

This book deals with various aspects of cultural exchange between the Low Countries and Asia. While the Dutch East India Company (VOC) is extensively documented and its social and economic history have been researched, the important role the VOC played in the arts and more broadly visual culture has been relatively neglected. Although it is well known that increased prosperity and the flood of imported goods from Asia had a huge influence on seventeenth-century Holland, Netherlandish impact in Asia has not yet been thoroughly studied.

However, hundreds of VOC functionaries in Asia practiced forms of art in which they had been trained in the West. Several important Dutch painters worked at the court of the Persian shahs. Western perspective is found in unexpected places, including murals in an Isfahan palace and on Japanese title pages. Painters like Willem Schellinks who had traveled abroad created imaginative renditions of ceremonies at the Mogul court and wrote about the quality of its art.

When the VOC spread merchandise through Asia, it affected developments such as the growth of popularity of Chinese decorative motifs in Indonesia. A wave of interest in Dutch culture also hit Japan after the ban on import of books was lifted, resulting in Hollandomania, the imitation of anything Dutch, and *rangaku* (Dutch studies), which became the main vehicle for any and all knowledge concerning Europe.

Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia offers new insights into the world routes traveled by seventeenth-century Dutch art, architecture, and visual culture in relation to the impact of Asia on the Dutch Golden Age.

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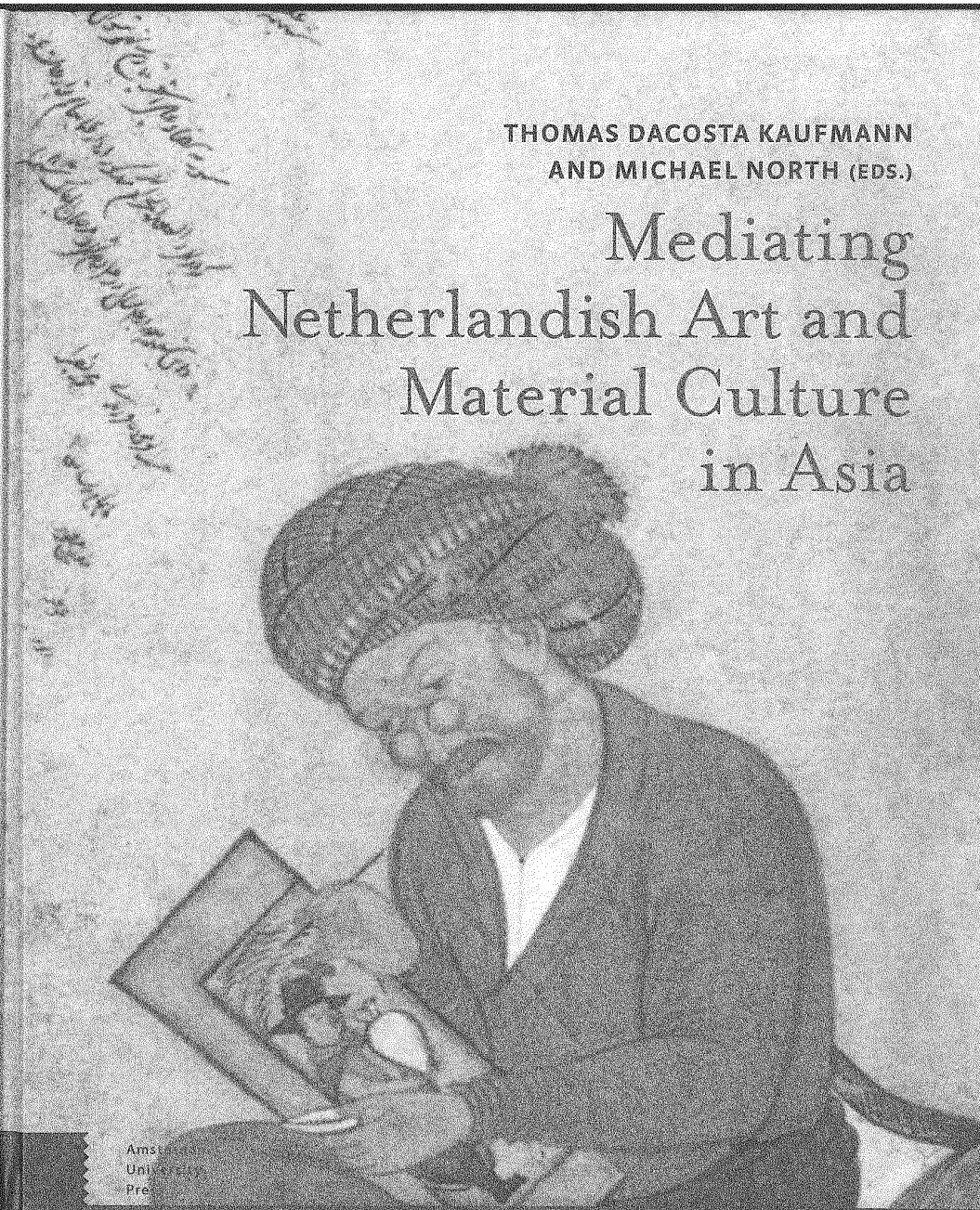


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KAUFMANN & NORTH Mediating Netherlandish Art and Material Culture in Asia

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1 Terms of Reception

Europeans and Persians and Each Other's Art

Gary Schwartz

"Of the 14 stations outside Batavia, Persia [...] stood at the top, surpassing even Japan."¹ The quotation is from the writings of Hendrik Dunlop, one of the pioneer researchers of the Dutch East India Company in Persia. "These pleasing dividends," his younger colleague D. W. Davies wrote, "caused Jan Pietersz. Coen to exclaim in November 1627, 'God grant the Company a long and peaceful trade in Persia [...].' And he was, in fact, graciously pleased to grant a continued high return. For more than a century, the Persian establishments were the most important Company posts on the mainland of Asia." Persia was an insatiable import market for whatever the Company had to offer: spices and condiments, foodstuffs, dyes, drugs, metals, steel products, wood, cloth, tobacco, porcelain, Japanese lacquer, and above all silver. Export was limited largely to silk, with smaller quantities of "foa, a dye stuff, and rose-water."²

Notice that the list does not include works of art. This is not an oversight. Dutch-Persian relations lacked many of the features that made for meaningful artistic exchange in Asia. The Dutch were not in charge of territories in Persia, as they were in the Indonesian archipelago, Sri Lanka, and to a degree the Indian subcontinent. There were no Dutch communities where an artist could set up shop and work for local Dutch patrons, as on the Cape and in Batavia. The Safavid court was receptive to Western art, but it did not espouse it the way the Japanese court did, as a source of knowledge, or the Mogul court, out of curiosity, for status and iconographical support of imperial pretensions.

The lack of positive stimuli was compounded by the existence of one major negative one. In contrast to the above countries, in Persia the state religion was Islam, in the form known as Twelver Shi'ism. While this did not deter the Safavids in the seventeenth century from supporting a lively and eclectic production of figurative art, it did spook the governors and high officials of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), who showed themselves excessively apprehensive about bringing paintings with human figures to that land. The potential damage this could do, one reads between the lines of their missives, was not worth the risk. Why trade for peanuts in a potentially explosive commodity that could endanger the market in silver, spices and silk? We will return to this matter below.

Purchase of Persian art was an even lower priority. If Persian artists showed a degree of interest in Western art and if the Safavid court patronized Dutch artists, European artists and patrons did not reciprocate. The voluminous VOC archives make no known mention of the purchase of even a single work of art in Persia. No sale within seventeenth-century Europe of a contemporaneous work of art from Persia has ever been published, to my knowledge.

The subject we are discussing, it is therefore well to realize, was not of major concern in its time. Our own reasons for delving into the role of art in Netherlandish-Persian relations in the Safavid period are anachronistic; they reflect the highly elevated role assigned to the fine arts in present-day society, especially within the humanities. Even within historical studies

today, this subject receives little attention. In the recent volume *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (2002), there is no mention of Dutch art or artists in Safavid Persia.³

This situation has its advantages. The subject brings us close to what Roland Barthes might have termed the “zero degree” of art history. The phenomena we will be studying stand out all the more starkly for their location in a void. They help to highlight certain features of more highly developed artistic exchange that are otherwise taken for granted. To gain the most from the sparse evidence available, the material will be analyzed to identify certain implicit features that carry meaning despite their scantiness. These are the terms, sometimes quantitative, sometimes qualitative, of the mutual artistic relations of Persia and the Netherlands, such as they were. What are here called “terms of reception” are not just found in words. Dutch texts on Persian art are virtually non-existent, and Persian ones on Dutch art completely so. Reception is a broader concept than that, however, and other aspects are taken into account as well: the physical treatment of works of art; gestures and other forms of behavior; official documentation; travelers’ reports; the evidence of works of art; and images of persons.

The conclusions of this study with regard to these issues are summarized in Table 1.

Only in two categories, both on the Persian side, do we detect outspoken reception of the

art of one of the cultures by the other. That is, the honors accorded by the Persian court to Dutch artists and the reflections in Persian art of respectful awareness of European art. Notice the reference to “European art,” a broader category than Netherlandish art. There are certainly instances of Persian artists directly copying Dutch and Flemish models. However, these are mixed in with examples of the copying or appropriation of models from Italy, England, and elsewhere. There is no reason to believe that Persian artists or patrons saw or were interested in possible differences between the art of the Netherlands and other European schools. All Europeans were called by the same name – *farangi*, Franks.⁴ In Persian art discourse, Netherlandish art had an undifferentiated place in the Frankish School that was sometimes but not always included in the listing of the seven modes of painting, exemplified by seven peoples.⁵ When a direct comparison is made, it came out in favor of the Persian school, as in these lines from a poem of 1559 by the Shiraz poet ‘Abdi Beg:

Painting has seven principles / it is like the sky,
which has seven spheres, The Islamic bright-
ness of the Muslims / has made manifest the
faults of the Franks.⁶

Table 1: Forms of recognition between the Netherlands and Persia with regard to each other’s art. The pluses indicate appreciative reception, the minuses active or implicit derogation.

	Physical survival	Gestures, reports of respect	Official archives	Travelers’ reports	Reflections in art	Images of persons
Persia	--	++	Lost	--	++	+
Netherlands	--	--	Plentiful, silent on Persian art	Late, derogatory	--	+

Physical Survival

In 1996, in an article on the mortality of art, the present author emphasized an important fact that is widely ignored and sometimes denied by art historians – namely, that the survival of a work of art through time is not the rule but the exception.

We deceive ourselves in claiming that art is an undying repository of memory, that it comes to us intact from the past and that it is in our power to preserve it for posterity. Every generation sees the decay or destruction of far more art than it conserves.... Sooner or later objects fall under the care of an alien culture which has no interest in preserving them. The conservation of art demands money, space, expert knowledge and lots of love. What culture will lavish these things on the art of an enemy or alien group? If it is not done, then at a given moment art objects begin to obey not cultural but physical laws of survival.⁷

In Persia, following the Safavid period, that effect was aggravated by two campaigns of deliberate destruction of earlier art, cultural heritage, and archives. In October 1722, Afghan forces took Isfahan after a siege of seven months and twenty-three days. In the course of a seven-year-long occupation, the Afghans not only ravaged the city and massacred its inhabitants. They also destroyed its paper memory. Sussan Babaie wrote:

The massive destruction and pillaging of the palaces entailed enormous losses, especially of imperial records. All evidence of the empire’s administration – its inventories and bookkeeping implements, its documents and decrees – were thrown into the river, according to a later source. The fact that Isfahan was so brutally plundered has contributed to the

dearth of documentation that stands in such sharp contrast to that of the Ottomans.⁸

To which Willem Floor adds the following more specific observation: “in October 1732 when Tahmasp Qoli Khan, the later Nadir Shah left Isfahan, ‘He paid his soldiers munificently, removed all books from the royal library and distributed the books and pictures among the troops.’”⁹

Any Persian records concerning the work of European artists or details of Safavid ownership of works of art from the Netherlands were irretrievably lost in this siege.

A following attack on the Safavid past was undertaken 150 years later not by a foreign invader but by the Persian dynastic successors to the Safavids, the late Qajar monarchs. Shah Nasir al-Din (1831-1896; r. 1848-1896) and his children, following the lead of Iranian nationalist intellectuals, chose to regard themselves as the embodiment not of the medieval or early modern past, but of the ancient Achaemenids, specifically Cyrus the Great. After allowing most of Safavid Isfahan to decay and deteriorate through malign neglect, a more active policy was pursued between 1880 and 1910.

Whether the driving force behind the destruction of the Safavid palaces was Nasir al-Din Shah or his son Zill al-Sultan, a fact is that in total 74 Safavid palaces and their gardens were destroyed during the latter’s governorship of Isfahan. [...] The decision maker as to the demolition of the Talar-i Tavila [the hall of stables, a key reception locale for the Safavids] was Zill al-Sultan’s older sister, Iftikhar al-Dawla, in 1900. She was also the moving force behind the demolition of some other Safavid palaces such as the Jahannama, the Bihisht-i A’in, the Bagh-i Khargah, and the ‘Imarat-i Afschar.”

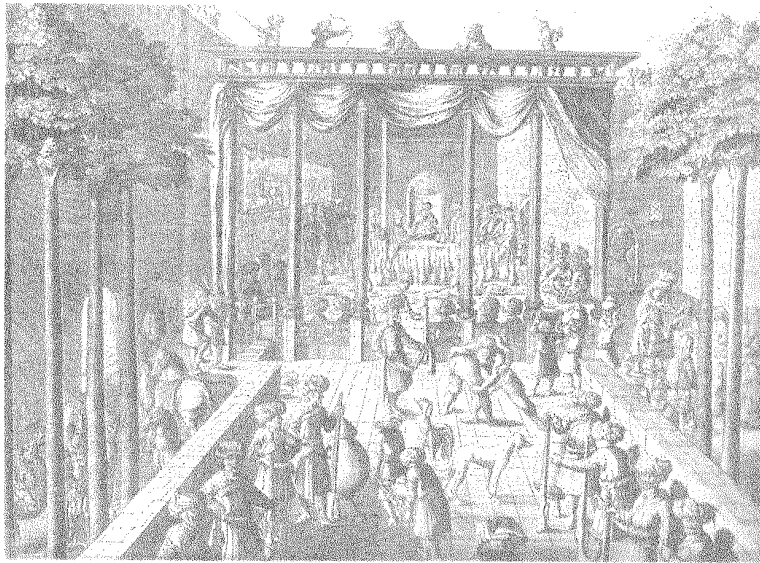


Fig. 1.1: The Banquet Hall of the Talar-i Tavila in the Royal Precincts of Isfahan. From Adam Olearius, *Beschreibung der muscowitischen und persischen Reise*, Schleswig 1647.

With these palaces were lost their wall decorations and other relics of artistic creations by artists from all the nationalities represented in cosmopolitan Isfahan, including Dutchmen (fig. 1.1). We can, therefore, draw no conclusions concerning what there once was from what has survived. All we can say is that the laws governing the mortality of art applied with particular force to the VOC period in Persia.

