

Safavid Revival in Persian Miniature Painting

Renewal, Imitation and Source of Inspiration

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In their 1933 seminal publication on the 1931 exhibition at Burlington House in London, Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson and Basil Gray state that

“[w]ith present-day painting, and the rival claims of the modernist and the *archaizing* movements, we are not concerned; nor with the activities of the professional ‘fakers,’ who, whether operating from Persia or Europe, have executed *some close imitations* of old work, which have deceived many collectors, and who have displayed a technical dexterity comparable occasionally with that of the old miniaturists, and worthy of better employment.”¹

These remarks express a certain frustration shared by many contemporary collectors and scholars interested in Persian miniature painting, a general attitude that can be traced back at least to the prosperous years before World War I, when the market for Persian miniatures flourished. Ironically enough, Binyon and his colleagues end their observations with an outlook to future trends, arguing that, “It would be rash to speculate along what lines the eventual revival, which it is safe to predict in a nation of artists, is likely to develop.”²

Both quotations clearly reflect the ambivalent attitude of the European public toward an archaizing movement today known as the Safavid

Revival that entered the art market around 1900, that is, at the very moment when the West discovered Persian paintings. In its search for the original or genuine, this public either opposed or straightforwardly disdained eclectic imitations and certainly not valued them at all.

A similar uneasiness dominated scholarly research for nearly half a century, until first steps toward a more positive appraisal were taken. One is marked by the year 1982, when Ernst J. Grube examined a series of lacquered doors and ascribed them to the late nineteenth century, thereby re-evaluating them as creations of the Safavid Revival.³ A decade later, in 1995, Eva Baer followed suit by re-evaluating the famous chest at the Berlin Museum of Islamic Art (J 4655) in terms of not describing it as blunt forgery but as a genuine work from the late Qajar period.⁴

Ever since, many papers and articles on specific lacquer works as well as manuscripts have been published to improve the understanding and sharpen the perception of the Safavid Revival. By now, most experts seemingly agree that Persian drawings and paintings from the late nineteenth century with stylistic features from earlier periods, especially the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, should be taken more seriously and accepted as genuine artworks. As a result, Western and

1 Laurence Binyon, J.V.S. Wilkinson, and Basil Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting. Including a Critical and Descriptive Catalogue of the Miniatures Exhibited at Burlington House, January–March, 1931* (London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford), 1933, 163 (italics by the author).

2 Binyon and Wilkinson and Gray, *Persian Miniature Painting*, 163.

3 Ernst J. Grube, “Traditionalism or Forgery: Lacquered Painting in 19th-Century Iran,” in *Lacquerwork in Asia and Beyond*, ed. William Watson. *Colloquies on Art & Archaeology in Asia 11* (London: Percival David Foundation, 1982), 277–300.

4 Eva Baer, “Traditionalism or Forgery: A Note on Persian Lacquer Painting,” *Artibus Asiae* 55, no. 3/4 (1995): 343–79.

Iranian scholars alike created the labels “Safavid Revival”⁵ or “neo-Safavid”⁶ for these eclectic miniatures.

However, there is still a lot of uncertainty as to the beginnings and historic development of the style. Whereas Layla S. Diba relates the revival to the first years of the Pahlavi era (1925–79) and thus qualifies the previous period as merely transitional, others like Adle Adamova⁷ date it back to the 1870s.

In this article, I intend to take a closer look at the evolution of the Safavid Revival. In a first step, I will therefore examine its founding years and then, and in a second one, discuss two characteristic works that mark its apex.

1 The Beginnings: A Reflex of Nostalgia

The earliest examples of paintings deliberately emulating works of the Safavid period certainly are the lacquer panels and pen boxes with images that imitate four murals at the seventeenth-century Fourty Columns Palace (Chihil Sutūn) in Isfahan.

5 The term was first coined by Diba, see Layla S. Diba, “The Formation of Modern Iranian Art: From Kamal-al-Molk to Zenderoudi,” in *Iran Modern*, ed. Fereshteh Daftari and Layla S. Diba (New York and New Haven, CT: Asia Society and Yale University Press, 2013), 60, footnote 24. See also Maryam Ekhtiar and Marika Sardar, “Nineteenth-Century Iran: Continuity and Revivalism,” in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/crir/hd_crir.htm>; Marianna Shreve Simpson, “Mostly Modern Miniatures: Classical Persian Painting in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Muqarnas* 25 (2008): 359–95.

