

A research about the effect of traditional arts in environment on national identity protection (Case study: Drawing room)

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Abstract

Inattention to different aspects of human needs will have undesirable effects on person and society. Attention to these needs and presenting a solution for answering it help achieving a desirable society and country. One of these matters is presence of national identity in house architecture especially internal designing of drawing room which has various furniture and decoration. This is the question: What is the role of traditional arts on drawing room identification? For answering this question we used library-based and qualitative research methods and case study. As attention to national identity is necessary for consistency of a country, its presence at home and family is important as well.

Drawing room in Iranian traditional houses, because of importance of guest, has been one of the most beautiful parts of house. In Qajar era, before tendency toward west, these rooms had completely Iranian identity using various traditional arts. Comparing drawing room of this era with its contemporary Europe showed although they had definite identity, architecture of drawing room and even decoration of two places are different because of cultural difference; but lack of identity of drawing rooms in comparison with current Iranian drawing rooms is worth mentioning.

If those who are in charge of country in their actions and people in their thoughts pay attention to national identity in environment, they will help a lot to protection of national unity and independence of country.

Key Words: National identity, Environment, Traditional arts, Architecture of Qajar era, Drawing room.

Introduction

Inattention to different aspects of human needs in huge social planning, regarding quick changes of society, politics, opinions, technology, etc can have unrepairable harms on person and society. Environment has essential effects on all social aspects such as culture and human; therefore it is necessary to pay attention to all elements of the world such as humane activities, because human and his environment have mutual relationship. Berlind says: "We as human have our psychological, physical, cultural, personal and social features but we are influenced a lot by our environment like a container which has its content's form. In fact environment is the container and our feeling and behavior are contents." (Shahcheraghi and Bandarabadi, 2015, p.30)

One section of the environment is the houses we have lived in them and spend some parts of our life with our family. Therefore, environment and specially human's environment are necessary and can lead a lot of his life positive chances such as convenience, improvement, safety, right thought. But unfortunately nowadays world is deprived from this possible chance. Human had sense of belonging to the world before modern era, but today he does not feel being and interfere because of depositing everything even building his house to other experts.

Many times programmers and planners of our environment are subdued by administrative rules or economical calculations; and we prefer to follow the current public life style and ignore our

real intention and even regard the purpose of designing and decoration of our house as manifestation and luxurious show. "Nowadays taste in many cases is influenced by economic and social issues and public media. Capitalism economics and massive propaganda are one of the most important factors of making public taste. They teach people what elegant or inelegant is. Beauty is not the sense that nature has taught us and be able to specify its beauty essence as a blind instinct. This sense needs teaching, and the taught beauty sense is called taste. Therefore; taste is the result of teaching. This teaching happens from birth in family and then in society." Shahcheraghi and Bandarabadi, 2015, p.246) on the other hands as we know nearly all of the human behaviors in adulthood are influenced by past experiences especially first years of his life. So, "as ruling principles of family concept affects architecture, architecture affects consistence or breakout of cultural values of family" (Naghizade, 2012, p.39).

Desirable architecture of a house is not made just by cold and lifeless appearance and volume; the architecture can create the most beautiful manifestation and use the best material and simultaneously regard the interested points and needs of family and society. If human can't have a good relationship with the environment he undoubtedly is doomed to desperation; and he will be subdued in a world that not only does not lead him toward calmness and improvement, but also will deprive his interest from presenting in that place.

Therefore investigation and presentation a solution for removing each of these needs will help in achieving a desirable environment and society. One of the issues, that although it has been regarded during the past decades it is still remained as a lamentable problem, is some buildings in Iran that are unidentified in architecture and internal decoration, and this issue is seen more in drawing room more than other parts of houses.

For answering to the fore mentioned question we needed data gathering through epistle sources and also field study of buildings in Qajar era. Also using library-based and qualitative research methods and case-study we could answer the research questions.

This is the question: What is the role of traditional arts in giving identity to environment?

For achieving the answer we need to reply other questions as well such as:

- What does identity mean? And what are features of national identity?
- Which arts have been used in architecture and internal decoration of Iranian houses in the past?
- What is the place of drawing room in the culture and traditional architecture of Iran?
- What is the difference between drawing room of early Qajar era and its late and its contemporary Europe?