The Netherlands underwent no such calamities. Nonetheless, not a single Persian item with a provenance from the period of VOC presence in Persia is presently known to be preserved in a Dutch museum. The only items of cultural heritage from Persia that I know of in Dutch collections are in Leiden University Library: several hundred manuscripts bought in Turkey

and Syria by Jacobus Golius in the 1620s and 200 manuscripts bequeathed to the library in 1665 by Levinus Warner, the Dutch ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in Istanbul.¹¹ The motive behind these acquisitions was antiquarian, philological, and theological, not interest in contemporaneous or even medieval Persian art. This bias is underlined by the eloquent fact that none of the illustrated travelers' reports on Persia from the VOC period contains a single image of a Persian work of art later than Sassanid times (224-651 A.D.). This seems to be as true of other European countries as of the Netherlands. The only instance known to me of printed illustrations of Persian art are costume plates in Jan de Laet's Latin book on Persia (1633) in the Elsevier series of pocket monographs on the countries



Fig. 1.2: Costume Prints from Jan de Laet, *Persia seu Regni Persici Status*, Leiden 1633.

of the world (fig. 1.2). De Laet says he acquired the miniatures on which these illustrations are based "from his friend Nicolas Hemmius, a merchant who had made the journey into Persia from Ormuz in 1623."¹² The original drawings, simple depictions of individual figures in typical dress, have never surfaced.

This view of the reception of Persian art in the Netherlands may be excessively bleak. The survey of records concerning Indian miniatures in the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century published in 1996 by Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer presents a more positive picture. Among the items she assembled are several references, from 1663 on, to Persian miniatures that cannot be identified today but were documented

at the time. They were to be found in the collections of the Amsterdam alderman Roeter Ernst (1663), Johan Jacobsz. Swammerdam (1685) and Constant Sennepart (1704). These items were among a far larger selection of miniatures from India and China. Among them was a group of Mogul miniatures owned and admired by the same Cornelis de Bruyn who, as we shall see, wrote quite disparagingly about Persian art.¹³

Gestures, Reports of Respect

One body of evidence above all others illuminates the matter at hand. That is, the respect bestowed on Dutch artists by three succeeding shahs:

'Abbas I (1571-1629; r. 1587-1629)
Safī (1611-1642; r. 1629-1642)
'Abbas II (1632/33-1666; r. 1642-1666).

During each decade of the half-century between 1605 and 1656, in the heyday of the Safavid dynasty and of the Dutch penetration of Asia, one Dutch artist or another is recorded as being a painter to the shah.¹⁴ A certain number were given official, well-paid appointments by the shah as well as prominent commissions. Nearly all of them went east as VOC merchants; the Company released them grudgingly, for limited periods of time, to the court. Only in one case is the VOC known to have taken the initiative in sending a Dutch artist to Isfahan to work there as an artist: Barend van Sichem, who seems to have died en route in 1639.¹⁵ Although the VOC was always on the lookout for export goods in whatever territory it operated, it never commissioned or purchased work from Persian artists. The documentation regarding Dutch artists in Isfahan, reviewed below, is the most substantial evidence that we have concerning Dutch-Persian artistic relations.

When Huybert Visnich, the first representative of the Dutch East India Company in Persia, arrived at the court of Shah 'Abbas I in Isfahan in 1623 he resumed his acquaintance with a remarkable fellow countryman with great prestige at court, prestige that he owed to his mastery of the art of painting. Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt (b. before 1600, d. after 1653) had come to Isfahan in the cortege of a famous Italian traveler, the Roman nobleman Pietro della Valle (1586-1652), with whom he had "traveled," by his own later statement, "over a period of many years in Italy, Constantinople, Egypt, Jerusalem, Aleppo [where Visnich first met him], Babylon and other places as well."¹⁶ The painter "made portraits in Constantinople and Cairo, and sketches of antiquities; in Isfahan he

drew the elephants in the Shah's menagerie and made a portrait of della Valle's Assyrian bride."¹⁷

"Jan van Hasselt probably arrived in Isfahan in 1617 and was soon taken into the service of the Shah, who gave him the title of *ustad naqqash* [master painter]," writes Willem Floor, who cites this corroboratory reference: "In 1621 the Carmelites report that a Flemish painter was present at an audience given to them by Shah 'Abbas I." According to della Valle, the shah paid him a princely annual salary of 1,000 zecchini, a Venetian gold coin. There is only one reference in the surviving documents to a specific work by van Hasselt. The English traveler Sir Thomas Herbert (1606-1682), who visited Persia in 1628, wrote of the richest room in the Shah's palace at Ashraf on the Caspian Sea:

The Chamber was Gallery wise, the seeling garnisht with Poetique fancies, gold, and choisest colours, all which seem'd to strive whether Art or Nature should be to a judicious eye more valuable: one *Iohn* a Dutch-man, who had long served the King celebrated his skill, to the astonishment of the Persians and his owne advantage.¹⁸

To the Company, the fact that this valuable contact person at the Safavid court was a painter was more of a potential embarrassment than anything else. In the numerous references to van Hasselt in the VOC papers he is often called "painter to the king," but there is only one reference to his art, in a revealing passage from a missive of December 1624 to Visnich from the directors in Amsterdam:

Several paintings are [among the goods] going to Surat [i.e. Company headquarters in India, to which the Persian office reported], but we do not think it a good idea to send any of them to Persia, because there are human figures in all of them. We have moreover been advised

in a private writing of 18 January 1624 that you have been helped greatly in attaining your audience and access and opening of trade from His Majesty by a master painter who stands in high favor with the king. For this reason, the aforementioned painter should not be offended on any occasion in any way. If he is a better master than those who made the paintings that are being sent to Surat, then they will not be valued highly in Persia; if they are better, then we will have damaged his reputation with His Majesty by comparison with better work [than his].¹⁹

The importance of Jan van Hasselt for the establishment of VOC operations in Persia cannot be overstated. By his report, Visnich and his party showed up in Isfahan without letters of recommendation.

Upon hearing that they carried no papers from their lords and masters, His Majesty was surprised and ordered me to gather complete information. On my account, His Majesty was prepared to treat our friends graciously,... upon which I asked His Majesty to extend to them the same honor and respect he bestowed upon the Portuguese, English and Italians and that his Majesty provide them with appropriate lodgings, for which I invested all my good will with the king and his minions, so that those of all the other nations were jealous and sought ways to prevent it. His Majesty acceded to all that I requested and designated a handsome palace to lodge our newly arrived friends and to allow them complete freedom, at no cost; they reside there to this day [seven years later].²⁰

Visnich paid van Hasselt a fee of 100 guilders for his initial mediation and worked closely with him for years to come. Van Hasselt's prestige with the Dutch was enhanced considerably in

1625 when the shah included him in an embassy to the Republic led by the court factor Musa Beg. Della Valle tells us that Shah 'Abbas attached van Hasselt to the mission in order to rustle up more Dutch painters for the Persian court.²¹ This would not be the first time he did so. In 1605, the Haarlem painter Cornelis Claesz. Heda was taken on as painter to Shah 'Abbas by a Persian delegation to the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. (Heda never made it to Persia. His ship was captured by the Portuguese and he was sent to Goa. He ended up working for the Bijapur court and the VOC in India.²²) Van Hasselt, who in his own statements never refers to his art, tells it differently: his commission was to aid in expanding trade between Persia and the Republic. Van Hasselt seems to have regarded his status as master painter to the king of Persia as a springboard to a higher station in life and to greater wealth.

Visnich wrote a warm letter of recommendation for the painter.

[Musa Beg] has in his company a Dutchman who has served the king as painter for several years, a young man of good name and repute, very favored by His Majesty, named Jan Luyckassen Hasselt. Since I met him previously in Aleppo, I have been eager to employ him in your service [...].²³

In the Netherlands, Musa Beg made a perfect nuisance of himself. He pestered the States-General and the VOC for services, favors, and payments while chasing after women and drinking too much. The unannounced mission itself was not *comme il faut* in diplomatic terms, and Musa Beg's behavior made things worse. In 1626 van Hasselt returned to Persia before Musa Beg and the rest of the delegation in order to tell the shah what was going on. His report was credited and Musa Beg fell into disgrace.²⁴

For decades the shah had been attempting to invigorate what he rightly perceived as the underdeveloped trade potential of Persia. He already sold silk to several European partners, who transported it mainly overland to Aleppo, on a caravan route that was not only insecure but also crossed the Ottoman Empire, with which Persia was often at war. With the arrival of the Dutch and their seaborne empire, brilliant new opportunities presented themselves. Soon the Company had inland way stations in Shiraz and Lar, supporting the 900-kilometer land route between Isfahan and the port factory at Gamron, renamed Bandar 'Abbas (Port 'Abbas) in honor of the shah after the English East India Company and he drove out the Portuguese in 1615. From there the armed merchant fleet of the VOC had access to all the harbors of the world sea.

The benefits to the VOC of trade with Persia were phenomenal. Within months, a million-guilder cash stream came into being with no one guarding the banks. Anyone on the shore could dip into it, and all who could did. On paper, respectable bodies such as the Persian kingdom, the Dutch Republic, and the United East India Company were involved in legitimate transactions with each other. On the ground, the individuals working for these bodies were enriching themselves prodigiously at the expense of their masters.

Within seven years after Visnich's arrival in Persia, van Hasselt and he built up one of the most profitable businesses in the world and then, in Shakespearean style, they destroyed their own careers. The chief culprit was van Hasselt. The head of the VOC factory in Surat, Pieter van den Broecke, when he saw what riches Visnich was mining, enlisted the aid of van Hasselt to undermine the position of his colleague, hoping to take his place. "Van den Broecke provided van Hasselt, who emerged as Visnich's greatest nemesis, with money and

a letter of recommendation to the Directors, which van Hasselt seemed to have used to malign Visnich."²⁶ Visnich had indeed engaged in illegal practices, but even worse he had neglected to cover his tracks. By 1630 van Hasselt and other conspirators had made Visnich's position so impossible that the founder of the VOC stations in Persia abandoned his post and fled, ending up in Ottoman Iraq, where he was arrested and executed as a spy.²⁷ He signed his last letter, of Christmas Eve 1630, "in Joseph's pit," that is, betrayed by his brothers, "who need a St. Stephen to pray for them: Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do."²⁷

He was perfectly right. Van Hasselt in fact did not know what he was doing and was busy bringing about his own ruin. In the spring of 1630 he had sailed to Holland with a return fleet commanded by van den Broecke. He carried with him a letter to the States-General from Shah 'Abbas, who however had died in January 1629. Presenting his credentials in The Hague, van Hasselt claimed that they were respected by the new shah, Safi, as well. He presented his mission "not as a simple legation but as a veritable embassy, and van Hasselt himself as the resident representing the shah in the Netherlands."²⁸ He entered into negotiations with the States-General concerning new rights for traders of "the Persian nation," a designation that covered himself as well as native Persians. On 7 February 1631 the States-General actually passed a resolution providing these rights. That resolution, in the view of a leading historian of Asian-European relations, Rudi Matthee, was unique in the history of the Dutch Republic.

In 1631 van Hasselt in fact managed to conclude a treaty with the States General on behalf of the shah, according to which Iranian merchants in Holland received the same rights as Dutch merchants in Iran [...]. This remarkable document [was] the only treaty ever

concluded between the Dutch Republic and an Asian power to include bilateral rights [...].²⁹

The treaty was however never put into effect. It cut into the turf of the VOC, which refused to credit the new arrangements and which from the head office in Amsterdam followed van Hasselt's doings with antagonistic suspicion. And then came the crunch. In October 1631 new letters arrived from Shah Safi, addressed to the *stadholder* and the States-General and making no mention whatsoever of van Hasselt. All credit lost, the painter who probably played the most important diplomatic and commercial role of any Dutch artist of the seventeenth century, a role in which he has been compared to Peter Paul Rubens, met his Waterloo.

After the departure and disgrace of Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt, the Safavid court took on three other Dutch artists as painter to the shah. But they, like van Hasselt, came to an unfortunate end in typical VOC circumstances: one through disease, one through dissipation, and one through corruption.

Shah Safi died in 1642 and was succeeded by his nine-year-old son 'Abbas II. His court was initially run by Grand Vizier Saru Taqi, who in 1643 hired the VOC junior merchant and painter Hendrick Boudewijn van Lockhorst for royal service at an annual salary of 4,000 guilders. This was about ten times the amount that a painter of reasonable talent would earn at home; in Isfahan it seems to have been the going rate, equivalent to the 1,000 zecchini earned by van Hasselt. (In 1618 the zecchino traded at 12.8 ducats of three guilders apiece, making van Hasselt's retainer 3,840 guilders.³⁰) The VOC allowed van Lockhorst to commit to court service for three years, beginning in 1644, after which he was to return to the service of the Company. The head of operations in Persia, Carel Constant, wrote to the Governor-General in Batavia that the shah was

quite pleased with van Lockhorst's portraits. By 1647, however, when the contract expired, a new team had taken charge that was more struck by van Lockhorst's misbehavior than by his portraits. No sooner had he reentered Company employ than he was arrested. On 4 May 1647 the new men wrote to the directors that they had relieved van Lockhorst of his functions "because he could not govern himself and during his stay here led such an excessively luxurious and licentious life that he caused considerable damage to the East India Company."³¹ Van Lockhorst attempted to escape with his Armenian concubine, but was apprehended and sent back to Batavia. (That he had an Armenian concubine was not in itself misbehavior. Christians were not allowed to have sexual relations with Muslim women in Persia, and the VOC tried to keep its servants from marrying; concubinage with Christian women was therefore the relation of first resort.³²)

Van Lockhorst was the fourth Dutch painter in Persia, after van Hasselt, van Siche, and a certain Joost Lampen, who is mentioned once in this function in 1630, and the third to come to an inglorious end. There was a fifth artist whose story was even worse. Juriaen Ambdis was a ship's gunner and painter. He entered the shah's employ in the former capacity in 1648 as did several of his comrades, in order to fight for Persia against the Great Mogul. After the successful battle of Kandahar, 'Abbas discharged them all from service. While the others resumed their duty for the VOC, Ambdis decided to stay. No doubt inspired by reports of van Lockhorst's fabulous earnings, he told one of his fellow gunners that he was staying behind – that is, as the VOC saw it, deserting – to earn money "with painting and drawing." Failing in that attempt, Ambdis fell almost at once into beggary.

