The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

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Abstract

This paper questions the validity of the term "Perso-Islamic," a label invented in scholarship on the history of the Middle East to coin the presumed cultural union between former ancient Persia and later Islamic culture. From the nineteenth century on, particularly the European historians with Indo-European philological background introduced an idiosyncratic discourse to studies on Islamic civilization. The phrase Perso-Islamic has been almost extemporaneously employed by them in places where institutions, culture and etiquette in central Islamic lands hint at elements of pre-Islamic kingship. As a result, the elements of culture in Central Asia, Iran and Anatolia that are considered as "civilized" are habitually linked to ancient Persia, and non-Iranian elements are marginalized under that holistic term, Perso-Islamic. As a chief expression of a long fostered orientalist paradigm, "Perso-Islamic" then became one of the key concepts of the grand narrative on Islamic art and architecture. The objective of this paper is first to reveal what "Perso-Islamic" refers to in historical studies, then to illustrate virtually impetuous use of the term in recent scholarship on Seljuk art and architecture.

Keywords: Perso-Islamic, Persianization, Aryanism, Seljuk, Anatolia, Art, Architecture, Historiography.

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Şarkiyatçi Yazında "İran-İslam" Kavramının Oluşumu ve Neticeleri, Selçuklu Sanat ve Mimarlık Tarihi Örneği

Öz

Bu makale, özellikle İngilizce tarih yazınında yaygın bir şekilde kullanılan "İran-İslâm" (*Perso-Islamic*) teriminin geçerliliğini sorgulamaktadır. Bu terimin gönderdiği kavram dünyası, Orta Doğu tarihi üzerine yapılan yayınlarda, eski İran kültürü ile sonrasındaki İslâm kültürü arasında bir birlik olduğu varsayımıyla icat edilmiştir. On dokuzuncu yüzyıldan bugüne İran üzerine, özellikle dilbilim kökenli tarihçilerin yaptığı çalışmalar, Hint-Avrupalılık üzerinden bir anlatı ve söylem gelişimine neden olmuş, Orta Asya, İran, Irak ve Anadolu'da İslâm döneminde ortaya çıkan medeniyet unsurları hemen her zaman eski-İran'a bağlanmıştır. Araştırmacılar bu terimi, İslâm egemenliği altındaki kurum, kültür ve âdaba ait geleneklerde İslâm-öncesi kültür unsurlarını çağrıştıran herhangi bir unsurla karşılaştığı zaman, üzerinde fazla düşünmeden yaygın olarak kullanmıştır. Bu durum İslâm medeniyetine katılan pek çok başka kültürün gözardı edilmesini; İran-İslâm adlandırmasıyla, kolaycı ve bütüncü bir yöntemle tanımlanması sonucunu doğurmuştur. Sonuçta, "İran-İslâm," bir oryantalist paradigmanın temel terimi olarak, İslâm sanat ve mimarisi üzerine hakim anlatının da anahtar kavramlarından biri haline gelmiştir. Bu makale önce "İran-İslâm" teriminin tarih çalışmalarında hangi içerikte ve amaçlarla kullanıldığını sergilemekte, daha sonra Selçuk sanat ve mimari tarihi yazımını örnek alan olarak ele alarak bu kavramın kullanımını sorgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İran-İslâm, İranlaştırma, Aryanizm, Selçuklu, Anadolu, Sanat ve Mimarlık Tarihyazımı.

Introduction

This paper questions the validity of the term "Perso-Islamic (or Iranian-Islamic)," which has been used to coin the presumed cultural union between ancient Persia and later Islamic culture. This term is greatly shaped in Islamic studies at large in its early age by scholars with a solid background in linguistics. It is also one of the primary concepts of the grand narrative on Islamic art and architecture. Though it seems to a great extent inclusive of all cultural components and actors that appeared under the banner of Islam, it is at the same time exclusive of indigenous features like idiosyncratic formations, and non-Islamic or non-Persian generic cultural elements. While building up Persian nationalism, it overshadows contributions of different cultural backgrounds to "whatever" Islamic. For example, why "Islamic" rather than "Arabic" and why "Persian" instead of Sassanid are questions, to begin with! Today nobody knows what Perso-Islamic truly refers

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

897

to! It is usually employed in places where culture, etiquette, art, and architecture in Islamic lands hint at elements of pre-Islamic kingship. It is like habitually referring to a "Greco-paganism" sort of absolute terminology when Roman imperial images are dealt with, devoid of care paid to the Roman context.

Recent scholarship in Islamic art and architecture uncovers medieval cross-cultural encounters that instigate reservations on the validity of unconditional if not stereotypical referential labels like "Perso-Islamic." My objective in this paper is first to briefly give the repercussions of the term "Perso-Islamic" in historical studies, then to illustrate the virtually impetuous use of the term in recent scholarship on Seljuk art and architecture. A full critical analysis of the term in its formation and later ramifications is not my scope here, since this depth can only be given in a dissertation or book format historical study that would delve into the contexts this term emerged and has been used. My aim in this paper, as a beginning, is to reveal why and what difficulties arose in the field of Islamic history, particularly in art and architectural historiography and a sub-branch of it, Seljuk[1].

"Perso-Islamic" has a history of usages from its inception to today. While its use for the Early Islamic period refers to the immersion of the Persian element in Islamic civilization, for the later periods it denoted a scholarly consolidation of whatever was constructed as Persian (or Iranian) in whatever Islamic in the topic under discussion. This "Persian" overrides anything non-Persian in the "Islamic" which in effect comes with the Persian already incorporated. Hence, Perso-Islamic, virtually an adjective clause, means tautologically putting a Persian layer over "Islamic" that is grounded on multifarious backgrounds[2]. How and why did researchers in Oriental/Islamic studies, notable in their scholarship, interiorize this over-generalization and credulously use it?

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1   Scholars employed different variants of the name Seljuk. Here except in quoted texts our use of Seljuk is after the "Seljuk" entry in Webster's TNID 1986 edition.

2   Among many here is the most common Perso-Islamic paraphernalia: "Perso-Islamic society," "Perso-Islamic history," "Perso-Islamic cultural synthesis," "Perso-Islamic chancellery culture," "Perso-Islamic ideology of kingship," "Perso-Islamic Institutions," "Perso-Islamic world," "Perso-Islamic mythical and historical figures," "Perso-Islamic standards," "Perso-Islamic impulses," "Perso-Islamic tradition," "classical Perso-Islamic political notion," "Perso-Islamic context," "Perso-Islamic chaharbagh garden" and "Perso-Islamic cuisine."

The Formation of Aryanism and its Repudiative Impact

Knowledge production in the initial era of Persian/Iranian studies after the eighteenth century was instigated by, according to Mansour Bonakdarian, "European investigations into racial origins and/or hierarchies[3]." Persian language included in the Indo-European family tree prompted Iranian studies. In the Netherlands, the early interest in the relationship of Indo-European languages and the possibility of historical links between the Germanic languages and Persian influenced comparative linguistics until the beginning of the nineteenth century[4]. In the first decades of the twentieth century, the British imperial interests in India, Iran, the Persian Gulf, and Afghanistan prompted the teaching and study of Persian[5]. This was followed by the foundation of the University of London's School of Oriental Studies (now the School of Oriental and African Studies; SOAS) in 1917 with the purpose to train British administrators at a time of British imperial ascendancy. Later, the British imperial spread in the former Ottoman lands and the British state-controlled oil industry in Iran gave a further impetus for sponsorship to lend oriental studies in Britain[6]. An exhibition of Persian Art directed by an American expert on Iranian art, Arthur Upham Pope, was held in London in 1931 and followed by a colossal book on Persian art[7]. Pope is emblematic of the scholarly admiration for Persia in Oriental studies at that time. In 1925, in a conference in Tehran, during his first visit to Iran with the invitation of the Society of National Heritage, Pope "deemed the art of Persia instrumental in developments not only in Turkish and Indian art but also in the art of Europe and China from as early as the fifth century BC[8]."

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[3]   Mansour Bonakdarian, "Iranian Studies in the United Kingdom in the Twentieth Century," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 43/No. 2 (April 2010), p. 272.

[4]   J. T. P. de Bruijn, "Iranian Studies in the Netherlands," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 20/No. 2-4, (1987) pp. 166-167.

[5]   Bonakdarian, *ibid*, p. 279. Also in the Netherlands with a similar commercial concern (De Bruijn, *ibid*, p. 162).

[6]   Bonakdarian, *ibid*, p. 283.