6 Alice Bombardier, “Persian Art in France in the 1930s: The Iranian Society for National Heritage and its French Connections,” in *The Shaping of Persian Art. Collections and Interpretations of the Art of Islamic Iran and Central Asia*, ed. Yuka Kadoi and Iván Szántó (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 192–211.

7 Adle Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings. From the 15th to the Early 20th Century in the Hermitage Collection* (London: Azimuth, 2012), esp. 56–59.

We know several more or less complete sets of lacquer panels and *qalamdāns* with this iconography.⁸

Originally intended to demonstrate the political power and diplomatic skills of the Safavid dynasty,⁹ two centuries later, these murals now nourished nostalgic sentiments of an unblemished, self-confident past that, in the imagination of contemporary residents of Isfahan, completely differed from the realities of nineteenth-century Iran. However, at that time the country had long lost its formerly hegemonic position and found itself exposed to the interests of foreign powers, and thus struggling with modernity. Commemorating the glorious days of Persian past was a comforting practice that stirred emotions among the ruling class to regain the country’s lost sovereignty.

This certainly was the motivation for one of the earliest drawings “by the most humble Allāhverdi,”¹⁰ executed for the crown prince ‘Abbās Mīrzā Qajar Nāyeb al-Saltāne (1797–1833) in 1241 AH (1825/26 AD). The painting is a mostly reliable copy of a depiction of the historic meeting between Shah ‘Abbās I (r. 1588–1629) and Valī Muḥammad Khān (r. 1605–11) found on Safavid murals. There also is a second painting by Allāhverdi that shows Shah Tahmāsp (r. 1524–76) receiving Humayūn (r. 1530–40), which makes it very likely that the original set consisted of four images.¹¹

These first examples highlight a contemporary tendency to link the experience of the present to a certain interpretation of the past, as confirmed by

8 For instance, see the three lacquer panels in The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, VR-200, VR-204, VR-203, published in Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings*, cat. nos. 200–02, 364–65.

9 Babaie, Sussan, “Shah ‘Abbas II, the Conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sutun, and its Wall Paintings,” in *Muqarnas* 11 (1995), 125–42.

10 Iván Szántó, “The Art Patronage of Abbas Mirza: New Material from Hungary,” in *Qajar Studies* xii–xiii (2013), 42.

11 Szántó, “The Art Patronage of Abbas Mirza,” 40 (Ill.) and 41–2.

other pen boxes. A particularly revelatory example comes from the middle of the nineteenth century and is attributed to the workshop of Sayyid Muḥammad Imāmī.¹² In its center, the top lid shows Fath ‘Alī Shāh (r. 1797–1834) sitting on his throne and surrounded by four courtiers arranged in a circle around him. On each of its sides, the circle is flanked by two royal receptions resembling those of the Chihil Sutūn wall paintings. Judging from their headdresses and facial features, the person to Fath ‘Alī’s right can be identified as Shah Tahmāsp, whereas the one to his left must be ‘Abbās I. This indicates that in this artwork the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925), represented by its founder, expresses its self-understanding as the heir of the Safavid dynasty, embodied by its two most influential rulers.

Other pen boxes and lacquer works attest to the growing popularity of the iconography of these royal receptions. Most interestingly, the paintings of these later creations became increasingly independent from their original models and showed a trend to use other sources of inspiration. Examples are a mirror case now kept in St. Petersburg, which quotes another once popular royal gathering,¹³ or panels with the omnipresent image of equestrians in Safavid attire, often with falcons in their hands.

These lacquer panels echoed the mass-produced, molded ceramic tiles of the time. Although they do not bear any signature or date of their production, we do know the earliest dates when such

tiles were purchased and added to private and museum collections, and on this basis can deduce that the first specimens must have been created in the 1860–1870s.¹⁴ Because of their popularity potters had extended their repertoire and added other neo-Safavid images to it, such as promenading couples or fighting soldiers on horseback.¹⁵

The last example consists of a famous and relatively large single tile depicting the picnic of a prince in a garden, commissioned by the French military musician and composer Alfred Lemaire (1842–1907), a professor at the *Dār al-Fūnūn* in Tehran, and executed by ‘Alī Muḥammad Isfahānī in 1884/85 (fig. 1.1). Originally intended as the centerpiece of a fireplace, the tile was surrounded by a dozen of others adorned with undulating vines. A comparison with a large panel acquired by the New York Metropolitan Museum in 1903 reveals that ‘Alī Muḥammad Isfahānī’s tile is a faithful but reduced copy of a seventeenth-century tale panel that had once decorated one of the Safavid palaces of Isfahan (fig. 1.2).

