

Western Influence in Ottoman Lands | Syria

'However, the identity of Damascus as a holy city remained predominant, irrespective of political and stylistic changes.'

The yearly ceremony of the hajj involved arduous preparation of the pilgrim caravans for a long and potentially dangerous journey through the desert on camelback. The procession out of Damascus was, therefore, a crucial moment to ensure security and to gain visibility for good governance. The Mahmal al-Hajj headed the procession carrying emblems of the Ottoman caliph, where a Westernised decorative language can be discerned filtering into a local decorative repertoire. Such cultural and artistic innovations became ubiquitous by the early 14th/20th century. Qur'anic manuscripts painted with gold and enamel show a new sense of shading and colour. However, the identity of Damascus as a holy city remained predominant, irrespective of political and stylistic changes.



Name:

Mahmal al-Hajj

Dynasty:

AH 1330/AD 1912 Late Ottoman

Details:

Damascus, Syria

Justification:

A fine example of a typical mahmal, dated 1330/1912 and made of luxurious green cloth, woven with gold thread.



Name:

Mahmal al-Hajj

Dynasty:

AH 1330/AD 1912 Late Ottoman

Details:

Damascus, Syria

Justification:

The European influences are encapsulated in the embossed cartouche of the central brass standard and the Baroque-style framing with curved floral motifs that decorates here the Islamic declaration of faith.



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Mahmal al-Hajj

Dynasty:

AH 1330/AD 1912 Late Ottoman

Details:

Damascus, Syria

Justification:

The tughra of the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmed V (r. 1230-1336/1844–1918), son of Abd al-Majid, is seen amidst the heavily brocaded green fabric of the mahmal.



Name:

Qur'an Manuscript

Dynasty:

Late 13th/19th century Ottoman

Details:

Damascus, Syria

Justification:

These precious mashaf date to the end of the 13th/19th century and were probably made in Damascus.

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