

KAZIMKARABEKİR ULU MOSQUE MIHRAB TILES*

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ABSTRACT

Karamanoğulları Principality, which lived in Anatolian lands, produced tile works that will set an example for the history of Turkish tile art. They demonstrated that they practiced and valued this art form by using tiles to decorate the architectural works in the areas where they lived. We can gain a better understanding of the principality's tile art and the techniques employed by examining the tile works applied to the architectural structures of the era. Among the principality's architectural works, the Kazımkarabekir Grand Mosque's tiles are a significant representation of the era's traits. The research focused on the tiles of the Kazımkarabekir Grand Mosque, particularly the hexagonal tiles in the mihrab border section. These tiles have drawn attention because they do not match the mihrab's tiles in terms of consistency. They were created using various techniques, such as underglaze and luster, and are not present in contemporary architectural designs. The study examines if these tiles are original to the building considering their patterns, mounting method, and hexagon shape, which are different from the mosaic tiles forming the mihrab. Furthermore, an analysis was conducted on the Kazımkarabekir Grand Mosque's architectural design, the hexagonal tile shape and patterns on their surfaces, the symbolic significance of the patterns, and the methods employed. To gain a deeper understanding of hexagonal tiles, comparable tiles manufactured in various eras were found, compared, and their visuals analyzed.

Keywords: Karamanoğlu, Architecture, Art, Tile, Hexagon.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Anatolian Turkish principalities, which were formed with the disintegration of the Seljuk state, consist of small states called 'Beylik' [1]. Karamanoğlu principality, which established sovereignty in Anatolia, is one of the Turkmen principalities that emerged in this way [2]. Karamanoğulları Principality was settled in 1228 by Alaeddin Keykubad in Ermenek and the surrounding Kamsı region [3]. Karamanoğulları Principality continued its struggle from the 13th century until the 15th century [4]. It is seen that the architectural works they built in the regions where the principality lived were decorated with tiles. It is seen that Kazımkarabekir (Gaferyat) Great Mosque, one of the architectural structures of Karamanoğulları Principality, is also decorated with tiles.

Kazımkarabekir (Gaferyat) Great Mosque is located in Kazımkarabekir district of Karaman province, Turkey (Figure 1). It has a transverse rectangular plan in the north-south direction, with four free supports in the

centre and three pointed arches resting on the walls on the sides, four pitches parallel to the mihrab, and a flat drop-covered roof. The last congregation carried by seven wooden columns in the north is covered with a wooden roof (Figure 2). The architectural structure is made of the stone known as 'say' of the town [5].



Figure 1. Kazımkarabekir (Gaferyat) Grand Mosque general view (Fotoğraf, Yazar).



Figure 2. Plan of Kazımkarabekir (Gaferyat) Great Mosque [6].

When we look at the mihrab tiles of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, it is seen that the mosaic technique is mostly applied. The hexagonal shaped tiles used in the mihrab border are in underglaze blue and white, underglaze and luster technique and differ from the mosaic technique tiles forming the general mihrab in terms of form, technique and pattern (Figure 3.4).

Tile is a perfect material for covering wall surfaces and even buildings. Hexagonal shaped tiles can be used as the main material for wall decoration [7]. When we look at this building, we have the impression that hexagonal shaped tiles were not used to cover the mihrab surface, but to fill the missing or lost tiles on the mihrab. For this reason, it can

be thought that the hexagonal shaped tiles were installed afterwards.

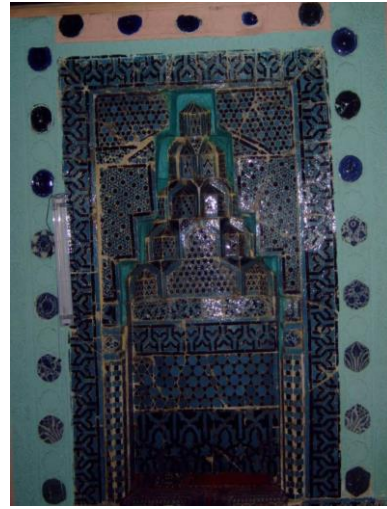


Figure 3. Mihrab view of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque [8].

