

Short Paper

## The Statue of the Current Hor Square, as the Oldest Surviving Urban Sculpture in Tehran Squares

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Received: 15/12/2020

Accepted: 26/01/2021

Available online: 21/03/2021

**Abstract** | Within the recent year (2020-2021), it has been decided to register the current Hor Square's status as a national monument, since it has been presented in Tehran urban space for many years. The status is one of the urban sculptures that has been interpreted in different ways due to the indirect reference of the status to a specific subject. These diverse and in somehow related interpretations, which have caused the statues to be survived until now, in spite of the political and governmental changes- as a component for removing the statues- seem to record some statements and perceptions, relatively far from the original reality; There are some relevant declarations such as the relation between the construction of the statue and the liberation of Azerbaijan from the Soviet occupation in 1945, which have been proposed by the authorities and researchers in various media, publications, interviews and news reports, without paying enough attention to the original date of the installation. Under these presumptions, this short paper intends to provide the reliable documents about the original date of the status' installation, which have either not been proposed yet or have been rarely observed by now.

**Keywords** | *The Statue of Aghl va Jahl (Wisdom and Ignorance), The Statue of Garshasb va Ejhdeha (Garshasb and Dragon), Bagh-e Shah Square, Hor Square, Tehran.*

### The common narrations of Hor square's status; the first date and occasion of the installation

• In year 2012, the book "Sculptures of Tehran" was published by the 'Tehran Beautification Organization' with the aim of classifying Tehran sculptures based on the separation of available artworks in the 22 districts of Tehran Municipality. The first introduced work from district 11, was the status installed in Hor Square, with description as: "The Garshasb Battle with Dragon (the domination of wisdom over ignorance), 'Rahim Rahimzadeh Arjang', cement and bronze, 5.4 meters, Hor Square, 1953"<sup>1</sup> (Esmaili, 2012, 232).

• In year 2013, the ISNA news agency published a news item entitled "Chera mojasame-ye meidan-e hor nabayad takhrib shaved [Why shouldn't the statue of Hor Square be destroyed?]" stating: "The statue installed in Hor Square with the original title of "Garshāsp battle with Dragon" was installed in 1960 in Bagh-e Shah Square. The narrative concept of this statue expresses the victory of 'good' over 'evil'. "Garshāsp while holding a spear, is fighting a dragon that has wrapped around his body and opened its mouth."

• In year 2013, 'Mashreq News' agency wrote: "The statue located in the center of Hor square is an artwork by 'Gholamreza Rahimzadeh Arjang', which was made following the Azerbaijan's reunification to Iran (in the

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1320s SH ~ 1940s. “This statue shows ‘Garshāsp’ the son of Zaav/Zou, as one of the heroes of the Shahnameh, fighting a dragon”.

- In year 2015, a comprehensive research was provided in book “Pishine-ye zibasazi-ye shahr-e Tehran [History of Tehran beautification]” by attempt of ‘Tehran Beautification Organization’ and the publication of ‘Peykareh’, which is about the history of beautifying the urban spaces of Tehran city, which is considered as an instructive source for the relevant researchers. In the chapter speaking over the history of urban sculptures in Tehran, under the title of “Garshāsp battle with Dragon “in Hor Square” there is a saying as below: “This place [Hor Square] has been known as an urban square in the reign of Pahlavi, and it is about half a century that the statue of ‘Garshāsp battle with dragon’ is standing in this place. This status, which originally made by ‘Gholamreza Rahimzadeh Arjang’ in the 1960s (probably in 1953, according to the cited date in the book ‘Sculptures of Tehran’, Aftab Andisheh, 232) has a concrete base with a six and a half meters high “(Mohajer & Taj-al-Dini, 2015, 322-23). The book authors, by referring to Esmaili (2012), as mentioned earlier, have quoted: “There are some uncertainties about the original date on which the status was constructed. ‘In some sources, the year 1933 (1312 SH) has also been mentioned’.

