The use of Yehya Abu Al Qasim shrine and Al Tahra church and surrounding space for social and mixed religious group development

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Abstract. The main reason for our endeavour to present syntheses and rehabilitate the tomb of Yahia Abu Al Qasim is to try to insert this area within the boundaries of the heritage area of the old Mosul area. Previous studies were defined the old city according to the boundaries of the main streets surrounding the urban fabric, while in the usual contexts we see that the boundaries of the heritage and historical area are within the historical wall, this is because the heritage values of space confined between the urban fabric and the wall are not less than the building part. The district of Yahia Abu Al Qasim was considered outside the heritage area because the area is defined by the path of the dividing street between the heritage area and the new area in Mosul, rather than the old wall route. Based on the concept of containment of the river by the historic Nineveh on the left side and the old Mosul on the right side, describing this area by butterfly shape and each part of it represents a wing, and to confirm that it was necessary to have every wing entity and areas of polar growth, (Polar Development); and a spine connecting the poles with a filtration area between the old and the new, so we find that this study may complement the high level and functional for previous studies. The re-designation of the importance of the shrine through spatial analysis will re define the historical dimension of old city by adopting the matching maps and satellite images available for that.

1. Introduction
The main reason for our endeavor to present rehabilitation and renovation study for the tomb of Yehya Abu Al Qasim and al Tahra church is to try to include this area within the boundaries of the heritage area of Mosul as the careful study submitted by the Ministry of Municipalities and Public Works General Directorate of Urban Planning Urban Renewal Project for the Old City of Mosul Figure (1), [1] did not include the area near the church and tomb. This area is within the boundaries of the old city wall which has always been considered as the criteria to identify the heritage zone of the main old urban fabric, the other reason is that the tomb and the old church are the oldest historical buildings in Mosul and thus express the religious tolerance and the possible use of the surrounding area for shard social activities to encourage tolerance and mixing of both Christen and Muslim Mosul communities.

Methodology: By examining historical geography, the study will identify the main feature and characteristics of these buildings based on concept of containment and the polar development as this area represents the historical pole of the city while the other side in the south represents the commercial pole thus encourages integrated growth (Polar Development), Figure (1).
Figure 1 The main poles of development the historical and the commercial centres with Alfarouq road; the linking spine city wall is the boundary of development area

2. Geographical history
District of Yehya Abu Al Qasim and Altahra church in Mosul was visited by the large number of old travellers and scholars who accurately documented the history and stages of the growth of the urban fabric, including Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta, but the most accurate documentation came by the Danish traveller Figure (3) [2] in the seventeenth century AD, which in his plan showed the urban fabric and alleys and the path of the city walls, another scholar Felix Jones at the beginning of the twentieth century [3], prepared a map a scientific accurate plan, showed the scale of drawing the path of the fence and doors and the amount of construction and the form of urban fabric and then came the map of the British army in 1944 illustrating with precision and the main parameters and growth in City Figure (2) [2]. Based on these documents, we find that the city's morphology was based on large growth from the south of the city with slow growth in the north during the 17th and 20th centuries. However, the period between the beginning of the 20th century and the middle of it witnessed a significant expansion towards the north of the city. A large space between the wall and the urban fabric from the north remained intact, while the south and west were filled; this space in the north of the city and the important buildings in the vicinity of the shrine of Yehya Abu Al Qasim and Itahra church is the centre of our extensive research.

Over the years, the city has been settled by a group of different Arab tribes, nationalities, and various religions, thus providing them with the basis of peaceful coexistence, which we saw as united against any foreign aggression.

3. Old Mosul city Wall
In the era of the Umayyad caliph Muhammad Ibn Marwan, Mosul was an open city for international trade, later because of the constant threat of the armies of Nadir Shah to invade Mosul, the Caliph decided to build a wall surrounded by the defence and protected the city wall with the castles to house the guards and provide the requirements of logistical defence, this is the present fortress, "Bashtabia" Figure (3), which is located on the right shore of the Tigris River to the north of the tomb of Imam Yahya bin Mohammed al-Qasim. The name Bashtabia is Turkish. It is composed of two words (Bash - main) and (Tabia - tower) meaning the main tower or the main castle, it was called by this name because it is located at the highest point in old Mosul at an altitude of 75 feet from the sea level by land and 150 feet from The Tigris River.
The fortress consists of a high tower, rooms, fortifications, marshals, hardware stores and underground tunnels that link the castle with the Old City and other secret tunnels outside the city. It is one of seven castles that were part of the old Mosul wall. The wall of Mosul was built in 180 AH. Then the castle was demolished by the Basasiri in 450 AH and was re-built by the Amear of the Aqili in Mosul 474 AH / 1081 AD. He was interested in the castle in the era of the state of Tabakia in the era of Imad al-Din Zanki and his son Nur al-Din Zanki in the fifth century of migration and fortress. The eastern part of the Altabic state was destroyed in the Holaco campaign in 660 AH and in the campaign of Tamerlane in 726 AD. It was re-built during the reign of Wali Bakr Pasha Ismail Almusli with the Mosul Wall in 625 AD, he added to it a high tower and it was restored and built during the reign of the governor of Mosul Hussein Pasha al-Jalili in 1743AD.

