

Seals of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi

Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi'ye Ait Mühürler

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ABSTRACT

Inscriptions on hard materials such as precious or semiprecious stones, which are engraved on the reverse so that they appear properly when printed, are called seals. In Ottoman society, a seal showing their status was used by almost everyone, men and women, who had a certain authority and position in social life. The oldest seal known in the history of Islam belongs to our Prophet and has the inscription *Muhammedu'n- Rasulullah* on it. This seal is a sample of later periods in terms of both the forms of seals and calligraphy. The sealed envelopes and letters on the official writings, letters, etc. in the estate of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi were transferred to the Süleymaniye Library through his grandson Süheyl Ünver. In these letters, remarkable information about the design stages, excavation, and use of seals emerges. At the same time, we see the use of artworks with different calligraphy types on the seal with an esthetic pleasure. Scribbles, essays, and sketches in the estate are likewise important with their free forms.

Keywords: Art, calligraphy, design, Mehmed Şevki Efendi, seal

ÖZ

Değerli veya yarı değerli taşa benzer sert malzeme üzerine, basıldığı zaman düzgün çıkması için ters olarak kazınan imza hükmündeki yazılara mühür denir. Osmanlı toplumunda sosyal hayatta belli bir makam ve mevkii olan kadın-erkek hemen hemen herkes tarafından statüsünü gösteren bir mühür kullanılmıştır. İslam tarihinde bilinen en eski mühür Hz. Peygamber'e ait olup üzerin "Muhammedu'n-Resulullah" yazılıdır. Bu mühür sonraki dönemlerde hem mühürlerin formu hem de hat sanatı açısından numune niteliğindedir. Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi terekesinde bulunan resmî yazı, mektup vb. evrak üzerinde bulunan mühürlü zarf ve mektuplar, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi'ne torunu Süheyl Ünver vasıtasıyla intikal etmiştir. Bu mektuplarda mühürlerin tasarım aşamaları, kazılması ve kullanımı ile ilgili oldukça dikkat çeken bilgiler ortaya çıkmaktadır. Aynı zamanda farklı hat çeşitleriyle ortaya çıkan sanat eserlerinin mühür üzerinde estetik bir zevkle kullanımını görmekteyiz. Yine tereke içerisinde yer alan karalama, deneme ve eskizler, serbest formlarıyla da önem arz etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sanat, hat, istif, Mehmed Şevki Efendi, mühür

Introduction

There are quite a lot of seals on the official writings, letters, etc. in the estate of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi¹. While examining Mehmed Şevki Efendi's inheritance, which was transferred to the Süleymaniye Library through his grandson Süheyl Ünver and Ünver's daughter Gülbün Mesara Archive, we noticed that many of the documents that came and went to him were sealed. From this point of view, within the framework of this study, along with general information, evaluations will be made on the seals that have been identified so far belonging to Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi.

The Persian word seal (*müher*) is a signature engraved upside down on hard material such as a precious or semiprecious stone so that it leaves the signature properly when printed. It is used for the printing of coats of arms, symbols, or stamps, and in Arabic, it is called *hatem* and *tâbi* (Taş, 2006, p. 528).

The seal, as a term, is a small cute object that has names, signs, ornaments, verses, and beautiful words on it, which are carved upside down to be printed on precious stones (gold, silver, brass, etc. metals and (emerald, amethyst, agate, najaf etc.), papers such as promissory notes, letters, hanging on a ring, necklace or chain that people always carry with them as a trademark of the person precious

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¹ For more information, see Bilen, Yusuf (2010), "Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi ve Sülius-Nesih Hat Ekolu" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Atatürk University Institute of Social Sciences, Erzurum, p. 1-287.

stones, papers such as promissory notes, letters, hanging on a ring, necklace or chain that is used as a trademark of the person, and small cute objects that people always carry with them (Kuşoğlu, 1994, p. 23).