For answering these questions, achieving elevation for Iranian society, finding the meaning and importance of identity and features of Iranian identity and history of architecture and its affecting factors we used qualitative and library-based research methods and field-study of architecture and internal designing of drawing rooms of the past and present time in Iran and abroad.

What are traditional arts?

Traditional arts are a collection of authentic, native and popular arts of every country that have deep and firm roots in opinions, beliefs, ceremonies, habits, customs and spiritual culture of society. Traditional arts of Iran include a group of the oldest arts of Iran such as traditional architecture, handicrafts, handwriting and calligraphy, classical music etc. and are objective manifestation of genuine Iranian culture and art.

Three historical sections effective on Iran architecture from localization to westernization

Iran architectural eras can be divided into three main periods based on fundamental political and cultural changes of governments that lead identity-based changes. "In the first period, the Achaemenian ruled in Iran and presented their specific architecture. They localized architecture namely they adjusted other countries' architecture and art with Iran's and opened scientific and artistic borders for entering of valuable thoughts and experiences of other countries to Iran.

The second period started after Islam's entrance to Iran and continued by inspiring a new spirit into the Sassanid's architecture. The Sassanids changed gradually. In fact, architectures tried to make an architecture that is consistent with current thoughts of that society by using their experiences. The mosques having Shabestan are from among them.

The last period is related to the late Qajar and early Pahlavi that its negative effects are seen till now. In Qajar period when western countries improved a lot, Iran experienced one of its darkest historical period. There was a hidden weakness in society because of an extreme captivation toward West. This was caused by lack of self-confidence of rulers, especially after traveling to Europe and seeing the difference between their welfare level and improvement and Iran's. This weakness spreaded in whole society (Figure 1).



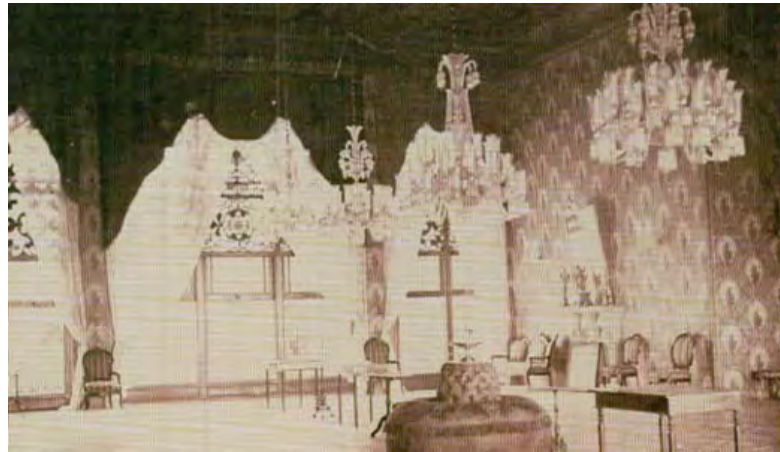
Figure 1: Inside of one hall of Golestan palace, before extreme inclination to west, Qajar era, Tehran, Nearly all of decorations and internal design of the hall is Iranian. Source: Zoka, Yahya and Mohammad Hasan Semsar, 1990, p.95) In this period Iran architecture changed so that it had not happened during the past several years.

There was something being created that was called chaos and anarchy. Separating from the past architectural culture may be caused by internal weakness of that period's society; architects were parts of it as well." (Memariyan, 2010: 38-60)

"Studies about the structure of guest's place in Qajar houses (ancient or recent) show that planning and forming this place has not been completely based on tradition and its architecture in different eras has been changed a lot in different periods of building, development and growth so that finally it has caused destruction of tradition of Iranian native architecture; the main reason of these changes is nothing except ever-increasing leak of foreign cultural elements in the Iranian's life (Kateb, 2005, p.194). Even this issue has caused a meaningful commotion and disunity in usable patterns for decoration this period buildings. For example "Images of Karel Marx, Napoleon, Zahak,

Indian old woman and prophets are seen in tiling patterns of the walls of Ziyai's house that was related to Qajar era in Shiraz" (Oji, 1995, p.7).