4. Castle Qara Sarai
To the south of the tomb of Yehya Abu Al Qasim and al Tahra church lies, a view of the Castle Qara Sarai which is a Turkish word that means the Black Sarai or the Black Palace, which is the remains of the buildings of the era of Attic Figure (4), built by the Governor of Mosul Badr Eddin in 636 AH / 1231AD. It is also the residence of the government. This house was inhabited by the Hamdans and the Aqeelites, and later, by Imad al-Din al-Zanki.
5. The Church and the monastery of Tahra
Adjacent to Yehya Abu Al Qasim stands Altahra church which is also known as the Upper Monastery Church, shown in Figure (5), [9], which was built by Hassan Pasha al-Jalili after the defeat of Nadir Shah Tahmasp in 1744 AD. On the foundation of Abbasid church, the last date of 1878 coincided with new additions. These renovations were carried out under the reign of Bishop Bahnam Samarji. This date was discussed on the door of the outer temple [10]. In 1940, the stone was laid by Patriarch Boutros IV. The building was completed on Sunday, 22 December 1896. The construction work was carried out by donations from Mosul. The building was supervised by the architects Naum Hanna al-Aswad and Shammun Tanbouri, the oldest of Mosul's architects. In the 1950s, facilities were added to the site. Its surface is reinforced concrete.

The church contains very interesting and important building element which is considered as the best and refined architectural heritage of Mosul.

Figure 5 Yehya Abu Al Qasim and Altahra church near each other on the banks of the Tigress

6. The shrine (tomb) of Yahya Abu al-Qasim
It is one of the most important Abbasid buildings and one of five buildings in Iraq. It came from the Abbasid period and dates back to the third century AH, [25]. The tomb passed through the first historical stages when the tomb was erected on the tomb after the death of Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Fath. And the second stage after the destruction of the shrine and the mosque Qud before the year 615 AH 1211 AD, in the era of Badr al-Din Loloa in 636 AH / 1231 AD and the establishment of a shrine on the tomb of Imam Yahya Abu al-Qasim Ibn al-Hassan Ibn Ali Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. In the Battle of Taf in Karbala, as it is written on the wall on the side (719 AH / 1319 AD), which is the maintenance work carried out by one of the city's buildings at the time. The fourth architectural role dates back to the year 1916 AD when the Directorate of Antiquities at that time established two pillars based on a terrace on the eastern wall on the river side, shown in Figure (6), to prevent it from collapsing due to cracking since 1907, [19]. The fifth stage was in 1980 when I was commissioned by the Regional Centre for the Conservation of Cultural Property in the Arab World of the United Nations to prepare a study with the Indian Professor Sharma for required maintenance procedures and consolidation. The Department of Antiquities carried out part of the work under the supervision of the late Dr. Bahnam Abul-Souf when he was the Director General of the Department of Archaeology and Heritage in the Northern Region (Figures 7 to 9) and after it was the sixth stage which was conducted in July 1997 and ended in November 1999 and continued maintenance work for two years and three months. This last and most important role in the maintenance work was carried out at the expense of one of the donors, who removed all the historical monuments from the building and it became just a modern building (the ISIS demolished the building which was considered as one of the most important Abbasid landmarks until then), [23].
7. Natural environment
The location of the castle is characterized by its unique natural environment and (Micro Climate) because of its high altitude and its being surrounded by the Tigress River from the east and north, where the prevailing wind passes through the forests. The air is moistened and purified and then becomes wet through the river and then becomes clear and wet through the forests on the right side and the site is part of the so-called environmental corridor, shown in Figure (10) [1]. This unique environment calls for special attention and investment, landscape that embodies more historical sites than anywhere in Mosul, making this area of the northern Mosul suitable as tourism development area worth to be an international historical site that draws tourists' from all over the world.

In addition to the historical site and climate, the area is characterized by its unique geology and various heights, Figure 11. In view of its splendour and health wells, in the past Mosul was supplied with medicinal minerals from this area, it was called the Shifa district which means a place of curing from illness; it was a place of worship, medication and leisure.

The river bank was used by vehicles and as pedestrian path until the closure of the road in the fifties of the last century, which necessitated the return of this part as right of way.

Although the management of water and dams’ authorities claim that they built Adam, in fact, they did not build the part that is adjacent to this site. The dam was built only from the bridge to Qara Sarai and
was not completed to reach this site since 1980, which should be completed in order to allow pedestrians to reach the site.

![Figure 9](image1.png) The building just before demolition by ISIS, [25]

![Figure 10](image2.png) The ecological system of the site, [1].

