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CENOTAPH, CARVED WALNUT, FROM THE MAUSOLEUM OF MAHMUD KHAYRANI IN AKSEHIR

TURKEY; C. 1340

H: 48.5; W: 36.5; L: 139 CM

This cenotaph – a coffin-shaped monument placed over a grave – originally stood on a larger and equally richly carved box-shaped part, side by side with two similar sepulchral monuments of wood.

The wooden coffin bears witness to the high quality of the woodworking that was done in Anatolia under the Seljuks of Rum. The many gently receding spirals that form the vines' shoots and ends of the leaves are typical features. The inscriptions on the cenotaph use poetical phrases to describe the various aspects of death and paradise, while the name of the deceased, Sayyid Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud, is inscribed on the box-shaped base, which is found today in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art in Istanbul.

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