

FIG. 1

DETAIL OF GREEN SATIN, DATED 1571 A.D. ESTATE OF PARISH WATSON.

SOME SHIRAZ SILKS

by

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AN APPLE-GREEN satin with a design of two men under a blossoming tree, alternating with a cypress, appeared in Paris in 1928 (Fig. 1). The piece was virtually complete, and at the top was a white panel with a red *naskhi* (cursive calligraphic) inscription: "*This is made for a present to the Holy Place by Ghulam Shirzadh, 979*" (=1571 A.D.). Rumor averred, probably correctly, that the "Holy Place" was the Shrine of Imam Reza at Mashhad, and the silk had been spirited out of the Treasury there. The piece was subsequently cut into sections, but a Paris dealer had them re-assembled and sewed together, save for the inscription portion, which was lacking when the piece appeared at the London (Royal Academy) Persian Exhibition in January 1931.¹

The satin is not of the usual Safavid quality, which is characteristically firm and closely woven, but is, rather, soft and spongy, and the pattern-wefts are so thin and so loosely floated that they do not cover the surface as closely as do those of the familiar personage satins of the time. Moreover, the colors are unusual. The ground is a somewhat acid light apple-green; the costumes are a clear, strong orange and a sulphur yellow, which is used also for the imbricated cypress; the very dark chocolate brown of the tree branches serves as a binding tone, and the massed white of the blossoms and of the turbans alleviates the sharp contrasts.

At London, two or three professionals, more or less specialized in Islamic art but not at all in textiles, questioned, as usual, its authenticity, reacting on two common fallacies: first, the erroneous assumption that a negative judgment is "safer" than an acceptance — but logically every negative statement is a positive affirmation, and involves just as much responsibility; and second, the implicit assumption, "What I do not know is probably not so"—a presumption of omniscience which needs no comment.

Epigraphists had been emphatic that the inscription was, both textually and calligraphically, correct for the period, and believed it unlikely that it could have been so successfully falsified. But even more convincing evidence for authenticity are details of the pattern, unprecedented in treat-

ment. In each tree, branches form a pair of half-concealed dragons; from the white mass of blossoms emerge, still less immediately perceptible, a pair of ibex heads; on the base of the trunk is hidden a horned mask, with pear-shaped face ending in a long, pointed chin, slanting slit eyes, and V-shaped mouth; the roots are metamorphosed into an addorsed pair of the Chinese fantastic beast, the *kh'i-lin*.²

Both the differences in the weaving quality and the color values, and this exceptional use of *double entendre* pointed to a hitherto unidentified center of origin within Persia, and the writer, dealing with this problem in the *Survey of Persian Art*, tentatively suggested Mashhad,³ from which one documented Safavid piece had appeared.

The satin, long since accepted, has been repeatedly published and exhibited,⁴ and the tentative identification has not been challenged; but meanwhile, an important study in a collateral field has provided decisive evidence for a corrected attribution, and the definition of a neglected school of textiles.

Miss Grace Guest,⁵ analyzing the illustrations in Safavid manuscripts belonging to the Freer Gallery, which have colophons specifying a Shiraz origin, has established the distinctive character of the painting style of that city, and in her definition she develops at some length, as an outstanding feature virtually peculiar to this city, the introduction, principally in plant and rock forms, of more or less concealed figures — animals and human beings. These hidden figures are sometimes complete, more often they are heads, frequently grotesque.

Miss Guest's emphasis on this point prompted a re-examination of the green satin, with its Shiraz-style concealment of the dragons, the ibex heads, the mask and the *kh'i-lins*, and then a search through other Safavid silks for possible further examples of such hidden elements. On the green satin two pairs of birds were noted, incorporated in the orange and yellow portions of the tree: one, perched on the outer branches just below the white cloud; the other, above the white blossom-mass and beyond, with wings raised and head twisted; and also, and more interesting, the inverted figure of a fanciful manikin, drawn into the trunk and first fork of the tree. He stands with legs straddled and (shrunken) arms akimbo, and wears a flat-topped cap with a triadic finial.

The search for other Safavid silks attributable to Shiraz has brought together, to date, ten examples. Seven have concealed figures; another has other diagnostic features defined by Miss Guest; two others are closely allied to one of the pieces directly attributable.

The Shiraz painters' device of concealing grotesque heads in rock forms is characteristically developed on a satin voided cut-velvet, the satin covered with metal-thread (Fig. 2).⁶ Two fanciful lilies grow on swaying stems on a slanting rock. Between every two plants is a small *t'chi*, or Chinese cloud-knot, and below is a butterfly. In the cluster of seven rocks are incorporated at least eight more or less detailed animal and human faces, including: a monkey; a sharp-nosed bear of a type indigenous to Iran; a dog of the greyhound type, the head seen from above and to one side; three human faces, all caricatured and one incomplete; a dog of the spaniel type; and a larger human face, with receding chin, which includes the monkey and one of the small faces.

On a dark blue satin (Fig. 3),⁷ showing a horseman with a man afoot in front of him, set in a rich, close coverage of plants and cloud-wisps, is another bear's head, hidden in a yellow rock. Here the nose, though pointed, is less sharp and longer, and in the jaws is held one of the beast's legs, with claw attached. At the foot of a feathery willow is concealed a boar's head; and the base of a bare willow-shrub carries the horned demon mask already noted on the green satin, more naturalistic here, but lacking the lower jaw, like early Chinese, and occasional early Near Eastern animal masks.

In this composition another stylistic element, also emphasized by Miss Guest, re-enforces the Shiraz attribution: an elongated leaping hare in a distinctive style.

The satin is thinner and softer than the green satin, but the pattern wefts in this weave also are very fine and loosely floated, so that they have worn off in patches. The color-chord is again unusual: butter-yellow, terracotta and white on the dark blue.

The rider rather aimlessly extends his right hand, while the man afoot holds one hand out and the other above it, with no apparent purpose. These gestures are explained by figures on another satin with a citron-colored ground,⁸ for almost the identical group recurs here and the man afoot is offering a jug to the rider. The latter has not extended his hand to accept the proffered jug, but in the original rendering he was evidently reaching for it, as shown on the blue satin. In short, these two groups stem from a common origin, but both vary, though in different details, from that origin.

