

REFLECTION OF GHAZNAVID PALACE DECORATION ON ANATOLIAN SELJUK PALACE DECORATION

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Within the Islamic environment, Turkish states from Turkestan to Anatolia were widely dominant over a great period and influenced Islamic art by innovative activity in many forms of art. Despite the changes seen in different areas and periods, the frequent repetition in Islamic art of certain details in decoration and architectural features is noticeable.

As seeds spread by the wind take root on new ground, some elements are to be seen crossing continents and centuries to initiate a new growth.

The beginning of Central Asian and Turkish influence in Islamic decorative arts can be traced to the Abbasids in the 9th century. With the removal of the Caliphate capital to Iraq the antique influence on Islamic works in Syria and Palestine, most dominant during the Umayyad period, began to give way to Central Asian and Turkish elements. The Abbasids, by founding the city of Samarra for their Turkish troops, contributed to this new movement.

The Ghaznavids in Afghanistan took this heritage over, during 10th to 12th centuries. The few remaining examples of Ghaznavid art, among which are the palaces of Lashkari Bazar of Sultan Mesut I, dated 1030-1041, and Ghazne of Sultan Mesut III, dated 1112, present some indication of the architectural ornamentation of the period.

The Great Seljuks, who ruled in Iran from 1040 onwards to the beginning of 13th century developed the architectural decoration of the Abbasids and Ghaznavids. A parallel figural style is followed mainly in their rich minor art.

The Seljuks, entering Anatolia at the end of the 11th century, brought with them their heritage from the East which can be traced to Samarra, to the Ghaznavids and to the Great Seljuks of Iran.

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This Turkish heritage is especially noticeable in the Anatolian decorative art. The Anatolian Seljuk palace decoration presents great similarities with the Ghaznavid period figural decoration in the Ghazne and Lashgari Bazar palaces.

All Seljuk palaces are now in ruins. The results of excavation, together with chance findings, indicate that these palaces had once been decorated with tiles and partly with stucco relief(1). The richest material is found in the Kubadabad Palace, situated on the shores of Beyşehir lake in Central Anatolia, dated circa 1236. The Kubadabad material is today in the Karatay Medrese Museum in Konya(2).

In this limited paper, I will mainly base my comparisons on this palace. In fact, parallel scenes can be followed also in other Anatolian Seljuk palaces.

The Ghaznavid period palace, Lashgari Bazar, offers us in the throne room one of the most remarkable innovations in decorative work. On the lower part of the walls, there are polychrome frescoes depicting forty-four soldiers arranged in a file(3). There were originally seventy of these (Fig. 1). The heads are ruined, only the bodies remain. They wear rich and coloured caftans with various designs, long boots and trousers. The figures have a belt at their waist and from this were suspended straps on which bags and various

(1) For a general idea on Seljuk palace tiles see. Öney, G. «Türk Çini Sanatı. Turkish Tile Art.» İstanbul 1977. pp. 121-123-149.

(2) Otto, Dorn, K. «Bericht über die Grabung in Kobadabad 1966». Archäologischer Anzeiger Heft 4. 1969. Berlin. pp. 484-491.

Otto, Dorn, K. «Die Menschliche Figurendarstellung auf den Fliesen von Kobadabad» in Forschungen zur Kunst Asiens in Memoriam Kurt Erdmann. İstanbul 1970. pp. 111-139. See also. Öney, G. «Kobadabad Ceramics» in The Art of Iran and Anatolia from the 11 th to the 13 th Century A.D. Colloquies on Art and Archæology in Asia. 4 University of London. Percival David Foundation of Chinese Art. London 1974. pp. 68-84.

Öney, G. «Die Karreefliesen im grossen Palast von Kobadabad» in Archäologischer Anzeiger des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. LXXXIV. no. 4. Berlin 1961. pp. 496-500.

(3) Schlumberger, D. Lashkari Bazar, Une résidence royale Ghaznévide et Ghoride, I A. L'Architecture Mémoires de la délégation archéologique Française en Afghanistan. Tome XVIII. Planches. Paris 1978. Planche 121-124.

necessary articles were hung. There are tiraz bands on their arms. These are woven inscription bands in the name and titles of the ruler they served. The heavily damaged bird of prey to be seen amongst the soldiers indicates the presence of falconry. They have a weapon resting on their shoulders. A fragment of fresco on an pilaster depicts a man's head with a round face and almond shaped eyes traditionally associated with the Turks(4) (Fig. 2). This sort of dress is typical of the Turks of Central Asia. Similar figures are found in Uighur frescoes of the 8th and 9th centuries(5). Standing in a row with their caftans and belts they draw our attention. The Turkish soldier figure is also repeated in the 9th century paintings at Samarra. Their richly decorated caftans, trousers, tiraz bands, belts reflect the similarity(6). This guard figure type is later much repeated in Islamic art, mostly in minor arts.

