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**GOULD CARPETS IN  
EGYPTIAN COLLECTIONS**

**AHMED MOHAMED DABB'**

**2000**

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## Gördes Carpets in Egyptian Collections



Thesis  
2000/14

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

GORDES CARPETS IN EGYPTIAN COLLECTIONS

A THESIS SUBMITTED BY AHMED MOHAMED DABB'

TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARABIC STUDIES

JANUARY 2000

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	4
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY.....	7
1. COLLECTING IN EGYPT .....	7
2. THE COLLECTIONS.....	8
3. HISTORY OF OTTOMAN CARPETS.....	10
4. OTTOMAN CARPETS OF THE 18 <sup>TH</sup> AND 19 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY.....	13
CHAPTER TWO: TECHNICAL ANALYSIS .....	22
1. INTRODUCTION .....	22
2. THE MANIAL PALACE .....	24
A. <i>History of Prince Muhammad Ali</i> .....	24
B. <i>The carpet collection</i> .....	25
3. THE MUSEUM OF ISLAMIC ART.....	25
A. <i>History of the building and the collectors</i> .....	25
B. <i>The carpet collection</i> .....	27
4. THE CATALOGUE.....	28
CHAPTER THREE: DECORATIVE ANALYSIS .....	48
1. ANALYSIS OF THE LAYOUT.....	48
A. <i>The field</i> .....	48
B. <i>The borders</i> .....	50
2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOTIFS.....	51
A. <i>Tulips</i> .....	51
B. <i>Carnations</i> .....	53
C. <i>Chinese Lotus</i> .....	54
D. <i>The Dragon</i> .....	56
F. <i>The Cloud Band</i> .....	58
3. CHARACTERISTICS AND DATING OF THE GÖRDES CARPETS .....	60
A. <i>Size</i> .....	60
B. <i>Material</i> .....	60
C. <i>Pile</i> .....	61
D. <i>Knots</i> .....	62
E. <i>Dating</i> .....	62
4. THE SAJJADAH AND ITS CONNOTATIONS .....	66
5. MEANING OF THE DECORATIVE ELEMENTS. ....	67
CONCLUSION .....	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	72
LIST OF PLATES .....	80
MAP .....	84



## Introduction

The Manial Palace and the Islamic Museum in Cairo possess two large collections of Oriental Carpets that have always interested me first as an admirer and second as a student of Islamic Art. When I first thought of studying these collections I found out that they both contain a variety of types and dates. The major acquisitions on display in both collections were of Ottoman origin dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. So I had to narrow my choice and focus on a group that would form a body to be studied on its own. Going through the two museums, the Gördes carpets fulfilled my requirement.

Reading works of scholars like Maurice Dimand, Louise Mackie, Oktay Aslanapa, Muhammad Mustafa, Frederick Spuhler and others I have noticed that the carpet production of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Turkey did not enjoy the interest and concern addressed to earlier centuries. The lack of academic work on this period was probably due to the huge numbers of carpets produced then, especially prayer ones, which made them connected to the idea of mass production and not related to the state or court art. Scholars have agreed in most cases that among the Turkish prayer carpets produced by the villagers of Bergama, Lâdik, Kula, Melâs, Mucur and Gördes, the latter were more distinct and most popular.

In the section about prayer rugs weaving areas in the catalogue of *Prayer Rugs* Dimand gives a brief discussion of Gördes carpets emphasizing that these carpets followed the design of Ottoman court carpets. He also divides their production to three main types: prayer rugs, kiz-Gördes or



maiden carpets and cemetery carpets.<sup>1</sup> Concerning their dating he tends to include most of them in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the same work Mackie, who was responsible for the cataloging and the technical analysis, gave her comments on knotting and the material used for weaving.<sup>2</sup> She also mentioned, like Dimand that the Gördes designs depended heavily on the Ottoman court manufactory rugs.

The Turkish scholar Aslanapa, giving a short account of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century carpets in his work *One Thousand Years of Turkish Carpets*, described the Gördes carpets in a general way, also mentioning that they depended in design on the Ottoman court manufactory carpets. He did not mention the cemetery carpets.<sup>3</sup>

Muhammad Mustafa who wrote the first book about carpets in Arabic restricted it to Turkish prayer carpets only.<sup>4</sup> In his book he discussed prayer rugs in a general way and then focused on the collection in the Islamic museum in Cairo. The body of his work consisted of studying the elements of the prayer rug (mihrab, arches, columns, spandrels, and borders) mentioning the decorative motifs that were present in each of them and were common in the different types of Turkish prayer rugs.

In his book about carpets in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, Spuhler notes that the city of Gördes was known only for its extensive production of prayer rugs. He also mentions that "its reputation in the carpet

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<sup>1</sup> Dimand, *Prayer Rugs*, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Mackie, *Prayer Rugs*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> Aslanapa, *One Thousand Years*, 153.

<sup>4</sup> Mustafa, *Turkish Prayer Rugs*.



literature is based on its production in the 18<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>5</sup> Reading his detailed catalogue in the same work one can recognize his lack of appreciation for the carpet production of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

One should also mention that apart from works of respected scholars such as those mentioned above, the subject of carpets in general and the 19<sup>th</sup> century production in particular has also been dealt within the tourist domain and the context of guides for collectors.

From the above readings I noticed that the decorative elements of the Gördes carpets would be a key point of their analysis and their development. The other point that made me eager to pursue this topic was the lack of any published technical analysis of the Gördes collections in both museums. The aim of this study became to analyze, identify and present criteria for dating those carpets.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Spuhler, *Oriental Carpets*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. , 47.



## Chapter one: History

### 1. Collecting in Egypt

During the 1920's Cairo went through a period of Islamic Revivalism based on a trend of Egyptian Nationalism. This period reflected a new "National Identity", rebelling against the colonial impact and stretching towards a more local and national image. This trend was reflected in the political, economic and social life in Egypt: the eruption of the 1919 rebellion, the creation of Egyptian capitalism and the influence of Sheikh Muhammad `Abdu were all factors that added to the reshaping of a new class of intelligentsia.<sup>8</sup> An interest in the cultural heritage of Egypt arose among a sector of those intellectuals.

But one should not imagine that this interest arose without any introduction. Several aspects and events had prepared and shaped the artistic atmosphere from the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two exhibitions of orientalist painters were held in Cairo under the supervision of Khedive `Abbas Helmy the second.<sup>9</sup> The first took place at the Opera House in 1891 where all the contents were sold. The second was at the gallery of the Art dealer "Nihman" at 21 al-Madabegh St (now Sherif St.). Both exhibitions had

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<sup>7</sup> The technical analysis of these collections will be based on Walter Denny's catalogue *The Markarian Album*.

<sup>8</sup> Amin, *Mohamed Abdou*, 23.

<sup>9</sup> El Gabaghngi, *Tarikh*, 10



a very strong impact on the members of the well-off and aristocratic families, encouraging them to buy pieces of art or to practice artistic activities. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1908 the school of Fine Arts was founded under the supervision of Mr. Guillaume la Plane and the auspices of Prince Yussef Kamal.<sup>10</sup> In 1923 "The Egyptian society for Fine Arts was founded; it is worth mentioning that Muhammad Mahmoud Khalil was its head from 1925 until his death in 1953."<sup>11</sup> The Egyptian woman also participated in the artistic movement due both to personal interest and under the influence of Hoda Sha'rawi who tried to emphasize the positive role of women in activating national and cultural awareness as a proof of her importance in the field of the national resistance.<sup>12</sup> The idea of collecting was an established concept in Egyptian society, as is proved by a glance at some of the catalogues of the auctions that took place after the revolution in 1952. These auctions were of belongings of the Royal Palace (Abdin Palace 1954), members of the Royal Family (Prince Ilhamy Hussein 1956), the Egyptian aristocracy (Mrs. Marguerite Assad Bassily Pasha 1960), foreigners living in Egypt (Sir Robert Greg 1954) or even dealers' collections (Moussa Mechihi). And we also have evidence of other members of the society who were interested in collecting such as Adel Bek Nada.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. The Collections

<sup>10</sup> The Egyptian school of Fine Arts was opened earlier than the inauguration of Cairo University, which was on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1908.

<sup>11</sup> El Gabakhangy, *Tarikh*, 13

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 45

<sup>13</sup> A list of these catalogues and photographs is provided in the index.



The two main figures who formed a successful and lasting collection in this period were Dr Ali Ibrahim and Prince Muhammad Ali. Prince Muhammad Ali (1875 – 1954) son of Khedive Tawfik (ruler of Egypt from 1879 to 1892) was a cultured man who was interested in the different aspects of art especially Islamic ones.<sup>14</sup> A protector of Islamic monuments and an art collector, he built a palace of eclectic taste where he represented the different Islamic styles in architecture and where he displayed his collection. Later after his death and by his will the Palace became government property. In his private museum in the Palace, Prince Muhammad Ali exhibited pieces from different areas including Chinese and European porcelain, Orientalist paintings, silver pieces, glass and carpets. His collection of carpets is one of the richest private collections in the Islamic area. It contains mainly Anatolian rugs from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards with an emphasis on Gördes carpets; the focus of this study along with those in the possession of the Islamic Museum in Cairo.<sup>15</sup>

Most of the carpets in the Islamic Museum were formerly part of the Ali Ibrahim collection of Islamic Art. Dr. Ali Ibrahim was born in Alexandria in 1880. An eminent surgeon, he became the Minister of Public Health and later the president of Cairo University until his death in 1947. He started collecting art objects in 1910 and by the twenties he started focussing on Islamic Art, particularly on carpets and ceramics.<sup>16</sup> Within the course of 27 years he collected over 800 pieces forming a first class collection. Only two months

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<sup>14</sup> Ghoneim, *The Palace*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. , 42.

<sup>16</sup> Dr Ibrahim states that it was in that time that he started studying Islamic art



after his death the Museum of Islamic Art bought the whole collection of ceramics, 378 pieces, 42 panels of tiles, 26 pieces of Iznik and Kütahya ceramics, 36 pieces of metalwork and 127 carpets.<sup>17</sup> The majority of the carpets were purchased from Istanbul, others from Syria and Paris. The collection displayed an interest in the major areas of carpet weaving and a wide time span ranging from the 11<sup>th</sup> until the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries with an emphasis on Ottoman and Turkish carpets. Among the later ones the Museum possesses 15 Gördes pieces, which constitute -- along with another 22 pieces in the Manial Palace -- the focus of this study.

Both collections consist mainly of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Turkish prayer carpets, which were very popular, representing a continuation and evolution of traditions that flourished during the golden era of the Ottoman Empire.

### 3. History of Ottoman Carpets

Turkey is one of the areas where the carpet-weaving tradition has been fully developed for centuries. The so-called Konya rugs found in the Seljuk mosque of Alaeddin (1218-20) and the fragments found in the Eshrefoglu mosque (1298) in Beyshehir, some fifty miles southwest of Konya, are considered to be among the oldest surviving Islamic knotted rugs. Although they were found in Seljuk buildings scholars tend to date them to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> Their design is characterized by the contrast between their large pseudo-Kufic borders and the small- scale pattern of the field.

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and collecting in a scholarly way.

<sup>17</sup>Mustafa, *Mathaf al-fann al-islami*, 139. The museum has today 149 pieces.

<sup>18</sup>Mackie, "Rugs and Textiles," 302



By the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century a new spirit in design appeared in the carpet production of Anatolia: figural representations. They consist of two squares in each of which is represented a pair of animals fighting or confronting each other. This concept enchanted the European spirit and led to the depiction of these carpets in Western paintings, especially in Italian ones.<sup>19</sup>

During the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century carpet production under the Ottoman Empire underwent new developments. The presence of the Palace Painting Atelier (Nakkash Khaneh) added to the sources of inspiration and provided designs to be woven for the Imperial palaces. This led to a more complex evolution in the treatment of the geometric patterns: the designer introduced the usage of several planes, interlacing outlines, swirling stars and overlapping design motifs.<sup>20</sup>

European interest in prestigious Turkish carpets created a demand for carpet trading. Large workshops were set in Western Anatolia; Bergama and the Ak regions flourished and the Venetians became the master traders between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Several types of carpets became connected with European painters such as Hans Holbein the Younger (ca.1497-1543) and Lorenzo Lotto (ca.1480-1556),<sup>21</sup> and were later copied by European weaving centers in Flanders, England and in Alcaraz in Spain.<sup>22</sup>

A new influence came through the Mamluks in Cairo after the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517. The Egyptian weavers who were sent to Istanbul

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<sup>19</sup>Erdman, *Seven Hundred years*, 17.

<sup>20</sup>Mackie, "Rugs and Textiles," 308.

<sup>21</sup>Spuhler, *Oriental Carpets*, 43.



were partly responsible (in collaboration with their fellow Ottomans) for the appearance of the Ottoman Court Carpets.<sup>23</sup> These carpets are characterized by their curvilinear designs, the realm of flora and a wide range of colors with an extensive use of crimson for the ground color of both the field and the borders.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, red was the dominant ground color used in Uşak for Uşak carpets in western Anatolia introduced a new concept of scale, design and drawing. Their characteristic feature was the use of large units, usually dark blue stars or medallions, in a repetitive scale in a manner close to the medallions in the tilework of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman Buildings.<sup>25</sup> Uşak rugs are different from the smaller and angular designs that characterize Anatolian rugs. It is very probable that these patterns were influenced by Ottoman court art.<sup>26</sup> Uşak carpets began production in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and slowly declined during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a decline in carpet production, as a whole, due to the economic problems of the Empire. The most popular type that was not affected was the production of the prayer rug. More prayer rugs from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in Turkey survive than from any other area due to the great demand for them. This demand was responsible for the mass production phenomena in the Ottoman carpet industry and for the introduction

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<sup>22</sup>Beattie, "The Admiral Rugs," 2:276.

<sup>23</sup>Erdmann, *Oriental Carpets*, 47.

<sup>24</sup>Mackie, "Rugs and Textiles," 320

<sup>25</sup>Raby, "Court and Export", in *Oriental Carpet & Textile Studies*, 179.

<sup>26</sup>Mackie, "Rugs and Textiles," 314



of new designs foreign to the Ottoman lands but suitable for the Western taste.<sup>27</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a kind of revivalism of the Palace atelier with Sultan Abdul Mecid establishing the Hereke factory in 1844 producing carpets with a curvilinear style closer to Iranian than to Turkish designs. The old tradition was kept in the hands of the village weavers. It is during this period that cities like Lådik, Bergama, Gördes and their surrounding areas became famous for their own production, reflecting their regional identity and preserving their traditional values in carpet production.

#### 4. Ottoman Carpets of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century

##### Lådik

The city of Lådik is situated about 35 kilometers northwest of Konya on a route that was once used by Suleyman the Magnificent in his campaigns (1494-1566) and by pilgrims from Istanbul to Mecca.<sup>28</sup> Like most of the Anatolian rugs of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the majority of the production was of prayer carpets, characterized by three distinct field designs.<sup>29</sup> The first design is of a plain niche with three pointed arches topped by a decorative panel with crenellations from which sprout tall flowering plants. These panels, which are common in the three field designs, could be also seen under the mihrab but very rarely on both areas. The second field design consists of a stepped single arch. The usual plain red field is sometimes blue green or ivory. The third field design is characterized by two floating columns at one or both ends of the niche. The lobed rosette predominates the main border

<sup>27</sup> Batári, *Ottoman Turkish Carpets*, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, "Lådik Prayer Rugs", 19.



design; sometimes alternating with forked blossoms and in others connected by stem brackets.

