



*Crossing
the Caspian*

PERSIA AND EUROPE
1500-1700

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PERSIA AND EUROPE, 1500-1700

Cantor Arts Center
at Stanford University



Fig. 1 Johann Baptist Homann (Germany, 1663–1724), *Map of the Persian Provinces of Kilan, Shirvan, and Dagestan (Provinciarum persicarum Kilaniae nempe Chirvaniae Dagestaniae)*, 1728. Map, 18½ × 22⅞ in. Courtesy of Stanford University, David Rumsey Map Center

Crossing the Caspian

PERSIA AND EUROPE, 1500–1700

ALEXANDRIA HEJAZI TSAGARIS

In 1728, the Nuremberg print shop of Johann Baptist Homann issued a revolutionary map of the Caspian Sea and its coastal Persian provinces (fig. 1). Homann's map was one of the first to accurately represent the shape of the Caspian, the world's largest inland body of water, in the area surrounded by what we now know as Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Iran. Up until that point, cartographers had depicted it as a wide, vague oval, as in a 1634 example by Willem Janszoon Blaeu (fig. 2).¹ The cartographic misperception carried on so long due to the simple fact that, until the 17th century, the Caspian remained an untraveled and mysterious waterway. Mapmakers like Blaeu—then the most sought-after cartographer in the Netherlands—still referenced Ptolemy's ancient geographic atlases for templates of Caspian lands. But in 1600, this changed. In contrast to the empty sea in Blaeu's map, the constellation of ships in the version by Homann demonstrate the emergence of the Caspian as a major water route between Persia and Europe. Ambassadors and merchants crossing it gathered direct knowledge of the sea as they navigated to and from the coasts of Persia.

When the Caspian opened as a channel of exchange, Persia was part of the Safavid Empire, an Islamic Shi'ite dynasty (1501–1722). In the bottom-left corner of Blaeu's map, Shah Abbas I (r. 1588–1629), the most widely known king of the Safavid dynasty, is represented with two of his guards. It was during Abbas's rule that the Safavid Empire reached the apex of its military, artistic, and economic might—a success that had much to do with Abbas's campaign to bring Persia into contact with a wider network of international allies.² Europe was an especially



Fig. 2 Willem Janszoon Blaeu (the Netherlands, 1571–1638),
Map of the Kingdom of Safavid Persia (Persia sive Sophorum Regnum), 1634.
 Map, 14¹⁵/₁₆ × 19¹¹/₁₆ in. Courtesy of Stanford University, David Rumsey Map Center

important part of this foreign policy, since, like the Safavids, Italy, Spain, Austria, Poland-Lithuania, Hungary, and the Balkans were also fighting wars against the Ottomans. Because the geographical stretch of the Ottoman Empire bordered Europe to the west and Persia to the east, Ottoman attempts to expand their territory threatened both frontiers. Collaborating against their shared enemy, ambassadors from Europe and Persia attempted to establish an alliance against the Turks. First, however, they needed to find a safe passage that circumvented Ottoman land. The Caspian emerged as that crucial pathway (fig. 3).



Fig. 3 *Routes between Persia and Europe, 1500–1700*, 2019. Digital map. Cartography by Grga Basic

In the end, this planned coalition against the Ottomans never fully materialized.³ Yet the opening of the Caspian as a route between Persia and Europe led to important developments outside of politics, especially in the fields of the visual arts, literature, linguistics, science, religious studies, and cartography.⁴ Inspired by the idea of coming to know a foreign culture through the medium of art, *Crossing the Caspian* brings together prints, drawings, paintings, books, maps, porcelain, and silk from the golden age of artistic encounter and exchange between Safavid Persia and Europe: the years 1500 to 1700.



Fig. 4 Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Scene from the Shahnameh: Rostam Battling with the White Demon*, c. 1588. Gouache and gold leaf on paper, 6 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 4 $\frac{3}{16}$ in.
Committee for Art Acquisitions Fund, 1985.137

THE ROSE AND THE NIGHTINGALE: MINIATURES AND TEXTILES BETWEEN PERSIA AND EUROPE

Diversity was a defining feature of Safavid art even before Persia came into contact with Europe. At their height, the Safavids controlled all of modern-day Iran, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Armenia, and eastern Georgia as well as parts of the North Caucasus, Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Before they came to power in 1501, all of these regions were autonomous states governed by local rulers, each with unique artistic tastes and styles. When Shah Ismail I (r. 1501–24), the founder of the Safavid dynasty, brought this vast expanse under his control, he worked diligently to create a cohesive political and visual identity that reflected the diversity of the new Safavid dynasty.⁵

At the royal workshop in Tabriz, artists from across the new empire gathered to produce lavishly illustrated manuscripts.⁶ These were highly collaborative enterprises that involved miniaturists, illuminators, calligraphers, poets, scribes, and gold sprinklers. One of the favored commissions was the *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), an eleventh-century epic composed by the poet Firdausi. Firdausi's *Shahnameh* recorded the sweeping history of Persia from its mythical origins up until the 7th-century Islamic conquest. Around the middle of the 16th century, a trend developed for stand-alone illustrations of single scenes from the *Shahnameh*. The most popular of these was *Rustam Battling with the White Demon* (fig. 4).⁷ In this episode, Rustam—the legendary hero of the *Shahnameh*—slays the monstrous leader of a foreign army that had captured and blinded the Persian king, Kay Kavus. Whereas manuscript versions of this scene included detailed landscapes, margin illustrations, background figures, and calligraphic text, the sole focus in this painting is the physical struggle between figures—metaphorically, between good and evil. Or, to a Safavid viewer, the defense of Persia against the Ottomans.

