Watercolour - Rikaphasekisi, or stirrup-holder to the Sultan

Object: Watercolour
Place of origin: Istanbul (Painted)
Date: about 1809 (Painted)
Artist/Maker: Anonymous Greek artist. (Painter)
Materials and Techniques: Water- and bodycolour
Museum number: D.69-1895
Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level D, case BOX, shelf 83

Public access description
This picture was one of a series commissioned by Stratford Canning (later Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe), 1786-1880. He began his long diplomatic career in Turkey as first secretary to Robert Adair on his mission to Istanbul in 1808. On arrival Canning soon arranged to see officially (and unofficially) all manner of Ottoman institutions, buildings and customs. What made his curiosity really valuable is that he hired a local artist to make this large series of views and studies of what he had seen. The identity of the artist is unknown, though Turkish scholars believe that he was part of the studio or circle of Konstantin Kapidagli. His style combines the dense and brilliant water and bodycolour used by Ottoman artists with European conventions of representation and perspective.

As a young man, the artist and future neo-classical architect Charles Cockerell went to Istanbul in 1810, stayed at the embassy, and even met Byron there. There Cockerell (with an interpreter) met and discussed painting technique with this Greek artist whom, frustratingly, he did not name in his letters. Cockerell's copies of the Greek's architectural views are now in the British Museum. The Victoria and Albert Museum finally acquired the original set of drawings from Canning’s daughter Charlotte in 1895.

Descriptive line
Rikaphasekisi, or stirrup-holder to the Sultan, about 1809. Anonymous Greek artist

Physical description
Official with a staff, wearing a red robe and a tall red turban with a sideways fold

Dimensions
Height: 32.3 cm, Width: 18.6 cm

Museum number
D.69-1895

Object history note
Originally the paintings in this series [D.23-150-1895] were bound in a volume. It was bought by the Museum in 1895 from 'Miss Canning' [i.e. Charlotte Canning, daughter of Stratford Canning] for 10 Guineas.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O916954/rikaphasekisi-or-stirrup-holder-to-watercolour-anonymous-greek-artist/