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THE KUNDEKARI TECHNIQUE IN MIDDLE AGE ANATOLIAN TURKISH WOODWORK ART

Key Words: Art, Middle age, Anatolia, woodworking.

Woodworking is one of the most important types of Turkish art, which have been performed since the pre-Islamic era On the transportable objects found in kurgans of Central Asia, various samples of a very special technique called *beveled style* had been used (for some samples see Rudenko 1951; Diyarbekirli 1972). In beveled style technique, which is in the engraving group, the motif cuts down with a light arc in a declivitous way and intersects to the background of surfaces, making the background visible only in a line; consequently the background and the motif is mended in the decorating. In this way, with the background joining to the design, both the background line and the motifs left inside the various arcs made by this line, earn an abstract character and they present a vivacious and fluid image by making the looks go the entire surface. This technique brought to Samarra in 9th century by Turks, then it presented an original style in various materials and spreaded to the other Islamic countries from there (Ögel 1965:110; Öney 1970:143). By being contemporary with Samarra, the woodwork decorating of Tulunaid era in Egypt (AD 868-905), reflects this style completely (Ettinghausen 1952:75). But later, Egypt as well as various territories such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Anatolia, started gradually distancing and scattering from the genuine style in Samarra (Ettinghausen 1952:72-83; also see Bozer 1992:227-36); commonly engraved with the other techniques.

Various engraving techniques, including beveled style, had played a dominating role in Turkish and Islamic woodwork art until 12th century; through the middle of this century a new technique called *kundekari* is emerged. It is guessed that this technique, which there exists no con-

firmed knowledge about the source, firstly appeared as an Islamic art (Kuhnel 1950: 57) and early samples seen in 12th century in Egypt, Anatolia and Aleppo, thus was developed in parallel in these three centers (Öney 1970:135).

After indicating some development in 12-13th centuries samples such as mihrabs of Seyyide Nefise Mausoleum (AD 1138-45) and in Seyyide Rukiye Mausoleum (AD 1154-60) (for these mihrabs see Ravaisse 1889:637-67; also see Bakırer 1971:367-78), minbar of Amr Mosque in Kus (AD 1155), sarcophagi of Imam Şafi (AD 1211), minbar of Tolunoğlu Mosque that was ordered to be made by Sultan Laçin (AD 1296), the kundekari technique, started to superimposing in Egypt in Fatimi era, and increased reaching its peak with the monuments of Mamluk era in 14-15th century (Kuhnel 1950:55-63).

The mihrab ordered to be made by Nureddin Zengi (third quarter of 12th century) in Aleppo, which was deemed as another important center for woodwork art besides Cairo, is being considered as one of the early representatives of the kundekari technique in Syria (Kuhnel 1950:57 note 7; for mihrab also see Herzfeld 1943:57, fig. 81).

The appearance of kundekari technique in Anatolia is in coincidence with the same date as in Egypt. Kundekari technique, which has found different superimposing fields in Anatolian woodwork such as minbar, lectern, wardrobe shutter wings, door and window shutter wings[1], had been imitated with different superimposing which represents same image. Because of this, it is discriminated in two groups as *actual* and *imitated kundekari* by their application on the monuments.

Actual kundekari technique, also named as *framework*, is to connect the little pieces, prepared separately in triangle, star and polygonal with grooved edges, with the help of rabbetted lath, without using pins or glue (for the definition of the technique also see Arseven 1950:1193-95; Karamağaralı 1965:12; Öney 1970:136). In this technique, where always geometrical compositions are used owing to the difficulties in application, pieces being both small and separate from each other prevent the corruptions that could be caused by the humidity and heat in time. With this very difficult technique that requires mastery, while achieving the desired geometrical decorating, the surface itself being decorated is also produced. Therefore, the actual kundekari technique has

[1] In Farsi, kendekari means “craving on metal, wood or another material” ; kunde means “thick tree”, “huge wooden shackles attached to criminals’ or prisinors’ feet”; kari means “workmanship” (see Muin 1984) As it is seen the kundekari term does not explains the technical superimposing we are mentioning clearly. It is not known for today since when this term was used for the mentioned technique nor by whom.

the peculiarity of being both decorating and establishing technique. To decrease the strength against large strokes and weights there is a frame or compact wood board at the backside of the decorated part, as in door or window shutter wings. The technique had been used uninterruptedly in Seljuk, Emirates and Ottoman era since the middle of 12th century[2].

The imitated kundekari technique, which is easier than the actual kundekari, can be examined in two groups as *embossed and relief, full embossed and pasted* by their way of making.

In embossed and relief kundekari technique, the desired geometrical composition is drawn on the compact wood boards connected side by side; the places left between the triangle, star and polygonal pieces are carved and the laths which form the geometrical setting are nailed to these places. In this superimposing, which resembles the actual kundekari technique a lot with its look, the parting and cracks on the boards caused by humidity and heat in time, ruins the wholeness and fluency of the composition (Karamağaralı 1965:121; Öney 1970:137-138). This technique, which develops in parallel with the actual kundekari technique but comes with less samples, is seen generally in minbars and door shutter wings in Anatolia thru the middle of 15th century. Samples thicken in Ankara, Divriği and Kayseri[3].