Rather than being confined within the bindings of books, individual miniatures such as the one we examine here were mobile. Royals and other elites collaged miniatures from different sources into albums called *muraqqa* (literally “that which has been patched together”).⁸ Safavid artists also circulated their miniatures in more public spaces such as markets and coffeehouses. In Persian bazaars, European merchants traded Italian and Dutch prints and paintings for Persian manuscripts and miniatures. Once transported back to Europe, these treasures found their way into artists' collections and libraries. The Dutch artist Rembrandt van Rijn, for instance, was an avid collector of Persian miniatures, which he then copied.⁹ Regarding the transport of full manuscripts, in 1599 two Tuscan scholars purchased a 13th-century *Shahnameh* from a market in Cairo and brought it back to Italy. Still held at the National Library of Florence, it is the oldest surviving *Shahnameh* manuscript.

Safavid textiles—spun from raw silk harvested near the Caspian—also featured figural scenes from the *Shahnameh* and other favored Persian poems and stories.¹⁰ Because Europeans imported so many Safavid textiles, Persian artisans readily produced silks bearing floral and vegetal motifs that would appeal to both domestic and foreign markets. The most popular of these themes was the Persian *gol o bol-bol*, “the rose and the nightingale.” In one fine example from the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,¹¹ a repeating pattern of thorned roses and flowering pomegranates interlocks with nightingales and peacocks, woven into scarlet and ocher tufts of velvet atop a base of saffron-dyed silk (fig. 5).

The rose and nightingale motif was both a literary and a decorative theme in Persian culture, symbolizing earthly and spiritual love. In its beauty and perfection, the rose represented the beloved (though its thorns also warned of love’s cruelty), while the dotting nightingale, lost in songs of longing and devotion, represented the lover. In mystical Islamic poetry, such as the Sufi verse of Rumi and Hafez, the nightingale’s thirst for the rose was also a metaphor for the soul’s yearning for union with God. In Christian iconography, the peacock—the other of the two birds represented on the textile—was a symbol of resurrection and immortality, and in Islamic and Christian contexts alike, the motif conjured associations of heavenly gardens of paradise. Safavid artisans continuously worked to refine their techniques. To this end, they consulted English and Dutch herbals (manuscripts containing descriptions of plants) that European ambassadors brought to the Safavid court as diplomatic gifts. This collaboration eventually led to the appearance of more scientifically precise plants in Safavid art.¹²

THE (RE)DISCOVERY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN PERSIA: SAFAVID AMBASSADORS IN EUROPE

Safavid ambassadors brought diplomatic gifts of silk on their embassies to Europe. In 1599 Shah Abbas I sent his first major delegation to Europe with the twofold aim of fomenting anti-Ottoman alliances and exposing Safavid silks to European markets. In 1601, two years after departing from the Caspian, the ambassadors arrived in Prague. Their host, the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II, commissioned his imperial engraver from Antwerp to make portraits of them. Aegidius Sadeler II designed a print of the embassy’s lead diplomat, Hossein Ali Beg Bayat (fig. 6). In the rendering of Bayat’s clothing, Sadeler captured the various rich textures in exquisite detail, from the striped linen turban and fur-lined robe to the velvet palmette woven into the silk sleeve.

Ambassadorial portraits were valuable sources of anthropological and sociological knowledge, particularly for Europeans interested in Safavid demeanor and fashion. The French draftsman Jacques Callot made an extraordinary number of prints of costumed figures from Islamic empires,

