

**P. Blessing**

## **ARCHITECTURE, SCALE AND EMPIRE: MONUMENTS IN ANATOLIA BETWEEN MAMLUK AND ILKHANID ASPIRATIONS**

*This article examines the question of size and scale in the architecture of late thirteenth-century Anatolia. Competition between the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria and the Ilkhanids in Iran greatly affected the political environment of Anatolia starting from the 1270s. Therefore, it is relevant to examine whether the tendency towards monumental architecture in these two neighboring empires had an effect on building practices in the region. Examining medieval Islamic texts commenting on notions of monumentality in architecture, the article will describe how ideas of scale have been reflected in the written sources. These ideas will then be examined with regard to monuments built in central and eastern Anatolia in the second half of the thirteenth century, where it appears that architectural decoration, rather than large scale, was used in order to create visually impressive buildings.*

**Keywords:** Mamluk architecture; Ilkhanid architecture; Seljuk architecture; scale and architecture; Islamic architecture

**П. Блессинг**

## **АРХИТЕКТУРА, МАСШТАБ И ИМПЕРИЯ: ПАМЯТНИКИ АНАТОЛИИ МЕЖДУ ПРИТЯЗАНИЯМИ МАМЛЮКОВ И ИЛЬХАНИДОВ**

*В данной статье рассматривается вопрос размера и масштаба в архитектуре Анатолии конца XIII в. Конкуренция между мамлюками в Египте и Сирии и ильханидами в Иране сильно повлияла на политическую обстановку Анатолии начиная с 1270-х гг. Поэтому важно рассмотреть, повлияла ли тенденция к монументальной архитектуре в этих двух соседних империях на строительство во всем регионе. В статье будет описано, как идеи масштаба отражаются в письменных источниках, на примере средневековых исламских текстов, комментирующих понятия монументальности в архитектуре. Затем эти идеи будут рассмотрены в отношении памятников, построенных в Центральной и Восточной Анатолии во второй половине XIII в., где, как представляется, для создания визуально впечатляющих зданий использовалась архитектурная декорация, а не крупные размеры.*

**Ключевые слова:** архитектура мамлюков, архитектура Ильханидов, сельджуцкая архитектура, масштаб и архитектура, исламская архитектура.

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This article addresses medieval architecture in Anatolia in its position between the Mamluk and Ilkhanid Empires. Focusing on aesthetic considerations of size, scale, and decoration, I will argue that in visual terms, the architectural production of the region operated within specific local parameters, rather than falling into the patterns of monumentality, power, and empire that were in place in the

realms of its formal overlords, the Ilkhanids, and their primary rivals, the Mamluks<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the relationship between the size of monuments and the visual

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary research on the concepts of size and scale used in this article was presented as: "Monumental Structure versus Intricate Detail — On Size and Scale in Medieval Islamic Architecture," 45<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo MI, 16 May 2010.

emphasis on decoration in Anatolia differs greatly from the paradigms in place in Mamluk Egypt and Syria, and in Ilkhanid Iran.

The Mamluks and the Ilkhanids are known for their competition for political power, leading to warfare over territories in northern Syria, and complex diplomatic relations<sup>2</sup>. This rivalry extended to architecture, where rulers on both sides aimed at creating the largest and most impressive monuments for their own glory, hoping that delegations sent by the respective rival would carry back the news of such constructions<sup>3</sup>. Even the production of manuscripts was included in this competitive stance: both sides produced monumental copies of the Qur'an that were sent as gifts with diplomatic missions (Gray 1985; James 1988).

This competitive aspect was by no means exclusive to the Mamluks and Ilkhanids but has been observed throughout the history of Islamic architecture, beginning with the creation of an Umayyad visual idiom in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The phenomenon, however, became especially accentuated in the early modern period, when competition between old and new monuments became a conscious part of the architectural discourse, for instance in the mosques that the architect Sinan built for the Ottoman rulers, members of their family, and their notables (Necipoğlu 1993a: 171–174). Within this context, the Mamluk-Ilkhanid competition is only one aspect of a larger picture that connects the large scale of architecture with a demonstration of dynastic power. The place on Anatolia within this framework yet needs to be understood; as I argued elsewhere, the Mongol conquest of the region ended the budding emergence of a royal Seljuk

style. The changes in patronage related to the slow decline of Seljuk power caused a resurgence of locally rooted styles (Blessing 2014).

The pursuit of architectural monumentality in the Mamluk and Ilkhanid empires appears to be an intrinsic part of the rivalry that led them to conduct wars and send spies in both directions from the beginning of Mamluk rule in 1260 to the demise of the Ilkhanate after 1335. During this period Anatolia, once the Seljuk rulers had lost more and more actual power to Mongol overlords and their administrators, became a buffer zone between the Mamluk and Ilkhanid realms, a fact that had far reaching effects on the political and ultimately on the cultural level.

