

LAYLA S. DIBA

PERSIAN PAINTING IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: TRADITION AND TRANSMISSION*

In 1972, S. J. Falk's *Qajar Painting* introduced a hitherto unsuspecting public to the beauties of the monumental and decorative mural painting of nineteenth-century Persia.¹ These paintings were known to only a few in the academic and art world, and appreciated for their decorative qualities by even fewer. They had only been given serious consideration by Basil Robinson in articles which sprang from his acquaintance with the Amery collection, formed by two Englishmen in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which was also the subject of Falk's work.² The Amery collection later formed the nucleus of the collection of the Nigaristan Museum of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian art, which was specifically created to house these paintings, as well as many other fine examples of Qajar art. Further acquaintance with this hitherto unknown school of painting both enchanted and surprised an art audience mainly composed of novice collectors, and Qajar paintings quickly gained great popularity and wide acceptance. Quite soon, however, their charm and impressiveness began to wear thin, and questions began to take the place of enthusiasm among serious collectors and scholars.

The Amery brothers were connoisseurs with a wonderful eye for quality—and probably quite a knack for bargaining—as they picked up these paintings in bazaars all over the Middle East. Therein lay the problem: on the one hand, the pictures they bought represented the culminating achievements of later Persian painting in its most perfect, coldest, and finally least interesting phase (that is, from the late eighteenth century to circa 1850) and, on the other, having been uprooted from their architectural context, the palaces and pleasures houses they were meant to adorn, they

were also singularly devoid of social significance. From this problem arose the questions that we will now try to address.

First, what were the artistic traditions and creative components of this style before its flowering in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? And second, how could one fully explain its subsequent evolution from an impressive but unimaginative court style into a fascinating school of “super-realistic” portraiture and naturalistic painting almost one hundred years later, as embodied primarily in the works of two members of the Ghaffari family, Abu'l-Hasan Sani' al-Mulk and Muhammad Ghaffari Kamal al-Mulk.

Persian scholars and one lone Western scholar, G. R. Scarcia, spoke of the development of a school of realistic, historical painting in the course of the eighteenth century based on trends that began in the Safavid period.³ There was said to exist a school of portraiture rooted in everyday observation and of a more “popular” nature than the court style of Fath-‘Ali Shah. My initial questions and the Persian viewpoint were not easily reconciled with the view held by Western art historians, who saw the formative traditions of Qajar painting in the late-seventeenth-century court art of Isfahan and the subsequent flowering of life-size painting in Shiraz during the reign of Karim Khan Zand and his followers (1750-79).⁴

This approach did not account for developments in the first half of the eighteenth century. A confusing and chaotic period of Persian history, it began with the slow disintegration of the Safavid state and a brief usurpation of power by Afghan invaders (1722-36).⁵ However, numerous Safavid pretenders challenged their rule, and it was as the lieutenant of the most important of them, Shah Tahmasp II, that Tahmasp-Quli Khan, the future Nadir Shah Afshar rose to power. In the name of the Safavid dynasty this conquering condottiere foiled the numerous threats to Persia's nationhood that came from Afghans, Ottomans, Russians, and various other enemies. He not only secured Persia's borders,

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but extended them for a brief time as far as Central Asia and India.

Nadir might have been a military genius—a second Alexander the Great, as he was named in his titulature—and a charismatic leader to the beleaguered Iranian peoples, but he was no statesman. Under his rule (1736-47), the economic and cultural situation declined even further. Evidence of architectural programs and court patronage is difficult to find, and large-scale paintings that would establish the links between the late-seventeenth-century examples and the earliest extant dated examples from the late eighteenth century in the Zand style consist of a few portraits of Nadir Shah (and even those may be late eighteenth century).⁶

A closer examination of the book production in the first half of the eighteenth century (manuscripts, album painting, some lacquer bookbindings, and penboxes) should demonstrate that art and culture did not totally disappear in this period and that there are enough extant examples to give a convincing picture of the maintenance of the Safavid pictorial tradition in the Afsharid period and its transmission not only to the painters of the school of Shiraz but to the late-nineteenth-century “Nasiri” school of portraiture.

Although there is no denying the importance of lacquerwork in the development of later Persian painting, only a few succinct examples will be considered here. Lacquerwork as such—that is, painted and varnished bookbindings, boxes, and pencases—is an adaptation and extension of the art of traditional miniature painting and provides the major vehicle for much of the painting of this period. However, its recent popularity with collectors and the subsequent abundance of examples in the art market should not divert us from considering evidence from a more traditional painting medium: the manuscript in its various forms.

The innovative style introduced by the late Safavid court artists in Isfahan—a not always successful but nevertheless intriguing blend of European post-Renaissance tradition, Mughal interpretations thereof, and traditional Persian values—continued to be the predominant style in the eighteenth century. It was enthusiastically adopted by the sons and the grandsons of these innovators, even if under diminished or non-royal patronage or in a number of provincial centers, a situation which clearly mirrored the political and economic fragmentation of the period. To name the most important: Muhammad-‘Ali ibn Muhammad-Zaman, Muhammad-‘Ali ibn Abdu’l Naqqashbashi

Ibn ‘Ali-Quli Jubbadar, ‘Ali-Naqi, and Taqi ibn Shaykh-Abbasi, and other lesser known artists such as the painters identified as Muhammad Rashid Khan, Muhammad Sultani, Muhammad-Riza Hindi, Ahmad Nayrizi, and Azad. The extant visual evidence is supported by very meager historical and literary documentation, but it is hoped that a closer examination of Persian eighteenth-century literary sources may prove useful in this regard.