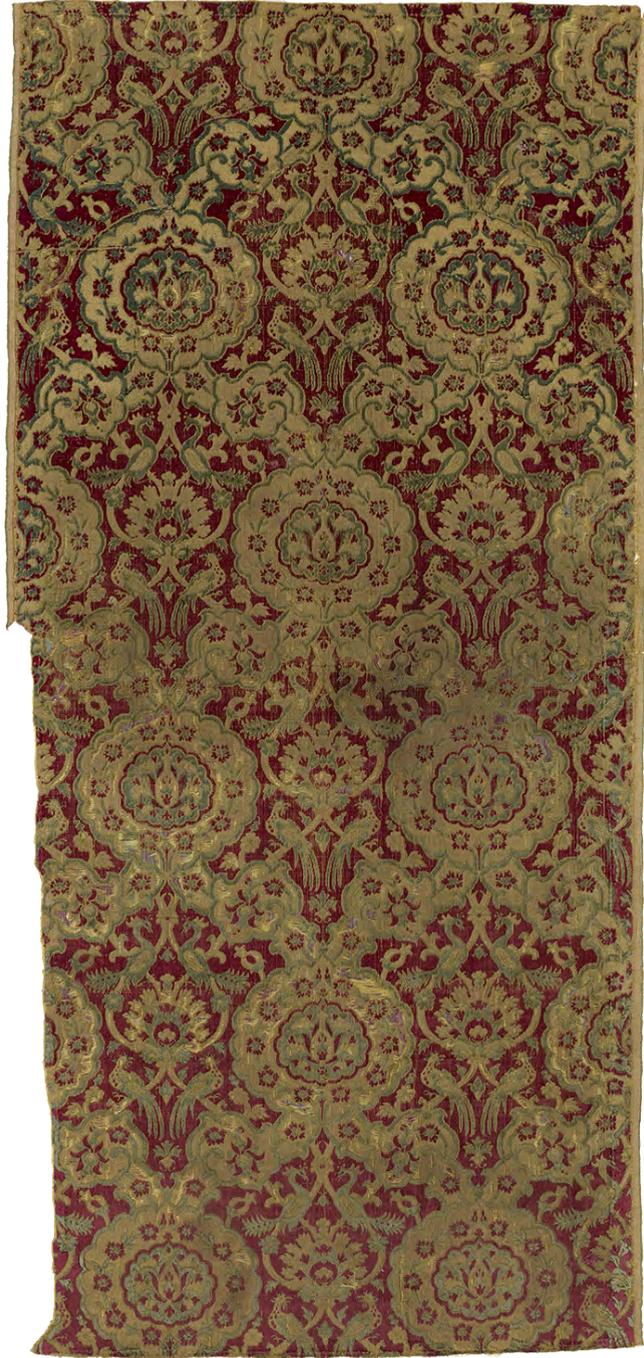


Fig. 5 Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Length of Velvet*, 17th century.
Silk, metallic thread, velvet, 49 × 22 in. Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco,
Gift of Archer M. Huntington



Fig. 6 Aegidius Sadeler II (Flanders [now Belgium], c. 1570–1629), *Portrait of Hossein Ali Beg Bayat*, 1601. Print, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 5 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts



Fig. 7 Jacques Callot (France, 1592–1635), *Two Turkish Headdresses of a Turban with an Aigrette* (*Les Deux Turs Coiffés d'un Turban Avec un Aigrette*), 1621–24. Etching, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 5 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. Gift of Andrea Rothe and Jeanne McKee Rothe, 2015.43.13

nearly all of which have since been erroneously labeled as “Turks.”¹³ The two figures in Callot’s *Les deux turs coiffés* (The Two Turkish Headdresses) are unmistakably Safavid (fig. 7). The elongated and well-trimmed mustache was a distinctive feature of courtly Persian men, a trend started by Shah Abbas in the late 1580s. Ottoman facial hair, on the other hand, was typically characterized by a mustache and full beard. The Safavid *mandil* or turban, also seen in Callot’s print, was wrapped twelve times around the head (a symbol of the Safavid religion of Twelver-Shiism) and held in place with a long finial or feathered plume. The billowing robes depicted in Callot’s print—long silk chemises worn over collarless shirts and tapered trousers, with jeweled sashes encircling the waist—were also characteristic Safavid sartorial finery. A longer robe, the royal *kal’at*, was worn over the entire outfit. Last, Callot’s figures wear the heeled Persian boot, a trend later imitated in Europe.

Theatrical productions featuring Persian characters used figural studies like Callot’s in the design of stage sets, costumes, and various ephemera. Some of the most iconic works of European literature include references to the contemporary Safavid court, for instance Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602) and the French philosopher Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* (1721).¹⁴ These works represented not only a fascination with the Safavids, but a rebirth of European studies of Persian antiquity.¹⁵ European courts commissioned translations of ancient Greek histories of classical Persia, notably those by Herodotus, Xenophon, and Ctesias. These translations inspired a wave of European plays devoted to ancient Persian history, including the wars of Cyrus and Darius (kings of the Achaemenid Empire); the battle for Jerusalem between the Sasanian king Khosrow and the Roman



Fig. 8 Pieter Jansz. Quast (the Netherlands, 1605/6–1647),
Man in Oriental Dress, c. 1640. Graphite on vellum, 7¹¹/₁₆ × 6 in.
Committee for Art Acquisitions Fund, 1983,104

emperor Heraclius; and from the Old Testament, the story of Queen Esther, the wife of the Persian king Xerxes who saved the Jews from persecution. When Callot worked at the Florentine court of Cosimo II de' Medici, he collaborated on several of these Persian-inspired court plays. Callot's prints spread as far as the Netherlands, where they were carefully copied.

A sketch by Pieter Jansz. Quast, the so-called Dutch Callot because of his careful study of the French printmaker, was possibly a direct response to Callot's Persian figures (fig. 8).¹⁶ We can identify Quast's figure as a Persian because of the feathered headgear, layered robes, and heeled leather boots. Quast's Persian greets the viewer frontally, as if facing an audience from a stage. The theatrical connection is apt, since the sketch was made while Quast was working on Joannes Serwouter's production of *Hester* or *The Deliverance of the Jews*, which premiered at the Schouwburg Theater in Amsterdam.¹⁷ Quast's sketch is likely meant to be a study for the character of King Xerxes. But the sketch is amusingly anachronistic: an Achaemenid king who reigned in the fourth century BCE is wearing 17th-century Safavid fashion. Xerxes was a Zoroastrian king, not an Islamic Shia shah.

BECOMING PERSIAN:
EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS AT THE SAFAVID COURT

Images of Safavids were useful to European ambassadors preparing for their journeys to Persia. Foreign visitors to the Safavid court routinely transitioned from European to Persian clothing upon entering the Safavid Empire, demonstrating respect for the shah and signaling the transformative aspect of the journey. Some even grew Safavid-style mustaches especially for their arrival. Adam Olearius, the secretary of a 1635 German embassy to Isfahan, recorded this custom of



Fig. 9 John Ogilby (Scotland, 1600–1676), Plate from *Asia: The First Part*, 1673. Book.
Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

“becoming Persian” in his illustrated travelogue.¹⁸ In an English print of the embassy’s entry into Isfahan, the German diplomats descend into the Safavid capital on silk-adorned camels (fig. 9). The panorama includes a diagram of the *maydan* (city square) with its important architectural monuments: Ali Qapu Palace, Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, Shah Mosque, and the Imperial Bazaar.

