

Public Preferences in Design of Martyrs' Memorials

Reviewing Social Success of Projects by Bonyad-e-Shahid Organization*

Behzad Masoudi Asl
Ph.D. Candidate in Architecture,
Nazar Research Center, Tehran,
Iran.
bmasodiasl@yahoo.com

Ahmad Ali Farzin
Ph.D. in Architecture, Assistant
Professor, University of Tehran,
Tehran, Iran.
a.farzin@hotmail.com

Nasser Barati
Ph.D. in Urban Planning,
Assistant Professor, International
University of Imam Khomeini,
Qazvin, Iran.
neda.arabsolghar@gmail.com

Abstract | In recent decades, monuments and works in relation with war and martyrdom have had different effects on urban landscape. Although, creating monumental buildings in Iran has a long rich history, but the diversity of approaches and types of creating such landscapes in modern era and the efforts to increase innovation in these designs, has resulted in production of various works which do not meet the requirements in many cases. In this study we have tried to identify the most successful approaches and patterns at the viewpoint of functionality, identity and aesthetic design, in addition to evaluating the efforts and programs of Martyr Foundation and Veterans Affairs. Accordingly, after studying different samples in a cross-sectional study method using documentary analysis and identifying ways to design monumental works, the methods were analyzed and evaluated based on the general criteria in designing, layouts and features of historical monuments and also surveying experts in relevant fields. The results highlighted significant points in relation to approaches and the success of efforts in creating urban monumental landscapes and revealed the importance of the success factors namely components of audience-oriented approach, also attractiveness and connection with daily activities.

Keywords | Historical landscape, Martyrs monument, Martyrs cemetery, Martyr Foundation.

Introduction | Building monuments for the victims of wars to appreciate their sacrifice is a common custom in different societies; however in Iran, the position of martyrs in the religious culture and the connection between war and the concept of "holy defense", has formed special monumental works which differ fundamentally, in terms of concepts and identity, from usual monuments in other parts of the world. Likewise, Iran is one of the richest territories in terms of cultural heritage and historical monuments and its architecture records beside advanced architectural patterns of monuments have made great capacities to create high quality monuments.

Efforts in promoting the values of sacrifice and martyrdom, which took place in the years following the Islamic Revolution and the war, are varied and have been evolved over time. Martyr Foundation and Veterans Affairs is known as one of the core authorities with considerable influence through its significant presence in this field. The organization, based on its statute, defines the culture of building martyrs monuments as one of the principal objectives in its activities to promote the culture of sacrifice and martyrdom. These objectives include representing the concepts and values of martyrdom using artistic and promotive methods, presenting martyrs and veterans, creating a context for constant remembrance of their these values, and restoration and beautification of symbols and monuments of war and martyrdom through new artistic approaches (Martyr Foundation and Veterans Affairs, 2015). Based on these objectives, various activities in the fields of art, architecture and urbanism are followed which directly affect the urban landscape. Some of these activities which are based on Martyr Foundation guidelines and regulations include:

- Organizing outdoor advertising and installation of billboards in public spaces.
- Naming of streets, pathways and urban boulevards, transportation terminals, and different religious, educational, industrial or administrative buildings.
- Designing and implementing art projects in the field of the culture of sacrifice and martyrdom, including: building statues, monuments, and designing reliefs, posters, brochures, murals.
- Organizing Martyr Cemeteries.

Reviewing the Foundation activities reveals that artistic works and monuments diversity has considerably affected the urban landscape. In this paper, more successful models in terms of their functional, identity, and aesthetic have been examined through studying selected samples. This study can help to identify the best models in creating mementos of martyrs and improving the quality of these works.

Types of Martyrs' Monuments

Building monuments for martyrs is a multi-dimensional

and multi-functional phenomenon which is drastically involved with Iranian worldview and different aspects of their culture, life, behavior and attitude. "Monumental architecture in the context of materialistic culture can be reread and rethought as a language with its own specific rules and regulations. The relation of this architecture with memory and identity of its people is intrinsic and fundamental. The language of materialistic culture has its own way of expressing and requires its own language and rules to be read" (Mollasalehy, 2015: 80).

