

Wall Paintings of Giresun, Yağlıdere, Tekke Village, Sari Halife (Hacı Abdullah Halife) Mosque, Türkiye

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Abstract

The Hacı Abdullah Halife Mosque is located in Tekke Village, Yağlıdere District, Giresun, Türkiye. The present study documents the building and its wall paintings, evaluates its architectural fabric and later interventions, and reassesses its chronology and decorative attribution through measured survey, photographic documentation, documentary sources, and comparison with regional mosques. Field documentation and measured drawings were used to record the current condition; published historical and art-historical studies, the 1977 protection-board registration record, and the mosque's survey, restitution, and restoration documentation were consulted to distinguish original fabric from later alterations. The mosque is a rectangular masonry building with a wooden ceiling, wooden *mahfil* and furnishings, and a later reinforced-concrete minaret. Comparison with selected nineteenth-century mosques in Giresun and the Eastern Black Sea region indicates that the present architectural form is most plausibly nineteenth-century, although this remains a typological assessment rather than a securely dated construction. The wall paintings, executed on dry plaster, include floral bouquets, trees, vases, lamps, clocks, architectural imagery, and a seven-tiered, eight-gated paradise depiction. A partially legible inscription naming “*Darendeli Eş-Şeyh Hamza*” supports, but does not by itself prove, the attribution of the paintings to Hacı Hamza. The study therefore treats both the building chronology and painter attribution as evidence-based but qualified conclusions.

Keywords

Rural Mosques, Wall Paintings, Tekke Köy, Hacı Abdullah Halife

1. Introduction

The Hacı Abdullah Halife Mosque in Tekke Village, Yağlıdere, Giresun, is a rural mosque associated in the written literature with the Gülbahar Hatun Waqf and with a foundation attributed to Hacı Abdullah Halife in the early 1480s. The building visible today, however, must be distinguished from the date of the foundation: its present architectural fabric, construction technique, openings, wooden ceiling, *mahfil*, and later minaret reflect several phases of construction and alteration (**Figure 1**). The principal value of the monument lies not only in its architectural character but also in its extensive wall paintings on dry plaster, which combine floral, vegetal, object, architectural, geometric, and symbolic imagery. Previous studies have identified the decoration as part of the nineteenth-century Westernization-period mural-painting tradition of the Eastern Black Sea region (İltar, 2014a; Yavuz, 2009; Karpuz, 1982; Fatsa, 2008).

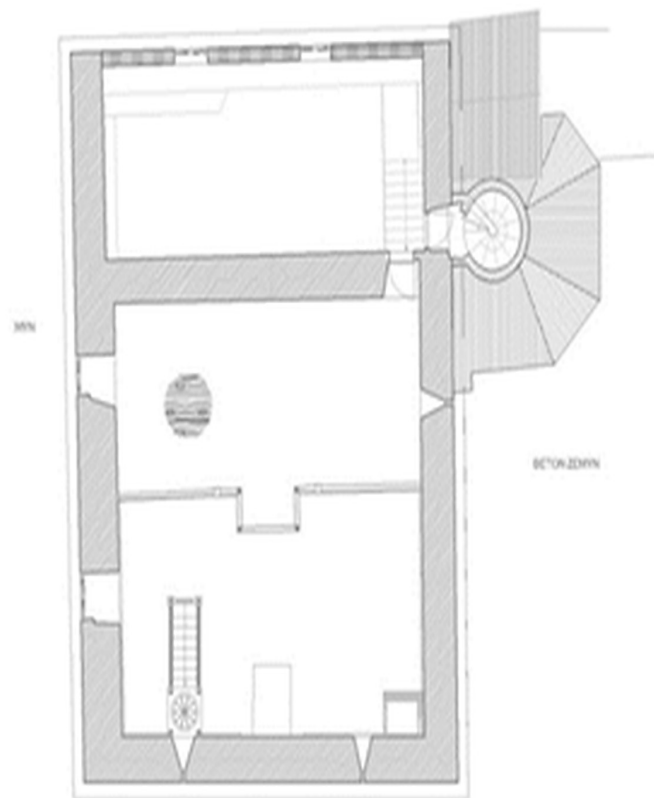


Figure 1. Plans of the *harim* and gathering place (Sedes, 2018).

2. Methods

Documentary Sources and Survey Procedure

The study combines architectural documentation, measured survey, art-historical analysis, and documentary research. Photographs taken during field documentation in 2014, 2016, and 2018 were used to record the building and the condition of its surfaces. Measured and scaled survey drawings which prepared were used to

establish the plan, sections, elevations, and spatial relationships. The documentary base includes published historical and art-historical studies, the 09 July 1977 *Trabzon Cultural and Natural Heritage Protection Board* registration decision (no. 678), and the survey, restitution, and restoration project documentation associated with the mosque. Historical records establish documentary claims; measured survey and material observation establish current physical condition; typological comparison is used only to formulate, not to prove, chronological hypotheses.

Original fabric was distinguished from later intervention by combining construction joints, differences in masonry and plaster, opening profiles, material and workmanship, visible traces of blocked or enlarged openings, documentary evidence, and comparison with the measured survey. Later interventions include the reinforced-concrete minaret, entrance enclosure, PVC window joinery, later sheet-metal roof covering, and other documented alterations. Restitution was based on surviving traces and regional typology, whereas restoration is treated as a conservation/intervention issue rather than evidence for the original construction date.

3. Comparative Framework and Research Questions

Regional Comparators and Analytical Criteria

The selected regional comparators—Bulancak Ahmetli Mosque, Bulancak Kızılot Neighbourhood Mosque, Bulancak Burunucu Village Mosque, Keşap Güneyköy Mosque, Keşap Tepeköy Mosque, and Piraziz Maden Village Mosque—are suitable because they belong to the same broad regional architectural environment and allow comparison of rural mosque planning, masonry construction, wooden ceilings and *mahfils*, openings, roof forms, and interior decorative practices. The comparison focuses on: 1) rectangular plan and the relationship of *harim* and last-congregation space; 2) masonry wall construction and wall thickness; 3) wooden ceiling and *mahfil* systems; 4) window and entrance forms; 5) roof construction; 6) minaret and ancillary units as indicators of later intervention; and 7) wall-painting vocabulary, including vases with floral bouquets, trees, cypresses, fruit trees, lamps, clocks, architectural frames, mosque depictions, geometric borders, and symbolic motifs. These comparators establish regional typological and decorative parallels, not direct architectural or workshop dependence (Sümerkan & Okman, 1999; Tuluk, 2007; Yavuz, 2009).