Olearius was just one of many Europeans who published Persian travelogues. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, a French gem merchant who was the official jewel broker to Shah Safi I, also recorded his observations of the Safavid court. In a passage describing the reception of an Uzbek ambassador in Isfahan, Tavernier takes the reader to the center of the Safavid palace:

The ambassador entered into a large garden all paved with great marble stones, in the middle of which runs a channel of water. . . . At the end were four lions and three tigers couchant upon carpets of silk. The ceiling and the pillars were all painted with foliage work in gold and azure and the floor was spread with gold and silk carpets. The King sat upon a cushion of cloth of gold, with another behind him of the same, set up against a great hanging tapestry wrought with Persian characters containing the mysteries of the law. The King was clad in a silk streaked with gold: his cloak was gold with flowers of silk and silver, furred with a Martin sable, the blackest and most glittering that ever was seen. Upon his bonnet he wore a plume of heron feathers fastened with a transparent jewel; in the middle was a pear-fashioned pearl, set with great topazes and rubies.¹⁹

Intrigued by the tapestry’s Persian characters containing “the mysteries of the law,” Tavernier reproduced the calligraphic inscriptions as prints in his travelogue (fig. 10). His inscriptions record the names of the Twelve Imams, the spiritual and political successors of the Prophet Muhammad according to Iranian Twelver Shi’ite doctrine. Isfahan was a center of comparative

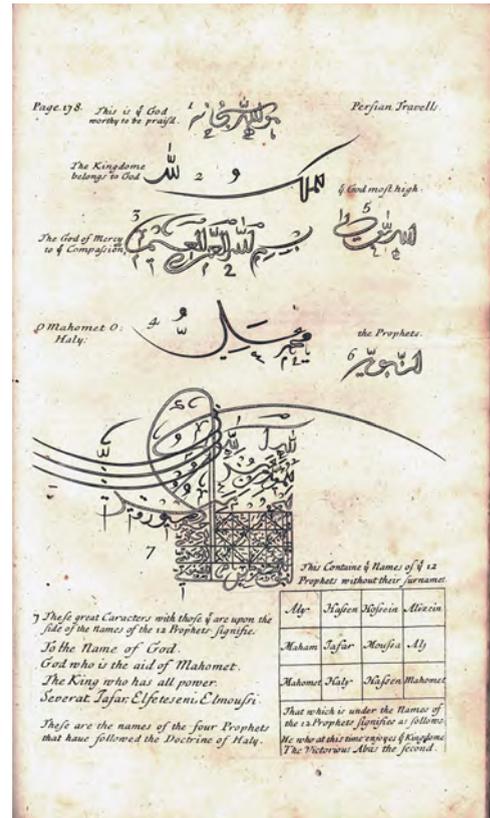


Fig. 10 Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (France, 1605–1689), Leaf from *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, a Noble Man of France Now Living, Through Turkey Into Persia, and the East-Indies. . .*, 1678. Book. Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries



Fig. 11 Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Bowl*, 17th century.
Soft paste with white slip and underglaze blue decoration, $3\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8} \times 7\frac{1}{8}$ in.
Gift from the Virginia and Ernest Esberg Trust, 2003.39

religious debates. Just as the Safavids welcomed Christians into Persia and took an avid interest in learning about Christianity, European travelers like Olearius and Tavernier were also keen to learn about Islam, including the distinctions between Sunni and Shia theology.

European cities hosted comparative studies in the field of linguistics, examining Persian and Indo-European languages. The Dutch university town of Leiden especially became a thriving center for Persian studies. In the 1600s Dutch scholars printed the first Persian-Latin dictionaries and grammars there, which were financed and commissioned by the Dutch East India Company. The most important foreign trading firm in Persia, the Dutch East India Company exported the usual commodities of silk, leather, and spices from Persia to the Netherlands. Persia also became their go-to supplier of blue-and-white porcelain (a commodity conventionally sourced from China).²⁰ When the imperial kilns of Jingdezhen shut down from 1652 to 1683, Persia supplanted China as the main producer of this type of pottery (fig. 11). The uneven lines and rushed hand of the glazer on the Safavid bowl at left tell us that it may have been painted hastily to satisfy a large order from the Netherlands.

Growing ties between the Netherlands and Persia brought several Dutch artists to the Safavid court.²¹ Around 1617 the Dutch painter Jan Lucasz Van Hasselt arrived in Isfahan and was named *ustad naqqash* (master painter) by Shah Abbas. Van Hasselt made several portraits of Safavid officials and drawings of ancient antiquities, and painted murals on the walls of the Shah's summer residence in Ashraf, a palace that overlooked the Caspian Sea. Figural painting was already a thriving artistic genre in Persia well before the arrival of European artists, and exchanges between artists amplified this preexisting tradition.

A miniature by the school of Mu'in Musavvir of the Safavid eunuch Saru Taqi demonstrates the enduring Safavid taste for portraiture (fig. 12). Saru Taqi, advisor to three Safavid shahs, is shown slightly turned to the side in a gesture of reception. As a grand vizier, he routinely hosted foreign ambassadors to Persia. He personally welcomed Adam Olearius and the German ambassadors in his own magnificent palace in Isfahan; Olearius recorded how Venetian mirrors and portraits of foreign women in European style adorned the interior of Saru Taqi's reception hall. Group scenes of Persians hosting Europeans and other foreign visitors in lavish garden parties were a distinctive feature of Safavid architectural decoration. Thanks to 20th-century restoration projects, these murals can still be seen on palace and market walls in Isfahan today (fig. 13).²² In 1722, Afghan armies laid siege to Isfahan; soldiers threw Safavid documents into the Zayandeh River and covered over figural murals with thick coats of white paint, marking the fall of the Safavid Empire. Centuries after this erasure, surviving works of art in museum collections across the world, such as the ones assembled here endure, as a powerful visual archive of the golden age of encounters between Persia and Europe.



