

Memories in cities through the performance of festival processions

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Abstract

The paper explores the idea of memories in cities. In the present scenario of globalised settlements, the rapid time-space and vast landscape of conurbation compression how memories are sustained in physical form. Historic landmarks (sites of memory) provide a medium to locate memory but they are viewed as objects. The city becomes a palimpsest with layers of history, events such as festival procession work as an instrument to link people to their past and these sites of memory. Various aspects of spatial framework influence and are influenced by festival procession. The static part of the built environment actively participates with the kinetic nature of procession. The study analyses the kinetic nature of procession and its performance to understand the production of memory and its spatialisation. Moreover, it demonstrates impact remembrance on urban form. Nature of memory is dynamic which change with alternation in processional rituals and built environment. Processional movement and performance develop perceivable spaces and create an association to sites of memory.

Keywords: Memories; Cities; Kinetic; Theatre.

1. Introduction

Cities are the pinnacle of civilisation and always considered as a mnemonic of culture. The built environment and social cultural practices connect people to their past. Most of us now reside in urban areas. There are many different ways to understand the built environment in the cities. In recent past our metropolitan cities have grown rapidly, they compete with each other in terms of progress. Many of them in India are in process of conurbation i.e. Delhi NCR, Mumbai. Our extended cities, the vast landscape of built fabric, streets, etc. exceeds the limits of humans to perceive as “spaces” (Mazzoleni). The Global forces at play have made our settlements homogenised in nature. Any symbol or product are repeated and placed devoid of creating any association or linkage to people. This landscape of our limitless globalised cities create “crisis of memory”.

We seek resolution in our monuments and museum for being memory makers of the city (Rossi), but they prove to be curated work of history than memory

It is necessary to understand position of memory in a city where conurbation and global forces are crippling imageability of cities. Festival/events provide a measure to look at urban memory in city fabric. The urban built form can be looked as an assemblage of meaning provided or altered due to festival/events.

The paper is divided into parts. First is to understand terms memory, rituals, festivals, conurbation, homogenised cities, globalisation and the way they are related to each other. Their role in developing physical manifestation of city and influence on built environment. The second portion is about examining about a case study. This is an attempt to investigate performance, spatialisation of memory and to develop a phenomenological understanding of it in urban space.

2. Memory and city

Memory is a product of past experiences which somehow remain active in the mind, it's our ability or faculty through which we recollect the past. In psychology, it's understood as the capacity to store experiences and learnings with their relations to the past in mind as an outcome of a conscious procedure. Cities, in fact, are places of collective memories. (Boyer). Cities provide sites, performances and archived architecture to replenish memory. Maurice Halwachs' work on Collective Memory showcase history as an instrumental and overly rationalised version of past, and memory intimately linked with collective experience. Memory bounds group of people together, reactivating their commonality by references to the physical spaces and earlier occasions, often a moment of collective identity.

The idea of collective memory did not solely stay as a sociological term. It delicately moved to urban design and architecture writings after 1980's. Aldo Rossi in his book the Architecture of the City argues conservation of old structure are “memory makers” which help to preserve memory. The French historian Pierre Nora termed them as sites of memory. The sum of all sites of memory and traces in the city develop “identity”, if forces of city erase such sites it causes memory loss or identity crisis. Kevin Lynch, Tuan and Giesen also reflected upon theories of memory, identity, sense of place and sense of association. Scholars proved that collective memory affects sense of place and sense of association through linkage with experience of objects and spaces from the past and creating a common history in the community. A city without its memory form cannot be a guide to the past for the people living in it. Memory challenges current urbanism.

Cities were always connected to each other by means of trade, economy and interchange of world-view throughout the history. The big

rupture of globalisation happened after industrialisation and colonisation where modernity stepped its foot in planning and designing of the city, propagating universal thought, whereas in India modernity came in the late 19th and mid-20th century. But in the recent past of 1970 – '90, the intensity of such transaction of the economy, investment, capital and migration has tremendously increased. Globalisation is essentially the speeding up in the world the wise connectiveness in all aspects of social life (King, Appadurai). Indian second globalisation occurred after the 1990s liberalisation of the economy, this changed urban landscape of metropolitan cities in like Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai. In the present, the cities are not bounded with borders for circulation of capital, product or symbols. The cities are becoming equal, marketed to gain different assets and weakening urban identity. Characteristic of any city identity is about varying products and its culture is reinforced by marketing. e.g. introduction of “smart cities” strategies in Indian sub-continent. City physical life is depended on two production systems. The first is production of space which is interlinked with cultural meaning and capital share. Next is the production of the symbol which helps in trade and provides a language for social identity.

