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Qajar painting in the second half of the nineteenth century and realism

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QAJAR PAINTING IN THE SECOND HALF OF
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND
REALISM

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Art and Humanities
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Mahshid Modares

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ABSTRACT

QAJAR PAINTING IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND REALISIM

by Mahshid Modares

Artists of the Qajar period in the first half of the nineteenth century in Iran exhibited an interest in European paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque periods in response to the enthusiasm of patrons. In the second half of the nineteenth century, changes in artistic viewpoints were caused by social and cultural transformations, the presence of European artists at the Qajar courts, Iranian artists traveling to the West, and advances in photography and lithography. These influences resulted in Qajar painting becoming more realistic in style and subject matter. The artists focused on expressing real events, the lives of ordinary people, individual figures with distinct characteristics, and realistic nature popular in nineteenth-century Europe. Meanwhile, some elements in Qajar painting continued to be influenced by the traditional visual arts from the earlier Safavid time, resulting in an eclectic and highly distinctive art that was unique in the history of Iranian painting.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents,
Ozra Mehrpasand and Ali Modaresi,
and my husband, Siamak Beheshti.

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Introduction

The Qajar dynasty ruled Iran from 1795 until 1925, a time during which Iran came face to face with the growth of European imperialistic powers and their interest in Iran. This thesis presents an investigation into Qajar painting in Iran from the early nineteenth century until the 1906–1907 Constitutional Movement. It proposes to demonstrate that European contact introduced Iranian artists and their patrons to Western art, particularly that of the Renaissance and Baroque periods and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, European Realism, which became known in Iran as the European realistic style of painting. The effects of this East–West contact may be observed in the military, political, economic, social, and cultural events of the Qajar period, thus making its art an interesting subject for study. It should be noted that this examination of Qajar painting does not include the influence of Russian artists on Qajar canvases or the art of the early eighteenth century dynasties, the Zand and the Afshariyeh, in which the later Qajar style has some roots. Neither is the very early Qajar period discussed, nor the history of painting between 1907 and 1925, the time of the fall of the Qajar Dynasty. Also, of minimal interest for the present study are the traditional arts, such as works known as *Gol-o-Bulbol* paintings (the rose and the nightingale), or paintings on pen boxes, caskets, mirror cases, mirrors, and glass. However, examples of murals, carpets, and tiles are mentioned in support of this study.

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European collectors were attracted to the traditional decorative arts of the Qajar, such as painted pen boxes and

other novelties, but they showed little interest in Qajar painting. The first Qajar paintings presented in Europe were mostly figurative oil paintings of Fath Ali Shah, the second Qajar shah, that were presented as gifts to European politicians or were sent to European kings as mementos. One of the earliest examples is an 1806 oil entitled *Portrait of Fath Ali Shah on the Throne* by the court artist Mehr Ali. This painting was given to Pierre Ame de Jaubert, Napoleon's ambassador to Iran, and was later kept in the Versailles Palace.¹ Naser-al-Din Shah, the fourth Qajar shah, continued this tradition, for instance, rewarding Jules Laurens, the French artist, with four canvases in 1848, which the artist took to his native town of Carpentras, France. After his death, the paintings were donated to the Duplessis Museum in Carpentras.² In the twentieth century more Qajar paintings found their way into museums—the most important of which were the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Tiflis Museum in today's T'bilisi, the capital of Georgia, and the Louvre Museum in Paris³—and in galleries and private collections, such as that of the American Islamic art collector Doris Duke (1912–1993), who purchased canvases in the 1940s, and the Amery collection, which houses the largest collection of Qajar paintings. Major Harold Amery, an English politician who served in Sudan and Egypt, and his brother Leopold S. Amery (1873–1955), the British Secretary of State in India and a writer, purchased sixty-three Qajar paintings between 1900 and 1914.⁴ In the 1970s, all the paintings in the Amery collection were purchased by Farah Diba Pahlavi, the last Pahlavi queen of Iran.⁵ These paintings are currently preserved in the Sa'adabad Museum in Tehran.

In the past decade, the foremost exhibitions of Qajar paintings were in the United

States, England, and Iran. Sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum of Art and organized by Leyla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiyar, an exhibit of Qajar paintings toured museums in Los Angeles, New York, and London in 1998–1999. The catalogue for this exhibition comprised of articles and discussions by scholars on different aspects of Qajar painting.⁶ Another important event was an exhibition dedicated to the history of book illustration in Iran, held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in the summer of 2005. One of the exhibited books was *The Thousand and One Nights*, illustrated by Sani-al-Molk, Naser-al-Din Shah's court artist. This gave scholars an opportunity to study one of the last hand-painted books of the Qajar period with illustrations that contain the main characteristics of Qajar painting.⁷ The most recent exhibitions of late Qajar paintings was at the Niavaran Artistic Creations Foundation, in Tehran, in May of 2005.⁸

These exhibitions have given art historians an opportunity to study Qajar painting, which had become a subject of Western interest from the second half of the nineteenth century. One of the art collectors who left valuable information about the arts of the time and enriched the South Kensington Museum (the present Victoria and Albert Museum) in London with Iranian artifacts was Sir Robert Murdoch Smith (1835–1900). While working in the telegraph department in Tehran in the 1870s, he collected and sent Qajar paintings and other artifacts to the South Kensington Museum.⁹ His efforts resulted in an exhibition of not only Qajar paintings, but also many other works of art in that museum in 1876.¹⁰ In his book *Persian Art*, which was published in the same year, he states that Arabs “were probably never an artistic people,” yet, Iranians “never lost their taste for ... representations of actual natural objects.”¹¹ Such an inaccurate and prejudiced statement

limits the value of Smith's theories for art historians of the twenty-first century; however, since he is one of the individuals who was present in Iran in the late nineteenth century and witnessed the artistic activities in Iran, his accounts remain important to any study of Qajar painting.

Qajar painting became a subject for more serious discussion in the second half of the twentieth century. The most significant studies in Qajar painting were done by B. W. Robinson, who published his books and articles from the 1960s until 1998.¹² In his article "Painting in Iran During Qajar Epoch," Robinson states that many Qajar paintings cannot be considered high art and are not at the same artistic level as the art of the Safavid period. However, Robinson believes that Qajar paintings are delightful, simple, and specific to their period. He states that collectors and scholars should distinguish between works of poor quality and paintings by admirable artists such as Sani-al-Molk.¹³ In his most recent studies, Robinson declares that Qajar painting can be studied from a psychoanalytical point of view since they were created to give pleasure and contain "spiritual aspirations"; continuing the traditional themes of the Safavid and the Timurid periods, Qajar paintings illustrate "royal magnificence, youthful beauty of both sexes, love of animal forms, and the exploits of heroes."¹⁴

Richard Ettinghausen (1906–1979), a well-known scholar of Islamic art, takes a different approach when discussing the art of the Qajar period. In his article "World Awareness and Human Relationships in Iranian Painting", Ettinghausen mentions that Qajar portrait painting revealed some deeply sinister psychological aspects, even a capacity for evil, matching perhaps the work of the Romantic Francisco de Goya (1746-

1828), the Spanish artist, in the West. Ettinghausen also feels that the well-to-do Iranian middle class, in its attempt to mimic the taste of the court, preferred “rather realistic renditions of landscape and gardens,”¹⁵ as well as elegant domestic interiors. He claims that Qajar art incorporated a “wave of foreign influence”¹⁶ similar to that seen in Chinoiserie backgrounds so popular in Western art at the time. Curiously, he also claims that Iranian landscape painting was the most difficult genre for Iranian artists, “probably because much of the Iranian countryside was so forbidding.”¹⁷

Layla S. Diba, an Iranian scholar, agrees with Robinson and Ettinghausen in the importance of psychological values of Qajar paintings and in the “sociohistorical significance” of figure paintings commissioned by the monarchs, whose intentions were to strengthen dynastic power.¹⁸ In her essay “Images of Power and the Power of Images”, Diba briefly explains that painting and other forms of image making were not limited to the personal view of one particular Qajar ruler; rather, “it was the artistic component of a concerted policy of cultural revival and political propaganda intended to equate the Qajar rulers with the glorious Persian Past.”¹⁹ Diba’s main focus in this essay is the portrait and figure paintings of the first half of the nineteenth century, which, she claims, should be studied as the continuation of traditional figural imagery seen mostly in the mural paintings created in previous centuries.²⁰

In a catalog of an exhibit of Qajar paintings in Brunei Gallery, London, in 1999, the scholar Julian Raby analyzes portraits of the Qajar shahs, specifically by Mehr Ali and Mirza Baba, the chief artists of Fath Ali Shah’s court. She explains how these two artists and their disciples continued “borrowing ideas from Europe and the Ottomans” to

indicate “dynastic legitimacy” and the shahs’ supremacy. Raby believes that some core examples of this period, such as paintings by Mehr Ali, are not derived from the imagery of ancient Iran to which other scholars link them. Rather, the source was European contemporary painting. The example she suggests is a canvas by Mihr Ali dated 1809–1810 titled *Fath Ali Shah Standing with a Scepter*, which according to Raby is based on several versions of *Napoleon in His Imperial Robes* painted between 1805 and 1806.²¹ Moreover, Raby divides portraiture into two forces: the mimetic and the semantic. She believes “the emphasis under Fath Ali Shah is semantic,” which is prescriptive and indicates aspirations to record “the Shah’s majesty and masculinity.”²² During Naser-al-Din Shah’s rule this discipline becomes shifted to creating mimetic images, which are descriptive and record appearance. Some human figure paintings by Kamal-al-Molk (1848–1941) are examples of descriptive realism.

In her book *Persian Painting*, Sheila R. Canby, a contemporary British scholar, reflects on the continuing Europeanizing of art seen in Qajar painting, especially in the reign of Naser-al-Din Shah, and how photography affected portrait painting. She discusses that, although the foundations of the Qajar style were established in the late eighteenth century, painting continued to develop during the reigns of Fath Ali Shah, Mohammad Shah, and Naser-al-Din Shah to achieve, as she calls it, “the last efflorescence” of Persian painting.²³

The Iranian scholar Ruin Pakbaz, in contrast, focuses on the essential role of Qajar rulers and princes as the major patrons and leaders of the painting movement. He states in his book *Painting in Iran from Ancient Time to Present* that Qajar artists were dealing

with the conflict between Western painting as the “new art” and traditional Iranian art as the “old art.” Pakbaz believes that five generations of Iranian artists studied European realistic painting, and the final result was the victory of Western art. He also claims that the last great artist of the Qajar period, Kamal-al-Molk, found the traditional Iranian art useless for his time, refusing to continue traditional Iranian image making, and instead adopting European realistic painting in an attempt to be modern.²⁴ Also, a recent work, *Life and Works of Sani’ol-Molk, 1814–1866*, by Iranian art historian, Yahya Zoka (1923–2000), examines the life of Sani-al-Molk; Zoka has brought to light influential new scholarship on this talented artist.²⁵

This thesis provides a more detailed analysis of and a different approach to understanding the Qajar artists’ journeys in experimenting with new features in painting and creating a school of Realism in Iran. Based on the observations, in this thesis the history of painting in the Qajar period is divided into two periods: early, from early nineteenth century until about 1840, and late, from the 1840s until about 1906–1907. Chapter One summarizes the history of the Qajar dynasty, reviewing the cultural and social changes of the nineteenth century as the foundation for alterations in painting. Chapter Two discusses characteristics of Qajar painting and compares some examples from the early period to those of the late period. It also traces the impact of European art as well as the roots of Qajar painting in Safavid art and the continuation of Safavid traditional imagery in the nineteenth-century Qajar works, particularly in terms of the choice of subject matter and composition. This chapter, moreover, explains the vital role of patrons in the changes seen in religious and secular art. Chapter Three discusses the

movement in Iranian painting and the ways in which European art and new technical inventions eased this process.

This study, therefore, aims to demonstrate that while Qajar painting in the nineteenth century was a direct continuation of the Safavid art of the seventeenth century, it would eventually become more analogous to a new style because of the social and cultural changes occurring within Qajar Iranian society, which resulted in the adoption of Realism in art. Because Iranian artists of these previous periods had already experimented with some of the qualities of a more modern style, the artists of the second half of the nineteenth century took advantage of the Iranian–European relationship to become familiar with new European movements, which they studied carefully, adopting some Western stylistic features to create their own distinctive Iranian style. The presence of European artists in Iran, travel by Iranian artists and students to Europe, the opening of European-style art schools in Iran, the techniques of photography and lithography, the demands by patrons for artwork in the newer styles, and the social and cultural changes all accelerated the process of absorbing Realism, although the artists of that era never thought of their style as the foundation of a new school of Realism. Their style became known in Iranian society as European realistic painting. Sam Hunter, John Jacobus, and Daniel Wheeler define Realism in *Modern Art* as “a reaction against vagueness and escapism that insisted upon acknowledging the fact of life in an art of suitable thematic and formal frankness.”²⁶ Iranian artists, too, established an art that represented their independency, individuality, the real life of middle-class and lower class people, and social changes. They recognized their sentiments and thoughts toward their subject

matter and they eventually led art to a new phase.

Endnotes

- ¹ Yves Porter, "Persian Art and Art Collections in France," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranica.com/articles/v10f2/v10f216h.html> (accessed October 29, 2005). According to the author the Versailles Museum lent this canvas to the Louvre Museum.
- ² Porter 2005. "Laurens was the illustrator for the scientific mission led by Xavier Hommaire de Hell; the drawings illustrating his travels were published in 1859. The Qajar paintings, along with some of his own compositions (including two entitled *The Ashraf Gardens* and *The Roofs of Isfahan*) were donated to his native city after his death."
- ³ "Background of Modern Iranian Painting," *Farhangsara Niyavaran*, <http://www.farhangsara.com/paint-article.htm> (accessed October 29, 2005).
- ⁴ See Doris Duke's Shangri La Foundation for Islamic Arts, http://www.shangrilahawaii.org/search-results_multi.asp?newaction=advanced_multi_searchrequest&rawsearch=Collection/./is/./WEBQajararts/./false (accessed November 1, 2005). Also see S. J. Falk., ed., *Qajar Paintings: A Catalogue of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Paintings* (Tehran: The Private Secretariat of Farah Pahlavi, 1973), 6.
- ⁵ B. W. Robinson, "Persian Painting in the Qajar Period," in *Highlights of Persian Art*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater and Richard Ettinghausen (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1979), 331.
- ⁶ See Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar, eds., *Royal Persian Paintings, The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998). About one hundred canvases from the Safavid, Zand, Afshariyeh, and Qajar periods toured New York, Los Angeles, and London. This exhibition was held in the Brooklyn Museum of Art from October 23, 1998, to January 24, 1999. The Armand Hammer Museum of Art and Cultural Center in Los Angeles hosted these canvases from February through May 1999; the paintings were exhibited in the Brunei Gallery, London, from July 6 until September 30, 1999.
- ⁷ See "Master Pieces of Persian Painting," Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, <http://www.tehranmoca.com/exhibition/previous.htm> (accessed November 1, 2005). The life and works of Sani-al-Molk will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three.
- ⁸ See Niavaran Artistic Creations Foundation, Tehran, http://nacfiran.com/News_e.htm (accessed November 1, 2005).

- ⁹ See Robert Murdoch Smith, *Persian Art* (New York: Scribner, Welford, and Armstrong, 1877).
- ¹⁰ Smith 1877, 54 and 58. At least six oil and watercolor paintings were exhibited, one of which was a life-size figure of Fath Ali Shah in oil on calico painted in the early nineteenth century.
- ¹¹ Smith 1877, 4. The British scholar Dr. Francesca Vanke analyzes Smith's point of view about Persian art and how it shaped the Islamic art collection in the museum and the patronage of the time in her paper "Acquisition and Attribution: Robert Murdoch Smith and Persian Art Collecting at South Kensington," *Camberwell College of Arts*, No. 12, <http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/collections/research/victorians/abstracts/greatexhibition.doc> (accessed October 5, 2005).
- ¹² See B. W. Robinson, *Persian Drawings from the 14th through the 19th Century: Drawings of the Master* (New York: Shorewood Publishers Inc., 1965). Also see B. W. Robinson, "Qajar Paintings: A Personal Reminiscence," introduction to *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch, 1785–1925*, edited by Leyla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998).
- ¹³ B. W. Robinson, "Painting in Iran During Qajar Epoch," in *Highlights of Persian Art*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater and Richard Ettinghausen (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1979), 331–332 and 361.
- ¹⁴ Robinson 1998, 12–13.
- ¹⁵ Richard Ettinghausen, "World Awareness and Human Relationships in Iranian Painting," in *Highlights of Persian Art*, edited by Ehsan Yarshater and Richard Ettinghausen (Boulder: Westview Press Inc., 1979), 269.
- ¹⁶ Ettinghausen 1979, 269.
- ¹⁷ Ettinghausen 1979, 270.
- ¹⁸ Layla S. Diba, "Images of Power and the Power of Images," in *Royal Persian Paintings, The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)*, edited by Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 31.
- ¹⁹ Diba 1998, 31.
- ²⁰ Diba 1998, 31–32.
- ²¹ See the images in Julian Raby, *Qajar Portraits* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 12–13.

- ²² Raby 1999, 11–18.
- ²³ Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting*, 3rd ed. (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 119–124.
- ²⁴ Ruin Pakbaz, *Naghashi Iran az Dirbaz ta Emrouz* (Painting in Iran from Ancient Time to Present) (Tehran: Zarin & Simin Publication, 2001), 11, 169–173.
- ²⁵ See Yahya Zoka, *Zendegi va Asar-e Ostad Sani'ol-Molk* (Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866) (Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 2003).
- ²⁶ Sam Hunter, John Jacobus, and Daniel Wheeler, *Modern Art*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2000), 15.

**Chapter One:
A Short History of the Qajar Monarchs:
Social, Political, and Cultural Alterations**

The nineteenth century in Iran marked one of the most complicated periods in its history. For the majority of Iranian people, the nineteenth century was a time of agony, starvation, torture, and war. Social and political changes occurred relatively quickly in a society capable of making rational judgments about social necessities. Perhaps for the first time Iranians started questioning both the monarchy and the judiciary system that was supposed to be based on Islamic laws; but these laws were not truly practiced by the government. The presence of individuals from European countries in Iran, on the one hand, became an obstruction to economic and political progress, while on the other hand, it provided a tool for finding new solutions. Artists reacted to these shifts, too. They investigated the art of Europe in search of different ideas and techniques to expand their visual-stylistic toolbox. And, art was no longer limited to the aristocrats, although they remained the primary patrons. Iranian artists started communicating with the needs of the growing bourgeoisie as well.

Two significant events related to the development of art in the history of Iran may be cited. The first was the 1507 Portuguese attack on the Island of Hormuz, in the Persian Gulf. Since Shah Ismail (who ruled from 1501 to 1524), the Safavid ruler, lacked a strong navy, he requested assistance from the British to repel the invaders. The British benefited from such a request because it not only reduced Portuguese power in the Persian Gulf, a strategic area in the Middle East, but also provided Britain with the

treaties that established its de facto authority over Iran for the next four centuries. The other significant historical event was the 1514 Battle of Chaldiran, fought in northwestern Iran between Shah Ismail I and the Caliph of the Ottoman Empire (1453–1922), Sultan Selim I (who ruled from 1512 to 1520). Shah Ismail I was defeated primarily because of his lack of advanced military equipment. The Ottoman army was equipped with the latest European military advances such as muskets and artillery, whereas the Safavid soldiers fought with bows and swords.¹

The battle of Chaldiran was a turning point in the history of Iran. Shah Ismail I was convinced that fundamental military changes were needed to maintain his power. To discourage further Ottoman attacks, the Safavid shah saw no alternative but to turn to Europe for new military technology. This, in turn, resulted in further dependence on Europe.² The differences in attitude between the Safavid and Qajar rulers, however, rests on the fact that, even though the Safavid rulers realized they needed the new military technology to survive, they were aware and proud of their strength in philosophy, religion, science, culture, art, and morality. Nonetheless, the sovereigns of the Qajar period, from the time of the second monarch, Fath Ali Shah, viewed themselves as politically and militarily inferior, believing that the West should be their role model in almost all aspects of life, even in clothing and social manners. This belief rendered the country susceptible to European influences. Although these influences were harmful economically and politically, they did create a fruitful environment for exchanges in art and science and the introduction of new technology. Iranian artists benefited from exposure to European achievements in the West, and many European artists found

Iranian art and culture fascinating, using Eastern motifs, which were considered foreign and, therefore, exotic, in their works.

The Qajar Dynasty had overseen Iran from 1795 until 1925. In older sources, the Qajars are described as one of the tribes of the Mongols.³ Because Qajar rulers spent their summers in Sultaniyeh near Tabriz, in northwest Iran,⁴ which was the capital of the Ilkhanid dynasty of the Mongol rulers in Iran (1258–1370), this made such a theory more credible. However, according to Ali Modaresi, a contemporary historian in Iran, there is no document to attest to the fact that Qajar roots go back to the Mongols or the Ilkhans. In fact, research suggests that the Qajars were a tribe of Turks who lived north of Ghafghaz, a region in the northwest of Iran, and emigrated to Central Asia in the fourteenth century. What makes many historians believe the Qajars were descendents of the Mongols is that the Mongol rulers, who captured Central Asia, chose one of the khans of the Qajar tribe to rule over a part of their new lands, from Rayy to Jayhoun.⁵ Agha Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, was the eldest son of the chief of that tribe, Mohammad Hassan.⁶

When the shahs of the Afsharid Dynasty (1736–1749) ruled Iran,⁷ Agha Mohammad Khan's father attacked Astarabad, in the Khurasan region in northeast Iran. Ali Gholi, Nader Shah's successor, failed to defeat him but detained his teenaged sons, Agha Mohammad Khan and his brother, ordering the castration of Agha Mohammad Khan before freeing the two brothers.⁸ Mohammad Hassan was finally killed by the Zand army⁹ in 1759 and his sons took refuge in Shiraz, the Zand capital. Karim Khan, the founder of the Zand Dynasty, never treated Agha Mohammad Khan as a refugee and

an enemy; instead, the ruler greeted him as an honored prince¹⁰ and took him to his court, where Agha Mohammad Khan lived for sixteen years. When the Qajar prince, while hunting outside of Shiraz, heard of Karim Khan's death in 1779, he did not return to the court but moved toward Isfahan in central Iran and continued moving north to reach the Turkish tribes. In each region, he captured cities and expanded his territory into the northern part of Iran.

For ten years, Agha Mohammad Khan unified the Qajar tribes and overpowered the major cities, including Shiraz, bringing an end to the rule of the Zand Dynasty. However, the Qajar prince favored Tehran in the north as his capital and was enthroned in 1788. He chose Baba Khan, his nephew, who became known as Fath Ali Shah, as heir to the throne¹¹ and the governor of Fars, Kerman, and Yazd in southern and central Iran.¹² The Qajar monarch was greedy, brutal, controlling, and pessimistic; he killed many of his relatives, most heads of the tribes, and the foremost figures of the remaining Safavid and Zand princes, philosophers, and governors, all to ensure his security. But such a brutality did not save the ruler's life; two of his servants stabbed him to death in 1799. Agha Mohammad Khan spent twenty years at war to add lands to the territory of the Qajar dynasty and left detailed written advice for his nephew, Fath Ali Shah, about the steps to maintaining power.

Fath Ali Shah (1797–1834) spent his time attempting to change his tribal behavior and to bring it in line with the manners of the previous shahs of Iran. He married princesses from different tribes to keep them unified, as well as the daughters of merchants and important families from each region.¹³ He commissioned palaces and

mosques and their related artwork, such as their tiling, stone reliefs, murals, and paintings. Unlike his uncle, he recognized the chief values of government functionaries who had already worked for the Zand dynasty and who were familiar with the ruling system in Iran; the monarch brought them to his court and gave them governmental positions. He also understood the supremacy of the Shi'ite clergy and their authority in society. Fath Ali Shah attempted to meet their demands by offering them lands and gifts and he recognized their command over the Islamic judicial system.¹⁴ He and his descendents continued their practice of Shi'ite beliefs and introduced themselves as the shahs of justice who were familiar with their Islamic duties. Fath Ali Shah's policies, in hiring the government functionaries from the previous dynasty and introducing himself as the shah of the Shi'ite world, became a fundamental practice of the Qajar ruling system.

In addition to this system of government and the recognition of Shi'a beliefs as the main religion, there was a third factor: European culture. Its powerful tools weakened indigenous government practices and religion. European culture, introduced to Iran during the Safavid period¹⁵ (1502–1736), became dominant in the Qajar epoch due to the direct political and economic control of England and Russia, as well as the royal courts' belief in the superiority of Western civilization and its interest in European culture and technology. An economic crisis in Iran led to the country's dependence on Europe. Fath Ali Shah was incapable of managing the economy or trade. Fath Ali Shah's prince-governors, continuing an old tribal habit, took their share of the taxation revenue and sent the rest of the levied money to the capital to be used by the shah and his court.¹⁶ Moreover, the endless battles among small tribes¹⁷ along the borders of the east and

northeast made trade impossible in those areas. Major southern ports and the Persian Gulf were essentially controlled by England, and trade was more profitable for England than for Iran. Therefore, Tabriz, located in the northwest, was the primary active city for trade with the Ottomans¹⁸ (1453–1922) and a gateway to other European countries such as Italy, France, Germany, Portugal, and Austria. The province of Azerbaijan and its capital, Tabriz, became the core district. It was where the crown princes of the dynasty lived and from where they governed Azerbaijan.

Besides his failure in supervising the economy, Fath Ali Shah was also deficient in international political relationships. For instance, he did not support his crown prince, Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), and his minister, Ghaem Magham Farahani, in preventing Peter the Great, the emperor of Russia, from taking advantage of Iran's weakened condition in the Russia–Iran wars of 1804–1813 and 1827–1828—wars largely fought over the most fertile lands of Iran.¹⁹ The south, too, was threatened and insecure as a consequence of English ships landing in the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea, guarding the English flank to retain dominance over India. In fact, as historian Abbas Amanat states in his book *Pivot of the Universe: Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy*, the great game of Russia and England monitoring and restraining the Middle East became the pivotal crisis for Iran in the Qajar epoch;²⁰ their primary tool was to keep Iran economically and politically weak.²¹

The political and economic dependence on England and Russia were not the only influences that led Iran toward westernization. Qajar shahs and aristocrats deeply believed in Europe's superiority in civilization and technology. As the leading patrons of

schools and the educational system, they transferred such a belief to the people. The Qajar monarchs and aristocrats, therefore, focused their attention on European culture by visiting Europe, sending their sons and talented students there to study, opening European-style schools in Iran, hiring European teachers, importing new inventions, translating books, and even wearing European-style clothing, which became more fashionable after the time of Fath Ali Shah. With the permission of the ruler, Abbas Mirza sent the first students to England,²² and then he reorganized the army based on the French military. Unfortunately, the crown prince's ambitions to introduce major changes based on Western technology came to an end with his sudden sickness and death in 1833.²³

Fath Ali Shah chose Mohammad, son of Abbas Mirza, as the crown prince. Mohammad and his brothers were very well educated; their father had hired tutors to teach them Farsi literature,²⁴ the Arabic language, the fundamentals of the Shi'ite religion, and calligraphy. Abbas Mirza also urged his sons to become familiar with European culture and its achievements in technology.²⁵ Fath Ali Shah died one year after Abbas Mirza, and Mohammad was crowned king in Tehran in 1834. One of the main political events of his time was his 1838 march to Herat, a part of Khurasan in the northeast, to overcome the Afghan tribe that had continued attacking this area. Immediately, England sent its troops to the Persian Gulf and conquered Khark Island and the port of Boushehr forcing the monarch to bring his troops back from Herat.²⁶ Such events made Iran appear powerless, thus encouraging Russia and England to enforce more vigorously further restrictive treaties.