The famous Ghaznavid period historian Bayhaqi describes the reception of ambassadors on the death of Sultan Mahmud(7). He mentions a bodyguard of four thousand soldiers. In the frescoes of Lashgari Bazar, the soldiers are drawn up facing the throne according to rank. The different ranks are shown by different styles of caftan and by jewelled, gold and silver belts. These frescoes are now in Kabul Museum.

The palace of Sultan Masud III in Ghazne is decorated in the courtyard with carved marble panels. Some of the remaining figural reliefs present the same kind of Turkish soldiers standing in a row (Fig. 3 a, b). On a broken panel from the same palace we notice the same type of caftaned human figure, holding a mace over his shoulder. The figure is depicted under a pointed arch. Most probably it was repeated under the following broken arch. In between we notice the repeating double-headed eagle figures. They were most probably used as an emblem or were symbolising might and power of the sultan. On another broken panel the caftaned human figure is surrounded with plant motifs (Fig. 3b).

(4) Ibit. Planche 121 a.

(5) Gabain, A von. *Das Uigurische Königreich Chotscho*, Berlin 1961.

And see Von Le Coq. A. *Budhistische Spätantike*. III. Taf. 14, 15, 17.

(6) Herzfeld, E. *Die Malereien von Samarra*. Berlin 1927. Taf. 61 and others.

(7) *Tarih-i-Bayhaqi*, Gâni and Fayyâz, Teheran 1324, (1944), pp. 281-288. See also Schlumberger, D. *Lashgari* ... p. 264.

The reflection of this figural style is seen in the 13th century Anatolian Seljuk palace decoration, as we notice in Kubadabad palace. In Kubadabad palace the figural compositions and the star and cross shaped luster and underglaze tiles impart a new character to Anatolian Seljuk ceramic art. Some tiles represent scenes of the court servants, which were most probably taking place around the sultan or high ranking personages of the palace(8) (Fig. 4, 5, 6). The figure on a tile holds a pomegranate in his hand as a symbol of eternal life. A fragment depicts a figure holding a stick in his hand, most probably representing the polo player(9).

On two other Kubadabad tiles standing figures wearing caftans and holding wild goats in their hands as game are depicted (Fig. 6) (10). It is interesting to note the resemblance between these figures and the figures on the Samarra palace painting mentioned before. These figures are described as servants to the ruler.

On another Ghazne marble panel we see a row of dancing women (Fig. 7). They were doubtless entertaining the sultan. This scene, also common in Iranian Seljuk minor art, is missing in Kubadabad. However, we notice on several fragments the harem women who most probably were entertaining the sultan. In these female figures, a distinctive feature is the presence of moles and earrings (Fig. 8).

An important pastime and tradition of the palace, namely hunting is often repeated in early Islamic palace decoration and

(8) Bombaci, A. *Introduction of the excavations at Ghazni*. Rome 1969. p. 17. See also. Bombaci, A.-Scerrato, U. «Summary report on the Italian archaeological mission in Afghanistan».

East and West (New series Vol. 10 1 a, 1-2 March-June) 1956 Rome. p. 90 ... See Otto-Dorn, K. «Die menschliche Figurendarstellung ...» p. 135-136.

(9) *Ibid.* For other figures with pomegranate on Seljuk pottery see. Öney, G. «Human figures on Anatolian Seljuk sgraffiato and champlevé ceramics» Daneshvari, A. (edited by). *Islamic Art and Architecture I. Essays in Islamic Art. In Honour of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, pp. 113-125. Figs, 1, 19. Los Angeles 1981.

See also Otto-Dorn, K. «Die menschliche Figuren ... pp. 114, 117, 118. Figs. 1, 6 — 7, 8, 9.

(10) Önder, M. «Selçuklu Devri Kubadabad Sarayı Çini Süslemeleri» *Kültür ve Sanat*, İstanbul 1977. Cilt 5, s. 104-105.

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minor arts. On the marble panel of Ghazne, we see the hunter with a spear in his hand and riding a horse (Fig. 9). His caftan and boots are in Turkish style. His head is ruined and we cannot see the head cover. A lion-like animal attacks from the rear side.

We have not been able to find the mounted hunter figure on a tile in Kubadabad. However, the existence of the subject is verified through a stucco panel from Kubadabad where a hunter is shown riding a horse, accompanied by a greyhound type dog and an angel. The angel is supposed to bring luck to the hunter and protect him (Fig. 10) (11).

In the Ghaznavid palaces, the sultan figure is missing. The soldiers must have flanked in Turkish style, the crosslegged sitting sultan, which is very common in early Islamic art, coming all the way from Samarra.

