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Portable Palaces: On the Circulation of Objects and Ideas about Architecture in Medieval Anatolia and Mesopotamia

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Abstract

This essay examines two categories of portable objects: ceramics and ephemeral architecture (such as tents, palanquins, litters) for clues to the transmission of ideas about palatial architecture and the creation of a shared taste for a certain kind of palatial form and decoration between Christian and Muslim states whose artistic production is usually considered separately. The time period investigated is the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, and the geographical area investigated spans Constantinople, Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia. Without denying the importance of traveling craftsmen as vectors for artistic exchange, this essay argues that portable objects and portable or ephemeral architecture helped create the taste and demand for a supranational palatial architecture.

Keywords

palaces, palatial imagery, ceramics, ephemeral architecture, medieval Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia, Byzantium

It is perhaps obvious to compare a building to a tree. It can be uprooted but it is hard to think of it surviving transplantation whole. Certainly a building can be partially or wholly dismembered, its parts grafted onto other buildings in other places, but this act can give only a partial idea of an ensemble. Given architecture's defining characteristics of rootedness and completeness, how do ideas about architecture spread? In this essay, I would first like to address how not spoliation, nor itinerant artisans (architects, builders, tile-makers, painters, and specialists in molded plaster decoration), but objects propagated ideas about and a taste for palaces and palatial decoration in Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia and Byzantium in

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the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. After examining ceramics as a means of transmission in the first part of this paper, in the second part I will address other ways in which mobility can be connected with architecture by examining several categories of ephemeral architecture.

The objects considered in this essay did not depict buildings so much as evoke them. In doing so, portable objects promoted the creation of a taste for a particular kind of palatial building, the domed polyhedral pavilion, and a particular kind of palatial décor, the depiction of young male court attendants. The creation of taste was aided by two factors: first, the spread of representations evoking palaces and palatial décor to the easily replicable and widely diffused medium of glazed ceramics; and second, the mobility of monarchs and courts and the duplication of elite palatial settings for them. Pierre Bourdieu argues for taste as a marker of class differentiation, and that popular taste is more of an ethos than an aesthetic. While my employment of the word "taste" is not congruent with that of Bourdieu, I do employ his ideas of taste as an important economic force and social marker.[1]

Let us start with a fragmentary object, about a quarter of a monochrome glazed earthenware vessel that was found in rural central Anatolia and is currently in the Etnoğrafya Müzesi (Ethnographic Museum) in Ankara, Turkey (Figs 1 and 2). At 34 centimeters in diameter, it is large, typical in size and shape for central Anatolian glazed ceramic bowl production in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. What is atypical of this vessel is its extensive champlevé decoration, both exterior and interior, under a now-decayed transparent greenish glaze. As opposed to its more economical cousin, sgraffito, champlevé decoration is more expensive, because more time has to go into the carving away of the light colored slip to reveal the darker earthenware body of the vessel than sgraffito, which arrives at a design more quickly and simply through incision in the slip.[2]

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. R. Nice, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 32 for ethos versus aesthetic and 56 for taste as a marker of class differentiation.

[2] This sherd is in the collections of the Etnoğrafya Müzesi, Ankara, where it has inventory number 17345. I studied it there in 2010 with a museum research permit granted me by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I would like to thank the Director Mehmet Yücel Kumandaş, Yıldız hanım and Aynur hanım of the Etnoğrafya Müzesi and Ben Claasz Coockson, who drew and photographed the sherd. For their assistance and advice, I would like also to thank symposium organizers Heather Grossman and Alicia Walker, as well as Serpil Bağcı and Massumeh Farhad.

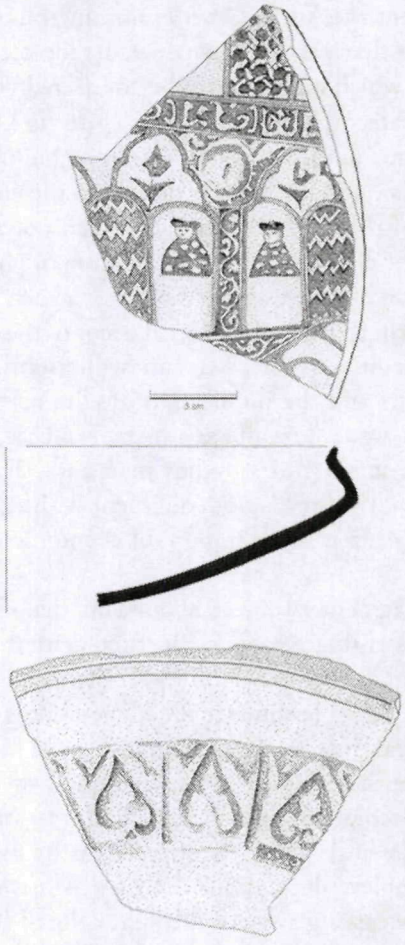

Figure 1. Earthenware bowl fragment with monochrome green glaze and champlevé decoration on interior and exterior. Etnoğrafya Müzesi, Ankara, Turkey. Accession number 17345. Interior view, profile and exterior view drawn by B. Claasz Coockson.

Figure 2. Earthenware bowl fragment with monochrome green glaze and champlevé decoration on interior and exterior. Etnoğrafya Müzesi, Ankara, Turkey. Accession number 17345. Photograph of interior by B. Claasz Coockson. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

The bowl's exterior has a band of decoration that consists of repeated tripartite vegetal elements inscribed in a rounded frame like an ivy leaf and separated from one another by vertical lines. The vegetal elements most resemble a fleur de lys, although they vary in shape from frame to frame. At first glance, this band of vegetal ornament seems to have nothing to do with the decoration of the interior, until one realizes that there are similar tripartite vegetal/floral elements both on the extradoses of the arches, represented there as well as one in the inscription, where this element may be seen as taking the place of the Arabic letter *'ayn*. The reader will notice the reflowering of the fleur de lys over and over again in this essay.

The interior decoration of this vessel was first published by Gönül Öney, who recognized that it represented the interior elevation of a palace. The elevation has three registers. At the top, a window with hexagonal grille pierces a blank wall. Underneath runs a band of cursive writing or

pseudo-writing. Below this band is the largest of the registers, a series of round arches that contain either zig-zag patterns or busts of beardless young men wearing polka-dotted kaftans and soft, rounded hats. In between two of the arches is a colonette decorated with a vegetal scroll. This arcade is surmounted by a series of tri-lobed arches containing tri-lobed floral elements mentioned above. The space between two of these tri-lobed arches is filled with more floral and vegetal scrollwork.[3]

Öney related this depiction to the elevation of a courtyard façade of the Kara Saray, a palace in the citadel of Mosul in present-day northern Iraq, built by its ruler Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' in 1233 and first published by Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld (Figs 3 and 4) and, accordingly dated the bowl

Figure 3. Photograph of courtyard stucco decoration of the Kara Saray palace, Mosul made in April/May 1909. Courtesy of The Gertrude Bell Photographic Archive, Newcastle University. Image number M006.

[3] Gönül Öney, "Human Figures on Anatolian Seljuk Sgraffiato and Champlevé Ceramics," in *Essays in Islamic Art and Architecture in Honor of Katharina Otto-Dorn*, ed. Abbas Daneshvari (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1981), 121-122.

