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Visual Representations of the Safavid Judicial System in the Islamic Painting Tradition

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Abstract

The depiction of individuals with their hands tied to *pālāhang* reflects typical Safavid judicial convictions and customary punishments. The prevalence of these pictures suggest their significance for the Safavids. This article examines 23 visual representations of this specific form of punishment, compares the laws related to the Safavid judicial system with the paintings produced, and uncovers the roots of the punishment tools used by the Safavids. The study addresses the following questions: Who are the individuals depicted bound to *pālāhang*? What is the reason for depicting kings with tied hands? And who were the artists responsible for creating these images? According to the current study, these types of illustrations—and the presence of a significant number of them in Islamic manuscripts—were designed to humiliate the Safavids' principal enemy, the Uzbeks, and to deter potential attacks.

Keywords

Pālāhang – Safavid art – Safavid judicial system – images of Uzbeks

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1 Introduction

As an all-encompassing Islamic government, the Safavid regime in Iran demonstrated a refined and deliberate approach to issues pertaining to the structure of the judicial system and the punishment of criminals. The Safavids used a tool called *pālāhang*, a restraint device that closely resembles those described by earlier and contemporary Iranian poets, as well as similar instruments noted in European accounts. Descriptions of such methods of punishment are available in the numerous travelogues from this era and their visual echoes have can be found in multiple paintings from the Safavid period. These depictions of prisoners are rendered in a distinctive and official style, establishing a visual tradition within Safavid art. Notably, the individuals shown in these illustrations—whether chosen members of a society or even sultans of rival nations—are represented symbolically as prisoners.

These paintings (in manuscripts or albums) are connected to the political interactions between the Safavids and their close neighbors, including the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Ottomans, and even the Gūrkān[1] of India. Although the successive Safavid wars were sometimes inevitable, carried out to protect the geographical borders, the Safavid government occasionally adopted more peaceful behaviour in some cases. However, no relationship was as controversial and fraught with hostility as that between the Uzbeks and the Safavids. According to historical documents, the Uzbeks were the Safavids' principal enemy in the east. The brutal killing of the defeated people on both sides, their mutual greed and territorial ambitions, along with the Safavids' creation of a religious divide through the spread of Shiism, all contributed to the increase in conflicts. The extent of Safavid hostility is perhaps most notably illustrated by an incident in which the Safavid king Shāh Ismāʿīl ordered a wine cup to be made from the defeated Uzbek ruler Shībak Khān's skull. These enmities found visual expression in numerous paintings from the period, which portray prisoners and are labelled with titles such as "captive", "Uzbek prisoner" and "Turkmen prisoner".

1 Bābur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, was descended on his mother's side from the feared Mongol invader Chingiz Khān (Genghis Khan), while his father was the great-great-grandson of the Turk Amīr Tīmūr. As the two peoples blended, Amīr Tīmūr married a daughter of Chingiz Khān and took the Mongolian title of Kürägän/Gūrkān, meaning "son-in-law". The Persianized form of this word was Gūrkān, and hundreds of years later, the Mughal dynasty, proud of its descent from Amīr Tīmūr, would call their dynasty by this name, "Gūrkāni". Ed Rothfarb, *In the land of the Taj Mahal, The world of the Fabled Mughals* (Canada: Fitzhenary & Whiteside Ltd, 1998), 43.

A central issue explored in this study is the visual representation of the punishment of sulṭans and rulers. The artworks considered in this research include single-page illustrations and folios embedded within various albums. Most of these works are now housed outside of Iran, dispersed among museums and collections abroad. While this study focuses on 23 selected works, the actual number of such paintings is significantly higher, and many of these lack identifying details such as the names and signatures of the painters. The selection criteria for the artworks examined in this study are based on the fixed poses of seated figures with one hand tied to the special punishment tool characteristic of the Safavid period. Within this framework, the article seeks to answer the following questions: Who are the figures depicted in these images? What is the reason for illustrating imprisoned kings? And who were the artists responsible for creating these visual representations? The main aim of the article is to compare Safavid judicial laws with the paintings produced and to trace the roots of the punishment tools of the Safavid period. The significance of the topic is underscored by the frequent depiction of past sulṭans in Iranian, Indian, and Ottoman albums, the recurrence of their names, and the substantial number of such illustrations. Despite this, the subject has received little scholarly attention, highlighting the need for further research. This study aims to analyse the selected works in a descriptive-analytical and comparative way using historical documents to address the research questions. The research is based on library resources, and the data collection has been conducted through note-taking and observations. The statistical population of this study includes all the paintings produced during the Safavid period that depict Uzbek/Turkmen prisoners restrained with the distinctive *pālāhang* punishment device. These works are kept in museums and collections in different countries. From this broader corpus, 23 works have been selected as the study sample. The reason for choosing these works is the presence of the Safavid punishment tool and prisoners shown with their hands tied to it (works lacking information about the identity of the prisoner or the name of the artist have been excluded from the analysis). Drawing on knowledge of the judicial system of the Safavid period, this research aims—through visual analysis of the illustrations of the prisoners and consultation of available historical documents—to identify the prisoners and, where possible, to attribute the works to specific painters.

2 Background Research

The background of the research can be divided into two categories: firstly, research about the judicial system of the Safavid period, and, secondly, scholarship related to Safavid painting. Momeni has discussed the laws governing the sentencing of prisoners in the Safavid period noting that prisoners were classified according to social class.[2] Willem Floor has examined Safavid religious and judicial organizations in detail.[3] Extant travelogues of European travellers also contain descriptions judicial practices in Safavid Iran, most notably those of Chardin (1643–1713) and Adam Olearius (1603–1671). Chardin's accounts reveal that Safavid society punished elite prisoners differently. To date, no study has been done in Iran regarding the paintings of Uzbek prisoners. Existing surveys are limited to a few indications of the existence of these works. In his book *Iranian Islamic Design Art* Muhammad Khazaei includes only two images related to Uzbek prisoners, offering not further explanation. Outside Iran, research is equally sparse: One of the first mentions of these illustrations appears in the work of Fredrik Robert Martin (1868–1933), who acknowledge the existence and importance of these paintings in his book *Miniature Paintings and Iranian, Indian and Turkish Painters from the 8th to the 18th Century AD*. In a brief explanation, he states that some of these works may have been influenced by the Bihzād school, and noted that only two surviving examples of these paintings are signed by Bihzād.[4]

More recently, in the book *Faces of Asia: Portraits from the Permanent Collection* by Denise Patry Leidy and Vishakha N. Desai, the authors discuss paintings under the title *Captive Prince*. After analysing one of these works, they suggest that the paintings were probably influenced by the Timurid portrait tradition, particularly in the idealized representation of the faces of these people.[5]

2 Mohsen Momeni, "Prison and Prisoner in the Safavid Period," *History of Iran after Islam* 9, no. 17 (September 2018): 207.

3 Willem Floor, *Judicial System of the Safavid Period*, trans. Hasan Zandieh (Qum: Research institute of the Ḥozeh and university, 2011), 14–90.

4 Fredrik Robert Martin, "Chapter IV: Bihzad and His School", in: *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia India and Turkey*, ed. (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1912), 45.

5 Vishakha N. Desai and Denise Patry Leidy, "A Brief History of Asian Portraiture", in: *Faces of Asia: Portraits from the Permanent Collection*, ed. Margaret Jupe (Boston, MA: Museum of Fine Art, 1989), 29.

Susan Stronge,[6] has studied another famous painting of Uzbek prisoners but her analysis is limited to a brief description of the physical features of the figure tied to the *pālāhang*, largely reiterating Martin's earlier observations. Alice Taylor discusses another work from the same collection entitled *A Captive Uzbek*. She notes that Uzbek attacks from the northeast were a persistent threat during the 17th century. However, she cautions against using the ethnic origin of the Uzbek as a definitive indicator of the source of the image (Esfahān) and focuses primarily on the stylistic and physical characteristics of the work.[7] In these three recent books, the identity of the imprisoned persons and the reason for their imprisonment remain unaddressed. Another relevant work is introduced by Edwin Binney, who considers the tradition of depicting prisoners tied to *pālāhang* as a shared motif in both Iranian and Turkish visual culture.[8] Further study of these paintings has been done in an article entitled "Liberating the Turkoman Prisoner." Jaimee K. Comstock-Skipp seeks to show how the Safavid society expressed a sense of superiority over its prisoners, drawing on both poetic and visual sources.[9] However, Comstock-Skipp does not attribute the paintings to specific artists, nor are the prisoners identified as specific historical figures. Therefore, despite the more detailed investigation, the identities of both painters and the imprisoned people remain shrouded in ambiguity. Moreover, there has been no prior investigation of the relationship between the Safavid judicial system and these paintings of prisoners. The present study aims to clarify the identities of several prisoners and the painters of these works. This is achieved through a synthesis of previous scholarship, reference to historical documents, and visual analysis of the paintings themselves.

