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Manifestation of Power: Toopkhaneh Square, Tehran

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Abstract: Urban design and architecture are used as manifestations of power and control over a society. The city square is not just an architectural element; its structure has a nature that weaves together its contemporary social and political atmosphere and brings a new meaning and concept to the square. This paper aims to clarify the formation of Toopkhaneh Square ("The Place of Cannons," or "Artillery Barracks" Square) whose military function and ominous name were physical evidence of the use of urban design by the ruling authority to control the citizenry. The transformation of Toopkhaneh Square is an example of power relations and the struggle for power, which have been projected on the body of the city. This research concentrates on power relations and urban transformations in the spatial analysis of Toopkhaneh Square throughout different periods of its history. The transitional process of Toopkhane Square to an Artillery Square in the Qajar Era dynasty of Naser al-Din Shah (1888) until the Islamic Revolution (1978) shows that the structural elements of the traditional square were modified, as its name, political statues, meaning, and functions were changed to fulfill the modern needs and reflect the power struggle. This study analyzes Toopkhaneh Square as the representation of the ruling power and its politico-religious ideology in Iranian urban form.

Keywords: Iranian Public Square, Spatial Transformation, Power Struggle, Toopkhaneh (Artillery) Square, Tehran

Introduction

Architecture has always been manipulated by sources of power and the political system. According to Vale (2008), architecture is used to mediate forms of political power in order to propagate political ideologies to the society (Vale 2008). The ruling powers symbolically make use of the urban space as a tool to exercise their authority to declare and enact their political intention (Sudjic 2011; Dovey 1999). By arousing nationalistic emotions of the masses, the ruling authority aims to unify the citizenry, representing achievements and maintaining their status and position in the society (Sonne 2003). One way of understanding power is through Foucault's ideas that explore power, religious beliefs, and national identity through symbolism in architecture and urban design. According to Foucault (1980), the success of power and its acceptance depends on its ability to legitimize its existence by use of different sources like hiding behind the religious beliefs, national values, or architecture. In this interpretation, the square as a whole reflects the struggle between sources of power, as each source tries to gain control of the society in its strong appearance in urban space. Public squares are fundamental features of cities, which constitute the main social areas (Mehan 2016b). The study of ancient Iranian cities indicates that public squares have always had an effective presence in the cities (Mehan 2016a). The analysis of the conception of the square in the city of Tehran cannot be separated from the inherited concept of space that is used in its production and transformation, concepts that are associated with ongoing political and social institutions, symbolic significance, or a combination of old and new (Mehan 2017; Madanipour 1998). Toopkhaneh Square (literally, "the place of cannon") is one of the key historic squares in Tehran, which was a vast central opening into which six major thoroughfares converged. This paper focuses on Iranian public squares as one of the most important typologies of urban open spaces throughout Iranian urban history. The first aim here is to understand how public squares manifest the ruling power's ideology. Alongside the theoretical discussions, the case study of Toopkhaneh Square in Tehran will provide a multi-dimensional source for more research in three stages from its formation in 1888 till the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1978. For a better understanding of

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the theoretical framework, the typology of Iranian public squares in a historical perspective will be analyzed first.

Typology and Analysis of Iranian Public Squares in the Historical Perspective

Throughout Iranian history, public squares have been important places for promoting social interactions between citizens and enhancing the quality of urban lives (Mehan 2016b). Traditionally, squares served many functions. They were activity zones for all kinds of events, from public gatherings to daily markets and public celebrations (Kheirabadi 1991). Historically, public squares and plazas have functioned as "the theater for the principle scenes of public life" (Bibeva 2012, 5).

Historical public squares, like urban public spaces, had connective, physical, psychological, social, political, economic, military, aesthetic, symbolic, religious, and recreational functions (Shaftoe 2008; Tavakolian 1990) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Traditional Functions of Historical Public Squares

Trade	Buying and selling, depository and manufacture
Information	Dissemination of news, place of social activity
Recreation	Games, teaching, lunch, and conversation
Protection	Militia, training and drill, gathering in times of danger
Piety	Holy inspiration and prayer, open space before a church for worship

