A Comparative Visual Analysis of Nineteenth-Century Iranian Portrait Photography and Persian Painting

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A COMPARATIVE VISUAL ANALYSIS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRANIAN PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY AND PERSIAN PAINTING

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PART I: TEXT

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For my family: Luna, Mitra, Mani and Alireza Darvish

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INTRODUCTION

Field of research

The field of research of my dissertation is nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography. The origin and motivation of this choice lies in my own work as photographer in Asia. After a two and half year of travel from Turkey to China by land, I came back to Spain in the Summer of 2000 with around sixty rolls of films, mostly black and white, and I published several portfolios and the catalogue of a solo exhibition about the work of women in Asia that opened in the Principe Felipe Museum in Valencia (2001). Many of the photographs showed women doing hard physical work (carrying bricks, breaking stones, etc.) and others performing daily life tasks like picking up or carrying water, cooking or taking care of children.

I sent the catalogue to an Iranian poet who liked it but remarked that in some of the photographs he could guess that I was a Western photographer. I did not really know what he exactly meant by that, but whatever it was, it concerned me for some time. It motivated me to finish my incipient career as a photographer and began a long period of reflection and study whose final result is this dissertation.

Asia has inspired and fascinated me for many years, first as a photographer and later as researcher. I am fluent in Persian and I decided to focus my research on Iran because it is one of the most under-researched Middle Eastern countries by Western photo-historians. I hold a degree in Astrophysics (University of Barcelona), and it is my scientific background that has enabled me to approach the topic from an analytical point of view: in this dissertation I undertake a visual analysis of nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography.

The camera is not just an a-cultural technical device, a non-culture influenced medium. Culture, or more precisely, the cultural background of the photographer, does play a role in the process of taking a photograph. Photography produces constructions of real life and photographs are cultural productions. Photography is clearly not a mirror of daily life: the fact that images are constructions is especially obvious in nineteenth-century portrait photography. My aim in this dissertation is to analyse photographs in order to show this cultural conditioning in the creation of images. I chose images through the use of fine detail. The corpus of photographs selected for this dissertation constitutes a practical example of photography's construction of the visual world and the goal of this research is to demonstrate that photography is always a construction of reality, regardless the photographer's nationality. I am specifically interested in exploring how indigenous Iranian photographers constructed their own realities in contrast to how foreign photographers constructed Iranian's realities.

Photography and painting both interpret reality. As the British photographer and critic Victor Burgin states, when photography first emerged into the context of nineteenth century aesthetics, it was initially taken to be an automatic record of reality; then it was argued that it was an expression of an individual; then it was considered to be a "record of a reality through a sensibility".[1] Susan Sontag stated, "[P]hotographs are as much interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are".[2] I myself took the camera and interpreted a reality that was in front of me, no

[1] Burgin 1986, p. 46.

[2] The art historian Geoffrey Batchen sees the early photographers as a rebuke both to the modernists

matter how honest my intentions to show "reality" were and how deeply I tried to achieve that. I showed with my photographs, like everybody else does, my own reading of the reality that I had in front of me. Significantly, while constructing my own perception of reality, I was missing "reality" itself.

As a result of insights in the cultural components in Iranian photography, we may look with different eyes to Western photography in general, which may be more "Western" than we thought.

The state-of-the-art of the discourse

Both Western and Iranian scholars' research on nineteenth-century Western photography in Iran has been mainly focused on an historical approach.[3] Most of the publications in the West on nineteenth-century photography in Iran deal with the work of Western photographers. Yet, there was much more photography made by Iranian photographers than we know about in the West and definitely more than by Western photography. Such indigenous work is, indeed, interesting and bears a particular and unique aesthetic. There were more than one hundred Iranian photographers active during the second part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century but fewer than thirty Western photographers,[4] and not all of them were professionals: some were amateurs or just took pictures to illustrate their travels.[5]

Several books have been published about nineteenth-century Iranian indigenous photography as well: compilations of photographs with an introduction about the history of photography in Iran; monographic books of relevant Iranian photographers active during the nineteenth century; books on photography and photographers in different cities and, rarely, on a particular subject, like the one recently published about the photography of children.[6] Most of these books on indigenous photography were published in Persian and have not been translated into any other language. Therefore, the majority of this material is accessible only to Iranian scholars and to Western scholars fluent in that language.

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and post-modernists views of photography. The modernists see photography as an imprint of nature, a tracing of reality, however crafted and shaped. The post-modernists see it as an ever shifting product of culture, a representation that depends, as the British critic John Tagg put it, "on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work". Batchen in *Burning With Desire: The Conception of Photography* steers a middle course between the two positions. He argues that the early photographers were actually deconstructing (in Jacques Derrida's terminology) the opposition between nature and culture, reality and representation, showing them to be false.

[3] See: Afshar 1992; Barjesteh ed. 2004 and 1999; Bohrer 1999; Damandan 2004; Scarce 1976, pp. 1 22; Stein 1984, pp. 257-292; Tahmasbpour 2007; Zoka 1997.

[4] For chronology on Western photographers: Vuurman 2004, pp. 24-25.

[5] Most of the Iranian photographers were active in big cities: 47 in Tehran, 13 in Isfahan, 11 in Tabriz, 9 in Shiraz. For Iranian photographers and biographies: Zoka 1997 (in Persian). Also, Afshar, 1992 (in Persian). For good insights into historical aspects of Iranian photography, see: Adle 1983, pp. 249-281; and Sheikh 2004, pp. 231-253.

[6] The best sources of information are: Afshar 1992 and Zoka 1997. Further literature: Tahmasbpour 2001 and 2007; Damandan 2001; Jalali 1998, (in Persian); Mahboob & Nemati 2005, (in Persian); Semsar 2004, (in Persian); Sane 1990, (in Persian) and 2004, (in Persian); Torabi 2003 (in Persian); Sattari 2006 (in Persian).

My position in the field

Even if there are studies in the field of indigenous nineteenth-century Iranian photography, there is no in-depth study of the work of Iranian photographers from an analytical approach. As the title of this dissertation suggests, my approach to early Iranian photography is an analytical one based on the visual analysis of photographs taken by Iranian photographers in the nineteenth century. While applying visual analysis, I take into consideration the cultural components of the image.

It is fundamental to remark that the very choice of using the word "Persian" or "Iranian" is often a problematic one, since there is a certain tendency to judge the scholar or writer by means of that choice. I stress here that my choice is totally free of political connotations. I have chosen "Iranian" because it is the word that is in use today to refer to this culture and Iran to refer to the country. There is only one exception: I use *Persian* miniature painting because it is an established reference within traditional painting that is accepted by all art historians working in that field of research.

My research concentrates on a visual analysis of the elements found in nineteenth-century Iranian photography that have been inherited from the Iranian visual arts tradition, especially from the Iranian painting tradition. The research undertakes a comparative study of the Iranian painting tradition and nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography. The elements that have been identified and analysed are:

* Mirror-like composition due to the *visual laterality* phenomenon, defined here as the influence of the direction of writing on the composition in works of art, particularly in photography;
* Use of calligraphic inscriptions of text within the photographic space;
* Use of traditional Iranian portraiture poses, such as kneeling, in contrast with sitting or standing; and
* The understanding of space in photographic composition: isometrical perspective, vertical composition, grid structure layout and diffuse compositions.

In contrast to these elements, Western elements have been identified as well, but merely as a way of understanding, by way of contrast, the Iranian elements: Victorian pose (frontal, hieratic, static); studio paraphernalia (chairs, backdrops, balustrades, etc); and iconographical elements mostly borrowed from the Orientalist painting tradition. Finally, I explored the *mixed aesthetics* present in nineteenth-century Iranian photography due to the appropriation of Western elements. I do not maintain that these elements are exclusive for Iranian culture and/or that they are only found in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. In fact, as we shall see in the course of the dissertation, some of these elements are also to be found in Japanese and Indian photography, albeit with their own peculiarities. This indigenous way of representation differs substantially from Western ones, which makes it important to study mainly from a comparative visual analysis approach.

Frames of reference and corpus

In my research I use an interdisciplinary approach that includes the theory of photography, Islamic art history, neuroscience, post-colonial studies and world art studies. I am constructing a theoretical framework to analyse nineteenth-century photographs in their cultural components. Iranian photography is a case study, but the

same study could be undertaken with any other country. The theoretical framework developed here to analyse photographs should work also with other photographic corpuses. Each chapter is guided by a specific theoretical perspective (see further under structure of the thesis). The photographic material will recur and be analysed in the various chapters.

The first step in order to undertake this research was to build up a corpus of photographs from which to draw conclusions after pursuing an in-depth visual analysis.[7] Five years ago, I started gathering as many published books on Iranian photography as possible with the aim of building up a corpus of photographs that would constitute the material for a starting point for a visual analysis. The process was long and arduous, but I gathered a rich corpus of material to be analyzed.[8] This corpus consists of around 5.000 portrait photographs (most of them studio portraits, but there are also some outdoor portraits to be found within the corpus). In parallel, I gathered two other corpuses of graphic material: a corpus of paintings (both Persian miniature paintings and Qajar paintings, around 3.000 paintings) and a corpus of Western nineteenth-century portrait photography (around 5.000 photographs). I went time and again through the three corpuses defined above visually analysing them with the aim of establishing groups that could take into consideration each one of the five topics explored on my dissertation: visual laterality, text and photography, pose, space and Western influences.

The Iranian painting tradition includes Persian miniature painting and Qajar painting. A comparison will be established between these three, otherwise diverse mediums: Persian miniature painting, Qajar painting, and portrait photography. Miniatures are part of a sequence in a book. Their size is very small and, therefore, is meant to be enjoyed by only one person at the time, a very intimate contemplation. Interestingly, as stated by Susan Sontag and many other theoreticians, photography is, in contrast to Western painting and film, also an object of contemplation, exactly what miniatures are. In contrast with this, Qajar portraits are life-size paintings and are always exposed to the public mostly on palace walls. Therefore, their reception is collective and open. Photographs can be seen as part of an album and especially in the nineteenth century they were produced with that aim, therefore bearing some narrative meaning, or as individual items. What is especially interesting here is that there is no great difference in size between miniature paintings and photographs (in some cases they

[7] The photographic corpus selected for this research has been collected from all published books about nineteenth century Iranian photographs, printed all of them in Iran, from the photo-archives in Iran (Palace Golestan, etc), and from Iranian private collectors (some of them have their collections online).

[8] The photographs printed in the books used while building up the corpus are hosted in several archives in Iran: the biggest and most important one of all photo-archives is the Golestan Palace Library in Tehran, which hosts around 43.000 photographs; the Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies; Majlis Library; Tehran University Documentation Centre; National Documentation Centre; National Library; Documentation Centre of the Cultural Heritage Organization, all of them in Tehran; Archives of Mashhad, Isfahan and Tabriz. Several important private collectors should be mentioned here: Dr. Iraj Afshar, Arman Stepanian, Bahman Bayani, Bahman Jalali and Rana Javadi, Mansour Sane (photographs from Shiraz) and Parisa Damandan (photographs from Isfahan). There is also a Museum of Photography which host several thousand photographs and that was founded in 1996 by the photographers and researchers Rana Javadi and Bahman Jalali. Unfortunately, the museum was taken from them by the government and is run now by people that is not as prepared and skilled as its founders. In the West, the most important photo-archives that hosts nineteenth century Iranian photography are Harvard University Library and Free and Sackler Gallery, both in USA.

are even the same size), whereas the difference in size between Western paintings and photographs is huge.[9]

Qajar painting[10] is seen as a worthy successor of the painting of the Timurids (1390-1500) and the Safavids (1501-1722). In portraiture, the Qajar artists surpassed all their predecessors. Whereas Timurid and Safavid painting is confined to manuscripts and albums, Qajar painting presents itself in a variety of forms: painted lacquer, glass, painted enamel and traditional manuscript illustrations and album pictures. As stated by the art historian of Islamic Art, Layla S. Diba, life-size painting of this period was the visual expression of a self-consciously historizing ruler.[11] Naser od-Din Shah approached the new medium of photography in the same way that his predecessors had approached painting: he consciously utilized imagery as a vehicle for the formulation of the Persian self-image. This topic has been considered by the leading Iranian photo historian Reza Sheikh and also by the Iranian theoretician of post-colonialism Ali Behdad.[12] An important part and production of photography in nineteenth-century in Iran was done within the walls of the Golestan Palace in Tehran (Naser od-Din Shah's residence) and the Dar al-Funun.[13]

Structure of the thesis

The dissertation is structured in five chapters, according to the five topics mentioned above.

In chapter one, the main research question is how the direction of writing and reading of Iranian nineteenth-century photographers influenced the way they composed the photographs that they took. No study of the influence of the direction of script on pictorial or photographic composition has ever been undertaken. The research is built on visual analysis and is approached from two disciplines: art history and neuroscience.

After studying the photographic material gathered for this research many times I was able to establish three different groups: linear order (groups of people ordered by height), couples, and people with chairs. The following step was to study the state of the field regarding the *visual laterality* phenomenon in neuropsychology and perception psychology to build a theoretical framework in which this phenomenon could be understood. The hypothesis formed by this research is that if pictures are "read" from left to right (the direction of writing of all Western

[9] Nevertheless, in recent publications about Western painting-like photographs this is an important issue. Huge formats of photographs by Jeff Wall and the Düsseldorfer Schule (Andrea Gursky, Thomas Struth and Thomas Ruff, among others) are just but some well-known examples. See: Elkins 2007, pp. 129-203.

[10] It is important to note that when I introduce Qajar portrait paintings and some photographs, the date that is written on a painting or a photographic surface is given in the Iranian calendar, or Solar Hijri. It is currently used in Iran and Afghanistan as the main official calendar. It begins each year on the vernal equinox as precisely determined by astronomical observations from Tehran. The official Iranian calendar was last changed in 1925 by a law of the Iranian Majlis (Parliament) to have fixed month lengths for the first eleven months of the year, with only the final month iterating between 29 and 30 days. The current Iranian calendar year is AP 1387 (AP: Anno Persico/Anno Persarum-Persian year). The Iranian year usually begins on March 21 of the Gregorian calendar. One needs to add 621 or 622 (depending on the time of year) to an Iranian year to find the corresponding year of the Gregorian calendar.

[11] Diba 1998, p. 45.

[12] See: Sheikh, 2004, pp. 231-253 and Behdad 2001, pp. 141-152.

[13] Iran's first institution of higher learning based on Western models. A special department of photography was opened as early as 1851.

languages), the opposite applies for those languages written from right to left (such as Farsi). Therefore Iranian photographers would produce "mirror-images" of those made by Western photographers.

For chapter two, I explored the use and role of calligraphy in Persian painting tradition and the influence that this has had on nineteenth-century Iranian photography. I analyzed the use and meaning of calligraphic inscriptions or text both within pictorial and photographic space. I established three ways of categorizing the photographs: by elaboration of the script; by content and meaning; and by spatial organization. All of these classifications aim to make a difference between script with a decorative purpose and script with a practical/informative purpose (calligraphy versus plain text).

Chapter three is devoted to the topic of pose. I studied whether the use of the traditional kneeling pose in Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture has been inherited by nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography. Further, I have studied the difference of pose and objects held by men and women in painting and later in photography. In order to achieve this, I have made a thorough visual analysis of the pose and objects held by the sitters both in the Iranian painting tradition and in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. I have identified the typical poses used in nineteenth-century portrait photography in Iran that were mainly inherited from the Persian miniature tradition. I also explored the influence of Western poses on Iranian photo studios such as the changing from a kneeling or squatting position to the sitting position due to the introduction of the chair in the photographer's studio in the same way that happened previously in the painter's studio.

In chapter four, I researched the understanding of space in the Iranian painting tradition and the influence this has had on nineteenth-century Iranian photography. I analyzed the formal use of space both in Persian miniature painting and photography. The main research issues related to the arrangement of space in Persian miniature painting that I am concerned with in this chapter, are topics such as the non-linear perspective approach or the isometrical perspective (also called the parallel perspective) to project a three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional picture plane; the existence of multiple centres of attention (*diffuse* composition); the grid layout structure; and the vertical composition/vertical perspective. I introduced the kinds of compositions that can be defined due to the arrangement of the elements in the pictorial or photographic space, and explored the ones that are peculiar to nineteenth-century Iranian photography as influenced by the Iranian painting tradition.

Chapter five is devoted to the interaction between Western and Iranian photographers. I explored the influence that Western aesthetics in nineteenth-century photography has had on Iranian native portrait photography. The group of indigenous photographers that were more exposed to this foreign influence were the court photographers, in contrast to the bazaar or local photographers. I introduced in this section the Western photographers that were active in Iran in the nineteenth century and focused on the ones whose influence on Iranian photographers was more noticeable. How they influenced the aesthetics of local photographers was an important issue. Especially relevant for the present dissertation was how this influence has changed the four topics explored in the previous chapters: visual laterality, text/calligraphy, pose, and space. In order to discuss this, it was essential to know which Iranian photographers were working together with Western photographers. Depending on the position of the photographer, we can find Iranian photographers whose work perfectly matches that of Western photographers (like court photographers) and others that have a completely Iranian conception and

representation in their work (like bazaar photographers). But the majority of them present, with more or less intensity, a hybrid aesthetic in their work.

My final goal in this dissertation is to show through visual analysis of the images that photographs are cultural products and to transcend Edward Said's orientalism by analysing other constructed realities, those created by indigenous photographers. Next to this, it is fundamental to emphasize the remarkable difference between the Victorian way of representation and other lesser-known peripheral models of representation, such as the Iranian one.[14] I advocate for a place in a global history of photography of those unknown, local photo-histories and of the indigenous photographers that build it up. What I address is historical modes of representation and the need to achieve intercultural approaches in the study of art in general and of photography in particular. World Art Studies, the disciplinary field that is taking into consideration these matters must be, therefore, a source of inspiration and reference for photo historians.[15]

[14] Throughout most of photographic history, these local photo histories have been dismissed o slighted. For instance, in Peter Pollack's *Picture History of Photography* (1969); Beaumont Newhall's 1982 revision of *The History of Photography from 1839 to the present day;* In *Masterpieces of Photography,* a 1986 compendium of highlights from the George Eastman House Collection; In Mike Weaver's *Art of Photography, 1839-1989* (1989); Frizot, Michel, *Neue Geschichte der Fotografie,* Könneman, 1989; and Naomi Rosenblum's *A World History of Photography,* there are no references to any of these "peripheral" or "local histories" of photography. Countries like Iran, Syria or Burma have been completely neglected by those global photo-histories and if they have been mentioned at all it has been always through the work of Western photographers in those countries. An exception to this is Mary Warner Marien's book, *Photography. A Cultural History,* London 2002. This book benefits from two decades of new research into non-Western photography.

[15] Fundamental referents for this topic are: Zijlmans and van Damme, 2008; and Onians 2007.

1. VISUAL LATERALITY: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIRECTION OF WRITING AND COMPOSITION

> If one observes the movements of a human being in possession of a camera (or of a camera in possession of a human being), the impression given is of someone lying in wait. This is the ancient act of stalking which goes back to the Paleolithic hunter in the tundra. Yet photographers are not pursuing their game in the open savanna but in the jungle of cultural objects, and their tracks can be traced through this artificial forest. The acts of resistance on the part of culture, the cultural conditioning of things, can be seen in the act of photography, and this can, in theory, be read off from photographs themselves.
>
> Vilém Flusser[16]

> "If right and left had not been relegated to the traffic regulations or to the terrestrial and celestial ceremonial, Science and Philosophy would have known how to use them fittingly."
> Silvio Ceccato[17]

The main research question of this chapter is whether, and if so, how the direction of writing and reading of Iranian nineteenth-century photographers influenced the composition of the studio photographs of this period. To understand the relation between the two, I have defined groups of photographs to show different ways of composition due to the different reading habits (left-to-right on the one hand, right-to-left on the other). This research is built on visual analysis and from two frames of reference: art history and neuroscience. First, I will define the phenomenon of visual laterality, then I will introduce the photographic corpus identified as showing the effect of the phenomenon of visual laterality. I will finish the chapter with an historical survey of the main conclusions and results found both in the fields of art history and neuroscience that support the main hypothesis of this chapter. It is important to note that the art historical literature that relates to this phenomenon belongs mainly to the first half of the twentieth-century whereas the literature in the field of neuroscience is recent, mostly produced in the last fifteen years. This apparent gap in the art history literature can be explained by the fact that in the field of neuroscience an important group of scholars focused their research on answering and giving an appropriate theoretical framework to the questions posed by some art historians several decades ago, though in a very discrete way. The most recent literature in this field has an interdisciplinary approach.

[16] Flusser 2000, p. 33.
[17] Taken from Fritsch 1964, p. 7. Silvio Ceccato (1914-1997) was an Italian philosopher and linguist.

1.1. Definition of visual laterality

Scripts can be written in many directions. The Japanese scripts specialist Akira Nakanishi has elaborated nine models (fig. 1a) to resume the different directions of scripts.

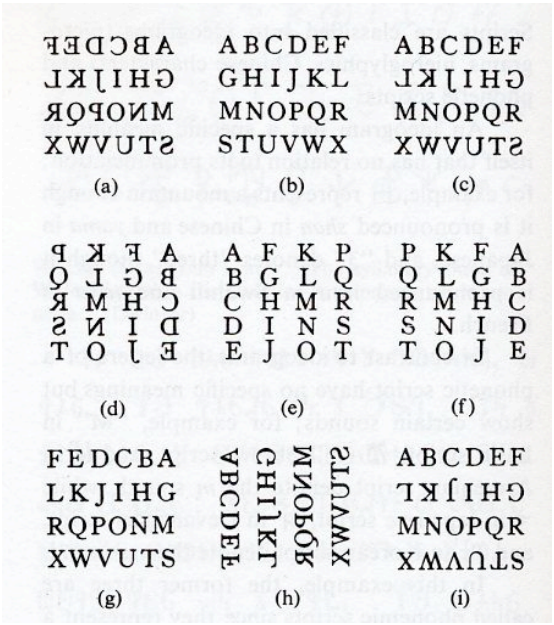

Figure 1a

Ancient Phoenician and Aramaic scripts were written in (a) only; the descendants of these scripts, Arabic, Hebrew, Farsi, Urdu, and others, are now written in the same way, i.e., from right to left, the opposite direction of all Western languages (b). The neurologist Chris McManus has made a schema of the evolution of the direction of the script in the different languages (fig. 1b), which is very helpful to understand the remarkable number of languages written today with a right-to-left (leftwards) script.[18] Would this remarkable difference in the writing direction used by different cultures affect in some way the composition in works of art, and in particular in the photographic image, since the direction of writing and reading is exactly the opposite in these two groups of languages? The area of research of this study is Iran in the nineteenth-century and the material of study is photography. The language in question is Farsi. My conclusions will be directly connected to photography. Is there a difference in composition between the photographs made by Westerners and by Iranians resulting from this? In other words, I want to know if photographs show evidence of *visual laterality*, and visual laterality is defined here as the conditioning of the composition of the image by the direction of writing.

[18] After McManus 2004, pp. 242-43.

Figure 10.4 The historical development of the direction of writing in different scripts.

Figure 1b

How does visual laterality manifest itself, if at all? One of the topics that are fundamental to understanding visual laterality is to know and define its relation with laterality caused by handedness[19] and hemisphere specialization, in other words, if there is a relationship between left and right in pictorial and photographic space and left and right in the brain. In this particular case, the condition of the composition of the photographic image. My hypothesis is that the fact that Farsi is written from right to left implies a production of mirror images to those produced by Western photographers. For the purposes of this discussion a mirror image is understood to be a reflection with respect to the human's plane of symmetry, that is, a left-right mirror image.

Asymmetries of the pictorial space could arise from asymmetries of the brain or from cultural conventions. The psychologists Charles G. Gross and Marc H. Bornstein suggest that both contribute to the anisotropy[20] of art but in different ways.[21] I will start this research with the second cause of anisotropy of the photographic space, the cultural convention due to the direction of writing of different scripts. Aestheticians have frequently asserted that left and right in a picture are absolutes. The Swiss art historian Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) called attention to the fact that pictures change appearance and loose meaning when turned into their mirror images. He realized that this happens because pictures are "read" from the left to the right, and naturally the sequence changes when the picture is inverted.[22] Wölfflin noted that the direction of the diagonal that runs from bottom left to top right is seen as ascending, the other as descending. Any pictorial object looks heavier at its right side.[23] Therefore, my hypothesis is that, if the only condition for that rule of composition is that the pictures are "read" from left to right (like the direction of writing of all Western languages), then the opposite applies to the rest of the languages, i.e. those written from right to left (like Farsi): Iranian photographers produce mirror like images to those made by Western photographers. We can see Wölfflin's thoughts summarized in figure 2a, where the final point of the scanning path in red (bottom right) is the heaviest point of the image (painting or photograph). Thus, Western artists would avoid placing an object there and would place it in the bottom left where it does not have such weight as in the symmetrical point. In figure 2b you can see the Persian (Arabic, Urdu, etc.) version where the final point of the path (bottom left) is the one to be avoided by Iranian artists. We can clearly see that both figures are mirror-reversed images of each other.

[19] Handedness is an atribute of human beings defined by their unequal distribution of fine motor skill between the left and right hands. An individual who is more dexterous with the right hand is called right-handed, and one who is more skilled with the left is said to be left-handed (8-15%).

[20] Anisotropy is the property of being directionally dependent as opposed to isotropy, which means homogeneity in all directions.

[21] Gross and Bornstein 1978, pp. 29-38.

[22] Wölfflin 1941, pp. 82-96.

[23] Further reading of works by other aestheticians about the right-left problem in art: J.W. Schlosser, "Intorno alla lettura dei Quaddri", *Critica,* XXVIII, 1930, p. 72; Anton Faistauer, "Links und Rechts in Bilde", *Amicis, Jahrbuch des Oesterr. Galerien,* 1926; R. Keller, "The Right-Left Problem in Art", *Ciba Symposia,* Summit, N.J. III, 1942, p. 1139.

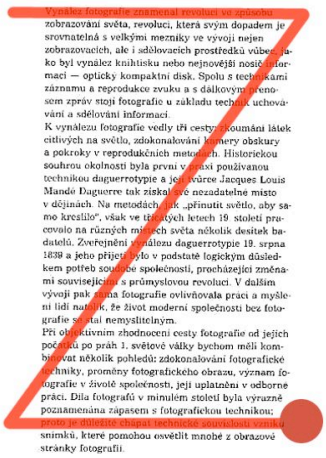

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

The art historian Mercedes Gaffron carried Wölfflin's investigation further. According to her, the observer experiences a picture as if he was facing its left side. He is subjectively identified with the left, and whatever appears in that part of the picture assumes the greatest importance.[24] This agrees with the art historian Alexander Dean's observation of the so-called stage areas of the theatre. He states that as a curtain rises at the beginning of an act, the audience can be seen to look to its left first. The left side of the stage is considered the strong one. In a group of two or three actors, the ones on the left dominate the scene.[25] In Chinese theatre, on the other hand, the important positions are to the audience's right. It is interesting to know whether this can be extrapolated to photographs.

As stated by the art historian Rudolf Arnheim, it will be evident that when the observer experiences facing the left side, a second and asymmetrically located centre is created in the picture at that side. Just like the center of the frame, this subjective center carries importance and can be expected to influence the composition accordingly. A contrapuntal relationship between the two centers results.[26] Like the area around the center of the frame, the area of the subjective center is able to carry more weight. There is, then, a curious difference between being "important" and central, at the left, and being heavy and conspicuous at the right, in the words of Arnheim. The same could have been said by an Iranian researcher writing about composition in Iran. Only he would say that a curious difference between being "important" and central, at the right, and being heavy and conspicuous, at the left. Concluding these observations on the right-left phenomenon Wölfflin reminds his readers that he has described, but not explained it, and he adds: "Apparently it has deep roots, roots that reach down to the nethermost foundations of our sensuous nature".[27] At present the most common explanation runs along empiricist lines. The reading of pictures from left to right is a habit taken over from reading the books.[28]

As stated by Gaffron, the art historian Theodora Haak describes a European tendency of compositions where the movement enters the picture from the left, and where the left side shows more clarity and distinction, while the right leaves more

[24] Gaffron 1950, pp. 312-313.
[25] Dean 1946.
[26] Arnheim 1974.
[27] Wölflin 1941, p. 90.
[28] Arnheim 1974, p. 50.

room for the play of imagination. She explains this tendency by a preponderance of right-eyedness. However, in a later work, considering the opposed direction of movement in East Asiatic art, she abandons this theory and assumes that a fundamental difference in mental structure must be the cause of the directional contrast in Western and Eastern art.[29] In contrast to European pictures, Theodora Haak found out that in the pictorial representations of Eastern Asia one finds a marked direction of movement from right to left. It manifests itself with particular distinctiveness in the so-called *makimono,* in the long scroll, which must be observed while being unrolled uninterruptedly from right to left on the floor.[30]

There is some empirical evidence to support what some art critics have said about a picture that loses something of value when mirror reversed. As stated by the scholar Martin Gardner in his interesting book *The New Ambidextrous Universe. Symmetry and Asymmetry from Mirror Reflections to Superstrings,* David B. Eisendrath Jr, a New York photographer (he does not mention when), prepared a set of 50 scenic photographs so that each picture had two reproductions, one a mirror image of the other. The pairs were shown one at a time to various viewers who were asked to designate which one of each pair they liked best. Scenes that had an overall left-right symmetry were chosen as often in one form or the other, but if the scene showed a composition with strong asymmetry, there was about 75 percent agreement among subjects on the choice of one picture over its mirror twin. All these viewers read from left to right. When the same pictures were shown to viewers who read only Hebrew, which goes from right to left, there was a tendency to prefer the mirror reversals of those pictures that had been preferred by left-to-right readers.[31] Further, Gross and Bornstein ask themselves, if, as aestheticians say, mirror reversal changes the meaning of a painting, why have so many artists, from Raphael and Rembrandt to Munch, remained apparently indifferent to the reversal of their originals when reproduced as prints or tapestries? And why, conversely, did a few, such as Dürer and Van Gogh, take great care to etch originals in their mirror image? [32] They point out that, in fact, objective studies (meaning here, based on statistics) involving a number of observers and different paintings have lent little support to the generality of the claims of art historians, that mirror-reversing paintings consistently change the content or tone of the original. A possible explanation for the failure of experimental psychologists to find the perceptual differences between paintings and their mirror images claimed by aestheticians might be, as Gross and Bornstein suggest, that the psychological experiments involved collections of both symmetrically and asymmetrically organized compositions. In contrast, aestheticians exemplify their point with highly asymmetrical paintings, with marked perspective and lighting differences between the two sides that clearly do alter on reversal.

In sum, the visual laterality hypothesis is supported by the ideas of classic art historians and aestheticians such as Arnheim and Wölfflin. Their theories have not been contradicted since then and their ideas are still valid in the field of art history and provide an appropriate theoretical background for my research.

[29] Gaffron 1950, p. 315.
[30] Keller 1942, p. 1142.
[31] Gardner 2005, pp. 36-37.
[32] Gross & Bornstein 1978, p. 34.

1.2. Nineteenth- century Iranian portrait photography

I have organized the photographs in three different groups attending to the type of composition that they have: the first group, ***linear order,*** consists of images in which a group of sitters have been depicted arranged by their height; the second group, ***couples,*** consists of images in which a couple has been depicted, one sitter sitting and the other standing; and the third group, ***chairs,*** in which a sitter is depicted standing and resting one of her/his hands on the chair.

Linear order

The first group of studio portraits of groups is where people depicted are organized by their height. This group was established after finding a group photograph that depicts five Iranian children (fig. 3), the image responsible of the whole classification that will be shown here. If we compare figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 made by Iranian photographers and figures 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 made by Western photographers, we can clearly see that some are mirror images of the others. The first photograph (fig. 3), made by an anonymous Iranian photographer, shows a group of Bakhtiari[33] children, most probably brothers, who posed in height order, from smallest to tallest, if we read it in the Iranian way, but from tallest to smallest if we read it in the Western way. From the clothing the children are wearing, I can conclude that they were court children. The names have been identified as (right-to-left) Afrasiab, Bahman, Shatar, Seifollah and Sohrab.[34] Another photograph (fig. 4), made by Iranian photographer Reza Akkasbashi, shows Prince Firouz Mirza'a children, from right to left: the infant Prince Abdolhossein (Farman Farma), Princess Mahsumeh (Esmat os-Saltaneh), Princess Soroush os-Saltaneh (Hazrat-e Olia) and Princess Malek-Taj (Najm os-Saltaneh). The photograph was taken around 1860. Taken by Reza Akkasbashi, the next image (fig. 5) presents the sons of Mohandes-e Mamalek in Tehran, ordered again by height, standing on a Persian carpet and performing a military salute. These three images are the clearest photos showing the difference in composition on the basis of visual laterality. The next photograph of this group (fig. 6) was taken as well by Reza Akkasbashi in 1866 shows also this tendency. It depicts two men sitting (Ismail and Asad al-Khan if we start with the one at the right of the image) and one standing at the left side of the photograph (Naser a-Manushi). The last one (fig. 7) can be seen also as two groups of people organized by height: the first one on the back row is formed by four men and one boy; the second one on the front row is composed by four children also organized by height. Its author is an unknown Iranian photographer.

As I have mentioned before, direction in composition is one of the two factors that determine balance, weight being the other one. This first group of pictures is particularly interesting as far as the direction of the image is concerned, but it also shows clearly what Wölfflin said about the ascending-descending diagonal. He said that the direction of the diagonal that runs from bottom left to top right is seen as ascending, the other one as descending, which is what is happening in the Western

[33] The Bakhtiari are a group of southwestern Iranians. A small percentage of Bakhtiari are still nomadic pastoralists. They inhabit the provinces of Lorestan, Khuzestan, Chahar Mahal and Bakhtiari, and Isfahan.

[34] Taken from *Qajar Studies. Journal of the International Qajar Studies association,* Vol. VIII, 2008, p.127.

photographs that we present here and exactly the opposite (opposite meaning here "mirror-like" compositions) to what happens in Iranian photographs.

The first photograph of this group of Western photographs (fig. 8), taken by the Czech photographer Ignác Schächtl in 1890 in Tábor (Czech Republic), presents a group of children that are organized by height like the ones shown before, but in this case the order mirrors the first ones. The same is true for a family portrait (fig. 9), taken by Czech photographer Josef Jindrich Sechtl in 1911 in Bozejov (Czech Republic) and which presents the Novak Family. The composition of these two images is mirror-reversed of figures 3, 4 and 5. The same happens with a photograph of a group of Khiva women with their children (fig. 10), taken by the French photographer M. Hordet not later than 1890. Even today we can find examples of this kind in contemporary photography of photographers that are educated in a right-to-left script. *Converging Territories # 10* (fig. 11), taken by the Moroccan photographer Lalla Essaydi is a contemporary example of this. Essaydi places Islamic women in an isolated space and literally decorates them with text written with henna. The next photograph (fig. 12), a daguerreotype made by the French photographer E. Lorichon around 1850 in Spain and another daguerreotype of a family (fig. 13) taken by the British photographer Frank and Wigle around 1850 are very similar and they show the Western one-dimensional order that I have referred to. These two images are mirror-like images of figure 6.

Couples

The second group, the *couples,* is actually a smaller version of the first group. In this kind of photographs, a couple is depicted and one person is always sitting, the other one standing up. We can compare figures 14, 15, 16 and 17 made by Iranian photographers with figures 18, 19, 20 and 21 made by Westerner photographers. The Western photographs are mirror-like images of the Iranian ones. The one who is sitting is usually the person of highest social rank (figs. 16, 20), the older one (figure 21) or in the case of children, the smallest child (figs. 14, 18). Also, if the couple is mixed, then usually the woman is sitting. In the photographs made by Iranian photographers, the chair is, in the majority of the cases, placed at the bottom right side of the picture, i.e., avoiding the heaviest weight point, under Iranian composition (see figure 2b). However, in the photographs taken by Western photographers, the chair is almost always placed at the bottom left side of the picture, avoiding the heaviest weight point (in a Western composition). As a curiosity, I found one portrait that deserves a more detailed observation since the two men depicted are actually one and the same person (fig. 15); the photograph is an interesting double exposure picture of one of the sons of Baha al-Molk taken by Agha Reza Eqbal al-Saltane.[35] In this case hierarchy plays no role.

There is another difference between Western and Iranian studio portrait photography in the way couples or groups of people are composed and arranged. In Western photography we can find many examples of studio portrait photographs of couples formed by a man and a woman. As photography historian William C. Darrah states, among the more abundant surviving *carte de visite* portraits are those of newly married couples and husband and wife at various ages. The most striking convention

[35] Doble exposure in nineteenth-century was specially related and used in spirit photography, but there were photographers that were using it just to create funny tricky portraits or scenes, like the one shown here. A very interesting book about this topic is: Henisch & Henisch, *The Photographic Experience 1839-1914: Images and Attitudes,* Pensilvania University Press, 1994.

is the almost universally used pose of the husband seated and the wife standing, with one hand on her husband's shoulder.[36] In contrast to this, only rarely do you find studio portrait photographs of couples composed of man and wife in Iranian photography in the nineteenth century. There are portraits of a man with several wives (the most famous case being Naser od-Din Shah), normally the man standing and his wives on a lower level, sitting or kneeling. However, as stated by Iranian historian Guity Nashat, with the exception of rulers and wealthy individuals, most marriages were monogamous. Polygamous marriages around the well-to-do were rare but were not unheard of: men took second wives when their first wives reached menopause. However, the prospect of sharing a husband with another woman was a threat hanging over the heads of many wives.[37] What we can find prolifically is portraits of two men, normally one sitting depending as a sign of respectfulness (the older one normally is sitting) or hierarchical reasons (normally the socially highest rank is sitting).

In this group of couples, we can also identify a subgroup of mothers and fathers holding a child on their lap. It has been already demonstrated by groups of neurologists[38] that in most of the photographs of parents holding children on their lap, the babies or children are sitting on the left part of their parent's bodies. This bias direction is well established, but why it is to the left, remains unclear. Among several explanations proposed, the handedness explanation posits that most people, being right-handed, hold the child on the left side to keep their right dominant hand free for other tasks related to infant care.[39] The heartbeat explanation posits that the heartbeat, being more detectible on the holder's left side, makes the left hold more soothing for the infant.[40] The attention explanation credits the bias to the selective activation in the holder of right-hemisphere-lateralised perceptual, emotional and intentional systems, which predispose a left hold by directing the holder's attention to the left.[41] Nevertheless, even if this basic directional effect is well established, many details are still uncorroborated, uncertain or inconsistent across studies, and further research is needed.

I have collected some of these photographs, both nineteenth-century Iranian and Western, and I have analyzed them from a formal point of view. The compositions of those photographs agree with the results presented by the neurologists only when we consider Western photographs. Most of the Iranian photographs (figs. 22 and 23) have reversed compositions (mirror-like compositions) compared to the Western ones (figs. 24 and 25). This, again, raises the question of whether the directionality of the script may play a role in this kind of composition. After having analyzed the material presented above, I can only conclude that there is a tendency of mirror reversal composition on Iranian photographs that depict couples of mother/father and child.

Chairs

The third group, *chairs,* is a clear example of Wölfflin's hypothesis. The group of photographs that I present here (figs. 26, 27, 28 and 29, taken by Iranian

[36] Darrah 1981, p. 36.
[37] Nashat 2004, p. 76.
[38] Harris et al. 2007, pp. 64-86.
[39] See: Van der Meer and Husby 2006, pp. 263-276.
[40] See: Salk 1961, pp. 740-746. See also: Todd and Butterworth 1998, pp. 229-233.
[41] See: Harris et al. 2006; Vauclair and Donnot 2005, pp. 564-571.

photographers) and 30, 31, 32 and 33 (taken by Western photographers) are just a few of many examples of it. The first photograph of this group (fig. 26) is a very interesting picture as far as the viewpoint of the photograph is concerned. The photographer has lowered his plane in order to fit the child fully within the picture's frame and therefore, the chair has got a very dominant role, almost a majestual one. The child is posing with a lot of charm and in a very natural way. The next photograph (fig. 27) depicts Sultan Ahmad Shah Qajar in a very self-conscious pose for a young boy. He is wearing the clothes and regalia typical of court children and he even holds the omnipresent sword of Qajar painting portraiture. Naser od-Din Shah is looking extremely self-conscious and elegant (fig. 28), resting his left hand on the most photographed court chair, that highly carved rococo one in which all his wives were immortalized by himself. This photograph was taken by his favourite court photographer, Reza Akkasbashi. The last image of this group of Iranian photographs (fig. 29) is the one that depicts Hajji Ali Khan E`temad al-Saltaneh (Minister of Security Affairs and Governor of Golpayegan and Khansar). In the Western group of pictures (figs. 30-33) we can see three women; the last one is a portrait of two Iranian men and was taken by the Georgian photographer Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933). In all these Western images, we can notice that the object located on the right side (in this case, the chair) seems to be heavier than the one located at the left side (as Arnheim points out). Is this visual laterality caused only by the choices made by the photographer, or can it also be produced by the person or group of people depicted? The homogeneity in the pose of those depicted in nineteenth-century portraits points to the fact that, most probably, the photographer was the one who arranged the scene in an already established way and the sitter would just follow the directions of the photographer.

The three forms of composition that I have defined above, agree with the examples of stimuli used in the aesthetic preference experiment already proposed and used by the neurologists S. Christman and K. Pinger and later on by Health et al., which consisted of three geometric elements arranged laterally to form a composition: a vertically-oriented solid black rectangle to represent Weight, an outline of a elongated triangle to represent direction and a stippled hat-like shape to represent Interest (fig. 34).[42]

[42] Taken from Christman and Pinger 1997, p. 159.

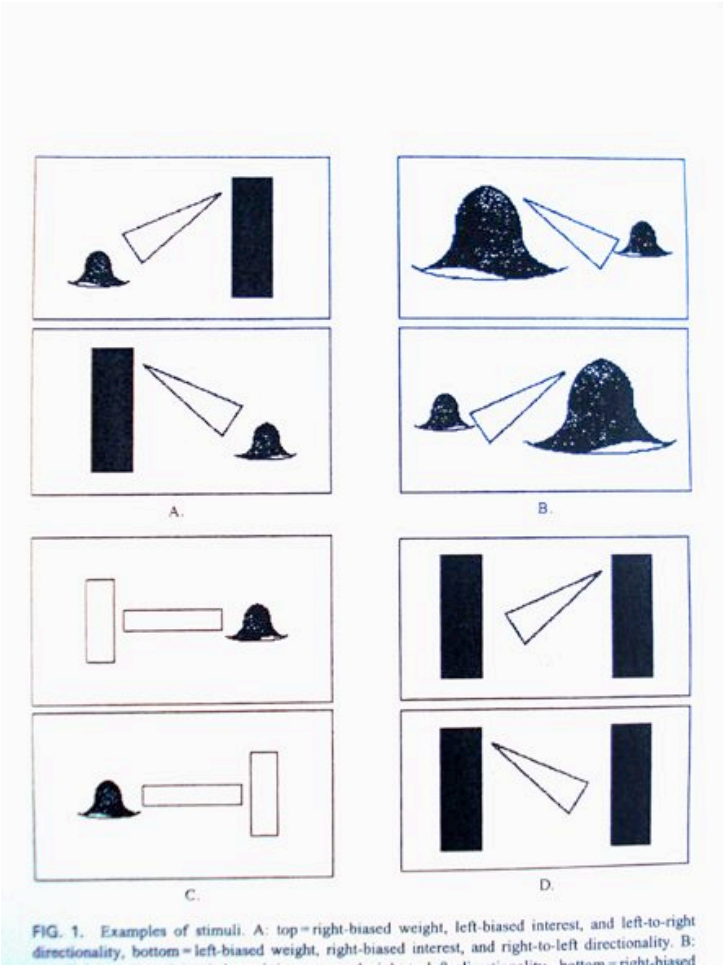

FIG. 1. Examples of stimuli. A: top = right-biased weight, left-biased interest, and left-to-right directionality, bottom = left-biased weight, right-biased interest, and right-to-left directionality. B:

Figure 34

Examples of stimuli. ***A:*** *top=right-biased weight, left-biased interest, and left-to-right directionality, bottom=left-biased weight, right-biased interest, and right-to-left directionality.* ***B****: top=left-biased weight, balanced interest, and right-to-left directionality, bottom=right-biased weight, balanced interest, and left-to-right directionality.* ***C:*** *top=absent weight, right-biased interest, and absent directionality, bottom=absent weight, left-biased interest, and absent directionality.* ***D:*** *top=balanced weight, absent interest, and left-to-right directionality, bottom=balanced weight, absent interest, and right-to-left directionality.*

The three basic compositions I have described at the beginning of this section can be identified with some of the examples of stimuli presented by Christman and Pinger. They can be identified as one of the examples of stimuli shown above:

* linear order and couples, Iranian composition: figures 3, 4, 5, 6, 14,15,16 and 17 are examples of stimuli "D" bottom (balanced weight, absent interest, and right-to-left directionality).
* linear order and couples, Western composition: figures 8, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19, 20 and 21 are examples of stimuli "D" top (balanced weight, absent interest, and left-to-right directionality).
* mother/father and child on her/his lap, Iranian composition: figures 22 and 23 are examples of stimuli "D" bottom (balanced weight, absent interest, and left-to-right directionality).

* mother/father and child on her/his lap, Western composition: figures 24 and 25 are examples of stimuli "D" top (balanced weight, absent interest, and right-to-left directionality).
* chairs, Iranian composition: figures 26, 27, 28 and 29 are examples of stimuli "A" top (right-biased weight, left-biased interest, and left-to-right directionality).
* chairs, Western composition: figures 39, 31, 32 and 33 are examples of stimuli "A" bottom (left-biased weight, right-biased interest, and right-to-left directionality).

Arnheim wrote: "An unbalanced composition looks accidental, transitory, and therefore invalid".[43] This however depends on whose eyes are looking at that particular artwork. He also wrote that looking at those unbalanced compositions, we get the impression that the process of creation has been suddenly and accidentally frozen somewhere in its course. Since change is needed, the stillness of the work becomes a handicap.[44] Foreign observers of nineteenth-century Iranian photographs, such as the ones presented above, could wrongly perceive them as not well composed, but this is a judgment based on ignorance of the existence of other modes of representation. Actually that is what happened in India. As the art critic and photo-historian Judith Mara Gutman pointed out, in the West the great majority often laughed at photographs like these (non-perspective photos), thinking of them as "mistakes".[45] In 1895, a correspondent for the *Practical Photographer,* a magazine published in London for the large audiences soaking up information about photography, caught a glimpse of the swell of indigenous photographic activity in India. He found it repulsive, citing the bazaars that were "infested" with native photographers who were bringing down the level of photography all over India.[46]

There are, however, exceptions in both cases, in the Western a small percentage, and in the Iranian a larger one. The larger number of exceptions in Iran has, I believe, a logical explanation: the Iranian mirror-like images are decreasing with time due to European influences. That means, and this is a new hypothesis, that visual laterality changes around the end of the nineteenth-century and the beginning of twentieth-century.

Movement and visual laterality

Up to this point I have only analysed studio portrait photographs that are static. Now I will consider those that also suggest movement. I want to consider this aspect because it also gives support to my hypothesis, both with clear graphic examples and theory from the field of neurology. As the psychologist Jerre Levy points out, it may be that those pictures in which movement, implied or potential movement is present, are preferred by Western observers when the movement is from left to right. If so, monolingual readers of Hebrew and Arabic would prefer the opposite versions of such pictures from those preferred by readers of European languages.[47] Levy carried out an experiment with Western observers to see their preferences for 97 vacation slides or their mirror versions. He found that left and right-handers differ in their preferences for mirror versions. In 1976 he planned to carry out a replication of this

[43] Arnheim 1969.
[44] Arnheim 1969, p. 12.
[45] Gutman 1982, p. 39.
[46] Gutman 1982, p. 23.
[47] Levy 1976, pp. 431-445.

study, using the same sets of slides, in Israel, but I do not know if the experiment has been made or not. Serious experiments similar to this have been undertaken by different groups of neurologists around the globe and I will devote some time to them and their results in the section concerned with the neurological approach to the right-left problem.

The next three images taken by unknown Iranian photographers, present a potential movement towards the left, like the direction of writing of the Iranian script. The first image of this group (fig. 35) depicts a man riding a horse and crossing a river. The horse is going from right to left and his position on the bottom left corner stresses the fact that he is moving leftwards. The movement in the river brings to the viewer the feeling that the horse is really going through difficulties crossing the river. The next image (fig. 36) is one of the most beautiful images that I have seen in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. Five small children are depicted sitting on a bench with a leftward reclining pose. The last image of this group (fig. 37) depicts a man riding a motorbike in the right-to-left direction. To support my hypothesis, I have identified many stone reliefs and paintings of earlier times in Iran. Is there a tendency to show the movement on the right-to-left direction, like the direction of reading and writing in Iran? Further below, I will present some of those paintings and stone reliefs.

Wölfflin remarked: "one could mean that our art - in the sense of our writing - must always have the inclination, to present movement from the left to the right (marching soldiers, running horses). It is certain that the right side of the picture has a different value from the left one. It decides the general tendency of the picture, that is, its movement to the right".[48] A good example of this is the motion studies of horses by the photographer Eadweard Muybridge (1830-1904). Further, Arnheim points out that "since the image is read from left to right, the pictorial movement towards the right is perceived as easier, as if it demanded less effort. If, on the contrary, we see a rider crossing the image from right to left, it will seem to be overcoming a greater resistance, using a greater effort, and therefore going more slowly".[49] These phenomenon can be related (observable when visual representations are compared with their specular images) with the findings of psychologist H. C. Van der Meer in the sense that "spontaneous movements of the head are executed more quickly from left to right than in the opposite direction" and that, when experimental subjects are requested to compare the speeds of two locomotions, one from left to right and the other from right to left, they perceive the movement towards the left as faster. It is possible to conjecture that the movement towards the left appears as the winner of a greater resistance; it pushes against the current instead of letting itself be taken by it.[50]

Since Farsi is read and written from right to left, the movement of an image, a scene, will be also depicted and read in that direction. After examining and going through a vast number of Iranian paintings and stone reliefs, I can conclude that this is true most of the time. In the majority of cases, in the Iranian paintings and rock reliefs, the horse is running in the right to left direction, whereas in the Western paintings and reliefs the horse would be running in the left to right direction.

There are many examples of this kind to be found in painting, but I will show here just a few examples of these kinds of works in Iranian art. In *Fath `Ali Shah Received by Mirza Riza Quli Munshi al-Mulk in Sawdasht* (fig. 38), the story is happening in the right to left direction. The important figure in the picture is on the

[48] Quote translated from Wölfflin 1941, p. 83.
[49] Arnheim 1974, p. 43.
[50] Van der Meer 1958.

left, Fath `Ali Shah enthroned on the Sun Throne, is receiving gifts from a vizier, and other men are also waiting to give him some presents. The arrow of reading is clearly in the right-to-left direction. This painting belongs to the manuscript of the *Shahanshahnameh* (Book of the King of the Kings) that was donated in 1818 to the Österreichische National Bibliothek.

The *Pictorial Cycle of Eight Poetic Subjects* is painted by an unknown artist in Shiraz in mid eighteenth century; here I have selected four of the eight works that constitute this cycle (fig. 39) These eight lyrical paintings constitute, collectively, a valuable document of the original architectural format and narrative program of eighteenth-century domestic interiors: these oil-on-canvas paintings were cut to fit small niches located in the upper walls of the reception room of a residence or a pleasure or hunting pavilion. The paintings depict beloved stories from the classic works of classic Iranian poets such as Nizami and Jami and often also hunting scenes were depicted. In these four images, four different stories are depicted: *Queen Shirin Visiting the Sculptor Farhad* (by Nizami); *Khusraw Discovers Shirin Bathing* (by Nizami); *Bahram Gur and Azadeh* and *Hunter on Horseback Attacked by a Lion.*[51] *Shirin Presents a Jug of Milk to Farhad* (fig. 40) was painted by an unknown artist in Iran in the late 15th –early 16th century. This work is one of the number of episodes from Nizami's text concerning painting and sculpture. Nizami's text, written in the fourteenth century, and the subsequent popularity of this theme illustrate the slow upsurge in the acceptance of the art of painting in Iran. Here we see that the scene is happening again in the right-to-left direction, like the direction of reading and writing of the Iranian painter that made this work. Again, the horse is running towards the left side of the picture. *Military Review with Fath `Ali Shah and Prince Husayn `Ali Mirza* (fig. 41), painted by an unknown artist in Shiraz is an interesting example of the right-to-left directionality of the happening of the scene of a ritual encounter of Fath `Ali Shah and a prince during a military review. The prince has fallen to his knees before the Shah and is identified by an inscription above his head with his title, Farmanfarma (Prince Husayn `Ali Mirza, Fath `Ali Shah's son who was governor of Shiraz in 1799-1835). Husayn `Ali Mirza's three sons appear at the upper left, with their names (Akbar Mirza, Shahrukh Mirza and Timur Mirza) inscribed above their heads. The Shah is mounted on horseback at the center of the picture, dominating the composition and all those around him and the scene is clearly happening in the right-to-left direction. In *Fath `Ali Shah at the Hunt* (fig. 42), we can see again the horse running from the right to the left. This stone relief executed by `Abdallah Khan in Rayy, circa 1820-30. Next to the main scene, there are other more peripheral scenes that also reveal this leftward directionality (see, for instance, the one happening in the right top corner). These are just but a few examples of this phenomenon, and anybody who may open a book about Persian miniature, will be able to gather many examples of the kind that I have just shown. I have also researched for sometime miniatures that illustrate Urdu (also right-to-left script) literary texts and I have found the same consistent leftward directionality in the way the scene is happening and on the direction of the depicted horses.

