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AUTHORS: Meliha YILMAZ

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A Correction For A Dragon Figured Tile In Kubadabad Palace

Meliha YILMAZ*

*G.U., Faculty of Education, Department of Primary Education Teknikokullar/Ankara

ÖZET

Bir süre Kubadabad Sarayı kazılarını yönetmiş olan Mehmet Önder gün ışığına çıkarmış olduğu figürlü bir çini kompozisyonu ejder figürü olarak tanıtmıştır. Bu çalışmada bunun bir ejder figürü değil, bir panter figürü olduğu ortaya konmaya çalışılmıştır.

ABSTRACT

A tile composition found by Mehmet Önder who led the Kubadabad Palace excavations, was presented as dragon figured tile. In this study it was proved that it was not a dragon but a panther figure.

Dragon figures, which have various symbolic means, appear almost in every fields of Seljuk's art with their common structural features such as open helical mouth, pointed ears , pointed fork like tongue and fangs (Öney, 1969 :171). Dragon figures, which appears in wooden , metal, plaster , stone and cloth crafts of these era, were naturally used in tiles as well .

The widest repertoire related the dragon figures of Seljuk's era is seen to Kubadabad Palace of Beyşehir. In the tiles of this place fantastic creatures such as sireng and sphinx were frequently used along side with human and animal figures . However according to Mehmet Önder, who led the excavations of the palace, dragon figures only

appear in two compositions (Önder, 1976 :16). The dragon figured tiles were later excavated by Rüçhan Arık . If these two compositions presented as dragon figures by Önder are examined it can be seen that they have none of the features specific to dragon figures (Photo 1, Figure 1). The piece made with sub glaze technique, was ripped in a diagonal manner from a eight cornered star shaped tile . In the piece upper right and lower middle edges were partly and upper middle edges was totally intact. But the upper left corner was broken. Before anything else there was no helical twist in the open mouth, which is the most prominent feature of Seljuk's dragons, in the composition presented in up side down manner in Önder's paper. Also there are no fangs, which is another common characteristic of Seljuk's dragons , observed in these compositions. The ears are, forget being pointed ,almost semi circular . Apart from these, the figure has a very small nose which is never seen in Seljuk's dragons. We are in the opinion that the only reason which made Önder think that these are Dragon figures is the line which gives the impression of a pointed and fork like tongue . However this line is not the pointed tongue which came the brush of the artist but it is the result of cracks in glaze which are observed in many different parts of the tile. If one examines the tile with scrutiny one can see that that this crack does not start from the middle of the open mouth but from the cheek and passes from the upper lip and the nose and goes up to upper right corner of the tile.

We can now evaluate what this figure really is . When we compare this with the other tiles in Kubadabad palace we can see the broken part of this tile containing the other part of the body, laying diagonally. There is also a tail end appearance at the end of the body .The head is turned back and there is a line resembling a collar at the end of it. The open mouth facing back and diagonally laying body are the characteristics of Eurasia animal style (Diez-Aslanapa,1955 :15-17).

This style was employed in many animal figures such as lion , tiger , sphinx and mountain goat. Although there are some differences in the surrounding motifs, there are so many compositions with the same structural appearance of this figure (Photo 2). We can easily claim that this figure is stylized tiger or panther. The spots on the body and the front part of the head are the Hun art originated motifs which were believed to have protective values and used to express motion and they are observed in many animal

figures such as swallow, various water birds , peacocks , mountain goats and sphinx in Kubadabad palace (Öney, 1984 :129, Diyarbekirli, 1968 :169).

The widest repertoire in Kubadabad palace belongs to the hunting animals . The ancient tradition of hunting was an important palace activity in Seljuk's. The return of the hunt used to be celebrated with a very big feast complemented with drinks , dance and music (Turan, 1958 :28). The main reason that the panther or tiger figure (Çoruhlu, 1995 :140-154), which is believed to represent power in Shamanistic belief and frequently encountered in Seljuk art , is used here is that it is a hunting animal.

In conclusion we can claim that the composition on the above mentioned tile is not a dragon , but a panther with a Eurasia animal style among the many compositions depicting the hunting animals .

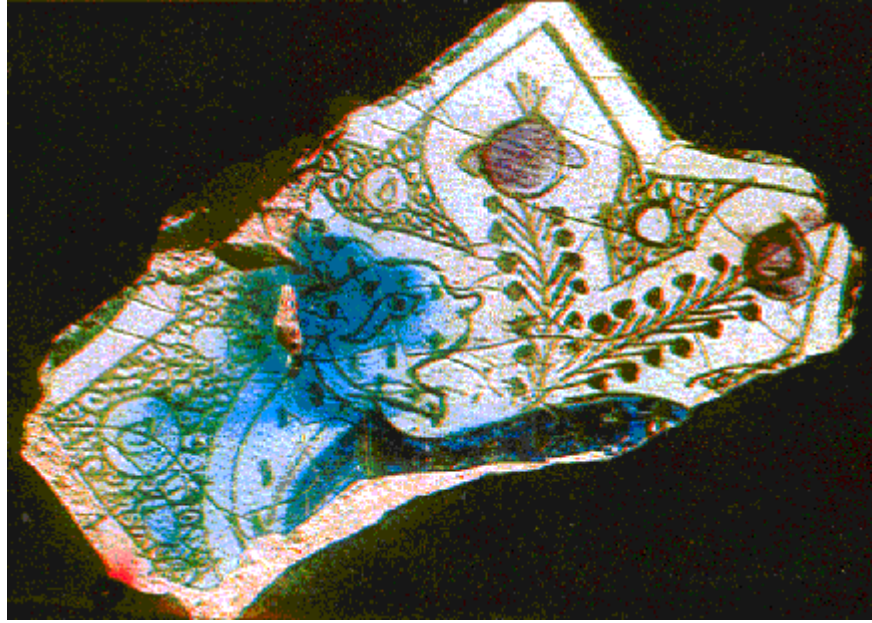


Photo 1



Photo 2

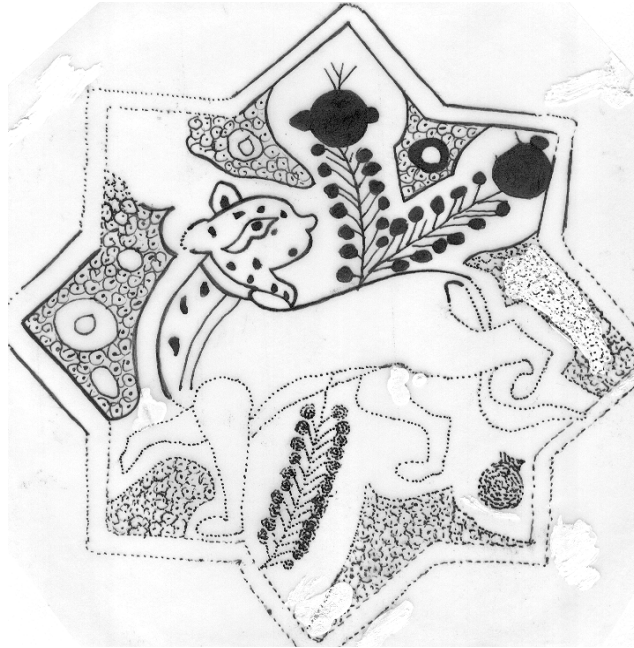


Figure 1

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