On the other hand, on Kubadabad tiles, there are numerous examples showing the sultan and the elite of the palace sitting cross-legged in the Turkish tradition (Fig. 4). These figures have full cheeks, large almond eyes, slender, long noses and a small mouth. In most cases, there is a halo on top of the head. The head is covered by a three-lobed cap or a crown-like, inflated-looking headgear. The figures have long hair and wear caftans. Some of the caftans are ornamented like the Lashkari Bazar figures. The arms have tiraz lining. In most cases, the figures hold in their hands a symbol representing the eternal life, like a pomegranate, a flower or opium branch, or a large glass (12).

On two marble panels of the Ghazne palace, a magical world of imagination is reflected. Here a stem-like life tree with scroll shaped branches is surrounded by these symbolic figures (Figs. 11, 12).

Double birds shown face to face, or back to back on the two sides of a stylized life tree, are common figures on Kubadabad tiles (Fig. 13). They are part of the rich world of imagination created on the palace walls. In Ghazne reliefs the world of imagination is combined

(11) For other hunting scenes in Anatolian Seljuk art see. Öney, G. «Mounted Hunting scenes in Anatolian Seljuks in comparison with Iranian Seljuks». *Anadolu (Anatolia)* XI. Ankara 1969. pp. 121-159. Figs. 1-37.

(12) Otto — Dorn, K. «Die Menschliche Figuren ...» s. 114, 116, 117, 118, 121, Figs. 1, 5-10.

in the same panel while in Kubadabad the symbolic figures are depicted singly on each tile. Sphinxes, harpies, griffons, double-headed eagles surround the life tree on the Ghazne panel (Figs. 11, 12). Griffons, Sphinxes and harpies, being magical creatures, were believed to protect the palace and the sultan. They are repeated with frequency on Kubadabad tiles(13). These imaginary figures have wings and are presented with faces similar to those of the Sultan, or the palace women (Figs. 14, 15). The crown on their heads, their long hair, the magical moles on their faces point to the correlation. The wings and tail end with spirals and volutes. This detail is also noticed in the sphinx figure of Ghazne. The spots repeated on the body of the sphinx and harpies are probably magical signs coming down all the way from Central Asian figural art. These magical figures are repeated often in Anatolian and Iranian Seljuk art. They were believed to be endowed with magical powers enabling them to protect the palace from all sorts of evil, from enemies and sickness. They are also symbols of luck. In Anatolian Seljuk art, they have also been used in conjunction with the life tree. In such cases they protect the life tree. The life tree probably underlines the importance of the palace. We also know, that in central Asian beliefs life tree represents the road or ladder leading to the other world(14).

The emergence of single and double-headed eagles among the symbolic figures is natural. Double-headed eagle was also seen before on another Ghazne panel together with the soldier figure (Fig. 3). It is frequently repeated on Kubadabad tiles (Fig. 16, 17). Double-headed eagle is widely used as a symbol of imperial power and might(15). It appears often on Anatolian Seljuk city walls. They are

- (13) Önder, M. «Kubad-Abad sarayı harpi ve simurgları». *Türk Etnoğrafya Dergisi* 10, pp. 5-9. Ankara 1968. See also. Öney, G. *Turkish Tile Art*. pp. 38, 42.
- (14) For the life tree motif in Anatolian Seljuk art see. Öney, G. «Die Figurenreliefs an der Hüdavent Hatun Türbe in Niğde». *Belleten XXXI*, 122. Ankara 1967. pp. 143, 167.
- Öney, G. «Das Lebensbaum Motiv in der Seldschukischen Kunst in Anatolien». *Belleten XXXII*, 125. Ankara 1968. pp. 25-50. Figs. 1-40.
- Öney, G. «Über eine Ortukidische Lebensbaum Darstellung». *Vakıflar Dergisi VII*. İstanbul 1968. pp. 117-125. Figs. 1-5.
- (15) For Double-headed eagle in Anatolian Seljuk art see. Öney, G. «Anadolu Selçuk Sanatında Kartal, çift başlı kartal ve avcı kuşlar». *Türk Tarih Kurumu Malazgirt Anma Yılığ*. Ankara 1972. pp. 139-172. Figs. 1-46.

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presented as imaginary birds with their double heads, pointed ears, drop-like bodies, and oversize claws. Double-headed eagles were also used as the Sultan's coat of arms. On a Kubadabad tile, we notice on the body of a double-headed eagle the inscription «Es Sultan» which proves this suggestion. On some other tiles, the eagle's body is covered with magical protecting spots. Thus, according to İbni Bibi, the Seljuk period historian, the eagle of the Sultan's tent extended his wings of luck over the Sultan, and spreaded his shadow of might. This indicates that the eagle was at the same time used as a symbol of protection, might, force and luck (16).

