ABSTRACT

Shotor Galoo, a heritage site in Mahan, Iran, is a 165-year-old Qaajari\(^1\) garden pavilion that represents the historic royal gardens and pavilions of Iran. These sites teach us about the traditional lifestyle of the Iranian aristocracy and, more importantly, characterize the famous Persian gardens and the enthusiasm of the Persian people for celebrating nature and its resources by creating earthly paradises.

In 1977, the building was registered on the national list of cultural heritage sites based on its aesthetic and architectural values. However, since the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) purchased the property from its last resident owner in June 2007, the building has remained vacant. Besides its own merits, Shotor Galoo’s cultural significance also stems from its proximity to the 15th century mausoleum of the famous Sufi leader, Shah Ne‘ematollah Vali (1329-1431 A.D.), a significant national heritage site.

The garden pavilion lies along the main axis of the mausoleum. The area between the two sites, which at one point featured gardens, is now occupied by various single-story buildings that have been built within the last 35-45 years. On the southwest side, directly adjacent to the site, there is an unoccupied 100-120 year-old earthen courtyard-style housing complex that is now owned by ICHO, and may be adaptively used as a hotel. The author’s thoughts and suggestions regarding the future of Shotor Galoo are based on this premise and on ideas that have been formulated following a substantial research.

This thesis uses conservation planning as a stewardship tool for Iran’s historic royal gardens, parks and pavilions. Considering the fact that mud-brick garden pavilions feature traditional construction techniques and practices that are rapidly fading away, their conservation would

\(^1\) Qaajari refers to an Iranian dynasty that ruled Iran from 1786 to 1925.
be of tremendous value for ICHO as the patron of Iranian heritage. The proposed conservation plan can also serve as a model for conserving similar types of sites in countries and regions with hot and arid climates. Half of the world’s population (3 billion people) live or work in earthen structures, but a lot remains to be learned about their conservation and preservation. Studies of such nature are therefore valuable and essential as they could help save the world’s earthen heritage.

The proposed conservation plan will provide a set of guidelines for conserving Shotor Galoo in such a way that its future survival and maintenance are secured, while its values as a historic site are retained and emphasized. The proximity of the site to the shrine of Shah Ne’ematollah Vali (referred to as “Aastaaneh” by the locals) and their physical connection requires that the axis lying between the two heritage sites also be addressed and reinstated. The revival of this axis will have positive effects that would extend beyond the boundaries of the two sites, and would affect the city of Mahan as a whole. It will serve as an uplifting urban project that would revive the city and create a city center that incorporates the social, commercial, religious and recreational features that are characteristic features of all Iranian historic city centers.