Although the property of the crown, these palaces, especially the Forty Columns Palace, were not only neglected but also partly defaced during the rule of the notorious governor Zill al-Sultān (1850–1918) over Isfahan from 1874 to 1907. Repeatedly, European travelers and residents alike lamented their decay. It seems that the threat motivated Lemaire to choose a Safavid model for

12 The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, VR-135, published in Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings*, cat. 163, 349–50.

13 The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, VR-59, published in Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings*, cat. 166, 351; this mirror case shutter resembles an illustration of the *Meeting of Afrāsiyāb and Garsivāz*, signed “Yā Sāhib al-Zamān” in a *Shāhnāma* manuscript from 1663–69, now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 13.228.17, fol. 110v. According to B.W. Robinson, the miniature is from 1107 AH (1695/96 AD).

14 See Friederike Voigt, *Qadscharische Bildfliesen im Ethnologischen Museum Berlin* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museen Dahlem, Ethnologisches Museum, 2002), p. 9 as well as Ina Reiche and Friederike Voigt, “Technology of Production: The Master Potter ‘Alī Muḥammad Isfahani: Insights into the Production of Decorative Underglaze Painted Tiles in 19th Century Iran,” in *Analytical Archaeometry. Selected Topics*, eds. Howell G.M. Edwards and Peter Vandenaabeele (Cambridge: The Royal Society of Chemistry, 2012), 503.

15 For instance, see Victoria and Albert Museum, 623–1868, 624–1868, 14–1886, 16–1886 and 230–1887.



FIGURE 1.1 *Picnic Scene in a Garden*, 'Alī Muḥammad Isfahānī, Tehran, 1302 AH (1884/85 AD). Tile, fritware with underglaze painted in polychrome, 48 × 59 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, acc. no. 512–1889
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the design of 'Alī Muḥammad Isfahānī's tile, implying that it was not only intended as a decoration for Lemaire's later European home but that its iconography should also commemorate and celebrate Iran's glorious artistic heritage. The aforementioned tiles with Safavid figures and the lacquer panels with images from the Chihil Sutūn murals had similar functions.

2 A Revival Style in Full Bloom

The lacquer workshops of Isfahan and Tehran remained the thriving force behind the Safavid Revival. An excellent example is a lacquered casket

sold at Sotheby's London in 2014.¹⁶ The oblong top lid consists of a gold sprinkled field filled with floral vines, framed by polylobed corner pieces. Its center is decorated with a medallion that shows the half-length portrait of a Madonna with her child. Four cartouches of different sizes flank them, with two of them portraying a girl and a boy, whereas the other two are filled with a flower. Fields of roses, garden flowers and nightingales, which were separated from the rest distinctly,

16 See <<http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2014/arts-islamic-world-l14220/lot.89.html>>, last accessed May 18, 2018, for all images.



FIGURE 1.2 *Reciting Poetry in a Garden*, Isfahan, 1620–60. Tile panel, fritware with polychrome glaze (*cuerda seca*).
Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 03.9b
© METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

dominate the four concave borders of the lid, twice interrupted by medallions with portraits of a beautiful Qajar woman and a young Indian man. Except for minor variations, the four side panels of the casket repeat the composition of the top lid.

Its backside and the inner surface of the case's bottom come quite as a surprise (fig. 1.3), as their painted decorations show courting couples, elegantly set into lush gardens. Although these scenes resemble Safavid tile panels, the dark backgrounds and golden outlines actually originated from traditional sixteenth and seventeenth-century lacquer artworks. It is fitting that the lid's borders are covered with wild animals in a forest with designs similar to Iranian illuminated manuscripts or album pages from the same period.

However, there are stylistic inconsistencies that reveal the scope of artistic freedom in the imitation of Safavid designs. There are many unusual costume details, such as the young man's turban, the girl's knee-long veil (as seen inside the casket's bottom) or the textile patterns. Equally

unusual is the depicted phoenix or *sīmurgh*, which is merely decorative and carries no deeper meaning—something unthinkable in classical Safavid painting. Another similarly free appropriation by the artist is the blooming tree that winds itself around three cypresses—the painting of a single conifer had been the convention.

