the Mediterranean. The Ottomans lost half their fleet, and although they were able to rebuild it, they never regained control of the Mediterranean, partly because they continued to use galleys while the Europeans introduced sail ships with sails which were able to fire broadsides. The Portuguese circumnavigation of Africa and opening of direct trade with India meant that the Levant no longer controlled the luxury trade from the Orient. Iran also expanded its international contacts under Abbas I (see Chapters 12 and 13), who was able to bypass the Ottomans by establishing direct European trade route through the port of Bandar Abbas on the Gulf. By the seventeenth century the Ottoman empire had shrunk to a regional power confined to Asia Minor, the Balkans, and the Arab lands.

The string of military losses profoundly affected Ottoman society and the patronage of art. The earlier series of victories had enriched the royal coffers with booty, but now the sultans needed to spend more on munitions, men, and administration. The financial crunch was exacerbated by rampant inflation between 1585 and 1606, caused by the importation of massive quantities of silver from the New World. The cost of living escalated, but prices for materials and labor had been fixed by royal decree many decades before. Thus the palace paid the same price per tile in 1616 as it had in 1596, leading to a decrease in the quality of production for the court and preference of artisans to sell their work on the market. Edicts to prevent artisans from doing so were of no avail, as were government attempts to solve the problem with the traditional means of debasing the coinage. In retrospect, the Ottomans were unable to unwillingly integrate themselves into the new world economy dominated by European capitalism. Instead, they were repeatedly forced to grant concessions (capitations) to the European states and kept looking back to the past, particularly the glorious reign of Selim I, which was seen as an age of balance and perfection in society and the arts.

Ahmed I (r. 1603–17) was the first Ottoman sultan in three decades to erect a major imperial mosque in the capital. Whereas his predecessors had paid for their foundations with the booty captured in campaign, Ahmed’s reign was devoid of notable victories, so the funds had to come from the treasury, provoking the anger of the religious establishment. Well known to modern tourists because of its prime location on the Hippodrome or Ameydan, the mosque replaced several important residences, including that of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, which had been built on the site of the Great Palace of the Byzantine emperors. The foundations of the mosque were laid in 1609 and opening ceremonies held in 1612. The architect was Mehmed Aga (d. 1626), who was appointed in January 1616 to complete the Muradie Mosque in Manisa [286] and promoted to chief imperial architect in October 1606. Known as Mehmed Aga Sadfar (“the worker in mother-of-pearl”), he also made a splendid walnut throne encrusted with mother-of-pearl and tortoiseshell. According to his biographer Cäfer Iffendi, the mosque was the summation of Mehmed Aga’s career.

Like other imperial foundations in Istanbul, the Mosque of Ahmed I is the centerpiece of an ensemble comprising the tomb of the founder, a madrasa, a hospice, a hospital, a bazaar, and a row of shops. Unlike them, the layout is irregular, as the complex had to be fitted within a preexistent urban fabric, and the major façade faced the Hippodrome. The mosque has a spacious court preceding a domed prayer hall, with ablution facilities arranged on either side. The four sides of the court have been successfully integrated into a continuous arcade of small cupolas and semidomes from the court [287]. The prayer hall (64 by 72 meters) has a quadrifoil plan much like that of the Schätze Mosque [275], but each semidome has been given

three exedrae. The large central dome (12.5 meters in diameter) is supported on four cylindrical piers of massive size; their heaviness is only accentuated by their vertical grooves. This impression of weightiness is countered by the somewhat fancy decoration of the interior, with colored glass, tile, and paint in a palette dominated by blue, whence the building’s popular epithet “the Blue Mosque.” On close examination, however, many of the tiles have runny colors and dull glazes, especially when compared to the finest work of the mid-sixteenth century. The absence of imperial commissions during the preceding generation had greatly reduced the production of tiles; the decorators of Ahmed’s mosque had to procure new tiles at old prices or rely on available stock. The best tiles, on the back balcony wall, were recycled products made for the Topkapı Palace in the 1570s and 1580s. As in the Mosque of Rüstem Pasha [282], disparate elements have been united by a characteristic border tile used throughout the building. Mehmed Aga’s tutelege under Sinan and his long experience all over the empire undoubtedly familiarized him with the grand tradition of Ottoman architecture. In this complex he ably synthesized the lessons he had learned from the classical style, but as he was unable or unwilling to control the dissonances characteristic of Sinan’s masterpieces, he avoided them altogether.

