
Jane Dieulafoy in Varamin: The Emamzadeh Yahya through a Nineteenth-Century Lens

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A highlight of the exhibition *Persia: Ancient Iran and the Classical World* held in 2022 at the Getty Villa was two panels of colorful glazed bricks from the palace of Darius I (r. 522–486 BCE) at Susa. Both panels were borrowed from the Musée du Louvre, and the example depicting a royal archer ended up in Paris because of the photographer and writer Jane Dieulafoy (1851–1916).¹ In 1881–82, Jane and her husband, Marcel, spent a year traveling around Iran, and in 1884, Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (r. 1848–96) granted them permission to excavate Susa, which unfolded over two seasons in 1885–86.² Wooden crates filled with glazed bricks were soon transported to Paris and entered the Louvre’s Department of Oriental Antiquities, at whose 1888 inauguration Jane received the cross of the Légion d’Honneur.³ While Susa bricks flooded the Louvre, another form of Persian architectural revetment steadily entered French collections. Luster tiles dating to the first half of the thirteenth century and the Ilkhanid period (1256–1353) were also sourced from archaeological excavations but more commonly were taken off the walls of still-standing buildings. One such site was the Emamzadeh Yahya (ca. 1260–1307) at Varamin, a tomb complex that the Dieulafoys visited just two months into their trip.

This article explores Jane Dieulafoy’s photographic documentation of the Emamzadeh Yahya and Varamin’s other historical monuments during the couple’s weeklong stay in the village in June 1881. To date, scholars of Iran have relied heavily on the woodcut prints after Dieulafoy’s photographs reproduced in her well-known travelogue *La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane: Relation de voyage contenant 336 gravures sur bois d’après les photographies de l’auteur et deux cortès* (1887).⁴ In French photography circles, her photographs were largely presumed lost until their inclusion in the 2015–16 exhibition *Qui a peur des femmes photographes? 1839–1919* (Who is afraid of women photographers? 1839–1919) at the Musée de l’Orangerie.⁵ Thanks to recent (2021) digitization efforts at the Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art (INHA), Dieulafoy’s photographs can now be studied on the pages of her six personal photography albums.⁶ The result is a seismic shift in her work’s viability as a source for many fields of Iranian studies, for her photographs omit the creative liberties of the later woodcuts and often outnumber what was reproduced in the travelogue.⁷ The Varamin section of *La Perse*

features ten prints, for example, whereas “Perse 1” (1881) preserves twenty-eight photographs, meaning nearly triple the archive.⁸ While this essay focuses on Dieulafoy’s photographs of Varamin, it is anticipated that pre-Islamicists will conduct comparable work on Susa and specialists of Orientalist photography will reevaluate Dieulafoy’s depictions of women. One of the best known and most insidious prints in *La Perse* depicts a half-dressed “Ziba Khanoum,” an elite woman of Isfahan. The only known comparable photograph taken by Dieulafoy shows the subject fully dressed and calls into question any use of the phrase “after the photographs” (*après les photographies*).⁹

Bearing in mind that Dieulafoy was traveling in Iran for the first time in 1881, had no formal training or expertise in Iranian studies or Persian art, and retained many of the biases of European (*farangi*) travelers of the day, I explore her photographs of Varamin (June 1881) in relation to the slightly earlier Persian account (December 1876) of Mohammad Hasan Khan E’temad al-Saltaneh (1843–96), a Qajar historian and favorite dragoman of Naser al-Din Shah.¹⁰ E’temad al-Saltaneh accompanied the shah on his internal travels and three European tours (1873, 1878, and 1889) and was a prolific writer.¹¹ Early on his career, during the 1870s, he served as the head of the state press office and directed the government newspapers *Ruznameh-ye Iran* and *Ruznameh-ye Dowlati*. His account of Varamin—“Tarikh va Joghrafiya-ye Varamin (ya Shekar-e Masileh)” (The history and geography of Varamin, or hunting Masileh)—was originally published in *Ruznameh-ye Iran* on 7 Dhu al-Hijjah 1293 AH/23 December 1876, just twelve days after he left Varamin. It was recently included in a collection of his lesser-known works—the *Rasa’el-e E’temad al-Saltaneh*—and is therefore relatively untapped as a resource, like Dieulafoy’s photographs.¹²

Reading E’temad al-Saltaneh and Dieulafoy in tandem paints a robust picture of Varamin at precisely the moment when it was becoming known for its luster tilework (Persian: *zarrinfam*; French: *faiences à reflets métalliques*), a twice-fired ceramic technique incorporating metallic oxides that reached the height of its production between 1180 and 1350. This sparkling revetment once covered the interior of the tomb of Emamzadeh Yahya but was steadily stolen during the second half of the nineteenth century and exported to European cities such as Paris and London. Both E’temad al-Saltaneh and Dieulafoy visited the tomb during this critical period, but their accounts differ dramatically in their expertise, emphases, and value. While the Qajar historian excelled in geographical analysis, recording measurements, and reading epigraphy, the French traveler took a series of unmatched photographs, including the best view of the complex before its renovation and the only known image of its exceptional luster mihrab in situ. These photographs have not only advanced scholarly understanding of the living sacred complex but also prompted a reevaluation of the display of the tomb’s tiles in more than forty museums worldwide.¹³

Introduction to Jane Dieulafoy: The Photography Album “Perse 1” and Travelogue La Perse

The Dieulafoys’ first visit to what they called “La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane” (corresponding to Iran, southern Iraq, and Susa) lasted from February 1881 to February 1882 and took them from Azerbaijan in the northwest to Fars in the south.¹⁴ The pair had traveled previously in Spain, Morocco, and Egypt, and Marcel had served as the architect in charge of historical monuments in Toulouse (1871–79). They carried a letter from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs but were effectively on their own. In advance of the trip, Jane Dieulafoy studied photography in Paris, and her equipment included cameras, chemicals, albumen papers, and glass plate negatives, all carried by horse across rugged terrain.¹⁵ Gelatin dry plates were in wide circulation by 1880, and Dieulafoy could store these negatives and develop them via contact printing when it suited. In addition to being a budding photographer, Dieulafoy was an avid writer, and like E’temad al-Saltaneh, she first published her account of Varamin in a newspaper, in this case the January 1883 issue of *Le tour du monde*.¹⁶ She continued to publish in *Le tour* through 1886 and ultimately compiled these articles into her better-known and more exclusive *La Perse*.

While Dieulafoy’s *Le tour* articles were accessible to France’s general public and *La Perse* to privileged elites, her photographs remained largely hidden from view until INHA’s recent release of her six albums (Perse 1–6) cumulatively containing more than nine hundred photographs.¹⁷ This essay focuses exclusively on “Perse 1,” which covers the first few months of the trip of 1881–82: Marand (April), Tabriz, Soltaniyya, Qazvin, Tehran (June), Varamin, back to Tehran, Saveh (July), Qom, Kashan (August), and Isfahan, which continues into the next album. “Perse 1” is a chronological memento of the couple’s journey and distinguished by its personal, dialectical, and working nature and dynamic mixing of landscapes, buildings, and human subjects (fig. 1). Most of the prints are small (around 6.35 × 10.16 centimeters) and lack captions and borders, save for the vignettes of Dieulafoy’s wide lens. There are often two to four prints mounted on a page in a scrapbook manner, and she sometimes placed two similar prints side by side, or even two prints from the same negative.¹⁸ She stitched together her panoramas, and some seemingly cohesive prints are in fact collages.¹⁹

The majority of prints in “Perse 1” are Dieulafoy’s photographs, but the album also includes some professional images that she collected. Her portraits of the shah’s nieces and nephews, which he requested she take after their brief audience on 7 June 1881, were mounted across from two professional photographs of Qajar officials.²⁰ The page before contains four professional photographs of Naser al-Din Shah.²¹ The small red *D* impressed on the prints is therefore indicative of her ownership, not necessarily her authorship.

Dieulafoy’s modus operandi was to document every step of the journey, and as such, her photographs vary in quality. A comparison of her approach to the congregational mosque (*masjed-e jame‘*) of Qazvin, one of the oldest mosques of Iran, to that of the



FIG. 1. — View of Jane Dieulafoy’s photography album “Perse 1,” pp. 34–35, showing photographs taken in Khorramdareh and Qazvin in May 1881. On the right page is the domed tomb of the Emamzadeh Shahzadeh Hossein at Qazvin (975–1008 AH/1568–1600). Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 4 Phot 18 (1). Photograph by the author, March 2022.

Qajar court photographer ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar (1850–1909) is illuminating. This was Dieulafoy’s first substantive experience of a living congregational mosque in Iran, and she took seven photographs of the site. The north *ayvan* (vaulted space with an arched opening on one side) topped by two minarets and facing the domed sanctuary on the south was selected as the representative view in her travelogue, but the woodcut altered and enhanced the photograph in several ways.²² Two figures were added to the foreground, and areas of deep shadow were lightened. ‘Abdollah Qajar positioned his camera in the same area looking toward the north portal, but the comparisons end there. His extremely crisp and evenly lit image captures many features lost in Dieulafoy’s shadows and is one of the most beautiful nineteenth-century photographs of the mosque.²³

Dieulafoy’s preference for quantity over quality exemplifies her approach to architectural photography. One of the most famous monuments photographed by her and many others was the tomb of the Ilkhanid ruler Oljaytu (r. 1304–17) at Soltaniyya. “Perse 1” includes eight photographs of the tomb across three pages, proceeding from general views, to details of the exterior, to a single view of the interior.²⁴ In the last, she stood in the upper story and looked down toward a tiny figure by the entrance, unobstructed by the scaffolding that currently engulfs the space. The GRI’s album of photographs by the Italian colonel Luigi Pesce includes a single general view of the ruler’s tomb mounted in a shimmering border and identified by a misleading caption: “Grande Moschea in ruina a Sultanie” (Great mosque in ruins at Soltaniyya).²⁵ This monumental view was included in many formal albums of the day, many of which were presented as gifts.²⁶ In her personal album, Dieulafoy had no interest in beautiful borders and captions, often went beyond the singular facade shot, and included her local interlocutors.²⁷

While Dieulafoy's architectural photographs are often refreshing to the art historian for their scope, detail, and generally unfiltered nature, the text of her later travelogue can pose problems. She sometimes made historical errors, but more problematic is her bias and stereotyping, including tirades against mollahs and superstition, and a frequent use of the words *fanaticism* and *infidels*.²⁸ Much of *La Perse* is sprinkled with Dieulafoy's encounters with Islam and her struggles to gain access into religious sites, and her early visit to Qazvin ("Kazbin," 10–13 May) is a case in point. The couple wanted to visit the aforementioned congregational mosque, but they were refused entry, so they sought an audience with the governor, the brother of the shah.²⁹ When they asked for his assistance, he replied that he had no authority in the matter and had not visited the mosque in months. The next day, the guardian of the city's grand hotel offered to take the couple into the mosque between prayers. Their "protector" (*protecteur*) was successful, and the couple spent more than an hour and a half walking through the building, she taking her seven photographs.

In Qazvin, Dieulafoy was also introduced to Twelver Shi'ism, the majority form of Islam practiced in Iran that hinges on devotion to the Prophet Mohammad's bloodline and considers the Twelve Imams his rightful successors. She first observed a passion play (*ta'ziyeh*) in the street recreating the martyrdom of Imam Hossein (626–80), the third Imam, at Karbala. She took two photographs, and one was reproduced in *La Perse*.³⁰ She then proceeded to the Emamzadeh Shahzadeh Hossein (975–1008 AH/1568–1600), the tomb complex of a young son of Imam Reza (766–818), the eighth Imam (the term *emamzadeh* refers to a descendant of one of the Twelve Imams and also the tomb of such a person). The tomb is set in a walled courtyard that doubles as a cemetery, and Dieulafoy observed women chatting and eating sweets, mourning at the graves of loved ones, and donning the chador (a loose cloth, often black, engulfing the body). This scene was captured in her general view of the tomb, which must have been taken from atop the entrance portal (see fig. 1, right page).³¹

Dieulafoy was surprised when a cleric invited her into the tomb, and what follows in *La Perse* is her description of pilgrimage (*ziyarat*), or pious visitation. The most sacred element of any Iranian *emamzadeh* past or present is the cenotaph of the deceased, and this example was enclosed in a three-dimensional pierced screen (*zarih*). Dieulafoy observed pilgrims tying pieces of cloth to the screen, tapping their foreheads against its corner bosses, and circumambulating it three times. The tomb's mihrab was covered by a piece of cloth lifted to reveal a painting of a man whom she presumed to be the Prophet Mohammad. She concluded, "It is very rare to find him in a mosque, the Muslim religion prohibiting the reproduction of the human figure."³² This statement underscores Dieulafoy's amateurism on two levels. First, the space in question was/is most accurately defined not as a mosque but as a tomb—many of which have mihrabs—and specifically an *emamzadeh*, a tomb of a descendant of one of the Twelve Imams. Second, there is no outright prohibition against figural imagery in Islam, and in certain times and places, religious subjects were, and still are, depicted in figural form.³³ Portraits of the Twelve Imams were especially common in Qajar Iran (Twelver Shi'ism

being the state religion since 1501), and it is more likely that the painting in the mihrab portrayed one of the Imams, although portraits of the Prophet are known in Iranian tombs.³⁴ At the end of her visit, Dieulafoy was invited to sit down with a *majtahed* (senior theologian), and his education would fill over three pages of *La Perse*.³⁵

Reading and Seeing Varamin: E‘temad al-Saltaneh and Jane Dieulafoy

During the Ilkhanid period, Varamin emerged as an important provincial capital and center of trade, scholarship, and Twelver Shi‘ism.³⁶ By the Qajar period, the once thriving medieval city had reverted to an agricultural village, but its proximity to Tehran ensured a steady stream of visitation. Among the most important early visitors were Russian consul Alexander Chodzko, who visited in April 1835, and the Qajar statesman ‘Aliqoli Mirza E‘tehad al-Saltaneh, who took part in a royal delegation in January 1863.³⁷ During the 1860s and 1870s, Qajar court photographers like the aforementioned ‘Abdollah Qajar documented a variety of expeditions, and it is likely that the 1863 (E‘tehad al-Saltaneh) and 1876 (E‘temad al-Saltaneh) visits to Varamin could have included a photographer.³⁸ In the current absence of Qajar court photography of the village, Dieulafoy’s photographs fill a significant gap while visualizing many details described by E‘temad al-Saltaneh, especially epigraphy.³⁹ Their combined archive is critical to the art historian, because it illuminates the conditions of Varamin’s monuments before many were radically transformed.