As to European sources, Cornelis le Bruyn, the painter-traveler who visited Iran in 1702-4 and who first published the account of his travels in 1711, is so far the only contemporary authority; he tells us of only one of two nameless painters in the royal service painting watercolors of birds and copying floral designs from a printed Dutch work on flowers. He also mentions painters working in lacquerwork.⁷ Nadir Shah is said to have employed a German painter named Cassel who came to Iran as part of a mission for the Russia Company (an English firm similar to the East India Company) to paint pictures for him—eight in all. These are unfortunately no longer extant.⁸

The only source actually to identify a painter by name is a late-eighteenth-century Persian anthology of literary biography, the *Ātashkada* of Lutf-‘Ali Beg Adhar, a poet of Shiraz in the Zand period.⁹ His single reference to painting is indirect; a certain Muhammad-‘Ali ibn ‘Abdul-Beg ibn ‘Ali-Quli Jubbadar is listed under his pen-name—‘Ali Farangi. A short biography follows. The passage refers to ‘Ali-Quli Jubbadar as a painter second only to Mani, who was known to have converted to Islam and worked in the royal employ in the Safavid period. Muhammad-‘Ali was born in Isfahan and worked as *naqqāshbashi* to Shah Tahmasp II and Nadir Shah. His eyesight is said to have weakened in later life, and he returned to Mazandaran where he passed away in 1750. He was especially noted for his talent in portraiture.¹⁰

Basically the same account is contained in a most important historical source for the Zand era, the *Gulshan-i Murad* by Abu’l-Hasan Khan Mustawfi Ghaffari.¹¹ As a courtier, painter, and scribe he was an eyewitness to many of the events described, and he also includes short biographies of some of his contemporaries. There are, however, no references to artists except for the same Muhammad-‘Ali; ‘Ali-Quli Jubbadar is here said to have worked for Shah Abbas II.¹²

The next references—European and local—are all from the nineteenth century, but still refer to late Afsharid and Zand painters. According to M. A.

Karimzada, a modern Persian scholar of painting—‘Tīmād al-Saltāna, a famous literary figure of the late nineteenth century—refers in his *Kitāb al-Mu‘assar va al-Āthar* (1888-89) to the lineage of Abu’l-Hasan Afshar Urumiā, a renowned penbox painter of his day. His father, a painter, colorist, and bird and flower painter, was Allahvardi Naqqash and his great uncle was ‘Ali-Ashraf Naqqash.¹³

Claudius Rich met the painter Mirza Muhammad Hadi in Shiraz in 1820; by then he was at a very advanced age. He seems to have acquired a reputation as a Sufi shaykh and was accompanied on his visit to Rich by two unnamed students. His works were extremely rare and expensive, for he was regarded as being the leading painter of his time. Texier in 1852 refers to Aqa Sadiq and Benjamin in 1892 to Aqa Bir (Baqir).¹⁴

Compared to the meagerness of the available sources, the information from Muhammad-Hashim Rustam al-Hukma seems positively abundant. Rustam al-Hukma was the author of a unique history covering the period 1696-1835. Now available in an annotated German translation, it is a mixture of gossip, eyewitness accounts, folklore, and the literary genre of a mirror of princes. Listed as the painters of Karim Khan’s reign—all compared in excellence to Mani, of course—are Aqa Zaman, Aqa Baqir, Aqa Sadiq, Mirza Hasan, and Mirza Muhammad.¹⁵

To sum up: painting continued on a reduced scale under the court patronage of Shah Sultan-Husayn, Shah Tahmasp II, and Nadir Shah in Isfahan and perhaps in other provincial centers during the first half of the eighteenth century. Nadir Shah employed a German painter. Muhammad-‘Ali (the only official court portraitist) and ‘Ali-Ashraf were two painters active at that time. In Shiraz in the late eighteenth century painting was practiced by the artists mentioned above—at least six are known.

Additional information can be gathered from the familial and student-teacher relationships inferred from the numerous artists’ signatures of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in their extant works. These have been used extensively by Persian scholars and dealers and with somewhat more caution by Western authorities to establish a chronology for painting of the period.¹⁶ Although this method sometimes descends to the level of artistic folklore, when used with caution it provides us with the basic evidence that the core elements of a style had been transmitted from one generation to another.

Applying this method to the signatures of the immediate successors of the Muhammad-Zaman school mentioned above, we may add the following punning signatures:

(1) *zi ba‘d-i Muḥammad ‘Ali ashraf shud*, which can mean both “After Muhammad, Ali was the most noble” and “Ali-Ashraf came after Muhammad.” This establishes a student-teacher relationship between ‘Ali Ashraf and Muhammad Zaman.

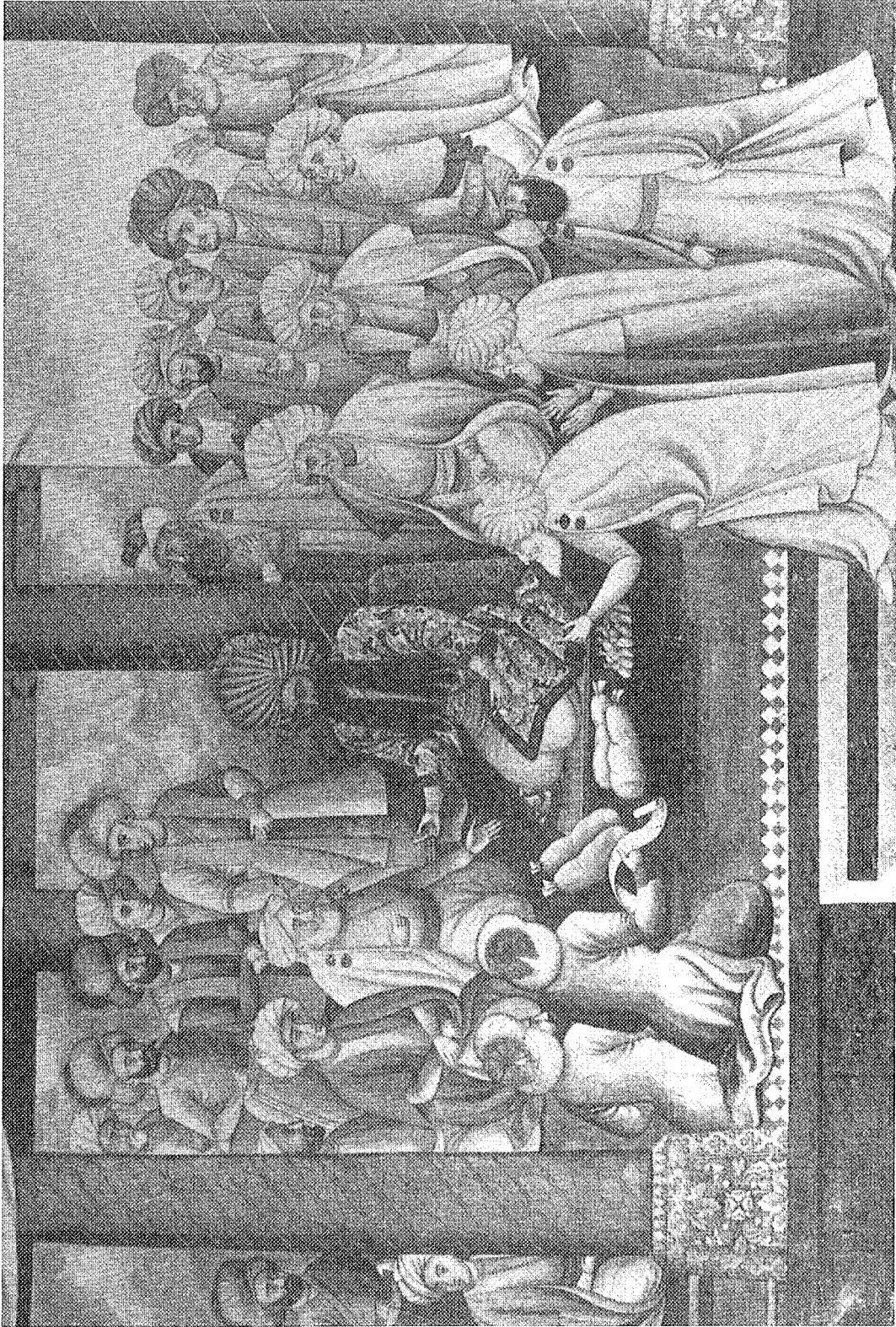
(2) *ṣādiq az lutf-i ‘Ali ashraf shud*, which can mean both “(Ja‘far) Sadiq was the most noble by virtue of Ali’s grace” and “Sadiq was ennobled by Lutf-Ali,” establishing a student-teacher relationship between Muhammad Sadiq and ‘Ali Ashraf.