In the Ottoman Empire, words such as *memhûr* (sealed) and *tem-hîr* (to seal) were derived from the Persian seal into Arabic molds. Samples of the so-called practical seal of persons both in the civil service and in business with the state were kept in the relevant office to investigate the authenticity of *the document presented*. At the same time, in order to prevent document forgeries, the sealers had notebooks (see Image 1) in which they printed the seals they had engraved (Kütükoğlu, 2006, p. 530).

In ancient times, containers where liquor was stored were first closed and then tied with rope or glaze and knotted, and the knot was closed with potter's mud and sealed. In the Hittite and Egyptian traditions, things such as vessels, letters, and chests, which were not wanted to be opened, were also sealed in this way. In the field of archaeology, such mud seal prints are called *bulla*. Later, these were replaced by lead seals (postal seals), which are still used today. The oldest lead seals in Islamic history date back to the Umayyad period. *Bulla* seals were important for security in the palaces. In the Turks, the seal was called *tamga* (seal). Today, the official seal is printed on hard seal candles that can easily melt when heated in cases of preservation, closure or

cancellation by law (Taş, 2006, p. 528). Due to the low cost and the fact that they are easily made, plastic seals are becoming more common.

Seals are sources for many branches of science, such as theology, literary art history, history, archaeology, sociology, psychology, folklore, and medicine. The phrases, shapes, and beliefs engraved on the seals are sources of information.

As the seal has been known in Egypt since the time of Prophet Yusuf, it is understood *from the form called "Mühr-i Süleyman"* (Pakalın, 1993, p. 607).

When the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him [pbuh]) wrote letters to foreign heads of state (such as Kisra, Kaiser, and Najashi), he was reminded that they had not read the unsealed letters, so he had a silver seal (ring) made of round black agate engraved. Under this seal, there was the name *Muhammad, rasul* in the middle, and the phrase *Muhammadu'n rasûlullah*, with the letter "i celâl" designed on the upper part (Taş, 2006, p. 529).

The seal of the Prophet's (pbuh) ring has been the source of inspiration for calligraphers in their wonderfully beautiful stacks and designs of calligraphy. In the design of the verse, hadith or any other phrase, they have taken care to write the word Allah at the top (Bilen, 2014, p. 51).

It is necessary to divide the seals into personal seals, official seals, and foundation seals. Both where they are used and how they are used are different. When the word "seal" is mentioned in the context of the Ottoman Empire, the first thing that comes to mind is the seal of the sultan, which is called the seal of *humâyûn* (Kütükoğlu, 1994, p. 84).

On the personal seals made in ovoid, circular, angular, pear-shaped or serrated edges, the owner's name and profession were engraved, sometimes with his father's name or sometimes alone (Kütükoğlu, 2006, p. 530).

It has been widely used in ring-shaped seals in order to be easy to carry and find. Image 3 shows the agate seal with the inscription *Sayyid Ali*.

