

Introduction

The Special Collections of the Leiden University Libraries (henceforth: the UBL) house a spectacular collection from Albertus Paulus Hermanus Hotz (1855-1930), a Dutch businessman who traded with Persia intermittently between 1874 and 1903 via his company, the Persian Trading Company J.C.P. Hotz & Son (*Perzische Handels Vereeniging J.C.P. Hotz & Zoon*).¹

Albert Hotz was born on 22 January 1855 in Rotterdam. He was the son of Jacques Cornelis Paulus Hotz (1834-1875) and Geertruida Arnolda Johanna Pino Post (1834-1912). Albert belonged to the wealthy families of Rotterdam. His father, magnate and entrepreneur, Jacques Cornelis Paulus, was the director of an iron foundry (*De Prins van Oranje*) owned by the Prince of Orange, a post from which he resigned on 1 January 1870. He then founded his own iron company, Hotz & Co, which became a major supplier to the Dutch navy and railway company.

In the 1860s, business relations between the Netherlands and Persia took a new turn. In February 1868, the Dutch government appointed Richard Charles Keun (1838-1906) as consul in Bandar Bushihr—a southwestern Persian port at the terminus of the Persian Gulf—to safeguard Dutch commercial interests and foster trade relations with Persia. Throughout Keun's efforts, a solid partnership was established among key figures and institutions, including Prince Hendrik of the Netherlands (1820-1879), Jacques Cornelis Hotz, Richard Charles Keun, Dutch Trading Company (*Nederlandsche Handels Maatschappij*), the Rotterdam Trading Association (*Rotterdamsche Handelsvereniging*), the Rotterdam Bank of Rensburg, and van Witsen. In this partnership, Hotz served as the managing partner. In October 1874, Hotz founded the Persian Trading Company J.C.P. Hotz & Son in Rotterdam. That same year, he sent his son, Albert, to Persia to open the company's office and organise its business operations there (Fig. 1).

Albert's father passed away after a short illness on 29 May 1875. Albert, who was just 20 years old, soon took over all his father's trading activities, including his business with Persia.² On 2 August 1875, the Hotz Company chartered a ship that set sail from Rotterdam—marking the first direct voyage from the Netherlands to Persia.³ From that point on, Albert Hotz remained involved in business with Persia until 1903. Over the course of nearly three decades of trade, Albert Hotz amassed an extensive collection of Persian art, literature, and archival documents. Part of his collection was donated to the Leiden University Library in 1935 by Lucy Helen Woods, Hotz's widow, followed by a second donation in 1994 by Charles Albert Haccius, a grandson of Albert Hotz.⁴ The 1994 donation comprises an extensive

Vertrouwelijk.-

Ging voor de eerste keer naar Perzië in 1874 en opende kantoren voor de door mijn vader als Gereerend vennoot, opgerichte "Perzische Handelsvereniging J.c.p. Hotz en Zoon" waaraan deelnamen:

wijlen Prins Hendrik,

de Nederlandsche Handelsmaatschappij,

de Nederl. Consul te Buchir de heer R.C.Keun,

en de thans verdwenen Rotterdamse Handelsvereniging en de Com-
-manditaire Bank Rensburg en van Witsen.

Bleef er tot Mei 1881, gedurende welken jaren ik twee keeren eenigen tijd in Nederland doorbracht. Was sedert in Perzië in 1890/91, 1892/93 en in 1898. Mijne reizen in 1890 en 1892 geschieden in opdracht van de Imperial Bank of Persia ter behandeling van zaken met het Perzische Gouvernement betreffende leening en den aanleg van wegen. Hierdoor en om andere redenen kwam ik in voortdurende aanraking met de Ministers te Teheran en de Gouverneurs der Provinciën en bleef met hen en de vertegenwoordigers van Perzië in Europa steeds op vertrouwelijk voet.

Maakte herhaaldelijk lange reizen door Perzië in nagenoeg alle richtingen en heb mij steeds veel bezig gehouden met studie over de literatuur van dat land, waarover ik artikels schreef in tijdschriften (Aardrijkskundig Genootsch., Economist, Society of Arts, enz.)

Was verschillende keeren in Rusland en besprak met den Minister van Financien Witte en den Gouverneur van de Staatsbank, aan wie de Russische Gezant te Teheran mij aanbevelingsbrieven had meegegeven, de beste wijze om, door bemiddeling mijner firma's, de Russische handel in Perzie te ontwikkelen. Dit leidde tot de ondertee-

Figure 1. The first page of a letter written by Albert Hotz, in October 1904, outlining his career in Persia. The letter is preserved in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (catalogue reference. 2.05.38), B-149, no. 1381, © The National Archives of Netherlands, the Hague.

collection of watercolour paintings, which form the focus of this contribution. The images of these paintings were published in their entirety in 2013, but the collection has never been thoroughly studied or catalogued.⁵ The present catalogue aims to fill this gap.

The Hotz painting collection contains eleven sets of 247 Persian watercolours and one set of nineteen Chinese pith paintings.⁶ The Persian artworks are gouaches/watercolours on richly coloured paper dating from the mid-1870s to the early 1880s, a significant proportion of which were probably made in Tehran. The artworks vary in size. Some folios have watermarks and others have embossed stamps. The subjects of the paintings vary widely, from scenes of everyday life to ceremonies, entertainment, professions, or flora and fauna, as well as a few scenes from the *Shahnama*. These paintings offer a panorama of Persian life in the Qajar period, depicting musical instruments, dance, eating habits, the legal system, medicine, customs, and fashion—especially women's clothing, and beauty conventions and accessories.

During the Qajar period, relations between Persia and the West were expanded. In particular, the fourth Qajar king, Nasir al-Din Shah (r. 1848-1896), made three official visits to Europe in 1873, 1878, and 1889. Likewise, in the nineteenth century, Westerners flocked to Persia for a variety of reasons. Throughout their stays, they were fascinated by Persian art. In response to this intense interest, a flourishing art market developed, the Hotz case being an example par excellence.⁷