

The Ottomans | The Palace and the Arts

‘With their distinguished place in society, the court calligraphers were highly respected by the sultans.’

Calligraphy was led by the palace calligraphers (hattats) who, with their distinguished place in society, were highly respected by the sultans and allowed to view, read and study the most valuable manuscripts in the palace library. Interest and respect for calligraphy never waned throughout the centuries, and despite the corruption seen in other branches of the fine and decorative arts, the art of calligraphy continued to develop and adapt to the taste of different periods. In the 19th century the Ottoman sultans, preferring a different lifestyle, moved to the Western-style Dolmabahçe and Yıldız Palaces. The end of life in Topkapı Palace saw a change in the sultans’ aesthetic taste and thus the palace workshops came to an end, and the ties between the palace and artistic practice were loosened.



Name:
Writing box

Dynasty:
Reign of Sultan Abdülmecid I (r. Hegira 1255–78 / AD 1839–61) Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:
All the Ottoman sultans were trained in a branch of the arts. Sultan Abdülmecid, who was a very skilled calligrapher himself, used this writing box for his calligraphic practices.



Name:
Qur'an binding

Dynasty:
Hegira 1054 / AD 1644 Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:
A 10th- / 16th-century cover from the Qur'an designed in the bookbinder's atelier by palace craftsmen.



Name:
Page of manuscript with Moses, Muhammad and the Archangel Gabriel

Dynasty:
Hegira end of 10th century / AD end of 16th century; probably during the reign of Sultan Murad III (AH 982-1003 / AD 1574–95) Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art at the Pergamon Museum
Berlin, Germany

Justification:
An illustrated manuscript of the life of the Prophet Muhammad made for Murad III.



Name:
Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira 9th / 15th century (c. AH 874 / AD 1470) Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:
A Qur'an written and gilded for the sultan Mehmed II 'the Conqueror', by the calligrapher Asadullah of Kirman (Iran).



Name:
Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira Rajab 899 / AD April 1494 Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:
A distinguished example of a Qur'an from the classical Ottoman period; the calligrapher was Sheikh Hamdullah.



Name:
Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira Safar 1259 / AD March 1843 Ottoman

Details:
Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts
Sultanahmet, Istanbul, Türkiye

Justification:
A Qur'an made in the palace workshops and read by Pertevniyal Valide Sultan.
