TRANSLATION

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The Regionalist Debate in the Context of the 1970s International Architecture Forums in Iran

In the late period of Pahlavi rule, the monarchy sponsored and funded the holding of several international architecture congresses in Iran to address issues facing a rapidly transforming society, such as the reconciliation of tradition with industrialization, and appropriate forms of mass housing within an Islamic society. One significant theme that emerged from the range of presentations and debates was the question of the possibility of a viable regional architecture, counter-posed to what was characterized as the purely technical nature of the 'internationalist' architecture of Late Modernism that had come to dominate architectural design in Europe, the United States, and increasingly, the Third World. Leading international and local speakers debated issues such as the viability of traditional building techniques and planning, and the need for a local resistance to global homogenization. The congresses provided an important forum for post-CIAM architectural debate, inviting leading international architects and critics.

It will be argued that the critiques by delegates of the position of modern architecture under post-war capitalist liberalism reflected the debates that had emerged from the break-up of modernist orthodoxy under Team X and nativist rhetoric in peripheral architectural cultures like Turkey, India and Iran. The issue of tradition was a key subject for debate, through which, I further argue that three strands of thinking on tradition and regional identity emerged from these critiques: traditionalism, a focus on national heritage and thirdly, a leftist critique of tradition, which characterized it as mutable and related to ideological inscription and regimes of power. I will position such debates within a broader international context, in which issues such as culturally appropriate forms and standards of shelter for third world and emerging economies were being proposed as alternatives to both market-driven and centrally planned policies. It is argued that the debate over regionalism and tradition in the 1970 Conference, exemplified by these divergent positions, derives from the earlier CIAM and Team X debates, and foreshadows the later discourse on (Critical) Regionalism.

Introduction

Architectural regionalism, of the 'critical' or 'non-critical' kind, may be said to have had a life as discourse beyond its period of influence in the West. In this paper, I will examine the emergence of a regionalist discourse in Iran in the 1970s, as manifested in conferences that took place there in the 1970s, under the auspices of the Empress Farah.[1] It will be argued that the debates that took place over regionalism and tradition in relation to what Mumford had previously described as "Modern Technics" foreshadowed the nativist rhetoric of the later Islamic Republic (1979 on). It will be argued that this series of conferences held in Iran in the 1970s before the Islamic Revolution[2] constituted a forum where the ideas of 'progressive' and 'reactionary' regionalism of the 1980s found their initial synthesis,[3] and that its core themes perpetuated what Colquhoun has described as the two irreconcilable lines of argument in modernism: Enlightenment rationality, and Romanticism.[4]

The International Context of the Conferences

In the 1950s and -60s, the Modern Movement as codified by the older generation of The Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), which had retained a radical caché in the 1930s was associated by critics in the Team X group with a homogenizing and colonialist orthodoxy.[5] Contemporary culture was to be reconnected to tradition not through historicism, but through a rediscovery of what Van Eyck termed the "archaic principles of human nature", and significantly, and emphasis on "habitat" rather than "dwelling".[6] It is significant that a number of CIAM and Team 10 members were invited to the Iran congresses, and it would appear that the central themes were

2   There were three major architectural Congresses in Iran in the decade before the Islamic Revolution: 1970, "The Interaction between Tradition and Technology", Isfahan; 1974, "Towards a Quality of Life", Persepolis, and in 1976, "Architecture and Identity", Ramsar, a special "Women in Architecture" conference. A fourth congress was planned for 1978, but does not appear to have taken place.

3   The connections between regionalist theory and traditionalism later became apparent at the 1985 symposium that took place in Dhaka, under the auspices of the Aga Khan, entitled "Regionalism in Architecture", and presided over by the critics Kenneth Frampton and William Curtis, which emphasized the difference between Islamic and secular cultures, and counter posed authentic Islamic architecture to the crisis of nihilism that Marxist architectural critics in the 1970s had attributed to the West. On the latter, see Marco Biraghi, *Project of Crisis: Manfredo Tafuri and Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2013). Significantly, a number of speakers at Dhaka were previously invited to the Iranian conferences of a decade earlier. International participants at the 1985 symposium included the Pakistani traditionalist architect Mumtaz, the Indian Doshi, the American Rudolph, and the critics Curtis and Frampton.