(3) *bāqir az ba‘d-i ‘Ali ashraf shud*, which can mean both “[Muhammad-Baqir] was the most noble after Ali” and “Baqir came after Ali-Ashraf,” establishing a student-teacher relationship between Muhammad Baqir and ‘Ali Ashraf.¹⁷

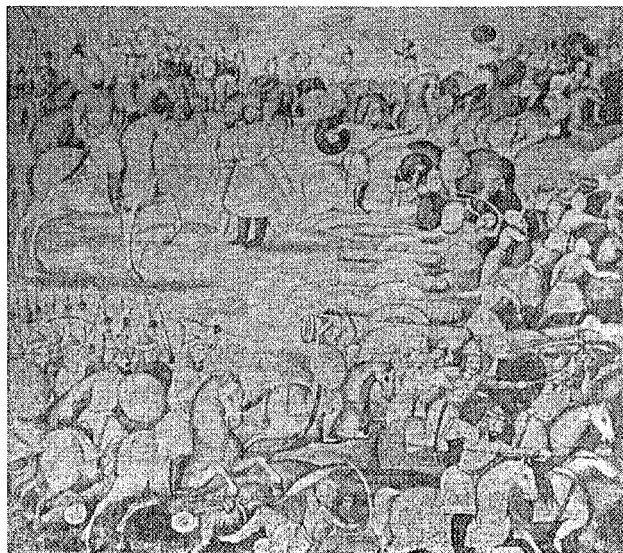
Of course all these artists had multiple signatures, depending on the quality of the work, their status when they painted it, the patron who commissioned it, and even the holy imam they were named after; then again, some of the signatures may be later attributions.

Artists’ signatures for this period also provide some biographical facts not available in the literature: for instance; Muhammad-Zaman’s death date is established with a penbox by his son Muhammad ‘Ali in which he refers to him as “the late” Muhammad-Zaman and dates it 1112 (1700-1);¹⁸ a penbox formerly in the Godman Collection and now in the British Library dated 1217 (1802) and signed *zi ṣulb-i ‘Ali ashraf āmad Rizā*, which can mean both “From ‘Ali’s loins Riza became the most noble” and “From Ali-Ashraf’s loins came Riza,” i.e., this otherwise unknown artist calls himself the son of ‘Ali-Ashraf.¹⁹ A mid-nineteenth-century penbox in the eighteenth-century style has an inscription telling us that it is the work of Ahmad ibn Muhammad-Mahdi and dated 1266 (1849) and that the design was taken from the late-lamented ‘Ali-Ashraf.²⁰

It is not my purpose here to attempt a complete biographical sketch of all these artists and to ascribe their authentic work, but simply to present some of the visual evidence now known. Chronologically we should begin with Muhammad-‘Ali ibn Muhammad-Zaman. There are no literary references to his career, in contrast to his famous or infamous father for whom a whole (now proved to be) fictional biography was fabricated.²¹ However, we have at least five signed and



1. Nāw Ruz Salam ceremony. Watercolor, Persia, signed Muhammad ʿAli ibn Muhammad Zaman and dated 1133 (1722). British Museum, London, no. 1970-9-17-0299.



2. Battle scene with Nadir Shah. Manuscript, *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā-yi Nādīrī*, Persia, 1171 (1757). Private Collection.

dated works from the years 1700-21. Although working in his father's style, he displays a penetrating feeling for portraiture and a more fluid approach to the depiction of the human form that may help to distinguish his works from his father's (fig. 1). Some works in the late Safavid style in the Leningrad album and other unsigned works in single leaves in the manuscript of the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā-yi Nādīrī* can be assigned to him.

Another important artist of the period who has left no signed work is Muhammad-ʿAlī ibn Abdal Naq-qashbashi, court painter to Shah Tahmasp II and Nadir. He may well be the painter of a hitherto only legendary manuscript copy of the official history of the reign of Nadir Shah, the *Tārīkh-i Jahāngushā-yi Nādīrī* by his court secretary and official historian Mirza Mahdi Khan Astarabadi. An article on this manuscript has recently been published by its owner, a Persian collector, wherein he states that his copy is dated 1171 (1757), but has no name of scribe or place of manufacture. It must also be without a dedicatory preface, since the owner assumes it to be an author's copy solely on the grounds that one of the figures in the miniatures can be identified as Mirza Mahdi.

