

Original Research Article

Ritual Landscape from the Perspective of Tourism

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Abstract | Human beings, to diagnose for recognition of their beliefs and opinions, have always expressed the mental concepts hidden in them in a symbolic and allegorical way and in the form of specific actions called “ritual”. Rituals have played a significant role in restating the cultural components of societies and cultural groups. Moreover, they are considered as important tourist attractions of ancient civilizations such as Iran. Landscape as a multi-capacity form of cognition provides the opportunity of awareness of important aspects of ritual tourism and re-reading the roots, capabilities, and different types of rituals to provide new horizons in the field of tourism development. The current article aims to study examine the different dimensions of ritual landscapes and use its capabilities and attractions by adopting a landscape tourism approach to ritual places and events., which is discussed by examining examples of ritual landscapes in Iran.

Throughout history, human beings have created myths and used rituals to meet their material and semantic needs. Rituals, as a practical form of beliefs, have three physical, semantic, and social aspects that are formed by the superposition combination of three factors of human, human environment, and nature. Continuity of beliefs and meanings, the possibility of recognizing cultural and identity components, and improving the social and participatory quality of tourism, are among the capabilities of ritual landscapes in improving the tourism experience. Adopting the view of landscape tourism in addressing the role of rituals and promoting the position of tourists from mere observers to activists in interaction and communication with the environment has led to the question of what and why the rituals to recognize and achieve cultural meanings and values hidden in them.

Keywords | *Ritual landscape, Landscape tourism, Ritual tourism, Myth, Ritual.*

Introduction | People have long traveled to visit sites that they consider sacred or unique or to distance themselves from everyday life (Eliade, 1961) Nowadays, rituals have become one of the factors in the development of tourism worldwide, and as a result of the tourist nation of religious and ritual landscapes, the dual nature and at the same time the religious (sacred) and tourist (material) places have been formed for such purposes (Bremer, 2001, 3). According to annual reports, Evidence shows that 250 million tourists, including Muslims, Christians, and Hindus, travel for a ritual visit and pilgrimage go on a pilgrimage (Jackowski, 2000), which highlights the need to address the various dimensions of rituals and their place position in the development of tourism programs. The landscape is a way to know the world and study how

man interacts with the environment. and By explaining the physical-semantic dimensions of phenomena, it provides new dimensions of the human relationship with the environment through cultural components such as rituals. Truth-seeking and the desire to discover the unknown are the basis for the formation of ritual tourism. The landscape approach to ritual tourism can transform this phenomenon from an act based on movement in space to knowledge and exaltation with special capacity. It requires being in a place to experience the meaning in which human beings live (Niknam, 2014). With the ritual quality of indistinguishable space, it becomes a specific place in human travel plans through which they experience the desired landscapes and by gaining a new understanding of the world, they narrate experiences for themselves and others.

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The role of The narrator of rituals and myths about in the view of the people of land towards the world around them plays an important role in understanding the culture of any land. Observing customs along with discovering the truth of rituals and understanding why and the meaning behind rituals - beliefs of society – is the answer to the question is that what attracts the tourist’s mind (Ghazanfari & Javadi, 2009). Investigating the nature and capabilities of ritual landscapes as tourist destinations by relying on the cultural and social role of rituals can form new dimensions of tourism development. The purpose of this article is to answer the question of (I) which features of ritual landscapes can play a role in the development of the tourism industry and if the landscape tourism view of rituals is applied, (II) what positive results will be achieved for by the tourism industry?

Research background

So far, numerous researches studies have been written on the relationship between landscape and tourism. One group considers landscape as a place of location for the tourists’ experience and cultural understanding of the environment (Bell & Lyall, 2002), and another group has a more semantic view of the relationship between the two, including re-theorizing tourism for the social construction of meanings in landscape (Knudsen, 2008), paying attention to landscape tourism as an epistemological system (Mansouri, 2014 & 2020), and a simultaneous economic and socio-cultural role (Mansouri & Shafia, 2019) that can create a new paradigm in the realization of sustainable tourism (Parchekani, 2015). Ritual tourism is derived from the recent perspective on the role of landscape in tourism and has a diverse scope of research; including understanding the culture, customs of the destination community through ritual tourism (Ghazanfari & Javadi, 2010; Javadi, 2018), the study of collective rituals derived from common beliefs, including mourning (Beigi, 2019) and ancient rituals (Sepehr & Rahimi, 2012), explain explanation of the similarities between tourism and pilgrimage based on the recognition of realities such as self and the world (Niknam, 2015). Based on the physical-semantic role of ritual landscapes, the present study explains the various dimensions and factors affecting ritual tourism and its place role in recognizing the recognition of the world through landscape tourism.

