



Publication of Association Esprit, Société et Rencontre
Strasbourg/France



The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies

JASSS

Volume 5 Issue 8, p. 1135-1155, December 2012

***THE YASAWI SHRINE'S BRONZE DOORKNOCKERS:
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE TIMURID ARTISTIC WORLD***

***YESEVİ KÜLLİYESİ BRONZ KAPI
TOKMAKLARI: TİMURLU SANAT DÜNYASI AÇISINDAN BİR
DEĞERLENDİRME***

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Başak Burcu TEKİN

Erciyes Üniversitesi, Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi, Temel Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü

Abstract

The Yasawi Shrine was built by Timur in 1397 to honour Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi 230 years after his death in Turkestan. Today when you visit the city of Turkestan (Yasi) in Kazakhstan, you can sense a feeling of eternity inspired by the gigantic building. The structure's significance comes from the importance attributed to the Sufi Sheikh Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi. This building symbolises both the spiritual power of Yasawi and the worldly reign of Timur and the Eurasian steppes. The subject of this paper is the doorknockers on the entrance door of this shrine. The aim of this study is not only to examine the doorknockers but also to expose their place in Timurid art. Accordingly, the doorknockers will be analyzed from an artistic perspective, and the iconographic descriptions will illustrate how Timur understood symbolism in art. As an integrative and comparative study, this paper examines several sources of Timur's political and art history, the iconography of Buddhism and Islam which were dominant in the region, Yasawi Sufi thought and Ahmad Yasawi's poetry. Also included are comparisons of the miniatures, wooden artworks and architecture.

This research shows Timur's artistic powerful and far-reaching influence as it was reflected in the massive Ahmad Yasawi Shrine and in its smallest art works like the doorknockers.

Keywords: Yasawi, Symbolism, Timurid Art, Eurasia, Central Asia,

Öz

Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Külliyesi, Timur tarafından önceleri Yesi olarak bugün ise Türkistan olarak anılan şehirde Hoca Ahmed Yesevi'nin ölümünden 230 yıl sonra 1397 yılında inşa edilmiştir. Günümüzde dahi, Türkistan (Yesi) şehrini ziyaret ettiğinizde bu anıtsal inşaatın etkililiğine kapılılmaktadır. Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Külliyesi'nin önemi doğrudan Hoca Ahmed Yesevi'ye atfedilen önem ile ilintilidir. Bu yapı hem Ahmed Yesevi'nin ruhani lider kişiliğinin hem Timur dönemi yönetiminin hem de Avrasya steplerinin sembolik ifadelerini barındırmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın konusu Külliye'nin giriş kapısı üzerinde yer alan bronz kapı kollarıdır. Kapı kollarının tanımlaması değil, Timurlu sanatı içindeki yerinin de saptanması bu çalışmanın amacıdır. Bu nedenle kapı kollarının genel özelliklerinin betimlenmesinden çok kullanılan motiflerin sembolik anlamları üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu amaç doğrultusunda bronz kapı kolları sanatsal özellikleri ve ikonografik açıklamaları ile ele alınacak ve böyle bir anlamda Timur'un sanat ve sembolizm ile ilgili yaklaşımı da incelenmiş olacaktır. Karşılaştırmalı olarak Timurlu siyasi ve sanat tarihi verileri, bölgede hakim olan Budizm ve İslamiyet ikonografisi, Yesevi düşüncesi ve Ahmed Yesevi şiirleri karşılaştırmalı değerlendirme için kaynak olarak kullanılmıştır. Ayrıca karşılaştırmalara ahşap sanatı, mimari ve minyatürler de dahil edilmiştir.

Bu araştırma ile Timur'un sanatsal gücünün nasıl etkin olduğu ve Timurlu beğenisinin büyük boyutlu Hoca Ahmed Yesevi Külliyesi içindeki küçük ölçekli bir eser olan bronz kapı kollarında nasıl yansıtıldığı gösterilmeğe çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yesevi, Sembolizm, Timurlu Sanatı, Maden Sanatı, Orta Asya,

Introduction

Today as you visit the city of Turkestan (Yasi) in Kazakhstan, you can experience a sense of eternity stimulated by a gigantic building (Fig.1). The shrine of Ahmad Yasawi was built by Timur in memory of Yasawi in 1397. As the size of the building meets the vastness of the steppe, it becomes a symbol of contrasts. The gigantic building symbolises both the spiritual power of Yasawi and the worldly reign of Timur. The symbols of Sufi tradition and Timur's artistic understanding were skilfully integrated even in the minute details, into an artistic-architectural whole.

Ahmad Yasawi lived in the 12th century. However his spiritual influence has continued to the present day to the extent that nowadays Turkic people living in Central Asia see a visit to the shrine as a first and necessary step before beginning their pilgrimage to Mecca (Privatsky 2001 :90). His death in 1166 did not end his spiritual influence. In contrast, he became more spiritually influential than ever. The Yasawi Shrine, which was built by Timur in 1397 to honour Yasawi 230 years after his death, is an illustrative example of his lasting influence.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the iconographic decorations of bronze doorknockers which enhance this Timurid era building. One of the sub- purposes of this study is to argue that decorations were not only used for their own sake, but they were also used to provide an iconographic integrity. The other sub purpose is to illustrate on a small scale, Timur's artistic judgment that reflected his organized style.