Fig. 12 Attributed to Mu'in Musavvir (or his school) (Iran, active c. 1635–1697), *Portrait of the "Pillar of the State," the Grand Vizier Saru Taqi*, before 1645. Tempera or gouache, possibly on paper, $7\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{3}{16}$ in. Gift of the Estate of Marion B. Pierstorff, 2005.97



Fig. 13 Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *European Fête*,
Mural on the East Side of the Inner Wall of the Qaysariyya Portal, Isfahan, 17th century.
Photograph courtesy of Mohammad Sarraf

CODA: A PERSIAN COURT IN SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco Bay Area has a unique and important tie to the early study of Persian art in the United States. While the study of Safavid art flourished in modern European cities like Paris, London, and Rome, courses in Persian art were not offered at US universities until the 1940s. This came after a wave of New York exhibitions dedicated to Persian art and culture in 1934 celebrating the millenary of the birth of Firdausi (author of the *Shahnameh*). Arthur Upham Pope, a former professor of aesthetics at the University of California at Berkeley, was central to this movement that opened the doors to the arts of Persia.²³ Museums around the world commissioned Pope to organize symposia and exhibitions on the topic of Persian art, in which works from the Safavid Empire were especially of interest. Pope facilitated full-scale reproductions of Safavid monuments at exhibitions in Philadelphia, London, and New York's Museum of Modern Art.

While most of these ephemeral revivals of Safavid art can only be glimpsed in photographs today, Pope's replica of a Persian court still stands in San Francisco's Fairmont Hotel. Pope was commissioned to design the penthouse suite for US banker John S. Drum, and for the entryway he chose to re-create a Safavid-style portal, replete with Islamic inscriptions, a niche composed of *muqarnas*—a form of ornamental vaulting—and exquisite Isfahani tile work. It is documented in a photograph by Ansel Adams (fig. 13). Adams had collaborated with Pope several years earlier, when he photographed Pope's curation of Persian textiles for Yosemite's Ahwahnee hotel. In 1945, advisors and ambassadors from fifty countries gathered in the Fairmont to draft the 1945 Charter of the United Nations. Secretary of State Edward Stettinius stayed in the Persian penthouse, where he hosted secret meetings with world leaders like British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov, and Chinese Foreign Minister T. V. Soong over drinks in the Persian court. This historic event recalled the arrival of foreign officials to the Safavid court of Isfahan more than four hundred years earlier. Thus, a moment of temporary rapprochement between Iran and the United States occurred in a setting that recalled the long history of diplomatic relations between Persia and Europe and the art it inspired.