Ritual tourism

Tourism is a multifaceted phenomenon that examines the movement of human beings to a destination other than their usual place of residence for leisure (Ziaee & Torab Ahmadi, 2012, 13). Depending on the destination, the

goals of tourists may be to gain new experiences (Smith, 2012) and to have fun, and distance themselves from the usual process of work and life, and distance from the usual process of work and life.; In general, tourism can be considered a ritual of “inversion of life” in its everyday meaning (Graburn, 2004). Landscape tourism is an advanced system of meaning and knowledge that aims to achieve growth and perfection. In this process, reading the landscape is accompanied by the narration of why the manifestations of civilization appeared and in addition to transferring the findings that leads to the promotion of tourists’ insights, it provides a great attraction for them to remain in the process of growth and discovering the truth (Mansouri, 2015; Mansouri, 2018). In the meantime, rituals as acts derived from beliefs have a great contribution to obtaining information about tourism destinations. Furthermore, and by involving tourists with rituals held in ritual places, the tourist’s role is promoted from an observer to an active activist concerning the environment. Relying on the multifaceted nature of rituals, s/he succeeds in discovering, experiencing, and knowing the world that relies on the multifaceted nature of religions, s/he succeeds in discovering, experiencing, and knowing the world (Fig. 1).

Wherever religious individuals have created places of interaction with sacred forces and concepts, tourism practices can create a place worth visiting (Bremer, 2006: 25). According to Kaszowski, the process of the cultural transformation of natural and geographical landscapes into ritual and sacred landscapes is associated with changing the behaviors, habits, and mentalities of local communities (Kaszowski, 2000). In this regard, we must first identify the distinctive nature of the ritual landscape and the areas affecting its formation, and in the next stage, by recognizing the characteristics of tourism based

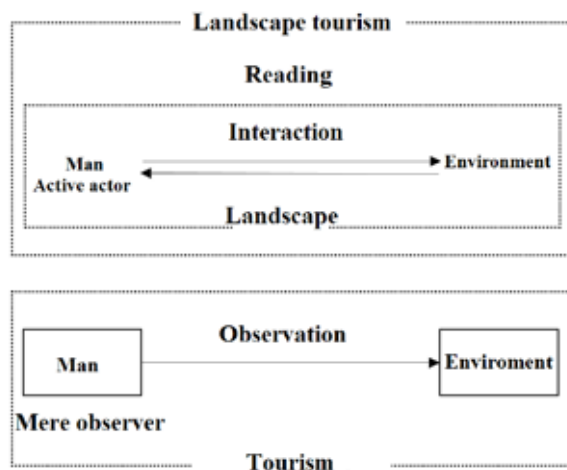


Fig. 1. Conceptual model of landscape tourism, Source: Author, 2020.

on ritual landscapes, explain the position role of rituals in achieving the goals of landscape tourism.

The roots origins of the formation of ritual landscapes

Myths are considered as metaphors and mental examples of the beliefs and convictions of human societies and their objective translation are seen is appeared in the form of rituals. Consequently, it can be said that the distance between beliefs and rituals is the distance between thought and movement (Fakuhi, 2004). Myths, as a part of history, including man's human's view of himself, the world around him, and its developments (Bahar, 2010, 15), and as polysemous concepts are related to the human epistemological and cognitive system. Correspondingly, rituals as a practical manifestation of beliefs are closely related to the myths of each civilization and are the result of human efforts to understand the world and its phenomena. Myths, as "cultural facts," were the hallmarks of cultures and civilizations and required practical crystallization in the objective world. In this regard, rituals were created as an objective reflection of these mythical ideas. Rituals are considered as the symbol of the cultural and religious ideas and differences of human societies. Therefore, and are considered as the common link between the past and the future.

Another reason for the formation of rituals is the inherent human need to make meaningful and sanctify the elements essential for survival, which is the result of knowing and understanding the world and its surroundings and capabilities. Iranians likewise realized the impact of natural elements on their quality of life. For this reason, Accordingly, many of these elements such as water, tree, the sun (Mehr), and ... etc. have given a mythical aspect and have formed places and ritual events related to them. Since the issue problem of water scarcity in Iran has caused the semantic importance of this functional element, and by dedicating the myth of Anāhitā to it, rituals have been formed to sanctify it. Regarding the collective way of holding most rituals and the collective agreement of cultural groups to perform them, preservation of the collective identity of different ethnic groups is the most important feature of the rituals. By being able to connect with history in the form of the common experience of individuals, provide knowledge of the identity components of the people of each land. For example, in Iran, many rituals have been performed created following the marriage sanctity of natural elements and myths related to

them, which shows the importance of nature and its manifestations such as water and trees, mountains, and ... etc. in Iranian culture.

