

# RUMI MOTIFS IN THE TILE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE EMİNÖNÜ YENİ VALİDE MOSQUE

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## Abstract

*The Yeni Valide Mosque is situated in Eminönü, one of the busiest parts of İstanbul and at the head of the Galata Bridge. It is of great importance not only in terms of the facilities it incorporates in its structure, but also for the tile inscriptions and other decorative elements it has. The tile inscriptions written by Teknecizade İbrahim Efendi in celi sülüs form and transferred on tile at İznik ateliers contain a wide range and genuine repertoire of motifs. The motifs used together with the calligraphy are flower originated forms, rumis, curves and clouds. Among those motifs, the rumis acquired their flower originated form at the XVIIth century. The aim of decorating the empty spaces by small motifs in calligraphy although it is already a decorative element in itself, should be to emphasize the character of the writing. While the various and free use of the rumi form in its floral character gained in the XVIIth century is considered in this article, it is also worthy to attract attention to these unnoticed tiny decorative details at the Yeni Valide Mosque.*

**Key Words:** Yeni Valide Mosque, tile inscriptions, rumi motif

## Eminönü Yeni Vâlîde Câmîi Çini Yazıtlarında Rûmî Motifleri

### Özet

*İstanbul'un en işlek iskelelerinden biri olan Eminönü'nde, Galata Köprüsü başında yer alan Yeni Vâlîde Câmîi (1074/1663), mimari özellikleri*

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*bakımından olduğu kadar çini yazıtları ve çini bezemeleri açısından da önem taşımaktadır. Câminin Teknecizâde İbrahim Efendi tarafından yazılarak İznik atölyelerinde çini levhalar üzerine aktarılan celi sülüs yazıtları, zengin ve özgün bir motif repertuarını barındırmaktadır. Yazıtlarda, harflerle birlikte yer alan motifler, bitki kaynaklı motifler, rumîler, münhanî ve bulutlardır. Kendisi de dekoratif bir öge olan yazının, harfleri arasında kalan boşlukların küçük motifler ile ayrıca süslenmesi, yazının karakterini kuvvetlendirmek olmalıdır. Bu makalede, XVII. yüzyılda kazandığı bitkisel karakteri, caminin yazıtları içindeki çeşitli ve serbest kullanımıyla göze çarpan rumi motifi üzerinde durulurken, esasında, Yeni Valide Camii'nin pek farkedilmeyen bu minik bezeme öğelerine dikkat çekilmek istenmektedir.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Eminönü Yeni Valide Camii, Yazıt, Rumi Motifi

## 1.INTRODUCTION

Eminönü Yeni Valide Mosque, constructed at the busiest port of the world, is situated in the center of the last big complex reminiscent of Ottoman Architecture. Its construction was started by Safiye Sultan, mother of Sultan III.Mehmed. The foundation was laid by the architect Davud Aga in the year 1597 and the construction was completed in 1663 by the architect Mustafa Aga. The founder of the mosque is Turhan Hatice Sultan, mother of Sultan IV.Mehmed.<sup>1</sup> The mosque is built in classical style and stands out with its decorative elements. Tile inscriptions are found in the last attendance corner, mihrab's walls, Sultan's gallery, front planes of the second story windows. Inscriptions by the calligrapher Teknecizade İbrahim Efendi<sup>2</sup> in celi sülüs form white on a dark blue ground contain verses from the Koran, esma-i hüsnâ (glorious names of God) and prayers in Arabic.