In the less seen *full embossed and pasted kundekari* technique, both separately prepared triangle, star and polygonal pieces and between these, the laths which forms the geometrical setting, are nailed or pasted on the wood boards connected side by side (Öney 1970:138-39). Due to the peculiarity in the making, it parallels to *marquetry* technique. But, in two samples of this technique that we were able to locate[4], the decorating produced by pieces prepared separately, in the looks resembling the actual kundekari technique perfectly. Because of this, we have to evaluate this technique, which is clearly evident that it's imitating the actual kundekari, in the imitated kundekari group. Since it is hard to understand if it's the mentioned technique unless the pasted or nailed pieces drop, it is possible to determine new monuments made with this

[2] There are false informations estimating the kundekari technique generally in Ottoman period and that this technique is not seen in Seljuk period, but it was used and developed in Otoman era. (see Kerametli 1962:10-11; Yücel 1975:3-11;Yücel 1977:58-71)

[3] This technique, which is coming infront of us in the minbar of Çorum Great Mosque (AD 1306), because of the masters of the minbar being from Ankara it must be considered in the monuments of Ankara workshops (for minbar see Karamağaralı 1965:128-29).

[4] Minbar of Ankara Ahi Elvan Mosque (AD 1413) and door shutter wings of Kastamonu Yakup Ağa Mosque (AD 1547).

technique only in time. Also, looking at the given two samples, it is seen that the probability of the pieces dropping is rather high (fig. 1).

While this technique, with its original workmanship, is imitated in different ways in woodworking, imitations in various materials such as rock (Ögel 1966:25-27; Mülayim 1982:82), plaster, ceramic (Yetkin 1965:95) and metal[5], are also seen probably because of this techniques' influence.

With the change of preferences by the ages, both groups of kundekari technique had been used together in carving, repoussē, marquetry and lattice work.

Konya Alaaddin Mosque's minbar, which carries various peculiarities such as being the first woodwork monument in Anatolia known with its date, first sample of kundekari and first minbar, is showing clearly that Seljuks had a developed wood workmanship when they came to Anatolia. In the minbar made by an Anatolian master, Üstad Hacı Mengümberti from Ahlat in 1155 (Oral 1962:30), when looked to the parts, like side surfaces, balcony, banister and the doorpost, crest and the vault corners in the door, as a whole it is made with a very intensive and grift decorating (fig. 2). The decorating with beveled style in the triangular tips of the banisters, carry an importance known as the first sample of the Central Asia originated technique carried to Anatolia, for now. The actual kundekari technique in the minbar seen at the sideways, the lowes of balcony and door pediments, seem to have formed the beginning and diagnosis of some peculiarities continues in 13, 14 and even 15th centuries. In the geometrical arrangement, which the hexagon, octagon, star etc. pieces being framed with a thin molding and to their surfaces, rounded surfaced and grooved cravings which can be said deep, and vegetal decorating in palmet-rumi are superimposed; between the pieces, deep groves are made by the profiled wide laths which connecting the pieces. While the laths and the geometrical pieces are in the same level, the grooves in the laths play a role to decrease the plastic effect of the pieces. The pieces are big, the place laths are covering is much. Because of this the number of the pieces for m^2 lessens. Consequently the compositions materialized on the monument, are able to show a tight part of the geometrical system that was planned. Even if, because of the place that sideways cover is wider in some samples this

[5] In Egypt, begining from 13th century, in the bronze or bronze plated doors, influence of this technique is clearly seen. (see Kuhnel 1950:58-59). Same peculiarity, in Anatolia, comes infront of us begining from early samples such as bronze plated door shutter wings of Cizre Great Mosque (first half of 13th century) and the bronze door made by Al-Cezeri for Diyarbakır Palace (end of 12th century) (see Meinecke 1989:56-57, fig. 5-6).

situation does not attract attention, it is noticed clearly in more narrow areas such as door shutter wings and like in this minbar in the lowes of balcony parts.

Besides having some different preferences in details such as the style of profiling the laths, size of the geometrical pieces, groove shapes etc. according to the century, artist or region, same superimposing of the peculiarities said above for the minbar of Konya Alaaddin Mosque is seen in samples such as, in 13th century Siirt Great Mosque, Kayseri Lala Paşa Mosque, Beyşehir Eşrefoglu Mosque, Sivrihisar Great Mosque; in 14th century Birgi Great Mosque (fig. 3), Damsaköy Taşkın Paşa Mosque, Manisa Great Mosque; in 15th century Manisa Ivaz Paşa Mosque and Hatuniye Mosque minbars with actual kundekari technique; in 13th century Ankara Aslanhane Mosque; in 14th century Çorum Great Mosque; 15th century Ankara Ahi Elvan Mosque minbars with imitated kundekari technique.

