

Investigating the Effect of Strategic Planning on Restoration of Historical Fabrics with Sustainable Development Approach to Cultural Aspects (Case Study: Historical City of Semnan, IRAN)

Ali Khaksari Rafsanjani

Associate Professor
Urban and Regional Planning Department
Social Sciences and Communication Faculty
Allame Tabataba'i University
Teheran, Iran

Hani Rastegaran

Student of M.A
Regional and Urban Planning Oriented Field Urban Management
Architecture and Urban Planning Expert at Iran Cultural Heritage
Handcrafts and Tourism Organization

Abstract

Today, the range of definitions of sustainable development includes a variety of different issues and branches in the various areas of policy making and operation. However, the requirement for achieving the successful sustainable development in all aspects is strategic perspective with the use of strategic management knowledge for decision making in the implementation of operational plans. It has been a missing link and forgotten issue in development projects of development and urban renewal. Strategic planning documented in explaining the cultural perspectives of the cities that part of which is reflected in historical fabrics, can result in rehabilitation and functional determination in order to achieve a sustainable development. This paper examines the impact of strategic planning based on the principles of sustainable development in regeneration and utilization of historical fabrics and cultural urban aspects using documentation, analysis and field survey methods, and as a case sample the improvement solutions of public space and restoration of the historical cultural center of Semnan city which has known as one the most valuable historical cities with lots of worthwhile monuments in Iran, for sustainable cultural development would be debated.

Keywords: Strategic Planning, Cultural Landscape, Restoration of Historical Fabrics, Sustainable Urban Development, Cultural Center, City of Semnan

1. Introduction

Utilization of monuments in our country has a history of less than a decade and has a difficult path to continue. The main factor is unused and destruction of historic sites, the untimely change of people's lifestyle and entrance to the modern technology in architecture; so that has made the modern architecture and urbanism null and void and has made all the cities and public and private buildings alike. Once you went to Yazd, without mentioning the name of the city you would imagine a desert cities like Yazd, Isfahan, Nain, Kerman, and etc. Unfortunately, now is not a reality anymore. Perhaps the beginning of the haunted buildings in the historic fabrics of Iranian cities began since the early seventies. When the Iranian experts were engaged in learning the methods for conservation and restoration at in the Department of National Heritage or were removing the dust of the history of Iran. This happens slowly penetrated into the cities, neighborhoods as well as streets and used the negligence of the Iranian experts to extend this phenomenon. After a decade, with the emergence of intentional and unintentional destruction at the difficult conditions of the war that all of them were thinking and seeking to defend the Islamic Republic of Iran, a group of experts thought of preserving these values and attributed the name of the Islamic Republic of Iran to it as the first solution to prevent this to happen; the building that after years have been reconstructed several times with public funds and now have been left unused.

These buildings are among the ones that were not neglected by the custodians, but if the ownership of about 400 unused historical buildings among hundreds of thousand valuable historical buildings with the same feature in the terms of Iranian architecture was the solution of this issue for a long time (Institution of Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places, 2012). We can say that all of the Iranians during their life have seen the beautiful ruined spaces on the checkered streets and have got unhappy. This process was continued so that only a group of experts in an organization titled Cultural Heritage Organization were concerned for these buildings, those that now are the experts in the method restoration and reconstitution and the other modern methods of physical protection that unfortunately the public understanding was against this affair, so that all the governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as people believed that the Cultural Heritage Organization is not useful. Several million square meters of infrastructures of historical spaces that had historical, artistic, cultural, religious as well as national values for Iran were ruined one after the other, and because of the various excuses as distressed fabric, retrofitting, creating facilities and ..., the buildings were constructed that were incompatible with the culture of Islamic Iran and a bulk of the population in quiet neighborhoods with historic identity was abandoned. (Institution of Revitalization and Utilization Fund for Historical Places, 2012) Perhaps the main reason for this procedure is the lack of attention to the life and prosperity of life in these bodies. But what was the solution to address this important matter that has been neglected by the experts, the subject is considerable from two dimensions:

