

Louis Kahn's Silent Space of Critique in Tehran, 1973–74

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In 1974, while he was designing a new civic center for Tehran, Louis Kahn saved a newspaper article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in which an American journalist discussed Iran's path toward modernization:

[The queen] Farah is chairman of the Iranian Arts Committee and has built concert halls across the nation. Since 1962, she has been responsible for such well-known artists visiting Iran as Fonteyn and Nureyev, Van Cliburn, Arthur Rubenstein, the Bolshoi Ballet, the Royal Ballet, the Stuttgart Ballet, Herbert von Karajan, and heaven knows how many singers from La Scala. . . . While Farah's doing all that, the shah is busy with world politics and the development of his country, as we've all read a hundred times. Since 1959, he has poured billions of dollars back into his country and maybe even performed a miracle or two.¹

This paragraph, highlighted by Kahn, describes the dual pursuit of modernization in Iran that gained momentum after the 1973 oil crisis. The shock inflicted by the oil crisis and the ensuing socioeconomic turmoil caused the site of modernity to shift toward the non-West. This situation also resulted in a transition of avant-garde technological and artistic expertise into new territories, opening up a space that would localize the modern vocabulary of freedom and progress. In this context, the local actors of modernization in Iran adopted differing frameworks for approaching change in their social practices and institutions.

Although the journalist's report reminds us of the queen's and the shah's attempts to build a modern nation and their coordinated quest for Westernization, it fails to draw a distinction between the two. The aesthetic sensibility of the queen's modernity was informed by an emphasis on cultural institutions and a nostalgic return to Iranian heritage, whereas the shah's modernization agenda was based on material progress. This duality of Iranian modernism further hinged on a division of power between the queen's modernity as a peripheral cultural project and the centrality of the shah's social and political approach. While the queen and her liberalist circle focused on the discourses of identity, authenticity, and self-knowledge to fabricate new representations of traditional culture, the shah launched the "White Revolution," which aimed to engineer technological and economic reform in opposition to the rising threats of socialism and nationalism in Iran.² The tension between these two antithetical and divergent forms of modernity provided the background for Kahn's engagement with the Iranian context.

Within this dichotomous space of power and culture, Louis Kahn visited Iran in 1970 to participate in the First International Congress of Architects in Isfahan. Three years later, Kahn and Kenzo Tange were commissioned by the shah and the queen to collaborate on a design proposal for a new civic center in Tehran.³ This new public space, located on a 1,369-acre parcel of land in the Abbas Abad district, was intended to create a focal point of modern social and economic institutions for the growing population of Tehran. During the course of this collaboration, the two architects prepared individual proposals, working in Philadelphia and Tokyo (Figure 1). In February 1974, Kahn and Tange presented their master plans to the queen and the shah in Tehran. On the basis of conversations between Tange and Kahn and the confluence of their ideas, Kahn developed his

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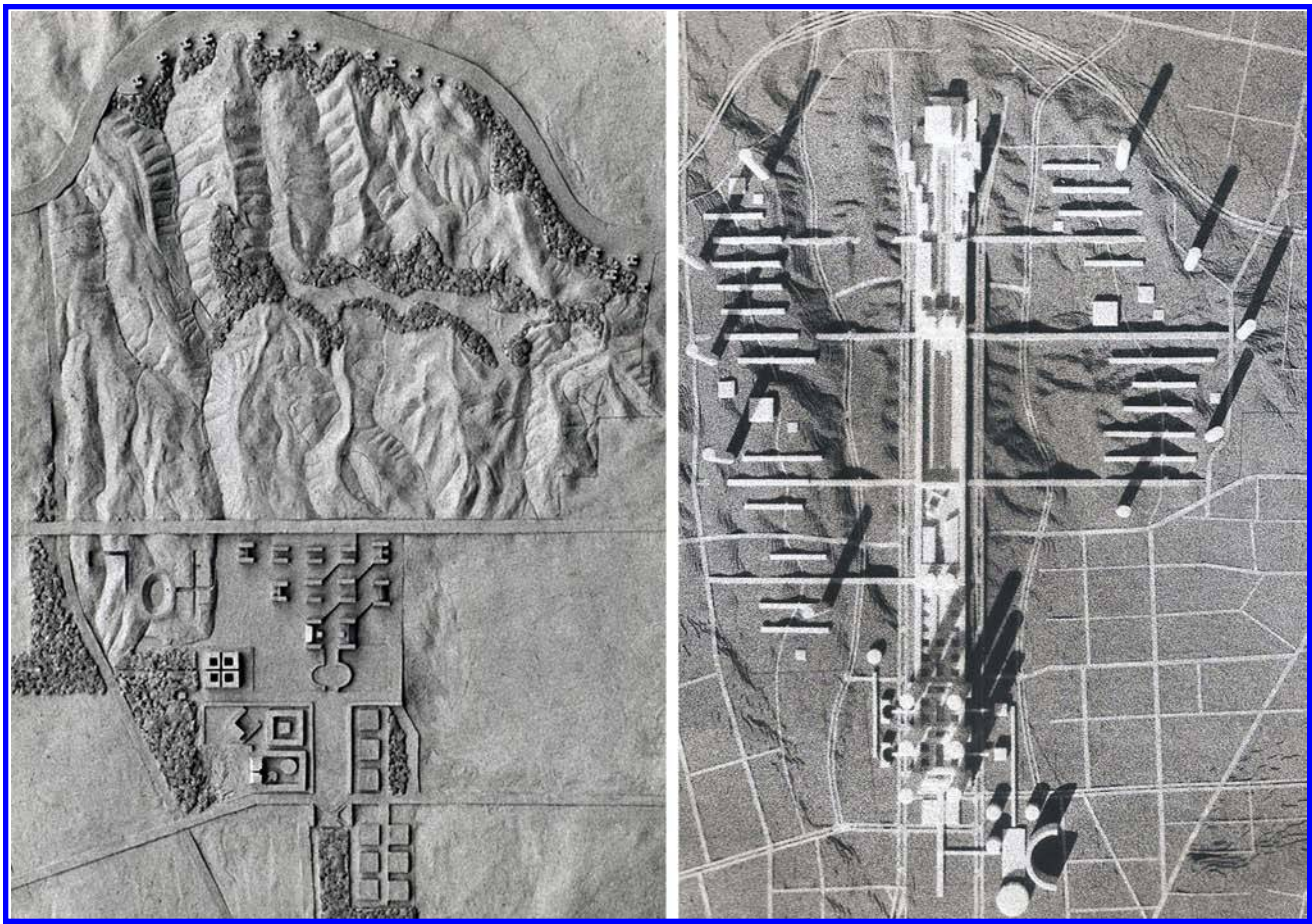


Figure 1 Left: Louis Kahn, model of the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (photo by George Pohl; Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). Right: Kenzo Tange, model of the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (photo by Osamu Murai).

final sketch in Tehran just a few weeks before his sudden death in March 1974. The last drawing prepared by Tange's office (completed by Arata Isozaki) articulated the results of this joint effort (Figure 2). The project was never realized because of the Iranian Revolution.⁴ This article focuses on Kahn's contribution and his critical engagement with the centers of culture and power in Iran. As I argue below, Kahn's unexecuted plan illustrated the struggle between the queen and the shah and reflected the tensions between the polarities of culture and power in Iranian society. Kahn, who was more inclined toward the queen's culturalist version of modernity, nevertheless challenged the assumptions held by both the shah and the queen. Kahn's unrealized layout for a modern public space in the heart of the Iranian metropolis hinted at his *indirect* resistance to the modernization agendas of both courts and the manifest dichotomy in Iran's politicized and institutionalized culture and identity.

I believe Kahn's design contained a silent denunciation of the archaic forms of power and of the hyperbolic romanticism of Persian history. Kahn's silent resistance situated his scheme outside a Western-centric discourse of modernity

and projected the possibility of a decolonial space as a defense against a local, internal Orientalist culture and against the asymmetrical dichotomy of power between the two courts, a critical approach that had not yet been seen in local Iranian architectural circles. By adopting a different attitude toward modernity, Kahn's unfinished master plan offered a way out of Iran's dualism. By focusing my analysis on the lines of exchange between Kahn and Iranian cultural and political agents of modernity, I aim to go beyond a descriptive historiography of *local* experiences in the name of modernity and the discourse of modernity that continues to create an opposition between the local and the global. In this study I intend to show that Kahn's design strategies were concerned with the development of an ethical attitude toward architectural modernity in a non-Western context and equally constituted a silent resistance to Iran's sociopolitical reality and its spaces of representation. The result of Kahn's dual cultural/political engagement, I argue, was bound up with the possibility of bringing these forces into a new, unreconciled public space in Tehran. Unlike his modern predecessors, Kahn realized an urban form that could recover the lost connection between

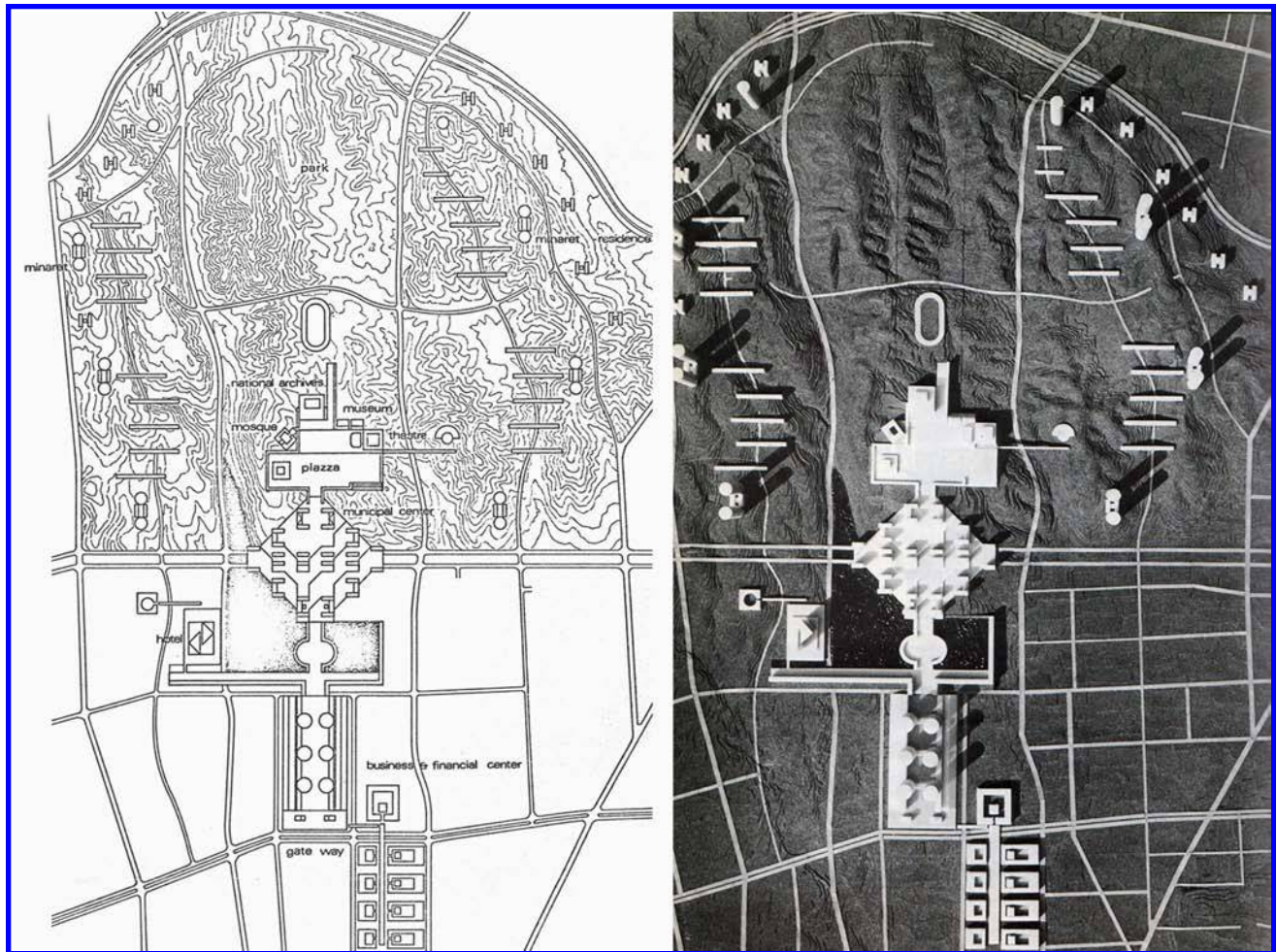


Figure 2 Left: Arata Isozaki, integration of Tange's and Kahn's proposals, Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). Right: Arata Isozaki, model of Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (photo by Osamu Murai).

human cultural institutions and the modern logic of movement with its social and political forms of praxis.

