

16th Century Ottoman Art and Architecture as Imperial Propaganda

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Abstract : The 16th century, and more specifically the reign of the sultan Murad III, is one of the most interesting periods of Ottoman culture. The art of this period vividly depicts the transition of the Ottoman Empire from a conglomeration of conquered territories into a distinct polity, with its own established artistic mores. An analysis of two major forms, illustrated manuscripts and architecture, reveals the Ottomans' self-consciousness and depicts the identity Ottoman elites wished to project, both domestically and internationally. Both forms were used during and before Murad III's reign to express Ottoman imperial power, but it is under Murad III when illustration solidifies into the iconic classical Ottoman style. This paper will analyze how the content of illustrations and their role in Ottoman society in relation to other art forms like architecture reflect the trend, beginning with Süleyman the Magnificent and maturing under Murad III, of an empire that would become increasingly decentralized and begin to move away from significant expansions and even contraction.

Keywords : art history, Ottoman Empire, Murad III, early modern propaganda, imperialism

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