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**Calligraphic Inscriptions in the Şehzade, Süleymaniye
and Selimiye Mosque**

Abstract

The mosques are very similar to art galleries due to the architectural and decorative properties. The calligraphy art was profound and applied on specific spots following specific rules. The calligraphy at the mosques of Sinan the Architect was written by the famous calligraphists of the time, Ahmet Karahisari, Hasan Çelebi, Demircikulu Yusuf and Hasan Üsküdari. In this article, the calligraphy in the mosques of Istanbul Şehzade (1544–1548), Süleymaniye (1550–1557) and Edirne Selimiye (1569–1575) is researched to reveal the arrangement of calligraphy art in Sinan's mosques. The writings, almost resembling jewelry, in the mosques of Sinan complement the architecture. We wish that these writings will be preserved for the future generations.

Mosques are like galleries of ottoman architecture, displaying both methods of construction and examples of the decoration applied. As the buildings themselves are solid and lasting the decorative elements with which they are adorned have also survived more or less intact. The artists who decorated these mosques with tiles, paint-work and stained-glass windows also gave great importance to the art of calligraphy. Lettering, whether employed as part of the architectural whole or as a purely decorative element, never loses its own particular aesthetic character. Thus calligraphy is never used in high parts of the building where it would remain more or less invisible. When used in appropriate places with its own peculiar type of composition there is no need for any additional decoration.

As the expression of the word of God, calligraphy occupies a very special place in our mosques. Certain inscriptions are used in certain places. For example, above the entrance there will be a verse from the Qu'ran together with the name of the founder and the date of

construction. Above the *mihrab* there will be the *mihrab* inscription: on the right of it the word *Allah* and on the left *Muhammad*, while in the pendentives will be found the names of the first Caliphs. Other places where writing is to be found are: the dome, the half-dome, the drum of the dome, above the windows, the main entrance door and the side doors, and above the windows in the portico. These inscriptions are usually in the *süliis*, *muhakkak*, *Kufic* or *ta'lik* scripts, according to the position in which the inscription is to be placed. Calligraphy can be applied to stone, tiles or plaster. In Istanbul, examples of calligraphy applied to plaster are very rare compared with those to be found in the Ulu Cami in Bursa and the Eski Cami in Edirne. The finest examples of the use of calligraphy in Turkish architecture are to be found where lettering is employed as a completely independent branch of art without the addition of any extraneous ornament. Such writings display a simple beauty and harmony of form in the lettering and great purity in the overall composition.

The most interesting instances of 16th century calligraphy are displayed in the monuments built by the architect Sinan. His mosques contain calligraphic panels by the foremost masters of the time, such as Ahmet Karahisari, Hasan Çelebi, Demircikulu Yusuf and Hasan Üsküdarlı.

An examination of the calligraphy in the Sinan mosques reveals how carefully they are made to harmonize with the architectural setting. One gets the impression that they must have been arranged by the architect himself. The fact that so rational an arrangement is nowhere to be found in the mosques built either before or after Sinan shows quite clearly the unique quality of his contribution, not only to the history of architecture itself but also to the decoration adorning it.

Şehzade Mosque was built by Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent in memory of his beloved son, Şehzade Mehmet, who died at the age of twenty-one. Sinan started work on the Şehzade mosque, which he described as his «apprentice work», in 1544 at the age of fifty-four, and completed it after four years. This is the first mosque in which he took in hand the problem of the half-dome and, in producing a central plan with four half domes, he succeeded in realizing the dreams of the Renaissance architects.

Although the architectural features of Şehzade Mosque have received exhaustive cover, little attention has been paid to the calligraphic inscriptions. These are to be found on the outside of the three entrance doors, the dome, the half-domes, the quarter-domes and the pendentives, as well as on the piers, the *mihrab* and the *mihrab* wall, the northern entrance wall and the imperial gallery.

The seven-line date inscription is set within cartouches above the northern portal. To the right of this is the inscription *La ilahe illallah* and to the left *Muhammeden Resulallah*. Above the entrance door there is the inscription: *Kalellahu teala: Innes salate in kanet alel müminine kitaben mevkuta* (4:103).

Above the western entrance door we find a *besmele* written in H. 1314 by Arif Bey, a work which prompted the famous calligrapher Sami Efendi to exclaim that “Such a *besmele* has never been written since the creation of the world!”

