88
A PORTRAIT OF MAHARAYAT UHED SINGH OF DEVGARH
(R. TTB 58) ON HORSEBACK, DEVGARH, INDIA,
SECOND HALF 18TH CENTURY
Gouache heightened with gold on paper, mounted on an album page, depicting an equestrian rider on the banks of a stream amid an empty landscape; the reverse with a sketch of the painting
central panel: 20.6 x 12.5 cm.
leaf: 34.5 x 28.6 cm.
PROVENANCE
Presented to an Englishman by the Maharaja of Udaipur in the late 1940s.
£5,000-7,000 €6,000-8,000

90
AN ILLUSTRATED AND ILLUMINATED ALBUM PAGE FROM
NIZAMI’S SHARAF MARJ ALEXANDER BEFORE HUSHABA,
INDIA, HUMAYUN 18TH CENTURY
Ink and gouache on paper, heightened with gold, the painting depicting a princely figure enthroned amidst scores of male and female attendants beneath a canopy on a terrace, bordered by panels containing Persian text in Nastaliq script within scrollbands against gold grounds with triangular corners decorated with palmette and gold foliate patterns, a further dark blue border with finely scrolled in gold, outer margins filled with coloured naturalistic flowers, the reverse with a central panel of Nastaliq calligraphy ruled in colours and gold, laid down on an album page backed with gold
central panel: 23.5 x 16.5 cm.
leaf: 58.5 x 38.3 cm.
£3,000-5,000 €3,650-6,050

91
A PORTRAIT OF KARIM KHAN ZAND ON HORSEBACK,
ATTRIBUTABLE TO ABU HASSAN GHAFFARI MUSTAFA KASHANI,
PERSIA, LATE 18TH CENTURY
Gouache heightened with gold on paper, depicting Karim Khan Zand on horseback holding a bow in his right hand, the horse reared in his left, set in blue borders and laid down on card central panel: 24 by 19 cm.
leaf: 28.2 by 25 cm.
The painter Abu Hassan Ghaffari Mustafawi Kashani, to whom this lively composition can be attributed, is known to have also painted historical personalities and portraits of his contemporaries. After two years of painting apprenticeship, the artist joined the employment of Karim Khan Zand (who was too short-winded to fight, typically square-jawed and intense, piercing gaze) as court secretary.
The present work is a continuation of the style of the later Safavid artists Muhammad Zaman and ‘Ali Gilani, Jabinidas, and shows him to have painted in the same style as the former in the collection of the Later Principe Sadduldeh Aga Khan (previously attributed to Muhammad Zaman, published in Diba & Elhissi 1998, p.148-9, no.33). It is likely that this portrait was painted by Abu Hassan during Karim Khan’s reign (1744-79), and judging by the similarities between the work of hand and a further depiction of Karim Khan and his horse by the same artist sold at Christie’s London, 27 April 2004, lot 91 (particularly the treatment of the horse), it seems likely that the portrait was painted from life, and that the horse was the ruler’s own.
£35,000-45,000 €42,000-55,000
92
A PICTORIAL SCROLL DEPICTING THE CORONATION PROCESSION OF MUHAMMAD SHAH QAJAR, PERSIA, QAJAR, DATED 1251 AH/1835 AD
Watercolour on paper, backed with blue paper and beige cotton 447 by 215cm.

This highly unusual and finely painted scroll depicts the royal procession of Muhammad Shah Qajar on the occasion of his coronation. It is dated the year after the event took place but clearly shows the Shah (labelled below his horse) riding ahead of other members of the Qajar court, preceded by a long train of ceremonial officers and officials, both mounted and on foot, including musketeers, see-bearers, a horse-drawn gun carriage, a marching band, musicians mounted on camels and a carriage bearing the Qajar royal emblem of the lion and sun, drawn by two horses.

£20,000-30,000  €24,400-36,600

93
A LACQUERED PAINTING, PERSIA, QAJAR, EARLY 19TH CENTURY

Of broad rectangular format, depicting a lady with a child on her lap, a maidens with a duck standing behind the chair, a landscape visible in the distance, and a vase of flowers in the foreground, bordered with scrolling naturalistic flowers within gold ground cartouches.

296 by 235cm.

£6,000-8,000  €7,500-10,000
THE PROPERTY OF A LADY

A PORTRAIT OF A LADY

SIGNED BY MIRZA BABA, PROBABLY PAINTED FOR THE COURT OF FATIH ALI SHAH QAJAR (1797-1834), PERSIA, EARLY QAJAR PERIOD, DATED 1215 AH/1800-01 AD

Oil and metal leaf on canvas, framed 146 x 194 cm.

