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ÇUKUR VILLAGE MOSQUE WITH ITS ARCHITECTURAL PROPERTIES AND HAND DRAWN ORNAMENTS*

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Abstract

Çukur is a village settlement 16 kilometres away from the city center and is officially bound to the district of Ovacık in the West Black Sea Region. The mosque, which has the same name with the village, is one of the 18-20. century mosques with a "villageroom" and registered. This facility which is located within the mosque and which has all the elements of a traditional Turkish room can be found in various places in Karabük. The structure which was built with stone and masonry techniques has hand-drawn decorations on the walls of unpartitioned walls of "harim section" and women's gathering-place. Various colors and motives were used in geometrical, herbal and inscribed compositions.

This structure, which has never been focused on any scientific study, will be made public by means of the present study. The purpose of the monographic featured study is to introduce the structure with architectural and decorative features to scientific community, to draw attention to the protection and the sustainability of historical and cultural heritage.

Keywords: Karabük, Cultural Heritage, Architecture, Late Ottoman Mosques, Hand-drawn Painting.

1. Introduction

Çukur village is in Ovacık which is one of the 6 districts of Karabuk province including the central district. The district is 48 kilometres away to the province centre and Cukur village is 12 kilometres away to the district. The present geographical area in which Karabuk province is located was referred as Paphlagonia in the first age, separated by Filyos Stream in the west from Bithynia and by Kızılırmak in the east from Pontus (Umar 2005:2).

Paphlagonians, who are still unknown when and where they came to the area from, ruled there between 1100 - 700 B.C. and named the area as Paphlagonia. However, it is known that Romans ruled over the area in 64 B.C. and after the secession of the Roman Empire, Byzantines reigned until 1000 A.D. (Gökoğlu 1952:12-13, Yazıcıoğlu 1982:9). Today, along with Karabük, there are Bartın, Kastamonu, Çankırı, Sinop provinces and a part of Çorum province which is in the western part of Kızılırmak is located in this aforementioned area.

Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate was founded in 1075 after the conquest of İznik by Suleiman Shah and Kastamonu and some of the surrounding premises which were affiliated to Karabuk are noted as important military and settlement area in the Seljukian history. Besides, as the area was contiguous to Byzantine and Black Sea and near to the Central Anatolia in the south, it made its military - strategic location more important (Turan 1988:1).

After the foundation of Seljuk State, the Turkish nomad tribes who were settled in Anatolia headed to the west, they seized Kastamonu, Çankırı, Ankara, Eskişehir, Kütahya, Denizli and achieved domination in the Kastamonu, Safranbolu and Gerede zone. This progress was broken after the death of Suleiman Shah. In 1085, Emir Karatekin, a frontiersman who had been allied to Suleiman Shah, ruled over the area including Sinop, Kastamonu, Çankırı and Safranbolu (Yazıcıoğlu 1982:11).

Byzantine Emperor Yuannis organized an expedition to the area in 1126 - 1127 and took the charge of the area from Turks. After that date, the area continuously changed hands between Turks and Byzantines (Turan 1988:3).

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Çobanoğulları sovereignty started in the area between the years 1213 – 1280 with the assignment of Emir Hüsameddin Çoban as the right frontiersman of Seljuk State after he seized Kastamonu over Byzantines in 1213 (Yazıcıoğlu 1982:17).

In 1354, when the Ottomans came as near as Gerede and Ankara, Safranbolu and surrounding premises were under the government of Candaroğulları. After the struggle between Ottomans and Candaroğulları and with the help of the support of the local community on their side, Ottomans dominated the area (Yazıcıoğlu 1982:23).

Çukur Village Mosque is recorded in Karabuk province, Ovacık district, central neighbourhood, 125th block and 195th layout. The structure is placed on a flat terrain in the centre of the village. It was registered as a cultural heritage which is required to be preserved and protected according the adjudication no. 8442 dated 07.03.2003 of Ankara Regional Directorate for Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets¹ (Picture 1).