1. Artistic Conception of the Timur Period: Imperial Style under Court Control

Timur, the patron of the shrine, was born in the 14th century as a son of the chief of a Turkicized Mongol tribe. His birth, childhood and youth became so legendary that it is almost impossible to suggest anything relevant on scientific grounds that can go beyond the legend (Barthold 1975:290). Within a short time, Timur became a real power in Transoxiana (Mawarannahr) in 1370 (Aka 1991; Grousset 1996). Until his death in 1405, he led numerous conquests. When he died on the way to his last military expedition to China in 1405, he left behind a vast land of 14 million square km, then known as Turkestan, covering a large area of present day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The empire and sultanate of the Timurid dynasty remained in place until 1517 in Turkestan and until 1858 in India albeit on a much smaller scale and was less politically powerful and influential.

Timur rose to power, and the world he conquered was the product of the Mongol Empire; Mongol history and traditions defined his goal, his methods and his ideology (Manz 1991: 2). The Timurid era was a period of two different and contrasting worlds. The first was a world in which settled Muslims were influenced by urban Persian culture, and the other was comprised of nomadic tribes who were then still under the influence of Shamanists and Buddhists living in the vast Eurasian steppes (Roux 1994: 214). The spoken language of this new culture was Turkic, its religion was Islam, and its political legitimation was Mongolian (Manz 1991:3). Timur managed to hold these contrasting worlds together within his Empire's border by relying not only on military means but also on cultural ones. For example, although he was a Muslim sultan, he adapted Chengiz laws in the administrative system (Serafettin Ali 2000). He was also supported by the local Muslim elites including the Shaykh al-Islam of Samarkand and the Sufis, who became his spiritual advisors and who also may have helped him rally support from both nomadic and town populations to legitimize his new

regime (Marvin 2002: 229). On a large basalt rock from Kazakhstan, the honours given to Timur in 1391 were recorded in both Uighur and Arabic, which hints at a polyglot culture even after the conversion to Islam (Herrin 2006:239). Timur's administrative skills, which brought different, contrasting social components together, can also be found in the making of the Timurid artistic style he insisted upon.

Timur did not base his hegemony on brutal force alone as Chengiz Han, who lived 150 years before him had done. He was rigid in performing his religious duties and paid consideration to pious men he respected and to their schools, shrines and mausoleums and to men reputed in learning (Dalal 1995: 158). In fact, Timur was much more interested in architecture than in other artistic forms. This very interest itself is an important clue in the evaluation and understanding of the style he wanted to generate. Gigantic architectural monuments, never seen until his time, became the very symbol of his political power. Qavam al-Din ibn Zayn al-Din Shirazi is the only architect that can be identified as a personality recorded in literary sources, He also worked at the shrine of Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi at Turkestan between 1395 and 1399 as a shagird or apprentice, His contribution to Timurid architecture was to produce a number of integrated large-scale monuments in a distinctive style, which includes Iranian design elements, features of the contemporary Turanian monuments and personal hall-marks of the master (Wilber 1987: 31-32). Golombek and Wilber called this style, which was developed according to Timur's requisition, the "Imperial Style" (1988).

Imperial style artistic can categorized into following order.

1. Monumental buildings as signs and symbols of Timur's political power
2. Following centralized directives from Timur himself and his court
3. Craftsmen, artists, architectures brought and/or invited from different land and cultures.
4. A common world of motif and composition based on decorative and iconographic integrity.

In this manner, Timur's identity emerged. Gigantic architectural monuments, never seen until his time, became significant symbols of his political power. His saying "Those who suspect our power should look at our buildings" (Zakhidov 1996; 83) clearly shows how consciously the imperial style was designed and created by Timur. The great Timurid poet Alī-Shīr Navā'ī (1441-1501), born 40 years later once wrote that "who built a long lasting building his name lives with it, as long as the building stands his name became a legend on people's lips" (Quoted in Lenz-Lowry 1989:43). This saying also reflects how Timur consciously designed and created his ideal artistic style.

The rules of imperial style were not only for architecture but were also adapted to other branches of art. Artisans, craftsmen, artists and architects who came from as far away as Qazvin, Tabriz, Syria, Shiraz and even from India contributed, under Timur's supervision, to establishing the style which turned Timur's vision into artistic forms (Golombek –Wilber 1988:188-189). Timur closely supervised and directed their artistic efforts according to his desire and principles. It can be strongly argued that without Timur's close supervision, the bringing of skilled craftsmen and artists to Samarkand would not have been enough on its own to create his distinctive style. In other words, it was Timur's preferences, vision and principles that played the major role in the emergence of his imperial style without which it would have been nothing but a mass of eclectic artistic products.

