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Mysticism in handicrafts. Case study: Seljuk Era Pottery

Nikoo Shojanoori*

ABSTRACT

One of the most important periods in Iranian art history in the handicraft part is the Seljuk period. Among the handicrafts of this era, in which diversity and creativity in the motif and structure and quality and quantity of productions are quite noticeable, is pottery art. At the same time, in the pottery of this era, paintings have been used, which are often cryptic and have a certain semantic load. The present study, which is objective and fundamental in terms of method, historical analysis, and gathered information through library resources, after examining the cause of the quantitative and qualitative development of this era of art, has sought to find the reason for the proliferation of the use of mystical motifs in pottery and revealing the meanings of these designs. In this period, when the beginning of changes in the mode of transmission, the mystics and artists express their perceptions of the heart and mind that they did not permit to reveal in the majority of mystical symbols. For example, the attraction of divine love, a kind of relationship and love and lover's unity, was seen in the form of tales of Layla and Majnun, Yusuf and Zulaikha. But among other influences on the art of this era, the influence of the group's thoughts, the Brethren of Purity, was on the actions and thoughts of businessmen and craftsmen. According to them, the bothering to construct a craft is a form of cultivation of a worthy soul, and the artifact is a manifestation of the beauty of God. As a result, the artisans of this period, influenced by these thoughts, added as much as possible to the quality and quantity of their work, because they considered the attempt in this way a form of worship, and therefore the transfer of professional skills through a professor to an apprentice student conditioned on having a qualification of that apprentice. In addition, the establishment of large pottery centers in the two major religious and religious cities of Rey and Kashan, which has many mystical circles and monasteries, while also witnessing frequent ethnic and religious conflicts, can also be counted from other influences on the art of this era. Among the Seljuk decorative motif artifacts, Arabesque, geometric and calligraphic motifs are more synchronous with mystical thoughts that have grown more than other motifs and have been used widely. But in the case of potteries dishes, the manuscripts related to lyrical stories and imaginative animal

* Faculty Member of Handicrafts Department, Alzahra University, Tehran,
Correo: Iran.n.shojanoori@alzahra.ac.ir

drawings have a larger share, and a number of motifs, such as the motifs of woman, tree, or water which have become more meaningful than the past. Also, the appearance of some motifs to create a new meaning is different from the past, such as the conversion of vertices of letters to human faces.

KEYWORD: Seljuk era, Brethren of Purity, mysticism, mystical motifs, motif on pottery

Misticismo en la artesanía. Caso de estudio: Cerámica de la era de Seljuk

RESUMEN

Uno de los períodos más importantes en la historia del arte iraní en la parte de artesanía es el período de Seljuk. Entre las artesanías de esta era, en las que la diversidad y la creatividad en el motivo y la estructura y la calidad y cantidad de producciones son bastante notables, destaca el arte de la cerámica. Al mismo tiempo, en la cerámica de esta época, se han utilizado pinturas, que a menudo son crípticas y tienen una cierta carga semántica. El presente estudio, se basa en el análisis histórico y recopilación de información a través de recursos bibliográficos, ha buscado la razón de la proliferación de el uso de motivos místicos en la cerámica y la revelación de los significados de estos diseños. En este período, cuando comenzaron los cambios en el modo de transmisión, los místicos y los artistas expresan sus percepciones del corazón y la mente que no permitieron revelar en la mayoría de los símbolos místicos. Por ejemplo, la atracción del amor divino, la relación amor y la unidad del amante, se vio en la forma de los cuentos de Layla y Majnun, Yúsuf y Zulaikha. Pero entre otras influencias en el arte de esta era, la influencia de los pensamientos del grupo los Hermanos de la Pureza, fue sobre las acciones y los pensamientos de los empresarios y artesanos. Según ellos, la molestia de sostener un oficio es una forma de cultivar un alma digna, y el artefacto es una manifestación de la belleza de Dios. Como resultado de la investigación se destaca que los artesanos de este período, agregaron lo más posible a la calidad y cantidad de su trabajo, porque consideraron que esta sería una forma de adoración, a la par que procuraron la transferencia de habilidades profesionales de un profesor a un aprendiz. Además, el establecimiento de grandes centros de alfarería en las dos principales ciudades religiosas de Rey y Kashan, que tiene muchos círculos místicos y monasterios, aunque también son frecuentes los conflictos étnicos y religiosos, también se puede contar de otras influencias en el arte de esta era. Entre los artefactos de motivos decorativos de Seljuk, los motivos arabescos, geométricos y caligráficos son más sincrónicos con los pensamientos místicos que han crecido más que otros motivos y se han utilizado ampliamente. Pero en el caso de los platos de alfarería, los manuscritos relacionados con cuentos líricos y dibujos imaginativos de animales tienen una mayor participación y varios motivos, como los motivos de la mujer, el árbol o el agua, que se han vuelto más significativos que en el pasado. Además, la aparición de algunos motivos para crear un nuevo significado es diferente del

pasado, como la conversión de vértices de letras a caras humanas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Era de Seljuk, Hermanos de la pureza, misticismo, motivos místicos, motivo de la cerámica.

