A history of Ottoman art history through the private database of Edwin Binney, 3rd

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‘The possibility of Turkish miniatures was too much’.¹

‘It appeared in Paris that no one was very interested in the most rare Turkish things. I was! And, having paid less than I expected for the major things I wanted, I “settled in” to buy most of the Turkish lots’.²

‘After the Vente Pozzi, I was breathless over Turkish stuff … and was already beginning to consider the possibility of writing a Turkish catalog of my own things’.³

These passionate, humorous, and transparently honest statements were drawn from the personal cataloguing system of one of the United States’ greatest art collectors of the mid-twentieth century, Edwin Binney, 3rd (1925–86) (figure 1). Within art-historical circles, Binney is best known for amassing ‘one of the largest and most important concentrations of South Asian painting outside of India’.⁴ Exhibition catalogues published by the San Diego Museum of Art – to which Binney bequeathed over 1,450 examples of South Asian painting in 1986 – have solidified his reputation as America’s leading and most influential collector of Indian painting.⁵

¹Ackowledgements: I am grateful to Linda Komaroff for introducing me to Binney’s notebooks and for encouraging my study of them for a graduate seminar at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2007 and subsequently for presentation at the College Art Association in February 2008. For sharing their personal thoughts on Binney, which significantly enhanced my understanding of the collector and individual, I am indebted to Catherine Glynn and Walter Denny. For facilitating the reproduction of images in their collections, I am grateful to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Linda Komaroff, Sabrina Lovett, Piper Severance) and Harvard University Art Museums (Mary McWilliams and her team). Finally, I thank Moya Carey and Margaret Graves for their insightful editorial critique.


⁵See, for example, B.N. Goswamy and Caron Smith, Domains of wonder: selected masterworks of Indian painting, San Diego and Seattle: San Diego Museum of Art and University of Washington Press, 2005.
Less well known than this publicly lauded collection of Indian painting is Binney’s collection of Ottoman art and his participation in the burgeoning field of Ottoman art history, particularly on American soil. Before his death in 1986, Binney divided his ‘Turkish’ collection – including painting, decorative arts, and textiles dating from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries – between Harvard University Art Museums (HUAM) and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).\(^6\) Binney had been loyal to both institutions and coasts throughout his life. His interest in Islamic art blossomed at Harvard in the late 1950s; in the early 1970s, after settling part-time in San Diego, he played an instrumental role in securing the Nasli and Alice Heeramanick collection of Islamic art for LACMA.\(^7\)

The most accessible and readily available windows into Binney’s world of Turkish art history and collecting are his four self-authored exhibition catalogues on the subject (1973, 1974, 1979 and 1981), which accompanied exhibitions held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1973), LACMA (1974–75), the Honolulu Academy of Arts (1975), and the Portland Art Museum (1979).\(^8\) This significant public legacy devoted to ‘Turkish treasures’ is further complemented and clarified by Binney’s private thoughts on Turkish art, which are recorded on the pages of three densely-packed, three-ring binders now preserved in the Art of the Middle East Department at LACMA.\(^9\) Each of the LACMA notebooks has a specific focus: ‘Turkish objects

\(^6\) For the nearly three decades that Binney collected Ottoman art, he almost always employed the term ‘Turkish’. For purposes of consistency, I use his preferred terminology in the present article.

\(^7\) Catherine Glynn has recalled that Binney’s ‘galvanizing’ pitch before LACMA’s Board of Trustees ‘clinched the deal’. See Catherine Glynn, ‘The Unique Character of Edwin Binney, 3rd, the Collector’, paper presented at the San Diego Museum of Art in November 2005. I am grateful to the author for sharing a copy of this presentation.


\(^9\) A fourth notebook preserved at LACMA also deserves mention. Entitled ‘Islamic collection: Gifts, sold, for sale’, it includes invaluable information on Binney’s de-accessioned Iranian holdings. Binney’s two notebooks devoted to his Indian collection are preserved at the San Diego Museum of Art.
and pre-classic miniatures’, ‘Turkish calligraphy and classic painting’, and ‘Turkish painting from the 17-20th centuries’.

Binney’s notebooks, which I like to term his personal ‘TMS’ (The Museum System) database, thus framing them in comparison to the electronic systems used in museums today, are an invaluable resource for the field of Islamic art historiography, for they introduce the reader to the international world of Indo-Islamic art collecting c. 1958–84. Thanks to Binney’s meticulous documentation, one meets all of the major players in the game: dealers Hassan Khan Monif (d. 1968), Adrienne Minassian (d. 1997), Joseph Soustiel (d. 1990) and his son Jean Soustiel (d. 1999); academics and curators Richard Ettinghausen (Freer Gallery of Art and later Metropolitan Museum of Art/Institute of Fine Arts, New York University; d. 1979), Glyn M. Meredith-Owens (British Museum and later University of Toronto), Ernst J. Grube (Metropolitan Museum of Art and later University of Venice; d. 2011), W.G. (Bill) Archer (Victoria and Albert Museum; d. 1979), and Walter Denny (University of Massachusetts); collectors Edmund de Unger (d. 2011), Alfred Chester Beatty (d. 1968), and Mark Zebrowski (d. 1999); and members of Harvard’s Islamic art circle, including Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (d. 2003), Stuart Cary Welch (d. 2008), John Goelet, and Eric Schroeder (d. 1971). Binney’s notebooks afford the reader a rare insider’s view onto the vicissitudes of the mid-to-late twentieth-century Islamic art market. For those interested in the internal dynamics of collection and canon formation, Binney’s notebooks are jewels, a veritable treasure trove.

