War and Urban Sculptures of Tehran
From an Objective Reality to a Subjective Matter*

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Abstract | The numerous wars such as the war against Russia in Qajar era, the World War II in Pahlavi era and the 8-year war against Iraq in the Islamic Republic of Iran are experiences that the contemporary Iran has tasted its flavor. On the other hand, the experience of existing urban sculpture in contemporary Tehran brings this question to mind that how the urban sculpture as a form of art, could reflect the war experience? And what approaches has been emerged in artworks over the representation of the war issue in different periods?

This article is based on a documentary research that, the statues have been discussed as a document. According to the historical documents and books, a total of 47 dated sculptures related to the war issue from the Qajar era up to 1389SH. were studied.

The results of this study showed that Tehran’s sculptures can be divided into two main sections, "Qajar to the Islamic Revolution” and "Islamic Revolution to 2010". In the first section due to the much experiences and significant raids into the country, war is comprehended as the general definition means “aggression”. Therefore, the government policy through the urban sculptures located in the squares - as a state element- is trying to project the military power; from the cannons, as the first examples, to the cavalry bodies of King. On the other side, the revolutionary concepts following the Constitutional Revolution (Mashrouteh) such as justice and freedom are also reflected in the mythical forms of fight in the square. In the second section, the Islamic Revolution caused another interpretation of the signified war; so that the war was interpreted as the Sacred Defense, and the myth-making, heroism and the revolutionary concepts and values had been targeted; Making the status and figurative sculpture of martyrs as a tribute to the heroes of the Sacred Defense, monuments and abstract sculptures of concepts such as martyrdom, resistance and courage, both in public (parks, squares, streets) and non-public (highway) spaces have been installed.

Keywords | Urban Sculpture, War, Contemporary Tehran, Revolution.
Introduction | War has always been an issue in the history of Iran that has influenced directly and indirectly the various areas of political, economic, social, and cultural-art issues. The contemporary Iran is not exceptional and from the Qajar era has been involved with this issue; for instance, the first round of Russo-Iranian wars (1804-1812) at the time of Fath Ali Shah and the Iranians 10-year-old resistance despite having sufficient weapon and military techniques, the second round of war between Iran and Russia and the Jihad permission of jurists and clergymen following a breach of the treaty of Golestan by Russians (1825-1827), the Iran and Ottoman War (1820-1822.), The war between Iran and Herat (1837-1838) during the reign of Mohammad Shah, the war against Kharazm during Naser al-Din Shah (1824), The war between Iran and Britain followed by the second war against Herat (1855-1856), the Marv’s war and the domination of the Russians on portions of the eastern provinces of Iran, the regional wars at the time of Mohammad Ali Shah (1905), the civil war following the constitution until the dismissing of Mohammad Ali Shah, the invasion of the Russians in the years of 1908 and 1909, the World War II (1941) and the attack of Soviet Union and British troops on Iran at the time of Pahlavi and the Iran-Iraq war during the Islamic Republic of Iran (1980-1988).

From the Qajar era and by acquiring the experiences of Journey to the West, the statue will emerge as a beautifying element of the urban space. By accepting the idea that art reflects the society and social events, the question is raised that how war as a social reality, that contemporary society of Iran has been faced with, could have been reflected in Tehran’s urban sculptures within different social courses? And what are the differences in themes and content of the urban sculptures while representing the war in various sections? Generally based on the assumption that the Islamic Revolution as a turning point in the contemporary history of Iran has been caused fundamental change in the discourse of different fields, sculptures are divided into two sections before and after the Islamic Revolution.

Hypothesis
It seems that in the history of Tehran’s urban sculptures, we are faced with two major approaches in dealing with the subject of war: One, war as an objective reality that shows the political realities related to it and the other one, war as a matter of subjective concept, that the beliefs and values are reflected through it following the Islamic Revolution.