The information given on the manuscript is tantalizing. We are only told about thirteen of the miniatures because they pertain directly to Nadir Shah and show his most important battles and victories. The

miniatures are said to be unsigned—but ascribable to either of the Muhammad-ʿAlī's. The cover, said to be lacquer painted in a design of birds and flowers, is ascribed to Muhammad Hadi.²²

As only one of the miniatures, a battle scene with Nadir Shah, is reproduced in the article and that one in black and white, it is difficult to evaluate the manuscript's importance (fig. 2). Nevertheless, it seems to be a fine example of the Isfahan court style, as it must have been used in the early to mid eighteenth century. We can compare it to certain of the darbar scenes of the late seventeenth century by ʿAlī-Qulī Jab-badar, gathered in an album now in Leningrad, to see its parentage: volume, foreshortening, recession into depth, perspective, and a use of color subtler than the lapidary art of the classic Persian miniature painting are all elements derived from the late Safavid Europeanizing style.²³ The fact that this manuscript is dated 1757 might indicate to some that this is a Zand product,²⁴ but it seems unlikely that a Zand prince or partisan would commission the manuscript illustration of a panegyric official history to the glory of Nadir Shah. It is more likely to have been made for Mirza Mahdi, an Afsharid partisan who would have survived the terrible last years of Nadir's reign (he was out of the country in 1747 when Nadir was murdered) and who subsequently returned to Iran and, having been head of the *divānkhāna* and then official court historian, may easily have patronized the remnants of the imperial *kārkhāna* Nadir had inherited. That it may originally have been meant as a presentation copy for Nadir Shah is also very possible.

Other examples in a similar style, portraits of Nadir Shah and his contemporaries, most of which are unsigned and undated, also form a visual corpus with this manuscript and show the continuity of historical manuscript illustrating style which was to be revived for the early Qajar *Shāhanshāhnāmas*.²⁵

Before this example became known, the only other dated manuscript of the Afsharid period was a copy of a much less flattering portrait of Nadir's reign, the *ʿĀlām-ārā-yi Nādīrī* by another lesser court official, Muhammad Kazim of Marv.²⁶ The manuscript itself was written between 1152 and 1157 (1752-57), but does not record its scribe, place of manufacture, or patron. It has been published, together with a variety of unsigned illustrations by at least two hands, in a facsimile edition in the Soviet Union. The editor has proposed that this is the author's manuscript copy, illustrated in Khurasan.²⁷ The miniatures, though

doubtless of the period, are much less impressive than those of the previous manuscript and would seem to represent provincial and retardataire variations of the seventeenth-century manuscript-illumination style.

Other examples of the period, which have survived in single leaves detached from their original context, testify to the continuing importance of European-style portraiture and single floral paintings; the basic compositional rules and semi-realistic approach of the previous generation of painters are maintained. The only distinguishing features are changes in details of costume and the somewhat heavier proportions of figure style.²⁸

Particularly interesting in this group is a watercolor portrait of a renowned Safavid theologian—Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi—from his grave-site shrine (*buq'ca*) in the north-iwan area of the Imam-Jum'ca mosque in Isfahan (fig. 3). Majlisi lived from 1637 to 1700. This is noted by Hunarfar as being one of two paintings used in situ with other architectural decoration including mirror-work. This example is not only securely dated to within a few years of his death, but throws new light on the use of pictorial representations in a religious context. It also suggests that a previously published watercolor portrait of the same period may be of him.²⁹

Another example of particular importance is the varnished painting fitted into the top of a lacquerwork casket in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It depicts a lady and her attendants, is signed "*Ya Sahib al-Zaman*" (O Lord of Time), is dated 1125 (1714), and may be by Muhammad-'Ali ibn Muhammad-Zaman (fig. 4).

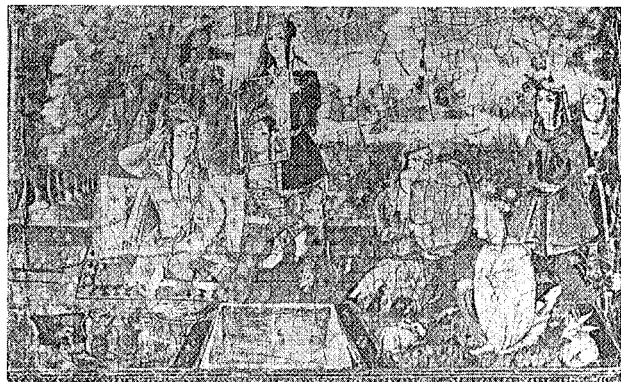
Some painting survived in *muraqqa'* (album) form—a kind of portable picture gallery which could include paintings, calligraphy, prints, sometimes in very sumptuous borders and bindings, sometimes in very pedestrian formats for preservation purposes only. As an art form it began in the late Timurid and Safavid periods, but was extremely popular in the eighteenth century. Many of the Mughal and Safavid models for this period were thus carefully preserved.

The chief example of the art form for this period is a sumptuous album, now in Leningrad, which forms the principal benchmark for dating and identifying painters of the Afsharid period. It was published in facsimile by Soviet scholars in 1962, and examples from its leaves and explanatory text have been quoted at random by Western scholars ever since.³⁰ Its proper importance as the prime document for this period has, however, not been recognized. The covers are



3. Portrait of Mulla Muhammad-Baqir Majlisi. From his shrine in the north iwan of the Imam-Jum'ca Mosque, Isfahan. Watercolor, Persia, ca. 1700-25.

decorated with a painted and varnished design of loose flowers and birds contained within a framework of medallions and borders. They are dated—the date 115 should be read as 1115 (1738)—and signed by two artists, 'Ali-Ashraf and Muhammad Hadi. The dedicatory verses in the cartouches of the framing border contain a lengthy poem in honor of the patron, named Mirza Mahdi, and celebrate the beauty of the album as well; each verse is a chronogram of 1147 (1734). Although highly praised and endowed with a lofty titlature (he is compared to a king and described as the jewel in the crown of the state), the patron's exact political position is unclear.



4. Lady and attendants. Casket lid. Varnished watercolor, Persia. Inscribed *Ya Sahib al-Zaman* (O Lord of Time) and dated 1126 (1714). Victoria and Albert Museum, London, no. 2405-76.

The patron may very well have been Mirza Mahdi Khan Astarabadi again.³¹ Even though begun in the 1730's, the album took until 1758-59 to complete according to the inscriptions in the decorative margins of its pages. This date would correspond with the approximate death date of Mirza Mahdi and fit very well with his biography. He was not only a historian and scribe, but a great linguist with a special interest in Chagatay Turkish. He wrote a Turkish grammar and dictionary, which was dated to the same years as the last dates in the Leningrad album.³² Mirza Mahdi was a great admirer of Mir 'Ali-Sher Nava'i, the late-fifteenth-century courtier and poet of the court of Sultan-Husayn Bayqara, who not only composed great poetry in Turkish, but was a memorable patron of the arts, and more specifically of Bihzad. What better role model for Mirza Mahdi?

