THE INFLUENCE OF TURKEY AND THE NEAR EAST ON 18TH CENTURY EUROPEAN CERAMICS

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In the second half of the 17th Century Ottoman Turkey had been for more than 150 years a mighty and dangerous neighbour to the countries of central Europe. In 1683 a strong Turkish army beseiged Vienna and tried to capture the city, but the siege ended by the defeat of the Turks. Up to that date the Ottoman Empire reached its largest expansion on the European continent. It covered the whole area of the Balkans with the countries of present day Hungary, Yugoslavia, Greece, Bulgaria, Rumania and great parts of southern Russia; the whole eastern Mediterranean with Egypt, Syria and the Middle East down to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea were controlled by the Turks. Towards the east the Ottoman Empire bordered on Safavid Persia – and further to the east followed the empire of Mogul India. Ottoman Turkey, Safavid Persia and Mogul India were the three great empires of the muslim world. And behind this world – in a far greater distance – lay the Far East with China. India and Persia were countries with trading ports on the way to the Far East. In the 17th Century, Europe began to participate in this trade by founding its own East Indian Companies (England founded its EIC in 1600, Holland in 1602, Denmark in 1616 and France in 1664) which meant an increasing impact of oriental and far eastern goods on the European market. From about 1603 especially the Dutch built up an extensive trade carrying porcelain and other Chinese goods to markets not only in Europe, but also Japan, the Pacific, India, and the Near East.

This China trade had an immense influence on Near Eastern and on European ceramics. The market for Chinese porcelain not only increased tremendously in 17th/18th Century Europe, but it entailed that in the Middle East as well as in western Europe "chinoiseries" came into fashion. It is in the wake of this fashion, that in Europe the "arcanum", the stuff of "china" itself, e.g. the manufacture of porcelain was reinvented.

The title of my lecture does not take the aim at the influence of China on 18th Century European ceramics, but of Turkey and the Near East. What's about such influences if we look at the Islamic world and at its borderland in Europe, at Ottoman Turkey, the mighty and menacing neighbour to the Christian countries, especially to Austria? Were there besides the fashions of "chinoiseries" in 17th/18th Century European ceramics fashions of "turqueries" as well?

This question is easy to answer if we understand by "turqueries" just representations of Turks. So we encounter the Turk first of all as the Pagan enemy of the Christian soldier. Illustrations of fights and battles with Turks are found on Dutch wall tiles and on Swiss

1 Stove tile. Winterthur 17th Century (Swiss National Museum).

stove tiles as well as on pieces of German and in particular, Meissen porcelain.[1] The ruler of the Ottoman Empire was one of the great sovereigns of the world. So the sultan is shown amongst other monarchs as an important representative of those who are reigning on earth. You can find his portrait on Winterthur stove tiles from the first half of the 17th Century painted undoubtedly after woodcut book illustrations (plate 1). Some of them may originate from effigies of Suleiman the Magnificent and demonstrate how one imagined him to be: a man with an enormous turban on his head, a sword and a sceptre. Such pictures of "the Turk" are quite common and are found at the base of stories, like the one of the liberation of a Christian slave girl from captivity in a Turkish serail.[2] The theme is best known from the opera by Mozart, written in 1782. Mozart was not the first composer to treat the subject in an opera. A musical "La sciava liberata" was already performed in 1768 at Ludwigsburg and 1777 at Dresden. A few years after the play was staged at Ludwigsburg, the porcelain factory of Zürich produced a set of figures illustrating the same theme.[3] Here, in a sequence of five scenes, the story is told how the beautiful slave girl in fine Turkish dress was held in captivity by ferocious, half-naked, wild Turkish guards and was liberated by two brave soldiers of the Austrian or the Russian army. The last scene shows the happy end, the girl standing between her deliverers, one with a bottle of wine in his hand, the other holding triumphantly the head of a decapitated Turk. This set must have been modelled at Zürich in the years of the Turkish-Russian War 1768-74.