In what follows, I first examine Kahn's engagement with the condition of modernity in Iran—the centers of culture and power represented, respectively, by the queen and the shah—as a way of articulating a set of analytic tools for critical intervention in Tehran's new urban space. I then consider Kahn's thinking as expressed in his proposal for the Tehran civic center, which took a critical position toward history, identity, and power and the space of their representation and practice.

The Critique of Local Modernism and the Queen's Second Court

In the late 1960s, Iran established a "second court," the Special Bureau of Her Imperial Majesty, under the purview of the queen. By means of the Special Bureau the queen supported numerous organizations, such as the Iran Cultural

Foundation, the High Council of Architecture and Urban Development, the Iranian Center for the Study of Civilizations, the Imperial Academy of Philosophy, the Queen Farah Pahlavi Foundation, and the National Iranian Radio and Television, as well as many art festivals and museums. Contrary to the queen, who provided enduring support for artistic and cultural activities, the shah, who considered contemporary art "too modern," believed that the modernization of his country was possible not through art or culture but rather only through scientific and technological progress.⁵ Farah, who had studied architecture at the École d'Architecture in Paris for two years before becoming the queen of Iran, was a strong patron of Persian art and architecture. Largely at the queen's urging and due to her support in the face of political and financial opposition, the Abbas Abad project was assigned to Kahn and Tange instead of to French and British architects. The queen was interested in resurrecting the Persian cultural past, an indication of her retrospective cultural modernism, but she showed a

Figure 3 Mr. Sohi, I. M. Kadri, Keyghobad Zafar, Nader Ardalan, Louis Kahn, and Mehdi Kowsar (back to the camera) at the First International Congress of Architects, Isfahan, Iran, September 1970 (Laleh Bakhtiar and Leila Farhad, eds., *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology: Report of the Proceedings of the First International Congress of Architects* [Tehran: 25th Shahrivar Press, 1970], 23).



simultaneous zeal for avant-garde artistic productions. The Shiraz Arts Festival (1967–77), for example, patronized by the queen, provided a venue for her historicist view of Iranian modernism.⁶ In the early 1970s, the festival presented works by Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, and Iannis Xenakis that incorporated Persian visual, aural, and symbolic themes, such as the garden, Sufi dervishes, and Avestan (an ancient Zoroastrian language).⁷ The festival's contemporary projects performed a countermodernism that served the queen's liberalism and forged a connection with historicism in art, culture, and society.⁸

The division of the courts coincided with a wave of cultural criticism in Iran and marked the beginning of an aesthetic and architectural program of museums, preservation projects, and environmental campaigns that expressed an agenda opposed to the shah's approach to modernity. The Special Bureau, under the direction of Karim Pasha Bahadori (1968–76), Houshang Nahavandi (1976–78), and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1978–79), became the chief commissioner of prototype designs for housing and other civic functions.

By the end of 1978, the bureau, under executive architect Manouchehr Iranpour, had involved many renowned architects and planners in Iran's grand modernization project.⁹ Although the queen often consulted local architects and even, on occasion, offered them opportunities to design cultural and educational institutions, Iranian architects were involved only tangentially with the affairs of the bureau in the production of prototypes.¹⁰ With the exception of a few joint ventures, local architects' roles as interlocutors often involved cataloging historical monuments and landmarks of Iran to provide court-appointed international designers with environmental, technical, and aesthetic knowledge on traditional Iranian building practices. Collaborations between

local and nonlocal designers were often political arrangements designed to absolve the shah of privileging foreign architects; in such cases Iranian architects were appointed to execute foreigners' plans and ideas.¹¹ Local architects also intervened in negotiations and contracts, offering invaluable suggestions about navigating the maze of Iranian bureaucracy, with its newly enforced protocols and regulations.¹² While there were times when foreign architects turned to local experts on issues of cultural continuity, national modernity, and public taste, the influence of Iranian architects on the prototype plans was minimal.

Even if the designs of the museums, educational institutions, residential developments, and public gardens did not serve as sites of reciprocal exchange between local and foreign architects, two architectural congresses in Iran provided moments of critical debate on modernism outside the West. Sponsored by the queen's office and the Ministry of Housing and Development, the First International Congress of Architects, with the theme "The Interaction between Tradition and Technology," emphasized "Iranization" in design and planning as a critique of the impasse of industrialization and urbanization in the West. As we will see, however, the convention's participants understood the theme in multiple and contradictory ways.

In her opening address at the convention, Queen Farah called for a reconciliation of "tradition" with "change" during the course of the country's transition to modernity, accounting for the cultural and psychological dynamic of the society.¹³ Nader Ardalan was the central figure of this architectural event. He saw it as a quest to find a leading "voice from the West" who might remind Iranian architects of their own traditional order, charged with contemporary implications (Figure 3).¹⁴ However, the theme of a return to or reconciliation with tradition was refuted by other practitioners and

critics at the congress. Iranian architect Houshang Seyhoun (a proponent of the new vernacularism in Iran and a distinguished architect of the shah's court) believed that the debate over the adaptation of modern technology to traditional forms should be replaced by a discussion of "modern tradition."¹⁵ Seyhoun saw modern tradition as a form of ecological and geographical awareness concerned primarily with aesthetics and comfort.¹⁶ His alternative reading of tradition as vernacular (exclusive of pre-Islamic architecture) was characterized by the biological and environmental and opposed to historical pastiche.

Seyhoun's call for a radical diversion from the main thesis of the congress was echoed by other participants. Georges Candilis was among the first to challenge the queen's disposition toward modernity rendered as a petrified monument. Recounting his conversation with the queen about the construction of a modern hotel in Isfahan, Candilis suggested overturning the traditional problems of architecture so that quality could be identified with the creative power of architecture in response to contingent, social, and historical realities rather than style, material, or technology.¹⁷ In the same vein, Italian town planner and scholar Ludovico Quaroni criticized any metaphysical and formal interpretation of tradition as an absolute object divorced from social realities. While it was contentious, the congress became a venue for cross-cultural exchange and the clash of ideas among local and international architects.

This period of Iranian architecture was characterized by competing styles and formal allegiances to French, Anglo-American, German, and Italian postwar modernism.¹⁸ Yet assimilations from historical or vernacular references, infused with the residue of modernist discourse, often remained merely formal exercises insofar as they failed to take a critical approach in addressing Iranian political and social conflicts. To ameliorate the shock and anguish brought by modernism, Iranian architects took up a type of internalized Orientalism by returning to history.¹⁹

Among the congress participants' responses to the queen's culturalist position on modernity, Kahn's intervention offered a departure from the "traditional." In a Heideggerian manner, Kahn differentiated between "tradition" and the "traditional." He argued that the term *traditional* belonged to circumstantial events of space-time and frozen, limited moments in the history of ideas, whereas *tradition* extended to "a longer period of time" (if tradition could be understood as a crystallization of humankind's existence and one's inner truth). However, in this sense tradition did not belong to the past or to the present. As Kahn remarked: "What man is composed of is that which is not yet made, not what is made. What is made has to do with needs, what is yet not made is the very essence of existence, so therefore nothing but art can bring it up."²⁰ For Kahn tradition hinted at the potential of

a temporal extension only if it could be seen as a state of futurity, in which only the work of art could release the incomplete and the unmade.

Thus, humankind's "powers of anticipation" resided in the *beginning* of the work of art.²¹ This is why Kahn consistently praised the architecture of beginning, not in terms of spatial archetypes but as "that which confirms its continuation."²² In his lecture at the Isfahan congress, Kahn stated:

[Tradition] is not so much what you see, but what you feel. If you feel the reflection of something, it is beautifully stated. It reflects something which you would like to extend the expression of, although you may not know its background. It transcends the knowledge about it.²³

Kahn's faith in a romantic idea of origin and self-knowledge that could offer primacy to architectural work was sublimated in his well-known idiom of the "golden dust." As Kahn expressed it:

Tradition is a kind of golden dust that falls; if you put your fingers through it, there is a crystallization out of all circumstances which brought it about and made it be. If you put your fingers through it, I think you can sense the powers of anticipation, because in what has been accepted before by man as a place to live, a place to be, a place to talk, to learn, there must be considered a miracle, and nothing short of it.²⁴

For Kahn, the golden dust was a "treasury" full of forms and an indication of the existence of amorphous ideas that belonged to a multiplicity of coalescing times and spaces.²⁵ During a dialogue with Luis Barragán, Kahn identified the fleeting character of tradition by offering two examples: a play by Shakespeare at the Globe Theatre and the old Etruscan mirror.²⁶ We cannot relive these two artistic products as spectacle, Kahn reminded us, no matter how much we dig into the past or manipulate their acts or images. Each rendered a static, vulnerable moment that broke down during the act of reconstruction. The golden dust, as a matter that was luminous but ruinous in character, would direct us toward new beginnings.

An advocate of architectural historicity (and not historicism) as revolutionary, fragmentary, and a basis for the "coming about of new institutions," Kahn often denied using historical precedents and their forms in his projects.²⁷ While Kahn wrote of the joy of beginnings, he warned against making the *error of beginning*: "If you get too close to beginning, it goes farther and farther away from you. Stop in midstream and allow that which will be forever unattainable."²⁸ From this perspective, Kahn can be seen as a figure of resistance within the context of the Iranian revivalist movement and its restrictive notion of history. Kahn's idea of the architecture of beginning, free from the constraints of chronological time

Figure 4 Oswald Ungers, Paul Rudolph, Philip Will, Louis I. Kahn, I. M. Kadri, and Minoo Mistri (left to right) with Queen Farah Pahlavi at the First International Congress of Architects in Isfahan, Iran, September 1970 (Laleh Bakhtiar and Leila Farhad, eds., *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology: Report of the Proceedings of the First International Congress of Architects* [Tehran: 25th Shahrivar Press, 1970], 18).



and bounded geography, advocated a new and urgent understanding of modernity that involved spatial/cultural differences as a way of protesting such delimiting discourses of cultural identity and national heritage.