The context on the citron satin shows, moreover, the significance of the original drawing: it was an illustration of Rustam's expedition to subdue the White Div, recounted in the *Shah Nama*. En route, he becomes



FIG. 2

METAL-GROUND, SATIN, VOIDED CUT-VELVET. LATE
SIXTEENTH OR EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.
METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.

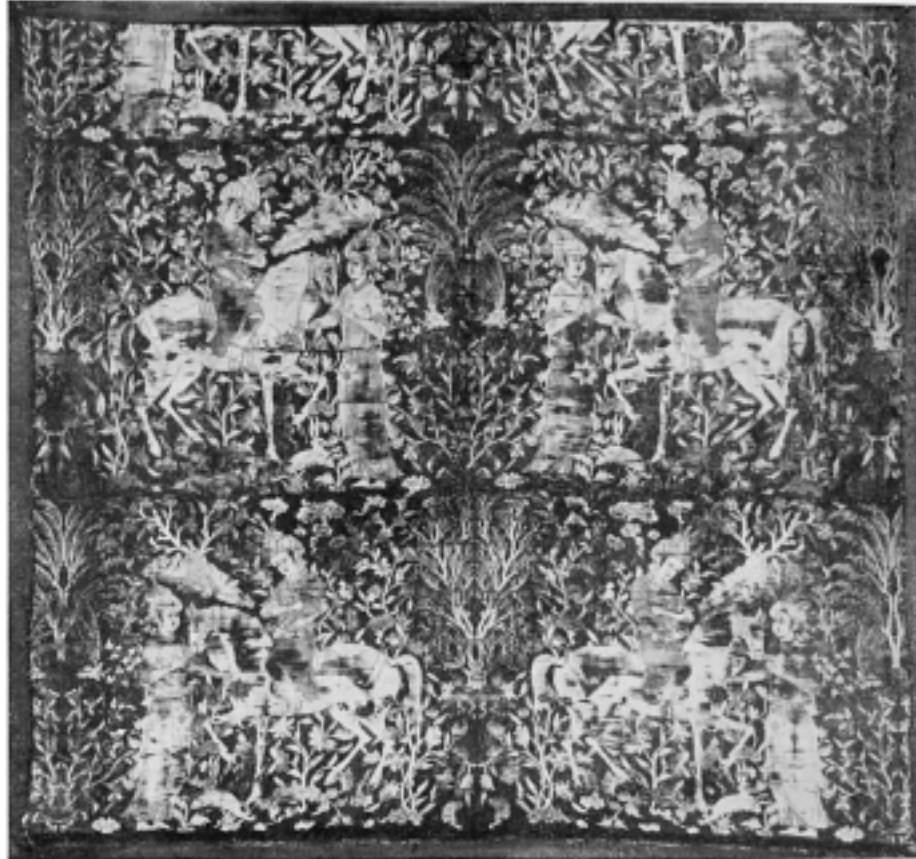


FIG. 3

BLUE SATIN. THIRD QUARTER SIXTEENTH CENTURY. MOORE MEMORIAL COLLECTION,
YALE UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY.

very thirsty and can find no water, but a majestic ram appears and leads the way to a spring. On the citron satin the ram is shown near the two men. Rustam's servant (who does not appear in this episode in the *Shah Nama*) has just brought him water from the spring to which the ram (which represents Ahura Mazda) has led the way.

Another episode in the same adventure supplies the subject for the next register of the repeat. Rustam on his horse Rakhsh, who is proceeding at his lightning gallop ("*rakhsh*" means "lightning"), is dragging along by a rope a prisoner afoot. Rustam had defeated this man, then spared his life on condition that he guide him to the White Div's den, whither they are now hastening. Here is the origin of the hitherto mysterious "Prisoner" theme so often repeated on Safavid satins. The oldest known illustration of the subject in this form is on a tapestry⁹ of the late Sasanian period, attributable, from internal evidence, to Byblos, where the main theme is the battle between Kur and the Hero, derived ultimately from Sumerian mythology,¹⁰ a context which throws considerable light on some sources and processes of development of *Shah Nama* material.

Only one hidden figure has been noted on this citron satin: a feline head in a rock above the rump of Rakhsh in the first episode.

Still another satin,¹¹ very close in style to the blue one, shows two young men seated in a garden beside a plane tree which grows out of a cluster of rocks, of a form frequent in Shiraz paintings. A larger rock above contains at least two hidden grotesque heads. Beside that are large, dramatic streaming clouds, similar to the clouds on the blue satin. The color combination is especially unusual — on the yellow ground the pattern is all in brown, save for the rocks, which are dark red. All four satins are of about the same period, approximately the third quarter of the sixteenth century.

On a compound-cloth with metal-thread ground,¹² the blossoming tree treated as a cloud, which is a feature of the green satin, is repeated, but with more elegant detail. The white blur is exquisitely sprinkled with delicate star blossoms. Under the tree a stag grazes; behind it, a rocky outcrop resolves, on examination, into two grotesque profiles, and two others are developed between this and the tree. The repeat is treated in an unprecedented manner — like a cut-out, the bottom a rectangular section, applied at intervals on the silver ground.

The pattern of a rose-ground compound-cloth (Fig. 4),¹³ where the main figure is a fashionably dressed youth of the time of Shah Abbas, seated, drinking wine, includes the horned mask at the base of a tree, in



FIG. 4

ROSE-GROUND COMPOUND-CLOTH. PERIOD OF SHAH ABBAS I.
DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ARTS.

a form very similar to that on the green satin — the face pear-shaped with pointed chin, the mouth sharply upcurved, the slit eyes slanting; but in this case the head is set down into a thick ruff, and between the horns rises a phallos.

A white rock, just below the seated figure, sketches a camel's head, and another, above the man's foot, suggests a three-quarters view of a woman's head. The color scale is very rich: turquoise blue, beige, light rose and white on the deep rose of the ground.

Two other patterns have thus far been found in this rose-ground compound-cloth series. A small fragment in the writer's collection, which antedates the Shah Abbas piece by a quarter of a century or more, shows Bahram Gur, mounted on a camel, plunging a long spear into a fawn, one of a small herd in flight. The color range is similar: a lighter blue, a paler beige, a deeper rose on the lighter rose ground (reversing the relations in the Shah Abbas piece), and white; and also black and golden yellow. Behind Bahram Gur are the pinnacled rocks so frequent in Shiraz paintings, and one white escarpment suggests a fantastic boar's head, while a bit of blue rock resembles a bear's head. Above is a *v'chi*.