The first dimension, the responsibility of protecting the cultural heritage of the country should not be only on culture and heritage organization and all of the governmental bodies and policies should pay attention to protect and improve these values, and the second dimension, the organization with such a responsibility is being managed for 30 years without the necessary skills of urbanism, urban planning, economy of cultural heritage and taking life back to these bodies. During this period, the opportunity and legal fields to protect the historical fabrics have not been used properly in the third and fourth development plan (Falamaki, 2013). With a look at performance and policies of the leading countries in the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage we can see this key point that their success has been because of prevailing re-utilization of the historical places with participation of people as the main guardians of the cultural heritages. You should just remember the memories of the families that until 30 years ago lived in these buildings with happiness and their children are invited to continue to live and work in these buildings. The success of this important issue is proved by a few hundred monuments that have been converted into the best spaces for work, fun and entertainment by applying change via the private unit assignment by the public unit and it shows this important point that Iranians do not yet feel loneliness in these spaces, so we should take step in this way. (Short, 2000)

1-2. Problem definition and the Necessity of the Research

Restoration, conservation and restoration of cultural heritage is complex, difficult and multifaceted that is associated with various economic, social and cultural factors. Without a real consideration at this issues can create a serious threat that sometimes may result in destruction or gradual ruining of the historical monuments. The institutions in charge of protecting and reconstructing the monuments in the country, before and after the Islamic Revolution, have repaired so many buildings but there has not been any criticism and analysis up to now to systemize the methods. So there have been always a few key questions about the repair and reconstruction of the fabrics and historical monuments in the cultural centers of the cities. These questions are:

- 1) Essentially what is considered as a valuable building?
- 2) How valuable is a building?
- 3) Are there any value categories?
- 4) How much can interfere in the restoration of historic buildings?
- 5) Are the monuments restored with the same previous functions and uses?
- 6) In case of change in the uses, and defining a new function, what type of uses can be suitable with the nature of the building?

As mentioned before, this paper aims to examine the necessity and importance of restoring historic buildings and structures of cultural aspects of cities with urban sustainable development approach considering criteria and elements of strategic management and strategic planning. The cultural center of Semnan city was selected as a case to be studied. Therefore the following cases should be considered:

- 1) Introduction of valuation parameters of the monuments.

- 2) Recognition of the needs and characteristics of historical fabric and physics.
- 3) Identifying the physical capacity of the building or historical fabric in compliance with the proposed uses
- 4) The status of the fabric and the surrounding networks.

These cases are being considered and explained in this paper. It is worth noting that studying and limiting this topic is related to the definition and understanding of concepts regarding cultural historical authenticity of the fabrics and monuments.

1-3. Research Method

The methods and techniques used in this study include:

- 1) Documentation study technique that is almost used in all of the studies and every researcher needs it. One of the advantages of this technique is that it is considered as a non-intrusive and non-response method; because during the other methods such as: observation, interviews and the like, it is difficult to collect information but when you use the document method, the information is available (Shatkin, 2007). For this purpose books, documents, urban planning, comprehensive urban transport documents, information collected by organizations and etc. were considered to be used.
- 2) Research description technique that is the result of the successful and reliable studies. In this method it has been sought to describe the parameters and variables derived from researches, and problem-solving strategies.

1-4. Research Literature and a Review to Past Researches

The importance the cultural monuments in terms of national and humanity culture, has made intervention in these monuments with the aim of repairing a perfectly practical affair, so the scientific and technical criteria, under consensus of experts have long been considered in the national and international levels. Athens charter and subsequently the Venice charter are also essential steps in creating theoretical and operational standards regarding repairing and restoration. The formation of the International Council of Monuments and sites accelerated the production process and the formulation of international, regional and national charters and made formulation the national document of protection and restoration in the world as an obvious, common and essential issue. Despite benefiting of the Iranian experts from international charters and experiences of other countries, it has not result in formulation of a national document for protection and restoration of the cultural monuments. However, the Department of cultural heritage, handicrafts and Tourism with collaboration of ICOMOS Institution of Iran has made a serious effort in this path. (Freidmann, 1986)

Numbers, diversity and the dispersion of the historical cultural place of the country and the plurality of the beneficiaries such as the administrative boards, urban managers, private owners and etc. has made the involvement necessary for national standards that are accepted by the experts and the management system of cultural heritage. It is obvious that if there is no nationally scientific-technical standard principles, the involvement in historic cultural places will become a heterogeneous issue with a different quality level that cannot be supervised and managed and is subject to the involvers' taste. In order to formulate this plan, three methods were examined:

First: recognizing the need and necessity of the restoration and utilization of the historic cultural places.

