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Ottoman Turban Stand (Kavukluk)

Ottoman Turkey, 18th century

Painted and gilt wood

96.5cm long, 39cm wide

Stock no.: A5900

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 gilt foliage. The white background is decorated with subtle clusters of pink flowers. Raised from backboard is a carved vase of flowers on a table.

The protruding shelf, also decorated with pink flowers and a red border, 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.

[1] İpşirli Arçıt, 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.