* were located in the layout,

if at all as they could have been independent standalone spaces. The *Kothi* stood on a high plinth with a double flight of grand sweeping steps both in the front and rear. Externally, both the north and south facades were articulated as per the classical style with a solid base topped by a colonnaded verandah that in turn was topped by a wooden lattice at roof level that had an elaborate balustrade as well as classical statuary. The fenestrations were topped with pediments and had wooden louvred shutters to keep out the heat and the glare.

Fig.1 *Begum* Samru's *Kothi*: Front View (Source: Author)

Fig.2 *Begum* Samru's *Kothi*: Interior (Source: Author)

Even as early nineteenth-century European visitors to the city mentioned the *Kothi* in their memoirs not so much for its architectural attributes, but for the parties that were hosted there by the *Begum*, there can be no denying the fact that the *Kothi*'s architecture matched the grandeur of the *Begum*'s parties. As a prominent city landmark, the *Kothi* was visually represented in coeval sources including maps of the city. The most well know representation was in a folio of drawings prepared for Thomas Metcalfe, that was called *Reminiscences of Imperial Dehlie.*[44] The *Begum*'s adventurism did not stop at architecture but was also exhibited in art as she commissioned at least two paintings of the *Kothi*, one showing the interior with the *Begum* posing with her court officials in a large space that was probably the *Durbar* Hall. The other depicted the *Kothi*'s forecourt on the occasion of one of the *Begum*'s entertainment with a large group of European guests arriving for the party.

Like Smith, *Begum* Samru's adventurous architectural exploits were not confined to Delhi alone as she built public and private buildings in Sardhana, all designed by Regehini, that showcased her transculturalism in *Mofussil* India.

7. CONCLUSION: 'OH EAST IS EAST AND WEST IS WEST AND (…) THE TWAIN (CAN) MEET'

It is also worth speculating whether Smith, the western man and the *Begum*, the eastern woman, knew each other as a fellow *Dilliwallah* in culturally hybrid Delhi of the nineteenth century. The possibility of their being acquaintances does exist as the *Begum* was known to host lavish entertainment soirees in her *Kothi* to which all prominent EIC officers stationed in or travelling through the city were invited and Smith could not have been an omission. It may be difficult to assert with certainty whether the two conversed about their cosmopolitanism and exchanged notes on their architectural adventurism as showcased in their respective *Kothi*s, both being prominent city landmarks and a subject of conversation particularly among visiting Europeans.

Nevertheless, both Smith and the *Begum* demonstrated how to become cosmopolitan in nineteenth-century Delhi in their own way. Their *Kothi*s, outcomes of two different ways of negotiating space were nevertheless united in the spirit of transculturalism where neither Smith's west nor the *Begum*'s east overwhelmed the other but both 'met' and co-existed.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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4. While typically, the term *Dilliwallah*, has been used in scholarship and in coeval archival sources to imply elite Indian males born and brought up and living in Delhi, I have extended the ambit of this rather narrow definition to also include the two protagonists of the Paper, an Indian woman ruler living in the city part-time and an EIC officer who also lived in the city while on a posting.
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7. See, Pollock, Sheldon, Bhabha, Homi, K. Breckenridge, Carol, A. and Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "Cosmopolitanisms." *Public Culture*, 12(3), 2000, pp.577-589. More recently, scholarship is being increasingly populated with women, youth, migrants and marginalized communities who have taken centerstage in the cosmopolitanism discourse making it more inclusive.
8. Elias, 1978 and Bourdieu, 1984.
9. Epstein, 2009.
10. Epstein, 2009, p.330.
11. See, Vertovec, Steven and Cohen, Robin. Introduction: Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. In Vertovec, Steven and Cohen, Robin (eds.) *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism. Theory, Context and Practice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 1-22.
12. I have used Architectural Adventurism as a framework to critique the building patronage of patrons who demonstrated unconventional behaviour, like the French mercenary cum gentleman architect, Claude Martin of Lucknow; *Begum* Samru, a female ruler who built a church in Sardhana and Maharaja Jagatjit Singh, ruler of Kapurthala state who built a mosque. See, Pandey Sharma, Jyoti. "From Marrakesh to India: A Colonial Maharaja's Pursuit of Architectural Glory in Kapurthala." *International Journal of Islamic Architecture*, 1(2), 2012, pp. 269-300; Pandey Sharma, Jyoti. The Villa in Colonial India: Major General Claude Martin's Villa Estates in Eighteenth-Century Avadhian Lucknow. In Arciszewska, Barbara. (ed.)

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE SILK ROAD ON COSMOPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE IN IRAN: ILKHANID PERIOD (1256-1335)

Parnian Rahbar

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SILK ROAD ON COSMOPOLITAN ARCHITECTURE IN IRAN: ILKHANID PERIOD (1256-1335)

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This paper examines the dynamic architectural landscape of Iran during the Ilkhanid period (1256-1335), investigating how Iran's integration into the vast Mongol Empire fostered unprecedented architectural exchange along the Silk Road network. The Silk Road, an ancient network of trade routes, facilitated not only the exchange of goods but also the intermingling of cultures, ideas, and architectural styles, transforming Iran into a melting pot of architectural innovation. Through analysis of significant monuments including the Soltaniyeh Dome, Friday Mosque of Varamin, Rabʿ-e Rashidi Complex, and Ilkhanid caravanserais, this study explores how Iranian architecture maintained its distinctive indigenous character while absorbing and transforming diverse influences from China, Central Asia, India, and the Mediterranean region.

The research identifies specific mechanisms of architectural exchange including the movement of skilled craftspeople, circulation of materials, exchange of technical knowledge, patron-directed synthesis, and adaptation to local conditions. It highlights specific examples of cosmopolitan designs and techniques derived from different nations and examines how these elements were synthesized with indigenous Persian architectural traditions to create a unique style. The study emphasizes the role of trade caravans, traveling artisans, and scholarly exchanges in disseminating architectural knowledge and fostering a cosmopolitan environment.

This examination of Ilkhanid architecture illuminates broader patterns of cosmopolitan exchange along the Silk Road, demonstrating how cultural synthesis in built environments occurs at the intersection of tradition and innovation. The study concludes that the Silk Road not only enriched Iran's architectural heritage but also strengthened its position as a cultural crossroads, promoting a legacy of inclusivity and aesthetic diversity that continues to influence contemporary Iranian architecture. This interdisciplinary approach offers new insights into the interconnectedness of ancient civilizations and the ongoing impact of cultural exchange on architectural evolution.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Mongol conquest of Iran, beginning in 1219 and culminating in the establishment of the Ilkhanid dynasty (1256–1335), marked a pivotal moment in Iranian history, particularly in the realm of architecture. This conquest not only reshaped political structures but also facilitated new forms of cultural and artistic interaction. The incorporation of Iran into the vast Mongol Empire positioned Iranian cities within a global network extending from China to Eastern Europe. Within this transcontinental empire, the Silk Road—already a powerful agent of connectivity—was revitalized and expanded, enabling the movement of artisans, materials, construction techniques, and architectural ideas on an unprecedented scale.

Iran's strategic location at the crossroads of Eurasia had, since antiquity, made it a key mediator of exchange between the East and West. From the Royal Road of the Achaemenid Empire to the flourishing Silk Roads of the Ilkhanid period, Iran continuously served as a conduit for intercultural dialogue. During the 13th and 14th centuries, under Mongol rule, this role was significantly amplified. The Mongol Empire's unified

administration and commitment to maintaining secure trade routes allowed for the intensive flow of goods, people, and knowledge.

The Silk Road functioned as much more than a commercial corridor—it was "a critical vector for intercultural exchange, facilitating not only the movement of commodities but also the transmission of architectural knowledge, construction methodologies, and aesthetic paradigms"[1]. This paper explores how these Silk Road exchanges manifested in Ilkhanid architecture, analyzing how foreign influences were not merely superimposed on existing traditions, but dynamically integrated and reinterpreted. The Ilkhanid period thus becomes a compelling case study of how architecture can serve as a material record of transregional interaction, revealing the mechanisms by which indigenous forms were transformed through sustained exposure to external ideas.

By tracing specific architectural transformations—from the adaptation of Chinese motifs to the fusion of Central Asian spatial typologies—this paper demonstrates how Ilkhanid Iran cultivated a uniquely cosmopolitan built environment. In doing so, it contributes to a broader understanding of how transregional networks like the Silk Road functioned not just as economic lifelines, but as architectural and cultural incubators.

2. THE SILK ROAD NETWORK AND IRAN'S STRATEGIC POSITION

The Silk Road, a vast web of overland and maritime trade routes, connected the civilizations of East Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. This network facilitated the exchange of luxury commodities—silk, spices, precious stones, and fine textiles—as well as technologies, religions, philosophical systems, and architectural ideas. While earlier scholarship has focused on the economic and artistic aspects of the Silk Road, its architectural consequences—particularly in the Iranian context—have received comparatively less critical attention.

Historically, Iran had always played a crucial role in East–West communication. The Royal Road, constructed during the Achaemenid period, was a proto-Silk Road route that connected Persepolis to Sardis via Susa, Hamadan, and the Zagros Mountain passes. This ancient infrastructure laid the groundwork for later Silk Road extensions and underscored Iran's role as a perennial connector of civilizations [2]. As the Silk Road expanded over centuries, these ancient paths were incorporated into broader networks that stretched from Xi'an (formerly Chang'an) in China to Constantinople and the Mediterranean coast.

Iran's strategic position was further enhanced by the natural integration of Central Asian trade routes with the internal roads of the Iranian plateau. These paths linked major cities such as Nishapur, Rayy, Tabriz, and

Isfahan with the wider Eurasian world, reinforcing Iran's position as a logistical and cultural linchpin in the transcontinental exchange system.

The Silk Road experienced three significant phases of intensified activity: under the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD), the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD), and finally, during the Mongol era in the 13th and 14th centuries. This latter period, when Iran was ruled by the Ilkhanids, saw the most robust architectural interactions, as the Pax Mongolica ensured the safety of travelers and artisans, making long-distance exchange feasible on a new scale [3].

The architectural implications of this connectivity were profound. Persian architects and craftsmen encountered new building materials, spatial typologies, and ornamental vocabularies originating from China, Central Asia, India, and Anatolia. These were mediated and adapted through local idioms, resulting in innovative syntheses rather than wholesale adoption. For instance, the Chinese influence on dome construction, brickwork articulation, and symbolic motifs can be seen in structures such as the Soltaniyeh Dome—a monument that epitomizes the Ilkhanid engagement with transregional aesthetics.

Beyond physical structures, the ethos of the Silk Road shaped cultural values. As Chong (2022) explains, "along the original Silk Roads, a cosmopolitan ethic of hospitality to foreigners emerged," fueled by both religious pluralism and pragmatic coexistence. This created a climate in which the architectural expressions of different cultures could be received, reimagined, and localized.

Fig. 1: The map above shows the diverse network of overland and maritime routes used by merchants from across the world to transport a wide variety of goods, forming the foundation of the historical Silk Roads. (Source: UNESCO Silk Roads Programme, https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/about-silk-roads).

The Silk Road's architectural legacy is also visible in the infrastructure that supported it—most notably the vast network of caravanserais, many of which were built or expanded between the 10th and 19th centuries. These structures, found from China to the Mediterranean, provided resting places for merchants and became centers for cultural interaction, architectural experimentation, and even the diffusion of construction techniques[4]. Iranian caravanserais, such as those in Qazvin and Kerman, exemplify how architectural forms evolved in response to practical needs and transregional influences.

3. INDIGENOUS IRANIAN ARCHITECTURAL TRADITIONS

Iranian architecture before the Mongol conquest had developed distinctive characteristics over centuries, creating a recognizable architectural vocabulary. Major indigenous elements included:

3.1 Structural Systems

- Chahar-taq: The four-arched square bay roofed with a dome, forming the fundamental unit of Iranian architecture
- Iwan: The large, vaulted hall open on one side, typically leading to a courtyard
- Dome construction: Techniques for transitioning from square to circle through squinches and pendentives
- Barrel vaults: Used extensively in both religious and secular buildings

3.2 Spatial Organization

- Four-iwan plan: The cardinal arrangement of four iwans around a central courtyard, becoming standard for mosques and madrasas
- Axiality: Strong emphasis on primary axes and symmetrical organization
- Courtyard centrality: Organization of spaces around a central open courtyard
- Hierarchical progression: Movement from public to increasingly private spaces

3.3 Decorative Programs

- Geometric patterns: Complex mathematical designs expressing cosmic order
- Arabesque: Stylized plant-based ornament developed to high sophistication
- Calligraphy: Integration of Quranic verses and poetry as architectural decoration
- Muqarnas: Three-dimensional stalactite-like decorative vaulting

3.4 Building Typologies

- Mosque: Particularly the four-iwan congregational mosque type
- Madrasa: Religious school typically organized around a courtyard

- Caravanserai: Fortified way stations for travelers along trade routes
- Hammam: Public bath complexes with distinctive spatial organization

These indigenous elements provided the foundation upon which foreign influences would later be integrated during the Ilkhanid period.

4. ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE ILKHANID ERA

Following the conversion of Sultan Mahmud Ghazan Khan to Islam, architectural activities within the Ilkhanid Empire witnessed unprecedented growth. Between 617 and 736 AH (approximately 1220-1335 CE), cities such as Tabriz, Soltaniyeh, and Baghdad became vibrant centers for artists and architects. The Ilkhanid rulers often issued royal decrees demanding the construction of monumental buildings that reflected the might and magnificence of their state.

The scale of architectural ambition during this period was unprecedented. As noted in the sources, the Ilkhanid rulers sometimes directed their architects to create works that would surpass famous monuments like the tomb of Sultan Sanjar in Merv or the Taq Kasra in Ctesiphon. This imperial ambition manifested in three particularly grand structures: Shanb-e Ghazan, the Soltaniyeh Dome, and the Grand Complex of Alishah[5].

Although Ilkhanid architecture did not introduce radically new forms compared to the Seljuk period, it is distinguished by several key characteristics:

1. Increased verticality: Taller iwans, slimmer walls, and slender façades framed by pointed arches
2. Monumental scale: Vast interior spaces and imposing proportions
3. Advanced engineering: Innovative use of transverse vaults and sophisticated dome construction
4. Decorative elaboration: Extensive application of stucco and glazed tile

A turning point in Ilkhanid decoration was the shift from brickwork to glazed tile, creating a more vibrant visual language. As one Persian source notes, "the transition from Seljuk to Ilkhanid architecture is marked by the gradual change from brick decoration to tile work, giving a dramatic quality of color to Azerbaijani architecture"[6]. Techniques like mosaic tilework featuring vegetal and geometric patterns, as well as calligraphic inscriptions, became increasingly common.

Hillenbrand identifies Azerbaijan as "the cradle and birthplace of progressive Ilkhanid architecture," arguing that the most progressive expressions of Ilkhanid architecture are best exemplified in the cities of Tabriz and Soltaniyeh. These urban centers emerged as leading sites of ambitious architectural and urban design projects

within the Islamic world, where architects applied their highest levels of skill, creativity, and technical expertise[6].

5. CASE STUDIES: MONUMENTS OF ILKHANID IRAN

The case study method was employed in this research to provide a detailed and focused examination of key architectural monuments from the Ilkhanid period. By analyzing specific examples such as the Soltaniyeh Dome, Friday Mosque of Varamin, and Rabʿ-e Rashidi Complex, the case study approach allows for a deeper understanding of the ways in which foreign influences were absorbed and transformed within the context of Iranian architecture. This method enables a nuanced exploration of the architectural features, construction techniques, and design philosophies that characterize Ilkhanid architecture, highlighting the broader patterns of cultural exchange along the Silk Road and their impact on Iran's architectural evolution.

