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Ottoman Turban Stand (Kavukluk)

Ottoman Turkey, 18th century

Painted and gilt wood

95cm long, 39cm wide

Stock no.: A5901

Provenance: Labelled 'Prima Mostra mercato internazionale dell'antiquario Firenze', (First international fair of antique dealers, Florence), which took place in October 1959.

This Ottoman turban stand is of typical 18th-century form, carved and pierced with Rococo-style pillars and foliage. Gilt foliage is raised from a green-blue background. The protruding shelf was designed to hold the turban of an Ottoman man. Clothing was an important status symbol during the Ottoman Empire. The legal code of Mehmed II (*kanunname*), which set out strict laws on how different people of ranks, professions, religions were to dress, was observed until the final years of the Ottoman Empire.¹

The materials, colour, and elaborate patterns of winding could all be used to identify a man's social status, profession, or religion. So important was the turban that the tombstones of men were often topped with a turban (see for example no. [AC1992.50.1](#) in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art or no. [OA+.7403](#) in the British Museum, London). Professional turban winders, known as *sarıkcı*, were employed to ensure that turbans complied with regulations.² Once the *sarıkcı* had wound the turban around the silk under cap, the wearer would remove it like a hat without being unwound.³ It would be placed on the protruding shelf, perhaps on a wooden former, and protected with a silk cover.

This example is of typical Rococo style, which arrived in Turkey during the so-called Tulip Period, when the Ottoman Empire began to open itself to the West.⁴ The technique of carving and decorating is

known as *Edirnekâri* in Turkish, named after the craftsmen of Edirne, Western Turkey.

Similar Ottoman turban stands decorated in the rococo style are held in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (accession no. [M.85.237.95](#)) and the Weltmuseum, Vienna (accession no. [124676](#)). Both are dated to the 18th century.

A sticker on the reverse of this turban stand reads 'Prima Mostra mercato internazionale dell'antiquario Firenze', (First international fair of antique dealers, Florence), an event which took place in October 1959.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links

[1] İpşirli Argıt, Betül. 'Clothing and Fashion in İstanbul (1453-1923)', *History of İstanbul from Antiquity to XXI century*, vol. 4. Türkiye Diyanet Foundation Center for Islamic Studies (İSAM) and İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Kültür ve Sanat Ürünleri A.Ş., 2019. Retrieved online via <https://istanbultarihi.ist> on 11.03.2025.

[2] 'Turban stand in Ottoman rococo style', *Weltmuseum Wien*, retrieved online via <https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/object/?detailID=462583&offset=0&lv=#object-data> on 11.03.2025; 'Turban stand in Ottoman rococo style', Explore Islamic Art Collections. Museum With No Frontiers, 2025, retrieved online via https://islamicart.museumwnf.org/database_item.php?id=object;EPM;at;Mus23;23;en on 11.03.2025.

[3] 'Man's Turban Cover', *St Louis Art Museum*, retrieved online via <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/586/> on 11.03.2025.

[4] Çalışkan Eken, Ceren. 'The Impact of Baroque and Rococo on Turkish Decorative Art', *İznik Mavi Çini*. Retrieved online via <https://iznikmavicini.com/ar/blog-detay/the-impact-of-baroque-and-rococo-on-turkish-decorative-art-98#:~:text=Turkish artists also became acquainted,time as the French Rococo> on 11.03.2025.