

AMIR MOHTASHEMI



Enamelled and Gilt Zarf for the Ottoman Market

Geneva, Switzerland, 19th century

Silver Gilt, enamel

5.5cm high, 4.5cm diameter

Enamelled silver gilt and filigree

Stock no.: A3379

The zarf is a decorative holder for a coffee cup without a handle (known as a *fincan*), used in the Islamic world.¹

During the 19th century, enamel workshops in Geneva produced large numbers of zarf sets for the Turkish market. They were generally constructed from a basic silver gilt frame which could be customised with enamelled panels, filigree, or gems.²

This fine zarf has scalloped borders, the walls decorated with foliate openwork and oval filigree panels, the borders decorated with green, turquoise, navy blue, and white enamelling.

An example of a Swiss zarf, dated to c. 1840, is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession no. [1976.285.14a,b](#)). Three zarfs, dated to the mid 19th century, are held in the Khalili Enamels of the World collection (accession no. [SW 180](#)). The middle of the three bears particular resemblance, and was certainly made in the same factory. Another large collection is held in the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels.³

[1] Interestingly, the term is now used for cardboard sleeves on takeaway coffee cups.

[2] Williams, Haydn. 'Three Zarfs', *Enamels of the World: 1700-2000*. London: The Khalili Collections, 2009. cat. 57, p. 105.

3 Boghossian, Jean (ed.) *Couleurs d'Orient, arts et arts de vivre dans l'Empire ottoman* (catalogue), Brussels: Boghossian Foundation, 2010. pp. 87-89.