Kahn's Plan for the Civic Center as an Open Institution

While the shah enthusiastically promoted the project for a new civic center in Abbas Abad as a representation of his new society, Kahn saw Queen Farah as his true client. Kahn was introduced to the queen by Ardalan, who had invited Kahn to the 1970 First International Congress of Architects in Isfahan (Figure 4). Kahn became aware of the shah's modernization program, the White Revolution, during his participation in the congress. At the congress, the Tehran Comprehensive Plan—one of the last products of the White Revolution—was presented and reviewed by international architects and urban planners.²⁹ Yet Kahn was already familiar with the generic socioeconomic reforms initiated in the 1950s and 1960s in the developing world. His knowledge of the power structures in Pakistan and Iran allowed him to avoid being deceived by his clients' desire for rapid socioeconomic developments in the name of democracy, a notion that contrasted with Kahn's concept of *institution* as the groundwork for a democratic "way of life."³⁰

While the queen's second court, with its retrospective modernism, cast itself as a liberal force by sponsoring proposals for model institutions, the dogma of the shah promoted programmatic reform that was socialist on paper but adopted capitalistic forms. The Pahlavis were renowned for identifying their monarchies with ancient Persian civilization

as a means of crafting a non-Western, modern state through a hyperbolic nationalism. In the name of a white (bloodless) revolution, the state developed an empty and archaic image of progress through such megaprojects as land reforms, development plans, mass housing, public monuments, highways, and high-rises, all modeled on imported designs.³¹ The White Revolution resulted in increased rural migration, urban congestion and pollution, a housing crisis, and an armed state, circumstances that overwhelmed the pursuit of economic prosperity and social justice.³² The increased budgetary outlays directed toward the shah's industrialization, military, and development plans separated the rural populace from the urban and alienated the traditional from the newly modern. In 1975, the shah's modernization program and its ensuing failures coincided with a drop in oil prices, which prompted a burst of nationalism. Iranian nationalism, in opposition to the so-called clockwork orange culture of the West and its degenerate democracy, was emblematic of the crisis in Iran's sociopolitical and economic sphere in the late 1970s.³³

The shah manifested an ambivalent attitude toward modernization that vacillated between his socialist utopian aspirations and the realities of a capitalist state with both progressive and archaic forms. His inconsistency is particularly apparent in the context of the Tehran Comprehensive Plan (Figure 5). The plan was prepared in 1968 by the Austrian American city planner Victor Gruen and his associate Iranian-born planner Fereydoon Ghaffari in collaboration with the Iranian architect Aziz Farmanfarmaian.³⁴ The Tehran Comprehensive Plan was a collision of modernist total planning, social engineering, postwar American suburbanization and consumerism, and segregated communities.

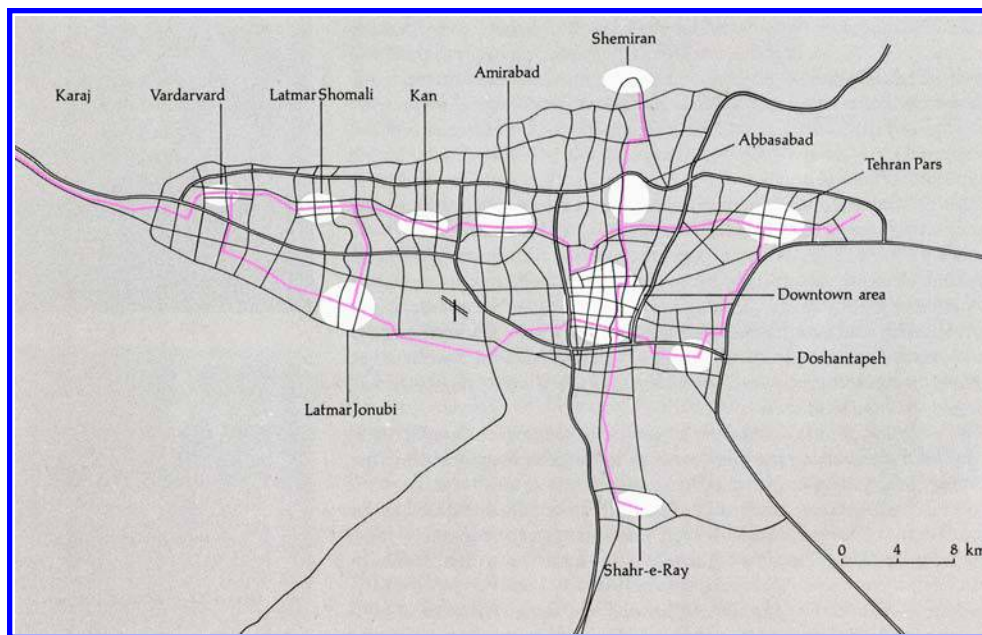


Figure 5 Victor Gruen Associates and Aziz Farmanfarman, Tehran Comprehensive Plan, 1969 (Llewelyn-Davies International, *Shahestan Pahlavi: A New City Center for Tehran, Book I: The Master Plan* [London: Llewelyn-Davies International, 1976], 30).

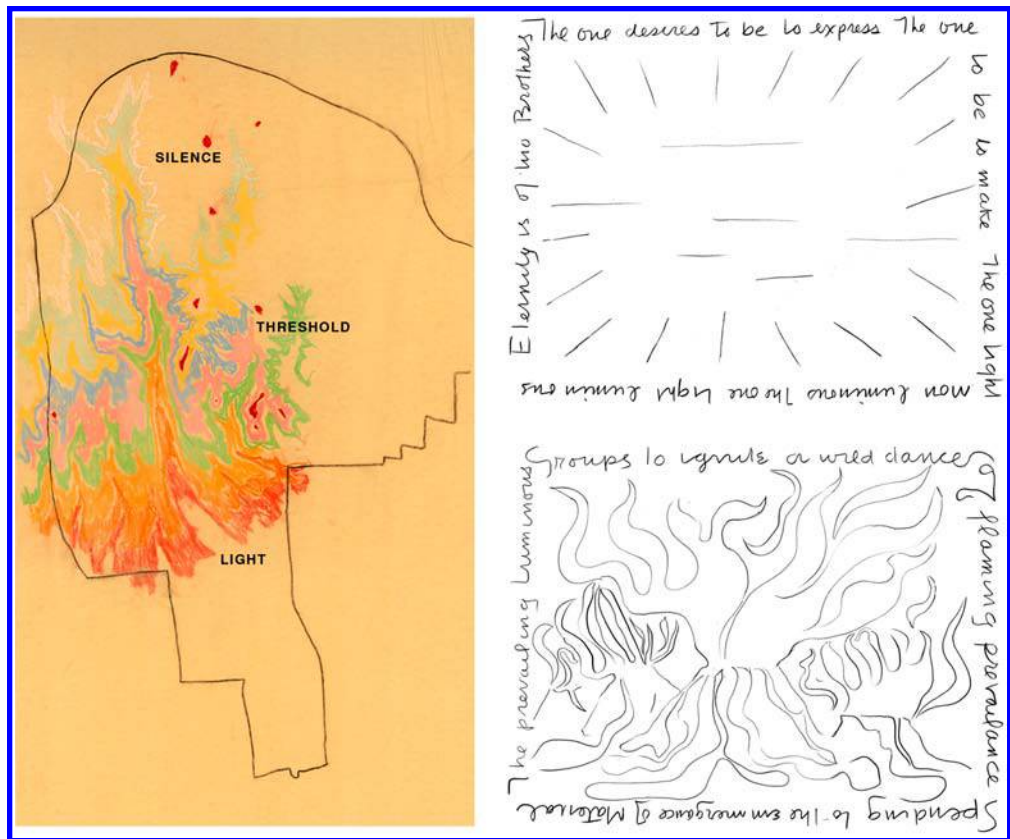
The plan exhibited a closed, striated pattern of socioeconomic segregation in the form of new satellite towns separated by greenbelts and situated along a linear, east–west passage interconnected with superhighways.³⁵ The Comprehensive Plan served as a model for other major Iranian cities hoping to control urban growth and rural migration—and the ensuing informal settlements—by reorienting toward centralized urban communities.³⁶ The result was a sudden proliferation of proposals for luxury high-rise apartment blocks, suburban housing developments, and shopping malls in districts such as Shahrak Gharb, Farahzad, and Levit Shahr (modeled on the iconic Levittown), which were designed to promote urban culture and accommodate the *nouveau riche*.

Gruen’s Comprehensive Plan selected Abbas Abad (labeled Abbasabad on the plan) to be the strategic core of Tehran. The Abbas Abad district, an arid vacant land crossed by a series of ridges and valleys, was situated between South Tehran (the traditional downtown) and North Tehran (Shemiran, a developing district with residential and commercial areas, hotels, and high-rises). Gruen’s plan was to limit the uncontrolled growth of the city toward the north by assembling civic and commercial activities within a new city center in Abbas Abad. In 1971, after the government approved the Tehran Comprehensive Plan, the shah ordered the Tehran municipality to seize land in Abbas Abad (formerly occupied by housing for the Iranian army) and its surrounding neighborhoods. Following his father’s example of supervising all urban plans and public monuments personally, the shah exercised power over municipal affairs through his joint ownership of city development projects (funded by the Pahlavi Foundation).³⁷ Tehran’s new

city center was a late expression of the shah’s sociopolitical modernization; as a state-sponsored urban project it posed a counterimage to the traditional old center and its vibrant and spontaneous enterprise. The shah’s centralized modernism and empty democracy dictated a disciplinary strategy for regulating public space. By contrast, Kahn’s plan showed signs of a refusal to play along. Kahn’s design put the shah’s political campaign, the White Revolution, into the margins, as Kahn expressed in his annotated sketch of Abbas Abad.³⁸ His desire to explore new forms of democratic “institutions” in the Iranian sociocultural milieu situated Kahn’s design philosophy in opposition to the shah’s technocratic democracy.

The idea of institution in Kahn’s architectural thought first emerged at CIAM ’59 in Otterlo, Netherlands. An “institution,” he stated, “tells you that there is an agreement in back of the making.”³⁹ This agreement, Kahn believed, should be pursued beyond the circumstantial situations of design—including material or geometric order—and thus be closely associated with the way of life projected onto space and its inner form. From Kahn’s perspective, institutions did not suggest spatial constructs “shackled and confined and running in one direction only.”⁴⁰ Rather, they implied meetinghouses for embracing the idea of agreement. An institution is both responsive to the “spirit of commonness” and “civic responsibility” and dedicated to the individual’s “desire for higher levels of expression.”⁴¹ Kahn spoke of the social responsibility of the architect: “When an architect begins his work, the building he is about to design must present itself as belonging to an institution. Even before satisfying the client’s specific needs, the force of institution in society should be the background of his architectural decisions.”⁴²

Figure 6 *Silence and Light* drawings and their depiction in the Abbas Abad Master Plan. Left: Louis Kahn, first color sketch of Abbas Abad landscape, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). Right: Louis Kahn, “Eternity Is of Two Brothers” and “The Prevailing Luminous,” *Silence and Light* drawings, 1970 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).



When considering the center of Tehran, Kahn was concerned with the forms of civic institutions and communal spaces. He granted architecture the power to emplace democratic institutions beyond political ideologies and the authority of the state. His exploration continued to develop in parallel with the cultural discourse of modernity in Iran and pointed to certain implications for design in relation to Iran’s social and political realities.

Designing Silence and Light in Tehran

In a letter to the queen, Kahn wrote:

This morning we flew over the site. The strength and beckoning of this ancient land offers ever so more than I imagined. This new anchoring civic place must be concerned as a whole presenting an indelible image comprehensive and symphonic. There must be a way to impel its aspirations towards new thresholds of living and to inspire the talents of all of us to great exemplary work.⁴³

Kahn’s urban proposal for Tehran began with a polychromic and forceful rough draft that referred to the analytical diagrams of his *Silence and Light*. Following the lines of the topography and its voluptuous forms, this diagram shows a lessening intensity as it unfolds throughout the site. The motion and material energy of what he referred to as “a wild

dance of flame” plunges into a zone of silence (Figure 6).⁴⁴ In his diagrammatic expression of the Abbas Abad landscape, Kahn suggested the possibility of a new world yet to come in tracing the focal points and territories that later would occupy the centers of culture and power, as well as the cross-over spaces (threshold) reserved for the public.

Kahn’s theory of silence and light reached a turning point when he initiated a dialogue with Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar on the concept of illumination in the Persian philosophy of Suhrawardi. From 1971 onward, Kahn’s diagrams showed the influence of Persian Zoroastrian and Islamic sources. Whereas the early diagrams of silence and light represented a separation between the two realms, Kahn’s later sketches reflected an interconnection between the two.⁴⁵ The space of silence (the immaterial and unmeasurable for Kahn) corresponded to “the desire to be, to express” that signified the realm of art and culture, but the space of light, “the giver of all presences,” indicated a world of science and praxis, concrete structures and events.⁴⁶ This polarity of art and science, silence and light, and the possibility of their reconciliation in a third space became a powerful tool in the planning of the Abbas Abad project. Kahn’s sketch implied a possible dialectic of the space of reality with aesthetic and cultural life. As a result of this reconciliation, the real space of the public was able to emerge as a “treasury of shadows” capable of channeling the democratic and creative impulses of the city.