The other pattern, with cavaliers, is known only from a group of badly damaged fragments which appeared in the London market in 1937.¹⁴ Unfortunately, the writer did not make any record at the time and the fragments seem to have disappeared.

The characteristic extended and elongated running hare, whose diagnostic significance in Shiraz painting Miss Guest has emphasized, is presented in three variations on a solid cut-pile velvet,¹⁵ unusual in that the design is almost wholly in silhouette, green on red (faded). Apparently there are no hidden elements in this composition, but that is true likewise of many Shiraz miniatures that Miss Guest illustrates.

A red and yellow trimming band (now in the Moore Collection, Yale University Art Gallery), which is stylistically in a class by itself,¹⁶ presents a fantastic profile in a different manner. The pattern consists of a pair of identical, reversed, confronted arabesque-blossoms, unusual in detail, on stems springing from a common stalk, and the split petal at the top of each blossom, instead of curling over, is extended into a stem, the two joining to support a dependent trefoil. This unit is alternately upright and inverted in a close interlocking series. The profile is created in the space between the backs of the blossoms, and a dot is inserted here, meaningless in the positive design, but serving as the eye of the negative, or void profile. The profile, with a sloping forehead swinging down into a

sharp nose and an ambiguous chin running forward into a sharp point, perhaps a beard, is so similar to the smaller rock profile on the compound-cloth with the grazing stag under the blossoming tree, it seems likely that the two were by the same designer.

Such development of interspaces or voids in designs into specific figures, which was an ancient Near Eastern device, might well have attracted Shiraz artists, with their penchant for concealed motives, and further analysis of the silks now attributed to this center has revealed void motives on at least three other pieces.

Thus in the design on the green satin (Fig. 1) there are five void figures. First, between the dragons is a vase, supported by their forepaws — a squat, broad bottle with a narrow neck, a shape familiar in Persian Safavid ceramic wares, sometimes called a “spittoon.” It is decorated with a white cloud, a detached bit of the blossom cloud in the positive pattern. Second, immediately below that is a simple tripod bowl. Third, behind the cypress, inverted, is a void-cypress (Sketch 1),¹⁷ stylized as a phallic symbol, “growing” on the mountain-shaped cover of a cauldron, with a high, slightly slanting and moulded foot. Fourth, next to this, between the seated figures addorsed, likewise inverted, is a short thick cypress, also phallically stylized and “growing” from the mountain-shaped top of a simpler cauldron (Sketch 2). The positive, concealed figure of the manikin is thus imposed on a shadow-pattern of a phallic cypress and the cauldron cover. Finally, below this is a silhouette of the head of the horned bovine personality.

But this phallically stylized cypress on the domed cover of a cauldron has an almost exact antecedent on the Sasanian silk showing King Khusraw performing a Vernal Equinox Tree-rite (Sketch 3).¹⁸ Could a textile pattern of the Safavid period, a time of deep Islamic devotion, include a Mazdean symbolic motive? Persian Muslims of the Sufi mystic group have maintained that Sufism perpetuated Zoroastrian elements. Some Western scholars have denied this. Does this Shiraz satin bear witness to the Sufi retention of Mazdean factors, refuting the skepticism of dogmatic aliens?

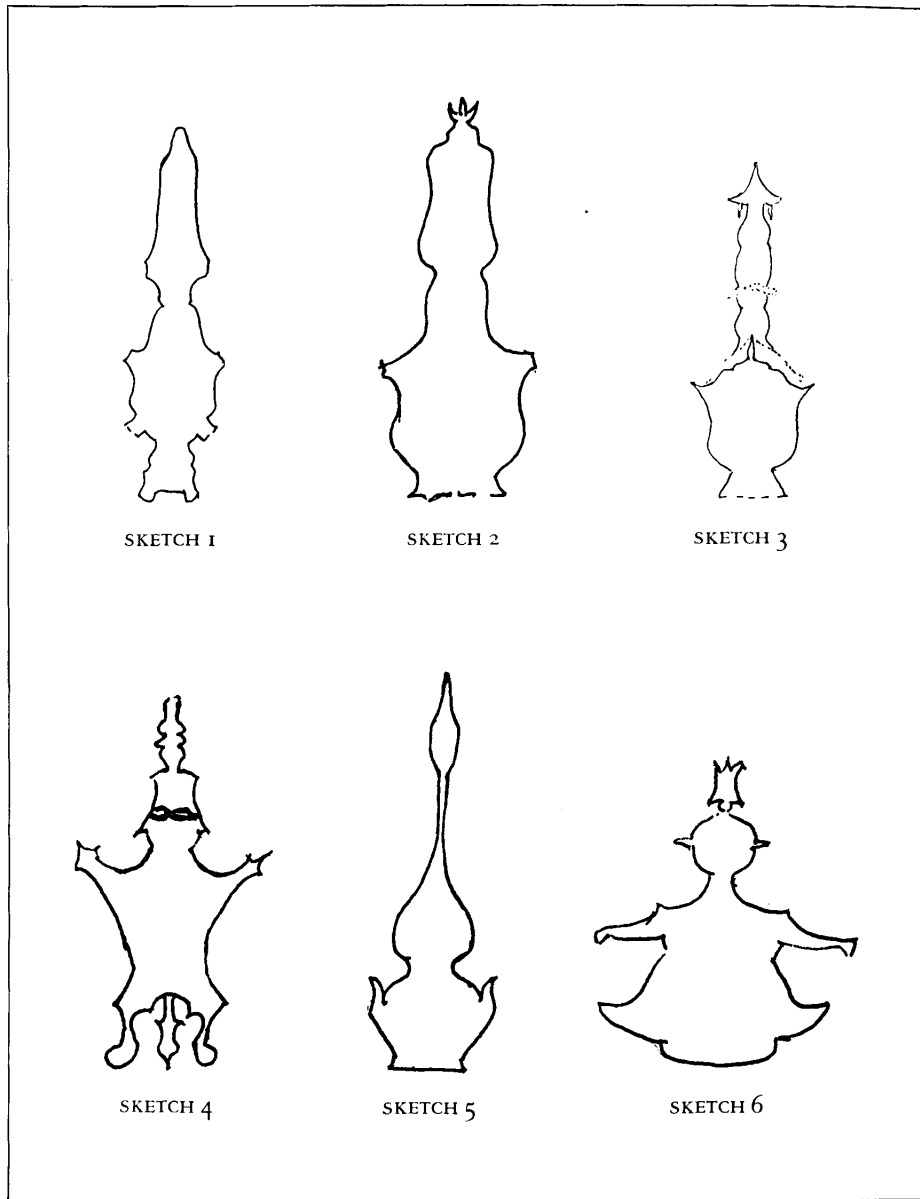
Void-patterns on the blue cavalier satin provide richer and more striking confirmation. In the shrub between the addorsed cavaliers, inverted, is a curiously stylized manikin, with short arms outstretched, fingers pointing up, bowed legs and pendant phallos, and flat-topped cap on which stands a phallic pole (Sketch 4). His eyes are drawn with leaflets from the positive pattern.

