

ИСТОРИЯ КУЛЬТУРЫ

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Study of Sociological Components on the Evolution of Pottery in the Seljuk Period (5th to 6th Century AH)

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The Seljuks, with their important role in Islamic civilization, spent two periods in their lives, which paved the way for many changes and innovations in their art, especially pottery. The first period is the era of their authority, which appeared in the Islamic world as an empire, and the second period is the era of their disintegration, which paved the way for their downfall. The purpose of this study is to investigate the developments of Seljuk society and how the social structure influences the evolution of pottery in these two periods. With a sociological approach and basic research and based on the nature and method of historical and descriptive-analytical, this research discusses the general and comprehensive knowledge of the influential elements of society on the pottery art of Seljuk period by using historical data through the collection of library documents to enable the social conditions, innovations and trends of this art in the time frame. The result of the research shows that artistic developments are always related to their social environment. The results indicate that public access to art and the tendency to depict everyday and realistic subjects after the growth of the middle class and factors such as urbanization, trade, economic status, religious orientation of rulers, imposing their tastes on artists, and the emergence of realistic and popular art among the middle class is one of the most important factors influencing the development and evolution of pottery in the studied period.

Keywords: Seljuk pottery, Seljuk society, rulers, social transformations, religion.

Introduction

Sociology of the art is amphibious knowledge, consisting of two pillars of art and sociology. The sociology of art examines the ways in which human beings collaborate

to create what we call it art. It also assesses the role and place of art in their lives and the impact of society on the evolution of that art, which is an important issue and can clarify the cause of many artistic developments [1, p. 9]. Because art has an expressive format, it can offer a story or interpretation in relation to real life and claim to tell the truth. As Janet Wolf says, everything we call art takes place within social structures, so it is influenced by it. In fact, Wolf tries to tell how practical activities and the creation of human beings are interconnected with the social structure and derive from determinants and structural conditions [1, p. 17]. The ability of the sociological approach to study the systems of production and evolution of the arts is to such an extent that some believe that “the deep and inseparable connection between social issues and art has caused art criticism not to enjoy the desired perfection regardless of sociological issues. In other words, it is not possible to deal with the category of art and its complex angles without understanding the effective social components in the creation of works of art” [2, p. 7].

One of the finest potteries in Iran is pottery of the Seljuk period. The study of history shows that new forms and motifs of pottery were made in this period, whose motifs and structures have been studied many times by scholars and researchers in terms of the stylistics and aesthetics. Also, a lot of information has been made available about the sociology and the aesthetics of the art of the Seljuk period, but so far no research has been done on the study of Seljuk pottery, the impact of society on the evolution of this beautiful art, and the relationship between different classes of people with the motifs of these pottery. Therefore, since the Seljuk period, like any other period, can show its impact on the artistic styles of its period, some events and ways of life of the people can be read from the designs and art of the people of the intended period. Through this, the manifestation of social conditions and the changes that took place were evaluated by re-reading these motifs.

The art of the Seljuk and Khwarazmian dynasties is part of Islamic art, which includes the years when these dynasties were in power in Central Asia, Iran and Anatolia. It also includes a period of turmoil and decline of Seljuk history in Iran that lasted a total of two centuries. During the reign of Malik-Shah, Sultan Sanjar created well-known works of Islamic art in a wide range of arts including pottery, textiles, ivory, and metalwork with regional characteristics. During the Seljuk era, art flourished and reached its full perfection, and artists and architects created many works. In the pottery art of this period, the use of white glass paste influenced by the Song period of China to make pottery can be seen. Pottery made from this paste was very thin, which gave the dishes a semi-transparent color with an alkaline glaze coating. The pottery of this period is various and includes unglazed pottery, monochromatic pottery, azure pottery, enamel pottery, golden glaze pottery, underglaze pottery, white stylized pottery, pottery with the framed motifs. Potters of this period had used various decorations, such as geometric motifs, Kufic scripts, bird and animal motifs, spiral motifs, flower and plant motifs, and human motifs with glazes in blue, black, yellow, brown, azure, green, white, turquoise and other colors in the decoration of pottery. Archaeological research has shown that famous cities such as Sultanabad (present-day Arak), Rey, Kashan, Saveh, Gorgan, Neishabour, Shush, Bukhara, Isfahan and Samarkand were important centers of pottery during the Seljuk period. Potters were encouraged to carve on pottery and cover them with colored and golden glazes. At the end of the 6th century AH, making pottery decorated with paintings became popular and the basic elements of this painting were: feasts, hunting and delicate forms of foliage. These

vessels are known as enamel glaze. Other innovative features of pottery production of the Seljuk period was the emphasis on making statues out of small animal patterns, humans as well as small objects in the form of buildings. At the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the 7th century AH (Seljuk period), the art of pottery in Iran reached its highest stage. Kashan was considered the center of this art in this period [3, p. 54].