The heyday of Ottoman architecture in the first half of the seventeenth century can be seen on a much smaller scale in two pavilions erected in the hanging terraced garden beyond the third court of Topkapı Palace. The Revan (1635–6) and Bagdad (1638–9) kiosks were erected to commemorate victories by Murad IV (r. 1623–40) at Yerevan in Armenia and Baghdad in Iraq. The Bagdad Kiosk is raised on the foundations of one of the towers of the original palace, to take advantage of the splendid view of the Istanbul skyline along the Golden Horn to the Sileyməne and beyond. It is a small cruciform building with an outer gallery covered by broad eaves which protect a high dado of marble and porphyry panels, somewhat in the Mamlik style, surmounted by tile panels. Within [288], it is a central domed prayer hall, fitted with low turks (Turk. 1501–5), from which one can enjoy the view to the exterior. A great bronze fireplace in one corner warmed the building. The interior is a showpiece of decorative arts: the walls are rehung with a mixture of re-used cuerda seca tiles and new underglaze-painted blue-and-white tiles, some of which are copies of early-sixteenth-century originals [291]. A stately inscription band encircles the walls above the dado, inscribed with the Throne Verse (Koran 1:55) extolling God’s majesty over heaven and earth, the text hints at the sultan’s semi-divine status. According to the historian Naime, the inscription was the work of the calligrapher Tophane Mahmad Celебi. The tile revetment continues to the springing of the wooden dome, which is painted with arabesques against a red ground. The wooden shutters and doors are exquisitely inlaid with ivory, tortoiseshell, and mother-of-pearl, and double windows glazed with colored glass filtered the light. Soon after construction, the Bagdad Kiosk was transformed into one of the palace libraries, and the volumes it contained, now consolidated in a single palace library, are identified by the shelfmark Bagl18.

In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, funds for vast royal construction became increasingly scarce, particularly after 1683, the disastrous end of the second Ottoman siege of Vienna. The one exception, the Yeni Valide Complex at Üsküdar (1728–10), on the banks of the Golden Horn below the Sileyməne Complex, was built by Ahmed III (r. 1703–30) to honor his mother. It was endowed with taxes from Cairo, and hence the great market adjacent to it is known as the Egyptian Bazaar. Commercial structures, often erected by great families who had profited from their government positions, were the main type of construction. The 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz with the Austrian and Venice opened Ottoman society to European ideas and styles, and the last two years of Ahmed’s reign, under the guidance of his vizier Neşettirli İbrahim Pasha, are known as the “Tulip Period,” as the cultivation of this flower became so much of a rage. The social spirit of the age is exemplified by the verse of the poet Nadim (d. 1730): “Let us laugh and play and enjoy the world!” Instead of mosques and charitable foundations, the sultan built pavilions and gardens, whose beauty inspired foreign wise. The architecture of the Tulip Period is epitomized by the seven grand fountains built in Istanbul between 1728 and 1732, two by Ahmed III and the others by his nephew and
The Arts under the Ottomans after the Conquest of Constantinople

Evidence for the patronage of the portable arts by members of the Ottoman dynasty before the conquest of Constantinople (see Chapter 10) is limited, but with the establishment of court arciers there by Mehmed II (r. 1444–81), with interruptions, a burst of activity ensued in a variety of media. Artists sought inspiration from a wide range of sources in the artistic traditions of the Islamic and Mediterranean lands, thanks to the new position of the Ottoman empire as heir to the Byzantine (Roman) empire and a major world power. By the mid-sixteenth century, during the reign of Süleyman (r. 1520–66), a classical Ottoman style had emerged, with a distinctive visual vocabulary which was applied equally to textiles, ceramics, and other media. This style struck an extraordinary balance between the geometric order underlying much of Islamic art and a lyric naturalism visible in the common representation of plants and flowers. By the end of the seventeenth century this style became increasingly codified and repetitious, and in the eighteenth century Ottoman society, beset by increasing economic, military, and political problems, turned back to the reign of Süleyman as a golden age.

