

ON THE CONCEPT OF DESIGN IN SELCUK CERAMIC ART

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Abstract. Selcuk period ceramics representing one of the richest pages of Turkish cultural history is defined as the Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian or Khorasan sources according to their geographical position and sometimes Eyyubi or Ilhanlı examples based on political administration. As it is known, the Selcuk art school which has a special place in World Cultural History constituted a tradition that does not overlap with the historical framework of the Great Selcuk state and effectively preserved its existence in the periods after the political collapse of the state. The art of ceramics that existed in this school has been integrated into all the developments that have emerged before the time it first appeared, enriching the artistic accumulation that it has created in this place with new technical and artistic breakthroughs. From the Selcuk era, Islamic Ceramics Art continued at a much higher level, with a direction and understanding determined by the Selcuk Era.

When we closely examine the Selcuk Ceramic Art, the scope and effectiveness of the pre-Islamic Turkish culture, which is among the sources of Islamic art, is very prominent. This effect, which started to show itself for a long time, increased considerably during the Selcuk period and eventually the ceramic art has acquired some important qualities. These aspects, which are more related to the style of representation and composition, were evaluated in the context of Pre-Islamic and Islamic Period sources and emphasized points that are important from the point of view of art.

Keywords: Selcuk period, Selcuk ceramic school, style and composition understanding.

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1. Introduction

The effects of pre-Islamic Turkish culture are manifest in a very obvious way, in Selcuk ceramic art representing one of the brightest pages of Islamic ceramic art. This effect, which is mostly related to iconography and which is related to the way of describing the figures defined as Turkish type in the sources, is one of the most prominent indicators of the source. When we carefully examine the Selcuk ceramics, we see that the tradition of Central Asian Turkish art determines the entire design and production chain, and that even in the most elaborate detail, there is constant contradiction. In the declaration, the traces of this activity have been tried to be followed and defined from the Scythian art.

The legacy of the Scythian art to the Selcuk masters was studied by the Azerbaijani scientist Siyavuş Dadaş in the scope of painting art (Ferehvari, 1976). The value for the art critics and art historians of the work entitled "The Theory of Turkish Miniature Art" published by the author is related to the undiscovered and beyond consideration of the searched area. The source, the theory of art, the logical content of the design action, and the way it is related to the process, as well as the unique style,

composition and subject matter framework of all the great cultures have emerged from the framework of the new approach (Fig.1).

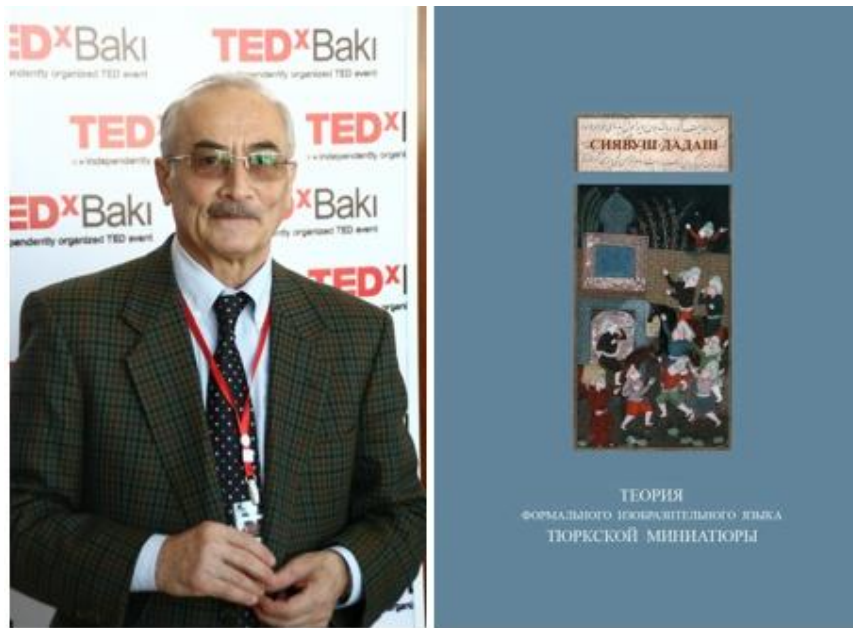


Fig 1. Azerbaijani scientist Siyavuş Dadaş and the cover image of the his book titled "The Theory of Turkish Miniature Art" published in Russian in 2006 in Istanbul.