Since early epochs of Islamic architecture empty spaces within calligraphy on tiles are embellished in various styles within certain motifs. Decorative elements in tile inscriptions are recognised on Anatolian Seljuk works belonging to XIIIth century, on edifices built in central Asia during the Timurid period in the XIVth and XVth centuries and following XVth century in all periods of Ottoman architecture. Since an inscription is a decorative element in itself, the purpose of decorating it must be to point out the characteristics of the calligraphy by enriching it with ornamentation. The designs observed on the inscriptions may be formed by circular compositions

<sup>1</sup> Fındıklılı Silahdar Mehmed. (1928). Silahdar Tarihi, İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, c.1, s.218; Hüseyin Ayvansarayi (1281), Hadikatü'l-Cevami', İstanbul, Matbaa-i Amire, s.144; Ernst Menburi (1925), Rehber-i Seyyahin, İstanbul, Ritsu ve Mahremi Neşriyatı, s.218; Tahsin Öz (1987), İstanbul Camileri, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu. c.1, s. 147; Ali Saim Ülgen, "Yenicami", Vakıflar Dergisi, Ankara 1942, II, s.338.

<sup>2</sup> Müstakımdade Süleyman Sadeddin. (1928). Tuhfe-i Hattatin, İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, s.48.

twisting inwardly where small motifs are used and which cover the base entirely, or else by using the same motif in empty spaces or as attached to the words individually. One can also use inscriptions ornamented by one or two motifs. These motifs can be rumi, leaf or flower arranged gently at the end of the calligraphy or to the vacancy left above the calligraphy. The vacancies of tile inscriptions can be embellished by semi stylized flowers at intervals. The vacancies within the inscriptions are also embellished densely with various groups of motifs, by using individual motifs or by using the motif in a composition. Although there are unembellished inscriptions, motifs are as well drawn in the hatayi style and rumis are frequently used in tile inscriptions. However motifs of animal origin, spots and tiger stripes are also observed.

Tile inscriptions of Eminönü Yeni Valide Mosque contain groups enriched with motifs, motifs of floral origin, münhani (curves), rumi motifs, and stylized clouds. Rumis among motifs placed in calligraphical vacancies individually or situated on a line is our main topic in this article. In order to write Turkish Ornamentation History, it is necessary to relate the phases of this art. In this sense the tile inscriptions of Yeni Valide Mosque enlighten a certain phase and is distinguished with its specific motifs and the way they are used. Before mentioning about the motifs in tile inscriptions in Yeni Valide Mosque, we want to mention embellishments within calligraphy at some monuments chosen from Islamic architecture.

## **2. TILE INSCRIPTION ORNAMENTS IN ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE**

Tile inscriptions were used extensively both on the outer and inner surfaces of monuments established during the Seljuks period in Anatolia in the XIIIth century. It is also noted that tile decorations are inevitable elements for monuments. The decorative styles used at the base of the inscriptions show close similarities to each other. Kufi calligraphy in black on light colored surface at the mihrap (prayer nich) of Alaeddin Mosque in Konya is decorated with green spirals. The wide circles having inward curves are decorated with small rumis. Similar rumi compositions are also encountered at Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Rumi Mosque. At the Karatay Medrese in Konya, tile inscriptions attract attention together with abundant use of tile inscriptions. The base of the inscriptions is light in colour and decorated with wide spirals adorned with green rumi motifs. At the tile exedras of Sırçalı Medrese the base of inscriptions with calligraphy in black is decorated with turquoise coloured spirals, the base of turquoise coloured tile inscriptions is decorated with black spirals. Various rumi motifs are noticed on the spirals. The same composition with wide spirals are also seen in tile inscriptions of Gök Medrese. The joint characteristic of the tile inscriptions used in these monuments is that at first

glance one can notice the inward curved circles instead of the motif itself. Motifs used in compositions do not exhibit variety, but same kind of motifs are used repeatedly. On the tile inscriptions placed in frontal side of İzzeddin Keykavus Tomb in Sivas, rumi motifs decorate the calligraphy freely and not in a composition.