[51] As stated by the Iranian Islamic art historian Diba in 2001, even though the themes of these works are derived from manuscript painting, their treatment differs considerably: the scale of the figures in relation to the background is larger, while the number of figures and degree of ornamental patterning is reduced. The palete is restricted to red, blue, cream and brownish green hues, and unmodulated, broad pasajes of color predominate.

We can easily find contemporary examples of this directionality in Iranian comics, in Iranian websites (specially interesting to see is the mirror-like composition of the design of the websites that have an Iranian section and an English one) and also in Iranian films where the movement of the camera reveals the influence of reading habits on composition and directionality in Iranian cinema. This also supports the visual laterality hypothesis but it is a new field of research that is beyond the scope of the present dissertation but that deserves further and deep research.

In sum, I can conclude that there is a tendency in nineteenth-century Iranian photographers to produce mirror-like images of those produced by their Western colleagues. This tendency has been proven to be consistent in the three groups of composition that I have analyzed through the chapter: in the group *linear order,* Iranian photographers tend to organize the group of sitters by height, from the shortest to the tallest in the leftward direction, whereas the Western photographers tend to organize the group in the opposite direction; in the group *couples,* the person that is sitting on the chair in Iranian photographs is normally placed on the right side of the photograph, whereas in the Western photographs is placed almost always on the left side of the image and this holds also true for the third group, *chairs.* The exceptions only seem to confirm that visual laterality changed in the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most probably due to the influence of Western composition. There is also consistency in the leftward directionality of the scene in Persian miniatures, which gives further evidence to the visual laterality phenomenon.

1.3. Visual brain and visual perception in art

Neurologist Semir Zeki's statement that all visual art is expressed through the brain, whether in conception, execution or appreciation, and no theory of aesthetics that is not substantially based on the activity of the brain is ever likely to be complete, let alone profound[52], made me aware of the importance of trying to understand what is happening in the brain in relation to visual art. One of my goals in this section is to find out if Zeki's theories can provide new insights into my subject.

The neurologists have learned enough about the visual brain in the last quarter of the last century to be able to say something interesting about visual art, at least at the perceptual level, as Zeki believes. He hopes that with his, in my opinion, highly interesting book *Inner Vision. An Exploration of Art and the Brain,* he can contribute to the foundations of a neurology of aesthetics or *neuro-aesthetics,* and thus for an understanding of the biological basis of aesthetic experience.[53] The neurobiological view that he presents in his book, is that art has an overall function, which is remarkably similar to that of the visual brain and that it is actually an extension of it and therefore obeys the same laws that govern the visual brain. Actually, everything seems to point to this emerging field becoming fundamental in the decades to come since it is a joint effort of art historians and neurologists to try to understand more about the process of production of a work of art and the role the brain and its functions plays in that process. In May 2008, an institution named *Neuroaesthetics* has been founded in Berlin, notably by leading scholars in both fields, art history and neuroscience.[54] The recently published book *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts*

[52] Zeki 1999, p. 1.
[53] Zeki 1999, p. 2.
[54] The art historians Christine Macel, curator at MNAM Centre Pompidou in Paris, the architect

and Approaches[55], which acknowledges in the first place art as a panhuman phenomenon, constitutes an effort to study art from all times and regions of the world in an integrative manner from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Specially interesting for my research is the article written by the neuroart-historian John Onians, "Neuroarthistory: Making More Sense of Art", in which he explains with examples why a neuroscientific approach is likely to contribute deeply to the world art studies. As Onians state, if we know something of the factors that might have affected the unconscious mental formation of the makers and viewers of art in a particular place at a particular time, neuroscience helps us to understand how those factors might also have affected the appearance of that art. This is why neuroscience helps us to make more sense of art.[56] Onians's recently published book *Neuroarthistory. From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki,* offers an account of this new field in the human sciences: neuroarthistory.[57] The number of art historians making use of neuroscience is growing and this helps them to understand and explain better the creative process and the response to art.

In the words of Zeki, vision is an active process, not a passive one that we have long imagined it to be. Even the most elementary kind of vision is an active process. Art is in his opinion also an active process, a search for essentials; it is a creative process whose function constitutes an extension of the function of the visual brain.[58] Therefore, if we understand the connections of brain and vision, we will be able to understand better how the aesthetical experience is happening.

The most complex organ in the human body is the brain. Since ancient times, the brain's structures and functions have been prodded, observed, and experimented on. A major impetus to the study of the physical workings of the brain came in 1791, when the Italian physician and physicist Luigi Galvani (1737-1798) showed that electricity exists as a force within the brain cells. His experiments were later confirmed by the German physician and physiologist Emil Du Bois-Reymond (1818-1896) in 1850, who found that neurons emit pulses of electricity that travel at around 200 mph. The Czech anatomist Jan Evangelista Purkinje (1787-1869), in 1838, found that nerve cells consist of two parts: a nucleus similar to other cells and a set of fibbers which emanate out from the nucleus - these were later identified as the axons and dendrites. In 1870, the Italian physician Camillo Golgi (1843-1926) made the observation that there were literally billions of neurons making up the central nervous system and established that the neurons in the brain sent information to the motor nerves and that information from the sensory nerves was sent to the brain for analysis. These initial discoveries paved the way for modern neuroscience, which in recent years has yielded enormous amounts of information about the physical functions of the brain. Yet, very little of the brain's mystery has been unravelled. What is known of its characteristics is due, in large part, to the efforts of biological psychologists such as Roger Sperry (1913-1994) and Michael S. Gazzaniga. One of the brain's most intriguing aspects is its hemispheric specialization. This refers to the division of tasks within the right and left hemispheres of the brain. In humans, the left side of the brain

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Tammo Prinz) and neurologists (Dr. Alexander Abbushi, Prof. Karl Einhäupl and Prof. Detlev Ganten from the Dept. of Neurosurgery of Universitätsmedizin Berlin; Prof. Ernst Pöppel, director of the Institute of medical Psychology at Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich; Prof. Semir Zeki, professor of Neuroesthetics at University College London. Website: http://www.association-of neuroesthetics.org/documents/content.php?nav=lnk0200&use=con0200

[55] Zijlmans and Van Damme 2008.

[56] Onians 2008, p. 284.

[57] Onians 2007.

[58] Zeki 1999, p. 7.

is dominant in language and analytical skills; whereas the right side is dominant in spatial tasks, facial recognition, prosody (tonal qualities of speech), and emotion. In addition, the left hemisphere of the brain controls the right side of the body while the right hemisphere controls the left side. Also, normally the right side of the visual field is projected to the left hemisphere of the brain and the left field to the right hemisphere. The right part of the body is controlled by the dominant left half of the brain, and the left part of the body by the right half of the brain. Therefore, the left hand is controlled by the right half of the brain and the right hand by the left half of the brain. See the following diagram of the visual pathways from Ramón y Cajal's classic *Textura del sistema nervioso del hombre y de los vertebrados* (fig. 43).[59]

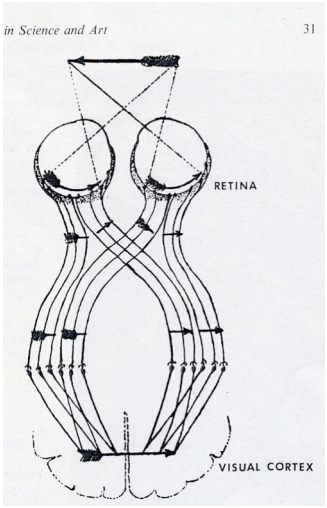

Figure 43

Note that the optics of the eye reverses the image of the arrow in the retinae. The nerve fibres from each retina separate so that messages from the left half of each retina travel to the visual cortex of the left hemisphere, and the messages from the right halves travel to the visual cortex of the right hemisphere. Thus when the center of the arrow is fixated (as shown) information in the left half of space (the arrow head) goes to the right cortex, and information in the right half of space (the feathers) goes to the left cortex. Note further that the two cortical representations are not mirror-reversed with respect to each other.

In the past thirty years, the evolution of the knowledge of the structure of the brain and its functions has been remarkable. Nowadays we know that there is a specific part of the cerebral cortex, which deals specifically with vision. It is instructive to recall, as Zeki points out, that it is only recently that neurologists accept that the retina connects with only one well-demarcated part of the brain, the primary visual cortex, and that there is therefore a localization for vision in the brain.[60]

See figure 44 for a diagrammatic representation of the connections between the eye and the brain[61] and figure 45 for the division of functions within the visual brain.[62]

[59] Moya 1904. The labels have been added by Charles G. Gross and Marc H. Bernstein for their article already mentioned above.
[60] Zeki 1999, p. 16.
[61] Zeki 1999, p. 15.
[62] Taken from Zeki 1999, p. 16.

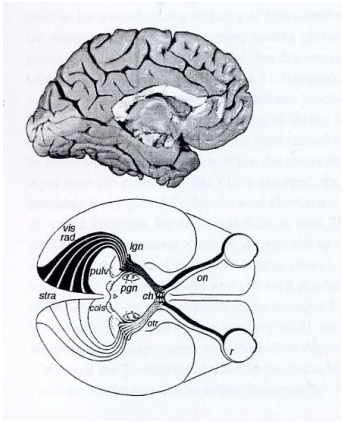

Figure 44

The fibres from the retina terminate at the back of the brain, in a part known as the primary visual cortex (area V1), shown in yellow on the medial side of the left hemisphere of the brain.

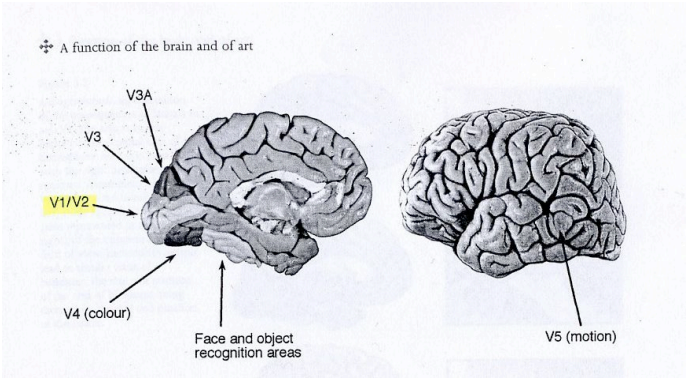

Figure 45

The visual brain consists of multiple functionally specialised areas, which receive their visual input largely from V1 (yellow) and an area surrounding it known as V2 (green). These are the best charted visual areas, but not the only ones. Other visual areas are being continually discovered.

But how can brain functionality be related to left-handedness and leftward scripts at all? This has been one of the most disturbing and confusing points in the whole process of trying to understand the visual laterality phenomenon, but an important one, since it is the linking point to connect my work with previous research in neurology.

In a recent article written by G.D. Schott and J.M. Schott, *Mirror Writing, Left-handedness and Leftward Scripts,* the authors say that they have found that a particularly high prevalence of left-handed mirror writing has been reported among those whose native languages are traditionally written in a leftward direction, including Chinese, Japanese and Hebrew. Innate lefthanders and those whose languages are written leftward thus share an unusual facility for left-handed mirror writing, an observation that may have implications for understanding hemisphere specialization in relation to handedness.[63]

I wonder if what is said for mirror writing is also valid for mirror composition (in this case, mirror composition in photography), since in the end, it is a matter of reading and moving the eyes in one direction or the other. And in this sense, I will present the actual situation related to this topic nowadays. In their article, Schott and Schott wrote that they have observed that a surprisingly large number of reported left-handed mirror writers are those whose native languages have traditionally been written and read leftward. This is evident from various individual reports of Japanese and Chinese patients, most of whom mirror-wrote after (usually) left hemispheric vascular lesions, and the polyglot who, following a head injury, selectively mirror-wrote and read Hebrew script, while his normal reading and writing of Polish remained.[64] The high prevalence of mirror writing reported in healthy individuals and the patients whose languages are typically written and read from right to left is striking, as we can conclude after reading the above-mentioned article. The authors wrote that this finding cannot be attributed to population differences in handedness. Left-handedness is no more frequent among Asians than Westerners, and right-

[63] Schott and Schott 2004.
[64] Schott and Schott 2004, p. 1850.

handedness has predominated in all cultures for at least 5000 years. Both consonantal phonetic (Hebrew) and ideographic (Chinese and Japanese) languages are implicated. This suggests that, although ideographic languages are extensively processed in the right hemisphere, it is less the structure and more the leftward direction of these languages that is important and that drives, or it is driven by, the contralateral right hemisphere.[65] The neurologist JR Skyoles goes on further to state that it may well be not only the direction of writing itself but also the right hemisphere involvement in the leftward direction of eye movements and the left visual fields that are important.[66]

The neurologists A. Pollatsky and S. Bolozky, did an experiment that showed that eye movements, the covert scanning of letters and mirror-image perception of words, are linked to the two visual fields. Leftward scripts (scanned with leftward eye movements) are read through the visual window extending into the left visual field (rightward ones are read through one extending into the right visual field).[67] Visual fields and eye movements are also connected to the two cerebral hemispheres. The left visual field is connected to the right hemisphere and the right with the left hemisphere. Also, each hemisphere controls eye movements directed in the opposite direction (the right hemisphere controls leftward eye movements and the left hemisphere rightward ones), so images scanned through the left visual field into the right hemisphere are also reciprocally controlled by this hemisphere.[68] Further, a group of Japanese neurologists wrote an article as an answer to the one written by Schott and Schott, in which they make a correction regarding the direction of writing in Japanese.[69] At the moment, neurologists only seem to agree on the fact that further studies in other languages are warranted, and it is especially important to investigate languages that have been variously written in leftward and rightward directions. These studies can be very relevant to further understand how this mirror-like image happens in the photographic image produced by Iranian photographers, always assuming that the mirror-writing phenomenon can be identified with the mirror-like image. Actually, in a more recent article written by GD Schott, he states that even if many individual cases of acquired mirror writing are reported among Chinese and Japanese people, these findings need to be interpreted with some caution, as the definition of leftwards direction of language is complex, and variables include the direction of the vertical and horizontal lines of script, letters and hieroglyphs, and changes in direction of written language over time,[70] in a clear reference to the corrections made by the group of Japanese neurologists.

Unlike handedness, which appears to be at least to some degree genetically determined, the direction of reading and writing seems to be merely a matter of convention. About A.D. 1500 there were as many scripts written and read from right to left as there were written and read from left to right. With the expansion of European culture in the centuries that followed, left-to-right scripts came to predominate (see McManus diagram, fig.1b). It is noted by Skoyles, that in those societies in which script direction changed, writing was not important in propagating religious beliefs. In other cultures it has taken on this role, largely through the belief

[65] Schott and Schott 2004, p. 1850.
[66] Skyoles 1992; pp. 25-26.
[67] Pollatsky et al. 1981, pp. 174-180.
[68] Skyoles 1992, p. 1.
[69] Tashiro et al. 2005, p. 834. They point out that, in contrast to Hebrew script, Japanese script (both Kanji and Kana) is traditionally written and read vertically, although the lines are read from right to left. This does not mean Japanese languages are written in a leftward direction. Japanese horizontal scripts are written from left to right, the same as alphabetic languages.
[70] Schott 2007, p. 8.

that written religious works contain the "word of God". Since such writings are believed to be holy, it is central to the religion to propagate them unchanged.[71] Skoyles suggests further that the convention of leftwardness has been preserved due to the central importance of the Torah and the Koran in the Jewish and Arabic societies, dating back to an earlier period when the leftward script, that was used to write them, reflected right hemispheric reading processes.

In sum, accepting that we can assure an intrinsically parallel phenomenon between mirror script and mirror composition in the pictorial or photographic space, I am able to benefit from this research and conclude that not only the direction of writing but also the right hemisphere involvement in the leftward direction of eye movements and the left visual fields are important and play a role in mirror-writing and, therefore, on the visual laterality phenomenon. However, further studies in other languages are warranted.

1.4. Asymmetries of the photographic space: brain mechanisms or artistic conventions?

Asymmetries of photographic space could arise, as already mentioned before, from asymmetries of the brain or from cultural conventions. Both of them seem to contribute to the anisotropy of art but in different ways. One artistic asymmetry that appears to be universal in this way is profile orientation. Portraits are rarely full-face.

One pioneer study made by the neurologists Chris McManus and N.K. Humphrey, found that the majority face leftward in 1474 painted portraits produced in Western Europe between 1500 to the present.[72] I am not aware of a similar study made with non-Western paintings. But I have so far gone through around 300 Western studio portrait photographs from the nineteenth- century and most of them, indeed, face leftwards. Similarly, with Iranian portraits I see that there are much more examples of profile orientation in the rightward direction. This difference may be related to the directionality of writing and reading again, but further research must be done in order to be able to extract solid conclusions.

The neurologist Hans-Joachim Hufschmidt asserts that eighty percent of right-handers drawing a human profile direct it towards the left. The preference for the left profile direction is traced back to the early Greek period in paintings, drawings, coin portraits, gems, cameos, and vase portraits. Fifty thousand objects have been analyzed. A 60% prevalence of face direction towards the right occurs in cultural centers of the Mediterranean before 600 B.C. Before the early Greek period, the Assyrian, Egyptian, and Sumerian cultures faced more profiles to the right. This tendency for the right profile direction can be traced back to Stone Age cave drawings. The profile shift from right to left occurs in the early Greek period and is related to a shift in script and in letter profile at the same time. This profile shift occurs simultaneously with an acceleration of intellectual and cultural development, which also influenced our present culture.[73]

So profile orientation appears to be a function of brain laterality, not direction of reading, suggest Gross and Bernstein. Nevertheless, it is not possible to reach such a conclusion before further experiments are done considering subjects literate in right-to-left scripts. When a face is fixated centrally, the half of the face in the left visual

[71] Skoyles 1998.
[72] McManus and Humphrey 1973.
[73] Hufschmidt 1980.

field is processed by the right hemisphere. As stated by the neurologists C. Gilbert and P. Bakan, face recognition is a right hemisphere function and, when right-handed people look at the two halves of a front view of a face, the half of the face in the left visual field looks much more "like the person" than the other half.[74] Thus the tendency for portraits to locate profiles in the left visual field presumably reflects the fact that facial information would be perceived more readily and accurately by the majority of people (i.e., right-handers). Similarly, as shown in figure 46, it is the expression on the half of the face in the left visual field that usually determines the right-handed viewer's impression of it.[75] Although the faces are enantiomorphic[76], right-handers tend to see the lower face happier than the upper one, whereas the reverse is true of left-handers.

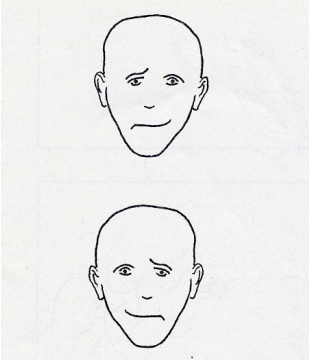

Figure 46

Stare at the nose of each face. Which looks happier? J.Jaynes found that most right-handers choose the bottom face with the smile in their left visual field, presumably because the smiling side is processed by the right hemisphere on central fixation.[77]

In contrast to profile orientation, other aspects of visual anisotropy appear to reflect cultural conventions. Wölfflin suggested that individuals typically enter a picture at the left foreground and proceed along a specified path or "glance curve" into the depth of the picture and over to its right-hand side.[78] He points out how this direction scan lends an aesthetic dimension of movement in graphic art. Movement from left to right in a painting is perceived as easier and faster, while movement from right to left is slower and perceived as having to overcome resistance. The former signals attack or approach; the latter signals withdrawal. In addition, the diagonal "/ " is often associated with ascent and triumph, while " \ " is associated with descent and defeat. Wölfflin believed that the left-to-right glance curve represented a fundamental aesthetic vector. However, the glance curve in Oriental art appears to be in the opposite direction, as I have already shown earlier in this article with some examples

[74] Gilbert and Bakan 1973.

[75] Gross and Bronstein 1978, p. 35.

[76] *Enantiomorphs* is the mathematical term for two things which have contrary shapes. Also the term *incongruent counterparts* (objects that are perfectly similar in shape except for being mirror images of each other, such as left and right human hands) is widely used in the scientific literature instead of *enantiomorphs*. Inmanuel Kant was the first great thinker to point out the philosophical significance of such objects. He called them *counterparts* because they are similar in nearly every way, *incongruent* because, despite their similarity, one could never be put in the place of other. Further reading: Van Cleve J and Frederick RE, *The Philosophy of Right and Left. Incongruent Counterparts and the Nature of Space,* Canada, 1991.

[77] From Jaynes 2000, p.120.

[78] Gross and Bornstein 1978, p. 36.

of Iranian paintings and engravings. Thus the direction of the glance curve in both painting and theatre (as we have pointed out above) appears to be a cultural convention, presumably related to the direction of reading, and we believe that the same is true for photography. The form of this path is best represented by the curve shown in figures 47a and 47b. Figure 47b shows the curve as seen from above; figure 47a shows it as seen in perspective. It begins in the left foreground, penetrates towards the depth, then turns over towards the right.[79]

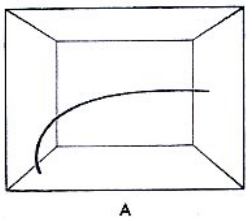

Figure 47a

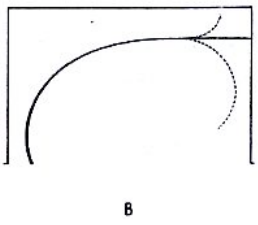

Figure 47b

Gaffron states that to follow the glance curve seems to be our natural way of viewing - so natural, in fact, that the process remains unconscious and we become aware of it only by its effects, which cause the above mentioned phenomenal changes on reversal.[80] But, as Gross and Bornstein suggest, the term "glance curve" may be a misnomer, since studies of eyes movements across both Eastern and Western pictures do not reveal glance curves in either direction.[81] Rather such studies suggest that the eye roams over a picture in an arbitrary manner, only stopping to rest on salient features. The glance curve may be some kind of covert cognitive scanning with its direction set by reading habits. Or, alternatively, it may reflect a cultural organizing principle implicit in graphic art.[82] The results of a recent study made by the neurologists W. H. Zangemeister, K. Sherman and L. Stark[83] seem to demonstrate that those classical studies' conclusions were, indeed, wrong. Scanpaths, the repetitive sequences of saccadic eye movements, occurred when subjects viewed slide projections of both realistic and abstract art, a result that contrasts with previous theories that suggested that the eye moves freely over a picture in an arbitrary manner. As stated by this group of researchers in the conclusion of their paper, the eye movement experiments reported here of subjects looking at abstracts paintings have shown that abstract images are viewed by the same top-down, perceptual-cognitive processes that drive active looking or scanpaths in viewing realistic paintings, scenes and objects.[84]

In sum, it seems that the glance curve theory is not accepted, since it contradicts the results found with recent eye scanning experiments done by neuropsychologists. Asymmetries of the painting and/or photographic space do arise from asymmetries of the brain and from cultural conventions. One artistic asymmetry that appears to be universal is profile orientation. It has been demonstrated that in the majority of

[79] Gaffron 1950, p. 317.
[80] Gaffron 1950, p. 317.
[81] Buswell 1935; Noton and Stara 1971; Yarbus 1967.
[82] Gross and Bornstein 1978, p. 35.
[83] Zangemeister 1995.
[84] Zangemeister 1995, p. 1023.

Western paintings the face is shown in the leftward direction. A replica of McManus experiment should be undertaken with paintings done by artists literate in a right-to-left script language.

1.5. Reading habits versus aesthetic preferences: a neurological approach

In the previous sections, I have made an historical survey of the perspective of art historians towards the left-right phenomenon. Next to this, I made an introduction to the main contributions of neurologists to the possible relation of left-handedness with leftwards scripts and also about the phenomenon of mirror writing. Now I will present a historical survey of the positioning of neurologists towards the more concrete topic of reading habits and aesthetic preferences, which links the two relevant fields for this research: art history and neuroscience.

There is a large corpus of literature on the asymmetrical placing of the preference, in the West, for the centre of gravity to the right of the centre. This literature, as we shall see shortly, has a great deal of discussion about why the basic spatial asymmetry occurs in addition to the now rather discredited idea of a glance curve. There are some fundamental studies related to this topic whose conclusions I will introduce chronologically and that are relevant for my own study, since they support my visual laterality hypothesis. From the middle of the 1970s onwards this topic became a main issue for scholars in the field of neurology and nowadays it remains an important topic in the field. Much has been achieved and demonstrated, but there are still several obscure points that deserve further study.

Research has demonstrated that there is a significant effect of reading habits on aesthetic preference, with left-to-right readers showing a preference for stimuli with a rightward directionality while right-to-left readers preferred stimuli with a leftward directionality. These findings raise the question of an interaction between cultural factors and cerebral dominance, as we have already pointed out before. For the cerebral dominance part, one pioneer, the American neurologist Jerre Levy on the field of lateral dominance and aesthetical preference, supports the hypothesis that lateral specialization of the cerebral hemispheres affects preferences for one of two mirror symmetric pictures. As stated in the discussion of that paper, while preferred choices of one group of right-handers predict choices of another group of right-handers, the predictive validity for a group of left-handers is essentially zero. Slightly over 40% of sinistrals prefer mirror versions of pictures opposite to the choice of the dextrals.[85] These observations are similar to those of neurologists Swartz & Hewitt who found a very small, but significant, majority of right-handers preferred the original versions of famous paintings as compared with their mirror images, while left-handers did not.[86] Later on, another article was published on this topic by the neurologists Marily Freimuth and Seymour Wapner that contributed to perceptual and aesthetic theory by demonstrating that two factors influence the evaluation of paintings: sequence of figures and exposure time (meaning here, how long the viewer is observing the figure). It concluded that asymmetrical factors are predominantly operative in perception and aesthetic judgments made after brief observations. These asymmetries influence evaluations only for paintings with dominant directional properties measured by lateral organization. With longer exposure time (and this is

[85] Levy 1976, p. 436.
[86] Swartz & Hewitt 1970, p. 991.

relevant for my study) other cognitive factors (e.g. conceptual, symbolic analyses) become increasingly influential.[87] So, cultural conventions became only a factor of importance after longer exposure time. They found that pictures with implied motion from left-to-right are preferred to those with implied motion from right-to-left. Further in this line of research, the American neuropsychologist J. Graham Beaumont, argued as a conclusion of an experimental observation that lateral asymmetry in preferred picture arrangements is not the result of a counterbalancing of content against perceptual bias, but a consequence of gaze being directed to informative content on the right, leaving more of the secondary content within the left visual field and associated with attentional bias or processes of the right hemisphere.[88] He further concluded that it is therefore the operation of neuropsychological processes related to the peripheral elements of the visual array, those outside central vision, which best explain the association between aesthetic preferences and features of lateral neuropsychological dominance.[89]

In the same year, an article about the subjective balance in pictures was published by the neurologists I.C. McManus, D. Edmodson and J. Rodger, that showed that when pictures used for the experiment showed large differences in balance point, subjects showed smaller differences, unrelated to handedness or eye-dominance[90], a conclusion which provides no support for the position of Levy (introduced above). Further, the neurologists Marie T. Banich, Wendy Heller and Jerre Levy, taking into consideration Freimuth and Wapner's study, suggested that the preference of slides with apparent motion from right-to-left deserved comment. After pursuing their experiment, they were able to conclude that: first, it appears that left-to-right scanning habits induced by reading do not induce preference for asymmetry of motion in their slides, because right-handers preferred slides with right-to-left motion and because the orientation preference of left-handers was unrelated to asymmetry of motion; second, that their findings differ from those of Freimuth and Wapner, who found that preferred slides were judged to have relative motion from left-to-right.[91] They point out, however, that in Freimuth and Wapner's study, the slides did not have a significant asymmetry of content, implying with this that it may be that right-to-left motion is only preferred where there is a significant asymmetry of content. It has also been reported by Beaumont (unpublished data) that subjects preferred pictures of horses when they were jumping towards the center of the picture. If the horse was placed to the right of center it was preferred when jumping to the left; conversely, if the horse was placed to the left of center, it was preferred when jumping to the right.[92]

As we have already seen, observers often prefer orientation of a stimulus over its mirror image and this preference, as stated by neurologists S. Christman and K. Pinger, for left-to-right directionality may represent a fairly deep and pervasive aspect of mental representations and processes.[93] The neurologists Chatterjee, Maher and Heilman reported that when normal subjects are asked to draw stick figures depicting the thematic roles of agent and patient, they exhibited a consistent bias to place the agent on the left and the patient on the right, thus displaying a left-to-right pattern of

[87] Freimuth & Wapner 1979, 70, p. 218.
[88] Beaumont 1985, p. 103.
[89] Beaumont 1985, p. 112.
[90] Mc Manus et al 1985, 76, p. 311.
[91] Banich et al. 1989, p. 193.
[92] Banich et al. 1989, p. 194.
[93] Christman & Pinger 1997.

causality.[94] Further, Christman and Pinger state that, in the same way, there is evidence that scanning patterns in visual search proceed rightward from fixation.[95] Finally, saccadic latency is less for left-to-right movements than for right-to-left.

Collectively, these findings are suggestive of a deep, underlying preference for left-to-right directionality in both perceptual and motor processes. Nevertheless, as stated by Christman and Pinger, an unresolved question concerns the relation between the aforementioned directional biases and the left-to-right scanning involved in reading. That is, do the aforementioned preferences for left-to-right directionality simply reflect the influence of learned preferences arising from left-to-right reading habits, or is there some more fundamental directional bias that underlies all of these phenomena? They finish their reflection stating that future research involving multiple tasks and/or subjects who read right-to-left language will be necessary to address this issue.[96] This is, indeed, extremely interesting for my research. One of the fundamental studies done at the beginning of the present decade is the one by neurologists Sylvie Chokron and Maria de Agostini.[97] The aim of that study was to determine the extent to which aesthetic preference, previously attributed to cerebral dominance, may be determined by reading habits. In order to achieve that, they submitted left-to-right (French) and right-to-left (Israeli) readers to a visual aesthetic preference task. Subjects were presented pairs of object pictures: one with a left-to-right directionality and the other with right-to-left directionality. As they stated in their discussion, the main finding of the present experiment is an effect of reading habits on aesthetic preference, with subjects preferring the pictures possessing the same directionality as their reading habits.[98] Therefore, reading habits are able to influence visual preferences and even the way we mentally represent the world. Only three years later, an article about this topic was published by the neurologists Jacqueline Fagard and Riadh Dahmen.[99] They compared the influences of reading and writing habits on the asymmetry of space perception and the directional tendencies of French and Tunisian right-handers, aged 5, 7 and, 9 years. By comparing two groups of children who use the opposite direction for writing, before and after being taught to read in school, they evaluated the impact of writing direction on these asymmetries. In their conclusion, they state that basic influences appear to be similar in young children with differing reading and writing habits, which becomes obvious after some practice in writing, overrides these more basic influences. When the two influences are compatible (as when left-right writing favours the pre-existing leftward bias and the left-to-right hand bias), the bias appears stronger and earlier. When the two types of influence are opposed (with right-left writing), there is less and sometimes no bias. The lack of a bias in the Tunisian children on two of the three tasks might also reflect the influence of learning French.[100]

This unclear topic has been addressed in this decade remarkably by a group of neurologists from the American University of Beirut (Lebanon). There are some classic studies[101] on this topic of reading habits that are important to read. This group

[94] See: Chatterjee et al. 1995.
[95] Christman & Pinger 1997, p. 174.
[96] Christman & Pinger 1997, p. 174.
[97] Chokron & De Agostini 2000.
[98] Chokron & De Agostini 2000, p. 48.
[99] Fagard & Dahmen 2003.
[100] Fargard & Dahmen 2003, p. 50.
[101] See: Dreman, S.B., "Directionality Trends as a Function of Handedness and of Reading and Writing Habits", in *American Journal of Psychology*, *87* (1), 1974, pp. 247-254; Bryden, M.P.,

of researchers advocates the need to acknowledge script as a variable when examining hemispheric asymmetries when employing non-linguistic stimuli, as its influence has been demonstrated by their different experiments including right-to-left script users. The neurologists Robin L. Heath, Aida Rouhana and Dana Abi Ghanem, from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon, have performed two research experiments whose results were published in two different papers in 2005.[102] In the first experiment they selected three groups of subjects: white Americans, bidirectional readers and Arabic readers. They used the asymmetric chimeric faces test (I introduced it in the previous section, page 18) and they found that readers of right-to-left scripts showed a mixed or weak rightward bias in judgments of facial affect which supports again the influence of habitual scanning direction to intersect with laterality.[103] The second experiment was also done with the same three groups of subjects as in the first one, plus one more group of illiterates. Their findings showed that biases in aesthetic preference were influenced by script direction and pictorial dimensions. In a laterally balanced composition, participants preferred to begin their scan with the object representing Interest and terminate with the object representing Weight, the direction being determined by the script. In an unbalanced composition, participants tended to fixate on content, whether Interest or Weight, and move in a direction consistent with the script.[104] Nowadays, according to the results of my investigation, there are at the moment two groups of scholars working on direction of script and aesthetic preferences or perception: Dr. J. Vaid at Texas A & M and her colleagues are working with Urdu script (also right to left). She was doing work with drawing the profiles of human heads. Steve Christman at the University of Toledo is also researching aesthetics and reading direction.

In sum, all the previous studies constitute a solid theoretical basis that supports my visual laterality hypothesis. A large amount of research in the field of neuropsychology has demonstrated that there is a significant effect of reading habits on aesthetic preference, with left-to-right readers showing a preference for stimuli with a rightward directionality while right-to-left readers preferred stimuli with a leftward directionality. Nevertheless, in order to fully probe the validity of my hypothesis, an experiment should be made to collect objective data that could be replicated by any research team that would undertake the same experiment.

"Left-Right Differences in Tachistoscopic Recognition: Direccional Scanning or Cerebral Dominance?", in *Perceptual and Motor Skills,* 1966, 23, pp. 1127-1134; Ghent Braine, Lila, "Asymmetries of Pattern Perception Observed in Israelis", in *Neuropsicologia,* 1968, Vol. 6, pp. 73-88; Blount, Patricia, Colmes, Janet & Rodger, Hill, "On the Ability to Discriminate Original from Mirror-Image Reproductions of Works of Art", in *Perception,* 1975, Vol. 4, pp. 385-389; Kugelmass, S. & Lieblich, A., "Impact of Learning to Read on Directionality in Perception: a Further Cross-Cultural Analysis", in *Hum. Dev.* 22, 1979, pp. 406-415;

[102] Heath et al. 2005. Heath et al 2005 B.

[103] It must be noted that the same conclusions were already achieved with an experiment made 25 years ago by the neurologists Joytsna Vaid and Maharaj Singh. Perceptions of happy facial affect from asymmetric composite faces presented in free vision were compared in four groups: left-to-right readers (Hindi), right-to-left readers (Arabic and Urdu), left-to-right and right-to-left readers (Hindi/Urdu) and illiterates (Hindi/Urdu). The leftward bias was present in a significant larger proportion of Hindi than Urdu or Arabic readers. These results are taken to reflect an interaction between a cerebral laterality effect and a directional scanning effect in facial affect judgement. See: Vaid, J. & Singh, M., "Asymmetries in the Perception of Facial Affect: Is There an Influence of Reading Habits?", in *Neuropsychologia*, Vol. 27, No. 10, 1989, pp. 1277-1287.

[104] Heath et al. 2005, p. 399.

As a conclusion to the research done for this chapter, I can state that the direction of the script is directly related to the composition of works of art. Therefore, the direction of writing is one of the cultural components that constitute a photograph. There is a tendency in nineteenth-century Iranian photographers to produce mirror like images of those produced by their Western colleagues. This tendency has been proven to be consistent in the three groups of composition that I have analyzed throughout the chapter. The state of the discourse in the field in neurology is, nowadays, still full of unanswered questions and we will have to wait and see how it will develop with time, to test if we can profit from future findings to be able to explain the visual laterality phenomenon. Different groups of neurologists have concluded, after pursuing statistical experiments, that not only the direction of writing but also the right hemisphere involvement in the leftward direction of eye movements and the left visual fields are important and play a role in mirror-writing and, therefore, on the visual laterality phenomenon. Leading scholars in the field of neuroscience advocate the need to acknowledge script as a variable when examining hemispheric asymmetries, as its influence has been demonstrated by their different experiments including right-to-left script users. The last studies point to the fact that there is an interaction between cultural factors (reading habits) and cerebral dominance when considering the visual laterality hypothesis. The fact that those studies acknowledge the script as a variable in perceptual lateral asymmetries gives a solid theoretical support to my hypothesis from a neuroscientific approach.

In the following chapters I will extend the process of analysis of images to find other cultural components involved in the process of producing a photograph.

2. THE WRITTEN IMAGE: TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY

> **"**Texts were invented in the second millennium BC in order to take the magic out of images, even if their inventors may not have been aware of this; the photograph, the first technical image, was invented in the nineteenth century in order to put texts back under a magic spell, even if its inventors may not have been aware of this. The invention of the photograph is a historical event as equally decisive as the invention of writing. With writing, history in the narrower sense begins as a struggle against idolatry. With photography, "post-history" begins a struggle against textolatry"
>
> Vilém Flusser[105]

The usage of text/ calligraphy in the Persian painting tradition seems to have a great impact on nineteenth-century Iranian photography. However, the relation of this particular phenomenon to photography is somehow more ambiguous than the laterality factor. It needs to be explored as to what end the photographer has used the inscription around the studio photographs, if they are used just as a decorative purpose, or just as plain text to provide some information (where the text is devoid of any stylistic components) or the text bears some symbolic, or hidden hints, or a combination of any of the above. For this purpose a careful reading of the text, its meaning as well as its style analysis, its symbolic significance, or its literary references, both within the pictorial and the photographic space, is a must that I will emphasis on in this chapter. Towards this end, I will categorize the photographs selected for this chapter according to three different parameters: by the degree of elaboration of the script; by the content or meaning of the text; and by the way in which the text has been implemented in the photographic space.

2.1. Persian calligraphy and its use in Persian painting tradition

The Persian word for calligraphy is *khosh-nevesí,* literally "beautiful writing". Calligraphy, out of all the arts, could be considered one of the most typical expressions of the Islamic spirit. The Qur'an itself has stressed the importance of writing several times. For example, in the earliest Sura[106], 96/3-4, God is described as the Almighty Who "taught man with the Pen" and in Sura 68 the oath begins: "*Nun!* And by the Pen….". The idea of writing, as stated by the scholar in Islamic culture Annemarie Schimmel, is found everywhere in the Holy Book: 'the Qur'an is pre-eternally written on a well-preserved tablet (Sura 85/21-22)'.[107] Writing was, thus, considered to be of divine origin and the letters were considered the only worthy

[105] Flusser 2000, p. 19.
[106] Sura is one of the 114 sections into which the Qur'an is divided. Suras are subdivided into ayat, "verses". Muslims believe that these suras were given to the last of Allah's prophets, Mohammad. Mohammad is said to have built on and perfected the teachings of Abraham, Moses and Jesus.
[107] Schimmel 1970, p. 1.

carriers of holyscriptures and divine revelation. As stated by Schimmel, every human fate has been written since pre-eternity, and its unchangeability is expressed in the Prophetic tradition *qad jaffa'l-qalam* "The Pen has already dried up".[108] As Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations professor Franz Rosenthal points out: "Sacredness became a characteristic element in writing".[109] The sixteenth-century Iranian artist and critic Qadi Ahmad suggests the remarkable importance that calligraphy held within the Muslim world: "Through the *qalam* (pen) existence receives God's orders, From Him the candle of the *qalam* receives its light. The *qalam* is a cypress in the garden of knowledge, The shadow of its order is spread over dust".[110] Most studies of Islamic calligraphy have concentrated on historical questions. The remarkable work of Nabia Abbot, Anne Marie Schimmel, Martin Lings, Yasin Safadi, and Sheila Blair among others, has created an important body of information concerning certain aspects of this phenomenon. *Islamic Inscriptions* by Blair is am important book as referent for the present chapter since it is a rigorous study of the content and function of inscriptions found from monumental arquitecture to all kinds of portable objects.[111]

Focusing on the particular case of Iran, all different kinds of Persian art are characterized by abstraction, sensuous tendencies, harmony and more than anything else by its decorative tendency. In Persian calligraphy this is especially true. In the words of the Iranian scholar Ehsan Yarshater, 'the obscuring of the main function of an art through indulgence in secondary aspects of it, finds a further example in the development of Persian calligraphy. In its latest stages, the artist is so much enthralled by his elaboration of curves, circles, and flowing lines, that communication of the written word becomes almost an alien thought to him. It is a thrilling experience to look at late cursive Persian calligraphy, with its extraordinary grace and its intricate artistry, but to try to read it is quite a different matter. One might just as well try to solve a recondite riddle'.[112]

Calligraphy was practised not only by professional calligraphers, but also by princes and nobles. Calligraphers were an essential requirement for any self-respecting court, both to instruct the prince's children in the principles of the art and to produce manuscripts for the royal library. The calligrapher's pen was made out of reed and was, according to strict rules, considered to be the "cypress in the garden of knowledge". Calligraphy was regarded as an expression of man's spiritual state; for "purity of writing proceeds from purity of heart" (Sultan Ali Mashhadi). Therefore the calligrapher had to undergo observances similar to those of a holy person.[113] As stated by Schimmel, from the very beginning, two different types of writing seem to have existed side by side. The normal type for correspondence, as found in papyri, was cursive and a forerunner to the later so-called *Naskh*-style: round and easy to write. For copying the Holy Book, however, another type is used, called *Kufi,* though there should be a distinction between Meccan, Medinan and Kufic proper.[114] The Islamic calligraphy scholar Nabia Abbott prefers to speak here of "Qur'anic scripts" in contrast to the normal hand.[115]

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[108] Schimmel 1970, p. 1.
[109] Rosenthal 1961, p. 17.
[110] Ahmad 1959.
[111] See: Abbott 1939; Lings 1977; Safadi 1978; Schimmel 1970; Schimmel 1984; Blair 1998 and 2006.
[112] Yarshater 1962, p. 69.
[113] Kianush k, 2000: http://www.art-arena.com/cal.htm
[114] Schimmel 1970, p. 5.
[115] Abbott 1941, p. 69 ff.

In this chapter, I am concerned with the cursive scripts, mostly used in Persian miniature painting and also in photography, as we shall see later on. My aim is to analyze the use of text in the photograph as an ornamental and symbolic element and to explore how this use is related to calligraphy, miniature and Qajar painting. I will introduce some examples of Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture that will aid the understanding of some nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photographs. Two of the topics that I am more concerned with are calligraphic inscriptions within the photographic space and the kinds of cursive scripts used in the photograph. In order to achieve this, a brief introduction to the different types of script styles is required.

As the Islamic art historian Yasin Hamid Safadi states, the "six styles" known in Arabic as *al-Aqlam al-Sittah,* and in Persian and Turkish as *Shis Qalam,* are cursive scripts which were first raised to the status of major scripts when they were subjected to strict calligraphic rules by Ibn Muqlah (d. 940)[116]. Persian calligraphers excelled in all styles of writing. The names of these classical cursive scripts are *Thuluth, Naskhi, Muhaqqaq, Rayhani, Tawqi* and *Riqa.* Four more scripts, *Ghubar, Tumar, Tal'iq and Nastal'iq* were later added to Ibn Muqlah's repertoire. *Taliq* and *Nastal'iq* are known as the hanging scripts. As stated by the art historian in Islamic art Sheila Blair, of all scripts, by far the most important in this period was *Nastal'iq*. She further writes 'that Habiballah Faza'ili, the modern expert on Persian calligraphy, has estimated that 75 percent of everything written in Persian from the mid-fifteenth century was done in this script.'[117] We will see shortly that in Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture, *Thuluth* and *Nastal'iq* are the most widely used. In some nineteenth-century Iranian photographs, we can see the use of *Naskhi* script as well. Therefore, I will just focus on these three scripts and will introduce them briefly, as Safadi has defined them.

Thuluth was first formulated in the seventh-century during the Umayyad caliphate, but did not develop fully until the late ninth-century. The name means "a third" – whether because of the proportion of straight lines and curves, or because the script was a third of the size of another popular contemporary script, the *Tumar*, is not known.[118] *Thuluth* is still considered the most important of all the ornamental scripts. The first image (fig. 48) is a good example of *Thuluth* being a detail in the hand of the most famous Ottoman calligraphers, Shaykh Hamdullah, who was active in Istanbul in the early sixteenth-century. The text is part of an anecdote and translates: "A wise man was asked: What is humility?"

Naskhi was one of the earliest cursive scripts to evolve, but it gained popularity only after it had been redesigned by Ibn Muqlah in the tenth century. It was transformed by Ibn al-Bawwab and others into an elegant script worthy of the Qur'an, and ever since, more Qur'ans have been written in *Naskhi* than in any other script. It appealed particularly to the ordinary man because it was relatively easy to read and write. It is nearly always written with short horizontal stems, and with almost equal vertical depth above and below the medial line. The curves are full and deep, the uprights straight and vertical, the words generally well spaced.[119] The second image (fig. 49) is an example of *Naskhi* Qur'an copied also by the Ottoman calligrapher Shaykh Hamdullah al-Amasini in early sixteenth-century.

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[116] Safadi 1978, p. 52.
[117] Blair 2006, p. 418. See: Habiballah Faza'ili, *Atlas-I khatt: tahqiq dar khattut-I islami*, Tehran, 1971, pp 448-50; Hanaway and Spooner 1995, p. 3.
[118] Safadi 1978, p. 52.
[119] Safadi 1978, p. 62.

During the sixteenth-century in Persia, an important calligraphic development took place with the formulation of the *Ta'liq* (hanging) script from *Riqa'* and *Tawqi'*. The third image (fig. 50) is a composite page of Persian text in large ornamental *Tal'iq* and small *Nastal'iq* by Shah Mahmud al-Nishaburi in the early sixteenth-century. From *Ta'liq,* an even lighter and more elegant form evolved, known as *Nasta'liq*. The next image (fig. 51) presents a page from an album in *Nasta'liq* written by Mir`Ali during his stay in Bukhara in the middle sixteenth-century. Derived from both *Ta'liq* and *Nasta'liq* was *Shikasteh* (broken form), which is characterized by an exaggerated density in the super structured letters.[120] The next image presents a page in densely structured *Shikasteh* (fig. 52) written by Nawab Murid Khan in India, probably during the seventeenth century.

A challenging example of the use of the *Thuluth* and *Nasta'liq* scripts in Qajar painting is found in the painting of *Prince Mohammad Ali Mirza* by Jafar (fig. 53). The *Thuluth* script is used in the upper right-hand corner in two cartouches: *Navvab Muhammad`Ali Mirza (Shah) Qajar, fi shahr-i Rajab al-murajjab, Sanah 1236.* The *Nasta'liq* script is seen under the throne: *Raqam-i Jafar, chakir-i Dawlat.* The upper inscription reveals the name of the sitter as Fath 'Ali Shah's eldest son, Muhammad 'Ali Mirza, better known as Dawlatshah, whereas the lower one informs us of the name of the artist. Dawlatshah is sitting on a jewelled chair throne in full regalia, in keeping with the iconography and details of court costume. The portrait fully resembles those of Fath 'Ali Shah himself so much that easily the viewer can be confused with the real identity of the poseur. In this painting it is especially interesting the way, the calligraphic inscriptions identifying both sitter and painter, have been placed and how. The symbol of the Lion and the Sun belonged to the regal attire and the imperial image of the Persian court in the Qajar Era. In this painting, both symbols have been integrated in quite an interesting way: the throne has lion-shaped arms and the Sun symbol (*Khorshid Khanum* in Persian) has been placed in the upper right corner above the cartouche where the name of the sitter is written. The paraphernalia in the way the identity of the sitter is revealed contrasts with the sober way in which the identity of the painter is revealed through a plane calligraphic inscription on the floor, right under the sitter's throne, as if it was his carpet!

After going through much material, I found that most of the Qajar portraits analyzed use the *Thuluth* script for the name of the person depicted and the *Nasta'liq* script for the name of the artist. Since *Thuluth* is considered the most important of all ornamental scripts, the fact that the painter uses this script to identify the poseur may have some hierarchical reasons: he may have used this special script to show clearly the social status of the person depicted, shah or prince. Also, the way in which the painter arranges this kind of calligraphic ornament and information in the pictorial space is very interesting and seems to follow some kind of aesthetic and/or symbolic rules. The name of the person depicted, in this case always Shahs, princes and noblemen of lesser rank, is placed in the upper part of the painting, whereas the name of the painter finds its place in the lower corners of the painting. This seems to follow the rules of the Qajar courts as far as social status and hierarchy are concerned. The clearest example found is the one that I have just analyzed. Therefore, this seems to point out to the fact that, both the choice of the kind of script used and where it has been placed within the pictorial space reveal the social status of the poseur and the relationship established between the painter and his patron.

[120] Safadi 1978, p. 84.

As the Islamic art historian Oleg Grabar states, 'most written sources mention the painters after the calligraphers, whose prestige was certainly far greater. The classification of styles of writing has to be founded upon a definable and measurable starting point: the lozenge or square created by the application of the tip of the pen to the paper. Everything else follows more or less automatically. Except for very rare cases of strongly geometrical compositions, paintings do not generally lend themselves to the clear and rigid analysis that applies to calligraphy'.[121] Grabar, who is Professor Emeritus at the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and who is one of the leading scholars in the field of Iranian art history, continues further on to state that 'the relationship between calligraphy and painting may also be approached in a different way. The art of writing is characterized by order, precision and attention to detail, learned only by constant exercise. Parts of these exercises are preserved for later periods, especially that of the Ottoman'.[122] 'The presumed rigidity of this training might have conditioned the painters and may explain, amongst other things, the precision of their drawing, the clearly expressed contours, the clearly separated and always lively colours and the readability of all that is shown. On a slightly less technical level, calligraphic art required the artist to relinquish his own impulses and accept the rules already laid down for composition and design'.[123] Nevertheless, note how in all Qajar portrait paintings, painting and calligraphy are mixed together perfectly, always the calligraphic inscriptions being placed in the best possible places and with a harmonic understanding of space and design. This would be also a very important characteristic of text and photography, as we shall see with clear examples. Calligraphy flows through the painting and finds its proper place to become a perfectly harmonious work of art. This constitutes something like a poetic marriage of opposite elements (imagery and abstract calligraphic forms), in both visual art mediums, photography and painting. The calligraphic inscription not only does not disturb the perception of the final image, it also adds an extremely aesthetic dimension to it.

As stated by Blair, 'in the Islamic lands the earlier tradition of monumental writing not only continued but expanded. Inscriptions occur on objects of all media and materials, from the humblest, such as oil lamps and other unglazed ceramics, to the finest and most expensive, including rock crystals and jades. Inscriptions were added even in media where the technical limitations of the material make it extremely difficult to incorporate a running text, like silk textiles…. The demand for inscribed textiles was so great, however, that silk weavers in the Islamic countries soon overcame the confines of the technique, and by the tenth century Persian weavers had figured out how to incorporate long bands of inscriptions on their elaborated patterned silks woven on draw looms'.[124] With this long and well-rooted tradition of placing inscriptions in every possible object, regardless of size or function, it is not striking that nineteenth-century Iranian photographers also used inscriptions within the photographic space.

[121] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[122] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[123] Grabar 2001, p. 131.
[124] Blair 1998, p. 4.

2.2. On signatures and portraits

In this section I will study the function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian paintings. I want to explore whether the calligraphic texts used within the pictorial space have merely an informative function or, perhaps in parallel, an aesthetic purpose in the final composition of the image.

According to one of the pioneers in the study of Qajar painting, the Islamic art historian S.J. Falk, 'the main occupation of the Persian artist until the eighteenth century was the illustration of manuscripts, a practice restricted by its nature to small-scale work where the qualities of detail and brilliant colour were of greater significance than texture or shading. This was based upon a code of representation, where to record directly from observation would have been the exception. The colours are clear and pure, the figures and objects finely drawn, but above all, a kind of idealization pervades the entire picture: one knows that the ground cannot have been pink, nor the sky gold, nor the vestments that variety of mineral colours'.[125] But, to be sure, the overall effect makes sense within its context, and this way of depicting brings out the illustrative potential of a picture, while at the same time creating an enjoyable painting. In contrast to this, the introduction of oils as a novel medium for making a large picture fit to hang on a wall was to produce some interesting results, as we shall see with some clear examples.

As the Islamic art historian and former curatorial assistant in the Islamic Department of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, Eleonor Sims states, 'until about the end of the fifteenth century, Iranian figural painting in any medium, at any period, is virtually always anonymous; authentically signed paintings are very rare. In the late fifteenth century a change is noticeable: some painters begin to sign their pictures, just as scribes had done for some centuries in the Muslim world. When the image was intended to represent a particular person, he (or she) may have even been identified by a written inscription. In other words, starting late in the fifteenth century, paintings begin to be qualified, modulated, explained and- most significantly- specified by words: a fact that represents a profound change in certain norms with which literary Iranian society viewed itself'.[126] I will analyze several miniature paintings and later Qajar portrait paintings from the fifteenth century onwards in order to explore the possibility of illustrating with examples Sim's statement. Sims further argues that one of the fundamental differences between the signatures and identifications on Ottoman and Mughal painting and those of Iranian paintings, is that both the former are relatively straightforward, functioning primarily as documentation. 'Signatures on Timurid paintings, if they are present at all, are usually couched in a formula of humility and self-deprecation, such as "the least of the slaves", the slave in question then declining to name himself. Or they may be "disguised" within the context of an architectural inscription, or further hidden in a written or a visual pun. The most famous, and still most bedevilling, of punning signatures on Iranian works of art is associated with the name of the seventeenth-century painter Muhammad Zaman ibn Hajji Yusuf: *ya sahib al-zaman,* "O Lord of the Age". The reading of others, such as *ya sadiq al-vad,* "O Thou who art True", often depends as much upon a knowledge of contemporary literature, history and religious practices as upon visual connoisseurship.'[127]

[125] Falk 1972, p. 9.
[126] Sims 2002, p. 58.
[127] Sims 2002, p. 59.