[7]   A. U. Pope, *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, Vol. 1-10, assistant editor: Phyllis Ackerman, Oxford University Press, London New York 1938-.

[8]   Kishwar Rizvi, "Art History and the Nation: Arthur Upham Pope and the Discourse on "Persian Art" in the Early Twentieth Century," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 24, (2007) p. 47.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

899

Pope, in this conference, contrasted Persian art with the cultures of the Semitic Arabs and the "barbaric" Turks whose art according to him had Persian origins[9]. Pope's eulogy for Persian art delighted Reza Shah and his officials, who were consolidating Iranian nationalism at home. Pope did his best to prove to the Iranian intellectuals that they were the inheritors of a great "Aryan" civilization in Iran[10]. Pope's conference in the face of Reza Shah integrates a stagy political tone but also gives an inkling of the facts of the nineteenth century Orientalist Aryanism, which debarred particularly the Turks as a civilizing society in contrast to the Persians. Later in the 1940s, pre-Islamic Iran, particularly the Achaemenids and their capital Persepolis were regarded as symbols of the greatness of Iran. The Pahlavi dynasty's cultural policy actively promoted the "Achaemenidization" of ancient Iranian history[11]. Hence, Iran's pre-Islamic past was greatly demarcated as a chapter of its cultural history to consolidate the modern Imperial State of Iran.

Before the modern era, "Achaemenidization" (or "Sasanization") was not as favorable as Pahlavis later thus acknowledged. For instance, Diyā' al-Dīn Baranī of Delhi (1285-1357), the *nadim* (royal mentor) of Muhammad bin Tughluq (the Sultan of Delhi from 1325 to1351), in his work on government, *Fatāwā-i Jahāndārī*, counsels the rulers not "to adopt the imperious manners and the luxurious habits of the kings of Iran before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad[12]." Conversely, modern historians took sides to the bone with the Pahlavis in the admiration of ancient Persia. If modern historian Clifford E. Bosworth would be a contemporary of Diyā' al-Dīn Baranī, he would probably find his counsel hopeless! On the first page of his introductory chapter in *The Cambridge History of Iran, fifth volume: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, Bosworth holds that "For nearly a thousand years (…) all of the alien ruling dynasties have come from races of low cultural development, and thus they have lacked the administrative expertise necessary for ruling a land of ancient settlement and civilization. Whether consciously or unconsciously,

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9   Rizvi, *ibid*, p. 47

10 For a discussion on how "Aryan Theory," which bestows privilege upon Indo-European in the face of non-Indo-European occupied intellectual circles before and coeval to Pope's career see Stefan Arvidsson, "Aryan Mythology As Science and Ideology," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 67/No. 2 (June 1999), pp. 327-354.

11 Touraj Daryaee, "The Study of Ancient Iran in the Twentieth Century," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 42/No. 4 (Sep., 2009), p. 583.

12 P. Hardy, "Unity and Variety in Indo-Islamic and Perso-Islamic Civilization: Some Ethical and Political Ideas of Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Baranī of Delhi, of al-Ghazālī and of Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūsī Compared," *Iran*, Vol. 16 (1978), p. 129.

they have adopted Iranian culture at their courts, and they have been compelled to employ Iranian officials to administer the country and collect the taxes[13]." Thus, for Bosworth, non-Iranian in Iran means to be from a "lower culture, an insignia of the magnified "Persian" enduring in Islamic studies in the aftermath of early twentieth-century Persianism.

The modern "Iranian" versus "Turkish" scenario is an output of this trend, which suggests inspiration from the fabled demarcation of sedentary Iran and nomadic Turan[14]. In Yashts, the Turanian leader Franrasiyān (Afrāsiyāb) is overthrown by the Iranian king Kay Khusrow. David Bivar aptly suggests real historical opponents from the history of Iran and its fringes that inspired such allegorical figures[15]. This image even today is so haunting that an anthropologist regards the Turks of two

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13   C. E. Bosworth "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. I000-I217)," *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, ed. J. A. Boyle: At The University Press, Cambridge 1968, p. 1.

14   The division of crude "nomadic Turc" and "Persianized sedentary Turc" reigns in historical studies on the Seljuks today. It is so overwhelming that in a recent study on the Great Seljuks, Turkish origin ruling body (the court) portrayed as wandering in tents outside of the cities which were supposedly governed by the Horasanī Iranians (David Durand-Guédy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers*, Routledge, Oxon 2010 pp. 79-100, 300). This sort of an approach disregards syncretic nature of medieval culture in Islamic lands. We know that nomadic infiltrations in Central Asia, Iran and Anatolia ended up with sedentarization. A fine case is the early settlers of Bukhara who arrived from Turkistan, initially setting tents and pavilions, then erected permanent buildings (*Al-Narshakhi's The History of Bukhara*, trans. with a commentary by R. N. Frye, Markus Wiener Publications, Princeton 2011, p. 5). Peacock in his recent study on the formation of Seljuk reign from tenth to eleventh century emphasized that "Studies of comparable societies show that nomadic and sedentary groups may be complementary, and an entire community or tribe may alternate between nomadism and sedentarism (…) Thus neither Oghuz nor Türkmen are synonymous with nomad (…)" (A. C. S. Peacock, *Early Seljūq History: A New Interpretation*, Routledge, New York 2010, pp. 55-56). For a more reliable account of Seljuk urbanism and Seljuk extramural and intramural courtly life in tents outside towns and in palace complexes at town centers see Peacock's recent book, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, pp. 156, 166-172, 302-308. Faruk Sümer's widely referred book on urbanism among ancient Turks provides credible material on semi nomadism and towns settled by the Turks in Transoxiana and beyond (Faruk Sümer, *Eski Türklerde Şehircilik* Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, İstanbul 1984). As a matter of fact, the material culture of the Seljuks undeniably refutes any hypotheses based on nomadic-sedentary segregation since the Seljuk hegemony and art in Iran and elsewhere, nourished by the culture of both towns and countryside. For a rich visual source for Seljuk art and architecture extending from Central Asia to western Anatolia incorporating and synthesizing diverse elements from nomadic and urban backgrounds see S. R. Canby, D. Beyazit, M. Rugiadi, A. C. S. Peacock (eds.), *Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Seljuks*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University, New Haven, London 2016.

15   A. D. H. Bivar, "The Role of Allegory in the Persian Epic," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, Vol. 14 (2000), pp. 22-23.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

901

sorts as either "urbanized and Persianized or rural and very Turkish[16]." As another typical example, one of the eminent scholars of Turkish and Middle Eastern studies, Peter B. Golden, in a paper on the history of Turkish-Iranian interaction, estimates an Iranian ("or even earlier Indo-Iranian" as he coins) background even for the pre-Islamic Turkic cultural elements like "pastoral nomadism," "religion and attendant concepts of royal/imperial ideology" (including the concept of *qut*, heavenly good fortune), "trade," "runiform script and even language" and "urbanization[17]." Golden expresses these with probability clauses like "possible," "probably," "may have or may well have," "very likely," "very close." Golden even accepts without any reservation the Iranist's conviction that the Abbāsid Caliphate itself was "an Islamic version of the Sasanid Empire[18]." Richard N. Frye is not less insubstantial in his presumptions and probabilities of Persian backgrounds for almost all considerable cultural formation in the history of Iran and Central Asia. For example professional army, sacral kingship (or royal glory), slave guards or soldiers, administration, art and an economy based on production (as he puts it not an economy based on the exploitation of others like nomads did!)[19]. Yuri Bregel who contributed a paper to the same volume is a champion of Arianism. According to him Turks and Mongols were "nomads and barbarians" and "the Turco-Mongol penetration to Central Asia (…) contributed (…) to the political, economic and cultural decline of the country[20]."

The Elusiveness of the Philolog's Persian Sources

Reliable historical knowledge to expose the incorporation of pre-Islamic establishments in the Islamic state apparatus is very restricted since no authentic source

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16 R. L. Canfield, "Introduction: The Turko-Persian Tradition," *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*, ed. R. L. Canfield, Cambridge University Press, New York 1991, p. 12.

17 P. B. Golden, "Turks and Iranians: An Historical Sketch," *Turkish-Iranian Contact Areas*, ed. L. Johanson and C. Bulut, Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 18, 20-21, 23, 24.

18 Golden, *ibid*, p. 26.

19 R. N. Frye, "Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Cultures of Central Asia," *Turko-Persia*, pp. 40-41, 44-45.