On March 29, 1649 it was reported that Ambdis had been seen walking alone behind a caravan in Iraq by an Iranian merchant, who had given him three loaves of bread. On May 22, 1650 the Isfahan office of the Dutch Company reported that according to information received from an Armenian merchant from Baghdad Ambdis had become a Muslim in that city, "which if it is true, will revolt the feelings of all pious Christians," the director commented. This is the last time we learn anything about Ambdis.³³

The sixth Dutch painter known to have been in Persia was Philips Angel (1618-after 1664).³⁴ His only known works before then were two etchings in Rembrandt's style, one of which is signed and dated 1637. Despite his low profile as an artist – none of the standard books on Dutch artists mention him until the late nineteenth century – Angel was a respected figure in the Leiden art world. Not only did he deliver and publish the St. Luke's Day lecture of 1641; in the mid-1640s he also served as undersecretary and then secretary of the guild of St. Luke.

In 1645 Angel enlisted in the VOC and sailed with his wife for Batavia. Like many artists who took that step, he was driven to it by financial need. In 1646 he was a junior merchant and member of the justice council of Batavia. In 1647, on account of his good work and good character, he was recommended for transfer to Persia as the third man on the Company team. For unknown reasons the assignment did not go through, but in 1651 he was dispatched to Isfahan. According to orders, he was to run the station as second man in Persia, under the head of the Gamron office. However, things did not turn out that way. By way of bad luck, he was in the company of his superiors when his baggage arrived on the backs of 20 or 22 donkeys carrying not only his personal possessions but also 58 pieces of tin weighing 2,697 pounds and eight sacks of medicinal roots weighing 960

pounds. In order to cover up the evidence for this unlicensed private trade and to make some extra money, he had charged the bill for the donkeys to the Company as moving expenses, at an exorbitant rate.³⁵ The VOC was used to overlooking considerable infractions of the rules – in fact, everyone in the Company was criminalized – but this was just too much. Angel was ordered back to Batavia to stand trial.

At this point Angel's status as an artist paid off. During his journey back to the coast, in shame and sick to boot, a missive from Shah 'Abbas II reached the VOC party. The shah said that he did not learn that Angel was a painter until after he had left Isfahan and that he wished to employ him in that capacity. Whatever the truth of the matter, the Company made Angel an offer: either continue on to Batavia to face criminal charges or return to Isfahan as a painter to the shah of Persia. Traveling under arrest with his manservant and his pregnant (by whom we know not) black female servant, in miserable health, Philips Angel faced the choice between a kangaroo court in Batavia or a stint as an artist in Isfahan, a position that had ended badly for all his predecessors. Although Isfahan was considered an unhealthier place than Gamron or Batavia, Angel took the latter option. Returning to the extraordinary Persian capital, he invested more than 2,000 guilders in a studio and in 1653 went to work. With the court Angel seems to have got on brilliantly. In addition to a salary of 4,000 guilders a year, he was paid 6,000 guilders for five paintings of unspecified subjects and presented with a robe of honor. (The VOC preferred to regard this payment not as the purchase price of the paintings but as remuneration for Angel's expenses, to be credited to the Company.)

History began to repeat itself. Angel was distrusted by the Company; as early as 1654 the new Governor-General, Joan Maetsuyker, ordered the head of the Persian region, Dirck

Sarcerius, to remove Angel from Isfahan and send him back to Batavia. (This was matched by another Company action at the same time against a painter who had risen in the ranks. In 1654 the directors objected to the advancement in India of Isaack Koedijck, who was doing very well as a merchant, merely on the grounds that he was trained not in commerce but in art.³⁶) Because Angel was engaged in large-scale commissions for the shah as well as the chief of the royal slaves, Sarcerius declined to execute the command. Reconstructing these events, Willem Floor remarked rightly:

Sarcerius and the Governor-General clearly did not realize the advantage they had over other competitors in having a painter in their service, who had the Shah's favour. Any praise of Angel was toned down by Sarcerius although the Shah had written that he was very pleased with him. This impression is confirmed by the Chronicle of the Carmelites where it is stated that: "Nothing could be more useful to the Mission than if we had here a good painter, the Shah taking great pleasure in painting; and in these countries good artists are rare. There is a Dutchman who works for the Company, who has done very little, and yet has received very good rewards, and the Shah has conferred great favours on him."³⁷

Angel was able to use his influence at court for the benefit of the Company, but was unable to muster support for himself. He tried to rally resistance to Maetsuyker's order, but to no avail. On 10 July 1655 Angel left Isfahan for Gamron, where he arrived on 31 August. There he was treated contemptuously by certain Company officials, who spread the unlikely story that "some courtiers [of the shah] plainly told them that the Shah had honoured Angel enormously by giving him twice Dfl. 10,000 not because of the paintings which he presented to him, which

amounted only to one item called the 'Sacrifice by Abraham' in all these two years, but out of respect for the Company."³⁸

Whatever arrangements had been made between the shah, Angel, and the VOC regarding payment for his services, these were not sufficiently clear to avoid disagreement. Upon his return, Angel laid a claim before the Company for monies he felt were coming to him. In January 1656 the claim was refused, and the Company instituted charges against him for illegal private trade.

At the end of July 1656 the widowed artist married a woman from a distinguished family. Maria van der Stel was the daughter of a murdered VOC official and the younger sister of Simon van der Stel, later the founder of Stellenbosch and governor of the Cape. It might have been thanks to this newly acquired attachment to a prominent family that Angel was able to walk away from his contentious VOC job and take up various positions in the civil government of Batavia, including secretary of the aldermen's chamber. The supposition that he was protected by his marriage finds support in the fact that his relations with the township of Batavia turned sour shortly after the death of Maria on 6 July 1661. On 21 October, in the wake of earlier accusations of financial impropriety, Angel was arrested for misappropriating 6,000 or 7,000 rijksdaalders. Four days later his goods were sold at auction for 4,242 rijksdaalders, at which point the VOC laid a new claim against him for 3,300 guilders for "the expensive studio that he built on his own responsibility in Isfahan in violation of the orders of the director in Persia." In December the Reformed church of Batavia ejected Angel from Holy Communion, readmitting him conditionally.³⁹ In 1664 an inventory of Angel's possessions was drawn up in Batavia. He was "lodging" – an apparent euphemism for cohabiting – with the widow Dieuwertje van Thije. The meager inventory

included nine "paintings of various portraits" of Angel, his deceased wife, his grandfather, and his children. That is the last record of the man who trod in the footsteps of Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt and Hendrick Boudewijn van Lockhorst. Three painters who were richly paid retainers of the shah of Persia overplayed their hands in their relations with the VOC and were brought down low by Jan Compagnie.

Philips Angel suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune not only in his lifetime. After his death he was also mistreated, by fellow artists, writers, publishers, and art historians. Precious drawings that he made in Persia and Batavia were published under the names of other draftsmen, painters, scholars, and engravers. For a long time his identity was confused with that of a namesake from Middelburg. It was not until 1949, when Laurens J. Bol studied these issues, that the identity of Philips Angel was cleared up.⁴⁰ This is particularly unfortunate because Angel produced some of the most important antiquarian documents of the time. On his way to Isfahan in 1652 with the party of the newly appointed ambassador to Persia, Joan Cunaeus, Angel stopped off in Persepolis. There, on 10 February 1652, he created one of the first drawings of the ancient site to come down to us. That is, it has come down in the form of a print after Angel's drawing, which itself is lost. It is reproduced in François Valentijn's *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indiën, vervattende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandelinge van Nederlands mogentheyd in die gewesten* (Old and New East India, Containing a Precise and Extensive Report on Dutch Authority in Those Territories; 1724-1726).

It would be nice to say that Angel's drawings of Persepolis were inspired by the scholarly interests that were manifest in his St. Luke's Day lecture in praise of painting.⁴¹ This however cannot be maintained, in view of damning testimony reported by the French traveler and

art dealer Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. Tavernier claims that Angel told him personally "that he had spent his time poorly, and that the thing [that is, Persepolis] was not worth the effort of being drawn, nor to oblige the interested traveler to take a detour of as much as a quarter of an hour from his route."⁴²

Our last reference to Angel in Persia is the kindest one. In a journal entry for 1657, the same Jean-Baptiste Tavernier relates that upon taking leave of Shah 'Abbas II he received as a parting gift "several drawings, of which a few were by himself, since the king had indeed learned to draw from two Dutch painters, one named Angel and the other Lokar [van Lockhorst] that the Dutch Company had sent to him."⁴³ 'Abbas was only eleven years old when van Lockhorst came to Isfahan and eighteen when Angel arrived. It is nice to think of him taking drawing lessons from these Dutch artists and being proud enough of the results to give samples of his work to visiting dignitaries.

Reciprocity on the part of the VOC is not evident from the documents. The Company showed its regard for one of the king's painters, Mamet Beg, in its own way. In August 1638 it lent him 40 tomans, about 1600 guilders, without requesting a receipt, and which it did not expect to be repaid. This piece of petty corruption under the table, recorded in contemptuous innuendo in the books, is paltry indeed compared to the public shows of favor conveyed by the shahs on his Dutch painters.⁴⁴

Insofar as institutional maneuvering can be interpreted as a form of artistic reception, the picture seems clear. From 1605 to 1655 a certain pattern prevailed in the artistic relations between the Safavid court and the Dutch authorities. During the reigns of Shahs 'Abbas I, Safi and 'Abbas II, Dutch painters were welcomed at the Safavid court and accorded

public signs of high regard. Upon request of the court, individual artists would be allowed by the Dutch to enter royal service, always with strings attached. The relations are put into so many words in this passage concerning the neighboring kingdoms of India from the pioneering study of our subject, two articles by Pieter Arend Leupe in *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, 1873.

In 1656, while the post of second man [of the VOC station] at Soeratta [Surat] was filled by [the Dutch painter Isaack] Koedijck, [the Great Moghul] Shah Jehan sent a letter to one of his governors, in which he writes of "having heard news about the painters and surgeon (or one with knowledge of the things of nature) of the Hollanders," commanding him to send them to the court at once. The governor informed Director Hendrik van Wijck [of the VOC in Persia, where the personnel were apparently stationed] of the order. Van Wijck was not in the least pleased. In the first place because the [Indian] ruler was deciding over the persons in question without acknowledging him and regarded Company employees as being in his service. In the second place because it was usually so difficult to get personnel back again once they had been placed at the disposal of His Majesty. But in order not to offend His Majesty and in view of the [possible] consequences [of refusal], van Wijck, supported by his council, decided to honor the request, stipulating however that the oldest member of the group would go in the capacity of agent [of the VOC] and that he be put in charge of Company interests there.⁴⁵

The VOC, by contrast, is not known ever to have patronized a Persian artist. The attitude of the VOC toward its own functionaries who worked as artists for the shah was dictated entirely by the administrative and diplomatic interests of

the Company. This is true even in the single instance, concerning Barend van Sichem, when it did seem to take the initiative in sending an artist to Isfahan.⁴⁶

Christians for Christians Outside the Royal City

On 28 September 1638, a new director for Persia, Adam Westerwolt, was issued his instructions by the high command in Batavia. After touching on the trade in "rarities," the instructions continue:

Which is why we are also giving you a certain Barend van Sichem, who is an able draftsman and is reasonable with the brush as well, along with Claes Andriesz. of Amsterdam who can make enamels and set jewels. In the past His Majesty [Shah Safi] has displayed particular appreciation for the work of these artists. You shall offer their services and thanks to them you will garner as much good will as previously was the case with French and Italian [artists]. The supplies they require will be sent in batches.⁴⁷

The instruction from Batavia says that work by van Sichem had reached Safi before 1638, to the marked satisfaction of the shah. The appointment specified in the instruction seems to have been aborted. Westerwolt fell ill and died en route to Qazvin, where the shah was in temporary residence. This seems also to have been the fate of van Sichem, about whom the documents are further silent, while Claes Andriesz. – as well as Huybert Bufkens, a diamond polisher – do appear in later dispatches.⁴⁸

Willem Floor speculates that van Sichem may have reached Isfahan alive and have gone to work not for the shah but for the Armenian

community. The All Savior's Cathedral and other Armenian churches of New Julfa, across the river and within easy walking distance of Isfahan, are elaborately decorated with cycles of wall paintings illustrating the Bible and the lives of the saints. The authorship of these paintings is a vexed question. Floor's suggestion that Barend van Sichem was involved in their creation fits in well with the known evidence. In 1950, the English art historian T. S. R. Boase, who visited New Julfa in British military service during the Second World War, demonstrated that some of the monumental paintings in All Savior's resembled woodcuts by Christoffel van Sichem the Younger (1581-1658) in the first Armenian Bible, published in Amsterdam in 1666.⁴⁹ Boase noted that the arrangement of the subjects was highly significant. It followed the dictates of typology, an age-old Christian interpretive method that links subjects from the Hebrew Bible to passages in the Christian Bible. This implies a modicum of theological and iconographical knowledge, knowledge that would have been commanded by the Armenian patriarchate in New Julfa.

Boase assumed that the Amsterdam imprint of 1666 was the source for the imagery in New Julfa. However, the decorations in the church are now dated to 1645-55, ruling this out. Nonetheless, the connection was real and significant, in a form of which Boase was unaware. The same engravings used in the Armenian Bible were printed earlier by van Sichem, in a volume of Bible prints entitled *Bibels tresoor* [Biblical Treasury], published in Amsterdam in 1646, making them available as a source for the churches of Julfa. The correspondences were published in 1968 by J. Carswell (see plates 1.1a-b).

What would have been the role of Barend van Sichem? Floor writes that he "was unable to find any family connection between

Barend and Christoffel." That connection has since been found by Marten Jan Bok, in the framework of the NIAS project. Barend was baptized in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam on 27 October 1620 as the son of Christoffel van Sichem the Younger, the maker of the woodcuts. In 1638 he was only eighteen years old, making it unlikely that he was personally responsible for the execution of the mighty vaults and domes in Julfa Cathedral. However, he may well have been the bearer of iconographical models for that project. The edition of 1646 did not come out of thin air. One of the prints is dated 1631, and Christoffel van Sichem is likely to have had the drawings for most if not all of his woodcuts, many of them based on older sources, by the time Barend left for the east. In accounting for the transmission of those images from Amsterdam to New Julfa, there is every reason to take seriously the possibility that Barend van Sichem was the main agent. It is not even necessary to assume that he survived his trip. He may have been bringing prints and drawings for the Armenian community that were delivered there and were adapted and executed by local Christian artists.

If we therefore expand our view of "Persian art" to "art in Persia," the connection between the van Sichem family and the Armenian community of New Julfa emerges as a key example. With regard to extant survivals, this connection would by far exceed the VOC in importance. Opposed to this view of the transfer in real time of Dutch sources to Persia, Amy Landau points to sources in the more distant past that had been used by van Sichem and that could have been available in their original form to the Armenians of New Julfa.⁵⁰ That is, the extremely influential volumes of iconographic models published in the 1590s by the Plantin press in Antwerp, Hieronymus Nadal's *Evangelicae historiae imagines* (1593)

and *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia* (1594) as well as other prints and books that Catholic missionaries had been introducing into Asia for over a century. While granting this point, I do not believe that it detracts from the significance of the van Sichems as providers of iconographical and stylistic content to the Armenians of New Julfa. The fact that the first Bible edition in the Armenian language (1666) was a translation of Christoffel van Sichem's *Bibels tresoor* (1646) and was undoubtedly printed by the van Sichem firm, is indicative of meaningful ties between them and the Armenian community. With such a strong, tailor-made connection at hand, it seems to me unlikely that the New Julfa clergy would have resorted to a much older source.