Although the casket carries no signature nor date, it is very likely that it was produced by the Imāmī workshop that had been famous for its lacquered works. What backs this assumption is that the reclining girl on the lid's backside bears similarities to a female figure on the upper left corner of the margins of a single-page painting signed by Mahdī al-Imāmī, auctioned in London in 2015 (fig. 1.4).

Both figures show the same postures and head-dresses, and the upper parts of their garments have identical shapes as well. Even the textile patterns, a combination of *sāz* leaves, palmettes and rosettes, are alike. What furthermore corroborates the ascription to the Imāmī workshop are



FIGURE 1.3 *The inside of a lid of a casket*, Iran, 1860/70. Papier-mâché, painted, gilded and lacquered, 20.5 × 25 × 37.5 cm. Sold at Sotheby's, London, on April 9, 2014, lot 89

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similarities between the floral garlands on the casket and decorations on a mirror case Rizā Imāmī had made for the Persian pavilion at the Paris World Fair of 1867, later purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum.¹⁷ Taken together, all these clues suggest that the casket was created in the 1860s. It is therefore justified to assert that even though the Safavid Revival originally took its inspiration from the iconography of Chihil Sutūn, it later adopted other models, and was in full bloom by the end of the 1860s. What was typical for this appropriation, however, was the free interpretation of Safavid motifs, an interpretation that, in an analogy to European art history, could be characterized as “Romantic.”

¹⁷ Victoria and Albert Museum, 9221, 2–1869.

3 Iranian Artisans and European Collectors

Let us now turn to a group of lacquer objects that distinguish themselves from the aforementioned through their stylistic accuracy and quality of artisanship.

Two door leaves now in the possession of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore are particularly interesting here (fig. 1.5). They have been the subject of Géza Fehérvári's 1969 article¹⁸ and Grube's aforementioned re-evaluation, and are instructive

¹⁸ Geza Fehérvári, “A Seventeenth-Century Persian Lacquer Door and Some Problems of Safavid Lacquer-Painted Doors,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 32, no. 2 (1969): 268–80.



FIGURE 1.4 *Sitting Youth*, Mehdi al-Imami, erroneously dated 1025 AH (1616/17 AD), Tehran/Isfahan, after 1912/13. Pigments, ink and gold on paper. Sold at Christie's, South Kensington, April 24, 2015, lot 224
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examples for understanding the later developments of the Safavid Revival. The door leaves each consist of a central, oblong panel surrounded by two smaller, square panels on their top and bottom sides. Two pegs had once fixed the leaves to the doorframe. The rails and panels are fully decorated with figurative, floral and astrological motifs. This rich ornamentation might seem idiosyncratic at first, yet its composition derived from a special type of decorated album pages—a matter to be discussed further below. The depictions of amorous couples, elegant youths, wistful maidens and young courtiers imitate the figurative repertoire of the first half of the seventeenth century. A closer analysis, however, reveals that some of the figures are exact copies of well-known originals. The princely couple in the upper left corner of the left door-leaf was modeled after a seventeenth-century tile panel now at the Victoria and Albert Museum (139:1 to 4–1891), albeit in a mirror-reversed fashion. It is likely that said panel once decorated one of the Safavid palaces in Isfahan before it entered the museum's collections in 1891 (fig. 1.5.a). The kneeling young man offering a cup of wine to his beloved (fig. 1.5.b), and the sitting young beauty reading a letter in the presence of a young man (fig. 1.5.c) both have their counterparts in the richly decorated margins of the first double page of the so-called Vignier Album (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1986.278 and 277). The young woman on the left-hand medalion of the left door-leaf, depicted in the moment of adjusting her aigrette (fig. 1.5.d), was designed after a colored drawing attributed to Muḥammad Sādiqī (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1986.298). A standing dervish, wearing a long-sleeved overcoat and a sheepskin around his shoulders, adorns the lock stile of the right-hand door-leaf (fig. 1.5.e)—an imitation of a late sixteenth-century miniature today kept at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (Od. 41, res. 22).

