tour of room III

On the back walls of the reception room with the inlaid marble floor from Cairo are Ottoman gold-woven silks with an eponym pattern, which were made in Istanbul in the second half of the 16th century. The fabric, interwoven with gold and silver threads and decorated with lotus palmettes and feathery leaves, dates from the middle of the 16th century and is one of the most sumptuous Ottoman silks, based on a design by the court painters (fig. 191). An identical pattern is found on two kaftans in Topkapi Palace which are believed to have belonged to two sons of Suleyman the Magnificent.

On the side wall is an exceptional 18th-century Iranian silk fabric depicting slender, graceful figures in a landscape of blossoming trees and cypresses (fig. 171). Iranian fabrics of the Safavid era often contain representations taken from contemporary manuscript illustrations. Typical of the period is the turban wound round a red rod worn by the Redheads or Kizilays—the Shī‘ite Turkomans who had assisted the Safavids in their rise to power. A similar piece of fabric in the County Museum of Los Angeles bears the date AH 975 (1567).

190
Silk fabric with large leafy leaves
Possibly Iranian
mid-18th c.
Ht. 154 cm. (1956–1957)

191
Large ceramic dish with blue and white Chinese-style decoration
Porcelain, 17th c.
D. 44 cm. (1908–1909)
Gift from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

192
Water-pipe base
Porcelain, 17th c.
Ht. 26.5 cm. (1895–1908)
Gift from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

tour of room III

The group of ceramics displayed here is on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Of the three large dishes, two are decorated with typical Chinese motifs: one depicts two servants carrying an official on their shoulders and the other is a Chinese landscape with birds and a vase containing flowering branches. The third combines Chinese vegetal motifs with a Persian geometric design (fig. 191). Two of the three bottles are decorated with birds and hunting scenes. The hunters wear Persian court dress, and one of them holds a firearm. The third is a water-pipe bottle (fig. 192). When smoking was first introduced to Iran in the 17th century, it was a privilege reserved for the upper classes. The container for the scented water required two sockets, one for the pipe through which the tobacco smoke was inhaled, and the other for the bowl where the tobacco was burnt.
Islam's contribution to the study of astronomy was based on the writings of Greek and Roman authors such as Ptolemy, many of which had been translated into Arabic during the Abbasid era. An important factor in this development was the connection of astronomy with religion, as astronomical instruments such as astrolabes, quadrants, compasses and sundials were required to calculate the times of prayer and the direction of Mecca. The silver compass or qibla indicator dates from 17th-18th-century Iran and is signed by the maker, Muhammad Tāmīr (fig. 193).

193 Silver compass for the orientation of prayer; signed by Muhammad Tāmīr
Iran, 17th-18th c.
D. 7.5 cm. (1133/48)

194 Brass astrolabe with the signature of the maker Hājī ʿAlī
Iran, AH 1207 (1925) H. 14.5 cm. (13177)

The practice of magic aimed at protecting the faithful from sickness and the evil eye, and from demons and jinns, the evil spirits mentioned in the Qur'an. God's help was invoked through the use of amulets and charms bearing magical symbols, prayers and Qur'anic inscriptions. The rear shelf contains bowls and seals from 16th-18th-century Turkey, inscribed with Qur'anic passages. The octagonal amulet on the right, decorated with inlaid gold and a Qur'anic inscription (LXVIII, 51-52), is probably from Deccan, and dates from the 17th-18th century. Amulets of this type, worn as armbands, contained miniature copies of the Qur'an (fig. 195).

195 Octagonal amulet with overlaid gold and a Qur'anic inscription
Possibly Deccan
17th-18th c.
D. 4.5 cm. (12047)

The study of medicine, a well-developed science from earliest Islamic times, continued the Greek, Persian and Indian traditions while observing the precepts contained in the Qur'an and the Hadith on personal health and hygiene. On the middle shelf is a manuscript from 1732, dealing with medicine and pharmacology, which was translated into Ottoman Turkish from the Iranian treatise. The Offering of the Two Mu'mins, written by the doctor Muhammad Mu'min in 1649. The Iranian manuscript was a trophy acquired during the Iranian-Turkish wars by the Ottoman leader of the Eastern army (serasker) and later Grand Vizier, Ali Paşa Hâkimoğlu, who, being a doctor himself, realized the importance of the treatise and ordered its translation. Next to it is a set of surgical instruments with gold overlaid designs, from 19th-century Iran (fig. 196).

196 Set of seven surgical instruments decorated with overlaid gold
Iran, 19th-c.
L. of scissors 18.5 cm. (73285-2-7)
Another group in the case is made up of religious manuscripts. The two Ottoman prayer books with illustrations of the shrines at Mecca and Medina date from the 18th-19th century. They contain passages from the Qur’an, the 99 attributes of God and advice to the faithful (fig. 33). Next to them is a copy of the interpretation of the Qur’an with commentaries by Zamakhshari, transcribed by al-Husayn, son of Yusuf, son of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Shirazi, which bears the date AH 747 (1346/7) [fig. 97]. The Iranian scholar Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn ‘Umar al-Zamakhshari (1075-1144) is noted for his commentaries on the Qur’an and his contribution to the study of the Arabic language generally.

The pen cases, inkwells, scissors [fig. 198], knives and other tools of the calligrapher and the bookbinder came from Turkey and Iran and date from the 16th-19th centuries. The brass pen case and inkwell inlaid with silver, made by Mirak Husayn Yarib, from 16th-century Iran, are particularly fine. The ornamentation consists of arabesques and verses from Arabic and Persian poems [fig. 172].