The place where the Imperial Style came to life was the kitabhane, the library in the court. The *Arzadasht* written by Ja'far Tabrizi¹ in a petition to Baysungur Mirza (1397-1433) about works in the palace library in Herat is a later dated document about Timur's purpose for organized, court controlled artistic products (Ja'far Tabrizi 1989: 323-28). An album in the Topkapı Palace Library containing 15 sheets of embellished patterns of mostly vegetal composition was used in a wide range of decorations from wall paintings to metal works; this indicates that court library played a role in forming the Timurid style (Lentz- Lowry 1989:192; Knobloch-Hrbas 1965: 15; Blunt 1973: 133). Therefore, regardless of which region it originated in Timurid art developed its own decorative programme (Kaya 2009:60). Sharafuddin Ali Yazdi, the Timurid period official historiographer mentioned these is artistic activities in *Zafarnama*: "It had been commanded that the Egyptian and Syrian builders should raise a royal palace in the midst of garden that had been made to south of the Shimal Garden.....The workers from Fars and Persian Iraq covered the exterior in tile work of great elegance and magnificence" (1989:90). Likewise, the Timurid conquest had a far-reaching effect upon the development of Persian art, including metalwork, insofar as it brought about a complete shift in its centre of gravity from western to eastern Iran, this was because first Transoxiana (Mawarannahr), and then Khurasan became the focus of Timurid artistic patronage (Kamaroff 1992: 17).

From 1379 onwards, Timur started bringing artisans, artists, architects and skilled workers from conquered lands to his capital, and shortly after began to build the Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Shrine using many artisans with a wide range of skills in Turan in 1397 (Golombek 1992:3). The Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Complex's, metalwork and woodwork were most probably the work of craftsmen from outside Central Asia (Kamaroff 1992: 19). The earliest Timurid metalwork in the complex was derived from the techniques, styles and forms developed in western Iran and adjacent lands in the 14th century rather than those that evolved indigenously from central Asian traditions (Kamaroff 1992: 17).

2.The Iconographic World of the Ahmad Yasawi Shrine

Despite ethnic and cultural diversity in the Timurid Empire, the genesis of decorative and iconographic unity in the imperial style is an important question needing our attention. To date, the arts and artistic values in the Timurid period have been studied on a macro scale with reference to gigantic buildings, centralized directives, and artisans and artists from different cultural backgrounds. Researchers have studied common motifs and compositions to understand the characteristics of imperial art.

Examining this imperial style on a micro scale, for example the bronze doorknockers, illustrates how these common motifs and compositions were incorporated. The particular focus is on the decorative and iconographic unity of the shrine's wooden entrance door and its doorknockers. The decorations were not created as independent elements, but they were purposely rendered with their iconographic and decorative unity in mind.

It is almost impossible to believe that Timur, who used every opportunity to strengthen his political image and legitimacy, would no interest in the iconographic meaning of the

¹ Ja'far Tabrizi was born in Tabriz at the end of the 14th century. He became a successful calligrapher at an early age. He was appointed as director to the library founded by Baysungur Mirza, the grandson of Timur, in Herat in 1420. The place to which he was went after Baysungur's death in 1433 is not known. See (Özergin 1976:80-81).

monuments and buildings he founded. In contrast, the transformation of interior and exterior decorations into images on his buildings became symbolic narratives of his political power. In this regard, it is possible to think that the iconographic composition of the Ahmad Yasawi Complex was also carefully designed and planned with the same purpose in mind. The iconographic world of the Ahmad Yasawi Shrine comes from three sources: the works of Ahmad Yasawi, Sufism and Buddhist art.

2.1.First Source-Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi : Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi was born around 1085-1095 AD in the village of Sayram, which is located 8 kilometres to the north of the city of Cimkent in southern Kazakhstan (Arslan 1995:794-95). As founder of the Yasawi order he had long shared spiritual hegemony in Central Asia with the Naqshbandiya and enjoyed particular popularity (Algar 1976:132). Yasawi was closely associated with Uzbek Sufism which is currently enjoying renewed popularity (Levin 1993:57). During his lifetime, Yasawi provided spiritual guidance and wrote poems called *Hikmat*, which roughly means “gnosis”, in order to emphasize Islamic moral values and beliefs. Yasawi’s poems aimed to provide high moral qualities in connection with and /or under the guidance of the Qur’an and the prophetic deeds of Muhammad; they are still loved and read with great respect. Yasawi’s spiritual power in Central Asia reached such a high level that people in the Turkestan region still sincerely believe the legend that highlights Timur’s unbeatable power and how it is related to the wholehearted respect he showed towards Yasawi and his principles (Aka 1996:529). It is also commonly believed that before the Ankara war with Bayazid, Timur read Yasawi’s *Hikmat*, i.e. his book containing spiritual poems. He read a poem supposedly by Yasawi, that said “whenever you have a difficult time, whenever you run into a hardship read this poem to be relieved from your hardship”. One legend is that before the Ankara war, Timur read this poem 70 times by heart and with its spiritual help won the war (Köprülü 1991:41). This narrative shows that Timur, who knew Yasawi’s spiritual influence over people, tried to use this influence by showing his respect for Yasawi’s spirituality for his own political ends. It should be emphasized here that Timur’s use of Yasawi’s became more important than what Timur actually thought about him and his spiritualit. Today, a prevalent belief among the people living in Central Asia is that a pilgrimage to Mecca without paying a visit to Yasawi’s shrine has no value in God’s eyes; thus the spiritual power Yasawi had in the Timurid period becomes clearer. For this reason, respect for Yasawi and his teaching, whether for political ends or for sincere personal adherence, was strongly reflected in the Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Complex. Timur’s endowment for the Ahmad Yasawi Shrine dated from the late 1390s, and it also pointed to his high regard for Ahmad Yasawi (Woods 1984:331).

