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Medallions Found on the Ceiling of the Nakhchivan Mumine Hatun Cupola

Nahçıvan Mümine Hatun Kümbeti Tavanında Bulunan Madalyonlar

Abstract: The thought, understanding and pleasure seen in pre-Islamic Turkish art also manifested itself after Islam. It is possible to see the reflections of this understanding in all geographies where Turks dominate and live. In Turkish-Islamic art, especially in religious architecture; There is a continuity in the interior and exterior decorations throughout history. It is an expression of the continuity of the Turkish-Islamic understanding of thought, both in architecture and decorations. Nakhchivan architecture and decorations have an important place among the examples spread in the area from Central Asia to Anatolia and the Balkans. Undoubtedly, one of the best examples of Nakhchivan architecture, which played an important role in the transition from Central Asia to Anatolia, is the Mumine Hatun cupola. The medallions on the inner ceiling of the Mümine Hatun Vault, which we examined, had an impact on the Turkish-Islamic works made after them in terms of cosmic and ornamentation.

Keywords: Turkish Art, Nakhchivan, Mumine Hatun Cupola, Medallions, Decorations

Öz: İslam öncesi Türk sanatında görülen düşünce, anlayış ve zevk İslam sonrasında da tezahür etmiştir. Bu anlayışın yansımalarını, Türklerin hakim olduğu ve yaşadığı bütün coğrafyalarda görmek mümkündür. Türk İslam sanatında da özellikle dini mimaride; iç ve dış süslemelerde tarih boyunca bir devamlılık görülmektedir. Türk-İslam düşünce anlayışının gerek mimaride, gerekse süslemelerde kendini göstermesi devamlılığında ifadesidir. Orta Asya'dan Anadolu'ya ve Balkanlara kadar olan alanda yayılmış örnekler arasında önemli bir yere sahiptir Nahçıvan mimarisi ve süslemeleri. Orta Asya'dan Anadolu'ya geçişte önemli bir rol üslenen Nahçıvan mimarisinin en iyi örneklerinden biri şüphesiz, Mümine Hatun kümbetidir. İncelediğimiz Mümine Hatun Kümbetinin iç tavanında yer alan madalyonlar, kozmik ve süsleme açısından kendinden sonra yapılan Türk İslam eserleri üzerinde etki etmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türk Sanatı, Nahçıvan, Mümine Hatun Kümbeti, Madalyonlar, Süslemeler

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Introduction

Undoubtedly, the first architectural work that comes to mind in Turkish architecture in Nahcivan is the Mömine/Mumine Hatun cupola. When I went to Nakhchivan in 1992, I visited the work and took photographs of it. I was excited to stand in front of a magnificent monumental work.

Not much research has been conducted on the work. In the following years, there will be a lots of research on Mömine/Mumine Hatun. However, in these studies, there was not much information about the medallions on the ceiling of the work

In this article, we will examine the medallions on the ceiling of the work.

The interior walls of the tomb, which work wonders in decoration on its exterior, are undecorated. The architect went to the interior decoration of the building with four large medallions on the ceiling of the cupola, which he placed at a height of 20 m (Salamzade.- Mamedzade, 1985, p.116).

There are four round medallions with a diameter of 1,5 m in the interior of the tomb, in the north, south, west and east. The traces of a fifth medallion in the middle of the ceiling of the cupola can also be seen.

The inscriptions and decorations on the medallions, which were attached to the ceiling of the cupola with a mixture of plaster and given interlaced geometric shapes with the carving technique, are processed in a separate style. The basis of the writings is the Kufic font. These medallions would later serve as an example for the Olcay to Hüdabend Tomb in Sultaniye.