Below this queer gentleman, in the center of the bare-branched shrub, likewise inverted, is a jar with ear-handles, and growing out of it a short, rotund cypress, with a second, smaller, slender cypress developing out of it (Sketch 5). Below that is a small animal head.

On the same axis, between the confronted horsemen (and still inverted) — but more readily visible in the repeat to the right, and thus in the upper right corner when the silk is held upside down — is a seated figurine (Sketch 6), with a full skirt flaring out, her arms held straight out, a narrow brimmed “bowler” on her round head. Below her, in the midst of the feathery willow shrub, is a double phallos emblem (Sketch 7), consisting of two miniature cypresses, vertically inverted in relation to each other. Other void figures in this composition are too ambiguous to mention here, especially as we have time to trace the antecedents of only one of this complex group. For present purposes the most revealing will be the little bow-legged manikin.

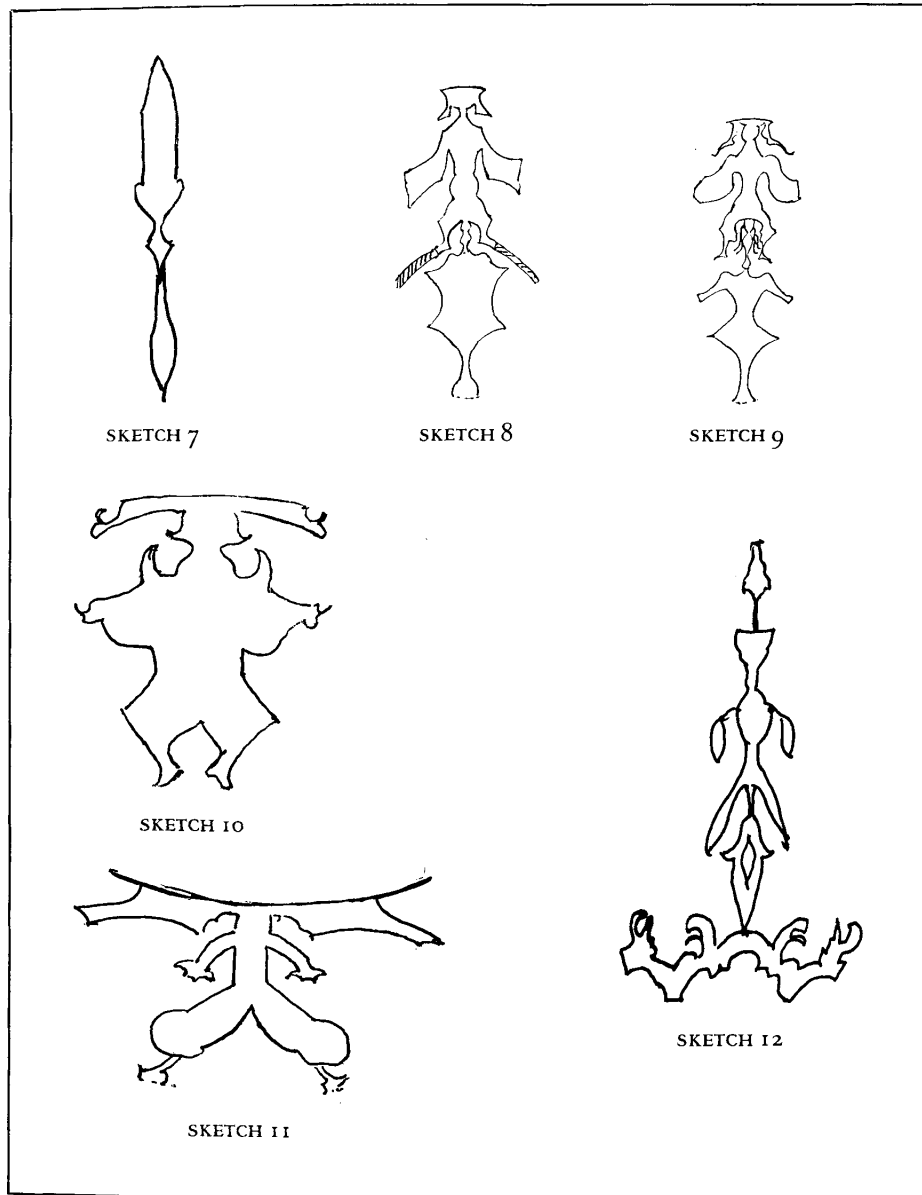
His history, as a textile void-pattern, goes back at least to the Sasanian period. Thus a male personage with outstretched arms, bow legs and pendant phallos, and flat-topped cap appears as a void-pattern on a polychrome silk from Säkkingen (Sketch 8),¹⁹ showing a mounted goddess hunting lions with a bow (the Anath-Anahit of the ancient Shrine, found and restored by the Achaemenid, Cambyses, near the site where Antioch-on-the-Orontes was subsequently built, and not far from the ancient city of Ugarit where the hunting-goddess Anath had been worshipped). On the Säkkingen silk the god is united with an animal hide spread out flat, a strange theme found also (Sketch 9)²⁰ on bichrome silks showing the same goddess. The Akkadian Creation-myth (“*Enuma elish* . . .”) tells how the first goddess, Tiamat, in cow form (as we know from the still-living myth among the Kabyls) was killed and the carcass split, half being spread out in the sky and the other half used to make the earth.²¹ Here, it would seem, is the flayed hide of this sacrificed cow as mate of a god above, probably up in the sky. The residual “God” in the void-pattern on the Safavid blue satin (Sketch 4) is drawn as if he were cut out of a hide. Incidentally, to this day Navajo sand-painters render Father Sky and Mother Earth as figures cut out of bovine hides.

