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From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey: Formation and Display of the Earliest Islamic Art Collection in the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*), Istanbul

Abstract

In the 1880s, Islamic art objects were not yet regarded as collectable heritage in the Ottoman state. Although Salomon Reinach (1858–1932) had suggested turning the fifteenth-century Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) into a museum of 'Muslim art' in 1883, this was realised only in 1908, when the building was devoted exclusively to the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*). The collection itself had begun to take shape gradually from the 1880s under the direction of Osman Hamdi (1842–1910) and Halil Edhem (1861–1938). In 1939, during the early Republican period, the collection in Çinili Köşk was dispersed, closing this chapter. This paper examines how the formation and display of the earliest Islamic art gallery in the Imperial Museum were shaped through the interplay between the visions and scholarly networks of individual actors and by the broader political and cultural transformations of the late Ottoman and early Republican state. These individuals, shaped by the intellectual currents of their time, simultaneously influenced state cultural policies, redefining the Islamic art collection under the framework of 'national heritage,' 'decorative art,' and/or 'masterpieces' and positioning the museum within internationally recognizable scholarly and curatorial practices. By situating the Imperial Museum's Islamic art gallery within both local reformist agendas and transnational exchanges, this study argues that it functioned as a site where the collection was reframed in service of nationalism and international recognition.

Keywords: Islamic art collection, Ottoman museum, Turkish museums, museum studies

1. Introduction

> [The Turkish government] has every right to consider Greek and Roman antiquities found in its lands as we in France would consider construction rubble. These are assets it can take advantage from, and which it can convert into cash. If the state were to auction every two or three years the antiquities entering its domains, one would see in Constantinople a series of brilliant sales, where all museums of Europe would be represented and the proceeds of which could be used to repair ruined mosques and, if need be, to buy back from Europe the precious weapons, the Kütahya and Bursa tiles, and other reminders of ancient Turkish art which have long left the country. Chinily Kiosk Museum [Çinili Köşk], that work of Mehmed II, the present use of which would scandalize the Conqueror, would become a museum of Ottoman art unique in the world. One would not even need to buy much abroad: it would suffice to centralize the treasures dispersed in storerooms, old palaces, and

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> mosques. Turkey would cease to be ungrateful toward its artists, and the dome of Yeni Djami would no longer threaten to fall upon the heads of the believers who have paid for the establishment of a museum of antiquities…. We wish to believe that at the end the Porte will abrogate a law that deceives it while harming art and civilization. We hope to see that Mehmed II's kiosk shall eventually be turned into a sanctuary for the treasures of Muslim art.[1]

This is a paragraph from the article entitled '*Le vandalism modern en Orient*,' written by French archaeologist Salomon Reinach in 1883 on the eve of the forthcoming changes to the 1884 Ottoman Antiquities Law. Reinach was strongly opposed to the planned alterations of the antiquities law. He believed that each civilization should focus on its 'own' heritage because the sole inheritors of 'classical and other antiquities found on the Ottoman soil were Western museums and collections.' Reinach went even further, stating that the '"Turkish race" had its own 'national art,' which had nothing to do with the Greco-Roman past.'[2]

During the 1880s, Islamic objects had not yet been considered as collectable heritage within the Ottoman state.[3] Despite his Eurocentric arrogance, Reinach was the first scholar to propose converting Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) into a museum of '*l'art musulman*' (Muslim art) by considering the 'national' character of the building and the prospective collection of Islamic art.[4] In doing so, he effectively equated 'Muslim art' with a form of national art for the Ottoman state. Twenty-five years later, Reinach's expectation was realized and Çinili Köşk was designated solely to the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*). However, an Islamic art collection and its gallery within the Imperial Museum did not happen suddenly, it was an ongoing process that started in the 1880s and continued gradually to 1908. A gallery solely devoted to Islamic art was created within the Imperial Museum in 1889. In 1939, during the early Republican period, the collection in Çinili Köşk was dispersed, closing this chapter.

This paper examines the formation and display of the earliest Islamic art gallery in the Imperial Museum, tracing its evolution from the late nineteenth century to the early

1 Reinach 1883, 165–6. English translation of the quotation is taken from Eldem 2016, 129.
2 Çelik 2016, 44; Eldem 2016, 129.
3 In the broader European context, the terminology for describing the visual and material culture of Muslim societies was far from standardized in the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the earliest known usages of the term 'art of Islam' appears as a chapter heading – *Die Kunst des Islam* – in Franz Kugler's *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1842), possibly the first global art history book to incorporate Islamic art into a universal narrative. In this and similar works, 'Islamic art' coexisted with other terms such as 'Mohammedan art' or ethnogeographic designations, and the religious dimension of the category was not yet dominant. As Shaw notes, it was not until the *Exposition d'Art Musulman* in Paris in 1893 that such arts began to be framed primarily in religious rather than regional terms. Shaw 2003, 174. For a discussion of the historical development and changing usage of the term 'Islamic art,' see Uzun 2023, 31–66.
4 Reinach 1883, 166.

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Republican period of the 1930s through a range of sources such as archival documents, museum catalogues, visual materials, and travel guides. It argues that this process was shaped through the interplay between the visions and scholarly networks of individual actors – most notably Osman Hamdi and Halil Edhem – and the broader political and cultural transformations of the Ottoman state. These individuals, influenced by contemporary intellectual currents, both responded to and redirected state cultural policies: safeguarding Islamic objects from Western appropriation, reframing them as national heritage, decorative art, or masterpieces, and positioning the museum within internationally recognizable scholarly and curatorial practices. The study further situates the Imperial Museum's Islamic art gallery within local reformist agendas and educational frameworks, particularly the incorporation of Islamic art into the curriculum of the affiliated fine arts school, as well as within transnational exchanges and institutional models such as the Victoria and Albert Museum. By doing so, it highlights the gallery's role as a site where Islamic art was reframed in service of nationalism and international recognition.

2. A Tool of Modernization: Brief History of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümâyun*)

Ottoman museology, as a concept in Western sense, started with a reflexive character in the 1840s. Motivation to create a museum was both political and practical for the Ottomans. Establishing a museum was part of a wider set of modernization and Westernization reforms promoted during the Tanzimat period (1839–1876) by the Ottoman statesmen of the era under the reign of Sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861).[5] At first, the idea of forming a museum was driven by the desire to prevent the exportation of antiquities found in Ottoman lands by foreign excavators and European collectors. Ottoman museology is generally traced to the conversion of an armoury warehouse, located in the Church of Hagia Irene in the first courtyard of the Topkapı Palace, into a museum in 1846.[6] However, the term 'museum' was not applied to the institution until 1864.[7] In addition to the collection of ancient arms (*mecma-i esliha-i atika*), there was also a collection of antiquities (*mecma-i asar-ı atika*) in the Church of Hagia Irene. The antiquities collection was formed of mostly Greek, Roman, and Byzantine remains such as sarchopagi, sculptures, and reliefs. In 1871, a rudimentary catalogue was prepared, however there is no sign that there were artefacts that could be entitled as 'Islamic' today.[8]

Need for a bigger space appeared due to the increasing number of ancient artefacts in the following years. The collection of antiquities transferred to their new location,

5 Eldem 2018, 267; Shaw, 48–9.

6 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. İrade Hariciye (İ. HR.) 32–1478. 2 Muharrem 1262 [31 December 1845]. Eldem 2018, 262.

7 The Imperial Armor and Antiquities collection took the official name of 'museum' in 1864. The Church of Hagia Irene was one of the few churches in Istanbul which was never converted to a mosque. Ar 2013, 73. See also Eldem 2018, 259, which says collection is renamed 'Imperial Museum' in 1869.