The Formative Period: From Mehmed to Selim

Mehmed II Fath seems to have had an unusual interest in the arts: one of the sketchbooks preserved from his childhood has a page with several portrait busts shaded with crosshatching. It shows that even at an early age Mehmed was familiar with Western conventions of representation, perhaps through the Florentine engravings he is known to have collected later in his life. Mehmed’s private cultural activity was directed toward the figural arts and learning of Europe, Byzantium, and the Latin West, as well as toward the traditional arts and literature of Islam. He supported the works of eminent scholars and mastered the principles of Christianity, European history, and geography. He commissioned a biography in Greek from Kritouilos of Imbros and was extolled in Italian epic poetry. Mehmed visited Troy in 1462, and commissioned a copy of the Iliad soon thereafter. There was a widespread, if coincidental, belief in Europe that the Turks (Turk) were descendents of the Trojans (Tauri).

Mehmed’s interest in art and ancient history made him one of the foremost patrons of Italian medalists, whose medium had just been revived in Italy. The first portrait medal, made by Pisanello in 1438, depicts John VIII Paleologus, the penultimate Byzantine emperor of Constantinople. Costanzo da Ferrara, a follower of Pisanello, spent several years in Istanbul in the 1470s, and his medal of the sultan [291] has been justly described as one of the finest portrait medals of the Renaissance. The obverse shows

a bust of the sultan in profile; he is still plump-faced (he became gravelly thin just before his death) and wears a turban with broad transverse folds and a caftan with a thick collar. The reverse shows him, dressed in a turban and heavy robes, riding through a wintry landscape. The scene appears to be a contemporary view of the aged ruler riding forth in triumph, but the composition is actually based on Roman imperial prototypes known from coins minted in coastal Asia Minor and showing the emperor’s ceremonial adventus. Mehmed’s patronage of Europeans, particularly painters and bronze-workers, increased as the end of the 1470s. Between the autumn of 1478 and spring of 1479 he concluded a truce with Venice, and in the two years before his death, the Venetians were free to respond to Mehmed’s request for artists. Such artists as the Venetian painter Gentile Bellini and the Paduan sculptor Bartolommeo Bellano journeyed to the sultan’s court in Istanbul. While in Istanbul, Bellini may have been commissioned to decorate a palace pavilion (see Chapter 12), and he produced sketches, oil paintings, and medals. The most famous product of this trip was his oil portrait of the sultan in the National Gallery, London. Bellano’s dubious talents were less appreciated by the patron, and his two surviving medals are mediocre. In form, style, and technique, the medals made for Mehmed are entirely Italian; even the inscriptions are in Latin. Yet, as works designed for a Muslim patron in an Islamic land, the

medals can also be considered to be “Islamic art,” and they demonstrate the cosmopolitan nature of the Ottoman empire in the second half of the fifteenth century. Mehmed also encouraged the development of more traditional media of Islamic art, such as the arts of the book, and at least seventy-five manuscripts can be attributed to his patronage. These works represent a new stage in Ottoman book production, for the quality of the paper, illumination, and calligraphy improved dramatically. Early Ottoman books had been modeled on Mamluk examples (see Chapter 8), but gradually a more Persianate taste developed, particularly from the 1460s, when Istanbul began to enjoy a new role as a major center of book production. One noteworthy example is a copy of the Farâ’îs al-ghajârâ’î, transcribed by Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-‘Aragâh (“from Maragha”) for the treasury of Mehmed II. The binding, painted and varnished (“lacobiqued”) with chinoiserie flowers and elaborate arabesques in black and gold on a brown ground, is the earliest dated example of a type that became popular in Iran under the Timurids [86]. Iranian books were also prized. Mehmed asked for rare books and albums (maraqâ’i) as parte of the ransom for the Aqquyunlu prince Yusuf Mirza, who was captured in 1472. These may have formed the basis of the collections of drawings and calligraphy later known as the “Fatih Albums.” Following Mehmed’s victory over the Turkomans in 1475, he forcibly removed artisans from Tabriz to Istanbul [87].