6 Susan Stronge, "Painting for Jahangir", in: *Painting for the Mughal Emperor: The Art of the Book 1560–1660*, (London: V&A Publications; New York: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 114–115.

7 Alice Taylor, "Contemplating the Other: Isfahan Style Miniatures", in: *Book Arts of Isfahan: Diversity and Identity in Seventeenth-Century Persia*, eds. John Harris and Leslie Thomas Fitch (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1995), 17–18.

8 Edwin Binney, *Turkish Miniature Paintings and Manuscripts* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of art, 1973), 54.

9 Jaimee K. Comstock-Skipp, "Liberating the Turkoman Prisoner: An Assessment of Bound Captives in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Persianate Works on Paper", in: *Iranian/Persianate Subalterns in the Safavid Period: Their Role and Depiction Recovering 'Lost Voices'*, ed. Andrew J. Newman (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2022), 1.

3 The Treatment of Criminal Rulers and Princes in the Safavid Judicial System

The Safavid state, with its distinct political-social structure, established specific institutions and laws for the punishment of convicts. However, the lack of coherence across the different layers of the government structure and court institutions contributed to a chaotic situation in the judicial system of this period. Several travellers, including Chardin and Ronald W. Ferrier, have given accounts of the ineffectiveness of Safavid judges. What is certain is that the Safavid king played an active role in judicial affairs until the 17th century. Later, this work was entrusted to the *Dīvān-begī*,[10] a high-ranking judicial officer.[11] In practice, the customary courts were under the supervision of the *Dīvān-begī* and the Sharia courts were under the supervision of the *Ṣadr*.[12] Thus, the king, the *Dīvān-begī*, and the *Ṣadr* were the three judicial authorities in the Safavid period.[13]

In addition to the punishments prescribed for ordinary criminals, special penalties were reserved for the elites and ruling classes. These punishments included the arrest and imprisonment of the princes and other members of the Safavid royal family—a practice similar to the Ottoman "cage"[14]

10 The *Dīvān-begī* was the second judicial authority in the country and was in charge of the civil and criminal courts. The first *Dīvān-begī*'s jurisdiction included handling four cases of murder, rape, blinding, and breaking a tooth, but later it included handling all crimes throughout Iran. Seyyed Muhammad Hoseini, and Ahmad Rezvani Mofrad, "The Structure of the Judicial System in the Safavid Era," *Law Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (October 2012): 159, 20.1001.1.25885618.1390.41.3.9.1.

11 Willem Floor, "The Secular Judicial System in Safavid Persia," *Studia Iranica* 29, no. 1 (2000): 9, 10.2143/SI.29.1.565532.

12 During the Safavid era, the king appointed the *Ṣadr* to preside over Sharia courts. Floor, "The Secular Judicial System in Safavid Persia," 161. The *Ṣadr* was a hereditary official, and, according to Minorski, Shāh ʿAbbās II took the office and its power seriously toward the end of the Safavid period, although its importance gradually declined. Amin Benani, Darley Duran, Dubrovin, sivri, Lekhart, Newman, and Carey Welch, "The Major Positions of the Safavid Era during the Time of Shāh Tahmāsab I", in: *Safavian*, ed. Yaʿqub Azhand (Tehran: Moli, 2011), 265.

13 Hoseini, RezvaniMofrad, "The Structure of the Judicial System in the Safavid Era," 155–161.

14 Under this policy, Ottoman princes were confined to their private palaces, which were called "cages", and their education was limited to interactions with the residents of the harem. Consequently, they did not have the necessary training and experiences to attain power. This practice brought an end to the earlier tradition of fratricide. J. Shaw Stanford, "Decentralization and Traditional Reform, 1566–1683," *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280–1808* I, ed. Shaw Ezel Kural (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 170. According to other researchers,

policy[15]—as well as the confiscation of property, which varied was often subject to personal discretion. Although Twelver Shiism was officially recognized as the state religion, judicial punishments under the Safavids were rarely based on formal jurisprudential rulings. Instead, they were typically determined according to customary law.[16] The travelogues of the time, including that of Chardin, describe a certain type of punishment that was common during the Safavid period:

> Je n'ai toutefois commis nul des crimes que mes ennemis m'ont imputés pour exciter son courroux; mais il ne sert de guère que je sois innocent, puisque le roi me condamne. Il est le maître, je suis son esclave, et tout prêt à subir sa sentence; c'est pourquoi il est inutile que Mirza Ibrāhīm vienne s'assurer de ma personne et de tous mes biens: je lui veux épargner cette peine. En disant cela, il fit venir deux menuisiers, et leur commanda de le mettre au crondou chaqué, qui est une sorte de carcan, fait de trois pièces de bois, … dans lequel le cou est resserré, sans se pouvoir remuer, et la main droite est attachée à une des trois pièces, à la hauteur du cou, en sorte qu'un homme ne peut plus agir.[17]

In the travelogue of Adam Olearius, a case is described in which an infidel who killed a Muslim was subjected to punishment, namely, being bound to a *pālāhang*:

> L'Horloger, qui ne croyoit pas qu'on le dût rechercher pour la mort d'un Voleur, ne laissa pas le lendemain de monter à cheval pour aller à la Cour suivant sa coûtume; mais il fut pris dans la rue, mis en prison à l'instant, attaché au *palenk* (instrument de bois, qui serre les bras & le col, & qui est appellé une chevre en quelques lieux de *France*) & y fut fort maltraité.[18]

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the Ottoman cage may have historical roots in an earlier event during Tīmūr's war with the Ottomans, when he is said to have imprisoned Ottoman sultans like Bayezīd in an iron cage to prevent their escape. Marcus Milwright and Evanthia Baboula, "Bayezid's Cage: A Re-Examination of a Venerable Academic Controversy", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 21, no. 3 (2011): 254.

15 Benani et al., *Safavian*, 86.

16 Momeni, *History of Iran after Islam*, 231.

17 Jean Chardin, "CHAPITRE XVII. De la Justice Criminelle," *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient IX*, ed. Louis Langlès (Paris: Le Normant, Imprimeur Libraire, 1811), 114–115.

18 Shāh Ṣafī ordered the execution of a German watchmaker, see Adam Olearius, *Voyages S^R^*.

High-ranking officials were not exempt from punishment, even partially.[19] According to Ferrier, if government officials committed crimes, a triangular yoke called a *carcan* was placed around the person's neck, and one hand was tied to the end of it, causing severe pain.[20] However, according to Chardin, some prisoners were granted certain freedoms; for example, they could go hunting with their trusted companions, even in remote areas.[21] Chardin also mentions another type of punishment, known as "takte-cola"[22] (*takht-e kulāh*) which was used for people caught underselling in the marketplace. In this form of public humiliation, the criminal's head was passed through a board with a hole in the middle, and they were forced to wear a bell and a paper hat. This effectively turned the prisoner into a "caged slave" who could be humiliated by everyone.[23] As described in various travelogues, the *carcan* or *pālāhang*—which had a similar appearance—was a tool for humiliating and punishing certain prisoners, including rulers and governors of a region. The following is an example of the punishment imposed on imprisoned rulers.

ADAM OLEARIUS, trans. S[R]. De Wicquefort (Paris-Bibliothèque INHA: Imprimeur ordinaire de l'Académie de la ville, 1917), 728.

19 Floor, "Judicial System of the Safavid Era," 30.

20 Ronald W. Ferrier, *A JOURNEY TO PERSIA Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1996), 93.

21 Jean Chardin, "A Bandar Abassi", in: *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient IX*, ed. Louis Langlès (Paris: Imprimeur Libraire, 1811), 115.

22 "Board and hat"

23 Jean Chardin, "CHAPITRE XVIII. De la Police" in: *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient VI*, ed. Louis Langlès (Paris: Imprimeur Libraire, 1811), 129–130.