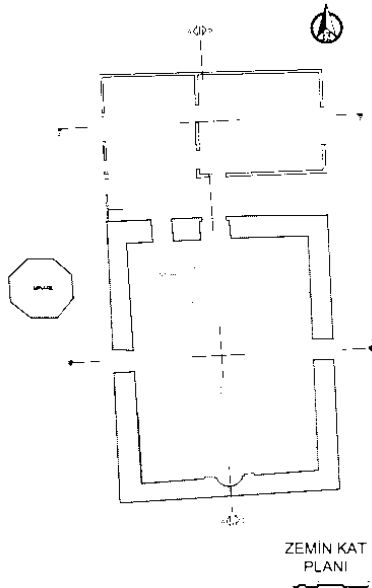


Pic.1. Overall view of Çukur Village Mosque

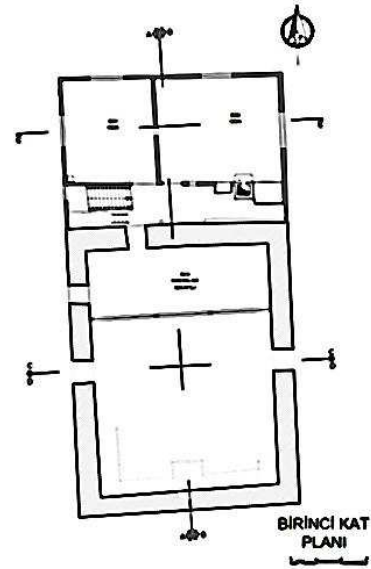
2. Material, Technique and Architectural Properties

The mosque consists of two main sections, one of them is the main prayer section named as “harim (sanctuary)” and the other is an additional section (appendix) which was built subsequently and coterminously to the building in the north side (Drawing 1, 2). The walls of the sanctuary are sheared in the corners, boast and rubble stone in the main masonry walls and mortared. Underneath the coating, it can be seen especially in the peeled off bare parts which are close to the base that bonding timbers were used in the wall arrangement. Coatings in the south part of the mosque were peeled off more than the rest of the building and there are outward openings in the west wall (Picture 2). These openings can be seen distinctively in the inner side of the building.

¹ Obtained from the records in Directorate Regional of Karabük Committee for Protection of Cultural Assets.



Drawing 1. Plan of Downstairs
(Drawn by Ş. Kaya)



Drawing 2. Plan of Upstairs
(Drawn by Ş. Kaya)



Pic. 2. South Aspect

The additional section (appendix) is a two storey construction which shows poor workmanship with its framework with bricks filled with mud without a coating. Even though the construction date of this additional section is not known, the building was registered as it is. The top of the whole building is covered with a hipped roof, of which the construction is free standing timber. Covering material of the roof is Turkish and Marseilles tile (Picture 3).



Pic. 3. Roof View

Just in the northwest of the building, there is a concrete minaret with two balconies, the height of which is approximately 25 meters. There is no direct connection between the building and the minaret (Picture 4). It can be understood from the traces on the building and the old pictures that the authentic minaret of the mosque was made of wood and was located adjacent to the main structure in the northwest corner and the stairs up to the minaret starts inside the building (Picture 5). According to the oral notices, the present minaret was built separately 15 years ago in the west of the building.



Pic. 4. Present Concrete Minaret



Pic.5. Original Wooden Minaret

While the entrance of the building was in the north side in the authentic single spaced building, the entrance today is in the west side of the additional section (appendix) of which extent is 8.75x5.95 meters. In the east of the entrance, there is a room of which the floor and the ceiling was made of wood and has a window on the east side. The wooden stairs to the second floor are in the south of the entrance (Picture 6). In this floor, the room placed in the east extending 4.82x4.20 meters has a wooden floor and ceiling. There is a furnace in the west side. Same as the downstairs room, this room also has a window on the east side. It can be understood that this additional part is used as a village chamber.



