WOOD

Wood 1
Vertical wood panel with carved and gilded frame.

Background of painted brown lacquer. Calligraphic inscriptions present an Invocation to Allah and the names of Muhammad, the "four perfect caliphs," his immediate successors, and Hasan and Houssein, the sons of his daughter Fatima and her husband Ali, fourth of the caliphs, By the scribe Sayyid Muhsin al-E infrastructure. Dated: 1123/1718-19 A.D. Size: 33.5 x 11.2 x 4.5 x 9 cm.

The decoration of this wooden panel, in the shape of a tombstone, presents the monumentality of calligraphy contrasting with the "prettiness" of its flowers. The same contrast appears in the slightly later horizontal panel (Wood 3).

Wood 2
Kavuklu (turban stand).

Carved wood, gilded (the so-called "Edirne work"). Probably 18th century. Size: 44 x 14, 77.7 x 35.6 cm.

EX COLL: Chateau de Savoye, Ennecé (near Rambouillet), France.
Catalogued as "image d'époque en bois doré et polychrome, décor de vases en guirlandes de fleurs sur fond re. Ancien travail islam."
EXHIBITIONS: Los Angeles-Honolulu, 1974-75, Cat. No. 63.
REPRODUCTIONS FOR COMPARISON: Arsenev, figs. 488 and 707.

The large pumpkin-shaped, or elongated, Turkish turban (see Cat. Nos. 17, 31, 33, 35, 50, 51, etc.) was a complicated arrangement of cloth wound around a cap-shaped base. Its preparation took such an amount of time that it was envisaged as a work of art. This ornately carved example is a Turkish variant of the rococo style prevalent in Western Europe in the mid- and late 18th century. For this reason it was catalogued as "antique Italian work" in the sale from which it came.

The companion piece to this, from the same private collection, is in the Beit Me'ir (L. A. Mayer) Foundation in Jerusalem, which specializes in Islamic art.
Wood 3

A calligraphic inscription in Arabic on a wooden panel, with the seal of Ibrahim al-Azhari, calligrapher to the Exalted Court.

Dated: 1391/784-85 A.D. Gold letters: 'Tawakkulat bi-maghfiri Assadullahi wa ispiyruhhum ('In the clemency of the Ever-Watchful have I put my trust'); blue letters: 'Sanaa 3ughrafiin bi-yarahin ('He is the Clement, the Author of Mercy'). Size: 11 1/2 x 26 3/4 x 1/2, 29.2 x 68.2 x 1.2 cm.

The two interwoven lines of naskhi script, one in gold, one in blue, stand out from the plain ground behind them. The fussy floral decoration in green and gold provides contrast for the monumental calligraphy. Fine writing was sufficient as an art form for the Muslim. Many mosques have inscriptions like this one, some of them even later. Notable among them is the Jami Masjid (the Great Mosque) in Bursa.

Wood 4

Wooden panel with painted decoration of a mosque and thunderbolts.

Late 19th century. Size: 11 1/2 x 6 x 38.1 cm.

This inconsequentials wall decoration is probably a patriotic souvenir of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. The Ottoman Empire, despite internal disorganization, was still sufficiently strong to put down rebellions in its Bulgarian provinces and successfully invade Serbia, which had declared war, as did Montenegro (summer, 1876). But the Pan-Slavic policies of Tsarist Russia ignored efforts of the other great European powers to preserve the status quo, and declared war (April 24, 1877). The Turks succeeded in holding the Russians from occupying the Bulgarian fortress of Pleven (Plovdiv) until December, but, with the fall of that city, the Turks appealed first to the powers for mediation (December 12th) and, upon rejection by Bismarck, to the Russians for armistice (January 9, 1878).

The Treaty of San Stefano (March 1878) would have stripped Turkey of most of her European territories, setting up a large, autonomous Bulgaria. The powers, particularly Great Britain, worried by the strong Russian presence near the Straits,
continued

convened the Berlin Convention (June-July) which remade the map of Eastern Europe. The Ottoman Empire, shorn of less errant than by the treaty with Russia, was left completely at the mercy of the great powers and its unsatisfied, covetous neighbors. Treaty insistence on reforms in the treatment of the Christians in Macedonia and Anatolia led to increased agitation among those Greeks still under Turkish control and among the Armenians also. The pattern for future dismemberment was set and continued.

Wood 5

Table (Koran stand).

Carved wood. Contemporary. Size: 19×7¾×7¼, 48.2×19.7×1.9 m.

REPRODUCTIONS FOR COMPARISON (earlier examples): Arseven, fig. 475 (carved wood), pls. 13, fig. 528 (mother-of-pearl inlay).