Despite the political and geographical position of Anatolia between the two rivaling Muslim empires of the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, the architectural discourse created in this competition does not appear to have affected “post-Seljuk” architecture, i.e. those monuments built after the Mongol conquest of Anatolia in the mid-thirteenth century. In comparison with the monumental buildings of the Ilkhanid realm and the early Mamluk monuments in Cairo, monuments in medieval Anatolia are small in terms of their measurements.

Rather than on size, the creators of these latter monuments capitalized on the effects of decoration, which is often so exuberant that the small size of the monument is not evident to the viewer. The focus on smaller monuments was not, however, specific to this region and moment in time. It was part of a phenomenon of moving towards smaller, often multifunctional structures in the regions ruled by the Great Seljuks and their successors from the early 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Necipoğlu 1993b: 12–13). This shift in architecture, going hand-in-hand with the political

<sup>2</sup> Detailed discussion in (Amitai 1995).

<sup>3</sup> This was first studied in (Necipoğlu 1993a) and later expanded in (O'Kane 1996).

fragmentation of the medieval Islamic world, appears to represent a move away from the monumental unity of the Abbasid realm, reflecting the political changes in the construction of monuments that are a far cry from the monumental palaces of Samarra (Northedge 2005).

In this article, I argue that medieval Anatolia found its place somewhere between these two tendencies, that is the competition for monumentality between Ilkhanids and Mamluks on the one hand, and the small-scale monuments current in many regions from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand. In creating a scheme and level of decoration that dominate the visual impact of a monument, architects in medieval Anatolia in fact transcended size by the means of intricate details in decoration. In methodological terms, the dearth of medieval sources concerned with the perception of monuments by contemporary viewers poses the problem of understanding the aesthetic principles at hand. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of approaches and their potential for realization with regard to this specific topic, shaped by the lack of specific reference to visual practices in the medieval written sources related to Anatolia.

### Size and Scale in Islamic Architecture

Monumental buildings were an essential part of architecture in the medieval Islamic world, beginning with mosques designated for worship, and palaces as residences for rulers. Monuments commissioned by the Umayyad rulers, such as the Dome of the Rock (built in 691) in Jerusalem and the Great Mosque of Damascus (built in 709–715) began this trend. In the Abbasid Palaces of Raqqa and Samarra in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, this ambition for more

and more expansive structures culminated. Competition with the past especially became a central feature of patronage (Necipoğlu 1993a: 169–170).

In written sources, these monuments were often described in terms of their monumental scale, rather than looking at other aspects such as plans or details of decoration. Comparison to pre-Islamic monuments frequently arose as part of the competitive nature of construction, striving to create buildings larger than those of the past. The Sasanian palace at Ctesiphon, known in the sources as “Khusraw’s arch” (*īwān Kistrā* or *ṭāq Kistrā* in Arabic), became a topos for monumentality in architecture. The poet al-Buḥturī (d. 897) dedicated an entire poem to the monument, staging it as a reminder of lost imperial glory, and in some ways including a critique of the Abbasid court (Ali 2010: 153–170; Spertl 2006). In this text, the *īwān Kistrā* becomes a decaying memory of the past, still reflecting its magnificence:

“As if the Arched Hall, by its wondrous craftsmanship, were hollowed in the cliff of a mountainside. It would be thought, from its sadness — to the eyes of morning and evening visitors — distraught like a man torn from the company of loved ones or distressed by the breaking of nuptials. Nights have reversed its luck. There, Jupiter whiled the night but as a star of misfortune. It shows hardiness but the cruel weight of time is fixed upon it” (Ali 2010: 159, l. 35–39; Arabic text: Ali 2010: 206–208).

The monument, despite or perhaps because of its praised monumentality, did not remain uncontested: In sources on the construction of Madīnat al-Salām (Baghdad), it is told that the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 754–775) considered razing the *īwān Kistrā* in order to use the materials in the construction of his new capital. Despite contrary advice, the ruler ordered the destruction to begin, only to have it stopped

when the costs of dismantling the Sasanian palace proved too high (O’Kane 1996: 501). Yet reprieve was temporary: A century and a half later, parts of the Īwān Kistrā were destroyed in order to supply building materials for the palace of caliph al-Muktafi (r. 902–908) in Baghdad (Necipoğlu 1993b: 4). Both anecdotes use the monument, and a ruler’s ability or incapacity to destroy it as ways to reflect the power of a sultan in controlling such resources, but, from the perspective of a skeptical author, also their inability to surpass the achievements of past rulers.