Unable to analyze or change the political aspirations of England and Russia, Mohammad Shah searched for possible changes in other areas. He invited European politicians, travelers, and artists to his court,²⁷ and he sent several groups of students to France to study sugar and textile manufacturing.²⁸ He showed great interest in bringing inventions to Iran; these included photography, which reached Iran in 1844.²⁹ Mohammad Shah ordered a ninety-page book about Napoleon Bonaparte in French and Farsi.³⁰ Moreover, the monarch even allowed a French lady to become the nurse and tutor of the crown prince, Naser-al-Din Mirza, and his sister, as well as hiring a second French teacher for the prince.³¹ Like other Qajar monarchs, Mohammad Shah did not realize that such achievements were not as constructive as changing the whole educational system.³² But his endeavor signified him as a ruler who brought Western culture and technology into Iran.

After the death of Mohammad Shah in 1848, his son, Naser-al-Din Mirza, became the ruler. Naser-al-Din Shah had even more enthusiasm for European culture than his father. In the first years of his rule, the monarch's first minister and chief commander of the military, Amir Kabir, took advantage of Naser-al-Din Shah's interest in Western improvements and started instigating fundamental changes in the educational system. Amir Kabir was a key figure in the Qajar epoch and understood the requirement for changes in the judicial system, the government, the military, the economy, and certainly in education. The first step was opening Dar-al-Fonoun School (The Polytechnic School of Skills), the first school in Iran for the new sciences of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³³

It is crucial to note that this school was not the first school in Iran. Schools were always a part of the educational system of the country. John Chardin (1643–1813), the philosopher and traveler who twice traveled to Iran during the Safavid period, mentions that the royal family and aristocrats hired tutors to train their children, but ordinary people sent their children to school twice a day.³⁴ By the end of the Safavid Dynasty, however, the materials and the style of teaching in those schools had not changed, and students were no longer exposed to new ideas in religion, philosophy, and the sciences. Moreover, the rapid changes in technology and science in Europe, on the one hand, and Iran's social catastrophes after the Safavid period, on the other, placed the country in need of recovery.

Amir Kabir adapted the idea of opening Dar-al-Fonoun School from a school in the Ottoman Empire that had the most advanced educational system of any Islamic country. Dar-al-Fonoun was officially opened in 1851.³⁵ The school, built near the main bazaar in Tehran, included classes in engineering, military education, medicine, chemistry, candle making, pharmacy, physics, mineralogy, and music. The school also included a theater for plays and music and a lithography studio for publishing schoolbooks. Later, other subjects such as history, geography, traditional medicine, mathematics, cartography, painting, Farsi, Arabic, French, and Russian were added to the curriculum.³⁶

Choosing appropriate educators for the school was a challenge. Iranian teachers were chosen both from the best of the clergy to teach religious duties, hold daily prayer, and teach Arabic and from the best physicians and scholars who studied the new sciences

in Europe. European teachers were hired from Austria, Italy, France, and the Netherlands, and the schools employed translators to translate professors' lectures for the students. The students were paid and given clothes, and the best of them were hired as teaching assistants. Dar-al-Fonoun had its own newspaper, which informed society about its achievements.³⁷ After many decades, Iran eventually began to recover because of the Dar-al-Fonoun School, whose graduates started working professionally in different fields and training the next generation.

Besides Dar-al-Fonoun, Amir Kabir opened another school at the end of the Tobacco Merchant's bazaar in Tehran to teach traditional art; the Majma'-e Dar-al-Sanayeh (The Polytechnic School of Crafts) encouraged the best artists in different traditional fields to train young talented students as well as to create artifacts for their patrons.³⁸ These two schools became models for other schools that were opened subsequently. Amir Kabir's concern for traditional art, as well as for modern technology and the sciences, reveals a man who was completely aware of the significance of keeping the roots of society alive and building a new society upon them. Although he held office under Naser-al-Din Shah for just four years, he established the basis of a high-quality educational system in Iran.

Another important improvement of this period was the publishing of newspapers, also owed to Amir Kabir; because of Naser-al-Din Shah's interest, the first weekly newspaper, *Vaghayeh Etefaghiyeh (The Happenings)*, was published in 1851. This newspaper was not Iran's first, however. Fourteen years before *Vaghayeh Etefaghiyeh*, Mirza Saleh Kazerouni, one of the students sent to Europe by Abbas Mirza, published a

monthly untitled newspaper in Tabriz from 1837. It is not clear how long he continued publishing his newspaper nor what subjects he chose, but he is given the credit of being the first Iranian reporter.³⁹ *Vaghayeh Etefaghiyeh* continued for ten years, informing people about the price of food, the government's announcements, the monarch's travels, and events in other provinces.⁴⁰ Like the schools, this newspaper played a crucial role in educating people and it led to the publication of many other newspapers. Moreover, it provided an opportunity for artists to provide lithographic images and for calligraphers, reporters, and writers to work together as their ancestors did in the book-illustrating studios in the Iranian royal courts, but with a different approach and technique.

Published in Istanbul and Izmir, two cities in the Ottomans Empire, European newspapers were available in Tabriz and Tehran as well. Thus, European politicians, travelers, and merchants were kept informed of European news.⁴¹ Always curious, Naser-al-Din Shah had someone read French newspapers to him even when traveling.⁴² In his *Safar Nameh Dovoum Khurasan (The Second Travel to Khurasan)*, the shah explained that almost every morning one of the princes read a French newspaper for the monarch while riding to Khurasan.⁴³ Naser-al-Din Shah was also eager to learn about the history and geography of the world and ordered books in French to be translated into Farsi.⁴⁴

Naser-al-Din Shah's inquisitiveness was not limited to European civilization; he loved Iranian poetry, invited poets to his court, wrote poems, and read books such as *The Thousand and One Nights*,⁴⁵ which the monarch would later commission his court artist to illustrate.⁴⁶ By inviting poets, writers, artists and architects to his court, and learning

about art, literature, history and geography, as well as allowing wise individuals such as Amir Kabir to provide the tools for cultural and educational enhancement, Naser-al-Din Shah's court nearly achieved the level of the Safavid court. Unfortunately, it was his weakness in managing the political and economic conditions of Iran that held back the country's progress and had dreadful effects on the society, resulting in an unhappy and disenfranchised populace. In the end, after ruling for fifty years, the monarch was assassinated.⁴⁷

Mozafar-al-Din Shah (1853–1907), the ill crown prince, ascended to the throne at the age of forty-three. He had neither his father's keenness for learning nor for the improvement of art and education, nor the good fortune to have great men like Amir Kabir to serve him. He inherited his ancestors' weakness in political and economic analysis and a love for the European lifestyle. He did not pay attention to the schools, even Dar-al-Fonoun, leaving its funding and management responsibilities on the shoulder of teachers, principals, and families whose sons studied at the school.⁴⁸ Moreover, his court was not interested in artists, poets, or scholars. Thus, there were few new achievements in modern or traditional arts. For example, Kamal-al-Molk (1848–1941), one of the greatest artists of the time, who founded a school dedicated to painting, carpet weaving, mosaics, and wood carving, was ignored by the shah and discouraged by the minister of education. Hopeless and offended, the artist left Tehran and the school.⁴⁹ There were, however, some positive aspects in Mozafar-al-Din Shah's regime, especially in the social and political arena.

Mozafar-al-Din Shah's weakness and ignorance of almost all the aforementioned major social and political changes encouraged people to take action. Women, for example, became socially active and requested that the government provide them with education and open schools.⁵⁰ Despite the government's and some conservative clergy's disagreement, in 1865, Safiyeh Yazdi, the wife of one of the well-known clergy,⁵¹ opened the first school for women named *Aftiyeh* and invited men and women educators to her school. She lectured in the school about women's rights and trained sixty-six young women, some of whom became teachers and principals of future schools. Eventually other women joined her and she founded the Women's Freedom Organization in 1868.⁵² It was not the first time that women showed their power and concern for social issues. They had also participated in rallies and objections against the government in Naser-al-Din Shah's reign.⁵³ This was the first time that women asked for social improvement and equal rights with men for education.

In the last years of his life, Mozafer-al-Din Shah witnessed a popular uprising against his regime that dominated Tehran and other major cities. When protesters asked for the opening of a Ministry of Justice, he immediately consented and signed the agreement written by the people. Although his ministers and some courtiers firmly objected to both the new ministry and the signature of the monarch, Mozafar-al-Din Shah preferred to do what the people favored.⁵⁴ At this point, he was wise enough to understand the social changes. Also, his travels to Europe⁵⁵ and an attraction for the European lifestyle made it easier for him to accept revolutionary ideas. The next step was the revolution of 1906–07, the Constitutional Movement, and the opening of the First

Congress in the same year. The history of the Constitutional Movement and the rule of Mohammad Ali Shah (1872–1925) and Ahmad Shah (1898–1930), the last shahs of the dynasty, however, are beyond the scope of this thesis.

The relationship between Iran and the West in the nineteenth century can be considered from three different viewpoints. There were individuals who believed that Iran must copy Europe entirely, even in clothing, to become modern while disregarding its traditional culture and religious beliefs. Some Iranian students who had lived in Europe for a while and saw themselves as backward became the main advocates for this idea. The second group consisted of conservatives who objected to any association with Europe and other social enhancements and tried to stop the enlightened activists, sometimes in the name of Islam backed by some of the clergy. The best example was their hostility toward the opening of a women's school. And finally, enlightened individuals, including activists, artists, poets, writers, clerics, politicians, merchants, and people from other groups who considered such an affiliation an opportunity to learn about Western technology, culture, and social change, followed their ancestors who had been open to other civilizations and cultures such as China, India, and the Arab world and adopted what they believed was positive for the society without harming its cultural roots; they left behind what they felt was not needed.

During the nineteenth century, the political imposition of other countries, notably England and Russia, over Iran resulted in a catastrophic situation. The wars and the persuasive influence of the English and Russians on the Qajar monarchs pushed the country into disaster, including the loss of fertile lands in the northwest, lack of control

over oil and other resources, trade failure at most borders, poverty, starvation, insecurity, and dependence on powerful foreign countries. These circumstances ignited the tension between the regime and the people, resulting in the Constitutional Movement of 1906–1907, a significant step toward independence and democracy. In this process, the French Revolution and social changes in other European countries gave Iranians self-confidence and assured them that they could revolutionize their society as well. These political changes also affected society, but in a constructive way, as people looked for new experiences in literature, the educational system, and art. Enlightened individuals, artists among them, found their way in adopting and experimenting with new ideas to transform the experiences of previous eras and let to a new stage of artistic development. These developments are the focus of the next chapter.

Endnotes

- ¹ Amir Haghghat, interview with the author, April 8, 2005.
- ² Amir Haghghat, April 8, 2005.
- ³ Hasan Fasaa'i, *Farsnameh Naseri*, translated by Herbert Busse (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1972), 1.
- ⁴ Fasaa'i 1972, 6.
- ⁵ Ali Modaresi, interview with the author, May 5, 2005.
- ⁶ Agha Mohammad Khan was from the Qavanlu, one of the clans of the Qajar tribe.
- ⁷ The Afsharid dynasty was founded by Nader Shah (1688–1747). He was a brave soldier and became the chief of the Safavid army during Shah Tahmasp II's reign. He drove the Afghans out of Khurasan in 1727 and recaptured Georgia and Armenia in 1732. Shah Tahmasp II had lost those lands in a battle with Turks in 1729. In 1736, Nader killed the Safavid princes and Shah Abbas III (1732–1740) and took the throne. In 1738, Nader Shah invaded Kandahar, Kabul, and India, killing many people and looting Indian treasures of the Mughal dynasty. Because his greed, prejudice, and cruelty could no longer be tolerated by his army and court, he was assassinated by his commanders in his sleep in 1747. Three other Afsharid shahs, Ali Gholi, Ebrahim, and Shahrokh, ruled after Nader Shah, and the Afsharid dynasty came to an end with the Zand dynasty in 1749. See "History of Iran: Afsharid," *Iran Chamber Society*, <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/afsharids/afsharids.php> (accessed September 14, 2005).
- ⁸ "Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 602–605, <http://www.iranica.com/articlenavigation/index.html> (accessed September 12, 2005).
- ⁹ Karim Khan Zand was a powerful general in Nader Shah's army. After the assassination of Nader Shah he took control of the central and southern parts of Iran, but he never called himself a shah. Being a humble, merciful, and wise leader, Karim Khan chose the title of Vakil-al-Ro'aya (the Senate of People) for himself. Until 1760, he controlled all of Iran except Khurasan, which remained under the control of the last shah of the Afsharid dynasty, Shahrokh. Karim Khan chose Shiraz, in the south, as his capital and invited artists, scholars, poets, and philosophers to his court. He also decreased taxes, rebuilt the cities, activated trade, and started a relationship with Western countries by allowing the English East India Company to found a trading center in Bushehr by the Persian Gulf. In 1775, he attacked Basra, a port at the northwest of the Persian Gulf that

was controlled by Ottomans. Karim Khan died in 1779. His successor, Lotf Ali Khan, spent his entire governance waging war with Agha Mohammad Khan and was finally killed in 1794. See “History of Iran: Zand,” *Iran Chamber Society*, <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/afsharids/afsharids.php> (accessed September 14, 2005).

- ¹⁰ Karim Khan settled the Qavanlu clan of the Qajar tribe in Damghan, in the Semnan region between Tehran and Khurasan, and encouraged Agha Mohammad Khan to urge the remaining refugees to improve. See “Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 602–605, <http://www.iranica.com/articlenavigation/index.html> (accessed September 12, 2005).
- ¹¹ Since Agha Mohammad Khan was castrated, he was unable to sire a son as the heir to the throne and the rest of the dynasty was transferred to his brother’s family.
- ¹² “Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 602–605, <http://www.iranica.com/articlenavigation/index.html> (accessed September 12, 2005).
- ¹³ Abbas Amanat, *Ghebleh A’lam: Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar va Padeshahi Iran (Pivot of the Universe: Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy)*, translated by Hassan Kamshad (Tehran: Karnameh Publishers, 2004), 40.
- ¹⁴ Amanat 2004, 41–42.
- ¹⁵ The Safavid period will be discussed in the Chapter Two in more detail.
- ¹⁶ Amanat 2004, 42–43.
- ¹⁷ Those tribes were Turkmen, Afghans, and Balouches who lived in Herat, Kandehar, Balouchestan, Makran, Bokhara, and Marv. They attacked small villages and sometimes cities, destroying them and taking their people to sell as slaves. Such situations continued until the end of the Qajar dynasty. See Amanat 2004, 53.
- ¹⁸ These are the powerful Sunni rulers who governed Turkey, Syria, northern regions of today’s Iraq, some parts of Africa, Palestine, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.
- ¹⁹ Abbas Mirza, the crown prince, was the chief commander in those two wars and lost both battles. Fath Ali Shah agreed to sign the Treaty of Golestan in 1813 and the Treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828, both of which were written by the Russians. In the first treaty, Iran recognized Georgia and most of the north Caucasus region as the lands of Russia. In the second treaty, Russia forced the ruler to recognize Russia’s dominion over the entire region north of the Aras River, today’s Armenia and the Republic of Azarbaijan. See “History of Iran: Fath Ali Shah

Qajar,” *Iran Chamber Society*,
<http://www.iranchamber.com/history/qajar/qajar.php> (accessed September 14, 2005).

Ghaem Magham Farahani was the minister and chancellor of Abbas Mirza. He and his father, Mirza Issa, served Abbas Mirza for twenty years, advising him in his political and cultural decisions. Ghaem Magham Farahani was one of the first politicians who understood the necessity of fundamental changes in the Iranian military and education system, improving the sciences and supporting Abbas Mirza in those achievements. When Abbas Mirza’s son, Mohammad Shah, took the throne, he made Ghaem Magham Farahani his prime minister, but after seeing his success in organizing the court, controlling the army, and making wise decisions, the shah became suspicious and feared Ghaem Magham’s power. Also, Haji Mirza Aghassi, his childhood mentor, always spoke of the prime minister as a serious threat. Finally, Mohammad Shah ordered Ghaem Magham to be suffocated secretly and chose Mirza Aghassi as the prime minister (Ali Modaresi, May 5, 2005).

Mirza Aghasi, a Sufi immigrant from Ghafghaz, attracted the attention of Mirza Issa Ghaem Magham, who invited him to the court to become his son’s teacher. Soon, Mirza Aghasi’s position rose in the court and he became a chancellor of Abbas Mirza and the teacher of his sons. He was smart enough to understand that Mohammad could be a potential crown prince if anything happened to Abbas Mirza. Therefore, he established a mentor–follower and father–son-like relationship with the young Mohammad, influencing him greatly in his personal life and later his political decisions. The young prince truly believed in Mirza Aghasi’s mystical power. Aghasi encouraged Mohammad to eat little, dress simply, not to wear European-style clothing, stay away from many individuals including the Farahani family, and follow Sufi rules as defined by his mentor. See Amanat 2004, 67–75.

²⁰ Amanat 2004, 56.

²¹ Sir Ouseli, the British politician, wrote in one of his reports that since the main goal of Great Britain is to control India, we need to keep Iran a weak, wild, and Berber country. This report was written on October 15, 1844, and was published in 1944 (Ali Modaresi, May 5, 2005).

²² The traveling of Iranian students to Europe will be discussed in Chapter Three.

²³ “History of Iran: Abbas Mirza,” *Iran Chamber Society*,
http://www.iranchamber.com/history/articles/siege_of_herat13_appendix.php
 (accessed September 14, 2005).

²⁴ The Qajars’ first language was Turkish; Farsi was their second language chosen as formal language of the court.

- ²⁵ Amanat 2004, 67–68.
- ²⁶ Amanat 2004, 80–81.
- ²⁷ L.Thornton, *The Orientalists Painter-Travelers 1828–1908* (Paris: ACR Edition International, 1983), 80.
- ²⁸ Ahmad Hashemiyan, *Tahavolat Iran dar Doreh Qajar va Madresseh Dar-al-Fonoun* (The Improvements in Iran During the Qajar Period and Dar-al-Fonoun School) (Tehran: Moaseseh Joghrafiyae va Kartougraphy Sahab, 2000), 56.
- ²⁹ Pirooz Sayyar, “The Legacy of Qajar Period Photographers,” *Fasl Nameh Tavoos*, No. 1 (Fall 1999): 40.
- ³⁰ Amanat 2004, 129.
- ³¹ Amanat 2004, 109–112. The nurse was a French woman who married Hajj Abbas, one of the students sent by Mohammad Shah to France to learn chinaware manufacturing. Hajj Abbas went back to Iran in 1830 with his wife. Soon, she found her way to the court and amazed Malek Jahan, Mohammad Shah’s wife, by her knowledge of flower arranging, cooking, embroidery, dancing, and singing. She became the queen’s best friend, the tutor of her children, and one of the leading figures of the court of Mohammad Shah and Naser-al-Din Shah. Also, the French teacher was Mirza Ebrahim Armani, who studied in France and was hired as a translator and teacher at the court.
- ³² Amir Haghghat, April 8, 2005.
- ³³ Amanat 2004, 148–210. Amir Kabir had a very strong personality. He limited the activities of some of the courtiers who were the spies and puppets of Russia, England, and Malek Jahan, Naser-al-Din Shah’s mother. The shah trusted Amir Kabir’s judgment completely and gave him the title of the “first man” of Iran. His absolute power did not please the courtiers. They finally were able to successfully dispose of him by hiring some solders to object to Amir Kabir’s policies about the army, forcing the monarch to dismiss Amir Kabir and send him away to Kashan. Naser-al-Din Shah fired Amir Kabir in 1851 and when the shah was drunk ordered him killed in 1852. Afterward Amir Kabir, Mirza Agha Khan Nouri, a puppet of Malek Jahan and England, became the first minister.
- ³⁴ John Chardin, *Siyahat Nameh Chardan* (Voyages de Chardin en Perse et Autres Lieux de L’ Orient) Vol. 4 of the Complete Works of John Chardin, translated by Mohammad Abbasi (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1957), 155. Chardin wrote a ten-volume book about Iranians from pre-Islam to the Safavid period. He entered Iran in 1665, Shah Abbas II’s period, and left in 1677.

- ³⁵ Amir Kabir started organizing the school in 1849. The last year of Amir Kabir's work in the court was 1851. In fact, he just witnessed the opening of the school but did not have the chance to see its improvements.
- ³⁶ Hashemiyan 2000, 91–93.
- ³⁷ Hashemiyan 2000, 120–130.
- ³⁸ Yahya Zoka, *Zendegi va Asar-e Ostad Sani'ol-Molk* (Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866) (Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 2003), 32.
- ³⁹ Ahmad Tajbakhsh, *Tarikh-e Tamadon va Farhang Iran, Doreh-e Qajar* (History of Civilization and Culture of Iran During the Qajar Period) (Shiraz: Navid Shiraz Publishers, 2003), 392.
- ⁴⁰ Tajbakhsh 2003, 393–394.
- ⁴¹ Amanat 2004, 127.
- ⁴² It seems the monarch never became skilled in French and was unable to read the newspapers and books in French, although he had a French tutor during his youth.
- ⁴³ See Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar, *Safar Nameh-e Dovvom-e Khurasan* (The Second Travel to Khurasan) (Tehran: Kavosh, 1984), 31.
- ⁴⁴ Amanat 2004, 126.
- ⁴⁵ *The Thousand and One Nights* was a collection of Indian, Arabic, and Iranian tales and was very well known in the Middle East and Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Commissioned by Bahman Mirza, Mohammad Shah's son, when he was governor of Azerbaijan, it was translated from Arabic into Farsi by Abd-al-Latif Tasouji. *The Thousand and One Nights* was one of the first books published using the technique of lithography in 1845 (Amanat 2004, 161).
- ⁴⁶ Sani-al-Molk and his team illustrated the book in 1855–1860 (Zoka 2003, 33–34).
- ⁴⁷ Naser-al-Din Shah was assassinated by Mirza Reza Kermani, a follower of Jamal-al-Din Asa'd Abadi who lived in Egypt and later in Istanbul and had mounted political activities against the Qajars. Asa'd Abadi ordered Kermani to assassinate Kamran Mirza, the chief of the army. However, Kermani shot the monarch instead when he was in the holy shrine of Abd-al-Azim near Tehran celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his rule in 1896. Interestingly, Kermani went to a photography studio in Tehran the day before the assassination, took a photo, and told the photographer to keep it since it would become precious (Ali Modaresi, May 5, 2005). He was right.

- ⁴⁸ Tajbakhsh 2003, 455.
- ⁴⁹ It is mentioned in some sources that Kamal-al-Molk left Tehran because of his disagreement with Reza Shah, the founder of the next dynasty, Pahlavi. It is said that Reza Shah asked the artist to paint his son's portrait and the artist refused. This cannot be true. Based on the artist's letters and the published memories of his close friends, Kamal-al-Molk left Tehran during Mozafar-al-Din Shah's period and lived in Neyshabour, in the Khurasan region, until his death. The artist's biography and works will be discussed in Chapters Two and Three. See Ali Dehbashi, *Nameh-haye Kamal-al-Molk* (The Letters of Kamal-al-Molk) (Tehran: Behnegar, 1989).
- ⁵⁰ Until that time girls from upper and middle class families were tutored at home by male or female teachers. Qajar princesses usually sat in the same class with their brothers.
- ⁵¹ Her husband was Shiekh Mohammad Yazdi, a very well known figure in Tehran. He probably provided the major support for his wife and protected her against the government or pessimistic clergy, who believed educating women was hostile to Islam. Despite Safiyeh Yazdi and her husband's efforts, the school was closed three years later, but it left its effect on the society.
- ⁵² Tajbakhsh 2003, 456–457.
- ⁵³ See Amanat 2004, 500–504.
- ⁵⁴ Ali Modaresi, May 5, 2005.
- ⁵⁵ See Amanat 2004, 464–465.

Chapter Two: Characteristics of Qajar Painting and Patronage in the Qajar Period

In this study of Qajar paintings, a brief discussion of the late-nineteenth-century works of art and their correlation with European art is useful. Because the efforts of Sani-al-Molk, the court artist of the Mohammad Shah and the Naser-al-Din Shah periods, are a turning point in the history of Qajar painting, we can divide the era into two periods: early and late. The first half of the nineteenth century precedes Sani-al-Molk. In the early period, from the early nineteenth century until about 1840, artists concentrated on depicting the external qualities of nature, incorporating anatomical accuracy, perspective, and the effective use of light and shade. In the late period, from the 1840s until around 1906–1907, Sani-al-Molk and his disciples continued those experiments and added effects such as *chiaroscuro*. They went even further and indicated the individuality and temperament of their sitters. Their style can be considered the equivalent of European Realism. In this chapter, paintings of the early and late periods are compared, and their connection with the image-making tradition during the Safavid period (1501–1722) as well as with European art of the nineteenth century is discussed. The techniques and materials that artists of this era used include oil and watercolors on canvas or paper, murals, and images painted on tile or woven in carpets. It does not include painting on pen or jewel boxes or glasses, nor does it include manuscript illuminations, except for an explanation of the art of the Safavid period. Also elucidated in this chapter is the crucial role played by patrons in encouraging artistic changes that occurred during these periods.

The influence of European art on Iranian painting began in Safavid times, but it affected murals more than traditional Persian manuscript illumination in which the image looks flat, and where perspective, anatomical accuracy, portrait likenesses (including emotional state), and depth are of no concern. In traditional manuscript illuminations, contours and outlines form the objects, and vivid and primary colors are used more frequently than dark muted tones. Also, decorative qualities such as arabesque forms are vital for beautification of the piece and calligraphy is usually seen as part of the composition. The composition is typically complicated, with the background as busy as the foreground and the subject matter consisting of the stories from books that the manuscripts served to illustrate. Moreover, the illustrations provided for a book are not painted by just one artist. In the court atelier, a group of artists, calligraphers, bookbinders, and others worked together; a chief artist controlled the work and painted the key parts of the illustrations, while artists of the Qajar period worked individually in most cases.

During the Safavid era, the art of the Italian Renaissance, as well as Dutch Baroque painting, were introduced to Iranian artists and their patrons, and the demand for this new art rose. Moreover, some of the qualities in European paintings such as depth, likeness, anatomical accuracy, and *chiaroscuro* apparently seemed like new challenges for the court artists and they were encouraged to study them. Interestingly, however, European impact is not seen in the work of the most influential Safavid artists Kamal-al-Din Bihzad (1460–1535/6) and Reza Abbasi (b. 1565). The characteristics of composition and subject matter with which these two artists experimented, and which

their students continued to pursue, were not derived from European art. Therefore, to understand the characteristics of Qajar painting it is necessary to differentiate between the elements of style that were adopted from the work of the artists of the Safavid period and those coming from Western art of the nineteenth century.

Kamal-al-Din Bihzad, the most celebrated and influential manuscript illuminator of the late Timurid and early Safavid periods, created a style that became known as the Bihzad realistic school. Iranian painting from the Mongol period of the thirteenth century combined various features of Chinese art, such as the window concept, sponge-like clouds, high horizons, and oriental faces, with features of Iranian painting, such as two-dimensional figures, cartoon-like cutout figures, bright colors, geometric tile patterns, gold skies, and carpet-like hills with tufts of flowers. These new combinations for revealing heroic or romantic themes were used to create distinctive book illustrations, known as Persian miniature painting, and large murals or tile-paneled walls; unfortunately, few have been preserved. Bihzad, however, depicted contemporary or historical events that were narrated by people he knew. He also illustrated stories from literature, including the *Shahnameh* by Ferdosi¹ (935–1020), *Kamseh* by Nizami² (1141–1203 or 1209), and *Bostan* by Sa'adi³ (1200–1292), but his illustrations exhibited more realistic facial features, with figures that do not all look the same but have different distinct characteristics, and his mountains and vegetation vary in shape and mass. His paintings were therefore more realistic in setting and figural portrayal than had been produced in previous periods. Bihzad also added a sense of movement to the whole composition, especially for human figures and animals.⁴ Such characteristics make

Bihzad's paintings appear to be filled with groups of figures in action. The artist, however, did not employ light and shade to give a three-dimensional look and an illusion of volume to objects or space, nor did he demonstrate anatomical accuracy or perspective in his work. He used traditional vivid colors and geometric patterns for the background, the edges, and the buildings and added calligraphy with a few selected verses from literature as a part of the composition. But it was the differentiation of human figures, with their faces indicating some degree of emotion, and realistic poses with movement that was this artist's main innovation, which would later affect the next generation of artists and Qajar artists in new studies (no illustration shown)⁵.