The hard evidence presented in Table 2 for royal Persian patronage of Dutch artists may not be extensive. However, it shows that for 30

of the 37 years from 1618 to 1655, there was a Dutch painter in royal or high court service in Isfahan.

Official Documentation

In Persia, as we have seen, no official documents have survived. In the Persian literature of art there are no reported references to European artists except in the most general terms. The Dutch records, on the other hand, are immense. It therefore is significant that they contain no mention of Persian art or for that matter hardly any of Dutch art.

These two points are brought out clearly by what is missing from two exhaustive publications on the respective subjects, David Roxburgh's masterly study of Persian writings on art and Hendrik Dunlop's collection of

Table 2: Persian court patronage of Dutch painters, 1605-1655.

Shah 'Abbas I (1571-1629; r. 1587-1629)	1605 His envoy to the court of Emperor Rudolf II takes on the Haarlem painter Cornelis Claesz. Heda as painter to the king. Heda never reaches Isfahan. 1617-1630 Employed the Dutch painter and draftsman Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt. Among his commissions was the decoration of the royal palace at Ashraf. Extends title <i>ustad naqqash</i> (master painter) to van Hasselt, bestows favor on him, honors causes pleaded by him. 1625 Sends van Hasselt on diplomatic mission to the Netherlands led by Musa Beg. 1629 Signs letter to States-General giving van Hasselt status of envoy.
Mulaim Beg, factor to Shah Safi	1630 Has Joost Lampen paint several pictures in his house.
Shah Safi I (1611-1642, r. 1629-1642)	< 1638 Expresses satisfaction to Company officials concerning portraits by Dutch painter Barend van Sichem, who is sent by the VOC to work in his service.
Grand vizier Saru Taqi (in office 1632, assassinated 1645)	1643 Mediates in hiring of Dutch painter Hendrick Boudewijn van Lockhorst to work for court of young shah, at annual wage of 4,000 guilders.
Shah 'Abbas II (1632/33-1666; r. 1642-1666)	1643 > Takes art lessons from van Lockhorst. 1652 Intercepts the departure from Persia of Philips Angel, who was being removed by VOC to Batavia to face charges, bringing him back to Isfahan to work for him as painter and drawing teacher. 1653 Puts Angel to work at 4,000 guilders a year painting palace decorations in Isfahan. Pays Angel 6,000 guilders, according to Angel for five small paintings, according to VOC money intended for the Company. Grants Angel high favor at court. 1655 Upon departure of Angel, presents artist with robe of honor and 100 toman for watercolors.

sources for the study of the Dutch East India Company. In Roxburgh's book on a large number of Persian writings on painting, there are only two passing references to European art, none to Dutch art in particular.⁵¹ In Dunlop we find three references to paintings, compared to the hundreds referring to such items as pepper, sandalwood, sappanwood, presents, spices, sugar, tin, and tolls. In fact, as shown by the missive of 1624 cited above, trade in paintings was avoided by the Company out of trepidation with regard to the religious sensibilities of Muslims, uncertainty concerning quality, and the nagging suspicion that Persian buyers would not understand why the price of a painting had to be so high.

The VOC archives reveal that the Persian court turned to the Company not only as a source for painters but also of paint. On 15 March 1635 the manager of Persian operations, Nicolaes Jacobsz. Overschie, wrote from Gamron to Batavia that the shah had *again* requested that he be sent from the Netherlands sufficient paint to execute portraits of one thousand persons, with brushes in corresponding quantity. The order was not shipped, since in December 1636 the request was taken up again in the general order for 1637.

Voor de Coningh van Persia verwe om duysent personen te conterfeijten pinceelen na advanandt.⁵²

[For the King of Persia, paint for portraits of a thousand persons, brushes in the same measure.]

We have no record of the presence of a Dutch artist at the court during that period. The ruler was the fifteen-year-old Shah Safi, who is reported by the VOC to have a taste for the work of Western artists and jewelers. However, we cannot be sure that the order was an expression

of artistic interest – say, for creating portraits of courtiers to adorn public buildings. There was another use for portraiture in the pre-photography age in the Middle East. Painted images of wanted criminals were spread around the provinces to help track down fugitives. This would fit in better with what we know about Shah Safi's suspicious and vengeful character. Whatever purpose was intended, the VOC did not rush to help the king of Persia to accomplish it.

As we have noted, the VOC displayed habitual reluctance to send figurative art to Persia. The repeated conviction by Company officials in Amsterdam and Batavia that Persians would be offended by images of human beings is hard to explain. Not only is Persian art full of human and even divine figures, there is also the express wish by the Safavid court for paintings of genre subjects, with pretty girls, rather than the battle scenes that the Dutch thought more appropriate. The head of the Gamron station, Wollebrant Geleijnsz., wrote the following to headquarters in Batavia on 9 May 1641 concerning an aborted attempt by the Dutch to present some paintings to the shah.

We are hereby returning the large painting of the sea battle at Gibraltar fought by Admiral Heemskerck as well as [the portrait of] the chief merchant Adriaen van Oostende and various Moors, as a [French] painter formerly in the king's service told us that they would not please the king or be valued at anything close to their price. What he would like are [paintings of] beautiful women, banquets, parties, anything smacking of luxury....⁵³

The Dutch traveler Cornelis de Bruyn, to whom we will return below, wrote in 1711 something that must have been well known to any resident of the country:

there is little difference between their religion and that of the Turks, except that the Persians have no aversion to painted images, which one sees in their houses as a matter of course.⁵⁴

The English East India Company had better intelligence on this issue than the Dutch. In 1618, on a list of 101 items considered "vendible" in England, India, and Persia, English agents included as number 101, under "[...] particulars [...] supposed to be most acceptable to present unto the kinge[...]" – that is, Shah 'Abbas I: "Pictures bearing the resemblance eyther of man woman or other creatures beinge drawne to the lyfe are much desired by this king."⁵⁵

This misunderstanding on the part of the VOC must be held responsible in some measure for the low level of artistic interchange between the Republic and the Safavid Empire. We do not know how it arose, but it might be conjectured that the Heren XVII took advice concerning trade with Muslim countries from a Dutch theologian who made a major point of the presumed Muslim antagonism to images. In the sixteenth century, the Safavid Shah Tahmasp may indeed have given expression to this feeling, after decades of supporting and practicing the arts, when in 1556 he issued an Edict of Sincere Repentance, dismissing all painters and calligraphers from their court positions. However, it is not likely that the motivation was aniconism, which is not ordained by Shi'ite Islam. As one recent student of the edict, Abolala Soudavar, put it, "Had there been a Shi'ite prohibition of painting, Tahmasb would have been a master at finding ways to circumvent it."⁵⁶ The same author points out that the fact that calligraphers as well as painters were dismissed from royal service, casts another light on the matter.

If painting had been from time to time the subject of religious controversy, calligraphy was

not only immune from such controversy but represented Islamic art *par excellence*. Therefore, if Tahmasb expelled calligraphers along with painters, a reason other than religious fanaticism must be sought.

Whatever information the VOC was acting on, we seem to be confronted with a case of bending too far over backwards out of ignorance and exaggerated fear, compounded by commercial defensiveness.

One occasion when the Dutch, by their own account, outdid their European rivals in an artistic endeavor took place in 1636. On 24 November of that year Nicolaes Jacobsz. Overschie wrote the following in a report to the governors in Amsterdam:

On the 13th of this month the shah [the 25-year-old Shah Safi] was given a triumphal reception, bringing with him many Turkish prisoners from Eriwan, as well as an ambassador from Constantinople and one from Hindustan. The shah extends to him [Overschie], as he does to the Englishmen [in Isfahan], the courtesy to invite him to festive meals. H.M. [His Majesty] begins to take increased interest in affairs of state.

Like the other foreigners, Overschie had a triumphal arch made. The shah honored the triumphal arch with a visit and Overschie offered H.M. jewels and money in the amount of 4,000 guilders, while H.M. also accepted a cup of wine and spent an hour there. He also inquired after the name of His Princely Excellency [Frederik Hendrik]. H.M. declared that this triumphal arch was the most beautiful of all. The total costs amounted to 6,000 guilders, not including the gift. He [Overschie] hopes that this will not be held against him.⁵⁷

Unfortunately, Overschie does not tell who designed and executed the triumphal arch.

Travelers' Reports

Not only in Europe but in Persia and India as well books of travel were a popular and widespread form of literature. However, when we turn to this resource for what it tells us about the art of painting in the mutual regard of Persians and Europeans, we draw a near blank. Persian travel literature from our period has been studied in an authoritative volume by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discovery*.⁵⁸ The book is silent concerning the art of painting. For that matter, the index contains no reference to the Dutch East India Company. The idea that the Dutch were somehow in control of territories in Persia and India beyond the confines of their offices, trading posts, factories, and harbor installations would have come as a complete surprise to contemporary locals. On Persian literature in general, Sussan Babaie writes:

Until late in the seventeenth century, when some substantive written commentaries on Christians appear in Safavid sources, Europeans feature rarely, often in passing and invariably with little or no commentary on the specifics of their character or social conduct [...]. Persian chronicles take an interest in describing, characterizing and doling out either praise or disdain for the visiting dignitaries from their rival empires of the Mughals, the Uzbeks or the Ottomans. Europeans seem to have been neither as important, nor as interesting.⁵⁹

The disregard was mutual. During the seventeenth century the Dutch were notably backward in publishing about Persia. In every western European language as well as Russian, important travelers' reports on Persia saw the light of day from 1600 on. The trend was set

by a book published in that very year by the "adventurous but unscrupulous Englishman Sir Anthony Sherley."⁶⁰ The earliest piece of travel literature on Persia by a Dutch author did not come out until three-quarters of a century later, in 1676. (The most informative piece of Dutch writing on Persia from the seventeenth century was the journal of a failed VOC delegation to Isfahan in 1651-1652 by Cornelis Speelman; it was not published until 1908.)

By 1676 the Dutch East India Company had been established in Persia for half a century, since 1623. Before that year important first-person books on Persia had appeared in French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and Russian, some of them printed in Amsterdam. Dutch translations had been published of travel accounts by Adam Olearius and Jean Chardin. The man under whose name the 1676 imprint was published was not a VOC official. He was a sailmaker named Jan Struys. The English title of his book is *The Perilous and Most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys*.⁶¹ It was a ghost-written product based only in part on the experiences of Struys, who could not read or write very well, and for the rest cobbled together by Olfert Dapper from various published sources. However, the words under which it was recommended in 1677 by the Amsterdam bookseller Jan Claesz. ten Hoorn are quite apposite: "Most travellers who travel there are commonly people who rather focus on personal profit than on a precise description of a place [...]."⁶²

A notable exception to this rule was the German physician and naturalist Engelbert Kaemper (1651-1716), who after spending a year in Isfahan from 1684 to 1685 with a Swedish delegation entered the service of the VOC. He served as chief surgeon of the VOC in Persia from 1685 to 1688, when the Company transferred him to Japan. The posthumous publication of his writings on his travels in

1712 was a formidable contribution to European knowledge of the Orient. Kaemper's book contains an extensive, illustrated section on Persepolis, but is silent on contemporaneous Persian art and on the activities of European artists in the country.

The first substantial comments on the country by a Dutchman who actually spent time there are to be found in a book published in 1711 by Cornelis de Bruyn, whose English title begins *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of the East Indies*.⁶³ De Bruyn was a dedicated traveler who did aspire to write a precise description of the places he visited. He provides detailed information on the time it took to travel from A to B and the distances between them, on the quality and price of fruit, on water, vegetation, bird life, and the weather. His book contains a treasure of information on Persian and Armenian costume, jewelry, and folkways. He was a passionate draftsman who provided his book with more than 200 illustrations. He would depart from the caravan with which he normally traveled and, accompanied by Armenian interpreters, would spend hours traipsing around in search of the best angle from which to draw a village or town. De Bruyn showed considerable interest in antiquities, tombs, and miscellaneous ruins that he drew assiduously without knowing very much about them.

De Bruyn devotes two and a half columns of his large book to "The Use of Painting by the Persians."⁶⁴ His attention was drawn in the first place to matters involving the Dutch. He tells of a visit he paid to one of the two painters who during his visit to Isfahan worked for the shah,

in order to sample his art, which consisted mainly of painting small birds from life in water color. And I must admit that his work was quite attractive, exceeding my expectations,

although like all the rest he showed little or no understanding of light or shadow, which are after all of the essence in painting. This painter was at the time engaged in painting for the king water colors of flowers from a book of prints printed in our fatherland. [Because the images were in black and white and the artist was painting the flowers in color,] a European clergyman told him as well as one could what color they were. They have excellent pigments here, but I did find some that were brought from our Netherlands, such as enamel paint and others.

The European clergyman was in all likelihood a Catholic priest or friar from one of the missions that were permanently established in Isfahan. The practice that de Bruyn here described is a rich adaptation by a Persian artist of European art and natural history. The resulting painting cannot however have been of impressive quality either as a work of art or a botanical document. To a contemporary of such scientifically inclined still-life painters as Jan van Huysum and Rachel Ruysch, painted copies of prints colored in on the basis of recollection by a third party cannot have been taken very seriously.

While the Dutch artist-traveler was able to express grudging admiration for his Persian colleague's watercolors of small birds, when it came to miniature painting, the glory of the Persian Golden Age, he displays sheer contempt.

People of distinction also own books that are handsomely bound and decorated with all manner of figures dressed in their style, as well as hunting scenes, single figures of men and women, companies, animals, and birds, depicted in beautiful colors in water color. There were also indecent images, which they like quite a lot. I found books of this kind with

a certain distinguished gentleman, but all the painting was poor, flat, stiff, and totally lacking in technique. So that there was nothing attractive about it, aside from the pleasing colors. All the sheets were adorned with gold and silver to please the eye.

De Bruyn's opinion concerning Christian art in Persia was no more generous.

The interior of the small Armenian church [the Anna-baet, or Episcopal cloister] is painted on the walls from top to bottom. Most of what you see are Biblical stories, painted by Armenians with little art [...]. Of the glorious cathedral, [de Bruyn says no more than that] it is painted completely with Biblical stories.⁶⁵

De Bruyn even takes the trouble to disparage patronage of the arts in Persia. Only exceptional individuals, including certain rulers of the past, were willing to pay a fair price for art. Otherwise they kept their money in their purses. He cites the case of a German painter named Dionys who painted a multi-figure composition for the shah that was accepted but never paid for. In this context, de Bruyn repeats a story dating from 1652 about a large painting of riders brought to Isfahan by Joan Cunaeus. And that, aside from the remark about religion quoted above, is all that de Bruyn has to say about art in Persia.