The topos of the Īwān Kistrā as a paradigm for monumentality became prevalent in passages of sources that mention architecture. Thus, speaking of the Madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan in Cairo (built 1357–64) the fifteenth-century writer Khalīl b. Shahīn al-Zāhirī compares the grandeur of this monument with the Sasanian building:

“Concerning the Madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan [located] facing the victorious citadel; it does not have an equal in this world. It was told that the above-mentioned al-Malik al-Nāšir Ḥasan, when he ordered its construction, summoned all engineers from the regions of the world, and ordered them to build a *madrasa* [in such a way that] there is no building higher than it on the face of the earth. He asked them, which were the highest places in the world in [terms of] building, and he was told: the Īwān Kistrā Anūshirwān. And he ordered that [the Īwān Kistrā] be measured and rendered accurately, and that the *madrasa* be built higher than it by ten cubits, and [so] it was built, and four minarets were built for it, and it was said that three [were] in the elevation of the *madrasa* as well, and then some of the minarets were destroyed, and today two remain. The Īwān Kistrā [had] one [*iwān*] and this [*madrasa* had] four *iwāns*. It is a wonder among the wonders of the world, the thickness (*sumk*) of its

walls is eighteen Egyptian cubits, and the abovementioned minarets are visible from a distance of one day. What is more it was said that the yearly revenue (*mutaḥaṣṣil*) of its *waqf* exceeds the income of a large kingdom”<sup>4</sup>.

In this passage, the size and especially the height of the monuments become the measure for their overpowering appearance. The question of the Mamluk sultan inquiring after the highest known monument elicits the expected answer: the Īwān Kistrā in Ctesiphon, by then firmly established as a topos for monumental architecture. The ruler’s desire to surpass this construction again reflects that of the Abbasid caliphs to trump bygone imperial grandeur. The architecture of the sultan’s *madrasa*, in exceeding the Īwān Kistrā in height, as well as featuring four rather than one *iwān*, becomes the symbol of the Mamluk ruler’s supreme power. Considering that since the Mongol conquest of Baghdad by the Ilkhanids in 1258, the Mamluks had become the keepers of the Abbasid caliphs, now devoid of power, this statement is one of supremacy with reference to the past, as well as to the present.

The correlation between monumental architecture and power is clear, and by no means unique to the text above. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406) explicitly stated this connection in the *Muqaddima*, suggesting that the grandeur of a dynasty’s architecture was equivalent with its power, and mentions the Īwān Kistrā as one example of such grandeur (Ibn Khaldūn 1958: vol. 1, 354, 356; Necipoğlu 1993a: 170; O’Kane 1996: 499).

The topos of the Īwān Kistrā as the supreme and example of imperial glory expressed in architecture proved to be persistent: an inscription over the gate of an

<sup>4</sup> My translation of (al-Zāhirī 1894: 31). An abbreviated translation of this passage is quoted in (Necipoğlu 1993a: 170; Rabbat 1988–1989: 6).

Ottoman house in the citadel of Masyaf in Syria, dated 1793, refers to the *Īwān Kisrā*. In the last line of the inscription, belonging to a relatively modest residential structure rather than a monumental expression of kingship, the Sasanian precedent is evoked as a long-gone reminder of part glory: “*Īwān Kisrā qad fanā*,” the *Īwān Kisrā* has faded, in comparison to present rule and architecture<sup>5</sup>. This is of course a bold statement on a residential structure built in a provincial Syrian fortress, yet it pertinently shows the strength of the topos, as well as the concern with monumentality even when financial constraints did not permit corresponding architecture.

Within the Ilkhanid context, Ghāzān Khān had competed with the mausoleum of the Seljuk sultan Sanjar, built in 1157, when he built his own funerary complex:

“Since he [Ghāzān Khān] was in the capital Tabriz, he chose it was the site and laid the foundation himself outside the city to the west in the place called Shamb. They have been working on it for several years now, and it is planned to be much more magnificent than the dome of Sultan Sanjar the Seljuq in Merv, which is the most magnificent building in the world and which he saw” (*Rashīd al-Dīn* 1998: vol. 3, 685).

Apart from the reference to this domed mausoleum as an example of monumentality, it is striking that Ghāzān Khān is said to have seen the building himself, putting the authority to decide about monumental scale with him, rather than with a group of advisors. In Anatolia, where not many buildings seem to have met his criteria of admi-

nable monumentality, traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa focused on the riches of gardens and orchards, praising the hospitality of the Akhī communities that welcomed him for feasts and provided lodging. Even the Gök Medrese in Sivas, a rather large monument, did not attract Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s attention although he describes a hostel for *sayyids* nearby (*Ibn Battuta* 1958: 434–435; 1879–1914: vol. II, 289). In his account of Anatolia, the Mamluk chronicler al-ʿUmarī is hardly impressed with the architecture, with the exception of the Karatay Han, a mid-thirteenth century building that was described in detail based on the sources that the author drew on (*Blessing* 2014: 176–177).