The growth and expansion of urbanization, the emergence of the middle class and the growing power of merchants who were the first and most important patrons of art led to the tremendous growth of works of art in the Seljuk period, resulting in the production of beautiful and diverse works of art in the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century [4, p. 648; 5, p. 95]. This growth is especially seen in pottery and bronze vessels that depended on the large commercial market. These types of vessels are the best and closest vessels for comparison with blue-white vessels of the Song Ch'ing-pai period, which were produced at the same time and are probably the same pottery of the Song period that became the source of inspiration for Iranian potters to build a higher quality body. In fact, the pottery of the Seljuk period is one of the most important artistic media of the Seljuk period, which, on the one hand, shows the glory and beauty of the art of this period and on the other hand presents one of the most brilliant periods in the history of pottery in Iran to its audience. The re-use of physical bodies and alkaline glazes by Iranian pottery artists made it possible for Iranian potters to use the similar structure of the body and glaze and have an unprecedented expansion in the production and decoration technologies of this period [6, p. 143]. Other important features of this art were the written motifs of the dishes, which were used as a medium to give a message to the audience and played a dual-purpose role in this pottery. Firstly, it was the practicality of the dishes and secondly, the importance of the aesthetics of the motifs and scripts in the decoration of the dishes. In this period, pottery, as a medium for the audience, played the role of the recipient of the message and the text written on these vessels can be a manifestation of the spirit of mystical Islamic art [7, p. 85].

This research indicates that the Seljuk pottery, emerged by the general class of artists, was welcomed by a special audience (initially by Seljuk rulers, ministers and capitalists, and then by the middle class and the folks and urban peoples, who also had a religious spirit and were interested in showing their wealthy counterparts). On the one hand, cultural and social origins and on the other hand, the expansion of trade and cultural exchanges with other nations, were directly related to the pottery patterns of that time, which show the tastes of certain groups, reflect different aesthetics in society and also were influential factors on the evolution of pottery motifs of that time.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study is to answer the main question of how social structure can affect the formation and emergence of new methods in the art of pottery. In addition to the structural and aesthetic aspects, the present study reveals a clear picture of the influence of the society of that period on this art, recognizes the pottery art of the 5th to 6th centuries AH (Seljuk period) in relation to the society of that time, provides sociological data and interpretation for the evolution of trends in this artistic phenomenon, and considers it as an example of the production of culture, new society and changes in the artistic context by analyzing the Seljuk pottery. It also examines its macro-structures with art and

its unique characteristics in this period by explaining the impact of social conditions on the emergence and tendency of different trends in pottery in this period and clarifies the reasons for the interaction and confrontation of society.

Research questions:

1. What is the role of society and social conditions in turning artists to new trends in Seljuk pottery?
2. What are the factors and conditions underlying the formation of new artistic approaches in pottery and the evolution of this art in the Seljuk period and what are the necessary cultural, social and artistic environment for these approaches?

Hypotheses

3. It is assumed that social contexts (economic, political, cultural, etc.) provided the ground for new and fundamental developments in the art of pottery of this period, which caused a change in new styles and methods by artists and audiences.
4. It seems that social, political, economic and cultural resources were the driving forces for production and transformation, thought and art of pottery in this period and due to social policies in the Seljuk period, the creation of a middle class in society, the Popularization of art and religious tendencies of the ruling class, the intellectual and political atmosphere of society was faced with a new situation and caused a change in the process of Seljuk pottery.

Review of the literature

Over the past years, there had been written many books and researches in the field of Seljuk history and their art, the main subject of which had been about the history, art, aesthetics and stylistics of those arts. There were many articles about the history of the Seljuk government and society in Iran and the world that can be very useful to study.