Second: reviewing the global experiences (e.g. Italy, Turkey, Spain, India, Azerbaijan and etc).

Third: content formulation of the works meeting the needs, with an emphasis on domestic needs and the scientific methods that have been done with three approaches:

- 1) Adapting the needs to the similar international issues and transferring the principles.
- 2) Identifying the changes in the principles and methods
- 3) Some of the methods are totally changed and are formed according to the relevant conditions and features related to the domestic needs.

Some of the needs are also created based on the needs. In order to formulate the document of restoration and utilization of the cultural and historic places from among the common methods to formulate the similar documents, with respect to the weak information system, recording the scientific and technical experiences and accumulating the experiences in the elites of the country, method of the elites' experience - the beneficiaries were selected. This document is already formulated and is used to utilize the buildings and historic and cultural places of the country.

2. Definitions and Basic Concepts

In this section the basic definitions and concepts about the issues and subject will be defined and explained:

2-1 Strategic Management

Strategic management is a set of managerial decisions and actions that determine the long-term performance of a decision. Strategic management is the study of environmental (external environment and internal environment) strategy formulation, strategy implementation, evaluation and control. The strategic management emphasizes monitoring and evaluating the opportunities and external threats in light of attention to strengths and weaknesses of a set. (Adrian, 2000) Strategic Management allows the set act in an innovative and creative way and not to be passive in shaping its future. This management method enables the organization to be initiative so that it would influence its own destiny and future. (Qarib, 1998)

2-2. Restoration Activities

2-2-1. Restorable monument: those buildings and cultural historic sites where there is the ability to adapt its capacity to contemporary needs (with stabilization historic application or granting a good application and utilizing it) by surviving and enhancing the monument and its values.

2-2-2. Restoration: the process (operations and actions) that is planned, designed and run to increase level of protection, guarantee the survival and grant a good use for operation of buildings and historic places, by maintaining its integrity and originality. (UNESCO: International Centre for Restoration)

2-2-3. Good application: good application of buildings and historic and cultural sites can be determined by observing the following:

maintenance and improving the values of historic, cultural, social, artistic, structural, natural and spiritual of the monument and utilizing its capacities and benefits of historic, cultural, social and economic to meet the temporary needs of the applicable adaption with the regulations.

2-2-4 Supporting the restoration of monument: the measures and activities to prevent ruining and degrading the values and re-presence of monument in the temporary life of social, economic and cultural.

2-2-5 Guidelines: all of the solutions, measures and activities to guide the capacities and the nationally and internationally potential for restoration and utilization the cultural historic monuments.

2-2-6. Utilization: a process to utilize the potentials of cultural, social, economic and etc, of the monument with consideration of maintenance and preservation regulations.

2-2-7. Technical and administrative system of restoration and utilization: set of principles, processes (design, implementation and operation) and the relevant documents to the definition, management and operation of these projects.

With the definitions, we can now describe the proposed cases in dealing with the case study.(Iran Cultural Heritage Organization, 2008)

3. Principles of Identifying Restoration Potential of Cultural Historic Monuments and Sites

In order to obtain the validity and possibility of restoration of monuments and historical, cultural sites the following conditions are necessary:

- 1) The adaptation potentials of the monument (to preserve its values) with contemporary needs and possible utilization.
- 2) The possibility of scientific restoration with regard to the available and existing documents.
- 3) The possibility of restoration of a monument or building while conserving its, livability, originality and enhancement.
- 4) The possibility of being fixed or changed or upgraded.
- 5) Not being a nationally unique and invaluable.

4. The city of Semnan and it's the physical condition

Semnan, like other cities in the country has organic fabrics that over time and with the development of city have become completely anonymous checkered fabrics. Based on the studies undertaken in Semnan, three different physical compounds could be observed. (Government Administrative of Semnan Province Publishing Center, 2014)

A) Historical sector: it has been formed by annexing various neighborhoods and has been surrounded by the old wall of the city.

Historic axes are:

1. Nasar Neighborhood.
2. Esfanjan Neighborhood
3. Choob Masjed Neighborhood
4. Latibar Neighborhood
5. Shah-Joogh Neighborhood.