Accordingly, the study addresses four central questions: 1) Which elements of the present building can be documented as original fabric and which are later interventions? 2) What evidence supports a nineteenth-century date for the present architectural form, and how should that evidence be distinguished from the earlier foundation history? 3) Why do the mosque's wall paintings belong to the regional nineteenth-century mural tradition, and what can be said, with appropriate caution, about their maker? In addition, 4) How do the building and its decorative program relate to comparable rural mosques in Giresun and the wider Eastern Black Sea region? The paper therefore distinguishes four aims: documentation of the existing building and decoration; restitution of lost or altered elements based

on physical traces and regional comparison; assessment of restoration-related interventions and conservation needs; and art-historical interpretation of the architecture and wall paintings.



Figure 2. Photograph of the mosque from North side (Sedes, 2016).

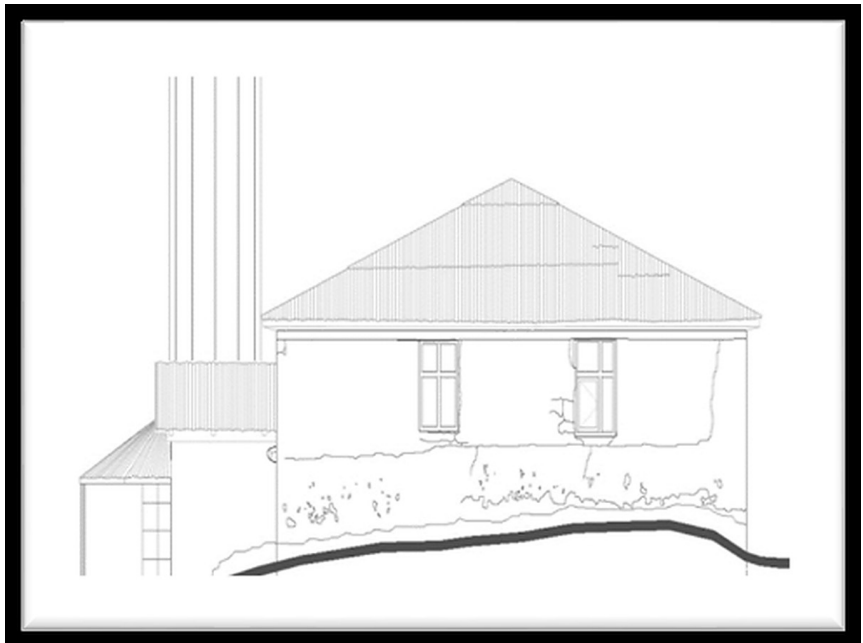


Figure 3. Drawing of the mosque from the North side (Sedes, 2016).

There are two vertical rectangular windows on the north façade at approximately eaves level (Figure 2). They have simple flat heads and no projecting jambs or separate stone lintels. The wall surface is plastered and painted, with localized cracking, and the façade terminates in a short wooden eave (Figure 3).

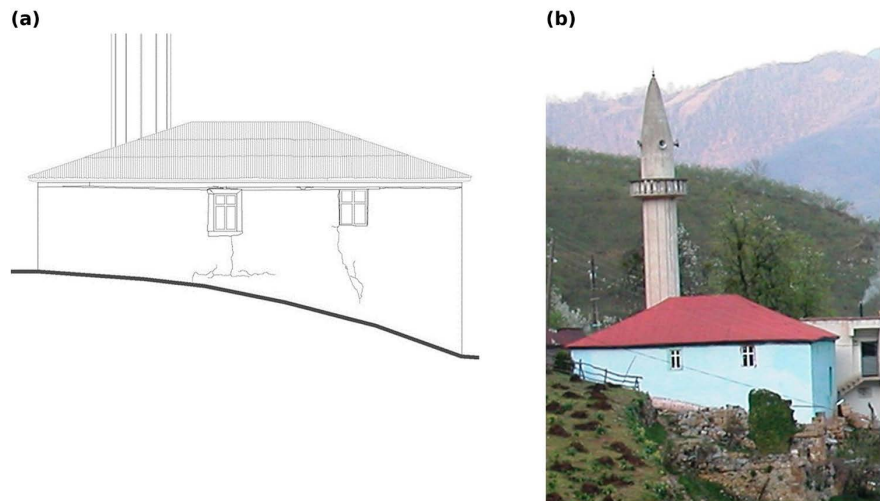


Figure 4. Western façade (Sedes, 2014).

The southern façade appears higher than the other façades because of the slope of the site (**Figure 4**). Near the eastern corner is one vertical rectangular window with a flat stone head and no projecting jambs. Unlike the other façades, the south façade also contains two loopholes. Its wall surface is plastered and painted, with localized cracking, and the façade terminates in a short wooden eave (**Figure 5**).

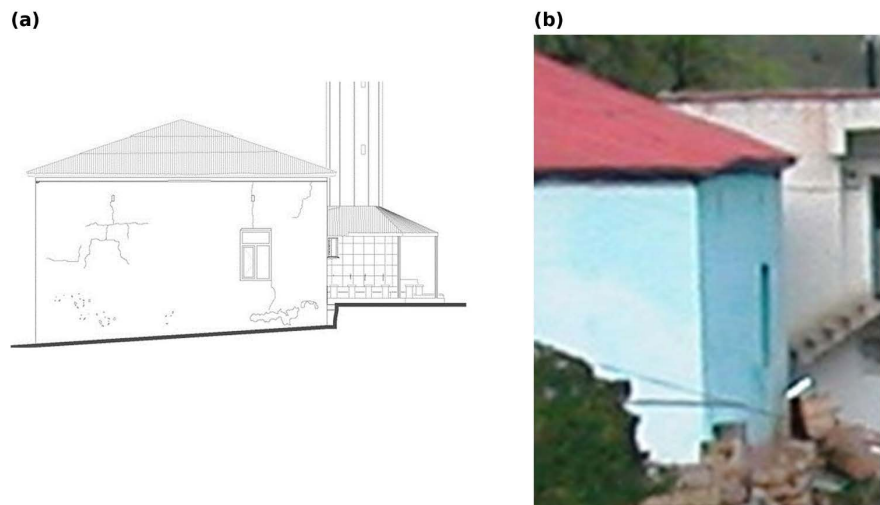


Figure 5. Southern façade (Sedes, 2014).