But a thousand years separated the Safavid satin and the Sasanian silks. Could the idea have lived on, leaving no intermediary links? Possibly, yes; but fortunately this debate is rendered superfluous by a Buvayhid silk dated the equivalent of 998 A.D., bearing a design of Sasanian-style goats flanking a deciduous tree, in a roundel decorated with running goats



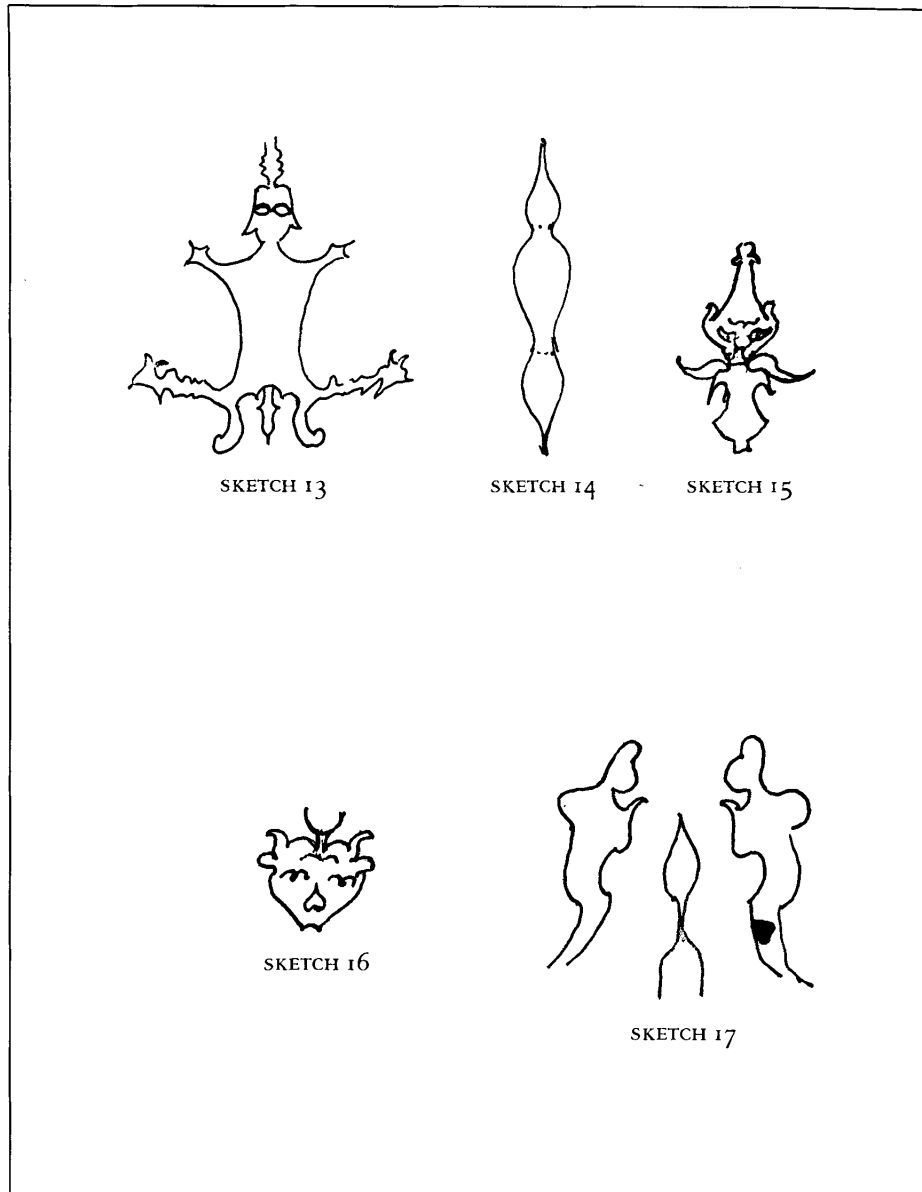
OUTLINE SKETCHES OF VOID-PATTERNS NOS. 1-6

(1) FROM GREEN SATIN FIG. 1, INVERTED, BEHIND CYPRESS. (2) FROM SAME, INVERTED, BETWEEN ADDORSED SEATED FIGURES. (3) FROM KHUSRAW I VERNAL EQUINOX TREE-RITE SILK, AT BOTTOM OF MEDIAL AXIS. (4) FROM BLUE SATIN, FIG. 3, INVERTED, IN SHRUB ABOVE WILLOW. (5) FROM SAME, INVERTED, CENTER OF BARE-BRANCHED SHRUB BETWEEN ADDORSED HORSEMEN. (6) FROM SAME, INVERTED, AT FOOT OF WILLOW BETWEEN ADDORSED HORSEMEN.



OUTLINE SKETCHES OF VOID-PATTERNS NOS. 7-12

(7) FROM BLUE SATIN, FIG. 3, IN WILLOW BETWEEN CONFRONTED HORSEMEN. (8) FROM "SAKKINGEN" SILK, INVERTED, ON MEDIAL AXIS. (9) FROM BERLIN BICHROME SILK WITH MOUNTED GODDESS HUNTING, INVERTED, ON MEDIAL AXIS. (10) FROM BUVAYHID SILK, DATED 998 A.D., FIG. 5, CENTER TOP ROUNDEL BAND. (11) FROM BUVAYHID SILK WITH PEACOCKS, FIG. 6, INVERTED, UPPER REGISTER ABOVE ROUNDEL. (12) FROM MONGOL PERIOD SATIN, FIG. 7, ON MEDIAL AXIS.



OUTLINE SKETCHES OF VOID-PATTERNS AND POSITIVE CONCEALED PATTERNS, NOS. 13-17

(13) FROM BLUE SATIN, FIG. 3, INVERTED, IN SHRUB ABOVE WILLOW (CF. SKETCH 4), (14) FROM GREEN SATIN, FIG. 1, BETWEEN LEGS OF CONCEALED MANIKIN, INVERTED IN TREE. (15) FROM BUVAYHID SILK WITH PEACOCK PATTERN, FIG. 6, POSITIVE CONCEALED PATTERN ON TREE-TRUNK IN ROUNDEL, LOWER REGISTER. (16) FROM SAME, ON TREE-TRUNK IN ROUNDEL, UPPER REGISTER. (17) VOID-PATTERN, ROSE-GROUND COMPOUND-CLOTH, FIG. 4, INVERTED, IN BARE WILLOW SHRUB.

