

Art of the Safavid Empire

Discussion Question:

- The Safavids, like the Ottomans, were known for their silk industries. What are some products that the Safavids might have created out of silk?

Safavid Art

- In the arts, manuscript illustration was prominent during the Safavid Empire
- Textiles and carpets were made of luxury materials as furnishings for the court.
- In architecture, they commissioned mosques and palace complexes, restored major shrines, and contributed to sites of pilgrimage.

Shah 'Abbas (r. 1587-1629)

- His reign was a period of cultural florescence.
- In 1597-98, Shah 'Abbas transferred his capital to Isfahan, in southern Iran.
- The centerpiece of his capital was the new Maidan-i Shah, which was built initially for state ceremonies and sports.



Shah 'Abbas (r. 1587–1629)

- Shah 'Abbas encouraged trade with Europe
- Silk was Iran's main export.
- Carpets and textiles were also important export items.
 - These were produced in workshops set up under state patronage in Isfahan and other cities.
- The art of painting continued to flourish, with single-page paintings and drawings becoming popular.



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Safavid Arts

- In pottery, imitations of ceramics from Turkey and of blue-and-white ware from China were especially popular.
- Carpet weaving was transformed from a craft practiced by nomads and peasants into a national industry.
- Fabrics were another major industry, both in silks, and in velvet.
- European imported works provided new technical techniques, which local artists combined with elements of traditional Persian painting.



http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/tott/hd_tott.htm

Safavid Fashion

- Textiles showed contemporary Safavid dress, with men sporting turbans wound around a central oblong baton (*taj haydari*).
- Women are depicted wearing a small square kerchief (*chahar-qad*) at the crown of the head tied over longer flowing headscarves.
- Figures on textiles made from the early seventeenth century onward reflect the changing fashions, as the *taj haydari* was replaced by a wide, elliptical turban.

Date: mid-16th century

Medium: Silk, metal wrapped thread; cut and voided velvet <http://www.metmuseum.org/>



Safavid Motifs

- Popular scenes feature idealized pastimes such as hunting, falconry, or poetry reading in garden settings.
- Popular designs included stylized flowers with delicate drawings of deer, rabbits, and birds.
- Weaving incorporated gold or silver strips through colors that included pistachio green, salmon pink, alizarin, cream, and ochre.

Silk Fragment with a Rosebush, Bird, and Deer Pattern
Date: late 17th-early 18th century
Medium: Silk, silver- and gilded metal wrapped thread;
compound twill weave, brocaded



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