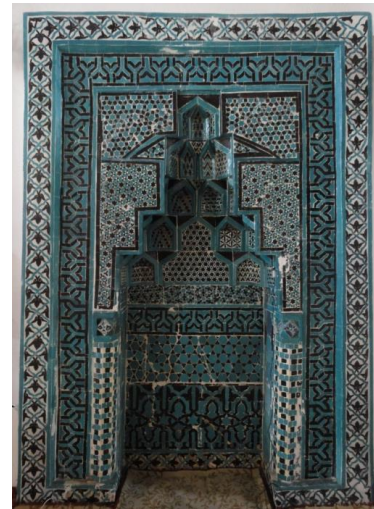


Figure 4. Mihrab view of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque (Fotoğraf, Yazar).

The hexagonal shaped tiles in the outer border of the mihrab of the Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque were placed in plaster like the other tiles. Some of these tiles are similar to

the 15th century Iznik blue and white tiles with floral patterns [9].

2. TILES WITH HERBAL MOTIFS

Blue and white are porcelain-like tiles made of white, hard paste. The motifs used in this group of tiles in underglaze technique are applied in blue tones on a white background or in white tones on a blue background. The transparent colourless figureglaze is thin, bright and smooth [10].

Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque hexagonal shaped blue and white underglaze tiles (Figure 5-12) are partially damaged artefacts. The photographs below show the floral motifs applied on the tiles. The tiles are decorated with hatai, rosebuds, leaves and various plants and flowers.



Figure 5.6. Konya Sahip Ata Museum, Kazımkarabekir Great Mosque's underglaze blue and white tiles (Fotoğraf, Yazar).

Figure 5: The surface of the hexagonal shaped tile is decorated with blue coloured motifs on a white background. A large flower motif reminiscent of the seventeen-slice claw motif is applied in the centre. A branch decorated with leaves encircling the edges of the motif in a circle is applied. In order to delimit this pattern, a frame is formed with lines on the edges.

Figure 6: The hexagonal shaped tile work is decorated with geometric forms. Firstly, a hexagonal form was drawn inside the six-pointed star. When we examine from the outside to the inside, the inside of the star arms are left plain without pattern, while the outer edges are decorated with lines and circular lines. The hexagonal form in the centre is filled with a sixteen-sliced flower motif surrounded by branches and lea



Figure 7.8. Konya Sahip Ata Museum, Kazımkarabekir Great Mosque's underglaze blue and white tiles (Fotoğraf, Yazar).

Figure 7: The edges of the hexagonal tile are broken. The tile with floral motifs is decorated with curved spirals. The surface of the tile is covered with the use of large and small sized floral motifs reminiscent of the rosebud motif and the use of leaf motifs.

Figure 8: The surface of the hexagonal tile is decorated with three plants resembling claw motifs reminiscent of daisy flowers. Two of the three flowers have eighteen and one has sixteen slices and are drawn in similar sizes. The composition is completed by applying sliced leaves on the edges of the flowers

Figure 9: Like the tiles in Figure 10 and 11, this work is also decorated with plant motifs placed vertically. The applied plant motifs are symmetrical in the centre and it is understood that there are seven plants in total.

Figure 10: When we look at the pattern applied to the hexagonal tile whose edges are framed with lines, it is understood that seven plant branches are applied vertically. Larger plants were used in the centre and smaller plants were used on the edges, and it is understood that the motifs used were placed symmetrically in the middle.



Figure 9.10. Underglaze blue and white tiles of the Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, Konya Sahip Ata Museum (Photograph, Author).



Figure 11.12. Underglaze blue and white tiles of the Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, Konya Sahip Ata Museum (Photograph, Author).

Figure 11: The tile, the surface of which is decorated with vertical placement of plant motifs, was made with underglaze blue and white technique. In the centre is an ornament reminiscent of a pomegranate tree and similar plant motifs are applied on both sides. Looking at the exit of the plant on the left from the bottom, it is seen that it is divided into three separate branches from a single branch.