But Europe was nonetheless fascinated by Turkish manners and Turkish life. Many examples testify to this, such as a series of oval dishes minutely painted with male and female figures in Oriental dress by Carl Wendelin

2 J. J. Kaendler. A Turk riding a Rhinoceros, Meissen porcelain, c. 1752 (Historisches Museum Bern).

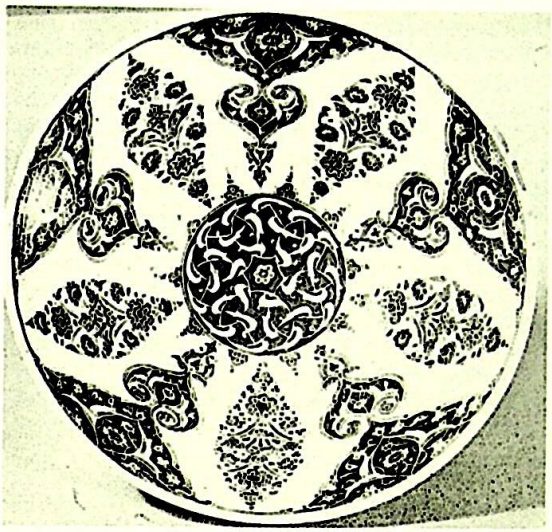
Anreiter at Doccia about 1746,[4] or a sequence of rectangular faïence plates with pictures of the Turkish court painted at Schrezheim in the early 1760's.[5] Furthermore there are porcelain figures representing Orientals as the ones modelled by Johann Joachim Kaendler at Meissen like the group of an Oriental with a white horse[6] or the famous pair of an Indian riding on a white elephant and a turbaned Turk sitting on the back of a rhinoceros and "lolling nonchalantly against a green bolster"[7] (plate 2). This pair illustrates emphatically the contemporary love of exotic fancies and the demand for novelties from the countries along the trade route to the Far East, a passion which is just as much evident in the paintings of harbour scenes showing European merchants and Oriental tradesmen dealing.[8] Some Europeans went so far in their enthusiasm as to dress in the Turkish style. Porcelain figures showing actors disguised as Turks may have been influenced by plays like "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme" by Molière, written and performed in 1670.[9] And there is even a figure of a man in Turkish dress made at the porcelain factory of Zürich about 1770/75 that seems to be a portrait of the painter Etienne Liotard who spent five years of his life in Istanbul.[10] The figure corresponds with a self portrait which the artist painted as an old man in 1773. In the later years of the 18th Century the Ottoman Empire was no more a danger to Europe. So disguising as a Turk became a children's game. Charming examples of children disguised as Turks were modelled in porcelain by Johann Peter Melchior at Hoechst,[11] another example was the group made by Johann Carl Schönheit at Meissen showing the good father, who takes pleasure in his children; with his son riding on his knee, wearing a turban to make him feel like a real Turkish horseman.[12]

To feel like a Turk – it was this sensation Europeans tried to explore when they began to drink coffee. For this beverage was first known in the Orient; from there it found its way to the West and was introduced to European High Society only in the late 17th Century.[13] But by then it became the overnight rage among the fashionable and witty in cities throughout Europe. Meanwhile one did not forget about its Oriental origin; the Turks for Europeans were and continued to be people drinking coffee and smoking a pipe. When Giovanni Giuliani created his sculpture of a Turkish boy, he gave him a Meissen porcelain cup to hold in his right hand thus showing us that he is serving coffee.[14] Coffee drinking and pipe smoking Turks you find in the etched oeuvre of Johann Esaias Nilson were widely copied by painters on porcelain.[15] And when Franz Anton Bustelli at the porcelain factory of Nymphenburg produced his most elegant group of a Turkish couple he added a table with a whole set of coffee vessels.[16] One recognizes easily the little cups placed upwards down in the saucers and the typical high form of the pot with slightly bulged body and drawn up neck, spout, handle and cover. This type of pot has its ancestors in the Turkish "ibriq" illustrated for the first time in the 1685 edition of the 1671 published "Traitez Nouveaux et curieux du Café, du Thé et du Chocolate".[17] The other well known type of coffeepot with a spout in the form of a tube was used as well in late 17th Century coffeehouses as by Oriental coffee sellers in the streets of European cities which may indicate Oriental origin too. The first known coffeepots of this latter type were made of silver; they came from England and showed a straight conical shape.[18] Similar forms were produced in faïence at Delft from about 1700.[19] Both types of pots were encountered at Meissen soon after the foundation of the porcelain factory in 1708.[20] A characteristic feature of the coffeepots produced at this early time are high covers often of a shape reminding us of a Turkish turban on the head of a Turk and referring in such a way as to the origin of the beverage it was intended to contain. An important part of the Oriental coffee set were the little cups which in Turkey seem to have been made mainly of china, first from the Far East, and since the 18th Century imported in large quantities also from Europe, particularly from Meissen. Instances of such Meissen export porcelain are cups with Arab inscriptions like the ones of the rose service from 1757 decorated with letters that mean: "How nice, may the drinker like it".[21]

