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# Interpretation of Persian Motifs in the Artworks of William de Morgan

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**Ключевые слова:** Уильям де Морган, ориентализм в искусстве, персидское искусство, английское искусство, искусство XIX века, декоративно-прикладное искусство, рецепция в искусстве, межкультурный обмен

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Интерпретация персидских мотивов в творчестве Уильяма де Моргана

**Abstract.** This article discusses the role of William de Morgan (1839–1917) in the development of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century English ceramic art, with a particular focus on his use of Persian motifs. To further explore this topic, the author characterizes the significance of Persian art in the museum collections of Victorian England, as well as the concept of ‘Persian style’ and how it was interpreted by the contemporaries of the English ceramist. Additionally, the article analyses the characteristics of W. de Morgan’s figurative and artistic system which was shaped under the influence of Persian art collections and studies. The article also examines zoomorphic motifs such as scenes of birds and snakes fighting and fantastical creatures which are typical of Persian art. Through an analysis of W. de Morgan’s creative works this article identifies the unique features of his use of Persian motifs and distinguishes them from those of other regions he studied. As a result, the author has come to the conclusion that Persian motifs played a significant role in the expansion of artistic boundaries in European decorative arts during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This material significantly enhances our understanding of decorative and applied art history of Victorian England and W. de Morgan’s artistic development.

**Аннотация.** В статье анализируется роль Уильяма де Моргана (1839–1917) в развитии английского керамического искусства XIX века с акцентом на использовании персидских мотивов. Для углубления в тему автор характеризует значение персидского искусства в музейных коллекциях викторианской Англии, а также понятие «персидский стиль» и его интерпретации современниками английского керамиста. Кроме того, рассматриваются особенности образно-художественной системы У. де Моргана, сформированной под влиянием коллекций и исследований персидского искусства, а также зооморфные мотивы, такие как сцены борьбы птиц и змей, фантастические существа и символические изображения, характерные исключительно для персидского искусства. Анализ произведений де Моргана позволил выявить отличия использования персидских мотивов в его творчестве по сравнению с изобразительными и эстетическими аспектами других регионов, которые изучал мастер. В итоге автор приходит к выводу, что персидские мотивы способствовали расширению художественных границ европейского декоративного искусства второй половины XIX века. Материалы публикации могут существенно расширить представление об истории декоративно-прикладного искусства викторианской Англии и развитии творчества У. де Моргана.

## Introduction

An interest in Persian art in England began with missions to the court of the Safavid Shah Abbas the Great (1588–1629). The brothers Robert and Anthony Shirley were the first to introduce the English to Persian ceramics, raw silk, clothing, and customs. The fashion for Persian clothing is evidenced in a number of artworks, for instance, portraits of Robert and Teresa Shirley by Anthony van Dyck (A. van Dyck, *Sir Robert Shirley*, 1622, Petworth House; A. van Dyck, *Portrait of Lady Shirley*, 1622, Petworth House) and an unknown English artist (unknown master, *Double portrait of Robert Shirley and his wife Theresa*, ca. 1624–1627, collection of R.B. Berkeley), and portraits of Persian ambassadors sent to Britain. However, due to the exponential growth of Persian goods import into Europe, their uniqueness was not studied in depth at that time. The European audience was just getting acquainted with the mysterious and distant land, which led to exoticization and simplification of interpretations.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was marked by methodical collecting, exhibiting, and studying of Persian ceramics and textiles, which excited a growing interest in Persian culture among scholars, artists, and artisans. They studied production techniques and the cultural code of Persia: its literature, treatises, and manuscripts. An important step was the founding of the South Kensington Museum in 1852 (presently the Victoria and Albert Museum) upon the suggestion of Prince Albert, following discussions surrounding the 1851 Great Exhibition. The museum started collecting Persian art, and currently houses one of the largest and most diverse collections of Persian art in the world that contains various art forms and covers different historical periods and regions. The idea of collecting Persian art belongs to the museum's first director Henry Cole (1808–1882). Between 1871 and 1873, he turned to Robert Murdoch Smith (1835–1900), head of the Persian Telegraph Company in Tehran, who had a thorough knowledge of Persia. Smith committed himself to the role of agent for the acquisition of Persian artworks and handled purchases from 1873 to 1885. As a result, he succeeded in adding ceramics, metalwork, musical instruments, gemstones, embroideries, carpets, paintings, and manuscripts to the museum collection. It should be highlighted that manuscripts

played a major role in the study of Persian art in Britain. Illustrated and illuminated manuscripts and albums were obtained from the library of Tipu Sultan which had been seized after the battle of Seringapatam (1799), and almost all of them dated back to the Safavid period. Manuscripts were also collected by Richard Johnson and other travellers and ambassadors. It was due to these collections that the English audience discovered *Shahnameh*, *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, and many other works.

