

Ceramic Tiles in the Mihrab of Al-Kashef Mosque in Assiut 1226 AH / 1811 AD (A Comparative Artistic Archaeological Study)

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Abstract:

This Research aims to study the Group of Tiles that cover the Mihrab of the Mosque of Prince Muhammad Kashif Bekzadeh in Assiut, those Tiles that embodied a Group of various Motifs that expressed the periods and stages of the development of Ottoman Ceramics in Egypt and Turkey and represented them well. Accordingly, Analytical Studies and Comparative Technical Studies came in search as an attempt to date these tiles based on the Decorations contained on them to determine the places and date of their manufacture, especially since the Decorations of those Tiles were not studied or dealt with before, so I chose to divide the research into two main parts: The first is concerned with the descriptive study of Levels of The Mihrab Tiles and the artist's success in designing and arranging them with the Mihrab Area. The Second is the Analytical Study, which is concerned with analyzing the incoming Decorations and their Types, and deducing the Aesthetic Values contained in the Ceramic Tiles covering the Mihrab.

Key Words:

Ceramic Tiles - Tulip Flower - Saz Flower - Carnation Flower - Iznik Ceramics - Kutahya Ceramics.

Introduction:

Al-Kashef Mosque is located in Al-Wakail neighborhood, west of the city of Assiut, and the records of the facts of the Sharia Court of Assiut are kept under the pretext of building the mosque, and they contain the description of the mosque and its annexes. / 1811 m (Plate 1), the mosque is a rectangular area of 10.15 x 7.95 m in the middle of it are two circular marble columns that divide the mosque into three equal naves parallel to the qibla wall (Plate 2), and the mihrab of the mosque is a semi-circular apse of width 1, 15 m in depth and 0.85 m in depth, this apse is crowned by a cap knotted with a semi-circular knot resting on two cylindrical columns of marble. Within the written calligraphy; there is the previous text which is followed by a Qur'anic text (Plate 3), as we will see later when studying the descriptive tiles covering the mihrab.

The Ottomans excelled in producing wonderful forms of ceramic tiles and used them with an elaborate talent to decorate the walls of their buildings, and they came out in a distinctive aesthetic image. In the cities of Alexandria and Rashid, the niches of some mosques also appeared in the cities of Upper Egypt, such as Minya, Gerga and Assiut.

The ceramic tiles are almost entirely dated, and the centers of their manufacture are known, because we see them covering palaces, mosques, royal tombs and other buildings, and since most of these buildings remain until now, and they are dated of course, the dating of the tiles

that cover these buildings has become a matter in which there is no difference. It is disputed, and although this fact applies to the tiles that exist in many of the dated buildings, many of the ceramic tiles were moved from their original places to other places. – 12 AH / 17-18 AD, which made the date of the manufacture of some tiles is unspecified or uncertain, and the phenomenon of transferring ceramic tiles from old buildings to modern ones, usually resorted to by the builders or those in charge of constructing huge buildings that require cladding and decoration of their walls, large numbers of tiles and the inability of ceramic factories to meet their requirements.

Despite the artistic prosperity witnessed by the Ottoman capital and its surrounding cities in Anatolia, the states' fortunes in arts were less prosperous, given the economic weakness of most of them and neglect of industries and arts after their transformation from independent states to dependent states, and this matter can apply to Egypt, in which the great difference appears between the arts of the Mameluke state and the arts of the Ottoman era, as it lost many of its wealth, and many of its makers and artists migrated to the Ottoman capital, which negatively affected the local arts, even if it did not eliminate them. Ibn Iyas mentioned that Sultan Selim the first deported skilled craftsmen and artists to Astana, where a group of masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, archers, tilers, turners, engineers and stone-workers about fifty crafts went to Istanbul.

Also, with the transfer of the capital from Edirne to Istanbul in 856 AH / 1453 AD, it was obvious that craftsmen and potters moved to the city of Iznik, where kilns were built to manufacture ceramics to meet the needs of the royal palaces, and witnessed the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent in the year 926-973 AH / 1520-1566 AD. We can distinguish between three decorative styles and patterns that were common in that era of the history of Islamic art, which we extracted from drawings found on ceramics and tiles. I was inspired by the enchanting forest, and was influenced by the drawings of botanical stripes by adding long saz leaves and adding beautiful flowers, in order to create undulating and intertwining shapes. Carrying modified plant forms and the other transmitting flowers and leaves in their natural forms, two methods that both preserved the characteristics of the other without compromising the importance of one of them, and the city of Iznik preserved its importance as a center for the manufacture of pottery until its decline in the 17th century AD.

The Ottoman art was also influenced by many intellectual and ideological influences, represented in some ancient beliefs, as well as in the Sufi paths... The influence of some ancient beliefs that the Turks knew before their Islam appeared in some symbolic elements such as: clouds, lightning, and some other elements that lost their symbolism, but it did not lose its shape and the Turks' love for it, and just as the Sufi orders contributed to the establishment of the Ottoman Empire, it also contributed to the formation of Ottoman thought and art for a long time in terms of its contact with craftsmen, which led to the emergence of an influence of Sufi ideas on various arts, in addition to the extension of the time period that the Ottoman Empire lived through it (more than six centuries), in addition to the influences that came to Ottoman art as a result of the conquests, as well as the continuous patronage of the Turkish sultans for art and artists.

Results:

- 1 - The research conducted a comparative technical study of the ceramic coverings of the mihrab of Al-Kashef Mosque in Assiut, which dates back to the early 13th century AH / 19 AD, that was, the era of Muhammad Ali Pasha, and it is a new study for these tiles.
- 2 - The study was able to date the cascading ceramic tiles of the mosque's mihrab based on the decorations executed on them, the extent of their mastery and colors, and even the location of their manufacture according to the development of the Turkish tiles during the Ottoman era.
- 3 - The study made some comparisons with similar tiles found in mosques in Cairo and in Istanbul, other than those of Upper Egypt, as well as with some tiles kept in some international museums.
- 4 - The study confirmed the continuation of the artistic traditions of ceramic tiles in the 18th century AD through the 19th century AD in terms of the implementation of modified plant motifs, faded colors and others, affected by the current economic situation at that time.
- 5- The study also acknowledged that the reuse of ceramic tiles brought from previous buildings was not the result of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire, but rather found that characteristic in the Turkish cities themselves, as we saw before.
- 6 - The study also indicated that the similarity of the decorations between some mihrab tiles - which may be characterized by poor manufacture and local manufacture - and the decorations of the Turkish tiles, their decorations came as imitation of the Turkish ceramics in Iznik, Kutahya and Istanbul.
- 7- The study also elicited the aesthetic values that the artist tried to use - to some extent - when designing and decorating the mihrab tiles from symmetry, and balance.

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