8 Goold 1871; Eldem 2016, 124.

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Figure 1. Photo of Çinili Köşk (Tiled Kiosk) taken by Sébah & Joaillier, c. 1880. Source: Getty Research Institute Special Collections, 96.R.14 (C27.19). URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10020/96r14_ref8267_sb7 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

Çinili Köşk, which is a tile-covered kiosk in Persianate style, built during the reign of Mehmed II (r.1444–46, 1451–81) in the fifteenth century. It is located in the outer garden of the Topkapı Palace and is one of the oldest structures within the palace complex. Çinili Köşk was heavily restored to serve as a museum, with its interior walls whitewashed and a double staircase added to the façade (Figure 1).[9] During the opening ceremony in August 1880, the minister of education Münif Pasha (1828–1910) emphasized the historical and architectural importance of the building and why it was chosen as the new location:

> The building where we gathered today is in itself an ancient monument. It dates back to the glorious reign of Sultan Mohammed Khan II, the Conquer, and constitutes a beautiful example of the-architecture of the time. For this reason, its selection as a museum is a most auspicious event.[10]

9 'Inauguration du Musée impérial' 1880. Eldem 2016, 125.
10 *ibid*. English translation of the article was taken from Eldem 2016, 125.

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Soon after the transfer, the German historian, archaeologist, and philologist Philipp Anton Dethier (1803–1881), the second director of the Imperial Museum, passed away. He was succeeded in 1881 by Osman Hamdi Bey (1842–1910), the first Muslim and Ottoman director of the Imperial Museum, held the position until his death in 1910. Osman Hamdi, a multifaceted and intellectual individual, is considered the founder of the Turkish museology, along with his brother Halil Edhem [Eldem] (1861–1938). Both were the sons of Ibrahim Edhem Pasha (1818–1893), an influential an Ottoman bureaucrat educated in Paris. Like his father, Osman Hamdi also studied in Paris. Initially, sent to study law, Osman Hamdi pursued painting at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and took lessons in the ateliers of the Orientalist. He was not only a prominent museum scholar, but also a leading figure on cultural heritage management in the Ottoman Empire. He took part in the formation and implementation of the first antiquities law in 1874 (*Asar-ı Atika Nizamnamesi).*

Upon his appointment in 1881, Osman Hamdi's primary objective was to introduce a more systematic and scholarly order to the Imperial Museum. One of his first initiatives was to invite the aforementioned Salomon Reinach to classify and catalogue the collection, thereby aligning the institution with contemporary European museum practices. The catalogue of the Imperial Museum, dated 1882 classifies its antiquities collection based on civilization, geography, medium or typology under seven sections.[11] As the catalogue shows, there was still no object that can be categorised as Islamic art at that time within the museum.

It was also during Osman Hamdi's directorship that the fine arts school, the *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* – whose establishment had been discussed for several years prior – was finally founded in 1883 under the museum's management as an initiative of the Ministry of Commerce (*Ticaret Nezareti*) with the aim of improving national art, culture, and heritage.[12] Three years later, in 1886, both the school and the museum were transferred to the Ministry of Education. The aim and administrative history of the fine arts school recalls the first School of Design in London, which became a part of the South Kensington Museum (now the V&A).[13] In 1837, the School of Design was founded '[…] to stimulate trade by making articles of commerce more artistic […]' and was initially managed by the Board of Trade.[14] In 1856, its administration was transferred to the Council of the Education Department.[15] By contrast, the education system and curriculum of the *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* was based on the model of the *Paris École des Beaux-Arts*. This is not surprising, since Osman Hamdi was responsible for organizing the education model of the school. As Edhem Eldem has demonstrated, this broader mission to cultivate national art and heritage also shaped the collecting policies of the

11 Reinach 1882, 7.
12 Cezar 1995, 182; Özlü 2018, 289; Şahin 2019, 91; Ürekli 1997, 103–6. *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi* evolved into the University of Fine Arts during the republican period.
13 Smith 1914, 106. See also Eldem 2016, 131.
14 *Victoria and Albert Museum. General Guide to the Collections*, 106.
15 *ibid*.

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Figure 2. View of the new museum building taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1892. Source: Getty Research Institute Special Collections, 96.R.14 (C27.02a). URL: http://hdl.handle.net/10020/96r14_ref8213_mbw (last accessed 25 January 2025)

museum, particularly in relation to objects that would later fall under the category of Islamic art – a point to which I will return in the subsequent discussion.[16]

In accord with the ever-increasing numbers of collection in the late nineteenth century – thanks to archaeological digs – the need for a bigger museum space emerged. The new museum building was designed in the Neoclassical style by the Levantine architect Alexandre Vallaury (1850–1921), who studied at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. The museum collections, particularly the Sarcophagus of the Mourning Women, inspired the architect.[17] The new museum building was opened in 1891 (Figure 2). Shortly after the construction of the new building once again the space became inadequate. Therefore, additional buildings were constructed to the right and left sides of the first build-

16 Eldem 2016, 129–33.
17 Çelik 2016, 14.

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ing in the following years. The second extension to the north was built in 1905 and the construction of the third extension to the south completed in 1908.[18] Today, this museum complex is known as the Istanbul Archaeological Museums (*İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri*). Although the museum complex continued to expand, a dedicated gallery for Islamic art was only established with the first extension in 1905, made possible by the availability of new space and prompted by the growth of the collection as the state increasingly sought to safeguard Islamic objects.

3. The First Display: A Gallery within the Museum (1895–1908)

The collection of objects from the Islamic world began relatively late in the Ottoman Empire. In the second half of the nineteenth century, objects from the Islamic world had started to be highly appreciated among European collectors and museums. This growing interest turned the Ottoman Empire, with its still-huge Muslim-majority geography, into a 'market state' for the art market in Europe. To counter the increasing threat of theft, the Ottoman government began to the collect Islamic objects, referred to as *sanayi-i nefise İslâmiye âsârı*, mainly from religious endowments such as mosques, madrasas, and mausoleums which were particularly vulnerable to theft. However, in the absence of a comprehensive law, items such as tiles, carpets, tomb covers, candlesticks, lamps, or Quran stands were stolen quite easily and frequently from ancient buildings. Although, the first Ottoman Antiquities Law (*Âsâr-ı Âtika Nizamnamesi*) was created in 1874 and revised in 1884, it mainly protected Helleno-Byzantine antiquities.[19] Islamic and Ottoman heritage was not clearly protected under the law until the final revised version introduced in 1906.[20] Like Helleno-Byzantine antiquities, Islamic antiquities were safeguarded only after they began to be smuggled out of the Ottoman Empire.[21] Therefore, one of the main motivations behind the Ottoman state's collecting of these objects can be summarized as Wendy Shaw aptly states:

> It was not so much the inherent value of the objects that led to their collection but a distaste for the idea that Europeans would benefit from their theft by making them acquire aesthetic and exotic value in their museums. […] The danger of their

18 Çelik 2016, 14–5.

19 For the transliteration of the Ottoman Antiquities Law of 1869, 1874, and 1884, which were published in official gazette *Takvimi Vekâyı* (Cerîde-i Resmiyye-i Devleti Âliye-i) see Koşay, Orgun, Bayram, Tan 2013, 750–833. The first article of the Ottoman Antiquties Law of 1874 states that '*Ezmine-i kadimeden kalan her nevi eşyayı masnua âsar-i atika'dandır*.' ('Every item made with art from ancient times is an ancient work.') Koşay, Orgun, Bayram, Tan 2013, 760.

20 The 1906 antiquities law was recognized by the Republic of Turkey after its establishment in 1923 and remained in effect with only minor modifications until 1973. For the transliteration of the Ottoman Antiquities Law of 1906, see Dilbaz 2018, 128–42.