In the middle of 12th century, approximately in the same date with Konya Alaaddin Mosque's minbar, the minbar of Aksaray Great Mosque which again made with the actual kundekari technique, while showing paralleled peculiarities in the intensity of decorating and technical superimposing, it differs by leaving the laths used in kundekari technique flat. Here the pieces left higher than the flat laths; consequently the geometrical pieces with various shapes comes fore more. Hobnails are attracting attention in some of the pieces[6]. The door shutter wings of the minbar, which made with kundekari technique, shows a scheme that doesn't have a second sample of it in Anatolia[7]. Each of the double wings is estimated vertically, in exterior with a writing border, and in interior with a kundekari board (fig. 4).

In imitated kundekari technique, 12th century Ankara Alaaddin Mosque and Divriği Kale Mosque, 13th century sideways of Divriği Great Mosque and Kayseri Great Mosque minbars; in actual kundekari technique 12th century Malatya Great Mosque's minbar (for date see Ettinghausen 1952:82; Ögel 1966:115), it is seen that the laths have been left flat, and the geometrical pieces with vegetal decorating came fore. In the minbars of Ankara Alaaddin Mosque (AD 1197) and Divriği Kale Mosque (AD 1180-81), the strength had been decreased and also earned a decorative look by the hobnails been nailed to the connecting spots of the laths (fig. 5).

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[6] The use of hobnails in monuments made with kundekari technique, comes infront of us more oftenly in the later centuries.

[7] Unfortunately this unique sample had been stolen from its place in 1998, hadn't been found yet (see Karaduman 1999:151).

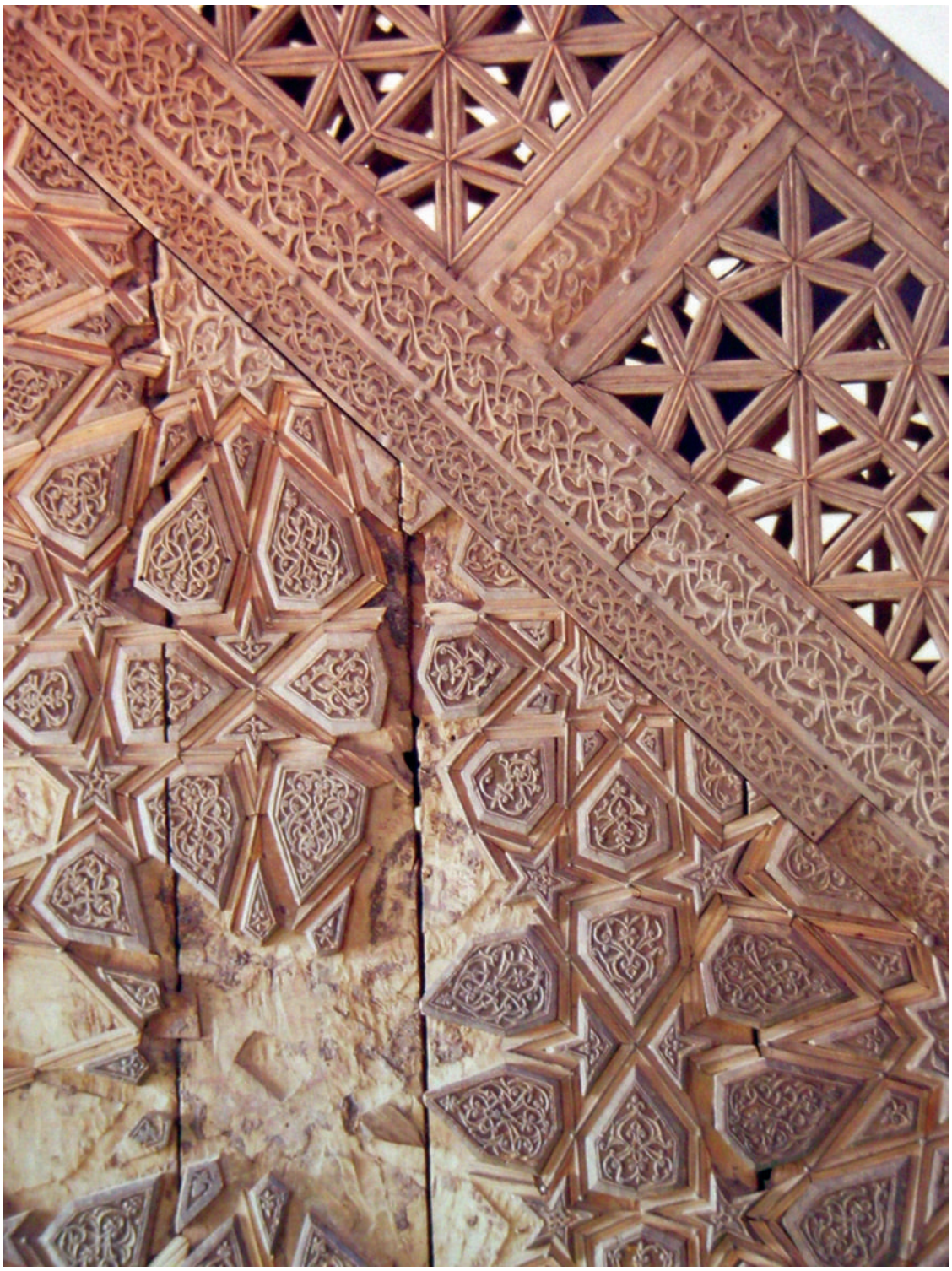
In some samples like Malatya, Kayseri, Sivrihisar Mosques' minbars made with actual/imitated kundekari technique, whether flat or profiled, it is observed that the laths have been made very wide.