Thus Monuments of Martyrs, due to their mental status accompanying with various functions, can meet the community requirements as a major element in the urban landscape; and thus they must fulfil the requirements of the community.

Sustaining the memory of martyrs in urban design has been conducted in different ways and configuration which its major target has always been as applying Iranian culture background and symbolic features of their cultural religion and art. In this study, the most important forms of monumental works related to martyrs, which are more prolific, has been explored.

- Martyrs' Saqakhaneh

"Saqakhaneh is ingrained in oriental intuitive thoughts. In Iran, it also is linked to local and Shiite beliefs as a place for praying to make dreams come true and to fulfil the expectation which no rational and scientific way has been found to fulfil yet" (Zareie & Golzarian, 2012: 425). This very basic memorial pattern seen in urban public places is in respond to a requirement that in addition to the functional aspects have symbolic value and meaning as well; also acts as a landmark in the urban micro scales.

- Inscriptions and Reliefs

Crating inscriptions and bas-reliefs is an Iranian historical tradition used by governments as a media to reflect beliefs and gallantry within community. Bas-reliefs are the most important works to narrate Iranian historical culture and civilization. Martyr Foundation is applying reliefs in outdoors and indoors of urban area as a means of guiding and enlightening people. This works stand as one-sided advertising and communicating with its audience.

- Monuments of Martyrs

Constructing martyrs monuments in places such as mosques, cultural centers, plazas, schools and other specific urban areas is used to strengthen the subjective criteria of the space and making better communication with cultural concepts of martyrdom and self-sacrificing. In these monumental works, memorial aspects of landscapes and developing cultural sights are strongly highlighted and the focus is on the issues of aesthetic and identity.



Pic 1: The monument of martyr commander pilot Jodie, Ardabil.
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.



Pic 2: The Cemetery of Martyrs of Yazd, Mehriz, Mirokabad.
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2014.

- The Symbolic Elements of Martyrdom

Based on the principle of association of ideas, sometimes viewing a simple element can induce a range of meanings behind it. Elements such as candles, tulips, pigeons, pen and tablet in the urban arts are known as symbolic elements connoting to the concepts of martyrdom. While elements such as weapons directly refer to the issue of war, recreating the scenery of war and applying the real and familiar elements can narrate the event more impressively. In regard, a simple, explicit and primary technic has been used to attract public attentions (Farzian & Hojat, 2012: 34); (Pic. 1).

- Cemetery of Martyrs (Golzar-e Shohada)

Developing a particular cemetery for martyrs killed in the war contains different national, political, and even tourism concepts in different countries. Due to the importance of the martyrs in Iranian religion and culture, martyrs cemetery can be considered as one of the most important social-cultural centers in the city. Martyrs Foundation is responsible for maintaining the sanctity and dignity of the Martyrs and Veterans affairs. At the same time martyrs cemetery is relatively a new idea of and dates back to the years of war. In recent years, several patterns have been used to design martyrs cemeteries. Due to the importance of this activity, the most significant and common plans in monumental architecture are introduced briefly in the following categories:

- Architectural pattern for shrine and holy mausoleums: This

type of monumental architecture and sacred ritual, which now turned to one of the most common patterns of architecture and monuments commonly used in the cemetery of martyrs, is linked to a strong history in Shiite beliefs about martyrdom. The custom of visiting graves, shrines and holy mausoleums also has a long history in Iranian religious culture. The important point of this pattern is creating a symbolic monument which is a sign of religious beliefs and cultural values mixed with the holiness of martyrdom and sacred spaces; and at the same time recreates the act of pilgrimage as a collaborative and social action. Therefore, in creating a special space for social-ritual practices in such memorial-sacramental monuments, designing and organizing must also be considered severely (Pic. 2).

- The architecture of the mausoleum: It is said that inspiring monumental buildings were the first mausoleums which were built (Alsop qtd. in Mollasalehy, 2015). Iran has a long and rich history in the architecture of mausoleums. The usage of quadripartite vault (Chartaghy) or tower-like structures and the evolving of these plans to create symbolic mausoleums is one of the most important models in design of mausoleums. The most important feature of this pattern developed in the national configuration of mausoleums architecture is their specific form that reflects the glory, greatness and power and is known as an indication in terms of landscaping (Pic. 3).