4   Alan Colquhoun, *Kritik am Regionalismus* (Verlegergemeinschaft Werk, Bauen & Wohnen, 1993), 45.

5   Annie Pedret, *Team 10*: an Archival History (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), cf. 166-212.

6   Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Architecture of Regionalism* (London: Routledge, 2012), 164.
    For concept of Habitat developed at CIAM 8, Sigtuna, Sweden (1952), and CIAM 9, Aix-en-Provence (1953), see Annie Pedret, *Team 10* (London: Routledge, 2013), 81 ff.

a continuation of the debates on habitat and regional identity that took place in these groups in the 1950s and 1960s.[7] Tzonis and Lefaivre's argument that the regionalist discourse waned in the 1970s must be reviewed in the case of Iran.[8] Certainly, in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis, there was a turning away by some Western critics from formal concerns towards environmentalism, and even an anti-building ethos. But in the very different context of Iran's booming economy, a focus on regional identity accompanied the Pahlavi regime's ambitious campaign of infrastructural reform in areas such as new industries, tertiary education, and cultural bodies, and a massive building campaign of civic and governmental building projects, such as the Shahyad (now Azadi) monumental gateway and museum by Amanat, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art by Diba, the National Library of Iran, and the grandest but unrealized project, Shahestan Pahlavi, which comprised a vast governmental extension of the city to the north. Louis Kahn would design the first scheme for this massive project with the support of the Empress Farah.[9] As an element of this modernization drive, the state sought to refine its urban policies by sponsoring the holding of architectural congresses and competitions in which the relation of regional cultures and international technique was explored.

The three conferences held under the auspices of the Queen featured many prominent Iranian and International critics and architects.[10] Why were so many leading international architects willing to attend the congresses? A cynical explanation might be that the congresses formed an opportunity to tout for work before an audience of cash-rich potential patrons. The monarchy itself appears to have used its architectural commissions to both project a positive, reformist image and to emphasize its power.[11] But as the 1979 revolution was to indicate, the foundations of the regime were fragile and dependent on outside support, notably from America and Great Britain who had

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7   Delegates in common with Team X were Kahn, Alison Smithson, Bakema, van Eyck, Candilis, Soltan and Tange. Stirling was also associated with later Team X meetings, despite his marginalization by the Smithsons. Sert was ex-President of CIAM, while Quaroni and Zevi were trenchant critics of CIAM orthodoxy.

8   Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism*, 178. Note that in 1998, these authors authored a paper examining the period between Team 10 and that of its 'heirs'- them? *Le Carre Bleu* 3-4, 1998.

9   Farshid Emami, "Civic Visions, National Politics, and International Designs: Three Proposals for a New Urban Center in Tehran (1966-76)"(MA thesis, MIT, 2011).

10 The congresses appear to have been organized in a similar fashion to the CIAM congresses. Thus there was in each case a core organizing committee setting the agenda, a limited number of individual presentations, and subsequent thematic roundtable discussions with nominated panels. Photographs indicate a large attendance of audience for these events, but they are not named in the proceedings. Among the invited delegates listed for the 1970 congress, there were 16 internationals, and 10 Iranians, with a further 3 unidentified; for the 1974 congress, there were 35 internationals, 24 Iranians, and 2 unidentified; for the 1976 congress, there were 21 internationals, 10 Iranians, and two unidentified. The international character was strengthened by the large percentage of Iranians with expensive foreign education. Of the international delegates who are recorded, in 1970, there were 5 from North America, 5 from Europe, 4 from Asia and 4 from the Soviet Bloc; in 1974, there were 18 from Europe, 8 from North America, 6 from Asia and 2 from Africa, and in 1976, there were 8 from Europe, 5 from North America, and 5 from Asia. The weighting of delegates may reflect the Western educational background of the organizers.

