

THE TYPOLOGY OF PALMETTE IN THE SELJUKID PERIOD

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(SUMMARY)

In general, the term "typology" describes a series of consistent types of species. In different fields of science, typology accepted as a cooperative research method, which examines any kind of object in terms of its various types. In the following pages, after giving general information concerning typological methods, we will try to examine how to apply this method to a certain theme in the history of art.

The source of the "typology" is "typos", which in Greek means to strike, to print or figure; a human statue, a sample or a model. In Latin it has a similar meaning such as a figure, image, low relief or character. In modern Western languages the word is accepted in the form "type" with the meaning of "type and model". In the Ottoman dictionaries the equivalent of this term is "enmuzec", and this word means "the essence of a figure or example". Thus we can translate the word into contemporary Turkish as "the main form of a thing; an example".

In today's Turkish, "type" is used as an example which has an independent character of its own which contains within itself the basic characters. As for typology it is used widely as the name given to a method which examines samples and types of forms and their transforming process. Each field of science uses the method in a different way and capacity. But in every case, the peculiarities or qualities of objects either formal, functional or apart from these, any other characteristic is used as a criterion. And this criterion is examined through other similar kinds of object of the group.

In general, we perceive the events and objects around us by grouping them. Similar events or objects can be perceived and recognized

easily and speedily according to their similarities. Different science in according with the methodical level they have reached, investigate objects by grouping them in certain categories. In this manner, associations and events come into existence in the social sciences. For example, beliefs and attitudes of a similar kind which fit within the same framework form a group, thus various types of belief systems, such as animistic, totemic, etc., emerge.

The tendency to classify the materials of the natural sciences is quite ancient. The man who developed this point of view in an extraordinary system was C. Darwin (1809–1882). This well known scientist by building up an evolution theory for the organic world, systematized species in accordance with their genealogical tree. This famous observer in observing the numerous creatures, felt the necessity of making a typology which contained categories such as family, order, sub-order and form. Beside this necessity he uses the term “prototype” for the types which are the earliest specimen and primitive kind of each creature.

In the field of prehistory and archaeology, the method which is known as typology is used in order to explain the changing forms of the types of artifacts or objects. Typology, which claims to compare the types of materials, especially ceramics, tools and other findings gives their cultural and trade relationships, and thus frequently enabling the cultural picture of an age or a region to be reconstructed. From this it can be concluded that typological similarities have been frequently as a very valuable subordinate method of investigation in the search for cultural relationships, and as an aid in the dilemma of dating unknown items.

J.J. Winckleman (1717–1768) who realized that the history of the history of their producers, tried to classify that of the Classical antiques in terms of their forms. Because of his fresh systematic outlook he is called the father of archaeology. It can be said that he had applied the same kind of typological method used before by Darwin in the natural sciences to the field of Classical archaeology.

Typology in the History of Art

Throughout the history of man, man's understanding of the change in form and his reflection of this into artistic form, has been one of the main problems of the History of Art. This formal change in art objects

would be treated as another special problem by the typological method. Typology which deals with a great deal of complex, absurd materials, groups the forms by approaching the whole and the details of the form by taking into consideration a certain principle. The typological method uses the differences and similarities between the various forms and puts these complex materials into an order.

The typological method is used more or less in every field of the History of Art. In architecture, typology appears in two different situations. Firstly, it groups the buildings according to their functions; such as mosques, medrese, caravanserail, etc. Secondly, it defines the plan schemes of the buildings. In most of the architectural researches made in recent years, we can see chapter headings such as “characteristics of the plans of buildings” or only “typology”.

Besides the field of architecture, typology is also used in other branches of the History of Art. Especially in the industrial arts, typology deals with the characteristics of the shapes more than with their functions. For example, we can say that a pistol and a sword have similar functions (both of them are weapons), but they have different forms. These two kind of artifacts cannot be included in the same group. So, we can compare a sword only with other swords, but not with pistols.