De Bruyn's dismissive judgment of Persian painting corresponds with the only other passage on the subject that I have found in the extensive European travel literature. In 1686 the Frenchman Jean Chardin brought out an account of his travels to Persia and the East Indies undertaken between 1671 and 1677. Chardin is considered to be the most perspicacious and intelligent of the European writers on Persia from the seventeenth century. His

chapter "On Mechanick Arts and Trades" begins thus:

Before I treat of the *Arts and Trades* in particular, I'll make five general Observations with regard to the Subject [...]. The first is, That the *Eastern People* are naturally Soft and Lazy, they work for, and desire only necessary things. All those beautiful Pieces of Painting, Carving, Turning, and so many others, whose Beauty consists in an exact and plain imitation of Nature, are not Valu'd among those *Asiaticks*: They think, that because those Pieces are of no use for the occasions of the Body, they do not therefore deserve our Notice: In a Word, they make no account of the making of good Pieces; they take notice only of the Matter, which is the Reason that their Arts are so little improved; for as to the rest, they are Men of good Parts, have a penetrating Wit, are Patient and Sincere, and would make very skillful Workmen, were they paid liberally.⁶⁶

Even allowing for the conventional nature of these remarks, with their echoes of Herodotus and Lucian on the ancient Persians, they and the judgment of Cornelis de Bruyn leave no room for doubt concerning the main issue. That is, that Chardin and de Bruyn could not see Persian painting in any other terms except those of high Western art, and in those terms it failed.

Both Europeans think in terms of bipolar opposites. In no particular instance do they find common features between the art of their countries and of Persia. This is all the more a pity because in other respects these travelers were open-minded for their time. Rudi Matthee, in a fresh reconsideration of the contribution of these and other European travelers to our knowledge of Persia, takes issue with colleagues who accuse

Table 3: Comparative Judgments of Jean Chardin and Cornelis de Bruyn of Persian and European Painting.

Source	Feature	Persian	European [implicit]
Chardin	Industry	Lazy	[Diligent]
Chardin	Imitation of nature	Not valued	Mastered
Chardin	"Making of good Pieces"; contribution of artist versus cost of materials	Do not value skill above materials	[Have high regard for artistic skill]
de Bruyn	Light and shadow	Not understood	[Mastered]
de Bruyn	Modeling	Flat	[Suggestive of volume and space]
de Bruyn	Grace	Stiff	[Suggestive of movement]
de Bruyn	Technique	Lacking	[Mastered]

seventeenth-century writers on Persia of cultural bias. "Early modern European travelers to Iran brought remnants of past religious and cultural prejudice with them," he writes, "yet the best explored the country with an open eye, an appreciation for difference, and even a critical perspective on their own culture." While I agree in general with this judgment, which Matthee backs up with solid evidence, I can say with some certainty that it does not apply to the fine arts.⁶⁷

Art Itself

Turning to the art of Persia with the judgments of Chardin and de Bruyn in mind, we discover something of considerable interest. That is, that by the time the two travelers visited Persia, the artists of that land had already gone a long way to appropriating and adapting the very features they find lacking in Persian art. This phenomenon can be demonstrated with two typical examples, one from the 1550s and another from the 1670s. Both images show one of the favorite motifs of Persian painting, court receptions.

Yusuf Entertains at Court before His Marriage is the subject of the earlier painting (see plate 1.2a; Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art). It partakes fully of the stereotype characteristics that were found so objectionable by Chardin

and de Bruyn. There are no shadows, no modeled forms, space is treated as a makeable commodity, nothing in the painting is depicted directly from nature, the figures are indeed stiff, and gold is applied to please the eye without adding anything to the composition.

At the far end of this development, regard a painting of another court event, *The Head of Iraj Presented to His Brothers Salm and Tur* (see plate 1.2b; Dublin, Chester Beatty Collection). Cast shadows are employed, space is effectively suggested, the figures are modeled to some degree, faces are individualized as are the trees in the background. Nonetheless, one can still see what the Europeans were talking about when they would call a painting of this kind stiff and lacking in artistry.

References to and adaptations of Western art begin long before the VOC first put foot on Persian soil in the 1620s. Eleanor Sims, one of the foremost specialists in Persian art, remarks repeatedly in her survey *Peerless Images: Persian Painting and Its Sources* that new developments in Persian art tend not to grow in steps but to start at a climax and decline from there. One can say this in fairly certain terms of the study by Persian artists of Dutch art. In the 1990s the art historian Gauvin Bailey published an extraordinary example of our phenomenon (see plates 1.3a-b). A drawing by the Persian artist Sadiqi (b. 1533/34; d. after

1600) in the Harvard Art Museums, dated to the 1580s, clearly shows knowledge of a Netherlandish woodcut of the fifteenth century by an anonymous Flemish artist known as the Master of the Banderoles. The angel of the *Annunciation* in the Flemish print was adapted by the Persian miniaturist without wings, without halo, and without cross. No exact model for the Madonna has been found, but other Annunciate Virgins by that master and his contemporaneous colleagues come close. The words in the banderole are turned by Sadiqi into meaningless signs. The large inscription above and below reads

I have gained experience from every single thought. There is nothing more honorable than generosity.

This would seem to refer to the patron for whom the drawing was made, who is identified in the smaller inscription below the figures:

These two figures are in the manner of the Frankish masters: drawn while in the service of the one giving asylum to those seeking the right path, the Wonder of the Age, Khvaja Ghiyath Naqshband. Written by the servant [of God] Sadiqi, the Librarian.

Khvaja Ghiyath Naqshband was a many-sided individual, a maker and manufacturer of costly textiles, an artist and poet, an archer, athlete, and connoisseur of the arts. His profession led Bailey to connect him to another object with figurative elements derived from the same Flemish print as the painting. The textile collection of the Correr Museum in Venice owns a Persian brocade datable to the year 1603 that shows motifs from sura 19 of the Koran, in forms that reflect knowledge of Flemish prints. In this work they do retain haloes, in the pointed Persian form.



Fig. 1.3: Aegidius Sadeler II (c. 1570-1629), Portrait of Mehdi Quli Bey, 1605. Engraving.

Naqshband is believed to have died in the mid-1590s, leaving up in the air Bailey's suggestion that the brocade came from his workshop. However, around that time there was a fresh opportunity for Persian artists to learn about Netherlandish art. In 1599 Shah 'Abbas I sent a high-level delegation to the court of Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. There the Persians made contact with the remarkable stable of artists maintained by the emperor, including some of the best Flemish engravers of the day. The mission returned to Isfahan in 1602, but in 1605 Ali Quli Bey, the nephew of the chief envoy, visited Prague once more. On that occasion he was portrayed in a print by the Antwerp engraver Aegidius Sadeler (fig. 1.3). I would speculate that one of the Flemish artists in Prague presented to a member of the Persian delegation old and new engravings that came into the hands of Sadiqi. Only a small number of Persian masters are considered practitioners

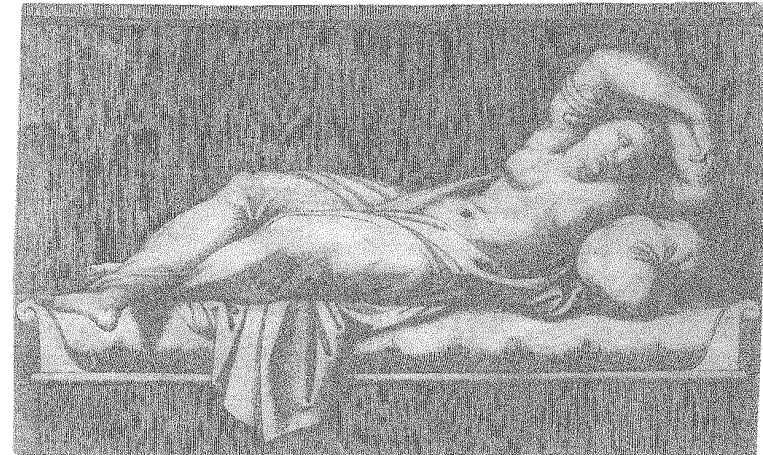


Fig. 1.4a: Marcantonio Raimondi (1480-1534) after Raphael (1483-1520), *Reclining Woman, Partly Nude, identified as Cleopatra*, c. 1515-1527. Engraving.



Fig. 1.4b: Riza Abassi (c. 1565-1635) after Marcantonio Raimondi, *Reclining Woman*, Late Sixteenth Century.

of an art informed by European principles. This manner was sometimes employed by Sadiqi's younger contemporary Riza (1565-1635), as in his adaption of a print by Marcantonio Raimondi after a Raphael painting of a famous antique statue in the Vatican then thought to depict Cleopatra but since identified as Ariadne (fig. 1.4a-b). When Riza's pupil Mu'in Musawir, Mu'in the Painter, honored his teacher with a portrait drawing, on which according to the inscription he worked from 1635 to 1673, he showed him at work, tenderly drawing from his imagination a European man (see plate 1.4).

The earliest surviving examples in Persia of monumental painting in a European mode are found in a mid-seventeenth-century royal pavilion in the palace complex of Isafahan, the Chihil Sutun or Hall of Forty Columns. The building stands in a shady park, open from the first to visitors who were even allowed to peer at royal celebrations on the terrace and within.⁶⁸ Not all the decorations in the building are from the Safavid period, and those that are have been dated variously, from the 1650s to 1670.⁶⁹ The earlier date, shortly after construction was completed, seems the most likely. The wall paintings in the building are regularly brought into connection with Western art with regard to the use of perspective and landscape background, the portrait-like depiction and plastic modeling of figures, and the European garb and behavior of figures in various panels. These features, combined with the documented presence in Isfahan of Dutch painters during the period of decoration, has fostered the assumption that the murals with the most pronouncedly European appearance were the work of Dutch painters. When I was led through the building in the summer of 2007, my well-informed guide stopped before a hunting scene and said plainly that it was made by Philips Angel (see plate 1.5).

However, as Sussan Babaie suggested in 1994 and Amy Landau showed convincingly in 2007, the derivations from European art are not direct, but came into being through the participation in the project of local Armenian artists. This is visible, to cite an example illustrated by Landau, in the unmistakable resemblances between a wall painting of *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery* in the Armenian Bethlehem Church of New Julfa, of the 1630s and 1640s, and the most representative mural in the Chihil Sutun, *Shah Tahmasp Holding a Reception for the Moghul Emperor Humayun*. The definition of space, the columned dais and window on a Western-style landscape, the grouping of the figures, and the cast shadows, occurring within a few years of each other in the same location, speak strongly of a common source. Landau writes that

correspondences between the Meydani Bethlehem and the Chihil Sutun indicate a shared pool of designers, craftsmen and painters on behalf of the court and the Armenians of New Julfa [...]. Contemporary documentation indicated that [...] the Armenian painter Minas, to whom the Bethlehem murals are attributed, [...] worked for Muslim court officials, supervised building projects and trained Persian painters. It is then plausible that this Armenian painter, trained by a European artist, was involved in the decoration of the Chihil Sutun.⁷⁰

Concerning the possible participation of Dutch artists in the decoration of the Chihil Sutun, Landau writes convincingly that "Dutch artists may well have participated in the project," but that it is unlikely that foreigners who did not speak the local languages could have played a supervisory role. In addition, she points out that "the Chihil Sutun murals are a hybrid of European and Persian elements," making "sole

European authorship [...] unlikely."⁷¹ Her remarks conjure up an appealing and believable picture of a collaborative art world in Isfahan, with Persian court artists occupying studios in the Daulatkhané, the palace precinct where royal workshops of all kinds were housed, and Armenian colleagues based in New Julfa, an hour's walk away. European artists too will have lived in New Julfa, where all non-Muslims were put, but they may have had workshops in Isfahan itself. Be that as it may, on a project as ambitious as the Chihil Sutun, designed to impress an international as well as local audience, the talents of all three groups would be called upon.

Study of this material, and of our subject in general, has greatly benefitted from the work of Amy Landau, who in 2007 was awarded a Ph.D. by Oxford University for her dissertation *Farangi-sāzi at Isfahan: The Court Painter Muhammad Zamān, the Armenians of New Julfa and Shāh Sulaymān (1666-1694)*. One of her most striking conclusions is that the application of Western principles of art in Persia was not a long-term trend in taste or a natural outcome of increased East-West commerce. Rather, its most significant manifestation took place all at once, at a given, rather late moment, after a good century of being honored more in the breach than in the observance. Landau finds in the work of Muhammad Zaman a sharp break with earlier practice, a programmatic favoring of European above traditional Persian aesthetic principles. In her view,

the unprecedented sophistication of Muhammad Zaman's assimilation of the European artistic tradition, as presented by his manuscript paintings of 1675 and the biblical compositions of the 1670s and 1680s, is the result of historical circumstances specific to the post 'Abbas I epoch.

Those circumstances pertain to certain religious and cultural policies of the often neglected Shah Sulayman and the ways in which they affected the practice of poetry and art in Persia in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. Whether or not that was the driving motivation for Muhammad Zaman's stylistic choices, there is no doubt that his work raises to an unprecedentedly high level the integration of European artistic principles and models in Persian painting. This applies to subject matter of all kinds. Landau rightly stresses the importance of the subjects from the Jewish and Christian Bibles that were ordered from Muhammad Zaman by Shah Sulayman himself in support of his supposition that he might be the Messiah (see plates 1.6a-b). However, the artist also worked in an identical way on non-religious, even erotic motifs.

Landau's revision casts a different light on the main question that concerns us here, the significance of the Dutch contribution to Persian art.

Emphasis must be shifted away from external factors, such as the flow of Europeans and their goods into Iran in the first half of the century, and placed on internal historical developments in the latter half. I believe changes in Safavid visual culture are not so much directly and causally linked with Iranian taste for exotica and the patronage of European artists. Rather, they are related to developments in non-royal patronage and evolving aesthetic interests in and outside of the court.⁷²

These remarks are in keeping with our opening assessment of the negligible significance of the Dutch input, via the VOC, in Persian artistic developments.

