Original Research Article

The Spatial Representation of Power Tolerance in Isfahan City during the Safavid Era
(Case study: Allahverdikhan Bridge)

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Abstract

Problem statement: By the beginning of the Safavid rule, a new era of civilization and progress started to initiate in the city of Isfahan. Economic and political stability, along with a balanced establishing of social, religious and governmental powers, prepared a fundamental change in the urban structure and the social and urban relations of Isfahan city.

Therefore, the city moved toward a new kind of urban formation and the required basement for a dynamic social life in the form of public events with diverse perceptions was created, that all resulted in the foundation of a considerable range of public spaces in various type, including urban bridges. Accordingly, "Allahverdikhan Bridge", with its functional and physical development, become a place of public gathering, recreation and urban interaction, which has played an important role in power balance in the target city.

Research objective: The aim of this study is to examine the Safavid government relation with people, religion and city, and to study their effect on the formation of public spaces in Isfahan, especially Allahverdikhan Bridge. Based on this, the central position of this bridge in the Safavid power's relation can be explained in accordance with the other components in the city.

Research method: A qualitative research study was adopted to analyze the concepts of research objectives through an interpretive-historical method and by addressing the library resources.

Conclusion: The results show that the special role of Safavid reign was to legitimize the power structure (reinforcing the religious and public base) in the process of social relations' development and the formation of public spaces, especially in Allahverdikhan Bridge. The interaction and tolerance of the government system as the major base of power, in relation to 'religion, society and city', led to the formation of a connected space between the state and people (public spaces) and the balanced establishment between them. In this regard, Allahverdikhan Bridge as a public space, and considering its position and role in the urban structure of Isfahan in the Safavid era, become the center of power tolerance and social balance.

Keywords: *Safavid era, Power Tolerance, Isfahan city, Social Balance, Public Space, Allahverdikhan Bridge.*

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Introduction and problem statement

Isfahan, due to being the capital in the Safavid era and playing an important role in some historical times of Iran, once more again become the center of notice. At this historical moment, the city appearance was revolutionized and a unique representation of the growth and development in the city structure along with the urbanization of the land of Iran emerged.

The developed social relations in different layer of society, the establishment of governance in the city, the special place of religion in urban spaces and relations between individuals, in support of the mutual co-existence of urban society and the King, both in the shadow of religion, brought a new vitality into the urban rules of that time and prepared conditions for the structural and modern changes of Isfahan along with its civic growth1.

The power as the arrangement of political and economic elements and as one of the influential factors in creating urban texture (Motamedimehr & Rahmat, 2011, 76) forms its physical and spatial organization; Therefore, in this urban evolution, the Safavid power has played a major role, and provided the conditions for creating an 'Utopia' based on its own political-religious principles and beliefs (Habibi, 1998, 48). The Isfahan urban development in the Safavid era happened in different layers of society, that were affected by the power structure, in relation with the various social configurations; it can be said that, this relation was a combination of religious, political and economic actions, that while originated in the previous way of politics and power in Iran, was demanding some new requirements as well (Allahyari, Zahabi & Kajbaf, 2019, 48). According to this, the city, which has always been organized from outside the territory of Iran (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 1975) as a reproducing context of Safavid power, took a special appearance this time. Most of the urban developments that occurred with the interference of the Safavid government were affected by its power base and through its confrontation with the community,

religion and urban context. This city evolution and its structural development, along with some political and economic stability led to the city expansion and urbanization (Foroutan, 2009, 104) that provided an essential context for the creation of multiple urban aspects with various application. On the other hand, in order to establish religious and social tolerance, the government has directed the vents and public gatherings in order to reinforce its own position and provide necessary context for interaction between the three bases of 'people, religion and government' at the same time. Therefore, these buildings have mostly public uses.

The consequence of this process has caused the urban architecture to be developed in Isfahan city during the Safavid era, as a special manifestation of Iranian history (Pourjafar, Amini, Varzaneh & Mahdavinejad, 2014, 11); this happening was strongly influenced by crossing the Zayandehrood River through the Isfahan city; it strongly caused an evolution of the bridge from the mere function of crossing pass way to a public space providing a context for conducting social activities in Isfahan during the Safavid era (Mansouri, Hanaei, Diba & Dabbagh, 2020, 8).

The implication of this change is the "Allahverdikhan Bridge" (in 1011 SH, during the reign of Shah Abbas I), that given its central position and significant role in the new urban structure of Isfahan, is representing a unique example of the bridge as a public space. Therefore, the aim of this research work is: 1. To study the developments of the Safavid power and its relations with the society, religion and the whole city, which has provided the conditions for functional development of the bridge; and 2. To read the role of this bridge in power relations by examining the functional evolution of 'Allahverdikhan Bridge' in Its historical and geographical context in order to address the following research question:

What was the position of 'Allahverdikhan Bridge' in the urban organization of Isfahan in relation of power interactions with society, religion and the city, during the Safavid era?

Research background

Considering the previous research studies on society, city and the relations between government and public in the Safavid era, the subject of this research is completely novel. However, the research foundations are related to various studies that are about the society and public spaces of Isfahan in the Safavid era; so, the research approaches addressing the objectives and research question have been extracted from this background. This part of resources is presented and classified in table 1.

Research methods

The main topic of this research study is mostly focusing on an 'urban element' (Allahverdikhan Bridge) that has a multi-layered relation with its historical context. Based on this, the using approach is qualitative and historical one. By using the interpretive-historical method and studying the documentary and library sources, the relevant historical context along with the role of power relations, in relation to it has been investigated; finally, by using the analytical-descriptive method and reviewing the literature background the research question is being addressed. The whole research process is presented in figure 1.

