Encyclopædia Iranica

ENAMEL
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Published: December 15, 1998
Last Updated: December 20, 2017

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ENAMEL (Pers. *mīnā*, possibly a dialect form of *mīnū* < Mid. Pers. *mēnōg* "uncorporeal, spiritual, the world beyond, heaven" < *"sky" < "blue," meaning "glass, luster, enamel" [Horn, *Etymologie*, s.v. *mīnō*; for the *ū*-/*ā*– variation in words derived from OIr. –*u* stems, cf. Av. *bāzu-*, Pers. *bāzū*, Sogd. *βāzā*; Av. *pərəsu-*, Pers. *pahlū*, Sogd. *prsā*]; another possibility is Av. *minu-* "jewel" [*AirWb*., col. 1186] > **minā*,and by analogy, *mīnā* [Mayrhofer, II, pp. 556-57, not repeated in Mayrhofer, *Wörterbuch*, II, pp. 293, 308]; an ancient Near Eastern base cannot be ruled out; cf. Ar. *mīnāʾ* "enamel").

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(EIr.)

Enamel is a heat-fused glass paste colored by metal oxides and used to decorate metal surfaces. In medieval sources *mīnāʾ* denoted glaze, glass, and, after the 11th century, enamel. Enamel was associated with lapidary,

glassworking, and goldmithing crafts and was probably used primarily in place of precious stones before the 17th century. Anthony Jenkinson, a traveler to Persia in 968-71/1561-63, described an enameled and jeweled aigrette worn by the ruler of Šīrvān (I, pp. 367-68; first cited in Ivanov, Lukonin, and Smesova, p. 11). The medium was first used extensively in the mid-17th century, however. A variety of textual sources and a few datable examples suggest that at that time champlevé enameling and enamel painting—sometimes in slight relief, in transparent and opaque colors on gold, copper, and silver—began to appear in Persia.

The flowering of this craft may be attributed, at least partly, to the influence of European and Russian enameled wares sent to Persia as diplomatic gifts in the 17th century. According to some sources, European jewelers, goldsmiths, watchmakers, and enamelers were patronized by the Safavid court, and enamels were ordered from Europe. The jewel merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier reported that Shah ʿAbbās II (q.v.) (1052-77/1642-66) provided him with sketches for an enameled knife and spoon which the ruler wished to order (Tavernier [London], p. 183). Other travelers described court receptions at which magnificent enameled plates, daggers, and insignia were common. By the late 17th century the position of court enameler (*mīnāsāz-bāšī)* and records of the trade of enameler in the *bāzār* indicate that European techniques had been mastered by Persian craftsmen (Hoffman, I, p. 228, no. 81; Diba, 1994, p. 271; Ivanov, Lukonin, and Smesova, p. 10).

No dated works from this period are extant, but a group of fine enameled daggers in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, may be assigned to the later 17th century on stylistic grounds (Ivanov, Lukonin, and Smesova, pp. 8, 10). Moreover, a number of these same works were recorded as having been in the collection of Peter the Great (1672-1725) beginning in the 1730s. Perhaps the earliest object in the group is a gold dagger with enamel-painted decoration of an animal combat in delicate pastel tones (Ivanov, Lukonin, and Smesova, no. 55; Diba, 1996). The treatment of the animals is clearly related to that in similar designs used on textiles, ornamental margins in manuscripts, lacquer bindings, and other decorative arts of the period. A jeweled dagger and sheath with polychrome floral enamelwork on a white ground is another superb example of this period. High-quality enamels continued to be produced in Persia in the 18th century and are documented in visual sources. A portrait of Nāder Shah (1148-60/1736-47) includes a fine dagger enameled with bird designs tucked into his sash and a similarly decorated saber hilt (Plate I). A

particularly noteworthy example of this type is a dagger sheath with busts of a man and a woman within a medallion on each side (Plate II). The man's four-cornered cap is of a type introduced by Nāder Shah in 1148/1736 and provides a mid-18th century date for the manufacture of the sheath, although the dagger may be somewhat later.

A number of delicate, small cups with floral, bird, and arabesque designs—some in openwork technique (e.g., Robinson, 1988, p. 135, signed *ʿamal-e Taqī* and dated 1174/1760; Ivanov, Lukonin, and Smesova, nos. 56-57)—illustrate the continued excellence of Persian enameling in the later 18th century. Indeed, the enamel painting of this period is characterized by brilliant colors (primarily pink, royal blue, turquoise, and translucent green) set off against gold or opaque grounds; elegant figural, animal, and floral designs; shading; and fine detailing. The medium was well suited to the talents of Persian craftsmen, who continued to produce works equaling or surpassing those of Ottoman, Mughal, and European workshops.

Many dated and signed examples from the later 18th through the early 20th century document the longevity of this tradition. A wide range of objects—including arms and armor, *jeqqa*s (ornaments used on hats, turbans, and crowns), vessels, *qalīān*s (waterpipe bases; Plate IIIa, Plate IIIb, Plate IIIc), mirrors, Koran and amulet boxes, snuffboxes, and inkpots for pencases—were decorated with enamel. Many of the finest examples were produced for the court of Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah (1212-50/1797-1834); a small traveling mirror signed by the painter Moḥammad Jaʿfar and dated 1212/1797-98, the year of the ruler's accession, includes a superb portrait of him. Court painters were commissioned to provide designs for various media. Their versatility is clear from the production of enamel work: More than twenty-five artists' names have been recorded, including painters also noted for work in other media (e.g., Moḥammad Bāqer, Mīrzā Bābā, and Aḥmad).

Moḥammad Bāqer was noted for marginal designs and lacquerwork; his work in enamel is attested by a signed covered bowl, saucer, and spoon decorated with astrological figures and dedicated to Fatḥ-ʿAlī Shah (Plate IV). Enamelwork continued to be produced at a high standard in the later 19th century, even when royal patronage decreased and other arts were in decline. Textual sources attest to the continued patronage of certain Persian notables. Indeed, the French traveler Julien de Rochechouart recorded more than 200 enamel craftsmen active in Tehran in the 1860s (chap. 13; cf. Robinson, 1988, p. 187). Although Persian painters' attempts to render European subjects met

with little favor in the eyes of European travelers, the technical brilliance of Persian enamelers elicited their admiration. The last significant achievements in this medium occurred in the third quarter of the 19th century and were associated with the workshop of Moḥammad Kāẓem and his sons. Their works featured Europeanizing subjects designed to appeal to the taste of the later Qajar period. By the early 20th century enameling was in decline and had been replaced by works of Swiss, German, and French manufacture.

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