

# Participative Landscape

## The effect of people's presence in design of two garden-museums in Tehran and Khorramshahr\*

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**Abstract** | After 8 years of the holy defense of Iran against invasion of Iraq, a new genre in art named “Art of holy defense” has been emerged which visualizes bravery, perseverance, patriotism and self-devotion of people against invaders. This area of the art in the field of architecture has been presented in design of museums as well as museum-gardens. Such museums could be found in many cities to showcase the war, warrior’s memorabilia as well as the battle scenes in both conceptual and realistic ways. Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense that was constructed on 1996 and Tehran garden-museum of holy defense that was built on 2006, are two important examples of such museums. The comparative analysis of two projects shows that cultural center of Khorramshahr -with minimum of taking advantages of technocrats and low cost in construction- is more successful than urban project of museum-garden of holy defense in Tehran -with maximum of taking advantages of technocrats and high cost- in representing self-devotion and essence of war between Iran and Iraq.

Now it’s the question; why museum-garden of holy defense in Tehran couldn’t succeed as it was expected in the other hand what factors led Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense to be a successful project?

**Keywords** | Holy Defense, Tehran Garden-Museum of Holy Defense, Khorramshahr Cultural Center of Holy Defense, Folk Art, Technocracy Art.



Pic 1: Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defence ; transparent barriers and feasibility of seeing inside from outside.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2015.

**Introduction** | After eight years of war, the idea of creating places to preserve and present memorials of war and warriors and also showing what happens not only to warriors but also to the Iranian people during these years was created. It further formed a new identity for Iranians - a nation with adamant and defiant morale. This idea in the shape of museum, cultural center and museum-garden of holy defense has been visualized to show memorials of eight years of holy defense and its impressions on the future of Iran. In order to respect years of war and people who voluntarily proceed war fronts or reinforce warriors behind the fronts, various of museums and garden-museums in many cities of Iran, even the ones which were not directly engaged, have been constructed.

In some cities, such spaces are administrated by “Islamic Council” or “Foundation for Preservation of Holy Defense Works and Values” of the city and are built by collaboration of the townspeople, and the museum is evolved during years by collecting memorials and remains of the war. In contrast, in some cities and above of all Tehran - as the capital of Iran -, this project turns to a tremendous and national one with excessive cost and providing the funding from leadership of Iran and also bringing technocrats together to select an appropriate site and planning, in a modern process has been

designed and constructed.

Few months ago, in a trip to Khorramshahr, when I was walking on a pedestrian parallel to Karoun River accidentally and without any predestination to visit holy defense cultural center, site barriers at first and then conceptual artistic installations which were visible from outside in, drew my attention. The project had been gotten involved with city and its urban landscape; so that encouraged me to study and search about the designer, administrative organization and process of forming the center (Pic.1). In contrast, a similar space with same function has been opened recently in Tehran (Pic.2). Plenty of announcements in Tehran, specifically beside Shahid-Hemmat and Shahid-Haqani highways, call for visiting it. I had read various arguments and reviews about this newly constructed space before. Moreover, Manzar scientific journal in an article criticised the concepts of garden-museum of holy defense in Tehran (Minatour Sajjadi et al. 2016). The idea of comparing these two spaces has been shaped after field visit and more study about two projects. It's the question; which factors made Khorramshahr cultural center more successful - in both narrating 8 years of war and holy defense and communicating people- than Tehran garden-museum of holy defense?

In this article both projects has been compared in deferent scales to answer these questions; how much war in urban landscape affected Tehran garden-museum of holy defense? Why does this project, despite huge amount of budget, wasn't successful? Which factors in the process of this project -from beginning days of discussing the theme until performing it- made it unsuccessful? In comparison with Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense, why in Tehran garden-museum of holy defense, despite of taking advantages of technocrats, does not appear successful?

### Hypothesis

Tehran museum-garden of holy defense -with a technocracy attitude in design and planning- is less successful than Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense -with minimum of taking advantages of technocrats- in reflecting what has happened during years of holy defense.

### The Essence of Holy Defense

War between Iran and Iraq get started by entering 192 bombers in 21st of September 1980. Although Iraq army had begun sporadic attacks on Iran boards from a month ago, this was the official announcement for a battle which lasts eight years. The new born government of Islamic republic which had a messy defense basis after Islamic revolution in 1978, suddenly faced war and military network of Iran was not able to react properly. This situation made Iraq military more powerful so they go forward from south borders of Iran, occupy Khorramshahr and enclose Abadan.