Although several scholars have addressed Binney’s contributions to Islamic and Indian art history, this is the first attempt to narrate a history of one of his specific sub-collections – Turkish art (primarily painting) – through the lens of his unpublished and largely unknown notebooks, selections from which are reproduced and quoted here for the first time. In an essay published in 2003, Walter Denny examined advances in Ottoman art historical scholarship since 1982, the year prior to the Istanbul exhibition Anadolu Medeniyetleri (The Anatolian Civilizations), which he deemed ‘the great pioneering exhibition of the past two decades’. Four years after The Anatolian Civilizations, an international blockbuster exhibition entitled The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC and subsequently travelled to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. The catalogue for the

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10 The lines between collecting, dealing and scholarship were often blurred. Mark Zebrowski, for example, was a collector and dealer who also made significant contributions to the fields of Indian painting and decorative arts. For his publications see Mark Zebrowski, Deccani Painting, London: Sotheby Publications, 1983 and Gold, Silver and Bronze from Mughal India, London: Alexandria Press in association with Laurence King, 1997. For further information on Harvard’s Islamic art circle, particularly that surrounding the Fogg, see Stuart Cary Welch, ‘Private Collectors and Islamic Arts of the Book’, in Toby Falk, ed., Treasures of Islam, London: Sotheby’s/Philip Wilson Publishers, 1985, 25-31, esp. 29-30.


Süleyman exhibition marked a turning point in the reception of Ottoman art on American soil. Where Binney’s modestly-sized and cheaply-printed catalogues of the previous decade had included small black-and-white illustrations and limited descriptive text, Esin Atıl’s 356-page tome was filled with glossy colour images and the results of decades of exhaustive scholarly research. The present essay, then, is concerned with the landscape of Ottoman art history prior to this major shift in the early-to-mid 1980s, which roughly coincided with Binney’s death in 1986. As such, this study is in some ways a prelude to Denny’s 2003 essay.

Before delving into the development of Binney’s Turkish collection from 1960 until 1984, it is necessary to introduce briefly the collector himself. Heir to the Binney and Smith Crayola company – a circumstance that did not necessarily ensure lifelong financial security, as will be further elucidated below – Binney has been described as a ‘broadly cultured gentleman’ and ‘intellectual’ with an ‘ebullient,’ ‘intensely competitive’ and at times ‘manic’ personality. From an early age, Binney exhibited a compulsive propensity to collect. His earliest collection was devoted to Portland streetcar tickets and transfers, and shortly after completing his doctoral dissertation on the ballets of Théophile Gautier at Harvard in 1961, he resolved to acquire one artwork by each artist that Gautier had ever reviewed. It was while writing his dissertation, in 1958, that Binney purchased his first piece of Islamic art, a ‘modest’ Shirazi hunt painting of c. 1560. At the time, Binney aspired to be a professor of French literature, and it was his training as an academician that eventually set him apart as ‘one of the rare few who has managed to adroitly combine in his long-term aims the passion of collecting with the discipline of scholarship’. This combination (collecting and scholarship) was not limited to the Islamic realm; mention should also be made of Binney’s collections of European prints and paintings (many of them now in the Portland Art Museum), American quilts, and theatre material (now at Harvard), all of which inspired their own exhibitions and self-authored publications, some appearing concurrently with the Turkish ones examined here.

The primary sources of this study, Binney’s three Turkish notebooks preserved at LACMA, are filled with individual ‘object records’, each of which consists of images (transparencies and reproductions from catalogues) and one to three pages of typed text (figure 2). Individual objects were assigned an acquisition number (Turkish examples were preceded by a ‘T’; see the upper right corner of figure 2), and each record opened with the object’s basic ‘tombstone’ information – title, place, date, dimensions – as well as the price and place of its purchase. In the paragraphs below, Binney passionately narrated how he came to know about, and eventually acquire, the work of art in question, including information regarding his

16 I am grateful to Walter Denny for sharing this information. Personal correspondence, February 2012.
19 Consider, for example, Royal festivals and romantic ballerinas, 1600-1850: from the collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd, which was circulated by the Smithsonian Institution between 1971 and 1973, and Delacroix and the French romantic print: an exhibition from the collection of Edwin Binney, which was also circulated by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service; this time, between 1974 and 1977.
competitors, financial worries, and auction house antics (mostly in New York, London and Paris). This was typically followed by his handwritten notations concerning the exhibition of the piece over time (‘Portland, 1979, 8’ in figure 2 thus refers to the Turkish Treasures exhibition and catalogue of 1979, cat. no. 8). Binney often capitalized words to express his excitement (see ‘A MAJOR ADDITION’ for his purchase of the tugra of Süleyman; figure 3), and his unabated enthusiasm continues to emanate from the pages of his entries.