20 Yuri Bregel, "Turko-Mongol Influences in Central Asia," *Turko-Persia*, p. 69, 73. Victims of the Arianism thesis are not only Turks. It is telling to observe in the 2000's, in California, USA, the persistence of the "Aryan Theory" among its advocates in academia. The targets are now Hindus set against "magnificent Aryans;" defense is thorny, as Navaratna S. Rajaram puts "any opposition to the Aryan theories is denounced as irrational, chauvinistic and the handiwork of Hindu nationalists and fundamentalists. N. S. Rajaram, "Racism in Academia: A Long Twilight," *The Journal of International Issues*, Vol. 11/No. 3 (Autumn 2007), p. 168.

adequately informs on it. Despite this, scholars who are aware of such difficulties maintain the Persianization paradigm. Bertold Spuler, wholly assured of "Iraniza-tion of Islam," is quite confident in his statement that "for Islām, at any rate, the model, which it knew and of which it was conscious, was the state of the Iranian Great King[21]." He also contradictorily goes on to say, "But here (Mesopotamia) the taking-over of pre-Islamic administrative practices is still harder to recognize because we are provided only imperfectly with source materials from Sassanid times for this area[22]."

Specifically, the scholars who excelled in Semitic and Indo-Iranian languages argued that Hellenistic, Roman/Byzantine, and Iranian traditions persisted under the rule of the new possessors of the Middle East. Hamilton A. R. Gibb is among them[23]. Claude Cahen has a critical approach to this in remarking that the documentation in the former Roman and Hellenistic lands was in Latin and Greek, which were not familiar to the majority of the population. These sources deal with governmental affairs and Hellenized and Romanized social groups which led to the overstatement of Hellenic and Roman influences and "at the expense of other more durable elements belonging to the native population" (…) it is almost impossible to know which elements were able to survive the regime change and carry on unaltered and as before[24]." Similarly, Gustave E. von Grunebaum is skeptical of the available sources; for example, the city administration thought to be patterned after Persian, though we have little tangible evidence to prove this[25]. Contrasting the prevalent meta-narratives, Cahen emphasizes the persistence of the native hues even in the realm of law (*fiqh*). According to him, "Muslim law always recognized and respected popular local customs[26]." Identifying the shortcomings of the medieval sources, Marshall G. S. Hodgson also has a critical approach to

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21 Bertold Spuler, "Iran: The Persistent Heritage," *Unity and Variety in Muslim Civilization*, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London 1955, p. 169, 173.

22 Spuler, *ibid*, p. 171.

23 H. A. R. Gibb, "The Evolution of Government in Early Islam," *Studia Islamica*, No. 4 (1955), pp. 5-17.

24 Claude Cahen, "Socio-Economic History and Islamic Studies: Problems of Bias in the Adaptation of the Indigenous Population of Islam," trans. P. Ditchfield, *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society*, ed. R. Hoyland, Ashgate, Aldershot 2004, p. 262.

25 G. E. Von Grunebaum, "The Sources of Islamic Civilization," *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2b: *Islamic Society and Civilization*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S. Lambton, Bernard Lewis, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1970, p. 496.

26 Cahen, *ibid*, p. 15.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

903

philological perspectives in Islamic studies. Firstly because "Islamic studies have tended to be concerned (…) within the high culture (…) preoccupied with religious, literary, and political themes, which are most accessible to a philological approach[27]." Secondly, the dominant language discourse guided judgments. For example, according to him, "identify(ing) 'Islamic culture' as culture appearing in the Arabic language," is misleading and reflects "an Arab-centered or 'Arabistic' viewpoint[28]." The reason for this concentration on the culture of the group whose language rose to the level of *lingua franca* is the philologist's concern in the origin of the terms that are (in the word of Hodgson) "at least more accessible, than the origin of the actual institutions to which they are applied[29]."

Given Hodgson's considerations of the authentic sources in the case of Persian, the situation seems more critical. According to him, "Sasanian religious and social history must be reconstructed from archaeological and indirect textual sources, with very few major literary witnesses from the period itself. Aramaic, Greek, or Armenian texts view affairs largely from the outside and marginally. The Pahlavî texts are often suspect as having been edited, at least, in Islamic times, or they must even be reconstructed from Arabic and Persian translations and adaptations. Even when we do have undoubted Pahlavî texts from Sāsānian times, the original script was so tricky, and the manuscript tradition has been so defective that reading the texts must be left to philological specialists. In consequence, few scholars have entered the field and those who have been tempted to indulge in rather wild philological speculation, building much on shreds of verbal detail[30]." Bosworth in another place likewise emphasizes the inadequacy of the authentic sources: "In all questions pertaining to the internal organization of the Sāsānid Empire, we are hampered by the paucity of contemporary Middle Persian sources, and our consequent dependence on post-Islamic Arabic ones[31]." These latter are also susceptible. As Robert G. Hoyland remarks, "the mediators of the Persian tradition in

27 Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, *Vol. 1: The Classical Age of Islam*,: The University of Chicago Press, Chicago And London 1974, p. 41.

28 Hodgson, *ibid*, pp. 41-42.

29 Hodgson, *ibid*, p. 42.

30 Hodgson, *ibid*, p. 43. In a similar way, Richard N. Frye in terms of the impact of Achaemenid Persia on Central Asia concedes that "we have so few sources for the post-Achaemenid history of Central Asia that it is impossible to reconstruct these influences" (Frye, *ibid*, p. 44).

31 C. E. Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past," *Iran* , Vol. 11 (1973), p. 52.

Islam were chiefly secretaries at the ʿAbbāsid court, who were in general Aramean Christians rather than Iranian Zoroastrians[32].” This vagueness of the philologist's tool raises serious doubts on the adoption of ideas and customs from the Persian past of the Middle East.

Even the substantive facets of influence of ancient Persia on Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid kingships are not as intense as one would expect. A paper by Bosworth recites them as such: the organization of the court on hierarchical lines, chamberlain (*hājib*) guarding the monarch, the introduction of a harem system, boon companions (*nudamā*), prostration (*taqbīl*), *dīwān* and state postal service (*Barīd*)[33]. In addition to these, legends about Persian emperors and the literary genre of *adab* (etiquette/cultivation) with its advocates became a part of the cosmopolitan society of the Arab Caliphate; the "Mirrors for Princes" genre strengthened this[34]. Spuler is also not much prolific in his list of direct Persian borrowings and goes on to say, "Details on this persistence of Sassanid conditions cannot always be gotten at easily, for in Iran and Mesopotamia, in contrast to Egypt, we lack papyri as documents of the daily life[35].”

Despite this scarcity, Persian elements are exaggerated not only today but also in medieval Persian sources since these sources echo Iranian partialities; they are at the same time elitist discarding "subaltern perspectives," as Edmund Herzig emphasized[36]. The authors of *adab* were very selective. They overlooked the realities of the time and adduced the past through legends. As Carole Hillenbrand indicates, *adab* authors reflected a "model court rather than an actual one[37].” Ann K. S. Lambton is of this opinion concerning Iran after Saljūq infiltration, "they (writers) represent the 'Persian' and not the 'Turko Mongolian' point of view. Because of this, the reality is to some extent concealed[38].” According to Bosworth,

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32 R. G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It: A survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*, The Darwin Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1997, p. 241: note 19.

33 Bosworth, "The Heritage," p. 51-53.

34 Bosworth, "The Heritage," p. 55-56.

35 Spuler, *ibid*, p. 177.

36 Edmund Herzig, "Foreword," *The Age of the Seljuks*, ed. by E. Herzig and S. Steward, I.B. Tauris, London 2015, pp. 3-4.

37 Carole Hillenbrand, "Aspects of the Court of the Great Seljuqs," *The Seljuqs: Politics, Society and Culture*, ed. C. Lange and S. Mecit, Edinburh University Press, Edinburgh 2011, p. 24.

38 A. K. S. Lambton, "Changing Concepts of Justice and Injustice from the 5th/11th Century to the 8th/14th Century in Persia: The Saljuq Empire and the Ilkhanate," *Studia Islamica*, No. 68 (1988), p. 30.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

905

under the Saljūqs as well, Persian and Arabic sources disregarded non-Persian or
non-Arabic: "Many old Turkish traditions and practices were still of significance
during Malik-Shah's reign, although this is frequently obscured by the exclusively
Arabic and Iranian nature of the historical sources[39]." Hillenbrand also suspects
legitimacy of the medieval sources by religious scholars and bureaucrats on Sel-
juk history, who were non-Turkish Muslim chroniclers and molded Seljuk rule in
"Perso-Islamic statecraft[40]." Andrew C. S. Peacock's recent book on the Great Sel-
juks provides a critical evaluation of the medieval sources in Persian and Arabic
on the Seljuks. To give an example, according to him, Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama*
and Kayka'us b. Iskandar's *Qabusnama* "(…) are more useful for understanding the
ideal than the reality[41]". Recently Peacock reiterated the fact that "even in the field
of bureaucracy, where Iranians are thought to have predominated, the Seljuq sys-
tem was quite distinct from its antecedents, introducing new offices and practices
reflecting the Seljuq's Turkish heritage (…) even where older local institutions con-
tinued with the same names, their function often changed considerably under the
Seljuqs. The Seljuq political system was thus rather more Turkish and less Iranian
than Nizam al-Mulk suggested[42]." Hence, the scenery presented by the sources in
Persian was different from the realities of a multicultural and multiethnic social
and administrative system, which was shaped and nurtured by a constant appro-
ach of inclusiveness.