In 1893, the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired the famous Ardabil Carpet (1539–1540), a masterpiece of Persian carpet weaving and the oldest dated carpet made in the city of Ardabil in northwestern Persia. It was examined by William Morris on behalf of the Victoria and Albert Museum [Stead, 1974, p. 32–33]. In general, that period enjoyed a growing interest in carpet weaving and handicrafts. William Morris was known for his passion for Islamic art: he studied Persian literature, illustrated manuscripts, and found inspiration for his famous patterns in Persian ornaments. Representatives of the Pre-Raphaelites, such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, turned to Persian motifs too.

What also played an important role in the dissemination of Persian culture in Victorian everyday life and art, in addition to museum and library collections, was the research into ornamentation by the architect Owen Jones and the drawings of the Persian architect Mirza Akbar<sup>(1)</sup>. Meanwhile, the above-mentioned aspects and personalities have already been discussed in publications and monographic studies, whereas the creative activity of William de Morgan (1839–1917), English ceramicist and pioneering experimenter in pottery, and his appeal to Persian themes and imagery have not been studied sufficiently, although the researchers

(1) In 1875, the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired a collection of 238 sketches on paper that vary in style and content. They show designs proposed for tilework, stucco, and woodwork, as well as architectural groundplans and elevations. Some reflect ancient Persian traditions, while others depict contemporary European trends. The sketches were acquired for the museum by the architect Caspar Purdon Clark, who later became the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum. In 1874–1875, Purdon Clark was in Tehran renovating the British Embassy buildings and local master-builders presented him with a series of sketches in appreciation of teaching them European building techniques. The two master-builders, Ostad Khodadad and Ostad Akbar, explained that the portfolio had belonged to the late Mirza Akbar, a court architect active in Tehran at the beginning of the century [Scroll. Mirza Akbar]. However, currently it is debated whether there really was such an architect as Mirza Akbar, or the album contains works by a group of masters.

highlight his key role in setting a fashion for the so-called 'Persian style' in decorative arts and interior design [Art, Trade and Culture, 2016, p. 188–189]. Indeed, de Morgan's ceramics adorned many Victorian homes; due to their unique design, they are considered among the most recognizable examples of decorative art of the era. The master's natural flair and skill for creating original, elegant patterns and harmonious compositions (he created thousands of original designs for tiles, vases, and tableware) let him stand out among other ceramicists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The only research on the reception of Eastern art in William de Morgan's ceramics and designs was published by Guillermo Gracia and is dedicated to the influence of Hispano-Moresque, Iznik, and Persian traditions on the English master [Gracia, 2020]. However, Gracia focuses more on the unique perception of Persia in Victorian England in general, without paying attention to de Morgan's understanding of the specific Persian image system.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to analyse and interpret Persian motifs in the work of William de Morgan, as well as to identify their influence on his artistic style and compositional solutions. This study is intended to provide insight into the cultural and artistic ties between Persia and England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to define the role of Persian motifs in shaping the artist's aesthetic and technical perspectives. The relevance of this research is due to the increased interest in intercultural interactions and receptive mechanisms in art, and the need for a deeper understanding of William de Morgan's contribution to the development of decorative and applied arts and their connection with Eastern traditions. Furthermore, the material presented in the article will fill the gap in the study of William de Morgan's work and will allow us to trace the Persian, Turkish, and Spanish influences in his ceramics.

### **Periodization of William de Morgan's work**

William de Morgan was a friend and colleague of William Morris; they worked together between 1863 and 1872. He was close to the Arts and Crafts movement and rejected industrial methods of decorative objects production, giving preference to handcrafts. De Morgan created tiles, stained glass, and furniture for Morris & Co.