Figure 2 (above). Object record for T54, ‘Tughra of Soliman I’ (see figure 3), from the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection Notebooks, Art of the Middle East, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Figure 3 (left). Tughra of Süleyman the Magnificent, Turkey, c. 1550-1565. The Edwin Binney, 3rd, Collection of Turkish Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.85.237.17). Photo © 2011, Museum Associates/LACMA.
Binney appears to have begun each notebook record shortly after the object’s purchase. Like any curator, however, he continually updated his entries to reflect new information. For a *Shahnama* painting acquired December 14, 1961, for example, his notebook record reads, ‘[t]o date – Jan. 1, 1962 – this is the most expensive miniature I have purchased!’ Next to this typed phrase, he later pencilled in, ‘(unchanged until Oct, 1963)’. Binney’s meticulous record-keeping appears to have commenced with his Gautier collection, and he may have been inspired by the card catalogue systems he would have encountered at Harvard museums such as the Fogg. The primary motivation behind his universal documentation was the desire eventually to publish all of his collections.

For much art-historical research today, the most immediately useful information contained in Binney’s object records concerns provenance and related works, two ‘fields’ that curators are expected to populate and continually update in electronic collections management databases such as TMS. Quintessential examples of Binney’s forays into these ‘fields’ can be found in his entries for two Persian manuscript illustrations that he purchased in 1961, during the first few years of his collecting. On the first page of his two-page record for ‘Bowmen killing courtiers’, an illustrated folio from the c. 1480 Shirazi manuscript of the *Khavarnama* of Ibn Husam, the collector recorded:

The story behind my purchase of this painting goes back from the beginning of the collection. Mr. Monif [Hassan Khan Monif] had received a group of paintings from this manuscript shortly before I began to collect. He had gradually sold them (see below: other collections). Of about 50 (check for exact number – Dr. Wyman [Leland. C Wyman] knows) he had sold all but about 20 (check again) when the Persian government asked for the remainder back. He was forced to send them to Iran where the remainder are now at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Teheran. (Mss. supposedly has 151 mins. in beginning).

On the next page, in a section entitled ‘In other collections’, Binney listed the other known *Khavarnama* pages outside of Tehran and their respective locations. With the exception of approximately a dozen paintings in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin (a private institution until the late 1960s, but one which was open to scholars), most of these were in private collections – including those of Leland C. Wyman (d. 1985) and S.C. Welch – and Binney must have devoted a great deal of time to such detective work. Similarly, his entry for a painting from the 1436 manuscript of the *Zafarnama*, ‘Amir Sheikh Nuz-al-din killing a lion in front of the emperor Timur’, included a detailed list of other pages from the dispersed

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21 Personal correspondence with Walter Denny, February 2012.
22 Personal correspondence with Walter Denny, February 2012.
23 ‘The bowman Saadil protects his king from assassination at night’, P 87. Purchased from Stuart Cary Welch, 28 September 1961, ‘1st painting he has sold me directly’.

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manuscript. Both the Khavarnama and Zafarnama paintings received a ‘BEST’ rating from Binney, which he scribbled in capital letters.\textsuperscript{24}

Generally speaking, it appears that Binney’s favourite pieces were those that had been formerly owned by illustrious collectors with personal and professional connections to the Middle East, such as Fredrik R. Martin (d. 1933), Hagop Kevorkian (d. 1962), Jean Pozzi (d. 1967), and S. Sevadjian.\textsuperscript{25} He also valued those pieces which had necessitated a ‘chase’ on the art market (including the outwitting of a personal rival – most often S.C. Welch), and those that were related to examples collected by his peers (particularly Welch, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, Wyman, Beatty and de Unger) or by major museums and dealers (including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Soustiel).\textsuperscript{26} For Binney, a work of art’s ‘life’ on the art market, as well as its position within broader histories of art and patterns of collecting, were often more important than its quality or style. As such, he is perhaps better described as a connoisseur of the market, rather than a connoisseur of the object; a specialist in the history of Turkish art collecting, rather than in Turkish art itself.

While Binney’s scholarship on Turkish art – as presented in his four self-authored catalogues – has been subject to considerable revision and expansion, his notebooks remain an invaluable long-term resource for historiographic research; specifically, they are critical resources for those wishing both to locate elusive objects and to understand how and why individual pieces were valued at a given point in time, particularly within the framework of ‘social collecting’. The most prominent individuals within Binney’s social network of collecting – as evidenced by their regular mention on the pages of his notebooks – were Denny, Meredith-Owens, Ettinghausen, Grube, and Archer, as well as Minassian, the Soustiel, S.C. Welch, and Nasli Heeramaneck (d. 1971). Reading (and re-reading) Binney’s notebooks, one senses that relationships with these individuals – professors, curators, dealers, collectors, friends and rivals – sometimes played a more decisive role in his collecting than the works of art themselves. Here is a potent reminder of the significant impact that personality and social relationships can have on the formation of Islamic art collections.

Just two years after purchasing his first piece of Islamic art – the aforementioned Shirazi hunt scene – Binney acquired his first Turkish miniature, an

\textsuperscript{24} For reproductions of both paintings, see Edwin Binney, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, with contributions by Richard Ettinghausen, \textit{Islamic Art from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3\textsuperscript{rd}}, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1966, cat. nos 18 and 20. In 1962, Binney owned two paintings from the 1436 Zafarnama. The lion scene (cat. no. 18) was given to the Portland Art Museum in 1975 (75.23.2), and the duel scene (cat. no. 17) appears to have been traded to Stuart Cary Welch for an Indian painting. In 1968, Binney purchased a third painting from the manuscript, ‘Timur hawking’ (P 184); for a colour reproduction, see P. and D. Colnaghi, \textit{Persian and Mughal Art}, London: Colnaghi & Co Ltd, 1976, 23.