Images of Persons

This section deals not only with portraits of individuals but also with the generic and iconographical types that were more familiar both to Persians and Europeans. The tiny European on Mu'in Musawir's portrait of Riza can stand for all Persian images of the Westerner, Dutchmen or not. They were men – Western women were unknown in Persia – with characteristic clothing, often with red hair and nearly always with hats. If any portraits of individual Europeans were made by a Persian artist, they have either not survived or have not yet been recognized as such. It has been suggested with some likelihood that a portrait by Anthony van Dyck of Henrietta Maria, a copy of which was presented to the shah by an English delegation on 16 April 1638, accompanied by a personal letter from Charles I to Shah Safi, was adapted by Muhammad Zaman in 1675 for a non-portrait image of an Indian princess being visited by Bahram Gur.⁷³ This reminds us that the relatively low regard in which Europeans were held in Persia is due in considerable measure to the fact that no European ruler ever visited the country. A favorite theme in Persian art is the meeting between a shah and the ruler of a foreign land. Those rulers came from neighboring countries, not Europe. Within Europe, the Dutch stood on a lower plane than countries with a proper king. Not only for that reason, the English had longer staying power in the region, down to Iran in the twentieth century. Shah Suleyman does not seem to have had Dutch painters in his employ. Instead, he turned to the English, requesting in 1668-1669 in a letter to King Charles II that he send him "an enameler, a watchmaker, a diamond cutter, a goldsmith, a gunsmith, a painter, and a cannon-maker."⁷⁴

As Sussan Babaie has shown, Persians demonstrated lively interest not only in how Europeans dressed, but also in what they did when they took their clothes off. Just as the Dutch

were misinformed about Persian imagery, the Persians allowed themselves to be misled about the sex life of Christians. They seemed seriously to have believed that Christians adhered to the belief that

"celibacy and taking the path of Jesus is better than taking a wife." [...] Persians saw their European guests' abstinence from sex (and not just among missionaries) to be a bizarre form of repression, as the paintings and later discursive sources indicate.⁷⁵

One of the paintings to which Babaie refers is a single-sheet painting entitled *Lovers' Dalliance*, painted in the mid-seventeenth century by Muhammad Qasim Tabrizi (d. 1659) (see plate 1.7). The man's hat is not – or not entirely – a sign of sexual kinkiness, as in Randy Newman's song "You Can Leave Your Hat On," but a marker identifying the man as a European. In addition to such explicit images, Europeans were also shown in social foreplay, partying, flirting, and drinking. In these forms of behavior they were depicted in public on palatial wall paintings. Concerning this form of imagery, Babaie writes:

[...] the large panel on the east flank of the Qaysariye portal depicts a crowded and rather bawdy gathering of European revelers: all are dressed in formal clothing reminiscent of seventeenth-century Dutch costumes and occupy a balconied loggia with a vista onto the distant landscape that recalls contemporary Dutch and Flemish painting [...]. As far as I know, there is no parallel tradition within Mughal or Ottoman realms of mural painting that spotlights Europeans, especially in public spaces, as we find in Safavid Isfahan.⁷⁶

To which she however adds: "Whether the artists of these images intended them to be

recognizably of one or another nationality remains unknown." This uncertainty is manifest in a remark penned by Cornelis de Bruyn⁷⁷ concerning "several European figures painted in the Chihil Sutun, dressed in Spanish fashion and otherwise."



Fig. 1.5: Dominicus Custos (after 1550-1612), *Shah Abbas I*. From *Atrium heroicum Caesarum*, Augsburg 1602.

Summing up, we can say that the image of the Netherlander in Persian art was invariably a generic image, indistinguishable from that of other Europeans. There were single-sheet paintings of European men in recognizable costume and in flagrante delicto with women of the Middle East; wall paintings of Europeans in attendance on the shah and engaged in more and less raucous leisure activities. The function of these images within Persian visual culture seems to reflect internal interests and

received ideas rather than dynamic bilateral interchange with Europeans.

Stereotyping and prejudice are also the norm in Netherlandish images of Persians, with a number of important exceptions. Among the exceptions is Aegidius Sadeler's powerful portrait of Mechtü Qulî Beg. Less exceptional but better circulated is the portrait of Shah 'Abbas I made by another Flemish engraver in Prague (and Augsburg), Dominicus Custos (fig. 1.5). It was made for a collection of portraits of great rulers published in Augsburg in 1600 under the title *Atrium heroicum Caesarum* (Heroic Court of the Emperors).⁷⁸

If Persian interest in the Dutch suffered from the lack of high Dutch delegations to their country, the opposite effect took hold in Europe, albeit with visits by intermediaries, not the shah himself. A powerful impulse was administered by Sir Robert Sherley, representing 'Abbas I in Europe in 1608-1613 (see plate 1.8).

Sir Robert and his Circassian wife, Lady Teresia, both dressed exotically *à la Perse*, made a great stir during their protracted progress around the courts of Europe.⁷⁹

Although they did not visit the Netherlands, the Sherleys were in close contact with various people from the circle of Rubens. Through those contacts, it is surmised, Rubens acquired materials that allowed him to include in his album of costume studies two sheets with seven drawings of Persians (fig. 1.6).⁸⁰ He made use of them in at least one painting pertaining to Persia, *The Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris*, c. 1622-1623 (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts).

In the following decade the Northern Netherlands did receive a Persian mission. In 1625 the royal factor Musa Beg showed up in The Hague and Amsterdam (see above pp. 31-32). His appearance and behavior made a powerful



Fig. 1.6: Peter Paul Rubens, *Study of Eastern Women's Dress from the Costume Book*, c. 1610-1615. Pen and Ink.

impression on the popular imagination and on Dutch artists. "It is this embassy," wrote Hermann Goetz in 1938,

to which must be attributed the strong Persian interest so long to be felt among the public and the artists of Holland [...]. The most obvious of these new Eastern features in the art of Holland are the figures of actual Persians or of other persons in Persian costume. This vogue was so strong that we are fairly entitled to speak of a specific Persian tradition among the Dutch artists affecting portraits and religious paintings in Eastern garb. This tradition sets in suddenly in 1626-27, slowly to ebb away about the end of the century.⁸¹

While admitting that most of his examples display no authentic knowledge of Persia, Goetz makes one prophetic statement that did not pan out until more than 70 years later. "It seems quite probable that the famous embassy of Joan Cunaeus [...] revived the interest in paintings *à la Persane* [...]."⁸² In fact, one major evocation of that embassy was indeed painted, but that was not recognized until in 2009 Erlend de Groot of the Rijksmuseum published his discovery that a painting by Jan Baptist Weenix (1621-1659) that until then had been thought to depict a Dutch delegation to Sri Lanka or Bijapur in India was an image of the arrival in Bandar 'Abbas of the VOC functionary Joan Cunaeus, on a mission to Shah 'Abbas II in Isfahan (see plate 1.9).⁸³ The artist had never been to the Middle East; he modeled his topographical details on a print in Isaac Commelin's 1646 book on the VOC and presumably on information provided by Cunaeus himself, who returned to the Netherlands in 1658. De Groot's perfectly convincing new identification of the subject matter of the painting is a major contribution to the history of early Orientalism in Europe. The particulars of costume and of the place of dogs and horses

in the event are conveyed with an air of authority. Erlend de Groot is justified in saying that Weenix's painting is "the most important visual documentation of Dutch relations with mighty Persia." At the same time, this reveals the narrow limits of such documentation. It has not much more reportorial value than the flower paintings by the artist in Isfahan who copied black-and-white Dutch prints and filled in the colors on the basis of oral information provided by expat churchmen from another country.

The fact that one of the members of the Persian mission was the Dutch artist Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt deserves to be re-emphasized here. One striking example of the trend described by Goetz is actually attached to the name van Hasselt. On 15 May 1636, a woman named Grietje Hermans van Hasselt (1613/14-1668) married Jochum Berntsen van Haecken (b. 1603/04) in the Buurkerk in Utrecht. In celebration of the event, an intriguing painting was made of a wedding couple seated at a festive table, surrounded by guests (see plate 1.10a). The groom wears a crown and golden chains. He and his bride – *portraits historiés* of Jochum and Grietje, whose ages are inscribed in the painting – are dressed in exotic garb. The subject is interpreted, somewhat hesitantly, as the wedding feast of the Jewish maiden Esther and King Ahasuerus of Persia. Some support for this theory is provided by the carpet behind them, with the prominent star motif. The name Esther is related to the Persian word for star, *setareh*.

The painting, owned since 1947 by the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, is signed and dated *J. Hasselt fe 1636*. The artist is assumed to be a relative of Grietje. Three painters with that name come into consideration, the most likely of whom is Jan Gerritsz. van Hasselt. In 1983, Leonard Slatkes, in his book *Rembrandt and Persia*, suggested that the author was Jan Lucasz. van Hasselt. Even if this is not the case,

it seems reasonable to suppose that he was involved in the conception if not the execution of the painting.

In addition to the location of the presumed subject in the Elamite capital of Susa, the ruins of which lie some 300 kilometers west of Isfahan, the painting refers in other ways as well to Persia. The geometry of the carpet, with small lobes connecting larger lozenges, speaks of an origin in Shiraz. Concerning the rich clothing, the costume historian Jennifer Scarce wrote when I showed her an image of the painting:

It [...] seems to me that while the characters in the painting are beautifully and opulently dressed, most of them are wearing garments of plain rich silks with a satin finish which are of European origin, probably Italian. I do, however, detect traces of a subtle repeated medallion lattice on the woman's red gown which is outlined in gold. This may be of Persian brocaded silk.⁸⁴

About two years after the date of the Hasselt wedding dinner, another painting of such an event came into being, a large canvas by Rembrandt (see plate 1.10b). This is not a *portrait historié*, but a history painting of another story from the Hebrew Bible. The theme is quite obscure; only one other depiction of it has ever been recorded in Dutch art, a lost painting by Gabriel Metsu. It shows the wedding feast of Samson and his first wife, from Timnah. The story is from the Book of Judges, chapter 14. In the days before his wedding with a Philistine woman, Samson killed a lion and later found that the carcass had been taken over by a swarm of bees, which was producing honey in it. At the wedding feast, he posed to the 30 companions who had been assigned to him a riddle based on this incident. The prize was 30 linen garments and 30 sets of clothes. The men pressured Samson's bride to discover the

answer. She badgered him until he told her the solution, which she passed on to her compatriots. When they came up with the answer to his impossible riddle, Samson guessed what had happened. He paid off the wager by killing 30 countrymen of the wedding guests and giving their clothes to the winners.

On 18 October 1641, at the annual dinner of the Leiden painters' guild on the day of their patron saint, the evangelist Luke, Rembrandt's painting was singled out by the speaker for special praise:

I once saw a depiction by Rembrandt of the Wedding of Samson, of which we read in Judges, chapter 14, verse 10. You can see in it how that keen intelligence, by thinking hard about the actual way the guests sit (or in this case recline) at table – since the ancients used small beds on which to lie, not sitting at table the way we do today, but lying on their elbows the way the Turks still do in that part of the world – showed it very nicely.... These fruits of natural representation, true to the subject, come into being by reading the story well and analyzing it in deep and wide reflections.

Although it speaks of Turks rather than Persians, the text, published in book form in 1642 as *Lof der schilderkunst* [In Praise of Painting], suggests that Rembrandt had performed a kind of ethnographic research for his painting.⁸⁵ Remarkably, the speaker was none other than Philips Angel, who within a few years was himself to come to Persia with the VOC. If in 1642 he was contemplating that move, this would help explain his interest in things Oriental.

Rembrandt's envisioning of the event is not copied from van Hasselt's, but it comes so close in general arrangement and details such as the crown, the carpet, the white tablecloth, the discourse between the groom and a guest, and the exotic clothing that we must assume

that Rembrandt saw the painting by J. Hasselt. And if Jan Lucasz. was involved in the creation of the painting, as I am inclined to believe with Slatkes, we can surmise further that the two of them met between 1636 and 1638, that Jan Lucasz. was the source of Rembrandt's ideas concerning table manners at Middle Eastern feasts and that this was known to the Leiden speaker.

This is not Rembrandt's only connection to Persia in the years after Musa Beg's mission. In 1635 he painted the portrait of the VOC official Philips Lucasz. (b. before 1600, d. 1640) and his wife Petronella Buys (c. 1605-1670). From 1625 on Philips spent ten years in the Indies and Asia for the VOC. Toward the end of this term he served as "Council of India, Commander of the Company's naval forces in the kingdoms of Gujarat and Persia." In that capacity he paid two visits to Gamron (19 January-2 March 1632; 22 February-19 March 1633), although he never got to Isfahan.⁸⁶ Petronella Buys's sister Maria Odilia was married to Governor-General Jacques Specx, who owned the portraits of Philips and Petronella as well as several other paintings by Rembrandt. None of them seem to contain visual or iconographic references to Persia. If however we widen our scope to Indo-Persian sources, Rembrandt is revealed to have shown the strongest interest in the art of Asia of any European artist of his time. His 25 copies of the 1650s after drawings of people from the Mogul court are famous, as is his adaptation of one of them for an etching of 1656.⁸⁷

Equally forthright testimony to a new appreciation of Indo-Persian art in the Netherlands was evinced in the same years as Rembrandt by the Amsterdam artist Willem Schellinks (1627-1678). In one of four paintings by him that incorporate sources from Mogul painting (see plate 1.11) we see two cavalcades approaching from either side of a stage, bringing princely personages toward the center. This takes

place under the aegis of a celestial vision of the apotheosis of Mogul emperors Akbar and Jahangir. The source of that detail was also known to Rembrandt, who made a copy of it about the same time. Even more unusual is that Schellinks also wrote a poem about the excellence of Indian art. It appeared in the second volume of a two-volume collection of poetry called *Klioos Kraam* (The Muse of History Gives Birth).

His poem is called "On the Painting of the Benjans," a common word for Indians. It presents the following capsule history of the art of painting: after being invented by the Chaldeans, painting was improved on by the Greeks, then the Romans, then the High and Low Germans (that is, the Netherlanders) and the French, only to be trumped in our time by the clever Gujarat.

Delightfully, on the silken sheet,
His painting is as wonderfully distinguished
As the brush has ever been able to create:
So that he, mocking Europe,
Captures once more the crown of painting.⁸⁸

This is the highest praise ever paid to Indian painting in the West at that time. It seems to have emerged from enthusiastic discussions between Schellinks and Rembrandt and perhaps a group of collectors around them like those identified by Pauline Lunsingh Scheurleer. Among them must have been a high official of the Dutch East India Company. Drawings of the Moghul court were not the kind of collectible one could pick up at the bazaar. The Schellinks-Rembrandt initiative can be called a starting shot for a development that never came to fruition.

Not that Persia lacked appeal to the Dutch public. On the Amsterdam stage, a number of plays were produced on Persian themes. *The Coronation of Darius* by P. Dubbels was staged

thirteen times in seven years from 1651 to 1665. *Kosroes, King of Persia* by A. B. de Leeuw had less luck, with only three performances in 1656. Jacob Cats's *Cyrus and Aspasia*, the story of the emperor's love for a shepherdess, was the most successful of these productions, going through seventeen performances in six years between 1656 and 1662.⁸⁹ It has been suggested that this is the subject of the painting by Rembrandt known as *The Jewish Bride*.⁹⁰ Whether or not this probably unprovable hypothesis is true, the painting, with its tender evocation of love between a man and woman in seemingly Oriental dress, fits in with Rembrandt's respectful evocation of the east in his work of this period.

Conclusion

Real-life contact between Dutch VOC officials and the Persians was anything but tender. It was mainly guided by sheer venality and disfigured by thievery and abuse of power, corruption and lying, threats, and employment of actual violence on both sides. To paraphrase von Clausewitz, to the VOC warfare was a continuation by other means not of politics but of business.