The eastern façade contains two windows, one loophole, the entrance to the narthex, and the fountain associated with the later minaret (**Figure 6**). The two vertical rectangular windows serving the *harim* have round-arched internal openings. The minaret is a later reinforced-concrete addition located at the northwestern side of the building; the fountain is attached to the minaret and projects toward the east façade. The narthex entrance on the north side of this section has a depressed arch. The entrance, fountain, and the lower part of the *harim* wall were covered with tile in a later period. The remaining wall surface is plastered and

painted, with localized cracking, and terminates in a short wooden eave.

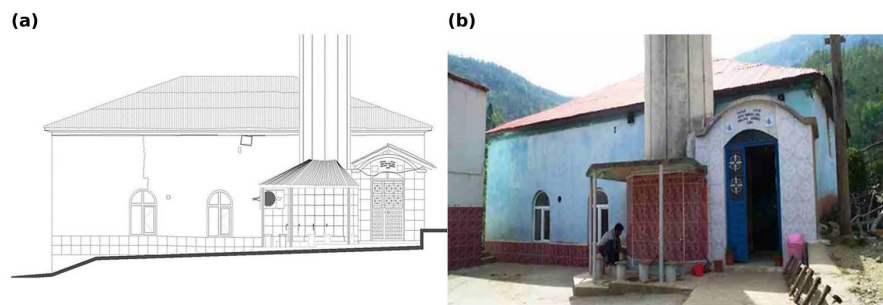


Figure 6. Eastern façade (Sedes, 2014).

The interior consists of the entrance hall and the *harim* (Figure 7). Due to the slope of the land, the entrance to the hall is provided from the east side. The round vault-shaped reinforced concrete space in front of the entrance was an addition (Figure 8). There are two windows on the north-facing face of the entrance hall. There is a vertical rectangular and flat-ribbed entrance door on the north corner of the eastern part of the hall, the west of which is solid. As soon as one enters through the door, there is a landing one-step higher than the entrance hall floor. A wooden staircase starting from this landing and rising adjacent to the eastern wall accesses the entrance hall and the minaret.

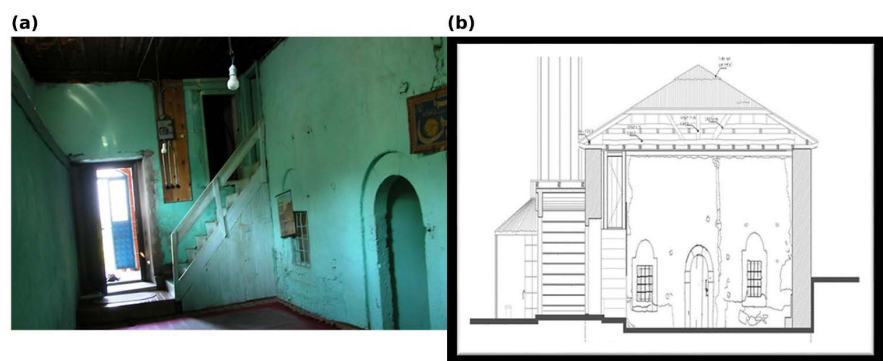


Figure 7. Entrance door (Sedes, 2014).

The door that provides entrance to the *harim* from the last congregation place preserves its original shape. The door with round arch opening and vertical rectangular shape is narrow and flat. The doorframe and arch are made of cut stone material. The single-winged door has simple workmanship and is made of wood. The windows placed symmetrically on both sides of the door, have round arches on the inside and flat lintel stone openings on the outside. The window frames and lintels are made of cut stone and are the same material as the doorframe. The joinery of the vertical rectangular windows is made of wood and the railings are made of metal. The application of round arched pediments on the windows is a common application in 19th-century mosques and churches in the region. The

original shape of the windows on the other facades of the mosque is also like this.

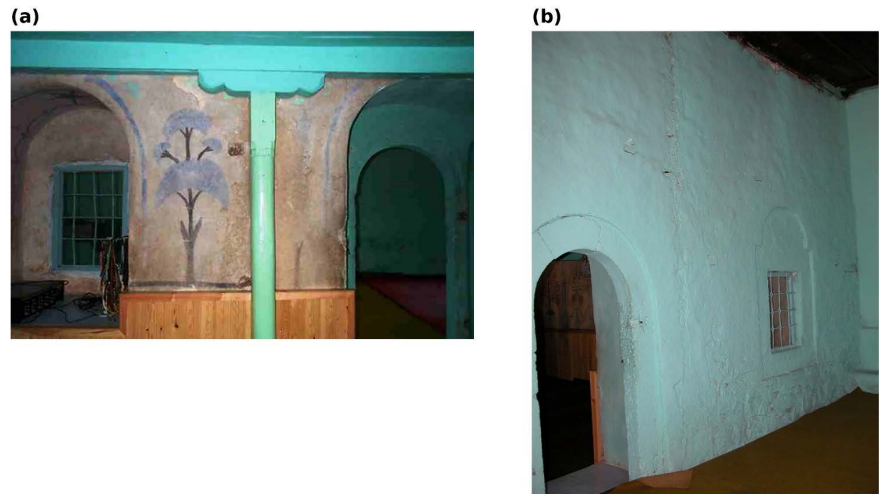


Figure 8. Entrance opening and round-arch window opening to the north (round-arch pediment application) (Birleş, 2014).

The gallery floor located to the north of the *harim* is completely wooden and extends to the middle of the *harim*. The *harim* has a square-shaped pavilion section that sits on the walls on the sides and two wooden columns in the front. The bases and capitals of the columns supporting the *harim* are square, while the body is round. The transitions from the base and capitals to the body are softened by beveling and made clear with moldings. The railings of the gallery are in the form of wooden railings animated by concave and convex moldings (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Gallery floor and wooden columns (Sedes, 2016).

In the interior, there is a door in the middle under the main wall's gallery and a window on each side of the door (**Figure 9**). The door and windows have semi-circular arch openings from the inside. The surface of the main wall above the gallery is solid, and there is a single-winged, simple-workmanship wooden door on the eastern corner of the wall that opens to the gallery (**Figure 10**).