\textsuperscript{26} For example, regarding his portrait of Charles V by Haydar Reis (Nigari) (HUAM 1985.214.B) – purchased from Adrienne Minassian on 29 April 1965 and formerly in the collection of Martin (see Fredrik R. Martin, \textit{The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey from the 8th to the 18th century}, London: Quaritch, 1912, plate 227, far right) – Binney noted that the piece was ‘[p]urchased at the same time as the companion portrait of Francis I of France [HUAM 1985.214.A]. I probably was swayed in my desire to get both, rather than just one of the pair, by the fact that Dr. Ernst Grube of the Metropolitan was interested in them’.
album portrait of Mehmet III enthroned (figure 4).\textsuperscript{27} In his notebook entry for the piece, Binney noted, ‘[n]ot having any Turkish miniatures, I was most anxious to procure one of the seven lots at this auction’.\textsuperscript{28} Despite this early interest in Turkish painting, Binney primarily focused on Iranian and Indian miniatures during the first four years of his collecting career in Islamic art, no doubt inspired by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan and S.C. Welch. As the Khavarnama and Zafarnama examples discussed above testify, Binney early on approached collecting with the exactitude of an archivist and the market-trend awareness of a dealer.

By 1962, at the age of 37, Binney had acquired enough material to organize an exhibition of his collection. Binney’s first show at the Portland Art Museum in the winter of 1962 was extraordinary for several reasons. In just four years of collecting he had acquired approximately ninety miniatures, split almost equally between Iranian and Indian material. Unlike several of his peers, who would not exhibit and publish their collections until decades later, he resolved to share his with the public a few years into its making.\textsuperscript{29} Even more boldly, he chose to write the accompanying exhibition catalogue, rather than asking an established scholar to do so.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{27} Lentz, ‘Edwin Binney, 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 32.
\textsuperscript{28} ‘Ottoman Sultan attended by two janissaries’, T 1. Purchased 11 October 1960, Christie’s, London. LACMA M.85.237.34.
\textsuperscript{29} Consider, for example, Stuart Cary Welch and Kimberly Masteller, \textit{From mind, heart, and hand: Persian, Turkish, and Indian drawings from the Stuart Cary Welch collection}, New Haven and Cambridge, MA: Yale University Press and Harvard University Art Museums, 2004.
At the beginning of his section on Iranian miniatures, Binney hinted at the fundamental motivating factor that would guide his collecting over the next three decades: ‘[b]ecause of the ravages of time and war, the only works which remain to provide a *consecutive history of art* of the brush in Persia are the miniatures produced as illustrations for literary works, mostly poems and chronicles’. Binney’s subsequent ‘consecutive history of art’ was arranged chronologically from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries, and we can assume that this approach was probably influenced by publications such as Fredrik R. Martin’s *The Miniature Paintings and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey* (1912) and Arménag Sakisian’s *La Miniature persane du XIIe au XVIIe siècle* (1929). Even though he had only approximately forty images at his disposal, Binney was determined to offer an ostensibly comprehensive narrative of six hundred years of Iranian painting. Of the paintings created under the patronage of the nineteenth-century Qajar dynasty, he wrote, ‘[t]hese were not worthy successors for the great literary illustrations of the Il Khans, the Timurids, and the Safavids, but were the last products of an artistic evolution of fully six hundred years’. For Binney, quality was not paramount; what mattered was that Qajar painting represented one link in a larger chain of artistic production. Binney’s desire to fully recount ‘artistic evolution’ in this manner ultimately rendered him a visionary collector. It was not until the 1970s, in the wake of S.J. Falk’s 1972 monograph *Qajar Paintings*, that the art of nineteenth-century Iran was to become a regular fixture on the art market.

In the mid-1960s a major shift took place in Binney’s collecting. Despite his early interest in Iranian painting, he began to sell his Iranian material and aggressively to acquire Turkish painting. This decision was largely motivated by financial concerns; specifically, the realization that he could not compete for Iranian paintings against wealthier individuals such as S.C. Welch and Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. Despite his seemingly fortuitous position as heir to the Crayola Crayon fortune, Binney’s collecting was almost always guided by a strict budget, and by the mid-1960s he realized that the less popular field of Turkish painting presented a more viable future, at least in economic terms, than its eastern neigbour. At the time, Vladimir Minorsky (d. 1966), Grube, Meredith-Owens and Ettinghausen were among the select few who were studying Turkish painting and publishing their findings in English. In their respective publications each of these scholars lamented...
that Turkish painting simply did not exist in substantial quantity outside of Istanbul and therefore remained grossly understudied.\(^{37}\)

Ettinghausen, who had early on emerged as one of Binney’s closest advisors, was especially committed to narrowing the gap between American audiences and Turkish art. Most notably, he played a major role in ‘Art Treasures of Turkey’, an exhibition featuring nearly three hundred objects dating from the prehistoric era to the eighteenth century, many of which were borrowed from the Topkapı Palace collections. This groundbreaking exhibition opened at the National Gallery of Art in Washington in the summer of 1966 and subsequently travelled to nine American museums between 1966 and 1968.\(^{38}\) Likely inspired by this precedent, Binney concurrently launched an exhibition of his Islamic art collection in its breadth (arts of the book, ceramics and metalwork), which was also circulated by the Smithsonian between 1966 and 1968. In the foreword of the accompanying catalogue, Ettinghausen described Binney’s collection as ‘a small miracle’ and ‘very wide ranging’.\(^{39}\) At the time, the collection numbered ninety objects, including only four ostensibly Turkish miniatures.\(^{40}\)