Nineteenth-century Varamin was strategically located between the Qajar capital of Tehran to the north and one of the court’s favorite hunting grounds—Masileh—in the Great Salt Desert (Dasht-e Kavir) to the south.⁴⁰ The first major destination on the road south from Tehran was Rayy, one of the oldest cities of Iran and home to the twelfth-century Toghrol Tower, which was photographed twice by Dieulafoy and opens the chapter in question in *La Perse*.⁴¹ The Dieulafoys passed by several Zoroastrian cemeteries (*dakhmeh*, or “tower of silence”), and she also described the gold dome of the Shrine of ‘Abdolazem (‘Abd al-‘Azem al-Hasani), the most significant holy site near the capital.⁴² When they were about three “farsakhs” (*farsangs*, one unit of which is equal to about four miles) from Tehran, the landscape changed dramatically, and lines of “kanots” (*qanats*, or underground water channels) descended into plains yellowed by wheat and filled with the sounds of harvesting, dogs, horses, and cicadas.⁴³

The Dieulafoys spent an entire week in Varamin (June 15–21), and it left a sizeable impression on Jane, resulting in twenty-eight photographs in her personal album and ten woodcuts in her published travelogue. The couple was hosted by the head of the village (*kadkhoda*), thanks to the arrangements of Joseph-Désiré Tholozan, Naser al-Din Shah’s physician. The *kadkhoda*’s house included a courtyard with a *talar* (porch) and served as the venue for the local court. It was from the rooftop of this house that Dieulafoy took her general view of Varamin before watching the sky turn purple as a “violent” sandstorm approached from the desert (fig. 2a, upper left; fig. 2b).⁴⁴ In the



FIGS. 2A, 2B. — Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916). The first spread of Varamin photographs in Dieulafoy’s photography album “Perse 1,” June 1881, pp. 56–57. On the left page is a general view of the village toward the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin (688 AH/1289) and two views of the congregational mosque (722–26 AH/1322–26); on the right page is a detail of the mosque’s entrance *ayvan* and a general view of the *ayvan* leading into the domed sanctuary. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

foreground are the village’s mudbrick houses, and in the background is the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin (‘Ala’ al-Din, 688 AH/1289).

The farmers of Varamin cultivated wheat and opium poppy, and the intense June heat dictated the daily schedule. On market day in the main square, Dieulafoy observed the cattle market and some visiting tribes, including Turkomans from Astarabad, near the Caspian Sea.⁴⁵ Her daily routine included early morning gallops to monuments, midday naps, and delicious meals prepared by the *kadkhoda*’s cook. She concluded, “Life is very gentle in Varamin,” which reflected the privilege of a temporary visitor.⁴⁶ At the time, Iran was recovering from the great famine of 1870–71 and several cholera outbreaks.

Turning now to E‘temad al-Saltaneh, it was a hunting expedition to Masileh that led the Qajar historian to Varamin in December 1876. The royal procession departed Tehran on 23 Dhu al-Qa‘dah 1293 AH/9 December 1876, and made several stops along the way, including lunch in a recently restored garden in Daulatabad and the evening in Firuzabad, four *farsang* (about sixteen miles) from Varamin.⁴⁷ As is typical of a Qajar insider and geographer, E‘temad al-Saltaneh provides a long list of the crown (*khaliseh*) and private (*melk*) lands along the route, which reads as a who’s who of the court.⁴⁸ He describes Varamin as one of the oldest cities of Iran but now just “a big village” (*qarieh-ye bozorgi*) with a population of about a thousand, including Bakhtiari, Ardestani, Shirazi, and Kangarlu tribes.⁴⁹ He then launches into an architectural survey of seven monuments visited during his relatively quick two-day visit. He begins with Varamin’s oldest and largest site: the central *qa‘leh* (citadel), or Narenj Qa‘leh. The citadel’s massive scale and sloping walls were first memorialized in a wash painting of 1848 by French artist Jules Laurens, but Dieulafoy’s photograph is a far sharper record (fig. 3a, upper left; fig. 3b).⁵⁰ Its importance is amplified by the fact that the citadel is now completely lost.



FIGS. 3A, 3B. — Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916). The fourth spread of Varamin photographs in Dieulafoy’s photography album “Perse 1,” June 1881, pp. 62–63. On the left page is the citadel (*qa’leh*); a detail of the interior of the domed sanctuary of the congregational mosque; and the cattle market. On the right are three views of the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

E‘temad al-Saltaneh describes four monuments in cardinal relation to the citadel: the congregational mosque to the south (Masjed-e Jame‘); a ruined mosque (Masjed-e Sharif, 707 AH/1307) and the tomb of Kokaboddin (Emamzadeh Kokaboddin) to the west; a ruined mosque (899 AH/1493–94) and the tomb of Fathollah (Emamzadeh Seyyed Fathollah) to the north; and the tomb of Shah Hossein (Emamzadeh Shah Hossein) to the east (fig. 4).⁵¹ He also devotes considerable attention to the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin closest to the village in the north (see fig. 2a, upper left) and the Emamzadeh Yahya to the distant southeast. As he leaves Varamin for Masileh, he describes the outlying *qa’lehs* and references his separate account of Qa’leh Iraj, the massive citadel to the northeast.⁵²

Built between 722–26 AH/1322–26, the congregational mosque was and is Varamin’s largest and most significant Islamic monument.⁵³ It once sat at the heart of the medieval city, but by the time of E‘temad al-Saltaneh’s visit of 1876, this southern area was completely ruined (“beh koli kharab”), and settlement had moved to the north.⁵⁴ Dieulafoy’s photographs capture the mosque in an empty field (see fig. 2a), and the west side of the courtyard is completely lost, which E‘temad al-Saltaneh attributes to a flood.⁵⁵ In its original configuration, the mosque included a monumental entrance portal leading into a courtyard with four *ayvans*, the southern one leading into the domed qibla sanctuary (see fig. 2b, right). The Varamin mosque is the only surviving congregational mosque from the Ilkhanid period in the classic four-*ayvan* plan.

One of the strengths of E‘temad al-Saltaneh’s account is his careful analysis of architectural epigraphy, which required the reading of Persian and Arabic (mostly Qur’anic) inscriptions written in a variety of calligraphic scripts and media.⁵⁶ At the mosque, he began with the tiled foundation inscription on the entrance portal, which recorded the name of the patron Mohammad b. Mohammad b. Mansur al-Quhadi and the date of AH 722/1322 in three dense lines of turquoise *sols* (thuluth) on a dark-blue ground.⁵⁷ Dieulafoy captured a glimpse of this inscription in her general view of the

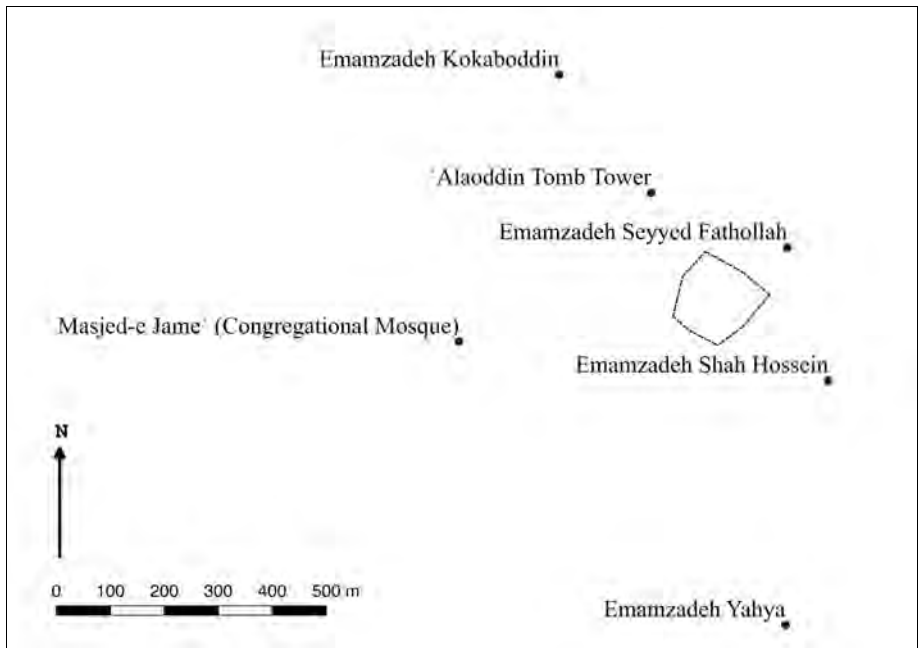


FIG. 4. — The architectural monuments of Varamin observed by E‘temad al-Saltaneh in 1876. The citadel (*qa‘leh*), represented through dashed lines, is now lost, but the surrounding sites (ca. 1260–1490) all stand to various degrees. Drawing by Kanika Kalra.

portal (fig. 5, left), and she also photographed the beginning of the elaborate band of knotted Kufic below (see fig. 2b, left).⁵⁸ Her images are significant, for only a fraction of the foundation inscription remains today, and the beginning of the Kufic band is now entirely gone.⁵⁹

E‘temad al-Saltaneh also identified the stucco (*gach*) inscription on the *ayvan* leading into the domed sanctuary as verse 9 of chapter (sura) 62 of the Qur‘an, appropriately concerning the Friday prayer.⁶⁰ Dieulafoy photographed both the beginning (see fig. 5, right) and middle of the inscription, which still survives.⁶¹ Inside the domed sanctuary, E‘temad al-Saltaneh identified the stucco inscription wrapping the upper walls as the first seven verses of sura 62, a common selection, and Dieulafoy left us three details (see fig. 3a, upper right).⁶² She also photographed the exquisitely carved stucco mihrab, but instead of capturing the full niche, she cropped out its lower half, which had a gaping hole.⁶³ A final photograph of the mosque deserves mention because it captures Dieulafoy herself leaning against a wall.⁶⁴

E‘temad al-Saltaneh turns next to the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin. He identifies the Kufic inscription wrapping the top of the tower as the Throne Verse (Ayat al-Kursi, Qur‘an 2:255) but neglects to mention the detailed foundation inscription naming the deceased and dated 688 AH/1289–90.⁶⁵ The patron, Fakhroddin Hasan (Fakhr al-Din, d. 1308), was the local ruler (*malek*) of the province including Rayy and Varamin and enjoyed an excellent reputation in Ilkhanid circles. He built the tomb for his father ‘Alaoddin and would soon patronize the Emamzadeh Yahya. Had E‘temad al-Saltaneh



FIG. 5. — **Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916).** Views of the Congregational Mosque of Varamin (Masjed-e Jame', 722–26 AH/1322–26) from Dieulafoy's photography album "Perse 1," June 1881, p. 58. At left is a general view of the mosque's entrance *ayvan*; at right is a detail of the *ayvan* leading into the domed qibla sanctuary. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

read the foundation inscription, he would not have speculated about the deceased's identity, but when looking at Dieulafoy's three photographs (see fig. 3b), we can appreciate the challenge of reading an inscription that was not only located high up the tower but also rendered in an almost illegible script weaving in and out of its thirty-two flanges. It was only in the early twentieth century that the foundation inscription was recorded, providing the basis for Sheila Blair's recent analysis.⁶⁶

To the east of the citadel was a tall building in ruins (*makhrubeh*) said to be the tomb of Shah Hossein.⁶⁷ A tiled mihrab was one of the remains (*baqi*) of the adjacent mosque, and E'temad al-Saltaneh identifies its inscription as *al-Sakinah* (Tranquility), in reference to Qur'an 48:4.⁶⁸ In his book of 1955, which recorded his visits of 1939 and 1943, American art historian Donald Wilber described the mihrab as enclosed in a new prayer hall and referred back to Dieulafoy's two "drawings" of the site in *La Perse*.⁶⁹ In "Perse 1," she mounted her three original photographs on a single page (fig. 6). On the left are two views of the octagonal tomb tower. The roof is missing and populated by birds' nests, but we can still discern the fine brickwork. On the right is the mihrab described above and one of Dieulafoy's most arresting photographs: A man leans against the inside of the niche, engulfed by the hood above; a mule stands to the right; and a small child sits precariously on the high wall behind, next to other onlookers. The mihrab's massive muqarnas hood recalls Seljuk Anatolian examples, and it is framed by a border of inscribed square tiles, only the top row of which is intact.⁷⁰ When zooming

in on Dieulafoy's sharp photograph, the viewer can see the word *al-sakinah* on the first surviving tile on the upper right. The cropped and simplified woodcut in *La Perse* is a poor substitute but would have a lasting legacy in Varamin, as I will discuss below.⁷¹