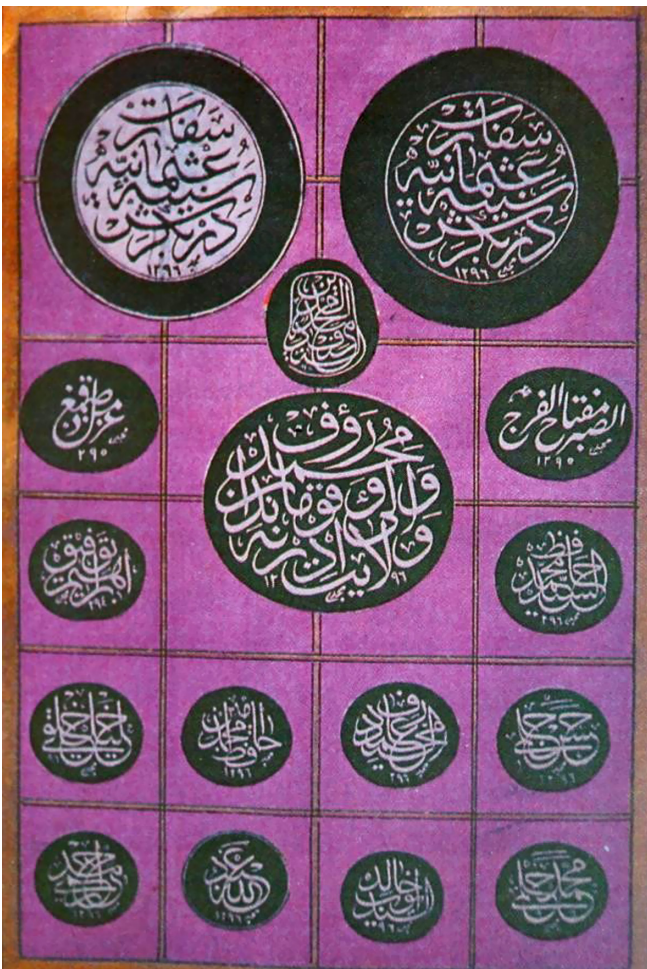


Image 1.
A sample from Hakkak Mecdî Efendi's Seal Book (Kuşoğlu, 1994, p. 25)



Image 2.
The seal of the Prophet (Serin, 2003, p. 14)



Image 3.
Ring Seal (Erzurum Museum, 1-29-75)

Seals may include statements that indicate a place, such as a city, as well as occupation, family, or name. We can easily see this information in a sample dated 1330/1912 in the Erzurum Museum.

On the seal, the information *Eğîn Kaza Kâtib-i Adlîsi Emîr Alizâde Bekir Sıdkî 1330* (Image 4) is indicated.

Seals are first prepared as a mold by calligraphers and then engraved inversely by engravers into various materials.

İbrahim Alaettin (İ. Alaaddin Gövsa) Yedigün Magazine 407. In his article published in the issue, he classifies the seals from an aesthetic point of view as follows. *"I like seals from different spots. Many kinds of delight and grace are sometimes gathered in those tiny seals. First of all, there is the beauty of the writings that you come across admiring varieties of rik'a, thuluth, ta'lik, dîvânî etc. calligraphy-like paintings. Secondly, grace is striking in the writings. Fitting three, five or more words in a small space in the most appropriate way is an extraordinary skill of master craftsmen. Thirdly, the beauties preferred in the mines, stones and finally the handles of the seals are pleasing to the taste. It is also a special feature that sometimes phrases, verses and couplets describing the occupation, sect, and temperament of the owner are included on the seals"* (Gövsa, 1940, p. 14).

Evlîya Çelebi mentions Hakkak Abdullah Yümnî as the patriarch of the Ottoman Engravers. Baba Yümnî (d.?) was a person who was interested in science called alchemy. As in the past, he wanted to obtain gold from the soil. One day, while he was at it, he also dug up a seal. One day, one of the leading people of



Image 4.
Seal (Erzurum Museum, 8-47-5)

pleasure, who had heard about his skill in making seals, visited him and ordered many seals. He says to Yümnî Efendi, *"You do these things, and I will teach you how to make gold in science and chemistry."* Yümnî Efendi works and prepares the masterpiece seals by the time they contract. After a while, the person who ordered the seals came with the men who had ordered the seals, saw the seals and liked them very much, gave a bag of gold to Hakkak Yümnî Efendi and said, *"Your profession is like gold, why do you want to make gold from the soil?"* and goes. After that day, Yümnî Efendi became Hakkak Yümnî, who engraved writings on gold and earned a lot of gold (Kuşoğlu, 1994 p. 26).

Seals of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi

Mehmed Şevki Efendi was one of the most sought-after calligraphers of his time in seal writing as well as in Mushaf, Hilye, Kit'a, Delâilü'l-Hayrât, En'âm, etc.