Military of Iran forces in shape of "Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution" and "General Mobilization" with the support of Islamic clerics, after failure in a great armored operation. Although Iran was prosperous in airstrikes by being well equipped in weapons and combat hardware, it's weakness was remained in ground combat and armed equipments. Since then, defensive strategy of Iran changed to general mobilization and could retake Khorramshahr. From this date Iran focused on people forces and taking advantage of ethnic and mass groups participation tactics (Pic.3). This tactic demoralized Iraq army which was evasive to have casualties in war. Spirituality, sacrifice, persistence, patriotism and national zeal was immersed in Imam Khomeini strategy in public defense during eight years of holly defense in the form of general mobilization (Shaabani Sarooei, 2005). It's the key point which made this war different from a military war with its classic definitions for Iranians.

War was not limited in Iran boarders. Iraq bombardment on central regions of Iran from 1981 to last days of war caused displacement of people, who seemed to be far from direct involvement in war. Approximately 30 percent of Tehran population moved to other cities during these years.

Iraq did various chemical warfare during eight years of war in Iran; about 30 of these attacks was in residential areas.

The most gruesome chemical warfare was in Sardasht (a city near west boarder of Iran) in July 1987. Chemical attacks increment in 1988 and civilian passengers' casualties leads to adopt United Nations Security Council Resolution 598 by Imam Khomeini and ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in



Pic 2: Tehran garden-museum of holy defence ; Bird view to the complex and its location on Abbas-Abad hills, Tehran.  
Source: [www.arkanarzesh.com](http://www.arkanarzesh.com)

8 of August, 1988.

Without volunteer people, 8 years of holy defense, was not possible. Incorporation of religious culture and the sprite of resistance and national zeal against aggressor shaped a specific genre of war which was different from classic wars in the world (Shaabani Sarooei, 2005). Holy defense was the resistance of all Iranians, that's why it has a great place in collective memory of people during 8 years. All Iranians were engaged in this phenomena; whether those who sent their beloved ones and children to the war frontiers, or the ones who lived in the border cities and were under chemical warfare; people who lived in the central regions of Iran and were enforced to escape to safe places such as shelters and



Pic 3: Participation of volunteers from various ages and ethnicities in the war.  
Source: [www.jamnews.ir](http://www.jamnews.ir)



Pic 4: Wall painting of a martyr portrait in a realistic style. Painted by : Ahmad Mansoub.  
Source: [www.fardanews.com](http://www.fardanews.com).

stairwells with every single warning alarm; also women and children who had displaced from their home to other cities to find a safe place to live. Such concepts and specific characters made 8 years of war, holy defense for Iranians.

### Holy Defense and Art Movements in Iran

After years of war, holy defense emerged not only as a common collective memory and national identity for Iranians, but as a symbol of resistance, alliance, sacrifice, defense of homeland against aggressors. To honor all merits come after those years, art of holy defense has emanated. Film, painting, theatre, music, literature and etc. endeavored to show war-torn society of Iran, achieved and missed goals, holy defense concepts and patriotism, back scenes of war and everything said and unsaid about war years. Two different genres of holy defense art have been emerged:

1. Realistic art; which visually shows war, war scene and war operations. In this genre of art, the artist uses the war as subject and tries to revival it in his/her artworks (Pic.4).
2. Conceptual and abstract art; which addressing the concept of war, essence and meanings of holy defenses, and tries to do art considering holy defense concepts and values which achieved during 8 years of war with resistance and scarification and also its influence on following years (Pic.5).



Pic 5: Conceptual painting of holy defence. Painted by: Hosein Khosrojerd. Source: [www.fardanews.com](http://www.fardanews.com).

Architecture, also as an art, did take place in this genre of art. Various of museum and garden-museums has been built during post war years in almost all big cities in Iran, which shows war memorabilia remained from warriors and also reconstruct memorable atmosphere of war and holy defense -whether realistic or conceptual-; in a way that visitor feels like being in war field and experience war memories, in such spaces. Museum- garden of holy defense of Tehran, in compare with cultural center of holy defense in Khorramshahr, is inefficient and unsuccessful example of such spaces.