Apart from the pictorial representations of the magical world, created in the mind of man, the Ghazne reliefs and the Kubadabad tiles dwell on an important pastime and tradition of the palace, as mentioned before, namely hunting. Various animals, which can definitely be categorized as game are depicted. These figures are sometimes more stylized. At other times, they are more realistic (17). In all cases they are in graceful motion, running (Fig. 18-20).

Dragon head is a significant addition to the existing group of figures. Dragons constitute another chain in the pictorial representation of the magical world of figures in Kubadabad. These figures have a distinct style of their own, with their double heads, their knotted bodies, curved mouth and forked tongues (Fig. 21).

In Anatolian Seljuk architecture, dragon has been used with a wide range of symbolic purpose, together with astral-mythological themes or the life tree (18).

See also. «Tombstones in the Seljuk tradition with bird, double-headed eagle, falcon and lion figures in Anatolia.» *Vakıflar Dergisi* VIII. Ankara 1969. pp. 283-301. Figs. 1-23.

(16) Öney, G. «Anadolu Selçuk sanatında kartal...»

(17) Öney, G. «Mounted hunting scenes ...». See also Öney, G. *Turkish Tile Art*. pp. 36, 37, 44. And Öney, G. «Anadolu Selçuk Mimarisinde Süsleme ve El Sanatları. Architectural Decoration and minor arts in Seljuk Anatolia. Ankara 1978. pp. 98-103.

(18) Öney, G. «Dragon Figures in Anatolian Seljuk Art». *Belleten*, Vol. XXXIII, 130. Ankara 1969. pp. 171-216. Figs. 1-42. For a dragon figure on a Kubadabad tile see. Önder, M. «Yeni Bulunan Selçuklu Devri Ejder Figürleri». *Kültür ve Sanat*, Yıl 22. Sayı 4, 1976. p. 16.

The Ghazne relief is surrounded with imaginary protective animals like the winged lions, griffons and also elephants, and peacocks. We miss the elephant in Kubadabad. Being close to India, this gigantic animals seem to be natural in Ghazne. The lion, winged or not, is always a protective animal in all cultures. As seen in Ghazne, it is also depicted in Kubadabad(19) (Figs. 22, 23).

Among Kubadabad tiles and stucco panels, single or double peacocks are frequently repeated (Figs. 24, 25). Tiles containing a single peacock have a highly artistic composition. Their tail is presented in a most decorative manner in different colours. The neck is drawn with elegant curves, balancing the composition in a skillful manner. The peacock is usually surrounded by pomegranate branches. This beautiful bird is obviously used as a symbol of paradise, depicting the palace as a corner of paradise (Fig. 26).

On small tiles from the Ghazne palace the figural world continues (Fig. 18). On a Ghazne palace tile double peacocks in low relief between small rosettes and game are seen(20). Also on Kubadabad tiles double peacocks are depicted (Fig. 26). They too are seen together with rosettes. On a Kubadabad tile double peacocks are shown with intertwining necks, with rosettes and the life tree. Paradise and eternal life have been emphasized in these examples. While the rosettes symbolize planets, life tree further stresses the symbolism of paradise and eternal life(21). On other small Ghaznavid tiles, again game animals are depicted, which are very common in early Islamic art(22). We see several parallels on Kubadabad tiles as the hare, wolf and many other figures.

In this limited paper, I wanted to point to the parallels in Turkish

(19) For Anatolian Seljuk lion figures see. Öney, G. «Lion figures in Anatolian Seljuk architecture». *Anadolu (Anatolia)* XIII. Ankara 1971. pp. 1-64.

Figs. 1-84. See also «Bull reliefs in Anatolian Seljuk Architecture». *Bulleten* XXXIV, 133. Ankara 1970. pp. 83-120. Figs. 1-32.

(20) Grube, E. *The World of Islam*. New York. p. 22.

Ayrıca bak. Scerrato, U. «Islamic Glazed Tiles with moulded decoration from Ghazni «East and West (New series) Vol. 13. No. 4. 1962. Rome.

(21) Öney, G. «Architectural Decoration and minor arts in Seljuk Anatolia.» p. 93 and Öney, G. «Die Karreefliesen ...» p. 496-500.

(22) Grube, E. op. cit.

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palace decoration, faraway from each other and with a century in between. This similarity can be followed on a broader scale on other Anatolian Seljuk palace material and also on the figural stucco and stone decoration in Anatolian Seljuk art. The same figural style, the same symbols of Central Asian shamanistic beliefs are displayed behind these figures.

The rich figural world created in Ghaznavid and Seljuk palaces represents a substantial and complex art, based on symbolism and shamanism, — reaching far back to Central Asian tradition. The same figural world appears on handicrafts in earlier and contemporary Islamic art. Iranian Seljuk art constitutes a sort of transition, forming a bridge between Ghaznavid and Anatolian Seljuk arts.

