

# The Ottomans | Guardians of the Holy Sites

'For about 400 years the sultans paid particular attention to giving their generous support to the holy sites.'

After the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 923 / 1517, the local rulers of Mecca offered Sultan Selim I supreme power over Arabia for political and economic reasons. Consequently, the two most important Muslim cities, Mecca and Medina – and with them the holiest places of Islam – became part of the Ottoman Empire, and the sultans took the title of Caliph. Thus, for about 400 years the Ottoman sultans paid particular attention to giving their generous support to the holy sites.



**Name:**

Painting

**Dynasty:**

Hegira early 12th century / AD early 18th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Uppsala University Library  
Uppsala, Sweden

**Justification:**

The holiest place of Islam: the Ka'ba in Mecca. The enclosure shows Ottoman influence.

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**Name:**

Siyer-i Nebi ('Biography of the Prophet')

**Dynasty:**

mid hegira 11th century / AD 17th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts  
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Justification:**

Though restored several times, the structure of the Ka'ba as depicted in this miniature has never altered.

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**Name:**

Ceramic tile with a picture of the Ka'ba

**Dynasty:**

Hegira last quarter of the 10th century / AD 16th century Ottoman

**Details:**

Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts  
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

**Justification:**

Tile showing the Ka'ba, which would be placed on the outside of a mosque showing the direction of and reminding the faithful about the holiest site of Islam.

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**Name:**

Dome of the Rock

**Dynasty:**

Hegira 72 / AD 691 Umayyad

**Details:**

Jerusalem

**Justification:**

Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent re-embellished the Dome of the Rock with the highest quality Iznik tiles available.

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