Present technologies of production, information and transformation system are extremely sophisticated and any product or symbol can be found almost in everywhere and every society. E.g. shopping malls follow the same language of space flow, materiality, façade and articulation to such extent they appear similar in nature irrespective situated in Bengaluru or Delhi. In such case, it's very difficult to find a relationship with these symbols and products with a certain society or certain time.

The increase in globalisation intensity is pressurising our cities to follow same ideologies in terms of social and built environment to sustain at the equal platform.

It's also true that from medieval times, cities have adopted various universal forms and modified them in the process, which was very similar in term of urban fabric, structure and social environment. The great rupture of modernism came during the 19th century in the world. It has been indicated through studies modernist architecture carried the universal ideas, was used to sustain regimes of democratic socialism in Germany, colonial oppression in Italy and post-colonial nationalism in India (King). When modernism was induced to the urban form or lifestyle, then the modern city and the tradition city coexisted at the same time in India or any other part of the world (Appadurai). But the present global situation is distinctive from the past, a larger portion of urban settlements is modernised or globalised ultimately leading to homogenisation.

In present the traditional settlement of the city acquires a very small portion as compare to the whole metropolitan area. The built environment has lost connection with the past. Globalisation forces have created homogenised cities which are a mesh of imitated symbols and images. In such scenario where globalised forces have become intense and cities not able to portrait an image of themselves, this has led to crisis in memory.

3. Crisis in memory

There have been great attempts to represent the past and acknowledge traditional urban form to bring back traces to incarnate memory. But as Boyer puts it city spaces have become “pictorialisation of space and time” through a “matrix of well-designed fragments . . . fictional styles of life and imaginary behaviours”. The subjectivity of history is suppressed repeatedly by modernism and globalisation forces, and the past is instrumentalised. Furthermore, the interpretative means are lost which could translate memories and traditions into meaningful contemporary form. In such scenario, the city monuments create a relation to city history and known as memory makers (Aldo Rossi, Peter Eisenmen). The monument or museum proves to be curated form of past, a very selective recollection. But they are treated as exhibit objects than a functioning structure. These “memory makers” can also suffer from amnesia. Where in past they joined the life of streets, and hustle bustle of activities, today such things are necessarily ignored. E.g. Khidki

Masjid an ASI protected monument, restored in 2014 doesn't allow nearby residents to offer prayers according to norms (Vatsa).

Indian cities have layers of history and influences due to political power, economy and social group's influences like Delhi was ruled by Chauhans, Khiljis, Tughlak and Mughals leaving their traces by means of built form, cuisine, etc. These layers are transcribed in form of images, built forms and symbols. Each layer is considered important and preserved by different means. Moreover, these are reproduced and weaved together as objects to create past. In such case, any viewer (body) is prone to be camouflaged and overpowered by physical aspects (space). This is a one-way relationship between the viewer (body) and the viewed - space because there is no participation. Due to the continuous bombardment of juxtaposed images, the viewer is unable to position itself in relation to space (Tiwari).

“When memory does not have a link to the “lived experience”, it is reduced to history or a fragmented reconstruction of the past” (Tiwari, Space Body Ritual; Performativity in City). There is a need of lived experience, James E Young asserted that the best possible way to keep the memory alive would be debating it constantly; through events such as competitions, parades, rituals by public.

Hence, rituals help to revive and express the memory of a myth or experience associated with an event, a person or a place (Kanekar). This shapes into selected remembrance or selective recollection of the event. The acts in a ritual help to recreate the past thus helps to develop a formal recreation of collective memory.

4. Festivals and processions

The word derives from Latin word *festum* or *festas* meaning public joy or merry making which was abstinent from daily work and in respect to gods. In the whole mechanism of the festival, the feeling of performativity or play come first and ritual comes next.

Festival means a reoccurring cynical social event exhibited through performances with a multitude of forms involving people direct or indirect participation who have different things in the economy, religious beliefs and geographic location.

