

Perspective of Iranian-Islamic Identity through art Case Study: Seven Historical Monuments (Kouzeh HaftBana)

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ABSTRACT

the purpose of this paper is the study of national identity in terms of the coherence and unity of the nation, with the view of Amartya Sen on Solitaries of identity. First; it is proposed some examples in Iran history with the theory of solitary and evaluated with critically approach. Then the article was introduced this artwork through the capabilities of cohesion and unity of the artwork and seven historical Monuments (Kouzeh HaftBana), in the context of national and religious Iran identity. This study is used Case study methods, content analysis, and libraries. Finally, the article supports this idea that don't reduces the Islamic identity of Iran as a reduction to one aspect of the "Islamic" and "Iranian" and do as much as possible attention to the identity of the two roots together and interact with each other as not to damage the unity of the country.

Key words: National identity, Nation, Solitarist of identity, Seven historical Monuments (Kouzeh HaftBana), The Iranian-Islamic identity.

INTRODUCTION

Often it seems that art is associated with changes in social experience. We see this type of relationship between art and social developments in all cases of evolution. Such as: in case that Society was replaced by former society as a result of war or the territorial. When Evolution is civil and political, the dynamics of the society, in agreement with the community, create a change in the mode of economic production. And when a traditional society evolves and finds him in a new technological environment (Dvvyynyv, 2005). Apparently, Art is born from an artist character. But to understand the art must refer to the society. Because as we know, everyone's character is made from social environment in which it is grown. As society's values, beliefs, norms and worldview can influence on art and artists, art also

impact on society and can make a change in the form of Artistic norms and values and create new value. Artists Communicate with the society by a symbol that exist in art. This symbol represents the society and recounts the identities of individuals and society. Due to the reflexivity of current society's function iterate identity of individuals and society. From this perspective, dealing with the symbols of the art in different historical periods can give a good knowledge about the cycle of identity. And also, gives us the ability to take a better action against these courses, and make an influence. Identity is something that every person wants to answers. Identity is a Definition that a person explains about him or her, and answer to questions like who I am or what I am. It is considered a sense of national identity and commitment of community members from the collective identity. A nation will accept only one

national identity that a complex set of relationships gives way to a simple identity. "We can say as a conclusion that national identity, meaning-creation based on a set of interlocking feature of cultural, historical, political and geographical. People feel the sense of responsibility, commitment and loyalty which in the context of membership in a political community" (Zuhairi, 2005). Today, the national identity is at risk through the technological revolution and the communications media. And making identity has become matter of Individual choice. Nations must try to protect themselves identity by providing the capabilities of their identity in the world. In this regard, nations must provide images of their identity, historical, cultural, ethnic and geographic. In order, preserve national unity and solidarity. Because of the challenges, face in our modern world, the idea of a socially acceptable is very important. The purpose of this article is rejected one-way view of process identity by seven historical Monuments through showing the unifying feature of it.

It seems that Art has broad capabilities in the field of making identity of society members Because of the wide range of cultural and social. This ability doesn't regard from social researchers. And some Researches have done in this field. (Marshall, 2007) paper investigates the use of imagination to create cultural communication and research on cultural identity through art production. Form his point of view; this communication can be full of Synergistic opportunities that enable artists to create a new world of communications that reflects the emotional, spiritual, mental and physical, cultural identity. Also (Halvrsvn, 2012) has shown how the arts can have a positive effect on development of adolescent identity in a study. In his study, he focuses on a group of young people who work in theater, film and fiction. Halverson concluded in his research that the process of art's dramaturgical make some potentials to encourage young people for creating positive identity.in another article, (Allison *et al.*, 2013) study the role of the visual arts in the early decades of the fledgling United States of America in North America. They argue that through art established the foundation national identity and An American civil religion of secular. Art is also establishing the necessary identity, civil religion and narrative national that help the United States of America for keeping its republic in formative years.