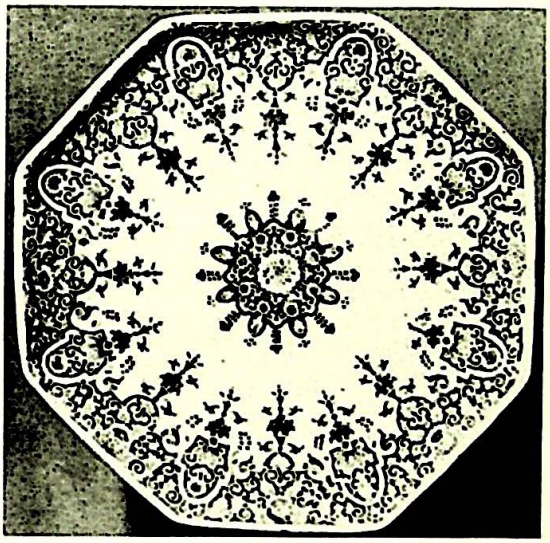
One of the main opportunities to become acquantied with Turkish customs such as the drinking of coffee was the exchange of embassies from European countries to Turkey and vice versa. Most instructive in this context are the pictures that Jean Baptiste van Mour painted on the occasion of an audience given by Ahmed III 1724 to the French Ambassador Vicomte d'Andrezel.[22] The floor of the audience hall is covered with carpets showing a central medallion, ornamented edges and a floral border design, and on the wall are fabrics decorated with disseminated bunches. You find flower motifs of this kind wherever you look for an Islamic setting at that time. In 1679 Nicolas de Largillière painted a portrait of the great traveller Jean Baptiste Tavernier in Oriental

dress with a turban on his head and a coat decorated with disseminated little bouquets.[23] Even a hundred years later such bunches are still a feature of the Indian dress Captain Foote wore in the famous portrait painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds.[24] Since the late 17th Century disseminated flowers became a real leitmotif of indienne fabrics which were first imported from India and from 1700 were imitated in Europe.

If we look at European ceramics of that time we notice an increasing predilection of flowers in decoration. In fact we are aware of an overwhelming abundance of flowers. And many of these blossoms and bunches are just disseminated on the ground as an easy and pleasant floral pattern. A blue painted faïence dish from Hanau in Germany dated 1717 and decorated with an allegorical representation of Flora as a young female gardener sitting in the midst of a wealth of flowers could nearly be of programmatic character.[25] For big and little flowers disseminated on the surface of the ceramic vessel were now found on products not only from Hanau but also from factories like Delft or Frankfurt.[26] Models for the flower decorations were procured by woodcuts or engravings from botanical drawings; such designs of European artists initiated in the 16th Century a real mania of flower decoration in the Orient, especially in India. What we notice at the end of the 17th Century is nothing else than the reflux of this flower rage to Europe. In the wake of this return artists in France like Jacques Bailly (1629-1679), Jean Baptiste Monnoyer (1636-1709) or Jacques Vauquer (1621-1686) specialised in flower engravings.[27] And Paul Androuet Ducerceau (1630-1710) published a collection of "Bouquets de fleurs à la persanne".[28] The engravings of the latter lead us to the very centre where this flower delight produced its highest blossom: in the then new carpet industry in France, in the Savonnerie. The art of carpet knotting as such was adopted from the Near East. Up to the middle of the 17th Century carpets knotted in France looked quite like their Oriental models. Instances of that early date show a central medallion, corner panels with arabesque fillers and a richly flowered border frieze.[29] This layout, in which soon large and compact bouquets of flowers became dominant, is at its origin deeply Islamic. It is not only known from carpets but it belongs above all to the decorative pattern of the frontispiece of the holy book of Islam, of the Koran in contemporary copies.[30] And we find the elements of it also in the decoration of Turkish pottery especially from the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566). One of the characteristics of design are medallions in the centre of radiating flower trees or star patterns and panels of corresponding silhouettes descending from the edge to the centre[31] (plate 3). In such a display we recognize the proximity to the book illuminators' ornament. In pottery decoration it forms a fascinating interplay of positive and negative shapes filled in with arabesques and flowers. The panel contours of such ornaments have the shape of pointed arabesque leaves. Pieces with similar decorations are also quite common on 17th Century products from Southern Persia.[32]