Introduction

The history of world art has many glorious periods that have not necessarily been praised for all time. A period of skill in building and periodicity for creativity in the design, time for the magnificence of the works, and another time for the beauty of colors and motifs, have been praised and considered. The history of the art of the Islamic countries is no exception to this and the general spirit of their arts are unified but its manifestation has appeared differently in each country and geographic region, in spite of its people, culture and government. One of the most important periods in Iranian art history is the Seljuk era, whose multiplicity of motifs and construction in its handicrafts can be likened to the eruption of creativity and volcanoes. Pottery is one of the handicrafts of this era in which the glory is well visible. The growth of science and the ability to make a variety of colored glazes has caused the potters of this era to create a variety of paintings that had not been up to date on the surface of their own motifs. Most of these symbolic and mystical motifs have not been used before and after this period. Accordingly, and given its importance in the history of Iranian art, the above subject is the basis of this research. Though so far, several studies have been carried out on the art of Seljuk era, its pottery motifs and the relation between arts and mysticism, but the present research, from the point of view of studying the artwork of the art of pottery of the Seljuk era from the perspective of its mystical meanings, intends to bring a new word. The research, in terms of purpose is fundamental and in terms of its nature and method is historical-analytical, and the collection of data is done in a library way. It is hoped that the present research will help to clarify the way of art and artists whose ideals are the excellence of society and the world today.

1. Seljuk era

From the third century AH, the Turks became Absolute Power of Western Asia and their official rulers. The first dynasty Turks in Iran was Ghaznavids who came to Iran by invitation of Samanids to protect them against Al Boyah. Ghaznavids gradually dominated all of the eastern parts of Iran and chose Ghaznah as their capital. After that, the second rule of the Turks, the Seljuk (1157-1037 AD), began to arrive in northeastern Iran, then raid to the west and captured Baghdad in 1055 AD, followed by Turkey and eventually Syria Under their control. "The Seljuk period in Iran lasted for almost two centuries and began in the second quarter of the 11th AD centuries with the Seljuk conquests and continued until the establishment of the Ilkhanate in seventeenth century AD""(Catelly, 1997: 3). "Revolutions were also taking place in religion at this time. The official religion of Sunnis was transformed into pragmatism and the living and religious form crystallized in a diverse and organized manner, and mystical movements (Sufism) became increasingly popular with the pleasing

experiences of personal introspection and the sense of responsibility and social organization” (Ettinghausen, 2004: 369). The Seljuk era witnesses conflicts between religions. Shi’a and Sunnis, Shi’a principles with Shiite Akhbari and the conflict between Hanafi and Shafi’i sects, the latter being one of the reasons for the progress of Shi’a in the sixth AH century of Rey. In addition to Rey, other cities such as Kashan, Qom, and Tabarestan are also strong bases for Shiites in Iran, and numerous schools have been reported in these cities during this time. In the sixth century AH, four religions of Shafi, Hanafi, Shiite Imamiyah and Shiite Zaidiyah were preached in Rey, each of which had its own cultural and religious centers. This century coincides with the rise and spread of the Isma’ilism and their followers in Iran. Despite the fanatical support of the government of the Sunni religion, despite the great pressure, we see the successful presence of Shiites in the affairs of management and the growth of Shiism (Jalali, 2008).

“In the meantime, the existence of ethnic-ideological differences has caused tension among the people, so that in each city, separate neighborhoods for each tribe and ethnicity were created, sometimes conflicts led to conflicts and even bloody massacres between the neighborhoods, as it was reported in the history of the city of Rey, before the Mongol invasion, the bloody clashes of the neighborhood destroyed the city” (Ettinghausen, 2004: 374-373).

The dominance of the non-Iranian tyrannical rulers, the dominance of the common people and the religionists, the prevalence of corruption, lies, trickery, murder, plunder and oppression were also other factors influencing the situation of society. “The abovementioned factors, which have played a significant role in the despair and pessimism of the people, especially scholars and poets, are among the main reasons for the spread of Sufism and the emergence of poet such as Sanai, Nizami, and Attar. In addition, the internal transformation of courtesy poets such as Sanai and Nasser Khosrow, who enjoyed any kind of pleasure, suggests the disloyalty and incompetence of and bloodthirsty sultans and the anomalies of the courts, as well as the disorder and dissatisfaction of the masses” (Bagheri Khalili, 2007: 69). So gradually, mystical movements grew with prominent features of introversion and a sense of responsibility towards the community and with their specific rules and arrangements, among the various classes and ordinary people. The social and economic situation was not very clear. The practice of exploiting farmers in the country was common. By contrast, business groups, and even professionals, have become increasingly wealthy thanks to the weakness of local rulers through trade and growth become part of the wealthy community in social decision making and urban production and exports. On the other hand, a chivalrous manner, as a branch of Sufism, has found new field of action. Chivalrous religion was devoted not only to the armies and Ayyār but also to marketers and professionals. Transfer of professional and technical skills through a teacher to an apprentice was usually given to a teacher from a childhood. As a result, the traditions and methods of chivalry were taught to the aspirants from an early age (Bani Ardalán, 2010: 69).

