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CAT. 51. SILK WITH STYLIZED TULIPS

TURKEY; 2ND HALF OF 16TH CENTURY

The designs of large-patterned Ottoman silks from the 16th century are among the most sublime woven anywhere.

They were made in Bursa and Istanbul, and their patterns were often designed by the artists in the court studio (nakkaşhane). The most impressive group of these fabrics can in fact be found in the Topkapı Palace's collection of the Ottoman sultans' caftans.

Rows of stylized tulips form the pattern. The tulips have six petals: the outermost two are golden and blue with Chinese cloud ornaments, and the four innermost are silver and blue with a scale pattern. A seven-headed stamen and an odd stalk further denaturalize the motif.

The use of precious metals for these textiles resulted in several bans on weaving them.