- There are similar narrations pointing the installation of the statue in 1930s in other sources<sup>2</sup>, which have not been addressed in this study; however, the recent interpretation has presented on December 14, 2016, on which the ‘Islamic City Council of Tehran’ gave a speech by “Ahmad Masjedjamei”, as a member of the council announcing the significance of the status as below:

The statue installed in Hor Square has two story behind it; one is a narration adapted from Shahnameh in which Garshāsp goes to a battle against the evils, and the other one is thought to go back to a story which is beyond its construction, that is related to the uprising of the Azerbaijan people and the end of the Iran occupation by the former Soviet Union in December 1945 [...].

“This artwork points to many hints as history, myth, memory, and also the contribution of various groups that were separated from this land by force, in addition to stating a historical event.”

### Documents obtained about the installation of the statue in the Pahlavi I Era

The lack of a database of Tehran squares sculptures, as a necessity for doing a historical study, on the one hand, and having different dates of creation date of a work, especially in this case, the status of Hor square, on the other hand, led the author to focus on the installation date of the sculptures in her doctoral dissertation entitled “Aesthetics of Tehran`s urban sculptures in the last two decades (1990 - 2010)”;

this attempt was made by addressing the descriptions in travelogues, newspapers and the past magazines, which were considered as the most reliable documents for obtaining information about Tehran sculptures. The reflection of the events pointing the urban sculptures, as the manifestations of modernism, were among the important news headlines during the time of Pahlavi. In this regard, the ‘Ettela’at’ newspaper, compared to other documents of that time, is one of the most comprehensive available archive that is continuously being published from the beginning of the first Pahlavi. Additionally, considering that it was a government newspaper, it can be referred as a reliable informative document about the policies of the mentioned time. For this reason, in this study, the author provides the research outcomes as the reference for future researchers who are eager to know more about the Hor status.

- A news item was published in Ettela’at newspaper by using gravure printing on December 14, 1961, with the following explanation: “In addition to the squares that were built inside the city, the construction of beautiful squares on the street which is opening around the city has been noticed, and now several squares outside the city have been either constructed at crossroads or are under construction. There are also sculptures in the middle of these squares, and Mr. Rahimzadeh is commissioned to build interesting and historical sculptures for the newly established squares” (Fig.1). This news, while referring to the status of Maidan

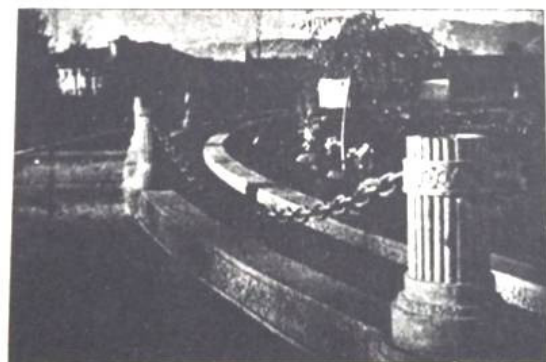


Fig. 1. The lion sculptures of the current Hor Square. Source Ettela'at newspaper, Nov. 1935 (23 Azar 1314).

Hor in 1935, refers to the service of Mr. Rahimzadeh Arjang<sup>3</sup> for the municipality of Tehran at the time of making the urban sculptures”.

In reviewing the archives of the “National Library of Iran”, the author encountered a photograph with ID number 4527 and identification number 2066943, which according to the endorsement saying: “Khedmat-e khanom malake khanom miresad 12/10/ 14 [it reaches to royal lady, Mrs. Malakeh, 1935/12/23]”, it can be said with certainty that the statue was installed in the square in 1935 (1314 SH); However, the scaffolding can be seen around the statue, which may indicate additional work on the statue (Fig. 2).