William de Morgan made his first attempts at firing ceramics in the early 1870s at his studio in Fitzroy Square, London. However, his experiments led to a fire, which forced him to move to a new studio in Chelsea in 1872. In 1882, de Morgan moved to Merton Abbey (nearby William Morris's workshops); in 1888 — to Sands Ends, Fulham. Every year from the mid-1890s, in order to maintain his health, he spent time in Italy and sent sketches back to England. He produced his last works around 1907, and in the decline of years became a successful writer. Thus, based on the location of his workshops, there are three creative periods distinguished: Chelsea (1872–1882), Merton Abbey (1882–1888) and Fulham (Sands Ends pottery) (1888–1907). Each period of de Morgan's ceramics is characterized by distinctive artistic features and production peculiarities. The Chelsea period was dominated by floral motifs and pastiche of the medieval times; in that period, the master, inspired by Middle Eastern and Persian ceramics, began experimenting with glossy glazes. At Merton Abbey, de Morgan designed kilns and equipment, striving to increase production performance and quality; that period was characterized by sophisticated ornamentation and the master's increasing appeal to Islamic art. During the Fulham period, de Morgan's designs became more ambitious and developed into large-scale ceramic panels. Furthermore, William de Morgan's works can be roughly divided into three main groups based on his source of inspiration: works inspired by Persian art, works in the Turkish Iznik style, and works imitating Hispano-Moorish art. The symmetrical motifs on tiles and Islamic pieces were very close to W. Morris's works as well and constituted an essential source of his inspiration.

De Morgan's contemporaries valued him for his distinctive technique of lustreware which will be discussed further in the article. In 1909, William de Morgan's wife, artist Evelyn de Morgan (née Pickering), painted portrait of him (National Portrait Gallery, London) holding a lustre vase skilfully decorated with bright gold, ruby, and deep dark blue glazes. The vase can be considered a symbol of his mastery and innovation in ceramics. He spent years studying ancient Persian and Italian techniques for creating and perfecting this exotic effect. The pattern heavily borrows from Italian majolica and Iznik ware, but contemporaries associated it with the 'Persian style'.

## On the problem of defining the ‘Persian style’ in English ceramics of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

In the Victorian era, the term ‘Persian-style pottery’ referred to pieces that belonged to the Persian, Ottoman (Iznik), Syrian, and Egyptian traditions [Art, Trade and Culture, 2016, p. 188; Gracia, 2020, p. 56]. Robert Murdoch Smith, whom we mentioned in the introduction, played a fundamental role in shaping this concept. In 1876, he published the work *Persian Art*, in which he stated his views on the development of Persian art and its significance for the world culture. A separate chapter was devoted to ceramics — there, he gave a detailed description of six different types of Persian pottery, highlighting their chemical composition and decorative motifs. According to Smith, it was Persian art that Islamic art as a whole owed its refined forms to. He noted that the first Muslims to arrive in Persia discovered a civilization with advanced architecture, sculpture, and decorative arts, and were fascinated by what they saw. Those advances, according to Smith, were then exported, e.g. to Andalusia, and from there spread throughout the Muslim world [Smith, 1876, p. 2–4]. Smith also emphasized the distinctive character of Persian ceramics which were heavily influenced by the arrival of Chinese porcelain via the Silk Road — and so was Iznik porcelain. Smith also identified a distinct ‘Persian porcelain’ by which he meant faience ware [Smith, 1876, p. 7–17].

Thus, the refined ornamentation of many Muslim countries was linked to Persian culture, which was also evident in other works of the period, as noted by the researcher Gracia [Gracia, 2020]. Thus, French ceramists Eugène Victor Collinot and Adalbert de Beaumont created several collections of ornamental designs, including the one entitled *Persian Ornament* (1880) [Collinot, De Beaumont, 1880] which, in addition to Persian ceramic panels, employed ceramics copied from Ottoman buildings. Moreover, in the South Kensington Museum catalogue of Islamic faience and tiles, many Iznik pieces were labelled ‘ceramics in the style of Damascus’ [Fortnum, 1873] — a city in the Ottoman Empire whose architecture was often decorated with Iznik ceramics. This indicates that in the period under consideration there was no clear understanding of terminology and specificity of ornamental designs from different countries and regions.

A similar thing happened to the term ‘Japonisme’ coined by the collector of Far Eastern art and art critic Philippe Burty. By Japonisme he

understood “everything related to Japanese history and culture” [Dufwa, 1981, p. 197], which led to the merging of form and content, and for a long time all Asian art was labelled as Japanese.

So, probably, William de Morgan may also have been influenced by the two publications (1887 and 1888) by the French archaeologist Jane Dieulafoy, who travelled to Persia, Morocco, and Susa [Dieulafoy, 1887; Dieulafoy, 1888], and together with her husband, archaeologist Marcel Dieulafoy donated her archaeological finds to the Louvre. The mentioned publications disseminated widely thanks to numerous illustrations of Persian ceramics, which contributed to the promotion of their designs in different countries.