It is only from about 1490 that Iranian artists' names begin to be mentioned by contemporary writers. 'Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Amir Ruh Allah Mirak *Naqqash* are the two from whose hands we also have signed paintings. The names of a dozen others stand quite alone, unconnected by documentation to any pictures they may have painted. At this time, too, the sense of a distinct personal style operating within a given set of stylistic conventions begins to be more prevalent'.[128]

Sims further states that 'a better contemporary match between words and images occurs in another later Timurid phenomenon, the "portrait" that truly attempts to render some aspect of the physical reality of the person portrayed. Just as artists' signatures begin to become more frequent on paintings towards the end of the fifteenth century, painted portraits of important contemporary figures also begin to appear'.[129] This is the material that is relevant for my research since it is my intention to look for parallels or differences in the way in which artists use different media, meaning here painting or photography. This relationship between text and painting and the way calligraphy is used in the pictorial work of art is also apparent in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography. There is, indeed, a remarkable parallel between Persian painting tradition and early Iranian photography.

Together with Falk and Sims, the Iranian art historian Layla Diba belongs to the group of researchers, which pioneered in the field of Qajar painting studies. This field has been historically neglected both by Western and Iranian scholars due probably to the extraordinary interest that most art historians working on the Iranian painting tradition have had on miniature painting. Diba states that 'there is considerable evidence that images, in myriad forms, sizes, and media, played an integral role in the nineteenth-century exercise of power, both at home and abroad. In addition, numerous intriguing references document the widespread use of figurative imagery in popular and court milieus throughout Qajar society for both religious and secular purposes.'[130] Qajar royal paintings are life-size figurative imagery and are much less known and studied by Western scholars than miniatures. Indeed, the study of Persian painting became synonymous with the study of 'miniatures', as illustrations of handwritten manuscripts came to be known. The Islamic art historian B.W. Robinson's statement, "Persia in the nineteenth century was a land of paintings, as never before or since,"[131] may be taken literally. Images in the form of mural paintings were embedded in the fabric of structures located throughout the country. They included portraits; historical, literary and mythological themes; genre, hunting, and battle scenes; and religious subjects. In fact, the entire Persian domain functioned as a lavish stage for images designed to convey the pageantry and splendour of Qajar rule.[132] Members of the Qajar ruling elite soon realized that lithograph portraits and photographs of royal personages and the nobility were capable of serving the same purpose that life-size paintings had fulfilled earlier and began to regard lithographic portraits as a more efficient and economical vehicle for disseminating the royal image. Thus, Royal Qajar painting came to influence the photographic portrait.

As Falk states, the character of Qajar paintings is largely embodied in the subjects that were chosen. These must have always depended upon the choice made by the patron and, understandably, one of the first interests of a patron is himself, a fact amply illustrated by the greatest patron of Qajar painting, Fath`Ali Shah (1798-

[128] Sims 2002, p. 59.
[129] Sims, 2002, p. 59.
[130] Diba 1999, p. 31.
[131] Robinson 1964, p. 96.
[132] Diba 1999, p. 31.

1834).[133] The other main subject, girls, apparently resulted from a desire for decoration that would suit the purpose of the buildings for which the paintings were intended. These girls have various roles: some played a drum, a long-necked mandolin or a guitar, they sometimes danced, etc. We shall discuss this topic further in the next chapters. I have made a more formal analysis of some Persian miniature paintings to illustrate my observations concerning the use of calligraphy in the image. What do those calligraphic inscriptions mean and which functions do they serve?

Men in painting

Sultan-Hussayn Mirza Bayqara, Herat, ca. 1500 (fig. 54), presents an unfinished drawing with a background of solid colour, probably added when it was mounted in the Bahram Mirza Album.[134] The sultan sits on his heels, one hand holding a *mandil,* or handkerchief, on his knee and the other in front of him with a forefinger extended in a speaking gesture; he wears a turban with a plume of black heron feathers. The inscriptions in *Nasta'liq* script are placed in "boxes" at each side of the painting and identify the subject as Sultan-Husayn (left top cartouche) as well as the artist- Ustad Behzad (top right cartouche). In the bottom centre cartouche, we can read in *Naskh* script written with golden colour and placed very much hidden inside a very intricate eslami structure,[135] "Show to me the answer to my letter". These three inscriptions (artist, sitter and text) read, in Farsi:

سمت راست بعمل استاد بهزاد
سمت چپ صورت سلطان حسین میرزا
پایین جواب نامه بنمای از فغفور

In *Seated figure holding a cup,* mid seventeenth century (fig. 55), we can read an inscription in *Nasta'liq* script, a beautiful piece of poetry by one of the great masters of Persian poetry, Omar Khayyam.[136] The poem is a very popular one among Iranians:[137]

هنگام سپیده دم خروس سحری
دانی که چرا همی کند نوحه گری
حکیم عمر خیام

The translation into English reads: "Do you know why the rooster sings a dirge at dawn?". In the frame on the miniature and divided into twelve cartouches, we can read another poem whose author I have not managed to identify:

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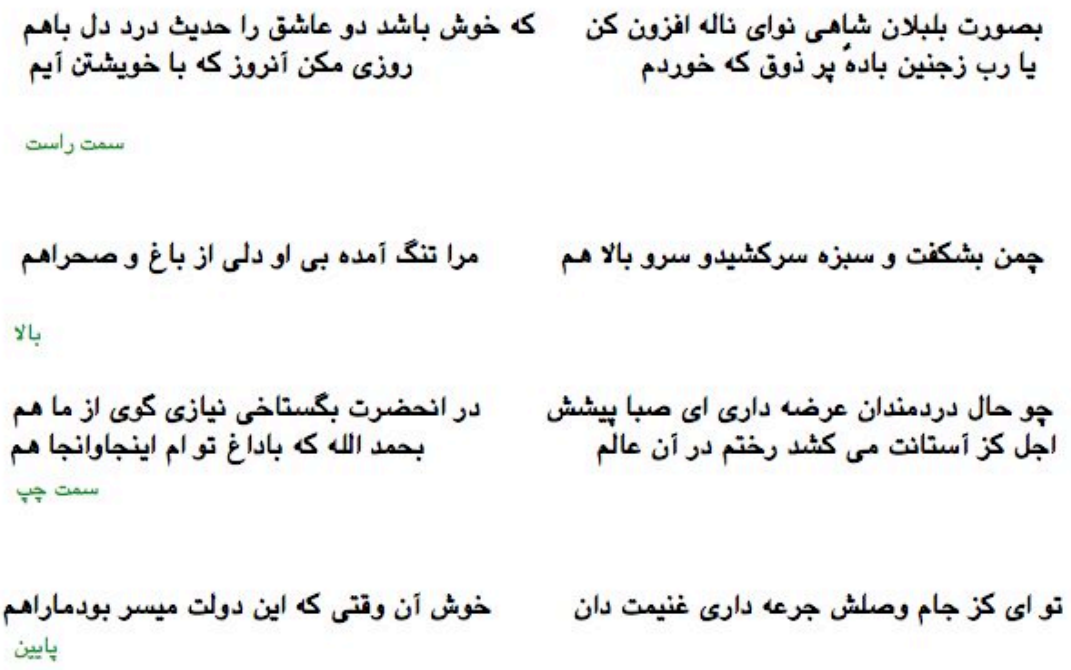
[133] Falk 1972, p. 10.
[134] Sims 2002, p. 270.
[135] Eslami structure is a typical ornamental and decorative background used in Persian minaiture painting.
[136] Omar Khayyam (born in Nishapur, 1048-1122) was a Persian poet, mathematician, philosopher and astronomer. He is believed to have written about thousand four-line verses or quatrains (*rubaai's).* In the English speaking world, he was introduced through *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,* translated by Edgard Fitzgerald (1809-1883).
[137] Transliteration: *Hengahmeye sepide dam, khurus-e sahari* (top cartouche) / *dani ke chera hami konad nohegari* (bottom cartouche).



Riza-Abbasi painting a picture of a European man, signed by Mu'in Musavvar (fig. 56), who started painting it in 1635 and finished it in 1673, is a well-known work by the leading exponent of the "Isfahan style" in the second half of the seventeenth century. Mu'in's master, the celebrated artist Riza 'Abbasi is shown absorbed in his work with deep serenity. Even though Mu'in has tried to give volume in the treatment of the figure, the titled angle of books and papers conforms to the flatness and stylization of the Persian manuscript mode of painting. The inscription has been written in *Shikasteh* script, and it is quite difficult to read and decipher.[138] The vivid drawing is annotated with long, chatty, and very detailed inscriptions that tell us when, why, and under what circumstances the drawing was made. In this image, we can notice already a change of attitude towards pictorial art and the role of calligraphic inscriptions within its space. This interest in recounting ephemeral was unknown in previous centuries and, therefore, indicates a change of conception in the role of the text within the pictorial space.

The same kind of analysis has been made with Qajar portraits. This group of images have in common that the calligraphic inscriptions give us the same kind of information: person depicted and author. In *Fath`Ali Shah Seated,* 1798 and attributed to Mirza Baba[139] (fig. 57), the inscription in the upper right corner, in *Thuluth* script, reads "Fath`Ali Shah Sultan". The inscriptions in figure 58 are in *Nasta'liq* script on the right-hand corner ("Fath`Ali Shah al-Sultan-i Qajar, 1234) and on the Sun throne reads: "Is this the throne of that of the world-possessing Fath 'Ali Shah/ Or the

[138] Transliteration: *Shahib-i ghufran va rizvan ara makan, marhum-i maghfur ustadam Riza Musavvar `Abbas, mashhur bih Riza `Abbasi-Ashgar bih tarikh-i shahr shaval bih iqbal sanah 1044 Abrang gardideh bud kih dar shahr-i Zu'lqa'deh al-Haram mazkur az dar fana bih `alam baqa rihlat nimud, in sabih ba`d az chihil sal dar chihardahum-i shahr Ramazan al-Mubarak sanah 1804 hasb farmudeh farzandi-yi Muhammad Nasira bih itman risanideh, Mu'in Mussavar, Ghafar 'anhu zunubahu.*

[139] Diba 1999, p. 180.

heavenly thrown of the Lord of the Throne/This elephant of a king, golden-crowned/In whose justice the world is in need."[140] In the stairs to the throne is written these are the stairs to the golden crown king/the king whose justice the world deserves. *Portrait of Fath `Ali Shah Seated,* signed by Mihr `Ali, 1813-14 (fig. 59), presents inscriptions in two different scripts. In *Thuluth* script, to the right of the crown in a cartouche ("*al-Sultan Fath `Ali Shah Qajar*") and in *Nasta'liq* script below in a cartouche, the text reads: "This is the likeness of the King of kings, who is exalted to the Heavens/ Fath `Ali Shah is the ocean of the world".[141] And also in *Nasta'liq* script in the lower left corner ("Raqam-i kamtarin ghulam Mihr `Ali sanah 1229", i.e., "the work of the humble slave Mihr`Ali in the year 1229). In *Fath `Ali Shah in Armor,* signed by Mihr `Ali, 1814-15 (fig. 60), we can see in the upper right corner, in *Nasta'liq* script ("Sultan Fath `Ali Shah Qajar") and in the lower left we can read: "the work of the merest slave Mihr `Ali in the year 1229".[142] Again, this way of placing the inscription identifying sitter and painter, and the kind of script used for that, seems to be very consistent. The last is one of the many examples that can be found of Qajar portraits whose inscription I will analyze, *Apotheosis of Nasir al-Din Shah,* signed by Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari in 1858 (fig. 61). In black *shikasteh-Nasta'liq* script, in the upper cartouche, the inscription identifies both the person depicted (Naser od-Din Shah) and the painter (Abul Hassan Ghaffari Naqqashbashi).[143] This painting exhibits a completely different style from all the previous ones. The image of the ruler conveys his cautious modernity, luxurious tastes and an autocratic but melancholy character. A comparison with the paintings of the rulers executed 10 years earlier, illuminates the new style of painting forged by Abul Hassan (ca. 1814-1866) and his contemporaries: the outmoded hieratic pose, the emphasis on jewelled decoration and weaponry have been discarded in favour of an informal seated pose set against a plain ground. Especially interesting is the contrast of this painting and the portraits of Fath `Ali Shah that I have just analyzed. In common they have, though, that once more the name and the titles of the person depicted are in the upper position and the name of the artist in a lower place. Nevertheless, the prestige of the painter's signature seems to have raised its category in contrast with earlier decades, since its place it is not so difficult to locate and, as far as the way of presenting the signature, it even has the same treatment as the calligraphy used to identify the king, since both are placed within the same decorative cartouche.

It is striking that consistently among the paintings analyzed for this section, the inscription that reveals the identity of the sitter has been placed on the top right corner (quite close to the poseur's head) and the inscription that reveals the identity of the painter, his signature, has been placed exactly on the opposite side of the diagonal, meaning on the bottom left, in the furthest possible place to the first inscription! In some cases it is so hidden that it is very difficult to locate: under the chair where the poseur is sitting, next to the edge of the carpet. Further, the majority of the Qajar

[140] Transliteration: *In takht dara-yi-jahan-i Fath`Ali Shah ast/ ya 'arsh ast ba an malik-i `arsh-ahang; In pileh-i shah-i zarrintaj ast/shani kih jahan bi-`adl muhtaj ast.*

[141] Transliteration: *Timsal-i shahanshah-i falakjah ast in, ya tal'at mihr u paykar mah ast in / Timsal nigar kih har kih binad fuyad, darya-yi jahan-i Fath `Ali Shah ast in.*

[142] Transliteration: *raqam-i kamtarin ghulam Mihr `Ali fi sanah 1230.*

[143] Transliteration: *Al-Sultan, ibn al-Sultan, ibn al-Sultan Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar Khaldallah mulkuhu* and in the lower cartouche *raqam-i Abu'l Hassan Ghaffari Naqqashbashi; tahir fi shahr rajab, marhama sanah 1275.*

portraits analyzed for this chapter use the *Thuluth* script for the name of the person depicted and the *Nasta'liq* script for the name of the artist. Since *Thuluth* is considered the most important of all ornamental scripts, the fact that the painter uses this script to identify the sitter may have the intention to show the social status of the person depicted. Also, the way in which the painter arranges this kind of calligraphic ornament and information in the pictorial space is very interesting and seems to follow some kind of aesthetic and/or symbolic rules. The name of the person depicted, in this case always Shahs, princes and noblemen of lesser rank, is placed in the upper part of the painting, whereas the name of the painter finds its place in the lower corners of the painting. This seems to follow also the rules of the Qajar courts as far as social status and hierarchy are concerned. So both the type of script and where it is placed seems to be directly linked with hierarchical rules of Qajar society.

My hypothesis regarding the inconspicuous places where the signatures are normally placed in Qajar paintings is supported by Blair's research on signatures in all kinds of objects. She states that in bowls, for example, 'they are often found on the plain outside or under the foot. On a box, they can come between the straps or under the clasp.' She significantly states further that 'the inconspicuous location was deliberately chosen to show the humility of the artist, particularly in contrast to the lofty patron or recipient, whose name is usually inscribed earlier or in amore prominent place and often written in a different script.'[144] This is what I have concluded in the previous paragraph after analysing an important number of Qajar paintings. Blair continues that 'tiles show the same juxtaposition, and the artist is typically identified as " a low slave" in contrast to his lordly patron. This identification should be taken metaphorically: these workers were not necessarily slaves and were often quite well known individuals who worked in high-status professions'.[145] She states that 'signatures on objects are typically introduced by the word *'amal* ("work of"). The verb *sana'a* was used for higher-status or more meticulous work. Artisans who signed their names with *'amal* on metal bowls and other objects, for example, used *sana'a* on astrolabes and other scientific instruments'.[146] It would be interesting to explore if this holds true for nineteenth century Iranian photography and I will devote sometime to this topic in the next section.

Related to the spatial arrangement of the signature/inscription within the pictorial and photographic space, I would like to reflect about the visual laterality phenomenon analyzed in chapter one of this book. I wonder if the fact that the inscription is placed at the right or at the left of the sitter may be related somehow with the direction of the script, with the phenomenon of visual laterality. Consistently, the main text that reveals the identity of the person depicted in Qajar paintings is placed at the top right corner next to the sitter's face (see figures 53, 57, 58, 59 and 60). This agrees with the basic rules of Iranian graphic design that place the text on the right side of the page and the photograph on the left side: following the direction of reading in Farsi, the text is found first and the image that illustrates the text in a second place, at the left of the text. An accessible way to see this difference on graphic design due to the visual laterality phenomenon is to visit Iranian websites that have a Persian version and an English one: we can immediately notice this mirror-like composition between the two possibilities. See, as an interesting example, the website of the Golestan

[144] Blair 1998, p. 100.
[145] Blair 1998, p. 100.
[146] Blair 1998, p. 101.

Palace where the biggest photo-archive of nineteenth-century Iranian photography is hosted: http://www.golestanpalace.ir

Women in painting

I would like to introduce a couple of examples of typical images of women. Most of the portraits painted by artists during the Qajar era were men. Nevertheless, there are enough portraits of women to deserve a close analysis of them and focus on the use of calligraphic inscriptions in these artworks. After a period of research on this topic, I have found that, interestingly enough, no calligraphic inscriptions are to be found in those works of art except, and not always, the signature of the painter. Since they are idealizations of women, no further identification is found, and this seems to be the reason for the lack of further calligraphic inscriptions. Therefore, the treatment of the portraits of women and those of men is different when it comes to the presence and meaning of calligraphic inscriptions. In *A Tipsy Lady* (fig. 62), we can read in the *Nasta'liq* script in the right center: *raqam-i kamtarin Mirza Babah, sanah 1215*, which identifies Mirza Baba as the author of the painting and the date in which it was done. The woman is an unknown and idealized one, sitting on a typical Persian carpet and shows all the beauty attributes of Qajar women: her moon-faced visage, joined eyebrows, bow-shaped eyes and flower-bud mouth. In her right hand, she holds an apple and in her left a glass of wine. Both of these attributes act as visual poetic metaphors since, in Persian culture, apples represent love and fruitfulness and wine represents earthly and divine love. In *A woman balancing on a knife* (fig. 63), the acrobat's body is flattened against the picture plane and performing some impossible acrobatic exercises that challenge all the laws of gravity and perspective. There is just one inscription placed between the face of the woman and the watermelon, the word *Khatun,* which means dame or lady. Here, as in many others such pictures that I have analyzed, not even the signature of the painter is to be found. This probably has to do with the fact that these artworks were executed merely for decorative purposes and that they were not considered as important and valuable as those of the men that mostly depicted Shahs and princes. For a painter, this kind of women portraits probably would not give any status, whereas the fact that he would paint a portrait of the ruler of the dynasty would immediately give him some extra value. This is especially interesting because it illustrates my point that women in Qajar portraiture were mere abstractions, idealizations and therefore, in any case are not or can not be identified. This is a remarkable difference again in contrast to the portraits of men that present calligraphic inscriptions with good factual information about both the person depicted and the painter.

Illumination

There is an interesting aspect of the use of calligraphy in photography that has also been inherited from its use in Persian miniature painting: illumination. The sumptuous and meticulous art of illumination of manuscript title pages, headings, verse division, dedications, borders and book covers, had its origin, in the words of the Islamic art historian Norah Titley, 'in the simple decoration of vowel marks and ornamentation of the circles separating the verses of Qur'ans written in the seventh and eight centuries by Arab calligraphers. By the fourteenth century, ornate palmettes and sunbursts decorated the borders of Qur'ans and the arabesque, which developed from an origin as simple as that of the border decorations had become indivisible from

Islamic decoration'.[147] The Persian illuminators with their strong sense of pattern and colour and their creativity in design brought the art of illumination to a peak. As in miniature painting, every period and every atelier had its distinctive personal style of manuscript illumination. The designs of the illuminator were not confined to the text pages but were also incorporated in details within miniatures, on textiles, tents, architecture, carpets and also in photographs, as we shall see shortly in the next section with a couple of clear examples of the many to be found. Lotus petal and flower design (fig. 64) from a page in Ferdawsi's *Shahnama* is a beautiful example of illumination in the Persian Inju style of Shiraz and is dated from the middle fourteenth century. The next example is a whirling arabesque design and illuminated page decoration (fig. 65) from *Ghara'ib al-sighar* by Nava'i made around 1520-30. We will see later on the similitude between these examples of illumination of pages of albums or books and those made in nineteenth-century Iranian photographs.

In sum, I can state that the function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian painting has, as we have seen through the analysis of the works selected, not only an aesthetic but also an informative purpose: to state clearly who the person depicted is, and the author of the particular work of art. Sometimes, other kinds of inscriptions can be found, like pieces of poetry or philosophical thoughts, but those are not as widely used as the previous ones, at least in Qajar portraiture. I can also conclude that it seems that different authors follow the same pattern of implementing calligraphic inscriptions within the pictorial space, in both content and composition. Hierarchy in Iranian society has a great influence on the unique usage of these informative texts (i.e. to inscribe the name of the subject above the name of author.) This is all valid if we take into consideration male portraiture, but in the case of female portraiture, the situation is different since these artworks are in most of the cases unsigned and without any other kind of calligraphic inscriptions.

2.3. Text and Nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography

The main research focus of this section is whether the use, function and meaning of text or calligraphic inscriptions in nineteenth-century Iranian photography have been inherited from the Persian painting tradition. To establish parallels and differences is the aim of this chapter. Other questions that I pose in this section are whether the use of text in the photographic space is something unique, and therefore, defining of nineteenth-century Iranian photography or if it is to be found in nineteenth-century photography in other countries. I will consider also Japanese and Indian photography to explore the use of text or calligraphy in the nineteenth-century in these two countries.

It is fundamental to remark here that when analyzing the text that is present in nineteenth-century Iranian photography, we find several degrees of elaboration in those inscriptions to the point that we have to be very cautious on how we use the words calligraphy or text, since in some cases the inscription is just a plane text that can not be named calligraphy due to the lack of elaboration and the lack of decorative purpose, even if it has been written neatly or beautifully. As pointed out by Just Jan Witkam, photography was mainly an elite pastime. It is in that context that we must appreciate and judge the neat or beautiful texts on the photographs. In some cases,

[147] Titley 1983, p. 229.

there is no practical purpose and therefore is easier to see this as calligraphy.[148] Nevertheless, what is common to all of them, and this is especially relevant for my research, is that they are implemented in the photographic space in a similar way as they were implemented in the Persian miniatures and, even more clearly, as in the Qajar portrait paintings. There are three possible ways of classifying the photographs selected for this chapter: by the grade of elaboration of the script; by the content and meaning of the inscription; and by the way in which the inscription has been implemented on the photographic space. For the first classification, I have defined three groups: plain text, calligraphy-like and illumination. For the second classification I have defined two groups: factual information and poetic or symbolic meaning. The third classification includes two groups: framed/organized and freely written on the photographic space. The first and second classifications can also be identified and related to either decorative purpose (which includes both calligraphy-like and symbolic or poetic meaning) or practical purpose (which includes both text and factual information).

Elaboration of the script and, content and meaning of the inscriptions

In this sub-section I will focus only on the analysis of the elaboration of the script and the content and meaning of the inscriptions written in the photographs. The meaning of the inscriptions can be categorized in two groups: factual information and/or symbolic or philosophical meaning. All the photographs selected here present, in different degrees, both types of information. In the next sub-section I will analyze further the photographs selected here from the spatial arrangement of text within the photographic space.

As the photo historian Rod Slemmons states, 'meaning goes into pictures and has to be re-extracted through close observation. It goes into words and must be released by reading. But it is actually more complicated than it seems on the surface'. The game of placing words and images in the same perceptual space, either combined in the picture, or side-by-side, is not an easy one to play, as many have discovered. 'Firstly, the artists have to keep track of four phenomena, not just the apparent two: 1. The words have accepted, coded meanings and contexts that affect what we see. The same image next to two texts is seen in two different ways. 2. The words invoke mental images that might conflict with what we see. Language was invented to abbreviate and explicate the visual world - words enter our brains on the back of images. 3. All photographs have meanings based on context, which may alter our engagement with them. 4. Images invoke words in the mind of the viewer. Images enter the brain on the backs of words. The choreography of image/word/word/image is not easy to score. The more difficult it is, the more possibilities there are for qualifying or clarifying the larger world that is their source'.[149] If we are taking in consideration photographs with calligraphic inscriptions that we cannot decipher, then that choreography image/word/word/image is even more difficult to analyze. But, interestingly, since we can not know the meaning of the words used, the text will not affect the perception of the photograph as a whole in the same way that would happen among Iranian observers.

[148] E-mail exchange in February 2009. I am gratefull to Just Jan Witkam for his remarks concerning this matter and for his valuable help with the translation of several of the Persian and Arabic texts written in the photographs selected for this chapter.

[149] Slemmons 2004, pp. 43-44.

As the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser points out, 'images are not "denotative" (unambiguous) complexes of symbols (like numbers, for example), but "connotative" (ambiguous) complexes of symbols: they provide space for interpretation'.[150] Interpretation on a layering basis, especially in the case of inscriptions within the photographic space considered here, since the inscriptions are illegible for non-Iranian observers.

The first group that I have established taking in consideration the elaboration of the script, **plain text,** is formed by images like the portrait of Crown Prince Mozaffar od-Din Shah (fig. 66), and we can see an interesting use of text in the photographic space. There is an inscription in *Nasta'liq* script that is placed on four cartouches on each corner of the image. It is a piece of poetry about the young man depicted in this portrait:

این عکس که در قالب دولت جان است
تمثال ولیعهدفلک دربان است

سلطان جهان مظفرالدین شاه
کامروز خدیو خطه ایران است

Interestingly, the inscription is a poem about the sitter that gives us at the same time factual information about him. The poem has been written for this photograph and this is an interesting element that we can find in other photographs selected for this chapter: a poem is written about the personality and/or ocupation of the sitter and it is placed on the photographic surface. The inscription reads (free translation): "This portrait that is so real/ the face of this prince takes care of the whole world." (upper two cartouches) and further "The King of the world is Mozzafer al-Din Shah/ that is also now *Javid* (the immortal) of the country Iran" (bottom two cartouches). This portrait presents the typical pose used by court photographers and we can find many examples like this one when going through the albums of Naser od-Din Shah and his family hosted at Palace Golestan Library. The pose has been inherited from the Qajar portrait paintings of Fath 'Ali Shah and Naser od-Din Shah, as I will show in the chapter of this book devoted to the pose in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait studio photography.

The next photograph (fig. 67) depicts the poet Habib Gha'ani. The inscription, in *Nasta'liq* script, in the upper left corner, is one of his poems of autobiographical content:

قاآنی ارزپافتاده است عیب نیست
نیکوقویست دست توانا خدای او
قاآنی از گنه چوهراسد بروزحشر
بی پرسش بخلد بر نداروای تو

[150] Flusser 2000, p. 8.

The text speaks about the weaknesses, lack of energy and fears of the poet and how they are taken in care by God. The photograph belongs to the private collector Iraj Afshar and was given to his father, Mahmoud Afshar, as a present from Mohamad Hasane Madudel Sulta Azi in 1961 as it is written on the back of the photograph. Again, the cushion behind the sitter's back, the water-pipe, the traditional kneeling pose and the inscription result in an image that resembles fully that of miniature studios.

In Shiraz there was a family of photographers that was very active in the last part of nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth-centuries. The first photographer of this family was Mirza Hassan 'Akkasbashi (1853-1916), who was active from around 1870. An interesting photograph taken by this photographer presents a group of poets from Shiraz (fig. 68) in 1894. Under and above each of them, we can read their names: four are kneeling in the traditional pose and eight are sitting on chairs. This photograph is also arranged in miniature style with inscriptions placed in cartouches above and under the image. In plain and clear *Nasta'liq* script we can read a poem:

تبارک الله از این صفحه خجسته مثال
بغیر من همه نیکو نهاد و نیک خصال
زابتدای یمین تا با نتهای شمال
مسخرش بود ازفیض ایزد متعال

که کلک صنع نبندد دگر چنین تمثال
بپیش کرسی یک رسته کرده اند فعود
یکی نثار بود بخردی که بر نظمش
دگر حکیم سخندان جناب آسوده

نیاورند دگر چار مام وهفت پدر
خلاف من همه روشندل وشگرف سکال
نثار کردن جان است افضل الاعمال
که سوده بر قدمش هر لبیب روی سوال

یکی چو این ده و دوازدگان بفضل و کمال
تو را که ناظر این مجلسی اگریابد
دگر بصیرخردمند حضرت قدسی
دگر منم یک از ایشان که فرصتم خوانند

خبر زجمله القاب این بزرگ...
که هست پایه قدرش برون ز...
ولی به درگهشان کمتر از...

دگر وحیدزمان فیلسوف دانشور
..ون زچارتن دیگرارنشان خواهی
دگر فریفته دل شیفته که چون خورشید

صدیق نیک سیر صادق عدیم مثال
بدان وتیره وترتیب گویمت فی الحال
بود رفیع مکان بر سپهر عزو جلال

دگرنوا که بود تاج فرق اهل سخن
مظفر است نخستین که اندراین میدان
دگرفصیحی آن شاعر فصیح زبان

بجای نظم فشاند گهر زدرج مقال
مظفر است بهر کوست خصم زشت فعال
که در محامدو اوصاف اوست ناطقه لال

دگر شعاع که طبع بلند روشن اوست
دگرحسن که بطبع حسان و خط حسن
به حرف اول القابشان فرارجبی

چو آفتاب فروزان...
کسش نبوده نظیر...
که تا بدانی تاریخ...

حرزه العبد العاصی علی نقی الشیرازی فی شهر الله الاعظم رمضان المبارک سنه ۱۳۱۵

The Iranian poet Abdol-Asi Ali Naghi al-Shirazi is the author of this poem, whose content is a poetic exhaltation of the good personal qualities of each one of the poets depicted in the photograph. The Iranian photo historian and collector Mansour Sane states in his book *Photography in Shiraz* that a photographer without some knowledge of poetry would be incomplete just in the same way a poet ignorant of images would be.[151] Iran is a land of poets and visual artists, and often both literary and artistic traditions are so intermingled that it is impossible to understand them properly as independent artistic expressions. Therefore, the aforementioned statement makes sense in this context, but it does not in a Western context. Poetry is deeply rooted in the Iranian culture's subconscious and impregnates with its metaphoric language all the visual arts. As stated by Blair, 'Persian verses became standard decoration on many other types of art made in Iran from the twelfth century onwards…. Some verses were taken from well-known poets, others were compossed for the occasion''.[152] This agrees fully with the conclusion that I have reached after analyzing the text on several photographs. Persian verses were also used in textiles and even in carpets, like the Arbadil carpets, one hosted at the Victorian and Albert Museum in London and the other hosted at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.[153] Blair presents an interesting example of a silk dated to the twelfth century in the Boston

[151] Sane 1991, p.2.
[152] Blair 1998, p. 98.
[153] For a detailed study of the Ardabil carpets and the inscriptions written on them, see: Stead, Rexford, *The Ardabil Carpets,* The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, 1974.

Museum of Fine Arts that has a Persian quatrain. 'Composed for the occasion, the verse is written in the first person as though the textile were speaking.' She states further that 'Persian poetry became increasingly popular on objects from the fifteenth century onwards. The Persian verses were drawn from a wide repertory of classical poets, such as Daqiqi, Firdawsi, Sa'adi and Hafiz. The text also refers to the objects on which they are inscribed'.[154] The photograph that I am analyzing now is a good example of Sane's statement. In this case, a poem has been especially written about the persons depicted on the photograph and it is, therefore, also a good example to illustrate Blair's statements introduced above. The Iranian writer Mina Zandi Siegel has translated the poem for me and it reads:

Praise The Lord of this land, a byword for goodness,
All graceful and good natured, aside from myself.
From the far South to the extreme North,
All has been under His Majesty's rule, by the grace of the Most High.

No artist's brush could create such an image,
A row of servants have humbled themselves near his throne.
One is Nessar,[155] with the wisdom of his poetry.
The other, His Honor Asoudeh,[156] the most learned and lucid,

The Four Mothers and Seven Fathers[157] will not bring about such again
But for me, all luminous of heart and profound of thought.
Sacrificing ones life being the most virtuous action,
So all the learned rubbed their imploring faces on his feet.

"If you, oh viewer of this group, would know
Those ten and twelve wise and learned,
One is the discerning, wise, His Excellency Ghodsi,
The other is myself, who is called Forsat.

Knowledge of all the titles of this great...
The fame of the basis of his grandeur exceeds all limit ,...
But yet in his court is less than...

One is Vahid-Zaman, philosopher and scholar.
And if you want to know the names of the other four,
One is Shifteh,[158] his heart seduced, radiant as sun,.....

The other, true Sadeq, of good past, beyond compare,
Whose manner and education I shall tell you at length.
My he hold the loftiest place in Mighty and Glorious Heaven.

Another is Nava, who is a crown to groups of the cultured,
The prime victor in this field.

---

[154] Blair 1998, p. 98.
[155] Sacrifice
[156] Calm
[157] The earth and the heavens.
[158] Love-struck

Another is Fassihi,[159] that poet of eloquent tongue,

Who strikes such verses that gems emerge from his speech.
He vanquishes every evil-doing foe,
For jeweled speech is in of his meritorious qualities.

Another one is Sho'a,[160] whose lofty nature is brilliant,
Another Hasan,[161] the elegant calligrapher,
With matching nature peerless in time.

Like the blazing sun...
No one is their peer,...
History stands a witness...

Composed by Abdol-Asi Ali Naghi al-Shirazi, in Great God's month of Ramezan, on the blessed date of 1315".

Another interesting photograph with inscriptions is a portrait of Khojatoleslam Balmuslemin Agha-ye Seyyed Mohammad Mojtahed Tabatabai (fig. 69), an important figure of the Constitutional Period.[162]

فطوغراف
بندکان حضرت مستطاب
ابو الارامل والایتام رکن
الملة والدین حجة الاسلم والمسلمین
اقای اقا میرزا سید محمد مجتهد
طباطبائی ذابت
افاضاته

The inscription is written in clear *Thuluth* script and starts with a phrase that reads (in a very symbolic way) that the person depicted is a servant of the Mahdi (the 12th Imam for the Shia).[163] The exact translation of the text written in this photograph was

[159] Eloquent
[160] Effulgence
[161] Handsome
[162] The Iranian Constitutional Revolution took place between 1905 and 1911. The Revolution led to the establishment of a parliament in Iran. The system of constitucional monarchy created by the decree of Mozzafar-al-Din Shah that was established in Persia as a result of the Revolution ultimately came to an end in 1925 with the dissolution of the Qajar Dynasty and the ascensión of Reza Shah Pahlavi to the throne. Tabatabata'i was a very important religiuos constitutionalist. Further reading: *History of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Tarikhe Mashrute-ye Iran,* Volume I, translated into English by Evan Siegel, Mazda Publications, Costa Mesa, California, 2006.
[163] According to Twelver Shi'as Imam Hujjat al-Mahdi (or Hujjat ibn Hasan ibn Ali) is the twelfth Imam and the Mahdi, the ultimate savior of humankind. Other Shi'a schools adhere to different Imam successions and do not, along with Sunnís, consider ibn-Al-Hasan the Mahdi. Shi'as believe that for several reasons, God concealed the twelfth and current Shi'a Imam, al-Mahdi, from humankind. They believe that al-Mahdi will reappear when the World has fallen into chaos and war and that he will bring justice and peace to the World. Further reading: Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy,* translated by Liadain Sherrard and Philip Sherrard, Kegan Paul Internacional, 1993.

done by Witkam is: Photograph/ (of) the most excellent person/ father of widows and orphans, pillar/ of the state and the religion, proof of Islam and the muslims/ Mr. Agha Mirza Sayyid Muhammad the *mugtahid/* Tabatabai, may increase/ his overflowings.[164]

The second group, **calligraphy-like,** is composed by images such as the one taken by the Iranian photographer Mohhamad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri (fig. 70). It is one of the nineteenth-century Iranian photographs that show in a clearer way the relationship between calligraphy/text, poetry, painting and photography, since it presents several typical Iranian elements inherited from the Persian painting tradition. In the upper part of the photograph we can see three groups of inscriptions, all of them in *Naskhi* script. Here we can appreciate that the script has been written in a much more elaborated way than in the previous examples, with a more noticeable deformation of the letters and with a more free understanding of the space (some words are placed above or under the main line of the inscription). The main inscription is:

خلق میبیند تصویر یکسبر جای
غافلند از یک جهان معنی که در تصویر است

If I analyze the inscriptions in the portrait of this kneeling mullah, then in the right cartouche we can read "photo of Hojjatoleslam" and in the left cartouche "Fazel Sharbiani Edamelboje", i.e. the person depicted in the photograph is being identified, exactly as in the Qajar portraits and in some miniatures, as noted above. The inscription in the upper center is a philosophical poem, a reflection about the importance of the meaning of the image beyond its mere form, its mere outer appearance. The inscription reads (free-translation): „the people see his image/ without noticing the deep meaning that underlies it". Finally, one can read in the lower inscription, also in *Naskhi* script, "the work ofthe photographer Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, taken in the year 1305". Here, interestingly, the word *'amal* has been used to introduce the signature on the photograph, as it is traditionally done on objects, as I have already mentioned before (see page 51). This is an interesting parallel in the way the inscriptions have been placed in all kinds of objects and in photography. Further below, I will introduce other examples. The pose of the man depicted here, the traditional kneeling one inherited from the miniature portraits, together with the paraphernalia (cushions behind the back, the Persian carpet and the *tasbi* that the mullah is holding) result in an image that fully resembles the studies of Persian miniatures. The main inscription is the one that is especially relevant for my research because it has some deep philosophical message, which stresses the difference between form and meaning. As stated by the historian of religion and philosophy Herni Corbin (1903-1978), the duality between *surat* (form) and *ma'ni* (meaning) can be related to the Sufi notion of *zahir,* "the exterior" and *batin,* "the interior", as well as to the Zoroastrian complementary opposition between *menok* and *getik*. Every creature has a double nature: *getik*, the terrestrial, opaque, heavy, and *menok,* the ethereal, transparent, subtle.[165] Further, in words of the scholar Johann Christoph Bürgel, for the mystic spectator, all earthly beauty points to the Divine, and by this very fact all the phenomena of creation transcend themselves, turn into

[164] Words in red means here not well legible.
[165] Corbin 1960, p. 32.

symbols, which by their outward appearance (*zahir,* exterior, form) veil and, at the same time partly unveil, an inner meaning (*batin,* interior, *ma'ni,* meaning), point to a higher layer of existence.[166]

The relationship between onward form and inner essence is treated directly in the writings of the great Iranian poet Ghazali (1059-111) on the nature of beauty. In the words of the Islamic art historian Priscilla Soucek, 'Ghazali discusses several types of beauty and the manner in which they are perceived by the senses in an ascending progression that moves from the beauty of man to that of the creation and finally focuses on how to define God's beauty. The faculty of sight and the related skill of visual imagination are important aspects of this process. The eye is attracted to beauty and takes pleasure from its perception'.[167] In the same way, another great Sufi poet, Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (Konya, 1207-1273), acknowledges the power of images and stresses their inherent limitations. I have looked for books written by Iranian photographers in nineteenth-century, but in the first years after the invention of photography only books written by Western photographers were translated from French or English into Persian. In a later stage, the Iranian photographers started printing their own books written from their own perception of the new medium. A book that is especially interesting for this topic that deals with a philosophical and religious perception of the image, is *Aksieye Hashrye,* a 56 pages book written in the time of Naser od-Din Shah by the photographer Mohammad-devne Ali Maskute al-Molk.[168]

The next photograph (fig. 71) also presents two inscriptions in elaborated *Naskhi* script. The upper one, interestingly enough, is the same poem that was used in figure 70. I found this image in a different book from the one in which the first was found. In this second one, the author of the photograph is not identified by the author of the book or by any inscription in the photograph. But it could be that the photo is also mounted on a frame like the previous one and perhaps the inscription identifying the author is to be found there. In any case, I believe that the maker of this second photograph is the same as that of the first one, Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, not only because he uses the same poem but also because of the subject (full portrait of a mullah) and the way he uses the inscriptions. In the lower inscription we can read "photo of the dead Mirza-ye Sharestani, in 1315 Ghamari", identifying in this way the sitter. The pose of the man depicted is not a traditional one but a typical Victorian sitting pose. The table has been also introduced in the studio and it is covered with a Iranian tablecloth. On top of it we can see several books with the intention to mark the high education level of the mullah depicted. One of the most interesting elements of this photograph is the folded curtain on the right side, an element that was introduced to Qajar portrait painting due to Western influence and later on also in photography, as we can see in this example.

Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri took the next photograph as well (fig. 72), as we can read in the inscription, which is in *Naskhi* script under the feet of the person depicted. The rest of the photograph is framed by one inscription in *Nasta'liq* script just as they are in miniatures. This is especially interesting since the inscriptions have been placed in clouds, exactly like in the illuminations (see fig. 65). In this image, it is

[166] Bürgel 1975, pp. 34-38.
[167] Soucek 2000, p. 102.
[168] I am grateful to Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour for helping me with this matter and for giving me digital copies of this book.

fundamental to be able to see the original, since the image is quite faded away and it may be a photograph that has been painted afterwards, since its appearance is more like a watercolour than a naked photograph. Also it could be a photograph of a typical painting of the period, known as *tasvir-e ghalamí,* made in a very realistic approach to the subject, influenced by the new technique of photography. After a conversation with the Iranian photo historian Mohammad Reza Tahmasbpour in September 2008, it seems that the image is a photograph of a painting, as he stated after seeing the original. In the Golestan Palace Library, there is one album (number 461) with 28 photographs taken by Mohammad Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, which includes this image. The text in Farsi reads (first the inscription on the right side of the image, second on the top of the image, third on the left side and finally the inscription on the bottom):

سمت راست

..... غیر قابل رویت می باشد .....
صورت پذیر گردد اگر فیض دادگر

..... غیر قابل رویت می باشد .....
خیزند جمله از پی تعظیم تو صور

بالا

...ر مملکت گشا امین ملک پادشاه
...یمن دین مصطفی ضیمن رزق خوارها

یگانه صدر محترم مهین امیر محتشم
اتابک شه عجم امین شهریارها

سمت چپ

کاری که این امیر درین روزگار کرد
این روزگار فخر بروز شمار کرد

گویند شد نگین سلیمان شکار دیو
این دیوهای دولت شه را شکار کرد

پایین

صورت جناب صدارت نصاب وزارت مآب امیر لشگروزیر
کشور قوام عظمت واجلال نظام وحشمت اقبال
... معظم وزیر اشرف مغخم اتابک اعظم شخص اول ایران میرزا تقی خان
امیر نظام بااحتشام در سن چهل وپنج سالگی

On the left, upper and right part of this frame, we can read a poem about the sitter, Amir Kabir (d. 1852).[169] In the lower part of this frame, the photographer gives some biographical information about Amir Kabir, with his whole title, and indicates that the photograph was taken when he was 45 years old.

We can see a clear parallel between the way of identifying the person depicted and the author in Iranian paintings and photographs, and that is one of the clearest and most defining Iranian elements of nineteenth-century Iranian photography and it demonstrates an influence of the Iranian painting tradition on the photographic space.
Who wrote the calligraphic inscriptions on the photographs? It could have been a calligrapher or illuminator, or maybe the photographer himself. Tahmasbpour states that, the inscription on the photograph was written by a calligrapher or illuminator.[170] This is, again, an interesting parallel between Persian miniature paintings and photographs, since in the pictorial works the calligraphic inscriptions were also implemented by calligraphers or illuminators. It also shows that some Iranian photographers, like Abdol-Ghassem Nuri, who were more exposed to their own traditions, were working somehow under the guild-like tradition as was done in the ateliers of painters and calligraphers.

The image of an unknown dervish (fig. 73) is interesting for this research. This image shows that the continuation of the tradition of illuminating paintings with poems did find its way into photography. Interestingly, two different kind of scripts have been used: in the inner frame the inscription is written in *Naskhi,* which is the script that was normally used to write Qur'anic verses as it is the case here, and the inscription in the outer frame has been written in *Nastal'iq* script for the inscription in the outer frame. Both inscriptions have been written in a very elaborated way. In the outer frame, a poem about the figure of the dervishes and their philosophy has been written.

Nos. 1-4. Upper outer frame

1 یا حنان

2 خلوتي در سراي دروشان

3 بطلب از خداي دروشان

4 یا منان

Nos. 5-8. Lower outer frame

5 یا دیان

6 در جهان بهر لقمهء باشند

7 پادشاهان كداي دروشان

8 یا سبحان

[169] Amir Kabir was the prime minister of Naser od-Din Shah.
[170] Tahmabspour 2001, p. 28.

Nos. 9-10. Right outer frame

9 ستر لي نيست در جهان حقرا

10 جز دل با صفاي دروشان

Nos. 11-12. Left outer frame

11 سر وجانم فداي انكه بود

12 سر وجانش فداي دروشان

No. 13. Inner frame, right-bottom-left

13 الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذييشفع عنده الا بإذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤديه حفظهما وهو العلى العظيم لا إكراه في الدين

No. 14. Inner frame, top

14 يا علي يا ابليا يا با حسن يا با تراب ادركني

In this case, the photograph seems to have the function to illustrate the text, like happens in the miniatures. The inscription reads (outer frame): Pray for solace in the dervishes' abode / to the God of the dervishes / in the world has Truth no abode / other than in the pure hearts of the dervishes / For the tiniest morsels in this world / must kings beg for the dervishes / my body and soul be sacrified / to him whose body and soul is sacrified to the dervishes.[171] In the inner frame of the photograph, we can read several verses from the Qur'an, precisely the one known as the Throne Verse (2:255 and beginning only of 2:256). The translation by Witkam reads:

2.225: Allah is He besides Whom there is no god, the Everliving, the Self-subsisting by Whom all subsist; slumber does not overtake Him nor sleep; whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth is His; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission? He knows what is before them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases, His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the Most High, the Great.

2.256: There is no compulsion in religion; …. (Throne Verse, in the Shakir translation).

Oh, 'Ali!, oh, Abliya! (=?); oh, Father of Hasan!; oh, Father of Turab! (=?), take me.

As stated by Witkam in the course of an e-mail exchange in February 2008, the Throne Verse is one of the most popular Qur'anic quotations. It is often seen in inscriptions in buildings or on objects (ceramics or the like). He noted that Sheila Blair in the index of her book *Islamic Inscriptions* has a considerable number of references to *sura* 2:255. It is by far the most frequente Qur'anic quotation mentioned by Blair.[172] In the case of the Throne Verse, there is no practical purpose in its use on

[171] Translation taken from Damandan 2004, p. 154.

[172] Blair 1998. Witkam went through the index to find those references: p 69: common on mosques; p 73: part of a limited repertoire of Qur'anic texts on buildings; p 74: Fatimid inscription on walls of Cairo; p 80: on a minaret in Tirmidh; p 137: inscription in wood in Beyshehir; p 139: on the Qala'un mosque in Cairo; p 147: on a walnut chest (to contain a Qur'an); pp. 156-57: on tiles; pp. 195-96; and pp. 213-215: as a Qur'anic used most on objects.

a photograph and therefore is easier to see it as calligraphy than in other cases where the text gives us plain factual information.

Another photograph that also illustrates the mystical meaning of images that I have introduced above while analysing the portrait of the constitutionalist Tabatabatai is a portrait of the Iranian photographer Mirza Mohammad-Rahim Akkasbashi (fig. 74), taken by the Iranian photographer Amir Seyyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hosseini. This image is interesting because we can find two different ways of implementing inscriptions within the photographic space: the first one is the traditional Persian way of using text/calligraphy within the pictorial space, the cursive flowing freely and harmoniously in the space and the second one using one piece of paper to frame the text (notice the Kodak piece of paper where the name of the photographer is written: Amir Seyyed Mohammad Reza Khan al-Hoseini). In the left side of the photograph just above the sitter's elbow we can read a poem written by the photographer himself that again constitutes a mystical reflection about the role and meaning of the image:

غرض نقشی است کز ماباز ماند
که هستی را نمی بینم بقایی
مگر صاحب دلی روزی برحمت
کند در حق اینجانب دعایی

میرزامحمد رحیم عکاسباشی چهره نگار ۱۳۰۶

In this photograph, a free translation of the text written freely within the photographic space is: "the main role of the image is that it keeps memory for us, since life (world, humans) do not last forever". The inscription written in the Kodak paper identifies the photographer who took this image as Amir Seyyed Mohammad Akkasbashi. Interestingly, the signature has been introduced, as in other photographs, by the word *'amal* and this agrees with Blair's statement about the generalized use of this word to introduce signatures on objects. The image has been mastered both in composition and atmosphere. The photograph is also remarkable for the pose/camera and clothes. The clothes are a mixture of Persian traditional clothes that present an elegant design of vest, shirt and belt that contrast with the Western-style coat. The composition is mastered through a triangle formed by the camera (looking leftwards), the chair (looking rightwards) and the head of the sitter. The elegant pose of the photographer together with his interesting face and appearance, complete a magnetic image that has been prepared with great detail and care.

As a conclusion it is important to stress that independently of which kind of information is given in the inscription (factual or interpretative), the language is always poetic. This is probably the most important conclusion of my research on this topic since it establishes a clear link between the use and function of text in painting and photography. Consistently, most of the inscriptions found in nineteenth-century Iranian photographs are poems or have been written on a poetic tone, even if they are not real poems.

The third group, **illumination,** includes images such as figures 75 and 76, that are examples of how the photographs were mounted in frames and how illumination took

place within the photographic space. In the first one we can read, in *Nasta'liq* script, the name of the person depicted: *khanezad dowlat abad-mot'dat Mirza Mehdi Khan nayyeb besarate hareje",* an important political figure in foreign affairs, Mirza Mehdi Khan. Here the text is totally integrated in the decorative cartouche as happens many times in miniatures. In the second one we can read, in *Thuluth* script: *Wali-'ahd, akskhane-ye mobarekeye hazrat-e vala va hana-fada Khanezad Manuchehr Hassan 'Ali Khan Garusi (Amir Nezam)*. In this case, the inscription informs us that the photographer is Manuchehr and the person depicted, 'Ali Khan Garusi. We can easily compare the way of placing and presenting the calligraphic inscriptions in this last photograph and the illuminated page decorations already considered above (see figure 65). We can see that the illuminators also had a role in the final image produced in a photograph and this is again something that has been inherited from the Persian painting tradition and its use of calligraphy. See also figures 70 and 72, since they also present this kind of illumination.

Spatial Organization

If we would classify the photographs by the way in which the inscriptions have been placed on the photographic space (**framed/organized** or **freely written**), figures 66, 68, 72 and 73 would belong to the first group and figures 67, 69, 70, 71 and 74 would belong to the second group. These two ways of implementing text in a photograph have been inherited from the painting tradition, since we find both ways on paintings: compare, for instance, images 54 and 55, in which the text has been placed in boxes, therefore in a framed/organized way with figure 56 or the Qajar paintings, in which the text has been placed within the pictorial space freely and playing with the composition, sometimes in decorative cartouches that contrast with the rigidity of the boxes used in the previous images. There are clear similitudes between the way of placing the text in the photographic space in images 66, 68, 72 and 73, all of them using cartouches or/and boxes to place the text and to frame them like is the case in many Persian miniature paintings. In contrast to this, images 67, 69, 70, 71 and 74 share a way of placing the text freely in the photographic space without the rigidity of boxes or cartouches, playing with the composition of the photograph. Actually, figure 74 is quite remarkable as far as the different way in which two inscriptions have been implemented on the photograph. The first inscription is found in a piece of paper (Kodak) and is, therefore, pre-photographic and is shown IN the photographic space. Whereas the second inscription has been written freely ON the photographic space and is therefore post-photographic. Notice that the text seems to adopt some visual pleasing form, like a smooth-shaped cartouche (see the right and left inscriptions on image 70, the left inscription on image 71 and, especially the text on image 69). These cartouche-like forms remind us of the cartouches in Qajar portrait paintings (see images 53, 57, 58 and 60).[173]

[173] It would be very interesting to explore if the visual laterality phenomenon would affect the way in which the text is placed on the photograph, as I have already suggested while analyzing Qajar portrait paintings, as far as composition is concerned. In order to undertake such a study, I need to gather material like figures 67, 69, 71 and 74, portraits that present calligraphic inscriptions at the right or left of the sitter. Of the four images just mentioned, in three of them the text has been placed at the left of the person depicted and one just at the right, the contrary of what I have found in painting. Is this consistent with graphic design rules or page composition? This topic remains open to further research.

Unlike the Persian art tradition, this use of text within the photographic space in the West is a recent phenomenon. As remarked by Helen Westgeest in the course of a conversation in September 2008, you can put a text in a Japanese sumi-e landscape painting or in a Japanese photography, but if you would write a text in a Western nineteenth-century oil painting it would disturb the effect of the painting. The same goes for Western illusionary photographs: you can add text for a decorative Iranian photograph, but not in a "spatial" Western photograph. She further pointed out to the interesting solution found by the American photographer Robert Frank (see fig. 77), since he managed to place the text within the photographic space without disturbing the final image thanks to the integration of the text within a piece of paper that is part of the photograph already. That piece of paper acts as a frame for the text and, therefore, does not disturb the final reception of the image. It is interesting to compare this last image with the one that I selected for the section on Iranian photography and text (fig. 74) since it also uses this kind of solution but several decades before and next to another way of implementing calligraphy freely on the photographic space!

