



Hexagonal Iznik Tile from the Çinili Hamam

Iznik, Ottoman Turkey, c. 1575

Fritware decorated with polychrome underglaze

23cm high, 27cm wide

Stock no.: HS72

Provenance: Acquired from Momtaz Islamic Art, London, in the early 1990s.

UK private collection.

A hexagonal tile of fritware, decorated underglaze with two shades of blue on a white ground. At the centre is a complex rosette, around which two bands of floral decoration seem to rotate in opposing directions. The inner band is made up of six flowers, each with six petals, and the outer band of larger five-petaled flowers. These flowers are derived from Chinese sources, known as *hatâyî* in Turkish. The flowers are attached by swirling tendrils, from which grow saz leaves.

Tiles of identical design were commissioned for two important buildings in Istanbul in the 1530s, helping to date this tile. They can be seen around the tiled entrance of the Circumcision Chamber (*Sünnet Odası*) of the Topkapı Palace. While only built in 1640 by Sultan Ibrahim, the façade was almost entirely decorated with tiles re-used from other settings. For photographs of these tiles in situ, see the Walter B. Denny Islamic Art Slide Collection at the University of Washington (accession nos [TT64](#) and [TT52](#)). The *Çinili Hamam* (Tiled Bathhouse) in the Zeyrek district of Istanbul, for which construction began in 1530, was also decorated with blue and white hexagonal tiles. A group tiles from this bathhouse, including an identical one (accession no. [1020-1892](#)), can be found in the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Other identical tiles are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (accession no. [40.181.11](#)), dated

to c. 1535, and the Louvre, Paris (accession no. [AD 1732](#)), dated to 1530-1535.

n.b. accession nos are clickable links