5.1. Soltaniyeh Dome (Gonbad-e Soltaniyeh), Zanjan Province

The Soltaniyeh Dome represents a pivotal moment in Iranian architectural history where Ilkhanid patronage facilitated unprecedented cultural exchange along the Silk Road. Built between 1305-1313 CE as the mausoleum for Sultan Muhammad Öljeitü (r. 1304-1317), this structure embodies the cosmopolitan nature of Ilkhanid architectural innovation.

Fig. 2: Tourist view of the Soltaniyeh Dome as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, captured from the eastern perspective. (Source: Homsa.net)

Historical Development

Arghun Khan initially selected the fertile plain of Soltaniyeh in 1270 CE for a new city, ordering the construction of city walls. However, it was his son Öljeitü who declared his intention to complete his father's plan upon ascending the throne[7]. Construction activities accelerated rapidly, with the mausoleum serving as the city's focal point. The city was officially inaugurated in 1313 CE, intended as the political and commercial center of the realm.

The significance of this architectural project aligned with broader Ilkhanid policies of establishing new urban centers that functionally connected eastern and western portions of the Mongol Empire. As Blair (1986) notes, Soltaniyeh represented "the imperial" architectural expression of Mongol rule, combining indigenous Iranian forms with foreign influences that traveled along Silk Road networks[8].

Fig. 3: Soltanie in the night (Source: photographed by Sadegh Miri)

Architectural Synthesis

The interior diameter of the structure measures approximately 26 meters with walls 2 meters thick. Three elements complicate the simple octagonal plan: triangular structural elements in the northern corners, a staircase tower in the southwest corner, and a tomb chamber on the southern side.

Godard describes the building as "definitely the finest example of Mongol architecture and one of the best products of Islamic Persian architecture, and perhaps the most technically interesting among them" [7] This assessment underscores how the structure represented both technical innovation and cultural synthesis.

Several architectural features demonstrate specific Silk Road influences:

1. Double-shell dome construction: architectural historians have identified the dome's innovative structural system as incorporating techniques that circulated throughout the Mongol realm. The structure's ability to maintain stability while concentrating weight at specific points represented an advancement that drew on multiple building traditions.
2. Octagonal plan with surrounding galleries: the Soltaniyeh Dome represents "a complete example and the final result of a series of similar buildings that all have domed chambers and side galleries," citing precedents including the tomb of Ismail Samani and Sultan Sanjar in Merv. This evolutionary development shows how Ilkhanid architects synthesized earlier Iranian forms with spatial concepts that circulated along Silk Road networks.
3. Perforated structure: Unlike earlier structures where solid walls dominated, at Soltaniyeh "the walls are perforated with openings, niches, staircases, windows, and latticed galleries," creating visual connections between interior and exterior spaces while concentrating structural weight at specific points. This innovation gave the massive structure "lightness, delicacy, and beauty" and became influential for later buildings in both Iran and India[7].

Decorative Programs and Material Exchange

The decorative scheme underwent two distinct phases reflecting the patron's changing religious orientation:

First Decorative Phase

The initial program was designed when Öljeitü converted to Shi'ism in 1309 CE and planned to transform the structure into a shrine for Ali and Imam Hussein (Wilber). Decorative elements included:

1. Pale yellow brick laid in conventional patterns, sometimes forming Kufic letters spelling "Ali" using blue glazed bricks
2. Geometric designs combining carved brick with blue and dark blue glazed ceramic strips
3. Flat corner surfaces decorated with light and dark blue ceramics

Second Decorative Phase

After Öljeitü abandoned the plan to convert the mausoleum into a Shi'a shrine and returned to Sunni Islam, the interior decoration was renewed:

1. A four-meter-high dado of hexagonal blue glazed tiles
2. Half-columns at sixteen corners covered with white and light blue tiles
3. A border of rectangular tiles with underglaze designs featuring dark blue backgrounds
4. White gypsum walls with polychrome decoration in blue, red, black, green, brown, and gold

Fig. 4: Stucco Decorations Ceiling of Balcony (Source: photographed by Sadegh Miri)

The extensive use of blue glazed ceramics, particularly in turquoise and cobalt blue tones, demonstrates material exchange along Silk Road networks. The chemical composition of these materials shows direct influence from Chinese ceramic production techniques, with cobalt pigments imported from regions under Chinese control.

The Soltaniyeh Dome represents a significant case study in how Ilkhanid architecture synthesized multiple building traditions that circulated along the Silk Road. Under Mongol patronage, Iranian architects integrated structural and decorative innovations from across the empire while maintaining continuity with regional building traditions. As contemporary historians noted, this "unique building has no equal anywhere in the world" (Wilber), precisely because it represented the culmination of unprecedented cultural and technical exchange facilitated by the cosmopolitan nature of Ilkhanid rule.

The structure's subsequent influence on buildings in Iran and India demonstrates how architectural innovations at Soltaniyeh continued to shape building traditions along Silk Road networks well beyond the Ilkhanid period, establishing new paradigms that would influence Islamic architecture for centuries.

5.2. Friday Mosque of Varamin (Masjid-i Jami)

The Friday Mosque of Varamin, constructed during the early years of Abu Sa'id's reign (1316-1335), stands as a significant example of how traditional Iranian architectural typologies were transformed through the incorporation of diverse influences that traveled along the Silk Road during the Ilkhanid period.

Historical Context and Significance

Located approximately 42 kilometers south of Tehran, the Friday Mosque of Varamin represents a critical example of the four-iwan mosque typology. While the western section has been completely destroyed over the centuries, the remaining portions are in relatively good condition. The structure's significance lies in being an "ideal" four-iwan mosque where all four iwans were constructed as balanced components within a single building campaign. Among the buildings catalogued in this study, it stands as the only structure meeting this criterion, with the Jami Mosque of Zavareh serving as its only Seljuk-era predecessor[7].

Two dates are inscribed in the mosque: 722 AH/1322 CE appears in the dome chamber inscription (though partially damaged), alongside an elaborate list of titles and honorifics for Abu Sa'id including a Mongol title. The interior of the dome chamber bears the date 726 AH/1326 CE. These dates firmly place the construction within the late Ilkhanid period when cross-cultural exchange along the Silk Road had reached its zenith.

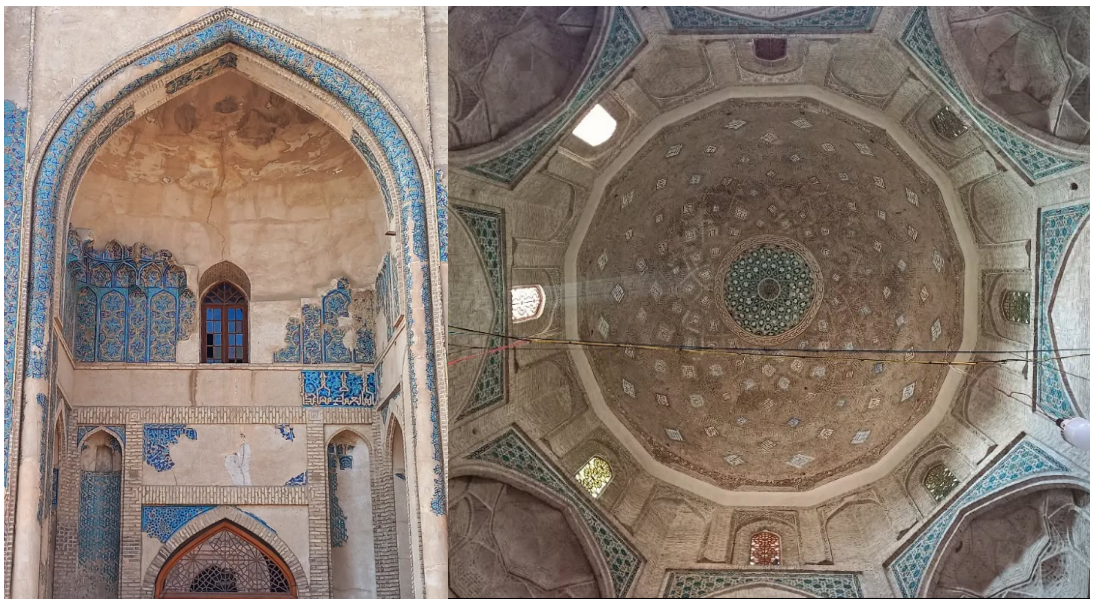

Fig. 5: Friday Mosque of Varamin(Source by author)

Architectural Synthesis

The Varamin mosque exemplifies how the four-iwan mosque typology, while fundamentally Iranian, was reimagined through the incorporation of spatial and decorative elements from across the Mongol Empire. Several key features demonstrate this synthesis:

1. Proportional relationships: One of the mosque's notable characteristics is "the small size of the courtyard relative to the building's overall dimensions". This compressed courtyard proportion is identified as "one of the characteristics of the Mongol period, [7]" differentiating it from earlier Iranian mosque designs and suggesting influence from Central Asian spatial concepts.
2. Vertical emphasis: The mosque's dome rises significantly higher than other parts of the building, while the entrance portal and dome chamber portal are deliberately kept low "so that the entire dome is clearly visible" [7]. This careful manipulation of proportions to create visual hierarchy draws on compositional principles that circulated along the Silk Road.
3. Spatial organization: While maintaining the traditional four-iwan layout, the Varamin mosque introduces subtle innovations in the relationship between prayer hall and courtyard that echo Central Asian developments. The integration of these spatial elements was achieved while maintaining the fundamental typological identity of Iranian religious architecture.

Fig. 6: bird view of Friday Mosque of Varamin (Source: Instagram.com/Varamincity)

Decorative Programs and Cultural Exchange

The mosque's decorative scheme represents a sophisticated integration of techniques and motifs from across the Silk Road, with particular attention to the relationship between structural materials and ornamental elements:

1. Geometric brick patterning: Wilber describes the presence of "brick patterns created from combinations of ordinary, carved, and specially molded bricks." The mihrab wall features "a beautiful elaborate design formed by combining fishbone and diamond patterns." These geometric compositions demonstrate mathematical principles developed in the scientific centers of Central Asia, showing direct parallels with Transoxianan architecture.

2. Integration of Chinese motifs in stucco decoration: The mosque features "well-executed inscriptions and various designs between vertical bands and horizontal moldings containing geometric patterns and floral motifs in stucco"[7]. The incorporation of floral motifs includes lotus flowers and cloud collar designs derived from Chinese textiles and ceramics, thoroughly integrated with traditional Islamic geometric patterns.

3. Tilework: Wilber describes tilework combining "pieces of light and dark blue glazed tiles and unglazed ceramic" used in "geometric designs, decorative panels, and inscriptions above the main entrance portal." The inscription background is dark blue tile with letters formed from strips of unglazed ceramic, with light blue ceramic used for the scroll designs above the letters. This limited blue palette represents an early stage in the development of polychrome tilework that would later characterize Timurid architecture.

4. Technical innovation: The text notes various technical innovations, such as brick patterns "one brick thick in the thick plaster covering on the building," and in one area, "the brick pattern placed on a plaster covering applied to smooth brick latticework, which in turn was pressed into the plaster covering on the building" [7]. This layering technique demonstrates sophisticated understanding of materials and construction methods.

Religious and Cultural Context

The mosque contains numerous inscriptions with religious content, including "Quranic verses and Shi'ite prayers," as well as "decorative brick designs forming sacred names and religious phrases" throughout the building [7]. The prevalence of Shi'ite content is noteworthy in an officially Sunni context, suggesting the cosmopolitan religious environment of the Ilkhanid period where various Islamic traditions coexisted.

A later inscription from the Timurid period mentions Shah Rukh, though its exact date is uncertain. Wilber notes that when "Shah Rukh-era panels were placed on the wall, no construction was carried out, and the work from that period is limited to panels and some decorative elements in the dome chamber." This indicates the mosque's continued significance as a religious center worthy of royal patronage beyond the Ilkhanid era.

The Friday Mosque of Varamin represents a critical case study in how traditional Iranian religious architecture was transformed through the incorporation of diverse influences that traveled along the Silk Road during the Ilkhanid period. Its significance lies not merely in its status as an "ideal" four-iwan mosque, but in how this traditional typology was reimagined through the integration of spatial concepts, decorative motifs, and technical innovations from across the Mongol Empire.

The mosque exemplifies the cosmopolitan nature of Ilkhanid architecture, where Iranian builders synthesized diverse influences while maintaining continuity with established architectural traditions. The result was a structure that, while fundamentally Iranian in its typology, incorporated elements from Central Asia and China in ways that enriched rather than disrupted the coherence of the architectural whole.

5.3. Rabʿ-e Rashidi Complex, Tabriz: A Cosmopolitan Educational Center of the Ilkhanid Era

Fig. 7: Landscape view of the Rabʿ-e Rashidi archaeological site with the city of Tabriz in the background. (Source: Visit Iran, n.d. Retrieved from https://www.visitiran.ir/attraction/rab-e-rashidi)

Historical Context and Significance

Located several kilometers east of Tabriz, on the northern banks of the Mehranrud River, the Rabʿ-e Rashidi (Rashidian Quarter) represents one of the most ambitious architectural and educational complexes of the Ilkhanid period. Established around 1300 CE by the influential vizier and polymath Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah, this complex embodied the cosmopolitan vision of its founder during a period of unprecedented cultural exchange along the Silk Road.

Fig. 8: View of the remaining structures of Rabʿ-e Rashidi Complex in Tabriz, once a major scientific center during the Ilkhanid period. (Source: SURFIRAN, 2023. Retrieved from https://surfiran.com/mag/rab-e-rashidi-a-historical-school-in-tabriz/)

Rashid al-Din was born in 1247 CE to an Iranian family in Hamadan. Initially serving as a physician in the court of Abaqa Khan, he later rose to become historian and vizier under Ghazan Khan[9]. In other sections of historical texts, detailed accounts of his political career and written works are provided, highlighting his prominent role in Ilkhanid administration and intellectual life.

The site's location is significant, situated on low rounded hills with higher mountains behind them, east of Tabriz. Today, the remains consist primarily of scattered building fragments, wall foundations, and glazed ceramic shards across barren hills and fruit orchards. The French traveler Chardin, visiting in the seventeenth century, was told these ruins belonged to a palace called "Rashidi Castle," built four hundred years earlier by Khwaja Rashid [9].

Architectural Development and Organization

According to contemporary accounts, as Tabriz became the Ilkhanid capital, the city experienced significant population growth, with extensive suburban development. One chronicler, formerly among Rashid al-Din's students, writes: "When this city of Tabriz became the capital during the Mongol period, the city's population increased and many houses were built in the suburbs, until eventually outside each gate, suburbs as large as the city itself emerged" [10].

Ghazan Khan initiated the construction of an outer wall to encompass these suburbs, including the gardens and buildings of the Valian and Sanjan villages. Although this wall remained incomplete due to Ghazan's

death, it defined the greater metropolitan area. Subsequently, "above the city, beside Valian hill and within Ghazan Khan's wall, Rashid al-Din the vizier built another suburb known as Rabʿ-e Rashidi, where he constructed magnificent palaces and grand buildings"[10].

With virtually unlimited resources at his disposal, Rashid al-Din created a complex rivaling Ghazan Khan's own constructions in grandeur and scale. The complex is mentioned in four letters from a collection of approximately 53 surviving missives addressed to his sons and provincial governors. Letter 51, particularly detailed in its description, outlines the complex's comprehensive facilities:

The letter describes the establishment of various facilities, including caravanserais, shops, baths, storehouses, mills, dyeing workshops, a mint, and thirty thousand beautiful houses. It also mentions that at least two thousand individuals, including Quran reciters, students, jurists, theologians, traditionists, physicians, craftsmen, weavers, and others, were settled in this suburb, all of whom received salaries and stipends.

While some scholars like Levy have questioned the authenticity of these letters, suggesting they might be later productions, possibly from the fifteenth century with Indian origins, the detailed description in Letter 51 specifically seems difficult to dismiss as inauthentic.