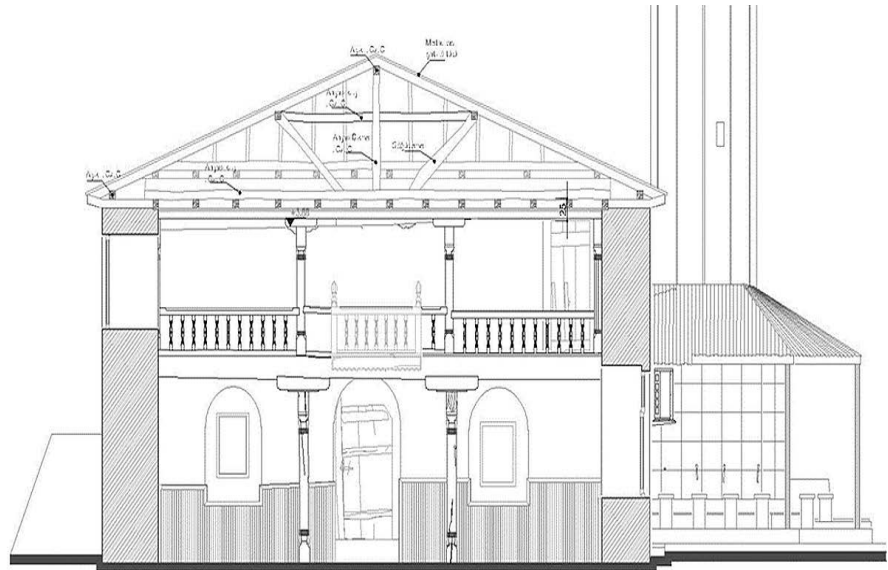


Figure 10. Section drawing in the harim (Sedes, 2018).

The entrance door is in the middle of the North wall, and a semicircular arched window is opened on both sides of the door. There are two tree motifs on the surface between the entrance opening and the window on the west of the entrance. Since the wooden column carrying the gallery divides the surface in two here, a cypress tree is depicted in the narrow area between the pillar and the door due to its thinness. It is difficult to notice since its color fades over time. The trunk of the tree is brown and the upper part is light blue. A tree motif that can be described as a weeping willow or a ball pine tree with blue leaves clustered in four places is embroidered on the surface between the column and the window. The blue leaves here are stylized. The window is surrounded by an outer contour consisting of a blue line. A zigzag border with dotted corners on both sides surrounds the window niche, and the spaces between the borders are filled with a curved branch motif (**Figure 11**). There is a six-pointed star in the arch. On the surface between the window and the west wall, there is a stylized fruit-bearing apple tree (İltar, 2014b).

A stylized fruit tree without leaves is seen on the wall surface to the east of the entrance and the entrance. Although the decorative composition in the window niche is the same as the other window, there is no star motif here. On the surface between the east of the window and the east wall, there is a tree motif resembling a palm tree. The branches of the tree rising from the ground line are curved to the right and left (**Figure 12**).



Figure 11. Wall paintings on the north wall.

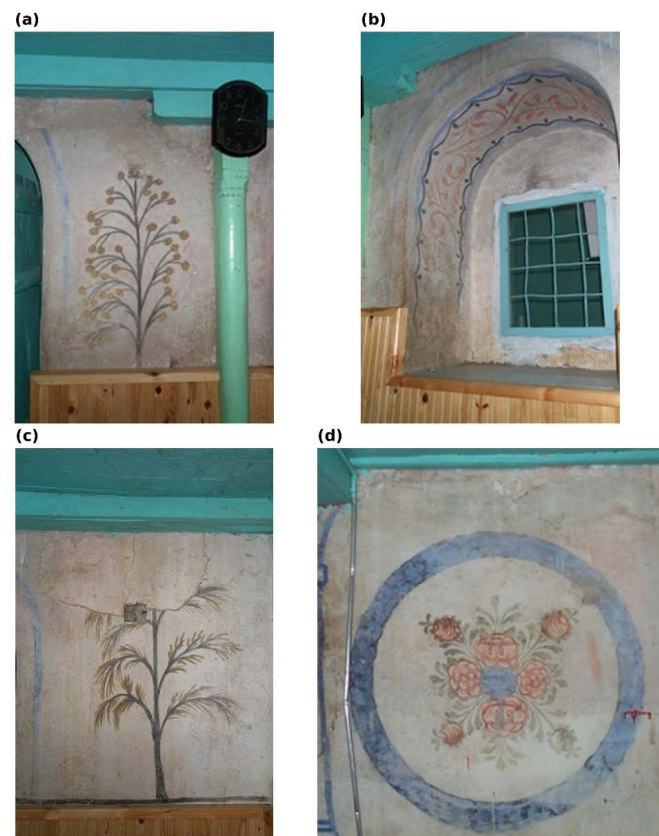


Figure 12. Stylized fruit tree without leaves on the east side of the entrance (Birleş, 2014).

There are two flat lintel window openings on the western main wall of the prayer hall. The original shape of these windows was the loophole opening on the southern body wall, but they were enlarged in a later period. One of the windows opens to the prayer hall and the other to the gallery (Figure 13).