Theoretical foundation

• The Safavid power base

Basically the columns of any government structure determine how power is ruled; and the issue of legitimacy affects the development of power in the structure of societies. This issue can emerge as a reliable identical order among the common people in order to integrate the social and political realms (Akvani, 2019, 9). The Safavids have sought to strengthen their ruling order among the common people by focusing on three basic fundamental columns as follows: 1. The theory that refers to the divine right of the Persian Kings, 2. The Shiite religion and 3. The position of the Safavid Kings as the perfect leader for the followers of the Sufi way (Savory, 1999, 15). These basic columns are considered as the power

basis, as Shah (King) finds a special place among the people relying on them: "The Kings of this reign, by considering themselves as the Prophet descendants, take this right for themselves that Iranian people consider them as innocent [rulers]" (Sanson, 1967, 168). The formation of Safavid rule based on these three columns revived the land of Iran as through the political and religious independence, the condition for national unity (Eshraghi & Alavi, 2011, 7) and its expansion was provided. The Iranians' national identity was emerged once more again for the first time after the arrival of Islam (Zahed, 2005, 132) and the idea of 'Iranshahri' (It refers to Persian Land, dates back to Sass a nid Era) (Rezaei Panah, 2019, 245-246) is consid e red in it. Therefore, the Safavid era is the only age after the Sassanids that the central authority of the g o vernment is fulfilled for a long time by establishi n g a secured condition (Haghir & Kamelnia, 2019, 129).

• Power tolerance in the Safavid era[2]

The political conditions and power relations in the Safavid era created a new type of government in the land of Iran. The Safavids tried to create interaction in order to achieve the government aims by adopting different strategies while ruling power and influencing the order under their control. In parts of Safavid history, this interaction reached its preferred level and led to the power tolerance. Among these interventions, the following can be mentioned: adopting development-based approaches by accepting religious tolerance, replacing non-Iranian forces instead of Iranians at the head of major foundations, and acquiring the proper approaches against the religion and Shiite scholars (Ulamā) (Allahyari et al., 2019, 49). The Safavids, while representing the official and rigid appearance of power, intelligently were trying to apply both the micro face (microphysics) and disciplinary face of power (macrophysics) in their discourse arrangements (Akvani, 2019, 9) to establish relations consist of different society's layer; This approach has been considered here in three ways: Power-Society, Power-Religion, and Power-Public space.

Table 1. Research background references. Source: Authors.

Genre	Title	Author (s)	Subject	Description on the Research Background
Travelogue	Travelogue of Della Valle	Della Valle (2005)	A description of Iranian cities; The political, social and cultural issues; the Iranian customs and the state of art in the country.	The travel reports in relation to the social activities of people in the city and the way of communication between the power organizations' layer based on the reliable sources that is the basis for analyzing the social relations' structure and the government role.
	Voyages en Perse	Tavernier (1984)	It includes five books on the political, cultural, social and economic situation in Iran.	
	Voyage de Chardin	Chardin (1957)	A detailed study of political, social, economic and cultural situation of Iran with collection of glorious drawing of buildings and art clothing.	
	Am Hofedes persischen Grosskonigs	Kämpfer (1984)	A one of the most reliable sources belong to the Safavid era on history of Iranian art and architecture.	
	L'Ambassade de D.Garcia de Silva Figueroa en Perse	Figueroa (1984)	Description of the geographical, political and social situation of Iran during the reign of Shah Abbas and the King›s behaviors.	
	'Sir Antony Sherley, His Relation of His Travels into Persia'	Sherley (1972)	A description of route, the King's character and the social, economic and cultural situation	
	The travels of John Albert de Mandelslo	Olearious (1669)	A historical/sociological work containing descriptions of various Iranian customs and traditions in addition to education and occupations.	
	'VOYAGE ou RELATION de LETAT PRESENT ou ROYAUME de PERSE'	Sanson (1967)	An accurate report on the manners, ethics and government of Iran during the reign of Shah (King) Suleiman the Safavid.	
Book	Tarikh-e Alam-ara-ye Abbasi [History of Alam-ara-ye Abbasi]	Eskandar Beig Monshi (1998)	Describing the events of the Safavid dynasty from the beginning to the death of Shah Abbas I.	First-hand books as contemporary Safavid sources that provide a report on the situation in Iran in the Safavid era; and providing the contemporary sources of special and novel analyzes on various aspects of Iran condition during Safavid era.
	Alam-ara-ye Safavid	Anonymous (1971) (Y. Shokri, Ed.)	History of Safavid Kings from Shah Ismail to Shah Abbas I; A comprehensive description of the social situation in Iran.	
	Iran under the Safavids	Savory (1999)	Studying and reviewing the way Safavids came to power	
	Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire	Newman (2006)	Assessing the position of Safavids in developments and flourishing of Iranian culture; A new attitude to the rise and fall of the Safavids	
	The Conflict between Government and Nation; Theory of History and Politics in Iran	Homayoun Katouzian (2012)	Presenting the theory of authoritarian rule and studying the general theory of Farrah-e Izadi (Khvarenah: An Avestan word for 'Glory') and the divine right of Kings	
	Isfahan in Safavid Era: Lifestyle and Power Structure	Roohi (2018)	Reading the social and political conditions of the Safavid ear and analyzing the role of power on social, economic and other relations.	