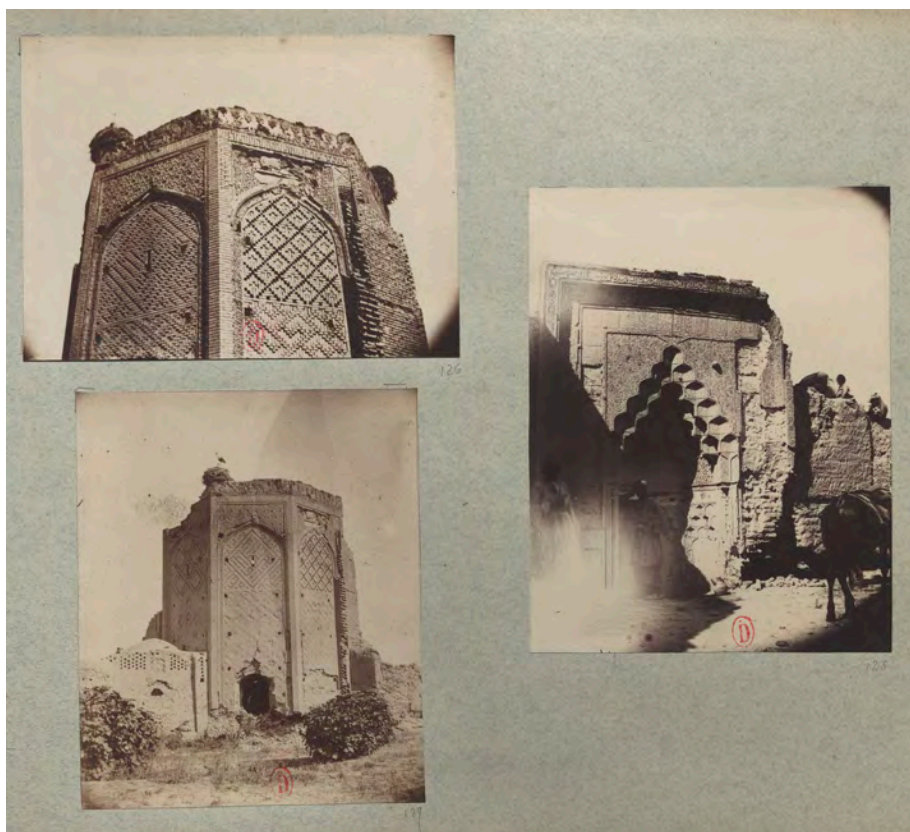


FIG. 6. — Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916). Views of the Emamzadeh Shah Hossein (early 1300s) at Varamin from Dieulafoy's photography album "Perse 1," June 1881, p. 64. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

When Wilber visited the Emamzadeh Shah Hossein about sixty years later, he encountered a very different building. The tomb was no longer an elongated tower but had been shortened by half and topped by a new low dome. Wilber took five photographs of the mihrab, including details of its elaborate strapwork, but by this time the inscribed tiles documented by E'temad al-Saltaneh and Dieulafoy were mostly gone.⁷² Today, the site has fared the worst of Varamin's Ilkhanid monuments. A report published in 2016 describes the encroachment of new construction and the destruction of historical features, and the mihrab is below ground level and screened by a metal frame.⁷³

“The Most Celebrated Building of the World”: The Emamzadeh Yahya in the Field

The Emamzadeh Yahya was the farthest site from both the medieval city of Varamin (by the congregational mosque) and the nineteenth-century village (by the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin), but it nonetheless received the most attention and praise from our travelers (see fig. 4). E‘temad al-Saltaneh concluded, “Due to the prestige of its tilework, we can say that it is the most celebrated [lit. first] building of the world.”⁷⁴ Dieulafoy described it as “one of the most interesting monuments in the country” and further maintained: “It is not possible to find enamels more pure and more brilliant than those of the Emamzadeh Yahya.”⁷⁵ They were both referring to the tomb’s luster tilework, which comprised the cenotaph, mihrab, and dado.

All of the Emamzadeh Yahya’s luster revetment was incrementally stripped from the tomb between the 1870s and 1898 and primarily exported abroad. The mihrab signed by ‘Ali b. Mohammad b. Abi Taher, dated Sha‘ban 663 AH/May 1265 and measuring 3.84 by 2.29 meters (12.61 × 7.5 feet), is preserved in the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design in Honolulu.⁷⁶ The only portion of the dispersed cenotaph that has been identified to date is a four-tiled panel in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg that names the deceased (“the wise Imam, Yahya”) and is signed by Yusof b. ‘Ali b. Mohammad b. Abi Taher, son of the maker of the mihrab, and dated 10 Moharram 705 AH/2 August 1305 (fig. 7).⁷⁷ This enormous panel measuring .87 by 2.21 meters (2.85 × 7.25 feet) rested on top of the cenotaph and would have been framed by a series of borders, for a total upper surface of at least .91 by 2.44 meters (around 3 × 8 feet). Some comparable examples include shallow holes in the upper corners that might have held ritual objects and liquids.⁷⁸ The many stars and crosses attributed to the tomb’s dado are preserved in at least forty museums worldwide, only one of which is in Iran.⁷⁹ They are distinguished by their size (around 30 centimeters in diameter), a palette of luster and white alone, and a perimeter of Qur’anic verses sometimes dated between 660–61 AH/1262–63 (see fig. 7).⁸⁰

According to E‘temad al-Saltaneh, the tomb (*maqbareh*) of Emamzadeh Yahya was located southeast of the citadel in a neighborhood called Kohneh Gel, an external quarter (*mahalat-e kharej*) of the medieval city of Varamin that likewise remained at a distance from the present village (see fig. 4). Dieulafoy’s photograph of the site has long been known through its woodcut version in *La Perse*, which in turn served as Wilber’s guide for the reconstruction of its Ilkhanid-period plan (fig. 8, upper right).⁸¹ The complex was originally fronted by a monumental entrance portal; to the west was a conical tower; and at the south was the main tomb capped by a stepped dome. As always, Dieulafoy’s photograph is a much stronger resource than the woodcut, and we can now appreciate the portal’s decorative brickwork, note some damages to the conical dome, and discern details of the complex’s crumbling walls. The only known comparable photograph was taken by German art historian Friedrich Sarre around 1897 and is far darker and blurrier.⁸²



FIG. 7. — Luster tiles from the Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin on display in the renovated Iran galleries of the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, September 2022. Middle: top panel of the cenotaph naming “the Imam, Yahya,” dated 10 Moharram 705 AH/2 August 1305 and signed by Yusof b. ‘Ali b. Mohammad b. Abi Taher and ‘Ali b. Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Hosseini; left and right sides: stars and crosses from the tomb’s dado; and upper: tiles from different sites, including the tomb of Shaykh ‘Abdosamad at Natanz (upper left). Photograph by Dmitry Sadofeev.

In *La Perse*, Dieulafoy refers to the stripping of the tomb’s luster tilework and notes that she and her husband had been granted special access by Naser al-Din Shah:

Several parts of this revetment [the tomb’s luster tilework] have been stolen and sold in Tehran at very high prices; as a result of these thefts, entrance into the small sanctuary has been forbidden to Christians, and this prohibition is best observed because the chapels sanctified by the tombs of the imams are, in the eye of Persians, imbued with more sacred character than the mosques themselves. We are exempted from the ban [*loi commune*], the shah having agreed, in the interest of Marcel’s studies, to authorize us to cross the threshold of the sanctuary. On seeing the royal order, the *ketkhoda* [*kadkhoda*] ordered his brother to accompany us; his presence was not useless. When we arrived, the guarding of the gate was entrusted to peasants armed with sticks, surrounding a mollah wearing a white turban reserved for priests.⁸³

A portrait of these supposedly threatening “peasants” and mollah is mounted next to Dieulafoy’s general view of the shrine (see fig. 8, far left), and we can imagine the subjects’ potential displeasure on two levels: having to grant the couple entry and being subjected to Dieulafoy’s voyeuristic lens.



FIG. 8. — **Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916).** Views of Varamin from Dieulafoy’s photography album “Perse 1,” June 1881, p. 65. At the upper right is a general view of the Emamzadeh Yahya (660–707 AH/ 1261–1307). At left are its guards and a mollah. Below is a group of Turkomans at the village’s market. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

Dieulafoy took two photographs inside the relatively small tomb measuring about 9 meters across and ultimately stacked and slightly overlapped the prints in “Perse 1” (fig. 9).⁸⁴ The upper photograph is the only known image of the luster mihrab in situ and one of the most valuable photographs in “Perse 1.” The mihrab, in turn, is a very important subject, and one of just nine known examples of its kind. Six are relatively intact in museums—three in Mashhad and one each in Tehran, Berlin, and Honolulu (the Emamzadeh Yahya example)—and three are dispersed and require virtual reconstruction.⁸⁵ Dieulafoy stood slightly to the left of the enormous mihrab and captured it perfectly framed by a stucco inscription and topped by an additional stucco panel. Her lower photograph focuses on the squinch to the mihrab’s immediate left, which was decorated with fine panels of stucco. A recent photograph of the mihrab void and adjacent corner niche effectively combines the views in Dieulafoy’s two photographs and gives a fuller perspective of the intimate space (fig. 10). A green sheet divides the visitors to the tomb by gender and hangs across the narrow ambulatory between the white void once home to the mihrab and the hexagonal screen (*zarih*) enclosing the modern cenotaph.⁸⁶



FIG. 9. — Jane Dieulafoy (French, 1851–1916). Two views of the interior of the Emamzadeh Yahya from Dieulafoy’s photography album “Perse 1,” June 1881, p. 66 (detail). At the upper left is the luster mihrab dated Sha’ban 663 AH/ May 1265 and signed by ‘Ali b. Mohammad b. Abi Taher. At the lower right is the squinch of the adjacent corner niche. Albumen silver prints from gelatin glass negatives (dry plates). Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 4 Phot 18 (1), <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.



FIG. 10. — Mihrab void and southwest corner niche of the Emamzadeh Yahya, Varamin, April 2018. Photograph by the author.

Despite some fading, Dieulafoy’s photograph of the mihrab allows us to appreciate its original configuration on its multimedia qibla wall. The mihrab was framed not only by the surviving later stucco inscription dated Moharram 707 AH/July 1307 (forty-two years after the mihrab’s date) but also two smaller borders, one of which was composed of luster half stars and half crosses. During the mihrab’s afterlife on the market (circa 1898–1940), some of its more than sixty tiles were lost, which led Blair to conclude, “The proportions and layout are slightly odd, and there must have been a horizontal band on top of the second niche connecting the two vertical bands with jumbled sections of Qur’an 2:255–56.”⁸⁷ Indeed, this now-lost band is visible in Dieulafoy’s photograph (fig. 11).

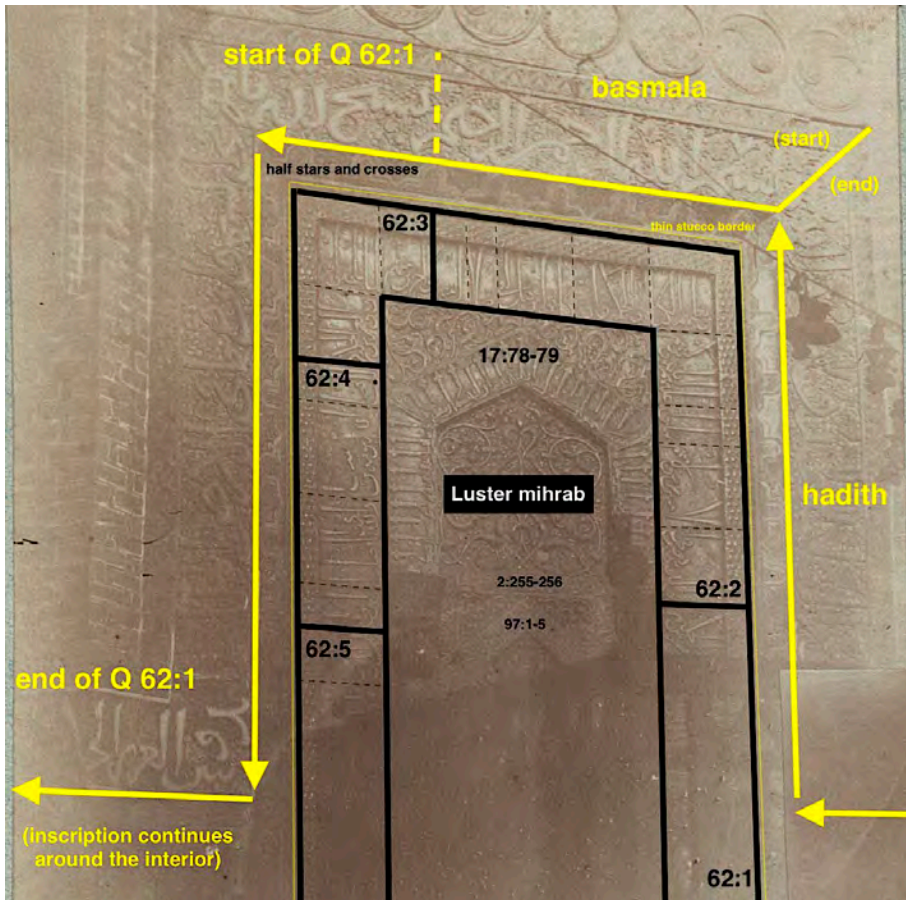


FIG. 11. — Annotation of Jane Dieulafoy’s 1881 photograph of the Emamzadeh Yahya’s luster mihrab in situ (“Perse 1,” p. 66). Yellow elements are carved stucco, and black is luster tilework. The numbers indicate chapters and verses of the Qur’an. Dashed lines in the outer border of the mihrab delineate individual tiles, which sometimes span verses. Annotations by the author.