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts—details of the selected paintings

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
1		prisoner	–	–
2	 Portrait of a Mongol prince who has been made prisoner and is bound with fetters.	A Mongolian prisoner	–	–
3		Prisoner (Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkāni)	A leaf from the album of Indian paintings and calligraphy	Attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad
4		Turkmen prisoner	–	Attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad
5		Uzbek prisoner (Ibrāhīm Beg)	A leaf from an album called “Clive” with 104 pages	–

Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL[24]
10AH	Reza Abbasi Museum	Iran/Tehran	–	Work registration number: 2522	–	Photo by authors
–	–	–	–	–	–	URL1
1500–1800	Oxford Bodleian Library	India	30×43.5 Cm	MS.Ouseley Add.173	fol. 1v	URL2
1555–1590	The Louvre Museum	Iran, Ibrāhīm Mīrzā court	24.2×40.4 Cm	K3426	–	URL3
Late 16AD	V& A Museum	–	14.2×24.9 Cm	IS133–1964	f. 50a	URL4

24 All URLs can be found in the List of URLs at the end of the article.

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts (*cont.*)

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
6		Turkmen prisoner	–	–
7		Uzbek prisoner	–	Attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad
8		Uzbek prisoner	A leaf from Read's Persian album	–
9		Prisoner (Turkmen's king)	–	–

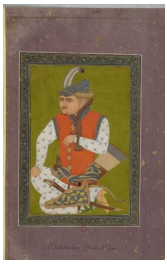
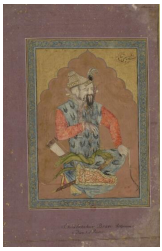
Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL
Second half of 16AD	Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)	Iran	14×21.5 Cm	M.2000.135	–	URL5
The second half of 16AD	Christies	–	8.2×17.1 Cm	–	–	URL6
1600	Morgan Museum	Probably Herat (Afghanistan)	–	MS M.386.2	–	URL7
The second half of 16AD	Hermitage museum	Iran	11×14.5 Cm	VP-740/3	–	URL8

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts (*cont.*)

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
10		Turkmen prisoner (Khvājeh Beg Kalhur)	–	–
11		Uzbek prisoner	–	Signed by ʿAlī Qulī
12		Turkmen prisoner	Aḥmad Khān Empire album	Bihzād
13		Turkmen prisoner	–	Attributed to Reżā ʿAbbāsī

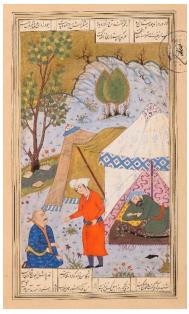
Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL
Late 18th or 19th AD, Qajar period	Yale University Art Gallery	Iran	24.3×22 Cm	1983.94.9	–	URL9
first half of the 17th AD	Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA)	Probably Esfahān	6.37×12.7 Cm	M.85.237.28	–	URL10
Middle of 16AD	Topkapı Museum of Türkiye	–	–	H2165	45b	URL11
1600AH	The Metropolitan Museum	Esfahān	11.9×18.5 Cm	67.266.2	–	URL12

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts (*cont.*)

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
14		Uzbek prisoner (fake portrait of Bāyrām Oghlān)	From Shāh Salīm's album	The work of Farukh Beg, similar to Parām Oghlān
15		Prisoner (Bāltū Khān)	Indian album (*Dīvān*-e Amīr Khusrū Dehlavī)	–
16		prisoner (similar to Chīnī Bahādur)	Indian album (*Dīvān*-e Amīr Khusrū Dehlavī)	–
17		Prisoner (Tursh Kerāī)	Ottoman album related to Sulṭān Murād III	–

Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL
1600–1615	Louvre Museum (Department of Islamic Art)	Gūrkāniāns of India, Akbar Shāh's court	16.6×24 Cm	OA 3619Ia	–	URL13
16, 17AD	National Library of France, Manuscripts Group	–	23.5×15.5 Cm	ark:/12148/btv1b52507620v	F.57V	URL14
16, 17AD	National Library of France, Manuscripts Group	–	22.5×17 Cm	ark:/12148/btv1b52507620v	F.58R	URL15
1546–1595	Vienna Library, Austria	–	22.2×33.3 Cm	Mixt.313	–	URL16

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts (*cont.*)

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
18		Prisoner	From the engraved works in Chardin's travelogue	Jean Chardin
19		Prisoner	–	–
20		Untitled	A leaf from *Būstān* Sa'dī's manuscript	–
21		Yusef prisoner	A leaf from Jāmī's *Yūsuf and Zulaykhā*	–

Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL
1811	–	–	–	–	–	URL17[25]
17AD	Private collection	Iran	15×10 Cm	–	–	URL18
1600	Bodleian Library version	Iran	–	MS. Pers.c.39	fol. 34b	URL19
17AD	Istanbul university library	Iran	137×212 Cm	NEKFY01327	F.98v	URL20

25 Ronald W. Ferrier, *A JOURNEY TO PERSIA Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1996), 94.

TABLE 1 Presentation of visual examples found in manuscripts (*cont.*)

Number of Figures	Figures	Figure title	Manuscript name	Artist name
22		Yusef prisoner	A leaf from Jāmī's *Yūsuf and Zulaykhā*	–
23		Rustam pulls the prisoner from a pit.	A leaf from *Shāh-nāmeh* of Firdūsī	–

Production date	Current location	Production location	Dimensions	Access number	Folio number	URL
17AD	Istanbul university library	Iran	137×212 Cm	NEKFY01327	F.106r	URL20
1604–1605	NMVW Collections	Shiraz schools	–	NMvW no. RV-2103–1	–	URL21

4 Visual Characteristics of Paintings Depicting People Tied to *pālāhang*

The paintings in question, found in different albums and manuscripts, share a series of features that can be grouped into a single category. These features include:

- Most of the paintings depict a single figured, usually in a seated position.
- The faces often reflect the ethnic traits of Uzbek warriors, namely, elongated cheeks, slanted eyes, beards, and a tall hats wrapped in cloth.[26]
- The figures typically assume a specific pose: one hand rests on the knee while the other hand (usually the left) is tied to the *pālāhang*.
- The clothing often includes a turban or a brimmed hat with feathers on it.
- The garments have circular and wavy pleats, especially in the sleeves and the waist shawl, which hang from the belt.
- In most cases, the background of the work is simple.
- The presence of weapons, such as bows, arrows and quivers with motifs, and swords, daggers, and even maces, commonly associated with Uzbek warriors.
- Figures have a ring on their hand.
- There is no visible horizon line, and only in rare cases is the punished person is depicted in a more detailed scene with various elements. In most images, the right hand is free while the left hand is bound, which suggests a degree of permitted mobility or privilege for certain prisoners, officials, and jailers. The presence of engraved bow boxes also reinforces the notion that the prisoner had state privileges. The *pālāhang* tool consists of two pieces of wood, one of which is shaped like a fork, and the other is attached to this V-shaped fork with a nail positioned behind the neck. An additional strap is attached at the bottom of the branch and used to bind the prisoner's hand (Figure 24). According to Chardin, this type of punishment for prisoners continued until the Qajar period. At this time, the most common punishments for minor offences were fines, whippings, or beating with clubs. Iranians also used a kind of *carcan* (vest) (Figure 25). This straitjacket is made up of three pieces of wood nailed together to form a triangular frame. According to Chardin:

> Les Persans ont sorte de carcan […] Ce carcan est en triangle, formé de trois morceaux de bois cloués l'un à l'autre.

26 Marie Lukens Swietochowski, and Sussan Babaie, *Persian Drawing in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), 18.



FIGURE 24
(*Pālāhang*) Punishment tool of the Safavid period

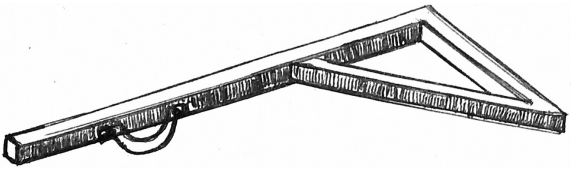


FIGURE 25
(*Pālāhang*) punishment tool of the late Safavid and early Qajar period

> Le cou, dit Chardin, passe dedans sans se pouvoir tourner. La pièce de derrière et celle du côté gauche sont de dix-huit pouces de longueur ; celle du côté droit est longue presque du double, et l'on y attache le poignet au bout, dans un morceau de bois demi-rond et où il est comme pendu au croc, et parce qu'on a bientôt le bras las jusqu'à la douleur, on permet au prisonnier de se soutenir avec un bâton qu'il tient de la main gauche. Cette machine est grossière et sans art.[27]

In a few paintings, the figures wear a turban wrapped around a pointed, conical hat. In other cases, people wearing hats with Uzbek features are depicted. These

27 Louis Dubeux, *L'Univers Histoire et description de tous les peuples, La Perse* (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1841), 404.