The palette of colors used comprises deep cherry red, usually used for the niche, blues, blue-green and golden yellow frequently used for the borders. Deep aubergine is the standard color for Ladik rugs.

Some of the Lådik rugs are dated to as early as the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Another type of coupled-column prayer rugs has been called Lådik but is rather related to an earlier western Anatolian type descended from Ottoman court pieces.<sup>30</sup>

### Bergama

The ancient city of Pergamon is situated in Western Anatolia. Its name is usually associated with a type of prayer rugs, produced in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, called Transylvanian. They have either one or two niches at each end of the field, with one or two mosque lamps hanging from the apex of the field. The 19<sup>th</sup> century pieces from Bergama and the surrounding areas are in many instances clear descendants of the large pattern Holbein carpets, the layout of which consists of a central square flanked at top and bottom by two smaller squares. Interlocking panels, large octagons and open-end hexagons are the usual designs employed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Bergama carpets. They have a great similarity of motifs and layout to the carpets of the Caucasus, especially those of the Kazak region, leaving the door open to all sorts of hypotheses about the interchange of the design and the waves of influences

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid. , 19

<sup>30</sup> Eiland, *Oriental Rugs*, 99.



that affected both types of carpets.<sup>31</sup> The palette used consists of the traditional brick-red, dark-blue and white. Red and blue are used individually or together for the woven bands at the ends.

The designs of the previous carpet centers appeared in other areas indicating that they were copied in other centers of carpet production. Following is a discussion of centers that were connected with Gördes carpets; Milâs, a distinct type; Kula, which produced designs closely related to Gördes; and Bandırma which copied Gördes prayer rugs.

### Milâs

The layout of the prayer rugs consists of a central rectangle flanked by strips of borders. Between these borders lies an indented arrow-shaped mihrab (an angular version of the horseshoe arch) in the center of which usually protrude flowery stems. Floral motifs adorn the white area woven above the mihrab. The large borders that almost swallow up the ground of the carpet consist of a series of round blossoms or rosettes separated by angular stems and flower heads, the latter often forming cross devices. The color scheme is predominantly of earthy colors with rust red, shades of brown, yellow and subdued mauve or aubergine; the hallmark of the Melâs rugs.<sup>32</sup>

Another type of Melâs is a striped squarish carpet in which the field is divided into vertical panels with the color scheme restrained to brown-red. Melâs rugs usually have a thick high pile.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bennett, *Rugs and Carpets of the World*, 208.

<sup>32</sup> Eiland, *Oriental Rugs*, 108

<sup>33</sup> Bennett, *Rugs and Carpets of the World*, 211



## Kula

Quite close to Gördes in western Asia Minor, the city of Kula produced carpets that were often difficult to distinguish from those of Gördes. Still their wool foundations and the looseness of their knot characterize the Kula rugs and give them a softer texture. The majority of them are prayer rugs with a niche in the shape of the apex of a triangle with a wide angle. Two suspended columns, some of which have hanging beneath them inverted ewers, usually support the arch.<sup>34</sup> The height of the mihrab is often occupied by a long flowery branch, which does not leave much of the single-color ground to stand on its own. The border is composed of multiple strips showing groups of carnations, flowery branches of hyacinths, tulips and roses. The color palette used is restricted to yellow, blue, green and brown.<sup>35</sup> The colors used in these rugs were usually dark-blue, black and predominately red.

## Bandirma

On the north coast of Anatolia, this city appeared on the carpet map during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The manufacture of the Gördes and Kula prayer rugs had a great impact on the weavers of Bandirma workshops. The workshops produced wool and silk pieces adopted from the designs of the previous centers along with Ottoman court rugs. Several striped borders of minute Herati pattern and carnations characterize the layout of the majority of the pieces. The niche embedded within these borders is either plain or

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<sup>34</sup> Mustafa, *Gördes and Kula Rugs*, 23.



adorned with a hanging lamp or inverted ewer. A stylized tree or shrub is often planted on the bottom of the niche towards the mihrab. Their fine knotting and the delicate pastel tones distinguish the carpets: subtle blue, ivory, pistachio and beige. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Bandirma carpets had been artificially aged and then repaired extensively; a fact that led to their confusion with Gördes originals.<sup>36</sup> A short time before the Second World War, the workshops closed down.<sup>37</sup>

### Gördes

Situated in Western Anatolia the city of Gördes was one the most important center of carpet production of Anatolia during the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The city also gives its name to the Turkish carpet knot. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the fame of their carpets was strongly connected with the rising demand of the Western consumer. The industrial revolution and its revenues allowed the Americans and the Europeans to adopt lavish taste in their home decoration among which carpets represented an essential part. In the same time the collapse of Ottoman raw silk production between the 1860s and the 1880s heightened the need for carpet production in order to finance Ottoman imports.<sup>38</sup> The mass production of the carpets affected every aspect related to the rug production. Designs were provided to appeal to the Western consumer, the wool yarn was machine made, synthetic dyes were introduced and the act of knotting itself moved from households to workshops. But the

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<sup>35</sup> Harris, *Rugs and Carpets of the Orient*, 67.

<sup>36</sup> Hopf, *Oriental Carpets and Rugs*, 35.

<sup>37</sup> Iten-Martiz, *Le tapis turc*, 82.



rugs remained handmade.<sup>39</sup> During this booming period, Gördes along with Uşak and Kula dominated the industry. In the early 1880s about 2000 looms were in commercial operation in Anatolia and by 1906 at least 8000 looms were in function. In 1882, 2000 workers in Gördes were operating 600 looms and by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in 1904 the same number of workers were operating 1100 looms.<sup>40</sup> These figures which were given by the Ottoman government, show how rug production increased constantly responding to the export demand.

The characteristic feature of the Gördes design is the open field mihrab in the shape of the apex of a triangle with two equal sides.<sup>41</sup> Two columns support the niche, which is usually formed by finely stepped diagonals. The columns in some cases become decorative pilasters or floral festoons.<sup>42</sup> In later examples the columns disappear. Two horizontal panels usually flank the niche, one below it and the other above the spandrels. The niche is usually left in a single color, dark blue, red or ivory with a mosque lamp suspended from its apex. The lamp is frequently turned into a jeweled piece or a floral device.<sup>43</sup> The spandrels and the borders are usually filled with floral decoration. The flowers seen are those favored by the Ottoman court designers: hyacinths, tulips, lilies, carnations, roses and pomegranate. In some specimens the borders consist of narrow stripes filled with small flowers

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<sup>38</sup>Quataert, *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire*, 108.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid, 109.

<sup>40</sup>Quataert, *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire*, 108.

<sup>41</sup>Mustafa, *Gördes*, 23.

<sup>42</sup>Ettinghausen, *Prayer Rugs*, 29.

<sup>43</sup>Dimand, *Oriental Rugs*, 205.



arranged in parallel lines appearing like small birds. This type of border is called "Shubukli "; a term derived from the thin stripes resembling the divided reeds fixed to the "Shubuk" (pipe) used for smoking.<sup>44</sup>

Along with the prayer carpet the Gördes weavers produced another type called the Kiz-Gördes. Kiz is the Turkish term for young girl or maiden so possibly these rugs were woven by young women as part of their dowry.<sup>45</sup> The mirror image arch of the field characterizes the design of the Kiz-Gördes along with the "jeweled ornament hanging from the apex of each arch".<sup>46</sup>

In construction these rugs show a white wool warp (except for a few specimens with a red or blue dyed warp) and wool double-shot, untwisted wefts, often dyed red. Alternate warps are moderately to severely depressed. The sides have a weft selvage, while the ends sometimes show a narrow plain weave band in red or dark blue. The use of cotton was restricted to the pile . to highlight some of the details of the designs, but in later examples and due to the increasing prices of the raw wool, cotton was sometimes used in the weft.<sup>47</sup> The knotting is usually between 120 and 200 knots to the square inch.

Of the Ottoman production of this period, Kula carpets are usually paired with Gördes as they both were very fashionable and their production represented a considerable share of the Ottoman carpet market during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They both have almost the same layout of the prayer rug and

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<sup>44</sup>Mustafa, *Gördes*, 24.

<sup>45</sup>Ettinghausen, *Prayer Rugs*, 29.

<sup>46</sup>Dimand, *Oriental Rugs*, 205.

<sup>47</sup>Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing*, 148.



they tend to use a subtle and limited palette. They are both small size prayer rugs with a central prayer niche usually of plain color. Two columns usually support the arch in both of them.

The hanging lamp or the flower decoration flanking the apex of the arch in the Gördes rugs is occasionally transformed to a long flowery branch occupying the length of the mihrab in the Kula rugs. Another characteristic of the Kula field is the presence of repeated floral forms or even portions of landscape with figures of houses and trees. Kula rugs are also characterized by their striped borders (*shubukli*) that were copied by Gördes weavers. One transverse panel usually occupies the top of the field of the Kula rugs in contrast to the Gördes carpets, which have one at each end of the field. Kula rugs usually have looser knotting and their wool is softer than Gördes examples. In most Kula rugs yellow and blues are dominant.

Both Gördes and Kula carpets show a low pile height unlike most Anatolian rugs. But in Gördes rugs, a feature exists in a number of them, called "lazy lines". The "lazy lines" form a pattern of discontinuous wefts that leave diagonal lines dimly visible on the back of many examples. In other examples the wefts of the niche differ in color from those of the borders.

From the previous preview of the different types of carpets produced in Ottoman Turkey of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries we deduce that they differ from the Gördes carpets in the emphasis of the use of geometry, the strong bold earth tone colors of brown, beige and cherry red. The majority of other Anatolian carpets are usually looser in knotting, seldom exceeding 150 knot per square inch. They also have a thicker pile height than the Gördes rugs. Gördes carpets are distinct with their consistency on fine weaving, the



delicacy of their spirit and their faithful evolution of the tradition from Ottoman court carpets.



## Chapter two: Technical analysis

### 1. Introduction

The aim of chapter two is to introduce the main Gördes carpets collections in the museums of Egypt. Special attention will be given to the collections at the museum of the Manial Palace and the Islamic Museum in Cairo. A brief history of the museums and their collection will be presented, followed by a catalogue of carefully chosen Gördes carpets that are most representative of the wide variety of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century examples.

The catalogue will be regarded as the first attempt to analyze Gördes carpets with emphasis on their technical structure. To a great extent this catalogue has followed the method of analysis used by Walter Denny in presenting technical data to similar carpets.<sup>48</sup> As the catalogue covers 18 Gördes pieces it can be viewed as a comprehensive study of this type found in Egyptian collections.

Throughout the catalogue the description of the decorative units has been carefully detailed in order to trace the development of such items clearly. The development of the decorative patterns will be used in the following chapter to explain the proposed method for dating the Gördes collection.

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<sup>48</sup>Denny, *The Markarian Album*.



Gördes carpets form major acquisitions in many of Egypt's museums. The museum of "Confiscated Items" in the Citadel possesses two Gördes prayer rugs, one of the so-called "Mecidiye" type and the other a typical arched-mihrab Gördes. Both are on display but in poor condition. The museum of Bani Swaif and the museum of al-Nuba each have a couple of Gördes prayer rugs on loan from the Islamic Museum in Cairo. The Museum of Gayer Anderson near the mosque of Ahmad ibn Tulun, according to the curators and to eye witnesses, possesses some Gördes carpets that are in a very critical condition and are now in the storage areas.

The study pieces that concern us are situated in the richest museums of Islamic Art in Egypt. The Manial Palace was founded by a private collector, Prince Muhammad Ali and now belongs to the government. The Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, although founded by the state, acquired its major holdings from several private collectors who donated or sold their collections to the museum. Confiscation of properties, though, is a major source of later acquisitions in all Museums of Egypt. Before dealing with the carpets we will take a glance at the two museums and the collectors, starting with the Manial Palace.



## 2. The Manial Palace

### *A. History of Prince Muhammad Ali*

Prince Muhammad Ali, the founder of the Manial Palace<sup>49</sup>, was the son of Khedive Muhammad Tewfik and brother of Khedive Abbas Helmy II. Along with his strong Arab culture, the Prince received Western education. He was known as a pious man, very much interested in art in general and its Islamic aspect in particular. A leading horse breeder, he was also a great art and antique collector. On several occasions he would hear about a ruinous Mamluk or Ottoman monument and he would buy what he would find interesting or rare from its contents.<sup>50</sup> He was also a world traveler whose travel accounts are considered one of the most important Oriental eyewitnesses of the west at the beginning of the century. As for his political position, Prince Muhammad Ali was Regent for the throne after the death of his uncle King Fouad I in 1936 until his cousin Farouk I took the rule in the same year when he was appointed heir to the throne, a title he lost with the birth of Prince Fouad II, son of King Farouk.<sup>51</sup>

The character of Prince Muhammad Ali is reflected in his palace, which is unique in style, quite different from the palaces of his relatives. Situated on the Manial, on al-Rauda Island, the palace was built in several stages from 1901 until 1929. The building included different styles of architecture: Egyptian, Persian, Syrian, Moorish and Ottoman. It is composed of five units spread over several locations surrounded by great walls made of

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<sup>49</sup> Ghonaim, *Palace of Prince Muhammad Ali*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 6



blocks as large as those used in medieval buildings. The five buildings are the reception hall, the mosque, the hunting museum, the residence palace, the throne hall and the private museum.<sup>52</sup>

### ***B. The carpet collection***

The Private Museum consists of 14 rooms containing manuscripts, silverware, paintings, glassware, textiles and carpets.<sup>53</sup> The carpets are in rooms 2, 3, 4 and 5. They are mainly Ottoman and range from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two huge medallion Uşak adorn the walls of room 5, opposed on the top by two small mihrab Uşak of exquisite colors and quality dating to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The majority of the collection consists of prayer rugs mainly from the city of Gördes (23 pieces) along with other pieces from Kula, Bergama, Mucur and the Caucasus. A very fine large silk Hereke carpet represents the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup>

## **3. The Museum of Islamic Art**

### ***A. History of the building and the collectors***

The National Museum of Arab Art, later The Museum of Islamic Art, was an idea that was first initiated in the reign of Khedive Ismail. He charged Franz Pasha, chief of the Technical Department of the Wakfs Administration, to set aside a government building to serve for this purpose.<sup>55</sup> The idea saw the light of day in 1881 with the order of Khedive Tewfik who created the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>55</sup> Herz, *The National Museum of Arab Art*, 8.



Commission for the Preservation of Monuments of Arab Art. The task of the commission was to rescue whatever had survived the ravages of time or escaped the eager hands of collectors. The objects were gathered in a temporary shelter in the Mosque of al-Hakim. The acquisitions grew more numerous every day and the Museum became more important not only for art history but also for the development of industrial art, as a source for inspiration for models and patterns. The commission pointed to the necessity of installing the collection in a more suitable home. The request was welcomed and eventually the museum was opened on the 28th of December 1903.<sup>56</sup> In 1952 the name of the museum was changed from The National Museum of Arab Art to The Museum of Islamic Art as it also contains pieces made in other Islamic countries such as Persia and Turkey.<sup>57</sup> The dates of the objects in the museum range from the 7th to the 19th century covering all the artistic expressions of the civilizations and dynasties that ruled Egypt and added to its cultural heritage.

