

Investigating the Factors Affecting the Decline of Toreutics in the Present Era

Abstract

Iran's traditional handicrafts have always enjoyed a logical process and have been in tune with the progress of science and technology in the course of their several thousand years of history. Nonetheless, this logical process loses its balance from the last years of the Safavid era, and following it, the traditional arts of Iran gradually stagnate. Today, Iran's handicrafts are suffering from difficulties and complications due to its brilliant past and for various reasons, it lacks good dynamism and vitality. In this study, the roots affecting the decline of the art of toreutics are investigated with the method of hierarchical analysis conducted based on the nature of basic research and a qualitative technique of data analysis. The spatial territory of the city of Isfahan and the community of calligraphy artists and the temporal territory is from November to February ۲۰۱۳. Finally, four criteria and ۲۲ sub-criteria, which were believed to be effective in diminishing the art of toreutics were identified and ranked and weighted by the method of pairwise comparisons with Expert Choice software. The results of this study showed that the most influential factor in the reduction of this art was the lack of plans for cultural creation and support of the artist; moreover, and the sub-criterion of the artist's disappointment gained the most weight in this criterion. Other principles were also obtained according to the conditions governing the current political and economic situation of the society, the artist and the facing problems, style and motifs.

Research aims:

۱. Identifying the factors affecting the decline of toreutics art.
۲. Determining the effective factors for the prosperity of toreutics art.

Research questions:

۱. What are the factors affecting the fading of toreutics?
۲. Has the art of toreutics lost its status over time?

Keywords: handicrafts, toreutics, art, decline, Iranian traditional arts

Introduction

Today, Iran's handicrafts are suffering from troubles and problems due to its tendency towards its brilliant past. The art of toreutics has not been separate from this; accordingly, in recent years, a significant drop in the prosperity of this art can be seen, thus, supporting handicraft producers has a special priority. Artifacts and artists active in this field, due to their vigorous connection and harmony with nature, have a special standing in the social life of our era. However, it is a misfortune that most of the activists of this branch of the industry do not have cultural and economic support and lack to ability to expand technical and financial facilities and they are in danger of reducing the qualitative and quantitative efficiency of their productions considering what they produce in such difficult conditions, in addition to current consumption, is a work of art with an effect of creativity and beauty and a basis for human happiness and social vitality. Therefore, it is important to investigate, identify, diagnose and provide solutions for the recognition and sustainability of this art.

Iran's traditional handicrafts have always enjoyed a logical dynamism over the course of their thousands of years of history, in such a way that they have always aligned themselves with the progress of knowledge and technology and have had a harmonious process with other branches of science and industry. Nevertheless, this logical process loses its balance from the end of the Safavid era due to the shift of power and wealth from Asia to Europe as well as political and economic disturbances in Iran, and as a result, the traditional handicrafts of Iran gradually stagnate (Riyazi, ۱۹۹۵: ۳۲). The art of toreutics is one of the ancient arts in Iran. A detailed examination of the obtained works shows that Iran is the birthplace of many handicrafts and arts, and Iranian artisans have played a worthy role in the development, expansion and universalization of handicrafts throughout history; moreover, with their taste and creativity, they have given the necessary richness to the works of art of every era. (Qara and Yaori, ۱۹۹۵: ۳۸). Handicrafts are the true manifestation of real human values and traditions, which, far from geographical, political and economic categories, play a significant role in objectifying the three fundamental pillars of sustainable development (harmony and compatibility, innovation and creation, and creativity) (Hoshiar, ۲۰۱۵: ۱۷).

These industries have always been the attention of many experts and technologists for their unparalleled potential in creating jobs, increasing income and eventually developing the national economy as well as the growth and education of the young generation. The art of toreutics is one of the most popular, magnificent and beautiful works of art beholding a deep history and worth. This art, similar to other handicrafts, is made from the framework of cultures

and philosophical insights accompanying the taste and art of people of each region with a tendency towards their ethnic views (Sarami, ۲۰۱۴: ۴۹ and Hoshiar, ۲۰۱۵: ۱۶). In this research, the factors affecting the fading of the art of toreutics were investigated using the hierarchical analysis method. This research has been done based on the nature of fundamental research and the method of data analysis is carried out using a qualitative method. The spatial territory of Naqsh-e Jahan square of Isfahan, the statistical community of Isfahan toreutics artists has been chosen. Sampling of the artists was done randomly and the time domain was from November to February ۲۰۱۳.