In the interior of the mosque the first four verses of the *Fetih* (48) Surah are inscribed in red on a plaster ground in the pediments of the windows in the *mihrab* wall. The

inscription ends before reaching the end of the fourth verse. The text of this inscription runs as follows:

“Prophet, we have granted thee a clear victory with the peace of Hudeybiye leading to the conquest of Mecca and the other cities. / God will forgive your past and future sins and bestow his blessing upon thee and set thee upon the true path. / And God will make the victorious with a great victory. / God is He who brings peace to the heart of the faithful that their faith may increase.”

The first pediment on the right hand side on the *mihrab* wall contains a *Besmele* in *celi sülüs*. The end of the *Fetih* Surah is to be found here. The calligraphic composition in the other pediment is much more intricate than those in the first two pediments. On the wall above the *mihrab* we find the inscription: *Kullema dehale aleyha Zekeriiyyel-mihrab* (3:37).

Celi script is employed in the round inscriptions in the pendentives. On the front right pier we find an inscription consisting of the phrases *Ya Hennan* and *Ya Mennan* repeated at regular intervals, while on the one on the left we find a similar repetitive treatment of *Ya Fettah* and *Ya Sübhan*.

The inscription beginning with a *Besmele* in the half-dome in front of the *mihrab* continues in the four half-domes, with verses 144–145 of the *Bakara* Surah. The meaning is as follows:

“O Prophet we have seen thee turn thy face towards every part of heaven but we will have thee turn a direction of Mecca (*kible*) which shall please thee. Turn then thy face towards than part. Then verily, to whom the Book hath been given, know this to be the truth from their Lord. And God is not ignorant of your deeds and back-sliding. Even though thou shouldest bring signs and miracles to the Jews and the Christians, yet the direction of Mecca they will not adopt. Nor should thou adopt their direction of Mecca. And if, after the knowledge which hath come to thee, thou follow their wishes, verily then thou wilt become of the unrighteous”.

In the quarter-domes effecting the transition to the half-domes we find the following text (2:285–286):

“The Prophet and the believers have faith in the Qu’ran which was sent down to them. All have faith in God, the Angels, the Book and the Prophet. We hearken to and obey the Prophets without distinction. O Lord, we beg forgiveness of our sins. We turn only to Thee, they have said. God demands from each only according to his ability. Each earns his own blessing for the good he does and his own punishment for the evil he commits. O Lord! if we forget, or sin through inadvertence, do not call us to account. O Lord, do not lay upon us the grievous burdens you laid upon those that came before us. Burden us not with burdens we cannot bear. Forgive us our sins, pardon us. Show us Thy compassion. Thou art our Lord and our Helper. And grant us assistance and victory over the unbelievers.”

The above inscription begins with a *Besmele* in the quarter-dome to the right of the *mihrab* and continues throughout all the other quarter-domes. In the central dome the *El Isra* (17.) Surah is inscribed in *celi sülüs*.

In the Şehzade Mosque inscriptions are placed above and between the windows in the imperial gallery, but as the entrance to this has been blocked no detailed examination of the inscriptions could be carried out. *Kufic* inscriptions arranged in square compositions are to be found above, and to the left and right of the entrance do or in the northern wall. Here we find a repetitive treatment of *maşallah* in red on a white ground. *Allah, Muhammed, Osman, Ali, Ebubekir* and *Ömer* are inscribed over the stalactite niches in the sides of the piers facing the *mihrab*. A *Kelime-i Tevhit* (declaration of God's unity) is inscribed over the door of the *minber*.

The researches we have carried out in the Şehzade Mosque have failed to reveal the identity of the calligrapher responsible for these inscriptions. Apparently the artist was too modest to append his signature to his work. Nevertheless, the inscriptions are obviously choice specimens of 16th century calligraphy, and we hope that the research soon to be undertaken in the archives will shed some more light on this subject.

We may conclude this section by saying that in the Şehzade Mosque, referred to be Sinan as a work of his apprenticeship period, the calligraphic inscriptions are arranged in perfect harmony with the architectural setting.

The Süleymaniye Mosque, whose location on terraces overlooking the Golden Horn reveals an ideal approach to town planning and urban landscape was built by Sinan in 1550–1557 for Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent. In the construction of the mosque Sinan performed the function of an orchestra conductor blending the work of great artists such as Karahisari and Ibrahim the Drunkard into one harmonious whole.