Another leading figure of the mid-Safavid period is Reza Abbasi, the artist of Shah Ismail's court and later Shah Abbas's. Like the work of many other Safavid artists, his work is small in size, consisting of either text illustrations or album leaves, with figures and objects outlined by contours whose thickness changes to express shape and provide variety. The figures appear anatomically incorrect; the puffy faces look boneless, eyes and eyebrows are almond-shaped, and they have an elegant S-curve to their shapes. The backgrounds are flat. Perspective and three-dimensionality, however, are not of interest to this artist.

In the 1620s, as the presence of European travelers and artists in Isfahan, the Safavid capital, increased, so did the number of commissions for European-style paintings. However, according to Sheila Canby in *Persian Painting*, Reza Abbasi refused to employ elements from European paintings.⁶ Two new subjects, "half-nude recumbent women and meditating shaykhs [spiritual, knowledgeable men]" and paintings

and drawings of a single figure covering a large space as well as the use of black ink and pencil for drawings were Reza Abbasi's personal experiment.⁷ Bihzad and his followers left a few works of single figures or couples, but these works were commissioned or purchased by wealthy individuals.⁸ In contrast, Reza Abbasi further developed drawing and painting of single figures and left many works that demonstrate his serious study of this genre. Moreover, the artist left the court from 1603 to 1610 and painted the life of ordinary people; this was unusual subject matter for an artist of his time.⁹ Although Bihzad introduced common folk in his manuscript illumination by painting groupings of people, Reza Abbasi made ordinary people become the main theme and sometimes the only human figures in his works (no illustration shown).¹⁰ This new genre introduced by Reza Abbasi to the next generation was repeatedly used by the painters of the Qajar period.

The murals of the Safavid epoch also show the inspiration of European art, specifically religious art. During the Safavid epoch, Armenians were brought from the Turkish borders and settled in Isfahan by Shah Abbas to protect them from Turkish incursions. Armenian merchants who traveled to Europe brought back numerous pieces of artwork, many of which are still on display in the Vank Museum, in the Jolfa suburb of Isfahan. These paintings include portraits and figures and a few landscapes and still lifes in the Italian Renaissance style. Painted in oil, most canvases are religious portrayals of Christ and the Virgin Mary, painted and purchased in Europe by Armenian traders, who would in turn donate them to the churches in Isfahan.¹¹ Eventually, the paintings became effective models for Iranian artists and helped them become familiar with new

techniques, especially oil on canvas. In addition, the walls of the churches that were built in the Safavid era, such as Betlaham Church (built in 1628), Vank Cathedral (built in 1655), and Georg Church (completed in 1719), were covered with murals depicting the life of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and Judgment Day, all in the Italian Renaissance style.¹²

One example is the murals on the walls and ceilings of Vank Cathedral attributed to an Iranian–Armenian artist named Minas, who was born in the first half of the seventeenth century. During his childhood, Minas’s family moved to Halab, Syria, where he was trained by a European artist. After returning to Isfahan, he was commissioned to provide murals for palaces and merchants’ houses.¹³ Around 1977, Leon Minasian, the head of the Jolfa Armenians Museum, recovered the name of Minas on a wall in Betlaham church and introduced him as the chief painter of the church’s murals. The murals were probably painted around the 1640s.¹⁴ Since both the technique used and some images painted in Betlaham Church are very similar to the ones in Vank Cathedral, it is more than likely that Minas painted the walls of the Vank Cathedral, as well. As seen in Figure 1, the figures are painted wearing green, red, or brown Roman-style clothes or they are nude. The angels are distinguished by wings and the figures of the Virgin Mary and Christ are painted with gold halos behind their heads. God, who is painted on the upper part of the niche, appears as an old bearded man wearing red and green Roman-style clothes, sitting between clouds and light. By using light and shade the artist suggests the texture of the skin and the form of the bodies under their clothes, as well as three-dimensionality, an aspect assisted by the colors of the background and the landscape behind the figures. One fascinating characteristic of these murals is that the

biblical stories painted in a European style are surrounded by Islamic nonfigurative motifs basically in gold and blue. Neither the figurative images nor the Islamic motifs seem dominant or overwhelming; they are harmoniously balanced. The fact that an Armenian artist and Muslim artists worked together to create such sublime artwork is not only unusual historically, but it also indicates the first evidence of Muslim artists seeing figurative paintings used in Iran for a religious purpose alongside Islamic nonfigurative motifs. This concept was not used in mosques or other religious structures built during the Safavid era, but it was employed in the holy shrines of the Qajar epoch.

Unlike Bihzad and Reza Abbasi, artists of the late Safavid period, the most famous of whom are Mohammad Zaman, Ali Ghouli Jabadar, and Bahram Sofrehkesh, showed a great interest in European-style painting.¹⁵ These artists studied the way in which light, shadow, and linear perspective created the illusion of three dimensionality and were successful in indicating pictorial depth and the shape of the human body. Ali Ghouli Jabadar, for instance, copied classical human figures, Greek-style jars, and statues of Greek gods from European paintings while his mountains and vegetation are similar to traditional Safavid manuscript illuminations. Also, Mohammad Zaman was famous for his use of highlights and shadows to indicate figural form and garments.¹⁶ He used light and shadow effectively to create a sense of depth and three-dimensionality in paintings of birds sitting on a branch, animals in the wild, the delicate leaves of a tree, and floating clouds; he brought human figures to viewers' attention by choosing the brightest colors for the faces. Although some historians introduced Mohammad Zaman as the first Iranian artist to travel to Italy to study art, there is no proof for this claim. It is more

likely that Mohammad Zaman studied European Renaissance influences in the works of Armenian artists such as Minas, and also in the paintings that were brought from Europe, or perhaps, as Ruin Pakbaz suggests in his book *Iranian Painting from Past to Present*, through his contacts with European artists, especially Dutch artists, who worked for the Safavid court¹⁷ (no illustration shown).¹⁸

Safavid artists opened new doors in their exploration of these fundamentals experimenting with novel elements they saw in European art. The European paintings seen in the Armenian churches, palaces, and in the houses of wealthy individuals, as well as the murals of the Safavid era, inspired Qajar artists to continue to investigate new subject matter and techniques. Some alterations that Qajar artists needed to make were minor. For example, they painted highly decorated clothes embellished with jewels and floral or geometrical patterns in their large-size figurative paintings so that the viewer could see them more clearly, whereas Safavid artists usually painted clothes in simple colors since the figures were small; they saved the elaborate decorations for the larger buildings, edges or borders, and sometimes backgrounds. The new methodologies posed a real challenge for Qajar artists. In most cases, the nineteenth-century transformation included working on canvas instead of on paper, using oil paints instead of water colors and gouache, using thick brushes instead of thin brushes, and painting life-size figures instead of miniatures. All this new subject matter required a more realistic European-style technique that necessitated new compositions, *chiaroscuro*, background to foreground correlation, and the proper use of perspective to create depth. The Qajar artists of the early period concentrated on utilizing these elements.

The second half of the nineteenth century was a time of social change, created by questioning the political system, the past, and religion, and leading to increased individuality and self-expression. The 1906–1907 Constitutional Revolution was the result of these changes of points of view. Intellectuals, including artists, had their own way of demonstrating their thoughts and feelings. The artists of the late period continued the investigations of the external features of nature and explored some techniques, such as *chiaroscuro*, with which most artists of the early period had not experimented. They also went further and tried to illustrate the internal characteristics of nature, the broad emotions and thoughts of human beings, and how to express dramatic subjects, disaster, enjoyment, pride, bravery, weakness, sadness, and foolishness.

One artist of the late period, Aboul Hassan Ghafari, also known as Sani-al-Molk (1814–1869), is perhaps the first royal artist in the Qajar period whose canvases show such characteristics.¹⁹ Sani-al-Molk's family always had connections with the court and some of his relatives worked for the government. When he was fifteen or sixteen, his father sent him to Fath Ali Shah's court to learn painting from the master Mehr Ali Esfahani, the chief court painter. In 1842, at age twenty-nine, with his extraordinary talent and enthusiasm, he became the chief artist at the court of Mohammad Shah.²⁰ No doubt, Sani-al-Molk was the most vigorous, influential, and dominant artist of the Qajar period. In the practice of realistic painting, he very soon surpassed the work of the previous generation. In his early paintings, the artist uses the compositions, traditional colors, and decorative qualities of the early Qajar school of painting; however, he eventually developed numerous qualities in realistic painting that were not attained by

other artists. His study of light and shadow, composition, form, and color and his success in indicating the sitters' characteristics and individuality are noteworthy. The changes that he brought to Qajar painting begin what can be called the late Qajar period of painting, and his works indicate the many differences between the early Qajar canvases and the later ones.

Realism in the work of Sani-al-Molk and other Iranian artists who followed him includes the appreciation of a person as an individual, distinct from any class, gender, or ethnicity. In addition, they acknowledged themselves as individual artists, as is visible in the many self-portraits. Artists of the previous periods in Iran rarely painted a self-portrait; when they did, these portraits were small and set among a group of figures in paintings or on a decorative item such as a pen box. Most artists did not sign their work. Bihzad started demonstrating individual dissimilarities in the facial features, the pose, and activities of his subjects; artists painting in the late period continued this new phenomenon in Iranian painting by showing diverse behaviors and emotions. Sani-al-Molk, as an example, sometimes caricatured and distorted his sitters' facial features in a humorous form to show the naiveté of people. He also painted children in whose faces innocence or mischief is evident (no illustration shown).²¹

Artists of the late period also painted national heroes who fought against the government and were killed. Until that time, heroes in paintings were either mythical or legendary figures or the monarchs who commissioned paintings, in which they were usually shown as heroes in war scenes. Kamal-al-Molk, for example, painted a series of self-portraits at different stages of his life as well as a portrait of Satar Khan, a national

hero who fought against the government during the Constitutional Movement.²² Artists also indicated people participating in different social activities. Moreover, the decorative qualities that had characterized earlier miniatures are no longer seen in most canvases. However, the ornaments and decorations are shown in the paintings of the bourgeois as an indication of their materialistic interests. The intense contours and silhouettes that in Persian traditional illustrations formed the figures almost disappeared to let the complementary palette define the objects. Brush strokes became more visible, and negative space and background are used differently to create atmosphere. In general, the paintings of the late period demonstrate true or poetic sentiments, not mimicking the appearance of nature. In comparing early Qajar paintings to late Qajar paintings, these differences are plainly perceptible.

The general subject matter of Qajar painting as a whole can be separated into five major categories: royal male figures, women, religious compositions, animals, and still lifes and landscape. During the early period human figures appear as the main subjects. Facial features, clothes, and composition in early period paintings are different from those of the late period. In the early period, these paintings are notable for their detailed portrayal of costumes and courtly interiors, as seen in the density of ornaments on a crown or a hat, jewels on a costume, and the size of a sword, which probably emphasizes rank and status. Moreover, in a group portrait, individuals of higher rank look directly at the viewer, as if in a photograph, while their attendants or less important characters look respectfully at them.

Figure 2, a 67 $\frac{3}{4}$ × 33 inch oil on canvas painted in 1810 by an unidentified artist and entitled *Dancer*, exemplifies paintings created during the early period. The figure is centered, life size, and in the foreground. The figure dominates the canvas, looks huge, and is dressed in traditional Iranian-style clothes of the Qajar period. As a general rule, in the early period, the figures are anatomically inaccurate and static; even the musicians and dancing girls, depicted in acrobatic movements while playing musical instruments or posing in complicated dance positions, appear frozen. Men are always crowned or wear a hat, which is a sign that the sitter is a gentleman. Women wear a scarf or a crown. The eyes and eyebrows of both are almond-shaped.

The composition in early paintings is usually simple. A figure or a group of figures stands or sits on a carpet in the foreground. The space is sometimes filled with pets, fruit, dishes of food, and vases. Color selection reflects the combination of pigments from Iranian manuscript illumination and colors seen in European paintings. The choice of colors, frequently in hues of red, green, and blue, looks complex. Although the number of hues is very limited, the nuances of colors' tones are intricate, especially those delineating the jewels, costumes, carpets, and tiles. Bright pure colors of red, yellow, orange, and turquoise, often employed for the costumes, ornaments, tiles, and carpets, are elements of traditional image making and create a stunning contrast to the grays and browns of the background. Qajar artists use patterns of tiles and carved woods to create decorative backgrounds for the figures. However, in a notable number of figure paintings the background is often a window with a landscape behind it or a niche, either as an empty space or filled with a still life. A hanging curtain is a motif repeated in

almost all the paintings of interiors (see Figure 2). The creation of empty, less-busy backgrounds with unfilled negative space in the Safavid period is most likely the result of the study of European paintings.

In early Qajar paintings, the Safavid art's influence on the composition of exterior scenes, specifically hunting scenes, is apparent. In hunting scenes the land and sky are divided by a high horizon line, so that the sky appears as a small strip, while the land covers the painting. This characteristic is also seen in many Safavid manuscript illuminations. There is usually no specific source of light. There is an erratic light source on the figure and the background. In many paintings, light is used to show the form of the clothes, rather than to illuminate the background (see Figure 2). Figures and objects usually have few shadows, even in exterior scenes. This quality of Qajar painting results from its close connection to traditional book illustrations. In a few paintings, artists attempted some three-dimensionality by painting a small shadow under the women's sandals or around their skirts, whereas artists of the late Qajar period created three-dimensionality through *chiaroscuro*.

The largest and most important category of the human figure is that of royal male individuals; these include the shahs, the foremost patrons, princes, and their attendants. During the early period, in the figures of Fath Ali Shah, for instance, the shah is recognizable with a long black beard and wearing a belted outfit that forms a tunic with embroidered epaulets and upper arm guards. Shahs are almost always crowned, holding a bejeweled staff or wearing a full-size sword, whereas princes carry swords or small daggers and wear fewer jewels and ornaments on their costumes. The royal attendants

frequently stand in the background and wear unadorned simple outfits, usually a long coat in red, brown, or green tied with belt, and a hat or turban. Males in the early period, as a general rule, are represented as victorious and authoritative personages (no illustration shown).²³

Male figures in the late period include more than just the courtiers, although they remained the main patrons. Artists also painted their own portraits as well as ordinary people doing various tasks. Facial features are not similar, and the figures may not look like the sitters, but each shows some personal characteristic and they are anatomically accurate. Male figures are not always shown as brave, keen, loyal, victorious, and wealthy gentlemen. Their fears, misery, poverty, and loneliness are depicted, too.

The best examples of male figures demonstrating these characteristics are painted by Mohammad Ghafari (1847–1940), known as Kamal-al-Molk, a title of honor, meaning “among others.” He was Sani-al-Molk’s student and nephew and became the next leading artist of the late Qajar period.²⁴ At age seventeen, after finishing his primary education, Kamal-al-Molk moved from his hometown of Kashan²⁵ to Tehran to study French and art at the Dar-al-Fonoun School. Three years later he was called to the court of Naser-al-Din Shah to become the chief artist.²⁶ In the court, he created many canvases, including portraits of the shah, other princes, landscapes, animals, and palace gardens. In 1897, Naser-al-Din Shah was assassinated and his son Mozafar-al-Din Shah took the throne. Kamal-al-Molk continued living and working in the court for a while and then left to travel to Europe and later to Baghdad, Iraq.²⁷ From that time on, the artist started painting ordinary male and female figures as well as self-portraits. Kamal-al-

Molk's self-portraits usually introduce him as a simple man wearing minimal plain clothes with no sign of a luxurious or even a happy life. His most famous self-portraits were painted after the death of his three children.²⁸ He employed muted colors and a blank background to create a sense of loneliness, despair, and silence.

Representations of women, the second category in Qajar painting include princesses, noble women sometimes accompanied by their attendants and maids, musicians and dancers, mothers and children, and women with lovers. In the early period, women are shown with puffy boneless faces, who otherwise appear emotionless with no individual features. As seen in Figure 2, women are portrayed with long hair and many wear a bejeweled headband or a scarf. Their hair is decorated with pearls and their costumes have long skirts usually worn over pants with sandals on their feet. Women are usually depicted as heavier and larger than men and seemingly less anatomically correct. This suggests that perhaps women did not pose for these works since male–female relations were limited at court; however, a few exceptions are notable. Pakbaz states in *Iranian Painting from Past to Present* that Mehr Ali, the famous painter of Fath Ali Shah's court, may have painted noble palace women, but he did not sign his paintings.²⁹ Also, Zoka argues in *Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866* that Sani-al-Molk's female cousin posed for him in his early works of women since their "kinship allowed them to be intimate."³⁰ However, in his paintings and lithographs, it seems that Sani-al-Molk may not have used a model for painting women since they are shown wearing veils covering their bodies. In general, for the artists of the early Qajar period, it was less important to be so specific about the human body, especially for the figures of women; a

general suggestion of a female body would be enough. They spent more time with the details of fabrics and jewels; these would draw the viewer's attention first. In contrast, in the late period, specifically in Kamal-al-Molk's paintings of women, women sitters were used in a number of figure paintings. However, apparently these women are not known princesses or noble women.

In the early Qajar period, women in sheer dresses showing their breasts and sometimes even their abdomens appear in rare images of princesses and noble women, who logically should have been more modestly portrayed. These paintings are on the one hand noteworthy examples of Fath Ali Shah's fantasy about women, and his taste as the only Qajar ruler who commissioned such paintings, and, on the other hand, the symbol of the shah distancing himself from religious beliefs. These paintings were usually placed in the more private halls of palaces and villas, not in public halls where the monarch received his important visitors.

A few canvases indicate a Qajar shah and queen together, or a ruler with one of his wives. There are at most three known paintings in which Fath Ali Shah is represented with his wives. One of those paintings, as described by Robinson, shows the monarch with his three wives in a joyful setting.³¹ The Qajar shahs did not share their power with a queen and they were fully supreme at court. The only individual who could break that control was the queen mother or a powerful wife from a more authoritative Qajar clan who controlled the harem. These women would often spy on the monarch, fight for a particular son to gain a higher position, and force the shah to recognize their wishes. In the rare single-figure paintings of Qajar princesses and noble women their power is

evident. In these paintings the life-size figures of women dominate the canvases.

Sometimes a maid standing behind her lady and showing her respect by looking at the princess accompanies them. The maid's outfit is simple with very little decoration.

Figure 3, showing a young princess drinking wine, is one of the best examples of this genre. It is a $64 \frac{1}{2} \times 34 \frac{3}{4}$ inch undated unsigned oil on canvas entitled *Young Woman with a Cat*. In this painting, the princess is wearing two black-and-white pearl necklaces, an elaborately decorated turban, and a belt and dress that suggest her high status. Holding a glass of wine with one hand and her belt with the other, she looks directly at the viewer with confidence, just as many high-ranking male figures do. Even her white cat, sitting in the foreground, is staring at the viewer. The artist intends to show anatomical accuracy, but perhaps he intentionally painted the huge figure of the princess to expose her supremacy. The sheer dress under her Qajar-style outfit is open from her neck to her belly, suggesting a female's sexual beauty. She is sitting on a carpet and leaning on a large decorated pillow. A jar of water and a bowl, also decorated, fill the space in the foreground and middle ground while the background is painted simply with an empty niche and a red curtain. This canvas, in general, suggests a powerful, confident, and beautiful noble woman.

Musicians and dancing girls, commissioned by Fath Ali Shah, are among the most common subjects in the early period. Unlike noble women who are anonymous, dancers and musicians are sometimes introduced by their nicknames written on the canvas, for example, *Shirin*, meaning a sweet girl, or *Saghi*, meaning a wine server. The girls, most of whom look at the viewer, are depicted in exaggerated acrobatic poses while serving

wine, dancing, or playing musical instruments. Most figures, covering almost two-thirds of the canvas, are located in the foreground and are not anatomically accurate. Their clothing is sometimes highly decorated and sometimes very simple and designed to make their breasts visible.

In the paintings of a mother and child, the mothers are depicted half nude or nude in bathing scenes or inside a room sitting on a carpet. Sometimes the mother is holding her breast while looking lovingly at her child seated on her lap. This depiction of a mother and child was probably adapted from images of the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child, but Qajar images do not have any religious connection. On the contrary, they represent the sexual beauty of a woman as much as the figures of the dancers do. Children look like miniature adults; girls can be distinguished by a pearl necklace or jeweled earrings. This subject matter does not appear in the paintings of Mohammad Shah's era or later.

Paintings of young women with lovers are fascinating subjects since they are the only examples that demonstrate male figures gazing at women exactly the way women are staring at the viewer. In these canvases, the focal point is the heavy-bodied woman in her ornamented and sometimes translucent clothing. The canvases show happy moments of drinking wine, playing an instrument, or embracing each other in interior or exterior settings (no illustration shown).³²

There are also canvases of nude bathing figures in a lake, sitting by a river or a pool, or in an indoor public bath. Developed over many centuries, this subject was popular in fifteenth-century Timurid illustrations of Nizami's *Khusro and Shirin*. In this

story, Farhad, the lover, sees Shirin, the beloved, when she is bathing in a lake. In some manuscript illuminations Shirin is inside the lake and just the upper part of her body is visible. In other images she is sitting by the lake and her legs are covered with a cloth, usually red. Since the figures in these book illustrations are small in size and are painted among many decorative trees and flowers, the viewer hardly perceives the body of Shirin. Quite the opposite is true, however, for the life-size nude of the Qajar era; here the bodies of the nude women are prominent. The traditional illustrations of Shirin from Nizami's poetry follow the narration of the story, whereas early period Qajar nude paintings explicitly focus on the nudity of women. Although the portrayal of a nude can be considered a familiar subject in Iran, it is rarely used as a motif. The Qajar artists' choice of the nude differs from artwork of the previous periods. Qajar female nudity was probably anchored in a study of European paintings and customized to the culture of Qajar patrons. The popularity of the female nude in Fath Ali Shah's reign characterizes the art of his era.

One of the most fascinating canvases created during this period including nude women is an undated oil on canvas entitled *Women in the Garden*, probably done by the court artist Mohammad Hassan during Fath Ali Shah's reign (see Figure 4).³³ This canvas shows thirteen princesses and six little girls enjoying themselves by a river. They are arranged in two rows. In the foreground, eleven princesses are standing in a row before four different fruit trees and some distant hills. One of them is holding her nude daughter while looking down at another female nude sitting by the river. Beside the girl in the second row, two other nude females are about to bathe in the river and two

princesses are sitting, hugging their daughters, one of whom is naked and holding her mother's breast in her hand. Painted in different poses, all the figures stare at the viewer. Their bejeweled clothes are a combination of Qajar fashion and the style of showing neck and breast as seen in the sixteenth-century European fashion³⁴ suggesting the artist's study of European works of art. In this painting, a nude woman embracing her daughter is more sexually attractive than the affectionate mother and child. To enhance this, the artist uses the dominant color of red for the cloth draped across her legs as well as for the women's dresses in the background over the green and blue colors of nature.

According to Iranian religious and cultural beliefs, revealing nude women and their sexual beauty has never been an accepted theme for the majority of people. Although nudes appear in various manuscripts and illuminations and on some wall paintings from early Islamic times, these were usually hidden from the regular populace; it was not until the Safavid period that female nudity was more acceptable as a subject. However, these images were not widespread and their observation was very limited to a small number of viewers, who, in most cases, were probably already familiar with classical and European subject matter. Safavid and Qajar artists observed images of nudes in European paintings in their travels to Europe or in a few images available in Iran. Such paintings can be seen as a sign of the change in Iranian culture and its distancing itself from Islamic beliefs in an attempt to emulate Europe.

It was during Naser-al-Din Shah's reign in the late period that artists started painting "real women" according to Najmabadi, in her essay "Reading for Gender through Qajar Painting."³⁵ Sani-al-Molk, for instance, portrays veiled women in a holy

shrine (1860/63), a portrait of his cousin Khorshid (1843), and women taking care of their children while a physician is visiting a patient in a house (1859).³⁶ His paintings are infrequent examples of veiled women in Qajar painting. In the early period, not many paintings portrayed women wearing veils. Their hair is usually exposed or is visible through their sheer scarves. Another example is the work of Kamal-al-Molk, who illustrated women in leisure activities for their own pleasure or busy at daily tasks, such as an Egyptian girl decorating her hair with flowers, women visiting a fortune teller, an old woman reading a book, two girls begging in the street, and veiled women working or walking in a square.³⁷

In an 18 × 22 inch oil on canvas painting entitled *Fortune Teller from Baghdad*, signed and dated 1899, Kamal-al-Molk portrays two women, probably mother and daughter, visiting a male fortune teller (see Figure 5).³⁸ It seems that the fortune teller is telling the women of their good luck since they all give the impression of being content, by smiling and looking at each other. The simple life of these individuals is evident in their clothing and the few pieces of furniture painted in muted earthy colors. The women's bodies are completely covered by their veils; only their faces are visible. The woman in the background leans against a box while the other woman in the foreground sits close to the fortuneteller with her legs stretched toward him, expressing her comfort. Her pose gives strength to the oval composition.

In one painting, however, Kamal-al-Molk demonstrates an Orientalist point of view toward women. *Arab Girl*, dated 1877, is the figure of a young girl standing before a muted solid background.³⁹ She wears a white checkered turban that covers most of her

head and her torso while still leaving a part of her black hair and bulky moon-shaped earrings visible (see Figure 6). Her dark skin, the decoration on the green dress, and the golden vest emphasize her ethnicity as an Arab female. But her sheer skirt, which is open up the sides making both her legs visible, and the sleeveless blouse give the girl an exotic and erotic identity, and seem peculiar for an Islamic culture, suggesting the Orientalist approach. The young girl appears to look at a cigarette in her right hand and ignores the viewer, who may gaze at her charming pose and the freshness of her skin before paying attention to what she is doing.

Meanwhile, Qajar shahs, courtiers, and court aristocrats commissioned paintings, tiles, and murals for the newly built mosques, mausoleums, *tekiyehs* (where religious rituals were performed), and *sagha-khaneh* (single rooms where people could drink cold water and pray for the builder).⁴⁰ The third category—religious images in the form of illustrations, paintings, carpets, tile designs, or murals—can be divided into portraiture and figures of the Prophet Mohammad and the Imams, and sometimes the patrons, as well as figurative images of nature and still lifes.

In early Qajar paintings, religious figures are often depicted in ornamental Qajar costumes. For example, two paintings of the Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) show him crowned and in bejeweled clothes, looking at the viewer while other figures in the painting look at him. The only element that identifies Joseph as a holy person is a halo behind his head.⁴¹ Portraying the Prophet Mohammad and the Imams is not a new subject. There are two general groups of the portraits of the Prophet Mohammad and Imams. The first group of paintings is based on the belief that the Prophet of Islam is a man and a messenger of God

chosen to call on nonbelievers. This is the way the Qur'an, Islam's holy book, introduces the Prophet. For example, the *Mi'raj Nameh* (Book of Ascension), the story of the Prophet Muhammad visiting heaven and hell, was a popular book for illustration.⁴² One that was illustrated in the fifteenth century in Herat⁴³ contains sixty-three illustrations in which the Prophet is portrayed as a bearded middle-aged man wearing a simple turban and robe with a flame-shaped halo as the only way to distinguish him from other figures.⁴⁴ The second group of images depicts the Prophet and Imams as sacred elusive individuals who should not be portrayed. In these images, the face of the Prophet is not visible; instead his face is unpainted and left in white or gold with a flame-shaped halo around it. One example is a folio of *Khamseh* by Nizami entitled *The Mi'raj of the Prophet Mohammad*, attributed to Sultan Mohammad, the sixteenth century artist. In this folio, which was painted around 1539–1544, the Prophet's face is not shown and a flame-shaped mandorla in gold surrounds his body.⁴⁵ It seems that Qajar artists were really the first artists in Iran who attempted to paint the face of sacred individuals as life-size, tangible human beings placed in religious constructions. This idea was probably adopted from the Armenian churches in Isfahan or the European churches seen by Iranian artists on their travels to Europe.