The compilation and splendid borders of the album were executed by the finest court artists of the period; their signatures have been recorded by Ivanov and are known from literary references. They are Muhammad Hadi, Muhammad Baqir, and Muhammad Sadiq. Fortunately a few scattered leaves also exist in Western collections.³³

The album was begun at the height of the Afsharid period, for an important court functionary, obviously a great connoisseur of painting and calligraphy, and not completed until many years after the dynasty had ended. In artistic terms it not only shows the superlative quality that could still be commandeered by an enthusiastic and powerful patron but also that artists

previously associated with Shiraz and the court of Karim Khan Zand also worked for Afsharid patrons.

The principal artists of this album are also represented by other extant works. 'Ali-Ashraf was extremely prolific in the production of bookbindings, penboxes, and mirror cases using a "small floral" style almost always with a leitmotif of African pansies or violets, derived directly from Muhammad-Zaman's style, but standardized and simplified. His figural style is also derivative.³⁴ According to Karimzada,³⁵ 'Ali-Ashraf worked for Ahmad Khan Dunbuli, a powerful Kurdish overlord of the district of Salmas and Khuy in northwest Persia. Like the Muhammad Kazim manuscript, this is another example of the importance of provincial, non-royal patronage in the period.



5. Sleeping Nymph. Watercolor, Persia, signed Muhammad Baqir and dated 1178 (1765). Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, cat. no. 282.VI.

‘Ali-Ashraf, in addition to having students, as we know from the signatures, also passed on his talents to his brother and son. His brother was responsible for one of the finest portraits of the early nineteenth century, now in a Soviet collection, and his son continued his father’s style in lacquerwork.³⁶

Muhammad Hadi was an illuminator and specialized in floral designs. His known works include a penbox dated 1148 (1735), formerly in the Niyavaran Palace Collection and many single leaves of narcissus, carnations, and roses.³⁷

Muhammad Baqir has also left quite a large oeuvre consisting mainly of margin decorations, copies of European prints, and seventeenth-century paintings, nudes (fig. 5), and especially floral sprays and wash drawings. Many of these were contained in a fine album, a smaller version of the Leningrad album, auctioned in Paris in 1982 and since split up. Muhammad Baqir signed one of the finest margin paintings and may have been responsible for all of them. His dated paintings in the album—rose sprays and copies of a *Susanna and the Elders*—are all dated 1178 (1764), by which time we can assume the album was completed. The covers are somewhat later; they are by a Qajar-period painter Ahmad, dated 20 Shawwal 1237 (10 July 1822), and commissioned by an anonymous royal patron, perhaps Fath-‘Ali Shah. Unfortunately, the album was already incomplete at the time of the sale, so its history is rather difficult to reconstruct.³⁸

The last artist to have collaborated on this album, Muhammad Sadiq, is the best known of the group, primarily for his large oil paintings, now in the Amery collection, and many lacquerworks from the second half of the eighteenth century.³⁹ From literary references, we can see he was among the most renowned painters of the age, credited with the painting of the battle of Karnal, where Nadir defeated the Mughal armies. However, the inscription by Sadiq on the painting, as recorded by Hunarfar,⁴⁰ indicates he was commissioned to repair a pre-existing painting on the orders of Aqa Muhammad, a man who has gone down in history as the bloodthirsty eunuch who founded the Qajar dynasty, and not as a great patron of the arts. Sadiq’s works in the Leningrad album must have been done at the beginning of his career.

Although we have examined the most important, there are other Indo-Persian albums of the eighteenth century that belong to this group: an album in the Walters Art Gallery, no. 771, the David Album in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and two albums, again

in Leningrad, of which only the seventeenth-century miniatures have been published.⁴¹

On the basis of the above evidence, the Afsharid period emerges as a historical and cultural reality, an era characterized by the preservation of the late Safavid court style with its European and Mughal components through familial and student-teacher relationships, access to models of the highest quality, thanks to the still functioning royal *karkhāna* system, and stimulated by non-royal patronage, when conditions were otherwise unfavorable. Afsharid patronage continued well beyond the historical limits of Nadir Shah’s reign—not only through aristocratic members of the regime who survived its demise, but possibly in Khurasan itself where the Afsharids ruled until finally subjugated by Aqa Muhammad Qajar in 1796.⁴²

A major question remaining to be resolved is the true effect of whatever manuscript painters and scribes may have been brought back as part of Nadir’s Indian booty. Details of the four hundred manuscripts he donated to the shrine of Imam Riza are as yet unavailable, and many of the scribes and court officials he returned with seemed to have died or gone back to India.⁴³ We must also consider that Afsharid painting may have been produced abroad, say in India or Iraq, by emigre artists.

With a better understanding of the components and transmission mechanism of pre-Zand eighteenth-century Persian painting, we can now consider the careers and relationship of the eighteenth-century painter Abu’l-Hasan Mustawfi Ghaffari Kashani and his great nephew Abu’l-Hasan Ghaffari Kashani, known as Sani‘ al-Mulk (Craftsman of the Realm). They can serve as a casebook study of how earlier traditions were transmitted to late-nineteenth-century painters, combined with the evidence from another lesser-known nineteenth-century painter’s working album—that of Lutf-‘Ali Khan Suratgar.

Abu’l-Hasan belonged to a distinguished family of government officials and jurists from Kashan who continue to serve the state to the present day and without whose help and encouragement much of this information would have been permanently lost.⁴⁴ Abu’l-Hasan’s father was governor of Kashan, Jawshaqan, Qum, and Natanz for more than twenty years beginning in 1749. His son became interested in painting at an early age and served an apprenticeship for two years. He was, however, advised by a family friend, Mirza Muhammad Burujirdi, court treasurer of Karim Khan Zand, that painting, even though a delicate craft,



6. Portrait of Shah Safi. Watercolor, Persia. Signed Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari Mustawfi Kashani and dated 1208 (1794). Private Collection.



7. Royal reception (Shah Abbas II and the Mughal ambassador). Watercolor, Persia. Unsigned and undated, attributed to Abu'l Hasan Ghaffari Mustawfi Kashani, ca. 1790. Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan.