11 Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (New York: Periscope/ Prestel, 2009); Ali Mozaffari, *Inscribing a Homeland: Iranian Identity and the Pre-Islamic and Islamic Collective Imaginations of Place*, PhD dissertation UWA (2010).
     See also Emami, Civic Visions (2011), 47, on 2500 years celebration at Persepolis, 1971.

massive investments in the Iranian oil industry under the Consortium Agreement.[12] In this context, the style in which architecture might represent the image of the regime was seen to be of unusual importance. The initial selection of Louis Kahn to design the new urban centre in Tehran must be seen in this light – his vague, universalizing design philosophy and referencing of traditional building in his governmental centre for Dhaka in East Pakistan was construed by several leading Iranian architects as being in keeping with Iranian and Islamic traditions.[13] The architectural congresses fit into this picture of a regime, and a profession, trying to accommodate the twin objectives of both modernization – the introduction of modern technics and institutions – and the accommodation of a generally traditional and anti-secular population.

While the situation of Iran, culturally peripheral but economically emergent, was necessarily very different to that in the West, nonetheless the exchanges over the issue of global civilization and local tradition form a revealing transitional stage of architectural dialogue, from whence several very different strands of theory develop, not least the positions advocated in the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements of 1976, presented by the delegates to the 1970 and 1974 Iran conferences to the United Nations,[14] the 'Islamic architecture' of the later Aga Khan-sponsored Shelter conferences of the 1980s and the development of the discourse of Critical Regionalism.

While the three conferences explored different themes: reconciliation of traditions with modern technology; the need to find new means of adequately housing the population in the light of a massive demographic shift from the villages to cities, and finally the crisis of identity, they may be said to be connected by the questions of what might constitute a suitable habitat, whether in a village or metropolitan context, and secondly, the question of how Iranian architecture might be contextually specific and expressive of a local cultural identity. The debates around these questions reveal underlying ideological differences between leftist critiques of capitalist hegemony, and rightist (traditionalist) rejection of Western culture en bloc. The Iran congresses provided an important forum for post-CIAM architectural debate. The invited international speakers were, from their various positions, offering critiques of the position of modern architecture under post-war capitalist liberalism, critiques that reflected the debates that had emerged from the break-up of modernist orthodoxy, the emergence of new groups like Team X, and also the rise of nativist rhetoric in peripheral architectural cultures like Turkey, India and Iran. The issue of tradition, exemplified by the traditionalist architecture of Hassan Fathy in Egypt exemplified by his mud-brick New Gourna village of 1945–48, was a key subject for debate in all three conferences.

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12 James H. Bamberg, *British Petroleum and Global Oil* 1950–1975. *The Challenge of Nationalism*, Vol. 3 of *The History of the British Petroleum Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 171–84, 455–61; Ronald W. Ferrier, "The Iranian Oil Industry," in *The Cambridge History of Iran* Vol. 7 *From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic* ed. William B. Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 639–704 at 665.

13 Ali-Akbar Saremi in Conversation with Faryar Javaheriyan Mehrjui,' *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1 (1996), 94–97.

14 The Vancouver Declaration On Human Settlements, from the report of "Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements", Vancouver, Canada, 31 May to 11 June 1976, accessed 30 December 2013, http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/924_21239_The_Vancouver_Declaration.pdf.

The 1970 Conference, Isfahan: "The Interaction between Tradition and Technology"

The first, 1970 congress, 'The Interaction between Tradition and Technology', took place in a royal palace in the historic former Safavid capital of Isfahan from Monday [14] September to Friday 18 September. In keeping with this theme, the congress explored the issue of the possibility of a viable regional architecture, counter posed to what was characterized as the purely technical and homogenizing nature of 'international' modern architecture that was perceived to dominate architectural design in Europe, the United States, and increasingly, the Third World.[15]

The organizing committee, consisting of the congress secretary Nasr Badi, Laleh Bakhtiar and others, had invited many leading international architects, from both the First World and developing countries.[16] The selection indicates an interest on the part of the organizers to generate discussion on questions of regionalism, place and identity, in the face of technological transformations generated by the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the country: Rudolph had written on these themes, while Yoshinobu Ashihara, like his countryman Kenzo Tange,[17] had interpreted traditional structures in his projects, such as the recently completed Japanese pavilion at the 1967 Expo in Montreal, a concrete plank structure modelled upon the Shosoin treasure storehouse in Nara.[18] Candilis was a founding member of Team X, an advocate for culturally appropriate architecture, and jointly responsible for culturally hybrid projects such as the Carrières Centrales housing project at Casablanca, Morocco of 1952,[19] while Kahn was seen as a model by Iranian architects. It would appear that the choice of delegates might also have had something to do with the influence of Doxiadis. His celebrated, ouzo-fuelled Delos symposia had included the Iran congress participants Ashihara, Tange and Buckminster Fuller, and some of his symposium themes paralleled the Iranian congresses.[20] Doxiadis, who worked

15 See Sherban Cantacuzino, and Kenneth Browner, "Making of the City," *Architectural Review* vol. 159, no. 951 (1976): Isfahan.