The First Section: From the Qajar Era to the Islamic Revolution
In the Qajar era for the first time we are faced with the idea of presenting the war cannons (balls) as a beautifying element in the city. These balls as the first urban sculptures in Tehran are considered as forms of art in the public space, before the first urban figurative sculptures that were seeking to emulate the West, become common. These balls were either the remnants balls of war that their military use had been stripped or similar to the pearl balls were made merely to be shown. They are reported based on the different narratives; in this regard “Madame Carla Serena” writes in her itinerary that: “... around the square [Toopkhaneh (artillery)] numbers of arches are prepared for putting the balls on and in each arch a vehicle ball is set... along with the balls a lot of conical bullets in different size are hilled. During my stay in Tehran (Winter 1877- 8) for the visual pleasure of the king and people of the capital, these harmless bullets were colored in rainbow. The painting was the idea of the armory’s boss to decorate leastwise the square by the rusty irons. Since the artillery square has had this arrangement, it has been said that this was the initiative of the Minister of War and he has tried to display the army products of the Iranian arsenal, to scare the representatives of foreign countries in Tehran (Serena, 1983: 59-60). However, due to the weakness of the Iranian army against the rival nations and the teachers of European military were always served in Iran and the Iranian weapons were not comparable with their instruments of war, therefore showing such volumes could induce even a false power.

About the Pearl Ball,” Jafar Shahri” in his book “Tehran-e-Ghadim” (The Old Tehran) writes: it was a muzzle-loaded hub, located in the Ark or Naghareh Khaneh square over a platform at the height of a rug and the reason for putting the name of Pearl on it was that there was a necklace-like design on its bottleneck with pearls-like grains that were built of gunmetal (bronze). There were a couple of narrative traditions saying: it has transferred from Shiraz to here by permission from Shah-Cheragh without any means, and also that Nader-Shah has conquered India by the use of it, and it was blessed and inspired and furthermore, the people believed it and were resorting to it. But above this all, the name of Fath Ali Shah was carved on the gunpowder’s tank (Shahri, 2004 vol., 4: 74) it seems that it was made for showing up from the beginning and no bullet was thrown out of it (Ibid., vol. 3: 364); (Pic.1). Mohajer and Tajeddini (2015: 151) have stated in their study, quoted by “Yahya Zoka”: The ball around the artillery square was also enclosed by a fence and railing that were muzzle-loaded rifles that due to being unused they had been connected by the metal tubes and turned into parapet form. At the four corners of the garden, in the middle of the square, four circular platforms and four large balls were installed, but sometimes the stored balls were also used for making garden rows. According to the above reports, it can be said that these sculptures with direct reference to the war were considered targets such as showing the military power as a political goal, beautifying the square and the visual delight of audiences. However, it should be noted that the creators and performers...
were not artists and sculptors but the armorer (Ghourchian) and who were casting in the armory (Ghourkhaneh). The pearl ball and the other artillery and used military equipment were shown by a special arrangement and decorative painting in the space of squares until the coupe of Esfand 1299 SH (1920) and were remained there as a beautiful element in the urban space.

After [seeing] these masses, Naser al-Din Shah by travelling to Europe and receiving gifts from foreign governments, visiting museums and statues of kings and famous people, who were present on horseback in the squares and public places, fascinated with figurative sculptures and then he ordered his sculptures as well on horseback to the Minister of Industry (Eghbal al-saltaneh) and the armory. This time, although the issue had no direct reference to war, but had implications to the cavalry that could have a close relationship with warfare and military power. Of course, this theme is not considered as an imported idea, but instead as one that has always been existed in Iranian culture; as according to the evidence of remaining works and reliefs, the riding kings are considered as a symbol of power in warfare, conquest and defeating the enemy (for instance the relief of Khosrow Parviz ride on horseback in Taq-e Bostan). Similarly, in Islamic culture and in the Qur’an and Hadith, the horse in different forms and from many aspects, especially from a military perspective and combat, has been praised and honored. In Surah Al-Anfal, verse 20 it has been said that, “Mobilize whatever is in your power, of force and of ready horses, to terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy”. Naser al-Din Shah desired the statue get installed in the square-Toopkhaneh-similar to the European counterpart examples, but because of the prejudices of the people and
fear of Clergymen, inserted it on the ground of Bagh-e-Shah - the symbol of the army. In the book memoir of "Itimad-os-Saltaneh" (1966: 597) about the unveiling of the statue, it has been mentioned that: "Today is the feast of sculpture. This means that the royal (Homayouni) statue, ride on horseback is built of cast iron in the armory. It has been manufactured properly; because it was very difficult to make such a status without any tools. But it was not required to make a celebration and arrange a feast. Building such a Pic on the Nation of Islam is forbidden ... but the only thing is that the king is able to do anything he wants, thank god; but there are still such a zealous people who do not like this situation. If my request was considered, I would not let them provide such ceremonies" (Pic.2).

