Another painting of Shah Sulayman with a courtier and a servant from the same album as that mentioned above includes a variant of the Herat-style carpet. Here green lancet leaves and pink and white four-petalled flowers are combined with cloud scrolls and lotus flowers on a ground that appears black but may have been dark blue. Blue-ground variants of the Herat type are extant, though the choice of palette as a function of artistic licence cannot be ruled out entirely. As in the group scene, the shah is seated on a white-patterned cloth that covers a small gold carpet. While the gold carpet represents a variation on the one in the group scene, the white coverlet is designed like a carpet with a border of irises alternating with pink flowers with pointed petals and a ground of rows of roundels, each containing a four-petalled flower. As only three of what must have been many types of carpets available in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, these floor coverings indicate the continuing manufacture of luxury metal ground and silk carpets as well as the development in Herat carpets away from the inclusion of animals to strictly floral and vegetal designs in the seventeenth century [fig. 142]. The cotton covers,
er painting of Shah Sulayman with a courtier and a
men the same album as that mentioned above includes a
the Herat-style carpet." Here green lancet leaves and
white four-petalled flowers are combined with cloud
d lotus flowers on a ground that appears black but may
a dark blue. Blue-ground variants of the Herat type are
ough the choice of palette as a function of artistic licence
 ruled out entirely. As in the group scene, the shah is
a white-patterned cloth that covers a small gold carpet.
e gold carpet represents a variation on the one in the
one, the white coverlet is designed like a carpet with a
irises alternating with pink flowers with pointed petals
and of rows of roundels, each containing a four-petalled
only three of what must have been many types of carpets
in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, these floor
indicate the continuing manufacture of luxury metal
nd silk carpets as well as the development in Herat carpets
n the inclusion of animals to strictly floral and vegetal
n the seventeenth century [fig. 142]. The cotton covers,
assuming they were Indian, demonstrate how thoroughly the taste
for Indian cottons had spread in Iran by the 1670s. In addition, the
cotton covers in both paintings are held down by small gold domes
studded with jewels, called 'slaves of the carpet'. These weights
were produced in India and do not appear in other Persian paint-
tings, even ones from the reign of Shah Sulayman. Assuming the
two paintings are accurate depictions of Shah Sulayman's court, the
slaves of the carpet may be further proof of this shah's taste for
Indian products and style.
Indian textiles also found wide use outside court circles. Silks with tulip designs are extant and may be the type of fabric used for the lining of coats or for complete robes, as seen in paintings by Mu'in Musavvir from the 1660s and 1670s. In Iran opulent gold-ground textiles decorated with flowers of alternating colours on the diagonal, in stripes or as part of a lattice pattern continued to be produced and made into elegant fur-lined coats, robes and waistcoats [fig. 145]. In some examples the size of the repeat pattern decreased, but extant fragments show that the single flower repeats on gold ground were still large in scale in this period. However, the standing figures and smaller patterned figural vignettes of the first half of the century ceased to be prevalent in the reign of Shah Sulayman.

The metalwork of the period of Shah Sulayman does not mark a radical departure from that of the mid-century, but some small developments can be noted. A lidded tinmed copper bowl dated 1089/1678–9 [fig. 145] and inscribed with the names of the Shiite imams follows the shape of a late sixteenth-century piece with its lack of foot, convex body and concave neck rising to a narrow, everted lip. The neck is proportionately higher than in earlier examples and the use of an escutcheon to separate sections of the inscription band is an innovation. Otherwise, the animals, hunters and animal combats that decorate the body and lid of this piece fall squarely within the repertoire of seventeenth-century Persian metalwork, bookbinding and illuminated manuscript borders.

A significant development in Safavid metalwork, namely the production of openwork panels for fixing to doors and possibly cenotaphs, had begun in the sixteenth century but continued apace in the seventeenth. A remarkable set of gold openwork inscription plaques was presented to the Mashhad shrine by Shah Tахmahp in 947/1540–41, and similarly designed openwork inscription cartouches of ivory were produced about 950/1542 for the cenotaph of Shah Isma‘īl at Ardabil. Stool openwork panels appear at least as early as the sixteenth century set into ‘alams, or standards, and in decorative and inscription plaques shaped variously as quatrefoils, cartouches and lobed medallions. An example of the latter bears the date 1105/1695–4 and is inscribed in Arabic, ‘It is from Sulayman and it is this: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate’ [fig. 146]. Although it is not certain whether the Sulayman of the inscription is the shah himself, the medallion would have formed
Textiles also found wide use outside court circles. Silks and designs are extant and may be the type of fabric used for coats or for complete robes, as seen in paintings by usavir from the 1660s and 1670s. In Iran opulent gold textiles decorated with flowers of alternating colours on the in stripes or as part of a lattice pattern continued to be made into elegant fur-lined coats, robes and waistcoats.

