

THE AESTHETICAL SCOPE OF THE SIX-POINTED STAR IN THE ALBANIAN CULTURAL INHERITANCE

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Abstract

Man, being the foundation of civilizations and cultures, has always sought ways to express his feelings and thoughts. And the most direct way of explaining and conveying feelings and emotions are symbols. Man, in each era, with his presence in the world, has used various symbols to paraphrase his ego and has attached different religious, mystical, sensory and ideological meanings to them. The six-pointed star surely is considered one of the most universal symbols that has maintained its presence throughout different civilizations and has even reached us today. The six-pointed star has been used throughout almost all historic eras and has managed to keep its universality despite the local contexts given to it. The six-pointed star, embezzled by Muslims as a seal or ring of Solomon (PBUH), dating from the Seljuk Empire up to Osman art, has been used for decorating Muslim objects. The six-pointed star in Islamic art can be found carved on marble, metals, wood, paper and so forth. The six-pointed star is especially found in cubes, ceilings, gates as well on various religious objects like mosques, tekkas, madrasahs and the like. In the history of Islamic art, even in Albanian territories, there have been many instances of the usage of the six-pointed star. In this paper, we shall only use some examples that will serve as illustrations.

Keywords: Six-pointed star, Albanian cultural inheritance, aesthetics, the seal of Solomon

Man, being the foundation of civilizations and cultures, has always sought ways to express his feelings and thoughts. And the most direct way of explaining, conveying feelings and emotions are symbols. Man, in each era, with his presence in the world, has used various symbols to paraphrase his ego and has attached different religious, mystical, sensory and ideological meanings to them. A portion of these symbols was forgotten in history, while others have reached us today in different connotations, assigned to them from various cultures and civilizations across the world. (Atasagun, 2002)

The six-pointed star is surely considered one of the most universal symbols that has maintained its presence throughout different civilizations and has reached us even today. The six-pointed star has been used throughout almost all historic eras and has managed to keep its universality despite the local contexts given to it. Nowadays when the six-pointed star is mentioned, most people believe that it is a symbol that comes from Israel or Hebrewism. This is an idealized mistake and in reality, it has nothing to do with it. The six-pointed star is a universal collective value of all humankind. It becomes even sadder when some try to erase

this symbol from the cultural monuments, thinking that it has only to do with Hebrewism or masons.

The figure of the six-pointed star, according to various scientific researches, had begun to be used in the Bronze Era. This shape has been spotted in Egypt, North America and India. Some other studies have come across the same shape in Scandinavia. The six-pointed star had also been a horoscope symbol in the calendars of several pagan tribes. It has been noted in the Illyrian culture and has represented the unification of active and passive powers in nature. We also come across the same symbol carved in stone in the Alps. They have also been spotted in Upper Mesopotamia, in Great Britain, as well as carved in the walls of the Elaphania and Barbaria caves of Africa. (Horsley, 1902)

It is not known if these symbols share one origin, or have been used independently by different people, given their basic nature. The symbol is one simple hexagon, a shape in which equilateral triangles come together to form a star with six angles, with a hexagon in between. Two right-angled triangles, mixed with one another, have been recognized in human inhibitions since the early civilizations or the establishment of first cities. In ancient cultures, one of the stars has represented the male, while the other star the female, and together they have formed the harmonic unity of family in humankind. In ancient Greek culture, it has been believed that the six-pointed star has a direct connection with gods. This figure has been linked to the figure of Dionysus. The temple of Bacchus in Baalbek and Tauroentum's floor are both examples of the six-pointed star being used in the Roman civilization.

In Hindu culture, the six-pointed star symbolizes the sun and has been named Yantra, while one of the triangles represents creation by Vishnu, and the other triangle represents destruction by Shiva, while their unity is the Sacred Crown in the Universe of Vishnu and Shiva. In other words, it represents the continuous creation and destruction in the physical world. Because of the importance of this symbol in Hindu culture, we come across it in the Hindu temples, cemeteries and the ancient flags of Indian ships. Apart from Yantra, there is another symbol in Hindu culture similar to the six-pointed star, known as Mandala. This is a symbol of the universe, a description of the soul of man and the center of contemplation. As a symbol, it has expanded to Hindu and Buddhist rituals, in which the triangles are placed within a circular frame. This is a magical circle of the cleric who leads the ritual and leads to the sacred place (imago mundi). In Hinduism, this represents Anahata, the fourth paired chakra, one energy spot of the body.

