

OBERDEN COLUMN, DATES BACK TO 3RD A.H / 9TH A.D CENTURY –PRESERVED IN MUSEUM OF HISTORY IN TASHKENT

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ABSTRACT

It was for the availability of trees in Central Asia a great effect on making a lot of wooden products. Most of the monuments in western Turkistan –used local wood- specially the wooden artifacts dated back to 3rd A.H / 9th A.D. It's noted the lack of studies related to that period due to the lack of wooden works despite the fame of the area with a variety of local trees as we find a wooden column preserved in Museum of History in Tashkent , came from the village of Oberden in the valley of Zarafshan ,in addition ,we can compare it with some similar examples to match between its decorations and Samara decorations

KEYWORDS:

Beyond The river, Samarra, Oberden, Column, Wood, Stucco

1. INTRODUCTION

Column of Oberden (plate.1) " Museum of Tashkent , first floor ,hall No .3 – without register number " is considered one of rare examples we have from the period between 2-3 A.H / 8-9 A.D that were used in simple mosques . Thus the column can be used to shed the light on prevailed methods during that period. Wood carving was prosperous in Central Asia since early times where it was used as one of decoration forms in Western Turkistan since ancient time. It was found in civil buildings more than religious buildings. In private houses we find doors and columns that used as supporters for wooden roofs. Those columns were executed in carving.

2. DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Column of Oberden (Pugochenkova, Khakimov,1988). takes the cylindrical form holding wooden beams , its decorations were executed at its top in deep carving while in the middle is plain .Decorations begin from the middle the body to its top. The column is divided into two sections: First section (plate.2.A) divided into a group of small seven round bands , each was decorated with various ornaments . The first band: consecutive and contiguous arches m then the second band: decorated with abstract winged leaf with eyes in its haves in front of it a triple leaf. The third, sixth and seventh bands: small vertical contiguous lines while the fourth band we find Sasanian pearl beads and the fifth band the decoration of saw teeth.

The second section (plate.2.B) is decorated with a floral decorative form consists of fivefold grape leaves getting out from long strains extending in scrolls alternated with heads of birds , some in confront position ,others in opposite position . The necks decorated with Sasanian pearls beads. Those decorations were executed in geometrical divisions as circles some framed by pearls while the field of circles was decorated with heads of birds and fish scales, all executed in deep carving.

The beginning of the column (plate.3.A, 3.B) is a round band divided into a collection of contiguous arches its field decorated with abstract winged leaves with triple floral leaf in its middle that similar to the decoration of the first band from the beginning of the column. the field of wooden beams in a simple decoration consists of a winged leaf with hollow bottoms as well as a pointed floral leaf .

3. ANALYTICAL STUDY

Decoration of the column is similar to decoration of Samarra; we suggest that the column was the oldest in using Samarra style for a lot of reasons such as:

3.1 HISTORICAL ASPECT

Arabs ruled Beyond the river since the late of the first century of Hira till the after the middle of the third century of Hira as it was ruled by Umayyad and Abbasids (Armenius, 1987). Its cities were older than Samarra that was built by Al- Mu'tasim in 220 A.H / 836 A.D that means it was established and ended in half century.

After the defeat of Umayyads, the Abbasids moved from Damascus to Baghdad that made for the first time a non Arab ruled in an Islamic state that was the Persian race leading to the prevalence of Persian tradition in Islamic states (Shalaby,1983). This Persian element settled in the countries beyond the river and was credited with spreading Persian culture (Armenius, 1987), Caliph al-Mu'tasim while building Samarra brought Turks from Beyond the River, bought some, others came as presents (Zidane,1903). Rapidly they became the true rulers of Abbasside state.

Thus Persian and Turkish became among the elements of Abbasside caliphate that explains the spread of Persian and Turkish traditions and arts to the Abbasside caliphate that influenced by Sassanian state appearing in architecture and arts in Abbasside centers as we find in building Baghdad and then Samarra (Ismail,1974). We find the culture and arts of the two races, - Persian and Turkish – found before Islam and continued after it in Umayyad and Abbasside caliphates when they were used through Al-Mu'tasim in the building of his city, thus their cultures and arts prevailed in Beyond the River before Samarra .

