Rug - Medallion and Çintamani Ottoman Rug

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	14800
Manufacturer:	sultan's court carpet workshop
Date of production:	second half of the 16th cent.
Place of production:	Cairo (presumably)
Materials:	silk warp yarns; silk weft; wool knots
Techniques:	Senneh (asymmetrical or Persian) knot
Dimensions:	length: 220 cm width: 138 cm knots: 2350 csomó/dm2

New styles incorporating chiefly Iranian, but also Mamluk elements, appeared in Turkish Court art as the Ottoman Empire expanded after the capture of Tabriz (1514) and Cairo (1517). The court style developed by the artists, painters, illuminators and calligraphers working in the Court, which started with manuscripts and miniatures, came to dominate every branch of art – jewellery, tiles, fabrics and carpets. The term "court carpets" designates those rugs produced to a very high standard with patterns designed by the court artists. Some of these are products of the court luxury manufactories in Istanbul and others come from workshops supervised by the court (Cairo, Uşak). In the Mamluk carpet weaving manufactory in Cairo, which came under Turkish control in 1517, the hitherto dominant geometric pattern gave way to the court floral style favoured by the Ottomans. It was only the pattern which changed on the Cairene Ottoman carpets; the technical features, asymmetric knots and the use of silk warp and weft threads, stayed the same.

The carpet’s red background is occupied by a central ragged-leaf mandorla with arabesque or rumi (arabesque, based on floral, foliate or biomorphic design) lilies framed by saz (reed, bullrush) leaves and lotus flowers in the centre. The four corners of the background are cut off by quarter-star medallions of intricate design and rumi decorations. The remaining area is occupied by small çintamani (Ottoman court motifs of triangular arrangement of three balls above two cloud bands of waves, or a cloud band with one ball) arranged in horizontal rows, offset row by row. The main border is the typical 16th century floral Court style adornment, Chinese lotus flowers and rosettes arranged along an undulating stem, and the outer and inner borders contain alternating red and yellow rosettes strung along an undulating stem. This kind of rug is regarded as a “mass produced” item which the Court workshops made for sale, this evidenced by four known nearly identical rugs (London:Victoria and Albert Museum; Berlin: Museum für Islamische Kunst; Paris: Musée Jacquemart-André; New York: Metropolitan Museum). According to Atil Esin, four of the five rugs – all except the New York piece – come from the Palazzo Corsi in Florence.

See also: Museum With No Frontiers

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