Same wide spiral characters are seen in tile inscriptions used in monuments established during Timurids in Asia in the XIVth and XVth centuries. The tile ornaments with white calligraphy in dark blue base situated at prayers niche of Ahmed Yesevi Tomb built by Timuri in Türkistan are embellished with small flowers and stems holding leaves. Small yellow flowers are used on blue spirals in tile inscriptions of Derb-i İmam Tomb in Isfahan. The tile decorations on the gates of Şah-ı Zinde, Şirin Bike Ata and Tuman Ata Tombs in Semerkand are decorated with spirals embellished with small flowers. The same decoration is observed in the tile decorations at the gate of Gur-i Emir Tomb built by Timur for himself and at the entrance exedra of Ulug Bey Medrese built by Ulug Bey. Tile decorations are used extensively at the gate of Mavi Mosque in Tebriz. The tile inscriptions situated in this monument are mostly composed of circular wide spirals together with motifs.

Yeşil Tomb in Bursa built by Ottomans in the XVth century is prominent for its tile inscriptions found at the window foreheads on internal and external surfaces of the monument. Tile inscriptions are decorated with plane, sencide and separated rumis. At the base of Çelebi Sultan Mehmed's tile sarcophagus, the inscriptions are decorated with compositions formed using small flowers. The window foreheads lined in tile at the inner surface of Yeşil Mosque are decorated with rumi compositions.

The use of tile decoration on the outer surfaces of monuments built by Ottomans in İstanbul are restricted to the inner court window foreheads last attendance corner walls. Whereas in the inner site tile decorations are more intensive. At the last attendance corner of Fatih Mosque, two window foreheads remaining from I. Fatih Mosque built by Mimar Atik Sinan between 1462-1470, the empty spaces in calligraphy are filled in by rumi compositions. In the tile forehead on the western side having besmele-i şerif in the celi sülüs form in white, on dark blue base and in the forehead where yellow kufi calligraphy is used turquoise, yellow and white plane and seperated rumis on circular stems and small rumi spots are found. The yellow colour seen in two sides at the triangular window forehead and which is characteristic of the early period tiles is not seen at the third corner. The colour of the base at the forehead of the window in the east side is light navy blue. The calligraphy is in celi sülüs form in white colour. On the other window forehead the calligraphy is kufi in grayish white. At the base of the calligraphy white and dark blue

lobed rumis are used in white stems. The two window foreheads remaining from I. Fatih Mosque are considered important since they create an example to XVth century calligraphy and tiling technics together with circular formed calligraphy base decorations.



Photograph 1. A Detail From The Tile Inscriptions of I. Fatih Mosque.

The base of tile inscriptions at window foreheads of Yavuz Selim Mosque (1522) in İstanbul, are decorated with a composition made with rumi motifs in single colour. The celi sülüs calligraphy at window foreheads of Yavuz Selim Mosque are decorated only by using a leaf in the form of a saz style. In the tile inscriptions at Mesih Ali Paşa Mosque (1586) window foreheads, the empty spaces in calligraphy are filled in with leaves, rumis and flower motifs used sparcely. On the tile foreheads of Kadirğa Sokullu Mosque (1571) motifs are used sparcely, too. Motifs are seen on inscriptions of Allah and Muhammed (pbuh). A small number of motifs are used at the tile inscriptions of Rüstem Paşa Mosque (1561). At the Topkapı Palace Valide Sultan courtyard tile inscriptions are found decorated with big flowers and leaves. Tile inscriptions entouring the Sultan Sofa walls display an intensive embellishment. On the circular blue and white tile inscriptions at the Harem entrance corridors and at the base of besmele-i şerif at Çifte Kasırlar, leaf motifs are in sight. An extensive ornamentation in tile inscriptions is observed at III.Murad Kiosk. Square tile inscriptions are found at window foreheads of prayer niche at Kara Ahmed Paşa Mosque built in İstanbul by Mimar Sinan in 1558. In celi sülüs calligraphy of White on dark blue base, same motifs are repeated in the tile inscriptions. In the inscriptions bordered in yellow bands, small turquoise coloured rumis are used. The motifs are not mingled with calligraphy. There is an additional design in rumi and hatayi at the border.

