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

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5. INTERACTIONS BETWEEN WESTERN AND IRANIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

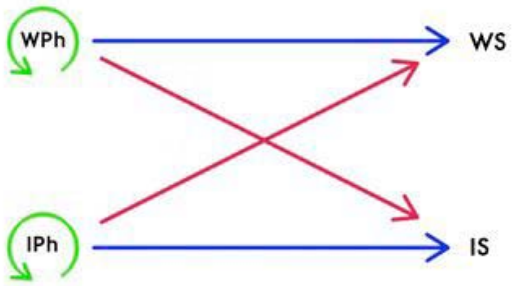
Born originals, how comes it to pass that we die copies?
Edward Young[309]

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.