Rest of Table 1.

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Research Article	Effects of government autocratic interventions on urban structure of Isfahan in Safavid Shah Abbas era	Haghighi Boroujeni, Yazdanfar & Behzadfar (2018)	Investigating the methods of interventions applied by government and Shah Abbas Safavid on the urban structure of Isfahan	
	Recognition of the concept of the interaction between Safavid squares and Royal gardens; investigating the mutual Relationship between public space and centralized power	Lavafi, Sepehri Moghaddam & Habib (2017)	Recognizing the role of public space in relation to the centralized power discourse	Targeting the outcomes of recent research over the structure of power and its influence on city and social relations, as a background for the study of the role of power and its relations in interventions were applied on urban planning and architecture of the Safavid era.
	The performances of geometric power over the physical structure of spaces (An Introduction to genealogy of Safvid's government building complex in Isfahan)	Motamedimehr & Rahmat (2011)	Investigating the spatial evolution of the government in Iran until the Safavid era and its influence on the urban spatial organization	
	The study of different functions of mosques in the Safavid period	Esmaeili, Ahmadi & Sefatgol (2014)	Reviewing the role of mosques and scholars in Shiite in managing the social behaviors and highlighting the political opinions	
	City, ceremony, collective Memory; A study on the relation of ceremonies and urban spaces in Safavid and Qajar eras	Ahari (2011)	Reviewing various celebrations and events in the city of Safavid era	
Dissertation	Art and Power in the Safavid Era	Hassanshahi (1976)	Investigating the joint and two-sided relation between two subject of art and power, and analyzing the role of politics and power in creation of artworks during Safavid era.	
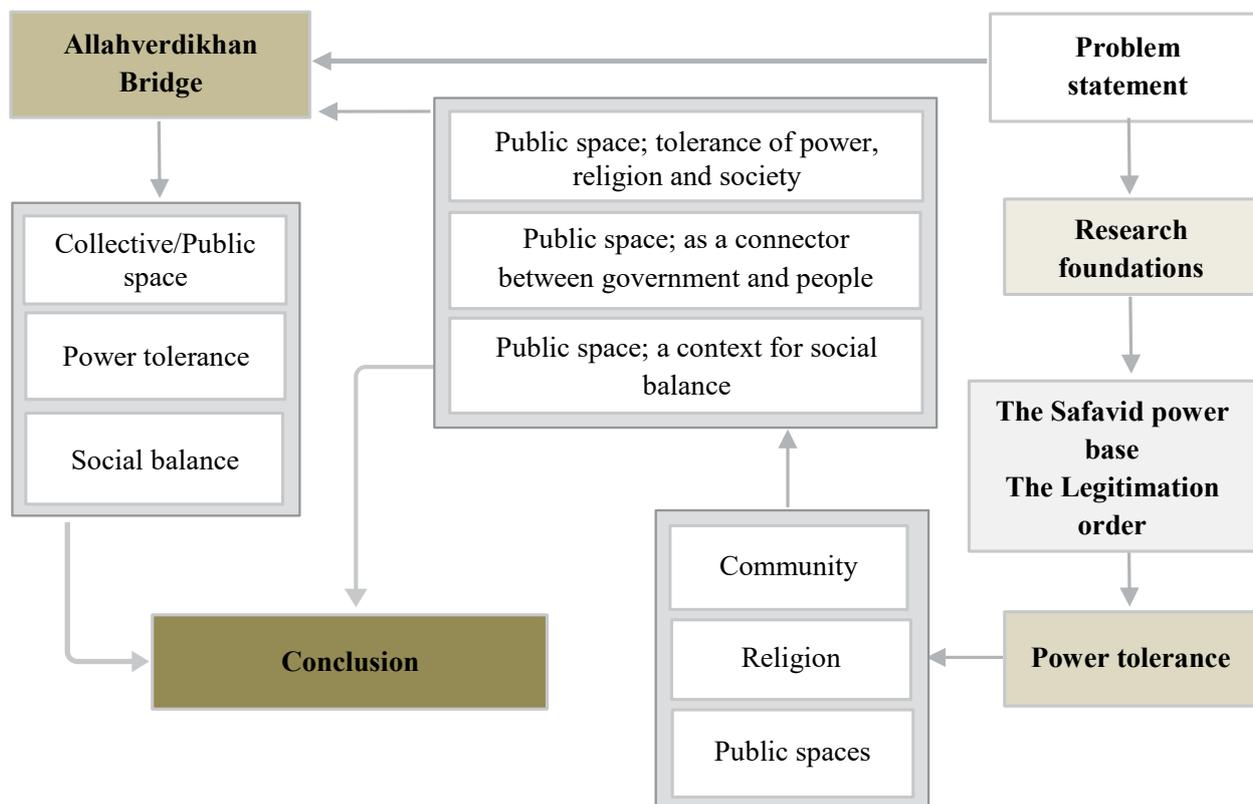
Fig. 1. The research process. Source: Authors.