Over the next three years (1969–71) a considerable amount of Turkish painting from notable private collections, particularly the Kevorkian and Pozzi collections, began to surface at sales in New York (Sotheby’s) and Paris (Hotel Drouot, Soustiel and Palais Galliera). Given these opportune circumstances (for Binney, at least; details concerning this material’s departure from Turkey remain to be clarified), Binney embarked on a self-declared ‘campaign’ to completely corner the market. At the Kevorkian II sale of December 1969, he purchased four examples of arts of the book, including what would become one of the masterpieces of his collection, an exquisite drawing of two dragons entwined in stylized foliage (figure 5). In the accompanying notebook entry, he recorded, ‘[i]t\[s\] the second lot in my campaign to get ALL the Turkish lots at the second Kevorkian sale ... After the sale, SCW [S.C. Welch] said “the best thing in the sale, I would have gotten it, if I didn’t already have mine!” A wonderful purchase’.\(^{41}\) A second acquisition was a manuscript illustration entitled ‘A Prophet visited by an angel and holy men’, which Binney published in 1973 as ‘ʿAli, with his sons Hasan and Husayn, visited by

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40 In fact, only one of the four works (cat. no. 62, the aforementioned portrait of Mehmet III; see figure 4) was undeniably Turkish. Cat. no. 60 (‘A dragon in vegetation’; HUAM 1985.263) is currently attributed to Iran, Tabriz, fifteenth century, and cat. no. 61 (‘Portrait of a Mongol prisoner in a yoke’; LACMA M.85.237.28) is currently attributed to Iran, probably Isfahan. Cat. no. 63 (‘A begging dervish in a fur mantle’; LACMA M.85.237.98) should most likely be attributed to India, perhaps the Deccan; for a comparable piece attributed to India (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.51.30), see Ladan Akbarnia with Francesca Leoni, *Light of the Sufis: The Mystical Arts of Islam*, Houston and New Haven: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and Yale University Press, 2010, cat. 9c, 32-33. For Binney’s later reattribution of cat. no. 60, see Binney, *Turkish Miniature Paintings*, cat. no. 45 and footnote 49 below.

Gabriel and a delegation of holy men’ and asserted that it was ‘probably from a manuscript of the Siyar-i-Nabi …’. Binney’s notebook entry reveals that he had budgeted £3,000 for the painting – a considerable sum for him – and felt that he ‘HAD TO HAVE THIS PICTURE’. The painting cost only a third of what he had anticipated, and he happily recorded, ‘[w]hen it went for only £850 pounds … my plan to get “ALL THE TURKISH MINS.” in the sale seemed much more likely of realization’. This statement confirms, if there were any doubt, that financial considerations deeply impacted Binney’s collecting practice.

Within just two years of his 1966–68 Smithsonian exhibition, which included only one undeniably Turkish painting, Binney had acquired approximately forty examples of Turkish arts of the book, many of which dated from the early modern period. As he confidently asserted in his notebook, ‘I have, and WANT, as many examples of Turkish painting as possible. I have bought almost everything that has appeared on the market in the past years … and have always sought out the Turkish items … (even convincing WGA [William G. Archer] that this was good collecting sense)’.

42 Binney, *Turkish Miniature Paintings*, cat. no. 12. He would later associate the painting more specifically with the Siyar-i Nabi of Murad III dated 1003/1594-95; see Binney, *Turkish Treasures*, cat. no. 22. For additional information on this painting, see Carol Garrett Fisher, ‘A Reconstruction of the Pictorial Cycle of the Siyar-i Nabi of Murad III’, *Ars Orientalis*, 14 (1984), 82-3, fig. 26.


44 See footnote 40 above.

Like the Kevorkian sale of December 1969, the Jean Pozzi sale (Vente Pozzi) of exactly one year later, December 1970, was a critical moment in the formation of Binney’s Turkish painting collection. He was able to purchase two manuscripts, a detached manuscript illustration, and several album paintings. In his notebook entry for a single-page painting of an embracing couple, he recorded, ‘I was able to make an almost clean sweep of the Turkish things, which went for very little’. In addition to low costs, lack of competition also facilitated Binney’s rapid-fire acquisition of Turkish painting. His notebook record for the left side of a double-page manuscript illustration of Osman II (r. 1618–22) in procession reads: ‘[i]t appeared in Paris that no one was very interested in the most rare Turkish things. I was! And, having paid less than I expected for the major things I wanted, I “settled in” to buy most of the Turkish lots’.47

Two days after the Pozzi sale, Binney recorded in his notebook: ‘[a]fter the Vente Pozzi, I was breathless over Turkish stuff … and was already beginning to consider the possibility of writing a Turkish catalog of my own things’.48 Indeed, he soon began to plan his first exhibition devoted to Turkish art, which opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in November 1973, thereby coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Turkey. At the time, the sheer size of Binney’s collection of Turkish arts of the book (forty-four examples) was unprecedented in the United States.49