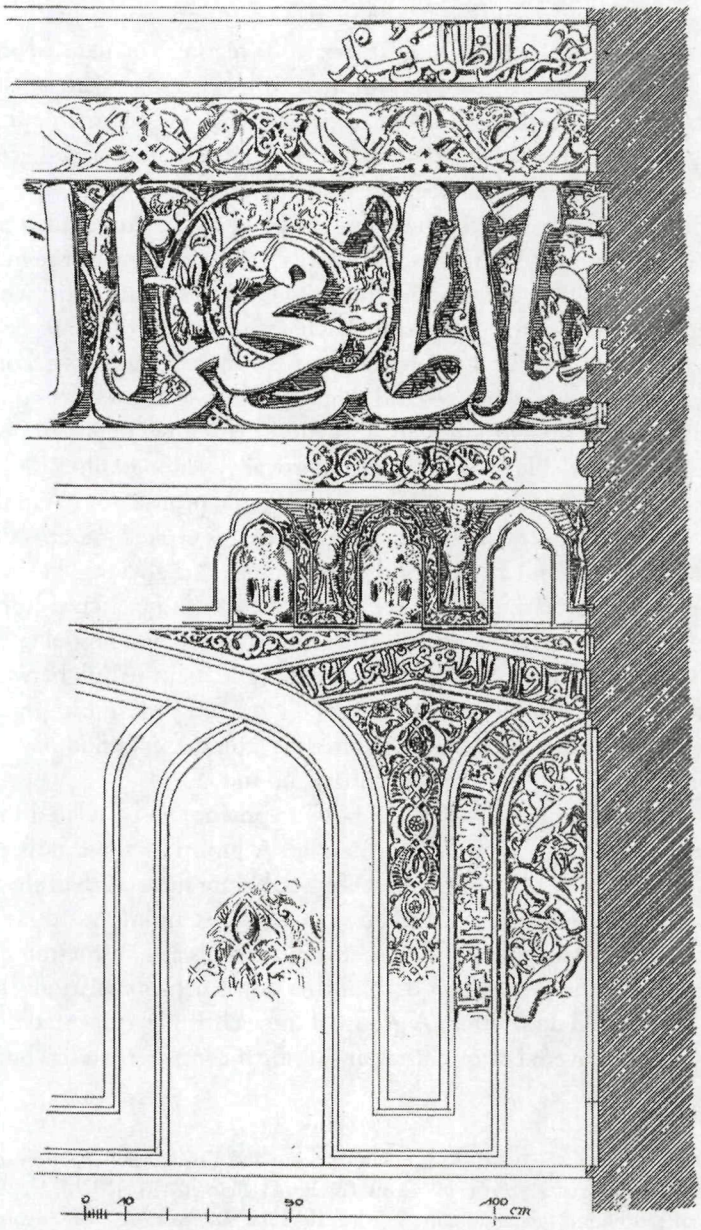

Figure 4. Elevation detail, courtyard stucco decoration, Kara Saray, Mosul. From Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archaeologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1920), plate 97.

fragment to the thirteenth century and, due to its find spot, Seljuk Anatolia. The resemblance is apt, because there, too, registers of painted molded plaster with bands of writing surmounted tri-lobed arches with small busts in them, and below them blind arcades filled with vegetal ornament terminating in fleur de lys-like elements. Order and size may have been a bit different, but the essential elements were there.[4]

Since its publication, the fragmentary bowl in the Ankara Etnoğrafya Müzesi has prompted neither scholarly discussion relating to the meaning of its decoration, nor questioning the reasons that a ceramic artist would be moved to reproduce the impression of what was likely a courtyard elevation of a palace. In this essay, I would like to try to contextualize its decoration, as I earlier related its diameter and shape to what we know of central Anatolian glazed ceramic production at the time. This bowl fragment becomes more understandable when linked stylistically, iconographically and in terms of technique to contemporaneous ceramic production. Whether, as is the case with this fragment, the palace setting is evoked, or, as is the case in other, more frequently encountered examples, the young Turkic slave soldier retainers of the palace are represented without architectural setting, the aim was to evoke the court and its luxuries for a non-elite market that purchased and utilized these vessels. I argue that the link between the figures and the setting is the contemporaneous and widespread practice of representing, either as plaster or painted figures, these Turkic slave courtiers on the walls of palaces from Samarkand to Cairo.[5]

In style and subject matter, this bowl fragment can be related to other earthenware bowls produced in Anatolia. A group of these bear similar champlevé decoration, but represent less elaborate subjects than the palace façade. Often, the inside of the bowl depicts a standing beardless youth dressed in a caftan and hat, often with a bird on his arm, sometimes with a flower in his hand, sometimes both. Other bowls depict stylistically similar birds and vegetal decoration. A group of these champlevé decorated glazed bowls was discovered at one location in north central Anatolia, but there

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[4] Öney, "Human Figures," 122; Friedrich Sarre and Ernst Herzfeld, *Archaeologische Reise im Euphrat- und Tigris-Gebiet*, 4 vols. (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1911-1920), 1:239-249.

[5] Daniel Schlumberger and Janine Sourdel-Thomine, *Lashkari Bazar: une résidence royale ghaznévide et ghoride* (Paris: de Boccard, 1978); Yury Karev, "Qarakhanid Wall Paintings in the Citadel of Samarqand: First Report and Preliminary Observations," *Muqarnas*, 22 (2005), 45-84; Nasser Rabbat, *Mamluk History through Architecture* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 128 n. 14, with references to contemporaneous descriptions of the citadel palace at Cairo.

Figure 5. Glazed earthenware bowl. Interior has champlevé figural decoration carved through slip under a transparent light green glaze. Ereğli Museum, Turkey. According to museum records, it was found at Devle/Ayrancı and entered the museum collection in 1968. Photograph by B. Claasz Coockson. Reproduced with permission of the Ereğli Museum Directorate. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

are also other examples of varying quality found at various spots present in museums elsewhere in Turkey. One such bowl also comes from central Anatolia and from a place outside the town of Ereğli in Konya province in south central Anatolia (Fig. 5).[6]

[6] Hakkı Acun, "Yozgat Müzesi'ndeki Selçuklu Kaseleri" (Seljuk Bowls in the Yozgat Museum), *9. Milletlerarası Türk Sanatları Kongresi* (9th International Conference of

During excavations at the site of Kinet, in southern Turkey, archaeologists recovered a single glazed earthenware bowl with champlevé decoration on the interior and slip-painted decoration on the exterior (Fig. 6). Archaeological context allowed it to be dated not to the thirteenth, but to the early fourteenth century, the last occupation phase at the site. The exterior of the bowl is slip-painted with a ragged version of the word *al-sultan* alternating with a rosette running beneath the rim. The interior of the bowl contains an incised full-figure depiction of a standing, beardless youth. In his right hand he carries a large, leafy bough ending in a bulbous trilobed flower. On his left arm perches a bird of prey. Protrusions like golf clubs seem to grow out of his shoulders. He is dressed in chain mail, covered by a long, kaftan-like garment closed by buttons. On his head, he wears a soft, polka-dotted hat.[7]

It has long been realized that in this period, with its proliferation of small states and their courts, and the increase of trade (especially in glazed ceramics) among them, objects of art in many media were decorated with excerpts, mélanges and misinterpretations of princely cycles of pleasure and disport, or other arts of the court. In ceramics, the beardless youth featured on these bowls can be compared to the widespread depiction of the cupbearer, or *saqi*, on mid- to late thirteenth-century glazed earthenware bowls. The Kinet bowl mixes themes of love and hunting, just as other images mix hunting and war, heraldry and astrology, and so on. This image can also be related to the poetry of the time, in which the young male beloved is often addressed as a Turk. The homoerotic aspect of this genre may perhaps be seen as represented in another ceramic bowl in the collections of the Etnoğrafya Müzesi in Ankara, also attributed to thirteenth-century Anatolia, in which the beardless, kaftanned, fur-hatted beloved seems oblivious to attentions (and beverage) proffered him by an older, smaller, bearded man (Fig. 7).[8]

To return to the architectural image on the bowl in Ankara, the image of the beardless youth in court costume carrying an attribute can be related

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Turkish Arts), 3 vols. (Ankara: Kultur Bakanlıgı, 1995), 1:1-12; Cihan Soyhan, Çinili Köşk'ten bir Grup Selçuklu Keramiği" (Seljuk Pottery in the Tiled Pavilion), *Sanat Dünyamız*, 11 (1985), 9-17.