Also see: [Le 31, Zael-can, gouverneur de la ville et de la province de Candahar, fut amené à Ispahan, accusé d'être complice du vol d'une caravane qui alloit aux Indes, riche de plusieurs millions. On le donna en garde au kelonter, ou prévôt de la ville, qui est comme le lieutenant civil. Le prisonnier n'avoit qu'un seul valet, et étoit au carcan, lequel, en Perse, est fait de trois pièces de bois carrées, mises en triangles, dont l'une est presque du double plus longue que les deux autres. Le cou du criminel est enfermé dans ce triangle, et sa main au bout de la plus longue pièce, dans un demi-cercle de bois qui y est cloué], *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse*, vol. III, ed. Louis Langlès (Paris: Imprimeur Libraire, 1811), 155.

hats have two upward-facing edges and are adorned with a feather, indicating their Uzbek identity. Della Valle[28] also considered people's hats and shawls as a criterion for distinguishing between social classes.[29]

5 The Origins of the *pālāhang*

The use of the word *pālāhang* in various Iranian and even non-Iranian texts attests to its ancient origins. In the *Jahāngīrī* dictionary, *pālāāhang* is defined as a kind of lasso. It is noted that the double *ā* is likely a misreading. Originally, it was *pālāhang*, and *āhang* means pulling, a term used in the context of a horse's bridle. The word *pālāhang* appears in the poetry of both Muʿazī and Anjū Shīrāzī:

"درگه خسروان همه دریاست یک گهر نی و صد نهنگ
در پناه خرد نشین که خرد گردن آزر است پالاهنگ"[30]

> It alludes to the issues of the king's throne and the responsibility that hangs around the necks of all monarchs; each one is as huge as a whale, and all of these troubles hang from the king's neck like a *pālāhang*.

"آن خداوندی که گردون بخت را مرکبست مرکبی کش ماه نو زینست و جوزا پالهنگ
کشی ز روم بخوارزم بتپرستان را فسار بر سر و بر دست بسته پالاهنگ"[31]

> A lord who rides a horse and dominates the world. *Pālāhang* is a horse whose saddle represents the new moon and is associated with the Gemini constellation (two bodies). In this poem, the shape of the Gemini constel-

28 Pietro Della Valle, a traveller of the Safavid period. Sonja Brentjes, and Volkmar Schuller, "Pietro Della Valle's Latin geography of Safavid Iran (1624–1628): Introduction", *JEMH* 10, no. 3 (2006): 170, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006506778234162.

29 Munire-Sadat Naqavi and Muhsen Marasi, "A Comparative Study of Men's Hats in Travelogues and Paintings of the Safavid Era with an Emphasis on the Mural Paintings of Chehel-Sutun Palace in Esfahān", *Comparative Studies in Art* 2, no. 3 (2012): 4, https://sid.ir/paper/205418/en.

30 Fakhr al-Dīn Ḥasan Anjū Shīrāzī, and Mīr Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn, "Faṣl-e Baye ʿAjamī فصلِ بایِ عَجَمی," *Farhang-e Jahangīrī*, ed. Rahim Afifi (Mashhad: Mashhad university, 1972), 238.

31 Amīr al-Shoʿra Muhammad ibn Abd al-Malik Nishaburī, "Letter Gāff حرفِ گاف," in *Complete Dīvan of Amīr-Muʿazī*, ed. Abbas Eqbal (Tehran: Eslami, 1983), 436–437.

> lation's face is compared to a *pālāhang*. From Rome to Khwarazm, you lead the pagans with bridles on their heads and *pālāhang* in their hands.

In addition, this word is also found in the poems of poets such as Firdūsī, ʿAyyūqī, Farrukhī Sīstānī, Asadī Ṭūsī, Manūchehrī, Sūzanī Samarqandī, Qaṭrān Tabrīzī, Anvarī, Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Mūlavī, Saʿdī, Nasīmī, and Sanāī. Therefore, this device was already in use before the Safavid era, and underwent a transformation during this period, taking on the form seen in the paintings under study here. A similar instrument was used outside of Iran during the Middle Ages and the early modern period to punish prisoners. These devices, made of wood or iron, were attached to the prisoner and known as "the neck violin" due to their resemblance to musical instruments (see Figure 26). The neck violin was used for criminals or people involved in verbal crimes such as blasphemy, fortune-telling, slander, or absenteeism in church and religious places.[32] The pillory (Figure 27) is another stationary punishment tool used by judicial courts in the Middle Ages. All these tools were intended to humiliate position in society.[33]

Thus, medieval punishment was fixed, stationary, and static. The accused was not able to move. However, from the 14th century, particularly duirng the European Renaissance, the means of punishment became more mobile and dynamic. For example, the punishment for non-payment of debts throughout Europe resembled the pillory but adapted to more mobile contexts, such as for workers. Definitions of the *carcan* describe it as an iron collar that is attached to a rod designed to connect the condemned's hand to their neck.[34] This method of punishment also existed in Iran where it is called *qāpūq*. One issue of the newspaper *Vaqāyeʿ-e Ettefāqīyeh* refers to the *qāpūq*, a type of torture device that was common during the Qajar period and resembles gallows.[35] Therefore, given the chronological overlap between the Safavid period and the European Renaissance—as well as the entry of Western elements into Iran—it seems plausible that the form of certain European punishment tools influenced Ira-

32 Marie Louise Herzfeld-Schild, "'He Plays on the Pillory': The Use of Musical Instruments for Punishment in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era," *Torture* 23, no. 2 (2013): 18, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/24480889/.

33 Herzfeld-Schild, "'He Plays on the Pillory'", 19.

34 Marvin E. Wolfgang, "Crime and Punishment in Renaissance Florence," *Journal of Criminal Law Criminology* 81, no. 3 (1990): 579–580.

35 Mīrzā Taqī Khān Amīr-Kabīr, *Newspaper Vaqāyeʿ-e Ettefāqīyeh 1* (Tehran: National Library of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Press and Media Research Center, 1994), 23. See also: Camron Michael Amin, "The Press and Public Diplomacy in Iran", in: *Iranian Studies* 48, no. 2 (March 2015): 277, https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.871145.



FIGURE 26
European example of means of punishing prisoners in the Middle Ages, URL22



FIGURE 27
Prisoner punishment, Engraving of a pilloried Titus Oates, 1750 CE, Unknown artist URL23

nian practices. This is particularly likely considering the background that the *pālāhang* had in Iranian judicial courts in the Safavid period.

6 Matching Visual Depictions of Punished People with Historical Evidence

Among the introduced works, only seven feature the name of the painter; most are attributed to unknown artists. The identities of the prisoners depicted are only known in nine cases. In contemporary sources, many of these works identify the figures as Uzbek or Turkmen prisoners. In Safavid sources, the name Uzbek is used in a derogatory way.[36] Figures 1 and 2 are very similar to each other—one is the original, and the other is a copy.

In Figure 3, the inscription identifies the subject as Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī (Figure 28). A copy of this picture is held in the Louvre Museum, and can be seen in

36 Comstock-Skipp, "Liberating the Turkoman Prisoner", 1.



FIGURE 28
The inscription on the border of the painting, part of the work



FIGURE 29 Picture of Hūlākū Khān leaning on a mace, 16th century, Bukhara School, (part of picture), British Museum, URL24

Figure 4. The original image of this work (Figure 3) is included in an album containing a series of portraits of Mongol emperors. All the works are done in the Indian style—except for this one, which is labelled as a portrait of Tīmūr and bears his name. Therefore, it is likely that this work was executed by painters who migrated from the Safavid court to the Indian court.

According to the website of the Bodleian library, the painting in Figure 3 is attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad. The mace on which the warlord rests also appears in many other independent portraits of Uzbek warriors, but is rarely seen in Qizilbash portraits.[37] A similar example can be seen in the image of Hūlākū Khān (Figure 29). In the version available on the website of the Louvre Museum (Figure 4), the figure is likewise identified as Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī. However, according to Martin, all the portraits painted of Timur are always shown with splendour, and it seems unimaginable that Akbar Shāh's court would have sanctioned an image of Tīmūr to be depicted as a prisoner.[38] Martin argues that Figure 4 is a painting of the imprisonment of Sulṭān Murād

37 Abolala Soudavar, "Sixteenth-Century Painting", in: *The Art of the Persian Courts*, ed. Suzanne Kotz (New York: Rizzoli, NY, 1992), 236.