Institutional Complexity and Cultural Exchange

The Rabʿ-e Rashidi represents a deliberate attempt to create a cosmopolitan center for knowledge production and exchange. Despite its architectural ambition, the complex had limited immediate cultural impact, likely collapsing after Rashid al-Din's execution in 1318/718.

This disgrace proved temporary, as his son Muhammad Ghiyath al-Din was later appointed to the vizierate, potentially confirming accounts that Rashid al-Din was buried near the mosque of the Rabʿ-e Rashidi.

During Timur's son Miranshah's rule in the region, stories circulated that Rashid al-Din had been Jewish by origin—rumors that had existed during his lifetime—prompting Miranshah to order his remains exhumed and transferred to a Jewish cemetery.

Architectural Evidence and Archaeological Remains

No elements of Rashid al-Din's complex are clearly identifiable in its current state. The most prominent features are tower foundations and the line of fortification walls atop the largest hills in the area. These fortifications might be those constructed in the fourteenth century, as mentioned above, or could be remnants of defensive works built by Shah Abbas in the early seventeenth century.

The most conclusive evidence for Ilkhanid-era construction consists of glazed ceramic fragments, many resembling those from Ghazan Khan's mausoleum and other dated structures from this period. These include " The tiles, featuring octagonal shapes and luster decorations in navy and blue, exhibit sections where the glazing has been removed to form intricate new patterns. Additionally, there are strip patterns made with navy and blue ceramic strips, with the mounting holes filled with plasterwork. Inscription fragments are also present, created by stripping the glaze from the background to reveal the letters.
Numerous complete multi-colored tiles from the Safavid period have also been found at the site.

Among the tower foundations, one deserves special attention. This foundation is larger than others and differs in plan, featuring a rectangular cross-section built with greater precision, with cut stone blocks placed on its rough stone foundation. Substantial portions of the superstructure stones still in place indicate the tower had a projecting upper section. Most of these stones are black marble, and if not all reused, some are definitely repurposed materials. The site contains column bases from the Parthian period and several Islamic-era gravestones, showing signs of desecration of Muslim cemeteries—suggesting construction during a period when Islamic authority was weaker than in periods before and after[9].

Comparison with International Models

When compared with contemporaneous centers like the Yuan Dynasty Imperial Academy in Dadu (Beijing), several significant parallels emerge in the Rabʿ-e Rashidi complex:

The comprehensive integration of educational, production, and residential functions within a single planned complex echoes institutional models found across the Mongol Empire. Rashid al-Din's correspondence with the Yuan court suggests direct awareness of Chinese institutional approaches, adapted to satisfy Islamic educational requirements.

Archaeological evidence indicates specialized workshops for paper production employing techniques of Chinese origin. The architectural accommodations for these processes parallel those found in contemporary Chinese paper-making centers, reflecting the transmission of technical knowledge along the Silk Road.

Historical descriptions of the library organization suggest systems showing awareness of Chinese cataloging practices, particularly in the physical arrangement of manuscripts. This represents a significant example of knowledge transfer beyond purely aesthetic or decorative elements.

While less archaeologically verifiable, historical accounts suggest the complex incorporated sophisticated garden elements showing Chinese landscape influence, particularly in the integration of water features and the relationship between built and natural environments.

Comparison with the contemporaneous Yuan Dynasty Imperial Academy in Dadu (Beijing) reveals several significant parallels:

- Institutional organization: Both complexes combined educational, production, and residential functions in a comprehensive plan. Rashid al-Din's correspondence with the Yuan court suggests direct awareness of Chinese institutional models, adapted to Islamic educational requirements.
- Paper-making facilities: Archaeological evidence shows specialized workshops for paper production using Chinese techniques. The specific architectural accommodations for this process parallel those found in contemporary Chinese paper-making centers.
- Library organization: Historical descriptions indicate an organizational system showing awareness of Chinese library practices, particularly in the cataloging and physical arrangement of manuscripts.
- Garden design: Historical descriptions suggest that the complex incorporated water features and landscape elements showing Chinese influence, particularly in the relationship between built and natural environments.

Blair (1984) argues that the Rabʿ-e Rashidi represents perhaps the most deliberate attempt at architectural cosmopolitanism in Ilkhanid Iran, directed by a patron who maintained extensive international connections and explicitly sought to create a center for global knowledge exchange[11]. As Rashid al-Din himself was involved in producing and translating texts from multiple cultures, his architectural vision for the complex reflected a similar cosmopolitan approach.

The Rabʿ-e Rashidi complex represents perhaps the most deliberate attempt at architectural cosmopolitanism in Ilkhanid Iran. Directed by a patron who maintained extensive international connections and explicitly sought to create a center for global knowledge exchange, the complex embodied Rashid al-Din's vision of cross-cultural synthesis.

As Rashid al-Din himself was deeply involved in producing and translating texts from multiple cultures (including his supervision of a history of China), his architectural vision for the complex reflected a similar cosmopolitan approach. Though short-lived in its original form, the Rabʿ-e Rashidi stands as a testament to the ambitious cultural exchange facilitated by the Pax Mongolica and the Silk Road networks that connected disparate civilizations during this remarkable period.

6. CARAVANSERAIS OF THE SILK ROAD: ARCHITECTURE AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN ILKHANID IRAN

Caravanserais (also known as khans or ribats) served as the critical infrastructure of Silk Road trade, providing secure lodging, storage facilities, and commercial spaces for merchants and travelers. During the Ilkhanid period (1256-1335), these structures experienced significant architectural evolution and played a vital role in facilitating the cosmopolitan exchange that characterized this era. This paper examines the distinctive architectural features of Ilkhanid caravanserais and analyzes their function as sites of cultural synthesis along the Silk Road network traversing Iran.

The Mongol unification of Eurasia created unprecedented conditions for commercial exchange, with merchants and goods traveling longer distances with greater security than in previous periods. As a result, caravanserais evolved from basic fortified shelters into sophisticated multi-functional complexes that accommodated diverse cultural practices and commercial requirements. These buildings became architectural embodiments of the cosmopolitan ethos of the period, incorporating elements from multiple traditions while serving travelers from throughout the known world.

6.1. Historical Context and Development

6.1.1. Pre-Ilkhanid Caravanserai Traditions

The caravanserai as a building type had deep roots in Iranian architectural tradition, with significant development during the Seljuk period (11th-12th centuries). Pre-Ilkhanid caravanserais typically featured:

- Fortified exterior walls with minimal openings
- Central courtyard surrounded by identical cells
- Four-iwan plan adapted to commercial function
- Limited specialized spaces beyond basic lodging and storage
- Strong emphasis on security over comfort or commercial facilitation

Seljuk examples like Ribat-i Sharaf established the basic typology that Ilkhanid builders would inherit and transform. However, these earlier structures primarily served regional trade and lacked the cosmopolitan qualities that would characterize their Ilkhanid successors.

6.1.2. Ilkhanid Innovations

Under Mongol rule, several factors transformed caravanserai design:

1. Imperial Integration: The incorporation of Iran into the vast Mongol Empire created commercial connections spanning from China to the Mediterranean, necessitating facilities that could accommodate diverse cultural practices and commercial requirements.
2. Commercial Scale: Increased volume and value of trade required larger, more specialized facilities with enhanced security and storage capabilities.
3. Cultural Exchange: The movement of diverse peoples along trade routes meant caravanserais needed to accommodate various religious practices, dietary requirements, and social customs.
4. Technical Transfer: The movement of craftspeople throughout the Mongol Empire facilitated architectural innovation, introducing construction techniques and design elements from distant regions.

6.2. Three Ilkhanid Caravanserais: A Comparative Analysis (1330-1335)

6.2.1. The Marand Caravanserai

Fig. 9: Front view of the Marand (Yam) Caravanserai showing its Safavid-era brickwork and central entrance. (Source: Iran Culture, 2023. Retrieved from https://ifpnews.com/irans-history-in-photos-yam-caravanserai/)

Historical Context and Significance

Located approximately 13 kilometers north of Marand on the Tabriz-Jolfa route, the Marand Caravanserai represents a significant example of Ilkhanid architecture. While local residents commonly attribute ancient caravanserais to Shah Abbas' era, this structure is locally known as "Hulagu's Caravanserai," a designation that more accurately reflects its historical origins. Based on architectural evidence, particularly its complete tilework, the structure must date to approximately 1330 CE, neither earlier (as complete tilework became common only after 1310) nor later than 1335 CE, as its decorative style belongs firmly to the Ilkhanid period.

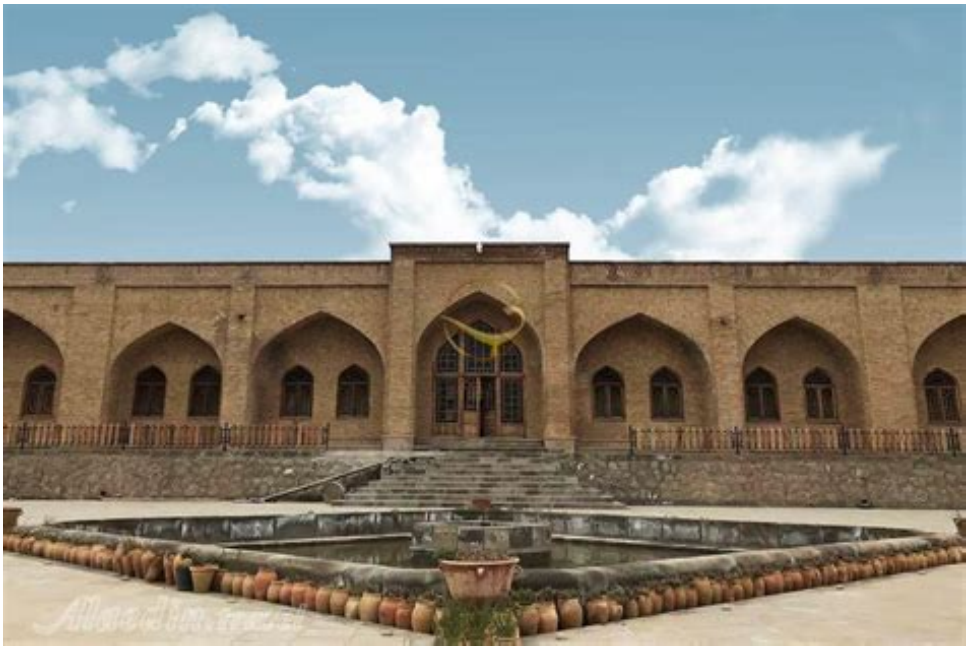

Fig. 10: Interior courtyard of the Yam Caravanserai, currently repurposed as a traditional hotel. (Source: Alaedin Travel, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.alaedin.travel/en/hotels/iran/marand/yaam-caravanserai)

Of particular significance is the structure's inscriptions. When Khanikoff visited in 1857, he observed that while the entrance portal was already deteriorating, he noted similarities to the dated 582 AH (1186 CE) Persian inscription at Nakhchivan written in Kufic script. The repetition of certain words led him to conclude the inscription was in Persian verse rather than Arabic. This assessment was later confirmed by Dr. George Miles, who noted that "the first interesting point is that only a few inscriptions on Islamic buildings in Iran are both Persian and before the fifteenth century"[12].

Architectural Features and Decoration

The caravanserai follows a rectangular plan with ten bastions and an imposing entrance portal facing east. The foundation consists of large blocks of black stone, with remaining fortifications approximately 1.10 meters thick. The portal decoration features an elaborate sequence of decorative elements, including:

"First a flat vertical surface to the highest remaining point of the portal about 9 meters above ground level; light blue glazed tile pieces have been set in the vertical joints. Next is a curved cross-section surface containing an interlace pattern with twelve-pointed stars in the center".

The decorative program combines unglazed ceramic elements with light and dark blue glazed tiles in complex geometric and floral patterns. The interior surfaces of the intersecting vault feature "diagonal squares of carved brick in light blue, dark blue, and white" with "plain areas of plain carved brick".

Construction Techniques

The structure showcases several distinctive architectural features of northwestern Iran, particularly "the combination of brick and carved stone" [7]. The carved stones forming the inner edge of the arch, their molded edges, and the protrusion on the keystone indicate influence from Syrian and Anatolian architecture.

6.2.2. The Sarcham Caravanserai

Fig. 11: Front view of Sarcham Caravanserai showcasing Ilkhanid-era stone masonry and twin towered entrance. (Source: ITTO, 2023. Retrieved from https://www.itto.org/iran/attractions/category/42)

Historical Context and Significance

Located between Zanjan and Mianeh on the Qazvin-Tabriz route, the ruins of the important Sarcham Caravanserai stand along the Zanjan River. The structure, referred to as a "ribat" in its inscription, was described by André Godard. The caravanserai's main entrance portal faces south toward the river, and its original plan It featured a spacious courtyard surrounded by rooms, with four iwans positioned along the main axes.

The inscription mentions "the name of the last Mongol ruler, Abu Sa'id, and his vizier Ghiyath al-Haqq wa'l-Din Muhammad, and the date 733 AH (1332-33 CE)", firmly establishing its construction date in the late Ilkhanid period.

Architectural Features

While most of the structure has been reduced to rubble, the southern entrance portal remains in relatively good condition. The design features "corner bastions, vertical surfaces, and intersecting vaults," all

characteristic of Iranian architecture of the period. However, the entrance portal and its inscription demonstrate a distinctive style that differs from the rest of the structure.

The portal's black stone construction and marble inscription suggest direct influence from Syrian architecture of the period, "particularly from a building in Aleppo that still exists" (Wilber). The most compelling evidence of this connection is "the narrow molding on the outer edge of the arch, which connects at the top of the keystone, with the inscription placed above it" (Wilber).

6.2.3. The Sin (Isfahan) Caravanserai

Historical Context and Significance

This caravanserai is located on what was for centuries the main northern route from Isfahan, in the village of Sin, approximately 21 kilometers north of Isfahan. The structure bears two dated inscriptions: one in the vault of the entrance hall dated 730 AH (1330 CE), and another on the small portal niche mentioning "Haji Muhammad the builder from Saveh" and dated 721 AH (1321 CE).

This chronological discrepancy suggests that "decorative craftsmen arrived at the site after the completion of the substructure," with the entrance hall decoration completed "several months before the decoration of the portal," though it remains unclear whether both were executed by the same group[9].

Architectural Features

The caravanserai follows a rectangular plan with an imposing entrance portal. While the rooms around the large courtyard have completely disappeared, as "villagers have stolen the building materials for their own use, even digging out the foundation stones", the entrance portal, seven-sided entrance hall, and corridor remain relatively intact.

A notable feature of this structure is that "the decoration of the building was never completed" [9]. This places it in a category with other unfinished buildings from the same period around Isfahan. For example, the entrance portal and curved niches of the exterior arch recess "should have had either inscriptions or other decoration," but the brickwork in these areas was never pointed, while the completed portions of the building feature full pointing.

Construction Techniques

The structure features an "unusual combination of materials above the portal". In the corners of the facade and below the horizontal niche, horizontal wooden beams are positioned, one in the facade and another at a right angle along the side wall of the portal. These two beams are connected by a nail passing through a piece of iron at a right angle, apparently original to the construction.

Comparative Analysis

These three caravanserais, all dating to approximately 1330-1335 CE, demonstrate both the architectural consistency of Ilkhanid caravanserai design and regional variations. The Marand and Sarcham examples share distinctive features of northwestern Iranian architecture, particularly the use of carved stone elements showing Syrian and Anatolian influence. The Sin caravanserai, while following the same basic rectangular plan with an imposing entrance portal, lacks these regional characteristics.

The decorative programs of the Marand and Sarcham caravanserais demonstrate sophisticated integration of techniques and motifs from across the Silk Road, combining traditional Iranian architectural elements with influences from Syria, Anatolia, and Central Asia. The Sin caravanserai, with its incomplete decoration, provides valuable insight into the construction and decoration process of Ilkhanid buildings.