In the laths of the lowes of balcony parts of Divriği Great Mosque's minbar, which was made in 1241-42 by Ahmet, son of İbrahim from Tiflis, 12 years after the mosque, a superimposing attracts attention that we don't know another sample of it besides Divriği, in Anatolia. Here, the surfaces of the laths were decorated in a very thin and elegant design with rumi (fig. 6). But, this situation, both prevents the fluency of the geometrical lines and with the vegetal decorating on the geometrical pieces, it creates a very grift tissue over the surface. We come across to the same superimposing, again in Divriği, in Şifahane's door shutter wings[8].

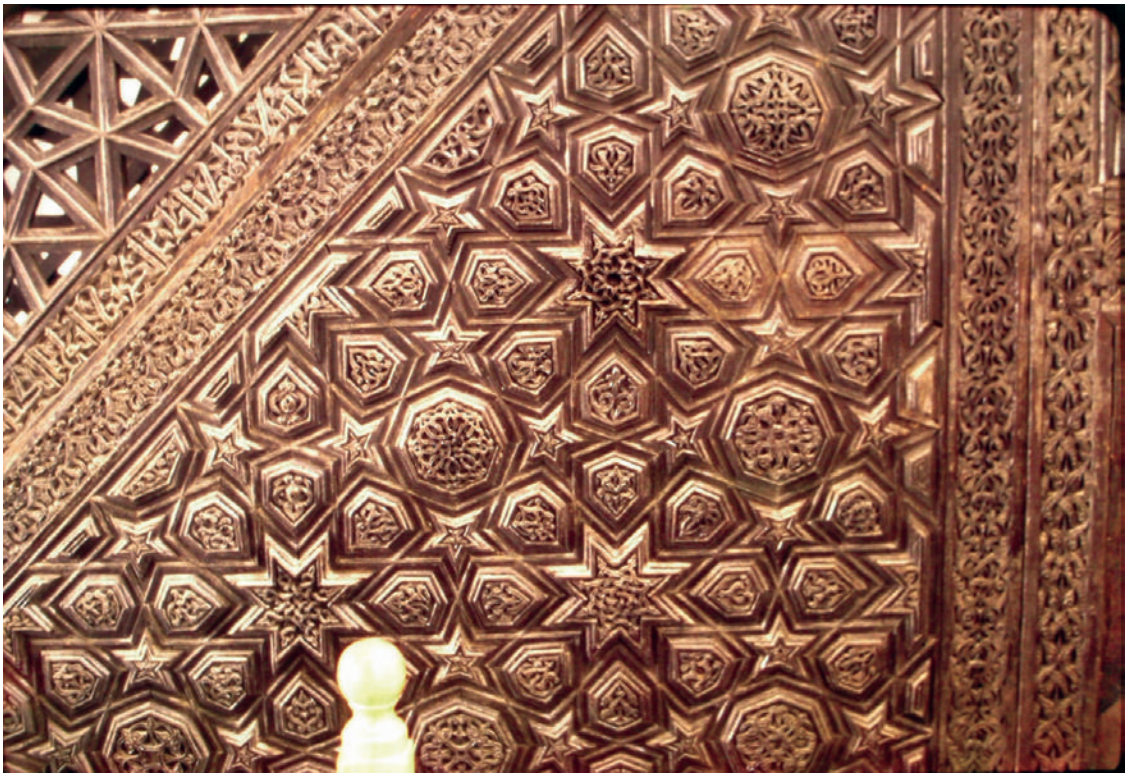
While the geometrical pieces were decorated in craving technique in compositions made with kundekari technique in Seljuk period, it is seen that some of these pieces were estimated with repoussē technique starting from the end of 13th century. By our determinations of today the first sample of it comes in front of us in sideways of Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Mosque's minbar (AD 1296-99), and started with a wood repoussed over wood way (fig. 7), this superimposing continued with door shutter wings of Niğde Sungur Bey Mosque (AD 1335) (fig. 8) in 14th century ; few samples as in, made by the same master, the minbar's door shutter wings of Manisa Great Mosque and sideways of Bursa Great Mosque's minbar, it lived a decreasing by repoussing different materials ; but the real decreasing is lived in the door shutter wings, beginning from the middle of 15th century.