The relation between image and written text is so well rooted in the cultural subconscious of the Iranian artist that nowadays it is very easy to find such examples in every field of Iranian visual arts. It is, indeed, one of the most important and defining aspects of Iranian contemporary art and it can be found in painting, animation, video-art and photography. In the visual arts, some artists find themselves looking back to their past, in search of inspiration. To be sure, history never repeats itself in the same way, but it rescues from the past old themes and present them in new garb. This applies to Iranian photography as well. The work of the most internationally recognized Iranian photographer and video artist Shirin Neshat is a good example of this. She has lived in New York since 1972 and has dealt with her sense of displacement by trying to disentangle the ideology of Islam through art. The result was "Women of Allah" (1993-97), a photographic series of militant Muslim women that subverts the stereotype and examines the Islamic idea of martyrdom.[174] The verses handwritten on the photographs emphasize Neshat's beliefs (fig. 78). Other Iranian artists, such as the Iranian graphic designer Reza Abedini[175] caught my attention for the use of parts of one Qajar photograph and calligraphic inscriptions mixed in perfect harmony with the image, in the way in which Persian miniatures and calligraphic inscriptions do (fig. 79). His interesting work is a good combination of his creativity in producing personal graphic design and his individual skill in adapting the knowledge and achievements of Iran's artistic heritage, making it new and compelling these days. Even among sculptors there is a current that exemplifies the desire to move calligraphy into the three-dimensional world. Some Iranian artists create sculptural calligraphy, like the pioneer in this field Parvin Tanavoli (fig. 80).[176]

Going back to my corpus of photographs, I must note here that of all material found of women photographic portraits, none of them carried inscriptions. The only examples that I have found, were the private albums that Naser od-Din Shah made

[174] For further reading about the work of Shirin Neshat: Dabashi, Hamid. "The Gun and the Gaze: Shirin Neshat's Photography" and Zaya, Octavio. "Sounds of Desire, Zones of Contention (Islam, Women and The Veil), in *Shirin Neshat, Women of Allah*. Milano, Marco Noire Editore, 1997; Schmidt, Brita/Stammer, Beatrice E. *Shirin Neshat,* Berlin, Steidl Verlag, 2005.

[175] Abedini was awarded with the Prince Claus Award in 2006.

[176] Further reading about this topic in: Blair, Sleila S., "From Traditional Styles to Graphic Design and Calligraphic Art", in *Islamic Calligraphy,* Edinburg University Press, Edinburg, 2006, pp. 589-627.

with photographs of most of his wives and many of his children. They are just informative inscriptions, with no artistic intention at all, that sometimes reveal the name of the woman depicted. Interestingly enough, a Persian word that is easy to find next to several of the photographs is *mord,* which means dead.

Text and Nineteenth-Century Photography in other countries in Asia

I have already suggested at the beginning of this section that it is important to ask if the use of calligraphy in Iranian photography is a particular and defining element of this culture, or if it is also used by other cultures like Chinese or Japanese. Calligraphy is regarded in China and Japan as the supreme artistic achievement. Painting, which uses the same basic materials of brush and ink on paper or occasionally silk, became the sister of calligraphy, while poetry, for its expression is linked inseparably to writing.[177] I have researched, mainly through printed books, nineteenth-century Japanese and Chinese photography, and it seems that the Japanese photographers at least used calligraphic inscriptions within the photographic space.[178] From around 200 Japanese photographs analyzed (taken by Japanese photographers) from the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, I have found a few, like *Quiet Temple in Autumn Woods* (fig. 81) that includes some Japanese calligraphy on the surface of the photograph. The author of this photograph is Urahara Seiho and it was taken in 1926. This kind of image belongs to the ones taken by photographers who discovered the chiaroscuro of the traditional brush-ink tradition.[179] The text is a piece of poetry, written in Kanbun (Chinese script). The use of text or inscriptions in the photographic space may have been inspired by Japanese traditional painting in particular by the ukiyo-e, or wood-prints. The term ukiyo-e, or "pictures of the floating world," refers to a style of genre painting and woodblock printing that appeared in Japan in the seventeenth century and that was practiced until the nineteenth century, more exactly the Edo Era (1603-1868). As the Japanese art historian Tadashi Kobayashi states, the phrase "floating world," which was originally associated with a Buddhist world view and alluded to the ephemerality of man's existence, subsequently came to suggest a hedonistic preoccupation with the present moment, with the latest fashions, pursuits, and life style of an urban culture, and implied a certain chicness.[180]

The three themes that recur most often in ukiyo-e painting are the beautiful women (*bijin*) and their world in the tea house and at home, the samurai, and the landscape. The influence of the ukiyo-e painting tradition on nineteenth-century Japanese photography is also evident in hand-coloured photography, which not only adopts the paintings' colour palette, but also copies the poses of the persons depicted and even the objects that they are holding.[181] *A married woman inspects her black teeth in a mirror* (fig. 82), a typical ukiyo-e, was painted by Kitagawa Utamaro (1754-1806). On the top right corner we find a cartouche divided in three parts; in the two outer sections we can read some calligraphic inscriptions: in the right section the title of the series to which this ukiyo-e belongs is written in black ink (*Fujin sogaku jittai,* "Ten Women Type Physiognomies") and in red ink we can see a seal that reveals the

[177] Shimizu and Rosenfield 1984.
[178] For nineteenth century Japanese photography: Bennet 1996; Ozawa 1981; Delank 1997.
[179] Japan Photographers Association 1980, p. 15.
[180] Tadashi 1992, p. 65.
[181] Pérez 2008.

identity of one of the owners of this artwork. In the left side of the cartouche written in black ink we can read *somi* (physiognomic seen) on the top, and on the bottom the name of the painter, Utamaro. This method of placing calligraphic inscriptions within the pictorial space is particular to the Japanese painting tradition.

The Japanese photographer Yokoyama Matsusaburo (1838-1884) also used consistently text within the photographic space, and he even chose to write both in red and black ink, like the painters did. The fact that other Japanese photographers such as Kojima Ryua also tended to add inscriptions within the photographic space, points to the fact that this combination of the two techniques, image and text, was an element particular to indigenous Japanese photography, like it is the case in Iran.[182] In portrait of Nitta Tomi taken by Yokoyama in 1872 (fig. 83) we can read an inscription written in Kanji script with black ink. The first four signs reveal the date in which the photograph was taken, "ca. the 5th year of the Meiji Era", and the next three signs reveal that the technique used was albumin paper, "Japanese-lack paper". In red ink the photographer has written very detailed information about the process, the identity of the poseur and where the photograph was taken: "Nitta Tomi, sister of (illegible sign), the 7th year of the Meiji Era a photo-studio was opened next to the five-stock pagoda of the premises of the Asakusa-Temple".[183]

As pointed by Helen Westgeest while viewing these images together, this way of placing the calligraphic inscriptions on a white strip was also done previously in the Ukiyo-es or Japanese woodprints. This indicates that the traditional Japanese painting tradition may have influenced the aesthetics used by some nineteenth-century Japanese photographers, like Yokoyama who was also an outstanding painter. Another portrait of the same woman, but taken by Yokoyama two years after, depicts the woman in the traditional kneeling pose (fig. 84). Here the calligraphic inscriptions have been placed on the left side of the image, again on a white strip and they have been written in red ink. One of the most interesting elements in this photograph is, again, the inscription placed on a white strip on the right top corner. The text has been written in Kanji script with red ink and gives us exhaustive information about date, technique used to produce the photograph and factual information about the person depicted. On the top right, Yokoyama inform us that this photograph constitutes the beginning of his work on the topic of women portraits and identifies the sitter as Nitta Tomi. Under this information, we find another inscription that inform us of the fact that Yokoyama opened a photo-studio on the premises of the Asakusa-Temple. On the left, the inscription informs us of the date in which the photograph was taken, "ca. the 7th year of the Meiji Era" and where, "in Yokoyama's studio in Ikenohata".

The last photograph selected here from this photographer depicts Yamamoto Rempei, disciple of Matsusaburo (fig. 85). It is an interesting image since it has been heavily overpainted with oil with a technique that was developed by himself. As stated by the Japanese curator of the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Yokoe Fuminori, he called this technique Shashin Abura-e or oil painting photograph, by which the film covering the photograph is peeled off and the photo is colored with oil pigments. This was probably the completion of a way of expression synthesizing both

[182] For biographical information and an impressive selection of his work see: Yokoe 1997.

[183] I am very grateful to Jun Ueno (Japanisches Kulturinstitute in Cologne, Germany) for his translations of all texts of the Japanese photographs selected here.

techniques of photography and oil painting, of which he had been in quest for many years.[184]

Portrait of Yamamoto Rimpei, is actually an example of his *shashin abura-e* or "photographic oil-paintings" (the original is in colour), as he has indicated in the lower part of the inscription in the top right white strip, in Kanji script: "the back of the photograph has been hand-coloured". This agrees with Bennett's description of this technique, that involved peeling off the emulsion covering the face of a photograph and then painting the rear side with oil paints.[185] Under this inscription we can read, the work of the master Yokoyama. On the bottom right white strip we find a very long and detailed inscription that inform us of the date in which Yokoyama started experimenting with this technique and how: "ca. the 13th year of the Meiji Era he discovered this technique and in the 15th year of the era the technique was refined. At that time, the photographer hired Mr. Ryoichi Komamezawa as his assistant and they made experiments with this technique together. His assistant started in the 17th year of the Meiji Era to…. (illegible)". The name of the sitter has been written in the left bottom corner: disciple Yamamoto Rimpei.

Another interesting Japanese author who used calligraphy in his work was Kojima Ryua. The collage of Kojima Ryua and his family (fig. 86) taken in 1873 is astonishing and very *avant-garde* for its time. It is both aesthetically pleasing and intriguing. Ryua himself is placed on the left side of the final image, resting his elbow on his camera and looking at his wife and child who have been photographed in two different poses and then pasted together to complete this unique collage. A calligraphic inscription that reads "willow; frog" has been placed on a white strip that seems to have been painted to give the impression of a piece of wood, like the Ukiyo-es. One of its corners is broken and the fact that in other of his photographs we find the same white-wooden strip with broken corner, seems to point to the fact that it may have been an effect made in purpose by the author. This is also the case in the next image, a self-portrait of Kojima Ryua taken in around 1870 (fig. 87) in which he is depicted in the traditional Japanese kneeling pose. The calligraphic inscription reads: "Ryua Kojima; photographer; born in Mino (today, province of Gifu); as a child he was named Gorosaku; willow; frog". The first three signs give factual information, but the last two "willow-frog" may have some poetic meaning (referring probably to a well-known Japanese fairy tale). The last Japanese photograph selected for this section depicts Iinuma Yokusai and was taken by an unknown Japanese photographer around 1863 (fig. 88).

I have also found some interesting nineteenth century Chinese photographs that belong to the Empress Dowager Cixi collection hosted at the Freer and Sackler Gallery in Washington[186]: they are the typical studio portraits of that time, but instead of placing the calligraphic inscription on the photographic space, it has been placed IN the photographic space as part of the studio paraphernalia! (see figs. 89 and 90)

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[184] Yokoe 1997, pp. 182-83.

[185] Bennet 2006, p. 83.

[186] This collection contains forty-four glass plate negatives depicting the Empress Dowager of China, Cixi (1835-1908), of the Qing dinasty, mostly photographed from 1903 to 1905 by the Chinese photographer Xunling (1874-1943). The collection is available on-line at: http://siris-collections.si.edu/search/results.jsp?fq=online_media%3A%22Images%22&q=xunling&view=grid&start=0

Also recently, I have found some Indian photographs that use calligraphy. A portrait of Nawab Raj Begum Sahibah of Oudh (fig. 91), taken by the Indian photographer Ahmed `Ali Khan around 1855, presents an interesting and quite long inscription in Persian:

شبیه نواب راج بیکم صاحبه که یکی از ممتو عات حضرت سلطان عالم خلد الله ملکه وسلطنته اند یسکن از جمله مروئی
با پوشاک هندی پرزر و زیورهائی مرصع در دست وگوش آراسته وباف زرین کار چوب بر سریر نشسته
بتصور ملاقات حضرت سلطان عالم خلد الله ملکه و سلطنته در عالم جوش دو نو قمر بر کرسی نقره نشسته
بسن بیست وسه ساله سنه ۱۲۷۱ هجری مطابق سنه جلوس میمنت مانوس عمل بیت السلطنت لکهنو

which reads, as translated by Witkam: "The image of Raja Begum Sahiba, who belongs to the most fortunate excellent sultans of the world, may God perpetuate his (her?) reign and power, and may he (she?) … in Indian clothing full of gold and studded with gold ornaments, ornamented with jewels in the hand and the ear, (clothed) in gold woven textile, …. sitting on the throne (of sculpted wood?)/ imaging to meet the excellent sultan of the world, may God perpetuate his reing and his power in the world… seated on a silver throne/ at the age of twenty-three years in the year 1271 of the *higra* (1854-1855), coinciding with the year of the happy ascension to the unrivalled throne, (in) the abode of power Lucknow.

Nawab Zorawar Khan of Kanota (1826-1908) is depicted in a gelatine silver print overpainted afterwards with watercolors (fig. 92) that was taken by an anonymous Indian photographer around 1890. The painted photograph has a double inscription, the first one being in Urdu (right) and the other in Hindi (left). This image was identified by Giles Tillotson, who is a specialist in Jaipur:[187] "the inscription (which was read for me by a student as SOAS, Saqib Baburi: "Nawab Zoravan Khan Sahib Bahadur". My conjecture is that this is Thakur Sahib Zorawar Singh of Kanota (1826-1908). The image clearly depicts the subject sitting in the veranda of the Chandra Mahal of the Jaipur City Palace in a somewhat proprietorial manner!" The third Indian image that is interesting for this purpose is a portrait of the Maharana Swarup Singh of Udaipur (1815-61), taken by an unknown Indian photographer and fully over-painted afterwards by the Indian painter Pannalal Parasram Gaur, as the inscription in Hindi reveals (fig. 93). In this case, the signature is precisely the signature of the painter who almost erased completely the photographic origins of this artwork.

It is interesting to note that when comparing the use of text or calligraphic inscriptions in these three countries, the decorative tendency and elaborated ornament of the Iranian calligraphy contrast with a more sober use of Japanese and Indian calligraphy. However my research has been much deeper in the Iranian case than in the other two countries.

To conclude, the use of text within the photographic space is one of the cultural components of a photograph analyzed here, as I have shown in this chapter through visual analysis of the role and meaning of the inscriptions in the photographic surface. The photographer constructs within the photographic space a frame of real life and the use of inscriptions helps to reinforce the intention of the photographer by giving either

[187] This information was given to me by the photohistorian Stephanie Roy Barath, curator of the Alkazi Collection of Photography (Delhi) where this photograph is hosted.

factual information or a more symbolic one. Text/calligraphy and image have been always closely related in the Iranian visual culture tradition. The use and function of text or the calligraphic inscriptions in Iranian photography, whether for informative or as a philosophical purposes is mostly influenced and inherited from the Persian painting tradition, though it is not so uniquely Iranian. I have been looking at books on nineteenth-century Japanese and Indian photography and I have found some examples with inscriptions. Nevertheless, the role and function of such inscription may not be the same, and this is a topic for further research.

The influence of the traditional use of calligraphy or text in painting and later on in nineteenth-century photography is apparent. The function of the calligraphic inscriptions used in Persian painting has not only an aesthetic purpose but also an informative one. Sometimes other kind of inscriptions can be found, like poetry or philosophical thoughts, but those are not as widely used as the previous ones, at least in Qajar portraiture. In this kind of paintings, the name of the person depicted is placed in the upper part of the picture, whereas the name of the author is placed in the lower part. This is all valid if we take into consideration male portraiture, but in the case of female portraiture, the situation is different since these artworks are in most cases unsigned and without any other kind of calligraphic inscriptions. The same happens in photography when taking in consideration the portraiture of women. The hierarchy implied by the way in which the text has been implemented in the pictorial space is not to be found in portraiture of men in photography. This is an important difference between the two mediums. The way in which the text or calligraphic inscription has been implemented within the pictorial and photographic space is also related: sometimes the text is placed within cartouches, other times it flows freely in the artwork's space. Interestingly, regardless of the content or meaning of the script, the language used in the inscriptions placed on photographs is a poetic one.

Another important conclusion is that signatures of the photographers on the photographs are often introduced by the word *'amal,* precisely like it happens with most of the inscriptions placed in objects to introduce the name of the author, the artist.

3. POSE, GESTURE AND OBJECTS HELD BY THE SITTER

> Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of *posing,* I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image.
>
> Roland Barthes[188]

One might inquire into the origin of the traditional kneeling pose in early nineteenth-century Iranian photography. One can rule out that this pose has found its way into Iranian photography through the apparatus and art itself (as in the use of chair, for example). Beyond the cultural habit of the time, sitting over floor mats, it seems that this particular position, along with the pose of holding various objects by sitters, is inherited from Persian miniature paintings. Another topic that I will research in this chapter, is the difference of pose and objects held by men and women in painting and later in photography. In order to achieve this, I undertake an exhaustive visual analysis of the pose and objects held by the sitters both in the Persian painting tradition and in nineteenth-century Iranian photography, with the aim of defining similarities and differences between the two techniques.

3.1. Gesture, posture and pose

The terms gesture and posture are closely related in meaning. What is a gesture and what is a posture?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition, 1989) defines gesture as a "movement of body or any part of it that is expressive of thought or feeling". In this sense, gesture includes any kind of bodily movement or posture (including facial expression) which is a message to the observer. The literary theorist Fernando Poyatos defines gesture as a conscious or unconscious body movement made mainly with the head, the face alone, or the limbs, learned or somatogenic, serving as a primary communicative tool, dependent or independent from verbal language; either simultaneous or alternating with it, and modified by the conditioning background (smiles, eye movements, a gesture of beckoning, a tic, etc). Further, he defines posture as a conscious or unconscious general position of the body, more static than gesture, learned or somatogenic, either simultaneous or alternating with verbal language, modified by social norms and by the rest of the conditioning background, and used less as a communicative tool, although it may reveal affective states and social status (sitting, standing, joining both hands behind one's back while walking, etc).[189]

The topic of gesture and posture has undergone much research. Since the Renaissance there have been many physiognomists, such as the Swiss J.C. Lavater (1741-1801), who have attempted to codify the facial expressions of emotion and

[188] Barthes 1981, p. 10.
[189] Poyatos 1981, p. 375.

character. He was certain that the wise physiognomist who studied and used the science of physiognomy with discernment could read the internal from the external, the character of humankind from the countenance and from its correct graphic representation.[190] The notion that inner human character could be interpreted through facial expressions persisted throughout nineteenth-century portraiture in all visual media. The conviction that a clear correspondence existed between inner moods and outward appearances also informed scientific experiments on human gestures and facial expressions, such as the photographs of mental patients taken by Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond in the 1850s, by the French doctor Guillaume Benjamin Duchenne de Boulogne (1806-1975)[191] or by the French physician and neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893)[192]. Also in the nineteenth-century Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* gave new support to the view that physical expressions might be biologically inherited.[193] Like Diamond, Duchanne, and Charcot, Darwin's works emphasized facial expression as an infallible indicator of psychological states.

Most modern writings on the subject however start from the assumption that gesture is not a universal language but the product of social and cultural differences. In the words of the English historian Sir Keith Thomas, there are many languages of gesture and many dialects.[194] As the French sociologist Marcel Mauss states, for example, it has been suspected for a long time that certain standing and sitting postures might be culturally significant.[195] Further, the anthropologist Gordon W. Hewes arguments that human postural habits have anatomical and physiological limitations, but there are a great many choices the determinants for which appear to be mostly cultural.[196] The ways in which we sit, kneel or stand are determined not only by the human anatomy but foremost by culture. The peoples of the world differ in posture styles just as they do in styles of clothing, housing, cooking and music.[197] Postures and related motor-habits are intimately linked to many aspects of daily life: they affect the design of our clothing, footgear, furniture, dwellings, offices, vehicles, tools and machines. Moreover, they speak an eloquent language in social intercourse. Most of us look to postural cues as well as to facial expressions and speech itself, in our never-ending efforts to interpret or evaluate people's motives, moods or behaviour.[198]

Here I would like to stress the difference in meaning of the terms posture and pose. The second one is more limited than the first. Pose is applied when considering photographs or paintings: the sitter's pose. Posture is a wider term used in a more

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[190] Stemmler 1993, p. 151.

[191] Duchenne was a physician at the Paris hospital *La Salpetriére* and treated people suffereing from epilepsy, neurological problems and insanity. His *Mécanisme de la physionomie humaine (The Mechanism of Human Physiognomy),* published in 1862, was accompanied by an atlas with 84 photographs of human subjects whose facial muscles were stimulated by electric current.

[192] His *L'iconographie photographique de La Salpetrière (Photographic Iconography of the Salpetrière Hospital)* was a three-volume work that contained photographs of hysterics, published in 1880.

[193] "Introduction" by Thomas Keith, in Bremmer and Roodenburg 1991, p. 2.

[194] Keith 1991, p. 3.

[195] Mauss 1979. Original in French: "Les Techniques du Corps", in *Journal de Psychologie, Normale et Patologique,* Paris, Librairie Félix Alcan, 1935, pp. 271-293.

[196] Hewes 1955, p. 231.

[197] Hewes 1957, p.123.

[198] Hewes 1957, p. 123.

general context.

In its general sense, posing can be considered as a way in which the "subject" responds to the implied presence of the beholder. In the words of the Turkish photography historian Fulya Ertem, it is by assuming a posture, an imaginary self, in front of any captivating gaze. When in front of the photographic camera, posing can be seen as a reaction to the camera's deadly capture.[199] The French theorist Roland Barthes, extending the pose to inanimate things, also describes it as an "instant, however brief, in which a real thing happened to be motionless in front of the eye. I project the present photograph's immobility upon the past shot, and it is this arrest which constitutes the pose".[200] Posing is thus a moment of immobility where the poseur turns him/herself into a frozen image. It can also be considered as a moment where the poseur tends to imitate a certain image he/she has in his/her mind in order to project it onto his body and gesture. However, the American film theorist and art historian Kaja Silverman in *The Treshold of the Visible World* claims that posing is not imitative of a pre-existing image, it is imitative of photography itself, as she says that the pose does not only arrest the body, "hyperbolising the devitalising effects of all photographic representation" but also resembles "three-dimensional photography".[201] Much like Silverman, the American post-modernist critic Craig Owens also says: "What I do when I pose for a photograph? I freeze.... as if anticipating the still I am about to become; mimicking its opacity, its stillness; inscribing, across the surface of my body, photography's mortification of the flesh".[202] Silverman refers to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's description of the phenomenon of mimicry in his *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis* and argues that for Lacan, although mimicry is the behaviour of certain species of insects, which seem to adopt the shape and natural colour of their environment for protective reasons, mimicry is more an attempt to become part of a particular picture rather than an attempt to imitate a pre-existing image.[203] Mimicry is thus a reproduction in three-dimensional space with solids and voids: sculpture-photography, as the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser calls it in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography.* [204]

For me the study of gesture and pose through photography is of more than purely antiquarian interest, since I believe that gesture formed an indispensable element in the social interaction of the past and it can offer a key to some of the fundamental values and assumptions underlying any given society; it gives us important clues to understand the mentality of that time. Behind the apparently most trivial differences between gesture and comportment there lie fundamental differences in social relationship and attitude. In the words of Keith, to interpret an account for a gesture is to unlock the whole social and cultural system of which it is a part.[205]

The anthropologist Weston Labarre argues that many of these motor habits in one culture are open to grave misunderstanding in another. So much of the expression of emotion in our culture is open to serious misinterpretation in another. There is no

[199] Ertem 2006, p. 10.
[200] Barthes 1981, p. 78.
[201] Silverman 1996, p. 202.
[202] Owens 1992, p. 210.
[203] Silverman 1996, p. 201.
[204] Flusser 2000, p. 50.
[205] Keith 1991, p. 11.

"natural" language of emotional gesture.[206] Nevertheless, he states further, in the language of gesture all over the world there are varying mixtures of the physiologically conditioned response and the purely cultural one, and it is frequently difficult to analyze and segregate the two.[207] Some research has shown that there are different gestures for the same meaning in different cultures and it has often been suggested that teachers of foreign languages should consider gesture not only so that students learn to speak the language but also that misunderstanding of gestural usage be avoided.[208] The emerging field of gesture studies is actually especially concerned with the exploration of the relationship between gesture and sign language, and how the gesture varies according to cultural and language differences. [209]

In this chapter, I will explore whether this cultural dependence of pose or gesture is visible in nineteenth-century portrait photography. I will analyse if there is a noticeable difference between the pose or gesture of the person depicted in Western portrait studio photography and Iranian portrait studio photography, and consequently also difference in meaning.

When analyzing photographs, one must assume that it is possible to distinguish between postures imposed upon the subjects by the photographer and those, which are habitual or indigenous. As Hewes states, there are pictures in which the subjects have certainly been arranged in a line for the purposes of photographic composition, but in which seemingly indigenous postures also occur. [210] In the cases in which the Western photographer imposes his wishes, in a probably unconscious way, he will at the same time impose typical Western poses that will probably change the natural native ones that the person depicted would do. As the photography historian William C. Darrah concludes when considering *cartes de visite* from nineteenth-century, there are four basic descriptive aspects of a portrait: pose, background, lighting and characterization, the latter being partly a result of the first three.[211] There are only three types of studio poses: head or bust, seated and standing, although there are many variations of each. The seated figure may be half-length to full length. The standing figure is usually in full length. From 1860 to 1890, portraits were roughly equally distributed among the three posing types, although heads were somewhat more popular in the early 1860's and again in the 1870's.[212] The seated pose was favoured by many photographers because the subject was more relaxed and it was easier to imply activity. The popular standing full pose was fraught with difficulties. The subject was obliged to stand motionless for a minute or more while the final adjustments were made in exposing the negative. An iron head clamp, adjustable for height, with a tripod base, held the subject firmly in position.

This classification is valid for Western photography, but for Iranian photography I would add another pose: kneeling, as an alternative way of sitting. This pose is commonly found in Iranian studio portrait photography in the nineteenth-century and, under the influence of Western poses on the studio, the seated pose is

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[206] Labarre 1947-8, p. 55.
[207] Labarre 1947-8, p. 57.
[208] See: Wylie, L., *Beaux Gestes: A Guide to French Body Talk,* The Undesgraduate Press, Cambridge, 1977; Monahan, Barbara, *A Dictionary of Russian Gestures,* Hermitage, NJ, 1983; Diadori, Pierangela, *Senza Parole. 100 Gesti degli Italiani,* Bonacci, Rome, 1990.
[209] See: Kendon 2004. Adam Kendom is a leading authority on the subject and is the editor of the journal *Gesture,* an important referent to everybody interested in human communication.
[210] Hewes 1955, p. 234.
[211] Darrah 1981, p. 26.
[212] Darrah 1981, p. 26.

also to be found at a later stage. I will demonstrate the evolution of the pose from the ground to the chair, from kneeling to the sitting position in my visual analysis of Persian painting and of nineteenth-century portrait studio photographs. Therefore, it is relevant to briefly explain how chairs appeared, evolved and were imported from other countries. In order to do so, I will introduce the ideas and research of the American architect Galen Cranz concerning the origins and role of the chair in our lives and will reflect after that about its role in the studio.

All around the world, the chair and chair sitting has become a symbol and sometimes evidence of Westernization. Chair-sitting and furniture go hand in hand, though is difficult to tell which is cause and which effect, whether the habit of sitting on a support led to the invention of chairs or *vice versa.* Interestingly enough, even if the object was discovered in Asia as we shall see further below, it was in Europe that it took the main role, as far as furniture is concerned, in the life of common people. Conversely, when Gandhi wanted to make a point about the importance of retaining traditional culture, he chose to sit cross-legged on the floor, self-consciously rejecting the chair and the modernism that goes with it. In non-Western cultures, the specific connotations associated with chairs are different, but the chair is still used to communicate status differences. In the words of Crams, when it was introduced to China in the second century A.D., the Chinese called it the "barbarian (their word for anything foreign) bed". It connoted informal use because of its years of association with military camps, temporary travel furniture, and garden use. It was more like a cot, and for years was never used indoors. People sat on it tailor-fashion (cross-legged), showing contempt, indifference, or extreme confidence. Nine hundred years later, a new seating type evolved: the folding chair with a back. This chair then became acceptable and was used by all, but the language of dignity and honour retained the use of the term "mat" rather than "chair".[213]

The word "chair" comes from the Greek. It is a contraction of *cathedra*, which is in turn a compound of *kata,* meaning "down", and *hedra,* from "to sit". A chair is a piece of furniture with a back, and usually four legs, on which one person sits. But so is a throne. However, the word "throne" has a different origin. It comes from the Indo-European base *dher,* meaning "to hold or support". The throne supports, while the chair is a place to sit down. A throne suggests the palanquins on which a potentate might be carried, while the underlying meaning of a chair is quite different. Physically, almost anyone can sit down, whereas only a very privileged few can be carried.[214] Neither thrones nor chairs originated in classical Greece; they are far older. Chair sitting was already a widespread practice in ancient Egypt of 2850 B.C. The oldest physical chairs we have come from the tomb of the young pharaoh Tutankhamen, who died in about 1352 B.C.[215] Chairs, stools and benches were in use in Egypt and Mesopotamia, therefore, at least 5.000 years ago. While commoners and slaves sat on stools or benches, the kings, priests and other exalted personages in ancient Egypt used chairs. The Chinese began using chairs fairly late in their history: 2.000 years ago they sat on the floor, as the Japanese and Koreans do today. In southern and Southeast Asia chairs have never become items of common use. Even in the Middle East and North Africa the Islamic peoples seem to have returned to sitting on the floor possibly because of the cultural prestige of the nomadic Arabs.[216] No less

[213] Cranz 2000, p. 29.
[214] Cranz 2000, p. 31.
[215] Cranz 2000, p. 31.
[216] Hewes 1957, p. 127.

widely practiced than chair-sitting is the deep squat. Ranking slightly behind chair-sitting and the deep squat is the cross-legged sitting posture that we call sitting in the "Turkish" or "tailor" fashion. Sitting on the heels with the knees resting on the floor is the formal sitting position for both men and women in Japan, and is the regular prayer position in the Islamic world and many other cultures in Eurasia. We shall see examples of all of these positions in paintings and photographs.

We need anthropologists to remind us that almost everything including how we hold our bodies should be understood in its cultural context. An Indian might squat to wait for the train or bus; a Japanese woman might kneel to drink tea or to eat; and an Arab might sit crossed-legged to read a book. Hewes, as I have already noted, emphasized that postural variations are culturally determined. Sitting, like other postures, is predominantly regulated all around the world according to gender, age, and social status. In mosques, Muslims sit and kneel on richly carpeted floors. Carpets are butted one against the other. Carpets do more than protect the knees; all who enter a mosque (or home) take off their shoes, ostensibly so that no dirt is brought onto the carpets where people will put their hands and faces. I will come back later to this matter while analyzing the paintings and photographs selected for this chapter. Among habitual chair-sitters over the world, there are a surprising variety of cultural differences in sitting posture, many of which can be classified on the basis of the way the legs or ankles are crossed.[217] Here it is useful to show a part of the postural typology used in the compilation of data for Hewes' article (fig. 94). As Hewes explain, these drawings are for the most part based on photographs in the ethnographic literature.

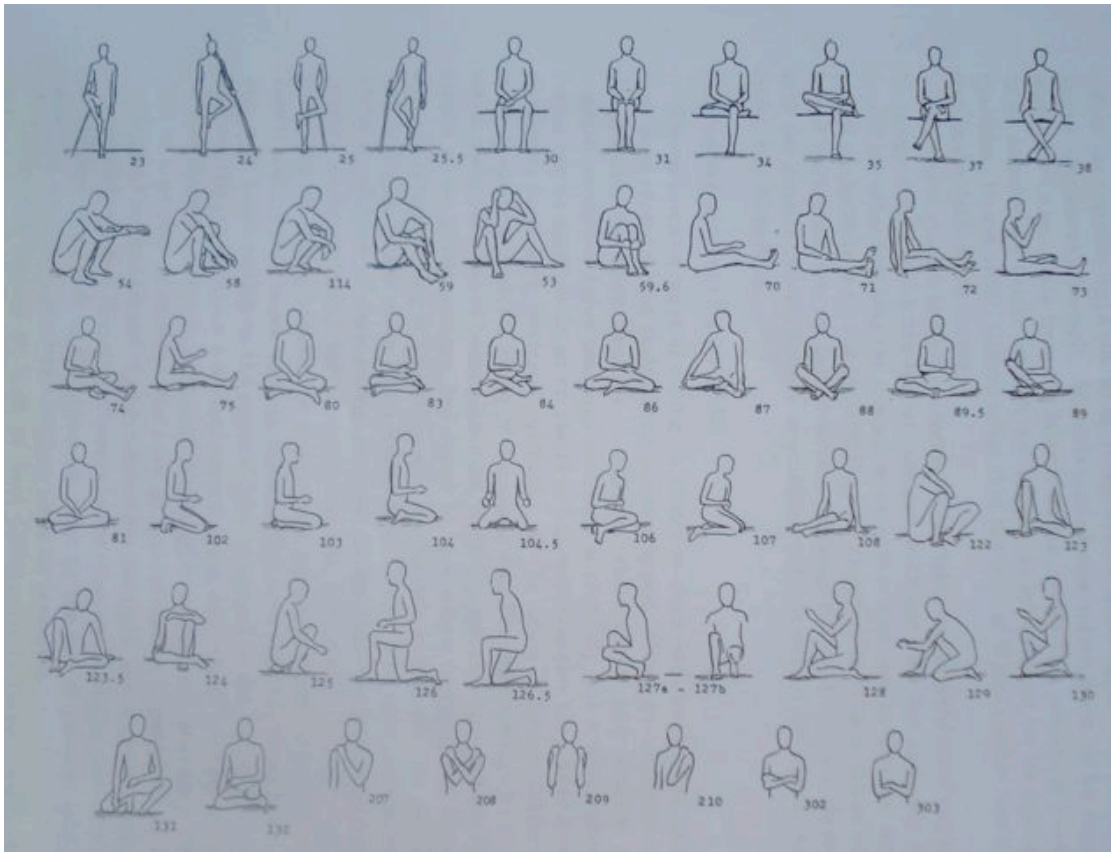

Figure 94

[217] Hewes 1957, p. 125.

Interestingly, from the corpus of photographs that I have analyzed for this chapter, both Western and Iranian, it will be evident that this variety of chair-sitting postures is not to be found in the photo studios where the typical Victorian sitting pose is more widely used: the two legs lying parallel next to each other (see posture number 30 and 31 in Hewes' drawings); even though, in Iranian photographs, due to the lack of experience of poseurs at that time with chair sitting, some very peculiar leg-poses appear as we shall see later in this chapter while analyzing some photographs, resulting in a more varied and interesting repertoire than the uniform Western one. In this case the role of the photographer was definitive in imposing, or at least influencing, a definite chair-sitting pose in the photographer's studio. The most common sitting posture, though, in nineteenth-century Iranian photography is number 103 in Hewes' drawings, sitting on the heels with the knees resting on the floor.

3.2. Pose and gesture in Persian painting tradition

In this section, I explore which are the traditional poses used in the Persian painting tradition. A fundamental topic that I consider is how has the use of the chair in Western portrait painting influenced the transition from the traditional kneeling pose to the sitting pose in Persian painting and later on in photography. Further, my aim is to solve the question of whether there is some difference in the poses in which men and women are depicted.

Men in painting

There are many examples to be found in Persian miniature painting that depict people in the Persian traditional pose, that is, sitting on their heels with the knees resting on the floor (posture 103 Hewes). *Sultan-Husayn Mirza Bayqara,* a wonderful miniature from Herat, ca. 1500 (fig. 54) introduced already in the previous chapter, presents the sultan sitting on his heels, one hand holding a *mandil*, or handkerchief, on his knee and the other in front of him with a forefinger extended in a speaking gesture. He is wearing a turban with a plume of black heron feathers. *Seated figure holding a cup,* mid seventeenth-century, presents a figure in the same pose both because he is seated on his heels and because of the position and pose of the arms and hands (fig. 55). *Riza-i 'Abbasi painting a picture of a European man* by Mu'in (pupil of Riza-i 'Abbasi (ca.1565-1635)), shows Riza as an older man with a greying moustache, wearing spectacles and a turban shaped in elaborate seventeenth-century style but made of a simple fabric. He is sitting on the ground with a low stand in front of him, but the picture is propped on a bent knee, as if to bring it closer to his face. His subject is a European man in a cape and a black brimmed hat: nothing could be more representative of the European presence in seventeenth- century Iran. Other than the stand, a few books, and pens and an inkwell on the ground before him, the tan-gold paper provides a timelessly neutral background, and the image thus becomes a universal one, of an aging painter plying his craft (fig. 56).

There are also many examples of this kind of pose to be found in Qajar painting portraiture. Fath 'Ali Shah (d. 1834), the second of Qajar Rulers, is depicted on the next portrait seated on his heels (fig. 95). He is the most recognizable, and historically verifiable, personage of any Iranian monarch up to the era of photography. In the words of the Islamic art historian Eleonor Sims, 'his fine slender figure, his pale complexion and blazing black eyes under wide black brows, and

specially his long and magnificent black beard, are instantly recognizable, whether they are on the tiniest of enameled gold pendants or the largest of oil-painted canvases or rock reliefs'.[218] He especially made use of the medium of oil on canvas for a number of large paintings of himself between 1798 and 1815. The one that I want to analyze, the first of such portraits, was painted in the year after his ascension in 1797. It is signed by Mirza Baba, Fath 'Ali Shah's chief painter from the very beginning of his reign. 'For the first of the large single-figure oil paintings, Mirza Baba appears to have isolated the Shah from the among his courtiers. Fath 'Ali Shah still kneels, in the old-fashioned position, on a carpet spread on a *takht* with a low wooden balustrade behind him. His posture is erect and he is holding a jeweled mace that, together with his level gaze, gives the sitter an effect of great majesty. The seventeenth-century European prop of the draped curtain on one side of the picture is utilized, but the background is essentially a neutral shadowed space that increases his majestic isolation'.[219] Mirza Baba repeated this kneeling image of the Shah several times and others further repeated it, although later portraits by other painters made use of the standing pose or seated the Shah in a European armchair-throne, as we will see shortly.

The next portrait is also an oil on canvas painting depicting Fath 'Ali Shah, circa 1798, and it is attributed to Mirza Baba (fig. 57).[220] In keeping with its early date, the composition follows the conventions of the Perso-European school (pose of the arms, spitoon, and elaborate jeweled regalia). Further, the overall design and the ruler's features are based on the previous portrait that I have just analyzed. Here, as stated by Diba, 'Mirza Baba probably painted the face, rendered with his distinctive soft modeling and heavily shaded eyes, and assigned another painter to complete the rest of the painting'.[221] The ruler's pose and the decorative treatment of his robe conform to the two-dimensional conventions of "miniature painting", as noted by Diba: 'the oblique angle of the carpet, however, suggests spatial recession, and the ruler's shadow on the shutter implies a light source to the right. Typically, the rendering of the shadows is not consistently applied: the glass vase in the background cast a shadow to the righ't.[222] I will analyze in-deph this topic of understanding of the space in chapter four. In the next portrait, also of Fath 'Ali Shah, we find again the traditional Persian pose, kneeling on a carpet with a cushion behind him, holding a mace (fig. 59). This portrait is the latest in a series of dated paintings depicting Fath 'Ali Shah seated on a carpet. The painting is signed by Mihr 'Ali and is dated 1813-14. Mihr 'Ali produced the most impressive full-size portraits of his patron, Fath 'Ali Shah. When faced with his work one can immediately realize that this painter was provided with the best materials and opportunities in order that he should produce really lavish representations of the Shah, which could be admired in each of his buildings. Conscious of the role of these paintings, Mihr 'Ali has missed no chance to include all the jewellery and finery in the king's possession, and next to this, he chose the most powerful and imposing attitudes to give these images their particular awe-inspiring effect. This way of working was most probably the reason Fath 'Ali Shah had him as his favourite painter.

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[218] Sims 2002, p. 275.
[219] Sims 2002, p. 277.
[220] For translation of the calligraphic inscriptions found in this image and also in figs.53 and 60, see chapter 2 on text and photography.
[221] Diba 1999, p. 180.
[222] Diba 1999, p.181.

The sitting and the standing poses are also to be found among Qajar portraits. *Fath 'Ali Shah Seated on a Chair Throne* (fig. 96), attributed to Mihr 'Ali[223], circa 1800-1806, was intended as a gift to Emperor Napoleon. Oddly enough, this painting has no calligraphic inscriptions. The work is one of the three life-size paintings showing the ruler seated in a jewel-encrusted and enameled chair throne, as stated by Diba. In conformity with the function of a state image intended for public display and designed to inspire a sense of awe in the viewer, Mihr 'Ali depicted Fath 'Ali Shah as impassive, rigidly posed, and ablaze with jewels. The image epitomizes poetic descriptions of the rulers' imperial aura and sunlike splendour, to which the sun-shaped roundel surmounting the throne back alludes.[224] In addition to the throne, each element of the rulers' attire symbolizes his imperial nature. The severity of this iconic image is skillfully counterbalanced by the grace of the ruler's features and the delicacy of his tiny feet, shod in floral-patterned hose and upturned slippers, combine to create an elegant image with just a touch of humanity. Notice that in all these portraits of Fath 'Ali Shah, he is invariably depicted looking to the front with a slight tilt to the left. *Prince Muhammad 'Ali Mirza, Dawlatshah,* signed by Ja'far and dated 1820 (fig. 53), is also an example of the seated pose used in Qajar painting portraiture from 1800 onwards. In addition to the throne, each element of the ruler's attire symbolizes his imperial nature: the crown surmounted by an exquisitely fashioned aigrette with black heron feathers; the sword of state covered in priceless pearls and hard stone gems; the royal armbands set with diamonds and the long belt typically associated with the Qajar tribe. *Portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah Standing,* signed by Mihr 'Ali and dated 1809-10 (fig. 97), depicts Fath 'Ali Shah standing and holding a jeweled scepter in his right hand. An inscription in *Thulth* script besides the crown informs us of the identity of the person depicted: *al-sultan Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar.* Under this inscription, there is another one in *Nastaliq* script and between panels that reads: *Bih kam-i pak-i parvadigar, zadi naqsh in namwar shariyar/ Chu in afarinish bar arasti, chunan afaridi ki khud khwasti* (free translation: with the help of God this painter has painted a portrait of this famous king, and if he has achieved this creation in this way is just because of God's wishes). Also in *Nastaliq* script in the lower left corner, we can read: *In pardeh tasvir-i-timsal-i-shamayil-I shashanshah bihmal ast; kih dar huzur bahir al-munavvar aqdas mulahized; shamayil muhr mayil mubarak shudeh va bidun-I taghyir raqamzad-i kilk-i khujasteh salk shud; kamtarim ghulam Mihr 'Ali amad, fi sanah 1024* (free translation: this painted canvas of the face and portrait of the king is unique because the king himself is unique and further compliments for the king. The inscription finishes with "the lowest servant Mihr 'Ali, in the year 1024). As stated by Diba, this work is the earliest known portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah standing: evidently Mihr 'Ali suggested here a new type of royal portrait.[225] The choice of pose for the king, with one arm raised and the other on his hip, produces a particularly grand effect, further increased by the king's extensive black beard and the mass of jewellery that he wears topped by the enormous crown with its three black feather aigrettes. The signature of the artist is to be found at the lower left corner. Mihr 'Ali found this pose highly successful when he used it for a later version of this artwork.[226]

[223] Robinson 1967, p. 336.
[224] Diba 1999, p. 181.
[225] Diba 1999, p. 183.
[226] To compare the image, see: Falk 1972, p. 35.

In the following, I will analyze the objects held by the sitters in Persian miniature painting and Qajar portrait painting. I explore if there is a difference in the objects held by women and men in these works of art. When analyzing nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photographs, we can find several recurrent elements, such as the man holding a flower, as one of the more interesting and particular ones. The fact that the man is holding a flower is quite an unknown and bizarre element in Western portraiture. Flowers tend to be something more related to women than men, especially in that genre. But not in the Persian painting tradition as we shall see. It is actually quite easy to find such portraits of men holding roses in various periods. Two typical examples among the many to be found are *Youth with Flower* (fig. 98) from the seventeenth century, a precisely drawn representation of a courtier or a dandy, which may have been a sketch for a larger painting, and *A Man in a Landscape* (fig. 99) from the sixteenth century. Iran has been often called "the land of the rose and the nightingale". Persian Sufi poets have used the rose extensively, almost obsessively. The symbol of the rose conveys allusions to concepts such as beauty, love, poetry, divine Unity, music and belovedness, while the nightingale symbolizes multiplicity and diversity. In the words of the Iranian scholar Hossein M. Elahi Ghomshei, artistic creation contains in miniature form the entire story of Creation. The rose plays a part of absolute Existence in this story and the nightingale - with its songs, infinity diverse in their tonality and pitch, hymning the praise of the beauty of this divine Existence-cum-Rose - expresses possible Being. Incessantly, Beauty - the rose of the beloved – brings into existence myriads of lovers (nightingales); every moment she contemplates herself through the eyes of these lovers, hearing them sing praises.[227]

Another interesting element is water, normally present in the image in the shape of a pond. See, for example, figure 100, where a messenger offers to Sam (grandfather of Rustam) a painted picture of the new-born Rustam, seated cross-legged and garbed in a miniature version of his grandfather's clothing.[228] This kind of miniatures with a pond of water placed in the bottom centre of the image is very common and this kind of composition would be used later on also in photography, as we shall see below. Interestingly, and especially in photography, water has a close relationship to reflection and mirror. Photography is often compared with a mirror in theories of photography. The motif of the mirror is one of the most fascinating ones used in Persian poetry, especially in mystical thinking. The meaning of the mirror in Persian literature has been deeply analyzed by Johann Christoph Bürgel and Priscilla Soucek. Rumi is one of the Persian poets that has used more the motif of the mirror in his poetry. Annemarie Schimmel[229] and Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch[230] have investigated the role of the mirror in the imagery of this poet.

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[227] Elahi Ghomsei, on-line publication.

[228] This page is an illustration of one chapter of Firdousi's *Shahnama*: Rudaba's travail at the birth of her son, the hero Rustam, was great and only alleviated by the Simurgh's divine assistance. But once Rustam had made his appearance in the world, his parents and maternal grandparents were overwhelmed with joy and also awe, for at birth he was the size of a child of twelve months. To convey the wonder of this elephantine-like child to his paternal grandfather Sam, Rudaba's servants sewed a life-size silken doll and limned Rustam's features of his face; they then put a spear, a mace, and a bridle into his hands and, setting the doll on a chestnut horse, sent it to his grandfather Sam in Mazandaran (quoted from Sims 2002, p. 319). This scene, as we can see in the miniature, is rarely (on a free-way) illustrated.

[229] Shimmel 1978.

[230] De Vitray-Meyerovitch 1972.

There are, to be sure, many more motifs that bear a symbolic meaning in Persian miniature painting, but I have only referred to the two that are to be found in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography.

If we consider now Qajar portrait painting, the Qajar imperial attire and regalia consist of several key elements that can be easily identified. These elements have a uniquely Qajar flavour to them during Fath 'Ali Shah's reign. As we can see in figures 53, 57, 60, 92, 93 and 94 they include crown, throne, sword, mace, dagger and jewels. The Qajar throne was also an essential element of Fath 'Ali Shah's imperial regalia. Crown and throne aside, as they are obviously the most symbolic of all the regalia, we can say that in general the arrangement and collection of elements chosen by Fath 'Ali Shah and his predecessor, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar (1742-1797), as part of their imperial image is important. In the words of the Iranian scholar Manoutchehr M. Eskandari-Qajar, 'each element is, of course, symbolic, and each element works to complete the image that is to be projected. It is in the particular arrangement of the elements that Fath 'Ali Shah also achieved the unique look of Qajar imperial attire and regalia'.[231] In addition to the above, a mace (*gorz),* a jewelled dagger, a studded belt with pendant and the Qajar hanging belt form the essential elements of Fath 'Ali Shah's official regalia, as we have seen clearly in the group of painted portraits presented. The sword and the mace allude to the ruler's justice and the regalia and furnishings evoke an image of wealth. Some of these objects also became part of the regalia shown in photographic portraits on a later stage, as in the case of the sword.

Woman in painting

Most of the portraits painted by artists during the Qajar Era were of men. Nevertheless, there are enough portraits of women to deserve a close analysis.[232] It is relevant for my study to analyze the pose of the women depicted in these paintings and see if there is any relationship of the pose and gesture of women in the Persian painting tradition and in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography. In all periods of history the prescriptions for the physical behaviour of women have been different from those of men. This has been reflected clearly in Qajar portrait painting and also in photography as we shall see shortly. According to the art historian S. J. Falk, this subject, girls, apparently resulted from a desire for decoration that would suit the purpose of the building for which the painting was intended.[233] We can find images of women playing different instruments, dancing with castanets, and sometimes just resting or drinking. But without doubt, the most impressive group of pictures is that which depicts women-acrobats and tumblers who played a prominent role in the entertainments provided at court. These images number among the most striking images from the Persian painter's repertoire of female types. Girls balancing on their hands and even on knives are specially interesting since those contortions of the human body have no precursors in earlier painting. *A girl playing a sitar* (fig. 101) by the painter Muhammad Sadiq and dated 1769-70 depicts a woman playing a sitar. The arched eyebrows, aquiline nose, narrow kohl-rimmed eyes, elongated body proportions, and stiff treatment of the wide trousers were, as stated by Diba, typical

[231] Eskandari-Qajar 2003, p. 84.
[232] For a good insight in this topic, see: Najmabadi, Afsaneh, "Reading For Gender Through Qajar Painting", in Diba 1999, pp. 76-89.
[233] Falk 1972, p. 10.

elements used in this idealized representations of women.[234] Those were, actually, the Zand painting canons.[235] The lady's countenance and body correspond, indeed, to the classical canons of Persian beauty as interpreted in the Zand period: moon-faced visage, joined eyebrows, etc. The woman depicted here is dressed in the costume of the period, which so often consisted of enormous patterned trousers made of thick carpet-like material, and a much lighter chemise that usually open at the front in addition to being transparent.

According to Diba, 'the role and status of women entertainers in Middle East societies is a perplexing phenomenon. Performing, especially in front of men, was not regarded as highly respectable profession, although its practitioners were not necessarily considered outcasts'.[236] As stated by the scholar Sarah Graham-Brown, in many instances women entertainers were professionals brought into the harem to perform on special occasions, or sometimes they were actual members of the harem, usually concubines of the rulers, who were trained in the arts of singing, music, poetry and dancing.[237] The half-filled crystal decanter and porcelain tableware with several delicacies typically appear in representations of women during this period. The wine and apples are both attributes that act as visual equivalents for poetic metaphors: in Persian culture, apples represent love and fruitfulness, while wine is a favoured metaphor for earthly and divine love. In *A woman balancing on a knife* (fig. 63) the acrobat's body is flattened against the picture plane, twisted like pretzels to maintain a balance that flouts all laws of gravity and perspective. The watermelon on the right bottom corner of the painting gives to the final image an interesting balance in composition. The wooden balustrade is also one of the typical elements found in these kinds of paintings as part of the studio setting. As is usual for Qajar paintings of beauties, the picture is neither signed nor dated (there is one word: *Khatun,* which means dame or lady), but its style and the young woman's clothes belong to the first quarter of the nineteenth-century. Note that the women depicted on these paintings are always barefoot and the soles of their feet have been painted with henna. Like many other Qajar canvases showing women, this one seems to be one of a series of paintings that once decorated a palace. I have seen several such portraits that show women balancing on knives, elbows or hands. The same facial type is repeated in all of these canvases, which were clearly created by the same artist. Their joined eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, puckered lips, and flamboyant hairdos reflect the late Zand-early Qajar ideal of beauty, as I have already stated before. Although Qajar representations of women were rarely signed or dated (in clear contrast with those of men), these paintings present marked affinities with similar subjects executed by the painters Ahmad and Muhammad, providing a dating range from the late 1820s to the early 1840s. Such paintings of women were displayed in the public as well as private quarters of palaces and residences. These representations, in a society where women were secluded from the male gaze, understandably puzzled nineteenth-century European observers, who failed to grasp the abstract nature of these representations

[234] Diba 1999, p. 157.
[235] In the Zand Period (1750-79), the subject of painting evolved from the cosmopolitan and imperial themes of the late Safavid (1501-1722) and Afshar (1736-47) periods to poetic and intimate subjects. Zand paintings are characterized by a heavier silhoutte and livelier compositions. Quoted from Diba 1999, p. 147.
[236] Diba 1999, p. 207.
[237] Graham-Brown 1988, p. 174.

and mistook them for actual portraits.[238] These female acrobats are not found in photography but the women musicians, especially playing the sitar are very common, as we will see in the next section. I will come back to this kind of women painting portraiture when I analyze the objects held by the sitter in a section further below.

The women depicted in Qajar paintings, interestingly, hold musical instruments or, in some cases, little knifes when performing some acrobatics, or a glass of wine or bottle, as we can see in figures 62, 63 and 101. These elements are also present in photographic portraits of women, as I shall show with some examples.