The excavations that were done by the museum with the collaboration of foreign partners were also of great value, especially that of Fustat. This value was not restricted to the historical and topographical information but included new acquisitions to the Museum from finds.<sup>58</sup> The collections of the museum grew over the years to include some of the finest examples of Islamic Art in the world.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>57</sup> Mustafa, *Mathaf al-fann al-islami*, 9.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 10.



### ***B. The carpet collection***

Two very large and rare private collections were purchased by the museum. The first, in 1945, was owned by Mr. Ralf Harari who had a special interest in pottery and metalwork. The second collection, belonging to Dr. Ali Ibrahim, was bought in 1949, and included pottery, metal works and carpets.<sup>59</sup>

It was the carpet collection that particularly enriched the museum, if we consider that of the 149 carpets in the museum 127 of them formerly belonged to Dr. Ali Ibrahim.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibrahim, *The Collection*, 43.



#### 4. The catalogue

Following is a catalogue of chosen Gördes carpets present in the Manial Palace and in the Islamic Museum. The collection includes 13 pieces in the Manial Palace and 6 pieces in the Islamic Museum in Cairo. They have been chosen to illustrate the three main categories of Gördes carpets: classical prayer carpet, kiz-Gördes and the "Mecidiye" type. The Manial Palace has more Gördes carpets than the Islamic museum and accordingly we chose in the cataloging more pieces from the Manial palace collection to discuss. Furthermore the procedures of examining, photographing and publishing the collection were easier in the Manial palace. The catalogue concentrates on specific description of the component of the carpet: the field and borders. It also includes technical data that may appear brief in the written form but it is the result of precise examination.



Plate no 1

2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Museum Acquisition No. 2 Manial Palace

Dimensions 200 x 137 cm

### Description

#### I. Field

A. Niche plain pistachio, with stepped arch, carnation stems around the inside edge of the mihrab, a large stylized floral pendant.

B. Spandrels vertical rows of carnations on a blue ground.

C. Panels mirror image flower branches and pomegranates.

#### II. Borders

9 striped borders of carnations.

### TECHNICAL DATA

WARP: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, S-plied, alternate warps

WEFT: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Missing

COLOR NOTES: Ivory, pistachio, corroded brown, dark-blue, medium  
blue, light-blue, brown-red, slightly faded

CONDITON: Fairly good except for the missing ends



**Plate no 2**2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition.** No. 4 Manial Palace**Dimensions** 180 X 137 cm**Description****I. Field**

A. Niche Plain dark blue, with rows of carnations around the inside edges of the apex; groups of double tulips facing each other frame the inside of the mihrab.

B. Spandrels vertical rows of red carnations against a pistachio ground.

C. Panels above; three branches each with three hyacinths  
below; inverted triangles design.

**II. Borders**

Main: repeated units of a tree with carnations and suspended fruits.

Two inner and outer guards of Chinese peonies.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, S-plied

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Original

COLOR NOTES: Wine-red, dark-blue, medium-blue, ivory, pistachio,  
yellow and brown

CONDITON: good pile overall, 2 holes at the bottom end, 2 vertical splits  
sewn up.



Plate no 3

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Museum Acquisition. No. 5 Manial Palace

Dimensions 185 x 120 cm

### Description

#### I. Field

##### A. Niche

Pink ground, stepped arch, rows of carnations on the inner edges of the mihrab; two vertical bands imitating columns. Apex decoration: three jeweled-like floral motifs.

##### B. Spandrels bouquets of carnations.

##### C. Panels Above and below, mirror image alternating rosettes.

#### II. Borders

Main border with alternating squares of carnations and hyacinths.

Inner and outer guard consist of tulips in a square form.

### TECHNICAL DATA

WARP: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool and undyed cotton, both 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Original, some pieces missing at the bottom one

COLOR NOTES: Light red, bluish green, ivory, black, light-blue and madder  
brown

CONDITON: Ends missing parts, pile in good condition except for some  
small areas, few old repairs and two sewn-up stitches



**Plate no 4**2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No. 6 Manial Palace**Dimensions** 160x113 cm**Description**I. Field

A. Niche Plain beige ground with a hanging lamp-like motif suspended from the apex, a bouquet of tulips in the center of the mihrab; six flowers across the bottom of the field.

Spandrels stylized tulips and carnations

Panels The two are mirror images of a stylized Chinese cloud band among scattered eight petaled-rosettes

II. Borders

The main guard is a broad stripe of alternating hyacinths with stylized tulips. The inner and outer guards are of undulating scrolls of small scarab-like design

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, S-plied

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Original but small pieces missing

COLOR NOTES: Pink red, pistachio green, ivory, brown, black and aubergine

CONDITON: slightly worn, stains in the bottom of the mihrab.



**Plate no 5**Late 18<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No 7 Manial Palace**Dimensions** 156x118 cm**Description**I. Field:

A. Niche: Plain ivory with finely stepped mihrab, two vertical bands decorated with carnations replace the columns supporting the arch, a lantern-like motif hangs from the apex, rows of stylized tulips across the bottom of the field.

B. Spandrels: stylized flowering leaves bearing fruits.

C. Panels: Top: two carnations between three pomegranates.

Bottom: attached triangles.

II. Borders: Main guard with broad winged palmettes and eight pointed rosettes. Outer and inner guards with carnations and undulating scrolls bearing flowers.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Red wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Not original

COLOR NOTES: Ivory, wine red, medium blue, light blue, beige, madder

CONDITON: Poor, pieces missing at the top end.



Plate no 6 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Museum Acquisition No 8 Manial Palace

Dimensions 170x118 cm

### Description

#### I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain dark blue with carnations in oblique lines adorning the inside walls of the mihrab.

B) Spandrels: vertical rows of carnations.

C) Panels: Top, Chinese peonies. Bottom, triangles.

#### II. Borders: Main border of repeated units of a tree-like motif with

suspended fruits topped with two carnations on each side.

inner and outer guards; stylized Chinese cloud band motif, separated from the main guard by zigzag stripes.

### TECHNICAL DATA

WARP: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps, depressed

WEFT: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original, added silk ones

ENDS: Rewoven as flat weave

COLOR NOTES: Dark-blue, light-blue, red, ivory, ocher, yellow and brown

CONDITON: Worn, two small holes at the bottom end, old repairs.



**Plate no 7**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 9 Manial Palace

**Dimensions** 175x130 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain beige ground with stepped triangle arch, rows of carnations in oblique lines adorn the inside edges of the mihrab. A large rosette flanks the center of the mihrab.

B) Spandrels: vertical stripes alternating with rows of carnations and small flowers.

C) Panels: Top and bottom are mirror image design of two branches each with three fruits and a large rose.

II) Borders: Main guard consists of a group of seven stripes with repeated small flowers. The side guards consist of rows of stylized tulips each forming a square.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: White wool, 2 Z- spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Undyed white wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Top missing

COLOR NOTES: Red, pistachio, dark-blue, light-blue, ivory, brown

CONDITON: Small part missing in the bottom left end, some worn in the field,  
old repairs above the mihrab.



**Plate n 8**2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No 11 Manial Palace**Dimensions** 157x140 cm**Description****I) Field:**

A) Niche: Plain dark blue with an arch of finely stepped diagonals, a floral vase-like motif at the apex of the arch; a group of seven flowers is displayed across the bottom of the niche, one row of carnations inside the niche.

B) Spandrels: vertical rows of carnations.

C) Panels: Only one at the top; four flowers between five stylized Chinese peonies.

II) Borders: Main guard: repeated design of a branch with two apples and a serrated leaf (stylized saz leaf). Two side guards framing the niche: repeated stylized dragon-like motif with turning head and tail. Outer guard: repeated branches each with three carnations.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

WEFT: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Not complete

ENDS: Missing

COLOR NOTES: Dark-blue, light-blue, ivory, red, yellow and oxidized brown

CONDITON: Old repairs in the center of the field, holes at the bottom left end



**Plate no 9**

2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 13 Manial Palace

**Dimensions** 170x122 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain brick red ground with an arch of finely stepped diagonals, adorned with nine carnations on each inner side. Two vertical bands filled with lozenges appear to support the arch. A row of six carnations across the bottom field of the mihrab.

B) Spandrels: Vertical rows of carnations.

C) Panels: Top three flowers and three Chinese peonies alternating with each other. Bottom: triangle design.

II) Borders:

Main: bouquets of carnations and stylized tulips.

Inner: guard repeated stylized Chinese lotus.

Outer: guard series of carnations.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Undyed wool, 2 Z- spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, S plied

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Not complete

ENDS: Not original

COLOR NOTES: Wine red, dark-blue, light-blue, ivory, light-gree

CONDITON: Old repair on top of the mihrab, ends rewoven, worn areas



**Plate no 10**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 14 Manial Palace

**Dimensions** 175 x 120 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Stepped arch, a series of very small flowers (Sinecli) cover the dark blue background, carnations in oblique line adorn the inner sides of the mihrab and across the bottom of the field.

B) Spandrels: repeated motif of a branch with carnation, hyacinths and a tulip.

C) Panels: Top: three branches each with a large rose and three fruits.

Bottom: stylized dragon-like motif.

II) Borders:

(Shubukli) eleven stripes filled with rows of carnations and small flowers

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

WEFT: Red wool, 2 Z- spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Original, red flat weave on both ends

COLOR NOTES: Dark-blue, light-blue, red, ivory, brown, pistachio, green and aubergine

CONDITON: Some worn in the borders, old repairs and splits, oxidized brown



**Plate n 11**Late 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No 16 Manial Palace**Dimensions** 190 x 133 cm**Description**I) Field:

A) Niche: Dark-blue ground with stepped diagonal arch, carnations in oblique lines at the inner sides of the whole mihrab.

B) Spandrels: bouquets of carnations each forming a square.

C) Panels: Top & bottom mirror image of a large stylized Chinese cloud band with scattered small rosettes.

II) Borders:

Main guard: nine stripes with small flowers (Shubukli ).

Inner guard: stylized tulips.

Outer guard: a series of alternating rosettes.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: White wool, 2 Z- spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Original

ENDS: Original

COLOR NOTES: Dark blue, ivory, pistachio, red, brown and black

CONDITON: Good except for the ends, oxidized brown



**Plate no 12**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 17 Manial Palace

**Dimensions** 220 x 140 cm

**Description**

I) **Field:**

A) Niche: A double mihrab each of mosque lamp with flowery decoration flanking each apex, a large rosette of carnations in the middle of the ground; tulips adorn each side of the field.

B) Spandrels: four repeated units of a carnation and two serrated leaves.

C) Panels: Top and bottom mirror image of three arches filled with a scarab – like motif.

II) Borders: Main guard: a large zigzag of alternating triangles, the sides of which formed of three stripes of small flowers, each triangle is filled with a candle stick or a tree-like motif.

Inner & outer guards: alternating rosettes.

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: Beige wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate warps

WEFT: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Originals

ENDS: Originals, red and white flat weave

COLOR NOTES: Ivory, dark-blue, light-blue, brown, olive-green and  
aubergine

CONDITON: Excellent, slightly faded, oxidized brown



**Plate no 13**

Late 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 36 Manial Palace

**Dimensions** 207 x 128 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain ivory with a stepped diagonal arch from which suspend a flowery motif a big rosette of carnation lays in the middle of the field; two rosettes adorn each side of them. A row of flowers is displayed across the bottom of the field.

B) Spandrels: Filled with repeated units of a rose surrounded by carnations

C) Panels: Top and bottom mirror image of a stylized Chinese cloud band

II) Borders: Main guard of repeated motif of a branch with two pomegranates and a serrated leaf. The two inner and outer guards are of a scroll of repeated units of a stylized cloud-band enclosing a Chinese lotus and 2 scarabs on each side

**TECHNICAL DATA**

WARP: White wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

WEFT: Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

PILE: Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

KNOT: Symmetrical

EDGES: Originals

ENDS: Originals

COLOR NOTES: Pink red, light blue, ivory, yellow, light green, black and brown

CONDITON: Good except for small parts missing at the bottom end.



**Plate no 14**

Late 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No 15807 Islamic Museum

**Dimensions** 170 x 133 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Ivory plain ground, with a finely stepped arch from whose apex hangs a flowering motif; rows of carnations adorn the outer sides of the arch; two decorated vertical pilasters support the niche, a series of strips at the bottom of the field.

B) Spandrels: Tracery flowering leaves.

C) Panels: Top one: two stylized big Chinese peonies, small rosettes and carnations. Bottom one: stylized tulips and small carnations.

II) Borders:

Main guard: broad strip of winged palmette containing rosettes or a cypress tree motif. Inner and outer thin strips: of undulating scrolls bearing small flowers.

**Technical Data**

Warp	Wool, 2 Z spun yarns, alternate
Weft	Undyed wool, Red wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots
Pile	Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, undyed white cotton, 2 Z-spun yarn
Knot	Symmetrical 21 x 21 inch
Edges	Original
Ends	Original, blue flat weave, some repairs
Color notes	Ivory, red, dark-blue, light-blue, green, brown, beige
Condition	Old repairs in the left guards, worn.



**Plate no 15**2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition.** No. 15809 Islamic Museum**Dimensions** 158 x 125 cm**Description****I) Field:**

A) Niche: plain brick red ground with a finely stepped arch, a blossoming carnation hangs from the apex. Two vertical decorated pilasters support the niche. Wavy water design across the bottom of the field.

B) Spandrels: Vertical rows of carnations.

C) Panels Top one: stylized dragon-like motif with turning head and tail.

Bottom one: triangles in the shape of crenellations.

II) Borders: Main guard: bouquets of hyacinths, tulips and carnations.

Inner guard: series of rosettes.

Outer guard: stylized Chinese lotus.

**Technical Data**

Warp Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate

Weft Dyed red & undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

Pile Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, cotton 2 Z – spun yarns

Knot Symmetrical 21 x 21 inch

Edges Rewoven

Ends Missing

Color notes Red, light-blue, light-green, black, ivory

Condition Old repairs in the field of the mihrab long repair (23 cm) from up till the beginning of the arch. Worn.



**.Plate no 16**

Early 18<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition** No. 3620 Islamic Museum

**Dimensions** 157x136 cm

### **Description**

#### I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain ivory ground with an indented arrow-shape arch, an inverted ewer hangs from the apex of the arch, a flowering motif suspending from the ewer.

B) Spandrels: tracery flowering leaves.

C) Panels: do not exist.

#### II) Borders:

Main guard: broad strip of winged palmette, enclosing rosettes or stylized flowers, each unit looks like a scarab.

The inner and outer guards: a series of four petaled rosettes.

### **Technical Data**

Warp	Undyed wool, 2 Z spun yarns, alternate
Weft	Undyed wool, 2 Z spun yarns, 2 shoots
Pile	Wool, 2 Z spun yarns, undyed cotton 2 Z spun yarns
Knot	Symmetrical, 10 x 22 inch.
Edges	Rewoven
Ends	Rewoven
Color notes	Ivory, red, blue, brown, yellow
Condition	Oxidized brown, old repairs in the field of the mihrab.



**Plate no 17**2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No 15808 Islamic Museum**Dimensions** 220 x 142 cm**Description****I) Field:**

A) Niche Double niche with an ivory ground filled with small flowers (Sinecli), 2 lanterns-hang from each apex; arches of stepped hooked design; tulips adorn the inner sides of the ground.