The seals on the official writings, letters, etc. found in the state of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi are quite numerous. While examining the Mesara Archive of Mehmed Şevki Efendi's granddaughter Gülbün, who were transferred to the Süleymaniye Library through his grandson Süheyl Ünver, many of the documents that came and went to him were sealed. Şevki Efendi prepared seal molds for many people and his students, especially sultans and princes, upon request. Although many of his identifiable students were calligraphers, they used the seal prepared by their teacher. When the seals of different people are brought together, the similarities in the design of the same words are clearly visible. For example, the design of the word "as-sayyid" in the names of several people is the same.

Since one of the biggest reasons for the use of seals on envelopes was that people do not penetrate a document or object, Hattat Hacı Ali Efendi from Erzincan, who was engaged in distance education by letters from Şevki Efendi, (See Image 5) demands that his envelope be sealed so that it does not fall into the hands of others.

In his letter, after salutation and reverence, he wrote the following sentences in the last part: *"Your Excellency, when you send a response, you are kindly requested to put it in a nice envelope and then seal it."* There is a seal in the form of "es-Sayyid Ali" on the letter he sent to his teacher, Mehmed Şevki Efendi (Bilen, 2012: 50).

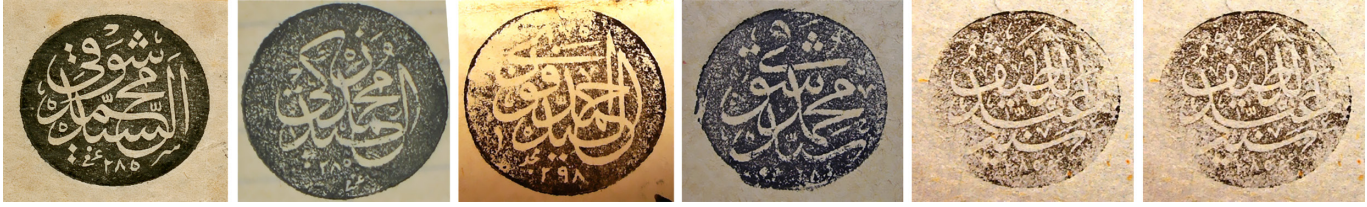


Image 5.
Similarity of the Words “es-seyyid” and “seyyid” in the seals

Şevki Efendi, who taught writing to Sultan Mehmed Reşad in his principality, wrote the Holy Qur’an and a Mevlevî Evrâd. He wrote a seal to the prince and Hakkak Azmî Efendi engraved it. He had his seals made by Azmî Efendi or Hakkak Hâfız Ahmed Efendi (Mecdî) (Derman, Şevki Efendi File).

The thuluth seal (See Image 6) belonging to Hüseyin Hüsnî Efendi, which was written by Şevkî Efendi at the time when his art was at its best level and which was engraved in the ovoid form in 1296/1879 by Hakkak Mecdî Efendi, presents a marvelous design with the cubes used in the letters “ha” and the harmony and tenasüb of the letters “sîn.”

A friend of Şevki Efendi named Hâfız wanted him to make a new design by making some changes on the seal previously written to es-Sayyid Hüsnî Efendi. In the letter, we learn that he wanted the word “as-sayyid” at the bottom and the word “Husni” with a cube

at the top to be written in a new design. We follow the writing course of both designs from the letters.

In the letter sent to Şevki Efendi in 1298/1881 by the person named Hacı Hâfız, the muallim-i evveli of Mekteb-i Rüşdiyye of Tırnova, in which explanations about the seal were made (see Image 7), the following information is included.

The reading of the letter is as follows:

Ma’ruz-ı muhlis-i bî iştibâhlarıdır.

