

MOMINA KHATUN AND GUDI KHATUN MAUSOLEUMS IN NAKHCHIVAN

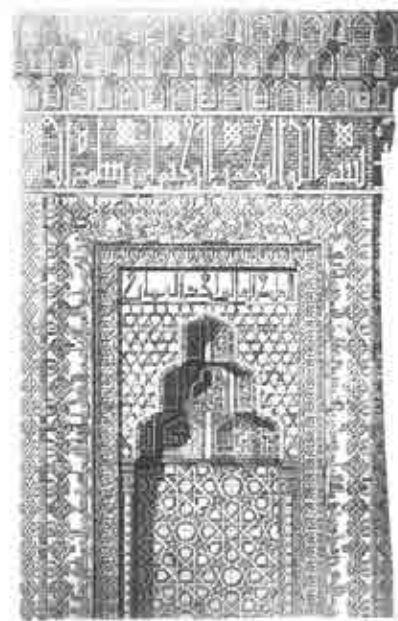
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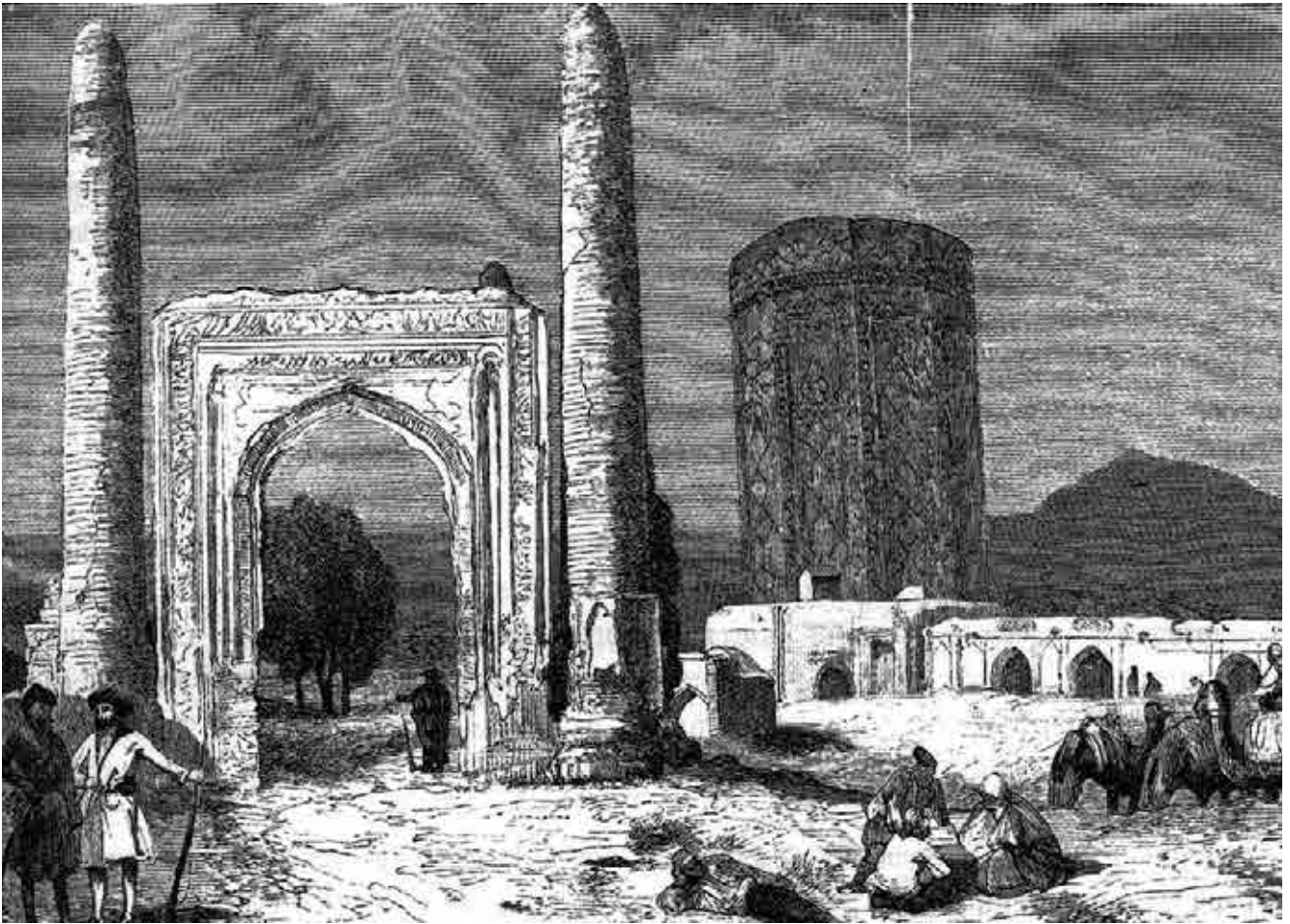
NAKHCHIVAN IS ONE OF THE ANCIENT CITIES OF AZERBAIJAN. ALTHOUGH SOME HISTORIANS LINK THE EMERGENCE AND ETYMOLOGY OF NAKHCHIVAN TO THE PROPHET NOAH, THE CITY FLOWERED IN THE MIDDLE AGES, OR TO BE MORE PRECISE, IN THE 11TH-13TH CENTURIES.