All three structures serve as critical case studies in how traditional Iranian caravanserai architecture was transformed through the incorporation of diverse influences that traveled along the Silk Road during the Ilkhanid period, serving as vital infrastructure components for trade and cultural exchange.

7. MECHANISMS OF ARCHITECTURAL EXCHANGE

Analysis of these case studies reveals several important mechanisms through which architectural exchange occurred along Silk Road routes during the Ilkhanid period:

7.1. Movement of Skilled Craftspeople

The precision and authenticity of foreign elements incorporated into Ilkhanid architecture strongly suggest the presence of craftspeople from diverse regions working on Iranian monuments. Historical sources confirm that the Ilkhanid court actively recruited artisans from throughout the Mongol Empire. The specific transmission of Chinese ceramic techniques, Central Asian brick patterning methods, and Byzantine structural concepts required specialized knowledge that likely traveled with expert practitioners rather than through secondary sources.

Kadoi (2009) has documented the presence of Chinese craftsmen in Ilkhanid court workshops, particularly in the production of ceramics and textiles, whose techniques and motifs were subsequently applied to architectural decoration[13]. Similarly, Allsen (2001) notes the systematic transfer of artisans across the Mongol Empire, creating networks of technical knowledge that directly influenced architectural production[14].

7.2. Circulation of Materials

The incorporation of specific materials—particularly Chinese cobalt pigments, Central Asian glazing compounds, and specialized construction materials—demonstrates physical movement of goods along Silk Road routes. Material analysis of architectural ceramics from sites like Soltaniyeh reveals composition that could only be achieved through imported materials or techniques.

Morgan's (2005) examination of ceramic production at Soltaniyeh demonstrates the importation of specific materials from China and Central Asia, indicating direct material transfer along trade routes. The distinctive cobalt blue used in Ilkhanid tilework derives from specific mineral sources in regions under Chinese control, providing tangible evidence of material exchange along the Silk Road[15].

7.3. Exchange of Technical Texts

The mathematical precision of geometric patterns and the systematic adaptation of foreign structural systems suggest familiarity with technical texts that circulated throughout the Mongol Empire. Rashid al-Din's establishment of scriptoria for producing and translating texts at the Rabʿ-e Rashidi complex provides direct evidence for this mechanism of knowledge transfer.

Allsen (2001) documents the translation of Chinese technical manuals into Persian during this period, covering topics from astronomy and mathematics to agriculture and architecture. These translations provided Iranian architects with direct access to Chinese technical knowledge, influencing structural and decorative approaches in Ilkhanid architecture.

7.4. Patron-Directed Synthesis

The deliberate incorporation of foreign elements—particularly evident in imperial projects like the Soltaniyeh Dome and the Rabʿ-e Rashidi complex—demonstrates how elite patrons intentionally fostered architectural cosmopolitanism. Both Mongol rulers and Persian administrators like Rashid al-Din maintained extensive international connections and deliberately imported foreign elements as expressions of their global networks.

Melville's (1992) analysis of Öljeitü's itineraries demonstrates the Ilkhan's direct experience with diverse architectural traditions during his extensive travels throughout the Mongol Empire, suggesting informed patronage based on firsthand knowledge[16]. Similarly, Blair's (1984) study of the Rabʿ-e Rashidi endowment deed reveals Rashid al-Din's explicit intentions to create an institution that would synthesize knowledge from across the known world.

7.5. Adaptation to Local Conditions

Each case study demonstrates how foreign elements were not simply copied but transformed to suit Iranian conditions and traditions. The incorporation of Chinese motifs into Islamic geometric patterns, adaptation of Central Asian structural systems to Iranian building materials, and integration of foreign spatial concepts into traditional Iranian typologies all demonstrate an active process of architectural synthesis rather than passive borrowing.

O'Kane (1998) emphasizes the selective nature of foreign influence in Ilkhanid architecture, noting how imported forms and techniques were consistently modified to accord with local aesthetic preferences and functional requirements[17]. This selective adaptation reveals a sophisticated approach to architectural exchange, where foreign elements were evaluated for their utility and compatibility with existing traditions rather than adopted wholesale.

8. SYNTHESIS OF INDIGENOUS AND FOREIGN ELEMENTS

The Ilkhanid period (1256-1335 CE) was characterized by unprecedented cultural exchange facilitated by the Pax Mongolica, where architectural elements from across the Mongol Empire were synthesized with traditional Iranian forms. This table summarizes the main architectural monuments discussed in the paper, highlighting their key features and the specific Silk Road influences observed in each structure.

Monument	Location	Date of Construction	Patron	Key Architectural Features	Silk Road Influences
Soltaniyeh Dome	Zanjan Province	1305-1313 CE	Sultan Muhammad Öljeitü	- Double-shell dome construction- Octagonal plan with surrounding galleries- Perforated structure- 26m interior diameter, 2m thick walls	- Chinese ceramic production techniques- Cobalt pigments imported from Chinese-controlled regions- Dome construction techniques from across Mongol realm- Blue glazed ceramics (turquoise and cobalt)
Friday Mosque of Varamin	Varamin (42 km south of Tehran)	1322-1326 CE	Abu Sa'id	- Four-iwan mosque typology- Small courtyard relative to building size- Vertical emphasis with dome rising high- Low entrance portal and dome chamber portal	- Central Asian spatial concepts- Chinese motifs in stucco decoration (lotus flowers, cloud collar designs)- Geometric brick patterning showing Transoxianan influence- Limited blue palette tilework
Rabʿ-e Rashidi Complex	Tabriz	c. 1300 CE	Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah	- Comprehensive educational center- Integration of educational, production, and residential functions- Specialized workshops for paper	- Chinese institutional models adapted to Islamic requirements- Paper-making facilities using Chinese techniques- Library organization showing

				production- Sophisticated garden elements	Chinese practices- Garden design with Chinese water feature influence
Marand (Yam) Caravanserai	13 km north of Marand on Tabriz-Jolfa route	c. 1330 CE	Unknown	- Rectangular plan with ten bastions- Imposing entrance portal facing east- Foundation of large black stone blocks- Combination of brick and carved stone	- Syrian and Anatolian architectural influence- Complex geometric and floral patterns- Light and dark blue glazed tiles- Persian verse inscription (rare before 15th century)
Sarcham Caravanserai	Between Zanjan and Mianeh on Qazvin-Tabriz route	1332-1333 CE	Abu Sa'id (mentioned in inscription)	- Four iwans positioned along main axes- Corner bastions and vertical surfaces- Black stone construction for portal- Marble inscription	- Direct Syrian architectural influence- Design elements from Aleppo building- Distinctive narrow molding on outer edge of arch- Islamic inscription style
Sin (Isfahan) Caravanserai	21 km north of Isfahan	1321-1330 CE	Unknown (built by "Haji Muhammad from Saveh")	- Rectangular plan with entrance portal- Seven-sided entrance hall- Wooden beams positioned above portal- Incomplete decoration	- Traditional Iranian caravanserai design- Decorative craftsmen arrived after structural completion- Unusual combination of construction materials

Table 1: This synthesis demonstrates the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation in Ilkhanid architecture, showing how foreign influences enriched rather than replaced indigenous architectural traditions.

9. THE LEGACY OF ILKHANID ARCHITECTURAL COSMOPOLITANISM

The architectural synthesis of the Ilkhanid period had enduring effects that reached well beyond Iran. As Ajorloo observed, "The Azerbaijani architectural style, which flourished with the Tabriz School of Architecture, extended beyond Azerbaijan and the Ilkhanid era. With the establishment of political relations between the courts of Tabriz and Cairo, Mamluk architecture in Egypt was influenced by the Tabriz School." This influence continued into the Timurid period:

The transition from the Ilkhanid Empire to the Timurid dynasty marked a political shift rather than a deep cultural transformation. Artistic and cultural developments from the Ilkhanid period continued into the Timurid era, which was characterized by sustained dynamism and innovation. This cultural momentum eventually led to the flourishing of Safavid art and the rise of the Isfahan School, with architecture standing out as a key area where this vibrant continuity is most clearly reflected.

Timur and his successors, who valued art, sent numerous artists from Azerbaijan, especially Tabriz, to Transoxiana. As a result, Samarkand and Bukhara soon became "the bride of world cities." Many masterpieces, including the Bibi Khanum Congregational Mosque in Samarkand, the Goharshad Mosque in Mashhad, and the Aq Saray in Shahrisabz, were created in Greater Khorasan, based on the teachings of the Tabriz School.

In Mamluk Egypt, several architectural works were also constructed under the influence of the Tabriz School, such as the Mosque of Amir Qusun, the Mosque of Sultan Naser Mohammad, and the Sultan Hassan

Complex in Cairo.

This widespread influence demonstrates how the cosmopolitan synthesis achieved in Ilkhanid architecture served as a model for later architectural developments throughout the Islamic world, creating a legacy that transcended both the temporal and geographical limits of the Ilkhanid state.

10. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated how the Silk Road functioned as a critical vector for architectural exchange, transforming Iran's built environment through sustained intercultural dialogue. The architectural landscape that emerged from these exchanges was neither a simple importation of foreign models nor a rigid preservation of indigenous traditions. Rather, it represented a dynamic process of selection, adaptation, and synthesis that created distinctly cosmopolitan forms while maintaining cultural continuity.

The Ilkhanid period (1256-1335) stands as a remarkable testament to architectural innovation at the crossroads of civilizations. With Iran's integration into the vast Mongol Empire, unprecedented connections facilitated the movement of craftspeople, materials, technical knowledge, and aesthetic concepts across previously separated cultural spheres. The resulting monuments—from the magnificent double-shelled dome of Soltaniyeh to the sophisticated synthesis visible in the Friday Mosque of Varamin and the ambitious institutional complex of Rabʿ-e Rashidi—embodied this cosmopolitan exchange while remaining fundamentally rooted in Iranian architectural traditions.

Several key findings emerge from this analysis. First, architectural cosmopolitanism in Iran operated at multiple scales, from decorative details to structural systems to urban planning concepts. Second, the transmission of architectural knowledge along the Silk Road occurred through diverse mechanisms, including the movement of craftsmen, the circulation of pattern books and models, and the deliberate patronage choices of political elites. Third, cosmopolitan architecture served multiple social functions beyond aesthetic expression, including facilitating intercultural commerce, symbolizing political legitimacy, and negotiating religious and cultural differences.

The analysis of specific monuments reveals how Chinese ceramic technology transformed Iranian decorative programs, Central Asian mathematical principles influenced geometric ornament, and structural innovations from across Eurasia enabled new architectural possibilities. These influences were not merely superimposed on existing traditions but thoroughly integrated, creating works that maintained their distinctly Iranian character while incorporating diverse external elements.

The legacy of Silk Road cosmopolitanism in Iranian architecture offers valuable insights for contemporary discourse on globalization and cultural identity. It demonstrates that cultural exchange need not lead to homogenization but can instead foster distinctive hybrid forms that maintain connections to multiple traditions. It also reveals how built environments can facilitate intercultural understanding by creating shared spaces that accommodate diverse users while incorporating recognizable elements from multiple traditions.

The architectural synthesis achieved during the Ilkhanid period extended far beyond temporal and geographical boundaries, influencing subsequent developments in Timurid Central Asia and Mamluk Egypt. The "Tabriz School" that flourished during this period demonstrates how thoroughly these foreign influences were assimilated into the continuing development of Iranian architecture, creating a legacy that contributed to the magnificent achievements of later periods.

As Iran continues to negotiate its position within global networks of exchange, its rich history of architectural cosmopolitanism provides valuable precedents for balancing cultural continuity with openness to outside influence. The Ilkhanid era stands as a compelling example of how architecture can serve as both a material record of intercultural dialogue and an active agent in fostering new forms of cultural synthesis.

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements
Working Paper Series

COSMOPOLITANISM & TRADITION IN BALTIMORE CITY

Annamaria Borvice

ATTRIBUTES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF COSMOPOLITAN SPACES AS NEW TRADITION: COSMOPOLITANISM & TRADITION IN BALTIMORE CITY, MARYLAND

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This paper seeks to investigate the relationships between urban tradition and cosmopolitanism by examining architectural elements of Row Homes in the city of Baltimore, Maryland. Drawing on both research and first hand experience in real estate development through our company; Housing Development & Neighborhood Preservation Corporation (HDNPC), it is evident that Baltimore City is a hybrid built environment. Baltimore's cosmopolitanism, often overlooked, plays a significant role in shaping the city's evolving traditions. Insights from research and involvement in the revitalization of some of Baltimore's Row Houses further underscore the importance of such spaces in cultivating vibrant, dynamic communities. Ultimately this study will highlight key challenges and opportunities within the city, emphasizing the ways in which its hybrid architectural and communal design foster both urban tradition and cosmopolitanism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many underestimate the extent to which cosmopolitanism has shaped the evolving architectural traditions within Baltimore, Maryland. This essay examines the hybrid built environment of Baltimore focusing on its iconic, internationally influenced, Row Houses to explore the attributes and potential of cosmopolitan spaces as new traditions. It argues that cosmopolitanism in architecture is not solely about the makeup of a communal aesthetic, but also about how global influences are embedded within the built environment. By analyzing how architectural features and communal design reflect the city's identity, this paper contends that preserving and adapting urban traditions while fostering cosmopolitanism is key to Baltimore's future. Drawing on academic research and personal experience with the rehabilitation of the Row Houses in historic neighborhoods through our housing and development company; HDNPC, this essay investigates how this rehabilitation offers a model for balancing historical preservation with cosmopolitan transformation.

Cosmopolitan spaces refer to the environments that embody principles of cosmopolitanism (which will be further outlined and defined throughout this essay) through design, interaction, and social dynamics. In the realm of architecture and urban planning, cosmopolitanism has inspired the creation of spaces that are not only functional, but inclusive, adaptive, and reflective of various cultural identities. As cities become increasingly interconnected, the influence of cosmopolitan values is evident in the design of buildings and communities that transcend traditional boundaries, creating new traditions seen in Baltimore. These architectural innovations promote cultural integration, foster multicultural dialogue, and establish new/urban traditions that honor both global diversity and local heritage. This essay will explore further on how cosmopolitanism is driving the evolving designs within the architecture of Baltimore's row houses, and communal design, crafting spaces that serve as bridges between cultures while fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging. Finally, this paper explores how the row houses in Baltimore, as a distinct

architectural form, reflect both the challenges and opportunities of creating cosmopolitan spaces in multicultural contexts, balancing historical preservation, community identity, and urban transformation.