In Iran (Mahmoudi *et al.*, 2009) examine the role of the three components of identity, religion, myth and saga of decorative motifs of religious buildings in the development of indigenous identity. The results of the three components have important role in the religious and social function in the development of Iranian identity and have preserved and strengthened the unity of the people. Also, (Mahdavinejad *et al.*, 2010) have analyzed Works of architecture design after the victory of the Islamic Revolution In a study. They have concluded that the orientations of the revitalization measures can be one of the most important trends in contemporary architecture of Iran, Which tend to restore the Iranian-Islamic identity is one of the most important goals of this process that have implemented with emphasis on methods and techniques of architectural design. Results of research show the ability of identity of art. Art has the ability not only in theory but also in practice to group identity in different societies. And the good news to all the different arts can be used to determine the identity of the community. And it gives hope to everyone that different arts can be used to determine the identity of the society.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Amartya Sen is as one the leading theorists of human development approach in the entire world. His theory in this approach named "Development as Freedom". In this theory, he comes up with this idea that development can be made possible through free choices of people in society. These freedoms which emerge through democracy can develop individual's choices; and considering the agent role of human in this approach lead to increase the capabilities of human followed by removing choice limitations by equal opportunities, political and social equitable distribution and having access to job opportunities and financial resources in every field lead to developments in all dimensions (Sen, 1999). Because of Sen's emphasize on freedom, he addresses to conditions of greater achieving to freedom in his other publications. For this purpose, he raises theory of Solitary of identity. Because of Sen's pluralist attitude, he seeks to provide further possibilities of individual freedom for their self-definition through tolerant attitude among different identities with his theory of Solitary of identity. In this way, range of people choices develop and all

of them play better their agent role in development and building of society with respect to nurturing their capabilities through development of individual's ranges of choice. In this article, Sen's theory of solitary was used for analyzing unifying capabilities of Kouzeh Haftbana. Indeed, in his theory of solitary Amartya Sen raises with this idea that when focusing on one of the several aspects of human identities and different societies it may lead to "The violence of solitarist identity can have a tremendously varying reach. Indeed, the obsession with religions and so-called civilizations has been so strong in contemporary global politics that there is a tendency to forget how other lines of identity divisions have been exploited in the past – indeed, not so long ago – to generate very different types of violence and war, causing millions of deaths" (Sen, 2008). Loading of solitarist is often the main themes of same "Art of Pugnacity" that is the cause of sectarian strife. Unfortunately, many of good willing attempts used for preventing such voidance in turn would failure because of the lack of considerable selection about out identities; and this problem seriously damages our capabilities about overcoming on violence. As Vicheth Sen says about Amartya Sen's book "Identity and Violence": "More convincing is Sen's treatment identities within the civilizational approach, which necessarily reduces the complexity and multiplicity of individual identities. Sen explains that this perception probably result of the use of a "solitarist approach" to understanding the identity of human beings" (Sen, 2008).

Sen's opinion about identity is not generally pessimistic but conversely is true, since he seeks to inform us about the danger of one-dimensional view to identity though by revealing this issue that emphasizing and sticking to one of identity maker aspects leads to human's separation and discord. Because solitarist approaches (about identity) can be a suitable way of causing misunderstandings than everyone in entire world. As he says, "Identity can be a source of wealth and encouragement, also violence and horror. In this case, totally detrimental thoughts is not meaningful about identity, but we should accept that the militant identity force can challenge competitive identity powers" (Sen, 2010). Indeed, Sen simultaneously wants to show identity varieties of humans and nations along with the tolerating view and more importantly raise this issue

that decreasing humans and societies to one identity element is very harmful and detrimental because a solitarist understanding of people and universe not only act against our common humanity, but also lead to degenerate our different identities. It opposes us along a unit line without any flexibility. Amartya Sen's approach toward identity is not just limited to nations' identities with each other but rather his anti solitarist approach about national identities and their internal components are analyzable and applicable. As we can see in Sen's opinions, for having a successful and developed society that excellent human values like equality, freedom and justice are governed it, and also having united and harmonic people, we should take some kind of national identity approach that do not lead to solitary and include all of identity elements that individuals recognize themselves through them. "The hope for agreement in contemporary world mainly rooted in a more explicit perception about pluralism of human identity. And also depends to the understanding of values that connect them with a shortcut and act against hundreds of watertight lines of disharmony and separation" (Sen, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A nations' identity can be surveyed from different aspects. One of them is portraying a national identity through an artwork, but comprehensive and attractive portraying of thousand years of history and civilization in a territory with different governments and cultures, if not very difficult, is not that easy.