There are various views regarding the identity of the calligraphers responsible for the inscriptions in the mosque. Some believe that the inscription in the dome was the work of Ahmet Karahisari while all the rest were written by Hasan Çelebi.

According to the *Tuhfe-i Hattatin*, one rumour had it that only the verse over the *mihrab* was written by Ahmet Karahisari, while according to another rumour he was responsible only for the inscription in the dome, the other inscriptions being the work of Hasan Çelebi.

Some people say that Ahmet Karahisari was greatly aggrieved and offended that his pupil should have been asked to work on the inscriptions, but that when Hasan Çelebi, after having completed all the *celi* inscriptions in the mosque, was about to begin work on the verse *Ayet amune-t taam* in the *tabhane* his sight became so dim and blurred that he was obliged to appeal to Karahisari to write it for him, which accounts for the superior skill displayed in this particular inscription.

According to another tradition the *musenna* (*müsennâ*, mirror) inscription in the great arch is the work of Karahisari, while the inscriptions on the *mihrab*, the windows, the doors, the *tabhane* and other parts of the mosque are the work of Hasan Çelebi.

According to Prof. Dr. Ali A l p a s l a n, the inscription in the dome was originally the work of Karahisari but that it deteriorated with the passage of time and was later restored by Abdülfettah Efendi. On being entrusted by Sultan Abdülmecid with the restoration of all the inscriptions in the mosque Abdülfettah Efendi felt the need for a spacious room and was presented by the Sultan with a house for his own use. During researches carried

out on Süleymaniye Mosque, Prof. Dr. Ömer L. Barkan found the price list for the paper required for tracing the inscriptions in the dome and for the gold leaf to be used in the inscriptions on the column capitals.

According to the *Tezkiret-ul-Bunyan* the inscription in the dome was written by Ahmet Karahisari: "... The great dome was finally completed and work proceeded on the other sections of the building. Ahmet Karahisari, the kible of calligraphers, inscribed in the dome in beautiful script the verse *Allah-u yumsiku-s-semawati ve'l-ard*, hoping that it would remain there for all time. Inscriptions were also placed on all the doors. These inscriptions were traced by the greatest calligraphers of the day and were translated into stone by skilled masons and decorators in order that a page might remain from time that passes as the wind."

Ahmet Karahisari (Ahmet Semsettin Efendi of Afyon Karahisar) was one of the greatest calligraphers of the 16th century. Although his date of birth is unknown and we have very little biographical information, he is known to have begun his artistic career during the reign of Beyazıt II and to have reached his zenith under Selim I and Süleyman the Magnificent. We have no definite information regarding the teacher from whom he learned his art, and although his first teacher is said to have been Yahya Sofi, the fact that he never uses this name in the signatures appended to his works and that he sometimes refers to the calligrapher Esedullah-i Kirmani would seem to suggest that the latter was probably his real teacher.

Ahmet Karahisari was something of a recluse, and his adoption of his slave Hasan, who became a calligrapher as talented as himself, as his son and heir would seem to indicate that he never married. Karahisari is later known to have had a close friendship with Cemal Halife, the sheikh of the Halvetiyye order. Karahisari's interests were not wholly confined to calligraphy. He learned Arabic and Persian, engaged in the study of science and literature, and even wrote poems in Turkish.

As a student of Esedullah he carried on the tradition of the Yakut school in Anatolia, though in many ways he surpassed his master. The influence of Karahisari's *celi* script continued until the time of Mustafa Rakim, but the innovations he introduced into the *nesih* script never gained general acceptance and were soon abandoned by his pupils.

Surviving works by Karahisari include copies of the *Qur'an* in Topkapi Saray Museum and the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art, the inscriptions in the dome of Süleymaniye Mosque, the inscriptions on the fountain and tomb of Sinan, the verse *Selamiün aleyküüm tibtum* in Piyale Pasha Mosque and the inscription on his own tombstone.

We learn that Karahisari, who invariably signed himself as a pupil of Seyyit Esedullah-i Kirmani, always performed several extra acts of prayer after every page he wrote. Karahisari, known as Şemsu'l Hat ("The Sun of Calligraphy"), died at the age of ninety and was buried in the graveyard of the Caferabad Tekke (dervish lodge) in Sutluce.