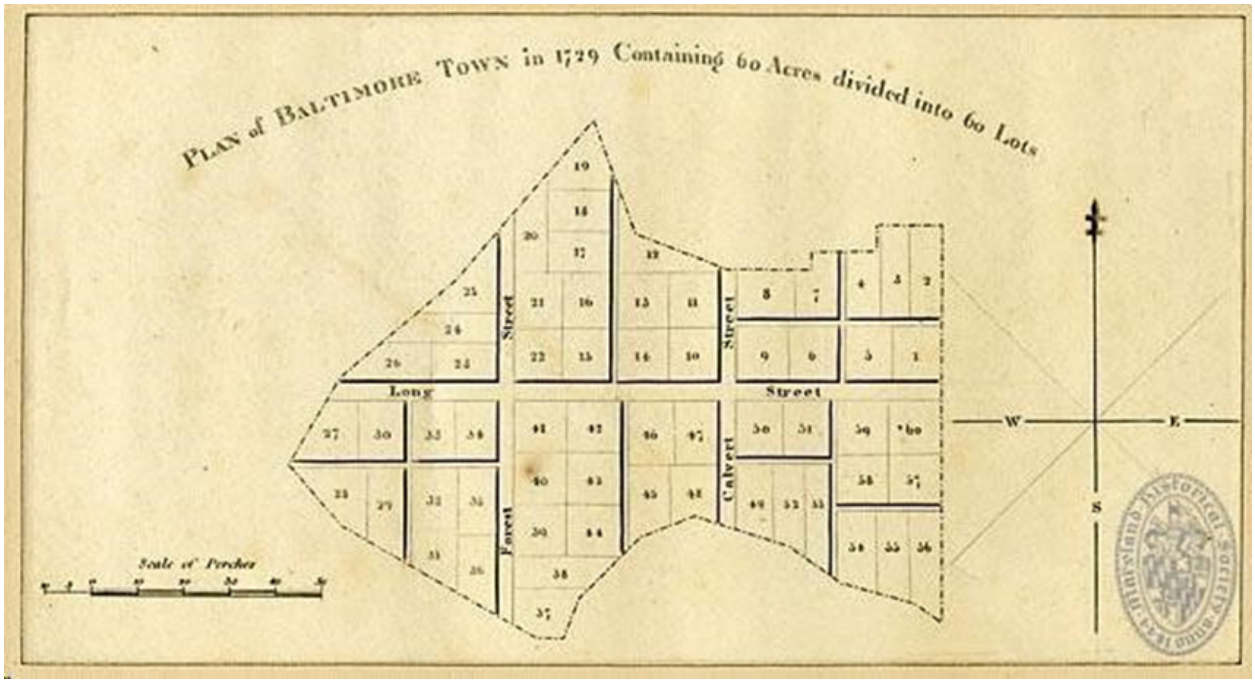

Fig. 1. Plan of Baltimore in 1729 containing 60 acres divided into 60 lots, ca 1823, MdHS, Hambleton Print Collection, H10.

> "This land that became "Baltimore Town" and over time, The City of Baltimore is a flourishing port city with a "cosmopolitan population and a wide range of urban amenities…"[1]

2. HISTORY OF BALTIMORE

Founded in 1729, Baltimore has long been a critical port city on the Chesapeake Bay, playing a vital role in the early economic development of the United States(fig.1). The rise of Baltimore began when Dr. John Stevenson, a prominent Baltimore physician and merchant, began shipping flour to Ireland. The success of this seemingly insignificant venture opened the eyes of many Baltimoreans to the City's most extraordinary advantage. The town exploded with energy, and Baltimoreans restructured the city's economy based on flour.[2] Baltimore eventually reached beyond Ireland to ports all over the world. The city saw rapid growth as immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and Italy arrived in search of work creating a foreign-born population.

The Industrial Revolution in the 19th century further transformed the city into a major center for manufacturing, steel, textiles, shipping, and more. This period of industrial expansion led to an influx of the working class and many settling in the row houses. The row houses were not only practical but reflected the

social hierarchy and growing urbanism/cosmopolitanism of the time. In 1816, when the population reached nearly 50,000 residents, Baltimore expanded its city limits, increasing its size from three to ten square miles. Land surveyor Thomas Poppleton expanded the city with a plan consisting of a gridiron street pattern. This set the motion for Baltimore's basic development pattern of various-sized row houses… catering to several economic classes, the larger streets held larger houses; the smaller streets held smaller houses; and the alleys held tiny houses for immigrants and laborers. These houses became the symbol of Baltimore's traditional housing style…In 1830 with its population of 80,000, Baltimore had become the second largest city in the United States. German settlers now made up a substantial part of this population.[3]

At the onset of World War I, the expansion of urban industrial jobs significantly influenced the Great Migration, prompting a surge in Baltimore's African American population. Many of these new arrivals were French-speaking immigrants from Santo Domingo, free and enslaved African Americans from the southern states, migrating by railroad up to Baltimore. Frederick Douglass (1817 - 1895), and Thurgood Marshall (1908 - 1993) though nearly a century apart are two of America's towering historical figures who serve as examples of black Baltimore personified. From early on, black Baltimoreans, slave and free, worked in the many industries that made the city a vital center of American commercial activity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[4] By 1820, Baltimore boasted the largest African American community in the nation, a title it retains today, with the highest percentage of African Americans among the top five cities in the United States. However, African Americans in Baltimore faced considerable challenges as they sought to integrate into the city's economic landscape. As one can imagine, the large and sudden influx of the black population during this time period was unsettling for most Baltimoreans. Free blacks were in direct competition with white workers for both skilled and unskilled jobs in the port economy, a situation that sometimes led to violence. In addition, African Americans faced severe housing shortages. As new waves of African American migrants arrived, already overcrowded neighborhoods became even more strained, and systemic discrimination ensured that little to no new housing was allocated to these growing communities.

Despite the hardships brought by World War I, the conflict also created new economic opportunities in Baltimore. The introduction of the eight-hour workday, the expansion of job opportunities for women, and the increase in skilled jobs for African Americans all contributed to the city's changing economic dynamics. By the early 20th century, another wave of African American migration led to the settlement of nearly half of the city's black population in Old West Baltimore[5]. Simultaneously, European communities that had immigrated centuries prior began expanding further north, creating an even more pronounced social divide. By the late nineteenth century within the concentrated African American community, as occupational diversity, population increase, and industrial development occurred, there was an intra-city migration to West Baltimore[6]. There they continued to nourish the institutions and organizations that had served them well in

the past. there flourished a vibrant diversity of black life and culture, enriching the cosmopolitan character of the area. Years later, the Great Depression struck Baltimore hard, leading to widespread economic despair as factories, banks, and businesses shuttered. By 1934, nearly 30,000 Baltimoreans were officially unemployed. Despite these setbacks, the city's population continued to grow, creating an increased demand for housing. The evolution of Baltimore's urban landscape, shaped by migration, economic shifts, and cultural transformation, set the stage for both challenges and opportunities in the years to come. Development started to pass City limits even further, and new suburbs were developed. In 1950, the population of Baltimore was approximately 950,000 people.[7]

Migrants from the south, looking for work and housing took a toll on Baltimore. In the south of the city, many Baltimore houses were cut up into small apartments, and the row houses were filled with multiple beds to house the overpopulated city[8]. Over time, Baltimore's population within the city limits began to steadily decline as residents sought housing in the surrounding counties and suburban areas. By the 1960s, the city's downtown shopping district and neighborhood main streets followed their customers to the suburbs. This shift reflected a broader trend of industries leaving the city, resulting in the abandonment of old, multi-story brick factories. As a consequence, many Baltimoreans were forced to relocate, with those unable to afford it left behind. Moreover, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Baltimore became one of the most violent and struggling cities in America, with many areas deteriorating to conditions similar to those found in rural, economically distressed regions. The city also faced health crises typical of impoverished urban environments, further exacerbating its challenges. Years later in 2017, Baltimore's population had fallen to just over 614,000[9]. This decline can be attributed to several factors, including the loss of key industries, shifts in the economy, and the rise of suburbanization.

Throughout the 1990s, Baltimore was the most drug-addicted city in the nation, a reputation that shaped its image nationwide. Moreover, it became notorious for high rates of deaths due to sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis, AIDS, and lead poisoning. For many years, public schools in Baltimore were underperforming, offering subpar education. However, as various industries thrived and employment grew, people flocked to the city for opportunities[10] at institutions like the Under Armor headquarters, Johns Hopkins University, and the University of Maryland. These have become powerful drivers for Baltimore's economic future. New neighborhoods and a housing development boom followed, with growth extending beyond the city limits into developing suburbs. Today, Baltimore stands as a leader among major cities in reducing violence, thanks to improved drug treatment programs, youth intervention efforts, and more effective policing. Violent crime has dropped by 40%[11], reaching its lowest point since the 1960s. The city has also doubled the number of people receiving drug treatment, from 11,000 to 25,000. The tide is turning, with noticeable progress in education as well. Baltimore is now a hub of creativity and innovation, as

entrepreneurs, musicians, artists, architects, engineers, researchers, and scientists contribute to moving the local economy forward.

Population Estimate (as of July 1)										
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
623,587	622,522	616,226	610,481	602,443	593,490	583,189	576,575	570,663	567,517	568,271

Elected for his second term as Mayor of Baltimore in December 2024, 27-year-old Brandon M. Scott stated:

> "Now, as a result of my administration's achievements a record-low number of vacant homes, a historic drop in violence, and billions being invested into our neighborhoods—we have finally stabilized our city's population. People can feel this progress. My administration will build on this momentum by continuing our work to promote public safety, accelerate equitable development, and protect our most vulnerable residents—making Baltimore a place that more people will be proud to call home."[12]

His goal is to attract more Black middle-income and immigrant families by increasing affordable housing opportunities and encouraging immigration to Baltimore. The history of Baltimore is deeply rooted in trade and commerce, which helped shape its social structure and contribute to its cosmopolitan character. This is evident in the city's architecture, particularly the row houses, which blend influences from European cosmopolitan cities with colonial American elements. As Baltimore grew, the design of mass-produced row houses, with their zero lot lines and repetitive architectural features, reflected a sense of appearance and social hierarchy. Today, Baltimore is experiencing a renaissance, becoming a city that is increasingly desirable and attracting new residents to replace the population it once had. The survival of a city largely depends on the vitality of its neighborhoods. In Baltimore, collaborative efforts between the city, State, developers, and local banks are working to prevent neighborhoods from deteriorating. Many of the housing units built during the city's population peak still stand. While some areas faced challenges such as economic stagnation, blight, and decline, targeted revitalization efforts are transforming these neighborhoods into vibrant, cosmopolitan spaces.

3. WHAT IS TRADITIONALISM?

Fig. 2. Scrubbing the White Marble Steps Baltimore, Maryland 1935 Photograph by A. Aubrey Bodine (1906-1970) Baltimore City Life Museum Collection Maryland Historical Society MC7849-2

Traditionalism can be defined as a practice or acknowledgment that emphasizes the importance of preserving a belief system or philosophy within a culture, community, religion, philosophy, politics, or in this case a city. Traditionalism protects traditional customs, values, practices, and institutions within these categories. It often stands in contrast to modernism and even in some cases cosmopolitanism. In different contexts, traditionalism can take on various forms. Specifically, within Baltimore, traditionalism came after cosmopolitanism as it was being established. New traditions are now seen, vividly in the housing because of many cultural contributions, resulting in a cosmopolitan city being formed and developed. Through research and first-hand experience when developing certain historical buildings in Baltimore, it is apparent that Maryland was a very diverse community, to begin with. Traditionalism is broadly concerned with a focus on the past of one's own group. Although any group can be the source of traditions, traditionalists most often focus on the past of their own large-scale groups, such as cultural, ethnic, national, and religious groups. Traditionalism can refer to both economic and social conservatism.[13]

While researching the history of Baltimore it is evident that immigrants from all over the world, specifically Europeans, made their mark early on through architecture, while Americans made their mark in trade, particularly in the flour and manufacturing industry. We can see this still being used today by Baltimore natives through new traditions; flour is now more recognized as the wheat that is used for their local beer[14]

being exported to surrounding cities and states. European architecture seen in certain housing is preserved to keep the tradition of those cosmopolitan designs and materials imported from Europeans, later explained in this essay in the "architectural evolution" of the row houses. In summary, traditionalism seeks to preserve and pass down established practices and values, often resisting change or modernization in favor of continuity and respect for the past. One of the primary examples of traditionalism in Baltimore is seen in the row houses. These buildings are not merely structures; they are repositories of the city's history, representing the lives of the working-class families who once inhabited them. Traditionalism in Baltimore is also evident in the city's commitment to maintaining its neighborhoods' character, where historical preservation and modern urban life coexist.

4. WHAT IS COSMOPOLITANISM?

Cosmopolitanism advocates for progress, innovation, and change. It is an idea that emphasizes that all people belong to a single community based on a shared morality. It stresses that the world is borderless[15]. It's a political and philosophical ideology that promotes equal respect and dignity for all people. Cosmopolitanism, and in this case cosmopolitan architecture, is still characterized by a combination of contemporary forms and sleek lines with a focus on functionality and minimalism through a united combination of cultures. The word by definition originates from the Greek word "cosmopolites", which means "citizen of the world". Cosmopolitanism, in contrast to traditionalism, refers to an outlook that promotes cultural diversity, and openness to international influences and change.

In the context of Baltimore, cosmopolitanism manifests itself in the city's diverse immigrant communities, and its international cultural exchange through art, food, and business including individualism, universalism, and multiculturalism. The relationship between cosmopolitanism and tradition is complex. On the one hand, cosmopolitanism encourages people to embrace and celebrate different cultures, which can lead to the preservation and revitalization of traditional practices and customs. On the other, critics argue that cosmopolitanism can undermine traditional cultures by promoting homogenized, globalized views and practices that challenge local traditions and identities. Yet many cosmopolitan cities have also found ways to balance the celebration of diversity with the preservation of traditional cultures.[16] Cities like Alexandria, Barcelona, San Francisco, Madrid, Baltimore, and more have substantial histories of cosmopolitanism, having been home to many different cultures and civilizations throughout time.

5. ROW HOUSE ORIGIN

Fig. 3. H. Furlong Baldwin Library, Maryland Center for History and Culture

Baltimore, Maryland, with its rich history and diverse population, offers a unique case study for understanding the intersection of cosmopolitanism and traditionalism. At the heart of this exploration is the row house, an iconic element of the city's architectural landscape. The row houses were developed in Baltimore in the early 1700s when immigrants needed quick and cheap housing (Fig.3). The Robert Long House is the oldest row house in Baltimore, Maryland, and dates back to 1765. It's considered one of the oldest buildings in Baltimore.[17] The incorporation of foreign materials and architectural forms in the row houses created a hybrid space that reflects both the historical complexity and the multicultural possibilities of modern urban living. These modest yet elegant structures resemble Baltimore's working-class past while providing a foundation for the city's evolving cosmopolitan identity. As Baltimore transitions into the 21st century, the role of row houses has become increasingly central in the conversation about the city's tradition. architectural evolution, urban development, and social fabric.

The row house originated as a practical and efficient solution to the urbanization of American cities in the 19th century. As cities like Baltimore grew rapidly, driven by industrialization and immigration, the demand for affordable housing skyrocketed. The row house, a series of attached homes that share common walls, was an ideal response to this need for space-efficient, cost-effective housing.[18] The homes became a defining

feature of the city's "traditional" architecture. Early row houses were built with local brick and featured simple, functional designs. These homes were typically small, with narrow frontages, but they maximized the use of available land. As the city's wealth grew, so did the design of the row house as explained previously in the "*History of Baltimore*". By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, row houses in Baltimore incorporated more elaborate architectural elements, such as bay windows, cornices, and decorative ironwork, reflecting the city's growing middle class and changing social dynamics. Row houses, though first originating in Europe and brought to Baltimore and cities alike, are easy to identify among modernized and industrial city architecture. Their style is commonly seen throughout cities in the US maintaining original colonial and European elements while inhabiting modern day families.

6. HDNPC DEVELOPMENTAL EXPERIENCE

Fig. 4, 5. Exterior & Interior of Row homes before HDNPC Henneman Ave. Baltimore, Maryland

Fig. 5. Exterior of Row homes before HDNPC Henneman Ave. Baltimore, Maryland

This case study acknowledges the first-hand experience in a portion of the historical rehabilitation within the city of Baltimore through our company HDNPC.

