

## Self-aware Painting in the Safavid Era (A Case Study of Sadeqi Beiq Kitabdar's Works)

### Fatemeh Mehrabi

Ph.D. Candidate, Analytical and Comparative History of Islamic Art department, Art University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran/ Fa.mehrabi@yahoo.com

### Seyyed Hasan Soltani

Associate Professor, Painting Department, Art University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)  
soltani@art.ac.ir

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### Introduction

Sadiqi Beiq Kitabdar, as a prominent Persian artist from the tenth to eleventh centuries, holds a unique position in the annals of traditional Persian painting. Despite the extensive study done by Welch, exploration into his life and works has been scarce. Sadiqi's artistic brilliance was somewhat overshadowed by contemporaries such as Bihzad or Reza Abbasi, and compounded by his reputed sharp temper that deterred effusive praise from his peers. However, delving deeper into the narrative of his life reveals a fascinating tale of an unconventional Qizilbash warrior, who has ascended to the pinnacle of artistic mastery amidst the Safavid era's cultural ferment. Understanding Sadiqi's contributions necessitates a nuanced examination of his life's chronicle, set against the backdrop of Iran's socio-political milieu in the Safavid era. Welch's meticulous research has illuminated key facets of Sadiqi's existence, offering insights into his patronage dynamics and the evolving landscape of Persian artistry. This study endeavors to unravel Sadiqi's enigmatic persona while shedding light on his profound impact on the burgeoning self-awareness and artistic ethos of the Safavid epoch.

### Research Method

This research adopts a qualitative strategy employing a descriptive, historiographical method. Focusing on the Safavid period, it examines the concept of self-awareness in Persian painting, with Sadiqi Beiq Kitabdar as the primary subject. The study analyzes Sadiqi's artistic expressions and signatures. To do so, it employs an interdisciplinary approach to understand his self-awareness and its impact on the Safavid painting evolution.

### Research Findings

Sadiqi Beiq, renowned for his prowess as a painter, emerged equally as a self-aware and prolific writer. Through his literary works, particularly *Majma' al-Khawas*, Sadiqi revealed a keen awareness of his status and effectiveness across various domains. His writings were marked by directness, candid observations, and occasional criticisms, reflecting his self-assured persona. Sadiqi's interactions with contemporaries, artists, and peers underscored his self-awareness, evident in his nuanced assessments and critiques. Despite his sharp temperament, Sadiqi's writings offered insights into the social and cultural milieu of his time, positioning him and his contemporaries within the broader artistic landscape of the Safavid era.

In *Majma' al-Khawas*, Sadiqi showcased his discerning eye and critical attitude towards his contemporaries, sparing few from his candid evaluations. His commentary on poets and painters alike reflected his self-confidence and uncompromising nature. Notably, Sadiqi's writings depicted a selective acknowledgment of the talent, with few individuals receiving praise, often accompanied by subtle self-comparisons or references to his own accomplishments. His interactions with fellow artists revealed a complex blend of pride, confidence, and perhaps, a desire for recognition.

Sadiqi's self-awareness extended beyond his literary works to his treatises on painting such as *Qanun al-Sovar*. In this technical treatise, he positioned himself as an authority, advocating naturalism and emphasizing the significance of imbuing paintings with meanings. Sadiqi's self-

appointed role, as a guide in the realm of Persian painting, reflected his aspiration for lasting recognition and influence. Moreover, his writings suggested a deep-seated desire for artistic mastery and innovation, evident in his quest to explore the meaning behind painting. Through his poems and treatises, Sadiqi crafted a narrative of self-aggrandizement, portraying him as a polymath of an unparalleled talent. Despite occasional critiques from contemporaries like Iskandar Beiq Turkman, who had questioned his literary prowess, Sadiqi's writings exuded confidence and self-assurance. His self-perception, as a multifaceted artist who was adept in both poetry and painting, underscored his ambition and self-awareness. Contemporary accounts offered further insights into Sadiqi's self-aware persona. Mirza Taher Nasrabadi's anecdote depicted Sadiqi's assertiveness and awareness of his artistic value as he swiftly dismissed praise in favor of material recognition. Similarly, Ohadi-e Balyani and Valeh Esfahani's descriptions highlighted Sadiqi's reputation for haughtiness and conceit, which aligned with his strong sense of self-awareness.

Overall, Sadiqi Beiq emerged as a multifaceted figure, whose writings and interactions reflected a nuanced understanding of his own abilities and place within the artistic community. His self-awareness, even though perceived as arrogance in some cases, was integral to his identity as an artist striving for recognition and mastery in the vibrant cultural milieu of Safavid Iran.

## Conclusion

The study has delves into the transformative process, whereby artists' self-awareness shaped the trajectory of modern Persian painting with a focus on the influential figure of Sadiqi Beiq during the Safavid era. Through an examination of Sadiqi's self-awareness in his artistic endeavors, the study has elucidated his pivotal role in fostering a movement of artist self-awareness within this period. Sadiqi's extensive body of works, encompassing both paintings and writings, has underscored his acute awareness of his impact and status as an artist. His writings, whether authored by him or about him, revealed a nuanced understanding of his influence, which he strategically leverages when necessary. Moreover, while Sadiqi's critiques of others were at times harsh, his deliberate concealment of opinions regarding certain individuals suggested a calculated control over his behavior, indicative of his self-awareness.

The study contends that Sadiqi's self-awareness and intelligence were instrumental in shaping contemporary modern painting art. Traditionally, Persian painting revolved around narrative-driven illustrations, characterized by a plethora of motifs and a rational, imaginative atmosphere. However, amidst religious reforms in Iran, the exodus of painters from the court led to a democratization of art patronage, resulting in a proliferation of painting genres and styles. This transition from elaborate, narrative-driven illustrations to single-page paintings marked a shift towards audience's deeper engagement and reflection.

In this period of artistic flux, Sadiqi and his contemporaries played a pivotal role in shaping modern Persian painting. Sadiqi's treatise on painting emphasized the importance of capturing both form and meaning and advocated a closer resemblance to nature in artworks. His artistic evolution mirrored this ethos as his works progressively embraced natural elements and techniques, such as perspective and shading, borrowed from the Western art. Notably, Sadiqi's reconfiguration of traditional painting formats and incorporation of natural elements facilitated a closer alignment between art and reality and elevated Persian painting to the new heights of realism and human-centric expression.

In conclusion, the study posits Sadiqi Beg Mosavver as a central figure in the emergence of modern Persian painting. His self-awareness and artistic innovations served as catalysts for transformative change within the artistic landscape of the Safavid era. Through his visionary approach to painting and his profound understanding of artistic expression, Sadiqi left an indelible mark on the Persian art, ushering in an era characterized by heightened emotional resonance, narrative depth, and humanistic sensibility.

**Keywords:** Persian painting, Safavid painting, self-awareness, Sadeqi Beiq Kitabdar.