Selimiye Mosque built by Mimar Sinan between 1569-1578 in Edirne for Sultan II. Selim, display the best examples of tile inscriptions. In the celi

sülüs writings of calligrapher Hasan Çelebi, a hatayi form decoration or a rumi motif is rarely seen. Out of the four window foreheads situated at inner court only one has a leaf motif. On the middle of this big leaf there are flowers and a coral red rose is seen behind the leaf. In this instance, the calligraphy covers the expected space in balance therefore it has not been necessary to make any decoration at the base of the inscription.

In the interior of Kılıç Ali Paşa Mosque built by Mimar Sinan dated 1550, square tile inscriptions are situated on all window foreheads. The calligrapher of celi sülüs writings of White on dark blue is Demircikulu Yusuf Efendi. At the base of the inscriptions in celi sülüs form at the window forehead of prayer niche leaf, rose and rumi motifs are used independently without forming a composition. The coral red of XVIth century tiles are seen in the carefully and gently drawn and proportionally scattered motifs. At the border of the inscription there is a supplement rumi composition.



Phograph 2. A Detail From The Tile Inscriptions of Kılıç Ali Paşa Mosque.

At Atik Valide Mosque built by Mimar Sinan dated 1583, the window foreheads at harem and last attendance corner, are decorated with tile inscriptions. The calligrapher of celi sülüs writings in square tile inscriptions is Hasan Üsküdari. In an inscription at the last attendance corner, big leaves, small flowers are used in empty spaces. A headgear in rumi form is placed in the upper left corner. At the turquoise coloured border, a supplement design is used with seperated and headgear rumi.

At Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Mosque built in 1734, on the walls of mihrap sofa, winding tile inscriptions are decorated here and there by semi-stylized rose and tulip motif. At the end of the celi sülüs inscribed band, yellow roses at the belly of the letter *zı* and at the end of *mim*, and yellow İstanbul tulip at the

side of the calligrapher's "piled up signature" attract attention. In the other parts of the inscription the same semi-stylized flower forms are used carefully and in good design.



Photograph 3. A Detail From The Tile Inscriptions of Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Mosque.

### 3. RUMI MOTIFS ON THE TILE INSCRIPTIONS OF YENİ VALİDE MOSQUE

The motif developed by Anatolian Seljuks, meaning "belonging to Anatolia" is named "rumi". This motif rumi has also been called "turkî", which meant belonging to the Turks, and it has also been called "Seljuki" since it was frequently used by the Seljuks.<sup>3</sup> Mustafa Âli Efendi of Gallipoli, in his *Mevâidü'n-Nefâis fi Kavaid-i Mecâlis* has mentioned this motif to be "rumi".<sup>4</sup> From the beginning up to now rumi has been used in stone, metal, wood works, in tiles, illumination, textiles and has given its name to the name of a style. The earliest rumi pattern is considered in its use as the wings of a dragon found on a fresco belonging to Uyghur Turks, however it is evident that the formation of this motif depends on animal originated figures. The animal figures used as a symbol of force, bravery, heroism, were designed realistically in weaving, swords, spears, saddles by Huns that existed between VIIIth and VIIth centuries B.C. Turks in their three thousand years have established about twenty states from Huns to Seljuks. This political existence has resulted in the maintenance and continuity of their art concept.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> İnci A. Birol ve Çiçek Derman. (2004). *Türk Tezyini Sanatlarında Motifler*, İstanbul: Kubbealtı Neşriyatı, s.182; Celal Esat Arseven. (1983). *Sanat Ansiklopedisi*, İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları, s.240.

<sup>4</sup> Cahide Keskiner. (2001). *Turkish Motifs*, İstanbul: Turing ve Otomobil Kurumu, s.10.

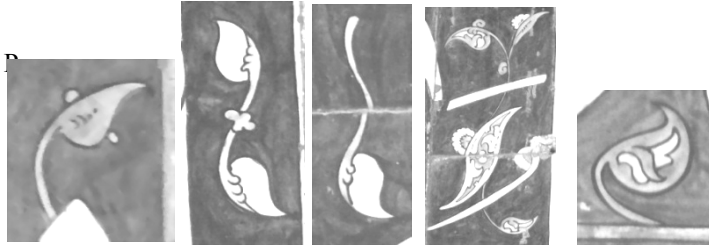
<sup>5</sup> Nejat Diyarbekirli. (1972). *Hun Sanatı*, İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, s. 123.