Trade of silk between China and Rome during the era of Augustus and people of Bukhara were skillful in it moving through Sassanian Empire to the east of Roman empire (Sumner, Feltham,1999) so people of Beyond the River influenced by all arts and cultures passing in silk road.

3.2 ARTISTIC ASPECT

Decorations executed on the column are the same decorations in the same method executed on stucco known by Samarra style "first, second, third" that executed on stucco not on wood. We find the three styles on our column while in Samarra the first and second styles were executed on stucco and the third style was executed on wood.

We suggest that the column was older than Samarra styles through its decorative motifs. The column follows the Umayyad style the first stage of Islamic art that was mostly deprived from Hellenistic art that mixed with Byzantine and Sassanian arts (Shafei,1952). We find those influences appeared in the decorative motifs on the wooden column as follows:

3.2.1 SASSANIAN INFLUENCES

Among Sassanian influences prevailed in Umayyad style and in Beyond the River :

- 1- The motif of winged leaf that was common in Sassanian decorations used in Caesars crowns as in Khesru II crown, then wings developed to be the outer frame only .In addition, the cavity phenomenon in the bottom of the winged elements was taken from Sassanian art.
- 2- The form of fish scales on the logs of trees was originally Sassanian.
- 3- The idea of successive arches found in Sassanian art.
- 4- bands of saw teeth one of the original Sassanian motifs that was found in a lot of Umayyad wooden pieces .
- 5- Cressings were found in Sassanian art as in Taq Bustan " 590 -628 A.D" in a silver plate with a drawing of a palace façade dates back to Sassanian era (Shafei,1951).

3.2.2 HELLENISTIC MOTIFS:

- 1- The motif of fivefold grape leaf was an influence deprived from Hellenistic art.
- 2- The style of Hellenistic graving shown in motifs realization " Tighten or convex" giving different shades in depth.

The decorative elements on the column are similar to those of some wood objects Which belongs to the Umayyad model such as the minber of the Kairouan Mosque (248 A.H / 862-863 A.D) , The wooden door that was found in Tikrit and preserved in the Banaki Museum in Athens It is attributed to the 3rd century AH / AD 9 (Shafei,1951) , Beyond the river The decorative elements on the column were similar to the decorative elements in the burial dome of Ismail al-Samani (3th A.H / 9th A.D), all these examples are contemporary to Samarra decorations .

The artists and makers of the city of Samarra turned to the development of these methods and elements of the Sassanid methods and elements of Islam In no more than a quarter of a century. This development is known as the Samarra I, II and III , This shows that the three Samarra models are preconceived by Sasanian and Hellenistic methods And then developed by artists and manufacturers brought by Mu'tasim from across the state Which was more dependent on the Persian and Turkish elements that were under the rule of the Sassanid state.

Thus, such decoration on the wooden column is not a Samarra tradition Because they are the source of Sasanian influences at the hands of Persian elements, The first style, which appeared on plaster in the city of Samarra, was previously found on the column under study.

4. ROOTING

The decorative elements on this column cannot possibly be influenced by the Samarra style, But such decorative elements are not peculiar to the area where the Sasanian state (Irwin, 1997) As was the art of Hellenistic and influenced by Islamic art in the Umayyad era , This column also dates back to the Samarra period, where the Samarra first style appeared on it m that is considered a continuation for the first style as well as the second style that appeared on it Which we found no outlet on the wood in the Samarra second style.

Through this column and what we compare, we can assume that the three Samarra models were not linked to the city of Samarra It was found in the Central Asian region, which was only an implementation of the decoration and artistic style prevailing in the region This is more evident in the use of Mu'tasim artists and manufacturers of Persians and Turks, which were not strange decorations for them where The Sasanian monuments show us that the Persian artists were very familiar with the methods of the stucco industry , It was one of the main materials used to paint the interior and exterior of the round walls with bricks and mud bricks , This method was more prevalent in Persia than in other Islamic countries , It is likely that these methods were credited with providing the artists in Samarra, which helped them to bring about that artistic revolution.

It is difficult to make a decorative artistic revolution with a small period of time not half a century, perhaps because of the multiple hands of art that carried out these models and the multiple countries that came from them. We can say that these decorative elements on the column moved in the same style and method to Samarra by skilled artists from Central Asia and Iran.