Ritual landscapes tourism capabilities

Ritual landscapes are the result of society's interaction with the surrounding environment and have a narrator role in recounting the cultural and social aspects of different societies. Holding rituals in the form of collective actions arising from common beliefs, add a semantic dimension to the body of space and the interaction of two objectives and mental aspects resulting from this interaction has created ritual landscapes (Abarghouei Fard, 2018). Paying attention to rituals in the context of ritual landscape tourism provides the knowledge of new dimensions of the cultural context of different societies and its reflection in their specific geographical range. Consequently, each of the social, physical, and semantic dimensions of the rituals demonstrates a way of human interaction with the environment, and addressing them is essential for the prosperity of tourism.

• Social dimension

Tourism experiences are inherently multifaceted and exploratory, and tourists meet their expectations through interaction with others. When tourists are treated as passive recipients of destination products, this active and interactive aspect of tourist behavior is easily overlooked (Selstad, 2007). While the significance of a place is the result of social relations between individuals and different groups, this issue is seen in religious places due to the sacred nature of the site (Bremer, 2006, 26). After mass collective rituals and ceremonies, people unify in the new social structure or a new combination of social relations becomes one (Gluckman, 1962, 1). Besides, and rituals change the position, role, and location of the individual (Fortes, 1962. 55-57). In many ritual places, space acts as a container for the expression and recognition of common beliefs of individuals, and the collective holding of rituals has a double effect on this issue.

The collective experience of being in spiritual space is much stronger than other spaces that have more individuality. The social nature of the rituals improves the participatory and social nature of tourism experiences and allows participants and tourists to experience effective authenticity and cultural differences. As a result of social characteristics, in many societies, including Iran, religious places have been closely related to recreation and travel. The intertwining of the concept of pilgrimage as a ritual practice with the concept of recreation is one of the obvious manifestations of the collective aspect of rituals among Iranians. This issue has led to the formation of the tradition of pilgrimage-

recreation and pilgrimage trips among Iranians. In these trips, in which recreation and pilgrimage are carried out in such a way that simultaneously, as far as its traces have been documented in the writings manuscripts of travel writers and even folklore and folk poems (Fig 2). Such trips combine travel and relaxation with a spiritual atmosphere. As in the past, pilgrimage trips to the holy city of Mashhad and sometimes lasts six months in Karbala and near the shrines of Imam Hussein (AS) and Imam Ali (AS) (Javadi, 2018).

• Semantic dimension

Rituals are the private or public expressions of individuals to reflect different meanings and to present their image and their world to the audience (Palmer & Jankowiak, 1996, 226). The meaningful content of religious sites relies on the overlap of identity narratives that establishes the links between religious followers and tourist visitors to that site. It has a narrative role in establishing the continuous and integrated identity of places (Bremer, 2006, 25). By “making the environment as a performance showing”, it serves the ultimate goal of tourism, which is to see places, things, and sights different from the daily life of tourists (Knudsen, 2008). Rituals, by symbolical expression and periodical



Fig. 2. Pilgrimage and recreation together as a stimulus for tourism and cultural phenomena in the ritual perspective of Imamzadeh Saleh shrine in Tehran. Source: <http://newspaper.hamshahronline.ir/>.

repeating of meanings and beliefs over time, have perpetuated the identity of societies and cultural groups, and this can be attractive to observers and outsiders, including tourists. Since the sanctity of the element of water in Iran and the assignment of the Anahita myth to it in the Islamic period only metamorphosed and its fixed content, namely the sanctity of water as a cultural feature of Iranians has continued differently. The ritual of seeking water and appealing to Anahita in the Islamic period is seen in the form of appealing to Hazrat Fatima (PBUH) and Saqqa of Karbala. Ritual landscapes such as shrines and fire temples attributed to Anahita and Mehr (God of the Sun) in the form of places such as places of Kija Tekyej, Saqanfarhaand tombs of elders in the Islamic period have continued to live (Javadi, 2007) (Fig. 3). Although most of the religious rituals can be seen in Islamic festivals and mourning ceremonies, in many cases due to the connection and close relationship between Islamic and ancient rituals, we see rituals that look Islamic but have ancient roots, such as the Ardehal Kashan carpet washing ceremony, which is held every year in the middle of Mehr 6th of October and is rooted in the beliefs related to the Mithraism Mehr religion.