In the late Qajar period, Sani-al-Molk painted two illustrations of Prophet Mohammad and Imam Ali, the Shi'ite first Imam, showing their faces in a frontal light. The portraits of the Prophet and other Imams are comparable to traditional illustrations; they reveal bearded middle-aged men, who are typically wearing bright green turbans, as indications of their holiness, and clothing similar to the clergy of the Qajar period. The

halo, however, is altered to a golden circle behind their heads, not affecting the light and shadow on their faces (no illustrations shown).⁴⁶

Almost all the portraits of the Prophet and the Imams painted in this era look alike: bearded adult men wearing green turbans, with white skin, almond-shaped eyebrows, and big eyes. To distinguish each individual, the artists would write the name of the Prophet and the Imams on the work, or employ symbols that represent each one: Imam Ali's symbol is his double-pronged sword; Imam Reza, the eighth Imam, as seen in Figure 7, is associated with a deer as, according to the tradition, he saved the life of a deer by purchasing it from a hunter and freeing it. Sometimes an image of his holy shrine in the city of Mashhad accompanies him (see Figures 7 and 8). Another example is Imam Hussein, the third Imam, who is often represented in the Battle of Kerbela, which took place in a desert near Kufa in Iraq, around 680 A.H., under the Umayyad ruler of the time, Yazid (see Figure 7).⁴⁷ He is sometimes portrayed just with a helmet or blood on his face, as seen in Figure 8, to emphasize his innocence and martyrdom.

Early Qajar religious characters differ from the ones created in the late period specifically in their clothing. The early period religious figures are in royal Qajar costumes and sometimes are crowned, whereas the late period holy figures wear simple unornamented green and brown clothes to downplay their royal connection and suggest ordinary men.

Narrative images also exist that describe a religious incident or legend, many corresponding to the hardships of the Imams' lives, their battles, or support for them from divine angels. On a tile in a bazaar near the Imamzadeh Davud Shrine, located in the city

of Rayy to the south of Tehran, Hazrat Aboul-Fazl, Imam Hussein's brother, is portrayed at the battle of Kerbela (see Figure 9). The Umayyad ruler of the time, Yazid, and his soldiers surround the family of Imam Hussein, his troops, their women, and their children, and they refuse Imam Hussein's followers access to water; the women and children are dying from thirst. Hazrat Aboul-Fazl volunteers to pass through the enemy lines and bring water from the Euphrates River. On his way back, he is attacked by the enemy and his hands are cut off. He tries to carry the container of water with his mouth, but he is killed before reaching the women and children.

This tragic battle of Kerbela, which followers of Shi'ite Islam mourn each year, is among the most common subjects. However, it is not depicted on this tile; instead, Hazrat Aboul Fazl is portrayed on horseback carrying a green flag on which is written a verse from the Qur'an: "God is the source of aid and victory is close."⁴⁸ The artist prefers not to overwhelm the viewers with horror and the bloody sacrifice of Hazrat Aboul Fazl. Such tradition is seen in manuscript illuminations of the Safavid period in which battle scenes are depicted in terms of grandeur and do not call for clemency or sympathy for the hero or heroes. However, the artist uses symbols to direct viewers' attention to specific features of the event. For example, on the tile, shown in Figure 9, the name of the river is written, the palm trees suggest an oasis, and the tents on the horizon indicate Imam Hussein's devotees waiting for water. The artist uses some perspective by painting palm trees and tents smaller in size in the background, but he does not appear interested in precise human anatomy.

The founders of holy places, or the individuals who rebuilt or expanded a shrine, are also the subjects of religious paintings. Two murals⁴⁹ in the Imamzadeh Davud Shrine are portraits of the Princess Homa Navab and Prince Nosrat-al-Douleh Navab, the founders of the main hall of the shrine and its stone arches, which were built around 1866.⁵⁰ They look so realistic that their images could have been copied from photographs (see Figure 10). Both figures are shown in the simple costumes of the period with no ornaments or jewels that would symbolize the status of a Qajar prince or princess. It seems that the sitters preferred to look simply dressed since the mural was commissioned for a holy shrine. Although women are not supposed to display their hair in a mosque or shrine, in the portrait of Princess Homa Navab, her front hair is exposed in the fashion of the time.⁵¹

The narrative iconographies also represent aspects of believers' lives. At the Bibi Shahrbanou Shrine,⁵² for instance, there is a fascinating mural of a group of women and young girls worshipping⁵³ (see Figure 11). The setting is as simple as the shrine itself. The unknown artist portrays stylized figures of women in Qajar outfits, each with a long black veil covering her body, over which a short white veil is worn to cover her face in public. Women perform their daily prayers or recite prayers written on hanging papers, while the little girls accompany them in prayer or just look around. One woman is facing the viewer as she kneels, leaving her veil open. The artist suggests three-dimensionality through the use of light and shadow, although outlining tends to delineate the figures. The illustration indicates a limited palette of three or four colors. This mural and other

narrative murals of the Qajar era are the first known examples of religious figurative murals in Iran after the adoption of Islam.⁵⁴

Some shrines also contain images of still lifes or landscapes in the form of tiles and murals for decorative purposes. Before the Qajar period, stylized geometrical forms or arabesque patterns were used in holy places, especially mosques, but it was unusual for figurative images to be included on Islamic structures. Qajar artists challenged such a prohibition for the first time in Iran. Such an action indicates the changes in both the culture and the patrons' points of view about religion. Whatever the reason, these figurative images marked a new era in the history of religious art in Iran. It kept a notable number of artists, working with tiles, stone reliefs, and murals, busy with a new style of composition in which European-style figurative images are the focal part in a section of wall or ceiling, while traditional arabesque and geometrical patterns are used for framing the figurative sections. A study of such work gives one the impression that the Qajar rulers urged artists to use European-style figurative images as the main subject and traditional Iranian nonfigurative patterns were added as embellishment. This quality became one of the characteristics of the visual arts in the Qajar era and diminished the importance of the symbolic meaning of patterns and colors that had been used for centuries in Iran.

One example is a tile panel on an exterior wall in the Imamzadeh Davud Shrine in which the image of two mosques and three still lifes are framed in three circles and two octagons (see Figures 12 and 13). The unknown artist attempts to show depth by using perspective and accurate dimensions in the portrayal of the two mosques. He is not in

fact successful, however, because the human figures look too small when compared to the height of the walls and the fountain. In both still lifes, figs, pomegranates, grapes, and pearls are strewn over flowers and leaves. The artist has drawn the fruit, the flowers in the oval frame in the middle, the birds, and the pink roses around the frames by using light and shadow. Arabesque motifs around the figurative images are done splendidly and are different from traditional arabesques since the artist creates a sense of depth with light and shadow. The entire tile display demonstrates the skill of the artist in creating arabesque patterns while perspective and figurative imagery appear to be a new challenge.

The same style is used for the decorative tiles on the walls of palaces. The best examples are the exterior walls and ceilings of the Golestan Palace and Museum in Tehran (Figures 14 and 15). Figure 14 shows the exterior ceiling of a hallway of the Golestan Palace. The murals within geometric frames are made of diamond-shaped pieces of mirrors. In each diamond or oval frame realistic European-style flowers or landscape are painted in oil. The landscapes employ the use of perspective, showing distance as well as three-dimensionality with the use of light and shadow, and the natural colors and texture of trees and the sky. Around the frames, arabesque patterns enhance the landscapes and flowers. With their two-dimensionality, strong black outlines surround the gold patterns. The use of just three or four colors makes the arabesque patterns look less realistic than the flowers inside the diamond-shaped frames. The flowers are painted with more colors, no black outline, and a touch of three-dimensionality, different hues of green for leaves and pinkish rose for flowers.

Figure 15 shows a tile panel of arabesque forms inside an arch surrounded by a geometric pattern. The blue background, green leaves, yellow, and sky-blue elements look flat and monotone, whereas the pink flowers have more than two hues and are painted more realistically. There is a balance between the arabesque designs and the figurative ones that are shown inside the arabesque patterns as two scenes: one is a hunting scene and the other a landscape with European-style buildings next to a river. The landscape tends to be realistic, following the rules of perspective, light and shadow, and the hues of blues for the sky and the river. The hunting scene shows a hunter in a traditional Safavid-style yellow turban and reddish-pink clothes riding a horse and chasing a deer. The large size of the hunter and the deer in the foreground contrast with the mountains in the background, suggesting distance. The artist provides a wonderful juxtaposition of European realistic imagery and Iranian nonfigurative traditional subject matter.

The fourth category of Qajar paintings is animals, another popular subject that has been one of the core themes for Iranian paintings, murals, and book illustrations until the end of Qajar period. Indicating real, legendary, or mythical figures in hunting scenes, battlefields, visits, and travels made during the early period, artists became skilled at and accustomed to painting different animals. In early Qajar paintings, pets as well as both wild and mythical animals such as dragons are seen. Pets are usually shown in the figure paintings of princesses inside a room, which may include cats, parrots, and other kinds of birds. Wild animals in exterior views and hunting scenes include lions, horses, dogs, deer, and antelopes, as well as dragons are also depicted. The animals look more realistic

than the human figures and are anatomically more accurate, except for cats, which sometimes have human-like faces (see Figure 3).

In the late period, Sani-al-Molk painted and provided some sketches of bears, deer, cows, horses, and birds that are anatomically correct. Also, Kamal-al-Molk's 1883 watercolors on paper of different birds signify his careful study of the finch, canary, parakeet, parrot, Eurasian jay, pheasant, garden warbler, sparrow, partridge, and lark. He also painted gazelles in a wood, cows in a farm, horses in a hunting camp, and even a hunted leopard.⁵⁵ Their precise movements and anatomical accuracy display the artist's skill and the fact that he must have observed animals intimately to paint them realistically. Naser-al-Din Shah ordered various animals to be kept in a small zoo as a part of the palace garden. Lions, for instance, were kept in a vast area and sometimes could walk around the garden freely.⁵⁶ Kamal-al-Molk and other artists, therefore, were able to view animals, so their paintings were more realistic. Artists sometimes accompanied the shah in hunting and had an opportunity to observe animals in action. Interestingly, Kamal-al-Molk painted a few canvases of hunted birds and frequently wrote a compassionate note on the canvas about the dead bird. The paintings of hunted birds are done with soft hazy colors, setting the animal before a blank background, usually in white, suggesting death and silence.

Still lifes and landscapes make up the last group of paintings. Still life was a popular genre in the early period, and it appears as an individual subject or as part of figure painting and, infrequently, in landscapes. The individual still life is often a bowl of fruit placed in the center of a canvas, with some fruits arranged around the central

bowl to make the composition symmetrical. The idea of having a still life and a landscape in one canvas was probably adopted from traditional book illustrations in which bowls of fruit and jars of flowers, water, or wine are set inside an exterior scene, usually a garden or hunting area. In these book illustrations, a still life fits within the surrounding environment and the various elements are in harmony with other components of the illustration. However, in a Qajar still life these qualities are lost; the still life is often painted in the foreground and is divided from the landscape behind it by a horizontal line. The fruit is too big and too dominant and sometimes just fills the space. The scale is disproportionate, which destroys the balance between negative and positive space. The lack of a logical connection between the landscape and the still life, and, therefore, between the subject matter and the composition, makes the Qajar still-life paintings appear somewhat weak (no illustration shown).⁵⁷ The artists of the late Qajar period were accomplished in still-life painting, but apparently they were not much interested in it. There are no known still-life canvases by Sani-al-Molk and no evidence to prove that his students were assigned to study this subject in the artist's art school.⁵⁸ It seems that only Kamal-al-Molk painted a few still lifes of flowers in a vase or fruit on a table; these are very well composed and suggest the artist's study of European still lifes.

Landscape painting did not attract most royal artists until the late period under Naser-al-Din Shah. Before that time, just a few landscape paintings existed in which a well-known place such as a pavilion, a palace, a bridge, or a dam is portrayed. To emphasize the dimensions of the buildings, small human figures are painted walking around or riding a horse.⁵⁹ However, it was very common to use landscape for the

background in portraits and figure paintings. Hills or buildings usually seen from a window increase depth and suggest three-dimensionality, and sometimes a touch of perspective is used. The hues of green and blue used for the vegetation and the sky create a balance between the colors in the foreground.⁶⁰ Perspective is one of the elements that attracted Iranian artists as they became familiar with Renaissance paintings. Qajar artists studied perspective thoughtfully and eventually artists of the late period mastered the technique. They also looked for metaphysical values in nature. During Naser-al-Din Shah's reign the artists who considered landscapes as a significant subject were Kamal-al-Molk and Mahmoud Khan Saba (1813–1893). Most of their landscape paintings were commissioned; and a freedom of expression is more obvious in these landscapes than in their figure paintings.

Another artist of the time, Mahmoud Khan Saba was a calligrapher, poet, and an artist at the court of Naser-al-Din Shah and received the title of honor Malek-al-Shoa'ra, meaning "chief among all the poets." He was a self-taught painter and never attended any art school. His oil and watercolor landscapes indicate his familiarity with perspective. The artist mastered watercolor landscape painting and became a very well known artist in his time.⁶¹ Mahmoud Khan Saba, however, preferred to use watercolor, and his work focuses on buildings, palace gardens, and views of Tehran from the roof of the Golestan Palace. Although he did not seek photographic city views, he experimented with linear perspective from an elevated point of view. Persian manuscript illuminations from as far back as the thirteenth century used a tilted horizon, so that the ground was represented as if from a bird's eye point of view; linear perspective was not employed.

Mahmoud Khan Saba successfully attained an exclusive reputation for landscape painting and was probably the first artist whose main works are landscape scenery. Working with water color on paper, the artist also suggests a romantic setting: the misty background adds a dreamlike quality to the scene and the buildings. The absence of any figures in his city scenes gives the works a strong feeling of solitude, enhanced by the use of blue, green, and white as the dominant colors. These qualities in Mahmoud Khan Saba's watercolor landscapes became a model for the next generation of artists who studied such subject matter (no illustration shown).⁶²

Unlike Mahmoud Khan Saba, who used watercolor as his primary medium, Kamal-al-Molk provided a notable number of landscapes in oil of the hills, mountains, waterfalls, and gardens of palaces around Tehran. Kamal-al-Molk, too, painted on the site to create accurate landscapes, but his works are not photographic and do not include all of a site's details. As seen in Figure 16, an 55.5 × 83.5 inch oil on canvas entitled *Moghanak Village*, the artist employs different tones of mellow colors and quick brush strokes to form the leaves and the shadows of the trees in the river. The shadows make a clear contrast between dark and light, but their blurred colors break into the contours. The lights, however, are seen on the right side of the canvas, where the brilliant light of the morning sunshine illuminates the backs of the trees. The river makes a passage toward the background and directs the eye of the viewer gently directs to a figure and a small house in the back. A village man sitting in the middle ground near a shed made out of wood enjoys the calm river and sublime nature. His small size emphasizes the grandeur of nature surrounding him. Different tones of green as the dominant color

create romantic scenery. Kamal-al-Molk's landscapes can be considered the foremost examples of the realistic landscape paintings of the late Qajar epoch.

Patronage should also be discussed in this chapter. The power that patrons had in directing artists through commissions, and thus in shaping the history of art in the Qajar period cannot be overlooked. The best Iranian masters of art spent their lives at the courts of the monarchs. They provided commissioned works until the last decade of the nineteenth century when Kamal-al-Molk left the court of Mozafar-al-Din Shah and started painting without restraint as well as working on commissioned paintings. He was perhaps the first artist to leave the court and establish an independent studio. Elements such as newly opened art schools, the availability of materials for painting, financial support for teaching at schools, and working for newspapers and publishers all helped artists to become more self-sufficient and solidified their positions in relationships to their patrons.⁶³ These factors affected patronage in the second half of the nineteenth century, resulting in an increase in the number and types of patrons.

Patrons of the Qajar period can be divided into two general groups: Iranians and Westerners. Iranian patrons were the Qajar shahs, courtiers and aristocrats, women, and middle-class, whose desires for something different in secular and religious art led them to commission works based on European Realism. This type of work was regarded at that time as superior to traditional Iranian art. By contrast, European patrons were looking for more traditional Iranian arts and ancient artifacts. Their interest encouraged some artists to revive the traditional style of manuscript illumination and merge European

figurative rendering within traditional Persian format (known as Persian miniature painting), thus attracting both Western and Iranian patrons.

Having the authority, funds, and desire for art from the beginning of the Qajar dynasty, the shahs indeed were the main patrons and art supporters of the time. In fact, the monarchs spent enormous amounts of money on artwork and architecture to glorify themselves and demonstrate a love for art. Qajar rulers not only collected artworks but also practiced art and became proficient in painting, calligraphy, photography, and sometimes in poetry and literature. In effect, Qajar shahs were knowledgeable about art, knew precisely what they wanted, and could identify quality artwork. Abd-al-Rafie Haghghat, the author of *The History of National Arts and Iranian Artists*, narrates an interesting recollection of Jacob Edward Pollack, court physician and traveler to Iran, about Naser-al-Din Shah's talent in painting. Pollack notes the Shah's excellence at drawing and how he once became impatient with a court artist who was not fast enough in painting the Shah's portrait. Finally, Naser-al-Din Shah took the brush or pen and finished the portrait himself.⁶⁴ Because artists were dealing with knowledgeable patrons they had to provide acceptable work.

The traveling of monarchs to Europe was another factor in the high level of interest in art. They planned to become familiar with the modernization process, advanced technology, and also art, which they considered as vital to the nation's development as science and manufacturing. Naser-al-Din Shah traveled to Europe three times, visiting museums, exhibitions, and military and industrial sites.⁶⁵ One of the reasons for his first trip in 1873 was to attend the Vienna International Exhibition.⁶⁶

Traveling to London after visiting Vienna, the ruler stayed at Buckingham Palace and went to Madam Tussaud's Museum; in Paris he went to the Versailles Palace, the Louvre Museum, and Notre Dame Cathedral. In Italy, he spent some time in studying historical sites.⁶⁷ Naser-al-Din Shah's third trip in 1888–1889 was to the Paris International Exhibition.⁶⁸ The monarch visited the exhibition the first day of his arrival and went back several times during his stay in Paris. In Holland, too, the shah took some time to visit museums.⁶⁹ His successor, Mozafar-al-Din Shah, also visited historical places and museums in Europe, including the Louvre Museum and the Eiffel Tower.⁷⁰ Such visits enabled the two Qajar shahs to be aware of the arts and the cultures of different countries; as patrons they were acquainted with art on an international level and demanded the types of work they liked.

The Qajar shahs were also interested in building mosques, Imamzadehs, tombs, and palaces in their new capital of Tehran and in other Iranian cities. Fath Ali Shah, for instance, commissioned one of the best architects of his time, Safar Ali Isfahani, to build the Shah Mosque in Semnan, a small city in Khurasan in northeast Iran.⁷¹ These commissions required tiles, murals, paintings, and stone reliefs that generally tended to be realistic for their patrons' satisfaction. Such a tendency kept a notable number of tile, relief, and mural artists busy experimenting with the new style of composition, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

Paintings hung on the palace walls were also a combination of work done by Iranian, European, and Russian artists. Today, the Sa'adabad Museum of Fine Arts in Tehran houses hundreds of paintings by artists from Russia, Italy, France, Germany,

England, and Belgium. These were gifts from foreign individuals or were purchased by the Qajar shahs.⁷² According to Abd-al-Rafie Haghghat, Jacob Edward Pollack wrote in his memoirs that, during his stay in Iran, Naser-al-Din Shah ordered one of the halls in the palace⁷³ turned into an art studio to hang the portraits of Queen Victoria and her husband (Prince Albert), Napoleon III, and others; these were gifts he had received from those monarchs. Then, since these canvases apparently were not enough to fill the gallery, the shah bought colored engravings published in Berlin with such subjects as bathing girls to place in the empty spaces.⁷⁴ The Qajar shahs invited Russian artists to work in their palaces and European artists to visit the courts and stay for weeks.⁷⁵ Consequently, the Qajar monarchs continued the process of art exchange and East–West relations.

Naser-al-Din Shah commissioned tiles indicating the figures of soldiers for the exterior walls, gates, and entrances of the Golestan Palace in Tehran, symbolizing the protection of the Qajar dynasty against their enemies. Similar images can be found on the ancient Achaemenid Palace of Persepolis.⁷⁶ In addition, on other tiles figures drawn from the Iranian army greet the king by playing musical instruments. Having a musical group for the army was an idea that Naser-al-Din Shah most likely adapted from the Sasanian reliefs at the site of Taq-i Bustan.⁷⁷ All these figures appear to be represented realistically through the use of perspective, light and shadow, different hues of colors, and anatomical accuracy. Moreover, the monarch also commissioned statues of lions resting on pedestals located at palace entrances. Figures of lions are also seen on tiles of the palace. Such tiles and statues suggest Naser-al-Din Shah's intent to elevate the Qajar

dynasty by adopting symbols used by the authoritative Iranian kings of the pre-Islamic periods, as well as by employing some elements of the art of European countries that were in control of the world at that time.

Naser-al-Din Shah also gave Kamal-al-Molk permission to add sculpture classes at his art school, training the first generation of Iranian sculptors since the beginning of the Islamic period. In general, the Qajar shahs tried to use art to show themselves as powerful rulers, and, as Leyla S. Diba suggests in her essay “Images of Power and the Power of Images”, to connect themselves with the ancient Iranian kings.⁷⁸ They also were eager to associate themselves with their contemporary European kings and to urge viewers to recognize the power of the monarchy. But the truth was that Qajar rulers were powerless and under the full control of England and Russia. Naser-al-Din Shah made a famous statement that shows how immobilized his kingdom was: “What a damn regime! To go to the north of my country, I ought to get permission from Russia, and to go to the south, I am obliged to get authorization from England.”⁷⁹

Naser-al-Din Shah can probably be considered the most demanding patron of the Qajar era and the most vigorous ruler in terms of learning about art. Besides commissioning paintings and tiles, participating in international exhibitions, and purchasing European and Russian paintings, he took many other steps that influenced the development of art in Iran. He studied calligraphy, drawing, and painting;⁸⁰ became a proficient photographer, and rewarded painters and photographers with medals, the most famous of which was the *Sun and Lion* medal.⁸¹ During his time, schoolbooks were illustrated, and books and newspapers were published with lithographic illustrations.⁸²

Naser-al-Din Shah loved traveling and writing travel books with his own calligraphy; he usually took a photographer with him.⁸³ He also opened museums, was interested in gathering information about Iran, and hired a few educated individuals to travel and write reports about the provinces, ancient places, and monuments and to provide maps and drawings, all of which became indispensable resources for historians.⁸⁴

The second group of patrons included Qajar princes and other courtiers, politicians, and merchants who were also educated about art and supportive of both secular and religious art. Aristocrats hired artists to decorate their houses with figurative murals as well as tiles decorated with arabesque and geometrical patterns. They commissioned their portraits and other figures as well as European-style still lifes and landscapes. Some of them, such as Malek Ghasem Mirza, the son of Fath Ali Shah and the governor of Urumiyeh, in northwest Iran, collected paintings and learned photography. He became a close friend of Eugene Flandin, the French painter and traveler, when Flandin was in Iran. Flandin was amazed by the prince's unique collection of paintings.⁸⁵ Also, Mohammad Afshar, known as Sani'-al-Saltaneh, the minister of the Department of Justice at Naser-al-Din Shah's court, was a gifted painter on canvas and glass, calligrapher, photographer, and poet. He himself designed a camera for a particular type of photography.⁸⁶ Some patrons traveled to Europe or sent their children to Europe to study art. Others financed the opening of new schools, or sponsored improvements in the existing schools, or hired teachers from Europe. Moreover, during the Constitutional Movement in Mozafer-al-Din Shah's era and the political and economical crisis of that period, when the shah apparently abandoned the schools and art

activities, the aristocrats continued supporting schools and art societies for their children's education. They also helped in the development of religious art by building or rebuilding Imamzadehs, mosques, and tekiyehs and commissioning murals, tiles, paintings, and stone reliefs.

Women in the Qajar period were also patrons and were interested in gaining knowledge in different fields of art and photography. For instance, Fatemeh Soltan Banou and Ozra, two sisters who were the wives of two photographers at Naser-al-Din Shah's court, learned photography from their husbands and are the first women photographers in Iran after Ashraf-al-Saltaneh, the granddaughter of Fath Ali Shah.⁸⁷ It seems that women in the Qajar period were often involved in religious activities and supported religious art and architecture perhaps because they were not allowed to participate in politics and other social institutions. Some women prevented old Imamzadehs and mosques from being damaged or enlarged existing buildings for the comfort of worshipers.⁸⁸ Although little information about women's roles as patrons of the fine arts is available, they probably commissioned jewel boxes, mirror cases, and pen boxes painted by the best artists of the era employing realistic paintings that were common at that time. Unfortunately, the identities of the professional women artists are all unknown because they were prohibited from entering the newly opened art schools. However, the art of carpet and textile weaving and embroidery were basically the products of women artists.

Although the middle class was patronized as being ignorant about art, they contributed to the development of religious portrait painting and therefore its popularity

by purchasing prints of the portraits of holy individuals. The realistic portraits of the Imams and the Prophet Mohammad created by the artists of Sani-al-Molk's generation fit perfectly into the Iranian society structured on Shi'ite beliefs. Many religious people were less attracted to secular art and often placed the figure of their beloved Prophet or an Imam on their walls. For example, such images could usually be found in the shops of the main bazaars. Although initially court artists painted portraits of the Imams and the Prophet that aristocrats commissioned, eventually, these commissions were disseminated to ordinary people, thereby encouraging artists, tile workers, carpet designers, and lithographers to create religious portraits of acceptable quality and at an affordable price.

During the Qajar period, the middle class became involved in art activities and came to be considered patrons as well. Ordinary people were accustomed to the traditional arts, but their familiarity with European paintings was through art schools, which were open to visitors when there was no class.⁸⁹ There they could see the works of Iranian and European teachers, students' canvases, engravings, and copies that artists such as Sani-al-Molk and Kamal-al-Molk brought to Iran from their travels to Europe.⁹⁰ Also, lithographic images were available and affordable for middle-class patrons.

In addition to Iranian patrons, Western visitors to Iran were also interested in art. Unlike Iranian patrons, European patrons did not emphasize the new experiences of realistic paintings; they expected to see something incredibly dissimilar to European art. Most Qajar-style paintings that are now part of private collections or museums were sent to European collectors and dealers or to European embassies as gifts from the Qajar kings and politicians. Western interest focused on ancient art and the traditional arts of Iran,

especially at that time because Orientalist sentiments was prevalent in Europe.⁹¹ It seems that Western traders were seeking old illustrated books, ancient artifacts, calligraphy, and Persian carpets and textiles to market in Europe. Such trade had two main impacts on art and art education in Iran.

First, Iran lost many of its artifacts. These included many illustrated books of the *Shahnameh* by Ferdosi, *Khamseh* by Nizami, and *Kalila and Dimna*, first written in India in the fourth century AD, and then translated by Burzo, a Persian physician, into Pahlavi, the language of the time.⁹² These manuscripts were transferred to private collections and museums in Europe, the United States, Russia, and Turkey. Some examples are the *Shahnameh* of Shah Abbas held in the Chester Beatty Library in England,⁹³ folios from an edition *Kalila and Dimna* illustrated in the mid-fourteenth century in Istanbul University Library, and folios of the story of *Khusro and Shirin*, one of the volumes of *Khamseh*, illustrated in 1410 and held in the British Library in London.⁹⁴ Many of the manuscripts in Iran were in court libraries and kept out of artists' hands. For instance, the *Shahnameh* of Baysunghur Mirza was kept in the royal library at the Golestan Palace in Tehran.⁹⁵ Therefore, Iranian artists of the Qajar period were unable to observe, study, or refer directly to the best examples of traditional book illustration and images. At the time that art was gaining popularity within a wider audience, and art schools were opening, Iranian society lost this chance to become truly familiar with its sublime traditional art.

Second, Iranian society learned about the best examples of their traditional art from Iranians who traveled to Europe and visited exhibitions, auctions, and museums. Since not all of these individuals were knowledgeable about art, they brought back

information based on gallery or auction catalogs, many of which were inaccurate, or museum catalogs, articles, and books, which sometimes introduced Iranian art as “Oriental.” Many Iranians accepted such a nineteenth-century Western point of view because they believed in the West as a modern civilization that knew better. Such factors culminated in the degradation of Iranian traditional art and the rise of the belief that Iran should follow the Western path in art to become superb. This attitude continued until fairly recently in Iran, with a resurgence of interest in traditional art only developing in the last decade of the twentieth century, and continuing until today.

