

Platform Anatolian Religions and Beliefs Platform / Those who are backing our cultural heritage Vanguards of Our Cultural Heritage / Part 15

"Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa" with Hayri Fehmi Yılmaz

TOPICS: History of Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa, Legacy of the Mengücekli Dynasty, Contributions of Ahmet Şah and Turan Melek, Unique Doors of Divriği Great Mosque, Decorative Art in 13th Century Anatolian Architecture, Mihrab and Interior Details of Divriği Great Mosque, Restoration Processes and Current Situation, Alaaddin Keykubad and Seljuk State Connection, Cultural Importance of Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa, Current Visitor Interest and Conservation Studies of the Building

Nükhet Everi: We are here with Hayri Fehmi Yılmaz, an art history expert, in our interviews series for the Anatolian Religions and Beliefs Platform. We will talk about a very important building, Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa, which is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In this interview, we discussed in detail the history, architectural features, and restoration processes of Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa. The cultural importance of the building and the efforts for its protection were also emphasised. There is a lot of misinformation and information pollution about these buildings. Let us listen to you in detail.

Hayri F. Yılmaz: Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa was built between 1228-1229 during the Mengücekid period. The mosque was built by Ahmet Shah and the Darüşşifa was built by his wife Turan Melek. This building complex has very important architectural features. While the mosque was designed as a large place of worship, Darüşşifa was used as a hospital. These two buildings were built adjacent to each other and this feature is different from other buildings in Anatolia.

Nükhet Everi: What is the cultural and historical significance of these buildings?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: The Great Mosque and Darüşşifa of Divriği are an important part of Anatolia's cultural and historical heritage. These structures were built during the Mengücekli Principality period and are important works reflecting the artistic understanding of the period. In addition, these buildings are examples of the influence and artistic accumulation of the Seljuk State in Anatolia. Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa, with its architectural and artistic features, are among the important cultural heritages not only of Turkey both in Türkiye but also of and the world.

Nükhet Everi: What are the striking features of the design of the mosque and the Darussifa darüşşifa?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: The design of the building is quite interesting and original. The direction of the *mihrab* of the mosque is also the direction of the entrance door of the hospital. This unusual arrangement enables worship and health services to meet in the same complex. In addition, the stone decorations on the facades of the mosque and the hospital are unique examples reflecting the artistic understanding of the period. Especially tThe crown gates of the mosque in particular are one of the most beautiful examples of Anatolian Seljuk- period architecture.

Nükhet Everi: Which motifs were used in the decorations of these doors?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: Rumi motifs, floral patterns, geometric ornaments, and some figurative elements are found on the doors of the Great Mosque of Divriği. Rumi motifs are a characteristic feature of Seljuk art and were used extensively in this building. The floral patterns consist of stylised shapes inspired

by nature. Geometric patterns also have an important place on the doors. These decorations are elements that increase the artistic value of the building.

Nükhet Everi: Can you give provide information about the *mihrab* and other interior details of the mosque?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: The *mihrab* of the mosque has a simple yet impressive design. An aesthetic balance is achieved by using a combination of intensity and simplicity in the decorations. The wooden pulpit (*minbar*) in the interior of the mosque is also among the remarkable details. The pulpit has ornaments made with fine workmanship. In addition, the shah *mahfil* in the interior of the mosque is also an important element. This *mahfil* is located in the upper part of the mosque's worship area, of the mosque and attracts attracting attention with its wooden workmanship.

Nükhet Everi: What can you say about the restorations the building has undergone throughout its history?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa has undergone various restorations throughout history. The first major restoration was carried out in the 16th century during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. During this period, the building had been damaged by natural disasters such as earthquakes and needed extensive repair. In the 1960s, the General Directorate of Foundations there was a undertook restoration work carried out by the General Directorate of Foundations. However, the cement materials used at that time damaged the original texture of the building. Today, a more modern and meticulous restoration process is being carried out. In the restoration works, and care is taken to repair the stones in the building by remaining faithful to their original state.

Nükhet Everi: Are there any other remarkable details about the Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: Yes, the name of Alaaddin Keykubad is mentioned on the doors of the building. This shows that the building was subject belonged to the Seljuk State. It is also known that the building masons were Hürremşah of Ahlat and Ibrahim of Tbilisi. These masons were among the most skilled stonemasons of the period and did a magnificent job inon this building. Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa is considered to be a structure far ahead of its time with its unique stone workmanship and architectural features.

Nükhet Everi: So, how is this building today? What is the number of visitors?

Hayri F. Yılmaz: Today, Divriği Great Mosque and Darüşşifa attracts many visitors as it is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Thousands of tourists come to Divriği every year to see this unique structure. Restoration works are ongoing and the building is under protection. The protection and promotion of such structures is of great importance in terms of transferring our cultural heritage to future generations. In additionFurthermore, thanks to the promotional activities carried out in recent years, the interest of local and foreign tourists has increased. The building also hosts various cultural events.