PERSIAN LACQUER

176 Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), attributed to Muhammad Zaman, Isfahan, late seventeenth century

top with trees and an avenue of cypresses leading to a building, a lake in the foreground, hills and a cloudy blue sky in the background, sides with dispersed sprays of violets and carnations, chipping mostly restricted to edges and sides, top darkened and cracked, some relouching, edges reglue, inscribed on top "zahab saltzman", underside and drawer decorated with floral motifs in gold on red and black grounds, length 233mm.

The style is consistent with the attribution to Muhammad Zaman, in particular, the avenue of cypresses in strict perspective recalls his miniature in the Chester Beatty Shahnama (MS.277)

£3000-5000

177 Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), signed by Muhammad Ali Ashraf, Persia, dated A.H.1160/A.D.1747

top and sides with nightingales amid roses, hazel-nuts and other flowers, on black ground, edges decorated with intertwining floral motifs in gold, one corner chipped, inscribed at top: "zahab Muhammad Ali ashraf 1160", underside and drawer decorated with floral motifs in gold on red ground, length 231mm.

£2000-3000

178 Persian lacquer casket, Qajar, early nineteenth century

flat-topped domed lid painted with Fatih Ali Shah hunting with princes and attendants, inner surface of lid painted with prince hunting with mazzed flowers, curved surfaces of lid with panels of ladies, children and sages separated by oval bust portraits of maidens and European youths, sides with further hunting scenes with Fatih Ali Shah, metal hinges and clasp, in good condition, 245 by 175mm.

£2000-3000

179 Large Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), Persia, nineteenth century

top and sides with hunting scenes, figures dressed in late Safavid costumes and turbans, inscribed 'Rahim Dekum' with the date A.H.1(1)009/A.D.1606, somewhat darkened and cracked, length 340mm.

£400-600
180 Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), style of Najaf, Qajar, c. 1840
Top with a standing male in a landscape, a dog in foreground, buildings and trees in background, side with pastoral scenes and portraits of reclining maidens, chipped, gilt edges, underside and drawer decorated with floral motifs in gold on red ground, length 210mm.
£350-450

181 Large Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), Qajar, mid-nineteenth century
Top and sides with finely painted flowering plants and shrubs, with two nightingales in gold on black ground, slight chipping, inside lid and underside decorated with floral motifs in gold on red ground, length 345mm.
£400-500

182 Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), Qajar, mid-nineteenth century
Top and sides with nightingales amid roses, tulips and hyacinths on black ground powdered with gold, underside and drawer decorated with floral motifs in gold on red ground, metal ink pot, length 235mm.
£800-1200

Property of a Lady
HIGHLY IMPORTANT PERSIAN LACQUER MIRROR-CASE

183 Persian lacquer mirror-case made for Nasr ad-Din Shah Qajar, signed by Isma‘il, Qajar, dated A.H.1271/A.D.1854
Cover and inside lid with nine scenes of gatherings, feasts, processions, battles and audiences, borders decorated with floral motifs in colours and gold, inscribed on lower cover: “Imad-i khamviri Isma‘il 1271”, two chips restricted to outer border and edge otherwise in excellent condition, gold clasp and hinges, mirror intact, 280 by 178mm.

Literature
This very notable mirror-case was the subject of an article by B.W. Robinson, “A lacquer mirror-case of 1854” in Iran, vol. V, 1967, pp. 1-6, in which the career of the painter Muhammad Isma‘il was discussed and the historical background of the painting explored.

Provenance
1. Formerly in the collection of the late Professor. R.A. Darra.
2. Sold at Messrs Phillips Son and Neale on 15th March 1966, lot 29

Artist
Muhammad Isma‘il (who often omitted his first name in his signatures) was the younger brother of the celebrated lacquer-painter Najaf of Isfahan. His dated works so far recorded span the period c. 1845-1875, and from his predilection for European subjects and figures he was nicknamed forangi-se or the “Europeanizer”. He appears to have been a court artist almost throughout his career, and held the title of Painter Laureate (maqash-bashi). He has left an excellent self-portrait in the interior of a pen-box, dated 1865, sold in these rooms on the 13th/14th October 1980, lot 155, showing a fairly elderly, portly man with a grey beard. There is also a portrait of him in the Malek Library, Tehran. Other lacquer pieces by Muhammad Isma‘il sold in these rooms include a mirror-case dated A.H.1271/A.D.1854 sold 23rd November 1976, lot 480; a pen-box dated A.H.1279/A.D.1862 sold 20th July 1977; a pen-box dated A.H.1277/A.D.1860 sold 24th April 1979, lot 385, and a pen-box dated A.H.1282/A.D.1865 sold 13th October 1980.
The subjects are as follows:

**Outer Cover**

a. The Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, with priests and worshippers. The representation of the cathedral is wholly imaginary and founded on the Armenian cathedral of Jolfa, a suburb of Isfahan, of which the artist Muhammad Ismail was a native.

b. A Russian couple in a carriage, attended by horsemen, approaching a bridge over the Neva at St. Petersburg, an imaginary view of which occupies the background.

c. A Russian feast al-fresco, with twenty-six guests seated round a table lavishly spread with food and drink. Horses and grooms in foreground and background.

**Inner Cover**

a. The walled city of Erivan with cannon firing a salute, and parties of Persians and Russians walking, riding and lounging in foreground.

b. Prince Nasr ad-Din Mirza (aged seven) seated on the Czar's knee in a talar overlooking a courtyard thronged with Persians and Russians receiving and arranging official gifts of horses, rolls of fine cloth, etc. This incident occurred in 1837.

c. The Persian camp, with Russian visitors, background of distant mountains.

**Back Cover**

a. The Czar and his elderly aide-de-camp mounted, with attendants paying their respects to two ladies, one in a carriage and the other about to mount beside her. Lake with ship, bridge and two towns in the background.

b. The Sultan of Turkey (Abd al-Majid) being presented with a pair of pistols. He is shown mounted beside a cannon with its gunners, and approached by a mounted princess, veiled and attended by mounted men and other veiled ladies.

c. Attack by an armed paddle-steamer on a shore position, held by a battery of guns, all firing, backed by infantry drawn up in line. In the foreground the Czar, seated in a chair, directs operations and receives a report from two officers, mounted troops in attendance, and two more cannons firing.

£40,000-50,000

**Other Properties**

184 Persian lacquer pen-box (qalamdan), signed by Muhammad Sadiq al-Imami, Qajar, dated A.H.1287/A.D.1870.

*Top and sides with nightingales amid flowering bushes, on dark brown ground, gilt edges, underside and drawer decorated with floral motifs in gold on red ground, length 227mm.*

It is interesting to find this fully signed and dated work of Muhammad Sadiq al-Imami, which explains the occurrence on mid-nineteenth-century pieces of the Sadiq signature normally associated with the celebrated eighteenth-century artist of the same name.

£1500-2000

END OF FIRST SESSION