Kouzeh Haftbana artwork has demonstrated this quality about Iran's thousands year of history. Kouzeh Haftbana is made of sycamore wood, with 135 centimeters height and a 60 centimeters span. This artwork is made of three bottom, middle and upper distinct parts, which is lathed and then set on each other. The main form of this design is an urn that Iran word is designed in each side of it and has the seven historical monuments of Iran inside itself. This form has selected to have an ancient appearance and receive public acceptability; in the bottom of this urn, Iran's geographical map reliefs have been implemented twice. The urn itself is located in the middle of Iran's map and seven historical monuments from bottom up to span includes Ziggurat Chogha Zanbil, Persepolis Appadana, Arg-é Bam, Gate of All Nations, Khaju Bridge, Imam Mosque in Isfahan,

Azadi Square and the Milad Tower as the main seven historical monuments. They start from the ancient places and ends up to modern prominent architectural artworks from bottom to top. In addition, in the middle of jar and Iran's map, a turquoise Eslimi flower can be seen that was used as the support of seven aforementioned artworks. In the lower part of the urn body, four Shah Abbasi flower semi reliefs are implemented on it. Other designs can also be seen such as Yazd's natural ventilations, which are located in internal body of jar and are stock to Eslimi flower branches, Persepolis capitals that are designed on the handles and ancient symbolic forms of Iran's arches on the top of the jar. We do not intent to explore technical values of Kouzeh Haftbana, but we want to demonstrate the values if this artwork from social and identity aspect. Every artwork can be judged in two ways. First, it is judged by experts in technique, design and construction method and second way is public opinions and judgments about it; means that it is viewed from a non-technical aspect, i.e. what is the level of social acceptance and range of a structure. Introduction of identity and social values of Kouzeh Haftbana is related to the second type of judgment about an artwork. It does not mean that this design has received public acceptance and social range since to measure this issue it should be tested. However, at first hand, our purpose about these subjects was to invite and encourage to simply general observation of this artwork like an ordinary and non-expert observer

and on the other hand was to express the capacities and capabilities of this design for social acceptance and range.

Before explaining identity capabilities of Kouzeh Haftbana it should be considered that "a nation is a soul, means a subjective/moral principle. These subjects are two sides of coin. Having a rich heritage and consensus about this issue that a nation is designed to collective life, i.e. it wants to alive it heritage's values and sustain them" (Rajai, 2006). As we can see, Ernest Renan believes that two principles are necessary for existence of a nation: a rich heritage and a consensus for a sustainable collective life. It is obvious that out country has the first condition but the second one historically has faced with many obstacles. In some periods, totality of our inheritance has been of concern and all of related identities have been considered which lead to strong national unity and a country's power. Like Buwayhid and Safavi period that "Safavi kings, in addition to emphasize on Islam and Shia, were also proud of Iranian history and myths and considered themselves as the heir of them" (Kabiri, 2011). There were, however, some periods that high focus were put one aspect of identity such as the Pahlavi period. In such situations, focusing on just an aspect of identity lead to solitary view which in turn cause to degeneration in other hidden aspects of nations and their people: "indeed, denying pluralism...can lead to one-dimensional and strange deteriorated



Fig. 1: The word of Iran the jug



Fig. 2: View of the buildings inside the jug

viewpoint" (Sen, 2010). Of course, it should not forget that ancient Iran has excellent values about identity aspects but noting to values of these identities should not lead to underestimate other resources of identity in our country.

In Kouzeh Haftbana, historical and geographical unity of Iran can be understood. The most important social message of this artwork is unity that "can lead to making capabilities in cultural fields of Iranian- Islamic culture to and help it to enter in globalization era" (Zuhairi, 2005). This message is offered to society through a historical artistic artwork about Islamic and Iranian art. This unity has portrayed with this description: in the center of this map, a jar emerges and grows that is symbol of Iranian history and archaeological life. Historical monuments from bottom up to span include Ziggurat Chogha Zanbil, Persepolis Appadana, Arg-é Bam, Gate of All Nations, Khaju Bridge, and Imam Mosque in Isfahan, Azadi Square and the Milad tower. They start from the ancient places and ends up to modern prominent architectural artworks from bottom to top. Each of these works is representative of one historical period in Iran. Iran word can be seen in both side of the body, the uniting factor of these seven historical works, which symmetrically has designed and on the second hand, the jar itself has located in the middle of the reliefs of Iran map. Considering these mentioned notes, it can be claimed that the main artistic feature of this design is two Iran word. On the other hand, this work has designed with several grid lines that symmetrically build two Iran word in both sides of body. In addition, the main seven maquettes of internal part of jar can easily be observed from outside.