At the beginning of the accompanying catalogue, which he authored with the assistance of Denny, Ettinghausen and Meredith-Owens, Binney included a two-page preface elucidating why he had chosen to collect Turkish arts of the book. He began by quoting five passages from texts published between 1958 and 1968, all of which commented on the rarity of Turkish painting and its scarcity outside of Turkey. He continued, ‘[e]ach of the scholars quoted here [Charles K. Wilkinson, Ettinghausen, Meredith-Owens and Grube] alludes to the treasures of Ottoman miniature painting to be found almost nowhere but in the country of their origin … Where, outside Istanbul, is it possible to study Ottoman miniatures in any depth?’50 He answered his own question with the claim that ‘[t]his collection [meaning, his own collection of forty-four works] is probably the largest and the most well-rounded group in existence outside of Istanbul, London, Paris, Vienna, and Dublin’.51

This immodest statement again underscores the fact that collecting was far from a private, domestic, or aesthetic venture for Binney. He did not collect to decorate the spaces of his home, as did Doris Duke (d. 1993), or because a given

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49 Compare, for example, Binney’s collection to that of the Freer Gallery of Art; see Esin Atılı, *Exhibition catalogue of Turkish art of the Ottoman period*, Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1973. In Binney’s 1973 catalogue, ‘Dragon in vegetation’ (cat. no. 45) – one of the four works attributed to Turkey in the 1966–68 catalogue (cat. no. 60) – was now labelled ‘probably from Tabriz, early Turkman style’. Binney appears to have altered and refined his attributions frequently.
work of art moved him visually or emotionally, as was often the case with S.C. Welch. Instead, he was an intensely competitive and compulsive individual who realized that a collection of Turkish art on American soil would be a significant and unparalleled contribution to the field of Islamic art history. Such a collection would secure his legacy as a veritable one-man ‘museum’ (conceptually, at least), and Binney’s desire for fame, through his collections, cannot be understated. Binney’s description of his collection as ‘the most well-rounded group’ further reveals that the mission statement of his ‘museum’ was to build an encyclopaedic collection of Turkish art; one that reflected all periods of production. This desire to narrate a comprehensive history of Turkish art often catapulted Binney into the later centuries, just as it did in the early 1960s with his Iranian holdings. It is worth noting that by the time of his 1973 exhibition, a quarter of his Turkish painting collection dated to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Shortly after the 1973 exhibition, Binney published his second catalogue of Turkish paintings; in this instance, a small booklet intended to accompany the exhibition in Los Angeles (13 August 1974 – 5 January 1975) and subsequently Honolulu. In the preface, he offered the following refreshingly honest testimony, which gives us a further sense of the anxieties caused by his particular mode of ‘social collecting’: ‘A collector’s work is never done! If new additions are not made to his holdings the collection stagnates. More auctions must be attended; more dealers must be visited. What if new material appears without being judged for acquisition? What if a major “find” is snapped up by a rival?’ The 1974 booklet included an ‘Addenda to the Original [1973] Catalogue’, which offered updated research on five pieces, as well as an ‘Errata to the Original [1973] Catalogue’. This was followed by catalogue entries for nineteen new works, including those acquired since the 1973 Metropolitan exhibition and those that had been ‘omitted to avoid duplication in New York’. Binney’s decision to publish the small 1974 catalogue speaks volumes about his meticulous, competitive, and often obsessive collecting habits.

In the summer of 1975, Binney described himself as ‘flat broke’ and able to buy ‘very little’. His financial concerns were partially alleviated by the sale of many of his most important remaining Iranian and Arab paintings at Colnaghi’s in London in 1976. Enjoying a certain degree of financial buoyancy following this sale, Binney resolved to circulate a second major exhibition of his Turkish collection. This time, however, the project would include all media (not just arts of the book, as in 1973), and Binney began actively acquiring new objects with this expanded parameter in mind. In an entry for a ceramic pot purchased in 1978, he recorded, ‘I have had my eye on this for quite a few years, and finally decided to get it for the new catalogue and show in Portland’.

52 Binney, Other Turkish Treasures, preface.
53 ‘Fragment of a Seljuk cenotaph’, Pot 51 (scratched out to read ‘?’?). Purchased 18 June 1975 from Soustiel, Paris. HUAM 1985.313. Binney had just returned from a sixteen-day trip to Turkey with the Dennys and was ‘stupefied by the gorgeous ceramics, particularly the Seljuk ones’.
54 Colnaghi, Persian and Mughal Art, 1976.
55 The 1973–75 tour (New York, Los Angeles, Honolulu) was Binney’s first major Turkish exhibition. As discussed previously, he authored two catalogues (one original; one addendum) for this project.
opened at the Portland Art Museum. In just five years, Binney’s collection of Turkish painting had more than doubled. Perhaps more importantly, he now boasted approximately forty-five examples of what he termed ‘decorative arts’ (textiles, ceramics, metal and wood), an interest largely stimulated by Denny and a recent trip to Turkey (1975).\(^57\) Although painting would remain the crux of his collection, Binney seems to have aspired to build a pan-Turkish collection across all media from this point forward.

