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CA18129 - Islamic Legacy: Narratives East,
West, South, North of the Mediterranean
(1350-1750)

***Islamic Legacy:
Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean (1350-1750).
A Thesaurus under Discussion.***

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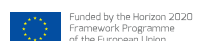
***The Afterlives of the war booty of the second
Siege of Vienna (1683)
Sophia Abplanalp***

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The Afterlives of the war booty of the second Siege of Vienna (1683).

Sophia Abplanalp

One of the most famous encounters in Europe with Islamic culture happened during the Second Turkish Siege of Vienna in the year 1683. In literature the siege is often described as the endgame between Christianity and Islam, because after 1683 there were no such war encounters between Islamic and Christian troops in Europe anymore. This event had a lasting impact on the European perception of the “Islamic East”.

After the siege ended, thousands of objects remained on the battleground and were collected, first, by the Polish king John III Sobieski, secondly, by the commanders of the German and Austrian troops and then by the soldiers and the citizens of Vienna. Among the objects were flags and standards, which were highly sought- after as they were for the Christian commanders the epitome of victory, as well as weapons, lanterns, tents, clothes, fabrics, food, animals and much more.

The sudden availability of countless and diverse objects belonging to the Ottoman material culture, sparked a row of religiously, politically, and culturally motivated reactions, that were projected onto the objects and resulted in their hybridization. They weren't mere Ottoman objects anymore, but also part of the European Christian history and identity. The objects were used and perceived in new contexts, that as well changed over time and therefore lead to multiple types of afterlives of the objects. The socio-historical and political circumstances that influenced the changing image of the “Turk” in Europe must be considered when approaching the material, to show in how far the perception, the use and presentation of the objects reflected these historical trends.

One obvious use of the war booty was to keep it as trophy, to serve as material proof of the own “holy” victory. For example, the flag of Kara Mustafa was sent by John III Sobieski to Pope Innocent XI. as a present. When the flag arrived in Rome, a grand ceremony was held during which the Pope stepped on the flag, then sanctified it, proceeded with it through St. Peter's Basilica, and finally introduced it to the collection of the Vatican Museum. By the Pope's staging of the flag in this spectacle, the identity of the object shifted from a solemn representation of Ottoman military culture to a hybrid object that also represented the Christian victory over Islam.

Besides the concept of the transformation of the object's religious identity, we can also see a “cultural transformation” of the objects. Flags, standards, clothing, and armory were used in courtly festivities such as triumphal processions, tournaments, or war games. Especially Leopold I. held many of these tournaments during the late seventeenth century, where fights between Turks and Hussars were reenacted. During these occasions the objects from the war booty were used to enhance the image of the triumphant Christian European, being superior to the Muslim Ottoman. Interestingly, Leopold I. did not just appear as Hussar, but also as Ottoman soldier. Him dressing up as such, using the original objects found on the battlefield of Vienna, indicates that a new image of the Ottomans spread. They were not just seen as



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enemies anymore, but also appreciated for being skillful fighter. In figure 1 we can see a painting called “Cartel-Rennen” by an anonymous painter. It depicts a (knight) tournament, in which objects such as Ottoman saddles and quivers were used (see figure 2+3).

The use of the objects during these festivities also had other reasons besides admiration. They were used by the Habsburg court to emphasize their triumph over the Ottomans and therefore highlight the glory of the empire. The objects were embedded in an artificial setting, which was tailored to the European view of the Ottomans as being the arch enemy and therefore served the propagandistic aim of these games.

At some point, the clothes and weapons were even copied by European artisans as there was a high demand for them due to the big number of tournaments and games held. These new “Islamized” objects can be seen as homage to Ottoman artisans, as the Austrian craftsmen tried to imitate the style of the Ottoman objects. This interest in and appreciation of the Ottoman material culture is connected to the changing image of Ottomans which emerged in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. Refraining from the idea of the Ottomans as enemies (as they were no political threat anymore) they were instead perceived as cultured exotics and admirable warriors. The various uses of the objects over time reflect the complex and changing reception of the Ottomans in Europe. This new trend of admiration of Ottoman culture reached its peak in the eighteenth century when the *Turquerie* was spreading and nearly all courts in Europe were fascinated by *Turcica*. After this point the objects were handled as precious artworks and found their way into the most renowned museums all over Europe.

In my research I want to expand on the above-mentioned ideas and concepts of the evolution of the European perception of the Ottomans and its relations to the hybrid character of the objects. Hereby an emphasis should be laid on the different types of purposes the objects served, such as imitation, appropriation, memory, as these are all results of cultural hybridization.

Figures

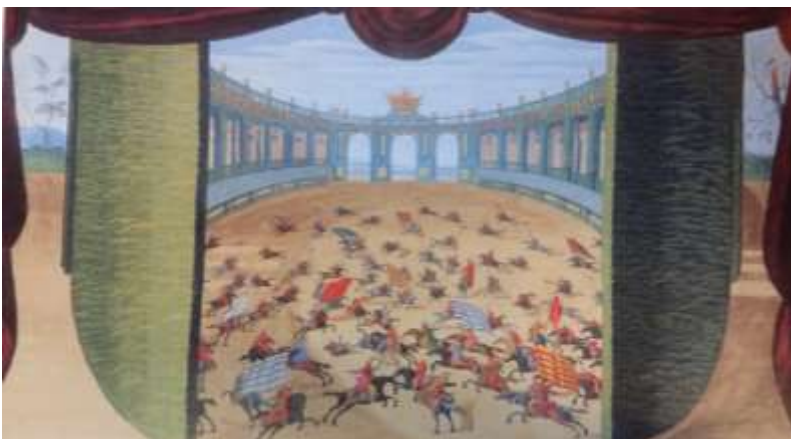


Figure 1: Anonymous, Cartel-Rennen of 1697 in Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Kupferstichkabinett Dresden.



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Figure 2: A set of quiver and bow case, Ottoman, 17th century, Musee de l'Armee, invalids, Paris.



Figure 3: Riding gear, Ottoman, 17th century, KHM, Wagenburg, Vienna.