In sum, as we have seen, there is a chronological evolution from the traditional Iranian pose to a more westernized pose, chiefly symbolized by the use of chairs in the painter's studio and, later, in the photographer's studio. The plain of the painting rises from a low one to an upper one in order to be able to fully depict the person sitting on the chair. This transition happens over a longer period of time in painting than in the case of photography. The first chairs to be found in Qajar painting portraiture date from the beginning of the eighteenth-century. Before this date, only the kneeling pose is to be found. This traditional Persian pose widely used in miniature and Qajar painting, can be described as a person kneeling on the floor, on a carpet, and normally with a cushion at his/her back. The hands rest relaxed on the sitter's lap and quite often grapple some kind of typical object: *tasbih* (set of coral prayer beads), mace (in the case that the person depicted is one of the Qajar rulers), a book, a handkerchief, etc. Interestingly enough, later on, after 1800, in Qajar portrait painting, only men were sitting on chairs or on a throne if the person depicted is one of the Qajar rulers. Women were kneeling, standing or performing acrobatics. A possible explanation of this difference is that in the portraits of men, the sitters were real, belonging mostly to the highest levels of court society, whereas those of women were idealized portraits of anonymous women, more exactly of a prototype of women that took part in the court as entertainer. Around the same time, the standing pose is also to be found, but is not as widely used as the sitting pose. There is clearly a different treatment of female and male portraits. Gesture reflects differences of gender as well as of class. Women portraits in the Qajar era were abstractions that represented anonymous women whereas those of men were always high-ranking society members that could be identified by the calligraphic inscription that is always found within the pictorial space. This conclusion agrees with the statement of the Iranian scholar Afsaneh Najmabadi that the subject of women in Qajar painting present us with a curious picture: we have an abundance of representations of women from the realm of male fantasy and pleasure, but very few representations of real women.[239] The objects held by the sitter are rich in sociological input. While Persian miniature painting, due to its direct relation and dependence on Persian literature, is more prone to use elements that bear symbolic meaning, Qajar traditional portrait painting, as well as photographs, are more directed to stress the social status and power of the sitters. This consideration has a great impact on the treatment of the object held by the sitter. There is a clear difference between the objects held by men and women. Objects held by men are more related to the outer appearance of the sitter, more related to the public sphere of society, while the ones held by women are more related to the domestic sphere, a place governed by women. However in either

[238] Diba 1999, p. 213.
[239] Najmabadi 1999, p.76.

case, through the objects held by the sitters, both photographers and sitters constructed their photographs showing a part of the reality of their life, what they were interested in and where they were coming from or their social status.

3.3. Pose and objects held by the sitter in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography

In this section I explore which are the poses used and which are the elements present in traditional Persian paintings that may have been inherited by nineteenth-century Iranian studio portrait photography. Next to this, I study how Western aesthetics and studio paraphernalia have influenced the traditional pose of Iranian sitters in portrait studio photography. Due to this influence some hybrid poses may be found among Iranian photographs and my aim is to define them. The last topic that I research in this section is whether there is a difference in the poses used by men and women in photography, as it was the case in Persian painting.

The two first photographs considered here share an almost identical pose: a man sitting on his heels with his knees resting on the floor (posture 103 Hewes, p. 78), the typical Persian pose, with the hands almost in the same position, one of them holding an object: in fig. 70 the *mullah* (religious priest or leader) holding a *tasbih*, as in traditional Persian painting (see figs. 54 and 55). The other hand rests on his lap. In fig. 67, the man is holding a water-pipe with the left hand and his right hand rests in his lap in the same way as in the previous photograph. The parallel between the composition and aesthetics of these photographs and the paintings analyzed in the previous section is remarkable and leaves little doubt of the influence of the paintings on the photographs. We can also find a remarkable amount of photographs of groups of people kneeling on the floor, like groups of musicians or jesters (see figs. 102 and 103). The first one depicts three men with one serpent and the calligraphic inscription at the centre reveals them as a *luti bashi*[240] and two *margir*s (trainers of serpents). Next to this information appears the date in which the photograph was taken. The inscription on the right reveals the place where the photograph was taken (*Akhaskahne Mobarake-ye Madrese-ye Majsus Nezam*) and the inscription on the left reveals the name of the photographer (*Dar al-Khalafa-ye Naseri-Khanezat Mohammad Hassane Qajar*) as Mohammad Hassan Qajar. In the second image, a group of four musicians is depicted in front of the well-known Reza Akkasbashi's backdrop with the Victorian house printed on it. Actually, all photographs by Reza Akkasbashi are immediately recognizable by this backdrop and since the sitters are always Iranians, an odd and intriguing de-contextualization of the subject with the atmosphere is also immediately noticeable. The inscription reveals the men as a group of musicians from Kashmir (the second part of the inscription is illegible). Notice that in this kind of images, the viewpoint of the photographer is also lower one than normal. This points to the fact that the photographer could be kneeling also (or at least bending) on the floor and the camera would be much closer to the floor that when taking photographs of people standing up. I have found one photograph that supports my hypothesis (fig. 104). Both photographers are Iranians, the one on the left is Yaagub Akkasbashi from Tabriz and we can notice that the level of his camera is

[240] *Luti Bashi* is a group of men that belong to a *Zurkhane,* literally, the *house of force.* Members of the *Zurkhane* followed a strict code of conduct. Imam Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, together with Rustam, the legendary pre-Islamic Iranian Hero, were inspirational figures for its members.

much lower than the common one (see the photographer on the right, also Iranian). This kind of pose, sitting on the heels and knees resting on the floor is also to be found in nineteenth-century photography in other countries in Asia, like in Japan (see figures 84, 87 and 88 from the previous chapter) and India (fig. 92).

The four photographs that I have just discussed are only a few examples of the many to be found in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. We can also find many examples of photographs in which the person depicted is sitting on a chair. I would say that this change in pose is more a fashion in the photo-studio, a direct influence of Western aesthetics, rather than a mirror of the social reality of the time. The uncomfortable and non-relaxed manner of several Iranian sitters shown in the photographs (see, for example, fig 105, where Anis al-Dawleh, Naser od-Din Shah's [reigned 1848-1896] favourite, is depicted), seems to reinforce my hypothesis that the chair found its way into the Iranian studio earlier than into Iranian daily life (I will come back to this photograph later on in this section for further analysis). We can also see this in fig. 71, by Abdul-Ghassem Nuri. This photograph was already analyzed in-deph in the previous chapter, especially regarding the inscriptions that are present on the emulsive surface of the photograph. Here the sitter is a *mullah* and is depicted seated in a chair in a photograph that is entirely reminiscent of the aesthetics and composition of Victorian studio photographs, in a rigid pose that contrasts with the more relaxed pose that we have seen in other images such as figures 67 and 70. The next portrait (fig. 106), taken by Reza Akkasbashi, depicts a young man in the typical pose of the Qajar portraits of men holding a sword, sitting on a chair with a very self-conscious look, like it was the case in the late Qajar portrait paintings of his ancestors. Actually the jewelled dagger, the studded belt with pendant and the Qajar hanging belt are all regalia and clothing present in the Qajar painting portraits as well. These are elements clearly inherited from the Qajar portraiture tradition and many such photographic portraits can be found (compare this portrait with figures 96 and 53). Notice the self-conscious look on the face of the young man, with an eyebrow raised resulting in a quite arrogant and proud pose. The calligraphic inscription below the portrait reveals the identity of the sitter as Jomein-al-Dawleh. As we have already seen in the previous section, Fath 'Ali Shah was responsible for the aesthetics and regalia used in Qajar painting portraiture and Naser od-Din Shah played the same role but in the new medium of photography. He tried to show his power and that of his country through the photographs that were taken mostly by court photographers of him and his family. The photograph that we have just seen is a good example of this kind of court portraiture and we can see that it has a flavour of those kind of portraits painted in Fath 'Ali Shah's time. The sword and the conscious pose are two of the elements inherited from that painting tradition. A good example of this is a hand-coloured photograph of Naser od-Din Shah (fig. 107) taken and painted by the Italian photographer Luigi Montabone (d. 1877). He is wearing an astrakhan hat with aslanted top typical of the mid Qajar period, decorated with the royal aigrette ("jiqqeh") and the clothes and especially the jewellery have been made obvious with the help of the colours.

The term hybrid gesticulation or pose, as the scholar David Efron has pointed out, is used when the same individual may, if simultaneously exposed over a period of time to two or more gesturally different groups, adopt and combine certain gestural traits of both.[241] So, a person that has been living for a long time in a foreign country

[241] Efron 1972, p. 160.

and, therefore, has been exposed to different cultures, after some time will adopt some of the gestural and postural traits of her/his country of adoption and they will be present next to other poses and gestures typical of her/his own culture. The more different these two cultures would be, the more peculiar hybrid poses may appear. I would like to add that the fact that new furniture imported from the West is introduced into the lives, and into the photo studios, of people in so-called non-Western countries will lead to the appearance of new poses that will often be hybrid poses themselves. A very striking example is that of a person sitting on his heels or knees on a chair using the surface of the chair as if it were the floor. The pose is exactly the same, but the space where it appears has changed. Another peculiar example is that of climbing, squatting or kneeling on other pieces of studio furniture, like a balustrade or a column. In fig. 108, we can see a child who is sitting in a deep squat pose on a balustrade, in what seems to be a recreational reaction of the sitter to the absurd studio paraphernalia which seems to stress, even more, the absurdity of such imported studio furniture. Fig. 109 is also interesting, since most probably the photographer placed the flowerpot on the chair giving the chair a new use that was not originally intended by Europeans when they introduced the chair in the studio. Also in the work of European photographers active in Iran in nineteenth-century we can track these kinds of hybrid images, like the photograph taken by the Italian photographer Montabone where the child is sitting on a chair but in a kneeling pose (fig. 110).

When we compare the photographs where the Iranian sitter is kneeling with those where the sitter is sitting, we can appreciate that the person depicted seems more relaxed in the ones with the traditional pose, resulting in a more natural pose. It appears to me that in the kneeling pose the hands of the sitter are more natural than when he/she is sitting on a chair or standing up. When they are sitting, the pose is very rigid: the legs lay heavy one next to the other (no crossing legs) and the hands lie quite still on each leg. Nevertheless, we can also find other kinds of hand poses, a direct influence of the typical portrait of the French photographer Nadar (1820-1910): one hand is placed under the jacket of the sitter giving him, somehow, a respectable appearance. In many photographs taken by Naser od-Din Shah, this kind of pose is used. There is a parallel indigenous pose for the hands, also widely used in miniature painting and Qajar portraiture, in which one of them is placed under the belt.

In the following, I investigate if there are common elements used both in the Persian painting tradition and in nineteenth-century photography. I also study possible differences between the objects held by men and the objects held by women in photography as I have already done with painting in the previous section.

Flowers being held by men are a recurrent element to be found in nineteenth-century Iranian portrait photography. There are two kinds of portrait photographs that depict men holding flowers. The first are ordinary men holding flowers (see figs. 111 and 112), the second are mullahs or religious men (see fig. 113). Interestingly, in this kind of photographs the mullahs are always the ones who hold flowers in their hands, whereas the servants who are standing do not.

There is a third kind of image where men are depicted not holding the flowers but wearing them as part of their outfit! The men depicted were jesters. Naser od-Din Shah was fond of the company of jesters[242] and there are many photographs of jesters in the Golestan Palace Library Photo-Archive. Many of these images depict jesters

[242] For an interesting research about the role of jesters in Naser od-Din Shah's society, see: Martin 2006.

with funny, often ridiculous, ornamental elements that reveal their role as entertainers in Naser od-Din Shah's court. Abol-Ghasem Ghaffari was a well-known jester at that time, whose head and shoulders are wrapped in flowers (see fig. 114). It seems that to decorate jesters with flowers was a favourite game among the Shah and his courtiers. Another image on this theme is the one that depicts Aqa Mohammad Khajeh, eunuch of Naser od-Din Shah's court and better known as Faghir ol-Ghameh (see fig. 115). This image has more interesting elements in it. The first is the backdrop (it is the same, by the way, that was used in the previous photograph) that is clearly noticeable, the elegant chair that contrasts with the tile floor and the jester depicted on the photograph, who shows a contended pose and who wears quite a weird outfit. Namely, this just seems to be a topic that was of interest to Naser od-Din Shah but that has no further connection to painting.

Many photographs of groups are organized around a small water pond (e.g., figures 116 and 117). The use and function of those pools in photography may be related to their use and function in poetry and could then be explained by Schimmel's statement that there are very few verses in the poetry of the greatest masters of Urdu, Turkish and Persian poetry that do not reflect the religious background of Islamic culture; it is, as she puts it, like the pools in the courtyards of the mosques, in which the grandeur of the huge building is mirrored, its beauty enhanced by the strange effects of tiny waves of verdure springing forth from the shallow water.[243] This metaphoric element is probably well rooted in the Iranians' subconscious, with poetry and its images being so important to Iranians even today that its presence in photography as well could be easily understood.

Another interesting and recurrent element are pots of flowers in nineteenth-century photography, especially in Shiraz, in the studio paraphernalia, both outdoors and indoors. Shiraz, city of roses and nightingales, is an important city for poetry since some of the greatest Persian poets (such as Hafiz and Saadi) are buried there and their tombs have become shrines for Iranians. I find a stronger connection between miniature painting and photography in Shiraz, and therefore also between poetry and photography, than in other parts of Iran. The reason may be the special place of Shiraz in the Persian poetic tradition. We can see this clearly in many images, such as the one presented here (fig. 118). In this photograph we can see a group of men, both religious and secular, kneeling, sitting or standing surrounded by many pots of flowers that are present even within the window frame next to two of the men depicted. The Iranian photographer from Shiraz Mirza Habibollah Chehernegar (1896-1942), who was fond of using flowers and pots of flowers in his compositions, took this photograph. He was a son of Mirza Fathollah Chehernegar (1877-1932).[244] We already saw a photograph that depicts a child and a pot of flowers placed on the chair as part of the studio paraphernalia resulting in an interesting and different image (fig. 109).

A recurrent element to be found in many photographs is the water pipe, which was simply a logical presence, being such an important part of Iranian daily life at that time. Other elements to be found with no other purpose than giving information about the person depicted are *tasbih* or books such as the Koran or of beloved poets. Some give us information about the person depicted through the pose and gesture

[243] Schimmel 1975, p. 288.

[244] An Iranian photographer born in Shiraz and one of the members of a family that had several generations of photographers. The first photographer of this family was Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi (1854-1916). For a very good selection of his photographs and of other members of his family and also biographical information, see: Sane 1990.

without needing objects, like fig. 119, where a young man is depicted in the pose of the Muslim prayer, with hands opening up to the sky. Notice the small prayer carpet on the bottom left and the two books (most probably one Koran at least) and the Shi'a Muslim prayer's stone.

Women in photography

The topic of women is an interesting one and deserves some close attention and analysis. There is an interesting example to analyze, a full page of one of Naser od-Din Shah's (reigned 1848-1896) albums hosted in Golestan Palace, fig. 120. In this page we can see five photographs, all of them taken by Nasser od-Din Shah himself, as well as some texts written under each image. The way that the photographs are arranged is quite interesting and gives us a lot of information about the structure and hierarchy of the imperial *andaroun* or harem, in this case, Naser od-Din Shah's harem and extensive family. In the centre of the page a photograph of himself is placed, sitting on a chair and under it the text reads "my face". Circling this photograph, we can see three photographs of some of his wives: the one on the left side of the page is Turani, photographed ten days after her wedding, as we can read in the text written under the image; the photograph on the right side of the page depicts two women sitting on a brench, Bimesal Khanum and Bigam Khanum as the text under them reveals. Under the frame of the page, we can also read that Naser od-Din Shah has written, "my face with 51 years"; and there is more text that is illegible, at least for me. The last photograph is the one placed in the upper part of the page in which the eunuch Agha Mohammad Khajeh is depicted. It has been pasted to the album in a very strange way, the man rotated 90º to the left. The reason for doing so is unclear to me at the moment; perhaps it is because it was the only way to fit this portrait in the page. Note that the poses of all women are rather unnatural, sitting on chairs with legs crossed at the ancles' height, a pose that reminds us of those used when they sit cross-legged on the floor. It is also interesting to observe the way the hands are placed: the one on the right shows the woman with a hand placed on her heart (this means, as stated by the American scholar Carol M. Sparhawk in her article *Contrastive-Identification Feature of Persian Gesture*[245], "your servant". It is a widely used gesture among Iranians still today.) The other two photographs show the women with a pose that Nadar popularized, that of placing one hand crossed on the chest under the jacket or shirt. In just this single page, we can find an indigenous pose as well as a Western one. Note the dress of the women, quite shocking for an Iranian court at that time. As with court fashions in men's clothing, women's dress changed sometimes rather dramatically as the layers of long trousers shortened to a series of skirts, as noted by C.J. Wills, who worked in Persia from 1866 to 1881 as a doctor attached to the telegraph offices at Hamadan, Isfahan and Shiraz: "Their feet and legs were bare; their skirts were bouffes by a number of underskirts such as are usually worn by the ballet on our operatic stage; but instead of these undergarments being white and gauzy, they were of silk and of all colours.[246]

When taking into consideration the portrait photographs of women, we can immediately identify some elements borrowed from Qajar portraiture not only in the pose of the woman depicted but also in the objects that she is holding. Due to the traditional Islamic attitude towards portraits of women, there are not many

[245] Sparhawk 1981, p. 449.
[246] Wills 1891, p. 50. For more information about him: Scarce 1981.

photographs of women to be found. Interestingly enough, Naser od-Din Shah took photographs of all his wives, most of them in formal poses, but also we can find others in a more intimate poses. Since his photography was only meant to be seen by himself, it is of great interest, from both a historical and an aesthetic point of view. The existence of these photographs provides an interesting bridge between the perception and the reality of harems and that of Naser od-Din Shah in particular. But what is especially interesting and important to point out is that this reality, like those of the Orientalist painters and photographers, is maybe staged too. Nevertheless, the actors are real and the photographer is the master of the harem himself. The reality depicted is a staged reality for the purpose of that picture alone and for the pleasure of the photographer alone. Not many of these images have been printed, but one of them is especially interesting as far as the pose is concerned: that of Anis al-Dawleh, one of his favourites, in the reclining odalisque-like pose (fig. 105). This reclining pose, very much favored by Orientalist paintings, is used here by Naser od-Din Shah in the form of some kind of astonishing mirror representation in which this native photographer represents his own people in the way that the Westerners perceive them.[247] This phenomenon has been named "self-orientalizing" by the Iranian scholar 'Ali Behdad and as he defines 'it is the practice of seeing and representing oneself as Europe's Other'.[248] Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the photographs of women analyzed here were taken exclusively by Naser od-Din Shah. In this sense, I disagree with Behdad's conclusion further in his paper regarding this topic. He states that 'there is an "indigenous" tradition of photography in Iran, but this tradition, as I will discuss later, is not organic. By this I mean, it is indebted to, and mimetic of, Orientalism's aesthetic values and ideological assumptions more than to its Iranian and Islamic tradition.[249] This maybe true when analyzing the work of Naser od-Din Shah and some Iranian court photographers, but it is certainly wrong when taking in consideration the work of local or bazaar photographers who were more exposed to their Iranian traditions such as Mohammad Nuri and Mirza Fathollah Chehernegar (1877-1932). I have already analyzed the work of these two and other Iranian photographers and there is, indeed, a clear influence on them from Persian miniature painting.

I have never seen printed images of fully naked Iranian women taken by Iranian photographers in books, but I have seen them while researching the photo-archives of the Golestan Palace Library in Tehran. Interestingly enough, I found three portraits of fully naked women, something quite unusual to find, since most of the prints of photographs have been given some make up due to censorship.[250] I have found in different books several printed photographs of women with transparent

[247] The word *odalisque* appears in a French form and originates from the Turkish *odalik,* meaning "chambermaid". During the nineteenth century odalisques became common fantasy figures in Orientalist painting.

[248] Behdad 2001, p. 148.

[249] Behdad 2001, p. 145.

[250] Since the Islamic Revolution took place in Iran in 1979, in Fine Art and Art History Universities there is a especial training on making-up of art works for artists that will work for the government later on as censors. This information was given me to me by some Iranian artists who remember how some artists have mastered to transform some famous Western paintings of naked women in their full dressed version ones. That is the reason why there are so many books about impressionists and so few about figurative painting. I myself saw many prints of photographs in Golestan Palace Library that had been heavily over- painted with a black pen in order to hide the naked parts of women's bodies. An interesting work inspired by this is the one done by the Iranian photographer Shadi Ghadirian. See: Rose, Issa, ed., *Shadi Ghadirian. Iranian Photographer,* London, Saqi Books, 2008.

blouses that reveal clearly their breasts and bellies. Most of the images of women present a hybrid approach mostly represented by the chair in which she is sitting. In clear contrast to this, in all of the Qajar portrait paintings that I have studied, the women are either kneeling on the floor or standing. I have not found any chairs in those paintings. See, for instance, fig. 121, which is actually an album page where two photographs of women have been placed together. The two are actually wives of Naser od-Din Shah and that he photographed himself. I have seen many of these images of his wives that are placed in different albums hosted at the Golestan Palace Library. All women sit in the same richly carved rococo wooden chair and are photographed in exactly the same way, frontally and hieraticly. Often the feet are cut out, as in these two photographs, and there is not too much space above their heads. The woman sitting on the left is holding a sitar and reminds us of the typical Qajar painting portraits of women playing instruments (see fig. 101). In the photograph next to the previous one, the woman is depicted with a transparent blouse that clearly reveals her breasts and her belly (see the woman on the right side of fig. 121). This kind of chemise is the same style as the ones used in some Qajar painting portraits (see fig. 101), but the long thick trousers have been changed by the ballerina-skirt that became fashionable in Naser od-Din Shah's harem at a later stage. As stated by Najmabadi, a figure that appears repeatedly in Qajar art is the bare-breasted woman. Allthough nude females as well as females whose breasts are visible through sheer clothing do appear in Safavid and Zand art, the bare-breasted woman, or woman with breasts emphatically displayed through style of dress or association with fetishistic objects, seem to be a heavily accented theme in Qajar painting.[251] One interesting detail is that in all photographs of women that I have found, they all wear socks and shoes, whereas in the paintings the women are barefoot and the soles of their feet are painted with henna. Notice that the normally joined eyebrows that many of the women were fond of in this case presents a variant that shows two thick and long eyebrows with a black painted point between them. This might be a special fashion, but I have no factual information regarding this. Above both photographs there are two calligraphic inscriptions that reveal the identity of the women: Fatimeh Sultan Tarchi (Fatimeh The Tar Player) on the left and Zahra Sultan on the right. When the woman depicted passed away, there was always a calligraphic inscription on the left side of her image that informs the observer of this: *mord,* the Persian word for dead.

When women are holding objects, these are usually musical instruments. I have not found women holding books or religious objects. Interestingly enough, I have not found photographs of women holding flowers!

The Western photographer's representation of Iranian women was quite different than the Iranian one. It is interesting that the German photographer Ernest Hoeltzer (1855-1930) was concerned on offering an image of Iran based on real life, on observation from daily life; many of the photographs he staged in his studio involve images in which the people sit on the floor while eating, singing or playing instruments. A good example is the portrait of a group of women eating and playing music (fig. 122). (Notice that in this case the plane of the photographer has been lowered as well.) At the other end of the spectrum, we find the commercial (but talented) photographer from Tiflis, Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830's-1933), who stressed the exotic side of this culture (to be more precisely, exotic to Western eyes), with images like fig. 123, which is hosted at the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden. Next to the photograph there

[251] Najmabadi 1999, p. 77.

is a caption: Persian toilet. And even more shocking and "exotic": the sitter is a woman. Also taken by Sevruguin is the portrait of an Iranian woman (fig. 124), depicted naked with her hand resting on a chair. These kinds of images of Middle Eastern women were quite usual in the second half of nineteenth-century and were especially constructed by Western photographers. The women who posed for such images were normally prostitutes, as the Algerian writer Malek Alloula states in *The Colonial Harem*. As he states, 'the photographer used paid models that he recruited almost exclusively on the margins of the society in which loss of social position, in the make of the conquest and the subsequent overturning of traditional structures, affects men as well as women (invariably propelling the latter toward prostitution)'.[252] As stated by Graham-Brown, 'many of these images of women, which hardened into clichés, were drawn from a pre-existing repertoire of themes already established by a genre of Orientalist painting which had developed, particularly in France and Germany, from the first half of the nineteenth century'.[253]

Barthes rejects the idea that "it was the painters who invented photography (by bequeathing in their framing, the Albertian perspective, and the optic of the camera obscura)". He argues that 'it was the chemists who were responsible for its creation'.[254] Graham-Brown states further that, in subject matter and construction, albeit not in aesthetic intention, it might be argued that Orientalist painting had a considerable influence on nineteenth-century studio photography of the Middle East.[255] I will return to this and investigate this topic more deeply in chapter 5 concerned with Western influences on nineteenth century Iranian photography. A few examples from Iranian and Western photographers have shown us that it often happens that the analysis of images from the nineteenth century reveals more about the state of mind of the photographers in particular and society in general (biased perception of reality and the consequent biased representation of that reality, both by Western and Iranian photographers) than the objective reality of the social mesh or the photographs and the people represented on them.

To summarize, in this chapter I have investigated photographs and paintings through one of their cultural components: the pose of the sitter and, as a part of the pose, the objects held by him/her. The analysis of the pose of the sitter revealed once again a cultural conditioning in the process of taking and producing photographs. Both the photographer and the sitter constructed photographs conditioned by the image that they wanted to give of themselves and they achieve that through the use of particular objects.

There is a clear influence of the pose used in Persian painting tradition on the pose of nineteenth-century Iranian studio photography: the kneeling pose, the cushion on the sitter's back, the pose of the hands, the objects that the sitter is holding, etc. We can find the same evolutionary phenomenon of the pose in the photographer's studio as we found in the painters' studio: rising from the floor to the chair level. Of course, in the case of photography, the process happens in a shorter period of time than in the case of painting. The fact that the sitter leaves the floor to climb on a chair is clearly an influence of the Western photo-studio's mode. There are *hybrid* poses to be found due to the double exposure of the sitter and photographer to the traditional Persian

[252] Alloula 1986, p. 17.
[253] Graham-Brown 1988, p. 40.
[254] Barthes 2000, p. 80.
[255] Graham-Brown 1988, p. 40.

culture and the (new) Western influence. Such *hybrid* poses are found widely among Iranian photographers, but also in some Western photographers who had been in Iran long enough to get exposed to the influence of the Iranian culture, like Ernst Hoeltzer who lived in Isfahan for over 30 years and married an Armenian woman. The photographs of women were mostly taken by Naser-od Din Shah and present them in a respectful mode, all sitting on highly decorated and elaborated chairs. Therefore, the influence of the Western sitting pose is especially interesting in the case of photographs of women and contrasts with the lack of chairs in Qajar painting portraiture of women. Indeed, the pose not only was use to stress social status, but also to express fantasy and ideals as well. The portrait of the women in painting as idealized form is a clear indication of this claim. Portraits of men are in a more stern and serious pose than those of the women, who are posed in more inclined, and fanciful, or even in dancing or acrobatic poses. This hints at a bitter truth that men were real while women mostly were anonymous or even none-existing.

As far as the objects are concerned, the traditionally depicted objects on Persian miniature painting and Qajar portraiture (*tasb*i, flowers, water-pipe, swords, cushion, etc) are also to be found in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. The women would normally hold musical instruments and the men religiuos objects, swords, flowers or water-pipes.

4. ARRANGEMENT OF SPACE

The function of "space" in Persian traditional painting, greatly influenced by Iranian mystic culture, may have lent itself to nineteenth-century Iranian photography by a large extend. I will devote this chapter to explore the understanding of space in Persian painting and the influence that this may have had on nineteenth-century Iranian photography. I will analyze the formal use of space both in Persian miniature painting and photography. The main research issues related to the arrangement of the space in Persian miniature painting are topics such as the non-linear perspective approach or the isometrical perspective (also called parallel perspective) to project a three-dimensional space onto a two-dimensional picture plane; the existence of multiple centres of attention (*diffuse* composition); the grid layout structure; and the vertical composition/vertical perspective. I will introduce the kinds of compositions that can be defined on the basis of the arrangement of the elements in the pictorial or photographic space, and explore the ones that are peculiar to nineteenth-century Iranian photography as influenced by the Persian painting tradition.

4.1. Spatial characteristics of Persian miniature painting

Space is perceived, understood, represented and inhabited in different ways in different cultures. This observation follows the same line of thought presented in the previous chapters of my book, and defends that artistic representation and composition is culture conditioned.

As Helen Westgeest states in her book *Zen in the fifties. Interaction in Art Between East and West,* Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945)[256] described the traditional Japanese way of suggesting space as follows: "The space in art from the Far East is not the space facing the self, but the space in which the self is situated".[257] Further, she remarks that the Japanese artist Hajime Shimoyama confirmed this in an interview with the comment that space for Western artists exists primarily in front of him, whereas for the Japanese artist space is surrounds him.[258] This difference, states Westgeest, would seem to be reflected in the terms *observation* with respect to Western artists, and *participation* with respect to Japanese artists. She remarks also that, in the words of the French scholar of cultural geography Augustin Berque, the opposition between subject and object, between self and non-self, appears only at a certain level, while at another level both terms merge. The surroundings are, in his opinion even more important than the subject, a phenomenon, which he calls *contextualism*. He contrasts this with the Western approach, which he defines as: "This culture less easily assimilates itself to nature because, fundamentally, the subject's spontaneous self-definition, or particularity, acts in opposition to the definition, or naturalness, of its environment".[259] Interestingly, the analysis that I will present here points to the fact that Iranians also perceive space in a more active way, meaning here, that individuals become part of the whole picture, the whole surrounding space. I will come back to this later while analyzing photographs. Another interesting appreciation that is

[256] Prominent Japanese philosopher, founder of what has been called the Kyoto School of Philosophy.
[257] Westgeest 1998, p. 20.
[258] Westgeest 1998, p. 25, note 48.
[259] Westgeest 1998, p. 25, note 49.

relevant for this research, is that of the French scholar Bernard Hourcade about the understanding and meaning of mountains (and space in general) for Iranian people. He stated in a conference held in Paris in 2006 that Iranians tend to feel that they are part of and somehow belong to the space that surrounds them.[260] This is interesting since it agrees with the way the Iranian people are present in nineteenth-century photographs of big groups of people and of buildings: people invade the whole structure of the building as we shall see later in this chapter, becoming part of the structure.

It is quite obvious that when we are looking at paintings and photographs made by artists from different cultures, we realize that there is a different understanding of space, a different treatment of photographic or pictorial space. If we take a representative series of Persian book paintings from a particular school and observe them with analytical attention, then it is straightforward to conclude that they obey certain conventions governing the depiction of space. The art of Persian miniature painting, so delicate and yet so vigorous, is an interesting historical manifestation. It is impossible to specify characteristics, which are applicable to all Persian miniature paintings, since there are many different schools with their own peculiarities. However, there are a number of recurring aspects regarding the understanding of the space. To be sure, many of these conventions differ greatly from those followed in Western painting, especially after the Italian Renaissance. In Western works since the Renaissance, a clear composition with one centre of attention dominates, whereas in Oriental traditional miniature paintings (Indian, Iranian, Chinese, etc.) we clearly find different centres of attention. That is the first difference that we can notice and that is related to the grid structure layout of the Oriental miniatures.

The second topic that I will take into consideration is the isometric perspective used in Persian miniature paintings (inherited most probably from the Chinese) in contrast to Western linear perspective. The latter issue deals with vertical composition and vertical perspective. These spatial elements can be actually grouped in two clusters: the first one being concerned with the fragmentation of the space into units (diffuse composition/grid layout structure) and the second one being concerned with methods of suggesting perspective. I will devote some time to each one of these three sub-sections.

Diffuse and scanned compositions / grid layout structure

The French art historian Lucien Rudrauf has made a systematic study of compositional patterns. This study is sixty years old, but I find it still applicable as far as the definitions are concerned. He distinguishes two families of plastic composition: *diffuse* and *scanned.* However, I do not quite agree with his idea that the scanned composition is more interesting (or developed) from an aesthetic point of view. He calls that type of composition *diffuse* which, without being unrhythmic, does not follow any hierarchical principle in the distribution of its elements. In Rudrauf's words, compositions of this kind are often made of a great number of details, none of which is marked with a predominant accent. The eye is not guided to go from one object to another. Attention scatters itself without hindrance over all parts of the

[260] I attended this conference in the Institute of History in Paris in June 2006, but the paper was not published, so I can only recall his words from the conference.

plane, with nothing to lead it imperiously back to the centre of radiation. Such pictures can be freely cut up into sections capable of having an independent life. Diffuse compositions ignore, intentionally or not, the effect of lighting which produces accents and contrasts incompatible with its nature. These kinds of compositions are often, if not always, freed from the laws of perspective (of linear perspective, as I emphasize).[261]

The Persian miniature, as we shall see later in this chapter, offers typical examples of such diffuse composition. In Occidental art this is an exceptional phenomenon, most often encountered in earlier epochs, before the Italian Renaissance. But it does not disappear in the more evolved stage of spatial realism. The Dutch painters Jerome Bosch (1453-1516) and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569) prefered it. In the words of Rudrauf, its theoretical interest lies, in part, in the position of its essential characteristics in those of the other large class of plastic compositions: scanned.[262] Rudrauf calls that type of composition *scanned* which spreads out before our eyes according to a spatial rhythm which is strongly hierarchical, allowing principal and secondary accents, marked with variable strength but always clearly perceptible. In sum, there are two different kinds of composition, diffuse and scanned, the first being relevant for my study since it is the one that is present in Persian miniature painting and also, as I shall show with clear examples, used in nineteenth-century Iranian photography. Both mediums display a composition that presents multiple centres of attention.

In an interview with Westgeest[263], we viewed some Persian miniature paintings and discussed the arrangement of the space in Persian miniatures and its possible influence on nineteenth century Iranian photographs. She remarked on the resemblance of the formal structure of the miniatures and that of the *grid* that became popular at the beginning of the twentieth century in European art. The multiple centres of attention characteristic of Persian miniatures, are supported or framed by a structure that resembles the grid layout structure, this late concept being a Western contemporary concept. I will briefly introduce this concept to further analyze it in Persian miniatures.

In the early part of the last century there began to appear in France and shortly after in Russia and Holland a structure that has remained emblematic of the modernist ambition within the visual arts ever since. As art critic Rosalind Krauss states, 'surfacing the pre-War cubist painting and subsequently becoming even more stringent and manifest, the grid announces, among other things, modern art's will to silence its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse'.[264] Krauss continues that there are two ways in which the grid functions to declare the modernity of modern art. 'One is spatial; the other is temporal. In the spatial sense, the grid states the absolute autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometricized, ordered, it is anti-natural, anti-mimetic, anti-real. It is what art looks like when it turns its back on nature. In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral spread of a single surface.

[261] Rudrauf 1949, p. 329.
[262] Rudrauf 1949, p. 329.
[263] In Leiden, September 2008. I am very grateful to Helen Westgeest for her ideas and reading of the photographs and paintings selected for this chapter, especially regarding the topic of axonometry/isometrical perspective and grid structure layout.
[264] Krauss 1979, p. 51.

In the over-all regularity of its organization, it is the result not of imitation, but of aesthetic decree. Insofar as its order is that of pure relationship, the grid is a way of abrogating the claims of natural objects to have an order particular to themselves; the relationships in the aesthetic field are shown by the grid to be *sui generis* and, with respect to natural objects, to be both prior and final. The grid declares the space of art to be at once autonomous and autotelic. In the temporal dimension, the grid is an emblem of modernity by just being that: the form that is ubiquitous in the art of our century, while appearing nowhere at all, in the art of the last one. In that great set of chain reactions by which modernism was born out of the efforts of the nineteenth-century, one final shift resulted in breaking the chain, Krauss arguments. By "discovering" the grid, Cubism, De Stijl, Mondrian, Malevich, etc., landed in a place that was out of reach of everything that went before. This is to say, they landed in the present, and everything else was declared to be the past'.[265]

Krauss points out that one has to travel a long way back into the history of art to find previous examples of grids. She is referring here to the Western world; one has to go to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, to treatises on perspective and to those exquisite studies by Ucello, Leonardo or Dürer, where the perspective lattice is inscribed in the depicted world as the armature of its organization. But perspective studies are not really early instances of grids. Perspective was, after all, regarded as the science of the real for a long period of time, not the mode of withdrawal from it. Perspective was the demonstration of the way reality and its representation could be mapped onto one another, the way the painted image and its real-world referent did in fact relate to one another - the first being a form of knowledge about the second. Everything about the grid opposes that relationship, cuts it off from the very beginning. Unlike perspective, the grid does not map the space of a room or a landscape or a group of figures onto the surface of a painting. Indeed, if it maps anything, it maps the surface of the painting itself.[266]

The grid has played a central role in the development and consolidation of the modern movement in twentieth-century graphic design, according to the graphic designer historian Jack H. Williamson.[267] His article "The grid: History, Use and Meaning", is an interesting analysis of the evolution of the grid in Western art. The article starts with the late medieval grid followed by the Renaissance and Cartesian grids, then the modern grid to finish with the post-modern grid. It is an interesting article that explores the evolution of the grid from a symbolic and formal point of view. In the words of Williamson, for practical purposes, the process may be said to begin with Paul Cézanne's initial move away from Renaissance illusionism toward the abstraction and geometricization of nature and an emphasis on the flat field of the picture plane. This impulse continues through the faceting of the picture plane by synthetic cubism to produce an overall effect, and it peaks when Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) takes up the pictorial grid of synthetic cubism to explore and purify it in virtual isolation from other pictorial elements. Under cubism's influence, Mondrian's naturalistic subject matter became progressively abstracted and continued to employ vertical and horizontal bars, sometimes colored and usually not touching, on a white field. Often these bars appear to continue off the edge of the canvas, suggesting that the field extends infinitely in all directions although the viewer sees only that portion visible within the "window" of the canvas.[268] This is also the sensation that may be

[265] Krauss 1978, p. 3.
[266] Krauss 1978, p. 4.
[267] Williamson 1986, p. 15.
[268] Williamson 1986, p. 22.

produced in the viewer by many Persian miniatures, like the ones that will be analyzed here, since they all share this sense that the scene goes on in all directions and off the page.

The grid shares, only structurally, the non-linear perspective approach of the Persian miniature painting tradition and its characteristics of non-realistic representation of the real world. There is an interesting corpus of literature on the "grid layout" for Persian miniatures, much of it determined by the text, including the module of column and ultimately the pen-stroke. It is interesting to note that these authors do not use the term "grid" to refer to this phenomenon. The grid structure that underlies every miniature is made more obvious through the way in which architecture has been used to divide space into blocks, as we will see with clear examples in the next section. The first attempt to make a rigorous study of the grid layout was done in the 1930s by co-authors Emmy Wellesz and Kurt Blauensteiner, in "Illustrationen zur einer Geschichte Timurs".[269] They achieved interesting conclusions after analyzing a manuscript of the *Zafar-nameh*[270] dated in 953 (1546) and designated as "The Praetorious Codex". The structural base of composition is best understood in the form of a diagram that was done by these two authors after the study (fig. 125). Also the Islamic art historian Grace Dunham Guest did a classical and fundamental study in the 1940s on the use of space and composition of Persian miniatures, "Shiraz Painting in the Sixteenth Century".[271] She undertook a deep analysis of the "inner order" and excellence in composition found in the miniatures of the manuscript volume of the *Khamsa* of Nizami[272] held at the Freer and Sackler Gallery of Art in Washington. She explained that this inner order is based on a mathematically-controlled plotting of the page design as a whole. She states that the complete Shiraz canon of proportion, then, which was evolved in the third decade of the sixteenth century appears in the diagram illustrated in figure 126. As stated by Dunham, greater liberties were taken with the "canon" towards the end of the century when the "inner axes" were sometimes abandoned and the upright composition based on divisions of thirds adopted (figure 127). Another, more recent, fundamental study of the understanding of space in Persian miniature painting was written in the 1970s by the Iranian archaeologist and research director at the CNRS (Paris) Chahryar Adle, "Recherche sur le module at le tracé correcteur dans la miniature orientale".[273] In this study he deeply analyzes, with the rigour of a mathematician, some miniatures and draws a schema of designs for them, like the modular composition and "traces correcteurs" (fig. 128) of the scene of *Shah Abbas attacking the Uzbek army* from *Fotuhat-e Hamayun,* from the school of Shiraz (fig.129). Note the position of the hand of the man right on the centre of the image, the vertical divisions of the page in three vertical identical parts regulated by the length of the text. After this analysis, I

[269] Wellesz 1936.

[270] The *Zafar-nameh* is an epic poem written by the Persian poet Hamdollah Mostowfi (d. 1334). The epic history explores Iranian history from the Arab conquest to the Mongols.

[271] Dunham 1949.

[272] Nizami-ye Ganjavi (1140-1202) is considered the greatest romantic epic poet in Persian literature, who brought a coloquial and realistic style to the Persian epic. His *Khamsa* consisted of 5 poems written in the form of couplets: *Makhzan al-Asrar*(„Treasure of Secrets", 1177); *Khosrov and Shirin* (1180); *Leyla and Majnun* (1188); *Haft Paikar* ("Seven Beuatifull Girls", 1196) and *Iskandar-Nama* (1203, usually divided into the *Sharaf-Nama,* which deals with Iskandar's conquests, and the *Iqbal-Nama,* which deals with his prophetic mission). For general information, see, J.R. Rypka et al. *History of Iranian Literature,* Dordrecht, 1968, pp. 210-219.

[273] Adle 1975.

can state that miniatures do present a grid-layout structure and I wil study later in this chapter if this holds true also for Iranian photography.

Linear perspective versus isometrical projection

Isometry (like linear perspective) is a graphic method to project three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional picture plane. With an isometrical perspective, the length and width of a cube are placed on the horizontal line of projection with an angle of 30 degrees (see fig. 130).

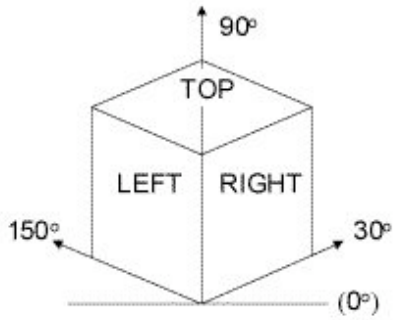
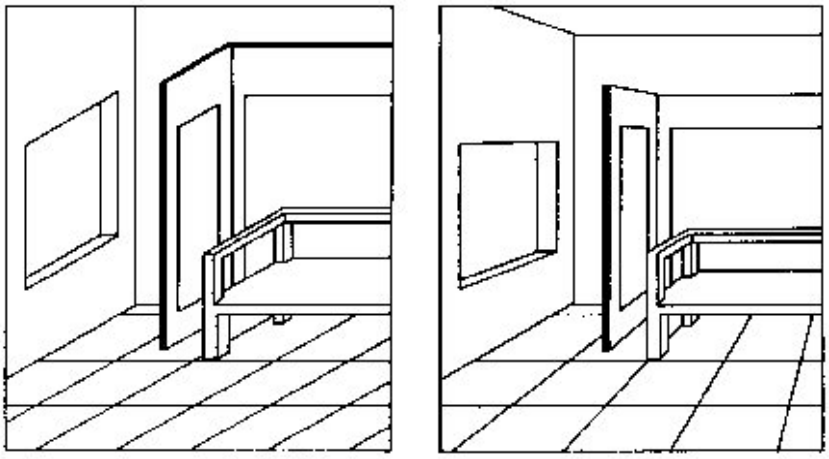


Figure 130

The three dimensions of a cube are projected onto the picture plane without optical distortion. Height, width, and length are true to scale, they are rendered in equal measures. To be more precise, measurements do not change, but optically they distort: there are no 90º corners (squares become rombus). This is different from linear perspective, in which edges that recede from the viewer are drawn shorter to stimulate the optical effect of things looking smaller in the distance. Because things do not get smaller in the distance in isometrical perspective, parallel lines remain parallel. The projection of three-dimensional space onto the two dimensional picture plane is a problem that has roots far back in history. In Europe, the problem was tackled by Renaissance artists such as Filippo Brunelleschi (1377-1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472). As stated by the journalist expert in Asia technology Jan Krikke, traditionally European art was based on optical representation.[274] This method of representing linear perspective dominated European art until it was challenged in the twentieth century by the Cubists, who interpreted reality by juxtaposing several viewpoints on a single canvas. The discovery of the vanishing point, which means that the lines of projection meet at an imaginary point at the horizon, resulted in linear perspective: a perspective that is achieved by receding to the vanishing point. Linear perspective tries to achieve visual realism in paintings of three-dimensional environments. But not only in Europe a system to project space on the two-dimensional picture plane was developed. In China, axonometry was developed, which unlike linear perspective is not based on optical principles. In axonometry there

[274] The invention of linear perspective in Western art in the Renaissance was achieved thanks to the discovery of the mathematical priciples that underly the concept of perspective by the Arab polymath Abu Ali Ibn al-Hasan Ibn al-Haitham (965-1040), known in the West as Alhazen. He made significant contributions to the principles of optics, astronomy, anatomy, visual perception and to science in general with his intrioduction to the scientific model. See: Saliba, George, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance,* Cambride, Mass., 2007; and "al-Haytam", in Onians, John, *Neuroarthistory. From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki,* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, pp. 38-41.

is no vanishing point and, therefore, no optical distortion (see fig. 131, an illustration of the difference between axonometry as it is used in Chinese painting (left) and linear perspective).[275]



. Figure 131

In Chinese and Japanese painting, we can find easily examples of building interiors in which its structural elements like pillars will remain parallel as they are in reality and their size and geometry remains constant (see fig. 132), even if at first sight observers may perceive them as divergent. The key features of axonometry are its high vantage point and the parallel lines of projection in the three principal directions: lines that are parallel in the three-dimensional space remain parallel in the two dimensional picture, in contrast with linear perspective in which lines along the z-axis in the three dimensional space collapse to a single vanishing point at the horizon in the two dimensional picture. As we can appreciate in the Japanese woodprint just introduced above, another characteristic of this kind of perspective is that objects that are distant have the same size as objects that are near; objects do not get smaller as they move away from the viewer. Axonometry was introduced to Europe in the seventeenth-century by Jesuits returning from China, Krikke mentions. However, the wider acceptance of axonometry had to wait until it was given a mathematical foundation, by William Farish who provided axonometry with its geometrical basis. He formulated isometry, which means "equal measures" because the same scale is used for height, width and depth.[276]

An interesting book by the German art historian Hans Belting, *Florenz und Bagdad. Eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks,* offers a well documented and argumentative study of the Arabic origins of the Western linear perspective in art and constitutes a comparative study of the way of looking in the West and in the Islamic world. He shows differences and similitudes between the way of looking and thinking in the East and the West. As Belting states, "Die heutige Globalisierung der Perspektive, die in dem westlichen Patent der weltweiten Medien TV und Presse Unterstützung findet, hat in der Kolonisation anderer Erdteile wie auch in ihrer Missionerung für das Christentum eine erstaunlich lange Vorgeschichte. In diesem gewaltsamen Export wurde die Perspective anderen Kulturen gegen deren eigene Sehgewohnheiten förmilch aufgezwungen".[277]

[275] Example taken from Krikke 1996.
[276] Krikke 1996. Further reading: Krikke 2000.
[277] Belting 2008, p. 54.

As observed by the art historian Peter Owen, the same perspective system was used by Byzantine, Islamic, Chinese, Indian, and Persian artists, and can be also seen in early periods of Assyrian and Egyptian art and European Medieval painting. Childrens and "naïve" or outsider artists also rely on this system to express three-dimensional form.[278] Interestingly enough and agreeing with the previous statement, as noted by Westgeest,[279] this system of projection of three-dimensional space onto the two-dimensional picture plane was used as well in Persian miniature painting. I will come back to this topic when I undertake the visual analysis of those miniatures further below in this same chapter.

Vertical compositions/vertical perspective

Around the fourteenth century the Shiraz School of miniature painting introduced a new system of vertical perspective, in which figures are shown one over the other, overlapping, and where such things as ponds and carpets appear as flat on the page.[280] In *Humay and Humayan Meeting in the Garden*[281] (fig. 133), we can see this way of placing the figures one over the other in this miniature that depicts two lovers that meet at night in a luxurious and enclosed garden. The bright colors, the flower motifs in the margins and the faces and figures with rounded contours, fine lines, narrow eyes and rather characteristic sideways glances are particular to the Shiraz School of later fourteenth century Persia. In this kind of vertical perspective, the objects most distant from the spectator are placed at the top; those closest at the bottom. After analyzing Persian miniatures, it seems that there is a tendency to use this kind of vertical perspective from the late fourteenth century onwards.

On the other hand, layering or vertical composition in the arrangement of the sitters in the pictorial space, has been used by several Persian miniature painting schools. A well-known example of this is *The Court of Fath 'Ali Shah,* painted by an unknown artist around 1815 (fig. 134). It is an image in miniature scale which evokes the monumental imperial enthronement scenes. The watercolor is one of a series of reduced copies of life-size wall paintings in the Negarestan palace outside of Tehran, as stated by Diba. She argues further that 'the original wall paintings represented an imaginary New Year's reception at the court of the monarch. The murals were completed in 1812-13 for the reception hall of the palace, by a team of artists led by 'Abdullah Khan. The copies (undated and unsigned, and executed in opaque watercolor, oil, and engraving) were produced sometime between the completion of the mural in 1812-13 and 1834, the year of Fath 'Ali Shah's death'.[282] The central image depicts Fath 'Ali Shah enthroned with twelve of his multiple sons.[283]Fath 'Ali Shah sits on a large jeweled throne with a sword across his lap and a nargileh pipe in his hand. His sons are depicted all standing (a symbol of respect) with their arms

[278] Owen 1970, p. 204.
[279] Interview done in Leiden, December 2008.
[280] See: Talbot 1971.
[281] *Humay and Humayan* is a medieval Persian romance written by the Persian poet Khwaju Kirmani (1280- 1352). For further information see "Humay and Humayan: A Medieval Persian Romance", in *Annali Instituto Italiano per il Medio e Estremo Oriente,* Roma, 1990, pp. 347-57.
[282] Diba 1999, p. 174.
[283] For a detailed descrition of this image and identification of Fath 'Ali Shah's sons, see: Eskandari-Qajar, Manoutchehr, M.: "The Message of the Negarestan Mural of Fath 'Ali Shah and His Sons: Snapshot of Court Protocol or Determinant of Dynastic Succession", in *Qajar Studies,* Rotterdam/Gronsveld/Santa Barbara/Tehran, 2008, pp. 17-41.

crossed and all of them identified by a yellow inscription to their right. In the lower section ambassadors from France, Great Britain, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and the kingdoms of Sind and Arabia are depicted in meticulous detail. Another example of this layered vertical composition is *Saf-e Salam* (fig. 135), also painted by 'Abdulla Khan. In this image, we can see three rows and in each one of them five men have been depicted. Hierarchy is surely one of the reasons for the layering structure: notice the long beared men in the top of row, whereas in the middle and bottom rows the men do not have a beard, an indication that the men in the upper row are older (and consequently more influential) than those on the middle and lower rows. In this painting the fifteen men are depicted standing with their arms crossed. All of them are sons and grandsons of Fath 'Ali Shah.

4.2. The use of space in Persian miniature painting

Having defined the different types of spatial composition, I will analyze a selected group of Persian miniatures that show all or some of the three spatial elements that I have just introduced and defined above.

One of the miniatures that I have found in the course of this research where we can more clearly notice the isometrical perspective used to suggest the three-dimensional space, is *Life in Town,* a painting probably intended for Shah Tahmasp's manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa*, Tabriz, 1539-43 (fig. 136). We can notice that all lines remain parallel in the three dimensions of the space, not receding to a vanishing point, and all the figures depicted in this painting have the same size. The vertical composition here only seems to reinforce the suggestion of a three dimensional space by isometrical perspective. In this dense image that is an evocation of urban life in sixteenth century Iran, all kinds of people from different social and economic classes and ages are depicted. They are all engaged in different activities and pleasures that are typical of the evening hours, as we can see by the darkness used in the colours of the sky. In the bottom left corner of the painting, there is a group of male musicians playing different instruments. Right above them, a prince hosts a reception for noblemen on a tiled blue terrace. Notice the three servants bringing fruits and cones of sugar. There is also a group of women sitting on a balcony in the upper left part of the image and observing what is happening on the terrace while listening at the music played by the musicians. Candles, oil lamps and all other lighting sources are spread all over the space through the private houses, the markets (see an active market scene right in the centre of the painting) and the mosque (see in the right top corner, the building that has the richest external decoration in the painting). This is a fascinating painting where many different events are happening in multiple centres of attention at the same time and with a narrative that gives the image a temporal and spatial dimension at the same time. The grid layout structure is also clear. The apparent lack of compositional organization in this picture is remarkable. Instead it appears to be a series of urban and genre-like architectural vignettes comfortably fitted together, even if at times the spatial logic would have us accept that a blossoming fruit tree can grow on a public walkway beside a high brick wall in the midst of a market.

The Persian outlook is essentially and incurably romantic. It enjoys all that is marvelous, it is quite ready to believe the incredible. The painter stages his scene for his own and the spectator's enjoyment, much as it might be arranged in a theatre.[284]

[284] Binyon et al. 1933 , p. 5.

Here is important to note that the majority of the Persian miniatures that I have seen during this research are vertical. In this particular painting, it is especially clear to note that there is a combination of two spatial strategies to give the painting an alternative way of suggesting perspective: isometrical and vertical perspective. In the vertical perspective, the objects most distant from the viewer are placed at the top, whereas the objects closest to the viewer are placed at the bottom. This combination of isometrical and vertical perspectives is something that is typical of Persian miniature painting and that I have not found, for instance, in Japanese or Chinese painting. Actually, it is relevant in order to understand the difference in the use of isometrical perspective in these countries that the origin of axonometry in China was found in the Chinese scroll paintings. A typical scroll painting has a size of approximately 40 cms high by several meters wide. For these scroll paintings, the Chinese painters needed a perspective that had no explicit vanishing points; every scene of the scroll painting would be seen individually, and a vanishing point that lies outside the viewpoint creates a disoriented view of the scene. The Chinese painters solved the problem by drawing lines along the z-axis as parallel lines in the scroll painting. This has the effect of placing the horizon at an imaginary line high above the painting. The axonometric projection is a technical term for a group of perspectives to which Chinese parallel perspective also belongs.[285] This is an important difference between the arrangement of the space and use of isometrical perspective used in China and Japan (horizontal format) and introduced here in contrast to this in Iran (vertical format). Notice that Japan has also *kakemono* (= hanging vertical scroll) as opposed to *makimono* which is meant to be unrolled laterally on a flat surface. The *kakemono* is intended to be hung against a wall as part of the interior decoration and lacks, due to its format, the isometric perspective approach that was shown in the horizontal scrolls. Interestingly, what both pictorial traditions share and make them different from a Western spatial approach in painting, is that in Oriental painting the eyes scan parallel to the surface instead of looking from foreground to background as in the Western approach.