16 Invited international participants to the 1970 congress included: A. Ali (Morocco), Y. Ashihara (Japan), G. Candilis and O. Zavaroni (France), A. Damian and M. Nicalescu (Romania), Buckminster Fuller, P. Will, Jr., P. Rudolph and L. I. Kahn (USA), M. I Hosseinoff (USSR Azerbaijan), A. Kuran (Turkey), M. Mistry and I. M. Kadri (India), J. Moravec (Czechoslovakia), L. Quaroni (Italy), L. Blanco Soler (Spain), and O. M. Ungers (Germany). Gropius, Mies and Neutra were invited to the conference, but died before it took place. Iranian delegates included M. Foroughi, the secretary K. Diba, S. Afkhami, H. Seyhoun and N. Ardalan. See L. Farhad and L. Bakhtiar, *The Interaction between Tradition and Technology: Proceedings of the First International Congress of Architects, Isfahan, Iran,* [1970] *prepared for the Ministry of Housing and Development of the Imperial Government of Iran* (Tehran: Hamdami Foundation, 1972) (in Farsi), 19.

17 Kenzo Tange was invited to the 1974 congress.

18 "Yoshinobu Asihara Digital Forum," 2013, accessed 10 January 2014, http://www.ashihara.jp/html/bio0103e.htm.

19 *Carrières Centrales,* ATBAT Morocco, Bodiansky, Candilis, Piot and Woods, 1952.
    See Tom Avermaete, "CIAM, Team X and the Rediscovery of African Settlements", in *Modern Architecture and the Mediterranean: Vernacular Dialogues and Contested Identities,* ed. J. F. Lejeune and M. Sabbatino (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 252–64 at 253 and fn. 6-7; Tom Avermaete, *Another Modern: the Post-War Architecture and Urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods (*Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2005).

20 On the Delos symposia, see Simon Richards, "Halfway Between the Electron and the Universe: Doxiadis and the Delos Symposia", in *Scale: Imagination, Perception and Practice in Architecture*, ed. G. Adler et al. (Critiques: Critical Studies in Architectural Humanities) (Routledge: London, 2011); Mark Wigley, "Network Fever", in *Grey Room* 4 (2001), 82–122.

extensively in the Middle East, he submitted an essay that was included in the proceedings for the following 1974 congress at Persepolis.[21]

The 1970 congress was opened on the evening of Monday 14 September by the Queen, Farah Diba, herself a former architecture student at the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris. In her opening speech, Farah argued that nations such as Iran needed to seek a way in which they could reconcile traditions with technological and by implication social progress. The ambiguity of this formulation reflects the unresolved contradiction between traditionalist and secular forces in Iranian society.[22] The main topics of the congress, which took the form of a think-tank, were: tradition, technology, the possibility of combining traditional architecture with modern construction technologies, and finally, the profession and its education. In the ensuing sessions, delegates debated such issues as the viability of traditional building techniques and planning, and the need for a local resistance to global homogenization.

In the round-table sessions of the 1970 conference, a dialogue ensued as to the problematic relation of the local and authentic to the homogenizing effects of international modernity. As reflected in the later Vancouver Habitat Bill of Rights, the traditional village was portrayed as the model for a humanitarian form of settlement, in which there was supposedly a unity of form, customs and beliefs. Here, the host city of Isfahan supplied a spectacular image of such unity, despite its actual partial transformation into a modern industrial centre. On the first day, there were three presentations, by Nader Ardalan, the Turkish architectural historian Abdullah Kuran and the Italian architect and then-academic at the University of Rome, Ludovico Quaroni, which, in their different nuances, express the separate strands of the regionalist debate: traditionalism (Ardalan), participatory design (Quaroni) and preservation of cultural heritage (Abdullah Kuran).