3 Standing bowl. Isnik c. 1525 (Godman collection, British Museum).



4 Faïence dish. Rouen early 18th Century (Musée de céramique Sèvres).

Turning now to ceramics made early in the 18th Century in France, especially at Rouen, we notice above all in the so-called "style rayonnant" a certain amount of very similar elements[33] (plate 4). The first astonishing fact is that here we are confronted with a purely ornamental style of decoration. Moreover we recognize not only the central medallion but also the strange patterns in shape of pointed leaves alternatively hanging from or ascending to the edge of the vessel. With regard to their pendant character such ornaments are called "lambrequins". In fact the very system of the "lambrequin" design is pregiven in Islamic decorations of the type mentioned. Sure: in the filler motifs, the asters and the scrolls, we notice a strong Far Eastern influence. But the world which inspired this ornamental style of decoration as a whole was another one other than the Far East.

In the decennies before 1700, the years of the formation of this style, France passed through a time of new contacts with the Near East, with Turkey. In 1669 Aga Solciman came as a Turkish Ambassador to Paris. His visit initiated at the French court not only the fashion of drinking coffee, but moreover it inspired Molière to write in 1670 his famous play "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme". To this end he consulted Laurent d'Arvieux as an expert for Turkish costumes and customs. The same year, 1670, Louis XIV built the "Trianon de porcelaine" near Versailles, as a pleasure pavilion, a kind of kiosk, covered with faïence tiles, for his mistress Madame de Montespan. And 1670 was also the year when the Marquis de Nointel was sent as French Ambassador to Istanbul from where he returned ten years later as a real missionary of Turkish art and culture.

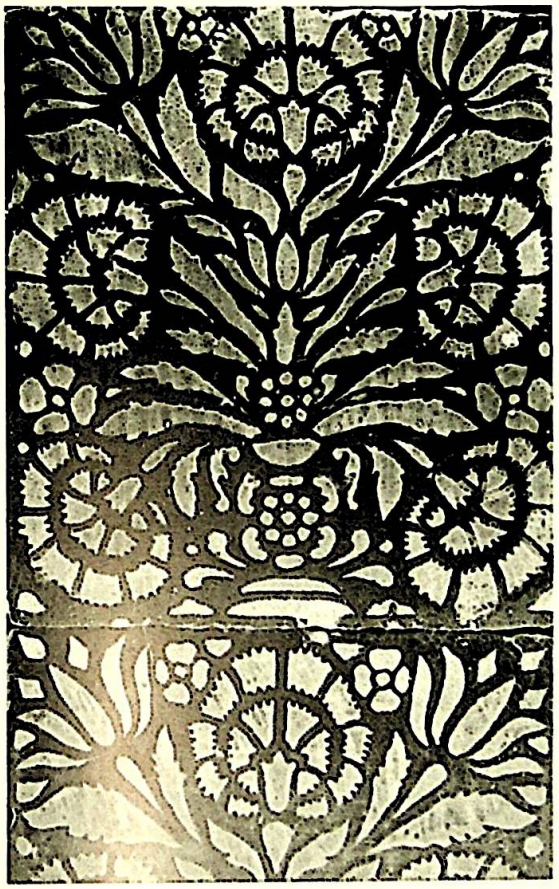
All that happened at a time when the porcelain trade to China did not work; the troubles that followed the fall of the Ming Dynasty brought it from 1659-1683 to a standstill and supplies of porcelain had to be sought elsewhere. From 1652 the Dutch began to order pottery from Persia.[34] This trade was at its height between 1665 and 1682. After these years we notice that the decorative system in France had much changed. By now the lambrequin pattern developed to become a real leitmotif of Régence and early Louis XV. It soon was used in many factories producing fashionable faïence, in Rouen as well as in Moustiers or in Strasbourg.

In addition to this ornamental vogue there were also motifs copied directly from Turkish models such as the ship design well known at Isnik about 1600[35] (plate 5) and reused more than a hundred years later at Berlin by the Funke factory[36] (plate 6). The shape of the Funke vases painted with ships of this kind was purely Chinese. Elements of Chinese and Near Eastern origin are here joined in a very significant way. For the conglomeration of elements of different provenance was a world-wide feature at that time. We can notice it in Europe as well as in the Middle East and in China. There was a fashion of "chinoseries" not only in Europe but also in the Middle East – and in the decoration of 17th Century Chinese porcelain one finds little tulips, pinks, roses and even the picture of a turbaned Moslem referring to Persian or Turkish influence.[37] In Europe the bouquets of pinks, tulips and roses known from the Isnik potteries of the 16th Century[38] occurred since the 17th Century, and quite often on Dutch tiles as well as on German or English faïence.[39] In the first half of the 18th Century they were used as a main decorative motif in Swiss peasant pottery,[40] and the pink bunches well known from Turkish tiles (plate 7) became a typical feature of design on Swiss peasant stove tiles (plate 8). Another type of pottery widespread since the late 17th Century was slipware with marbled decoration showing an astonishing similarity to the so-called "Turkish" paper the manufacture of which was introduced to Europe a little earlier. Such marbled ware must have been once very common and made for every day use; today it is quite rare and known only, due to excavations.

