

Important Book of Ottoman Costumes

"Costumi Turchi e Grechi fatti in Constantinopoli 1790"

late 18th century A.D

Constantinople (Istanbul)

Watercolour on Paper

H: 32cm x W: 19cm

This illustrated album provides a comprehensive catalogue of the costumes of the late 18th century within the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman costume albums are key examples of portable Mediterranean objects. Produced as bound collections of paintings on paper, each representing a figure, with some variation, from the Ottoman court, military, professions, and civil society such as those presented in the current album. Although some albums moved within an Ottoman circle, many of them circulated through trans-imperial networks in and across the Mediterranean, benefitting from the Ottoman Empire's advantageous location along the eastern Mediterranean. Produced from the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries, the small number of complete surviving examples illustrate that they were often as a result of the curiosity of foreign and usually diplomatic visitors, who hired a

local artist to study and capture what he had seen or presented as diplomatic gifts.

As with most costume albums, the artist who painted the images of our album is not named, but identified as “Done by a Greek, self-taught”. The illustrations are finely rendered, done with care and attention to aesthetic conventions. The close similarities between the Victoria and Albert museum’s Ottoman costume album (inv. no. D.92-1895) which is also assigned to an unnamed Greek artist and the paintings in the present album make it very likely that both albums are by the same artist, or a student of the studio or circle of Konstantin Kapidagli.

Literature:

Sotheby’s. The Library of Henry Rogers Broughton, 2nd Baron Fairhaven Part 1, 2022, lot 231