### Tehran Garden-Museum of Holy Defense in Comparison with Khorramshahr Cultural Center of Holy Defense

#### - Leading committee

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense's preliminary studies on feasibility and locating carried out by Cultural Spaces

Development Organization in collaboration with Urban Management of Holy Defense Values, General Staff of Armed Forces, Tehran City Council, Preserving Relics & Publishing Values of Holy Defense foundation, In 2004 (Pic. 6).

Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense is introduced from Foundation of Preserving and Publishing Holy Defense Relics, In 1994, as a museum and preservation center of what remains from war in the Khorramshahr (Pic. 7).

#### - Locating

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense located in Abbas Abad hills at north central of Tehran. Abbas Abad lands were a barren village outside the first and second enclosure walls of old Tehran, located between Shemiran and other villages like Yousef Abad, Davoudieh and Qasr. These lands reorganized several times that possessed by Agriculture bank in First Pahlavi period, planned to build the downtown of cosmopolitan and modern Tehran in Second Pahlavi



Pic 6: Tehran garden-museum of holy defence; view to the building and the garden.  
Photo: Shahrzad khademi, 2016.



Pic 7: The north-east to the south-west axis begins exactly from the entrance of the palace that is situated on the Tall-e Takht ("Solomon's Throne"). After passing the axis of the royal garden, this axis reaches to the tomb of Cyrus.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2015.

period, and after the Revolution stayed untouched for a while. The first designated lands were the mosque of Imam Khomeini (Musallā) by his permission. In 1989, Ayatollah Khamenei (as The President) in a letter to Tehran Municipal described, “Due to preserving the propriety of Musallā and other plans in the area, every meddling in the lands have to be reported to me. It is recommended to assign these lands long-term cultural and political plans and landscapes (Abbāsābād Renovation Company, 2010).

The main strategies were determined based on “Detailed Designation” in 2007 and “Comprehensive Plan” in 2005 consists of 7 areas with various functions; approximately 41 acre of these fields was allocated to cultural application with artistic and scientific tendency. Museum-garden of holy defense located following this plan in northern area of Abbāsābād fields, but was the selected location qualified for essence, values and concepts of the holy defense? Does the site and city interact well? Did locating the museum in



Pic 8: Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defence ; taking advantages of statues and monuments in harmony with exterior facade and museum theme. In contrast, landscape furniture and green area which are not prescheduled is obvious in the picture.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2015.



Pic 9: Tehran garden-museum of holy defence ; ornamental attitude in taking advantages of landscape furniture and planting, beside lack of preset plan in landscape designing.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2016.

this site have proper act and react with city? Does this site revive collective memories from years of the holy defense correspondingly?

Just a negative respond to all these questions exists. Unfortunately locating and making decision for the site plan was a wrong decision. apportion a piece of land beside some newly established theme parks like “Water and Fire park” and “Academies” to museum-garden go holy defense, does not provide an indicator and symbolic aspect for it. Despite locating near underground station and accessibility through main highways of Tehran, it’s not easily reached. As a fact, the site is located on the peak which detaches itself from city and its people. It’s in contrast with a people war that owes its victory to all people. If this site was located somewhere south or downtown beyond valuable urban fabric of Tehran -where almost all volunteers go to warfront from here-, could be more successful project.

Khorramshahr Cultural center of holy defense is located in site and building ruins remained from war. The building was administrative division of Oil Company in Khorramshahr from 1930 to 1980, when occupied by Iraq army. Until reclaiming Khorramshahr, this building was monitoring point for Iraq soldiers. Locating site and its building beside north edge of Karoun River, next to Khorramshahr-Abadan Bridge and also being near to Arvand River, made this building a strategic point for Iraq monitoring. There are plenty of inscriptions written by Iraq soldiers on the walls. This place was witness of various events from days of occupation to liberation of Khorramshahr. All these values beside its location and potentials make an added value for the site, which did it a cautious choice for cultural center of holy defense.

“Places are not determined only by objectivity, but by a chain of social and physiological activities and process happens there. A Place consist of physical attributes, as well as the symbolic definitions, emotional and sentimental attachments” (Ansarinasab, 2015).

Involving the location of the museum with memories of places which was under bomb attacks during years of war, dedicates a mental aspect to the site to create a suitable place for museum of holy defense.