Ardalan: a Traditionalist Position[23]

Ardalan, who had personally experienced advanced technological design through his time at SOM in San Francesco, advocated that through an understanding of traditional forms, archetypes and practices architects could preserve a sense of place. For him, true architecture was timeless. He proposed the need for a spiritual unity between architecture and culture through the proper understanding of the geometrical basis of both architecture and nature. This philosophy would be further espoused in the book he wrote with his then-wife Laleh Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity: the Sufi

21 Laleh Bakhtiar, "Towards a Quality of Life: the Role of Industrialization in the Architecture and Urban Planning of Developing Countries" (report of the Proceedings of the "Second International Congress of Architects," Persepolis, Iran [1974] (Tehran: Hamdami Foundation, 1976), 385–87.

22 "Education vii. General Survey of Modern Education", accessed 31 December 2013, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-vii-general-survey-of-modern-education; "Education xvii. Higher Education", accessed 31 December 2013, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/education-xvii-higher-education.

23 Nadar Ardalan, "The Structure of Traditional Architecture and Urban Design in Iran, Preliminary Studies," in The Interaction of Tradition and Technology eds. Bakhtiar and Farhad, 34 ff.

Tradition in Iranian Architecture, published in 1973.[24] Ardalan appealed to architects to return to, or more specifically learn from, tradition, arguing that traditional Iranian society enjoyed a civic and cultural continuity and a communal spirituality, something he held to be the case in all-traditional societies. Following the thought of the Islamic scholar S. H. Nasr,[25] he saw Islamic tradition as the most direct manifestation of Iranian culture – its hidden meanings were revealed in geometric forms, spatial organization, orientation and place, which consisted, he argued, in both materiality and spirit. Authentic Iranian architecture and urban formations reflected both the material and cosmic world in their unified organization.[26] Ardalan's prominent position at the congress reflects the more Islamic cultural policy that was characteristic of the Pahlavi regime from the 1960s.[27] This emphasis on continuity and Islamic tradition had the effect of bracketing Iranian culture apart from the flux of international cultural homogenization.

Quaroni: a Modern Urbanist Position on Tradition[28]

In contrast to Ardalan's neo-traditionalism, Quaroni was more ambivalent about the position of tradition, noting its weakening and labile nature. For tradition to survive, both the conveyer and the recipient must willingly embrace it.[29] In the modern context, there was no such stable continuity, and so it fell upon the individual creative architect to establish meaningful connections in his or her work through poetic imagination. However in the modern context, there was a disconnection between individual creativity and urban planning. Quaroni emphasized the need for an integration of architectural and urban thinking, in which cultural identity was emphasized:

"Our cities are growing by the day but the concept (meaning) of a city as a tangible expression of a tangible cultural heritage is weakened by the day… Today it is hard to speak of tradition … this is the first time that anyone has had the courage to discuss this issue, which is so difficult."[30]

24 Nadar Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity: the Sufi tradition in Persian Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).

25 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966).

Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968).

26 Ardalan, "The Structure of Traditional Architecture and Urban Design in Iran," 34, 37.

27 On the religious aspects of Pahlavi cultural policy, see Farshid Emami, "Civic Visions", (Architecture Studies thesis, MIT 2011), 51.

28 Ludovico Quaroni, "Lecture on Tradition And Urban Design," in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad (1972), 54–56.

29 Quaroni, "Lecture on Tradition And Urban Design," 54.

30 Quaroni, "Lecture on Tradition And Urban Design," 56. Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture,* 1944–85 (Cambridge, Mass./ London England: MIT Press, 1989), 17–18, 22–25: Tiburtino estate, Rome.

Kuran: a Regionalist Position on Tradition[31]

The Turkish architectural historian Abdullah Kuran, in turn discussed the need for society to pass on national cultural patrimony to future generations. National traditions, he argued, constituted "an unstoppable flow"[32] – tradition was characterized as a factor in the process of the formation of artistic concepts and specifically in the creation of 'thoughtful' building,[33] a term he apparently adapted from Louis Kahn. A specific mode of thinking and the development of artistic directions emerge from the cultural and physical milieu, or in a more recent term, the 'cultural landscape' of the region. He called on architects to creatively interpret the traditional spirit and cultural specificities of their region as; for example, Sedad Eldem had attempted to do in his projects in Turkey.[34] The architect was called upon to intuitively respond to this traditional 'spirit' in new forms, and with modern techniques.[35] Kuran's position also resonates with the later formulations of Tzonis and Lefaivre and Frampton, if without the leftist political rhetoric. It is apparent that what all three were really advocating, from their respective positions, was the necessity to engage with the issues of place and cultural specificity, in the face of economic and cultural globalization.