### Small Buildings — Elaborate Decoration: An Anatolian Phenomenon?

Monuments constructed in Anatolia throughout the 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries remain relatively small in scale. In a study focusing on palaces, Necipoğlu has suggested that in certain regions of the Islamic world, especially Syria, the architecture of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is characterized by a move away from the monumentality of Umayyad and Abbasid construction. Anatolia, where the architectural patronage of the Seljuks really only expanded from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards, was a late-comer to this phenomenon that had started elsewhere as the region had only just begun to be integrated into the Islamic world. Nevertheless, the region remained within the logic of the “Seljuk successor states,” adopting also the taste for smaller monuments (*Necipoğlu* 1993b: 12–13).

The relationship between decoration and structure in small-scale monuments varies over time. Bernard O’Kane has suggested that in North Africa in the early

<sup>5</sup>The text of the inscription is to my knowledge unpublished. For the date and the architectural context, see: (*Hasan* 2007: 195, and fig. 158). The photograph of the inscription is very small and in parts hard to read, but I had the occasion to see the passage on the *Īwān Kisrā* during a visit to Masyaf in summer 2005.

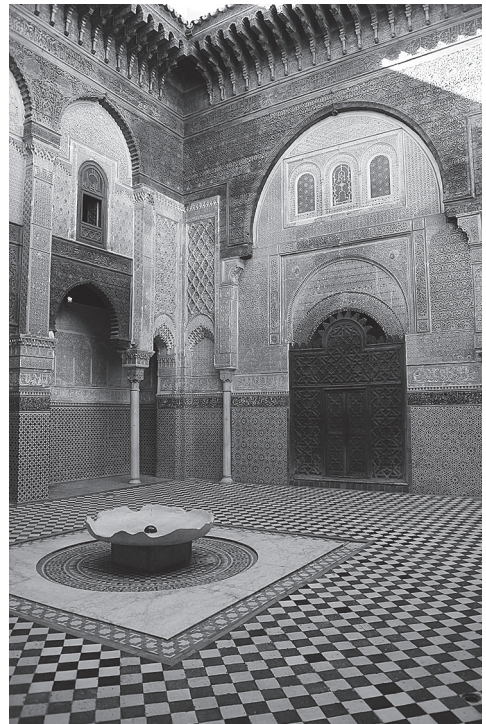




*Ил. 1. Courtyard, Madrasa Bu Inaniya, Fez, Morocco. Author's photograph*

14<sup>th</sup> century decoration in intricate details was privileged over monumental scale especially the *madrasas* that the Marinid sultan Abū 'Inān sponsored in Morocco (il. 1, 2) (O'Kane 1996: 504; Hillenbrand 1994: 240–242.). These buildings are relatively small in scale, yet intricately decorated in their courtyards with carved woodwork, stucco, and tile mosaic that create an overwhelming impression of intricate design. The exterior, however, does not display an impressive façade; rather, the exterior of these monuments is plain, and not accentuated in any obvious way. The splendid decoration remains in the interior, reserved for the building's occupants and visitors.

In medieval Anatolia, façades were accentuated by decoration that renders a visual presence to the exterior of the monuments. Due to this strong presence of the exterior decoration of mosques, madrasas, and caravanserais in central Anatolia dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries display a curious discrepancy between the small scale of the architecture, and the



*Ил. 2. Madrasa al-Attarin, Fez, Morocco. Author's photograph*



*Ill. 3. View, İnce Minareli Madrasa, Konya, Turkey, Author's photograph*

towering impression made by their carved stone decoration, centered on the portal façade, for instance in the İnce Minareli Madrasa (c. 1265) in Konya (il. 3), where an interlaced band of calligraphy is carved on the portal, or in the more common muqarnas portals such as the one of the Çifte Minareli Madrasa (1271–72) in Sivas (il. 4) (Blessing 2014; Wolper 1999).

This question of scale, and the connected issue of emphasizing decoration, rather than size, finds its place within the previous discussion of style and its implications in medieval Anatolia. Thus, this section addresses how this discrepancy works visually to enhance the buildings' effect in a way particular to medieval Anatolia. Comparisons to contemporary buildings in other regions of the Islamic world will show how the decoration of these Anatolian monuments operates in a specific way, enhancing the impact of monuments on the viewer without resorting to monumentality or all-over decoration. It has been argued that the location of certain monuments, especially of mausolea and *zāwiyas*, along main

thoroughfares and near public places such as market and city gates was crucial in attracting people to a building (Wolper 2003: 42–59). Equally, the ways in which decoration was distributed on the façade of a monument, creating an impressive image through its presence, was a crucial factor in drawing the public to a building. This is especially the case of a monument such as the Çifte Minareli Medrese in Sivas (1271–72), placed so closely to the facing Şifaiye Medrese that viewing of the façade from afar is only possible at an oblique angle.