2. Seljuk art

“The art of each period is proportional to the dominant thinking and spirit governing that period”(Bani Ardalan, 2010: 93). Decorative arts during the Seljuk period were at the height of creativity, innovation and flourishing. It can be said that in this period there was a unique movement in the field of art whose effects remained until the Mongol era. This movement was so enormous that many scholars saw the Seljuk era as the brightest era in Iranian art or in terms of the Renaissance art of Iran. The ingenious imagination of the artists of this age in the creation of countless forms, and decorative motifs has caused the survival of works whose artistic features are worthy of special attention. Ettinghausen refers to one of the artistic productions of this era and comparing it with Egyptian products in Egypt Fatimid and says: Unlike metallic objects in Iran, the work of these craftsmen in Egypt Fatimid does not reflect any pride, self-esteem or personal presence. No attempt has been made to pay attention to customer’s feelings or attraction. These comparisons with Egypt and North Africa show the unique character of the psychological and cultural factors that provoke artistic production during the Seljuk period (Nekoe, 2014: 138-114). During this period, artists tried to create a variety of designs from the combination of Kofic scripts and manuscripts in decorating the buildings. In the meantime, the Kofic scripts have a larger share than the other one. The main method of inscription is to go into the knotted Kofic scripts. One of its most important features is the simultaneous presence of a variety of plant and geometric motifs in the field alongside the writing, as well as types of geometric knots and plant motifs are connected to the letters (Hamidi, 2011: 91).

The botanical abstract and inscription motifs influenced by the symbolic and mysterious meanings of geometric shapes, opened up a window in the role of mediation between this world and that world, behind which, the invisible light of the creator, the space in its radiance, immortal and charmed the viewer. During this period craftsmen of handicrafts obtain lots off achievement in all fields; from architecture, brick and plaster to metalworking, weaving, shaving glass and pottery. A review of the Seljuk glazed pottery also points out that “there is no doubt the production of a variety of glazed pottery (clear glazes, turquoise glazes, monochrome matte glazes, light blue or dark, glazed white enamels and glazes multicolored paintings, along with various styles and designs, have presented the most striking Iranian art in the Seljuk era”(Rafice, 86: 115) figures 1 to 6.

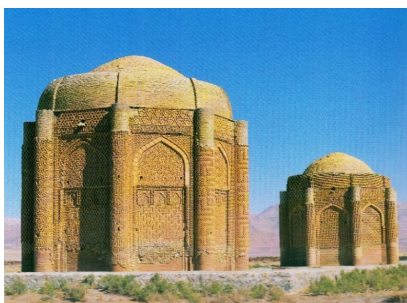


Figure 1: Kharraqan towers, <http://tripyar.com/iran>



Figure 2: Part of the brickwork of one of its buildings, each of the eight faces of the two tombstones has different brickwork, <http://www.askdin.com>



Figure 3: Part of the plaster altar of the mosque of Bastam, Seljuk period, <http://www.irantravellerir/iran>



Figures 4 and 5: Metal work and enlarged section of it, Source: Islamic Metalwork, Rachel Vand



Figure 6: The fabric of the Seljuk period with the motif of the tree of life and Harpi, Source: Iranian Art, Pop

3. Literature in the Seljuk era

The real course of the Persian literature was the Seljuk period and was governed by a decree for the Persian language of the courts. Apart from the ruling of the government, other factors were also involved in the spread of Persian literature, including the emergence of Persian literary centers in Iran, such as Isfahan, with poetry such as Jamaluddin Abdul Razak Esfahani and Azerbaijan with poets such as Khaqani and Nizami, and outside Iran with a poet like Jalaluddin Rumi.

“Religious conflicts were also a factor in the development of Persian literature in this era. These clashes led to the creation of a movement for religious scholars to compile Persian literature. Books that, on the one hand reject the enemies and condemn their religion and beliefs, and on the other hand, they were inspired by their beliefs” (Askari Chaverdi, 2010: 118).