The terms in which artists of the Persian and Netherlandish cultures received each other's work and each other barely come loose of the prejudgments brought to the arena by members of each group. This impression may be overly influenced by the sparseness of the evidence. It is possible that a minority opinion has been wiped out by time. The fact that the evidence is so sparse is however itself a reflection of the fact that artistic exchange is a minuscule phenomenon by comparison with more material forms of commerce. In the marketplace, a certain equality and mutuality are presumed. When a buyer and seller shake hands on a deal, they agree on the value of the items or services

concerned. It was hard enough for the VOC to achieve workable exchangeability in trading silk and silver. Transactions were complicated by issues of prestige, military considerations, corruption on both sides, European smugness, and the underlying assumption by the Persians that the Dutch were petitioners for favor, bringing tribute to the king of kings. Deals that were made, even royal edicts and resolutions of the States-General, were simply thrown out the window at the first setback or the first opportunity to gain an advantage by violating the treaty. Yet business did get done.

When it came to works of art, nothing close even to that defective degree of compatibility was attainable. All other factors aside, there was too large a financial-cultural gap between Dutchmen who wouldn't give a stiver for a Persian painting and Persians to whom European prices for works of art were incomprehensible. Recall the missive of 1641 accompanying a return shipment of paintings that were not offered to the Safavid court because they would not "be valued at anything close to their price." It would have taken a Joseph Duveen to sell Dutch paintings to the Persians for a good price, and none of the VOC officials in the country were endowed with his belief in the product, let alone his gifts as a salesman.

If Rudi Matthee is right that "the seventeenth-century travelers [...] brought with them a set of specific ways of seeing that facilitated the translation and the mediation of difference to the point of engaged empathy,"⁹¹ then the fine arts formed an exception. Of the two cultures, the Persians showed themselves far more open to European values than vice versa. Insofar as art entered Dutch-Persian relations, it can be said to have smoothed over rough edges. In a global perspective on our subject, we could suggest that fine art serves to divert attention from – and therefore make more palatable – the raw interest or hard necessity that otherwise threatens to

govern human relations. This may sound cynical, and to some it undoubtedly was. But artists and art lovers who looked beyond the borders of their own upbringing, however few in number they may have been, could be richly rewarded. In the midst of the mutual exploitation of Dutchmen

and Persians in the Age of the VOC, the realm of art gave room, however infrequently it was entered, for imagining, projecting, or experiencing the most personal qualities of the other and oneself.

Notes

1. "Van de 14 kantoren buiten Batavia stond, blijkens eene opgave der 'Generale Winst' van 1 Januari 1625-7 Januari 1626, Perzië met een winstcijfer van f. 176.429:12:4 bovenaan en overtrad zelfs Japan." H. Dunlop, ed., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis der Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, vol. 1 (all that appeared), 161-1638, vol. 72 of the series *Rijks Geschiedkundige Publicatiën* (The Hague 1930), LXXV. Now wonderfully available online at <http://resources.huysens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/perzie/>. The author wishes to express kind thanks and appreciation to Willem Floor and Rudi Matthee for reading and commenting on this essay; to Radinck van Vollenhoven and Martine Gosselink for commissioning an article from me on Dutch artists in Safavid Persia and other essential help; to Sussan Babaie, Gauvin Bailey, Jan de Hond, Amy Landau, Mary McWilliams, David Roxburgh, Jennifer Scarce, and Pauline Scheurleer for invaluable help along the way; to Petry Kievit for editorial improvement; and to NIAS and my fellow members of the NIAS theme group Netherlandish Art in Asia for a memorable experience in collaborative scholarship. Much of the contents of this essay have been published in other form previously. In 2009 in the publication cited in note 14, and in G. Schwartz, 'Between Court and Company: Dutch Artists in Persia,' in A. Langer, ed., *The Fascination of Persia: The Persian-European Dialogue in Seventeenth-Century Art & Contemporary Art from Tehran*, exhib. cat. Museum Rietberg (Zürich 2013), 152-169.
2. "Den 9en November 1627 schrijft Coen naar Amsterdam: 'God geve, de Comp. lange een vredigen handel in Persia behouden [...].'" Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, LX-III; D. W. Davies, *A Primer of Dutch Seventeenth Century Overseas Trade* (The Hague 1961), 99f.
3. N. R. Keddie and R. Matthee, eds., *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle and London 2002).
4. An exception to this rule is reported at secondhand by "one foreign observer, writing in the second half of the seventeenth century, [who] belies the notion that, in practice, the Iranians looked at Europeans generically as *Farangīyān*, asserting that they saw the Russians as uncultured, the Poles as bellicose, the French as quarrelsome, the Spanish as noble, the Italians as sagacious, the English as practically inclined, and the Dutch as mercantile." R. Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West,' *Iranian Studies*, 31.2 (1998): 219-246, esp. 231.
5. "[...] classical Muslim geographers [...] divided the world into seven 'climes,' situating Europe in the outer edge, beyond the realm of civilization." Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination,' 220.
6. Y. Porter, 'From the Theory of "Two Qalams" to the "Seven Principles of Painting": Theory, Terminology and Practice in Persian Classical Painting,' *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, 15 (2000): 109-118, esp. 113.
7. G. Schwartz, 'Ars Moriendi: The Mortality of Art,' *Art in America* (November 1996): 72-75.
8. S. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh 2008), 270f.
9. W. Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations in Iran* (Washington, D.C. 2008), 19.

10. W. Floor, 'The Talar-i Tavila or Hall of Stables, a Forgotten Safavid Palace,' *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World*, 19 (2002): 149-163, esp. 160.
11. See the information on the history of the collection on the website of the Leiden University Library: <http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/Collectieplan%20BC%20Midden-Oosten%20-%2001-10-08.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2011). With thanks to Jan Just Witkam for largely confirming this impression. Witkam also pointed out interestingly that early catalogues of the Leiden University Library drew no distinction between illustrated and unillustrated manuscripts – a rule that however applied to Western as well as Oriental manuscripts.
12. R.A. Ingrams, 'Rubens and Persia,' *The Burlington Magazine*, 116, nr. 853 (April 1974), 190-197, esp. 193.
13. "Aanwijzingen voor de aanwezigheid van Indiase miniaturen in de Republiek in de zeventiende en achttiende eeuw," in P. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Het Witsenalbum: Zeventiende-eeuwse Indiase portretten op bestelling,' *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, 44.3 (1996): 167-254, esp. 211-230.
14. Four scholars have reviewed the Dutch artistic presence in Persia in the seventeenth century: P.A. Leupe, 'Nederlandsche schilders in Persië en Hindostan, in de eerste helft der 17^{de} eeuw,' *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, 33 (23 June 1873): 260-263, and 34 (23 August 1873): 265-266; J. de Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia: landvoogdsportretten en compagnieschilders* (Leiden 1941), with valuable introductions and appendixes extending further than the collection itself; H. Gerson, 'Asien,' in *Ausbreitung und Nachwirkung der holländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Haarlem 1942), 535-550, reprint with additional matter by Bert Meijer (Amsterdam 1983); and W. M. Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran during the First Half of the 17th Century,' *Persica: Jaarboek voor het Genootschap Nederland-Iran*, 8 (1979): 145-161. I am most grateful to Willem Floor for having read and commented on an earlier version of the part of the present text dealing with the Dutch artists in Persia. Any errors it may contain I claim exclusively for myself. The following section is extracted from G. Schwartz, 'Safavid Favour and Company Scorn: The Fortunes of Dutch Painters to the Shah,' in M. Gosselink, Dirk J. Tang, and J. Braam, eds., *Iran and the Netherlands: Interwoven through the Ages* (Gronsveld and Rotterdam 2009), 133-152.
15. For his interesting story, see above, 37-39.
16. "Nadien ick jaeren soo in Italiën, Constantinopolen, Egipten, Jerusalem, Aleppo, Babiloniën, als meer andere plaetsen, geperegrineert hadde, ben ten laetsten gecommen aen het Hoff van den Coninck van Persiën [...]" Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 722, from the *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*, 1630-31, 29 June 1629.
17. Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran,' 146.
18. Th. Herbert, *Description of the Persian Monarchy Now Being the Orientall Indies, Its and Other Parts of the Greater Asia and Africk* (London 1634), 169.
19. H. Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 126, nr. 63: "Van Bewindhebbbers, Amsterdam, aan Huybert Visnich, Ispahan. Amsterdam Dec. 1624. [...] 'Eenige schilderijen gaen mede op Surrat, doch wy en vinden niet goet, dat daervan eenige na Parsia werden gesonden, vermits in all de selve menschelycke figuren geschildert sijn. Oock hebben wy verstaen by particulier advijs van den 18 January 1624, dat U E. by een meester schilder, die by den Coninck in groot credit is, seer sijt geholpen by Sijn Majt. in 't vercrygen van uwe audientie ende ander acces ende openinghe in den handel, waerover den voorseiden meester schilder niet en dient ergens in by eenige occasie te werden geoffeneert. Indien hy beter mester is als de gene, die dese schilderyen, op Surrat gesonden, hebben gemaect, soo en souden sy aldaer in Parsia niet wesen geëxtimeert ende indien beter waren, soo soude hy ons aen hem in sijn reputatie by Syn MaT. daerinne te cort geschieden door comparatie van beter werck met het syne."
20. "Syne MaT., horende dat ze geene brieven en brochten van haere heeren ende meesters, was verwondert ende heeft my belast, dat ick mijn op alles wel soude informeren. Syne MaT. wilde de vrienden, aldaer aengecomen, om mynent wille seer wel tracteren, seggende

- myne getrouwicheyt hem bekendt te wesen, verseeckert zijnde, dat ik niet anders als de suuyvere waerheyt verclaren soude, waerop ik aen zyne MaT. versocht hebbe, dat se nevens de Portugesen, Engelschen ende Italianen in gelycke eere ende respect mochten werden getraceert ende onthaelt ende dat Zyne MaT. belieffden hunlyuden met een bequaeme huysinge te versien, daertoe ick alle mijn faueur by den Coninck ende Zyne mignons hebbe gecontributeert, alsoo alle d'andere natiën hunlyuden affgunstich waeren ende middelen sochten 't selve te beletten. Syne MaT. heeft my datelijck alles toegestaan ende doen aenwysen een schoon paleys, omme onse aengecomen vrienden daerinne te logeren ende alle vrydom, sonder enige costen, te genieten, twelcke geschiet is ende logeren alsnock aldaer, tot op desen huydigen dage." Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 724, from the *Resolutiën der Staten-Generaal*, 1630-31, 29 June 1630. This self-satisfied version of events is not contradicted by anything else in the VOC papers.
21. Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran,' 146.
22. De Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, 35. At the 2010 conference of Historians of Netherlandish Art in Amsterdam, Rebecca Tucker gave a paper entitled 'At Home in Bijapur: Cornelis Claesz. Heda and Dutch Art in India.'
23. "Van Huybert Visnich, Gamron, aan de Staten-Generaal. 9 February 1625. [...] Heeft in sijn geselschap een Nederlander, den Coninck alhier eenige jaren voor schilder gedient hebbende, een jongman van goeden naeme, fame, seer gewilt van Sijn MagT., genaemt Jan Luyckassen Hasselt, welcken persoon, alsoo ick hem voor deesen in Aleppo gecent hebbe, heeft hem seer gaerne ten dienste van U E. laten gebruycken." Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 144, nr. 72.
24. U. Vermeulen, 'L'ambassade persane de Musa Beg aux Province-Unies (1625-1628),' *Persica: Jaarboek van het Genootschap Nederland-Iran*, 7 (1975-1978): 145-154.
25. "Aen Van Hasselt, die achteraf Visnich's grootste vijand bleek te zijn, verstrekte Van den Broecke geld en een aanbevelingsbrief, gericht tot Bewindhebbbers, waarvan Van Hasselt gebruik schijnt te hebben gemaakt, om Visnich zwart te maken [...]" Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, LXXV.
26. W. Floor and M. Faghfoory, *The First Dutch-Persian Commercial Conflict: The Attack on Qeshm Island, 1645* (Costa Mesa 2004), 54-64.
27. "Van Huybert Visnich (vermoedelijk te Ispahan) aan Johan. van Peenen. 'In den put Josephs,' 24 December 1630 [...]. Daertoe verleene Godt een openinge van passagie ende helpe my met Joseph uut den put, daer van myne broeders in geworpen legge, dewelcke wel eenen St. Steffen van nooden hebben, om voor haer te bidden: 'Heere, vergeeft het haer, want syen weten niet, wat sy doen.'" Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 360-361, nr. 198.
28. "Ce qu'il y a donc d'important ici, c'est qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une simple légation mais d'une véritable ambassade puisque Van Hasselt se fixerait aux Pays-Bas comme résident représentant le Shah." U. Vermeulen, 'La mission de Jan L. van Hasselt comme agent du shah de Perse aux Provinces-Unies (1629-1631),' *Persica: Jaarboek voor het Genootschap Nederland-Iran*, 8 (1979): 133-143, esp. 135.
29. R. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge 1999), 113.
30. These are approximations in a notoriously difficult field. For the value of the zecchino in Venetian ducats in 1618, see J. C. Hocquet, *Denaro, navi e mercanti a Venezia* (Rome 1999), 408. For the ratio between (Dutch) ducats and guilders, admittedly in the eighteenth century, see J. van Zanden and M. van Tielhof, 'Roots of Growth and Productivity Change in Dutch Shipping Industry, 1500-1800,' *Explorations in Economic History*, 46.4 (2009): 389-403. Appendix 2, n. 5.
31. "[...] daar deze een persoon is, die zichzelf niet gouverneeren kan en gedurende zijn verblijf alhier in het leiden van een zeer luxuriëus, ongebonden leven aan de O.-I. Compagnie veel schande [translated in the text as 'schade'; GS] heeft aangedaan [...]" De Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, 43.