Figure 12: The hexagonal tile is decorated with floral motifs formed by the use of hatayi and goncegul motifs. At the bottom there is a hatayi motif larger than the other motifs and hatayi and goncegul motifs emerging from its branches. The branches are decorated with leaf motifs and the space-filling balance is distributed proportionally.

The dice-shaped mihrab column capitals of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque are decorated with underglaze blue and white technique like the hexagonal shaped tiles. As ornamentation, compositions with floral motifs were also applied here (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Dice-shaped mihrab column capitals of the Great Mosque (Photograph, Author).

When we look at the mihrab tiles of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, we see examples similar in form and motif to the

architectural tiles of the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. When we look at the use of hexagonal shaped tiles in Islamic architecture, it is understood that they are mostly applied by placing them continuously to cover the wall surface. Edirne Muradiye Mosque hexagonal shaped tiles were also used in this way (Figure 14).

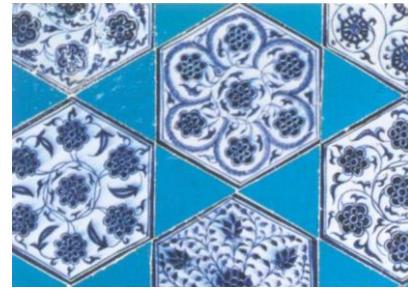


Figure 14. Edirne Muradiye Mosque tiles [11].

3. FIGURED TILES

Among the hexagonal tiles on the mihrab border of the Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, there are some that are similar to the Konya palace tiles.



Figure 15. Konya Sahip Ata Museum, Ulu Mosque, tile with luster technique (Photograph, Author).

Figure 15: This tile, which is located at the lower part of the mihrab, depicts a gazelle decorated with lüster technique on a cobalt ground [12].

Lüster technique is a work with copper and silver oxide applied on baked glaze, which leaves a shimmering effect [13]. The figure is surrounded by floral motifs with emphasis on the balance of space and fullness. Since the gazelle figure is painted in its entirety, it can be easily recognised by the floral motif decorations on its edges (Figure 15). The head of the figure is made like a bird's beak, with two long horns extending towards the back. Half of its body is depicted as a lion and half as a deer, and its tail resembles a peacock [14]. The deer figure is depicted running as in nature, with its front legs spread forward and its back legs spread backwards.

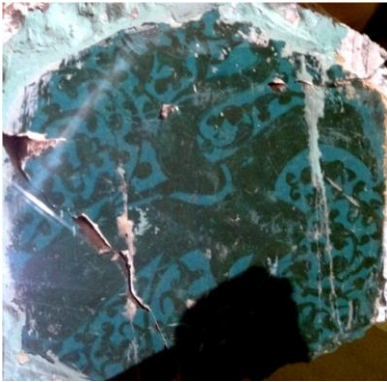


Figure 16. Konya Sahip Ata Museum, ulu mosque, tile with underglaze technique (Photograph, Author).



Figure 17. Konya Karatay Müzesi, ulu mosque, lüster teknikli çini (Fotoğraf, Yazar).

Figure 16: The hexagonal tile plate in the lower left corner of the mihrab. The figure here resembles the ongun bird, the symbol of the Karamanids (Figure 16). On the hexagonal tile, a bird motif was applied in black under a turquoise glaze [15]. The beak of the puffy-chested figure has the characteristics of birds of prey. Its wing and long tail inspired by the Rumi motif can be seen.

Figure 17: Among the hexagonal shaped luster and underglaze tiles seen to have surrounded the outer border of the mihrab, the ones currently exhibited in the Konya Sahip Ata Museum (Figure 15.16) and a hexagonal shaped tile preserved in the Konya Karatay Museum warehouse remain (Figure 17). In the inventory book of the museum, the tile is described with the following words: 'The luster technique tile with cream-coloured paste and turquoise glaze is covered with animal figures and floral decorations around it'. The tile under the minbar of the mosque is decorated with a swan figure [16]. The hexagonal tiles on the mihrab border of the Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque have

similar motifs and techniques, which are documented below with photographs (Figure 18.19).