It was just a few wise artists who realized what was happening. One of them was Kamal-al-Molk, who arranged classes for carpet weaving, traditional book illustration, and ceramics in his European-style art school, and encouraged students to take those classes by insisting on the value of Iran’s traditional arts.⁹⁶ However, his efforts could not prevent the general change in the culture, and that affected the work of the artists who were creating traditional fine arts. Some decided to change their field and learn European realistic painting. Others created a new path to maintain their European patrons while satisfying Iranian commissioners. This new path categorized traditional manuscript illumination as “Persian miniature paintings,” which B. W. Robinson in his essay “Painting in the Post Safavid Period” called “superior tourist art,” explaining it as “taking the form of miniatures on paper, usually a single figure on plain background, illustrating Persian types, costumes, occupations, and customs.... They are on the whole, well executed, with considerable charm and some originality.”⁹⁷

Akbar Tajvidi, a miniaturist, attributes the resurgence in popularity of this

nineteenth-century tradition to his father, Hadi Tajvidi (1855–1900), one of Kamal-al-Molk's students and a talented traditional painter who won first place in "Iranian Miniature Painting" in the 1911 competition, and was hired to teach at Sanayeh-e Mostazrafeh School.⁹⁸ In this manner, "Iranian miniature painting" in the Qajar era came to be a combination of European realistic painting and traditional book illustration. Here realistic figures of men and women, who looked more like Europeans than Iranians, were painted in Iranian-style clothing and acted within landscapes painted in a manner mimicking the landscapes of traditional book illustrations. The size did not matter and usually depended on the commissioner.

Iranian miniature painters occasionally added calligraphy to give their pieces a more traditional appearance. Those artists usually employed the same technique of traditional book illustration with watercolor and small thin brushes. Even today, miniature painting in Iran is taught in art schools as a separate major, and artists such as the sons and students of Hadi Tajvidi are famous for their works. In Europe, many art dealers took advantage of the market by selling famous illustrated books or torn individual folios, the latter of which were more easily sold since the complete books were extremely expensive. This action encouraged European art dealers to consider miniature paintings excellent substitutes for individual folios or traditionally illustrated books. Some Iranian patrons, too, were thrilled to have the image of a beautiful European woman, dressed in Iranian traditional clothing, drinking wine under an evergreen tree.

In general, the influence of European art began under the Safavids and continued into the Qajar period. Artists such as Mohammad Zaman studied the way in which light

and shadow and the use of linear perspective created the illusion of three-dimensionality. However, this influence is not seen in the works of Kamal-al-Din Bihzad and Reza Abbasi. Bihzad depicted contemporary or historical events with more realistic facial features and figures, adding a sense of movement. Reza Abbasi experimented with paintings of half-nude recumbent women and meditating shaykhs, as well as paintings and drawings of a single figure covering a large space. Moreover, paintings brought back from Europe by Armenian merchants and the murals on the walls of the Armenian churches became a source for Qajar artists and affected religious art of the Qajar era.

Religious images can be divided into portraits and figures of the Prophet Mohammad and the Imams, portraits of the founders of the holy places, some aspects of believers' lives, and figurative images of nature and still lifes. Qajar artists are most likely the first Iranian artists who endeavored to paint the face of sacred individuals as life-size, tangible human beings placed in religious constructions. Qajar artists rebelled against the prohibition of including figurative images on Islamic structures for the first time in Iran. Also, the Qajar rulers urged artists to use European-style figurative images as the main subject and traditional Iranian nonfigurative patterns as the decoration needed to embellish it. This juxtaposition of European naturalism became one of the characteristics of the visual arts during the Qajar era and decreased the importance of the symbolic meaning of the arabesque and geometric patterns.

The artists of the late period continued the investigations of the external features of nature and tried to illustrate the internal characteristics of nature and the emotions and thoughts of human beings. Realism in the work of Iranian artists includes the

appreciation of a person as an individual, distinct from any class, gender, or ethnicity. They acknowledged themselves as individual artists, visible in the self-portraits, national heroes, and people participating in different social activities. Moreover, the decorative qualities are no longer seen in most canvases. Brush strokes become more visible, and the complementary palette defines the objects instead of the forceful contours and silhouettes of the previous periods. Negative space and background are used differently to create atmosphere.

During the Qajar period, patronage also changed. First, the newly opened art schools, the availability of materials for painting, financial support for teaching at schools, and employment by newspapers and publishers altered the artists' relationship to their patrons. Second, Iranian patrons, who commissioned the European realistic-style art, were no longer limited to the Qajar shahs, courtiers, and aristocrats. Middle-class people, too, commissioned religious portrait paintings and prints of the portraits of holy individuals; therefore, they played a crucial role in the expansion of religious art. Third, upper-class patrons were knowledgeable about art and became familiar with European art through their travels to Europe. Accordingly, artists had to provide acceptable works that were basically within the tradition of European realistic art.

European patrons, in contrast, were not seeking new experiences within realistic paintings, but rather they sought works that were executed in a traditional Iranian style. Such trade had two results on art education in Iran. First, Iran lost a notable number of its artifacts; thus, Iranian society lost the chance to become familiar with the best examples of its traditional art. Second, Iranian society learned about their traditional art mostly

from individuals who traveled to Europe, where Persian arts was introduced as “Oriental.” Many Iranians accepted such a nineteenth-century Western viewpoint and saw Iranian traditional arts as inferior. They believed that Iran should follow the Western path in art to become sublime. In this manner, Iranian miniature painting during the Qajar era came to be developed as a combination of European realistic painting and traditional Iranian book illustration. In these paintings realistic figures, who looked more like Europeans than Iranians, were depicted in Iranian-style clothing and acted within landscapes imitating the landscapes of traditional book illustrations. These exotic paintings were in high demand and in a sense can be defined as Orientalism, but at the same time, they were part of the Realist movement in Iran during the second half of nineteenth century.

Endnotes

- ¹ Abol Qasem Ferdosi was born in a village near Tous, Khurasan. He spent twenty years writing his great epic, the *Shahnameh* (The Epic of Kings), a history of ancient kings, heroes, and people of Iran in the form of poetry. Compiled in 1010, the *Shahnameh* was presented to Sultan Mahmoud Gaznavi. See “Persian Language & Literature, Ferdosi,” <http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/ferdowsi/ferdowsi.php> (accessed February 19, 2006).
- ² Nizami Ganjawi was born in Ganje, Azerbaijan. He never left Ganje and died there. His five poetry books known as the *Khamseh* are entitled *Leyla and Majnoun*, *Khusro and Shirin*, *Haft Peykar*, *Makhzan-al-Asrar*, and *Eskandar Nameh*. He also wrote *Eghbalnameh*, dedicating it to the king of the time, Malek Ezeddin. See “Persian Language & Literature, Nizami Ganjawi,” *Iran Chamber Society*, <http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/nezami/nezami.php> (accessed February 19, 2006).
- ³ Mosleh al-Din Sa’adi, one of the most famous Iranian poets, was born in Shiraz and received his education at Nezamiyeh College in Baghdad. He traveled around Anatolia, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Central Asia, and India. He is famous for his books *Bustan* (The Orchard) and *Golestan* (The Flower Garden); the first one is in verse and the second in prose, and both include moral lessons and anecdotes about justice, kindness, modesty, fulfillment, etc. See “Persian Language & Literature, Sa’adi Shirazi, Mosleh al-Din,” *Iran Chamber Society*, <http://www.iranchamber.com/literature/saadi/saadi.php> (accessed December 15, 2005).
- ⁴ See Ruin Pakbaz, *Honar Iran az Dirbaz ta Beh Emrouz* (Painting in Iran from Ancient Time to Present) (Tehran: Zarin & Simin Publication, 2001), 80–91.
- ⁵ Examples of Bihzad’s works can be seen in Sheila R. Canby, *Persian Painting*, 3rd ed., (London: The British Museum Press, 2001), 73, and in Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250–1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 64–65.
- ⁶ Canby 2001, 101.
- ⁷ Canby 2001, 99.
- ⁸ See Pakbaz 2001, 96, and Image 9, p. 101.
- ⁹ See Pakbaz 2001, 120–122.

- ¹⁰ Examples of Reza Abbasi's works can be seen in Canby 2001, 100–101, and in Blair and Bloom 1994, 179.
- ¹¹ Iraj Bashiri, "Julfa," 1999, <http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Esfahan/Julfa.html> (accessed December 12, 2005).
- ¹² Bashiri 1999.
- ¹³ Leon Minasian, "Oustad Minas, Naghash-e Mashhour-e Jolfa" [Master Minas, the Famous Artist of Jolfa], *Honar va Mardom*, No. 179 (Shahrivar 2536 [1977]): 28–30.
- ¹⁴ Minasian 2536 [1977], 29.
- ¹⁵ See Pakbaz 2001, 139–141. Mohammad Zaman was born in the 1650s and died in the 1690s.
- ¹⁶ Canby 2001, 113.
- ¹⁷ See Pakbaz 2001, 141.
- ¹⁸ Examples of Mohammad Zaman's works can be seen in Canby 2001, 112, and in Blair and Bloom 1994, 181.
- ¹⁹ Aboul Hassan Ghaffari, who earned the title Sani-al-Molk, was born in Kashan from a well-known and well-educated family. He was also known as Aboul-Hassan the Second.
- ²⁰ Yahya Zoka, *Zendegi va Asar-e Ostad Sani'ol-Molk* (Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866) (Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 2003), 21.
- ²¹ Examples of Sani-al-Molk's portraits of children can be seen in Zoka 2003, 112, 113, 149, 146.
- ²² Kamal-al-Molk's biography will be discussed later in this chapter.
- ²³ Examples of male figures and portraits can be seen in S. J. Falk, ed., *Qajar Paintings: A Catalogue of Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Paintings* (Tehran: The Private Secretariat of Farah Pahlavi, 1973), Figures 2, 4, 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, and 27.
- ²⁴ Sani-al-Molk died in 1868 or 1869.
- ²⁵ Kashan is a city in central Iran.
- ²⁶ Hossien Kaashyan, *Kamal-al-Molk* (Tehran: Museh Honarhayeh Mo'aser Tehran, 1983), 2. The monarch met the artist in his visit to Dar-al-Fonoun School and

was fascinated by Kamal-al-Molk's extraordinary skill in realistic painting. However, Ali Dehbashi has a different approach. He states that the artist entered Dar-al Fonoun at age 13 and Naser-al-Din Shah took him to his court in 1880. See Ali Dehbashi, *Nameh-haye Kamal-al-Molk* (The Letters of Kamal-al-Molk) (Tehran: Behnegar, 1989), 7.

²⁷ Pakbaz 2001, 171–172.

²⁸ Kamal-al-Molk had one daughter and three sons. His daughter and two sons all died before the artist, causing him great pain for the rest of his life. See Dehbashi 1989, 235–238.

²⁹ Pakbaz 2001, 154.

³⁰ Zoka 2003, 22.

³¹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Reading for Gender Through Qajar Painting," in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)*, edited by Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 77 and 86. The author does not mention the name of the artist, the title of the canvas, or the date it was painted.

³² Examples of young women with lovers can be seen in Falk 1973, Figures 5, 6, 7, 22, 49, 62, and 63.

³³ To the author's knowledge, this painting has not been published nor displayed for at least twenty-six years.

³⁴ Najmabadi 1998, 77.

³⁵ Najmabadi 1998, 76.

³⁶ See Zoka 2003, 74, 84, and 150.

³⁷ *Kamal-al-Molk* 2003, 26, 47, 63, and 65.

³⁸ This is one of the canvases Kamal-al-Molk painted while staying in Baghdad for two years during Mozafar-al-Din Shah's reign.

³⁹ To the author's knowledge, this painting has not been published nor displayed for at least 26 years.

⁴⁰ These places were also built by people in an area of a town or by wealthy individuals in the memory of someone or for their faith.

⁴¹ See Falk 1973, Figures 41 and 42.

- ⁴² *Mi'raj Nameh* was about the miraculous journey of the prophet Mohammad to the seven heavens. He was guided by the angel Gabriel. The book was written by Rashid-al-Din in the fifteenth century. See "Non-Western Art and Architecture," http://cat.middlebury.edu/~slides/slide_web_page/nonwesternp.html (accessed September 15, 2005).
- ⁴³ Herat, one of the cities of today's Afghanistan, was a part of Iran in the nineteenth century and one of the most important regions for developing a unique style in book illustration in the early Timurid period of the fifteenth century.
- ⁴⁴ B. W. Robinson, *Persian Drawings from the 14th through the 19th Century: Drawings of the Masters* (New York: Shorewood Publishers Inc., 1965), 48, 49, and 132.
- ⁴⁵ M. M. Ashrafi, *Hamgami Naghashi Ba Adabiyat dar Iran* (The Correlation Between Painting and Literature in Iran), translated by Ruin Pakbaz (Tehran: Negah Publishers, 1989), Figure 11. This folio is kept in the British Museum, London.
- ⁴⁶ Examples can be seen in Zoka 2003, 78 and 79.
- ⁴⁷ Peter Chelkowski, "Popular Arts: Patronage and Piety," in *Royal Persian Paintings: The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)*, edited by Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 90.
- ⁴⁸ Green symbolizes peace in Islamic iconography.
- ⁴⁹ These paintings were seen and photographed in 1942 by Mohammad Taghi Mostafavi, an archaeologist and the head of the Archaeology Organization, who was in charge of providing articles about the holy shrines of Tehran for the magazine *Etela'at Mahaneh*. These paintings may no longer exist or have been relocated since the author was not able to identify them at the Imamzadeh Davud Shrine on a visit in April 2005.
- ⁵⁰ Mohammad Taghi Mostafavi, "Banaha-ye Tarikhi va Mazhabi-e Tehran Ghadim va Kharej-e Shahr: Imamzadeh Davud," [The Monuments and Religious Constructions in Old Tehran and Its Region: Imamzadeh Davud], *Etela'at Mahaneh Magazine*, No. 58 (Day 1331 [December 1942]): 17. According to the author, it is not clear when this shrine was built, but as seen on a stone relief, Shah Tahmasb, in the Safavid period, purchased some lands around the main building and donated these to make the shrine larger. Thus, it had existed before the Safavid period. In the Qajar era, during the reigns of Fath Ali Shah and Naser-al-Din Shah some parts were rebuilt and new buildings were added.
- ⁵¹ Mostafavi does not mention the name of the artist or the medium of the paintings.

- ⁵² Bibi Sahrbanou Shrine is located on a hill. The main building was constructed out of stone in the Sasanian era and some parts of the original building still remain. Bibi Shahrbanou commemorates the daughter of the last Sasanian emperor, Yazdgerd, who was also one of the wives of Imam Hussein.
- ⁵³ Mohammad Taghi Mostafavi, “Banaha-ye Tarikhi va Mazhabi-e Tehran Ghadim va Kharej-e Shahr: Bibi Shahrbanou,” [The Monuments and Religious Constructions in Old Tehran and Its Region: Bibi Shahrbanou], *Etela't Mahaneh Magazine*, No. 50 (Ordibehesht 1331 [April 1942]): 8–9. This mural probably no longer exists, but it was seen and photographed by Mostafavi in 1942.
- ⁵⁴ Chelkowski 1998, 94.
- ⁵⁵ See examples in *Kamal-al-Molk* (Tehran: Sazman Chap va Entesharat Vezarat Farhang va Ershad Islami, 2003), 38, 45, 46, and 85–111.
- ⁵⁶ Mehdi Ghouli Hedayat, *Khaterat va Khatarat* (Memories and Dangers) (Tehran: Zavvar Publishers, 1996), 5.
- ⁵⁷ Examples can be seen in Falk 1973, Figures 3 and 13.
- ⁵⁸ Sani-al-Molk's school will be discussed in the next chapter.
- ⁵⁹ Examples can be seen in Falk 1973, Figures 13, 53, and 54.
- ⁶⁰ Examples can be seen in Falk 1973, Figures 4, 37, 40, 51, and 52.
- ⁶¹ Ahmad Tajbakhsh, *Tarikh-e Tamadon va Farhang Iran, Doreh-e Qajar* (The History of Civilization and Culture of Iran During Qajar Period) (Shiraz: Navid Shiraz Publishers, 2003), 153–154.
- ⁶² See one example in the Golestan Palace Museum Web site, http://www.golestanpalace.ir/En_Site/collections/E-shams.htm (accessed February 19, 2006).
- ⁶³ These elements will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.
- ⁶⁴ Abd-al-Rafie Haghghat, *Tarikh-e Honar-haye Meli va Honarmandane Irani* (The History of National Arts And Iranian Artists), Vol. 1 of the Complete Works of Abd-al-Rafie Haghghat (Tehran: Moalefan va Motarjeman-e Iran, 1990), 581.
- ⁶⁵ Rozita Miri, “Padeshahan-e Qajar dar Gharb: Safar-e Naser-al-Din Shah va Mozafar-al-Dih Shah beh Oropa” [Qajar Kings in the West: Naser-al-Din Shah and Mozafar-al-Din Shah's Travels to Europe], *Tahrikh-e Moaser-e Iran*, No. 4 (Winter 1997): 211. In his first trip in 1873, which lasted five months and nine days, Naser-al-din Shah visited Russia, Germany, England, France, Italy, Austria,

Switzerland, and finally the Ottoman capital of Istanbul. On the second trip in 1878, a journey of four months, the monarch traveled to Russia, Poland, Austria, Germany, and France. And, on his third and the last trip to Europe in 1888, taking six months and twelve days, he visited Moscow, Germany, Belgium, France, England, Holland, and Austria.

- ⁶⁶ The Vienna 1873 Weltausstellung Exhibition (International Exhibition) was designed “to showcase [Austria’s] economic reconstruction, and Vienna’s progress in city planning. It meant to eradicate its current reputation as an unstable country.” It was held in Prater Park, located in the northeast of Vienna, and welcomed many countries and many fields. The exhibition was divided into areas such as the Machinery Hall or the Art Hall, located in the main exposition buildings, and basically held paintings, with a few statues. “Art exhibits were divided into three categories: fine art, religious art, and amateur art.” The providers of the exhibition decided to give the participating countries space based on their economic position in the world, meaning that the countries that were economically doing better received more space. Also, the location of the countries was from east to west, starting with Japan and China, and ending with the United States. Since Austria did not gain any reputation from this world fair, it was never repeated after 1873. See Ly Y. Bui, “Vienna 1873: Plan of the Weltausstellung, Vienna 1873,” <http://www.lib.umd.edu/ARCH/honr219f/1873vien.html> (accessed September 9, 2005).
- ⁶⁷ Miri 1997, 212–213.
- ⁶⁸ As announced in the magazine *The Manufacturer and Builder*, the French Minister of Commerce planned on organizing a “Retrospective Exposition of Industrial Work and Anthropological Sciences,” held in the Palace of Liberal Arts. The subjects were classified as anthropological and ethnographical sciences, liberal arts, arts and trades, means of transportation, and military art. A catalog containing the objects displayed from various countries was also provided. See “A Proposed Interesting Feature for the Forthcoming Paris Exposition,” *The Manufacturer and Builder*, *Cornel University library*, Vol. 20, No. 12 (December 1888): 271, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/cgi-bin/moa/moa-cgi?notisid=ABS1821-0020&byte=54560667> (accessed September 9, 2005).
- ⁶⁹ Miri 1997, 216–218.
- ⁷⁰ Miri 1997, 219–222. Mozafar-al-Din Shah traveled to Europe three times in 1899 for seven months, in 1902 for six months, and finally in 1905 for six months. On the first trip, he passed through a few Russian cities, including St. Petersburg, before going on to Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire. His second trip was to Austria, Italy, Germany, Belgium,

and England. And, for the third time, the ruler visited Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, Belgium, and France.

⁷¹ Haghghat 1990, 662.

⁷² Ne'mat-Allah Kaykavous, *Golgasht dar Negarestan: Goulchini az Asar-e Naghashi Mouseh Honarhaye Ziba-Saa'd Abad* (Promenade in the Picture Gallery: An Album of Iranian and European Paintings from the Sa'dabad Museum of Fine Arts, Tehran) (Tehran: Negah, 1992), 93–243.

⁷³ He does not mention the name of the palace, but it was probably one of the buildings of the Golestan Palace in Tehran.

⁷⁴ Haghghat 1990, 581–582.

⁷⁵ Haghghat 1990, 581. The author does not clarify the name of the artist nor does he give any other information about him.

⁷⁶ Those figures are stone reliefs located by the stairs and gates of Persepolis. Achaemenid kings ruled over Persia from west India (Indus River) to Egypt from 559 to 330 BC. Alexander the Great attacked Persia and ended the Achaemenid dynasty in 330 BC.

⁷⁷ See Johanna Domela Movassat, *The Large Vault at Taq-i Bustan: A Study in Late Sasanian Royal Art* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 88 and 101.

⁷⁸ Layla S. Diba, "Images of Power and the Power of Images," in *Royal Persian Paintings, The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)*, edited by Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 31.

⁷⁹ Ali Modaresi, May 5, 2005.

⁸⁰ Zoka 2003, 38.

⁸¹ Yahya Zoka, *Tarikh-e Akasi va Akasaan-e Pishgam dar Iran* (The History of Photography and Pioneer Photographers in Iran) (Tehran: Elmi & Farhangi Press, 1997), 26 and 62.

⁸² Iraj Afshar, *Khaterat va Asnad-e Zahir-al-Doleh* (The Memories and Official Documents of Zahir-al-Doleh), Vol. 1 of the Complete Works of Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Zarin Publishers, 1988), 38–39. Zahir-al-Doleh, one of the ministers under Naser-al-Din Shah and the ruler's son-in-law, wrote about his artist son, prince Mohammad Naser Safa, who illustrated schoolbooks and kept his job for forty years. The artist was born in Tehran in 1878. His mother, Touran Agha, was Naser-al-Din Shah's daughter. He was one of Kamal-al-Molk's students and

spent twenty-five years in France studying art. Following Kamal-al-Molk's style, the artist mixed Iranian traditional imagery with European realistic painting. He was a master in drawing and did not use any models in his works. He passed away in Kerman, a city in central Iran, in 1949.

⁸³ Zoka 2003, 33.

⁸⁴ Mohammad Golboun, "Resaleh Omran Khozestan: Khozestan Dar Doran-e Mozafar-al-Din Shah Qajar" [Rebuilding Khozestan: Khozestan During Mozafar-al-Din Shah's Epoch], *Tahrirkh-e Moaser-e Iran*, No. 7 (Fall 1998): 181. Several of those individuals are noteworthy. Abd-al-Ghafar Najm-al-Doleh Isfahani was in charge of the Khuzistan region in the southwest; Mirza Abd-al-Allah Khan Ghareh Gozlou, known as Saad-al-Saltaneh, was in charge of Sarakhs region in the northeast. The most famous individual was Foursat-al-Doleh from Shiraz; he traveled around Fars and Khuzestan and drew some sketches of important sites such as Takht-e Jamshid (Persepolis), Taq-i Bustan, and the grave of Cyrus the Great. His sketches are realistic, containing all the possible details. It seems that his focus was the old civilizations of Iran. See Foursat-al-Doleh, *Asar-al-Ajam Dar Tarikh va Joghrafiya-e Mashrouh Belad va Amaken Fars* (General History and Geography of the Fars Region), edited by Seyed Mohammad Nasir Hosseini (Tehran: Tarikh-e Iran Zamin Publishers, 1983).

⁸⁵ Zoka 1997, 17.

⁸⁶ Zoka 1997, 225–230.

⁸⁷ Zoka 1997, 178–180.

⁸⁸ Mostafavi 1942, 17.

⁸⁹ Zoka 2003, 51.

⁹⁰ The traveling of Iranian artists to Europe will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁹¹ Orientalism, a genre of painting characterized by iconography rather than style, was dominant as a part of Romanticism, the nineteenth century European movement. See Lynne Thornton, *The Orientalists Painter-Travelers 1828–1908* (Paris: ACR Edition International, 1983), 10. Also see S. F. Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art, A Critical History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd., 1994), 51.

⁹² *Kalila and Dimna* was written in India and titled *Panchatantura*. See Paul Lunde, "Kalila Wa Dimna," *Saudi Aramco World*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (July/August 1972), <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/197204/kalila.wa.dimna.htm> (accessed December 8, 2005).

- ⁹³ B. W. Robinson, *Drawings of the Masters: Persian Drawings from the 14th through the 19th Century* (New York: Shorewood Publishers Inc., 1965), 30.
- ⁹⁴ See Blair and Bloom 1994, 31 and 57.
- ⁹⁵ The *Shahnameh* of Baysunghur Mirza was commissioned by prince Baysunghur (who died in 1457) during the Timurid period to be illustrated in Herat. This *Shahnameh* is kept in the Golestan Palace in Tehran.
- ⁹⁶ Akbar Tajvidi, “Naghashi Iran dar Sadeh-e Akhir” (Iranian Painting in the Last Century) *Daneshnameh Iranshenasi*, Vol. 1, edited by Mojtaba Anvari and Shirin Mohammadi (Tehran: Satavand Yazd, 2003), 181.
- ⁹⁷ B. W. Robinson, “Painting in the Post Safavid Period,” in *The Arts of Persia*, edited by R. W. Ferrier (Yale University Press, 1989), 228. In Europe the term “Persian miniature painting” is used and refers to manuscript illuminations and album leaves created in the Seljuk period through to the Qajar period. It does not include large portraits and landscapes. The term refers mostly to works on paper.
- ⁹⁸ Tajvidi 2003, 181.

Chapter Three: Evidence for the Correlation of Qajar Painting In the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century With European Realistic Painting

Iran's deep religious roots and the powerful attraction of mysticism created an art that for centuries reflected the Iranian fascination with a world of the mind. It was not until the nineteenth century, however, that the desire for a materialistic world would replace the religious basis of society in people's minds. The art, therefore, shifted and became more realistic, in particular for representations of the royal family and the bourgeoisie who were the foremost patrons, and who wished for an art that would display their wealth, grandeur, and authority. In fact, Qajar shahs and princes were the first rulers of Iran who sat for their portraits.

The trend toward materialism was not limited to the desires of the upper class. The Iranian populace had aspirations, too, for material wealth as well as for good health, social rights, educational opportunity, and justice. Art and literature served to display people's emotions and thoughts about their dissatisfaction with their social and political status particularly in the late Qajar period. However, the imitation of nature apparently was not satisfactory for indicating the inner world of the Iranian psyche. Therefore, the artists of the Qajar period in the second half of the nineteenth century bypassed experimenting with techniques such as *chiaroscuro*, anatomical accuracy, and perspective and concentrated on realistic works of art that reflected the lives of ordinary people as well as their individuality. In this process, the study of European art became a

constructive tool for Iranian artists who voyaged to Europe to study, studied directly under European artists who traveled to Iran, or were trained in the European-style schools in Iran where they were introduced to works by European artists. Realism in this paper is defined as the artists' freedom to express real events or real people in a realistic manner. Realist artists focus on what exists or happens in society.

Iranian artists of the late Qajar period and their patrons used the term European realistic painting, since the term realism was not native in formal language, and this new style distanced itself from traditional Iranian imagery; many of its elements were adapted from European paintings. The term was generally used for paintings that did not contain features of Iranian traditional image making—two-dimensional imagery and vivid colors—but rather images of nature, human figures, and objects drawn and painted in a European manner, which included the use of perspective and three-dimensionality of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, and the nineteenth-century emphasis on realism in Europe. This thesis uses the term European realistic painting to reflect Iranian artists' fascination with a variety of elements from these periods such as use of light and shadow, attention to realistic space, descriptions of the ordinary world, and applications of the science of sight.

The familiarity of Iranians with European schools of art begins with the political relationship with Europe in the seventeenth century, and increases in the nineteenth century. In Europe, industrial, social, and cultural changes reformed many political systems in the nineteenth century and ended many monarchial, feudal, and hierarchical systems that had existed for centuries. In the transition from monarchy to democracy,

according to Stephen Eisenman, in his book *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History*, the bourgeois controlled some parts of Europe for about a century. On the one hand, the working class, farmers, and women followed revolutionary ideas of enlightened individuals in gaining their freedom and equality.¹ On the other hand, industrialized nations invaded weak countries in Africa, South America, and the Middle East, maintaining economical and military supremacy during the colonial period of the nineteenth century. Britain, for instance, asserted control over oil in Iran to assure its routes to India. Countries such as Iran suffered constant interference by Europeans trying to enforce their ascendancy in the name of modernization, two-way friendship, and trade. Having political and economic clout, England, Germany, France, and the United States chased valuable resources and lands. As a part of the plan, European ambassadors, government missions, military men, traders, archeologists, and artists, all of whom traveled to different regions, took back to Europe information on future investments, as well as a large number of ancient and contemporary art pieces and treasures, which made many museums and private collections enormously wealthy.

