

## **Two Rare Ottoman-Era Wooden Boxes to preserve the Kaaba' Keys, Dated (1146 A.H and 1197 A.H), in a Private Collection in Riyadh (Publication and study)**

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### **Abstract:**

The research is studying and publishing two rare wooden boxes designed for preserving the Kaaba keys, both are made in holy Makkah (Al-Mukarramah). One of them is dated (1146 A.H), while the other is dated (1197 A.H), both boxes are dated back to the Ottoman Era. This paper shows an accurate and scientific description for each box, such as its shape, inscriptions, and decorations, as well as analyzing these inscriptions and decorations in the light of their official role. The research concluded that the first box, dated (1146 A.H), dates back to the reign of Sultan Mahmud I (1143 - 1168 A.H / 1730 - 1754 A.D), during the Emirate of Sharif Masoud bin Saeed bin Zaid, Emir of Makkah Al-Mukarramah in his second period (1146 - 1165 / 1734 - 1752 AD), while the second, dated (1197 A.H), dates back to the reign of the Sultan Abdul Hamid I, who ruled from (1187 A.H / 1773 A.D to - 1203 A.H / 1789 A.D), during the Emirate of Sharif Surur bin Musaed, Sharif of Mecca, who assumed the emirate (1186 - 1203 AH / 1772 - 1789 AD). The study shows their manufacturing style and how they can be used, as they are designed to keep the Kaaba keys. As far as we know, there is no wooden boxes of this type that has been previously published or studied. Thus, we believe that these rare and important two boxes are worth studying, thus, that shows the importance and rarity of these boxes, and that there is no doubt that studying them in an accurately scientific way makes them a new and important addition to wooden artifacts in general, and the Kaaba key boxes specially. But it should be noted that although some of the keys of the Kaaba have been previously published and studied, key boxes have never been published. Hence the rarity and importance of these two boxes, and there is no doubt that studying them is an accurate scientific study that makes them a new and important addition to wooden artifacts in general, and boxes for keeping the keys of the Kaaba in particular, knowing that there are many studies and research that have published a set of keys to the Kaaba dating back to different Islamic eras. Museums maintain a group of them, especially the sacred secretariat hall in the Topkapü Saray Museum in Istanbul, Turkey, but the boxes in which these keys are kept have not been previously published in museums, but perhaps the storehouses of the Museum of the Topkapü Saray Museum in Istanbul keep analogues of these two boxes or the stores of other museums.

### **Key words:**

Box- Keys- The Kaaba- Wooden- Riyadh.

### **Introduction:**

The research is concerned with two wooden boxes for keeping the keys of the Kaaba dating back to the Ottoman era, in which the boxes are called in the Ottoman language a box, and in Arabic it means to put it in a box or container or something like it, and in Latin Turkish it is

written Sandik, and in English it is written Box. Treasurer in English is called Sandukdar in Turkish, and Dar in the Persian language means owner, trustee, or custodian. The Ottoman sultans were interested in the belongings of the Holy Kaaba and the belongings of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) preserved in the Topkapi Saray Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, where they made metal and wooden boxes of different colors.

The Ottoman era is considered as one of the prosperous eras in manufacturing boxes in which the locks and keys of the Kaaba, which enjoyed great religious status and value, are kept. Where the Sharif of Mecca used to send these keys to the Ottoman Sultan with the sacred beliefs, indicating his obedience and handing over the country to him. The Hijaz had been privileged with a stature and great care from the Ottoman sultans, not like any other states in the Ottoman Empire.

Wood industry, Ağaç Sanati, flourished in the Ottoman era, where Turkish and international museums abound with thousands of these pieces, including the boxes for keeping these keys, which are considered rare artifacts, including the two boxes - the subject of the study. They were not previously published or studied before, due to the rare of the study of the boxes that keep the keys of the Kaaba. They are only minor signs; therefore, there were no other boxes except these two boxes in museums and private collections so far.

