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Archi-Cultural Translations through the Silk Road
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A DELEUZEAN INTERPRETATION OF URBAN MORPHOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION
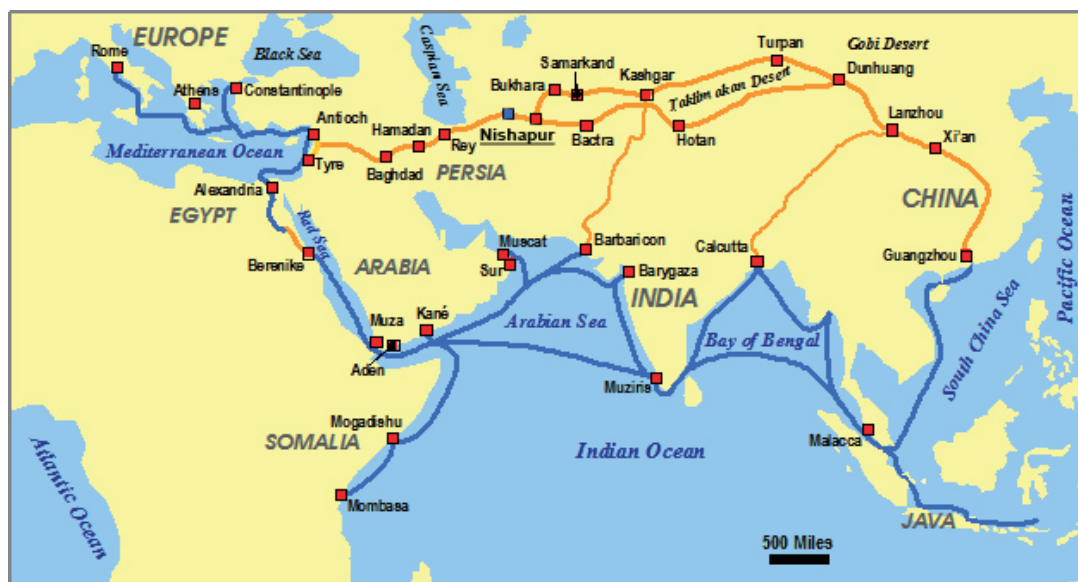
Saeid Nazari Adli[1], Mohsen Mohamadzadeh[1]

[1] *University of Auckland, New Zealand*

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1   Background

Silk Road, also called The Silk Route which was an ancient trade route, linking China with the West, carried goods and ideas among three great civilizations of Rome, Persia and China. Originating at Xi'an (Sian), the 4,000-mile (6,400-km) road, actually a caravan tract; follows its rout to west to Nishapur in Iran and goes to Levant; form there, merchandise was shipped across the Mediterranean to cities. Nishapur was important place on the Silk Road between Iran and Central Asia and at its glory was a rival to cities like Cairo and Baghdad in medieval ages. Nishapur was known as an economic center and was a source of turquoise and a center for producing silk and cotton textiles. The city of Nishapur was connected to other cities on Silk Road by trade and ideas flowing through the Silk Road.

Figure 1: The Silk Road and location of the city of *Nishapur*

(Britannica 2012)

2 Deleuzean definition of flows

City is not enclosure mechanism; but it inevitably relies on its connections with other cities through prominently flows (Brenner, Madden, and Wachsmuth 2011; Dovey 2005; Farías 2011; McFarlane 2011). "Through its multiplicity an assemblage is shaped by and acts on a wide range of flows" (Livesey 2010, 18). This definition is against the traditional utopias which have been mostly theorized as a delimit mechanism such as Plato's 'Republic' and/or More's 'Utopia' (Stavrakakis 2011, 301). Amin (2004, p. 34) states "cities . . . come with no automatic promise of territorial or systemic integrity, since they are made through the spatiality of flow, juxtaposition, porosity and relational connectivity". However, the process of globalization extends interdependences of cities, the global flows such as financial, migration and information become indispensable for the existence of the contemporary cities operation (Jacobs 2011). Historic cities also had been largely relied on their connections; this seems more significant for cities such as Nishpur which located in the trading roads. Briefly, city is an assemblage with all characters, it is not predetermined or pre-formed, it is dynamic instead of static, but it is determined by flows (Dovey, 2005).
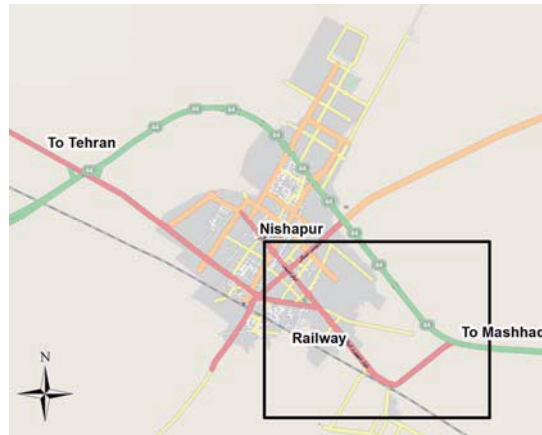
City is a product and also producer of flows (Dovey, 2005). Urban historians such as Morris (1994), and Mumford (1986), among the others, elucidate that the first human settlements, as collection of countable huts, were constituted in the middle of fertile lands beside the permanent rivers, when the Neolithic agricultural revolution created flows of surplus-food as an essential prerequisite to settle a larger number of people in a geographical point. Weber, in his foremost book "the City"(1958), extensively elucidates that how pedlars and traffickers rebuilt most of existing European cities beside of the Roman's roads congestions in the Middle-Ages. The roads as veins facilitated the movements of commodities, people and even ideas which assisted to reshape socio-cultural, economic and political constitutions in the middle ages cities. Furthermore, the prosperous Italian city-states and most of cities in silk city were the intercontinental trading hubs which attract flows of luxurious goods such as silk, hemp and other fine fabrics, musk, spices, medicines and jewels from other continents and then redistributed the commodities around the their local urban regions and Europe. By discovering new sea routs alongside with discovering the new continents the direction of flows had been changed dramatically, these Mediterranean cities such as Venice and cities in the silk road lost the bargaining privilege in contesting with the new trading hubs such as Amsterdam and London (Martin and Romano 2000). Nevertheless, the connectivity of cities also was, and yet is, challenging for their existence of them. In between, roads particularly facilitate movement of armies and/or diseases. For instance, the Silk Road generated adequate circumstance to conquer Middle East for Turks tribes, Mongolians and lastly Tatars which mostly demolished cities. Thereupon, flows and connectivity are imperative for existence of cities and their operations. Also, they are problematic.