From late years of this era "most of the people replaced wooden windows with iron ones and used their beautiful wooden windows as firewood of fireplace and installed iron windows instead of them because these ones had more security and assurance, but iron windows never could fulfill wooden ones' beauty, in addition they caused absorption of cold in winter and warmth in summer." (Figure 2)



**Figure 2: Drawing room of Sahebgharaniye palace, late Qajar era, Tehran, Most of decorations (from iron window and its curtain and furniture and wallpaper) is European.
Source: Semsar and Sarabiyan, 2011, p.7)**

Gradually and by rising of modern architecture life, the lost valuable aspects of it, such as society, culture and native experiences that were signs of national identity or society were identified. The answer of all of these issues was found in traditional architecture.

Identity and its importance

Identity in fact is "the process of consciously answering of a person to some questions about himself such as who he is, where he has been, what he is, and to what tribe, race or nation is belonged, what his primary and main origin is, and what his role is in the world's civilization" (Zahed, 2005, p.131). There are three identity levels. The lowest level is individual identity, after it is social one, and the highest is national.

Identity of a nation has a temporal nature. Rajai says: Identity is a dynamic framework that suggests a form of knowledge about oneself, society, culture, history and future. This frame work is dynamic, alive and changing (Rajai, 2003, p.14).

We can mention some positive effects of identity on a nation or person based on its meaning and features as follows:

1. Identity is a concept that a person or a group can find a place in the social world that he belongs. This feeling is more meaningful about collective identity because is based on some cultural elements and principles such as memories, values, symbols, myths and traditions which are more necessary and stable.
2. Identity causes respect and self-esteem of its members.
3. Identity opens a panorama to the world that the world and person's place is meaningfully more perceived and interpreted in it.

4. Identity is a sign that leads its keepers to know themselves as a real existence and a source of thoughts and an origin of acts like an effective social agent (Karimi, 2007, pp. 35-37).

Based on what was said, identity and belonging to it not only is necessary for stabilization and persistence of a country or society, but also is essential for the smallest unit of society that is family and the house they are living in it.

Characteristics of the Iranian's identity

Generally "the elements of Iranian identity are stable and have played an essential role in its territory and political persistence...but some of Iranian national identity such as Persian language are themselves complete form of Iranian ancient languages so, they are among stable elements of Iranian national identity.

The elements of Iranian national identity based on persistence and importance are: Iran history, territory and geography, political heritage and government constitution, cultural heritage of Iran, society and people of Iran, religion and spiritual heritage of Iran (Ahmadi, 2003, p.15).

Relation of house and its residents with identity

Researchers say: "The house, before having a structural skeleton, is a multidimensional function constitution affected by society, culture, religious custom, economics and environmental conditions. As building a house is a cultural issue, its form and organization is affected by the culture that house is its product. Local or cultural tradition has straight relationship with physical forms of every culture and in other words they are correlated" (Memariyan, 2010, p. 4).

The houses of a society that has monotheism religion, people with ancient culture, and lofty history should be manifestation of these values and "family as the fundamental unit of society is an element that its effect on architecture and city is noticeable because of the specific features that Iranian culture provides it. As principles of family affect architecture, architecture has an essential effect on consistence or breakup of cultural principles and values related to family" (Naghizade, 2012, pp.39-40). So it is necessary to pay attention to building method, planning and decoration of family we live in; because "his national identity which is bases of culture, religion and human's morality is being made during the first years of his life. The first step of cultural, identity, national training is made in the family" (Rouhhalamini, 2000, p. 54).

As people are affected by their houses, choosing or living in houses which do not have identity values means society, forcibly or freely, does not have access to all or some parts of history, culture, art, custom, religion or other acceptable values of its country. If house is deprived of Iranian identity, the family living and the children growing in it will gradually be far from their Iranian identity and country and society.