Rednecks in America as well as some tribes in Nepal, consider the six-pointed star a unity of the soul and the physical dimension, and in their unity, they have expressed the similarities between that which is up in the horizon and that which is beneath.

The oculist books of China "Yi King" have all been built upon this very symbol. Hexagrams consist of six lines and each line represents a principle or lead. In Chinese culture, two triangles perceived as Yin and Yang in reality represent a complementary principle of opposite forces that are still correlated and dependent on one another. Most of the opposing

forces (light and darkness, fire and water, expansion and deduction) are considered physical manifestations of the opposing forces that make up Yin and Yang. (Masquelier, 1993-1994)

Alchemists have considered the six-pointed star significantly important and they have linked it with four elements: the correlation between evolution and stagnation and the synthesis of positive and negative energy. The unity of these elements within the frame of the two united triangles represents their unity in the Universe. The same symbol, represents the Sun and the planets in the hermetic tradition, in other words, the Macrocosm and the Universe.

In ancient Egypt, this symbol has represented the entrance and exit from the pyramid. According to their belief, one of the triangles is the place from which the Pharaoh will travel to eternity, whereas the other triangle is his exit into the hereafter (Burckhardt, 1999).

The star of David (Magen David) in the Hebrew tradition

The six-pointed star known as Magen David (David's shield), for centuries has been used by Hebrews and has been considered a symbol for an excellent future for them. According to the sacred scriptures, the Hebrew star with six points has been the military positioning of children of Israel who have gone to take back Palestine. According to another transmission, it represents the manner of sitting and standing of the children of Israel in the forty years they have spent in the desert. In both cases, men have been positioned in the lines of the star, in the outer part, while the children and women within, in the inner part of the triangle.

Another name for the six-pointed star in Hebrew tradition is Shaddai. In old Hebrew, Shaddai has two meanings. The first meaning is the bosom of a mother, source of life, source of power. Whereas the second meaning is the absolute Creator, God. Within Magen David, Hebrews have inserted Shaddai and they have considered their unity as sacred. According to Kabbalah, the Jewish mysticism, the equalitarian triangle is the most sophisticated geometrical shape. This is true because on each side the triangle is equal or balanced.

The Prophet of Allah, David (PBUH) in the Hebrew tradition is considered as King David since during his time there were other prophets too. The shield of David, according to them, has had the shape of the six-pointed star. According to another transmission, his shield has been circular, but with motives of the six-points star. This is where the name of the symbol as Magen David (David's shield) comes from. Moreover, the three letters of the name David, Dal-Vav-Dal in Hebrew consist of the shape of the six-pointed star.

According to a generally accepted concept in the Hebrew tradition, in each corner of this star, the names of the prophet, Moses, Jacob Isaac, Abraham, and the king David, have been carved. Franz Rosenzweig believes that each corner of this symbol contains one of the six philosophical principles: Creation, Savior, Theophany, Humankind, World and God. (Horsley, 1902)

The six-pointed star, as a result of the philosophical and theological concept, attained in the Hebrew tradition, has been carried into the cultural inheritance of Hebrews as well. This symbol has been spotted in mosaics, afraisks, epitaph and Hebrew clothing.

Despite that this symbol has been present in the philosophical-theological conceptions and has been part of the Hebrew inherited culture, as the Star of David, this symbol has been ideologized from the 13th century, and precisely at that time initially used by the renewed Hebrew kabbalist, Joseph Gikatilla. After this period, this symbol has been used across houses and retail stores as a protective symbol. Albeit in religious Hebrew objects, this symbol has been used since 1643. As such, for the first time, it has been used by the Hebrew Community in Prague, and it is since then considered their first official symbol. Later, this symbol reached other Hebrew communities across Europe. Baron Shlome Meir Rothschild in 1822 used it as his family emblem. The contemporary expert of kabala, Gershon Scholem, regarding the transformation of Magen David into a Hebrew symbol says: in the contemporary world it was needed for the Hebrews to have their symbol, a specific figure just as the Christians had the cross. Even though the six-pointed does not have the same meaning as the cross in Christianity, the Hebrew world, given the universality of this symbol, accepted it without much hesitation. (Schimel, 1998)

Only after 1897, Magen David became a symbol of Zionists. In the same year, the six-pointed star was officially granted under the Zionists during a congress and then used as an emblem of the newspaper “Die Welt” published by Theodor Herzl. In 1933 during the congress of Prague, Dr. David Wolfson, a follower of Herzl, proposed for this symbol to be used on the flag and it was granted. Whereas in the year 1948, the same symbol was placed in the flag of Israel.