Wedding Celebration of Prince Humay and Princess Humayan (fig. 137) painted by Junayd Naqqash Sultani in 1396, is another example where we find several of the spatial elements introduced above. As noted by Blair, 'the window-grille above the princess's head (the one sitting on her bed at the left side of the image), bears the signature of Junayad, "the royal painter", the first unquestionably genuine signature in Persian manuscript painting'.[286] The floors of the royal halls, the palace gardens or the fields are represented vertically on the first plane, and then, immediately, the eye passes on to succeeding planes, which follow each other vertically, or at opposite angles, with their princely banquets, hunting, battle or love scenes. The picture plane is conceived as a flat backdrop against which the figures are posed in a circle. Here the vertical perspective used to suggest three dimensional space is also clear: the way in which the figures have been arranged to give the impression that the ones placed at the bottom are closest to the observer, whereas the ones placed at the top are most distant. In this case, the princess is the one that seems to be furthest from our view, inside of her room and sitting on her bed. In the words of Grabar, 'a fascinating composition with dominant red colors in which all the episodes of a wedding, from

[285] Thiadmer 2009. This article shows two interesting examples that can be seen on-line of two scroll Chinese paintings that have been digitalized and can be seen as a continuum. The second example is a reproduction from a18th century remake of a 11-meter handscroll by artists of the Qing court. It is a good example to understand the isometrical perspective in Chinese painting.

[286] Blair & Bloom 1994, p. 33.

sexual consummation to dancing, are either depicted or symbolized'.[287] As stated by Blair, 'the depiction of architecture is particularly elaborate, with geometric tile dadoes, floral arabesque archways, compartment carpets, and carved plaster grilles displayed in a dazzling array of brilliant blues, oranges and reds. This world of eternal lyricism in which flowers bloom and birds sing forever is one of the most characteristic features of Persian manuscript painting of the following century'.[288]

The next miniature, *Nushaba shows Iskandar his own portrait* (fig. 138), a painting in Shah Tahmasp's manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa* from the British Library, shows as well some of spatial characteristics defined in the previous section. Here, the two principal figures are placed in a garden-reception held on a luxurious terrace. Nushaba sits on the throne to the left, and Iskandar is seated to the right slightly below her, on the terrace, with his head bent as he examines his own portrait. Notice the two centres given here: on the left bottom corner, the circular pool with an extravagant lobed interior profile and on the other side of the diagonal, on the right top corner, the ornamented canopy, and between these two points, the pool and the canopy. All the personages involved in the scene are playing their role in a harmonic circular way. In this miniature we can not say anything about isometrical perspective since there are no building structures that bear one particular kind of perspective. But the painting is especially interesting as far as the vertical perspective is concerned: we can see how different scenes are happening at different vertical levels and all the personages depicted have exactly the same size, and they have been placed spatially at different levels according to the distance they have from the viewer. The closest plane is represented at the very bottom of the picture and the furthest plane is represented by the scene at the top right corner above the canopy.

There is an interesting article written by the Islamic art historian Priscilla P. Soucek, "Nizami on Painters and Painting,"[289] where she analyzes Nizami's writings with references both to artists and to works of art. In various passages scattered through the books of his *Khamsa,* Nizami discusses the education and training of artists, the relation between a portrait and the person portrayed (this is especially interesting, since it is a motif that is used in the miniature that I have just analyzed), and gives descriptions of works of art. There are many versions of this scene where a personage (be it Iskandar, Shirin or Khosrow) looks at their own portrait.

The most interesting study for my own research that I have found on the understanding and use of the space in Persian miniature painting is "The Use of Space in Timurid Painting" by the Islamic art historian Robert Hillenbrand. He focuses his study on four specific areas where the spatial understanding of space in Persian miniature painting is at its most intense: architecture, the preference for solid blocks of colour or form, the margin and the use of empty space. I will just refer to the first two aspects, since they are the ones relevant for my own analysis of nineteenth century Iranian photographs. In his words, most strikingly of all, Timurid painting learned to *suggest* an architectural framework rather than to display it.[290] This idea can be clearly appreciated in the next miniature, the *Shahnameh* (*The Book of the Kings)*[291] scene *Ardashir and his slave-girl Gulnar* (fig. 139). As Hillenbrand points

[287] Grabar 2001, p. 55,
[288] Blair 1994, p. 33.
[289] Soucek 1972.
[290] Hillenbrand 1992, p. 77.
[291] "The Book of the Kings" is the national epic of Iran written by the Persian master of poetry Abu al-

out, it is the difference in plane within the architecture which helps structure the picture and above all integrate it with the text.[292] The vertical divisions of the architecture reinforce those of the text columns, and the blocks of colour operate in harmony with that aim. This solid skeleton of the composition can easily accommodate different seemingly insignificant details, like the cute detail of a pair of bedroom slippers by the bed of the principal characters, the pillow, the candle, the teapot and other decorative details. In this case, it is important to note that it is the choice of architectural division that has placed considerable emphasis on the sleeping personages. This element is also found in nineteenth century Iranian photography, even though the text on them has been added after the photograph has been printed and, in the case of the painting, the whole conception of the page, as far as design is concerned, has been arranged previously. Another example of this kind of architectural arrangement is to be found in the Nizami's British Library *Khamsa* scene *Harun al-Rashid in a Bathouse* (fig. 140). The story of the caliph Harun al-Rashid going to bath is neither romantic nor heroic, as is normally the case in most of the miniatures. It is, nevertheless, a good example of how a public bath at that time was, where even the caliph leaves his own crown in a cupboard in the room where the men get undressed. This miniature is interesting as well because it shows a different organization of the space: simple walls have replaced richly colourful and decorated ones and all the bathhouse workers are shown in their work clothes. In the classic study by D. H. Zain, *Formal Values in Timurid painting*[293], the author includes numerous schema of design that clearly show the grid layout and block schema that I am analyzing in Persian miniatures. Three of the figures shown in Zain's study are, as it happens, design schemas of miniatures that I have selected for this chapter. One of them (fig. 141) is the schema of design of the miniature that I am concerned with here. We can also appreciate here the isometric perspective that is clearly recognized by the parallel lines in the z-axis that do not recede towards a vanishing point.

Many buildings present in the miniatures, embody an arrow device to draw the eye into the picture: flights of steps are invitingly located near the bottom of the painting, doors are located to guide you from one space to the other, curtains are drawn aside to disclose figures stepping in and out of doors, drawbridges welcome the viewer into a castle and into a painting at the same time and half-open doors operate as a kind of *repoussoir*. Sometimes these devices are used in concert at different levels, compelling the eye to move upwards and further into the painting. Closely packed receding planes, often with people jammed between them, sometimes with curtain walls (in depiction of castles and palaces) bring the third dimension somehow to life. In some paintings, nature is brought in the scene in the form of a huge tree or some mountain rocks. Then, we have seen that the most used contemporary fashion for composing an image on several levels is often reflected on the architectural forms themselves and those forms would allow many stories to happen at the same time, implying depth both in form and meaning. As Hillenbrand stated, a more dramatic version of the same idea is found in the sharp zigzag movement of successive flights of stairs that are sometimes used in miniatures. This is especially clear in *The Seduction of Yusuf,* the celebrated scene of Yusuf pursued by Zulaika in the Cairo

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Qasim Firdowsi (934-1025-26). He devoted 35 years to write the *Shahname* and this is he most studied of all Persian manuscripts, which was never finished.

[292] Note that in some photographs we can also find this kind of integration of picture and text. See, for instance, figure 25 in chapter 2.

[293] Zain 1989.

Saadi's[294] *Bustan* of 893, painted in 1488 as it is written on the cartouche to the left of the iwan, and that is a painting which implies the passage of time as well as a sequence of spaces (fig. 142). This miniature is signed by the great master Bezhdad on the architectural panel over the window in the room on the upper left. This painting accompanies a passage in Saadi's *Bustan* that mentions the seduction of Yusuf by Zulaykha (the Biblical Joseph and the wife of Potiphar). Sadi's text is written in cartouches at the top, middle and bottom of the illustration. According to Blair, 'Sadi's text does not require Bezhdad's elaborate architectural setting. Instead, this setting is described in the mystical poem "Yusuf and Zulaykha", written by the Timurid poet Jami five years earlier….'.[295] In this case, as Hillenbrand explains further, 'the explosive impact of the encounter between the two major protagonists owes much of its intensity to the earlier temporal and spatial building-up. The artist has responded to the accumulated suspense and eventual dramatic climax of the literary text with an extraordinarily apt visual equivalent whereby the principals of each tale confront each other at the very top of the picture–pictorially speaking at the very last moment. Thus time is suggested by space'. [296] Saadi's text merely refers to the attempts of seduction of Yusuf by Zulaykha, wife of an Egyptian functionary, but Jami describes at some length Zulaykha's vain efforts to persuade the beautiful Yusuf to give in to her wishes. He concludes this part of the story with the description of an architectural construct that is rich and laden with mystical overtones. In the words of Sims, that 'Jami's palace should be a sufi metaphor for the spiritual journey of both Yusuf and Zulaykha is hardly to be wondered, for a poet who was also the leader of the sufi order of the Naqshbandiya in Herat'.[297] Behzad's painting is a fantasy on the theme that is exposed in the visual language of Timurid architecture and its decoration. The architectural forms are exceedingly rich, but also empty. In the midst of this patterned elaboration, colour and the absence of pattern draw the eye to the two figures and their relationship. Notice here, once more, the perfectly-designed page with the columns where the text has been written being the ones that decide the final composition of the painting with a grid layout. As stated by the Islamic art historian and curator Lisa Golembek, 'the correspondence of text and painting in detail and in emphasis are static levels of relationship. There is yet in Behzad's painting a dynamic level in which the formal composition actively conveys meaning'.[298] Notice the grid layout that has been perfectly shown by Zain's schema (fig. 143). Note as well the isometric perspective approach to suggest three-dimensional space. For instance, the balcony on the right top corner of the miniature shows clearly the parallel lines in each space direction and the same holds true for any other part of the structure of the building. The vertical composition is also clearly shown here, like in all other miniatures selected for this section.

Persian miniaturists have always been fond of using solid blocks of form and colour. Often these blocks are created by the structure of the building where the scene is happening (as it happens in fig. 136), at other occasions blocks may be created by

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[294] Sheikh Saadi (full name: Musli-od-Din Mushrif ibn Abdullah), born in Shiraz (1184-1283-1291?), is one of the major Persian poets of the medieval period. He is recognized not only fort he quality of his writting, but also fort he depht of his sociological thoughts. His best known works are *Bustan* (*The Orchad)* completed in 1257 and *Gulistan* (*The Rose Garden)* in 1258. *Bustan* is enterely in verse (epic metre) and consists of stories to illustrate the good virtues recommended to Muslims and also includes reflections of the behaviour of dervishes and their ecstatic practices.

[295] Blair 1994, p. 63.

[296] Hillenbrand 1992, p. 78.

[297] Sims 2001, p. 247.

[298] Golombek 1972, p. 28.

rectilinear or multifold pods of water (as in fig. 138), doors, balconies, floors, etc. In the words of Hillenbrand, it is a prerequisite of their compositional role that they should be as monochrome as is consistent with their nature. Thus they establish a presence in the picture, something that is much more than mere decorative infill or background. They have an obvious spatial significance.[299]

In *Funeral Procession,* from *Mantiq al-Tayr* ("The Language of the Birds") by Farid ad-Din Attar[300], 1483 (fig. 144), the ground is shown in several receding planes. The landscape, in fact, constitutes a true background to the depicted subjects. The tree that strays outside the frame-like margins is an element that was adopted by Persian miniaturists as an influence from the Chinese painting tradition. Contrarily to what Rudrauf stated regarding *diffuse* composition, that the eye is not guided to go from one object to another (see pags. 96-97 of this chapter), Grabar states in *Mostly Miniatures,* that 'if we go a little further in the analysis, we discover the curious fact that despite the apparently artificial compositions of the human figures, two details are rendered somewhat less unreal. One is the important clue of the gaze. All the miniatures of a certain quality are organized by a circuit of gazes that the protagonists launch at each other. It is a complex and passionate game of clues that, as in embroidery, organizes the relationships among the persons'.[301] We can see this clearly in this miniature, in which a complex composition is shown, 'heads and eyes compel a dynamic movement leading up to the snake in the tree, which is about to gobble up the eggs in the nest. The other trait are the witnesses, a whole world of figures who are there as if to bear witness to the truth of what is depicted; they are furnished with a formulary of gestures whose details it would be interesting to unravel. These two traits are familiar in Italian painting of the same centuries, but they have been miniaturized in Persian painting and demand a greater effort from the observer, just as the painter was obliged to work with a precision that did not allow for error'.[302] The painting is a good example to see the funerary practices in the fifteenth century. A funeral procession arrives at the gate of the cemetery; inside workmen are preparing the grave of the man whose coffin is preceded by his mourning son, clothes torn from his upper body. He is placed in the vertical centre of the picture, on the direct axis supplied by one corner of the platform where his father's grave is being dug. The secondary axis of the picture is the horizontal line of the cemetery wall, effectively dividing the two parts of the picture. Notice that, even if this miniature that is mostly a non-architectural miniature, the isometric perspective is working: the octagonal fence that is depicted at the top left corner is shown with parallel lines in the three directions of space. Once again, Zain's schema clearly shown the grid layout structure and we can see clearly the parallel lines that I have just talked about in the octagonal fence (fig. 145).

We can see this grid structure in the miniature attributed to Mir Musavvir, *The Nightmare of Zahhak,* from the *Shahname* by Shah Tahmasp, ca. 1525-35 (fig. 146), where the king (shown with snakes on his shoulders) has a nightmare; as explained by Blair 'his screams wake up the entire palace, whose attendants form the painting's main subject. Prince Zahhak had been lured by Iblis, the Devil, into killing his father and usurping his throne. Distinguished, Iblis then demanded to kiss the new king on

[299] Hillenbrand 1992, p. 84.
[300] Farid ad-Din Attar (1142-1220) was a Muslim scholar and Sufi mystic. "The Language of the Birds" is a book of poems of aproximately 4500 lines. The poem uses a journey by a group of 30 birds, led by a hoopoe as an allegory of a Sufi *sheikh* or master leading his pupils to enlightment.
[301] Grabar 2001, p. 133.
[302] Grabar 2001, pp. 133-136.

the shoulders, whereupon two serpents sprang from the spots where he had been kissed'.[303] Notice its grid structure, composed of different squares and rectangles where the different scenes are occurring at the same time as the final scene. In this image we can also appreciate the zigzag movement that I referred to in the previous section. In order to ensure that the viewer does not get to the final point too quickly, the picture is punctuated by visual barriers: steps, walls, doorways, and abrupt changes of direction. This execution of zigzagging forms might be described as two dimensional in terms of technique, but their three-dimensional effect is clear. It is something like an intuitive perspective with temporal and narrative content. Here we can see clearly the parallel lines in each spatial direction as it was the case when I analyzed *The Seduction of Yusuf,* a clear sign of isometric perspective to project the three dimensional space into the two dimensional picture plane.

Persian artists of every generation and every style retained their innately Persian understanding of design. Some experts in the field of Persian painting have tried to explain the fact that the Persian miniature painters did not use linear perspective to suggest a three dimensional space. For instance, as stated by the art historian in Persian painting Sheila Canby, 'by favouring two-dimensionality and compositional harmony, they presented things as they should be, not necessarily as they are. Within these parameters, Persian artists produced paintings over six centuries unrivalled in their perfect realization of an ideal world'.[304] No matter what its period, a great Persian painting will exhibit a distinct sense of design and an understanding of how to arrange colours and forms on a flat surface to form a rhythmic whole. Despite the influence of European art from the seventeenth century onwards, Persian painters do not appear to have been convinced of the desirability of the illusionism that transforms two dimensions into the suggestion of three. Perhaps such visual tricks seemed innately dishonest. Finally, this art of highly developed surface values draws the viewer in, but does not trespass into his world. Before the nineteenth century the figures in Persian painting almost never look directly at the viewer. Later, when they do, they keep their emotions to themselves. Yet, as Canby states, 'the most gifted Persian artists could capture their sitters' character without invading their wall of reserve'.[305]

In conclusion, Persian miniatures do display a diffuse composition and grid structure layout. Often the proper structure of the buildings, the architectural structure that composes the painting, help stress this multiple-centred composition dividing the space into blocks. Many buildings embody an arrow device to draw the eye into the painting: flights of stairs located near the bottom of the image, doors to guide the viewer from one room to the next one, curtains drawn aside to disclose figures stepping in and out of doors, just to mention some of the most frequently used ones. Sometimes these devices are used in concert at different levels, compelling the eye to move upwards and further into the miniature. The third dimension is brought to life with the help of receding planes and at the same time allows several scenes to happen simultaneously, therefore achieving that multiple-centre or diffuse composition that is simultaneously spatial and temporal.

[303] See Blair 1994, p. 168.
[304] Canby 1993, p. 7.
[305] Canby 1993, pp. 11-12.

After having analyzed a representative corpus of Persian miniature paintings, I am able to state that the isometric system of projection to suggest perspective is used consistently, one of the influences that Persian miniature painting had from Chinese traditional painting. Next to this, the vertical composition/vertical perspective is used consistently in Persian miniatures as well. The combination of these two strategies to suggest perspective is, in my opinion, a unique element found in this painting tradition.

4.3. The use of space in nineteenth-century photography in Iran

I will explore in this section the way in which space has been arranged in nineteenth century Iranian photography. An immediate question is whether isometrical perspective, *diffuse* composition, the grid layout structure and vertical composition/vertical perspective are to be found in nineteenth-century photography as they are in traditional Persian painting. As was the case in the previous chapters, another important question to be answered is whether this understanding of space is something peculiar to the Persian visual arts tradition or if it can be found in other countries. It is important to note that isometrical perspective is impossible in photography. As stated by the chief curator of photography at MOMA in the 1990s Peter Galassi, the ultimate origins of photography (both technical and aesthetic) lie in the fifteenth-century invention of linear perspective. The technical side of this statement is simple: photography is nothing more than a means for automatically producing pictures in linear perspective. The aesthetic side is more complex and is meaningful only in broader historical terms.[306] Therefore, as far as the topic on isometrical projection is concerned, there is no possible argumentation when related to photography: no matter who is behind the camera, an Italian, Iranian or Malawian photographer, the result will be always a photograph in true linear perspective, as a result of the monocular viewpoint, which is also the basis of Alberti's theory of linear perspective. I have established different categories of photographs in order to be able to study in depth the different spatial characteristics present in Persian traditional painting as well as in photography. I have named the first group ***diffuse compositions/grid structure*** and the second ***vertical composition/vertical perspective.***

The first group that I have defined is ***diffuse*** **composition/*grid structure***, a term that means, as I elaborated in the previous section, the presence of multiple centres of attention within the photographic space. In order to understand fully and to be able to give enough examples of the composition used in nineteenth Iranian photography, I will broaden my scope and consider other kinds of photographs besides portrait studio photographs, since it is difficult to find those Persian elements of composition (*diffuse* compositions, grid layout structure, and vertical composition) in them. I will start with a photograph taken by an Iranian unknown photographer in which a group of school children (boys) are depicted together with their teachers from the school Nawbar in Tabriz. We can see that there is not a special centre of attention. On the contrary, the eye can scan the whole content of the picture freely and without a fixed path (fig. 147). See, for instance, the window on the right, full of people, in the same way that miniatures present different scenes all with the same importance as far as information is concerned, as we have seen previously while analyzing the material selected for the previous section. These are examples of Rudrauf's *diffuse* composition. Further, we

[306] Galassi 1981, p. 12.

can also make here an abstraction of the photograph and we get a grid structure as we did before with a miniature. There is an especially remarkable photograph of a group of school children gathered together to celebrate a special school event (fig. 148) in Mushirie's school in Yazd. The way in which the space has been depicted is interesting. See the left half of the image, where a group of teachers is depicted sitting around a huge table and the upper right part of the image in which a large group of schoolboys has been densely packed in a reduced space and ascending almost up to the ceiling. Here the monocular linear perspective of the table, drives the eye from the front to the back. This photograph is, indeed, a good example to illustrate the fact that photography is a perfect technique to produce pictures in perfect linear perspective. But, at the same time, the general aspect of the image is that of miniatures, with their multiple centres of attention and grid layout structure. The Persian carpets that are hung on the walls, fully covering them, help to give the final image the appearance of a miniature. Notice the three men in the balcony on the top left of the image, looking downwards, as in many miniatures, at what is happening on the hall. Another example of a photograph where this miniature like structure is clear is figure 149. These kinds of images are examples of what I introduced above about the "invasion" of space by Iranian people. Here it is important to remark that the possible parallels that I may establish between photography and miniatures are only valid from a pure formal point of view. The important temporal and spatial narrative dimension present in the miniatures as I have analyzed in the previous sections, is something that the photographs do not have. Further, the fact that the miniature belongs to a book that has its precise place between the previous miniature and the following one is fundamental and needs to be clearly pointed out in order to avoid confusion or to arrive at false conclusions.

The second group of photographs is ***vertical composition*****.** An interesting photograph is one that depicts a group of seven men arranged in two rows, occupying two horizontal planes, and dividing the photographic space into two identical halves, in two independent spaces (fig. 150). The governor of Kerman is depicted sitting on a carpet on the lower row, on the left of the image, next to two colleagues. The carpet bends along the stair to become the carpet on which the other four men on the upper row are also sitting. The plain of the photographer has been lowered in order to get a frontal image where the whole group is packed within the photograph's horizontal frame. The formal parallelism in the vertical composition between this photograph and figures 134 and 135 is remarkable. This is interesting, since isometric projection suggests birdeye's perspective.

One extreme example of this vertical composition is an image that displays the most bizarre composition of a group of people, in this case four men that I have found during my research (fig. 151). The original glass plate is partially broken, so we can only see in the print four heads of the five military men depicted. The heads of the four men have been arranged on a vertical line, being those heads fully packed on the vertical photographic frame. The photograph was taken by the Iranian photographer Mirza Mehdi Chehreh-Nama, who ran a very well-known studio in Isfahan.

There are several photographs that I have found during my research that show an aesthetic approach similar to those of the miniatures. This effect is caused, as I will explain shortly, by the technical restrictions of the camera rather than by an aesthetical intention of the photographer. I will call this group ***optical illusions.*** Naser od-Din Shah took the next two photographs consider here. The two women depicted in these images, seem to have been pasted to the blurred backdrop, giving them the

impression that they are partially floating on the photographic space. This probably happens due to the technical restrictions of the camera rather than due to an aesthetical effect intended by the photographer, but the perception of both of them is similar to those of the miniatures and this effect is reinforced by the carpet, clothing and pose of the women depicted. Notice that here the presence of the carpet is an important element that conditions the perception of the space by the viewer of the final image, as was the case in the previous picture. The first one depicts Iran al-Muluk (fig. 152), daughter of Naser od-Din Shah. The second depicts Bakhbaubashi (the one to the left), one of the wives of Naser od-Din Shah (fig. 153) the receding stairs giving a clear true perspective to the final image. In both of them there is a clear separation between the foreground and the background, therefore a clear linear perspective as I have already pointed out at the beginning of this section.

Within this group, we could consider another sub-group of photographs that show another peculiar element to be found in nineteenth-century Iranian photography: the use of the middle horizon in the photographic space. As we know from the laws of composition in Western photography, one should not place the horizon exactly in the middle of the photograph. But if we analyze the next two photographs, we clearly see that this is exactly what happened: a row of kneeling mullahs (religious men) is placed in the upper half of the photographic space, just starting at the horizon line or the middle line of the photograph, leaving an empty and wide space in the lower half part of the image (figs. 154 and 155). Actually this is just an optical illusion, since there is a carpet in both photographs that as a result of the bad quality of the print that lost its sharpness, we cannot see clearly. Further, the placing of the horizon right in the middle of the photographs is most probably due to technical restrictions of the camera, because the photographer needed to lower his camera in order to take a frontal image of the group and therefore, the carpet or floor, would have taken a dominant role in the image. It is important to note that this way of arranging the space is only found in photography and therefore peculiar to this medium due to technical restrictions of the camera, since it is not found in Persian traditional painting, where the lower half of the image is especially important in its content and density of information. Next to this kind of image, there is another one that depicts men as if they were floating in the air. I have selected two photographs to illustrate this spatial illusion. The first one is a portrait of Mirza Mehdi Khan taken by an anonymous Iranian photographer (fig. 156) and the second is a portrait of Hajji Housseinquli Khan Nuri Mustawfi, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, taken by an anonymous Iranian photographer (fig. 157). Next to these two images, there is one that is both interesting as a collage and because of the spatial arrangement of the three women depicted therein, all of them floating in the photographic space (fig. 158). This is actually the page of one of the albums of Naser od-Din Shah's wives. Three full portraits of woman have been cut and pasted directly to the album page and the final image presents a strange understanding of space since the three identical women are literally floating on the album page like the men in the previous two portraits did. This kind of collage became quite popular between the Shah and his family, since they do appear quite regularly in the albums' pages in the last years of his reign. An important difference between this last image and the previous photographs is that, in the collage, the photographer would be the one that decide to give the floating effect to the poseurs, not the camera!

It has often been remarked that the lower part of a visual pattern demands more weight. Gravitation is probably at the root of this asymmetry in the vertical dimension, but how its effect on vision comes about is not known. The compensation,

which keeps the lower part of a pattern from looking too light or too small, is needed everywhere, except for the structurally strong shapes, which resist the distortion of angles. It cannot be maintained, however, that general artistic practice makes patterns look heavier at the bottom – that is, lowers the centre of gravity. True, in the landscape that man, the land animal, sees around himself, the lower part of the visual field is crowded with buildings, fields, trees, and events whereas the sky is relatively empty. A corresponding effect is sought in the arts wherever the realistic representation of solid bodies is intended. By lowering the center of gravity, the painter or sculptor adapts his work to the asymmetry of physical space. This practice, however, is not universal. It goes with certain styles only. For instance, modern art – because of its trend towards abstraction – has little use for this uneven distribution of masses.[307] This is also true for some Iranian photographers active in the nineteenth century. Interestingly, in those images of a group of kneeling religious men, they actually seem to be levitating while being photographed and they do have, indeed, a very light appearance!

There is another group of photographs that can be considered as a sub-group of the one I am now analyzing. ***Plan-perpendicular*** shows a clear use of this way of understanding space. One of the peculiarities encountered in the Iranian style is the representation of sitters themselves in the perspective, above a patterned carpet that is shown in plan-perpendicular (straight-from-above) view and has no particular relationship to the rest of the studio setting, as we can see in the photograph where a man sitting on a chair is depicted (fig. 159). This image of Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Mehmarhbashi, Minister of Defence and head of Tehran department, presents as well an illusionary perception of the sitters, as if they were floating on the air. This element is also typical of the Indian photography of that time. We can see an obvious resemblance between this image and fig. 160, an 1885 albumen print taken by an unknown Indian photographer and painted partially with opaque watercolour where a music-loving landowner is depicted. The image shows him sitting, his face, hands and feet remaining photographic. Flatness of space is achieved through the way the carpet is painted, as in miniatures. Also the lack of shadows in the colours helps to give this non-perspective element of the space. As the art historian and critic Judith Mara Gutman states in her book *Through Indian Eyes. 19th and Early 20th Century Photography from India*, 'when photography was introduced to India in the nineteenth century, photographic expression followed the same pattern as paintings did. Photographers made photographs that emulated the space and subjects found in Indian paintings, using the patterns and forms that streamed through their aesthetic traditions; this ultimately changed the place, role, function, and representation of those patterns in photographs. Many photographs were composed with the same spatial arrangements that existed in paintings'.[308] Therefore, the influence of painting in photography in the nineteenth-century in different countries is clear, but it is also more evident in some countries (like India, Iran or Japan) than in others as it is when using some techniques (like hand-coloring) rather than others.

In sum, the grid layout typical of the Persian miniatures is also to be found in Iranian photographs that depict large groups of people spread over a more or less large space, be it the entrance of a school, a room in a school, a market, a theatre palace, etc. In

[307] Arnheim 1969, pp. 20-21.
[308] Gutman 1982, p. 69.

those cases, the people seems to completely inhabit the given space, and the final result, formally, has the grid layout structure and multiple centres of attention that I have analyzed in detail in the sections concerned with miniatures. Next to this, a vertical tendency towards organizing the sitters is also to be noted. The majority of the miniatures are vertical, whereas most of the group photographs of the kind analyzed here are horizontal, which could be explained in practical terms. Since the majority of the miniatures are used as a page in a book it seems that the artists find themselves with no choice but the vertical arrangement. In this respect the photographers do not feel such limitations and as a result the horizontal arrangements of sitters in the case of large groups of people are commonly found in the photographs of the period. It is important to note that the conclusions drawn here are exclusively from a pure formal approach. The placement of the horizon in the middle of the photographic space is something peculiar of some Iranian photographs and it is not found in Persian miniature painting, but this clearly happens in this way due to technical restrictions of the camera rather than a self-consciuos aesthetical approach of the photographer to achieve this particular effect. Photographers, in this sense, did not arrange the space. The camera did that for them. They did frame the part of reality that they wanted to show and compose the final image within that frame.

I have shown through visual analysis of the paintings and photographs selected for this chapter that the understanding of space is one of the cultural components involved in the process of producing a painting or a photograph. I have created a theoretic model to classify my corpus of paintings and photographs according to spatial components. For the paintings corpus I have defined three groups: *diffuse composition / grid structure; isometrical perspective* and *vertical composition / vertical structure.* For the photographic corpus I have defined two groups: *diffuse composition / grid structure* and *vertical composition / vertical structure.* Persian miniatures employ diffuse composition and grid structure layout to achieving multiple-centre or diffuse composition that is at the same time spatial and temporal. Often the proper structure of the buildings, the architectural structure, that composes the painting, help to stress this multiple-centred composition dividing the space into blocks; and the third dimension is brought to life with the help of receding planes and at the same time allows several scenes to happen simultaneously. Furthermore, by using the isometric system of projection they provide a consistent usage of space, one of the many influences that Persian miniature painting had from Chinese traditional painting. However, the combination of these two strategies to suggest space is, in my opinion, unique to the traditional Persian miniature. The parallels observed in Iranian photographs, in this regard, is also direct influence of the Persian paintings.

5. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WESTERN AND IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

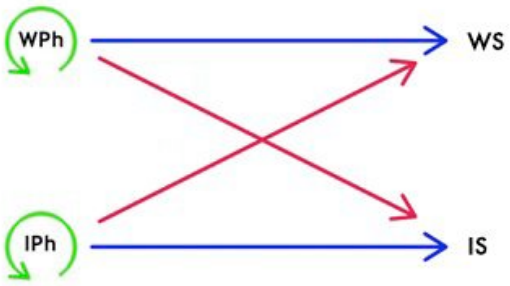
Born originals, how comes it to pass that we die copies?
Edward Young[309]

Nineteenth-century Iranian photography, with all its unique characteristics resulted from Iranian culture and arts, is not free from the influence of the Western aesthetics of the period. The Victorian model, with its characteristics of hieratical and frontal pose, is the main referent of Western aesthetic models. Iranian court photographers, who were more exposed to this foreign influence, exhibit a sharp contrast to the local photographers who lived in smaller cities or towns, or worked in bazaars, far away from the court, and whose work I have analyzed in the previous chapters. It is also worth noticing that in spite of this contrast, Iranian photographers managed to create their own style of adopting suitable to the Iranian taste and culture. This style, hybrid of two aesthetics, produced plenty of examples among the existing photographs of the period, and, further, has found its way to even modern photography.

5.1. Schema of positions in portrait photography

When defining the possible positions in portrait studio photography of two sitters belonging to two different cultures (here I will consider Iranian and non-Iranian which would be a person belonging to any Western culture in this particular example) by photographers belonging to the same two cultures, I have found four different possibilities: Western photographer (WPh) versus Western sitter (WS); Western photographer (WPh) versus Iranian sitter (IS); Iranian photographer (IPh) versus Western sitter (WS) and Iranian photographer (IPh) versus Iranian sitter (IS). Two of them belong to the category of photographing the self (here understanding the self as a culture, as one's own culture): WPh-WS and IPh-IS. The other two belong to the category of photographing the other: WPh-IS and IPh-WS. I have resumed the different possibilities of positions in studio portrait photography in the following diagram:

[309] Young, Edward, 18th century poet and playwrigh (1683-1765), *Conjectures on Original Composition. In a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison,* London, A. Millar and R. and J. Dodsley, 1759.



There are six possibilities that can be grouped in three different categories. The first one (blue lines) shows the pairs that compose the process of photographing and representing the self, one's own culture. The second one (red lines) shows the pairs that compose the process of photographing the other, the foreign culture. The pair WPh-IS has been studied deeply in visual arts, especially in painting. To the best of my knowledge, the pair IPh-WS has not been taken in consideration to date for serious research. The third category (green lines) indicates the process of self-portrait, the portrait that the photographer takes of himself, being at the same time the photographer and the sitter. Many male artists that went to the Near East and North Africa, were often photographed in oriental costume, smoking a narguileh and resting in the odalisque-like reclining pose. There are many well-known examples of Western photographers portraying themselves dressed up in local clothes, like the British photographer Francis Fritz (1822-1898) posing in an image wearing Turkish summer dress (fig. 161) or the French photographer Collard (fig. 162) in oriental garb. The portrait of the Dutch amateur photographer Albert Hotz (1855-1930) active in Iran in the last part of nineteenth century is also an example of this mode (fig. 163). In contrast to this, the numerous examples of self-portraits of Iranian photographers present a sober and self-conscious image of themselves, and their cameras are most of the time an important part of the photograph. This is interesting since it points to the fact that there is a difference in the image that local and foreign photographers want to give of themselves: Iranians more concerned about showing themselves as serious professionals and Westerns more concerned about giving a image of "integration" in that culture best revealed by the local clothes that they wear and the pose that often is reminiscent of the odalisque reclining pose. Iranians, interestingly, picture themselves as photographers! A self-portrait of the Iranian photographer Mohammad Abdull Ghassem Nuri (fig. 164) is a clear example to illustrate this.

By analyzing all the possible permutations shown in my diagram, we can get a clear idea of the way in which both local and foreign sitters were represented in nineteenth-century photography. By comparing all those different kinds of photographs, we can obtain a lot of information about the way Western and Iranian photographers perceived and represented each other more than one hundred and fifty years ago. In the previous chapters of this book, I was mostly concerned with the pair Iranian photographer-Iranian sitter. In the present chapter, I will focus my study on the pair Western photographer-Iranian sitter. For any of the pairs presented above in the diagram, it is always important to remember that the two main persons involved in producing the final photograph, the photographer and the person depicted, have a role and aspiration in their preconception of the image to be achieved. The relationship between them would be most of the time an unbalanced one, because of their different

social status, culture or even gender. For instance, if the sitter is Naser od-Din Shah and the photographer a Westerner, then to be sure the Shah would have had a dominant role in the way that he is depicted in the final image; whereas the same photographer taking a photograph of an anonymous local Iranian, the photographer would be the dominant one. By analyzing photographs, therefore, we can elucidate the kind of relationship that was established between the person depicted and the photographer at the time that the scene was frozen for eternity and, in more general terms, the way in which Westerners perceived Iranians and viceversa.

5.2. Western photographers versus local sitters: photographing the Other. Orientalism and Photography

In this section I will discuss the ways in which Western photographers represented Iranians in nineteenth century as a particular case of representing other cultures in photography, and to establish differences or similitudes between the way Western photographers perceived and represented Iranians and the way Iranian perceived themselves. An interesting topic to which I will devote some time is the concept of self-orientalism (the internalization of Orientalism) that may be present in nineteenth century Iranian native photography. Therefore, the influence that Orientalist painting may have had on Iranian photography will be also considered.

Photography was invented in Europe and exported to the rest of the world as soon as the first photographer-travellers started heading for "exotic" foreign countries in nineteenth century. The intersection of photography, printing, physical anthropology and colonial history produced hundreds of thousands of photographs and reproductions that represented the places and peoples of Asia as Westerners perceived them. In fact, they constitute an *image world.* This term was used by the American literary theorist, novelist and filmmaker Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography.*[310] In her words, in the real world, something *is* happening and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way.[311]According to the anthropologist Deborah Poole, the image world encompasses the "complexity and multiplicity of this realm of images" and the flow of image objects and associated ideas "from place to place, person to person, culture to culture, and class to class".[312] Further, as stated by the French anthropologist Christaud M. Geary, 'image makers, the subjects of the images, publishers, distribution agencies and consumers were actively involved in the shaping of this image world, in which images cross political and cultural boundaries. The metaphor "image world" also implies a degree of independence from the world that the images depict'.[313] In the words of the art historian Anandi Ramamurthy, 'some of the most dominant ideological and photographic constructions were developed during the nineteenth century and the camera joined the gun in the process of colonisation. The camera was used to record and define those that were colonised according to the interests of the West. She states further that Europe was defined as "the norm" upon which other cultures should be judged. Whatever was different was disempowered by its very "Otherness".[314]

[310] Sontag 1979, pp. 153-180.
[311] Sontag 1979, p. 168.
[312] Poole 1997, p. 7.
[313] Geary 2002, p. 19.
[314] Ramamurthy 2004, pp. 223-224.

In general terms, the "other" is anyone apart from one's self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is "normal" and in locating one's own place in the world. The term is used extensively in existential philosophy, notably by Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*[315] to define the relations between the Self and the Other in creating self-awareness and ideas of identity. The definition of the term as used in current post-colonial theory is rooted in the Freudian and post-Freudian analysis of the formation of subjectivity, particularly in the work of the psychoanalyst and cultural theorist Jacques Lacan. In Lacan's theory, the other – with a small "o" – designates the other who resembles the self, which the child discovers when it looks in the mirror and becomes aware of itself as a separate being. This will become the basis of the ego. This "other" is important for defining the identity of the subject. In post-colonial theory, it can refer to the colonised others who are marginalised by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of the imperial "ego".[316] The "Other" – with a capital "O" – is called the *grande-autre* by Lacan, the great Other, in whose gaze the subject gains identity. Lacan states that all desire is the metonym of the desire to be because the first desire of the subject is the desire to exist in the gaze of the Other.[317] This Other can be compared to the dominant centre, imperial discourse, or the empire itself in two ways: firstly it provides the terms in which the colonised subject gains a sense of his or her identity, as somehow "other", dependent. Secondly, it becomes the "absolute pole of address", the ideological framework in which the colonised subject may come to understand the world. In colonial discourse, the subjectivity of the colonised is continually in the gaze of the imperial Other, the *grand-autre.* Subjects may be interpellated by the ideology of the maternal and nurturing function of the colonising power, concurring with descriptions such as "mother England" and "Home".[318] On the other hand, the Symbolic Other may be represented in the Father. The significance and enforced dominance of the imperial language into which colonial subjects are inducted may give them a clear sense of power being located in the coloniser, a situation corresponding metaphorically to the subject's entrance into the Symbolic order and the discovery of the Law of the Father. According to Ashcroft, the ambivalence of the colonial discourse lies in the fact that *both* these processes of "othering" occur at the same time, the colonial subject being both a "child" of empire and a primitive and degraded subject of imperial discourse. The construction of the dominant imperial *Other* occurs in the same process by which the colonial *others* come into being.[319]

The other in photography

In the last years of the nineteenth century a prominent role was played by the illustrated press which made use of photographs, particularly those taken by commercial photographers as the preferential means of spreading Asian "knowledge" concerning Asia and its people. The scarcity of actual knowledge concerning the Asian continent was countered by the enormous potential of the "discourse" produced by it, along a path followed by the colonial enterprise in line with the construction of a collective imagery skilfully nurtured by photography. In the words of the Italian art-

[315] Sartre 1957.
[316] Ashcroft et al. 1998, p. 170.
[317] Lacan 1968.
[318] Ashcroft 1998, p. 171.
[319] Ashcroft 1998, p. 171.

historian Silvana Palma, photography drew the line between the visible and the non-visible.[320] Hence the identification of what was shown and what was omitted enables us today to measure not only the limits of Western "knowledge" of Asia, but also the strength of a representation. This establishes the horizon of the visible and proposes a manner of interpreting it, which proves the ability of imposing a perception, often a misleading one, of Asian otherness, so tenacious that it still partly survives unchanged today.

Called on not only to describe and document events but also to interpret them, photographs contribute, through what they show, hide or invent, to the construction of the imagery not only of a social group but also of an entire age. Therefore they come to assume a prominence equal to that of the events to which they are called on to bear witness. As Palma states, 'today they effectively make it possible to define the "mental landscape" that they helped to evoke, construct and reinforce in their day, thus creating, despite all their fragmentation and gaps in a nonetheless effective and significant manner, the ideological scaffolding that accompanied and supported the establishment of Western colonial power in Africa' (or in Asia, as I emphasise). They also guided relations between the rulers and the ruled.[321] She further states that 'the invention of photography, its diffusion and subsequent reproducibility in the press created a new mass visual culture. It was able to produce *clichés* that could be almost unwittingly absorbed and interiorised. The influencing and guiding of people's perception of Africa (or Asia, as I emphasise) must have been greeted with the same passionate excitement with which we more recently awaited the images sent back from space during the first moon landing, and certainly with no less trusting faith'. [322] As the historian Christopher Lyman incisively noted, 'photographs were not viewed as metaphors of experience, but rather as sections of reality itself. If photographs showed gigantic trees and awe-inspiring mountains, then all the trees were gigantic and all the mountains were awe-inspiring. When photographs depicted Indians as "savages", Indians were confirmed as savages'.[323]

As stated by the visual anthropologist Christopher Pinney, 'much recent writing that seeks to historically contextualize photography's emergence during a period of colonial expansion has drawn on crucial insights from Edward Said to Michael Foucault and has tended to construct photographic imagery and practice as immovably within a "truth" that simplistically reflects a set of cultural and political dispositions held by the makers of those images'. Perhaps, he states further, 'the starkest of these contributions is that offered by the Algerian poet Malek Alloula in the *Colonial harem* (1987). By consciously eschewing the study of the actual political and historical consumption of images, Alloula spins an eloquent but untested hypothesis concerning the role of "photography" as the "fertilizer of the colonial vision (producing) stereotypes in the manner of great seabirds producing guano".[324]

Such debates tend to invoke formal readings of images that are made to do the work of a pre-existing political hypothesis, continues Pinney. In Carlo Ginzburg' words these are "physiognomic" readings, in which the analyst "reads into them what he has already learned by other means, or what he believes he knows, and wants to "demonstrate". Underpinning this approach, Ginzburg continues, is the conviction that works of art, in a broad sense, furnish a mine of first hand information that can

[320] Palma 2005, pp. 39-40.
[321] Palma 2005, p. 61.
[322] Palma 2005, p. 62.
[323] Lyman 1982, p. 29.
[324] Pinney & Peterson 2003, pp. 2-3.

explicate, without intermediaries, the mentally and emotive life of a distant age.[325] This is, precisely, what the corpus of Western photography taken in such "exotic" lands constitute and represent.

Orientalism in photography

Before considering the topic of Orientalism in photography, it is important to note here that the corpus of Oriental Studies is not reduced exclusively to Said's Orientalism. One does find the kind of approach in nineteenth-century Western photography in Iran that Said has denominated as Orientalist. This does not mean however that this is the only kind of Western photography in the nineteenth century.[326] In fact, one of the most important European photographers active in Iran at that time, the German Ernst Hoeltzer (1855-1939), produced a remarkable amount of photographs that are free from Orientalism as critized by Said. But Hoeltzer was an amateur photographer and this is, indeed, an important fact: usually the Western commercial photographers used an orientalist approach in their work in contrast to those who were amateurs and therefore free from the demand of the photographic market. So the photographic production was market driven: the taste of the demand of the market did play a role in the kind of photography that was produced.

The concept and term Orientalism needs to be taken into consideration when studying the work of Western photographers in Iran (or in any other oriental country). This term was coined by Edward Said, and he examines the process by which the "Orient" was constructed in European thinking. Professional orientalists included scholars in various disciplines such as languages, history and philosophy. However, for Said, the discourse of Orientalism was much more widespread and endemic in European thought. As well as a form of academic discourse, it was a style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction between the "Orient" and the "Occident".[327] More widely, Said discusses Orientalism as the corporate institution, dealing with it by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the "Orient".[328] Orientalism signified a mode of *knowing* the other but it was a supreme example of the *construction* of the "Other", a form of authority. The Orient is not an inert fact of nature, but a phenomenon constructed by generations of intellectuals, artists, commentators, writers, politicians, and, more importantly, constructed by the naturalisation of a wide range of Orientalists' assumptions and stereotypes. The relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, domination and of varying degrees of a complex hegemony. Consequently, Orientalist discourse is more valuable for Said as a sign of the power exerted by the West over the Orient than a "true" discourse about the Orient. Interestingly, twenty-five years after Said's *Orientalism,* a whole field of study has developed to analyse and interpret the denigrating fantasies of the exotic "East" that sustained the colonial mind. But what about the fantasies of "the West" in the eyes of "the East"? These questions

[325] Ginzburg 1989, p. 35.

[326] It is important to remark here that whenever I may use the term Orientalism, I will exclusively refer to Said's Orientalism, but this does not meant that I view the whole corpus of Oriental Studies or Western photographic corpus through Said's prism.

[327] Said 1978, p. 1.

[328] Said 1978, p. 3.

remain largely unexamined and, as the Anglo-Dutch writer and academic Ian Buruma and the Israeli philosopher and academic Avishai Margalit argue, woefully misunderstood. An interesting book by these authors is *Occidentalism.*[329] The term Occidentalism usually refers to stereotyped and sometimes dehumanizing views of the so-called Western world, including Europe, the United States, and Australia. Iran constitutes just but one of the many examples that illustrate the previous discourse.

A good example to illustrate what I have just introduced above is The *National Geographic Magazine* published in April 1921,[330] a volume devoted to Persia (fig. 165). It included two long articles: "Modern Persia and Its Capital" (47 illustrations, 47 pages) by F.L. Bird who was for five years American college instructor in Tehran and "Persian Caravan Sketches" (62 illustrations, 51 pages) by Harold F. Weston. When going through the magazine, it is especially striking to see the contrast between the photographs of Persian women that illustrate the two articles and those of the American women depicted in the forty-four pages devoted for advertisements at the front and back of the magazine. On page 372 there is a photograph whose caption reads "The almost blind leading the really blind in Persia" (fig. 166). Next to the caption, there is a short text that I reproduce here verbatim: "There are many blind persons in Persia, owing partly to the intense light rays of the sun. Tradition gives the following origin for the wearing of the veils by Mohammedan women: One day when the Prophet was seated with his favourite wife, Ayesha, a passing Arab admired her, expressed a wish to purchase her, and offered a camel in exchange. This experience so angered Mohammed that the custom of requiring women to wear veils resulted". So, the caption talks about blinds and the text that comes along with it refers to them only in the first sentence. The four remaining sentences are devoted to the eternal Western obsession with the Muslim veil, something that is recurrently found in the two articles of this magazine. On the next page (fig. 167), there are two photographs in which different Persian women have been depicted fully covered with a chador. Their respective captions read: "Persian ladies leaving a public bath-house preceded by a domestic servant" (the short text that comes together with the caption reads: "Every Friday is "bath day" in Persia, and a bath is obligatory before the faithful can worship. Frequently there is a public bath attached to the mosque") and "Persian women in chadars" (short text: "Both Christian and Mohammedan women wear the *yashmak* (veil) out of doors, but the *chadar* (chuddar), or enveloping garment, is peculiar to the followers of Mohammed). Further, on page 392, there is a photograph of a Persian woman ridding a donkey (fig. 168) whose caption reads "A Persian woman apparelled for a pilgrimage" (short text: "The elaborate embroidered saddle-bag is a *khorjon,* in which both clothes and foot are carried for the journey. The white veil over the face is the *yashmak*").

In contrast to this, the pages devoted to advertisements where Western women are depicted deserve an in-depth analysis too. The page with an advertisement of the Motor Car Company (fig. 169) depicts a modern dressed smiling woman holding a bouquet of flowers and waiving to four young elegant women that are sitting on a modern black car, reflecting a quite emancipated attitude. The Persian woman riding the donkey contrasts deeply with the Western women represented in this advertisement. This is shocking especially because the title of the magazine is "Modern Persia and Its Capital" and the photographs selected do not show at all any

[329] Buruma and Margalit 2005.

[330] *The National Geographic Magazine*, published by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D.C., April 1921.

kind of modernity or wealth that it was also a part of the Persian reality in nineteenth century. A couple of pages further we find an advertisement of the American Radiator Company (fig. 170) that depicts a fine and elegant Western young woman admiring a modern heating machine. After the two articles devoted to Persia, we find twenty-eight pages of advertisements. In one of them there is an advertisement by the Eastman Kodak Company (fig. 171) that depicts a smiling and independent young woman carrying a Kodak camera on her shoulder. With this kind of advertisement George Eastman and other companies began to direct camera advertising specifically to female costumers. The modern clothes, the loose hair and the loneliness of this young woman contrast deeply with the full-dressed and covered Persian women and their omnipresent company are a man, servant or other women.

When analyzing the issue of *The National Geographic Magazine* devoted to Persia and its people, the photograph's caption emerges as playing an important role. This is because it has a clear influence in constructing the otherness of the people living in "exotic" countries. In fact, images employ a complex amplitude of levels and modes of communication. In addition to codes of a more specifically visual nature, socio-cultural and linguistic codes where the "written text" supports the image, are used to pilot and shape it's interpretation, as we have seen clearly while analyzing the magazine. As stated by the scholar Clive Scott, the distinguishing characteristic of the caption is that it is already a step away from the image towards its assimilation by, and interpretation through, language. The caption is spoken; it is an intervention, a response forestalling the response of the viewer.[331] As art-historian and critic Rosalind Krauss states, it is clear that although the photograph registers reality and isolates the fragments, which are to be made visible, the space isolated from the image is not always significant by itself. It therefore requires a double trace provided by the written text.[332] Moreover, Sontag states that the caption adds a further frame, which in reality proves to be a boundary: it creates an additional space, which guides the interpretation, influencing perception to such an extent that it can reverse its interpretation. And so the same image can be taken equally well to portray an ally or a traitor, a peasant or a brigand, thus confirming that images can be read in different and even conflicting ways depending on the context in which they are inserted, which also determines their possible uses.[333] Therefore, captions help to create and stress the orientalist perception of countries like Iran in the Western mind and they are a complement to the photographs that definitely makes them to be classified as "types". Captions do play an important role in making the conception of the other, in the process of othering.

Oddly enough, not only did Western photographers shape reality through the prism of Orientalism, but there are also examples of Iranian photographers, like Naser od-Din Shah himself, whose work was influenced as well by Western orientalist painting tradition and subsequently by Orientalist photography. As I have already introduced briefly in chapter 3, this phenomenon has been named "self-orientalizing" by the Iranian theorist of Postcolonialism Ali Behdad, who states that by this term he means the practice of seeing and representing oneself as Europe's Other. Having internalized the discourse and practices of Orientalism, Naser od-Din Shah depicts himself and his wives in the same stereotypical way as European artists represented Middle Eastern

[331] Scott 1999, p. 49.
[332] Krauss 1985, p. 131.
[333] Sontag 1979; See also, Berger 1972.

women and the oriental despot.[334] A portrait of Anis al-Douleh, one of Naser od-Din Shah's favourites, taken by himself (fig. 105) already introduced in chapter 3 of this book), reminiscent of the reclining odalisques typical of Orientalists painters, is a good example to illustrate the concept of self-orientalism.[335] Another example of this is a photograph taken by Reza Akkasbashi in which two women are depicted drinking wine and hugging an eunuch (fig. 172). In Behdad's words, a general aesthetic transformation took place in how the West represented the Orient and how the Orient represented itself. This aesthetic transformation, though governed by new rules and techniques, constantly returned to and repeated the subjects, aesthetic consciousness, and formal sensibilities of the previous mode of artistic representation, i.e., painting.[336] Orientalist paintings not only influenced Western photography in the nineteenth century, it also influenced native photography. As stated by Behdad, 'Orientalism, therefore, should not be viewed as a unilateral artistic, intellectual, and political force but instead as a particular system of ideas, aesthetic expressions, and intellectual practices that was internalized by "Orientals".[337] This paradoxical situation has been also pointed out by Pinney who asks himself, 'what are the consequences, for instance, of the documented fact that "collectors of North African, Near and Middle Eastern descent dominate the market for orientalist art?", as has been stated by the art historian Roger Benjamin.[338] Pinney goes on to argue that 'those paintings, which Said and Linda Nochlin[339] have argued projected an image of largely negative alterity, are now eagerly consumed by those whose reality these images so distorted'.[340] Benjamin's research with those who market these paintings, indicate that a nostalgic invocation of "indigenous identity through images of the pre-colonial past" is involved, together with a new sense of positive empowerment expressed through the acquisition and thus redefinition of western cultural documents.[341] A paradoxical situation in which everybody is implicated: the photographer, the person depicted, the observer and the collector. Further examples of odalisque-like portraits are to be found, like the one taken by an Iranian anonymous photoghrapher (fig. 173).

In clear contrast with the aforementioned representations of Iranian women in photography, it is striking to note that in all portraits of parents holding children in their arms or laps in nineteenth-century Iranian photography that I have gathered through this research, only men are holding children (see figs. 22 and 23)! This contrast with the fact that, in real life, the main occupation of those women may well have been taking care of children and hold them in their laps most of the day. Actually, the only photograph that I have found were you can somehow note the presence of a woman holding a children is an ambiguous presence indeed (fig. 174): a couple of boys have been depicted, the youngest one being held by two ghost-like hands that are hidden behind the chadored-chair in which he is sitting. A striking image that makes, even more obvious, the restricted presence of women in portrait

[334] Behdad 2001, p. 148.
[335] The word odalisque appears in a French form, and originates from the Turkish *odalik*, meaning "chambermaid", from *oda,* "chamber" or "room". During the nineteenth century odalisques became common fantasy figures in the artistic movement known as Orientalism.
[336] Behdad 2001, p. 142.
[337] Behdad 2001, p. 148.
[338] See: Benjamin 1997, pp. 32-40.
[339] See: Nochlin 1983.
[340] Pinney 2003, pp. 2-3.
[341] Benjamin 1997, pp. 34-35.

photography in nineteenth century in Iran. I have also seen several photographs of court eunuchs holding court children in their arms, like one photograph taken in Bodouir studio (fig. 175), in which two eunuchs are holding two babies and other two children are sitting on a bench.

