

THE WOODEN MIHRAB OF THE TAŞKIN PAŞA MOSQUE IN THE DAMSA VILLAGE OF ÜRGÜP

SUMMARY

ÖMÜR BAKIRER

The wooden mihrab of the Taşkın Paşa mosque, in the Damsa village of Ürgüp, was removed from its original place in 1940 and brought to the Ethnographical Museum in Ankara¹. The Taşkın Paşa mosque does not carry an inscription panel². However, it is dated to the 14th. century depending on stylistic analogies and the dates of the two mausolea in the courtyard³. As we shall try to designate in the description below, the general form and decoration of the mihrab gives us the opinion that it is contemporary with the mosque.

Two bands with different mouldings and different width determine the 350 cm. high, 203 cm. wide rectangular framework of the mihrab, The 65 cm. wide, 30 cm. deep, 110 cm. high niche is semi-circular in plan and it is covered by an half dome. The half dome is enframed by a two centered ogive arch which rests on the engaged columns flanking the sides of the niche. (Fig. 1, Pl. 1) A 98 cm. high rectangular panel is placed between the ogive arch and the framework, while two large roundels fill the corners of the spandrels. (Pl. 2)

The mihrab is made of walnut planks that are cut according to the shapes of the different elements and joined vertically and horizontally. For the moulded bands which delineate the framework two planks, measuring 16 cm. and 20 cm. respectively, are placed vertically at the sides and horizontally at the top meeting each other

¹ The mihrab is registered in Ankara, Ethnographical Museum, Env. No. 11541.

² Diez, E - Aslanapa, O., *Karaman Devri Sanatı*, İstanbul 1950, p. 184.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 184-188. Arık, M. O., 'Erken Devir Anadolu Türk Mimarisinde Türbe Biçimleri', *Anadolu (Anatolia)*, XI, 1967, Ankara, 1969, p. 72. Kuran, A., 'Karamanlı Medreseleri', *Vakıflar Dergisi*, VIII., Ankara, 1969, p. 213. Oral, M. Z., 'Anadolu'da Sanat Değeri olan Ahşap Mimberler, Kitabeleri ve Tarihçeleri', *Vakıflar Dergisi*, V., Ankara, 1962, p. 64-66.

diagonally at the upper corners. Three vertical planks, measuring 28 cm. in width and 110 cm. in height, are used for the semicircular niche; the half dome is made of a monolith piece and horizontal planks are used for the arch frieze, the spandrels and the rectangular panel between the arch frieze and the inner band. This construction technique of the mihrab resembles the construction of wooden doors and window shutters rather than mimbars⁴.

The surface of the mihrab is completely covered with carved geometrical and floral interlaces and inscription bands. The lower part of the lateral moulded band is covered with an intricate floral interlace where scrolls or palmet leaves are woven into a continuous composition running on the vertical axis up to 92 cm. from ground level. At the point where this interlace ends, an inscription band, in floriated Nesih script, starts and runs around the upper part of the framework. (Pl. 1, 4) This inscription, where the letters are well rounded and usually terminate with scrolls and palmet leaves, is a verse taken from the Koran⁵.

The lower part of the inner moulded band starts with an intricate geometric interlace. Curvilinear narrow strips intersect each other besides delineating squares that are looped on top of one another. As in the first band, an inscription band⁶ starts at the point where the interlace terminates, 68 cm. from ground level, and continues on the upper part of the band. The rectangular panel between the arch frieze and the inner band of the framework is divided into three horizontal zones. The two outer zones carry verses from the Koran in Nesih script⁷, while the center is decorated with a geometric interlace. In this case, narrow strips delineate twelve pointed stars whilst intersecting each other. (Pl. 2) The surface of the niche, the engaged columns, the arch frieze and the spandrels are decorated

⁴ Karamağaralı, H., 'Çorum Ulu Camiiindeki Mimler', *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, I., 1964-1965, İstanbul, 1965, p. 121; distinguishes two different techniques for the construction of mimbars, which are different from that used for this mihrab.

⁵ Verse 255 (Ayet-ül-Kursi) from Bakara Sure. See: *Kuran-ı Kerim ve Türkçe Anlamı*, Ankara, 1961, vol. I, p. 55-56.