£ 500,000-800,000

LITERATURE

Diba and Eltis, ‘Royal Persian Painting, the Qajar Epoch’, 1983 (p.43). Diba, 1985 (p.56).

This bold and voluptuous image of a lady is one of the most iconic portraits of the early Qajar period, painted by the leading artist of the day, probably for the royal court of Fatih Ali Shah Qajar.

It is painted very much in the Zand style of the late eighteenth century, the style in which Mirza Baba had been trained and which persisted in early Qajar art well into the nineteenth century. The figure type, the sleepy large eyes, the costume and particularly the broad, heavily patterned trousers, which are depicted in such a way as to consciously display their texture, are all features of Zand style and are characteristic of Mirza Baba’s work.

Mirza Baba was one of the most talented and influential of early Qajar artists. Described by B.V. Robinson as a “great painter” (Eltis, 1996, p.48), he was already working for the Qajar family at Ashtabad before they came to power and he continued in the service of Fatih Ali Shah as emperor. Fatih suggests that he was in the employ of the Zand court before transferring to the Qajars (Falk, 1997, p.23). Active until 1820, he was a versatile artist who produced ornate scale illustrations for manuscripts (such as a copy of Fatih Ali Shah’s poems commissioned as a gift to the Prince Regent in 1812 and now in the Collection of His Majesty the Queen at the Royal Library, Windsor Castle) and frescoes as well as large scale oil paintings, for which he is best known. His works in oil depict a variety of subjects, most commonly royal portraits, landscapes of dancing girls and musicians, young men in chains and still life paintings. He is mentioned several times, described as the best or greatest or second only by the English writer Sir William Ouseley, who was in Tehran in 1809 in the entourage of his brother Sir George Ouseley, one of the English envoys sent to the court of Fatih Ali Shah in 1802. He was commissioned by Fatih Ali Shah to design the royal throne of the capital’s audience hall in Tehran, and Layla Diba has suggested that this painting may well have been executed to decorate one of the royal palaces on the island of Diba and Eltis, 1991 (p.139). This possibility is supported by the fact that only two years earlier, in 1215 AH/1899 AD, Mirza Baba had painted the well-known monumental royal portrait of Fatih Ali Shah Qajar now in the collection of the India Office Collections at the British Library, London (see London 1998, no.103), and since he was one of the senior court artists it is highly unlikely that he would have executed works for any other patrons in the short intervening time.

It is probable that Mirza Baba was a pupil of Muhammad Sadiq Diba, who suggests this in her catalogue description of the present work in the catalogue of the 1998 exhibition of Qajar painting (Diba and Eltis, 1998, no.20). Certainly their style is very close and their biographies overlap both in the Zand and early Qajar contexts. But a more direct proof of this student-teacher relationship is evident in the remarkable compositional similarity that exists between this present work and one of Mirza Baba’s most famous female portraits (see fig.1). The painting in question is published in this introductory chapter of the seminal catalogue of the Amur Collection, written by Toby Houlden in 1997 (fig.4, p.181), and again in Diba and Eltis, 1998, fig.117. It shows a female figure seated with long crossed legs under the window with the hand resting on her outstretched foot. She is wearing a wide brocaded patterned skirt and a white frock coat; her hair is tied back and she holds a mirror. Her pose and mannerism are similar to those of this present work, where the leg and hand rest on the left knee. The pose is a classic pose for portraits in Persian art, and it is also found in Qajar miniatures.

An examination of this present portrait shows that the pose of the female figure is absolutely identical both in portraits, with the legs crossed in the same manner, the hand resting on the outstretched foot, and the hand and arms positioned exactly as if the figure were posing for a portrait, except here Mirza Baba has substituted for the mandolin a small large puppy in the right hand and a glass in the left. Even if the dog is the left hand resting on the left knee, even if the details of the hand are depicted otherwise that of Muhammad Sadiq’s original, if you replace the mandolin with a small large puppy and a glass, does it even matter? And if you replace the hand holding the puppy with a glass, does it even matter? And if you replace the pose of the puppy with the hand holding the glass, does it even matter? And if you replace the hand holding the glass with the hand holding the puppy, does it even matter?

The clothing and surroundings are also almost identical. In the present portrait the fur of the female figure is swirling with a wide brocaded patterned skirt and an open frock coat; behind her is a window and a mirror hanging on the wall behind her. The same composition is found in the portrait of Muhammad Sadiq’s original. If you replace the puppy with the hand holding the glass, does it even matter?