Hasan Çelebi, who is said to have been a Circassian, was as great a calligrapher as his master Karahisari, whom he rivaled both in technical skill and artistic style. The works of the two calligraphers are quite indistinguishable, but after Karahisari's death Hasan Çelebi returned to the Sheikh Hamdullah tradition in the *nesih* and *süliis* scripts. All the

inscriptions in the mosques of Süleymaniye in Istanbul and Selimiye in Edirne, apart from the inscription in the Süleymaniye dome, are to be ascribed to Hasan Çelebi.

In the Süleymaniye inscription Hasan Çelebi signs himself Kete behu Hasan bin Ahmet el-Karahisari. By bringing the upright letters close together and placing the names of the Sultans one below the other in the center of the inscription Hasan Çelebi produces a harmonious composition well in keeping with the magnificence of the mosque. Hasan Çelebi died sometime after H.1002 (1594) and was buried near the grave of his master.

Abdülfeṭṭah Efendi (1815–1896) was born in Chios into a Greek family. As a child he was purchased as a slave by Hüseyin Pasha, was converted to Islam, learned Arabic and Persian, and studied the *sülüs*, *celi*, *nesih*, *ta'lik*, *divani* and *rika* scripts. He learned *sülüs* and *nesih* from Mustafa Sakir Efendi and *ta'lik* from Yesarizade.

In 1831 he was employed as a teacher in the *Sibyan Alayi* and in 1839 he entered the *Sadaret Mektubi Kalemî*. After serving in the *Evkaf* directorates in Sivas and Amasya, he was employed in the finance offices in Saruhan and Kastamonu. In 1857 he entered the Mint as designer. In 1860 he went to Vienna and Paris to learn the art of filigree.

Abdülfeṭṭah Efendi was a master of *sülüs*, *celi* and *ta'lik* scripts and was responsible for the beautiful inscriptions in the Ulu Cami in Bursa. He was also responsible for some inscriptions in Edirne: the inscriptions in the old style in the Süleymaniye Mosque and those in the Beyazıt Mosque, as well as the inscriptions on the Bab-i Hümayun (Imperial Gate). Examples of his work are preserved in the Turkish Museum of Calligraphy and in several private collections. He died in his *yalı* (waterside villa) at Vanikoy on 1 October 1896 and was buried in the garden of the Tomb of Sultan Mahmut.

He displayed great skill and taste in the architectural and calligraphic additions he made in Süleymaniye Mosque. The Qu'ranic verses and hadiths he applied to sections of the interior and exterior of the mosque testifying to the existence of God, His unity and sublimity, His infinite strength and generosity, displayed a fair amount of artistic skill. Inscriptions are to be found in the following sections of the mosque: the northern, eastern and western entrances, the arches of the colonnade around the *shadirvan* courtyard, the doors opening into the courtyard, the windows in the portico, the central dome, the pendentives, the half and quarter-domes, the arches connecting these to the piers, the section above the mihrab and the windows on each side, the windows in the galleries, and the exit doors on the east and west.

The mosque inscription is over the main entrance door leading into the mosque from the *shadirvan* courtyard. The text was prepared by the Sheikh-ul-Islam Ebussuud Efendi and written by Hasan Çelebi, it is always difficult to compress a text into a limited space, and this difficulty is strikingly apparent in the Süleymaniye inscription, making it at first glance almost indecipherable.

The inscription is divided into three sections, the left, the middle and the right. In the first section are enumerated the qualities of the Sultan and Caliph who built the mosque; the second section is devoted to a list of Sultan Süleyman Khan's ancestors; while in the third section we find prayers for the continuance of the dynasty and the souls of

the Sultan's predecessors, followed by a description of the outstanding qualities of the mosque, and why and when it was built. A translation of the Süleymaniye inscription, written in Arabic, might run as follows:

I: Humble servant strong with the strength of God, Caliph excellent with divine excellence, ruler of the world by order and decrees of the Holy Book;

Conqueror of East and West by the help of God and his conquering armies:

Lord of all the countries of the world, God's shadow over all the peoples on earth, Sultan of Arabs and Persians.