21 Shaw 2003, 183.

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> loss lays not in their absence but in the degree of profit possible once they entered European collections.[22]

Collecting and displaying objects from the Islamic world was not the primary aim for the Imperial Museum, and they started to be collected in the late nineteenth century without a clear strategy.[23] Although the first objects that could later be categorised as Islamic art entered the museum's inventory and the first Islamic art gallery was opened during the directorship of Osman Hamdi (1881–1910), he lacked scientific interest in Islamic art.[24] As Edhem Eldem discusses, Osman Hamdi's probable neglect likely resulted from the perception that such objects, being relatively recent in origin and lacked the historical significance of much older antiquities.[25] Osman Hamdi's use of objects that would be classified as Islamic art as decorative props in his paintings underscores their secondary status as curiosities or decorative elements rather than valuable cultural heritage.[26]

In parallel to the founding of the *Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi*, this orientation is further reflected in the 1884 and 1885 inventories. Thirty-seven pieces of nineteenth-century Beykoz ware were entered to the museum in 1884.[27] A year later around fifty objects – majority of which can be classified as 'Islamic art' – were entered under the heading 'Catalogue of the objects destined to form a museum of national industry' ('*catalogue des objets destines à former un musée d'industrie nationale*').[28] Compiled between 1 February and 2 March 1885, the list drew on items from mosques such as Hagia Sophia, Selim I, Şehzade, Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, Laleli, Zeyneb Sultan; the imperial lodge of Yeni Cami; the tombs of Bayezid II, Selim II, Ahmed I, and Ibrahim Pasha; and the library of Hagia Sophia.[29] The entries, recorded without detailed descriptions, included 15 glass and porcelain lamps, two Chinese porcelains, seven carpets, three armchairs, one console, three porcelain vases, two Quran cases, six Quran stands, two incense-burner plates and two incense-burners, one celestial globe, three lanterns, one ewer and basin, three book bindings, and one wooden ceiling.[30] While many of these objects fall under the category of Islamic art, others – such as the Chinese porcelains and armchairs – do not fit any particular category in the museum.

The idea of linking museums with the promotion of crafts and industry was part of a broader nineteenth-century trend, visible in the World Expositions and institutionalized with the establishment of the South Kensington Museum in London. As Edhem Eldem has further argued, this embryonic collection may have formed part of Osman Hamdi's broader plan for the development of national crafts and industries. In 1888,

22 Shaw 2003, 209.
23 Eldem 2016, 123.
24 Çelik, 81.
25 Eldem 2016, 123.
26 *ibid*., 127.
27 Eldem 2016, 130.
28 *ibid*., 131.
29 *ibid*., 129–30.
30 *ibid*., 130.

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Hamdi even submitted a project to the planned Commission for the Encouragement of Industry (*Heyet-i Teşyikiye-i Sınaiye*), stressing the dangers faced by local crafts.[31] Seen in this light, the inclusion of Beykoz glassware and other contemporary objects in the 1885 inventory strongly supports the interpretation that Osman Hamdi intended to valorise local production within a framework of 'national industry.' Although this project of a museum of national industry was never realized, it is likely that at least part of this corpus eventually found its way into the first Islamic art gallery.

The Imperial Museum's administrative scheme and the organizational practices were revised with a regulation issued by the Council of State dated May 1889 and the department of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) became one of the six sections of the museum.[32] The 1889 regulation is curious because the department of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' was founded before the Antiquities Law of 1906. The new arrangement was as follows:

> The Imperial Museum is divided into six parts. The first is for Greek, Roman, and Byzantine antiquities. The second is for Assyrian, Caledonian, Egyptian, Phoenician, Hittite, and Himariote antiquities, as well as for works by Asian and African tribes. The third is for works of Islamic fine arts. The fourth is for ancient coins. The fifth is for examples of natural history. The sixth is for the collection, in a library, of books concerning the history and science of antiquities.[33]

An archival document dated 1894 states that there are enough objects and textiles to form a separate gallery of 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) within the Imperial Museum.[34] The archival document continues with the necessary budget, 20,700 *kuruş* (piastres), to establish the new gallery space.[35] The first gallery, solely devoted to Islamic art, located at the second floor within the Imperial Museum, was opened in 1895. This new gallery was opened almost a decade before the Islamic art galleries in Europe such as the ones in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum and the Louvre were created in 1904 and 1905 respectively. Although the gallery was opened at the end of the nineteenth century, to publish a catalogue of the Islamic art collection took more than four decades, and it was only possible in 1938. Therefore, to analyse the content and the display of the Islamic art collection between 1895 and 1908, an article written by the assistant director of the museum and the travel guides to Constantinople (Istanbul) of the time were used. In addition to the written source, available visual sources were examined. No other visual documents of the gallery are known, apart from a few photographs showing it from opposite perspectives (Figures 3–5).

31 For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Eldem 2016, 129–33.

32 Cezar 1995, 548. See also Eldem 2016, 133.

33 Cezar 1995, 547–48. English translation of the document by Shaw 2003, 172.

34 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. İrade Maarif (İ.MF.), 2–46. H-25-03-1312 [26 September 1894].

35 In 1895, the admission fee of the Imperial Museum was 5 piastres per person, which gives an idea of the requested amount to create a gallery space. Coufopoulos 1895, 88.

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*Figure 3. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1903. Source: Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection. Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection, Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, inv. no. 90518/10. URL: https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90518---0010.jpg. (last accessed 25 January 2025)*

The assistant director of the museum, Halil Edhem [Eldem], briefly mentions this new Islamic art gallery in his article on the Imperial Museum in 1895. It reads:

> [A]t one time during the Middle Ages when in Europe and in Asia no trace of civilization remained and knowledge and science had become nearly completely extinct, Islam and the Arabs appeared as a vehicle for the formation of a new civilization. The advancement of knowledge and science and literature and art spread across the world and the Ottomans were the inheritors of this with their acquisition of the caliphate.
>
> Since today old Arab works and old Ottoman works are among quite desirable and rare antiquities, these are also now being collected in the Imperial Museum and are being arranged for display in a special hall. In this section, the most striking item is in the corner: an ornate tile mihrab [prayer niche] from Karaman that is from the time of the Seljuk ruler Ala'al-din I. Stones with Kufic writing from the time of the Ahmed al-Malik of the Umayyad Caliphate; writing samples of famous cal-

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*Figure 4. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, taken by Sebah & Joaillier, c. 1903. Source: Abdülhamid II Photograph Collection, Istanbul University, Nadir Eserler Kütüphanesi, inv. no. 90518/9. URL: https://nek.istanbul.edu.tr/ekos/FOTOGRAF/90518--0009.jpg (last accessed 25 January 2025)*

> ligraphers; book bindings, which are testimony to the fine handicraft of Ottoman artisans; Edirne-work cabinets; mother-of-pearl inlay book-stands; ringstones with Kufic writings; and quite breathtaking Persian carpets decorate this hall.[36]

Halil Edhem states the significance of the Islamic world in the Middle Ages for the development of European civilization. He presents the Islamic world as a bridge between the 'uncivilized' and the 'civilized' world, framing the Middle Ages as a period in which civilization in both Europe and Asia had largely vanished and Islam, led by the Arabs, acted as the vehicle for its revival. This perspective echoes broader nineteenth-century notions of history, such as those of Augustus Wollaston Franks (1826–1897), curator at the British Museum, who described the Islamic world as a bridge between Antiquity and Renaissance Europe, thereby situating Islam within a linear civilizational narrative.[37] According to Halil Edhem, the Ottomans were the heir