According to this description we see again that the first urban figurative status despite of legal prohibition is to emerge, in order to project the military power and ambitions that Etemad-Olsaltaneh denies it. Although it is the first time that this status is made by an Iranian architect, Mirza Ali Akbar Khan- e Memar (architect), but interestingly, similar to guns and military equipment, it is still ordered to the armory reinforcing the its conceptual and performing affiliation to the issue of war. This statue was standing until "the early Pahlavi era that got melted according to the order of Bouzarjomehri and used for making weapons" (Mohajer & Tajeddini, 2015: 194).

The most highlighted presentations of status in urban spaces have occurred following the fading of religious veneration during the Pahlavi era and the horse riding figurative sculptures are one of the most important types of figurative sculptures of this time. After melting the statue of Naser al-Din Shah "By the year 1935 no statue of the Shah has been installed in Tehran squares, so the Baldia [according to the original text] of Tehran decides for the first time to order the building of the king’s status to a foreign artist [August Mayard French]. The sculptures were installed in three important locations in the city, including the squares of Gar (Rah Ahan), Sepah Square and the newly formed square on the Karaj new road “(Idem: 294). The Sculptures of Rah-Ahan and Sepah squares, follow the same pattern of cavalry with the only difference that in accomplishing of them the military power is also stressed by exploiting the historical concepts and patterns, for example, the status of Sepah square has a column base of four Achaemenid soldiers, with spears in their hands (Pic 3). This archaism approach that can be rooted in the ideas of “National Heritage Association” is also seen in the statue of ”lions with swords in hands”, at the entrance to the National Assembly (Majlis-e Shoray-e Melli) (1905) and a triumphal arch with the reliefs of lions and cows’ battle that was built on the occasion of Eisenhower’s arrival in Iran (1959).

In addition to the figurative cavalry sculptures displaying a classical presentation of the governor’s military power, the revolutionary concepts such as freedom and justice that are formed following the stream of seeking for independence and constitution become apparent, according to western-
style and by using of iconic elements such as swords and spears, indicating the fights and battle. During the Pahlavi II (probably 1960) the sculpture of “Gushtasp and Dragon fight,” which was built to commemorate the rescue of Azerbaijan from the Soviet occupation and today is installed in the “Horr” Square and is following to the mentioned concepts. Another example, is the status in Mokhberodoleh square that was installed after the coup of 28th Mordad (August). The statue was showing a dragon in front of a military and a civilian with a flag base and a spear in his mouth (Pics. 4 & 5).

The sculptures of this time- the Pahlavi era-are considered in somehow as governmental sculptures that were installed in spaces owned by the government, such as squares. As, the squares were connected with the concepts of everyday life were placed in leisure and cultural urban spaces such as parks, cultural centers, theaters’ forecourt and museums. In general, the matter of war and fighting in sculptures of this time, influenced by the war and constitutional revolution experiences can be divided into two groups:

1) The statues that are considered as an exhibition of the warriors, military power, hegemony of political leaders and authoritarianism such as war balls (cannons), figurative and cavalry King status.