The six-pointed star in Christianity

In Christian art, the six-pointed star has been used as decoration in architectural buildings. This symbol has been present in many churches of the Byzantine time, carved on wood and rings. In ancient mascots, this symbol has been called the “Seal of Solomon”. Furthermore, we come across this symbol in the cathedrals of the middle ages as well as the castles of Burgos, Valencia and Lleida. The six-pointed star has been used in Christian decorations until the end of the XIX century. Afterward, especially once Zionists officially used it as an emblem, the Christian world stopped using it in their buildings and objects. In the XIX century, the seal of Solomon started to be an important symbol of masons. (Cazenave, 1996)

In the masonic conceptions, the triangle facing upwards symbolizes man, whereas the one facing downwards symbolizes god. This is how they have come to symbolize their pantheist concept on existence.

The six-pointed star in the tradition and culture of Islam

In the Muslim tradition, the six-pointed star is recognized as the seal of Solomon. Tabari, regarding the seal of Solomon, says that it has descended from Jannah and in the four spheres of the seal it has been written: “Power belongs only to Allah”, “Allah is the highest of all”, “Governance belongs to Allah only”, “Allah reigns with everything”. Moreover, on another hadeeth transmitted by Ibn Maj it has been said that this seal of Solomon (PBUH) has descended to him from Allah Almighty, through Jibrael. (Chebel, 1995)

The six-pointed star, embezzled by Muslims as a seal or ring of Solomon (PBUH), dating from the Seljuk Empire up to Osman art, has been used for decorating Muslim objects. The six-pointed star in Islamic art can be found carved on marble, metals, wood, paper and so forth. The six-pointed star is especially found in cubes, ceilings, gates as well on various religious objects like mosques, tekkas, madrasahs and so forth. (Çayirdag, 1982)

The presence of this symbol in Islamic art shares its stay since the X century, before this symbol was used in Hebrew objects. Its use for decorative purposes in Islam has nothing to do with the connotation given to it in the XIX century by Zionists, Hebrews or masons. Muslim artists have always been very cautious not to use foreign symbols of other religions and ideologies, in their art. For example, we cannot come across the symbol of the cross in any mosque, tekka or madrasah, since this symbol belongs to Christians. While the six-pointed star, until the XIX century wasn't an official symbol belonging to the Hebrews or to another institute, but was considered universal for every religion and its meaning arose from a personal conception.

The six-pointed star in Islamic art has been used for four reasons:

1. This symbol, as a representation of strength, beauty, abundance, contact between heaven and earth in almost every culture around the globe, has marked the same presence in Islamic art with the purpose to convey the above meanings of the six-pointed star. This symbol was initially used in the X century, in other words during the time when the Hebrews did not have any political or cultural importance in the global area.
2. Muslim artists have replaced figures and images with geometric figures to which they gave Qur'anic connotations, or they supported these symbols based on Qur'anic teachings as well constitutive prophetic tradition. It is always delicate to use anthropomorphic images; man is willing to transform all psychological limitations on images that he creates, regardless of regulations and laws. Man, sooner or later, rebels against (the painting), not only against the image but also on what it stands behind: the epidemic layout of blasphemy that marked entire eras in human history, they have not been thought without the possibility of ruining religious anthropomorphic art. Islam deals with the problem from its core. At the same time manifests itself as the last religion, which has knowledge on what is best for man, and proclaims itself as a return to the primordial religion. Hence, this art has nothing to do with psychological issues, instead, it protects those elements that are permanently valuable in time. This is the reason for the geographical ornament development in Islamic art. There have been attempts to convey that the lack of images in Islam has created an emptiness, in which other types of art have been implied. The genialness of abstract thought in Islamic aesthetics, inspired by the connection of the inner complex between oneness and multiple, is represented in the artistic sphere through geometry. Henceforth, Titus Burckhardt was right to conclude that Islamic art contains the abstract instead of the mythological connotation. This issue is clearly expressed in the geometric figures which are covered with the veil of absolute versatility. Through geometrical limitations, the Islamic aesthetic area integrates spiritually, in the principle of oneness and is represented as an archetype of eternity and harmony. This is how, within the scope of geometry in Islamic art, we come across the usage of the six-pointed star.
3. The importance of the personality of Solomon (PBUH) as an archetype of power and absolute authority upon all creatures on earth. This metaphysical power of his is the symbol of his seal, which contained the six-pointed star. Upon taking power, many miracles began to