8. Prince and courtiers. Watercolor, Persia. Signed Abu'l Hasan Naqqashbashi Ghaffari Kashani and dated 1267 (1850). Gulistan Palace Museum, Tehran.

was an occupation unworthy of his family tradition and that he should rather devote himself to the sciences and embark on a scribal career. He goes so far as to say that Abu'l-Hasan had dishonored his family by painting a portrait of his father (a portrait which is still part of the Ghaffari family collection). Thanks to this advice, Abu'l-Hasan became court secretary to Karim Khan, and we are now in possession of one of the most important sources for his reign, the *Gulshan-i Murād* (the Garden of Desire). It is the foreword to the *Gulshan* that is the source for the above details as well as for the information that the manuscript was begun during his years of service but completed by his son Muhammad Baqir, also a painter, in 1796.⁴⁵

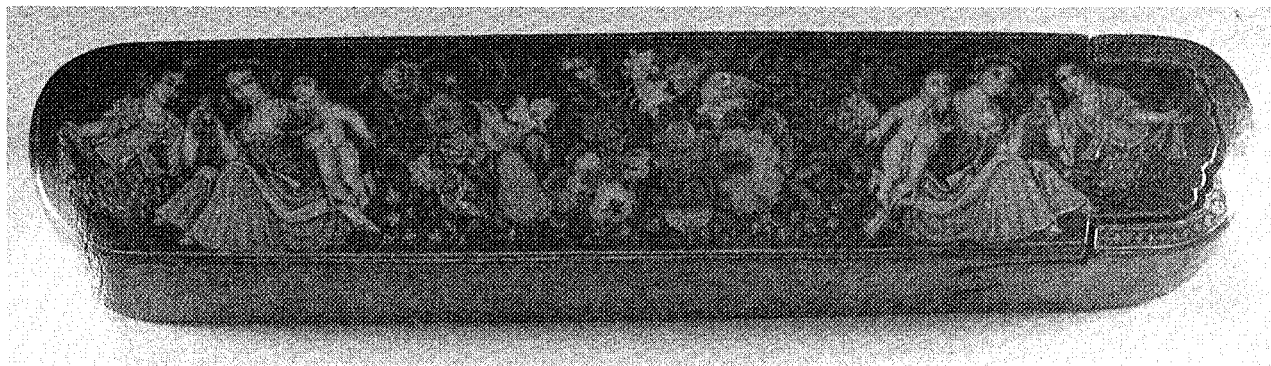
Neither of the two extant manuscript copies are illustrated, but we are fortunate to possess examples of his works preserved mainly by his descendants. His signed and dated works range from the 1770's to the 1790's and consist of polychrome watercolors and wash drawings—historical scenes and portraits of contemporary notables or historical figures. The latter include portraits of his father Mirza Mu'izz al-Din smoking a waterpipe, of his grandfather Mirza 'Abd al-Muttalib riding a mule to the coronation of Nadir Shah, a portrait of Karim Khan and his groom in the royal square of Isfahan, and a series of royal portraits including Jahanshah Qaraqoyunlu and Shah Safi Safavi (fig. 6). Of the extant attributable works, a portrait of Shah 'Abbas II previously attributed to Muhammad Zaman is perhaps the best example of the preservation of the

Safavid formal skeleton within a new eighteenth-century vocabulary and idiosyncratic style (fig. 7).⁴⁶

There is also a unique literary reference to his works and career. Dr. Qasim Ghani, a well-known political and literary figure of the first half of the twentieth century, was a close friend of Muhammad Ghaffari Kamal al-Mulk, Abu'l Hasan's great grand-nephew. In his published diaries he records a conversation with Kamal al-Mulk regarding his ancestor. He is said by Kamal al-Mulk to have practiced painting despite his father's objections, and to have been encouraged by both Nadir Shah and Karim Khan. A copy (perhaps the Malik Library copy) of the *Gulshan-i Murād* was in Kamal al-Mulk's hands and passed on to his sons. Among his works, Kamal al-Mulk mentions court gatherings of Nadir Shah and Karim Khan, an exchange of crowns between Nadir Shah and the Mughal emperor, said to be in the royal collections, and a large painting of Karim Khan and his court.⁴⁷

I do not think we can overestimate the importance of Abu'l-Hasan for our understanding of Persian painting of the eighteenth century. Because he was not a mural painter and because no references to him are to be found in foreign-travel literature, his existence was unknown in the West. His memory, however, was kept alive by Persian tradition, and thanks to the increase in eighteenth-century scholarship over the last twenty years, he can now be rescued from artistic limbo.

The fact that Abu'l Hasan was not primarily a painter, but an important member of the governing



9. Floral design with European figures. Painted and varnished penbox, Persia. Signed Lutf-^ʿAli... and dated 1266 (1849). Decorative Arts Museum, Tehran.

elite of his day, allows us to have a biographically complete picture, unique in the history of later Persian painting. He was not a paid craftsman, but a talented and perspicacious observer of current events, a witness to history who probably painted for his own pleasure events otherwise unrecorded from a very dark period of Persian history. His paintings are distinguished by an ability to form impressive compositions while remaining within the parameters of late Safavid court painting, but with an eye for detail, an immediacy and highly personal style which distinguished him from the decorative and charming but often colorless works of his contemporaries. Finally an analysis of his oeuvre does much to illuminate the Persian scholars' view of the importance of realistic portraiture and historical painting in the eighteenth century and its subsequent influence on Nasiri-period realistic portraiture and the recording of court events.

Although Kamal al-Mulk mentions that, in addition to his European and Persian teachers, his masters included members of his own family, we have no such direct testimony from Abu'l-Hasan Sani^ʿ al-Mulk, Kamal al-Mulk's uncle, and grand-nephew and true spiritual heir of the first Abu'l-Hasan.

Even though Sani^ʿ al-Mulk's career and works have been extensively studied by Persian scholars, there are no works or early studies extant based on his great uncle's designs; however, in his earliest signed works he does refer to himself as Abu'l-Hasan Thani⁴⁸ (that is, the second), an obvious reference and homage to his great-uncle. The precedent set by his ancestor does much to explain Sani^ʿ al-Mulk's highly developed sense of portraiture and his interest in current and

historic events as embodied in his portraits of court officials (fig. 8) and his marvelous *ex tempore* illustrations to the official court newspaper, the *Ruznāma-i Dawlat-i ʿAliyya-i Irān*, which he published for Nasir al-Din Shah in the 1860's. It is ironic that the very talent that caused the first Abu'l-Hasan to be disowned by his father was to be the source of such pride to later generations of his family.