Where the two boxes - the subject of the study - contained various decorations from written texts dating back to the Ottoman era, which is considered one of the important eras in the manufacture of applied artifacts and their decorative diversity, and by reading and analyzing the inscriptions recorded on these two boxes - the subject of the study - as well as shedding light on the way they work. It is a topic of great importance; Therefore, their study is a new and unique addition in the field of archaeological studies in general and in the field of Ottoman wooden artifacts in particular, Ağaç Sanati, which were made in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. For the two boxes, through their description and methods of manufacture, and the analysis of their decorative elements, whether they are floral, geometric, **or written motifs in terms of form and content, and they can be studied as follows:**

**The first box:(PL.1-4, Fig. 1-2)**

**Type of antique:** walnut wood box.

**Number of antiques:** 922.

**Date of Industry:** 1146 AH.

**Conservation place:** Preserved in the collection of Her Highness Princess Moody, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Condition:** good.

**Size:** Its height is approximately 44.5 cm, its base length is approximately 83 cm, and its base width is approximately 41 cm.

**The Description:** A rectangular box made of walnut wood, laminated with copper.

All plank in the four corners, rising by 5 cm.



Plate 1: A wooden box preserved in a private collection in Riyadh



Plate 3: The industry date of the box decorated on the lock.



Plate 2: General view of the cover of the BOX



Plate 4: The text "Makkah Al-Mukarramah" is decorated on the lock.

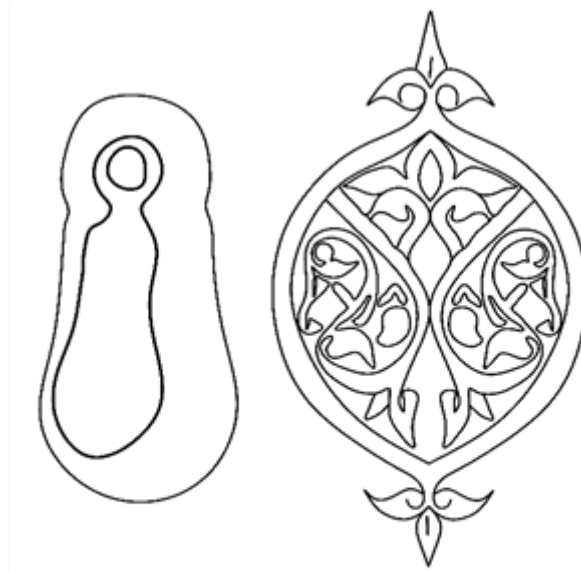


Figure 1: sketch of the decoration of the Bucharest from the front of the first box by the researcher.

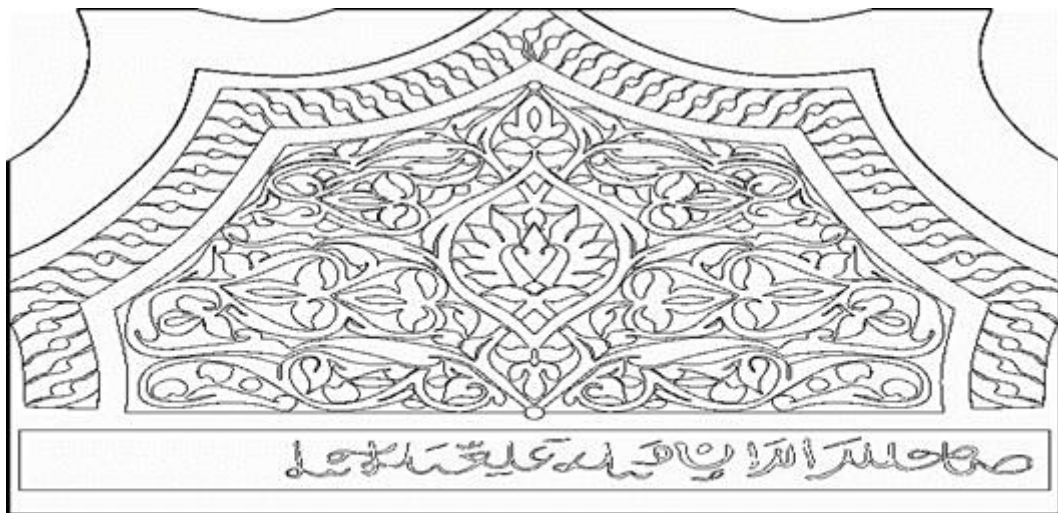


Figure 2: sketch of the decorations for the box by the researcher.