In some examples the size of the repeat pattern decreased, it fragments show that the single flower repeats on gold are still large in scale in this period. However, the standing smaller patterned figural vignettes of the first half of the case to be prevalent in the reign of Shah Sulayman.

Metalwork of the period of Shah Sulayman does not mark departure from that of the mid-century, but some small tents can be noted. A lidded tinmed copper bowl dated 8–9 [fig. 145] and inscribed with the names of the Shiites allows the shape of a late sixteenth-century piece with its convex body and concave neck rising to a narrow lip. The neck is proportionately higher than in earlier and the use of an escutcheon to separate sections of the n band is an innovation. Otherwise, the animals, hunters and combatants that decorate the body and lid of this piece fall within the repertoire of seventeenth-century Persian k, bookbinding and illuminated manuscript borders.

Significant development in Safavid metalwork, namely the in of openwork panels for fixing to doors and possibly s, had begun in the sixteenth century but continued apace venteenth. A remarkable set of gold openwork inscription was presented to the Mashhad shrine by Shah Tahmasp 1540–41, and similarly designed openwork inscription in of ivory were produced about 950/1544 for the cenotaph Isma'il at Ardabil. Steel openwork panels appear at least as the sixteenth century set into 'alums, or standards, and in e and inscription plaques shaped variously as quatrefoils, as and lobed medallions. An example of the latter bears the 5/1695–4 and is inscribed in Arabic, 'It is from Sulayman this: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate' |. Although it is not certain whether the Sulayman of the in id the shah himself, the medallion would have formed.
part of an ensemble of similarly worked panels containing more extensive inscriptions that probably would have elucidated the meaning of the lobed medallion. The bold *thuluth* inscription appears to float above the wiry tendrils of an S-shaped spiral arabesque, following the general principles of carpet design in which one ornamental scheme overlaps another. If this medallion was used on a door or other vertical, rectangular panel, it was most likely placed in the centre of a larger lobed medallion of sheet metal with a plain surface beneath the plaque and ornamented with a chased design around the edges. Such an arrangement is found on the silver doors of the Masjid-i Shah (Masjid-i Imam) in Isfahan of 1046/1636–7 and again on the doors of the Madrasa-i Chahar Bagh of 1126/1714, suggesting that its appeal remained strong at the royal level throughout the seventeenth century.

During the reign of Shah Sulayman the potters of Kirman sustained their output without radically altering their style. A large dish dated 1088/1677 [fig. 147] reveals the same polychrome effects as the *qal'yan* [see fig. 154] and combines the spiky flowers and grasses typical of earlier Kirman wares with peacocks and a cypress tree in underglaze blue analogous in form to those found in the borders of illuminated manuscripts, bookbindings and carpets. The black band with the inscription scratched through it had been in use for at least thirty years and the division into cartouches remained popular until the end of the century. As would be expected, shards of this type of ware were collected in the region of Kirman and Makran by Sir Aurel Stein, but it also must be assumed that such wares were used widely throughout Iran, as the large numbers of extant pieces suggest.

Blue and white wares thought to be made in both Kirman and Mashhad in the period of Shah Sulayman continued to supply both local and foreign markets unable to buy enough Chinese porcelain during the Transitional Period between the Ming and Qing dynasties. Some Persian blue and white pieces used Chinese examples as their point of departure but distorted the original composition to such a degree that it became unrecognizable [fig. 148]. While the leafy scroll in the border of the flattened flask has been straightforwardly rendered, the floating monks at sunset reflect a misunderstanding of the prototype on the part of the potter and
lead to confusion on the part of the viewer. Other blue and white ceramics adhere to typical Persian subjects, such as a youth being offered wine by a young woman [fig. 149]. The flask appears to have been carved so that the compositional elements stand out in low relief and are left uncoloured except for details picked out in black, while the background is painted in underglaze blue. The branch in the youth's hand and the joined tree trunk behind the woman are close in style to branches and tree trunks found in pieces attributed to Mashhad, which is probably where this flask was produced. In addition, the use of carving may be a development from the mid-seventeenth-century practice at Mashhad of carving floral designs in low relief in the cavettos of bowls and dishes and leaving them uncoloured. Such pieces may also represent the popularization of the use of motifs from manuscript illustration first encountered on the monochrome wares of the early seventeenth century thought to have been produced at Isfahan.