39 C. E. Bosworth, "The Political", p. 79.

40 Hillenbrand, "Aspects", pp. 23-24.

41 A. C. S. Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2015, pp.
12-19. This tradition created and promoted by the clerks continued in later periods. *Makhzan
al-inshā* (Treasure House of Insha) by a Timurid chancellery official, Kamal al-Din Husayn
Va'iz-i Kashif'i of Herat (d. 1504-05), deliberately omits many court positions that existed in
Turco-Mongol political discourse like *bukāvul*, *yārghūchī*, *qūshbeg*, *akhtahbeg*, *sūchī*, *bārschī*, or *qūrchī*.
According to Colin P. Mitchell, the *Makhzan al-inshā* "reflects Turkic-Tajik enmity at a certain
level and surfaces then as yet another Persian bureaucratic response to the political supremacy of
nomadic groups such as the Mongols and the Turks" (C. P. Mitchell , "To Preserve and Protect:
Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi and Perso-Islamic Chancellery Culture," *Iranian Studies*, (Dec., 2003), Vol.
36/No. 4, p. 488, 503, 505).

42 A. C. S. Peacock, "The Great Age of the Seljuks," *Court and Cosmos: The Great Age of the Seljuks*,
ed. S. R. Canby, D. Beyazit, M. Rugiadi, A.C.S. Peacock, MET, Yale University Press, New York
2016, pp. 9-10.

Particularistic and Universalist Trends in Early Islamic Period

 Scholars of Islamic history remark a fusion in Islamic civilization, but Iran is paramount. For instance, according to Hoyland "(the) influence of Iran upon Muslim civilization was great, it was precisely within the framework of Islam that this influence operated[43]." Bosworth makes a quotation from the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd b. al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (reigned 744), an Arab of Qurashi paternal descent, to evince the Islamized Arabs' ongoing praise of Persia "I am the descendant of the Persian Emperor, my forefather was Marwān, and both the Emperor of Byzantium and the Khāqān of the Turks were my ancestors[44]." According to Bosworth, by the ninth century, two cultural traditions, Persian and Arab-Muslim came together on equal terms and the resultant Islamic civilization was a symbiosis of them[45]. Discordant to what Bosworth understands from the aphorism, Yazīd b. al-Walīd, evidently attaches equal status to the pieces of his presumed Persian, Byzantine, and Turkish lineage. This chapter is about the composite nature of Islamic culture.

Suliman Bashear, who recently identified the elements of Arabism and religious universalism using traditional Muslim sources, demonstrates that the particularism of Arab ethnicity played a great part[46]. According to him, the Umayyad and early 'Abbāsid orientation was an Arab one and a process of fusion took place in the format of "Arabisation of Islam." In this process, Bedouins (*a'rāb*) became reconciled with Islam and "Arab particularism and Islamic religious universalism were fused[47]. As to the non-Arabs, the Arabic governing body carried out an ambivalent approach; acceptance and rejection bound up with the balance between interdependence and particularism.[48] The policies of the Emevid caliphs were pro-Arab, and Arabs and non-Arabs who took part in the 'Abbāsid movement (*da'wa*) remained "Arab in leadership and political aspiration[49]."

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43 Hoyland, *Seeing Islam As Others Saw It...*, p. 241.

44 Bosworth, "The Heritage," p. 53.

45 Bosworth, "The Heritage," p. 53.

46 Suliman Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*, the Darwin Press, New Jersey 1997, p. 5.

47 Bashear, *ibid*, pp. 41-42, 53, 113.

48 Bashear, *ibid*, p. 67, 76.

49 Bashear, *ibid*, p. 118. Gibb's remark strengthens this: "it is very questionable whether the Abbāsids were persophile" (H. A. R. Gibb, "The Social Significance of Shuubiya," *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Routledge, London and New York 1962, p. 69).

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

907

In the central lands of Islam, Arab attitude to ethnic groups and non-Arabs was quite pragmatic depending on benefit motive and political circumstances. Arab ethnicity, lineage, and language were increasingly favored by the higher echelons of the Muslim community. Though in the east, the Persian dynasties like Tāhirids, Būyids, Sāmānids, Saffārids, and Turkish slave origin Ghaznavids were keen to link themselves to the old heroic past of the kings of Iran[50]. In the north and north-east, the free Turkish origin Qarakhanids and Seljuks turned to their heroic Turkish past. The Qarluq tribal khans (Qarakhanids) assumed Âl-i Âfrasiyāb, descendants of Âfrasiyāb, the king of Tūran in Iranian epic tradition and the foe of Kai Kâ'ūs, who also was identified with Turkish folk hero Alp Er Tonga. The Seljuks also linked themselves to the Âfrasiyāb and Oghuz clans of Qiniq[51]. These references evince a sort of "medieval patriotism" under the universalist banner of Islam. "*Shu'ūbiyya* movement" is also quite informative in this context.

The Shu'ūbiyya movement in Islamic history started in the eighth century and reached its peak in the ninth century. Its proponents (also named *Ahl al-taswiya*) aimed at equality between non-Arabs and Arabs. Most of the *Shu'ūbī*s were Persians who were poets and secretaries. They were faithful to the Sassanid tradition and specifically concerned with Sassanid court culture. Their translations of the biographies of the kings of Persia, and works on practical knowledge about government echo this tradition[52]. The *Shu'ūbiyya* was essentially a literary controversy and *Shu'ūbī*s did not greatly concern political or governmental issues[53]. Their movement cannot be regarded as a "Persian nationalist movement[54]." It was more of a territorial concern. Iranian *Shu'ūbī*s attached to the land of Iran similar to the majority of Iranians[55]. According to Roy P. Mottahedeh, Shu'ūbiyya poets and Iranians, in general, defined themselves considering their town and locality. In *Shāhnāmaha* epic, the terms *mīhan* (native land), *Irān-zamīn* (the land of Iran), and *shahr-i Irān* (the city/land of Iran) refer to the territory of Iran where Iranians

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50 Bosworth, "The Heritage," p. 56-61. For the "renaissance of Persian literature" under the Sāmānids see by E. Yar-Shater, "Persian Literature," *The Cambridge History of Islam*, p. 672.

51 Bosworth, "The Heritage", p. 62.

52 S. Enderwitz "Al-Shu'ūbiyya," EI, Vol. 9, Brill, Leiden 1997, p. 513-516. Gibb,"The Social," pp. 63-64.

53 R. P. Mottahedeh, "The Shu'ubiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* , Vol. 7/No. 2 (Apr., 1976), p. 162.

54 Gibb, "The Social," p. 66.

55 Mottahedeh, *ibid,* p. 171.

live, who are not necessarily from common ancestry[56]. The upper echelons of the Iranian society, especially landlords and clerks, were proud of their Iranian past. Governmental control of the Seljuks protecting their "portion of *Irān-zamīn*" was not a challenge against their Iranian group feeling[57]. Under the Seljuks, the existing local dynasties turned out to be vassals and remained untouched, only paying tribute to the Turks[58]. This backed the Seljuk dominion in Iran, which introduced a symbiosis of the cultures of Eurasiatic and Iranian backgrounds rather than one conquering the other.

Though not a serious threat and not as destructive as one would expect, the skepticism and free thinking (*zandaqa*) instigated by the Shu'ūbīs was received with disapprobation and aroused the anger of the orthodox circles since anti-Arabic thoughts also alleged to be anti-Islamic[59]. According to Gibb, the reaction to this trend condemned dualist heresies and sow the roots of the Mutazilite theology[60]. Shu'ūbī influence gradually decreased with the involvement of an urban middle class in the highest positions of government[61].