38 Martin, *The Miniature Painting and Painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, 46.

Āq-Qūyūnlū, and he attributes this work to Bihzād. From his point of view, the existence of such a painted image—alongside copied images of such a person—serves as a key visual symbol tied to the beginning of the Safavid dynasty. He suggests that it was quite natural for an important prisoner to be depicted in this way, and that the new king wanted to reproduce such pictures to commemorate how his last opponent was captured.[39]

According to the history of the Aq Quyunlu dynasty, Sulṭān Murād Beg—the last king of this dynasty and the son of Yaʿqūb Mīrzā—repeatedly marched on different regions during his rule, bringing Shiraz under his control.[40] However, he was imprisoned by Āybeh Sulṭān in Rūyīn-Dezh Castle.[41] Āybeh Sulṭān was eventually killed by a person named Muḥammadī Mīrzā, and Sulṭān Murād was released from prison after her Sulṭān death.[42] Then Sulṭān Murād was killed in Baghdad during a battle with Ghāzīān-Ẓafar, and thus the Aq Quyunlu dynasty ended.[43] This war is known as the *Surūr* War and it took place in 907 AH/1501–1502 AD. Following Shāh Ismāʿīl Ṣafavī's defeat of the Aq-Quyunlu dynasty, he declared Tabriz as his capital.[44] The website of the Louvre Museum attributes Figure 4 to Shaykh Muḥammad. He was one of the painters who later moved from the Safavid court to the court of Ibrāhīm Mīrzā, who was a patron of artists; however, Shaykh Muḥammad left Mīrzā's court due to dissatisfaction, a change of patrons, and political instability in Khorasan, and he entered the Indian court together with a large number of fellow artists.[45]

According to Robinson, Figure 4, the Louvre version, is aligned with the Kazvin style and dates to 1575 AD. In his opinion, the neatly tied turban resembles those seen in the works of Shaykh Muḥammad and his contemporaries. According to Robinson, the identity of this person is a mystery, although names such as "MāhoKhān" and "Murād with a thin beard" have been suggested.[46]

39 Ibid., 46.

40 Ghiyâs al-Dīn Khuand Mīr, "The Third Part of the Third Volume", in: *Tārīkh-e-Ḥabīb-alseīr*, ed. Muhammad-Dabir Siaqi (Tehran: Khayam, 1380), 442–446.

41 Ḥasan Beg Rumlu, "The Battle of Āyba Sulṭān and Aḥmad King", in: *Aḥsan al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Abdo-al-Hosein Navaie (Tehran: Babak, 1978), 29–30.

42 Ibid., 34–38.

43 Yaḥya-Ibn-Abd-al-Laṭif al-Hussainī Al-Qazvīnī, "In the Mention of the Aq-Quyunlu", in: *Lab-Al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Jalal-al-Din Tehrani (Tehran: Khavar, 1935), 232.

44 Edvard Granville Browne, "Chapter VI, History of the Later Timurid Period", in: *A History of Persian Literature under Tartar Dominion 1285–1502 AD*, ed. Thomas Adams (London: Cambridge, 1920), 379.

45 Qāzī Mir-Aḥmad Munshī-Qumī, "In Mentioning the Conditions of Calligraphers", in: *Gulestān-e-Hunar*, ed. Ahmad-soheily khansary (Tehran: Bokiad Farhang Iran, 1973), 150.

46 B.W. Robinson, *A Description Catalogue of the Persian Paintings in the Bodleian Library* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 142–143.

An examination of Figures 3 and 4 indicates that the works were created at the Safavid court before making their way to the Indian court with immigrant artists. Shaykh Muḥammad took this work (Figure 3) with him to the Indian court. It seems highly unlikely that Figure 3 is a depiction of the imprisonment of Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī Given that the Turkmen always claimed that they were descendants of Chingiz Khān Mongols.[47] Instead, this image can be interpreted as a display of Safavid dominance. By portraying a figure believed to represent a powerful rival in a state of defeat, the painting functions as a form of visual propaganda—intended to assert Safavid authority and intimidate surrounding kingdoms. Such a depiction may exaggerate Safavid power, reflecting a broader strategy of political messaging through imagery. This case aligns with the historical documents and correspondence between the Safavid kings with their Uzbek, Turkmen, Timurid, and Ottoman neighbours.[48] This policy is also affirmed in the book *ʿĀlamārā-ye ʿAbbāsī*:

> "از بعد از ظهور چنگیزخان و زمان جهان گشایی صاحبقران امیرتیمور گورکانی تا زمان شاه صفی در محاربات عظیمه که فیمابین پادشاهان عرصه گیتی وقوع یافته به تخصیص جنگ حضرت صاحبقرانی با ایلدیریم بایزید در هیچ معرکه وقوع نیافته که در یک نهضت، بیست و پنج هزار نفر از سپاه دشمن به قتل رسیده باشد ..."[49]

This text refers to the Safavid Shah's victory in the war to conquer Ḥele Castle and the number of enemies killed. In this context, the creation of a painting of the captured Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkāni becomes more understandable. It is a symbolic statement: the strength of the Safavid king and his ability to win wars is portrayed as surpassing even that of Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkāni. Depicting him with his hands tied thus becomes a visual metaphor.

47 Abolala Soudavar, "Fourth Chapter, Turkmen Dynasties", in: *The Art of Iranian Courts*, ed. Abd-Alriza Dehqani (Tehran: Karang, 2001), 127.

48 Abdullah Mutavali, "The Effective Samples and Concept in the Area of Safavid Relations Relying on the Text of the Correspondence," *History of Islam and Iran* 26, no. 29 (March 2016), 200, https://doi.org/10.22051/hii.2016.2225.

49 Iskandar Beg Turkamān, "Conquering the Castle of Helle", in: *Tārīkh-e ʿĀlamārā-ye ʿAbbāsī*, ed. Soheili Khansari (Tehran: Eslami, 1938), 69.

[Since the time of Chingiz Khān and the conquests of the Sahib of the Qur'an, Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī, until the reign of Shāh Ṣafī, no battle among the great wars fought by between the kings of the world matched the scale and decisiveness of the conflict in which, in a single manoeuvre, 25,000 soldiers were killed. Even the famed battle between the Sahib of the Qur'an and Yīldirīm Bāyezīd did not witness such a devastating loss in one movement].

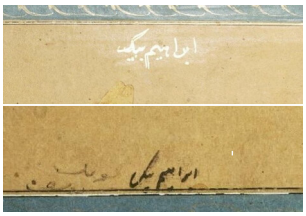


FIGURE 30
The inscription (ابراهیم بیگ) above and below the painting, part of the work



FIGURE 31
The image of a squirrel among the flowers of *khatāī*, an image on quiver, part of the work

In Figure 5, the name "Ibrāhīm Beg" is written in gold and black at the top and bottom of the painting (Figure 30). According to the *Tārīkh-e ʿĀlamārā-ye ʿAmīnī*, Ibrāhīm Beg (Ibrāhīm Beg Jahāngīr Mīrzā) was a Turkmen prince of the Aq Quyunlu dynasty. He and some of his men won a battle against the army of the Sufis, led by Shaykh of Ardabil (Shaykh Haydar was killed in this battle).

After returning from his campaign in Shirvan, Ibrāhīm Beg contracted an incurable disease and died in Dar al-Sulṭāneh, Tabriz.[50] Given the importance of such an enemy for the Safavids—their tendency to exaggerate power to neighbouring countries—it is unsurprising that they would depict even a deceased enemy with his hands tied.

In Figure 6, neither the name of this person nor the identity of the painter of the work are known. An image of an animal resembling a squirrel can be seen on the quiver (Figure 31), frolicking among flowers. The squirrel is also mentioned in Persian poems inscribed around this work, written by Amīr Shāhī Sabzevārī.[51] By incorporating this poem into the composition, the artist employs a metaphorical simile for the prisoner.

I. "شب‌ها سگ کویش را رحمی نبود بر من — خوش وقت اسیری کو فریاد رسی دارد
II. از کوی بتان شاهی، کم جوره برگشتن — کاین بادیه هم‌چون تو، آواره بسی دارد"[52]
III. "بی لبت هر دم ز چشم دُر فشان خون می‌رود — پاره‌های دل ز راه دیده بیرون می‌رود

50 Fażl-Allāh Roz-Behān khenjī Isfahān, "Goftār Dar Ṭarīqe Taṣavvof گفتار در طریق تصوف," in *Tarikh-e ʿĀlamārā-ye ʿAmīnī*, ed. Muhammad-Akbar ʿAshiq (Tehran: Mirase Maktoob, 2003), 316.

51 A poet of the 9th century AH.

52 Amīr Shāhī Sabzevārī, "Ghazalliat," in *Dīvān-e Amīr Shāhī Sabzevārī*, ed. Saied Hamidian (Tehran: Ebn-Sina, 1969), 24.