Power-Society: The public relations always plays an important role in the political authority (Haghighi Boroujeni, Yazdanfar & Behzadfar, 2018) of a government. From this viewpoint, power is penetrated in different layers of social interactions (Navabakhsh & Karimi, 2009, 49). The interaction of the urban society of Isfahan in the Safavid era with the ruler was at its highest level. This relation has represented itself in various ways: the government emplacement in the city, the King's presence in various ceremonies, and his ruling power in holding them. Such official ceremonies have been mentioned frequently in the travelers' reports of this time. Examples of such events can be mentioned here: Welcoming the King (Sherley, 1972), Greeting the Ambassadors (Figueroa, 1984), Holding the Shater Celebration (Chardin, 1957, vol. 5), and Establishing field games such as polo (Chardin, 1957, vol. 3) and Watering (Abpashan) Celebration (Figueroa, 1984). The high point of this relation is associated with the reign of Shah Abbas I, who was daily presented in the city square and bazaar, dealing with government affair among the people, due to his deep interest in attending the public space (Roohi, 2018, 151; Della Valle, 2005).Therefore, the Safavid society was a flexible community (Tahmasebi, 2018, 155) that was linked with social mobility, in which the people and the ruler found the highest communication with each other and the government was giving people a prominent and decisive role to make them accompanying.

Power-Religion: The component of religion has a very significant role in the Safavid era and is a multifaceted element that forms both the government's nature and the relation between government and people, which is not limited to the Shiite religion; the way the government confronts the other religions such as Christian Armenians is of great notice in this historical moment. The Safavid reign, put their influence and inland development based on the religion, at the beginning of their rule. Shah Ismail Safavid, with a sermon he delivered at the beginning of his reign in the Tabriz Grand (Jāmeh) Mosque (Anonymous, 1971, 64), introduced the Shiite religion

as an important element in the Safavid power's relations. Different layers of tolerance were formed between the power and religion during the Safavids era due to some religious positioning was taken by governments as follows: 1. The issue of adopting 'Shiite' as official religion; 2. The King's religious rank and positions as 'Sadr' (the highest level granted to king during the Safavid reign) (Kämpfer, 1984, 121); 3. The special position of religious scholars and jurists both in the court and among the people (Ansari, 1999, 131); 4. The prosperity of religious knowledge (Emami & Gholami, 2017, 43) and finally, propounding this issue in society through holding the various religious ceremonies by order of the King such as: Holding Muharram mourning ceremony (Della Valle, 2005; Figueroa, 1984) and Eid al-Adha (Della Valle, 2005; Kämpfer, 1984). One of the most important approaches of the government in employing such religious policies was the management of social behaviors to consolidate power and its further survival (Esmaeili, Ahmadi & Sefatgol, 2014, 145). Chardin refers that the Safavid King has strengthened his position with complex religious ceremonies associated with special religious symbols, times and places (Elias, 2000, 255).

The other aspect of duality of religion and power, as discussed, is the government's facing with the religious minorities. In this regard, 'Della Valle' considers the Safavid condition as an open society free from religious pressure (Mousavi Dalini, Mavadat, Mousavi & Tabatabaee, 2016, 138) and 'Chardin' introduces the Iranians people as those who show religious tolerance (Zarei Mehrvarz & Momeni, 2012, 82). The ruling power had no interfere in the works of the Armenian churches nor did they prevent their religious practices (Pourmohammadi Amlashi, 2013, 8). 'Tavernier' describes the Shah's behavior toward the Armenians of Isfahan as follows: "They have been given the right to own property and other related things, and the King does not allow anyone to treat them in equally" (Tavernier, 1984, 407). He was considering himself as the father of Armenians who were living

in Iran (Phalsaphi, 1984, vol. 3, 218). The lack of hardness toward these minorities and treating them with patience during the Safavid era is noticeable and is a clear manifestation of religious tolerance.

Power-Public space: The national and religious legitimacy in the Safavid era provided the conditions for new social and political relations, which its reproduction was and still is apparent in the urban structure of Safavid-era, especially in their later capital, Isfahan. This makes the city a center for holding gathering and events that were organized by the government. Therefore, the approach of power structure and the necessity of making appropriate spaces in order to hold glorious government ceremonies, leads to the formation of urban public spaces. These large-scale civic places (Collins & Stadler, 2020) are the ground for manifestation of political and social power (Kamanroudi Kajouri, Karami & Abdi, 2010, 10) and the context for connecting the activities of a community (Carr, Francis, Rivlin & Stone, 2004). It is also one of the most fundamental concepts of civil society through which human constantly redefines his social "self" (Barati & Khademi, 2018, 20). Therefore, according to the general social aspects of these spaces, in confronting the power with city, they are often the first spaces in which the manifestation of power can be observed. The ideology as a soft application in hands of power is being applied by a dominant class or social group to regulate and create legitimacy in creating a space (Lashgari Tafreshi, Rezaei & Kavianpoor, 2017, 54). In fact, the basis for creating urban spaces in a city is dependent to the thoughts that govern it. The production of public spaces is a context for competition and conflict of social active groups with opposed ideologies in which, power-based interactions and social principles are ruling there (Mitchell, 1995, 115).

Results

The outcome of what was examined as power communications with other dominated foundations let the emergence of new concepts in the physical and social basis of Isfahan city in the Safavid era. These results are mostly meaningful in the public territory and are considered as an important turning point in the urban history and urbanization in Iran, which in turn has changed the social nature and human relation with the city.

• **Public space; the consequence of power tolerance in relation with the society and religion**

The power relation with society and the existing religious structure was found to be a mutual relation based on the unity. Therefore, the power in the Safavid era, by controlling the relations and activities involved in this issue, created conditions for the emergence of events, of kind that was in tolerant with the internal urban community in addition to having a special view on the religion component. Therefore, the main public spaces were created by the power base during this time, are mostly the result of the power tolerance toward the people and religion (Fig. 2); Accordingly, the public space is a determinant factor in confrontation of three focal point (power, people and religion); therefor the urban intervention imposed by the government are achieved mostly through changes in the appearance and network of public spaces, to be able to provide the required context for this interaction and also implementing unity at different layers of society under their control.