3 The history of Nishapur

Nishapur (Newshapureh) was a wide administrative area of the territory of the Sassanian dynasty. The origin of the city returns to 244 A.D. by building a military fortress (Kohan Dezh) and a Zoroastrian fire temple with hands of Roman captives (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, the main glorious time of Nishapur was after Islam. When Nishapur was conquered by Arab tribes, the fire temple was converted to a mosque and the city became the main city of the region as a military base and also administrative city (Fig. 4). In 823 AD Taher, the first local Iranian king after Isalm, got the control of this region and made Nishapur his capital city and

built many buildings in city as well as at suburbs of city which was called Shadiakh (Fig. 5). In his time Nishapur expanded and prospered and became one of the most important Islamic education centres at ninth century.

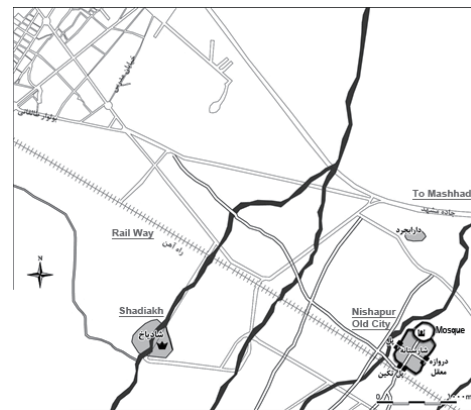Figure 2: Current Nishapur Map and the magnified area

(Open Street Map 2012)

Figure 3: Nishpur before Islam

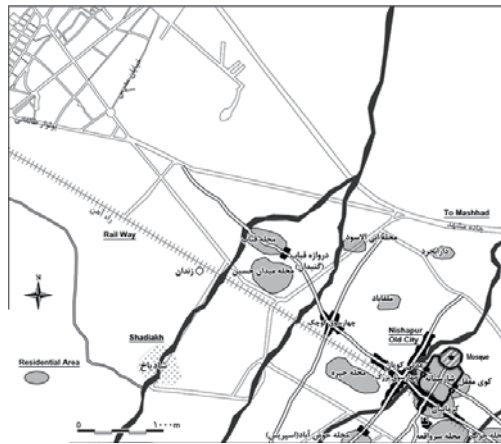Figure 4: Nishapur after Islam

(Pakzad 2011)

The world economy in the ninth century had two powerful engines. One was Tang dynasty China, an empire stretching from the South China Sea to the borders of Persia. The other economic engine was Baghdad, capital of the Abbasid dynasty from 762 A.D. onward. That dynasty inherited the Muslim world in the Middle East; by 750 it had spread as far as the Indus River to the east and Spain to the west, bringing with it trade, commerce, and the religion of Islam (the Prophet Muhammad himself had been a merchant) (Worrall 2009). All sorts of commodities, fauna and flora and ideas were also transmitted along the Silk Road between these two economic powers and the unique position of Nishpur on this flow brought prosperity and glory for it.