5. SIMILAR MODELS TO THE OBERDEN COLUMN

When comparing this column the subject of the study of one of the columns dating back to the third century AH / 9 AD, which was also discovered in the villages of the valley of Zafshan in the mountains of Tajikistan It is a column of Crete (Benkie,1968) Which is similar to the column of the Oberden Mosque in terms of decorative elements The leaves of the five-pointed grapes, twigs, palms and birds' heads , As well as in terms of the technical advantages of placing the elements within geometrical divisions It has been decorated with ornate decoration where both columns are similar in shape to the cylindrical shape Whose decorations were limited to the top of the column and the rest of the body is free of decoration.

As well as the column of the village Fatmeve ,we find it simpler than the previous examples Where he was decorated with the bent leaves through deep engraving without decoration These columns are attributed depending on the animal themes and decorations to the century (3A.H – 9 A.D) , The column of the Oberden Mosque may be due to an earlier period of time (Paranof, Bunin,1973) When comparing these columns with the columns of the Friday Mosque in Khiva (Mankovskaya,1982) This mosque, which dates back to the 10th century AH and has 220 columns, including 12 columns They were taken from an older mosque, a Kath mosque Whose columns were similar in form, decorative elements and artistic style with columns of Oberden, Crete and Fatimeve.

It is clear to us from these columns, dating back to the 3rd century / AD 9 that the decoration resembles the style of Samarra We cannot assert that these decorations were found in Samarra only , Or that its first appearance was in Samarra but was found in the wood that was discovered in the Zarfshan Valley in the mountains of Tajikistan and also Khiva.

Some models of the first style were found in some of the cities of the country beyond the river Of which, Excavations of the ancient city of Termez Then found some glass medallions decorated with Sassanian motifs of Sasanian pearl beads (12th-13th centuries) (Arbor,1968) . Where Khudat Palace in Bukhari found pieces of stucco decorated with Sassanian pearl beads and five-pointed grape leaves, Engraved on stucco dating back to the 2nd century AH, is located near Persia near Samarkand in Nishapur and Afarsiab

As found and continued such decorations on some models dating back to the fourth century AH until the sixth A.H century such as:

A wooden door for the burial of Mahmud al-Ghaznawi in the fortress of Agar Fares Ghazni 421 A.H / 1030 A.D Dwazdeh in front of stucco 429 A.H / 1027 A.D Fares Yazd , Mihrab decorated with stucco in the mosque Bardistan Fares 447 - 450 A.H / 1055 - 1058 A.D , A mihrab of stucco in the mosque of Shah Abi al-Qasim 5-6th A.H / 11-12th A.D Fares – Yazd , capital of column and a panel of wood Fares – Matcha , stucco decoration in Nain Mosque 350 A.H / 960 A.D, Fares - Azjandh stucco in the cemetery of Jalaluddin 457 A.H / 1152 A.D (Arbor,1968).



Plate 1: Column of Oberden in the valley of Zarfashan attributed to the 3rd century / 9 AD, preserved by the history of Tashkent



Plate 2.A : Details of the decoration of the upper part of the Oberden column



Plate 2.B : Details of the decoration of the upper part of the Oberden column



Plate 3.A : Details of the decorations of the bottom of the Oberden column.



Plate 3.B : Details of the decorations of the bottom of the Oberden column.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 1- It is likely that the column Oberdan oldest implementation of the Samarra models, illustrated by its decorative elements, this column follows the Umayyad style, which is the first stage of the development of Islamic art.
- 2- The decoration on the Oberden column is the same decoration and the same style as the Samarra, and it is not a tradition of Samarra because it is the source of Sasanian influences by Persian elements .
- 3- The cities of the countries beyond the river historically older than Samarra, and that the Turkish element, which was attracted by Mutassim from the country beyond the river have a role in the dissemination of Turkish culture in the Abbasid Caliphate and affected by the Sassanid state .
- 4- The artists of the city of Samarra developed Hellenistic methods and elements to the Islamic methods and elements in a period of not more than a quarter of a century, which was called the Samarra I, II and III, this is not strange to them, where Mu'tassim brought artists from across the country.
- 5- Use the method of oblique engraving (beveled section) in the implementation of decorations on the column.

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