- In 1936, one year after the announcement of the statue’s installation in the square, in front of Bagh-e shah and according to the photo taken in the same year next to the statue (see Fig. 2), another photograph was published in Ettela’at newspaper with a text below it: “The statue of the ‘Third of Esfand’ in the square of ‘Third of Esfand’ (the square in front of Bagh-e Shah)<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 3).

- Radio Goftgoo conducts an interview with “Seyed Hassan Arjangnejad”, a cousin of Gholamreza Rahimzadeh Arjang, who collaborated with him in constructing this statue, in which he mentions that this statue was ordered in 1933 (1312 SH) and was put into operation in 1936 (1315 SH). According to Hassan Arjangnejad, the original name of this statue is “Wisdom and Ignorance”, which its creators intended that “young people [have the chance to] see this status and think that a strong healthy person

can succeed and destroy the dragon, as a symbol of evil; by performing this idea, young people will wake up, get out of evil thoughts and move towards a healthy life “ (the interview of radio Goftgoo with Hassan Arjangnejad on 2016/02/20 ~94/12/1).

Applying “the third of Esfand” as a name of statue, in the advertisement section of Ettela’at newspaper, as a government newspaper of that time, on the one hand, and applying the name “Wisdom and Ignorance” by its creator on the other hand, together with its installation in the square, in front of ‘Bagh-e shah’, which was used to settle the statue of riding Nasser al-Din Shah on horseback, cast by Goorkhaneh, all suggests that the installation of status there may be considered as a sign of the establishment of the reign of Pahlavi and a symbol of modernization of that time that considered the rationalism of modernism in contrast to adherence to traditions. It should be noted here that this statue was presented in the public square of the city before the installation of Reza Shah Statues.

Following the studies carried out in this research, the author realized that based on the documents related to the second Pahlavi era, this statue is known as “Garshasb Statue”. For example, within the news sections of Ettela’at newspaper, there are some references to this name: one was published in 1974, that was an article entitled “Khiaban-e sepah az baghshah emtedad miyabad [Sepah Street extends from Bagh-e Shah]” (Fig. 4); and the other one was published in 1975 with the news titled “Tehran

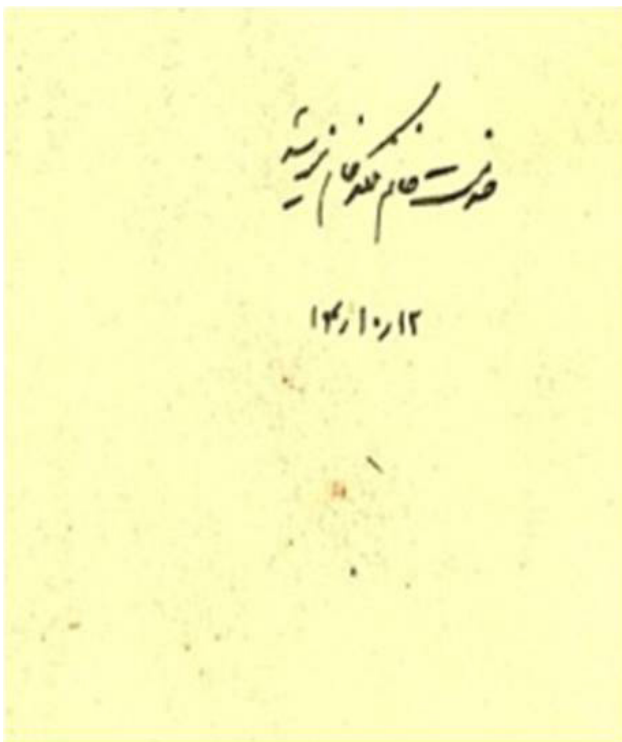


Fig. 2. A photograph taken from the current Hor Square in Tehran, the date of photo (1935/12/23~ 10/14/12 SH) is visible on the back of the photo. Source: The Archive of National Library of Iran.