Of course, Sani^ʿ al-Mulk's great artistry can also be traced to many other influences in his formative years: a period of study in Europe, European painters traveling through Iran, his apprenticeship with Mir ʿAli, Fath-^ʿAli Shah's court painter, perhaps even photography. Nevertheless, the continuing tradition of portraiture which began in the Safavid period and was carried on by artists, even if not always of the first rank, such as Bahram Shirazi, Jaʿfar, and Abu'l-Hasan I,⁴⁹ a seemingly more robust and realistic approach to painting than that of the court artists of Fath-^ʿAli Shah—seems much closer to Sani^ʿ al-Mulk's sensibility than the overly refined aesthetic of the artistic generation immediately preceding him.

The working album of Lutf-^ʿAli Khan Suratgar, a contemporary of Sani^ʿ al-Mulk, will serve here as the last piece of the puzzle we have been trying to reconstruct, and take the place of Sani^ʿ al-Mulk's early works. In 1976 this album was acquired by the Private Cabinet of Her Imperial Majesty Farah and eventually became part of the collection of the Riza Abbasi Museum and Cultural Center. It consisted of at least twelve folios of pounces, drawings, and studies which had been acquired from direct descendants of the artist's family.⁵⁰



11. Sleeping nymph. Watercolor, Persia. Signed Abu'l Hasan and dated 1189 (1775). Art market, London.



10. Sleeping nymph. Watercolor, Persia. Signed 'Ali Quli Jubbadar and dated 1084 (1673). Art market, London.

The materials ranged in style from late Safavid to Zand and Fath-ʿAli Shah periods; many pounces were shaped to be used as designs for penboxes or the rounded rims of large caskets, or for daggers or manuscript illumination; the pounces had been well used and still showed traces of red chalk or wash designs when they had been directly used as models; a few pounces were in Lutf-ʿAli's own style of floral sprays and flowering hazelnut branches contained within cartouches and medallions, the stock-in-trade of the *qalamdān* (penbox) painter. Most interesting was the exact pounce used for a penbox in the collection of the Museum for Decorative Arts in Tehran; a charming example of Lutf-ʿAli's highly Europeanized style, it is dated 1266 (1849) and signed by Lutf-ʿAli as court painter (fig. 9).

The variety of styles and periods represented confirm theories that a good Persian painter could re-create at will any historical style that a patron would choose or that he himself felt was in demand. Specific examples are a version of *Shaykh Sanʿān and the Christian Maiden*, derived from a model by Muhammad-Zaman, now in the Khalili Collection, another in the style of Muhammad-Zaman's son or brother, two female figures from the seventeenth-century casket mentioned above, and finally a pounce of a drawing of a sleeping nymph that had been popular with ʿAli-Quli Jabbar, Muhammad Baqir, and Abu'l-Hasan (figs. 5, 10, 11).

We may now view the eighteenth century as a prelude to a new era in Persian history, in art as in politics, perhaps not as great or innovative as the past, but essential to our understanding of the present. The history of this period is just beginning to unfold for us, but it speaks eloquently through its art. It reminds us that the history of art is but the study of the past as it was preserved, transmitted, and transformed—for our purposes, preserved by Muhammad-ʿAli ibn Muhammad Zaman (fig. 1), transmitted by Abu'l-Hasan I (fig. 7), and transformed by Abu'l-Hasan II (fig. 8).

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NOTES

1. S. J. Falk, *Qajar Painting* (London, 1972). I wish to take this opportunity to thank Wheeler M. Thackston, Jr., for his help in preparing this paper for publication.
2. B. W. Robinson, "The Court Painters of Fath ʿAli Shah," *Eretz Israel VII* (Jerusalem, 1963); idem., "The Amery Collection of Persian Oil Paintings," *Studia Iranica I* (1972): 43-53.
3. Mahdi Bahrami, "A Portrait of Lutf Ali Khan Zand," *Yadgar* 1, no. 5 (1323/1944): 63-66 [in Persian]; G. R. Scarcia, "Qajar School," *Encyclopedia of World Art* (New York, 1959-68), vol. 11, cols. 811-19; Adib Burumand, "Introduction to an Illustrated Manuscript of the *History of the World Conqueror Nadir Shah*," *Hunar va Mardum* 187 (Khurdad 2537/June 1978): 40-45 [in Persian].
4. B. W. Robinson, "Lacquer, Oil Paintings and Later Arts of the Book," S. J. Falk, ed. *Treasures of Islam* (Geneva, 1985), p. 178; E. G. S. Sims, "The 17th-Century Safavid Sources for Qajar Oil Painting," J. Scarce, ed., *Islam in the Balkans: Persian Art and Culture of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Edinburgh, 1979): 99-101.
5. The main sources for this period are Lawrence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavid Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia* (Cambridge, Eng., 1958); idem., *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly upon Contemporary Sources* (London, 1938); and John Perry, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747-1779* (Chicago and London, 1979).
6. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 277-78.
7. Cornelis le Bruyn, *Travels into Muscovy, Persia and Part of the East Indies*, 2 vols. (London, 1737), vol. 1, p. 220.
8. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 278.
9. On Lutf ʿAli, see E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* (reprt, Cambridge, Eng., 1956), vol. 4, pp. 282-84.
10. A. A. Ivanov, T. B. Grek, O. F. Akimushkin, *Alʿbom Indiiskikh Persidskikh Miniatur* (Album of Indian and Persian Miniatures) (Moscow, 1962), p. 57; and Muhammad ʿAli Karīmzāda, *Ahwāl va Āthār-i Naqqāshān-i Qadīm-i Irān* (The Lives and Works of Iranian Painters of Olden Times) (London, 1363/1985), vol. 1, p. 388 [in Persian].
11. Perry, *Karim Khān*, p. 305.
12. Abu'l Hasan Khān Mustawfī Ghaffārī, *Gulshan-i Muwad*, British Library Ms. OR 3592, fol. 121r (p. 243).
13. Karimzāda, *Ahwāl*, pp. 368-69.
14. B. W. Robinson, *Persian Miniature Painting from Collections in the British Isles* (London, 1967), pp. 77-78.
15. Birgitt Hoffman, trans., *Persische Geschichte 1694-1835 erlebt, erinnert und erfunden: Das Rustam at-Tawarikh in deutschen Bearbeitung*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1986), vol. 2, p. 629.
16. Chahriar Adle, *Écriture de l'Union: Reflets du Temps des Troubles, oeuvres picturales de Haji Muhammad, 1086/1675-6-1124/1712-13* (Paris, 1980); B. W. Robinson, "Introduction," *Eastern Lacquers, An Exhibition of 50 Pieces of Persian, Indian and Turkish Lacquer*. Bernheimer Fine Arts Ltd. (London, 1986) (henceforth cited as Bernheimer catalogue), pp. 4-5.
17. Ivanov et al., *Alʿbom*, pp. 8-15.
18. Ivanov, "Korobochka s Imenem Muhammada Ali, Syna Muhammada Zamara" (A Box with the Name of Muhammad ʿAli, Son of Muhammad Zaman), *Soobshcheniya Gosudarstvennogo Ermitaja* (Bulletin of the State Hermitage Museum) 18 (1960): 52-53.
19. *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Persian Art*, 3d ed. (London, 1931), no. 278 E; Robinson, Bernheimer catalogue, p. 5.
20. Layla S. Diba, ed., *Recent Acquisitions*, Nigarestan Museum (Tehran, 1978) [in English and Persian], no. 106, accession no. 77.3.11a-b.
21. A. A. Ivanov, "The Life of Muhammad Zaman: A Reconsideration," *Iran* 17 (1979): 65-70.
22. Burumand, "Introduction to an Illustrated Manuscript," pp. 40-45.
23. For example, see Ivanov et al., *Alʿbom*, nos. 98, 99, 100, 101.