In the field of decoration, there is a rich application area for typology. In this field the repertory of forms can first be classified according to their themes. First we can divide the motifs which are used in decoration, into six: 1. inscription, 2. floral, 3. geometric, 4. figure, 5. utensil forms and 6. architectural forms. This classification is made according to their themes rather than to their forms. So this classification is not a typology. But if we consider only one of these forms, for example figurals; we can see that it has a lot of sub-divisions, such as, human figures, animals and fantastic creatures; in addition to this, human figures can be divided into many sub-types too. This process is also available for florals. We can divide floral motifs into many types like, palmette, lotus, rumî, acanthus, etc. They are all members of the main type of floral motif.

Typology of Palmette

We may begin by gathering the examples of palmette which are seen in decoration. In this process, as a principle, our aim is to consider

the largest number of examples. Thus, any generalisation of classification arrived at consisting of main and sub-type groups, would be more accurate. The necessity of limiting this essay makes the numbers of the examples limited too. The number of the palmette motifs is around twenty.

The palmette motif which can be analyzed in building decoration of the Anatolian Seljuk, can be seen in the works of the ancient civilizations. The palmette which started to appear in the 11th century in Islamic countries, gradually developed through the reigns of the Great Seljuks of Iran, Zengi and Eyyübids. The examples of palmette form, carved on stone, in the Anatolian Seljuk buildings, are very rich and plenty, and it is incomparable with its other examples. The motif is also used in the Ottoman period but not as much as in the preceding period.

Palmette which is a floral form with a multilobed and symmetric structure, has the capacity to be transformed into endless variations. We know different kinds of palmette and it is possible to point out a main type. This type (Fig. 1) can be drawn by using different circles of different sizes. And it exists symmetrically on both sides of an axis. This main type is: at the middle the pointed petals curl outwards then downwards, and the bottom of the petal is connected with a circular movement to the stem. This main type has been transformed into new variations by changing the dimensions of the parts and the direction of the lines and articulations and by adding new elements.

To gather the various types is not enough to understand this motif; it can be said that each palmette motif is similar to the main type more or less. The kinds of the numbers of different types, force us to make a classification, in terms of typology.

We assume that we have twenty examples from the monuments of Erzurum, Konya and Kayseri, which are dated from the 13th century, that are completely different from each other as they can be seen in Fig. 2. So, by bringing them together in the table by random choice, we can notice that some of the types have some similarities. This means we have to make a new table.

When forming a new table, which can be called "The Typological Table" (Fig. 3), the formal similarities must be taken into account.

Thus, the main types gather the characteristics of their own group, so we can say that these main types are the prototypes of the others. In this sense, here, the prototypes are not classified chronologically but morphologically. Four main types differ from each other because of their silhouettes. This change is bound to the vertical lines which form the leaves. There is no doubt that, each main type forms the most fundamental forms of sub-types. As the process continues, we can see that the sub-types varies from "a" to "c" and the palmette example becomes more complex and so they form new types.

The similarities and dissimilarities between the sub-types, which are related to the main type, may produce a serial order. According to this explanation the nearest model to the main type is given the letter "a", and the farthest the letter "c".

In conclusion we can say that, it is necessary to build up a typological table in order to show the process of transforming in the motifs. Naturally this "transformation" may be interpreted in many ways; it may either give an approximate dating or a character of a reign. But in any case, the typological table must be considered an approximation.

The putting forward of this typological series is important because it may direct or describe the newly found examples. This table makes it easier to place a new example. When the forms of the art objects increase in number they become less alike. If we could have gathered the whole repertory of material of these motifs, a perfect classification could have been made. Today, when we are building up a series: there are many gaps between the objects because some of them have been lost and some still cannot be found. This gap forces us to leave some of the boxes empty. In Fig. 3 the empty "c" box shows such a deficiency.

The typological classification which Darwin has made, was quite detailed. It shows that it is impossible to give the genetic of creatures without a detailed typological table. But, in the History of Art, the world of forms is not so homogeneous, so we cannot collect them in a table. The model which we have analyzed in these pages, is a limited model with a few number of palmettes.

We hope that this short analysis has been of some value to our readers in their studies in this field.