The Housing Development & Neighborhood Preservation Corporation is an established organization, incorporated in 1978 in San Francisco, California. We are a recognized, non-profit entity with a track record of 40 years of housing and community development. We have an office in the City of Baltimore and have been working with the City's Vacant to Value program for over three years. Our project in Baltimore is the historic renovation of 17 row houses (Figs 4, 5, 6.) and one vacant lot. Along with the vast and highly specialized experience of developing residential and commercial real estate through rehabilitation and new construction. We discussed our project with a local developer who is undertaking a large neighboring historic rehabilitation of a commercial space.[19] Our joint efforts in homing in on a concentrated part of the city will complement each other with our individual projects, boosting neighborhood transition. It is important to note that the development of these row houses is best suited near an anchoring commercial entity. From there, the residential component can be concentrated in small waves so that the commercial and residential are both mutually benefitting from each other (Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. Hoen Building and Henneman Avenue Row Houses

The traditional legacy of Baltimore's iconic row houses plays a pivotal role in shaping the city's cosmopolitan character. The preservation and rehabilitation of these historic spaces offer critical opportunities to bridge the past and the present, enriching the urban landscape. By examining the global influences embedded in Baltimore's architecture, we gain a deeper appreciation for how hybrid built environments can foster cosmopolitanism and give rise to new traditions. In recent years, there has been a resurgence in the occupancy of these once-neglected homes that we are offering for sale. Before, these houses were neglected and ignored. With growing recognition of their unique value—value that cannot be replicated in terms of style or material. This renewed appreciation is the result of both governmental acknowledgment of the decay and the support of private financing sources. Moreover, developers willing to take on the challenges of restoring these structures create opportunities for the revitalization of some of the most deteriorated homes in these often-overlooked neighborhoods. Through these efforts, the city not only preserves its traditional heritage but also redefines its future through a dynamic, cosmopolitan lens.

Henneman Avenue has suffered from decades of disinvestment, with approximately 12% of Baltimore's vacant row houses concentrated in this small area. The current average size of these row homes is approximately 960 square feet. However, through our rehabilitation efforts, we have modernized these homes to meet the needs of today's homeowners. By excavating the basement level and adding a legal floor, we have increased the square footage to over 1,300 square feet, significantly enhancing the living space and functionality of each unit.

HDNPC has been fortunate to receive financial assistance through various city and state award programs, with our organization being one of the few to be selected for funding aimed at row house rehabilitation. Additionally, we have secured preliminary approval for tax credits through the City's CHAP program. This will further support affordability for homeowners, as the credits will help reduce monthly mortgage and tax payments over an extended period. The project has garnered strong support from the neighborhood, as well as from both the City and State, which underscores its importance to the community. By prioritizing rehabilitation over new development, we are ensuring that current residents are not displaced while revitalizing a long-established but deteriorating neighborhood. This aligns with both cosmopolitan and traditional values, balancing the preservation of historic character with the demand for modern, sustainable living spaces. Moreover, our efforts will contribute positively to the surrounding area, especially as the expansion of the Hopkins Campus continues. The rehabilitation will provide new housing opportunities for individuals who work or live nearby, fostering a diverse, integrated community.

Importantly, this project will also create local jobs, benefiting Baltimore residents directly. In this way, it represents a true "community project" — one that not only restores physical infrastructure but also strengthens the social fabric of the area. By transforming vacant lots and homes into viable, functioning spaces, HDNPC, with the assistance of the city, is helping to turn around a neglected neighborhood. Homeowners will be able to enjoy the benefits of a revitalized, sustainable living environment. In addition, we have received approval from 'One House at A Time,' a city agency responsible for administering the bidding, purchase, and receivership of privately owned homes. As a result, we intend to purchase the remaining homes on Henneman Avenue not included in the Vacant to Value acquisition program, further extending our rehabilitation efforts and solidifying our commitment to the ongoing improvement of this community.

We understand the importance of the row house history in Baltimore and how they represent very important architectural elements in contrast to new construction. By preserving the row houses, we are continuing to pass on the history and legacy of Baltimore's past to future buyers. We are not replacing a neighborhood…we are rebuilding it. The construction methodology is dictated by the Maryland Historic Trust and the City's Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) strict construction guidelines for historic preservation and beautification. Since the properties on 2200 blocks of Henneman and Prentiss Place are located within the Baltimore East/Clifton Park National Register Historic District, the rehabilitation work must conform to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic properties to preserve the historic elements of each individual home. For example, existing windows and doors will be repaired if salvageable. For windows/doors that are missing or beyond repair, they will be replaced with new windows/doors that match the old in design, materials, and appearance as closely as possible. The public and

community input received on our project has been positive. Not only is community support evidenced through rebuilding the neighborhoods via the Vacant to Value program but also evidenced by feedback from other community real estate development corporations, and local economic development corporations. Additionally, while touring the blighted sights, several residents on Henneman Avenue inquired as to what we were doing. We let them know that we were in the process of acquiring the vacant buildings and rebuilding them. They were enthusiastic about our ideas, and one resident even stated, "I hope you can really do it."

Fig. 8. Interior & Exterior of Row Houses after HDNPC Rehabilitation Baltimore, Maryland

7. ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION

Over the decades, the row houses in Baltimore underwent several transformations. Early row houses were utilitarian, built quickly to house the growing working-class population. These homes typically consisted of two or three stories, with narrow facades and minimal ornamentation. As the city prospered, however, these buildings became more decorative, reflecting more sophisticated design trends, influenced by Victorian, Federal, and Italianate styles creating a cosmopolitan yet traditional space. Its traditional appeal can be seen in the colonial red brick[20], and white marble from Italy[21], together becoming cosmopolitan. Materials and other design details can be seen, such as dental and crown moldings, finials, and corbels are all traditional elements. All were first seen used in European architecture then carried overseas and brought to Baltimore. Featured advancements like intricate cornices, and large windows, can be found in some of the later and even current row houses. However, the 20th century brought a decline in the construction of new row houses, as the suburbanization of the United States led to the development of single-family homes on lots.

In the early 21st century, there was a resurgence of interest in row house restoration seen within multiple cities across the US, driven in part by gentrification and efforts to preserve Baltimore's historical heritage. As stated, in the HDNPC rehabilitation program, it was necessary to follow the Historical Guidelines within Baltimore. Many of the architectural elements that were original to the design of the row house must be followed. This means that they have to be restored or recreated using like materials as shown in the rehabilitation. Although this may add cost to the construction, and an elevated skill level by the contractor, the end result will be a replica as close to the original builder's intent. Thus, the preservation of the original character is maintained. The rehabilitation of row houses is very expensive in comparison to demolition and new construction due to the fact that everyone involved in the project has to work within a historical guideline which is more difficult than designing something new. This work has to be done within the confines of the new building codes as well.

Although this method is more expensive and difficult, it is supportive of the City's sustainable plan, as well as connecting the past and present. This architectural evolution highlights how row houses have adapted to meet the changing needs of Baltimore's population by blending historical styles with modern functionality. Today, row houses in Baltimore range from modest, affordable homes to high-end, luxury residences, reflecting the city's ongoing transformation into a cosmopolitan urban center. The rehabilitation of Baltimore's row houses—one of the city's most iconic architectural forms—provides a clear example of how new traditions can emerge through a cosmopolitan blend of preservation and innovation. These architectural features not only connect the past with the present but also reflect broader patterns of globalization, colonialism, and post-colonial architectural practices. The row house, with its simple, symmetrical design and brick facades, reflects a time when architectural style was driven by necessity rather than luxury. While these homes must adhere to strict historical preservation guidelines during rehabilitation, the materials and designs themselves are a testament to the cosmopolitan influences that have shaped Baltimore's identity over time.

8. CREATING COSMOPOLITAN SPACES

Within research, creating cosmopolitan spaces in Baltimore involves integrating modern needs and global and cultural influences into the city's traditional fabric. This process can be seen in the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, the revitalization of neighborhoods, immigration within and outside of the US, export and import, and the transformation of old row houses into contemporary living spaces. With the already traditional foundation Baltimore has adapted throughout its history, the new cultures and global influences that keeps Baltimore evolving with the times. These efforts aim to preserve Baltimore's architectural heritage while accommodating the demands of a globalized, diverse community. Cosmopolitan spaces are marked by flexibility, inclusivity, and openness. In Baltimore, this is evident in the way new development blends

seamlessly with older architectural styles. For example, contemporary design elements like glass facades, open floor plans, and environmentally sustainable building practices are integrated into row houses and other historical structures. The result is a built environment that acknowledges its past while preparing for the future. Although Baltimore's "traditional foundation" was built by cosmopolitan spaces through immigration, the city keeps evolving with other diversities adding to the cosmopolitan space. Baltimore already had deep-rooted traditions, and those traditions keep evolving to create cosmopolitan spaces. From food and drink, music, manufacturing, hospitality, etc. throughout Maryland, Baltimore has embraced its new traditions to coexist within the cosmopolitan space.

Conceptualization of cosmopolitan cities usually are explained as urban areas whose cultures emphasize values including autonomy, freedom, egalitarianism, and mutual respect…Cosmopolitan cities typically tend to be centers of diversity and open-mindedness. These opportunities are often associated with the high-tech information industry, research and development, arts, fashion, media, and the music businesses. At the same time, precisely because these opportunities are relatively independent of people's socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds…the risk of taking on such opportunities can be substantial. In short, cosmopolitan spaces provide opportunities for wealth, success, freedom, egalitarianism, and diversity. People oriented toward independence rather than interdependence value individual success, autonomy, universalism, and uniqueness, independently (vs. interdependently) oriented people should prefer cosmopolitan cities as residential destinations[22].

9. OPPORTUNITY

Specifically, within Baltimore, the city is a goldmine for growth. It has its foundational traditions, some still celebrated and/or recognized today, however, with certain losses, come gains. There are many opportunities in Baltimore to not only be recognized as a cosmopolitan city with urban tradition but to become a safe and wealthy port city again. Situated geographically with four seasons, on the water between the US West Coast and Europe, the blending of traditionalism and cosmopolitanism in Baltimore presents numerous opportunities. The city's rich architectural history offers a solid foundation for urban revitalization. The preservation of row houses can serve as a model for sustainable development, as these buildings are often more energy-efficient than newer constructions due to their compact design and use of durable materials. The preservation of the row houses alone creates connection, and an opportunity to build a closer community through shared walls and lots, it can foster social interaction and cultural exchange. With every hybrid built environment, you will face both opportunities and problems that arise daily. The opportunities are social and global cohesion through integrated design, creative and cultural expression through diverse architectural forms, economic growth driven by multicultural communities contributing to globalized cities,

business in trade, international influence in culture, language, and education, job opportunities, and more. The city can use its row houses to foster a greater community engagement and pride while encouraging international collaboration in business and the arts. The rise of creative industries and tech hubs in neighborhoods throughout Baltimore, and the recent influx of young professionals provide opportunities to integrate contemporary design while maintaining the traditional urban fabric. Furthermore, Baltimore's diverse population and cosmopolitan atmosphere create opportunities for cultural exchange, economic development, and social inclusion.

10. CHALLENGES

During Baltimore's formative years of the newly formed republic, American cities were a destination for those seeking social and economic advancement in the "land of opportunity" and Baltimore was no exception[23]. Despite the many opportunities, there are significant challenges to balancing tradition and cosmopolitanism in the same space. With evolution comes a loss of tradition if not preserved as well as economic challenges Baltimore faced in the past being carried into the present. As cities, spaces, and cultures evolve, tradition gets lost. Specifically in Baltimore, there are many feared areas due to social inequality, and economic instability problems that can in part be attributed to deindustrialization. With a city that is roughly 62% black, the international foundation and traditions that have been upheld for decades are slowly disappearing, which is an obvious challenge within a cosmopolitan space. The risk of cultural dilution or marginalization of specific groups, the tension between globalized and local needs, and the challenge of designing spaces that are truly inclusive rather than exclusive are all challenges Baltimore and cosmopolitan cities alike face.

Although this may not always be considered a problem in an evolving cosmopolitan city, it is still important to recognize the city for what it was so that it can be recognized for what it now is. Gentrification, while bringing economic revitalization, often displaces long-time residents and changes the character of the historically working-class neighborhoods. The preservation of row houses and other historic buildings also poses practical challenges, as these structures often require expensive restoration work to meet modern building codes and environmental standards. It is evident that challenges may be the loss of attributes of the original tradition, risk of cultural division, social hierarchy, and economic divide as seen during the great migration period and the depression. Additionally, the tension between maintaining a cosmopolitan identity and retaining the city's unique local culture can be difficult to navigate. While globalization brings new influences and opportunities, it can also lead to the homogenization of the urban landscape, eroding the distinct character that makes Baltimore unique. This requires careful planning to ensure that Baltimore's

historical identity remains intact even as the city evolves into a global urban center. Baltimoreans identified the three most pressing challenges in the city as drug addiction, crime, and urban blight.[24]

11. CONCLUSION

Throughout this essay, and more importantly, throughout history, Baltimore's row houses are not merely a physical manifestation of its past but also a living part of its present and future. These structures embody the city's historical roots while providing a foundation for cosmopolitanism and global engagement. Through the careful integration of tradition and modernity, Baltimore has the opportunity to create an environment that celebrates its cultural diversity and architectural heritage. As the city continues to grow, the tension between cosmopolitanism and tradition will undoubtedly shape its identity, but with thoughtful preservation and innovation, Baltimore can maintain its unique character while embracing the future. Cosmopolitanism encompasses a position of openness toward the ideas and traditions of other cultures and historical movements as global inclusion. Therefore, a 'cosmopolitan community' is not necessarily needed to create a 'cosmopolitan built environment', but rather the influence and materials carried over to create one. A diverse population, with a global perspective, can exist in place, but the physical design and infrastructure of that space might not actively reflect or facilitate that diversity, requiring deliberate design choices to create a truly cosmopolitan built environment.

With every hybrid built environment, the attributes and opportunities of cosmopolitan spaces as new traditions in Baltimore City, Maryland are evident in this essay and throughout personal developmental experience. A cosmopolitan community can maintain its identity by being active towards embracing and celebrating diversity, fostering open dialogue across different cultures, promoting shared values of global citizenship, and emphasizing individual responsibility to the outer world, rather than solely relying on a single nationality or ethnic identity. Essentially, cosmopolitan spaces as new traditions thrive on the interconnectedness and shared humanity of their members despite their diverse backgrounds. Our work at HDNPC has resurrected a neighborhood via the combination of taking a design from a historical era and merging it with new traditions in modern building practices. Thus far the popularity of these two worlds has been well accepted and this upward trend of embracing traditional cosmopolitanism seems to create a new tradition of its own.

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

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RECLAIMING ALEXANDRIA'S COSMOPOLITAN TRADITIONS: NAVIGATING THE TENSION BETWEEN PROVINCIALISM AND URBAN HERITAGE

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RECLAIMING ALEXANDRIA'S COSMOPOLITAN TRADITIONS: NAVIGATING THE TENSION BETWEEN PROVINCIALISM AND URBAN HERITAGE

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This paper critically examines the transformation of Alexandria from a historically cosmopolitan Mediterranean city into a contested urban landscape marked by provincialism, heritage erosion, and fragmented identity. Anchored in a multi-scalar analysis, the study traces Alexandria's urban evolution across four key historical intervals (1936–1960, 1960–1973, 1974–2010, and 2011–present), each characterized by distinct socio-political shifts and spatial reconfigurations. Central to this investigation is the tension between cosmopolitanism, defined by openness, diversity, and cultural hybridity, and provincialism, characterized by homogenization, insularity, and centralized planning.

Employing a triangulated qualitative methodology—comprising phenomenological observation, archival investigation, and autoethnographic reflection—the paper presents a structured framework of nine interrelated parameters that span cultural, institutional, and spatial dimensions. These include migration and diversity, governance, economic structure, cultural identity, planning practices, and sustainable mobility. Through these lenses, the research highlights how both top-down policies and unregulated bottom-up growth have eroded Alexandria's pluralistic character, particularly in its waterfront, old city centers, and civic spaces.

Rather than romanticizing a lost past, the study proposes the concept of futuristic nostalgia—a mode of urban thinking that integrates historical memory into progressive spatial development. By situating Alexandria as a palimpsest of intersecting identities and contested futures, the paper offers a model for reimagining postcolonial urban heritage in the Global South. It concludes by advocating for locally grounded yet culturally open urban strategies that balance memory, identity, and inclusive growth.

