


Tapestry - so called Persian (Safavid appliqué) tapestry

Textile and Costume Collection

Accession Nr.:	52.2801.1-2 
Date of production:	16th century
Place of production:	Iran (Persian Empire)
Materials:	atlas silk base; gilded leather; silk taft
Techniques:	application
Dimensions:	length: 278 cm width: 254 cm

One technique of making tapestries is silk application: the different motifs cut out of silk fabrics of varying colour are applied to the ground with stitching. A unique piece of this technique is the Museum of Applied Arts' 16th century Persian applique wall hanging from the Safavid period. Since the 17th century it belonged to the Esterházy treasury in Fraknó (today Forchtenstein, Austria). Its first mention dates from 1693. In the field under an arch a young ruler, probably shah Tahmasp I of the Safavid dynasty (1524–1576) is sitting on an ornate throne.

Above the arch the space is filled by Persian mythological figures, the simurg and a dragon fighting each other. Most experts put the date of origin to the middle / end of the 16th century or the first half of the 17th. Some presume that it came from chief judge count Ferenc Nádasdy's (1622–1671) treasury in Sárovar, others trace it to the Thököly treasures. More recently it is assumed to have been part of the ransom paid for high-ranking Turkish prisoners-of-war after palatine Miklós Esterházy's (1583–1645) victory at Érsekújvár (today Nove Zamky, Slovakia) in 1623. Most recently it was examined from a specific angle, as a work of art combining miniature painting, rug-making and tent art, and traced to the court of shah Tahmasp in Tabriz. Its style is compared to the works of the court painter Mir Mosavver and his son Mir Sayyed Ali who worked there in the 1530s. This hypothesis says that the tapestry showing the shah and his retinue at outdoors revelry was made for a notable event and narrates the ceremonious submission of the ruler's rebellious brother Sam Mirza (1517–1567) in 1534.

The conservation of the carpet was possible in 2002 with the financial support of the Asia Society in New York and it could be put on display first abroad in the Society's New York building in 2003. It was last shown in the Museum of Applied Arts at the show of the Esterházy treasures in 2006.

Literature

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