Kiani and Karimi (1985), in the book *“The art of pottery in the Islamic era of Iran”*, [8], classified Islamic pottery in terms of the type of designs and location. Saifullah Kambakhsh Fard (2000), in the final chapter of the book *“Pottery in Iran from the beginning of the Neolithic period to the contemporary period”* [9] provided comprehensive information about the types of Seljuk pottery, their classification and glazing of pottery of the Islamic period that can be very useful to identify the type of pottery of that period. Dr. Abdullah Naseri Taheri (2011), in the Trans of book of *“Seljuk government”* [10] reviewed the historical features of the Seljuk era of contemporary governments, society, religion, Islamic civilization and social conditions of Iran during the Seljuk era in order to improve the recognition of the state of the time. Dr Naser Sedghi (2010) in the article *“Restrictions on the Recognition of the Developments of Iran in the Age of Seljuk”* [11] provided information about the events and developments of the Seljuk period in comparison with other Islamic historical periods, as well as the fundamental constraints due to the lack of official Seljuk politics. So far, few cases have studied the social and cultural conditions of Seljuk period pottery. Piri (2016), in the article *“A survey of Iranian art in the Seljuk era”* [12], first mentioned some features of Seljuk art and then examined the effects of architecture, pottery and textiles in

this era. In the field of pottery, minor references were made to make pottery with overglazed, underglazed paintings and red body utensils with white coating in this period. Nikkhal et al. (2011), in an article taken from a doctoral dissertation entitled *“Reflection of the formation of two social phenomena on the golden pottery of the Seljuk period”* [13], studied how social conditions are reflected only on the golden pottery of the 6th century AH. The results of this study indicated that the growth of the middle class is one of the reasons for the emergence and also the prosperity of the production of golden pottery and this is the beginning of public access to art and the desire to depict everyday and realistic issues in this period. In another article entitled *“Study of golden pottery motifs and metal utensils of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods and the reflection of social life of that era”* [14] the pottery and metal utensils of the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods was studied to find out which of the motifs of golden pottery and metal utensils of this era have been influenced by the social conditions of the time. Other articles on the sociological approach with an emphasis on the art of pottery of the Seljuk period have not been found by the author, and in some scattered and very detailed articles on the study of the arts, brief references have been made to it or to other arts such as metalworking, painting and etc. have been referred.

Therefore, the main distinction between the present research with the above cases is that it specifically examines the course of the evolution of the Seljuk's pottery and seeks to provide a sociological commentary on the evolution of this artistic phenomenon by identifying the impact of social conditions of that period on the art of pottery of the 6th century AH. The result is a better understanding of the impact of society on art and the impact of society on the evolution of the art of that period, in order to be able to respond to the audience as much as possible.

Research method

This fundamental research is of a descriptive-analytical nature, and the compilation of data is done in the form of documents and libraries.

Iran in the Seljuk era (5th to 6th century AH)

The Seljuk period is one of the longest periods of the history of the Islamic world, especially the Islamic East, which has various historical features. The Seljuk Islamism and their adherence to Sunni religions led them to approach the rulers [10, p. 13–6]. Their era in Iran was initiated by the conquest of Neyshabur in 429 AH and eventually the foundation of their rule in Iran was dismantled by the war of Toghrul III and the Tekish Kharazmshah in 590 AH [15, p. 364]. In the shadow of the Seljuk rule, due to the peace and political stability of the Seljuk realm, artists had better conditions and were able to create numerous works. Various developments and innovations such as the use of different techniques of pottery, molding, tile and brickwork in this period caused that the architectural decorations of the Seljuk era were more diverse and extensive than the early period of Islamic architecture [16, p. 9–21].

The art of pottery and its types in the Seljuk era

During this period, the art of pottery has grown considerably along with other arts. A remarkable innovation was made in the 6th century AH which was a turning point in

the history of Iran's pottery. It can be said that the potters with the support of the Seljuk and Sultans after them, including the Khwarazmshahids, created the most glorious type of Islamic pottery and, in general, the most excellent of it. Perhaps the reason for this is the belief of the Seljuk kings who considered art as belongings of monarchy and in the service of religion. Perhaps the reason for this is the belief of the Seljuk kings who considered art to belong to the monarchy and serve religion. Although the changes that took place in the art of Seljuk pottery were rooted in the art of the pre-Seljuk period and the best manifestation of this art can be seen in the period after the Seljuk rule in Iran, the artistic revolution in pottery is considered to coincide with the Seljuk rule. This period is considered as the "Golden Age" of pottery [17, p. 32; 13, p. 110]. Seljuk pottery is diverse and generally includes unglazed pottery, monochrome pottery, azure pottery, enamel pottery, golden pottery, pottery with underglaze motif, white lattice pottery, and molded motif pottery. Various shapes were made on pottery, each of which has special characteristics in terms of decorations. Potters of this period had been used various decorations, such as geometric patterns, Kufic scripts, bird and animal motifs, spiral scripts, floral and plant motifs, human motifs with colored glazes of blue, black, yellow, brown, azure, green, white, turquoise and other colors to decorate pottery. Archaeological research has shown that famous cities such as Sultanabad (present-day Arak), Rey, Kashan, Saveh, Gorgan, Neishabour, Shush, Bukhara, Isfahan and Samarkand were important centers of pottery during the Seljuk period.