[7] Scott Redford, "Kinet Höyük'te Bulunan bir Kase" (A Bowl Found at Kinet Höyük), in *Uluslararası Turk Sanatı ve Arkeolojisi Sempozyumu* (International Symposium on Turkish Art and Archaeology), Yeni Ipek Yolu-Konya Kitabi 10 (Konya: Konya Ticaret Odası, 2007), 537-542.

[8] Yıldız Meriçboyu, "Figürlü bir Selçuklu Kasesi" (A Figured Seljuk Bowl), *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, 9-10 (1981), 197-214.

Figure 6. Monochrome glazed bowl with underglaze slip painted, sgraffito and champlevé decoration excavated at Kinet. KNH-1212. Currently on display in the Hatay provincial museum, Antakya, Hatay, Turkey. Rim diameter 21.7 cm. Base diameter 10 cm. Exterior: underglaze slip painted cursively painted writing and rosettes. Green glaze. Interior: cream slip incised under a greenish-clear glaze. Drawing by B. Claasz Coockson.

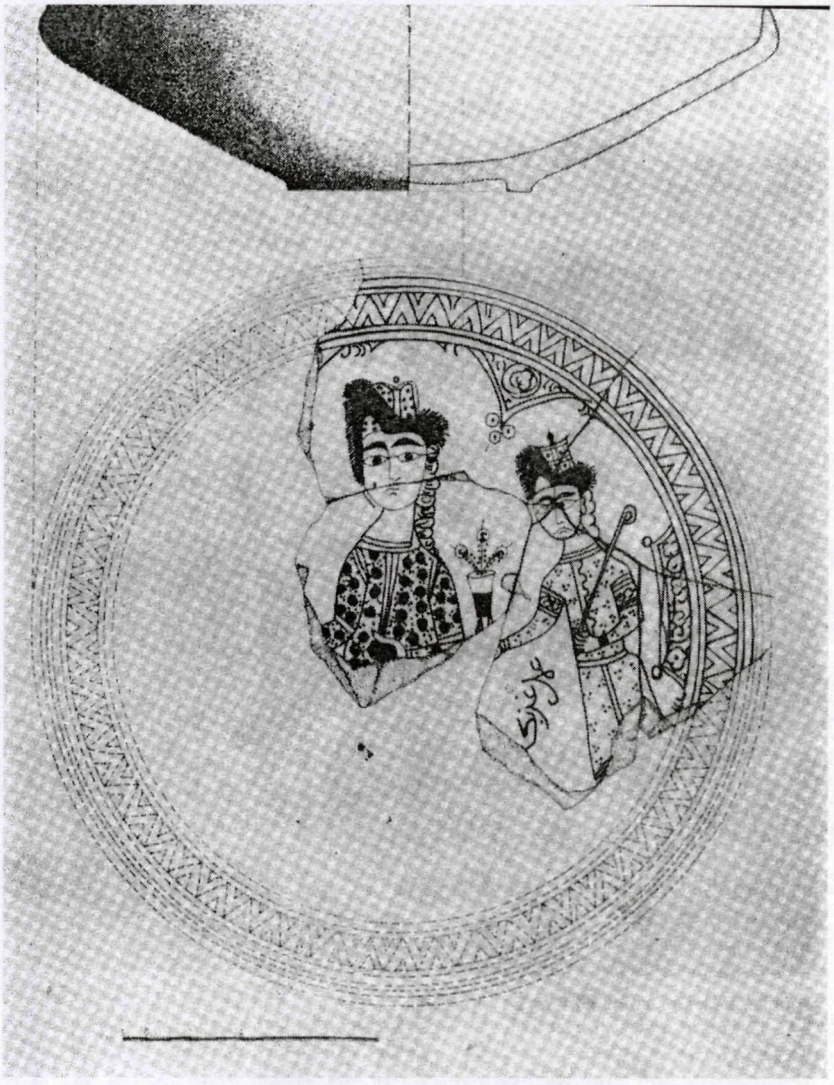

Figure 7. Monochrome green glaze earthenware bowl with interior sgraffito and champlevé decoration. Etnoğrafya Müzesi, Ankara. Inventory no. 455. Rim diameter 31 cm. Yıldız Meriçboyu, "Figürlü bir Selçuklu Kasesi," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, 9-10 (1981), fig. 3. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

to the schematized busts peering, as it were, down from the walls of the palace on the courtyard and court below. Despite the fragmentary nature of the Kara Saray in the Mosul citadel, it can be linked to a long-standing tradition of depiction of the court on the walls of the actual building where these officials and retainers would have been disposed in real-life ceremonies and feasts. Painted examples of courtiers "assembled" on the walls surrounding the throne of the monarch have been documented from palaces in Afrasiyab/Samarkand, Lashkari Bazar in Afghanistan and the Cairo citadel. Carved and painted plaster statues and reliefs of courtiers (including many beardless male warrior statues) from eleventh- to twelfth-century Iran are found in museums, though none have been found in archeological or architectural context, so it is impossible to state whether they functioned in spaces as did the painted examples cited above.[9]

The function of the plaster figures on the Kara Saray courtyard façade, which must be related in some way to the earlier, larger plaster Iranian statues, can be connected more firmly to the ranks of courtiers with their attributes when one examines the stone courtyard façade of the Gu' Kummet, a building discovered near Sinjar, west of Mosul, dating to more or less the same time period as the Kara Saray there (Fig. 8) and likely built by the last Zangid ruler of Sinjar before it was captured by Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu. The Gu' Kummet façade represents beardless young men wearing kaftans and soft, perhaps fur, hats and carrying the attributes of various court offices. They are situated in trilobed niches. These niches alternate court figures with bilaterally symmetrical stylized vegetal decoration that culminates in a fleur de lys. A similar tripartite vegetal ornament adorns the tops of the caps of the courtiers there. These figures are disposed around an actual architectural space, a *muqarnas* niche, where at least at some time they must have "accompanied" an actual seated sovereign (Fig. 9).[10]

The Beaux Brummel of the early fourteenth century may be seen as detached from their architectural settings at court and set to wander in the world of commerce, in a way connected to the more elaborate, but

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[9] Gerald Reitlinger, "Medieval Antiquities West of Mosul," *Iraq*, 5 (1938), 151-153.

[10] Estelle Whelan, "Representations of the *Khassakiyah* and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla Soucek (College Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), 222, which identifies the attributes: "Eight individual beardless figures in military dress are carved in relief at regular intervals on the arched panels that frame the niche. Clockwise from bottom left they carry an arrow or short spear, a polo stick, an object that is unidentifiable because of damage to the stone, a bow and arrow, a bow suspended from some kind of strap, a beaker and napkin, a baton, and a sword."

