NOTES ON SALDJŪQ
ARCHITECTURAL PATRONAGE IN
THIRTEENTH CENTURY ANATOLIA

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The Saljūq1) monuments of thirteenth century Anatolia are today recognized as the product of what might be called a classical moment in the evolution of medieval Turkish Islamic architecture. A time of intensive building activity, the thirteenth century was also a period in which a developed formal vocabulary and great technical assurance combined to produce a distinctive and powerfully expressive style of stone architecture which is still today widely admired and encountered in of the towns of the Anatolian plateau.

As the result of several decades of field survey, beginning with European scholars such as Frederich Sarre, Albert Gabriel and Kurt Erdmann and continued by Turks including Oktay Aslanapa, Aptullah Kuran and Metin Sözen, this body of monuments is today relatively well known. For the most part, however, these investigators have been architects by training, and not surprisingly this orientation is strongly reflected in their work. Hence, although considerable emphasis has been given to the formal description of monuments, little effort has been made to discuss this architecture within the broader context of the social, economic and political history of the Saljūq period in Anatolia.

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1) The term Saljūq is used here to refer specifically to the Rūm Saljūq sultanate and to monuments and patrons extant or active within its frontiers. Although the term is at times used in a more generic sense as descriptive of Turkish Anatolia between the late eleventh and early fourteenth centuries, it is not so employed here.
Fundamental to the linking of Saldjjūq architecture to these wider developments is the question of patronage. Who were the patrons of Saldjjūq monumental architecture? To what social and economic classes did they belong? What are the types of foundations to be associated with these groups? How do they compare with one another in terms of the character and scale of their patronage? And finally, to what degree does the evolution of this patronage, the changes in its character over time, reflect broader currents in Anatolian Seluq historical development?

Although definitive answers to such questions must await a fuller examination of the available sources, in particular the corpus of Saldjjūq waqfiyyas certain tentative conclusions can be reached on the basis of documentation at present readily available. This latter consists in the main of two types of sources. On the one hand, there are literary sources, the most important of which are the Saldjjūq chronicles of Ibn Bībī²) and Aqsarāyi³) and the a Tārikh-i Āl-i Saldjjūq of the so-called anonymous historian of Konya.⁴) Written in Persian from a court perspective, they span the period from the end of the twelfth century to the early years of the fourteenth, and include occasional and passing references to monuments and building projects, which, if in no way systematic, do nonetheless supply important details having to do with the circumstances and events connected with particular foundations.

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