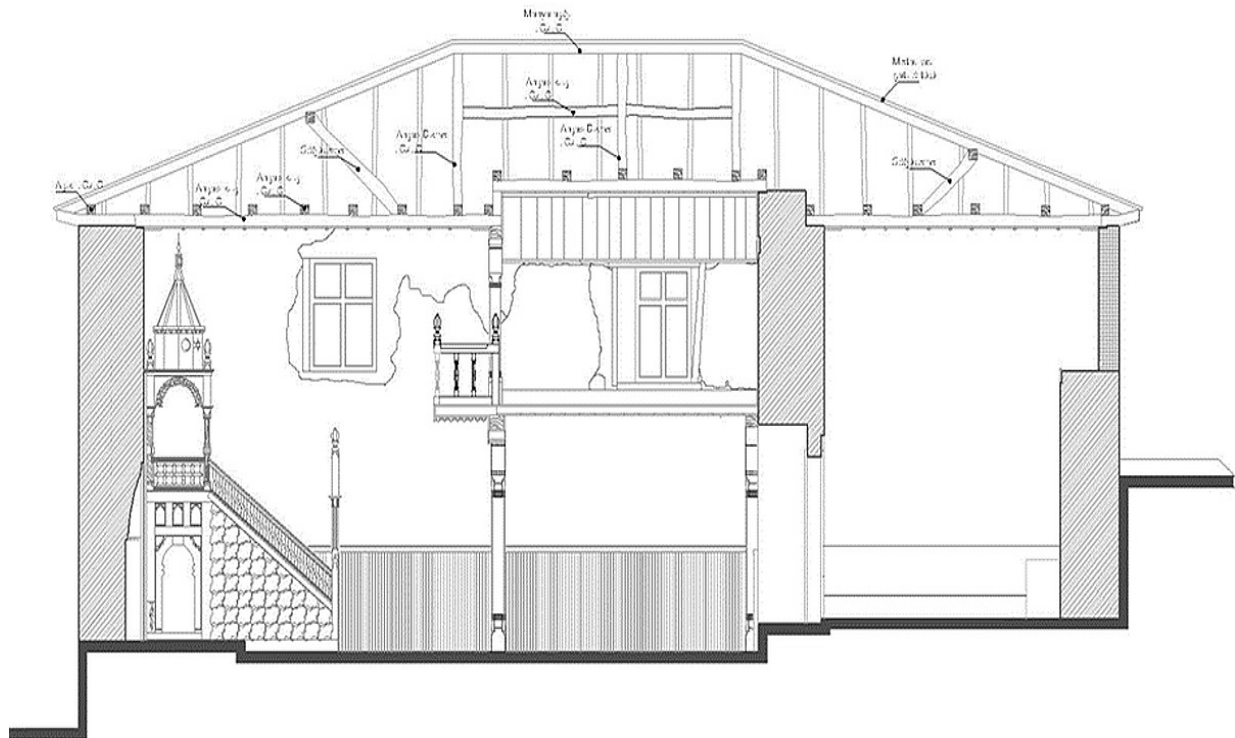


Figure 13. Longitudinal section in the mosque (Sedes, 2018).

On the surface of the west wall under the *mahfil*, after leaving a gap of about one and a half meters from the north wall, there is a medallion formed by a three-slice abstract leaf motif on a blue background. The medallion is filled with a bunch of roses and rosebud motifs designed from different angles. This cluster consists of four roses, four rosebuds, curling branches and leaves (Figure 14).

The ornamental composition, which continues with a two-storey portico appearance from the end of the *mahfil*, has four rows of arches in the upper and lower rows. One of the upper arched sections was destroyed due to a window opened later. The first of the arches in the lower row, from north to south, has a rose bouquet motif coming out of an earth-colored vase with a pedestal, bulging body, narrow neck and mouth. The second arch is filled with a cluster of red and blue roses, rosebuds and green leaves emerging from a blue vase with a pedestal, wide body, thin, long neck and narrow rim. The third arch is filled with a fruit tree rising from a blue pot with a pedestal, wide body and wide mouth. The leaves are dark green and the fruit is orange. The trunk of the tree is brown. The fourth arch is filled with a stylized pear tree motif with roots resting on the ground line. The tree is large and fruited and covers the entire arch eye.

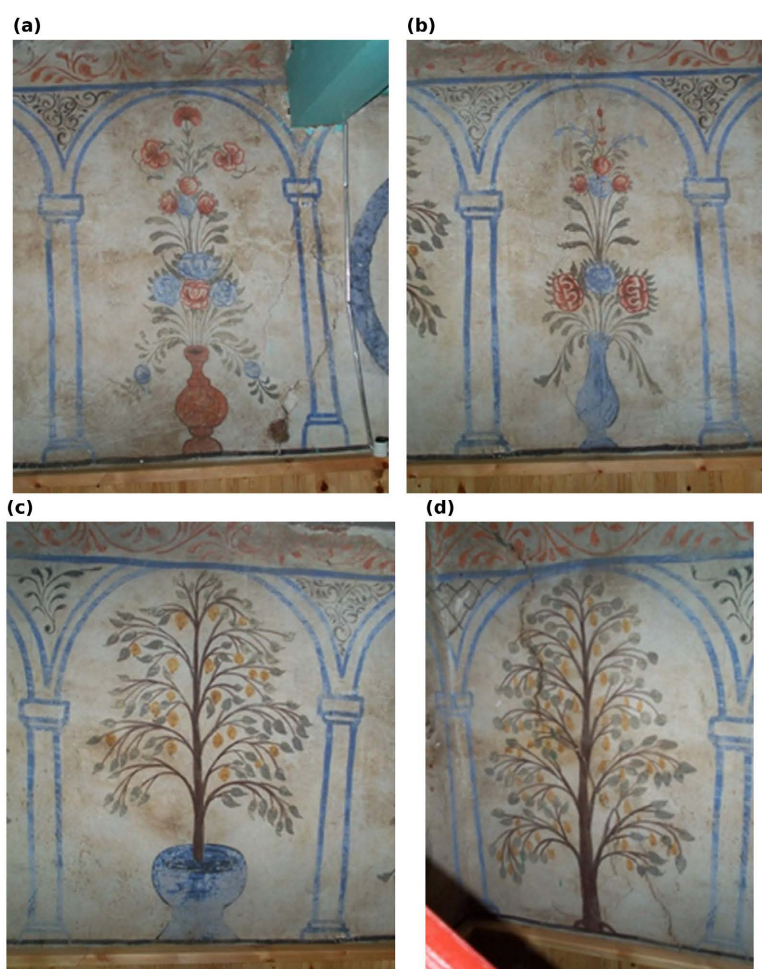


Figure 14. Wall paintings: flowers in vases (İltar, 2014a).

The upper part of the western wall has been damaged by a window that was opened later. Inside the first arch from north to south, there is a bunch of roses coming out of a vase with a high base, bulging body, long neck and handles. The roses are in red and blue tones. The upper part of the rose bouquet has been damaged. Only one blue colored vase handle can be detected inside the second arch, which seems to have been wider. The rest of it has been destroyed (Figure 15). In the third arch, there is a bunch of roses coming out of a pitcher-shaped vase placed on a base similar to an acanthus leaf. The roses are filled on the surface with a composition narrowing from the bottom to the top and clustered in four different places. On the upper levels, there is a moon and star motif to the right of the bunch of roses and a sun motif to the left. The moon and sun are radiating light. On the fourth arch, a cluster of red, blue and pink roses, flowers, tulips and leaves clustered in four places, rising from a vase with a stepped base, a wide body and a wide and open mouth, which sits on a base similar to an acanthus leaf. Black color is used from time to time to add perspective to the leaves in the composition. To the right of the composition is placed the moon and a small luminous sun, and to the left a larger luminous sun (Figure 16).