- Architectural pattern for Tekieh and Hosseinieh: Tekieh and Hosseinieh which are architectural models used to



Pic 3: The Cemetery of Anonymous Martyrs, Bushehr.
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.



Pic 4: The interior of the mausoleum of Haft-e-Tir Martyrs, Behesht-e-Zahra, Tehran.
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f9/7tir_inside.jpg.

develop specific indoor spaces for public ritual ceremonies at different times and different seasons, also are being used as an innovation in martyr cemetery plans. The most important purpose of these cemeteries is to create a multi-functional space with high functional capabilities. Although the creation of a public space has helped its maintenance which is counted as the positive features of these cemeteries, in practice, indoor function of space in different types of ceremonies and specially covering the graves by carpets has made its symbolic originality for rituals and monumental aspects inconspicuous (Pic. 4).

- Persian garden pattern: Another pattern commonly used in martyr cemetery is the Persian garden design which benefits various aspects of identity, meaningfulness, and social function, and plays an important role in creating a significant space for monuments and worship places. Associating the image of a Persian garden with Garden of Eden, besides emphasizing on natural elements and values and strengthening those elements in Iranian-Islamic culture and customs create a symbolic space while having a religious and spiritual identity creates a beautiful sensational connection with nature; and can be used for spending leisure time in a recreational space in the city. Creating a convenient place for meditation accompanying with benefiting the advantage of natural space, which also have touristic function combined with a sacred memorial space, has brought popularity to these places, while the mausoleums of the martyrs in this complex supports the

cultural orientation in the space (Pic. 5).

- Pattern of urban public space: Martyrs cemetery is designed to provide a multi-functional public space which contains various functions and meet the diverse needs of its citizens which is another approach of designing these sort of spaces. Locating these spaces close to the popular communal spaces, combined with the urban area by eliminating the pathways around the edges into the complex, and the vastness of space which allows groups of people to attend meetings and provide multi-functional spaces for flow of people simultaneously can develop a fresh ineffable urban space and placing the mausoleums of the martyrs beside daily activities in direct connection with the public. The main feature of this type of cemetery is its strong connection with ongoing life in the city and improving urban space by creating public space (Pic. 6).

Assessing the monuments based on criteria derived from analyzing the projects

Various aspects of works related to martyrs and culture of self-sacrificing and martyrdom make it difficult to learn from past experiences for future actions. The issues related to martyrs is very complicated to assess due to different kind of semantic, historical, functional, economic, personalized, native criteria and many other aspects. However, to improve actions and to achieve higher quality, choosing explicit values on one hand and analyzing the action based on indicators derived from these values are inevitable.

The author has considered four main criteria namely



Pic 5: The cemetery of Martyrs, Baugh-e-Rezvan, Islamabad, Kermanshah.
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2016.

"communicating with audience", "sustainability", "function" and "sensation and refreshing" based on a process which its explanation and description goes too far from this issue. These criteria have been suggested based on author experience in interviewing managers of Martyr Foundation and related experts.

- Communicating with audience: Communication with audience by projects related to the martyrs is the main purpose of these activities. Therefore analyzing the quality and quantity of their effectiveness on the audience is crucial

for further planning. The interaction of martyrs monuments with their audience is mutual and definite, hence in any environment, it should illustrates the culture and beliefs of people coordinated to the same architecture setting, but yet due to its generality, its success depends on the audience perception and individual impressibility.

- Sustainability: Sustainability refers to its durability and success as a whole despite some small changes in its components. Some sort of unchangeability lies in the concept of stability while sustainability is a sort of



Pic 6: The Martyrs of Kerman.
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.

acceptability of variable objects for audience. Sustainability is the main purpose of creating these buildings, artistic works and monumental sights. Sustainability of artistic works has two dimensions: one is its concepts and aesthetic aspects; if the martyrs memorials contain wisdom, philosophy and spirituality, they will be enduring, as sustainability value is higher than stability and can contain spiritual aspects too. The other dimension is durability of structure which includes its configuration and physical body endurance.

