

Kandovan, an Unique Cultural Landscape of Iran, Issues and Strategies

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT: In 60 km southwest of Tabriz in East Azarbaijan province, a village with magnificent rock architecture has been formed. The most famous history of about 6,000 years, annually hosts more than 300,000 domestic and foreign tourists. The conical and pyramidal masses formed by the volcanic interactions of the Sahand mountain from thousands of years ago made it possible to settle on the slopes of this mountain. Today this type of landscape is seen in only two examples of the hills in the world (Cappadocia in Turkey, Dakota in the USA) with the advantage of Kandovan, that unlike the mentioned examples which have no inhabitants, the Iranian case is a touristic village and has more than 120 families with the living and working facilities.

Exclusive architecture of Kandovan village along with its residents' flow of life in its old texture form is considered as a unique phenomenon in the world, since, no one is found, anymore, to live in Cappadocia of Turkey or Dakota of U.S. Kandovan is a lively village built at the heart of rocks, and stone is the only structure of the village. The houses are in pyramid-form and some holes have been considered for livestock of the villagers. Certainly, the ultimate goal of the present article is considering the village as the pattern to its two similar cases, hoping that the authorities and responsible in the field of culture and tourism consider the village as a source of inspiration and take some steps compared to revival actions of the two exclusive cases since protecting historical and natural heritages has economic and cultural importance from the tourism perspective.

Revival and introducing a progressive plan might be accompanied by the best positive cultural and economic results. This revival project, of course, has some certain dangers and potential threats for the elimination of historical and natural signs of the current texture, requiring a scientific and professional attitude and approach. The issue, which, unfortunately, has been ignored is that more than one decade attempts have been fruitless in registering the village in the UNESCO's historical monuments' list (unlike the other two above mentioned cases). In fact, modern human interferences in the form of unpermitted constructions have threatened historical signs and cultural value of the village. These are the barriers, which in the belief of UNESCO's experts, should be eliminated. Hence, the lessons taken from Kandovan village should be noted and considered by authorities of cultural heritage and tourism industry responsible.

KEYWORDS: Kandovan, cultural landscape, tourism, rock architecture, UNESCO



Figure 1. Village of Kandovan



Figure 2. Village of Kandovan

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