These findings beg the question of how the artists had gained access to this handful of dispersed models. Thanks to the available information on the provenance of these works we know that Henri

Vever had bought said double leaves with figurative margins from Charles Vignier in April 1908.¹⁹ The *Woman Adjusting Her Aigrette*, on the other hand, had been sold from Arthur Sambon to Léonce Rosenberg, who then traded the painting to the same Henri Vever in May 1913.²⁰ Although it has been hitherto impossible to identify the vendors from whom Vignier and Sambon had purchased their works, it is well known that art trade prospered in Paris during the two decades before World War I.

As the demand for Persian miniatures grew, a huge quantity of manuscripts and paintings taken from them were collected in Iran and sold to Europe during a relatively short period. Only a very small group of dealers was involved in this trade. Brokers supported the imports, who acted as intermediaries between sellers and buyers in Europe and Iran, but also stood in direct contact with artisans.²¹ It is possible that one of those brokers had shown some of his wares to the creators of the lacquer door at the Walters Museum. However, such an encounter would have required a highly organized network of dealers, brokers and artisans.

What seems more likely, though, is that there was another source, and it will certainly come as no surprise that all relevant images had appeared either in Fredrik Robert Martin's extensive *The Miniature Painting of Persia, India and Turkey* (1912) or Henri Vever and Georges Marteau's two-volume catalog *Miniatures persanes* (1913) for the 1912 Paris exhibition of the same name.²²

19 Glenn D. Lowry and Milo Cleveland Beach, *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 273.

20 Lowry and Beach, *An Annotated and Illustrated Checklist of the Vever Collection*, 307.

21 Willem Floor, "Art (*Naqqashi*) and Artists (*Naqqashan*) in Qajar Persia," *Muqarnas* 16 (1999): 131.

22 The Sackler works, S1986.278 and 277, were published in Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey From the 8th to the 18th Century*, 2 vols (London: B. Quaritch, 1912), II, Pl. 261; S1986.298, on the other hand, appears in Georges Marteau and



FIGURE 1.5 *Lacquer-painted doors*, Iran, after 1913. Wood, painted, gilded and lacquered, 189.9 × 91.5 × 9 cm. The Walters Art Museum, acc. no. 67.634

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Another template for one of the medallions, reproduced in Vever and Marteau's publication, proves this point.²³ It is obvious that the sitting young woman with a flask and cup in her hands (fig. 1.5.f) was fashioned after an album page with the composite figure of a Bukharan princess (fig. 1.6).²⁴ Furthermore, this page—as well as its counterpart and two further double-pages added to Martin's volume—inspired the composition of the door. Accordingly, the six door panels resemble mounted paintings framed by borders of vivid figures.

Vever and Marteau's publication inspired yet another work, namely, Mehdī al-Imāmī's single-leaf painting of a *Reading Youth* described further above (fig. 1.4): Although created in the last decade of the Qajar period, it clearly follows their reproduction of a sixteenth-century album page. More importantly, the miniature provides us with the information required for identifying the artist mainly responsible for creating the lacquer door. In the upper right corner of the right door-leaf, we see a young man wearing a red overcoat and a strange cap, casually leaning against a tree and half-embracing its twigs (fig. 1.5.g); it is this the exact same figure standing behind the reader in Mehdī al-Imāmī's painting.

Henri Vever, *Miniatures persanes tirées des collections de Henry d'Allemagne, Claude Anet, Henri Aubry [...] et exposées au Musée des Arts décoratifs juin-octobre 1912*, 2 vols (Paris: Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, 1913), II, Pl. CXXV, and the *Standing Dervish* (BnF, Od. 41, res. 22) is found in Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey From the 8th to the 18th Century*, II, Pl. 166.

23 A comparable case from before 1920, where the Iranian artist Turābī Bek Khurāsānī borrowed his motifs for the illustration of a *Khamsa* from the same sources is analysed by Simpson, "Mostly Modern Miniatures," see esp. 382.

24 Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, S1986.304 was published in Georges Marteau and Henri Vever, *Miniatures persanes tirées des collections de Henry d'Allemagne, Claude Anet, Henri Aubry*, II, Pl. LXXXIV.