The sources of this rumi style are animal drawings found on remnants from Asian Huns back in IIIrd and IVth centuries BC. The earliest sample in Rumi is in the form of dragon wings found in a fresco of Uyghur Turks from IXth and Xth centuries.<sup>6</sup> Some researchers envisage that the formation of this motif is of flower origin. They say it is a lotus and palmet.<sup>7</sup> The base of their thesis is the Helenistic arts. The rumi motif encountered in Great Seljuks, during period of Beylikler (Clans), Ottoman Seljuks was immersed into compositions during Karakhanid epoch. After the XIVth century, various stylized forms existed in Ottoman decorations. This form was later deviated from animal drawings. Rumis are arranged on a seperate line in the design<sup>8</sup> and usually are differently coloured.

Rumi motifs used in tile inscriptions at Yeni Valide Mosque which generally look like floral styles will now be studied under seven groups recording to their drawing properties. The eighth group shows samples of compositions including rumis.

### 3.1. Plain Rumis

These are simple motifs with a circular base narrowing in a curve towards the top. There are also various types as rumis decorated with their own tiny copies those are ornamented with specks. There are also drawings like a plant emerging from soil, a leaf falling from a tree or symetrical prolongations on both sides of a floral design. There are rumis emerging on both sides of a decorated rumi in the form of a shuttle. In this design a leaf is protruted from the rumi. The rumis do not exist on a curve but are arranged individually into appropriate vacancies.



Photograph 4. Plane Rumis

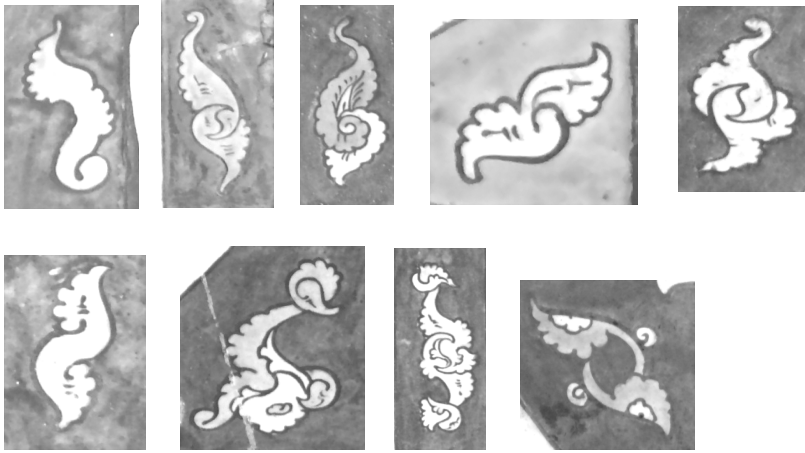
<sup>6</sup> Cahide Keskiner, Turkish Motifs, s.16.

<sup>7</sup> Yıldız Demiriz. (1979). Osmanlı Mimarisinde Süsleme I: Erken Devir, 1300-1453, İstanbul: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, s.27.

<sup>8</sup> İnci A. Birol. (2009). Türk Tezyini Sanatlarında Desen Tasarımı, Çizim Tekniği ve Çeşitleri, İstanbul: Kubbealtı Yayınları, s.314.

### 3.2. Smaller Pieces of Rumi

A rumi decorated with repeated whirrings (dendan) twisting inside takes the form of a spiral forming another rumi step by step. Two units united together show an appearance of a Chinese tai-kih<sup>9</sup> at the center. Ends of the motif are pointed and curved, the curves turn pointed inside forming a rumi, the body is enlarged. The whirrings at the edges are always protected. There are also others like one twisted rumi protruding from a spiral. The two units have been separated, the spiral in the middle has disappeared and small symmetrical motifs are formed. These motifs found in tile inscriptions situated at last attendance place, fill in the empty spaces between letters. These motifs are probably drawn by persons tutored in the same way.