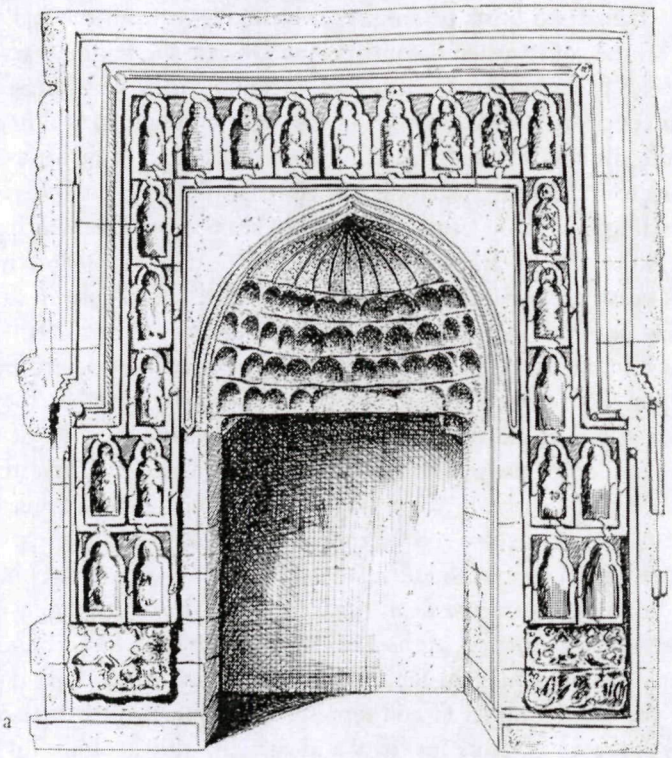

Figure 8. Stone courtyard façade of audience hall, Gu' Kummet, Sinjar, currently in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad. General View. From Estelle Whelan, "Representations of the *Khassakiyah* and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla Soucek (College Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), fig. 2a. Drawing by Thomas Amorosi.

still simplified (and misunderstood) representation of their architectural setting on the Ankara bowl fragment. There, a palace is evoked as much as represented, with the fleur de lys on the exterior essentializing the setting. The purchaser of this bowl would understand its evocation of palatial privilege from the combination of busts and writing, but also from the prominent use of zigzags, one of the most widespread decorations used on Seljuk, and likely other, palaces and pavilions of the period.[11]

[11] See Reitlinger, "Medieval Antiquities," 148 for painted zig-zag ornament from Tall A'far in northern Mesopotamia.

Figure 9. Courtyard façade of audience hall, Gu' Kummet, Sinjar. Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Photographic detail of niches with figures of courtiers. From Estelle Whelan, "Representations of the *Khassakiyah* and the Origins of Mamluk Emblems," in *Content and Context of Visual Arts in the Islamic World*, ed. Priscilla Soucek (College Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1988), fig. 5. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

Another *muqarnas*-topped audience hall, in this case known only from an historical source, has engaged scholarly imaginations for decades. This audience hall, however, was not in northern Mesopotamia, but in Constantinople. Alicia Walker is the latest to address the issues raised by a passage containing an architectural description by the Byzantine historian Nicholas Mesarites, writing in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. Rather than a courtyard-centered palace as the Gu' Kummet seems to have been, it appears to describe a *muqarnas* domed, painted and tiled pavilion that was located in the heart of the Great Palace in Constantinople. I quote from Walker's translation:

> The Mouchroutas is an enormous hall, next to the Chrysotriklinos, located on the westerly side. The steps to this hall are made from baked brick, gypsum and marble.

> The staircase bears serrated decoration on either side and turns in a circle. It is painted with dark blue, shining with deep red, dyed with green, blooming with purple from mixed, cross-shaped tiles joined together. The chamber was the work not of a Roman, Sicilian, Celt, Sybarite, Cypriot or a Cilician hand, but rather of a Persian hand, because it bears figures of Persians and their various costumes. Everywhere on the ceiling are scenes of various types applied to the heaven-like ceiling made of hemispheres. The recesses and projections of the angles are densely packed. The beauty of the carving is extraordinary, the spectacle of the concave spaces is delightful; overlaid with gold, it produces the effect of a rainbow more colorful than the one in the clouds. There is insatiable pleasure—not hidden, but on the surface: not just for those who for the first time direct their gaze upon it, but also for those who visit it frequently (it evokes) amazement and surprise.[12]

I have recently attempted to propose one category of portable object that, among many other factors, has influenced the creation of a taste for building such a domed pavilion at the Byzantine court in the late twelfth century.[13] This is a molded and monochrome glazed ceramic tabouret, or small table, in the form of a polygonal pavilion, a type known from medieval Iran and Syria, but also recovered archeologically from Turkey (Fig. 10). Like the decoration on the fragmentary bowl in the Etnoğrafya Müzesi in Ankara (see Figs 1 and 2), these tabourets serve to evoke an architectural form rather than reproduce it, and to spread ideas of elite palatial culture to larger audiences and markets. The domes that should top them are flattened to form level surfaces, and round knobs that raise them off the ground deny any sense of egress or ingress. Nevertheless, the facades contain windows, balconies, balustrades, writing and other features found on pavilions and palaces, making them recognizable as architectural forms. The fact that there are many in the museums of the world, combined with their lack of color and detail, lead us to posit that they were not luxury objects. However, their size (most are about 35 centimeters in height), breakability and variety of decoration all suggest multiple production centers. A tabouret unearthed by Turkish archeologists at Samsat in southeast Turkey was probably produced there, because of the simplified nature of its decoration, appropriate to provincial production, and the fact that Samsat had a thriving ceramic industry at this time (Fig. 11). However, the promi-

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[12] Alicia Walker, "The Architectural Ekphraseis of Nikolaos Mesarites," *Muqarnas*, 27 (2010), 94 with bibliography of earlier studies that address this building and text. I would like to thank Alicia Walker for permission to quote from her translation of Mesarites.

[13] Scott Redford, "Constantinople, Konya, Conical Kiosks, Cultural Confluence," *Proceedings of the Second International Sevgi Gönül Byzantine Studies Symposium* (Istanbul: Vehbi Koç Foundation, forthcoming).

Figure 10. Molded and glazed ceramic tabouret, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, USA. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1911.1. Attributed to Raqqa, Syria, eleventh to twelfth century, height: 35.9 cm. Reproduced with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

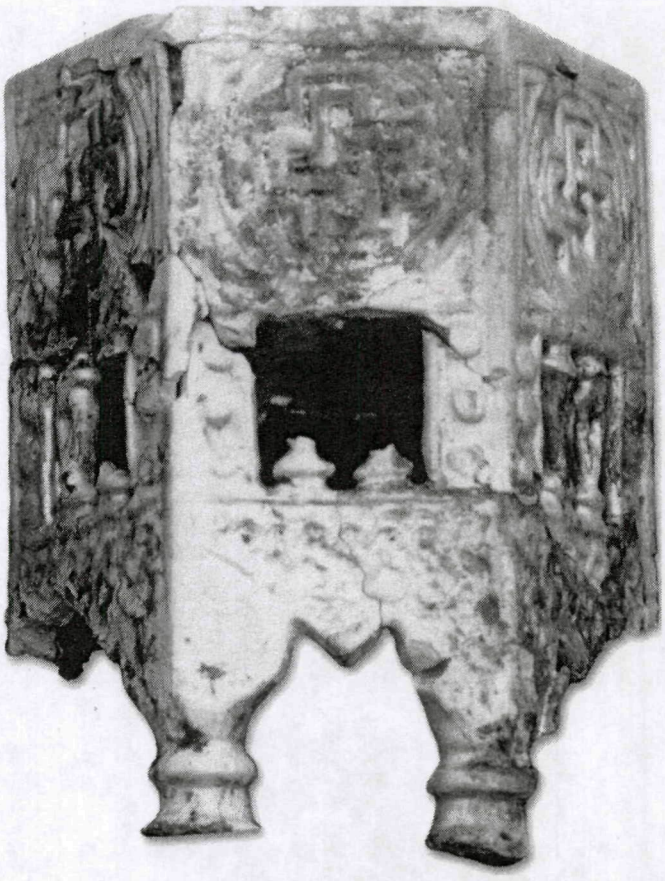

Figure 11. Molded and glazed ceramic tabouret found at Samsat Excavations. Lale Bulut, "Samsat Kazısı Buluntuları," in *Anadolu'da Türk Devri Çini ve Seramik Sanatı*, eds. Gönül Öney and Zehra Çobanlı (Istanbul: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007), photograph 18. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

nent use of crosses at the top of each side, something that remains to be explained, furnishes us with an example of the variety of interpretation and use a form can undergo as it passes from place to place, providing a measure of correspondence to the Byzantine introduction and use of an Islamic architectural form in the heart of the venerable Great Palace.