Guest and his place in ancient Iran's houses

There is a sentence that Iranian people use a lot: Guest is God's friend. This sentence is derived from traditions (Ahadith) narrated by Prophet and the Fourteen Innocent Ones about honor and importance of guest. For example, prophet says: everything has alms (Zakat) and alms of a house is guest's drawing room" (Anari and Abbaszade, 1994:96)

There are some orders, in addition to traditions, about esteem and accommodation of a guest; such as honor of guest, unasked, enough and suitable accommodation of guest, eating with guest, avoiding employing guest, not getting guest what he does not like, and convoy of guest. There are two other advices in addition to these: firstly convenience of host, and secondly appropriate honor of guest (Hossen, 2012, pp.89-100).

According to this we can see one case of conformity of architecture of drawing room of Iran traditional houses with Islamic culture, because the best and the most beautiful part of house is

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dedicated to this room. Even in some houses that possessor had less poverty they built a room inside or outside of houses which was called Mazif or an upstairs which was called Farvar and acted as guest's room in top of valley. "Generally in Iranian houses some issues such as private frontage beside the honor of guest are noticed" (Memariyan, 2010, pp.4-8)

Drawing room in big houses in Qajar era

In big houses of Qajar era there were some big rooms named hall, alcove, five or seven-doors and Sash that most of their uses are community or accommodation of guest. Choosing type of room depends on time and direction of sun glow, number and importance of guests. Big houses of Qajar era are made from different parts like yard, patio, three-doors, five or seven-doors, Sash, platform, upstairs, earring, seat part, wardrobe, hall and parlour. We briefly explain some uses of big rooms of these houses:

Hall (Parlour): It was used in public and religious ceremony. Hall was generally a place with very beautiful decoration that was eye-catching beside simple rooms of traditional house (Kateb, 2005, p.126). Sometimes there was an indentation in them that was a little higher than the ground. It was called alcove and great guest or the eldest of family sat in it (Memariyan, 2010, p.147). As an example we can refer to a house located in quarter of Oudalijan which has alcove in its central hall. This hall was for formal meeting or community of men. In both sides of this salon, there are two smaller houses that are for informal communities or less important guests. The order of these rooms is to make the access to interior part (living place of residents) easy. The decoration of this part shows that undoubtedly alcove is the place of the most respectable person in the house (Kateb, 2005). (Figure, 3)



Figure 3. Alcove of Oudalijan house, Qajar era, Tehran, Using windows decorated with slating and colorful glasses upside, paster-moulding with work with mirror and soft furniture, rug and tray and tray for accommodation on it) (Source, Kateb, 2005)

Sash (formal room): This room, which its name is from its Sash windows, was used for special ceremony, important community and formal parties in spring, autumn and winter. "Sash is a reticulated window that goes up instead of swing on trigger and is located in its container" (Amrai, 2004, p.29). (Image 4)



Figure 4. Sash windows in the house of Zinatolmolk, Qajar era, Shiraz, upside of windows is knurled with colorful glasses and ceiling is decorated with mirror (Source: Author)

Five-doors (or Seven-doors): It is a room for accommodation and community room in spring, autumn and specially winter and has five windows. Windows open by swinging on trigger (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Outside of five-door room of Borojerdiha house, Kashan, Two doors in the right and left belong to the corridor and each window has two doors (Source: Author)

Traditional arts used in accommodation room in Qajar era

Usually the doors of big drawing rooms, walls, ceiling and floor was decorated by beautiful and valuable decoration such as plaster-molding, decoration with mirror, painting on plaster, Openly accessible at <http://www.european-science.com>

painting or woodcarving on wood, vaulted and beautiful seven-color tile. Also, different forms of decoration were used in stacks, fireplace, plinth, ceiling and floor. Knurl windows and slating with colorful glasses and mosaic, woodcarving and inlaid work on the doors were used for more beautifying of rooms. Usually the used patterns included natural landscapes, flower and bird, geometric patterns, arabesque, flora, fauna, or humane designs which had ancient antecedent (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Hall of Borojerdiha house, decorated with Slated windows and colourful glasses and plaster-moulding with painting and mirror and vaulted, Qajar era, Kashan (Source: Author)