Pic. 6. Additional Section in the North, Ladders to Upstairs

Entrance to the sanctuary from the additional section is done in the north side, through a wooden double leaf door placed in a stone overcast aspheric arch. The double leaf door, which is one of the authentic elements of the building, is a hub door created by square and rectangular plates between horizontal springers. The centre pole of the door was ornamented in a herringbone pattern carried out by the scratching technique. There is an inscription of "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim" in the west of the door painted in black and in talik style on the wall coating (Picture 7, 8).



Pic.7. The Door of Sanctuary



Pic.8. The Writing in the West of the Door of Sanctuary

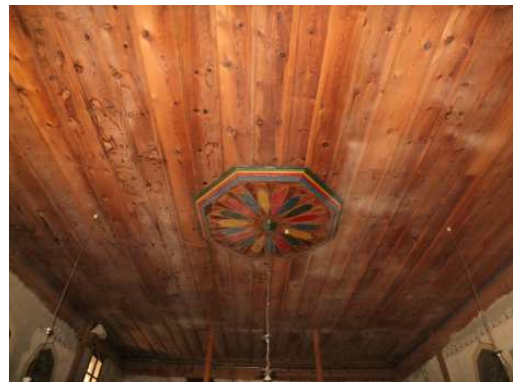
The "harim" (sanctuary) extends approximately 11.30x87.50 meters in a rectangular shape and its wall thickness is 0.85 - 0.87 meters. There are 2 windows on the top in the south side, one window at the bottom and two windows on the top in the west side and one window at the bottom in the east side to provide the illumination of the place. The approximate window dimension is 130x80x85 centimetres each. Wooden frame windows are covered with an arrangement which is widely known as "muşabak" in the region, made with networks of lath placed transversely.

Woodworking is not only seen in the entrance door of harim, but can also be seen in the floor covering and the ceiling, in the pulpit (minbar) and women's place. The women's place, which is located in the north and extending 7.00x2.50 meters, sits on four square posts, of two are wall bound and the other two are unbound. The women's place of wooden floor and ceiling is delimited by wood railing.

Timbers are laid down on the floor of the sanctuary in the direction of north and south, 8 centimetres in width. The ceiling technique is bottom coated joisting. Joining ends of the joists are covered with profile lathes which sets the surface in motion. In the centre of the ceiling there is an octagonal hub which has a geometrical arrangement and painted in yellow, blue, red and green colours (Picture 9, 10).



Pic.9. Sanctuary



Pic.10. Roof Hub of Sanctuary

The batten wood pulpit of the mosque is not authentic. The pulpit, having a coned throne and a closed guard rail, has a simple arrangement which has geometrical compositions only on the backboard.

Plastering can only be seen in the shrine (mihrab). On the shrine board, the semicircle recess in the centre is bordered with a round arch and a centrepiece which has a round shape and is ornamented with geometrical compositions is placed in the centre of the arch. The recess is followed by a wide band between graded mouldings. There is a botanic ornament on the band which connects the 15 spikes of a star shaped design with its branches with leaves on them. Several 9 spiked stars are placed on the left and the right of the 15 spiked star and they are unconnected with the branches. The shrine board ends with a hood which is shaped by 11 seamed palmette shapes. The authentic shrine board is painted with oil paint (Picture 11-13).



Pic.11. South Wall



Pic.12. South Wall Composition



Pic.13. South Wall Composition

3. Hand-drawn Ornaments

Besides the plastering and woodworking, another ornament technique used in the mosque is hand drawing. Hand drawn ornaments can be seen on inside of all the four walls of the building. These ornaments are drawn on and after a whitewash of the wall coatings. Metal oxide and vegetable dyes are used in this technique which is applied on the dry coat. Patterns are created by pen, brush and autography is used in some sections.