Some of the mihrab’s outer border tiles were jumbled during its life in Honolulu (since 1941), and thanks to Dieulafoy’s photograph, we can now read the tiles containing Qur’an 62:1–5 (al-Jumu‘ah) in the correct order and consider these verses in relation to the same ones (62:1–4) in the framing stucco inscription (see fig. 11).⁸⁸ These verses concerning God, His Messenger, and His Sacred Book were clearly very important to the denizens of Ilkhanid Varamin. They were selected not only for the Emamzadeh Yahya’s luster mihrab (663 AH/1265) and stucco frieze (707 AH/1307) but also for the stucco band (see fig. 3a, upper right) wrapping the sanctuary of the city’s congregational mosque (722–26 AH/1322–26). In the Emamzadeh Yahya, these verses transition into the dated foundation inscription naming Fakhroddin Hasan (the same patron as the ‘Alaoddin tower) and a hadith in honor of the Prophet Mohammad’s grandfather, all of which were read by E’temad al-Saltaneh.⁸⁹

In addition to leaving us with a priceless view of the luster mihrab in situ, Dieulafoy also captured the tomb’s living sanctity and furnishings. The lower half of the mihrab

is obstructed by a geometric screen, and metal vases with flared rims sit on its visible corners (see fig. 9, upper left).⁹⁰ A string above suspends several votive offerings (*nazr*), likely metal lamps, vases, and birds.⁹¹ Considered together, these features reveal that the tomb was a living sacred space in 1881, despite the poor condition of some parts of the complex, including the entrance portal. This assertion is supported by Dieulafoy's aforementioned photograph of the mollah and guards (see fig. 8, far left) and E'temad al-Saltaneh's encounter with the tomb's guardian (*motevalli*), who shared that the saint was a son of Imam Musa, the seventh Imam.⁹²

The screen in front of the mihrab poses some interpretive conundrums but likely attests the fluid and jeopardized nature of the interior. E'temad al-Saltaneh describes a wood *marqad* (tomb or grave) in the middle of the tomb measuring 1.75 by 3.25 *zar'* (cubits), or 1.82 by 3.38 meters (5.97 × 11.09 feet).⁹³ Given this substantial size, which was roughly one third of the tomb's total diameter (about 9 m), he was likely referring to the screen that shielded the cenotaph, versus the cenotaph itself.⁹⁴ By 1881, this screen could have been resized and pushed against the qibla wall for a double function: to serve as the sacred threshold between the pilgrim and the deceased (the cenotaph) and to protect the mihrab from theft.⁹⁵ While the former was the screen's conventional role, the latter would have been precipitated by the steady stealing of the tomb's luster tilework, and such a screen-cenotaph-mihrab combination is not unknown.⁹⁶ The ex-votos captured by Dieulafoy further imply the cenotaph's presence behind the screen, because, as the symbol of the deceased, the cenotaph would have been the focus of such offerings. A photograph taken in 1958 appears to capture the same screen bedecked in calligraphic drawings of birds (basmala birds), prayer tablets, and flags (fig. 12).⁹⁷ An elaborate metal *'alam* (ceremonial standard) rests against the screen, and a few vessels seem to sit on top of the cenotaph behind.⁹⁸ Still further behind, the mihrab is now but a looming void.

Like Dieulafoy, E'temad al-Saltaneh was captivated by the mihrab. He had only seen one of its kind in an *emamzadeh* in Qom, in reference to the 734 AH/1334 example from the Emamzadeh 'Ali b. Ja'far now in the Islamic Museum of Tehran's National Museum complex.⁹⁹ He presumably spent a good amount of time inspecting the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab, because he identified the majority of its twelve sets of Qur'anic inscriptions (see fig. 11).¹⁰⁰ The easiest to read were those in large blue letters in relief in either *sols* (thuluth) or Kufic (see the outer border and two triangular hoods). Far more difficult were those painted in luster in *naskh* script in one-inch bands on either side of the four columns. E'temad al-Saltaneh identified the inscriptions by their chapter titles (for example, sura Hamd, or al-Fatiha, in reference to the first chapter of the Qur'an) and common names (for example, Ayat al-Kursi, or 2:255) and provided the spread of verses when necessary. He also transcribed the signature and date panel at the bottom of the mihrab.¹⁰¹

One of the most interesting sections of E'temad al-Saltaneh's account concerns his reading of two luster tiles from the dado. He describes these stars as separated from the wall ("az divar seva shodeh") and conceivably could have held them in his hands,

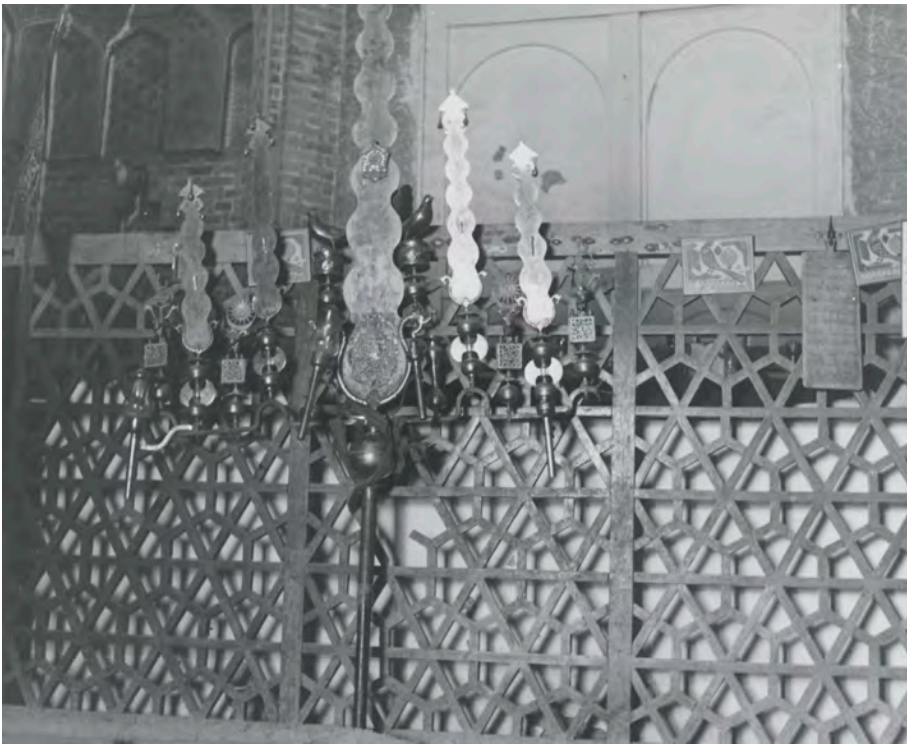


FIG. 12. — A large ceremonial standard (*alam*) and votives affixed to the screen in front of the mihrab void in the Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin, April 1958. Photograph dated on the reverse and stamped “U. S. I. S. Iran Press Section.” Washington, D.C., National Museum of Asian Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution, The Myron Bement Smith Collection, FSA-2023-000001.

rotating them as he read their small perimeter inscriptions in *naskh* (for their scale, see fig. 7).¹⁰² The first was inscribed with verses 78 and 79 of sura al-Isra’ (chapter 17), concerning the performance of prayer. The only tile currently known to carry these verses is in the Musée du Louvre and features verses 78–79 on one side and 80–81 on the other.¹⁰³ The second tile was inscribed with a common combination of verses—sura Hamd and sura al-Ikhlās (112:1–4)—and one of many examples is today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹⁰⁴ The Louvre tile was donated by Jules Maciet in 1888, and the Metropolitan star by Edward C. Moore in 1891, but the shrine’s stars and crosses had begun entering museums a decade earlier. The South Kensington Museum (later the Victoria & Albert Museum [V&A]) acquired its first batch of Emamzadeh Yahya tiles in 1875, and the Musée National de Céramique at Sèvres received its first in March 1880 via the diplomat Émile Bernay.¹⁰⁵ E’temad al-Saltaneh’s reading of the tomb’s tiles in situ, yet off the wall, therefore coincided exactly with their steady removal and export. This raises the question of any potential involvement in their dispersal, and the same must be asked of the Dieulafoys.

“All Is Fish That Comes to the Net:” The Emamzadeh Yahya on the Market

The Antoin Sevruguin collection of photographs of Persia at the GRI includes a rare photograph of luster ceramics on display in Tehran shortly after our travelers’ visits to Varamin (fig. 13).¹⁰⁶ Captioned “Cachis persans (Téhéran)” (“cachis” for *kashi*, or tiles), the subject is a tall cabinet with five shelves packed with four types of luster: medieval Kashani tiles, including large stars and crosses that can be attributed to the Emamzadeh Yahya and must have been recently removed; Safavid (1501–1722) vessels with metal fittings; contemporary Qajar tiles, some imitating Ilkhanid models; and, most remarkably given the location in Iran, large chargers made in Manises, Valencia, around 1400 and then referred to as “Hispano-Moresque.” The cabinet’s mixed curation of luster objects and tiles from Spain and Iran over seven centuries echoed contemporary trends in Europe. In the catalog of the Frédéric Spitzer sale held in Paris in 1893, for example, eleven Spanish luster vessels were reproduced directly above three sets of Ilkhanid luster tiles.¹⁰⁷

Judging by the quality and cosmopolitanism of the ceramics on display in the cabinet as well as the interior’s fine wallpaper and photograph of a military unit, the Tehran home in question likely belonged to a European attached to the Qajar court who was deeply immersed in the global trade of luster. One such individual was the Frenchman Jules Richard (1816–91), who taught photography at the Dar al-Fonun (a polytechnic college in Tehran founded in 1851) and is infamous for supplying many museums with medieval luster tiles, especially South Kensington. In his 1883 account of his fifteen-year residence in Iran (1866–81), English physician C. J. Wills describes a visit to Richard’s home that paints a useful backstory to Sevruguin’s photograph:

Our host was an old Frenchman who held an appointment as instructor in French and translator to the Shah, and was a Mahommedan [referring to Richard’s conversion to Islam]. . . . The Frenchman had a large collection of valuable antiquities, which he showed us, and they were all genuine. That was seventeen years ago [circa 1866]; now, in a hundred specimens from Persia, be they what they will, ninety are shams. . . . At that time [circa 1866] the craze for objects of oriental art had not set in, and the big tiles we saw (or bricks) of *reflet métallique*, with raised inscriptions, were such as one seldom sees nowadays [circa 1883], save in national collections.¹⁰⁸

Later in his account, in his section on pottery, Wills further describes the state of affairs in the 1880s:

The wall tiles now [circa 1883] so much valued in Europe are seldom seen *in situ*. Clever imitations are made in Ispahan [Isfahan], but the art of making the metallic (*reflet*) lustre is gone. Most of the bricks that are not protected, by the fact of being in shrines, have already been stolen, and fear of the consequences of detection is all that protects the rest. All is fish that comes to the net, and the local magnates



FIG. 13. — Interior of a Tehran house with a luster cabinet captioned “Cachis persans (Téhéran)” (Persian tiles [Tehran]), ca. 1880s. Photograph by Antoin Sevruguin (ca. 1851–1933), albumen print. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2017.R.25.

would sell the big monolith of Yazd [Yazd] marble, which covers the grave of Hafiz [d. 1390, buried in Shiraz], for a price.¹⁰⁹

Wills’s comments capture the major trends of the nineteenth-century (table 1).¹¹⁰ During the 1850s and 1860s, the purveying of luster tilework was led primarily by a small network of Tehran-based Frenchmen.¹¹¹ In 1858, the director of the Musée National

de Céramique at Sèvres instructed Émile Duhouset, an officer involved in training the Qajar army, to research contemporary ceramic production and acquire historical specimens.¹¹² Around the same time, Richard and Jules-Baptiste Nicolas, another Frenchman based in Tehran, began acquiring luster tiles, and in 1867, diplomat Julien de Rochechouart published a travelogue that named specific sites, including the Shrine of Shaykh ‘Abdosamad (‘Abd al-Samad, d. 1299–1300 [699 AH]) at Natanz.¹¹³ He especially praised the epigraphic frieze tiles in the shrine’s tomb and confessed that he owned a few.¹¹⁴ Some of these tiles ended up in the hands of Richard and Nicolas in Tehran and were sold in 1875 to Robert Murdoch Smith, agent for South Kensington, alongside stars and crosses from the Emamzadeh Yahya.¹¹⁵ As previously mentioned, the Sèvres museum would receive its first batch of Emamzadeh Yahya tiles five years later (1880).