B) Spandrels: Mirror image of a large carnation with two serrated leaves.

C) Panels: Top and bottom: mirror image of stylized Chinese lotus and carnations

II) Borders: Main border: zigzag pattern forming large triangles; the hooked sides of each formed by 3 rows of small flowers, each triangle encloses on his base a candle- stick or tree- like motif.

Inner guard: repeated carnations.

Outer guard: alternating rosettes.

**Technical Data**

Warp	Undyed wool, 2 Z spun yarns, alternate
Weft	Undyed wool, 2 Z – spun yarns, 2 shoots
Pile	Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns
Knot	Symmetrical 18 x 16 inch
Edges	Original
Ends	Original, red and white flat weave, tassels
Color notes	Ivory, cherry red, dark-blue, light-green, black
Condition	Almost perfect.



**Plate no 18**

2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Museum Acquisition.** No 15812 Islamic Museum

**Dimensions** 180 x138 cm

**Description**

I) Field:

A) Niche: Plain dark-blue, with finely stepped arch adorned with carnations, the inner sides of the mihrab are adorned with tulips.

B) Spandrels: Filled with rows of carnations and hyacinths.

C) Panels Top one: 3 Chinese peonies.

Bottom: a design of a stylized dragon -like motif with turning head and tail.

II) Borders: Main guard: a branch with two pomegranates and a serrated leaf.

Inner and outer guards: repeated stylized Chinese lotus.

**Technical Data**

Warp Wool, 2 Z spun yarns, alternate

Weft Undyed white wool, 2 Z – spun yarns, 2 shoots

Pile Wool, 2 Z-spun yarn, undyed cotton 2 Z-sun yarns

Knot Symmetrical

Edges Original

Ends Original, blue flat weave

Color notes Blue, light-blue, red, yellow, brown, ivory.

Condition Worn in some areas, old repair in the apex of the mihrab, old repair on the top end.



**Plate no 19**Late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century**Museum Acquisition** No 15827 Islamic Museum**Dimensions** 145 x 98 cm**Description**Field:

A) Niche: beige ground with a swastika-like stepped arch, the top of which is formed of a two facing clouds split by a row of three roses the whole forming a rosette-like motif. The field is decorated with large symmetrical leaves accentuated in a European rococo style. Two bird-like motif are displayed across the bottom field of the mihrab which occupies 80% of the design.

B) Spandrels: Composed of two rococo leaves against a plain ground.

II) Borders:

Main border filled with repeated branches each of carnations

Outer guard of stepped crenellations motif.

**Technical Data**

Warp Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, alternate

Weft Undyed wool, 2 Z-spun yarns, 2 shoots

Pile Wool, 2 Z-spun yarns

Knot Symmetrical 18 x 20 inch

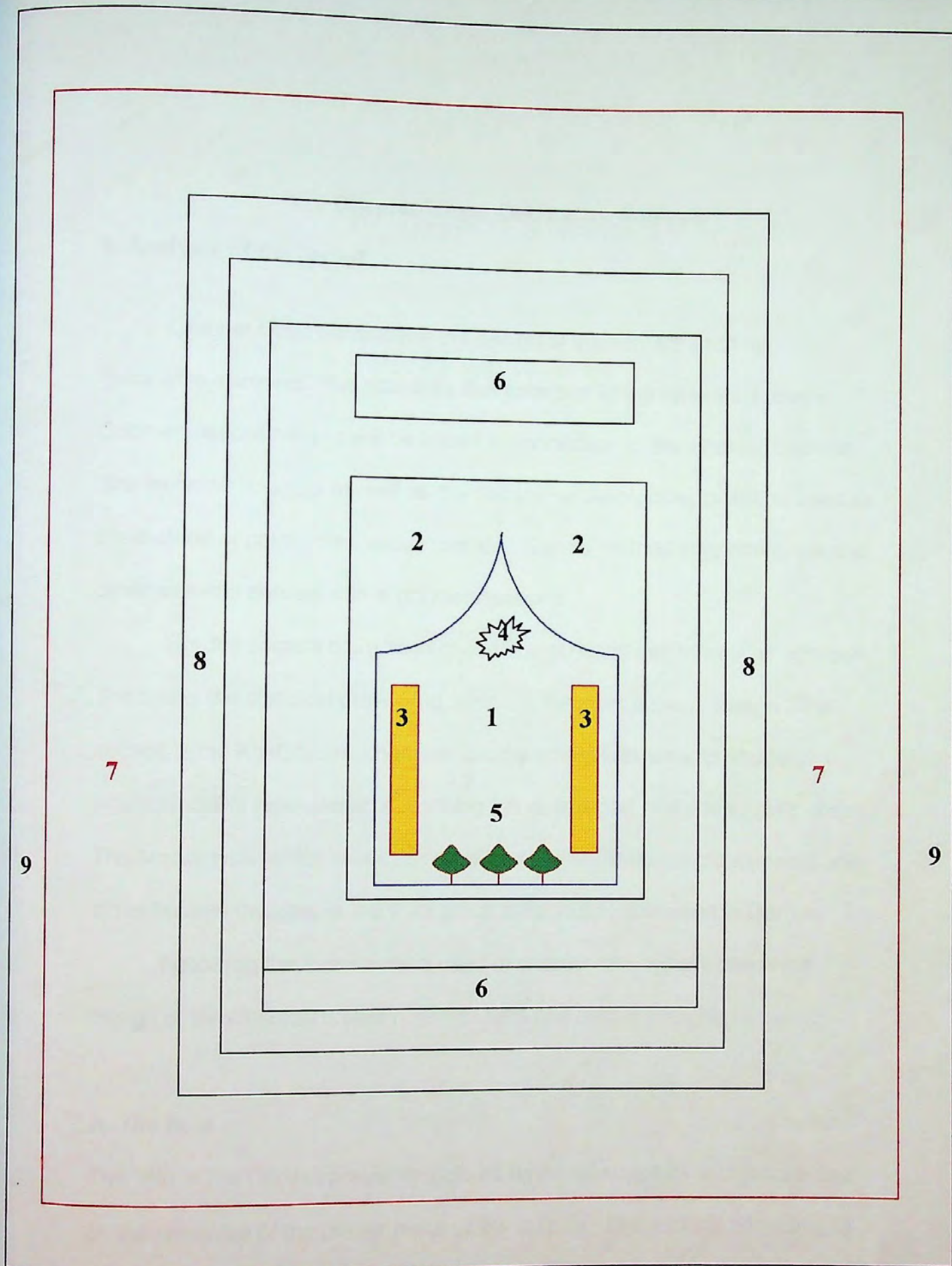
Edges Original

Ends Original

Color notes Ivory, pinkish-red, pink, brown, light-blue, dark-blue

Condition Some worms in the spandrels, slight repair in the middle of the field, very good thickness of pile





- 1- Niche ( Mihrab)
- 2- Spandrels.
- 3- Vertical Bands (columns).
- 4- Apex decoration.
- 5- Bottom field decoration.

- 6- Panels.
- 7- Main guard.
- 8- Inner guard.
- 9- Outer guard.



### Chapter Three: Decorative Analysis

#### 1. Analysis of the layout

Chapter three will analyze the design of the carpets and their decorative elements. The elements that form part of the repertoire used in Ottoman decorative arts will be traced in connection to the weaving tradition. The technical analysis as well as the decorative developments will be used as the method of dating the Gördes carpets. Such a method might be applied to other weaving centers with slight modifications.

Gördes carpets have been divided by scholars into three main groups. The first is the classical prayer rug, which is the most popular design. The second is the Kiz-Gördes, characterized by a field with a mirror image arch, which probably represented a wedding gift or was part of a young girl's dowry. The Macidi type, which takes its name from sultan Abdul Macid as being one of his favorite designs, is the third group presumably produced in Gördes.

Following the same criteria used in chapter two, we will divide the design of the classical prayer rugs into field and border designs.

#### **A. *The field***

The field of the Gördes prayer carpets as its name suggests is characterized by the presence of the prayer niche or the mihrab. The mihrab, according to architectural tradition, consists of an arch often supported by two columns.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Denny, "Ceramics," 287.



Two decorative spandrels ornament the sides of the arch. A horizontal panel above it bearing a verse from the Qur'an, sometimes defines the mihrab.

The niches of the prayer carpets are characterized by pointed arches in the form of the apex of a triangle, often with an acute angle. The lines of the arch are straight, sometimes very finely stepped, (plate 4), diagonally stepped (plate 7) or of an indented arrow shape (plate 16).

In some of the pieces of our catalogue two decorated vertical bands appear instead of the columns, but unattached to the arched mihrab. They may represent the huge candles that were set at the sides of the mihrab in some mosques.<sup>61</sup>

The mihrab ground usually appears in one color, something that emphasizes the place where the worshiper is supposed to stand and perform the prayer. The color of the ground might refer to certain Sufi orders; the white relating to the Kadiriya, the red to the Ahmadiya, the green to the Burhamiya, and the dark blue to the Rifaiya orders.<sup>62</sup>

The ground of the mihrab is either left plain or filled with small repetitive flowers arranged in parallel rows appearing as small birds. This busy mihrab ground is called *Sinekli* (Plate 10).

The spandrels of the mihrab are filled either with flowering stems in an arabesque design (plate 15), with two boss-like motifs (plate 5, 14), or more commonly with rows of carnations in vertical stripes (plates nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13 and 15).

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>62</sup> Mustafa, *Turkish*, 20.



Two horizontal rectangular panels bound the mihrab separating it from the border at its top and bottom. They are mirror images in some cases and differ in others. They create a compartment for further decorative designs. Some of the carpets have a lamp or an inverted ewer hanging from the apex of the arch. (Plate 16).

### ***B. The borders***

The main motif used repeatedly all over the borders is vertical and horizontal stripes, which accentuate the long sides of the mihrab. They also give a great degree of definition to the space of prayer, since it acquires a sense of privacy and unity.

Borders usually consist of three main bands, a central wide band flanked from both sides with smaller guards. The central guard is always larger in size than the others. Filling it with key motifs that are eye-catching also emphasizes the main guard. They are usually arranged in grouped patterns of flowers and fruits designed in repeated squares. In most cases distinct colors are used to attract more attention. The color of the background is also different from the side guards. The side guards are usually smaller in size and more emphasis is given to the guard nearer to the field by filling it with more distinctive motifs whether floral or geometric.

In later carpets the stripes become numerous and sometimes equal in size forming a one-unit border consisting, in some cases, of twenty narrow strips.<sup>63</sup>

As for the Kiz-Gördes they consist of a niche at either end of the field. From each arch hangs an ornamental motif. The spandrels of the niche are

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<sup>63</sup> Mustafa, *Turkish*, 25.



usually filled with flowering stems or saz leaves along with carnations. The borders of these carpets consist of a main guard filled with a wide zigzag pattern whose lines are filled with small flowers reminding us with the Sinekli pattern.

## **2. Development of the Motifs**

Having discussed the overall design of the carpets we will choose some of the frequently used motifs that have been used by the Gördes weavers to decorate their carpets. These elements belong to an old decorative repertoire that has been used by the Ottoman artists for centuries and in which local and foreign influences have played definite roles. Each element will be analyzed, emphasizing its origin and development, which will be vital to linking it to the Ottoman decorative vocabulary and to our dating method.

### ***A. Tulips***

Tulips are among the most popular flowers that were used as a decorative element in the different media of Ottoman art. They were popular in Turkey and in the Western world. They were introduced to the West by the Viennese Ambassador to Turkey, Ogier de Busbecq who sent some seeds to Austria in 1551.<sup>64</sup>

The Ottoman court designers of the Naqqash Khaneh exploited the flower to the utmost and provided Ottoman artists with the most exquisite designs. The two media where the tulip has triumphed were ceramics (Plate

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<sup>64</sup>Encyclopedia Britanica, 12, 32.



20.a) and textiles (Plate 20.b) beside Gördes Carpets. The flower appeared in different forms, sometimes incorporated with hyacinths and carnations<sup>65</sup>, sometimes included in a scrolling Chinese cloud band<sup>66</sup> and sometimes standing on its own as the main motif. The representation of the tulip attained its peak during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The usage of flower decoration and tulips particularly to ornament the kaftans of the Sultans and the surrounding court was the fashion and the sign of exclusivity (Plate 20.b).

The political and economic decline of the Ottoman State during the 17<sup>th</sup> century affected the state of the arts. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> century that a kind of revivalism movement took place under Sultan Ahmed III (1703 - 1730) who tried to recreate the glories of the past through cultural eclecticism and the revival of older types of artistic manifestations. This period called was the Tulip Age as there was an extensive reuse of this motif, in imitation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century style. But the representation became simplified and stylized. The silk embroidery dated to the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 20.c) reflects the decrease in precision seen in a piece of the same technique produced in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 21.a) replacing naturalism with abstraction.<sup>67</sup>

The depiction of tulips in carpets was not as common as in the other media, but they nevertheless appear on some of the Ottoman carpets within a bouquet of other flowers (Plate 20.e).

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<sup>65</sup> Denny, "Textiles", 129.

<sup>66</sup> Mackie, "Rugs and Textiles," 354.

<sup>67</sup> Denny, "Textiles", 135.



In our catalogue the tulip is represented in two positions. Bunches of tulips and carnations formed a unit, filling the spandrels or the borders of the carpet (Plates 1,2,3,4). The second position is in the inner walls of the mihrab, depicted as a unit of two tulips facing each other (Plates 2, 18, 25.f). We notice here, unlike the older designs of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that the lines of the flower lost its sinuous quality to a more rigid feel and look. The beauty of the design in these carpets is no longer connected with naturalism but with abstraction (plate 20.g).

### ***B. Carnations***

The carnation is another very popular flower of the Ottoman decorative repertoire. It was represented in textiles, ceramics and miniature paintings. Carnation can be seen in 16<sup>th</sup> century Iznik pottery and the Ottoman velvets of the same period (Plate 22.a.b). During this period they were depicted in a very naturalistic fashion.

A velvet *chatma* (Plate 22.b) in the Museum of Fine Art in Boston dated to the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century shows five large carnations occupying the surface of the cushion. The carnations here are depicted as the main motif; even if they are filled with small tulips and roses they still constitute the focus of the design. The tiles of the third quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the mosque of Sultan Ahmed depict the carnations amongst tulips, hyacinths, and saz leaves (Plate 22.a). Despite that strong presence in textiles and ceramics they were seen in the borders of carpets of the 16<sup>th</sup> among carnations and saz leaves (Plate 22.c). The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries partially continued the tradition of the Ottoman golden age, copying the designs but without the same



precision seen, for instance, in the design and execution of a silk embroidered bed cover dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the Textile Museum Washington (Plate 23).

In our collection the carnation is the most popular flower in all the carpets. The presence of carnations is not missing in any of the carpets. They are positioned in a group of three forming one unit filling the borders, and the spandrels (Plate 22.d). They are also represented on their own in repetitive rows adorning the inner walls of the mihrab (Plate 22.e).

The use of flowers in general and carnations in specific was so extensive in Gördes carpets that some examples appear to be like a garden of carnations (Plates 1, 2,3).