IV. یکشب ای شمع بتان، در کنج تاریک من آی تا ببینی حال تنها ماندگان چون می‌رود

V. خون که از زخمی رود، داعش نهی باز استد دل که صد جا داغ کردم، هم‌چنان خون می‌رود

VI. باغبان از گفتگوی غنچه گو لب بسته‌دار بلبلان را چون سخن زان لعل میگون می‌رود

VII. گفته‌ای، فریاد شاهی کم نگشت از کوی ما آری آری، دل به کار عشق اکنون می‌رود"[53]

VIII. "شب‌ها که بغلتد بسر کوی تو شاهی خارو خسکش بستر سنجاب نماید"[54]

In the first two couplets, it is stated that figure depicted—along with other people from his region—is both captive and displaced. In the last two couplets (couplets VII and VIII), the captive's claim to kingship becomes apparent. In response, the painter advises him: *You, like a squirrel that has set aside thorns and thistles, are considering kingship. Don't fool yourself*. The painter's fundamental message—expressed through poetry reflecting the person's imprisonment (I, II)—is inscribed at the bottom of the work, while the painter's advice and allegorical comparison of the prisoner person to a squirrel (VIII), are located in the upper section. From an iconographic perspective, the face of this person exhibits Uzbek characteristics. According to the museum's website, the work is titled *The Turkmen Prisoner*. Given that a huge number of Turkmen were enlisted or conscripted to the Safavid army throughout Shāh Ismāʿīl Ṣafavī's reign, it is likely that the portrait is of a captured Uzbek royal.

In Figure 7, the Uzbek warlord is fully armed but tied to a *pālāhang*. This work is attributed to Shaykh Muḥammad. During the reign of Ibrāhīm Mīrzā, in whose service he worked, Shaykh Muḥammad became acquainted with the Uzbek princes, likely through court encounters. It is therefore not surprising that he chose them as the subject of his work. Historical records note that a group of ten to fifteen Chingiz princes, led by Yunus, the deposed Uzbek Khān, along with his brother, Pahlavān Qulī Sulṭān, took refuge at the Safavid court. They passed through Mashhad and eventually reached Kazvin, which was the capital at that time.[55] In the manuscript in which the painting is found, the text of the poem that appears on the facing page (Figure 32) refers to the remorse and distress of the imprisoned person.

Figure 8 belongs to the group of works included in Read's Persian album. Sir Charles Hercules Read was the owner of two albums, one Iranian and the other Mongolian, which were purchased by the Morgan Museum in 1911. The compilation of the Persian album is believed to have been initiated by Ḥusayn

53 Ibid., 46.

54 Ibid., 48.

55 Soudavar, *The Art of the Persian Courts*, 236.

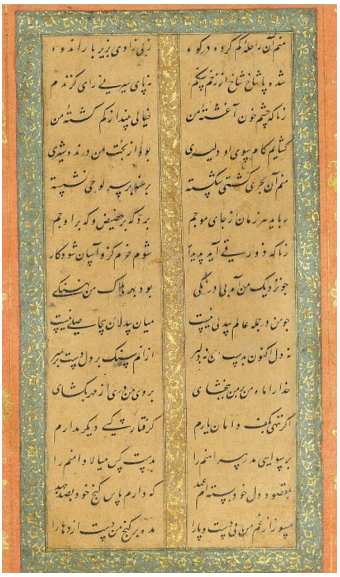


FIGURE 32
The text of the poem that is given on the page opposite the painting



FIGURE 33
Simurgh and rabbit in the desert, part of work on the quiver

Shāmlū (the governor of Herat in 1598–1618 AD), and it was probably continued by his son and successor, Ḥasan Shāmlū, until his death in 1646. Most of the works of this album were produced in Herat.[56] In this particular painting, a Simurgh is shown pursuing a rabbit on the prisoner's quiver (Figure 33). There are some letters in Persian in the upper part of the box: "غ ف ک گ ل م ن و ه" and at the bottom is written "لا ی", which means "and not". On the opposite side, the painter has written "بابت لح بد بر لس", meaning "a bad tone on the tongue". This textual evidence suggests that the Uzbek person depicted was for speaking inappropriately. The body of the prisoner is decorated with Iranian and Islamic motifs along with animal faces, which is reminiscent of the *Wāq* tree. In portraying the Uzbek prisoner, the painter has composed the scene in such a way that the surrounding space dominates the figure, creating an immaterial connection that overshadows his presence. Neither the name of the prisoner nor the painter is known.

Figure 9 is executed in the style of the Kazvin school of the 16th century, during the period when Kazvin was the Safavid capital. This coincides with the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp I. At the bottom of the painting, you can see the inscription "King of Turkmen".

56 *An Uzbek Prisoner*, The Morgan Library & Museum.

In Figure 10, the name of the prisoner inscribed in the painting is "Khvājeh Beg Kalhur". As his name suggests, this person belonged to the Kalhur clan. Historically, this tribe and its territories were frequently the site of conflict between the Safavid and Ottoman powers.[57] The Kalhur clan cooperated with the Safavids in numerous wars and helped them. In the first half of this dynasty, before Shāh ʿAbbās I, the Safavid government relied on tribes like the Kalhur, which occasionally led to insubordination by some tribal rulers. In response, Shāh Tahmāsp suppressed, exiled, and imprisoned them. From the beginning of the reign of Muḥammad Shāh Qājār, the status of the Kalhur family further declined.[58] According to information provided on the website of the Yale University Art Gallery, this work belongs to the Qajar period, which is consistent with historical documents, and this person was probably imprisoned by Shāh Tahmāsp.

In Figure 11, the inscription "Rāqemeh ʿAlī Qulī" can be seen in the work, identifying the artists responsible for the painting. According to the book *Gulistān-e Honar*, three different people with this name are mentioned:

1. ʿAlī Qulī Muṣavar, who was a painter of the Qajar period (13AH).
2. ʿAlī Qulī Beg Ārnāvet painter (Safavid period)
3. ʿAlī Qulī Māher Dāmghānī painter and engraver (Safavid period).

Since the work dates to the early 17th century, it was created during the Safavid period. The artist may have been ʿAlī Qulī Beg Ārnāvet or ʿAlī Qulī Māher Dāmghānī. The identity of the prisoner is not clear, but like the other presented works, the figure displays characteristics of the Uzbek ethnicity. Moreover, a closer examination reveals that the depiction of the quiver in the painting tells the story of the imprisonment of this person, illustrated across two scenes. In the first scene, the Safavid soldiers wearing Qizilbash hats are running after the figure, while in the second scene, the same person is being arrested by the Safavid soldiers (Figure 34). Notably, the captive's hat features a pattern similar to the Simurgh and a fleeing lion, which may allegorical representations of the Uzbeks and Safavids. This imagery recalls Iskandar Beg Turkmān's metaphorical comparison, which "likened Dar al-Sulṭāneh of Herat and other gunners to the lions of hunters in order to remove the sedition from the faithless".[59] Given the striking similarity of the prisoner in Figures 12 and 13, and the near-identical appearance of the *pālāhang*, it can be argued that one is original and the other

57 Manizheh Karami, Mehri Edrisi, Nezamali Dehnavi, and Saleh Aminpour, "Kalhor and the Ruling Powers from the Safavid Period to the End of Muhammad Shah Qajar Rule", in: *Local History of Iran* 9, no. 2 (2021), 80, https://doi.org/10.30473/lhst.2021.8049.

58 Ibid., 91–92.

59 Iskandar-Beg Turkamān, *Tārīkh-e ʿĀlamārā-ye ʿAbbāsī*, 150, 108.



FIGURE 34
The motifs on the Uzbek quiver and prisoner's cap, part of the work



FIGURE 35
The line work is representative of Reżā ʿAbbasī's works, a part of the work

is a copy. However, the museum records identify Figure 12 as portraying a *Turkmen prisoner* and figure 13 as *Uzbek prisoner*.

Figure 12, a Safavid-style painting, is included in Aḥmad Khān's *Imperial Album of Ottoman Kings*. According to Emine Fetvaci, Ottoman patrons and artists were interested in collecting foreign works of art and displaying them alongside Ottoman examples. According to this researcher, this work may have been a gift from the Safavid court to the Ottomans.[60] Bihzād's signature features on in this work. The identity of the prisoner is not known.

According to the Metropolitan Museum's website, Figure 13 was probably created as part of an album. Based on the line work (Figure 35), this illustration is attributed to Reżā ʿAbbāsī. Unlike the other images, the warrior's bow and arrow and mace have been removed, and only a slight hint of a dagger can be seen under the figure's waist shawl. This late example is slightly different from the earlier examples, with a background containing dense clouds and a drawing of plants around the figure. Reżā ʿAbbāsī purpose in creating this work appears to be primarily aesthetic, aiming to create a pleasant, figurative composition while, at the same time, referencing the traditions of Safavid painting.