• **Public space; as a connector between public and government**

The presence of divisions like government and rule spaces in Isfahan during Safavid era were
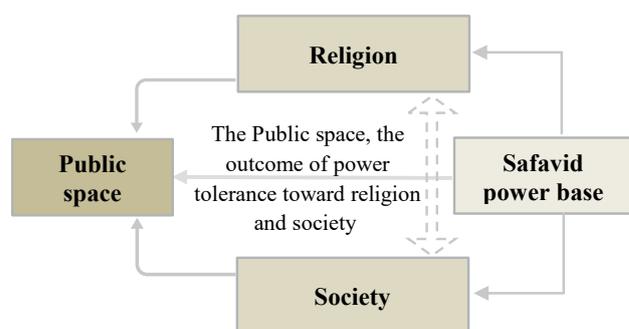

Fig. 2. The power tolerance toward the religion and society that resulted in creation of a public space. Source: Authors.

mostly enforcing the political aspect of the city. The connection of these government spaces and the city has influenced the government intervenes. The public spaces arising from the interaction of power and society has established a link between the imperial city and the people, providing the connection between these two. The palaces of the Safavid court were generally centered in a limited area between Naghsh-e Jahan Square, Chaharbagh Street and Zayandehrood River coast (Ahari, 2012, 30). Therefore, the Safavid government's square was connecting the government and people together, and became available to the public as a part of urban structure (Agha Bozorg & Motedayen, 2015, 27) (Fig. 3). On the other hand, the concept of King legitimacy entangled with the welfare in the form of the spatial composition of Chaharbagh Shahi, which was opening to the public (Motamedimehr & Rahmat, 2011, 87), showed the central role of Chaharbagh Street as a connector between government and the city (Fig. 4) that along with the Zayandehrood River have formed the two main urban axes (Haghighatbin, Ansari, Steenbergen & Taghvaee, 2012, 83). Therefore, Naghsh-e Jahan Square and Chaharbagh Street were constituting a set of urban public spaces with physical-functional role in Isfahan during the Safavid era, which let the public events to be realized with participation of government and people together who were experiencing tolerance in these connected spaces.

• Public space; a context of social balance in public events

According to the documents and reports were mentioned in travel reports of Safavid about the social events and public gatherings in public spaces, such events were generally attended by different parts of the population who were belonging to the various social groups. Therefore, in many events of this era, there was no social classification in the addressed public life and urban civilization. However, the special position and role of the King and the courtiers, in the public spaces that were required for the government and their hegemonic order, have always been reported separately from the people, but other classes from various social layers can be seen collectively in many public spaces of that time. Holding various ceremonies of other religions such as the 'Khajshooyan' (Epiphany) celebration of Armenian in the context of Zayandeh-rood River and Allah Verdi Khan Bridge with the presence of Shah reflects the freedom of religious minorities in holding their ceremonies and the possibility of enjoying free life in urban public spaces. One of the obvious examples of social balance in this time is the public gathering in the government ceremony of Abpashan, which was taking place in public space of Allahverdikhan Bridge; The ceremony was represented in the form of public presence of various classes in covered clothes, close to each other and next to the King, regardless of their social position. In table 2, the events of the

Fig. 3. A view of Naqsh-e Jahan Square during the 'Zell-e-Sultan' Era. Source: http://www.iichs.ir

Fig. 4. The Chaharbagh Street in the late Qajar Era. Source: http://www. negarestan.info

Safavid era have been described by addressing the social balance view.

• The Allahverdikhan Bridge: From the public space to the spatial representative of power tolerance

The confrontation of power with other foundations and the government's attitude towards the public spaces provided the conditions for a fundamental change in functioning of urban bridges. The Allahverdikhan Bridge by admitting a structural role in the city, has developed an important public space, as emerged a new concept of an urban bridge that beside the function of an urban passage provided a context for appearance of public activities in Isfahan city during the Safavid era. Moreover, the special geography of Isfahan and its proximity to the Zayandehrood River beside the city expansion across the river let the formation of such urban bridges, which has provided conditions for this bridge to play an important role in the urban landscape of Isfahan. The initiation of functional change in Allahverdikhan Bridge is coincided with the issue of highlighting the Iranian identity and their religious characteristic along with the power tolerance in the Safavid rule, that continued with its following role in holding various public gatherings and creating the public

spaces in the city. On the other hand, the prosperity of constructing road and other buildings such as bridges and Caravanserai in this time along with the frequent bridges constructed over there, all have influenced its functional role beside the way of intervention. Figure 5 represents the literature of this topic from two aspects of 1. The bridge construction's evolution; and 2. The Emergence of public space.

The Allahverdikhan Bridge had a central position both in the power relations and within the society due to its functional evolution and urban position in the Isfahan city; it has played an important role in the urban infrastructure of Isfahan during the Safavid era (Figs. 6 & 7). A series of factors has turned this building into an element beyond just a public and let it play a vital and central role in the city as follows: 1. The expansion of urban spaces made by Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Chaharbagh Street, which are playing as the connector spaces between the government and people and also between the 'public city' and 'royal-city'; and 2. the connection of two different religious parts of the city together (the neighborhood of Jolfa to the Muslim region) (Fig. 8). Being the context of social events with or without the presence of the King, including the Abpashan celebration and holding

Table 2. The emergence of social balance in the events of the Safavid era. Source: Authors.

