

The tombstone of Almoravid Princess Badr bint Prince Abi Al-Hassan Ali Al-Sanhaji (496 A.H / 1103A.D). Artistic archaeological study

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*** Objectives of The Study:**

- Study the inscriptions executed on the tombstone in terms of form and content.
- Study the decorative design of the tombstone in the form of the apse, and its effect on the implementation of inscriptions.
- Study of architectural, geometrical and floral motifs executed on the tombstone.
- An attempt to trace the stages of the appearance of the decorative design of the evidence in the form of the apse in Andalusia, and the extent of the influence of this decorative design on the tombstones of the Almería city in particular.

*** Introduction:**

Andalusians were interested in placing tombstones on their graves from an early period up to before the 3rd century A.H. / 9th century A.D... According to what we got from tombstones dated back to Andalusia which was characterized in the Islamic West region with being rich and wealthy, so the museums of Spain and Portugal are rich in evidences of that, and new discoveries are added daily of this kind. E. Levi Provencal studied the evidences available in Andalusia, and based on the shape and decoration, he divided them into four classes, and this division was taken by L. Torres Balbas.

Provencal mentioned that the oldest two arcade paintings were found in Cordoba, one of which belonged to Al Moravid Princess who died in 496 A.H / 1103A.D - the tombstone under study - and the other one, which was belonged to a master of the Almoravid masters who died in 517 A.H / 1123 A.D, and there is also in the Museum of Cordoba a painting of the tomb of Sheikh Muhaddi who died in the year 587 A.H / 1191 A.D, in which the writing in Kufic calligraphy appears in the interior of the two arches formed in the form of a sharp horseshoe arch.

The study is investigating a tombstone originating from the city of Cordoba, and is currently preserved in the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, dated back to the mid-spring of the other year 496 A.H / January 26, 1103 A.D., which is a rectangular piece of marble, and the inscriptions are executed on it by prominent relief, and the design of the tombstone takes the form of the apse forming two cylindrical columns in Corinthian style.

The study also investigates the written inscriptions executed on the tombstone in terms of form and content, and studying the decorative design of the tombstone in the form of apse, and its effect on the implementation of written inscriptions, as well as a study of architectural, geometrical and floral motifs executed on the tombstone, with an attempt to track the stages of the appearance of the decorative design of the evidence on the apse body of the mihrab in Andalusia, and the extent of the influence of this decorative design on the tombs of Almería in particular.

• **General written features of the witness's writing:**

- The designer or the engraver placed the tombstone on a decorative composition in the form of the apse, surrounded by three decorative frames, and took advantage of the mihrab apse cavity and wrote inside the main lines of the inscription of the tombstone, so the written lines implemented in the main area of the tombstone and located inside the apse design, apron were affected by the spaces assigned to them, so note that the written lines executed inside the shape of the contract that is in the form of a horseshoe varies in width according to the space available to it from the rest of the engraving lines, which are followed in order and enclosed between the two columns holding the contract.

-The designer combined a variety of different motifs, including: written and architectural and geometrical motifs, in addition to plant motifs.

- The calligrapher adhered to an engineering plan for his distribution of the inscription lines, whether in the central area, or in the three frames surrounding the design of the mihrab apse, so he wrote on regular and parallel lines, which made the writings appear in a regular and quality picture.

- The calligrapher drew the word "God" in a decorative way and wrote the letters of the word accurately, as the letters looked very thin and semi-adjacent, in the first, second and fifth lines of the inscription.

- The type of calligrapher in the images of single and compound letters, which made the single letter appear in more than one image, which gave the inscription more beauty and decoration.

- The beginnings and ends of the letters are accompanied by decorative appendages in the form of the division or the police, sometimes they are single, and sometimes they are double.

The calligrapher added some decorative appendages, such as the letter of the auspicious or ascending alif at the end of many of the words of the inscription, usually connected to the end of the last letter.

-Some ancient Nabataean influences are noticed in some of the inscription words.

