# The Ottomans | The Visual Language of Power

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For as long as people have held power, they have looked for ways in which to demonstrate it to both those under its sway and to those outside it. In particular, art and architecture have often been used to create a ‘visual language’ through which to proclaim power. Such visual proclamations have taken many forms over the centuries; sometimes they are quite overt and unmistakable, while at other times they are more subtle and implicit. The art and architecture of the Ottoman period includes an instructive range of examples by which the power of the sultan and of the Ottoman state was manifest in a visual form.



**Name:**
Star tiles

**Dynasty:**
During the reign of Sultan Alaaddin ('Ala al-Din) Keykubad I (r. hegira 616–35 / AD 1220–37) Anatolian Seljuq

**Details:**
Karatay Madrasa Tile Museum
Konya, Turkey

**Justification:**
Many of the figures on tiles such as these are thought to have been symbolic of the power held by the state. These tiles are of the Anatolian Seljuq period.

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**Name:**
Tu#ra of Sultan Osman III

**Dynasty:**
Hegira 1170 / AD 1756–7 Ottoman

**Details:**
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Turkey

**Justification:**
This tughra represents Sultan Osman III and served as an overt symbol of his power.

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**Name:**
Tent

**Dynasty:**
Hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Ottoman

**Details:**
Army Museum
Stockholm, Sweden

**Justification:**
A tent used by high-ranking Ottoman officials on campaign, and decorated so as to befit their rank. The tent was captured from the Turks in 1683 during the second siege of Vienna.

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**Name:**
Tent hanging

**Dynasty:**
Hegira 11th century / AD late 16th–early 17th century Ottoman

**Details:**
National Museums of Scotland (NMS)
Edinburgh, Scotland, United Kingdom

**Justification:**
Such a hanging would have adorned the tent of an important Ottoman official.

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**Name:**
Tile panel

**Dynasty:**
Late hegira 10th/AD 16th century Ottoman

**Details:**
Victoria and Albert Museum
London, England, United Kingdom

**Justification:**
The Ottomans used a distinct visual style to identify 'their' buildings.

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