### ***C. Chinese Lotus***

Chinese motifs and in particular Chinese flowers were popular motifs used all over the Islamic world. Since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, China traded with Egypt, Anatolia and Iran. Chinese influence on these Middle Eastern cultures was due to the frequent and precious imported products from China. The Ottomans also cherished Chinese motifs and borrowed from Iran much of the Chinese artistic vocabulary, which they developed in different areas of decorative arts. Especially after the Ottoman sacking of Tabriz in 1514 much Chinese art and imitations of Chinese art appeared in the Ottoman court.<sup>68</sup> The booty included Chinese porcelains, Persian miniatures and carpets. The Ottoman court artists in the Naqqash Khaneh were thus provided with these numerous sources of inspiration (Plate 24.a).

<sup>68</sup> Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 147.



The Chinese lotus was used by the Ottoman artists in Iznik pottery, textiles and carpets. The 16<sup>th</sup> century was the apogee of the lotus in Turkish art and it was during this century that the Ottoman lotus remained as faithful as possible to the Chinese original.<sup>69</sup>

The lotus flowers were represented both on long coiling scrolls (Plate 24.b) and as single plants. The long scrolling stems were already a tradition used by the Seljuks in their decorative arts. Thus it was not a new trend. The petals and the leaves were modified through the hands of the Ottoman artists and in some cases, newly invented flowers based upon lotus designs were introduced to the repertoire.<sup>70</sup> During the 16<sup>th</sup> century their rendition in carpets was as close as possible to the original Chinese designs. They became more of an impressive flower during the 17<sup>th</sup> century and developed into a more stylized figure in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as seen in our Gördes carpets. The development of the lotus can be seen clearly on the Iznik pottery. During the early period of its production, the artist depicted the flower as close as possible to its Chinese prototype (Plate 24.c). The artist also used the same composition of the Chinese blue and white ceramics.<sup>71</sup> At a later stage the stylization started to take place, leading to a fantastic flower consisting of a lotus bloom against serrated leaves.<sup>72</sup>

The lotuses in Ottoman carpets were first introduced as border designs. A part of the swirling and undulating scrolls, the lotus appeared to

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<sup>69</sup> Denny, "Ceramics," 258.

<sup>70</sup> Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 174.

<sup>71</sup> Atasoy, *Iznik*, 121.

<sup>72</sup> Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 177.



float around the carpet (Plate 24.d).<sup>73</sup> Later on, their position changed and they were moved to the panels above and below the mihrab of the prayer carpet. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries they lost their scrolls and became freestanding units set parallel to each other. They still maintained their large petals and the uniformity of their shape (Plates 24 e.f).

The lotus flower can be seen in our catalogue in several carpets (plate nos. 5, 6, 9, 14, 18). They occupy the panel above the mihrab in bright red colors. In (Plate 18) they occupy the panels above the mihrab in bright yellowish color. In their stylization stages, the lotus became a two-compartment flower; a large round bloom topped with a smaller flower, with several leaves and petals attached to its core (Plates 24 e.f.).

#### ***D. The Dragon***

The dragon is another Chinese motif that was included in the decorative repertoire of the Ottoman artists (plate 25.a). One might wonder why it was in vogue especially since it is a fantastic creature coming from a cultural heritage completely alien to that of the Muslim Ottomans. The answer probably lies in the idea that its representation was a sign of exoticism depicting a foreign creature that didn't exist in the Ottoman land or culture. Secondly it was the sense of power and magical qualities connected with the dragon. Thirdly the dragon in Chinese culture was connected with the Emperor, making it understandable that, on the other hand, a piece of art represented to or made for the sultans would include such a figure.<sup>74</sup> The representation of

<sup>73</sup> Ettinghausen, *Prayer Rugs*, 34.

<sup>74</sup> Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 95.



dragons started as early as the Seljuk period where they were carved in stone on the entrances of their buildings.<sup>75</sup> But the most common representations of the Chinese dragon took place in miniatures during the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 25.b), most probably as a result of imitating Persian prototypes in which they were rendered as decorative motifs (Plate 25.c).

Animal representation was known in the weaving tradition of Anatolia as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century; a carpet in the Berlin museum displaying an animal combat representing this trend. The animals seen in the carpet are restricted to a Phoenix attacking a dragon. Both creatures are depicted in a stylized manner.<sup>76</sup>

The representation of dragons in Ottoman carpets appeared during the 18<sup>th</sup> century also in a very stylized fashion. The direct influence did not come directly from Chinese counter-parts but most probably from the dragon carpets of the Caucasus dated to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century (Plates 26.a, b).<sup>77</sup> In the Gördes carpets the dragon is rendered in a very geometrical and stylized shape; almost unrecognizable to the original design.

In our catalogue stylized dragons appear in several positions: In borders (Plate 8), in panels (Plates nos. 10, 15 and 18) above and below the mihrab. They are rendered in mirror image positions in different colors. But one should notice that the dragon lost its life-like features and became a body with a tail and a stylized head, looking more like an S shape figure (Plate 26 c, d). A realistic head would not have been appropriate in the case of

<sup>75</sup> Ünal, *Les Monuments*, Plate LXXV, 64.

<sup>76</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years*, 18.

<sup>77</sup> Ellis, *Early Caucasian Carpets*, 10.



prayer rugs. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the animal became a kind of a pattern used unconsciously without direct connection to its original inspiration.

### ***F. The Cloud Band***

Of Chinese origin, cloud bands appeared in Ottoman manuscripts as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. They appeared as ribbons as well as clouds and were associated with birds and angels.<sup>78</sup> They became part of the decorative vocabulary during the Ottoman golden age. Because they were adjustable to different media, they were depicted in all aspects of art; notably in Iznik pottery, which was highly influenced by Chinese blue and white porcelain (Plate 27.a).<sup>79</sup> During the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century they became an independent unit, free floating and in the shape of a knot or a loop. (Plates 27b, c, 28a).<sup>80</sup> In the ak carpets of the 16<sup>th</sup> century such bands appeared in this knotted or looped shape as border designs (Plate 28.b). The unit was repeated all around the carpet and could be seen in the same borders of a Lotto carpet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 28.c). The shape of this unit can also be compared with Iznik designs of the same period (Plate 28.d).<sup>81</sup> In the course of its development the Chinese cloud band became a very stylized design that appeared repeatedly in Gordes carpets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Plate 28.e, 28.f).

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<sup>78</sup> Rawson, *Chinese Ornament*, 163.

<sup>79</sup> Raby, *Iznik*, 122.

<sup>80</sup> Sozen, *Arts in*, 307.

<sup>81</sup> Atasoy, *Iznik*, fig 287.



In the carpets introduced in our catalogue cloud bands were limited to the panels above and below the mihrab (Plates nos. 3, 4, 11 and 13). Unlike the 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> century carpets, where a single color was used against a dark background, the mixed color scheme of the Gördes collection doesn't allow so much emphasis on the cloud band which, therefore, becomes more integrated within the carpet.

From the above analysis we can conclude that tracing the development of the overall design and of the single decorative units is a possible criterion for dating. The depiction of the designs and motifs was more naturalistic and closer to the original concepts during the early Ottoman period with its economic and political power. With the decreasing power, artistic evolution was affected and the patronage of art declined. This was manifested in the use of inferior quality materials and the stylization of the naturalistic motifs.

The decorative and the technical analyses provided us with characteristics of the Gördes carpets, which can help to identify them and lead to dating criteria. In the coming few pages we will discuss our observations about the characteristics and dating criteria.



### 3. Characteristics and dating of the Gördes carpets

#### A. Size

Reviewing the sizes of the carpets in our collection we can see that the length ranges from 1.70 to 2.20 cm and the width from 1.20 to 1.40 cm. The difference of 20cm in width is relatively small, thus one can say that the preferred width was 130 cm plus or minus 10 cm. There was no need for larger sizes especially since this production was used in principal by villagers to suit their small houses or even tents and only later became a matter of mass production aspect.

The surface area of the woven carpet ranges between two and three squared meters. Accordingly this becomes a characteristic of Gördes carpets. In comparison to other collections such as those of the Metropolitan Museum<sup>82</sup> and Markarian<sup>83</sup>, we find that the dimensions agree with the carpets in our collection. These dimensions have also been used in other provincial cities such as Kula, Mucur and Ladik which did not have larger looms like the ones used for the Kum Kapu and Hereke carpets.<sup>84</sup>

Two sizes of carpets could be found repeatedly perhaps indicating the workmanship of one workshop if not one loom. Their dimensions are 180 x 138 cm (plate 4) and 180 x 137 cm (plate 18) and 220 x 140 plates (12 and 17).

#### B. Material

<sup>82</sup> Dimand, *Oriental Rugs*. 205.

<sup>83</sup> Denny, *The Markarian Album*, 94, 96.

<sup>84</sup> Harrow, *From the Lands*, 58.



One of the characteristics of Gördes carpets is the use of wool in their warps and wefts. Wool was available on the Anatolian plateau.

The warps were of undyed wool, but we noticed that some of the wefts were dyed red. For example plates 5, 10, 14, 15 show the use of red dye in all or part of their wefts. Scholars have indicated that wefts of two different colors white under the border, and dark-blue or red under the field, would indicate a desire to minimize the appearance of wear.<sup>85</sup> In other cases carpets show "lazy lines", a pattern of discontinuous wefts that leave diagonal lines dimly visible on the back (plate 30).<sup>86</sup> The lazy lines were visible among some carpets in our catalogue (Plates 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 14).

In the technical analysis of our collection we examined the warp, the weft, and the pile yarns, to determine their material (usually wool and sometimes cotton for the pile), their color (undyed or red), their ply (the number of smaller strands twisted together to make a warp, weft, or pile yarn) and the direction of that twisting (clockwise or counter clockwise, abbreviated S or Z). In general the warps of the carpets are two Z-spun yarns, alternating. The wefts are two Z-spun yarns, used as a double shoot between each warp.

### ***C. Pile***

The pile sometimes contains cotton in addition to wool. Cotton was used in the pile only to accentuate the details of some of the designs (Plates nos. 3, 4, 15, 16, 18). In general Gördes carpets show a lower pile height than most Anatolian rugs such as Melâs or Mucur.

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<sup>85</sup> I would like to thank Walter Denny for this observation.

<sup>86</sup> Again, I would like to thank Walter Denny for this observation.



### **D. Knots**

From our observation we found that the average count of symmetrical knots is 180 knots per square inch, which indicates that Gördes is one of the most densely knotted carpets of Anatolia, giving it a stiffer handle and differentiating it from the looser quality of Kula, for example.

### **E. Dating**

For a while scholars tended to assign some Gördes carpets to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>87</sup> It is more likely that some of them might fit into the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that the majority was produced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The rarity of dated Turkish carpets of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries adds to the difficulties in dating Gördes carpets. Erdmann lists several dates that were woven into Gördes rugs and Gördes rugs documented as being in particular collections before a particular date. The list of dated carpets starts in 1719 and ends in 1754.<sup>88</sup> A piece in the Metropolitan Museum with Arabic, Turkish and Persian inscriptions bears the date 1210 H (1795 / 96).<sup>89</sup> Several factors affected the dating criteria in our collection.

The decorative analysis showed that the simpler the pattern unit and the more naturalistic the design, the earlier was the carpet. This occurs with the use of one wide border and a plain solid field. In this case these are the earlier carpets. The gradual increase in the number of border strips led to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century introduction of the *shubukli* design.

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<sup>87</sup> Aslanapa, *One Thousand Years*, 153, 155.

<sup>88</sup> Erdmann, *Seven Hundred Years*, 172.



No obvious changes through time occurred in the technique. This may be due to the fact that the technology of carpet weaving did not change much. There was a time where the merchants tried to introduce new technology, but it was rejected until at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, because weavers and dyers saw the results as being "not satisfactory".<sup>90</sup> During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empire went through a period of an eclectic style pertaining to all arts making it impossible to connect carpet production with the other artistic media. But the development from naturalistic to stylized motifs occurred in all decorative media. Gördes decorative patterns followed the same trend a century later.

The following categorization of the catalogue items is based mainly on their decorative analysis present in chapter three.

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<sup>89</sup> Dimand, *Oriental Rugs*, 205.

<sup>90</sup> Quataert, *Ottoman Manufacturing*, 149.



First group: 18<sup>th</sup> century Gördes prayer rugs.

They are characterized by the single wide border that is equal to half of the width of the niche. Therefore the total dimensions of the two guards equals the dimension of the field.

The spandrels are filled with a continuous flowery stem and the transverse panels on top and bottom of the field have not appeared yet. The border design consists usually of a continuous large rosette motif imbedded with stylized Saz leaves; one in our study (Plate 16) could accordingly be dated to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. When all the above appear with the introduction of transverse panels at the top and bottom the date is more likely to be the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Second group

Most Gördes carpets fall under this category and can be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are characterized by a smaller mihrab, in comparison to the borders, with a solid color. A stress is put on the decorative elements used in the borders creating a series of guards that are occupied by a variety of stylized vegetation.

In the field the occurrence of the two transverse panels and the growing size of the spandrels all added to the diminishing size of the niche. The numbers of guards have grown more numerous with finer details, adding to the feeling of them visually overwhelming the niche.



In our collection Plates nos. 5, 14 could be classified as belonging to phase one of category two, thus dated to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Plates nos. 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 15, 17 are to be datable to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and Plates nos. 4, 7, 10, 11, 13 towards the end.

### Third Group

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *shubukli* borders were introduced. Guards grew repetitive with very stylized details. The color scheme changed due to the introduction of synthetic dyes. These synthetic dyes were not controllable by all the dyers, leading to fading (Plates nos. 3, 12). The carpets in question have a stiffer handle due to the use of chemicals to "soften" the colors, which probably affected the quality of the wool.



#### 4. The *Sajjadah* and its connotations

The prayer carpet had always been of significance to the users and later to the collectors. Their significance to their users is well established in connection with the sacred activity performed on it. The respect given to the prayer rug is gained from the respect to prayer itself.

In the second quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the traveler ibn Battuta mentions in his accounts of Cairo some of the rituals taking place in *khanqahs* and mosques.<sup>91</sup> He notes how each worshipper had his own *sajjadah* and how his *sajjadah* was treated with respect.

This was also noticed by E.W. Lane based on his experience in this country between 1825 and 1835. He wrote that *sajjadahs* were imported from Asia Minor into Egypt and used then only by the rich to perform the salat upon.

The expensive prayer carpet became a symbol of status, as shown by Jean Léon Gérôme who portrayed an important person with two retainers, who performs the prayer by himself on an Anatolian prayer carpet while the other two common people have ordinary mats (Plate 29).

The importance of the prayer carpet was accentuated in miniature paintings as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In a manuscript of Bal'ami's Persian translation of Tabari's *History* the prophet Muhammad is shown sitting on a prayer carpet leading a conversation with Abu Bakr and Ali, the first and fourth caliphs. The *sajjadah* is depicted in this miniature as a seat of honor or a

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<sup>91</sup>Aslanapa, *One Thousand Years*, 16



spiritual throne.<sup>92</sup> In another miniature attributed to Bihzad, the *sajjadah* is depicted with supernatural or magical qualities. It illustrates a story in a manuscript of Sa'di's *Bustan* dated to 1479. In this story a Sufi dervish spreads his *sajjadah* on the waters which then carries him across the broad river after being denied passage by the captain of a boat.<sup>93</sup>

Undoubtedly the meanings and functions of the *sajjadah* as well as religious beliefs were all present in the mind of the weaver and were then reflected to its iconography.