In the Buruciye Madrasa (1271–72) in Sivas (il. 5), the focus of decoration lies at the center of the main façade. The carved elements are arranged around the single portal giving access to the interior of the building. Surrounded by a succession of rectangular frames of various widths, increasing in size to ultimately surpass the cornice of the façade in height, the doorway becomes the main attraction of the building, inviting passersby to enter. The doorway, placed in a recess in the façade, is small compared to the decorated frames





Ил. 4. Çifte Minareli Madrasa (left) and Şifaiye Madrasa, Sivas, Turkey, Author's photograph



Ил. 5. Façade, Buruciye Madrasa, Sivas, Turkey, Author's photograph





İln. 6. Detail of inscription band on portal, İnce Minareli Madrasa, Konya, Turkey, Photograph by A. Kazaryan

that prepare and accentuate it. The frames that form the accentuating block for the portal are decorated with geometrical or vegetal motifs that greatly vary from one band to the next, but not within the same band. In the interior, a large and intricately decorated inscription attracts the viewer to the main *iwān*. Colored decoration is only present in the interior of the mausoleum chamber, visible only upon entering this section of the building (Blessing 2014: 90–98; Blessing 2013).

The Çifte Minareli Medrese in Sivas (1271–72), located just a few 100 yards away from the previous example, has two brick minarets rising over the portal. The arrangement of the decoration around the portal in frames remains the same. Once more, frames are drawn around the doorway, even though in this case the recess is not as deep because unlike in the Buruciye Medrese, the portal is not salient with

respect to the rest of the façade. In addition to the floral and geometric decoration of the portal, the corner buttresses of the Çifte Minareli Medrese are emphasized by decoration, consisting of a dado zone of triangles, that transition into a net of bulbous vegetal motifs covering the rest of the buttress, originally likely up to the cornice that has disappeared (Blessing 2014: 77–89).

In a variation on the theme, the central portal decoration of the Gök Medrese in Sivas is carved in marble, while the rest of the façade is built of the same stone that is used in the Çifte Minareli Medrese and the Buruciye Medrese. Rectangular frames run around the doorway, forming a focal point at the center of the façade. Each frame is decorated individually: geometric and vegetal motifs in high and low relief, kufic and cursive Arabic script are used. Corner buttresses carved with vegetal motifs close off the façade and are decorated in the same way as in the Çifte Minareli Medrese. The walls between portal and buttresses break up this symmetric structure. To the left, a fountain is placed beneath a trilobate arch; to the right, small irregularly spaced windows pierce the façade. Overall, the effect is one of symmetry, even though the insertion of windows at irregular intervals in the two wings of the façade to some extent breaks up this impression.

Even in examples that introduce variants on the decoration of the portal block, such as the İnce Minareli Medrese in Konya the emphasis on the entrance remains in place and powerfully draws the viewer's attention towards the monument (il. 6). The carved knot is placed in a receding conch, rendering the effect of the inscription band even more dynamic as it crosses over the edge of the recess to continue vertically towards the top of the portal block. Within the conch, to both sides of the inscription band, large plant motifs grow out of crescent moons atop crenellated squinches.

Fields filled with palmettes surround these central motifs. At a slanted angle just outside the conch, engaged colonettes covered with vegetal motifs are placed to both sides of the recess preparing the doorway. Above them, a band decorated with wine-leave like motifs runs towards the cornice. On the outside of this single colonette, another pair of colonettes, decorated with scales, is placed. Above these colonettes, thick moldings cross over each other before connecting to a large palmette motif. Then, a thick molding covered in a geometric pattern within a frame carrying an inscription. Larger than the inscription band, a frame decorated with interlacing scrolls ending in palmettes closes the portal off towards both sides. The rest of the façade has been so heavily restored in recent years that it cannot be taken into account here<sup>6</sup>. Only a fragment of the single brick minaret, decorated with intermittent accents of turquoise and black tile remains. The tall minaret was the main accent of the monument before it was destroyed by lightning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>.

As carefully as they are geared towards guiding the viewer, these façades do not reveal the plan of the monuments. The examples in Sivas have open courtyards with two and four *iwāns* respectively and are built entirely of stone just as the façade. The façades are similar to those used on some of the early thirteenth-century caravanserais, such as the Sultan Han near Aksaray, yet the interior plan differs from the latter type of monument which at time consists of a series of two courtyards, or a combination of open spaces and covered halls (Erdmann 1961–1976: vol. 1, 83–90). The courtyard of the İnce Minareli Medrese is covered with a wide brick dome, and the interior structure consists of one large *iwān*

<sup>6</sup> (Sözen 1970: vol. 2: fig. 12) shows the parts of the façade that were rebuilt.

<sup>7</sup> (Blessing 2014: 48–53 and fig. 1.10).



*Pl. 7. Interior, İnce Minareli Medrese, Konya, Turkey, Author's photograph*

facing the entrance, and rectangular and square side chambers (il. 7).

Thus, the differences in function between certain buildings became apparent only upon entering. The interior aspect of the monument, rather than being revealed in the structure of the façade, was reserved to those who had access to it. This created a public face of architecture marked by the parallels between monuments as apparent in façade structure, even though details still diverged. Moreover, the interior of a monument did not necessarily depend upon the structure of the façade, and could be developed according to functional needs, while still preserving a representative façade that provided some sense of uniformity.