appear to Solomon (PBUH), miracles that hadn't had happened to him before. One of his miracles was that he could govern the language of poultry. Regarding this event, God in the Qur'an says: "And Solomon inherited David. He said, "O people, we have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given from all things. Indeed, this is evident bounty." (An-Naml, verse 16).

He could comprehend their language and communicate with birds. God turned Solomon (PBUH) into the biggest king that humankind had seen. Nobody before him or after him ever reigned with such power. He is considered the most powerful king of all eras. Jinn has not bowed down to anyone else before or after him, only to him. They were all working for him. "And [also] the devils [of jinn] - every builder and diver. And others bound together in shackles." (Surah Sad, verse 37-38).

Jinn being of different tribes and nations had different professions as well. If one of them rebelled and did not abide, Solomon (PBUH) was able to imprison them with chains. With one pair of chains, he could imprison two Jinn.

" [We said], "This is Our gift, so grant or withhold without account." (Surah Sad, verse 39)

He used the wind to transfer himself and his army from one place to another. When he sought to go into war, together with his army he would be placed under some wooden planks and order the wind to take them to the right place. The usual distance that would take a month for an army to travel, Solomon (PBUH) and his army, in aid of the wind, would pass it within one afternoon. Their return would account for the same. God in the Qur'an says:

"And to Solomon [We subjected] the wind - its morning [journey was that of] a month - and its afternoon [journey was that of] a month, and We made flow for him a spring of [liquid] copper. And among the jinn were those who worked for him by the permission of his Lord. And whoever deviated among them from Our command - We will make him taste of the punishment of the Blaze. They made for him what he willed of elevated chambers, statues, bowls like reservoirs, and stationary kettles. [We said], "Work, O family of David, in gratitude." And few of My servants are grateful." (Surah Saba, verse 12-13).

The above verses as well as hadeeths by the Prophet (PBUH) speak of Solomon's greatness. In one of them, we even read about the seal/ring of Solomon (PBUH), that contained the six-pointed star. As a result of this, Muslim artists led by the willingness to insert all the power of Solomon (PBUH) as a protective shield of an object, in a metaphorical manner, have used the six-pointed star as a symbol of this. Thereof, we don't speak here about a Hebrew influence, but we infer a figurative symbolic Qur'anic discourse for Solomon (PBUH) instead.

4. The six-pointed star in Islamic culture and art has been the seal or the signature of decorative walls or monuments. Therefore, they have been placed in the most visible places. And through using symbols within and around the six-pointed star, they have expressed their artistic sophistication. Later, the masons have used this symbol since its name itself also suggests freemasonry or in French: *franc-maçonnerie*). (Demiriz,2000)

In the history of Islamic art, in Albanian territories, there have been examples of the usage of the six-pointed star. We shall mention some examples here to serve as illustrations:

1. The six-pointed star as a decoration of the pulpit of the Great Mosque (Ulu Cami) in Siirt of Turkey. The pulpit was been built in the year 578/1198.



2. The six-pointed star in cubes in the mosque of Aladdin in Konya of Turkey. The Mosque was built in the second part of the XII century.



3. The six-pointed star as a wall decoration in Karatay Madrasa in Konya of Turkey. Built in 649/1251



4. The six-pointed star in the Muradiye Mosque in Adana. Built in 840/1436.



5. The six-pointed star in the flag of Barbarossa Hayreddin Pasha. 940/1534



6. The six-pointed star in the weapon of Ali Pash Tepelena.



7. The six-pointed star in the mosques of Albanian territories, built since the XV century. The Sarena Mosque, Tetovo, North Macedonia.



8. The mosuqe of Sultan Murad, Skopje, North Macedonia. The mosque Hussain Shah Saray, Skopje, North Macedonia. The mosuqe of Aladza, Skopje, North Macedonia.

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