When examining hand drawn ornaments it can be noticed that the sanctuary walls except the gathering place are divided into three horizontal partitions. The first part, which is painted in grey and cream paint, starts from the baseboard and goes up until the level of windows in the downstairs. The second part continues upwards after the first for approximately 1 metres and ends with a band which is created by red rose motives between green leaf motives in its each side and that band continues to the timber poles of the gathering place in the north. The third horizontal part above the second ends in with the band just below the ceiling. On the band, there are motives in the shape of palmettes and flowers resembling to tulips facing downwards and below them there are blue palm tree leaves and red flower motives among those palmettes. (Picture 14).



Pic.14. Sanctuary Horizontal Parts

Compositions in second and third parts of the walls differ from each other in each wall. Starting from the wall in the south; in the background of the second part there are repetitive motives of flowers with 8 leaves in circles. In the east and west of the shrine, there are vertical and horizontal rectangular panels, a set of two for each direction. All these panels have the same botanic compositions whereas the horizontal panels have a more free-hand style. In the east of the shrine, and in the east of the horizontal panel, there is another large vertical panel on which black writings can be seen. The writing says “le in şekertüm le ezidenneküm”, which means “be grateful, I shall improve”, from the Holy Quran; surah Ibrahim, verse 7² (Picture 15).



Pic.15. South wall writing

In the third horizontal part, there is a rectangular writing panel, borders of which is cut up into slices, and the writing and the frame are in black. The writing in the panel says “Küllema dehale aleyha Zekerriyye'l mihrab” which means “in each entrance of Zekeriya to the mihrab” from the Holy Quran; surah Al-I Imran, verse 37³. There is a writing in the shape of ewer in each side of this panel; one of which is in the west side says “Bismillahirrahmanirrahim” and the other one in the east says “Vel kalemi ve ma yesturun”, which means “swear on the pen and the written lines” from the Holy Quran; surah Kalem, verse 1⁴ (Picture 16). The verse is written without the beginning letter of the authentic transcription “Nun (ن)”. In the west and east of these it can be seen that there are two separate black round panels on which it writes “Allah” and “Muhammed”, respectively.



Pic.16. South Wall Writings

In the second part of the east wall of the building, it writes “İnne (s) salate kanet alalmu'minine kitaben mevkuta” in the south with black paint on the cream colored background. This writing is from the Holy Quran; surah Nisa, verse 103 which means “forwhy salaah (prayer) is a fardh (obligation) for the believers, depending on certain times”. In the north of this writing, there is another writing which

² The Holy Quran, İbrahim, 14/7.

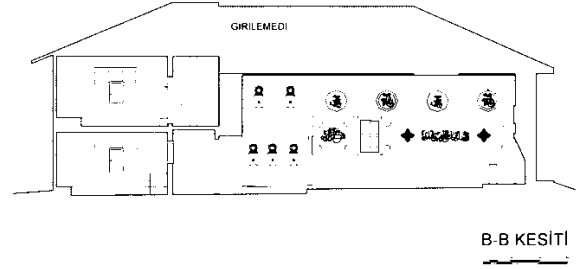
³ The Holy Quran, Ali İmran, 3/37.

⁴ The Holy Quran, Kalem, 68/1.

says “Masallah”, written in black on an orange background and bordered with red flower motives in the borders (Picture 17).



Pic.17. East Wall Second and Third Horizontal Parts



Drawing 3. BB Cross Section
(Drawn by Ş. Kaya)

On the third horizontal band of the east wall, there are octagonal panels, bordered with cream colour and black contour, on which there are white writings on black background. Starting from the one in the south, the writings on them respectively say “Hz. Omar (Omer) (Radi Ya Allahu)”, “Hz. Ali (Radi ya Allahu)”, “Hz. Huseyin (Hussein) (Radi ya Allahu)”⁵. There are two black and mirrored writings among the octagonal panels. In the first of these which is in the south says “levlake levlak le ma halaktul eflak” which means “without you, I would not create the realms” and the other writing in the north says “la ilahe illallah” (Drawing 3, Picture 17).