Bizim Hüsnî Bey bendeleri için geçen gün lutf-i âlilerine mağrûren vuku’ bulan tavassut ve müracaât-ı âcizî üzerine bir mühr resmi tanzîm ve ihsân buyurulmuş idi. Resm-i mezkûr hakka ki, ferîdûl-ı asr bulunan Efendimiz’in hâsıl-ı dest-i hüner ve ma’rifetleri olduğundan gerek âcizlerini ve gerek mîr-i mümâ ileyhi rûy-i gayr-i bîy mahebûbun hayrânı gibi hayrân ederek bekâ-yı ömr ü âfiyet ve terakki-i feyz u menzeletleri deâvât-ı evride-i zebân tekrar edilmiştir. Şu kadar ki evvelce dahi şifâhen arz u beyân eylediğim vechle mîr-i mûma ileyih zâten emin olmak mülâbesesiyle mezkûr resimden iki kelimeden birinin hazfıyla (Es Seyyid Hüsnî) olmak yani es-Seyyid kelimesi aşağıda ve kâseli Hüsnî kelimesi dahî üstünde bulunmak üzere diğerinin tanzîm ve tersîm buyrulmasını kemâl-ı arz u istihâmda bulunmuş ve lutf-i âlilerine gâyet ü nihâyet olmadığından mîr-i mümâ ileyhin şu niyâzının husûlü taraf-ı âciziden taahhüt ile kendisi te’min ve tefrîh ve yine îâde buyurulmak üzere evvelki resme leffen tesyîr edilmiş olmakla herhalde lutf u kerem Efendimiz’indir. Fî gurre-i Rajab sene 98 Ben-deniz Hâfız (ASÜ., SK., File No: 82- 1/03).

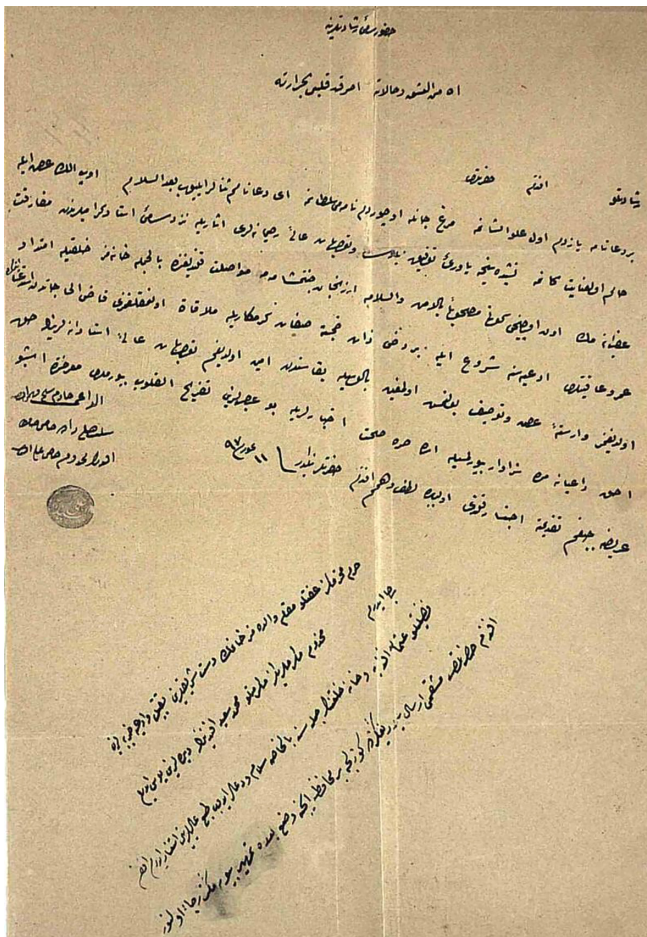


Image 6.
Erzincanlı Seyyid Ali Efendi’s Letter (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/40)



Image 7.
Şevki Efendi’s Hüseyin Hüsnî Seal (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82)

