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Bektashi Sufi Pendant (Teslimi Taşı)

Ottoman Turkey, probably 19th century

Jade, silver filigree, gemstone, onyx

13 cm diameter, 20 cm long (inc. pendant)

Stock no.: A5962

Provenance:

UK private collection, built up since the 1990s.

This jade star would have formed part of the regalia of a Bektashi Baba or master. It is made from a large piece of polished jade, with gemstones inserted into a hole in the middle. A teardrop shaped pendant of onyx is decorated on its base with a delicate silver filigree flower.

Bektashi (*Bektaşî*) are a Sufi order, founded by Haji Bektash Veli in thirteenth-century Anatolia.¹ The star, known as *teslim taşı* or 'stone of surrender', is the principal symbol of the order. It has 12 crescent shaped cut outs, symbolising the Shi'ite belief that 'Ali was the rightful Caliph, and his successors were the twelve Imams.'²

Bektashi Sufis wear a teslim taşı around their neck, often made of jade, onyx, alabaster or silver, a practice introduced by Balım Sultan (d. 1519 CE), who codified the order.³ This jade star is a variant

known as *palihenk* or *palihang*, which is a larger stone worn at the belt.⁴ Only babas, or Sufi masters, wore the *palihenk*.⁵ The teardrop shaped pendant of onyx would have been attached to the *palihenk* with a braided rope known as the *kamberiye*. It is worn in memory of Qambar, the groom of 'Ali, who wore the lead rope of 'Ali's mule around his waist when it was not hitched. The wearing of a stone around the abdomen is said to be used for suppressing hunger, serving an ascetic purpose.

Portraits of Babas show them wearing the *palihenk* and *kamberiye* together. A photograph from ca. 1913 shows Sha'ban Bab from Albania in full regalia.⁶ Another photograph of the Balkan Baba Hüseyin Hüsni Erdikut Baba, shows the same regalia in the late 19th century.⁷ Several examples of *teslim taşı*, *palihenk* and *kamberiye* are held in the Bektashi Museum, Nevsehir (Hacı Bektaş Veli Müzesinden).⁸

[1] Algar, Hamid. 'Bektāšīya', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, vol. IV, fasc. 2, pp. 118–122 (1989), retrieved online via <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bektasiya/> on 09/06/2024.

[2] De Jong, Frederick. 'The iconography of Bektashiism: A survey of themes and symbolism in clerical costume, liturgical objects and pictorial art', *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 4 (1989), pp. 7–29: p. 10.

[3] Trimingham, J. Spencer. *The Sufi Orders in Islam*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971, p. 83.

[4] Birge, John Kingsley. *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*. London: Luzac & Co., 1937, p. 265, p. 268.

[5] De Jong, *Op. Cit*, p. 10.

[6] See De Jong, *Op. Cit*, plate 1, p. 19.

[7] See Maden, Fahri. 'A Home of Soul in Köprülü: Hacet Baba Lodge', *Türk Kültürü* 93 (2020), pp. 37–70: 53.

[8] See Akbulut, Dilek. '[İnanç ve üretim bağlamında Hacibektaş taş işçiliği](#)' / 'Hacibektaş stonework within the context of faith and production', *Türk Kültürü* 68 (2013), pp. 221–238.