A particularly elegant ewer [fig. 150] demonstrates the enduring fascination that Indian metalwork shapes held for Persian potters as well as their perennial ingenuity in creating new forms from a known vocabulary. The moulded ewer consists of a ribbed pear-shaped body resting on a six-sided foot and rising up beyond a lobed collar to the neck, with its slight ring, and the crescent-shaped top. The spout, which is joined above the widest point of the body, ascends vertically and turns outwards to end in a dragon's head, while the handle in the form of a split-palmette may hint at the dragon's tail. The ewer is covered with a pale bluish-green glaze that in places reveals a buff colour beneath it, as if the ewer had an undercoat of buff slip. While the six-sided foot is most closely paralleled in Chinese ceramics, the ribbing and pear shape, crescent-shaped top and dragon-headed spout all relate to Mughal and Deccani metal ewers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For this reason Zebrowski and Rogers have both suggested that this ewer was intended for the Indian market. However, given the tradition of copying Indian metalwork shapes among Persian potters of the seventeenth century and the taste for Indian goods in the period of shahs 'Abbas II and Sulayman, this ewer could just as well have been made for Persian clients in Isfahan. Furthermore, the use of a celadon-coloured glaze and the technique of moulding support an attribution to Isfahan, the likeliest source.
of the copies of Chinese celadons and moulded wares of the first half of the seventeenth century.

One other group of ceramics that can plausibly be assigned to the period of Shah Sulayman is lustreware. Although production of lustreware may not have stopped entirely in the fifteenth century, only a few lustreware objects can be considered to date from the sixteenth. Nonetheless, the technique did not die completely, because a distinctive group of wares with coppery lustre glazes can be assigned to the second half of the seventeenth century. Only one dated bottle of this type has been published and the date has been read as 1006/1597, 1062/1651 and 1084/1675.a Arthur Lane accepted the latest date as correct, which is borne out by the novel shapes of some objects in this group. Along with so-called ‘tulip vases’ which have several wide-lipped spouts rising from the shoulder so that bulbs could be wedged in them, small spittoons, delicate coffee or egg cups and squat teapots join the more common bowls and long-necked bottles in the range of shapes [fig. 151]. The lustre is applied over a cobalt blue, yellow, turquoise or colourless transparent glaze. The decoration consists of landscape vignettes with or without animals and relates much more closely to the gold illuminated borders of manuscripts than to other pottery decoration. Although this might indicate that the lustrewares were produced in Isfahan, Kashan, the traditional centre of lustreware production in medieval times, may be a more likely source of these wares.

More vexing than where these small and glittering wares were made is the question of why and for whom they were produced. It has long been thought that medieval lustreware ceramics were acquired as an affordable alternative to gold and silver plate by well-to-do, non-royal members of society. Furthermore, lustrewares have the visual appeal of precious metals without breaching the Muslim law against the use of gold and silver. Could these same factors have applied to late seventeenth-century Iranian users of lustreware? It seems unlikely that potters and their patrons would have been concerned about the Islamic prohibition on gold and silver in a multicultural society with many wealthy non-Muslims. However, the shortages of precious metals that led to the debasement of Safavid coinage and excessive export of gold and silver may also have had an impact on the availability of vessels of gold and silver to wealthy patrons. This is not to say that gold ceased to be available in the quantities necessary for producing metal thread for carpets and textiles, nor that its use at court wavered. Rather, the lustrewares produced during the reigns of the last two Safavid shahs in shapes that are analogous to those of gold objects depicted in paintings of the court must have supplied a clientele who were aware of gold and silver vessels employed at court but unable or unwilling to buy them.

From the mirrors on the walls and ceilings of the Hasht Bihisht to the delicate ewers from which red wine was dispensed, fine glass in the time of Shah Sulayman was imported, primarily from Venice, Shiraz wine was packed in large glass bottles and some flasks were made locally, but these were utilitarian objects of indifferent to bad quality, cloudy and full of air bubbles. By contrast, the curvaceous Venetian glass ewers depicted in the paintings of ‘Ali Quli Jabbadar appear limpid, sparkling and lightweight.