(Fig. 5).²² For here again is the gentleman as a void-pattern between confronted reguardant goats, at the top, center, of the roundel band (Sketch 10). His arms are outstretched, his bowed legs define a void phallos, his flat-topped cap is very wide. A half-dozen other void patterns are concealed on this silk, but we must forego their exploration, to continue the quest of the gentleman.

On an approximately contemporary silk, with a design of peacocks in roundels (Fig. 6),²³ he is inverted in the space above the roundel in the upper register — hence at the base of the jar holding a palmette tree and flanked by winged goats. The head and flat-topped cap have been compressed into the roundel, but here are the outstretched arms and straddled legs (Sketch 11). Again there are several other void-patterns, including a most interesting presentation of the goddess, that must be temporarily neglected. The significant fact for our immediate purpose is that, with these two tenth century silks, we have cut in half the gap between the Sasanian and the Safavid examples of this void motive.

And now we can again cut in half (roughly) the five hundred years separating the Buvayhid and the Safavid examples, for we have a Mongol manifestation (Fig. 7). On a characteristic fourteenth century silver-brocaded satin, between rampant addorsed reguardant *kh'i-lins* (the Chinese fantastic beast that is also hidden in the roots of the blossoming tree on the Safavid green satin) is our manikin. Here he is rather in a rag-doll style — with arms out at his sides, legs straddled, and a flat-topped cap; and he, like the puppet on the Safavid dark blue satin, has a high finial on his cap, but it is in the form of a miniature cypress. Likewise his exaggerated pendant phallos is drawn as a miniature stylized cypress (Sketch 12). Thus incorporated into this Mongol period void-figure is the double phallic-cypress figure which forms a separate void-pattern (Sketch 7) on the Safavid blue satin.

The phallic cypress was, in Zoroastrianism, the emblem of Mainyu Spenta, hypostasyization of the Power of Ahura Mazda, the creative Power of the Great God being focussed, though not exclusively, in the phallos. Hence the god with a cypress-phallos is Ahura Mazda, the Great God, equivalent of the Rig Vedic Varuna and the Greek Ouranos, whose names come from a root meaning “over,” and designate them as Sky-gods.

The Mongol manikin is conjoined, not with a bovine hide, as were the Sasanian antecedents, but with the forequarters hide of a monstrous serpent, split and laid flat (in the so-called “Pacific” style that goes back



Tissu n° III.

FIG. 5

BUVAYHID SILK FROM THE RAYY GRAVES, DATED 998 A.D.



FIG. 6

BUVAYHID SILK FROM THE RAYY GRAVES. TEXTILE MUSEUM OF D. C.

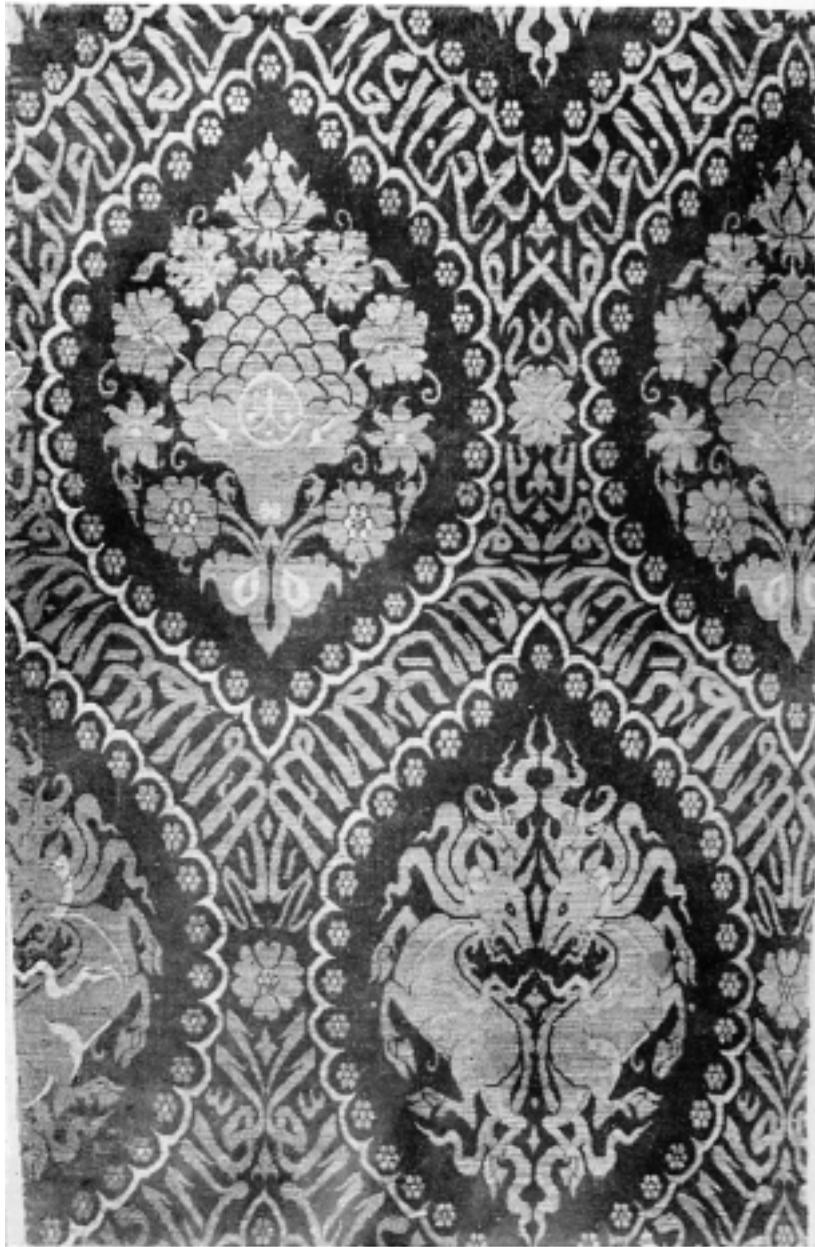


FIG. 7

MONGOL PERIOD METAL-THREAD PATTERNED SATIN.
BERLIN MUSEUM.

at least to Shang times in China). But Tiamat was also envisaged (and this we know from an Indian reference) as a terrific snake. The serpent depicted in the void-pattern also defines the “bow” of the Milky Way, which Tiamat represented.