36 Edhem 1895, 104. English translation from Shaw 2003, 176.
37 Ward, 272.

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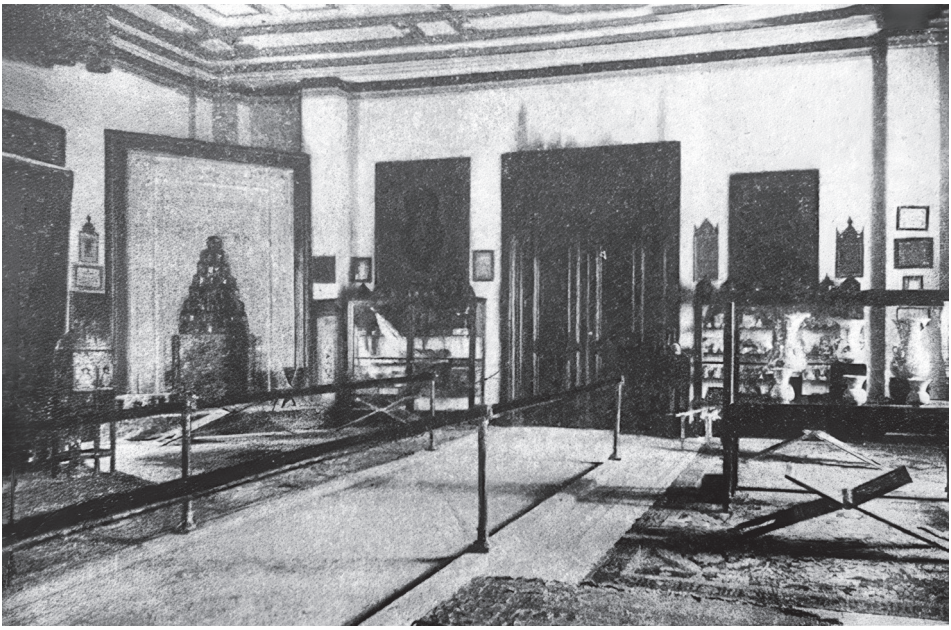
*Figure 5. 'Ancient Islamic Arts' (*Sanayi-i atikayı İslamiye*) collections upstairs in the Imperial Museum, c. 1903. Source: Ogan, Aziz. 2013. 'Halil Edhem.' In İğdemir, Uluğ (ed.).* Halil Edhem Hatıra Kitabı Cilt I-II/In Memoriam Halil Edhem Vols. I-II. *3rd edition. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013, 383–406 + 6 figures: Figure 2 [unpaginated].*



of the civilized world thanks to their caliphal status. Halil Edhem's usage of terminology is parallel to the scholarship of the time, with a shift of emphasis on Ottoman art. Halil Edhem uses the term 'Arab works' as an equivalent of 'Islamic,' and further conflates the 'Islamic' with the 'Ottoman,' thereby framing Islamic art within a national narrative. In addition, Halil Edhem alludes to the theft of items around the Ottoman Empire by emphasizing the changing status of Islamic art, which became highly appreciated collectable in Europe.

According to Halil Edhem's description, objects and architectural elements made of various materials such as woodwork and stonework, manuscripts, calligraphy, tiles, and textiles were displayed in the new gallery. Although Halil Edhem was a specialist on Islamic art and architecture, he falsely attributed the tiled mihrab from Karaman to the time of the Seljuk ruler Ala'al-din I (1190–1237, r. 1220–37). The tiled mihrab, dated to the early fifteenth century, was brought from the İbrahim Bey Mosque (*imaret*) in Karaman close to Konya.[38] The mihrab was placed in the corner of the gallery, as can be

38 The *imaret* was built by II. Ibrahim Bey (1423–1464) who was the ruler in the *beylik* (principality) of Karamanids. Durukan, Aynur. 2000. 'İbrâhim Bey İmareti ve Kümbeti.' In *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*. Vol. 21. Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 287–90.

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seen in Figures 3 and 5. Halil Edhem categorises and describes displayed items according to features such as dynasty, race, medium, typology, and place of production. This approach provides an idea about the possible label descriptions within the gallery.

While Halil Edhem's account reflects an internal, official perspective on the gallery's contents, contemporary travel guides offer an outsider's description that reveals how the space and its displays were perceived by visitors. Travel guides to Constantinople give an idea about the gallery and its marginalized position. Compared to the antiquities of the Imperial Museum, the Islamic art collection gallery occupied limited space. This approach is understandable, since the Islamic art collection had started to be collected recently and the gallery was still quite new in comparison to the antiquities collection. Moreover, in terms of the hierarchy of the collections, antiquities were more prestigious and ranked above within the art history and archaeology compared to Islamic art collections.

A Guide to Constantinople, written by a dragoman Demetrius Coufopoulos and published in 1895 describes the content of the new gallery concisely. It reads:

> In the room on the right-hand side is a small collection of old Oriental carpets, one of which is said to have belonged to Muhammad the Conqueror; and some furniture, comprising two chairs, one of which belonged to Sultan Muhammad, and the other to Sultan Ahmed. In a corner of the room is a *mihrab* or Mussulman altar, from a mosque at Kuttahiyeh [Kütahya], a place famous for the blue tiles made there.[39]

Coufopoulos describes the objects which had belonged to the Ottoman sultans by underlining their owners rather than their aesthetic or technical features. In addition, he provides incorrect information about the provenance of the above-mentioned tiled mihrab, which came from Karaman, not Kütahya.

Another guide published by a major English publication house for travel guides, John Murray, provides information about the display. *Handbook for travelers in Constantinople, Brusa, and the Troad* first published in 1900 and republished with an index and a directory in 1907, reads:

> […] *staircase* leading up to the first storey […] In the third room are interesting specimens of *Oriental* and *Osmanli* [Ottoman] *art*, old *Persian* and *Turkish carpets*, of good design but rather worn, one of which is said to have belonged to Ahmet I. (1603–17); a *Kurân box* inlaid with mother-of-pearl, belonging to Ahmed III. (1703–30); *furniture* belonging to Selim I (1512-20), and Ahmet III.; in a corner a beautiful *Mihrab* from the mosque of Sultan Ala ed-Dîn in Konia; fine inlaid *woodwork*, &c. In glass presses and cases are fine old mosque lamps, embroidered girdles, gold plats, a model of Yeni Jami' [*Yeni Cami* (Mosque)], & c.[40]

Here the author uses the umbrella term 'Oriental.' Like in Coufopoulos' guide, the sultan's objects were described by their owners and not with a focus of their aesthetic

39 Coufopoulos 1895, 112–3.
40 Wilson 1907, 72.

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or technical features. Also, here the name of the mosque of the tiled mihrab was falsely written as Ala ed-Dîn, maybe because this was written on the label of the object, if there was one. Almost all Islamic art collections in museums contained mosque lamps made of glass, metal, or porcelain: Unsurprisingly, they are also here. However, the model of Yeni Cami which was built in 1665 by the mother of Sultan Mehmed IV, Turhan Hatice Sultan, in Eminönü, Istanbul, is something unexpected to see in an Islamic art collection.

A Guide to the Eastern Mediterranean (1904) including Constantinople provides more detailed information about the exhibited items compare to other written sources. It reads:

> In the room to the left are several ancient Persian carpets found in different mosques in Constantinople; on the wall at the left-hand side of the inner door is a silk prayer-rug said to have belonged to Sultan Ahmed I. In the extreme left-hand corner is a Mihrab of Seljeukian *faince* of the best period, about 1400 A.D., which is from an ancient mosque at Karaman, near Koniah. The adjoining glass case has examples of Arab and Turkish Khoran binding, and of ancient *firmans*. The case at the right hand of the entrance door contains specimens of glass made at Beicos [Beykoz] in imitation of the 'yeux de rossignil' Venetian glass. The first cases on the north and south walls contain samples of pottery from Chanak Kalesi [Çanakkale] on the Dardanelles. In the second case on the right-hand side of the passage are specimens of Arab, Persian, Turkish, and Cufic calligraphy. In the third case are two large vases, very valuable, manufactured at Constantinople or Kutayah during the reign of Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. The other vases in that case are Persian. There are also in the room Khoran boxes and Khoran stands, the two carved sides of the ascent to a Minbar from Koniah, writing materials, time-measuring instruments, weights, etc.[41]

This guide provides more detail about the displayed objects. From a photograph dated around 1903, the wall-display case appears to correspond to the 'adjoining glass case' described in the *Guide*, though the specific objects mentioned cannot be clearly identified (see Figure. 5). Based on this description, the gallery appears like a decorative art museum with its contemporary design objects such as samples of Beykoz glass and Çanakkale pottery, which were the productions of the nineteenth century and may well have included some of the Beykoz pieces recorded in the museum's inventory in 1884.