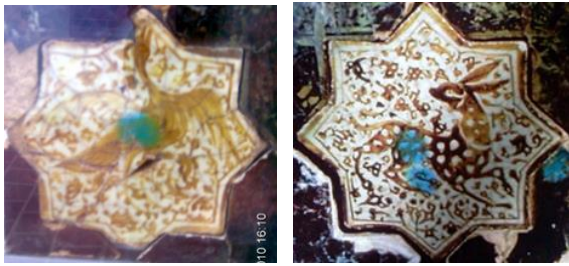


Figure 18.19. Kubad Abad Palace tiles exhibited in Karatay Museum (Photograph, Author).

When we look at the formation, symbol and the meaning of the number six of the hexagonal form used in the border tiles of Kazım Karabekir Ulu Mosque, the following definitions are given in different sources;

The division of the circle leads to some basic shapes: the hexagon is one of them. El-Said (1993) argued that Islamic patterns are based on the repetition of hexagonal shapes. The hexagon is formed by joining the centres of five circles. It represents heaven [17].

The geometric expression of two beings and the connection between them is the hexagon close to the circle, the sky symbol is one of the basic geometric figures derived from the circle. Six is the number of days the world was created [18].

In Christianity, the hexagon symbolises death. In Islam, it symbolises the six positions of heaven or matter (up, down, front, back, right, left) and the six directions of movement (up, down, forward, backward, left, right) [19].

The number six symbolises balance and harmony and is especially important for Jews

and Christians. Six is identified with the Seal of Solomon, also known as the six-pointed Magen David (Star of David), consisting of two intertwined equilateral triangles. The creation of the world in six days is also associated with the symbol of six. According to Islamic, Christian and Jewish beliefs, God created the world in six days. Therefore, for them, six is the number of the objective world and the universe is founded on the principle of six [20].

Six is the fundamental number of the Turkish-Islamic belief system. The most important symbol of Judaism is the six-pointed star. The fact that there is no space between the hexagon when it is brought side by side increases its use in various ornaments by obtaining symmetrical shapes [21].

Six is the number of perfection and creation. It symbolises divine power, majesty, mercy, wisdom, love and justice [22].

4. CONCLUSION

The surviving examples of the outer border tiles of the mihrab of the Kazım Karabekir Ulu Mosque in the Kazım Karabekir district of Karaman province are preserved in the Konya Sahip Ata Museum and the Konya Karatay Museum warehouse. These hexagonal shaped tiles are in underglaze blue and white, underglaze and luster technique and are decorated with floral and animal motifs. The fact that we see similar tile applications in the Seljuk and Ottoman periods shows us the interaction of the principalities that lived in the same geographies in tile art.

What makes these hexagonal tiles interesting is their differences in form and technique

with the mosaic tiles of the mihrab. When we look at the use of hexagonal tiles with underglaze blue and white technique in other architectures, we see that they are generally applied to the wall surface as a whole, not at intervals, such as the placement of hexagonal tiles in Edirne Muradiye Mosque.

The hexagonal tiles in the border of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque are similar to the Seljuk and Ottoman period tiles.

When we look at the dice-shaped mihrab column capitals of the mosque, it is understood that single colour turquoise, underglaze blue white and underglaze techniques were applied. Each technique applied is different and the decorations on their surfaces are different. One of them has a bird figure, while the other has ornaments made with floral motifs. It is understood that the applied motifs do not contain a complete composition. In short, it can be easily understood from the incomplete compositional patterns on the surfaces that different tile pieces were cut or broken tile pieces were mounted here. It should be considered whether the hexagonal shaped tiles in the border of Kazımkarabekir Ulu Mosque, which are similar to the tiles in the mihrab column capitals, were applied to the mihrab later.

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