Among Azerbaijan's local schools of architecture in that period, a special place was taken by the school that formed in the central part of the country, which received its name from Nakhchivan - the capital of the Atabay state. Among the representatives of this school, architect Ajami ibn Abubakr Nakhchivani stood out for the number of his works known to science and bright and original career. Ajami, the son of Abubakr, was born in the early 12th century in the city of Nakhchivan. He was the creator of the highest achievements of the Nakhchivan school, a classic of this architectural phenomenon

that ensured the prosperity of the school and a great architect who led the Nakhchivan school to the wider international arena beyond the framework of local significance.

Ajami was the chief architect of the Atabays' palace complex in Nakhchivan, which included the shah's palace, palace halls, a state administrative building (dovlatkhana), the Juma mosque, a madrasa, the Momina Khatun mausoleum, etc. Extremely interesting was the architecture of the Friday mosque of this complex, which was known from pictures and photographs of the late 19th century and a small number of earlier descriptions. It was



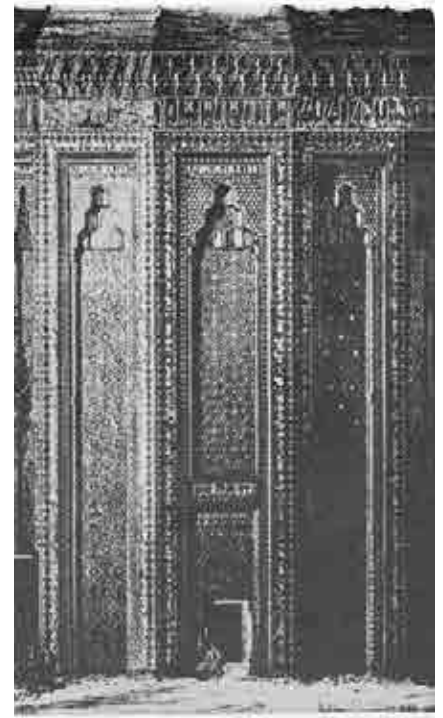


Entrance portal. 12th century

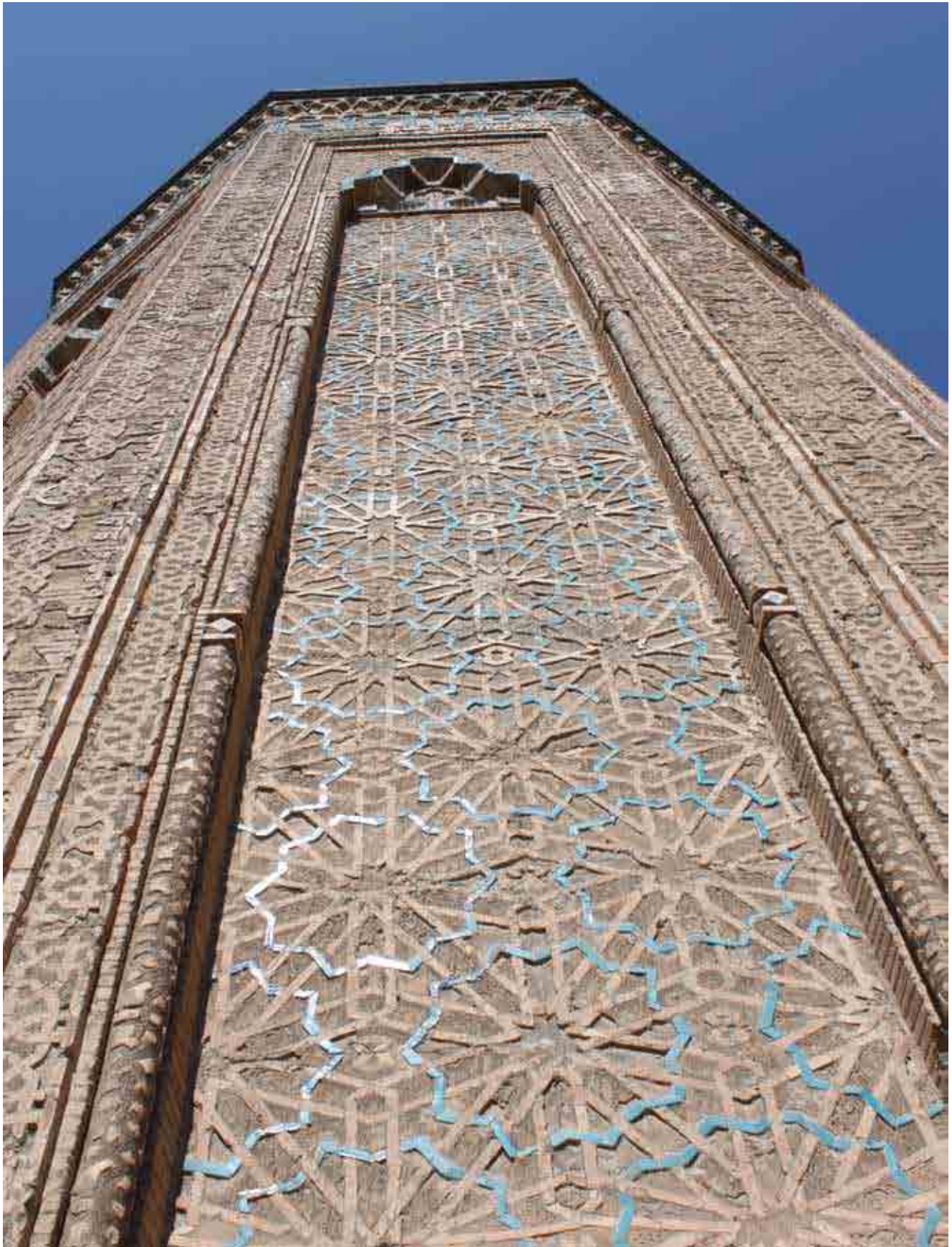
considered one of the best monumental mosques of the Middle East in the Seljuk period. The detached entrance portal, flanked by two minarets, was the last building of the Atabay complex. Erected in 1187 by the architect Ajami Nakhchivani, the portal is the oldest portal with two minarets in the entire Muslim world. Later, this artistic method became the leading method in the religious architecture of many Muslim countries. At the present time, only the Momina Khatun Mausoleum has remained from the architectural ensemble of the Atabays.

The works of the architect Ajami Nakhchivani were identified through construction epigraphy - he left his author's «signature» on all his works under the professional

title of «Banna» - «builder». On the example of the architect Ajami, it is clear that the perfection of skill and growing popularity and authority were accompanied by the movement of his «signature» that consistently occupied an increasingly prominent place in the composition of buildings. Moreover, judging by the content of the frame inscriptions of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum, such a prominent architect as Ajami Nakhchivani knew the value of his works and did not diminish their value. The inscription on the top of the mausoleum reads: «We are visitors. The world is eternal. We are going to die. This (work) will remain in memory. Oh God, keep the evil eye away! The Momina Khatun Mausoleum - a masterpiece of the



Main facade of Momina Khatun. Drawn by Jacobsthal



palace architecture of the Azerbaijani Atabays - has preserved the memory not only of the royal woman, but also its genius builder, the architect Ajami Nakhchivani, for more than 800 years.

The memorial buildings called «tower mausoleums» because of their external shape were mainly located in Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and Khorasan. The intensive formation of

world. The height of its presently missing pyramidal tent is 25 meters. And in the original form, the height of the mausoleum reached 35 meters.