Furthermore, this union with the outstretched serpent hide also explains a queer feature of the manikin on the Safavid blue satin — jagged undulant projections that develop from his knees (Sketch 13): in some two centuries of degeneration the two elements of the union had coalesced.

Finally, to round the circle, this Mongol period version of the cosmic bi-phallic figurine shows us that the positive concealed manikin on the Safavid green satin is another presentation of this same personality — an identification confirmed by a void-pattern extending down between his legs presenting the two miniature phallic cypresses vertically inverted in relation to each other, growing from the two ends of a Chinese baluster vase (Sketch 14).

Thus some of the hidden patterns on Shiraz Safavid silks, both negative and positive, have a continuous descent from Sasanian, and ultimately from much older sources. Their preservation and hidden presentation at this late period are explained by Sufi retention of Mazdean motives; and conversely, their continued usage sustains the Sufi claim of Zoroastrian ancestry.

The explanation of these void patterns as Sufi symbols can, furthermore, be put to a textual test; for just as the designers of these fabrics utilized visual puzzles, so did Sufis delight in verbal riddles; and a typical Sufi riddle parallels the most striking recurrent concealed puzzle-pattern on these silks.

The riddle has been translated:

“Heaven with these fair and beautiful stars is indeed beautiful; it has this aspect beneath, whatever may be above.

“If this lower aspect should go up by the ladder of knowledge, it would be united with its origin.

“No exoteric understanding can comprehend this.”

The two-level Heaven was a basic Mazdean assumption. The lower level was the region of the Goddess (and of the Milky Way), who is represented by the bovine hide or the split serpent; the upper was the realm of the God. The Goddess was created by externalizing, from the God’s own body, a phase of his being. She remained identical with him, a fragment of his very self, albeit physically detached. The Zoroastrian

goddess, Vohu Manu, was the female embodiment of the creative Good Thought of Ahura Mazda. Similarly, in one Old Testament Creation-myth (reported fragmentarily in *Proverbs* and the Apochryphal *Ecclesiasticus*) God creates a companion for himself by projecting into female form his Wisdom. Anahit (in Ugaritic "Anath") personated the Will or Purpose of the Great God. "*Tanit pênê Ba'al*," said the Carthaginians — the goddess "Tanit (probably another version of the name 'Anath') is the 'Face' (or 'Power') of the Lord." In the folkloristically degenerated *Genesis* version Eve is Adam's rib.

In some Near Eastern iconographies the pole uniting the two levels of Heaven was a ladder, as the verbal riddle says; the uniting pole in Mazdeanism was (or could be) the God's phallos, as shown in several of the textile void-patterns. Mystical knowledge is immediate experience, achieved by the goddess in her physical union with the god who is her origin. The esoteric or hidden nature of this doctrine is shown by the fact that it is illustrated only in hidden patterns. The Sufi verbal riddle is thus solved by the explication of the concealed textile patterns, and vice versa.

But in tracing the Mazdean-Sufi origin of these elements in the Safavid Shiraz textile style have we not also identified Buvayhid textile products of the Shiraz region? A Shiraz attribution of the peacock silk with void-patterns (Fig. 6) is supported by its inclusion of the recognized Shiraz feature, concealed positive patterns. For incorporated in the stylized crown of the tree between the peacocks in the lower register is a tiny winged lady with feline face and high conical cap (Sketch 15). Moreover, on the trunk of the tree in the alternate register, somewhat disguised, is the pear-shaped horned mask (Sketch 16) that we have already found on Safavid Shiraz silks.

The pear-shaped mask inconspicuously set amidst foliage on the trunk of a tree identifies as another link in this Shiraz series a fragmentary silk in the Rijksmuseum.²⁴ This piece is attributable to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century by comparison with a style of trees represented on Rayy underglaze-painted bowls. The tree is a pomegranate in fruit, long a Near Eastern symbol of male generative power. The horns on the mask survive here only as five small knobs.

The semi-concealed bovine head, at the base of the leafless shrub on the Safavid rose-ground compound-cloth showing the wine-bibber (Fig. 4), also incorporates a secondary concealed positive figure with puzzling associations: a tiny horned personage is seated, feet doubled under him,

on a rug, arms curved at his sides, hands evidently resting on his thighs. On each shoulder rises a serpent from whose head blaze flames — in their primary significance the bare branches of the shrub. On the person's head is balanced a vase decorated with a pendant cypress-phallos which, appearing to penetrate the vessel, suggests again the cosmic union. The blue rug on which the personage sits presents a simplified feline mask. A man with serpents on his shoulders is a major figure in the *Shah Nama*, Zahak; but he is a malevolent king. This seems rather to refer to an ancient Near Eastern cosmic divinity of which Zahak was a late, perverted interpretation.

The rendering of a pattern with triple meaning — a bare shrub, a horned mask, a seated horned personage — is an unusually elaborate instance of the tricky complexity with which Shiraz painters delighted to experiment, and here the difficult undertaking is carried to convincing success with extraordinary finesse. Nor does the complexity end there; for when inverted, the voids between the branches present a silhouette of a pair of winged angels (*peri*), with hair dressed in a high bun on the crown of the head, each wearing a long sweeping robe with deep bell sleeves, extending a hand in adoration of a tiny cypress on a mountain base (Sketch 17). The archangels who guarded the cypress-symbol of Mainyu Spenta were Haurvetat and Amretat, and these guardian angels flanking the cypress constitute the main pattern of one of the finest of the Seljuq silks.²⁵

The rose-ground compound-cloth is enriched by a number of other hidden patterns. For example, in the center of the beautiful symmetrical flower-spray just below the bare shrub is a column, in void-silhouette, of tiny vessels and emblems from the old Mazdean repertoire which can be seen either upright or inverted. Nor was the designer content just to repeat inherited symbolism; he also created void-patterns in the taste of his own time, notably two vessels in very large scale: a fine Chinese baluster vase, set on a low base, which is composed of the space between the two youths when confronted, so that it is decorated with a flower spray of the positive pattern; and a flaring jar with sharp pointed lip and flat-topped cover with a high, richly moulded knob, which is composed of the space between the two youths when addorsed, so that it is decorated with the bare-branched shrub. Directly above the vase is (likewise as a void-pattern) a large covered cauldron of the same general style as those which hold the cypress symbols of Ahura Mazda's Power (or of Mainyu Spenta), on the green satin; and the finial of the jar cover serves as stem

of a beautifully modelled chalice which likewise goes back to Sasanian antecedents.

