



‘AJAMĪ

‘AJAMĪ B. ABŪ BAKR, 6th/12th century architect under the Eldigüzid atabegs, founder of the Nakhchevan architectural school, ‘Ajamī’s name is connected with the erection of two mausoleums in the town of Naḵjavān (Nakhchevan)—that of Yūsof b. Kotayyer (the “Aṭābābā” mausoleum), and that of Mo’mena Ḳātūn (the “Atabek” mausoleum). These are the earliest monuments of Muslim architecture in medieval Nakhchevan; they are also among the earliest tower-shaped tombs and so are important for the study of that architectural type.

The mausoleum of Yūsof b. Kotayyer is an octahedral building constructed of baked brick and roofed by a cupola with a tent-shaped pinnacle. In spite of the extreme simplicity of the forms of the mausoleum, the architect achieved a considerable decorative effect. The exterior surfaces of the mausoleum are distinguished by independent motifs of geometric ornamentation. On the eastern facet, above the entrance, appears the building inscription giving the name of the *raʿīs* (head of the shaikhs) buried here, as well as the date of the erection of the mausoleum, 657/1161.

The mausoleum of Mo’mena Ḳātūn is a centrally domed building of the tower type. The decahedral mausoleum, 25 m in height, consists of an upper chamber and a crypt. It was built by ‘Ajamī in 582/1186 for Mo’mena Ḳātūn, the first wife of the atabeg Moḥammad Jahān-Pahlavān. The twenty-five years which separate the building of the two mausoleums had a strong influence on the development of ‘Ajamī’s creative faculty and technique. The mausoleum of Mo’mena Ḳātūn surpasses in size and wealth of decoration that of Yūsof, and



its architecture displays further development in the art of composition, architectural forms, and methods of ornamentation, especially by the use of inlays of glazed blue-green brick. The curtain walls are skillfully decorated; their slightly concave planes are finished with sharply outlined, stepped arches, the light and shade of which add to the effect of plastic expressiveness. The building inscriptions are on the eastern facet above the entrance. This mausoleum is regarded as an outstanding example of architecture in Azarbaijan. It has considerably influenced later monuments, such as the Gonbad-e Kabūd in Marāḡa.

‘Ajamī designed the portal with two minarets near the mausoleum of Mo’mena Kātūn, attested in photographs and drawings of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is also presumed that ‘Ajamī built the Friday mosque in Nakhchevan (not preserved), which formed part of the complex including the mausoleum and the portal.

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