

Sultan Bayezid II's Astrolabe Discovered in St. Petersburg

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Abstract

In 2005, famous researcher David King described an astrolabe made by a craftsman al-Ahmar al-Nujumi al-Rumi in 1505/1506. King wrote: «This important astrolabe is one of two known pieces dedicated to the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II. There are no other astrolabes dedicated to an Ottoman sultan, not even in the Topkapı Sarayı Museum». However, another astrolabe of the same master, dedicated to the same Sultan, was found in an unexpected place - in the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg. This is an incomplete astrolabe. Only the body with handle and ring are survived. But on the body there are both the master's signature and a dedication to his powerful customer: We do not know how this astrolabe ended up in the library. But we know that since the beginning of the 19th century, the Imperial Public Library has been a place of storage for many scientific instruments. In the 20th century some instruments were transferred to the museums of St. Petersburg. And the astrolabe of Sultan Bayezid II probably did not interest museum employees due to the fact that it was incomplete. A comparison of two astrolabes shows a lot of similar elements. These are the throne design, the shape of the numbers, the inscription of the dedication, and the signature of the master. The astrolabe found in St. Petersburg was made in 1500/1501, five years before the astrolabe described by King. It sheds additional light on the work of the masters of the early 16th century.

Sundials, Astrolabes and Quadrants

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Keywords: Astrolabe, Bayezid II, Ottoman Sultan, St. Petersburg.

Biographical Note(s)

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