### 5. Meaning of the decorative elements.

As early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century mosque lamps have been hanging from the apex of the prayer carpet's arch. In our pieces of the catalogue the lamps no longer appear but were replaced by an ewer, the implement used for ritual ablution before the start of the prayer. It is noticeable that the ewer is hung upside down. The rugs are woven upside down: that is the commencement of weaving was at the end with the point of the niche. The weaver, not knowing the architectural symbolism, wove the ewer right side up.<sup>94</sup>

The bottom field of the niche was filled in many prayer carpets with floral arrangements. The idea might be connected with a garden theme; terrestrial or celestial. The same flowering creations replaced the lamps and also filled the vertical bands that were meant to be supporting columns. Originally, and in earlier carpets those bands or columns had the tectonic

<sup>92</sup>Ettinghausen, *Prayer Rugs*, 13.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>94</sup>I would like to thank Walter Denny for this observation.



purpose of supporting the weight of the crowning arch. But ornamental devices were also used on these columns. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century the decorative nature of these bands which were once columns became evident: the capital of the column disappeared and was replaced by a flower, and was no longer connected to the arch which was supposed to support. But the mihrab itself as an idea indicating the direction towards Mecca can be seen as the gateway to Paradise, which is opened to the worshippers practicing daily prayer.<sup>95</sup>

One also has to mention that the vegetal and floral forms were not represented by the weavers only as part of the local repertoire available to him but they were also symbols associated with Paradise even when there was direct intention to invoke the heavenly garden.<sup>96</sup>

From this survey we deduce that in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the carpets were produced for a new market, which lead to the loss of the meaning of some the original features. Stylization and modification of the decorative elements were meant to please the mass production clientele. But at the end the *sajjadah* kept its essential function and role for the worshipper on the one hand and on the other hand it remained an attraction and a sought after item for collectors (Plate31).

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<sup>95</sup>Denny, W. B. "Reflections of Paradise in Islamic Art," 37.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 39.



## Conclusion

The idea of collecting works of art had its roots in Egyptian society as far back as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Khedive Abbas Helmy the second. The nationalistic movement that took place during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced an awareness of Egyptian identity. This awareness was expressed by the Egyptian intelligentsia in different ways among which was the interest in Islamic revivalism in architecture and in collecting pieces of Islamic Art. The outcome of this interest was the building of two major art collections formed by Prince Muhammad Ali Pasha, now in the Manial Palace, and by Dr. Ali Ibrahim, acquired by the Museum of Islamic Art. Carpets occupied a very important place in both collections. They were mainly Ottoman, including a large number of Gördes carpets. Collecting Gördes carpets during that time and until the late forties was part of an international trend that faded out with time. Nowadays there is no artistic regard for rugs of this manufacture. The lack of contemporary academic works on this subject was probably the reason. If this was true of international literature, and the Egyptian carpet literature was no exception: no scientific research was made on the two collections in general and Gördes pieces in specific.

In this work I have made an attempt to analyze the technical details of some of the pieces in the collections and to trace the development of their decorative elements. This was not easy because of the difficulty in examining the pieces and the impossibility of any scientific analysis of their dyes.

In the process of viewing the carpets as one whole integrated unit, our analysis of the various motifs and patterns along with the design of the field lead us to recognize specific developments from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



- 1- The function of the carpet with a mihrab was no longer restricted to praying, but with the development and elaboration of decorative elements and the growth of the size of the carpets they were made to point out the direction of Mecca or merely as an item of decoration.
- 2- It became clear that the more spacious the overall design and the fewer stylized patterns and motifs present in the carpets, the earlier the date.
- 3- The clearer the architectural elements, whether in the width of the mihrab or the presence of real columns with bases and capitals, the earlier in date the carpet is. One can add also that the architectural representation could be an implication of the door of heaven, an idea popular in Islamic tradition and relevant not just to mihrabs.<sup>97</sup>
- 4- In earlier carpets there was a clear contrast between the narrow guards and the main border, with the latter usually hosting a key pattern. At a later date this differentiation almost disappeared with the introduction of the *Shubukli* concept.
- 5- According to the technical analysis we found out that all the carpets were knotted with the symmetrical Turkish knot. The material used was generally wool for the weft and pile except for the use of cotton to accentuate some of the details in the pile. The use of cotton in the pile is not an indication of a later date as some of the carpets of the 16<sup>th</sup> century also used cotton in their pile.
- 6- Gördes carpets were woven by village weavers and were never intended to serve as court carpets. The fact that the design of the Gördes carpets incorporated vertical bands of column-like functions does not mean that

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<sup>97</sup>Denny, *Saff and Sejjadeh*, 96.



there was a direct impact from the court manufactory rugs as there were other column rugs produced later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Anatolia which would have influenced the village weavers of Gördes.<sup>98</sup> Accordingly a sense of freedom was available to the artist who produced them whether in borrowing the ornamental vocabulary available to him, imitating earlier examples or even in using chemical dyes.

- 7- The decorative elements used by the weavers combined both foreign and local motifs. These motifs were stylized with the course of time and became part of Turkish folklore. The village weavers would have used them as part of their decorative repertoire without knowing their origins, their real meaning or their interpretations.
- 8- The lack of dated pieces in both collections added to the difficulty of determining a fixed chronology for dating the pieces.
- 9- The so-called Macidi type of carpet (plate 17) is alien to the general stream of the Gördes carpets in design, color and construction. It was produced according to European taste and designs and could equally have been produced in any center other than Gördes.

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<sup>98</sup>Beattie, *Coupled-Column Prayer Rugs*, 243-258.



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## List of Plates

**Plate no 1**, Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 2

**Plate no 2**, Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 4

**Plate no 3**, Gördes prayer carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 5

**Plate no 4** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 6

**Plate no 5** Gördes prayer carpet, late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 7

**Plate no 6** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 8

**Plate no 7** Gördes prayer carpet, late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 9

**Plate n 8** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 11

**Plate no 9** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 13

**Plate no 10** Gördes prayer carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 14

**Plate n 11** Gördes prayer carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 16



**Plate no 12** Gördes double niche carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 17

**Plate no 13** Gördes prayer carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Manial Palace Museum, Cairo. 36

**Plate no 14** Gördes prayer carpet, Late 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 15807

**Plate no 15** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 15809

**Plate no 16** Gördes prayer carpet, Early 18<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 3620

**Plate no 17** Gördes double niche carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 15808

**Plate no 18** Gördes prayer carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 15812

**Plate no 19** Gördes prayer carpet, Late 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> century  
Islamic Museum, Cairo. 15827

**Plate no 20**

a) Iznik tiles, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

b) Kaftan of Murad III, Top Kapi Saray Museum, Istanbul

c) Silk embroidery, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Top Kapi Saray Museum, Istanbul, 31/4

d) Ottoman Court Carpet, 16<sup>th</sup> century, Österreichisches Museum für,  
Angewandte Kunst, Vienna, T.8327

e) Detail from plate 18

f) Detail from plate 18



**Plate no 21** Ottoman Silk embroidery, bed cover, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Washington D.C, Textile Museum, 1.22

**Plate no 22**

- a) Iznik tiles, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century,
- b) Velvet *Katma*, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, 77.256
- c) Detail from an Ottoman Court Carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century,
- d) Detail from plate 1
- e) Detail from plate 11

**Plate no 24**

- a) Chinese blue and white porcelain, 14<sup>th</sup> century, Istanbul, Top kapi Saray Museum, 15/1370, 15/1437
- b) Ottoman wooden panel, 16<sup>th</sup> century
- c) Iznik pottery, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- d) Detail from an Ottoman Court carpet, 16<sup>th</sup> century, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.10051
- e) Gördes carpet, 18<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 5
- f) Gördes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 6

**Plate no 25**

- a) Blue and white Chinese porcelain, 14<sup>th</sup> century, Istanbul Top Kapi Saray Museum
- b) Ottoman miniature 1583
- c) Persian drawing of a dragon attributed to Mir Sayyid Muhammad Naqqash, 16<sup>th</sup> century, Fogg Art Museum



**Plate no 26**

- a) Detail from a dragon carpet, late 17<sup>th</sup> /early 18<sup>th</sup> century, Washington Textile Museum, R 36.2.12
- b) Detail from a dragon carpet, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Washington, Textile Museum R.36.1.1
- c) Gördes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 8
- d) Gördes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 18

**Plate no 27**

- a) Iznik dish, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Paris Musée du Louvre
- b) Detail of an iznik tile, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Bonn, private collection
- c) Iznik lunette from the palace of Piyale Pasa, 1573, Boston Museum of Fine Art, 06.2437

**Plate no 28**

- a) Painted wooden panel, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- b) Detail from an Ushak carpet, 16<sup>th</sup> century
- c) Detail from a Lotto carpet, 17<sup>th</sup> century, Budapest, Imparmuvészeti Muzeum, 24.458
- d) Detail from an Iznik tile, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century
- e) Gördes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 13
- f) Gördes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century, detail from plate 4

**Plate no 29** Painting by Jean Léon Gérôme, "Prayer in the mosque of Amrou, Old Cairo", New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.