European artists–travelers of the nineteenth century who traveled to the Middle East were either Orientalists or on diplomatic missions. Orientalists were in search of new ideas and exotic subject matter for their Western audiences whereas artists on diplomatic and military missions were sent to explore Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, gather visual information, and provide maps for military purposes. They did not go merely for art experiences, as did many Orientalists. Therefore, traveling to Iran to fulfill political objectives offered a superb chance for artists to collect visual information about

the cultural, social, and political systems of Iran, its military, its people, and its different districts. For instance, Eugene Flandin, an Italian-born artist who lived in Paris, and Pascal Coste, a French artist, were sent to Iran on a mission in 1840 to collect information about Iran's political environment under the rule of Mohammad Shah.² Also, Jules Laurens traveled to Iran and Turkey on a government mission in July 1847 during Mohammad Shah's reign.³

Since European artists-travelers⁴ were expected to produce visual information about Iran, their paintings and drawings were intentionally graphic and explicit in detail. European paintings and drawings were intended as visual reports, revealing to foreign governments vital information on the land and people of Iran. One of these artists was Louis Emile Duhousset, a French artist and army officer, who was sent to Iran in 1858. He provided hundreds of fast sketches in pen and ink, and watercolor drawings of soldiers and their weapons, men and women from different ethnicities, the monarch Naser-al-Din Shah and his courtiers, attendants, servants, holy shrines, bridges, mountains, lakes, cities, and gates of the cities.⁵ His human figures contain accurate details of the costumes and characteristics of the sitters identifying them as to their rank, position, gender, and ethnicity. Duhousset visited the court of Naser-al-Din Shah and provided at least two sketches of the shah, in one of which the monarch himself is drawing Duhousset.⁶ These drawings suggest that the shah, some of the princes, and probably the royal artists of the time were introduced to Duhousset's technique. Moreover, the artist was one of the educators in the military department of the Dar-al-

Fonoun School, and there is a good chance that he shared some of his works and techniques with the art teachers and even the students.

Other artists–travelers invited to the royal court while accompanying diplomats also had the opportunity to show their work to the monarchs or paint their portraits. The rulers were fascinated with their realistic style and their techniques. For example, in his journal, Jules Laurens states that Mohammad Shah was delighted with the portrait he made of the shah and commissioned him to do more oil paintings.⁷ As a landscape painter, Laurens painted outdoor canvases in a realistic manner to be completed later in his studio.⁸ Some of his landscape paintings, drawings, and sketches of the sites in Iran indicate the hardship of traveling, especially in winter. Other artists contributing important information included Alberto Pasini, whose paintings of Iran were exhibited in the Salons in Paris,⁹ Eugene Flandin, who created hundreds of canvases and drawings of cityscapes, monuments, picturesque views, and people,¹⁰ and Pascal Coste, who accompanied Flandin and was in charge of making the engravings of architectural depictions of the monuments.¹¹ Colonel F. Colombari’s drawings and paintings of battle scenes were studied by the military commanders in Iran,¹² and Jane Dieulafoy, the wife of a French officer whose drawings of different parts of Iran are still studied today by historians,¹³ introduced different aspects and styles of nineteenth-century European painting to Iranian patrons and artists.

The presence of Western artists in Iran increased the awareness of and popularity of new styles and techniques in painting. As the primary patrons of art, Qajar monarchs, who were directly in touch with artists–travelers, urged Iranian royal artists to emulate

the style of these European artists. Since royal artists lived at court, there is a high probability that they met European artists and even were trained by them and were introduced to European techniques of sketching and drawing. Unintentionally, perhaps, European artists left behind visual elements of Western art, specifically the descriptive rendering of objects and people. Some aspects of European realistic painting found favor with Iranian artists and patrons, particularly subject matter displaying adversity, individuality, and social differences owing to rank, ethnicity, gender, and careers.

Another factor that led Iranian painting toward European realism was the presence of Iranian artists in Europe. Qajar rulers thought it would help the progress of modernization to send students to the West to study. It is noteworthy that, unlike European governments, the Qajar shahs did not send artists to other countries for political or military purposes; the artists were merely sent to enhance their knowledge of art and convey their art experiences to Iran.

For the first time in the Qajar period, Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), the crown prince during the Fath Ali Shah period, sent two students to London to study painting and medicine, Mohammad Kazem, the son of Abbas Mirza's personal artist, and Mirza Baba Afshar, the son of one of Abbas Mirza's sergeants.¹⁴ The crown prince requested that Sir Harford Jones, Great Britain's ambassador,¹⁵ to take the students with him after finishing his service in Iran. In London, Sir Harford asked one of his officers, Major Southerland, who had served in Iran, to sponsor the Iranian students.¹⁶ Southerland placed both students at the Cook Institute¹⁷ and sent reports regularly to Abbas Mirza about their progress. In his June 16, 1812, report, he praised Mohammad Kazem as a talented

painter who deserved to be trained by the best professors.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the art student was infected with tuberculosis in 1813 and died on March 25. He was buried in St. Pancras Church in London. The other student, Mirza Baba Afshar, continued his study in medicine for a while, but he returned to Iran a year later.¹⁹ No information about Mohammad Kazem's paintings or sketches exists; however, since Abbas Mirza always commissioned realistic portraits, it is almost certain that Mohammad Kazem was studying Renaissance and Baroque paintings at the Institute.²⁰

At the time Mohammad Kazem was studying in London, the English landscape painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) exhibited his oil on canvas *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps* (in 1812) and his *Frosty Morning* (in 1813) at the Royal Academy of Art, London.²¹ A celebrated artist of his time, Turner profoundly influenced European painting with his canvases of mythical and historical events, using the grandeur of nature as a backdrop, and with landscapes in which nature looks sublime and mysterious. Turner's fame as a Romantic landscape painter makes it possible that Mohammad Kazem or other Iranian artists who visited Europe at that time were familiar with his work. Yet, the probability of Iranian artists being influenced by Turner directly seems small. Turner's haze of light and color, obscuring atmosphere, and threatening nature were too distant from what Iranian artists were accustomed to seeing in painting, and it is extremely doubtful that Iranian bourgeois patrons would have purchased such paintings. The nineteenth century Iranians were not ready to accept Turner's work or other paintings in that style.

When the fourth group of students left for France in 1844, one artist, Mirza Reza Ghafari, accompanied them. Mohammad Shah chose the artist to send him to study textile fabrication and sugar manufacturing in addition to painting.²² However, because of the French Revolution of 1848 and the death of Mohammad Shah in the same year, the students were forced to return to Iran and could not fulfill their ambitions.²³

Mohammad Shah's son, Naser-al-Din Shah, continued sending artists to Europe. One of the artists in the fifth group of students who studied in France in 1858 was Mirza Ali Akbar Kashani, also known as Mozayan-al-Doleh.²⁴ In Paris he studied French and painting, and he later became the instructor of painting and French at the Dar-al-Fonoun School.²⁵ The artist even taught painting to Naser-al-Din Shah for a while. Although he was a master at painting flowers and landscape, his love of music and the theater led him to work mostly in those arenas.²⁶

As the center of world art and undergoing major changes under Napoleon III, Paris had much to offer Iranian artists. Mirza Ali Akbar Kashani probably saw the first exhibition of Eugene-Louis Boudin (1824–1898), a French landscape painter who introduced outdoor painting to the next generation, at the 1859 Salon in Paris.²⁷ In the same year, Felix Nadar (1820–1910), the French portrait photographer, took the first aerial photos of Paris from a balloon as well as the first pictures of known individuals using artificial light and blank backgrounds to emphasize the sitters' personality and emotions.²⁸ Also, Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), Honore Daumier (1808–1879), Jean Francois Millet (1814–1875), and Gerard Grandville (1803–1847), the avant-garde artists who, according to Eisenman, became known as realist artists of the post-Romantic

period, were actively representing the social crisis and the harsh conditions of the agitated third class during the 1840s and 1850s.²⁹ And Karl Marx (1818–1883), the German philosopher, was leading a modern school of thought, questioning the bourgeoisie and a classical antiquity that could no longer represent mid-nineteenth-century demands.³⁰

The French government, however, continued to honor classical antiquity and the art of the Renaissance to glorify the regime. Thus, acceptance into the main art school, the *École des Beaux-Arts*, was limited to the French students who passed the entrance exam by proving their talent in Renaissance and classical-style painting and sculpture; about ten of these students were awarded a *Prix de Rome* to study the masters of the Renaissance in Rome.³¹ The school was not for artists such as Paul Cezanne (1839–1906), who applied to the school in 1862 and was rejected,³² nor for foreigners such as the Iranian students. The restrictions of the academy forced non-native students to attend alternative schools of Paris, some of which were more radical or experimental, and to become familiar with other art movements.

Another Iranian artist who traveled to Europe was Sani-al-Molk. According to Yahya Zoca in the *Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866*, Sani-al-Molk traveled to Italy around 1847 to complete his study where he spent his time in museums in Rome, the Vatican, Florence, and Venice, studying the masters of the Renaissance such as Raphael (1483–1520). His copies of Raphael's *Christ's Ascension* and *Madonna di Foligno* in the Vatican are known.³³ Like many other artists who visited museums in Italy mastering techniques in the representation of nature, the Iranian artist satisfied his curiosity, developed new techniques, and then moved on.

Sani-al-Molk returned to Iran near the end of 1850.³⁴ It is difficult to compare the artist's works before and after his travel to Italy since most of his existing works belong to the period after his return to Iran. In general, Sani-al-Molk's main focus was the human figure and portraits, although he worked occasionally with landscapes and animals. He painted many portraits of the monarch, government individuals, and although rarely, ordinary people; the artist always worked on multiple commissions and used the court servants and attendants as models in his figure groups. One appealing feature of his work is his portrayal of children. He is the first Iranian artist whose portraits of children show the characteristics of the child: their innocence and their childish behavior. Other Iranian artists painted the faces of children as if they were adults but smaller in size. Furthermore, Sani-al-Molk was a true watercolor master, a medium he apparently preferred to oil.

A study of the artist's canvases created after his return from Italy suggests he adopted some elements from European paintings. One example of Sani-al-Molk's oil canvases is a 58.3 × 84.3 inch portrait of Naser-al-Din Shah entitled *Portrait of Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar* and painted around 1868 (see Figure 17). As in most of his paintings, Sani-al-Molk left the dark-brown background solid, thus focusing on the figure, especially the face. This is one of the techniques that the artist may have observed in European paintings. In traditional Iranian painting, the background is usually as busy as the foreground and until Sani-al-Molk's time there are almost no paintings with blank backgrounds. The artist's focus is on representing individuality; facial features and clothing provide some information about the sitter, such as his position and class, age,

and perhaps ethnicity. The expensive clothing of the shah, particularly his cane and the ribbon of honor, indicate his high rank and wealth. Moreover, the clothing gives us precious information about cultural changes. In the early Qajar paintings, the monarchs always wear traditional Iranian clothes usually made of the finest and the most expensive fabric named *termeh*, which is unique to Iran and was used for the royalty; also, they sit on the ground on an exquisite carpet. In Sani-al-Molk's canvas, Naser-al-Din Shah is wearing a French-style military uniform while sitting on a chair that is covered with red fabric. The monarch is looking directly at the viewer, demonstrating pride and confidence.

By studying this painting and Sani-al-Molk's other works, it becomes clear that the artist's journey to Europe resulted in a major innovation in his technique and experience in using a blank background to emphasize the sitter's characteristics. In all his portrait and figure paintings, the artist demonstrates anger, sorrow, solitude, contentment, cruelty, innocence, egotism, and weakness as well as rank, class, and even the educational status of his sitters through the facial features and poses, the objects they carry, and the backgrounds. Such qualities are particularly apparent in his group figure paintings; for example, some of the faces are painted humorously, poking fun at certain individuals. Although Sani-al-Molk is not thought of as a Realist artist, his works suggest that he can be considered the first artist to introduce Realism to Iran in the mid-nineteenth century.

Apparently, Sani-al-Molk's trip to Italy provided the opportunity for him to learn lithography and become familiar with the Italian academic system of teaching art. Upon

his return to Iran, he brought with him lithographic equipment, the idea of a European-style school, and some color prints and etchings of Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and other Western artists, which then became reference models for students and artists of the future school.³⁵ It is not known exactly which images the artist brought back to Iran. In Europe, lithography had widespread appeal among many artists experimenting with the new medium in the publication of images in books and newspapers, thereby making copies of famous art works available to a broader public. Thus, Iranian artists were able to view and select prints of many famous works of European artists.

After returning from Italy, Sani-al-Molk was honored by Naser-al-Din Shah in being appointed the chief of the Governmental Printing House. He published the weekly newspaper *Doulat-e Elliyeh-e Iran* [*The Great Government of Iran*], which had started under the name of *Vaghaye Etefaghiey* [*Events*] at the beginning of the ruler's period.³⁶ The artist worked on the newspaper from issue number 471 in 1861 until 1867.³⁷ Sani-al-Molk's knowledge of lithography facilitated the production of a high-quality newspaper with at least one image for each issue, many of which were portraits of members of the government or well-known individuals. Social events were also included. His lithographs have the same quality as his paintings; they indicate the characteristics of the sitters in an almost photographic manner. Lithography and the mass production of more realistic images were influential and introduced European realistic painting to ordinary people, who did not have access to the many paintings that hung on the walls of palaces. From that time on, more people could afford images or illustrated books since they were less expensive than the original paintings. Moreover, by studying lithographs by other

artists who continued working for newspapers and the press, it is almost certain that Sani-al-Molk's style of lithography became a model followed by his contemporaries and the next generation. Like him, these artists were looking for factual details to create individuality in portraits.

After Sani-al-Molk, a few Iranian artists either went to Europe to study lithography or learned it in Sani-al-Molk's art school. These artists, with their knowledge of lithography, were hired for more prestigious positions. One of them was Mirza Motaleb Esfahani, an artist working and teaching in *Majma'-e Dar-al-Sanayeh* [*The Polytechnic School of Crafts*].³⁸ He was one of the first artists who illustrated a book using the technique of lithography; *Tarikh Nameh Khusravan* [*The History of the Kings*], written by Jalal-al-Doleh,³⁹ was first published in Tehran and then in Austria. Later Esfahani became the minister of the Department of Post and received the title of honor Mostashar-al-Vozara (meaning among all ministers) in Naser-al-Din Shah's era.⁴⁰

Other artists/lithographers found positions working for the newspapers of the time. One of those artists was Mirza Mehdi Khan, also known as Mosaver-al-Molk, whose father sent him to *Majma'-e Dar-al-Sanayeh* to learn painting. At the school he met Mirza Motaleb, who was still teaching painting. Mirza Motaleb encouraged Mosaver-al-Molk to go to the Dar-al-Fonoun School to learn European realistic painting. At the Dar-al-Fonoun School, Mosaver-al-Molk learned to work with ink, watercolors, and lithography. With a strong knowledge of lithography, he was hired to publish his works in the newspaper *Sharaf* once a month during the last years of Naser-al-Din Shah's reign.⁴¹ Mosaver-al-Molk had his own techniques and painted the images directly on

stone, instead of painting them on paper first and then transferring the image to the stone. The transfer process normally resulted in image flaking and loss of quality. With this method, Mosaver-al-Molk's images were more controlled and of a superior quality than those using a transfer method. Also, to avoid reversing the image when publishing, he copied the image using a mirror and painted the image on the stone by looking at the mirror.⁴²

Another artist, Abou Tourab, Sani-al-Molk's nephew and Kamal-al-Molk's brother, worked for *Sharaf* newspaper at the same time. Abou Tourab studied art at the Dar-al-Fonoun School and was trained under his uncle Sani-al-Molk. After learning lithography, he started working for *Sharaf*⁴³ as well as providing lithographs for books, the most important of which was the *Second Travel to Khurasan* written by Naser-al-Din Shah in 1882.⁴⁴ In his travels, Naser-al-Din Shah took a photographer with him to record different regions he visited. After returning from the trip, the monarch commissioned Abou Tourab to make lithographs based on the photographs.⁴⁵ His series of lithographs start with a portrait of the monarch that is not limited to photographic details and anatomical accuracy.⁴⁶ This image is an example of Sani-al-Molk's influential artistic style on the next generation in conveying the sitter's personality. The series continues with landscapes from small villages, gardens, the shah's camping site, the governors' houses in which Naser-al-Din Shah rested overnight, the Semnan Mosque,⁴⁷ monumental buildings, and some parts of the holy shrine of Imam Reza, the eighth Shi'ite Imam buried in Mashhad.⁴⁸ Abou Tourab signed each of his lithographs. His proficiency as an artist and lithographer led him to become a court artist later (no illustration shown).⁴⁹

When Sani-al-Molk opened the first European-style school of painting and printing in Iran, he advertised for interested students in the *Doulat-e Elliyeh-e Iran* Newspaper.⁵⁰ The advertisement made it clear that Sani-al-Molk would teach the students directly once a week and on other days they would practice and copy from the artist's paintings, his copies of Raphael, and the lithographs and engravings of the works of Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and other masters. The students also sketched from plaster casts that Sani-al-Molk brought from Italy. The school was open to the public once a week to view the collection and the students' works.⁵¹ About thirty students registered in the school and they later helped the artist with his commissions.⁵² This school was free of charge and open to all talented youth from any class, but limited to men. Therefore, Sani-al-Molk took the first step in removing paintings from palaces and bringing them into society.

Kamal-al-Molk also was interested in traveling to Europe and studying European art. When Mozafar-al-Din Shah attained the throne, he allowed Kamal-al-Molk to travel to Europe in 1897 or 1898.⁵³ For about five years the artist traveled among Rome, Florence, and Paris, where he spent most of his time in museums such as the Louvre studying and copying the work of artists such as Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) and Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606–1669).⁵⁴ Unfortunately, Kamal-al-Molk's early works do not survive today. Nevertheless, by studying his biography, we can conclude that his paintings probably were somewhat realistic from the beginning since his art teacher, Mozayan-al-Douleh, trained his students to paint in this manner. Also, his uncle, Sani-al-Molk, left his knowledge of representing the appearance of nature for the next generation,

especially for his nephew who followed him. Moreover, Kamal-al-Molk was personally interested in European realistic painting. He explained, “I love realistic painting and I consider Raphael and Rembrandt to be my mentors. I am trying to master the Italian style, and my ideal artist is Rembrandt (sic).”⁵⁵ Instead of using “Renaissance” or “Baroque” to describe Raphael and Rembrandt’s styles, Kamal-al-Molk used the word “realistic”; he probably described his own paintings as realistic, too. It would be interesting to know what aspects of Raphael, Rembrandt, and other European artists’ works fascinated him and how he applied this information to his own paintings.

While staying in Rome and Florence, Kamal-al-Molk became proficient in using elements derived from Renaissance and Baroque paintings. For example, Kamal-al-Molk copied at least one portrait by Rubens⁵⁶ using a forceful frontal light on the face while leaving the background of the canvas dark. However, some of Rubens’s major works in Florence and Rome that Kamal-al-Molk might have seen are *Risen Christ* in the Galleria delle Statue in the Medici family’s Pitti Palace,⁵⁷ the large altarpiece for the church of Santissima Trinità, in Mantua, titled *Baptism of Christ*,⁵⁸ and the three paintings commissioned for the crypt chapel of St. Helena in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Rome.⁵⁹ These works probably did not attract the artist. Rubens’s busy compositions, demanding movements, masculine figures, and Biblical subject matters may have had little appeal to Kamal-al-Molk since these qualities are not seen in his paintings. He favored to experiment Rubens’s brushwork and lighting than subject matter.

From published accounts we know that Kamal-al-Molk spent time in the Louvre Museum in Paris, where he may have studied Rembrandt’s oils, which were available in

the Louvre Museum at that time, such as *Portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels with a Velvet Beret* (1654), *Bathsheba at Her Bath* (1654),⁶⁰ and *The Raising of Lazarus*.⁶¹ It seems that Kamal-al-Molk's focus was to learn the technique of *chiaroscuro*, and the result of his studies of this methodology in Rembrandt's and Rubens's canvases is plainly decipherable in the portraits he painted. One example is a copy provided in 1897–1898, from one of Rembrandt's self-portraits, entitled *Copy of Rembrandt's Self-portrait* (see Figure 18). In this copy, there is a definite transition from light to shade in the face, and a clear contrast between the face and the russet hat. Also, the sharp light on the steel collar around the neck and the luminous gold chain resting over the neckpiece along with the play of light and shadow revealed in the texture of the clothes all prove the artist's skill in employing *chiaroscuro*. Kamal-al-Molk repeated this technique in his other portraits and self-portraits painted after his return to Iran in 1902–1903.⁶⁴

Besides studying at the Louvre, Kamal-al-Molk became a friend of Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904), the French realist painter and lithographer, who was famous for his genre scenes, still lifes, and flower canvases.⁶⁵ Fantin-Latour had close friendships with Edouard Manet (1832–1883), Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), Gustave Courbet (1819–1877), and J. A. MacNeill Whistler (1834–1903) and met Edgar Degas (1834–1917) and Berthe Morisot (1841–1895). Fantin-Latour also admired Romantic music, especially that of Richard Wagner (1813–1883).⁶⁶ Kamal-al-Molk even copied Fantin-Latour's 1895 self-portrait, as *The Portrait of Fantin-Latour, the French Artist*,⁶⁷ in 1900–1901.⁶⁸ His friendship with Fantin-Latour would have been an incredibly informative opportunity for Kamal-al-Molk to learn about his contemporary leading artists, although it seems that

the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and other artists of the early modern period did not influence him. The artist did not even train the next generation in the *Sanayeh Mostazrafeh*, the art school he opened in 1911 in Tehran, to follow these modern schools. In this school, students were free to choose the European realistic approach, or they could study traditional arts such as woodcarving, mosaic, or carpet design and manufacture.⁷⁰ Kamal-al-Molk invited the masters of each major to train students also in the value of Iranian traditional art. His work and his students' human figures and landscape paintings are the manifestation of Realism that was started by Sani-al-Molk.

Kamal-al-Molk's realistic qualities are apparent in many of his paintings, particularly in the canvases he made depicting ordinary people. Of the Qajar royal artists, Kamal-al-Molk was perhaps the first artist who painted ordinary people, their daily lives, and their grief, happiness, hard work, and poverty. He painted beggars, blacksmiths, rug sellers, patients, women visiting a palm reader, and a worshiper exiting a mosque. He also was probably the first artist to paint noncommissioned canvases. One example is *Goldsmith from Baghdad* (see Figure 19). The goldsmith's simple clothes of inexpensive fabric introduce individuals who appear not to care about material treasures. Both sitters look at the piece of gold on which the old man is working. The features of the old man's face suggest an aware but perhaps unconcerned and stern man. The use of *chiaroscuro* is very interesting; the background behind the old man is dark while the background behind the young boy is light, suggesting the contrast between the two generations. Without a sharp light, the eye of the viewer is directed to the young boy and then moves to the right side and the dark area around the head of the old man, which appears like a murky hue.

Whereas a smooth frontal light on the face of the boy makes his features flatter and less intricate, the old man's features are sharp and distinct. This painting suggests Kamal-al-Molk's success in demonstrating a sitter's individuality as an indispensable element in painting. It also shows his interest in ordinary people, who were the foundation of Iranian society.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe, artists of the new movements, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, concentrated on qualities such as more flat surfaces, quick brushstrokes without clear edges, and the insignificance of *chiaroscuro* in other words less realistic painting. However, the apparent avoidance by Iranian artists for these important movements raises a question: Why did they prefer Renaissance, Baroque, and realistic paintings to the more contemporary art of Europe?

By the time Iranian artists went to Europe, Impressionism and Post-Impressionism had already led artists toward the use of vivid colors instead of the darker palette of the Baroque period, flattened surfaces instead of linear perspective of the Renaissance, and stylized forms instead of realistically rendered figures, objects, and landscapes. Moreover, European artists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were investigating the art of other cultures such as African art, Indian art, and Oriental art in search of new ideas. Gill Perry in *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* discusses the interest of artists, among them Gauguin, Picasso, Matisse, and Van Gogh, in "primitive sources and societies"; this became a crucial element in shaping Modern art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷¹ However, while

European artists were exploring the art of countries such as Iran, Iranian artists were studying European art of the earlier periods.

One may think that Iranian artists were unaware of the art procedures in Europe because they had no contact with European avant-garde artists. Yet, Kamal-al-Molk's presence in Paris for at least three years supports the idea that he and perhaps some other artists were aware of these movements but rejected them. Kamal-al-Molk was able to communicate with French individuals and learn about the revolutionary changes in art and society; he also loved to read Anatole France (1844 –1924), the French writer, critic, and poet.⁷² Given Kamal-al-Molk's friendship with Fantin-Latour, it is hard to believe that they never discussed Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, or other important art events, and nor the many avant-garde artists and poets whom Fantin-Latour knew. Also, it is doubtful that Kamal-al-Molk and other Iranian artists who studied in European art schools had never heard of those revolutionary movements. On the contrary, it is quite likely that, although Iranian artists were aware of European artists' determination to distance themselves from the idea of realistic painting, they saw no point in investigating modern European movements in art. They preferred to explore the more traditional aspects of European art.

There were a number of reasons why Iranian artists apparently avoided the new European art movements of the time and disregarded the contemporary European art movements, preferring instead to concentrate on the art of previous periods. The artists had excellent motives for their studies. First, the Qajar shahs urged artists to emulate the European realistic style. Naser-al-Din Shah, for example, commissioned Sani-al-Molk and Kamal-al-Molk to paint portraits and landscapes in this manner. Although the court artists

of the previous Safavid period had knowledge of many aspects of realistic painting, they did not focus on the indication of individuality in portraits nor were they interested in the technique of *chiaroscuro*. This fact probably encouraged artists who traveled to Europe to study realistic paintings, which had recently become popular in Iran. Another reason was that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries European artists were experimenting with pure vibrant colors, the lack of linear perspective, flatness, stylized forms, decorative surfaces, and abstract and geometrical shapes; these were elements and principles of art that had been used by Iranian artists since the fourteenth century. Such aspects of painting were of little interest to Iranian artists in the nineteenth century, especially during the late period, where perspective, three-dimensionality, a subtler palette, and individuality in portraits, ordinary people, and real events held more fascination for Iranian artists. For these reasons Iranian artists investigated paintings of the earlier periods instead of the contemporary art of Europe.

Another factor in shaping painting in the Qajar period in a realistic direction was photography. Photography reached Iran in 1844, during the period of Mohammad Shah, and spread rapidly.⁷³ Not only were the monarch and courtiers enormously curious about taking photographs and learning photography, but people outside the royal court also took great delight in this invention and enjoyed viewing themselves in photographs. Naser-al-Din Shah, for instance, started learning photography at age thirteen, when he was still the heir to the throne. Later, as shah, he established the Royal Album House in the Golestan Palace, Tehran, in which approximately forty-thousand photographs were preserved in albums, about twenty-thousand of which were taken by the shah himself.⁷⁴ With the

popularity of photography in Iran, many Iranian, Russian, and European photographers opened studios in Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz. For instance, Dmitry Ermakov (1845–1918), a skilled photographer from Tephlis, came to Tehran and opened a studio. He was honored with the title of royal photographer at Naser-al-Din Shah's court.⁷⁵ Photography's domination in Iran affected painting and the artistic point of view. One reason for this dominance was that Russian, European, and Iranian photographers had close contact with ordinary people. As with woodcarving, goldsmithing, metal carving, and other traditional studios that were a part of the bazaars or close to them, photography studios were located in the crowded parts of the cities, open to the public, and affordable.