The Momina Khatun Mausoleum has a two-tiered structure - an underground crypt and an upper tower. Its crypt has a decagonal shape with a strong decagonal pillar in the middle. The edges of the pil-

shape is totally covered with various geometric patterns. Ornamentation is made of bricks selected for the image. The spaces between the bricks are filled with a gaj (alabaster) solution, the planes of which are decorated with carved floral patterns. In the ornamentation of Momina Khatun, colored bricks with a turquoise glaze were introduced modestly, but with great tact.



Fragment architecture of the Momina Khatun mausoleum

these mausoleums took place in the Seljuk period, and having received a complete structural composition in the 9th-12th centuries, became a resistant architectural type spread over a wide area. The Momina Khatun Mausoleum, built in 1186, is the highest and most slender tower among tower mausoleums with a prismatic body not only in Azerbaijan but also in the entire Muslim

lar are combined with lancet arches - ribs with sides that form a unique mushroom-shaped structure. This construction method subsequently became widespread in architectural and engineering Gothic constructions.

The Momina Khatun Mausoleum is the most richly decorated monument among tower mausoleums. The entire surface of its decahedral

The picture of the ornament, which is different in all 10 facets, is maintained everywhere with the same geometric principle of harmonization. The basis of the picture of basic ornaments is a polygonal star with rays emanating from it. Among the decorations of the mausoleum there are combinations of eleven - and - thirteen angle bars, which are not found in the architectural



General appearance of the Momina Khatun mausoleum



decoration of other monuments in the region. The geometric patterns of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum stand out for the perfection and complexity of compositions.

An important part of the architectural decoration of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum is epigraphic ornaments - Kufic inscriptions. Not a single monument of the 11th-12th centuries in the Middle East has so many good Kufic inscriptions like the Momina Khatun Mausoleum. The total length of the frame Kufic inscriptions in the architectural decoration of the mausoleum is more than 500 meters. The developed stalactite cornice, as an important element of the artistic composition, was first used in the architecture of the region at the Momina Khatun Mausoleum.

We can confidently call the Momina Khatun Mausoleum the pinna-

cle of the evolution of Seljuk mausoleums with a prismatic body. With its large size, vertical composition and dynamic silhouette, the Momina Khatun Mausoleum dominated the large architectural ensemble. At the same time, the complex ornaments and fine patterns of the monument are easily perceived. The royal grandeur of the architectural-artistic image, the human scale and lyrical tenderness of the architectural decoration of the mausoleum are beautifully interwoven. The architectural image of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum clearly embodies the idea of building a memorial over the tomb of a royal woman. Based on the fact that the mausoleum is dedicated to a woman, the architect managed to give the monument features of grace, despite the huge size and overall monumental nature of the building.



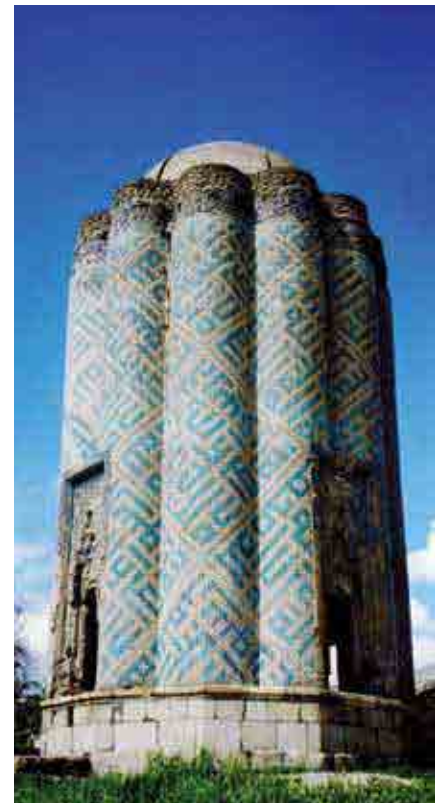
Architectural complex in the Garabaglar village



Atabay architectural complex in Nakhchivan. 19th century photo

The mausoleum in the village of Garabaglar was also erected in honor of a woman - Gudi Khatun, the wife of the founder of the Ilkhanid state Hulagu Khan – the grandson of the famous emperor Genghis Khan. The village of Garabaglar in Sharur District is located 40 kilometers north-west of the city of Nakhchivan. According to historical written sources, Garabaglar was one

of the ancient cities of Azerbaijan and, as one of the important hubs for caravan routes of the region, actively participated in international trade. With its scale and high architectural and artistic quality, the extant complex of buildings confirms the report of these sources. The Garabaglar complex consists of two ruined 12th century round minarets, the 16th century Gudi Khatun tower





Inscription on the portal of the complex, indicating the name of “Gudi Khatun”

mausoleum, and remnants of a religious building between the minarets and the mausoleum.

