

ZEYNEL BEY TOMB: THE UNIQUE PERSIAN TOMB IN ANATOLIAN PLATEAU

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Introduction

Zeynel Bey Tomb is the architectural result of political changes and power transitions along the Silk Road. It is located in, Hasankeyf region in Batman province, Southeastern Turkey near the border of Iran (West Azarbaijan province). The main reason leading to construct this tomb was the Battle of Otlukbeli which take place between Aq Qoyunlu and Ottoman Empire in 1472[3]. In 1453, Uzun Hasan has ascended the throne of Aq Qoyunlu in Diyarbakir and he unified the Roman Empire of Trabzon and the Safavids of Ardabil with his marriage which made him center of power in the region. These events caused problems with Sultan Mehmed II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire, but when Mehmet II toke over Roman Empire in Trabzon Uzun Hasan couldn't dare to come up against Ottoman army [7].

In 1467, Uzun hasan has defeated Jahan Shah, the king of Qara Qolunlu, who had good relations with Ottomans and destroyed the Qara Qounlu dynasty and became the king of Iran and Azarbaijan. Abu Said Gurkani, Timurid Khan, wanted to possess the lands which Qara Qolyunlus had lost after Jahan Shah's death, but he was arrested and killed by Uzun Hasan's son [7] [14]. Uzun Hasan claimed himself as an heir of Timur when he had the trait of being resolute of his sovereignty in Iran [7] and he was protecting all dynasties and tribes in Anatolia against Ottomans. So, he sent his representative to the Sultan Mehmed II and asked for all the unpaid taxes after Timur's death. After these events, Sultan Mehmed II was forced to have expedition against Aq Qoyunlu [1].

Finally, in 1473, both Ottoman and Aq Qoyunlu army were face to face in Otlukbeli region. Ottoman army defeat Aq Qoyunlu, but they did not continue the war to conquest and seize their lands. Uzun Hasan was not offensive to the Ottoman territory since the Battle of Otlukbeli until his death [7].

Method

This paper explores socio-cultural and political backgrounds along Silk Road leading to the construction of the Zeynel Bey Tomb. This tomb which was built in Aq Qoyunlu period in the Anatolian Plateau will be compared with the same architectural style of tombs of Azerbaijan era and Iran.

Discussion

According to the inscription, the tomb is made for the “Martyr” Zeynel Bey. The date of construction has not been written in the inscription of the monument, but considering the order of Uzun Hasan to build this monument, it should be built in between 1473 to 1478. (Fig.1)

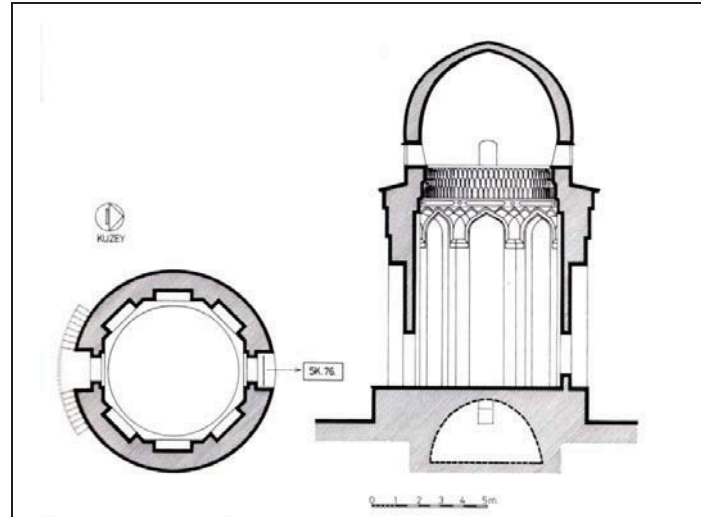


Fig. 1: Plan and Section of Zeynel Bey Tomb [12]

From outside the tomb has cylindrical form but from inside it has octagonal base covered with onion shaped dome and a ground which is designed to preserve mummy. The dome includes two openings, one is northern door another one is a window opens to the Southern facade. Each side of the prism with octagonal base has arches and niches inside, except the facade with door and window. The vaulted dome was placed on the ring of muqarnas, which contained four openings. (Fig.2)