These Iranian artisans undoubtedly brought with them a repertory of floral motifs which formed part of the international Timurid style developed in book ateliers. The Ottoman variation of this style is found in a variety of other media, such as woodwork, ceramics, and textiles. The shared designs and motifs, together with the qualitative improvement in the minor arts produced under the Ottomans, in the second half of the fifteenth century, suggest not only that the style was disseminated from the arts of the book, notably bindings and illumination, but also that there was some degree of central direction, probably from a court scriptorium in Istanbul. One of the leading artists in this scriptorium was Baba Nakkaş (“Venerable/Old Master Designer”). An Ubek Turk, Baba Nakkaş enjoyed privileged status at court, to judge from endowments he received from Mehmed in 1466. One example of the artist’s work is an album in Istanbul University Library (f 1423), datable to the later years of Mehmed’s reign. It contains decorative designs for square, rectangular, and crescented borders in the chinoiserie floral style typical of fifteenth-century Persian art; these tile designs are similar to those found in the bindings and illuminations of manuscripts dedicated to Mehmed.

As in architecture, the 1460s and 1470s marked a major turning in the decorative arts of the Ottoman period, and works from these decades show a greater homogeneity of design and a higher standard of finish. The stylistic change can be ascribed partly to the appreciation of foreign models and the presence of foreign artisans, and the change in quantity and quality can be ascribed to the pressing need to decorate and furnish the extensive buildings commissioned by the sultan. Both the New Palace and the vast Fatih Complex (see Chapter 1), for example, would have required enormous quantities of lamps, carpets, textiles, ceramic vessels, tiles, and other furnishings. The new style can be seen most clearly in two media which were transformed under the patronage of Mehmed and the establishment of court ateliers: carpets and ceramics.