**The second box:(PL.5-9, Fig. 3)**

**Type of antique:** Pine wood box.

**Number of antiques:**1022.

**Date of Industry:** 1197 AH.

**Conservation place:** Preserved in the collection of Her Highness Princess Moody, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Condition:** good.

**Size:** Its height is approximately 29.5 cm, its base length is approximately 51.5 cm, and its base width is approximately 30 cm.

**The Description:** A rectangular walnut box with four sides. The main facade is covered with copper slats, this facade is decorated with a plant inscription, consisting of half-palm fans and



coiled branches all over the frame, and the copper plate has protruding nails defined by a frame of hollow small circles.



Plate 5: A wooden box preserved in a private collection in Riyadh.



Plate 6: General view of the cover of the BOX



Plate 8: The manufacture date of the box decorated on the lock.



Plate 7: General view of the inside of the box.



Plate 9: Key of the Kaaba made of silver in the name of Sultan Murad IV, dated 1039 AH / 1629 AD, preserved in the Topkapi Say Museum under No. 16/21, the length of the key is 26 cm. by:

- Helmy Eden: The Traces of the Prophet in the Pavilion of the Holy Trusts in the Topkapi Palace Museum in



Figure 3: sketch of the inscriptional decorations for the box by the researcher.

## Conclusion:

This study represents a new and important addition in the field of archaeological studies of wooden artifacts in general, and the boxes for keeping the keys of the Kaaba in particular, as there was no independent study dealing with the boxes of keeping the keys of the Kaaba, as far as the author knows.

- These two boxes - the subject of the research - have never been published or studied before, and no similar box has ever been published.
- The study published two wooden boxes made under the Ottoman Empire in Makkah Al-Mukarramah to preserve the keys of the Kaaba.
- The study showed the method of opening and closing these two boxes and the way they work to save the keys of the Kaaba.

The study found that the first fund dated 1146 AH goes back to the period of the rule of Sultan Mahmud I (1143-1168 AH / 1730 - 1754 AD) during the Emirate of Sharif Masoud bin Said bin Zaid, Emir of Mecca in the second period (1146 - 1165 / 1734 - 1752 AD).

□ The study also found that the second fund, dated 1197 AH, dates to the period of the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid I, who ruled between the years (1187 - 1203 AH / 1773 - 1789 AD) during the Emirate of Sharif Surur bin Musaed Sharif of Mecca, who took over the emirate (1186 - 1203 AH / 1772 - 1789 AD)

□ The inscriptions on the second chest contain titles were special to Sultan Abdul Hamid I in the Ottoman Turkish language.

□ The inscriptions on these two boxes under study were recorded in the clear thuluth script and the botched thuluth script, which the calligrapher was ignorant of some of its rules in some texts, in addition to the use of Arabic and the Ottoman Turkish language.

□ The study clarified the industrial methods of prominent excavation, unloading and grooving in different degrees, as well as the working method of these two boxes.

The study showed the types of plant and geometric decorations that came on these two boxes. There is no doubt that the study of these two boxes in this way is a new and unprecedented study, and it proves that these two boxes are considered rare Ottoman masterpieces that were made in Mecca by Ottoman artists, as they represent a new and important addition to Islamic wood in general and the Ottoman Empire in Makkah in particular.

### **Recommendations:**

□ The study recommends preserving these two boxes - the subject of the study - by protecting them from damage through a restoration process to remove rust and paint stuck to the surface of the copper panels on the writing tapes.

□ Exhibiting them in an independent museum, and HRH Princess Mowdi bint Assaf Mansour Al-Assaf in Riyadh seeks to do this, to spread archaeological awareness and introduce visitors and scholars to the importance of this collection acquired by Her Highness, which includes hundreds of artifacts.

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