Ceremony	Holding Agent	Location	The State of Social Balance	Source
Abpashan	King	Allah Verdikhan Bridge/ Charbagh St.	The presence of people from various social classes to watch and participate in ceremonies covered with clothes different from the usual social custom	Figueroa (1984)
Khajshooyan	People	Allah Verdikhan Bridge	Holding ritual celebrations of other religions and the King`s reception for similar events	Della Valle (2005)
Eid al-Adha	King	Public Urban Territory	The presence of various groups of people from different neighborhoods in a community and equal benefit for all people during the ceremony	Della Valle (2005) Kämpfer (1984)
Muharram Mourning	King People	Public Urban Territory	The constitution of mourning procession (Dasteh) from various groups of people and their communal presence in the urban spaces	Della Valle (2005) Figueroa (1984)
Promenade in the Garden	People	Public Garden Charbagh St.	The constitution of public green space and the possibility of public access to benefit from it and the formation of recreation concept	Tavernier (1984)
Coffee Houses Gathering3	People	Coffee Houses		Tavernier (1984) Chardin (1957)

The process of public space emerging as a mean for government to organize the events

The Safavid Power Base

The Recognition of Shiism at the beginning of Safavid rule

The Importance of Nationalism in Representing the Kingdom of Iran

The Constitution of Iranian and religious Identity

The special position of the government in relation to religion and society

The emergence of unity in society

Controlling public spaces and organizing gatherings

The city is a context for social events with great diversity

The importance of national and religious social events

Government as an agent for holding religious, national and governmental ceremonies

The importance of public spaces as a context for events

The appearance of public spaces, the government, as a construction agent

The constitution of public spaces in line together

Continuation of Isfahan public space network on the river

Providing condition for creating a public space on the bridge

The formation of public space in the urban bridges of Isfahan in the Safavid era

The political condition for creating a public space

The government authority and the economic power in various fields

The economic context, the reason for expanding the bridge industry

Expanding the roads' network and the other related spaces such as the Caravanserai

The prosperity of road and bridge construction in different places

The prosperity of urban bridges in cities adjacent to the river

The expansion of Isfahan to the father lands than Zayandehrood

The construction of Isfahan bridges for connecting two urban points
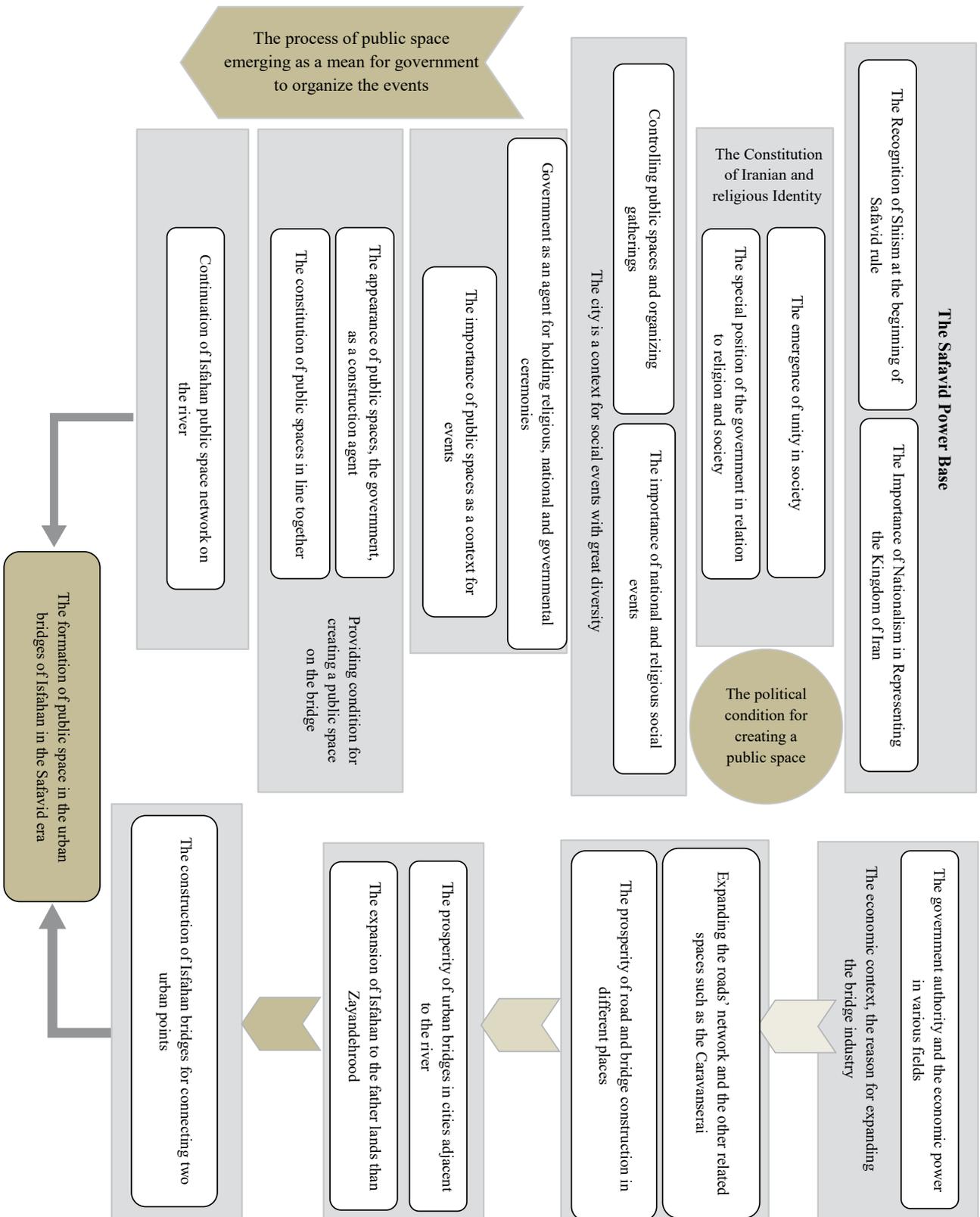
Fig. 5. The components and factors affecting the formation of public space in Allahverdikhan Bridge. Source: Authors.