The case also contains a group of objects connected with dervishes, members of religious fraternities who follow a specifically Muslim form of religious devotion which aimed at mystical union with God. The begging bowl, from 19th-century Iran, symbolises humility and the renunciation of earthly goods, while the staffs supported the dervishes during the long hours of vigil and meditation. The 19th-century staff from India, which also served as the scabbard for a sword, bears a hill made of jade and is inlaid with gold and rubies [fig. 201].

Other objects from Iran are, at the top of the case, a pair of brass plaques decorated with a pierced scrolling floral design, Qur’anic inscriptions and Shi’ite invocations (17th-18th century) [fig. 201], and a hook with dragon-shaped finials, ornamented with turquoise (18th-19th century), which was used for hanging the heavy chains which protected the entrance to houses [fig. 199].

On the wall beyond is a gold-woven silk fabric with an ogival pattern and medallions decorated with cloud scrolls and flowers (fig. 286). It comes from Istanbul and dates from the third quarter of the 18th century. Silks with metallic threads were made exclusively in the palace workshops, which were reorganised by the Grand Vizier Rustem Pasha in the 1740s in order to be able to meet the demands of the court and thus to limit the importation of silks from Italy.
In the centre of the case are two 17th-century tiles. One depicts two birds of paradise flanking a fountain. The other is octagonal and shows a Christian place of pilgrimage in the Holy Land, probably the oak of Mamre and the house of Abraham, a site mentioned in 17th-18th-century illustrated pilgrim guides (fig. 202).

In the centre of the case is a foamed dish, dated circa 1580, which recalls similarly shaped dishes depicted in 16th-century Ottoman miniature paintings (fig. 203).

The plate and bottle decorated with representations of animals (fig. 204) are typical products of Iznik workshops in the second half of the 16th century. Wolves hunting hares and other, often mythical, animals in motion are depicted on secular and ecclesiastical silver from the Christian territories of the Ottoman empire and the independent city of Ragusa (Dubrovnik). The influence of metalwork on pottery is clear in the shapes of late 15th-century ceramics, but the depiction of animals only became popular in the last decades of the 16th century.
The plates depicting tulips, roses, hyacinths and carnations represent a distinctive group of Iznik ceramics (fig. 205). Naturalistic renderings of flowers growing from a single root are a dominant motif in Ottoman art of the second half of the 16th century, which first appears in manuscript miniatures and is attributed to the painter Kara Meini, head of the court workshop from 1520/7. The realistic depiction of flowers in Ottoman art coincided with the interest of European botanists in Turkish flora.

Naturalistic flowers are often accompanied by an elongated feather-like leaf terminating in a curved point, known as the sçz leaf, which belongs to the repertoire of imaginary flora found in Ottoman decoration from the 1540s onwards in ceramics, fabrics and woodcarving (fig. 207). Such leaves are depicted in 15th-century Iranian manuscripts, and their appearance in Ottoman art is attributed to the Persian painter Saib b. Sabihiya, who in 1514 was brought by Sultan Selim I from Tabriz to Istanbul, together with other craftsmen, to strengthen the court workshops.

The two deep dishes on the right, decorated with overlapping scales, and the dish with a palmette on a ground of spirals date from 1580–1590 (fig. 208). Emerald green was first used in 1546/7 on the tomb of Süleyman the Magnificent's mausoleum and is a common feature of ceramic vessels of the 1570s. On the right of the case is a later dish from circa 1600 depicting a flowering prunus tree, a motif which first appears on tile decoration of the 1540s. The case also contains a group of jugs and tankards dating from the late 16th and 17th century.

105 Ceramic plate with tulips, roses, hyacinths and carnations
Turkey, Iznik, second half of 16th c.
D. 29.4 cm. (11 3/4"
GIFT OF EMMANUEL BERNARD
From the collection of his son Alexander

106 Deep ceramic bowl with tulips and carnations in a vase
Turkey, Iznik, second half of 16th c.
D. 37 cm. (14 1/2"
GIFT OF EMMANUEL BERNARD
From the collection of his son Alexander

107 Ceramic plate with feather-like sçz leaves
Turkey, Iznik, second half of 16th c.
D. 30 cm. (11 3/4"
GIFT OF EMMANUEL BERNARD
From the collection of his son Alexander

108 Ceramic dish with a palmette on a ground of spirals
Turkey, Iznik, late 16th c.
D. 29 cm. (11"
GIFT OF EMMANUEL BERNARD
From the collection of his son Alexander
In the middle of the room is a 17th-18th-century Transylvanian-type prayer rug with a pattern of three arches and double columns (fig. 212). This label was given in the early 20th century to a group of some 450 rugs found in Transylvanian churches, but it was soon extended to cover other prayer rugs sharing the same stylistic, technical and chromatic features, which were probably made in western Anatolia. Rugs of this type are depicted in at least a hundred paintings by 16th- and 17th-century European painters.

Beside the door is an Iznik tile dated AH 1117 (1704) showing the footprints of Muhammad (fig. 211). The footprints were left by the Prophet when he set out on his miraculous Night Journey to the heavens from Jerusalem, on the site where the first Islamic monument, the Dome of the Rock, was built in 691.

212
Transylvanian-type prayer rug
Western Anatolia, 17th-18th c.
H. 207 cm. (1992)

211
Ceramic tile with footprints
of Muhammad
Turkey, AH 1117(1704)
H. 31.5 cm. (125)
653 (Emmanuel Benakos)
from the collection of his son, Alexander