The works of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi are not regarded as reliable sources since they under went change over time. Fuat Köprülü states that none of the existing copies of the *Hikmat* belonged to his period, and they were completely amended in accordance with the Naqshbandi traditions and it is necessary to evaluate Ahmet Yasawi and Yasaviyya in that framework (Köprülü 1940:212). These works do not reflect the real Ahmed Yasawi, the legendary Ahmet Yasawi, in other words, the Islam of the 12th century, the time when Yasawi lived in Asia, but reflect the Naqshbandi Ahmet Yasawi trying to defend Islam against Shamanistic winds blown by Mongol invasions which began in the 13th century(Ocak 1996:35).

As a result of such determinations, the question as to how particularly the *Hikmats* can be used as a source comes to mind. At his point, dating is of essence. This is because, Timur and people of his period, did not have the chance to know Ahmed Yasawi, who lived before their time and his original works. *Hikmats* read in their periods had undergone several changes are those which went the change at issue. Notice that research to be conducted on hikmets will mislead researcher at the beginning of the research (Ocak 1996:53) will not be

deemed to be applicable for any study to be made on the iconographic meanings of the motives created in the late 14th and early 15th centuries. Consequently, symbols on the structure were formed according to those *Hikmats* which had undergone change. The purpose herein is not to discover the original Yasaviyya. The contents of the *Hikmats* which are considered to have an impact on iconography are become more important than their originality.

2.2.Second Source/Sufism: Sufism is important because Ahmad Yasawi had Sufi training, and the Sufi orders followed his teachings. The Yasawi tradition as a Sufi path has many religious, social and cultural ramifications. It played a role in the Islamization of Turkish tribes, in the adaptation of Islam to the Turkish nomadic milieu and in linguistic reconciliation through the ideas and poems of Yasawi (Trimingham 1971:58). The sources of these ideas, whose reflection can be observed on the motifs in the Shrine, lie in Sufism. Central Asian mysticism was so powerfully rooted in the Yasawi tradition that every Sufi order among the Turks has drawn upon it in some way (Ocak 1996:40).

2.3.Third Source/Buddhism: motifs originating in Buddhism were used in the Yasawi Shrine to a significant extent. Buddhism was born in India and spread first to Indo-China and China, and then to Central Asia. The Huns were among the first Turkic people who accepted Buddhism. Towards the second half of the 6th century, Buddhism spread among the Gokturks. It is known that even Bilge Khan developed an interest in Buddhism, but on the advice of his vizier, Tonyukuk, the Khan had to control his interest (Ocak 1983: 37-40). The influence of Buddhism on Turkic people in the same century is illustrated in the Bugut Inscription². According to the inscription, Bumin Khan was an adherent of Buddhism, and upon the call of his spirit, he ordered his successors to build a Buddhist monastery (Roux 1998:85). In the middle of the 9th century, Uigur Turks became the major Buddhist population as a result of living in a strongly Buddhist environment, after they migrated into the oasis cities on the Silk Route (Kudara 2002:100-102). Descriptions on the frescos uncovered in Bezelik revealed the fact that Buddhism found its strongest adherents among the Uigurs (Smith 2005:30). Buddhism was the official religion among the Uigurs until the beginning of the 13th century (Günay-Güngör 1996:28). In the 11th century, it has been suggested that Manicheism could have weakened Buddhism, but Buddhism regained its strength; a prominent scholar of the time, Mahmud al-Kashgari Mahmut, mentioned no trace of Manicheism in his works (Roux 2001:215). As Yasawi's teaching spread among the nomadic tribes in Transoxiana (Mawarannahr), it adapted itself well to already existing beliefs and traditions (Köprülü 1991: 116) . The legends about Buddha and Buddhist saints in Uigurian books written in the Sogdian alphabet were adapted to the lives of Yasawi and other prominent Muslim saints and were transformed into saint legends in the Islamic mould (Ocak 1983:43) In addition, Ahmad Yasawi and his successors developed a method of teaching in Sufi form which was not unknown to the nomadic people who were familiar with Shamanist and Buddhist ecstasy (Ocak 1996:587).