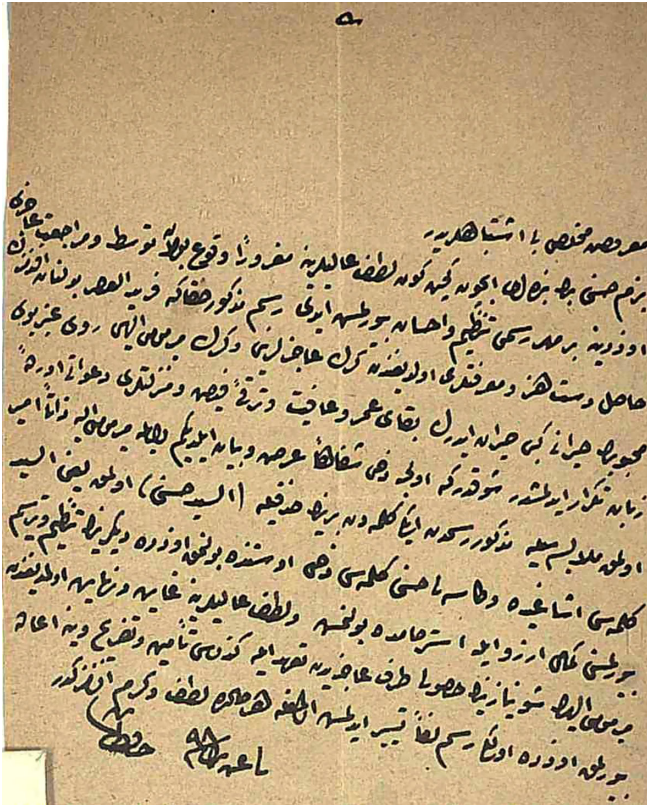


Image 8.
The Letter Sent to Mehmed Şevki Efendi by Hâfız Efendi (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/2)

In the heritage found among the Süheyl Ünver files, we identified two different seals belonging to Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi. The first one is located in the Süleymaniye Library. On the circular seal dated 1284/1867 with the thuluth inscription (See Image 8), there is the phrase “Seyyid Muhammed Şevki.” It is noteworthy that the plain *sin kashida* and *ma’kûs ye* are used as elements of harmony and balance. The seal was engraved by Azmî Efendi.

The second seal of Şevki Efendi in the Gülbün Mesara (A. Süheyl Ünver Bey’s daughter) Collection (ASÜ., GM., Notebook No: 171) and also engraved by Hakkak Azmî Efendi (See Image 9) is in an ovoid form. The seal dated 1285/1868 (one year after the previous seal) was properly engraved without disturbing the structure of the letters. The letter bodies, vowel points, and design are more beautiful than those of the first seal. The letter Ha is written as a cube and sits in the central position in the design. The word “sayyid” in the first seal was used in the second seal as “as-sayyid” with the lâ-m-i tariff, adding mobility and richness of letters to the design.

The seal of Hacı Mehmed Zeki Efendi of Shumen, who worked as a watchmaker in Mecca-i Mükerrreme (See Image 10), was also written by Şevki Efendi. The seal, which was designed in a circle with the thuluth inscription, was engraved by Hakkak Azmî Efendi in 1285/1868. The seal bears the inscription “as-Sayyid Muhammad Zeki.” He made the letter “ha” in the word “Muhammad” with cube and gave the design a lot of mobility by writing the letter “sîn” of the word “as-Sayyid” straight and with *kashida*. At the same time, the signature of Hakkak Azmî Efendi was also included in the seal.



Image 9.
Another seal of Mehmed Şevki Efendi dated 1284/1867 (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 386/16)

He wrote seals for many of his students and we understand from his letter that he wrote a thuluth seal in a circular form to Ahmed Fevzi Efendi (See Image 11), who later returned to Erzincan after practicing calligraphy with Mehmed Şevki Efendi in İstanbul, and it was engraved by Hakkak Mecdî Efendi in 1298/1881 (ASÜ., SK., File No: 82- 1/25).