A festival breaks the ordinary social order and regulates the environment in form of rituals. The processional festival involves most participatory and collective traits of movement. The procession circulates through the settlement on public spaces such as streets, rather than certain festivals that involve the notion on gathering emphasising on a particular location whereas to the processional festivals that involve the entire settlement as well as significant places within them. These are a particular display which claims public space and private spaces for performer or observer. In religious ones, Gods are transported on streets through chariots spread sacredness, the presentation of flowers, banners and performance of musician signifies streets belong to the sacred entity. In political one, the exhibition of the act is different. Procession confirm identity, revisit the past with experiential feature in a pluralistic context, the importance of it cause participator to invest more work in them. Either it's a religious procession or political the groups of participants put a lot of effort in advance, e.g. republic day parade in New Delhi takes weeks and month practice with repetitive rehearsals. In such an occasion, the diasporic spaces become one in public realm it may be a street or a square. The boundaries are diminished not only in urban spaces but “insiders” and “outsiders”. In a procession, groups of people travel together on a route form one physical location to another, displaying symbols of representation. This display and momentary repetition of act cause a rhythm, strengthening collective urban memory in public space of the city. The re-iteration of acts, rituals in course of the festival procession in a rhythmic manner help to strengthen memory.

5. Performance of memory

The re-iteration of acts, rituals in course of the festival procession in a rhythmic manner help to strengthen memory. Henry Lefebvre the gave description of the production of spaces. He argued on basis

of spatial practice and developed a special trait for understanding. First space is considered as physical space/perceived space which is physical in nature and appropriated by people with time. Second space is described as mental space/ conceived space which conceptualisation of space by people (especially by planners, architects, urbanist) about identifying how space is lived and perceived. Third space is lived space/ social space which is directly lived, experienced through practices, acts. If one observes the fabric of any city she/he can identify the physical structure and create mental image of past. Then again, the layers of past are treated as objects and this create a bombardment of juxtaposed images. Hence, any person is not able to place herself/himself in space relating to past. The gap exists between the view and the viewer (Tiwari). Therefore there is strong need of lived space which is generated by experience and festival provide such practice in a collective manner.

Memory depended on lived experience, something that connected of the past and grabbed the individual/body in a way and immediate knowledge (C. Boyer). The body in movement during procession create a special association to spaces at the time, the display and gathering help to strengthen collectiveness. The gap between an "outsider" viewer and the viewed (procession/ display/built form) is diminished in the process when the viewer become a participant and thus becomes part of the original group. The performance itself show the manifestation of culture or religion.

Processions are highly integrated with public spaces. The public space act as a container to such performativity, where the audience concentration is not only at the display or main object but the "others" around him/her. Same performativity exercised in private domain only focus on the display, this basic difference in the performativity is achieved through spaces which effect sightline/image of the viewer hence affecting memory. In public spaces, the faces of other individuals become as a backdrop to the ritual or object which procession is focused. The reaction of "others" are noticed during such events, promoting communal participation. The urban form itself response to the procession, being at a static state it reacts

to the kinetic nature of the spectacle. A situation of negotiation is developed between the urban form and the procession.

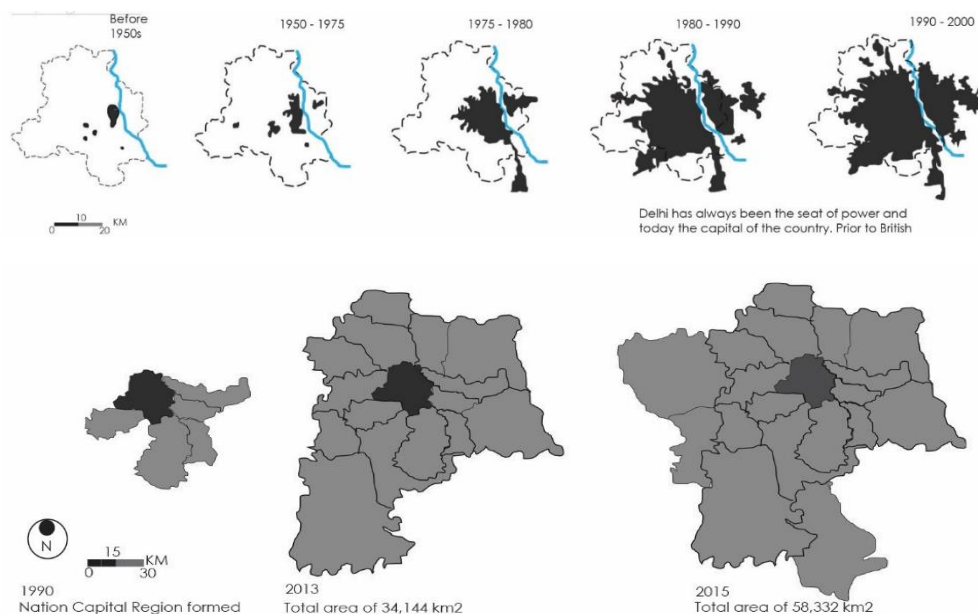
In such events, the public space in a city is transformed during liminal phase through ritual occurring there. These processions are not exact copies of the historical practices, these are essentially contextual and transformed with time. These are tracks to illustrate linkage between the present and the past.