the religious ceremonies and those of religious minorities such as Khajshooyan. Accordingly, this bridge is considered as an objective manifestation and significant emergence of the power tolerance toward the people and religion in the context of urban public space, which has established a balance between these three major columns. On the other hand, due to the presence of different social layers and connecting the various powers of society as a focal urban point, regardless of their social class (according to the travelogue reports), Allahverdikhan Bridge is considered as the main core of city establishing the social balance in Isfahan during the Safavid era (Fig. 9).

Conclusion

The power in the Safavid era was a dynamic and motivating force that provided civilization and mutual communications in the city by expanding it through the different parts of the society. The Safavids, as a power base, representing a national and religious basis of government, have tolerated different social powers in the society and tried to create a balance between these forces instead of confronting with them and magnifying their conflict of interests in relation to the other centers of power in the city. This approach resulted in deep evolution and structural changes in various fields such as social, religious and political relations and its physical and spatial representation of Safavid part of Isfahan, a city with civil development, where is principled in the history of Iranian architecture and urban planning. One of the most significant implications of this viewpoint in the city is the public and recreational spaces that have survived in various forms until today.

During these developments, Allahverdikhan Bridge implicitly has played a central role in the urban structure of Isfahan during the Safavid era; Similar to Naghsh-e Jahan Square, which clearly shows the balance between the columns of power geometry in the Safavid era, Allahverdikhan Bridge also represents this position relying on its

internal structure and in the light of the connections of different layers of society, government and religion. The religious division of the city, holding ceremonies of religious minorities, such as:
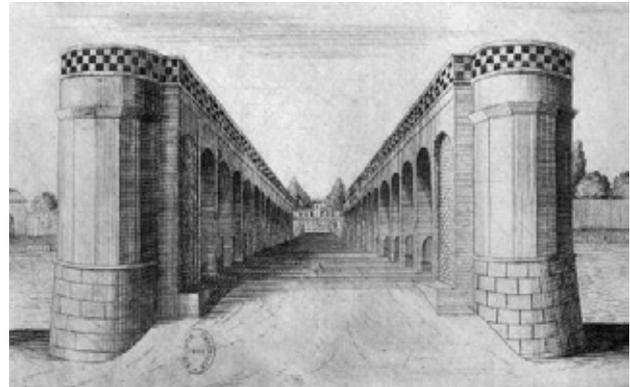

Fig. 6. A Painting of Allahverdikhan Bridge. Source: Chardin, 1957, vol. 3.

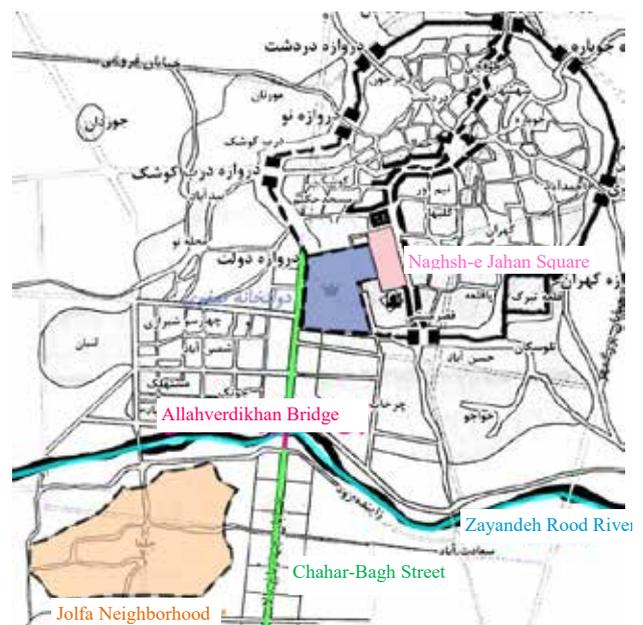Fig. 7. The Allahverdikhan Bridge. Source: Flandin & Pascal, 1851.

Fig. 8. The location of Allahverdikhan Bridge in Isfahan city during the Safavid era. The urban central point in power relations and providing social balanc. Source: Pakzad, 2011.

Khajshooyan, the national celebrations with the king's presence, such as Abpashan, expanding the public space of Chaharbagh Street across the Zayandehrood River and the feminine function of the bridge in special days of the year, all have provided the required condition for it to develop the religious and political social center of the city. Therefore, this bridge, which at first stage was transformed into a public and recreational space with the transformation of its function from a mere urban passage rout, has become the center of power tolerance toward the society, religion and city in Isfahan during Safavid era according to the new analysis. During its 400-year history, the Allahverdikhan bridge has always maintained its central position in the structure of Isfahan due to its prominent social role; This bridge is one of the most important urban spaces in emerging the various social behaviors and representing a public life in Isfahan city.