In 1981, Binney published an addendum to the Portland catalogue (1979), much in the same way that he had published Other Turkish Treasures (1974) following Turkish Miniature Paintings & Manuscripts (1973), which had been prepared for the first exhibition’s opening at the Metropolitan. The 1981 ‘supplement’ included twenty-five new objects, all of which served ‘to fill in previously existing gaps in the coverage of the evolution of Turkish book arts and decorative arts …’.\(^58\) Binney continued to view his Turkish collection (now multi-media) as a continual work in progress and strove to present as complete a history of Turkish art as possible. Indeed, the phrase that one routinely comes across in his notebooks is ‘to round out’, which in this context meant the acquisition of ‘staple items’ or ‘common types’, so-called because of illustrious provenance and/or representation in other collections, both public and private.\(^59\) Upon his purchase of a manuscript of the Qisas al-Anbiya’ in 1984, he observed, ‘[i]t is very important, and although I already have many miniatures of religious subjects, I do not have a more or less complete manuscript of what is a common type’.\(^60\) Likewise, following his purchase of a chanfron (armour for a horse’s head), he recorded, ‘[t]his was so posh … and I wanted it to round out the Turkish collection! The similarity to the Topkapu pieces (see above) was also a deciding factor. Cary [S.C. Welch] bought his companion to this, AFTER MINE’ (figure 6).\(^61\) With regards to an exceptional early-sixteenth-century Iznik jar, he noted, ‘[t]his was a crucial purchase, as I already had three very good later blue-and-white pieces in the Turkish show, and wanted another—EARLIER for the new catalogue supplement in San Diego, Dec., 1980. This ably filled the bill … Amusingly, no sooner had I left the Soustielis [in Paris], having bought the pot, that Esin Atil from the Freer in Washington arrived, and wanted to purchase it’ (figure 7).\(^62\)

\(^57\) Denny authored the sections on ceramics and textiles in the 1979 catalogue. For the Turkey trip, see footnote 53.
\(^59\) Consider, for example, his comment on paintings from the Majmaʿ al-Tavarikh of Hafiz-i Abrū: ‘The pages of this manuscript are “staple items” for collectors’. ‘Sakyamuni, the Buddha, greets a Brahmin who has come to ask him the way to Paradise’, P 24. Purchased 19 December 1959 from Philip Hofer, Cambridge, Massachusetts. According to Binney, ‘Hofer bought it from Charles Kelekian in Jan., 1952’, and the folio was also once in the collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. Binney publicly recorded this illustrious provenance in his entry for the painting in the 1966 catalogue. See Binney, Islamic Art, cat. no. 26.
\(^60\) ‘Manuscript of the Qisas al-Anbiya’, T 171. Purchased 15 October 1984, Sotheby’s. HUAM 1985.275. For further information on this manuscript, see Rachel Milstein, Karin Rührdanz and Barbara Schmitz, Stories of the Prophets: Illustrated Manuscripts of Qisas al-Anbiya’, Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999, 190 and fig. 13 (Ms. H).
One of Binney’s final, most expensive, and most important purchases was a painting from the *Siyar-i Nabi* of Murad III (T 166) (figure 8). In 1984, four pages from the celebrated manuscript were offered for sale at Nouveau Drouot. In his notebook entry, which was as detailed as ever, Binney described the sale as ‘the “big event” of Paris at the time’ with ‘a lot of competition’ (figure 9). Indeed, he was now competing for Turkish paintings in the six-figure range against the Louvre and rivals from his earlier collecting days, such as Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan. According to Binney, the “‘big guns’ went for the (supposedly) better pictures’, which enabled him, through Jean Soustiel, to acquire the least expensive lot (‘The Prophet Muhammad and his companions at a feast’). With this notable purchase, Binney’s collecting had truly come full circle. One of his earliest Turkish acquisitions had been the aforementioned painting of Gabriel visiting ʿAli (T 34, discussed above), which the collector and others had proposed as ‘probably’ from the *Siyar-i Nabi* of Murad III. Fifteen years and one hundred and thirty-two purchases later, Binney finally acquired what he deemed a ‘real leaf’ from the manuscript.63

The *Siyar-i Nabi* sale at Nouveau Drouot exemplified the coming of age of Turkish painting in global collecting and exhibition circles. The Paris sale coincided with the previously mentioned Istanbul exhibition *Anadolu Medeniyetleri* (*Anatolian Civilizations*), which was soon to be followed by the National Gallery’s *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent* and its two accompanying publications.64 Although Binney’s exhibitions and accompanying publications from 1962 until 1981 were modest in comparison, they had certainly advanced interest in Turkish art,

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64 Esin Atılı, *Süleymanname*. The former served as a quasi-facsimile of an illustrated manuscript included in the exhibition, while the latter was the actual exhibition catalogue.
particularlly on American and European soil, and paved the way for later private collectors.