2. Main discussion

It is a fact that art and artist's subjects are basically universal. Motifs such as love, togetherness, family, world, sun, moon, sky, and earth, life in the nature, plant world, mountains, forests and sea in human relations are fundamental and common issues affecting people from early ages. In addition to this, each culture is selected with its own subject, motif and iconography. The identification of these issues that make cultures special is based on the choices and preferences made within the above-mentioned wide range of subjects. Turkish Culture has also developed its own pivotal culture pool and its own style of visual transfer with the election and elimination it has done in its early ages. This style is being searched by Siyavuş Dadaş by putting it on the table, and its basic qualities are analyzed one by one. The visual transfer style, defined as the cultural artistic language, occurs once according to Dadaş and remains stable in terms of its basic qualities as long as the cultural tradition is not overtaken, not interfering with or being preferred to other styles (Dadaş, 2006, p.14).

In other words, the most important thing for us is related to the fact that the style of the painting in Selcuk ceramic art was also adopted from the miniature art (Hillenbrand, 1994; Iskenderzade, 2010; Rice, 1957). This commitment is explained by the "art pyramid" theory that exists in the Middle Ages cultures. According to the order of the "pyramid", the more costly master craftsmanship takes care of the more expensive masters, adapting their style, techniques and subjects to them by adapting them to their own materials and trying to achieve similar visuals (Hillenbrand, 1994).

The masters who were in the top of the Seljuk art pyramid were undoubtedly miniature artists. Ceramic masters are located on this level following the metal craftsman. The imitation of the ceramic forms of mine form and ornamentation

techniques can easily be explained by this reason (Marshak, 1961). If we look at human history, however, the interaction between minerals and ceramics must be related to the use of both materials in the production of pots (Fig. 2, 3).



Fig. 2. The bronze bird-shaped censer made by casting method, X-XI. Century, Fatima Egypt. H= 5 cm. (Ferehvari, 1976).



Fig. 3. A Kashan lustre pottery in the form of a bird, XIII century, Iran. H= 13.7 cm (Iskenderzade, 2010).

On the other hand, the polichromatic color scheme of the *minai* application of the Seljuk ceramic art techniques and the sharp of a incise line on the sgraffito (color-splashed ware) ceramics should be inspired by the ornaments applied by the technique of engraving metal ware.

One of the main points in Selcuk ceramic art is the priority of the form according to the decoration. This criterion, which is one of the most important design principles, is based on the "nature of the nature" and the formation logic. It is not right to perceive this dependence as a secondary form of adornment and primary form. Because of the

emergence of the form first, the person who will do the ornamenting should behave according to the existing possibilities and remember to try to decorate a certain form. This principle, which is considered as one of the core values of the school, is an important concept which reveals that the Selcuks are the *artistic production* of the ceramics.

When we look at the composition of the ornaments on Selcuk ceramics, Turkish pre-Islamic culture can be traced back to the time of the Iskit. Many features such as stylistic style, indulgence towards figurative ornamentation, love for symmetrical representations are seen in Selcuk ceramics. When we first compare Scythian illustrations with the method of describing figures in Selcuk's ornaments, many common features are evident. Among these, the first thing that strikes me is the lack of photographic similarity in the depictions. Dadaş defines the way in which he is driven during the animation process as the first principle of Turkish miniature art. According to him, *this is not the object itself* in the way of portraying, but *it is portrayed in its mindfulness* (Dadaş, 2006, p.22). In another way, this style of art attempts not to depict the real object or object, but to depict the impression, trace, or imagination that it leaves in the human. This approach, which is at the root of the Turkish art iconography and motif formation, is perhaps the most obvious difference in classical European art (Dadaş, 2006, p.15-16) (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. "Gabri-Garrus" ceramics, XII-XIII. Century, Iran (left) (Marshak, 1961).
A lure detailing if the lion from Pazirik kurgan (right).