Arabic Humanities, Integration of Cultures and Now Fluctuating Persianization Thesis

More influential in the demise of the Shu'ūbiyya is a counter intellectual movement. According to Gibb, author Al-Jahiz (Amr b. Bahr, 776-869), who was one of the founders of Arabic humanities, "on the one hand satirized the defects, the pomposities, the narrow-mindedness of the secretaries, but at the same time integrated what was of practical value in the Persian tradition with the Muslim sciences[62]." Ibn Qutaiba (828-289) consolidated the path paved by Al-Jahiz with Arabic and Muslim sciences also incorporating the Sassanian traditions of court etiquette and administration. Their great synthesis canonized and caused late Per-

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56   Mottahedeh, *ibid*, p. 172, 173.

57   Mottahedeh, *ibid*, p. 181-182.

58   Peacock, "The Great Age," p. 7.

59   Gibb, "The Social," p. 70.

60   Gibb, "The Social," p. 70.

61   Enderwitz, *ibid*, p. 513-516.

62   Gibb, "The Social," p. 71.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

909

sian works *Shahnama* by Firdawsi and *Siyasatnama by* Nizam ul-Mulk to remain ineffectual in the face of Arabic literature and ethics[63].

The initial Arab and Persian encounters in Iraq and Persia in the Emevid period encrypted the far-reaching tendency of integration we see in the formative period of Islamic culture. From the beginning, their interaction was not one of "a conquered conquering the conqueror." As Gibb remarked it was "putting Arabs and non-Arabs together in social, economic and intellectual activities[64]." At the end of the Shu'ūbiyya movement, Arabic humanities triumphed with the help of the literary heritage of ancient Arabia and incorporated the Sassanian tradition[65]. When later at the end of the eleventh century, vizier Nizam al-Mulk founded *Nizamiya* madrasas in the Seljuk era, the teaching program was based on Arabic humanities to train the members of the "orthodox bureaucracy" to replace the secretarial class[66]. In the early period of its formation, as Hoyland states "Islam ended up, then, as something of a hybrid religion" without losing the initial Arab focus[67]. Hoyland objects religious outlook of the Western scholars restricting the definitions of the "Islamic culture" with the religious dimension and states that civilization is something else. He tends to see "Islamic civilization" shaped by a pluralist society with different actors of diverse backgrounds. But, Hoyland, in the same place, also mentions "large-scale Persianization of Islamic culture" in literature, history, art, statecraft and court etiquette, which paralleled to the infiltration of Semitic, Hellenistic, ancient/antique Middle East in realms like law, and "Islamization of history". Hoyland's study evinces how the "Perso-Islamic model" founded by the fathers of Islamic history persists in contemporary research. Even in a book where the ingredients of Islamic civilization indiscriminately revealed, the author, assured of the superiority of the Persian in Islamic civilization, still overemphasizes it in the face of the other ingredients[68].

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63   Gibb, "The Social," p. 72.

64   H. A. R. Gibb, "An Interpretation of Islamic History," *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Routledge, London and New York 1962, p. 10.

65   Gibb, "An Interpretation," p. 13.

66   Gibb, "An Interpretation", p. 24.

67   R. G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: the Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2015, p. 219.

68   Hoyland, *In God's Path*, pp. 219-227.

Governmental theory and practices are every so often explained in reference to historical backgrounds as such. What Rome and Persia for the student of the medieval Middle East, Han period is for the Sinologue. The absence of connecting archival documents usually opens gates for inventive inferences. Ann K. S. Lambton explains Persian impact on al-Ghazālī's Nasīhat al-mulūk (1105-1111), a mirror for princes, as such: "(…) he appears to look to the Sasanian tradition of absolute monarchy rather than to a patriarchal concept of rule[69]." In the Seljuk case, we hardly find a similar approach alternatively connecting the Seljuk sultanate for example to the Turkish Khanate traditions of divine legitimization. One of the very rare and extraordinary cases is Hillenbrand's remark, who relates Tughril's title of 'Sultan of East and West' to "the nomadic concept of world dominion in the steppes – a symbol of Turkish sovereignty[70]." What differentiates possible Persian associations are simply romanticist ascriptions by means of idealistic medieval Persian prose composed in a syncretic Islamic context centuries after the Sassanid era.

Hodgson too, in his depiction of Early Islamic state formation greatly employs Persian precedents, but also emphasizes its integrative nature: "the Islamicate civilization may be seen as the latest phase of the IranoSemitic culture which goes back, in the lands from the Nile to Oxus, to Sumerian times[71]." This idea is the backbone of his theory of a sort of civilizational chronology in world history. Unfortunately, Hodgson fails to convince his readers why and how his concept of "IranoSemitic" sums up the entire history of the Middle East from the Nile to Oxus[72]. Nonetheless, Hodgson justifiably aimed to strip Islamic studies off earlier Arabism to integrate pre-Islamic developments into Islamic history. His synthetic approach to Near Eastern History correlating ancient Sumerian beginnings and later developments up to the Islamic age is truly rewarding.

History teaches us that every inheritance is inherited. Linda T. Darling has recently demonstrated the Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian roots of state structures and political concepts that until recently thought to be of Persian origin; Circle

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69   A. K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory: The Jurists* RoutledgeCurzon London, [1981] 1991, p. 117.

70   Hillenbrand, "Aspects," p. 28.

71   Hodgson, *ibid,* p. 43.

72   His meta-term "Irano-Semitic" remains a generalization in his philosophical history. The explanation Hodgson offers for "Irano-Semitic" in note 9, on p. 117 is not much endorsable.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

911

of Justice is among them. According to Darling, "Mesopotamian governmental concepts, filtered through Persian political and social arrangements, were thus available to Islamic political thought as soon as the Arabs left the peninsula, and probably before[73]." Darling's view that the patterns thought to be Persian were mostly ancient Mesopotamian is quite illuminating: "the translation of Persian literary and political works into Arabic stimulated Muslim society's assimilation of ancient Mesopotamian ideals understood as Persian because they were articulated in the speeches of Persian kings[74]."

Grunebaum employs the term "Perso-Islamic synthesis," indicating the inseparable integration of Persian in Islam. According to him, the Persian self-consciousness of the tenth century "fostered rather than disrupted the process of integration of Iranian elements" in Islamic civilization[75]. The language we today call "New Persian" is a good case. It was a product of the new Muslim society in eastern Iran, a symbiosis of elements. It was written with Arabic script as a multicultural and multiethnic construction. It replaced Middle (Pahlavi) and Old (Avestan) Persian after passing a formative period between the seventh and ninth centuries. It was a product of the new vernacular from Middle Persian (Dari), which had been exported to Khurasan from the Sasanian capital and developed in symbiosis with the imperial literary and political culture of Arabic. It absorbed Arabic and became an Arabicate language[76]. The proponent of the multi-ethnicity of New Persian is an Iranologist, Bo Utas, who indicates that this sort of a new language "may have

73 L. T. Darling, "The Vicegerent of God, from Him We Expect Rain": The Incorporation of the Pre-Islamic State in Early Islamic Political Culture," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 134/No. 3 (July, September 2014), p. 416.

74 Darling, *ibid*, p. 426. My master's thesis laid the ancient Mesopotamian backgrounds of the "double-headed eagle" that we find in Seljuk art and in its cosmological symbolism, in Iran and Anatolia. When I demonstrated this possible link in Seljuk art, specifically the double-headed eagle, the scholarly circles in this field were not much ready to receive associations stretching over millennia (A. U. Peker, "Double Headed Eagle of the Seljuks: A Historical Study," unpublished master's thesis, Bosphorus University, İstanbul 1989)

75 Von Grunebaum, p. 501. It was a process from 8th to the 10th century. Islamization of Iran introduced a new culture not only in letters but also in visual arts. Bloom emphasize that while "the Arabic word replaced the Persian image (…) oddly enough Persian was reemerging as a literary language" (J. M. Bloom, "The Expression of Power in the Art and architecture of Early Islamic Iran," *Early Islamic Iran*, Vol. 5 of *The Idea of Iran*, ed. E. Herzig and S. Stewart, I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, New York 2012, p. 116).

76 Nile Green, "Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World (ca. 800–1900)," *Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, ed. Nile Green, University of California Press, 2019, p. 10, 12, 14.

developed in a heterogeneous linguistic area. (...) As a new medium for commerce along the trade routes in Eastern Iran and Central Asia (…) New Persian is not a direct, linear continuation of Middle Persian, neither written "Pahlavi" nor spoken "Dari," but partly new construction that simplifies Middle Persian in various analogous ways, possibly under the influence of morpho-syntactic patterns in other languages, including Turkic[77]." Golden names "assimilation" to this reconciliation of the elements. He indicates that "Turkic, Iranian and Arabic traditions, all within the bounds of an Islamic world view, shaped this culture" (the culture here is of the "composite" society that appeared after the Samanid decline), and in it, he finds a "continued Turco-Soghdian symbiosis, now in Islamic form[78]."