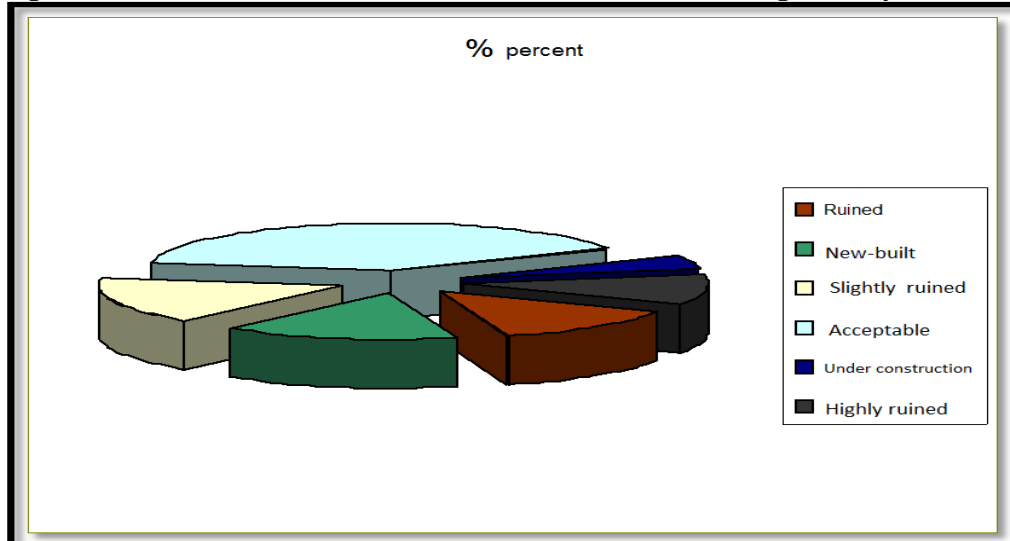
Three other neighborhoods that were at 3 kilometers of the center of the old city at west, are Kadivar, Kooshmaqan, Zaveqan; in this sector of city the buildings are mostly made of mud bricks and the passages are organically shaped. In the historical fabric of Semnan unlike many historical fabrics of Iran, except for a few that have high architectural value, the rest of the building blocks for various reasons have not high architectural value. In this evaluation, the criteria such as the proper relationship between different elements of building, decoration and climate issues have been considered. The population of historical fabric of Semnan in 1366 is equal to 4689 persons, counting for 1332 households. The population of this area is 7.2 percent of the total population of Semnan. (Iran Publishing Textbook, 2014)

B) The new part of the city: it is mainly in the northern part of city and until 1357 it was not developed, but since 1357 has been greatly expanded; in this sector the buildings are generally new-built and with concrete. (Fajr Engineers Consulting, 2005)

Figure 1: Historical Fabrics of Semnan City



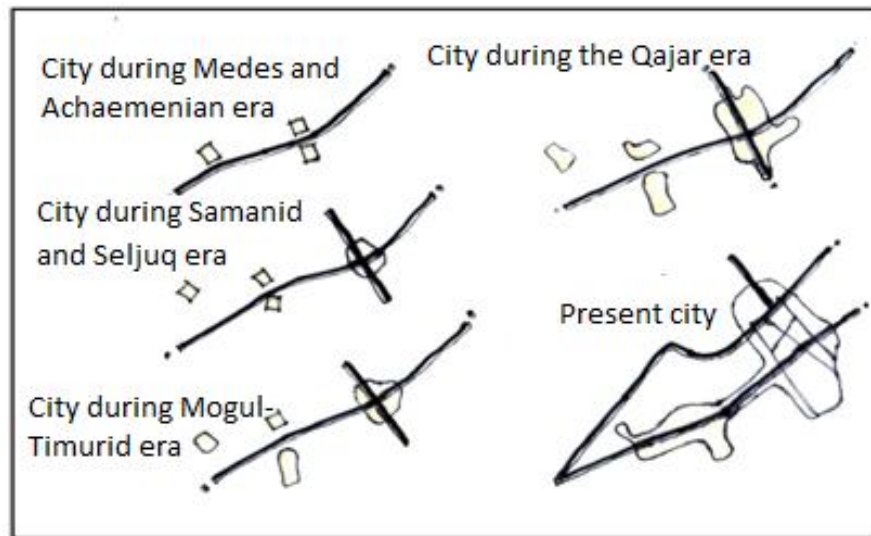
Figure 2 – Historical Fabrics and Monuments Status Percentage in City of Semnan



C) The middle part of the city: middle part is between the new part and the old historic section and buildings are generally built with brick and still retain their architectural identity, this part is mostly belonged to the first Pahlavi period that with collapse of the city fence, this part of the city is formed around the Arg Gate.