- Function: The function of built space is another concern of audience which is significantly important in architectural viewpoint. The concept of function arises from the beneficial

effects of works on people and fulfilling their requirements. Functional quality of space that meets the daily needs of the audience and makes the opportunity of being present in a proper environment is one of the basic prerequisites of success in building spaces.

- Sensation and refreshing: Coherency of landscape with leisure time as well as linking it to the nature needs a space full of liveliness and sensational features which has caused so many challenges in the contemporary urban planning and its architecture designs. In order to impress audience, each public space should have its own fantastic character and creativity to provide a proper place for its audience to

Table 1: Evaluation of monuments of the martyrs (scores from 1 to 4: 1 as the lowest and 4 as the highest success rate).
Source: Authors.

| Evaluation Criteria \ Types of Monumental Works | Monuments of Martyrs | Sagakhaneh | Symbolic elements | Inscription & Reliefs | Designing patterns for martyrs' cemetery | | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| | | | | | Persian Garden | Shrin Architecture | Tekieh & Hoseiniyeh Architecture | Mausoleum Architecture | Urban public space |
| Communicating with audience | 2.75 | 3.25 | 2.5 | 2.75 | 3.25 | 3 | 2 | 2.25 | 3.5 |
| Sustainability | 3 | 3.5 | 1.25 | 2.25 | 3.75 | 4 | 2.75 | 3.75 | 3.5 |
| Function | 2.5 | 4 | 1.25 | 1.25 | 4 | 2.75 | 3.25 | 3 | 3.75 |
| Imaginative & Refreshing | 1.25 | 2.5 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1.75 | 1.25 | 1.5 | 2.75 |
| Total | 9.5 | 13 | 6 | 7.25 | 15 | 11.5 | 9.25 | 10.5 | 13.5 |
| Average | 2.38 | 3.25 | 1.5 | 1.81 | 3.75 | 2.86 | 2.231 | 2.62 | 3.37 |

meditate and relax. Emphasizing on sensational features of the place is much more important than its decorative features for the audience.

In this study, each of the martyr' memorial projects is evaluated based on enumerated criteria. This is done by setting a questionnaire to 20 experts in the fields of landscaping, architecture, art and urban design, and the results of survey are reflected in Table 1. In this regard, the assessment schedule and corresponding explanations were provided to respondents and they were asked to answer the questions through the numbers one to four as one for the least successful works up to the number four as the highest. Author's assessment in accordance with the field work and available samples has also been entered in the table 1.

Exploration and Evaluation of the Results

Among the patterns in organizing cemeteries for martyr, Persian garden pattern and urban public space has gained the highest score. Landscaping derived from Persian garden landscape design is a funerary common design that is used in the mausoleum courtyards. Iranian garden is the most familiar and memorable space for Iranians that is strongly linked to the audience mind and is in consistent with their aesthetic tastes. The concepts of beauty and meaning in Iranian garden never get old since they are associated with nature, and will sustain. "In Iranian Muslim mind, nature is a means to build a proper space matched to the human entity, and is an environment that can facilitate and foster the latent spiritual forces in his sentimental cognition... The Islamic worldview mentions the nature as divine source of wisdom and its elements as divine verse" (Mansouri, 2005). Through its water and evergreen trees, the major prospect of an Iranian garden which is an open-ended perspective on the main direction of the garden, makes "a suitable space for sensational meditations which helps human in intuitive understanding" (ibid). Accordingly, the landscaping capacities of this pattern has gained a great success in impression on both objects of nature and its memorability. Thus, the model gains the highest score in terms of the ability to create a spiritual fantastic atmosphere, while other models by a large margin are in the lower rank.

Due to Iranian social traditions in terms of functionality, garden space has also been considered as a place for leisure

activities and interaction of people with each other. Spending sensational time in the lap of nature and a landscape under the shade of trees are used as symbols in Iranian poetries and are also linked to the custom of visiting mausoleums and pilgrimaging. Garden pattern is in consistent with Cemetery of Martyrs for public celebration in wide open spaces.