Figure 15. Upper part of the western wall (Sedes, 2014).

(a)



(b)



Figure 16. Wall paintings (İltar, 2014b).

There is a half-round *mihrab* niche in the center of the south body wall of the *harim*, a window to the east of the *mihrab* niche that was later enlarged, and a crenelated opening above the window that preserves its original shape. The original shape of the lower window is the same as the upper one. The pulpit is located between the *mihrab* and the west wall and was built adjacent to the south wall (Figure 17).



Figure 17. South side of the harim (Birleş, 2014).

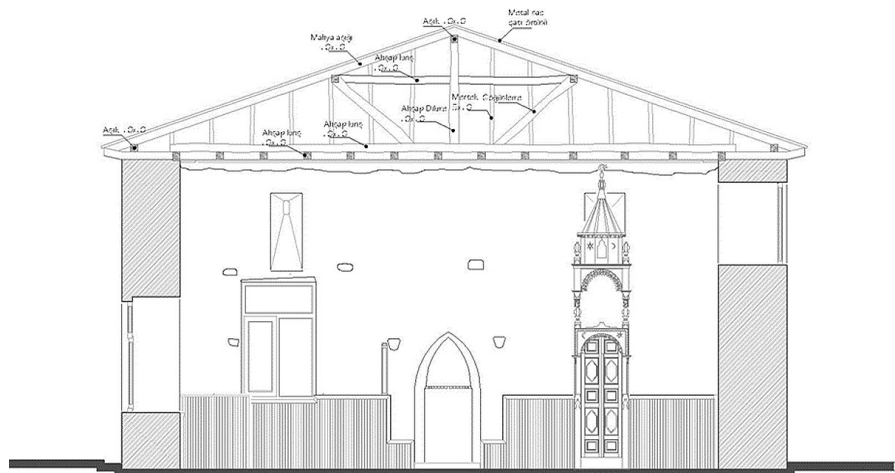


Figure 18. Section of the south face of the harim (Yavuz, 2014).

The *mihrap*, *minbar* and windows influenced the arrangement of arches on the South wall of the mosque (Figure 18). The arches between the *minbar* and the western wall and the two arches between the upper row of crenellations and the eastern wall were kept narrow due to the small size of the surface. On the surface between the pulpit and the west wall, there are four archways, two above and two below. The upper ones are between the wall and the crenellation, and the one on the west has a tree with a brown trunk and green leaves, which is placed on the ground with its roots. The one to the east shows a stylized tree with its branches cut off below it and its leaves gathered in three groups to the right, left and top with brush strokes. This tree, which we also encounter to the west of the entrance door, is probably top pine or bunch willow. In the lower arch eyes, there is a cypress tree with its tips leaning towards the east due to the wind. On the South wall,

there are four archways in the section between the two crenellations at the top. In the first one from the west, there is a cluster of pink, red and blue roses, rosebuds and green leaves emerging from a red vase with a pedestal, wide body, throat and narrow mouth. The second arch eye has a cluster of roses, rosebuds and green leaves in red and blue tones coming from a brown vase with a stepped base, wide body and mouth; the third arch eye has a cluster of roses, rosebuds and green leaves in red and blue tones coming from a blue vase with a pedestal, handles, wide and open mouth and inlaid on it; and the fourth arch eye has a cluster of roses, rosebuds and leaves in red and blue tones coming from a brown vase with a wide body and wide mouth (**Figure 19**) (İltar, 2014a).

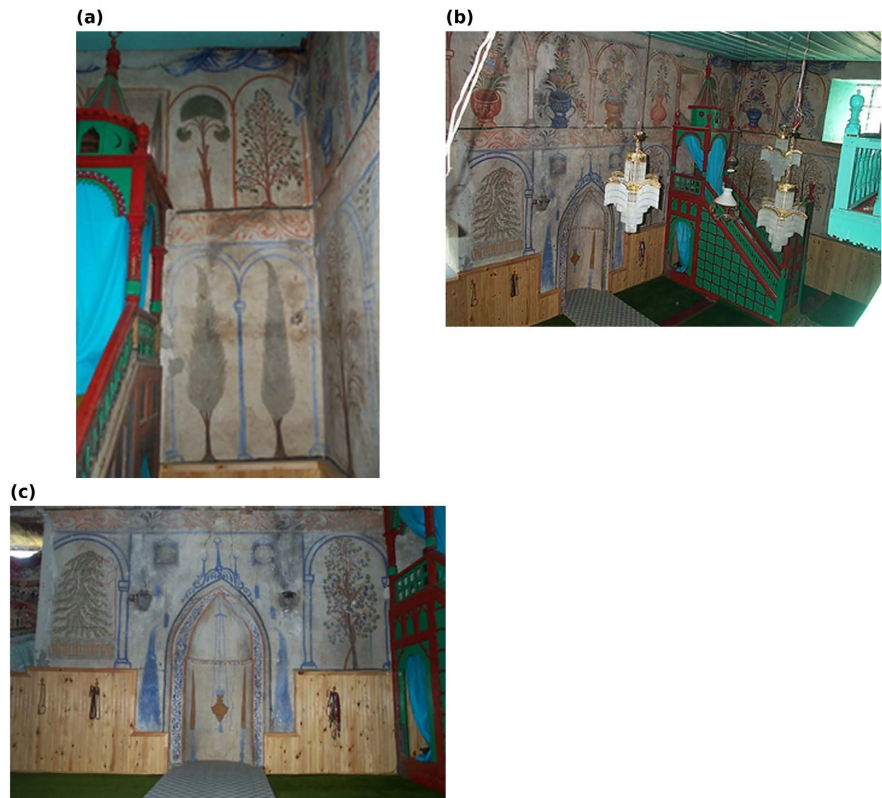


Figure 19. Wall paintings on the mihrab wall (Birleş, 2014).