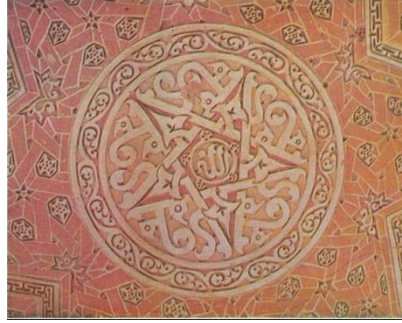


Image 1. Medallion in Sultan Olcayto Tomb

Although Y. Yakobstal, (Salamzade and Mamedzade, 1985, p. 119) was the first to examine the Mumine Hatun Cupola, it is another question that he did not mention the medallions on the ceiling of the building. In another strange situation, medallions are not mentioned at all in the writings prepared by M. Hartman and added to the work of Y. Yakobstal (Salamzade and Mamedzade, 1985, p. 119). It is impossible for both researchers not to see the medallions. However, if there were no medallions in reality; in the 1939 and 1940s, it would not have been possible to take photographs of the medallions on the ceiling when the cupola was properly and thoroughly examined. Later, the researcher and epigrapher E. Eleskerzade (Eleskerzade, 1979, p. 319) tried to read the writings on the medallions. He mentioned the existence of medallions in his work titled *Azerbaijan Architecture*. In addition, the construction of the first medallion was examined graphically by the Architect T.

Bağırzade (Bağırzade, 1960, p. 60-63). Later in 1981, the photographs of the medallions were taken again.

The inscriptions inside the medallions could not be read by the researchers at first. The medallions in the Olcayto Tomb in Sultaniye, which was built 128 years after the Mümine Hatun Cupola, were in better condition and could be read more clearly than the medallions in the Mümine Hatun Cupola. Based on the medallions in the Sultan Olcayto Cupola, the researchers were able to read the inscriptions on the medallions on the ceiling of the Mümine Hatun Cupola. In fact, although the writings on the medallions are not clear, it is not easy to read them..

Four different medallions were made in four different styles. Their decorations and writings are different from each other. The artist did not apply the unity and harmony in the decorations he applied on the exterior surfaces to the medallions he created in different styles here.



Image 2. The number one medallion

On the first medallion, the words *Allah* and *Muhammad* repeats eight times. The medallion is completely decorated with plant motifs. On the outer edge of the medallion, there is a border formed with floral motifs. In the very centre of the coin, there is the script of *Allah*. *There is a small circle* around the script, and outside the circle, intertwined pentacles and shapes create a cosmic atmosphere (Berkli, 2011, p. 157). Different star shapes have also been tried on other medallions. Although the ways in which these stars are placed are different, it has created a cosmic aura.

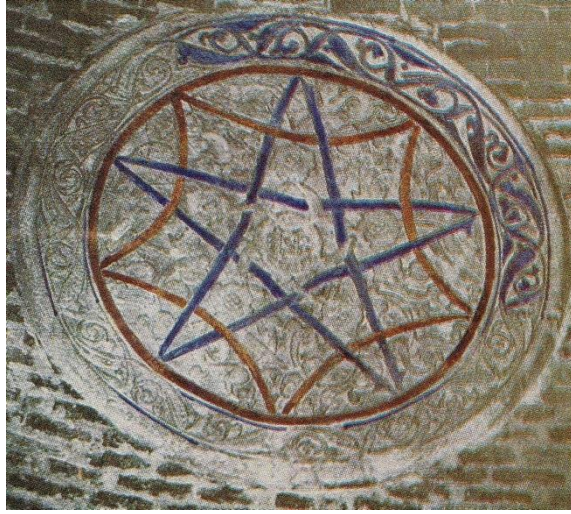


Image 3. A view from the number two medallion

The number two medallion

Unlike the first medallion, the artist filled the inside of the medallion with different words. Again, the word *Allah* is at the center of it. A five-pointed star is placed in the center of the coin and a five-pointed star is formed outside it. The inner star and the outer star are designed completely differently, although they are five-pointed. Of both stars, the outer one is kept wider and flatter, but interlocks with the vertices of the thinner inner star. On the edges of the star, the word *Allah* is written one after the other in a flowering Kufic character. In terms of composition, both elements pentagon and pentagonal star combine quite harmoniously, giving the appearance of a pentagonal frame. The meaning of the borderlines of the pentagonal star is not clear. The name "*Omar*" is repeated six times in the frame on the sides of the star.