Recent scholarly but timid awakening shows a tendency to a key concept, which is "integration" and teaches us that singling out one (Persian) of the elements (Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Turkish, Central Asiatic, Indian etc.) is futile. The synthetic nature of "human culture" anywhere, anytime, averts biased paradigmatic magnifications. Lambton's remarks are valuable from this point of view. She holds that in the early period of Islamic history, political ideas were shaped by "pre-Islamic tribal Arab tradition [jurisdiction] and Hellenistic [philosophy] and Sasanian Persian [literary] theories of state, (and) the distinction between them is also sometimes obscured by the fact that some writers wrote now as jurists, now as philosophers, now as counsellors of kings[79]." Besides, Lambton's study of Seljuk and Mongol (Ilkhanate) configurations of administrative and social dimensions from vizierate to law, land use, agriculture, and tax administration, represents a contextual and unperturbed evaluation of the facts instead of misrepresenting them as vestiges of the past glory of ancient Iran[80]. Decades after Lambton's prudent treatment of Seljuk realities, Peacock pertinently concentrated on the role of Turks, nomads, and steppe culture in the formation of the Seljuk political traditions in Iran[81]. According to him, the Seljuk Empire is a Khurasani empire, and "(…) the period is characterized by a fusion of Turkish, Persian and Islamic influences (…)[82]."

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77   Bo Utas, "A Multiethnic Origin of New Persian?" *Turkish-Iranian*, p. 246, 249.

78   Golden, *ibid*, p. 29.

79   Lambton, *State*, p. XVI-XVII.

80   A. K. S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia: Aspects of Administrative, Economic and Social History, 11th-14th Century*, The Persian Heritage Foundation, New York 1988.

81   Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, p. 3, 11.

82   Peacock, *The Great Seljuk Empire*, p. 9.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

913

Sound research now and then demonstrates and considers the complexity of encounters and interactions. Recently, an edited book is dedicated to questioning the validity of the cultural historian's "Persianate hypothesis" in a critical approach[83]. This book challenges the concepts "greater Iran" or "greater India," which come with an Indo-Iranian paradigm load. Its chapters "consider Iran as only one contributing region of the Persianate world" and uses the model of "frontiers" which "suggests spaces of cultural métissage, of the linguistic fusions and literary syntheses" and the Persianate world in this new outlook is not a "world with a center in the singular," it is more pluralistic and permutable[84]. Though the use of established nomenclature endures in this book as well; I am in no doubt that approaching decades in humanities will bring the analysis of cultural domains as convoluted syncretic entities that are incomprehensible employing established paradigmatic models like even this "Persianizing of centers" offered to replace Persianizing "from a center." Anyhow, this new edited book needs to be acclaimed as a major step forward to conscience. As evinced here, the "Persianization" thesis has been reshaped by different scholars in linguistics, anthropology and cultural studies hence it greatly fluctuates[85]. From Hodgson's "Persianate" to (as Green quotes) Bert Fragner's "Persophonie" or "Persophonia" to this latter book's "Persographia," the core concept has been reconstructed, redefined and expectedly to be deconstructed in the future.

We now come to understand that the knotty "Perso-Islamic" is the greatest pronunciation of a single element picked out from a "synthesis." This sort of compound term based on ethnicity and denote pockets of civilization in history are problematic since coming with a load of multifarious modern (even political) references[86]. Furthermore, it reflects presentism since, in pre-modern traditional

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83 Nile Green (ed.), *Persianate World: The Frontiers of a Eurasian Lingua Franca*, University of California Press, 2019.

84 Green, "Preface," *Persianate World*, pp. XIV-XV.

85 For the modifications of the concept see Green, "Introduction", pp. 28-29.

86 There is a growing interest in a new concept called "Turco-Persian." Scholars started to use "Turco-Persian synthesis" for the encounter of the Islamized Turks and Iranians in the ancient lands of Persia after the tenth century: Herzig, 4; István Vásáry, "Two Patterns of Acculturation to Islam: The Qarakhanids versus the Ghaznavids and Seljuqs," *The Age*, p. 10. In similar to how Persian element aggrandized in "Perso-Islamic," a book on Turco-Persia edited in 1991 primarily accentuates the Persianization thesis (R. L. Canfield (ed.), *Turko-Persia in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, New York 1991). The name "Turco" in "Turco-Persian" has a pejorative sense suggesting a "nomadic Turko" accultured by the "sedentary Persian" (in a similar sense, in the case of Perso-Islamic, what is "religiously Islamic" is nurtured by "administratively

Islamic culture, ambiguity greatly reigned in terms of the verbal connotations, and the values attached to them today were non-existent[87]. In sum, given the fact that the *adab* literature is not unbiased, the pre-Islamic Iranian elements could not be demonstrated, and after the eighth century Arabic humanities involved with an umbrella effect fusing the elements, the emphasis put on the "Persian" in "Perso-Islamic" becomes unfounded. The "Persianization model" in scholarship hence verifies the fact that "Perso-Islamic" is the product of a greatly enduring paradigmatic conviction, which is auspiciously vulnerable in the face of meticulous analysis.

Testimony of the Matter in Anatolia

Up to here, my point was to reveal uncertainties in the formation and use of the term. Now I can check it against the characteristics of a sort of material different from the written, which is the art and architectural object that autonomously visualize miscellaneous factors among which is cultural multifariousness[88].

In a paper on Rāvandī, Hillenbrand is unreservedly dedicated to testify "Persian influence" on the Seljuk government and institutions. According to her, "(…) the Seljuks of Anatolia modeled themselves closely on Persian-Islamic government traditions. These, in turn, drew on ancient pre-Islamic Iranian models, whose touchstone of excellence was the Sasanian machinery of rule and the religious norms and forms of Islam. Together these created an enduring symbol of good government[89]." However at another place, she is also skeptical of the truthfulness of the written sources from the Seljuk period in Iran and Anatolia and emphasizes

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Persian"). A parallel invention would be "Germano-Latin" or "Germano-Christian" alluding to barbaric German civilized by the Latin or Christian, but has never become popular in a Germanic language like English.

87 For the predominance of a purposeful ambiguity in Islamic intellectual culture see Thomas Bauer's glorious contribution to the field: *A Culture of Ambiguity: An Alternative History of Islam*, trans. H. Biesterfeldt and Tricia Tunstall, Columbia University Press, New York 2021. A very good case of ambiguity is the name "*tat*" from Māhmud Kāshgarī's *Dīwan al-Lugāt at-Turk* (1077), which is a medieval Turkish word for Persian, which might also mean "Tajik," "alien" and "Uighur infidel (Vásáry, *ibid*, p. 13).

88 For this nature of architectural work see our chapter on "realities of architectural history" in A. U. Peker, "Architectural Transformations in Mediaeval Anatolia (With Special Reference To Central Asia)," *Byzantine Culture*, ed. Dean Sakel, TTK, Ankara 2014, pp. 281-282.

89 Carole Hillenbrand, "Rāvandī, the Seljuk court at Konya and the Persianisation of Anatolian cities," *Mésogeios*, 25-26 (2005), p. 159.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

915

the need "to seek supplementary information from material culture[90]." Songül Mecit, in an endnote to a book chapter, in which "Perso-Islamic ideology of kingship" is taken for granted to explain Seljuk sultan's persona, states that "Turkish cultural traditions can be found in art[91]." These remarks are significant since lead the student of Seljuk culture to a different media for a fuller understanding of cultural syncretism(s) (and periodic syntheses) we find in culminations of material culture following the movement of groups and subsequent consolidation of discrepancies[92].

The recent discretization of formal studies in art and architecture resulted in a widespread cultural history-bounded art and architectural history writing. Paralleling to this, beginning in the 1980s a new trend appeared in Islamic (particularly Seljuk and Ottoman) art and architectural history. A context-oriented approach is central to it. Its proponents sanctioned written sources and archival material accessible about the issue under consideration, and underrated "stylistic" and "formal" approaches[93]. The cultural/contextual studies on art and architecture in the Islamic lands remarkably opened our eyes to socio-political realities though they at the same time manifest a naïve conviction of authenticity and credibility of the medieval written material, and modern historical accounts based on them. For instance, this sort of art and architectural historiography unhesitantly borrows stereotypical terms like "Perso-Islamic."