For several centuries woven pile carpets had been made for domestic use and in Anatolia, but in the fifteenth century commercial production was expanded for export to Europe. A range of different designs were produced, but all types were knotted entirely in wool, with symmetrical knots of medium density in a limited range of colors. The designs are usually known after the names of the European painters in whose works the carpets were depicted, including Carlo Crivelli, Gentile Bellini, Hans Holbein the Younger, Hans Memling, and Lorenzo Lotto, or according to the towns in which they are thought to have been made, most notably Ushak in western Anatolia. Among the most distinctive types of carpet produced in Anatolia in the later fifteenth century are those known as large-pattern Holbein, or wheel, rugs [90]. The typical example has a field containing several large octagons inscribed in square frames which are separated and bordered by bands composed of smaller octagons. The octagons are usually decorated with strapwork patterns, and there are usually several borders of varying width which are often decorated with elegant pseudo-Kufic inscriptions with intertwined stems. Although the carpets are known from their appearance in the paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger (1497–1543), such as his Ambassadors (London, National Gallery), large-pattern Holbein carpets are actually depicted as early as ca. 1450 in northern European paintings and in the 1560s and 1570s in Italian works. The widespread popularity of these carpets in Europe testifies to the expanded commercial production in Anatolia in the later fifteenth century. Under Mehmed’s patronage, even larger and finer carpets were produced for the Ottoman court [94]. Known as Ushak medallion carpets, they are distinguished in comparison to export rugs, and the large size presupposes a significant investment in loom equipment, labor, and materials consonant with royal patronage. Ushak medallion carpets have traditionally been attributed to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, but a close analysis of their design structure and of such details as the shape of leaves suggests that a date in the third quarter of the fifteenth century is more appropriate. The composition of these rugs shows a rhythmic balance of arabesques with small-scale tendrils; the same designs are found on other objects from the reign of Mehmed. The graphic conception and curvilinear design of Ushak medallion carpets also differ from the geometric conception from such earlier types as Holbeins or animal carpets [90], where the weavers could generate the designs directly at the loom. In contrast, these large-scale curvilinear compositions demanded the use of paper cartoons, which were undoubtedly furnished by the court design studio. The role of the court is further supported by the absence of transitional pieces, and the lack of contemporary European representations of this type of carpet argues for its specific production for the Ottoman court. By the mid-sixteenth century, when Ushak carpets were represented under the feet of such rulers as Henry VIII (1491–1547) or the Venetian Doge, Ottoman court taste had moved on to another type [91].
Ceramics, the other medium transformed by Ottoman patronage under Mehmed, were used as architectural elements as well as tableware. Coarse red-bodied earthenware decorated on a white slip under a clear glaze had been produced in the fourteenth century at several centers, particularly Iznik in north-western Anatolia (see Chapter 10). From the 1470s, however, a distinctly new type of lead-rich friteware with a lead-fluxed glaze began to be produced.¹¹ The earliest of these ceramics, which are known by various modern names, are exemplified by a deep dish decorated in blue and white and datable ca. 1480 [295]. These pieces are of a technical standard unmatched in Islamic ceramics since the Kashan wares of the thirteenth century and are often quite large, measuring over forty centimeters in diameter.¹² They have a hard and dense body, which has been corrected with a brilliant white slip and painted in cobalt blue, often in reserve, with elaborate arabesques and floral scrolls. The colorless glaze shows no tendency to crackle and little tendency to pock.

In general concept these wares were inspired by Chinese blue-and-white porcelains, which were exported throughout the Islamic lands in the fifteenth century. The hard white body gives the impression of porcelain, and the shapes and designs on the exteriors of some dishes, with peony scrolls in blue on white, are also somewhat Chinese in flavor. The designs on the interiors, however, are an Ottoman variation of the International Timurid style: the rather languid rhythms of the prototype were transformed into a more forceful design, which has a greater sense of three-dimensionality and a more intense and contained quality. The disparity of scale among the various motifs was reduced; broad leaves were tightened into compact rounds by twisting their ends and turning them in on themselves, and buds on stems were made to clasp the scrolls.¹³ The few examples of precious metalwork that survive from the period show a similar combination of arabesques (Turk. kırzı) and chinoiserie ornament (Turk. klift), suggesting once again that the designs originated in a central source, presumably the court atelier under the direction of Baba Nakkas.¹⁴ This hypothesis is supported by the superb quality of the ceramics and the enormous investment of time that would have been required for their intricate decoration in reserve. Despite their decorative origins in the International Timurid style, these exquisite Baba Nakkas wares are technically distinct from contemporary Iranian ceramics [26] as well as from contemporary architectural ceramics, such as those on the Fatih Mosque or the Çinili Kiosk, suggesting that the technology to make these vessels was an invention of Ottoman ceramists, who were encouraged by the expanded patronage of the court in Istanbul. As fragments of this ware have been discovered at Iznik, a site known earlier and later for its ceramics, it is assumed that they were made there.