The Debate Over Tradition in Architecture

In a round-table discussion following these lectures, Kahn, Rudolph, Quaroni, Ardalan, Ungers, Candilis and local architects debated the issue of tradition in architecture. Although the term 'regionalism' was not deployed, the issue of regional culture was implicit. The debate oscillated between the poles of universalism and local specificity, immutable 'truth' and historical mutability and transience. Thus, for example, Kahn argued that tradition resulted from, and depended upon, inspiration. There was a separation between the essence of art and style: essence is fixed and style is subject to change in time. Thus, true art possesses an immutable essence. By implication, the metropolitan condition could not give rise to truth in art or architecture, but simply produce mutable styles. True architecture must be autonomous of the nihilism of modernity.[36] In a general discussion session on the theme of Tradition (on the Tuesday), Rudolph subtly criticized the essentialism of Ardalan and Kahn, arguing that the 'unity' of the traditional Iranian city derived from the imposition of religious or state power, thus by implication was historical, not timeless or immutable. Rudolph had, in an earlier article, argued that regionalism in architecture should consist of a individual creative response to place, climate that manifests in form and type – here

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31 Aptullah Kuran, talk entitled: "Technology and Traditional Architecture," in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* eds. Bakhtiar and Farhad, 45–52.

32 Kuran, "Technology and Traditional Architecture," 6.

33 Kuran, "Technology and Traditional Architecture," 49.

34 Eleni Bastéa, 'Dinitris Pikionis and Sedad Eldem, "Parallel Reflections of Vernacular and National Architecture" in *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories* ed. K. S. Brown and Y. Hamilakis (New York, Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 147–69.

35 Kuran, "Technology and Traditional Architecture," 51.

36 *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad, 97–99.

he was contrasting this free regional expression with what he characterized as the normative romanticization of the traditional village.[37] In the same session, Quaroni pursued this theme, noting that even if architects embrace tradition and regional specificity, their objects existed within an urban context that was itself instrumentalized and by implication transient, recalling Marx's aphorism that "all that is solid melts into air."[38] Ungers contrasted the unity of the mediaeval city, in which it could be understood as a collective project, with the 'otherness' of tradition to modern architects, who in adopting its forms, but not its spirit, must inevitably transform it.[39] He appears to have been arguing for the need for a collective will, or consensus as the basis for social settlement: "...for people to live, they need to accept a certain order..." unlike totalitarian societies, in the Middle Ages urbanism was based on proper judgment as an individual member of a society.[40] Finally, Candilis mounted an argument that Iranian architects should use tradition as a "reforming force" that allows a vision of the future (see below), calling for a "critical" use of tradition[41] – he argues that the uncritical embrace of tradition is motivated by two factors: modern reactionary political ideology on the one hand, and tourism-related emulation of the past in order to create what he termed "fake authenticities". Political ideologies inscribe forms with "official" meanings, while the tendency towards the picturesque characteristic of the nexus of cultural heritage and tourism runs the risk of the construction of simulacra.[42]

The Political Context of the Issue of Tradition in Iran

Given this range of responses to tradition, it is instructive to consider the intellectual context of the period. Western and Iranian leftist intellectuals had engaged in a discourse of 'authentic culture'. Thus, Frantz Fanon had called for Third-World, that is peripheral, cultures[43] "...to find their native culture in order to regain their dignity and glory in the face of Western imperialism."[44] It is possible to see the roots of Frampton's Critical Regionalism formulation in this light. Nabavi notes that Iranian leftist intellectuals had also used this discourse of authenticity as an oppositional tactic against what they perceived as the Western capitalist basis of the Pahlavi regime.[45] However, as noted above, from the late 1960's the regime had adopted the tactic of co-opting the discourse – it

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37   Paul Rudolph, "Regionalism in Architecture", Perspecta 4 (1957): 76–83; Rudolph in round-table discussion in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad, 83 ff. cf. 88.