In the nearby Karatay Medrese, a large brick dome covers the courtyard, to which



Pl. 8. Interior, Karatay Medrese, Konya, Turkey, Author's photograph

a large *iwān* is attached (il. 8). The entrance into this central space, however, does not lie in the axis of the building. Rather, the visitor enters through a domed vestibule that separates a small door at the eastern corner of the courtyard from the central space. This indirect approach leaves the viewer unprepared for the rich interior decoration: the dome is covered in turquoise and black tiles, with black flower-like medallions emanating from a geometric interlace pattern. Elaborate kufic inscriptions in tile run along the base of the dome and around the oculus at its center. The Turkish triangles below are covered with square kufic script in black on a turquoise background and framed with bands of dark-blue leaves on a white background. A dark-blue cursive inscription on a background of turquoise

scroll frames the arch of the *iwān*. Around the square of the courtyard, touching at the tips of the Turkish triangles, runs a kufic inscription framed by bands of vegetal patterns, all in black on a turquoise background. Panels above the windows and doorways between the courtyard and side chambers are decorated in the same manner. The wall decoration, to the extent that it has been preserved, consists of hexagonal turquoise tiles with gilded inscriptions on them<sup>8</sup>. Even though the parts of the walls where tile decoration has not been preserved are today whitewashed, it is likely that the entire interior was covered with these same tiles. This decoration, in its visual richness, makes the small space of the courtyard measuring 12 m by 12 m appear much larger than it actually is.

To a similar effect, the tile decoration in the tomb chamber of the complex of Şāhib 'Aṭā Fakhr al-Dīn 'Alī enhances the importance of this small space. Even though much smaller than the domed courtyard of the monument, the section containing the burials of the founder and his relatives is decorated more prominently, displaying tiles on all walls and on the cenotaphs<sup>9</sup>. The courtyard, similar in size and plan to that of the İnce Minareli Madrasa except for the presence of four *iwāns*, is covered with the same type of dome, and carries little tile decoration. Thus, the courtyard remains a preparatory space, announcing the tomb chamber without revealing the splendor of the decoration within. The portal of this section of the complex, conceived as a *khānqāh*, is decorated with bands of geometric patterns framing the portal block. A pointed arch with engaged corner colonettes forms the recess for the doorway. Over the segmental arch

<sup>8</sup> For details of the epigraphic program, see (Redford 2015).

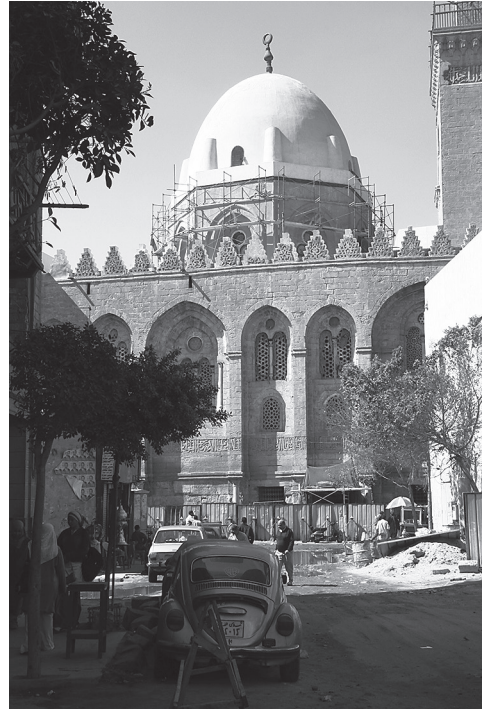
<sup>9</sup> Detailed discussion of the building in (Blessing 2014: 55–62).



of the doorway, the foundation inscription is carved onto the trilobite panel. In this building, the portal is less elaborately decorated than the interior, yet it serves its purpose of drawing the visitor towards the central space. There, the decoration is applied hierarchically, with the mausoleum of the founder, the main attraction of the monument, receiving the largest share of the tile work.

The attention paid to decoration obtains a singular layer of meaning in connection with the relatively smaller size of the monuments. Thus, the Buruciye Madrasa measures just 25 m by 30 m, a size that is quite common for central Anatolia during the period in question<sup>10</sup>. The Sırçalı Madrasa, the Karatay Madrasa, and the Yakutiye Madrasa (built in 1310) in Erzurum all measure about the same. The Gök Madrasa (c. 1270–80) in Tokat and the Sahibiye Madrasa (built in 1266) in Kayseri are both somewhat larger with 25 m by 40 m. The late thirteenth-century Çifte Minareli Madrasa in Erzurum with its elongated plan measures roughly 35 m by 50 m, not including the mausoleum. This makes it one of the largest buildings in Anatolia, somewhat of an exception together with the Şifaiye Madrasa in Sivas with its 61 m by 41.5 m. Overall, however, smaller buildings are more common. In the smaller ones of these monuments in particular, the overwhelming decoration of the portal façade and of the central block around the entrance in particular, is the first element that the viewer takes in. Thus, the small size does not become apparent at first, and only conscious attention to the measurements reveals the relatively limited dimensions of these buildings.