A noteworthy detail is that, in addition to ancient Persian ceramics which were already on display at the South Kensington Museum in the 1870s, the British may also have been familiar with ceramics produced in Tehran at that time. The Victoria and Albert Museum houses several elaborate panels created for the French composer Alfred Lemaire who had lived in Iran since 1868 [Gracia, 2020, p. 65]. The panels imitated the complex interior designs of Persian houses. It is likely that de Morgan was familiar with this architecture type and borrowed floral motifs such as leaves or Persian trees from it [Greenwood, 2007, p. 12]. This can be evidenced through a thorough examination of his design for the Arab Hall (ca. 1898, Leighton House Museum, London): in the tiles he employed an image important for Persian culture — a cypress that embodied light, warmth and longevity, and was associated with love.

The mentioned works and events were widely discussed in the press and among artistic circles of the period, so de Morgan, who had established close contacts with the staff of the Victoria and Albert Museum, was likely to be aware of the latest research and acquisitions. More importantly, through an in-depth analysis of Persian and Iznik ceramics and a study of ancient Persian glaze techniques, de Morgan invented a new lustre glaze technique and created outstanding lustreware.

## The creation of lustreware: William de Morgan’s technique

The son of a mathematician, William de Morgan had an inquiring mind. While studying the properties of coloured glass, he noticed that restricting the flow of oxygen in the kiln created a metallic lustre, the opalescent

properties of which were reminiscent of the glassware common in the Middle East and Renaissance Europe. Inspired by this observation, he began experimenting and soon developed the technique of lustreware (from the French *lustre* meaning ‘shine’ and the Latin *lustrare* meaning ‘to illuminate’) — ware with a distinctive metallic gloss achieved through special processing and firing techniques.

In Muslim culture, lusterware is cherished: the theme of light is given a prominent place in the Quran, so ‘luminous’ ceramics symbolized the beauty and divine glory awaited by believers in paradise. De Morgan gave a detailed description of his method for adding lustre to ceramics in a lecture given in 1892 at the Royal Society of London [De Morgan, 1892, p. 756–764]. Its text published in *Journal of the Society for Arts* speaks volumes about W. de Morgan’s knowledge of Spanish, Persian, and Ottoman ceramics: the master went into detail about techniques and motifs, and shared his observations on the cultural connections of the regions.

In 1893, de Morgan also travelled to Egypt where he studied local traditions and crafts [Gracia, 2020, p. 62]. Following the trip, he designed a project for the establishment of a glazed ceramics factory in Egypt, hoping to revive and develop local ceramics with the use of modern technology and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the region [De Morgan, 1894]. The bulk of documentation for the unfinished project is kept at the British Library in London [Gracia, 2020, p. 62]<sup>(2)</sup>. It was Thomas Armstrong, artistic director of the department of Science and Art of the South Kensington Museum, who recommended William de Morgan to the Egyptian government. Despite his short stay in Egypt — it lasted no more than three weeks — his report on the establishment of the Moderna production site contained a detailed overview of costs, types of clays, glaze, kilns, etc. [Gracia, 2020, p. 62–63].

The technique described by de Morgan implied mixing metal oxides such as copper or silver with white clay to which gum arabic was added to facilitate processing. Having been glazed, the pieces were then fired at low temperatures, and then sawdust was added. When sawdust began to ignite, the kiln was turned off and the oxygen supply was blocked, which created the so-called reducing atmosphere. Under such conditions, the

heat of the kiln oxidized the glaze, leaving only a metallic patina on the surface. After cooling, the iridescent patina was carefully polished to intensify its shining and give the piece the characteristic metallic effect.

In his tiles and vessels, William de Morgan also used stylized floral images in blue, green, and turquoise. Such hues and motifs formed his signature style, commonly referred to as ‘Persian’. From 1875, he worked primarily with the ‘Persian’ colour palette, limiting himself to red, blue, purple, green, and yellow. In his ceramic works, de Morgan employed traditional Persian imagery: antelopes, long-horned goats, roses and nightingales (*gul va bulbul*), floral arrangements with birds (*gul va morgh*), snakes, various fantastical birds, the letter waw (و), and islimi. It should be highlighted that the depiction of living creatures was typical of Persian artworks, in which the aniconism characteristic of Islam was less pronounced. Furthermore, English museum collections contained numerous examples of pre-Islamic Persian ceramics. These facts distinguish Persian ceramics from Iznik ceramics dominated by floral patterns. Furthermore, de Morgan himself classified his designs inspired by Ottoman art as Persian.