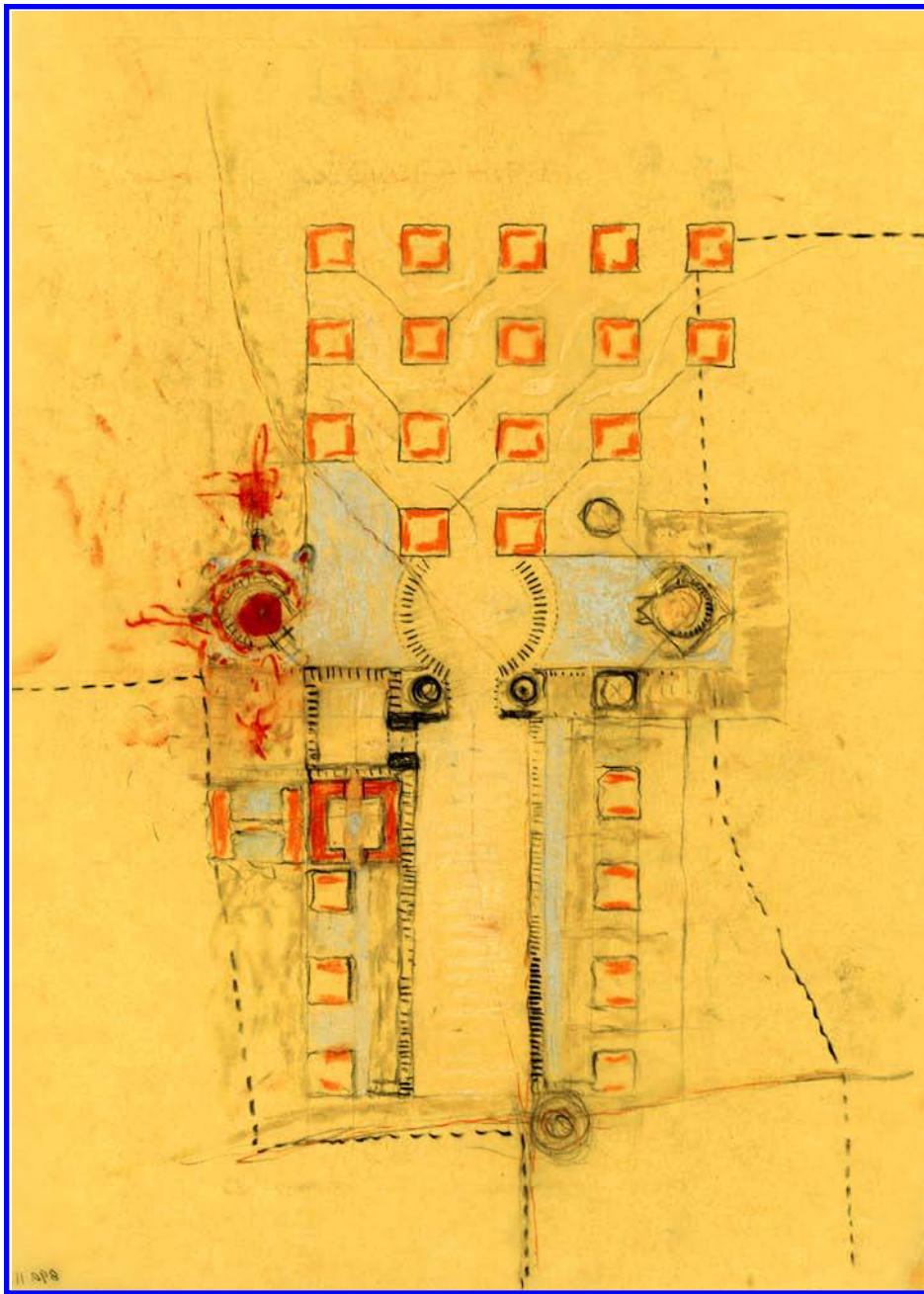


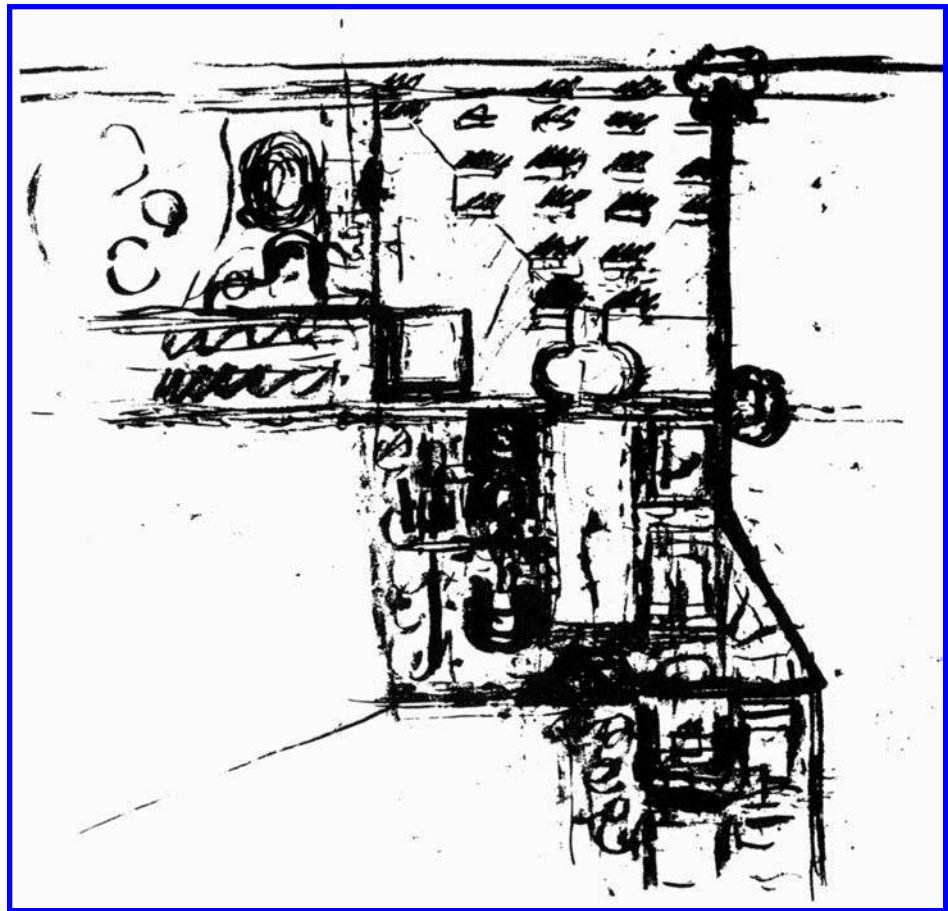
Figure 7 Louis Kahn, early sketch, Abbas Abad project, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).

Gruen's initial program for the Abbas Abad city center called for a clear division of activities and institutions. More important, it created a dichotomy between a cultural modernity and a political one: the National Iranian Oil Company complex serving as an economic epicenter and indication of national prosperity; a city hall representing the center of a modern civic state; a plaza reminiscent of the golden era of Shah Abbas the Great and Naghsh-e Jahan Square; an opera house and a mosque resurrecting traditional art and culture.⁴⁷

Kahn's programmatic play of different institutions evolved into a trifold arrangement of cultural, political, and public spheres, as shown in his numerous sketches of this relationship. In the early outlines, the plan was organized

around a focal point of two adjoining plazas, modeled on St. Peter's Square in Rome and Naghsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan (Figures 7 and 8). The plazas brought together the city hall to the east, the governmental (ministries) hub to the north, and the cultural institutions (the library, museum, theater, opera house, and mosque) to the west (Figure 9).⁴⁸ This layout closely resembled the order of spaces in Isfahan, where the forums of commerce, power, and culture circumscribed the main Naghsh-e Jahan plaza. In his initial sketches, Kahn drew a curved line—tracing the pathway of water along an old aqueduct canal on-site—to signify a diagonal promenade connecting the commercial and cultural spheres (see Figure 7). As the design progressed, this triangular relation

Figure 8 Louis Kahn, charcoal sketch showing the trifold spheres of power, public, and culture, Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).



began forming an open system rather than a circular domain. In the final plan (which he brought back from his last trip to Tehran in February 1974), Kahn succeeded in overcoming the dichotomy of power and culture by locating institutions around the plaza (Figures 10 and 11). The city hall, the representation of a democratic society, displaced the formal plaza devoid of social function (see Figure 11). The city hall became the threshold between the political institutions and the cultural institutions. This programmatic inversion advanced a new possibility for Iranian modernism, incorporating open institutions and socially produced spaces and, thus, challenging the status quo.

A Modern Architecture of Beginning

To resist the prevailing trend of monumentalizing traditional history in Iran, Kahn explored the question of “beginning” as it appeared on the Iranian historical landscape and more broadly. Looking at different cultural terrains from Italy, Egypt, Greece, and India, he liberated his design from the discourse of cultural identity as a unified whole. In the Kahn archive, a small box contains pieces of cardboard on which blueprints of traditional buildings have been pasted. The Baths of Caracalla in Rome, the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Islamic caravansaries, Roman and Greek amphitheatres, and

other institutions, which are emblematic of Kahn’s golden dust, became vehicles for endless play. For Kahn, these singular spaces, far from presenting a single architectural type, characterized a diversity of primordial form-spaces that played against each other in his collaged plan for Abbas Abad (see Figure 11). An examination of Kahn’s first sketches reveals an atomization of forms and institutions, each borrowed from a different architectural tradition, distributed almost randomly across the site to characterize the city hall, national archives, museum, theater, mosque, and opera house (see Figures 7–9). However, by shifting, rotating, and adjusting these forms, again and again, throughout his sketches and corresponding models, Kahn worked to situate the architecture of beginning onto a new site in Tehran, expanding Iranian historical and traditional horizons (see Figures 10 and 11).