• Physical dimensions

The most important factor in the survival of people's beliefs is to embody them in the form of temples and shrines. One of the main reasons for the formation of myths and rituals related to them is the human effort to know the world and then master the natural factors and conditions; for this reason. Therefore, many Iranian Persian myths have been formed in connection with natural elements and rituals have been formed regarding to the worship of these elements. Ritual places in most religions were determined based on the natural characteristics of the environment and in close relationship with nature. Nature itself is considered sacred because of its high importance and value, and the power of sacred places and landscapes is due to the simultaneous tangible [objective] and symbolic [semantic] meaning of natural elements and their relation to myths, legends, and gods attributed to natural elements (Mann, 2010).

In the geographical area of Iran, the effect impact of rituals has a manifestation and is a common physical pattern that has continued throughout the history of this civilization., the three elements of the tree, water, and holy place have formed a special type of ritual landscapes that can be seen in different parts of Iran (Mansouri & Javadi, 2018). Holy tree, holy spring, Chartaghi Chahartaq (fire temple) buildings and holy mountains and places that are the tombs of the elders and shrines, mosques, as well as some churches and tomb towers that were located in the heart of nature and by the river, fountain or aqueduct are

other examples of the naturalism of Iranian rituals and culture. Also in Iran, rituals with a cultural manifestation in the public imagination are often related to ancient ceremonies that are used to celebrate natural elements; such as Pir Shahriyar celebration, Kumsai celebration, and Tosheh celebration which are among the ancient ritual ceremonies of Oramanat Takht village (Fig. 4).

Instances

The manner and mode procedure of occurrence and location of rituals is not only dependent on the holy place. Sometimes a specific time meaning such as mourning days leads to the formation of a ritual landscape in cities and villages. Rituals generally have two spatial and temporal manifestations. The spatial dimension of the rituals is related to ritual landscapes such as shrines, tombs, etc., and the temporal dimension is related to the holding of special ritual ceremonies that are part of the culture, customs, and religion of the communities. In both cases, the repetitively in a specific place and time and the symbolic and social nature of the rituals cause people to communicate and interact with different places and reproduce part of the body, meaning, and identity of different spaces in people's minds. This can be due to the cultural or religious dimensions of a society, which in many cases are inseparable.

• Ritual time

Holding rituals at certain times of the year is another aspect of the mental impact of rituals that gives meaning to different places at specific and sacred times. Ritual time - according to Emile Durkheim, as "common time between members of a group" (Durkheim, 1965, 23)- is the result of the formation of ritual events and happenings are at specific times. Ritual and ceremonies are a type of human behavior with a common belief and social origin that is done takes place to preserve and express beliefs



Fig. 3. The juxtaposition of the Quran and water in the ancient altar of Kahnnoj Madim Kahnuh-e Modim village, which is known today as the Islamic name of Cheshmeh Morteza Ali, Photo: Narges Ghadyani, 2017.



Fig. 4. Pir Shaliar ritual in Oramanat village, that is among the naturalistic rituals in Iranian culture and a tourist attraction in Kurdistan province, Photo: Mohammad Barkar, 2016.

and strengthen social cohesion (Khorramroui, Mahan & Farzin, 2018, 59). The meaning and power of periodic occasions and events can create a kind of collective self-awareness and change spaces and create social spaces (Picard & Robinson, 2006).

Examples of ritual times in Iranian culture include ancient celebrations such as Nowruz, Mehregan, Tirgan, etc., some of which have continued to this day up to now and others have lost their importance and formality over time. National mourning ceremonies have also been accompanied by extensive and public ceremonies. For many years, these ceremonies and rituals have been repeated as national rituals for many years in the past (and now) by national and religious elders and have many different examples in different historical periods. Events that, due to their impact, have manifested themselves in various artistic dimensions such as music, literature, architecture, and drama (Fig. 5).