For all the ineffectiveness of Shah Sulayman as a ruler, his love of luxury sustained the arts of the court and in particular encouraged painters working in the European style. Although Eurasian trade became increasingly competitive in the second half of the seventeenth century, fine textiles and ceramics were sold in Europe and India through the increasingly rich and powerful Armenians of Isfahan, among others. The fashions in the social fabric of Iran which began to appear under Shah Sulayman were not yet sufficiently deep to disrupt artisanal output. However, the shah’s weak and decadent personality restricted his influence on the arts to the extent that, except for the Europeanizing court painters, little innovation in design occurred during his reign. Rather, carpet makers, weavers, potters and metal workers relied on the decorative vocabulary established in the first half of the seventeenth century and earlier and recombined familiar motifs in new ways. The result was an attractive, sometimes opulent array of objects that rarely exhibit the spark of originality and technical precision found in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

---

151 A group of lustrewares, Isfahan?, late 17th century, stoneware, cobalt blue and lustre glazes. All British Museum, Spinton, h. 11.5 cm, o. 1985.391, Godman Collection; bowl, h. 4.4 cm, diam. 8.1 cm, o. 1982.25-50.601, Henderson Bequest; long-necked bottle, h. 24.1 cm, o. 1958.570, Godman Collection; bracelet, h. 4.4 cm, diam. 7.9 cm, o. 1985.570, Godman Collection; bowl, h. 4.5 cm, diam. 13.5 cm, o. 1985.565, Godman Collection.
Disintegration of the Dynasty

Shah Sultan Husayn
1694–1722

Most of the time the Shah spent in the company of divines, sayyids, the Hākīn-bāshī, the Mullā-bāshī, discussing literary problems and poetry, the preparation of dishes and medicines, while the ordaining of the state affairs was left to the amirs, who hated each other.¹

Like all the Safavid shahs after Shah 'Abbās I, Sultan Husayn was reared in the harem without the benefit of any formal education or preparation for his role as ruler of Iran. Had his great-aunt and champion, Princess Maryam Begum, not been the first to discover the dead Shah Sulayman, Sultan Husayn's more dynamic younger brother, 'Abbās Mirza, might have been designated shah and the Safavid dynasty might have lasted longer. As it was, the passive, pious Sultan Husayn was crowned shah on 14 Dhu'l Hijja 1105/6 August 1694. For a while Muhammad Baqır Majlisi, the leading theologian and shaykh al-Islam, then mulla-bashī (both terms signifying chief cleric), exerted a strong influence on the twenty-six-year-old shah. Edicts were issued outlawing the consumption of alcohol and expelling Sufis, the descendants of the original Qızibash followers of the Safavid shaykhs, from the capital. The triumph of the orthodox Shiite hierarchy, the ‘ulama, not only was the death knell for the Sufis but also marked a shift in the power structure of the Safavid elite. Although the eunuchs and royal princesses of the harem enticed Shah Sultan Husayn into drinking alcohol, the ‘ulama with Muhammad Baqır Mulla Bashi at their head instituted religious intolerance to a degree not previously endured in Safavid society. Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Sunnis and Sufis all suffered from discrimination, if not persecution and forcible conversion, which in turn immeasurably weakened the loyalty of the diverse population which had steadfastly supported the Safavid shahs in times of crisis.

Given the indifference of the shah to governing, the attempts of the ‘ulama to convert the whole country to Shiism amounted to the main political policy. This was especially dangerous in the borderlands where Sunni populations had remained loyal to the Safavids despite the presence of their co-religionist neighbours, the Ottomans in the west and the Mughals in the east. One such group, the Ghazi Afghans, who held sway in the region of Qandahar, drinking alcohol, the ‘ulama with Muhammad Baqır Mulla Bashi at their head instituted religious intolerance to a degree not previously endured in Safavid society. Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Sunnis and Sufis all suffered from discrimination, if not persecution and forcible conversion, which in turn immeasurably weakened the loyalty of the diverse population which had steadfastly supported the Safavid shahs in times of crisis.

Given the indifference of the shah to governing, the attempts of the ‘ulama to convert the whole country to Shiism amounted to the main political policy. This was especially dangerous in the borderlands where Sunni populations had remained loyal to the Safavids despite the presence of their co-religionist neighbours, the Ottomans in the west and the Mughals in the east. One such group, the Ghazi Afghans, who held sway in the region of Qandahar,

¹ 152 Velvet fragment, Isfahan, late 17th century, silk, 105 × 99 cm, David Collection, Copenhagen, 10/1989.
lechol, the 'ulama with Muhammad Baqir Ma'lla Bashi, head instilled religious intolerance to a degree not previously endured in Safavid society. Christians, Jews, Parsees, Sunnis and Sufis all suffered from discrimination, if not persecution and forcible conversion, which in turn immeasurably weakened the loyalty of the diverse qapulion which had steadfastly supported the Safavid kings in times of crisis.

The indifference of the shah to governing, the attempts made to convert the whole country to Shiism amounted to political policy. This was especially dangerous in the is where Sunni populations had remained loyal to the despite the presence of their co-religionist neighbours, the in the west and the Mughals in the east. One such group, the Afghans, who held sway in the region of Qandahar,