32. See on this subject Floor, *A Social History of Sexual Relations in Iran*, 150ff.
33. Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran', 150.
34. The best lexicon entry on Angel, indeed the only complete and reliable one in the art-historical literature, is that by M. Wurfbain and S. Kratzsch in Saur's *Allgemeine Künstler-Lexikon* (Munich and Leipzig 1992).
35. C. Speelman, *Journal der reis van den gezant der O. I. Compagnie Joan Cunaeus naar Perzië in 1651-1652*, ed. A. P. H. Hotz (Amsterdam 1908), XLI, 199.
36. De Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, 63.
37. Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran', 154.
38. *Ibid.*, 154.
39. "De Compagnie eischte een bedrag van 3300 guldens wegens 'de costelijcke schildercamer, die door dezen in den jaere [left blank] in Spahan tegen ordre van den directeur in Persia op zijn eygen autoriteit gemaect heeft.'" De Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, 49-51.
40. L. J. Bol, 'Philips Angel van Middelburg en Philips Angel van Leiden,' *Oud Holland*, 64 (1949): 3-19; A. van der Willigen Pz., *Les artistes de Harlem: notices historiques avec un précis sur la gilde de St. Luc*, édition revue et augmenté (Haarlem and The Hague 1870, reprint Nieuwkoop 1970), 68-73 (on Philips Angel, 70).
41. I committed this error of judgment in Schwartz, 'Safavid Favour and Company Scorn The Fortunes of Dutch Painters to the Shah', 141.
42. "[...] qu'il avoit mal employé son temps, & que la chose ne valoit pas la peine d'estre dessinée, ni d'obliger un curieux à se détourner un quart-d'heure de son chemin." Speelman, *Journal*, XCII, quoting Tavernier 1680-1681, vol. 3, 729.
43. "[...] plusieurs desseins, dont quelques-uns estoient de sa propre main. Car le roi a fort bien appris a dessiner de deux peintres hollandais l'un nommé Angel et l'autre Lokar que la Compagnie hollandaise luit avait envoyé." De Loos-Haaxman, *De landsverzameling schilderijen in Batavia*, 43, quoting from J. B. Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean Baptiste Tavernier: qu'il fait en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes* (Paris 1680-1682), vol. 1, 456. There are earlier editions of the journals in English.
44. "Van Adriaen van Oostende, Ispahan, aan Bewindhebers, Amsterdam, 10 Augustus 1638 [...] noch sonder noot aen Mametbeecq, Coninx schilder, geleent 40 tomannen – daer weynich van weder comen sal [...]." Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 656, nr. 318.
45. "Terwijl de betrekking van tweede persoon aan het kantoor te Soeratta in 1656 werd waargenomen door Koedijk, zond Shah Jehan aan een zijner gouverneurs een brief waarin hij schrijft 'te hebben gehoord, het nieuws van de schilders en chirurgijn (of die kennis heeft van de natuurlijke dingen) der Hollanders,' met last hen dadelijk naar het hof te zenden. De gouverneur gaf van dezen bekomen last terstond kennis aan den directeur Hendrik van Wijck, die hiermede in het geheel niet was ingenomen. Vooreerst omdat de vorst over deze personen wilde beschikken zonder hem daarin te kennen, en de dienaren der Compagnie te beschouwen als in zijnen dienst te wezen en ten anderen omdat, wanneer ze eenmaal ter beschikking van Z.M. waren gesteld, het doorgaans zooveel moeite kostte hen weder terug te krijgen. Maar om Z.M. niet voor het hoofd te stooten en om der gevolgen wille, besloot van Wijck, gesterkt door zijn bijhebbende raden, aan zijn verzoek gevolg te geven, doch tevens zóó dat aan den oudsten hunner het karakter van agent zou worden toegekend en dat dezen de belangen der Compagnie aldaar zouden worden opgedragen." Leupe, 'Nederlandsche schilders in Persië en Hindostan,' 265. Quoted here as exemplary for the attitude of the VOC in such matters in Persia as well as India.
46. For a summary of the references to other painters, see Schwartz, 'Safavid Favour and Company Scorn,' incorporating the main findings of Leupe, 'Nederlandsche schilders in Persië en Hindostan' and Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran.'
47. "Waarom wij UEd. mits dezen ook medegeven eenen Barend van Sichern, die zeer wel teekenen en het penseel mede redelijk wel manieren kan, idem Claes Andriesz. van Amsterdam die wel in esmalte (émail) en het

- verzetten van steenen werken kan. Vóór dezen is de Majesteit van dezen kunstenaars een bijzonder liefhebber geweest. UE. zullen haren dienst presenteren en met hare personen zooveel benevolentie winnen als voortijds bij Franschen en Italianen wel geschied is. De noodwendigheden voor dezen wordt in partijen medegezonden; hetgeen nog gebreken mogte en nu niet te bekomen is, zullen als voren naar deze voldoen." Leupe, 'Nederlandsche schilders in Persië en Hindostan,' 262; Floor, 'Dutch Painters in Iran,' 148f. I remain slightly concerned over this reading of the case: had the shah expressed pleasure in the work of these specific individuals, or in the talents of European painters and craftsmen in general?
48. Bufkens is buried in the Armenian cemetery in Julfa, outside Isfahan. The inscription on his gravestone, as photographed in April 2008 by Martine Gosselink, reads: "Hier Leyt Begraven Huybert Bufkens, in syn Leven [...] wegens de N^{re} Oost-Indische Comp", En Diamant Slyper in Dienst vande Coninck van Persien – Obyt [...] 25en December 1658. [Here lies buried Huybert Bufkens, in his life [servant] of the Dutch East India Company and diamond cutter in the service of the King of Persia, deceased [...] 25 December 1658.]"
49. T. S. R. Boase, 'A Seventeenth-Century Typological Cycle of Paintings in the Armenian Cathedral at Julfa,' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 13, 3-4 (1950): 323-327.
50. See A. Landau, 'Reconfiguring the Northern European Print' in this volume.
51. D. J. Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth-Century Iran* (Leiden 2001).
52. The Hague, Nationaal Archief, VOC 13473, Generale eisen van Indië, eis van 1636 voor 1637. With kind thanks to Cynthia Viallé for this and the following reference.
53. "Soo sijn wij UE meede terugge sendende de grootte schilderije vande zeestrijt voor Gibraltar door den admiraal Heemskercken gedaen, alsoo den oppercoopman Sr Adriaen van Oostende en verscheijde Mooren, niet min een schilder voor deesen in dienst van den coningh geweest ons onderrechten bij den coningh niet aengenaem, nocht op verde naerde waardij geexlimeert soude werden, maer wel schoone personages, vrouw, personen, banquette, feesten, als aenlijdinge tot luxurie [...]." The Hague, Nationaal Archief, VOC 1135, Gamron, 9 May 1641, Wollibrant Geleijnsz. to Batavia, Governor-general and councillors, fol. 80zv.
54. "Met een woort alleen zeg ik, dat'er tusschen hunnen Godtsdienst, en dien ter Turken zeer weinigh verschil is, uitgezeit dat de Persianen geenens afkeer hebben van geschilderde beelden, die men ook doorgaens in hunne huizen ziet." C. de Bruyn, *Cornelis De Bruins Reizen Over Moskovie, Door Persie En Indie: Verrykt met Driehondert konstplaten, Vertoonende de beroemste lantschappen en steden, ook de byzonderere dragten, beesten, gewassen en planten, die daer gevonden worden* (Amsterdam 1711), 173.
55. R. W. Ferrier, 'An English View of Persian Trade in 1618: Reports from the Merchants Edward Pettus and Thomas Barker,' *JESHO*, 19 (1976): 182-214, esp. 214. With thanks to Willem Floor for this reference.
56. A. Soudavar, 'Between the Safavids and the Mughals: Art and Artists in Transition,' *IRAN*, 37 (1999): 49-66, esp. 51.
57. Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 590: "290. Van Nicolaes Jacobsz. Overschie, Ispahan, aan Bewindhebers, Amsterdam, 24 November 1636.
- "De Shah is den 13en dezer triomfantelijk ingehaald, vele gevangen Turken meebrengende, afkomstig uit Eriwan, alsmede een ambassadeur uit Constantinopel en een uit Hindustan. De Shah bewijst hem, evenals aan de Engelschen, de beleefdheid hen op gastmalen te noodigen. Z.M. begint zich meer met staatszaken te bemoeien.
- "Evenals de andere vreemdelingen heeft Overschie een eerepoort doen maken. De Shah heeft die eerepoort met een bezoek vereerd en Overschie heeft aan Z.M. juweelen en geld ten bedrage van f4.000 aangeboden, terwijl Z.M. tevens een beker wijn heeft aangevaard en er een uur heeft doorgebracht. Hij vroeg ook naar den naam van Zijne Princelijck Excellentie. Z.M. had verklaard, dat onze eerepoort de mooiste van alle was. De totale

- kosten bedragen f6.000, behalve de schenkeage. Hij hoopt, dat men hem dit niet ten kwade zal duiden."
58. M. Alam and S. Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discovery* (New York 2010).
59. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces*, 12. This remark comes uncannily close to the two-thousand-year-older judgment of Herodotus, *Histories*, par. 134: "After themselves, [the Persians] hold their immediate neighbours in the highest regard, then those who live the next furthest away, and so on in order of proximity; so they have the least respect for those who live furthest away from their own land." I doubt however whether Sussan Babaie would second the following remark by Herodotus: "The reason for this is that they regard themselves as by far the best people in the world in all respects, and others as gradually decreasing in goodness, so that those who live the furthest away from them are the worst people in the world." For more specific references to sources, see Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination,' 226-228.
60. L. Lockhart, 'European Contacts, 1350-1756,' in W. Bayne Fisher, P. Jackson, and L. Lockhart, *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 6 (Cambridge 1986), 373-409, esp. 386. Schwartz, "The Sherleys and the Shah: Persia as the Stakes in a Rogue's Gambit," 78-99.
61. *The Perilous and Most Unhappy Voyages of John Struys through Italy, Greece, Lifeland, Muscovia, Tartary, Media, Persia, East-India, Japan, and Other Places* (London 1683).
62. K. Boterbloem, *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys: A Seventeenth-Century Dutch Globetrotter* (Basingstoke 2008), 1.
63. De Bruyn, *Cornelis De Bruins Reizen Over Moskovie, Door Persie En Indie*; A new and more correct translation than has hitherto appeared in public of Mr. Cornelius Le Bruin's *Travels into Moscow, Persia, and Divers Parts of the East-Indies* (London 1759).
64. De Bruyn, 'The Use of Painting by the Persians,' in *Cornelis De Bruins Reizen Over Moskovie, Door Persie En Indie*, 173f.
65. De Bruyn, *Cornelis De Bruins Reizen Over Moskovie, Door Persie En Indie*, 138f., 182.
66. *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia*, ed. Sir Percy Sykes (London 1927); photomechanical reprint (Amsterdam 1971), 248f.
67. R. Matthee, 'The Safavids under Western Eyes: Seventeenth-Century European Travelers to Iran,' *Journal of Early Modern History*, 13 (2009): 137 and passim. Matthee, quoting P. J. Marshall, declares his intention of seeking "similarity, convergence and complementarity, rather than stark difference," in the writings of European travelers in Persia. In all candor, I can say that I began the present research in the same spirit. However, I failed to find any evidence of complementarity in these writings with regard to art. In Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination,' 231f., the same author does include references to the art of painting in a study of Safavid attitudes to Europeans. By locating some of the developments discussed in the present article in a broader context, Matthee arrives at a more upbeat picture of the situation than that sketched here. He is surely right, however, in concluding: "An admixture of premodern toleration, calculated pragmatism, and plain human curiosity prevailed in the practical attitude of Iranians toward people from the West" (246). This applies perfectly well to the spotty adaptation by Persian artists of models and ideas in Western art.
68. Sussan Babaie speaks of the "architecture of conviviality" as a leading principle of Safavid statecraft. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces*.
69. S. Babaie, 'Shah 'Abbas II, the Conquest of Qandahar, the Chihil Sutun, and its Wall Paintings,' *Muqarnas: An Annual on Islamic Art and Architecture*, 11 (1994): 125-142, esp. 131; A. Landau, *Farangi-sāzi at Isfahan: The Court Painter Muhammad Zamān, the Armenians of New Julfa and Shāh Sulaymān (1666-1694)* (Ph.D. diss., Oxford 2007), 219.
70. Landau, *Farangi-sāzi at Isfahan*, 212-213.
71. *Ibid.*, 213.
72. *Ibid.*, 5-6.
73. More amazingly, the same artist created in the early 1680s a painting entitled by Eleanor Sims, *Pastiche of the Holy Family and the Trinity, the Angel of the Annunciation, and Charles I in the Guise of St. Joseph*. Sims (1983), 76-77

- (Pastiche) and 82, note 20 (gift of English royal portraits). See also Ferrier, 'An English View of Persian Trade,' for the English gifts to Shah Safi.
74. Matthee, 'Between Aloofness and Fascination,' 236, n. 79.
75. Babaie, *Isfahan and its Palaces*, 130f.
76. *Ibid.*, 117f.
77. De Bruyn, *Cornelis De Bruins Reizen Over Moskovie, Door Persie En Indie*, 148.
78. S. R. Canby, *Shah Abbas: The Remaking of Iran* (London 2009), 257-258, cat. nr. 125. In this interesting entry, Canby comes to the provisional conclusion that the image derives not from a likeness of 'Abbas but from a portrait series in Munich of the Ottoman sultans.
79. Ingrams, 'Rubens and Persia,' 194.
80. *Ibid.*, 197; K. Belkin, *The Costume Book*, vol. 24 of the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* (London 1980), 165-170, cat. nrs. 39-40. The source for Rubens's images, which are extensively annotated concerning color and other features, has never been identified. Ingrams thinks they derive from Persian miniatures, while Belkin prefers the theory that they are based on drawings made by a European traveler in Persia.
81. H. Goetz, 'Persians and Persian Costumes in Dutch Painting of the Seventeenth Century,' *The Art Bulletin*, 20 (1938): 280-290, esp. 281f.
82. Goetz, 'Persians and Persian Costumes,' 288.
83. E. de Groot, 'The Dutch Embassy to Isfahan (Persia) in 1651-52 Led by Johannes Cunaeus: A New Interpretation of Weenix's Monumental History Painting,' *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin*, 57.4 (2009): 312-325.
84. Jennifer Scarce, e-mail of 1 April 2008.
85. Goetz, 'Persians and Persian Costumes,' 284, remarks: "It is not quite easy to define the differences between the Persian, Turkish, and Indian fashions of dress during the first half of the seventeenth century, as not only the Turks but also the Indian Mohammedans copied the Persian model to a considerable degree." This applies to more customs than dress alone.
86. N. MacLaren and C. Brown, *The Dutch School: 1600-1900*, 2 vols., Vol. 1: *Text and Comparative Plates*, Vol. 2: *Plates and Signatures* (New Haven and London 1991), 343-346, with earlier literature. See also Dunlop, *Oostindische Compagnie in Perzië*, 399, a source that seems to have been missed until now in the art-historical literature. Dunlop does not have a very high opinion of Philips's reputation in the Company.
87. P. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Mogolminiaturen door Rembrandt getekend,' *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis*, 32 (1980): 10-40. Certain aspects of the present project would have benefitted, in my opinion, had the Indo-Persian realm been treated as a whole.
88. With kind thanks to Jan de Hond of the Rijksmuseum, who introduced the poem into scholarly discourse at a seminar of November 2009 at the NIAS.
89. E. Oey-de Vita and M. Geesink, *Academie en Schouwburg: Amsterdams toneelrepertoire 1617-1665*, Amsterdam (Huis aan de Drie Grachten) 1983, 160 ("Darius kroning"), 161 ("Cirus en Aspasia"), 178 ("Kosroes, koning van Parssen"). There may be other Persia themes hidden behind less unequivocal titles.
90. G. Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (London 1985), 328.
91. Matthee, 'The Safavids under Western Eyes,' 137-171, esp. 140.