Source: Mehan 2017

On the city level, large public squares, often planned by government or religious authorities, are distinctive due to their centralized position, large size, and association with major civic or religious buildings, and they play a vital political and symbolic role. These spaces are typically used for cultural events, military assemblies, local trade, and social interactions (Stanley et al. 2012). For instance, the central urban public square in Isfahan during the Abbasid period was a highly diverse space in the sixteenth century, and remained the largest plaza in the world until the twentieth century. Ringed by religious, governmental, and educational buildings, and home to large markets and recreational activities, the plaza today hosts a similar mix of functions and is occasionally used for political expression. Iranian squares can be divided into three types according to function, urban scale, and form. Based on function, there are six types of Iranian squares: public squares, military squares, governmental squares, commercial squares, sport squares, and connecting squares. Iranian squares are also divided into five types based on urban scale: squares outside the city, urban squares, region squares, district squares, and neighborhood squares (Solatanzadeh 1991). Furthermore, in relation to the typology of Iranian squares by form during the history of Iranian urbanism, it has been concluded that they can be divided into five types: irregular organic forms (before Islam, 9 BC to 11 AC); regular geometrical forms, rectangular and square (after the Islam-Safavid era, 1501–1785); regular geometrical forms, rectangular elipsoide and circular (Qajar Era, 1786–1920); regular geometrical forms, circular (Pahlavi Era, 1921–1979); and irregular forms (after the Islamic Revolution, 1980 to present; see Table 2) (Mehan 2017).

Table 2: Categorization of Iranian Public Squares

Categorization of Iranian Public Squares		
Function	**Urban Scale**	**Form**
Public squares	Squares outside City	Irregular organic forms (before Islam: 9 BC to 11 AC)
Military squares	Urban squares	Rectangular square (after the Islam-Safavid Era: 1501–1785)
Governmental squares	Region squares	Rectangular ellipsoid and circular (Qajar Era: 1786–1920)
Commercial squares	District squares	Circular (Pahlavi Era: 1921–1979)
Sport squares	Neighborhood squares	Irregular forms (after Islamic Revolution, 1980 to present)
Connecting Squares		

Source: Mehan 2017

The Manifestation of Power in Iranian Squares

To provide an understanding of the concept of power, one should refer to the root of the word itself, which is derived from the Latin "potere." It means "to be able to achieve an end," but it is loaded with a different meaning in human affairs, where it has the meaning of control over others (Dovey 1999). Those holding political power have always used symbols to control societies (Mehan 2016d). This expression of power has always been one of the functions of architecture (Grabar 1979). The way the architecture of a period affects the image of a government through the style of governmental buildings is one of the main ways to see how architecture is manipulated by those in power (Skolimowski 1972). Vale (1999, 391) argues that "there are business, cultural and governmental elites, which have control over images; these elites need 'official' sorts of architectural monuments to demonstrate their ongoing power and legitimacy." Milani (2004) describes what exists in the main square of Isfahan, an ancient Persian city that was the capital of the country for a while, as a combination of the main elements of the power in a society. He writes "Naghsh-e Jahan Square at Isfahan, with its spatial grandeur and name, which means, 'map of the world,' was designed according to the King's astute and carefully enforced calculus of power. The trinity of the mosque, the bazaar, and the crown, the three pillars of power and commerce in traditional Iran, dominated its landscape" (Milani 2004, 84). Focusing on Tehran, the capital of Iran, which has always been considered in terms of modernization and globalization, the built environment of the city presents the modern pillars of power in the Iranian public spaces (Mehan 2016c).

The first great modern square of Tehran, named Toopkhaneh meaning "the cannon house," was physical evidence of the use of urban design by the ruling power to control the citizenry since it became an urban element of defense against public uprisings and social demonstrations (Milani 2004). The idea of placing cannons before the palace began in the Safavid period, first to indicate supremacy and victory and later to prevent attacks on the citadel. Later, some buildings surrounded this open space to accommodate guards; thus, a new urban space was formed. Adjacent to the royal citadel, this space functioned as a military, public, and governmental urban space (Najafi 2009).

The continuation of the monarchy (palace) and the absolute power of the ruler, the intermediary role of religion (mosque) and economic institutions (bazaar), and the symbolic notions of order and direction have all had direct implications on the urban form of Tehran, even today; the axial form of the city, which caused the segregation of the poor and the rich—derived from the historical segregation of the ruler and the ruled—is the other observable consequence of

the power structure on the urban form of Tehran (Madanipour 1998). Discussions of power relations are deeply linked with the way one authority legitimizes it and gains power over the others. A basic framework to settle this discussion can be based on Weber's typology of three types of legitimate domination, which is to cover all historically possible forms of legitimate government. Those three types can be briefly named as "legal rule," "traditional rule," and "charismatic rule" (Mommsen 1989). Charismatic rule is the authority that is gained by familial or religious status, while traditional rule is based on social class and money, and legal rule is what occurs under political parties. Soltani (2011) applied this framework to Iranian Naqhsh-e Jahan Square, a square that can be considered as a geometrical position for power; the manifestations of these three pillars of power can be categorized by simplifying the mosque as the representative of charismatic domination, the bazaar as the representative of traditional domination, and the palace as the representative of legal domination. Focusing on Toopkhaneh Square in Tehran, the next section will study the spatial transformation of square from its formation until the Islamic Revolution of 1978.