Its use by art historians goes back to the end of the nineteenth century when scholars and travelers first encountered Seljuk art and architecture in Anatolia. In 1895, a German art historian Friedrich Sarre, in a phlegmatic travelogue did

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90   Hillenbrand, "Aspects," p. 24.

91   Songül Mecit, "Kingship and ideology under the Rum Seljuqs," *The Seljuqs*, p. 77.

92   In the history of Islamic material culture, variety paralleled unity. According to Richard Ettinghausen, a number of factors disseminated and bounded diverse elements. Among them are high density of trade facilitating the exchange of commodities; migrant craftsmen and stonemasons; formation of capital cities in newly conquered lands; ambassadorial missions; traveling rulers in exile or campaign; the movement of ethnic groups and regional accumulation of universal and local cultural patterns (Richard Ettinghausen, "Interaction and Integration in Islamic Art," *Unity and Variety*, pp. 107-118).

93   One of the early studies of this sort, where formalist approach is criticized sharply, is by Gülru Necipoğlu, "The Süleymaniye Complex in Istanbul: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 3 (1986) pp. 92-117. For a later overview and criticism of the formalist approach see Oya Pancaroğlu, "Formalism and the Academic Foundation of Turkish Art in the Early Twentieth Century," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 24, pp. 67-78.

his best to link Seljuk art to Byzantine and Iranian backgrounds[94]. Later in the middle of the century, Ernst Diez sharply contrasts the archaic art of the nomadic Turks and the religious monuments of the later urbanized Turks since the latter originated from Persian, Armenian, and Georgian backgrounds[95]. The Persian connection is thus taken for granted and in 1993, Scott Redford reiterates the probability of Shahnameh influence on the cycle of figures from medieval Konya walls[96]. He also emphasizes Persianization with good intentions elsewhere, "the factor unifying his (Sultan Alaeddin Keykubad) conception of the state seems to have been a Persianate ideal of kingship[97]." As this paper evinces quite a lot, Persian connections are ubiquitously expressed with such probability clauses. Redford interestingly points out that the Seljuk rulers in Anatolia attempted to formulate a "*vatan*" (homeland) with references to Roman and Greek backgrounds in the land married with Persianate culture[98]. In this narrative, there is no room for Eurasia, where Seljuk Turks originated, since it is possibly regarded as a *terra incognita* by Redford. This Eurasiatic background (today Post-Soviet space) is greatly overlooked in Seljuk scholarship authored in English.

Given visible and concrete material pieces of evidence, some scholars are led to be more restrained in their attribution of pre-Islamic traditions to later formations. In Cambridge History of Iran, there is an illuminating comment by Oleg Grabar who states that "Islamic art of Iran succeeded over the centuries in maintaining its originality and uniqueness. At the same time, however original some of its works may have been, the essential process is not Iranian alone but only one aspect of the complex ways in which Islamic art was formed all over the world it had taken over[99]." This is predictable since medieval Iran did not identify ethnic and geographical compartments of the modern literature on history. In Islamic art and architectural historiography, our ongoing use of a selected range of terminology

94   Friedrich Sarre, *Küçükasya Seyahati (1895 Yazı): Selçuklu Sanatı ve Ülkenin Coğrafyası Üzerine Araştırmalar*, [Reise in Kleinasien] trans. Dârâ Çolakoğlu, Pera, İstanbul 1998, pp. 54-55, 86.

95   Ernest Diez, *Türk Sanatı: Başlangıçtan Günümüze Kadar* [Türkische Kunst], trans. O. Aslanapa, İstanbul University, İstanbul 1946, pp. 5-6, 49, 71, 85, 95, 58.

96   Scott Redford, "The Seljuqs of Rum and the Antique," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 10 (1993), p. 155.

97   Scott Redford, *Landscape and the State in Medieval Anatolia: Seljuk Gardens and Pavilions of Alanya, Turkey*, Archaeopress, Oxford 2000, p. 60, also see p. 85.

98   Redford, *Landscape*, p. 61.

99   Oleg Grabar, "The Visual Arts," *Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 4: The Period From the Arab Invasion to the Saljuqs*, ed. R. N. Frye, Cambridge U. Press, Cambridge 2007, p. 363.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental
History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

917

bounded by orientalist or autonomist paradigms is a real hindrance on the path to fully understand art and architecture in times and places.

The problems of "Persianization" discourse is explained above. Moreover, the syncretic nature of Seljuk culture in Anatolia discards the attribution of a hegemonic label to it since it is simply not possible to prove its penetration. In the case of the "Persianization" claim, *adab* literature, architecture, sūfism, Persian names, etc., are not emphatic enough to differentiate them from Arab, Byzantine, Armenian and Turkish elements in the Seljuk culture. Moreover, the different segments of the society incorporated them in different measures. Ambiguity reigns in all matters named cultural. The hegemony of one culture in the historiography of medieval Anatolia reveals a washed-out model of scholarly interest in ethnicity. When you approach the case with any "ization" in your mind, you simply reinforce another "ization" in another's. Any idea of "ization" is non-explanatory.

Richard P. McClary in a recent paper on Seljuk tombs, aims to prove that some Seljuk tombs in Anatolia are the products of Persian funerary architecture[100]. In the beginning, he openly puts that the paper does this in a non-Turkocentric context, and the conclusion gives the aim, which is "to delineate the grand narrative of the development and diffusion of brick-built Persianate funerary architecture from central Asia to central Anatolia[101]." Hence the author simply shifts from discrediting Turkocentrism to crediting Persianism! The paper mainly compares the Ildegüzid Yusuf ibn Kuthayyir tomb (557/1162) in Nakhchivan City, Azerbaijan, and the Mengücek Ghazi tomb (c. 586/1190–91) in Kemah[102]. McClary after having done a detailed formal analysis tells of the Kemah case: "the technique used in Kemah may be viewed as an adaptation rather than an adoption of the Iranian antecedents as there are innovative elements not seen in any of the surviving earlier examples in Iran[103]." McClary also holds that "the craftsmen responsible for

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100 R. P. McClary, "From Nakhchivan To Kemah: The Western Extent of Brick Persianate Funerary Architecture In the Sixth/Twelfth Century AD," *Iran*, Vol. 53/1 (2015) pp. 119-142.

101 McClary, "From Nakhchivan", p. 119, 141.

102 McClary's recent study of Seljuk architecture is a meticulously done account of its structural and formal characteristics. It is more restrained in terms of the "Persianization" discourse. McClary emphasizes the appearance of a "clearly Islamic and distinctively Anatolian style of architecture by the second decade of the thirteenth century" which reflects "a uniquely Rum Seljuq architectural aesthetic" (R. P. McClary, *Rum Seljuq Architecture, 1170-1220*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2017, pp. 184-185.

103 McClary, "From Nakhchivan", p. 133.

the Anatolian building (Kemah) (...) developed their own individual style (…) the craftsmen and patrons in Anatolia were not content with just mimicking earlier structures. Instead, they used them as a jumping-off point for the development of a new and unique Anatolian Islamic architectural aesthetic[104]." These remarks obviously scale down "Persianate" sort of extraterritorial references and are expected to govern the approach of the paper that needs another name like "Formation of a New Architectural Aesthetic." This innovative and synthesizing character of Seljuk architecture certainly merits approaches beyond Perso-centrism.

Ömür Bakırer's paper is illuminating in this context. She explains how in Anatolia, brick building tradition from Turkestan, Khorasan, Ghazna, and Central Iran transformed into stone architecture through "continuity," "change," and adaptation in the new land[105]. Another scholar, Suzan Yalman defines 'Ala al-Din Kayqubad's projects as "a symbiosis of 'Eastern' Perso-Islamic and 'Western' Rumi cultural horizons[106]." Though her paper mirrors the here debated "Perso-Islamic" convention," its incorporation of the idea of an art tradition under local and extrinsic impacts is promising.

The art and architecture of Islamic Anatolia teach us that recurrent references to the past in them reflect historicist tendencies replenishing inventiveness in time. Learning from past and/or neighbors ended up with original works. One should surely come to terms with the idea of a self-contained "Seljuk," instead of frequently and discriminately referring to Armenian, Arabic, Turkic, and Persian backgrounds, The sources of the individual elements of Seljuk art and architecture are so diverse that any approach based on an ethnicity thesis easily collapses in the face of its alternative.

Earlier, Walter B. Denny ingeniously disagreed with the idea of the "lender" and "borrower" relationship between Iran and Anatolia in the realm of architecture. According to him "(…) with the passage of time (…) the relationship between Iranian and Anatolian architectural traditions grew progressively more remote[107]."