The Natanz and Varamin tomb shrines were far from the only Iranian sites plundered for their luster during the second half of the nineteenth century. Additional targets were *emamzadehs* in Qom and Damghan and the Masjed-e Maydan in Kashan.¹¹⁶ The stolen elements included mihrabs, cenotaphs, long epigraphic friezes, and the variously shaped tiles of the dadoes. The easiest way to reimagine these tiled jigsaw puzzles is to walk into the Natanz tomb, whose walls have not been plastered and which capture for posterity the imprints of each removed tile.¹¹⁷

One of the last luster elements taken from the Emamzadeh Yahya was the mihrab composed of more than sixty tiles. According to Armenian-American dealer and collector Hagop Kevorkian, Mirza Hasan Ashtiani Mostowfi al-Mamalek, the chief state accountant, brought the mihrab to Paris for exhibition in the Exposition Universelle of 1900. As a result, the Mostowfi was “disgraced and degraded” by Mozaffar al-Din Shah (r. 1896–1907) and prohibited from exhibiting or selling the piece.¹¹⁸ It was eventually displayed in a store on the rue du 4 septembre, where it was the focus of pilgrimage by all of the amateur enthusiasts of “Oriental art” in Paris, as described by French collector and author Henry-René d’Allemagne.¹¹⁹ During this time, it was also reproduced in Sarre’s *Denkmäler persischer Baukunst* (Monuments of Persian architecture) and attributed to the Emamzadeh Yahya.¹²⁰ According to Kevorkian, upon the death of the shah, a leading *mojtahed* of Iran’s Constitutional Revolution (1906–11) authorized the Mostowfi “to dispose of the monument in question.”¹²¹ In October 1912, Kevorkian traveled to Iran to negotiate the purchase, and his political connections ultimately earned him a good price. He soon sent the following telegram to American industrialist and collector Charles Freer: “Have just secured famous mihrab of lustre tiles of Veramin mosque property of Mostofy Memalik Persian Minister of War . . . now stored in Paris where could be viewed privately . . . pleased give you priority of right of refusal.”¹²²

The year 1913 was momentous in the global dissemination of the Emamzadeh Yahya’s tiles, and Paris was a central node. While Kevorkian peddled the mihrab to Freer, Paris-based dealer Clotilde Duffeuty sold the cenotaph panel (see fig. 7) and many stars and crosses to the museum of the Stieglitz Central School of Technical Drawing in Saint Petersburg.¹²³ Concurrently in London, the luster mihrab from the Masjed-e Maydan at Kashan was offered in the *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios: The Collection*

TABLE 1. — Timeline of Key Events, ca. 1860s–1940

1862–75: First wave of luster tilework thefts: Natanz, Qom, Varamin	
1863	— January: E'tezad al-Saltaneh visits Varamin
ca. 1860–70	— museums in Sèvres and London dispatch agents to research ceramics and acquire tiles — 1867: publication of Julien de Rochechouart's <i>Souvenirs d'un voyage en Perse</i>
1875	— South Kensington Museum (now Victoria & Albert Museum) receives a large set of luster tiles from the Emamzadeh Yahya
1876	— apparent Qajar edict banning Christians from entering religious sites — December: E'temad al-Saltaneh visits Varamin and publishes his account in <i>Ruznameh-ye Iran</i> — state of the Emamzadeh Yahya as observed by E'temad al-Saltaneh: <i>marqad</i> (tomb or grave) in the center of the tomb, luster mihrab in situ, some dado tiles off the wall, <i>motevalli</i> (caretaker) present
1880–1900: Second wave of luster tilework thefts: Damghan, Kashan, Qom, Varamin	
1880	— March: Musée National de Céramique, Sèvres, receives its first Emamzadeh Yahya tiles
1881	— June: Jane Dieulafoy visits Varamin — state of the Emamzadeh Yahya at the time of Dieulafoy's visit: entrance portal standing but vault collapsed, conical tower intact, luster mihrab in situ, mollah and guards present, apparent edict of 1876 in place (see above)
1883	— January: publication of Dieulafoy's first <i>Le tour</i> article, including Varamin
1885–86	— Jane and Marcel Dieulafoy excavate at Susa over two seasons
1887	— publication of Dieulafoy's travelogue <i>La Perse</i>
1888	— inauguration of the Musée du Louvre's Department of Oriental Antiquities, including the Susa galleries
1889	— Naser al-Din Shah's third tour of Europe, including Paris
ca. 1880s	— Antoin Sevruguin photographs the luster cabinet in a Tehran home
ca. 1890s	— underglaze tiles dateable to the late Qajar period are installed on the dado of the tomb of Emamzadeh Yahya to mask the empty walls of the stolen luster tiles
1893	— sale of the Frédéric Spitzer collection in Paris combining Iranian and Spanish luster
1900	— the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab is in Paris, said by Hagop Kevorkian to have been brought there by Mirza Hasan Ashtiani Mostowfi al-Mamalek for the Exposition Universelle — July–August: Mozaffar al-Din Shah visits Paris for the Exposition Universelle; signing of the third Franco-Persian archaeological convention

ca. 1900–1930	—	major renovation of the Emamzadeh Yahya; the original entrance portal and conical tower are completely lost
1906–11	—	Constitutional Revolution of Iran
1909	—	case launched by the Qajar government to investigate the thefts of manuscripts from the Golestan Palace Library
1910	—	publication of Friedrich Sarre's <i>Denkmäler persischer Baukunst</i> , including a general view of the Emamzadeh Yahya and its mihrab on display in Paris, likely in a shop
1911	—	publication of Henry d'Allemagne's <i>Du Khorassan au Pays des Backhtiaris</i> , including a section titled "Histoire du mihrab de Véramine"
1912	—	February: Henri Viollet visits Varamin and photographs the congregational mosque — October: Kevorkian travels to Iran to negotiate the purchase of the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab, still stored in Paris
1913	—	May: <i>Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios</i> , London, inclusive of the luster mihrab from Kashan's Masjed-e Maydan — 25 August: Kevorkian writes to Charles Freer offering the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab for sale
1914	—	the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab is displayed in <i>Exhibition of Muhammedan-Persian Art, Exhibition of the Kevorkian Collection</i> , New York
1920s	—	1921: coup d'etat; foundation of the Society for National Heritage — 1925: rise of the Pahlavi dynasty — 1927: end of the French archaeological monopoly — 1928: André Godard arrives in Iran to serve as Director of the Persian Antiquities Service and head of the National Museum in Tehran
1930s	<i>Iran:</i>	— 3 November 1930: passing of the Antiquities Law — 1930–33: registration of Varamin's congregational mosque, tomb tower of 'Alaoddin, and Emamzadeh Yahya as national heritage — 1934–37: construction and inauguration of the National Museum in Tehran
	<i>International:</i>	— 1931: the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab is displayed in the <i>International Exhibition of Persian Art</i> , London — 1938: publication of Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., <i>A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present</i> , including the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab — Godard and Donald Wilber photograph the renovated Emamzadeh Yahya
1940	—	April–May: the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab is displayed in <i>Six Thousand Years of Persian Art</i> , New York — June: Mary Crane negotiates with Kevorkian for Doris Duke's purchase of the Emamzadeh Yahya's mihrab — 28 December: Kevorkian writes to Duke celebrating the sale of the mihrab

Formed by J. R. Preece.¹²⁴ In his telegram to Freer, Kevorkian compared the two luster mihrabs, emphasizing that the Emamzadeh Yahya example was “in far better condition and about twice as large as that of Preece quality infinitely superieur altogether by far finer monument.”¹²⁵

The theft of the Emamzadeh Yahya’s mihrab marked the end of the shrine’s half century of steady plunder and both conformed to and departed from contemporary trends.¹²⁶ Unlike many large luster ensembles that were broken up and sold piecemeal, including the Emamzadeh Yahya’s cenotaph and the two mihrabs from the Natanz shrine, the Emamzadeh Yahya’s mihrab was carefully packed and transported for display abroad as a relatively complete unit. If we trust Kevorkian’s account, this was a bold example of removal and export by an Iranian minister, but Hasan Mostowfi was far from the first Qajar official to sell out the country’s luster tilework.¹²⁷ In the 1870s, the minister Hossein Khan Sepahsalar issued four critical permits facilitating the export of luster tilework bound for South Kensington, including from the Emamzadeh Yahya.¹²⁸ By the 1880s, large luster tiles were increasingly rare, as observed by Wills, and it is not surprising that the mihrab became a valuable cultural commodity at the Paris exposition. This was also the stage to negotiate the ongoing excavation of Susa, then under the purview of French archaeologist Jacques de Morgan. Just before he left Paris, Mozaffar al-Din signed the third Franco-Persian archaeological convention, which made the French monopoly perpetual and granted all Susa finds to France.¹²⁹

While the Dieulafoys were responsible for illegally taking much of Susa to Paris, and their names appear frequently on the Louvre’s labels for the glazed bricks, they played a more indirect role in the global consumption of the Emamzadeh Yahya’s luster tiles. Jane Dieulafoy’s praise of the shrine’s tilework in her first newspaper article and subsequent travelogue undoubtedly amplified its demand, as was the case with Rochedouart’s 1867 travelogue and the Natanz shrine. It is critical to remember, however, that Dieulafoy never reproduced her exceptional photograph of the mihrab in situ during her lifetime. It remained tucked away in her personal album (see fig. 9), while the mihrab itself entered a state of architectural ambiguity on the art market. Despite Sarre’s attribution of the mihrab to the Emamzadeh Yahya in 1910, Kevorkian vaguely described it as from the “Veramin mosque” in his 1913 telegram to Freer.¹³⁰ The next year, he displayed it in New York and published it as “from the Seljoucid Temple at Veramin.”¹³¹ In 1931, the mihrab was included in the momentous *International Exhibition of Persian Art* in London and described as a “mihrab of lustre tiles from a mosque in Kashan.”¹³² Had Dieulafoy reproduced her photograph of the mihrab in her 1880s publications, and had it simply been seen on its distinct qibla wall in the tomb of Emamzadeh Yahya, its origins might not have been so easily confused or deliberately muddled.

The anonymity of the Emamzadeh Yahya persists in many museums today. In the V&A's Ceramics Galleries, a single star tile from the shrine's dado is included in a large display titled "The Spread of Tin-Glaze and Lustre, 800–1800." The star tile sits in front of a contemporaneous Kashani jar, and the two are combined in a label that only lists the shared place of production (Kashan).¹³³ In the same museum's Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art, a large panel of stars and crosses from the shrine is displayed next to a fifteenth-century luster bowl from Málaga in a manner that recalls the eclectic Tehran cabinet photographed by Sevruguin (see fig. 13).¹³⁴ This label does provide some architectural context—"from the tomb of a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad at Varamin near Tehran"—but there are many *emamzadehs* in Varamin, and the Emamzadeh Yahya could have been named, as it is in the collections records online.¹³⁵ These two displays represent a fraction of those worldwide, but we can generally observe a prioritization of the luster technique over architectural context. One exception is the bilingual placard in the Hermitage's recently (2021) renovated Iran galleries titled "Tiles from the Imamzadeh Yahya Mausoleum in Varamin." This longer text offers substantive information on the tomb's original luster environment and the tiles' provenance. The latter section opens with, "The mausoleum gradually fell into decline and was largely destroyed by the middle of the nineteenth century."¹³⁶ This begs questions about the extent to which the Emamzadeh Yahya was "largely destroyed" and the look of the building today.

Conclusion: Ruins to Realities

In their accounts of Varamin, both E'temad al-Saltaneh and Dieulafoy describe the village's historical monuments as ruins, ruined, or remains (Persian: *makhrubeh*, *kharab*, *baqi*; French: *ruine*). Dieulafoy's picturesque photographs of lost domes, crumbling *ayvans*, and stripped tiles attest some of these grim realities, but Varamin's monuments were not ruins in the total sense of the word, and their conditions varied considerably. Some had suffered massive structural damage (the congregational mosque); others were relatively intact (the tomb tower of 'Alaoddin); and still others remained in use despite areas of dilapidation (the Emamzadeh Yahya). In the ensuing century, all of Varamin's monuments, except for the citadel, would be renovated and restored to varying degrees. Viewers of Dieulafoy's photographs must therefore avoid indefinite lingering and romanticization and approach them as valuable snapshots in time (1881 to be precise), ultimately moving beyond their frame.

Indeed, in the decades following Dieulafoy's visit, the Emamzadeh Yahya underwent profound physical changes. The complex's original entrance portal and conical tower (see fig. 8, upper right) were progressively lost and/or deliberately demolished, and the tomb was recast as a solitary building set in the middle of a new rectangular courtyard, as documented by French architect, archaeologist, and museum director André Godard (fig. 14).¹³⁷ The original domed tomb was ringed by a new perimeter of low, domed rooms and *ayvans* (one each on the north and south), and

the interior's stripped dado was clad in rectangular underglaze tiles, many of which also went missing.¹³⁸ The exact dates of these renovations are unknown, but they likely transpired in the early twentieth century during the Qajar-to-Pahlavi (1925–79) transition.