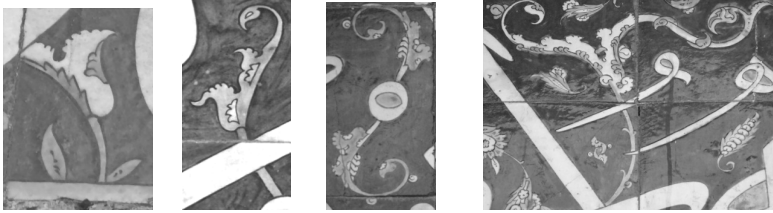
Photograph 5. Smaller Pieces of Rumi

### 3.3. Lobed Rumis (Dendanlı)

Those are rumis with repeated whirrings. These elegantly ornamented rumis have been frequently used in textiles, tiles, wood works, illumination. This form has been improved in the XVth and XVIth centuries with the impact of Herat school. This design exists in tile inscriptions at the Yeni Valide

<sup>9</sup> This figure is formed by two commas situated inside a circle symbolizing the contrast between the universe and life. One of the commas is colored white, the other black. Turks have used this figure in rugs and embroidery, calling it "white and black". This figure found in Iran, Indian and Turkistan rugs, embroidery, textiles and called cypress by the Turks is thought to origin by stylizing one of the Tai-kih designs and given a leaf form. Arseven, *Sanat Ansiklopedisi*, c.IV, s. 1898.

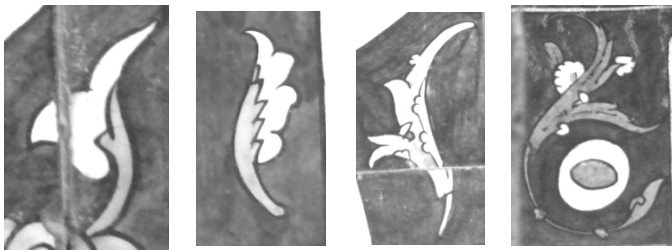
Mosque sometimes independently, sometimes as a great leaf procuring another leaf at the tip on the same stem. Therefore, it looks like a floral originated design. Lobed rumis exhibit special characteristics with tiny rumi particles winding the same stem.

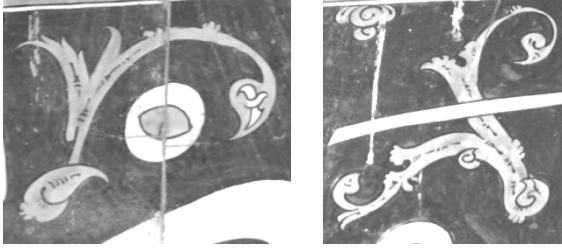


Photograph 6. Lobed Rumis

### 3.4. Separated Rumis

A section is separated in appropriate measure in the opposite direction in order to avoid monotony, thus making it more attractive. All kinds of rumis drawn in the pattern are therefore separational rumis at the same time. However the rumis selected from tile inscriptions of the Mosque are not included in this pattern. They are placed in empty spaces uniquely and properly. Separations occurring at outer limits of plane rumi, extension of the motif caused by division of the motif in two lead us to nominate them as separated rumis. A section stretching out from the motif in opposite direction has been extended in a curve forming a small plane rumi by twisting at the tip. These motifs attract attention for their likeliness to leaves and flowers and by lining on top of each other like ivy leaves on one stem. They exhibit unique forms by different artists with the veinlike lines in leaf designs, and small rumis winding around stem and body.





Photograph 7. Seperated Rumis

### 3.5. Sencîde Rumis

Sencîde is an adjective in the Persian language which means moderate and appropriate. It is the name of a rumi form that shows itself in our decorative arts to be a symmetrical form by placing the same rumi motif opposite the other. On the tile inscriptions of the mosque there are two different types of sencîde rumi. The ones made up of two plain rumis side by side are decorated with short lines and tiny rumis. The long ones arranged on a line are decorated with small flowers.