Figure 14 features the inscription "Shabīhe Bāyrām Oghlān", the ruler of Georgia who surrendered to the Safavid ruler in Herat in 1551.[61] According to other sources, Bāyrām Oghlān, the Uzbek ruler of Georgia, in 957 AH/1550 AD, surrendered to the Qizilbash after being besieged in Ashbār Castle and recognizing his inability to resist. Despite surrendering, he was killed by Qazzāq Sulṭān and Georgia was captured by the Safavids.[62]The work is signed by Farukh

60 Persian Aesthetics in Ottoman Albums—Ideas | Institute for Advanced Study (ias.edu).
61 Comstock-Skipp, "Liberating the Turkoman Prisoner", 8.
62 Amir-Hosein Barazesh, "Relations between Iran and Uzbeks during the Reign of Shāh Tah-

Beg. This is likely Farukh Beg Muṣavar, a Georgian convert to Islam who first came to Iran during the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp and was allowed to reside at the king's court. Following a demotion, he moved to Akbar Shāh's court in India and was later appointed head of the library at Jahāngīr's court.[63] This work appears in Prince Salīm's album and was made at the Indian court. According to the website of the Louvre Museum, the painting was created during the reign of Akbar Shāh, within his court.

In Figure 15, the inscription "Bāltū Khān" is written in the upper margin of the image, and the words "Bāltū Khān the brave king" were later added in Latin in the lower margin of the work. Bāltū Khān, nicknamed Sīn Khān or the Good Prince, was the son of Jūjī, and Jūjī is the eldest son of Chingiz Khān.[64] Bāltū Khān is captured in a battle but escapes the death sentence issued by Tagoudar.[65] In terms of iconography, this person's face has been rendered in an Indian style. The reason for including the imprisoned Mongolian prince—depicted in the Indian style and within an Indian album—is unclear. It seems unlikely that the court would have allowed such an illustration, as it would not be considered appropriate for a Gūrkān album to feature an imprisoned Mongolian king. However, given that this later Hindi album appears to have been compiled independently, it can be speculated that it was created by a patron outside the court and in India (see also Figure 16).

In Figure 16, the inscription on the painting is "Shabīhe Chīnī Bahādur". There are two possible identifications for this person: either he is Bahādur Khān, the Mughal emperor of Iran, who succeeded his father Uljāitū in 1317 AD and died in 1335,[66] or Chīnī Bahādur is Bahādur Khān Uzbek, the ruler of Qandahar, whose picture appears in Jahāngīr's album (Figure 36).

In Figure 17, the inscription next to the image reads "Tursh Kerāī" and the painting depicts this individual's imprisonment. of this person. Tursh Kerāī was from the Crimean Khanate and belonged to the Tatar ethnic group. After the collapse of Mongol power at the end of the 14th century, the Crimean Tatars—under the leadership of the Kerāī dynasty—fought with other claimants to the throne who claimed to be descendants of Chingiz Khān. By the 15th cen-

masab 1 935–983 AH", in: *Political and Diplomatic Relations between Iran and the World during the Safavid Era* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2013), 262.

63 Abul-Qasem Radfar, "Esfahān School Painting", in: *Interaction of Literature and Art in the Esfahān School*, (Tehran: Farhangestan-e Honar, 2006), 85.

64 Jean Dardel, "Recueil des historiens des croisades", in: *Documents arméniens, tome second* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1906), 291.

65 Tagoudar was also one of Chingiz Khān's descendants and princes; he took the title of sultan after converting to Islam. Dardel, "Recueil des historiens des croisades", 880, 843.

66 Ibid., 873.



FIGURE 36
Part of the work, from Jahāngīr Album, *ʿAmal-e Bshandāsh*, 1600, Berlin State Library, f. 22v, URL25

tury, the Crimean Tatars were forced to seek help from the Ottoman Sulṭān, Muhammad II, to protect their Khanate. The Khanate of Crimea remained under Ottoman rule between 1475 AD and 1774 AD.[67] In addition to having a *pālāhang* on his neck, this person also wears a chain. The place of production of the work is not known.

In Figure 18, the device depicted on Chardin, who is shown as a European tourist, is called a *carcan*, which corresponds to the Persian *yūgh*. According to Chardin, another name for the *carcan* is "Guirywâun doù chàukéh".

"Les criminels d'état sont mis et gardés au carcan, qu'on appelle *cron doucha ké*, c'est-à-dire, *collier à deux pointes*".[68]

Figure 19 reflects the continuation of the Safavid painting tradition at the end of this period. The work is representative of the Esfahān school. It features a new form of the *pālāhang*, although it retains the same function. The person is tied to a shrub (V-shaped branch of a tree), and his hands are also tied with a rope (Figure 37). The name of the prisoner and the name of the painter are not known. The poem surrounding the work is written by Khusrū-e Shīrīn

67 Ayşegül Aydıngün and Erdoğan Yıldırım, "Perception of Homeland among Crimean Tatars: Cases from Kazakhstan Uzbekistan and Crimea", *Social Sciences in Turkish World* 54, no. 54 (2010), 23.

68 "Guirywâun doù chàukéh", necklace with two thorns. Chàukéh is an Arabic word that means "ear of grain" but also eludes to greatness, power, and strength. Chardin, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse* VI, 105.



FIGURE 37
The prisoner's head is caught between the V-shaped branches of the tree while his hands are tied behind his back.

Niẓāmī. There are no weapons depicted alongside the person. The reason for the punishment is alluded to in the poem, suggesting that he made a claim to the throne.

"به می بنشست روزی بر سر تخت بدین حرفت حریفی کرد با بخت
و گریک دانه رفت از خرمن شاه فدا بادش فلک با خرمن ماه ..."[69]

> If you have a claim to the kingdom, even Khosrow, who was sitting happily on a heavenly and holy throne, could not resist his fate.

In Figure 20, although previous research has pointed out that such illustrations are unique, other examples have been found where the tied *pālāhang* figure is shown in a distinctly Iranian scent, complete with a rocky background and other figures and elements. This picture belongs to the Safavid period. N weapons are shown alongside the punished person (Figure 38), and the poem in the work refers to the story of the Ardabīlī sniper and his confrontation with a felt-clad person, who is ultimately punished. Part of the poem is as follows:

"به لشکرگهش برد و در خیمه دست چو دزدان خونی به گردن ببست[70]"

69 Ilyās b. Yūsuf Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Khusrū-e Shīrīn*, ed. Sadeq Nikpur (Tehran: Sofia-Susia, 2014), 335, 339.

70 Shaykh Muṣliḥ al-dīn Sa'dī Shīrāzī, "Bāb-e Panjum Dar Reżā باب پنجم در رضا", in: *Būstān-e Sa'dī*, ed. Mohammad Ali Foroughi (Tehran: Quqnos, 1993), 345.

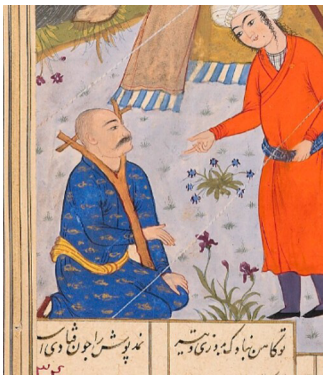


FIGURE 38
Punishing the person who intended to confront the shooter

> The man took the young archer to the camp next to the tent and, according to Saʿdī's poem, like a thief, his hands were bound around his neck with a *pālāhang*.

According to the image and the text of Saʿdī's poem, punishment depicted is intended to humiliate the individual, who is not a ruler or an Uzbek prince but an ordinary person. Based on the descriptions of travellers such as Chardin, and Saʿdī's poem, following a confrontation in which he attempted to coerce a young man in the presence of an official, he has been tied up like a thief.

In Figures 21 and 22, the two scenes depict Yūsuf's imprisonment. In the first, he is shown imprisoned at night, and Zulaykhā observes him from a distance. Yūsuf is released from prison in the next scene, around sunrise. In each of the two instances, the painter depicts another prisoner bound to the *pālāhang*, not Yūsuf. This detail is intended to reinforce his innocence.

In Figure 23, the use of the *pālāhang* also appears in a scene from Firdūsī's *Shāh-nāmeh*. In this example, Rustam is either rescuing a prisoner or taking a prisoner to the king. The individual is tied with a tool resembling the *pālāhang*. Such scenes have been depicted many times in different versions of the *Shāh-nāmeh* (see e.g. Figures 40, 41, 42).