The door shutter wings of Konya Sahip Ata Mosque dated to 1258 is the first known sample of actual kundekari technique in door shutter wings (fig. 9). This technique which is seen in minbars begin from the middle of 12th century, being superimposed in door shutter wings after approximately one century later, ponders that doors were made in this technique but couldn't reach today. Seeing the door shutter wings made in other techniques reached today since the end of 12th century and coming across to the door shutter wings in actual kundekari technique until the 15th century less, could be considered as a sign for, in Seljuk and Emirates periods door shutter wings kundekari technique was less preferred. As mentioned above, in kundekari technique in middle ages, pieces being big and laths being wide, both brings the problem of setting the desired compositions to the boards on the wings and the problem of strength because of being frequently exposed to the strokes caused by being an element that used often.

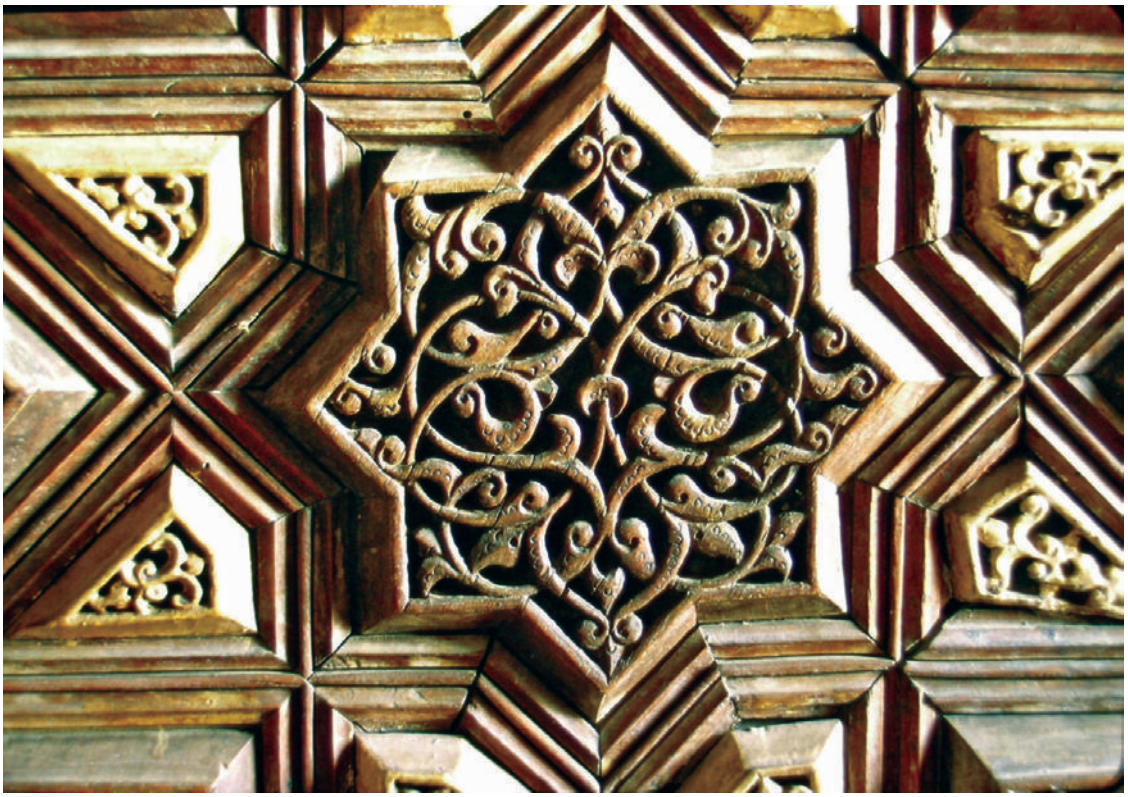
[8] These laths in the door shutter wings have been mostly dropped.