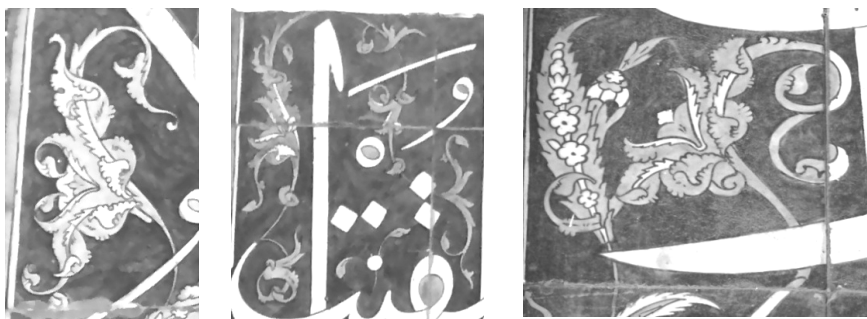


Photograph 8. Sencide Rumis

### 3.6. Piçide Rumis

Piçide is a Persian adjective meaning mingeled, twisted, intertwined. On our decorative arts the decorated rumi motif intertwined with small rumis is called a piçide rumi.<sup>10</sup> On the tile inscriptions of Yeni Valide Mosque, there are three specimens of piçide rumi resembling each other. Small rumis are intertwined at the back to a great lobed rumi. The ones arranged in a curved line give an effect of floral originated motifs.

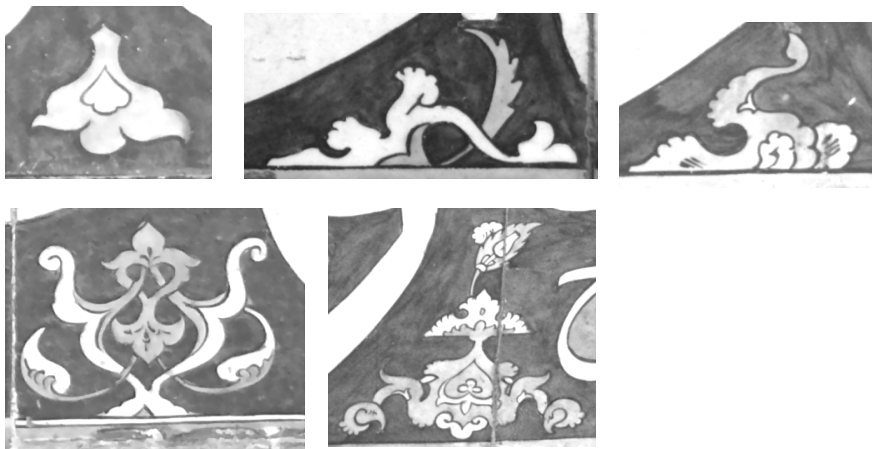
<sup>10</sup> Sitare Turan Bakır. (1999). İznik Çinileri ve Gülbenkyan Koleksiyonu, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, s.200.