Thus, the emergence of the two layers of the appearance and conscience of

Iranian culture emerges in a new way. On the one hand, the bias derived from the propagation of the Ash'ari word, which made it apparent in religion and overcome conscience in all aspects, and on the other hand was a pole that, in spite of the being appeared, provided an conscience thought in the form of the thought of Shiism and the Illuminationism wisdom, and the mystical journey was preserved, and it was mainly a mysterious poetic and a sardonic poem that had a language of expression. In this contrast, the appearance and the inside of the soul of Iran saw that he could not make his inner appearance in this seemingly biased. That is why in this era Iranian art is the song of Persian spirit. In this era, the Iranian soul experiences this seclusiveness and innocence in the form of mysticism and mystical art which has been prepared in advance for its fields in Iranian culture (Khatami, 2011: 151). Bukhari, in connection with the intellectual-social atmosphere of the Seljuk era, says:

“In these days, with the presence of such celebrities as Suhrawardi, Ibn Arabi and Mowlana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi Rumi, on the one hand, and on the other hand, for political and social reasons, they have a great deal to do with Sufi thoughts which was created among the people, so that the social environment of the Seljuk era was filled with mystical thoughts based on philosophy and reason”(Rabiee, 2009: 109).

The writing of emotions, wishes, the scope of imagination and intelligence of superior people who have become more sensitive and more capable of transferring them to others has created literature. The atmosphere of the periods of repression can bring poetry into a heartwarming place that, with metaphor and poetry, accommodates the well-known manuscripts and narrations from the state of the times. Therefore, during this period, mysticism and Illuminationism thought as one of the main features of Iranian thought in Persian literature, and a little by little took a particular place. On the other hand, thinking about the opportunity and enjoyment of life, which is called Khayyami's thinking, is another example of Iranian thought in the Persian literary period of this era. But love and affection are also the viewpoints of the poets of this period beyond which they have looked at themselves and expressed their inner feelings (Asna Ashari and Rastegar Fasaee, 2005).

4. The relationship of mysticism with handicrafts

Knowledge of the truth or the recognition of the right has always been the essence of the thinking of the Iranian Muslims, and the sects who recognized knowledge as their head of work and in this way mystics were in the science of the heart, and not in the knowledge of the school, or the discursive. They believed that the knowledge of the laws and the nature of the objects was impossible to discover and intuition, and in this work he must have given the heart and cleanse the soul from the filth, so that without the veil, one can realize the truth of things and matters. This great but sweet promise is the root of the formation of the works of Iranian Muslim intellectuals. The basis of the art that these artists have been trying to create is based on the presence. The artist-mystics through the imaginary forms, intuit the facts in the world of meaning, and in his invention introduces the meanings in sensory form,

or finds practical ways to convey to the audience. The science of the presence of the field provided for theoretical education of the Iranian society and allowed the Iranian artist to make his taste in new horizons. The science of the presence of the tastes led to the creator of the creation which is not separate. The form of the manifestation of the right is, of course, the recognition of the nature of the objects, their reasons, and does not depend solely on their appearance. The Iranian artist tries to work through his behavior as attendant and a merciful servant of good temper and praiseworthy traditions, and through the cultivation and tracing of the soul, he succeeded in abandoning abusive behavior and moral censure. His synthetic work helps both the artist to achieve this goal and share his audience in his conduct and behavior; because his audience is also known. Therefore, the ultimate goal of Iranian art is not to create an artwork. The art is the result of a series of epistemic behaviors and conduct that manifests itself in his art. As a result, the synthetic effect was significant from two perspectives. First of all, the very effect of austerity was turned into an act of conduct of the artist, and the practical endeavor of creating the work and learning the origin of techniques during the work of the artist became practice of conduct. And secondly, these works of art represent the synthetic work of the Iranian artist to show the truth and the examples of its creator to achieve that goal (Bani Ardalan, 2010: 115-16).

This thought was promoted in the 4th and 5th AH centuries by a group called Brethren of Purity. In this regard, Balkhari writes: Brethren of Purity, with an innovative approach combined with research and reflection on the concept of intellectuality which had a profound effect on the thoughts of the industrial mastermind, as well as artists, architects, engineers, and Iranian-Islamic designers. In addition to the scientific conduct and behavior of thought, Brethren of Purity has a practical course of action. On this basis, the system has developed a teacher-student education and a regular organization with different levels of novices and mentors and is one of the most important factors influence in the emergence of the connecting circles of wisdom, intellectual, and art in the history of Islamic civilization. They were influenced by the teachings of the infallibles (a), especially the seventh Imam, who understood the end of all the attributes of the intellectual of His excellence and knowledge. Likewise, that, for example, in the end of the culture of music, as well as all of intellectual leads back to the truth (God). In their fifth treatise which is music, they express how to make incense and say if incense is made up of spiritual principles and based on the noble form, so it creates a music that has a similar taste to the movements of the planet and the stars (Rabiee, 2009: 158-142).

5. Relationship of mysticism and symbol in handicrafts

“Ladies and Gentlemen; all of you are connected to the unseen world. In fact, the unseen is in the form of an artistic work in order to bring a well-informed audience into the same unconventional unseen reservoir that comes from there. This descent and ascension, that is, the expansion of matter by the soul, is the same as spiritual, mystical, and religious art” (Ibrahim Dinani, in Hadi Rabiee, 2009: 88).