2) The symbolic sculptures expressing a mythical theme and using war implements such as spears and swords are a presentation of the struggle for concepts of justice and freedom. The figurative sculptures of this time have a more...
political function with strong impress as toppling a square status would be equal to the change of the regime.

The Second Section: from the Islamic Revolution to 2010

The experience of Iran-Iraq’s war, only two years after the Islamic Revolution in 1978 led that the concepts of war redefined through the concepts and values of the revolution and its definition changed from aggression, struggle for ambition and dominance to a Sacred Defense against invaders of religion, life, property and territory and varied to the defense of the oppressed, the values and ideals. During this time we can see the presentation of revolution, values and the positive aspects of the war such as courage, sacrifice, loyalty and self-devotion (changing the meaning of War into Jihad). War for ambitious at this section is an action against the religion and is also unhallowed.

The concept of war in this section is accompanied by a kind of fatalistic interpretation of war and disasters and its outcomes are accompanied by emphasizing on the Ashura’s pattern and task-oriented approach; A spiritual interpretation of war based on task-oriented with an emphasis on human values and narratives of war. The significance of human values during the Sacred Defense has had an important role in forming the spiritual-value approach to the war; an approach that is mentioned as an interpretation approach or spiritual expression of the human aspects of war. War in this look is thought more as an individual and spiritual behavior.

Following this introduction that indicates the transformation of the war concept, four major time courses can be considered in this section:

In the first course, that can be mentioned as the power transition and consolidation time of a new political system was continued from 1978 to 1980., it seems that there was no action to build urban sculptures for the following reasons: 1) The unstable conditions of the new government 2) The religious prohibition 3) considering the statue as a symbol of the former regime; but in the next course (war time from 1980 to 1988), although urban sculpture, is not kind of art to be in the service of war, for some reasons including believing and religious issues, closing the universities and the schools of sculptures and consuming more time to built it compared to the other visual art such as murals, however, some sculptures are made on theme of revolution and over the concepts of martyrdom that among them, the status of Revolution Square in 1982 is the most famous one. "Before presenting, this statue was in modular volumetric and relief patterns that was considered as the symbol of the revolutionary struggles of different groups of people during the revolution and demonstrations. Displaying the presence and role of women and ethnic groups with different modes and a little overexpression in the form of hands, especially in the hands of Imam Khomeini referring to their leadership role and support of people during the revolution. But, after that it was referring to another signified as narrating the eight years of imposed war and the leadership of Imam Khomeini..."
at the time” (Derived from 8-year-old expectation to unveil a symbol, 2015); (Pic. 6).

During the war, in addition to considering a figurative and realist sculpture, as a symbol of the former regime, the intensified religious’ ban after the Islamic Revolution on statue resulted in defining symbolic revolutionary elements: Tulips, birds and pigeons. Thus, the volumes adopted from the symbols of the revolution were created by artists within those years and were installed in the city squares. In an interview with Iraj Eskandari it has been said that: “One example of these works was for Jafar Najibi” in Vanak Square, the four volumes of cubic shape, were placed vertically, each was a standing hand and a symbol; Gun, pen, book and ... or The Rah- Ahan square that was holding a few tulips resembling the martyrs” (Ibid.).

In this era, the statues that were remnants of the former regime and did not refer directly to that time are found modern interpretation through the concepts of revolution and Islamic values, such as the status of Gushtasp and the Dragon of Bagh-e-Shah that was built on the occasion of the Azerbaijan’s liberation, but after the revolution and renaming to Horr has found another reference. As, Mobajer and Tajeddini (2015: 323) write: “[it refers to] the Horr character and the concept of fighting with sensuality. According to many of the later audiences of the statue, it commemorates the Battle of Karbala and relevant events”.