• Ritual place

The spatial aspect of rituals is related to the special meaning and experience of people in a specific point, which causes it to be distinguished from the surrounding spaces. The formation of neighborhood centers and urban city centers as a focal point of social the social focal points in the vicinity of ritual places is common in many cities and villages. and The impact of this issue on the tourism aspect of the places is such that in some cases we see caused the formation of ritual and pilgrimage cities such as Qom and Mashhad. In cities such as Mashhad, Qom, Ashrafieh, and Shahreza, the effect impact of ritual on the formation of the city's identity is so that the city is known with that identity. From the perspective of some of these cities, the supremacy of the ritual aspect goes beyond the mental dimensions of the city identity and is reproduced



Fig. 5. The mourning ceremony of Imam Hossein (AS) in Bushehr, one of the annual ritual events in Iran, source: <http://fa.wikishia.net/>.

by placing the tomb in the physical center of the city and arranging other spaces around it (Abarghouei Fard, Saboonchi & Farzin, 2018).

Conclusion

The necessity to make meaningful and sanctify the vital elements, to understand and represent the world and its phenomena, and to achieve cultural and identity stability are among the grounds for the formation of rituals and ritual landscapes. By paying attention to ritual paces and connecting them with the myths and collective subconscious of the inhabitants of a land, it is possible to achieve a different understanding of the culture, beliefs, customs, and opinions of its people. In the continuation path of continuity of beliefs, rituals as a practical reflection of mental concepts such as myths have continued to live along with historical and religious

developments and relying on their semantic aspect, they have reproduced the cultural values of societies. The three factors of nature, human, and human environment are the three main building blocks of ritual landscapes, each of which has unique characteristics for these landscapes. Recognition of identity and cultural component, continuity of beliefs and meanings, improving the participatory nature of tourism experiences are among the results of the landscape tourism view of attention to the category of rituals. Re-reading the social, semantic, and physical content of ritual landscapes in the form of ritual places and events provides the ground paves the way for understanding the culture of communities and tourism destinations and increases the quality of travel from data and information to the understanding of the intellectual and semantic contexts behind the rituals as cultural phenomena (Fig. 6).

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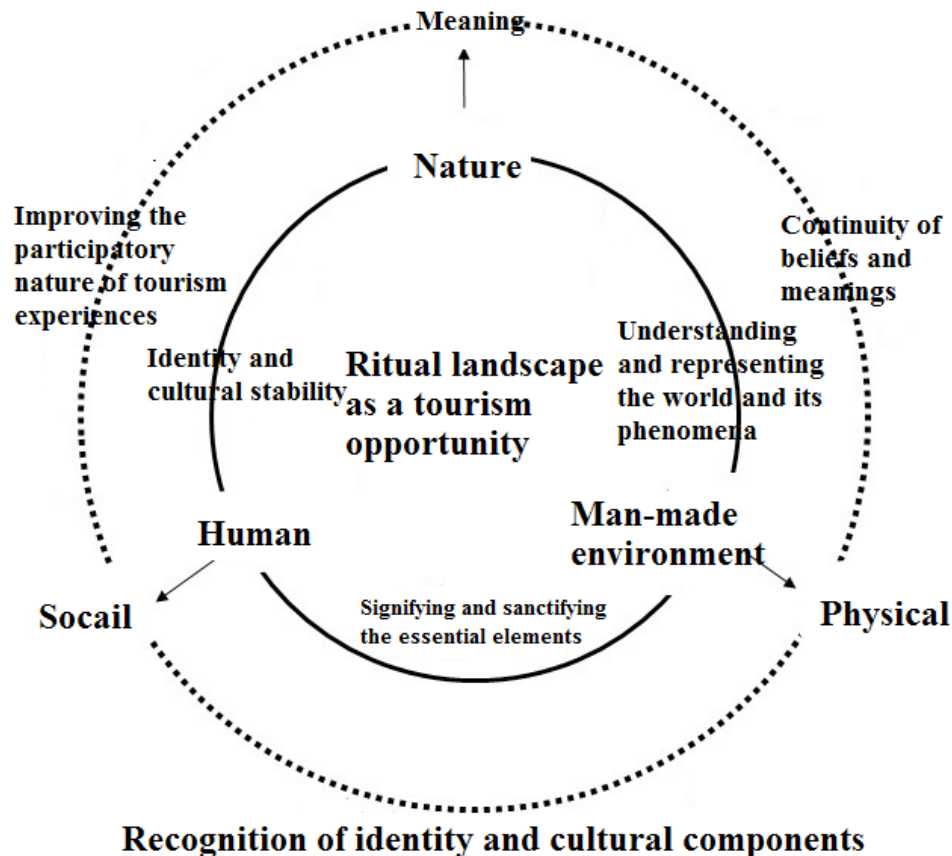


Fig. 6. Conceptual model of landscape tourism view towards ritual landscapes, Source: Author, 2020.

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