Figure 1: Toopkhaneh Square, Tehran, early 1900s. The image shows this historically important square of Tehran in the beginning of twentieth century, hosting a parade of armed forces on their horses.
Source: http://www.iran-forum.ir/thread-36909.html 2016

Toopkhaneh Square

Milani (2004) interprets the essence of the famous square in Tehran, which was built as the first touch of the modernity in nineteenth century (Figure 1), as an essence of the use of urban design to prevent social uprisings and to fight, as follows: "There was Toopkhaneh, a square whose military function and ominous name (Cannon House) were reminiscent of what Benjamin calls the 'Haussmannization of Paris,' an attempt to use urban design to fight 'the barricades,' to make the city and the citadel more defensible against a popular uprising" (Milani 2004, 85). Toopkhaneh Square was a large quadrangle enclosed with two-storey arches, which housed the cannons on the ground floor and the artillery staff on the upper floor. This square was the converging point of six new, wide streets, each with a gate decorated with glazed tiles at its entry to the square (Marefat 1988). The initial pattern of Toopkhaneh Square was inspired by traditional Iranian squares in the Safavid era, but its proportions were based on the Western Baroque architecture style. Naghizadeh (2006) claims that the focal point of the traditional Iranian square was an empty point, which contributes to natural holy elements. Regarding this fact, the focal element in Toopkhaneh Square is a water pond; however, the installation of a

statue in middle of the square was a modern and Western element (Naghizadeh 2007). The most important building flanking Toopkhaneh Square was the Imperial Bank of Persia. This was a new economic institution with international connections, as compared to the traditional economic institution of the bazaar, whose entrance flanked the old market square. To the north of the Toopkhaneh Square were the new quarters which were the houses of the aristocracy and the embassies, delegations, as well as the residences of Europeans. In and around the New Square, especially to the north, new institutions were built. Apart from the bank, there were hotels, European shops, an institute of technology, a hospital, and a telegraph house (Madanipour 1998). Mahvash Alemi (1985) writes: "The square reflects the principal ambitious of the court and is a sort of exhibition hall for new acquisitions: the military reform is perceived through the cannons, the decorations and the nearby drill grounds; the technological innovations are to be seen in the use of gas for illumination, the telegraph, and the tramway; the new source of finance, the Imperial Bank of Persia, is the most important building facing the square" (Alemi 1985).

According to Abraham Jackson (1862–1937), an American traveler in Iran, the heart of the city lay in the newly established European-influenced northern part, with the Toopkhaneh Square at its center. He provided the detailed explanation of this complex, with modern components: the Imperial Bank of Persia, an imposing white edifice in "Perso-European Style" and an arched gateway to a garden where the English members can play tennis; the "Boulvards des Ambassadeurs" as the principal driveway of the city; and the entrance to the "Avenue of Diamonds," with the royal flag on top which announced the presence of the king. Jackson perceived the northern section of this part to be even more Europeanized, including the buildings of the American Presbyterian Mission, the English Hotel, and the Legation of the United States (Shirazi 2015). In comparison with traditional squares, Toopkhaneh Square is distinct in two ways. The first is that traditional Iranian squares formed gradually without any predetermined map or special order; however, Toopkhaneh Square was designed based on a predetermined map and function. The second is that, for the first time, governmental space was represented as the manifestation of political ideology in Tehran, the capital of Iran (Hasanzadeh, Koulivand, and Ghiassy 2015).