Photography at this time was considered a science, not an art. For this reason professional photographers called themselves engineers;⁷⁶ engineering was considered on the same level as mechanics. However, people found that with the advances in cameras just about anyone could become a photographer. In the public mind artists were seen as gifted individuals with extraordinary talent; photographers did not need such exceptional talent. A love for this invention led many individuals to the extensive use of photography, whether it was just for taking photographs or for studying its techniques. Artists, too, were curious about photography and some of them started using this medium. For instance, Mir Mosaver, an artist and book illustrator from Tabriz, practiced photography for a while.⁷⁷ Other artists worked as professional photographers, one of whom was the lithographer Mosaver-al-Molk. He worked with Ivanouf, also known as Rousi Khan, in his photography studio opened in 1907.⁷⁸

Many other artists used photography as a tool for their paintings and this affected their canvases. Photography assisted painters in creating more accurate works, which was how artists viewed its role in painting. Etemad-al-Saltaneh, the Minister of Publications in Naser-al-Din Shah's reign, stated that "the essential outcome of the science of photography is on the art of painting [so that] photography had greatly served the art of portraiture and landscape by reinforcing the use of light and shade, accurate proportions, and perspective."⁷⁹ A number of paintings created during the reign of Naser-al-Din Shah and later were either copied directly from photographs or were based on photographs, creating more anatomically accurate and realistic works. For example, Kamal-al-Molk painted three or four oil canvases from the portraits that Jules Richard, the French photographer, took of Mohammad Shah and Naser-al-Din Mirza in 1880. The original photographs no longer exist, but we know of them from the artist's explanation on the canvases where he writes that the paintings are copies of Jules Richard's photographs.⁸⁰ According to the artist himself, Kamal-al-Molk used photographs specifically to create commissioned portraits of deceased individuals or for his own interest.⁸¹

One of his most appealing canvases is the *Eight Portraits of Naser-al-Din Shah and Mozaffar-al-Din Shah at Different Ages* (see Figure 20). In this 64 × 75 inch canvas, six portraits of Mozafar-al-Din Shah at ages nine, ten, thirteen, sixteen, thirty-eight, and forty-six and two portraits of Naser-al-Din Shah at ages ten and sixty-seven were painted inside oval frames. Kamal-al-Molk wrote the name and age of each person portrayed to the right of each face. By including a painted shadow on the edge of each frame, the

artist provides a sense of three-dimensionality, suggesting to the viewer that there are eight different canvases hung on a green wall. The painting is not dated. However, since the oldest portrait is the one of Mozafer-al-Din Shah at age forty-six, it was probably painted in 1894 or later. In the paintings of their youth, both shahs are dressed in Qajar-style clothes, whereas portraits of the monarchs at ages forty-six and sixty-seven show them in French military clothes. The identification of the shahs as Iranian rulers is possible by the feature of their faces, especially the mustaches, and their jeweled and feathered hats. Although this canvas was painted during Mozafar-al-Din Shah's reign, the figure of Naser-al-Din Shah at age ten is placed in the center and is bigger than the other portraits, indicating his importance. On the frame, the artist wrote the following: "The portrait of the martyred shah when he was the crown prince." There is a good chance that these portraits were all painted from photographs for several reasons: The two rulers appear at different ages, the pose of each portrait is photographic, and the light on the faces resembles studio light. The use of different photographs taken at different dates, the expressive composition, and the realistic poses that indicate the sitters' characteristics introduce this painting as one of the most interesting canvases historically and artistically of the Qajar period.

A painting, like a photograph, became very popular especially when the subject was as precise as a photograph by the hand of a talented artist. Even the artists who were chosen to teach at the Dar-al-Fonoun and Sanayeh-e Mostazrafeh Schools were tested for their abilities in this art form. From the viewpoint of the public and patrons, the artists who could paint in a European realistic style were modern, whereas traditional painters

were considered old-fashioned. Such opinions led a few book illustrators to change direction and turn from traditional painting to a more realistic method to display their abilities in photograph-like painting. The best example is Hadi Tajvidi, who stopped working as a miniature painter for a while to experiment with realistic painting to “complete his art,” as he said.⁸²

As we have learned, the presence of European artists who worked in a realistic manner in Iran, the Iranian artists who studied art in Europe, and the introduction of lithography and photography all had a vital function in leading Iranian painting toward realism. But, that was not the only concern for the artists of the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition, the historical route of painting in Iran followed the study of anatomical accuracy, perspective, *chiaroscuro*, and, therefore, more realistic European style paintings and then moved toward the introduction of personal characteristics and increased individualism. Although realistic representation in painting was the only concern of the patrons, it was not the main point of studying European art for the artists. Artists of the late period knew that Iranian artists of the previous centuries were aware of certain realistic techniques. Their aptitude and consciousness can be seen in book illustrations created centuries before, such as those created in the early fourteenth century for a book entitled *Jami'-al-Tawarikh (The Universal History)* written in 1314 in Tabriz, northwestern Iran, by Rashid-al-Din Hamedani (1247–1318), the Iranian writer and historian.⁸³

While the author of *Jami'-al-Tawarikh* is known, its illustrator is not. In one of the folios of the book, two anthropomorphic creatures are sitting next to each other

playing the *kaman-cheh*⁸⁴ (bowed lute) and drinking wine, while the animal legs that they probably used as musical instruments for clapping are placed in the foreground (see Figures 21, 22, and 23). Although their bodies are deformed to portray strange and eccentric creatures, they both look realistic. The *kaman-cheh* and animal legs are painted accurately. The unknown artist uses fine outlines to draw certain parts of their bodies, the *kaman-cheh*, the wine cup, and the chains. The use of light and shadow emphasizes their form, specifically their muscles and the animal legs in the foreground. Even the features of their faces are emphasized. The lines that shape the clothing, the wires of the *kaman-cheh*, and the ropes attached to the chains suggest movement; the negative space of the left side expresses the movement of the whole composition. In general, this work suggests the artist's talent in creating or in using some techniques associated with realist painting.

This work is just one example of Iranian artists' awareness of realistic elements in painting centuries before their familiarity with European painting. Many Iranian artists had purposely not used the realistic manner to express the religious, symbolic, or mystical environment of the literature. Iranian artists had already dealt with such features as negative and positive space, vivacious colors, and decorative motifs, aspects that had enchanted European artists in the nineteenth century. Like artists of the previous centuries, artists of the Qajar period continued to reveal their awareness of traditional art and the significance of relating their art to the society and culture in which they were living, instead of slavishly copying European masters. The adoption of realism as a new art style reflects the changes in the late Qajar society.

Endnotes

- ¹ Stephen F. Eisenman, *Nineteenth Century Art: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 7. “The age of modern colonialism began about 1500, following the European discoveries of a sea route around Africa’s southern coast (1488) and of America (1492). With these events sea power shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic and to the emerging... Capitalism: also called free market economy, or free enterprise economic system, dominant in the Western world since the breakup of feudalism, in which most of the means of production are privately owned and production is guided and income distributed largely through the operation of markets.”
- ² Lynne Thornton, *The Orientalists Painter-Travelers 1828–1908* (Paris: ACR Edition International, 1983), 80. As Thornton states, Eugene Flandin was born in Naples, in 1803, and died in Paris in 1876. Pascal Coste was born in Marseilles, in 1787, and died in 1879. The leader of this mission, Edouard De Sersi, was unable to manage his political duties in Iran, and the government recalled him to France. Yet, Flandin and Coste stayed in Iran and traveled to Hamedan, Kermanshah, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Persepolis. After two and a half years, they returned to France and published a six-volume album on Iran in 1851.
- ³ Thornton 1983, 80. According to Thornton, Jules Laurens was born in Carpentras in 1825 and died in Saint-Didier in 1901. While on his mission of travel to Iran, Laurens provided many sketches and drawings of people and landscapes. He went back to Paris in 1850. The advantage Laurens had over other artists was that he was allowed to paint a portrait of a royal princess, the shah’s aunt, Farah Khanoum [Lady Farah] in the shah’s private harem; this was an opportunity for him to get some information about harem life. Unfortunately, no information about this canvas has been found.
- ⁴ Three other artists traveled to Iran. The first was Emile Prise d’Avennes, who was born in Avennes in 1807 and died in Paris in 1879. He was an archaeologist, artist, and illustrator. The artist traveled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Iran, and India. (See Thornton 1983, 264). The second artist, Edwin Lord Weeks, was born in Boston in 1849 and died in Paris in 1903. He traveled to India in 1882 through Turkey and Persia. He published the book *From the Black Sea through Persia and India* and exhibited his oil paintings in Paris, Berlin, Munich, London, Boston, and Philadelphia. (See Thornton 1983, 267). Also, Henry Blocqueville de Couliboeuf was a French physician, painter, and photographer who traveled to Iran about 1858. He also joined the army as Sergeant of the Royal Guard and was in charge of recording military equipment and war scenes in paintings. See Yahya Zoka, *Tarikh-e Akasi va Akasaan-e Pishgam dar Iran* (The History of

Photography and Pioneer Photographers in Iran) (Tehran: Elmi & Farhangi Publishing, 1997), 41.

⁵ See Manouchehr Farman-Farmayan, *Safari Beh Iran, Duhousset* (The Voyage to Persia, Duhousset) (Tehran: Bonyad Farhang Iran, 1977), 9. L. E. Duhousset was born in April 18, 1823. He attended military school and joined the army. As an officer, he was sent to Iran in 1858, when Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar requested the French government to send a group to instruct the Persian army based on French standards. Since Duhousset was very interested in anthropology and human ethnicity, he prepared more than 600 drawings of people from different provinces on their way to Tehran. A year later he traveled to Isfahan, Shiraz, Kerman, Baluchistan, and Khurasan and studied ethnic groups such as the Lur, Bakhtiyari, Balouch, Armenians, and Turkamen. Duhousset also taught at the Dar-al-Fonoun School. He left Iran after three years. His drawings impressed Napoleon III and Eugenie, the empress, deeply. In 1863, his works were exhibited at the Science Academy. The French Ministry of Education printed his drawings in a book.

⁶ See Farman-Farmayan 1977, Figures 7 and 9.

⁷ Lynne Thornton, *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting* (Paris: ACR Edition International, 1985), 204.

⁸ Eisenman 1998, 246.

⁹ Thornton 1983, 124–125. Thornton states that Alberto Pasini was born in Basseto in 1826 and died in Cavoretto in 1899. In 1851, he moved to Paris, met Prosper Bourre, and traveled to Iran with him “on an official mission to counteract the Russian influence on Naser-al-Din Shah.” Pasini’s drawings fascinated the monarch and he asked the artist to accompany him on hunting trips and his travels. Pasini was also commissioned to paint works of art for the royal family. The artist returned to Italy in 1856 and sent his paintings of Persia, Arabia, Azerbaijan, and Syria to the Salons in Paris.

¹⁰ Jean Calmard, “Flandin and Coste,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranica.com/articles/v10f1/v10f104.html> (accessed November 16, 2005).

¹¹ Jean Calmard, “Flandin and Coste”, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, <http://www.iranica.com/articles/v10f1/v10f104.html> (accessed November 16, 2005).

¹² Manoutchehr M. Eskandari-Qajar. “Mohammad Shah Qajar’s Nezam-e Jadid and Colonel Colombari’s Zambourakchis,” *Qajar Studies, Journal of the International Qajar Studies Association*, Vol. V (2005): 54–62. Colonel

Colombari traveled to Iran in 1833, during Mohammad Shah's reign, and served in the Iranian military as an advisor until the death of the monarch in 1848. Like other travelers-artists he provided many sketches and paintings. Iranian commanders used Colombari's sketches of battle scenes for studying war techniques.

- ¹³ See Jane Dieulafoy, *La Perse, la Chaldee et la Susiane* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1887).
- ¹⁴ Ahmad Hashemiyan, *Tahavolat Iran dar Doreh Ghajar va Madresseh Dar-al-Fonoun* (The Improvements in Iran During the Qajar Period and the Dar-al-Fonoun School) (Tehran: Moaseseh Joghrafiyaae va Kartougraphy Sahab, 2000), 13.
- ¹⁵ Hashemiyan 2000, 9. The British government sent Sir Harford Jones to Iran in 1808 and recalled him around 1812.
- ¹⁶ Hashemiyan 2000, 15.
- ¹⁷ Probably after the name of Captain James Cook (1728–1780), who explored most parts of the world while serving in the British Royal Navy and added some lands to Britain. See Nathan Kerl, "Captain James Cook; a Life Full of Adventure, Triumph, and Struggle," 2000, <http://members.tripod.com/cuculus/cookbio1.html> (accessed November 29, 2005).
- ¹⁸ Hashemiyan 2000, 16.
- ¹⁹ Hashemiyan 2000, 18.
- ²⁰ It is fascinating that Abbas Mirza was so interested in art and used the government's funds to send one student to Europe to have new experiences in painting while Iran was at war with Russia. Abbas Mirza fought against Russia in 1804–1813 and for the second time in 1827–28, losing some parts of Iran's lands in the northwest.
- ²¹ See Turner's Gallery, <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/turner/gallery3d.htm#6> (accessed November 29, 2005).
- ²² Hashemiyan 2000, 51.
- ²³ Hashemiyan 2000, 53. Later, Mirza Reza Ghafari worked as a translator in Naser-al-Din Shah's court and also as the translator for Mr. Czarnotoo, the instructor of mining sciences, and Mr. Fochetti, the instructor of sciences at the Dar-al-Fonoun School.
- ²⁴ Hashemiyan 2000, 351.

- ²⁵ Hashemiyān 2000, 352. Two other artists, Agha Mohammad and Hedayat-Allah Khan, were also sent to France to learn the art of ceramic decoration. They started their training in the Sevres china factory near Marseille, where they met Constant and two of his daughters who were working in the factory as painters. Agha Mohammad and Hedayat Allah Khan married the daughters. Agha Mohammad Khan took his wife and Constant to Iran. Constant started teaching painting in Dar-al-Fonoun and Agha Mohammad Khan's wife became a close friend of Naser-al-Din Shah's mother and one of the tutors of the young Naser-al-Din Mirza when he was the crown prince. See Hashemiyān 2000, 358–359.
- ²⁶ Ruin Pakbaz, *Naghashi Iran az Dirbaz ta Beh Emrouz* (Painting in Iran from Ancient Time to Present) (Tehran: Zarin & Simin Publishers, 2001), 162.
- ²⁷ "Eugene-Louis Boudin," *Olga's Gallery*, <http://www.abcgallery.com/B/boudin/boudinbio.html> (accessed November 29, 2005).
- ²⁸ "Nadar," J. Paul Getty Museum, <http://www.getty.edu/art/collections/bio/a1622-26.html> (accessed December 1, 2005). Nadar photographed, for example, the portrait painter Benoit-Hermogaste Molin in 1858 when Molin was visiting Paris from Italy.
- ²⁹ See Eisenman 1998, 206.
- ³⁰ See Eisenman 1998, 206–209.
- ³¹ "The Heritage Collections," *Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, <http://www.ensba.fr/patrimoine/collectionsEnglish.htm> (accessed December 1, 2005).
- ³² "Breaking Away from the Academy," San Jose State University, http://gallery.sjsu.edu/paris/breaking_away/chronology.htm (accessed December 1, 2005).
- ³³ Yahya Zoka, *Zendegi va Asar-e Ostad Sani'ol-Molk* (Life and Works of Sani'ol-Molk, 1814–1866) (Tehran: Markaz Nashr Daneshgahi, 2003), 26–27. Zoka also reports that "Sani-al-Molk's copy of *Madonna di Foligno* was at Naser-al-Din Shah's court, later came into the possession of the Atabak Mirza Ali-Asghar Khan Amin-os-Soltan, who had it set in the main corridor of the Atabak Park building (the present premises of the Russian Embassy). During the Constitutional Revolution, this painting was riddled with bullets and badly damaged. Eventually, Mirza Ali-Akbar Mozayyen od-Dowleh Kashani, one of the master's pupils, restored it. Thereafter, the painting hung on a wall in Kamal-al-Molk's school and...it remained in the master's house in Nayshabur until the last years of his life, but its

present whereabouts is unknown. According to Dost Ali Khan Mo'ayer ol-Mamalek, *Christ's Ascension* was part of his own collection.”

- ³⁴ Zoka 2003, 28. When Sani-al-Molk went back to Iran, Naser-al-Din Shah was on the throne from 1848, after the death of Mohammad Shah.
- ³⁵ Zoka 2003, 28, 50 and 51.
- ³⁶ Zoka 2003, 49.
- ³⁷ In the newspaper, the date was written based on the Arabic calendar, so Sani-al-Molk started from issue number 471, dated 28 Moharram (from 1861 until 1866).
- ³⁸ Zoka 2003, 151. *Majma'-e Dar-al-Sanayeh* was a school for traditional arts opened by Amir Kabir. This school is discussed in Chapter One.
- ³⁹ Zoka 2003, 152.
- ⁴⁰ Zoka 2003, 152.
- ⁴¹ Zoka 2003, 152.
- ⁴² Zoka 2003, 152–153. Sixty-six issues of this newspaper were published from Safar 1314 A.H. until 1322 (1896–1904); in each number, a portrait of one of the shahs, or courtiers from Iran or other countries, was lithographed and signed by Mosaver-al-Molk. The artist was invited by Arfa'-al-Doleh, Iran's ambassador to the Ottomans court in Istanbul, to paint Iranians in the Iran embassy. The artist made a few canvases but since he was not satisfied, he went back to Iran after six months.
- ⁴³ Zoka 2003, 152.
- ⁴⁴ Naser-al-Din Shah loved traveling and wrote travel books, which are preserved. In almost all his travels, he took a photographer with him. According to Zoka (1997, p. 83) the photographer who accompanied the shah on this trip was Mirza Hossein Ali, one of the Dar-al-Fonoun's students in photography who also had studied in Europe. He took about 260 photos from different regions. Abou Tourab painted a few of those photos for the shah's travel book.
- ⁴⁵ Zoka 1997, 83.
- ⁴⁶ See the image in Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar, *Safar Nameh Dovoum Khurasan* (The Second Travel to Khurasan) (Tehran: Kavoush Press, 1984), Figure 1.
- ⁴⁷ Semnan is a city in Khurasan province.

- ⁴⁸ Mashhad is the capital of Khurasan.
- ⁴⁹ See examples in Naser-al-Din Shah Qajar, 1984, in the Illustrations section.
- ⁵⁰ Zoka 2003, 50. Newspaper Number: 518, Shaval 1278 H/1862.
- ⁵¹ Zoka 2003, 50.
- ⁵² Ahmad Tajbakhsh, *Tarikh-e Tamadon va Farhang Iran, Doreh-e Qajar* (History of Civilization and Culture of Iran During Qajar Period) (Shiraz: Navid Shiraz Publishers, 2003), 152.
- ⁵³ Pakbaz 2001, 171–172.
- ⁵⁴ Dehbashi 1989, 8. Rubens was a Flemish artist of the Baroque period who developed his own school. Rubens traveled to England, Florence, Genoa, and Rome in 1600 to study and work on commissioned works. Also, Rembrandt Van Rijn was the artist of the Dutch Baroque, who is famous for his portrait paintings.
- ⁵⁵ Pakbaz 2001, 169–171.
- ⁵⁶ This copy is an oil on canvas, 24.5 × 21 inches (62 × 53.5 cm), entitled *Copy of a Portrait by Rubens*, and is kept in the Malek Library in Tehran. See Hossien Kaashyan, *Kamal-al-Molk* (Tehran: Museh Honarhayeh Mo'aser Tehran, 1983), 33.
- ⁵⁷ “Palazzo Pitti & Giardino Boboli,”
<http://www.frommers.com/destinations/florence/0051022251.html> (accessed December 2, 2005).
- ⁵⁸ Anne-Marie Logan and Michiel C. Plomp, “Rubens's Development as a Draftsman,” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2005, http://www.metmuseum.org/special/Rubens/rubens_essay.asp (accessed December 2, 2005).
- ⁵⁹ “Rubens, Peter Paul,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*,
<http://www.britannica.com/shakespeare/article-6285> (accessed December 2, 2005). The name of the paintings are not mentioned.
- ⁶⁰ See the Louvre Museum Web site,
http://www.louvre.fr/llv/commun/home_flash.jsp?bmLocale=en, (accessed December 2, 2005).
- ⁶¹ See T. F. Chen, “Post-Van Gogh Retrospective,” 1999,
http://www.123soho.com/artgroup/nwac/post_vangogh/van6.htm (accessed December 2, 2005).

- ⁶⁴ Dehbashi 1989, 215. During Mozafar-al-Din Shah's second trip to Europe, the shah met Kamal-al-Molk at the Louvre Museum and ordered him to go back to Iran. For this reason, the artist left Europe although he believed he still needed more experience. See examples of the artist's self-portraits in Kaashyan, 1983, 51, 53.
- ⁶⁵ Pakbaz 2001, 171.
- ⁶⁶ "Ignace-Henri-Jean-Théodore Fantin-Latour, 1836–1904," *Olga's Gallery*, <http://www.abcgallery.com/F/fantin-latour/fantin-latour.html> (accessed December 2, 2005).
- ⁶⁷ The painting is an oil on canvas, 19 × 15 inches (48 × 39 cm), and is held in the Malek library in Tehran. See a copy of the painting in Kaashyan, 1983, 45.
- ⁶⁸ The painting is an oil on canvas, 21.2 × 17 inches (54 × 44 cm), and now is held in Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.
- ⁷⁰ Dehbashi 1989, 8–12. The artist continued teaching and supervising at the school until 1930. Kamal-al-Molk died at age 93, in 1940.
- ⁷¹ Gill Perry, Charles Harrison, and Francis Frascina, *Primitivism, Cubism, Abstraction: The Early Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), 3–4. We should be reminded that Oriental included not only China and Japan but also the Islamic world.
- ⁷² Dehbashi 1989, 40, 42, 71. Kamal-al-Molk mentioned Anatole France and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the philosopher (1712–1778), several times in his letters. Also see "Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904)," *Olga's Gallery*, <http://www.abcgallery.com/F/fantin-latour/fantin-latour.html> (accessed December 2, 2005).
- ⁷³ Pirooz Sayyar, "The Legacy of Qajar Period Photographers," *Fasl Nameh Tavoos*, No. 1 (Fall 1999): 40. Photography was invented in 1839 and five years later Jules Richard, a French teacher of English and French, took the first photos of Mohammad Shah and the thirteen-year-old crowned prince, Naser-al-Din Mirza, at the court in Tehran.
- ⁷⁴ Sayyar 1999, 40. The Royal Album House in Golestan Palace and Museum in Tehran is still open to the public to view the photographs.
- ⁷⁵ Zoka 1997, 59. Some of the Ermakov's pictures are kept at Tehran University.
- ⁷⁶ Layla S. Diba and Maryam Ekhtiar, eds., *Royal Persian Paintings, The Qajar Epoch (1785–1925)* (New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998), 264.

- ⁷⁷ Zoka 1997, 223.
- ⁷⁸ Zoka 1997, 146–150. Ivanouf, also known as Roussi Khan, was born from an English father and a Tatar–Russian mother in Tehran in 1875. Roussi Khan and Mosavar-al-Molk expanded their work by purchasing a film projector during the reign of Ahmad Shah, the last shah of the Qajar dynasty. They started taking seven- to eight-minute movies first at court and then in wealthy people’s houses and at parties and wedding receptions. Because of interest in their work, they decided to show movies at night in their studio. Later, they opened a movie theater with 200 seats. It was the second movie theater in Tehran after *Sahaf Bashi*. During the Constitutional Movement, Ivanouf’s studio was closed and he left Iran in 1909. He died in 1967 in Saint Cloud in Paris.
- ⁷⁹ Diba 1998, 264.
- ⁸⁰ Zoka 1997, 7–8. Kamal-al-Molk wrote the following on the painting: “The portrait of the shah photographed by Mr. Richard with a Daguerreotype in 1301 A.H. [1843]. His majesty was 38 years old. Painted by Khaneh-zad Mohammad Ghafari, 1338 A.H. [1880].” Two other oil paintings are portraits of Naser-al-Din Mirza for the arches of the north hall over the gates of the Shams-al-Emareh building. The artist wrote the following on one of the canvases: “Portrait of his majesty at age 15 when he was crowned prince in Tehran. Mr. Richard, the Frenchman, took it with a Daguerreotype in 1260 A.H. [1804].” These paintings are held in the Golestan Palace and Museum in Tehran.
- ⁸¹ Dehbashi 1989, 157.
- ⁸² Akbar Tajvidi, “Naghashi Iran Dar Sadeh Akhir” (Iranian Painting in the Last Century), in *Daneshnameh-e Iranshenasi*, Vol. 1, edited by Mojtaba Anvari and Shirin Mohammadli (Yazd: Satavand Yazd Press, 2003), 184. Hadi Tajvidi is introduced earlier in Chapter Two.
- ⁸³ Tahir Shah, “The Khalili Collection of Islamic Art,” *Saudi Aramco World*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (November/December 1994), <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/199406/the.khalili.collection.of.islamic.art.htm> (accessed February 19, 2006).
- ⁸⁴ *Kaman-cheh* is a musical instrument comparable to the violin.

Conclusion

Iranian painting in the second half of the nineteenth century, during the Qajar dynasty, was influenced by European styles of painting, particularly a combination of Renaissance, Baroque, and Realism. There were three incentives for change in Iranian art in the Qajar period: social and political alterations, a revival of interest in the art of the Safavid period, and the strong influence of certain artistic styles from Europe. Social and political transformations occurred because of the Iranian attitude toward religion, the recognition of a person as an individual and as a valued member of society, and a change in government accountability. As materialism became more important than religious beliefs in the minds of the people, they started questioning their social and cultural values. The result was the 1906–1907 Constitutional Movement as a step toward democracy. People looked for new experiences in the educational system, in literature, and in art, in response to political and social changes. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, art became more descriptive to meet the increasingly materialistic aspirations of its patrons. From about the 1840s until the 1910s, however, the need to indicate the individual characteristics of people came to be of great interest. The artists of this era bypassed experimenting with techniques such as perspective and *chiaroscuro* to express their feelings and thoughts. To reflect their intention, artists established a new style that could be considered Realism.

Art during the Safavid epoch (1502–1736) became the basis for Qajar painting because of the direction taken by two Safavid artists, Kamal-al-Din Bihzad (1460–1535/6) and Reza Abbasi (b. 1565). Meanwhile European painting was represented in Iran by the Armenian community and the increase of European travelers. As a result, Iranian artists, such as Mohammad Zaman (1650s–1690s), were able to study new elements in painting. In the early Qajar paintings, typical use was made of Safavid traditional image-making with its emphasis on the importance of decorative qualities and subject matter such as mythical and legendary characters and war and hunting scenes, all set against a high horizon. The half-nude woman is also seen. European paintings of the Renaissance period found in the paintings and murals of Armenian churches and in the palaces and houses of wealthy Iranian patrons became functional models for artists in the Safavid period as they experimented with new elements such as depth and anatomical accuracy, and the new medium of oil on canvas. Also, murals of Armenian churches became the first examples of the combination of figurative European stylistic features and nonfigurative geometrical and arabesque Islamic motifs in a sacred place. Moreover, Mohammad Zaman and other artists of the late Safavid period studied three-dimensional representation, the use of light and shade, linear perspective to indicate depth, and the shape of the human body and garments as seen in European paintings. Their paintings are constructive examples of the first links between European paintings and Iranian image making followed by Qajar artists.

It seems that the artists of the late Qajar period showed an interest in studying Kamal-al-Din Bihzad's style known as Bihzad's realistic school and Reza Abbasi's

single-figure paintings. The individuality of composition and subject matter seen in these two artists' works were not derived from European art. The differentiation of human figures from each other, the varied poses and body movements, and the human faces indicate some degree of sentiment and are an aspect of Kamal-al-Din Bihzad's works that influenced the artists of the late Qajar period. Reza Abbasi's new subjects such as meditating individuals or a single figure covering a large space, as well as his use of black ink and pencil for drawings, were also role models for artists of the Qajar period.

The most significant element in shaping art of the late Qajar period was European art. Iranian artists had investigated the art of Europe in search of new ways of communicating in a period when art was becoming a social issue and was still not limited to the royal court. At this time the presence of Western artists in Iran, who were expected to produce visual information about Iran, increased the awareness of and popularity for new styles and techniques such as sketching, as well as some components of nineteenth-century Realism in indicating individuality and social differences based on rank, ethnicity, gender, and career.