1. INTRODUCTION

Alexandria—once hailed as a beacon of Mediterranean cosmopolitanism—has endured profound transformations that continue to reshape its cultural, architectural, and spatial identity. Revered for its complex urban heritage and cross-cultural exchanges, the city historically thrived as a hub of intellectual dynamism, pluralism, and spatial openness. Its identity emerged from a convergence of layered histories: Greco-Roman architecture, Ottoman urban customs, colonial infrastructure, and modernist planning interventions. However, contemporary Alexandria increasingly exists in the shadow of this past, challenged by rapid urbanization, weak heritage governance, and a persistent nostalgia that obscures actionable futures.

While literary works and historical portrayals celebrate Alexandria's pluralistic grandeur, they risk presenting a selective memory—a romanticized urban ghost that may never have fully existed in practice. The dissonance between this imagined cosmopolitanism and the city's lived realities reflects deeper structural issues, including centralized planning lacking participatory frameworks, unchecked informal expansion, and socio-political shifts prioritizing homogeneity over inclusion. These forces have contributed to the erosion of Alexandria's

distinctive urban character, especially within its waterfront, city center, expanding peripheries, and older districts.

This research confronts a fundamental paradox: Can Alexandria reclaim its layered identity while adapting to the present and future? Is cosmopolitanism a viable urban goal, or does its resurrection risk displacing local identities and producing a superficial cultural veneer? Addressing these questions requires critically re-evaluating Alexandria's spatial transformation, evolving governance, and the cultural narratives that continue to define its urban imaginary.

This paper examines the tensions between cosmopolitanism and provincialism in Alexandria's urban trajectory by engaging with architecture, planning history, personal memory, and cultural discourse. It offers a historically grounded and forward-looking inquiry into how spatial and cultural practices shape, preserve, or undermine the urban identity of a city long caught between memory and modernity, see Figure 1.

Fig. 1: illustrates Alexandria's historic city center, highlighting key tourist attractions. The street network is color-coded based on a space syntax analysis, indicating accessibility levels: reddish tones represent highly accessible streets, while bluish tones indicate more segregated areas. As shown, the red zones correspond to the city's most vibrant streets, whereas the blue areas are predominantly residential.

The research aims to explore how the interplay between cosmopolitanism and provincialism has shaped Alexandria's urban identity across key historical intervals, evaluating the spatial, cultural, and policy-based transformations that influenced its decline or preservation. It investigates how top-down urban planning approaches, characterized by a lack of public participation and uncontrolled bottom-up urban growth, have contributed to the neglect, densification, and erosion of Alexandria's distinctive character. The study will analyze architectural and spatial transformations across distinct political-economic phases, assess how governance, policy, and demographic shifts influenced the city's cosmopolitan character and spatial form, examine literary, archival, and personal narratives that shaped both the imaginary and tangible heritage of Alexandria as a cosmopolitan city, and propose integrated strategies for heritage conservation, sustainable development, and cultural inclusivity amid ongoing urban pressures.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research integrates three complementary methodological approaches that align with the historical and observational data available:

Phenomenological Engagement with Urban Space: Through extensive observational walks and spatial immersion, this method captures how public life, urban morphology, and architectural fabric reflect the remnants or transformations of cosmopolitan culture. Neighborhoods such as Port Said Street, Fouad Street, and Cleopatra El Hamamate serve as critical lenses to observe spatial rhythms and transformations from proximity.

Archival Investigation: Historical newspaper archives, including planning proposals, policy changes, and media narratives, are analyzed to reconstruct how urban planning decisions shaped Alexandria's shifting identity. These are juxtaposed with contemporary media coverage and civic campaigns (e.g., Save Alex) that document recent demolitions and urban activism[1]

Autoethnographic Reflection: The researcher’s experiences as an Alexandrian, blended with family oral histories and professional architectural insights, establish the study in a lived urban memory. Personal encounters with foreign educators, visits to historic villas, and transitions observed in key urban corridors provide a critical lens to narrate Alexandria’s spatial evolution from within.

This triangulated methodology combines subjective insight with historical objectivity and spatial evidence while recognizing the lack of direct stakeholder interviews, which is one of the main limitations of this paper.

3. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK: COSMOPOLITANISM VS. PROVINCIALISM

Svetlana Boym's (2001) distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia offers an important theoretical lens. While restorative nostalgia aims to reconstruct a lost home through a singular, idealized narrative, reflective nostalgia lingers on fragments, embraces ambivalence, and encourages critical engagement with memory. Alexandria's evolving identity aligns more closely with the latter, where the city's past is not merely revived but interrogated and reinterpreted as part of a dynamic urban future. This perspective resonates with the concept of "futuristic nostalgia" developed in this paper, wherein memory is not romanticized but used reflectively to inform inclusive urban strategies[2].

Cosmopolitanism is a multifaceted concept encompassing political, moral, and cultural dimensions[3]. It is rooted in ideals of universalism, inclusivity, and intercultural dialogue. In Alexandria, cosmopolitanism was historically expressed through diverse social groups coexisting within a shared urban space, an openness to global ideas, and a material culture that reflected architectural hybridity and spatial pluralism[4]. In contrast, provincialism emphasizes local identity, often manifesting as a defensive mechanism in response to external pressures or as a reactionary mode of nationalism[5].

Cultural, critical, and rooted cosmopolitanisms offer supplementary perspectives to expand previously discussed conventional definitions. Canbakal (2022) defines cultural cosmopolitanism as a "practiced disposition of openness to the communal Other,"[6] reflected in Alexandria's Ottoman-era hybridity and shared civic spaces. As introduced by Walkowitz and explored by Zaydan and Futayha (2018), critical cosmopolitanism highlights the subversive, anti-hegemonic qualities of cosmopolitan identity in postcolonial contexts[7]—useful in assessing Alexandria's literary and spatial narratives. Meanwhile, rooted cosmopolitanism, as articulated by Appiah (2020), emphasizes the balance between global openness and local attachment[8], aligning with Alexandria's geographic and cultural duality. These frameworks offer additional nuance in evaluating how Alexandrian cosmopolitanism evolved, was contested, and may be reimagined in future policies.

This study considers cosmopolitanism not just as a nostalgic ideal but as a spatial and cultural condition historically rooted in the city's planning, architecture, migration trends, and social life. Provincialism is thus viewed both as a result of modern urban policies and as a reaction to anxieties induced by globalization[9, 10].

3.1. Preliminary Archival Survey and Visual Mapping

As part of the methodological foundation, an initial exploratory survey was conducted through a rapid review of archival newspaper records. This review sought to preliminarily identify major historical events that may

have transformed Alexandria's urban and cultural landscape. Rather than serving as an exhaustive catalog of all occurrences, this survey provided a high-level overview of recurring themes and influential forces, categorized into four key domains: economic, religious, political, and cultural events.

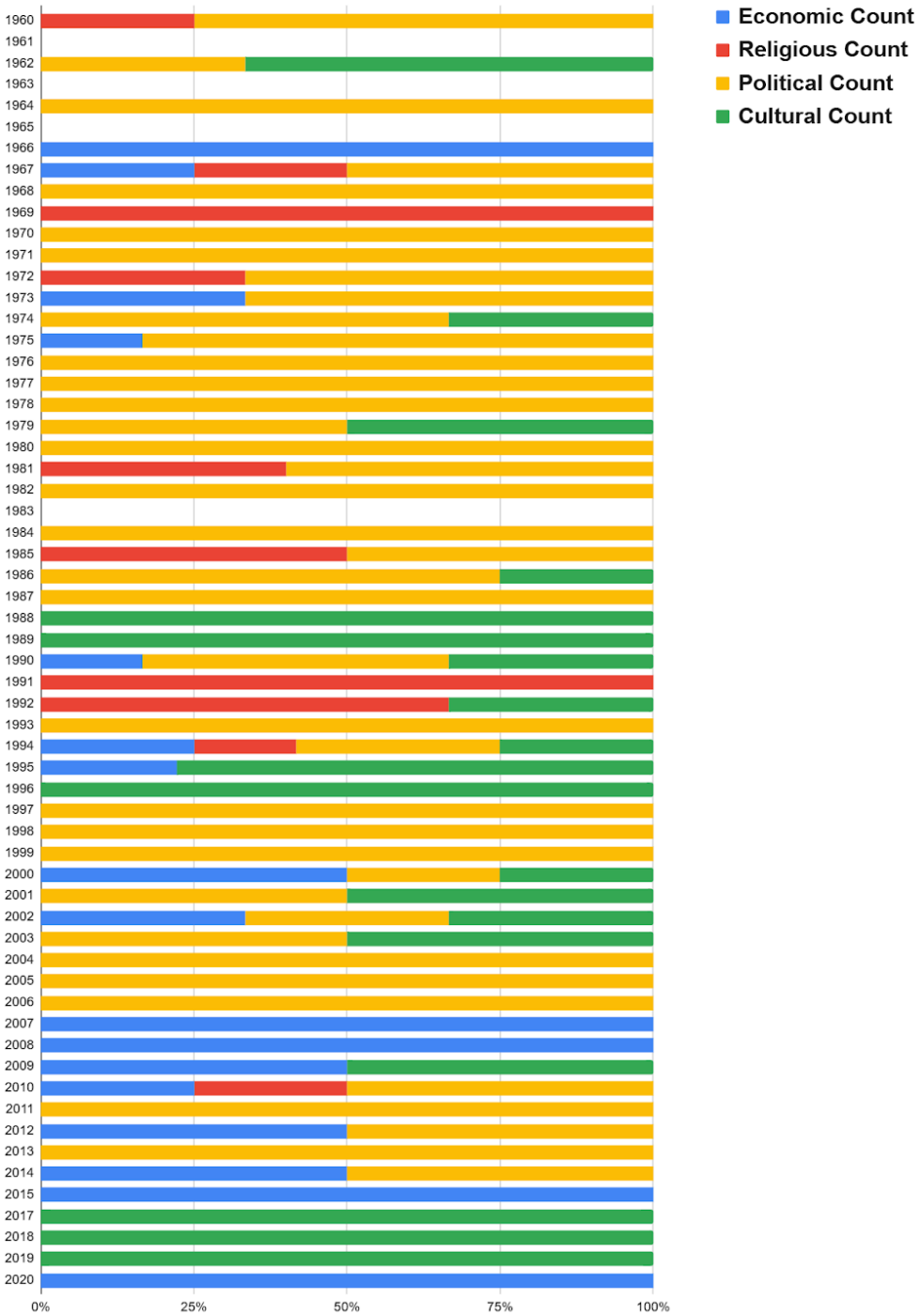

Fig. 2: Preliminary visual survey of events influencing Alexandria's transformation (1960–2019), categorized by domain. The relative predominance of political events suggests their potential role as the most persistent driver of structural and socio-cultural shifts.

The result of this initial scan is visualized in Figure 2, which offers a comparative yearly distribution of events across these domains. The graphic illustrates patterns and temporal concentrations that may align with shifts in urban governance, identity formation, and socio-cultural transformation. Notably, a preliminary observation of the chart suggests that political events appear to be the most consistently dominant factor, potentially exerting the greatest influence on Alexandria's structural and cultural transitions over time.

This preliminary mapping served as an orienting framework for identifying recurring pressures and their overlaps with the cosmopolitan/provincial parameters outlined later in the paper. It also helped structure the chronological segmentation used in the historical framework.

Importantly, this exercise is not intended to serve as a definitive historiographic tool but as a diagnostic lens—a way to visually contextualize patterns of influence over time that merit deeper examination through qualitative and phenomenological methods applied in subsequent sections.

3.2. Parameters of Cosmopolitanism and Provincialism

To better understand the interplay between cosmopolitanism and provincialism in Alexandria, this study identifies nine critical parameters that frame the city's transformation over time. These dimensions serve as conceptual tools to assess how specific urban, social, and policy dynamics have evolved across the four historical periods. Each parameter represents a key factor influencing either cosmopolitan openness or provincial retreat and informs the subsequent analysis.

A. Cultural and Social Dimensions

- Migration and Diversity: Influx of diverse populations from various ethnic, cultural, and national backgrounds—historically encompassing Greeks, Italians, Jews, Armenians, and more—contributed to Alexandria's pluralistic ethos[11, 12, 13].
- Cultural Openness: A defining feature of Alexandria's urban life historically, this parameter examines the city's capacity to embrace diversity, host intercultural encounters, and support freedom of expression[14, 18].
- Cultural Identity: Examines how creativity, cultural heritage, and artistic exchange shape urban experiences and foster belonging within a cosmopolitan milieu[13, 16].
- Active Old City Centers: Spaces like Mansheya and Attarin represent cultural and economic cores where heritage and cross-cultural engagement once flourished and where reactivation strategies could promote renewed urban identity[17, 18, 19].

B. Policy and Institutional Dimensions

- Governance and Policy: Policies that either supported pluralistic integration or centralized control have significantly impacted how diversity and identity were managed across time[20, 21].
- Economic Factors: Alexandria's status as a major port city and trade hub once enabled economic cosmopolitanism. However, economic liberalization and infrastructural volatility have also contributed to spatial inequality and selective development[22].

C. Spatial and Environmental Dimensions

- Urban Planning: This includes spatial integration, access to public spaces, green areas, and the ability of planning frameworks to preserve heritage and guide controlled growth[23, 24, 25].
- Urban Densities: While moderate densities can promote vitality and economic activity, uncontrolled vertical growth—especially post-2011—has contributed to overcrowding and reduced social and spatial diversity[26, 27, 28].
- Sustainable Mobility: Transportation systems that promote accessibility and inclusivity—such as tramways, pedestrian networks, and electric buses—are key indicators of urban openness and connectivity[29, 30].

These parameters will be referenced throughout the historical and analytical sections of the paper, providing a conceptual structure to evaluate how Alexandria's cosmopolitan legacy has been preserved, undermined, or transformed over time, see Figure 3.

3.3. Temporal Phases of Urban Transformation

The intervals—1936-1960, 1960-1973, 1974-2010, and 2011 to the present—are justified by their alignment with significant political and economic shifts in Egypt's history, each uniquely influencing Alexandria's cosmopolitan condition:

- 1936-1960: Transition from a cosmopolitan monarchy to a nationalist republic, marked by the revolution and the Suez Crisis.
- 1960-1973: Reflects the height of Nasser's nationalist and socialist policies, culminating in the 1973 war.
- 1974-2010: Encompasses economic liberalization and stability under Sadat and Mubarak, fostering a cosmopolitan resurgence.
- 2011-Present: Represents the post-revolutionary era, featuring new social and political dynamics that reshape diversity.