The seal of Mahmud Aziz Efendi, who was the treasurer of the Treasury of Makkah-i Mükerrreme and the calligraphy student of Şevki Efendi (See Image 12), also belongs to Şevki Efendi (ASÜ., SK., File No: 82-1/36). Among the documents transferred from Şevki Efendi’s estate to the Süleymaniye Library, there are “Mahmud Aziz”



Image 10.
The Seal of Şevki Efendi dated 1285/1868 Was Engraved by Hakkak Azmî Efendi (Gülbün Mesara Collection, Notebook No: 171)



Image 11.
The Seal of Mehmed Zeki Efendi, Written by Şevki Efendi and Engraved By Azmî Efendi (Süleymaniye Library, File no: 82)

design drawings in pencil (Image 13) (ASÜ., SK., File No: 386/02). The seal dated 1296/1879 is very successful in terms of design and was engraved by Hakkak Mecdî Efendi.

Şevki Efendi, who was a magnificent figure, did not even throw away the tiny papers on which he made the design drawings of the seal he wrote for Mahmud Aziz Efendi. The second person whose design drawings were made in the foil is Ismail Sıdkî Efendi (ASÜ., SK., File No: 82-1/67), the treasurer of Medina-i Münevvere Treasury of Harem-i Sherif, and it is possible to see the stages of the evolution of the design in four attempts. The written form of this person's seal could not be determined.



Image 12.
The Seal Written by Şevki Efendi to Ahmed Fevzi (Hakkak Mecdî Efendi) (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/25)



Image 13.
The "Mahmud Aziz" Seal Written by Şevki Efendi in 1296/1879 (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/67)

Doodles and design drawings are of great importance in terms of showing the preparatory stages of a work. Identifying the imagination of the artist, the alternatives he freely tries is eye-opening for the artists who come after. It is important in terms of showing how successful Şevki Efendi, who is mostly known to be successful in thuluth-nesih writing, is also successful in celi thuluth writing design. In the lower right corner of the document, Süheyl Ünver wrote the note, "It is one of his own designs from the Hattat Şevki Efendi Collection" in rik'a calligraphy.

Another seal in the name of Sıdkî Effendi, the chief clerk of the Medina-i Münevvere Treasury Harem-i Sheriff, was written as "Seyyid Sıdkî" (See Image 14) and was engraved by Mecdî Effendi

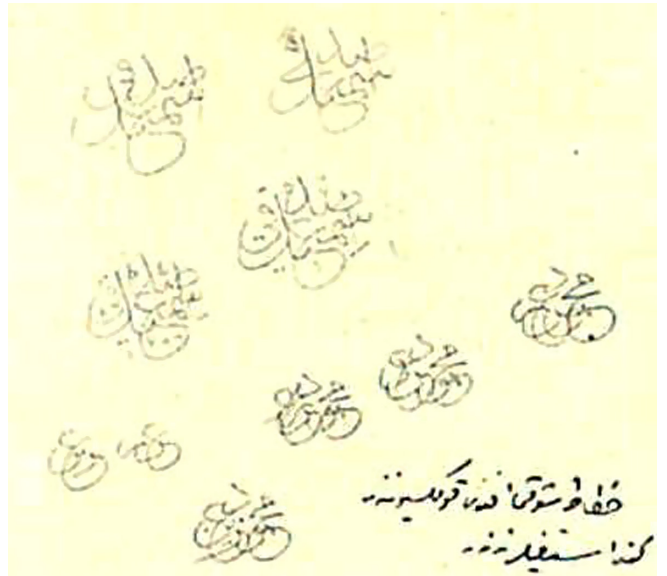


Image 14.
Şevki Efendi's Design Drawings for the Seal of Mahmud Aziz (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/67)



Image 15.
Şevki Efendi's "Seyyid Sıdkî" Seal (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/67)

(ASU., SK., File No: 82-1/67). Although it is obvious that the number 9 belongs to the 1290s, the next figure can be read. Harmony was created with the letters "dâl" in the design and a simple and beautiful seal was obtained with suhulet. Based on this information, it can be thought that the seal labeled "Seyyid Sıdkî" was written earlier.