Figure 12. Base and bottom of an open vessel of red clay. White slip inside and out. Interior: champlevé decoration with fine sgraffito details. Depiction of a male bust flanked by two pointed-topped trees. Pale green glaze with streaks of green and brown glaze. Early thirteenth century. Surviving height 3 cm. Diameter of base 9 cm. Maximum diameter 14 cm. Benaki Museum, Theodoros Macridy Donation. Inventory No. 13604. Image © 2010 Benaki Museum, Athens. Reproduced with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

In this paper, we have seen the prominence of representations of court attendants and officials in Islamic palaces in the form of sculpted and painted busts and statues attached to the spaces where rituals and other activities connected with the ruler and court would have taken place. Although there was a lively tradition of painted depictions of ruling monarchs and their feats on the walls of their palaces, to my knowledge,

Byzantine palatial traditions at the time did not use representations of court officials to "populate" the spaces where they participated in activities.

A champlevé bowl base in the Benaki Museum provides the only iconographic parallels between the champlevé bowls from Anatolia and Constantinople at the time, as well as the idea of ceramics conveying artistic motifs that are then misunderstood and resituated (Fig. 12). Although it is unprovenienced, this bowl base was part of the Macridy collection, and therefore likely originated in Istanbul/Constantinople, where Theodore Macridy worked for many years for the Imperial Museums. Unlike the Anatolian examples, the youthful, beardless male figure represented in the middle of the bowl is shown as a bust, and his clothes are different than those of the youths in the Anatolian examples. However, the connection with the Kinet bowl is made stronger by the placement of the figure's head framed between two cypress trees, which appear as if growing out of his elbows. The right arm of the figure is separated from the body, perhaps copied from a model in which the figure would carry something, as was the case with the flower offered by the figure in the Kinet bowl.[14]

The Benaki bowl provides slender evidence for the mis- or reinterpretation of the youthful court retainer figure in a Byzantine or Latino-Byzantine context. Would it be straining credibility to propose a connection between observed and/or reported instances of the practice of reproducing court figures in palatial spaces from the Islamic world and the deployment of three small sculpted imperial female busts above the entrance to the twelfth-century Gyrolimne gate to the Blachernai palace at Constantinople (Figs 13 and 14)? There is a tradition of the depiction of busts on the extradoses of arches in Byzantine religious art, but not palatial art. Of course who exactly is represented at the Blachernai is unclear: the figures seem to be female, but the comparanda for their jewelry all come from earlier centuries, so they may have been reused here. While most definitely not courtiers bearing attributes, their beardlessness could relate them to the court attendant figures discussed above. Whatever the case, one must think of this gate into the newly constructed twelfth-century additions to the palace as a place of ritual that must have accompanied the passage of the emperor through the gate, so these busts, otherwise so anomalous in the Byzantine imperial iconographic tradition, might be

[14] Demetra Papanikola-Bakirtzi, F.N. Mavrikioy and Ch. Bakirtzis, *Byzantine Glazed Pottery in the Benaki Museum* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 1999), 111, no. 228; Theodoros Macridy Donation, Invoice no. 13604.

Figure 13. General view of Gyrolimne Gate, Walls of Istanbul. From Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-İstanbul* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), fig. 158. Used with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

Figure 14. Photograph of imperial bust found at the Gyrolimne gate, Walls of Istanbul. Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople. The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London: John Murray, 1899), xii. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

seen as a repurposing of a practice observed in neighboring Islamic lands. The specific form of the busts might be anomalous, but in this context, it might not be inappropriate to quote from Mesarites' description of the audience hall in the Great Palace, which "...bears figures of Persians and their various costumes..." In addition to the figures described in the *muqarnas* vaults, could this passage refer to the kind of ranks of courtiers we have seen in Islamic audience halls? If this were the case, it would bring the busts of the Gyrolimne gate at the Blachernai palace a step closer to the Mouchroutas.[15]

Another possible conveyer of ideas about palatial architecture is manuscripts, and the medieval Islamic practice of frontispiece depictions of rulers. Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu, ruler of Mosul and Sinjar and builder of the Kara Saray citadel palace in his capital also commissioned copies of the multi-volume poetic compendium entitled *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, or Book of Songs. These frontispieces, which likely date from after the completion of the volumes in 1219, depict him in a variety of activities, including seated flanked by serried ranks of beardless young men with kaftans and fur hats, presumably at court (Fig. 15). This depiction is particularly interesting in light of the fact that Badr al-Dīn, himself a former slave courtier of the ruler of Mosul, originally an Armenian from Anatolia, was the first slave soldier in the medieval Islamic world to rule in his own right.[16]

While it is unlikely that a multi-volume compendium of Arabic poetry might have been of interest to a Byzantine monarch, there were other kinds of books produced at that time with potential cross-cultural interests. In this respect, and in reference to the issue at hand, which is the transmittal of ideas about palatial architecture through portable objects, illustrated manuscripts of pharmaceutical texts could have evoked interest

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[15] Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople. The Walls of the City and Adjoining Historical Sites* (London: John Murray, 1899), xi, 127, "The gate was at the service of the Palace of Blachernae, a fact which, doubtless, explains the decoration of the arch of the entrance with three Imperial busts." Neslihan Asutay-Effenberger, *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel-İstanbul* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 145-146, which lists comparanda from representations of imperial women dating mainly from the sixth century. I would like to thank Dr. Buket Coşkuner for inquiring at the Istanbul Archaeology Museums, where there is no record of such a bust in the collections. The remains of two are still to be found above the (now blocked) Gyrolimne gate. I would also like to thank Dr. Hansgerd Hellenkemper for his suggestion that these busts could be spolia.

[16] D.S. Rice, "The Aghani Miniatures and Religious Painting in Islam," *The Burlington Magazine*, 95 (1953), 128-135.