FIG. 14. — View of the south (back) facade of the Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin during or after the major renovation of the early twentieth century, likely early 1930s. Photograph by André Godard (French, 1881–1965). Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts de l’Islam, Archives Godard, 1APAI/9025.

Soon after he ascended to the throne, Reza Shah (r. 1925–41) and his ministers initiated a rapid systematization of some of the seeds of excavation, documentation, and restoration planted by their Qajar predecessors. The Society for National Heritage (Anjoman-e asar-e melli) was founded in 1921, the year of Reza Khan’s coup, and national heritage thereafter became a top priority of an increasingly nationalist state.¹³⁹ Among the most important early initiatives were the abolition of the French monopoly on excavation (1927), the passing of the Antiquities Law (“Law concerning the preservation of national antiquities,” 3 November 1930), and the founding of the National Museum in Tehran (1934–37, Muzeh-ye Iran Bastan), whose first director was Godard. The Antiquities Law called for the registration of historical monuments through the end of the Zand era (1796), and Varamin’s Ilkhanid sites were registered at the

beginning of this process (the congregational mosque, registered as no. 176 in 1932; the tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin, no. 177, 1932; the Emamzadeh Yahya, no. 199, 1933; and the Emamzadeh Shah Hossein, no. 339, 1940).¹⁴⁰

While national heritage became a chief prerogative of the Pahlavi state, Kevorkian peddled the Emamzadeh Yahya’s luster mihrab on the global stage. After displaying it in New York (1914) and London (1931) and securing its inclusion in the six-volume *A Survey of Persian Art* (1938–39), he again displayed it in New York, this time in the momentous *Six Thousand Years of Persian Art* (1940).¹⁴¹ Shortly after this exhibition, he sold the mihrab to a then-twenty-eight-year-old Doris Duke for the staggering sum of \$150,000.¹⁴² In a letter to Duke, Kevorkian expressed his “deep satisfaction in the realization that I have transferred the title of this unique monument which I cherished, to one so worthy.”¹⁴³ It is quite something to consider the registration and renovation of the Emamzadeh Yahya on one side of the world and the purveying of its mihrab as a “unique monument” on the other, which ultimately landed it in a private home in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is equally powerful to consider the relatively contemporary construction of the National Museum in Tehran (1934–37) and that museum’s possession of several Ilkhanid mihrabs, including the luster example seen by E’temad al-Saltaneh in Qom’s Emamzadeh ‘Ali b. Ja’far.¹⁴⁴

Unlike many *emamzadehs* in Iran, the Emamzadeh Yahya has successfully resisted encroachment and construction beyond the major renovation of the early twentieth century. Its exceptional Ilkhanid stuccowork can still be appreciated in situ, and the site lives on as a sacred space. The current cenotaph is modestly sized, covered in textiles and ritual objects, and set within the aforementioned hexagonal screen (*zarih*). The memory of the luster tilework lives on and is symbolized by a tiny fragment of a cross remounted at the top of the mihrab void (see fig. 10). Until recently (2021), Dieulafoy’s *La Perse* also figured prominently in the mihrab void. Two framed collages (for viewing on each side of the gender-segregated space) displayed two woodcuts from a Persian edition of *La Perse*: the general view of the Emamzadeh Yahya and the mihrab of the Emamzadeh Shah Hossein, erroneously identified as the mihrab of the Emamzadeh Yahya (see fig. 10).¹⁴⁵ Below were two photographs of tiles on display in the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, including the cenotaph panel flanked by stars and crosses. At the time of the collage’s production, Dieulafoy’s excellent photographs of both mihrabs (see fig. 6, right; see fig. 9, upper left) were not known, but today they are accessible to anyone in Varamin with internet access. It remains to be seen if Dieulafoy’s photographs will make a cameo in the Emamzadeh Yahya, like the previous *La Perse* woodcuts. What is certain is that they are known to the shrine’s conservators, and their digitization has facilitated practical and educational use by many.

Tehranis willing to make the trek to Varamin today (about the distance from West Los Angeles to San Bernadino) are most likely to visit the congregational mosque and tomb tower of ‘Alaoddin. The tower is now a small anthropology museum set off the main square, and it displays a large field camera of the type Dieulafoy would have used.

As we have seen, the mosque was in terrible condition during the nineteenth century but rebuilt in the 1990s. Today, it is surrounded by a park, used for religious ceremonies such as Moharram and Ahya (Laylat al-Qadr, when the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed to the Prophet Mohammad during Ramadan), and is the home of the Varamin branch of the Office of Cultural Heritage. Like the Emamzadeh Yahya, these buildings exemplify the fluid fortunes of medieval sites, and the mosque's rise from an abandoned ruin to a living building is an important reminder to see beyond the nineteenth-century lens.

This article has emphasized the importance of nineteenth-century photography for the study of Iran's medieval monuments while also underscoring the contingent nature of the photograph as a source—contingent on its reproduction (or not), accessibility (or not), and dissemination (or not). It has taken more than 140 years for Dieulafoy's photographs to become critical resources for the study of Varamin, and the future discovery of additional photographs will likewise reshape the narrative. In the meantime, it is expected that Dieulafoy's openly accessible photographs will become standard resources in many fields of Iranian architectural history, including Achaemenid Susa, Safavid Isfahan, and Qajar Tehran, as well as critical tools for revisiting *La Perse* itself.

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Notes

I am sincerely grateful to Thomas Galifot for alerting me to Dieulafoy's albums at INHA and Jérôme Delatour and Julie Brunet for supporting ongoing research and reproduction. Archivists at the Louvre, BULAC, National Museum of Asian Art, Getty Research Institute, and University of Michigan also kindly facilitated research. Finally, I thank Sheila Blair, Lauren Gendler, and the anonymous reviewers for their feedback. The transliteration of Persian follows a simplified phonetic format (a, e, o for short vowels; a, i, u for long vowels; ' indicates the letter 'ayn and ʾ indicates hamza). Dates are given in AH (Islamic lunar calendar) and SH (Iranian solar calendar), followed by the Gregorian conversion. All translations from Persian and French are mine.

1. Jeffrey Spier, Timothy F. Potts, and Sara E. Cole, *Persia: Ancient Iran and the Classical World*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2022), 85, cat. no. 2 (Musée du Louvre, SB 23875). The second panel, SB 24868, is from the Jacques de Morgan excavation (see this essay, note 3).

2. The term used for Iran by the Dieulafoys and other foreigners of the time was *Perse* or *Persia*, a Greek exonym derived from Pars, a region in southern Iran. For Dieulafoy's Susa account, see Jane Dieulafoy, *Suse: Journal des fouilles, 1884–1886* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1888).

3. A decade later, Naser al-Din Shah granted the excavation to Jacques de Morgan. See Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, *L'archéologie française en Perse et les antiquités nationales, 1884–1914* (Paris: Connaissances et Savoirs, 2004); and Kamyar

Abdi, "Nationalism, Politics, and the Development of Archaeology in Iran," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, no. 1 (2001): 51–76.

4. Jane Dieulafoy, *La Perse, la Chaldée et la Susiane: Relation de voyage contenant 336 gravures sur bois d'après les photographies de l'auteur et deux cortes* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1887). I have consulted the copy at the Getty Research Institute (GRI), 3026-720. It is also online at https://archive.org/details/ldpd_6885554_000/mode/1up.

5. In 1997, Marc Potel noted that Dieulafoy's photographs had "apparently disappeared." Marc Potel, "Photographie et voyage en Perse," *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien* 23 (1997): paragraph 7, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cemoti.123>. For Dieulafoy's inclusion in the exhibition, see Thomas Galifot and Marie

Robert, *Qui a peur des femmes photographes? 1839–1945*, exh. cat. (Paris: Hazan, 2015), 269, cat. no. 292 (a young woman of Zanjan).

6. Albums Dieulafoy, “Perse 1–6,” 1880–94, Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art (hereafter INHA), collections Jacques Doucet, NUM 4 PHOT 018 (1–6). The albums were acquired by the Bibliothèque d’Art et Archéologie shortly after Marcel Dieulafoy’s death in 1920. See Ambre Péron, “Les albums de Jane et Marcel Dieulafoy,” *Sous les coupoles* (blog), 9 October 2021, <https://blog.bibliotheque.inha.fr/fr/posts/les-albums-de-jane-et-marcel-dieulafoy.html>.

7. For the reproduction of several *La Perse* woodcuts in a seminal history text, see Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), 272, figs. 5.8, 5.9.

8. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” INHA, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62746>.

9. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 273; and Dieulafoy “Perse 1,” INHA, 98, no. 197. There is also a bust portrait of Ziba Khanum in “Perse 2,” INHA, 19, no. 232, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62742>.

10. E’temad al-Saltaneh was titled as such in 1886. I refer to him with this title throughout, with the caveat that his visit to Varamin occurred ten years earlier. For his lengthy career, see Abbas Amanat, s.v. “E’temād-al-Saltāna, Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Moqaddam Marāḡā’i,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 15 December 1998 (updated 19 January 2012), <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/etemad-al-saltana>.

11. Eight years after his visit to Varamin, E’temad al-Saltaneh accompanied Naser al-Din Shah on his second pilgrimage to Mashhad, home to the Shrine of Imam Reza (d. 818), the eighth Imam. For his account of Nishapur’s turquoise mines, see Arash Khazeni, *Sky Blue Stone: The Turquoise Trade in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 110–20.

12. *Rasā’el-e E’temād al-Saltāneh* (Notes of E’temad al-Saltaneh), ed. Mir-Hāshem Moḥaddeth (Tehran: Eṭṭelā’āt, 1391 SH/2012) (hereafter E’temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasā’el*), chap. 11, 199–209. Many of the twenty-four texts in this collection were published in *Ruznameh-ye Iran* and/or survive in manuscript form in Iranian libraries. I thank Hossein Nakhaei for introducing me to this volume, which he used in his book Hossein Nakhaei, *Masjed-e jāme‘-ye Varāmin: bāzshenāsi-ye ravand-e shekḡiri va seyr-e taḥavvol* [The Great Mosque of Varamin: The Process of Formation and Evolution] (Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University and Rowzaneh, 1397 SH/2019). Hereafter *The Great*

Mosque. In January 2024, Nakhaei located E’temad al-Saltaneh’s original newspaper article in the National Library and Archives of Iran, 82-00065-00, <https://sana.nlai.ir/handle/123456789/77911>.

13. Keelan Overton, “Framing, Performing, Forgetting: The Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin,” *Platform*, 19 September 2022, <https://www.platformspace.net/home/framing-performing-forgetting-the-emamzadeh-yahya-at-varamin>. I did not know about Dieulafoy’s photographs when coauthoring my earlier article: Keelan Overton and Kimia Maleki, “The Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin: A Present History of a Living Shrine, 2018–20,” *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* 1, nos. 1–2 (2020): 120–49, <https://doi.org/10.1163/26666286-12340005>.

14. The entry on Dieulafoy in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* summarizes her 1881–82 travels as follows: “From Marseilles to Athens, Istanbul, Poti, Erevan, Jolfā [modern-day Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic], Tabrīz [first stop in modern-day Iran], Qazvīn, Tehran [then the capital of the Qajar dynasty, 1789–1925], Isfahan, Persepolis, Shiraz, Sarvestān, Firūzābād, and to Susa via Būshehr [Bushehr, a port on the Persian Gulf] and Mesopotamia.” Varamin is noticeably missing from this synopsis and occurred after Tehran in her actual itinerary. Jean Calmard, s.v. “Dieulafoy, Jane Henriette Magre,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 15 December 1995 (updated 28 November 2011), <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dieulafoy-1>.

15. For her mention of these plates, see Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 10. I am grateful to Thomas Galifot and Jim Ganz for providing feedback on Dieulafoy’s equipment and techniques.

16. Jane Dieulafoy, “La Perse, La Chaldée et La Susiane,” *Le tour du monde: Nouveau journal des voyages* (January 1883): 1–80. This first article ends with her account of Varamin and includes the same ten woodcuts later reproduced in *La Perse*.

17. This number is a bit deceiving, because nearly one hundred photographs in albums “Perse 3” (INHA, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62745>) and “Perse 4” (INHA, <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62743>) pertain to physiologist Louis Lapicque’s mission to the Persian Gulf. “Perse 1” through “Perse 4” cover the 1881–82 trip from Azerbaijan to Fars, Bushehr, and into Iraq, and Susa is found in “Perse 5” (<https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62747>) and “Perse 6” (<https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/62754>). The albums are half-bound

in imitation brown shagreen (chagrin) and green cloth boards; identified as “Perse” on the spine, followed by the number; and include marbled endpapers. These are the original bindings.

18. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 18, 79.

19. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 22–23 and 61, no. 118.

20. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 40–41.

21. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 39.

22. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 37, no. 76; and

Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 107.

23. Abdullah Mirza Qajar album of Iran, GRI, 2021.R.15, folio 10v, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2021r15>.

24. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 30–31 and 32, no. 63.