5 Jug. Isnik c. 1600 (Museum Dahlem, Berlin).

6 Faïence vase. Funke factory, Berlin c. 1730 (Hetjens Museum Düsseldorf)

7 Wall tile. Isnik c. 1600 (Takkeci Ibrahim Aga Mosque Istanbul).



8 Stove tile made at Ebertswil near Zürich, 18th Century. (Swiss National Museum).

To conclude, "Turqueries" as traces of the impact of Turkey and the Middle East on 18th Century European ceramic design, seem to be at first sight quite rare and much less evident than "chinoseries". But at a closer look we realize that the light world of decoration so characteristic for the European Régence and Rococo with its lambrequins and its disseminated bunches and flowers is so deeply marked by Turkish and Middle Eastern impressions that we forgot about it. In contrast to the Chinese elements which never became really european and always remained exotic, and reserved to a high society level, Turkish and Middle Eastern elements became an integral part of European life and thereby so common in the western world as the habit of coffee drinking.

Footnotes

[1] E.g. Gerhard Kaufmann, Bemalte Wandfliesen, München 1973, p. 114; Otto Walcha, Meissner Porzellan, Dresden 1973, fig. 69.

[2] W. Daniel Wilson, Humanität und Kreuzzugsideologie um 1780, Kanadische Studien zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur 30, 1984, p. 34.

[3] Siegfried Ducret, Die Zürcher Porzellanmanufaktur und ihre Erzeugnisse im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, vol II Die Plastik, Zürich 1959, p. 33-37, 59.

[4] Arthur Lane, Italian Porcelain, London 1956, p. 35, fig. 46B; G. Liverani, Il Museo delle porcellane in Doccia, Sesto Fiorentino 1967, p. 37, pl. I; A. Mottola Molfino, L'arte della porcellana in Italia, Busto Arsizio 1976 fig. LVIII.

[5] Peter Ducret, Türkendarstellungen auf Schrezheimer Fayence-Bildplatten von Johann Andreas Bechdolff, in: Kermos 119/1988, p. 69-80. For other examples see: Ernst Kramer, Veilsdorfer Türken, in: Keramos 53-54/1971, p. 77-96; Siegfried Ducret, Keramik und Graphik des 18. Jahrhunderts, Braunschweig 1973, fig. 61-62, 136-139, 288-308; Michael Newman, Les sultans de porcelaine du XVIII[e] siècle, in: L'Estampille 205/1987, p. 48-56.

[6] Otto Walcha, cf. note 1, fig. 115f.; Robert L. Wyss, Porzellan Sammlung Kocher, Bern 1965, p. 98.

[7] Robert L. Wyss, cf. note 6, p. 86, 88; T. H. Clarke, The Rhinoceros from Dürer to Stubbs 1515-1799, Sotheby's 1986, p. 102.

[8] E.g. Rainer Rückert, J. Willsberger, Meissen Porzellan des 18. Jahrhunderts, Wien-München-Zürich-Innsbruck 1977, fig. 37, 71; Stefan Bursche, Meissen, Kunstgewerbemuseum Berlin 1980, p. 25.

[9] E.g. Siegfried Ducret, cf. note 3, p. 18.

[10] W. A. Staehelin, J. E. Liotard, "Peintre Turc", 1702-1789, als Zürcher Porzellanfigur, in: Keramik-Freunde der Schweiz, Mitteilungsblatt 46/1959, p. 26f.

[11] P. W. Meister, Porzellan des 18. Jahrhunderts, Sammlung Pauls vol. II, Frankfurt 1967, p. 73.

[12] T. H. Clarke, Johann Joachim Friedrich Elasasser's Engravings of the "Academic" and Marcolini periods, 1785-1792, in: Keramik-Freunde der Schweiz, Mitteilungsblatt 103/1988, fig. 147.

[13] Antoinette Schnyder-v. Waldkirch, Wie Europa den Kaffee entdeckte, Jacobs Suchard Museum, Zürich 1988.

[14] Günther Schiedlausky, Tee, Kaffee, Schokolade, München 1961, fig. 1.