The second horizontal part of the west wall of the mosque is different in terms of writings whereas it looks similar to the east wall from the viewpoint of compositions. In the south, there is a writing which says “fe innez zikra tenfeul mu’minin” meaning “no doubt, wise advice is benignant to believers”, from the Holy Quran; surah Zariyat, verse 55⁶, in black colour on the cream colour background which is framed by a geometrical red and cream colour border on a blue background. The verse starts with the words “ve Zekkir” in the authentic transcription whereas it is written without these. In the north of this part, there is a hadith (the prophet Mohammad’s saying) written on an orange colour background bordered with red framing flower motives which says “essalatu İmaduddin” meaning “salaah (prayer) is the basis of faith” (Picture 18).

On the third horizontal part of the west wall, beginning from the south, it writes “ya hafiyyel eltaf neccina mimma nehaf” which means “oh! the entity whose graces are hidden, save us from our fears and ventures” in black paint and in talik style. In the sequel, there are writings on octagonal panels similar to the panels on the east wall saying “Ebu Bekir Radi ya Allahu”, “Osman Radi ya Allahu” and “Hasan Radi ya Allahu”, respectively⁷ (Drawing 4, Picture 18).

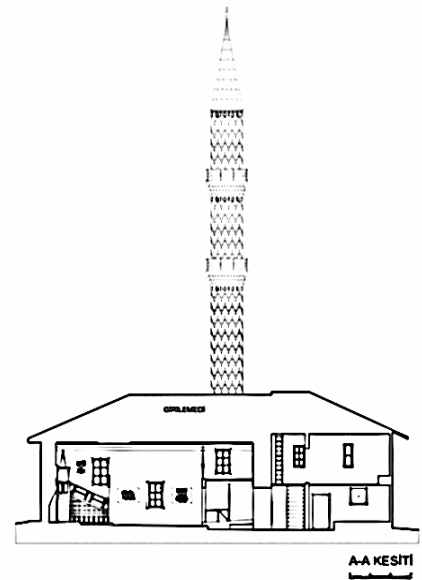
⁵ May Allah bless him (from Hz. Omer, Hz. Ali, Hz. Hüseyin)

⁶ The Holy Quran, Zariyat 51/55.

⁷ May Allah bless him (from Hz. Ebu Bekir, Hz. Osman, Hz. Hasan)



Pic.18. East wall Second and Third Horizontal Part



Drawing 4. AA Cross Section
(Drawn by Ş. Kaya)

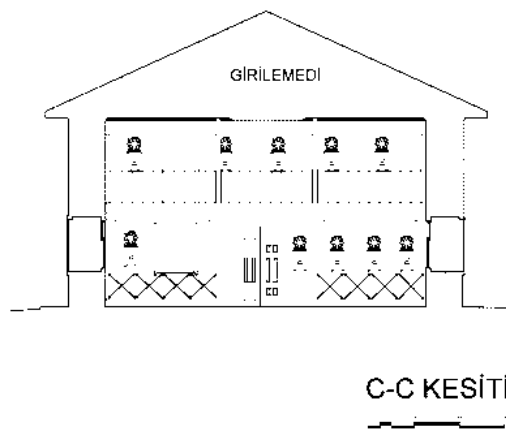
In the north, different from the other walls, gathering place walls consists of two parts. The first part is painted in blue beginning from the baseboard up until second part and in the second part there are light grey urns and grey flower bundles are painted in them (Drawing 5, Picture 19-20).



Pic.19. Gathering Place



Pic.20. Gathering Place Composition



Drawing 5. CC Cross Section
(Drawn by Ş. Kaya)

4. Evaluation and Result

In an overall evaluation, Çukur Village Mosque keeps its authenticity in terms of planning scheme except the additional section in the north. Monolithic small scaled mosques with wood floors and ceilings were frequently preferred especially in the settlements which are far from the capital city in the late Ottoman era.