Figure 8 (left). The Prophet Muhammad and His Companions at a Feast (painting, recto; text, verso), folio from a manuscript of Siyar-i Nabi (The Life of the Prophet) by Mustafa Darir of Erzurum, Turkey, 1594-1595. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Harvard Art Museums (1995.824). Photo: Imaging Department © President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Figure 9 (above). Object record for T166, ‘Muhammad offers a banquet to the victors of the raid on Buwaf’, from the Edwin Binney 3rd Collection Notebooks, Art of the Middle East, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.
As the history of American collectors of Islamic art continues to unfold, Edwin Binney, 3rd will likely stand out as distinctive and exemplary in several respects. Unlike collectors such as Norma Jean Calderwood (d. 2006), who left only scattered documentation and sparse paper trails, Binney dutifully recorded for posterity the how, when and why of every single one of his acquisitions. From the earliest days of his collecting (recall the Khavarnama and Zafarnama examples), he administered his one-man ‘museum’ as would any devoted curator, methodically researching and recording related works, provenance, exhibition history, and bibliography. Like his collection, Binney’s database (contained in his notebooks) was a continual work in progress, thereby tracing the evolution of scholarship and collecting in Turkish art history for nearly three decades. Although Binney’s self-authored exhibition catalogues – feats in and of themselves – may have secured him the ‘collector-scholar’ designation in some circles, it is the ‘collector-curator’ title that remains incontrovertible and is arguably his greatest legacy.

This essay has traced the chronological formation of Binney’s collection of Turkish art from 1960 until 1984, with particular focus on the underlying motivations and practical factors that shaped it. In the mid-1960s, a major shift occurred in Binney’s collecting strategy, and he recorded in his notebook, ‘[t]he possibility of Turkish miniatures was too much.’ ‘Possibility’, in this sense, translated as ‘opportunity’, for Binney had realized that he could resolve a major weakness in Islamic art scholarship by building an accessible collection of Turkish art on American soil. It was a desire for legacy – a desire to be remembered as the collector of Turkish art versus simply a collector of Iranian painting – that motivated the new direction of Binney’s efforts. This fundamental incentive was of course facilitated by several practical factors, including availability, low prices, and sparse competition, which enabled Binney to corner the market of Turkish painting for nearly three decades before its international explosion in the early-to-mid 1980s. Collecting in the relative calm before the storm, Binney was able to build his distinct notion of what he termed a ‘posh’ art collection; one that was chronologically broad, encyclopaedic in representation, and meticulously accounted for in relation to those of his contemporaries.

As the field of Islamic art history becomes increasingly self-reflexive, Binney’s notebooks offer an important reminder that what we see in museums today is often the product of practical circumstances – availability, cost, timing, pure luck – and a reflection of the distinct personalities, biases, and agendas of individual collectors. For Binney, Turkish art was not only uncharted territory (at least in western European and American circles), it was also relatively inexpensive, particularly in comparison to Iranian painting. For someone hampered by a

66 McWilliams, ‘Collecting by the Book’.
constrained acquisitions budget but nonetheless obsessed with securing an
international legacy, Turkish art was certainly the best way to leave a mark.

Binney’s personal financial woes ultimately had a positive effect in the
public realm, for they ensured that at least two museum collections of Islamic art –
HUAM and LACMA – now feature Turkish art of the nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries, including some especially ‘curious’ pieces that might not have
otherwise found homes in public venues.68 Binney’s determination to build an
encyclopaedic narrative of Turkish art means that visitors to HUAM and LACMA
today can appreciate early modern masterpieces of Ottoman art – the Iznik jar (see
figure 7), the drawing of dragons (see figure 5), the tughra of Süleyman (see figure
3), the right-hand side of a double-page portrait of Prince Selim and attendants by
Haydar Reis (Nigari) (figure 10)69 – alongside idiosyncratic examples of art from the
later centuries, including an early nineteenth-century scroll of the Qur’an (figure
11).70 Ultimately, what set Binney apart was the fact that he collected Turkish art
both by – and vehemently not by – the book.

Figure 10 (left). Portrait of a pasha with attendants, right-hand page of a double-page portrait by
Haydar Reis (Nigari) of Prince Selim and attendants, Turkey, c. 1561-62. The Edwin Binney,
3rd, Collection of Turkish Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.85.237.20). Photo ©
2011, Museum Associates/LACMA.

Figure 11 (above). Installation shot of ‘The Edwin
Binney, 3rd Turkish Collection: The Art of Ottoman
Turkey’, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (May
Associates/LACMA. Among others, figures 3 and
10 are visible.

68 ‘This was so curious, so unlike anything Turkish that I had already, that I simply had to get it. I’ll
find out something about it later’. ‘A magpie and a butterfly in a fire; with the same, a vase and thorn
stalk below. To the left a man holding a chest’, T 81. Purchased June 1974, Jean Soustiel. LACMA
M.85.237.53 (‘A Man standing beside a fire that surrounds a butterfly and a bird’).

69 Incidentally, the left-hand page was acquired by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan (now Aga Khan
Museum, AKM 219), at a price that Binney ‘ran up’. Binney’s object record reads, ‘I determined to get
this one [the right-hand page] if I could only afford one (having already two portraits of Selim II, even
though the one at this sale was infinitely more important) … So I ran the Selim II up to [amount
omitted] and got this one for [amount omitted]’. ‘Portrait of Jahab Pasha with attendants. Right half of
a double-page picture’, T 132. Purchased 3 May, 1977, Sotheby’s. The left- and right-hand pages are
cat. nos 31.1-2.

70 Scroll of the Qur’an, LACMA M.85.237.63. Also worthy of mention are Binney’s two masterpieces of
Indian and Persian painting, which have been exhibited at LACMA and elsewhere: Mir Sayyid ‘Ali’s
‘Self-portrait’ (M.90.141.1) and ‘Abd al-Samad’s ‘Horse and Groom’ (M.2010.54.2).

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