Another thing that emerges in Scythian art and protects its existence in the Selcuk ceramic art is the *precious and conscious use of the spaces* in the depictions (Dadaş, 2006, p.23). In Selcuk ceramics, this aspect shows itself more in the background of the figures or in the "holes" applied on the body (Fig. 4). "Holes" on the trunk usually aim to visualize or emphasize limbs in large areas. However, gaps are used for a much different purpose in the background layout.

This method of regulation, which İskenderzade call "*safety lane*" in her doctorate research thesis, is applied in order to pull the main element of the trimming from the ground, to make it foreground, to make it more specific and effective (İskenderzade, 2010). Sometimes figurines, and sometimes this envelope surrounding the text, also serve to determine the location, form and size of the auxiliary filler elements at the same time (Rüçhan, Oluş, 2007). This method of arrangement, which is mostly seen in Anatolian Selcuk tiles, is found in Abbasi and partly Fatimi luster and in the slip painted

ceramics of Horasan. This indicates the presence of common tradition (Aini, 1980; Baudin, 2012; Grube, 1995). The result of the developments experienced in the great Selcuk Iranian ceramic art continues this like the “*halo*” (circle frame around the head) (Caiger-Smith, 1985) (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Lustre imitation Horasan slipware bowl, Samarkand, X century, D= 34.1 cm. (left) [12].
Sample of Scythian gold (right) [11].

Great Selcuk, Iran and Anatolian Selcuk tiles and ceramics are very popular sources of symmetrical arrangements are reserved in Scythian art (Bilgili, 2014). The composition scheme of human and bird depictions mutually depicted around the tree of life is intensely used in the first Scythian period in Turkish art (Menghin, 2007). It is possible to predict that our successors interpreted this system differently, even though the plant and the living world that existed on earth are shaped according to symmetrical construction. The symmetrical array around the central axis can be perceived as the sky and the earth, the north and south, the birth and death, the masculine and feminine power, the earthly and the helpless life opposition. It is not a coincidence that these kinds of arrangements are always depicted with different cinsten figures and animations. It is interesting and meaningful that the popularity of symmetry in Turkish culture is not limited to visual arts, and that literature reflects in a unique way (Karagözlü, 2015) (Fig.6).



Fig. 6. Selcuk *minai* ceramics with symmetrical decoration, dated to the beginning of the XIII century- end of the XII century, Iran. D= 21.5 cm (left) (Pancaroglu, 2007). The siliceous bowl restored to the right by fractures D=20.3 cm. (right) [10].

Another noteworthy feature of the Selcuk ceramic ornaments is the sensitive approach to the frame. Thanks to this sensitivity, which is an important feature of artistic school, figures are depicted in the largest dimension that fits in the space. They do not force the frame, they do not tend to overflow, they use the existing space in a comfortable and aesthetic way. This concept, which is included in the concept of aesthetic value, has undoubtedly made such a solid development thanks to the high pattern and picture skill that the school has (Caiger-Smith, 1985).

When we look closely at the above mentioned subjects, it is understood that what the Selcuk art form is a rich accumulation and it is not worth merely within the framework of the present history. Selcuk Ceramic Ecology, which may be the subject of endless researches with its wide content, should not escape attention that it has a great influence on the development of contemporary ceramic art and that it serves as a cradle to many construction and decoration techniques used today. Another area where this heritage may be useful is education in contemporary art, especially ceramic art. The pottery and architectural covering forms of the Seljuk masters who made the art have all the knowledge and skills encompassed by this concept. To stay away from this heritage is to stay away from certain artistic values and to limit our knowledge and skills.

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