Fig. 2: Zeynel Bey Tomb (Photo By: Ali Paşaoğlu)

Since some of the brick part of the building is fallen, it can be seen that the base of building has been implemented with stones. The exterior façade is decorated with double layer of brick which has blue glazed bricks at outer layer with Kufic calligraphy and repeated words (Allah, Mohammed and Ali). The lower part of the dome is consisted of a band of glazed brick with geometrical motifs and decorations. The dome is placed on a stone base and its facade has been performed with the glazed brick. The entrance doors and windows are very similar and all the frames of doors and windows are decorated with turquoise, yellow and black tiles with flowers and plants motifs. There are arches over doors and windows with inscription embedded into the tile on the arches. On the other hand, all doors and windows around the cylindrical base are decorated with brick frame from the outside. (Fig.3)



Fig. 3: Zeynel Bey Tomb, Interior View (Photo By: Ali Paşaoğlu)

The inscription is installed above the entrance door and "The agent of Building is the old master Pir Hassan ibn Abd Al Rahman" is written on it. Pir Hasan is known as an architect and master of tile works of the tomb, because except this inscription, there is not any available written explanation about the architect and his living place, but according to the architectural characteristics of buildings which were built in Hasan keyf at the same time, obvious differences could be seen which are also represent that Pir Hasan's building is non-endemic to this region.

This tomb has large difference with the other buildings constructed in the Aq Qoyunlu period in Anatolian Plateau and this form of dome cannot be seen in other monuments of Aq Qoyunlu or Anatolian traditional architecture. Moreover, this dome is the unique example in Anatolian architecture but the cylindrical shape of the tomb can be seen in Seljuk period in some tombs and religious buildings. Although, these tombs have dome-shaped roofs but the exterior shapes of domes have been implemented in conical shape and it is noticeable that most of the tombs and mausoleums in Anatolian architecture are built of stone. The glazed bricks and tiles used in the Zeynel Bey Tomb's facade are similar with architectural characteristics of Anatolian Minarets, but there are not any other similarities in Anatolian tombs and mausoleums with this case.

Although Zeynel Bey Tomb has similarities in appearance with the tomb of Sultan Mohammed Chalabi, the Ottoman Sultan, known as the Green Tomb in Bursa which façade is decorated by green tiles too, but observing the old images, it was originally decorated by bricks and its original facade does not have any resemblance with Zeynel Bey Tomb.

The Green Tomb (Yesil Türbe) is built between 1421 to 1425 and "Ali Ibn Haji Ahmad Tabrizi, Mohammad Majnoon and Tabrizi masters" is written on its inscription. However, the inscription mentions the name of Ali Ibn Ilyas who had gone to Samarkand with Timur after the Battle of Ankara and came back to Bursa after the death of Timur with a good experience of tiling works then, he began to work on art of tiling there. According to the masters and architects of the tomb, and observing the techniques used in tile works, it can be said that the Green Tomb is constructed by none Anatolian architects. It seems this tomb was constructed as a symbol of strength and bravery of Timur in Anatolia after the Battle of Ankara. However, the architectural style and techniques used in this tomb has not become prevalent in Ottoman architecture, but it has remained as the only foreign architecture and non-Ottoman tradition. (Fig.4)



Fig. 4: Green Tomb (Yesil Türbe), Bursa, Turkey Left [5], Right (photo by: Ashkan Mansouri)

The Zeynel Bey Tomb has been built half a century later than the Green Tomb and it is another single example that its roots can be traced in architecture of out of Anatolia. Uzun Hasan returned to Tabriz after the Battle of Otlukbeli and moved his capital to Tabriz. Since Uzun Hasan has built tombs for his prince "Zeynel Bey" and regarding to the Pir Hasan architectural style which is similar to the Timurid architecture in Tabriz and Azerbaijan [3], it seems that Pir Hasan has been sent by Uzun Hasan from Tabriz to Hasankeyf to build the tomb and this hypothesis can be proved by the other similar specimens of Azerbaijan built forms.