38   Quaroni, "Lecture on Tradition And Urban Design", 63; Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* 1848, accessed 30 December 2013, https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/.

39   Oswald Mathias Ungers, in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad (1972), 189.

40   Georges Candilis, in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad (1972), 254.

41   Candilis, in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology*, 65.

42   Candilis, in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology*, 65.

43   Benita Parry, "Aspects of Peripheral Modernisms," *Ariel* 40/1 (2009).

44   Negin Nabavi, "The Discourse of 'Authentic Culture' in Iran of the 1960s and 1970s," in *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth-Century Iran: A Critical Survey* ed. N. Nabavi (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2003), 104.

45   Nabavi, "The Discourse of 'Authentic Culture' in Iran of the 1960s and 1970s," 94.

became more openly Islamic and traditionalist in its rhetoric, if not in reality. The regimes, however, sought to reconcile 'authentic culture' with what it perceived as the positive aspects of Western culture, notably industrialization and technics. This authenticity was, of course, actually syncretic, combining aspects from the Pre-Islamic and Islamic past in the synthesis of a romantic nationalism. This use of the discourse of authentic culture can be detected in the contrast the leading Iranian architect Diba made between the unity of the traditional Iranian village and the individualism and disharmony of Iranian cities: "…it is about some contemporary ways of thinking which destroys those general harmonies… we will not have an integrated form as a result."[46]

For Diba, in the traditional society of the Iranian village, residents could come to a consensus over time – the spatial and aesthetic unity of the village reflects such a consensus. This reflects the wide influence at the time of Hassan Fathy's romantic nativist advocacy of traditional construction techniques, forms and symbolism.[47] There was an apparent split here between Diba and Ardalan's appeal to vernacular forms and practices as being in harmony with traditional culture and religious beliefs, a point of view that is not so far removed from the aesthetically-driven positions of Tzonis and Lefaivre and Frampton, for all their Leftist rhetoric, and a more radical position held by Quaroni and Candilis, which sought to place the issue of tradition, vernacular architecture and crafts in a wider political context that would examine the effects of modernity and international capitalism upon such structures, and engaged with the displacing and culturally fragmenting consequences of economic migration upon traditional culture.

Louis Kahn and Traditionalism

A final note can be made here on Louis Kahn's position within, and influence on, the exchange on tradition and regionalism. Kahn appears to have exercised an ambivalent position. In one of the congress photographs, he is seated next to the traditionalist Ardalan – this may be more than coincidental. In a later article, the Iranian architect Ali-Akbar Saremi, who trained under Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania, compares the 'loose order' of traditional Iranian architecture with a similar quality in Kahn's work. More than this, he saw Kahn's work and writing as a lens through which to discern a more authentic Iranian architecture, noting also his influence on Ardalan.[48] As noted above, Kahn had stressed the necessity for individual intuition and inspiration in engaging with tradition. It is in this context that he made his extraordinary statement that

46 Farah Diba, in *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad, 86.

47 Hana Taragan, "Architecture in Fact and Fiction: The Case of the New Gourna Village in Upper Egypt", *Muqarnas* 16 (1999), 169-78. On Mumtaz, see Zarminae Ansari, *A Contemporary Architectural Quest and Synthesis: Kamil Khan Mumtaz in Pakistan*, MSc. (Architecture Studies thesis, MIT, 1997).

48 "Ali-Akbar Saremi in Conversation with Faryar Javaheriyan Mehrjui," *Environmental Design: Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1 (1996): 94-97.

"Traditions are just mounds of golden dust, not circumstance, not the shapes which have resulted as an expression in time. . .And if you can just put your fingers through this golden dust, you can have the powers of anticipation."[49]

From Kahn's libertarian position, the response to tradition was not a top-down process, whether religious or political, but rather an individual encounter. This position seems to have found fertile ground In Iran, in the context of the nativist discourse discussed above, but through the Sufi concept of spirit being apprehended by the mind through mathematics and the geometry of the material world. This brings to mind the disillusioned judgement made by Tafuri with respect to what he saw to be Kahn's destructive effect upon the autonomy of architecture, in which he saw Kahn's mining of history as a turn from reality and a flight to the interior.[50]