Baedeker, one of the main publication companies specialized in the tourist guide genre, published *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* (Constantinople and Western Asia Minor: A Traveler's Guide) in 1905. A very brief section entitled 'VI.-VII: *SAAL: Erzeugnisse des TÜRKISCHEN KUNSTGEWERBES*'[42] (Room 6-7: Products of Turkish handicrafts) is devoted to the gallery.[43] This guide offers concise information about the display content in the gallery, consistent with other guides.

41 *Guide to the Eastern Mediterranean* 1904, 179.
42 Capital letters were left purposely, the same as the source.
43 *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* 1905, 113.

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Different from the other guidebooks, though, it shows the exact location of the gallery with a small ground plan, numbered as rooms 6 and 7.[44] Taken together, these travel guides do more than merely list the contents of the gallery; they provide rare outsider perspectives on how the displays were framed and perceived at the time by foreign visitors. Introducing these sources brings a new perspective to the study of the early Islamic art gallery, complementing internal, official narratives with contemporary external viewpoints largely absent from previous scholarship on the Imperial Museum.

The photographs of the gallery taken from opposite directions confirms the description of the travel guides. Objects made from various material or with various techniques from different time periods were scattered around the room detached from their original contexts. As the photographs of the gallery demonstrate, only the large-scale carpets, calligraphic panels, *kavukluk*s (turban stands), and metal lanterns hanging from the ceiling were exhibited as used in their authentic functions. The carpets, for example – transferred from mosques or tombs – were detached from people who would freely walk, pray, sit, or even lay on them in their original context.[45] Although there are modern approaches to the display techniques, such as hanging the small-scale carpets or textiles on the walls as if they were paintings, or separating the visitor route from the displayed items with a rope, the overall display seems rather chaotic. The use of ropes not only defined a path through the gallery but also prevented visitors from examining the small-scale objects in the cases up close, limiting the kind of intimate viewing such objects might once have invited. The tiled mihrab from Karaman, impressive with its size and its colourful tiled decoration, is mentioned in all the written sources, and it visible in the corner of the room in each photograph. From the visual sources, at least four Quran stands can be seen placed on each side of the room, behind the ropes, on the carpets. The Quran cabinet decorated with mother-of-pearl inlay, which is also referred to in almost every written source, is located on the carpet on the right side of the room in Figure 3 and the left side of the room in Figure 4. Smaller objects were displayed in display cases with wooden frames, rather typical for museum displays of that period. Unfortunately, it is not possible to understand exactly from the photos what type of objects were displayed in the wall display cases. On the other hand, it is possible to detect some of the objects such as Mamluk and Iznik mosque-lamps, which were located in one of the free-standing display cases on the right side. In Figure 4, what appears to be a painting – possibly even a portrait of a sultan – was hung on the wall next to what looks like a stone with a calligraphic inscription, underscoring both the eclectic variety of objects and the potential presence of dynastic imagery in the gallery. Taken together, the written and visual sources indicate that there was no consistent system of categorisation within the gallery; at best, some objects appear to have been loosely grouped by material, technique, or type. More significantly, the display practices themselves reveal how objects once embedded in religious or dynastic settings

44 For the ground plan see *Konstantinopel und das westliche Kleinasien: Handbuch für Reisende* 1905, 111.

45 *ibid.*

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were redefined within the museum space as 'historic' or 'artistic' items.[46] In this period, for the first time the Ottoman Empire began to articulate its national identity through the material culture of its Islamic heritage, just as Reinach recommended in 1881.

4. The Second Display: Transfer to the *Çinili Köşk* (the Tiled Kiosk) (1908–1939)

When construction of a third wing of the museum was completed in November 1908, the overall museum display was reorganized. As part of the reinstallation process, the Islamic art gallery was transferred to Çinili Köşk in the same year. The above-mentioned vision of Reinach was realized after twenty-five years, and *Çinili Köşk* was solely devoted to the Islamic art collection. Halil Edhem was content with this transfer, too. He emphasizes the development and richness of the Islamic collection and draws attention to the relation between the collection and its new repository by stating the 'Turkish and Islamic art' collection 'found its exact location.'[47]

French archaeologist Gustave Mendel (1873–1938) worked many years on the collection of the Imperial Museum to prepare a comprehensive new catalogue consisting of three volumes entitled *Catalogue des sculptures grecques, romaines et byzantines* and completed in 1921. No catalogue of the Islamic collection appears to have been requested from the museum management. In 1909, Mendel published a series of articles where he promoted the new reinstallation of the Imperial Museum.[48] He reserved one of his articles for the Islamic art collection which had gone on display in Çinili Köşk at that time. Mendel starts the article with a criticism of the previous Islamic art gallery display and continues with a praise for the new installation and the efforts of Halil Edhem, who was responsible for enriching the museum collection. It reads:

> Two years ago, once these marbles had been moved into the museum's new wing, Çinili Köşk, discreetly restored, became a museum of Muslim antiquities. Until then the objects of Muslim art were piled up on the first floor of the Sarcophagi Museum, in a room which – one can say it today – had a bit of the chaotic look of an antique shop. Once they were seen in the kiosk, each of them properly placed and grouped by families, it was as if hidden treasures were suddenly revealed, for so beautiful was the setting, and so soft the light that embraced them. Halil Bey had devoted himself to this long and delicate task; and together with his excellent taste, he had brought to it his deep knowledge of Oriental history and Islamic arts.[49]

Here I would like to draw attention to the role of Halil Edhem and his contribution to the development of the Islamic art collections. As mentioned before, Halil Edhem was the younger brother of Osman Hamdi. Halil Edhem was educated in Istanbul, Berlin, Zurich, Vienna, and Bern. He studied geology and chemistry at the Polytechnic

46 Shaw 2003, 176
47 Edhem 2019, 148. The article of Halil Edhem was first published in 1932.
48 Mendel 1909, 337–52.
49 *ibid*., 340; English translation of the quotation from Eldem 2016, 134.

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Vienna. Later he went to Switzerland and earned a PhD in philosophy at the University of Bern and returned to Istanbul in 1885.[50] He also took archaeology classes during his education.

He became an assistant director at the Imperial Museum in 1892. After his elder brother Osman Hamdi's death in 1910, he was appointed as a museum director and stayed in that position until 1931. It wouldn't be wrong to say he dedicated his lifetime to the Imperial Museum and museums both in the Ottoman state and in the newly established Republic of Turkey. He also played an important role in the establishment and curation of the Museum of Pious Islamic Foundations (*Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi*) in 1914, which later became the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Art (*Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi*) in Istanbul.

Halil Edhem was almost twenty years younger than Osman Hamdi and naturally belonged to a different generation, one which was filled with sharper sensibilities about Turco-Islamic nationalism and heritage ideologies of the period.[51] The changing syllabus of the above-mentioned School of Fine Arts can also give an idea about the different management styles between Osman Hamdi and Halil Edhem. Only in 1911, one year after Halil Edhem became director, a course on Islamic art and Ottoman architecture was added to the curriculum for the first time after a major revision of the school curriculum.[52] Halil Edhem would have been influential in this change since he was interested in promoting and preserving the Islamic heritage of the Ottoman Empire with a nationalistic perspective and even published some articles on the subject.[53] In parallel, in 1910 the Ministry of Public Education established a commission under the director of the Imperial Museum to determine the preservation methods of 'Islamic and Ottoman arts.'[54] The revision of the curriculum is meaningful considering the changing political environment and rising nationalism trends after the Second Constitution period that began with the Young Turk Revolution in 1908.[55] In this context, the Young Turk emphasis on Ottoman-Turkish identity promoted a redefinition of Islamic material culture: religiously functional objects were no longer valued solely for their liturgical role, but were increasingly reframed as works of aesthetic and historical significance that could serve as markers of national heritage.[56] These developments are also mirrored in the 1911 curriculum of the School of Fine Arts, where the structure and content of the art history course reveal how heritage and educational policies intersected.