In the third period (1988 to 2001) the first melodies of efforts to stabilize the sculpture as a form of art were heard that is able to be in the service of war and revolutionary concepts. So that after a long break from making status, in 1988, ”Taher Sheikh-al Hokmai” In a note entitled “Sculpture in isolation,” states: “In our revolutionary country the question in the minds of most of the people is that “what is sculpture?” and despite of being able to have a basic role in flooding movement of the society to proceed it to the goal of the revolution, why has it stagnated? To our opinion the basic point is that if the art of statuary grows in proper direction could have a proper impression on society and reflect the highest values and ideas of our people in the correct format and dedicate an eternal role to them.” (Sheikh-al Hokmai, 1988: 32) and from this time forward, the first melodies of building urban sculpture as a revolutionary and promise art are heard and for removal of its religious ban some requests for knowing the opinion of religious leader (Marja-Taghlid) have been proposed (for examples see the fine arts magazine that was published in the efforts of Jahad-e-Daneshgahi (scientific information database, SID) of that time and the publisher, Nashr-e- Eslami within the years of 1988-1989).

Although, in spite of all these efforts, finally the statues of Felestin (Palestine) square is the first human status dealing with the issue of human Pics in 1991, and has been constructed by three artists, "Memarian", "Qashqai" and "Garoosian", but this recession continues until that sculpting is recognized as an academic desiline and students accepted in this course in 1993 (Pic. 7). During this time course the first urban statue of a revolutionary warrior – the martyr Ayatollah Modares - is presented at the Parliament Square (1996).

The fourth course (2001 to 2010), might be interpreted as a stabilized time for the urban sculptures on the subject of war and revolution by adopting from "Nicholas Pruna", saying that "A wartime experience shows that a decade after war, is the time for polishing the bitter memories. At this time people will find this opportunity that once more again to face with these bitter memories but this time by using the creative power of art" (Sorlin, quoted by Ravadrad and Heiranpour, 2013: 59); urban sculpture deals with it seriously, but the points that infract the saying is that the urban sculptures
of Tehran are not the actual narrative form of war and are not considering the hardship and bitter memories of it; unlike the other countries dealing with displaying the various invasions and atrocities of it. This course of time, as mentioned before, through the revolution concepts and by having a new look at the war issue, is accompanied by the epics of war’s hero, heroism of the commanders and respecting and honoring them by building their status, head and bust sculptures (Pic. 8). It is should be noted that the subject of martyrs does not only return to those of the Iran-Iraq’s war (The martyrs Fahmideh, Jahan-Ara and Hemmat) but the whole revolutionary warriors and commanders who were killed during the mission or terrorist attacks are also considered as the martyrs (Including the martyrs: Bahonar, Rajai, Motahari, Modares, Beheshti, Navab Safavi, Avini, Raiis Ali Delvari, Dadman, Ahmad Kazemi and Sayyad Shirazi). However, the other notable point is that it seems a kind of patriarchal look prevails constantly over this subject.
heroism; because, although the roles of mothers and women are undeniable and admirable—whether during the war or within the defense of the homeland (rear of the front line) following encouraging and convoying their sons in defense of homeland (nearly 3,500 martyred women in the Iran-Iraq war) from one hand and enduring the pain and also suffering from losing their sons on the other hand, but there is no trace of commemorating, venerating and respecting them whether in form of a figurative sculpture or in the form of memorial and symbolic one in the reviewed examples. The reason for this deficiency could not even be justified by religious jurisprudence as the presence of famous women’s status (such as the status of Parvin-e Etesami) in Tehran is reversing it.6

In another approach, sculptors, are also trying to make symbols for the revolution’s concepts and values like resistance and courage (Pic. 9). Moreover, we are encountering with the third approach in which the sculptors using abstract and modern expression, present the revolutionary concepts (Pic.10). Generally, by reviewing the works, the characteristics of these statues can be categorized technically as follows:

- The use of symbolic elements such as cedar, dove, flying, hands (The Hand of Abolfazl) and tulips
- Making the head, burst and realistic status of the martyrs
- Applying the abstract forms by using symbolic colors of red, black and white.
- Abstract expression of value concepts such as strength, endurance and perseverance
- Until the 80s (2001) in the square and the 80s in the garden, park, street and highway’s border, square