Mehmed’s private patronage had little effect on later developments, while his public patronage of such media as carpets and ceramics was essential stages in the formulation of the classical Ottoman style. His interest in Italian medals and naturalistic portraiture, for example, was not shared by other high officials at court. As his patronage failed to inspire others, his experiments in cultural eclecticism ended upon his death, and these elements were not integrated into the mainstream of Ottoman taste. The tastes of Mehmed’s son Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) did not run to Italian figural art, and he sold most of his father’s collection for the benefit of the great mosque he established in Istanbul in 1505 [274]. He continued royal patronage of the two traditional types of Islamic art, collecting and cataloguing his father’s manuscripts and reorganizing the court studio.¹⁵ The fourteenth-century copy of Ibn Battûta’s Mafûd al-bayânâwâni (“Benefit of animals”) [241], for example, bears Bayezid’s seal, and may have been rebound at this time. The sultan was an accomplished calligrapher, composer, and poet. While serving as governor of Amasya, he studied calligraphy with a local teacher, Şeyh (Seb) Hamdullah (1418–1510), and upon assuming the sultanate, Bayezid brought his master to Istanbul and assigned him a workroom in the palace. Şeyh Hamdullah became the most influential calligrapher of the entire Ottoman period and is credited with revising the six canonical scripts of Yaqût (see Chapter 3).

Şeyh Hamdullah designed the inscriptions for the sultan’s mosques in Istanbul and Amasya and is said to have copied nearly fifty manuscripts of the Koran [296] as well as hundreds of single sheets with religious texts and prayers. These calligraphic specimens often juxtapose a line of large script with several lines of smaller script and include small panels of painting and marbled paper, all enclosed within a ruled frame. To give a rhythmic flow to his hand, the calligrapher elongated and exaggerated certain letters, such as the long sîn in the hamâda at the upper left and the long scooped bows of the nûs on the first and third lines which extend to encompass the following word or rossette. His fluid and controlled calligraphy is often accompanied by a crisp and colorful style of illumination. Many of his characteristic motifs, such as cartouches and knotting, appear in contemporaneous ceramics, which are decorated in a variant of the Baba Nakkas style with more open and spacious compositions. The use of these ceramics at court is documented by treasury inventories and kitchen registers, the first of which date from Bayezid’s reign.¹⁶

Fine manuscripts of the Koran often formed part of the endowments to mosques. A magnificent walnut box [297] made for Bayezid by Ahmad b. Hasan al-qâlidî al-farisi (“The ephemeral mould-, frame-, or block-maker”) in 1505–6 was probably commissioned for the sultan’s mosque in Istanbul, which was completed in that year [274]. The hexagonal box, with a hinged lid surmounted by a twelve-sided pyramid and carved ebony and ivory finial, is the earliest example of a distinct Ottoman style of woodwork and one of the finest pieces extant. The exterior is veneered with ebony, encrusted with ivory panels, and inset with fine marquetry, the interior, with more restrained decoration of minute inlay in fine woods, ivory, and gilt brass, is divided into compartments to hold a thirty-volume Koran of oblong format. While the particular manuscript of the Koran for
prise, for the splendid court at Istanbul attracted artisans from all over the eastern Mediterranean lands who came together to create the new Ottoman style.

THE CLASSICAL OTTOMAN STYLE

A distinct Ottoman visual vocabulary emerged during the long and prosperous reign of Süleyman (r. 1520–66).26 Already by Mehmed's time, objects were produced for the court in two different types of factories. There were royal factories, often in Istanbul, for carpets, silk textiles, ceramics (both vessels and tiles), and designs. Commercial factories in such provincial centers as Usbuk, Bursa, or İznik produced carpets, silk textiles, and ceramics of differing quality for various types of patrons. Some of their products were sold to the Ottoman court, while others were sold on the open market for use at home or abroad. Although some pieces for the court were made on commission from patterns prepared by court designers at the capital, others were purchased from among ready-made examples. In this manner the fashions of the court at Istanbul were synthesized with popular tastes. Süleyman's predecessor, Selim the Grim (r. 1512–20), spent most of his reign on campaign, leaving him little time for royal patronage of the arts, although regular production seems not to have been interrupted. As with architecture, the effects of Süleyman's reign on the history of art are indirect, for his victory over the Safavids at Chaldiran in September 1514 led to the increased presence of Iranian artists and works of art at the Ottoman court. An unpublished inventory in the Topkapı Palace archives lists some of the booty taken, including gold and silver vessels, jades, porcelains, furs, rich brocades, and carpets, as well as craftsmen, including tailors, furriers, marquetry-workers, goldsmiths, and musicians.27 Many of these craftsmen were put to work in the imperial studios in Istanbul. One of the most important artists was Şahbuzl (Şahbuzlu), mentioned in several registers of the imperial design studio. By 1526 he had become the head draftsman (resim) of the twenty-nine artists and twelve apprentices employed there, and in that year he received the high salary of 22 akç. He became popular with Süleyman: he gave a picture of a pietà to the sultan and received gifts including 2000 akç and brocaded cottons and velvets.28