The circular thuluth seal dated 1285/1868 (See Image 15), was written by Şevki Efendi to his sheikh Abdullatîf Efendi of Shumen. The seals found in this person's pre-1285 letters in the Shawki state are in ta'lik writing. The seal was engraved by Azmî Efendi.

Mehmed Şevki Efendi also wrote a seal to the famous Hattat Mehmed Mahbub Efendi of Konya, who had taken calligraphy lessons from him for a short time but did not lose contact with his master (Image 16). The seal on the letters found in the Mehmed



Figure 16.
The Seal Written by Şevki Efendi to Sheikh Abdullatîf Efendi of Shumen (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/67)



Image 17.
The Seal of Hattat Mehmed Mahbub Efendi of Konya (Süleymaniye Library, File No: 82-1/67)

Şevki Efendi estate is dated 1288/1871. The coordination and harmony of the letters ha with cube are quite remarkable. Since Mehmed Mahbub Efendi was also engaged in engraving, he probably engraved his own seal.

In our evaluations on the seals in the state of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi, in particular, a seal letter is generally considered to be a good example of both the design, the engraving, and the following of the final version of a calligraphy design.

Conclusion

Starting from the ancient Egyptian civilization, the seal has always been used in the east and west. The oldest known seal in the history of Islam is Hz. It belongs to the Prophet and has the inscription *Muhummedun Rasulullah* on it. In Ottoman society, seals were used as a sign of status by almost everyone, men and women who had a certain position and status in social life, especially the privy seals.

It is possible to see the aesthetic pleasure and elegance in the tiny seals both in the writing and in the selected phrases. Seals written in rik'a, thuluth, talik, dîvânî celif dîvânî, or other scripts are in the quality of a painting. At the same time, the grace of writing fascinates people. The coherent design of three, five, or sometimes more words in a small space reveals the level of mastery of the craftsmen. Metals, stones, or rings, on which seals are engraved, are also the product of a literary pleasure. It is also important to determine the profession and occupation of the owner from the words, verses, and couplets included in the seals.

Most of the documents sent to and from Şevki Efendi in the works in the estate of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi and the Archives of Gülbün Mesara are sealed. Şevki Efendi prepared seal molds for many people and his students, especially sultans and princes, upon request. Although most of her five identified students are calligraphers, they used the seal prepared by their teacher, which is very important in terms of seeing the master's skill in this

regard. When the seals of different people are brought together, the similarities in the design of the same words are clearly visible.

Şevki Efendi, who taught writing to Sultan Mehmed Reşad in his principality, wrote a seal to the prince and Hakkak Azmî Efendi engraved it.

Perhaps one of the most striking points in the seal writings of Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi is that we have the course of writing the seals to be written through letters. For instance, in a seal he wrote to Hüseyin Hüsnî Efendi beforehand, he stated that a new design should be made by adding the word “as-Sayyid” later.

In the heritage found among the Süheyl Ünver files, we identified two different seals belonging to Hattat Mehmed Şevki Efendi. The first one is located in the Süleymaniye Library. The circular seal dated 1284/1867 with the thuluth inscription bears the phrase *Seyyid Muhammed Şevki*. The second seal of Şevki Efendi, which is in the Gülbün Mesara Collection and engraved by Hakkak Azmî Efendi, is in an ovoid form. The seal dated 1285/1868 (one year after the previous seal) was properly engraved without disturbing the structure of the letters. The letter bodies, vowel points, and design are more beautiful than the first seal. The letter Ha is written as a cube and sits in the central position in the design. The word “sayyid” in the first seal was used in the second seal as “as-sayyid” with the lâm-i tariff, adding mobility and richness of letters to the design.

The document in which we see the drawings of the seal with the design in the name of Mahmud Azîz is of great importance in terms of showing the preparation stages of a work.

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