24. Nora Tittley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India* (Austin, Texas, 1983), p. 126.
25. See Layla S. Diba, "Dating Persian Silks: The 18th-Century Visual and Literary Evidence," *Woven from the Soul, Spun from the Heart: Textile Arts of Safavid and Qajar Iran* (Washington, D.C., 1987), n. 33; also Habib Anavian, *Catalogues of the Habib Anavian Collection* (New York, 1979), no. 54 (illustrated in color).
26. Originally published by Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 296-99, and illustrated opposite pp. 128, 170, 188, and 242; facsimile edition, N. D. Michluko-Maklay, *Nama-yi alam-ara-yi Nadiri* (Moscow, 1960).
27. Michluko-Maklay, *Nama-yi alam-ara-yi Nadiri*, vol. 1, p. 21.
28. See Richard Ettinghausen and Marie Lukens Swietochowski, *Islamic Painting*, Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, 1978, p. 31, Album 30.95.174, no. 31; B. W. Robinson, S. J. Falk, E. G. Sims, G. Féhérvari, and D. King, *The Rothschild and Binney Collections: Persian and Mughal Arts of the Book* (London, 1976), no. 62.
29. Lutf-Allāh Hunarfar, *Ganjīna-i Āthārī Isfahān* (Isfahan, 1965), p. 158, and illustration, p. 159; for the other watercolor, see B. W. Robinson, E. J. Grube, G. M. Meredith-Owens, and R. W. Skelton, *Islamic Painting and the Arts of the Book*. The Keir Collection (London, 1976), p. 212, no. III, 397 and pl. 91.
30. See above, n. 10.
31. This suggestion has already been made by Ivanov et al., *Al'bum*, p. 14, and Karimzāda, *Ahvāl*, p. 375.
32. Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, pp. 292-96.
33. Milo Beach, *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court* (Washington, D.C., 1981), pp. 167-72.
34. For his works, see Robinson, Bernheimer catalogue, p. 4.
35. Karimzāda, *Ahvāl*, p. 31.
36. See above n. 19 and N. K. Karpova, *Stankovaya Zhivopis Irana XVIII-XIX vekov* (Easel Painting in Iran in the 18th and 19th Centuries), (Moscow, 1973), no. 7 (illustrated).
37. See A. S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Objets peints d'Iran," *Encyclopédie Connaissance des Arts, Art Iranien* 1, ill. 3; and Nūshīn Nafīsī, "Mīrzā Muḥammad Hādī Ṭarrāh-i Gulhā va parandahā" (Mīrzā Muḥammad Hādī, bird and flower designer), *Hunar va Mardum*, no. 129-30 (1352/1973): 23-24.
38. *Art Islamique*, sales catalogue, Hotel Drouot, Paris, June 23, 1982.
39. See Falk, *Qajar Paintings*, pp. 32-33, and Robinson, Bernheimer catalogue, p. 5, inter alia.
40. Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, p. 574.
41. Metropolitan Museum of Art, no. 30.95.174 and Album D-181, Oriental Institute, Academy of Sciences, Leningrad, and Album D-489, Leningrad Public Library; see also E. G. Sims, "The European Print Sources of Paintings by the 17th-Century Persian Painter Muhammad Zaman ibn Haji Yusuf of Qum," Henri Lerner, ed., *Le Stampe e la Diffusione della Immagini e degli Stili* (Prints and the Transfer of Images and Styles), (Bologne, 1983), n. 1.
42. In addition to the two manuscripts mentioned here, see also Falk, *Treasures*, no. 193.
43. Jean Otter, *Voyage en Turquie et en Perse*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1748), vol. 2, p. 89.
44. I particularly wish to thank Mr. Farrukh Qaffari and Mrs. Avida Qaffari for their help. For his works and career, see Farrukh Qaffari, "Abul Hasan Mostawfi," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983), vol. 1, fasc. 3, p. 311, with extensive bibliography.
45. Abu'l Hasan Mustawfī, *Gulshan-i Murād*, British Library. ms. or. 3592, pp. 1-3.
46. See Anthony Welch and Stuart Cary Welch, *Arts of the Islamic Book: The Collection of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan* (Ithaca, 1982), pp. 115-17.
47. Qasim Ghani, *Yāddāshthā-yi Duktur Qasim Ghani*, 5 (London, 1981), pp. 26-27.
48. Yaḥyā Zuka, "Mīrzā Abu'l Hasan Khan, Sanīf al-Mulk Ghafārī," *Hunar va Mardum*, no. 10, pt. 1, p. 16.
49. For Ja'far, see a painting by him in Perry, *Karim Khan*, ill., p. 285; for Bahramī Shirazī, Bahramī, "Portrait," n. 3.
50. Riza Abbasi Museum and Cultural Center, Accession no. 1299-1309, 1311-1510; unfortunately this album is unpublished, and no photographs are available owing to current conditions in Iran.