II: Giver of laws, tenth of the Ottoman Sultans, son of Sultan Süleyman Khan son of Sultan Selim son of Sultan Beyazıt son of Sultan Muhammed son of Sultan Murad son of Sultan Muhammed son of Sultan Beyazıt son of Sultan Murad son of Sultan Orhan son of Sultan Osman.

III: May the dynasty of the Sultan continue to all time and the souls of his ancestors rest in peace in the gardens of Paradise.

This matchless monument, this mosque of unrivalled excellence, built for those who give themselves to prayer, for those who prostrate themselves in worship, rises up to the possessor of all excellence and power, the creator of all things worldly and divine.

The construction began at the end of Cumadalula nine hundred and fifty seven and ended at the end of *Zilhicce* nine hundred and sixty four. This was written by Ahmed el-Karahisari.

On the right hand there is a part of a verse from the Qur'an: "O our Lord! Decide between us and between our people, with truth; for the best to decide art Thou" and above this, in large letters: "Your Lord hath laid down for Himself a law of mercy!"

On the left hand door there is the inscription: "And verily, the pious shall have a goodly retreat – Gardens of Eden, whose portals shall stand open to them" (*Sad* Surah (38.), 49–50), and on the marble slab higher up the following verse: "Peace be with you, because ye have endured all things. Charming the recompense of their abode!" (*Er-Ra'd* Surah (13.), 24).

Over the main door of the mosque is the inscription: "O Lord who opens all doors, open the door of felicity!"

On the tiles on each side of the *mihrab* the *Fâtiha* Surah is written in white letters. In one of the stained glass windows in the *mihrab* section there is the inscription: *There is no God but God!* and in the other: *Muhammed is His Prophet!* In the stained glass windows in the upper section are inscribed the names *Allah*, *Muhammed*, *Abū Bakr*, *Ömer*, *Osman* and *Ali*.

The inscription on the marble slab on the arches connecting the piers reads: "Those who turn to God, and those who serve, who praise, who fast, who bow down, who prostrate themselves, who enjoin what is just and forbid what is evil, and keep to the bounds of God ... Wherefore bear these good tidings to the faithful!" (*Et-Tevbe* Surah (9.), 112) Between these inscriptions there are several *Esmâ-i Husna* (lists of the Beautiful

Names of God) in roundels on a black ground. The *Fâtiha* Surah is to be found inscribed in roundels on the piers. The 99 names of God are inscribed on the windows of the galleries.

The calligraphy, the stonework, the tiles, the stained glass and the marble work to be found in Süleymaniye Mosque are all of matchless beauty and form a perfect complement to the architecture. Sinan's choice of artists capable of creating such beauty is another proof of his creative genius. We most sincerely hope that Süleymaniye Mosque and all its beauty will be perserved and carefully protected.

The Selimiye Mosque was built in the years 1569–1574 on the orders of Sultan Selim II, and represents the architect Sinan's most successful effort to create an interior forming one single organic whole. The plan of Selimiye Mosque is based on that of the Üç Şerefeli Mosque, but the interior is so organized as to produce an effect and significance absolutely unique in world architecture, Sinan took the bold step of raising a single dome high over the interior, which would produce an interior effect of great height and at the same time accentuate the lines of the exterior. Here the exterior silhouette is the exact reflection of the internal organization.

Although Selimiye Mosque has been the object of a large number of architectural studies, no detailed work has been devoted to the inscriptions. These were the work of Hasan Çelebi, a pupil of the famous calligrapher Ahmet Karahisari, and continue the tradition of Seljuk *celi* calligraphy in the arrangement of the vertical strokes side by side and very close together.

The Ottoman archives contain two documents referring to the inscriptions in Selimiye Mosque, These are the *irades* (commands) sent by Sultan Selim II to the architect Sinan.

Irade I: "To the head architect (Sinan). You had requested the services of Katip Molla Hasan (the calligrapher Hasan Karahisari) for the inscriptions required in the great mosque currently being erected in Edirne on my orders. The said individual has been appointed and sent to carry out the required work. On his arrival you will show him where in the great mosque the inscriptions are to be written tiles, and will ensure that these are written in a style and manner you deem suitable. 8 Muharrem 980 (1572)".