² The Bugut inscription is one of the old Turkic inscriptions found in Mongolia. It derives its name from the Bugut Mountain located in the Bayn Tsagaan Göl (The Sacred White Lake) region within the Arhangay Aymag. It is one of the Turkic cultural and civic monuments among others in the mausoleum complex which dates back to the First Köktürk Kaganate and constructed on the valley 10 km away from the Bugut Mountain in the East. This Bugut Inscription is a didactic text and a narrator of the historical events. With these features it also set the example for the later Turkic inscriptions. The Bugut Inscription and its turtle-like base are exhibited in the garden of Cecerleg museum. For details see (Alyılmaz 2003:11-21).

Timur's selection of Buddhist symbols for use on the buildings and monuments he wanted built may well be related to the cultural settings in which he was raised so that he saw no harm in adopting images from those symbols. As mentioned earlier, his choices may also be related to his tolerance. According to Ruy Gonzales de Clavijo, a Spanish ambassador to Timur's court, after the Ankara War, Timur brought an enamelled door with gold and silver inlays showing the Paul and Peter holding a Bible in their hands and used it at the entrance of his tent (1994:269). For a Sultan who took a door with Christian images from the treasure of another Muslim sultan, Bayazid, in order to use it as a symbol of his power, using motifs familiar to the cultural settings he lived in should be considered.

However, an important point that deserves careful attention is that Buddhist motifs were not used as they were. They were stripped of their Buddhist meaning, all became Islamic motifs as they were incorporated into Islamic form. To suggest that all motifs in the Timurid period were used with iconographic meanings in mind may not be true. However it can be safely claimed that the majority of motifs used in the Timurid period were intended to reflect latent meanings.

3.The Doorknockers : Characteristics Analysis

Our discussion of the artistic highlights of Timur's reign and his perceptions could logically conclude with the bronze doorknockers on the wooden doors of the Yasawi's Shrine. The first pair of doorknockers was on the entrance portal leading to the central domed chamber of the shrine complex; the second pair, now missing, was on the Shrine chamber's doors. The missing second pair compelled us to limit our study only to investigating the doorknockers on the wooden entrance doors.

The double panelled main wooden door's one panel is approximately 1.07x3.53 meters. The front and back surfaces are composed of three panels with inlays and engraved embellishments (Fig.2). Each of the cast bronze doorknocker, measuring approximately 40x27 centimeters is decorated with silver and gold inlays. The doorknockers can be separated into four sections: crown, inscription plaque, door handle and the flat surface under the handle (Fig.3,4). The crown has two sections. At the top, palmette and stylised lotus motifs are used interchangeably. Similarly, palmette and stylised lotus are also used interchangeably in the decorative lines surrounding the door's edge in three dimensions. In the second section of the rectangular border, palmette and an Asian originating stylized flower khatai, on crosswise spiral curled branches interchangeably. We can see a very similar example of this decoration on the border surrounding each panel of the door. In a different way palmette petals are stretched and khatais are composed in imitations of spring flowers. The inscription plaque is located between the crown and the flat surface. The doorknockers' inscriptions that are of concern in this context share complementary content. "Our beloved Prophet says" is written on the epigraph part with inlaid gold on the left one and the "World is momentary and live it worshipfully" on the right one. The spaces on the epigraph are of inlaid silver.

A. A. Ivanov was the first researcher to translate the inscriptions (1981:73-75). According to translation there are two signatures on the two different sets of doorknockers of in the Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Shrine. The artisan's name and date on the part in the form of a sectional medallion under study reads "Work of the poor slave the hopeful Izzal-Din ibn Taj al-Din al-Saki, the date 799/1396-97"; and the second inscription "Work of the poor slave Izz al-Din ibn Taj al-Din Isfahani" belongs to the doorknockers of the mausoleum chamber's wooden doors, these doorknockers are now lost (Ivanov 1981:74-75). It is specified that Ivanov read the artisan's name utilizing the three exact scaled drawings made

by the Hermitage Museum official A.Gurjiyenko (1981:181). Also, the Persian quatrain abridged from Sa'di's *Gulistan* with a slight variation, is inscribed on the surface of the handle, as well as on one of the other pair (Kamaroff 1992: 29).

The handle and the flat surface under the handle are of interest. One of the major concerns here is the lions' heads. The hinges of the doorhandle are attached on each side of the lions' head in the middle. On the lower part, two lions' heads are placed on each side. The handles project downward in the form of a lobed ogival medallion that ends at the bottom exterior of a palmette; the inside is filled with a vegetal ornamental pattern based on tangent split palm leaves, with a palmette in the centre and at the top. The flat surface under the handle contains hobnails with eight sliced surfaces at each corner, each measuring three cm in diameter (Fig. 5). On the surface of the flat panel a multi-foil inlaid arch can be seen. The vegetal decorations under the arch are split palm leaves in the middle, and at the top, curly forms of palm leaves are used similar to those on the door handle. Below, in the middle, there is a hobnail in the form of an eight-leaved flower. At the corners of the multi-foil arch there is a free style composition of khatais and leaves.