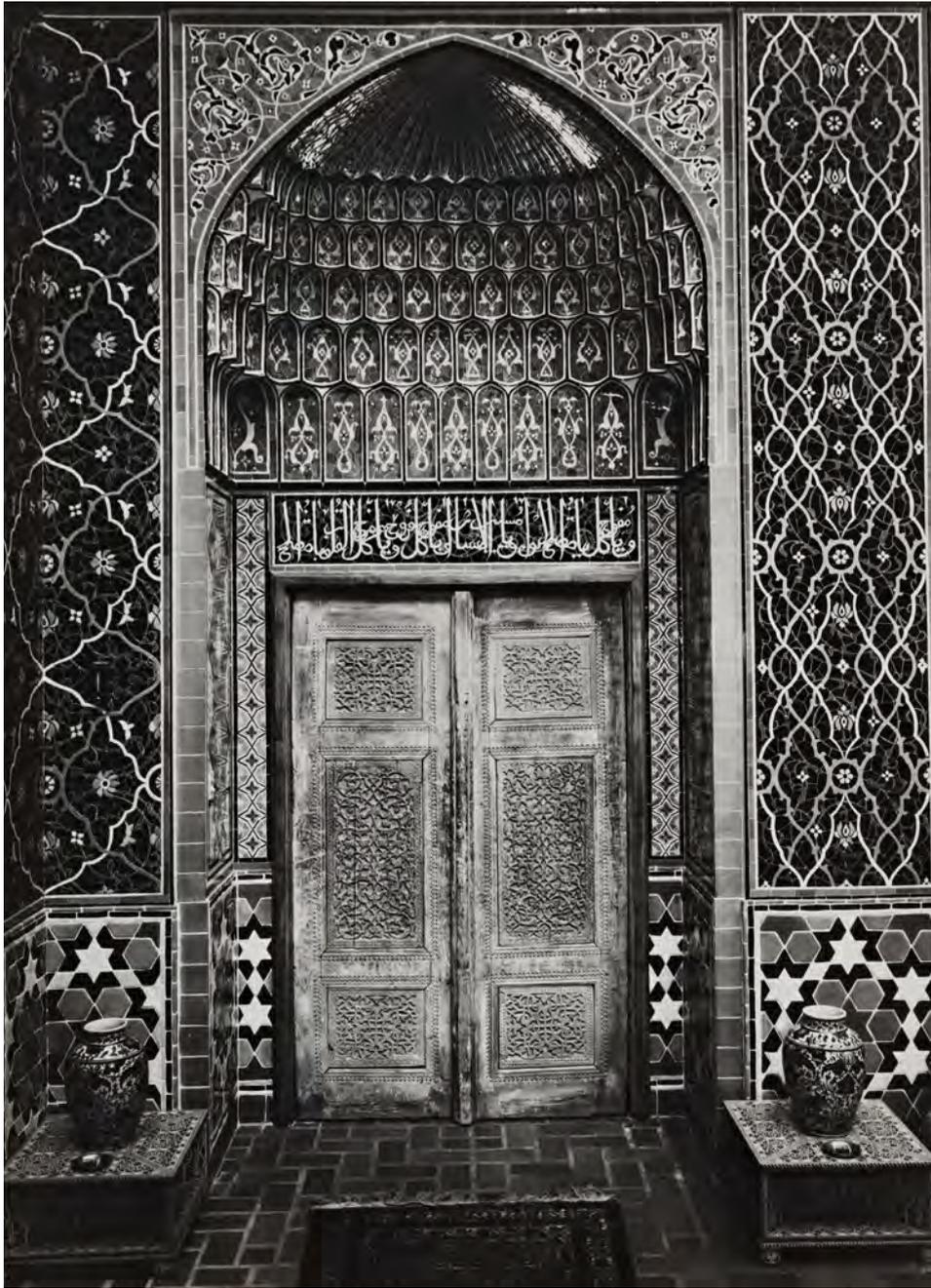


Fig. 14 Ansel Adams (U.S.A., 1902–1984),
Doorway of Persian Court, c. 1932. Gelatin silver print, $13\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ in.
Used with permission of and © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust.
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Holt, 1986.19.2

- 1 For an analysis of the Caspian in early modern cartography see chapter 3 of Elio Branciforte, *Visions of Persia: Mapping of Adam Olearius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
- 2 For studies of foreign relations with Safavid Iran see Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, eds., *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012); as well as several articles by Rudi Matthee, including "The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers to Iran," *Journal of Early Modern History* 13 (2009): 137–71; and "Safavid Iran through the Eyes of European Travelers," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 23 (2012): 10–24. See also Jean Aubin and Jacqueline Calmard, eds., *Européens en Orient au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1994).
- 3 While a joint Persian-European army never fought arm in arm against the Ottomans, there were other moments of collaboration. For instance, on the Persian Gulf, the Safavids conceded military and commercial bases to Portugal, Britain, Spain, and the Netherlands. Bernard Lewis and other historians argue that had the Muslim countries not been at war with one another, the Ottomans may well have won in their attempts to expand farther into Europe. Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 19–29.
- 4 For a recent study on relations between commercial and artistic exchange in Safavid times see Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson, eds., *The Mercantile Effect: Art and Exchange in the Islamic World during the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: Gingko Library, 2017). See also Axel Langer, ed., *The Fascination of Persia: The Persian-European Dialogue in Seventeenth-Century Art and Contemporary Art of Teheran* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg and Verlag Scheidegger & Spiess AG, 2013).
- 5 Sheila Canby, ed., *Safavid Art and Architecture* (London: British Museum Press, 2002); Charles Melville, ed., *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris in association with the Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, University of Cambridge, 1996).
- 6 Sheila Canby, ed., *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp: The Persian Book of Kings* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011).
- 7 Francesca Leoni, "Picturing Evil: Images of Divs and the Reception of the Shahnama," in *Shahnama Studies II: The Reception of Firdausi's Shahnama*, ed. Charles Melville and Gabrielle van den Berg (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 101–18.
- 8 For an overview of the *muragga* tradition see David Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).
- 9 For more on Rembrandt's collection of Mughal and Persian miniatures see Stephanie Schrader, Catherine A. Glynn, Yael Rice, William W. Robinson, and Harmenszoon R. Rembrandt, *Rembrandt and the Inspiration of India* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2018), 43–61.
- 10 Carol Bier, *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart: Textile Arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran, 16th–19th Centuries* (Washington, DC: Textile Museum, 1987).
- 11 Layla Diba, "The Rose and the Nightingale in Persian Art," *Arts of Asia* 26 (1996): 100–112.
- 12 Basil Gray, "An Album of Designs for Persian Textiles," in *Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst: Festschrift für Ernst Kubnel*, ed. Richard Ettinghausen (Berlin, 1959), 219–25.
- 13 Leonard Baskin and A. Hyatt Mayor, "The Etchings of Jacques Callot," *Massachusetts Review* 3, no. 1 (1961): 121–32.
- 14 For other examples of English plays that mention the Safavids see Cyrus Ghani, *Shakespeare, Persia, and the East* (Washington, DC: Mage, 2008); Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1649–1622* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). On the French fascination with Safavid Persia see Susan Mokheri, *The Persian Mirror: Reflections of the Safavid Empire in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
- 15 Chloë Houston, "'Thou Glorious Kingdome, Thou Chiefe of Empires': Persia in Early Seventeenth-Century Travel Literature," *Studies in Travel Writing* 13, no. 2 (2009): 141–52.
- 16 B. A. Stanton-Hirst, "Pieter Quast and the Theatre," *Oud Holland* 96, no. 4 (1982): 213–37.
- 17 Ann Tzeuschler Lurie, "Jan Steen: Esther, Ahasuerus and Haman," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 52, no. 4 (1965): 95–100.
- 18 F. Behzad, *Adam Olearius' "Persianischer Rosenthal": Untersuchungen zur Übersetzung von Saadis "Golestan" im 17. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, Germany, 1970).
- 19 Johann Baptist Homann, *Les six voyages* (Paris, 1677), 178–79.
- 20 Yolande Crowe, *Persia and China: Safavid Blue and White Ceramics in the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1501–1738* (London: La Borie, 2002).
- 21 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann and Michael North, eds., *Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014). The work of Gary Schwartz is fundamental to the study of Dutch-Persian artistic exchange. See Gary Schwartz, "Between Court and Company: Dutch Artists in Persia," in *The Fascination of Persia, 15–67*, 300–320; Gary Schwartz, "Safavid Favour and Company Scorn: The Fortunes of Dutch Painters to the Shah," in *Iran and the Netherlands: Interwoven Through the Ages*, ed. Martine Gosselink and Dirk J. Tang (Gronsveld, the Netherlands, and Rotterdam: Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn & Co's Uitgeversmaatschappij, 2009), 132–52.
- 22 Sussan Babaie is the leading art historian on Isfahan and Safavid palace architecture. For her work on the figural murals that depict Europeans, see her essay "Frontiers of Visual Taboo: Painted 'Indecencies' in Isfahan," in *Eros and Sexuality in Islamic Art*, ed. Francesca Leoni and Mika Natif (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 131–56.
- 23 Yuka Kadoi, ed., *Arthur Upham Pope and a New Survey of Persian Art* (Boston: Brill, 2016); Keelan Overton, "From Pahlavi Isfahan to Pacific Shangri La: Reviving, Restoring, and Reinventing Safavid Aesthetics, c. 1920–40," *West 86th: A Journal of Decorative Arts, Design History, and Material Culture* 19, no. 1 (2012): 61–87.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