In general, among the pottery of that period, a type of pottery called "*Chinese Porcelain*" and another type of it called "Qoli", with a loose glaze, were made. Their ease of construction made this art available in large cities and in all homes of the lower class of society. Some of these potteries were made with carved or cut ornaments in the factories belonging to the court, and others were utensils belonged to the general class and villagers. The Iranian potters of this period, like the potters of the Abbasid period, tried to imitate Chinese porcelain made in China. Cream-colored white bowls and cups and ewers found in different parts of Iran, especially in Rey, have the transparency of Chinese porcelain. The white body of these porcelains is harder and thinner than the samples of the 9th and 10th centuries AD. It shows that the pottery industry has advanced a lot in this period. Its decoration consists of a joint on the two heads on which bird shapes have been drawn and separated scrolling designs of birds. Another joint has leaf shapes and pierced work. It is clear that this pierced work is in the early stages of development and later had been completed and used extensively (Fig. 1).

The best of Seljuk products of potters was the double-layered jug known as "*Touri [Teracery]*", which was seen on the outer surface of the two-layer curved motif. Other top products of pottery, known as "enamel", as well as transparent cups, found different colors by changing light. Seljuk pottery artists continued to evolve this art to achieve a type of oil and colour-free pottery that was common in the



Fig. 1. Iranian ewer. Iran, 4th-5th century AH. Metropolitan Museum, The collection of Islamic art, Havemeyer Collection. Accession no. 29.160.2. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/448260>



Fig. 2. Golden Pottery. Iran, 6th century AH. Metropolitan Museum, The collection of Islamic art, Rogers Fund. Accession no. 1970.24. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/452075>



Fig. 3. Jug. The enamel pitcher pottery with the image of three women. Iran, 7th Century AH. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. Accession no. F1929.9. <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1929.9/>

Middle East, especially in Iraq. In the late Seljuk era, polished pottery was historiographed and then multichromatic pottery were created [10, p.195]. One of the brilliant effects among this pottery was the works decorated with golden glaze, which was more common in Iraq and Egypt. It came to Iran in the 6th century AH and caused a great change in the making of pottery. It reached the peak of its greatness in the 7th century [18, p.17]. Golden glaze was a kind of glossy glaze with golden shine, which was appeared on the pottery after the cooking of it without using gold in its construction. This made it significant and soon entered the palaces and houses of the royal aristocracy. Due to its low price compared to gold and silver utensils, it became very popular among the middle class because before that they did not have access to gold and silver utensils. This made them able to consider themselves the symbolic counterpart of the aristocracy and the rich (Fig. 2).

From the 5th to 7th centuries AH in the Seljuk period, the construction of pottery figurines of women of the Islamic era of Iran was created as the result of the political, social and cultural developments of the entry of Seljuk Turks into Iran. The most important construction centers for these figurines were Gorgan and Kashan, which created a unique collection of women's figurines. One of the most prominent features of these statues was that, unlike prehistoric specimens, they were not naked and displayed sexual characteristics and sexual organs. One of the most important sources of inspiration for the construction of these clay figurines was the pre-Islamic artistic traditions along with some religious concepts (embodiment of angels), political (ruling tribal system), literary (female literary personality of Iran like Azadeh), which is known as an example of the evolution of pottery and its decorations during the Seljuk period [19, p. 341] (Fig. 3).

The effect of Iranian social conditions during the Seljuk period on the evolution of pottery art

The claim that the social environment, in its broadest sense, influences the classification of objects as works of art, not only seems correct, but also seems to be a clear explanation, and it is appropriate that there is a kind of margin or overlap between the study of

art and the study of the society both politically and socially [1]. Economic and religious affairs are no exception. The relationship between art on the one hand, and the wealthy and the artistic community on the other hand, creates a special social class among artists and audiences and art fans. Each work of art finds and develops features in order to satisfy the tastes of its supporters and audiences in its social and economic contexts. From Janet Wolff's point of view, the tastes and interests of a social class have a certain influence on other classes. This leads to a distinction between "special art" and "common art", which is the distinction between bourgeois culture and culture of the middle classes. In fact, social phenomena create social classes and art is the product of ideological and classical tendencies. Sociological analysis can reveal some interesting points about it [20, p. 9]. There are many criteria for defining the social class including career, income, wealth, diversity of talents, access to property, etc. "Class is any type of group consisting of persons with the same class status" [21, p. 36], and these classes are the creators of the economy within society. The class division of society can also be based on the system of production, that is, the relationship of individuals with the means of production. In the Seljuk period, a new class was created in cities in terms of social construction [22, p. 367]. With the expansion of trade, the improvement of the business environment and the increase of the wealth of the society, a large group of merchants and craftsmen, who had a good economic situation, had gradually emerged in different cities of the Seljuk territory [13, p. 112]. They wanted to join the class and were imitators of the way of life of this class. This class which is called the "middle class" in sociological terms, sought to join the aristocracy and to be as luxurious in their way of life as they were. The middle class is the mainstream of the society, which has attracted the attention of researchers along with politicians. This class replaced the traditional force, which both work and strive to spend their lives, and, unlike the lower class of society, own the tools of labor and capital.