4.The Doorknockers : Iconographical Analysis

Analyzing the decorations on the door handle according to their iconography can begin with the lion head figures (Fig. 3) Lion figures symbolism can be observed in almost all societies more or less similarly. Ample evidence about the symbolism of the lion can be found from antique Greece to Rome to Mesopotamia and as far away as Central Asia (Çoruhlu 1984:113). In all these cultures lion figures were used to symbolize power, strength and holiness. In Islamic lands, especially Shiite regions, particularly in Iran and its adjacent geography, lion figures were used to symbolize Caliph Ali (DeJong 1989:8). Yasawi, in his poems, likened Caliph Ali to a lion.

Ali is the lion of God,³

The infidel's death caused by his sword (Ahmed Yesevi 1993:56)

Although it is not known for certain that Timur was himself a Shiite, it has been suggested that he was under strong Shiite influence (Kamaroff 1992: 28). In this regard, it can be noted that the inscriptions on Timur's own sarcophagus, which provides the ruler's genealogy, imply that Timur was a descendent of Ali (Kamaroff 1992:41).

The number of lions' heads is another important perspective because of the symbolism it carries. It is surprising to observe how the trinity, which is not recognized in Islam, made its way into the symbolism of certain artistic forms. The Shiite declaration of faith, "There is no God but Allah, Muhammad is His Prophet and Ali is His friend", led to countless examples in poetry and in decorations of a trinity of Allah, Muhammad and Ali (Schimmel 1998:78)

A miniature found in an album (AH.2153) in the Topkapı Palace Library illustrates well the symbolic use of the trinity in Shiite influenced cultural settings that were not necessarily Shiite. These black inked miniatures in an *Album* are attributed to the artist named Muhammed Siyah Qalam. Ernst Grube, gives a useful catalogue of most of the pictures in Topkapı Palace and attributes them to the pictorial art of Central Aisa, considering them to

³ English translations from this and all other Yasavi poems are my own.

belong to the Timurid School of the 14th and 15th centuries (Grube 1978) ; however in his last work taking into account discussions at the collegium held in 1980, he says that some of the pictures were executed under the influence of Central Asian Buddhism and others may have been executed in Samarkand during the time of Timur and in Herat during the time of Ulugh Beigh and Shah Rukh (Grube 1985:1-36).

The black-inked miniature in folio 29v, assumed to be drawn during the construction of Yasawi's Shrine, describes a type of religious ceremony (Fig.6). Dancing dervishes with a piece of cloth and a rod in their hands refer to Yasawi's adherents of esoteric Shiite dervishes where 12 sliced headgears represent the 12 Imams in Shiite doctrine (Karamağaralı 1984:70-71). The dervish paintings combine a variety of cultural strands, suggesting shamanist and Tantric Buddhist rites, but also have Islamic connotations, such as men wearing the turbans of shaykhs over their corolla-shaped hats, and veiled women (Esin 2004:72). In Mawarannahr, the Yasaviyyah brotherhood (many specialists connect their origin with pre-Islamic rituals of shamanism) consider *sama*, *dhikr* and the ritual dance *raqs* as their main rites; furthermore the main subject about *sama*, *raqs* and *dhkir* in one of the earliest extant Persian Yasawi treatises the *Risalah-i Hisam al-Din Sighnaqi* was the participation of women. (Babajanov 2003:66). When in ecstasy, both Tantric and Muslim dervishes danced, to the diverse sound of instruments and such scenes appear in Siyah Qalam's work, together with the symbol of the cup, in dances with handkerchiefs, as seen Uighur murals: drums, horns, castanets and bells (Esin 2004:76). The most important point in the miniature for this paper is a figure depicting a woman in ecstasy showing the sign of trinity with her left hand during this Yasawi *sama*, *raqs* and *dhkir*. This sign apparently represents Allah, Muhammad and Ali (Karamağaralı 1984:70). In addition, a similiar trinity to this Shiite doctrine can be seen in Anatolia in Malatya Great Mosque. Malatya has strong ties with Persia and is also a centre of many Islamic movements ; for these reasons the inscriptions "Allah, Muhammad, Ali" on the walls of the Great Mosque's *iwān* would not be surprising to encounter (Karamağaralı 2006:300-301).

For this reason, the figures of three lions in the Yasawi Shrine make us think of the trinity of Allah, Muhammad and Ali. Also one of the lions is depicted higher, bigger and with a mane symbolizing the Creator and has a privileged position in the miniature.