Mehdī al-Imāmī, born as Mehdī Muḥammad and later known as Mīrzā Āqā, was the last descendant of the famous Imāmī, a family of lacquer artists. He was born as son of Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn in Isfahan in 1881. Educated in Tehran, he later returned to Isfahan, where he worked at the bazaar.²⁵ Together with Hosseyn Behzad (1894–1968), he is today celebrated as one of the founding fathers of the *niqārgārī-yi jadīd*, or "New Miniature Painting" that flourished after 1930.²⁶

A stylistic comparison between the faces in *The Reading Youth*, that is, of the sitting young woman on the door of the Walters Museum and the young woman with a bird of prey in Mīrzā Āqā's painting,²⁷ strengthens the assumption of this authorship. All faces share the same distinct features, such as almond-shaped eyes with clearly visible epicanthic folds, eyebrows that become thinner near the temples and the root of the nose, as well as similar nose lines and mouth contours.

These observations identify Mīrzā Āqā as the creator, or at least the main creator within a team of artists that worked on the lacquer doors of the Walters Museum. In accordance with the consulted sources, we can furthermore deduce that the doors must have been painted after 1913.

There is at least one other work that can be attributed to Mīrzā Āqā with certainty: a pair of album covers with polylobed corner pieces and a row of varied medallions, resembling the decoration on the lid of a casket sold at Sotheby's. Today, the covers are kept at the Khalili Collection in London (LAQ457).²⁸ The centerpiece shows a young

25 Willem Floor, "Art (Naqqashi) and Artists (Naqqashan) in Qajar Persia," 141.

26 Alice Bombardier, "Persian Art in France in the 1930s: The Iranian Society for National Heritage and its French Connections," 197 and 203.

27 Cf. <http://fotografia.islamorient.com/sites/default/files/image_field/Obras_maestras_de_la_Miniatura_persa-Artista_Mirza_Aqa_Emami-Ir%C3%A1n%2C_4_3.jpg>.

28 Nasser D. Khalili, Basil W. Robinson, Tim Stanley, *Lacquer of the Islamic Lands*, 2 vols. (London: Azimuth, 1997), II, cat. 315, 106–07.



FIGURE 1.6 *Seated Princess*, Uzbekistan, probably Bukhara, ca. 1600. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, acc. no. S1986.304

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woman holding a drinking vessel, her eyes cast down bashfully. Altogether, this image resembles the female cupbearer from the Walters door. The Imāmī painting as well also includes a similarly arranged handkerchief, and we therefore are assured to believe that Mīrzā Āqā's pair of album covers were also created after 1913. The two fighting *qilins* in the lower right corner derive from an ornamented manuscript page created for Shah Tahmāsp that had once belonged to the Frères Tabbagh in Paris and was later published by Martin under the shelf mark of Pl. 256.

Another example underscoring how popular both books were as sources for the Safavid Revival is *The Standing Dervish with Begging Bowl*. While the original miniature is kept at the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, a photographic reproduction has been published in the second volume of Martin's book (Pl. 154, 16.2 × 8.4 cm). Moreover, the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg owns a flawless, albeit colored, miniature of the same format that imitates the black and white photograph (VR-1204).²⁹

4 Conclusion

After the middle of the nineteenth century, potters and lacquer painters used Safavid models as sources of inspiration. Especially popular were the Chihil Sutūn murals and Safavid single-page miniatures. The growing popularity of these images was the result of a reaction to the decay of Isfahan's Safavid monuments in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, coinciding with an increasing historical awareness and emerging nationalistic consciousness within the Iranian population. The works of the Safavid Revival were furthermore attractive for Western collectors and tourists, who collected them as souvenirs.

Later, around the 1860s and 1870s, the Safavid Revival reached its apex. Some of its leading representatives came from the Imāmī family, among which Mīrzā Āqā Imāmī became one of its most prominent members after the year 1900. During these decades, a shift from a "Romanticizing" attitude toward a version of the Safavid style of 1590 to 1630 occurred that aspired to more historical accuracy, a development that coincided with a booming market for Persian paintings in Paris and London, where collectors competed with each other in accumulating, exhibiting and publishing such images.

Ironically, enough, these activities also had long-lasting effects on the artistic production in Iran. In 1912 and 1913 respectively, Martin, Martineau and Vever published Safavid artworks, executed as black and white illustrations and thereby making them accessible for international audiences. In turn, artists such as Mīrzā Āqā made use of these reproductions as templates for their own artworks. Although acquired by Iranians and non-Iranians alike, the Persian artists of the Safavid Revival sold most of their works to Europeans, which explains why so many are still found in Western collections.

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29 Adle Adamova, *Persian Manuscripts, Paintings and Drawings. From the 15th to the Early 20th Century in the Hermitage Collection*, 374, cat. 224.

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