Plate 1  
Gordes 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

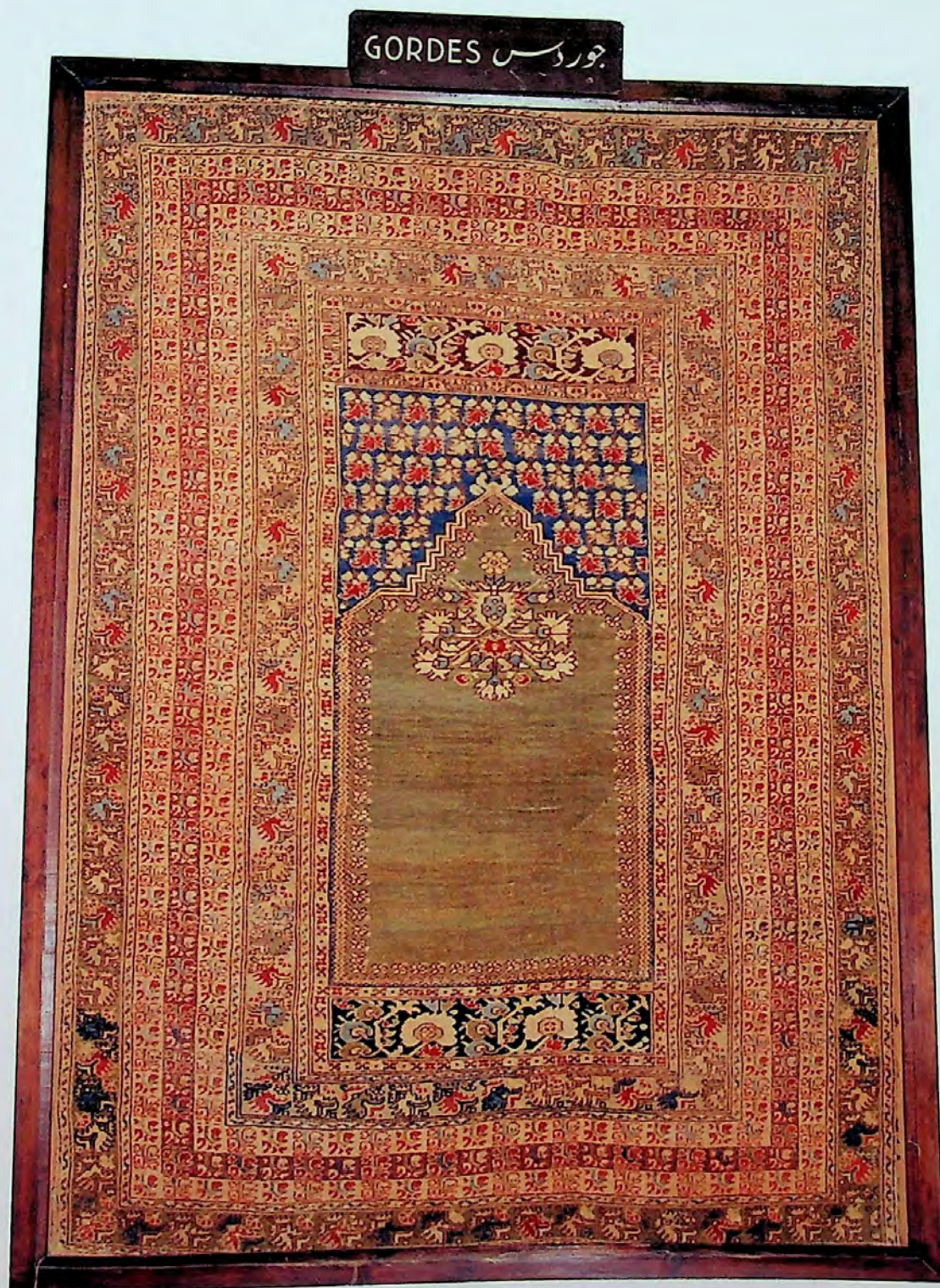


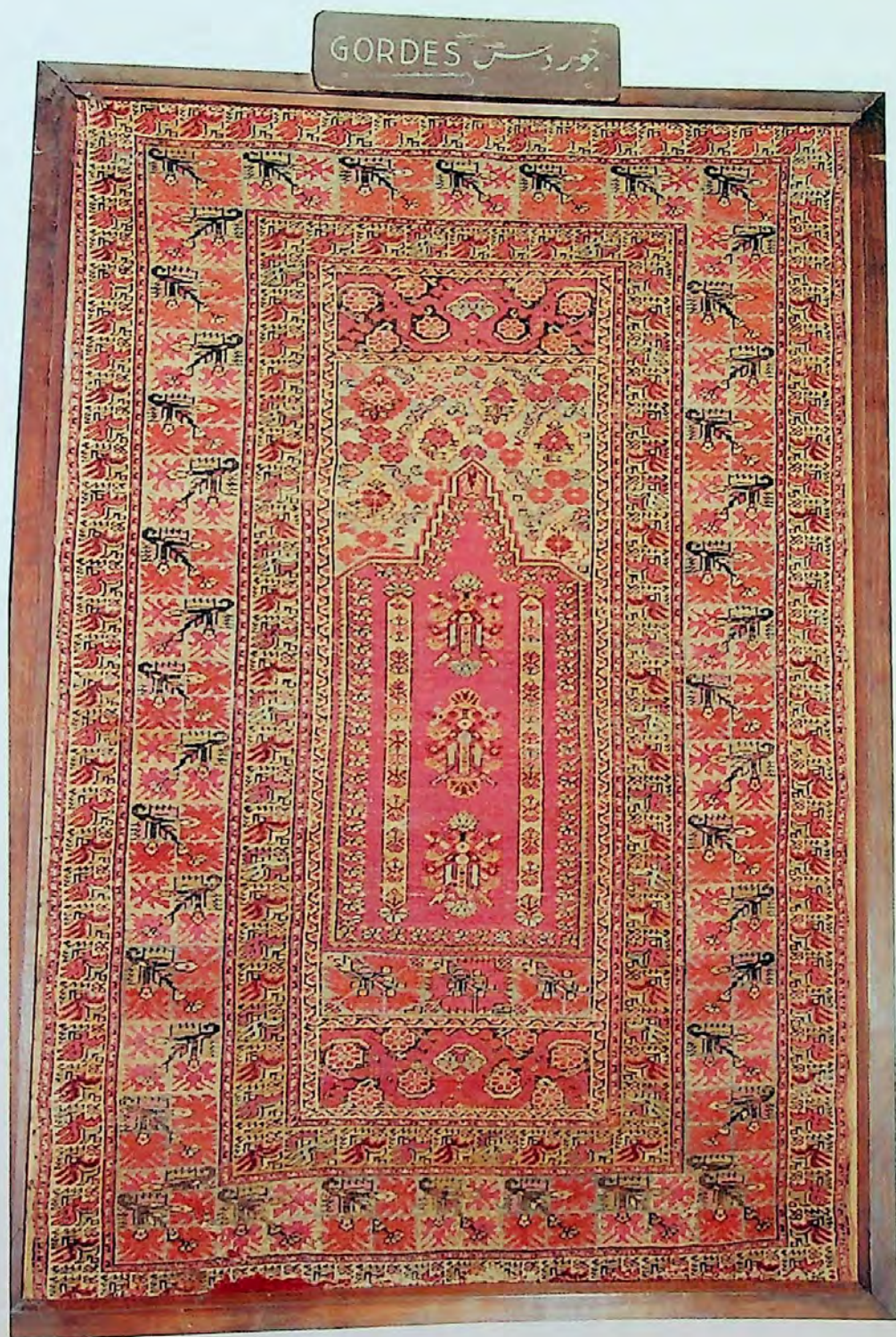


Plate 2  
Gördes 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century



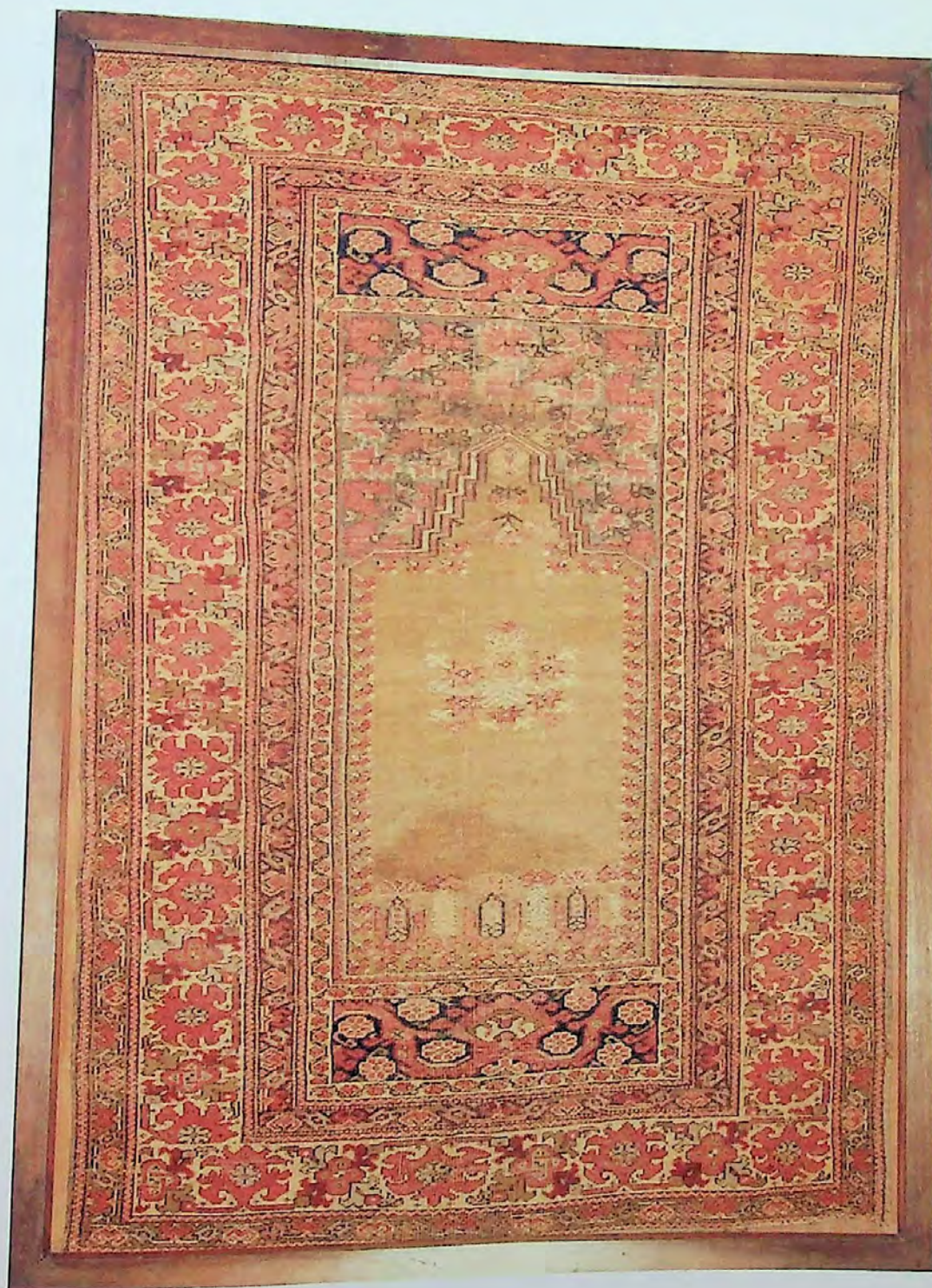


Plate 3  
Gordes, Late 19<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 4**  
Gördes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 5**  
Gördes, late 18<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 6  
Gordes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

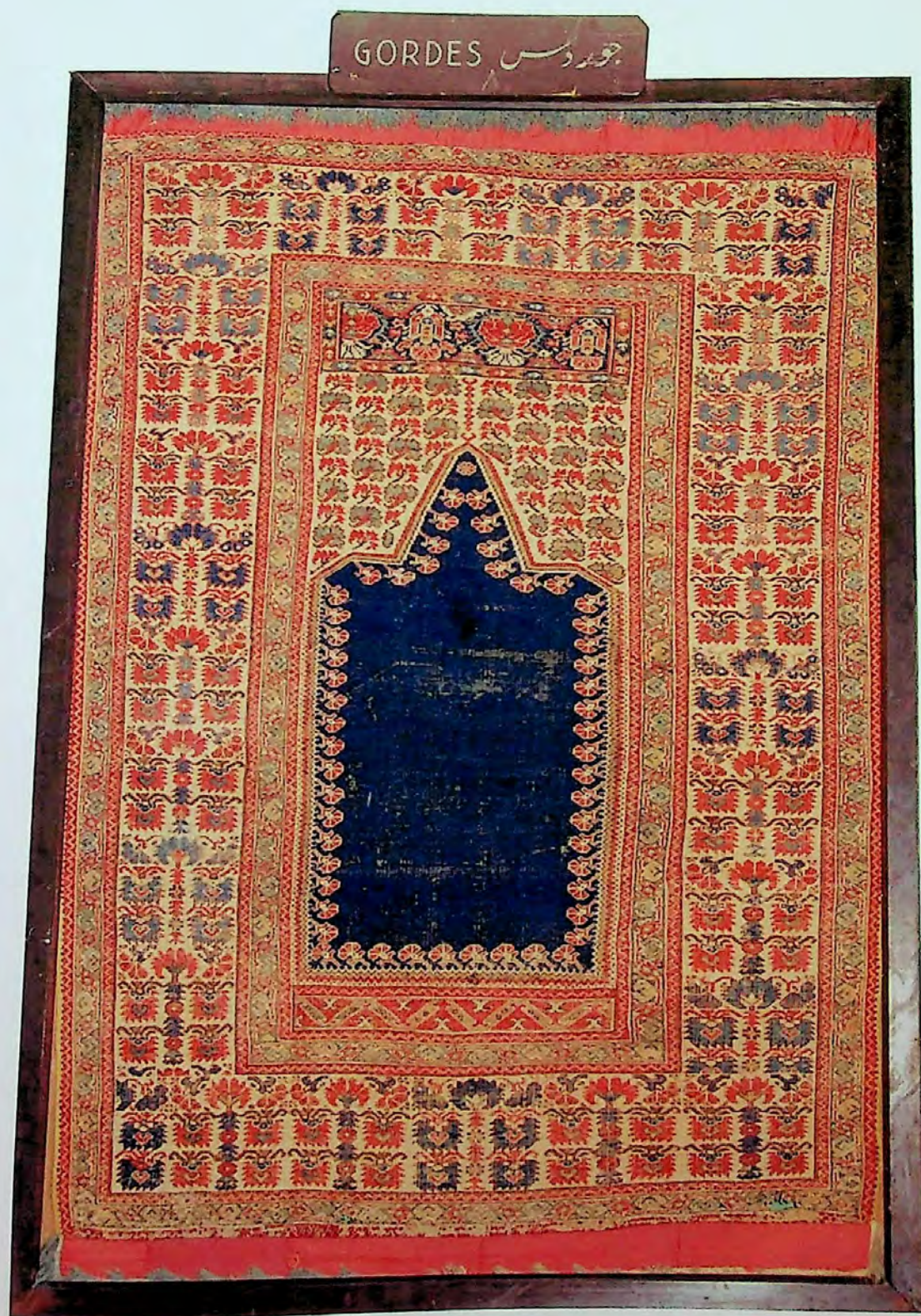




Plate 7  
Gördes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 8  
Gördes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 9  
Gordes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 10  
Gordes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century

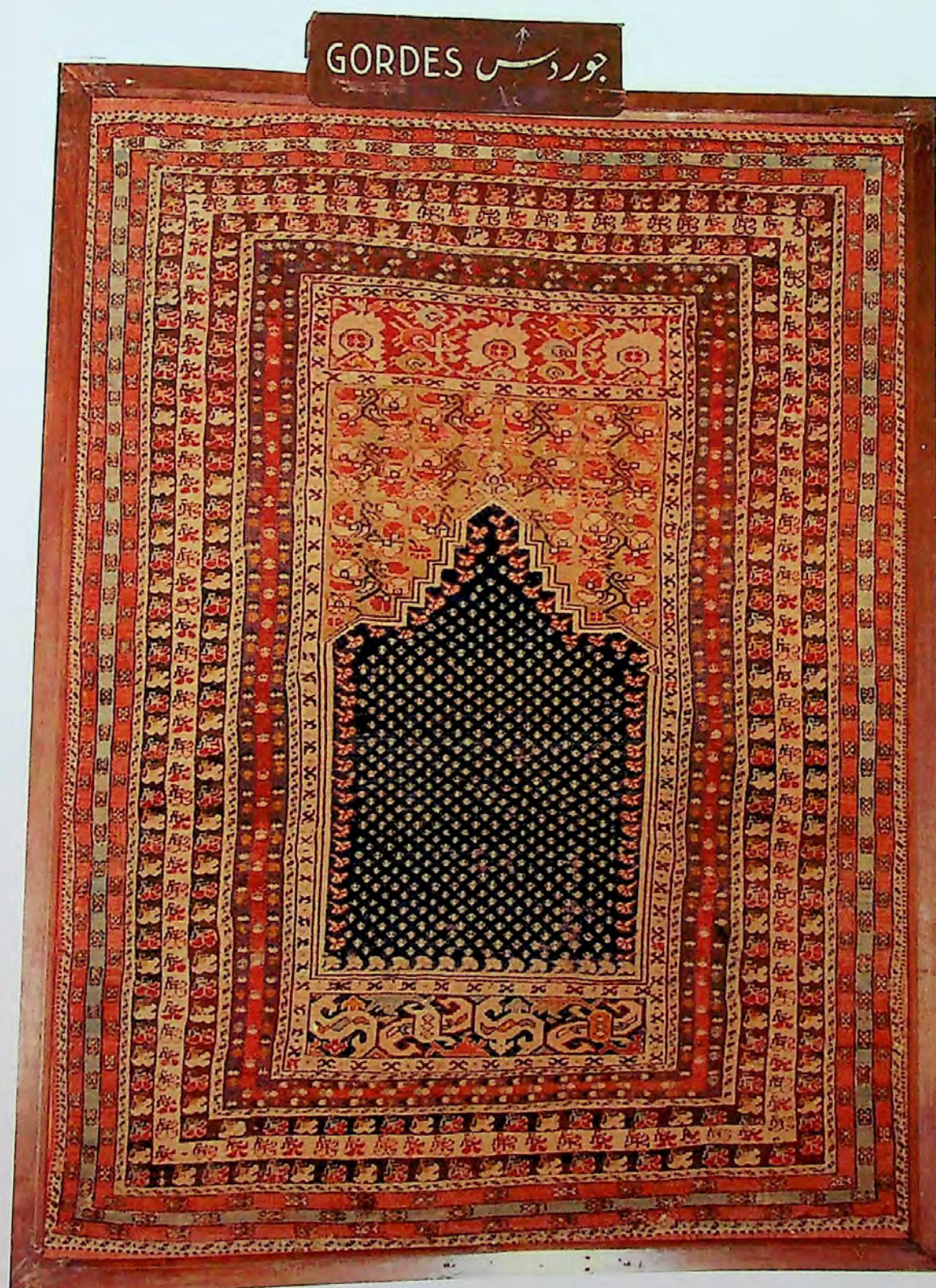
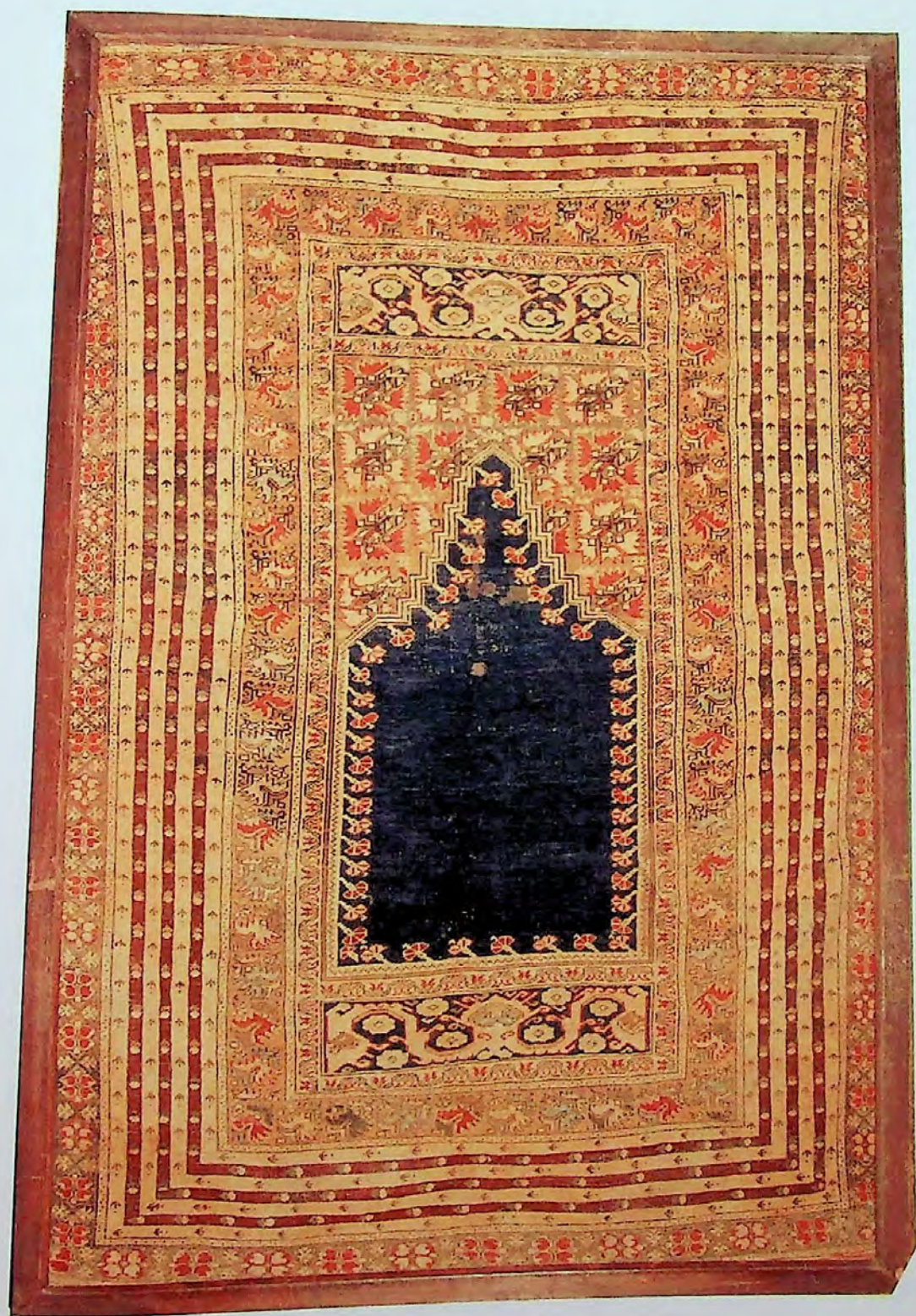