Minbar of Ankara Ahi Elvan Mosque

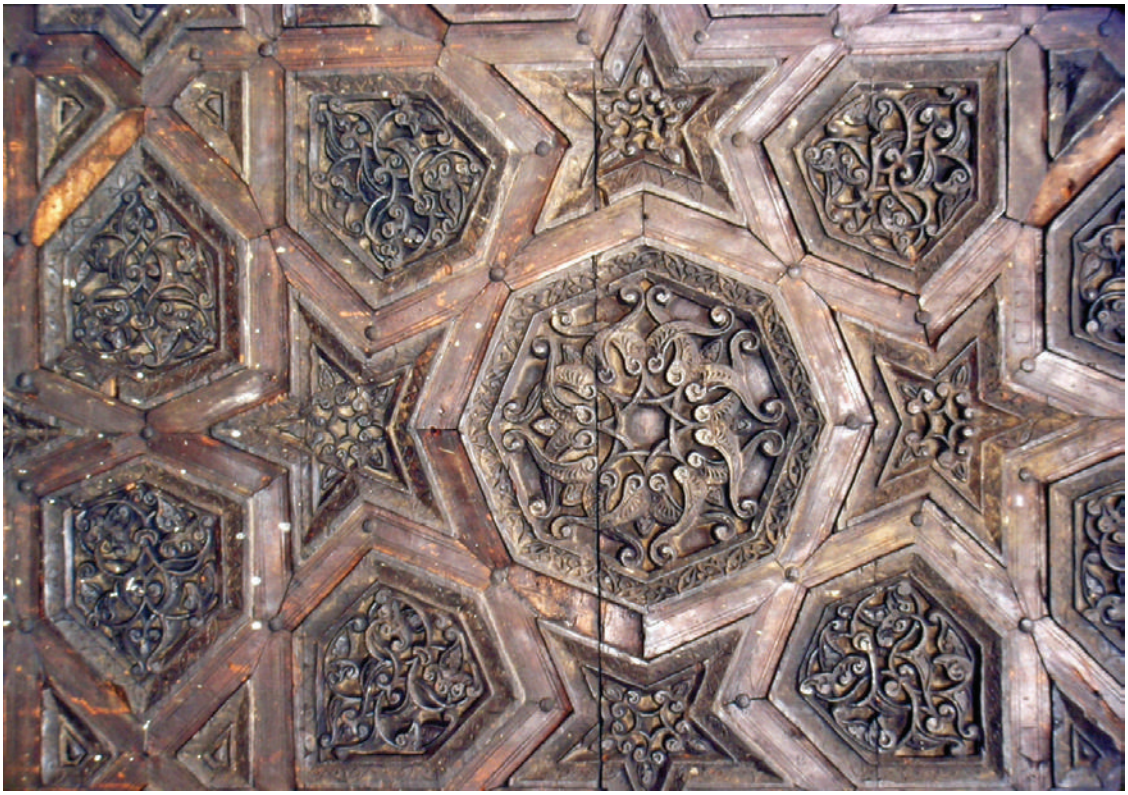


Minbar of Konya Alaaddin Mosque



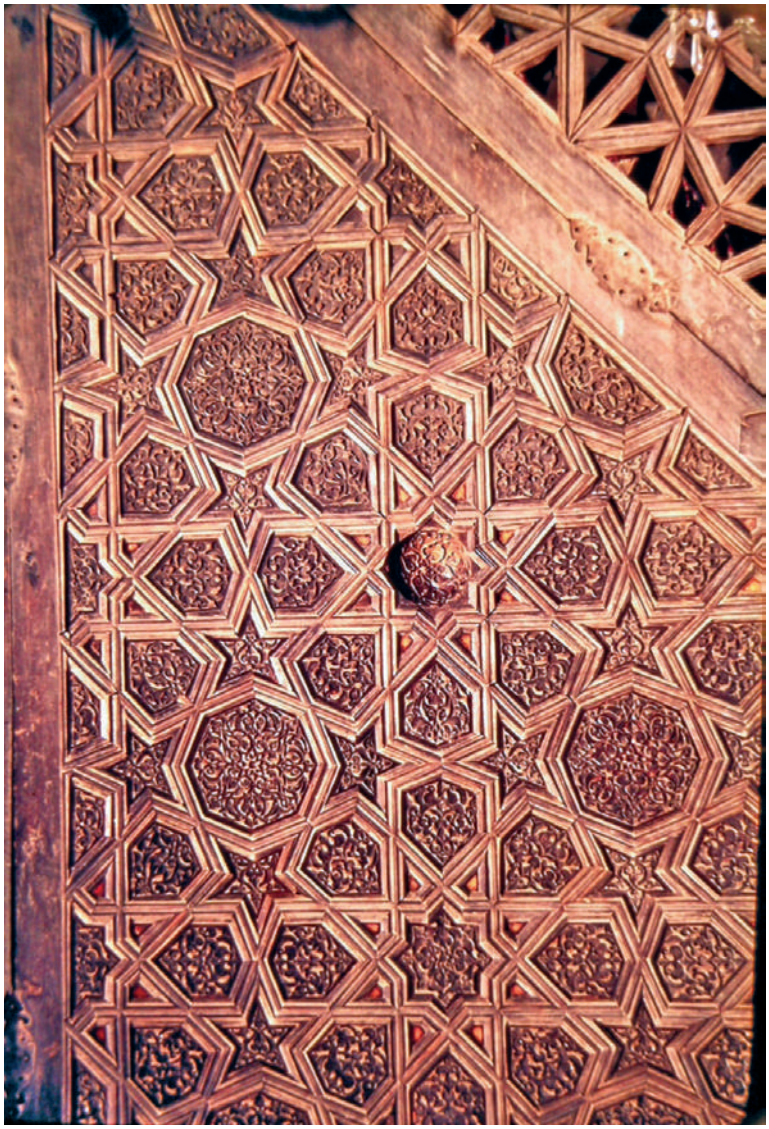
Minbar of Birgi Great Mosque, detail from the sideways