This compositional repetition is an interesting and important art historical point. While the general and conscious repetition of a compositional feature or basic outline is common and acknowledged throughout the history of Persian painting (witness the numerous compositional tropes evident in Persian book painting from the fifteenth century onward), it is even more often and more directly the case where a pupil is working from the original of the master. However, the extreme similarity evident here is unusual, and it only confirms that Mirza Baba was Muhammad Sadiq’s pupil, but that the thirty years later he had access to his master’s paintings, or to other identical compositions. Could this be the present work has been painted for the same patron? A further interesting point, and one which has a bearing on the subject of Qajar taste for Zand style, is that the two pupils must surely have been executed for different royal patrons. In 1760-61 Muhammad Sadiq was working for the Zand court at Shiraz, whereas in 1800-1 Mirza Baba was working for the Qajar court at Tehran. Could Mirza Baba have intentionally echoed his master’s composition not only in the context of master-pupil compositional repetition, but also because his patron Fatih Ali Shah had hinted for a portrait that was close to the style and composition of the earlier work, and perhaps even a whole decorative cycle in one of his palaces that echoed a Zand example in Shiraz?

The identity of the female figure in the present work is unknown and unidentified, and in the case with all such portraits in this early Qajar period, it is likely to have represented a royal concubine or entertainers, shown in an idealised way rather than as an actual portrait of a real person. Misbeh Najmabadi has written an interesting essay on the subject of female portraits in Iran, which shows light on the possible role and context of portraits such as this one (see Najmabadi 1999).
95
A LARGE LACQUER PEN BOX. SIGNED MUHAMMAD ISMA'IL, PERSIA, QAJAR, DATED 1280 AH/1863 AD
of rectangular form, with sliding tray, the main body top decorated with a central cartouche enclosing a landscape, signature and date in small lozenge cartouches above and below, flanked by two female portraits, the side cartouches depicting battle scenes and the figure of Nasir Al Din Shah with further male and female portraits, the underside with large scrolling vines, the tray sides with corresponding decoration, plain underside, interior lip with maker's stamp 25.3cm.
INSCRIPTION
.sell-e-kastam-bang-i-dargah-muhammad-sma'y-
nequeh-bazli-ye-de-al-sabah-ye-e-fakhan-1280
"Drawn by the smallest servants of the court, Muhammad
ismail, the Chief Painter of Capital Isfahan 1260 AH/1845/6 AD"
The embossed seal impression of the case maker reads: His
[Gods] hoping servant, Muhammad Javad 1271 AH/(1855
AD)
Muhammad Ismail was one of the leading painters of the
Qajar period, active between 1840 and 1871. Various other
lacquer pieces depicting battle scenes are known by this
artist, and it has been suggested that Muhammad Ismail
adopted European depictions of famous battles as his
model. Indeed the Chini Sultani police in Tehran houses
some of the greatest large historical oil paintings in Iran and
it was here that the artist was found residing in the early
1860s by the traveler John
Usher (see N.D. Khalili, BM Robinson & T. Stanley [Eds.],
Lacquers of the Islamic Lands, Part Two, London, 1997 p.46, for a
further discussion of the artist).
For other pen boxes made by Muhammad, see Khalili
et al., op. cit., p.238. A remarkably similar pen box to the present
piece, also by Muhammad Ismail, was sold at Christie's, 6
October 2009, lot 151.
£ 15,000-25,000 € 18,300-30,500