Fig. 3. The photograph of the statue in Ettela'at newspaper. Source: Ettela'at newspaper, May, 22, 1936.

shahri ke mojasameh nadarad! [Tehran is a city that does not have a “status”!]” (Fig. 5). Of course, it is not yet clear to the author exactly from what date has the statue been called by this name, but it seems that the choice of this name was highly influenced by the content similarity of the status with Garshasb's characterization in Asadi Tousi's Garshasbnameh and the epic poem of Shahnameh by Ferdowsi, which is known as the dragon killer.

### Conclusion

Apart from giving the name “Garshasb” and “Hor” to this status and the formation of interpretive implications such as the battle of ‘good and evil’, the concepts such as freedom and confronting with one self, which all indicate the interpretability of artworks; however, according to the documents presented in this article, it can be declared here with certainty that this statue was installed in the first Pahlavi era, and was presented in year 1935 in the status area of the current Hor Square in Tehran. Therefore, relating the installation of the statue in the second Pahlavi era to the occasion of the liberation of Azerbaijan from the Soviet occupation in 1945 (1324 HS) is completely irrelevant. Generally, the importance of the current status in ‘Hor Square’ originates from this reality that according

to the reliable documents, it can be said that the target status is considered as the oldest urban figurative sculpture in Tehran squares, which fortunately has survived until now, so it is very valuable for studying the history of urban sculpture in Tehran and Iran. Moreover, it is thought to be created by an artist that considering his background activity will let us to know him as the “father of Iranian urban sculpture”, a giving name which is not that much far from the mind.



Fig. 4. Applying the name of Garshasb statue in Ettela'at newspaper. Source: Ettela'at newspaper, October 29, 1974, 4.



Fig. 5. The photograph of the statue under the name of Garshasb statue in Ettela'at newspaper. Source: Ettela'at newspaper, April 16, 1975, 5.

### Endnote

1. In this source, the name of the creator is also recorded as Rahim Rahimzadeh Arjang by mistake. Moreover, the material used in this work is mentioned as cement and bronze, which is not correct as no bronze material is used in this work.
2. In year 2016, the article entitled "War and Urban Sculptures from Objective Reality to Subjective Matter", mistakenly refers to year 1960, as the statue installation date, based on the previously published sources, and mentions the occasion as the liberation of Azerbaijan from Soviet occupation.
3. During his service, Rahimzadeh Arjang was responsible for making many of Tehran's urban sculptures, both during the first and second Pahlavi eras; according to the author, he may be known as the "father of urban sculpture in Tehran". However, it has also been said that "the activities of the prominent sculptor, Abolhassan Sadighi (1997-1995) in this time (Pahlavi I) should be considered a prelude to the formation of urban sculpture in Tehran and some cities" (see Mohajer & Taj-al-Dini, 2015, 298 & 299). However, it is notable that according to the works and evidence in this time, none of the sculptures of Sadighi, as a master in this field, were made for the urban space and the municipality did not seem to give him any orders. Most of the orders were from the "ANJOMAN-E ĀSĀR-E MELLĪ (AAM), The National Monuments Council of Iran which during the second Pahlavi was demanding sculptures for non-urban spaces or historical cities other than Tehran, such as Mashhad, Shiraz and Hamedan. It should be noted that his role in shaping the current of figurative sculpture, especially of celebrities, which continues to this day, is undeniable and commendable.
4. In reviewing the Tehran city maps of the Pahlavi era, the author has not found any document addressing the name of the "third of Esfand" Square to Bagh- e shah Square; however, its record and reference in the archive of newspapers can point to the popularity of this name among the citizens of Tehran at that time.

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Adelvand, P. (2021). The Statue of the Current Hor Square, as the Oldest Surviving Urban Sculpture in Tehran Squares. *MANZAR*, 13(54), 68-73.

DOI: 10.22034/MANZAR.2021.274231.2117

URL: [http://www.manzar-sj.com/article\\_128061\\_en.html](http://www.manzar-sj.com/article_128061_en.html)