A variety of sketches by William de Morgan based on Persian ceramics have survived which testify to the master’s profound knowledge of Persian culture and his commitment to accurate portrayal of its artistic characteristics. Some of de Morgan’s drawings are reminiscent of those by Mirza Akbar, a mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century court architect of Tehran whose works were acquired by the South Kensington Museum in 1875 [Carey, 2018, pp. 47–67]. A significant portion of the collection comprising 238 sketches is done on paper and depicts geometric motifs. The rest of the images feature animals such as deer and birds, and a variety of floral compositions — a universal range that could easily be reproduced on ceramics.

### The importance of the motifs of rose-nightingale and tortoise in the work of William de Morgan

The influence of Mirza Akbar’s works can be seen in de Morgan’s watercolours and pencil drawings [Gracia, 2020, p. 65]. De Morgan copied Akbar’s drawing of birds positioned symmetrically on either side of stylized flowers. Interestingly, birds and flowers were common in de Morgan’s works, indeed. The flower-bird motif was extremely widespread in Persia, and was classified according to the following categories: *gulshan* — depiction

(2) The project implementation failed as importing coal was expensive.

of various flowers (roses, irises, dahlias, hyacinths, etc.), *gul va bulbul* — rose and nightingale, and *gul va morgh* — flowers and birds. Floral motifs were particularly common during the Safavid (1501–1722) and Qajar (1795–1925) periods. However, their origins go back even further: back in the pre-Islamic times and Zoroastrian rituals, and in the Islamic period, roses occupied an important place symbolically and in terms of practical application in the culture and art of Persia. In Persian mysticism, the rose represented perfection, beauty, and grace, while the nightingale symbolized the human spirit. Together, they symbolized a loving couple; and love could be both earthly and divine, reflecting the soul's aspiration for unity with God [Cowen, 1989, p. 41–43, 56–58]. Such images also give an idea of paradisiac gardens described in the Quran with streams and beautiful houris [Blair, Bloom, 1991, p. 16–17]. The rise of the bird-and-flower genre during the Safavid period is also associated with the popularity of Chinese bird-and-flower painting at that time [Sugimura, 1986, p. 104–105].

Additionally, de Morgan borrowed deer images. Deer was common in works of ancient Persian art (Amlash and Luristan) — ceramics, metalwork, etc. [Grishman, 1964, p. 36, 334]. In Persian culture, the deer has an important symbolic meaning, representing grace, nobility, and spirituality. It is a recurring motif in art, literature, and folklore, a symbol of renewal and life, a messenger from the spiritual world.

The deer also appears in the drawings by Mirza Akbar, for example, in animal torture scenes. Similar scenes of a predator attacking a herbivore were common in Persia since ancient times (the Achaemenid dynasty) and were often found in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century works of art, for instance, on the sipar shield in the State Museum of Oriental Art (Moscow). William de Morgan copied this motif too, demonstrating his mastery of line. Scenes of animal torture typically signified rebirth in Persian culture — spring rebirth which the Persians associated with Nowruz [Kuzmina, 1979, p. 78–80].

### Images of antelopes and goats in the works of William de Morgan

A special place in the imagery of de Morgan's ceramics is given to goats and antelopes: he decorated a number of dishes with such images. Ceramics with similar images were widespread in central, southeastern, and southwestern Persia in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC. Moreover, in ancient times, depiction of the goat distinguished the schools of the mentioned

regions. The characteristic features of those images were pectiforms, long crescent-shaped horns, and black and brown colours (for example, ceramics from Shahr-i Sokhta). Each ancient tribe considered the mountain goat a symbol of a natural element. Sometimes it personified rain, because in ancient times the moon was associated with rain, and the sun — with heat and drought. The horns also resembled a crescent shape. Furthermore, in Persian culture, the antelope and goat were the symbols of happiness and were depicted on festive tableware. The goat-and-tree motifs were particularly common in Persian ceramics; archaeologists classify them into the following groups: the goat and the sacred tree (the tree of life), the palm tree and the goat, and heraldic animal groups [Bushnell, 2008, p. 65].