Irade II: "To the head architect (Sinan). You wrote to me to inform me of the stage reached in the construction of the great building (the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne), that four of the main arches had been completed and that the other four were on the point of completion, and asking for my exalted orders as to whether the dome and wall of the apse should be decorated or left plain. There should definitely be tiles up to the level of the window, with *Fâtiha* Surah inscribed in tiles above. I order that on receiving my command *Fâtiha* Surah should be written in a suitable fashion in tiles above the windows. 4 Rebiulevvel 980 (1572)".

The above documents indicate that correspondence was carried on with the palace in connection with the overall decisions to be made on the decoration of the mosque, but that the architect was given full responsibility for their practical application. It is clear that the decorative scheme was carried out in a spirit of rational and harmonious

cooperation with the architect and on the basis of Sinan's own artistic invention. The inscriptions occupied a very important place in this decorative scheme.

There can be little doubt that Sinan received the greatest assistance in the realization of this decorative scheme from the calligrapher Molla Hasan Çelebi, and it seems in place here to give some information on the life and work of this great artist.

Hasan Çelebi's real name was Hasan bin Abdüllah. He is said to have been a Circassian. He was a slave belonging to Ahmet Karahisari, who first of all freed him and then adopted him as his spiritual son. He studied calligraphy with his master Ahmet Karahisari, whose style he followed so closely that it is almost impossible to distinguish the work of the master from that of his distinguished pupil. For centuries now the letter *V* (*vav* – *wāw*) in the *veleddalin* in Hasan Çelebi's *Fâtiha* Surah inscribed in the tiles on the *mihrab* wall in the Selimiye Mosque has remained a model of excellence for all calligraphers.

According to the 17th century writer Evliya Çelebi, a chip of lime went into one of Hasan Çelebi's eyes while he was supervising the work in the Selimiye Mosque, leading to loss of sight in one eye. Later, he happened to wash his eyes in water he had used to dean his brushes, which resulted in loss of sight in his other eye and complete blindness. After this tragic incident he was granted a pension for life by the Sultan Selim II, and, on the death of his master, returned to the school of Sheikh Hamdullah. Many of Hasan Çelebi's calligraphic works have survived to the present day.

Three hundred years later the *celi sülüs* inscriptions in the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne were re-written by the gilder and calligrapher Nakşi Molla Mustafa (d. H. 1224/ A.D. 1809). Nakşi Molla Mustafa, a native of Edirne, was one of the most distinguished calligraphers and gilders of the 19th century, and was responsible for the *İhlas* Sura in the dome of the Selimiye Mosque. The signature Esseyit Nakşi Mustafa 1223 appended to the calligraphic inscriptions on the walls of the mosque indicate that these were written only one year before his death. He was also responsible for some of the inscriptions in the Old Mosque (Eski Cami) in Edirne, as well as for the inscription panels in the Üç Şerefeli Mosque.

The inscriptions were included in the work of restoration begun in 1982 by the General Directorate of Pious Foundations, and have been skillfully re-written in a manner worthy of Selimiye Mosque by Mr. Mahmud Öncü, the present-day expert in *celi sülüs* calligraphy.

In Selimiye Mosque inscriptions are to be found in the main dome, the pediment and upper section of the *mihrab*, the tile pediments of the three windows on each side of the *mihrab*, on the walls flanking the *mihrab*, the window pediments in the south wall, the *mihrab* pediment and walls in the Imperial Gallery, the interiors of the four exedra, the side galleries, the north, east and west walls, the tile rosettes on the arches, the door of the minber, the window pediments in the- portico, the rosettes on the portico arches and on the half-dome over the *mihrab* apse.

An inscription by Sofizade Dai of Edirne is to be found over the Harem door. This inscription is written with gold leaf in *sülüs* script and contained within eight cartouches. In the last two lines the date is indicated by the numerical values of the letters:

Sara fadlullahi tarihul esas (976/1569)

Fazdli yezden kone tarihul tamam (982/1575)

The main dome contains the *İhlas* Sura in the form of a round inscription in white *celi sülüs* on a blue ground. A very lovely interlace is formed by the extensions of the letters. This is surrounded by eight rosettes containing the virtues of the Prophet in white *celi* lettering on a brown ground.