Photograph 9. Piçide Rumis

### 3.7. Tepelik Rumis (Headgear)

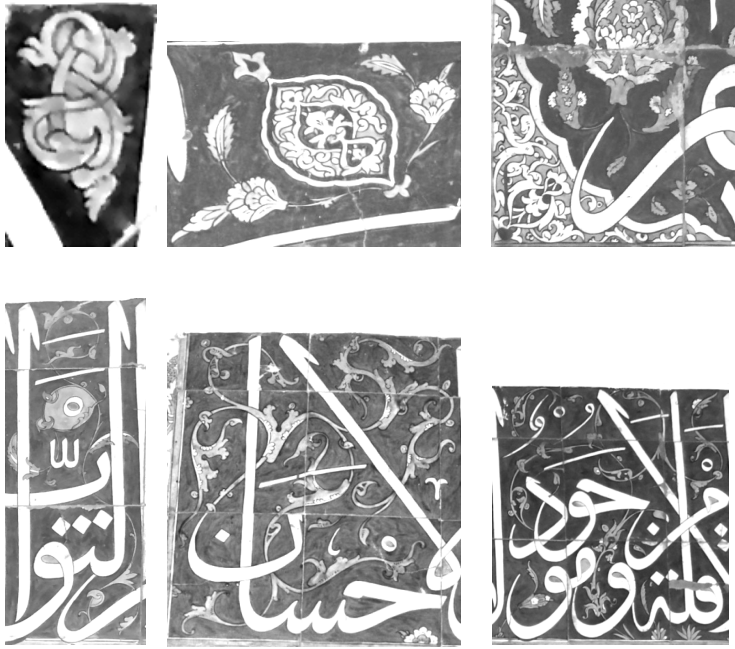
Tepelik rumis are situated as starting points of a composition and have symmetrical properties. The headgear rumis in tile inscriptions of the mosque are drawn either near the top or base boundaries or near the side fringe and sometimes are drawn in half. There are also some left in empty spaces of the calligraphy. They have characteristics of their own with rumi branches sprouting from inner parts and with their well balanced drawings.



Photograph 10. Tepelik Rumis

### 3.8. Compositions Including Rumis

In the empty spaces of tile inscriptions at Yeni Valide Mosque motifs are individual rather than compositions. Individual motifs not attached to a stem are used to fill in empty spaces. Floral compositions are scarcely used and do not indicate any differentiation. Whereas rumi compositions used intensively in tile inscriptions at the second story are exceptional. Some compositions start with leaves. Rumi compositions observed in şemse forms and at a fringe do not exhibit differences. Closed forms are created with rumi stems and these sections are coloured in light blue. The artists must have appreciated their work so much that they have formed an evil eye bead with the cezim inside a closed drawing.



Phograph 11. Rumi Compositions

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Yeni Valide Mosque occupies a space in the latest complex of the classical period and although bears the characteristics of this epoch in view of its structure and ornamentation, there is a sense of distortion in proportions. A deviation from simplicity in decorative elements is obvious.

The existence of various motif groups intensively in the tile inscriptions written by the calligrapher Teknecizade and inscribed at the İznik tile ateliers is in harmony with the embellishment style used generally. The inscriptions are situated at the last attendance corner, mihrab's walls, Sultan's gallery, front planes of the second story windows. The inscriptions used for decorative purposes in architecture relay messages to its visitors and also to the Sultan. What is the purpose of decorating these inscriptions so intensively since they are decorative elements in themselves? The intensity of motifs included in the tile inscriptions of the Mosque indicate the artists' horror of emptiness. It is an indication that the artist has chosen to apply an intensive decoration to overcome this feeling. The character of the words and placement of the celi sülüs calligraphy have necessitated this usage. We can say that the decorations have strengthened the character of the calligraphy and has endeared it to be prevalent.

Plenty of motifs are used at the base of celi sülüs calligraphy in the inscriptions at Yeni Valide Mosque. We are faced with floral motifs in all tile inscriptions of the Mosque. Rumi motifs are another group used frequently in the tile inscriptions. Curves and cloud motifs are also used in small amounts. Flower originated motifs and rumis are used both at empty spaces and in compositions as well. On the empty spaces of celi calligraphy flower originated motifs and rumis are used in the same spiral. Rumi and leaf motifs are drawn similarly so that the characteristics of one is used in the other too.

Sometimes small rumis have flourished from inside a small grass heap. What can be the reason for this? Is it a technical drawback resulting from the outcome of a break down in drawing motifs and designing? Are these motifs drawn in tile makers style and not in the decorators style? Is it a result of artists' search for novelties? It is not easy to find answers to these questions. However, it can be said that the artists who have decorated tile inscriptions at Yeni Valide Mosque have developed unique motifs and designs with new design perspectives. This century has created new forms within the boundaries of its own style.

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