This listing reflects the information available at the time of publication.

Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Length of Velvet*, 17th century. Silk, metallic thread, velvet, 49 × 22 in. Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Archer M. Huntington

Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Scene from the Shabnameh: Rustam Battling with the White Demon*, c. 1588. Gouache and gold leaf on paper, 4 $\frac{5}{16}$ × 6 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. Committee for Art Acquisitions Fund, 1985.137

Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Lady Reading by a Pool*, c. 1570. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper mounted to decorated album page mounted to additional support, 8 $\frac{1}{16}$ × 3 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Gift of Arthur Sachs

Artist unknown (Persian, Iran), *Bowl*, 17th century. Soft paste with white slip and underglaze blue decoration, 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ × 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. Gift from the Virginia and Ernest Esberg Trust, 2003.39

Ansel Adams (U.S.A., 1902–1984), *Doorway of Persian Court*, c. 1932. Gelatin silver print, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Used with permission of and © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Holt, 1986.19.2

Willem Janszoon Blaeu (the Netherlands, 1571–1638), *Map of the Kingdom of Safavid Persia (Persia sive Sophorum Regnum)*, 1634. Map, 14 $\frac{15}{16}$ × 19 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. Courtesy of Stanford University, David Rumsey Map Center

Jacques Callot (France, 1592–1635), *Two Turkish Headdresses of a Turban with an Aigrette (Les Deux Turcs Coiffés d'un Turban Avec un Aigrette)*, 1621–24. Etching, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 5 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. Gift of Andrea Rothe and Jeanne McKee Rothe, 2015.43.13

Jacques Callot (France, 1592–1635), *Frontispiece to "Various Figures (Varié Figure)"*, 1621–24. Etching, 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Gift of Andrea Rothe and Jeanne McKee Rothe, 2015.43.14

Johann Baptist Homann (Germany, 1663–1724), *Map of the Persian Provinces of Gilan, Shirvan, and Dagestan (Provinciarum persicarum Kilaniae nempe Chirvaniae Dagestaniae)*, 1728. Map, 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ × 22 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. Courtesy of Stanford University, David Rumsey Map Center

Nicolas Lagneau (France, active c. 1590–c. 1610), *Bust Portrait of a Man in Oriental Dress*, c. 17th century. Black, brown, and red chalk on paper, 12 $\frac{5}{16}$ in. × 8 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. Vincent Bressi Fund, 1989.73

Attributed to Mu'in Musavvir (or his school) (Iran, active c. 1635–1697), *Portrait of the "Pillar of the State," the Grand Vizier Saru Taqi*, before 1645. Tempera or gouache, possibly on paper, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 4 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. Gift of the Estate of Marion B. Pierstorff, 2005.97

John Ogilby (Scotland, 1600–1676), Plate from *Asia: The First Part*, 1673. Book. Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

Pieter Jansz. Quast (the Netherlands, 1605/6–1647), *Man in Oriental Dress*, c. 1640. Graphite on vellum, $7\frac{1}{16} \times 6$ in. Committee for Art Acquisitions Fund, 1983.10

Aegidius Sadeler II (Flanders [now Belgium], c. 1570–1629), *Portrait of Hossein Ali Beg Bayat*, 1601. Print, $7\frac{7}{8} \times 5\frac{7}{16}$ in. Courtesy of Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (France, 1605–1689), Leaf from *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier, a Noble Man of France Now Living, Through Turkey Into Persia, and the East-Indies. . .*, 1678. Book. Courtesy of Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My discovery of Safavid art began in 2015 while enrolled in Paula Findlen's seminar "Coffee, Sugar, and Chocolate: Commodities and Consumption in World History." We were each asked to choose an object from the Cantor Arts Center and write a cultural biography for it. I selected an object mysteriously titled "Persian manuscript," for which no further information was available. With help from my father, we identified it as a seventeenth-century illuminated manuscript of Jalal al-Din Rumi's *Masnavi*, a Safavid version of one of the great jewels of medieval Persian literature. I then wondered if there were other Persian pieces at the Cantor waiting to be found. I am grateful to the Cantor and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for making the discoveries shared here possible.