The architecture of these three parts is quite different from each other so that at the historic part criteria and rules of Iranian architecture is more seen and in the middle part and new part these criteria get weaker and the buildings would have lower cultural identity. Relationship between the 3 parts of the city can be examined in the terms of population movements, urban economics and public relations.

Figure 3: Evolution of the Historical Development of Semnan



5. Revitalization and Restoration of the Historic Fabric of Semnan

The most important valuable fabric dimensions of historic and cultural of Semnan are:

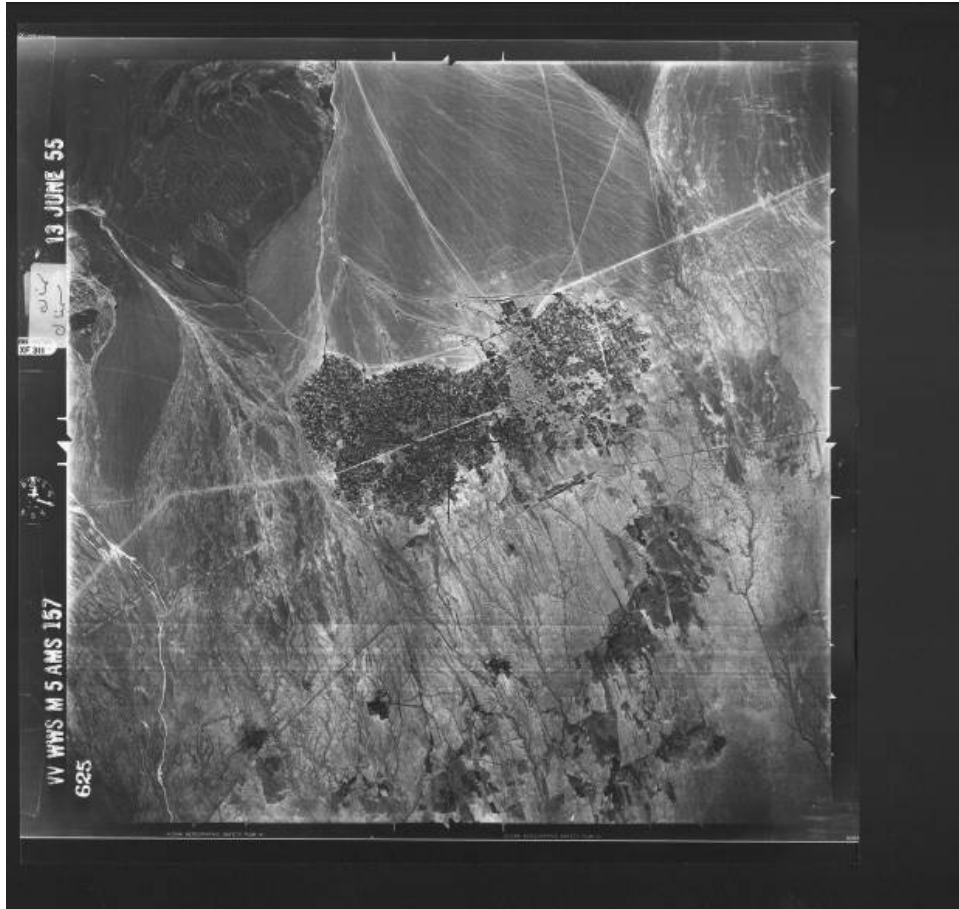
- 1) The existence of a sustained center for unifying the entire corpus of the city, which ensures smooth and healthy urban living.
- 2) The historic fabric with the physical, historic and cultural values which is the best sign of urban identity.
- 3) The Liveliness and growth of historic fabric avoids inside erosion and excessive development.
- 4) The old fabric of the city can be the best place for economic, social, cultural and service facilities because of its centrality.

In order to proceed with the aim of restoration of historic fabric of Semnan and to ensure the sustainable development of the city, the general procedure is as follows.