⁶ Verse 20, 21, 22, 23 from Haşr Sure (Sure 59). See: *Ibid.*, vol. III., p. 727.

⁷ Top: Verse 31, from Ahkâf Sure (Sure 46). Bottom: Kelime-i Şahadet. See: *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 669, 672, 680.

⁸ On the right roundel: Verse 22, Haşr Sure (Sure 59) on the left roundel: Verse 23, Haşr Sure (Sure 59), See: *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 727.

with simple or complex floral compositions. The large roundels on the spandrels are decorated with inscriptions⁸. (Pl. 2, 3, 6) In contrast to all these elements the half dome is left free of decoration which probably indicates a later restoration⁹.

The geometric and floral interlaces and the inscription bands are carved in three different techniques which are: slant cut, high relief and double layer relief. These techniques are similar to those used for the carved decorations of wooden mimbars from the XIII. th. and XIV. th. centuries¹⁰.

In the sequence of Anatolian mihrabs from the XIII. th. and XIV. th. centuries no other examples are found in wood and only four early wooden mihrabs have survived from outside of Anatolia. The earliest of the four belongs to the Iskodar village mosque in Turkestan, and is dated to the pre Mongol period, to the XI-XII. th. centuries¹¹. (Pl. 7) The other three are from the Fatımıd period in Egypt. The mihrab of the El-Ezher mosque (Pl. 8), is dated to 519 H/1125-26 A. D. with an inscription panel placed above its framework¹². That from the Mausoleum of Seyyida Nefisa (Pl. 9), is attributed to 969 H/1171 A. D.¹³; while the third one belonging to the Mausoleum of Seyyida Rukiya has an inscription giving the date 550-555 H/1155-1160 A. D. (Pl. 10)¹⁴ The relationship of the Taşkın Paşa mihrab with these prototypes remains mainly in mate-

⁸ In an earlier photograph of the mihrab the half dome is missing which indicates a restoration. See: Uzunçarşılı, İ. H., *Anadolu Beylikleri*, Ankara, 1969, Pl. 11.

¹⁰ For carving techniques of mimbars see: Öney, G., 'Anadolu Selçuklu ve Beylikler Devri Ahşap Teknikleri', *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, III, 1969-1970, İstanbul, 1970, p. 135-151. Ögel, S., 'Anadolu Ağaç Oymacılığında Mail Kesim', *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı*, I, 1964-1965, İstanbul, 1965, p. 110-120.

¹¹ Denike, B., 'Quelques Monuments de Bois Sculpté au Turkestan Occidental', *Ars Islamica*, II/1, 1935, p. 69-83.

¹² Creswell, K. A. C., *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, I., Oxford, 1952, p. 36, Pl. 118c. Herz, M., *Catalogue Raisonné des Monuments Exposés dans Le Musée National de l'Art Arabe*, Le Caire, 1906, p. 101, No. 95, Fig. 21. Migeon, G., *Manuel d'Art Musulman*, I., Paris, 1927, p. 310.

¹³ Creswell, K. A. C., *op. cit.*, p. 258, Pl. 120', 121a. Herz, M., *op. cit.*, p. 103, No. 96. Migeon, G., *op. cit.*, p. 310, Fig. 122.

¹⁴ Creswell, K. A. C., *loc. cit.* Briggs, M., *Muhammedan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine*, Oxford, 1924, p. 217, Fig. 225, 226. Grube, E., *The World of Islam*, London, 1966, p. 68, Pl. 30. Herz, M., *op. cit.*, p. 103, No. 97, Pl. 11.

rial, since only certain analogies can be found in the arrangement of the mihrab elements and the carved decoration. Whereas the Taşkın Paşa mihrab carries close analogies to the late XIII. th. and early XIV. th. century Anatolian mihrabs made of other materials, such as stone, mosaic-faience and stucco. The placement of a rectangular panel above the arch frieze which elongates the framework, the abundant use of inscription bands and intrecate floral interlaces are characteristics of especially XIV. th. century Anatolian mihrabs, These analogies make us think that the mihrab is contemporary with the XIV. th. century mosque and is a unique wooden mihrab surviving from this period.