There is one arch eye on each side of the *mihrab*. The western arch eye contains a vine branch with blue grape clusters wrapped around the trunk of a tree; the leaves are green and C-shaped. The eastern arch eye, immediately to the east of the *mihrab*, contains a seven-tiered, eight-gated depiction of paradise. The composition includes the “*livâü l-hamd*” banner, the tuba tree, the gates of paradise, and its successive levels. The *mihrab* niche is centered on the south wall and is bordered by two bands of scrolling branches. The outer band is narrow and appears to have been conceived initially with lozenge forms before being changed to curving branches; the wider inner band is outlined in brown. Above the niche are three finial-like elements set on S- and C-curving supports. A chain from the *mih-*

rab arch suspends a hanging oil lamp; two standing candlesticks flank the niche. Two suspended clocks occupy the rectangular surfaces between the *mihrab* and the adjacent arch eyes. Cypress motifs occur at the lower sides of the *mihrab*. Soot around the lamps indicates their historical use before electrification (Figure 20, Figure 21).



Figure 20. East side of the harim (Birleş, 2014).

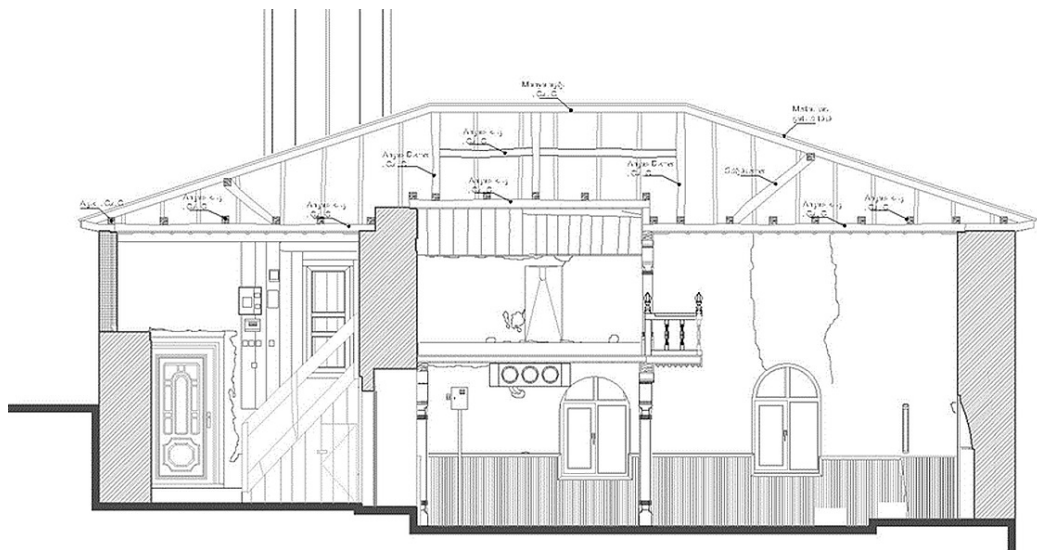


Figure 21. Section drawing from the gallery (Yavuz, 2014).

The *mihrab* is a simple semicircular niche located at the center of the south wall. Its two decorative borders, hanging lamp, candlesticks, suspended clocks, and cypress motifs are described above. The surviving painted composition is significant because it combines vegetal ornament with objects and symbolic imagery; the seven-tiered, eight-gated paradise depiction is located in the eastern arch eye beside the *mihrab*, while the western arch eye contains the vine motif (Figure 22).



Figure 22. The mihrab (Birleş, 2014).

The pulpit is placed in the middle of the *mihrap* and the west wall. The wooden pulpit is original. The entrance opening has round arches and the door has two wings. There are ten trays, five in each wing. The trays are square and polygonal. There is a row of tassels consisting of semi-circles in the belly of the arch. One of the triangular spaces at the corners of the arch is decorated with a moon and the other with a star motif. The rectangular panel around the arch is surrounded by a tooth motif. There are two knobs on the panel (Figure 23).

The railing of the pulpit is made in openwork technique. The surface of the mirror part is arranged as if a net motif formed with wooden folds. The pavilion part of the pulpit is in *baldaken* style and has a polygonal pulley and a conical cone on it. The pavilion has a round arch. On the facades of the pulley, there are different motifs such as moon, etc., formed with openwork technique. A bracelet consisting of a row of teeth is seen between the pulley and the cone. The cone ends with a moon and star motif.

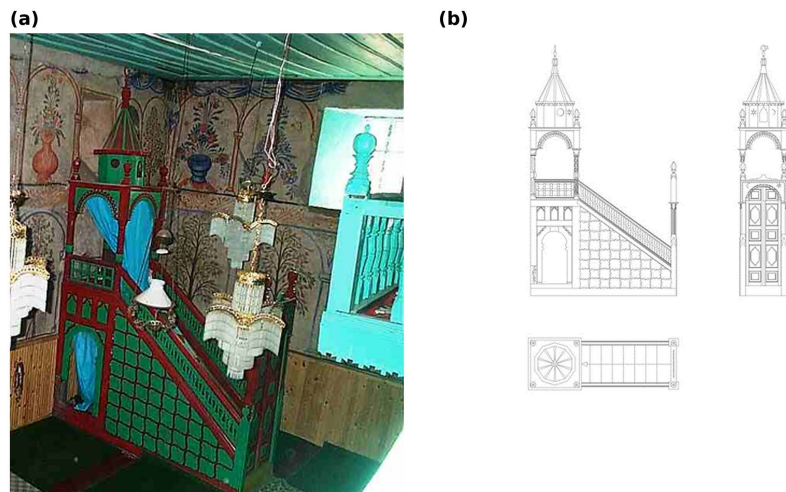


Figure 23. Minbar plan and drawings (Birleş, 2014; Yavuz, 2014).

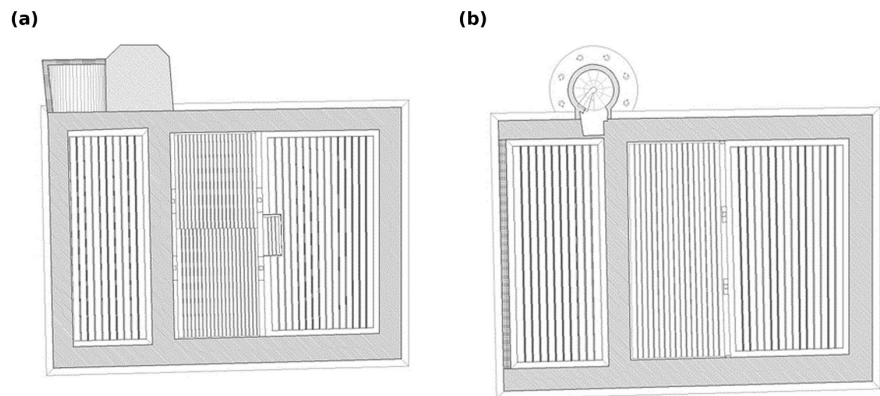


Figure 24. The ceiling of the *harim* and *mahfil* in slatted construction (Birleş, 2014; Yavuz, 2014).