#### - Designing Process

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense has been designed trough an architecture competition with an opening call in widely circulated newspapers in 2005. They asked all architects to send their work to the competition secretariat. 250 people took place in completion and 42 works were selected for judgement.

Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense in contrast, was designed and built imperatively and collaboratively, whiteout any completion.



Pic 10: Tehran garden-museum of holy defence ; locating war equipments and machineries without preset plan.  
Photo : Shahrzad Khademi,2016.



Pic 11: Tehran garden-museum of holy defence ; locating war equipments and machineries randomly without preset plan.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi,2016.



Pic 12: Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defence ; taking advantages of war equipments as fences and make it a transparent barrier. Mental essence is added to a physical architecture element (wall) through this attitude.  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi,2015.

#### - Judgment Comity

Tehran garden- museum of holy defense was arbitrated by the ones who were mostly specialist in architecture technology and also were acceptable political faces. In fact, this project was done by taking maximum advantage of technocrats.

Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense was done whiteout any competition and arbitration and also taking minimum advantage of technocrats, perhaps local people who had an active role during years of war done this project.

#### - Selected Project for Construction

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense was the result of the winner of the competition -with slight changes- which completed finally. The project had to be constructed under supervision of the designing team.

Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense is built on ruins of building remains from years of war, with preservation and conservation some of its parts or adding a second shell on existed building. Various traces of shrapnels are notable on the building. Interior walls with Iraq soldiers' inscriptions are also preserved. Operation of the building was in 1996, but in following years some conceptual arts and installations was added to the site (Pic. 8). In fact, what we can see today, as cultural center, has been figuring during years from 1994 till now.

#### -Project Cost

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense was constructed by a colossal cost. 17.2 million USD was the first estimated budget for this project, but finally it completed by 77.1 million USD. Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense was built in low budget from dedicated funds of Iran government for reconstruction of Khorramshahr.



Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defence ; doing installations and conceptual artworks with war theme in museum landscape .  
Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2015.



### - Taking Advantages of War-Related Elements

Tehran garden-museum of holy defense is constructed with technocrat attitude and a predesigned documents. Neither in museum building nor in the landscape, intelligent usage and integration of war implements and memorabilia in designing of the building and landscape planning, is not notable (Pic.9). So as a result, large scale implements representing, which are located randomly without any harmony with design ideas, catch visitors' eyes. There is some minimal furniture inside the museum, use as seat, which are made from battleship ammunition boxes. You can rarely see this idea in other parts of museum (Pics. 10 & 11). Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense which is forming from vernacular potentials, in contrast with the same place in Tehran, takes maximum use of war implements and memorabilia in museum building and landscape. Museum building is partly from ruins of old building which is obvious from outside. More over using war implements as fences of museum site and other parts of its landscape, is considerable (Pics. 12- 14).

Pic 14: Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defence; Using memorable elements and statues of people defending their own city. Photo: Shahrzad Khademi, 2015.

**Conclusion** | Systematic analogy of two war museum with the same theme in Tehran and Khorramshahr shows that designing process from early conceptual sketches to construction with two different attitudes leads to two different results. Khorramshahr project is formed approximately with local forces and minimum taking advantages of technocrats and was affected by the circumstance of those period of time in Iran. However, this project was more successful in comparison to Tehran project which was constructed by technocrats who mostly didn't experienced the war and solely took into account the originality of design concept. Hence a general discipline for all the projects might not be the proper answer. The result of analogies in this paper and also general feedbacks to Tehran garden-museum shows

that some spaces, based on their early concepts, function and essence, need different attitude. Unfortunately, allocating high cost, taking maximum advantages of technocrats who are mainly well-known political faces, is not a suitable way to make such spaces glorious. Glory and magnificence in such spaces, like greatness of 8 years of holy defense, is in different genre which just makes sense by people presence. Imam Khomeini says, "Reconstruction after war is just like war". It means, when the war is leads to victory by people presence and scarifications, in post-war reconstructions and creating new building and sites with holy defense theme, people must be present. It's what had done in Khorramshahr cultural center of holy defense. This project despite of allocating low cost, is much more successful than Tehran project.

### Endnotes

\* This paper is based on a research project titled "warscape and city" which was conducted by NAZAR research center.

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