However the effect of Kahn's ideas within a non-Western context like Iran was evidently far more than encouraging the production of consoling images. It is clear that Kahn was a central figure in the debates over tradition at the 1970 conference – directly and indirectly; he was to have a substantial voice in the transformation of Tehran until his death in 1973. As can be noticed in the Congress exchanges briefly covered here, they were enthusiastically taken up by conservative traditionalists for whom Kahn's work and ideas seemed to offer a path towards a return to unity. Ironically, similar ideas seem to have inspired both conservative Islamism and leftist Critical Regionalism, both strands united in their hatred of Western hegemonic capitalism and what Jamad Al-e Ahmad had called "gharbzadegi": "Westoxification", a concept that was to re-emerge in the ideology of the Islamic Revolution of 1979.[51]

Conclusion

What emerged at the 1970 congress was a discrepancy between, on the one hand, an appeal to the social and aesthetic unity of traditional settlements, where Diba and Ardalan's traditionalism was supported by Ungers' call for collective consensus on the form and function of social habitat,[52] and on the other, the reality that the villagers were migrating to the Iranian cities in large numbers – this crisis of urbanization, and the need for provision of mass housing to accommodate displaced villagers, would be the focus of the 1974 congress, and in hindsight appears to have been one of the driving forces behind the discourse of Critical Regionalism. This second congress, entitled "Towards a Quality of Life", and held at the former Achaemenid capital of Persepolis (in the 2500 years of kingship pavilions?), dealt with the interconnected issues of planning, public housing and internal

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49 Louis Kahn cited by Ardalan, *Towards a Quality of Life* ed. Bakhtiar, 38.

50 Biraghi, *Project of Crisis*, 77.

51 Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (Oxford: One World, 2000), 296.

52 Ungers, in round-table discussion on tradition, *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology* ed. Bakhtiar and Farhad (1972), 87.

migration.[53] As in the first congress, the issue of tradition was always there in the background, reflected in one of the final declarations:

"To create a dynamic document in which the sense of continuity and the quality of life aims are pursued while responding to the desirable diversity of perceptions and means inherent in the particular circumstances of time and place."[54]

The respective positions at the 1970 and 1974 congresses were later accommodated in the Persepolis Declaration written by nominated conference delegates Josep Lluis Sert, Moshe Safdie, Balkrishnan Doshi, Georges Candilis, and Nader Ardalan, and presented as a Shelter Bill of Rights by the Iran delegates to the United Nations (UN) Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976.[55] This document, which reprises a central theme of the later CIAM congresses and Team 10 discussions[56], balances a call for architects to learn from the organic unity of the traditional village structure, while calling for greater political control of citizens over their social and physical environment.[57] The ethos of the Iran Bill of Rights is at the core of the UN Habitat conferences.

This paper has explored a forgotten chapter in the debate over architectural modernism and regional identity, a debate which later resulted in the familiar positions of Western Critical Regionalism, but also the Aga Khan-sanctioned category of 'Islamic Architecture' and various more-or-less chauvinist appeals to national identity. The Iran congresses revisited and developed ideas on identity, tradition, historical memory and cultural difference that had been at the core of the debate over 'Habitat' at the Sigtuna and CIAM 9 conferences, and were later promoted by Team 10 members Candilis, Van Eyck, Bakema and the Smithsons. It is argued, in summary, that the series of conferences held in Iran in the 1970s before the Islamic Revolution form a link between the revisions of Modernism in the 1950s and -60s, and those of Postmodernism, and constituted a forum where the ideas of 'progressive' and 'reactionary' regionalism of the 1980s found their initial synthesis.

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53 Invited delegates to this second conference included Josep Luis Sert, the former president of CIAM, Buckminster Fuller, Moshe Safdie, Balkrishnan Doshi, Jaap Bakema, Dolf Schnebli and Kenzo Tange.

54 From "The Persepolis Declaration for an International Code of Human Habitat", *Towards a Quality of Life* ed. Bakhtiar, xviii.

55 "Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements", accessed 25 April 2014, http://habitat.igc.org/vancouver/van-decl.htm.

56 Annie Pedret, *Team 10*, 81 ff.

57 Habitat Bill of Rights presented by Iran to the first "Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements," in Vancouver, Canada, 31 May – 11 June 1976 (Tehran: Hamdami Foundation, 1976), 14.