"Before experiences showed that Iran's national unity has damaged whenever Iranian governments weaseled from tuning different layers of social identities and underestimated or partly denied it in political designs and program implementing" (Ghasemi *et al.*, 2011). One of the good informative historical experiences is emerging Shu'ubiyya movement in caliphs of the Umayyad period in Iran. In that period, Arabism was dominant feature of society as a solitarist identity. By contrast, this movement focused on other aspects of its identity means Iranian Identity. "Shu'ubiyya movement could refresh depressed soul of Iranian nation... only

through re-connection of after Islamic Iran to its huge history... it stimulated these two huge spiritual and fruitful forces in this beaten nation, a "self conscious" followed by "self belief" that are capable of rebuild a nation" (Shariati, 1983). Although this movement was a story maker in its return, it actually entrapped in solitarist identity. Finally, despite of its cultural force, literature and devotional spirit, Shu'ubiyya could not succeed as it only intended to prove its Iranian identity. This vicious circle of solitarist identity is actually a term of Amartya Sen's viewpoint: "this is not the case when a person has to deny an identity to prove another one, but rather a multi identity person, in paradoxical situations, eventually will have to decide for a certain choice about relative importance of posed identities" (Sen, 2010).

In every era, Iranian thinkers sometimes have proposed different guidelines in order to define and find identity. Some of them believe that the solution is back to before Islamic Iranian identity, while some others see it in westernization and accept western culture and some groups insist on Iranian-Islamic identity (Alikhany, 2006). As the Islamic identity has dominated feature of Iran for centuries, most of symbolic identities of Kouzeh Haftbana refer to these characteristics. Shia has become formal in Iran, Since Safavi period. two historical places: Khaju Bridge and Imam Mosque can be intensively seen. In addition, Eslimi flowers that are symbolic features of Islamic art can also be seen that has grown from the bottom of jar and came from its span. This flower is used as a base of all seven structures inside the jar, which refers to encompassing feature of Iranian identity by Islamic identity. Here, Kouzeh Haftbana refers to the issue that Iranian and Islamic identities have merged balanced to each other and actually encourage this matter. But not the conflict and separation since "ideological exploitation from each element (Islam and Iran) in order to remove another one to establish a dispensational political order can be extensive damages for Iranian society in one hand, religion and nationality on the other hand" (Ahmadi *et al.*, 2004).

Four semi-raised implemented Shah Abbasi flower on the bottom and body are another aspect of Islamic art that is very common in unique Iranian carpet. Other constructions are Yazd's natural ventilations at the inside of jar and Persepolis

capitals on the handles and forms of Iran's ancient arches on the top of the jar. As it can be seen, there is no supernumerary part in this artwork and all of them have pictorially a word to say about Iranian-Islamic identity. Such artwork with these capabilities can attract people attention and learn them about our country's history, culture and architecture. Kouzeh Haftbana artwork strengthens individuals' self-confidence and patriotism through comprehensive exhibiting the main historical monuments of Iran and makes people more attentive toward their society and country. Therefore, "people view themselves as very different ways and they have rights to do so" (Sen, 2010). In addition, the design and decoration give us the knowledge that, historically, all Iranian nations have had a great role in making Iranian identity. It also prevents radical nationalism, "increases national harmony and its unity and correlation decreases external and internal threats, and provides suitable bases for country's development and progress" (Ghasemi *et al.*, 2011).

CONCLUSIONS

True identification of self is necessary for survival and evolution of every nation (Saghebar, 2004), if a nation does not have a comprehensive and correct understanding of its identity, there isn't a harmonically united country. Since, both of them are made through familiar, objective and acceptable commonalities for nations. One of the most important

reasons of this problem is degeneration and decrease of national identity which starts from over focusing of solitarist emphasize on one aspect of national identity and leads to underestimation of other aspects that ends up with internal separation and disharmony and detaches national unity. If we have a correct understanding about Iranian national identity, we are able find out that, from Greek culture, Arabs, Mongols and the West until now, Iran's identity and culture historically has grown and survived because of its flexibility and acceptance, tolerance and absorption of overseas cultures. Hence, our tolerant and flexible characteristic of Iran's identity and culture poses such potential capabilities that made us adjusted with globalization sense. Art, as one of the most important identity maker subjects that reflects cultural features of a society, can play a major role in merging different aspects of identity because "As one form of communication, art has the capacity to reflect social contexts, depict specific events, and provide a visual link that makes words memorable, lasting, and compelling" (Allison *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, these potential Islamic-Iranian cultural capabilities can clearly, simply, and attractively be seen in Kouzeh Haftbana in a realistic and compromising framework. These characteristics and specially its structural design have the capability of becoming a national symbol. As Rajaei says, "until a comprehensive definition of Iranian identity, they can't respect to themselves nor others appropriately respect them" (Rajai, 2006).

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