Except the handled parts in the walls of the gathering place and in the first horizontal part of the walls, hand drawings are substantially authentic. Hand drawn ornaments had found a wide range of usage in Ottoman architecture in all periods. As they are highly vulnerable to physical effects and alterations, there are very few examples of hand drawn ornaments which still exists or able to exist authentically in contrast to their wide usage in the past.

Two different techniques were applied in hand drawing in Ottoman architecture. In the first one of them the wall coating was whitewashed with lime and motives were applied on with metal oxide or vegetable dye. In the second technique, wall coverings were plastered in order to obtain more flat and smooth surface and then motives were applied with oil paint. This second technique was used in the early 19th century with the appearance of oil based paints (Hatipoğlu 2007:26). Autography technique is used in the motives in the walls of the gathering place and with the flower motives in the second part endings of the walls, as well as panel ornaments. It is known that stencils made of stone were used in this technique.

Hand drawing is applied on especially on wall coatings as well as stone, marble, wood, leather and fabric. The first examples of hand drawn ornaments on wall coatings are seen on the window arches of Kırızlar Tomb which is dated in mid-15th century in İznik. In the same way, the hand drawn inner dome and on wall ornaments in Bursa Green (Yeşil) Mosque, Bursa and Edirne Muradiye Mosques, Edirne Üç Şerefeli Mosque and İstanbul Rum Mehmet Paşa Camii are among other important works which are evidences of the technique and motive properties of early period hand drawn ornaments (Ödekan 1997:934; Bilsel 1999:14-15).

The renovations in Ottoman painting started being seen in the beginning from the mid-16th century firstly by city paintings appearing in miniature paintings. This effect of the European culture on the Ottoman culture with the help of intercultural interaction leded important changes in the state regulations and community life. The deliberate policies of the Ottoman administrators to open the doors to the Europe showed itself in the art as well as in every other fields. In the last two quarters of the century many westerner artists were received as a guest to the palace or students were sent to Europe in order to get education on arts (Arık 1988:12-16). Changes showed themselves firstly in the ornaments, and at the same time wall paintings were appeared in İstanbul and all over Anatolia (Arık 1988:22-23). However, the wall pictures were applied in the technique of mural painting but Ottomans carried it out with earth dyes on dry wall coatings (Hatipoğlu 2007:7).

Hand drawn ornaments of Çukur Village Mosque show similarities with the ornaments in the buildings in the other parts of Anatolia as well as the buildings in Karabük and its districts. These kind of hand drawn ornaments can be seen in both religious and civil architecture in all of the districts and villages of Karabük province. Both the central style which was under effect of the west and the country style are seen together in the housing and religious architecture examples of Safranbolu city centre and its villages and in Eskipazar district. Some examples are the hand drawings of Safranbolu Hacı Memişler House, Kavşalar House and Yörük Village Kurtgiller House (Göktaş Kaya and Kaya 2015:967-990). Apart from these, the hand drawings of the buildings especially in Ovacık, Eflani district of Karabük province and Çankırı and in Kastamonu border which were areas once affiliated to those provinces appear as a more local folk art⁸.

Çukur village is presently in the borders of Ovacık district of Karabük province whereas once it was affiliated to Çankırı. For this reason, the geography of the region, the architectural and cultural features are similar. Another building which is associated with Çankırı province but which today is in the borders of Karabük province is Boyalı village mosque like Çukur Village Mosque. The hand drawings of Boyalı village mosque, which is dated to 1199/1785 (exilic/common), shows a great similarity to the Çukur Village Mosque⁹. The same technique and the similarity in the composition and style can be seen in the hand drawn ornaments of Seydiköy village Murat Veli Mosque in Eldivan district of Çankırı province and in Taşoğlu

⁸ Stated by Lütfiye Göktaş Kaya during the 2012 Eflani and 2013 Safranbolu-Ovacık works of the project "Surface Survey of Karabuk Province and its Districts" carried out on behalf of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

⁹ Hand drawings of the building were removed in 2013 in the restoration. All the remaining is our sights and documents as evidence.

village Aksar Mosque in Ovacık district of Karabük province which once was in the borders of Çankırı province¹⁰. Despite the fact that there are old information, documents and photographs belonging to Aksar Mosque, the hand drawings are completely painted over and cannot be seen today.