In sum, Iran was not an exception in having orientalist traits in the representation of foreign societies in nineteenth-century photography. This orientalism could be found both in single photographs or in publications were photographs had a main role in the construction of the image of Iran, of the image-world of Iran. Next to this, a self-orientalizing approach was also present in the work of some Iranian photographers.

5.3. Interaction between Western and Iranian photographers

In this section I will introduce the Western photographers that were active in Iran in the nineteenth century and focus only on the ones whose influence on Iranian photographers were important. An important topic to explore is in which way they could have influenced the aesthetics of local photographers. Especially relevant for the present dissertation would be a discussion of how this influence might have changed the four topics explored in the previous chapters: visual laterality, text/calligraphy, pose, and space. In order to achieve this, it is essential to know who were the Iranian photographers working with Western photographers. There were two possible agents through which this interaction could take place: the first were Western photographers who travelled and/or lived in Iran (some of whom came as to work as photographers in the court of Naser od-Din Shah); the second were Iranian photographers who travelled and/or lived in Europe (some of whom, like Abdullah Qajar, went to Europe precisely to learn photographic technique). I will discuss both.

Western photographers in Iran

The French photographer Jules Richard (1816-1891) was the first Western photographer to work in the Persian court. He arrived in Tehran in 1844 and started teaching photography to Iranian students in the Dar al-Funun[342] starting 1851. He mastered the process of daguerreotype, which was his main teaching subject. Unfortunately, none of his photographs have survived.[343] Being as he was the first Western photographer to work as a teacher for Iranian students, he may have been an influential photographer for Iranians.

As stated by the Iranian prominent historian and photo historian Iraj Afshar, there are two sources of valuable information about French and Italian photographers in Iran, the former active in the years 1857-60 and the latter dating from 1860-63. He states further that for our information about the French photographers, we are in debt to an article by J. Qa'im-Maqami[344] based on documents in the French military archives at Vincennes (no. 1673) containing reports by the head of the French military mission in Iran. These mention that in 1857 two photographers named Carlhiée and

[342] Dar al-Funun (Academy), was Iran's first institution for higher learning based on European models. A special department of photography was opened as early as 1851. This academy was envisioned by Naser od-Din Shah's prime minister, Amir Kabir, as a training ground for future civil servants and military men.

[343] For biographical notes on Western photographers working in Iran in 19th century a good source of information is: Zoka 1997.

[344] Qa'im-Maqami 1977, pp. 279-82.

Blocqueville accompanied the mission. For our information on Italian photographers in Iran, we are indebted to Angelo Piamontese's valuable study, "The Photograph Album of the Italian Diplomatic Mission to Persia (Summer 1862)".[345] The article, he states further, deals in a comprehensive manner with the background of the Mission and its members, including the two photographers Luigi Montabone and Pietrobon.[346] There were around thirty Western photographers active in Iran in nineteenth century[347], but for my research the most relevant ones are the French Francois Carhliée, the Italian Luigi Montabone and Antoin Sevruguin. The reason for this is that they were the ones whose work influenced most the aesthetic of local photographers. To probe this is the aim of the present section.

The French photographer Carlhiée was active in Iran in 1858. There is an interesting album hosted at the Museum Guimeè where photographs taken by Carlhiée, the Italian photographers Luigi Pesce and Gianuzzi are shown together with some watercolours collected by the French colonel Brongiart.[348] He became a teacher at the Dar al-Funun and, as stated by Tahmasbpour in the course of e-mail exchange in March 2009, he made some experiments with cyanotype.[349] Most likely Reza Akkasbashi (1843-1889)[350] learned this technique from his. This photographer was probably responsible for the introduction of Western props and paraphernalia in the Iranian photographer's studio as well as the typical Victorian pose: frontal and hieratic.

The Italian photographer Luigi Montabone (active from 1856, in Iran from 1862, died 1877), who belonged to a family of professional photographers, introduced hand-coloured photography in Iran. The photographs taken during his Italian mission were exhibited at the international exhibition in Paris in 1867 with big success. He produced the aforementioned and well-known album titled *Ricordo del Viaggio in Persia della Missione Italiana 1862.* Until today, three copies of the album have been identified: one in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, one in the *Albumkhaneh* of the Golestan Palace in Tehran and a third one in the Royal House Archives in the Hague, the Netherlands.[351] In the words of Tahmasbpour, 'the aesthetics and style introduced by Montabone had a profound influence on Iranian photographers working at the imperial court. To date, no earlier examples of colored photographs in the Golestan Palace other than the photographs of Montabone are identified and so we can safely argue that Montabone's photographs mark a revolution in Iranian photography'.[352] A good example of this kind of photographs is the one that depicts two Iranian military men whose clothes have been finely hand-painted with watercolours (fig. 176). The

[345] Piamontese 1972,
[346] Afshar 1992B, pp. 262-63.
[347] For chronology on Western photographers: Vuurman 2004, pp. 23-29.
[348] The album consists of more than 150 photographs and watercolours. For a deep analysis of this album, see: Sheikh, Reza: "Brongiart Album" in *Aksnahme,* 1999, Tehran.
[349] The cyanotype process was discovered by John Herschel. A low-cost permanent print made by putting an object (i.e., a drawing or plant specimen) directly in contact with paper impregnated with iron salts and potassium ferricyanide, then exposing them to the light. The paper darkness except where the object blocks the light. The resulting image is white on a blue ground. Taken from: Rosenblum 1997, p. 651.
[350] Reza Akkasbashi is regarded as the most important Iranian photographer of that period. In 1864 he was granted the tittle *Akkasbashi* (Chief Photographer) in recognition of his mastery of photography. He studied with the French photographer Carlhièe who came in Persia in 1857 as photographer of the French Mission in Persia. For biography and a good selection of Reza Akkasbashi's photographs, see: Tahmasbpour 2007.
[351] See Vuurman 2004, p. 23.
[352] Tahmasbpour 2007, p. 17.

Iranian photographers that were active in the hand-coloring were Reza Akkasbashi, Mirza Ahmad Akkas, Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akkasbashi and Abdullah Qajar (1849-1908).[353] Tahmasbpour further states that, besides, the vignetting used for the portraits taken of the Shah were novel too and were copied by Iranian photographers in the ensuing years.[354] There is a hand-colored and vignetted portrait that Montabone took of Naser od-Din Shah (fig. 177) that is a good example of the two techniques that Montabone introduced in Iran. Many Iranian photographers adopted the vignetting technique like Reza Akkasbashi, Mirza Hosein Ali Akkas, Mirza Ahmad Akkas, Agha Yousef Akkas, Manouchehr Khan Akkas, Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akkasbashi, Abdollah Qajar, Amir Jalil-al-Dowle Qajar and Rousi Khan. One of the Iranian photographers that was most likely influenced by Montabone was Reza Akkasbashi. There is one photograph taken by Montabone in which a group of Iranian poseurs from the court are depicted (fig. 178). Among them we can find Reza Akkasbashi standing (the third one from the left), portrayed in 1862 when he was already active as a photographer in the court. Actually his attitude, among all the men depicted, is the most conscious and theatrical one: he is the one who is completely aware of the camera and is playing both with the camera and the photographer. In this photograph we can guess the relationship that these two photographers may have had. There is another copy of this photograph in the album hosted at the Golestan Palace Library, but in that one Naser od-Din Shah identified and wrote the name of the persons depicted in Farsi, and also wrote: "Taken by the Italian photographer at Niavaran" (fig. 179).

Ernst Hoeltzer (1855-1939) and Antoin Sevruguin (late 1830s-1933) are two of the more interesting photographers that were active in Iran in the nineteenth century. They not only stayed longer and lived there for over 30 years, but also married Iranian women. Hoeltzer lived in Iran for over 30 years and married an Armenian woman in Isfahan.[355] My hypothesis is that he was in Iran long enough to learn extensively about Persian aesthetics, mostly through paintings. Additionally, his work was nourished by both his cultural background and Persian visual arts aesthetics. On the other hand, the Iranian photo historian Parisa Damandan claims that his knowledge of Iranian culture and history was so limited that it stuns any educated person of our age.[356] Even if he was in Iran a long time, the fact that he was an amateur photographer who basically worked for his own interest and enjoyment, make very plausible the hypothesis that his work was not influential to Iranian photographers. Nevertheless, as a consequence of that stay of 30 years in Iran, his work is interesting especially for its hybrid approach. I will come back to his work in the next section, devoted to hybridity and photography.

Sevruguin was born at the Russian embassy in Tehran as the son of a diplomat and lived in Iran for over 30 years as a professional and highly commercial Orientalist photographer. His work's aesthetics were remarkable. His photography finds itself half way between portrait and ethnographic photography. As the Iranian photo historian Reza Sheikh points out, 'Sevruguin's prowess as a stage director with a painter's instincts was best revealed within the confines of his studio. To assure better light he often photographed in his house's courtyard or the military procession

[353] I am grateful to Tahmasbpour for this information, result of his own research on the topic.
[354] Tahmasbpour 2007, p. 17.
[355] For a good source of information on Ernst Hoeltzer and a wonderfull selection of his photograhs, see Damandan 2004.
[356] Damandan 2004, p. 21.

grounds near his studio'.[357] Sevruguin's work was very well known by Western travellers and was often used in their travelogues. In some cases, the writer would acknowledge the author of the photographs but in some others would not. One of the most shocking examples is the April 1921 National Geographic Magazine, *Modern Persia and its Capital,* that I have already analyzed in the previous section, and where many pictures taken by Sevruguin appeared with another author's name (Faye Fischer). Unfortunately in those days copyright was only science fiction. His work clearly shows the influence of the Russian realist painters like Ilya Yefimovich Repin (1844-1930) and the English photographer Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879). We can compare figs. 180 and 181 from Sevruguin with 182 and 183 from Cameron, the Victorian period's most enduring famous photographer. In Cameron's work, friends, family, and servants were changed into characters from the Bible, Greek mythology, and Renaissance paintings, as well as figures in British folklore and literature. She appreciated the languidly beautiful women in medieval costume who appeared in paintings by artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.[358] This kind of portraits of dervishes was a clear influence on the work of some Iranian photographers, especially in the work of the Armenian photographer Aghayanes (figs. 184 and 185).[359] The pose, facial expression and treatment of light of these portraits resemble Sevruguin's portraits of dervishes. In none of these photographs the sitter looks directly to the camera. All the men portrayed here seem to be in deep inner thought, with a clear mystical appearance in all of them that has been masterly achieved through the use of light and the staging of the sitter's attitude.

The next photograph by Sevruguin (fig. 186) is good to illustrate the pictorialist approach of this painter photographer. Taken around 1880, the composition of this image is no doubt very *avant-guarde* for it's time and is very different from the archetypical Victorian portrait: frontal, hieratic and still. Looked at from a distance it shows a perfect balance of light and composition, a perfect diagonal and turning movement of the body that recalls the paintings of Ingres, all of which help to create an atmosphere of harmony. To make it even more interesting, the eyes of the sitter, which are turned away from the observer, are reflected in the mirror in front of him. Only people who are familiar with Persian culture will recognise the person depicted in the picture as a *luti*, a member of a traditional Iranian wrestling and athletic club known as *zurkhane.* Apparently, *lutis* shave their heads when preparing for the annual passion play to commemorate the Shi'i imam Hussein, who died a martyr's death at the hands of the Sunni caliph Yazid in 680 CE. In an act of self-mutilation known as *ghame zani* or *tigh zani*, they inflict heavily bleeding wounds on their shaved heads, re-enacting the sufferings of Imam Hussein. Later on, while doing research on the archives of nineteenth century Western photography in Iran at the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, I was surprised to find a second image (fig. 187), a preliminary stage of the first one, that shares the three most important and characteristic elements with the first picture: it is also taken from the back, with a mirror, and the Persian style of haircut. However, it is obvious that the composition and the light bear no comparison with the first photograph, the previous one. These two photographs proof that Sevruguin was indeed a stage director in his own studio.

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[357] Sheikh, Reza. "Portfolio of a Nation" in Bohrer 1999, p. 56.

[358] Warner 2002, p. 158.

[359] He was born in Tabriz and was active as photographer in the last years of the rign of Naser od-Din Shah and the firts years of the rign of Muzafar od-Din Shah (around 1890-1910). For further information about this photographer see: Zoka 1997, pp. 197-205.

Type was a genre practised by Sevruguin and in the collection we can find many images (like fig. 188). Here I would like to mention a very interesting research conducted by the German Iranologist and curator Frederike Voigt who is currently engaged in PhD Thesis research at Berlin University. She states that this kind of type photography influenced the traditional tile painting in nineteenth century in Iran, Sevruguin's photographs serving as a model for those tiles.[360] There is one photograph where an Iranian woman is depicted in a squatting position and a straightforward title written under the photograph: Persian Toilet (fig. 123, already analyzed from another point of view in chapter 3). Another interesting photograph is that of a naked Iranian woman (fig. 124, also analyzed in chapter 3). These two photographs, emblematic of the "Otherness", are at the Ethnology Museum of Leiden which hosts a well-preserved collection of Sevruguin. These two images reveal Sevruguin's Orientalist approach better than in any other.[361] Nude women are a recurrent topic in studio portraits of the nineteenth century, no matter in what country. This matter deserves deeper attention because the photographer is non-Iranian and the woman an Iranian lady. The Algerian writer Malek Alloula has written the most remarkable analysis of postcards of "exotic" women that were sent to the Western public. In his book *The Colonial Harem*[362]*,* he collected, arranged, and annotated picture postcards of Algerian women produced and sent by the French during the first three decades of last century. The mundane use of the postcards – short messages to family and friends – make the portrayals of Algerian women all the more insidious. Who were those women posing for these kinds of images? Were they the pure fantasy of the photographer's mind? As Alloula states, the photographer comes up with more complacent counterparts to these inaccessible Algerian women. These counterparts are paid models that he recruited almost exclusively from the margins of society. The loss of social position in the wake of the conquest and the subsequent overturning of traditional structures, affects men as well as women (invariably propelling the latter toward prostitution).[363] Thus, as the photo historian and curator Nissan N. Perez stated, genre photographers faced another problem in the lack of availability of models and the unwillingness of the local population, owing to their religious taboos or simple prejudices, to be photographed. Many of the women photographed in evocative poses were no doubt prostitutes. Other models appear to be blind and unaware of what was happening around them.[364] Perez uses a striking example of a literally blind Nubian woman with exposed breasts taken by the Turkish brothers photographers of Armenian origin Abdullah Frères (fig. 189). Further, he presents two photographs by the French photographer Félix Bonfils of the same person identified in one as the chief rabbi of Jerusalem and in the other as a cotton carder.[365] Alloula also presents a similar example in his book in a set of three postcards in which the same model, wearing the same outfit, photographed by the same photographer at the same location, represents in turn a "young Bedouin woman", a "young woman from the South" and a "young kabyl woman"![366]

[360] For further reading on this topic and interesting examples see: Voigt, Friederike, *Qadscharische Bildfliesen im Etnologischen Museum Berlin,* Staatliche Mussen zu Berlin, Berlin, 2002.
[361] For further reading on Sevruguin, see: Bohrer 1999 and Vogelsang-Eastwood 1999.
[362] Alloula 1986.
[363] Alloula 1986, p. 17.
[364] Perez 1988, p. 107.
[365] To see the examples: Perez 1988, p. 107.
[366] To see the examples: Alloula 1986, pp. 62, 63 and 65.

One of the peculiarities that I find more revealing of the Western mind when faced with “exotic” women from North African and Asiatic countries, is the ambiguity between modest reserve and whispered beckoning, between the veil that reminds us of the seclusion of the female in those countries and naked parts of their bodies, which is almost always the breast. There are many examples of this kind of dichotomic images that play between hiding and revealing. I have selected two of them here: the first one is titled *Moorish Bust* and belongs to the series of postcards "Scenes and Types" (fig. 190). The second one is a postcard full of fantastic surrealism (fig. 191). The caption of the photograph reads: "Arabian woman with the Yachmak". I have found some examples of this kind in nineteenth-century Iranian photography, even if more discrete, interestingly in the work of Naser od-Din Shah (see, for example, figs. 101 and 192), where two of his views have been depicted with full covered head, but with exposed belly or/and breasts. I have seen quite a significant number of these photographs where his wives wear a transparent blouse that fully reveals the breast underneath it: see figure 108. It is important to note that the Shah was the only photographer that took those kinds of photographs; therefore they were only meant to be enjoyed by himself and his wives. I believe that there is some kind of ludic component in those images: he did not produce the photographs for the market; they were just meant to be items of private contemplation, to his own enjoyment.

In retrospect, I can say that Western photographers, active in Iran in nineteenth century, produced similar work to that of other Western photographers active in other “exotic” countries like Egypt or Algeria.

Iranian photographers in Europe

Several Iranian photographers travelled to Europe to learn the photographic technique with Western photographers who became their teachers. Reza Akkasbashi travelled to Vienna in 1873 on a mission with Naser od-Din Shah, but he probably got Western influences already before this trip, since in 1863 he was already being trained as a photographer in the court of Naser od-Din Shah under the guidance of the French photographer Carlhiée. Abdullah Qajar attended the Dar al-Funun and in 1869 travelled to Europe to study photography. He lived for a year and a half in Paris and for three years in Salzburg. Both of these photographers were court photographers and the influence that Western photographers had on the aesthetics of their work is noticeable in contrast to that of other more local (or bazaar) Iranian photographers: the pose (especially of the hands and head), the use of Western studio paraphernalia, the hand-coloring of photographs and the vignetting technique. Actually, one of the most aesthetically pleasing photographs that I have seen from nineteenth century Iranian photographers is a lithograph hand-over-painted by Abdullah Qajar (fig. 193), where we can see a very young Naser od-Din Shah. To be sure, Naser od-Din Shah was himself one of the Iranian photographers that was more exposed to Western aesthetics. He travelled to Paris several times and met the French photographer Gaspar Felix Tournachon (1820-1910) better known as Nadar, who took at least one portrait of the Shah (fig. 194) taken around 1873. I have also seen a portrait taken by Nadar of Farroukh Khan, who went with the Shah on his trip to Paris. The influence of this photographer on the photographic work of the Shah is clear (especially the hand-pose used consistently by Nadar: one hand under the coat or jacket). See, for instance, figure 108 introduced in chapter 3, in which he and all the women depicted there strike the same Nadar-pose. In contrast to this, we do not find this kind of pose

at all in the work of Abdullah Qajar, but we do find it in Reza Akkasbashi (see fig. 195).

Another important Iranian photographer, Ali Khan Vali Hakem (1845/6-1902), deserves close attention. He was a member of a distinguished Qajar family, his father having had a long career as diplomat and governor. Ali Khan was born in Tehran in 1845 or 1846. The most important event in his young life occurred when he accompanied his father to St. Petersburg in 1855 for several years. During that time, he studied and learned photography. Ali Khan Vali's photograph album documenting his career as governor at various places in Azerbaijan (Northwest Persia) between 1879 and 1896, is of virtually unprecedented quality and character. Although the earliest photographs in the album are portraits of Naser od-Din Shah taken in 1862-3, it would appear that the rest of the photographs date from Ali Khan's 1879 posting to Maragha, and the following years. The last date in the text is 1895-96. It contains no less than 1.400 photographs on 439 pages, that include representations of Shi'ite saints, portraits of Naser od-Din Shah, Ali Khan's family, and all those persons and places he encountered during his career as governor. The photographs are captioned in almost all cases. Moreover, page after page is covered with a continuous narrative of his career, written around the photographs. In the work of this photographer we can clearly find elements that are borrowed from the Victorian portrait, but also clear elements that come from the Persian cultural background of the photographer. I will present some of his work in the next section, devoted to the topic of hybridity.

Court photographers versus bazaar photographers. Art and craft.

Among the topics considered in the four previous chapters of this book, the ones in which Western influence would be most noticeable or relevant are "visual laterality" and "pose". The Iranian photographers that used calligraphic inscriptions within the photographic space, such as Abdul-Qassem Nuri (see figs. 70 and 72), were not especially influenced by Western photographers since they were producing their work in bazaar studios where Western aesthetics were absent and they were more influenced by their traditional guild system, that related the new medium with traditional painting and calligraphy. It is also important to note that there is a remarkable difference in the aesthetic approach in photography between the Iranian court photographers and professional studio photographers living in big cities, on the one hand, and those who lived in smaller cities or towns or worked in bazaars, far away from the court. Photographs like those taken by Nuri are examples of the kind of pictures produced by photographers more influenced or attached to their aesthetic traditions in the arts than by court photographers. For instance, we have not found any photographs taken by court photographers in which calligraphy is used within the photographic space in any way. My current hypothesis is that the aesthetics of these court photographers was very different from those photographers exposed to the age-old master-apprentice system. My aim is to show this with images and reflect on an interaction between the traditional Iranian learning system based on guilds and the new system directly influenced by Western academic models.

For centuries in Iran, "art" was considered indistinguishable from "handicraft".[367] The analysis of the four Persian words for art or craft – *san'at, fann,*

[367] According to *Webster's New World Dictionary*. the English words *art* and *craft* are also almost synonymous and are both defined as "a trade, occupation or profession requiring special skill or dextrity", although the word *art* implies creativity, ingenuity, and a unique ability to impart aesthetic

pisheh, and *hunar* – and a tracing of their usage back to the fifteenth century reveals that they were employed interchangeably until the second half of the nineteenth century. At that time, certain handicrafts, especially painting and related arts, were first perceived as "branches of knowledge" akin to geometry and history.[368] An 1862 announcement in the state newspaper *Ruznameh-i Dawlat 'Aliyeh-i Iran* inviting students (*danish amuzan*) to "study" (*tahsil*) painting, exemplified the new tendency to equate "art" and "schooling".[369] Traditionally, the activities of artisans and craftsmen in Iran were tied to the operation of guilds (*asnaf*)[370] and workshops (*karkhaneh*). Whether employed by the royal workshops and guilds (*asnaf-i shabi*) or by the local bazaars, artists and craftsmen worked and trained within the system. The *kitabkhaneh,* or royal library workshop, had functioned within the parameters of the Royal Household and was considered one of its domestic departments. Despite Iran's increasing interaction with Russia and Europe during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the practices of the royal ateliers at this time still bore a striking resemblance to those of earlier periods.[371] As stated by the Islamic art historian Sheila Canby, 'while individual artists, occasionally with the help of an assistant, designed and executed the actual illustrations in Persian manuscripts, the complete production of an illustrated book could involve many people, all of whom would be employed within the library or book-making atelier of a major, often royal patron. The director of the project would decide which episodes of the narrative should be illustrated. If the borders were to be flecked with gold, specialist gold-sprinklers would perform their task while the paper was still wet. Then, once the sheets were burnished, the scribe would copy the text, leaving space for paintings and illuminations as instructed by the director. The painter(s) would next proceed, followed by illuminators and gilders, whose intricate decorations adorned the frontispieces, end-pages and chapter-headings. These artists were also responsible for ruling and framing the lines that demarcated text from paintings and separated lines of poetry'.[372]

There is a very illustrative miniature in which Sultan Husayn is depicted. He was a most enlightened patron who took a keen interest in the activities of his studios. This manuscript of his own poems written in Eastern Turkish, in the Topkapi Sarayi dated 1492, was undoubtedly produced for him because one of the miniatures (fig. 196) shows him holding a book while all around him his craftsmen are at work. A calligrapher is working in the left foreground, an illuminator opposite him, an artist is on the right while the head of the academy is proudly watching his patron's pleasure

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appeal. Seyyed Houssein Nasr defines the words *fann, san'at,* and *hunar* in a more general way as "having the capability of doing or making something correctly" and adds that the use of the word *hunar* to translate the modern European concept of "art" is a very recent phenomenon. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Art and Spirituality,* Albany, 1987, p. 67.

[368] The only instance in which "art" in any way approximated an academic discipline before the mid-nineteenth century had been in the education of kings and princes within the royal household. Maryam Ekhtiar, "From Workshop and Bazaar to Academy. Art Training and Production in Qajar Iran", in Diba 1999, p. 63.

[369] *Ruznameh-i Dawlat-i 'Illieh-i Iran,* no.518, Shaval 3, A.H.1278/April 3, A.D.1862. *Ibid*. *Op.30*. 51.

[370] *Sinf,* the singular of *asnaf*, can be defined as a group of city dwellers engaged in the same occupation, working in the same bazaar, headed by their own chief and paying regular guiad tax to the local authorities. See Keyvani, Mehdi. *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period: Contributions to the Social-Economic History of Persia*. Berlin, 1982., 38; Willem M. Floor, "The Guilds in Iran: An Overwiev from the Earliest Beginning till 1972", in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft,* N. 125 (1975): 99-116; and William Floor, "Asnaf", *Encyclopaedia Iranica,* vol. 2.

[371] Diba 1999, p. 51.

[372] Canby 1993, p. 19.

in the book he is holding. In this miniature we can appreciate the guild traditional system that was used in the ateliers in Iran, Turkey and India.

European photographers became teachers of the Iranian court photographers. Muhammad Shah (reigned 1834-1848) had experimented with photography, and his court received the first daguerreotype camera. But it was under Naser od-Din Shah (reign 1848-1896) that photography was really promoted and different techniques learned and mastered. His interest in photography began when he was very young, when he learned the photographic technique quite quickly and produced his own prints. It took a lot of effort for the Shah to bring this new invention close to his servants at Court, where several rooms were reserved for photography, as well as at the Dar al-Funun, Iran's first institution of higher learning based on Western models. The Qajar art historian Maryam Ekhtiar has extensively researched the Dar al-Funun, this being the subject of her PhD thesis. As she explains, 'a special department for photography was opened there as early as 1851. This academy was envisioned by Naser od-Din Shah's prime minister Amir Kabir as a training ground for future civil servants and military officers. Instruction was conducted in a pattern similar to that of the European academies of fine art, where art was regarded as a scientific and scholarly discipline. Although the Dar al-Funun ultimately altered art education, the age-old master-apprentice system continued to exist and was also important in the field of photography'.[373] The Shah's encouragement of photography in Iran inspired his courtiers, as well as Dar al-Funun students, to take up the art. Some, such as Abdullah Qajar, were even given the opportunity to refine their skills in government-sponsored training in Europe, in workshops or on courses. European professionals were brought to the court and to the Dar al-Funun to work as teachers.

Analyzing photographs taken by court photographers, like Reza Akkasbashi, and contrasting them with the previous ones, we can see a clear Western influence, more specifically that of the Victorian portrait tradition in photography: hieratic, still and with the typical studio paraphernalia (background, chairs, columns and carpet).

It is interesting to reflect here that there are two different attitudes in two different art disciplines in the Persian courts. My current hypothesis: court painting was more rooted in tradition following the guild working models, whereas court photographers were more exposed, in general, to Western models. The reason for this could be that photography was a Western discovery that was immediately accepted and admired by the Persian kings and he therefore accepted with no reserve with regard to the way of learning and teaching that came with the photographic practice. On the other hand, it is important to know if bazaar photographers approached photography with the guild system, as I believe to have been the case. I have found a photograph where photographers-guilds have been depicted in Mashad (fig. 197). We can see the guild structure typical of bazaars where the artists or craftsmen were organized by crafts, noticeable by the fact that in that part of the bazaar only photographers would have a shop. This is reinforced by the fact that classic Iranian historical texts about photography and Iranian photographers, such as "The beginning of the craft of photography and stereotyping in Iran" written by Iqbal Yaghma'i's article[374], that considers photography as a craft from the very title. Actually, an

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[373] Maryam Ekhtian and Marika Sardar, 'Nineteenth-Century Iran: Art and the Advent of Modernity' in *The Time of Art History* at: http:/www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/irmd/hd_irmd.htm.
For Dar al-Funun see: Maryam Ekhtiar, *Modern Science, Education and Reform in Qajar Iran: The Dar al-Funun,* New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003.

[374] Afshar 1992, pp. 267-68. As stated by Afshar in note 35: Article published in the journal *Amuzash va Parwanrash,* xxxviii/1-2 (1347Sh), pp. 90-7. The source of the extract is not recorded in the

important question to take into consideration is how Iranians received a modern Western invention such as photography, and how it became accepted. In my search for the roots and early uses of photography in Iran, the first thing that I must consider is the name that the Iranians gave to this new medium: *Aks.* As stated by Afshar, the word *aks* has long been used in Persian in the general sense of the reflection in water, mirrors, etc. As he states further, the term *aks* and *akkas* (photographer) have also a more technical use in two sixteenth-century texts dealing with miniatures and illustrations. Both passages refer to the same artist, Mawlana Kepek of Heart. The first is an introduction to an album in the Topkapi Museum (dated 1576-7) published under the tittle of *Bustan-I Khatt:* "the other rare talent of the era was Mawlana Kepek the *Akkas* of Heart, who made *aks* (stencils) of pictures and line drawings, and in the making of coloured stencils and gold sprinkling and the use of different colours and artistic designs (*tarrahí)* and calligraphy copying (*muthanna)* has excelled all human beings".[375] So it seems that Iranians used a word that was already in their language to name the new invention. This contrasts with the fact that the English word *photography* that comes from the Greek *photos,* meaning "light", and *graphia,* meaning "drawing" or "writing", was invented exclusively for the new medium. Interestingly in Japan something similar happened of what happened in Iran: as stated by the Japanese critic and art historian Kohtaro Iizawa, the Japanese gave to the new medium the word *shashin,* which is derived from the characters for "reproduce" and "true", meaning, in other words, the process of making a true reproduction, or "true copy". He states further that the word *shashin* was used in Japan even before the arrival of photography. It was used in the Chinese school of painting, which had a great influence on Japanese artists, especially with regard to the techniques of portraiture.[376]

Women photographers

What about women photographers? We know of three Western women active in Iran in nineteenth century, the French archaeologist and journalist Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916, active from 1881), the English Isabella Lucy Bishop-Bird (active 1890)[377] and Gertrude Bell (1868-1926, active in Iran from 1892).[378] All of them were traveller-photographers and their work did not have an influence on local photographers. Jane Dieulafoy married Marcel Dieulafoy in 1870 and joined him in the army of the Loire during the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. From that time, she adopted masculine costume and short haircut in her extensive travels. When Marcel obtained an assignment in Persia, she decided to accompany him. She covered on horseback all the Persian itinerary of the voyage (1881-82). She managed to penetrate into the *andaruns* and provided us with vivid descriptions of the lives of secluded women of all ranks. Besides the main monuments and archaeological remains, she photographed and processed on the spot many portraits of men, women and various social groups.

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article, and the writer has personally informed me that he took it from a newspaper of the time of Muzaffar od-Din Shah but forgot to indicate the source.

[375] Afshar 1992, pp 263-64: *Bustan-I Khatt,* published by Mustawfi Books, Tehran, 1971, pp. 11-12.

[376] Iiazawa, Kohtaro, "The Shock of the Real. Early Photography in Japan", in Robert Stearns *Photography and Beyond in Japan. Space, Time and Memory,* Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 1994, p 38.

[377] Bird 1988-89.

[378] See: Hill 1976.

All drawings and engravings illustrating her travel accounts and Marcel Dieulafoy's publications were made from these photographs.[379]

As stated by Tahmasbpour, the first Iranian women to get acquired with the technique of photography were most probably some of Naser od-Din Shah's wives, who approached the new medium as an enterteinment. They especially enjoyed the dark room's work. Asraf al-Soltane (1901-1953) was one of the Iranian pioneer women photographers.[380] She was born in Kermanshah but moved to Tehran when she married her Mohammad Hasan Khan Eh-temadol Soltane, one of Naser od-Din Shah's ministers. In the family of Moirel al-Mamahlek, there were also some women photographers. Asraf al-Soltane did not have children and used her time mostly to learn history, medicine, French and the technique of photography with Shahzadeh Soltan Mohammad Mirza Wallet. After the death of her husband, she married again and moved to Mashad.[381] She was a very unusual woman for that time, who lead a life devoted to learn and experience things that were not the norm among Iranian women at the turn of the twentieth century. Eight years after her death, the Iranian historian Soltan Ahmade Doulatshai Yomhan-Douleh wrote about her life and work, and that constitutes the best known source of information about this pioneer woman photographer.[382]

There were two well-known Iranian women photographers active in the nineteenth century, Fatima Soltan Khanum (wife of Mirza Hasan Ali Akkas) and Osrat Khanum (wife of Agha Yusef Akasbashi). They were sisters and the wives of two Iranian photographers, as was almost always the case with women photographers in the nineteenth century: as stated by Rosenblum, 'most frequently, a woman would help her spouse in a photography business and then take it over after his death.[383] Rosenblum states further that as the techniques for producing portrait photographs changed, women were called upon for retouching as well as coloring. This skill, taught in schools, remained women's work into the twentieth century, perhaps because, as one writer put it in the mid-1880s, a women skilled in retouching "would have secured greater pay if she had been a man".[384] Interestingly, Naser od-Din Shah's wives were helping him to put together the albums of photographs that he took at court, mostly portraits of his wives and children.

The wife and daughter of Sevruguin are also among the first women photographers that were active in Iran in late nineteenth-century and early twenty century. They were both working at Sevruguin's studio and took it over after his death, as stated by Tahmasbpour and agreeing with Rosenblum's statement.

In Shiraz, two daughters of Mirza Hassan Chehernegar known as Azizé Yahan and Habibé Zaman, opened the first studio in this city specialized in portraits of women. They became serious professional photographers.

Iranian women photographers in nineteenth century remain a topic to be researched. It is especially important to undertake such a research since women photographers mainly took pictures of women, and such a research will probably give new insights on the topic of the representation of women in nineteenth-century photography.

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[379] See Dieulafoy 1989.
[380] Tahmasbpour 2005.
[381] See, Zoka 1997, pp. 178-79, translated by the author from the original in Persian.
[382] Zoka 1997, p. 178.
[383] Rosenblum 1994, p. 42.
[384] Manson, George J., "Work for Women in Photography", *Philadelphia Photographer* 20, 1883, p. 37. Taken from Rosenblum 1994, p. 48.

Evolution of visual laterality, relation text-image, pose and space

As I mentioned previously in the first chapter of this book, the visual laterality phenomenon changed in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. My research points to the fact that there are more exceptions to the visual laterality composition (mirror-like) of Iranian photographs towards the beginning of the twentieth century, when Western influences would be deeper and more noticeable.

As for pose, the most important Western influence on the traditional Iranian pose was caused by the introduction of the chair in the studio paraphernalia. The change of pose from the traditional kneeling pose to a more westernized sitting position is clearly noticeable chronologically in nineteenth century Iranian photography. Next to this, the court photographers, such as Reza Akkasbashi or Abdullah Qajar, were by far more influenced by the Western studio paraphernalia than bazaar or local photographers: in the individual portraits taken by court photographers we find more sitters on chairs than in the case of non-court photographers, whose photographs show normally kneeling sitters. This difference disappears, interestingly, when we consider group portrait photographs: in this case, the sitters are almost always kneeling! The reason for this may be that there were not enough chairs in the photographer's studio. See, for instance, Reza Akkasbashi's photographs of kneeling mullahs (figs. 154 and 155) from the previous chapter. Probably the traditional poses of the hands (like the modest one, holding hands and resting them on the sitter's lap, or holding with one hand a *tasbi* or some other traditional object, see figures 67 and 70) were influenced, and changed, into some other more westernized, like the one already introduced that Nadar made popular: one hand under the coat. One of the typical Victorian hand-poses that also entered the Iranian photographer's studio is that of the hands resting in parallel on each one of the legs (see figure 114). Other traditional pose inherited, as I have already pointed out in chapter 3, from the Qajar portraiture tradition is the one of a man sitting on a chair and holding a sword (see figures 15, 20, 66 and 106).

Even if Iranian photographers adopted the props and studio paraphernalia typical of the Victorian studios, they adapted those elements some times in a different way, a more local way. For example, the background: there are local backgrounds used by some Iranian photographers that are more patterned than the Western realist ones. There are photographers that use even a carpet as background.

In sum, Carlhiée, Montabone, and Sevruguin were the most influential Western photographers on their Iranian colleagues. Carhliée was responsible for the introduction of the Victorian pose (hieratical and frontal) and studio paraphernalia among Iranian court photographers; Montabone introduced hand-colored photography and the technique of vignetting; and Sevruguin's pictorialism in photography was also a fundamental referent for those Iranian photographers more exposed to foreign influences like court or successful professional photographers who run studios in Tehran or other big cities.

5.4. *Hybridity* versus *Appropriation*

Due to the double cultural influence that some of the nineteenth century Iranian photographers had during their active life as photographers, their work presents, as I shall show shortly with several photographs, a combination of elements belonging to each of the two cultures. I have spent some time trying to find an adecuate term to

define this property of the photographs produced by those Iranian photographers. It was difficult to find a good term to name that phenomenon: hybridity, acculturation, interculturality, assemblage and appropriation were the terms considered during that process. For a long time I considered the term "hybridity" as the one to explain clearly the concept. Nevertheless, I disregardered it later in favour of "appropriation". I discuss in the following pages the reasons for taking that decision. Iranian photographers made elements found in nineteenth century Western photography their's own: they not only adopted studio paraphernalia but also the attitude and pose of the sitter.

Hybridity is one of the most widely employed and most disputed terms in post-colonial theory. It refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone made by colonisation. The term hybridity has been most recently associated with the work of the Indian theorist of postcolonialism Homi K. Bhabha, whose analysis of coloniser and colonized relations stress their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Bhabha states that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space that he calls *The Third Space of enunciation"*.[385] Cultural identity always emerges in this contradictory and ambivalent space, which in Bhabha's opinion makes the claim to a hierarchical "purity" of cultures untenable. For him, the recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity. Within this, cultural difference may operate. As Bhabha said: "It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory…. May open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity.*"*[386] Here it is important to remark that some scholars, such as the art historian John Clark, have incisively noted that 'sometimes post-colonialist discourses were built on virtual ignorance of the local archives it would be thought they had consulted'.[387] He further states that 'according to the Scottish writer and historian William Dalrymple, in all the output of Subaltern Studies not one PhD has been written from the Mutinity Papers[388], the basic archival collection, nor a major study systematically explored its contents'.[389]

The use of the term hybridity has been widely criticised, since it usually implies negating and neglecting the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it references. By stressing the transformative cultural, linguistic and political impacts on both the colonised and the coloniser, it has been regarded as replicating assimilationist policies by masking or "whitewashing" cultural differences.[390] The idea of hybridity also underlines other attempts to stress the mutuality of cultures in the colonial and post-colonial process in expressions of syncreticity, cultural synergy[391] and

[385] Bhabha 1994, p. 37.
[386] Bhabha 1994, p. 38.
[387] Clark, John, *Hybridity in Asian Art now:* conference outline, 2007, p. 2.
[388] The Mutinity Papers is a corpus of historical documents written in Urdu and Persian about the 1857 Indian mutinity or "first war of independence", when Indian soldiers of the british army rebelled against their colonial masters. They are held at the National Archive in Delhi.
[389] After Clark: see Dalrymple, William, *The Last Mughal; The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857,* London, Bloomsbury, 2006, pp. 13-14.
[390] Ashcroft 1998, p. 119.
[391] A term used to emphasize that post-colonial cultures are the product of a number of forces variously contributing to a new and complex cultural formation.

transculturation. The criticism of the term referred to above stems from the perception that theories which stress mutuality *necessarily* downplay oppositionality, and increase continuing post-colonial dependence. There is, however, nothing in the idea of hybridity as such that suggests that mutuality negates the hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an *equal* exchange.[392] This is actually the way in which some proponents of decolonisation and anticolonialism have interpreted its current usage in colonial discourse theory. It has also been subject to critique as part of a general dissatisfaction with colonial discourse theory, including the critics Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Benita Parry and Aijaz Ahmad.[393] These critiques stress the textualist and idealist basis of such analysis and point out the fact that they neglect specific local differences, which agrees with Clark's arguments as well. For Clark, 'hybridity is the notion of a redeployment of practices and discourse, even whole constructions of the self, into the interstitial space between cultures has a long presence in varying shapes and mediations of the "other". It requires mutual acceptance and sometimes adherence to values and practices, involving reciprocal tolerance and sometimes reciprocal formal acknowledgment'. He further states that 'the hybrid is dependent on neither colonial nor post-colonial situations and may indeed have been historically subversive of the hegemonies of both'.[394]

The art historian Frederik N. Bohrer used Bhabha's ideas on hybridity and applied them to photography. He takes Sevruguin and his life as an example of cultural "between-ness", since he was influenced and knew well two cultures due to his early movements back and forth between Tehran and Tblisi, between the Iranian capital and an area newly under Russian rule. He talks about the conditions of photographic hybridity.[395] Behdad has been critic with Bohrer's use of New Historical/Post-colonial language to describe early photography as a self-fashioning and hybrid phenomenon. He takes Sevruguin and also Naser od-Din Shah as examples for his argumentation. In the words of Behdad, 'Qajar photography, as a Western mode of representation, borrowed its images from the large body of Orientalist discourses and artistic practices. Neither Sevruguin nor Naser od-Din Shah could have captured "the complexities and contradictions of a multicultural society", as Bohrer claims'.[396] I do fully agree with Behdad's statement, these photographers could not have captured the complexities and contradictions of a multicultural society. But, their work (probably in an unconscious way) does reflect the double exposure of the photographer to Western and Iranian culture at the same time. Therefore, the photographs are, to my understanding, the only ones that can be classified under the term hybrids. The historian G. R. Garthwaite has made hard critic of the author's methodologies of the book *Sevruguin and the Persian Image* (among them Bohrer and Behdad). He states that historians value this kind of photography as texts that need contextualization from other contemporary sources, without which the photographs cannot be fully understood or appreciated. Decontextualization is but one of the negative consequences of Said's orientalism and, as stated further in his article, the use of "hybridity" as analytical categories, says more about late twentieth-century

[392] Ashcroft 1998, p. 119.
[393] See: Mohanty, C.T., "Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourse", *Boundary 2,* 1984, pp 71-92; Parry, B., "Problems in current discourse theory", *Oxford Literary Review 9,* 1987, pp 27-58 and "Resistance theory/theorising resistance: two cheers for nativism", *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory,* Manchester and NY, Manchester University Press, 1994; Ahmad, A., *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures,* London, Verso, 1992.
[394] Clark 2007, p. 2.
[395] See: Bohrer 1999, pp. 33-53.
[396] Behdad 2001, p. 148.

academic interests than late nineteenth-century Iran.[397] This fully agrees with Clark's arguments that I have introduced in the previous page. After having introduced this discourse on hybridity, it is clear that one must be careful in the way in which the term hybridity is used. To make my position clear, I will define *aesthetic hybridity* (maybe better *hybrid aesthetic)* as a cultural practice that presents, next to each other, elements that come from two different cultures and that share space in a work of art, in this case, in a photograph. Nevertheless, the use of this word is not accurate for this particular phenomenon and after some time I adopted "appropriation" because its meaning reflects better that phenomenon.[398]

Etymologically the word "appropriation" derives from the Latin *ad* meaning "to", with the notion of "rendering to", and *proprius,* "own or personal", yielding in combination, *appropriare,* "to make one's own". Appropriation is active, subjective, and motivated. Following that definition of the word appropriation by the art historian Robert S. Nelson in *Critic Terms for Art History,*[399] it seems more adecuate to use the term "appopriation" to define what happened with nineteenth century Iranian photography in the process of its influence by Western photography. Its application to art and art history is relatively recent and pertains to the art work's adoption of preexisting elements. Such actions have been less successfully described as "borrowings", as if what is taken is ever repaid, or as "influences", that elusive agency, by which someone or something infects, informs, provokes, or guides the production or reception of the artwork. Michel Foucault critized the concept of influence, in particular, as belonging to a constellation of terms, which if poorly understood theoretically, nevertheless function to affirm and maintain the continuity and integrity of history, tradition and discourse. In regard to art history itself, Michel Baxandall also argued that influence occludes actor and agency. In contrast, the term "appropriation" locates both in the person of the maker or receiver. The difference between the two is the same as the grammatical distinction between the passive and the active voices.[400]

In conclusion, I will undertake a visual analysis of a group of photographs, both by Iranian and Western photographers, which present this phenomenon of appropriation of foreign elements in their work. Only in few cases this *mixed aesthetic* can be found in the work of Western photographers, like when the photographers were in Iran for a long time, such as Hoeltzer or Sevruguin. As I have mentioned already, there is always the possibility that the persons depicted chose the pose by themselves. In these cases they often picked traditional poses, such as kneeling. Therefore, elements belonging to the two cultures can be traced in the photographs, and they can have been caused both by the photographer or by the person depicted. The first is caused by the mixed cultural influence on the photographer and the second by the unconscious gestual reaction of the body of the poseur that can be also conditioned by culture. The photographs that I will analyze in this section show elements inherited from the Victorian portrait tradition next to others from the Iranian culture background of the photographer and/or the sitter. I have grouped the photographs selected for this section in three categories: appropriation of the objects hold by the

[397] Garthwaite 2000, p. 409.
[398] I am very grateful to Kitty Zijlmans for her ideas and insight on the topic of hybridity and appropriation.
[399] Nelson and Shiff 2003, pp. 160-173.
[400] Nelson and Shiff, 2003, pp. 161-62.

sitters **(objects)**; appropriation of the use and role of the studio props and paraphernalia, specially the chair (**chair);** and finally appropriation of studio props that provoque a decontextualization of the subject, a tension between an unexpected sitter and an artificial atmosphere best represented by the backdrop and studio props **(tension).** An artificial and a strange environment has been created: a Western environment in their own cultural context.

To start with the first group, **objects,** I have selected two images, one by a Western photographer and the second one by an Iranian photographer. In the first image (fig. 198), taken by Hoeltzer, we can see a group studio portrait of four men and two boys. The three men sitting are *mullahs* and are wearing traditional garments. The man standing is probably a servant and the boys could be students. All of them are wearing a *gaba* (gown) under the *aba* (a form of outer garment that is open at the front and sleeveless with large armholes). Men and women of all clases wore these two pieces of clothes. The type of material (silk, wool, camel hair) and its weight varied according to the time of the year. Only one man, the servant, is wearing a tall cap, which was typical for the late nineteenth century and called *Kolah Qajari* (Qajar Cap). The four men are wearing the typical turban that completes the outfits of the mullahs. This photograph is revealing as far as aesthetic hybridity is concerned as we see a mixture of the Victorian portrait (frontal, hieratic) and the aesthetics of the Persian miniatures represented by the flowers held by two of the men depicted. The pose of the two men holding flowers in their hands recalls that of figure studies in miniature paintings where this pose was often used (see figs. 112 and 113, chapter 3). This element is unusual for this painting tradition and cannot be found in Western painting. Two other men are holding a *tasbih,* a religious object used by Muslims. The pictures made by Mirza Mehdi Khan Charmana, an Iranian photographer who was working successfully in Isfahan at around the same time as Hoeltzer, are particularly interesting. He composed the pictures in exactly the same way: the same Victorian portrait aesthetic mixed with that of the miniature represented by the flowers. If we compare both group of pictures, we would not actually be able to tell which one was taken by Hoeltzer or which one by Mirza! This is apparent if we compare the previous image with one taken by this Iranian photographer (fig. 199).

The next photograph, also taken by Hoeltzer depicts a group of women playing music (fig. 200). This is an example of the influence of Persian painting on nineteenth-century Western photography! The composition is very similar to the one widely used in Qajar paintings such as *Ladies around a Samovar* (fig. 201) and *Mirror Case* (fig. 202). In the photograph, one of the women is playing a traditional Persian percussion instrument, the *tombak.* The tombak is the principal percussion instrument in Persian music. It is made from goat or lamb's skin, which is attached to a body made of mulberry wood and gives it its distinctive sound. The neck is almost cylindrical and it is connected from the top to the body. The drum is held diagonally across the tombak player's lap with the wider section (usually the right side) and is played with the fingers and the palm of the hand, as we can see in this photograph. The ladies depicted are wearing *charqat* (head covers) over a chemise and a gown with a fitted skirt and under it long loose trousers. There is a plate of watermelon, one of the favourite fruits of Iranians, especially in the summer. This way of placing watermelon in the foreground of the picture is also to be found in Persian miniatures, as we can see in *Ladies around a Samovar.* This painting by the late nineteenth-century painter Isma'il Jalayir shows a group of harem ladies enjoying themselves around a samovar and reflects the warm, intimate ambiance of a Qajar royal harem

(*andarun)*. In this idealised image the women are gathered for afternoon tea on a veranda overlooking a lush garden of fruit trees. The soothing sound of the bubbling water pipe (*qalian),* the sweet music of the *tar,* the aroma of the brewed tea, the rich colours and elaborate costumes all convey the sensuality and luxury of the harem setting.[401]

There are numerous examples that illustrate the second group, **chairs,** like one taken by Montabone, in which a hybrid pose caused by the use of the chair is to be found. In *Viceré di Tebriz coi suoi ministri* (fig. 203) we can see a boy who is kneeling on a chair as if it was the floor. This is the kind of image that is produced, as I have stated above, by the person depicted. As David Efron states in *Gesture, Race and Culture,* "Hybrid" gesticulation indicates that the same individual may, if simultaneously exposed over a period of time to two or more gesturally different groups, adopt and combine certain gestural traits of both groups.[402] In this case, a foreign element in the studio (chair) is used with a native posture (kneeling). There are many examples of this kind of hybrid postures, like figure 204, which depicts a child squatting on a balustrade, therefore giving this studio prop other role as the one that had originally: a mere decorative element of the studio. The chair is an interesting element used as part of the studio paraphernalia and I have found many examples of photographs were the chair has been given a particular use very different of the one that it was meant for: sitting or just as a point to hold your balance. Seyyed Ali Darvandi is depicted in the next photograph (fig. 205) taken by the Iranian photographer Ali Khan Hakkem Vali (1845-1902).[403] He is sitting on the floor and using the chair just to rest his elbow. The fact that the main function of the chair is for people to sit on makes the image quite bizarre (for Western eyes) since the man is completely ignoring the function of the object and uses it in his own way. Also taken by Hakkem Vali is the next image that presents Mirza Mohammad Sadegeh Sahebnasgh in exactly the same pose as in the previous one (fig. 206). Another interesting use of the chair to be found in Iranian photographs is as a table, placing, for example, a pot of flowers on top of it as if it was a decorative object on top of a table. See the next two photographs by Hakkem Vali that show this interesting refunction of the chair in the photographer's studio. In the first one Mirza Ali Khan Sartip (fig. 207) is depicted and in the second one Ali Agha Akkas (also photographer) (fig. 208). I have seen the same two pots of flowers being photographed by Hakkem Vali over and over again. There are many other examples of this kind taken by other Iranian photographers.

An interesting photograph that I have falready introduced in chapter 2, is one that depicts a mullah sitting on a chair and with a book on his lap (fig. 71). Mohammad Nuri probably took this photograph. The studio paraphernalia and pose is typical of the Victorian portrait: carpet, curtain a table with books… But the text on the upper left corner of the image is the Persian element that finally gives the image a hybrid aesthetic and specific representation. The inscription in the upper part of the photograph is a philosophical poem, a reflection about the importance of the meaning of the image beyond its mere form and outer appearance. In this image, the sitting pose is used instead of the traditional Persian kneeling or sitting on the floor pose.

[401] Diba 1998, p. 261.
[402] Efron 1972, p. 160.
[403] Ali Khan Vali, the Governor, a member of a distinguished Qajar family, was a notable nineteenth-century Iranian photographer. He is best known for his photograph album that documents his career a as governor at variuos places in Azerbaijan between 1879 and 1896.

Some of the photographs selected for the second chapter of this book (text and photography) show this same *mixed aesthetic*.

The last group, **tension,** include images, such as the next two photographs, that are shocking images of prisioners posing in a photographer's studio (figs. 209 and 210). The subject is totally out of context, the background and studio paraphernalia look ridiculous next to the hard look and position of the prisoner. Further examples of this kind are those taken by the court photographer Reza Akkasbashi. After analysing many photographs taken by this photographer, I can now recognise the authorship of his photographs simply by looking at the backdrop, which shows a landscape with a typical Victorian house (fig. 211). The interesting decontextualization that is to be found widely not only among Iranian photographers but also in the work of other Asiatic and African photographers is where a native person is depicted in front of a painted background with a landscape that does not belong to the real context of the person depicted. A sort of spatial and temporal dislocation is achieved through this decontextualization between the backdrop and the sitter. Sometimes it was not the topic of the backdrop's painting, but the mere use that the backdrop was given. In many photographs taken by nineteenth century Iranian photographers we can notice that the photograph has not been framed "properly", meaning here, that one of the functions of the backdrop (to make "more" credible a staged photograph in the studio) has been ignored, be it by technical restrictions of the camera or by purpose of the photographers. Nevertheless, there are clear examples of the second possibility, like a stereographic portrait of Naser od-Din Shah (fig. 212): the Shah is depicted sitting on a chair and is smiling to the camera, the photographer has gone well far away from him and takes the picture from behind a fence so that the Shah, the backdrop and the whole montage loose fully their original function. The Western backdrops contrast with a more local kind of backdrops that in same cases were patterned (with abstrac designs, often a carpet) that introduced an element of indeterminance (see figs. 213 and 214). It is interesting to note the striking parallel between the kind of images just analyzed and those produced by the Malian photographer Seydou Keïta in the 1960s. He also used patterned and abstract backdrops that contrast with the realist backdrops used by Victorian photographers. This practice is also found in nineteenth century African photography and Indian photography.[404]

In retrospect, Western and Iranian photographers both constructed photographs based on their own perception, their own reading of the reality that surrounded them. However, the Western photographers constructed their concepts based on the the informations passed to them through the Orientalist photography and paintings that was en vouge at that time and was a fashionable practice in other "exotic" countries such as Argelia or Egypt. The photographs taken by Western photographers have been deconstructed in their cultural components, like I did in the previous chapters with the Iranian ones: the direction of writing, the lack of inscriptions on the photographic surface, the pose of the sitter (sitting, frontal, hieratic), and the understanding of the space are the cultural components.