50 Eyice 1995, 18.
51 Eldem 2016, 134.
52 Gençel 2021, 142.
53 Edhem 1911, 226–30. This article mainly focuses on the neglected architecture of the Ottomans and Seljuks. Edhem also discusses the condition of the Islamic art objects such as mosque lamps and Quran cases from the Mamluks contained in these Ottoman and Seljuks monuments.
54 Shaw 2003, 210.
55 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Programları 1911;* Keskin 2017, 426–45.
56 For a further discussion on this subject, see Shaw 2003.

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Before turning to the article of Gustave Mendel, I would like to share the detailed syllabus of the history of art course (*tarih-i sanat-ı nefise* in Ottoman Turkish) dated 1911. It follows a similar structure of an art history survey book at the time, with a few exceptions. The timeline of the course starts with the ancient civilizations of the 'East' ('*Şark*') such as Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Persia, and Phoenicia, and then it continues with the ancient Greek and Roman periods. Following this is a part entitled 'Middle Ages' (*Kurun-u Vasatı*) and including the Byzantine period. Interestingly, under the Byzantine period, different from a Western art history survey, there is a subtitle which reads 'mosques converted from churches' ('*camie tahvil olunmuş eski kiliseler*').[57] Probably, Hagia Sophia was included under this subtitle, along with some other churches such as Chora (*Kariye Camii*) which were converted to a mosques after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. A section of the syllabus contains Arab, Iranian, and Turkish art and architecture; it comes after the Byzantine period, as expected. This section of the curriculum reads:

> Principles of Arab Art – Architecture: [its] prominent qualities and monuments- [its] influences [on other civilizations]- [its] decorative art- Iranian Art- [its] prominent monuments- Turkish Art: [its] general qualities and prominent works and monuments of Seljuks- Purity and nature of the Ottoman Architecture and the character of [the] decorative features of Ottoman buildings/monuments (mosques, tombs, and palaces [in] İzmir, Bursa, Edirne, and Constantinople)[…].[58]

This section differs from the others in categorisation because it is not defined with a subtitle like the other sections such as 'East,' 'Greece,' 'Rome,' or 'Middle Ages.' Moreover, the adjective 'purity' used to describe the character of the Ottoman architecture is significant. Neither Arab, nor the Persian sections of the syllabus included this adjective. Since the 1870s, the Ottoman government had tried to create an independent and individual place for the art and architecture of the Ottoman Empire. The book on Ottoman Architecture (*Usûl-i Mi'mârî-i Osmanî*) prepared for the Vienna Exhibition in 1873, was the first attempt to elevate the status of Ottoman architecture.[59]

Mendel's article provides information both about the architecture of Çinili Köşk and the types of the displayed items, such as architectural pieces, woodworks, metalworks, ceramics, and textiles. Mendel focuses on the decorative and technical details of the objects, rather than their historical contexts. According to Mendel, the display is based on typology and material rather than race, dynasty, or geography, which is a typical beaux arts school approach. The majority of the objects on display were rather typical for an Islamic art collection, such as mosque lamps, stucco pieces, armouries, ceramic sherds, ceramic vases, carpets, astronomical devices, incense burners, coins, calligraphy, book bindings, and Quran stands. On the other hand, there were objects

57 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Progamları* 1327/1911, 33. For the full curriculum of the School of Fine Arts (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) in 1911 see Gençel 2021.

58 *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi Talimatname ve Ders Progamları* 1327/1911, 33. English translation of the curriculum is by the author.

59 Ersoy 2007, 120.

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which are surprising to see in the collection, such as musical instruments, *kavukluk*s and a large gilded console all in Rococo style.[60] One cannot help remember the above-mentioned first inventory of the Islamic collection formed in 1895, where a console was registered. Maybe the one on the display and the registered one were the same item.

Some of the works that Mendel introduces in the article were well-known examples within the international academic circles. For example, carved wooden door panels[61] were already published by French Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), the father of the Louvre's Islamic art collection, in his prominent book *Manuel d'art Musulman* (1907). Today, the wooden door panels are on display in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts, Istanbul. Another internationally recognized object was a carpet, which had recently been published by 'Dr. Martin.'[62] Mendel must be referring to the Frederik R. Martin (1868–1933) – diplomat, collector, dealer, and scholar of Islamic art – who published a two volumes book entitled *A History of Oriental Carpets Before 1800* few years previously.[63] Mendel also points out a resemblance between a wooden minbar in the Çinili Köşk and the one in the V&A Museum.[64] The wooden minbar must have entered the Imperial Museum's collection before 1908, because it was not on display at the previous gallery in the main museum building. Mendel's article indicates that the management of the Imperial Museum was aware of the content of the foreign museum collections, which is not so surprising, since museum catalogues were requested or sent from foreign museums such as the British Museum and the so-called 'Egypt Museum.'[65] In addition, the V&A was a world-renowned museum, with its innovative concept and rich collection. Mendel was trying to position the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum next to these well-established museums through emphasizing the similarities. Mendel finishes his article by emphasizing the educational role of the museum.[66] According to Mendel, this collection should help 'Turkish craftsmen' (*l'artisan turc*) to restore their 'ancient traditions,' which had been under Western influence for so long. The museum section would show 'the charm of the old national art' to the *l'artisan turc* and would be the most effective contribution to the wealth and economic development of the Ottoman state. Although with different intentions, both Reinach and Halil Edhem advocated Islamic art collections as the national cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Mendel, too, underlines the role of the Islamic art collections as the 'national' art of the Ottoman state. Moreover, Mendel's comments on the educational role of this collection recalls the mission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, which

60 Mendel 1909, 344.
61 '*Un des gloires du musée, c'est sa collection de portes sculptées*.' Mendel 1909, 343.
62 *ibid*., 349.
63 Martin 1906–1908.
64 Mendel 1909, 342.
65 *T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Devlet Arşivleri (Osmanlı Arşivi)*, *Istanbul*. Sadaret Mısır (A.MTZ. 05) 17–134; Hariciye Nezareti Londra Sefareti (HR.SRF.3) 537–84; Hariciye Nezareti Londra Sefareti (HR.SRF.3) 646–14; Maarif Nezareti Mektubi Kalemi (MF.MKT.) 1128–42.
66 Italics have been added for emphasis. Mendel 1909, 345.

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was established in 1852 with an aim to educate and improve designers, manufacturers, and the public in art and design.[67]

In the 1910 edition of *A Guide to Constantinople*, Coufopoulos dedicates almost two pages to the new display. The increasing page number indicates the growth of the collection and the given importance given to it. It reads:

> Chinili Kiosk […] is used now as a Museum, and it is well worth a visit. Holders of tickets to the museum proper are entitled to a free visit to this building as well. The objects in it are of pure Muhammadan and Turkish art, and they mostly consist of objects of the decorative art.
> Among others, on the wall, a large Ispahan rug of the 15th century. The Mihrab or niche of blue tiles taken form a ruined mosque in Asia. It is one of the finest specimens of early encaustic art, and it is noted for its resemblance to the famous Mihrab of the Blue Mosque in Bursa. A collection of Persian and Turkish tiles and vases, some carved wood and a fairly good collection of Rhodian plates.
> Some of the old wooden doors taken from ruined mosques are well worth inspection, as they are artistically carved and inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl. The yellow rug lying on the floor is said to have been used for many years in the Mosque of St. Sophia.[68]

In the new edition, Coufopoulos erases his previous false comment about the origin of the tiled mihrab. The information that he provides about the displayed items parallels Mendel's. This time, Coufopoulos does not mention about the objects which had belonged to the sultans. The emphasis that the museum was worth to visiting is important, since this is a revised opinion of the author after the new installation of the collection. Different from the earlier guide, this time he uses the term 'Muhammedan and Turkish art.' It is curious that he separates these two terms from each other. While 'Muhammedan' seems to function as an umbrella category encompassing, for example, Persian works, the addition of 'Turkish' reflects a shift in emphasis that resonates with the proto-nationalist discourse the 1908 Young Turk Revolution and the subsequent wave of Turco-Islamic nationalism.[69] It is significant to see that Coufopoulos categorises the collection as 'decorative art.'

Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern; Handbuch für Reisende, a German travel guide dated 1914, presents detailed information about the display layout of the collection under the part entitled Çinili Köşk. It states that both old and new Islamic art works are exhibited in the kiosk.[70] The emphasis of 'old and new' objects is curious and recollects an understanding of a decorative art museum. Maybe

67 It was first located in Marlborough House as the Museum of Ornamental Arts in 1852 and moved to its current home on Exhibition Road in 1857. No author. 2019. 'Building the Museum'. *The V&A website*. URL: https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/building-the-museum (last accessed 15 January 2025).

68 Coufopoulos 1910, 119–20.

69 For a further discussion on this subject, see Shaw 2003, 26–7.

70 *Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern* 1914, 205.

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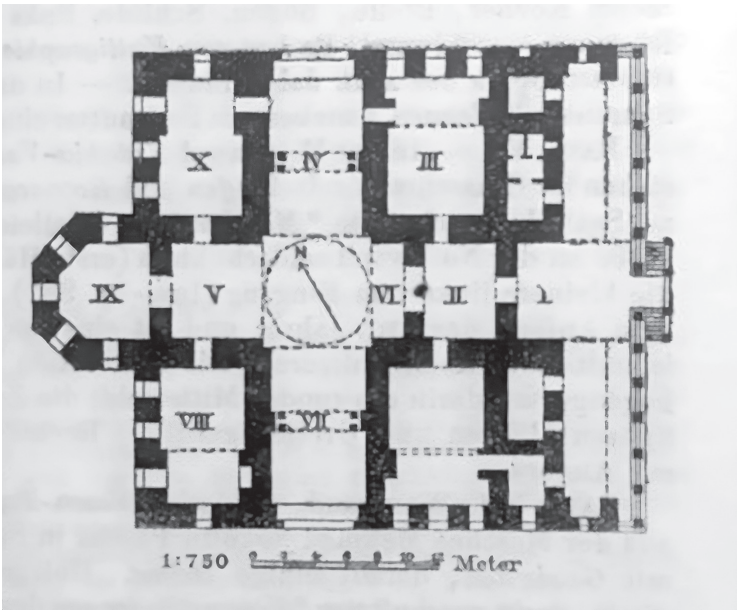
Figure 6. Ground plan of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1914. Source: Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern; Handbuch für Reisende. *1914. Leipzig: K. Bædeker.*



this guidebook perceives the collection as a decorative art museum. According to the guidebook, there are ten sections of the display including the Lobby, which is numbered I (Figure 6).

As mentioned above, Gustave Mendel wrote each object was 'properly placed a grouped by families' for the new display in the Çinili Kiosk.[71] However, by looking at the 1914 guidebook, it is difficult to see a rational and proper categorisation within the display. Like in the previous one, again it seems rather unsystematic. Categorisation can only be spoken about for some of the display cases. For example, a group of early Islamic pottery from Raqqa was displayed in a freestanding display case in room X.[72] In room V, a wall display case contains various armours.[73] However, a prayer rug, samples of calligraphy, and a Quran stand can be seen next to the armoury case in the same room. Therefore, it is not easy to detect a consistent and meaningful display techniques.

Thanks to the few photographs of the Çinili Kiosk interior, it is possible to visualize the display. Figure 7, dated 1909, shows probably the central area of the building (numbered as II, IV, V, VI, and VII in the above-mentioned ground plan). There are

71 Mendel 1909, 340.
72 *Konstantinopel, Balkanstaaten, Kleinasien Archipel, Cypern* 1914, 207.
73 *ibid*., *206*

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Figure 7. Islamic antiquities in the Çinili Köşk, c. 1909. Source: Shaw, Wendy M. K. 2003. Possessors and possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire. *Berkeley: University of California Press. 211.*

similarities with the pre-1908 display. The same display cases were in use, and it is even possible to see a very similar arrangement of ceramic mosque lamps as in the previous gallery. One of the sixteenth-century Iznik mosque lamps with bosses, one the signature items of the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman's reign (r. 1520–1566), is also recognizable in Figure 4 at the very left side of the photograph placed in a display case. The engraving of this specific mosque lamp was also published in Mendel's article dated 1909.[74] Here again, the large-scale carpets are laid on the floor, but this time a platform was built under the carpets for their preservation. A rope encircles the platform to separate the visitor and the exhibited objects. Again, Quran stands and a Quran cabinet are placed on the rugs. The Quran cabinet, which can be identified in Figures 3, 4, and 5 – most distinctly in Figure 4 – appears to have been continuously displayed across different installations. Another similarity is the display of the metal lantern hanging from the ceiling.

The book entitled *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel: Die Sammlung türkischer und islamischer Kunst im Tschinili köschk* (1938), written by the German Islamic art and architecture expert German Ernst Kühnel (1882–1964), can be accepted as the

74 Mendel 1909, not paginated.

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first catalogue of the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum.[75] In the foreword, Kühnel states that Halil Edhem suggested preparing this book more than a decade before, but it was not possible to publish it until this date without the efforts of the German Orient Institution.[76] This catalogue dedicated to the Turkish and Islamic art in Çinili Köşk was the third volume of the museum catalogue series entitled *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel,* which began publication in 1928.

The name of the catalogue gives a clue about the changing mindset about the museum. The masterpiece approach became popular for Islamic art objects after the 'Meisterwerke muhammedanischer Kunst' exhibition, which was organized in Munich in 1910. Ernst Kühnel was 28 years old at the time, and he was an assistant curator of this exhibition. One year after the 1910 Munich exhibition, Kühnel started to work as the assistant to Friedrich Sarre, who was the first director of the 'Department of Persian-Islamic Art' (*Abteilung der persisch-islamischen kunst*) in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum (currently Bode Museum) in Berlin, established in 1904. As stated in Chapter 1, this department grew into the museum of Islamic art, which is today known as the *Museum für Islamische Kunst* in Berlin. Kühnel took over the position from Friedrich Sarre and served as the director of the museum in Berlin between 1931 and 1951. Therefore, he was still the director of the *Museum für Islamische Kunst* in Berlin when he was writing *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel* for the Imperial Museum.

Although Halil Edhem was an expert on the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum, he invited Kühnel, who was a well-known scholar with many publications on Islamic art and architecture, mainly written in German and English.[77] The field of art history in general but also the field of Islamic art and architecture was dominated by foreigners, particularly German and Austrian scholars, in those years. In Turkey, art history as a separate branch had started to be taught for the first time at the University of Istanbul by the Austrian art historian Ernst Diez (1878–1961) in 1943.[78] This could also be the reason why Ernst Kühnel was asked to write the Islamic art catalogue of the museum. On the other hand, inviting a well-known scholar and museum director for the preparation of *Meisterwerke der Türkischen Museen zu Konstantinopel* shows the importance given to it. Probably, Halil Edhem was trying to promote and position the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum to a wider and international audience.

The Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum remained in Çinili Köşk until 1939. Based on the postcards of the Çinili Köşk interior from the 1930s, the display of the collection seems unchanged over the years (see Figures 8 and 9). These surviving images, however, were not neutral records: they circulated as postcards and their framing focused primarily on architectural elements, particularly tiles, rather than on smaller portable objects. It is possible that postcards of individual objects also existed, but if so, they have not come down to us or I have not encountered them. This visual emphasis on monu-

75 Kühnel and Ogan 1938.
76 *ibid*., unpaginated.
77 For his bibliography see Erdmann 1954, 195–208.
78 Aslanapa 1993, 9. Also, Diez worked in the 'Department of Persian-Islamic Art' in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum between 1908 and 1911. Eyice 1997, 3.

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Figure 8. The interior of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1930s. Source: Salt Research Archive. URL: https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/85266 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

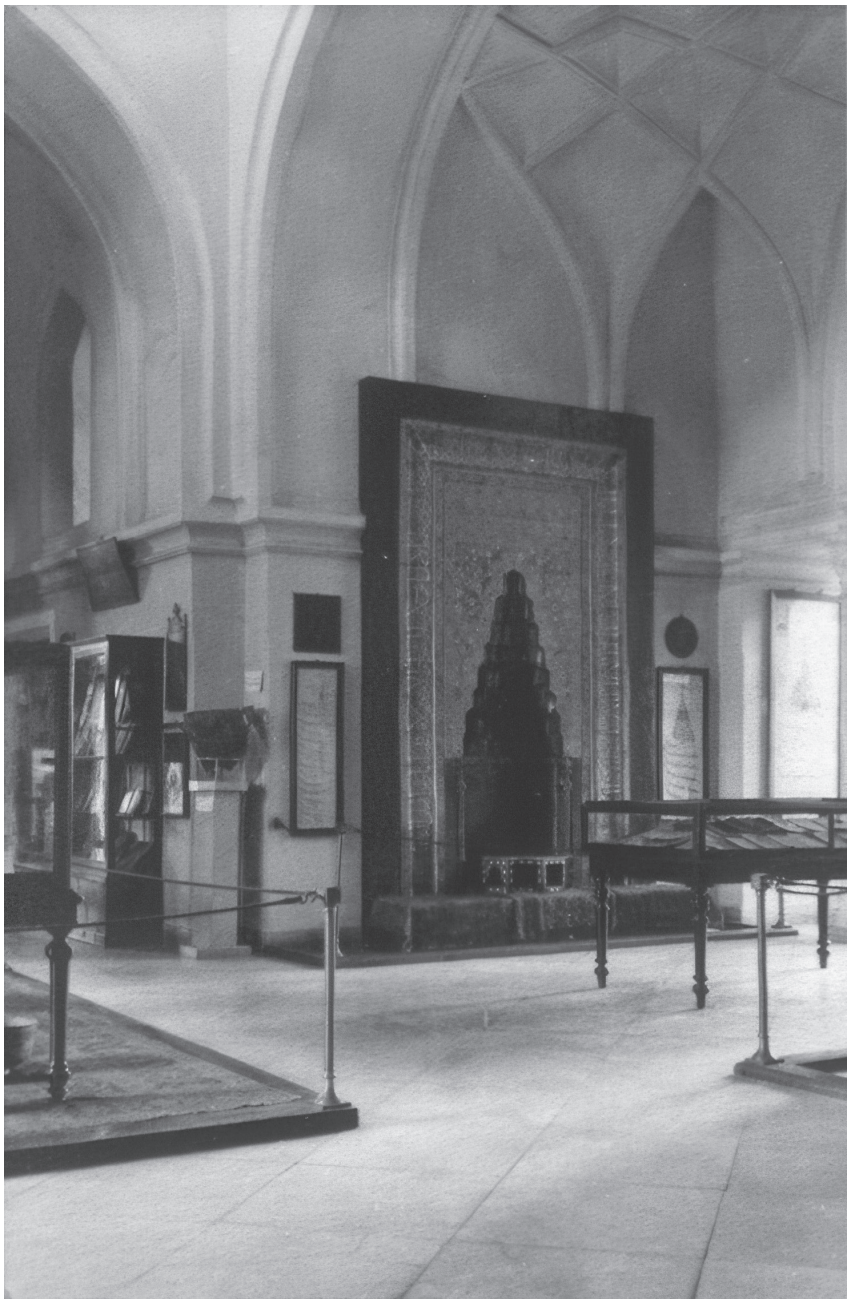

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Figure 9. One of the tiled rooms of the Çinili Köşk, c. 1930s. Source: Salt Research Archive. URL: https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/79309 (last accessed 25 January 2025)

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mental and decorative features indicates that the public representation of the collection did not follow the 'masterpiece approach' emphasized in the catalogue, but rather highlighted architectural splendour as a defining characteristic of 'Turkish' heritage.

Although the museum director of the time, Aziz Ogan (1888–1956), who was appointed in 1931, was against this move, the Islamic art collection of the museum was dispersed among different museums in 1939.[79] The available evidence does not clarify the reason behind the dispersal of the Islamic art collection in Çinili Köşk. Considering the objections of the museum director and the recent catalogue of the Islamic art collection, which was published with international collaboration, the closure of Çinili Köşk is a curious decision. In 1953, *Fetih Müzesi* (The Museum of Conquest) was opened in Çinili Köşk to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople (Istanbul). The museum was devoted to Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), byname Fatih Sultan Mehmed (Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror), who captured Constantinople in 1453. The costumes and armouries of Sultan Mehmed II, which were brought from the collection of Topkapı Palace, were displayed in Çinili Köşk.[80] The nature of the objects can be categorised under the umbrella term 'Islamic,' but the attributed meanings and the narrative of the museum had been changed significantly. As such, the story of the Islamic art collection in the Imperial Museum (renamed after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey and later Istanbul Archaeological Museums) came to an end.

5. Concluding Remarks

The earliest public Islamic art collection in Ottoman Turkey was created in the late nineteenth century within the Imperial Museum. The formation and display of the earliest Islamic art collection in the Ottoman Empire from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century was a complex and multifaceted process that involved various political, cultural, and intellectual factors. The earliest public Islamic art gallery was formed in 1895 in the Imperial Museum almost a decade before the Islamic art galleries in the well-known museums of Europe such as the Kaiser Friedrich and the Louvre. This initiative was started under the directorship of Osman Hamdi and developed by the efforts of Halil Edhem in the early twentieth century. The establishment of the Islamic art gallery within the Imperial Museum had both cultural and political implications. The initial and strongest motivation behind the formation of the collection was to protect Islamic art objects from being collected and benefitted from by westerners. Collecting and displaying Islamic art in the museum also represented an effort to preserve and promote the artistic achievements of the Islamic world. On the other hand, it served as a tool for Ottoman nationalism and identity-building, as it

79 '*Müzeler 1939 da iki gurupa ayrılmış, Türkiyenin esaslı eski bir Müzesi ve milletlerarası büyük bir şöhreti olan Arkeoloji Müzesinin islâmî koleksiyonunu ihtiva eden Çinili Köşkdeki Türk, Arap, Acem eserleri diğer müzelere dağıtılmışdır*.' Ogan 1947, 11–2. Typos are left purposely as in the source.

80 *Fetih Müzesi* 1953.

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showcased the cultural and historical connections between the Ottoman Empire and broader Islamic civilization.

The physical display of the Islamic art collection in the Imperial Museum shifted within the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The first gallery 'had a bit of chaotic look of an antique shop,' as described by Mendel. After moving to Çinili Köşk, the gallery was reinstalled according to typology and material, with a focus on the aesthetic and technical details of the objects like in a decorative art museum display. The travel guide reviews and the articles about the collection written by Europeans after the reinstallation in 1908 praise the collection and emphasize the similarities between the Islamic art collection of the Imperial Museum and other significant collections such as the V&A. The changing perception of the Imperial Museum's Islamic art collection demonstrates its growing importance. The analysis of the earliest Islamic art collection in the Ottoman Empire shows that the management of the Imperial Museum tried to improve the Islamic art collection and display as a part of national heritage and wanted to put it on par with international museums.

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