The finest work during the early years of Süleyman's reign is epitomized by five enormous tiles, over one meter high, now installed on the façade of the Sünnet Odası (Circumcision Room) of Topkapı Palace in Istanbul [28]. These perfectly smooth slabs, larger even than the Fortuny Tablet of a century earlier (see Chapter 9), show an extraordinary technical command of fabrication and firing. The magnificent compositions in mirror reverse are superbly painted underglaze in blue and turquoise (a new addition to the palette), with birds and Chinese deer-like creatures (qilin) among a loose scroll of feathery leaves and fantastic composite flowers.29 White chinoiserie clouds on a dark blue ground decorate the spandrels at the upper corners. The compositions are clearly based on pounced paper designs, undoubtedly supplied by the imperial design studio. The tiles have variously been dated from the 1520s to 1560s on stylistic comparisons with the album of Murad III (r. 1574–95) in Vienna, but a date in the late 1520s is more likely, for these tiles were probably made by the royal ceramics workshop in Istanbul to decorate Süleyman's New Kiosk, built ca. 1527–8 and destroyed by fire in 1653.30 In 1658 the Baghdad Kiosk was built on the site of Süleyman's damaged building, and tiles, including these enormous slabs, must have been rescued from the ruins. They were reassembled in their present location when the Sünnet Odası was restored.31

The designs on the tiles epitomize the saz style, in which composite flowers are displayed on a gracefully curving armature of lancelolate leaves with feathered edges. The name of the style may derive from the saz (reed) pen, used for the drawing. Particularly associated with the work of Şahbuzlu, the saz style represents the final flowering of the International Timurid style as it had been developed under Ottoman patronage by Persian artists from Tabriz and Herat. As the first generation of emir artists and craftsmen retired and were replaced by locally trained artists, the Timurid esthetic was gradually replaced by a more distinctive Ottoman one. This development in the visual arts was parallel to the gradual replacement of Persian with Turkish as the literary language of the Ottomans during the second half of the sixteenth century.

It has been suggested that these tiles were produced in an imperial ceramic workshop at Tschirar Saray in Istanbul known through palace account books. This ceramic studio, which had five kilns and seven assistants, also produced vessels, for on religious holidays the ceramicists presented the sultan with special gifts, such as a ceramic rose and a large dish. A fragmentary dish with a foliate rim in Vienna [29] may be one of their works, for it is decorated in
turquoise and cobalt blue with a bird amidst foliage in a style virtually identical to that of the Sünnet Odası tiles. The free quality of the design in the field of the dish is subtly distinct from the rather mechanical drawing of the cavettos and rinceaux; this could be explained by the differentiation of labor in the shop or by the use of pounced designs for the field design. Without technical analysis, it is impossible to state whether this dish was made in Istanbul or Iznik, but the superb quality of the drawing sets it aside from most wares assigned to Iznik. Many of the largest and finest pieces of “Iznik” wares from the first half of the sixteenth century may have been made in the royal workshops at Istanbul.

The sultan in Istanbul increasingly surrounded himself with the trappings of imperial splendor, according to both European and Islamic traditions. Although traditional Muslim headgear for centuries had been the turban, Suleyman commissioned Venetian goldsmiths to make a fantastic golden helmet with four crowns decorated with pearls, diamonds, rubies, and a large turquoise; in 1532 it was sold to the sultan for the enormous sum of 144,400 ducats. The helmet was designed to show Suleyman’s European audience that he was not only the superior of the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor but also the successor to Alexander the Great.27 The foreign iconography of the crown, however, meant that it had no real place at the Ottoman court, and it was eventually melted down for its precious materials.