Besides Persian garden, public space pattern has also gained high marks in respond to functional needs. The most important feature of this model is its capacity for diverse functions which provides a multi-functional urban space which consequently creates an opportunity to communicate with audience and his everyday life, and forms collective memory with reinforced mental aspects.

In contrast, the patterns which imitate the architectural forms of shrines and mausoleums despite their endurance capacity benefited from mausoleums or shrine, have gained lower scores due to the lack of sensation to create a high quality, meaningful and fantastic place. The sustainability of this pattern is related to two factors: first, the sanctity of the famous character and their shrine or mausoleum which is linked to the architecture of monuments, secondly, it is related to their symbolic feature which remains in the mind of audience and acts as a landmark in identifying and describing the place. Despite these features, the architectural pattern of the mausoleum is not capable enough to create a high quality and sensational place and does not have enough space for relaxing, and performing memorable and affordable ceremony.

Among other monumental works, Saqakhaneh has also gained high scores. This model has gained the highest score in functionality and has been evaluated as high durability. Functional linkage with meaning in this particular type of monuments increases its capacity in communicating with the audience. Although Saqakhaneh is only a symbolic and functional element and is not regarded as a kind of space, but because of the strong relationship with the concept of martyrdom beside its proper functioning advantage, has gained a rank much higher than monuments of martyrs. According to the results obtained in this survey, it seems that the main weakness of monuments is their inability to create a sensational and functional space which leads to less communication with the audience.

Conclusion | Considering that the Monuments of martyrs contain all physical (Architecture and landscaping) and non-physical (social, cultural and semantic) aspects of an urban element, it is expected to fulfil different functional and identifying requirements. This study shows that in creating buildings and monumental works which sustainability and meaning-making is an important part of its objectives; in

terms of function, mentality and meaningfulness have great impact on the success of the project to make it an audience-oriented plan considering audience role and requirements, while creating fine and decorative buildings do not have a deep connection with society and sustainability. Although the use of symbolic or well-known forms empowers the symbolic dimension of landscape and can make better

mental communication with the audience, the study shows that integrating the work in daily life routine of community supports the success and its sustainability.

According to the results of this study, key characteristics that influence the success of memorial monuments associated with war and martyrdom in Iran are described as follows:

1. Audience-oriented; means considering the diverse needs of the audience such as mental, spiritual, cultural and functional requirements.
2. Combining the function with form; creating spaces or

elements that accept different roles in city and landscape.

3. Integrating the pattern into everyday life; semantically, this connection needs cultural relationship with the community demands; and physically, it includes relation between monuments with public spaces and urbanism in everyday life of people.

4. Creating community centers; which strengthens the audience interact with the environment and gives more memorability to the space.

Endnotes

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

Reference List

- Farzian, M. & Hojat, I. (2013). Ta'amoli bar mabāni-e nazari-e tarāhi-e se yādemān-e defā'e moqadas [Exploring the theoretical principles in the design of three memorials of Holy Defense]. *Soffeh Scientific Journal*, 23 (60): 31-50.
- Mansouri, S.A. (2005). An introduction to the aesthetics of Iranian garden, *Bagh-e-Nazar Journal*, 2 (3): 58-63.
- Martyr Foundation and Veterans Affairs, Department of Cultural and Social Affairs. (2015). *Majmou'e dastour-ol-amahā va āeen-nāme-hā* [Collection of Guideline and Regulations], 1: 12-22. Tehran: Martyr Foundation and Veterans Affairs, Department of Culture and Advertising
- Mollasalehi, H. (2015). Rereading of memory and identity in monumental architecture of Iran. *Bagh-e-Nazar Journal*, 12 (34): 69-82.
- Zareie, S. & Golzarian, M. (2012). *Mafāhim-e mojoud dar me'māri-e saqākhāneh ba ta'sir-paziri az maktab-e shi'eh* [The concepts in the architecture of Saqākhāneh under the influence of Shiite religion]. Article presented at the national conference of Andishehā-ye no dar Me'mari [New Thoughts in Architectur], Tabriz.