Although individual institutions reappeared in their original forms in his plan for Abbas Abad, the urban forum became the center of Kahn’s scheme. Early in the process of design, a large forum, not unlike the Royal Meydan of Isfahan, appeared in Kahn’s charcoal and color sketches (see Figures 7 and 8).⁴⁹ In his later plans, Kahn sought to disengage the forum from its precedent. While the original scale of the Royal Meydan and surrounding buildings was maintained in Kahn’s final plan, the forum took on a different

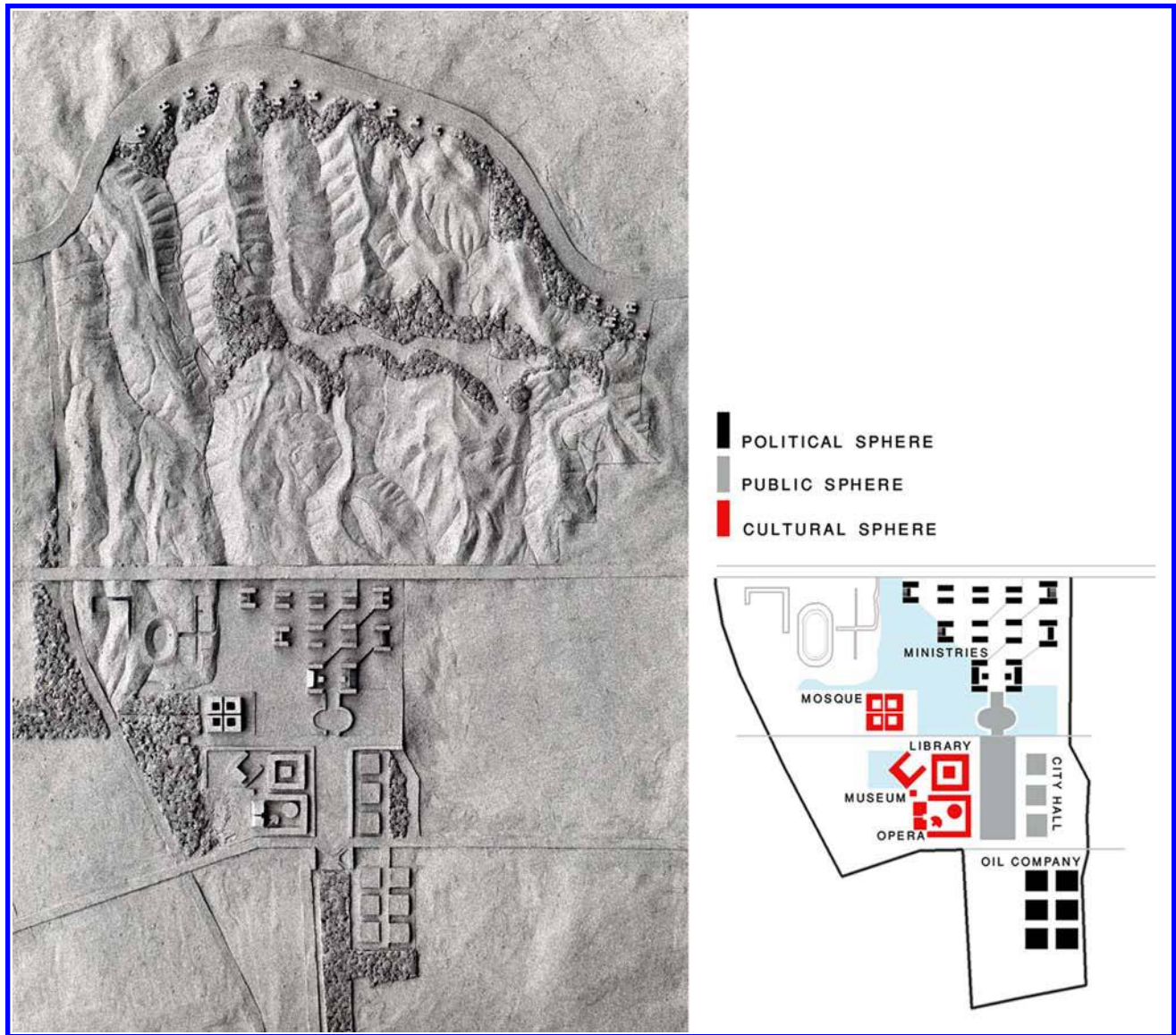


Figure 9 Left: Louis Kahn, clay model of the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). Right: Diagram of Louis Kahn's early scheme for the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (author's drawing).

character when he appropriated the form of the Egyptian tomb-temple and its tripartite layers of vertical space. As Kahn sketched it in the 1950s, the sanctuary of Queen Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahari, Egypt, was organized into three distinct, vertically separated spatial layers that made possible a gradual transition from public to private and from light to silence.⁵⁰ By superposing this tripartite spatial order onto the urban collage/assemblage of the Meydan in Isfahan, Kahn achieved a new public form on the site of Abbas Abad.

In Kahn's final design, the district for the institutions stepped down the hill's slope in three platform-courts (see Figure 10). The institutions of the museum, library, and national archive occupied the upper platform-court and embraced the natural topography. Coming down the hill, the

mosque, the opera house, and the theater were located in the corners of the second platform-court. Referring to these spaces, Kahn annotated his last sketch with the phrase "religious art" linked to the words "Cultural(rel)" and "The way of life" (Figure 12).⁵¹ In Kahn's terminology, religion signified a transcendent "feeling" and state of mind. He explained that "the inspiration to express gives rise to all places of religion in which art is the great language."⁵² On another occasion, in the context of his design for the Theater of Performing Arts, Fort Wayne, Indiana (1961–73), Kahn wrote: "Shouldn't there be a place, a religious one, one might say, which is truly given over to the essence 'play.' . . . The religious center of every activity of man must be formed to give new life to spaces it inspires."⁵³ To incorporate the

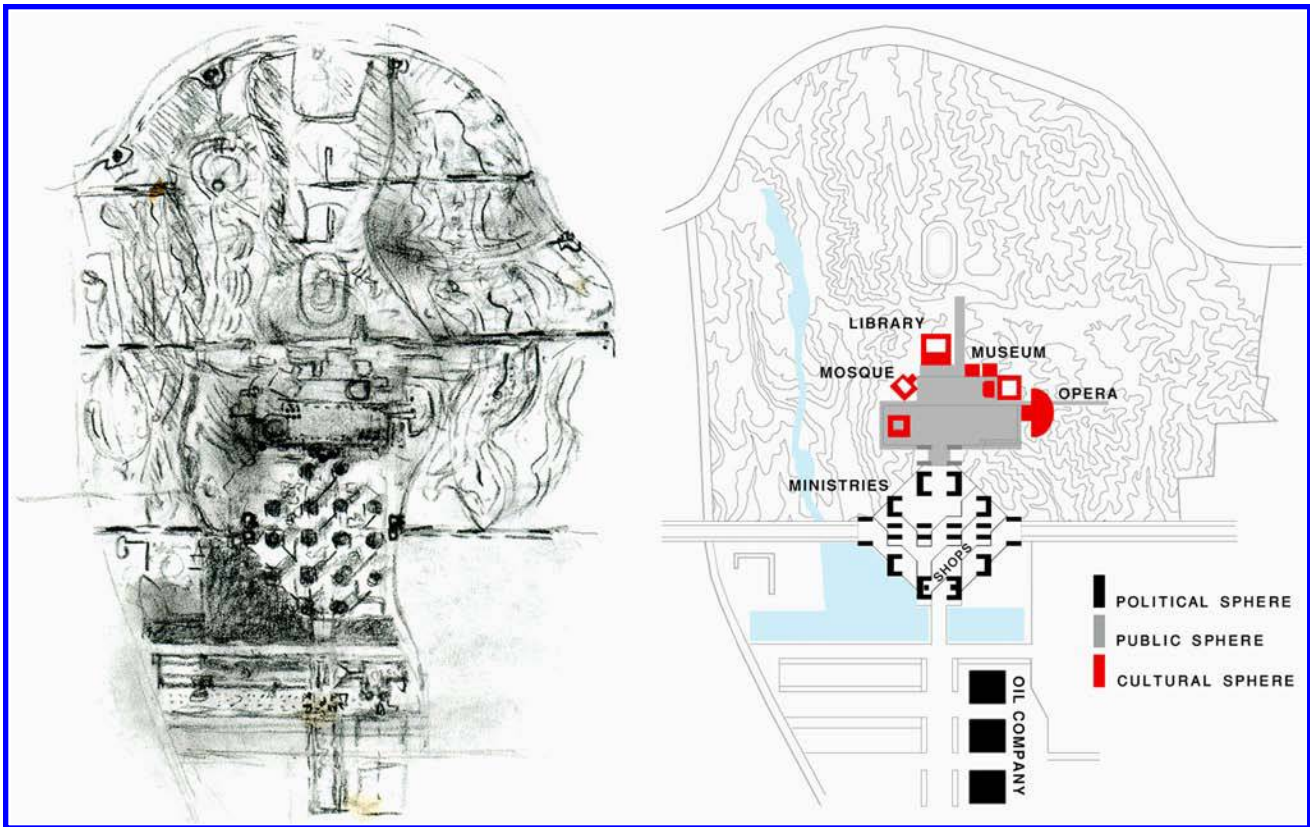


Figure 10 Left: Louis Kahn, final sketch of the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission). Right: Diagram of Louis Kahn's final scheme for the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (author's drawing).

concepts of beginning and silence, Kahn provided the new Tehran city center with a “society of rooms” so that participants could rehearse their “religious art” in the nooks and crannies of museums and archives, chapels and theaters, before participating in urban play. As Kahn said, the city centers “could become cathedrals in themselves.”⁵⁴

Passing through arcades, one could reach the third, lower platform-court, which provided a transition from the silence of the upper spaces into a vast public space, full of light. As one descended the hill, participation in the public realm increased in relation to the nature of the institutions. On the lower platform-court, the city hall intensified participation and exchange (see Figure 10). Situated at the edge of the lower platform, the city hall served the cultural forum above yet at the same time turned into the beginning of the political and economic forum below.

The spatial layout of the urban space, legible as the passage from private to public, silence to light, and culture to power, resembled the order of space in Persepolis in Shiraz (see Figure 11). A copy of the plan of Persepolis exists in Kahn's archive, but it is not clear whether the interplay of the two forums through the hinged space of the city hall resulted from a conscious appropriation of Persepolis's spatial order. For Kahn, Persepolis was an unprecedented architectural

monument with no existing prototype; it reflected the true spirit of architecture and represented the epitome of the beginning in Iran.⁵⁵ At Persepolis, the public quarters of the Apadana and the Hall of a Hundred Columns are separated from more private quarters, such as the Palace of Dariush and Xerxes, the Palace of Andarun (Haram), and the Treasury, by a hinged space called the Tripylon, the Council Hall. This interplay of a series of introverted (*andarum*) and extroverted (*birun*) spaces with a multiplicity of thresholds was characteristic of traditional Iranian spatial language.⁵⁶ In Kahn's Abbas Abad plan, the spaces of thresholds as guarded gateways, like the Council Hall (Tripylon) in Persepolis, evolved into the democratic institution of the city hall.

Kahn denied a representational or analogical relationship between his design and the historical models of Isfahan and Persepolis. Instead, he introduced a continual interplay of spatial differences. His identification of tradition with golden dust and his emphasis on an oblique relationship with history contrasted, therefore, with the queen's inverted modernism and misuse of cultural identity and national heritage. Through his design practice, Kahn showed that it was impossible to reenact history in its purest sense; rather, the secrets of being could reveal themselves only in a fragmented network of forms assimilated from a multiplicity of sources.