Also, Iranian artists who traveled to Europe studied the paintings of the Renaissance and Baroque periods and probably Realism, which they preferred to Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, and other modern movements. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European artists were experimenting with pure vibrant colors, the lack of perspective, flatness, stylized forms, decorative surfaces, abstract and geometrical shapes, and other elements and characteristic of Middle Eastern art that had been used by Iranian artists for centuries. These qualities were not of interest to Iranian artists in the nineteenth

century. Rather, perspective, three-dimensionality, the use of dark colors, and the indication of individuality in portraits and figure painting became fascinating aspects of study for Iranian artists of this era.

Moreover, photography, which reached Iran in 1844, and lithography, brought in by Sani-al-Molk (1814–1869) around 1850, affected painting and patronage. Although photography became very popular in Iran and artists experimented with photography or used photographs for their paintings, they found it pointless to create photo-realistic paintings. Artists used photography as a tool to create more accurate works and to study studio lighting instead of natural light, which affected the indication of the sitter's characteristics. They also provided portraits of deceased individuals and national heroes. Iranians were enormously curious about photography. Even some women, who had never posed for artists unveiled, believed photographers were like physicians and that it was moral to have their photographs taken without a veil. It seems that photography not only affected painting but also the culture of the time.

Lithography, too, was seen as the new art of making images for mass production, introducing European realistic painting as the art of the time to ordinary people who were unable to see many original paintings. Also, the fact that middle-class people were able to purchase art in the form of lithographs affected the patronage of the time. Moreover, the publication of newspapers and books with lithographed images such as portraits of well-known individuals and social events increased society's awareness of images as a tool to express facts and opinions.

Although secular art dominated society in this era, religious art was frequently commissioned as well. The paintings used in Islamic buildings included portraits and figures of the Prophet Mohammad, the Imams, and patrons and narrative images describing religious incidents or legends as well as landscapes and still lifes. The new social changes had a strong influence on religious painting, particularly portrait painting. For the first time in Iran, Qajar artists opposed to the rule restricting the use of figurative images on Islamic structures and they provided life-size images dedicated to a mosque or a sacred shrine of holy individuals such as the Prophet Mohammad, Imam Ali, and Imam Reza, showing their faces. This phenomenon is one of the most important aspects of art in the Qajar epoch since it demonstrates how much religious art reflected cultural and social changes and the influence of European art; for the first time worshipers viewed tangible portraits of their beloved Prophet and Imams on religious structures. And, although they were aware that those images were not similar to the real faces, they felt that they were communicating with real human beings, not the creations of fantasy. Also, following the tradition seen in Armenian churches, the artists created a new style of composition in which European-style figurative images became the focal point in a section of wall or ceiling, while arabesque and geometrical patterns frame the figurative parts. This quality decreased the importance of the symbolic meaning of traditional patterns and colors used for centuries in Iran.

Patronage faced some changes, too. The Qajar shahs, courtiers, and aristocrats were the main patrons who were knowledgeable about art and commissioned European realistic works, which were accepted as modern and thus superior. Women and the

middle class also played a crucial role in the development of religious portraiture by purchasing prints of the holy individuals. However, the European patrons' appeal for more traditional arts persuaded some artists to revive the traditional style of manuscript illumination, which came to be known as Iranian miniature painting, in which European realistic-style human figures are painted in an Iranian manner, with a focus on decorative qualities. The variety of patrons and the demand for different subject matter such as portraits and human figures, landscapes, still-lives, and Iranian miniature paintings in different forms such as murals, paintings on canvas or paper, tiles, carpets, and lithographs encouraged artists to experiment with various media, styles, and subjects and to attempt to advance the art of the previous periods.

The artists of the late period never titled their style Realism. Instead, they and their patrons used the term European realistic painting, a term that included the art of the Renaissance and Baroque as well as Realism in Europe. The leading artists, Sani-al-Molk, Kamal-al-Molk (1847–1940), and Mahmoud Khan Saba (1813–1893), succeeded in indicating an individual's particular and specific characteristics, reflecting class, gender, and ethnicity. They acknowledged themselves as artists. This is visible in their self-portraits, which indicate their diverse personalities and humanity in relation to society, as well as their evident participation in different activities of daily life, demonstrating true or poetic feelings such as bravery, fear, misery, poverty, silence, contentment, and hardship. Decorative qualities are rarely seen in figure paintings of this era unless it is used to demonstrate the materialistic interest of the sitter. The intense linear silhouettes almost disappeared to let the complementary palette form the objects.

Brush strokes became more visible. Negative space and backgrounds were used differently from Iranian traditional image-making to create atmosphere. Misty backgrounds were sometimes used to create romantic qualities. Freedom of expression, however, is more evident in landscape paintings than in figure paintings. This is due to the work of the leading landscape painters Kamal-al-Molk and Mahmoud Khan Saba. Moreover, Kamal-al-Molk, who is now acknowledged in Iran as perhaps the first court artist who left the royal palace and began working on noncommissioned canvases, opened a new door for Iranian artists to work independently. The artists of the second half of the nineteenth century established Realism, an innovative perspective in the history of art in Iran and a valuable step toward modern art of the twentieth century.

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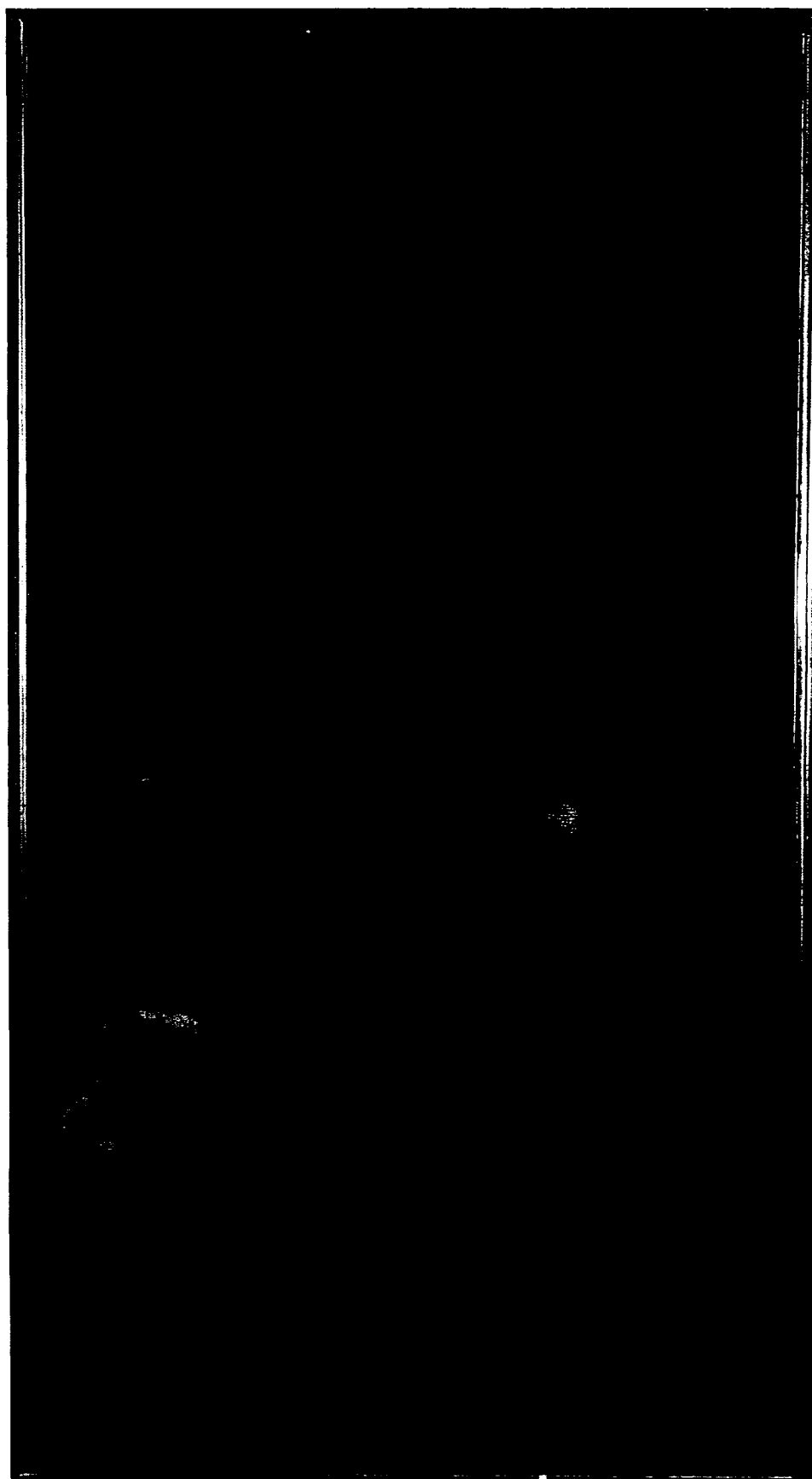
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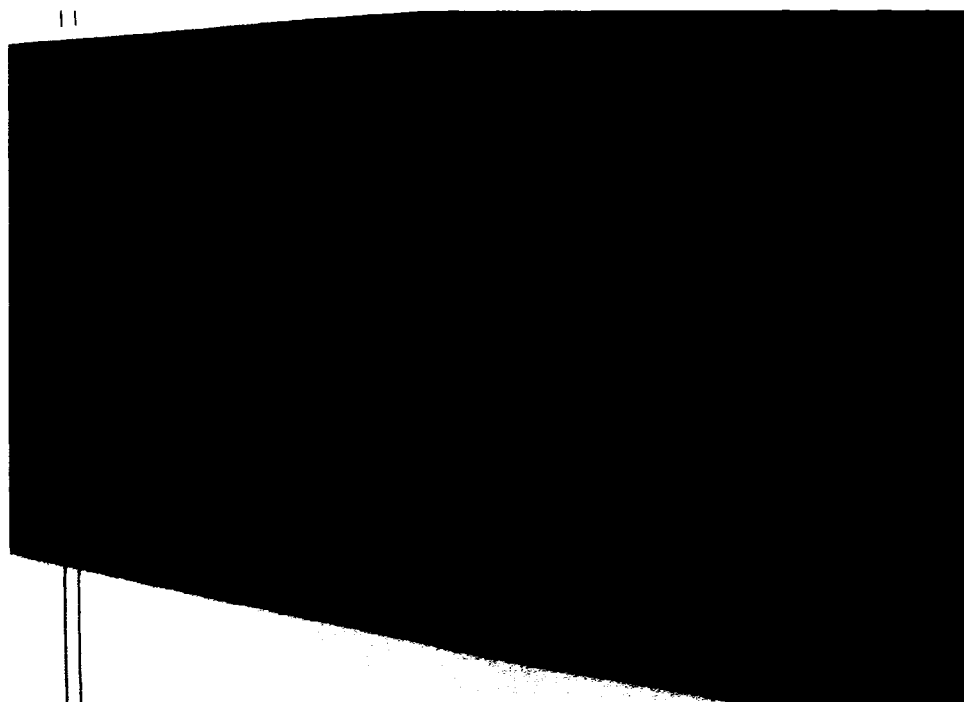


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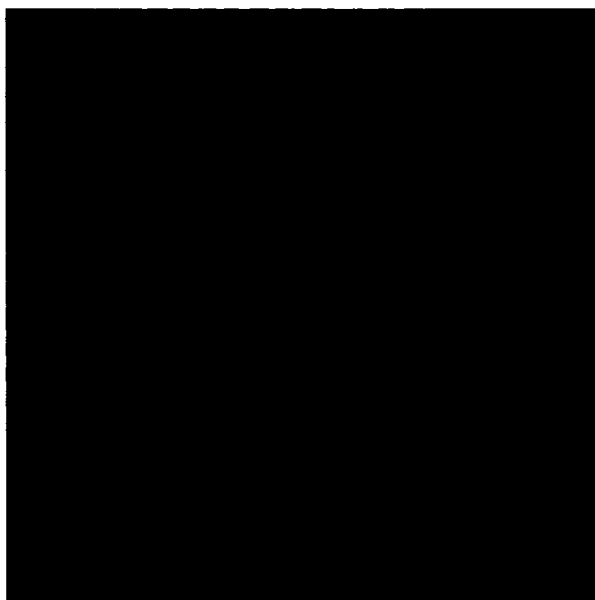


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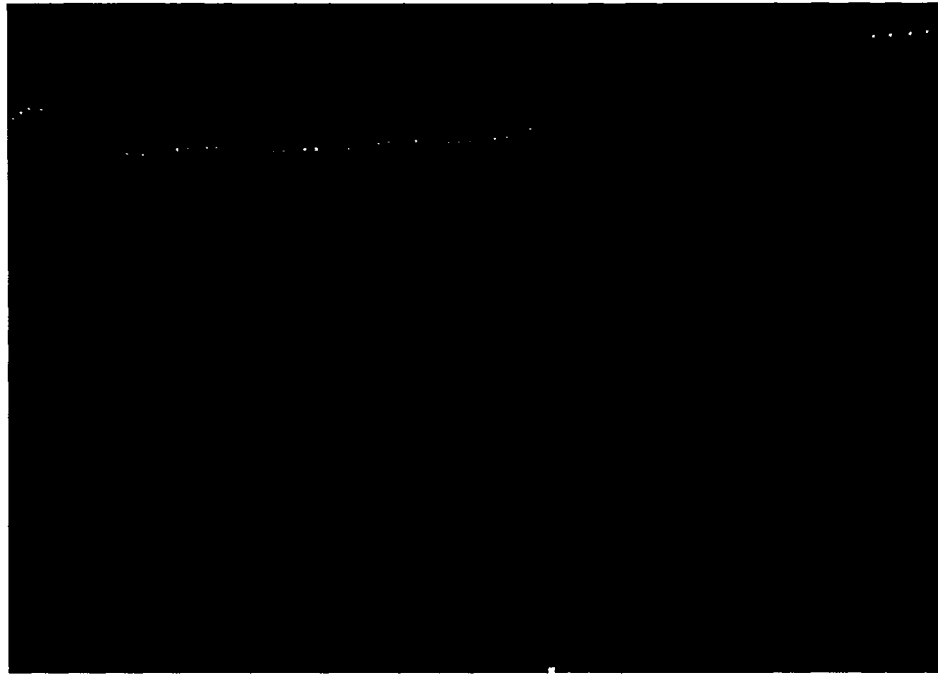


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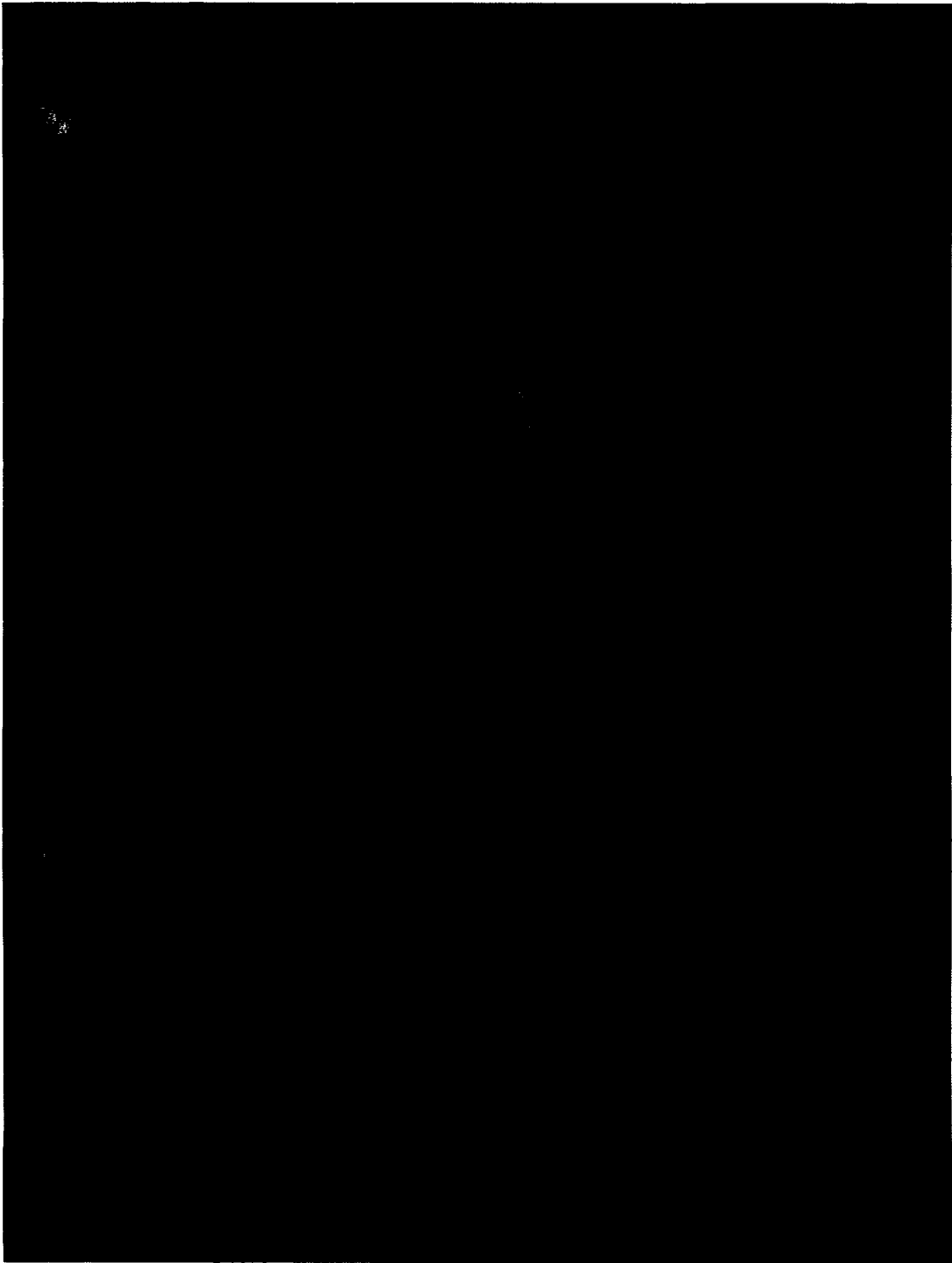


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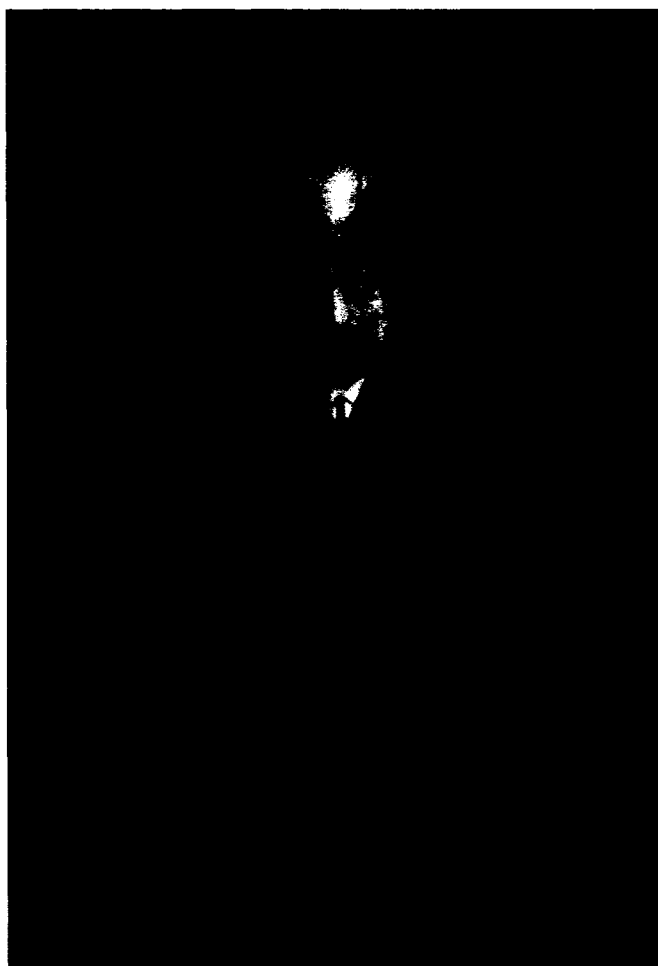


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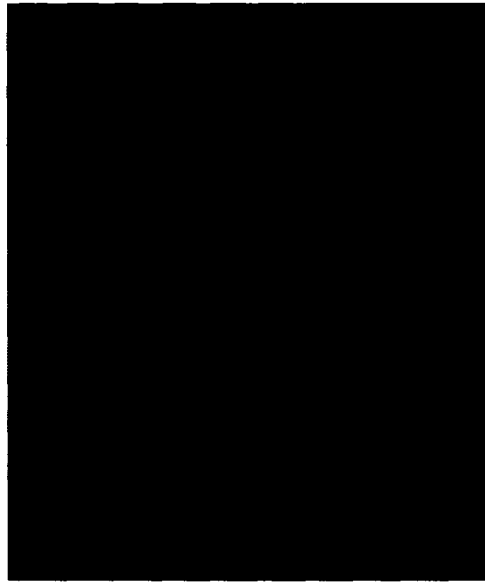


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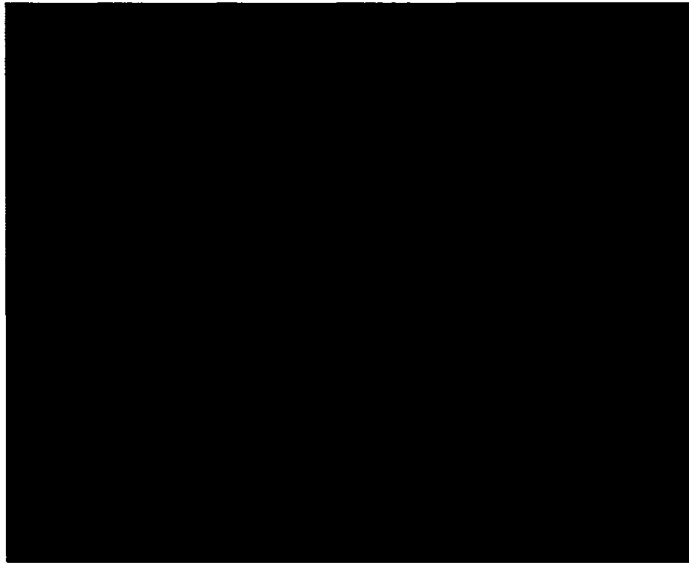


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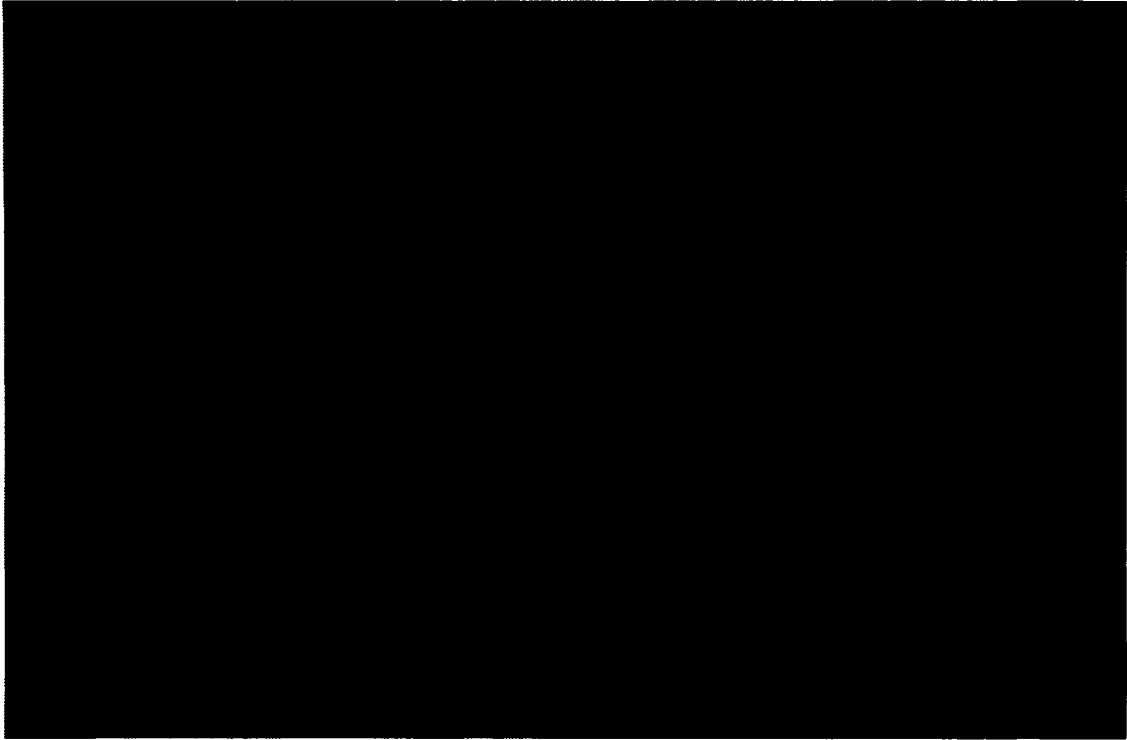


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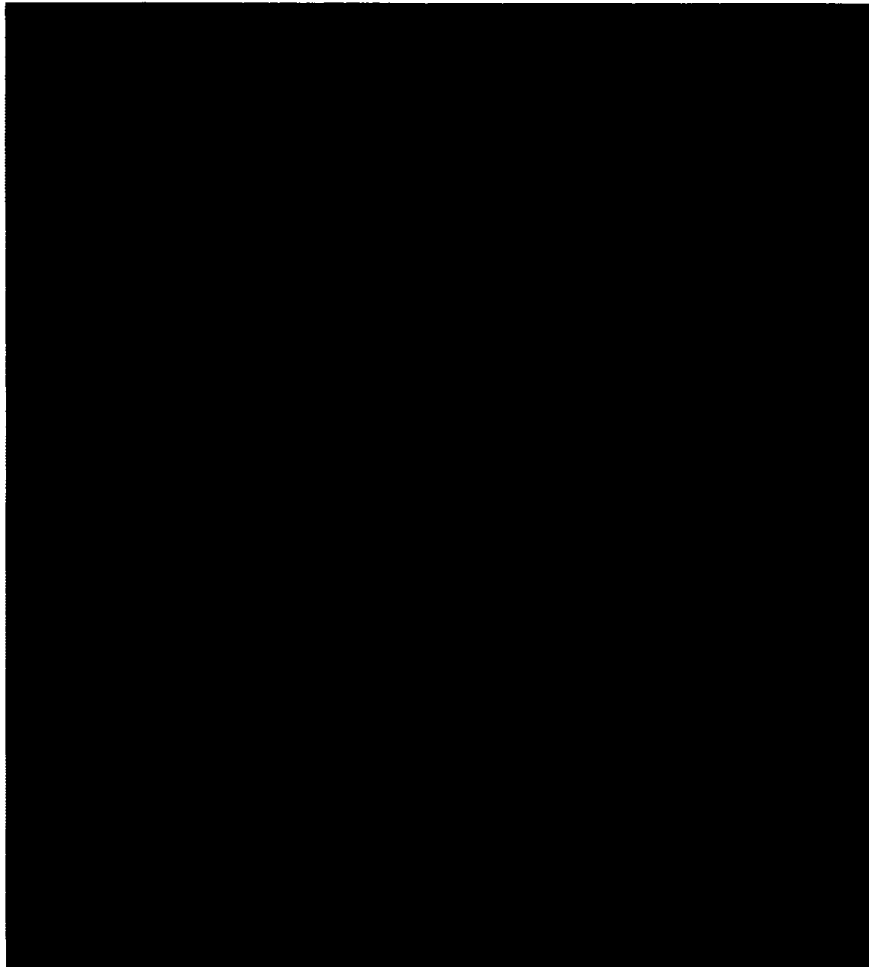


Figure 22

Detail of Figure 21.



Figure 23

Detail of figure 21.

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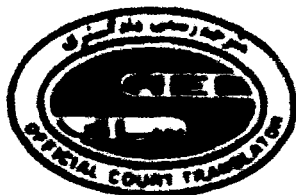
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