7 Discuss

As illustrated in all the presented works in Table 1, a sense of ambiguity often surrounds the depiction of powerful people in states of captivity, despite them being show with weapons. The iconic appearance of these people frequently indicates their identity as warriors or criminals, clearly distinguishing them from ordinary members of Safavid society. It is, therefore, difficult to imagine



FIGURE 39 Rustam is rescuing Bizhan from a pit, while Bizhan is tight with Palahang.



FIGURE 40
Rustam rescuing Bīzhan from a pit (part of painting), *Shāh-nāmeh* of Firdūsī, 1604–1605 AD, BNF library, Sup. Pers. 490, F.170r, URL26



FIGURE 41
Rustam takes Bīzhan out of the pit (part of painting), *Shāh-nāmeh* of Firdūsī, 1460 AD, University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1963/1.54, URL27



FIGURE 42
Gushtāsp imprisons his son Isfandīyār (part of painting), *Shāh-nāmeh* of Firdūsī, 1460 AD, University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1963/1.60, URL28

a person like Tīmūr, despite his royal splendour, being captured and tied to a *pālāhang*. Nevertheless, weapons and military regalia are prominently and repeatedly emphasized in these depictions, possibly to an exaggerated or symbolic extent. The recurring motif of prisoners tied to a *pālāhang* indicates an intent to convey the Safavid judicial system to the audience, emphasizing its authority. Investigations show that these works were often reproduced, and these copies were sent to the surrounding kingdoms to reinforce the power of the Safavids and to show how the government treated its opponents. In this context, it is possible that Tīmūr Gūrkāni's may serve as a visual assertion of Safavid power as a response to the inconsistencies and opposition of the Indian court over the acquisition of the Qandahar region. A large number of these paintings were created by unknown artists; however, some researchers, such as Martin, have attributed these works to Bihzād and his school. It is clear that only one of these works is signed by Bihzād. The basis of these paintings derives from earlier paintings of Uzbek warriors, which share a characteristic style of paintings of prisoners. The only difference is the presence of *pālāhang*s. The numerous descriptions and poems by Iranian poets that reference the *pālāhang* indicates that this device was used before the Safavid era, i.e., in the 6th and 7th centuries A.H. It was clearly seen as a useful tool for punishing people. In addition, the visual similarity of the *pālāhang* to tools such as the *carcan* or the neck violin, which were used in medieval Europe, indicates the possibility that this tool entered Iran through cultural exchange or was adapted based on foreign models. In most cases, the paintings offer little or no explanation for why the person being punished was imprisoned. This contributes to the promotional and informative function of these pictures, In this way, the image alone—without textual elaboration—implicitly conveys the weight of a judicial verdict. In a small number of cases, there are poems inscribed around the figure, which describe the situation of the imprisoned person. Sometimes, the painter provides further explanation in the form of other motifs on the prisoner's helmet or hat. Iskandar Beg Turkmān used similes such as rabbits, foxes, and lions to describe Uzbeks fleeing. It seems that the single-folio pictures are without additional explanations and may not even have the artist's signature. This is because they are meant to reproduce an imagined image of a person. In most cases, the works have been reproduced by anonymous painters. Thus, it is the reproduction of the painting that is important, not the painter's artistry and skill. These works are preserved in manuscripts or albums. In addition to featuring details and decorations, they contain poetic descriptions or the narrative existence of another painting is embedded within the image. According to Table 2, some of the paintings appear to be fabricated representations and serve as propaganda for the prisoner. Historical documents suggest that these

TABLE 2 Summary of information found from historical documents

Figure Number	A fake and promotional image to showcase the power of the Safavid	"Prisoner's" Name	Artist's Name	Identity of the prisoner
1	unknown	?	?	Mongol
2	unknown	?	?	Mongol
3	✓	Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī	Shaykh Muḥammad	Gūrkān
4	✓	Amīr Tīmūr Gūrkānī / Murād	Shaykh Muḥammad	Gūrkān
5	✓	Ibrāhīm Beg	?	Uzbek
6	unknown	?	?	Turkmān
7	unknown	?	Shaykh Muḥammad	Uzbek
8	unknown	?	?	Uzbek
9	✓	Turkmān's king		
10	×	Khvājeh Beg Kalhur	?	Turkmān
11	unknown	?	ʿAlī Qulī Beg Ārnāvet / ʿAlī Qulī Māher Dāmghānī	Uzbek
12	unknown	?	Behzād	Turkmān
13	unknown	?	Reżā ʿAbbāsī	Turkmān
14	×	Bāyrām Oghlān	Farukh Beg	Uzbek
15	×	Bāltū Khān	?	Mongol
16	×	Chīnī Bahādur	?	Mongol
17	×	Tursh Kerāī	?	Mongol
18	×	Guirywàun doù chàukéh	Jean Chardin	Ṣafavī
19	unknown	?	?	Ṣafavī
20	×	?	?	Ṣafavī
21	unknown (Mythical story)	?	?	Ṣafavī
22	unknown (Mythical story)	?	?	Ṣafavī
23	unknown (Mythical story)	?	?	Ṣafavī

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works were meant to promote the Safavid judicial system and exaggerate the power of the Safavid government. The names of the imprisoned people and the name of the artists are only known in a handful of cases. Among the imprisoned people are Uzbeks (a result of the main Safavid conflict in the east of the country) as well as Gūrkānī or Mongol kings and Turkmen Khans. The assertion of Safavid power and the depiction of means of punishing prisoners are evident in the first 19 pictures, which consist of single-figure portraits. These images also serve as compositional models for later narrative that accompany literary texts paintings, such as those by Saʿdī, Jāmī, and Firdūsī (Figures 20 to 23). In Figures 40, 41, and 42, for example, the punishment device depicted resembles a *pālāhang* but is made of metal. Thus, the Safavid judicial system was also illustrated in literary manuscripts. While only a few examples are discussed in this article, the number of such depictions is certainly greater.

8 Conclusion

The representation of the judicial system of the Safavid period—and the state's approach to dealing with its enemies, as documented in historical texts—is vividly reflected in the visual culture of the era. These images often functioned in parallel with the issuance of judicial verdicts, portraying criminal punishment; however, in many cases, the purpose of the images appears to have been aimed at the governments of surrounding countries, especially the Uzbeks. The exaggeration of Safavid power is clearly shown in depictions of kings who were never actually prisoners of the Safavid government. These images served propagandistic purposes: to humiliate the defeated enemy, intimidate enemies, assert Safavid supremacy, and to symbolically punish wayward rulers. The origins of these works lies within the Safavid court. Comparable works produced in the Indian and Ottoman courts were either an imitation of the Iranian painting tradition of the Safavid period or were executed by painters who left the Iranian court and relocated to the Indian and Ottoman courts. The presence of these paintings in Iranian, Indian, and even Ottoman manuscripts or albums may be attributed to several factors:

1. The original production of works in Iran.
2. The inclusion of Iranian painters' works in Ottoman manuscripts or their direct production on Ottoman soil.
3. The commissioning of works by a patron in India, particularly at the court of the Gūrkānī dynasty.

Pālāhang also appeared in illustrated literary works, where they are often shown being carried or worn by individuals who are portrayed as criminals,

rebels, thieves, or prisoners. These works align closely with the various travelogues describing punishment tools in the Safavid era. The roots of the use of *pālāhang* as a tool of punishment go back to the pre-Safavid period, as evidenced in the poetry of Firdūsī, Sanāī, etc. In terms of iconography, *pālāhang* has many similarities with European examples of the Middle Ages, such as the *carcan* or the pillory. It is also mentioned in Chardin's travelogue. The *pālāhang* was a method of punishment and humiliation. The conquering generals tied the defeated and captured warriors to their horse's *pālāhang*, and they were dragged behind them in an act of public humiliation. In some cases, even sultans from past eras (such as Tīmūr) are shown in this condition, indicating that these images were also constructed to convey broader political and ideological messages:

> We have fitted them with a horse bridle and are towing them behind us.
>
> بر آنان افسار بسته‌ایم و بدنبال خود می کِشیم

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List of URLs

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URL9 https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/91394
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URL11 https://www.ias.edu/ideas/2018/fetvaci-persian-aesthetics
URL12 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/451957?pg=34&rpp=90&ft=iran&pos=3002"Turkoman Prisoner | The Metropolitan Museum of Art (metmuseum.org)
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URL14 https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52507620v/f120.item"Recueil de peintures et de calligraphies des meilleurs artistes de la Perse et de l'Inde. | Gallica (bnf.fr)
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