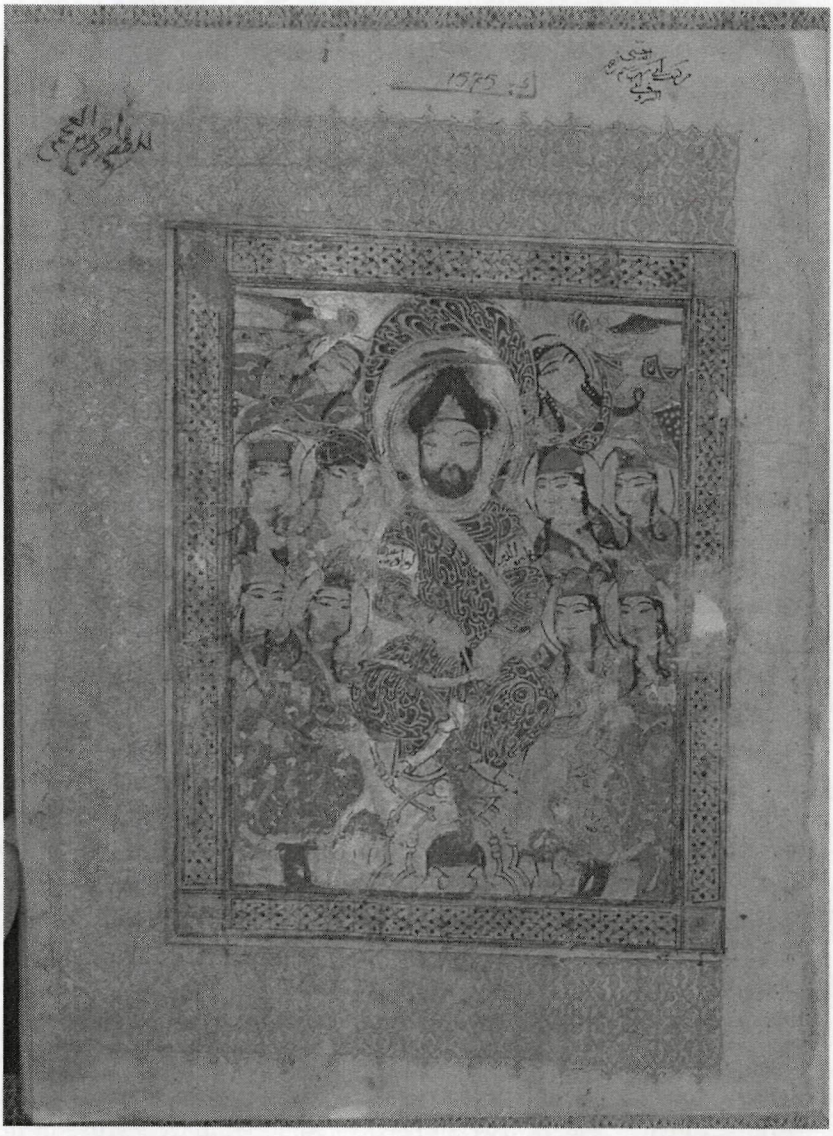

Figure 15. Frontispiece of Volume 17 of the *Kitab al-Aghani*, Millet Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Feyzullah Efendi 1566. Reproduced with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

in Byzantium. The frontispiece that incorporates the most architecture is from a manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Diryāq*, or Book of Antidotes, attributed to Mesopotamia in the first half of the thirteenth century, the same time period as the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* frontispieces (Fig. 16). This well-known frontispiece depicts three different scenes—the top portrays a hunting scene, and the bottom a procession. It is the largest, middle scene that concerns us first. It is an intriguing mixture of an ideal picture of court with a genre scene. The monarch is depicted seated on a raised *iwan* holding a wine glass in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, gazing at kebabs that are cooking on the grill in front of him. Behind him are two beardless youths carrying lances or standards that end in tripartite fleur de lys-like elements. To his right and left are ranks of beardless youths, all bearing attributes of court office—reminiscent of the frontispieces of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu'. Given the scholarly attribution of this frontispiece to the general region of Mosul, and the era of the reign of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu, it is interesting to observe that four of the courtiers flanking the Kebab King are depicted in windows on an upper story, and shown from the waist up—similar to the plaster figures on the walls of the Kara Saray palace in Mosul (see Figs 3 and 4), and displaying only a bit more torso than the figures on the scene on the fragmentary vessel in the Ankara Etnoğrafya Müzesi (see Figs 1 and 2).

As can be seen in these two examples, the courts of northern Mesopotamia were active in book production. With Byzantium entangled in the politics of the region due largely to the Frankish states of the Outremer, there would have been multiple ways for copies of pharmaceutical texts like the *Kitāb al-Diryāq*, or astrological or philosophical texts to make their way from this region to Constantinople—some perhaps, with the kind of depictions of palatial spaces found in the Vienna copy of this manuscript.[17]

Whether through decoration on champlevé bowls, tabourets in the shape of pavilions, or frontispieces depicting court scenes, there were multiple ways in which portable objects evoked palatial spaces and practices at this time. In this article, I have situated the objects under discussion in

[17] For an example of the involvement of Mosul with larger intellectual and cultural currents at the time, see Dag Nikolaus Hasse, "Mosul and Frederick II Hohenstaufen: Notes on Atiraddin al-Abhari and Siragaddin al-Urmawi," *Occident et Proche-Orient: contacts scientifiques au temps des Croisades*, eds. Isabelle Draelants, Anne Tihon and Baudouin van den Abeele (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 145-163.

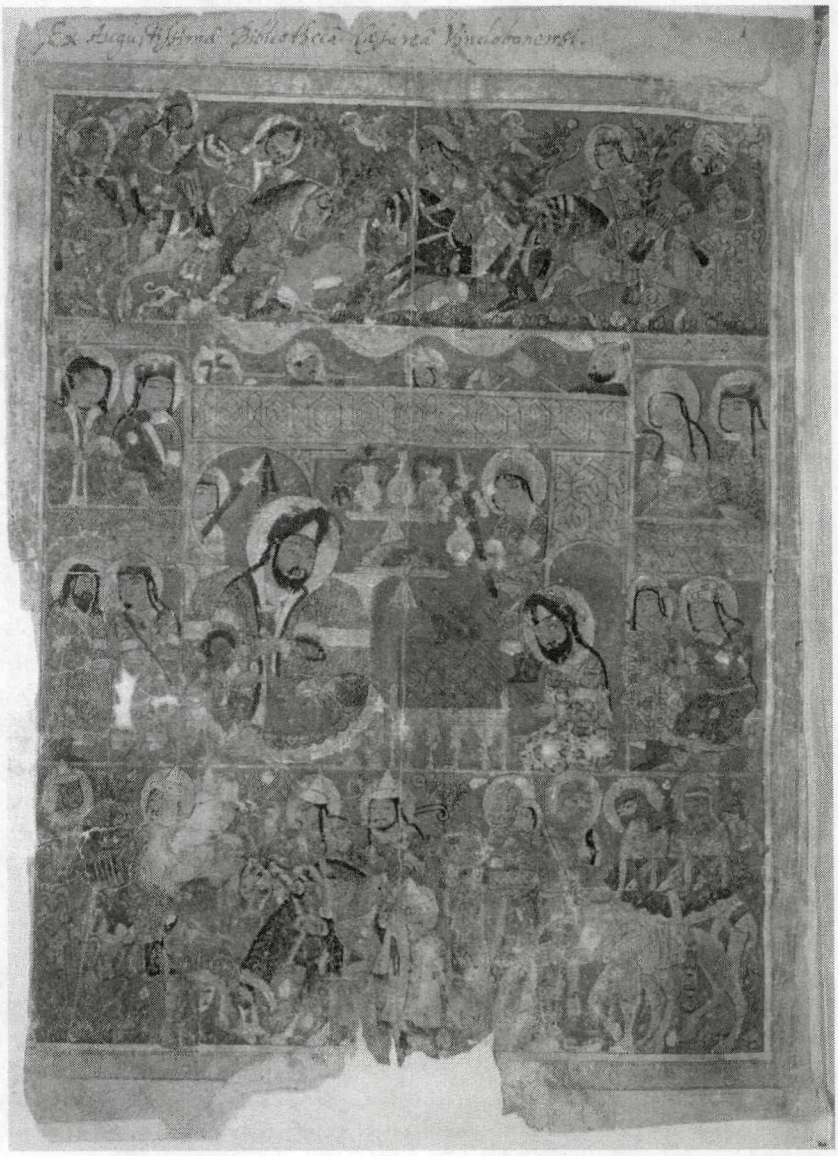

Figure 16. Frontispiece of the *Kitab al-Diryaq* Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Cod. A.F. 10, fol. 1. Reproduced with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

a general trend: the spread of royal imagery to a variety of objects not necessarily produced with a courtly audience in mind, and have linked them also to the proliferation of small courts, increased trade links and multiple centers of production of the era. But in addition to this, we know from Byzantine and Seljuk examples that the artistic and architectural vocabulary of the monarch and his high court officials were almost identical at this time. This means that multiple places existed in each of these dynastic capitals, as well as in every city of every realm, where palaces and pavilions would have been built for the monarch and his court.