Formation of the Square from 1888 to 1925

Toopkhaneh was a common name for a particular type of urban plaza in the Qajar period, to introduce its unique identity and function. As its name would suggest, the most important feature of this space was the permanent settlement of the cannons and the gunners in its surrounding recesses (Najafi 2012). The first evidence from the settlement of cannons in Iranian public spaces can be traced back to Naghsh-e Jahan Square in the Safavid Dynasty. During this period, the symbolic function of the cannons in national celebrations and public events was more emphasized (Chardin 1957). However, during the Qajar era, Arg Square in Tehran and Toopkhaneh (Artillery) squares in other cities of Iran became the permanent homes of the cannons. In addition, the permanent presence of military forces highlighted the military function of Toopkhaneh Square in this period. Najafi (2009) argued that the permanent residence of cannons in public squares was a symbol of power that created a sense of security in the people. In the map of Tehran, drawn in 1896, Toopkhaneh was situated in the heart of old Tehran (Dozdozani 2014). In this period, the square had a rectangular shape with six streets connecting the central plaza to city and four cannons situated in the four corners of the street (see Figure 2). The gates were destroyed in order to facilitate the entry of transportation vehicles such as carriages, wagons, railroads, and smoking cars (Mohammadzadehmehr 2003). Ernest Orsolle, a Belgian traveler, in his book *Le Caucase et la Perse* (1885) describes the daily life of people in Toopkhaneh Square as the unofficial meeting point between the king and the people of Tehran.

Figure 2: The western view of Toopkhaneh Square (Cannon House Square), Tehran, 1880–1920 (Qajar period). This period includes the first formation of the square. The pool and trees are the central elements of the square. The square is used for festivals and trade.
Source: Mohammadzadehmehr 2003

Orsolle describes the special national festival entitled "Sharbat-Khori" in this square for the Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's birthday celebration. This political importance of the square continued since the late Qajar era and Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911). In 1908, after the bombardment of national Iranian Parliament (senate), Toopkhaneh Square became the main gathering point of anti-revolutionaries and government dependents.

The Modernization Process, from 1925 to 1940

Modernism, which had begun in the Qajar era, intensified during this period, and so this is when the majority of changes happened to the body of the square. With the reign of Reza Shah (1925–1940), a new period of modernization started in Tehran. The former walls were demolished again in 1937 to make way for a network of open spaces inspired by Haussmann's project in Paris, including wide streets and circular squares to facilitate the movement of goods, troops, and vehicles (Mirgholami 2009). New functions such as administrative, office, and industrial organizations moved to the city center and created a new image of the city, a modern Tehran (Bagheri 2013). With the construction of new governmental institutions, the military application of Toopkhaneh Square surrendered its place to official applications and governmental identity (Khodabakhshi 2014). Marefat (1988, 87) states, "Around Toopkhaneh Square important buildings had always been clustered; the arsenal, and the Imperial Bank of Persia, and later, the Baladiya (municipality). Reza Shah left the square and convergent streets intact. The gateways were torn down and the square itself renamed Sepah Square in honor of the Sardar Sepah, Reza Shah's title as commander-in-chief of the army," although it was once again renamed "Imam Khomeini" after the Islamic Revolution of 1978. Mozaffari (2010, 97) argues that the "statue of Reza Shah was installed at the center of the artillery square (1945–46) which is guarded by four Achaemenid soldiers, and elevated by Persepolis-styled columns and bas-relief decorations," which represented Reza Shah as the triumphant hero of Iran's future (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The western view of Toopkhaneh Square, Tehran, 1920–1960 (Reza Shah Pahlavi period), Reza Shah's period of reign lasted until 1941, but the main changes in the square until 1960 were parts of his modernization program. The landscaping has changed, and grass has replaced the tress. A statue of Reza Shah was erected in the center of the Square.
Source: Mohammadzadehmehr 2003

Total Transformation, from 1941 to 1978

Urbanization during the second Pahlavi can be divided in two stages. The first stage, from 1941–1961, had a slower pace, while the second stage, from the oil boom until the 1979 revolution, had a faster pace inspired by Western-style urbanization (AmirAhmadi and Kianfar 1993). The squares in this period were symbols of axial planning; however, within the urban grid, they formed expansive traffic circles and became Le Corbusier's "apparatus for circulation." These large and symmetrical public squares and circles were planned for the intersections of streets and were intended as grand and monumental focal points of the city (Marefat 1998). Bayat (2010, 103) states, "Tehran became a site of ever-increasing consumption, as new spending patterns and western lifestyles were adopted; restaurants, Cafes, and inclusive uptown neighborhood appeared. The Shah's regime sought to reshape Tehran into a de-centered LA-type suburban entity." The 1966 comprehensive plan for Tehran (CPT), prepared by American mall-maker Victor Gruen and master Persian architect Abdol Aziz Farmanfarmaian, proposed a linear development for Tehran with ten satellite towns mostly along an east-west axis (Costello 1998). Regarding these facts, with the expansion of modern needs in Toopkhaneh Square's surroundings, new functions and buildings emerged in an international style. During this time, municipal bus terminals replaced the municipality buildings. In addition, telecommunication buildings were destroyed and replaced with post, telegraph, and telephone ministries (Khodabakhshi 2014) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: The western view of Toopkhaneh Square, Tehran, 1960–1980 (Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi period). The whole body of the urban environment as well as urban life has changed. Pedestrian movement is less visible and the buildings around the square are mostly demolished.
Source: Mohammadzadehmehr 2003