The Turks were among the first to institute a program to stop the export of the art works of their cultural heritage. It is impossible to obtain licenses for export of art treasures, and illegal smuggling has been reduced to a minimum by a strongly enforced system of penalties. Unable to obtain an historical Koran stand on which to display the Khamsih by Nizami (Cat. No. 7), I bought this modern one in the bazaar in Bursa.

Modern artists and craftsmen in wood, metal and ceramics are producing excellent adaptations of traditional objects and workmanship. Good calligraphers still practice their demanding trade. No attempt at faking is intended; they simply produce very fine modern copies. Only the painting of miniatures has not been renewed.
Appendices
NOTE: the following introductory material from earlier catalogues is reprinted to help readers understand the importance of the Binney collection, and to give information on its growth.

Examples of the Turkish pictorial arts outside the Topkapı Saray Library in Istanbul are rare—a well-known fact that Dr. Binney demonstrates again in his introduction to this catalogue. Why so rare? For one thing, this art never achieved widespread support or appreciation within the Turkish empire. It was fostered only by the sultan's court and kept within the confines of the royal establishment. The fact that the Turks were Sunni who followed the canonical law more strictly than, for instance, the Italians may have a good deal to do with the limited number of existing works illustrated by Turkish miniature painters.

The major museums and libraries of the world possess relatively few examples of Turkish miniature paintings and manuscripts. In the private sector, only two enthusiastic connoisseurs have acquired large and representative collections: the late Sir Chester Beatty, founder of the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, and the author of this catalogue, a loyal friend of the Islamic Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Aided by his connoisseurship and wide knowledge of the arts of the Near and Middle East, Dr. Binney has been able by painstaking and well-informed endeavors to collect every form of Turkish painting. His collection ranges from a rare example of the late fifteenth century through the more numerous paintings of the nineteenth century, when the art was increasingly influenced by European styles. The collection contains historical accounts of the lives and accomplishments of earlier sultans as well as illuminated works dealing with saints or legendary heroes. There are portraits of sultans and of handsome youths and maidens, renditions of historic buildings, decorative illuminations, and various forms of the art of calligraphy.

While Turkish painting was contemporary with that of Iran and Mughal India, in nearly all ways it was distinguishable, not only in its different forms of dress and headgear and the more formal presentation of the figures, but also in its more simplified and at times monumentalized forms of trees, landscapes, and architecture. At the same time the Turkish artist had a keen eye for details, an attitude that led in the course of time to realistic portrayals of figures and scenes. Such close observation eventually made the artists turn to exaggeration—even caricature. All of this helped to make Turkish painting something unique, even though its heritage from Persian painting and its European influence are easily recognized. Dr. Binney's well-illustrated catalogue offers the general public and the student alike an excellent survey of Turkish painting and an insight into the special qualities of this diverse art. His collection, so generously lent to us, represents a cultural achievement worthy of honoring the Republic of Turkey on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary.

A collector's work is never done. If new additions are not made to his holdings, the collection stagnates. More auctions must be attended; more dealers must be visited. What if a new material appears without being judged for acquisition? What if a major "find" is snapped up by a rival? While a healthy collection is always in transition, it becomes less transitory with the publication of a "complete catalogue." When the present exhibition was envisaged by The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1972, a terminus a quo had to be established. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the "Turkish Republic provided an excellent opportunity for the presentation of Ottoman art in as many of its varied aspects as possible.

No private collector could dare to compete with The Metropolitan in the fields of Turkish ceramics and metalwork, but the "Arts of the Turkish Book" were represented in the Binney collection in much greater depth than in that august institution. Thus, the book arts were selected for the New York exhibition that opened in November, 1973, while the "related Turkish arts" in the Binney collection were neither catalogued nor included.

For the subsequent presentation of this collection in Los Angeles and Honolulu, however, further opportunities to complete the catalogue were provided. First, recently obtained Turkish miniatures and three small albums could be catalogued and inserted into the chronology of those originally recorded. Second, those related Turkish arts, omitted to avoid duplication in New York, could now be joined again to the rest of the collection. Instead of using subsidiary letters to existing catalogue numbers, as the miniatures and albums are labelled, the five ceramics, four works in metal, two textiles and a lone example of woodwork are given numbers containing those of the original catalogue. Finally, the correction of a few typographical errors and the addition of supplementary information to the original catalogue can now be published.

Despite the fact that nearly twenty additional items cannot rival the many Turkish riches of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, it is hoped that the exhibition with its expanded catalogue will interest Southern Californians in 1974 and Hawaiians in 1975, as much as it did New Yorkers in 1973.

*For the 1979 catalogue, these interim numbers are purposely omitted.
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