The physical setting has the capability of unfolding performance of festival to translate memories. The response of the body is not limited to visual but complete involvement of senses and the mind which is achieved through movement and performance of the procession.

A Case of memory in conurbated city - Republic Day Procession in New Delhi and Performance of Memory

Delhi always has been power seat of the country or the region ageing back to the mythological city of Indraprastha till New Delhi. The city has layers of settlements of past, Mehrauli, Siri, Tughlakabad, Jahanpanah, Firozqabad, Shahjahanabad were settlements established in chronological order before British New Delhi was constructed. It has gone through a metamorphosis in terms of urban form, economy, and socio-cultural change in process of evolution. Production of National Capital region in 1990 which consumed land each five years has occupied nearly 60,000km². This vast landscape of the metropolitan city is beyond the limit of humans to perceive it as spaces. The city is now completing at the global platform to sustain as a brand. In most of the city and NCR, every building is trying shine in the glass. Any product, symbol or image is produced irrespective of its environment, location and association. This hampers the identity of the city.

Delhi being composite of settlement has its pilgrimage sites which housed shrines, tombs of deities, saints like Qutuddin Bakhtiar Kaki, Yog Maya temple at Mehrauli, Tohfewala Mosque in Siri, etc and there is evidence of ceremonial axis for the procession in the earlier settlements like a map of Tughlakabad shows direct royal axis to Masjid.



6. Shahajahnabad and new Delhi

Focussing on Shahajahnabad and New Delhi, both of cities were the last predecessor of modern and global capital. It's important to look at the spatial structure of both the settlements for ceremonial procession religious and political.

Shahjahanabad was Mughal capital shifted from Agra in the 16th Century, one of the main reason provided that The Streets of Agra were winding and not functional for processions caused hindrance

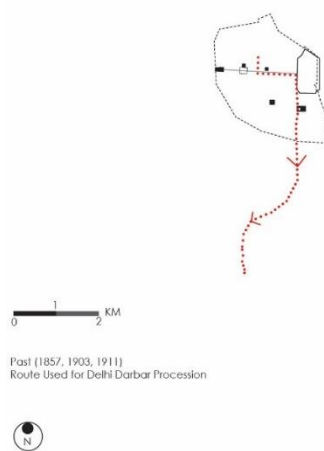
for ceremonial ritual in Mughal era specially in street form (Muhammad Salih Kanto Lahauri, Amal e Salih).

A great deal of work is written about planning and implementation of Shahjahanabad was built on southern western banks of river Yamuna. Construction of Delhi began in 1639 and shifting of the capital happened in 1648. The major design element of the city was Red Fort, Fatepuri

Mosque, Chandni Chowk and other institutional buildings and royal gardens. Rest of the regions was occupied by noblemen and general citizen residences.

Some scholars argue that the manifestation of the city is based on ancient planning techniques of Vastu-Shastra known as karmuka (bow) a semi-elliptical shaped pattern. The positive spot was considered the intersection of two streets for a temple, in the case of the city its palace of the emperor. Another planning pattern is observed in many medieval Islamic cities where the royal complex is always situated on the edge like is the older city of Agra. The notion of centre and boundary in the city is related to the royal power and all essential processions begin from the centre. Axes of the Red Fort was precisely aligned with Cardinal direction and the axis of Faiz Bazaar combined made two orthogonal axes of the city. At the junction of these is placed the red fort, presenting a symbolism to everyone as the throne was placed at the centre of the city, the empire and the universe.

