

Platform of Anatolian Religions and Beliefs Platform / Those who are backing our cultural heritage Vanguards of Our Cultural Heritage / Chapter 22

"Double Minarets in Anatolia" with Hayri Fehmi Yılmaz

TOPICS: The Importance and Origin of Double Minarets, Double Minarets in Anatolia, The Impact of Minarets on Islamic Architectural and Cultural Heritage, Double Minarets in the Seljuk and Ottoman Periods, Double Minarets in Iran, India, and Azerbaijan, Ayşe Denk Nalbant's Studies on Double Minarets, Double Minarets in Erzurum and Sivas, Engineering and Aesthetic Values of Double Minarets, Use of Double Minarets in Madrasas and Mosques

Nükhet Everi: In this episode of our interviews with those who shoulder our cultural heritage, we have a guest who is an art historian whom we know and love very well. In this episode, we will talk about the double minarets in Anatolia with Hayri Fehmi Yılmaz. Actually, the double minaret is a symbol in my eyes and a building, especially mosques, have minarets. Madrasahs also have double minarets. So, why are double minarets used? We have friends who are curious about this, especially since we received a request on this subject.

Hayri Fehmi Yılmaz: Frankly speaking, the expert on this subject in Turkey is Mrs Ayşe Denk Nalbant. Her doctoral thesis is on madrasas with double minarets. More precisely, structures with double minarets in Anatolia. She has visited most of the buildings in Iran, India, and Azerbaijan. That is, she visited all those in Anatolia. HeShe visited most of those in Iran and Azerbaijan. And she prepared such a great doctoral thesis. You know that it is difficult to prepare such a thesis. Preparing a doctorate that crosses borders is a troublesome job. Sometimes there are those who do a doctorate with a single structure, but that is of course a very difficult task. However, it is even more difficult to work in a wide geography and with different structures. I think it was also very enjoyable. HeShe also enjoyed it a lot. Actually, I would have liked himher to be here too. I also like this subject. It is very interesting. But of course, most of the determinations evaluations are his. HeShe has very beautiful photographs and very interesting evaluations.

Very interesting topics about the Seljuks are now being dissertated and very interesting discussions are coming to the agenda. In fact, we see how interesting the roots of this civilisation in our geography are. I think it would be useful to remind you how interesting things are extending to Iran on one side, Azerbaijan on the other, and even India and Egypt. In fact, of course, the minaret is one of the most interesting architectural elements of the Islamic faith. We discuss its origin a lot. There are many examples in a wide geography, but it may have come from lighthouses. Maybe the word originates from there. Those in Asia may be related to the communication towers of the Buddhist world. Because some of these minarets look like very serious towers. Some minarets in the interior of Asia, in Central Asia, in Turkestan geography have lost their mosques and have been left alone. European travellers and experts who first saw them could not understand what they were, and even thought they were victory towers when they read the inscriptions on them. When they saw such huge towers that praised the sultans, there was no mosque next to them. It was very difficult to understand that. But, of course, the minaret is an interesting subject. It may not be easy to determine its origin for the time being. However, the Islamic faith is the most recently developed belief system in the Middle East and we know more or less how its rituals and worship methods developed. Bilal-i Habeshi, the pioneer of muezzins, used to call to prayer. He used to call to prayer from a high place on the Kaaba. The main issue is to invite the congregation to worship. For this, even Islamic sources explain it clearly. I cannot be sure if this discussion has been held, but Islamic sources always explain it. Muslims also discussed in Medina what to do to invite the congregation to worship in the mosque, and in order not to be like the Jews and Christians, they preferred to make such an invitation with the

human voice. However, it is also worth mentioning this. Sometimes it is like music, it is something that is recited in a makam, sometimes it is just a call. In fact, if you think of the word from an Arab point of view, it is a human voice inviting them to worship in the mosque. This is actually a very interesting invitation. Gradually, it became clear that in order to make this invitation, it was necessary to choose a high place in the city, not just the roof of the building, but a high place. There are bell towers in churches and monasteries. It is not very common in Eastern Christianity, but they have them. They ring bells and they are located in a slightly high part of the building. Therefore, as far as I understand, they were a little inspired by that. and they started to build a high tower next to a building, next to a place of worship. These are not very big things, but for example, there is a very interesting example in Samarra. We have a giant tower called Malviye. This is a marvellous thing. Maybe one of the most beautiful examples of 8th and 9th century architecture. Next to a giant camp mosque, they built a spiral minaret with a staircase from the outside, almost like a ziggurat.

I started from Bilal-i Habeshi, one of the oldest minarets, I know the double minarets. Of course, it is very interesting in Asia. For example, when Islam was developing towards North Africa, in that geography, we come across towers sitting on square bases. In the minaret of the Malviye and Tolunoğlu Mosque in Egypt, there is a staircase going round from the outside. In the east, from the 10th and 11th centuries onwards, cylindrical minarets begin to appear in eastern Iran. They are not square but cylindrical. Some of these have sliced bodies in Central Asia. They appear next to giant mosques. Of course, what is interesting is that the façades with double minarets, which we have been talking about since the Seljuk era, are emerging. It is a very interesting element. For one thing, you suddenly see such an enormous tower in the centre of a horizontally developing city. This tower, especially when its number increases, gives a great information about the identity of the city. It both marks the location of mosques. It also contributes to the sound reaching all Muslims. It also becomes an element that changes the silhouette. These are also very serious engineering achievements, big towers. Here it sits on a square base. It is extremely important that these towers are both thin and tall, and that they are built with smooth bricks or smooth stones. You look at a period, it progresses a little more. This time, crown gates, large portals, let's call them flood portals, because they are formed by overflowing from the building. They start to come side by side with them. Now, starting from the middle of the 12th century, this style appears in Seljuk works in Anatolia. The first big examples of course start in the East. And in fact, it is largely encountered with madrasahs. Especially in the East, maybe a mosque, but I always associate things related to mosques with the existence of a mosque. But we usually come across madrasahs. The origin of one or two of them can be traced back to the Akkoyunlu period. But before that, of course, we encounter them in Sivas from the beginning of the 13th century. One of them is the Double Minaret Madrasa. It is dated around 1270s. The other is the Gök Madrasa in Sivas. They are two magnificent buildings in Sivas within such a 1-2 bird flight distance. There are two minarets on the facade of both buildings as if imitating each other. There is a large crown door between them and the inside of that crown door is decorated with a magnificent workmanship that is really a masterpiece of stone workmanship.

There is a similar building in the same style as the Hatuniye Madrasah in Kayseri. Another example is in Erzurum. There is the Double Minaret Madrasa in Erzurum. It is also very interesting. The buildings in Erzurum are a little different. It is again in the form of a madrasa. It is a building with a courtyard, portico and student cells around it. It has a crown gate and there are two minarets on both sides of this crown gate. Later on, we encounter mosques in Erzurum more frequently. But this time double minarets do not appear together in mosques. But it is an important element that the minarets are double and point to that mosque. For example, we see it in mosques with fountains. Erzurum Ulu Mosque has a structure with a fountain. In big cities, these minarets define that city architecturally. In our geography, for example, in Gülbahar Hatun Mosque in Trabzon, they do not keep the minaret

very close to the mosque. The minaret seems to be a little further back and comes out from there. Therefore, Trabzon's Ulu Camii has the same structure. These features are actually very important architecturally for the Seljuk period and the Ottoman period afterwards. Double minarets add an aesthetic value to the building and at the same time ensure that the call to worship reaches everywhere.