Minbar of Aksaray Great Mosque, detail from the door shutter wing



Minbar of Ankara Alaaddin Mosque, detail from the sideways

Minbar of Divriği Kale Mosque, sideways



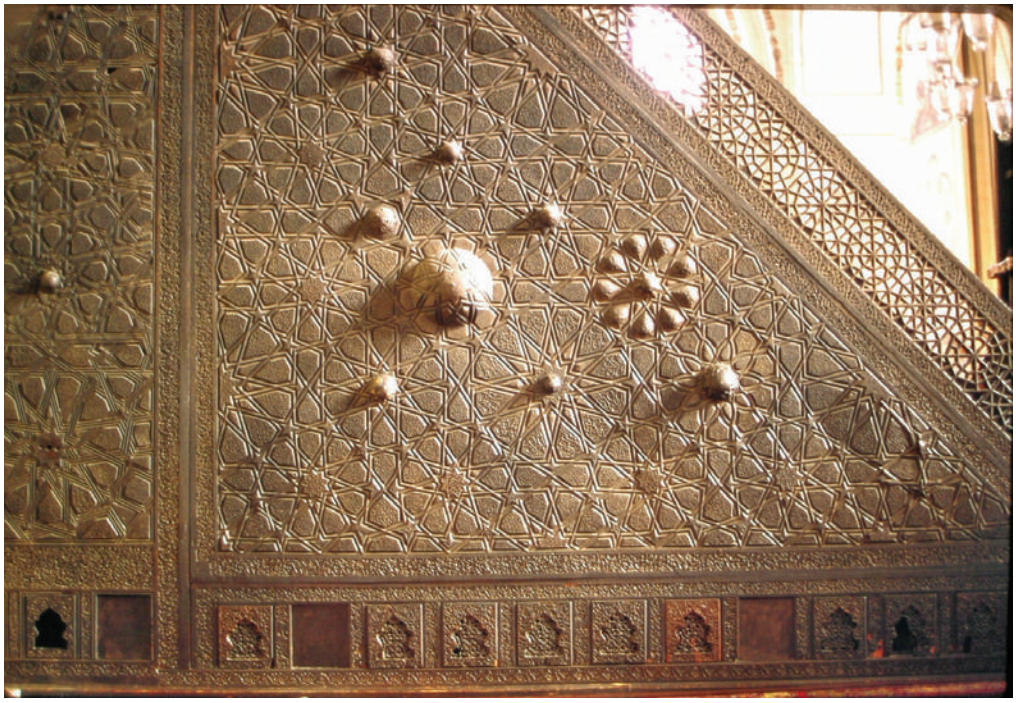
Minbar of Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Mosque, sideways

Niğde Sungur Bey Mosque, detail from the door shutter wing

Konya Sahip Ata Mosque, detail door shutter wings

Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Mosque, door shutter wings

Osmancık Koca Mehmet Paşa Mosque, door shutter wings



Bursa Great Mosque, sideways

Minbar of Manisa Great Mosque, detail from the door shutter wings

These also, can be considered to why the kundekari technique was preferred less in door shutter wings in Middle Ages. Door shutter wings of Konya Sahip Ata Mosque, Çorum Elvan Çelebi Zaviyah (end of 13th century, beginning of 14th century) and Niğde Sungur Bey Mosque are the most important representatives of the kundekari technique in Middle Age doors. In the doors of Konya and Niğde, because of laths and geometrical divisions being approximately in the same level, doesn't show a clear surface difference. But in the door shutter wings of Elvan Çelebi Zaviyah, the geometrical divisions made fairly higher than the laths cause a plastic effect on the surfaces.

At the end of 13th century, door shutter wings of Beyşehir Eşrefoğlu Mosque, represents a different superimposing of actual kundekari technique. Here, cogs are opened to the sides of the pieces set in different locations, inserted to each other without laths in between (fig. 10). Vegetal decorations hadn't been used, instead of it, the surfaces are profiled and with the profiles connecting each other, continuous rectangles are obtained on the whole board. This kind of superimposing, which is not unprevalent in Seljuk and Emirates periods, is seen in an anonymous door shutter wings (first half of 14th century) aroused from the restitution of the pieces said that belonged to Konya Beyhekim Masjid's window shutter wing (Önge 1980:34, fig. 7).

In the period until 15th century, we came to the imitated kundekari technique in door shutter wings, only in 13th century Divriği Great Mosque's east door and Şifahane's door shutter wings. This technique, which seen in embossed and relief kundekari style, superimposed in the door shutter wings of Merzifon Çelebi Sultan Mehmet Madrasah (AD 1414-17) and Osmancık Koca Mehmet Paşa Mosque (AD 1430-31) in 15th century (fig. 11). The last two samples represent an image close to the actual kundekari technique by its workmanship.