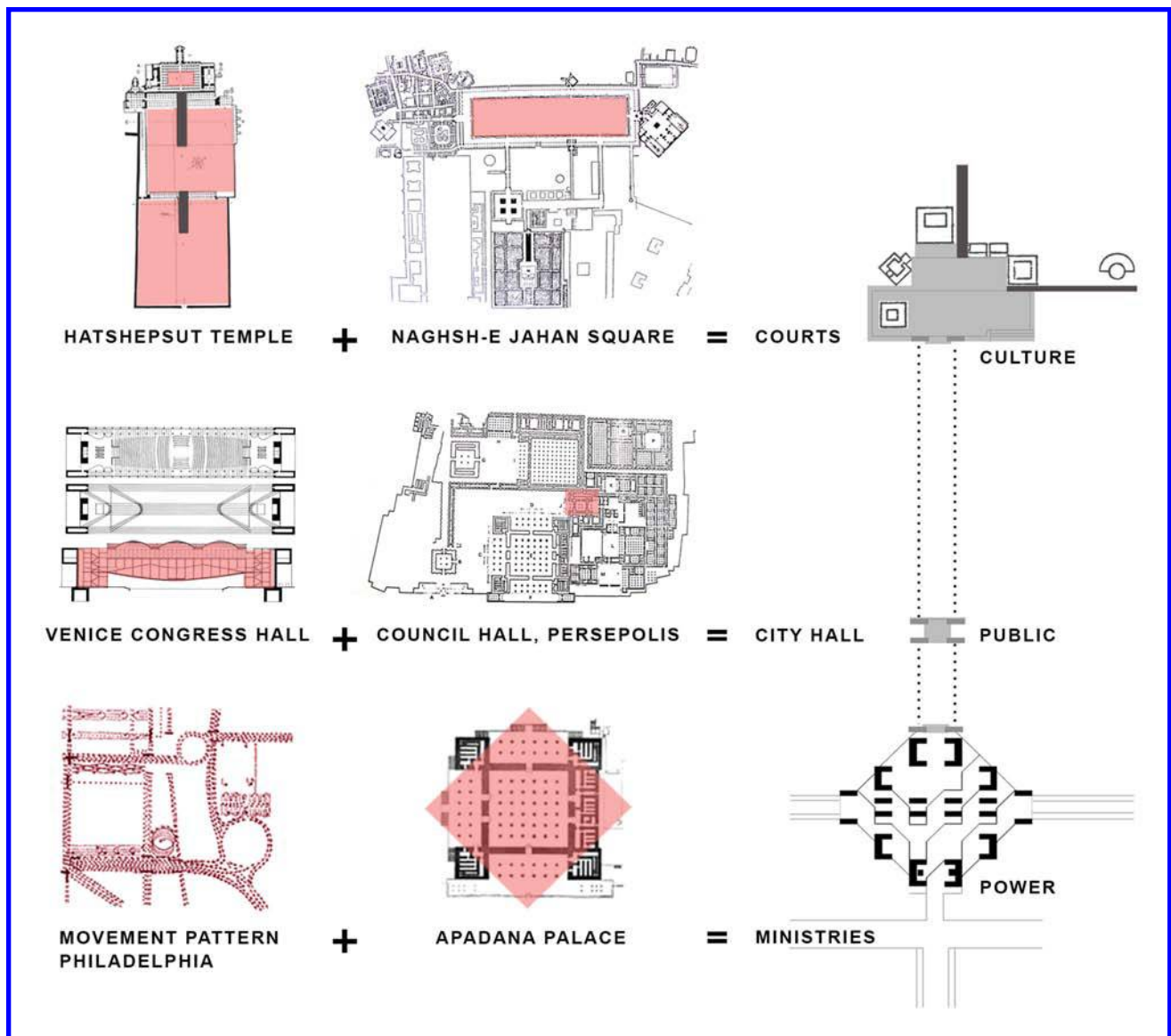


Figure 11 Diagram of the architecture of beginning in Louis Kahn's final scheme for the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (author's drawing).

The Architecture of Movement

As a matrix of open institutions, Kahn's design further challenged the authority of the state and its hierarchical, linear structure, which inhibited social engagement and increased segregation and the hegemonic presence of power in space. In his earliest sketches for the Abbas Abad plan, Kahn analyzed the urban segmentation that would create a sharp sociospatial divide between the new northern and old southern centers of Tehran. Reacting against the totalizing program of the state to displace the old royal district (*arg*) and the traditional bazaar from the city center, Kahn drew a diagram in which the old center was connected to the new to distribute its cultural and political functions (Figure 13). In his notes on the final plan, Kahn suggested that "art galleries of merchants," the "samovar convention," and the "rug

symposium" should all be located next to the "banks," "wall streets," "bourse," "world bank," "stock exchange," and other financial and governmental activities (see Figure 12).⁵⁷ Creating this variety served to open up the new center and turn what could have been a tabula rasa of centralized power into what Kahn considered a space of movement and distribution of availabilities.

In his final plan for Abbas Abad, Kahn adopted a central spine to express the reciprocal exchange between the centers of culture and power but employed design techniques that countered the straightness of the passage (see Figures 10 and 11). Just as the cultural institutions occupied an abstract scheme without symmetrical or centralized order, the government center of the ministries also disrupted the appearance of traditionalism and classicism. Kahn explained his



Figure 12 Louis Kahn, annotated final sketch of the Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).

general design strategy: “I use the square to begin my solutions because the square is a non-choice, really. In the course of development, I search for the forces that disprove the square.”⁵⁸ Looking at the plan of Apadana Palace in Persepolis, Kahn offered a new reading of the institution of government in which the grand columns of Apadana were turned into ministry buildings on a rotated chessboard plan (see Figure 11).⁵⁹

Kahn’s manipulation of the chessboard plan in rotation allowed him to move the government ministry buildings

(perimeter blocks) and set them in new configurations. He merged the buildings’ positions on the main board with a series of oblique/zigzag lines indicating shopping arcades, watercourses, and spatial connectors, thereby animating the individual ministries (Figure 14). Kahn began his design with a classical approach; “Buildings,” he wrote, “must be like a good position on a chess board. For its symbolic value no building must be in the wrong place.”⁶⁰ Then he sought to invert the conventional order. He turned around and translated the structural order of chess into a dynamic field of

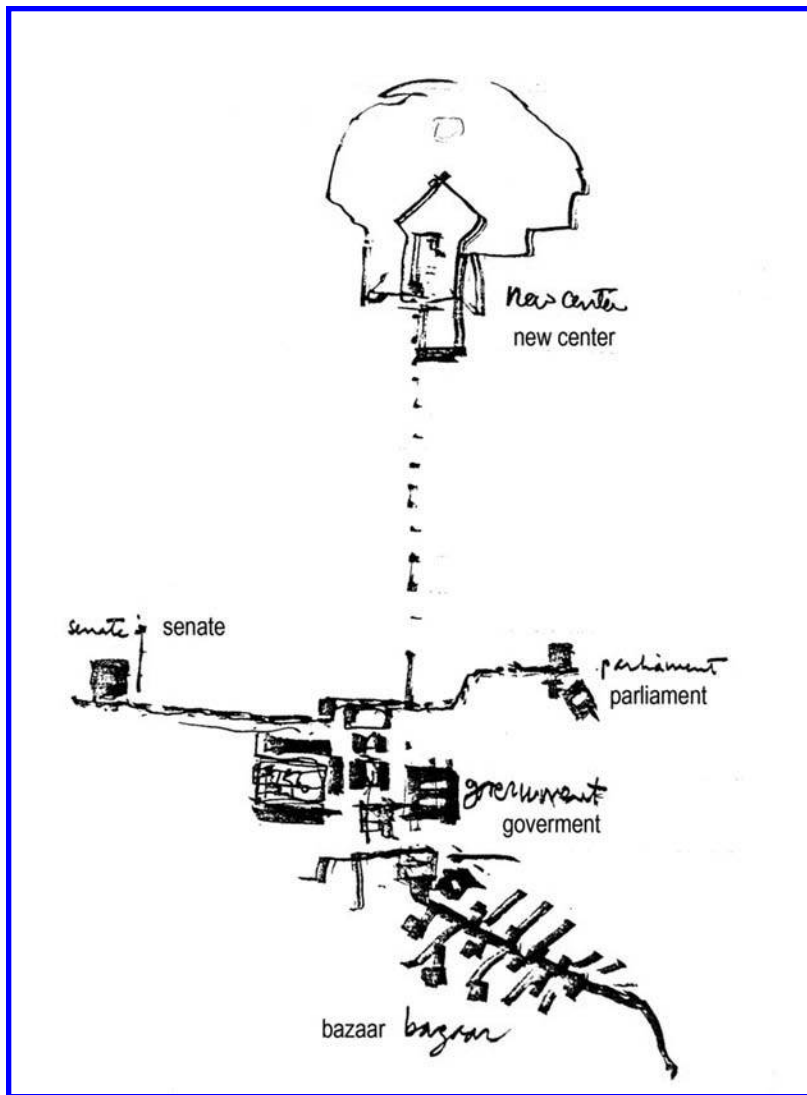


Figure 13 Louis Kahn, analysis of the old and new centers of Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).

space in which the linear, shallow enfilade transformed into a deeply networked space.

Kahn sketched the ministries as sixteen perimeter blocks with open corners (see Figure 14). They formed a constellation of towers of different heights (sixteen, thirteen, and ten stories) and occupied a stepped triangular platform that created a nonlinear path among the blocks, facing the building of the mosque (the larger perimeter block). The winding passages between the blocks framed the beautiful landscape of Alborz and located the spectator among a series of parallel watercourses that ran diagonally through the blocks before pouring into a large basin in front of the mosque. This spatial experience was intensified by the movement of people strolling in shopping arcades that connected the various office blocks like viaducts or bridges and kept the government center alive at night.

Although Kahn made numerous sketches for this center of power and its urban blocks, he finally chose to situate the ministries on a diamond-shaped plaza and open them up as

a series of gateways in an effort to facilitate the fluid transfer of air, wind, and light (see Figures 10 and 11). The vertical “servant spaces” (such as elevators and stair shafts) located in the middle of each block were transformed into structures not unlike Persian water cisterns, to perform as passive air-conditioning systems for the parking garages below. This second subterranean level in Kahn’s master plan allowed pedestrian and vehicular traffic to inhabit the same space. Contrasting with the adjoining cultural forum, this diamond-shaped area was a complex organism with arteries and nodes characteristic of Kahn’s designs for urban viaducts, such as his proposal for midtown Philadelphia, where he turned parking garages and shopping centers into monumental cylindrical structures. In the plan for Tehran, Kahn effectuated his critique of functionalism, decentralization, and consumerism by designing shopping arcades as viaducts located among the ministry office blocks.

The design of the center of power as a living organism, according to Kahn, had to assimilate the “viaduct architecture

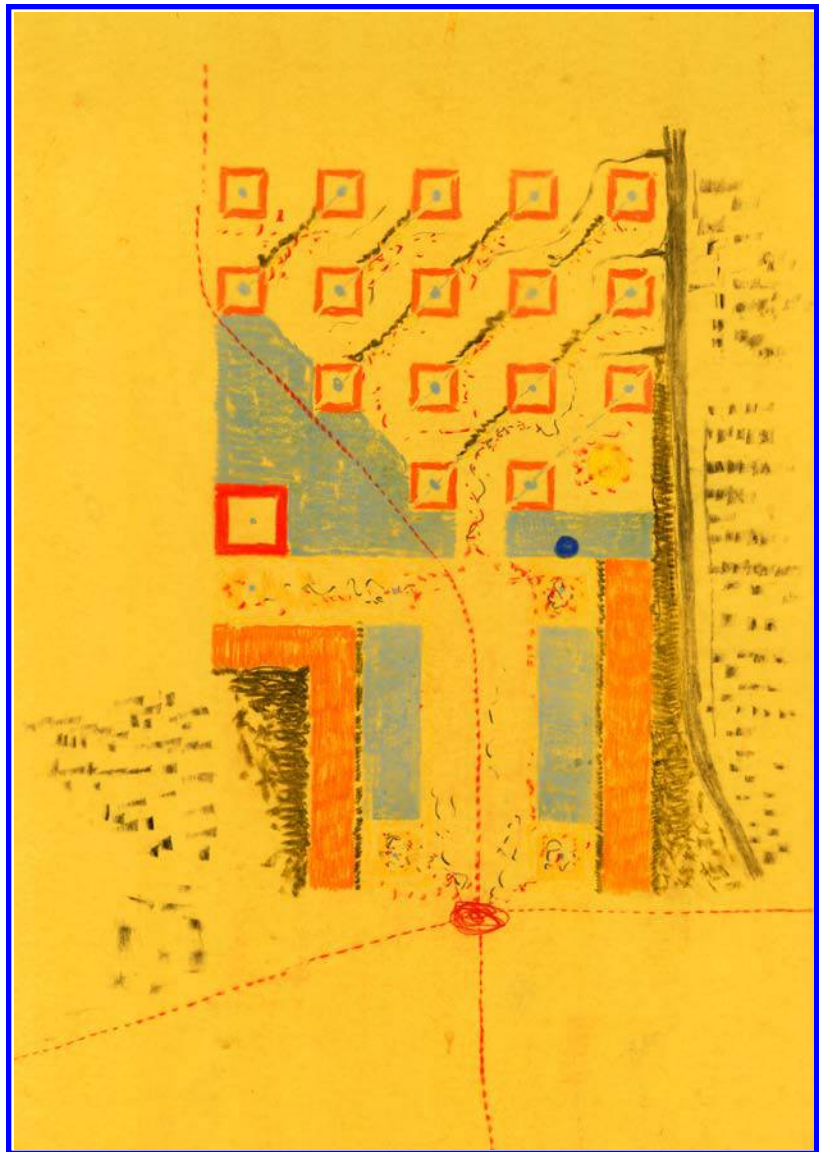


Figure 14 Louis Kahn, early sketch of government ministry buildings, Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission).

of the car” in order to survive.⁶¹ For Kahn, the defensive character of the city in the modern age had to originate in protecting the city against automobiles by giving them a separate place in urban planning. He designed an open platform that would function as an “intermediary building” between the major metro stations, expressway, and garage spaces on the level below and the promenade space around the tower blocks above (Figure 15).⁶² For Kahn, the city center was “a place to go to—not to go through.”⁶³ Two decades earlier, while working on the architecture of movement in his design for mid-town Philadelphia, he drew this textual diagram:

Expressways are like **RIVERS**
 These **RIVERS** frame the area to be served
RIVERS have **HARBORS**
HARBORS are municipal parking towers
 from the **HARBORS** branch a system of

CANALS that serve the interior
 the **CANALS** are the go streets
 from the **CANALS** branch cul-de-sac **DOCKS**
 the **DOCKS** serve as entrance halls to the buildings.⁶⁴

Kahn translated this poetic dialogue between nature (water) and machine into the modern city center of Tehran. His preliminary sketch of the architecture of the viaduct on the Abbas Abad site illustrated how an expressway and a rapid transit system crossed at the second level (see Figure 15). Other elements of his Philadelphia diagram also appeared in this design, such as the entrance gateway stations (harbors) in the outlying areas, the pedestrian promenades around the shopping arcades acting as “go streets,” and the building block entrances, although these elements were located on separate levels.