-The calligrapher divided some words at the end of some lines into two parts, and divided the word into two parts from the effect of the ancient Nabataean writings. It is also possible that it was due to the narrow area of the written lines, and specifically at the end of the line, the calligrapher was unable to write the whole word, which makes him sometimes have to write it on two lines, part of it at the end of a line and the rest of the word at the beginning of the next line, and this is a kind of non-commitment to having a pre-written plan at the beginning of the writing, which results in dividing some words into two parts.

- The calligrapher used the composition in some words of the inscription in the sense of writing a word or part of it on top of another word, due to two reasons: the first is the decorative purpose, and the second is the limited space.

* **Architectural motifs and decorative motifs associated with the formation of the mihrab:**

- The shape of the mihrab:

The artist engraved on Islamic gravestones the shape of the mihrab with his knots and columns, and he began to decorate the cushions of the contracts with beautiful decorations, and he mastered decorating the two pillars on which the mihrab contract.

- Horse shoe arch.
- Columns.
- Corinthian column.
- • Geometric motifs
- Tires
- • Decoration of memes peat
- • floral motifs:
- • Multiple petal flower
- Palmtree and halves

- • **The content of the headstone - the subject of the study**

The phrases on the Andalusian Islamic tombstones are considered well-known phrases consisting of Quranic verses, propaganda and testimony phrases, as well as mentioning the name of the deceased, his lineage and his position indicating a great difference in the social class, in addition to the date of death, date of birth, or Sometimes the age of the tombstone.

Results:

- The study confirmed that the design of the mihrab apse appeared on the Andalusian tombs since the era of the kings of the sects on a gravestone named Jaber bin Muhammad al-Khashab known as the (son) of the Qalal, and is currently preserved in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, and dated back to 435 AH / 1044 AD, and tombstone of another tomb of marble currently preserved At the Provincial Museum of Augustino Biboli in Palermo, Italy, dated back to 474 AH / 1081-1082 CE and was not mentioned by Levi Provencal, the phenomenon of the design of the tombstone in the form of a mihrab apse in Andalusia was dated back to the first half of the AH 5th / AD 11th century.
- The designer or the engraver placed the tombstone with a decorative composition in the form of the apse, surrounded by three decorative frames, and took advantage of the cavity of the apse, and wrote inside the main lines of the inscription of the witness, so the written lines executed in the main area of the witness, located inside the design of the apse, are affected by the spaces assigned to them, noting that the written lines implemented within the shape of the horseshoe shaped necklace, it varies in the width according to the space available to it from the rest of the engraving lines, which are followed by the arrangement and confined between the two columns holding the contract, and this design continued and spread in Andalusia and its cities and was considered a distinctive design for the graves of Almeria city.
- The calligrapher wrote the words of the basmalah, the words of the tombstone's owner name, and some of the words of history in a large size, drawing attention from the rest of the words of the inscription, and this is a kind of preserving the visual direction of the inscriptions.
- The discussion marked his signature in the form: "Engraving the clinic" and placing it in the center of the visual direction in about the middle of the tombstone.
- The type of calligrapher in the images of single and compound letters, which made the single letter appear in more than one image, which gave the inscription more beauty and decoration.

- It is noticed that there are some ancient Nabataean influences in drawing some of the inscription words.
- The study showed that the Andalusian tombs which its design appeared in the form of the apse, most of them came from the cemeteries of Almeria, and the oldest model dating back to the year 516 AH / 1122 AD, and Torbas believes that it is possible that the design of the apse contained on the Islamic tombstones was coming from the east of the sea, the Mediterranean white and spread in the city of Almeria during the reign of the Almoravids, and from this city spread to the rest of Andalusia.
- The study showed that the owner of the tombstone is an African woman from Sanjaya who was visiting the city of Tlemcen, and she attributed herself to her original homeland in the form: Sanhajy.
- The study proved that the name on the witness is: "Ali bin Tabsha Al-Sunhaji," which was confirmed by what was mentioned in "Nozom Al-Joman" by Ibn Al-Qattan, and what is already found in the writings of the grave tombstone itself.

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