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Published: December 15, 1991
Last Updated: April 5, 2013

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ČĪT (borrowed from Indian, where it occurs in many dialects with the meaning "spotted cloth," probably of non Indo-Aryan origin; Turner, no. 5036; cf. Irwin and Brett, p. 1), cotton cloth decorated with block-printed or painted designs in multiple colors. The term *čīt* passed into English as "chintz," now the common designation for any cotton or linen furnishing fabric printed with floral designs in fast colors. Conversely, in India Persian *qalam-kārī* was used to distinguish painted from printed cotton textiles.

In India Persian cultural influence was strong in the independent Muslim courts that arose in the west and in the Deccan after the collapse of the Delhi sultanate in 801/1398. In particular Gujarat, Khandesh, and Golconda developed into important production centers for painted cotton textiles. Golconda enjoyed close family, diplomatic, and trade links with Safavid Persia, to which it exported cotton cloth painted with designs of flowering trees and peacocks. Persian inspiration, transmitted through immigrant craftsmen and merchants, is, however, discernible in the style and technique of textiles produced in the succeeding Mughal period (932-1274/1526/1858). The similarities engendered by these close contacts complicate any effort to trace a distinct Persian industry producing either *čīt* or *qalam-kārī* textiles, especially as few examples survive from before the 13th/19th century.

Safavid miniature paintings feature textiles that may represent printed or painted cottons. In a copy of the *Šāh-nāma* painted for Shah Ṭahmāsb I about 945/1537 women wear white head scarves figured with delicate flower sprays in red, blue, and gold, comparable to the designs on lengths of *čīt* from the

13th/19th century (Welch, pp. 100, 168, 172). Formal receptions are depicted, with rulers seated under canopies bordered in bold lozenge and zigzag designs in white, black, red, orange, and green, possibly made of painted cotton canvas (Welch, pp. 128, 132, 141, 153, 157). A more explicit representation is seen in a *Šāh-nāma* of 984/1576-77 (Robinson, pp. 4041), where Sohrāb is received by his mother, Tahmīna, who is seated on a white *čīt* floor cover patterned with dark red and black sprigs within a deep border of alternating stripes of leaf and flower scrolls. Sir John Chardin, during his second visit to Isfahan in 1083-88/1672-77, noted a distinction between painted cloths imported from India and fabrics printed locally with floral and figural motifs (p. 278).

In the 13th/19th century references to a Persian industry were more numerous, but there is also abundant evidence of competition from a new source: cheap factory-made textiles from Europe. Jakob Polak, a German physician living in Persia, reported in the 1280s/1860s that, though cloth printed in variegated colors was highly valued in Persia, the work involved in making it was time-consuming: “The most widely used calicoes in Persia (*chit*) are usually supplied by Manchester factories, where goods are made to suit Persian taste and for sale in the Orient” (II, p. 167; tr. in Issawi, p. 269). The threat to local production was confirmed by Mīrzā Ḥosayn, an official of Isfahan who described his city’s handicrafts in 1294/1877. Nevertheless, he reported that 284 establishments—workshops, offices, and retail shops—specialized in *čīt* production were operating in the Isfahan *bāzār* (Issawi, p. 279). In the 1310s/1890s Lord Curzon testified further to the dominance of imported Manchester cotton cloth, both plain and patterned (Curzon, *Persian Question* II, p. 525).

One factor contributing to the success of cheap, machine-printed imports was the laborious process of producing *čīt* and *qalam-kārī* textiles. Three main stages were involved (Murdoch Smith, pp. 55-58; Wulff, *Crafts*, pp. 224-27). First, the cloth was cut to the required shape and then prepared with various resists or mordants. Then pearwood blocks, each carved with a section of the design, were used to print colors—usually four—successively onto the cloth. First, narrow black outlines were printed; then areas were filled with crimson and dark blue. Details were added in ocher and occasionally in gold. At intervals during the printing process the cloth was washed, rinsed, and dried. Traditionally the colors were prepared from infusions of minerals and plants, such as iron, madder, indigo, and pomegranate skins. Synthetic dyes gradually became more common.

The finished products were used for many purposes: as door curtains, wall hangings, bed and table covers, garment linings, and women's jackets and trousers. Curtains and hangings were patterned with bold schemes of peacocks, lions, and cypress trees, all within multiple borders of floral scrollwork. Ambitious pictorial compositions derived from popular epic and romantic tales were worked in a combination of printed and painted techniques. In contrast, fabric lengths used for clothing were printed with delicate patterns of such small repeat motifs as flower tendrils and narrow stripes; often they were stamped at one end with the maker's name and date.

There was a revival of production of *čīt* and *qalam-kārī* in the mid-14th/20th century, mainly to supply the demand for tourist souvenirs. New designs, for example, Achaemenid symbols and figures derived from the sculptures at Persepolis, were added to the traditional repertoire.

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