The interior space of the Gudi Khatun Mausoleum, like that of the Momina Khatun Mausoleum, consists of two chambers located one above the other, and the small lower chamber served as a crypt. The surface of the cylindrical body of the Gudi Khatun Mausoleum is complicated with 12 serried semi-cylinders - «corrugations» covered with a patterned brick coating. The combination of bricks and the turquoise and polished surface forms a grid of large squares filled with an ornament of repeating religious inscriptions - «There is no god but Allah. Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. God bless him!». The pattern on the coating is completed with the wide frame of the inscription. Above the frame, there are traces of cells of the stalactite cornice.

The socle of the mausoleum is covered with three rows of stones. The entrance to the crypt of the mausoleum is on the northern side. The smooth surface of the socle is

cut by four narrow openings in the form of slits, illuminating the crypt. Rising above the socle, the tower amazes the viewer with its power, which is due to the solution of the body in the form of cohesive cylinders, each of which separately gives the impression of a slender tower. The corrugated surface of the tower determines the artistic expression of the Gudi Khatun Mausoleum to a large extent.

The mausoleum in Garabaglar is effectively different stylistically from the nearby mausoleums and by the presence of four portals in the body facing the cardinal points with a deviation of 30°. On the large-scale two-tone pattern of the body, these portals, the most decoratively rich parts of the mausoleum, stand out with their bright spots. These portals, decorated with a colorful inlaid tile mosaic of high quality, further enhance the spatial uniqueness of the composition of the mausoleum. By the force of expressiveness of the architectural image, the Gudi Khatun Mausoleum in Garabaglar is the highest achievement in the



Facade of the Gudi Khatun mausoleum. Restoration draft

development of tower mausoleums with a cylindrical body not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the entire Middle East. This unique monument was erected in the 1330s by the architect Ahmad ibn Ayyub al-Hafiz Nakhchivani.

Both outstanding monuments of memorial architectural, Momina Khatun and Gudi Khatun, were erected over the graves of women. Momina Khatun, the wife of Seljuk Sultan Togrul II (1132-1135), who became the wife of the founder of the Azerbaijani Atabay state, Shams al-Din Ildegiz (1136-1175), after his death, enjoyed a great authority and influence in the palace. She became a counselor to Shams al-Din Atabay for the rest of her life and contributed to his rise to power. Gudi Khatun, the wife of Hulagu Khan (1256-1265), also had a great influence in the Ilkhanid palace even after the death of her husband and had large possessions. Both women, loved by their husbands, also actively participated in political life. Therefore, it appears natural that monuments were built over their graves. But

these mausoleums are not the only monuments built in memory of beloved wives.

Numerous facts prove that in the Middle East, especially among the rulers of Turkic origin, there was a cult of the true and clever wife, and thus, a special architectural theme - mausoleums for women - became a tradition in memorial architecture. If the customers, mostly rulers, generals, or just wealthy people spared no money to immortalize their beloved wives, the architects gave their all to embody great love in architectural forms. Therefore, the architectural image of monumental women's mausoleums is different for its delicacy and unusual beauty.

On the territory of Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, etc., there are many mausoleums bearing the names of women. Among them are mausoleums built over the graves of famous female rulers of the Middle East such as the Turkish wife of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, Zubaydah Khatun; the wife of Shams al-Din Atabay, Momina Khatun; Hulagu Khan's wife Gudi Khatun; the daughter of Argun Khan Ilkhanid, Miri Khatun; the wife of Iron Timur, Bibi Khanum; the wife of Safavid Shah Ismayil I, Tajli Khatun, etc. But the most monumental and well-known architectural monument on this topic is the Taj Mahal in Agra, India. The Taj Mahal was built by the great Mughal ruler, Shah Jahan (1628-1657), over the grave of his beloved wife Mumtaz Khatun. This architectural masterpiece is considered a great love poem in stone. The researchers who compare the Momina Khatun Mausoleum to the best works of the genius 12th century poet Nizami, praising beauty and love, are right. ❀



“The Gudi Khatun mausoleum”, water color, N.N.Uzson

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