The ideas behind *Crossing the Caspian* stem from my dissertation. My research questions have gotten sharper over the years thanks to discussions with and guidance from my advisors and committee, including Fabio Barry, Paula Findlen, Emanuele Lugli, and Bissera Pentcheva. Additional gratitude goes to other advisors on Safavid art, such as Cristelle Baskins, Elio Brancaforte, and David Roxburgh. I thank all of these mentors who offered help and feedback on this essay.

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PREVIOUS MELLON CURATORIAL RESEARCH ASSISTANT
EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

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Sculpture*, Winter 2018

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George Philip LeBourdais, *Arboreal Architecture:
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Annie Ronan, *Astley D. M. Cooper and Mrs. Stanford's
Jewels*, Fall 2015

John R. Blakinger, *The New Landscape: Experiments
in Light by György Kepes*, Fall 2014

Front:

Attributed to Mu'in Musavvir (or his school) (Iran, active c. 1635–1697), Detail of *Portrait of the "Pillar of the State," the Grand Vizier Saru Taqi*, before 1645. Tempera or gouache, possibly on paper, 7 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 4 $\frac{7}{16}$ in. Gift of the Estate of Marion B. Pierstorff, 2005.97

Back:

Ansel Adams (U.S.A., 1902–1984), *Doorway of Persian Court*, c. 1932. Gelatin silver print, 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ × 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. Used with permission of and © The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Holt, 1986.19.2

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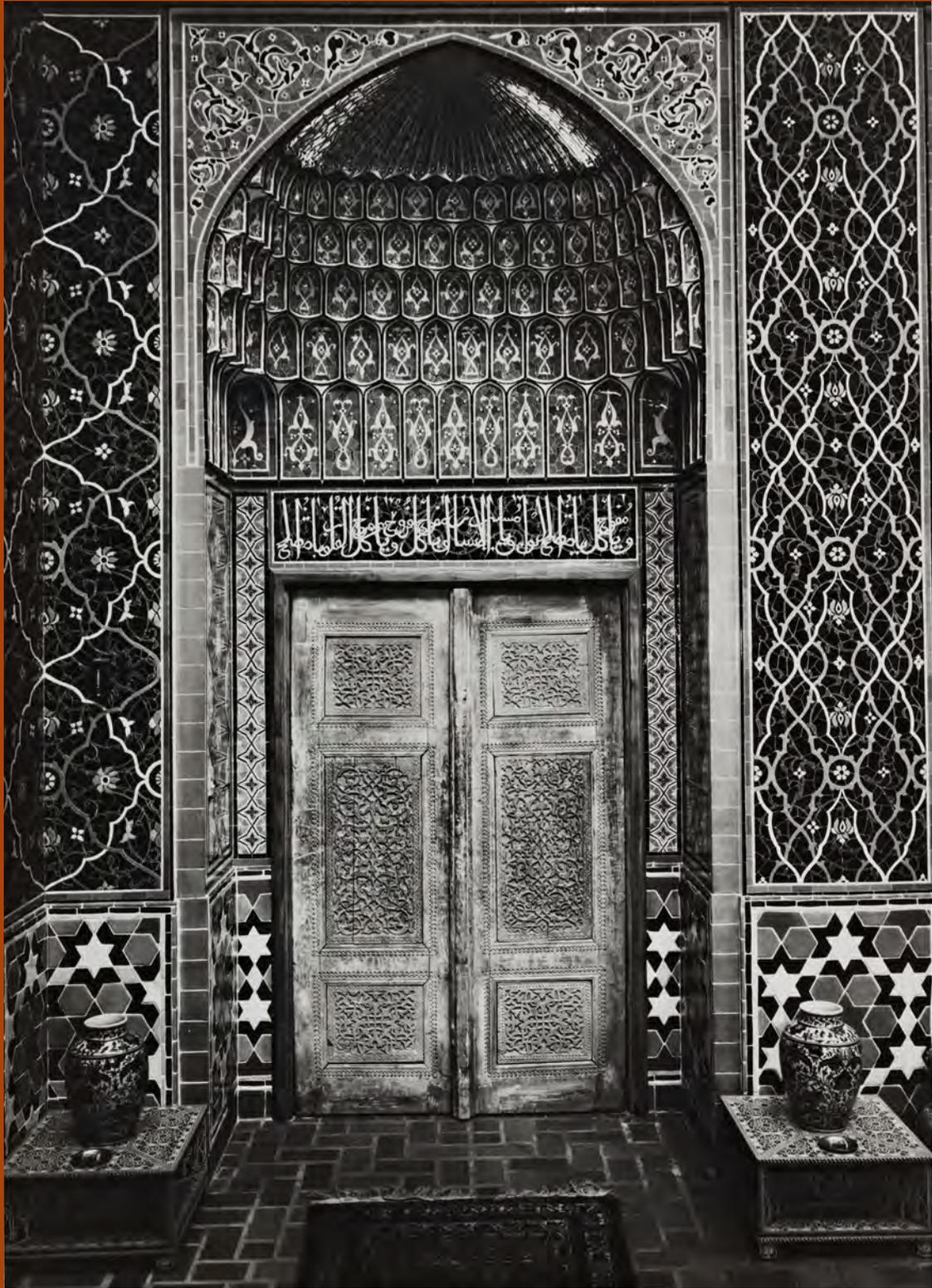
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