Some of Suleyman’s more traditional Islamic regalia, however, was preserved in the palace treasury, such as an extraordinary sword inlaid with gold by Ahmed Tckel in 1526–7 [500]. The hilt is ivory, engraved with a blossomscroll inlaid with black mastic and overlaid with a golden network of floral scrolls and chinoiserie cloud-bands. The golden network on the pommt is set with rubies and once had a large central gem, possibly a turquoise. Apart from the cutting edge itself, the damascened steel blade is lavishly decorated on both sides. The upper third was chased with scrolls and overlaid with representations of a dragon confronting either a serpent or a phoenix. The creatures were cast separately and affixed to the surface, which was parcel gilt and inlaid with rubies for the animals’ eyes. The middle third of the sword displays a scroll supporting composite flowers or animal heads. The lower third displays a beautiful inscribed with Suleyman’s name and titles; the spine of the blade is inscribed in nasta’liq script with Persian verses and the signature of the craftsman, probably a Turkman brought from Tabriz by Selim. This virtuoso transformation of the International Timurid style into a distinctly Ottoman mode is characteristic of the finest products of the Ottoman court in the early part of Suleyman’s reign.28

The pomp and ceremony surrounding the sultan and his distance from the general populace propelled his grand viziers into prominence as royal tastemakers, often at enormous profit to themselves. The sultan was forbidden by protocol from doing anything so practical as meeting with crafts- men, so that Ibrahim Pasha (1522–30), for example, was instrumental in procuring the Venetian commission for the crown, and luxury textiles were imported from Italy on a large scale during his vizirate. The opulence and European direction of patronage were reoriented under Rüstem Pasha (1544–53 and 1555–61), when domestic production of luxury textiles was encouraged. The splendor of Ottoman textiles from the middle of the sixteenth century is epitomized by a full-length ceremonial caftan with ankle-length decorative sleeves and pocket slits [501]. Woven of polychrome silk and gilt-metal thread in seven colors (blue, brown, green, peach, red, white, and gold) on a brown-black silk ground, it displays a scroll of chinoiserie composite flowers and leaves in a dazzling rendition of the rococo style. The design, which must have been extraordinarily difficult to set up on the drawloom, is known in other color range with a cream-colored ground.29 Contrary to almost all other Ottoman textiles, the layout of the design does not repeat. This caftan is typical of the outer robes worn during ceremonial activities: the arms passed through slits at the shoulders, leaving the ankle-length sleeves to hang over the back. Although the design is carefully matched across the front opening, there are no fastenings to keep the robe closed, suggesting that the wearer stood still. The label is inscribed “Sultan Bayezid,” which must refer not to Bayezid II, but to Suleyman’s son Bayezid (d. 1556), as the pattern is typical of the mid-sixteenth century. This date accords well with the companion garment made of the cream-ground fabric, which belonged to Bayezid’s brother Mustafa (d. 1555).

These Ottoman designs of the mid-sixteenth century, in which delicate scrolls of long serrated leaves act as the armature for composite flowers, are quite different from the tighter and more regular style of the late fifteenth century and epitomize the classical Ottoman style. These rococo designs were transferred to other media, particularly to ceramics and to carpets, where they remained popular for decades. A deep dish with rococo designs [502] is similar in size and shape to the fragmentary dish in Vienna [294], but the decorative scheme has been simplified so that the entire inner surface is covered by one continuous design.31 The design is a simplified combination of the serrated leaves and composite flowers found on the caftan and was probably transmitted to the ceramic studio via paper patterns. The design is drawn in black on a white ground and colored with cobalt blue, turquoise, and sage green. A purplish pink is often included.