![Figure 11](image3.png) Geological map of Mosul and the site position, [1].

### 8. Rehabilitation and renovation

The conservation and maintenance of the technical infrastructure of the streets and dams is the most important task to do to ensure that the river erosion does not cause the collapse of the embankment and therefore affect the adjacent buildings.

On archaeological sites, road rehabilitation will make a clear link between all the basic components of the project mentioned and the establishment of (Corniche) river street which had been abandoned because of abuses on the river shoulder. The river street link will create neighbourhoods that contain different religions and provide cases to all technical infrastructure and links to the main streets between the two important bridges in the city and direct access to the plain land and fast roads. This will create access to all water, electricity and sewage services.

The previous schools in site had been neglected. The historical well known religious school was removed which was in the historical building adjacent to the shrine and it existed until 1980 there was also the removal of all the historical structural elements from the windows and decoration of the building. They were replaced with a modern concrete block that makes the building appear as a new house, in contrast with the outer space distribution (negative space) and its relation to the building (positive space).
Building stands as free standing, of a Greek building, not Islamic and one of the axioms of Islamic architecture is that the building is part of its surrounding building overlooking the courtyard and thus creates a space drama that occurs when the individual walks in a closed space bar and is surprised with openness to the courtyard of the building. This is a real form that cannot be overlooked by a small trainee, [19] as shown in Figure (12).

In the southern corner of the shrine there is a sharp gradient to the river that can be used as open theatre this serves the church and the shrine, the river theatre will be a reason for social interaction between the Christian and Islamic religions, with beautiful views on the river and the city of Mosul, Figure (13).

In order to give the area a historical Islamic character and support development and investment, a shared space between the shrine and the church is proposed in the form of a market with arches to give the theme of the Islamic space of the complex as shown in Figure (14). This will restore the building to its space and its Islamic use which can provide investment opportunities as well as aesthetics of the complex.

After the completion of the proposed dam and the restoration of the river's walkway we will have a golden opportunity to river street (cornishe) which will connect all the components of the complex, the castle, the shrine, the theatre, the church and Qara Saray with each other, as well as connecting the complex to the city, this will assert its existence as a tourist attraction and supplement the old city. It is advised to avoid the shape of the embankment at (Angle of repose) and make stepped bank in the form of terraces that will facilitate direct access to the river bank form, [24].

**Figure 12** Main site building arrangement purposed, the market the shrine the church and the theatre.

**Figure 13** The stepped river embankment forms open theatre and Arabic arched market leads from the main road to the shrine.
Building elements: Renovation meant dealing with building elements maintenance history. Before the maintenance of the shrine in 1990, the shrine contained the most beautiful glazed and unglazed brick walls and structural elements, both of which form a unique type of decoration that characterizes Iraq, this was replaced by cement mortar work (Talass) which necessitates replacement with the same old decoration as shown in Figure 15, called (Alabaster), the same material used by Assyrians in winged bulls and palaces. The walls were decorated with patterned stone inscription, which dates back to the so-called Samarra II. Also, the patterned stones (Farshe) were decorated with black marble for writing Qur'anic verses and the names of the imams and determining the date and ownership of the building, as shown in Figure 16.

The building bricks were replaced in 1917 from the outside by standard bricks and in the style of the English bond. It is therefore necessary to reconstruct it with the same construction and style that was previously built with the building containing the iron structure for easy loading of weights and speed in construction. [14].

The original Abbasid tomb wooden box is exhibited at the Iraqi museum. The tomb was replaced with Fabric cover, the wooden tomb box should be reconstructed using wood to provide the original look for the shrine interior and all the added decoration should be replaced to match the originals, as shown in Figure 17.
9. Conclusion

1- The existence of a peaceful coexistence between the community components in the historic city of Mosul is rooted in the collective memory due to the proximity of religious symbols to the inhabitants of the Old City; therefore, it can be exploited as restart point to the rehabilitation of society in the city centre to overcome the period of war and beyond liberation.

2- The religious and heritage symbols are concentrated in the area of historic city; this area is away from the commercial core, and in the middle of the historic city centre, that will help us to create recreational activities to serve the city's residents in this area without competition powers on land use.

3- And this will connect them with intangible symbols of the city and its heritage to strengthen the spirit of citizenship again and strengthen them.

4- The determining of heritage area by tourist’s use of activities will help attract investments to the region and revive it again, and create jobs for the residents of the historical center, which will encourage the restoration of their settlement in the city.

5- The axis between the Christian Church and the Islamic Shrine reflects an epic ready for cultural and intellectual investment, so we can consider it a model of peaceful coexistence, which helps to erase the previous phase with all the pains, and create basic principles for peaceful coexistence between the community components of one city.

6- Organizing a movement between commercial and historical axes helps to spread the pressure on services in the city centre, which will help to create a balance in the distribution of employment opportunities and therefore value of land for all parts of the historical center of the city, especially that this axis is not used until the events of 2014.
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