Mughal had complete control of the city till 1857 revolt. After that major demolition occurred around North and North Eastern part of the city. This was done to clear out grounds, water canals on the ceremonial axes, area in and around the fort to seize the palace.



Later British establishments were placed near Kashmiri Gate and creation of civil and cantonment. These implementations came out as major elements in transforming spatial organisation created a major effect in the way new festival occurred.

Between the period of 1857 and 1911 Britishers decided and created the new capital of Colonised India. Three major durbars occurred during that time which added 80km² to the walled city, creating the new capital and power structure. Durbar was an assembling a court where King addresses the subject, which was used by many Mughal and other traditional kingdoms. This tradition as a native mechanism was well adapted by the British to arrange their purpose and was used as 'Invented tradition' (Cohn).

The structure of Coloniser was based on court rituals of Indian Kings. These Darbar were situated near the ridge, its placement created "symbolic significance due to the memory of British victory during the mutiny" (A. K. Kanekar).



The Axis, its continuity and reversal

A lot of detail description is available on the Delhi Durbars. One of them is by Berard Cohn of Lord and Lady Lytton riding on an elephant. The procession of troops of military, people and performers moved from Shahjahanabad to Red fort through Chandni Chowk, circled around the Jami Mosque and later continue towards the ridge (Cohn). It's essential to observe the use of Mughal ceremonial axis to showcase authority and dominance. 1857 procession was very first of its kind to represent the movement of a place of political significance to another (A. K. Kanekar). In later years durbar of 1877 was to proclaim Empress of India as Queen Victoria and those of 1903, 1911 to celebrate the coronation of the new monarchs. In 1911 King George V announced of shifting the capital from Kolkata to Delhi. According to Valentine Prinsep's account who came to paint the Durbar, the Britishers choose a barren land, without any surroundings and historical association. The site was selected south-west to the Shahjahanabad and next to the ridge. An elevated area was picked for placing Viceroy House, from which a processional way was developed called as the king's way ending at the mythological city of Indraprastha. Other important structures were settled around the ceremonial axis.

7. Republic day procession

The procession began in 1950 to declare India as a republic. It was a smaller gathering as compare to now, the ceremony began from

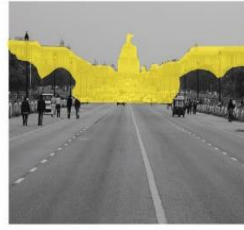
President's House directed towards Irwin Stadium (now Dhyanchand Stadium) through King's Way, then leading towards Connaught Place and ending at the Red Fort. Presently it starts from same Rashtrapati Bhawan through Rajpath (King's Way) directed towards India Gate and then ends at the Red Fort.

8. Performance of memory

The ceremonial axis of the city is very prominent connecting Rashtrapati Bhawan to India gate. But then does these structures create an image for the whole country or for the city. The physical space remains as landmark, structure or building stagnant in a time devoid of any relation to people directly. Only people who work or a tourist or a scholar visiting the space can link it very fragmented manner by conceiving in mental space. This depends person to person to perceived history but history is not memory as mentioned earlier. The lived space created by experience help to generate, strengthen and sustain memory. In such scenario, the movement and performance strengthen memory for a larger audience which is discussed next.



Physical Space



Mental Space



Lived Space

9. Movement in space

Processions create a specific movement and gathering pattern to the urban context, which is dynamic in nature occurring in the static fabric of the city. The static city is the physical form, the buildings, structures and “perceived as two-dimensional entity on conventional city maps” and the kinetic city which is temporary in nature provide the “third dimension” (Mehrotra).

The processions develop “ever-transforming streetscape” portraying constant flux. The physical elements do not make an entire image of the city, but the festivals, the movement create the complete image emerging as the spectacle of the kinetic city. This movement of the procession with display ingenuity breaks the boundaries of historic and contemporary. In such process, the physical elements embrace the dynamic movement. Kevin Lynch’s elements of urban design elements provide a better understanding of movements in spaces, which is widely used by scholars to understand the physicality of urban fabric.



Path; the route followed over here is a complete reversal of colonial durbar. This prescribed path has not been altered for 66years. The path followed can be considered as axial, its significance can be denoted by superimposing the memory and reversed route of Delhi Darbars.