[15] Günther Schiedlausky, cf. note 14, p. 39; Siegfried Ducret, cf. note 5, fig. 94, 95.

[16] Günther Schiedlausky, cf. note 14, fig. 29; Rainer Rückert, Franz Anton Bustelli, München 1963, p. 15.
[17] Antoinette Schnyder-v. Waldkirch, cf. note 13, p. 124.
[18] Günther Schiedlausky, cf. note 14, fig. 2.
[19] Günther Schiedlausky, cf. note 14, fig. 6.
[20] E.g. Meissen, Frühzeit und Gegenwart, Johann Friedrich Böttger zum 300. Geburtstag, Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden 1982, fig. I 38, I 39, I 66, I 74, I 78.
[21] Rainer Rückert, Meissner Porzellan, Ausstellungskatalog München 1966, pl. 165 Nr. 711.
[22] Türkische Kunst und Kultur aus osmanischer Zeit, vol. I, Recklinghausen 1985 pl. III, fig. 26, p. 192f.
[23] Myra Nan Rosenfeld, Largillière, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts 1981, p. 101, Sabine Jacob, Rüdiger Klessmann, Französische Kunst des Barock, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig 1975, p. 13, fig. 14.
[24] Exotische Welten – Europäische Phantasien, Ausstellungskatalog, Stuttgart 1987, p. 345.
[25] Adalbert Klein, Deutsche Fayencen, Braunschweig 1975, fig. 39.
[26] Adalbert Klein, cf. note 25, fig. 30-32, 34, 36; H. P. Fourest, La faïence de Delft, Fribourg, 1980, p. 83.
[27] Jacques Bastian, Les Hannong, Etude des décors peints sur les faïences et porcelaines à Strasbourg et Hagenau (1721-1784), Thèse de doctorat, Strasbourg 1986 (will be published).
[28] Pierre Verlet, The Savonnerie, London-Fribourg 1982, p. 167.
[29] Kurt Erdmann, Europa und der Orientteppich, Mainz 1962, p. 102, fig. 45.
[30] E.g. Arte do Oriente Islamico, Fundaçao Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa 1963 Nr. 152, 153.
[31] Arthur Lane, Later Islamic Pottery, London 1957, fig. 26, 27, 37, 38, 39.
[32] E.g. J. M. Rogers, Islamic Art & Design 1500-1700, British Museum 1983, p. 133, fig. 168.
[33] E.g. Arthur Lane, French faïence, London 1948, pl. 18, 19; Henri P. Fourest, Jeanne Giacomotti, L'oeuvre des faïenciers français du XVIe à la fin du XVIII^{e} siècle, Hachette 1966, p. 94, 95; Faïences françaises XVI^{e}-XVIII^{e} siècles, Exposition aux Galéries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 1980, no. 284-295.
[34] T. Volker, Porcelain and the Dutch East India Company 1602-1682, Leiden 1954, p. 113-16; Arthur Lane, cf. note 31, p. 75f.
[35] E.g. Ernst Kühnel, Islamische Kleinkunst, Branschweig 1963 pl. XII; Türkische Kunst und Kultur, cf. note 22, p. 163.
[36] Adalbert Klein, cf. note 25, pl. II, p. 57f.
[37] E.g. Daisy Lion-Goldschmidt, La porcelaine Ming, Fribourg 1978, p. 222; J. M. Rogers, cf. note 32, p. 121.
[38] E.g. Türkische Kunst und Kultur, cf. note 22, p. 26; Arthur Lane, cf. note 31, fig. 30A, 40A, 42B.
[39] E.g. Adalbert Klein, cf. note 25, fig. 43 (Heusenstamm); Claude Frégnac, Europäische Fayencen, Fribourg 1976, p. 105, fig. 137 (London or Bristol); Gerhard Kaufmann, cf. note 1, p. 112 (Delft).
[40] Robert L. Wyss, Berner Bauernkeramik, Bern 1966, pl. V, VII, VIII, IX.

Source of Illustrations

1 Swiss National Museum Zürich.
2 R. L. Wyss, cf. note 7, fig. 88.
3 A. Lane, cf. note 31, fig. 27.
4 H. P. Fourest, A. Giacomotti, cf. note 33, p. 94.
5 A, Klein, cf. note 25, pl. II.
6 E. Kühnel, cf. note 35, pl. XII.
7 Cihat Soyhan, Turkish tile Art, Istanbul 1988, p. 48.
8 Swiss National Museum Zürich.