Porta-Palaces II: Ephemeral Architecture

The lowest scene of the *Kitāb al-Diryāq* frontispiece depicts four women and one child traveling by camel accompanied by guards on horseback. They are seated in a square contraption atop the camel, with no indication of canopy or other covering. Presumably this scene, like the hunting scene at the top of the frontispiece, relates to the specific court being depicted, and like them is an official one with genre elements. This scene recalls another more spectacular one, which took place late in the previous century in 1184, at Mosul, as recounted by the Andalusian traveler Ibn Jubayr, who was part of the pilgrimage party of Saljūqa Khātūn, the daughter of Anatolian Seljuk sultan Qilij Arslān II and then wife of the Artuqid ruler of Diyarbakır. The litter of this illustrious woman was covered; in fact it was called by its covering: *qubba*, or dome. The Broadhurst translation, given in modified form below, assumes that she traveled by litter stretched between two horses (as the subsequent quotation makes clear), and not atop a camel or other animal:

> The Mas'udi princess (Saljūqa Khātūn) entered at the head of her troop of handmaidens, while before her was a body of the men who had conducted her. Her litter (*qubba*) was wholly adorned with pieces of gold shaped like new moons, with dinars the size of the palm of the hand, and with chains and images (*tamāthīl*) of pleasing designs, so that hardly any part of the litter (*qubba*) could be seen. The two beasts that bore her advanced with jaded steps, and the clatter of their trinkets filled the ears. The golden ornaments on the necks of her beasts and the mounts of her maidens formed together a sum of gold beyond estimation.[18]

[18] R.J.C. Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubair* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 246; Ibn Jubayr, *Rihla* (Beirut: Dar Sader, 1964), 212-213.

Both the nature of the litter and the visual splendor of the party are recounted in more detail in another passage:

> The Mas'udi princess (Saljūqa Khātūn), with many youths and much circumstance, came suddenly upon us the evening of our departure from Baghdad. She was withdrawn inside a litter (*hawdaj*) placed on two poles that lay between two beasts, one ahead of the other, and decked with gilded caparisons (*jalal al-mudhahhaba*). The animals carried her along like a zephyr, speedily and gently. There was an opening (*bāb*) both in the front and in the rear of the litter, inside which could be seen the princess, veiled and wearing a golden headband. Before her went a mounted troop of her youths and soldiers. On her right were the nags and excellent hackneys, while behind her was a party of her handmaidens riding both nags and hackneys, on gold-worked saddles. They also wore golden head-bands whose ends fluttered in the breeze. Like a cloud they moved behind their mistress, with banners and timbals and trumpets which they sounded at the mount and dismount.[19]

Ibn Jubayr also recounts a scene that took place earlier in the same pilgrimage, the visit of the same Saljūqa Khātūn to the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad at Madina. Here, there is no mention of golden adornment, nor or the multi-colored silks worn by the women when making their *succes fou* upon entering Mosul. Despite the sobriety appropriate to the setting, Saljūqa Khātūn's arrival once again occasioned a crowd. Of more interest to the topic at hand is Ibn Jubayr's mention of the domed litters (*qubāb*, plural of *qubba*) of not only Saljūqa Khātūn herself, but also her daughters and attendants.[20]

These passages evoke strong images of multiple domed litters, accompanied by guards as in the image from the *Kitāb al-Diryāq* frontispiece, bobbing and surging through excited crowds. While none of these portable, domed litters has survived, it is safe to say that they provide the beginning of a means to moderate the rootedness and place-specific nature of architecture presented at the beginning of this essay. It is a commonplace in many architectural traditions that domes are associated with important people: here, as in the decoration on the outside of the fragmentary bowl in the Ankara Etnoğrafya Müzesi, the top stands for the whole—there

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[19] Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubair*, 239-240; *Rihla* 206-207. A *hawdaj* here means a litter, but can also mean (an elephant) howda or camel howda. It seems the origin of this term can be connected with the Arabic *hawd*, one of whose meanings is camel hump. Thus the English language association of the term howda with elephants may have come from its use in India.

[20] Broadhurst, *The Travels of Ibn Jubair* 207; Ibn Jubayr, *Rihla*, 177.

it is the fleur de lys, here it is the dome of the litter that literally gives it its name.

Above, I introduced a category of portable objects—smallish ceramic tables evoking the tradition of polyhedral pavilions—as a way of providing one idea of a means of transmission for ideas about a particular architectural form from Islam to Byzantium, as well as in commercial milieux around the Islamic world. Litters, palanquins and howdas must have been found in all medieval societies, and therefore it is not necessary to think along similar lines for their ceramic representation. Furthermore the figure of the elephant, his mahout and howda are familiar to us from later contexts. Still it is apposite to introduce the fact that such figurines existed at the time, as well as one example of the object category (Fig. 17). This figurine, like most of its kind, is attributed to thirteenth-century Iran, but the general sharing of ceramic trends between Iran, Mesopotamia, and Syria at this time, as well as the presence of known examples of Syrian theriomorphic fountainheads, make it likely that it was part of the visual repertoire of these other areas. The pavilion-like howda on top of the elephant has a figure inside it (obscured in this photograph) and is topped by a centrally-place finial, perhaps evocative of a dome. The relation of howda to pavilion was made explicit in Fatimid Cairo, where there was a famous pavilion called the Hawdaj on Rawda Island in the Nile.[21]

The Seljuk sultans and their contemporaries also used an umbrella (*chatr*) as one of their regalia—it is perhaps this that is evoked by the cloth held by angels over the head of Badr al-Dīn Lu'lu' in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* frontispieces. This umbrella is called a *qubba* in Arabic language sources. In recounting the invasion of Anatolia by the Mamluk sultan Baybars in 1277, Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir mentions that the inhabitants of the city of Kayseri called the Seljuk sultan *ṣāḥib al-qubba wa'l ṭayr* (lord of the dome (umbrella) and the bird), because the Seljuk sultans had a bird atop their sultanic umbrella. Seljuk chronicler Ibn Bībī tells us that the sultan's tent was "three headed," a reference once again to those tri-partite elements

[21] The *hawdaj* pavilion on Rawda Island is mentioned in Neil Mackenzie, "The Fortifications of al-Qahira (Cairo) under the Ayyubids," *The Jihad and Its Times: Dedicated to Andrew Stefan Ehrenkreutz*, eds. Hadia Dajani-Shakeel and Ronald Messier (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Near Eastern and North African Studies, 1991), 86-87, quoting al-Maqrizi's *al-Mawā'iẓ*.