It is possible to find the hand drawn writings of Çukur Village Mosque similar or same to the hand drawings of other mosques belonging to the era. The writing of the verse found over the shrine of Çukur Village Mosque, which means “in each entrance of Zekeriya to the mihrab” is widely used in shrine compositions. It can be seen without any exception in various buildings independently from location, as Ankara Leblebicioğlu Mosque and Telli Hacı Halil Mosque from 18th century (Eskici 2001:122, 192). The same of the mirrored writing in the east wall which is a holy hadith meaning “without you, I would not create the realms” can be seen in the west wall of Dedeler Mosque in Keles district of Bursa province (Gülgen 2012:68). The verse 103 of surah Nisa from the Holy Quran which is on the east wall of Çukur Village Mosque saying “forwhy salaah (prayer) is a fardh (obligation) for the believers, depending on certain times” can be found in the east wall of Dedeler Village Mosque. Together with those two buildings, another similarity of the writing composition of Kırşehir Mucur Huseyin Ağa Mosque is in cihar-ı yar-ı güzin writings. Beginning from the classical Ottoman period, the names of four caliphs which are called cihar-ı yar-ı güzin and the names of Prophet Mohammad’s two grandchildren Hasan and Huseyin together with Allah and Mohammad names were started being written as elements of ornaments on mosque walls.

It is known that the people who wrote those writings on mosque walls were hand drawing artists. However, not all the artists knew Arabic. Besides the inexperience seen in the letters and writing styles, the absence of the letter “Nun (ن)” in the writing of the surah Kalem verse 1 and on the south wall and the absence of the words “ve Zikkir” in the writing of the surah Zariyat verse 55 on the west wall from the Holy Quran in Çukur Village Mosque express that the artist did not know Arabic and worked by copying the samples. The same situation can be seen in the hand written ornaments of Dedeler Village Mosque in Keles district of Bursa province (Gülgen 2012:72). Furthermore, it is possible to say that all of these ornaments are works of the same artist when the technique, composition, motive and style characteristics are inspected in those similar examples.

As a late period example, the hand writings of Çukur Village Mosque are seen in red, blue, black, green, mustard, cream and orange colours. These colours are generally the same with the hand writings in the buildings of the period which are in west Anatolia and east Black Sea region differing from Çukur Village Mosque as they show effects of western influence (Bozer 1987, Yavuz 2009, Tali 2014, Sözlü 2014).

In the Turkish art, many of the artist names of these kind of hand writings are not known (Arık 1975:8-13). However, it is possible to reason about the hand writings of Çukur Village Mosque. It is known that the artist who made the hand writings of Boyalı Village Mosque in Ovacık and Taşoğlu village Aksar Mosque were created by Ali Usta from Tosya district of Kastamonu province¹¹. Hand writings of Çukur Village Mosque which shows a great similarity in terms of technique, composition, motive and style makes it reasonable to say that it is possible to think the hand writings of Çukur Village Mosque were also created by him.

Çukur Village Mosque keeps its authenticity in terms of planning scheme except the additional section in the north. Especially the hand writings are important as they are the works of folk art examples which is the oldest existing and authentic among the examples related to country style in Karabük province.

¹⁰ Stated by Lütüye Göktaş Kaya during the 2012 Eflani and 2013 Safranbolu-Ovacık works of the project “Surface Survey of Karabük Province and its Districts” carried out on behalf of Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

¹¹ Obtained from the records in Directorate General of Foundations.

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