In the half dome over the *mihrab* projection is to be found an inscription containing verse 18 of the *Tevbe* Surah in white *celi sülüs* on a red ground. Another inscription begins in the exedra on the left of the *mihrab* with verse 9 of the *Cumua* Surah in white *celi sülüs* on a blue ground, and continues in the other exedras to end with verse 11 of the sura in the exedra to the right of the north entrance. Verse 103 of the *Nisa* Surah is inscribed in white *celi* script on a red ground over the two windows on the right hand side of the *mihrab* wall. The *Felak* Surah is written in white *celi sülüs* on a blue ground in the upper section of the same wall. Over the right hand window on the south wall is to be found the hadith or saying of the Prophet *Recite and perform the commands of God* in white *celi sülüs* on a blue ground, while on the window above this is the inscription, *God is the most compassionate of the merciful* in white *celi sülüs* on a red ground. On the lower right section of the left quarter exedra the hadith *The believer is reckoned by prayer* is inscribed in the same style, while in the lower left section of the left quarter exedra we find the hadith *Prayer descended between the believer and the infidel*.

The tile band extending from above the window on the right of the *mihrab* wall to above the window on the left contains verses 285 and 286 of the *Bakara* Surah inscribed in white *celi sülüs* on an indigo ground. The *Fâtiha* Surah, similarly inscribed in white *celi sülüs* on an indigo ground, begins with a *Besmele* in the tile pediment over the window on the right and ends in the pediment over the window on the left. Verse 24 of the *El-Haşr* Sura in white *celi sülüs* on a red ground is to be found on the inner face of the arch over the North entrance door.

Inscriptions in mother-of-pearl inlay can be seen on the right and left hand wings of the three doors opening into the mosque. Verse 1 of the *Fetih* Surah is to be found inscribed on the right hand side of the main entrance door and verse 3 on the left. Verse 13 of the *Es-Saf* Surah is inscribed on the right and left of the left-hand entrance door, while on the right-hand entrance door is inscribed a *Besmele* followed by the verse, *Enter in confidence, giving salutation*. Verse 29 of the *Fetih* Surah is inscribed in *celi sülüs* on the left hand wall of the main entrance to the mosque.

The pediments over the windows on the left hand side of the south wall of the mosque contain verses 8 and 9 of the *Al-i İmran* Sura. Higher up on the same wall the *Nas* Surah is inscribed in the same style. One also finds the date 1223 and the signature of Esseyit Nakşi Mustafa. Verse 101 of the *Yusuf* Surah is inscribed in white *celi sülüs* over the three windows under the library on the right hand side of the southern section of the mosque.

Bismillahi is inscribed in kufic lettering on the top right side of the upper arch over the north entrance, *maşallah* in the centre, *Ya Settar' ül uyub* in *celi ta'lik* below, *Illa*

billah in kufic script in the top left, *La kuvvete* in the middle and *Ve ya Gaffar u'z zunub* below. Under the left rear exedra we find verse 26 of the *Al-i İmran* Surah inscribed in *celi sülüs*.

Arabic verses are similarly inscribed in white *celi sülüs* on a ground of indigo tiles in the pediments over the windows in the Imperial Gallery, while on the wall surfaces between the pediments are to be found tile inscriptions in kufic script. In the front there is a *Hemelehu* while at the back there is an *İlmihi*, also in kufic. The inscriptions are repeated four times to form a square. The formula *La İlaha illaallah'ül meliku'l-hakku'l mubin, Muhammadiin Resulullahi sadiku'l Va'dul emin* is inscribed in *sülüs* script on the white inscription panel over the portico arches. The rosette to the right of this contains the inscription *Ya Mennan, Ya Hannan*, while on the left there is a fourfold repetition of *Ya Cami', Ya Mani'*. The tile pediments over the eight windows in the portico contain the *Ayet el-Kürsi* (the 254th verse of the 2nd Surah of the Qur'an) in white *celi sülüs* on an indigo ground.

All these inscriptions in the Selimiye Mosque are placed with a jeweler's precision in such a way as to complete and enhance the architecture of the building. We sincerely hope that these inscriptions will be carefully conserved and handed down intact to future generations.