25. “Album fotografico della Persia:

Compilato dal Sig.r Luigi Pesce, Tenente Colonnello; Istruttore d’Infanteria al servizio dello Shah, Teheran,” 1860, GRI, 2012.R.18, <http://hdl.handle.net/10020/2012r18>. Dieulafoy’s caption (*La Perse*, 12) more appropriately reads, “Tombeau de chah Khoda bendeh a Sultanieh” (Tomb of Shah Khodabandeh at Soltaniyya). Mohammad Khodabandeh was Oljaytu’s Muslim name.

26. The Pesce album was presented by Luigi Pesce to linguist, military officer, and diplomat Henry Creswicke Rawlinson in May 1860. Leila Moayeri Pazargadi and Frances Terpak, “Picturing Qājār Persia: A Gift to Major-General Henry Creswicke Rawlinson,” *Getty Research Journal*, no. 6 (2014): 47–62.

27. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 30, no. 57.

28. For example, Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 56, 105–6.

29. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 103.

30. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 38; and Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 111.

31. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 35.

32. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 110.

33. Dieulafoy’s comment echoes a still-widespread oversimplification and misconception. For a recent synopsis of this problem, see Christiane Gruber, “Islamic Paintings of the Prophet Muhammad Are an Important Piece of History—Here’s Why Art Historians Teach Them,” *The Conversation*, January 2, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/islamic-paintings-of-the-prophet-muhammad-are-an-important-piece-of-history-heres-why-art-historians-teach-them-197277>.

34. For an overview, see Ulrich Marzolph, “The Visual Culture of Iranian Twelver Shi’ism in the Qajar Period,” *Shii Studies Review* 3 (2019): 133–86.

35. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 113–16.

36. Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 33–47; and Sheila Blair, “Architecture as a Source for Local History in the Mongol Period: The Example of Warāmīn,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 26, nos. 1–2 (January 2016): 215–16.

37. Alexander Chodzko, “Une excursion de Téhéran aux Pyles caspiennes (1835),” *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages*, n.s., 127, no. 23 (1850): 280–308. On E’tezad al-Saltaneh, see Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 111, 163.

38. For some of ‘Abdollah Qajar’s expeditions, see Elahe Helbig, “Geographies Traced and Histories Told: Photographic Documentation of Land and People by ‘Abdollah Mirza Qajar, 1880s–1890s,” in *The Indigenous Lens? Early Photography in the Near and Middle East*, ed. Markus Ritter and Staci Gem Scheiwiller (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 79–109.

39. The most plausible location of Qajar court photographs of Varamin is the Golestan Palace Library in Tehran. On this immense repository of more than forty-two thousand photographs and one thousand albums, see Alireza Nabipour and Reza Sheikh, “The Photograph Albums of the Royal Golestan Palace: A Window into the Social History of Iran during the Qajar Era,” in Ritter and Scheiwiller, *The Indigenous Lens?*, 291–323; and Mohammad Hasan Semsar and Fatemeh Saraian, *Golestan Palace Photo Archives: Catalogue of Qajar Selected Photographs* (Tehran: Ketab-e Aban, 1390 SH/2011).

40. On Masileh, a depression south of Varamin historically flooded in spring, see H. M. The Shah of Persia [Naser al-Din Shah], “On the New Lake between Kōm and Teherān,” trans. and annotated by General A. Houtum-Schindler, in *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography* 10, no. 10 (October 1888): 626, 628, and map.

41. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 55; and Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 133.

42. The print depicting a newly deceased body in one of these towers is an example of pure fiction in Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 136.

43. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 139.

44. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 56, no. 106; and Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 153.

45. Dieulafoy, “Perse 1,” 62, no. 122, and 65, no. 131.

46. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 153.

47. E’temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa’el*, 199. These sites, and the route in general, can be read against the map of Rayy (Rhages) in G. Pézard and G. Bondoux, “Mission de Téhéran,” in *Mémoires de la*

Délégation en Perse, vol. 12 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911), following p. 56.

48. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 200.

49. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 200, 202.

50. Dieulafoy, "Perse 1," 62, no. 120. The Dieulafoys visited the "kale" (*qa'leh*) at dawn and were impressed by its immense size, mudbrick walls, moat, and still-decent condition.

51. I thank Kanika Kalra for drawing this map, which builds on E'temad al-Saltaneh's 1876 observations; Hossein Nakhaei's annotations of aerial photographs in Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 62, figs. 15–16; and the present locations of all sites (except for the citadel) in Google Maps. The citadel's location has been approximated.

52. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 208–9. For "Qa'leh Iraj Varamin," see E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 217–20.

53. For the general history of the mosque, see Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*.

54. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 203.

55. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 203; and Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 76–79.

56. Such skills are unsurprising for an Iranian historian and apparently pious Muslim. See Mehrdad Kia, "Inside the Court of Naser Od-Din Shah Qajar, 1881–96: The Life and Diary of Mohammad Hasan Khan E'temad Os-Saltaneh," *Middle Eastern Studies* 37, no. 1 (2001): 108.

57. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 204. See also Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 111–14.

58. Dieulafoy mismatched these photographs on the pages of "Perse 1." Her detail of the entrance portal's Kufic band (no. 109) appears next to her general view of the *ayvan* leading into the domed qibla sanctuary (no. 110). On the next page, her general view of the entrance portal (no. 111) is next to a detail of the qibla *ayvan* (no. 112).

59. For the condition of the foundation inscription in 1897 versus 2013, see Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 91, figs. 45 and 46.

60. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 205.

61. For the middle of the inscription, see Dieulafoy, "Perse 1," 61, no. 117.

62. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 205. For Dieulafoy's two other details, see Dieulafoy "Perse 1," 60, no. 115; 61, no. 119.

63. Dieulafoy, "Perse 1," 61, no. 118. This hole was still present three decades later, as captured by French archaeologist and architect Henry Viollet in February 1912. His archive (Fonds Henry Viollet) is preserved in the Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations (BULAC) in Paris, and his glass plates were recently

released online (<https://bina.bulac.fr/HV>). Thanks to Sandra Aube and Martina Massullo for facilitating research.

64. Dieulafoy, "Perse 1," 59, no. 113.

65. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 205.

66. Blair, "Architecture as a Source," 224–25, based on Étienne Combe, Jean Sauvaget, and Gaston Wiet, eds., *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*, vol. 13, no. 4912 (Cairo: L'imprimerie de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1931–56), 77, which indicates the basmala at the beginning. Parts of this formula are visible today (thanks to Hossein Nakhaei for confirming this), but E'temad al-Saltaneh's reading of Qur'an 2:225 remains to be verified.

67. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 207.

68. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 207.

69. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 148–49; and Donald Newton Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran: the Il Khānid Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955), 177–78, cat. no. 86.

70. Consider the thirteenth-century mihrab from the Beyhekim Mosque in Konya, now in the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), I. 7193, <https://id.smb.museum/object/1525437/gebetsnische-baukeramik>.

71. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 149.

72. The photographs are in the Donald Wilber Archives, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, DW49-00a, DW49-00b, DW49-01, DW49-02, DW60-37. I am grateful to Sally Bjork and Cathy Garcia for searching this archive and sharing scans. Wilber also took some valuable photographs of the Emamzadeh Yahya.

73. Ehsan Mohammad Hosseini, "Gozāresh-e taṣvīri va taḥlīl-e fanī Shāhẓādeh Hossein Varāmīn" [Image report and technical analysis of Shahzadeh Hossein Varamin], *Sina Press*, 29 Khordad 1395 SH/June 18, 2016, <https://sinapress.ir/news/40577/گزارش-تصویری-و-تحلیل-فنی-شاهزاده-حسین-ورامین>.

74. "Keh az heysiāt-e kashikari mitavan goft avval bana-ye 'alam ast." E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 207.

75. "Un des monuments les plus intéressants de la contrée. . . . Il n'est pas possible d'obtenir des émaux plus purs et plus brillants que ceux de l'imamzaddé Yaya." Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 148–49.

76. Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design, Honolulu, 48.327, <https://collection.shangrilahawaii.org/objects/4334/>. See Sheila Blair, "Art as Text: The Luster Mihrab in the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art," in *No Tapping around Philology: A Festschrift in Honor of*

Wheeler McIntosh Thackston Jr.'s 70th Birthday, ed. Alireza Korangy and Daniel J. Sheffield (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014), 415–16 and figs. 13–14. Much later in life, Doris Duke also purchased several stars and crosses from the shrine, including cross tile 48.267, <https://collection.shangriлахawaii.org/objects/5817/>.

77. State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, IP-1594, <https://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/o8.+applied+arts/125004>; and Blair, "Architecture as a Source," 218–20.

78. Consider the reconstructed cenotaph of Fatemeh Ma'sumeh (d. 816) in Qom. Mohsen Ghanooni and Samaneh Sadeghimehr, "Barrasi-ye katibeh-ye kashihā-ye zarrinfām-e mazār-e ḥazrat-e Fātemeh Ma'sūmeh dar Qom" [Study of the inscriptions of the luster tiles of the tomb of Hazrat-e Fatemeh Ma'sumeh at Qom], *Honarha-ye Ziba* 22, no. 2 (1396 SH/2017): 82, no. 3.

79. For those on display in the Moghaddam Museum in Tehran, see Mohsen Moghadam, "An Old House in Tehran: Its Gardens, Its Collections," in *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present*, vol. 14, ed. Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman (Ashiya, Japan: SOPA, A Survey of Persian Art, 1967), facing p. 3190, pl. 1529, figs. e–f.

80. There are exceptions. Similar tiles measuring about twenty centimeters across have also been attributed to the shrine, as well as some with Persian verses. For one example of the former, see the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, B60P2034, <https://searchcollection.asianart.org/objects/13026/starshaped-tile>. In the absence of in-situ documentation, attribution is indeed a problem.

81. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 147; and Wilber, *The Architecture of Islamic Iran*, fig. 6. The spacing of Wilber's plan is misleading (too long), and an alternative plan is pending in *The Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin: An Online Exhibition of a Living Iranian Shrine*. This online exhibition is an independent project led by the author since 2021 and will be hosted by the platform Khamseen: Islamic Art History Online (University of Michigan) at <https://khamseen-emamzadeh-yahya-varamin.hart.lsa.umich.edu>.

82. Friedrich Sarre, *Denkmäler persischer Baukunst* (Berlin: Wasmuth, 1910), 59, pl. 65, <https://archive.org/details/denkmlerpersiso1sarr/page/59/>. Sarre visited the site on two occasions: 30 December 1897 and at some point in 1899–90. I am grateful to Jens Kröger and Miriam Kühn for sharing this information.

83. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 148. Bracketed interpolations mine. Dieulafoy seems to reference a Qajar edict apparently passed in 1876 that banned Christians from entering religious sites. While this edict is often cited in primary and secondary sources, the text itself has not been located and remains ambiguous.

84. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 207, records the widest part of the tomb as 8.5 *zar'* (cubits), or 8.84 meters. I have favored the conversion rate used during the Qajar period (1 *zar'* = 104 centimeters).

85. For a list of the six intact examples dated between 612 AH/1215 and 734 AH/1334, see Blair, "Art as Text," 409, table 1. On the dispersed mihrab once in the tomb of Shaykh 'Abdosamad ('Abd al-Samad, d. 1299–1300) at Natanz, see Ana'is Leone, "New Data on the Luster Tiles of 'Abd al-Samad's Shrine in Natanz, Iran," *Muqarnas* 38 (2021): 336–48. On the dispersed mihrab once in the tomb of Imam 'Ali at Najaf, see Alireza Bahreman, *Bāzshenāsi va mo'arefi-ye mehrāb-e farāmūsh shodeh ḥaram-e moṭaḥar-e emām 'Alī* [Recognition of and introduction to the forgotten mehrab of the tomb of Imam 'Ali], *Honarhā-ye Tajasommī* 26, no. 1 (1400 SH/2021): 55–67.

86. This sheet has since been replaced by a permanent barrier. For additional recent images of the tomb, see the many figures in Overton and Maleki, "The Emamzadeh Yahya"; and Overton, "Framing, Performing, Forgetting." As of August 2023, sixty-three photographs of the site have been posted to Google Maps, all taken between 2021 and 2023. Such crowdsourced images are excellent resources for seeing the shrine in a more current state. Google Maps, Imamzadeh Yahya Varamin, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/rcLwGQL7dFygqWnk7>.

87. Blair, "Art as Text," 418.

88. For Blair's discussion of this jumbling, see Blair, "Art as Text," 417.

89. E'temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa'el*, 208.

90. For similar steel vases once mounted on an 'alam (standard), see Annabelle Collinet, "Performance Objects of Muḥarrām in Iran: A Story through Steel," *Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World* 1 (2020): 241, fig. 16.

91. Similar votives can be seen in Viollet's 1912–13 photograph of the Menar-e Jonban (Shaking Minarets) in Isfahan (BULAC, Fonds Viollet, PRS 180, HV 752). For a comparable print, see Henry-René d'Allemagne, *Du Khorassan au Pays des Backhtiaris: Trois mois de voyage en Perse* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), 4:56. On *nazr*, see Christiane Gruber, "Nazr Necessities: Votive

Practices and Objects in Iranian Muharram,” in *Ex Voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures*, ed. I. Weinryb (New York: Bard, 2015), 246–75.

92. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 208. Today, Emamzadeh Yahya is generally known as a sixth-generation descendant of Imam Hasan (d. 670), the second Imam. See Kambiz Haji-Qassemi, ed., *Ganjnameh: Cyclopaedia of Iranian Islamic Architecture*, vol. 13, *Emamzadehs and Mausoleums (Part III)* (Tehran: Shahid Beheshti University Press, 2010), 82.

93. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 207.

94. E‘temad al-Saltaneh does not describe the cenotaph at all, but it could have been covered by textiles or inaccessible behind the screen. It is unclear if the original luster cenotaph was present at the time of his visit, or Dieulafoy’s. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 149, describes the luster revetment as including the walls, cenotaph, and mihrab (“le lambris, le sarcophage et le mihrab”), but she does not describe the cenotaph in any detail.

95. It is also possible that this configuration was in place during E‘temad al-Saltaneh’s 1876 visit. He records the tomb’s dimensions as 8.5 by 6.75 *zar‘* (8.84 × 7.02 m), which suggests that one side was shortened by something, perhaps by the screen in question. As Hossein Nakhaei pointed out to me, the width of the screen (1.75 *zar‘*) plus the length of the short side of the tomb (6.75 *zar‘*) equals the full diameter (8.5 *zar‘*). See E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 207. I thank Nakhaei for exchanges on this complex issue.

96. Consider the tomb of Shaykh ‘Abdosamad at Natanz, which was also plundered for its Ilkhanid luster. In this even smaller space, a Safavid wood screen shields a Safavid cenotaph dated 1045 AH/1635–36 and clad in *haft rangi* (lit. seven colors) tilework. This Safavid cenotaph replaced the original luster one, and the now-stripped luster mihrab is just behind it. See Leone, “New Data,” 349, fig. 22; and the YouTube video “Tomb of Shaykh Abd-al Samad at Natanz,” 1:31, in Overton, “Framing, Performing, Forgetting,” https://youtu.be/-5q4jGA5x_1.

97. I found this photograph by chance in Myron Bement Smith’s archive in August 2022 (thanks to Lisa Fthenakis for facilitating research). While it is currently a rare image, comparable ones likely exist in Iranian archives, especially those in Varamin.

98. Further discussion of the ritual objects captured in this photograph, including the elaborate ‘alam, is pending in *The Emamzadeh Yahya at Varamin: An Online Exhibition of a Living Iranian Shrine* (see note 81). For a comparable

basmla bird dated 1372 AH/1952–53, see Amsterdam, Tropenmuseum, TM-4136-11, <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/132480>. Thanks to Mirjam Shatanawi for bringing this to my attention.

99. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 207. For a photograph of the Qom mihrab (acc. no. 32790) on display in Tehran, see Overton, “Framing, Performing, Forgetting,” fig. 10.

100. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 207–8.

101. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 208. Surprisingly, he incorrectly recorded the year as 463 AH instead of 663 AH.

102. E‘temad al-Saltaneh, *Rasa‘el*, 208.

103. Star tile, undated, Paris, Musée du Louvre, AD 4426, <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010332500>. I learned of this tile from a list of Emamzadeh Yahya tiles compiled by Anaïs Leone.

104. Star tile, 661 AH/1262–63, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 91.1.100, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/444453>. Sura al-Fatiha takes up most of the space, sura al-Ikhlās about a quarter, and the date is written out at the end (“in a month of the year one and sixty and six hundred”).

105. Moya Carey, *Persian Art: Collecting the Arts of Iran for the V&A* (London: V&A Publishing, 2017), 97–105. The information on Sèvres was kindly shared by curator Delphine Miroudot via chat during my Zoom lecture “The Emamzadeh Yahya: The Afterlife of an Iranian Shrine” for the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Islamic Art in Solitude online lecture series on 23 March 2023.

106. On this collection, see Sandra S. Williams, “Reading an ‘Album’ from Qajar Iran,” *Getty Research Journal*, no. 12 (2020): 29–48. Thanks to Frances Terpak, Moira Day, and Mahsa Hatam for facilitating several viewings during my fall 2021 residency and thereafter.

107. Paul Chevallier, *Catalogue des objets d’art et de haute curiosité antiques, du moyen-âge & de la renaissance, composant l’importante et précieuse Collection Spitzer, dont la vente publique aura lieu à Paris . . . du lundi 17 avril au vendredi 16 juin, 1893 à deux heures* (Paris: Imprimerie de l’Art, E. Ménard, 1893), lot nos. 1012–29, plate titled “Faïences Orientales et Hispano-Moresques.”

108. Charles James Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and Sun; or, Modern Persia, Being Experiences of Life in Persia during a Residence of Fifteen Years in Various Parts of That Country from 1866 to 1881* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 36. Bracketed interpolations mine.

109. Wills, *In the Land*, 191–92. Emphasis in original.

110. This summary builds on the seminal article by Tomoko Masuya, “Persian Tiles on European Walls: Collecting Ilkhanid Tiles in Nineteenth-Century Europe,” *Ars Orientalis* 30 (2000): 39–54.

111. On contemporary French activities at Persepolis, see Ali Mousavi, “In Search of Persepolis: Western Travellers’ Explorations in Persia,” chap. 5 in *Persepolis: Discovery and Afterlife of a World Wonder* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

112. Carey, *Persian Art*, 84–86. The Sèvres museum also acquired luster from Ferdinand Méchin, a dealer who traveled in Iran in the 1860s and sold a variety of ceramic fragments and tiles to South Kensington. Carey, *Persian Art*, 76.

113. Julien de Rochechouart, *Souvenirs d’un voyage en Perse* (Paris: Challamel, 1867), 314. In the next line, he names “Véramine.”

114. “Les briques de Natinz [Natanz] que je possède.” Rochechouart, *Souvenirs d’un voyage*, 315.

115. Carey, *Persian Art*, 97–100, 102–5, and 99, fig. 91 (an Emamzadeh Yahya star tile).

116. Masuya, “Persian Tiles,” 54, appendix. Dieulafoy also photographed the luster mihrab in situ in the Masjed-e Maydan (“Perse 1,” 77, no. 155). On this mihrab’s afterlife, see Markus Ritter, “The Kashan Mihrab in Berlin: A Historiography of Persian Lustreware,” in *Persian Art: Image-Making in Eurasia*, ed. Yuka Kadoi (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 157–78; and this essay, pp. 77–80.

117. See the many images in Leone, “New Data”; and the YouTube video “Tomb of Shaykh Abd-al Samad at Natanz” in Overton, “Framing, Performing, Forgetting,” https://youtu.be/-5q4jGA5x_L.

118. Hagop Kevorkian in London to Charles Freer in Detroit, 25 August 1913, 2, Washington, D.C., National Museum of Asian Art Archives (NMAAA), Charles Lang Freer Papers, FSA A.01, box 19, folder 28, <https://nzt.net/ark:/65665/dc38d01133a-fc80-4781-a382-bb38471c4e89>. Although aspects of Kevorkian’s detailed account in this six-page letter are plausible, his implication of the Mostowfi al-Mamalek cannot be considered ironclad until it is verified against Iranian sources. On page 2, Kevorkian himself mentions a “communiqué [sic] made through the Persian Legation.”

119. D’Allemagne, *Du Khorassan au Pays des Backhtiaris*, 2:130–32. He further states that the mihrab was brought to Paris by one of Mozaffar

al-Din’s ministers and hidden in the shah’s luggage, thus echoing Kevorkian’s narrative.

120. Sarre, *Denkmäler persischer Baukunst*, 67, pl. 77. The caption reads “wahrscheinlich aus dem Imamzadeh Jahja in Veramin” (probably from the Emamzadeh Yahya in Varamin).

121. Letter from Kevorkian to Freer, 25 August 1913, 2.

122. Hagop Kevorkian in London to Charles Freer in Detroit, undated telegram presumably sent before the letter of 25 August 1913 cited in note 118 above, NMAAA, Charles Lang Freer Papers, FSA A.01, box 19, folder 28, <https://nzt.net/ark:/65665/dc38d01133a-fc80-4781-a382-bb38471c4e89>.

123. In 1925, the tiles entered the Oriental Department of the State Hermitage Museum. I thank Dmitry Sadofeev for sharing this information.

124. *Exhibition of Persian Art & Curios: The Collection Formed by J. R. Preece, Esq., C. M. G., Late H.B.M.’s Consul General at Ispahan, Persia*, exh. cat. (London: Vincent Robinson Galleries, 1913), no. 1 and color plate.

125. Undated telegram from Kevorkian to Freer (see this essay, note 122).

126. The shrine’s wood door, dated 971 AH/1563–64, was also stolen at some point after E’tezad al-Saltaneh’s visit in 1863. See Haji-Qassem, *Ganjnameh*, 13:82; and Nakhaei, *The Great Mosque*, 55.

127. One of the biggest internal thefts that overlapped with the mihrab’s embargo in Paris was the stealing of manuscripts from the Golestan Palace Library by the royal librarian, who was assisted by a ring of Qajar officials and diplomats. See Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam, “L’affaire du vol de la Bibliothèque Royale du Palais du Golestan à Téhéran, ca. 1907,” *Studia Iranica* 32, no. 1 (2003): 137–47.

128. Carey, *Persian Art*, 90, 102, 247n96.

129. Nasiri-Moghaddam, *L’archéologie française en Perse*, 135–43.

130. For Sarre, see this essay, note 120. For the telegram, see note 122.

131. *Exhibition of Muhammedan-Persian Art, Exhibition of the Kevorkian Collection, Including Objects Excavated under His Supervision Exhibited at the Galleries of Charles of London at 718 Fifth Avenue in New York, March–April, 1914*, exh. cat. (New York: Lent & Graff, 1914), cat. no. 335, <https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofkevo00kevo/>. See also Blair, “Art as Text,” 416.

132. *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Persian Art*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of

Arts, 1931), 103, cat. no. 156. For its display in the exhibition, see the view of gallery IV, 1931, by an unidentified photographer, acc. no. 10/4764, on the Royal Academy website, <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/gallery-iv-the-international-exhibition-of-persian-art-at-the-royal-academy>; and Overton, "Framing, Performing, Forgetting," fig. 9.

133. "Fritware tile and drug jar (*albarelllo*), Iran, probably Kashan, (15) dated 1261–2; (16) 1180–1200, museum nos. 1072–1875; 369–1892." Quoted from the gallery label for objects fifteen and sixteen in the display "The Spread of Tin-Glaze and Lustre, 800–1800."

134. For a photograph of the V&A display, which welcomes visitors into the Jameel Gallery, see Overton, "Framing, Performing, Forgetting," fig. 7.

135. Quoted from the object label for "Lustre Tiles." For the panel's online record, which combines many accession numbers, see the V&A collection page, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O89590/tile-panel-ali-ibn-muhammad/>.

136. Quoted from the Hermitage gallery placard, "Tiles from the Imamzadeh Yahya Mausoleum in Varamin." I thank Dmitry Sadofeev for sharing his excellent photographs of the renovated galleries.

137. For facilitating research in Godard's archive, I thank Sophie Paulet and Alejandra Tafur Manrique.

138. It is possible that the north *ayvan* leading into the tomb would have been a renovation of an Ilkhanid feature. It is not, however, visible in Dieulafoy's 1881 view of the site in "Perse 1," 65, no. 129.

139. Talinn Grigor, "Recultivating 'Good Taste': The Early Pahlavi Modernists and Their Society for National Heritage," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2004): 17–45.

140. For an English translation of this law's twenty articles, see Nader Nasiri-Moghaddam,

"Archaeology and the Iranian National Museum: Qajar and early Pahlavi Cultural Policies," in *Culture and Cultural Politics under Reza Shah: The Pahlavi State, New Bourgeoisie and the Creation of a Modern Society in Iran*, ed. Bianca Devos and Christoph Werner (New York: Routledge, 2013), 139–43, appendix.

141. Arthur Upham Pope and Phyllis Ackerman, eds., *A Survey of Persian Art from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938–39), 2:1679, no. 53, and vol. 5, plate 400. In this publication, the mihrab was identified correctly as from the "Imamzada Yahya, Varamin" and was at the time on loan to the University Museum, Philadelphia. For its display in New York in 1940, see Edward Allen Jewell, "Persian Exhibition of Art is Opened," *New York Times*, April 24, 1940, 20.

142. Blair, "Art as Text," 417. Negotiations were led by Duke's adviser Mary Crane, a graduate student at New York University. See Keelan Overton, "Filming, Photographing and Purveying in 'the New Iran': The Legacy of Stephen H. Nyman, ca. 1937–42," in *Arthur Upham Pope and A New Survey of Persian Art*, ed. Yuka Kadoi (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 364.

143. Hagop Kevorkian in New York to Doris Duke Cromwell in Honolulu, 28 December 1940. Honolulu, Archives of the Shangri La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture & Design.

144. For its terrible condition at the time, see Yedda Godard, "Pièces datées de céramiques de Kāshān à décor lustré," *Athar-e Iran* 2 (1937): 314, fig. 139.

145. Dieulafoy, *La Perse*, 147 and 149. The mihrab of the Emamzadeh Shah Hossein is captioned "mihrab a Varamine" and reproduced on a page mostly devoted to the Emamzadeh Yahya. This likely contributed to confusion. For details of the collage, see Overton and Maleki, "The Emamzadeh Yahya," fig. 17; and Overton, "Framing, Performing, Forgetting," fig. 13.