While the traditional peculiarities are still continued in the lowes of balcony and sideways of the Manisa Great Mosque's minbar, the door of the minbar is like the lead of some newness in the superimposing of kundekari technique in Middle Ages. In the monument, made in 1376 by Hacı Mehmet, son of Abdülaziz son of Daki from Antep (Oral 1962:67), the laths became thinner, geometrical pieces have been shrank and in consequence of these, larger settings of the compositions have been situated. Another peculiarity is; the laths, which form the geometrical setting, are not flat as usual, they have been arced in a way to soften the geometrical setting (fig. 12). Thus, sides of the geometrical pieces have been made in arc necessarily. These two peculiarities comes in front of us in east side and the door of Bursa Great Mosque's

minbar, which is made by the same master in AD 1399 (Oral 1962:71), and in the door shutter wings of Bursa Yeşil Mausoleum (1421), made by Hacı Ali, son of Ahmet from Tebriz. The origin of the arched lath superimposing is hard to determine. Even if it is possible to mention about Syrian influence because of the master who made the minbars of Manisa Great Mosque and Bursa Great Mosque is from Antep, for now we are deprived from the samples to make these connections. Probably it is first used in Anatolia. As for in Egypt, it is appeared later than Anatolia. The star compositions in the minbar, which is dated to 1479, of Cairo Ebu Bekir Mosque, have been made with arched laths, which haven't seen in Egyptian monuments until then (Kuhnel 1950:63, fig. 14).

The minbar of Bursa Great Mosque is the most monumental of Seljuk and Emirates period samples. In this monument, where we also find a perfect superimposing of actual kundekari technique, pieces getting smaller, contrary to this minbar size getting bigger, so large settings of the geometrical compositions could be installed on the surfaces. Especially in the east side of the minbar facing the mihrab, big and little hobnails, some of them made in kundekari technique, gains a very vivacious image to the surfaces (fig. 13). The door shutter wings or doorpost of minbar is also in kundekari technique. For Anatolia, the use of kundekari technique in doorposts is not an application that we are used to.

The shrinking in the geometrical pieces, which started in the minbar of Manisa Great Mosque, besides being seen in less samples until the middle of 15th century, started to wide spreading beginning from the door shutter wings of Edirne Üç Şerefeli Mosque (AD 1447); in this way the kundekari technique, which was being less preferred in door and window shutter wings before, increased from the middle of the century and coming to 16th century almost in every sample this technique became supreme (for some samples see Bozer 1989:327-46). In parallel to this, vegetal decorating in geometrical pieces became plain and depth of the cravings lessened; repose and marquetry technique continued in increasing; gradually all pieces became estimated within repose technique.

After the middle of 15th century in Ottoman era, marble minbars started to get prevalence caused the slow disappearing of the traditional woodwork minbars, which can be considered as monumental, also the use of actual kundekari technique in minbars begun to be forgotten; contrary to this, besides the door and window shutter wings, it found more different superimposing fields such as lecterns, wardrobe shutter wings etc.

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THE KUNDEKARI TECHNIQUE IN MIDDLE AGE ANATOLIAN TURKISH WOODWORK ART

Summary

Kundekari is a technique practiced to interlock separately prepared panels-and laths attached to them - by using grooves furrowed on the margins; nail or adhesive is not used. With this method, on the one hand, geometrical compositions are created, and on the other, with the mergence of components, the surface is configured. Using this technique, long term deformations caused by heat and humidity is minimised. Different kinds of decoration methods such as inlaying, curving, tarsi can be ornamented on the constituent panels of the geometrical composition. In this way, it becomes possible to practice different techniques on the same work. All these decorations formed by the art style of their time are presented in abundant versions in Anatolian woodwork. This method which is encountered after the second half of the 12th century and progressed simultaneously in Egypt and Anatolia has an important place in Islamic and Turkish woodwork art. Kundekari was uninterruptedly practiced during the Seljuks, Emirates and Ottoman periods.

TEHNIKA KUNDEKARI U SREDNJOVJEKOVNOJ ANADOLSKOJ TURSKOJ UMJETNOSTI OBRADE DRVETA

Sažetak

Kundekari je tehnika kojom se spajaju odvojeno rađene ploče – i letve namontirane na njih – korištenjem žlijebova urezanih na rubovima; nisu se koristili ekseri ili ljepilo. S jedne strane, ovim se metodom stvaraju geometrijske kompozicije, a s druge, sastavljanjem dijelova dobiva se površina. Koristeći ovu tehniku, na minimum su svedene dugoročne deformacije koje nastaju usljed toplote i vlage. Razni metodi ukrašavanja kao što su inkrustacija, zavijanje, tarzi mogu se unijeti kao ornamenti na ploče kao sastavne dijelove geometrijske kompozicije. Na ovaj način je moguće primjenjivati razne tehnike na isti rad. Sve ove dekoracije stvorene umjetničkim stilom svoga vremena prikazane su u bogatim verzijama anadolske obrade drveta. Ovaj metod, koji se sreće od druge polovine 12. stoljeća i koji se istovremeno primjenjivao u Egiptu i Anadoliji, ima značajno mjesto u islamskoj i turskoj umjetnosti obrade drveta. Kundekari je bez prekida korišten za vrijeme seldžučkog, emiratskog i osmanskog perioda.

Ključne riječi: Umjetnost, srednji vijek, Anadolija, rad u drvetu.