The English ceramist imitated the designs of ancient masters, outlining the animal figures with laconic lines, simplifying their bodies, and enlarging their horns on a dish dated ca. 1880–1885 (Victoria and Albert Museum, London). The antelope stands against the tree of life at the water's edge — a typical decoration of Persian lusterware. In another sketch, de Morgan merged the image of the goat with vegetation: its fur literally mimics leaves, and a flowering branch grows from its tail. It is noteworthy that the master incorporated text into the sketch for the dish. Persian ceramists included letters in their works, for example in pseudo-Kufic script used purely for decoration.

In one of his sketches, William de Morgan almost literally copied the brown triangular pattern often found in Persian ceramics typical of Shahr-i Sokhta. The antelope in de Morgan's work has boundless energy and mobility — this feeling is produced by the sharp, sweeping horns also characteristic of ancient Persian ceramics.

### Snake motifs in William de Morgan's drawings and ceramics

In his works William de Morgan frequently depicted snakes — the image with rich symbolism and cultural tradition inherent to various peoples and eras. Thus, in Persian culture, the snake image takes on multiple meanings. Given the semi-arid climate and dependence on groundwater, the snake as a creature living underground and near water was considered the patron of underground waters and life [Shakiba, 2018]. This image is found on ceramics dated the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC, which proves its ancient origins and importance in the culture of the region. Snakes in

Persian art symbolize not only water and fertility, but also immortality and the cycles of life and death.

Apart from this, Persian mythology and art feature mythical snake-like creatures, such as the Simurgh — the king of birds and a benevolent protector. During the so-called Avestan period, the Simurgh was believed to act as a guide for the dead souls in the afterlife, and in the Sasanian Empire, it symbolized *khvarenah*, or the divine glory of rulers (the classic Persian poet Ferdowsi also represented the Simurgh as a mediator between the worlds and *khvarenah*), according to researcher I.V. Andrushchenko [Andrushchenko, 2023, p. 67]. The Simurgh is depicted as a majestic bird of prey, scaly, with a snake's tail, wings, paws, and a dog's head [Trever, 1937]. This image can be found on various decorative objects, including dishes and ritual objects created by Persian artisans. They often depicted scenes of the bird and the snake fighting — such compositions symbolize the struggle between good and evil or light and darkness. In Persian art, the bird is usually associated with higher spiritual qualities: wisdom, divinity, and immortality. The snake, on the other hand, often symbolizes fertility, the underworld, or negative forces — evil or chaos.

The interaction of birds and snakes in artwork is often interpreted as the victory of good over evil or light over darkness. Such motifs reflect deep philosophical thought on the struggle of opposites and the harmony of nature and humanity. In William de Morgan's works, such scenes become particularly expressive through the use of characteristic Persian motifs that include dynamic struggle and contrasting forms and symbols. Thus, not only do the images of snakes in his ceramics demonstrate his deep knowledge of Persian mythology and artistic traditions, but they also serve as universal symbols of the struggle between the opposites.

Generally, William de Morgan's appeal to snake imagery reflects his desire to convey the complex system of Persian mythological meanings by means of decorative art. It can be concluded that his study of Persian art provided a zoomorphic range that could not be easily found in either Iznik or Hispano-Moresque ceramics where aniconism was more pronounced [Gracia, 2020, p. 68]. Furthermore, the ceramist appeared to have carefully studied floral patterns from Mirza Akbar's works and the surviving ceramic examples in the South Kensington Museum, and developed dozens of patterns for tiles and ceramic ware with floral designs.

## Conclusion

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in England was marked by a broad interest in Persian art and culture. Collecting, exploring, and promoting Persian heritage was of great importance to the Victoria and Albert Museum which closely collaborated with experts and artists of the time. In this regard, a key role was played by the ceramicist William de Morgan who strived to incorporate elements of the Persian artistic tradition into his work. Scrutinizing the museum collections, contemporary research and images, he developed his own artistic system — the signature style known as 'Persian'. In his works, de Morgan employed distinctive Persian zoomorphic motifs, such as scenes of torture, paired images of birds and snakes, fantastical creatures, and herbivores, which emphasized the connection to ancient Persian culture. These motifs are characteristic of Persian art and differ from the borrowed Iznik and Hispano-Moorish features dominated by floral ornaments, which proves the artist's profound knowledge of Persian traditions. Therefore, William de Morgan's work largely contributed to the development of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century English decorative ceramics and the promotion of Persian art in Europe.

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