Other possible hidden figures, negative and positive, are less definite. A designer who so obviously enjoyed the intricacies of his skill would hardly be satisfied with such comparatively easily solved riddles; and, on the other hand, he might be wily enough to offer opportunities for fictitious imaginings. Thus, the bottom of the youth's robe, curiously scalloped, seems to present (inverted) a positive concealed semi-grotesque profile quite in the Shiraz manner, with slanting eye, jutting blunt nose, and flowing beard, and also a negative profile, just below, more refined in character. Is one, or the other, or both, really an "*Erlkönig*," or just a "*Nebelstreif*"?

Certainly the designer devoted to this cartoon a special prolonged and concentrated effort; and so did also the weaver, for the repeat is not spaced with the usual mechanically easy shift of fifty per cent, but is adjusted to give a more continuous coverage which does not create the diagonal lines that intrude a conflicting mechanical emphasis into many Safavid illustrative textile patterns.

That Sasanian factors should have been so long and faithfully preserved in Shiraz textile arts is consistent with the history of the province. For here in Fars were the deepest roots of the ancient Iranian culture. It was the homeland of the Achaemenids, and here they built their ritual center, known to us by the Greek name, "Persepolis." Sasan, progenitor of the Sasanians, was Priest in the Anahit temple at Istakhr, near by, and Istakhr became the Sasanian Holy City. Here in 915 A.D. the scholar Mas'udi found the great collection of Iranian documents recording, in word and picture, their history and traditions. At the end of the tenth century, when the Buvayhid, Adud ed-Dawla, built his great palace-city near Shiraz, Mazdeans were numerous in the province, many fire-temples were actively in use, including three in and near Shiraz, and Adud ed-Dawla had some Mazdean texts translated for his library. At the same time, Sufi mysticism was becoming strong in Shiraz.

Of earlier looms in Shiraz we know little, but Adud ed-Dawla created great palace shops which produced fine wools, silks and "brocades" — i.e., patterned silks of various kinds. Of the high quality and distinctive character of the Safavid silk-weaving in this center we now have specific and impressive evidence.

FOOTNOTES

1. Cat. No. 392; still lacking the inscription. The piece now belongs to the Estate of Parish Watson.
2. More readily visible in color: see A. U. Pope — P. Ackerman (Eds.), *A Survey of Persian Art*, Oxford, 1938-39 (hereafter designated "S.P.A."), Vol. VI, Pl. 1029.
3. S.P.A., Vol. III, pp. 2140-42.
4. Johns Hopkins University, 1940, Cat. No. 112; Asia Institute's Exhibition of Persian Art, New York, 1940, Cat. No. 44 (p. 42); Asia Institute's Exhibition In Honor of the Shah, 1949.
5. Grace Dunham Guest, *Shiraz Painting in the sixteenth century*, Washington, 1949.
6. In S.P.A., Vol. VI, Pl. 1064 A, the Writer has attributed it to Yazd, because of the fantastic lily forms.
7. Another piece, Rhode Island School of Design, No. 36.011. For color plate see S.P.A., Vol. VI, Pl. 1031. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 2092, attributed by the Writer to Kashan.
8. In the Musée des Tissus, Lyons. See S.P.A., Vol. VI, Pl. 1027.
9. Found at Antinoë, and divided between the Musée Guimet and the Musée des Tissus, Lyons. See R. Cox, *Les Soieries d'Art*, Paris, 1914, Pl. 20, Fig. 1.
10. S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*, Philadelphia (American Philosophical Society), 1944, pp. 37-38, 76-82.
11. In the collection of Mrs. W. H. Moore, New York City. See S.P.A., Vol. III, p. 2093, Fig. 678, where the Writer has attributed this, also, to Kashan.
12. Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. See S.P.A., Vol. III, p. 2141, Fig. 715, where the Writer has attributed this to Mashhad.
13. Another piece in the Textile Museum of the District of Columbia shows the disposition of the repeats more completely and the void-patterns are more readily recognized there, but it was impossible to illustrate it as the Museum is now publishing catalogues of its collections and did not release this for publication here. The Writer is indebted to Mrs. Adèle Weibel for supplying the photograph of the Detroit piece out of her personal files. This piece was formerly in the collection of the late Mrs. Christian Holmes. Other examples are in the Hobart Moore Memorial Collection, Yale University Art Gallery, and the collection of M. Gulbenkian, Paris. For color plate of the Detroit piece see: A. C. Weibel, *Two Thousand Years of Textiles*, N. Y., 1952, Pl. 138; of the Moore piece: S.P.A., Vol. VI, Pl. 1058.
14. In the hands of an itinerant Persian dealer whose name the Writer has forgotten. The fragments were also offered to the Victoria and Albert Museum.
15. Boston Museum of Fine Arts. See S.P.A., Vol. VI., Pl. 1022 A.
16. Now Moore Collection, Yale University Art Gallery. S.P.A., Vol. III, p. 2145, Fig. 719 a.
17. These outline sketches are not meant to be precise or finished renditions, but are merely quick fountain-pen notes from the Writer's research files.
18. Ackerman, *An Unpublished Sasanian Silk*, *Bulletin of the Iranian Institute*, Vol. IV, Nos. 1-4, Vol. VII, No. 1, December, 1946, pp. 42-50.

19. Berlin Museum, No. 96.263: ill. J. Lessing, Die Gewebe-Sammlung des K. Kunstgewerbe Museums, Berlin, 1900, Pl. 8; or O. v. Falke, Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei, Berlin, 1913, Abb. 70; or *idem*, Decorative Silks, New York, 1922, Fig. 41.
20. Berlin Museum, No. 9286: ill. O. Wulff — W. F. Volbach, Spätantike und Koptische Stoffe, Berlin, 1926, Pl. 135.
21. Tablet IV, 11. 137-144: A. Heidel, The Babylonian Genesis, Chicago, 1942, p. 32.
22. First published by: G. Wiet, Soieries Persanes, Cairo, 1937, No. III.
23. Another piece in the collection of the late Edward Jackson Holmes. Exhibited: Exhibition of Persian Art, New York, 1940, Gallery XIV, No. 45, Cat. p. 468.
24. S.P.A., Vol. VI, Pl. 983 B.
25. S.P.A., Vol. III, p. 2013, Fig. 648; Exhibition of Persian Art, New York, 1940, Gallery XIV, No. 53, Cat. p. 471, ill. p. 472.