Endnote

1. The content provided in this research study in relation to interaction, tolerance and civic development in the Safavid era, is mostly related to the glorious time of this dynasty, especially in the reign of Shah Abbas I. Therefore, considering the political complexities of the Safavid which ruled for 235 years, the addressed power relations with such approaches cannot be generalized to the whole era. The presented discussion is mostly related to part of Safavid history, in which the critical buildings such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square and Allahverdikhan Bridge were emerged.

2. The word religion in this study, in addition to addressing the concept of a branch of religion (Shiite) which is mostly derived from theology (Dehkhoda, 1962, vol. 30), also includes the concept of faith or believe in a special type of its manifestation among its followers. Religion as the same meaning as faith convey a general concept that is referred to the faith as a whole meaning prior to its outer manifestation (Shojaeezand, 1999, 254) and includes a broad concept. Faith or believe consists a general use, but religion has a specific connotation. Therefore, in the practical sense, these two are not in conflict with each other. The expressions such as 'religious tolerance between Muslim and Christian' are those examples address this word application. That is frequently used in similar studies related to the Safavid era.

3. The public area has had the most emergence in coffee houses at the same time with the West and especially in Britain during the Safavid era. In 'Taḏkera-Ye Naṣrābādi', the image representing the coffee houses is a place similar to literary centers where drinking coffee and other beverages, which later became forbidden, were popular. The presence of poets and the appearance of social and political issues in them has also been mentioned. 'Chardin' also points about to the freedom and its wide range in coffee houses, and believes that this freedom does not exist anywhere in the world.
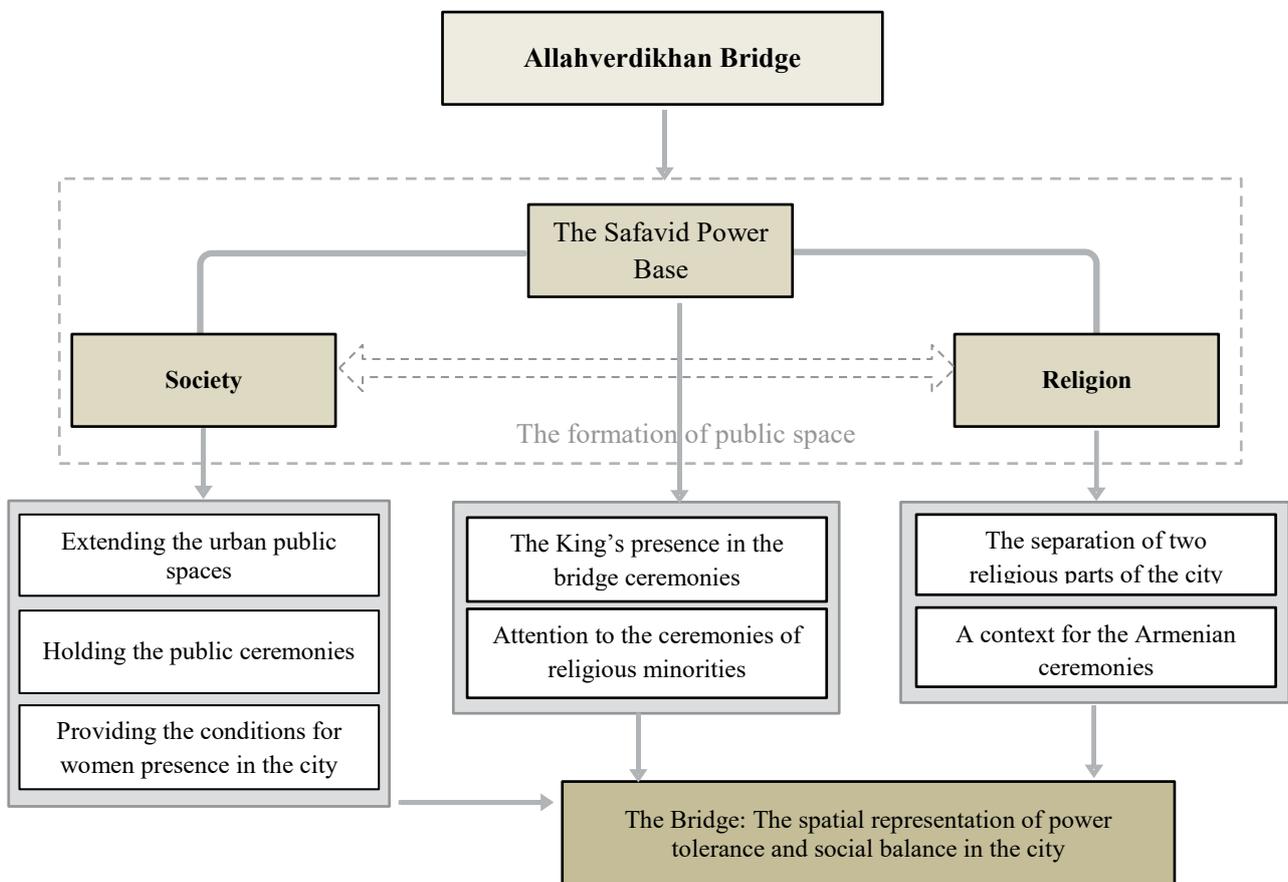

Fig. 9. The position of Allahverdikhan Bridge in relation to the power discourse and power tolerance in the city of Isfahan. Source: Authors.

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