The artist is placed in his artistic creation that comes from intuition, and stayed at a moment that goes beyond his knowledge. For this reason, he sometimes does not know what this secret is and where it originates, and if it does get to know it, it cannot express it and hence expressing it would be just a paraphrase, because the principle of receiving Illuminationism is inexpressible and incomprehensible. Cable says “Even with a superficial look, you can see the symbolic aspect of handicrafts, because not only in the objects of the production of handicrafts such as pottery and weaving, buildings, garments, craft and the like, but also in our handicraft tools, we find a significant language of the meaning of their spiritual status”(Firoozan, 2001: 152). The ascension toward God, and the survival of the word in the expression, appear in a cryptic form, and as if it were not included in the description except in this way. As the union between lover and beloved are always (albeit contradictory), such as turning grain into plants and firewood into fire and burning the butterfly (soul) in the flame of candle (divine beauty) and the firewood in the flame, and the fade of the shadow in light and droplets sea or in the form of love tales of Layla and Majnun, and Yusuf and Zulaikha, and Solomon, and Shirin, and Farhad all of which belong to the world of love, striving, and passion which are being expressed (Sattari, 2010: 164-33).

6. Some mystical symbols found in Seljuk pottery

As before, during the Seljuk period many artists used the symbol of designing and decorating their artifacts. These symbols include motifs of mystical stories, as well as natural and imaginative plant and animal designs, geometric and irregular patterns, and ultimately colors that each have their own mystical meanings.

Water: This motif has come in many scenes of lyrical and fiction based on the surface of the Seljuk pottery in the form of a creek or water reservoir at the bottom of the dish and the foot of the man and woman. “In Asia, the water is an intrinsic form of the emergence, the principle of life and the element of rebirth, physical and spiritual; the symbol of fertility, purity, wisdom, blessing and virtue. In the Islamic tradition, water is a symbol of many facts. In a more spiritual sense, Mowlana Jalaluddin Rumi, the symbol of the world’s mystical of the world, sees the ocean as the water of this ocean which is the essence of divine. It is the divine essence that steeps all creation and the waves are its creatures. On the other hand, water is a symbol of purity and is used as a cleanser and finally, water is the symbol of life; the theme of immersion in the source of immortality is always seen in the thought of Islamic mysticism, especially in Iran.

Arabesque: “The secret of the times and the importation of Sufi heart and modernity are converting the likes”(Sattari, 2010: 119). “ Arabesque is neither a beginning nor an end, and cannot demand a beginning and end, because demand is for him, as it is first and the last according to the Quran” (Knight, 1998: 183-184).

Bird types: it was a useful motif in this era. A bird in mysticism “is a symbol of life or soul, which means that the soul sees itself as inwardly winged, flying to the universe of the planet, which is its home, and this is a very ancient code. This inspiration for

attachment to the Rumi letter and the nostalgia of the western side of Suhrawardi is expressed in the most expressive language, and the story of all the pilgrims alienated from their homeland and are wandered and amazed at their home. But the essence of his humanity is based on wisdom and knowledge (medicine) and pharmacy, which means that the human is well-known and mysterious and is helping and saving and, of course, such a human being (who is a spell-bird) can fly as a poacher to the God's world, or in other words, his soul flying to the "East of the Great God", in the words of Suhrawardi"(Sattari, 2010: 119-135).

Tree: In these days, this motif, without emphasis on the type of tree, is usually used in smaller sizes and more to fill the sides of the container. "For the Ismaili sect Shiite Muslims, a tree that feeds on the soil and water and passes through the seventh heaven, is a sign of truth, the return to the eternal stage, where the mystic passes from the duality and goes to the ultimate truth where the creature and creator cross and achieve genuine unity. The tree of life, with evergreen leaves like the tree of the cave, symbolizes immortality and with four-season leaves, is a sign of alternating vivacity and a symbol of death and return to life, and thus represents the dynamism of life""(Knight, 1998: 190-191).

Cedar: This role, especially in lyrical or narrative scenes, is often seen as a haphazard (only used in this era). "This tree like everlasting trees is the symbol of immortality, that is, the life after death"(Hall, 2001: 289).

Colors: During this period, with the growth of skill in the production of colored glazes in enamel dishes, one color or golden glaze, the artist's hand was open to use in various colors. Many of these colors represent a special symbol, which in every civilization and culture its codename can be different (Figure 7).

Blue: "Is the color of the sky and the sea, the color of the cosmos and the dilation of meaning, the color of the wisdom of science and peace, and reconciliation and complete peace" (Sattari, 2010: 34). This "color of the symbol is infinite; it is the color of creation; it is the color; it is the color of the sky and the water; and the color is melon, and the color changes depending on the state and order of the soul. Blue is sometimes turquoise and sometimes also azure, and in this case it is a symbol of meditation and observation. At all times, the blue is a color of repentance and absolution; the color is transcendent and focuses on the interior of the imagination, and it gives rest and tranquility" (Khatami, 2011: 167-168).