In reality, the aesthetics of Iranian photographers were the product of travels

[404] For an interesting article about the widespread use of props and backdrops in popular postcolonial photography and the way it expresses a resistence to the documentary claims of photography and a foregrounding of critics of modernity, see: Appadurai, Arjun, "The Subaltern Backdrop", in *Afterimage* 24 (5), 1997, pp. 4-7.

that Western and Iranian photographers undertook in both directions. Carlhiée, Montabone, and Sevruguin were the most influential Western photographers, precisely on court photographers. Carhliée introduced the Victorian portrait's aesthetics and studio paraphernalia, and the cyanotype process to Iranian court photographers; Montabone introduced hand-colored photography and the technique of vigneting; and Sevruguin added a pictorialist approach to Iranian photography. Reza Akkasbashi and Abdullah Qajar, both court photographers, travelled to Europe and were also influenced by Western photographers that became teachers at court. Also, next to the Western influences in the court, there were the ones from Western photographers who were visited by Iranian photographers in Europe, notably the French Nadar. These comutings not only provided the exchanges and refinements but also they became witnesses to the formation of a new modern concept that Iranians formed from their own life and their own desires. Thus these photographs turned out to become a brilliant unadulterated document as to way Iranians recorded their passage from tradition to modernity.

Indeed, as mediator between the two cultures, these Iranian court photographers, not only brought the aesthetics of their European counterparts home, but they exposed Iranians to new form and a new structure of life through the use of props and backdrops in their photos and introduced a different kind of life style through the lenses of their cameras, a commodity as valuable as spices brought to Europe by Marco Polo.

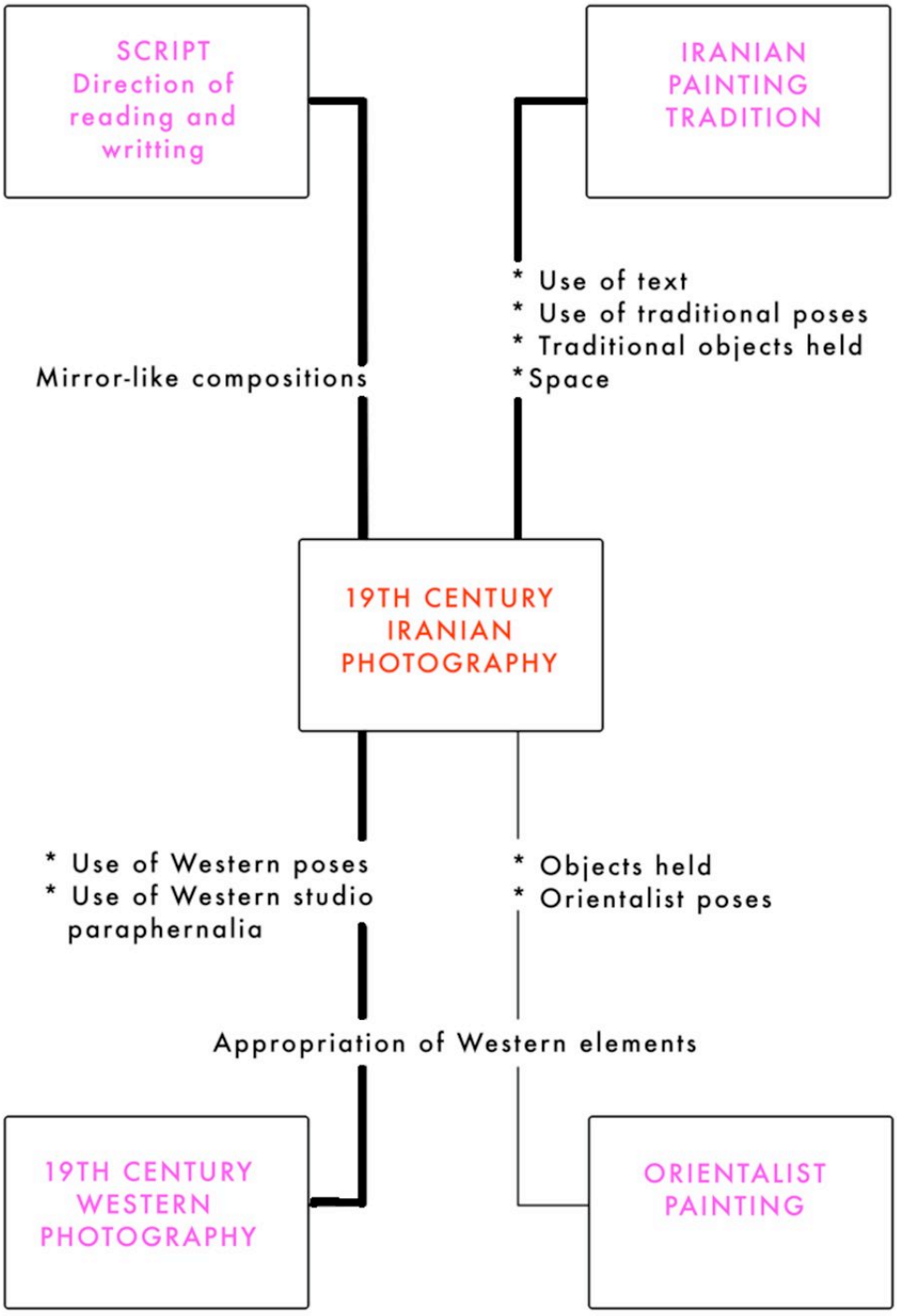
CONCLUSION

Nineteenth-century Western photographers constructed other culture's realities as much as Iranian photographers constructed their own. Both groups of photographers produced their own constructed-realities of the same 'reality' and the result of each process of construction was deeply influenced by the cultural background of the photographer. The Western creations were done in the line with Orientalist photography that was fashionable at that time and practised in other 'exotic' countries such as Algeria or Egypt. The Iranian photographs were influenced both by the Iranian pictorial tradition and by the Western (i.e. Victorian) model. Nevertheless, regardless of their nationality, photographers did not fail to submit to fashion when producing for the tourist market, for which the cultural origins of the photographer were of little importance. These elaborated representations never failed to reflect the ideology of their epoch. Iran was not a commercial country at all as far as its photographic material is concerned; therefore commercial photography has almost no relevance regarding the amount of photographic material produced in Iran in the nineteenth century, and it can be almost reduced exclusively to the work of Antoin Sevruguin.

With this dissertation I have conducted a thorough visual analysis of photographic material and have developed a model to visually analyze and compare corpuses of photographs and paintings . This model aims to unravel images into their cultural components in a multi-layered process in the same way, but in the reversed direction, as the images were constructed: images present different elements on a multi-layered form and these elements can be analyzed one after the other as if we were peeling off an onion. Further, what I mean by "reversed direction" is that I undertook an analysis of those images to define those elements present in the photographs in the contrary direction (temporal and probably also spatial) of the one in which the photographs were taken. The set of cultural components through which I have deconstructed nineteenth-century Iranian photographs is composed of: the direction of the script which leads to a tendency in nineteenth-century Iranian photographers to produce mirror like images of those produced by their Western colleagues; the use of text within the photographic space; the pose of the sitter; and the understanding of the space. This constitutes the particular cultural-components-set of Iranian photography in the nineteenth-century. Mirror-like compositions are directly related to the direction of writing of the script; use of text, pose and space are directly related to the Iranian painting tradition. If we would conduct the same research with a Japanese, Chinese or Indian photographic corpus, we may find a comparable cultural-component-receipt.

The model developed here can be resumed as follows : define the photographic corpus; define the corpus of paintings ; conduct a visual analysis of both corpuses to establish differences and similarities between them; define the cultural components found after visual analysis of the photographic and painting material (these cultural components can include some of the ones already defined for Iranian photography, but the final cultural-set will probably be different; and lastly, establish categories or groups of photographs that represent the cultural components defined in the previous section.

The cultural-components-set found and defined after pursuing an in-depth visual analysis of the corpuses selected for this dissertation and the interaction between the different disciplines, can be resumed in the next diagram:



In each chapter, I have analyzed the photographs from one of the four perspectives defined (visual laterality; use of text; pose; and space). To conclude this book, I would like to come back to a few photographs which have already been introduced from a multi-perspective point of view, to show that the above listed elements are not isolated phenomena but all share space within the photograph.

The portrait of a kneeling mullah (fig. 70) resumes the different aspects of the Persian visual art tradition present in nineteenth-century Iranian photography: the use of inscriptions; the philosophical understanding of images as powerful tools but in compliance with their inherent features (such as with Sufi philosophy); the poetic tone of the text; the use of traditional objects (*tasbi*); the traditional kneeling pose of the sitter; and the use of an ornamental frame. Another photograph that presents several characteristic elements found in Persian miniatures is the portrait of the poet Ga'ani (fig. 67): the use of inscriptions; traditional kneeling pose; objects held (water-pipe); studio paraphernalia (cushion); and an elaborated pass-partout. The third photograph selected here is the group portrait of the poets in Shiraz (fig. 68): the use of inscriptions (poem); traditional kneeling pose in some of the sitters; objects hold (*tasbi*, flowers); and the omnipresent pots of flowers.

Most of the photographs analyzed in this dissertation present at least two of the Persian elements mentioned above, revealing a quite different aesthetic approach to the dominant, Victorian model of photography that was in vogue in the nineteenth century. The research conducted in this dissertation has shown that different aesthetic models of representation existed in the nineteenth century, related to their specific socio-political and cultural context, such as in this case Iran.

It is my intention to undertake further research in the future to apply the aforementioned analytical method to a nineteenth-century Japanese photographic corpus and Ukiyo-e paintings. I am confident that a similar cultural-specific connection between the two ways of representation will be provable.

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Fig 26 Anonymous Iranian photographer, *Mirza Houssein Khan Ektecham,* Iraj Afshar Archive. Taken from his book *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photography,* Na Shre Farang-e-Iran Publishers: Tehran 1992, p. 319.

Fig 27 *Ahmad Shah.*Taken from the book *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photographs,* from Iraj Afshar, p. 33.

Fig 28 Reza Akkasbashi, 1866. Golestan Palace Library, Tehran, Iran.

Fig 29 Reza Akkasbashi. Golestan Palace Library, Tehran, Iran.

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Fig 32 Particular collection of Carmen Pérez.

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Fig 41 *Military Review with Fath `Ali Shah and Prince Hussayn `Ali Mirza.* Artist unknown. Shiraz. Ink on paper, 53 x 96 cm, State Heritage Museum, Saint Petersburg, VR-1047.

Fig 42 *Fath `Ali Shah at the Hunt.* Abdallah Khan. Rayy, circa 1820-30.

Fig 43 Ramón y Cajal, *Textura del sistema nervioso del hombre y de los vertebrados,* in Moya 1904.

Fig 44 Taken from Semir Zeki's book *Inner Vision. An Exploration of Art and the Brain,* p. 15.

Fig 45 Taken from Semir Zeki's book *Inner Vision. An Exploration of Art and the Brain,* p. 16.

Fig 46 J. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind.* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1977, p. 120.

Fig 47 Taken from Mercedes Gaffron's article "Right and Left in Pictures"*,* in *The*

Akkasbashi, Ferdowsi Photography Studio, Shiraz, hosted at City Photography Museum, Tehran.

Fig 75 Robert Frank, photo from the Serie "Words, Nova Scotia", 1977 (with photo from the Serie, "The Americans", 1955), in "the lines of my Hands", 1989. Taken from Hans Belting, *Bild Anthropologie,* pag. 238, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 2001.

Fig 76 Anonymous Iranian photographer. Taken form the book *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photography,* Iraj Afshar, p. 97.

Fig 77 Anonymous Iranian photographer. Taken form the book *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photography,* Iraj Afshar, p. 63.

Fig 78 *I am in secret,* Shirin Neshat, 1993.

Fig 79 Reza Abedini

Fig 80 Parviz Tanavoli

Fig 81 Urahara Seiho, *Quiet Temple in Autumm Woods,* 1926.

Fig.82 *A Married Woman Inspects Her Black Teeth in a Mirror,* Kitagawa Utamaro, Ukiyo-e painting, Ostasiatisches Museum, Cologne.

Fig 83 Yokoyama Matsusaburo, *Portrait of Nitta Tomi,* c. 1872.

Fig 84 Yokoyama Matsusaburo, *Portrait Yamamoto Rempei, disciple of Yokoyama Matsusaburo,* c. 1872.

Fig 85 Yokoyama Matsusaburo, *Portrait of Nitta Tomi,* c. 1874.

Fig 86 Kojima Ryua, collage of Kojima Ryua and his family, c. 1873

Fig 87 Kojima Ryua, self portrait, 1870s.

Fig 88 Unknown photographer, portrait of Iinuma Yokusai, c. 1863.

Fig 89 Xunling, Cixi, Empress Dowager of China, 1835-1908, Freer and Sackler Gallery, Washington.

Fig 90 Xunling, Cixi, Empress Dowager of China, 1835-1908, Freer and Sackler Gallery, Washington.

Fig 91 *Portrait of Nawab Raj Begum Sahibah of Oudh,* Ahmad Ali Khan, ca. 1855. Salt print, 12.2 x 9.8 cm, overall 29.8 x 21.4 cm, British Library OIOC Photo 500 (3).

Fig 92 Unknown photographer and painter, *Nawab Zorawar Khan of Kanota (1826-1908),* Gelatin Silver Print and Watercolour, c. 1890, 250 x 298 mm, ACP: 98.83.0187.

Fig 93 Unknown photographer; painter: Pannalal Parasram Gaur, *Maharana Swarup Singh of Udaipur (1815-61),* Albumen Print and Watercolour, c. 1860, 282 x 217 mm, ACP: 98.60.0062.

Fig 94 Postural diagram by Hewes, taken from Hewes 1957, p. 125.

Fig 95 *Fath 'Ali Shah.* Oil on canvas. Tehran 1798-99. London, Oriental and India Office Library Collections, Foster 116.

Fig 96 *Fath 'Ali Shah Seated on a Chair Throne,* attributed to Mihr 'Ali, Tehran, circa 1800-1806, Oil on canvas: 227, 5 x 131 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris, Section Islamique, on loan from the Musée National de Versailles, MV638.

Fig 97 *Portrait of Fath 'Ali Shah Standing,* signed by Mihr 'Ali, dated 1809-10, oil on canvas, 253 x 124 cm, State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg VR-II07.

Fig 98 *Youth with flower,* seventeenth century, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (53.22).

Fig 99 *A Man in a Landscape,* Painting on paper, Tabriz, 1530-40, London, British Museum, 1930.11-12.01.

Fig 100 *The Silken Image of Rustam Shown to his Granfather Sam,* Painting from

Photography, by Iraj Afshar, p. 97.

Fig 157 Anonymous Iranian photographer, *Hajji Hossein Gole Khan Nuri Mustufi,* taken from the book *A Treasury of Early Iranian Photography,* by Iraj Afshar, p. 98.

Fig 158 Naser od-Din Shah, page album, Palace Golestan Library, Tehran.

Fig 159 Mohammad Ehbrahim Khan Mehmarbashi, 1304, Taken from Iraj Afshar's book.

Fig 160 Landowner who loves music, ca. 1885, albumen, opaque watercolour, 22kt. Gold; photographer and painter unknown, courtesy of S.I & A.I.I.S.

Fig 161 Francis Fritz, *Self-portrait in Turkish Summer Costume (sic),* c. 1860, Albumen print, The Israel Museum, Jerusalem.

Fig 162 Collard, *Self-portrait in Oriental Costume,* c. 1845, full plate daguerreotype, Gérard Lévy, Paris.

Fig 163 Albert Hotz, *self-portrait*

Fig 164 Abdoll Ghassem Nuri, *self-portrait,* 1319, Palace Golestan Library, Zoka's book p. 117.

Fig 165 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, cover

Fig 166 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, p. 352

Fig 167 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, p. 353

Fig 168 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, p. 392

Fig 169 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, advertisement

Fig 170 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, advertisement

Fig 171 The National Geographic Magazine, April 1921, Washington, advertisement

Fig 172 Reza Akkasbashi, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

Fig 173 Unknown Iranian photographer, Bahman Bayani-s collection, Tehran.

Fig 174 Mouvasag Karimi, Museum of Photography, Tehran.

Fig 175 Boudoir studio, Bahman Bayani-s collection, Tehran.

Fig 176 Luigi Montabone, *Soldati Persiani,* hand-colored albumin print.

Fig 177 Luigi Montabone, *Naser od/Din Shah,* hand-colored albumin print.

Fig 178 Luigi Montabone,

Fig 179 Luigi Montabone,

Fig 180 Antoin Sevruguin, Palace Golestan Library, Tehran.

Fig 181 Antoin Sevruguin, Palace Golestan Library, Tehran.

Fig 182 Julia Margaret Cameron

Fig 183 Julia Margaret Cameron

Fig 184 Aghayanes, *Dervish,*

Fig 185 Aghayanes, *Dervish,*

Fig 186 Antoin Sevruguin, *The Persian Tonsure,* Leiden University Library,

Fig 187 Antoin Sevruguin, Ethnology Museum in Berlin

Fig 188 Antoin Sevruguin, Leiden University Library,

Fig 189 Abdullah Frères, *Nubian woman*

Fig 190 *Scenes and types,* "Moorish bust", taken from Alloula 1986, p.123.

Fig 191 *Scenes and types,* "Arabian woman with the Yachmak", taken from Alloula 1986, p.126.

Fig 192 Naser od-Din Shah, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

Fig 193 Abdullah Qajar, *Naser od-Din Shah,* lithography hand-overpainted, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

Fig 194 Nadar, *Naser od-Din Shah,*

Fig 195 Reza Akkasbashi, Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

Fig 196 Sultan Husayn receiving a book in his academy *Diva-I Husayni,* 24.6 x 15.3

cm, Persian, late Heart style, 1492, Topkapi, EH 1635 (123a).

Fig 197 *Photographers' guild*, Mashad.

Fig 198 Ernst Hoeltzer, University Library in Leiden.

Fig 199 Mirza Mehdi Khan Charmana,

Fig 200 Ernst Hoeltzer, University Library in Leiden.

Fig 201 *Ladies around a Samovar,* Ismail Jalayir, Tehran, third quarter of the 19th century, oil on canvas, 143.8 x 195 cm, Given to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Lady Janet Clerk, pp. 56-1941.

Fig 202 *Mirror case,* signed by Muhammad Sadiq, Shiraz, dated A.H. 1189/ A.D. 1775-76, Pasteboard, opaque watercolor and gold under lacquer 25,6 x 18,2 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 763-1888.

Fig 203 Luigi Montabone, *Viceré di Tebriz coi suoi ministri.*

Fig 204 Child sitting in balaustrade

Fig 205 Ali Khan Hakkem Vali , *Seyyed Ali Darvandi.*

Fig 206 Ali Khan Hakkem Vali, *Mirza Mohammad Sadegeh Sahebnasgh.*

Fig 207 Ali Khan Hakkem Vali, *Mirza Ali Khan Sartip.*

Fig 208 Ali Khan Hakkem Vali, *Ali Agha Akkas.*

Fig 209 Prisoner

Fig 210 Prisoner

Fig 211 Reza Akasbashi

Fig 212 *Naser od-Din Shah,* Golestan Palace Library, Tehran.

Fig 213 University Library, Tehran.

Fig 214 University Library, Tehran.

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APPENDIX 1: PHOTO-CHRONOLOGY

General Photo-chronology
Iranian Photo-chronology[405]

1835 *Publication of the first litographic newspaper in Iran by Mirza Salih Shirazi.*

1839 Daguerre's process for achieving images by the action of light on silver-coated copper plate is announced. The french government purchases rights to the process and makes it available to the French people.

Talbot announces to the British Royal academy his process for achieving images on paper by the action of light.

1841 Talbot patents calotype process.

1842 *Introduction of photography in Iran.*

1844 *Jules Richard (1816-1891) becames the first Western photographer to work in the Persian Court.*

1847 Claude Félix Abel Niepce de Saint-Victor proposes using as a negative a glass plate coated with albumen and silver halides.

1848 *Luigi Pesce (active 1848-1861), an Italian colonel and master of the calotype process, arrived in Iran.*

1849 Gustave Le Gray introduces waxed-paper process in France.

1850 Frederick Scott Archer, British sculptor, invents the wet-plate process.

Blanquart-Evrard announces process for making photographic prints on paper coated with albumen.

1851 *A special department for photography was opened in 1851 at Dar al-Funun (Academy), Iran's first institution of higher learning based on Western models.*

Fochetti arrived in Iran, a master in wet collodion process.

August Karl Kriz (1814-1886) experimented in Iran with photography on paper.

1853 Tintype process is invented in France.

1854 Collodion positive images ("Ambrotypes") are introduced.

[405] To elaborate this Iranian photo-chronlogy, the article "Some Remarks on the Early History of Photography in Iran" by Iraj Afshar has been fundamental.

French photographer A.A.E. Disdéri patents small-format “carte-de-visite”.

1857 *Francois Carlhiève and Henry de Coulibeouf Blocqueville arrived with the French Mission.*

1860 *While photographing the Turcoman revolt in Khurasan, the equipment of Carlhiève and Blocqueville was smashed and Blocqueville was taken prisoner.*

1862 French physicist Louis Ducos du Hauron describes methods of producing photographic images in color.

Luigi Montabone (d. 18779 came with the Italian mission. He introduced the hand-coloring of photograps technique in Iran.

Angelo Piamontese’s article “The Photograph Album of the Italian Mission to Persia (Summer 1862)” is published.

1863 *The eldest treatise describing the act of photography and how to develop pictures and make copies was written by Muhammad Kazim B. Ahmad Mahallati by order of Naser od-Din Shah.*

Publishing of the earliest information known to date about the introduction of photography in Iran: the third volume of the “Mir’at al-buldan-I Nasiri”, written by I’timad al-Saltana (Sani al-Dawla).

1864 Walter B. Woodburry, in England, patents Woodburytype.

Reza Akkasbashi (1843-1889) was granted the title Akkasbashi (Chief Photographer) in recognition of his mastery of photography.

1869 *Nasser od-Din Shah started taking pictures and learnt the technique with Jules Richard and Francois Carlhiève.*

Abdullah Mirza Qajar (1849-1908) traveled to Europe to study photography.

1870 *Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi (1854-1916) started working as photographer in his hometown Shiraz.*

1871 Dry-plate silver bromide process is announced by Richard Leach Maddox; it is not perfected until 1878.

The German ingenieur Ernst Hoeltzer started taking photographs in Isfahan, where he lived for 30 years.

1873 Platinum printing method is invented in England.

1878 **“***Fann-I ‘akkasi”, “The Art of Photography” was published in Tehran (translation made by Antovan Khan for Muzzaffar od-Din Shah).*

1880 First halftone reproduction of a photograph appears in a NY newspaper.

Antoin Sevruguin starts working in Iran.
"Qava'id-I aks va tiligraf", "Principles of Photography and Telegraphy" was written by Hassan B. 'Ali Rida Lahiji Najafi.

1881 Frederic E. Ives invents halftone photoengraving process, making possible reproduction of photographic and other images in same operation as printing of text.

1884 *Abdullah Mirza Qajar starts his carrer as profesional photographer after coming back from Europe.*

1886 *Mirza Mohammad Reza Akhs (1869-1903) starts working as photographer in Shiraz.*

1888 Introduction of George Eastman's Kodak camera.

"Al-Ma'athir wa l-athari" by I'timad al-Saltana was published (this is the second source of information written about the introduction of photography in Iran, as stated by Afshar).

1889 George eastman applies for patent on transparent roll film.

1890 *The Dutch amateur photographer and bussinesmen Albert Hotz took photographs in Iran during a trip of several months in the country. He was also collector of photographs of other photographers like Hoeltzer and Sevruguin.*

1895 *Another treatise on photography was written by Nawwab Mushin Mirza.*

1896 *Mr Iqbal Yaghma'i's article "The beginnings of the craft of photography and stereotyping in Iran" was published (it is the best source of information about Abdullah Mirza Qajar).*

1904 *Mirza Fatollah Chehernegar (1878-1942), starts taking photographs in Shiraz.*

1918 *Mirza Habibollah Chehernegar (1897-1943) starts taking photographs in Shiraz.*

APPENDIX 2: LIST AND BIOGRAPHIES OF IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHERS

Reza Akkasbashi (1843-1889)
Court photographer
Tehran

Reza Akkasbashi was the first professional Iranian photographer. He was son of Ismail Jadid Al-eslami, a well-known court servant and brother of Naser o-Din Shah's private doctor, Hakkim Ma-amale. Being still a child also became a court servant.[406] In 1863, while he was still a servant, the Shah decided that he would be trained as a photographer under the guidance of the French photographer Carlhiée who was working at court. It was Farrouk Khan Aminol-Mool[407] while he was on a diplomatic trip to Europe, which got in touch with the French photographer and offered him to go to Iran to teach photography at the court of Naser od-Din Shah. He taught the Collodion process[3] to Nsser od-Din Shah and to Reza Akkasbashi who was granted with the title *Akkasbashi* (Court Photographer) in 1864. Many photographs taken by Carlhiée were bought by Victor Francois Brongiart, head of the French mission in Persia (1859-1861) and then arranged in an album hosted now at the Gimeè Museum in Paris.[408] In 1873 Reza Akkasbashi went to Vienna in a trip together with Naser od-Din Shah. A book about the life and work of Reza Akkasbashi has been recently published in Iran with an interesting selection of his work.[409]

The influence of Victorian portraiture is very evident in his work. He uses mostly the sitting pose, frontal and hieratic like the Victorian photographs of that time. One interesting element in his work is the use of a background with a Victorian house and landscape painted on it which makes the final image quite absurd due to the decontextualization of the subject (the person depicted, always Iranians) with the Western atmosphere produced by the background.

Abdullah Mirza Qajar (1849-1908)
Court photographer
Tehran

Abdullah Mirza Qajar who had attended the Dar al-Funun and, in 1869, traveled to Europe to study photography. He lived for one and a half years in Paris and for three years in Salzburg. In 1884 he started his career as a professional photographer immediately on his return from Europe.[410]

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[406] Zoka 1979, pp. 47-56.
[407] When the Shah of Persia first opened an Embassy in Paris in January 1857, Farroukh Khan was appointed Ambassador.
[408] This album that has recently undergone restoration and displays an interesting collections of photographs by Carlihée, Pesce and Gianuzzi, and some paintings. For information about this highly intersting album, see: Sheik, Reza, "Brongiart Album", in *Akhsnameh,* (In Persian).
[409] Tahmasbpour, Mohammad Reza, *Agha Reza Akkasbashi,* Tehran, 2007. (In Persian).
[410] Zoka 1997, pp. 98-108.

Naser od-Din Shah (reigned 1848-1896)
Tehran

Muhammad Shah who reigned from 1834-1848 had experimented with photography and his court was the recipient of the first daguerreotype camera. But it was under Naser od-Din Shah that photography was really promoted and different techniques learned and mastered. Naser od-Din Shah's reign was from 1848-1896, during the Qajar Dynasty 1785-1925, and his interest in photography began when he was very young when he learned quite quickly the photographic technique and produced his own prints. He started taking pictures in 1869 and learned the technique mainly with Jules Richard (1816-1891) and Francois Carlhiève.[411] He also bought photographs from other photographers, Iranian and Western. His main subject was the women and children of his family, taken mostly indoors and his favorite models can be recognized by the number of times they were depicted. Since his photography was only meant to be seen by himself it is of great interest, from both historical and aesthetic points of view. His albums eventually comprised more than twenty thousand photographs. In them we can see the very clear influence of Nadar (1820-1910) and also that of French orientalist paintings, such as those by Delacroix (1798-1863) or Ingress (1780-1867).

It took a lot of effort for the Shah to bring this new invention close to his servants at court where several rooms were reserved for photography, as well as at the Dar al-Funun (Academy), Iran's first institution of higher learning based on Western models. A special department for photography was opened there as early as 1851. This academy was envisioned by Naser od-Din Shah's prime minister, Amir Kabir, as a training ground for future civil servants and military men. Instruction was conducted in a similar pattern to the European academies of fine arts, where art was regarded as a scientific and scholarly discipline. Although the Dar al-Funun ultimately altered art education, the age-old master-apprentice system continued to exist and was also important in the field of photography.[412] The Shah's encouragement of photography in Iran inspired his courtiers, as well as Dar al-Funun students, to take up the art; some, such as Abdullah Mirza Qajar (1849-1908), were even given the opportunity to refine their skills in government-sponsored training in Europe, in workshops or on courses. European professionals were brought to the court and to the Dar al-Funun to work as teachers.

Mohammad Abdoll Ghassem Nuri
Tehran

His father was working at the court of Naser od-Din Shah and he learned the photographic technique when he was quite young. There are several of his photographs hosted in albums at Golestan Palace Library. His work is especially interesting for my research, since he was fond of using inscriptions within the photographic space and he placed his signature within cartouches and in the same way

[411] Zoka, 1997, pp 26-40.

[412] Maryam Ekhtian and Marika Sardar, 'Nineteenth-Century Iran: Art and the Advent of Modernity' in *The Time of Art History* at http:/www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/irmd/hd_irmd.htm.
For Dar al-Funun see: Maryam Ekhtiar, *Modern Science, Education and Reform in Qajar Iran: The Dar al-Funun,* New York, Routledge Curzon, 2003.

as the with the illuminators did. Most of the sitters depicted in his photographs are kneeling on the traditional Iranian pose and hold objects borrowed from the Persian painting iconography.

Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi (1854-1916)
Shiraz

When he was 16 years old, he emigrated to Bahrain where he met an English photographer who taught him the photographic technique. Four years after that, he traveled to India and settled in Bombay for 20 years. There he kept on improving the his photographic skills with other English photographer, who was also his student of Persian. He started working as a professional photographer in 1870 when he was 24 years old. During the last eight years of his stay in Bombay, he worked as professional photographer and then returned to Shiraz. In 1894 he opened a studio in Busheir, the first one opened in Fars province. Later on he opened a studio in Kazerum and in 1895 he goes back to Shiraz where he did the biggest part of his production as photographer.[413]

His work, and also that of his family, is interesting for my research, specially due to the use of text within the photographic space, pots of flowers and understanding of the photographic space in general.

Mirza Mohammad Reza Akkasbashi (1862-1902)
Shiraz

He was brother of Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi and started taking photographs in 1886. He traveled, like his brother, to Bombay and learned the retouch technique with the English photographer T.B. Steward. He was running his brother's studio while he was traveling in Irak or in India, where he also worked as professional photographer.[414]

Mirza Fatollah Chehernegar (1877-1932)
Shiraz

He was the grand-son of Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi. He also traveled to India and settled in Bombay for a while. He started working as photographer in 1890.

Mirza Habibollah Chehernegar (1896-1942)
Shiraz

Also member of Mirza Hassan Akkasbashi family's, he started his career as photographer around 1918. He lived in India two years.

Mirza Mehdi Khan Chehre-nahma (1891-1979)
Isfahan

He was a pioneer photographer in Isfahan. He became well known as photographer and as *retoucher.* When he was 12 years old, became student of a painter and a couple of years later he traveled to Tehran to learn the photographic technique. When he was

[413] Translated from Persian from the book: Manssur, Sane, *Emerging of Photography in Shiraz,* 1990, pp 9-12.
[414] Translated Persian from the book: Sane,1990, pp 13-14.

20 years old, he opened his first studio in Tehran. Some years later, he went back to Isfahan and opened a studio in that city.

Aghayanz
Tabriz

He was an Armenian photographer active in the last years of the reign of Naser od-Din Shah and the first years of Muzafar od-Din Shah (around 1890-1910). He opened a photo studio together with the Iranian photographer Amishu and other colleagues. There are several of his photographs hosted at the Palace Golestan Library (albums 285 and 292) and also there is an album with forty-eight photographs in the Zoka private collection. His work follows the aesthetics of pictorialist photography, better represented in the West by Margaret Cameron and in Iran by Antoin Sevruguin. One of his favorite topics was portraits of dervishes and used on them the light, atmosphere, composition and pose of the pictorial tradition in photography.

Ali Khan Hakkem Vali (ca. 1845-1902)
Tehran

He was a member of a distinguished Qajar family, his father having had a long career as diplomat and governor. When Ali Khan Hakkem Vali was 10 years old, he accompanied his father to St. Petersburg in 1855 and stayed there for several years. During that time, he studied and learned photography.

Around 1860, his father left his post, and father and son traveled throughout Europe. A year later his father was posted to the northern (Caspian) province of Gilan as governor. His father was released from that post in 1869, at a time when Ali Khan was a special attendant at a royal tour of the northern provinces. In 1870, Ali Khan was one of the courtiers who accompanied Naser od-Din Shah on a tour of the Shi'ite shrines in Ottoman-governed Iraq (Najaf, Karbala, al-Kadhimiyya, etc).

He produced an amazing album both from an historical and aesthetical point of view. Although the earliest photographs in the album are portraits of Naser od-Din Shah, taken in 1863, it would appear that the rest of the photographs date from Ali Khan's 1879 posting to Maragha, and the following years. The last date in the text is 1896; however, photographs far from the end of the sequence show a coffin for a Christian with the death date of 1897, and it would appear that the album continues up to 1899 or 1900. Ali Khan Vali's photograph album documenting his career as governor at various places in Azerbaijan (Northwest Persia) between 1879 and 1896, is of virtually unprecedented quality and character. It contains more than 1,400 photographs on 439 pages (including a couple of blank pages within the series), commencing with photos of devotional representations of Shi'ite saints, and of Naser al-Din Shah, the reigning monarch. It then proceeds to document Ali Khan, his family, and all those persons and places he encountered during his career as governor. The photographs are captioned in almost all cases. Moreover, page after page is covered with a continuous narrative of his career, written around the photographs.

WOMAN PHOTOGRAPHERS

Asraf al-Soltane (1901-1953)

Asraf al-Soltane was one of the Iranian pioneer women photographers. She was born in Kermanshah but moved to Tehran when she married her husband Mohammad Hasan Khan Eh-temadol Soltane, one of Naser od-Din Shah's ministers. In the family of Moirel al-Mamahlek, there were also some women photographers. She did not have children and used her time mostly to learn history, medicine, French and the technique of photography with Shahzadeh Soltan Mohammad Mirza Wallet. After the death of her husband, she married again and moved to Mashad.[415] She was a very unusual woman for that time, who lead a life devoted to learn and experience things that were not the norm among Iranian women at the turn of the twentieth century. Eight years after her death, the Iranian historian Soltan Ahmade Doulatshai Yomhan-Douleh wrote about her life and work and that constitutes the best known source of information about this pioneer woman photographer.[416]

Fatima Soltan Khanum
Tehran

She was the wife of the photographer Mirza Hasan Ali Akkas.There are six photographs taken by Fatima Soltan Khanum that have survived and belong to one of the descendants of these two women.

Osrat Khanum
Tehran

She was the wife of the photographer Agha Yusef Akasbashi. She was also sister of Fatima Soltan Khanum. Unfortunately there is no material found this photographer.

Azizé Yahan and Habibé Zaman
Shiraz

They were daughters of the photographer Mirza Hassan Chehernegar. They were well- known photographers in their hometown Shiraz and opened the first studio in this city specialized in portraits of women. They became serious professional photographers.

[415] See, Zoka, 1997, pp 178-79, translated by the author from the original in Persian.
[416] See, Tahmasbpour 2005.

APPENDIX 3: LIST OF PHOTO-ARCHIVES OF IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

List of photo-archives of nineteenth century photography in Iran (selection)

In Tehran, there are the following photo-archives:

- The Golestan Palace Library, Tehran, there are more than 43.000 photographs and 10.000 glass plates;
- The Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies holds about 200.000 photographs from the Qajar and Pahlavi Era;
- Majlis Library: around 1.500 photographs;
- Tehran University Documentation Centre: around 35.000 photographs;
- National Documentation Centre: around 41.000 photographs;
- National Library;
- Documentation Centre of the Cultural Heritage Organization: around 10.000 photographs;

In Mashad the most important photo-archive is Astane-Qods Library and Documentation Centre holds around 30.000 photographs. There are also important photo-archives in other cities like Isfahan, Tabriz and Shiraz.:

Next to these institutions, there are several important private collections in Iran:

- Dr. Iraj Afsar's collection: around 2.000 photographs
- Arman Stepanian's collection: 2.000 photographs
- Bayani's collection: 800 photographs
- Rana and Bahman Jalali's collection
- Mr. Iliat Kashani: 2.000 photographs and postcards.
- Kamran collection: 15.000 photographs
- Mr. Sahlviri's collection

List of photo-archives of nineteenth century photography outside of Iran (Western photography)

In Holland (around 2.650 photographs):

- Leiden University Library
- National Ethnological Museum in Leiden
- Rijksprentenkabinet in Amsterdam
- Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam
- World Museum in Rotterdam

In France:

- Museè Guimet
- Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris
- Ecole National Superieure de Beaux-Arts in Paris

In England:

- British Library in London
- Royal Geographical Society in London
- Middle East Centre in Oxford
- Cambridge University Library

In Germany:

- Museum of Ethnology in Berlin
- Museum of Ethnology in Hamburg
- Sevruguin's private photo-collection in Heidelberg (grand-father)

In Austria:

- Herzog Foundation in Basel

In USA:

- Freer and Sackler Gallery from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington
- Fine Arts Library, Harvard University Library
- The Metropolitan Museum, NY

Een vergelijkende visuele analyse van negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse portretfotografie en Perzische schilderkunst
Translation by Ton Brouwers

SAMENVATTING

Het onderwerp van mijn proefschrift is de negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse portretfotografie. In dit onderzoek wil ik aantonen dat fotografie altijd een constructie van de werkelijkheid behelst ongeacht de nationaliteit van de fotograaf. In het bijzonder bestudeer ik de tegenstelling tussen de constructie van de Iraanse werkelijkheid door van oorsprong Iraanse fotografen en de constructie van die realiteit door buitenlandse fotografen.

Dit proefschrift richt zich op de analyse van foto's om de genoemde culturele bepaaldheid van het scheppen van beelden te laten zien. Het corpus bestaat niet alleen uit ongeveer 5000 door mij verzamelde Iraanse portretfoto's en zo'n 3000 Perzische miniaturen en schilderijen uit de Kadjaren-tijd, maar ook uit westerse negentiende-eeuwse portretfotografie (circa 5000 foto's). Eerdere studies over negentiende-eeuwse westerse fotografie in Iran, door zowel westerse als Iraanse geleerden, zijn hoofdzakelijk verricht vanuit een historische benadering, terwijl de meeste publicaties in het Westen over negentiende-eeuwse fotografie in Iran gewijd zijn aan het werk van westerse fotografen. Het aantal door Iraanse fotografen gemaakte foto's is echter veel groter dan in het Westen bekend was, en dit corpus is zelfs aanzienlijk groter dan dat van westerse fotografen.
De meeste literatuur over negentiende-eeuwse inheemse Iraanse fotografie werd in het Perzisch gepubliceerd en is tot dusver onvertaald gebleven. Al zijn er studies verschenen over dit onderwerp, er bestaat geen diepgaande studie van het werk van Iraanse fotografen vanuit een visueel analytisch perspectief. Mijn benadering van vroege Iraanse fotografie heeft daarom een analytisch karakter en is gebaseerd op visuele analyse van foto's gemaakt door Iraanse fotografen in de negentiende eeuw. In mijn toepassing van visuele analyse schenk ik aandacht aan de diverse culturele componenten van beelden.

Mijn onderzoek concentreert zich op de visuele analyse van specifieke elementen in negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse fotografie die teruggaan op de Iraanse beeldende kunsttraditie (zoals schilderkunst). Meer in het bijzonder betreft het onderzoek een vergelijkende studie van de Iraanse schilderkunst en de negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse portretfotografie. De beschreven en geanalyseerde elementen zijn:

1. Gespiegelde compositie als gevolg van *visuele lateraliteit*, een verschijnsel dat hier wordt omschreven als de invloed van de schrijfrichting op de compositie van kunstwerken, vooral in de fotografie;
2. Gebruik van kalligrafische tekstinscripties binnen de fotografische ruimte;
3. Gebruik van traditionele poses uit Iraanse portretkunst, zoals knielen in tegenstelling tot zitten of staan;
4. Begrip van ruimte in fotografische compositie: isometrisch perspectief, verticale beeldopbouw, rasterstructuur-indeling (grid) en decentrale beeldopbouw.
5. *Gemengde esthetiek* in negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse fotografie door de toe-eigening van westerse elementen.

Dit onderzoek is gebaseerd op een interdisciplinaire benadering die teruggaat op fotografietheorie, geschiedenis van de islamitische kunst, neurowetenschap, postkoloniale studies en *world art studies*. Het speciaal ontwikkelde theoretische

kader richt zich op de analyse van negentiende-eeuwse foto's en hun culturele componenten, waarbij de fotografie uit Iran fungeert als casus. Met dit referentiekader kan men echter een gelijksoortige studie over elk ander land verrichten.

Structuur van het proefschrift

Elk van de vijf hoofdstukken heeft een specifieke theoretische invalshoek. Het fotografische materiaal wordt geanalyseerd met het oog op de vijf hierboven genoemde onderwerpen en zal steeds terugkomen.

1. *Visuele lateraliteit*

De centrale onderzoeksvraag van dit hoofdstuk betreft de manier waarop de richting van het schrijven en lezen in een cultuur van invloed is op de compositie van foto's. Als beelden van links naar rechts worden 'gelezen', en dit is de schrijfrichting in alle westerse talen, dan heeft dit effect op de beeldcultuur binnen die talen en dan zou het omgekeerde van toepassing moeten zijn op talen waarin men van rechts naar links schrijft (zoals het Farsi). Het is dan ook aannemelijk dat in vergelijking met westerse fotografen Iraanse fotografen 'spiegel-beelden' maken. Dit wordt bevestigd in studies over *visuele lateraliteit* (visual laterality) afkomstig uit de neuropsychologie en waarnemingspsychologie, die essentieel zijn voor de ontwikkeling van een theoretisch kader om dit verschijnsel te benaderen. Uit mijn onderzoek blijkt dat de schrijfrichting rechtstreeks verbonden is met de beeldopbouw van kunstwerken. De schrijfrichting in een cultuur is met andere woorden een van de bepalende culturele componenten voor de vorm van een foto.

2. *Tekst*

Dit hoofdstuk richt zich op het gebruik en de rol van kalligrafie in de traditie van de Perzische schilderkunst en de invloed hiervan op negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse fotografie, zoals geanalyseerd vanuit drie gezichtspunten: inhoud, betekenis en ruimtelijke organisatie. Tekst/kalligrafie en beeld zijn in de Iraanse visuele cultuur altijd nauw met elkaar verweven, zoals onder meer blijkt uit de Perzische schilderkunst. De invloed van het traditionele gebruik van kalligrafie of tekst is overduidelijk in de schilderkunst en de negentiende-eeuwse fotografie, en de kalligrafische inscripties in de Perzische schilderkunst hebben zowel een esthetische als een informatieve functie. De wijze waarop tekst of kalligrafische inscriptie in de picturale en fotografische ruimte wordt ingevoegd, is eveneens vergelijkbaar: dit doet men soms in cartouches, maar ook op geheel vrije wijze in de ruimte van het kunstwerk. Het is interessant dat los van de tekstuele inhoud of betekenis, de taal van foto-inscripties altijd een poëtisch karakter draagt.

3. *Pose*

Dit hoofdstuk is gewijd aan de lichaamshouding. Aan de hand van dit onderwerp wordt ingegaan op het gebruik van de traditionele geknielde pose in Perzische miniatuurschilderkunst en de portretkunst uit de periode van de Kadjaren, op het verschil in lichaamshouding bij mannen en vrouwen en de door hen vastgehouden objecten in de schilderkunst en later in de fotografie, op conventies in westerse fotostudio's zoals het gebruik van stoelen, op *hybride* poses ontleend aan de traditionele Perzische cultuur en op (nieuwe) westerse invloeden. De traditioneel afgebeelde objecten in Perzische miniaturen en de portretkunst ten tijde van de Kadjaren (*tasb*i, bloemen, waterpijp, zwaarden, kussen, etc) zijn ook terug te vinden

in negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse fotografie. De vrouwen houden doorgaans muziekinstrumenten vast, de mannen godsdienstige objecten, zwaarden, bloemen of waterpijpen.

4. Ruimte

Dit hoofdstuk bestudeert het begrip en het formele gebruik van ruimte in de traditie van de Iraanse schilderkunst en de invloed ervan op negentiende-eeuwse Iraanse fotografie. De organisatie van de ruimte in Perzische miniaturen heeft betrekking op onderwerpen zoals de non-lineaire perspectiefbenadering of het isometrisch perspectief om een driedimensionale ruimte op een tweedimensionaal vlak weer te geven, het bestaan van meerdere aandachtspunten in het beeld (decentrale beeldopbouw), de rasterstructuur (grid) en de verticale beeldopbouw/verticaal perspectief. Ik heb een theoretisch model ontwikkeld voor de classificatie van het corpus schilderijen en foto's op grond van ruimtelijke componenten. Voor het corpus schilderijen heb ik een indeling in drie groepen gemaakt: *decentrale beeldopbouw/rasterstructuur, isometrisch perspectief* en *verticale beeldopbouw/verticale structuur.* Voor het corpus foto's ben ik gekomen tot twee groepen: *decnetrale beeldopbouw rasterstructuur* en *verticale beeldopbouw/verticale structuur.* Perzische miniaturen maken gebruik van een decentrale beeldopbouw en kennen een roosterstructuur (grid), om aldus een compositie met meerdere aandachtspunten te verwezenlijken die tegelijk ruimtelijk en temporeel is. In veel gevallen beklemtoont een evenwichtige structurering van de gebouwen, de architecturale structuur waaruit het geschilderde beeld is opgebouwd, de *multiple-centered* compositie, waardoor de ruimte in blokken wordt opgedeeld. Driedimensionaliteit wordt in het leven geroepen met behulp van terugwijkende vlakken, waardoor het bovendien mogelijk wordt gemaakt dat diverse taferelen zich tegelijkertijd afspelen. Door het gebruik van het isometrisch systeem van projectie tonen Perzische miniaturen ook een consistent gebruik van ruimte, een van de vele invloeden afkomstig uit de traditionele Chinese schilderkunst. De combinatie van deze twee strategieën om ruimte te suggereren is volgens mij uniek voor de traditionele Perzische miniatuurkunst.

5. Westerse invloeden

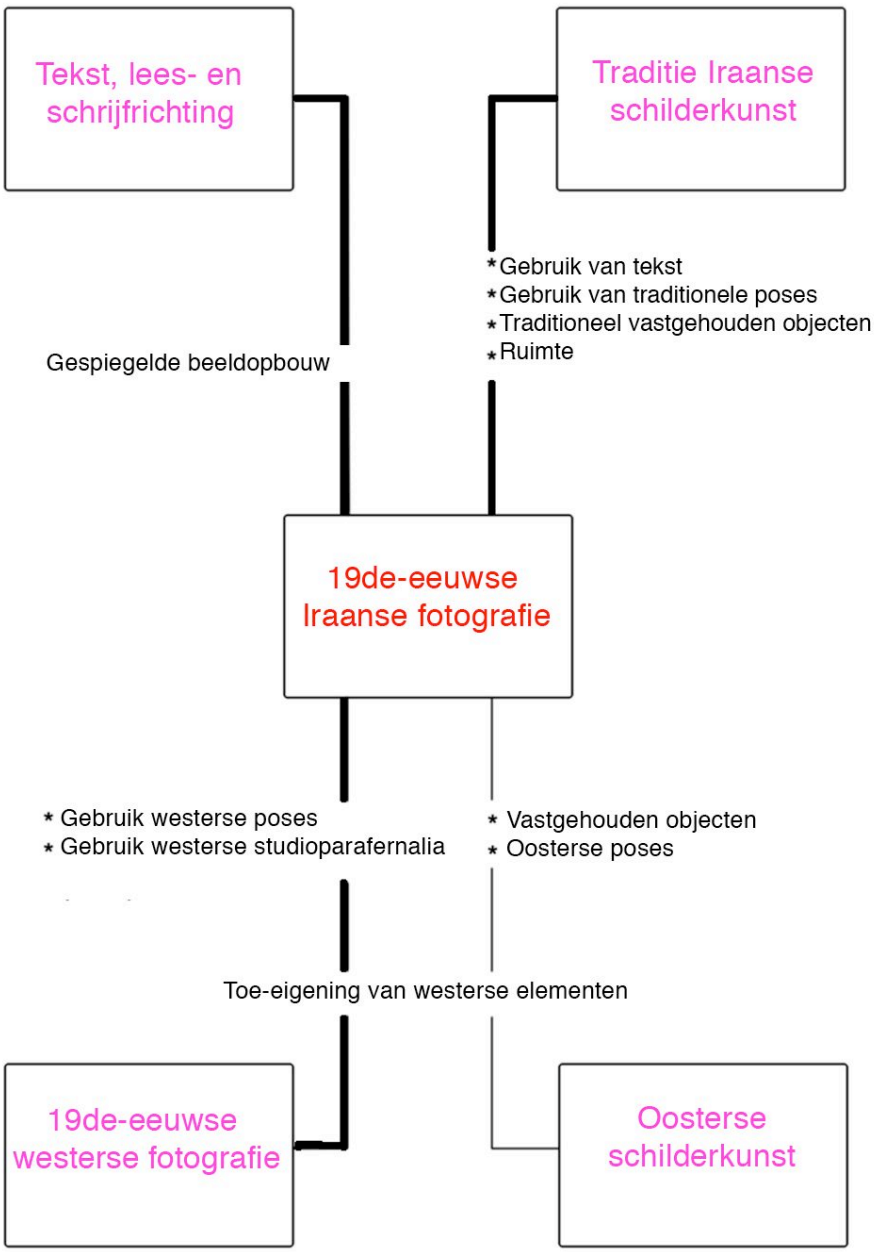
Het laatste hoofdstuk is gewijd aan het contact tussen Westerse en Iraanse fotografen, en de invloed van Westerse esthetiek/fotografen op de inheemse Iraanse portretfotografie. De fotografen in Iran die vooral aan deze vreemde invloed werden blootgesteld, waren niet zozeer de fotografen die op straat of lokaal hun werk deden, maar de hoffotografen. De esthetische opvattingen van Iraanse fotografen waren het product van reizen over en weer door zowel westerse als Iraanse fotografen. François Carlhiée, Luigi Montabone en Antoin Sevruguin hadden de meeste invloed in Iran. Zo bracht Carhliée de Iraanse hoffotografen in aanraking met de Victoriaanse portretesthetiek en studioparafernalia en met de cyanotypie, Montabone introduceerde de ingekleurde fotografie en de vignettechniek, terwijl Sevruguin een picturale benadering in de Iraanse fotografie inbracht. Reza Akkasbashi en Abdullah Qajar, beiden hoffotograaf, reisden naar Europa en werden ook beïnvloed door westerse fotografen die les gaven aan het hof.

Model

Dit proefschrift biedt naast een diepgaande visuele analyse van fotografisch materiaal een model om corpussen foto's en schilderijen visueel te onderzoeken en vergelijken.

Dit model heeft ook tot doel beelden terug te brengen tot hun culturele componenten als onderdeel van een gelaagd proces, maar dan in omgekeerde richting, uitgaande van de beeldconstructie. Het model kan worden toegepast op andere corpussen en als volgt worden samengevat: beschrijving van het corpus foto's; beschrijving van het corpus schilderijen; het maken van een visuele analyse van beide corpussen om verschillen en overeenkomsten vast te stellen; het vaststellen van de culturele componenten die zijn gevonden op grond van de visuele analyse van het fotografisch en schilderkunstig materiaal; en ten slotte, vaststelling van categorieën of groepen van foto's die de aangetroffen culturele componenten belichamen.

Zorgvuldige visuele analyse van de corpussen op basis van het combineren van inzichten uit de genoemde disciplines leidt tot een reeks gevonden en beschreven culturele componenten, die schematisch als volgt kunnen worden weergegeven:



Het in dit proefschrift gerapporteerde onderzoek laat zien dat de diverse negentiende-eeuwse artistieke representatiemodellen waren verbonden met specifieke socio-politieke en culturele contexten, zoals hier in het geval van Iran. In verder onderzoek wil ik de hierboven besproken analytische methode toepassen op een corpus van negentiende-eeuwse Japanse foto's en Ukiyo-e prentkunst. Ik ben ervan overtuigd dat aldus een vergelijkbaar cultuurspecifiek verband tussen beide vormen van representatie kan worden aangetoond.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Carmen Peréz González was born in 1969 in Valencia (Spain); she studied Astrophysics at Barcelona University and was awared her M.A. in 1993. As a photographer, she has published the catalogue of a solo exhibition about women workers in Asia taken during a two and half year's journey through Asia (Museo Príncipe Felipe, Valencia, Spain), as well as several portfolios. For several years she worked as a cultural manager, organising exhibitions, at the Science Museum in Barcelona (Spain) and at the Department of Culture of the Embassy of Spain in Prague (Czech Republic). In October 2005 she was awarded her *ABD* ("All But Dissertation") in Fine Arts (Photography) at Barcelona University and in February 2007 she was admited as exernal PhD researcher at the Department of Art History, Leiden University. She has published several articles about nineteenth-century photography in Iran, India and Japan in relevant academic magazines and books. She is currently working as a research fellow at the "Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst" in Cologne where she is preparing an exhibition of its collection of nineteenth-century photographs from different Asian countries.