According to Max Weber and Tocqueville, with the growth of a free economy, a new class emerges with different opportunities in market relations, which is located between the upper and lower classes, and has the same education, income levels, lifestyles, and social awareness [23, p. 4]. Tocqueville believes that with the economic growth and development of society, a middle class is created that is somewhat similar to the upper class in terms of literacy and civilization and has urban characteristics [23, p. 5]. Marx also states that the members of this class play a balanced and stabilizing role in society and, like other social classes, are the product of their own economic, social and cultural relations [23, p. 5]. In the Seljuk period of Iran, this class included urban merchants, traders, craftsmen, and artisans who were in direct contact with the scientific, propaganda and educational levels due to the religious interesting to the clergy and often formed part of their identity from this area [24, p. 22–5]. This new group, although luxurious, did not have access to many of the gold and silver luxuries for religious and economic reasons. Therefore, they turned to alternative goods such as golden pottery and enamel, which would both satisfy their desire for aesthetic beauty and artistic value and be exempt from religious sanctions. The increase in demand for this type of precious goods led to the promotion of the pottery industry and the importance of producers, who gained power with the prosperity of their profession and increased income and joined the growing middle class of Iranian society [13, p. 116]. The Seljuk ministers had been working to improve the economic situation, and played an important role in facilitating the process of trade between the various regions of the country [25, p. 226]. It is necessary to compare the two important historical

periods including the glorious and prosperous period (the time of the great Seljuk sultans and the competent ministers like Nizam al-Mulk and Kunduri) and the period of Fatra (the period of stagnation of the ministry status during the civil war between the successor's claimants) [26, p. 91]. The great presence of Seljuk artists and their roles belonged to the period of the efficient ministers of that era. After the formation of the government, the Seljuk entered the religious culture and traditions of the Islamic society and turned away from their non-Islamic past, showing complete disregard for them. The most important elements of the economy were the Seljuk state of the lower class, which led to the prosperity of the business class. Agriculture and business grew very well, and in the cities there was also a rich class of tax collectors and agents who were entertaining and luxurious. According to Richard Frye, during the glory of art in the Seljuk era, a kind of civilization was created through which a number of artists and craftsmen were able to distribute works of art everywhere and break the monopoly of palaces. This contributed a lot to the development of art in this period [27, p. 192–7]. Making of pottery and the emergence of a new method of construction and its innovative designs were the achievements of the middle class tendency towards luxury objects. Golden pottery, which at one time contained beautiful motifs from courtiers, attracted the attention of people who wished to equate themselves with the rich but could not yet afford to buy gold and silver vessels. On the other hand, the middle class had a religious spirit that affected the motifs and designs of pottery. Accordingly, the writings of the Qur'an and Arabic hadiths were used with a religious and moral spirit in their design, which showed the taste of the people of that time. Since the Seljuks were the first wealthy dynasty always look for luxurious and valuable goods and arts, this can be considered as a reason for the popularity of golden pottery by the people of that time. Religious prejudice influenced by Sunni teachings among Seljuk rulers and elders caused restrictions on paying attention and decoration of pottery. This led to the flourishing of new creativity in the artistic creation of this era. This event coincided with the rise of Persian as the common literary and administrative language of Iranians, which appeared in Persian phrases and poems on some pottery of this period. Attention to national traditions such as romantic and epic literature and related themes in the form of Persian writings and images of national and mythological heroes of Iran and drawings with the themes of Shahnameh epic poems were engraved on the pottery works of this period [14, p. 43]. The expansion of trade and cultural exchanges with other nations has made the tastes involved in the process of producing the motifs and works of artists and direct them to a specific direction. This difference in motifs and tastes was mainly the result of new artistic ideas from the Far East, which generally brought the arrival of the Mongols in Iran. The motifs had been made mostly compressed and images of humans, with a round Mongolian faces and almond eyes had been made in colors such as dark and light brown. The form of pottery and its decorations also showed the effects of Chinese art forms and decorations. The influence of Chinese design on the images of phoenixes, dragons, and lotus can also be seen on these works, which probably originated not from pottery but from Chinese silk. Their influence on the Islamic ornaments of the 7th and 8th centuries AH was fundamental [18, p. 148]. The influence of Chinese art on the form and motifs of the golden pottery of the Middle Ages. The face of the moon-like figurine, introduced from Buddhist art to Iranian art by the Seljuks, can also be seen in this period [28, p. 32]. All of them were very influential in the tastes and evolution of pottery designs.