Sapphire: "The color of benevolence and the life of the soul is the first color that affects the soul in order to ascertain the work for wisdom"(Khatami, 2011: 167).

Green: "It's a promise of the renewal of life, as well as the sign of the death-related collapse. Therefore, spiritual renewal, as well as physical effort, could be induced by the green color"(Sattari, 2010: 34).

Red: "The red color essentially belongs to the animal's human soul and so what it comes up can be attributed to this color. From ethics to emotional joy that comes to

the red symbol. We have a high degree of this color [red] that manifests itself from the horizons of the human being or purple in red, which is a sign of the presence of rationality or pure red color, which is a sign of knowledge and wisdom (Khatami, 2011: 168).

White: “Is the color of innocence, purity and innocence. It was a matter of holy deeds and acts; and since every mystery is a matter of purity, it is the white color of those who are reborn with rituals, as well as the way of the allegory of the color of spirits and soul and the white color belong to salvations and the prosperous in the after world”(Sattari, 2010: 33). “Whiteness, at its highest level, is the symbol of absolute existence, and at lower levels it is the sign of the overcoming of purity on the heart, and they are mostly expressed in a form of beauty that is characterized by these qualities and moral virtues” (Khatami, 2011: 168).



Figure 7: Sufis in Sama, each color of the dress is a sign of Sufi order, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Whirlingdervishes.JPG>

Men and women: This motif, which expresses the emotional or romantic relationship between men and women, is one of the most popular scenes of the poets of the lyric poetry and Seljuk artists. Because they regard earthly love as the symbol of the highest love, they are divine love, that is, the power of dying in Allah’s path and the survival in his path cannot be expressed except by the symbol and code. As the union between lover and beloved are always (albeit contradictory), such as turning grain into plants and firewood into fire and burning the butterfly (soul) in the flame of candle (divine beauty) and the firewood in the flame, and the fade of the shadow in light and droplets sea or in the form of love tales of Layla and Majnun, and Yusuf and Zulaikha, and Solomon, and Shirin, and Farhad all of which belong to the world of love, striving, and passion which are being expressed (Sattari, *ibid*: 159-139).

Face: The role used occasionally in the openings of the tangles or in the form of

semi-prominent edges of the bowls. “The face of man is his face, and he engraves his thoughts and feelings on the face of man. Does face turn toward light when it cannot emit light? The face of God, or the image of God, is related to the nature of God, because His observation is impossible. Therefore, the face is not for himself, but for the other, for God. The linguistic face is silent and quiet. The face is the symbol code for mysticism which is like a door that opens to the unseen; a door whose key is missing (Knight, 1998: 201)



Figure 8: Golden glaze stricture with decorative embroidered faces and a chain which encircles around the body

Phoenix: “The mythological bird that was supposed to have beautiful wings. According to a well-known legend, Phoenix was the only bird of its kind, living in the desert of Saudi Arabia, and its life was five hundred years old. At the end of the course, he sacrificed himself on a bunch of firewood (which had caused the fire to hit the wings and made a spark), and again came up from his ashes. The birds associated with the fire and the sun is called Phoenix “(Hall, 2001: 76).

Inscriptions and letters: It can be said that “no art in the cultivation of Muslim artifacts has been as effective as calligraphy. The Arabic scripts written in the horizontal line from the right to the left, the right is the area of work and effort, and the left is the heart of the way and so is way from the outside to the inside. The horizontal and wave movement of the writing is like the emergence and the formation of which is written on vertical lines, which are essentially the existential dimension or constant material”(Burkhart, 1986: 62-57). From the point of view of the scholars of God, the entire world is made up of letters, but these letters are manifest in mankind. 28 of these letters are in the Qur’an. “According to Abdul Rahman Bastami, the Sufi master, the letters, considering their original nature, lead to inner cognition, a cognition that was unattainable from other means. The letters are inspired somehow from one way

or another succession and shine in the face of the astonished eyes of the mystic, the bright light of the discovery and understanding of the latent events of the past, present and future” (Knight, same: 13).

Fish: “In general, the fertility symbol originally accompanied by the goddess mother (Hall, 2001: 100). According to mythological stories of Iran, “life has appeared in this world. The Saena tree containing all the seeds whose colorful shoots originated from all kinds of seeds and came from the waters of the Varokasha. Once upon a time, the devil sent a gigantic lizard to attack this infinite source, but ten fish, gathered round the roots of the tree to get rid of it, shoved it off” (Toni, 2005: 31).