Using different kinds of Iranian handicrafts such as elaborate rugs, velvet and brocade or embroidery curtains, cushions and sleeping pads, backed or unbacked seats, table, lamp and chandelier, kinds of tray and dishes for accommodation or putting on niche which were full of artistic patterns, tradition and Iranian culture, with decoration of doors, windows, walls provided these houses and their internal architecture with a completely Iranian identity (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Inside of a room of palace, Qajar era, Tehran, decorations include plaster-moulding of ceiling and wall's edge, numerous vaulted niches, decorated fireplace, curtain, rug, soft furniture, and slated window (Source, Zoka, Yahy and Mohammad Hasan Semsar, 1990, p.215)

Identity of Europe drawing room and its comparison with Iran

In this part for specifying identity condition of architecture of other parts of the world we investigate its condition in Europe contemporary with Qajar era.

By advent of bourgeois class in Europe, a little before Qajar era, those who were making a social identity for themselves and then introducing to society made some parts of their house for accommodation of guest because they wanted to stabilize their social roles, manifest according their taste, and not appear in an inappropriate condition in front of others. For example drawing room of women, which was dedicated to accommodation of special guests of housewife, was decorated with her private furniture, appliances and properties; and drawing room of men was armed with man's private things.

Kaufman analogizes Anglo-Saxon culture of guest's presentation in a bourgeois house as a play scene where it is necessary for both guest and host to play their roles appropriately. He says: "intrusive presentation of a guest means the scene is not prepared for play that causes anxiety. The children are kept far from this scene because they do not know play's rules" (Anari and Abbaszade, 1994, p.98).



Figure 8. An example of a bourgeois house (1865), England, according to plan, this house has special rooms for guests of different sex and class. This continued in second floor as well such as dining room, men and women drawing room, waiting room, library having accommodation function, and gallery (Source: Millerlane, 2007, p.193)

If we compare two views about guest and his place in Europe culture and Iranian culture of Qajar era, we will get that in Qajar era's architecture and generally in traditional architecture of Iran, in contrary with European one that is based on separate showing of house man and woman's private properties, there is no separation of drawing room of men and women. Also there is no separation of places in Iranian architecture as there are in modern European architecture such as dedication of a room as waiting room before guest's entrance to drawing room; instead the guest is straightly led to drawing room where community, talking, eating is done and even there are sleeping commodities of guest. On the other hand, the reason of separation of drawing rooms of men and women in Europe was providing a place for easy and obvious showing their paraphernalia and properties to guests. But in Iran there has never been a separation based on the sex, instead if the guest was alien or not intimate, a place separate from other members of family was dedicated to him for his convenience. If the number of guests was high and included not intimate men and women, a room was dedicated to women and one to men, without preference of one from the other and without difference of decoration or accessories, for providing guests' convenience. Also, there were some decoration

elements in these rooms; although some of them were luxurious they were not special and privatized for house man or woman as it was so in Europe. They were general artistic elements such as knurling and slating windows, mosaic and woodcarving of doors, vaulted, plaster-moulding, decoration with mirror and painting ceiling and walls, handicrafts like rug, lamp and beautiful dishes (Anari and Abbaszade, 1994) (Figure 8).

Drawing rooms of Iran in the present time

In the first looking at drawing rooms of Iran we get the desire of all house owners to manifest their drawing room beautiful in the eye of guests. If we compare present and past drawing rooms we will get that not only there are some traditional decorations or handicrafts in them, but also there are some common points. Firstly, convenience of guest and host is not prior as past; there is no priority in selection of comfortable furniture instead of luxurious one and complete separation of guest's place from other parts of the house like kitchen and other rooms, or separation of men and women because of convenience or religious affairs.

On the other hand in contrary to the past, the decoration of drawing room, except rug which fortunately has not had any rival till now and is used in decoration of all countries, mostly there is no sign of nationality, culture and Iranian art; generally saying: most of drawing rooms of Iran are without identity and fashion-follower. Unfortunately, as mentioned before this internal design method is common among all people and society like a contagious disease from late Qajar era by rising of westernization. It is continuous because of different reasons such as institutionalized inferior complex, desire to luxury, or being affected by propaganda or media images. Decoration of drawing room with kinds of luxurious goods that do not have Iranian identity instead of using traditional and durable decoration of past such as sash windows, woodcarving or mosaic of door and furniture, decoration with mirror, plasterwork and tiling is used (Figure 9).