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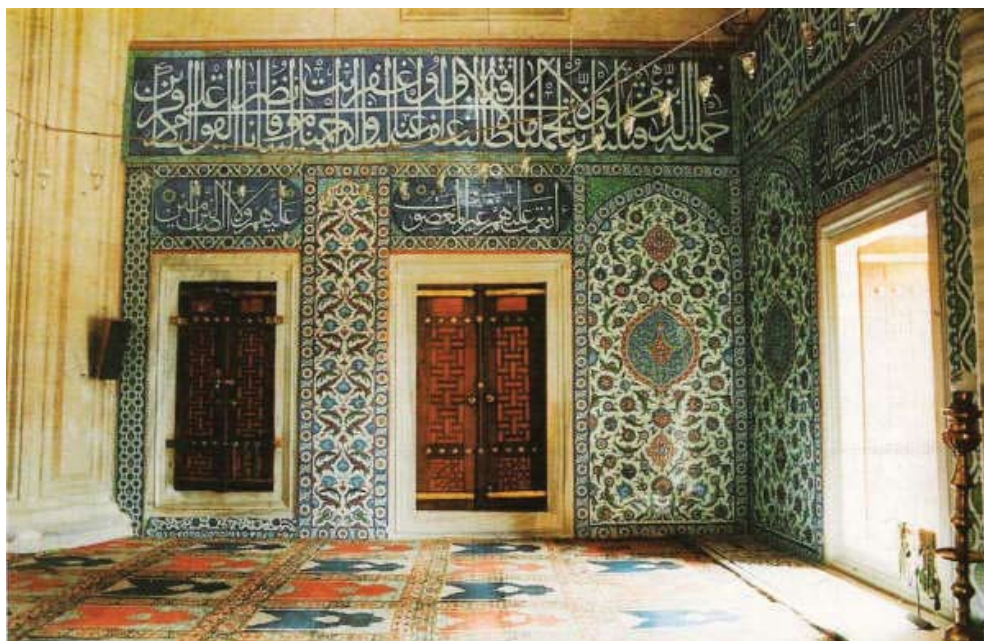
1. Calligraphic inscription



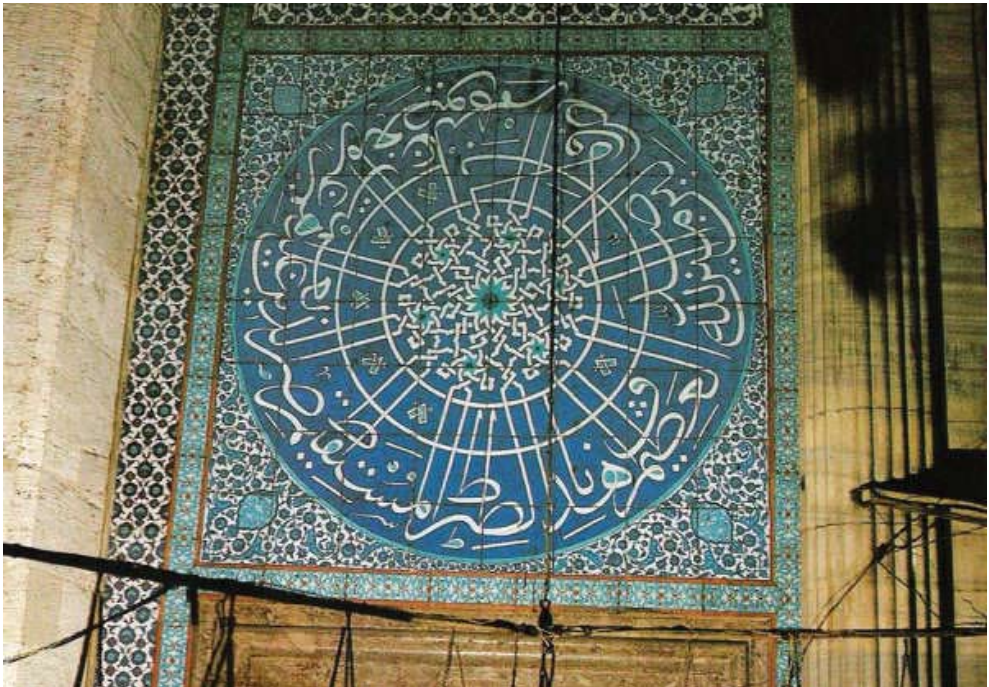
2. Calligraphic inscription in the main dome



3. Calligraphic inscription in the main dome



4. Tile panels inscribed with verses from the Qur'an over windows on the mihrab wall



5. The tile inscriptions on the left of the mihrab



6. Ya subhans inscription