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104 McClary, "From Nakhchivan", p. 136, 140.

105 Ömür Bakırer, "From Brick to Stone: Continuity and Change in Anatolian Seljuk Architecture," *The Turks*, *Vol. 2*: *The Middle Ages*, ed. C. Oğuz, et al., Yeni Türkiye Gazetesi, Ankara 2002, p. 735.

106 Suzan Yalman, "'Ala Al-Din Kayqubad Illuminated: A Rum Seljuq Sultan as Cosmic Ruler," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 29/1 (2012) p. 177.

107 W. B. Denny, "Points of Stylistic Contact in the Architecture of Islamic Iran and Anatolia," *Islamic Art*, vol. 2 (1987) p. 30.

Denny's enlightening paper on formal and technological features of Seljuk art and architecture remained quite invisible to "cultural art historians". He holds that Seljuks arrived in Anatolia after they dominated Iran "without having become extensively 'Persianized' in the process. In fact, the Turkic ruler/patrons appeared to have displayed a rather astonishing receptivity in both geographical areas (…)[108]." Illustrating the transforming impact of the local cut-stone building techniques employed in Anatolia, different from the extensive brick use in Iran, and how this changed construction techniques, space configurations and formal expressions; he argues that "the new patrons, little fettered by the bonds of tradition and recognizing artistic potential when they saw it, quickly began to adapt the pre-existing technology to their own artistic needs (…)[109]." Given the fact that the Seljuk buildings are Anatolian, "receptivity and adaptation clearly predominated over any notion of "influence[110]."

Another medium, ornamentations on architecture and different media like daily utensils cover a plethora of figures and motifs. Scholars from different educational, academic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds offered possible past or coeval neighboring realms of home for these elements. Among them, an indefinite notion of Central Asia and its legendary shamanism; pre-Islamic Byzantine and Armenian past of Anatolia with its Christian culture and Persia with its Islamic layer of religion are the grand repositories. Katharina Otto-Dorn's paper on the figures is emblematic of this conglomeration of roots. It refers to China, pre-Islamic and Islamic Persia, Islamic Egypt, Central Asiatic steppes and Armenia[111]. Jean-Paul Roux in a similar fashion agrees on the diversity of sources though attaches a significant role to the involvement of the Turks who introduced the art of the steppes to Anatolia with its animal genera[112].

A rather less known sculptural tradition in Caucasia draws a line of links between Seljuk and Eurasian lands. Alfred Salmony is among the first scholars who studied the sculptures discovered in Kūbachī, Daghestan on the western shore of the

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108 Denny, *ibid*, p. 29.

109 Denny, *ibid*, p. 29.

110 Denny, *ibid*, p. 30.

111 Katharina Otto-Dorn, "Figural Stone Reliefs on Seljuk Sacred Architecture in Anatolia," *Kunst des Orients*, XII, 1/2 (1978/1979) pp. 103-149.

112 Jean-Paul Roux, "La Sculpture Figurative de L'Anatolie Musulmane," *Turcica*, 24 [1992] p. 62.

Caspian Sea[113]. The Republic of Dagestan today is in the territories of former steppe cultures like Scythians, Sarmatian and Hazars. Hunnic burial customs and bronze mirrors with Chinese features discovered in Daghestan are, as Salmony stresses, "unmistakable signs of Asiatic Turks[114]." The sculptures found in Kūbachī dated to the 13th-14th centuries are contemporary with the apogee and waning of Seljuk (and Ilkhanid) art and architecture in Anatolia. They reflect a common cultural platform of visual representation. Discovered inserted within the walls of a modern house the original provenance of the sculptures are unknown. Today the sculptures are dispersed to private collections and prestigious museums like Musée du Louvre, MET and Hermitage. Among the figures are cross-legged men with cloud collars, men on horseback, horse-riding knights with cloud collars, lions, wrestlers, archers, winged sphinxes, and winged griffons, boar hunting scenes, antelopes and stags. These figures are of Egyptian (sphinx), Mesopotamian (lion), Scythian (griffon) and Eurasiatic (cross-legged men, wrestling and hunt scenes) origins. Several ornamental details can also be related to varied origins. For example, the manner of symmetrical representation (ancient Mesopotamia), men with whiskers (Eurasian steppes, Turkestan), hood (ancient Iran), stirrup (Scythian), leather pouch (Magyar, Turkish), bow, quiver, "tamgha" (owner's mark), half palmette, geometrical tendrils (Turkish), cap with an earflap, tunic, sleeve, belt, boots and cloud collar (Uighur Turkestan)[115]. The anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and plant figures of the Kūbachī group have close parallels and even shared features with the Seljuk figural sculpture in Anatolia[116]. Eurasiatic associations of Seljuk art and the new archaeological material obtained from the research done on the town and urban cultures of Transoxiana, Khorasan, and "nomadic, semi-nomadic, urban" symbiosis of Central Asia awaits new analyses to explain the formation of Seljuk art and architecture in Anatolia. Whatever local or extrinsic source exists underlying Seljuk art and architectural traditions from ancient Mesopotamian to Hellenistic, Roman, Persian and Central Asiatic; horizontal territorial and synchronic links provide a character and the preferable dynastic designation "Seljuk," is solidified as the name of a provincial and chronologically distinguishable tradition in Islamic art and architecture.

113 Alfred Salmony, "Daghestan Sculptures," *Ars Islamica*, 10 (1943) pp. 153-163.

114 Salmony, *ibid*, p. 154.

115 Salmony, *ibid*, p. 156-163.

116 For a collection of the Anatolia group see Gönül Öney, *Architectural Decoration and Minor Arts in Seljuk Anatolia*, İş Bankası, Ankara 1988.

The Formation and Denouement of "Perso-Islamic" in Oriental History and the Case of Seljuk Art and Architectural History

921

Conclusion

Seljuk art and architectural historiography is a rich ground to illustrate how scholarship in humanities can be exclusive in our modern age. Approaches to it are multifarious because of the multi-layered cultural past of Anatolia amid the three continents, hence are exclusivist due to its promoters, who affiliated with the learning of specific pre-Islamic backgrounds. They are paradigmatic, diversely based upon from Persianization or Perso-Islamic thesis (scholarship in English) to Romanization-Hellenization-Christianization thesis (scholarship in European languages, Armenian, Persian), Central Asian thesis (scholarship in Turkish), and Turco-Islamic/Turco-Persian thesis (scholarship in Turkish, English, and French). Among them, the Perso-Islamic is the most prevalent due to the restored orientalist interest in cultural history as a goal of historiographical study in art and architecture.

The idea to write this paper was to show the obscurity of "Perso-Islamic" widely employed in current scholarship on Seljuk art and architecture. This term blurs material properties, intentions, expressions, and extensions of the art object. It always complicates rather than explicates the topic under discussion. This paper introduced a concise account of the formation and use of the term in historical research, and Seljuk art and architectural historiography. The greater question is why is such a reducing term still bought? Firstly, in historical studies, Persian and Arabic sources shaped and continue to shape theories of statecraft and society formation. Hence philologist's and historian's predilections concentrate on pockets of culture in different fields like Iranistics, Arab Studies, Islamic Studies, Turcology, etc. Secondly, meta-narratives (like "Perso-Islamic") are still paramount in Middle Eastern Studies, and scholars who employ concepts and terminologies from them disregard alternative viewpoints or new knowledge from different fields (i.e. archaeology). It is also bewildering to see how wide are culture-bound generalizations in Islamic Studies, which leads to profuse use of paradigmatic terminologies excluding alternative or supplementary information. Thirdly, the lack of a sound methodology to collate art and architectural object with cultural knowledge to validate the latter, which causes the former to be legitimized by the latter. Fourthly, art and architectural studies on the Middle East are embedded in the cultural, chronological/linear histories. This brings in the conviction that every material formation is explainable with the involvement of either culture, donors or institutional bodies; and every latter element is caused by a former element. Fifthly,

the prevalent rejection of formal studies in Islamic art and architectural history in favor of cultural contextual readings leads to the weakening of a "check and balance system" grounded in the materiality of the art and architectural object with its cyclic realities bound to codes of technology and function. The Paradigmatic approach also hinders scholars to concentrate on the factors that shaped the rings of regional modes in art and architecture. These modes reflect local and intercontinental traits, but at the same time contribute highly original results which go beyond the compound. One cannot explain these intricacies within culturally and (in our modern age politically) oriented meta-narratives. History writing teaches us that in our writings when variety is sacrificed to unity our field recedes.

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