Kahn’s characterization of Iranian modernity by means of the architecture of movement and the agency of new

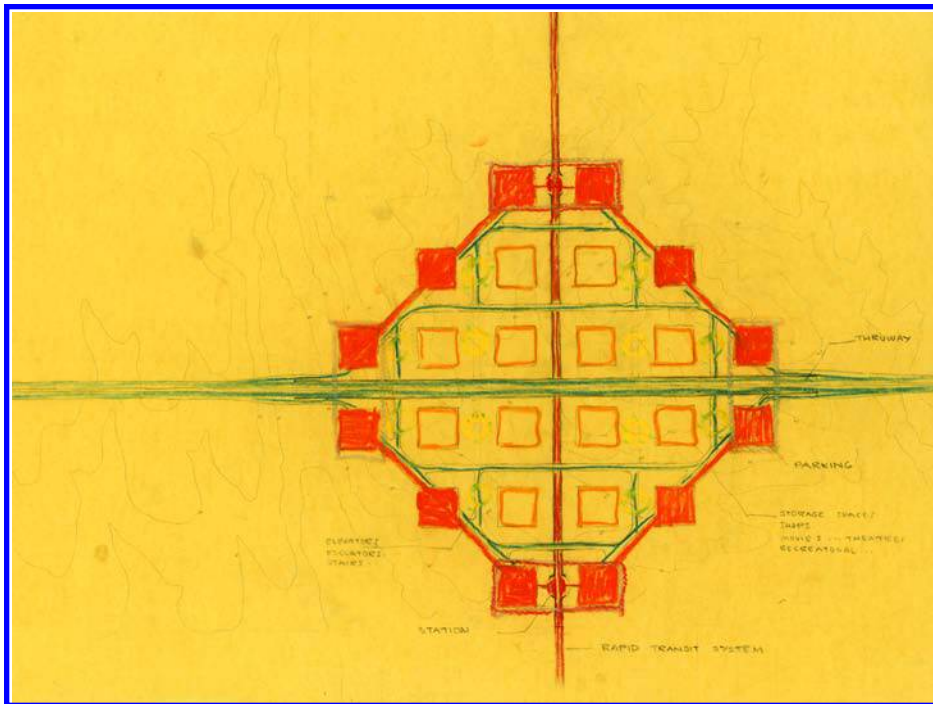


Figure 15 Louis Kahn, sketch for urban traffic, Abbas Abad Master Plan, Tehran, 1974 (Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission)

institutions in unlimited, nonhierarchical, and nonbinary space ran counter to his client’s vision of modernity. In a sense, Kahn’s proposal was a silent critique of the shah and his state architecture. Kahn provided his client with a radical design that challenged the shah’s modernization plan, a plan that depended on pseudodemocratic policies and the promise of an equality of means that was never realized.

A New Model of Publicness

Establishing a critique of both power and culture in a developing metropolitan site, Kahn’s master plan revealed a new schema of public space for Tehran. Kahn’s design differentiated the democratic model of publicness from a totalitarian approach that constructed, displayed, and petrified power and cultural history into a mute background space. It also challenged a universal, functional form of civic participation that excluded traditional and cultural heritage. The site of public life in Kahn’s scheme deconstructed the binaries of power and culture, and their forms of domination and resistance, to open up overlapping spaces of critique, exchange, and action.

In Kahn’s articulation of public space, “religious art” (which included the library, museum, opera house, national archive, and mosque) would not become an object of representation and thus be absorbed into the normative ideologies and politics of homogeneity, nor would the negation of authority become the explicit enterprise of a revolutionary art and culture. Rather, Kahn’s blueprint carried the polarity between a politically engaged culture and the culturalization of politics into the public sphere without dissolving the

opposition. Kahn’s characterization of democratic space, akin to Hannah Arendt’s idea of “active citizenship,” was informed by an indirect resistance to both opposing views; this resistance, in turn, allowed architecture and public space to serve as a critique of Iranian society and its cultural and political poles.⁶⁵ In this model, public space provided a forum for democratic discourse and became a manifestation of new life through spatial practices and social engagements.

By designing a space between the centers of culture and power, Kahn brought two contesting forces and their dialectic into the space of the public and the democratic institution of the city hall. The city hall was designed to make both culture and power public and subject to critique and scrutiny. In his lecture at the Isfahan congress, Kahn stated:

The City Hall that we have is a sign of misery where you pay taxes and where you constantly feel the disassociation between the people and the seat of government. The city should have in the new institutions the realm of the auditoria . . . the possibilities of the establishment of newer institutions . . . [that] stem from the multiple desires of expression.⁶⁶

In his final sketch for the Abbas Abad site, Kahn circled the institutions (library, museum, opera house, national archive, and mosque) around the city hall and labeled this area “The place of civic and national meeting in regard to the way of life” (see Figure 12).⁶⁷ By introducing the city hall as a “meeting place,” Kahn questioned the traditional order of the square as a place for ceremonial and military functions and created a place that united the public and the state. In his

annotated sketch, Kahn used phrases indicating the idea of such dialogue: “inter-nation symposiums” and “east = west.” Kahn had already applied this idea of reciprocity in his design for the unrealized Palace of Congresses and Biennale building in Venice (1968–74). A schematic section of the Venice congress hall appeared next to his final plan for Abbas Abad with the notes “Palazzo dei congressi” and “In Venice the Italian Biennale building was [the] entrance unit of the palazzo.”⁶⁸ The Palace of Congresses formed a bridge that spanned a canal at the Darsena Grande near the Arsenale, and the Biennale building was made of two sections divided by a square (see Figure 11).⁶⁹ In a similar manner, in the plan for Abbas Abad Kahn created a square that bound the cultural and civic domains by making the institutions act as urban entrances to the city hall.

From his plan for Dhaka to that for Tehran, Kahn’s evolving approach to public life and civic engagement expanded from a possibility to an actual site. Whereas the divisions between the assemblies of power and culture, public and private, were accentuated by the lake in Dhaka, the Tehran civic center and its city hall left this tension unresolved and concretized it. Here, the space of the public became for its subjects a means of seeking freedom (though not necessarily securing it) rather than a predefined, functional setting. For Kahn, the public sphere was where cultural and intellectual projects could be brought into association with praxis. Kahn did not seek the elision of ritual and traditional practices for the sake of a normative and rational modernity; rather, he sought to bring about new possibilities for individual creativity and self-formation in the face of monolithic structures of power.

Kahn’s plan for Tehran revealed the contradictions, tensions, and failures of the competing forms of modernity in Iran—the discourses of culture and power. His attempt to extricate Iranian modernization from its empty forms could be misread as simply another example of Western cultural domination, but his relationship with Iranian traditional culture went beyond the Orientalist or colonialist. His excavation of cultural and artistic themes in an Iranian context and in isomorphic relation to the tenets of architectural modernism employed his unique design strategy, a strategy that did not subsume the non-West into modernity. His plan demonstrates his silent practice of resisting the traditional, representational, and hierarchical structures of space. Later, after his death, his method was reversed in favor of a more conservative plan.⁷⁰ Kahn discovered local and creative motifs and ideas and transformed them into a modern form that he believed was suited to the Iranian way of life. By participating in this dialectic of modernity and local culture, Kahn opted for a new form of public space beyond a universalized modernism, a promise of a new reality, a new ethos of the intense globalism yet to come.

Notes

1. “Shah, Empress Don’t Give,” *International Set*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 20 Jan. 1974, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
2. The shah’s modernization plan, the so-called White Revolution, was introduced in the early 1960s and covered a multiplicity of socioeconomic reforms in education, health care, and landownership aimed at making Iran a global modern power. See Amin Saikal, “Iranian Foreign Policy, 1921–1979,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran: From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, vol. 7, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 426; James A. Bill, “Modernization and Reform from Above: The Case of Iran,” *Journal of Politics* 32, no. 1 (Feb. 1970), 19–40.
3. Following the 1973 oil crisis, Japan dispatched diplomats to the Middle East to strengthen its economic relations with the oil-rich nations of the region. Tange considered himself such a diplomat: “I think it is the duty of Japan, which already has industrialized know-how . . . to export design and techniques to the third world, and help them in sustaining man-made environments.” Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks* . . . (Cologne: Taschen, 2011), 590.
4. In an interview with Rem Koolhaas, Arata Isozaki reports: “I was asked by Tange to work between the two masters [Kahn and Tange] and put their ideas into one project. Tange and I worked on it first together, then we had a workshop with Louis Kahn in Japan, then Kahn sent us a scheme from the States two months before he passed away. It might have been Kahn’s last project. In the end, I had to finish it, which I somehow did. Then came the Iranian revolution. The Pahlavis fled the country and that was that.” *Ibid.*, 51.
5. Asadollah Alam, *The Shah and I: The Confidential Diary of Iran’s Royal Court, 1968–77*, ed. Alinaghi Alikhani (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008), 221.
6. The establishment of the Shiraz Arts Festival and its avant-garde theater in the autumn of 1967 was an outcome of the division of the Iranian courts. See Abbas Milani, *Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941–1979* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Robert Gluck, “The Shiraz Arts Festival: Western Avant-Garde Arts in 1970s Iran,” *Leonardo* 40, no. 1 (Feb. 2007), 20–28.
7. These hybrid linguistic and spatiotemporal representations involved audience members as actors (inspired by the Persian theatrical art spectacle known as *ta’ziyeh*) and made use of the historical landscape of the Iranian bazaar and caravansary or the palatial ruins of Persepolis. These projects included Wilson’s seven-day performance of *KA MOUNTAIN and GUARDenia Terrace* (1972) in the garden of Haft Tanan, situated at the foothills of Chehel Maqam mountains in Shiraz; Brook’s *Orghast* (1971) in Persepolis; and Xenakis’s *Polytope de Persepolis* (1971), along with his other works of musical land art *Nuits* (1968) and *Persephassa* (1969).
8. Milani, *Eminent Persians*, 1012. For a discussion of the cultural boycott of the festival, see Victor S. Navasky, “A Cultural Boycott: Artists in the Political Arena,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, 16 Aug. 1976.
9. Iranpour, an Iranian architect of Zoroastrian background, was the chief correspondent enabling communication among the queen, her office directors, and foreign architects. In 1969 he was appointed Alvar Aalto’s executive architect on the design of a museum for Shiraz. His office was responsible for sending information about the topography of chosen sites, aerial photographs, and climatic data to the offices of architects abroad as well as for arranging architectural visits to Iran’s historic landmarks.
10. The Special Bureau commissioned the Tehran City Theater, designed by Ali Sardar Afkhami; the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, designed by Kamran Diba; the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults, designed by Nader Ardalan; and the Negarestan Cultural Center, designed by Manouchehr Iranpour. Iranian architects and academicians Mehdi Kowsar and Behrouz Ahmadi were also among the

queen's advisers. In a note written in Tehran, Kahn mentioned Ardalan and Afkhami as young Iranian architects associated with the queen "who may be part of the team to evaluate specific parts of the project" of the city center. Louis Kahn, handwritten note, Abbas Abad Development Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Ardalan offered technical suggestions on Kahn's design for the Abbas Abad project and on Moshe Safdie's plan for Tehran Habitat, a model housing community for the members of the queen's cabinet. Moshe Safdie, Contract and Reports, Moshe Safdie Hypermedia Archive, McGill University, Montreal. Later in 1977, Ardalan's office, Mandala Collaborative, entered a joint venture with Wallace McHarg Roberts & Todd to design the Pardisan Environmental Park in Tehran. Pardisan Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

11. In the case of a new arts center in Shiraz designed by Xenakis, according to Sharon Kanach, the plan was "to make Xenakis in charge of everything, but to hire Iranians locally to execute his ideas. The purpose was two-fold: practical—Iannis Xenakis was not going to move to Iran; [and] political—[Empress] Fara Diba wanted to make sure the Shah wouldn't be accused of farming out all the interesting work to foreigners." Quoted in Robert J. Gluck, "The Shiraz Festival: Avant-Garde Arts Performance in 1970s Iran," in *International Computer Music Conference Proceedings* (Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office, University of Michigan Library, 2006), 219.