Conclusion | Generally, the war issue in urban sculpture of contemporary Tehran, under the influence of revolutions (the constitutional Revolution and Islamic Revolution) turns from an objective reality that concerns about the showing power into a subjective issue that matters defending of revolutionary concepts and values. In both sections under review, myth-making (Mythopoeia) and respecting the war commanders and warriors are visualizing through figurative language with the exception that in the pre-revolutionary section in figurative sculptures the emphasis is on the first authority of the state as commander and military power (mythical approach), while after the Islamic Revolution, the statues of martyrs without direct reference to the war and objective realities are trying to respect and honor them (epic approach). Moreover, in both sections, the revolutionary concepts -under the influence of constitutional and Islamic revolution- are created in form of sculptures with symbolic language, but we see that in sculptures before the Islamic Revolution, to manifest the concepts such as fighting for freedom, a mythical approach with an emphasis on archaism are used that has a direct reference to the battle, such as the combat with dragon by sword and spear, while after Islamic Revolution for representing the revolutionary concepts and values such as resistance, martyrdom and courage by using analogy-oriented and poetic approach, a symbolic language is created that its words has no direct reference to the war and battle such as tulip, cedar, dove, flying, red, black and white colors. In addition to different attitudes toward the perception of war issue within the two sections, the places of the statues are also different; before the revolution, the status
in addition to following the European pattern, on account of their dependency to the state, were placed only in the square’s field, that is converted gradually to a governmental element; and after the revolution it seems that by oversetting the figurative sculptures in the squares that were resembling the previous state and following the opposition to the previous policy, the busts and figurative sculptures, mostly because of their form and dimension are placed in outdoor gardens and parks, as more public spaces, while the monuments and abstract elements due to their higher symbolic impression, are installed more in the squares (Table 1).

Table 1: The comparison of Tehran’s figurative and symbolic sculptures with the subject of war and fighting from the Qajar era up to the year 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Before the Islamic Revolution</th>
<th>After the Islamic Revolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figurative Sculpture</td>
<td>Emphasizing on the authority and military power of the country’s first person (mythical approach)</td>
<td>Venerating and respecting the martyrs without direct reference to the war and the objective realities of it (epic approach)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Sculpture</td>
<td>Representing the freedom concepts by using of iconic elements</td>
<td>Representing the valuable and revolutionary concepts using symbolic elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of Sculptures</td>
<td>Square</td>
<td>Until 2001: Square</td>
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Endnotes

* This paper is based on a research project titled ‘warscape and city’ which was conducted by NAZAR research center.
1. From the words of Edward Pollock, Ernst Oursel, George Curzon, Madame Wolfensohn who have traveled to Iran at different times of the Qajar dynasty.
2. It is said that it was made by the Professor Esmail, an Isfahanian casting manufacturer to the order of Fath Ali Shah in 1233 AH. It is said that it was made by the skilful Isfahanian casting manufacturer, Ostad Esmail to the order of Fath-Ali-Shah in 1233 AH.
3. Two balls (Cannons) made in Denmark were installed at the entrance of the National Garden’s Army Asset that was remained from the aggregation of both the Cossack and the old Ministry War buildings (Savandian, as quoted by Mohajer & Tajeddini, 185;2015). 4. It should be noted that from the time of Mohammad Shah Qajar, the motif of Lion & Sun (Shir-o-Khorshid) is patterned together with a sword.
5. For more information, see the article of “The factors affecting the formation of war’s approaches and concepts and the necessity of research on this area” by Mohammad Droodian.
6. Among the examples in Tehran, the only available case of conceptual status was for a mother of a Martyr (1999) that was not considered in this review due to installation in a residential zone and remoteness from the general definition of urban sculpture in the sense of presence in public space and be accessible to everyone.

Reference List