Another important iconographic motif is the embellishment of an eight-leaved stylistic lotus at the lower part of the flat surface. Throughout the ages, the symbolic connections between paradise and the number eight can be found in different cultures. According to Sufi tradition in Islam, since the mercy of God is greater than His anger, there are seven hells and eight heavens. (Schimmel 1998:169-170). Many expressions in the lines of Yasawi's poems, such as "I left the world's sorrow when I was eight years old" (Ahmed Yesevi 1993: 8) and "Muhammad the Prophet, the possessor of the Eight Heavens" (Ahmed Yesevi 1993: 60) refer to the eight principles which were explained by Ahmet Kayhan which are also called the eight gates to heaven and the eight-phased spiritual journey to be followed to become a perfect human being(1994:148-149). With respect to his poems and Sufi tradition, it can be suggested that the motif was used to remind those who, like Ahmad Yasawi, wanted eight doors to be opened before they could enter his gate to arrive in his presence, that is, to follow his path,i.e. do what he says. The motif also means that entering the shrine is the same as entering heaven, or the presence of Ahmad Yasawi is like the presence of eight heavens.

Lotus iconography is a Buddhist concept. The use of Buddhist iconographic motifs in Turkic cultures has been adapted and rendered into Islamic forms. One example of this adaptation is from a miniature in the *Jamic al-Tavrikh* manuscript, dated 1314. The Gods, Buddha and Siva and or Vishnu were displayed as prophets, and Mara was exposed as a demon in miniatures depicting Buddha's life (Canby 1993:301). The Islamic version uses of

Buddhist motifs can be seen more specifically on the doorknockers of the Ahmad Yasawi Shrine.

The eight-leaved stylistic form like the lotus on the panel of the wooden door was used on the doorknockers' flat surface (Fig.7). The Buddhist lotus, transformed into an Islamic context, is similar and related to former iconography. This stylized lotus should probably symbolise, in macro scale, the great creator Allah, who possesses the Eight Heavens; in micro scale, the Khawaja Ahmed Yasawi, whose guidance is the best to reach the Eight Heavens.

The three centimeter cylindrical pieces at the four corners of the flat surface should be considered together with the decoration on the back surface of the wooden door in a square panel (Figs.8-9). In this panel, a swastika composition is depicted inside an eight-leaved stylized lotus, and on each of the four sides of the swastika the word *Bâb-ı Mubarak*, "the Holy Gate" is written in Kufi Arabic (Tekin 2002:877).

At this point, it will be helpful to consider what the swastika means in Buddhist iconography. In Buddhism, when the swastika's arms are turned to the right, it denotes the 'seal of Buddha's heart' (Eberhard 2000:121). For this reason, it exists in Buddha's foot print (Tekin 2006:418). The swastika's numerical value four is also important in Buddhism. Gautama meditates under the Bodhi tree at the age of 35, and he reaches the truth on the fourth day; he wakes up as the 'enlightened' Buddha and the Buddha doctrine is based on four truths (Michell 1989:32). The iconography of the swastika in Buddhism is integrated with the four door concept of Sufism on the wooden door of the Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Shrine; thus it is placed into an Islamic framework. In this respect, a later example of using the swastika in an Islamic context can be found in an Ottoman period manuscript album (Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, Inv. 1443) attributed to calligrapher Ahmed Karahisari (1540-1550). The Kufi calligraphic script *elhamdulillah* written four times in a square, begins from each border midpoint and ends at the other border midpoint and finally a swastika design occurs in the middle (Tekin 2006:416).

According to Anne Marie Shimmel, the number four refers to the four phases of Sufi thought (1998: 60). The four stages of a Sufi leading to the reality of God are *shariat* (the law), *tariqat* (the path), *haqiqat* (the truth) and *maarifat* (the truth behind the truth) (Ferraro - Bolat 2007:87). In his book *Farkname*, Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi describes these stages in detail (Güzel 1996:340-343). In one of his poems he mentioned the phases as symbolized by four doors:

"I walked around in the garden of Shari' a

I looked around in the rose leaf of Tariqa

I held the wing of Haqiqat and flew.

I opened the gate of Maarifat, my friend."(Ahmed Yesevi 1993: 38)

Referring to the iconography of the doorknockers, the four hobnails placed on the flat surface probably refer to the four gates or phases that should be ascended. The decoration on the back of the door, the inscription plaque and Yasawi's poems support this sentiment. In addition, the surfaces of the hobnails which are divided into eight slices seem to be complementary to both decorations with a swastika on the back surface of the door. The swastika and the four-times-written "Holy Gate" inscriptions are placed in an eight-leaved

lotus. The perception of the number four, the swastika design and the inscription "The Holy Gate" are used together although in a more abbreviated design here. This compliments the idea that four doors should be passed in order to reach heaven, and the way shown by Yasawi is the best.