6. Samples of Seljuk pottery with mystical designs

As before, in the Seljuk period, the art of pottery was greatly enhanced, and the artists of this field, with the help of artistic skill, creative thinking and mystical thinking, created works that were unparalleled in the preceding period, and then they were unparalleled. In this section, some of the hundreds of examples of beautiful pottery from this era have been selected to familiarize the readers with Seljuk pottery of mystical motifs. For this purpose, two types of motifs are considered to be lyrical motifs and fictitious beauties, each of which has three samples that have a good image quality. From the first series of dishes with the stories of Khosrow and Shirin, Layla and Majnun, Bahram and Azadeh were depicted from 9 to 11, and from the second series of dishes with the role of imaginative animals from 12 to 14 were selected.



Figure 9: Enamel dishes painted on the motif of Khosrow and Shirin alongside the cypress tree, birds and the fishy river (Firoozan, 2001:152)



Figure 10: The enamel plate with the story of Bahram and Azadeh on a camel, <https://www.pinterest.com/rmcclary99/minai/>



Figure 11: The motif enamel mug with scenes from Layla and Majnun's story <https://www.pinterest.com/rmcclary99/minai/>

Figure 9, a plate in which the motif of Khosrow and Shirin in the form of a noble couple is painted in a manner of respecting the enamel. "In this method, the enamel cover has been used with a few colors and glaze on a white or dark blue or turquoise glaze. This technique was originally Iranian and this method has not been used in any other area" (Rice, 2005: 79). Seljuk pottery, especially its enamel, is usually decorated with pictures of court, story or lyrical scenes. It was as if the potter had built his own design on the surface of the pottery in a beautiful plain dishes with stories or various scenes requiring the literary field of the era, and thus, at the same time create two visual and functional media roles. As previously mentioned, this period was the period of the development of Persian literature, writing and poetry. With the flourishing of literature, pottery artists used the arena to use the motif of women in the literary and

mythical stories of great poets such as Ferdowsi and Nizami, and presented the most beautiful motifs of Iran's pottery history. In the plate of Figure 9, the symbols of the tree represent the symbol of immortality or life after death, the bird is the symbol of the free soul of mystics, water as the source of life and the guardian of the tree of life. In addition, around Khosrow's head and sweet halo of light, which is a symbol of the sanctity and its high-ranking carrier, it can be seen.

In the case of the other two plates mentioned in Figures 10 and 11, it is worth mentioning; among the various sources of literature, the Shahnameh and the Nizami works are more than other places useful of the artists and potters of the Islamic era. The stories of Shahnameh include the story of Bahram and Azadeh, as well as Bijan and Manijeh, and the stories of Nizami include the story of Khosrow and Shirin, Layla and Majnun. The most fascinating scene of the story of Bahram and Azadeh from the perspective of Persian pottery artists is the moment of throwing the arrow by Bahram to deer, with numerous examples of this scene seen on the works of pottery located in different museums of the world (Hosseini, 2012: 67). In the same vein, Pope writes: "Some scholars have described this incident (Bahram and Azadeh) as symbolic of the power of manhood, which destroys his love, and in the astronomical symbolism, the sign of the blur of Venus's light, the creeping star upon his arrival the morning and the sun or the seals that are with Mars"(Hosseini, 2012: 728). Majnun's love, according to Sufism, is the display of the degree of manifestation, because love is with the mirror of beloved, then the beloved can see one's goodness only in the look of the love that he sees (Sattari, 2010: 139). An interesting point about the image of Layla and Majnun, and even the attendant, is the use of a holy golden halo on top of their heads. While these individuals were not of a high degree in terms of social status or wealth, the artist, in this way, sought to show their spiritual authority. In many of the golden glaze and enamel painted pottery, there are many female motifs that can be associated with astronomical concepts.

The use of this group of motifs, especially during the Seljuk period, is commonly used, indicating the fact that the potters or buyer has been aware of astronomical concepts and has used them for a particular purpose, such as goodness. One can imagine that the use of the symbol of the Venus and the moon in the form of women's motifs, as a symbol of aesthetics and as a symbol of goodness by Muslim potters, has been used. Because as previously mentioned, these planets, and especially Venus, have been considered by the predecessors as goddess of beauty. Some scholars of Islamic times, in addition to Venus and the moon, have also considered the symbol of other planets of the solar system, including Saturn, Jupiter, Mars and Mercury, and have been named as six brides or six Khatun (Dehkhoda, 1994: under the word six brides) (Hosseini, 2012: 73-69).