Plate 11  
Gördes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 12**  
Gördes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 13  
Gördes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century

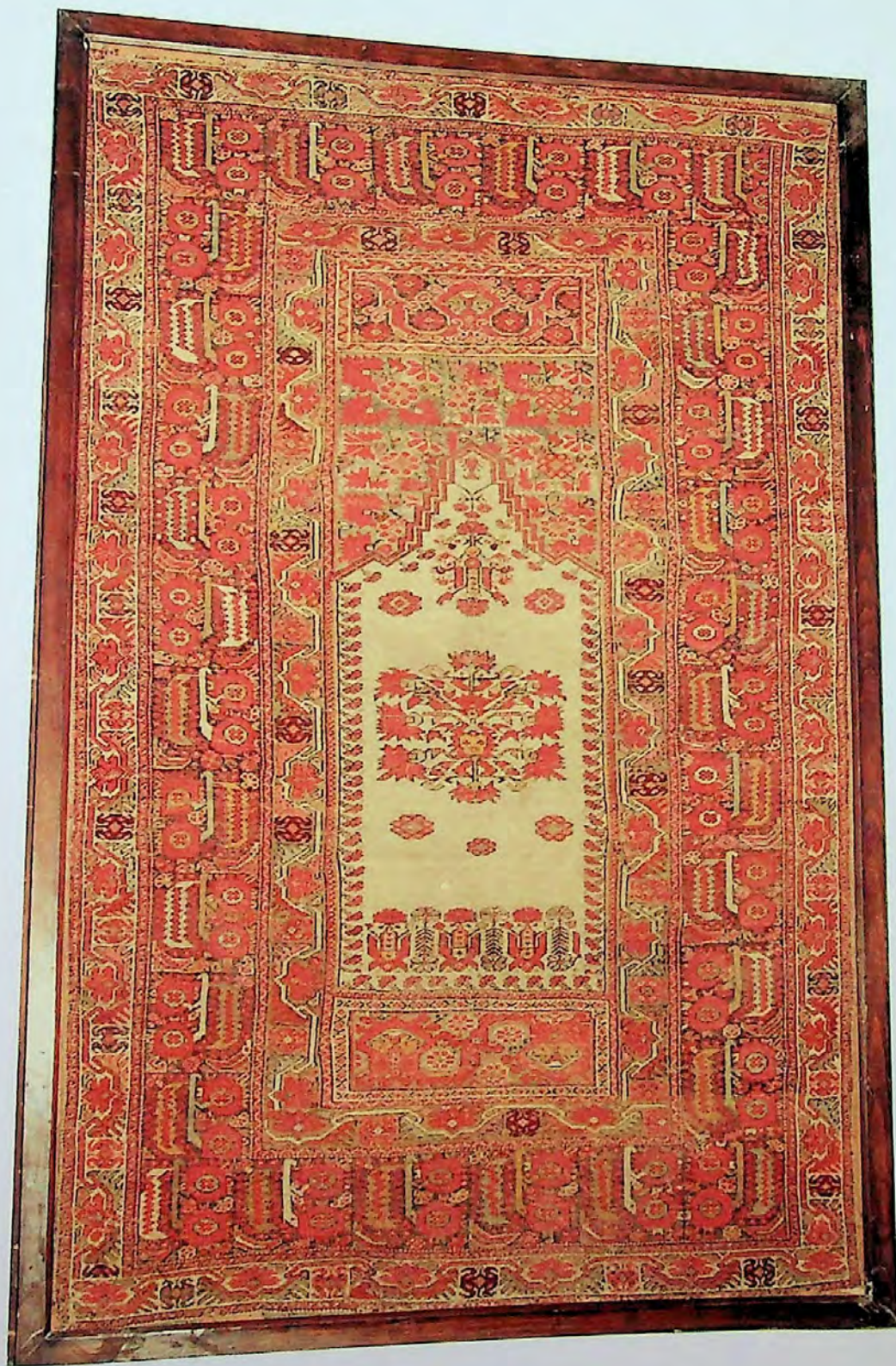




Plate 14  
Gördes, late 18<sup>th</sup> century



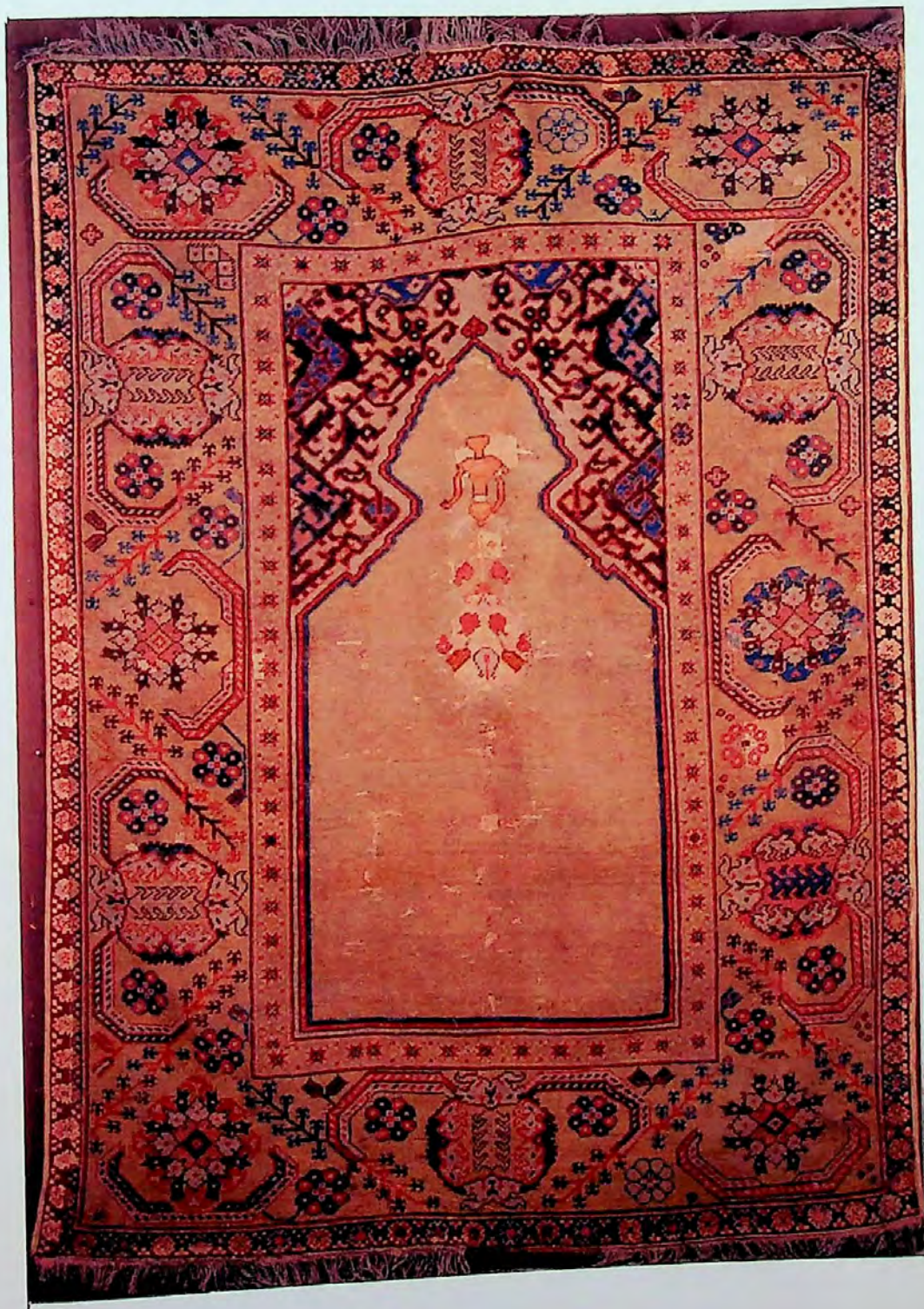


**Plate 15**  
Gördes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 16**  
Gördes, early 18<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 17**  
Gördes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





**Plate 18**  
Gördes, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 19  
Gördes, late 19<sup>th</sup> century / early 20<sup>th</sup> century





Plate 20



a) Iznik tiles, third quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



b) Kaftan of Murad III



c) Silk embroidery, bed cover, 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> century



d) Detail from an Ottoman Court carpet, 16<sup>th</sup> century



e) Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



f) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



Plate 21



Silk embroidery, bed cover, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century  
Washington D.C. Textile Museum



## Plate 22



a) Iznik tiles, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



c) Detail from an Ottoman Court carpet, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



b) Velvet Katma, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



d) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



e) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



# Plate 23



a) Blue & white Chinese porcelain, 14<sup>th</sup> century



b) Ottoman wooden panel, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



c) Iznik pottery, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



d) Detail from an Ottoman Court carpet, late 16<sup>th</sup> century



e) Detail from a Gordes carpet, late 18<sup>th</sup> century



f) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



# Plate 24



a) Blue & white Chinese porcelain, 14<sup>th</sup> century



b) Detail from an Ottoman miniature painting, 1583



c) Persian drawing of a dragon attributed to Mir Sayed Muhammed Naqqash, 16<sup>th</sup> century



Plate 25



a) Detail from a dragon carpet, late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century



b) Detail from a dragon carpet, 17<sup>th</sup> century



c) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



d) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



Plate 26



a) Iznik dish, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



b) Iznik tiles, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



c) Iznik lunette from the palace of Piyale Pasha, 1573



# Plate 27



a) Painted wooden panel, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century



b) Detail from an Usak carpet, 16<sup>th</sup> century



c) Detail from a Lotto carpet, 17<sup>th</sup> century



d) Detail from an Iznik tile, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

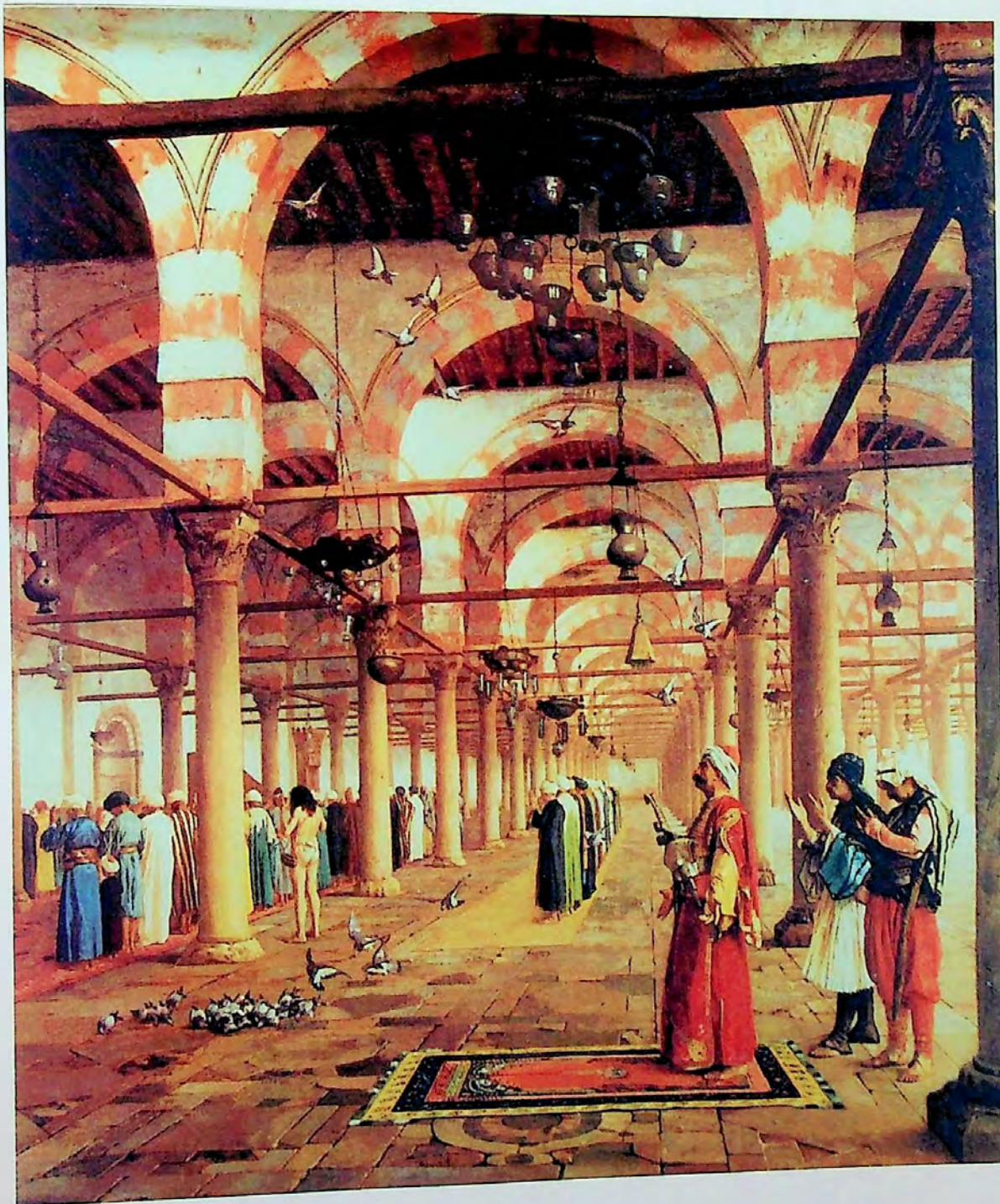


e) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century



f) Detail from a Gordes carpet, 19<sup>th</sup> century





Jean Léon Gérôme, "Prayer in the Mosque of Amrou, Old Cairo",  
1887, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art



Plate 29



a) Detail of lazy lines, Gordes carpet, plate 7



b) Detail of lazy lines, Gordes carpet, plate 8



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