In contrast, the main façade of the building complex of Sultan Qalāwūn in



Ил. 9. View, mausoleum of Sultan Qalāwūn, Cairo, Egypt, Author's photograph

Cairo (built in 1284–85) stretches over 70 meters (ил. 9). In addition to the width, the height of the façade and its complex composition with multiple salient angles distinguish this and other Mamluk monuments from buildings in Anatolia. Behind this long façade, the multi-functional complex consisting of the mausoleum of the founder, a madrasa, and a hospital once covered a large surface. The foundation inscription, written in large *naskhī* script, runs across the entire façade at a height of about two meters above the ground level, and visually ties the length of the building together. The portal stands out far less than in the Anatolian examples, its decoration being tied into that of the façade, rather than jutting out from it and carrying distinctive decoration.

<sup>10</sup> The measurements given here are taken from the plans in (*Kuran* 1969).



Generally, portals in Mamluk architecture are not emphasized in the same way as in the Seljuk monuments of Anatolia. Even when the portal is salient, such as in the Mosque of Baybars al-Bunduqdārī in Cairo (built in 1266–69) the decoration emphasizes the entrance of the monument more subtly, without variedly decorated frames that immediately capture the eye of the viewer<sup>11</sup>. This lighter approach to portal decoration is especially striking compared to the portals of Sivas or Konya, where the virtuosity of the stonemasons concentrated on this part of the façade.

The Madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan in Cairo, built in 1357–1364, has been connected to Seljuk architecture. In a detailed study of this building, J. Michael Rogers has examined whether the building might be the work of craftsmen from Anatolia, at least in some parts especially of the portal decoration. The focus of Rogers's study lies on the portal of the madrasa, a salient porch that at first sight indeed does evoke Seljuk architecture. The example of the mosque of Baybars al-Bunduqdārī establishes a local precedent, supplanting the need to look far afield for comparisons. Upon investigation of the details of the construction, Rogers suggests that the connection is not so direct as to warrant the involvement of actual workmen who immigrated to Egypt from Anatolia. Rather, Rogers posits, the decoration of the *madrasa* evokes a near-forgotten memory of Seljuk monuments, maybe through a workshop that migrated several decades earlier or through a craftsman who travelled in Anatolia at some point in his life (Rogers 1970: 67–68).

A clear discrepancy between the Madrasa of Sultan Ḥasan and Seljuk monuments lies in scale. Whereas in thirteenth-

and fourteenth-century Egypt, monumentality was a main concern, the elaborate decoration of portal façades in Anatolia conceals the smallness of the buildings from the viewer, suggesting a different attitude towards architecture, possibly concentrating material expense on the skill and quality of carving, rather than on size. The measurements of Seljuk monuments in Anatolia, as Sharon Laor-Sirak has shown, rely on the same units as those of Armenian buildings in that region and in the Caucasus, constructed throughout the Middle Ages (Laor-Sirak 2008: 18–19). This suggests connected architectural traditions, and probably collaboration between workmen and builders of different origin. The small size of many Islamic monuments may thus also reflect the connection to the Armenian tradition, a line of inquiry that has not yet been pursued.

Within the context of the region, the impact of older traditions and contemporary is as important as the competition for monumentality that the Mamluks and Ilkhanids engaged. The geographical position of Anatolia placed the region between these two competing forces; the mobility of craftsmen led to added transfer of motifs and concepts of design. Within this architectural landscape of size and scale, the place of Seljuk Anatolia has not been explored in detail. Geographically, the region is at the center of the phenomena just outlined. In chronological terms, it is at the junction between the smaller structures in the wake of early Islamic monumentality, and the new quest for it pursued by the Mamluks, Ilkhanids, and little later the Ottomans. It appears that the special place of Anatolia lies in the ways in which the relationship between plan, size, and decoration of a building is played out.

In the longstanding conflict between Mamluks and Ilkhanids, Anatolia was involved for geographical as well as politi-

<sup>11</sup> (Taragan 2006: 58–61). Taragan argues that the salient block itself, rather than its decoration, was the main carrier of meaning. For a detailed study of the building, see: (Bloom 1982).

cal reasons, as the Ilkhanids gained more and more influence over the Seljuk sultans in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century for the reasons discussed in Chapter Three. The aesthetic mechanisms in place in Anatolia had developed in the late twelfth and early 13<sup>th</sup> century, in line with the construction of smaller monuments under Zengid and Ayyubid rule in Syria, and later Egypt (*Necipoglu* 1993b: 12–14). Thus, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the conflict between Mamluks and Ilkhanids was fully in force, architectural practices in Anatolia were sufficiently engrained to continue in their previous path.