The mosque is covered with a four-shouldered hipped roof, with a wooden ceiling inside and zinc sheet metal outside (Figure 24). The mosque congregation stated that the hipped roof was covered with Turkish-style tiles in previous years, but was later converted to sheet metal. The peripheral units in the mosque include a minaret, a fountain and a toilet. The fountain was built adjacent to the minaret. There is no garden or wall around the mosque. The minaret located in the north-west corner of the building has a square base, a round plan, a single balcony and a conical cap. The minaret was built in the 1980s as cast concrete (Figure 25).

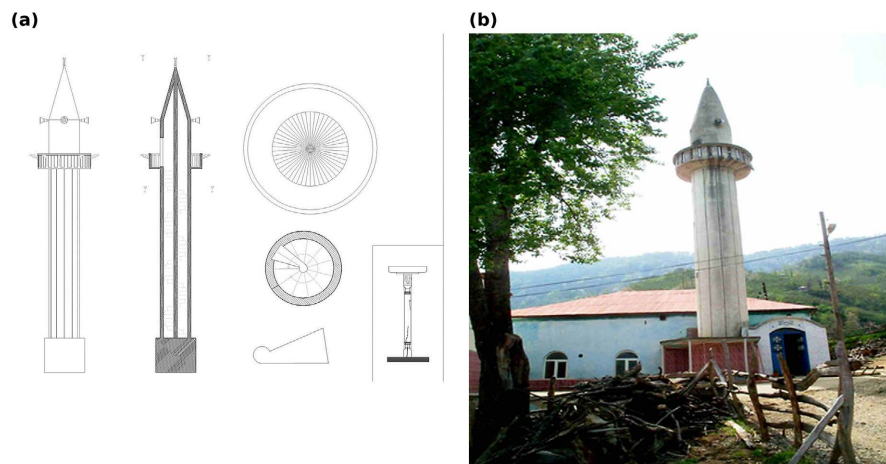


Figure 25. The minaret, built in the 1980's as cast concrete (Birleş, 2014; Yavuz, 2014).

The Westernization-period Baroque and Rococo vocabulary that spread into Ottoman provincial interiors from the second half of the eighteenth century provides the broader art-historical context for the mosque's wall paintings. In the Eastern Black Sea region, nineteenth-century mosque interiors frequently employ floral bouquets rising from vases, trees, architectural frames, mosque depictions, lamps, clocks, and related decorative motifs. The Hacı Abdullah Halife Mosque belongs convincingly to this regional decorative tradition (Arık, 1988; İltar, 2014b; Renda, 1977; Yavuz, 2009).



Figure 26. The inscription “li Eş-şeyh Hamza” (İltar, 2014b).

The wall thickness of the Hacı Abdullah Halife Mosque is approximately 70 cm. The walls were plastered internally first with thick and then with thin glaze plaster. It is understood from the spilled parts that the plaster was obtained by mixing materials such as sand, lime, egg white, straw, sheep’s wool, etc. The thickness of the rough plaster varies between one and five cm. The glazing plaster is between two and three mm. The wall paintings in the mosque were applied with pencil work technique. This technique is defined as paintings made with earthen paints mixed with glue or water on dry plaster (Renda & Turan, 1980). After the plaster was applied to the wall surfaces, the contours of the motifs were drawn with a pencil. Then the painting was done with free brush strokes. However, there is a noteworthy point here. In many places, the contour lines drawn with a pencil and the motifs painted on them are not the same. In the part of the eastern wall under the *mahfil*, four incomplete rose motifs were filled in the border in the form of a circle from the three-sliced leaf motif. In the south of the same wall between the window and the south wall, two arched eyes and the motifs inside them were drawn in pencil but left unpainted. From this point of view, we can state that the process of decorating the walls involved pencil work. The inscription “*Darendeli Eş-şeyh Hamza*” can be read in the first of the lower row arches on the west wall of the *harim* from north to south (Figure 26). There is also a date statement right below this inscription. However, since it has been damaged, the date could not be read exactly. Based on this article and examples from the region, it can be said that a master named *Hacı Hamza* from *Darende* in the second half of the 19th century (Birleş, 2014; Yavuz, 2014) made the wall paintings of the Hacı Abdullah Halife

Mosque.

4. Dating and Attribution

The chronology of the present building should be stated cautiously. The early-1480s date belongs to the historical foundation tradition and does not by itself date the surviving building. The present structure is more plausibly assigned to the nineteenth century on the basis of four distinct forms of evidence: 1) material and construction observations, including rubble-stone masonry, wooden ceiling and *mahfil*, and the character of the openings; 2) typological similarity to nineteenth-century rural mosques in Giresun and the Eastern Black Sea region; 3) historical and documentary records that preserve the earlier foundation history but do not provide a secure construction date for the present fabric; and 4) the stylistic character of the wall paintings. Typological and stylistic evidence is corroborative rather than documentary proof of a precise building date. The reinforced-concrete minaret is demonstrably later and should not be used to date the main body of the mosque (Duran, 1992).

The attribution of the wall paintings to *Hacı Hamza* is likewise provisional. The partially legible inscription on the west wall has been read as “*Darendeli Eş-Şeyh Hamza*”; the associated date is too damaged to be read securely. The inscription is therefore evidence for the name associated with the decoration, but identifying that person as the painter is an inference rather than a direct signature statement. The inference is strengthened by comparison with securely documented nineteenth-century regional wall-painting programs, especially the repeated use in Trabzon and neighboring Eastern Black Sea mosques of floral bouquets in vases, trees, architectural frames, mosque depictions, and related object motifs (İltar, 2014b; Sümerkan & Okman, 1999; Yavuz, 2009). However, the sources consulted do not identify a securely attributed surviving regional work by *Hacı Hamza* himself. The safest conclusion is therefore that the decoration can be associated with a *Darendeli Hacı Hamza* on epigraphic and comparative grounds, while the painter attribution remains tentative (Arslan, 2005).

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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