96
A QAJAR LACQUER PEN-BOX. SIGNED "YA SADQ AL-WAD" (MUHAMMAD SADIQ), PERSIA, DATED 1224 AH/1808-9 AD
of elongated oval form, the top and sides with scenes of Yusuf and the women of Egypt, the underside and sides of drawers with gold floral scrolls on a red
ground 23.5cm.
Muhammad Sadiq is primarily known for his lyrical subjects, revealing his great skill
as a portraitist. Sadiq's works are generally signed, either with his full name or using
the formula seen in the present example: "Ya Sadq al-Wad" ("O thou who are true",
referring to Ya'qub al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam). A lacquer mirror case signed by the
artist and featuring a similar scene of outdoor tissue is in the Victoria & Albert Museum
lacquer penbox by Muhammad Sadiq was formerly in the Napoleonic Palace
£ 4,000-6,000 € 4,900-7,200
In this context is the portrait of the fortunate monarch
Which has blessed days, Heaven and Spring
His picture would rile the heart of lions
His shimmer and arrows would frighten the firmament
The wind has tied the rope of submission around his neck
The summit of heaven is in his hand
Feathers of death are tied to his arrows
From the breast of his arrows to dragons and toneses
A whale would not escape him
He would play with dragon's tail
The heavens and stars are all his soil
That very milky-white saddle-stripe
The young king has refreshed the World
The World has a new young king
The World-seeker Muhammad, the illustrious king
The World has a pure-hearted monarch
In combat he is like heavens, in entertainment like the Sun
He destroys like fire and pleasant like water
The high heavens is a ball for his poles
From East to West is his field of play
He knows peace in battle field
He caused the Moon to touch the fish and hith the Moon
Fall's head rooted with his race
Moon's heart bewitched by his spear
His palm is the key to sustenance
His door facing good fortune
May Sephera and Sabith be servants at his door
May the universe worship him
'He old Sephera like the world of speech
Has put his soul and body at his path"
This is a rare and highly important portrait of Muhammad Shah Qajar. Compared to his predecessor Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar, and his successor Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar, Muhammad Shah sat for official portraits more rarely and the great majority of extant examples are smaller works, often in watercolour or gouache on paper. Large, monumental portraits of Muhammad Shah such as the present one are very rare. Indeed, the seminal exhibition Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch 1785-1925, which took place in Brooklyn, Los Angeles and London in 1998-99, presented only one large-scale portrait of Muhammad Shah (and this was considerably smaller than life size), as opposed to eight of Fath 'Ali Shah (see Diba and Blüher 1998, nos. 51-52, 67, 78, 1999, nos. 110 & 116). For a discussion of the general artistic trends of Muhammad Shah’s reign see Diba and Blüher 1998, pp. 221-3).

The Persian verses in the border calligraphies comprise a eulogy by the poet Mirza Muhammad Taqi Ullah al-Malik of Kashan (1792-1870), known by the pen-name Sepahli. Liuai al-Muluk was the royal botanist under Muhammad Shah, also serving as the secretary to the Foreign Department and later on as a historian. Finally inscribed by the calligrapher Mirza Usmail, these verses are a hymn in praise of the shah. They evoke his regal splendour and the apotheosised image that he had of himself and that others had of him, as embodied in the painting.

This work is notable for its traditional composition, reminiscent in its pose, the garments, the sword, the sceptre, the griffin, the throne and the rug of portraits of his forebear Fath ‘Ali Shah Qajar. Both in its formal arrangement and the grandeur and regal presence which it conveys are executed in the style of royal portraiture which was established by the artists Mirza Baha and Mir ‘Ali under Fath ‘Ali Shah’s direction in the early 19th century.

The artist in this case was recognised as one of the leading court painters during the reign of Fath ‘Ali Shah and Muhammad Shah Qajar, and was possibly a pupil of the famous Mir ‘Ali (E. Yorvater, ed.), The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 7, p. 807). Known simply as Ahmad, three other signed portraits of Muhammad Shah are attributed to his hand. These include a very similar seated composition now in the Ethnographical Museum in Berlin, a bust portrait, and an equestrian painting now at the Golestan Palace in Tehran (see, respectively, J. Schröder, Nationalmuseum Funktion künstlerischen Bildes, Berlin, 2004, pp. 20-21, and J. C. Robey, Qajar Portraits: London and New York, 1999, p. 55, pl. 177; E. Wokwor, Période: Royal Portraits in Qajar Iran, Political, Social, and Cultural Change, E. Blochworth and C. Hilmbrandt (eds.), Costa Mesa, 1988, p. 137, pl. 5). It is important to note, however, that in his publication The Lives and Art of the Old Painters of Iran, H.A. Kiaran-Abadi refers to two distinct artists named ‘Ahmad—one a watercolourist, the other an oil-painter—who were active in the first half of the 19th century. It is in fact possible, nonetheless, that these are the same person working different media (A. Kiaran-Abadi, The Lives and Art of the Old Painters of Iran, London, 1999, pp. 52-3).

A significant symbol of wealth and power in this portrait is the plethora of diamonds that surrounds Muhammad Shah’s head, particularly the pair of large diamonds incorporated into his turban. (remember again of the Fath ‘Ali Shah portraits, which have also depicted the rectangular diamond Daya’i Nur (Sea of Light) and rosette Si Farah (Crown of the Sea). These diamonds were a result of Naqib Shah’s looting of Delhi in 1799, and were then worn by successive Qajar rulers including Fath ‘Ali Shah, Muhammad Shah and finally Nasr al-Din Shah (who then led the Daya’i Nur mounted, as it remains today, see V.S. Mann & A.O. Tehrani, The Crown Jewels of Iran, Toronto, 1965, pp. 53 & 60). The diamond encrusted sword proposed on his left is also believed to have belonged to Naqib Shah, and later owned by order of Fath ‘Ali Shah (illustrated in 89, pp. 10-11).