The transformation and revolution in pottery art coincided with the Seljuk government, because this government was the organizer of a force that promoted this art and flourished the talents of potter artists [29, p.202]. During the Seljuk period, art was considered as a property of monarchy and in the service of religion, Some industries, including pottery, were so flourished at this time that they were less common in Iranian history [30, p. 142]. Factors that greatly influenced the development and evolution of the art of the Seljuk pottery in the Iranian governments are as follows [15, p. 11; 30, p. 142]:

- new equilibrium and balance between ethnic and linguistic groups;
- the disintegration of political power within the framework of the weak Abbasid caliphate;
- Sunni revival and revival of Shi'a and prosperity of Sufism;
- development of Persian language and Iranian traditions and customs [31, p. 11].

With the increase in the production of pottery during the Seljuk period, uniformity of forms took place, support increased, which was not exclusive to the courtiers. The reason was the increase in wealth and economic success of the society, which caused diversity in the taste of the society. Precious golden and enamel pottery [engraved on glaze] and rough glazed pottery, reminiscent of folk art, grew out of the diversity of society's tastes. Among these diverse tastes, local schools were created in the group of potters who created technical innovations and different styles [32, p. 92]. According to Grabar, along with the art of the Seljuk court, there was also a non-religious art which, in contrast to the art of the court, was completely different and original. This art was hypothetically called "the art of cities", and potters in groups in special places decorated the themes of manuscript motifs on multichromatic glazed pottery. Part of the decorations included king taste, kings' personality, servant, attendants, men and women hunting, playing polo, dancing and music were subjects influenced by the community as an indicator of the art of pottery in this period. Another part of the decoration of these potteries included the simpler motifs which expressed a latent feeling with an abstract and immaterial impression, showing one or two people standing motionless or near water, a shadow or a tree playing music. This group called a theme "love" or "meditation" group, which had a practical and tangible aspect. Therefore, it can be argued that the social context of Seljuk society is influential on the pottery motifs of this period, the class position of the artist and the audience of this art and determines the style of pottery produced in that period. The developments of the art of pottery in this period are examined separately.

The influence of investment of Seljuk rulers and nobles on the art of pottery

In the sociology of art, there is always the assumption that cultural and artistic symbols are not formed in a vacuum, but are created and influenced by the great social context [33, p.76]. The majority of the audience of the Seljuk pottery art was capitalists, sub-capitalists, and middle-class people, while all other works of art belong to the glory period of Seljuk [34, p.97]. Along with this part of pottery, there is another part that has its roots in the general classes of society, such as small pottery bowls that were obtained from the excavations of Neishabour and were out of the control of the court and the art of kings and are not considered magnificent works of that period. They were made for the



Fig. 4. A bowl with music entertainment, painting of decorated pottery. Iran, Kashan, Seljuk period. Art Museum of The David Collection, Copenhagen. Islamic Art. Inv. no. 45/2001. Photo by Pernille Klemp. <https://www.david-museum.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/ceramics/art/45-2001>



Fig. 5. A drinking fountain with handle, with inscriptions and scenes of colorful enamel of horse rider kings on the background of blue glaze. Iran, Rey, 6th and 7th centuries AH. Metropolitan Museum, The collection of Islamic art, Mr and Mrs Isaac D. Fletcher Collection. Accession no. 17.120.23. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446898>

the prohibition of sculpture led to the emergence of a kind of inscription decorations in pottery, which led to new creations among the pottery artists of that period. [35, p. 87]. As a result, Seljuk rulers and nobles supported the artists for the reasons mentioned above and put artwork on their agenda and impose their attitudes on artists. Religious prejudices and the prohibition of their statue-making led to the creation of inscription decorations in the works of pottery and created new creativity among artists (Figs 6, 7).

weak and poor class of Neishabour. From these two parts of the audience it is understood that the pottery of the Seljuk period was produced in two different forms, one for the royal and the court, which was liked by the taste of elders and specials, and was made in limited dimensions and the other was for popular and commonplace, which belonged to the lower classes of society and was more popular because of its cheaper price and easy availability of its raw materials. Golden pottery attracted the attention of the general and weaker sections of the society due to their cheap price. Sassanid art also had a small impact on a part of Seljuk pottery, which includes most of the pottery of Rey. In general, it is difficult to identify the common people or the properties of Seljuk pottery. But the most important difference was in portraying everyday life and folk tales in the pottery of the art of common people against the expression of the idealist aspect of the art of specials, which provides a general or specific recognition to the audience (Figs 4, 5).