The next specimen shows a blue pitcher pottery in which a Reticular system is used which is one of the special achievements of the Seljuk potters. These containers consisted of a solid internal body that was completely hidden underneath the shell's outer motifs and mesh. The above container "is one of the best remaining examples

of this kind, with only a small portion of the outer mesh being lost. Black motifs on the glaze linen include a series of animals including a pair of harp and phoenix are found in complex motifs aquatic plants”(Khalili, 2005: 176). The characteristics of this container are remarkable in several respects, at first, the mesh of the Reticular container absorb attention. The artist with a Reticular and two-sided construction of the body of the container made it more delicate and lighter than ordinary pottery and thus releases a container from its material. The next point is the use of the motif of Harpy (two opposite faces in front of the image) and the Simorgh (on the left side of the pitcher), which is associated with the meaning of death and transmutation. Based on what has come, these forms refer to the other world and its beauty and the need for death to pass through the mortal world and continue to evolve. Understanding the purpose of the potter when it becomes clearer that we see these birds in a blue background, a symbol of meditation, and at all times was repent and return and absolution and full of the motif of the arabesques, the secret of the times, and the import of the heart mystics to the Almighty God to add an extra-spiritual and spiritual sensation. The use of the arabesque motifs, the perfect harmony of appearance, was considered the most rational way from the standpoint of the Muslim craftsmen that it was intended to adorn the surface. Because these motifs are a very clear reference to the notion that divine unity is the basis of the infinite diversity of the world. That is, the universe is made up of a single agent, like a rope or a line that goes on and on in an infinite path to itself (Burkhart, 1986: 68-75).



Figure 12: double skin Reticular pitcher of the Seljuk Period,
<http://darnia.irimgcmsBlogPics2sofal-saljoghi7.jpg>

But in the case of imaginative animals, it is more than usual to use the combination

of human face and beast. This issue, when it comes to the use of the face at the end of the lines for the first time in this era (Figure 6). Even in the case of the Phoenix, in its definition, it has a very long beak and in fact a bird's head. At this time, the Phoenix has all the characteristics of Phoenix, apart from the head that is human. In the case of Harpy, whose history has not been used in Persian motifs, it also seems to have been used without affecting art from outside Iran. If we were unaware of the meaning of the symbol of the head and the bird and of the tendencies of the potters of this era for the use of symbolic motifs, then such changes would be striking in our motifs. But with a little care we will see all these measures reflect the attention that the potters have in the world of mysticism and mystics (Refer to the symbol of the face, the bird, phoenix and harp) (Figures 13 and 14).



Figure13: Seljuk plate with the motif of Simorgh in the middle (Najafi, Iranian Works in Egypt: 274)



Figure 14: Seljuk plate with inscription, horseback riding, harp and arabesque snood, <https://www.pinterest.com/rmcclary99/minai/>

Conclusion

The Seljuk era was a time of great change in the religion and the Iranian world. The growth of economy, trade, science, art, literature, mysticism and mysticism, urbanization, and the creation and empowerment of various trades, and many other such things, made this era a unique period in Iranian history. On the other hand, the Sunni Seljuk was fanatical religions who were reluctant to change the religion of Iranians and considered any propaganda for other religions contrary to tradition and government. As a result, the way in which the themes and meanings were translated into the minds of the owners of the arts at that time was changed in such a way that: the poetic style changed from epic to mystical, and the mystics and the folk artists and poets and artists understood what they thought in their hearts. But they were not allowed to express it, they expressed in most mystical symbols. Among other influential factors in this era was the group's thinking called Brethren of Purity, which by drawing phrases about the spiritual qualities of each class, attracted many followers. They considered the courage to construct an intellectual, a kind of cultivation, a valuable soul, and regarded the artifact as the manifestation of God. The growth of such thinking among the classes and the spread of the relationship between the teacher-student, in which the teacher as a student of the disciple sought for excellence, contributed greatly to the progress of the arts and industry of this era. But more than the quantitative and qualitative development of artistic craftsmanship it was creativity and variety of motifs of this period that attracts attention. Among the above motifs, arabesque motifs, knots and lines that have a synchronized structure with mystical and monotheistic thoughts, such as the meaning of plurality in unity and unity in plurality, have been used more than other motifs. In the pottery, the natural motifs and lyrical and mystical stories such as Layla and Majnun and Khosrow and Shirin, or scenes related to the king and the attendants and the motifs of imaginative animals, were welcomed for its reasons; acquiring skills in the manufacture of various colored glazes and invented the enamel painting method and allowed the use of this color variation on the pottery. Another noteworthy point is the establishment of two important pottery centers in Rey and Kashan, which, along with frequent conflicts between religions and different classes, has mystical circles and numerous monasteries, which can be influenced by other factors on selected designs of potters of the Seljuk era. A comparative study between the pottery motifs of these two cities and other Iranian cities in this era can help to clarify this issue. Another noteworthy is the number of pottery icons used in the past, but at that time a new meaning is taken. For example, the role of woman in the dominant goddess Anahita, which is both a fertility goddess and a warrior, is also a part of life and the woman's life, now beside the male motif, is a symbol of eternal and eternal desires, and what the seeker searches to be, is a symbol of the highest love, that is, divine love, and reflects the dying in Allah path and survive in his way; such is the motif of lion, bird, tree, water.

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