Minorsky mentions Bodalaf describing the ninth century Nishapur as a rectangular shape old city with area of around 16 km2, surrounded by high walls, deep moats and huge towers (Minorsky 1978, 86). City was made from five important elements: the governmental castle

(Arg), the mosque (Masjed), the trade center (Bazar), the fortifications with four gates and the suburbs which were containing inns (Caravansary). New large scale constructions in the old city are representative of wealth and prosperity which has been obtained by trade. The caravansaries around the city were the rest and trade places for Caravans from China, India, Baghdad and Istanbul.
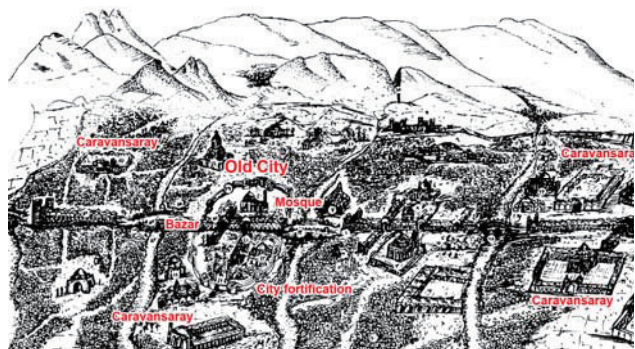
Figure 5: Nishapur at 9th century

(Pakzad 2011)

Figure 6: Aerial photograph of Nishapur

Figure 7: Imaginary photo of Nishpur

(Einifar 2002)

At the end of 10th century and by attack of Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavi followed by attack of Togrol the king of Seljuq dynasty, Nishapur entered its period of weakness. Even though it was no longer the capital city, retained its political and military importance. Some new buildings were built during this time like a new palace and school but the structure of city, more or less, remained the same. The control of city changed time to time between Ghaznavids and Seljuqs and weekend the city's commercial and educational position.

Both Ghaznavids and Seljuqs came from the same network of Silk Road. At this time the flow on Silk Road brought war and conflicts not only between two powerful dynasties but also between different religious. Both Ghaznavids and Seljuqs were Sunni while the people of city were Shiite. During 11th to 13th century clashes between Shiite and Sunni religious and also between different branches of Sunnis cased terrible killings and wildfires which followed by attach of Mongols and the city was totally destroyed.

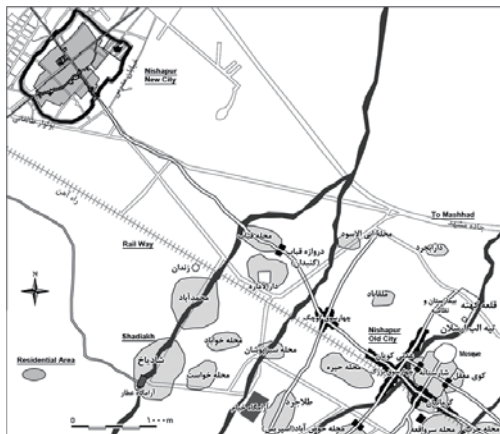Figure 8: Imaginary sketch of Nishpur after destruction

(The Popular science monthly. 1892)

The Mongols were an uncivilized nomadic confederation occupying eastern Mongolia and Manchuria. Their main conflict was with China; however, they could manage to use the network of routs on Silk Road to attach west and laid on a trace of destruction from China to Europe. Again this time the flow on Silk Road brought war and destruction but in a much larger scale in this time. The destruction was so great that the city could never be reconstructed and a new city was built in outskirts of old city.
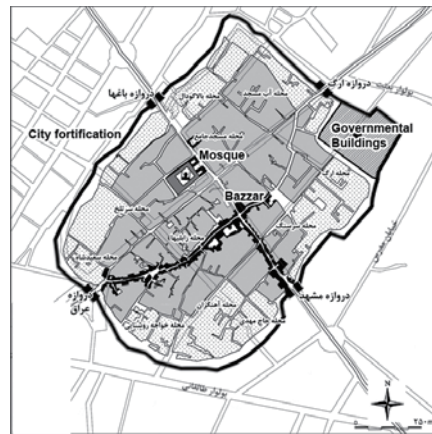
In 15th century the new city was built in today's location by King Shahrokh from Timurid dynasty which still remains and is the core of the current Nishapur. Despite the flow of goods and ideas were still on the Silk Road network, Emergence of a new maritime seafaring network brought a safer alternative for the transportation of goods. Nishpur not only could never rich its glory after that but also was almost a dead city with a small number of population until recent time. The layout of city and its morphological features are shown on figure 7.

Figure 9: Nishapur in 15th century   Figure 10: Nishapur new city in 15 century

(Pakzad 2011)

After First World War, Pahlavi dynasty came to power. Modernization was their main policies. Therefore, in beginning of 20th century the fortifications of city removed and city expanded to other side of moats around the city. A new national network of roads were built for the motor vehicles and after second world war the national rail way network expanded and passed from southern part of city. The flow on these new networks (railway and roads) has still kept the city alive so far.

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4   Research question

This investigate will address the impacts of city's' connectivity and flows on its morphological transformation by deploying Deleuzean notions. It will consider the influence of Silk Road on shaping, development and death Neishpur. Thus, this paper conveys two research approaches, theoretical based on literature review and practical aspects by analysing existing historical maps, archaeological results from the site.

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