

Abstract

The recently acquired 19th-century Ottoman manuscript in the Walter Havighurst Special Collections offers a fascinating glimpse into Islamic religious practices during the late Ottoman period. The object, a medallion-shaped prayer book containing extracts from the Quran and prayers in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, features images associated with the prophet Muhammad and sacred sites such as Mecca and Medina. The guiding question of this project continues to be: what does this artifact say about Ottoman religious practices? What was it used for, and why was it constructed the way it was? While much about its origins remains uncertain, the book's distinctive features—its small, circular, concertina format—suggest it may have been used as a personal amulet or a protective charm, possibly carried into battle or stored on a military standard. The manuscript's contents align with other late Ottoman devotional books featuring symbolic imagery of relics. The intentional crafting of this manuscript suggests that the colors, materials, and iconography all have meaning in the cultural context of the book. The research presented is simply the initial steps toward understanding the significance of portable, talismanic prayer books.