The four hobnails very probably symbolized the Sufi term *al-awtad*, which is also related to the four stages. Within the Sufi hierarchy, there are four true men, *al-awtad* (the pillars), whose stations are the four corners of the world-East, West, North, South.(Armstrong 2001:27). Also *al-awtad* is the title of the third class of the divine order and refers to the four holy persons who are accepted as four poles. (Goldziher 1975:419).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that Timur bequeathed his vision of the state through art. He encouraged the necessary environment, power and support for every belief and art style to be integrated into his overall vision. His ideal can be seen in all works of arts that were created during the Timurid era from the biggest to the smallest. Observations and assessments of the Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Shrine doorknockers lead to this conclusion All selected designs had a purpose. From doorknockers to monumental construction every design was used by Timur as an implement for defining Timurid imperial art.

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FIGURES



Figure 1: Khawaja Ahmad Yasawi Shrine. Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan,2000. Author's photograph.



Figure 2: The front panels of the the main door. Yasi (Turkestan) (Nurmuhammedoğlu 1993)



Figure 3: The doorknockers of the Khawaja Ahmad Yasavi Shrine. Crown, inscription plaque and door handle parts. Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan,2000. Author's photograph .



Figure 4: Detailed view of the handle part. Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan,2000. Author's photograph .



Figure 5: The flat surface of the doorknockers. Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan,2000. Author's photograph.



Figure 6: Mehmed Siyah Qalam. Album. Topkapı Palace Museum, H.2153, fol. 29r. (İpşiroğlu 1985:31)



Figure 7: The eight leaved stylistic lotus design. Front panel of the main door. Khawaja Ahmad Yasavi Shrine . Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan. Author's photograph. (Tekin 2000)

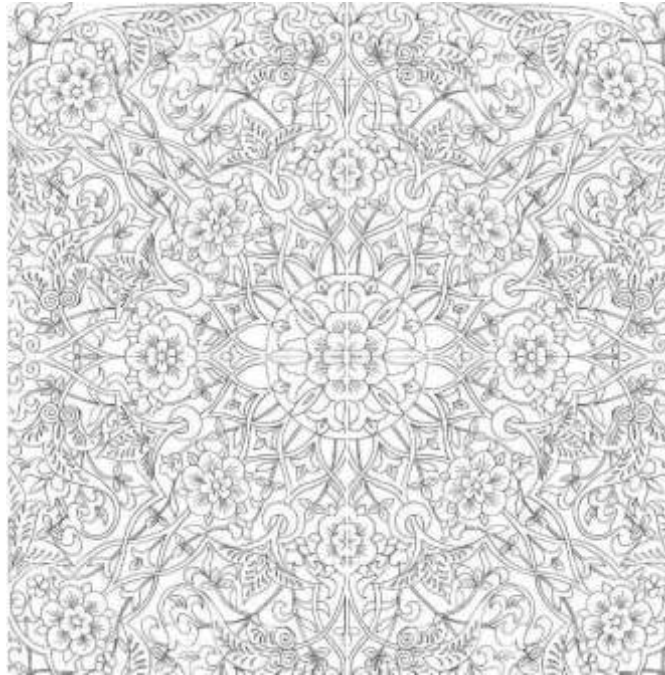


Figure 8: The restitution of the eight leaved stylistic lotus design. Front panel of the main door. Author's drawing. (Tekin 2000)



Figure 9: The swastika design on the the back panel . Khawaja Ahmad Yasavi Shrine main door. Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan. Author's photograph. (Tekin 2000)

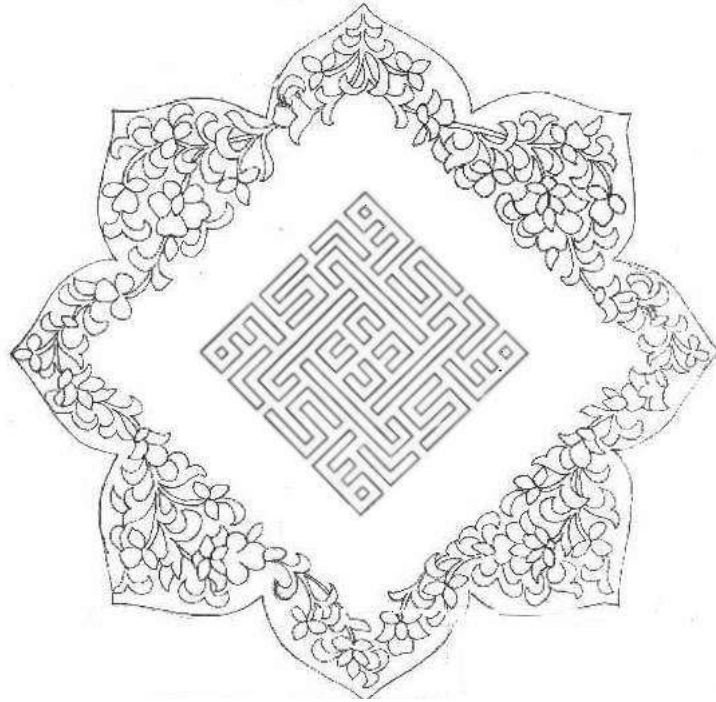


Figure 10: The swastika design on the the back panel. . Yasi (Turkestan), Kazakhstan.
Author's drawing. (Tekin 2000).