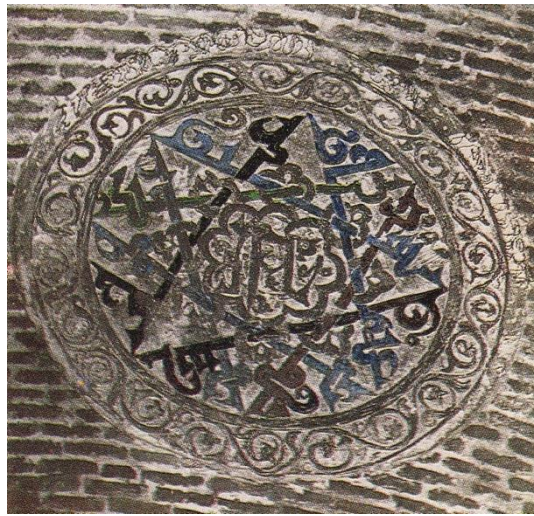


Image 4. A view from the number three medallion

The number three medallion

The badge, which is placed in the center, is combined with kufic inscriptions to form an octagon. The circular frame surrounding this octagon is decorated with a floral border. The names of the first eight caliphs of Islam are written in eight kufic inscriptions on the badge. According to its construction, the middle of the medallion is joined with a centralized clover leaf. Here, it is seen that the Kufic inscriptions intersect with their straight lines, revealing the cloverleaf motif.



Image 5. A view from the number four medallion

The number four medallion

This medallion, consisting of a six-pointed star, is similar to the number one medallion in terms of composition. Five of the six inscriptions in the corners of the stars are clearly legible. "Allah" is written in five of them, the other sixth one could not be read because it was destroyed, but it is thought that the script of the word "Allah" should be included here, according to the general harmony of the composition. Unlike other medallions, here the names of the four caliphs are placed respectively. One of the things they have in common with other medallions is that the name of *Allah* is written in the center of all of them.

Conclusion

The medallions on the ceiling decorations of the Mumine Hatun Cupola, known as the monumental work of the Nahcivan School of Architecture, one of the important schools of Turkish Islamic architecture and decorative arts, pioneered many Turkish Islamic architectures that came after them. In many religious architectures, the motifs in mosques, cupolas/tombs, especially in interior decorations, appear as a reflection of cosmic and Turkish-Islamic thought. This situation is one of the most important indicators of the continuity of Turkish-Islamic culture and art.

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Visual References

- Image 1.** Sultan Olcayto Türbesinde yer alan madalyon. Salamzade, A. V.-Mamedzade, K. M., “Azerbaycan’ın Nahçıvan Mektebi” ELM, Bakü 1985, s.122.
- Image 2.** Sultan Olcayto Türbesinde yer alan madalyon. Salamzade, A. V.-Mamedzade, K. M., “Azerbaycan’ın Nahçıvan Mektebi” ELM, Bakü 1985, s. 123.
- Image 3.** Sultan Olcayto Türbesinde yer alan madalyon. Salamzade, A. V.-Mamedzade, K. M., “Azerbaycan’ın Nahçıvan Mektebi” ELM, Bakü 1985, s.123.
- Image 4.** Sultan Olcayto Türbesinde yer alan madalyon. Salamzade, A. V.-Mamedzade, K. M., “Azerbaycan’ın Nahçıvan Mektebi” ELM, Bakü 1985, s.124.
- Image 5.** Sultan Olcayto Türbesinde yer alan madalyon. Salamzade, A. V.-Mamedzade, K. M., “Azerbaycan’ın Nahçıvan Mektebi” ELM, Bakü 1985, s.125.