In 1323, the Barda Tomb was built in Barda city in Azerbaijan and in 1335 to 1338 the Jahan Godi Khatun Tomb was built with same architectural characteristics like Zeynel Bey Tomb in Qara Baqlar in Azerbaijan. (Fig.5) The Sheykh Safi al-Din Tomb was constructed in 1335 in Ardabil is the similar sample with Zeynel Bey Tomb in terms of cylindrical form, dome and facade decorations. (Fig. 6) Also, the tomb of Sheikh Haydar one of the descendants of Sheikh Safi al-Din was constructed in 1330 in Meshgin Shahr. Although it is bigger than the Zeynel Bey Tomb in scale but it is another example of cylindrical form, dome-shape, brick works and Kufic inscriptions used in its facade. (Fig.7)



Fig. 5: Barda Tomb, Barda, Azerbaijan [15]

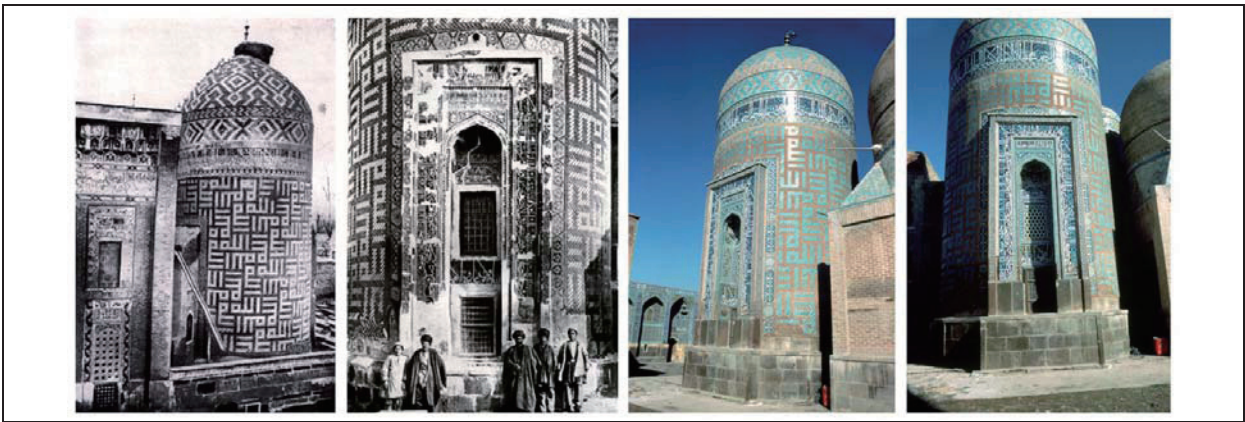


Fig. 6: Sheikh Safi al-Din Tomb, Ardabil, Iran [15]



Fig. 7: Sheikh Haydar Tomb, Meshgin Shahr, Iran [15]

According to the time of construction of these traditional architecture samples of Azerbaijan region which were built at the same period, it seems that they can indicate the roots of the Zeynel Bey Tomb's architecture too. So, it can be asked, what caused the Zeynel Bey Tomb to be as a unique example of Persian architecture in Anatolian Plateau?

Conclusion

It's clear that local materials, techniques and native architects are not implemented in the construction of the tomb and it is built as entirely non-native style in this region. After the Battle of Otlukbeli the center of Aq Qoyunlu Empire moved to Tabriz. Uzun Hasan dropped his political claims in Anatolia and made the Aq Qoyunlu a Persian government. So, it can be said that Aq Qoyunlu government with a centrality in Azerbaijan has built Zeynel Bey Tomb as a governmental building in an area away from its power influence which represents the architectural style of Aq Qoyunlu. This action of Aq Qoyunlu government is like the interest of the Roman Empire to construct the buildings with the Roman architectural characteristics to create a harmonious all over their territory and also as like as the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire began to construct buildings with the Ottoman architecture style to demonstrate their authority and influence in all areas of the domain of the Ottoman Empire. Finally, it can be concluded; Zeynel Bey Tomb is an architectural symbol of Aq Qoyunlu, a Persian government, in the Anatolian Plateau, with all its characteristics as the Persian building has a special place in Anatolian architecture.

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