The influence of religious tendencies of Seljuk society on the evolution of pottery art

Seljuk pottery was decorated with inscriptions of religious prayers and tendencies, such as prayers and proverbs. The obtained pottery was made by the public, and its decorations were rooted in the expectations of the audience, the middle class of the Seljuk community, but the content of these decorations was rooted in religious tendencies and tastes of the dominant and upper class, which was not related to their political and social issues. In fact, on the one hand, the formal connection between religion and government and the Seljuk interest in reviving Islamic Sunni had created an authoritarian ruling class in accordance with religion and culture, who supported artists and imposed their tendencies on them. On the other hand, religious prejudices and



Fig. 6. Jug, mid-6th century. Ceramic; earthenware, painted in black slip and white engobe under a transparent glaze. Iran, Rey, 6th century AH. Brooklyn Museum. Arts of the Islamic World. Accession no. 86.227.77. <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/124896>



Fig. 7. Jug. Enamel glaze pitcher pottery with a row of birds and inscriptions in the field of blue and cream. Iran, 7th century AH. Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. Accession no. F1969.27. <https://asia.si.edu/object/F1969.27/>

The impact of Seljuk's urbanization on the evolution of pottery art

A major factor in this period was the fertility of the art of urbanization in the Muslim community. Hence, the main supporter and inspiration for the amazing development of beautiful objects in the 12th and 13th centuries AD has been attributed to the merchant class of the Iranian urban bourgeoisie [4, p.648; 5, p.95]. It is an incontrovertible fact that urbanization and the production of goods for the middle classes in small towns in this period is one of the effective causes in the evolution of Seljuk art, including pottery. During the Seljuk period, Iran and its border regions to the east were full of compatibility of goods and artistic productions. It shows the expansion of trade and cultural exchanges of cities with other nations in that historical period. The tendencies of the urban middle class to acquire these arts also caused the art of pottery in that period to create works that could meet the needs of this class of Seljuk people. As a result, what was produced was both inexpensive and decorated with images includ-



Fig. 8. A bowl with a row of humans and animals (camels), overglaze painted. Iran, Kashan, 6th to 7th centuries AH. Metropolitan Museum. The collection of Islamic art, Purchase, Rogers Fund, and Gift of The Schiff Foundation. Accession no. 57.36.14. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451389>

ing everyday life events, which attracted more audiences among the lower classes, as well as the creation of local art and pottery during this period [36, p. 113] (Fig. 8).

Effect of suitable economic conditions on Seljuk society on the evolution of pottery art

During the Seljuk period, there was a rising economic situation in cities, resulting in higher production and more willingness of the audience to purchase manufactured goods. It was one of the main causes of the artistic transformation of that period [36]. At that time, there was a favorable environment for urban wealth and active demand for the purchase of pottery, especially golden pottery. This economic impact led to the artistic production of this type of pottery. In the first half of Seljuk, economic conditions needed more time to be effective in this art and in other fields of art, but in the second half, economic conditions combined with cultural and religious attitudes and led to the flourishing of the art of pottery [36, p. 123].

The impact of the social conditions of the Seljuk society on the evolution of pottery art

In the Seljuk period until the end of the reign of Malikshah and in some cases Sultan Sanjar, the last great Seljuk ruler, we see favorable social conditions, but the second period (after the reign of Sultan Sanjar until the fall of this dynasty) is a period of political and social unrest and disorder. However, the production of works of art continued, and even a number of magnificent works of Seljuk pottery belong to this period of decline. This shows that supporters outside the ruling class were influential in the works of art of this period. The Seljuk rulers, through their indirect influence, for example, by creating a suitable urban space and good social conditions for different classes of society, caused the production of works of art, especially pottery, to increase and cause trade and commerce. Among these pottery works, some had features of the art of the common people¹, which until then were hardly visible in the pottery of previous periods. In the Seljuk period, it caused the creation of demotic and realistic art in the streets and bazaars. At this time, the art of pottery spread among the people with realistic and everyday illustrations, while the drawings of books or murals were themes related to kings and officials [13, p. 118–9]. In the 6th century AH, golden pottery was presented to the public and emerged as a popular art, and pottery distanced away from artistic and special arts. At that time, demotic art represented the art of life and everyday life and was basically realistic and did not depend much on political, social and economic changes. But in the art of aristocratic pottery, because the potter was subject to the tastes of patrons and buyers, that is rulers and nobles, their art was also subject to the political and social changes of the time, and included scenes of hunting, court banquets, and conferring status, all of which represented court life and their special customs [13, p. 119]. At the end of this study, all the reports are summarized in the following tables in order to answer the questions of the article (Table 1).

