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- 1 The article deals with a very interesting “historical riddle”, that is, the presence in a palace of Palermo of a large painting showing the battle of Čālderān between the Safavids and Ottomans (1514). On the basis of its “mannerist style” (p. 67), Galletti dates the painting to the years between 1580 and the first half of the 17th century, although she considers the end of the 16th as the most likely hypothesis. She also submits that the painter might be either a Sicilian or a Northern European artist. After an *excursus* on the palace itself and the aristocratic families that owned it, Galletti describes the painting, which, in the tradition of battle paintings of that period, offers both a general view of the battlefield and one of the most important phases of the clash. The author also transcribes and translates the captions to the painting (written in Italian), which were heavily damaged by 19th century restorations. Details of the composition and the numbers of the Ottoman forces make her think that the writer of the captions may have been an eyewitness to the battle or have based himself on a “source directe” (p. 72). This seems, however, to be contradicted by the author’s own remark that the captions follow the account of Paolo Giovio, who mistakenly placed Šāh Esmā‘īl I in the left wing of the Safavid army. Moreover, the reproduction of the painting included in the article shows the Ottoman artillery but does not seem to show the gun-carriages which were so famously employed at Čālderān. Unfortunately, the archival sources did not allow the author to establish when the painting came to the palace, and whether it was ordered or purchased by a member of the family or acquired through marriage. However, the author was not able to peruse the private archives of all the potentially relevant families, which might still yield the answer: therefore she concludes that for the time being, “toutes les hypothèses sont plausibles” (p. 69). Likewise unanswered remains the “question fondamentale”, that is, who would have been interested in

celebrating the Ottoman Sultan in Palermo with such a painting and why (p. 69). Unfortunately, the author does not really try to answer this. For instance, she does not mention possible analogies or connections between the painting and an early 16th century Italian epic poem written in honour of Selim I (cf. Emilio Lippi, “1517: l’ottava al servizio del Sultano”, *Quaderni veneti* 34, 2001, pp. 49-88, listed in the bibliography of the article). She also does not mention a possible connection with the Ottoman *Kapudan Paşa* and Grand Vizier Scipione Cicala/Çiğalazade Sinan Paşa (d. 1606), who was born in Messina (Sicily): starting from the early 1590s (that is, the period when, according to the author, the painting is more likely to have been produced) Sinan Paşa was the target of repeated Spanish and Papal overtures, and he even called at the port of Messina with the Ottoman fleet in 1598 in order to meet his mother. Finally, one should not rule out the possibility that the painting was actually meant as a celebration of Persian valour, since Čālderān was the main engagement between the Safavids and Ottomans before Šāh ‘Abbās I restarted the war in 1603 (which could therefore be a *terminus ad quem* for the completion of the painting). From this point of view (the painting of a battle as a good omen for future victories), a parallel to the painting in Palermo might be found in Andrea Paribeni, “Una testimonianza iconografica della battaglia di Ankara (1402) in Apollonio di Giovanni”, in : Michele Bernardini, ed., *Europa e Islam tra i secoli XIV e XVI*, a. o. (Naples 2002), vol. I, pp. 427-441 (not listed in the bibliography).

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qājārs

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