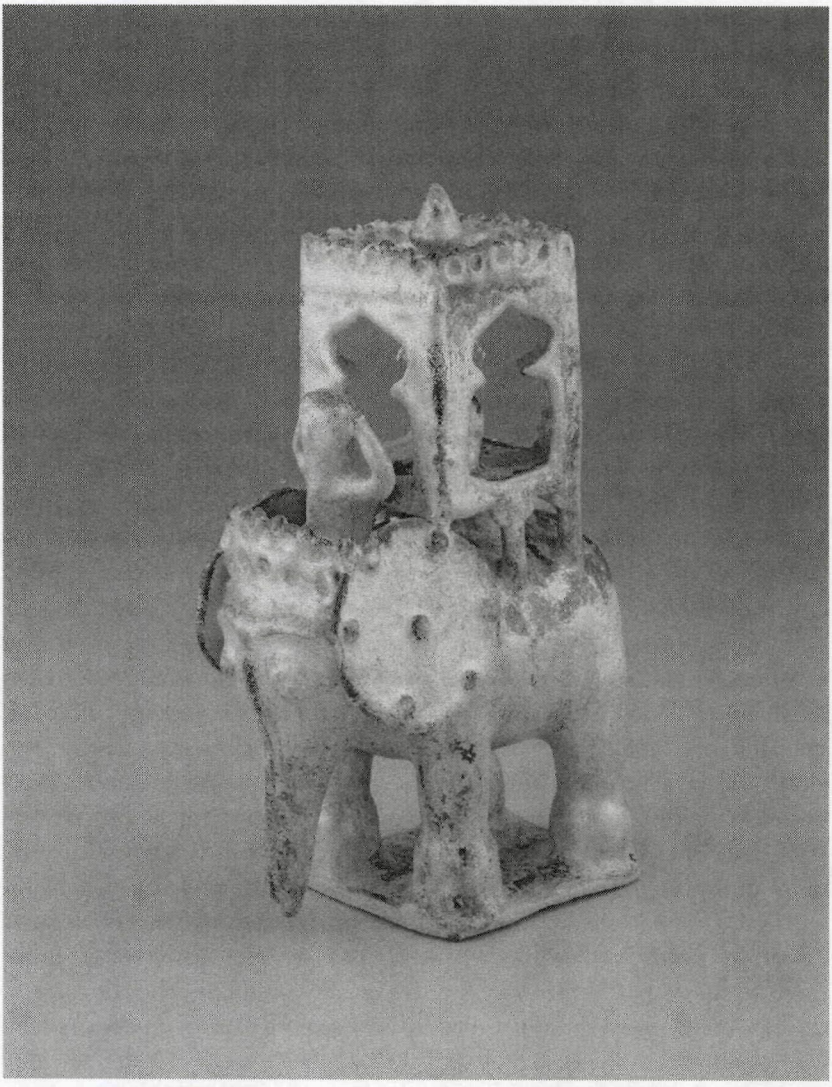

Figure 17. Underglaze painted glazed ceramic figurine of "elephant with howdah and figure." Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. F1967.26 Attributed to "Saljuq period, early thirteenth century." Height 22.9 cm. Reproduced with permission. This figure is published in colour in the online edition of this journal, which can be accessed via http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/15700674.

that seemed to top everything at the time—including the crowns of kings and sultans alike.[22]

A fourteenth-century drawing from Mongol Iran depicts such a tripartite finial—and introduces another kind of portable architecture, the tent pavilion. The structure represented is actually a tent mosque. There is a well-known if vague account of an Anatolian Seljuk tent pavilion that was gifted to the French King Louis IX while he was in Cyprus in 1248. This must have formed one part of the sultan's *sarā-parda*, literally curtain palace, which he set up at his suburban palaces, when traveling or on campaign.[23]

I would like to close this consideration of ephemeral architecture with a textual reference that recalls the travels of Saljūqa Khātūn as recounted by Ibn Jubayr. The Seljuk chronicler Ibn Bībī recounts enthusiastic crowds that gathered outside the central Anatolian cities of Kayseri and Konya to greet 'Alā' al-Dīn Kayqubādh when he became Seljuk sultan in 1219. Upon receiving news of the impending arrival of the new sultan and his party from the governor of Kayseri, "the military commanders of the city and the state and (other) important people went to the Çubuk district with movable and fixed pavilions (*koskhā-ye revān o sākin*), and wheeled vehicles (*gardūnhā*—literally wheels) full of bands, singers, and encomiasts (*meddāh*)."[24] When subsequently the sultan and his entourage arrived at the capital of Konya, crowds dressed in their best raiment greeted them, along with, and here Ibn Bībī is specific, 300 movable and 500 fixed kiosks decorated with all manner of weapons and implements. In Ibn Jubayr's travel narrative, litters are referred to as domes. Here, it is possible that the term "movable pavilions" refers to litters, or, as we saw in the elephant figurine, a howda in the form of a pavilion fixed to the top of a horse, camel, ox, water buffalo or the like, or to a wheeled conveyance. Since there is mention of weapons affixed to these, it is also possible that some of the movable pavilions might be of the "Elephant and Castle" type—basically

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[22] As preserved in the fourteenth- to early fifteenth-century writer al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-Ā'shā*, 14 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub, 1338 (1919)), 14:155, reprinted with original pagination in Faruk Sümer, *Yabanlu Pazar. Selçuklu Devrinde Milletlerarası Büyük bir Fuar* (Yabanlu Pazar: A Seljuk Period Big International Fair) (Istanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı, 1985).

[23] Stefano Carboni and Linda Komaroff, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002), 116, fig. 134.

[24] Ibn Bibi, *El-Evamirü'l-'Ala'iyye fi'l-Umuri'l-'Ala'iyye* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1956), 212 and 214.

an armored pavilion atop an animal—known from armed combat at this time. As for the fixed pavilions, one can imagine tent pavilions pitched by the urban notables and the military mentioned in connection with similar celebrations at Kayseri.[25]

In my opinion, these descriptions provide us with a category of ephemeral architecture—litters, howdas, tent pavilions and perhaps even wheeled pavilions—that uproot the fixedness of place noted at the beginning of this essay and any tendency to associate certain forms with certain construction materials. In this way, although many Byzantines came and went to Seljuk territories, it is not necessary to posit a trip to Konya to visit a sultanic pavilion or palace as a means of stimulating demand on the part of a late twelfth-century Byzantine emperor for a Seljuk-style pavilion. Elaborate, portable pavilion-type movable structures, so common as to be seen by the hundreds in the capital of Konya, in the form of booty, gifts or trade commodities, could easily have made their way to Constantinople. Visits like that of Sultan Qilij Arslān II to Constantinople in 1162 could very well have occasioned, if not gifts, then the strong visual impact of pavilion-like domed sultanic litters or howdas and elaborately structured tent pavilions, which were themselves used as reception halls.

The editors of this volume asked contributors to entertain the idea of a model that might encompass the production of both monumental and portable art. I take for granted that there were no architectural plans at the time, with the exception of schematic diagrams scratched on stones at building sites, and that master builders/artisans/craftsmen carried with them the secrets of their trade, and based their buildings on simple multiplications derived from the footprint of the building. Portable objects either recalling architectural forms in shape or decorated with architectural forms were neither unheard of nor uncommon, but in my opinion they formed part of a continuum with categories of decoration (like representations of beardless youths) that normally would not be considered

[25] Until about this time, Arabic language authors referred to the trellis tent (modern Turkish *yurt*) common to Central Asia as a *qubba*, or dome, due to its shape. A rounded tent or other dwelling placed on a cart was also a feature of Central Asian nomadism. It is possible that this is what is referred to in the passage from Ibn Bibi quoted above. See Peter Alford Andrews, *Felt Tents and Pavilions. The Nomadic Tradition and Its Interaction with Princely Tentage*, 2 vols. (London: Melisende, 1999), 1:180-193, for the use of the term *qubba* for trellis tent in pre-Mongol Arabic literature, and 1:201-203 and 1:256-263, for carts bearing round dwellings. It is entirely possible that this Central Asian tradition continued in medieval Anatolia.

related to architecture unless one knew, for instance, of their ubiquity in the decoration of palatial reception halls. I also take for granted the use of objects to create taste, and a desire on the part of the patron to commission a particular building based on that taste. But at the same time, with the lack of resources for monumental building and constant mobility, courts from those of the Normans and Frederick II Hohenstaufen through the Laskarids, Anatolian Seljuks and other dynasties in northern Mesopotamia constructed multiple urban and suburban palaces in or around all of the major cities of their realms. If the case of the Anatolian Seljuks holds true, these palatial settings were not grand, but they bore standardized imagery and were populated not only by sovereign, court and a menagerie of wild animals and birds, but also by luxurious portable objects, including textiles and gold and silver vessels. Some of these vessels also bore representations of monarch and court replicating the figural scenes found on the audience hall walls mentioned in this paper. While there must have been orders of magnitude, with capital cities like Mosul and Konya possessing larger palatial spaces with more complex iconographic programs, the very visibility, mobility and portability of the courts themselves must have contributed to the spread of selected court imagery to other settings and other media. As a result, my paper unifies architecture and portable objects in a single model conjoining the creation of taste and demand.