Landmark; the formal elements Viceroy House, King’s way, National War memorial near the ridge and the Red Fort has remained the same but their names and usage have changed. Hence, association have altered. Each formal elements as the landmarks project a different image and they define the movement. The homage paid is a reflection of the fact that the nation is a republic and to remember the sacrifice and joy being a part of it. The termination point is very significant, to recollect that the seat of power of the country is the red fort, which now belongs to the public. Moreover, the termination is a symbolic gesture of reversing the British procession.

Nodes; the gathering space is near King’s way, which act as a node. Moreover, the landmark transforms to nodes. The major gathering area is a dedicated zone in between Vijay Chowk and India gate. Here the spectator becomes participant only by observing the procession.

District; the area for performance becomes a separated district for the duration of the time. It’s considered high surveillance area for security region. This zone separate all together in a different manner.

10. Edges

The limits of the old city are now diminished, there is no trace of solid edge. But the procession itself comebacks to the old city creating a symbolic gesture of India being an independent republic.

11. Selective memory

The formal elements are the same, the physicality has not altered but changing of the name and use has been appropriated which has generated a different association. Viceroy house is presently Rashtrapati Bhawan, All India War Memorial is now India gate and King’s way is now Raj Path. The forms have remained same, appropriated a bit but not intensely

In present world there the royal and imperial power has been dissolved. But the memories of the Mughal and British rule are evident in the manner where spatial organisation designed and adapted to political ceremonies.

The traditional axis of Chandini Chowk has now transformed into a heavy commercial street and devoid of any imperial charm. During “Eid” the busy shopping street is totally transformed, which is closed to traffic and thousands of people face towards Fatehpuri mosque for prayers. On Independence Day the direction is reversed where people face the opposite the Red Fort. The republic day procession happens in the British designed part of the city, the attribute of British Power ends at Red Fort, the seat of Mughal Power in a symbolic gesture. It begins at old Viceroy’s House at Raisina Hills follow ceremonial axis laid out by the British and terminate at ceremonial axis laid out by the Mughal. In present India is a democracy and the empire of British or the Mughal play no important role but the memories of the both empire are used in a symbolic manner during the procession.

The alternation of movement and procession either by Mughal or Colonisers or Independent India shows preference of acts to demonstrate power, development of new identity and struggle of overcoming reminiscence. Hence, the meaning has also altered from a royal procession to political and ultimately a secular one. This present a

selection process of using same elements and same technique to develop selective memory.

12. Discussion

The performance and movement help to develop memory, both are deciphered in components for understanding the mechanism. The interplay of physical and social-cultural practice provides a kinetic area of development. Social norms and rituals of procession govern the kinetic and temporal phase. In the case of Delhi physicality remain same but its usage created different meaning from colonial past to the Independent Republic of India.

Change is constant, the static built environment and festival procession provides continuation of past and develop memory even though they are dynamic in nature.

The movement and the performance complex help to generate a memory. The factors of performance and movement in the physical environment even though inseparable is observed under a lens to demonstrate manifestation of memory. The script of procession ritual is followed all around the prescribed route in the case. There is interplay actor and audience throughout the performance expect this interplay is limited in Republic Day procession. The performance and movement at sites of memory transfer it to a larger gathering points develop it as a node for social interactions other than daily activities but in the case of political procession, it became a barricaded node for people. E.g. temples during the procession become larger gathering node than that of daily occasions or India Gate transform from a tourist space to place. The merging of performance and movement with the physicality of landmarks/nodes generate the linkage to these sites of memory of past in the present 21st century. All together they constitute experience for a larger area in the city, hence one constitute experience relating to space and develop association. In daily life, association varies from involuntary to voluntary and ranges different for a different scale.

Involuntary association due to conscious ranges according to the level of spaces, from one's house, street, district and city or their equivalents spaces. People can connect directly to home then the street where one can identify neighbours and friends, multilayer street create the district and then city where the level of the association decreases. The festival procession move around a larger area of the city hence cover all these levels, the rituals and experience to link people to space, the past and generated association and memory. Memory here is the absence of a presence, its not a physical entity, its mental images of past experiences, events in space and places. Collective memory through the mechanism of festival procession provide us sense of belonging and a collective identity.

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