So far, various studies have been published regarding the difficulties and hardships of handicrafts in our country. For instance, (Riyazi; ۲۰۱۴: ۳۲-۳۶) investigated the issues and problems that handicrafts have faced and explained the various reasons for these difficulties and proposed solutions to improve the state of handicrafts in Iran. In another research, (Sarami; ۲۰۱۴: ۴۹-۶۰) examined the types of industries in Isfahan and their facing problems and presented the necessary solutions to improve the conditions and desirability of handicrafts. (Qora and Yavari; ۲۰۱۴: ۳۸-۴۱) sought to investigate the role and position of handicrafts in the process of economic growth and development - social and cultural aspects and one of the basic bases in this process is to recognize the effective factors and determine the contribution of each one in the development process. (Zargham and Atresai, ۲۰۱۵: ۸۱-۹۹), based on a three-dimensional model, investigated the link between demographic characteristics, environmental/situational characteristics of the destination, expenses of tourists to buy handicrafts and the awareness of consumer behavior in the marketing and sale of handicrafts are important matters of planning and decision making. (Rezvanfar; ۲۰۰۶: ۴۷-۷۰), studied handicrafts from an anthropological approach to get a correct understanding of handicrafts, their place and role in the last few centuries to understand handicrafts in the traditional period or before the modern period as postmodernism is discussed. (Sharifzadeh; ۲۰۰۶: ۱۶-۱۹) deliberated on the role of art in the production of handicrafts and believed that handicrafts can be saved from repetition and blind following by being attentive to artistic aspects in handicrafts.

In this research, Tomas Saaty's hierarchical analysis method was used to determine the factors affecting the decline of toreutics art in recent years. Thus, at first, the effective factors in the decline of toreutics art were identified. In the current research, the factors affecting the decline of toreutics art were recognized by summarizing the opinions of experts, specialists and artists of this industry in the form of closed-answer questionnaires. Finally, by summarizing the opinions of experts and artists of this profession, four important factors on the decline of

toreutics were identified. Since the priority of the factors relative to each other has the role of each feature in its effect on the decline of toreutics art, one of the ways to compare the importance and influence of the features is to calculate the weight of the importance of the aspects in situ as a device to measure them. In calculating and estimating the importance (weight) of each factor compared to other factors, the method of paired comparisons was used based on the opinion of experts and related artists (Feng Kong and Hongyan Liu, 2008: 48). In addition, the hierarchical analysis method was used to evaluate the effective weights in decision making. In this method, a matrix of various effective factors was formed in the evaluation of the factors affecting the decline of the art of toreutics and in the paired evaluation of the factors, the importance of the factors was ranked from infinite, unimportant to interminably important. The importance of the factors in each order is expressed with a number between "1" and "9". The numbers related to the degree of relative importance of the factors were obtained by questionnaire, interview and summarizing the views of 30 artists and experts active in the field of toreutics Hierarchical analytical method by calculating the geometric mean of each row and column and weighing them with each other, obtains the weight of each factor in the dimming of toreutics, and these calculations were done with Expert Choice 9 software. The weight of each factor indicates the degree of its importance in the decline of the art of toreutics.

Conclusion

In this research, in order to identify the factors affecting the decline of toreutics, the basic factors and sub-criteria related to each have been investigated. The obtained results show the influence of all the factors that are involved in the difficulties and troubles of the art of calligraphy. Considering the very important role of the lack of planning for cultural creation and support of the artist as the first cause in the decline of the art of calligraphy, it is necessary to investigate and plan carefully, support the government, and provide strategies and solutions by researchers in order to reduce the effect of this issue.

The second factor affecting the decline of toreutics can be the current political and economic conditions of the society, which has resulted in a decrease in the quality and quantity of the productions of this art. Therefore, proper planning in the direction of exporting more industries and creating a competitive market among the active strata in this field can provide suitable conditions to promote this art and increase production efficiency. In the following, the artist and the problems he faces can be introduced as the third factor in the decline of the art of toreutics, which unconsciously leads to the weakening of the motivation to continue working

and the loss of the delicacy and fineness of the work created by the artist. Compilation and planning to record the design and style of artists in order to avoid imitating each other's works can be an important step in the direction of boosting this industry and preserving ethnic and cultural values.

In this study, style and motifs were determined to be the last influential factors in the decline of calligraphy art. Emphasizing the country's cultural characteristics and reducing the influence of Western art, coordinating handicrafts with the taste, initiative and spirit of contemporary society can reduce the influence of this factor.

According to the mentioned factors and in order to maintain the ethnic and cultural values, the valuable toretics needs solid thought and decision-making, in which the relevant authorities should promote the position of handicrafts, make the products practical, increase services to the artisans, introduce and provide suitable solutions. Also, other countries should also be familiarized with Iranian handicrafts. Although the country's Handicrafts Organization, Iran Export Development Center and Cultural Heritage Organization have taken important steps in the development and revival of Iranian handicrafts, the prosperity and progress of this art requires more cooperation of related organizations with artists and experts of this industry. It is hoped that what was studied will be effective in improving the current conditions of Iranian handicrafts.

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