From 1949 on, sentiment for nationalization of Iran's oil industry grew and Toopkhaneh Square became as one of the most important gathering points for mass rallies and social demonstrations in supporting Iranian Oil Nationalization Movement (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Different Groups of People Gathered in Toopkhaneh Square for Supporting Nationalization of Oil Industry, 1950s Demonstrations, Tehran

Source: http://fouman.com/Y/Picture_View-Tehran_Toopkhaneh_Square_1950s_Demonstration.htm 2016

During the days leading to the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, Toopkhaneh Square became the focal point for Anti-Shah political parties' meetings, revolutionaries' gatherings, and demonstrations like the Tudeh Party demonstrations (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Tudeh Party demonstrations destabilized the political power of the democratic government of Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh leading to the coup that brought back the Pahlavi Monarchy (statue seen on the horse), 1953,Toopkhaneh Square, Tehran.

Source: http://fouman.com/Y/Picture_View-Tehran_Toopkhaneh_Imam_Khomeini_Sepah_Square_1953.htm 2016

In 1979, a few days after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Iranian pulls down statue of Reza Shah Pahlavi in Toopkhaneh Square after his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, leaves the country

(Figure 7). This symbolic fall of the statue as well as the change in the square's name (from Sepah to Imam Khomeini Square) brought a new chapter in political life of the square.

Figure 7: Iranian pulls down statue of Reza Shah Pahlavi in Toopkhaneh Square after his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, leaves the country, 1979.
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3AReza_Shah_Statue_1979_Revolution.jpg 2016

Conclusions

The trinity of the mosque, the bazaar, and the crown, as three pillars of power and commerce in traditional Iran, dominated the Iranian square for several centuries, but new paradigms presented in the Tookhaneh Square's spatial definitions changed the trinity of power in traditional squares. Placing cannons in an open urban space had some precedents in Iranian history of architecture and urbanism that aims to manifest power and supremacy and prevent any possible attacks to main citadels. However, analyzing the spatial qualities of Toopkhaneh Square from its formation until the Iranian Islamic Revolution (1888–1978), clarifies that this square functioned as a military, governmental, political, and social urban space. In addition, the structural elements of the traditional square were modified, as well as its name, political statues, meanings, and functions, in order to fulfill modern needs and demonstrate the power and supremacy. Telegraph offices (a symbol of modern communication), banks (a symbol of modern financial relationships), and municipalities (a symbol of new government) are the modern institutions that fulfill the modern needs of citizens. Analyzing the spatial transformation of Toopkhaneh as one of the primitive modern public squares in Tehran highlights the following important factors:

- It has been noted that the historical public squares had connective, physical, social, political, economic, military, aesthetic, symbolic, religious, and recreational functions.
- This study portrays Toopkhaneh Square as the representation of ruling power and its ideology in Iranian urban form. Although its primitive pattern is based on the Safavid public squares, there are major differences, such as Baroque proportions in the square's dimensions, the installation of a focal statue in the middle of the square, a design based on a predetermined plan and functions, modern institutions in the square's surroundings, and presenting modern military technology like cannons in the square's corners.
- Based on the research, the spatial qualities and functions of Toopkhaneh Square from its formation until 1978 can be summarized as follows: main connection node for urban transport; public space for holding national, religious, and governmental celebrations; focal point for the manifestation of national achievements and latest technologies; and unofficial meeting point for demonstrations, political gatherings, social events, and public demands in Iranian modern urban history.
- From past monarchies to the Islamic Revolution, each political regime changed the name of this key historical public square in Tehran as follows: Toopkhaneh Square (Qajar Era, 1888–1925), Sepah Square (Pahlavi Era, 1925–1978), and Imam Khomeini Square (after Islamic Revolution of 1978), which emphasized the political importance of Toopkhaneh Square in capital of Iran.
- Toopkhaneh Square (literally, "place of cannons") is physical evidence of the use of Iranian urban design by the ruling power to control the citizenry, prevent attacks and social uprisings, and indicate supremacy and victory by the ruling power. This political square plays a major role in contributing to the national identity since it was the main scene during critical points in modern Iranian history such as the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905–1907), the Iranian Oil Nationalization Movement (1949–1953), the 1953 Iranian coup d'état, and the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979.

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