Bernard O’Kane has argued that the conflict between Mamluks and Ilkhanids was played out on an artistic level in the production of oversized Qur’ans and in the construction of monumental mosques and *madrasas*. Similarly, monumental buildings were erected in the Ilkhanid realm, such as the mausoleum of Ūljaytū in his capital of Sulṭāniya near Tabriz, built between 1307 and 1313. Economic prosperity allowed for the construction of such monuments, even if they were at times pushing resources to the limit (*O’Kane* 1996: 503). Comparing the monuments in Egypt and Iran to their smaller contemporaries in Morocco, such as the *madrasa* of Abū ‘Inān in Fez, built in 1350–1355 and several similar buildings sponsored by the same ruler, O’Kane concludes that in some regions, “the dominant aesthetic of the time seems to have been in favour [...] of reducing scale and increasing ornament.” (*Ibid.*: 504). The decoration of the courtyard is one that is repeated in contemporary and later monuments in Morocco: tiled dados, stucco decoration with inscriptions and floral motifs, and carved wood under the eaves. Built slightly earlier, in 1323–25, the smaller Madrasa al-Attarin has a narrow courtyard that is difficult to capture in an overall view. The decorative scheme

closely resembles the one in the Bu Inaniya Madrasa: from bottom to top — tiles, stucco, carved wood, and like other madrasas in Fez, this monument does not strike with a monumental portal or large size, but rather with the splendor of its courtyard.

Mamluk and Ilkhanid monuments, on the other hand, tower over the cityscape by their sheer size, but still resort to intricate decoration in the interior, such as the painted stucco in the mausoleum of Ūljaytū, or the gilding in the mausoleum of sultan Qalāwūn. Conversely, the exterior receives only touches of decoration, such as a large inscription connecting elements of a façade, a salient porch that itself remains devoid of decoration, or exterior arches and galleries that structure the silhouette of a monument. In comparison with contemporary buildings in Anatolia, the Mamluk and Ilkhanid monuments strive to impress with their size, rather than intricacies of decoration. The latter are still present, yet they do not form part of the first impression of a monument. Contemporary monuments in Anatolia, however, emphasize exactly that aspect: the decoration of the portal is such that it takes over the appearance of the building.

## Conclusion

In Anatolia, the portal facades with their decoration are the main point of attraction for a viewer. Since the medieval urban fabric has not been preserved in most Anatolian cities, it is hard to tell to what extent the buildings were surrounded by other constructions that would have influenced the possibilities of approaching the monuments. Early twentieth-century photographs often show residential structures right next to the medieval monuments, yet to what extent these later structures are reminiscent of the situation at the time of construction is unclear.

It is, however, obvious that the monuments were designed with a focus on one façade that contains the portal and thus serves to attract passersby into the building. Inside the buildings, the decoration varies greatly. In buildings with open courtyards, such as the three *madrasas* in Sivas, stone carving continues on the walls and in the *iwāns* of the courtyard. Special rooms within *madrasas*, such as the mausolea of the founders, or chambers designated as mosques, often received tile decoration in dark blue, black, and turquoise. Such decoration can also be found in the domes over the courtyards of the İnce Minareli Medrese and the Karatay Medrese in Konya, as part of the brick construction of the dome rather than in plaster applied over stone.

The significance of these choices — whether they were caused by aesthetic preference or technical conditions — is hard to assess. The ways in which these aesthetic preferences played out in the architecture of the time are difficult to trace in the sources. Observing the monuments of medieval Anatolia, however, it is clear that in this region as well, O’Kane’s statement concerning the presence of overwhelming decoration in small monuments can be adopted for an inquiry into the curious discrepancy between the small size of the buildings and the abundant use of rich ornamentation. Yet it is the façade, the public face of the monument that received the most attention. The contrast between the impact of the exuberant decoration and the relatively small size of the monuments is not apparent at first sight: the decoration involves the viewer to such an extent that the small size is not a primary concern. Thus, I argue that the size of the monuments was a conscious aesthetic choice.

The monumental architecture of the two rival empires was not introduced into Anatolia. It appears that the dynamics

of size and scale created in Anatolia during the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, as the Seljuk rulers provided architectural patronage that proved to foster creativity beyond the tight constraints of an imperial style, continued into the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The relative monumentality, by Anatolian standards, of the *madrasas* in Sivas and Erzurum, however, suggests a change in emphasis. Similarly, the use of tall double minarets on facades indicated an increased impact of Ilkhanid dominance. The rivalry between Mamluks and Ilkhanids, even though affecting Anatolia in political terms, did not lead to a change in architectural style and paradigms. Rather, the terms in which local architecture operated continued, and were affected by internal changes in patronage rather than the competition of these two major empires (*Blessing 2017*).

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