¹ Basically realistic and demotic.

Table 1. Results of examining the questions and hypotheses raised in connection with the Study of sociological components on the evolution of pottery in the Seljuk period

The effect of the investment of the Seljuk rulers and aristocracy	The effect of religious tendencies of Seljuk society	The effect of urbanization in Seljuk society	The effect of suitable economic conditions of Seljuk society	The effect of social conditions of Seljuk society
Creating two classes in the audience (special class and investments — general and weak class)	Decorations including inscriptions of religious prayers, religious tendencies and the prohibition of painting figurine	Development of amazing and beautiful pottery objects by supporters of the Iranian bourgeois business class	Ascending mode in economic position and high pottery production	Favorable social situation in the first period and the continuation of pottery production
Creating forms and motifs with an idealistic aspect preferred by the tastes of court kings (special class)	Making pottery by the common people and decorating according to the expectations of the audience (middle class)	Expansion of trade and cultural exchanges with other nations and adaptability of artistic productions	More audiences tendency and active demand to buy and flourish golden pottery	The period of political and social unrest in the second period but continuation of production and creation of more magnificent works
Creating forms and motifs with the theme of general stories favored by general and weak tastes (general class)	The content of ornaments rooted in the relationship between religion and government and the imposition of ruling tastes on artists	Meeting the needs of the middle class in accessing to cheaper art with decorations from everyday events and the creation of local pottery art	Favorable environment in terms of urban wealth and the combination of economic conditions with cultural and religious attitudes	Influencing supporters outside the ruling class on works of art and creating realistic (demotic) art with everyday images and illustrations

Conclusion

In the present study, an attempt was made to study the evolution of Seljuk pottery based on a sociological approach and to reflect the effects of society on all dimensional changes in this art, including motifs, design material, audiences, artists, tastes, etc. The results show that the period of Seljuk rule is one of the most important periods in the history of Iranian art. One of the reasons for the great importance of this period, which distinguishes it from the period before and after, is the pottery art of this period. In this period, pottery art reached perfection and prosperity. It was very important both in terms of style and method of construction and in terms of decoration. Among the influential factors discussed in this study are sociological interpretation of the evolution of Seljuk pottery, urban growth, religious tendencies, good position and economic growth, trade prosperity, increasing demand for valuable works, more production of works of art, the influence of Seljuk rulers through direct and indirect factors on the formation and content of pottery and finally the release of art from the monopoly of the court and the class of kings and aristocrats, public access to art, and the emergence of realistic and demotic art. The evolution of the pottery art of this period shows that pottery was not only made for aristocratic and indigenous elders, but also for a larger community, which included the urban middle class and the middle-class market.

In fact, some of the works contained the tastes of the court and the wishes of the aristocracy, and others were in line with the tastes of ordinary people. It can be seen as a reflection of the growth of the middle class and urbanization, which had given the public access to art and its popularization, and included scenes from everyday and realistic life that did not suit the tastes of aristocratic elders, but more suited for the middle class of Islamic society. In this study, one of the important and influential points on the evolution of Seljuk pottery was the religious tendencies of the rulers and aristocracy and their prejudice against the Sunni religion, which led to the creation of inscription decorations in this art. The prohibition of iconography, which in many cases was not a general rule, gave rise to new creations in pottery. Attention to the national traditions of Iran, including romance, epic literature and related themes, created beautiful paintings in pottery motifs of this period. The last issue was the creation of good social conditions and the creation of a suitable urban space by the early Seljuk rulers for different classes of society, which increased the production of works of art. These good conditions provided the ground for the trade and commerce of the art of pottery and accompanied by the developments of these beautiful handicrafts. The connection of Iranian art with extensive trade and economic prosperity created a supply and demand market for the artists of this period. All of the above, in addition to the artistic and technical aspects, were the product of a society that was constantly evolving socially and culturally. Its reflection in the field of art of the Seljuk period led to the course of developments, technical progress and many qualities in the pottery works of this period from the history of Iran.

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