12. During a cost analysis for Safdie's luxury Habitat design in Tehran, Iranpour and Ardalan offered contradictory suggestions of this sort. While Iranpour advised Safdie "to play down the cost" (to justify the project in the preliminary phase) and "let them worry about the high costs as it hit later," Ardalan believed this approach was "very unprofessional and in the long run problematic," although it was a common practice in Iran at the time. Moshe Safdie, Contract and Reports, Moshe Safdie Hypermedia Archive, McGill University, Montreal.

13. Queen Farah Pahlavi, "Her Imperial Address on the Occasion of the First International Congress of Architects in Isfahan (23 Shahrivar 1349)," *Honar-va-Me'mari* [Art and Architecture] 6–7 (June–Nov. 1971).

14. Georges Candilis's response to this agenda was "[We] have not come here as professors to tell you . . . what you should do." Laleh Bakhtiar and Leila Farhad, eds., *The Interaction of Tradition and Technology: Report of the Proceedings of the First International Congress of Architects* (Tehran: 25th Shahrivar Press, 1970), 66.

15. For a study of Seyhoun's monumental approach to architecture, see Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture, and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (New York: Periscope, 2009).

16. Grigor, *Building Iran*, 195–96.

17. Bakhtiar and Farhad, *Interaction of Tradition and Technology*, 67–68.

18. The "war of styles" in Iran can be discerned in Seyhoun's borrowing from Aalto's vernacular modernism and from the formalism of the French Beaux-Arts; in Ardalan's adoption of Kahn's monumental, formal language and his historical sensitivity; in Kamran Diba's borrowing from Josep Lluís Sert's morphology and typology of Mediterranean dwellings; and in Mehdi Kowsar and Dariush Mirfendereski's turn to Aldo Rossi and Manfredo Tafuri and the Italian culture of social and urban critique. For a discussion of the war of styles with a focus on Seyhoun and Ardalan, see Grigor, *Building Iran*.

19. For critiques of Iranian modernism as a "self-Orientalizing" project, see Grigor, *Building Iran*; Talinn Grigor, "Preserving the Antique Modern: Persepolis '71," *Future Anterior* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2005), 22–29.

20. Louis Kahn, "Iranian Panel (Sep. 1970)," in *What Will Be Has Always Been: The Words of Louis I. Kahn*, ed. Richard Saul Wurman (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), 100.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Louis Kahn, "The Invisible City—International Design Conference at Aspen (June 1972)," in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 150.

23. Louis Kahn, "The Profession and Education Address to the International Congress of Architects (Sep. 1970)," in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 93–94.

24. Louis Kahn, "Louis Kahn," "interview" by Carlos Brillembourg, *BOMB* 40 (Summer 1992), <http://bombmagazine.org/article/1548/louis-kahn> (accessed 2 June 2015). Brillembourg pieced this "interview" together from Kahn's writings eighteen years after the architect's death.

25. Louis Kahn, "*Silence and Light*—Address to Students at ETH Zurich (Jan. 1969)," in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 55.

26. Louis Kahn, "Silence," *VIA Magazine* 1 (1968), 88–89, reprinted in Louis I. Kahn, *Louis I. Kahn: Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, ed. Alessandra Latour (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), 232–33. Other versions of this story appear in Louis I. Kahn, "Address by Louis I. Kahn," *Boston Society of Architects Journal* 1 (1967), 7–20; and Louis Kahn, "Space and Inspirations," *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* 142 (1969), 13–16.

27. Louis Kahn, "Conversation with Karl Linn (1965)," in *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts*, ed. Robert C. Twombly (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 196.

28. Louis Kahn, "A Conversation with Jamine Mehta," in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 219.

29. Nader Ardalan, interview by author, 24 July 2010, Boston.

30. In 1953, a military coup helped the shah regain his lost throne; Ayub Khan, Kahn's client in the Pakistan National Assembly project, also rose to power through a coup in 1958. As Sarah Goldhagen shows, Kahn was aware of Ayub Khan's undemocratic practices before the election. The Louis I. Kahn Collection contains documents on the political life of Pakistan and accounts of the shah's White Revolution in Iran. Abbas Abad Development Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001), 166, 259, 260.

31. Alireza Dehesh, "Developmental Instability in Iran: Its Impact on Housing since 1962," *Cities* 11, no. 6 (1994), 409–24.

32. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).

33. David Holden, "A Napoleonic Vision of Iran as a New Japan: Shah of Shahs, Shah of Dreams," *New York Times*, 26 May 1974.

34. Aziz Farmanfarmaian, a graduate of École des Beaux-Arts, established the first consultant architecture firm in Iran. Among the many architectural projects that Farmanfarmaian designed during the three decades prior to the 1979 revolution were the Azadi Sports Compound (1974), the Ministry of Agriculture (1976), palace designs for the Pahlavi family, and the Tehran Carpet Museum (1978), as well as numerous residential and corporate office buildings. He was also involved in the preparation of the Tehran Comprehensive Plan and in the planning of new towns in Iran. Aziz Farmanfarmaian, "Interview with Aziz Farmanfarmaian," *Shahr* 28 (2004), 21.

35. Ali Madani-Pour, *Tehran: The Making of a Metropolis* (New York: John Wiley, 1998); Ali Madani-Pour, "The Limits of Scientific Planning: Doxiadis and the Tehran Action Plan," *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 4 (Oct. 2010), 485–504.

36. For a discussion of the socioeconomic divide and the displacement of the rural population that gave rise to the Iranian urban revolt in the late 1970s, see Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Nader Ardalan, "Architecture, VIII. Pahlavi, after World War II," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 1, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Vahid Vahdat Zad, "Spatial Discrimination in Tehran's Modern Urban Planning 1906–1979," *Journal of Planning History* 12, no. 1 (Feb. 2013), 49–62.

37. Sanjoy Mazumdar, "Autocratic Control and Urban Design: The Case of Tehran, Iran," *Journal of Urban Design* 5, no. 3 (2000), 317–38.

38. Kahn's sketch of Abbas Abad included the phrase "The way of life," followed immediately by "White Revolution" (in parentheses). Heinz

- Ronner and Sharad Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn: Complete Work, 1935–1974*, 2nd ed. (Basel: Birkhauser, 1994), 420.
39. Kahn, “Invisible City,” in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 156.
40. Louis Kahn, “An Interview with *VIA Magazine*,” in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 141.
41. Louis Kahn, “In the L.I.K. Studios,” in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 83.
42. Louis I. Kahn, *The Notebooks and Drawings of Louis I. Kahn*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard Saul Wurman and Eugene Feldman (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1973), 74.
43. Louis Kahn to Farah Pahlavi, 13 Nov. 1973, Louis Kahn Correspondence, Abbas Abad Development Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
44. Louis Kahn, “I Love Beginnings,” in *Louis I. Kahn: Writings, Lectures, Interviews*, 285.
45. In the archives on Kahn’s Abbas Abad project, there is an article on Suhrawardi’s philosophy of light, translated by Bakhtiar and edited by Kahn. Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
46. Bakhtiar and Farhad, *Interaction of Tradition and Technology*, 152.
47. Victor Gruen Associates and Aziz Farmanfarmaian, *Comprehensive Plan for Tebran: Phase I* (Tehran, 1968), 220.
48. The program was later expanded to include a stadium, a hotel, a clinic, and an array of residential high-rises. Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
49. At this stage Kahn was studying the site plan of Persepolis, the urban complex of Isfahan, Piazza San Pietro, and Piazza San Marco, drawings of which are among Kahn’s documents related to the Abbas Abad project. Abbas Abad Development Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
50. During their conversations about the Abbas Abad project, Kahn asked Ardalan to visit and study Egypt’s Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens. Kahn had appointed Ardalan to work with his office on this project.
51. Ronner and Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn*, 420.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*, 204.
54. Louis I. Kahn, “The New Art of Urban Design: Are We Equipped? (1960),” in *Louis Kahn: Essential Texts*, 79.
55. Louis Kahn, “Interview with Louis Kahn,” *Honar-va-Me’mari* [Art and Architecture] 8 (Jan./Feb. 1971), 66–67.
56. In a similar fashion, in the Naqsh-e Jahan complex in Isfahan, the governmental palaces are separated from the public domain by the Palace of Ali Qapu, which functioned as a reception house and chancellery.
57. Ronner and Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn*, 420.
58. *Ibid.*, 209. Kahn wrote this statement regarding his design for the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad.
59. Persepolis site plan, Abbas Abad Development Project, Louis I. Kahn Collection, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
60. Quoted in Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn’s Situated Modernism*, 174. Kahn mentioned chess in the context of his design of the master plan for Dhaka.
61. Kahn, *The Notebooks and Drawings of Louis I. Kahn*, 73.
62. Ronner and Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn*, 33.
63. *Ibid.*, 34.
64. This textual diagram renders the architecture of the viaduct. Louis Kahn, “Toward a Plan for Midtown Philadelphia,” *Perspecta* 2 (1953), 11.
65. Sarah Ksiazek reports that “Hannah Arendt and Louis Kahn were inducted into the National Institute of Arts and Letters at the same ceremony in 1963.” See Sarah Ksiazek, “Architectural Culture in the Fifties: Louis Kahn and the National Assembly Complex in Dhaka,” *JSAH* 52, no. 4 (Dec. 1993), 416–35. Alan Colquhoun indicates that Arendt’s political philosophy finds an echo in Kahn’s approach to the architecture of public space. Alan Colquhoun, *Modern Architecture* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002), 248.
66. Kahn, “Profession and Education Address,” in *What Will Be Has Always Been*, 92.
67. Ronner and Jhaveri, *Louis I. Kahn*, 420.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*, 387, 391.
70. Shortly after Kahn’s sudden death in March 1974, the city center project came directly under the control of the shah and Tehran’s mayor, Gholam Reza Nikpay. Nikpay, who had begun a campaign against Kahn’s design prior to his death, persuaded the shah to give the commission of the Abbas Abad urban project to a British consultancy firm, Llewelyn-Davies International, under the cover of an invited competition. The Abbas Abad development plan changed designers, identity, and character and adopted a new name: the Shahestan Pahlavi (City of the Pahlavi Shah). It too was never realized.