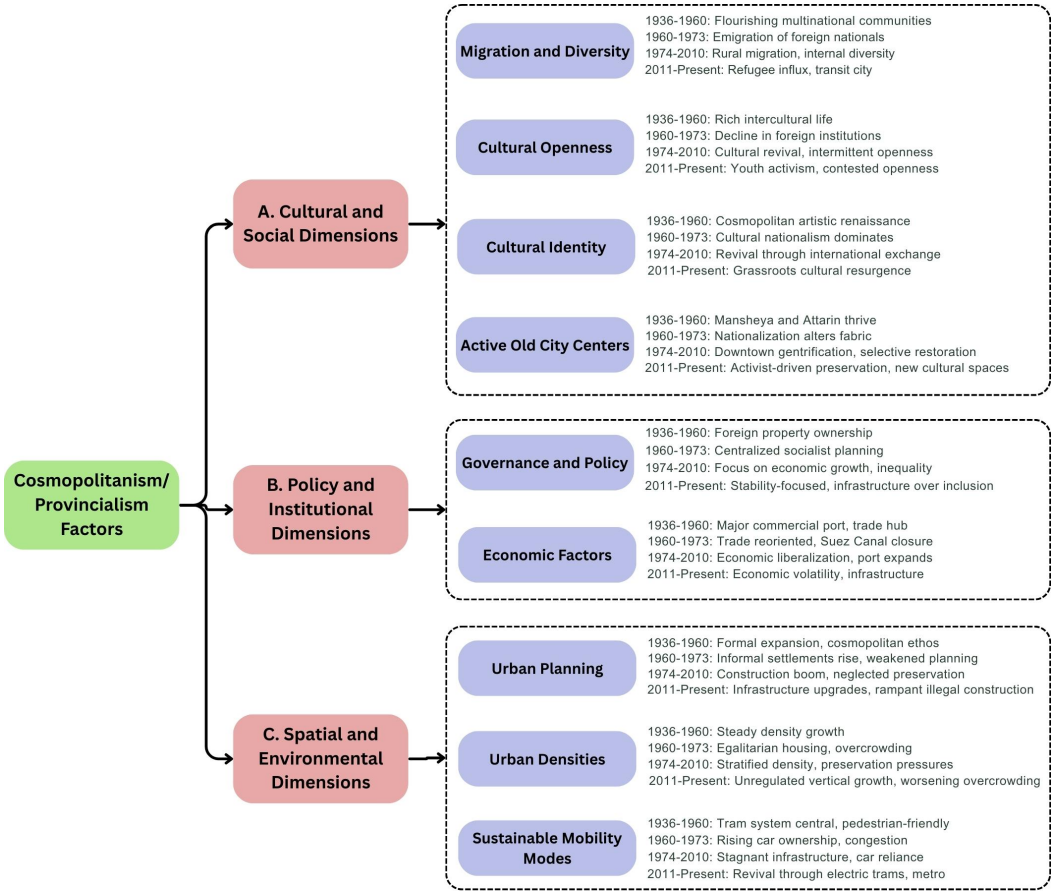

Fig. 3: shows the main parameters of cosmopolitanism and provincialism that are examined across different temporal phases of urban transformation.

These periods enable a comparative analysis of how governance, policy, and historical events have molded Alexandria's cosmopolitan character over time, providing a robust framework for academic exploration, see Figure 1.

1936–1960: Alexandria's cosmopolitan peak, marked by the coexistence of multinational communities (Greeks, Italians, Armenians, Jews, and Levantines), thriving artistic networks, and architectural diversity in areas like Attarin and Raml Station. Cultural and economic life was enriched by literary salons, cafés, and the cotton exchange in Mansheya, making Alexandria an intellectual hub of the Mediterranean. Foreign-designed boulevards and educational institutions reflected deep-rooted international engagement[4]. The city's old quarters retained strong multicultural character, while new planning efforts such as McLean's 1921 scheme continued to guide spatial expansion through structured street layouts and zoning initiatives[31, 32].

1960–1973: The Nasserist regime enforced nationalization and Arab socialism, leading to the exodus of foreign residents and the appropriation of cosmopolitan institutions[33]. Urban planning became centralized,

with the decline of local autonomy and the construction of functional housing estates like those near Mahmoudiyah Canal[34]. Projects such as Victory Road disrupted historical cores, symbolizing the shift from urban hybridity to utilitarian modernism[35]. Public space investment declined, and the Corniche lost its cosmopolitan vibrancy, while informal settlements grew on the urban fringe due to internal migration pressures[36].

1974–2010: Under Sadat's Infitah, Alexandria experienced economic liberalization and urban expansion. While elite-driven investment revived parts of the city, such as commercial districts and waterfront areas, historic villas were demolished in favor of high-rises[1]. Alexandria's port was modernized, contributing to economic revitalization, but increased land speculation displaced heritage buildings, especially in neighborhoods like Azarita and Chatby. Cultural symbols like the Bibliotheca Alexandrina[37] and Sayed Darwish Theatre were rehabilitated. However, planning enforcement remained weak; Law 144 of 2006, which aimed to protect over a thousand historic buildings, was inconsistently implemented[38].

2011–present: Following the revolution, civic activism surged amid a regulatory vacuum. Initiatives such as Save Alex mobilized against the illegal demolition of heritage structures like Villa Aghion[1]. Infrastructure projects like the Mahmoudiyah Axis (2018–2020) were launched, transforming parts of the city but also displacing informal communities[39]. Public awareness of heritage surged, supported by new cultural spaces like Wekalet Behna and grassroots events like Alexandria's Heritage Days Festival. Yet unregulated construction and vertical expansion continued to strain infrastructure and erase older urban identities[40], see Figure 4.

Fig. 4: shows the change in the street morphology due to unregulated construction and vertical expansion, changing the urban identity and the street experiences

4. ANALYSIS: SPATIAL AND CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

4.1. Urban Morphology and Heritage Loss

Alexandria's built environment has undergone radical transformations over the last century, marked by a continual erosion of urban coherence and historic character. From the structured expansion of the early 20th century to the unregulated sprawl of the post-revolutionary era, the city's morphology has become fragmented and overburdened. The replacement of villas and public gardens with high-rise apartment blocks—especially in areas such as Azarita, Chatby, and the Corniche—has undermined the aesthetic and spatial logic of earlier planning schemes[34, 1].

This erosion is particularly evident in the loss of key heritage buildings, including Villa Aghion and Al-Salam Theatre, which were demolished despite their legal protection under Law 144 of 2006[38]. The proliferation of informal vertical construction, often enabled by weak enforcement mechanisms and market speculation, has led to structurally hazardous buildings and compromised open space ratios. By 2017, over 14,000 buildings in Alexandria were estimated to be in violation of height and safety regulations[40].

The transformation of the Corniche promenade, once a symbol of Alexandria's cosmopolitan public life, into a privatized and fragmented waterfront further illustrates the tension between economic development and spatial heritage. Originally designed as a grand urban artery connecting various cultural and leisure nodes, the Corniche now exemplifies exclusivity, visual disconnection, and functional loss[41].

4.2. Migration, Demographics, and Identity

Migration has played a central role in shaping, and later destabilizing, Alexandria's cosmopolitan fabric. Prior to the 1950s, the city's demographic profile included substantial populations of Greeks, Italians, Jews, Armenians, and Syrians, whose presence enriched the city's urban life, institutions, and built environment[42, 43]. The forced departures following the 1952 revolution and subsequent nationalizations radically altered this composition[44], replacing permanent, culturally embedded communities with transient populations from rural Egypt.

Post-2011, the influx of Syrian, Libyan, and other regional refugees reintroduced some diversity, albeit often in temporary or marginalized forms[45]. While this renewed plurality adds to the city's cultural milieu, the absence of structured integration policies limits the potential for meaningful intercultural interaction[20]. The experience of cosmopolitanism has shifted from embedded coexistence to fragmented and provisional multiculturalism.

4.3. Cultural Institutions and The Imaginary City

Alexandria's cultural identity continues to oscillate between nostalgic imaginaries and contemporary constraints. Literary representations by Cavafy, Durrell, and Forster continue to frame the city's global image as one of melancholic decadence and intercultural mystique[46]. However, these portrayals often exclude the lived experiences of the broader Alexandrian populace, especially post-independence generations who grew up amidst provincial realities[47].

Despite this, institutions such as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and the renovated Graeco-Roman Museum serve as modern vessels of cultural revival. Grassroots initiatives, including Gudran for Art and Development and Wekalet Behna, have contributed to reclaiming cultural production as a site of local empowerment[39]. These efforts illustrate the persistence of Alexandria's artistic spirit even as official narratives struggle to reconcile cosmopolitan heritage with nationalist frameworks.

4.4. Urban Policy and Governance

Urban governance in Alexandria has reflected broader national shifts in Egypt's political economy. Under Nasser, centralized control resulted in rigid top-down planning, eroding local capacity for inclusive decision-making[36]. The 1970s' shift to liberalization under Sadat reintroduced market forces but failed to regulate land use effectively. Instead, speculative development intensified, particularly along the waterfront and in peri-urban zones[48].

Mubarak's regime continued to prioritize growth over equity, favoring elite interests and accelerating gentrification in selected urban pockets[49]. The post-2011 period witnessed a dual trend: renewed public engagement in urban issues and aggressive infrastructural interventions. While projects like the Mahmoudiyah Axis enhanced mobility and green space access, they also led to displacement and the destruction of informal socio-spatial networks[34].

Policy tools such as the 2019 Building Reconciliation Law attempted to curb illegal development by retroactively legalizing violations through financial settlements. However, such measures remain reactive rather than visionary. Effective urban governance remains hindered by weak institutional coordination, insufficient heritage funding, and a persistent disconnect between policy and participatory planning[50].

5. HERITAGE, MEMORY, AND URBAN FUTURES

Alexandria's future depends on how it chooses to reconcile its richly layered cosmopolitan past with the pressures of present-day urban development. The debate surrounding whether Alexandria should reclaim its

historical role as a Mediterranean cultural hub or focus solely on a nationally defined identity is central to shaping its urban future. This tension is not simply theoretical but is embedded in the physical cityscape—its architecture, public spaces, and cultural institutions—all of which bear traces of cosmopolitanism that are rapidly disappearing[51].

The destruction of iconic structures such as Villa Aghion, Villa Ambron, and numerous Belle Époque buildings reflects more than the loss of architectural assets; it signifies the erosion of collective memory and cultural continuity (Kingsley, 2014). These spaces once fostered intercultural interactions and represented Alexandria's unique identity. Their absence generates a vacuum that is often filled with generic developments that neither resonate with local traditions nor reflect global aspirations.

At the same time, grassroots activism and civil society have emerged as crucial defenders of memory and heritage. Initiatives like "Save Alex" exemplify how communities resist state and market forces that disregard cultural value in favor of profit-driven construction. These local efforts demonstrate a collective yearning to preserve what remains of the city's pluralistic legacy[39]. Furthermore, cultural festivals, pedestrianization efforts, and creative reuse projects—such as adaptive interventions in the Anfoushi and Attarin districts—represent tangible steps toward revitalizing Alexandria's urban memory.

To envision a sustainable urban future, Alexandria must prioritize a model of development rooted in "futuristic nostalgia"—a strategy that integrates layers of the past into the design of future urban spaces. This requires more than aesthetic preservation; it demands participatory frameworks that acknowledge the lived experiences of residents, align with ecological realities, and emphasize spatial justice. Heritage must not be reduced to monuments but understood as a lived urban narrative that evolves through policy, design, and everyday practice.

Several key interventions are necessary:

- Adaptive Reuse and Memory Preservation: Historic buildings, rather than being demolished or neglected, should be reprogrammed into community hubs, educational spaces, or cultural venues. Successful examples include the Bibliotheca Alexandrina and Kom El-Dikka's archaeological park[37, 52].
- Participatory Planning: Urban policies must include community voices. This includes inviting local architects, historians, and neighborhood organizations to contribute to zoning laws, preservation criteria, and public space planning[21]. The shift from technocratic governance to collaborative urbanism is essential to overcome the legacy of centralized planning.

- Regulatory Enforcement: Laws such as Law 144 (2006) and the Building Reconciliation Law (2019) should be enforced uniformly and transparently. Arbitrary enforcement encourages illegal development and incentivizes heritage erasure. A robust institutional framework is needed to protect buildings of historical and cultural significance[38].
- Public Space Revitalization: Alexandria's waterfront, historical gardens, and city squares should be reclaimed as democratic spaces of cultural encounter. Initiatives like pedestrianizing parts of the Corniche and restoring Princess Ferial's Park symbolize how open spaces can be nodes of collective identity[53].
- Cultural Education and Engagement: Education about Alexandria's diverse past should be embedded in public curricula and civic programming. Museums, walking tours, and festivals can anchor collective memory and facilitate intergenerational transmission of cosmopolitan values.

Only by reconciling the memory of what Alexandria was with a vision for what it might become can the city resist becoming a nostalgic shadow or a hyper-modern simulacrum. Its strength lies not in choosing between past and future, but in understanding how to fold one into the other.

6. CONCLUSION

This research has explored the multidimensional tensions between cosmopolitanism and provincialism in transforming Alexandria's urban identity. By analyzing the city across four pivotal historical intervals—1936–1960, 1960–1973, 1974–2010, and 2011 to the present—it has become evident that the erosion of Alexandria's distinctive urban character is not a product of mere physical decay, but of deeply rooted structural, political, and cultural reorientations.

Svetlana Boym's (2001) concept of reflective nostalgia further supports this vision[2]. Unlike restorative nostalgia, which seeks a return to a fixed, idealized past, reflective nostalgia acknowledges fragmentation, multiplicity, and the impossibility of full restoration. It offers a critical, memory-conscious engagement with history—one that lingers on the ruins rather than rebuilding them. This aligns with the study's proposal of 'futuristic nostalgia' as a planning ethic that honors Alexandria's layered identity without freezing it in time.

Through a triadic methodological framework—phenomenological observation, archival research, and autoethnographic reflection—this study has addressed the central question: How have top-down planning and bottom-up informal growth contributed to the neglect and densification of Alexandria's heritage and identity? The findings confirm that unchecked vertical expansion, centralized planning devoid of public engagement, and a narrowed provincial outlook have collectively disrupted Alexandria's layered fabric, reducing its tangible and intangible cosmopolitan legacy to isolated fragments.

Yet, this research has also uncovered opportunities—pathways through which Alexandria can reimagine its urban future not by replicating a lost golden age, but by weaving together the physical, historical, and cultural layers into a "futuristic nostalgia." This concept is grounded in the belief that memory, when actively integrated into contemporary planning and policy, can catalyze a renewed urban identity—one that honors multiplicity while embracing forward-looking innovation.

Central to this vision is the tangible image of the city: the architectural typologies, the rhythms of its streets, and the spatial negotiations between waterfront openness and the intimacy of old quarters such as Anfoushi and Attarin. These spaces are not just remnants of the past; they are vessels of memory and experience, mediating between Alexandria's former cosmopolitan stature and its evolving present. The Corniche, once a civic spine of inclusivity, and the historic city center, now under pressure from commercial expansion, must be viewed as critical sites of identity production—not simply for touristic branding but for cultivating a livable, inclusive city.

A pressing question persists: What do we want Alexandria to be? A nostalgic replica of a romanticized past or a city that actively fuses its old and new layers into a dynamic urban narrative? Do we seek full diversity and cultural openness or a curated form of localized cosmopolitanism that respects tradition while embracing pluralism? This question is not rhetorical—it underlies every zoning law, preservation policy, and urban redevelopment plan.

The paper contends that cosmopolitanism should not be mistaken for globalization, nor rejected as an externally imposed identity. Rather, as many scholars assert, the most sustainable pathway to cosmopolitanism lies in solid localization—a deep engagement with local narratives, cultural codes, and spatial memories. Paradoxically, through provincial grounding, Alexandria might regain a form of cosmopolitan expression tailored to its context. If this premise holds, then the fusion of heritage layers into future planning is not just desirable—it is essential.

In this light, alternative cosmopolitan frameworks—including cultural[6], critical[7], and rooted approaches[8]—further inform the analysis. They underscore that cosmopolitanism can be a lived, contested, and locally grounded condition, not merely a distant ideal. This theoretical expansion reinforces the study's call for a heritage-driven, inclusive, and forward-thinking urban strategy.

Ultimately, Alexandria must decide whether it wishes to remain a ghost city—a nostalgic echo evoked in literature and memory—or whether it can become a living city, one that projects its layered past into a pluralistic future. This research concludes that the latter is not only possible but imperative. Alexandria's legacy of openness, intercultural exchange, and architectural dialogue remains embedded in its spatial DNA.

Reclaiming it requires vision, discipline, and, above all, the courage to define an identity that speaks both to the past and the aspirations of future generations.

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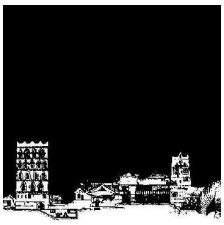

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