

NOTES ON PALIMPSEST

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- In ancient times, writing materials were scarce and expensive, and people used to erase and rub them to use again. This meaning is explicit in the Greek word *palimpsestos*, which is compound of *palin*, “again” and *psestos*, “rubbed smooth”. Often the erasing was not successful and the original writing showed through.
- There is a paradox in Palimpsest. Palimpsest is the realm of presence and absence: absence of the original text and presence of the new text. There are just some traces from the original text.
- Palimpsest is based on a threefold: original writing (old-text), erasing and rubbing (text-in-between), and writing again (new-text). Original writing is referred to the past. In erasing process, old text is not being eliminated completely. As a result of this process, we have a text-in-between which has some words and traces from the old-text. Erasing is a kind of writing as well. Writing again means to write something new. Palimpsest is not re-writing, but writing again. Re-writing means to write the *same*, but writing again means to write something new, another thing.
- Another paradox: palimpsest is being written and erased for several times. We write to erase and erase to write.
- We can find a mystery, secret, and ambiguity in palimpsest which refers to the text-in-between. We imagine the old-text in our minds.
- Philosophers used to have a palimpsestic attitude in their endeavors. A philosopher reads the old texts and erases them to write a new text on the text-in-between, as did Aristotle about Plato, Heidegger about Nietzsche, and Derrida about Heidegger.
- Postmodernism written on a text-in-between which is the result of erasing the modernism, is a palimpsest. Postmodernism is modernism besides something else.
- Fold is different from palimpsest. In Folding, all the layers are present and ready. We lose our location in the fold space, because there is no hierarchy in it. In palimpsest we are either in new-text or in old-text. Palimpsest is based on difference.

- Most of the Iranian cities are great palimpsests. In this case, erasing can be a natural event as earthquake, or flood, or a humane event as plundering or migration. Tabriz is a palimpsestic city. It has been ruined for several times by earthquake, and re-built again and again. About three hundred years ago, an awful earthquake damaged the entire city completely, except some buildings as Kabud Mosque, Ark, and Bazar. Tabriz has been written again.
- In Iranian architecture, we can find a palimpsestic attitude. New architecture used to be established on an old architecture. For example, Yazd-Khast Mosque built on a fire-temple, Mohammadih Mosque on a Mehrabe, and Neiriz Jami Mosque on an old temple.
- Jami Mosque in Isfahan is the largest architectural palimpsest. As a museum of Iranian architecture, there can be seen various traces from 1200 years ago up to now.
- In architecture, I would rather palimpsestic design, where we encounter an old historical building. In this case, we have a remarkable text-in-between and lie the new text beside the old-text while all the texts are evident and present. The new-text does not fade the text-in-between, but appreciates it and accompanies with it. The logic of palimpsestic design is interaction and conversation, not imposition and conquering.