Total protection of the available physical space and retrofitting the bodies, changing and designing the openings in order to remove the discordant elements of the passages, the design and placement of jardinière in available body sections and introducing plant decorations, the pathology of sunshade body and attempt to repair and retrofit that it depends on restoration and retrofitting the other buildings, lighting of the walls and sunshades of the inner wall of fabric, design of floor paths cover by observing an appropriate infrastructure and mounting straps and chains at the main tracks for traffic control and restricting the movement of motor vehicles within the limit that would hinder restoration of the historic fabric identity.

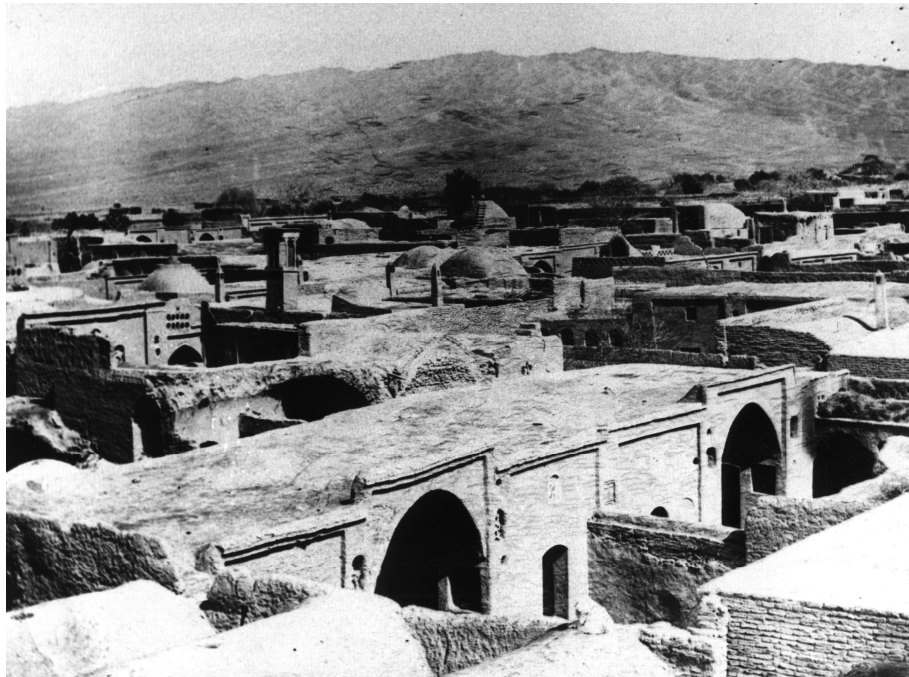
From another perspective, the necessity for the economic issues to prepare and formulate a comprehensive plan for the economic technical assessment and develop a financial plan in order to attract investment and create productivity will be very important. Dynamism of historic fabric of Semnan is dependent on the design formulation and will be applicable in all areas of cultural, social, economic and operational planning that would look the issues in a detailed and general manner. This look can exist regarding the fabric generally and restoration of the single buildings of it (Fajr Engineers Consulting, 2005).

Figure 4: Aerial Image of the Area, Semnan, 1955 (Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization of Semnan Province Archive)



6. Conclusions and Recommendations

With regard to the issues raised in the concepts and issues surrounding the designs about repair and restorations of fabrics and historic buildings and strategic management for further dynamic development of such areas, the following elements can be raised regarding the city of Semnan. In the proposal design to restore the historic fabric of Semnan, those uses that have the necessary conditions for the survival and maintaining the performance, may be stabilized. (Purvis, M., 2004) Any re-building and appearance or main change in the status quo should be in accordance with relevant regulations and rules. As well, in order to provide accommodation services for tourists the economic and technical feasibility should be considered and the houses having architectural, historic and artistic values are at priority. Any integration and modernization in the historic fabric should be based on the criteria of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and tourism Organization recommended by experts and observers. Commercial spaces in historic fabric can be floating and can be done according to rules and procedures. Finally, historic fabric of Semnan after restoration can become a center to develop cultural, economic and social activities in the city and attract the residents of the city to assemble and utilize the cultural and historic elements.

Figure 5: Historical Urban Fabrics of Semnan City, Qajar Era, 1898

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