Figure 9. An example of drawing room in Iran (Source: <http://www.folder98.irgallerypicsdekorimg60.jpg>)

Chances and challenges of identity to environment of Iran

As for doing every change and practical measure there is a need of getting informed of obstacles and chances that are forward, we infer to limiter or helper factors for officials of

education, culture, economics and other programmers and performers in macro level, and internal planners in micro level for providing identity to environment specifically through traditional arts.

- Chances

1. New wave of attention to precedents' the found and the have, especially in Iran, productive and valuable treasure of traditional arts and distinguished houses with traditional architecture, revival of national pride, self-confidence and inclination to the country's independence, ancient culture and valuable traditions, new generation of architectures, internal architectures and talented and creative decorators in Iran, revival and attention to Iranian handicrafts according to contemporary tastes, training and appearance of new and mighty generation of artists of traditional arts and handicrafts.

- Challenges

Identity is time-subordinate that causes lack of complete clarity of Iranian national identity, lack of clarity and an exact definition of originality in art and artistic work, different inclination of families in following different features of identity such as religion, different opinions and tastes among various areas and people, different tastes of three generations, limitation of furniture according to Iranian tradition and art, small space of many houses, stylish and cultural invasion, inclination for buying foreign goods, lack of self-confidence and institutionalizes inferiority complex among most of the Iranian, low number of erudite artists of traditional arts related to interior decoration of the building, not updating of internal design and not consistency with Iranian identity and young generation's taste, low information of the officials and planners of country and people about importance of development of traditional arts in the environment, unlimited entrance of various luxurious goods to the country, and harmful propaganda bombardment of all media.

Conclusion

According to the mentioned points it was shown that there is a mutual relation between these two groups of factors which each of them affects and is affected by the other including humane factors such as people, artists of handicrafts and traditional arts, architectures and internal designers, macro-planners and officials of the country; and environment having Iranian national identity. If one can pass the challenges and use the chances, its result is helping national unity and independence of the country (Figure 10).

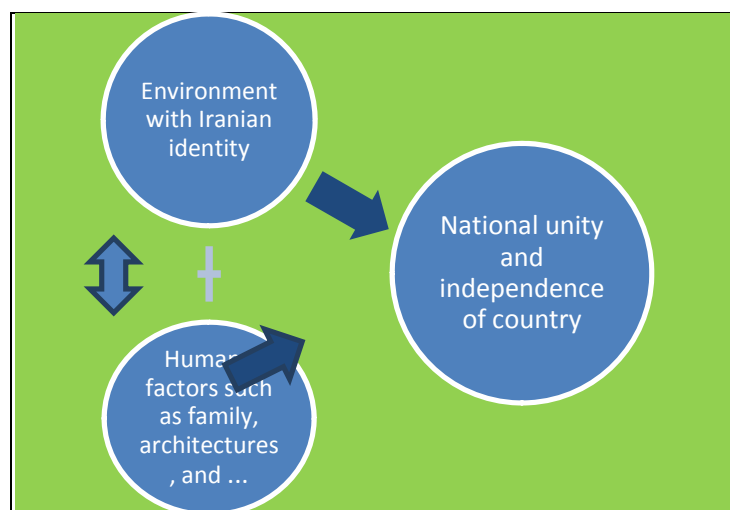


Figure 10. The relation between two factors

If the officials of the country attempt in cultural planning and issued law about urban construction to return Iranian identity to environment, and on the other hand people notice its importance and rely on Iranian productions and fashion and incline to environment and especially drawing room which has Iranian identity, internal architectures and decorators will get complete knowledge, beside construction skill, of Iranian identity, and will design the building which has Iranian identity and is according to the customer's updated taste.

This means our children will rise in an Iranian national identity environment; so they will have more interest and responsibility toward their country and this is a guaranty for protection of national unity and country.

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